



Communications Market Report: Northern Ireland

Research Document

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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 the internet, telecommunications, broadcasting and postal services, and comparing the findings with the other nations and with the UK as a whole.

More people in Northern Ireland are now online at home, and on the move, than ever before. More than three-quarters of homes in Northern Ireland (77%) now have a fixed-line broadband connection, while seven in ten adults (72%) own a smartphone, and 4G services are now available to 99% of premises in Northern Ireland.

Consumers are benefiting from faster mobile internet connections, with more than half of adults in Northern Ireland (54%) having a 4G mobile service, up from 26% in 2015.

This year's report shows another rise in tablet ownership, with three in five households (60%) now having one. The most popular internet activities in Northern Ireland were general browsing (92%) and using email (84%); significantly more adults are doing these now compared to a year ago.

Many other internet activities also showed significant year-on-year growth. Seven in ten (70%) internet users purchased goods or services online in 2016, while use of social networking sites grew significantly, to 63% of adults. In total, people in Northern Ireland now spend around 18.6 hours a week online.

Despite the rise in online activity, traditional media remain popular. Our research shows that TV is still by far the most important source of news in Northern Ireland, followed by radio and websites/ apps.

Northern Ireland also has the highest take-up of pay-TV services in the UK, with nearly three-quarters of households (74%) having paid-for channels delivered by satellite, cable, broadband or Freeview top-up services.

In this year's report, we also revisited and updated research last carried out in 2014 (*Digital Day*) looking at how people engage with communications and media services.

The biggest change has been the rise in instant messaging, with nearly half of all adults (49%) now using these apps.

The research also shows that people in Northern Ireland are spending more time listening to streamed music and playing video games, and less time watching DVDs and texting, than they did two years ago. They still spend far more time (3 hours and 35 minutes) watching live TV than any other communications activity.

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/cmnrnorthernireland>. Companion reports for the UK and each of the nations can be found at www.ofcom.org.uk/cmnr.

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Setting the scene

Key facts about Northern Ireland

Figure	Northern Ireland	UK
Population	1.852 million (mid-2015 estimate)	65.11 million (mid-2015 estimate)
Age profile	Population aged <16: 20.8% Population aged 65+: 15.8%	Population aged <16: 18.8% Population aged 65+: 17.8%
Population density	134 people per square kilometre	269 people per square kilometre
Language	11% have some ability in Irish; 8.1% have some ability in Ulster-Scots	n/a
Unemployment	5.8% of economically active population, aged 16 and over	5.1% of economically active population, aged 16 and over
Income and expenditure	Weekly household income: £606 Weekly household expenditure: £484.10	Weekly household income: £747 Weekly household expenditure: £531.3

Source: Office for National Statistics: *Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2015*; Office for National Statistics: *Regional Labour Market, June 2016*; Office for National Statistics: *Family Spending, 2015 edition*; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Census 2011 - Key Statistics for Northern Ireland*; *The Labour Force Survey June 2016*.

A note on our Technology Tracker survey research

We conducted a face-to-face survey of 3,737 respondents aged 16+ in the UK, with 507 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 2016, 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%.

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 Northern Ireland's communications market

1.1 Key findings for Northern Ireland

Introduction

This section sets out a selection of the key facts and figures relating to communications markets across Northern Ireland, comparing and contrasting between nations and highlighting changes that have taken place in the past year.

It also includes the highlights from two pieces of new research; Digital Day, an indepth quantitative diary study looking into people's media and communications activities, and Coping in a Connected Society, which examines how people feel about their use of communications services and devices and what they consider to be the benefits and advantages.

1.2 Fast facts for Northern Ireland

Figure 1.1 Fast facts for Northern Ireland

Nations Fast Facts: Half 1 2016 (%) – unless otherwise stated, figures relate to household take-up

	UK	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK urban	UK rural	NI urban	NI rural
Digital TV take-up	96	96	98	97	98	96	97	97	99
Pay digital TV	61	59	69 ⁺ +11	68 ⁺	71 ⁺ +8	62 ⁺ +3	54 ⁻	71	71 +11
Free view-only TV	29	30	25 -10	22 ⁻	23 ⁻	28 ⁻	35 ⁺	22	25
Smart TV take-up (among TV homes)	28 +7	29 +8	21 ⁻	33 +16	18 ⁻	27 +7	32 +9	18	16
HDTV service (among those with an HDTV)	79 +4	79 +4	79	77 +8	80	80 +6	75	84	74
DAB ownership (among radio listeners) ¹	50 +7	52 +8	36 ⁻	50	25 ⁻	49 +7	53	27	22
Catch-up TV/ film viewing online/ on-demand (via any device, among those who use the internet)	58	59	60	59	44 ⁻	58	60	50 ⁺	34 ⁻
Total internet access at home (via any device)	86	87	84	84	83	86	87	80	87 +11
Broadband take-up (at home)	81	81	79	79	78 +6	80 ⁻	85 ⁺	75 ⁻	84 ⁺ +10
Use mobile to access internet	66 +5	66 +4	63	61	69 +9	66 ⁺ +4	61 ⁻	68	70 +14

	UK	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK urban	UK rural	NI urban	NI rural
Mobile phone take-up (personal use)	93	94	91	91	92	93	94	90	94
Smartphone take-up (personal use)	71 +5	71 +4	70	65 ⁻	72 +9	71 +4	68 +9	70	73 +16
4G service take-up (among smartphone owners)	67 +22	68 +23	57 ⁻	68 +32	77 ⁺ +37	69 ⁺ +23	55 ⁻ +20	80 +39	72 +35
Fixed landline take-up	86 +2	86	86	85	86	85 ⁻	92 ⁺	85	89
Desktop PC take-up	31 -3	32 -5	23 ⁻	33	17 ⁻ -11	30 ⁻ -4	36 ⁺	14 -16	20
Laptop take-up	64	65	60	61	56 ⁻	64	64	56	58
Tablet computer take-up	59 +5	59 +5	56	67 ⁺	60	58 ⁻ +4	64 ⁺ +9	55 ⁻	67 ⁺ +19
E-reader take-up (personal use)	18	19	15	22	15	18 ⁻	25 ⁺	16	14
Households taking bundles	68 +5	68 +4	69 +8	67	64	67 +4	72	61	69
Fixed telephony av availability	100	100	100	100	100				
Fixed broadband av availability ²	99.98	100	99.86	100	100				
LLU ADSL broadband av availability ³	95	96	90	93	90				
2G mobile av availability ⁴	99.6	99.7	99.1	98.4	98.8				
3G mobile av availability ⁵	99.6	99.8	97.9	98.6	99.4				
4G mobile av availability ⁶	97.8	98.8	92.0	90.1	99.3				
DTT av availability ⁷	98.5	98.6	98.7	97.8	97.4				
TV consumption (minutes per day) ^o	216	219 **	240	250	225				
Radio consumption (minutes per day)	183	183	181	190	173				

Key: ⁺ Figure is significantly higher for nation than UK average or significantly higher for nation's urban/ rural than for nation's rural/ urban; ⁻ Figure is significantly lower for nation than UK average or significantly lower for nation's urban/ rural than for nation's rural/ urban; ^{+xx} Figures have risen significantly by xx percentage points since H1 2015; ^{+xx} Figures have decreased significantly by xx percentage points since H1 2015;

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker H1 2016, BARB, RAJAR, industry data

Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 489 Wales, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 507 Northern Ireland, 2711 UK urban, 1026 UK rural, 1958 England urban, 281 England rural, 251 Scotland urban, 251 Scotland rural, 240 Wales urban, 249 Wales rural, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural)

1. DAB ownership in the nations and UK as reported here is sourced from Ofcom research. The UK CMR uses RAJAR data for DAB ownership
2. Proportion of premises connected to an ADSL-enabled BT local exchange based on BT data, December 2015
3. Proportion of premises connected to an LLU-enabled BT local exchange based on BT data, December 2015

4. Proportion of premises with outdoor 2G mobile coverage from at least one operator, May 2016
5. Proportion of premises with outdoor 3G mobile coverage from at least one operator, May 2016
6. Proportion of premises with outdoor 4G mobile coverage from at least one operator, May 2016
7. Estimated proportion of homes that can receive the PSB channels via DTT (3PSB Mux coverage). Joint TV planning project (Arqiva, BBC, Ofcom).
8. Based on calendar year 2015. **This figure reflects the average across the English regions with the highest in Border (243) and the lowest in London (197) respectively.

1.3 The Digital Day in Northern Ireland

Introduction

Media and communications are a key part of our daily lives, and we spend more time using these services than we do sleeping. The total amount of time that adults in Northern Ireland spend using media and communications overall has increased since 2014, and this chapter explores the shifts in the respective amounts of time that people in Northern Ireland are devoting to different services.

People in Northern Ireland are spending less time watching DVDs, BluRays and online video clips, less time listening to digital audio that they own and less time listening to on-demand radio. It's likely that they're substituting this audio content with streaming services such as Spotify or Apple Music, as the time spent listening to these types of services has grown.

The time spent texting has fallen, while the number of people using instant messaging services has increased. But traditional methods of communicating are still popular – people in Northern Ireland rate phone calls as their most important communications activity.

Watching TV or films on a TV set is a core part of their evening - between 8pm and 10pm each day around nine in ten adults in Northern Ireland are doing this. Live TV viewing still takes the lion's share of our time with media and communications, and this is even more the case in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole. It is also cited as their most important media activity. Despite this, the number of people watching paid on-demand has increased since 2014.

Background and methodology

This section provides an overview of the core results from our 2016 Digital Day study, drawing comparisons with data from when it was last conducted in 2014. Further data is also available to access online via the dedicated website - <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/cross-media/digital-day/2016/>

Although Ofcom makes use of a wide range of industry research to understand how people consume broadcast media and online content, they generally provide limited insight into how people use all media and communications services and devices together, and how they form a central part of a consumer's day.

In Q1 2016 we conducted an in-depth quantitative diary study on UK adults' and children's¹ total media and communications activities to provide an overview of the role of media and communications in people's lives. The study was last conducted two years earlier, in 2014, so one of the primary aims was to gauge how things had changed since then. The study was therefore designed to remain as consistent as possible in terms of methodology (with some necessary tweaks and improvements).

¹ Within this report we focus on the data from the adults' diaries only.

The research provides a snapshot of media and communications behaviour over a seven-day period, exploring when and how people use services and devices throughout the day, covering both personal and business use, in- and out-of-home use.

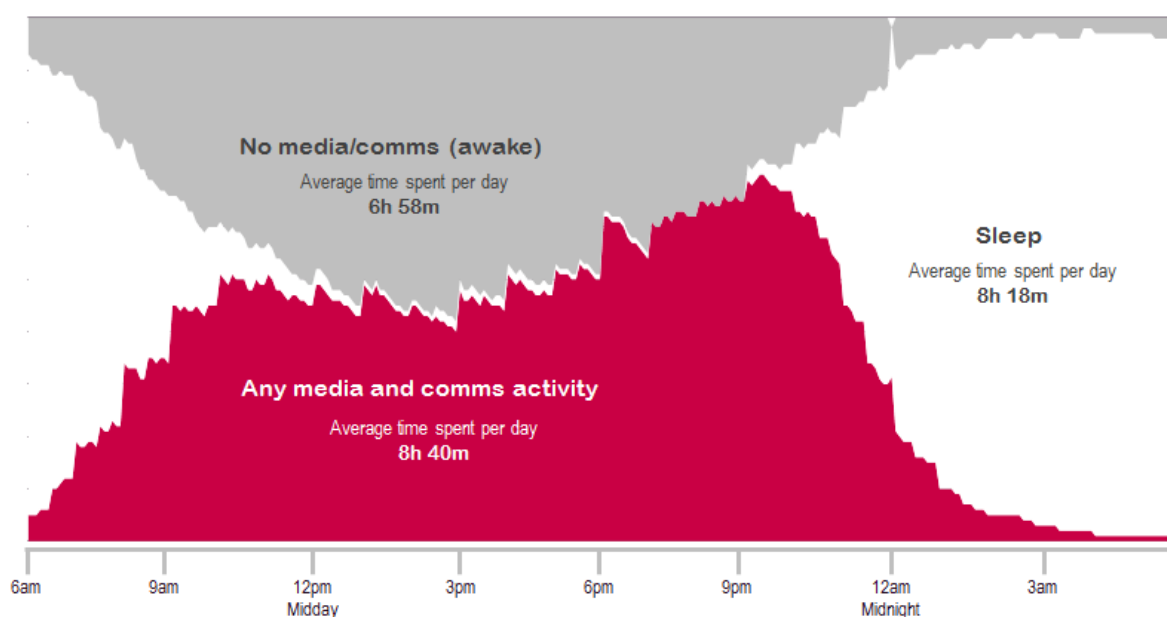
A comprehensive description of the methodology is available in the technical appendix. This includes all questionnaire material, sample information and analysis definitions -

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cross-media/2016/technical_appendix.pdf.

On an average day, adults in Northern Ireland spend more time using media or communicating via media than they do sleeping

Adults in Northern Ireland spend the majority of their waking hours engaged in media and or communications activity (8h 40m). The actual time spent on media and communications per day is relatively consistent across the UK nations.

Figure 1.2 Media and communications vs. non-media and communications activity, by time of day



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016

Base: Adults aged 16+ in N Ireland (155)

Through multi-tasking, adults in Northern Ireland squeeze 10h 36m of media and communications activity into 8h 40m on a typical day

People consume media in different ways, either focusing solely on the task in hand (categorised as solus activity), or doing two or more things at once, such as watching television and communicating with friends over instant messenger (media multi-tasking). Our research showed that thanks to multitasking, adults in Northern Ireland typically squeeze 10 hours 36m into 8 hours 40 minutes of actual time. Among adults in Northern Ireland overall, there has been little change in this respect compared to 2014.

Figure 1.3 Average daily media and comms time, by nation



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016

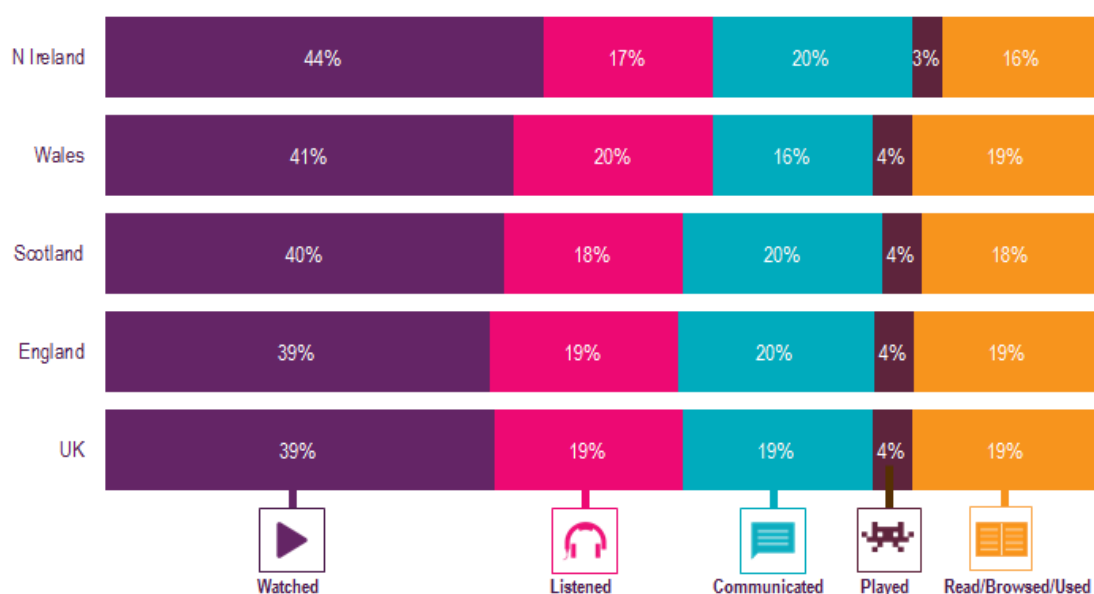
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

Among adults in Northern Ireland, about two-fifths of media and communications time is spent watching content

Watching content, such as TV programmes, films or short video clips accounts for 44% of the total time spend on media and communications for adults in Northern Ireland. This consists predominantly of live TV, which makes up 33% of the total media and communications time.

The proportions of time spent on the five broad activity types (watching, listening, communication, playing and reading/ browsing/ using) is consistent across the nations, and there have been no significant changes since 2014.

Figure 1.4 Proportion of time attributed to activity types, by nation



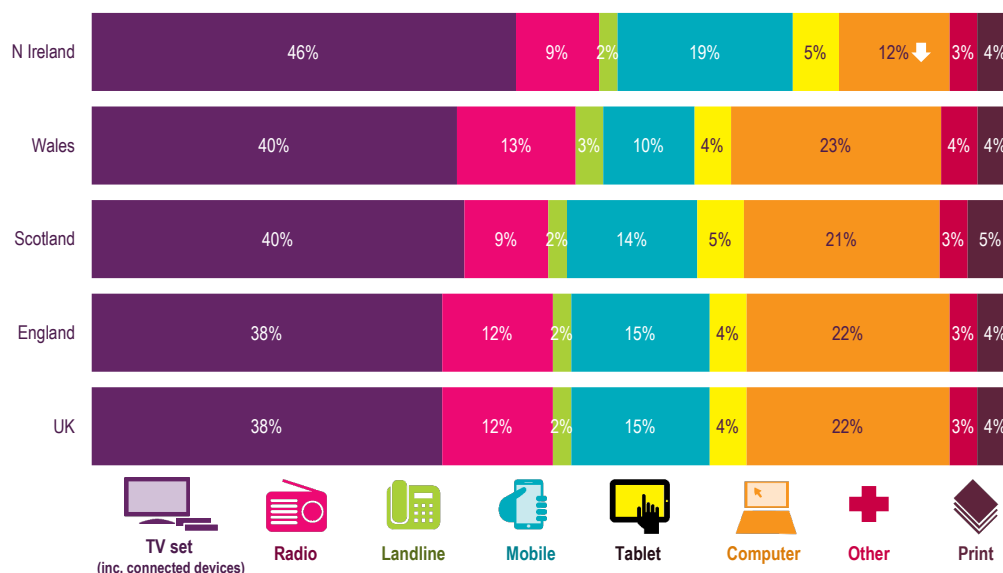
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016

Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

Adults in Northern Ireland spend a lower proportion of their time using a computer than those in the other UK nations

Adults in Northern Ireland spend proportionally more time watching TV² than using any other device; this is consistent across the nations. Their communication time is primarily spent on mobile phones and computers. However, adults in Northern Ireland spend a lower proportion of their time on a computer than any other nation (12% vs. 22% for the UK as a whole), with a higher proportion of time spent on TV sets and mobile phones (65% combined, compared to 53% among all UK adults).

Figure 1.5 Proportion of time attributed to devices, by nation



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016

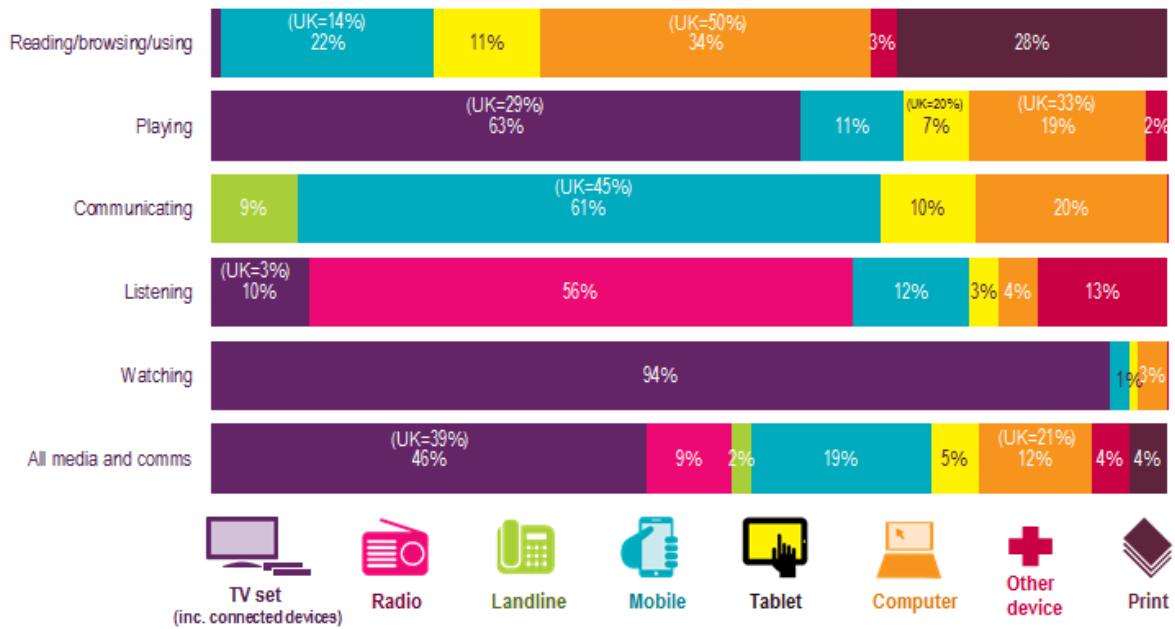
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

Overall, adults in Northern Ireland use their TV set more and their computer less than the UK as a whole

When we break activity types down by the device used, we can see that for all media and communications activities, adults in Northern Ireland are using a TV set more and a computer less. For listening activities, they also use a TV set more than the UK as a whole. For communication and reading/ browsing activities, adults in Northern Ireland use a mobile more than the rest of the UK, and for playing video games, the TV set (predominantly through a connected games console) is more popular than in the UK as a whole. The computer is used less for reading/browsing/using and playing by adults in Northern Ireland than the UK as a whole.

² Watching TV includes, watching TV and films via live TV, recorded TV, on-demand (paid or free) and DVD/ Blu-ray

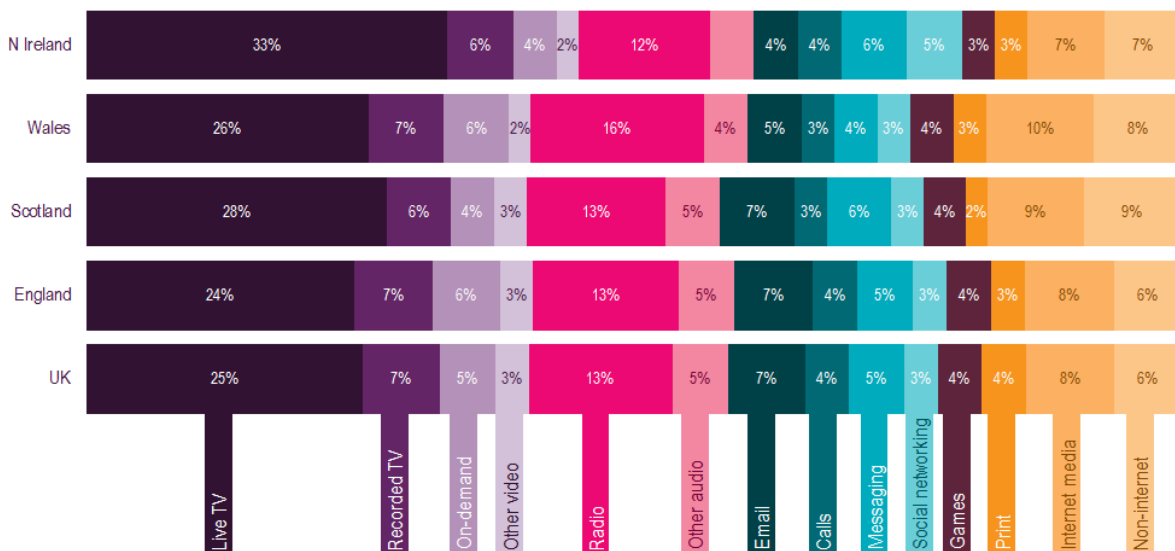
Figure 1.6 Proportion of time attributed to devices, by activity type



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in N Ireland (155)

Among adults in Northern Ireland, a higher proportion of time is spent viewing live TV (33%) than the UK as a whole (25%). Proportion of time spent on all other activities is in line with the UK as a whole.

Figure 1.7 Proportion of time attributed to activity types, by nation

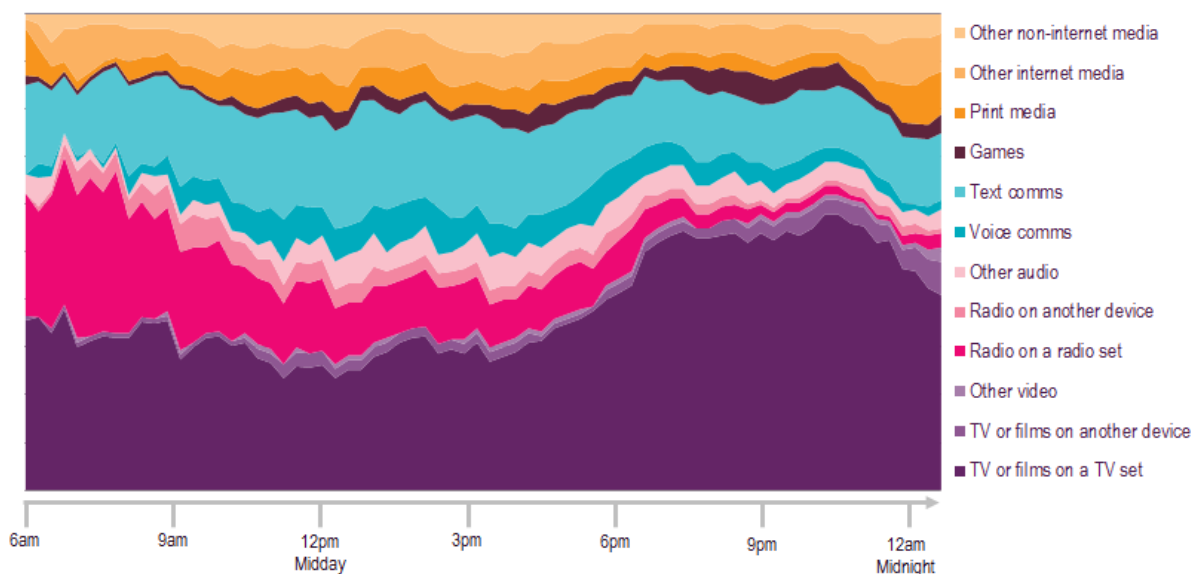


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N. Ireland (155)

Watching TV or films on a TV set is the most popular evening activity

Watching TV or films on a TV set, takes up 58% of media and communications activity between 9:30 and 10pm, in line with the share for this time period in 2014 and in line with the UK average.

Figure 1.8 Proportion of media and communications, by time of day

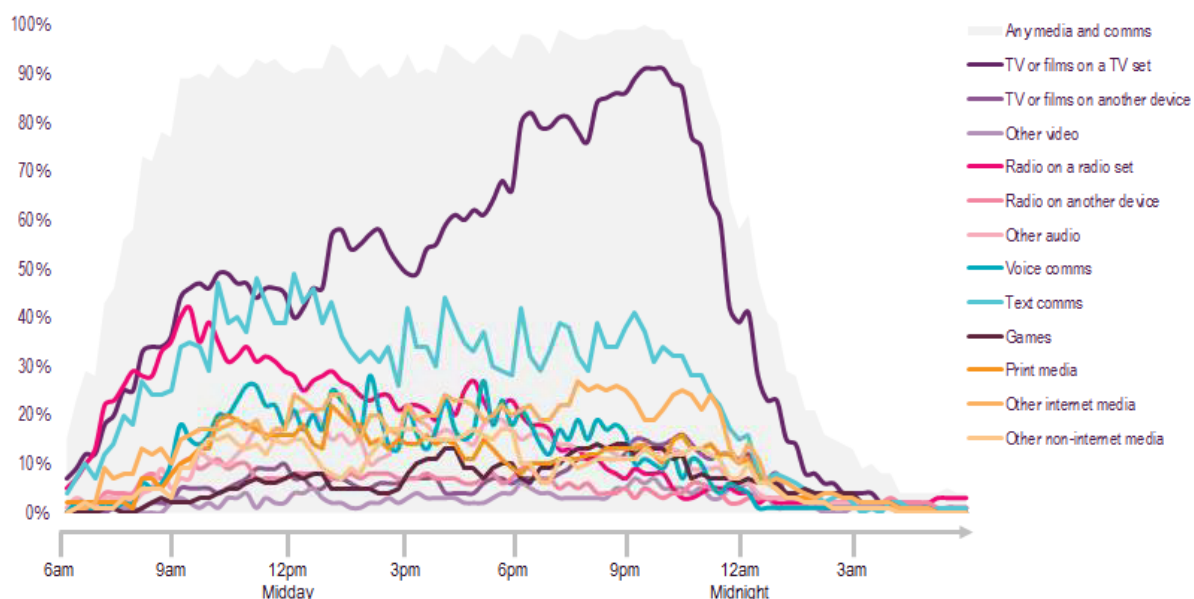


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

The popularity of watching TV or films in the evening period is also reflected in terms of 'reach' (the proportion of adults who do each activity) at specific times of day.

About nine in ten adults in Northern Ireland watch TV or films on a TV set between 8pm and 10pm at any point across the week. This compares to a peak of 49% for text communications, which slightly surpasses TV at 11pm and 12pm but declines after that time.

Figure 1.9 Weekly reach of grouped activities, by time of day

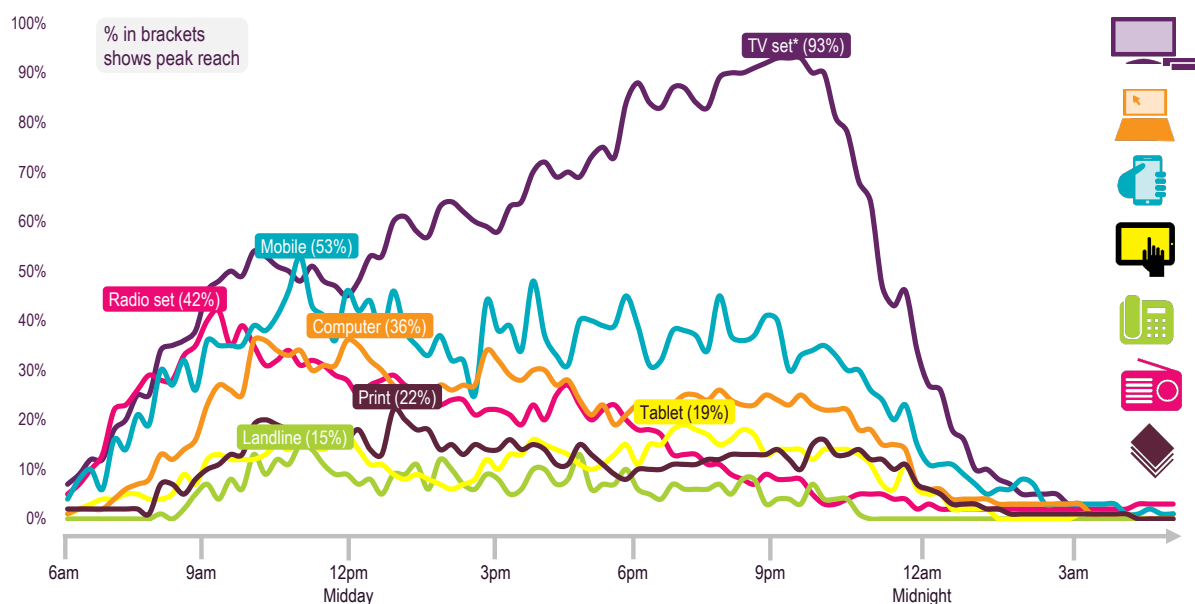


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

The patterns shown above for TV and radio content across the day are clearly mirrored by the weekly reach of the primary associated devices, i.e. the TV and radio set. This is also the case for mobile phones and text messaging, albeit to a lesser extent.

Northern Ireland has a higher peak for mobile than all other nations, at 53% from 11am to 11:15am; conversely, the computer has the lowest reach, at 36%, around midday.

Figure 1.10 Weekly reach of devices, by time of day



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016

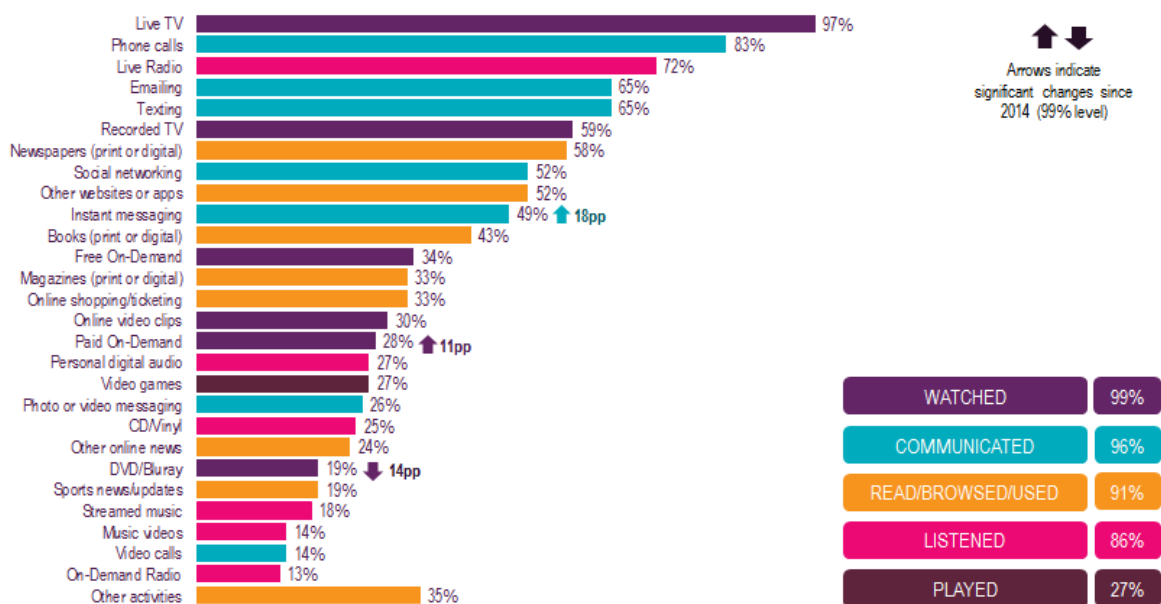
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

Since 2014, communicating via instant messaging and watching paid on-demand content has increased

Figure 1.11 shows the proportion of adults who did each activity at least once during their diary week. More than nine in ten (97%) watched any live TV over the week, while 83% communicated through phone calls.

Instant messaging showed a significant increase since 2014, up by 18pp, from 31% to 49% (compared to 42% in the UK overall) and watching paid on-demand also increased by 11pp, from 17% to 28%. Conversely, watching DVDs/ Blu-rays has decreased significantly (down 14 percentage points) since 2014.

Figure 1.11 Weekly reach of media and comms activities



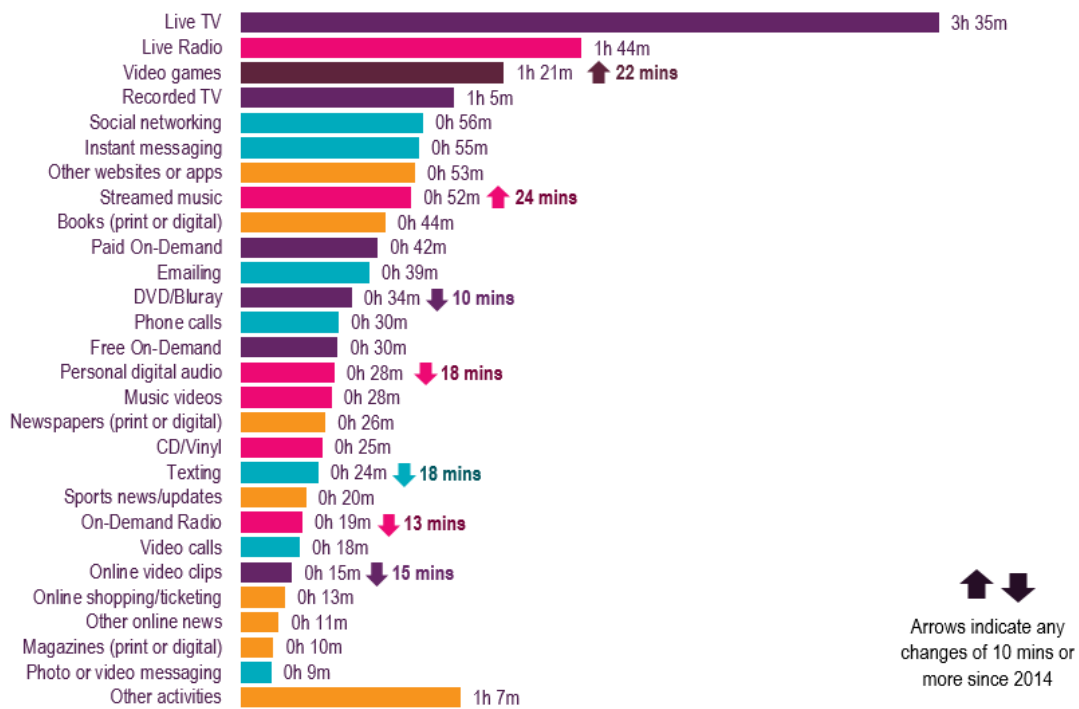
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

Adults in Northern Ireland spend more time each day listening to streamed music and playing video games than in 2014

Among those who listen to streamed music at all, the average duration of doing so per day has increased by 24 minutes since 2014; this may be a replacement for the decrease of 18 minutes in listening to personal digital audio.

Playing video games, among those who play at all, has increased by 22 minutes per day since 2014. Four further activities have decreased since 2014: watching DVD/ Blu-ray (down by 10m), texting (-18m), listening to on-demand radio (-13m) and watching online video clips (-15m).

Figure 1.12 Average time spent on activities per day



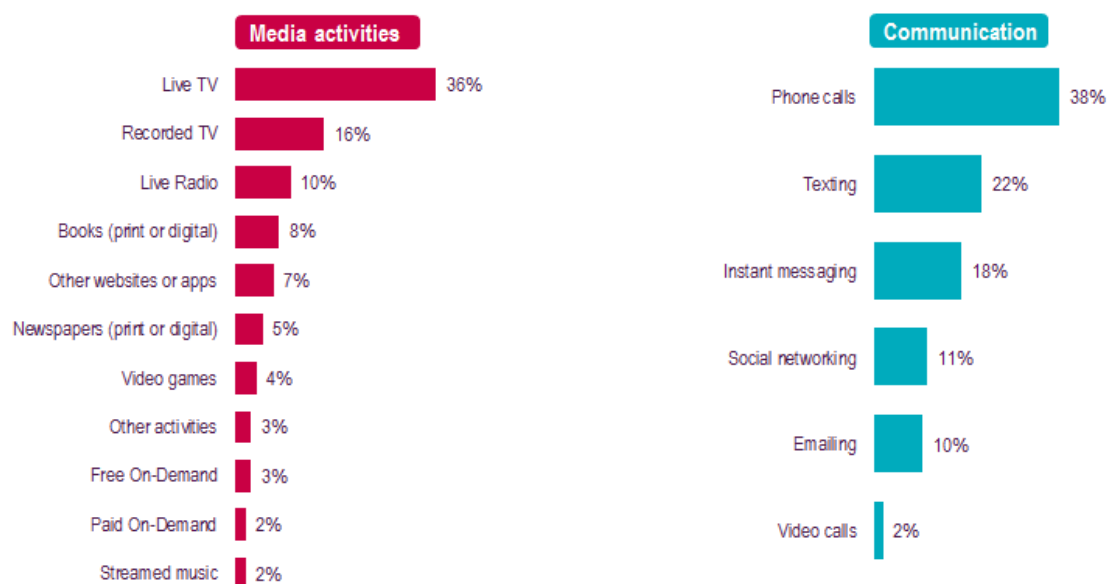
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

Live TV has more importance in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole

Respondents who completed the diary were asked (as part of the follow-up survey) which media activity, and which communications method, they considered most important to them personally. The results for adults in Northern Ireland are shown in Figure 1.13.

Over a third of adults in Northern Ireland see live TV as their most important media activity; higher than the UK average (27%). Almost two-fifths cite phone calls as their most important communications method, in line with the UK average.

Figure 1.13 Media and communications activities cited as most important



Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
 Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

1.4 Coping in a connected society

Summary

As we've seen in the Digital Day research in section 1.3, people in Northern Ireland are spending more time using media and communications than sleeping. With an increase in fixed broadband take-up from 72% to 77% of households, and a 9pp increase between 2015 and 2016 in the proportion of people who can access the internet on a mobile phone, people in Northern Ireland increasingly have the connections and the devices they need to get online.

Ofcom commissioned research in 2015 to investigate how people feel about being connected and what they see as the benefits and disadvantages. The internet is broadening people's horizons and making communications with friends and family easier. But using connected devices, like smartphones or tablets, can get in the way of face-to-face conversations. Two-thirds of people have felt ignored because the person they were with was using a device. And there's a risk of collisions too – six in ten people in Northern Ireland have had someone bump into them because the other person was engrossed in their phone.

People don't want to put their devices down, and some are spending more time online than they planned – when they do, it is sleeping and housework that are neglected.

Six out of ten people see themselves as 'hooked' on their connected device. A minority (almost a fifth) say that they feel nervous or anxious when they are offline, and three in ten feel nervous without their mobile. But if people in Northern Ireland did decide to spend a period offline for a break, they consider that they'd be better at coping with this than those in the UK as a whole. Some people in Northern Ireland have given themselves a 'digital detox'; a third had abstained completely from the internet for some time because they thought they'd been using it too much.

People in Northern Ireland are embracing the online world

Connectivity is broadening people's horizons; three-quarters of internet users³ in Northern Ireland say that being online means they can do things that they would previously have been unable to do, and 61% of internet users say that they would know a lot less about the world if they did not have access to the internet.

People in Northern Ireland are making more use of being online. Eight in ten internet users in Northern Ireland say that the internet has made their life easier, saving time and effort with services like banking and shopping. It also helps people stay informed, with eight in ten internet users saying that being connected helps to keep them up to date with news and current affairs.

And as well as people making more use of being online, they are also becoming more used to being online. If they couldn't access the internet, three-fifths of internet users would feel they were missing out, and two-fifths wouldn't know where to find information if they couldn't get online.

But not everyone feels the same about the time they spend online

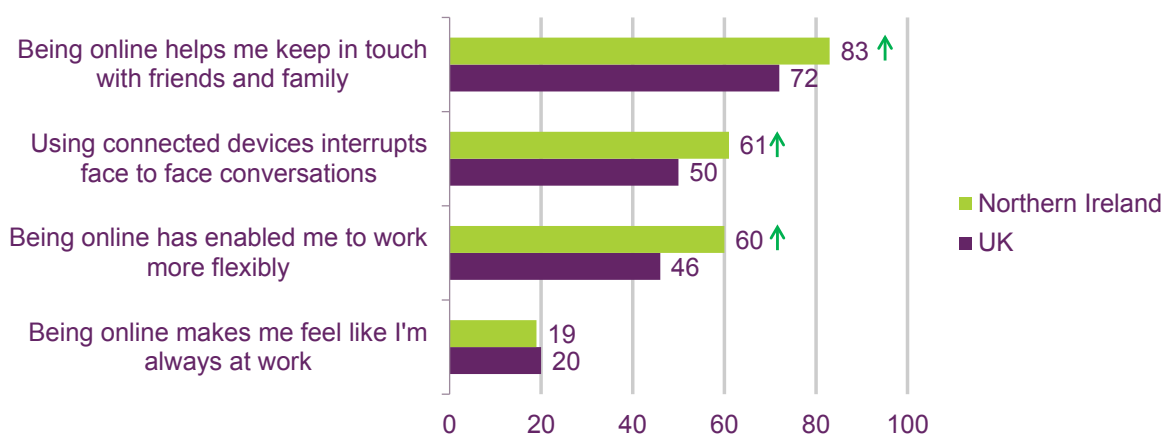
The relationship people in Northern Ireland have with the internet is not all plain surfing. Many recognise some of the more negative impacts it can have on their work and home lives.

Six in ten internet users in Northern Ireland say that they can work more flexibly because of the internet and this is a greater proportion than the UK as a whole. However, a fifth feel as though they're always at work as a result of this constant connectivity.

One of the biggest impacts – and most striking contrasts – is the influence of increased connectivity on communication. The feeling, among internet users, that the internet helps people keep in touch with friends and family is stronger in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole, but so are concerns that connected devices like smartphones and tablets interrupt face-to-face conversations, as Figure 1.14 shows.

Figure 1.14 The influence of being online, and connected devices, on communication

Proportion of internet users agreeing (%)



Source: Ofcom research, 2016

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All going online at least once a month (UK: 1,861; NI: 86)

Note: arrows represent significant difference to the UK as a whole

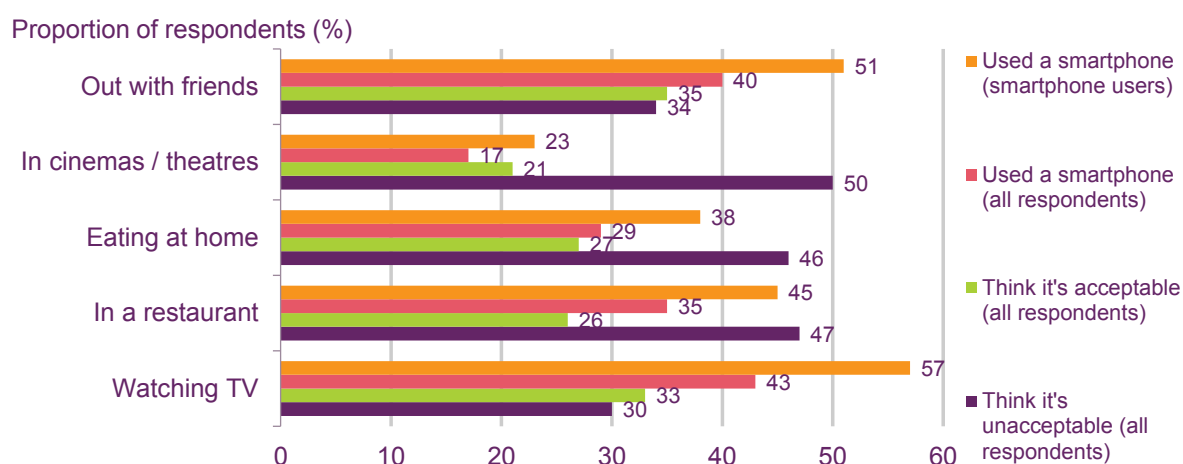
³ Internet users are defined as those who have been online within the last month

Although using smartphones or tablets is disruptive to conversation, people still do it

People in Northern Ireland are more likely than people across the UK to meet their friends in person, yet a majority report that face-to-face conversations are often interrupted by the use of connected devices.

Many people, however, are still willing to use them in company – be that when watching TV with friends, in a restaurant with other people or having dinner at home, or even at the cinema or theatre, as shown in Figure 1.15. Three quarters (73%) of smartphone users admitted to using their smartphone in at least one social situation. In most cases, the same proportion of people who have used their smartphone when out with others think that it is acceptable, but there are more people who think that it is unacceptable to use a phone in these situations.

Figure 1.15 Use and acceptability of using a smartphone with others in different situations



Source: Ofcom research, 2016

Base: All (NI: 102), smartphone users (NI: 75)

Q: For each of the following situations, please indicate if you have personally used and/or have been with others when they have used a smartphone or tablet on each occasion? And for each occasion, could you indicate the extent to which you think using a smartphone at this time is acceptable?

Six in ten people in Northern Ireland have felt ignored while others use their devices

Considering the widespread use of devices, sometimes while even in the company of others, it's no surprise that 58% of people in Northern Ireland report feeling ignored because the other person was too busy using their phone or tablet. Over a third (37% said they had experienced this at least once a week and almost a fifth (19%) had felt it on a daily basis.

Some people are using their devices to communicate with people while they are in the same place as them. More than a quarter of people (27%) in Northern Ireland had done this. At home, at a friend's house and in a bar or restaurant are the most likely places to communicate electronically with people while they are physically present.

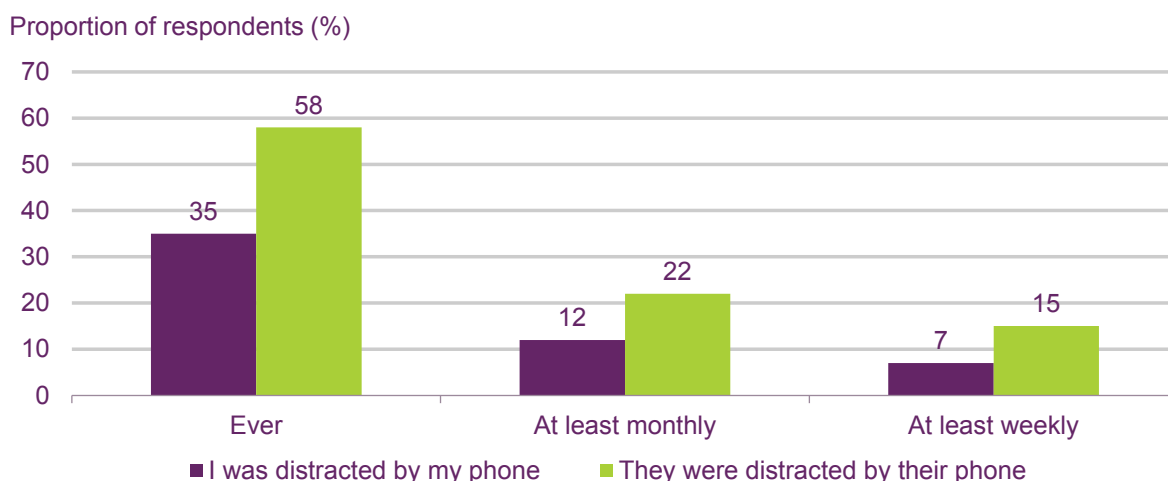
Some people can't put their devices down, and it's housework and sleeping that suffer...

This might be because some people feel that they just can't put their devices down. Six in ten people see themselves as 'hooked', almost a fifth say that they feel nervous or anxious when they are offline, and three in ten feel nervous without their mobile.

And less than one in ten people felt guilty about the amount of time they spend online, even though half of all internet users in Northern Ireland admit to spending longer than they intend in browsing social media, and six in ten spent longer than they intended to just generally browsing the web. When people in Northern Ireland do spend more time than intended online, housework and sleeping are the activities that are neglected, with 59% of regular internet users leaving the housework and 45% losing sleep.

Another effect of people not being able to put their devices down is the risk of collision. Six in ten people in Northern Ireland have been bumped into in the street by someone engrossed in their phone or tablet. But fewer people admit to bumping into someone else because they were too busy with their device.

Figure 1.16 Distracted by a phone: bumpers, bumpees and the frequency of collision



Source: Ofcom research, 2016

Base: All (NI: 102) and all phone users (NI: 88)

Q: How often, if ever, do people bump into you while walking on the street because they are too busy looking at their phone? Q: How often, if ever, do you bump into people or anything else while walking on the street because you are too busy looking at your phone?

...although some people have tried to disconnect for a while

In a bid to strike a healthier tech-life balance, some people in Northern Ireland have given themselves a 'digital detox' – purposefully going without the internet for a period of time. One-third (36%) had abstained completely from the internet for some time because they thought they'd been using it too much, and they had felt more productive and less distracted as a result. Two-thirds of people (65%) had cut down on specific activities, such as using social media or browsing the web, and half of parents (49%) had made rules of some sort to limit their children's time online.

And if they tried to cut down, or take a break from being online, people in Northern Ireland felt that they'd be better able to cope with a 'digital detox' than people across the whole of the UK. In fact, a greater proportion of people in Northern Ireland thought that they'd be able to cope very easily with switching off for a while – and perhaps would be looking forward to spending a bit more time communicating face to face with friends without feeling ignored.