

6 Post

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A note on our postal tracker research

Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker

The residential postal tracker survey is run throughout the course of the year. Since January 2016, data have been collected using a combined methodological approach: face-to-face interviews conducted using random probability sampling, and online interviews using quota sampling.

In 2016, the total sample was 6,419 adults aged 16+ in the UK. A total of 857 respondents took part in Scotland. Due to changes to the methodology and questionnaire, the data collected in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not directly comparable to previous years' data.

Ofcom Business Postal Tracker

The business postal tracker survey is run throughout the course of the year, via telephone interviews, among a sample of 2,001 people who are responsible for post in UK SMEs (businesses with 0-249 employees). A total of 234 respondents took part in Scotland. Due to changes to the methodology and questionnaire, the data collected in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not directly comparable to previous years' data.

6.1 Recent developments

Parcel Surcharges

Ofcom published findings from research it carried out into the causes of parcel delivery surcharges in some geographic areas in November 2016.¹ We found that some parcel operators charge more to deliver parcels in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (as well as Northern Ireland), and that in

general there was a higher cost of delivery in these areas (driven by factors including lower delivery drop density and cost of transport).

In addition, in reports published in 2012 and 2015, Citizens Advice Scotland found that the problem of high delivery surcharges impacts the Scottish Highlands and Islands

more than other rural areas of the UK. Ofcom is undertaking further research to understand the extent to which the factors given as the causes of parcel surcharging justify the additional charges, and will report on this later in 2017.

Royal Mail reveals plans for new post boxes in Scotland

Royal Mail is planning to install about 150 new post boxes in Scotland, most of which will be installed in rural areas and new housing developments.

The announcement is part of a wider drive to improve public access to post boxes across the country, despite Royal Mail admitting that many post boxes do not cover their costs as people

increasingly use electronic forms of communication. Once the installation programme is complete, 98.35% of UK households will be within half a mile of a post box.²

¹ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/postal-services/monitoring_reports

² Under its Designated Universal Service Provider (DUSP) conditions, Royal Mail must ensure that in the UK as a whole, the distribution of letter boxes is such that there is a letter box within half a mile of the premises of not less than 98% of users of postal services and for the remainder of the country provide sufficient access to the universal service to meet the reasonable needs of such users (having regard to the costs and operational practicalities of doing so).

6.2 Sending and receiving post: residential customers

In the previous month, adults in Scotland had sent on average three invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards

Adults in Scotland were asked how many items of seven different types of post they had sent in the previous month.

On average, they had sent 3.1 invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards, 1.1 smaller parcels (that will fit through a letterbox) and 1.1

formal letters to organisations or individuals. For each of the other four types of post, they had sent on average less than one item.

Figure 6.1: Approximate number of postal items sent in the previous month



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 4053 England, 857 Scotland, 770 Wales, 739 Northern Ireland)

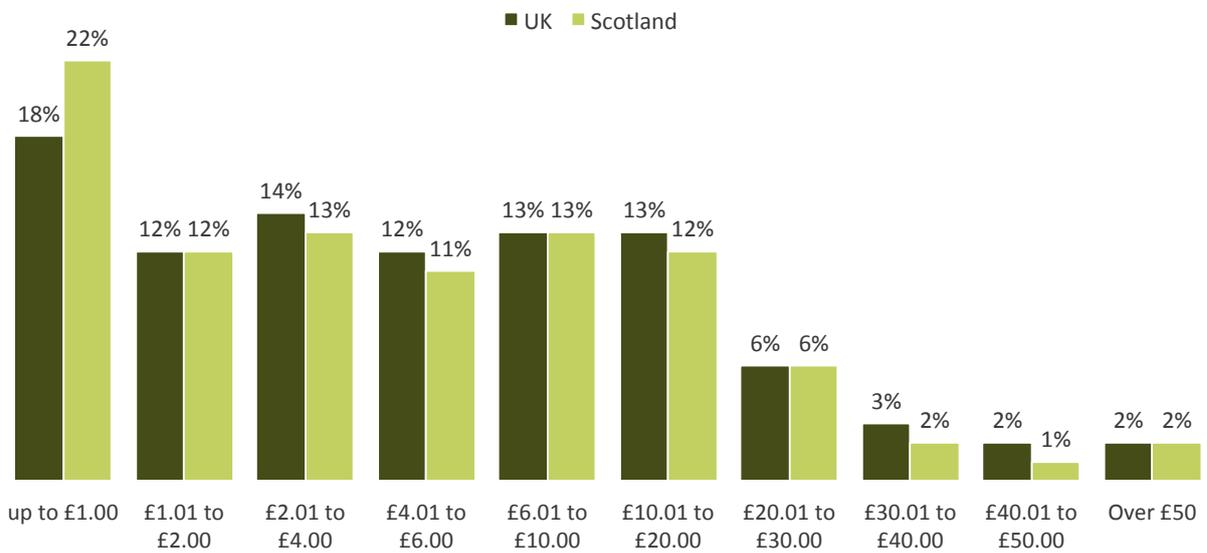
QD1: Approximately how many of the following have you sent in the last month (including international post and Freepost)

More than four in five adults in Scotland had spent less than £20 on postage in the previous month

More than four in five adults in Scotland (84%) said that they had spent less than £20 on postage in the previous month, which is the

same level as in the UK overall (81%). One in five (22%) had spent less than £1, which is higher than in the UK overall (18%).

Figure 6.2: Approximate amount spent on postage in the previous month



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 857 Scotland)

QD4: And in total, how much would you say you've spent on postage in the last month, including all letters, cards and parcels?

Note: Chart does not include the 6% of respondents who answered that they didn't know or would prefer not to say

In the previous week, adults in Scotland had received an average of 2.4 formal letters

Adults in Scotland were asked how many items of seven different types of post they had received in the previous week. On average, they

had received 2.4 formal letters, 1.6 bills/ invoices/ statements, 1.0 invitations/ greetings cards/ post cards and 1.0 smaller parcels.

For each of the other three types of post, they had received on average less than one item.

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



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 4053 England, 857 Scotland, 770 Wales, 739 Northern Ireland)

QE1: Approximately how many of the following have you personally received in the last week?

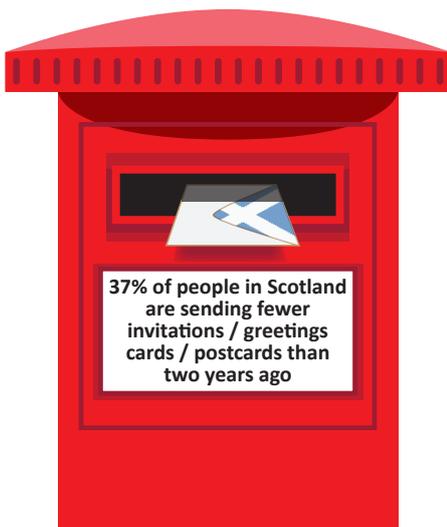
More than six in ten adults in Scotland are using more email instead of post, compared to two years ago

Sixty-five per cent of adults in Scotland report that they are using email more than two years ago, as a substitute for post, which is the same level as the UK overall (65%). More than four in ten (43%) say they are using texts/

SMS more, and 39% say this for mobile phone calls. Three in ten mention social networking (30%) and about a quarter choose instant messaging (27%). Fifteen per cent of adults in Scotland say that they aren't using any form of communication in particular more at the expense of post; this is in line with the UK overall (15%).

Nearly half of people in Scotland report that they are sending less payments for bills/ invoices/ statements (48%) and personal letters (47%) than two years ago. Just under four in ten are sending less formal letters (39%) and invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards (37%), with nearly three in ten sending less larger parcels (29%). Around a quarter are sending less smaller parcels (26%) and items requiring a signature (24%), while one in five are sending less tracked post (20%). For each

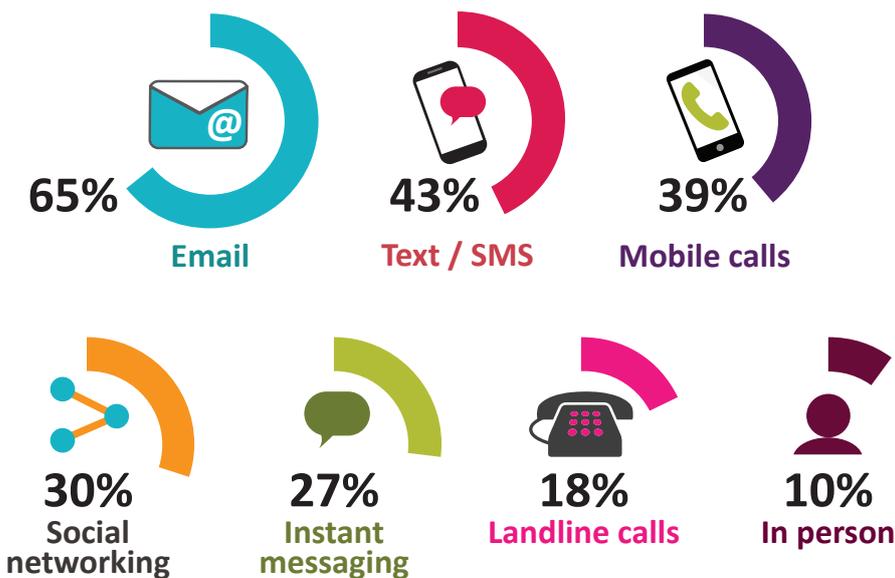
48%
of people in Scotland are sending fewer payments for bills, invoices and statements by post than two years ago



of these eight types of post, the percentage of people in Scotland claiming to be sending less is higher than the percentage claiming to be sending less in the UK overall.

The percentage of people in Scotland claiming to be sending less of each type of item is significantly higher than the percentage of those claiming to be sending more. For each type of post asked about, the percentage of those that say they are sending more than they were two years ago is 15% or less.

Figure 6.4: Communication types used more, instead of post, compared to two years ago



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 4053 England, 857 Scotland, 770 Wales, 739 Northern Ireland)

QD13: Which, if any, of these types of communication are you now using more instead of post, compared to two years ago?

6.3 Attitudes toward Royal Mail: residential customers

Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail’s service in Scotland is generally high

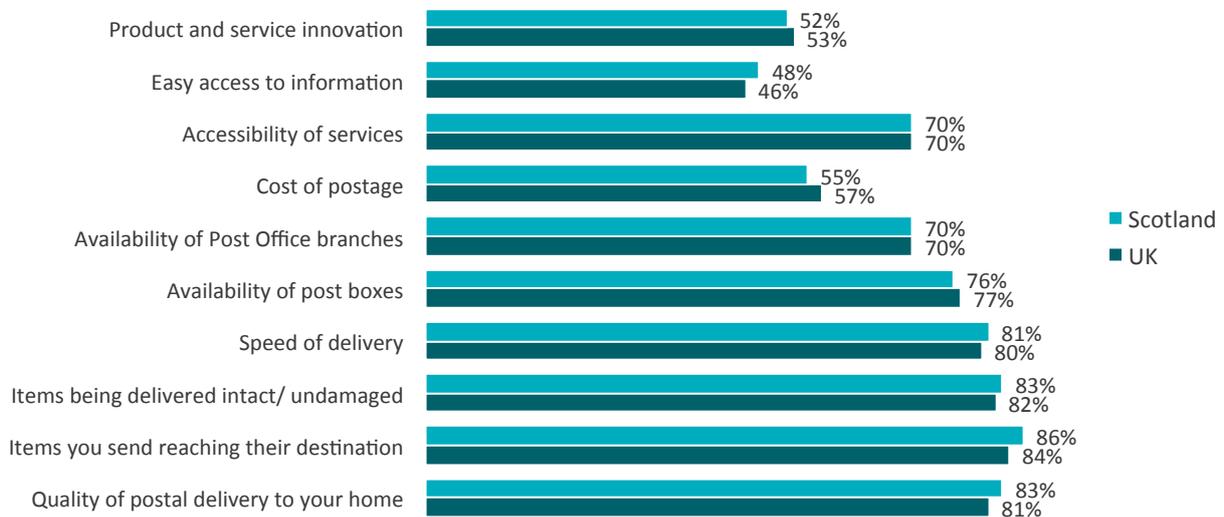
People in Scotland are generally satisfied with specific elements of Royal Mail’s service. Specifically, more than eight in ten are satisfied with items sent reaching their destination (86%), items being

delivered intact/undamaged (83%), quality of postal delivery to the home (83%) and speed of delivery (81%). Satisfaction is lowest for product and service innovation (52%) and easy-to-

access information (48%).

Although not shown in the chart, overall satisfaction with Royal Mail is 82% in Scotland, in line with the UK overall (83%).

Figure 6.5: Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail’s service



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 857 Scotland)

QG3_1: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Royal Mail’s service?

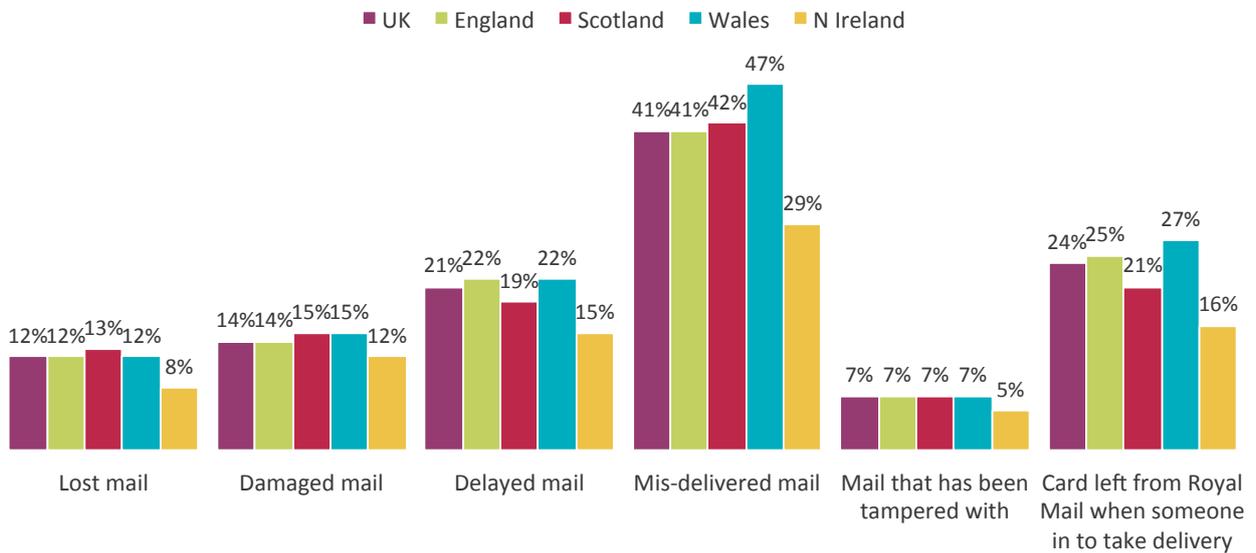
More than four in ten adults in Scotland have had a problem with Royal Mail’s service in terms of mis-delivered mail in the past year

Adults in Scotland were provided with a list of potential problems with Royal Mail’s service and asked whether they had experienced any of them in the past year. More than four in ten (42%) reported that they

had experienced problems related to mis-delivered mail. Around one in five (21%) said that they had experienced a problem in that Royal Mail had left a card saying that an item could not be delivered,

when someone had been at home to receive it. A similar proportion (19%) had experienced a problem with delayed mail. The other problems had been experienced by 15% of people or less.

Figure 6.6: Problems experienced with Royal Mail in the past 12 months



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 4053 England, 857 Scotland, 770 Wales, 739 Northern Ireland)

QH1: In the last 12 months, have you experienced problems with Royal Mail’s service in terms of...

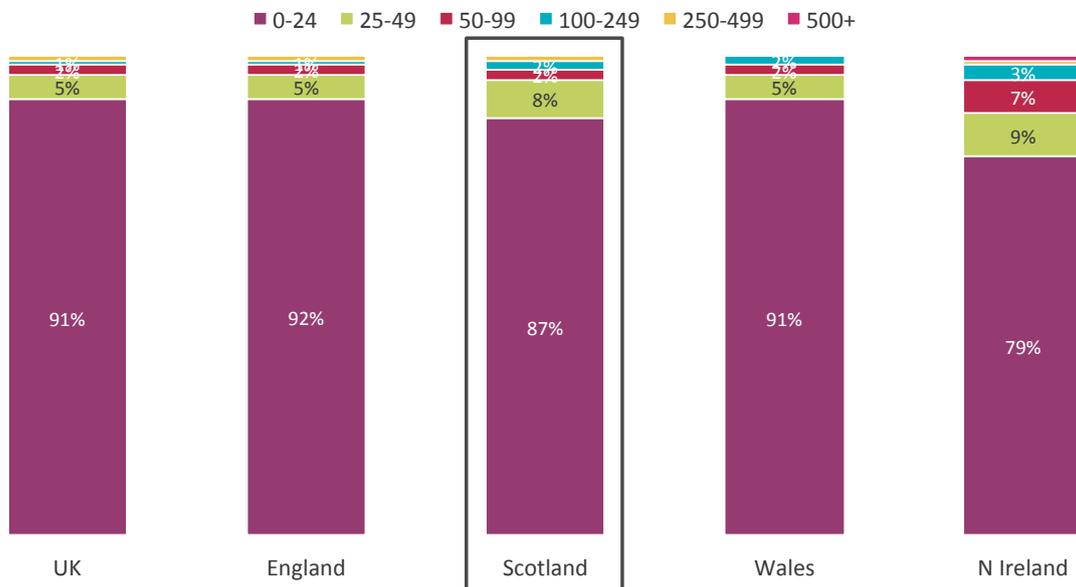
6.4 Sending and receiving post: business customers

The majority of SMEs in Scotland send fewer than 25 letters/ large letters per mailing

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Scotland were asked how many letters and large letters they send per mailing as an organisation.

Around nine in ten (87%) send 0-24 of these items, in line with the overall UK figure (91%).

Figure 6.7: Average volume of letters sent in each mailing



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All who send letters (n = 1821 UK, 1138 England, 214 Scotland, 241 Wales, 228 N Ireland)

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

Standard stamped mail is the Royal Mail service used by the most SMEs in Scotland to send letters/ large letters

SMEs in Scotland which use Royal Mail to send letters or large letters were asked which Royal Mail services their organisation had used

to send these items in the past year. About half had used First Class standard stamped mail (52%), lower than the UK overall (65%). More

than six in ten had used Second Class standard stamped mail (64%); this measure is higher than the overall figure for the UK (55%).

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



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail to send letters or large letters (n = 1781 UK, 1117 England, 211 Scotland, 234 Wales, 219 N Ireland)

QV6d. Which, if any, of the following Royal Mail services does your organisation use to send your letters and large letters?

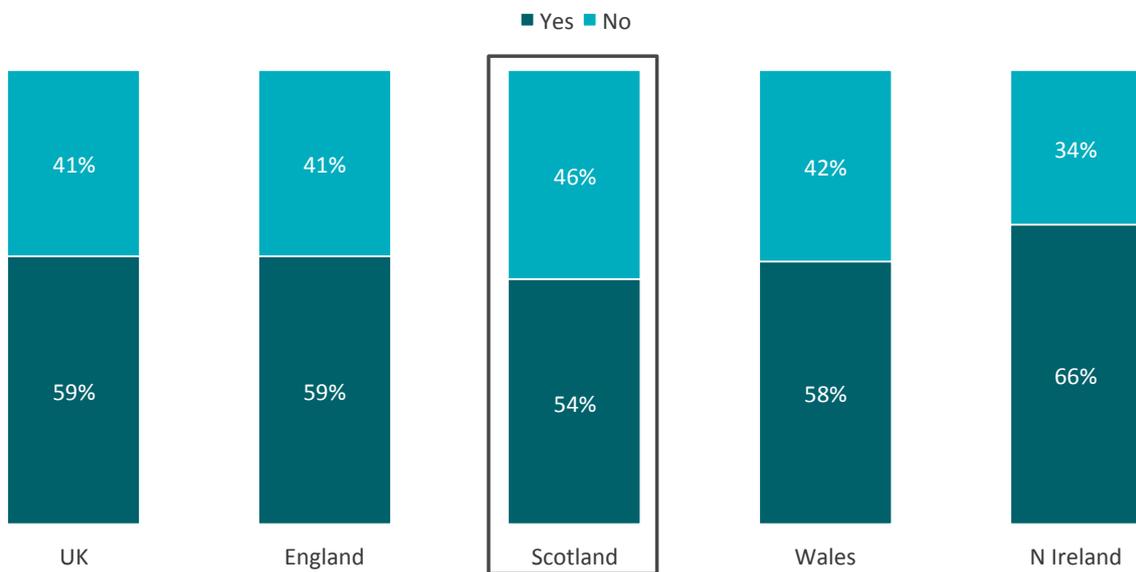
More than half of SMEs in Scotland had switched some mail to other communication methods in the past year

SMEs were asked whether they had switched any of their mail to other communication methods over the past year. More than half in Scotland (54%) claimed they had moved some of their mail to alternative methods, the same level as for the UK (59%).

Although not shown in the chart below, SMEs which had not switched any mail to other communication methods were asked why they had not done so.³ Around a quarter of SMEs in Scotland said that they were “happy with sending things by post” (27%), while seventeen per cent said

“no reason”. Fifteen per cent said “we have already moved everything that it is possible to move”, and just over one in ten (12%) said that there is no need as they don’t send a large volume of mail.

Figure 6.9: Switched some mail to other communication methods over past 12 months



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All respondents (n = 2001 UK, 1259 England, 234 Scotland, 264 Wales, 244 N Ireland)

QF4. Over the last 12 months, has your organisation moved some mail to other communication methods?

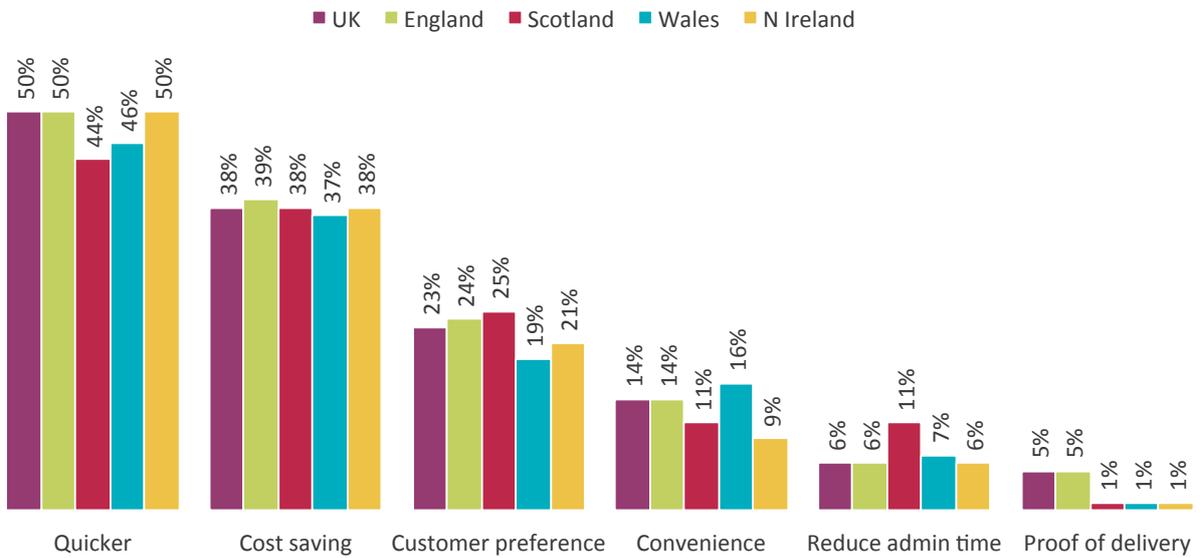
³ Low base size – 99 people in Scotland responded to this question, so the data should be treated as indicative only

More than four in ten SMEs in Scotland who had switched away from post did so for reasons of speed

Of those SMEs in Scotland that had moved some of their mail to alternative methods of communication, more than four in ten (44%) said this was for reasons of speed.

Over a third (38%) said it was to save cost, while for a quarter (25%) it was due to customer preference.

Figure 6.10: Main reasons for switching some mail to other communications methods over past 12 months



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All who have moved to other communication methods (n = 1207 UK, 751 England, 135 Scotland, 157 Wales, 164 N Ireland)

QF6: Why have you moved some mail to other communication methods? OPEN ENDED Top 6 reasons

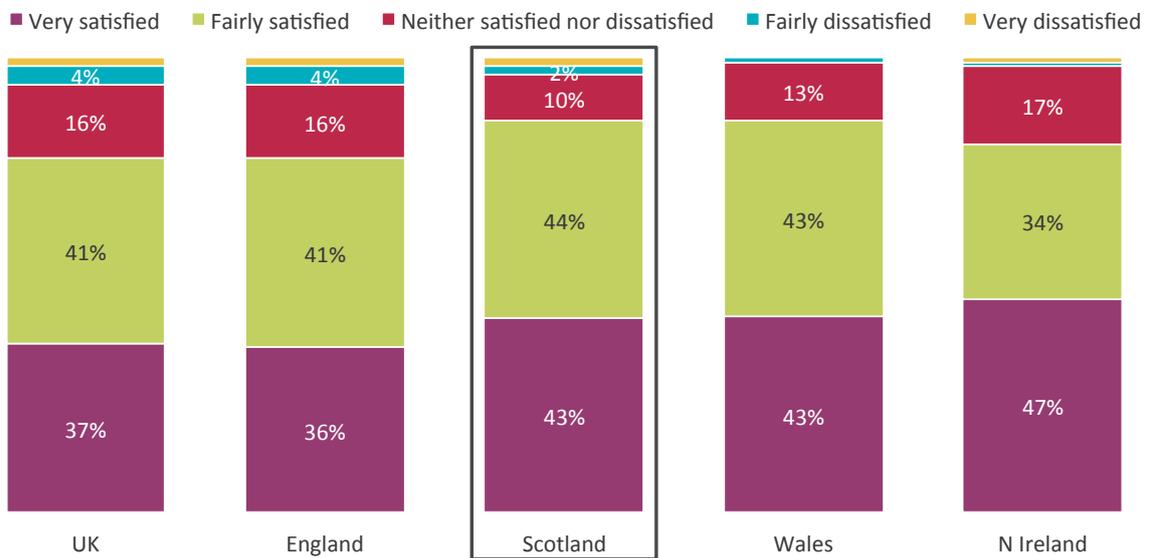
6.5 Attitudes towards Royal Mail: business customers

Satisfaction with Royal Mail is higher than the UK average among SMEs in Scotland

SMEs were asked about their overall satisfaction with the quality of service they received from Royal Mail, both as a sender and as a recipient.

In Scotland, 86% of SMEs said that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’, higher than the overall UK figure (78%).

Figure 6.11: Overall satisfaction with Royal Mail’s quality of service



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n = 1951 UK, 1229 England, 230 Scotland, 256 Wales, 236 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?

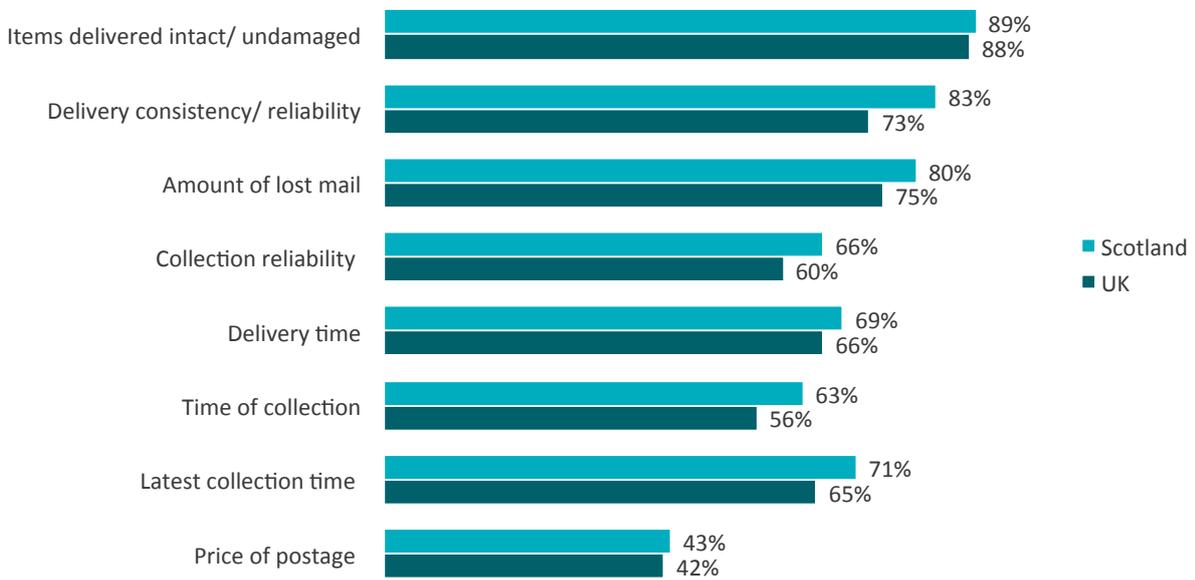
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(38%) said it was to save cost, while for a quarter (25%) it was due to customer preference.

Figure 6.12: Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail’s service



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016

Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n =1951 UK, 230 Scotland)

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?