Ofcom Cross Platform Media Tracker

Technical Report 2020

1. Preface

The Cross-Platform Media Tracker is a biennial survey that explores UK audience attitudes and opinions towards television and radio broadcasting, and related areas such as programme standards, advertising and regulation.

The research findings from Ofcom's Cross-Platform Media Tracker study provide a valuable source of information on consumers' attitudes and help inform Ofcom's work on broadcasting standards. Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom has a duty to draw up, and from time to time revise, a code for television and radio services, covering programme standards. This includes the protection of under-18s, the application of generally accepted standards to provide adequate protection from the inclusion of harmful or offensive material, sponsorship, product placement in television programmes, and fairness and privacy. Ofcom recognises that people's views on what are generally accepted standards are subject to change over time, and so should be explored by ongoing consumer research. This survey is one of a range of sources that Ofcom uses in undertaking its broadcasting standards duties.

The broadcast TV and radio elements and the on-demand and online elements had been tracked in separate studies previously, and were merged into a single survey in 2017.

In 2020, the study was run by BVA BDRC with fieldwork conducted by its in-house fieldwork division.

Ofcom's Cross Platform Media Tracker typically runs as a continuous tracking study each wave that monitors UK audience attitudes towards broadcast (TV and radio) and on-demand and online media, alongside audiences' awareness and views regarding standards regulation and audience protection.

Up to and including part of Q1 2020, the methodology used for this survey was a mixed mode combination of in-home face-to-face interviews and online survey completion. Due to the ongoing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and guidelines that were in place during what would have been the normal 2020 fieldwork period, Ofcom made the decision to suspend all face-to-face fieldwork across all consumer research projects to protect the safety of everyone involved and the Cross-Platform Media Tracker was affected by this decision.

The outbreak of Covid-19 prevented the face-to-face (CAPI) element from continuing in 2020. Ofcom also took the decision to initially suspend the online element so effectively the entire survey was suspended throughout Q2 and Q3 2020.

The study resumed in Q4 2020 with an alternative methodology and was completed by year end. There were no changes to the questionnaire/survey content and the sample remained a nationally representative sample of 2000+ UK adults. Where previously the survey was split

50% online and 50% face-to-face, the targets were reapportioned to reach approximately 87% online and 13% via a telephone (CATI) method. The telephone interviews specifically targeted the 13% of UK adults who are not online and aimed for a profile representative of this group. In addition the156 face-to-face (CAPI) interviews conducted in Q1 2020[1] were incorporated into the data. The resulting final sample was 83% online, 11% telephone (CATI) and 6% face-to-face (CAPI).

The resulting unweighted distribution of the sample by method in the data tables published in March 2020 includes data collected in Q1 and Q4 2020. The total sample of UK adults 16+ in the 2020 dataset is 2,474, including 2,051 online respondents (83%), 267 CATI respondents (11%) and 156 CAPI face-to-face respondents (6%).

The data from all methodologies was combined and weighted to the representative proportions within each of the four UK nations in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic group (SEG), working status and region; with an overall weight to rebalance the contribution of each methodology.

Impact on 2020 data

As an official statistic, this survey provides longitudinal data which helps Ofcom understand how behaviours and attitudes shift over time. The change in methodology meant that some impact on the direct comparability of trend data to previous years was to be expected. BVA BDRC worked alongside Ofcom to analyse and agree a weighting approach to help mitigate this impact and retain the ability to track trends as far as possible.

This document provides details of the sampling frame, research methodology and weighting procedures.

2. Fieldwork

In 2016, with Ofcom's decision to combine the online and on-demand survey content with the Media Tracker to create an integrated cross platform survey (TV, radio, online), it was decided a mixed method approach that incorporated face-to-face (CAPI) and online methodologies would be most appropriate, and which was introduced from the 2017 wave.

Methodological bias was reduced as far as possible operationally, by designing both research elements to be as similar as possible: both methods involve self-completion surveys, identical questions wherever possible and continuous interviewing (with fieldwork being conducted for at least three weeks in every month).

As discussed above, due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic this approach was interrupted and an alternative approach was taken including a larger online sample and incorporating a telephone (CATI) method to ensure representation of those not online. This also involved a pause in interviewing via any method throughout Q2 and Q3 2020.

[1] This was before the restrictions as a result of the pandemic started

3. Sample design

Each method has its own sample design, appropriate for each respective methodology and its purpose.

A. A stratified random sampling approach is applied to face-to-face (CAPI) interviewing. Random sampling points are selected in each region with six interviews undertaken per Primary Sampling Unit (PSU). To ensure a representative sample, individual quotas specific to the profile of each PSU are applied by gender, age (16-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+) and socio-economic grade (AB, C1, C2, DE).

B. Quota sampling is applied to online interviewing. There is no way of replicating the offline sampling approach online, as the demographic spread of panellists in each region is not nationally representative (and is, by no means, universal). For this reason, a quota sampling approach was adopted to ensure nationally representative responses

C. Similarly, quota sampling is applied to telephone (CATI) interviewing. Factoring in the sample size targeted via this method and that it includes exclusively UK adults not using the internet, this was seen to be the only viable method. For these reasons, a quota sampling approach targeting the profile of UK adults who are not online was adopted

Typically, targets at a UK level and within nation are set for the online component on a monthly basis. It is good practice to impose monthly targets, to avoid any skews in the profile of respondents. The monthly targets are set as a proportion of the total annual targets applied to the online component of fieldwork.

As a result of the change in method necessitated by the circumstances in 2020, online fieldwork was conducted during a contracted period in Q1 and Q4 2020 to achieve the following annual sample targets:

	UK	England	Scotland	Wales	NI
Total	**1879**	**1305**	**191**	**191**	**191**
Male	**919**	**639**	**92**	**94**	**94**
Female	**960**	**666**	**100**	**98**	**98**
16-24	**282**	**196**	**27**	**29**	**31**
25-34	**631**	**444**	**63**	**57**	**67**
35-44					
45-54	**590**	**405**	**63**	**63**	**59**
55-64					
65+	**376**	**261**	**38**	**42**	**34**
AB	**404**	**300**	**36**	**34**	**33**
C1	**575**	**405**	**59**	**56**	**56**
C2	**408**	**274**	**46**	**44**	**44**
DE	**493**	**326**	**50**	**57**	**59**
Working	**1088**				
Not working	**792**				
1-2 in HH	**1155**				
3+ in HH	**724**				
No child in HH	**1223**				
Child in HH	**656**				
BAME	**244**				
Disability	**282**				
Rural	**244**				
Urban	**1635**				

4. Weighting

Following an analysis of the combined data from the three methods, it was decided that there was a need for two types of weighting:

A. **Demographic & Geographic Weighting** – for all questions, to ensure the data is nationally representative within nation and for the UK overall by age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group, working status and region.

B. **Methodology** – An overall weight is applied to re-balance the contribution of each methodology.

Data from all questions are weighted to be nationally representative within nation by age, gender, socio-economic group and working status and for the UK overall on region and ethnicity; actual population figures and estimates have been taken from Census.

An additional overall weight is applied to re-balance the contribution of each methodology.

As a result of the change in approach in 2020 involving different proportions of the existing methodologies and the introduction of a new methodology, analysis was conducted to assess how best to combine and weight the data from the three methods to best provide consistency with the normal approach and thus allow trends to be tracked. A re-balancing of the contribution by method of 67% for online, 10% for CATI respondents and 23% CAPI face-to-face.

These proportions were determined on the principle of adjusting the contributions to be as close to the 50:50 online versus non-online methodology as collected historically as possible, while maintaining an acceptable weighting efficiency, on the basis that this best approximates the historic and anticipated future approach, thus retaining as much ability to track year to year while limiting the impact on the robustness of the data.

The initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profiles are illustrated below:

Weighting category	Sub-population	Unweighted	Weighted
Gender	Male	46%	49%
	Female	54%	51%
Age	16-24	14%	15%
	25-34	13%	16%
	35-44	17%	17%
	45-54	15%	17%
	55-64	15%	14%
	65-74	17%	11%
	75+	9%	10%
SEG	AB	22%	22%
	C1	32%	31%
	C2	17%	21%
	DE	29%	26%
Working status	Working	54%	50%
	Not working	45%	50%
Ethnicity	BAME	11%	13%
English region/nation	North East	4%	4%
	North West	11%	11%
	Yorkshire/Humberside	8%	8%
	East Midlands	6%	7%
	West Midlands	8%	9%
	East of England	6%	9%
	South West	7%	8%
	South East	12%	14%
	London	11%	13%
	Scotland	10%	9%
	Wales	10%	6%
	Northern Ireland	8%	2%
Method	Online	83%	67%
	CATI	11%	10%
	CAPI	6%	23%

Appendix: Guide to Statistical Reliability

This section details the variation between the sample results and the "true" values, or the findings that would have been obtained with a census approach. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95%: that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results. The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups.

	Sub-population	Actual (n=2,474)	ESS (n=1,341)
Gender	Male	1,143	618
	Female	1,331	727
Age	16-24	335	165
	25-34	326	180
	35-44	420	247
	45-54	376	211
	55-64	375	197
	65+	642	402
SEG	AB	539	286
	C1	790	421
	C2	423	240
	DE	722	416
Working status	Working	1,345	708
	Not working	1,120	630
Ethnicity	MEG	269	174
English region/nation	North East	96	51
	North West	268	148
	Yorkshire/Humberside	190	112
	East Midlands	149	102
	West Midlands	202	119
	East of England	144	107
	South West	162	73
	South East	294	153
	London	275	170
	Scotland	255	192
	Wales	238	155
	Northern Ireland	201	99
Method	Online	2,051	1,624
	CATI	267	226
	CAPI	156	124

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the “95% confidence interval”:

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,341 (Total)	1.61%	2.14%	2.45%	2.62%	2.68%
618 (Male)	2.37%	3.15%	3.61%	3.86%	3.94%
421 (C1)	2.87%	3.82%	4.38%	4.68%	4.78%
165 (16-24)	4.58%	6.10%	6.99%	7.48%	7.63%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 1,341 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 2.45 percentage points from the sample results. When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is “statistically significant” – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume “95% confidence interval”, the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
618 vs. 727 (Male vs. Female)	4.55%	6.06%	6.94%	7.42%	7.57%