



News consumption in the UK - 2013 report

Research Document

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Introduction

This summary report provides the findings of Ofcom's 2013 research into news consumption across the four main platforms: television, radio, print and online. Further detailed information is available in the chart pack which accompanies this document. It is published as part of our market research range of publications that examine the consumption of content, and attitudes towards that content, across different platforms. The aim of this report is to inform an understanding of news consumption across the UK, and within each UK nation.

An initial summary of this research was published as part of Ofcom's *Communications Market Report 2013*¹.

The report details various findings relating to the consumption of news; the sources and platforms used, the perceived importance of different platforms and outlets for news, attitudes to individual news sources and an overview of local media consumption. It also provides details of our cross-platform news consumption metric – 'share of references'².

This report uses a variety of data sources. The primary source is a news survey commissioned by Ofcom and conducted by Kantar Media in April 2013, comprising an omnibus survey of 2,862 people across the UK, including boosts of 350 in each devolved nation. This is the default source unless otherwise specified. Other sources used include:

- an omnibus survey of 2016 people across the UK, commissioned by Ofcom and conducted by Ipsos Mori, about local media;
- metrics on television viewing from the industry currency [BARB](#);
- newspaper readership figures from the [National Readership Survey](#); and
- online consumption metrics from [UKOM/comScore](#)

Any direct comparisons between the quantitative research we have commissioned and data from the industry measurement systems should be made with caution because of:

- methodological differences e.g. claimed or measured consumption, face-to-face surveys or diary based methods, and differing sample sizes and data collection periods;
- time period differences e.g. "nowadays" is used in the Kantar Media survey, compared to real-time recorded consumption (BARB) or recency (average issue readership) for newspapers; and
- differing definitions of news e.g. set by the provider (as in BARB) or self-defined by the people we questioned.

¹ Ofcom, *Communications Market Report 2013*, August 2013, [<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/cmr>]

² See page 6 for an explanation of how this is calculated

News consumption in the UK

Platforms used for news 'nowadays'

The majority of adults in the UK (90%) say they use at least one of the four main platforms (television, newspapers, radio, online) for news, with an average of 2.1 platforms being used.

Television is by far the most-used platform for news, with 78% of adults saying they use TV as a source of news. Four in ten (40%) use newspapers and just over a third (35%) use radio as a source of news. Almost a third (32%) use the internet for news³.

Almost one third of respondents use only one platform for news, with over one-fifth (22%) using just TV, 5% using the internet only, 3% using only newspapers and 2% using just radio.

The use of TV only was more prominent among those aged 55+ (26%) and those in the DE socio-economic group (30%) than among 16-24s (16%) or ABs (10%). More than one in ten (12%) of those aged 16-24 used only the internet for news, compared to just 1% of those aged 55+. The proportion of each demographic group that use newspapers only or radio only was fairly similar across ages and socio-economic groups.

Cross-platform news consumption, by demographic

Those aged 55+ are more likely than younger adults aged 16-24 (98% v 82%) to consume news. This difference is evident across all platforms, with the exception of the internet; 44% of young people use this platform for news compared to just 15% of those aged over 55.

There are also differences by socio-economic group. Although a similar proportion of those who are in AB and DE groups consume news (92% and 90%), use of each of the four platforms is higher for ABs, particularly the use of internet sources (50% v 19%).

Although use of television for news is higher for females than for males (80% v 75%), online consumption of news on any device is higher among males (36% v 28%).

Multiple and single sourcing of news

Across all platforms, UK adults use an average of 3.7 sources. This rises to an average of 4.6 sources among those in the AB socio-economic group. The average number of sources used on TV is 1.9, on radio 1.4, for newspapers 2.1 and online 1.9.

On a wholesale level,⁴ the majority of those who consume news use no more than three providers (78%), with 27% using only one provider.

³ Data for news consumption on platforms cannot be compared with those collected from the similar ad-hoc study on news from 2012, available at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/measuring-plurality/statement/Annex5.pdf>.

The 2012 study had asked prior questions on topics considered to be news, topics interested in, and topics considered important for society to know about; hence respondents were primed into thinking about a wider range of topics within the definition of news e.g. sport, celebrity gossip, etc. For the 2013 survey they were asked about the platforms they use for news straight away; hence the 2013 figures are lower in all cases than in the 2012 study.

⁴ 'Wholesale' is classified as the company that provides the news for the given source. This is distinct from 'retail' which is classified as the owner of the branded title/service through which the news is provided (except the three generic categories 'commercial radio', 'aggregators' and 'social media').

Looking within each platform at the different sources of news people might use, almost two-thirds (64%) of radio news listeners use just one source. The figures are less pronounced on other platforms; less than half of online news users (45%) and TV news users (43%) use only one source, and three in ten newspaper readers (29%).

The top three news sources, in terms of reach among UK adults, are all TV channels, with BBC One being by far the most used (57%). One third of people use ITV/UTV/STV news and 17% of people use BBC News 24. The most-used online source is the BBC website/app (16%, in fourth position), the most-used newspaper is the *Sun* (10%, in sixth position) and the most-used radio station is BBC Radio 2 (8%, in seventh position).

Importance of news sources

When asked to indicate the single most important news source to them personally, over one third (34%) of news users named BBC One, which had around 2.5 times more mentions than the next source, ITV (13%) and nearly six times as many mentions as Sky News (5%).

Three in ten 16-24s say their most important news source is a website/app – compared to 14% of all UK news users. Those aged 16-24 were also least likely to name a TV channel as their most important source, with less than half (46%) of this age group doing so. Seven in ten of those aged 55+ (70%) or in the DE socio-economic group (69%) say that a TV channel is their most important source of news, compared to 62% for all UK adults.

At a wholesale level, more than half (53%) of respondents named a BBC source as their most important source of news. This was followed by ITN (15%) and Sky (8%). Although the top three most important sources are from broadcasters, newspaper sources were also considered as the most important source by a minority of people; News Corp and DMGT sources were each named by 3% of people, and Guardian Media Group, Northern and Shell, Trinity Mirror and Telegraph Media sources were each named by 1% of respondents.

Users of each source were asked how important that source was to them. Generally, all sources scored highly among their users, with between 60-70% of the users of each source rating it highly for importance. There were some exceptions to this, including Channel 5 (40%), commercial radio stations, tabloid and mid-market newspapers and the *Daily Mail* website (54%).

Share of references

'Share of references' is Ofcom's cross-media metric designed to measure the share of individual news sources consumed across all platforms. It is calculated by asking people which sources of news they use 'nowadays', and how frequently they use them. If a respondent uses more than one source from a particular provider, it is counted each time. Frequency is used to weight the references. The share of each provider is then calculated as the aggregated number of references, expressed as a proportion of all references for all news sources. This produces a cross-media metric with consistent methodology and a consistent definition of news across all platforms. It is also possible to use this metric to look at each platform separately.

Television has a 47% share of references. This is followed by the internet (21%), radio (18%) and newspapers (13%). The higher share of reference for the internet, despite its lower reach compared to radio or newspapers, is due to its higher levels of frequency of use.

Within each platform, the BBC has the highest share of references on the platforms that it has a presence on, accounting for over half of references on TV (56%), almost two-thirds on radio (64%) and over a quarter on the internet (27%). At a retail level, ITV is the next most-used source on TV, with a 22% share.

After the BBC, the next most-used online sources are on social media, with over a fifth (22%) of share of references for the internet, followed by aggregators such as Google News, with 15%. Newspaper publishers take a 12% share of references online, with DMGT accounting for a third of these (4%). News Corp has a 3% share of references online, but almost all of this comes from the *Sun* website and app, and the research was carried out before the recent paywall was implemented.

News Corp has the largest share on newspapers, with over a quarter (27%) of references, followed by DMGT (24%) and Trinity Mirror (17%).

Across all platforms and at retail level, the BBC (44%) is followed by ITV (11%), commercial radio (7%) and Sky (7%). Social media comes next (5%), followed by aggregators (3%), News Corp (4%), DGMT (4%), and Channel 4 (2%). At wholesale level, the BBC has a 44% share, followed by ITN (14%), Sky (13%), News Corp (4%), DGMT (4%) and Trinity Mirror (2%).

News consumption on television

BARB figures show that each adult watched an average of around 114 hours of national or international news on television⁵ in 2012. The majority of this (62%) was on BBC One or BBC Two and a further 13% on the BBC News channel. However, 16-34 year olds consumed only 38 hours of news on television in the same period, compared to 148 hours for those aged over 35. Although the BBC channels are still the most popular for the younger age group, this group is more likely than older viewers to consume news on ITV or Channel 4 (20% v 16%).

Ofcom research has found that the 78% of adults who say they use television for news use an average of 1.9 different news sources on this platform. Almost three-quarters (73%) of adults who use television for this purpose use BBC One, the highest proportion of any television channel. As well as being used by the largest proportion of people, BBC One is also the most frequently accessed across all TV news sources, with 79% of those who use it doing so at least once a day.

ITV is the next most-used television channel for news, with 43% of adults who use TV for news watching news on ITV. Seventy-two per cent of those who use this channel for news use it at least once a day. ITV is followed by the BBC News channel (21%), Sky News (20%), Channel 4 (6%), and Channel 5 (5%). Al Jazeera (the English version) is watched by 3% of TV news users, Russia Today by 2% and CNN by 2%.

When asked to evaluate the importance of each source, 69% of those who watch news on a BBC television channel rate this source highly, followed by those who watch Al Jazeera (66%), Sky News Channel (62%) and ITV (60%). However, when asked to consider other attributes: 'accurate and reliable', 'trustworthy', 'impartial and unbiased', 'offers a range of opinions', users of the Sky News Channel rate that source the highest, compared to users of the other channels.

⁵ BARB listed channels only

News consumption on radio

Thirty-five per cent of adults claim to consume news through radio. Of these, 68% say they use any BBC Radio station for this purpose, compared to 43% using any commercial radio station. Fifteen per cent of those using radio for news use both commercial and BBC stations.

In line with RAJAR⁶ figures which indicate that the BBC network stations Radio 2, Radio 4 and Radio 1 have the highest reach⁷, respondents to the Ofcom news survey who have consumed news through radio are also more likely to name these three sources rather than any other station (23%, 22%, 18%). These radio stations broadcast regular news bulletins each hour and therefore, unsurprisingly, those who cite these as sources for their news consumption are likely to be frequent users. For example, 72% of those who consume news through BBC Radio 2 do so at least once a day, followed by 71% for BBC Radio 4 and 66% for BBC Radio 1.

When asked to evaluate the importance of each source, 69% of those who listen to news on a BBC radio station rate them highly, followed by those who listen to Capital FM (55%) and Heart⁸ (52%). BBC radio is also rated the most highly according to the other attributes – ‘accurate and reliable’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘impartial and unbiased’, ‘offers a range of opinions’ – compared to users of news through any other radio source.

News consumption through newspapers

Figures from the National Readership Survey show that the *Sun* is the most-read daily newspaper in the UK (6.7 million readers per day) followed by the *Daily Mail* (4.2 million), the *Metro* (3.5 million) and the *Daily Mirror* (2.9 million).

Similarly, among the 40% of respondents to the Ofcom survey who said they consumed news through newspapers, the most-used titles are: the *Sun*, 25%; *Daily Mail*, 19%; *Daily Mirror*, 13%; *Metro*, 12%). Seventy per cent of those who cite the *Daily Mirror* as a source for news consumption say they use it most days, followed by 69% of those who use the *Sun*, 67% of those who use the *Metro* and 60% of those who use the *Daily Mail*.

When the print and online readership of newspaper titles is combined, the *Daily Mail* and The *Guardian* see the largest increase in reach, with readership of the *Guardian* more than doubling from 1.3 million to 2.3 million. Of these, 1.3 million are online only. The *Sun* is still the most widely-read title, with 7.3 million readers across print and the internet.⁹

Among the weekly titles, 13% of those who read news in weekly newspapers use the *Sun on Sunday* and 12% use the *Mail on Sunday*. Almost nine in ten (89%) who cite the *Sun on Sunday* as a news source say they generally read it every week, compared to 78% of those who read the *Mail on Sunday*.

When asked to evaluate the importance of each source, 72% of those who said they used the *Guardian* or the *Observer* for news rated these as personally important, followed by those who read *The Times* or the *Sunday Times* (68%), those who read their local daily (63%) and those who read the daily or Sunday editions of the *Telegraph* (63%). The *Guardian* scores particularly highly among its users for being trustworthy, with more than eight in ten (82%) rating it highly for this attribute.

⁶ Radio Joint Audience Research

⁷ 29%, 21%, 21% reach among all adults 15+ respectively

⁸ Only Heart and Capital achieved sufficient sample sizes to be able to report

⁹ NRS/comScore PADD, March 2013

News consumption via the internet

Almost one third of adults (32%) say they use the internet for news. Half (50%) of those in the AB socio-economic group use online sources, compared to one fifth (19%) of DEs.

The most common method of accessing news online is by reading news stories online (54%), but the increasing influence of social media and user-generated content is also apparent: 27% of those who consume news online say they do this by reading news-related comments or articles on blogs or social networking sites. Among those aged 16-24, this rises to one third (33%), compared to 13% of those aged 55+.

Over half of online news users (52%) say they use the BBC website or app. This is followed by 19% who say they use Facebook, 16% who use the Google search engine, and 14% who use the Sky News website or app. Overall, aggregators are used by 25% of online news users, social media by 23% and search engines by 16%.

Of all the online sources referred to for news, Facebook has a higher frequency than the other most popular internet news sources, with 82% of users claiming to use it every day for news. Around two-thirds (67%) of those who use Sky News online do this every day, as do 65% of those who use BBC online news and 64% of those who use Google News.

When asked to evaluate the importance of each source, 69% of those who use Twitter for news rate this site as personally important for news, and 68% of those who use the BBC online consider it to be personally important. The way that Twitter enables multiple individuals to comment on the same topic, concurrently, perhaps explains why Twitter is also rated highest in terms of offering a range of opinions (79%) - the highest, in fact, of any named source across any platform. As an aggregator of news sources, Google News is also rated highly for offering a range of views (70%).

However, while Twitter may facilitate a range of opinions on a particular topic, those who use it for news do not rate it highly for being accurate (29%), trustworthy (28%) or unbiased (28%). For these attributes, the online news content provided by Sky News and the BBC are rated most highly, scoring between 60% and 70% for each.

Local media use

This section summarises the findings of an omnibus survey about local media of 2,016 people around the UK which was commissioned by Ofcom and conducted by Ipsos Mori. The survey looks at the changing use of local media and the perceived importance and satisfaction with local media. In the survey, 'local' is defined as "the area in which you live" and 'regional' is defined as "your local area and surrounding areas in the wider region".

Use and importance

Television is the most-used platform for regional and local news, with 80% of adults watching this at least once a week. This is followed by the 50% who read local newspapers at least weekly, 49% who listen to local radio and 36% who use online sources for local news and information.

Those aged 15-24 (65%) are less likely than those aged 55+ (89%) to watch regional news on TV on at least a weekly basis, but are more likely to use local news websites, with almost one fifth (17%) of 15-24s doing this, compared to 4% of over-55s.

When asked about how important local media sources were to them, respondents rated regional and local news on television as most important for local news and information

(56%), followed by the internet (46%). The high personal importance of regional and local news on television is further highlighted by the finding that 49% of those who use any local media say television is the source of most personal importance to them.

The changing use of local media

The use of online local media sources has increased the most over the past two years, with almost half of respondents (49%) claiming to use the internet more for local news and information. Around four in ten claim to be using local news websites/apps (41% and local community websites/apps (38%) more than two years ago.

A fifth (21%) of those who use local media at least once a month claim to watch local news on television more than two years ago, while one in ten (10%) claim to be watching it less. The proportion of people claiming to use local newspapers more was broadly the same as those who claim to use them less, with 15% claiming to use paid-for papers more, and 18% using free papers; compared to 17% using paid-for titles less and 16% using free titles less. The 15-24 age group were more likely than any other age group to have increased their use of local newspapers, with over a third (34%) reading paid-for titles more and four in ten (40%) reading free titles more.

News consumption in the nations

Platforms used for news ‘nowadays’

Television is by far the most-used platform for news in every nation of the UK, although the proportion of people using TV for news varies across the nations. Just over three-quarters (77%) of adults in England watch news on television, compared to nine in ten (89%) in Northern Ireland. In Scotland, 78% of people watch news on television and 83% of those in Wales do so.

Across all of the nations, Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of people using each platform for news; more than half use newspapers (55%) and radio (54%), and four in ten (41%) use online sources. More than one third (36%) say they use word of mouth. Despite this, the aggregated use of all four of the main platforms is not significantly different, with around nine in ten people in each nation consuming news on any platform (88% Scotland, 90% England, 93% Wales, 93% Northern Ireland).

Multiple sourcing of news

Adults in Northern Ireland use more news sources across platforms than any other nation – an average of 5.2, compared to 4.0 in Wales, 3.9 in Scotland and 3.6 in England. People in Northern Ireland also use the highest number of sources within each platform, reading an average of 2.7 newspapers and watching an average of 2.2 different television news sources.

Importance of news sources

At a wholesale level, despite ITN having a lower overall reach in Scotland than in other nations, almost one quarter of news users in Scotland (23%) cite it as their most important news source. People in Scotland are less likely to rate the BBC as their most important source than other nations (44% vs. 53% UK average). People in Northern Ireland also rate the BBC lower than the UK average for personal importance at 47%, and they rate ITN higher than average (26%).

In comparison to the UK average (8%), Sky is considered to be of lower personal importance in Northern Ireland, where 3% cite it as their most important source of news. In Scotland, Trinity Mirror is considered to be of higher personal importance than the UK average (1%), with 5% considering Trinity Mirror's sources to be the most important.

Share of references and cross-platform reach

The share of references for the platforms is relatively similar across all of the nations, as is the share of references for news providers. However, the share of 'other' providers is higher in Northern Ireland and in Wales, and at retail level, ITV has a slightly higher share in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

BBC reach for news across platforms is lower in Scotland than in the other nations (73%). Cross-platform reach for News Corp and Trinity Mirror is highest in Scotland, with each reaching 27% of adults in this nation. News Corp also has a higher reach in Northern Ireland (24%) than the UK average (19%).

The reach of ITN is higher in Wales (54%) and in Northern Ireland (48%) than in any other nation.

England

- Those living in England demonstrate the lowest appetite for news across all platforms (with the exception of online content accessed through a computer, where Scotland scores lowest - only 20% of people in Scotland consume news this way (vs. 25% in England, 29% in Wales and 33% in Northern Ireland)).
- Fifty-six per cent of adults in England use BBC One for news followed by ITV (30%) and the BBC News Channel (18%). In line with overall UK use of specific news sources, half of the top ten sources used by people in England are from the BBC.
- Those living in England are more likely than adults in the other nations to say they watch the BBC News channel (23%, v 18% in Northern Ireland, 15% in Wales and 13% in Scotland).

Northern Ireland

- In Northern Ireland, 38% of adults say they listen to news on BBC Radio Ulster, significantly higher than the equivalent BBC stations in the other nations (Radio Scotland, 16%; Radio Wales/Cymru, 9%).
- The reach of news on BBC One is highest in Northern Ireland, with over two-thirds (67%) of adults naming this a source. Here, use of UTV for news is the highest of any nation, at 62% (30% use ITV for news in England, 42% use ITV Wales for news, 44% say they use STV in Scotland).
- Among those who use the internet for news, those in Northern Ireland are significantly more likely than those in the other nations to say they share existing news-related clips online (9%, vs. 3% in England, 2% in Scotland, 1% in Wales).
- Use of Facebook for news is significantly higher in Northern Ireland compared to the UK (28% vs. 19%), as is word of mouth (36% compared to 11%).
- Almost one fifth (19%) of adults in Northern Ireland say they read any local newspaper for news, the highest of any nation.

Scotland

- Half of adults (50%) in Scotland say they use BBC One for news, the lowest reach of any UK nation.
- Scotland is the only nation where newspaper titles are among the top five sources used for news. Eighteen per cent claim to read the *Sun* and 17% the *Daily Record*. Furthermore, among those who say they use newspapers for news, those in Scotland are more likely than adults in the other nations to read the *Sun* (39% vs. 27% in Northern Ireland, 24% in Wales, 24% in England).
- One in seven online news users in Scotland say they use the STV or ITV website for news, compared to 5% of online news users across the UK saying they use any form of ITV news online.

Wales

- Sixty-five per cent of adults in Wales use BBC One for news, followed by ITV Wales (42%) and the BBC online services (21%).
- Almost three in ten (29%) of people in Wales who consume news by listening to the radio say they use BBC Radio 1 for this purpose, the highest of any nation (22% in Northern Ireland, 18% in England, 15% in Scotland).
- One fifth (20%) of those in Wales who use radio for news say they do this through Radio 4, more than double the proportion in Northern Ireland (9%).
- More people in Wales use Facebook as a source of online news than in any other nation (30%).

Further information - methodology

2862 interviews were conducted in total using Kantar's face-to-face Omnibus.

Omnibus sampling method

The Omnibus uses a comprehensive address-based system using PAF and CD-Rom, cross referenced to the census data. For each wave, 143 sample points are selected and, within the selected primary sampling points, a postcode sector is chosen. Postcode selection within primary sampling points alternates between A and B halves to reduce clustering effects. All interviews are conducted via the field team and in accordance with strict quality control procedures. Quotas (by sex, working status and presence of children) are set during interviewing to ensure representivity. Any sample profile imbalances are corrected at the analysis stage through weighting.

Nations boosts

A standard wave of UK omnibus (c2060) provides samples of roughly 175 in Scotland, 100 in Wales and 60 in Northern Ireland. However, in order to provide robust analysis by nation, fieldwork boosts took place to ensure a minimum sample of 350 respondents for each. To achieve this in the most efficient manner it required four waves of the regular GB Omnibus, plus a standalone Northern Ireland wave. The sample sizes achieved per nation were as follows:

- England = 1764
- Scotland = 361
- Wales = 385
- N Ireland = 352

Weighting

The following weighting matrix was applied to the data to address any imbalances.

Region	Total sample	Sex		Age			Working status	
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	Working	Not working
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SOUTH EAST	14%	7%	7%	4%	5%	5%	8%	5%
LONDON	12%	6%	6%	5%	5%	3%	8%	5%
NORTH WEST	11%	5%	6%	3%	4%	4%	6%	5%
EAST	9%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%	6%	4%
WEST MIDLANDS	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
SOUTH WEST	9%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%	5%	4%
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
EAST MIDLANDS	7%	4%	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%
NORTH EAST	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
ENGLAND TOTAL	84%	41%	43%	26%	29%	29%	49%	35%
SCOTLAND	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
WALES	5%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%
NORTHERN IRELAND	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
NATIONS TOTAL	16%	8%	8%	5%	5%	6%	9%	7%
TOTAL	100%	49%	51%	31%	34%	35%	58%	42%

The data was then grossed up to represent the UK total population of 50.7 million.

Sources

Mid 2010 Population Estimates from ONS (latest currently available) for Age, Gender & Region (Including Nations).

Annual Population Survey (ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 28 February 2012] for Working Status