Communications Market Report

Northern Ireland Published 3 August 2017

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Communications Market Report

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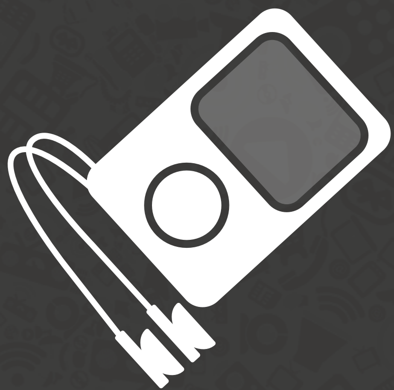


Introduction

Welcome to Ofcom's annual Communications Market Report for Northern Ireland.

The report gives an overview of the region's communications markets, examining availability, take-up and consumption of telecommunications, broadcasting, internet and postal services, and comparing the findings with the other nations and with the UK as a whole.

Smartphone ownership continues to rise in Northern Ireland, with more than three-quarters of adults (76%) now owning one. And 58% of people say the smartphone is their most important device for going online, compared to 42% for the UK as a whole.

This year's report shows another rise in tablet ownership, with three in five households (62%) now having one. Four out of five homes (79%) have a fixed-line broadband connection, while people in Northern Ireland now spend around 20.3 hours a week online.

Despite the rise in online activity, traditional media remain popular. We spend far more time watching live TV (an average of 3 hours 36 minutes a day) than engaging in any other communications activity.

Northern Ireland has the highest take-up of pay-TV services in the UK, with 64% of households having paid-for channels delivered by satellite, cable, broadband or Freeview top-up services. The number of homes with smart TVs, which can be connected to the internet, has more than doubled since last year, to 33%.

Our research also shows that TV is still by far the most important source of news in Northern Ireland, followed by radio and websites/apps.

For this year's report, we also commissioned some bespoke research on our experience of video-on-demand (VoD) services. Again, this shows the central role TV plays in our lives. Seven in ten people (71%) say that watching TV programmes and films brings the family together.

Radio continues to play an important part in our lives; nine in ten people in Northern Ireland tune in every week. On average, we listen to more than 20 hours of radio every week.

People in Northern Ireland are more likely to tune into local BBC and commercial stations; these stations account for 60% of listening, compared to 36% for the UK as a whole.

The information set out in this report does not represent any proposal or conclusion by Ofcom in respect of the current or future definition of markets. Nor does it represent any proposal or conclusion about the assessment of significant market power for the purpose of the Communications Act 2003, the Competition Act 1998 or any other relevant legislation.

The full dataset and charts are available in a searchable resource, which can be found at **http://www.ofcom.org.uk/cmrnorthernireland** Companion reports for the UK and each of the nations can be found at **www.ofcom.org.uk/cmr**

Setting the scene

Key facts about Northern Ireland

Figure	Northern Ireland	UK
Population	1.86 million (mid-2016 estimate)	65.65 million (mid-2016 estimate)
Age profile	Population aged <16: 20.8% Population aged 65+: 20.8%	Population aged <16: 18.9% Population aged 65+: 18.0%
Population density	137 people per square kilometre	271 people per square kilometre
Language	11% have some ability in Irish; 8.1% have some ability in Ulster-Scots	n/a
Unemployment	5.4% of economically active population, aged 16 and over	4.6 % of economically active population, aged 16 and over
Income & expenditure	Weekly household expenditure: £502.50 Weekly household income: £626	Weekly household expenditure: £527.70 Weekly household income: £781

Source: Office for National Statistics: Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, mid-2016; Office for National Statistics: Regional Labour Market, June 2017; Office for National Statistics: Family Spending 2016 edition; Annual labour market summary (16 or over) by Welsh local area and economic activity status June 2017; Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15; The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income, 2015/16.

A note on our Technology Tracker survey research

We conducted a face-to-face survey of 3,743 respondents aged 16+ in the UK, with 493 interviews conducted in Northern Ireland. Quotas were set and weighting applied to ensure that the sample was representative of the population of Northern Ireland in terms of age, gender, socio-economic group and geographic location. Technology Tracker data in this report are cited as from 2017, with the fieldwork taking place in January and February of this year.

Respondents were defined as urban if they lived in a settlement with a population of 2000 or more and rural if they lived in areas with smaller populations. The survey sample in Northern Ireland has error margins of approximately +/- 3-6% at the 95% confidence level. In urban and rural areas, survey error margins are approximately +/- 4-7%.

Unlike previous years, the interviewing conducted in 2017 used the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) method of interviewing. Because of this change in method, differences between 2017 and 2016 have been tested at the 99% confidence level.

In addition to the survey data, this report refers to information from a range of other sources, including data provided to Ofcom by stakeholders. Tables summarising the data collected in our survey are published on Ofcom's website[1].

[1] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/data/statistics

1 Northern Ireland's communications market

1.1 Northern Ireland: fast facts

	UK	Northern Ireland	Wales	Scotland		Northern Ireland Urban	Northern Ireland Rural
Bundling	81%	**79%**	79%	72%	Proportion of homes with a bundle of services[1]	77%	83%
Computer devices	29%	**15%**	28%	20%	Proportion of homes with a desktop PC	16%	14%+
	64%	**54%**	58%	51%	Proportion of homes with a laptop	53%	55%
	58%	**62%**	61%	56%	Proportion of homes with a tablet	60%	66%
Television	94%↓	**98%**	96%	97%	Proportion of homes with a TV	98%	98%
	62%	**64%↓**	60%↓	61%↓	Proportion of TV homes with any paid-for TV	60%-	70%+
	49%	**52%**	49%	46%	Proportion of TV homes with any free-TV	50%	57%
	38%↑	**33%↑**	36%	32%↑	Proportion of TV homes with smart TV	36%	28%
	83%↑	**83%**	86%	81%	Proportion of HDTV homes with an HDTV service	79%-	88%+
	71%	**62%**	76%	69%	hProportion of homes who watch on-demand content*	56%	68%
	32%	**24%**	25%	35%	Proportion of homes with a subscription to paid-for on-demand content*	21%-	29%+
	46%	**27%**	46%	39%	Proportion of homes who watch catch-up TV services (including live and catch-up)*	25%	31%
Radio[2]	90%	**89%**	92%	87%	Average weekly reach of radio services among adults 15+	/	/
	21%	**21%**	23%	21%	Average weekly listening hours among adults 15+	/	/
	57%	**57%**	58%	53%	Ownership of DAB radios among adults 15+	/	/
Landlines and mobiles	94%	**94%**	94%	90%	Proportion of adults with mobile phone	95%	93%
	76%↑	**76%**	74%	70%	Proportion of adults with smartphone	76%	75%
	76%↑	**74%↑**	66%	83%↑	Proportion of smartphone owners with a 4G service	72%+	77%
	82%	**84%**	80%	81%	Proportion of homes with a landline phone	82%	88%
	60%↑	**45%**	54%	49%	Proportion of homes who have ever used VoIP	43%	48%
Internet	88%	**83%**	84%	77%	Proportion of homes with internet access	82%	86%
	83%	**79%**	79%	73%	Proportion of homes with broadband	76%	84%
	66%	**68%**	58%	57%	Proportion of people who use their mobile phone for internet activities	67%	69%

Significance testing against Ofcom Technology Tracker figures:

↑/↓ Figure has significantly increased / decreased compared to Half 1 2016

+/- Figure is significantly higher / lower for nation's urban than rural, and vice versa

Significant differences between the UK and the nations have not been highlighted in the table. Please refer to the chapters for this information.

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker H1 2017, and RAJAR

Base for Ofcom Technology Tracker: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 495 Wales, 510 Scotland, 493 Northern Ireland, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural)

1. From 2017 the calculation of bundle take-up has changed – previously it was based on consumers who said they had a bundle.It is now based on those who have two or more services with the same supplier, therefore includes those previously unaware of being in a bundle

2. Radio figures taken from RAJAR data

1.2 The changing TV landscape

1.2.1 Introduction

Our TV landscape is evolving. We are no longer confined to the broadcasters' schedules.

Instead we are scheduling our own viewing to fit in with our lives, supplementing live broadcast TV[1] viewing with broadcasters' on-demand and streaming services, recorded TV and subscription on-demand and streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, which are becoming increasingly mainstream. Combined with the increase in take-up of fixed broadband (79% of households in Northern Ireland in 2017, compared to 66% in 2012) and portable devices (76% and 62% of people used a smartphone and tablet in 2017 compared to 34% and 9% in 2012).[2]

This has given us the freedom to watch what we want, when we want, wherever we want to watch it.

But it is not a simple shift from live broadcast TV to on-demand and streaming services. Live broadcast TV remains important, but increasingly people are using different services and types of content to meet different needs. This section is designed to explore the needs these different services are meeting, and the benefits and disadvantages of this new approach to TV consumption.

1.2.2 Highlights from the research

- More than eight in ten (85%) people in Northern Ireland like the ability to watch what they want, when they want. Two thirds (65%) of people in Northern Ireland said they like to watch TV programmes and films on-demand to avoid adverts, or because there are no adverts.
- "Binge watching" is now commonplace with 83% of people in Northern Ireland having done this, 32% saying they do it at least weekly.
- Only a quarter of people in Northern Ireland (26%) said they sat together with family members to watch the same TV programme or film on the same device every day.
- Three in ten (27%) said that at least once a week, members of their household sit together in the same room while watching different programmes on different screens.
- Almost half (46%) of people in Northern Ireland say they watch programmes and films by themselves every day.
- Over half (57%) of people in Northern Ireland say they prefer to watch big national events on live broadcast TV instead of on-demand because it's good to know everyone is watching at the same time. Nearly half of respondents (46%) said the same for sports programmes.

Methodology

This section draws on new Ofcom research carried out between 27 April and 9 May 2017, conducted by Populus. This research was conducted via an online survey comprising 2,356 interviews among adults aged 16+, and 505 interviews among 12-15 year olds. There were a total of 150 adult interviews in Northern Ireland.

[1] The term 'Live TV' covers live scheduled programming that is broadcast as part of a linear channel.

[2] Ofcom Technology Tracker

1.2.3 The services people use

Video on demand is becoming more mainstream

Ofcom's Digital Day research conducted last year[1] showed that live TV (viewed at the time of broadcast) accounted for 97% of all viewing time in Northern Ireland, clearly playing a central role in people's TV consumption. However, data from BARB show that the amount of time adults in Northern Ireland spend watching live TV has fallen since 2010[2].

Alongside the continued popularity of live TV, the numbers of people watching on-demand and streaming services are increasing.

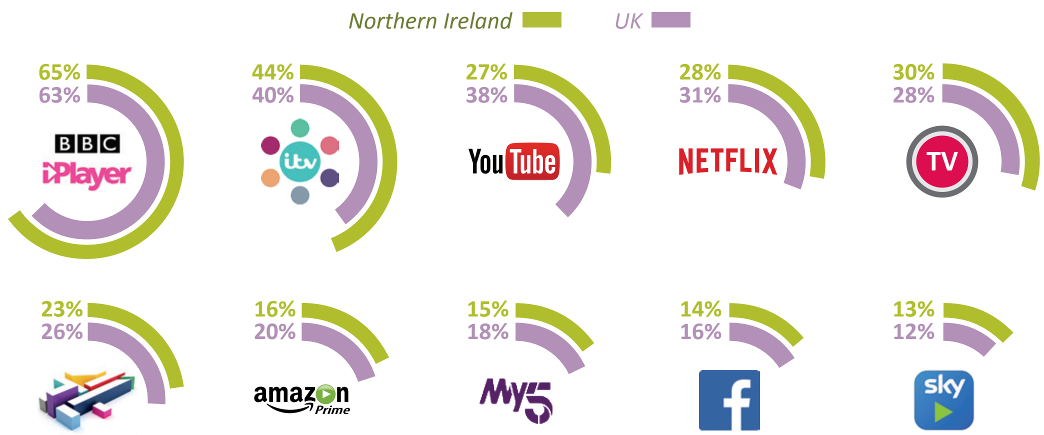
Digital Day found a ten percentage point increase between 2014 and 2016 in the proportion of people in Northern Ireland who said they watched any video-on-demand content (36% vs. 46%). This increase was driven by paid on-demand (for example, Netflix or Amazon Prime), which increased by 11 percentage points, from 17% to 28%, while free on-demand (for example, iPlayer or YouTube) increased to a lesser degree, by seven percentage points (27% vs. 34%).

Given this shift towards a wider range of services being used to watch programmes, Ofcom conducted research to investigate the drivers behind the use of these different services, and people's perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of watching on-demand and streaming services (such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, Facebook).

Nearly a third of adults in Northern Ireland watch programmes and films on YouTube

When asked what services they used to watch TV programmes and films, BBC iPlayer and ITV Hub were the most popular among adults in Northern Ireland, with 65% citing BBC iPlayer, and 44% citing ITV Hub. This was followed by recorded TV (30%). Just over a quarter (27%) say that they use YouTube for watching programmes and films, 28% use Netflix and 23% use All4, with all other services below 20%. Responses from Northern Ireland were largely in line with all other UK nations and the UK as a whole.

The proportion of adults who use different services for watching TV programmes/films (%)



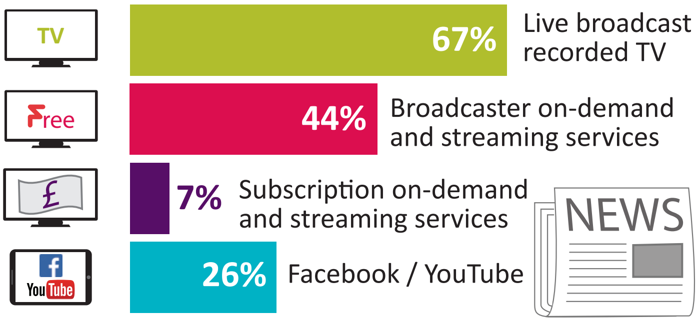
[1] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/digital-day

[2] Adults 16+. Average daily viewing time declined by 44 minutes (-17%) to 3 hours and 34 minutes per adult in 2016.

1.2.4 Reasons for using different services

Live TV is most popular among people in Northern Ireland for keeping up to date with the news

Services used by people in Northern Ireland to 'keep up with the news / keep up with what's happening around me'



To understand why people are using different services, we asked them which service they would use for a range of different needs.

Live broadcast TV is still the main viewing choice for keeping up to date with the news and current events. When we asked live-TV users in Northern Ireland why they used live TV, 67% said it was for 'keeping up to date with the news and what's happening around me'. This compares to 15% of users of iPlayer, All 4 or other broadcaster on-demand and streaming services and 7% of users of Netflix, Amazon Prime or other subscription on-demand and streaming services. This emphasises the important role live broadcast TV continues to play in keeping us informed and up to date.

Keeping up to date with the news is not the only reason for watching live broadcast TV.

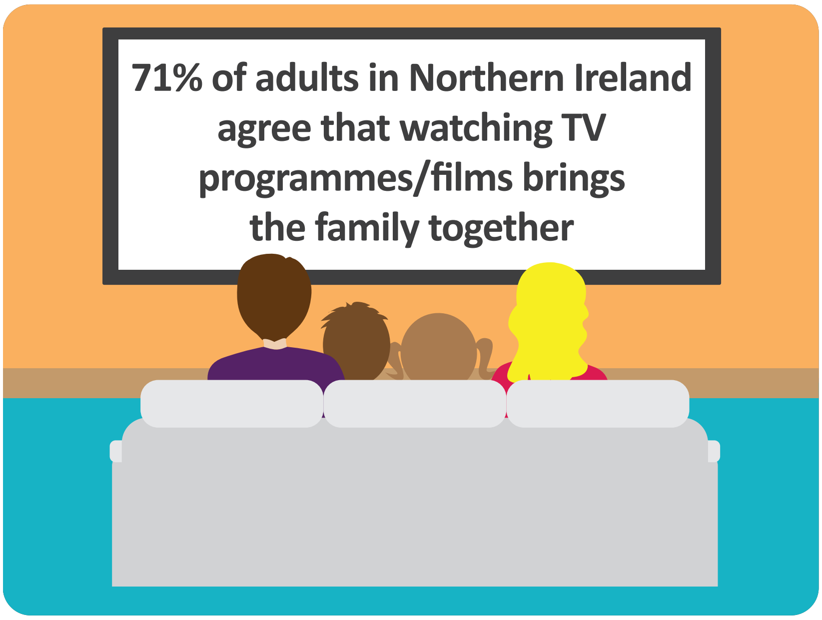
A sense of 'keeping up with others' and 'unity' partly explains the continued popularity of watching live broadcast TV. Over half (57%) of people in Northern Ireland say they prefer to watch big national events on live broadcast TV instead of watching at a time of their choosing because it's good to know everyone is watching at the same time. Nearly half of respondents (46%) said the same for sports programmes.

TV can be a great way of carving out a bit of 'alone time' and among respondents in Northern Ireland, it was the most popular reason for watching live broadcast TV. Seven in ten (71%) do so for some 'alone time'.

Among respondents who watch subscription on-demand and streaming services 65% do so for this reason and among those who watch broadcaster on-demand and streaming services, the figure is 57%.

When we asked respondents how often, if at all, they watched TV programmes and films by themselves on any device, almost half (46%) of people in Northern Ireland said they did so every day. A third of people (33%) said they did this several times a week. However, more than half (55%) of people in Northern Ireland agreed with the statement "people spend too much time watching by themselves on their tablets and smartphones nowadays".

TV is also the way many people de-stress and unwind. Over half (54%) of the people in Northern Ireland who watch live TV do so to de-stress. This is consistent with respondents who use Netflix, Amazon Prime or other monthly subscription services, with again over half (54%) saying they do so to de-stress.



Respondents who use broadcaster on-demand and streaming services also watch programmes for this reason, with 41% saying de-stressing and unwinding is important for them.

'Family time' is also a valued reason for viewing, with seven in ten (71%) of people in Northern Ireland agreeing that watching TV programmes and films brings the family together. When asked which services they used for family time, live broadcast TV (36%), subscription on-demand and streaming services (Netflix, Amazon Prime etc.) (38%) and broadcaster on-demand and streaming services (30%)[1] were popular.

This shows that all of these services play a role in family life, with subscription on-demand and streaming options becoming more mainstream. These services are also useful for keeping children entertained, with an equal proportion of people in Northern Ireland using live broadcast TV (11%), broadcaster on-demand and streaming services (7%) as well as subscription on-demand and streaming services (12%) for this.

More than eight in ten (85%) people in Northern Ireland agree that they enjoy the ability to watch what they want, when they want.

Flexibility is valued not only in terms of choice of when and where to watch content, but also to be selective in exactly what to watch. Two thirds (65%) of people in Northern Ireland said they like to watch TV programmes and films on-demand to avoid adverts, or because there are no adverts. Online TV and video viewing allows people to tailor what they're watching in a way that gives them control over their own personal viewing experience.

[1] There is no statistically significant difference between these two figures, due to low base sizes.

1.1.5 Changing viewing behaviours

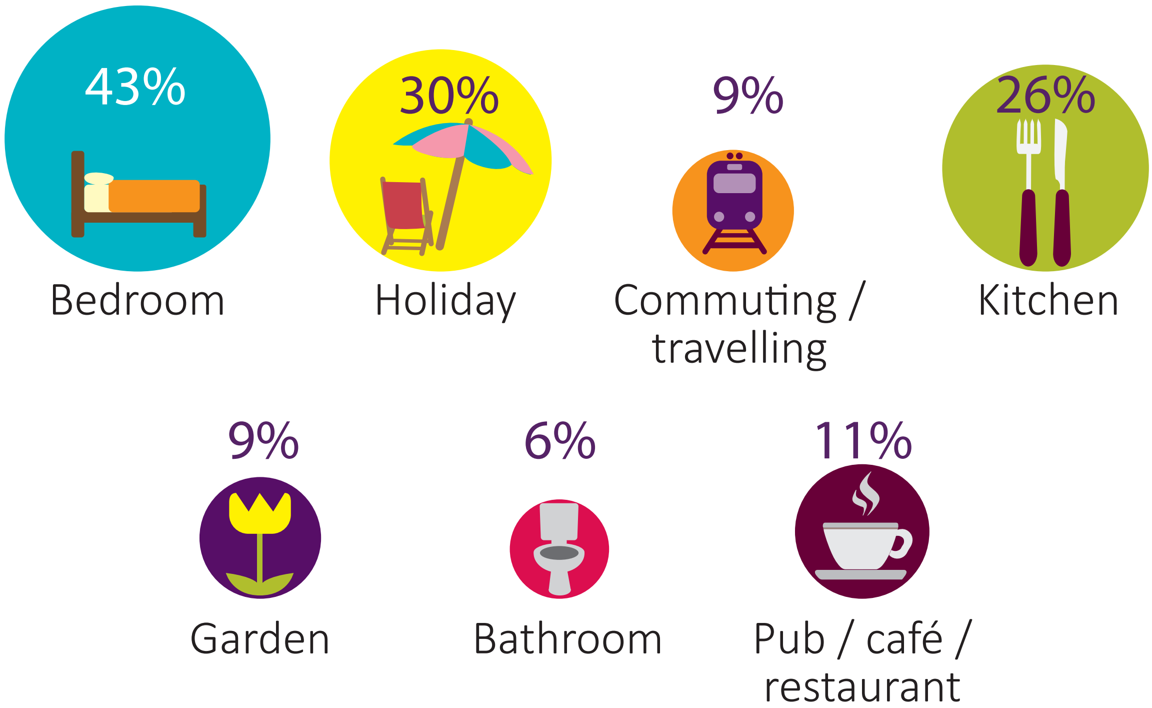
Three in ten people in Northern Ireland watch programmes and films when on holiday or on a break away from home

The availability of different services to watch TV programmes and films, coupled with the proliferation of portable devices, has changed not just what people are watching, but when and where they are watching it. Half (51%) said they liked the freedom of being able to watch content when and where they wanted on their tablet or smartphone.

Home-based viewing is still most popular in Northern Ireland, with 43% saying they watch at home in their bedroom, and 26% saying that they watch in their kitchen. This is higher among respondents in Northern Ireland than in any other nation. Among respondents in Wales, 13% watch at home in their kitchen, 16% of people in Scotland do so and 16% of the UK.

However, many are watching while out and about, with 30% saying they watch when on holiday/ breaks away from home, 9% saying that they watch programmes/ films while travelling/commuting and 11% saying they watch when in a pub/café/restaurant.

Locations where adults in Northern Ireland watch programmes/films on any device or service



Three in ten said members of their family frequently sit in the same room together and watch different programmes

The proliferation of new viewing options is clearly changing behaviour. As we have seen, this brings many benefits, but establishing a new viewing etiquette can sometimes be challenging.

As noted earlier, the majority of people in Northern Ireland agreed that watching TV programmes and films brings the family together, however three in ten (27%) said that at least once a week, members of their household sit together in the same room while watching different programmes on different screens.

This can be a good thing. When asked how they felt about this, 21% of respondents in Northern Ireland said it made things peaceful, 11% said it stopped arguments (a benefit of everyone getting to choose what they want to watch), and overall, six in ten (60%) said they didn't mind.

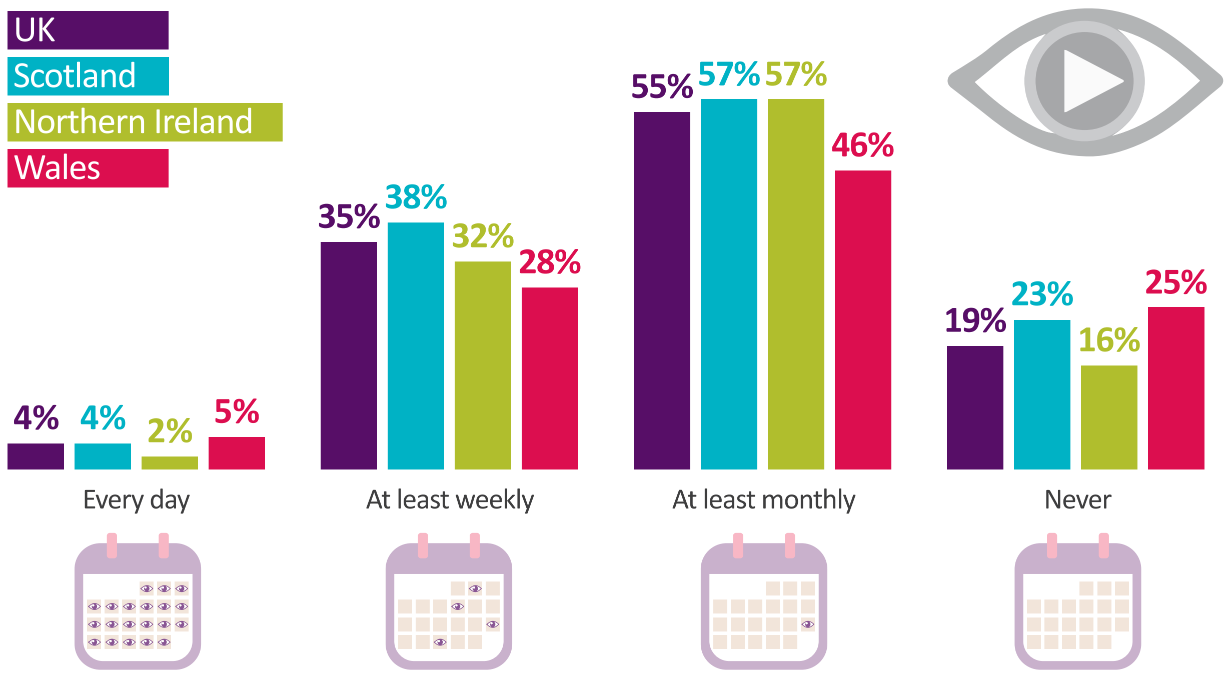
However, it can also cause tension. A quarter (24%) of respondents in Northern Ireland said that it makes talking to people in the room difficult; this is higher for people in Northern Ireland than in the UK overall (16%). And one in ten (10%) said it disrupted face-to-face communications.

This suggests that despite feeling that watching TV together brings the family closer, the use of multiple screens can sometimes be frustrating. But this doesn't mean people no longer have family TV time; a quarter (26%) of people in Northern Ireland said they sat together with family members to watch the same TV programme or film on the same device every day, while 71% said they did this at least once a week.

Six in ten people in Northern Ireland watch lots of episodes of the same programme in one sitting because it's relaxing

Another feature of the new TV landscape that online TV and video has created is the ability to watch multiple episodes back-to-back, sometimes referred to as "binge watching". As the reach of subscription online TV and video services has increased, so has the availability of entire series. It is no longer necessary to wait a whole week to find out what happens after the cliff-hanger, and many people in Northern Ireland are taking advantage of this, with 83% 'ever' doing it, 57% saying they do it at least monthly and 32% saying they do it at least weekly.

How often people watch multiple episodes of the same programme back-to-back in one sitting



In addition, several subscription on-demand and streaming services are now putting original content at the forefront of their branding. Netflix's popularity is linked to its original content, with programmes such as *House of Cards* and *The Crown* getting a lot of media attention. The same is true of Amazon Prime with series like *The Grand Tour* and *The Man in the High Castle*. High quality content such as this may be part of the reason why people are binge watching.

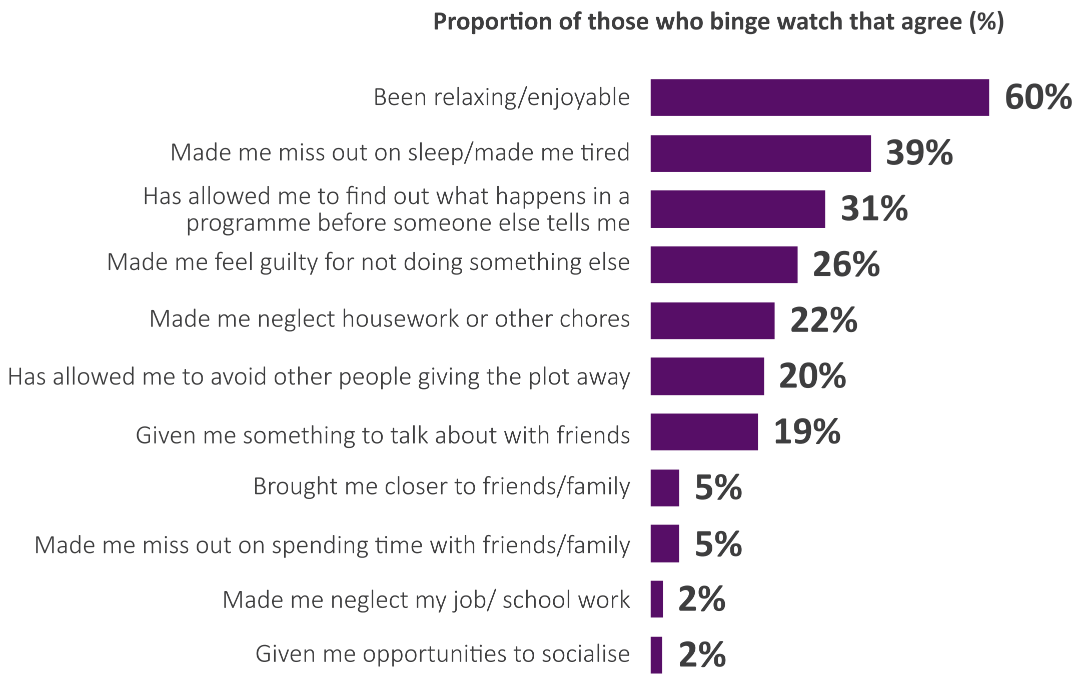
When asked about why they binge-watch programmes, six in ten (60%) people in Northern Ireland who had binge-watched in the last month said that they found the experience relaxing and enjoyable. Having the ability to choose how many episodes to watch in one sitting is giving people autonomy over their viewing time, thus making it more enjoyable.

Binge-watching also provides a chance for people to spend time with others; a quarter (25%) said they did it with a family member, 18% with a partner, while 19% said it gave them something to talk about with friends.

Some of this binge-watching behaviour is a way of avoiding friends and family who might ruin the plot's twists and turns. Nearly a third (31%) of people in Northern Ireland who had binge-watched in the last month said it allowed them to find out what happens in a programme before someone else tells them. One in five (20%) said it allowed them to avoid other people giving the plot away. That people binge-watch and want to stop the plot from being given away shows how immersed they are in the content.

On the other hand, it seems that sometimes the content can be too good; one in ten (9%) of respondents who binge-watch at least once a month said that they always watched more episodes of the same programme in one sitting than they had intended to. This binge-watching can sometimes have unfortunate side-effects. For instance, over a third (39%) of people in Northern Ireland said that binge-watching had made them miss out on sleep, or made them tired the next day. A quarter (26%) said it made them feel guilty for not doing something else, 22% said it had made them neglect housework or other chores, and 5% said it made them miss out on spending time with friends/family.

Figure 1.1: **Effects of binge watching on people in Northern Ireland**



Source: Ofcom research 2017
Q23. Watching lots of episodes of the same programme in one sitting is sometimes called binge watching. Thinking about when you have done this, do any of the statements below apply?
Base: All respondents who binge watch at least once a month (UK 1301, Scotland 117, Northern Ireland 85, Wales 74)

Some have therefore decided to act in order to change their binge-watching behaviour

Overall, 36% of respondents in Northern Ireland who said they had binge-watched in the last month had considered changing their behaviour. Two in ten (22%) said they had rationed the amount of TV they watched, 11% said they had found an alternative activity/hobby, 8% said they now watched more live broadcast TV, but only 2% had gone so far as to cancel a subscription service.

Despite all this, live broadcast TV is still an important part of our TV-watching portfolio

People are changing the way they view, by turning to different services for different needs and drawing heavily on the flexibility and choice offered by on-demand and streaming services, which can be watched anywhere at any time. However, traditional live broadcast TV is still at the heart of this new viewing experience. When asked what they would do first when wanting to watch a TV programme or film, the top answer was 'switch on the TV and see what's airing on live broadcast TV'. This response was chosen by half (53%) of people in Northern Ireland. The second-ranked answer was 'go straight to recorded TV', selected by 12% of people in Northern Ireland, followed by 'go straight to iPlayer, All4, ITV Hub or other free-to-view broadcasters' online services' (10%) and 'go straight to Netflix, Amazon Prime, Now TV or other on-demand services that you pay a monthly subscription for' (6%).

As we saw above, live broadcast TV is not just 'background noise; it still dominates as the place to keep up with what's going on in the world and to share important moments with friends, family and the nation. BARB data demonstrates this. The UEFA European championships featured in six of the top ten most-watched programmes at the time of broadcast among adults in Northern Ireland, rather than being watched later on a DVR or catch-up. ***The Secret, I'm a Celebrity, Coronation Street*** and ***Emmerdale*** completed the top ten programmes watched live in 2016[1].

[1] Source: BARB, Adults 16+. Based on the single best-performing episode of a programme watched live at the time of broadcast. Filtered on a minimum programme duration of 10 minutes. These viewing figures do not capture out-of-home viewing in pubs and other social spaces.

2 Television and audio-visual content

2.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

BBC increases investment in Northern Ireland

The BBC announced in April 2017 that it would invest an additional £11m in Northern Ireland over the next three years.

The money will be spent on:

- an enhanced digital service from BBC News NI, with improved news coverage throughout the day and weekends;
- greater coverage of local sport online, including live streaming of events across a range of sports;
- a 50% increase in commissioning spend on local television content – more drama, comedy and factual programmes and events on BBC One Northern Ireland;
- new digital content and services for younger audiences and new digital investment in radio; and
- new content to mark major historical anniversaries in Northern Ireland.

The funding equates to about 7% in additional spending over 2016 levels. BBC Director-General Tony Hall said: "It will transform our digital output – for news and sport and more. It means more drama, factual and comedy content – all things we know the public love and want from the BBC."

The BBC also renewed its partnership agreement with Northern Ireland Screen in April 2017. Among the successes of the first agreement, signed in 2015, were dramas ***Line Of Duty*** and *The Fall*.

This second partnership agreement will commit the BBC to spend a minimum of 3% of its network television budget in Northern Ireland.

Under the agreement, the BBC and Northern Ireland Screen will continue to jointly fund Irish-language and Ulster-Scots programming.

Channel 4 commissioning in the nations

Channel 4 has an obligation to commission 3% of its output, measured by value and volume, from producers in the UK outside of England. This figure will rise to 9% in 2020.

In 2016 Channel 4 spent 8.5% of its commissioning budget in the devolved nations. The breakdown by nation was Scotland (5.2%), Wales (2.8%) and Northern Ireland (0.5%).

By volume of programming, Channel 4 commissioning in the devolved nations amounted to 9.2% of the total number of hours broadcast in 2016. The breakdown by nation was Scotland 6.3%, Wales 2.4% and Northern Ireland 0.5%.

2.2 Television platform take-up in Northern Ireland

Half of all households in Northern Ireland have satellite television as their main TV platform; this continues to be higher than in the UK overall

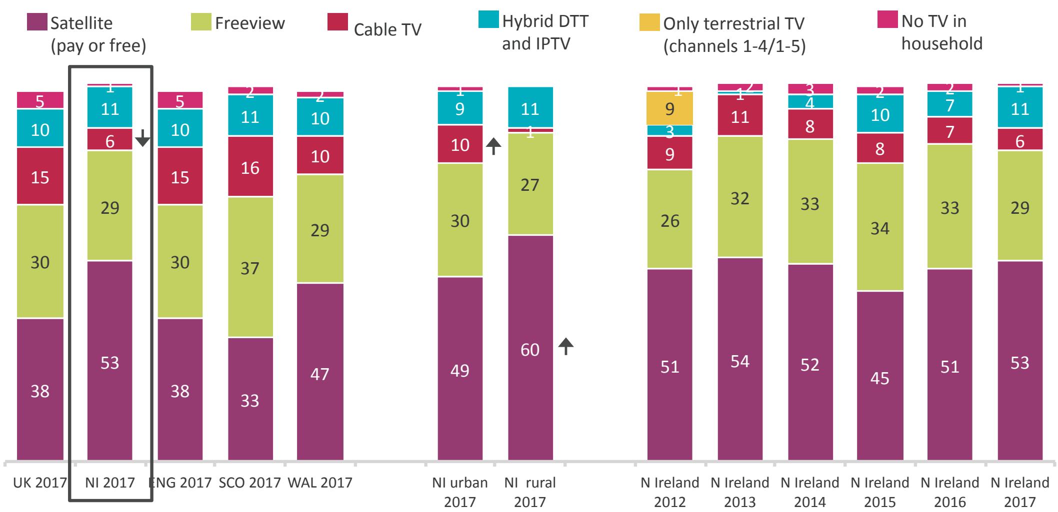
In 2017, satellite television was the most widely-used main television service in Northern Ireland.

Freeview was the next most popular service, while one in ten adults nominated Hybrid DTT and IPTV (such as BT TV, EE TV, etc).[1] Take-up is unchanged since 2016 for each service.

Take-up of satellite TV is higher in rural areas of Northern Ireland (60% vs. 49% in urban areas) and take-up of cable services is higher in urban areas (10% vs. 1% rural), probably due to its lower availability in rural locations.

Compared to the UK overall, penetration of satellite TV is higher in Northern Ireland, although households in Northern Ireland are less likely than in the UK overall to have cable TV, or no TV at all.

Figure 2.1: Main television set share, by platform



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016, 493 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017
QH1B: Which of these do you consider is your main type of television?
Note: Remaining percentages are Don't know responses

[1] These are hybrid services that provide the bulk of their channels via the DTT platform and offer additional channels and functionality through a broadband connection (such as access to online video services and programme recordings). Now TV offers this through its TV Smart Box and also provides access to channels and content libraries directly through its website and App

Six in ten TV households in Northern Ireland have Pay TV, less than in 2016 and in line with the UK overall

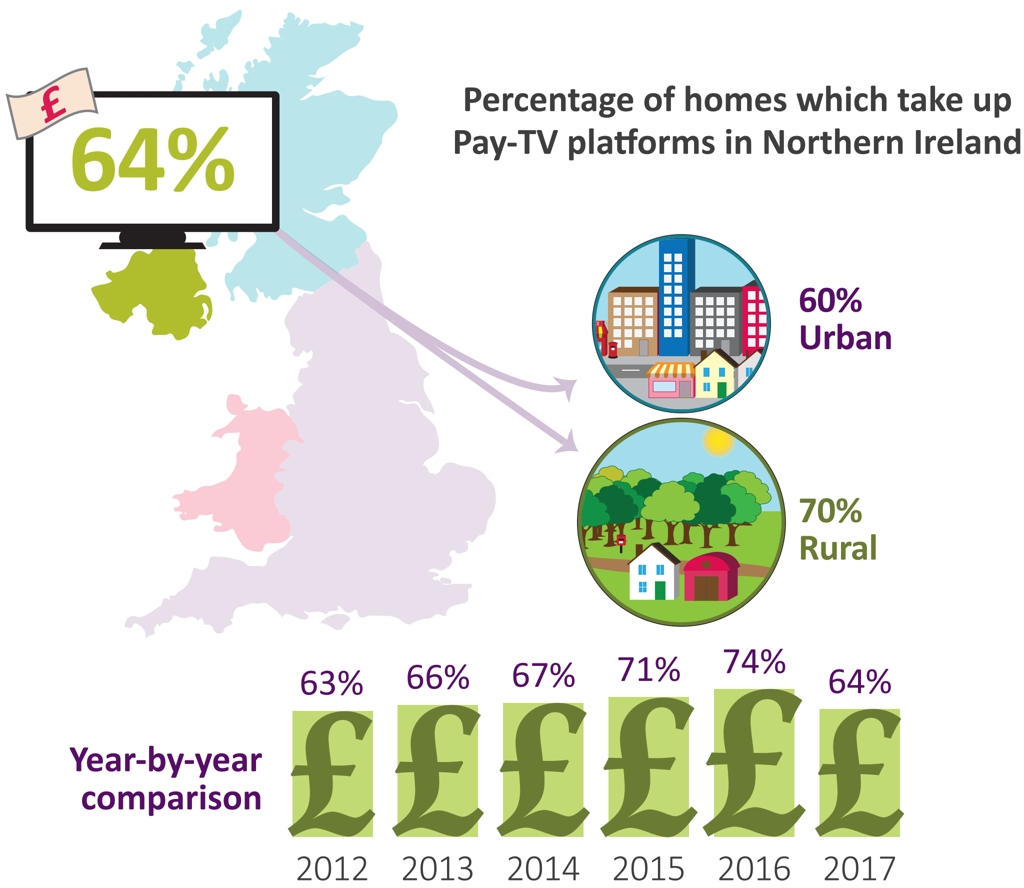
In 2017, more than six in ten (64%) households in Northern Ireland (with a television set) had Pay TV.[1]

This has fallen from 74% in 2016, with the decrease particularly evident in urban areas, where Pay-TV take-up has fallen from 76% in 2016 to 60% a year later.

Households in Northern Ireland are as likely as the UK overall to have Pay TV.

Take-up of Pay TV is significantly higher in rural than in urban areas of Northern Ireland.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of homes with free and pay television



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in household (n = 3564 UK, 483 Northern Ireland, 2109 England, 496 Scotland, 476 Wales, 246 Northern Ireland urban, 237 Northern Ireland rural, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 492 Northern Ireland 2013, 488 Northern Ireland 2014, 462 Northern Ireland 2015, 496 Northern Ireland 2016, 483 Northern Ireland 2017)
QH1A: Which, if any, of these types of television does your household use at the moment?

[1] 'Free TV' refers to households that only receive Freeview or only receive Freesat satellite TV. 'Pay TV' refers to all other types of television service.

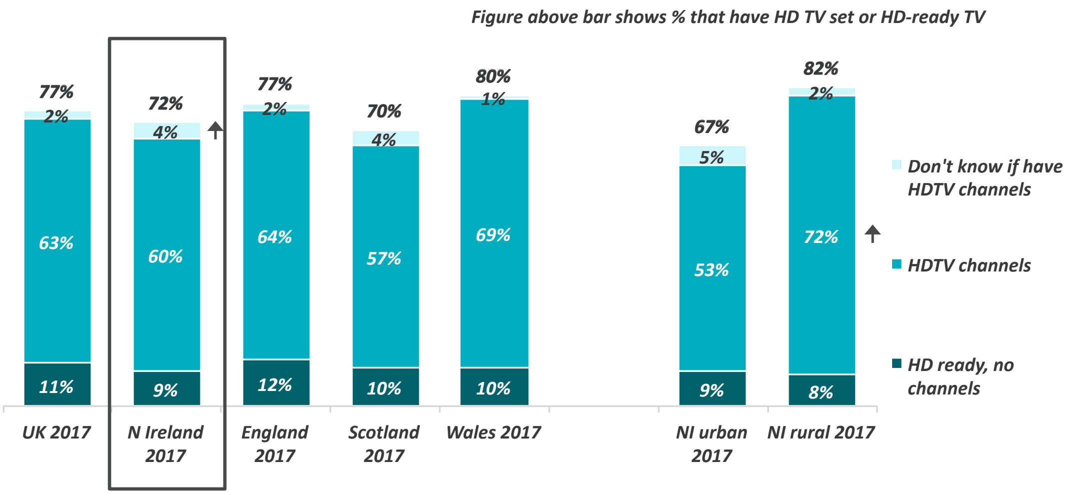
Seven in ten TV households in Northern Ireland have an HDTV set, in line with the UK overall

Among households in Northern Ireland with a TV set, 72% claimed to have either HDTV services or an HD-ready television set. Most (60%) of the TV-owning households in Northern Ireland said they receive HDTV services, with a further 9% claiming to have an HD-ready TV, but not receiving HD services.

Each of these incidences are in line with the UK overall. As HDTV channels are now available through all television platforms, including Freeview, it may be that many households are receiving HDTV services but are not aware of it.

In Northern Ireland, those in TV households in rural locations are more likely than those in urban locations to receive HD services, resulting in a higher overall incidence of having an HDTV set.

Figure 2.3: Awareness of receiving HD television



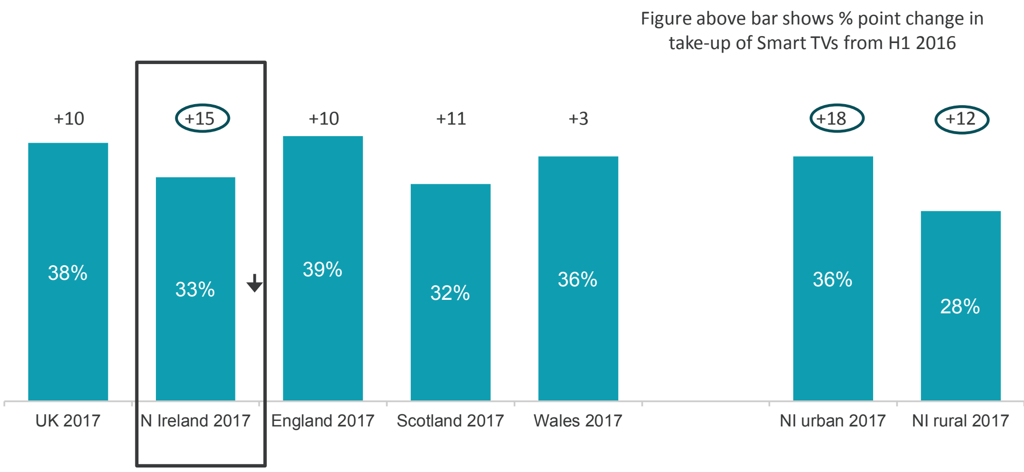
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in the household (n = 3564 UK, 496 Scotland, 2109 England, 476 Wales, 483 Northern Ireland, 251 Scotland urban, 245 Scotland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017
QH53: Is the main TV in your household an HDTV set or HD ready?/ QH54: Although you have an HDTV-ready set, to actually watch TV channels and programmes that are broadcast in high definition, you need an HD set-top box or a TV with built-in HDTV receiver. For the main TV set, does your household have an HDTV service?

One-third of TV households in Northern Ireland have a smart TV, lower than the UK average

Among those in Northern Ireland with a TV set in the household, 33% claimed to have a smart TV (i.e a television set that can connect directly to the internet, for example to watch on-demand services such as those available through the BBC iPlayer); lower than the UK average of 38% but almost double the 2016 measure for Northern Ireland (18%).

The increase in smart TV ownership since 2016 is evident in both urban Northern Ireland (up 18 percentage points to 36%) and rural Northern Ireland (up 12 percentage points to 28% in 2017). The difference in ownership by location in 2017 was not statistically significant.

Figure 2.4: Smart TV take-up



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in the household (n = 3564 UK, 483 Northern Ireland, 2109 England, 496 Scotland, 476 Wales, 246 Northern Ireland urban, 237 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QH62: Are any of your TV sets 'smart TVs'? These are new types of TV that are connected to the internet and can stream video directly onto your television screen, without the need for a computer, set-top box or games console.

Four in ten adults in Northern Ireland watch programmes or films on demand, mostly through catch-up services

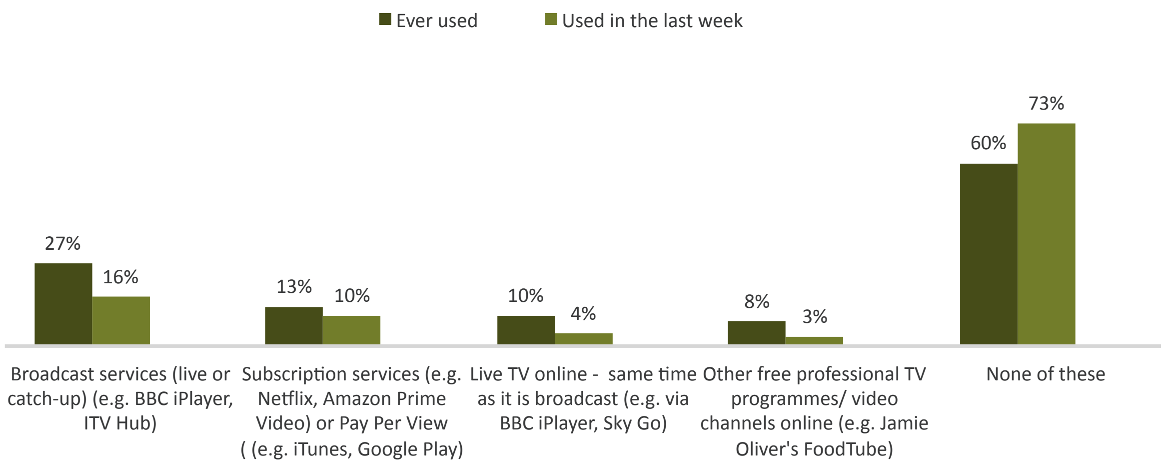
Four in ten adults in Northern Ireland[1] watch online TV programmes or films on any type of device (compared to 55% for the UK overall), and 27%[2] have done so in the past week.

Watching online through live or catch-up broadcast services (e.g. BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub) is the most popular method of on-demand viewing in Northern Ireland; with a quarter (27%) of adults using catch-up services and most of these (16%) having used these services in the past week.

The next most-used on-demand service is watching through subscription services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, or pay-per-view services such as iTunes or Google Play, used by 13% overall and in the past week by almost all of these (10%).

One in ten adults in Northern Ireland have watched live TV online, with a similar proportion (8%) having used other free professional TV programmes or video channels online, such as Jamie Oliver's FoodTube.

Figure 2.5: **Watching TV programmes and films on the internet, on any device**



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (n = 493)
QH72: Do you use any of the following types of services to view online TV programmes or films via any type of device (including a mobile phone, tablet or TV set)?/ **QH73:** And which of these types of services, if any, have you used in the past week?/ **QR1A/H:** Does your household have Sky+/ Sky Q?/ QR1B: Does your household have Virgin TiVo or V+?/ **QR1C/D/E:** Does your Freesat/ Freeview box of Freeview TV/ broadband TV service allow you to record and store TV programmes, and also pause and rewind live TV programmes?

[1] This measure is the inverse of the 60% shown in Figure 2.5 for None of these 'Ever used'
[2] This measure is the inverse of the 73% shown in Figure 2.5 for None of these 'Used in the last week'

2.3 Broadcast television content

Definitions

Broadcast TV viewing

BARB analysis is based on viewing of scheduled TV programmes such as those listed in TV listings magazines or on electronic programme guides (EPGs) on TV sets in homes. This broadcast TV viewing includes programmes watched on the TV set at the time of broadcast, recordings of these programmes such as through a DVR, or viewing of these programmes through catch-up player services, up to seven days after they were televised.

Channel group definitions				
	PSB portfolio channels			
Main five PSB channels	BBC Portfolio	ITV portfolio	Channel 4 portfolio	Channel 5 portfolio
BBC One	BBC Four	ITV/STV/UTV/ ITV Wales +1	Channel 4+1	Channel 5+1
BBC Two	BBC News	ITV2	E4	5STAR
ITV/STV/UTV/ITV Wales	BBC Parliament	ITV3	Film4	5USA
Channel 4	CBBC	ITV4	More4	My5
Channel 5	CBeebies	ITVBe	4Music	Spike
	BBC red button channels	ITV Encore	4seven	
		CITV		

Channels include HD variants where applicable. PSB portfolio channels include +1 variants.

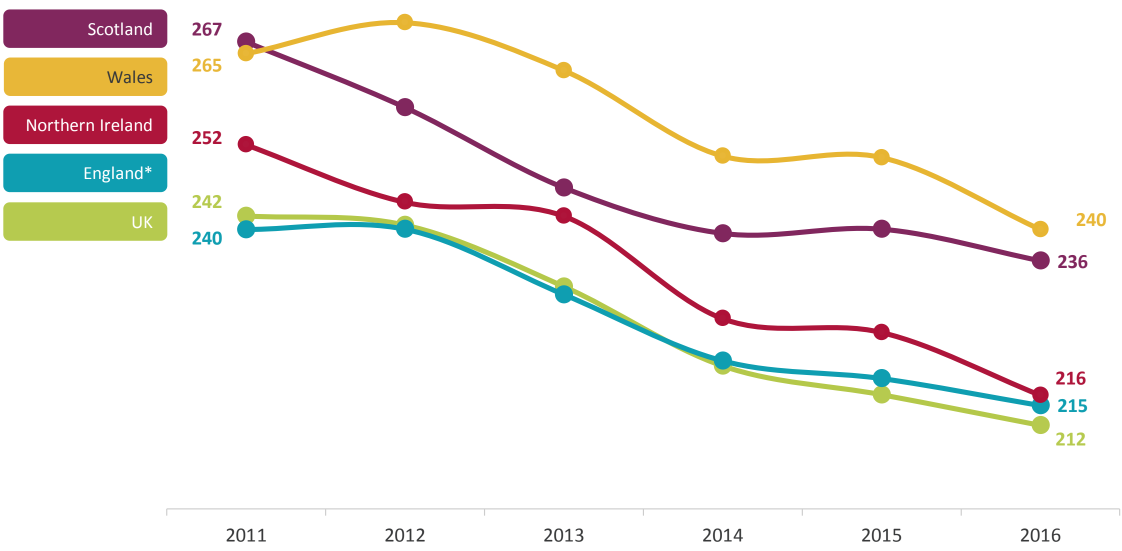
On average, people in Northern Ireland spend 216 minutes per day watching television

In 2016, people in Northern Ireland spent an average of 3 hours 36 minutes per day watching television, similar to people in England and the UK average, but less than people in Wales and Scotland.

In the longer term, daily viewing time has decreased in all nations and in the UK; the largest absolute (-36 minutes a day) and proportional (-14%) declines between 2011 and 2016 were in Northern Ireland.

The smallest falls over the same period were in England and Wales. Since 2015, viewing has fallen by 4% in Northern Ireland and Wales, compared to a 2% decrease in the other nations and the UK average.

Figure 2.6: Average minutes of television viewing per day, by nation: 2011-2016



Source: BARB, individuals (4+).
*__Note:__ Figures reflect the average across the English regions.

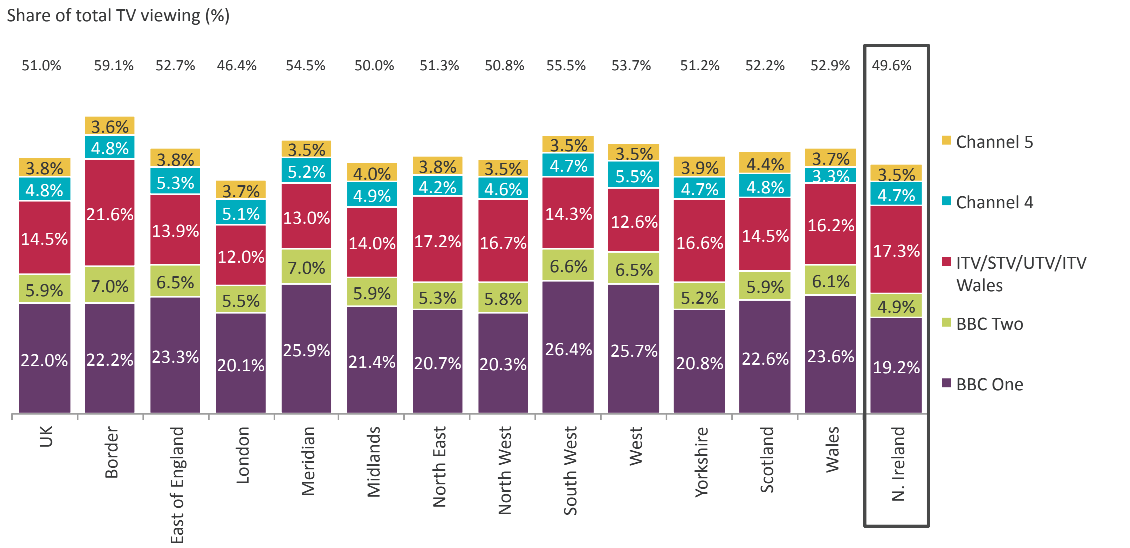
The PSB's share of viewing is lowest in Northern Irelands

In 2016, the main five PSB channels accounted for a combined 49.6% share of total TV viewing in Northern Ireland. Viewing of the main PSB channels is marginally lower than in the other UK nations and regions.

Northern Ireland was the only nation in which the share of the main five PSB channels was less than half of all viewing. BBC One and Two had lower shares in Northern Ireland than in any other UK nation or region.

However, UTV's viewing share was higher in Northern Ireland than the UK average for channel 3 and one of the highest across all nations and regions, with the exception of the Border region.

Figure 2.7: Share of the main five PSB channels, by UK nations and regions: 2016

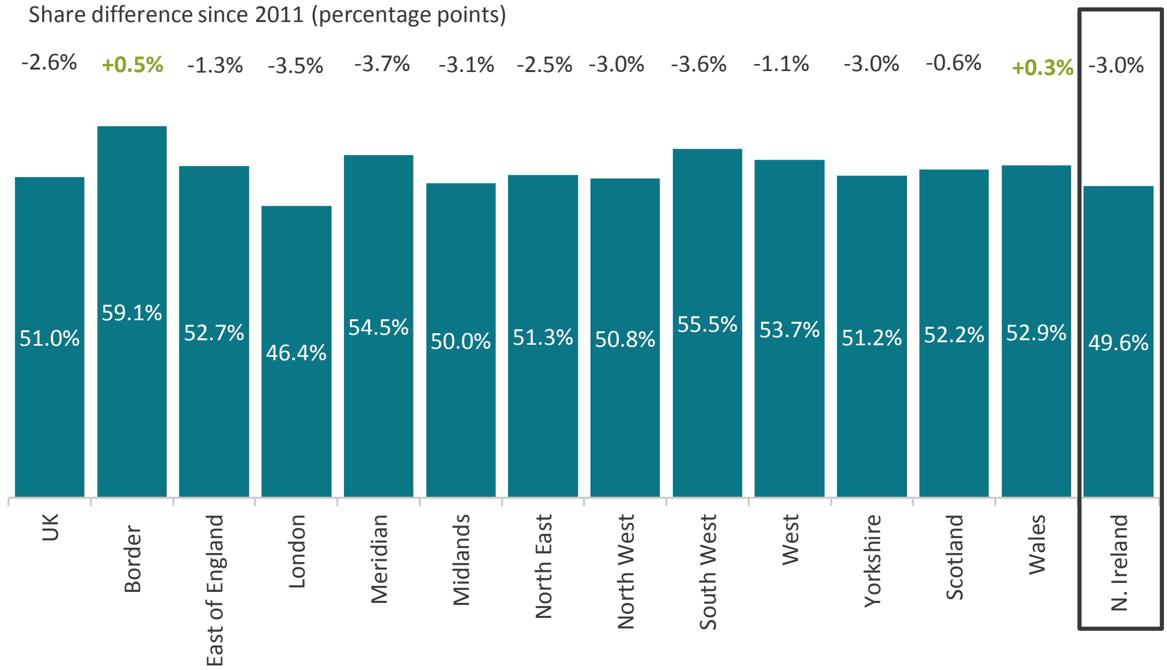


Source: BARB, Individuals (4+). HD channel variants are included but not +1s. Note: Chart shows figures rounded to one decimal place. Numbers may not appear to sum up to total share of main five PSBs due to rounding.

The combined share of the main five PSB channels has fallen in the past five years

Between 2011 and 2016 there was a 3 percentage point (pp) fall in the combined audience share of the main five PSB channels in Northern Ireland. This decline was higher than in Scotland and in the UK as a whole. Of the devolved nations, Wales was the only country in which the combined share of the main five PSBs went up, and Border the only region where this happened.

Figure 2.8: Combined share of the main five PSB channels: 2011 and 2016

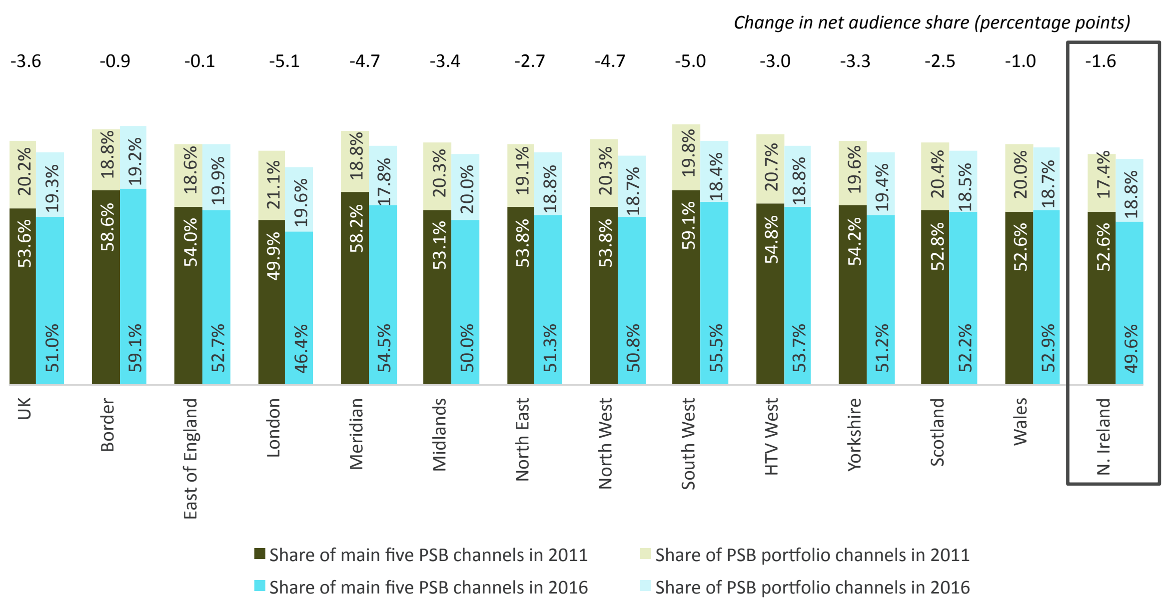


Source: BARB, individuals (4+). HD channel variants are included but not +1s.

The PSB portfolio channels have increased their share of viewing in Northern Ireland since 2011

While the main five PSB channels' share of viewing decreased, the PSB portfolio channels increased their share of viewing in Northern Ireland by 1.4pp between 2011 and 2016. This resulted in the overall net share of the main PSBs and their portfolios of channels falling by 1.6pp. This fall was greater in Northern Ireland than in Wales, but smaller than the overall decline in Scotland and the UK as a whole.

Figure 2.9: Net change in the audience share of the main five PSB channels and their portfolios of channels: 2011 and 2016



	5 PSB 2011	Portfolio 2011	5 PSB 2016	Portfolio 2016	Change
UK	53.6%	20.2%	51.0%	19.3%	-3.6
Border	58.6%	18.8%	59.1%	19.2%	-0.9
East of England	54.0%	18.6%	52.7%	19.9%	-0.1
London	49.9%	21.1%	46.4%	19.6%	-5.1
Meridian	58.2%	18.8%	54.5%	17.8%	-4.7
Midlands	53.1%	20.3%	50.0%	20.0%	-3.4
North East	53.8%	19.1%	51.3%	18.8%	-2.7
North West	53.8%	20.3%	50.8%	18.7%	-4.7
South West	59.1%	19.8%	55.5%	18.4%	-5.0
HTV West	54.8%	20.7%	53.7%	18.8%	-3.0
Yorkshire	54.2%	19.6%	51.2%	19.4%	-3.3
Scotland	52.8%	20.4%	52.2%	18.5%	-2.5
Wales	52.6%	20.0%	52.9%	18.7%	-1.0
N. Ireland	52.6%	17.4%	49.6%	18.8%	-1.6

Source: BARB, individuals 4+. **Note:** Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

The Secret attracted the largest audience in Northern Ireland in 2016

The penultimate episode of The Secret, UTV's four-part crime drama series, was the most-watched episode of the series and the most popular programme in Northern Ireland overall in 2016. It drew an average audience of 490,000 viewers, representing 28.9% of the population of Northern Ireland and a 58.4% share of total TV viewing in the slot in which it was shown.

In a UEFA European championships year, six of the top 20 programmes were televised matches, with the Wales vs. Northern Ireland match the second-most-watched programme in 2016.

Entertainment programmes were also popular, as were soaps Coronation Street and Emmerdale. The BBC One Northern Ireland programme A Nolan Show Investigation ranked 20th, the only current affairs programme in the top 20 list of programmes.

Figure 2.10: Top 20 programmes in Northern Ireland: 2016

Programme	Channel	Date	Average 000s	TVR %	Share %
The Secret	ITV	29/04/2016	490	28.9	58.4
Euro 2016: WAL v NIR	BBC One	25/06/2016	447	26.3	76.4
Euro 2016: NIR v GER	BBC One	21/06/2016	427	25.1	69.9
I'm A Celebrity- Get Me Out Of Here!	ITV (SD+HD)	13/11/2016	404	23.8	49.3
Euro 2016: POL v NIR	BBC One	12/06/2016	399	23.5	64
Euro 2016: Post Match	BBC One	25/06/2016	391	23	67
Britain's Got Talent	ITV	16/04/2016	370	21.8	54.2
Coronation Street	ITV	08/02/2016	355	20.8	44.6
Emmerdale	ITV	08/02/2016	353	20.7	46.4
The Great British Bake Off	BBC One	26/10/2016	339	19.9	45.8
Planet Earth II	BBC One	27/11/2016	328	19.3	39.5
Strictly Come Dancing: The Final	BBC One	17/12/2016	324	19.1	48.2
New Year's Eve Fireworks	BBC One	31/12/2016	324	19.1	53.2
The X Factor	ITV	03/09/2016	323	19	49
Mrs Brown's Boys Live	BBC One	23/07/2016	322	19	50.9
Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special	BBC One	25/12/2016	317	18.7	45
Euro 2016: POR v FRA	BBC One	10/07/2016	310	18.3	44.1
Mrs Brown's Boys	BBC One	01/01/2016	307	18	45
Euro 2016: GER v ITA	BBC One	02/07/2016	303	17.8	51.3
A Nolan Show Investigation	BBC One	15/12/2016	302	17.8	57.8

Source: BARB, individuals 4+, based on the single best performing episode of a programme title ranked on average audience 000s. Filtered on programmes with a minimum duration of 10 minutes. **Note:** Reporting of programmes against UTV HD was available from October 2016 in BARB. UTV programmes therefore include the SD variant only, as well as the combined SD+HD. BBC One includes HD.

Regional news and HD channels

Channel 3/ITV

ITV does not currently broadcast HD variants of its regional news programmes for all of its regions. This means that for some areas, an out-of-region HD version of regional news is shown on the ITV HD channel. London, Meridian, Wales, Central, Granada, STV* and UTV** currently offer the HD service across all platforms, while Anglia, Yorkshire and Tyne Tees offer it on some platforms only.^ In the remaining areas, the regional news shown on the HD channel is not the regional news for that region (e.g in Border, the Granada news feed is shown). The chart below includes all viewing to any early evening news programming, even if it is not the relevant one to the area.

BBC One

There are BBC One HD channels for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which show regional news in HD. At the moment, BBC One HD in the English regions cannot show local news (a message prompts viewers to turn over to BBC One during the regional news slot). The chart below reflects viewing of the early evening news on BBC One HD where available.

*The Glasgow regional news is shown.

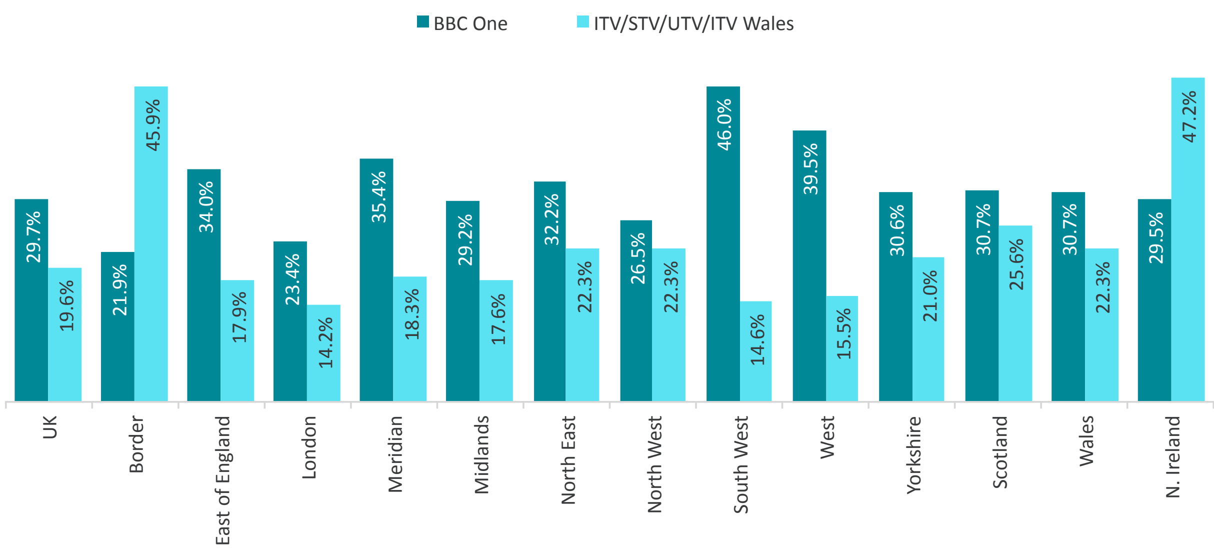
** UTV started reporting programme logs to the HD channel from mid-October 2016 and therefore the HD element is only included from this date.

^On 31 March 2016 ITV launched these regions in HD on Sky and Freesat (Freeview and Virgin Media pending)

UTV's early evening news bulletin attracts a greater share in Northern Ireland than the UK average for the same slot

UTV's early-evening news bulletin, UTV Live, attracted a 47.2% average share in Northern Ireland between 6pm and 6.30pm, more than double channel 3's UK average for early-evening news bulletins in the same slot. This was markedly higher than in all other UK nations and regions, apart from Border, which achieved a broadly similar viewing share. BBC One's counterpart bulletin in Northern Ireland, BBC Newsline, attracted a lower average share (29.5%) between 6.30pm and 7pm. This is in line with the BBC early evening news bulletin across the UK as a whole.

Figure 2.11: BBC One and ITV/ STV/ UTV/ ITV Wales early evening news bulletin shares: 2016



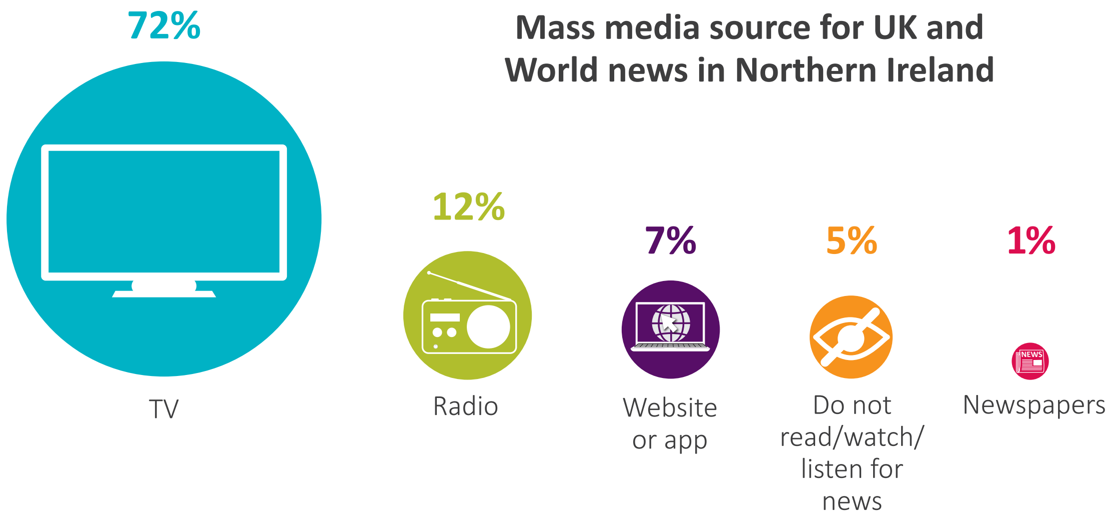
Source: BARB, individuals (4+). HD viewing included where applicable (see methodology box above). Note: Early evening ('local') news bulletin figures based on 'regional news' genre programmes, start time 17:55-18:35, 10mins+ duration, weekdays. UK figures based on share to respective early evening news bulletin time slots. BBC One's early evening news bulletin is transmitted between 18:30 – 19:00 and ITV/STV/UTV/ITV Wales' is transmitted between 18:00 – 18:30.

TV is the main source of news for more than seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland in 2016, 72% of adults aged 16 and over said that TV was their main source of UK and world news; this was the highest proportion across all nations and notably higher than the UK average figure (56%).

Seven per cent cited websites or apps as their main source of news,[1] lower than the UK average (20%), as was the proportion in Northern Ireland who cited print newspapers as their main source (1% vs. 8% UK).

Figure 2.12: Respondents' main media source for UK and world news, by nation: 2016



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2016
Base: All (2,069); England (1,591); Scotland (179); Wales (144); Northern Ireland (155). Prompted, single code.

[1] These include broadcaster, newspaper, social media and other websites or apps

2.4 Viewing of Republic of Ireland channels

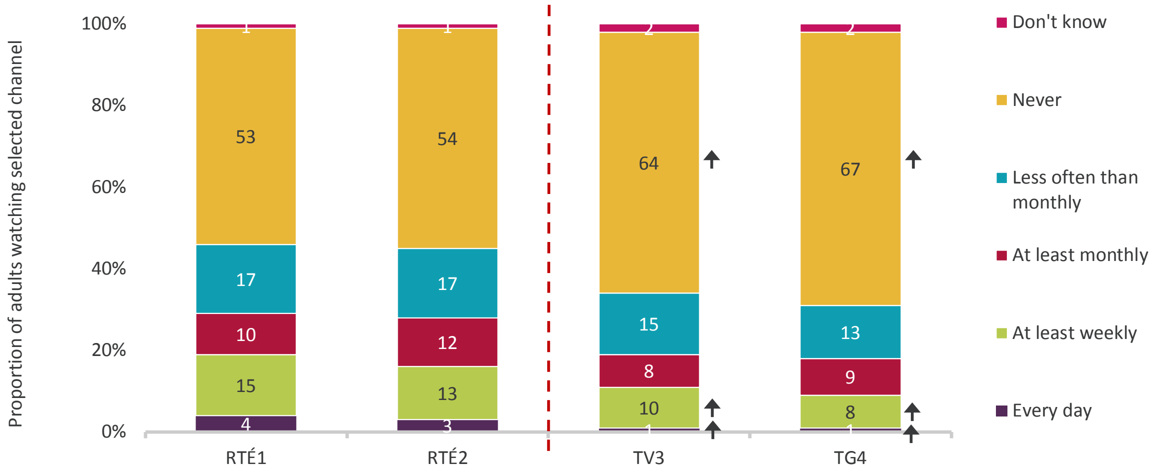
The two RTÉ channels remain the most-watched Republic of Ireland-originated TV channels in Northern Ireland

Before digital switchover in October 2012, RTÉ One, RTÉ2, TG4 (Irish language channel), and TV3 were available to around half of the Northern Ireland population via overspill from TV transmitters in the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Following digital switchover, RTÉ One, RTÉ2 and TG4 became available on free-to-view to the majority of the population; the channels are broadcast from three transmitters in Northern Ireland – Brougher Mountain, Black Mountain and Carnmoney Hill. In addition, the RTÉ services and TG4 are available on Sky and Virgin Media. TV3 is still available only via overspill.

Around one in three respondents in Northern Ireland with a TV in their household claimed to watch RTÉ One (29%) or RTÉ2 (28%) on at least a monthly basis in H1 2017[1]. This compares to around one in five respondents who claimed to watch TV3 and TG4 on at least a monthly basis (19% and 18% respectively).

Figure 2.13: Claimed viewing of RoI-originated TV channels in Northern Ireland

	RTÉ1	RTÉ2	TV3	TG4
Ever watch	46%	45%	34%	31%
Watch at least monthly	29%	28%	19%	18%



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland with a TV in household (n = 483)
QH65: How frequently, if at all, do you watch each of these channels?
Significance testing: Arrows and circles indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between RTÉ channels and TV3/TG4.

[1] RTÉ, TG4, and TV3 viewing are not measured by BARB. Ofcom carries out research through its annual Tech Tracker survey to measure viewing of these channels in Northern Ireland.

2.5 TV programming for viewers in Northern Ireland

The following section outlines spend and hours of programming for viewers in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English regions, provided by the BBC and the holders of the Channel 3 licences across the UK – ITV, STV and UTV (which was purchased by ITV in February 2016) .

The figures exclude Gaelic and Welsh-language programming but include some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. For information on Irish-language programming by the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) see section 1.5.

Historical financial figures have been adjusted for inflation using the CPI, which was particularly high in the period from 2007 to 2013. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the data, BBC and UTV spend figures have been combined.

Definitions

First-run originations

Programmes commissioned by, or for, a licensed public service channel with a view to their first showing on television in the United Kingdom in the reference year.

First-run acquisitions

A ready-made programme bought by a broadcaster from another rights holder and broadcast for the first time in the UK during the reference year.

Repeats

All programmes not meeting one of the two definitions above.

Spend on output

Includes all costs incurred by the broadcaster associated with making or acquiring programmes. These include both direct and indirect production costs for in-house productions and licensing costs for commissioned and acquired programmes, and excludes costs related to marketing and distribution.

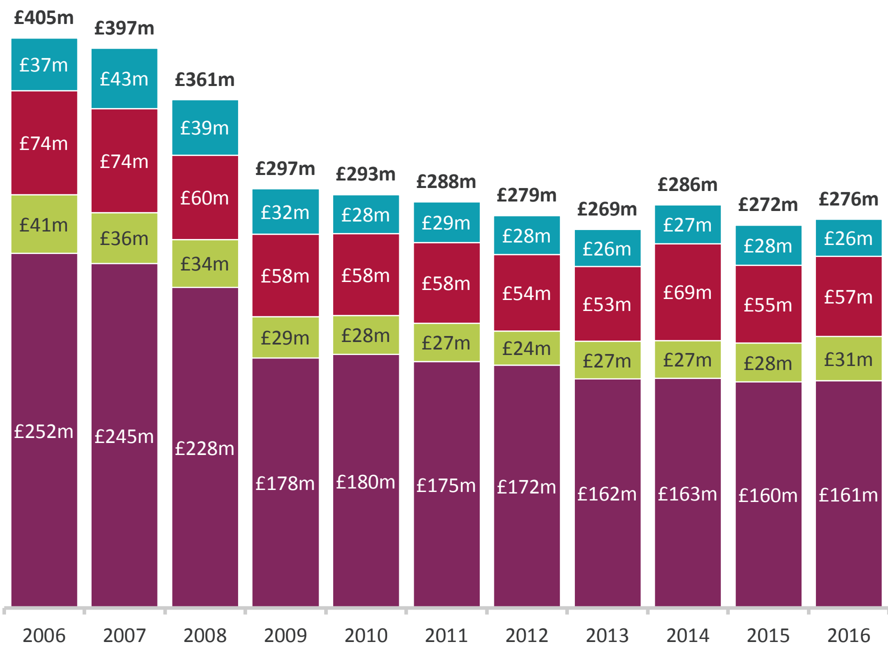
BBC and UTV real terms spend on first-run originated content for viewers in Northern Ireland increased in 2016

In 2016, £276m was spent by the BBC and ITV/ STV/ UTV on producing first-run originated programmes specifically for viewers in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English regions, up by £4m in real terms year on year.[7] However, since 2011, spend on first-run originated nations' and regions' output by the BBC and ITV/STV/UTV has fallen in real terms by £12m.

In real terms, the year-on-year spend by the BBC and UTV on first-run originated programming for viewers in Northern Ireland increased by 13.4% to £31m in 2016. The increase in spending could be explained in part by ITV's takeover of UTV in 2016. Prior to the takeover, UTV did not charge staff costs to their news programmes, allocating direct costs only. From 2016, ITV have allocated relevant staff costs to UTV news programming, consistent with their approach across the rest of the ITV network. Using estimated 2015 figures readjusted for this difference in accounting, the year-on-year change in spending on first-run originated output in Northern Ireland stands at 5.8% in real terms.

This was the largest increase across any UK nation. In contrast to the overall trend across the UK nations, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) shows that spending in Northern Ireland by the BBC and channel 3 licensees increased between 2011 and 2016, at an average of 3.1% each year.

Figure 2.14: Spend on first-run originated nations' and regions' output by the BBC/ ITV/ STV/ UTV



% change	1 year	5 year CAGR
UK	1.5%	-0.9%
Wales	-7.8%	-1.7%
Scotland	3.2%	-0.2%
Northern Ireland	13.4%	3.1%
England	0.6%	-1.6%

Source: Broadcasters. All figures are adjusted for inflation (2016 prices).
Note: Spend data for first-run originations only. BBC includes BBC One and BBC Two channels. Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. Since 2014, spend on content by ITV Border specifically for viewers in Scotland has been assigned to Scotland, with the rest of ITV Border spend attributed to England. These figures do not include spend on network content.

The BBC and UTV spent £31m on programming for viewers in Northern Ireland in 2016

Including acquisitions and repeats, the BBC and UTV spent £31m on programming for viewers in Northern Ireland in 2016. Spend by the BBC and UTV on news and other non-news/non-current affairs programming for viewers in Northern Ireland was at broadly the same levels with both accounting for just over 40% (£13m) of total spend. Current affairs accounted for the lowest proportion of total spend in 2016, at around 18% (£6m).

Figure 2.15: Total spend by the BBC/ ITV/ STV/ UTV on nations'/ regions' output: 2016

Source: Broadcasters.
Note: BBC includes BBC One and BBC Two channels. Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include spend on network content. Scotland figures include programming for viewers of ITV Border in Scotland: 76 hours of current affairs in 2016.

Content spend has increased year on year for viewers in Northern ireland

Including acquisitions and repeats, spend by BBC and UTV on nations' and regions' output for viewers in Northern Ireland increased by 13% in real terms between 2015 and 2016, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3% each year since 2011. This is in contrast to the UK wide trend, where year-on-year increases were much smaller, and there was an average decrease of 1% each year between 2011 and 2016.

In particular, spend on current affairs and news in Northern Ireland has risen. Again, the increase in spending could be explained in part by ITV's takeover of UTV in 2016, as outlined above. Using estimated 2015 figures adjusted for differences between ITV and UTV accounting methods, the year-on year-change in news spending decreases from 16% to 6% in real terms.

Spend on non-news/ non-current affairs programming for people in Northern Ireland by the BBC and UTV has also increased since 2015, by 7% in real terms. However, it has fallen by an average of 2% each year, in real terms, over the five years to 2016.

Figure 2.16: Change in total spend on nations' and regions' output, by genre and nation: 2011-2016

	UK		England		N. Ireland		Scotland		Wales	
	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR
Current affairs	9%	2%	20%	-2%	22%	19%	-16%	2%	11%	5%
News	1%	-1%	-2%	-2%	16%	5%	9%	3%	2%	-2%
Non-news/non-current affairs	1%	-2%	36%	3%	7%	-2%	5%	-2%	-18%	-3%
Total spend in 2016	**£277m**		**£161m**		**£31m**		**£58m**		**£26m**	

	UK		England		N. Ireland		Scotland		Wales	
	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR	1yr	5yr CAGR
Change in spend	**2%**	**-1%**	**1%**	**-2%**	**13%**	**3%**	**4%**	**-1%**	**-8%**	**-2%**

Source: Broadcasters. All figures are adjusted for inflation (2016 prices).
Note: BBC includes BBC One and BBC Two channels. Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include spend on network content. Spend on programming for the ITV Border region is divided between England and Scotland from 2014 onwards and attributed to England only before 2014.

The number of first-run originated hours for viewers in Northern Ireland is also up on 2015

The number of first-run originated hours produced for viewers in Northern Ireland rose by 6% (58 hours) from 2015 to 2016. The largest increase was in BBC current affairs programming, with 40 more hours broadcast in 2016 than in 2015, although there were decreases in some genres; hours fell for UTV non-news/ non-current affairs (4 hours less than 2015), UTV current affairs (4 hours fewer) and BBC news (37 hours fewer).

The distribution of programmes across genres and broadcasters in Northern Ireland remains broadly the same as in 2015. News accounts for the largest number of hours in any one genre (62% of all hours).

Figure 2.17: Hours of first-run originated nations'/ regions' output, by genre and broadcaster: 2016

Source: Broadcasters.
Note: Hours data for first-run originations only. BBC includes BBC One and BBC Two channels. Excludes hours for BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some hours of Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include hours of network content. Scotland figures include programming for viewers of ITV Border in Scotland, which was 76 hours of current affairs in 2016.

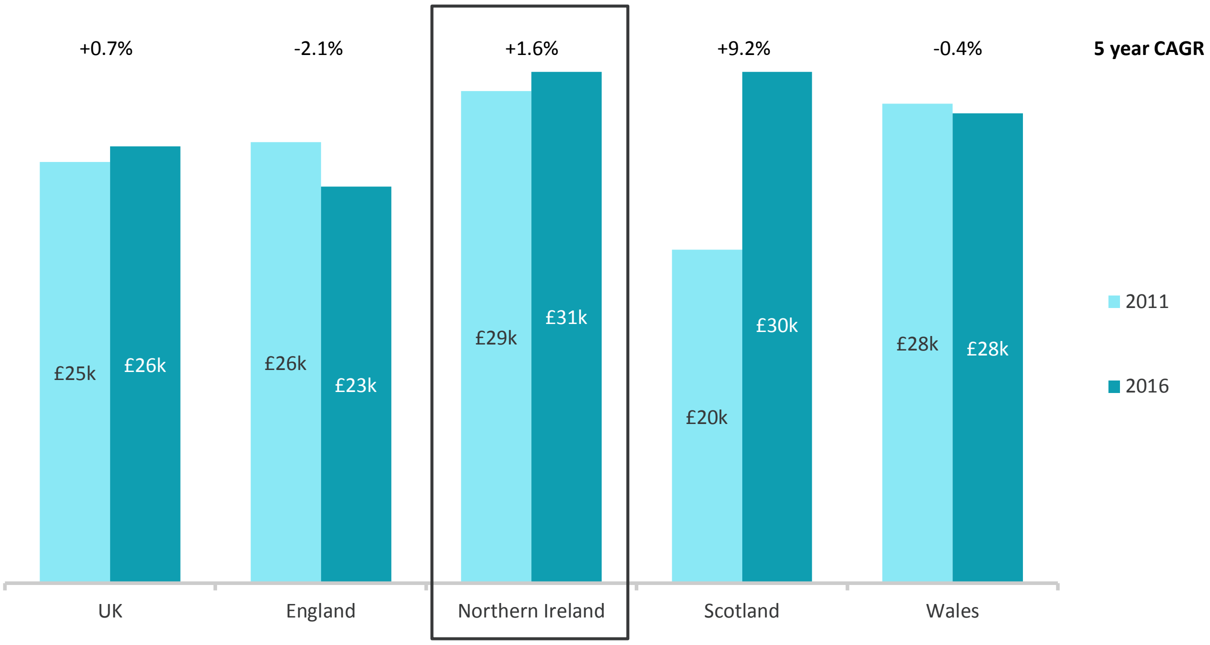
The cost per hour of first-run programming for viewers in Northern Ireland has risen since 2011

At £31,000, the cost per hour of first-run originated nations' and regions' output in Northern Ireland in 2016 was higher than the UK average (£26,000) and any other UK nation.

In real terms, over the five-year period, cost per hour has increased in Northern Ireland, rising by an average of 1.6% each year, in contrast to the UK average of 0.7%.

However, this could be related to the inclusion of staffing costs in news spend since ITV look over UTV's licence in 2016.

Figure 2.18: Cost per hour of first-run nations and regions output, by nation: 2011-2016



Source: Broadcasters. All figures are adjusted for inflation (2016 prices).
Note: BBC includes BBC One and BBC Two channels. Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include spend on network content. Scotland figures include programming for viewers of ITV Border in Scotland: 76 hours of current affairs in 2016.

2.6 Other programming in Northern Ireland

The Irish Language Broadcast Fund

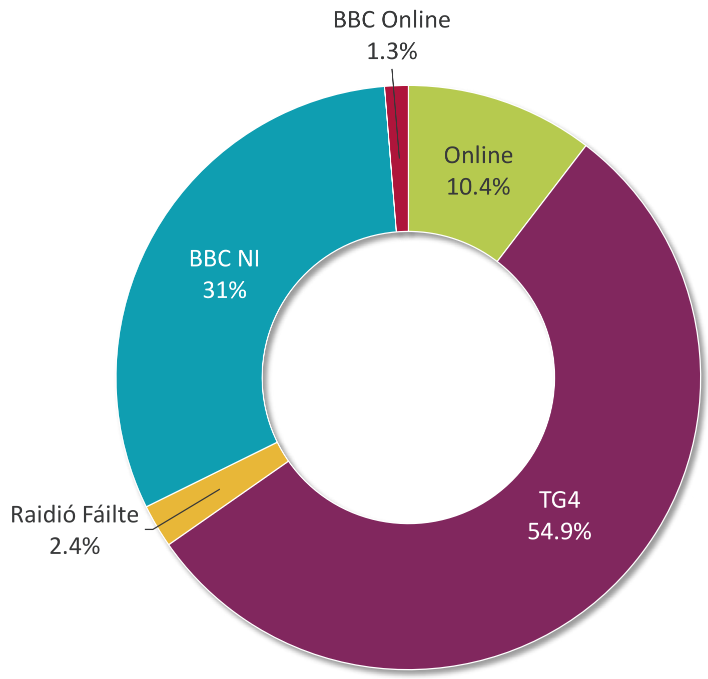
The Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) was launched in 2005.

Funding comes from the UK Government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport through the British Film Institute to Northern Ireland Screen, which manages the fund.

The first period of funding ran from 2005 to 2009. It was renewed in 2009, running until 2011 and again in 2013 for the period to 2015, with a further extension to 2016. The Fund is currently in a four-year period of funding from 2016 to 2020.

The ILBF supports a minimum of 55 hours of Irish language content every year, the majority of which is broadcast on TG4 and BBC NI.

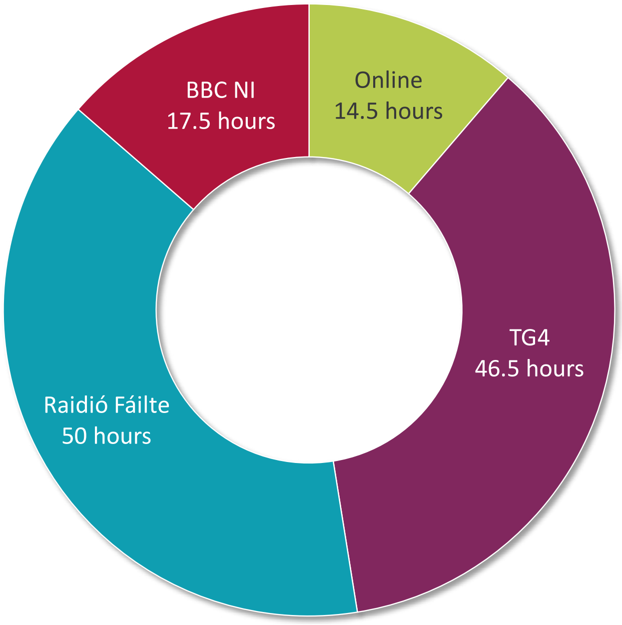
Figure 2.19: **ILBF content funding recipients, by broadcaster / platform: 2016/2017**



Source: Northern Ireland Screen

The ILBF also supports interactive content and, through a training programme, content on Raidió Fáilte. In the last financial year, more than £2.6m was spent on Irish language content. There were 32 recipients of funding (television production companies and Raidió Fáilte). To secure funding, these companies must be based in Northern Ireland and have a commitment from a broadcaster to show output.

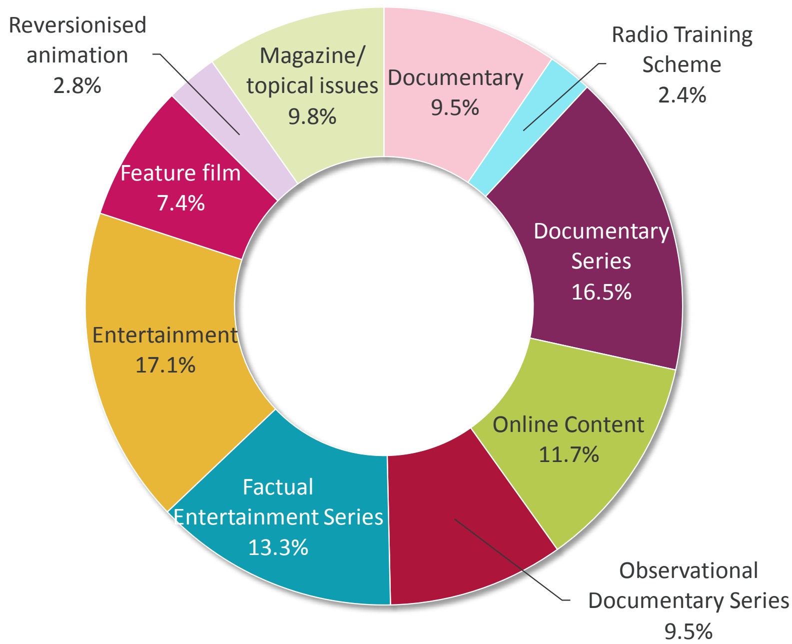
Figure 2.20: ILBF-funded hours: 2016/2017



Source: Northern Ireland Screen

Since the fund was started, the minimum language content in programming has risen from 60% to 75%. Funding is allocated to a range of genres including children's, documentary, entertainment, drama, radio and interactive content.

Figure 2.21: ILBF content funding, by genre: 2016-2017



Source: Northern Ireland Screen

Programming highlights

ILBF-funded historical documentary *Eoin Mac Néill: Fear Dearmadta 1916* was nominated for a Torc at the Celtic Media Festival.

Rocky Ros Muc premiered at the Boston Irish Film Festival and won the Global Vision Award for best documentary at the festival.

Other 2016/2017 highlights include include interactive content: *#Faduda, Meon Eile* and *Nós TV*; landmark documentary *John Philip Holland & Eithne – Idir Dhá Shaol*; new discussion series *An Focal Scoir*; and entertainment series *I Lár an Aonaigh* and *Opry an Iúir*.

ILBF objectives for 2017/18 include:

- To deliver at least 55 additional hours of Irish-language content across a range of genres to reach a weekly audience of 25,000.
- To ensure a minimum language level of 75% with emphasis on the Ulster dialect.
- To ensure maximum use of Irish-speaking cast and crew on each production.

About the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) was established to provide finance for the production of film, television and other moving image products on the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language in Northern Ireland.

Funding was secured in 2010, with the USBF making its first awards in March 2011.

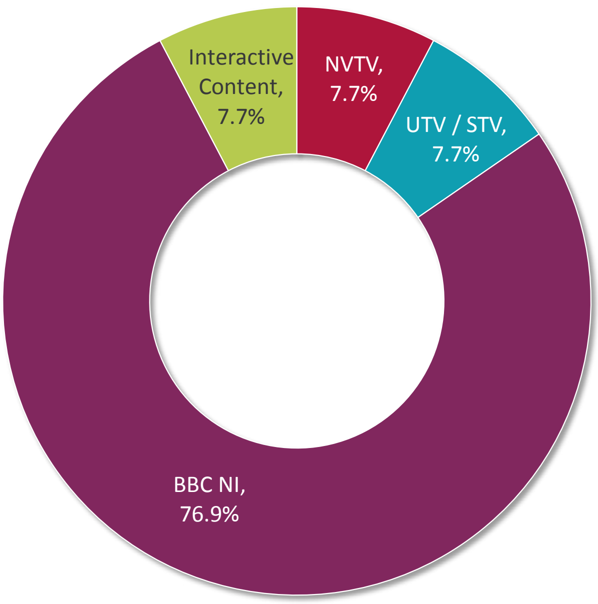
As with the ILBF, funding comes from the UK Department for Culture, Media & Sport through the British Film Institute to Northern Ireland Screen, which manages the fund.

The UK government has given a commitment to the fund of £1m per year until at least 2020.

The majority of programming funded by the Ulster-Scots broadcasting fund was aired on BBC Northern Ireland in 2016/17

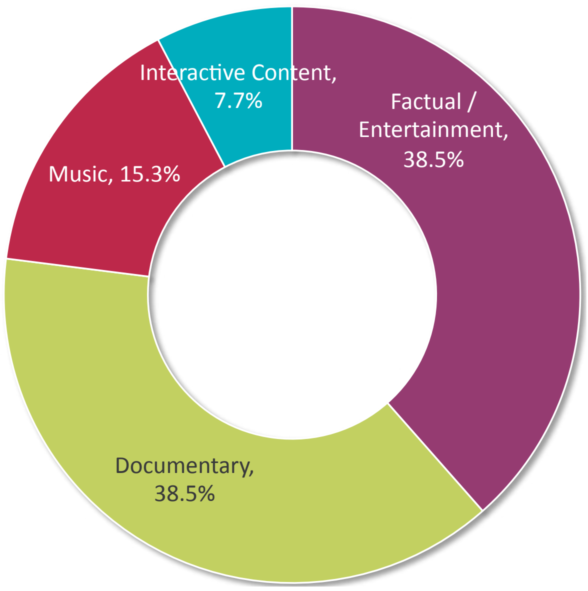
In 2016/17 eight awards were made, totalling 15.7 hours of production, and one award was made for interactive content. Twelve projects were broadcast in 2016/17 including documentaries, factual entertainment series and music content. The USBF provided over £1m in funding to these programmes, which were broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland, NVTV, UTV and STV.

Figure 2.22: USBF content funding, by broadcaster: 2016-2017



Source: Northern Ireland Screen

Figure 2.23: USBF breakdown of output, by genre: 2016-2017



Source: Northern Ireland Screen

Programming highlights

Shaping the Coast uncovered the fascinating history of the breathtaking Antrim Coast road.

Paul and Nick's Big American Food Trip Series 2 returned and was broadcast in Northern Ireland on UTV, in Scotland on STV and in the Republic of Ireland on UTV Ireland.

The Call of the Pipes followed two pipe bands, Thiepval Memorial and McDonald Memorial, in the run-up to the Belfast Tattoo.

In *In the Shadow of the Shipyard*, presenter Dan Gordon explored how the history, industry and streets of East Belfast influenced and helped shape the work of four ground-breaking Ulster playwrights – St John Ervine, Thomas Carnduff, Sam Thompson and Stewart Parker.

Objectives for 2017/18 include:

Following a strategic review and evaluation of the USBF, the objectives for the fund were updated, including the introduction of support for radio content and a new entrant trainee scheme.

- Deliver ten additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming in a range of genres.
- Deliver Ulster-Scots language programming (including radio programming) to a minimum value of 20% of the available USBF production budget each year.
- Deliver Ulster-Scots radio programming to a maximum of 10% of the available USBF production budget each year.
- Deliver online projects consistent with the aim of the USBF to a maximum of 10% of the available USBF production budget each year.
- Broadcast 90% of the USBF-funded programming within nine months of delivery.
- Reach a significant and initial audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland. This target is an average across all the programming supported by the USBF, applied to each 12-month period.

Programming reach

During 2016-17, programming supported by the ILBF and USBF, and broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland, reached an audience of 630,000, representing 37% of the total Northern Ireland population.[1]

[1] Source BBC Northern Ireland, using BARB, all individuals in Northern Ireland (age 4+) Note: This is all programming that broadcast during 2016/2017, not allocation of funding.

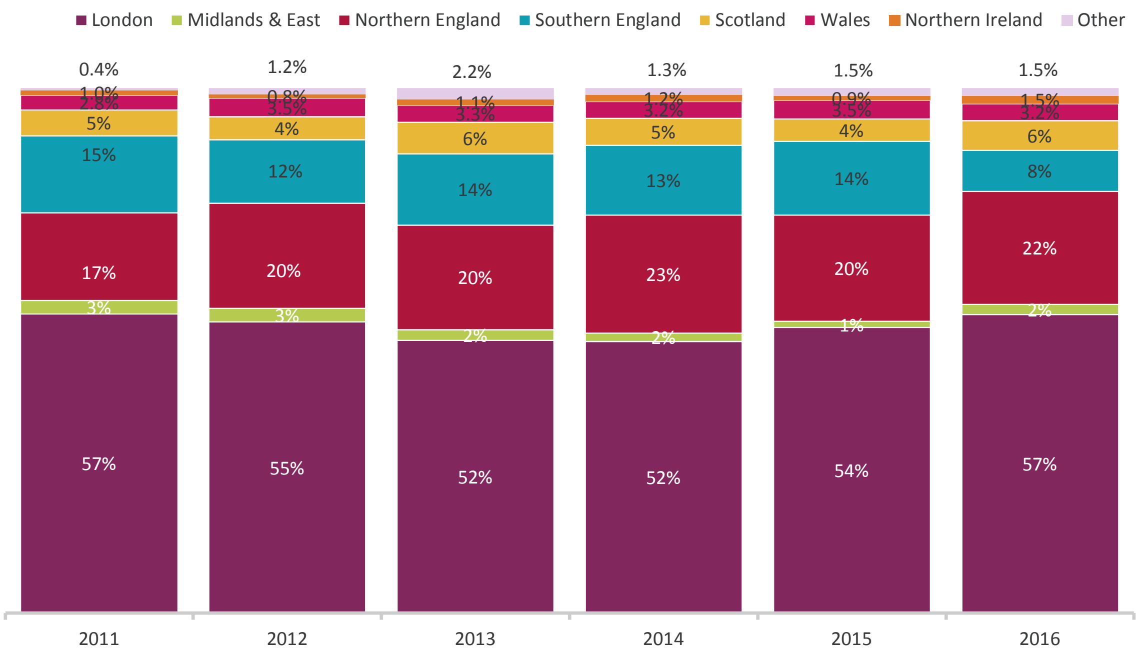
2.7 Network television productions made in Northern Ireland

Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.25 below illustrate the proportion of UK PSB network programmes (excluding news) that were produced in the nations and regions over the past five years, by expenditure and volume respectively.

In 2016, 1.5% of PSB network spend on original content, excluding news, was on Northern Ireland productions, up from 0.9% in 2015. Such productions made up 1.0% of all non-news first-run UK-originated hours broadcast across the PSB channels in 2016, up slightly from 0.9% in 2015.

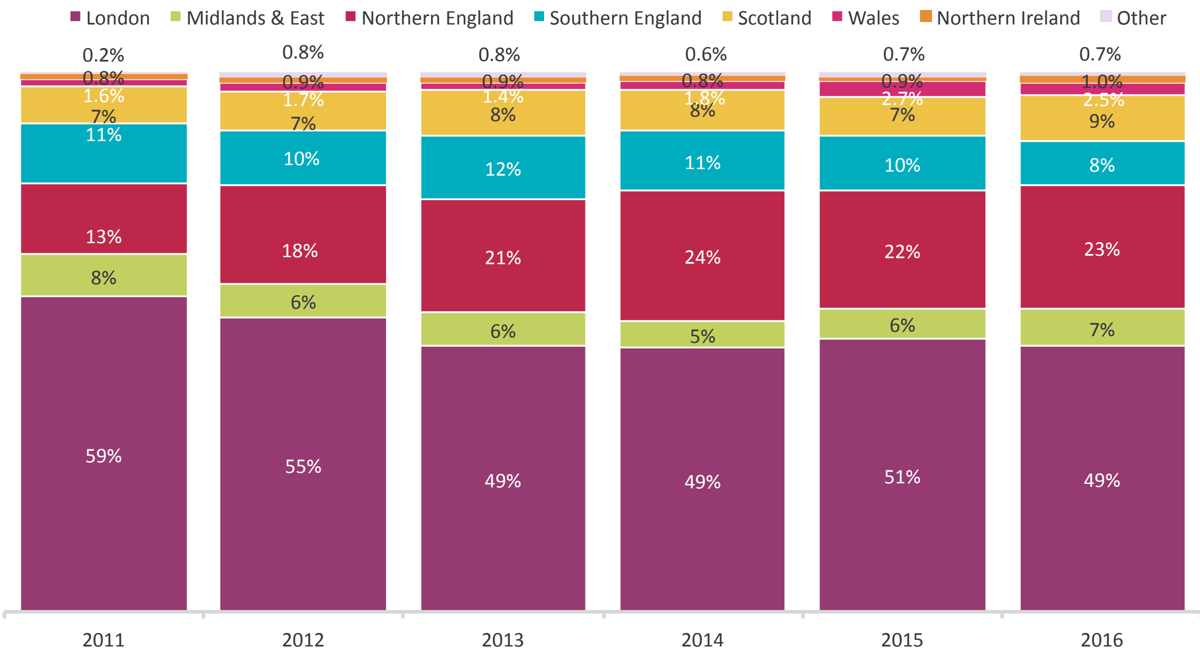
As in previous years, the majority of such spend was in London. Fifty-seven per cent of spend on new, non-news content returned 49% of all network hours.

Figure 2.24: Expenditure on originated network productions: 2011-2016



Source: Ofcom/broadcasters
Note: This expenditure does not include network news production .The category 'other' refers to programmes made by producers based within the M25 which qualify as regional productions on the grounds that 70% of total spend and 50% of off-screen talent spend was outside the M25 but not all in one macro-region, and therefore cannot be attributed to a single region. See www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/87040/Regional-production-and-regional-programme-definitions.pdf on Ofcom website for further details.

Figure 2.25: Volume of originated network productions: 2011-2016



Source: Ofcom/broadcasters
Note: These hours do not include network news production. The category 'other' refers to programmes made by producers based within the M25 which qualify as regional productions on the grounds that 70% of total spend and 50% of off-screen talent spend was outside the M25 but not all in one macro-region, and therefore cannot be attributed to a single region. See www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/87040/Regional-production-and-regional-programme-definitions.pdf on Ofcom website for further details.

3 Radio and audio content

3.1 Sector Overview

People in the UK consume a range of audio content including live radio, streamed music, recorded music and podcasts, on a range of devices.

Despite the range of ways in which audio content can now be consumed, the reach of live radio remains extremely high. Nine in ten people (89.6%) in the UK listen to the radio at least once a week – listening has remained at this level for the past five years.

While the proportion of people who listen to the radio has not changed year on year, people are listening to the radio for longer. Average listening per week increased by six minutes in the 12 months to Q1 2017 compared to the previous year, rising to 21 hours 24 minutes.

Figure 3.1: UK radio industry: key metrics

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Weekly reach of radio (% of population)	90.8%	90.5%	89.6%	90.4%	89.4%	89.5%	89.6%
Average weekly hours per listener	22.3	22.6	22.0	21.4	21.3	21.3	21.4
BBC share of listening	54.8%	54.7%	54.8%	54.5%	53.7%	53.4%	52.5%
Total industry revenue*	£1280m	£1255m	£1261m	£1203m	£1257m	£1256m	£1245m
Commercial revenue*	£509m	£492m	£498m	£471m	£516m	£522m	£526m
BBC expenditure	£760m	£751m	£751m	£721m	£730m	£722m	£707m
Community radio revenue	£11.3m	£11.3m	£11.3m	£11.1m	£11.6m	£11.7m	£11.6m
Radio share of advertising spend	3.2%	3.2%	3.3%	3.1%	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
DAB digital radio take-up (adults)	36.2%	40.3%	42.6%	46.3%	48.8%	53.4%	56.8%
Digital radio listening share	25.2%	28.4%	32.5%	36.3%	38.0%	42.2%	45.7%

Source: RAJAR (all adults age 15+) 12 months to Q1 of the following year. Ofcom calculations based on figures in BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16 (www.bbc.co.uk/annualreport), AA/Warc, broadcasters. Revenue figures are adjusted for CPI.
*Commercial and total revenue figures for 2010-2013 are not wholly comparable to 2014 and 2015 due to an amendment to the data collection methodology.

3.2 Radio station availability

There are 51 stations available on DAB in Northern Ireland.

There are 51 stations broadcasting on DAB in Northern Ireland

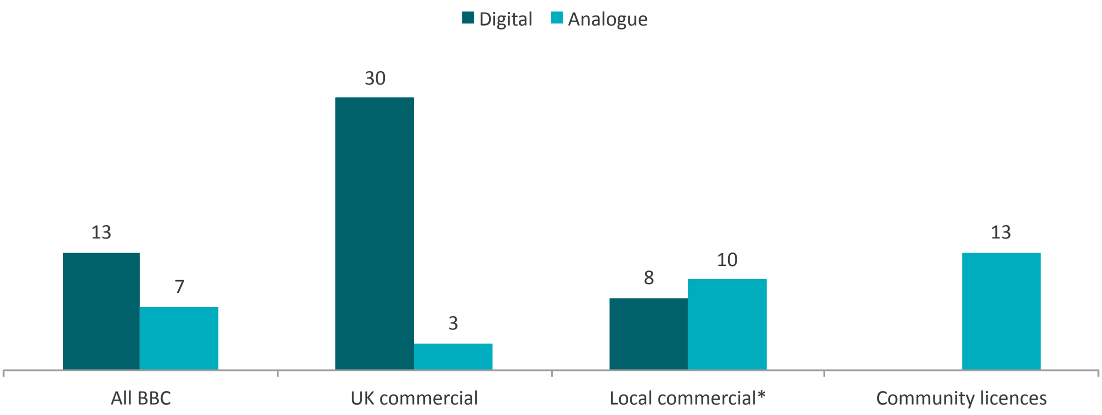
This comprises 13 from the BBC, 30 stations on the Sound Digital and Digital One multiplexes, and eight commercial stations on local DAB multiplexes.

However, not all these stations will be available on DAB to listeners across the whole of Northern Ireland.

As Figure 1.2 shows, the proportion of households within the coverage area for each DAB transmitter network (operated by the BBC, Digital One and Sound Digital Ltd) varies.

There are also 33 analogue stations available in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3.2: Radio station availability



Source: Ofcom, May 2017 *The eight digital local commercial services are carried on the local DAB multiplex. Four of these broadcast Northern Ireland-specific content.
Note: This chart shows the maximum number of stations available; local variations and reception issues mean that listeners may not be able to access all of them. Local commercial analogue includes seven separate stations broadcasting in different locations across Northern Ireland as the Q Network.

3.3 DAB coverage

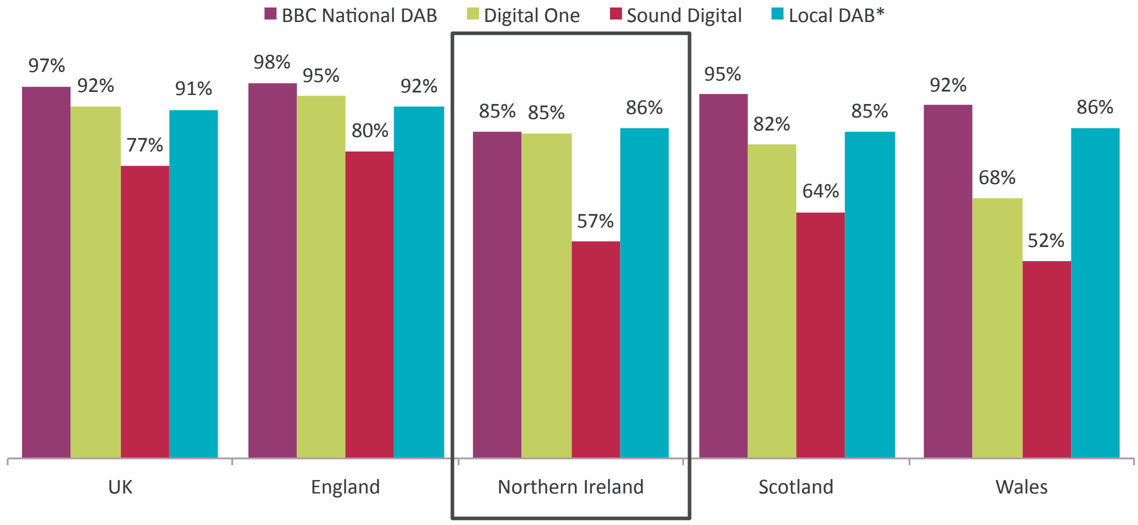
DAB services from the BBC and commercial broadcasters are available to a majority of households

DAB services from the BBC are available to 85% of households in Northern Ireland, the same as last year.

Coverage from Digital One, one of the UK-wide commercial multiplexes, can be received by 85% of households in Northern Ireland. The Sound Digital multiplex, which launched earlier this year, is currently available to 57% of households.

Coverage from the local DAB multiplexes in Northern Ireland, as well as across the UK, is currently being extended with the addition of new transmitter sites. By Autumn 2016, local DAB coverage in Northern Ireland reached an estimated 86% of households, representing a 7pp increase since 2015.

Figure 3.3: Household coverage of DAB



Source: BBC, Arqiva, Ofcom, May 2017. *Figures for local DAB are projections of expected coverage for mid-2017 based on a planned list of transmitter sites. The plan is continuing to be refined and actual coverage may differ slightly from those figures when the current programme of expansion completes during 2017.

3.4 Listening to audio content

Radio listeners in Northern Ireland spend 42 minutes more per week listening to the radio, compared to last year

Eighty-nine per cent of adults in Northern Ireland now listen to the radio, the highest reach in three years.

On average, people spend 20.8 hours listening to the radio in an average week, an increase of about 42 minutes compared to 2016.

The amount of time spent listening to any radio in Northern Ireland has increased by more than a million hours in the past year (26.4 million hours vs. 27.4 million hours).

Figure 3.4: **Average weekly reach and listening hours: 2017**

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK TOTAL
Average weekly listening	21.4 hours	20.6 hours	22.7 hours	20.8 hours	21.4 hours
Reach	89.7%	87.1%	91.6%	89.0%	89.6%

Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to Q1 2017. Reach is defined here as the number of people aged 15+ who tune to a radio station within at least 1 quarter-hour period over the course of a week.

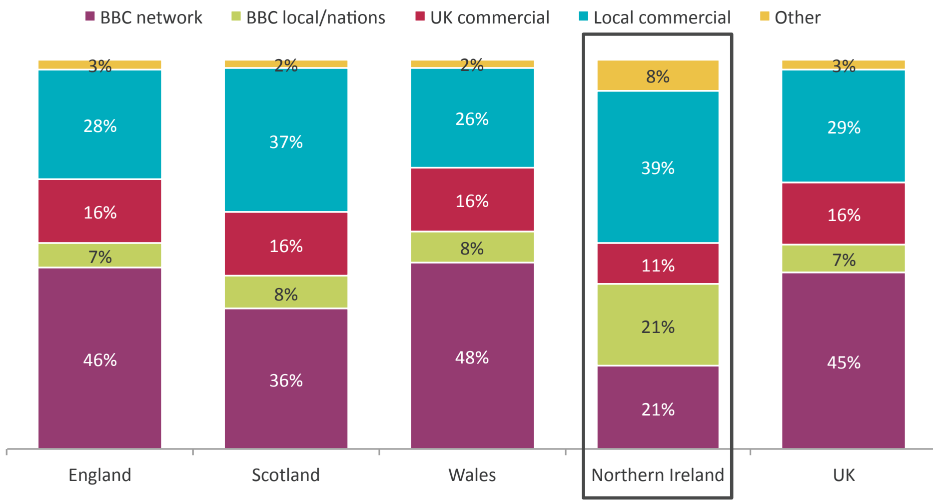
Six in ten hours of radio listening in Northern Ireland are to local radio

Sixty per cent of radio listening hours in Northern Ireland are accounted for by local services, an increase of 4pp since 2014. This is more than one and a half times greater than the UK average for listening to either local BBC or local commercial radio stations (36%) and the highest of any UK nation. Local commercial stations have a 39% share of listening hours in Northern Ireland, 10 percentage points (pp) higher than the UK average.

The nations' BBC services have a 21% share of listening hours. This is three times higher than the UK average for BBC local and nations' radio services. However, the BBC network stations have the lowest reach of all nations; less than half that of the UK average (21% in Northern Ireland vs. 45% across the UK).

Northern Ireland also has the highest proportion of listening to 'other' radio stations (8%), and around one in four radio listeners (23%) listen to these stations in a typical week compared to just 8% across the UK as a whole. This is likely to include a mix of listening to Republic of Ireland services, available via overspill stations, as well as community radio stations.

Figure 3.5: Share of listening hours, by nation

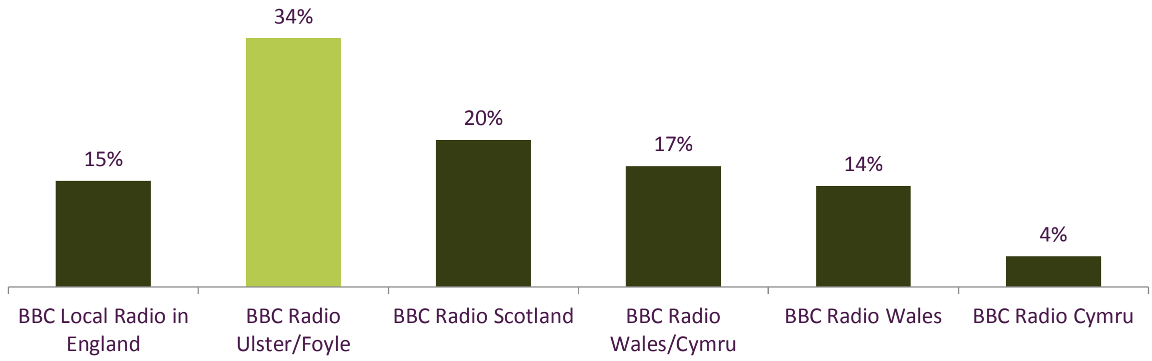


Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to Q1 2017

BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle outperforms all of the other BBC nations' services

Thirty-four per cent of adults in Northern Ireland listen to BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle each week. This is by far the highest weekly reach of any BBC nations' service, and 19pp higher than the aggregated reach of all the BBC local radio stations in England . The high reach, and the high share figures, also result in BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle having the highest average hours of all the BBC nations' services, with listeners tuning in for an average of 11 hours 42 minutes each week.

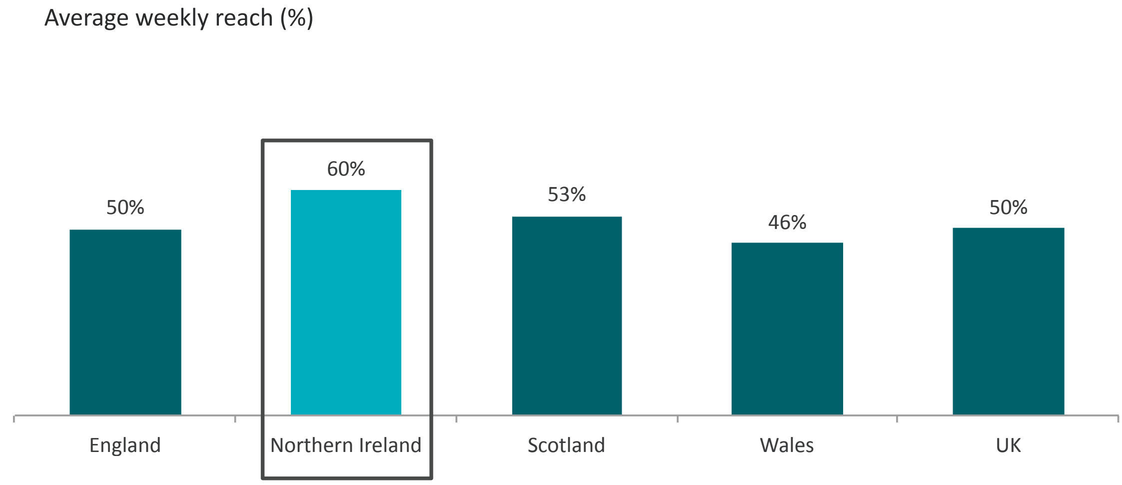
Figure 3.6: **Weekly reach for nations'/local BBC services**



Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to Q1 2017

The average weekly reach to local commercial radio in Northern Ireland in the 12 months to Q1 2017 was 60%- also the highest among the UK nations.

Figure 3.7: **Weekly reach to local commercial radio**



Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to Q1 2017

[1] In the 12 months to Q1 2017, BBC Radio Jersey was the only BBC local service with a higher reach than BBC Radio Ulster in the area in which it broadcasts (37.2%).

3.5 DAB digital radio set ownership and listening

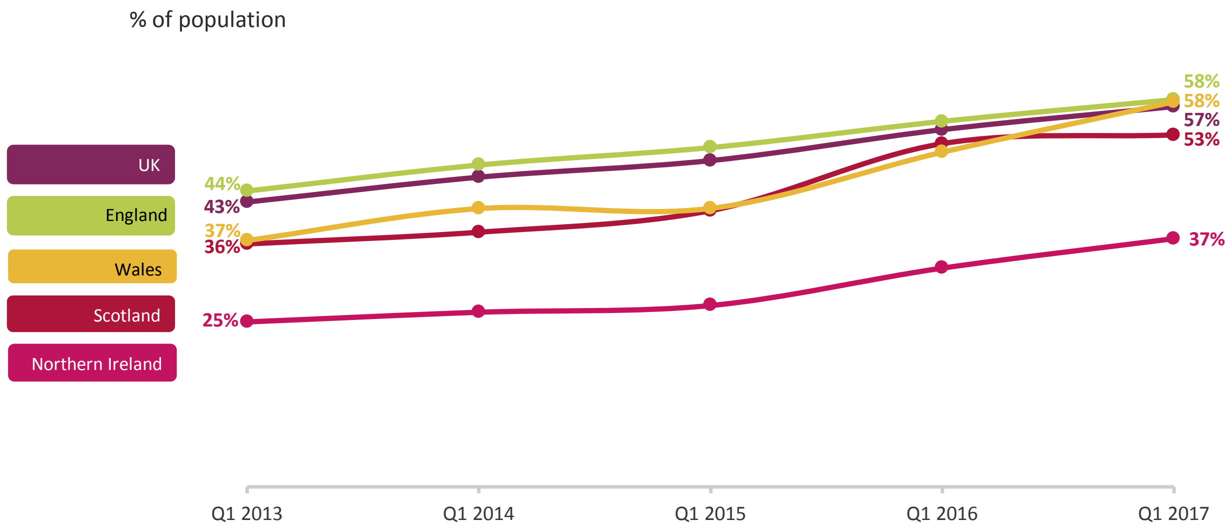
Although ownership of DAB digital radio sets is increasing, it is significantly lower than in the other UK nations

Thirty-seven per cent of adults in Northern Ireland now have a DAB radio, an increase of 4pp since 2016.

However, this is significantly lower than the other nations of the UK, especially Wales and England, where ownership currently stands at 58%.

This is likely to be influenced by the lower reach of UK-wide services in Northern Ireland, as a key selling feature of DAB is the availability of a greater range of UK-wide stations from the BBC and commercial providers.

Figure 3.8: **Ownership of DAB digital radios**



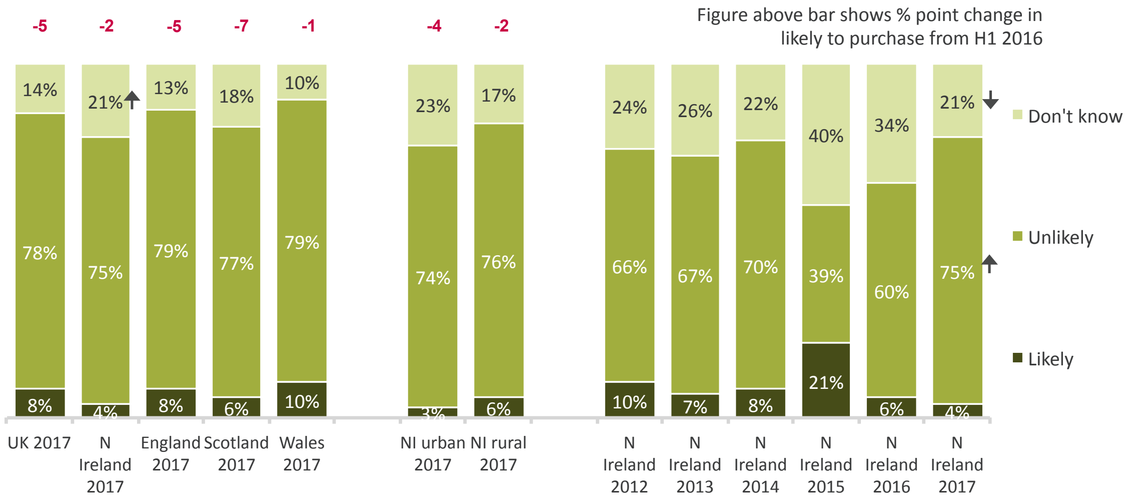
Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to Q1 Note: In previous CMR reports we have used figures from Ofcom's Tech Tracker

Less than one in ten radio listeners in Northern Ireland without a DAB set say they are likely to buy one within the next year

Four per cent of radio listeners in Northern Ireland who do not have a DAB set say they are likely to get one in the next 12 months.

There has been no positive change in the likelihood of buying a DAB set since 2016, but fewer respondents say they are unsure (21% vs. 34% in 2016) and more say they are unlikely to buy a DAB set (75% vs. 60% in 2016).

Figure 3.9: Likelihood of purchasing a DAB radio within the next year



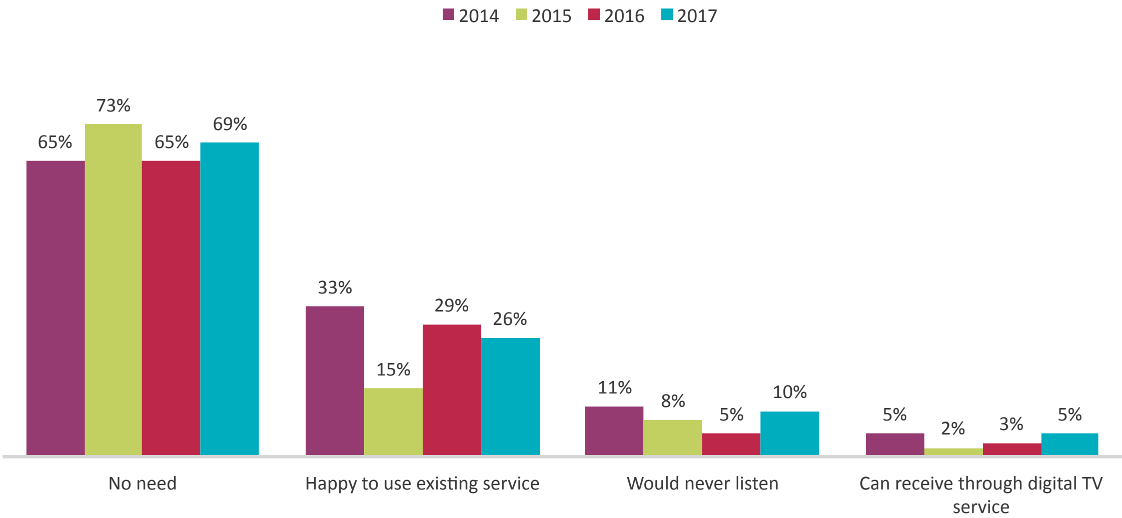
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ who listen to radio and do not have a DAB set (n = 1533 UK, 269 Northern Ireland, 800 England, 250 Scotland, 214 Wales, 131 Northern Ireland urban, 138 Northern Ireland rural, 305 Northern Ireland 2012, 300 Northern Ireland 2013, 284 Northern Ireland 2014, 271 Northern Ireland 2015, 275 Northern Ireland 2016, 269 Northern Ireland 2017).
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QP12: How likely is it that your household will get a DAB radio in the next 12 months?

Most of those not likely to buy a DAB set say they 'have no need of one'

Radio listeners stating they were unlikely to get DAB radio in the next 12 months were asked to say – without prompting – why they were unlikely to do so. More than two-thirds (69%) said it was because they did not need it, while a quarter (26%) said it was because they were happy using an existing service. One in ten stated that they would never listen to it (10%), while 5% responded that they could receive a digital radio service through their TV.

There has been no change since 2016 in the reasons given for being unlikely to buy a DAB set.

Figure 3.10: Reasons why unlikely to purchase DAB in the next year

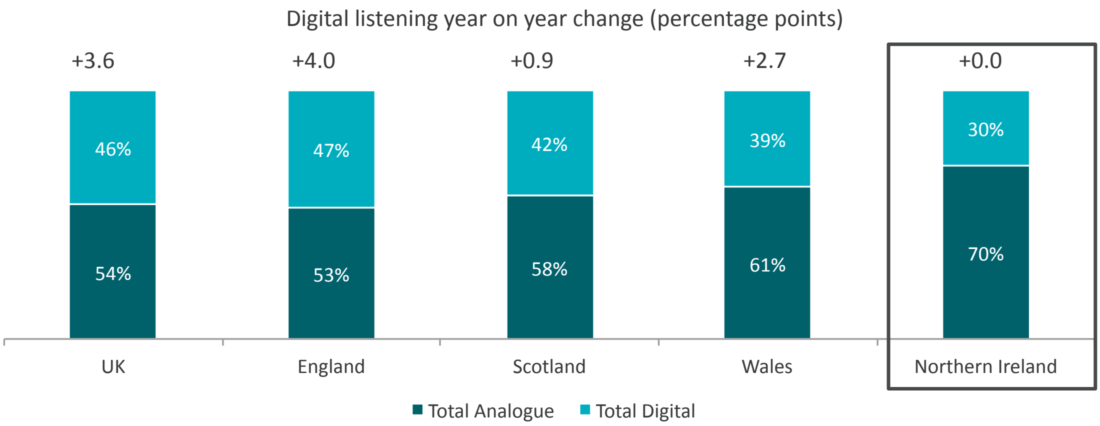


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ who listen to radio and are unlikely to get DAB radio in the next 12 months (Northern Ireland 2014 = 204; Northern Ireland 2015 = 113; Northern Ireland 2016 = 177, Northern Ireland 2017 = 206)
Responses shown for spontaneous mentions by 5% or more at a UK level
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017.
QP14: Why are you unlikely to get digital radio in the next 12 months?

Digital share of listening is lowest in Northern Ireland

Listening to radio services through all digital platforms[1] accounts for 30% of total listening hours in Northern Ireland, 16pp lower than the UK average. The majority of digital listening is through a DAB set (63%) followed by 20% through the internet and 17% through a digital TV.

Figure 3.11: Share of listening hours via digital and analogue platforms: 2015



Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), 12 months to 2017

[1] DAB, digital television and the internet.

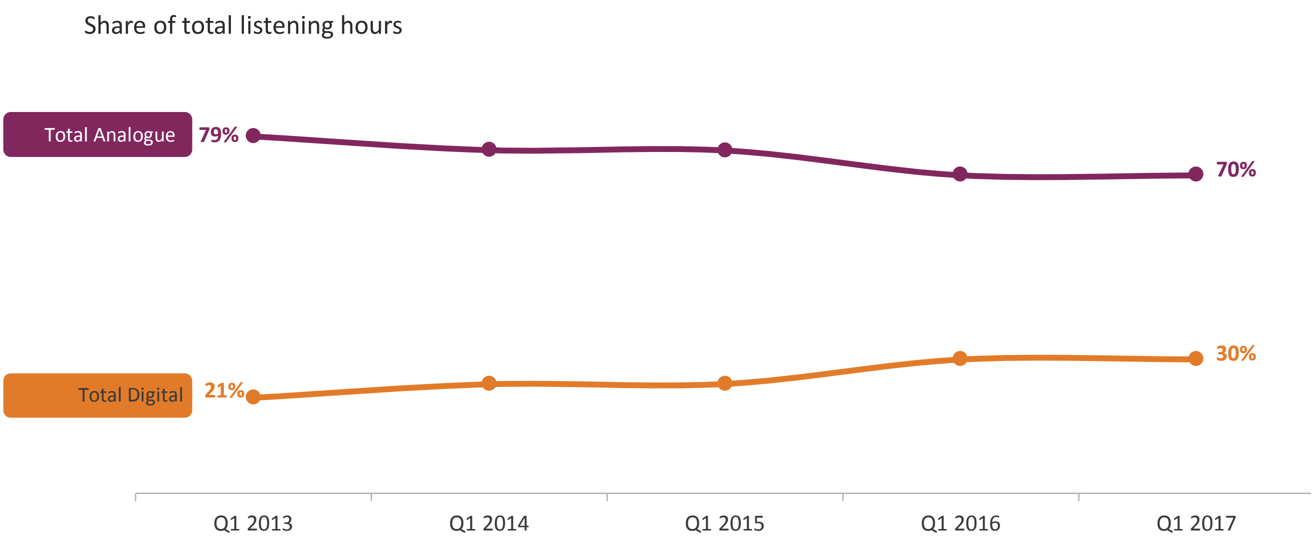
Digital's share of listening remains stable since last year

Although the proportion of listening through any digital platform has increased by 9pp since 2013, there has been no overall increase since 2016. However, there are some differences between specific digital platforms.

For example, the share of listening done through a DAB set increased by 2pp compared to the previous year (19% vs. 17%), whereas listening via the internet or through digital television both dropped by 1pp in the same period.

In the 12 months to Q1 2017, the average weekly reach of DAB in Northern Ireland was 39%, an increase of 23pp since 2010. The average weekly reach of radio stations via DTV was 14%, a decline of 2pp since 2016; it has been overtaken by the average weekly reach of listening to radio stations via the internet, at 16%.

Figure 3.12: Share of listening hours via digital and analogue platforms in Northern Ireland: Q1 2013 to Q1 2017



Source: RAJAR, all adults, 12 months to Q1 each year

Local commercial radio revenue in Northern Ireland grew by 3p in real terms per head of population in 2016, to £7.36.

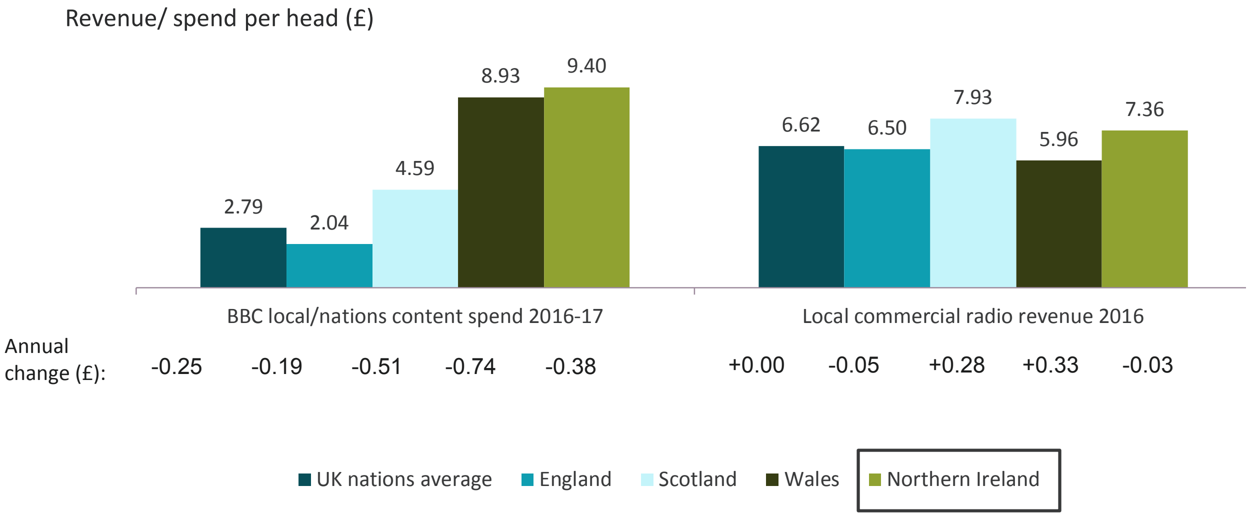
3.6 The radio industry

Local commercial radio revenue per head of population in Northern Ireland has continued to be above the UK average

This is higher than the UK average, and the second highest revenue per head across all the UK nations. Overall local commercial radio revenue in Northern Ireland in 2016 was £13.7m, up 1% in real terms on the previous year.

Spend on radio content for BBC Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle fell 3% in real terms between 2015-16 and 2016-17. However per capita expenditure was the highest in the UK at, £9.40.

Figure 3.13: Local/nations' radio spend and revenue per head of population: 2016



Source: Broadcasters
Note: The UK total shows the average for analogue local commercial radio across the four nations and therefore excludes services broadcast UK-wide. Figures are adjusted for CPI. Local commercial radio revenues at 2016 prices, BBC expenditure at March 2017 prices.

4 Telecoms and networks

4.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

The telecoms network across Northern Ireland has been upgraded in recent years so that broadband via VDSL is available to most premises.

New broadband-boosting technology put through its paces

This is enabled by the deployment of fibre-to-the-cabinet, whereby fibre-optic cables are laid from the local telephone exchange to the cabinet serving a premise, and broadband is delivered via VDSL technology over the copper wire between the cabinet and the premises. However, an issue with VDSL is that speeds slow down over the length of the copper – and a long copper line between cabinet and premise can mean that speeds can be much lower than the superfast speeds (>30Mbit/s) typically associated with fibre connections.

Two locations in Northern Ireland have been chosen to take part in the first commercial pilot of a new technology to increase the speed of fibre broadband over very long phone lines.

The scheme to test the technology, long reach VDSL, will include premises in Kesh and Pomeroy. Long reach VDSL operates at higher power levels, and makes use of a wider range of frequencies to increase broadband speeds and the distance over which they can be delivered.

The pilot builds on the success of trials which began in the UK in 2016, with Kesh and Pomeroy becoming the first of six new locations that have been picked to help BT NI Networks and Openreach (in Britain) understand how the technology might improve broadband performance in rural areas. If the pilots prove successful, they will remain in operation at the higher speed for the foreseeable future.

4.2 Service take-up

Take-up of communication services in Northern Ireland is mostly in line with UK averages

Take-up of landline and fixed broadband services in Northern Ireland, and ownership of a mobile phone, smartphone or tablet were broadly consistent with levels in the UK as a whole in 2017. Adults in Northern Ireland were as likely as those in the UK overall to use a mobile phone to access the internet (68% vs. 66% UK).

Some measures were below the UK average, however, and households in Northern Ireland were less likely to have any type of computer (80% vs. 84% UK) and less likely to have any type of internet connection (83% vs. 88% UK).

There was one significant difference between urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland: those households in rural areas were more likely than those in urban areas to have any type of broadband service and more likely to have a fixed broadband service (84% vs. 76%).

Figure 4.1: Take-up of communications services: 2017

		UK	N Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	NI urban	NI rural
Voice telephony	Landline (H)	82%	84%	82%	81%	80%	82%	88%
	Mobile phone (P)	94%	94%	95%	90%	94%	94%	95%
	Smartphone (P)	76%	76%	77%	70%	74%	76%	75%
Internet	Computer (any type) (H)	84%	80% ↓	85%	75%	81%	77%	82%
	Tablet computer (H)	58%	62%	58%	56%	61%	60%	66%
	Total Internet (H)	88%	83% ↓	89%	77%	84%	82%	86%
	Total Broadband (H)	83%	79%	84%	73%	79%	76%	84%
	Fixed Broadband (H)	82%	79%	83%	72%	78%	76%	84% ↑
	Mobile Broadband (H)	2%	1% ↓	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%
	Use internet on mobile (P)	66%	68%	68%	57%	58%	67%	69%

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2017
Notes: 1 Households with an internet connection of any description; 2 Households with a fixed broadband and/or dedicated mobile broadband (dongle/SIM) data connection (excludes households that solely use a mobile handset/s to access the internet); 3 Households that use a dedicated mobile broadband (dongle/SIM) data connection to access the internet (excludes households that solely use a mobile handset/s to access the internet); 4 Households that use a mobile handset/s to access the internet (may also have any other type of internet access).
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 495 Wales, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 493 Northern Ireland, 249 Wales urban, 246 Wales rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Wales and UK in 2017 and between Wales urban and rural in 2017.
QC1: Is there a landline phone in your home that can be used to make and receive calls?/ **QD2:** Do you personally use a mobile phone?/ **QD4:** Do you personally use a smartphone?/ **QE1:** Does your household have a PC or laptop computer?/ **QE2:** Do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet/ world wide web at home?/ **QE9:** Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?/ **QD28A:** Which if any, of the following activities, other than making and receiving voice calls, do you use your mobile for?

Total broadband take-up has remained stable in Northern Ireland since 2016

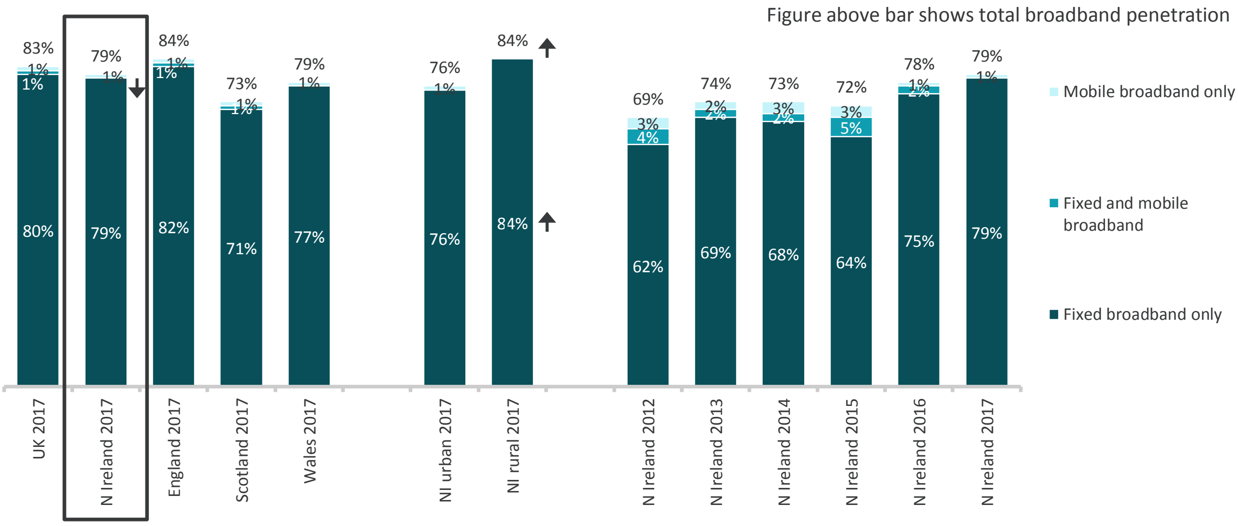
Mobile broadband

Various types of wireless high-speed internet access through a portable modem, telephone or other device.

Total household broadband take-up in Northern Ireland (79%) was very similar to that for the UK as a whole (83%) in 2017, with no change in total broadband take-up in Northern Ireland since 2016.

The proportion of households in Northern Ireland using solely a fixed broadband service in 2016 was also in line with the rest of the UK (at 79% and 80% respectively). While the incidence of UK households using both fixed broadband and mobile broadband (via a dongle/ integrated SIM card but not via a smartphone) was very low (1%), there were no households in Northern Ireland using both fixed broadband and mobile broadband via a dongle (0%).

Figure 4.2: Overall household broadband take-up, by connection type



Source: Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016, 493 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017.
QE9: Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

Broadband take-up in Northern Ireland is mostly in line with the UK average across the demographic groups

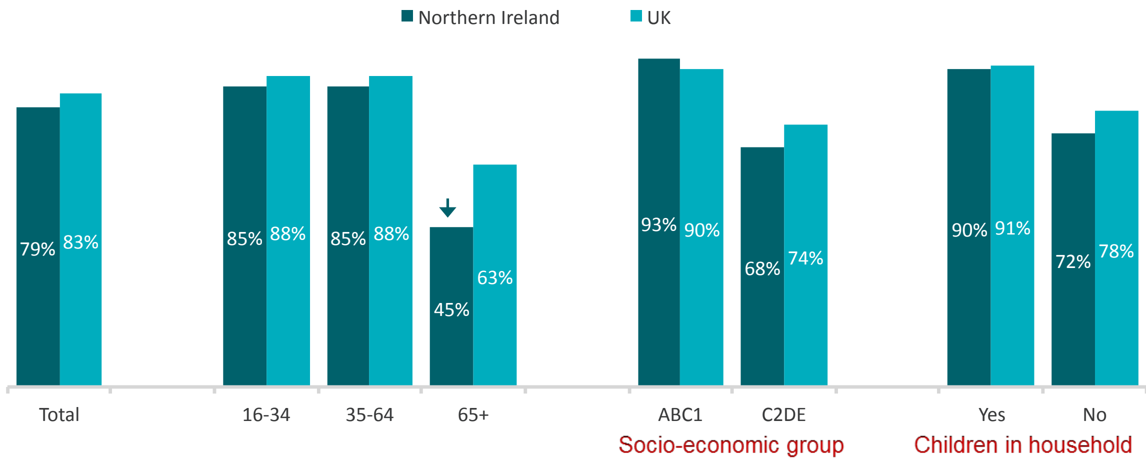
There was no significant difference between fixed and mobile broadband take-up[1] in Northern Ireland and in the UK as a whole in 2017 (79% and 83% respectively). There were also no significant differences between Northern Ireland and the UK for almost all the demographic groups shown in the chart below.

The one exception is that adults aged 65 and over in Northern Ireland were less likely than all UK adults in this age group to have broadband in their household (45% vs. 63% UK).

As with the UK, there were differences in broadband take-up in Northern Ireland by age, socio-economic group and presence of children in the household.

Adults aged 65 and over were less likely than younger adults to have broadband. Broadband take-up in Northern Ireland was 25 percentage points higher among adults in the ABC1 socio-economic groups than among those in the C2DE groups (at 93% and 68% respectively). As was the case across all of the UK households in Northern Ireland with children were more likely than those without children to have broadband (90% vs. 72%).

Figure 4.3: Overall household broadband take-up in Northern Ireland, by demographic



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n =493 Northern Ireland, 152 16-34s, 247 35-64s, 94 65+, 214 ABC1, 277 C2DE, 185 children in home, 308 no children in home)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 for each measure.
QE9: Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

[1] This figure includes fixed and dedicated mobile broadband (via dongle/SIM) access but excludes access on mobile handsets.

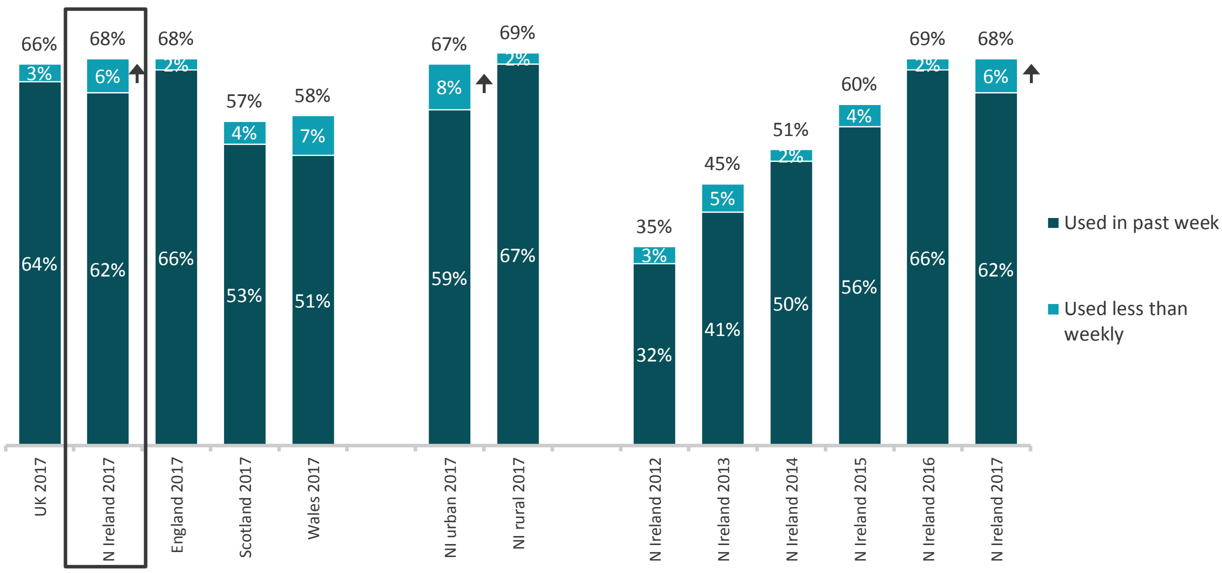
Over two thirds of adults in Northern Ireland had been online using their mobile phone in the previous week

Sixty eight per cent of adults in Northern Ireland said they had used their mobile phone to access the internet, with almost all those respondents saying they had done so in the previous week (62% of all adults).

These figures for Northern Ireland were largely unchanged since 2016, and in line with the UK average in terms of overall use of a mobile phone to go online.

In 2017, adults in urban Northern Ireland were as likely as those in rural areas to say they had used their mobile phone to go online.

Figure 4.4: **Proportion of adults who use a mobile phone to access the internet**



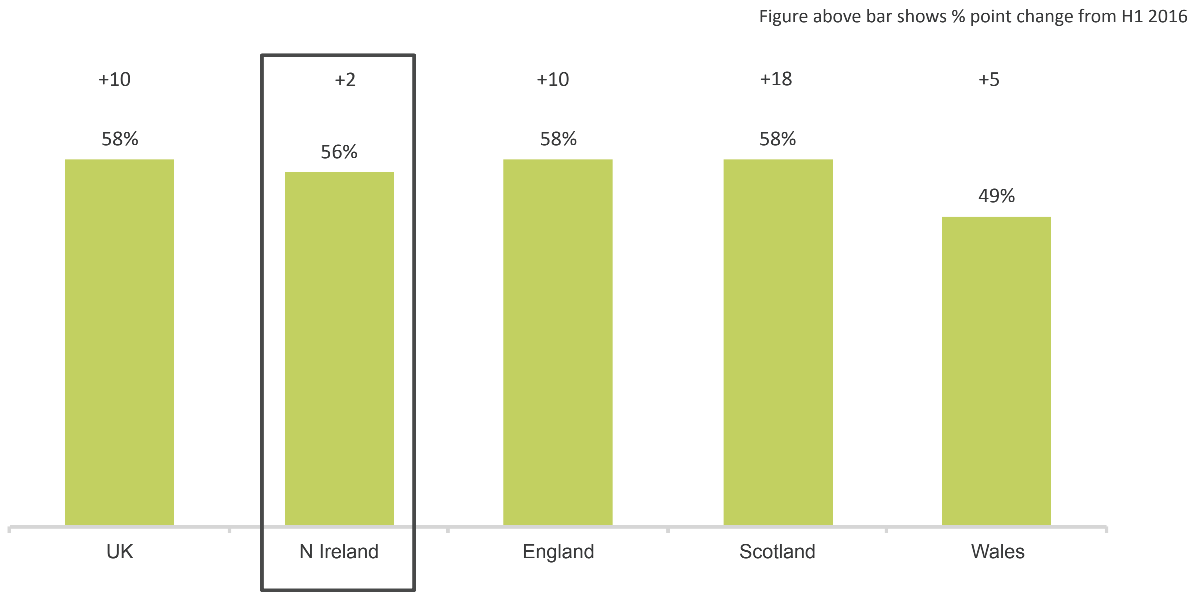
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural,508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016, 493 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017.
QD28A: Which, if any, of the following activities, other than making and receiving calls, do you use your mobile for?/
QD28B: And, which of these activities have you used your mobile for in the last week?

4G take-up in Northern Ireland is now in line with the UK average

More than half (56%) of adults in Northern Ireland said they had a 4G mobile service in 2017, unchanged since 2016 and in line with the UK average (58%).

In 2016, 4G take-up in Northern Ireland was above the UK average, but increases in other nations have led to an overall increase for the UK compared to a stable picture in Northern Ireland.

Figure 4.5: Take-up of 4G mobile services, by nation



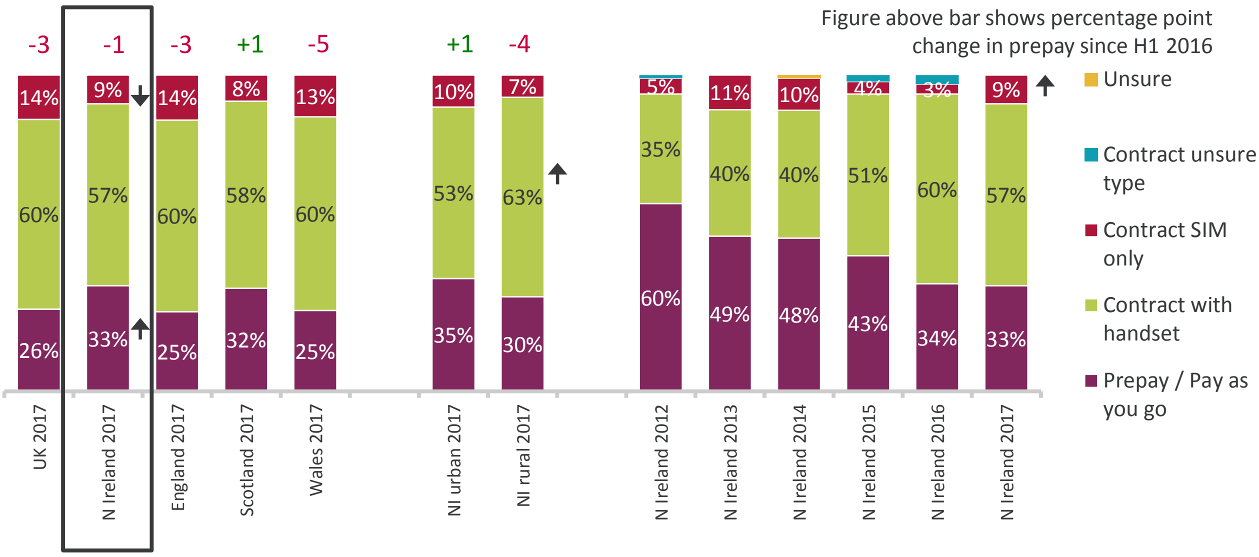
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland , 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017. A circle round the +/- figure above the chart indicates any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland.
QD41. Do you have a 4G service? This is a service that enables faster mobile internet access

Mobile users in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK average to have a pre-pay mobile phone service

In 2017, 57% of mobile users in Northern Ireland said they 'most often' used a pay-monthly contract package (with handset), while a third (33%) used a pre-pay phone and 9% had a SIM-only pay monthly package. Mobile users in Northern Ireland are more likely than in 2016 to use a SIM-only pay monthly package (9% vs. 3% in 2016), with no other significant changes.

Compared to mobile users in the UK overall in 2017, those in Northern Ireland are more likely to use a pre-pay mobile phone service (33% vs. 26%) and less likely to have a SIM-only pay monthly package (9% vs. 14%). Mobile users in rural Northern Ireland are more likely than those in urban areas to use a pay-monthly contract package with handset (63% vs. 53%).

Figure 4.6: Type of mobile subscription



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3471 UK, 457 Northern Ireland, 2099 England, 464 Scotland, 451 Wales, 236 Northern Ireland urban, 221 Northern Ireland rural, 463 Northern Ireland 2012, 463 Northern Ireland 2013, 465 Northern Ireland 2014, 456 Northern Ireland 2015, 446 Northern Ireland 2016, 457 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QD11: Which of these best describes the mobile package you personally use most often?

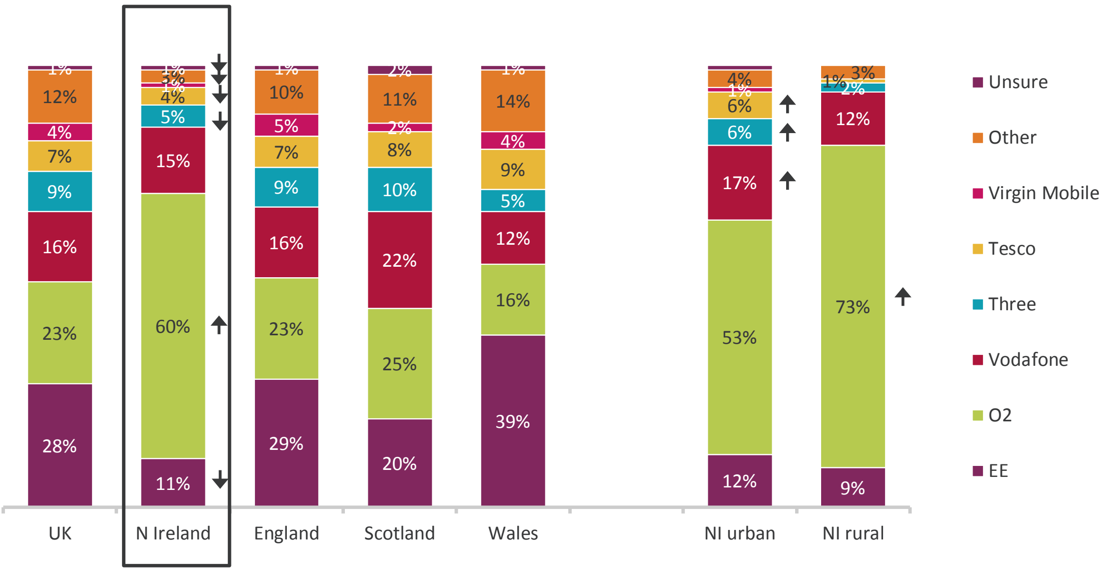
More than half of mobile users in Northern Ireland say that O2 is the mobile network provider they use 'most often'

In 2017, 60% of mobile users in Northern Ireland said that O2 was the network they used most often, compared to just under a quarter (23%) of all UK mobile users, in line with previous years.

Vodafone was the second most frequently-used mobile network provider in Northern Ireland (15%) in line with the UK average (16%). Mobile users in Northern Ireland were less likely than all UK mobile users to use EE (11% vs. 28%) and also less likely to use Three, Tesco Mobile and Virgin Mobile.

Mobile users in rural areas of Northern Ireland were more likely than those in urban areas to use O2 (73% vs. 53%) while those in urban areas were more likely to use Vodafone (17% vs. 12%), Three (6% vs. 2%) or Tesco Mobile (6% vs. 1%).

Figure 4.7: Mobile network provider used 'most often'

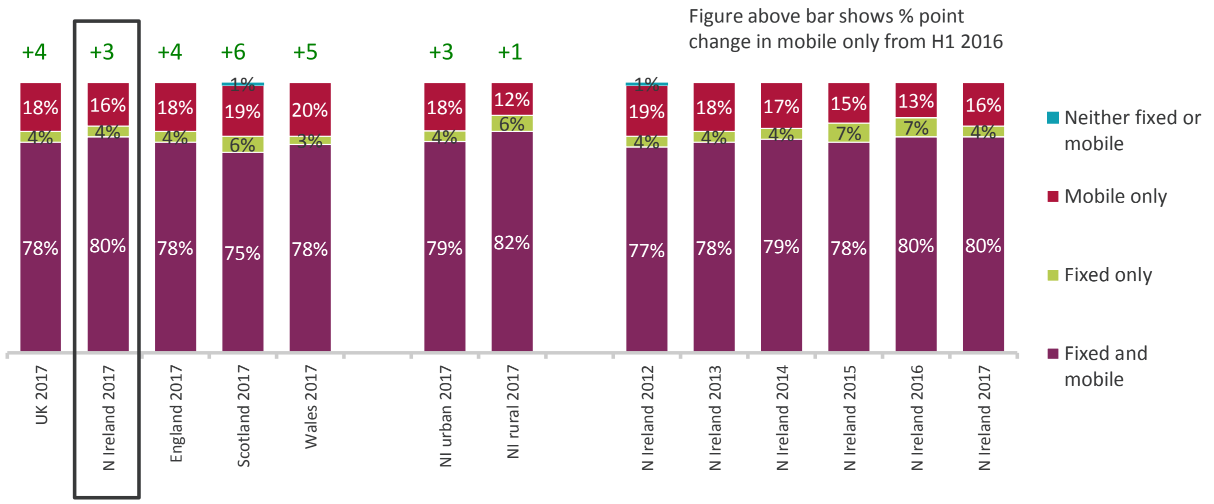


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3471 UK, 464 Scotland, 2099 England, 451 Wales, 457 Northern Ireland, 231 Scotland urban, 233 Scotland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017.
QD10: Which mobile network do you use most often?

The number of mobile-only households in Northern Ireland is unchanged since 2016, and is in line with the UK average

Four in five households in Northern Ireland (80%) used both fixed and mobile telephone services in 2017. Four per cent of households had access to a fixed line only, and 16% only had access to a mobile phone. There were no significant changes in any of these figures since 2016, and no significant differences between Northern Ireland and the UK overall, or between households in urban or rural areas of Northern Ireland.

Figure 4.8: Cross-ownership of household telephony services



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 495 Wales, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 493 Northern Ireland, 249 Wales urban, 246 Wales rural, 513 Wales 2012, 492 Wales 2013, 491 Wales 2014, 496 Wales 2015, 289 Wales 2016, 495 Wales 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Wales and UK in 2017, between Wales urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Wales 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Wales, urban and rural.
QC1: Is there a landline phone in your home that can be used to make and receive calls?/ QD1: How many mobile phones in total do you and members of your household use?

4.3 Satisfaction with telecoms services

Fixed broadband users in Northern Ireland are more likely than all UK users to be 'very satisfied' with their overall fixed broadband service

More than eight in ten broadband users in Northern Ireland (81%) were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their overall broadband service in 2017.

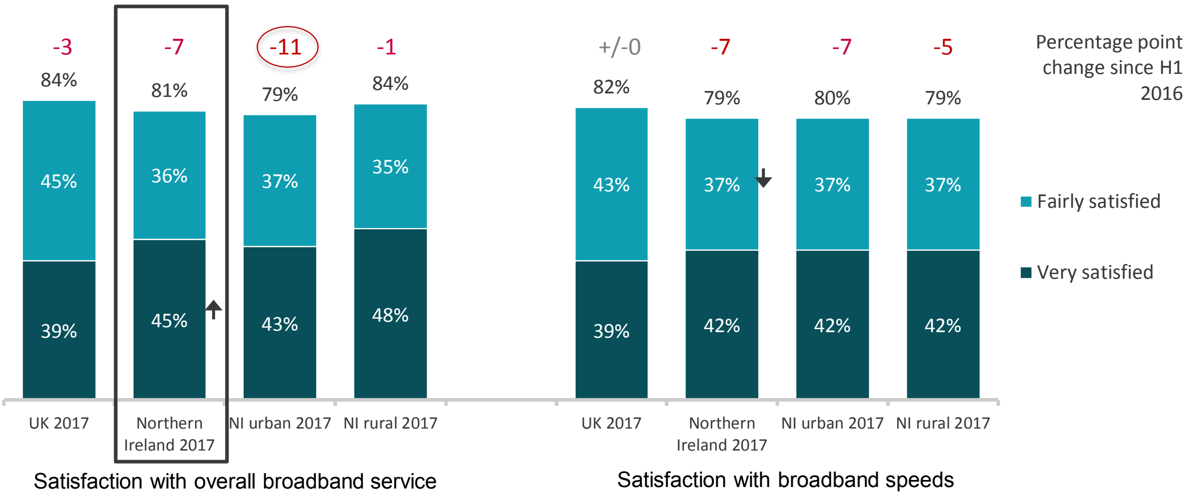
This figure is broadly comparable to the UK average (84%). There were 8% of respondents in Northern Ireland that were either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with their overall service, comparable to the UK as a whole.

Within the overall satisfaction measure, broadband users in Northern Ireland were more likely to be 'very' satisfied compared to the UK measure (45% vs. 39%) and less likely to be 'fairly' satisfied (36% vs. 45%).

Overall satisfaction with fixed broadband speeds in Northern Ireland was also comparable to the UK as a whole (82% in Northern Ireland vs. 79% in UK), with no significant change in this measure in Northern Ireland, or in the UK overall, between 2016 and 2017.

Although there was no significant difference in overall levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with broadband services in rural and urban areas of Northern Ireland, rural users were more likely to be 'very' dissatisfied than urban users for both their overall broadband service (5% vs. 1%) and with their broadband speed (9% vs. 2%).

Figure 4.9: **Satisfaction with overall service and speed of fixed broadband connection**



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ with a fixed broadband connection at home (n = 2928 UK, 375 Northern Ireland, 180 Northern Ireland urban, 195 Northern Ireland rural)
QE8A/B: Thinking about your fixed broadband internet service, how satisfied are you with (main supplier) for the overall service/ for the speed of your service while online (not just the connection)?
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017

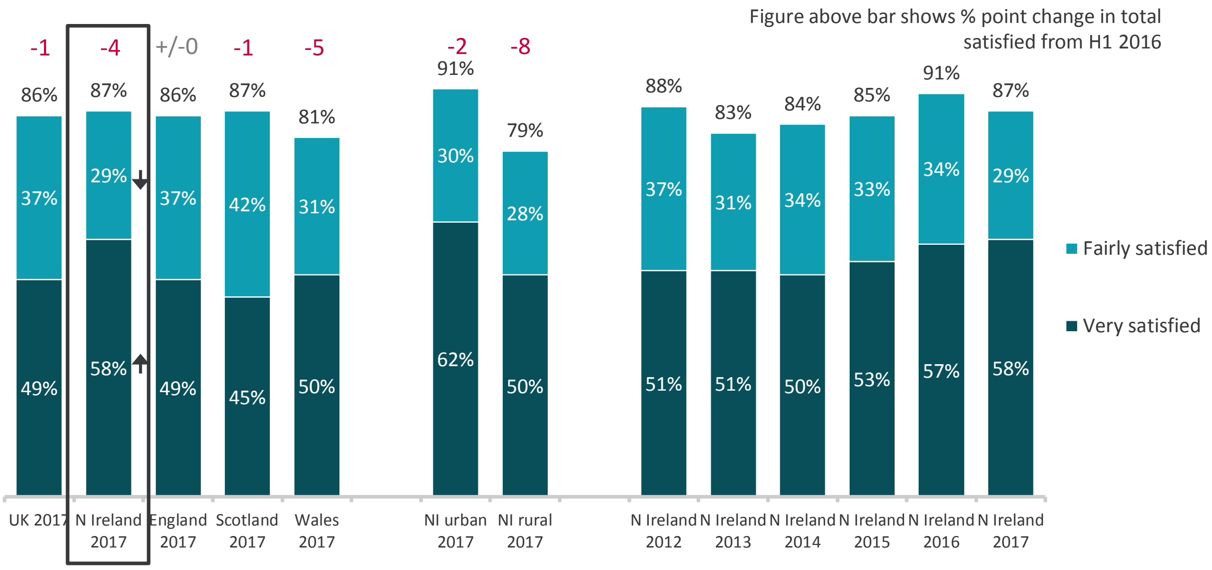
Mobile phone users in rural Northern Ireland are less satisfied with their mobile phone reception

Around nine in ten (87%) mobile phone users in Northern Ireland were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their mobile reception in 2017, in line with the UK average (86%) and unchanged since 2016.

Within the overall satisfaction measure, mobile phone users in Northern Ireland were more likely to be 'very' satisfied compared to the UK measure (58% vs. 49%) and less likely to be 'fairly' satisfied (29% vs. 37%).

Mobile phone users in urban areas of Northern Ireland were more likely than those in rural areas to say they were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their mobile reception (91% vs. 79%), while users in rural areas of Northern Ireland were more likely to say they were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied (18% vs. 4%).

Figure 4.10: Satisfaction with reception of mobile service



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3471 UK, 457 Northern Ireland, 236 Northern Ireland urban, 221 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017.
QD21J: Thinking about your mobile phone service only, how satisfied are you with (main supplier) for reception/ accessing network?

4.4 Consumer experience of mobile data services

New research methodology to capture consumers' experience of mobile services

In 2016 Ofcom piloted a new methodology to measure the consumer experience of using mobile services across the UK.

This approach involves establishing a panel of UK consumers who install an Ofcom-branded research app on their Android smartphone.

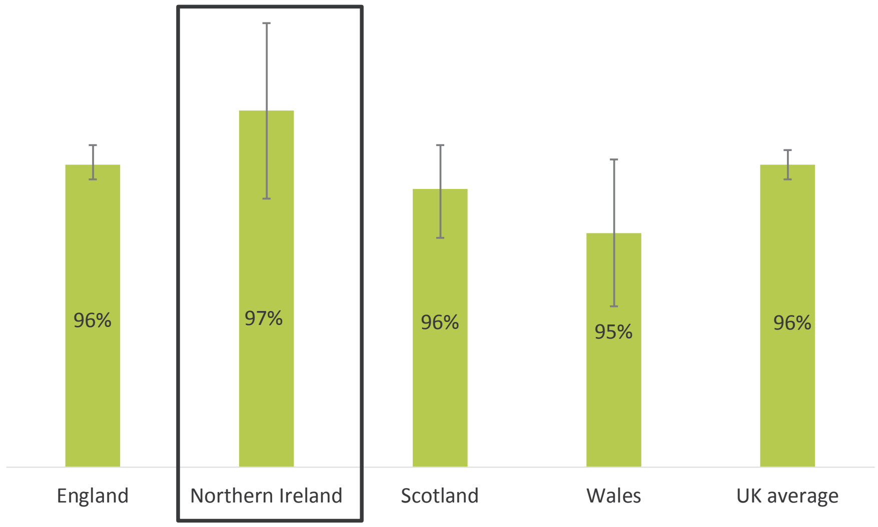
The app, provided by our technical partner P3, passively measures the consumer experience of using mobile services as panellists use their phone.

Data service availability for 4G Android users in Northern Ireland is comparable to the UK average

The app records whether people can use their data service when they want to. This is measured by running an automated test, which attempts to download a small file and logs whether this can be done successfully, every 15 minutes.

Figure 1.11 shows data service availability for 4G users, i.e., the proportion of instances when 4G users could access a mobile network and successfully download data. 4G users are those who can access 4G technology using their mobile phones. Overall, on around 96% of occasions, users could access a mobile network (either 2G, 3G or 4G technology) and successfully download data. The confidence intervals (showing the range of values in which the true average will sit to a 95% level of confidence) for each nation overlap, and this therefore shows that the figure for Northern Ireland (97%) is in line with the overall UK average.

Figure 4.11: Data service availability for 4G users



Source: Ofcom mobile research app data 2016
Base sizes: England (1,915) Northern Ireland (110) Scotland (290) Wales (242)
Please note: The line within each bar shows the 95% confidence interval around the average

5 Internet and online content

5.1 Internet take-up

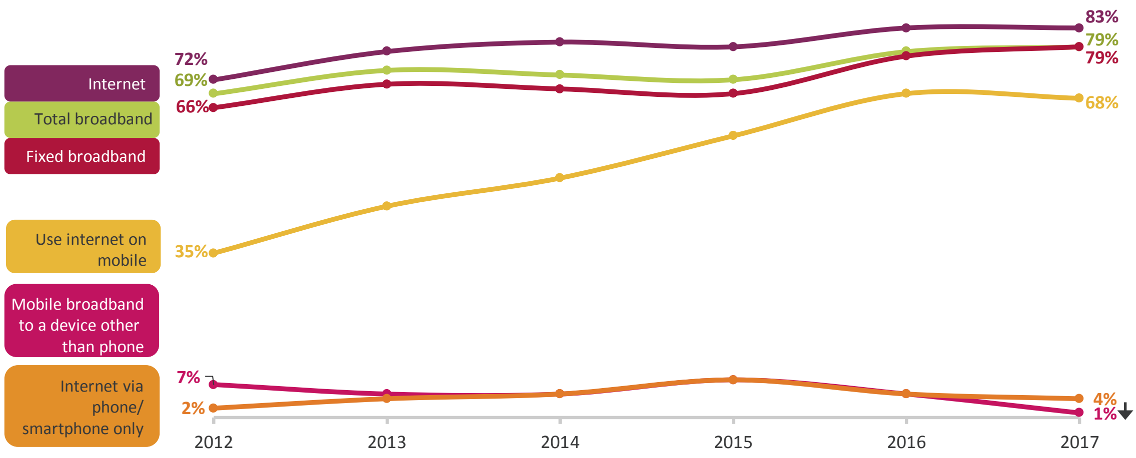
More than eight in ten households in Northern Ireland have access to the internet

In 2017, more than eight in ten (83%) households in Northern Ireland have access to the internet.[1] Internet take-up levels in Northern Ireland are statistically unchanged since 2016.

Almost eight in ten households in Northern Ireland (79%) have access to fixed broadband at home, and two-thirds (68%) of adults in Northern Ireland use the internet through a mobile phone, both figures unchanged since 2016.

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland accessing the internet exclusively through a mobile phone or smartphone remains stable at 3%, while mobile broadband to a device other than a phone has declined among households in Northern Ireland since 2016 (from 5% to 1%).

Figure 5.1: Internet take-up, Northern Ireland: 2010-2017



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker. Data from January-February each year
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 99% confidence level between Wales 2016 and 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 495 Wales 2017)
Note 1: 'Internet' includes access at home via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone, tablet etc.
Note 2: 'Total broadband' includes the following at home – fixed broadband (via phone line or cable service), mobile broadband (via a USB stick or dongle, or built-in connectivity in a laptop/netbook/tablet with a SIM), tethering (via mobile phone internet connection on laptop/tablet), mobile broadband wireless router (via 3G or 4G mobile network, which can be shared between devices).
Note 3: 'Fixed broadband' includes ADSL, cable and fibre services – perhaps using a Wi-Fi router. This includes superfast broadband services.
Note 4: 'Mobile broadband' is connecting a device using a USB stick or dongle, or built-in connectivity in a laptop or netbook or tablet computer with a SIM card.
Note 5: 'Use internet on mobile' is the proportion of adults who use a mobile phone for any of the following activities: instant messaging, downloading apps or programs, email, internet access, downloading video, video streaming, visiting social networking sites.

[1] This includes internet access via broadband or mobile phone. Incidences of narrowband are too low to report but would still count as 'internet access'.

5.2 Internet-enabled devices

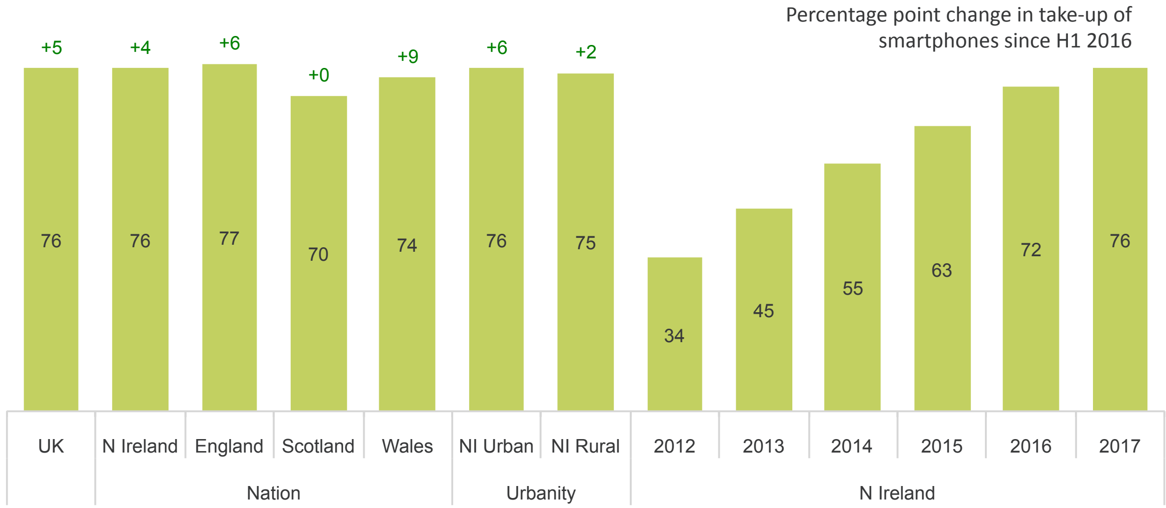
Three-quarters of adults in Northern Ireland personally use a smartphone

In 2017, three-quarters (76%) of adults in Northern Ireland personally use a smartphone, in line with the UK overall (76%) and not significantly changed since 2016.

However, the proportion of adults using a smartphone has more than doubled over the past five years.

Smartphone ownership does not vary significantly by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland.

Figure 5.2: Take-up of smartphones in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 493 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QD24B: Do you personally use a smartphone? A smartphone is a phone on which you can easily access emails, download files and applications, as well as view websites and generally surf the internet. Popular brands of smartphone include BlackBerry, iPhone and Android phones such as the Samsung Galaxy.

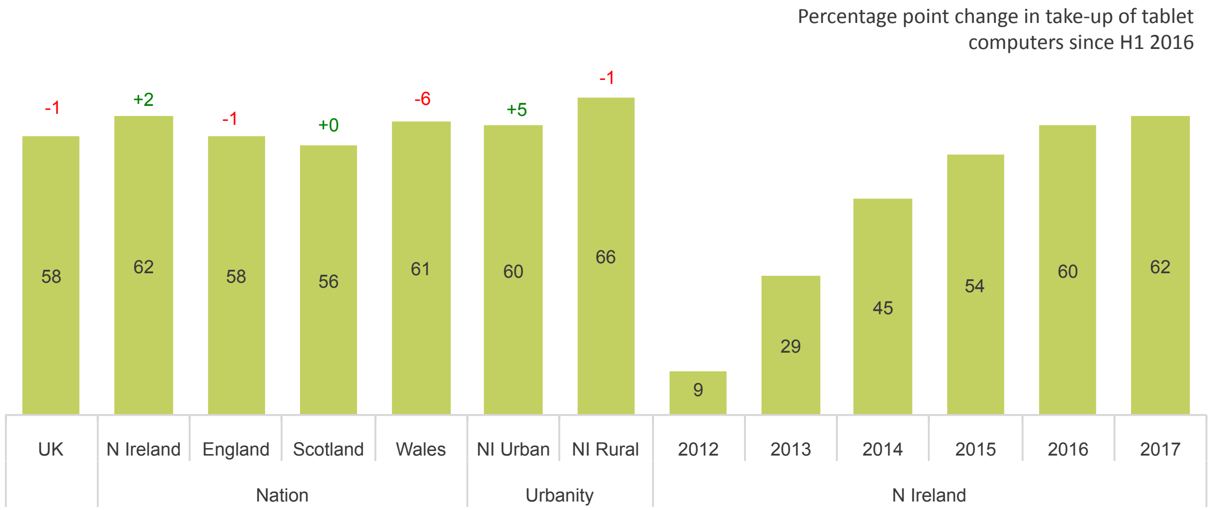
Six in ten households in Northern Ireland own a tablet, in line with the UK average

Six in ten (62%) households in Northern Ireland own a tablet computer in 2017, in line with the UK average (58%). This figure is unchanged since 2016.

Tablet ownership does not vary significantly by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland.

As with the UK overall, take-up of multiple tablets in Northern Ireland is increasing. In 2017, around half (51%) of households with a tablet said they had at least two or more tablets, an increase from 44% in 2016.

Figure 5.3: **Take-up of tablet computers in Northern Ireland**

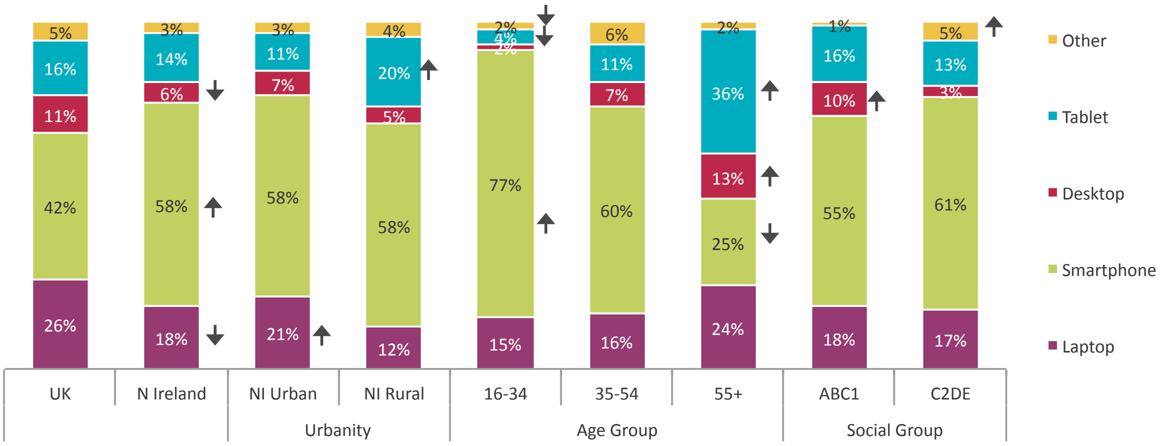


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3743 UK, 493 Northern Ireland, 2245 England, 510 Scotland, 495 Wales, 251 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural,511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016, 493 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017 and at the 99% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2016 and 2017. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level between 2016 and 2017 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QE1: Does your household have a PC, laptop, netbook or tablet computer?

A majority of internet users in Northern Ireland say a smartphone is their most important device for going online

Nearly six in ten (58%) internet users[1] in Northern Ireland said that their smartphone was their most important device for going online, at home or elsewhere, more than among all UK internet users (42%). With the exception of internet users aged 55 and over, all demographic groups considered the smartphone to be their most important device for internet access; it was cited by 77% of 16-34s compared to 25% of over-55s.

Figure 5.4: Most important device for accessing the internet in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = 3221 UK, 411 Northern Ireland, 211 Northern Ireland urban, 200 Northern Ireland rural, 149 16-34, 152 35-54, 110 55+, 203 ABC1, 206 C2DE).
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2017 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2017, by age compared to all internet users in Scotland in 2017 and between socio-economic groups in Scotland in 2017.
QE40: Which is the most important device you use to connect to the internet, at home or elsewhere? 'Other' responses include: 'netbook', 'e-reader', 'TV set', 'games console', 'other portable/handheld device', 'smartwatch', 'other device', 'none' and 'don't know'.

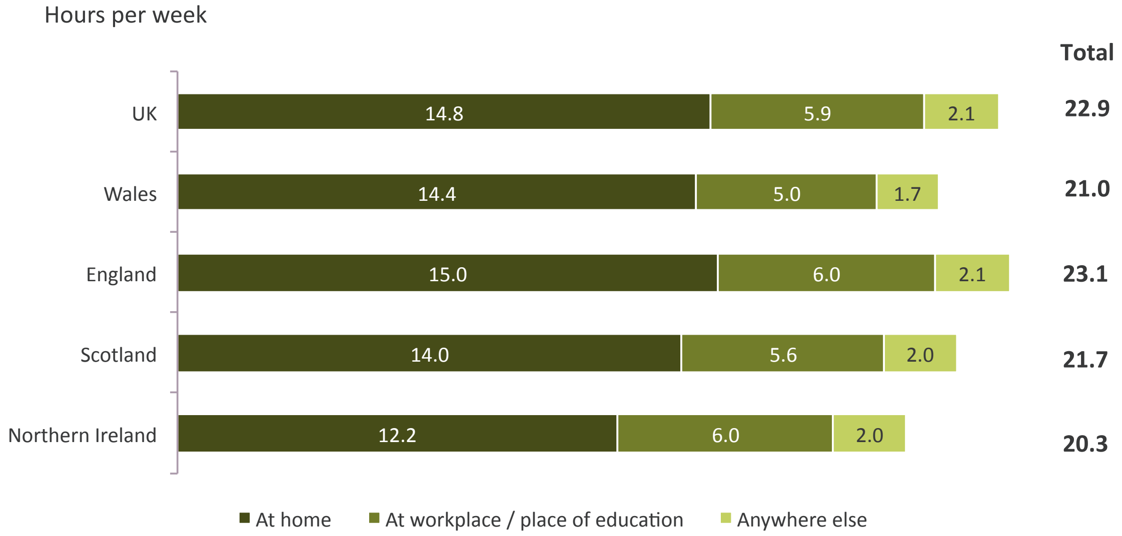
[1]Internet users are defined as those who ever go online, either at home or elsewhere.

5.3 Internet use

Internet users in Northern Ireland spent an average of 20 hours online per week in 2016

According to research conducted for Ofcom's *Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report 2016*,[1] internet users in Northern Ireland claimed to spend an average of 20.3 hours online per week in 2016. This was lower than in any of the other UK nations. More than half of this time online was at home (12.2 hours).

Figure 5.5 : Claimed time spent on the internet in a typical week



Source: Ofcom Media Literacy Tracker 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ who go online at home or elsewhere (1553 UK, 999 England, 176 Scotland, 189 Wales, 189 Northern Ireland).
IN5A-C – How many hours in a typical week would you say you use the internet at home/ at your workplace or place of education/ anywhere else? (Unprompted responses, single coded)

[1] Available online at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/102755/adults-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf

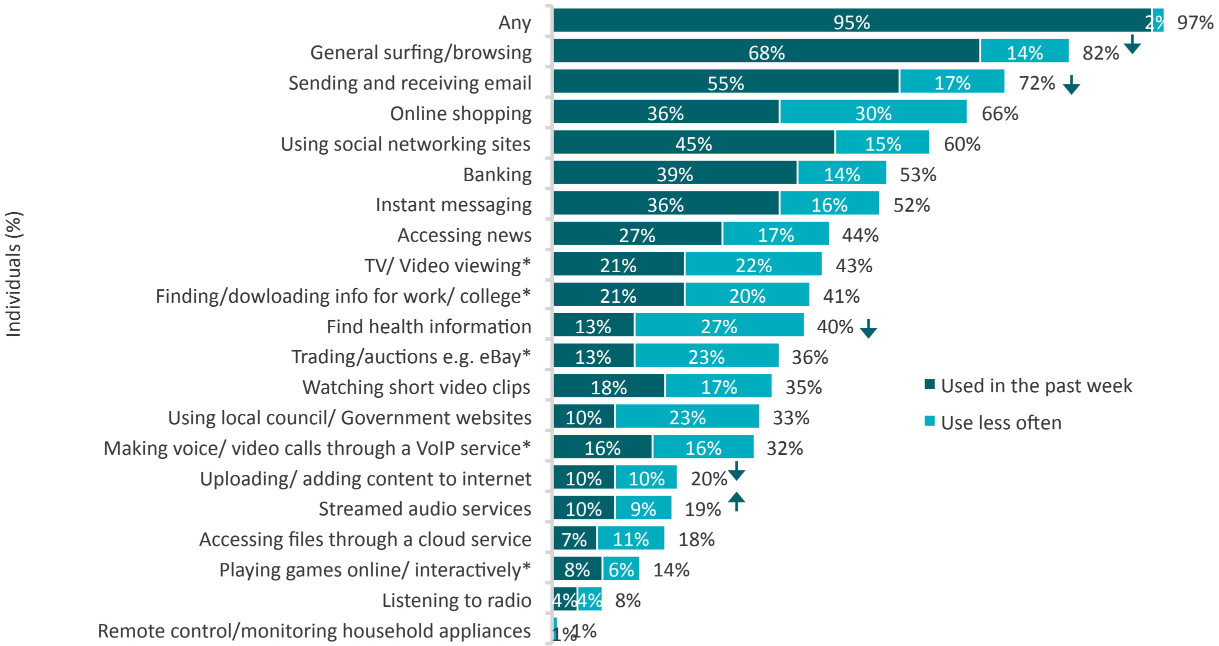
General surfing / browsing and sending / receiving email remain the most popular activities among internet users in Northern Ireland in 2017

The most popular internet activities among adults in Northern Ireland in 2017 were general surfing/ browsing (82%) and sending/ receiving email (72%). These were also reported as having been done the most in the past week[1]. Online shopping was the next most popular activity (66%), followed by social networking (60%).

Around half of internet users in Northern Ireland went online for banking (53%) or instant messaging (52%).

Where it was possible to make comparisons[2], four internet activities were less likely to be carried out online in 2017 compared to 2016: general surfing/ browsing: sending / receiving email; finding health information; and uploading / adding content to the internet. One activity was more likely to be carried out online in 2017 than in 2016: using streaming audio services (such as Spotify or Deezer).

Figure 5.6: Activities carried out online by internet users in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, Half 1 2017
Base: Adults aged 16+ who use the internet at home or elsewhere (n= 411 Northern Ireland 2017)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant difference at the 99% confidence level in the total incidence of use between Scotland 2016 and 2017. *Codes marked with an asterisk have not been tested as they are not directly comparable.
QE5A: Which, if any, of these do you use the internet for?

[1] 'The past week' was that at the time of respondents' interviews

[2] Activities marked with an asterisk in Figure 5.6 are not directly comparable

6 Post

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 739 respondents took part in Northern Ireland. 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 244 respondents took part in Northern Ireland. 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

More post boxes for Northern Ireland

Around 280 new post boxes are to be installed across Northern Ireland as part of a Royal Mail initiative to boost public access.

The boxes will be mainly in rural areas, new housing developments and areas not currently served by a post box. Once complete, 98.35% of UK households will be within half a mile of a post box.[1] England will also get a further 280 boxes, Scotland 150 and Wales 46.

Parcel surcharging update

Ofcom published findings from research it carried out into the causes of parcel delivery surcharges in some geographic areas in November 2016.[2] We found that some parcel operators charge more to deliver parcels in Northern Ireland and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and that in general there was a higher cost of delivery in these areas (for example, due to lower delivery drop density and cost of transport across the Irish Sea).

In addition, the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI) published a report in June 2015 which showed that only 50% of online retailers offered the same delivery price to Northern Ireland as the rest of the UK and that consumers ordering online in Northern Ireland faced more exclusion and less delivery and collection options than the rest 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.

[1]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).

[2]https://www.ofcom.org.uk/postal-services/monitoring_reports

6.2 Sending and receiving post: residential customers

Adults in Northern Ireland had sent an average of less than three invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards in the previous month

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

On average, they had sent 2.7 invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards, 1.0 smaller parcels (that will fit through a letterbox) and 1.0 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)

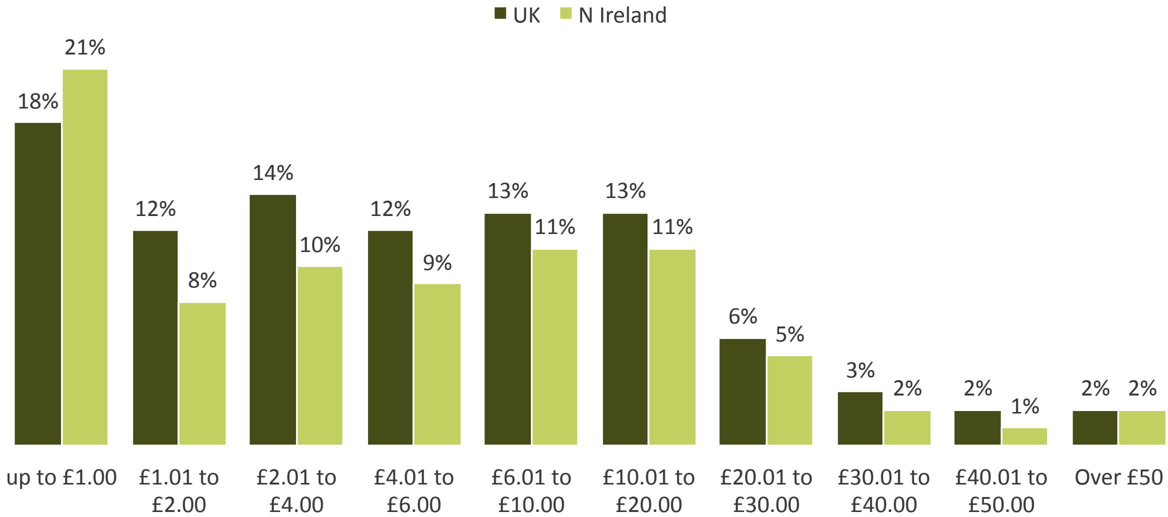
Seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland had spent less than £20 on postage in the previous month

Seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland (71%) said that they had spent under £20 on postage in the previous month, which is lower than the UK overall (81%).

However, a higher percentage of people in Northern Ireland responded that they didn't know or would prefer not to say (19% vs. 6% for the UK overall).

One in five (21%) had spent less than £1.

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

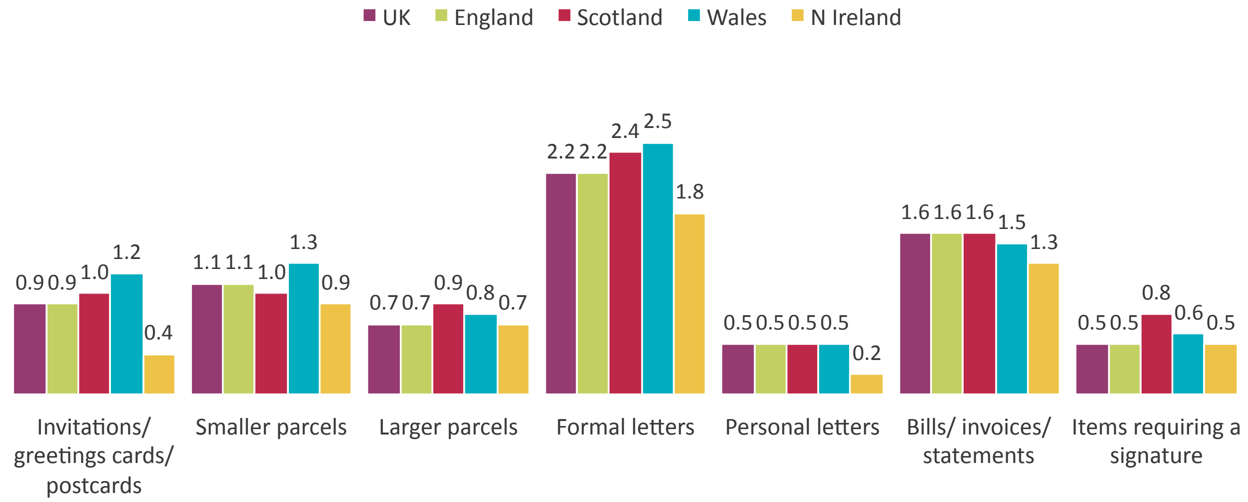


Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 739 Northern Ireland)
QD4: And in total, how much would you say you've spent on postage in the last month, including all letters, cards and parcels?
Note: Chart does not include the 6% of respondents who answered that they didn't know or would prefer not to say

In the previous week, adults in Northern Ireland had received an average of 1.8 formal letters

Adults in Northern Ireland were asked how many items of seven different types of post they had received in the previous week. On average, they had received 1.8 formal letters and 1.3 bills/ invoices/ statements. For each of the other five types of post, they had received on average less than one item.

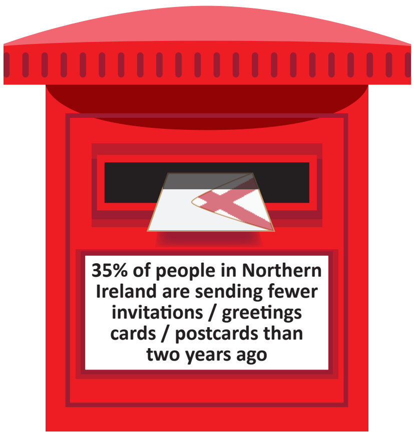
Figure 6.3: Approximate number of items of post received in the previous week



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?

Six in ten adults in Northern Ireland are using more email instead of post, compared to two years ago

Sixty-two per cent of adults in Northern Ireland report that they are using email more than they did two years ago as a substitute for post, the same level as in the UK overall (65%). More than four in ten (43%) say that they are using texts/ SMS more, and 36% choose mobile phone calls. A quarter mention social networking (25%) and more than one in five say instant messaging (22%).



Fifteen per cent of adults in Northern Ireland say that 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%).

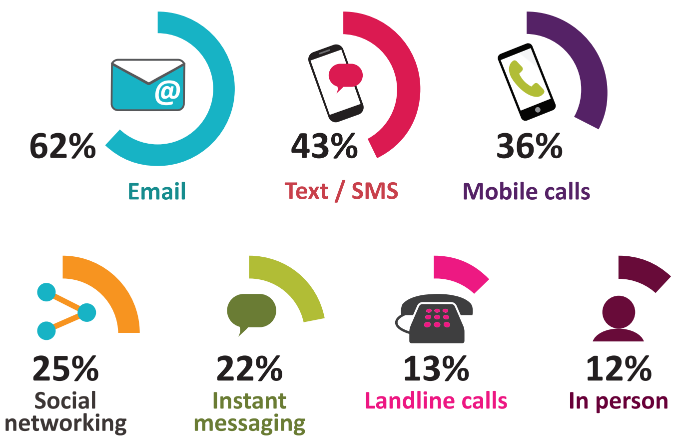
Around four in ten people in Northern Ireland report that they are sending less payments for bills/ invoices/ statements (43%), personal letters (42%) and formal letters (39%) than two years ago. Thirty-five per cent are sending less invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards, while around one in five are sending less larger parcels (21%) and smaller parcels (20%). Seventeen per cent are sending less items requiring a signature, and sixteen per cent are sending less tracked post. These measures are in line with the UK overall, with the exception of formal letters and invitations/ greetings cards/ postcards.

43%
of people in Northern Ireland are sending fewer payments for bills, invoices and statements by post than two years ago

A higher percentage of people in Northern Ireland say that they are sending less of these types of items.

The percentage of people in Northern Ireland claiming to be sending less of each type of item is significantly higher than the percentage of those claiming to be sending more, with the exception of tracked post. Twelve per cent of people claim that they are sending more of this type of post. For each of the other types of post asked about, the percentage of those that say they are sending more than they were two years ago is 11% or less.

Types of communication now being used more than post in Northern Ireland, 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?

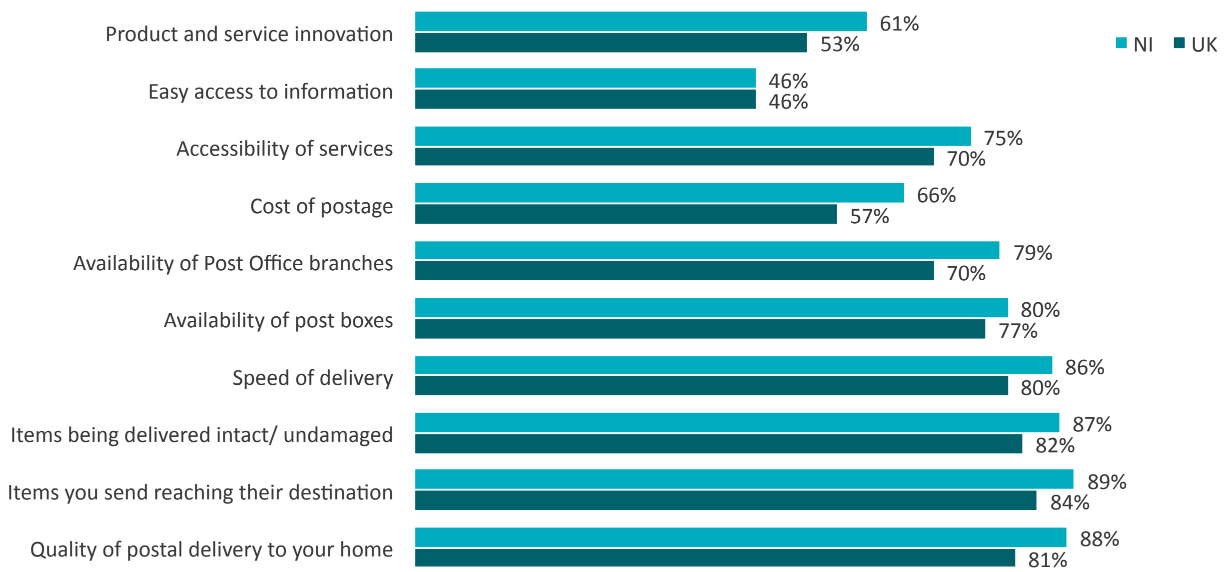
6.3 Attitudes toward Royal Mail: residential customers

Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service in Northern Ireland is generally high

People in Northern Ireland are generally satisfied with specific elements of Royal Mail's service. In particular, nearly nine in ten are satisfied with items sent reaching their destination (89%), quality of postal delivery to the home (88%), items being delivered intact/ undamaged (87%) and speed of delivery (86%). Satisfaction with all four of these measures is higher in Northern Ireland than in the UK overall, and is lowest for easy-to-access information (46%).

Although not shown in the chart, overall satisfaction with Royal Mail is 88% in Northern Ireland. This is higher than satisfaction overall in the UK (83%).

Figure 6.4: **Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service**



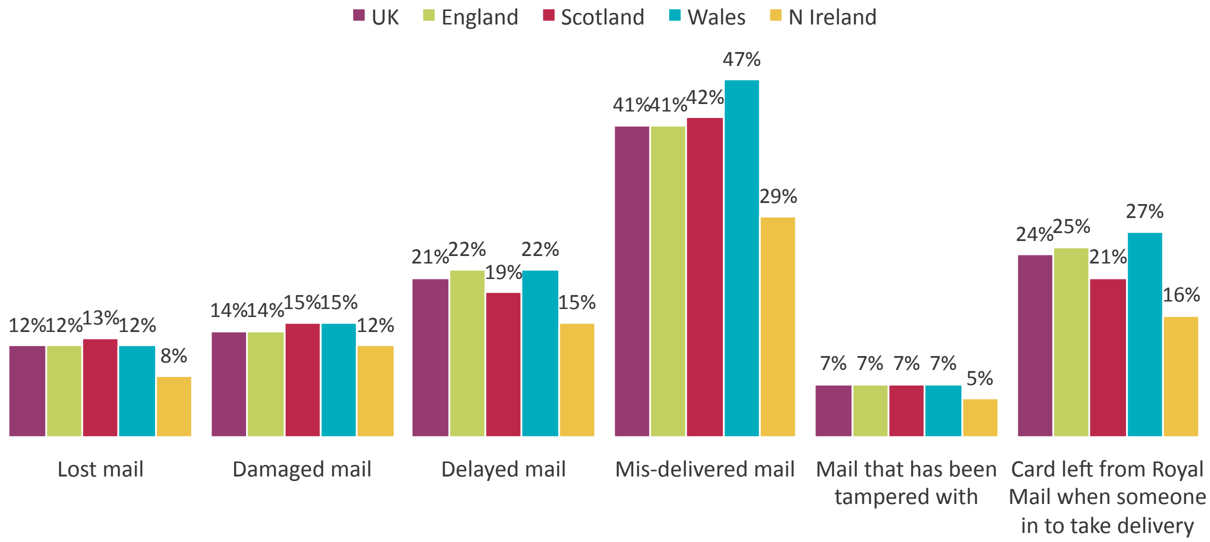
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 739 Northern Ireland)
QG3_1: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of Royal Mail's service?

Three in ten adults in Northern Ireland have had a problem with Royal Mail's service in terms of mis-delivered mail in the past year

Adults in Northern Ireland were provided with a list of potential problems with Royal Mail's service and asked whether they had experienced any in the past year.

Three in ten (29%) reported that they had experienced problems related to mis-delivered mail; this is lower than in the UK overall (41%). Sixteen per cent 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; this is also lower than the UK overall figure (24%). The other problems were experienced by 15% of people or less.

Figure 6.5: Problems experienced with Royal Mail in the past 12 months



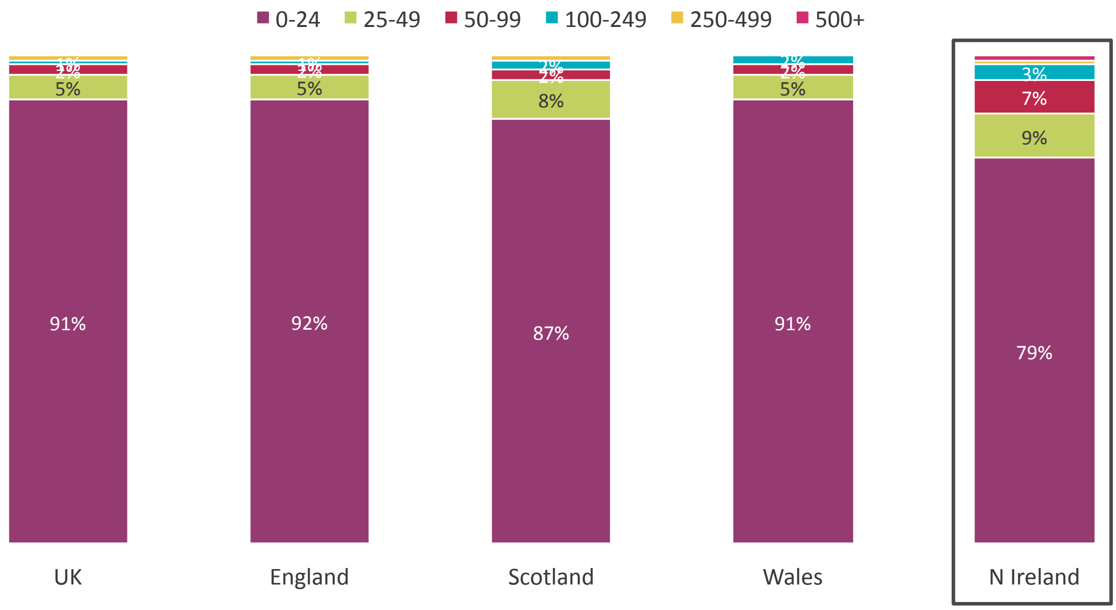
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All adults (n = 6419 UK, 4053 England, 857 Scotland, 770 Wales, 739 Northern Ireland)
QD13: Which, if any, of these types of communication are you now using more instead of post, compared to two years ago?

6.4 Sending and receiving post: business customers

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

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Northern Ireland were asked how many letters and large letters they send per mailing as an organisation. Eight in ten (79%) send 0-24 of these items; this is lower than the UK overall figure (91%).

Figure 6.6: Average volume of letters sent each mailing

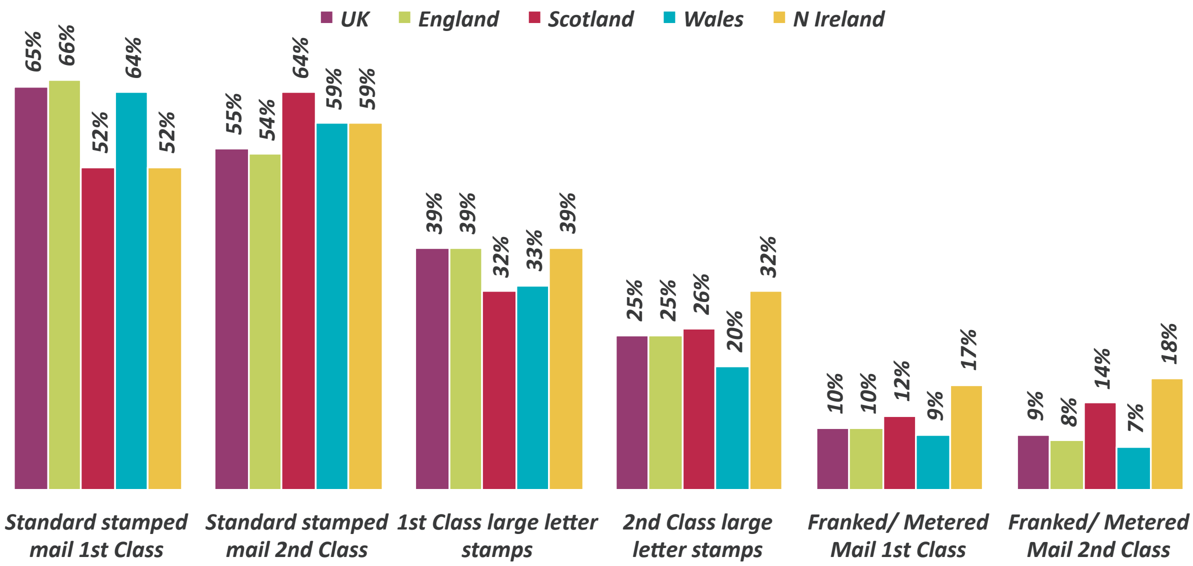


Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All who send letters (n = 1821 UK, 1138 England, 214 Scotland, 241 Wales, 228 N Ireland)
QV2a. On average, how many letter items does your organisation send per mailing? Please think ONLY about all the letters and large letters you may send as an organisation.

Standard stamped mail was the Royal Mail service used by the most SMEs in Northern Ireland to send letters / large letters

SMEs in Northern Ireland which use Royal Mail to send letters or large letters were asked which Royal Mail services their organisation had used to send these types of item in the past year. Around half had used First Class standard stamped mail (52%), lower than in the UK overall (65%). Six in ten had used Second Class standard stamped mail (59%); this measure is in line with the overall figure for the UK (55%).

Figure 6.7: Royal Mail services used to send standard post each month



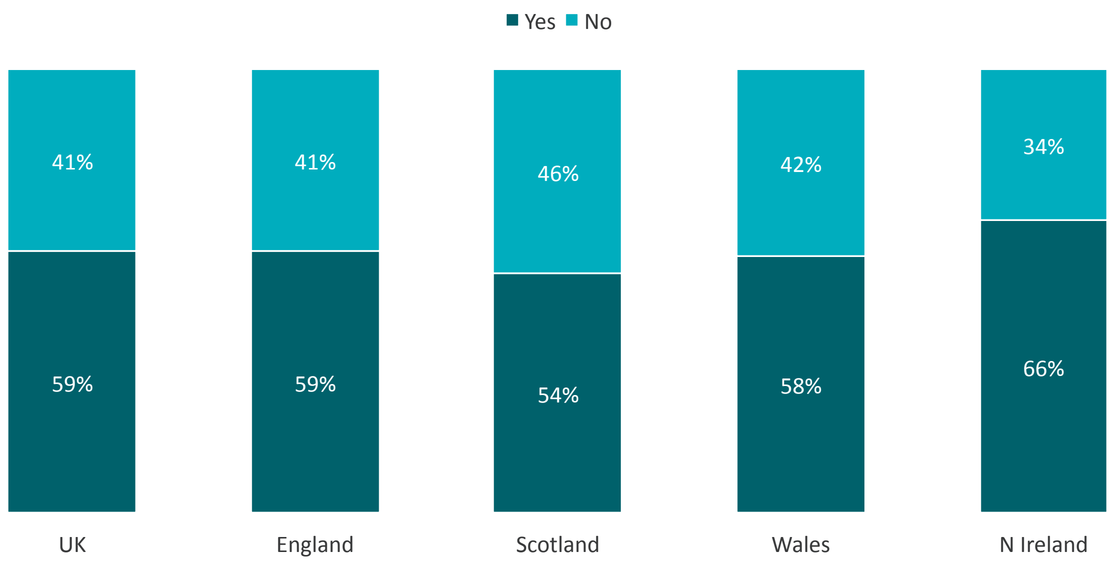
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail to send letters or large letters (n = 1781 UK, 1117 England, 211 Scotland, 234 Wales, 219 N Ireland)
QV6d. Which, if any, of the following Royal Mail services does your organisation use to send your letters and large letters?

Nearly seven in ten SMEs in Northern Ireland 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. Nearly seven in ten in Northern Ireland (66%) claimed they had done so, higher than in the UK overall (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[1]. A quarter of SMEs in Northern Ireland said that they were "happy with sending things by post" (25%), while eighteen per cent said "no reason". Thirteen per cent said "we have already moved everything that it is possible to move".

Figure 6.8: Switched some mail to other communication methods over past 12 months



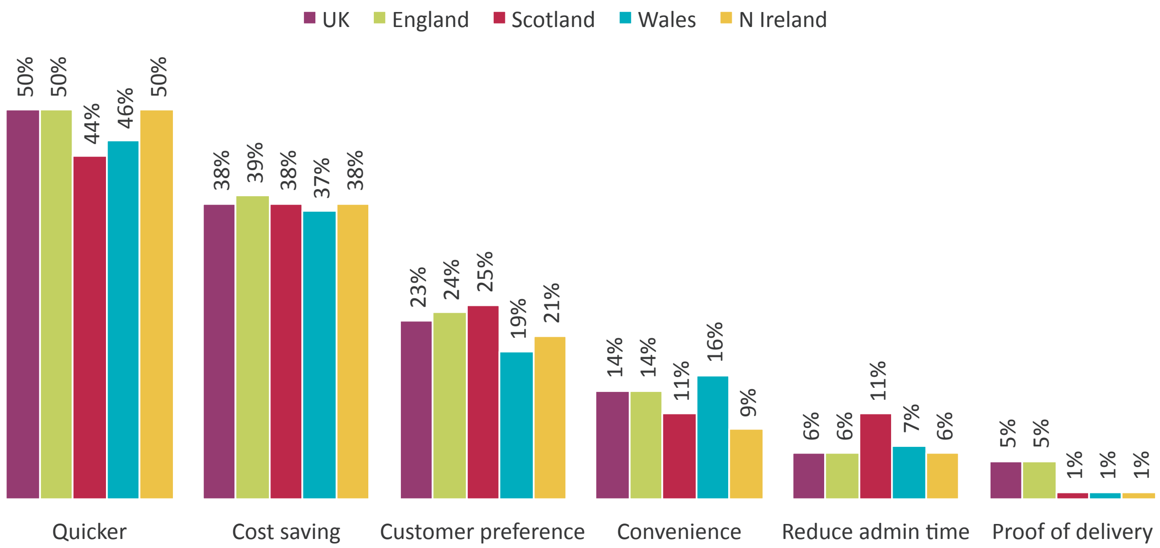
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All respondents (n = 2001 UK, 1259 England, 234 Scotland, 264 Wales, 244 N Ireland)
QF4. Over the last 12 months, has your organisation moved some mail to other communication methods?

[1]Low base size – 80 people in Northern Ireland responded to this question, so the data should be treated as indicative only

Half of SMEs in Northern Ireland who had switched away from post had done so for reasons of speed

Of those SMEs in Northern Ireland which had moved some of their mail to alternative methods of communication, half (50%) said this was for reasons of speed. More than a third (38%) said it was to save money, while for one in five (21%) it was due to customer preference.

Figure 6.9: Main reasons for switching some mail to other communications methods over past 12 months



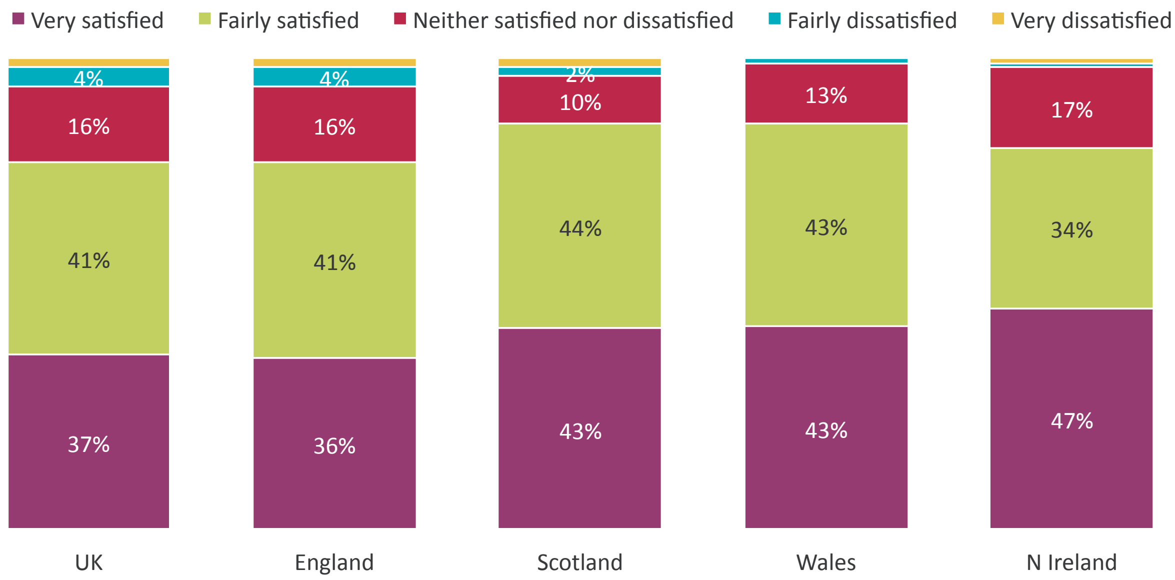
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All who have moved to other communication methods (n = 1207 UK, 751 England, 135 Scotland, 157 Wales, 164 N Ireland)
QF6: Why have you moved some mail to other communication methods? OPEN ENDED Top 6 reasons

6.5 Attitudes towards Royal Mail: business customers

Eight in ten SMEs in Northern Ireland are satisfied with Royal Mail

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 Northern Ireland, 82% of SMEs said that they were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied'. This is in line with the UK overall (78%). However, the proportion of SMEs in Northern Ireland who are 'very satisfied' (47%) is higher than the overall figure for the UK (37%).

Figure 6.10: Overall satisfaction with Royal Mail's quality of service



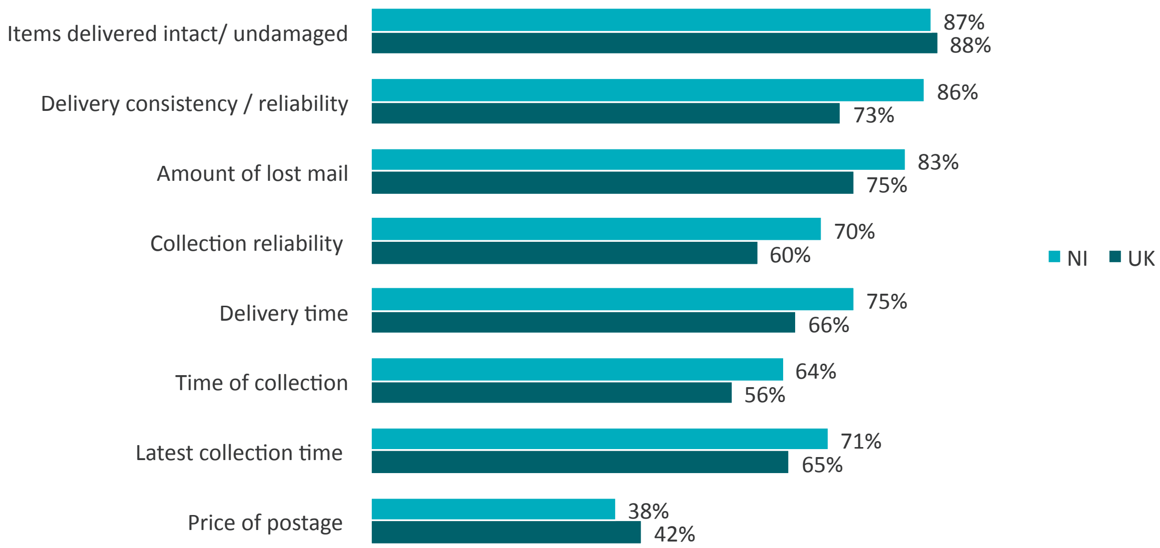
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2016
Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n = 1951 UK, 1229 England, 230 Scotland, 256 Wales, 236 Northern Ireland)
QRM2. Thinking generally about the service your organisation receives as a whole, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of the services you receive from Royal Mail as a recipient and sender?

SMEs in Northern Ireland are most satisfied with items being delivered intact/ undamaged, delivery consistency/ reliability and the amount of lost mail

SMEs were also asked about their satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service. SMEs in Northern Ireland were most satisfied with items being delivered intact/ undamaged (87%), delivery consistency/ reliability (86%) and the amount of lost mail (83%). Satisfaction with the latter two elements is higher than in the UK overall. Less than four in ten (38%) said they were satisfied with the price of postage.

Although not shown in the chart below, eight in ten SMEs in Northern Ireland who use Royal Mail (82%) said they had had no problems with their service from Royal Mail in the past six months. This measure is in line with the UK overall figure (81%).

Figure 6.11: **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, 236 Northern Ireland)
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?

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