

6 Post

6.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

Single-tier pricing for senders across the whole of Ireland

The existence of the universal postal service means that everyone in the UK, no matter where they are, is charged the same rate for universal postal services. They are charged international rates for sending mail to the Republic of Ireland. Presently, customers in the Republic of Ireland are charged the same domestic rate for sending a letter anywhere on the island of Ireland (including Northern Ireland).

A motion calling for single-tier pricing for stamps on the island of Ireland was debated and passed in the Northern Ireland Assembly in September 2014. The motion, signed by three Sinn Féin MLAs, also called on the then Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster to raise the issue at the North-South Ministerial Council and to “exert maximum pressure” on the relevant companies and agencies.

Online delivery restrictions for Northern Ireland consumers

A report from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, released in June 2015, said that a third of online retailers apply restrictions to Northern Ireland (NI), which can include higher charges, longer delivery times, and refusal to deliver to NI.

The Consumer Council say that this “level of exclusion is similar to other peripheral areas of the UK” (Isle of Man and Scottish Highlands) but is considerably higher than other regions such as Wales or Scotland.

The report also states that only half of online retailers offer the same delivery service across the UK, regardless of location. Free delivery was withdrawn by 4% of retailers when delivering to NI, while standard delivery was withdrawn by one in ten retailers. In these cases, the Consumer Council said that consumers could end up paying on average £10.00 for ‘free’ delivery or an additional £2.71 for ‘standard’ delivery.

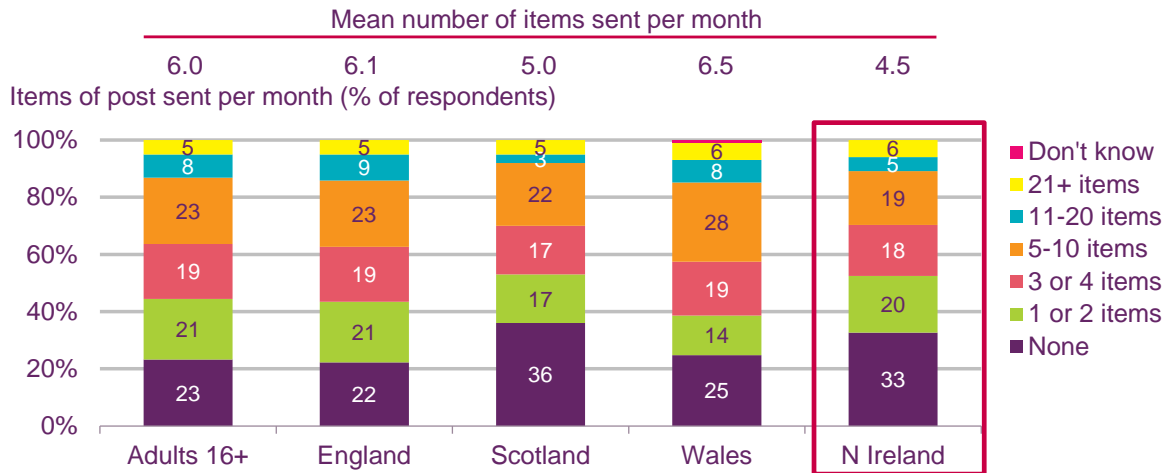
One in five retailers indicated that delivery times would vary, and almost a fifth of retailers withdrew some of the delivery options available.

6.2 Sending post: residential customers

One in three residents in Northern Ireland did not send any items through the post in the past month

Adults in Northern Ireland claimed to send 4.5 items of post per month on average, the lowest across the UK nations. This figure was brought down, in part, by the third (33%) of people who said they had not sent any items of post in the past month.

Figure 6.1 Approximate number of items of post sent each month



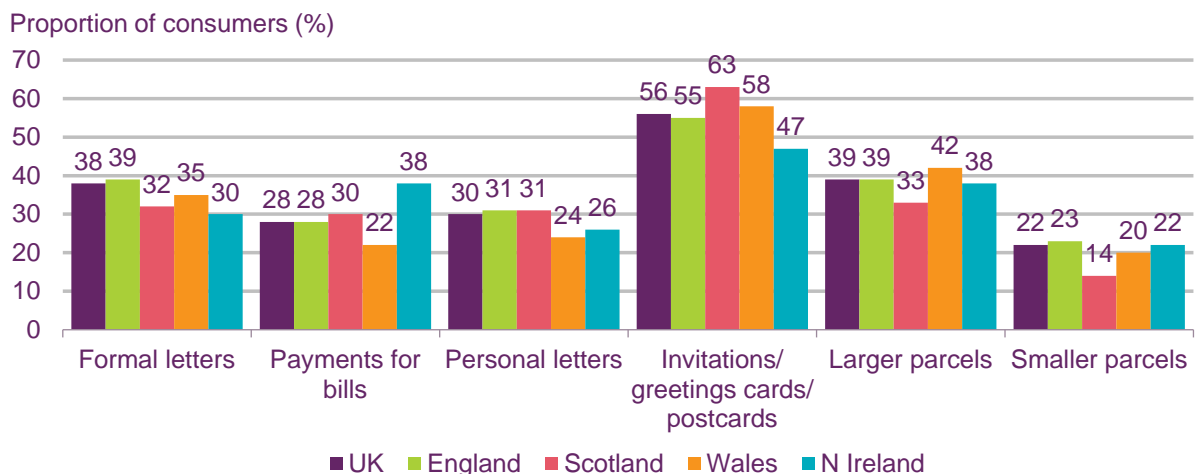
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015
 Base: All respondents (n = 3557 UK, 2123 England, 580 Scotland, 418 Wales, 436 Northern Ireland)
 QC1. Approximately how many items of post - including letters, cards and parcels - have you personally sent in the last month?

Adults in Northern Ireland are the least likely to have sent personal letters in the past month

Although people in Northern Ireland send the fewest items of post each month on average, Figure 6.2 shows that those in Northern Ireland are more likely than those in the rest of the UK to have sent payments for bills in the past month (38% vs. 28% overall UK). However, they are the least likely of all the UK nations to have sent any personal mail (including personal letters, invitation/ greeting/postcards) in the past month (61% vs. 70% across the UK).

When asked about their attitudes to sending and receiving post, those in Northern Ireland are less likely than the UK average to say they 'love to send and receive letters and cards' (49% vs. 58%).

Figure 6.2 Types of post sent in the past month



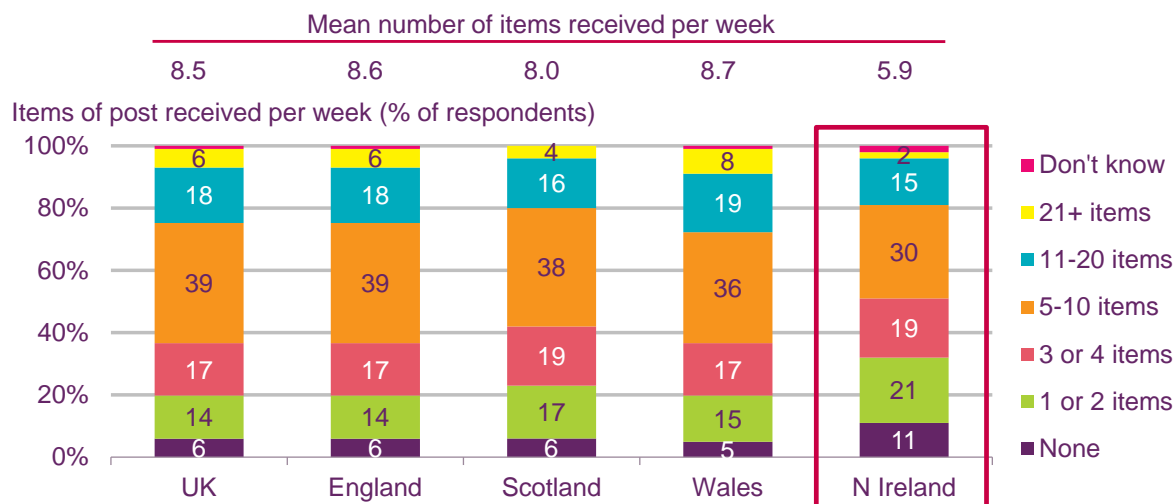
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015
 Base: All who have personally sent any items of post in the last week (n = 2685 UK, 1673 England, 382 Scotland, 330 Wales, 300 Northern Ireland)
 QC5. Which of these types of mail would you say you have personally sent in the last month by post? (multicode)

6.3 Receiving post: residential customers

One in ten adults in Northern Ireland had received no items of post in the past week

On average, people in Northern Ireland say they receive around six items (5.9) each week, again, the lowest across the UK nations. (Figure 6.3) Northern Ireland also had the highest proportion of people who said that they had received no items through the post in the past week (11%). Of those who had received post, a quarter (25%) claimed to have received at least one parcel in the past week, again the lowest across the UK nations.

Figure 6.3 Approximate number of items of post received in the past week



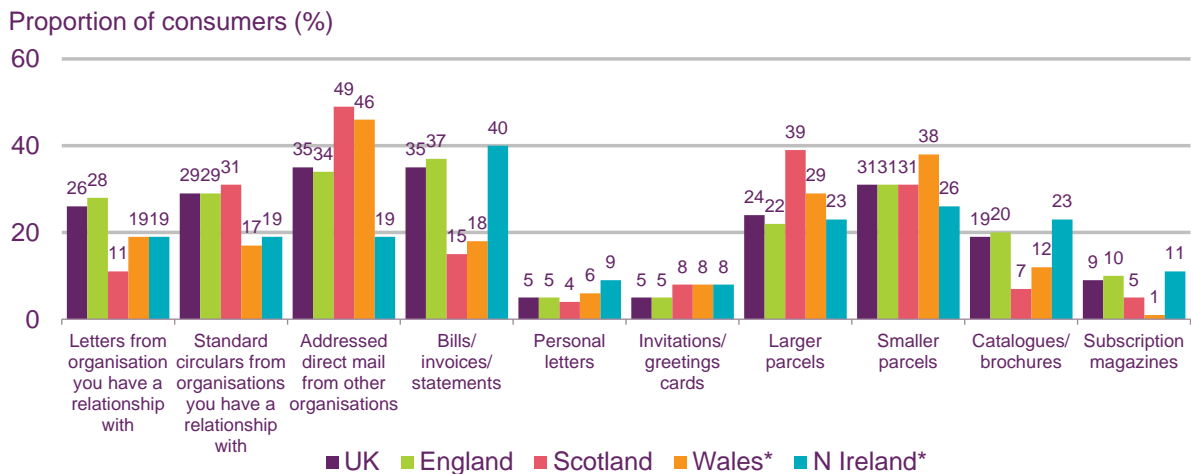
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents (n = 3557 UK, 2123 England, 580 Scotland, 418 Wales, 436 Northern Ireland) QD1. Approximately how many items of post – including letters, cards and parcels – have you personally received in the past week?

A third of those receiving more post than two years ago say they are receiving more parcels

Sixteen per cent of adults in Northern Ireland claim to be receiving more post than they did two years ago. Among these, two-fifths (40%) say they are receiving more bills and statements, the highest of all the UK nations. In addition, about a third said that they are receiving more parcels than two years ago.

Figure 6.4 Types of items people are receiving more often



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents who say that the number of items received by post has increased, compared to two years ago (n = 885 UK, 580 England, 130 Scotland, 98 Wales, 77 Northern Ireland)

QD6. Which of these types of addressed items are you personally receiving more often through the post now? (multicode) *Caution: low base

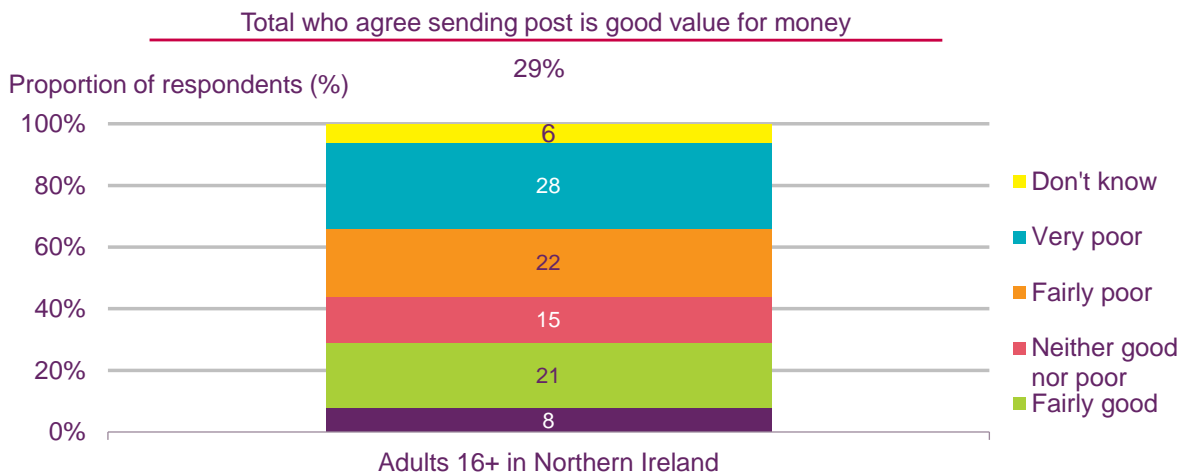
6.4 Sending post to / receiving post from the Republic of Ireland

Half of adults in Northern Ireland think the cost of sending a letter to the Republic of Ireland is poor value for money

Of adults in Northern Ireland who had sent post in the past month, only one in ten (13%) had sent any items to the Republic of Ireland. Of those who had received items in the past week, only 10% had been sent from the Republic of Ireland.

Figure 6.5 shows that when asked to consider the cost of posting a standard letter to the Republic of Ireland (97p at the time of the survey), half of all adults in Northern Ireland perceived this to offer poor value for money. Around three in ten (29%) saw it as good value for money.

Figure 6.5 Value for money of sending a standard letter to the Republic of Ireland



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents in Northern Ireland (n = 436)

QF5. (Show card) It currently costs 97p to send a standard letter from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland. How would you rate this service in terms of value for money? (single code)

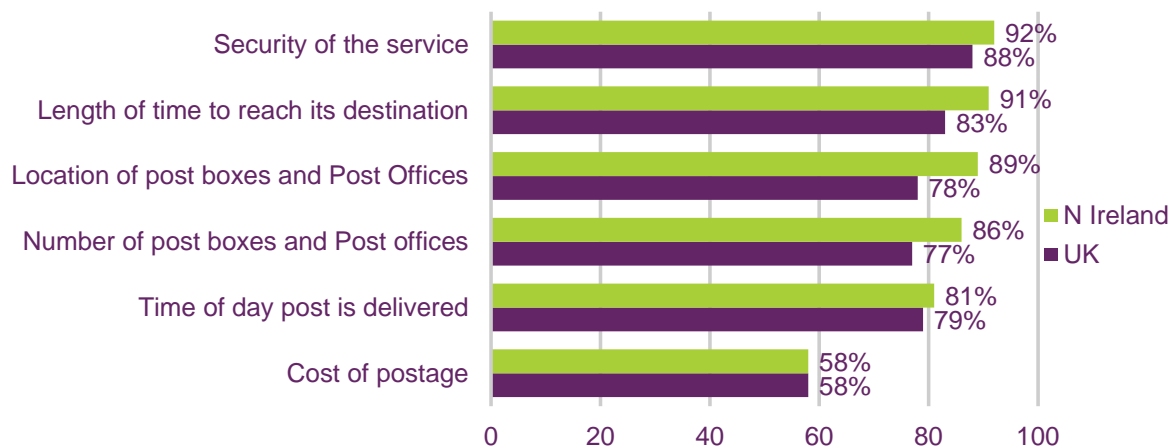
6.5 Attitudes towards Royal Mail

Nine in ten people in Northern Ireland are satisfied with Royal Mail

When asked about their overall satisfaction levels with Royal Mail, the majority of people in Northern Ireland (89%) stated that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' compared to 86% across the UK overall.

Considering their satisfaction with specific aspects of the service (Figure 6.6), people in Northern Ireland are more likely to be happy with the security of the postal service (94% vs 88% across the UK), the length of time it takes for mail to reach its destination (89% vs 83% UK average) and the number of post boxes and Post Offices, compared to the UK as a whole (83% vs. 77%).

Figure 6.6 Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents (n = 3557 UK, 436 Northern Ireland)

QE3A-F. Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's services – ranked by proportion satisfied among NI adults

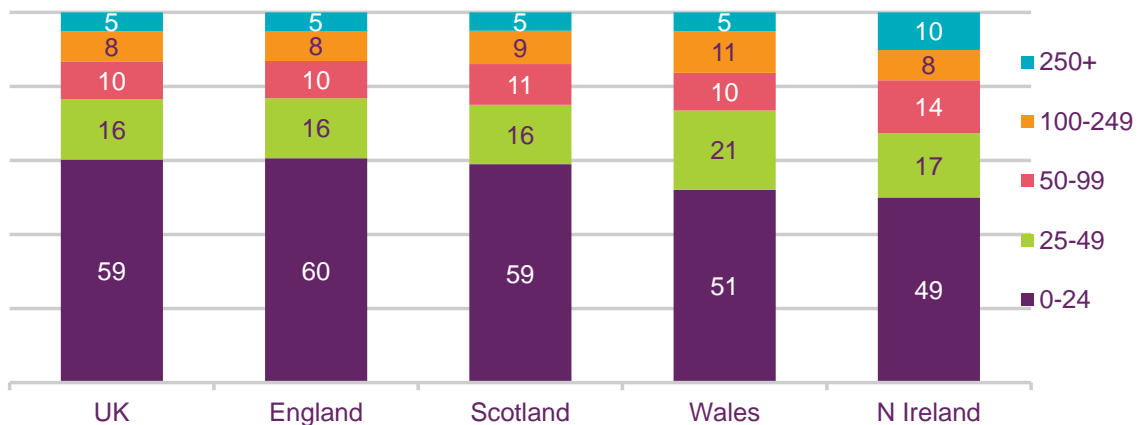
6.6 Sending and receiving post – business customers

Almost two in ten business customers in Northern Ireland send over 100 letters each month, the highest of all the UK nations

Post plays a mainly administrative role in almost six in ten (57%) of businesses in our survey in Northern Ireland, more than the UK overall of 54%. On average across the UK, businesses in our survey are more likely to send fewer than 25 letters (59%) each month. In Northern Ireland half (49%) say they send more than this amount each month, with almost a fifth (18%) sending over 100 items each month, higher than in any other UK nation.

Figure 6.7 Average volume of letters sent each month

Proportion of respondents (%)



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents (n = 1591 UK, 973 England, 217 Scotland, 198 Wales, 203 N Ireland)

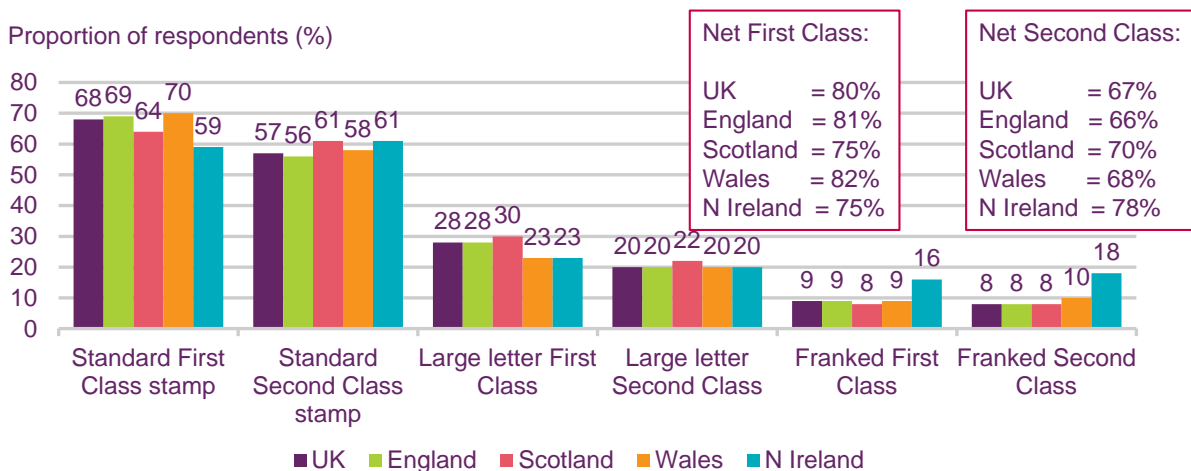
QV2a. On average, how many letter items does your organisation send per month? Please think only about all the letters and large letters you may send as an organisation.

Businesses in Northern Ireland are the most likely to use Second Class services for their standard and franked post

Standard Second Class postage is the most-used service for sending post by the businesses we surveyed in Northern Ireland; six in ten (61%) of respondents used this product. This is in contrast to the rest of the UK, where standard First Class stamps are more likely to be used (68% for UK vs. 59% for Northern Ireland). Over three-quarters (78%) of our respondents in Northern Ireland said they used any form of Second Class service, compared to two-thirds (67%) across the UK as a whole.

Figure 6.8 Royal Mail services used to send standard post each month

Proportion of respondents (%)



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

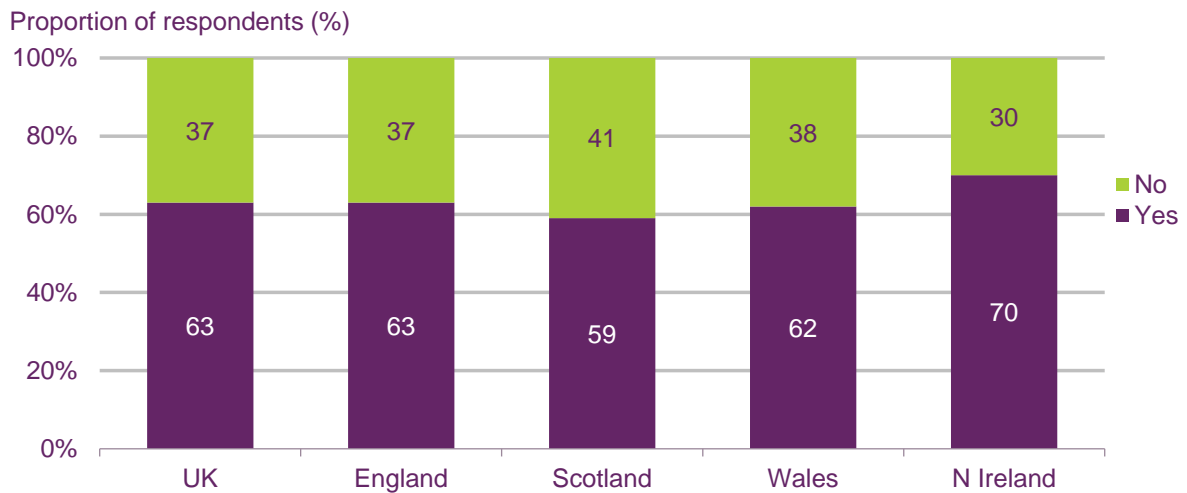
Base: All respondents using RM standard delivery services (n = 1493 UK, 916 England, 205 Scotland, 182 Wales, 190 N Ireland)

QV6d. Which, if any, of the following Royal Mail services does your organisation use to send your standard mail?

Businesses in Northern Ireland are the most likely have switched some of their mail to other communications methods in the past 12 months

When asked about their use of other communications methods such as email, seven in ten SMEs in Northern Ireland have switched some post to these methods over the past 12 months. This compares to 63% in the UK overall.

Figure 6.9 Switched some mail to other communications methods in the past 12 months

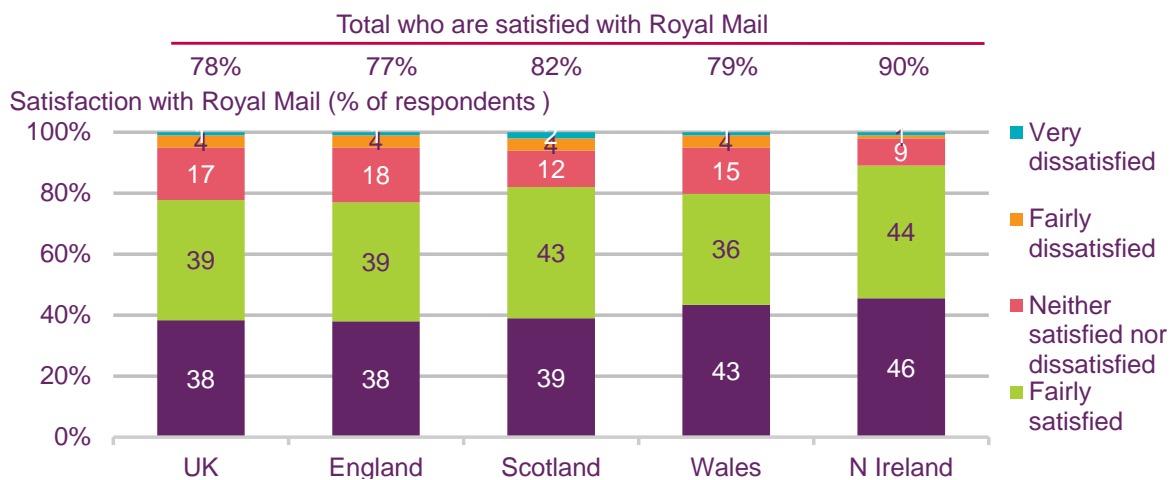


Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015
 Base: All respondents (n = 1591 UK, 973 England, 217 Scotland, 198 Wales, 203 N Ireland)
 QF4. Over the last 12 months has your organisation moved some mail to other communications methods?

Businesses in Northern Ireland are the most likely to be satisfied with the service they receive from Royal Mail

When asked about the quality of the service they receive from Royal Mail, both as a sender and as a recipient, 90% of businesses in Northern Ireland say they are satisfied, the highest of all the nations. The proportion that are 'very satisfied' in Northern Ireland (46%) is also higher than in any other nation.

Figure 6.10 Overall satisfaction with the quality of service from Royal Mail



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

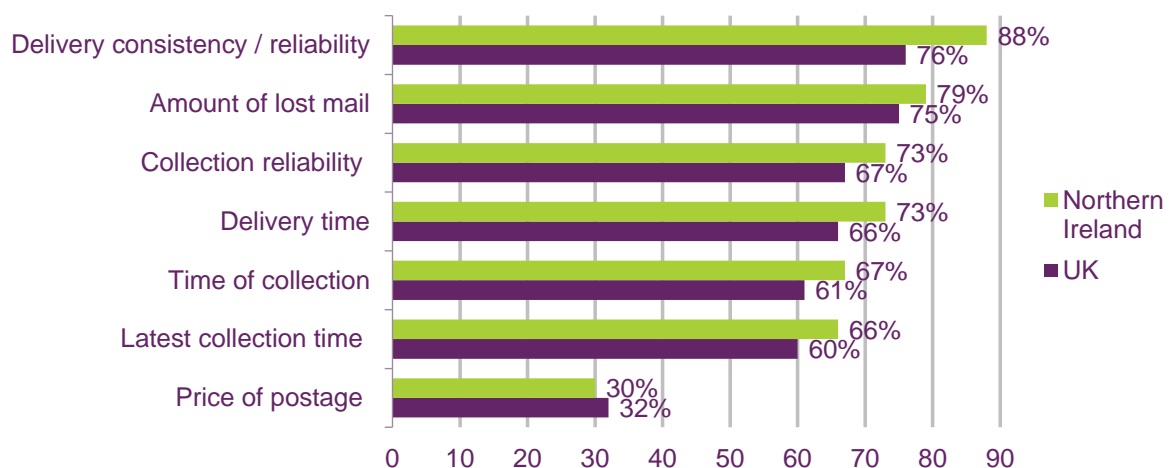
Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n = 1563 UK, 958 England, 213 Scotland, 195 Wales, 197 Northern Ireland)

QRM2. Thinking generally about the service your organisation receives as a whole, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of the services you receive from Royal Mail as a recipient and sender?

Businesses in Northern Ireland are the most likely to be satisfied with the reliability of deliveries and collections

Considering specific aspects of the postal service, Figure 6.11 shows that businesses in Northern Ireland are much more likely than the UK average to be satisfied with most aspects of the postal service. However, the cost of postage is an exception. Businesses in Northern Ireland are slightly less satisfied than the UK average with the cost of postage (30% vs 32%).

Figure 6.11 Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker, Q2 2014-Q1 2015

Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n = 1422 UK, 197 Northern Ireland)

QRM3: How would you rate the performance of Royal Mail, as a recipient and sender, in the following areas on a 5-point scale where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied?

Ranked by satisfaction levels in Northern Ireland