Ofcom Technology Tracker 2021 CATI omnibus survey Technical Report

To accompany the Technology Tracker Digital Exclusion data tables

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Preface

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent third national lockdown (January to mid-March 2021) many children of school age (aged 4-18) were required to undertake home schooling.

This CATI research was commissioned by Ofcom to provide detailed evidence on household access to devices, children's access to appropriate devices based on their schooling requirement and methods of using the internet at home. It will also supply some key figures for Ofcom's 2021 Technology Tracker data, in addition to the main Ofcom Technology Tracker survey (which is being conducted via post-to-web and post-to-paper and will be published in May).

Households with mobile-only access to the internet and with children of school age (4-18) were asked further questions to understand whether children have been impacted because of needing to use mobile data for home schooling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The questions that were fielded on this study related to the following areas:

- Household ownership of devices (PC/Computer, Laptop, Netbook, Tablet Computer and Smart Phones)
- Number and ages of school aged children (aged 4-18) living in the household
- Access to appropriate devices for children of school age for online schooling/ learning requirements
- How online schooling/ learning is managed if a suitable device is not available
- Access to the internet at home
- Methods used to access the internet at home
- Issues children of school age may face due to only having access to mobile data

The research was managed by Critical Research, with the interviews conducted by telephone via the Ipsos MORI weekly CATIBus survey in February and March 2021.

Overview of the methodology

Methodology: CATIBus (telephone) survey run by Ipsos MORI

Core objective: To provide Ofcom detailed evidence of access to appropriate devices and the internet for home schooling for children of school age

Sample size: 3,126 (rolled across 3 waves).

Fieldwork period: The fieldwork was carried out in three waves in 2021 (February 12th to 19th, February 19th to 26th February and February 26th to March 5th). We received a sample of c.1,000 respondents each wave.

Sample definition: UK adults aged 18+. Quotas are set on age, gender, working status and geographical regions. The GB sample was supplemented with interviews with households in Northern Ireland.

Sampling process: Respondents are found and interviewed using random digit dialling (RDD) for both landline and mobile as well as targeted mobile sampling. Mobile numbers have a selection probability proportional to mobile network market share, while landline numbers have a selection probability proportional to their population distribution across Government Office Regions. The split between mobile and landline is around 45% mobile and 55% landline.

Weighting: Where necessary, the data have been post-weighted to ensure they are representative of the UK adult population. This sample was weighted to be representative of the UK profile (including non-telephone owning households) for the key demographic variables of: gender, age, region/ nation, social grade, working status and ethnicity.

Weighting

The data are weighted to the national UK profile using target rim weights for gender, age, region/ nation, social grade, working status and ethnicity.

The following table shows the final weighted sample profile and the interviews achieved.

Figures based on UK adults	% Weighted	% Unweighted
	Profile	Interviews achieved
Gender – Male 18+	49%	44%
Gender – Female 18+	51%	56%
Age – 18-34	28%	24%
Age – 35-54	33%	32%
Age – 55-64	15%	16%
Age – 65+	24%	28%
SEG – AB	26%	24%
SEG – C1	25%	35%
SEG – C2	20%	16%
SEG – DE	24%	19%
Working Status – working	59%	55%
Working Status – not working	41%	44%
Region – London	13%	12%
Region – South East	14%	13%
Region – East of England	9%	9%
Region – South West	9%	8%
Region – East Midlands	7%	7%
Region – West Midlands	9%	8%
Region – Yorkshire & Humber	8%	7%
Region – North East	4%	4%
Region – North West	11%	10%
Region – Scotland	9%	11%
Region – Wales	5%	6%
Region – Northern Ireland	3%	4%

Guide to statistical reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone in the target sample had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is calculated at the 95% limit. This means that the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. 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:

	Actual interviews	ESS
Total	3,126	2,088
Gender – Male 18+	1,362	1,220
Gender – Female 18+	1,748	1,519
Age – 18-34	739	662
Age – 35-54	1,005	890
Age – 55-64	494	432
Age – 65+	877	776
SEG – AB	751	704
SEG – C1	1,105	1,057
SEG – C2	504	480
SEG – DE	580	505
Working Status – working	1,731	1,527
Working Status – not working	1,384	1,206
Region – London	384	339
Region – South East	407	358
Region – East of England	204	184
Region – South West	407	358
Region – East Midlands	204	184
Region – West Midlands	260	230
Region – Yorkshire & Humber	231	204
Region – North East	138	121
Region – North West	320	281
Region – Scotland	337	299
Region – Wales	191	172

Region – Northern Ireland	115	102

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% ±
2,088 (Total)	1.3%	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%
1,220 (Gender: Male)	1.7%	2.3%	2.6%	2.8%	2.9%
1,057 (SEG: C1)	1.9%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	3.1%
1,527 (Working status: Working	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,088 give a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of + 2.0 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 must 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% ±
1,220 vs. 1,519 (Male vs. Female)	2.3%	3.0%	3.5%	3.7%	3.8%
704 vs. 1,057 (SEG AB vs. C1)	2.9%	3.8%	4.4%	4.7%	4.8%