

Ofcom’s news consumption survey: proposed changes

Ofcom previously published a note on the official statistic calendar stating:

“Ofcom is currently in the process of reviewing the news consumption survey in order to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. This means that there may be differences to the next survey including different questions and a different methodology.”

Having now completed the tender for the news consumption survey and awarded the contract to a new research agency, Jigsaw Research, we are now able to confirm the proposed revisions to the survey:

Proposed change	Impact	Mitigation
<p>A change to the methodology from a face-to-face omnibus to a standalone survey using a mix of face-to-face CAPI and online interviews.</p> <p>This allows us to both increase questionnaire length and the overall sample size in a cost-effective way. Data will be more robust, allowing detailed analysis within additional demographic sub-groups. This methodology is also future-proofing the survey</p>	<p>The ability to compare results to historical data.</p>	<p>The sample size for the face-to-face element of the study will be of a comparable size to previous surveys to allow analysis on the face-to-face sample alone (if required).</p> <p>In addition, we will be running a parallel survey of 500 face-to-face CAPI interviews using 2016 (old) questionnaire.</p> <p>Via analysis between both samples, we should be able to identify whether any year-on-year changes in data are genuine shifts in the news market or if they may have been caused by a change to the questionnaire and/or methodology. This data can be used to calibrate either historical data or the new data going forwards to allow for trend over time comparisons (if required).</p>

Proposed change	Impact	Mitigation
<p>A change to the sampling and reporting periods. We propose moving from one wave of research to two (taking place in November 2017 and March 2018). This helps reduce the effect of seasonality as well as the potential impact from any major news story at the time of the fieldwork period. We expect to publish data in Q2 2018.</p>	<p>The ability to compare results to historical data.</p>	<p>50% of interviews will be conducted at a similar time of year than previous years (Q4), though note will comprise both F2F and online interviews.</p>
<p>Additional BBC questions. Given Ofcom's additional BBC duties, we are proposing to include additional questions with regards to the BBC News Purpose. Further detail of the key questionnaire changes is listed below.</p>	<p>Any changes to a questionnaire have the potential to impact on the ability to compare results to historical data.</p>	<p>Most BBC questions have been placed at the latter end of the questionnaire thus limiting potential impact on comparability.</p>
<p>Revision of current questions. As with every tracker, we have also reviewed all current questions to ensure they remain relevant, fit for purpose and are as effective as possible. To reflect changes in the news market, we are proposing changes to the current questions. Further detail on the main changes to the questionnaire is listed below.*</p>	<p>Any changes to a questionnaire have the potential to impact on the ability to compare results to historical data.</p>	<p>We will be running a parallel survey of 500 face-to-face CAPI interviews using 2016 (old) questionnaire.</p> <p>Via analysis between answers to both questionnaires on F2F CAPI sample only, we should be able to identify whether differences in data have been caused by changes to the questionnaire. This data can be used to calibrate either historical data or the new data going forwards to allow for trend over time comparisons (if required).</p>

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***Main questionnaire changes:**

- *Including 'social media' as a separate code when we ask respondents which platforms they use for news nowadays.*
- *Include social media sites as a separate question when we ask respondents what news sources they use for news nowadays.*
- *Additional questions on social media - accessing, active and passive following of news, awareness of original source of shared/trending news*
- *Additional question on which platform they tend to go to first for different types of news.*
- *Changes to source lists used nowadays for news to better reflect the most popular news sources used and future-proofing.*
- *Additional attribute statements covering BBC requirements*
- *Additional questions asking about satisfaction with the quality of international, national and local news.*
- *Additional questions focusing on current affairs.*

The above amendments will likely affect the comparability of new data with historical data, however we are working closely with Jigsaw Research to minimize and mitigate, where possible, disruption. We do believe that all the changes that we are recommending will be effective in future-proofing the news consumption survey and increase the overall robustness of the results.

Interested parties are invited to comment on these proposed changes by 26 October 2017.