

Ofcom PSB Tracker 2017 – Technical Report

Preface

This volume contains detail of the methodology, sampling and weighting for the Ofcom Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Tracker 2017.

Based on the public service purposes presented in the 2003 Communications Act, Ofcom developed a range of PSB purposes and characteristics in its first PSB review in 2005. The PSB channels (the BBC channels, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) are expected together to fulfil these purposes and characteristics, although it is also acknowledged that each PSB channel has a specific remit.

The PSB purposes and characteristics were put into everyday language for the PSB Tracker survey, which asks respondents to give their opinions on the PSB statements, both in terms of the importance and the delivery of these by the PSB channels.

The PSB Tracker also asks respondents to rate specific TV channels on each of the PSB purposes and characteristics relevant to that channel.

Methodology

This section outlines the current methodology used in 2017 as well as the changes undertaken in previous years of the survey.

Until 2014, the PSB tracker was conducted via a CATI telephone methodology. In 2015 the decision was made to transition it to a dual method with online and CAPI face-to-face (F2F) data collection.

The sample was split 75% online / 25% F2F, with proportional quotas applied to each method. The data collected from these two sources are combined to provide the final results for 2015 onwards.

Fieldwork for the 2017 PSB Tracker was undertaken by BDRC Continental in two waves: June and July 2017 and October and November 2017.

A total of 3,147 interviews were conducted (1,988 in England; 511 in Scotland; 406 in Wales; 242 in Northern Ireland). Sample sizes for the devolved nations are higher than required to be UK representative, in order to allow robust reporting at nation level.

Before 2015 the sample was approximately 3,000 interviews conducted throughout the year using telephone (CATI) interviewing. Before 2011, the sample consisted of c.7000 interviews conducted in four waves. The reduction was part of Ofcom's spending review to improve efficiency of operations and reduce costs to licensees.

Questionnaire Changes

Following a review in 2017, some changes were made to the questionnaire:

- The question on types of television that are used in the household was updated to reflect changes in the market
- New questions were included on the range of TV types watched
- Questions relating to BBC Three's move exclusively online in 2016 were removed as they were no longer as relevant
- New attitudinal statements were added to provide further variables for comparison between methodologies.

Quotas

Both methods were designed to be nationally representative with quotas being set by age, gender and socio-economic status within nation, by region within England, and a minimum quota set for BAME at an overall UK level using data from the 2011 census population estimates (ONS).

Matching quotas were set for the online and F2F elements in proportion to the total interviews conducted in each. In addition, the devolved nations were over-sampled, and England was under-sampled, to allow more robust analysis of the individual channels (in particular, BBC One, ITV and Channel 4) by nation.

Minimum targets were set on parents of CBeebies/CBBC viewers, and were also set to get a minimum number of regular viewers of C4 in each nation, to ensure minimum samples for individual analysis.

Boost samples for regular viewers of Channel 4 in each of the devolved nations were included as necessary to enable this.

Sample design

Each method has its own sample design, appropriate for each respective methodology.

A. A stratified random sampling approach is applied to face-to-face (CAPI) interviewing. Random sampling points are selected in each region with eight interviews undertaken per Primary Sampling Unit (PSU). To ensure a representative sample, individual quotas specific to the profile of each PSU are applied by gender, age (16-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+), socio-economic grade (AB, C1, C2, DE) and ethnicity (BAME, non-BAME)

B. Quota sampling is applied to online interviewing. There is no way of replicating the offline sampling approach online, as the demographic spread of panellists in each region is not nationally representative (and is, by no means, universal). For this reason, a quota sampling approach was adopted to ensure nationally representative responses

Weighting

Survey data were weighted initially to be nationally representative of adults 16+ within each nation by gender, age, region, social grade and working status; and ethnicity at an overall UK level; using ONS population estimates. The weights are required to adjust for any minor short-falls in quotas being met and to down weight the devolved nations to ensure the sample is nationally representative. The unweighted counts for the devolved nations are higher than required to be nationally representative to allow robust reporting at a nation level.

Online panels tend to be composed of people who are technologically literate and engaged with the internet and other media. Therefore in addition to weighting on demographics, further weighting was required to adjust for the differences between responses of those interviewed online and those interviewed face-to-face.

A variable was derived which was the count of channels viewed. Respondents from the online panel were much more likely to watch at least one PSB channel than respondents interviewed face-to-face. They were also more likely to watch at least four PSB channels than respondents interviewed face-to-face.

However, this only explained part of the differences – the second element was whether people chose to watch PSB channels or if they had other options. For this reason, whether or not they had access to Sky, Virgin or OTT services such as Amazon, Netflix etc. were included. This variable was crossed with the count of PSB channels watched.

The data was then used to create the following weighting matrix which was applied alongside the demographic weighting. The design of the matrix ensures that each of the two survey methodologies contributes 50% to the total result.

		Zero PSB	One PSB	2-3 PSB	4+ PSB
CAPI	Paid	5.1%	3.3%	13.3%	7.0%
	No paid	4.4%	3.1%	9.0%	4.8%
Online	Paid	5.1%	3.3%	13.3%	7.0%
	No Paid	4.4%	3.1%	9.0%	4.8%

Main questionnaire

The focus of the questionnaire is for respondents to rate specific TV channels on different aspects of broadcasting relating to the PSB purposes and characteristics. The research statements that they were asked about correspond to the purposes and characteristics as set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1 PSB purposes and characteristics and their alignment with PSB Tracker statements

PSB purposes and characteristics	PSB Tracker statements
Purpose 1: To inform ourselves and others and to increase our understanding of the world through news, information and analysis of current events and ideas	Its news programmes are trustworthy Its programmes help me understand what's going on in the world today Its regional news programmes provide a wide range of good quality news about my area*
Purpose 2: To stimulate our interest and knowledge of the arts, science, history and other topics through programmes that are accessible and can encourage informal learning	It shows interesting programmes about history, sciences or the arts
Purpose 3: To reflect and strengthen our cultural identity through original programming at UK, national and regional level, and by occasionally bringing audiences together for shared experiences	It portrays my region (IN ENGLAND)/Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland (Nations) fairly to the rest of the UK* It shows high quality soaps or drama made in the UK It shows high quality comedy made in the UK** Provides a wide range of high quality and UK-made programmes for children* Provides a wide range of high quality and UK-made programmes for older children
Purpose 4: To make us aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through programmes that reflect the lives of other people and other communities, both within the UK and elsewhere	Its programmes show different kinds of cultures in the UK It shows different parts of the UK including England, NI, Scotland and Wales
High quality – well funded and well produced	It shows well-made, high quality programmes
Original – new UK content rather than repeats or acquisitions	It shows new programmes, made in the UK*
Innovative – breaking new ideas or re-inventing exciting approaches, rather than copying old ones	It shows programmes with new ideas and different approaches
Challenging – making viewers think	It shows programmes that make me stop and think***
Distinctive**	The style of the programmes is different to what I'd expect to see on other channels

*Statement changed within the PSB Tracker in 2011

**Statement new in 2014

***Only asked for importance in 2014

Respondents were asked to individually rate each channel that they watched regularly. The channels list comprised BBC One, BBC Two, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, BBC Three and BBC Four. Those who viewed any of these channels regularly or occasionally were also asked to consider all of the channels together for each of the research statements.

Respondents were asked to rate the channel in relation to a statement on a 10-point scale where 10 is the highest score and 1 the lowest.

All respondents were also asked to rate how important it is that the PSB channels together fulfil the PBS purposes and characteristics. This provides useful context for the data on how the PSB channels are rated on these elements.

Analysis and reporting conventions

The majority of analysis was carried out on 'regular' viewers. Regular viewers provide a more informed opinion as they are more involved with the channels, and rely less on potentially out-of-date or unfounded perceptions of the channel. Moreover, including 'occasional' viewers increases the level of 'don't know' responses, thereby reducing the granularity of the insight provided.

Viewers were asked to rate each channel (and the channels taken together) out of 10, and the top four scores (7-10) were used to calculate responses, correlating to a very/quite response. Throughout the reporting this is expressed as: "the channel is rated highly on..."

Only statistically significant differences are reported and highlighted. Reported differences between survey figures are significant at the 95% confidence level for results compared within the current year and at the 99% confidence level for results compared between years to accommodate the impact of sample design and weighting. This means that there is a high level of confidence that any reported differences reflect a true attitudinal or behavioural change rather than being caused by a change in sample methodology or profile.