Preface

The Switching Tracker study has been run by Saville Rossiter-Base on behalf of Ofcom.

The Switching Tracker is Ofcom's key data source on switching levels, attitudes and experiences across the communications markets (fixed, mobile, fixed broadband and multi-channel/Pay TV). Since 2010 Ofcom has run this tracking study annually among UK adults (screening for decision makers in each market) to measure participation levels, switching incidence and ease of switching in each market.

Up to and including 2014, this study was conducted by telephone, using random digit dialling to mobile and landline numbers. In 2015 the fieldwork was shared between telephone interviewing and face-to-face interviewing. From 2016 onwards all of the fieldwork has been conducted face-to-face in home using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

Quadrangle Operations interviewed a quota sample of 2,582 adults, aged 16+, in the UK. Interviews were carried out across 200 different sampling points in the UK, face-to-face, in-home. All interviews were conducted between 2nd August and 2nd September 2017.

Questions are asked up front to establish household ownership of landline, fixed broadband, TV service and mobile. For each service, it is established whether the respondent is the decision maker – with detailed questions asked for each market sector that the respondent is the decision maker for. Questions also establish whether the decision maker considers that any of the household's services are in a bundle or package from the same provider.

Analysis is conducted by each total market i.e. fixed line, mobile, fixed broadband, digital TV and those purchasing services as a bundle. On completion of the interviews, weighting is applied for each market section (i.e. each of the above markets) of the survey using profiles from Ofcom's Technology Tracker Survey.

Details of the sampling frame, research methodology, and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

Sample Design

To ensure consistency with trend data, the sample approach to sampling has been used as in previous waves, using Output Areas (OAs) as the basic building block for sampling, then using quota control by three key variables (age, gender and SEG) to control the sample interviewed within each sampling point.

First Stage

The OAs in the UK were grouped into sampling units (SUs), which were then were stratified by region and rural/urban:

- firstly, all the SUs were sorted by region,
- the SUs were then sorted within region by rural/urban.

This approach controls the urban/ rural fallout of the sample, so no further quota is imposed. The sample extracted was checked for close correspondence to the UK population on two key variables:

- Deprivation Index for the United Kingdom.
- Cable/ non-cabled area

Since region has been used as the first sorting variable, regional distribution of SUs will be more or less in proportion to the number of residential addresses in each region.

Second stage

The size of a SU is measured by the number of addresses it contains. The SUs were selected with a probability proportionate to size. This ensures that all households within an SU have an equal chance of being selected, regardless of the size of the SU in which a household is situated. The number of interviews per SU was 13.

Quotas

The following quotas were set (within each SU) to represent the population within that SU, which means the overall quotas across the UK will closely match the UK population. Quotas were set using 2011 Census data for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

- Age (16-24, 25-44, 45-64,65-74,75+)
- Socio-economic grade (SEG)
- Gender

Fieldwork

Interviewers were provided with specific addresses. The average SU contains around 130 households in England and Wales and 160 households in Scotland and Northern Ireland, thus affording tight control over the addresses the interviewers called at.

Reporting

The sample is drawn on the basis of households within SUs, while quotas are set on the basis of adult population profiles. The data is then weighted to the profile of UK adults per market sector and so the data is representative of adults aged 16+ who are decision makers for that market.

Weighting

The data are weighted to the profile for each market sector using target rim weights for age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG).

The profiles used to weight the data within each market sector are taken from Ofcom's Technology Tracker; which uses the 2011 Census for the targets used to weight on age, gender and location, while SEG profiles come from NRS published data.

The '% Unweighted' column shows the actual percentage of interviews achieved in the 2017 Switching Tracker fieldwork across all respondents.

The following table shows the initial unweighted sample across all respondents and the final weighted sample profile across all respondents.

Figures are based on UK adult decision makers	**% Weighted**	**% Unweighted**
	Profile	Interviews achieved
Gender – Male 16+	50%	48%
Gender – Female 16+	50%	52%
Age – 16-34	36%	31%
Age – 35-54	34%	32%
Age – 55+	30%	37%
SEG – AB	26%	21%
SEG – C1	30%	32%
SEG – C2	17%	22%
SEG – DE	27%	25%
Region – England	84%	84%
Region – Scotland	8%	8%
Region – Wales	5%	5%
Region – Northern Ireland	3%	3%

Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the "true" values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95%, that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size[1] (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results. The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main groups across all respondents.

	Actual	ESS
Total	2,582	2,422
URBANITY: URBAN	2,260	2,121
URBANITY: RURAL	322	301
GENDER: MALE	1,237	1,163
GENDER: FEMALE	1,345	1,263
AGE: 16-34	795	768
AGE: 35-54	834	792
AGE: 55+	953	915
SEG: AB	547	530
SEG: C1	821	783
SEG: C2	560	546
546	654	616

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the "95% confidence interval":

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	**10% or 90%** ±	**20% or 80%** ±	**30% or 70%** ±	**40% or 60%** ±	**50%** ±
2,422 (Total)	1.2%	1.6%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%
1,163 (GENDER: MALE)	1.8%	2.3%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%
783 (SEG - C1)	2.1%	2.9%	3.3%	3.5%	3.6%
301 (URBANITY: RURAL)	3.5%	4.6%	5.3%	5.6%	5.8%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,350 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of ± 1.9 percentage points from the sample results.

[1] Effective Sample Size shown as Effective Weighted Sample in the data tables produced

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is “statistically significant” – we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume “95% confidence interval”, the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	**10% or 90%** ±	**20% or 80%** ±	**30% or 70%** ±	**40% or 60%** ±	**50%** ±
1,163 vs. 1,263 (Male vs. Female)	2.4%	3.2%	3.7%	3.9%	4.0%
530 vs. 783 (SEG AB vs. C1)	3.3%	4.4%	5.0%	5.4%	5.5%