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# **Ofcom's Adults' Media Literacy Tracker**

Notification of changes to the 2020 survey

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# 1. Overview

This document confirms the changes to Ofcom's Adults' Media Literacy Tracker in light of the ongoing situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and current guidelines in place, that have led to Ofcom's decision to suspend all face-to-face fieldwork to protect the safety of everyone involved.

## Background to survey

The Adults' Media Literacy Tracker is used to provide detailed evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among adults aged 16+. This includes a particular focus on critical thinking, or awareness, which is a core component of media literacy enabling people to assess and evaluate their media environment, as well as those groups who tend not to participate digitally.

## Methodology

Up until this year, the methodology used for this survey was face-to-face interviews in the home with the participants. The lockdown period across the UK this year prevented this methodology from continuing, with the following months demonstrating that respondents were understandably wary about completing surveys in this way.

This year's survey, with fieldwork conducted in autumn 2020 and data published in January 2021, will therefore be conducted online as well as via post as an attempt to capture those offline. This new methodology means that changes have had to be made to adapt the survey. This document provides full details of those changes.

## Impact on 2020 data

As an official statistic, this survey provides trend data to help us understand adults' media use, attitudes and understanding over time. However, the change in methodology means that we may not be able to compare trend data to previous years. We will be evaluating the extent of this when we get the data back.

### **Confirmed changes – in brief**

Taking account of stakeholder feedback, we are now confirming our proposed changes to Ofcom's Adults' Media Literacy Tracker as detailed in the consultation which was available on Ofcom's website from 10 – 23 September 2020.

The following changes will be made to the survey:

- Conduct the survey online and via post in place of the existing face-to-face format.
- A letter will be posted out to the general UK population inviting adults aged 16+ to complete an online survey.
- Alternatively, they will have the option of completing a paper version of the survey that will focus on the non-internet user questions as we aim to capture the offline audience as well.
- Responses will be topped up via an online panel if needed.
- The questionnaire length will be significantly reduced to maintain respondent engagement in online/paper surveys.
- For questions that remain, the wording may be amended to be adapted to an online/paper format and to be appropriate for self-completion.
- We may not be able to compare trend data due to the change in methodology.

If you have any queries, please email [market.research@ofcom.org.uk](mailto:market.research@ofcom.org.uk).

## 2. Confirmed changes to the 2020 Adults' Media Literacy Tracker

### Methodology

- 2.1 The existing methodology of face-to-face in-home interviews with participants will not be conducted in 2020. Instead, the survey will be conducted both online and via a postal survey:
  - a) An online survey which up to two adults aged 16+ per household will be invited to complete (if they go online), via a postal letter.
  - b) For those not online, the postal letter will also invite up to two adults aged 16+ per household to complete a paper version of the questionnaire. This will differ from the online survey with focus on the non-internet user questions. More detail is provided at 2.7.
  - c) An online panel will be used to top up responses and manage quotas if needed.
- 2.2 In order to ensure respondent engagement in the online/paper survey, the current questionnaire length will need to reduce by 50%. This means that several questions will be modularised for this year. Details of these are provided at 2.6.
- 2.3 It is important to note that although we are removing these questions for this wave in order to shorten the questionnaire length, we will be conducting a thorough review of our methodology and questionnaire in 2021 and will endeavour to reinstate key and relevant questions in the 2021 survey where possible.
- 2.4 For the questions that remain in the survey, some wording may be amended to reflect the change in methodology to online/paper surveys. The lack of a physical interviewer will also mean that the question wording will be made appropriate for self-completion.
- 2.5 For questions we are retaining, we may not be able to compare trend data due to the change in methodology, but we will evaluate this when we get the data back.

## Questions confirmed for removal

2.6 Below are the confirmed questions that will be modularised for the 2020 wave. Note that question numbers refer to the [2019 questionnaire](#).

- a) Devices:
  - i) **A1** and **A2** asking about access to and use of devices.
  - ii) **A5** asking people which would be their most-missed device if taken away.
- b) Television:
  - i) **T1** asking if people watch on-demand or streaming services.
  - ii) **T2** asking users how they choose what TV programmes or films to watch via on-demand or streaming services.
  - iii) **T7** asking about concerns people may have about what is on TV.
- c) Internet:
  - i) **IN4** asking what internet users would do if they got stuck or were unsure about how to do something online.
  - ii) **IN5** (including **IN5A/B/C**) asking for estimated time spent online.
  - iii) **IN14** asking internet users which of the listed civic, government or information sourcing activities they have done in the last week (note **IN13** asking which of the activities they have *ever* done online will be kept).
  - iv) **IN15** asking those who said they don't complete government processes online why they don't.
  - v) **IN41** asking about use of information sources online.
  - vi) **IN49** asking internet users about their attitudes to online advertising.
  - vii) **IN50** asking internet users about any action they've taken to avoid online advertising.
  - viii) **IN54** asking internet users which of the listed creative activities they have done online.
- d) Online harms:

The intention is for this topic to get picked up in an alternative research project.

  - i) **IN7** asking internet users if they have personally experienced any of the listed issues online.
  - ii) **IN17** asking about concerns people may have about the internet.
  - iii) **IN18A** asking internet users if they have witnessed hateful content online; and **IN18B** asking what they did after seeing it.

- iv) **IN30A** asking social media users if they have seen upsetting or offensive content on social media; **IN30B** asking what actions they took after seeing it; and **IN30C** asking those who didn't take any action, why they didn't.
- v) **IN58A/B, 59A/B, 60A/B, 61, 62, 63** asking users if they are aware of the reporting tool, have seen something inappropriate, and if they reported it for each of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.
- e) Video sharing platforms:  
The intention is for this topic to get picked up in an alternative research project.
  - i) **IN19A** asking if people watch videos on sites/apps like YouTube, Vimeo, Snapchat or Facebook.
  - ii) **IN19B** asking users what types of video they tend to watch on these sites/apps.
- f) Critical understanding:
  - i) **IN36** asking social media users if they usually accept terms & conditions on social media sites without reading them (note **IN35** asking all internet users whether they usually accept terms and conditions without reading them will be kept).
  - ii) **IN51** asking about video sharing site users' understanding of vloggers/endorsements.
- g) Mobile phones:
  - i) **M1** asking about concerns people may have about mobile phones.
  - ii) **M2A/B** asking smartphone users if they know how to check their data allowance and if they ever do so.
  - iii) **M3** asking smartphone users if they ever use up their data allowance; and **M4** asking what actions they take when at risk of running out of data.
  - iv) **M5** asking smartphone users if they ever use free public wi-fi.
- h) Gaming:
  - i) **G2** asking about concerns people may have about gaming.
- i) Classification:
  - i) **C5B** asking if any other adults in the household are working either full or part time.

## Questions for paper survey only

- 2.7 Questions asked of non-internet users will only be included in the paper survey and removed from the online version. The question numbers below relate to the 2019 questionnaire for reference. On top of the non-internet user questions, the paper survey will include core questions asked of all participants but will not include the internet section of questions.
- a) Non-internet use:

- i) **IN1** asking if they ever go online.
- ii) **IN8A** asking non-users about reasons why they don't go online; and **IN8B** asking for the main reason.
- iii) **IN9** asking non-users if they've asked someone else to do something for them online in the past year, and if so what.
- iv) **IN10** asking non-users what would prompt them to go online in the next 12 months.

## Questions with substantial amends

2.8 There are some questions will be kept for the 2020 survey, but that require adapting to support and optimise a self-complete survey. The question numbers below relate to the 2019 questionnaire for reference.

- a) Funding:
  - i) **T4, T5, T6, IN31, IN32, IN33, IN34** asking about awareness of the main funding source for different TV and online services will become prompted questions.
- b) Internet:
  - i) **IN6** asking about internet security measures will have simplified answer codes.
  - ii) **IN13** asking about activities done online will have simplified answer codes.
- c) Non-internet use:
  - i) **IN9** asking non-users if they've asked someone else to do something for them online, and if so what, will be split into two questions with an initial yes/no used for routing.
  - ii) **IN10** asking non-users what would prompt them to go online in the next 12 months will have simplified answer codes.
- d) Critical understanding:
  - i) **IN37** asking about perceptions of the truthfulness of factual information found online will be split into two questions with an initial yes/no used for routing.
- e) Classification:
  - i) **C1** will be asked up front to classify gender instead of S3.
  - ii) **C3/4** will refer to children aged under 18 instead of under 16.
  - iii) **C6/C12/C14** will be reviewed to ensure educational qualification, impairment and ethnicity lists are up to date.

## **New questions to be added**

- 2.9 We plan to include some additional questions asking about changes in media use/attitudes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.