Communications Market Report: Northern Ireland

Research Document

Publication date: 4th August 2016

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/cmrnorthernireland. Companion reports for the UK and each of the nations can be found at www.ofcom.org.uk/cmr.

Contents

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 quantititave diary study looking into people’s media and communicaitons 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
Freeview-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 availability	100	100	100	100	100				
Fixed broadband availability[2]	99.98	100	99.86	100	100				
LLU ADSL broadband availability[3]	95	96	90	93	90				
Fixed broadband (>=10Mbit/s) availability	95	96	93	91	91				
Fixed broadband (>=30Mbit/s) availability	88	89	83	85	83				
2G mobile availability[4]	99.6	99.7	99.1	98.4	98.8				
3G mobile availability[5]	99.6	99.8	97.9	98.6	99.4				
4G mobile availability[6]	97.8	98.8	92.0	90.1	99.3				
DTT availability[7]	98.5	98.6	98.7	97.8	97.4				
TV consumption (minutes per day) [8]	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's[1] total media and communications activities to provide an overview of the role of media and

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

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).

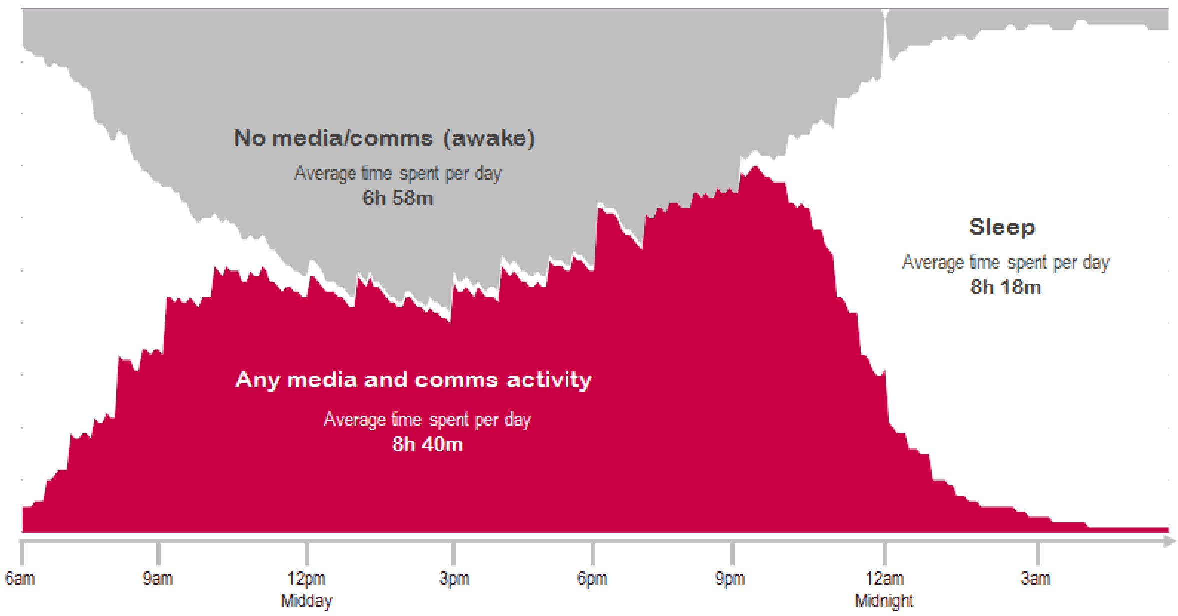
The research provides a snapshot of media and communications behaviour over a seven-day period, exploring when and how people use services and devices throughout the day, covering both personal and business use, in- and out-of-home use.

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

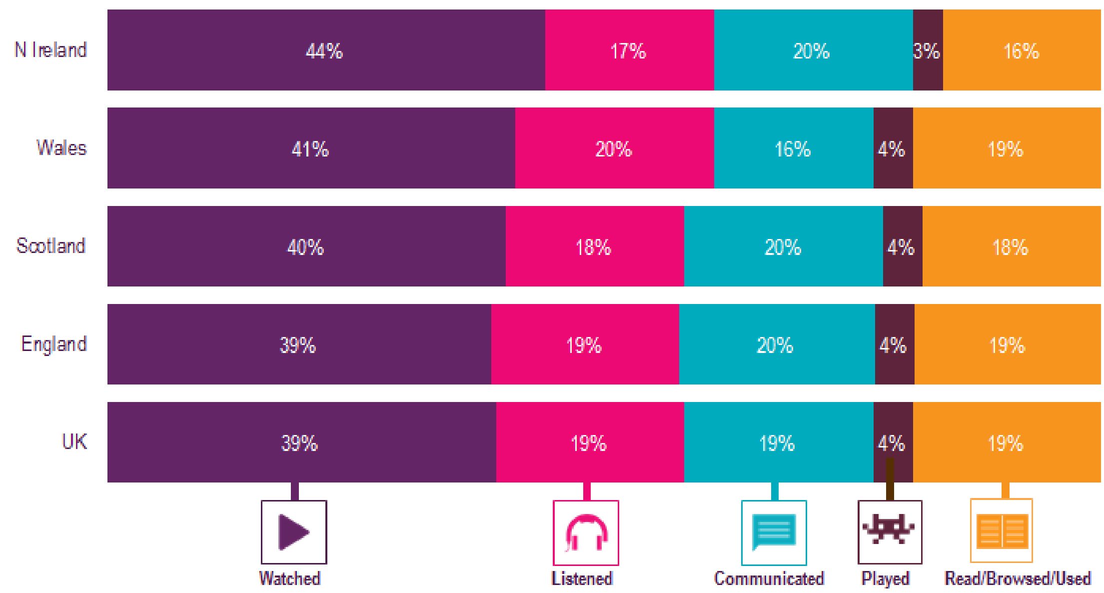
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

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

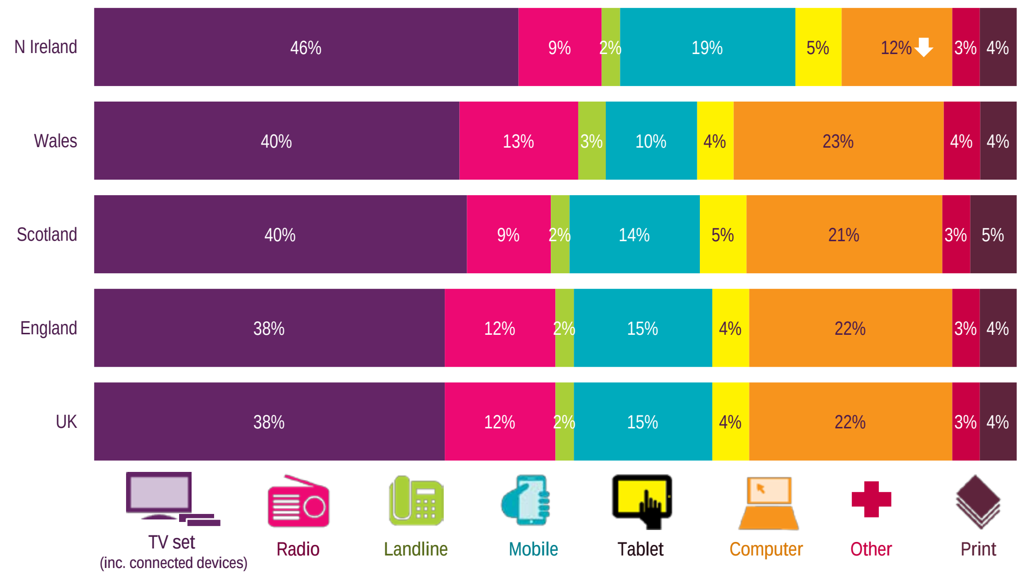


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

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 TV[2] 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



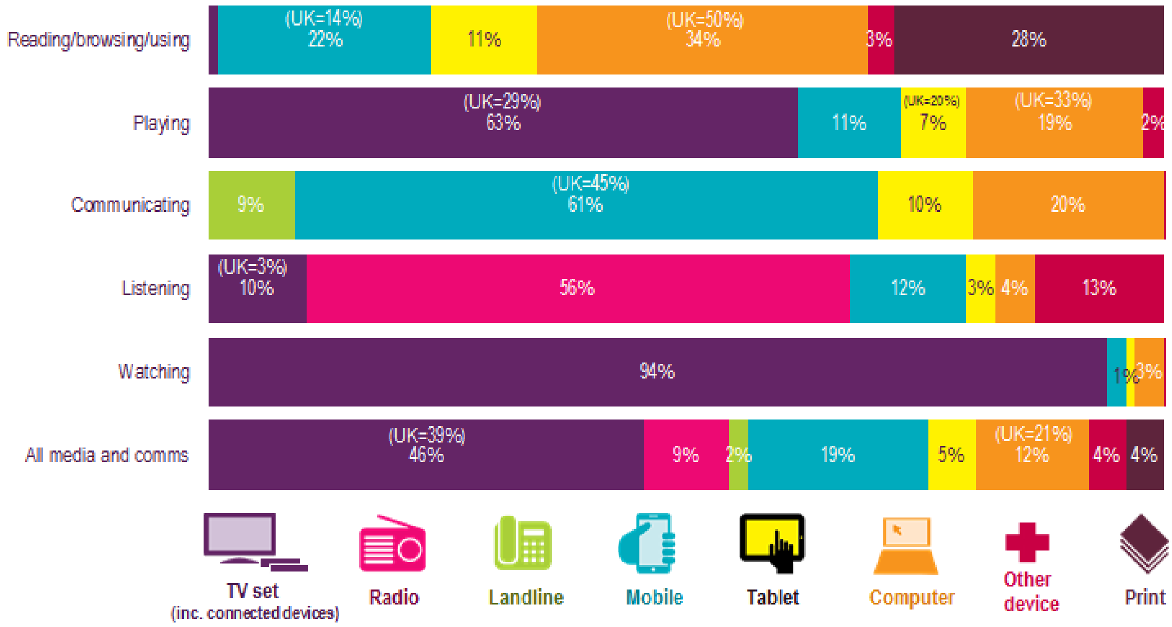
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N Ireland (155)

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/ Bluray

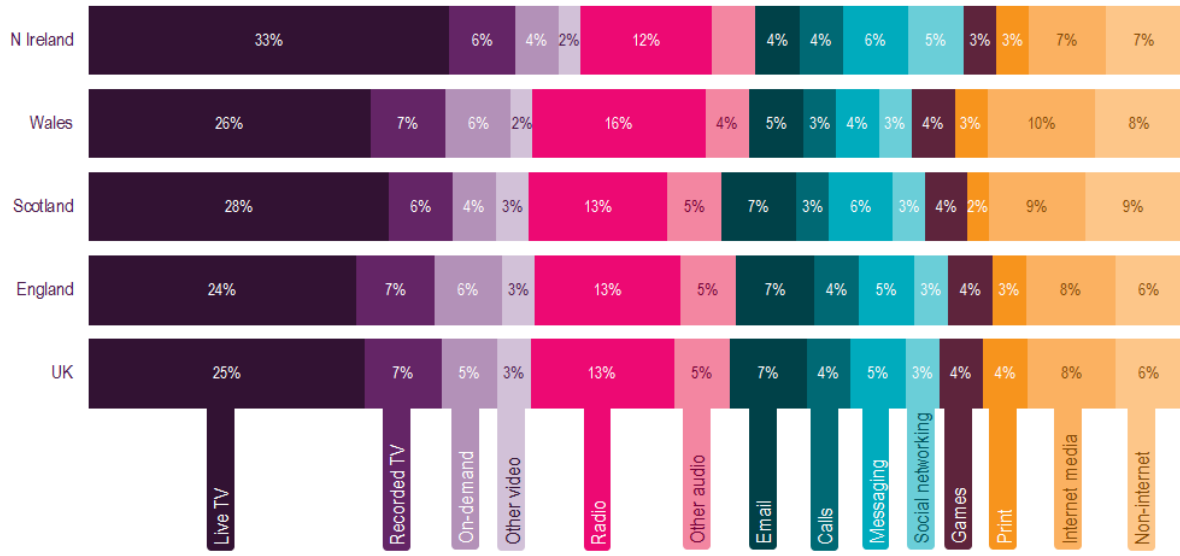
Figure 1.6 Proportion of time attributed to devices, by activity type



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

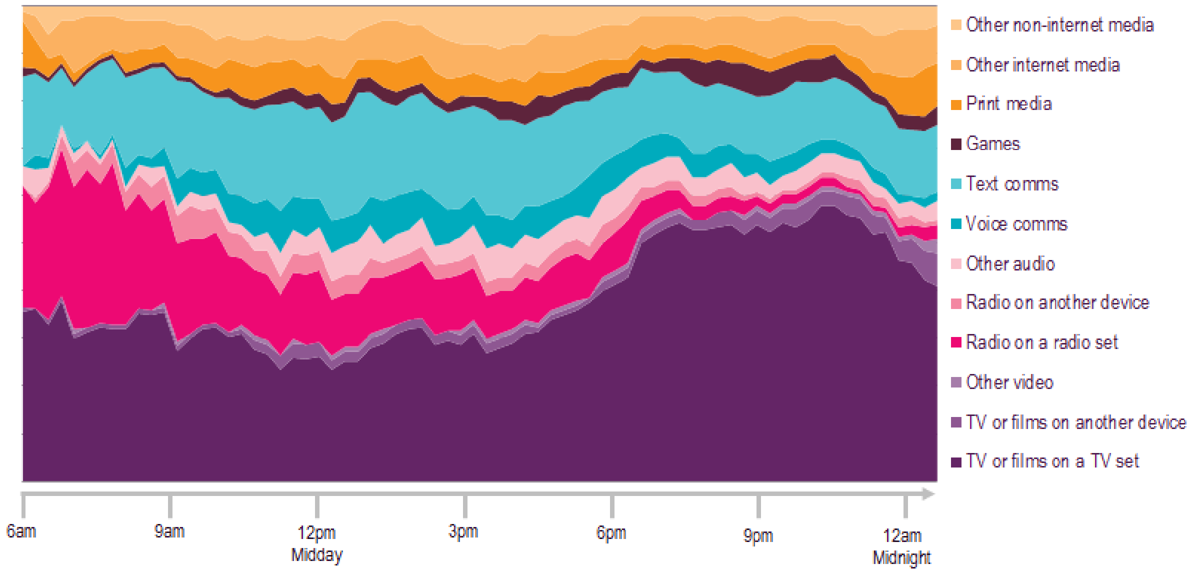


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in UK (1512), England (991), Scotland (190), Wales (176), N. Ireland (155)

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

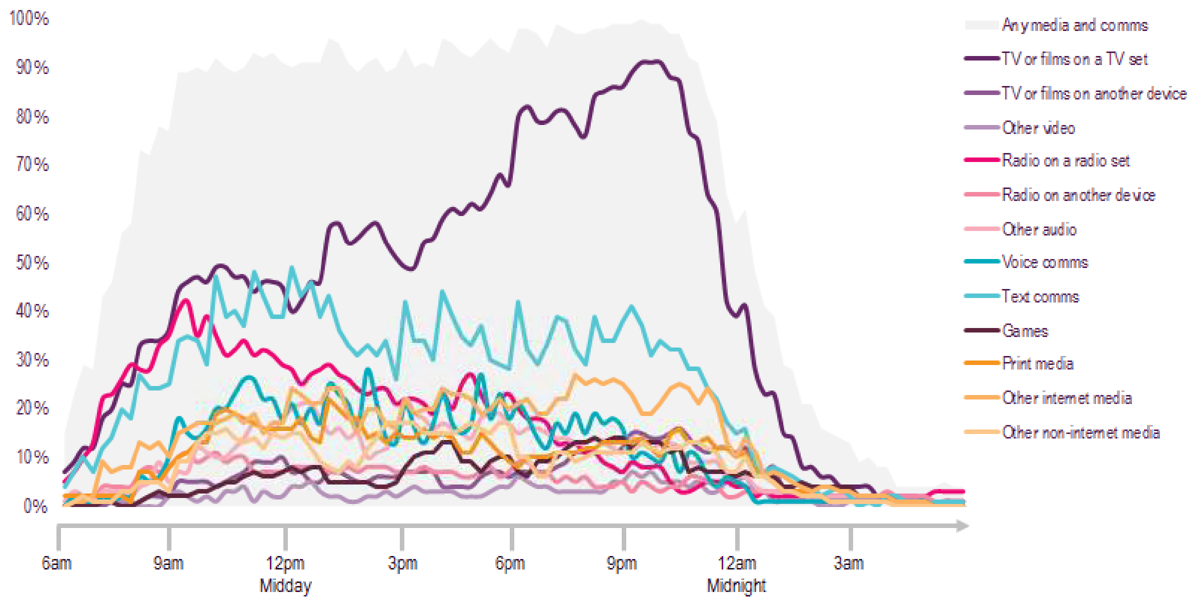


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

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

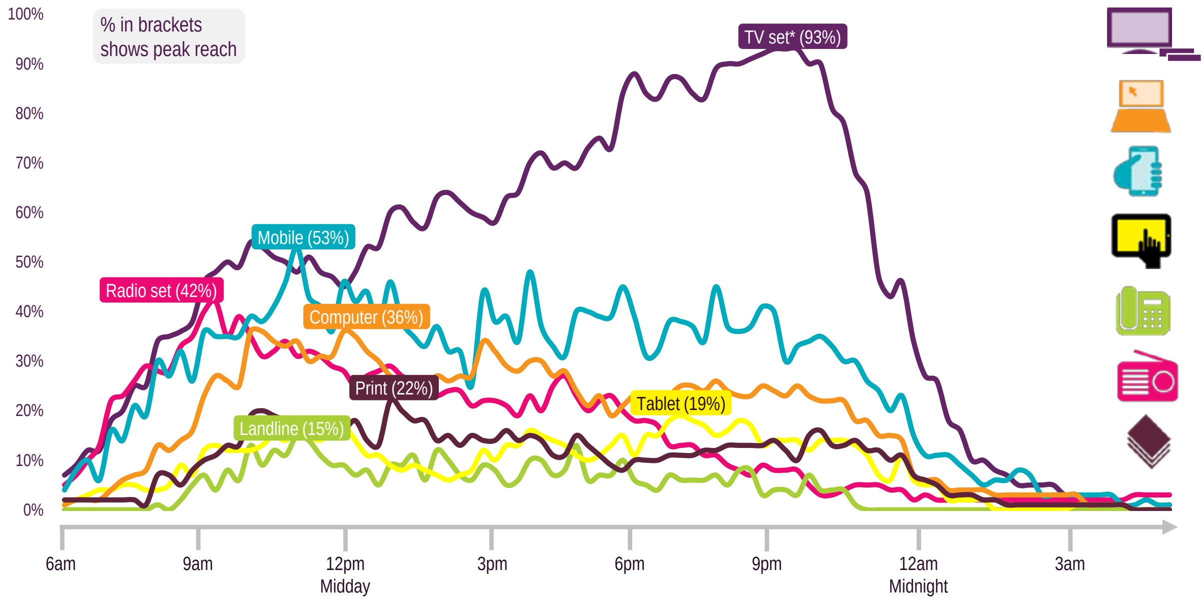


Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

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



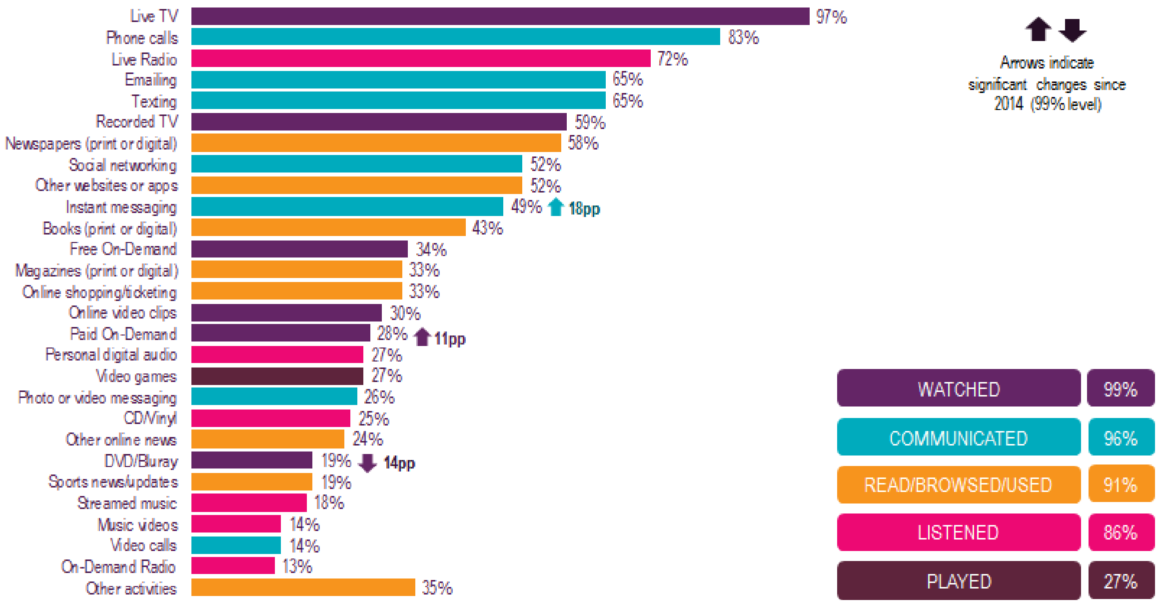
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

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



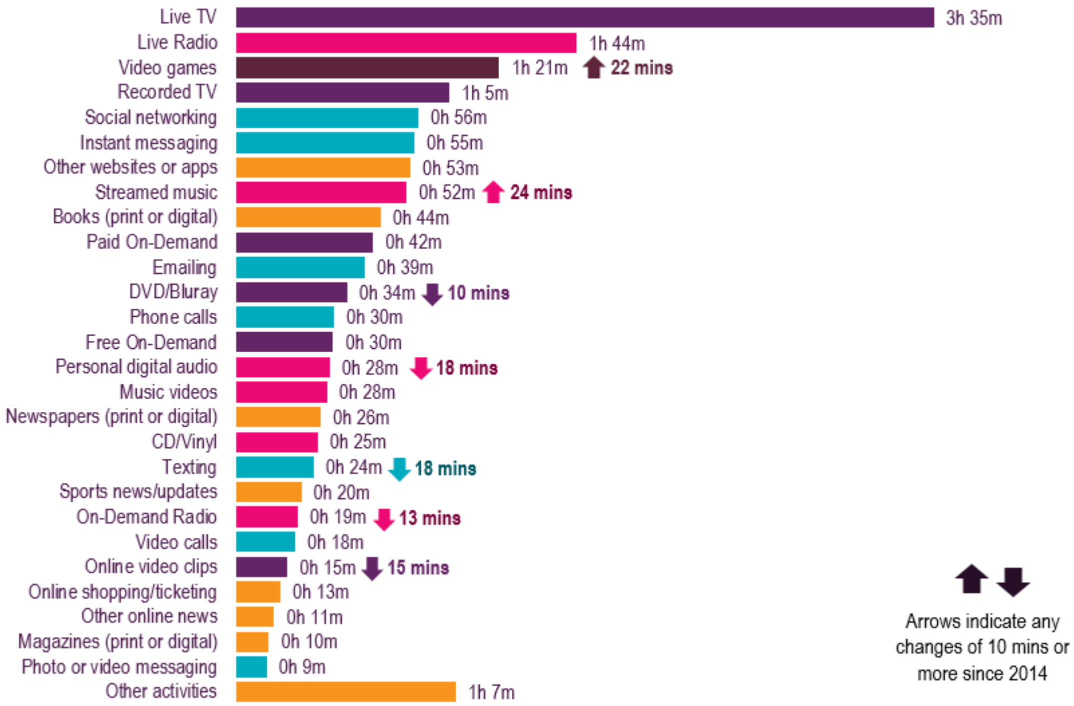
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

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



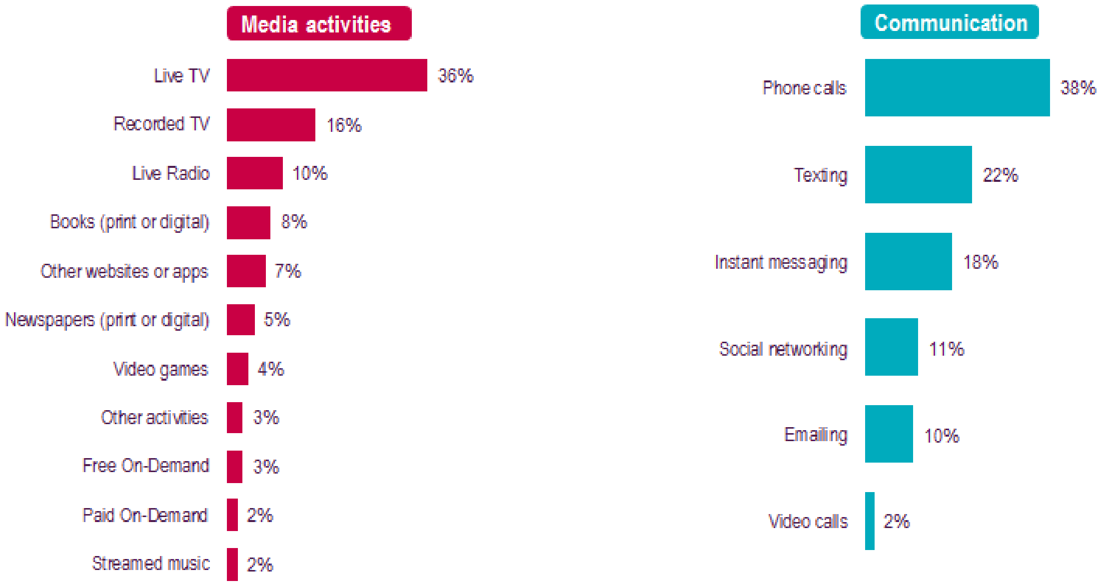
Source: Ofcom Digital Day 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ in Northern Ireland (155)

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 users[3] 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.

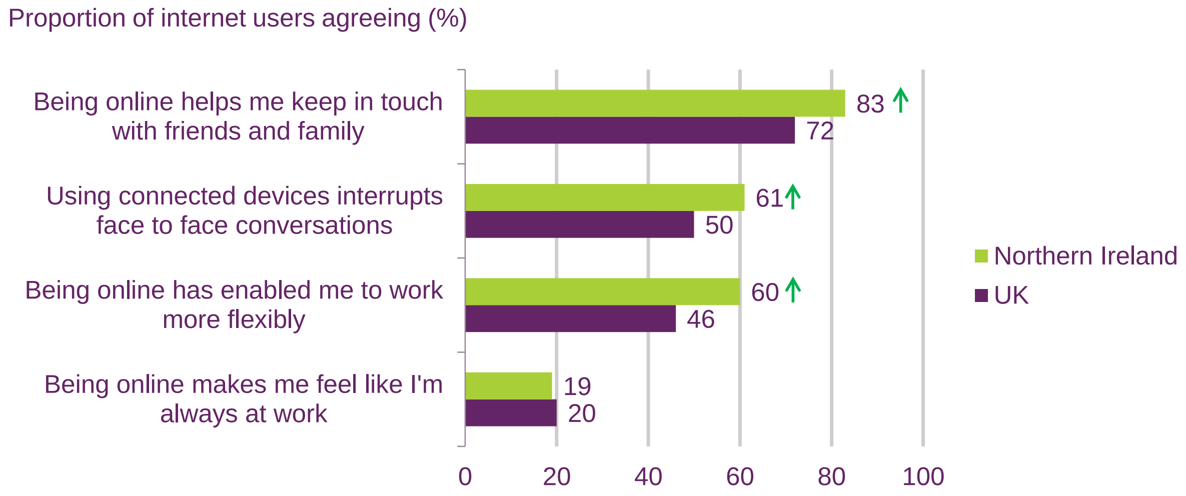
But not everyone feels the same about the time they spend online

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



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

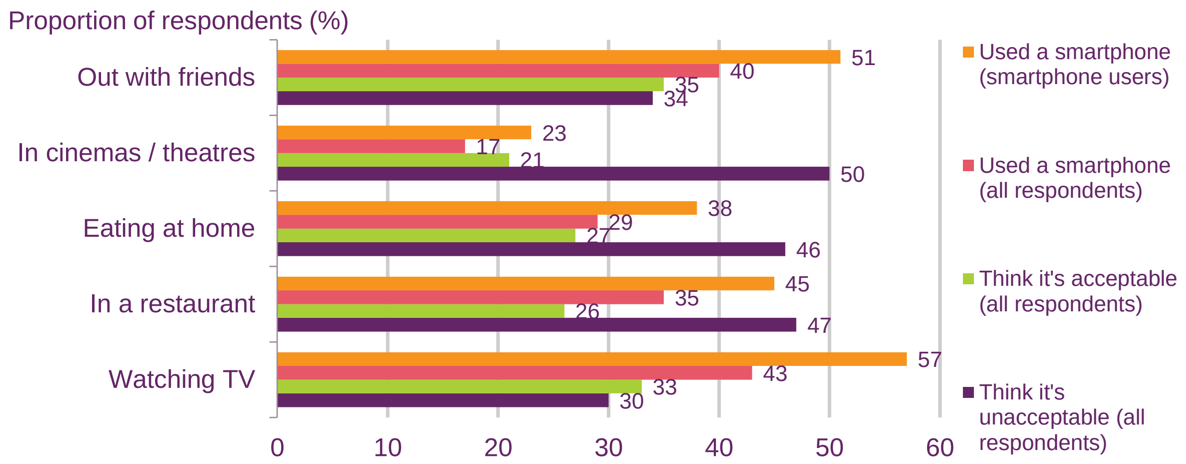
[3] Internet users are defined as those who have been online within the last month

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.

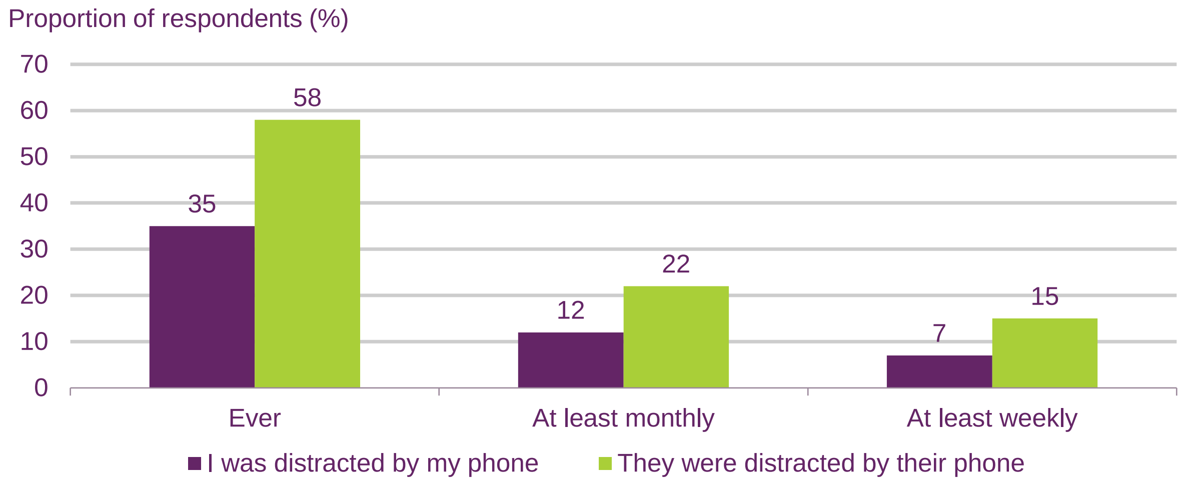
Some people can't put their devices down, and it's housework and sleeping that suffer…

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.

2 Television and audio-visual content

2.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

NI Assembly given more oversight of the BBC

The Northern Ireland Executive is being given more oversight of the BBC. As part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in October 2015, the Executive was given a formal consultative role in the process of the BBC Charter Review.

Once granted, the MoU will commit the BBC to send its annual report and accounts to the Executive, and to lay these before the Assembly.

The MoU also includes a commitment from the BBC to appear before Assembly committees on matters relating to Northern Ireland.

ITV takeover of UTV completed

UTV Media plc completed the sale of its TV interests in February 2016. The deal saw the company's TV stations in Northern Ireland (UTV) and the Republic of Ireland (UTV Ireland) transfer to ITV plc. Under the terms of its licence, which was renewed in January 2015, UTV has to deliver a minimum weekly quota of four hours of regional news and two hours of regional non-news programming (of which 26 minutes must be current affairs).

As part of the takeover process, Ofcom carried out a Change of Control Review. During the course of this review Ofcom approved a proposal from ITV to increase UTV's regional current affairs quota from 26 to 33 minutes per week, and varied the licence accordingly.

In June, News Corp. agreed to buy the remaider of UTV Media (rebranded Wireless Group), which includes radio stations in Britain and Ireland, in a reported £220m deal.

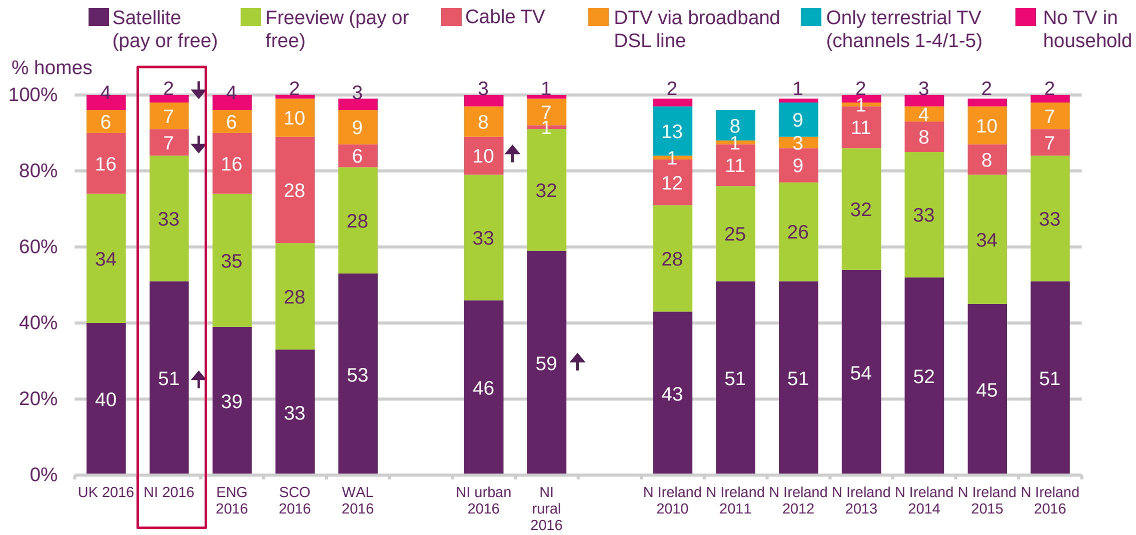
2.2 Television platform take-up in Northern Ireland

Half of all households in Northern Ireland have satellite television as their main TV platform – higher than the UK average

Figure 2.1 shows that in 2016, satellite television (pay or free) remained the main TV service in Northern Ireland (51%). Around one in three households had Freeview, and less than one in ten had cable TV or DTV via a broadband connection.

Compared to the UK as a whole in 2016, households in Northern Ireland were more likely to have satellite television (51% vs. 40%) and less likely to have cable TV (7% vs. 16%) or no television in the household (2% vs 4%). Take-up of Freeview and DTV services via broadband was similar across urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland.

Figure 2.1 Main television set share, by platform



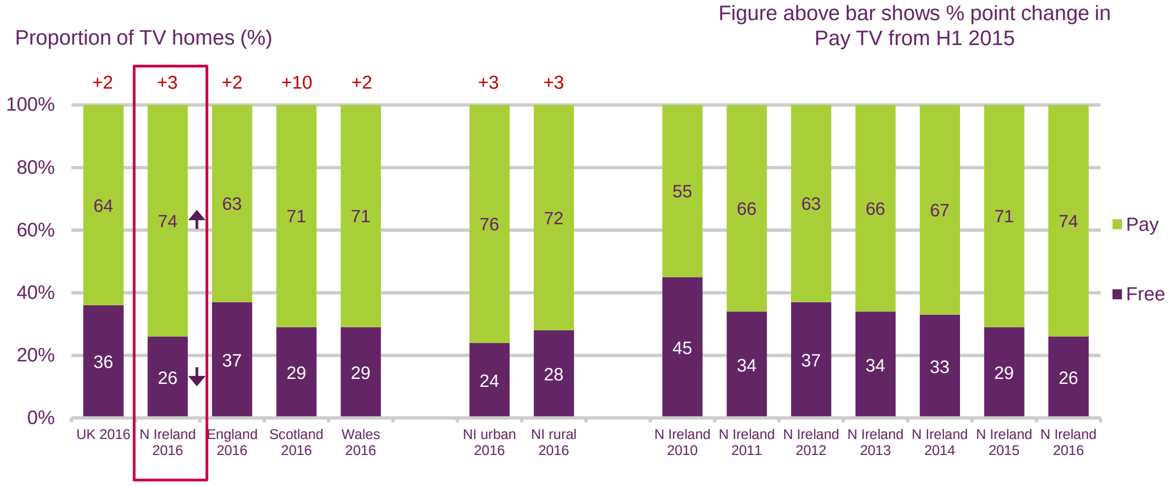
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016
QH1A: Which, if any, of these types of television does your household use at the moment?

Households in Northern Ireland continue to be more likely than the UK as a whole to have pay TV

Northern Ireland continued to have a higher than average proportion of TV homes with a pay-TV service: three in four households with a TV (74%) were reported to have paid-for satellite, cable or broadband TV, compared to two-thirds (64%) of the UK overall.

The proportion of TV homes in Northern Ireland in 2016 with a pay-TV service had not significantly changed year on year (71% in 2015 and 74% in 2016) and continues to be similar in both urban (76%) and rural (72%) areas.

Figure 2.2 Proportion of homes with free and pay television



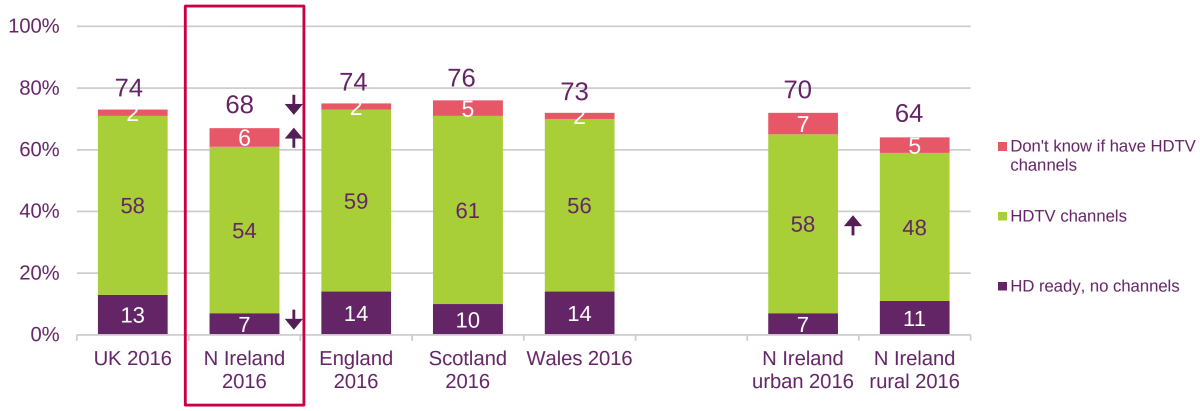
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in household (n = 3606 UK, 496 Northern Ireland, 2148 England, 491 Scotland, 471 Wales, 254 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 492 Northern Ireland 2013, 488 Northern Ireland 2014, 462 Northern Ireland 2015, 496 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QH1A: Which, if any, of these types of television does your household use at the moment?

Over half of TV households in Northern Ireland received HDTV services, in line with the UK average

Just over two-thirds (68%) of TV households in Northern Ireland claimed to own an HD-ready TV set in 2016, lower than the UK average (74%). Of these, over half (54%) said they received HD channels. Less than one in ten (7%) said they did not, lower than the UK average of 13%.

The proportion of households claiming to own an HD-ready TV set did not vary significantly by location (70% urban vs. 64% rural). However, households in urban areas were more likely than those in rural areas to say they had a TV set that did receive HDTV channels (58% vs. 48%).

Figure 2.3 Proportion of homes with HD television



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in the household (n = 3606 UK, 496 Northern Ireland, 2148 England, 491 Scotland, 471 Wales, 254 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016
QH53: Is the main TV in your household an HDTV set or HD ready?/ QH4: 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 HD TV service?

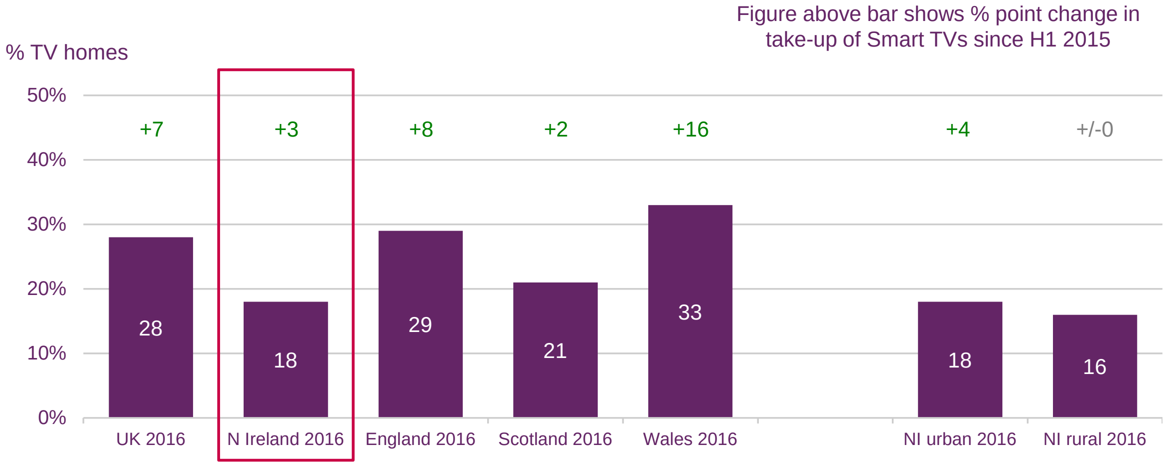
A fifth of TV households in Northern Ireland have a smart TV

Among those with a TV set in the household, 18% claimed to have a smart TV, which has not changed significantly since 2015.

Compared to the UK overall, as last year, smart TV ownership is lower in Northern Ireland (18% vs. 28%). Levels of smart TV ownership did not differ between TV households in urban and rural areas in Northern Ireland.

Using a smart TV's inbuilt internet functionality is only one way of connecting a TV to the internet. Set-top boxes, game consoles and dongles can also be used to make a TV internet-enabled. The proportion of households in Northern Ireland with a connected TV is likely to be greater than the smart TV take up figure of 18%.

Figure 2.4 Smart TV take-up



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ with a TV in household (n = 3606 UK, 496 Northern Ireland, 2148 England, 491 Scotland, 471 Wales, 254 Northern Ireland urban, 242 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 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.

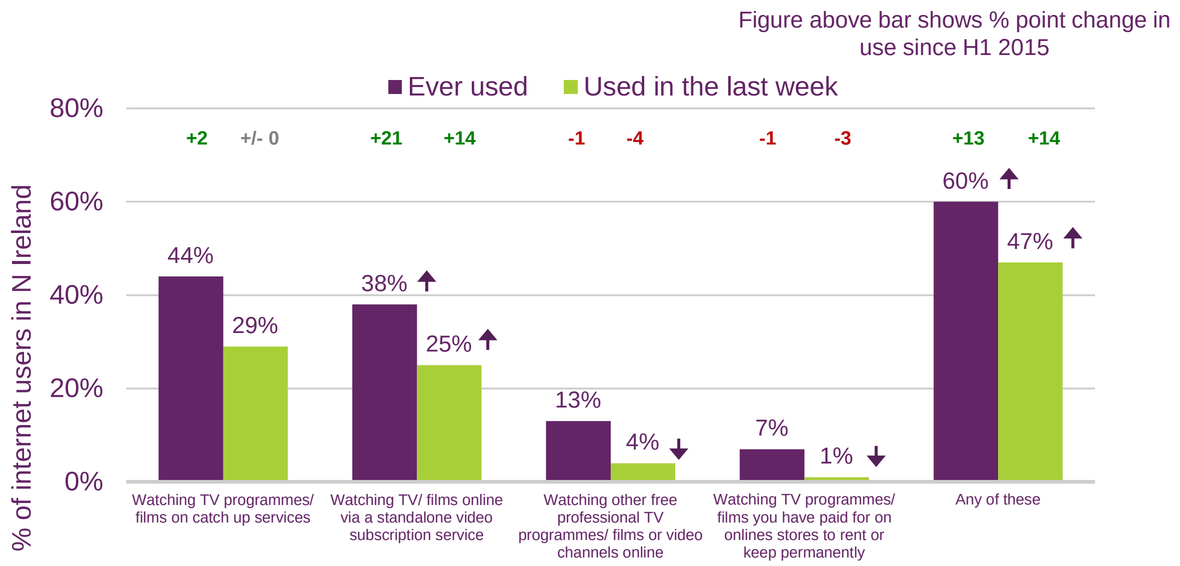
Catch-up services and stand-alone video subscription services are equally popular ways of watching TV programmes and films online

Among those who use the internet at home or elsewhere (e.g. on their smartphone, tablet or laptop), more than two in five say they have ever watched TV programmes or films on a catch-up service (e.g. BBC iPlayer, All4, Demand 5, Sky On Demand). Just under one in three internet users claimed to have watched these services in the past week. Both of these are comparable to 2015 figures.

Around four in ten internet users have ever used stand-alone video subscription services (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime) with a quarter having done so in the past week. Both of these figures have increased since 2015.

Four in ten adults in Northern Ireland who use the internet at home or elsewhere have never used any of these services, lower than in 2015.

Figure 2.5 TV programmes and films, on demand, on any service



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All NI adults aged 16+ who use the internet at home or elsewhere (n = 395)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016
QH46: Thinking about your personal use of TV programmes and films online and on-demand services that you may use on any device (e.g. smartphone, TV set, tablet or laptop) anywhere, which of the following, if any, have you personally ever used? / QH47: And which, if any, of these have you 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. Broadcast TV viewing refers to programmes watched on the TV set live at the time of broadcast, or recordings of these programmes, or viewing of these programmes through catch-up player services (referred to as time-shifted), up to seven days after they were televised.

Channel groups are referred to as ‘main five PSB channels’, ‘PSB portfolio channels’ and ‘PSB family’ or ‘PSB broadcaster’ channels. These are defined as:

Main five PSB channels:

BBC One, BBC Two, Channel3/ITV (inc ITV Breakfast), Channel 4 and Channel 5. Includes HD variants but excludes +1s.

PSB portfolio channels:

BBC: BBC Three, BBC Four, BBC News, BBC Parliament, CBBC, CBeebies, BBC red button channels

ITV: Channel3/ITV+1 , ITV2, ITV3, ITV4, CITV, ITVBeITV Encore

Channel 4: Channel 4+1, E4, More4, Film4, 4Music, 4seven,

Channel 5: Channel 5+1, Channel 5+24, 5*, 5USA, Spike.

+1 and HD variants are included where applicable.

PSB family or PSB broadcaster channels:

The main five PSB channels and all PSB portfolio channels combined

All viewing data is based on individuals aged 4+.

People in Northern Ireland spend an average of 3 hours 45 minutes per day watching TV

In 2015, people in Northern Ireland spent an average of 3 hours, 45 minutes per day watching television, less than in the other devolved nations but more than the UK average of 3 hours 36 minutes. Of the total time spent watching television, 2 hours and 36 minutes was spent watching the PSB family of channels.

Figure 2.6 Average minutes of television viewing per day, by nation: 2015

*Source: BARB, individuals (4+).*Note: This figure reflects the average across the ITV English regions with the highest in Border at 4 hours 10 minutes and lowest in West at 3 hours 17 minutes respectively.*

Just under half of all viewing is to the main five PSB channels

In 2015, the main five PSB channels accounted for a combined 49.4% share of total TV viewing in Northern Ireland, the only nation in which the share of viewing to the main five PSB channels fell below the majority of viewing. BBC One and Two had lower shares in Northern Ireland than in any other UK nation or region, while UTV performed strongly, second only to Border in share. Channel 4's share was above the UK average while Channel 5's share was broadly in line.

Figure 2.7 Share of the main five PSB channels in all homes, by UK nations and regions: 2015

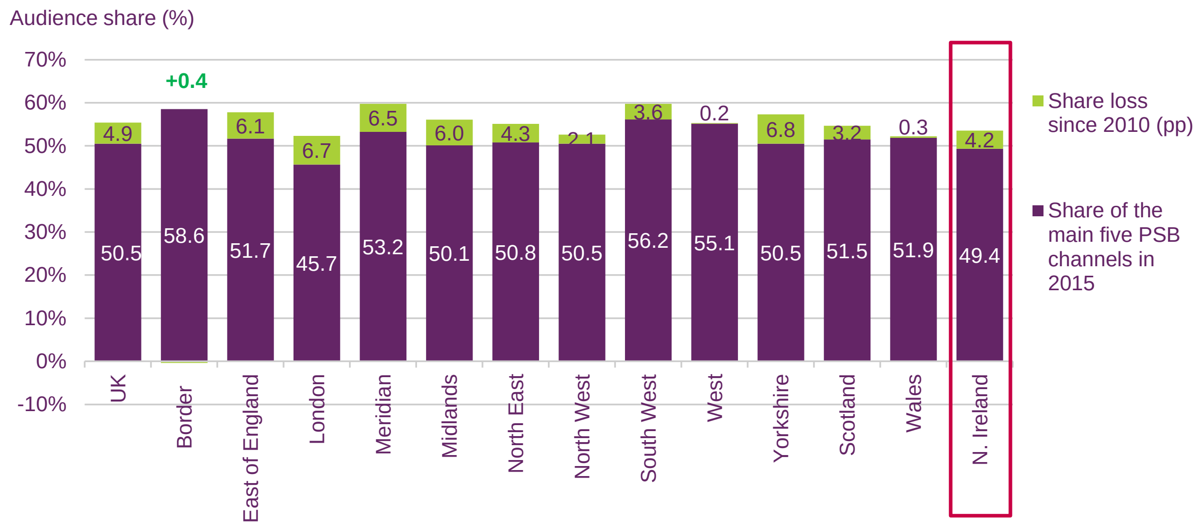
Source: BARB, individuals (4+). Note: Chart shows figures rounded to one decimal place. Numbers may not appear to sum up to total share of main five PSBs due to rounding.

The combined share of the main five PSB channels has decreased since 2010 but with a smaller decrease than the UK average

Between 2010 and 2015 there was a 4.2pp fall in the combined audience share of the main five PSB channels in Northern Ireland. This reduction was lower than the decrease across the UK as a whole (4.9pp) but larger than in Scotland (3.2pp) and Wales (0.3pp).

All other UK regions except Border (+0.4ppt) and West (a steady +0.2pp) saw a reduction in the total share of the main five PSB channels between 2010 and 2015.

Figure 2.8 Reduction in combined share of the main five PSB channels, all homes: 2010 and 2015

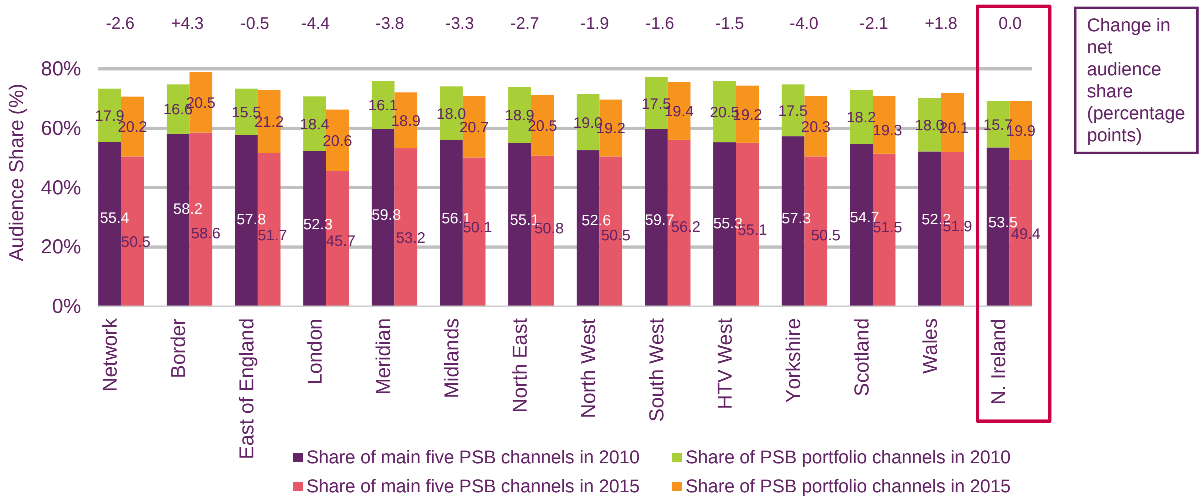


Source: BARB, Individuals (4+).

The total share of the main five PSBs and their families of channels remained stable between 2010 and 2015 in Northern Ireland

While the main five PSB channels' share of viewing decreased by 4.2pp, the PSB portfolio channels increased their share of viewing in Northern Ireland by 4.2pp between 2010 and 2015. This resulted in the overall net share of the main PSBs and their families of channels remaining stable. Only Border and Wales had a higher change in audience share.

Figure 2.9 Net change in the audience share of the main five PSB channels and their families of channels, all homes: 2010 and 2015



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

Regional news and HD channels

Channel 3/ITV

ITV does not currently broadcast regional HD variants for all of its regions. This means that in some areas, an out-of-region HD version is shown on the ITV HD channel. London, Meridian, Wales, Central, Granada, Anglia*, Yorkshire*, Tyne Tees* and STV currently offer the HD service, so in the remaining areas, the local news shown on the HD variant is not the local 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 local one to the area. The ITV early evening news bulletin share analysis in the 2014 CMR excluded the ITV HD variants and looked just at the SD share. Note: ITV HD is not reported against the ITV Ulster panel.

BBC One

There are BBC One HD channels for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which show local 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.

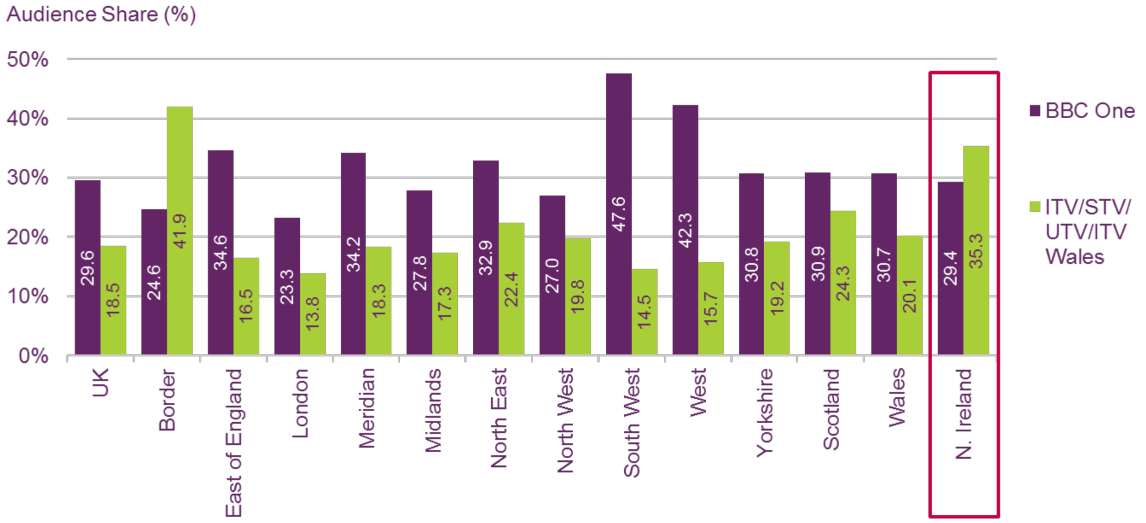
The reporting of BBC One remains unchanged from the CMR 2014.

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

UTV's early evening local news bulletin attracted a greater share in Northern Ireland than the UK average for the same weekday time period

UTV's early-evening news bulletin, *UTV Live*, attracted a 35.3% average share in Northern Ireland between 6pm and 6.30pm, nearly double Channel 3's UK average for early-evening news bulletins (18.5%). This was markedly higher than in all other UK nations and regions, with the exception of Border, which achieved a 41.9% viewing share. BBC One's counterpart bulletin in Northern Ireland, *BBC Newsline,* attracted a lower average share (29.4%) between 6.30pm and 7pm. This is in line with the BBC early evening news bulletin across the UK as a whole (29.6%).

Figure 2.10 BBC One and ITV/ STV/ UTV/ ITV Wales early evening news bulletin shares, all homes: 2015



Source: BARB, Individuals (4+). Channels include HD variants where applicable but exclude +1s (for Channel 3). Early evening ('local') news bulletin figures based on 'regional news' genre programmes, start time range 17:55-18:35, 10mins+ duration, weekdays. UK figures are based on share to respective early evening news bulletin slot times. 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.

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland who use TV as their main source of UK and world news is in line with the UK overall

Television was the main source of UK and world news for adults in Northern Ireland, with 62% claiming to use it, in line with the UK. Radio was the second most popular source for news, at 17% of adults; this was significantly higher than for the UK overall (10%). Both websites or apps[4], and newspapers, were cited as main sources of UK and world news by a significantly lower proportion than in the UK overall (at 9% and 4% respectively).

[4] These include websites or apps accessed using a computer, laptop, netbook or tablet and using a mobile phone.

Figure 2.11 Respondents' main media source for UK and world news, by nation:

Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2015.
Base: All (2,107); England (1,607); Scotland (180); Wales (164); Northern Ireland (156). Prompted, single code. Responses ≥ 3% labelled. Significance testing shows any difference in the main source of news between any nation and all adults in 2015

2.4 TV programming for viewers in Northern Ireland

The following section outlines spend and hours of programming for viewers in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the English regions, provided by the BBC and STV/ ITV/ UTV. The figures exclude Scots-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 2.5.

Historical financial figures are presented in nominal terms and not adjusted for inflation. The reason for this is to align the CMR suite of reports and to provide a 'base' view of the overall market to inform further analysis.

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.

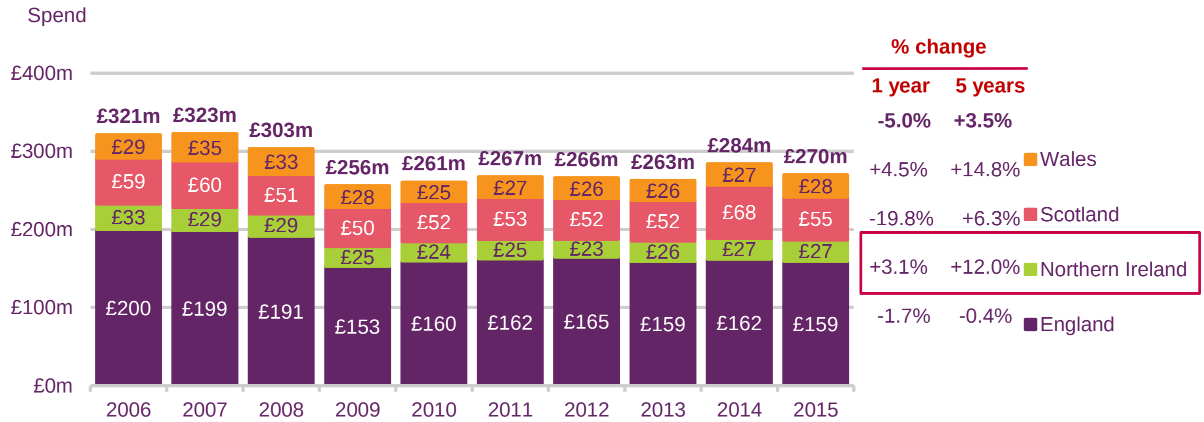
Spend on output - includes all costs incurred by the broadcaster on content; these usually include production costs for in house productions and licensing costs for commissioned and acquired programmes.

BBC and UTV spend on first-run originated content for viewers in Northern Ireland increased slightly in 2015

£270m was spent by the BBC and ITV/ STV/ UTV on producing regional first-run originated programmes specifically for viewers in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English regions in 2015, down by £14m in nominal terms year on year. The UK-wide decrease in spending can be accounted for in part by the exceptional nature of 2014, when spending increased in Scotland due to the Referendum on Scottish Independence and the Commonwealth Games held in Glasgow during July and August. However, since 2010, spend on first-run originated nations' and regions' output by the BBC and ITV/STV/UTV has risen by £9m.

In nominal terms, the year-on-year spend by the BBC and UTV on first-run originated programming for viewers in Northern Ireland increased by 3.1% to £27m in 2015. This was also a 12% increase on the £24m spend in 2010.

Figure 2.12 Spend on first-run originated nations' and regions' output by the BBC/ ITV/ STV/ UTV



Source: Broadcasters. All figures are nominal.
Note: Spend data for first-run originations only. Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. Spend on content broadcast in the Scottish part of the ITV Border region is included within England from 2006-2013, but in Scotland thereafter. These figures do not include spend on network content. For more information on S4C, please see Section 2.5.

Total spend on current affairs programming for people in Northern Ireland has increased by 11% year on year

Including acquisitions and repeats, spend by the BBC and UTV on current affairs programming for viewers in Northern Ireland increased by 11% in nominal terms in 2015, and was 68% up on five years earlier.

Spend on news also increased, with a 4% year-on-year increase, and there was a modest increase of 1% on non-news/non-current affairs spend.

Total spend on programming commissioned for Northern Ireland increased by 3% in 2015. This is in contrast to the rest of the UK, which saw an average decrease of 5% in spend on programmes produced for specific nations and regions, led in particular by the decrease in spending in 2015 in Scotland following an exceptional 2014.

Figure 2.13 Change in total spend on nations' and regions' output, by genre and nation: 2010-2015

	UK		England		N. Ireland		Scotland		Wales	
	1yr (%)	5yr (%)	1yr (%)	5yr (%)	1yr (%)	5yr (%)	1yr (%)	5yr (%)	1yr (%)	5yr (%)
Current affairs	-10%	-1%	-1%	-28%	11%	68%	-19%	34%	-7%	11%
News	0%	2%	-1%	-1%	4%	17%	1%	16%	-3%	0%
Non-news/non-current affairs	-14%	1%	0%	-25%	1%	-4%	-28%	-4%	14%	28%
Total spend in 2015	**£271m**		**£159m**		**£27m**		**£56m**		**£29m**	

	UK		England		N. Ireland		Scotland		Wales	
	1yr	5yr	1yr	5yr	1yr	5yr	1yr	5yr	1yr	5yr
Change in spend	-5%	1%	-2%	-4%	3%	12%	-20%	6%	5%	15%

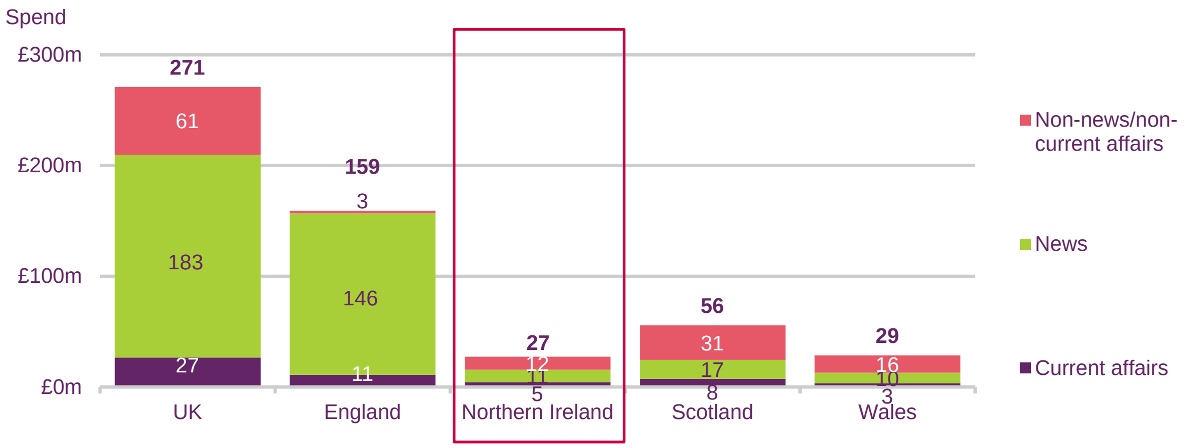
Source: Broadcasters. All figures are nominal.
Note: Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include spend on network content. Spend on programming for the ITV Border region is divided between England and Scotland in 2014-2015 and attributed to England only prior to 2014.

Expenditure by the BBC and UTV on programming for viewers in Northern Ireland increased by 3% year on year

Expenditure on nations' and regions' content broadcast by the BBC and UTV for people in Northern Ireland increased by £0.9m in 2015, a rise of 3%. In contrast, expenditure by the BBC and ITV/ STV/ UTV on programming across the UK fell by 5%.

In addition to this, the BBC incurred a further £28m of costs in delivering other content to S4C under the terms of the operating agreement, and contributed £5m to BBC Alba in Scotland.

Figure 2.14 Total spend by the BBC/ ITV/ STV/ UTV on nations'/ regions' programming for the main PSB channels (BBC One and Channel 3): 2015



Source: Broadcasters.
Note: 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. This was 73 hours of current affairs in 2015.

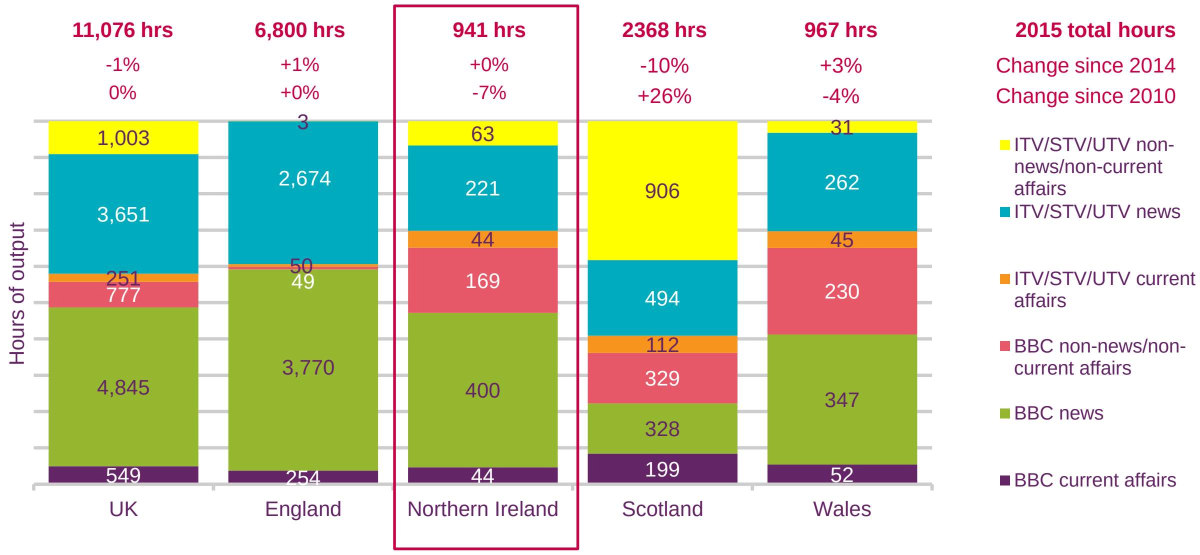
The number of first-run originated hours for viewers in Northern Ireland remained stable in 2015

The BBC and ITV/ STV/ UTV produced a total of 11,076 hours of first-run originated content for the English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2015, down by 123 hours year on year.

The number of first-run originated hours produced specifically for viewers in Northern Ireland has decreased by 7% since 2010. Over the past year, the number of first-run hours has remained stable, compared to the UK-wide average which decreased by 1%.

The distribution of programmes across genres and broadcasters in Northern Ireland remained broadly the same as in 2014. The biggest changes were reductions of 13 hours of non-news/ non-current affairs programming by UTV, and in current affairs content by UTV.

Figure 2.15 Hours of first-run originated nations'/ regions' output, by genre and broadcaster: 2015

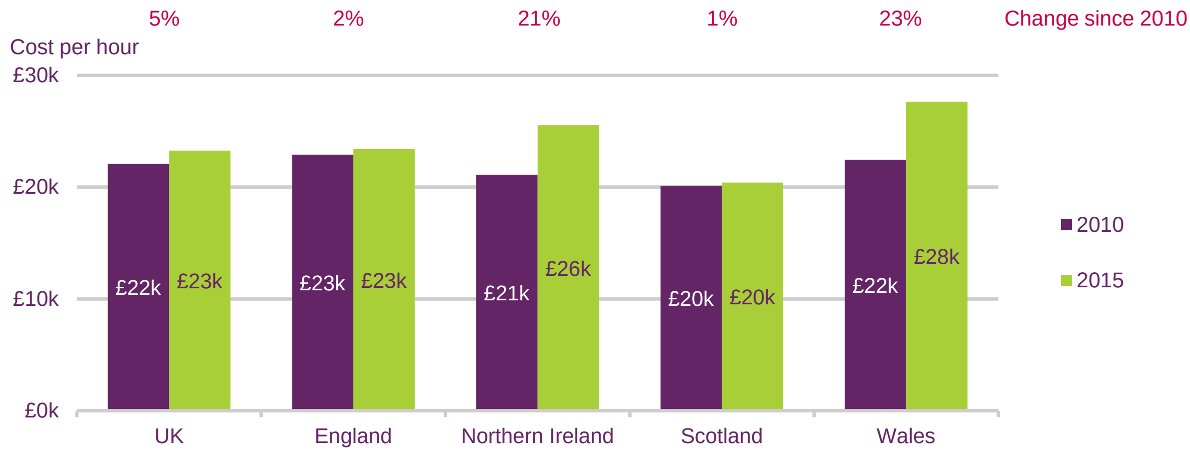


Source: Broadcasters.
Note: Hours data for first-run originations only. Excludes hours for BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some hours of Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include hours of network content. Scotland figures include programming for viewers of ITV Border in Scotland. This was 73 hours of current affairs in 2015.

Total cost per hour of nations' output is up by 21% since 2010 in Northern Ireland in nominal terms

Analysing the cost of making programmes for the nations, cost-per-hour calculations show that Northern Ireland costs, when measured in nominal terms, increased over the five-year period to 2015 by 21%, in contrast to the UK average, which increased by 5%. This cost per hour increase could be attributed to the production of more expensive content for viewers in Northern Ireland over this period.

Figure 2.16 Cost per hour: total nations/regions output, by nation



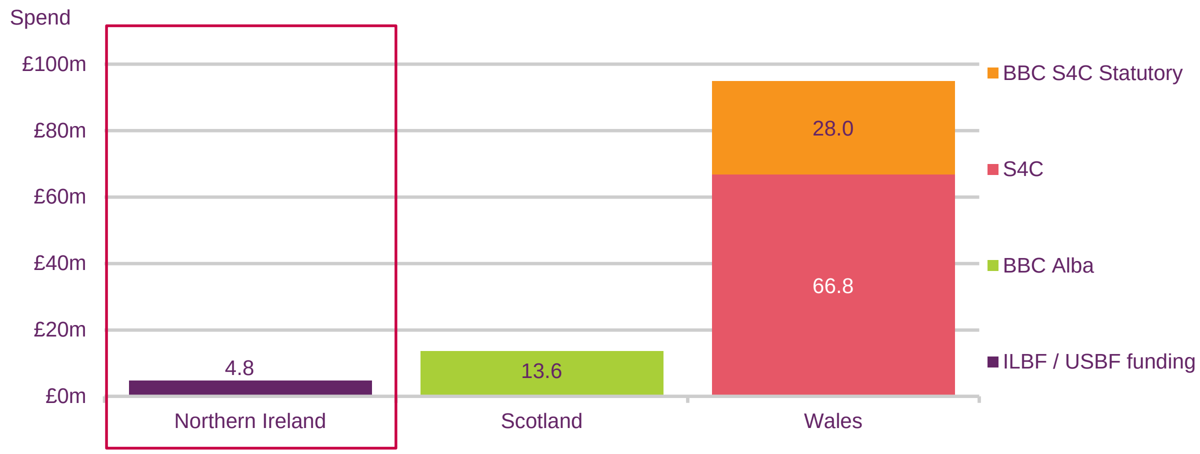
Source: Broadcasters. All figures are nominal.
Note: Excludes spend on BBC Alba and S4C output but includes some spend on Irish-language programming by the BBC. These figures do not include spend on network content. Scotland figures include programming for viewers of ITV Border in Scotland. This was 73 hours of current affairs in 2015.

2.5 Other programming in Northern Ireland

Together, the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) contributed £4.8m to programmes broadcast in Northern Ireland in 2015

On top of the BBC and UTV's contribution to local-interest programming, the ILBF contributed £3.4m and the USBF contributed £1.3m to the cost of Irish-language and Ulster-Scots cultural programming broadcast on BBC NI, UTV, TG4, and RTÉ.

Figure 2.17 Spend on other programming in the devolved nations: 2015



Source: Broadcasters.
Note: BBC S4C Statutory refers to the cost to the BBC of programming supplied to S4C by the BBC as part of their statutory agreement. ILBF / USBF refers to additional production contributions by the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund. S4C figures cover the 2015/2016 financial year, BBC Alba and ILBF / USBF figures cover the 2015 calendar year.

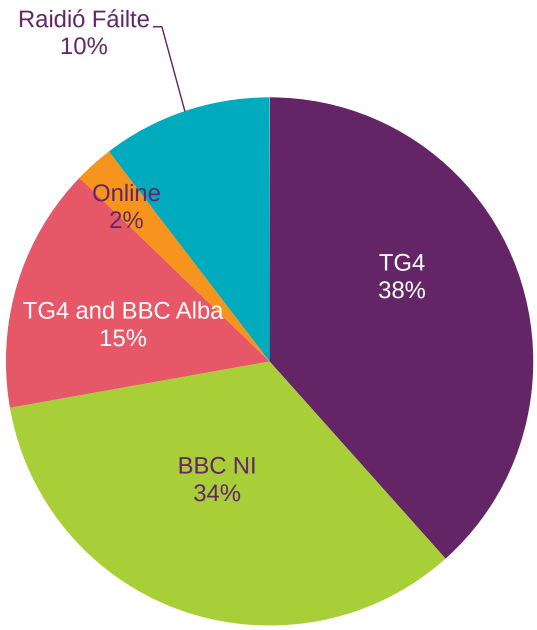
The Irish Language Broadcast Fund

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. A new four-year period of funding from 2016 to 2020 was announced in December 2015.

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.

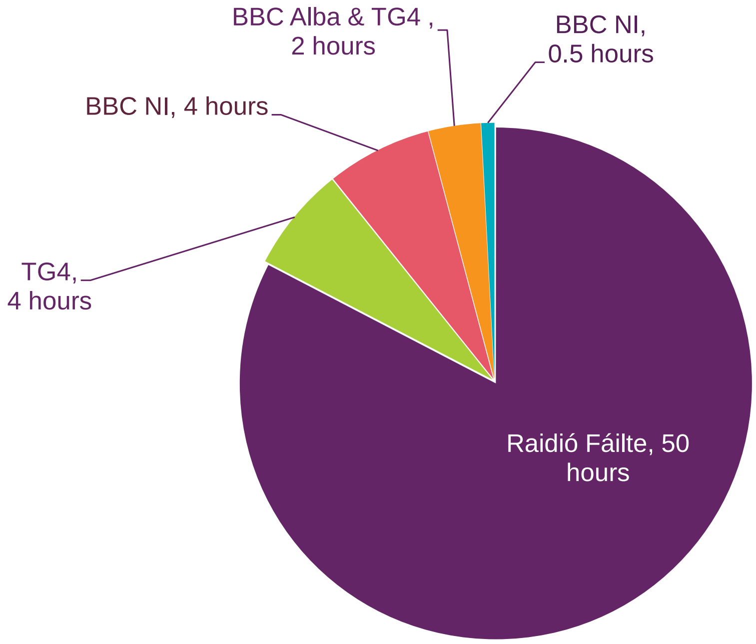
Figure 2.18 ILBF content funding recipients, by broadcaster / platform: 2015/2016



Source: Northern Ireland Screen.

The ILBF also supports online content, mobile phone applications and, through a training programme, content on Raidió Fáilte. More than £2.5m is spent annually on Irish language content, and in the last financial year there were eight 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.

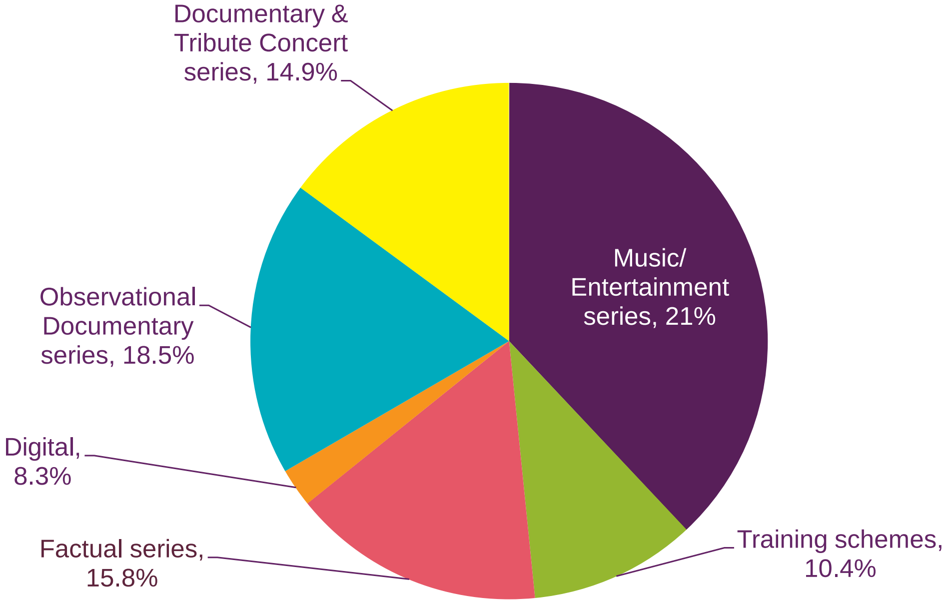
Figure 2.19 ILBF-funded hours: 2015/2016



Source: Northern Ireland Screen.

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

Figure 2.20 ILBF content funding, by genre: 2015-2016



Source: Northern Ireland Screen. Includes all programmes.

Programming highlights

ILBF-funded travel series *Wwoofáil California* was nominated for a Torc at the Celtic Media Festival and for an IFTA (Irish Film and Television Academy Awards). *An Bronntanas* (The Gift) was also nominated for an IFTA.

Other 2015/2016 highlights include landmark documentaries: *Mary McAleese & an Chéad Eorpach; Enigma de Blaghad; Eoin Mac Néill, Fear Dearmadta 1916; Sheehy Skeffington, Síochánaí;* and entertainment series *I Lár an Aonaigh* and *Opry an Iúir*.

ILBF objectives for 2015-16 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.

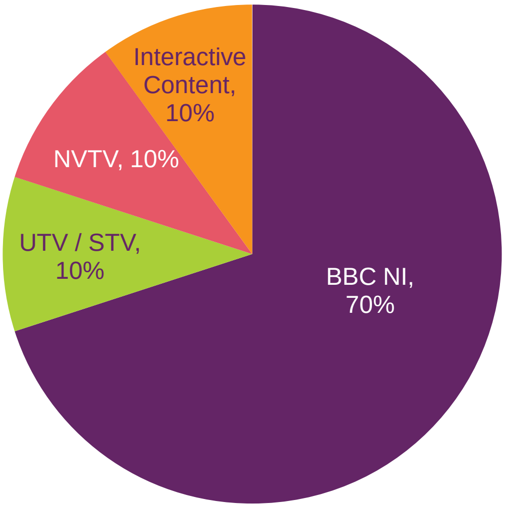
The UK Government has given a commitment to the fund (£1m per year) until at least 2020.

The majority of programming funded by the Ulster-Scots Broadcasting Fund was aired on BBC Northern Ireland in 2015/16

In 2015-16 nine awards were made, totalling 23 hours of production, plus one award for interactive content.

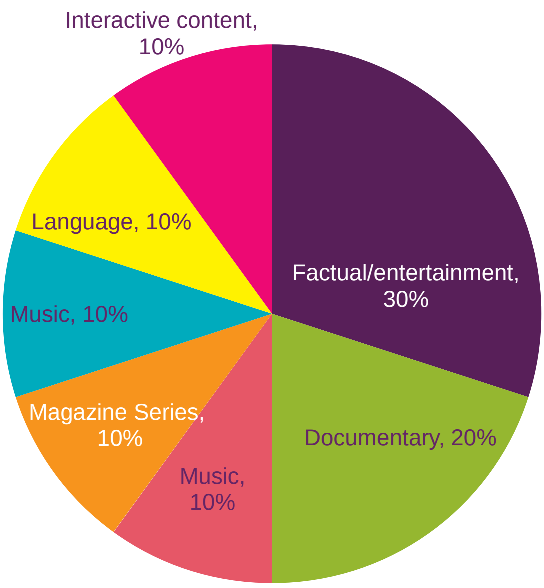
Five projects were broadcast in 2015/16 including documentaries, music and a cookery series. Funded content was broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland, UTV and STV.

Figure 2.21 USBF content funding, by broadcaster: 2015-2016



Source: Northern Ireland Screen .Includes all programmes.

Figure 2.22 USBF breakdown of output, by genre: 2015-2016



Source: Northern Ireland Screen. Includes all programmes.

Programming highlights

Belfast to Congo: A Deadly Mission told the story of Bob McAllister and his missionary family from Belfast, who in 1964 found themselves caught up in a bloody rebellion in the Central African Republic of Congo.

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

Three-part documentary travelogue series, *Brave New World: Canada,* explored the country's rich cultural connections with Ulster.

Objectives for 2016/17 include:

- Deliver 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming in a range of genres.
- 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.

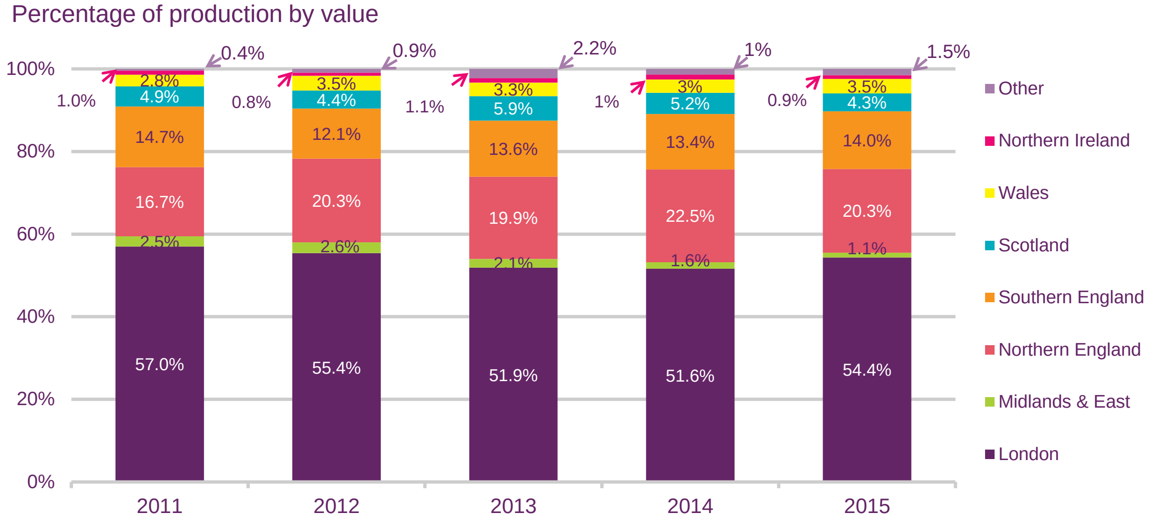
Programming reach

During 2015-16, programming supported by the ILBF and USBF, and broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland, reached an audience of 690,000, representing just over 40% of the total Northern Ireland population[5].

2.6 Network television productions made in Northern Ireland

Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.24 below illustrate the proportion of UK PSB network programmes that were produced in the nations and regions over the last five years, in terms of expenditure and volume respectively. In line with previous years, in 2015 0.9% of network broadcast hours were produced in Northern Ireland, measured by both expenditure and volume. This indicates that the average cost per hour was in line with the UK as a whole.

Figure 2.23 Expenditure on originated network productions: 2011-2015

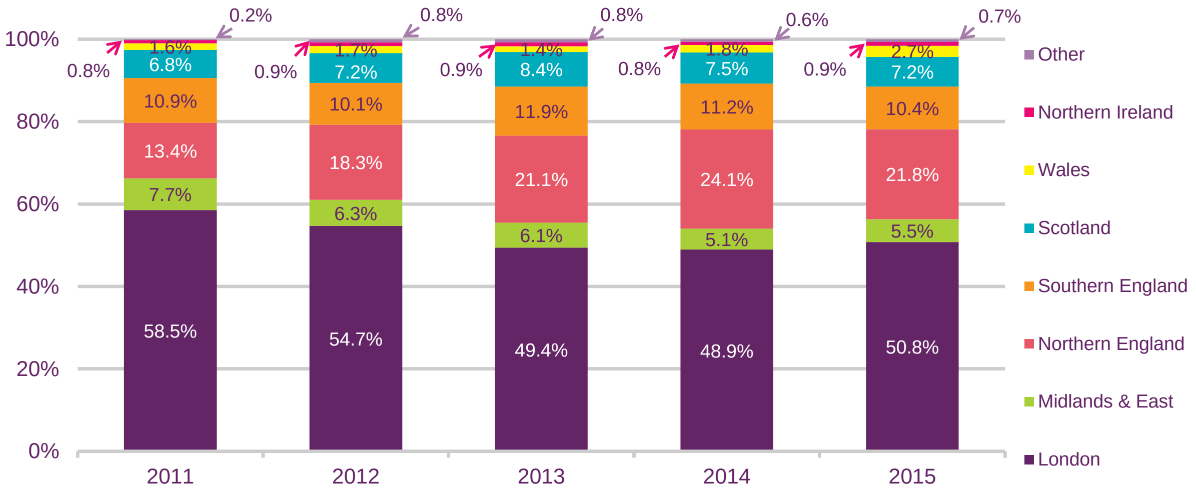


Source: Ofcom/broadcasters
Note: This expenditure does not include network news production .The category 'other' refers to programmes made by producers based within the M25 that qualify as regional productions on the grounds that 70% of total spend and 50% of off-screen talent spend was outside the M25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

[5] *Source BARB, all individuals in Northern Ireland (age 4+) Note: This is all programming that broadcast during 2015/2016, not allocation of funding.*

Figure 2.24 Volume of originated network productions: 2011-2015

Percentage of production by volume



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 that 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 http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/guidance/programme-guidance/reg_prod/ on Ofcom website for further details.

3 Radio and audio content

3.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

New UK-wide digital stations go live in Northern Ireland

A second UK-wide commercial digital radio multiplex, broadcasting 18 digital stations (including 14 new ones) launched in March 2016.

The new digital radio multiplex is run by Sound Digital, a consortium of Arqiva, Bauer, and Wireless Group (formerly UTV Media GB). The multiplex (which is the transmission infrastructure used to deliver these services) carries new stations including Virgin Radio, talkRADIO, talkSPORT 2 and Share Radio.

Coverage from the new multiplex is more limited than from others, comprising BBC services; Digital One; and local DAB. UK-wide indoor coverage currently reaches 76.5% of households. In Northern Ireland, the figure will be 56.6%.

3.2 Radio station availability

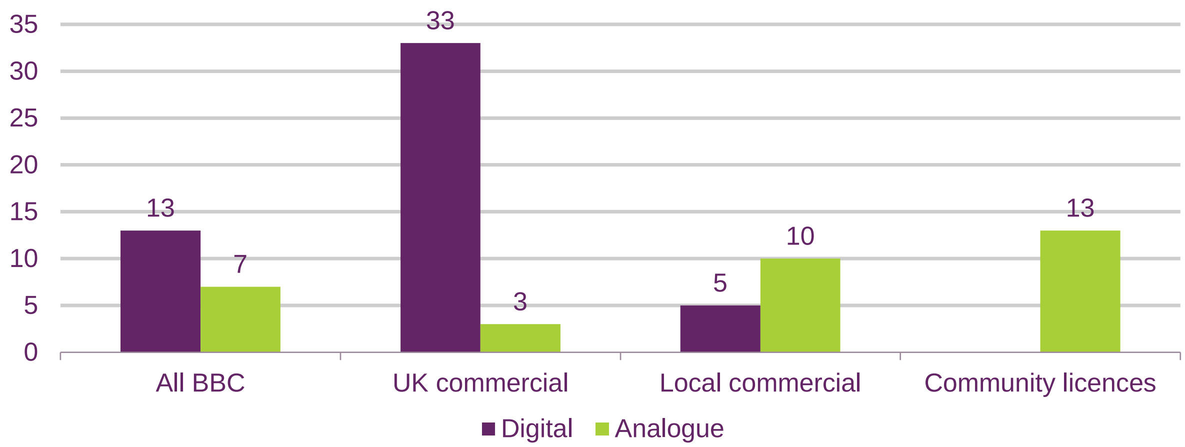
There are now 51 stations broadcasting on DAB in Northern Ireland

With the launch of the Sound Digital multiplex, there are now 51 stations available on DAB in Northern Ireland. The second UK-wide multiplex brings an additional 18 stations, adding to the 13 digital services available from the BBC, the 12 stations on the Digital One multiplex and the eight commercial stations on the local DAB multiplex.

However, not all of these stations will be available on DAB to listeners across all of Northern Ireland. As Figure 3.2 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. Many of these are simulcasts of DAB stations, but the 13 community radio services and some of the local commercial radio services are available on analogue only in their localised coverage areas.

Figure 3.1 Radio station availability



Source: Ofcom, May 2016
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.

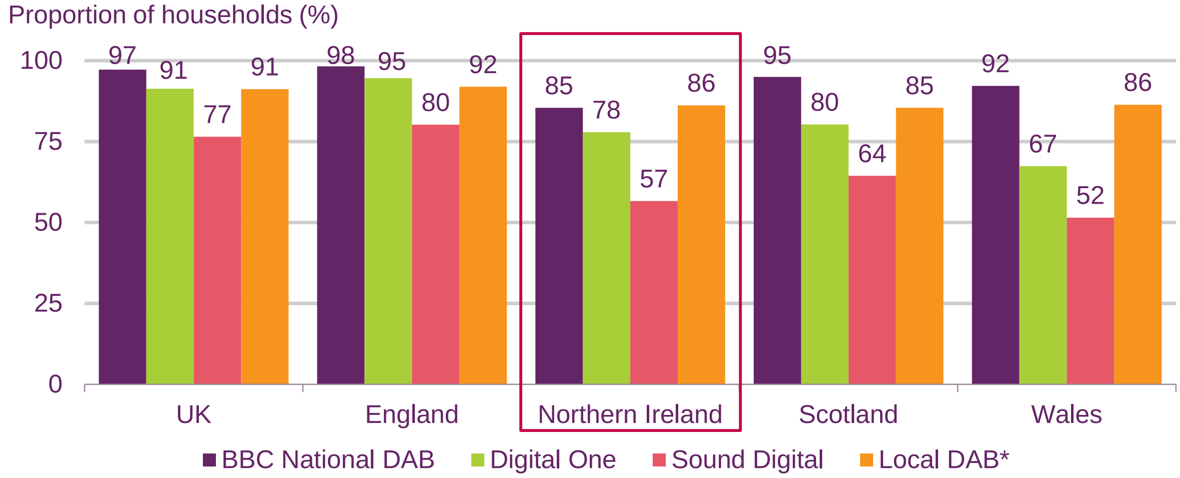
3.3 DAB coverage

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

Digital One, the UK-wide commercial multiplex which launched in Northern Ireland in 2013, now reaches 78% of households. The Sound Digital multiplex, which launched earlier this year, is currently available to 57% of households. The BBC's DAB digital radio services are available to 85% of households in Northern Ireland.

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, the expected coverage of local DAB in Northern Ireland is 86% of households. This will be a 7pp increase compared to coverage in 2015.

Figure 3.2 Household coverage of DAB



*Source: BBC, Arqiva, Ofcom, May 2016. *Figures for local DAB are projections of expected coverage for Autumn 2016 based upon 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.*

3.4 Listening to audio content

Fewer people in Northern Ireland than the UK average listen to the radio

The proportion of the adult population who listen to radio in Northern Ireland was lower than the UK average in 2015, although radio still reached 86.6% of people in Northern Ireland. The average time spent listening in an average week in 2015 was 20.2 hours, again lower than the UK average. This is lower than in 2014, when people in Northern Ireland spent 21.6 hours on an average week listening to radio.

Figure 3.3 Average weekly reach and listening hours: 2015

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK TOTAL
Average weekly listening	21.4 hours	21.1 hours	22.1 hours	20.2 hours	21.4 hours
Reach	89.6%	87.9%	93.6%	86.6%	89.6%

Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), year ended Q4 2015. Reach is defined as a percentage of the area adult population who listen to a station for at least five minutes in the course of an average week.

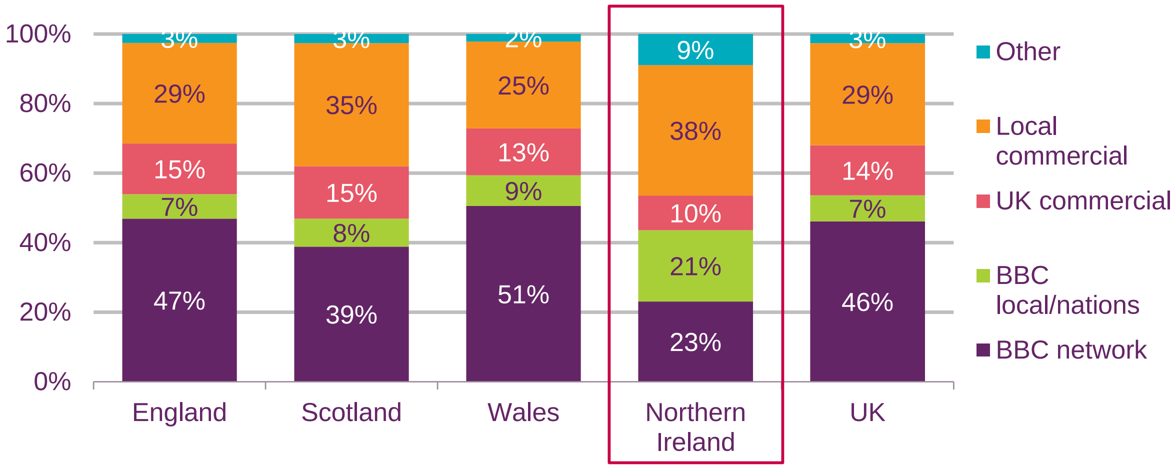
Local radio is the most listened-to type of radio in Northern Ireland

The share of listening hours to local and nations' services in Northern Ireland is far higher than the UK average, and higher than in any other UK nation. Together, local commercial and the BBC nations' services (Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle) accounted for 59% of total listening hours in 2015. Local commercial stations take the largest share of listening hours (38%) in Northern Ireland, 9pp 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.

Commercial radio's share of listening overall is high in Northern Ireland. This is due to the high share of local commercial stations; listening to UK-wide commercial stations is slightly lower than the UK average. The share of listening to BBC network stations is half that of the UK overall, accounting for less than a quarter of listening.

Northern Ireland also has the highest proportion of listening to 'other' (9%). This is thought to be mostly cross-border listening to overspill stations from the Republic of Ireland.

Figure 3.4 Share of listening hours, by nation: 2015

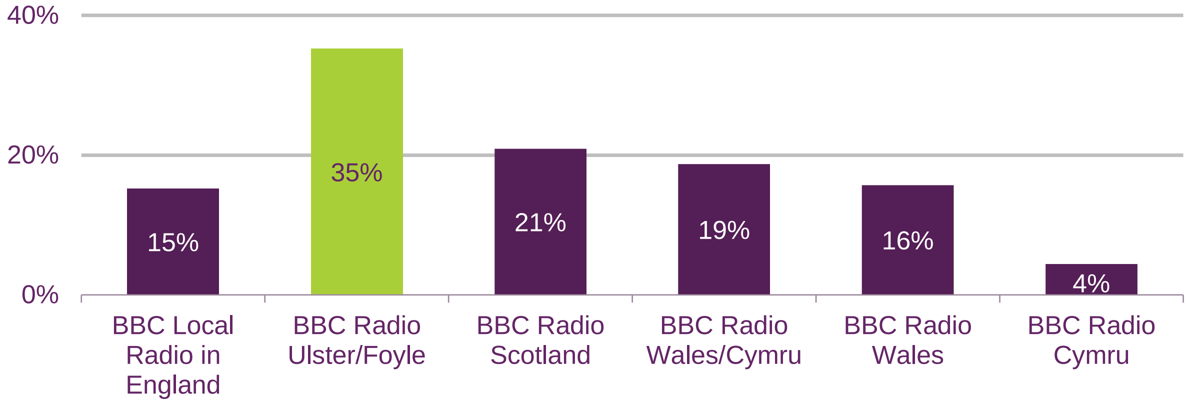


Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), year ended Q4 2015

Northern Ireland has the highest reach of all the BBC nations' services

In an average week in 2015, BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle reached 35% of adults in Northern Ireland. This is by far the highest weekly reach of any other BBC nations' service, and 20pp higher than the aggregated reach of the BBC local radio stations in England[6]. The high reach of this service is reflected in the fact that the BBC local/nations' services also have the largest share of listening hours in Northern Ireland, when compared to the UK average or any other nation.

Figure 3.5 Weekly reach for nations'/local BBC services: 2015



Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), year ended Q4 2015

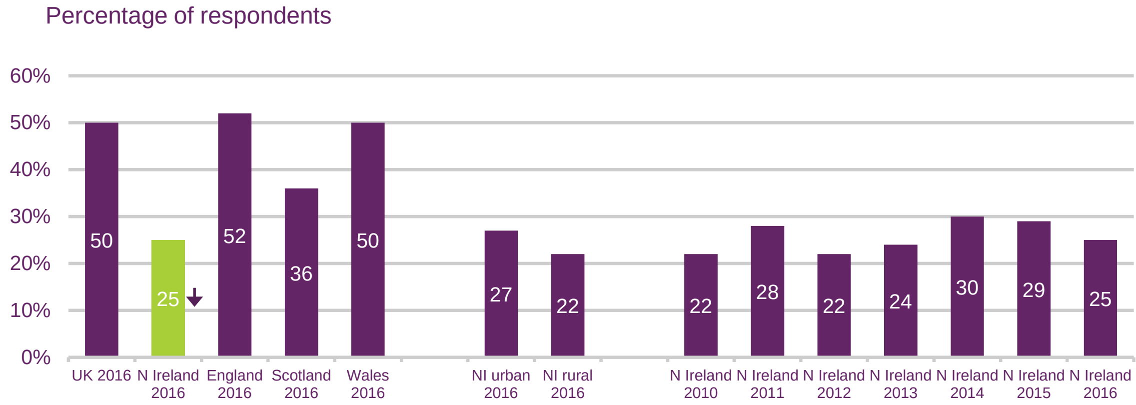
3.5 Digital radio set ownership and listening

Ownership of DAB digital radio sets is lower in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole

Twenty-five per cent of adults in Northern Ireland who listen to radio said they had at least one DAB radio set at home, in line with findings from 2015. Ownership of DAB digital radios among radio listeners in Northern Ireland remains much lower than the UK average (50%). Ownership did not differ greatly between radio listeners in urban and rural areas.

[6] In the 12 months to Q4 2015, BBC Radio Guernsey was the only individual BBC local service with a higher reach than BBC Radio Ulster in the area where it broadcasts (38.8%).

Figure 3.6 Ownership of DAB digital radios



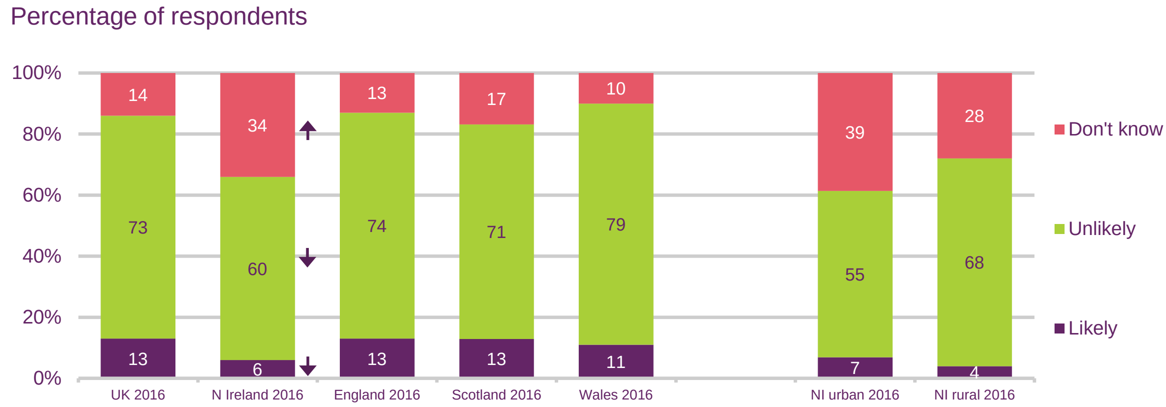
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who listen to radio (n = 2832 UK, 356 Northern Ireland, 1693 England, 384 Scotland, 399 Wales, 188 Northern Ireland urban, 168 Northern Ireland rural, 653 Northern Ireland 2010, 428 Northern Ireland 2011, 404 Northern Ireland 2012, 405 Northern Ireland 2013, 404 Northern Ireland 2014, 407 Northern Ireland 2015, 356 Northern Ireland 2016)
NB. Data in 2011 based on those who listen to radio and have any radio sets in the household that someone listens to in most weeks
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QP9: How many DAB sets do you have in your household?

Six per cent of radio listeners in Northern Ireland without a DAB set say they are likely to get one within the next year

Less than one in ten (6%) radio listeners in Northern Ireland who do not have a DAB set said they were likely to get one in the next 12 months, this was lower than the UK average (13%).

In 2016 there was no difference in the claimed likelihood of buying a DAB set by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3.7 Likelihood of purchasing a DAB radio within the next year



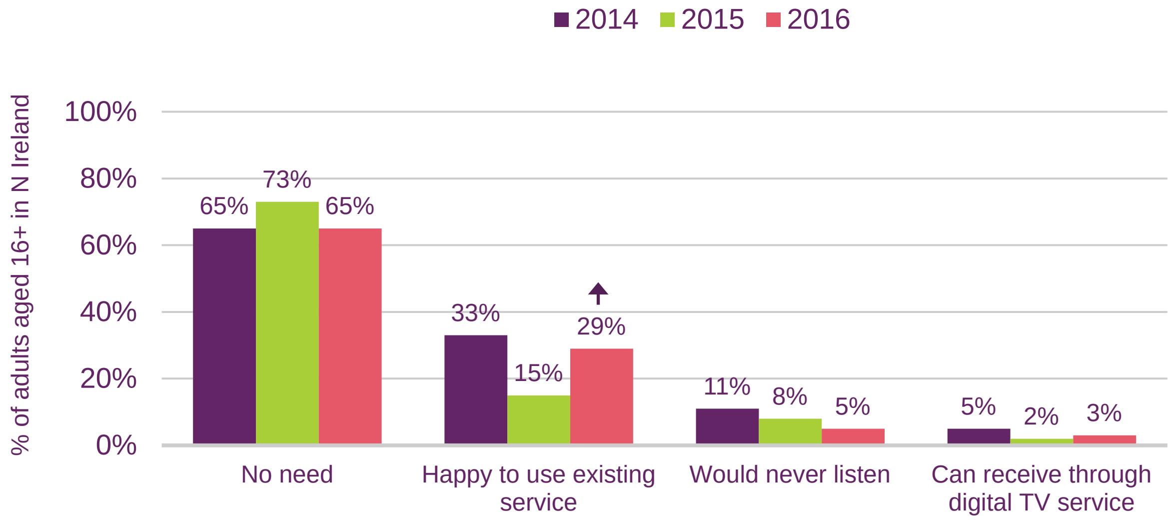
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who listen to radio and do not have a DAB set (n = 1593 UK, 275 Northern Ireland, 870 England, 236 Scotland, 212 Wales, 138 Northern Ireland urban, 137 Northern Ireland rural).
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016.
QP12: How likely is it that your household will get a DAB radio in the next 12 months?

Around two thirds of radio listeners in Northern Ireland without a DAB set are unlikely to get one in the next 12 months, as they feel they have no need

Non-DAB-owning radio listeners who said 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. Around two-thirds (65%) said it was because they did not have a need for it. Three in ten (29%) said it was because they were happy using an existing service; a significant increase of 14 percentage points since 2015.

Less than one in ten said it was because they would never listen to it (5%), or because they could receive digital radio through their digital TV service (3%).

Figure 3.8 Reasons why unlikely to purchase DAB in the next year

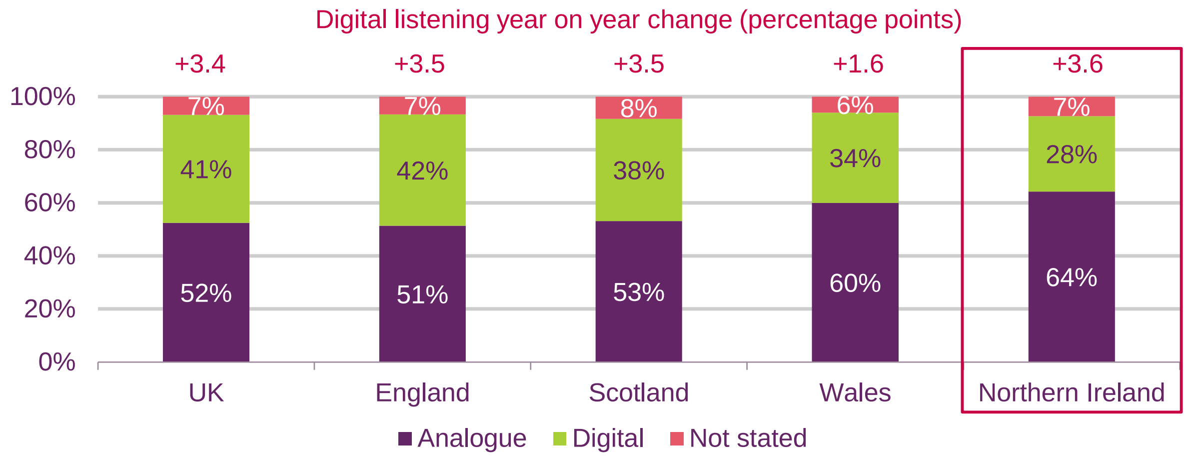


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ who listen to radio and are unlikely to get DAB radio in the next 12 months (Northern Ireland 2014 = 204; Northern Ireland 2015 = 113; Northern Ireland 2016 = 177)
Responses shown for spontaneous mentions by 5% or more at a UK level
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016.
QJ14: Why are you unlikely to get digital radio in the next 12 months?

Digital share of listening is growing, but still lags behind the UK average

Listening to radio services through all digital platforms[7] now accounts for 28% of total listening hours in Northern Ireland, 13pp lower than the UK average. Although this is the lowest share of listening in any UK nation, growth in digital's share was slightly higher in Northern Ireland (3.6pp), than in the UK as a whole (3.4pp).

Figure 3.9 Share of listening hours via digital and analogue platforms: 2015



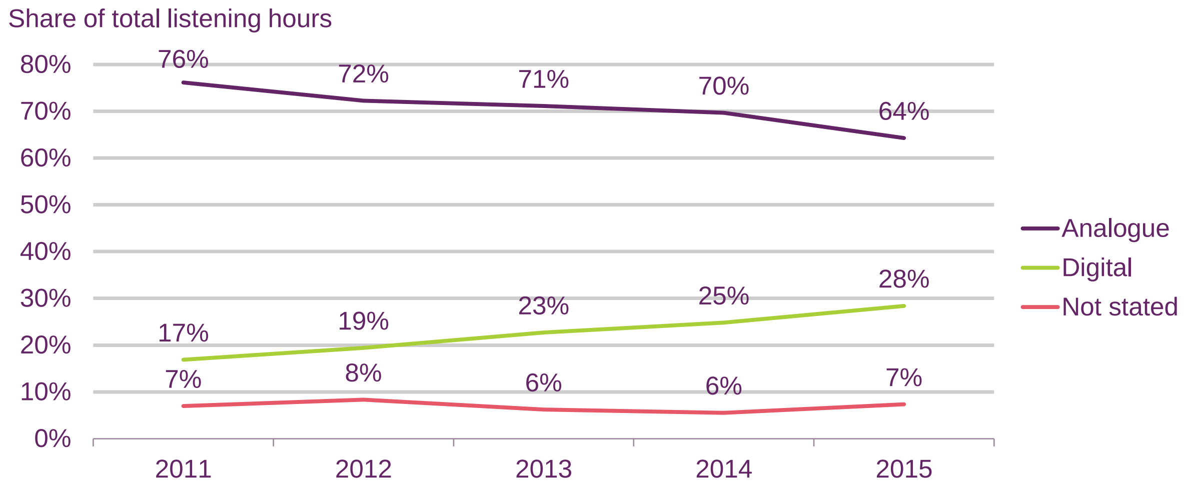
Source: RAJAR, All adults (15+), year ended Q4 2015

[7] DAB, digital television and the internet.

Analogue share of listening fell by 6pp in 2015

Almost two-thirds of radio listening in Northern Ireland is to analogue services, compared to just over half for the UK as a whole. However, the proportion of time spent listening through analogue platforms fell by 6pp year on year in Northern Ireland, a steeper decline than in previous years. Digital listening increased by 3.6pp year on year, more than the 2.1pp seen in 2014. This is partly due to an increase in digital listening hours since the launch (in Northern Ireland only) of Bauer's digital-only station, Downtown Country, in April 2015, and also because BBC Radio Foyle is now available on DAB, but it is also due to a fall in total listening hours overall in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3.10 Share of listening hours via digital and analogue platforms in Northern Ireland: 2011-2015



Source: RAJAR, all adults, calendar years 2011-2015

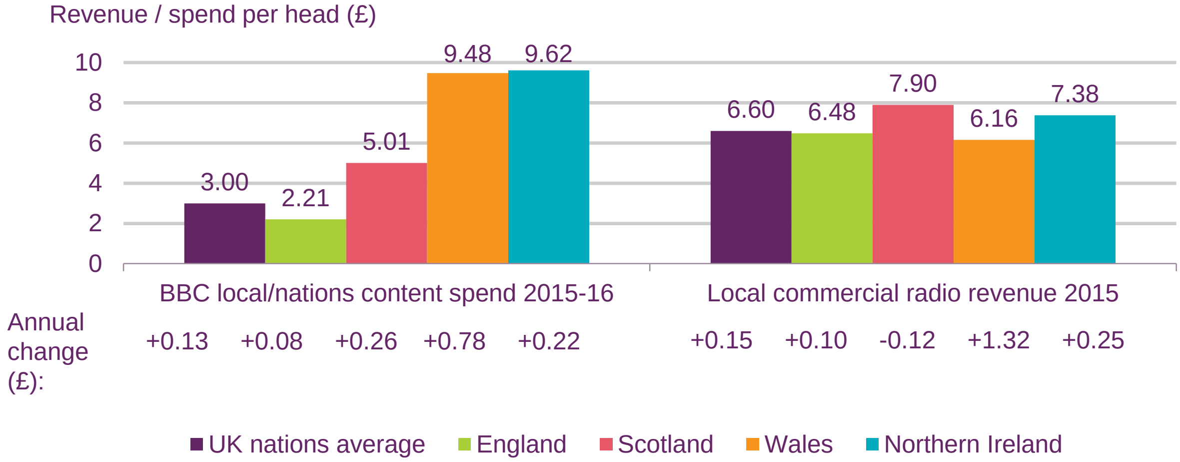
3.6 The radio industry

Local commercial radio revenue per head of population in Northern Ireland is above the UK average

Local commercial radio revenue in Northern Ireland grew by 25p per head of population in 2015 to £7.38. This is higher than the UK average, and the second highest revenue per head across all of the UK nations. Local commercial radio revenue was at its highest level since 2008, increasing by 4.3% to £13.6m.

Spend on radio content for BBC Radio Ulster and Radio Foyle also increased in 2015-16, up by 2.3% to £9.62 per head. On a per-capita basis, spend on BBC local/nations' services was highest in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3.11 Local/nations' radio spend and revenue per head of population: 2015



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 nominal.

4 Telecoms and networks

4.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

Broadband speeds increase

The Department for the Economy (DfE), the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and BT are investing around £17m to raise fixed broadband speeds for up to 39,000 premises across Northern Ireland. The Superfast Broadband Roll-out Programme aims to lift broadband speeds in these premises to 24Mbit/s or higher.

The main elements of the scheme include: some re-engineering of BT's network; additional fibred cabinets; and new fibre-to-the-premises nodes. The roll-out is due to be completed by December 2017 and will expand Northern Ireland's fibre footprint.

This programme builds on the £23.7m NI Broadband Improvement Project, completed in Q1 2016, which was aimed mainly at improving speeds for around 45,000 premises that were previously only able to achieve download speeds of less than 2Mbit/s.

Subsidised satellite services for rural areas launched

A subsidised satellite broadband scheme has been launched in Northern Ireland, aimed at homes and businesses that are still unable to get a broadband service of at least 2Mbit/s.

The UK-wide scheme, administered by DfE in Northern Ireland, provides a code to eligible homes and businesses. The code can be used with a selected number of providers to obtain a subsidised satellite broadband service including, in most cases, a free satellite dish and installation worth up to £350. The scheme is due to run until the end of 2017.

New Executive aims to further improve internet connectivity

"Improving internet connectivity so that more people have access to download speeds of 30Mbit/s and above" is one of the 42 performance indicators in the new Stormont Executive's *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021*, published in late May. The document, a plan of priorities and actions for the new Executive, is now out for public consultation. It will be brought before the Northern Ireland Assembly when it is finalised later in 2016.

Three trials new mobile broadband service

Mobile operator Three has chosen Northern Ireland as the site of a pilot for a new service, which will provide a mobile broadband alternative to fixed-line broadband for residential and small business customers.

The new home Wi-Fi service is targeted at renters, students and people who have 'little need' for a landline telephone service. The 'plug and play' router connects to Three's 3G and 4G networks, with customers able to choose from data packages of either 20GB or 40GB.

4.2 Availability of fixed broadband services

Basic broadband services are available to almost all premises in Northern Ireland

Three main technologies are used to provide fixed broadband services in the UK: exchange-based ADSL, cable (over a hybrid fibre-coaxial network) and fibre to the cabinet (using VDSL from the street cabinet).[8] Of these three technologies, ADSL is the most widely available, partly because it is the cheapest to deploy as it uses the existing copper telephony network to transmit data to the end-user. In most cases it does not require an upgrade to the existing copper access network, and the only costs are associated with the installation of the new equipment in the local exchange and the end-user's premises. By comparison, cable and fibre roll-out both involve the deployment of new infrastructure to connect local exchanges/nodes to the end-user.

BT has around 5,600 local exchanges across the UK, and almost all of these have been upgraded to offer ADSL broadband services. Across the UK as a whole, 99.98% of premises (i.e. homes and offices) were connected to an ADSL-enabled exchange by the end of 2015 (Figure 4.1). In Northern Ireland and Wales, all the BT local exchanges had been upgraded to offer ADSL broadband services, while in England and Scotland there remain a small number of exchanges that are not ADSL-enabled.

It is important to note that some premises in ADSL-enabled areas may not be able to receive broadband services, or may only be able to access very low speeds. Potential reasons for this include the long length, or poor quality, of the copper telephone line from the premises to the local exchange.

What is local loop unbundling (LLU)?

Local loop unbundling (LLU) operators are able to offer fixed broadband services by placing their own equipment in the incumbent provider's local exchange. This equipment is then connected to the LLU provider's backhaul network and ADSL broadband services are provided over the copper lines from the exchange to the end user; these lines are leased from the incumbent provider. LLU operators are able to benefit from economies of scale that are not available when purchasing wholesale services on a per-unit basis, and are better able to differentiate their services from those offered by their competitors. Similarly, consumers living in LLU-enabled exchange areas have a greater choice of ADSL broadband services and, typically, access to lower-cost (particularly bundled) broadband services.

By the end of 2015, 95% of UK premises were served by unbundled local exchanges (a small increase compared to the previous year). As there are a larger number of premises to be served in urban areas, roll-out of any fixed telecoms network tends to be concentrated there, at least initially. This is reflected in the fact that almost all premises in urban areas (over 99%) were connected to an unbundled local exchange at the end of 2015. In rural areas, 77% of premises were connected to an unbundled local exchange by the end of 2015. England had the highest proportion of premises connected to an unbundled local exchange at the end of 2015, at 96%, followed by Wales with 93% availability and then Northern Ireland and Scotland (both 90%).

[8] A small proportion of premises are also served by fibre to the premises (FTTP).

Figure 4.1 Proportion of premises connected to ADSL-enabled and unbundled exchanges

Source: Ofcom / BT, December 2015 data

Ninety-one per cent of premises in Northern Ireland were able to receive broadband services with speeds of 10Mbit/s or higher in June 2016

In 2015, the UK Government announced its intention to establish a 10Mbit/s universal service obligation (USO) for fixed broadband services. Data provided to Ofcom by fixed broadband providers[9] shows that by June 2016, 95% of UK premises were able to receive actual broadband speeds of 10Mbit/s or higher, up from 92% a year previously. As with basic broadband services, availability was higher in urban areas, with 98% of urban premises able to receive speeds of 10Mbit/s and above, compared to 76% in rural areas.

By June 2016, Northern Ireland and Wales had the joint lowest proportion of premises that were able to receive broadband speeds of 10Mbit/s or higher among the UK nations, at 91%. Availability in Northern Ireland had increased by five percentage points compared to a year previously.

[9] This analysis is a preliminary assessment of coverage and is based on data from a limited number of national and larger regional providers. We are continuing to analyse the data we have received, including integrating data from additional, smaller providers, and our final assessment of coverage will be published in the *Connected Nations Report* later this year.

Figure 4.2 Proportion of premises able to receive broadband services at 10Mbit/s speeds and above

Source: Ofcom / operators, June 2016 data
Note: UK urban and rural figures are not comparable to those published in the 2015 report due to a change in the urban/rural classifications.

Eighty-three per cent of premises in Northern Ireland were able to receive superfast, or higher, broadband speeds in June 2016

When collecting data to inform its work in monitoring the UK's communications market infrastructure in 2016, Ofcom asked operators to provide data regarding the proportion of premises that could receive superfast, or higher, fixed broadband speeds,[10] i.e. a fixed broadband service with an actual speed of 30Mbit/s or higher.

It is important to note that not all cable and fibre broadband connections are capable of providing superfast broadband services. For example, the speed achievable on a fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) line will depend on the length and quality of the copper connection from the street cabinet to the user's premises (as is the case with ADSL).

As shown in Figure 4.3 below, the proportion of premises that were able to receive superfast or higher broadband services in the UK was 88% in June 2016. This represented an increase of five percentage points compared to a year previously. Availability was much higher in urban areas, with 93% of urban premises able to receive superfast or higher broadband, compared to 58% in rural areas. Northern Ireland, together with Scotland, had the joint lowest proportion of premises able to receive superfast or higher broadband, at 83%; availability in Northern Ireland had increased from 77% since June 2015.

The UK Government defines superfast broadband as having download speeds of 24Mbit/s or higher. We would expect the coverage of services at these speeds to be higher than the 88% of UK premises that are able to receive speeds of 30Mbit/s or more.

---

[10] This analysis is a preliminary assessment of coverage and is based on data from a limited number of national and larger regional providers. We are continuing to analyse the data we have received, including integrating data from additional, smaller providers, and our final assessment of coverage will be published in the *Connected Nations Report* later this year.

Figure 4.3 Proportion of premises able to receive superfast or higher broadband services

Source: Ofcom / operators, June 2016 data
Note: UK urban and rural figures are not comparable to those published in the 2015 report due to a change in the urban/rural classifications.

4.3 Mobile network coverage

Overview

Mobile network availability varies across the UK, with some areas (known as 'mobile not-spots') having no mobile coverage from any of the providers. These areas are often characterised by low population density and/or hilly terrain, which present physical and economic obstacles, and deter mobile network operators (MNOs) from deploying mobile network infrastructure. Other areas (known as 'partial not-spots') have mobile coverage but only from some of the UK's four operators.

How we measure the availability of mobile telephony for this report

The coverage information presented in Ofcom's *Communications Market Reports* and the *Connected Nations* report is collected by Ofcom from the four UK mobile network operators (MNOs). Information on coverage is provided by each operator for each 100m x100m 'pixel' of landmass across the UK. This information is then correlated with maps of premises to give the premises' coverage figures.

The signal strength thresholds used by Ofcom to determine where 2G, 3G and 4G mobile services are available differ from those used in last year's reports. As such, the mobile coverage data in this report are not comparable to those published last year. These thresholds may also differ from those used by MNOs in their reporting. UK urban and rural figures are also not comparable to those published in the 2015 report, due to a change in the urban/ rural classifications.

The availability figures in this report all refer to outdoor coverage. Coverage figures for indoor reception are likely to be lower because radio signals are weakened as they pass through the fabric of buildings. Indoor reception is highly dependent on the building, as well as the user's location in the building, making it difficult to calculate accurate indoor coverage figures.

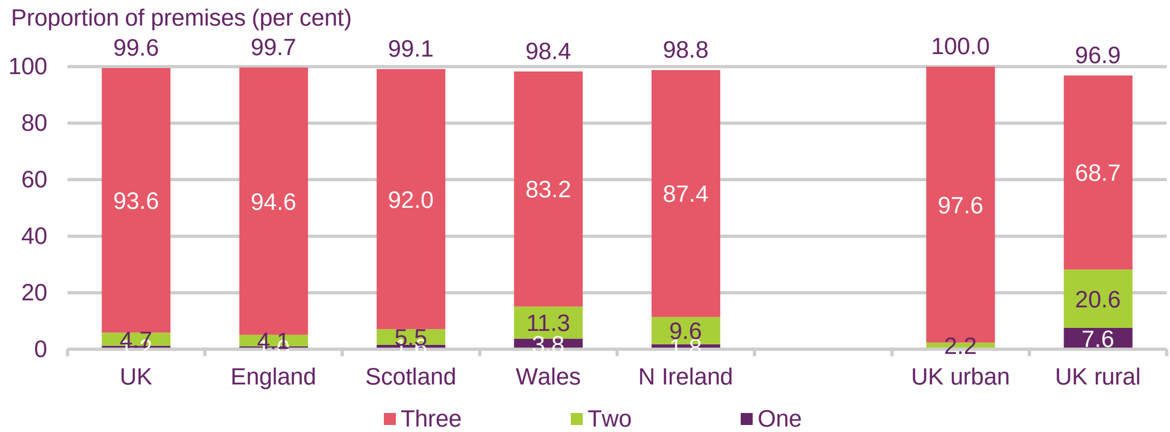
Figure 4.4, Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 show coverage levels for 2G, 3G and 4G mobile services respectively.[11] 2G is considered satisfactory for telephone calls and text messaging, while 3G is considered the minimum required to access mobile data services. 4G generally provides a better user experience when accessing mobile data services compared to 3G, as it offers faster download and upload speeds.

98.8% of premises in Northern Ireland were in areas with outdoor 2G coverage in May 2016

Data provided to Ofcom by the UK's three national 2G mobile network operators (Vodafone, O2 and EE) show that by May 2016, 99.6% of UK premises were in areas with 2G coverage from at least one network, and around 0.4% of UK premises were in areas without any 2G coverage at all. The data show that most UK premises (93.6% of the total) were in areas with outdoor 2G coverage from all three providers. The proportion of UK premises in areas with outdoor 2G mobile coverage in May 2016 was higher in urban locations (100.0%) than in rural ones (96.9%).

In Northern Ireland, 98.8% of premises were in areas with outdoor 2G coverage from at least one network in May 2016, the second lowest proportion across the UK nations, after Wales. Northern Ireland also had the second lowest proportion of premises with outdoor coverage from all three 2G networks, at 87.4%. One of the likely reasons for the lower-than-average 2G coverage in Northern Ireland is that a relatively large proportion of its population is evenly spread across the rural areas, where providing mobile services may not be commercially viable.

Figure 4.4 Outdoor 2G premises mobile coverage, by number of operators



Source: Ofcom / operators, May 2016 data
Note: Coverage is based on 100m² pixels covering the UK; UK urban and UK rural figures are not comparable to those published in the 2015 report due to a change in the urban/rural classifications used to calculate them.

Northern Ireland had the second highest proportion of premises with outdoor 3G coverage in 2016

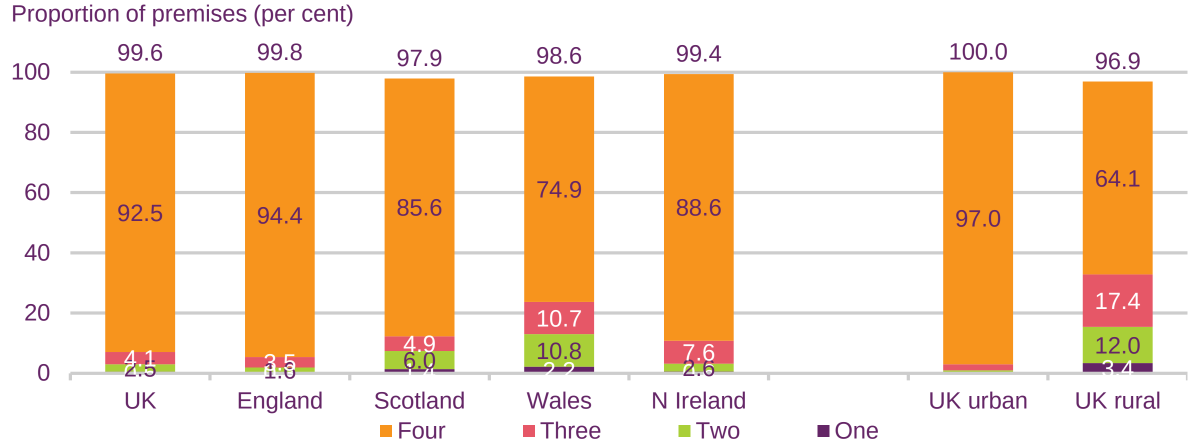
Data provided to Ofcom by the UK's four national 3G mobile network operators (the three national 2G providers plus Three) show that 99.6% of UK premises had outdoor coverage from at least one 3G network in May 2016, while 92.5% had outdoor coverage from all four

[11] The availability data provided by the MNOs is taken from network planning tools, which are subject to a margin of error. Local factors such as tall buildings or trees can also affect signal strength.

3G providers. The proportion of premises in areas with outdoor 3G coverage was higher in urban areas of the UK (100%) than in rural areas (96.9%).

In Northern Ireland, 99.4% of households had 3G coverage from at least one provider in May 2016, the second highest among the UK nations, after England. Similarly, 88.6% of premises in Northern Ireland were in areas with 3G coverage from all four 3G networks.

Figure 4.5 Outdoor 3G premises mobile coverage, by number of operators



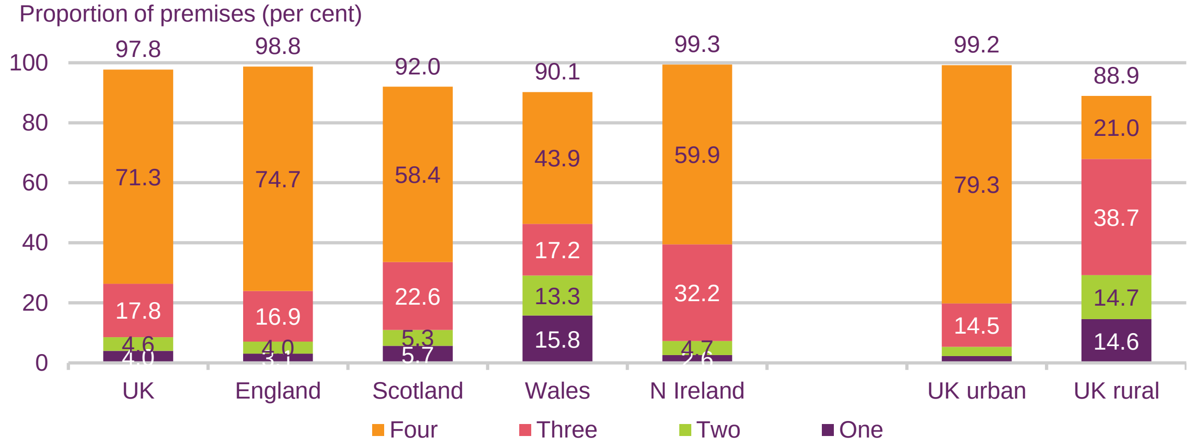
Source: Ofcom / operators, May 2016 data
Note: Coverage is based on 100m² pixels covering the UK; UK urban and UK rural figures are not comparable to those published in the 2015 report due to a change in the urban/rural classifications used to calculate them.

Northern Ireland had the highest proportion of premises with outdoor 4G coverage in May 2016

The deployment of 4G mobile services has progressed rapidly in recent years, and 97.8% of UK premises were in areas with outdoor 4G mobile coverage from at least one national mobile network operator in May 2016. Similarly, the proportion of UK premises able to receive outdoor coverage from all four national MNOs was 71.3%. The difference between urban and rural 4G coverage was much more marked for 4G services than for 2G and 3G, with 99.2% of urban premises having outdoor 4G coverage, compared to 88.9% of those in rural areas.

Northern Ireland had the highest proportion of premises with outdoor 4G coverage from one or more mobile networks in May 2016, at 99.3%. With Three launching its 4G service in Northern Ireland in summer 2015, 4G coverage increased rapidly, and by May 2016, 59.9% of premises had outdoor coverage from all four 4G networks, the second highest proportion among the UK nations.

Figure 4.6 Outdoor 4G premises mobile coverage, by number of operators



Source: Ofcom / operators, May 2016 data
Note: Coverage is based on 100m² pixels covering the UK; UK urban and UK rural figures are not comparable to those published in the 2015 report due to a change in the urban/rural classifications used to calculate them.

4.4 Service take-up

Take-up of 4G mobile services is higher in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole

While take-up of landline services, mobile phones, smartphones, tablets and all types of broadband in Northern Ireland in 2016 were all in line with the average for the UK as a whole, take-up of 4G mobile services was higher (54% vs. 48%).

Adults in rural areas of Northern Ireland were more likely than those in urban areas to have a tablet computer in the household (67% vs. 55%), to have any type of computer (86% vs. 77%) and to have fixed or mobile broadband (via dongle/SIM) access in the home (84% vs. 75%).

Figure 4.7 Take-up of communications services: 2016

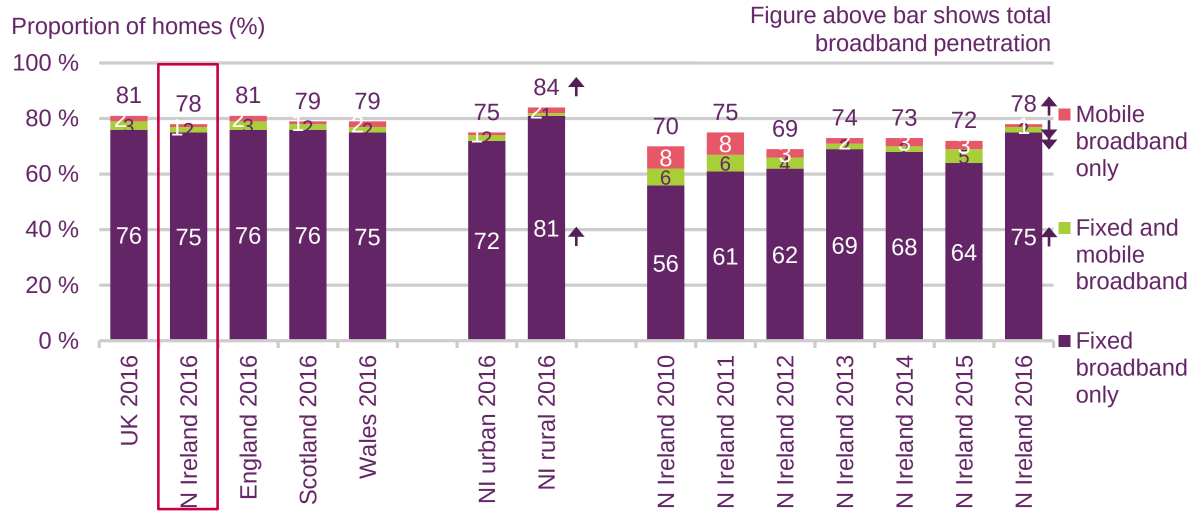
		UK	N Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	NI urban	NI rural
Individual								
Voice telephony	Fixed Line	**86%**	86%	86%	86%	85%	85%	89%
	Mobile phone	**93%**	92%	94%	91%	91%	90%	94%
	Smartphone	**71%**	72%	71%	70%	65%	70%	73%
Internet	Computer (any type)	**84%**	80%	85%	79%	85%	77%	86%↑
	Tablet computer	**59%**	60%	59%	56%	67%	55%	67%↑
	Total Internet[1]	**86%**	83%	87%	84%	84%	80%	87%
	Broadband (fixed and mobile)[2]	**81%**	78%	81%	79%	79%	75%	84%↑
	Fixed Broadband	**79%**	77%	79%	78%	77%	74%	82%
	Mobile Broadband (via dongle/SIM)[3]	**4%**	3%	5%	3%	4%	3%	3%
	Web access on mobile phone[4]	**66%**	69%	66%	63%	61%	68%	70%
	4G service	**48%**	54%↑	48%	40%	44%	57%	52%

Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
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 use a mobile handset/s to access the internet (may also have any other type of internet access).
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016.
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?/ QD6: Do you have a 4G service?/ QE1: Does your household have a PC or laptop computer?/ QE2: Do you or does anyone in your household have access to the internet 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 household broadband penetration in Northern Ireland is higher than in 2015

Total broadband penetration (both fixed and mobile) for households in Northern Ireland was up since 2015 (from 72% to 78%) and was in line with the UK average (81%). The proportion of households using solely fixed broadband services also increased, from 64% in 2015 to 75% in 2016 (in line with the rest of the UK, at 76%). In 2016, rural households in Northern Ireland were more likely than urban households to have any type of broadband.

Figure 4.8 Overall household broadband take-up, by connection type



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016.
QE9: Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

Overall household broadband take-up in Northern Ireland is lower than the UK average among over-65s and those without children in the home

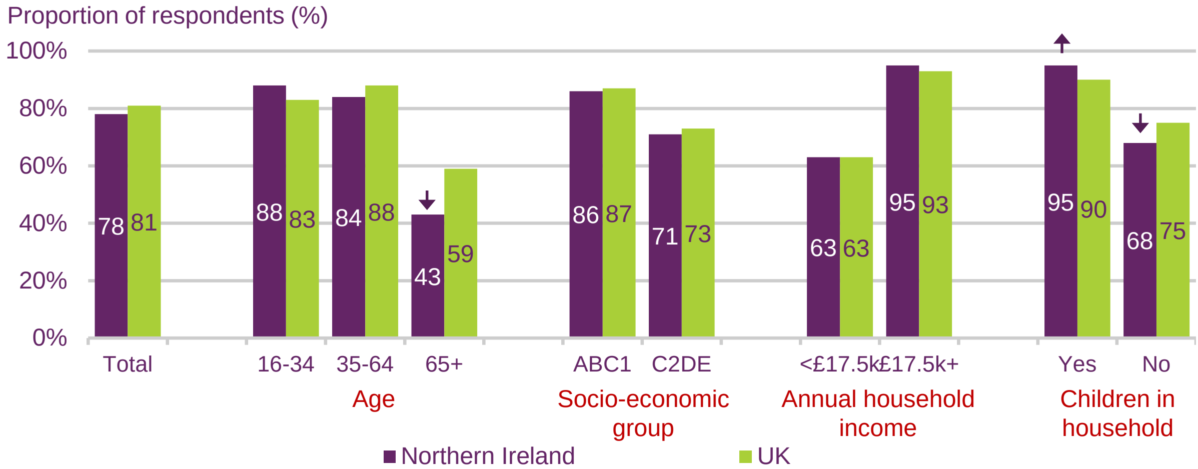
As shown in Figure 4.9, overall household broadband take-up[12] in Northern Ireland (78%) was consistent with the UK as a whole (81%) in 2016. Two demographic groups had lower broadband take-up in Northern Ireland compared to the UK: adults aged 65 and over (43% vs. 59%), and those without children in the household (68% vs. 75%).

As with the UK as a whole, there were differences in Northern Ireland in broadband take-up by age, socio-economic group, household income and the presence of children. Adults aged 65 and over were less likely than younger age groups to have broadband.

Broadband take-up was higher among ABC1 than C2DE households in Northern Ireland (86% vs. 71%). Similarly, there was a 32 percentage point difference in broadband take-up between households with an income below £17.5k (63%) and those with a household income above £17.5k (95%). Households with children in Northern Ireland were also more likely than those without children to have broadband.

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

Figure 4.9 Overall household broadband take-up in Northern Ireland, by demographic



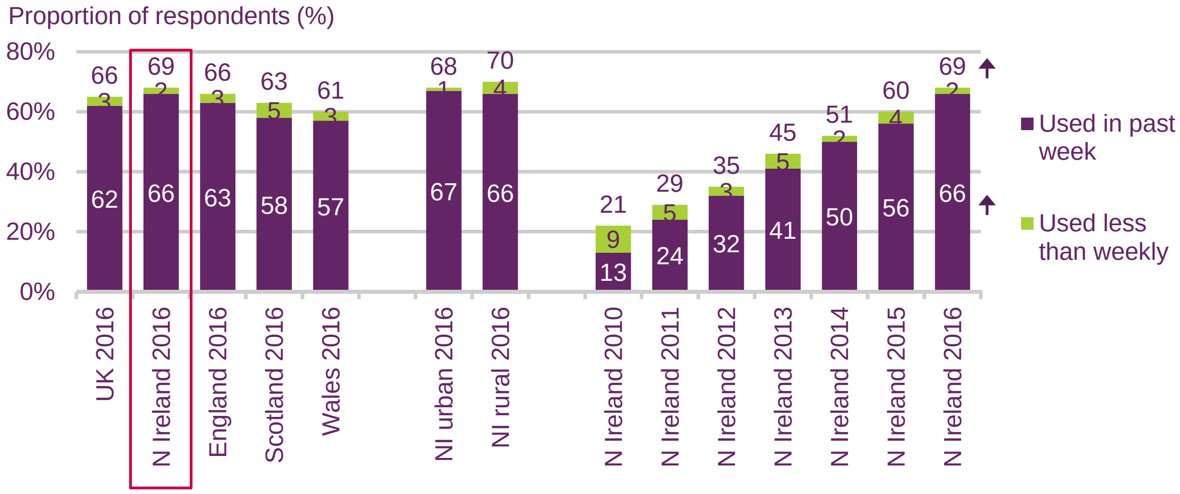
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n =507 Northern Ireland, 168 16-34s, 241 35-64s, 98 65+, 226 ABC1, 279 C2DE, 114 <£17.5k income, 90* £17.5k+, 187 children in home, 320 no children in home) *Caution: low base*
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 for each measure.
QE9: Which of these methods does your household use to connect to the internet at home?

Between 2015 and 2016 there was a nine percentage point increase in the proportion of adults in Northern Ireland accessing the internet on their mobile phone

In 2016, seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland said that they used their mobile phone to access the internet, with almost all these respondents saying they had done so in the previous week. These measures were in line with the UK average.

Between 2015 and 2016, use of mobile phones to access the internet rose from 60% to 69%.

Figure 4.10 Proportion of adults who have used a mobile phone to access the internet



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016.
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?

The proportion of 4G users in Northern Ireland has increased by 28 percentage points since 2015

Figure 4.11 shows that in 2016 more than half (54%) of all adults in Northern Ireland had a 4G mobile service, higher than the UK average of 48%. This is likely to be related to the higher 4G availability in Northern Ireland compared to the UK overall (see Figure 4.6). The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland who used 4G mobile services increased by 28 percentage points in the year to 2016 (from 26% in 2015), likely because Three launched 4G services in Northern Ireland in summer 2015, and due to continuing roll-out by other networks.

Figure 4.11 4G take-up, by nation

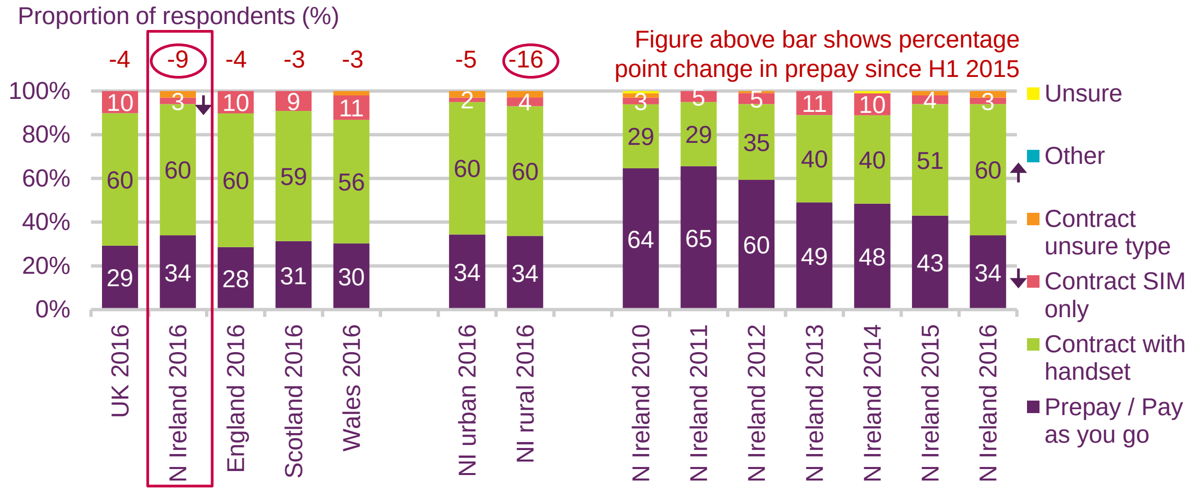
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016. A circle around the +/- figure above the chart indicates any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland.
QD41. Do you have a 4G service? This is a service that enables faster mobile internet access

Take-up of pre-pay mobile services in Northern Ireland has decreased since 2015

Since 2015, there has been an increase in use of pay-monthly contract mobile phone services including a handset, from 51% to 60%, with a corresponding decrease in use of pre-pay services (from 43% to 34%). Three per cent of mobile phone users in Northern Ireland have a SIM-only contract.

Overall use of mobile services did not differ by urban or rural location in Northern Ireland in 2016. However, the proportion of rural households using pre-pay services fell between 2015 and 2016 (from 50% to 34%).

Figure 4.12 Type of mobile subscription

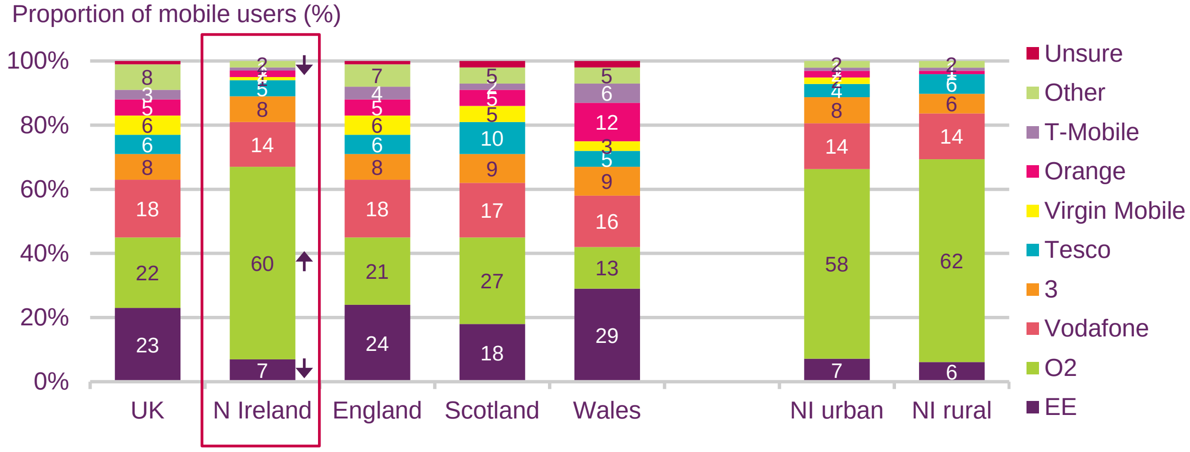


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3425 UK, 446 Northern Ireland, 2083 England, 451 Scotland, 445 Wales, 226 Northern Ireland urban, 220 Northern Ireland rural, 658 Northern Ireland 2010, 425 Northern Ireland 2011, 463 Northern Ireland 2012, 463 Northern Ireland 2013, 465 Northern Ireland 2014, 456 Northern Ireland 2015, 446 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QD11: Which of these best describes the mobile package you personally use most often?

Respondents in Northern Ireland say that O2 is the mobile network provider they use most often

In 2016, 60% of mobile users in Northern Ireland said that O2 was the network they used most often, compared to just under a quarter (22%) of all UK mobile users, in line with previous years. Vodafone was the second most frequently used mobile network provider in Northern Ireland (14%). Mobile users in Northern Ireland were less likely than all UK mobile users to use EE (7% vs. 23%).

Figure 4.13 Mobile network provider used most often

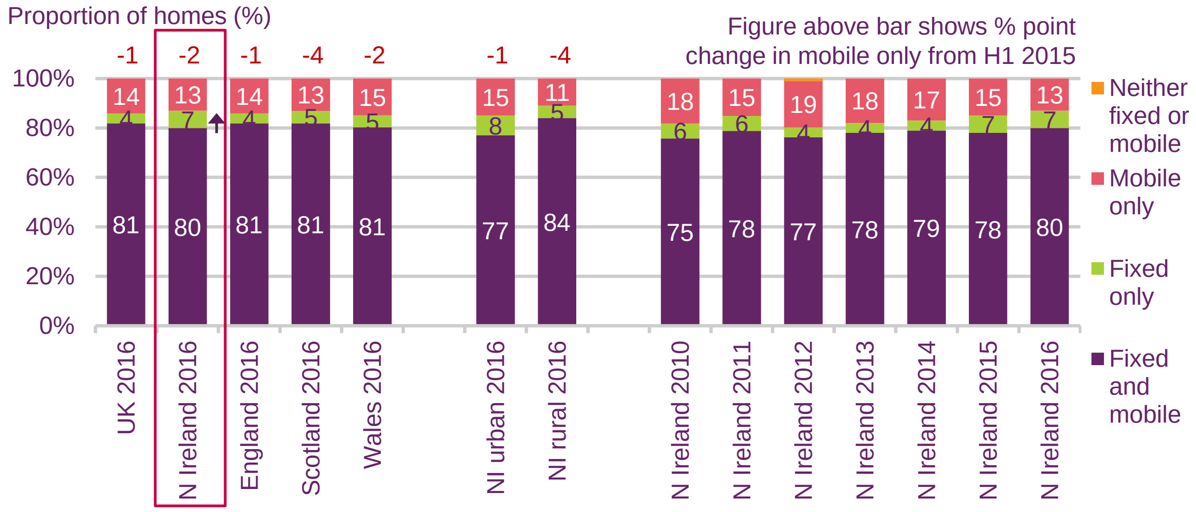


Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3425 UK, 446 Northern Ireland, 2083 England, 451 Scotland, 445 Wales, 226 Northern Ireland urban, 220 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016.
QD10: Which mobile network do you use most often?

The proportion of mobile-only households in Northern Ireland has remained broadly unchanged since 2015

Four in five households in Northern Ireland had both fixed and mobile telephony services in 2016. Seven per cent of households only had access to fixed line telephone services (higher than the UK overall, at 4%) and 13% had access to a mobile phone only. There has been no change since 2015 in any of these measures, and there are no variances in ownership of household telephony services by urban or rural location.

Figure 4.14 Cross-ownership of household telephony services



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 Northern Ireland rural, 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, 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?

4.5 Satisfaction with telecoms services

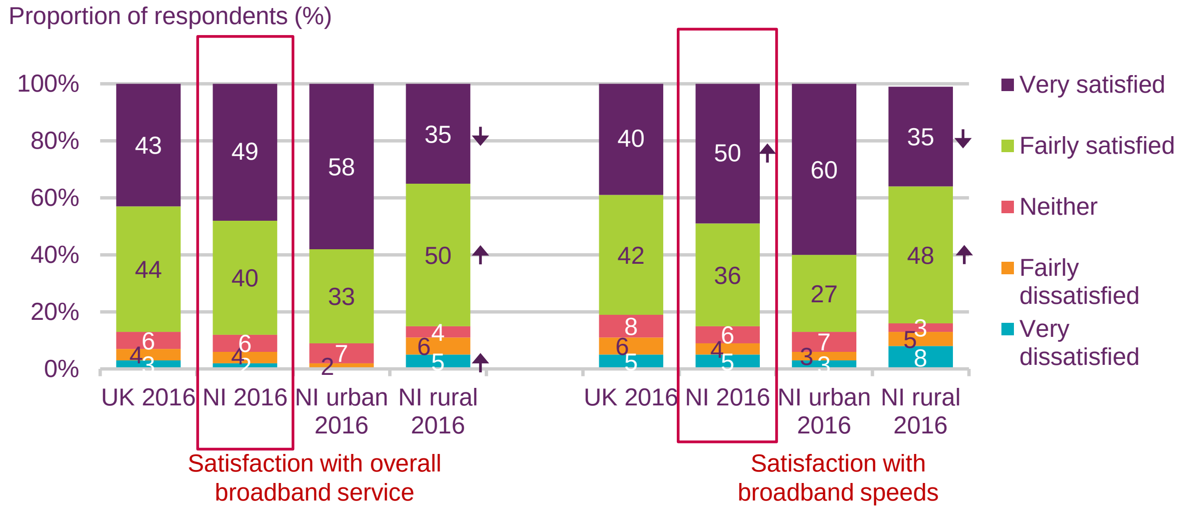
Fixed broadband users in Northern Ireland are more likely than all UK users to be very satisfied with their fixed broadband speeds

Almost nine in ten (88%) fixed broadband users in Northern Ireland were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their overall fixed broadband service in 2016, while only 6% said they were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. This was comparable to the UK averages of 87% and 7% respectively. Compared to 2015, there has been no change in satisfaction with overall broadband services in Northern Ireland, or in the UK as a whole.

Users in Northern Ireland were more likely than users across the UK to say they were 'very' satisfied with their fixed broadband speeds (50% vs. 40%). A much lower proportion (9%) reported being either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied, in line with the UK average (11%). There has been no change in satisfaction with broadband speeds in Northern Ireland since 2015.

Users in rural areas of Northern Ireland were more likely than those in urban areas to be dissatisfied both with their overall broadband service (11% vs. 3%) and with broadband speeds (13% vs. 6%). Similarly, for both measures, users in urban areas were more likely to say they were 'very' satisfied, while those in rural areas were more likely to say they were 'fairly' satisfied.

Figure 4.15 Satisfaction with overall service and speed of fixed broadband connection



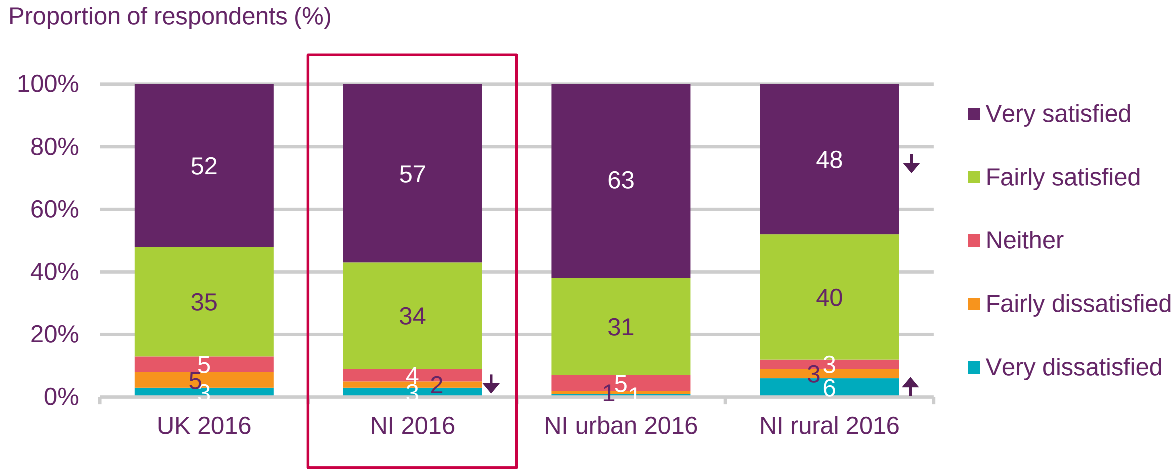
Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ with a fixed broadband connection at home (n = 2774 UK, 353 Northern Ireland, 173 Northern Ireland urban, 180 Northern Ireland rural)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016 and between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016.
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)?

Satisfaction with mobile reception has increased among mobile phone users in Northern Ireland, and is higher than in the UK overall

Nine in ten (91%) mobile phone users in Northern Ireland were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their mobile phone reception in 2016 – higher than the UK average (87%), and an increase of six percentage points since 2015. A significantly lower proportion (5%) of mobile phone users in Northern Ireland said they were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with their mobile phone reception - in line with the UK average.

While mobile phone users in urban areas of Northern Ireland were more likely to say they were 'very' satisfied, compared to those in rural areas (63% vs. 48%), rural users were more likely to be 'very' dissatisfied (6% vs. 1% in urban areas). Overall, mobile users in rural areas were more likely those in urban areas to be dissatisfied with their mobile reception (9% vs. 2%).

Figure 4.16 Satisfaction with reception of mobile service



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who personally use a mobile phone (n = 3425 UK, 446 Northern Ireland, 226 Northern Ireland urban, 220 Northern Ireland rural).
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016.
QD21J: Thinking about your mobile phone service only, how satisfied are you with (main supplier) for reception/ accessing network?

5 Internet and online content

5.1 Internet take-up

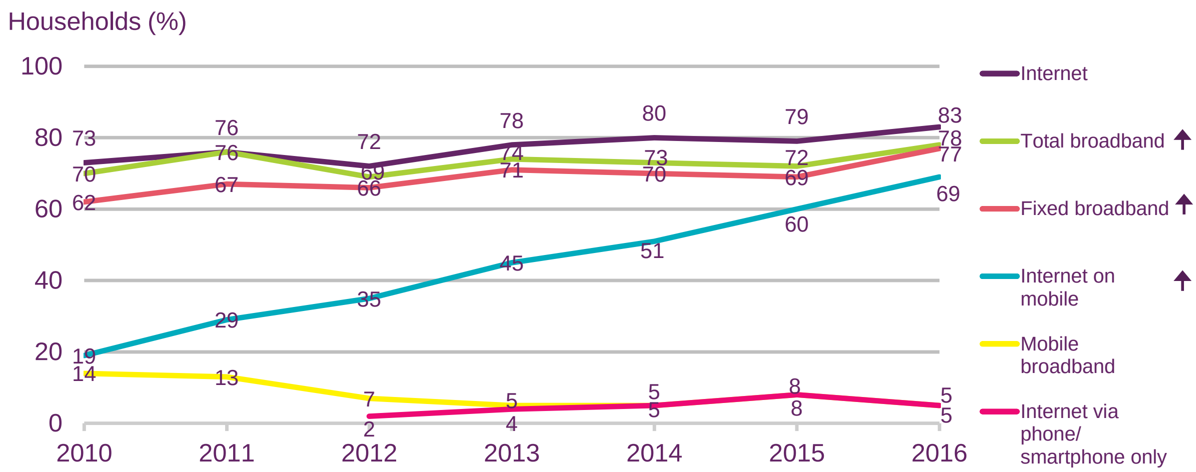
Internet access through a mobile phone and through fixed broadband has grown in Northern Ireland

Between 2015 and 2016, fixed broadband take-up increased, from 69% to 77% of households. Seven in ten adults (69%) had online access through a mobile phone, up by 9pp since 2015.

More than eight in ten households in Northern Ireland (83%) now have access to the internet,[13] which is consistent with take-up in 2015 (79%).

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland accessing the internet exclusively through a mobile phone or smartphone remained stable at 5%.

Figure 5.1 Internet take-up, Northern Ireland: 2010-2016



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker. Data from Q1 of each year 2010-2013, then Wave 1 2014-2015
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 761 Northern Ireland 2010, 511 Northern Ireland 2011, 508 Northern Ireland 2012, 507 Northern Ireland 2013, 499 Northern Ireland 2014, 504 Northern Ireland 2015, 507 Northern Ireland 2016)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016.
Note 1: 'Internet' includes access to the internet at home (via any device, e.g. PC, mobile phone, tablet etc.
Note 2: 'Total broadband' includes the following methods to connect to the internet 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), and 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 would include 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.

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

Note 5: '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.

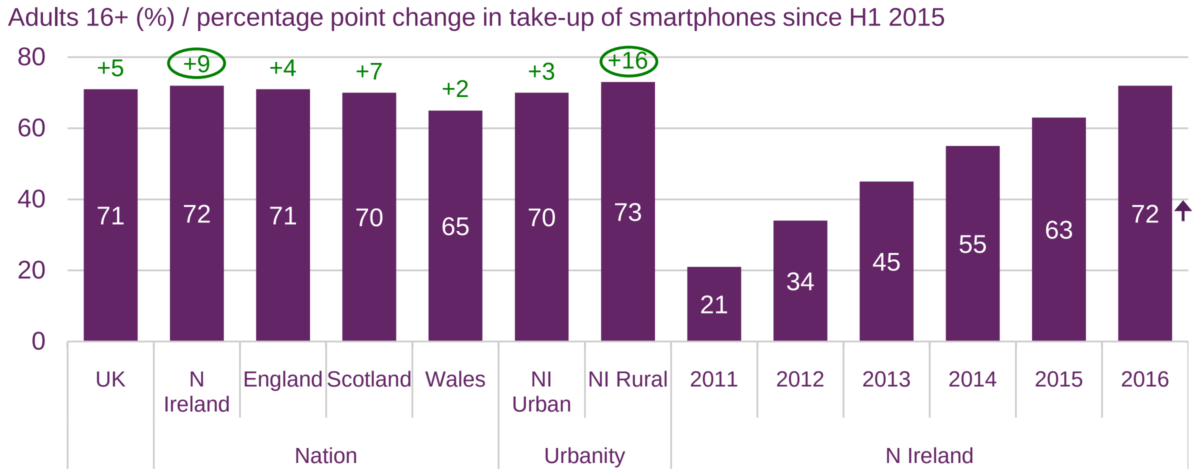
5.2 Internet-enabled devices

More than seven in ten adults in Northern Ireland owned a smartphone in 2016

Smartphone ownership in Northern Ireland grew by 9pp between 2015 and 2016, with 72% of adults owning one in 2016.

This growth was mainly driven by the increase in take-up by adults in rural areas, up by 16pp since 2015 (to 73%). In 2016 it reached a level comparable with that in urban areas.

Figure 5.2 Take-up of smartphones in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 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)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 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.

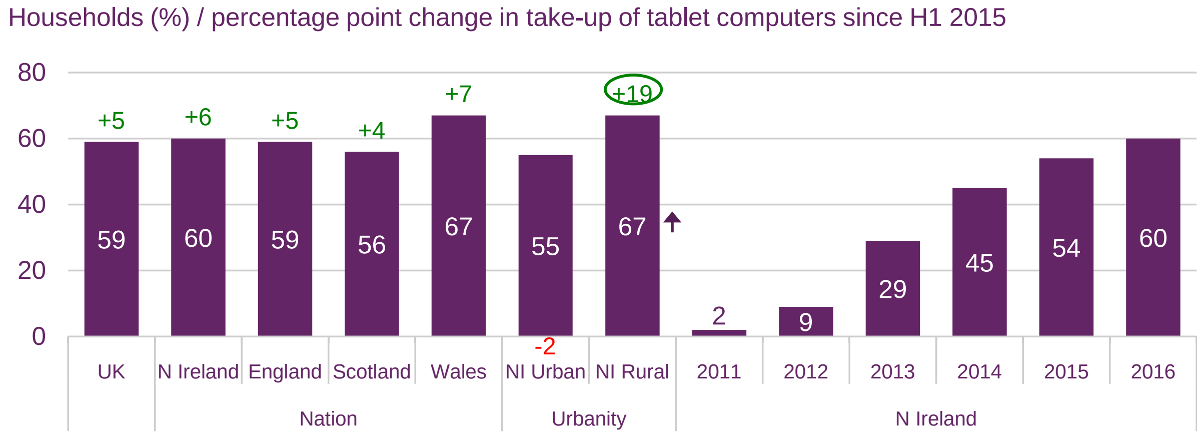
Sixty per cent of households in Northern Ireland owned a tablet in 2016

Tablet ownership in Northern Ireland stood at 60% of households in 2016. This is in line with take-up for the UK overall.

Since 2015 there has been a significant increase in tablet ownership among rural households in Northern Ireland (67% from 48%). Households in rural Northern Ireland are now more likely than urban households to own a tablet (67% vs. 55%).

The growth in take-up of tablets in rural areas could be due to a variety of factors. For example, in 2015, take-up of tablets in urban areas grew significantly by 17pp, while there was no increase in rural areas. Therefore the growth seen in 2016 may be indicative of rural areas catching up with take-up in urban areas. Another reason might be that both broadband access and smartphone ownership increased in rural Northern Ireland in 2016. The higher levels of access to broadband in these rural areas may have contributed to the growth in tablet ownership.

Figure 5.3 Take-up of tablet computers in Northern Ireland



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: All adults aged 16+ (n = 3737 UK, 507 Northern Ireland, 2239 England, 502 Scotland, 489 Wales, 262 Northern Ireland urban, 245 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)
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016 and between Northern Ireland 2015 and 2016. Circles around the +/- figures above the chart indicate any significant difference between 2015 and 2016 for Northern Ireland, urban and rural.
QE1: Does your household have a PC, laptop, netbook or tablet computer?

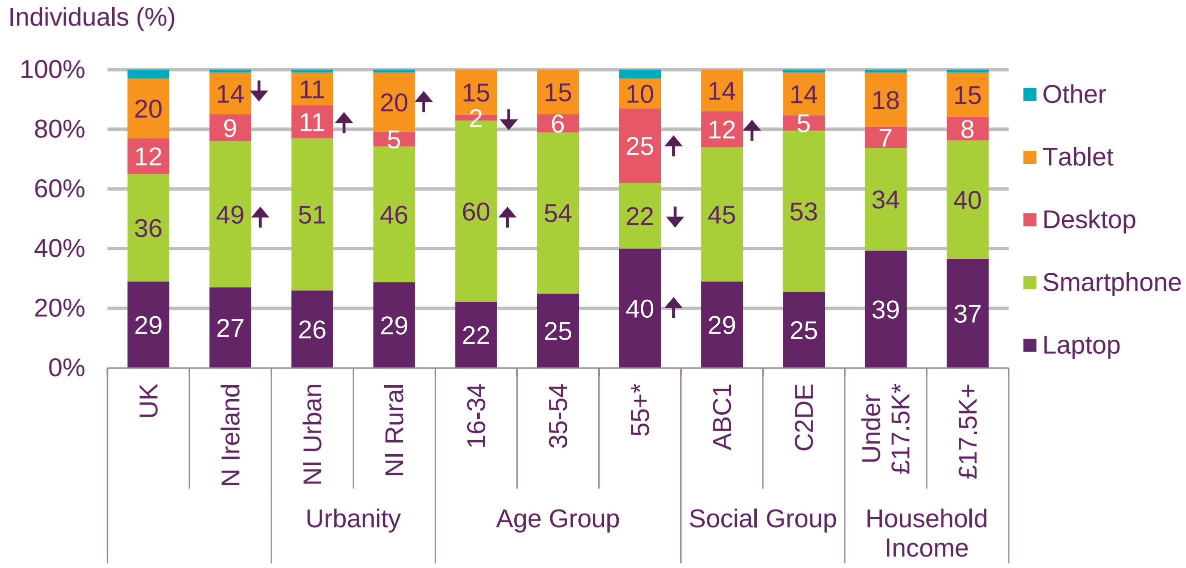
Smartphones are the most important device for going online for internet users in Northern Ireland

With the exception of internet users aged 55 and over and internet users[14] in under £17.5k households,[15] the smartphone was considered the most important device for internet access, across all demographics. Six in ten internet users aged 16-34 considered the smartphone their most important device for internet access, compared to 22% of internet users aged 55 and over. The smartphone was also seen as the most important device by internet users in both rural and urban areas, as well as those in ABC1 and C2DE households.

---

[14] Internet users are defined as those who ever go online either at home or elsewhere.
[15] This refers to annual household income

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



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Internet users aged 16+ (n = 3100 UK, 395 Northern Ireland, 204 Northern Ireland urban, 191 Northern Ireland rural, 163 16-34, 157 35-54, 75 55+, 195 ABC1, 200 C2DE, 72* under £17.5K, 80 £17.5K+).*
Significance testing: Arrows indicate any significant differences at the 95% confidence level between Northern Ireland and the UK in 2016, between Northern Ireland urban and rural in 2016, by age compared to all internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016, between socio-economic groups in Northern Ireland in 2016 and between household income groups in Northern Ireland in 2016.
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'. * Caution: low base.*

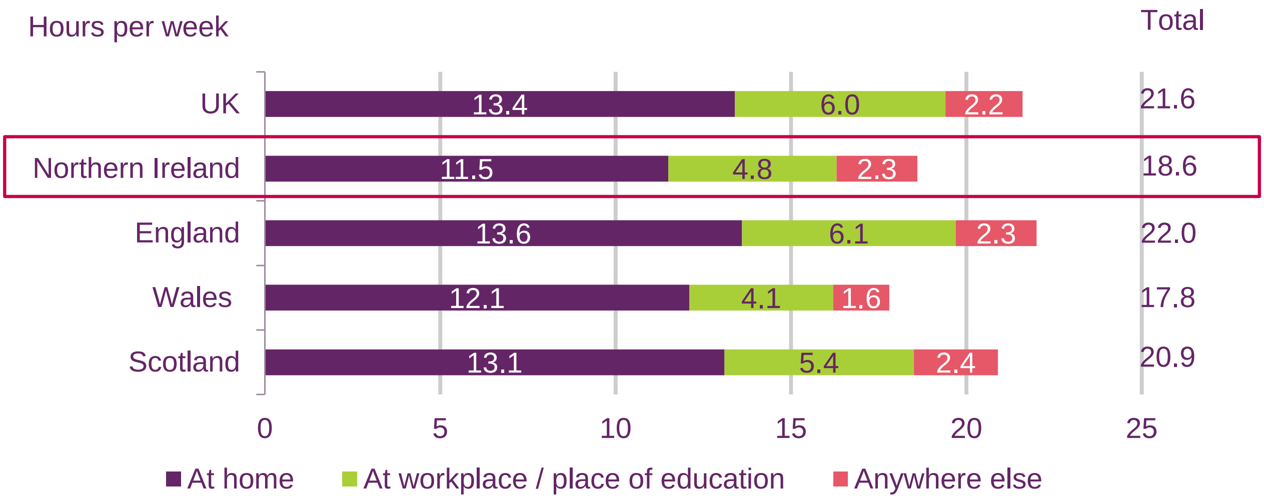
5.3 Internet use

Internet users in Northern Ireland spent 18.6 hours a week on the internet in 2015

According to research conducted for Ofcom's *Adult Media Literacy Report*[16], internet users in Northern Ireland claimed to spend 18.6 hours on the internet per week in 2015. This was statistically unchanged since 2014. As elsewhere in the UK, internet users in Northern Ireland say they spend the majority of their time online at home, followed by their workplace or place of education.

[16] Available from online at http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit-10years/2015_Adults_media_use_and_attitudes_report.pdf

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

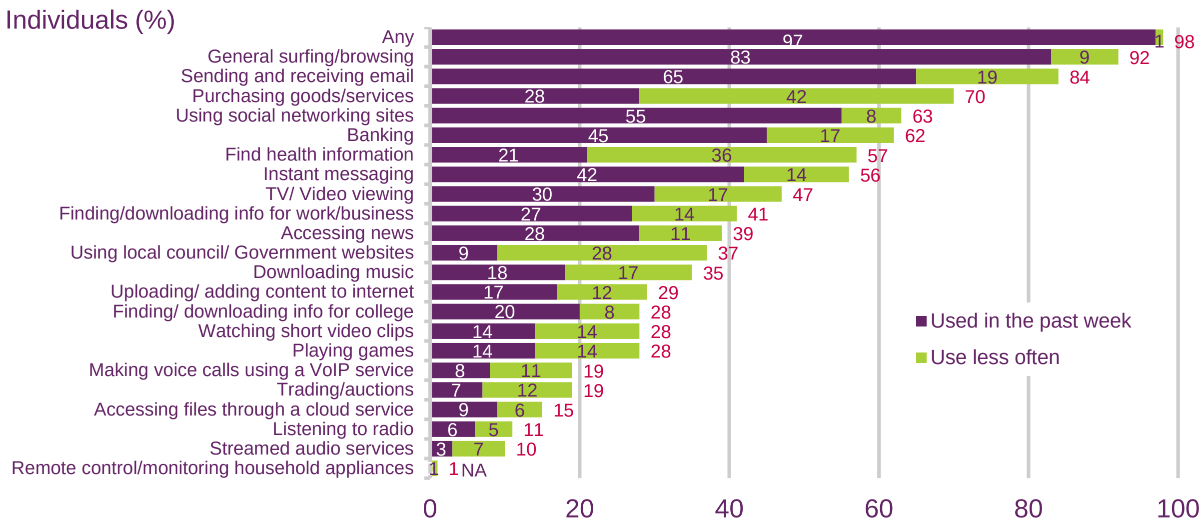


Source: Ofcom research, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in October to November 2015
Base: All adults aged 16+ who use go online at home or elsewhere (1548 UK, 957 England, 168 Scotland, 163 Wales, 170 Northern Ireland). Question: IN6A-C – How many hours in a typical week would you say you use the internet at home/ at your workplace or place of education/ anywhere else? (Unprompted responses, single coded)

General browsing was the most popular internet activity carried out by internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016

The most popular internet activities undertaken by internet users in Northern Ireland in 2016 were general surfing/browsing (92%) and sending/receiving email (84%). Purchasing goods/services was undertaken by 70% of adults, and around six in ten used the internet for social networking and banking (63% and 62% respectively).

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



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker, H1 2016
Base: Adults aged 16+ who use the internet at home or elsewhere (n= 395 Northern Ireland 2016)
QE5A: Which, if any, of these do you use the internet for?

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, via face-to-face interviews with 1,946 respondents aged 16+ in the UK. A total of 130 respondents were interviewed in Northern Ireland. Postal tracking data in this report is cited as from 2015, with the fieldwork taking place from January to December 2015. In Quarter Three of 2015, we did not conduct any interviews, to allow a review of the survey methodology. For this reason, the samples achieved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not directly comparable to previous years' data. The error margins of the sample in Northern Ireland are approximately +/- 5-9%.

Ofcom Business Postal Tracker

The business postal tracker survey is run throughout the course of the year, via telephone interviews, among a sample of 1,200 people who are responsible for post in UK SMEs (businesses with 0-249 employees) and 143 SMEs in Northern Ireland. Postal tracking data in this report is cited as from 2015, with the fieldwork taking place from January to December 2015. In Quarter Three of 2015, we did not conduct any interviews, to allow a review of the survey methodology. For this reason, the samples achieved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not directly comparable to previous years' data. The error margins of the sample in Northern Ireland are approximately +/- 5-8%.

6.1 Recent developments in Northern Ireland

Extra post boxes for Northern Ireland

Royal Mail has installed an additional 180 post boxes in Northern Ireland in the past year. This is part of its commitment to maintain its provision of post boxes across the UK, under the universal service obligation, and to help boost public access to post boxes, particularly in rural areas.

Parcel surcharging

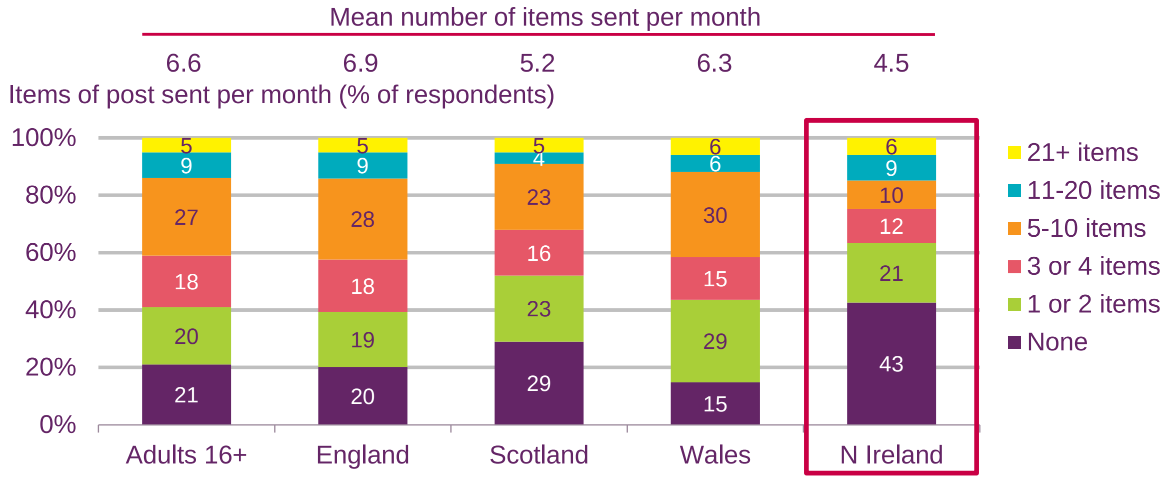
Individuals and consumer organisations continue to highlight that customers in rural, remote or distant locations can be subject to surcharges for parcel delivery, where the parcel falls outside the universal service for which a uniform price is applied. Ofcom is in the process of gathering information to understand the prevalence of these surcharges, which locations they apply to, and whether they are usually levied by retailers or delivery companies. Ofcom expects to publish some of these findings in its annual monitoring update on the postal market.

6.2 Sending and receiving post: residential customers

Adults in Northern Ireland sent fewer items of post than any other UK nation

Four in ten residents in Northern Ireland (43%) had not sent any items through the post in the past month, a higher proportion than in any other UK nation. The average number of items sent is, as a result, far lower than the UK figure (4.5 vs. 6.6).

Figure 6.1 Approximate number of items of post sent each month

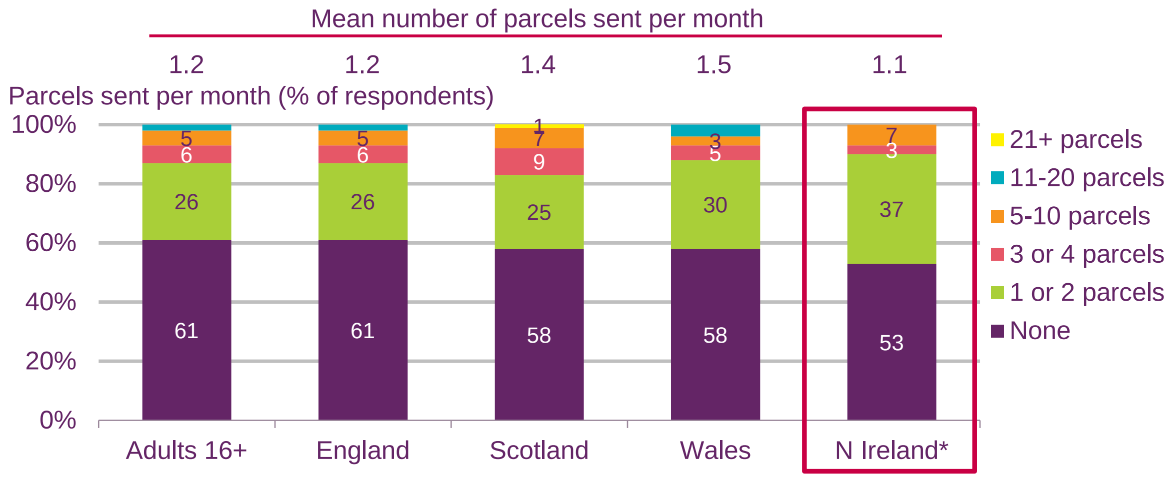


Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents (n = 1946 adults 16+, 1451 England, 214 Scotland, 151 Wales, 130 Northern Ireland)
QC1. Approximately how many items of post – including letters, cards and parcels – have you personally sent in the last month?

The average number of parcels sent per person in Northern Ireland is in line with the UK average

Just over half of adults in Northern Ireland (53%) said they had not sent a parcel through the post in the past month; this is broadly similar to all other UK nations. Nearly four in ten people in Northern Ireland (37%) said they had sent one or two parcels in the past month.

Figure 6.2 Approximate number of parcels sent in the past month

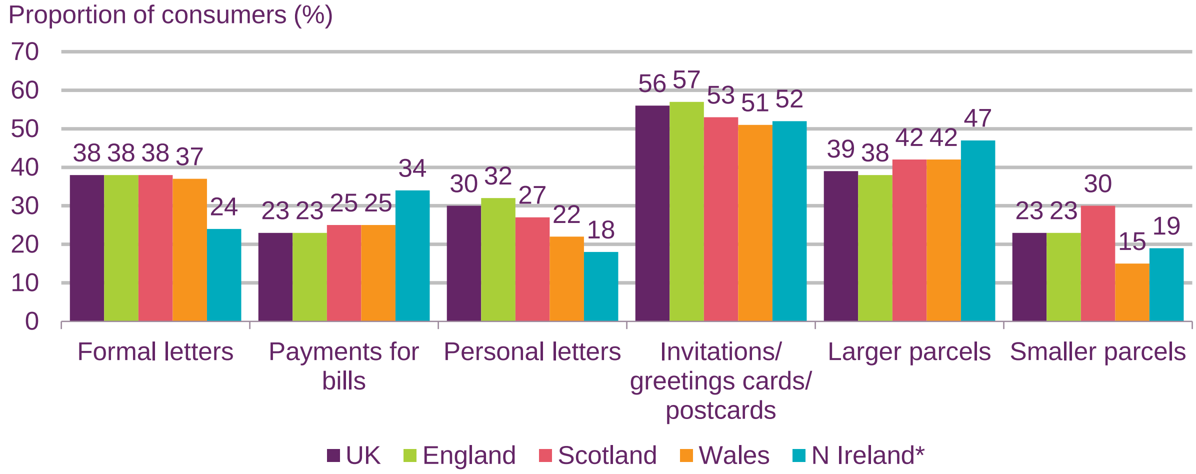


Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents who have personally sent any items of post in the last month (n = 1491 adults 16+, 1131 England, 152 Scotland, 127 Wales, 81 Northern Ireland)
QC2. And how many of these items sent in the last month were parcels rather than letters or cards?
**Caution: low base*

Adults sending post in Northern Ireland are more likely than those in other nations to send payments for bills

Three in ten adults in Northern Ireland (34%) said that they had personally sent payments for bills in the past month: this is more than in the UK overall (23%). As with the other nations, the reported use of mail for personal letters (18%) is low, perhaps as a result of take-up of digital messaging platforms. Nearly half of all adults in Northern Ireland (47%) said they had sent larger parcels in the past month.

Figure 6.3 Types of post sent in the past month

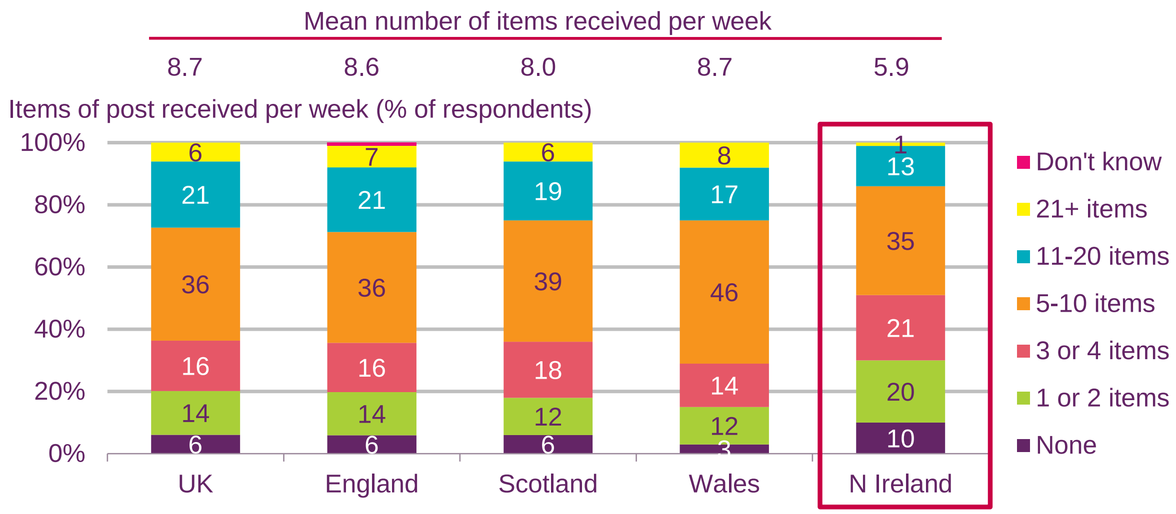


Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All who have personally sent any items of post in the last week (n = 1491 UK, 1131 England, 152 Scotland, 127 Wales, 81 Northern Ireland)
*QC5. Which of these types of mail would you say you have personally sent in the last month by post? (multicode) *Caution: low base*

One in ten people in Northern Ireland said they had received no post in the past week

Adults in Northern Ireland reported receiving fewer items of post per week than those in the UK as a whole. Four in ten adults in Northern Ireland (41%) said they had received between one and four items in the past month, compared to 30% in the UK overall.

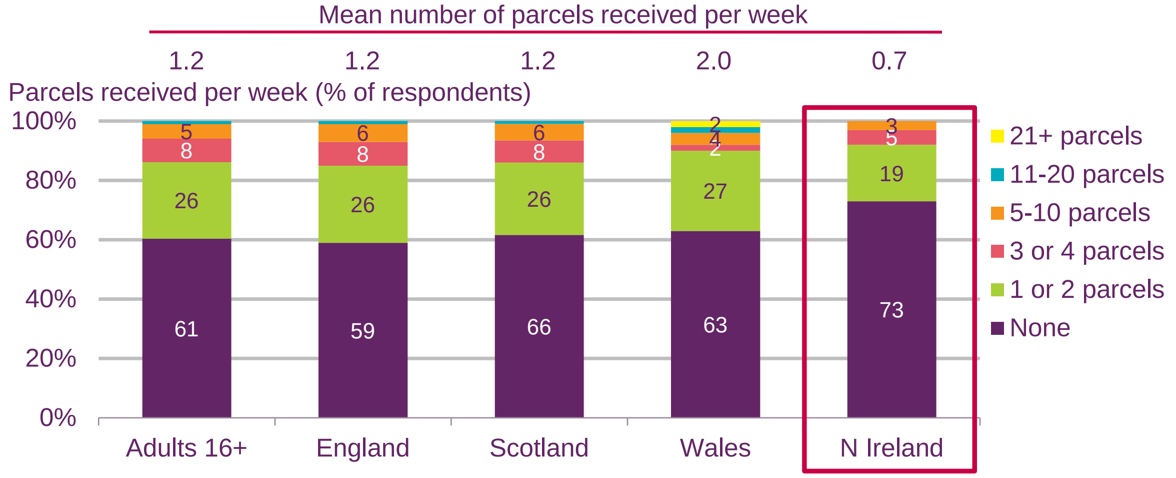
Figure 6.4 Approximate number of items of post received in the past week



Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents (n = 1946 adults 16+, 1451 England, 214 Scotland, 151 Wales, 130 Northern Ireland)
QD1. Approximately how many items of post – including letters, cards and parcels – have you personally received in the last week?

Nearly three-quarters of adults in Northern Ireland who had received post in the previous week had not received any parcels

Seventy-three per cent of those who had received any items of post in the past week in Northern Ireland had not received any parcels: more than in the other UK nations. Just under two in ten (19%) said they had received one or two parcels.



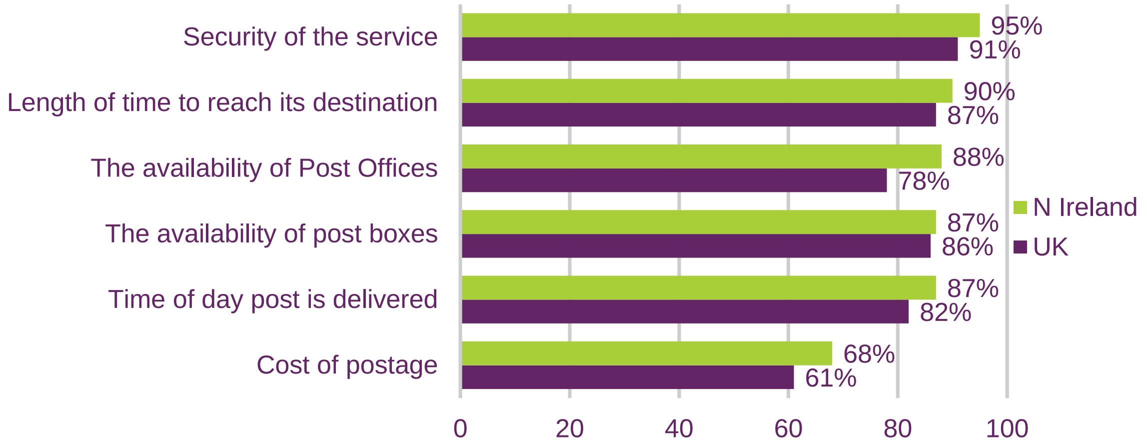
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents who have personally received any items of post in the last week (n = 1824 adults 16+, 1258 England, 203 Scotland, 147 Wales, 116 Northern Ireland)
QD2. And how many of these items received in the last week were parcels?

6.3 Attitudes toward Royal Mail

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

Respondents in Northern Ireland were asked about their satisfaction with certain aspects of Royal Mail's service. Nine in ten adults said they were satisfied with the security of the service (95%) and with the length of time post took to reach its destination (90%). Availability of services was also rated highly in terms of satisfaction: nine in ten adults said they were satisfied with the availability of Post Offices (88%) and with post boxes (87%). Nearly seven in ten adults (68%) in Northern Ireland said they were satisfied with the cost of postage, although this was the attribute with the lowest satisfaction level in Northern Ireland.

Figure 6.5 Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service

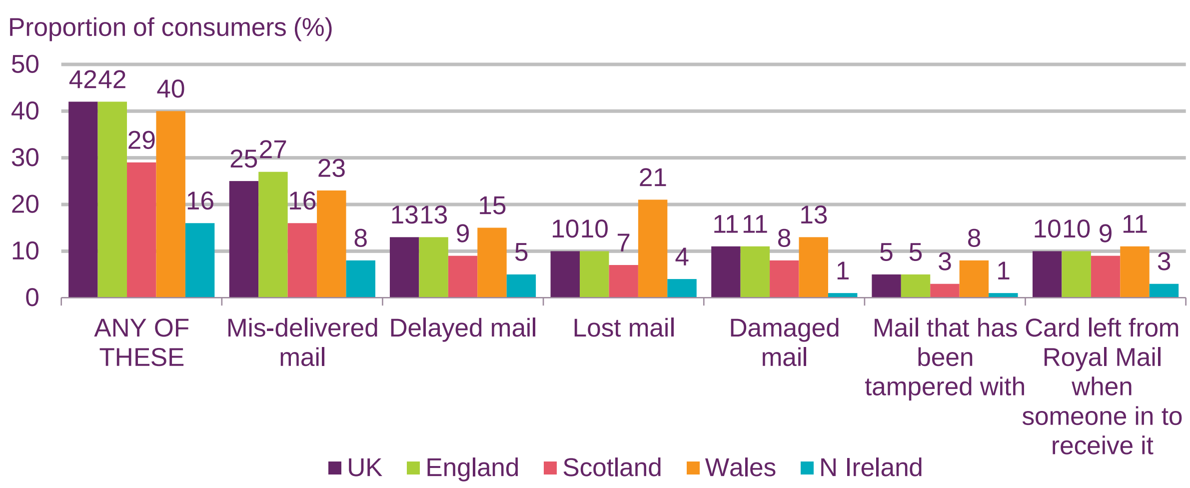


Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents in N. Ireland (n = 1946 UK, 130 N Ireland)
QE3A-F. Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's services – Ranked by proportion satisfied among adults in N. Ireland.

Fewer adults in Northern Ireland than in any other UK nation had experienced a problem with Royal Mail in the past year

Adults in Northern Ireland were asked if they had experienced any problems with Royal Mail's services in the past 12 months. Less than a fifth (16%) reported experiencing any of the listed problems in the past year, less than in any other UK nation. The most commonly reported problem experienced by adults in Northern Ireland was mis-delivered mail (8%).

Figure 6.6 Problems experienced with Royal Mail in the past 12 months



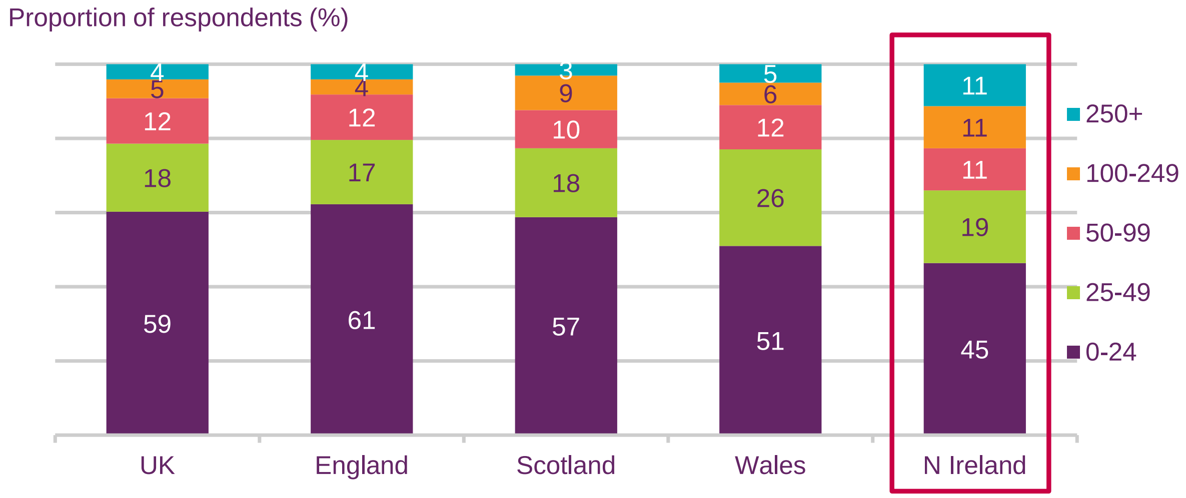
Source: Ofcom Residential Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents (n = 1946 adults 16+, 1451 England, 214 Scotland, 151 Wales, 130 Northern Ireland)
QG1A-E. Problems experienced with Royal Mail service in the past 12 months, ranked by proportion among all UK adults. Note: tampered mail is mail that has been subject to a deliberate attempt to identify or steal its contents

6.4 Sending and receiving post: business customers

One in ten businesses in Northern Ireland send more than 250 letters a month

Businesses in Northern Ireland were asked how many letter items they sent on average each month. A third of businesses in Northern Ireland (33%) said that they sent more than 50 letters each month, while less than half (45%) said they sent up to 24 letters on average per month.

Figure 6.7 Average volume of letters sent each month

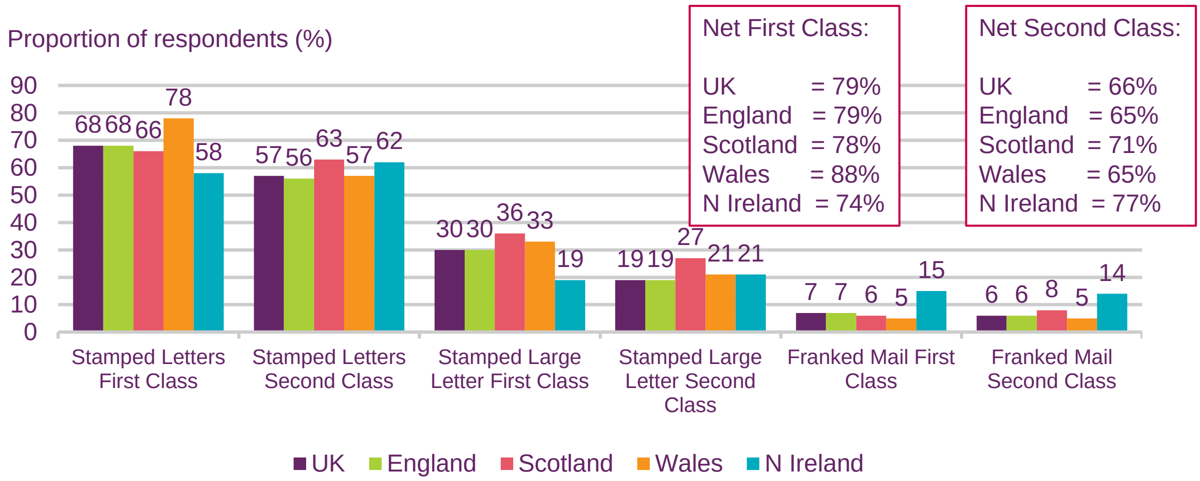


Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base : All respondents (n = 1200 UK, 734 England, 156 Scotland, 167 Wales, 143 N Ireland)
QV2a. On average, how many letter items does your organisation send per month? Please think ONLY about all the letters and large letters you may send as an organisation.

Franked First and Second Class products are more popular in Northern Ireland than the UK average

More businesses in Northern Ireland than in other nations in the UK reported using franked services to send mail: 15% had sent First Class franked mail and 14% said they used Second Class franked mail. More than three-quarters of businesses in Northern Ireland (77%) said they used Second Class services, which again, is higher than the UK average.

Figure 6.8 Royal Mail services used to send standard post each month



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents using RM standard delivery services (n = 1121 UK, 686 England, 146 Scotland, 155 Wales, 134 N Ireland)
QV6d. Which, if any, of the following Royal Mail services does your organisation use to send your standard mail?

Around two-thirds of businesses had switched some of their post to another communication method in the past year

Businesses were asked whether they had switched any of their mail to other communication methods in the past twelve months. Around two-thirds of businesses in Northern Ireland (65%) reported that they had done so.

Figure 6.9 Switched some mail to other communication methods over past year

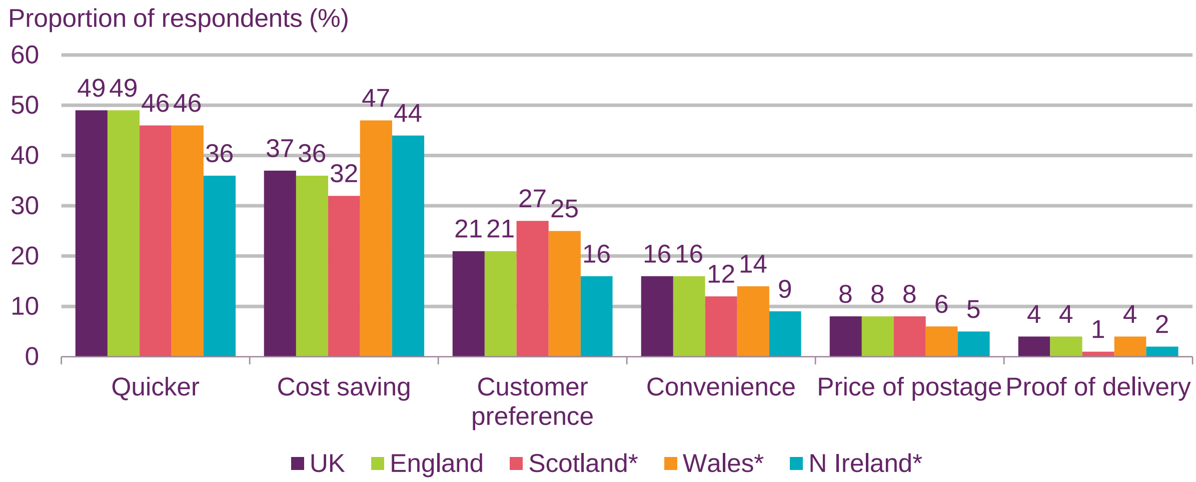
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents (n = 1200 UK, 734 England, 156 Scotland, 167 Wales, 143 N Ireland)
QF4. Over the last 12 months, has your organisation moved some mail to other communication methods?

Cost saving is the key reason for switching from post in Northern Ireland

Of those businesses in Northern Ireland who said they had moved some of their mail to other methods of communication, cost saving was highlighted as the key reason. Speed and customer preference were also highlighted as reasons for switching from mail.

When asked why some businesses had not moved any mail to other communication methods in the last 12 months, the most popular response other than ‘no reason’ was ‘we have already moved everything that is possible to move’.

Figure 6.10 Main reasons for switching some mail to other communications methods over past 12 months



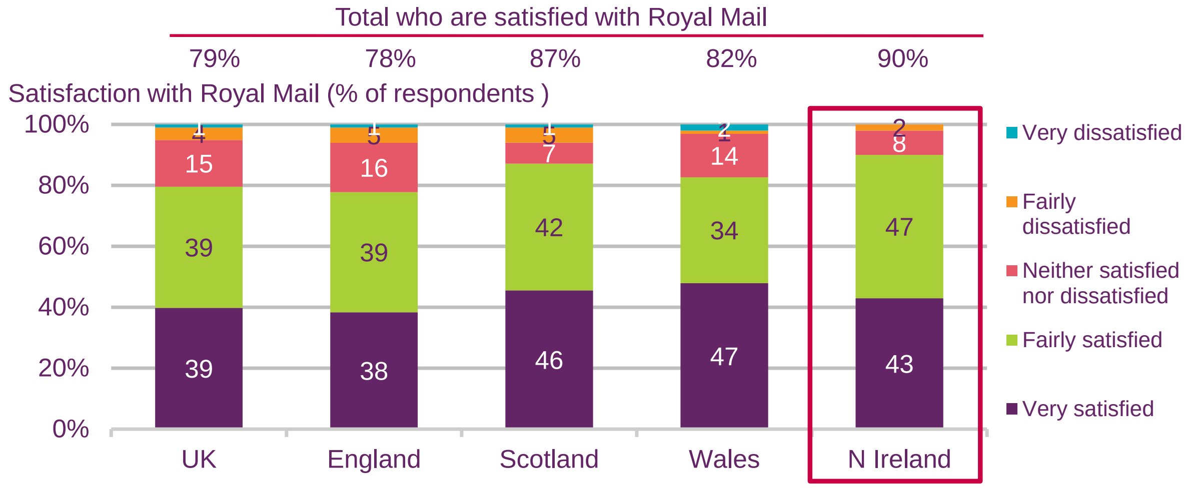
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All who have moved to other communication methods (n = 720 UK, 452 England, 80 Scotland, 94 Wales, 94 N Ireland)
QF6: Why have you moved some mail to other communication methods? (open ended). Top 6 reasons shown
**Caution: low base*

6.5 Satisfaction with Royal Mail – business customers

Satisfaction with Royal Mail is higher in Northern Ireland than the UK average

Nine in ten businesses in Northern Ireland reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the overall quality of service from Royal Mail, which is higher than the UK overall. Another 8% of businesses in Northern Ireland reported that they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with quality of service overall.

Figure 6.11 Overall satisfaction with Royal Mail quality of service



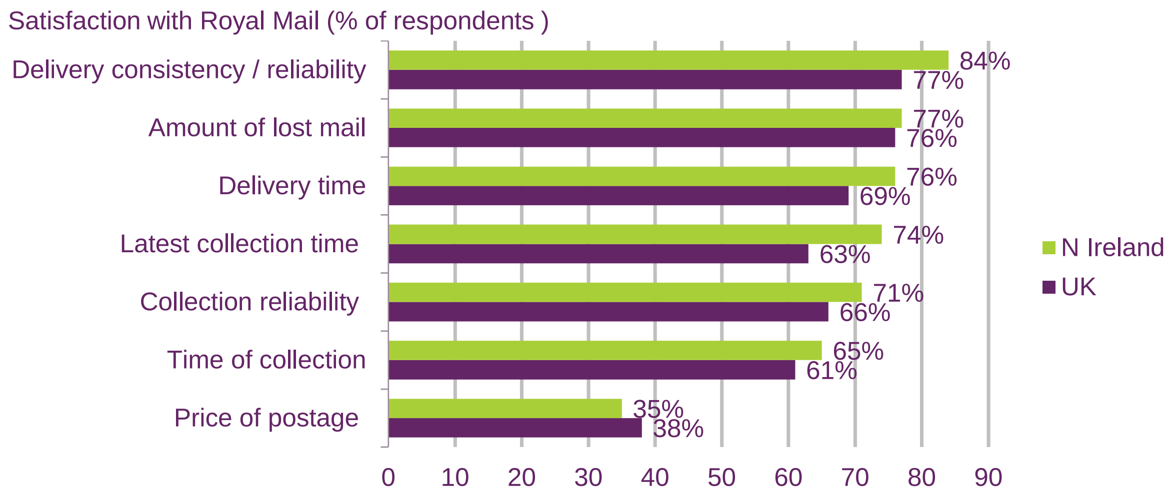
Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n = 1185 UK, 727 England, 155 Scotland, 164 Wales, 139 Northern Ireland)
QRM2. Thinking generally about the service your organisation receives as a whole, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the overall quality of the services you receive from Royal Mail as a recipient and sender?

Reliability of delivery and collection times may be driving the higher satisfaction

When asked about specific aspects of satisfaction with Royal Mail, a high proportion of business respondents (84%) said they were satisfied with delivery consistency and reliability. More than three-quarters of respondents also said they were satisfied with the amount of lost mail (77%) and with delivery time (76%). However, less than four in ten businesses (35%) said they were satisfied with the price of postage.

Among businesses in Northern Ireland who use Royal Mail, more than eight in ten (84%) said they had had no problems with their service when sending or receiving mail in the past six months.

Figure 6.12 Satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service



Source: Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2015
Base: All respondents who use Royal Mail (n =1185 UK, 130 N 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?