

Ofcom PSB Tracker 2019 – Technical Report

Preface

This document contains detail of the methodology, sampling and weighting for the 2019 Ofcom Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Tracker.

Based on the public service purposes presented in the 2003 Communications Act, Ofcom developed a range of PSB purposes and characteristics in its first PSB review in 2005. The PSB channels (the BBC channels, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) are expected together to fulfil these purposes and characteristics, although it is also acknowledged that each PSB channel has a specific remit.

The PSB purposes and characteristics were put into everyday language for the PSB Tracker survey, which asks respondents to give their opinions on the PSB statements, both in terms of the importance and the delivery of these by the PSB channels.

The PSB Tracker also asks respondents to rate specific TV channels on each of the PSB purposes and characteristics relevant to that channel.

Methodology

This section outlines the current methodology used in 2019 as well as the changes undertaken in previous years of the survey.

The 2019 survey used the same method as in 2018, which followed on from some larger method changes that were made in previous years. These changes are briefly outlined below. Until 2014, the PSB tracker was conducted via a CATI telephone methodology. In 2015 the decision was made to transition it to a dual method with online and CAPI face-to-face (F2F) data collection, with a 75% online / 25% F2F split. In 2018, the methodology was kept the same, but the F2F proportion of the sample was increased to make a 50-50% split. This change was implemented in order to ensure as representative a sample as possible. An estimated 51% of UK adults are thought to be low or non-internet users¹, and it was felt that a majority online methodology risked underrepresenting this group.

¹ According to GfK's Random Location Omnibus in 2017

Fieldwork for the 2019 PSB Tracker was undertaken by Ipsos MORI in two waves: May – June 2019, and October – November 2019. Quotas were applied to ensure that each fieldwork method delivered a sample representative of the UK. The data collected from these two sources were combined to provide the final results for 2019.

A total of 3,130 interviews were conducted over the two fieldwork waves. This consisted of 2,188 interviews in England; 313 in Scotland; 310 in Wales; and 319 in Northern Ireland, split evenly between the two waves. As was the case previously, sample sizes for the devolved nations were higher than what would have been UK representative, in order to allow robust reporting at nation level.

Questionnaire changes

The following changes were made to the questionnaire in 2019:

- The gender question was changed in accordance with the latest Market Research Society (MRS) recommended version.
- BBC Scotland was added to the individual channel ratings section of the questionnaire, for Scottish participants only.
- The question that asks about online services previously had one code that combined ITV Hub and ITV Hub+. In the 2019 survey these two services have been split into two different answer codes.
- The disability question is now asked in two parts. It firstly asks respondents if they have a disability or long-term medical condition. It then asks those who respond 'yes' what they have difficulty doing as a result of their condition.

Quotas

Both methods were designed to be nationally representative. In the F2F survey, quotas were set by age, gender and working status (interlocked) within nation, and then by region within England. Soft quotas were additionally set on ethnicity and parents so that these could be monitored throughout fieldwork.

In the online survey, quotas were set on age, gender, social grade, region/country, ethnicity and parents.

Across both methodologies, the devolved nations were over-sampled, and England was under-sampled, to allow more robust analysis of the individual channels (in particular, BBC One, ITV and Channel 4) by nation.

Sample design

As was the case in 2017, each method had its own sample design, appropriate for each respective methodology:

A. A random location sampling approach was used in the F2F (CAPI) interviewing. Random sampling points were selected in each region with six interviews undertaken per Primary Sampling Unit (PSU). There were a total of 133 points per wave. To ensure a representative sample, individual quotas specific to the profile of each PSU were applied by age, working status and gender.

B. A quota sampling approach was used for the online interviews. As we can never guarantee that the demographic spread of panellists in each region is nationally representative, the offline sampling approach was not replicated for the online fieldwork. Instead, quota sampling was used with targets in place to ensure a nationally representative sample (see previous section for specific quotas used).

Weighting

Survey data were weighted to be nationally representative of adults aged 16+ by gender, age, region, social grade, working status and ethnicity at an overall UK level. Weights were based on ONS population estimates as listed below.

Category	Target
Gender	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Age	
16-24	14%
25-34	17%
35-44	16%
45-54	17%
55-64	14%
65-74	12%
75+	10%
Social grade	
AB	27%
C1	26%
C2	22%
DE	25%
Working status	
Working full-time	45%
Working part-time	19%
Not working	36%
Region	
North East	4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	8%
North West	11%
West Midlands	9%
East Midlands	7%
East of England	9%
South West	9%
London	13%

South East	14%
Scotland	8%
Wales	5%
Northern Ireland	3%
Ethnicity	
BAME	13%
White	87%

The weighting process had two purposes; (a) to adjust for any minor short-falls in fieldwork quotas being met and (b) to down-weight the devolved nations (which were oversampled to ensure a robust sample size for these countries), to make the sample nationally representative again.

This represented a simplified weighting process compared to previous years, which was first adopted in 2018, and focused solely on demographic weighting. The weighting process in 2017 featured an additional weighting matrix, based on the number of PSB channels households watched, and whether or not the household had access to paid TV or not. This weighting matrix was not applied to the 2018 or 2019 data. This was partly due to the decision to employ a simpler demographic weighting process, but also due to the weighting matrix having a significant negative impact on the weighting efficiency. The final weighting efficiency for the 2019 data was 84%.

Main questionnaire

As with previous waves, the focus of the questionnaire was for respondents to rate specific TV channels on different aspects of broadcasting relating to the PSB purposes and characteristics. The research statements that they were asked about correspond to the purposes and characteristics as set out below.

PSB purposes and characteristics	PSB Tracker statements
Purpose 1: To inform ourselves and others and to increase our understanding of the world through news, information and analysis of current events and ideas	Its news programmes are trustworthy Its programmes help me understand what's going on in the world today

	Its regional news programmes provide a wide range of good quality news about my area*
Purpose 2: To stimulate our interest and knowledge of the arts, science, history and other topics through programmes that are accessible and can encourage informal learning	It shows interesting programmes about history, sciences or the arts
Purpose 3: To reflect and strengthen our cultural identity through original programming at UK, national and regional level, and by occasionally bringing audiences together for shared experiences	It portrays my region (IN ENGLAND)/Scotland/ Wales/Northern Ireland (Nations) fairly to the rest of the UK* It shows high quality soaps or drama made in the UK It shows high quality comedy made in the UK** Provides a wide range of high quality and UK-made programmes for children* **** Provides a wide range of high quality and UK-made programmes for older children
Purpose 4: To make us aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through programmes that reflect the lives of other people and other communities, both within the UK and elsewhere	Its programmes show different kinds of cultures in the UK It shows different parts of the UK including England, NI, Scotland and Wales
High quality – well funded and well produced	It shows well-made, high quality programmes
Original – new UK content rather than repeats or acquisitions	It shows new programmes, made in the UK*
Innovative – breaking new ideas or re-inventing exciting approaches, rather than copying old ones	It shows programmes with new ideas and different approaches
Challenging – making viewers think	It shows programmes that make me stop and think***
Distinctive**	The style of the programmes is different to what I'd expect to see on other channels

*Statement changed within the PSB Tracker in 2011

**Statement new in 2014

***Only asked for importance in 2014

**** Removed in 2018

Utilising the statements listed above, respondents were asked to rate the channels they watched regularly, or occasionally on every day or most days, based on their responses on viewing frequency. The 2019 survey followed changes made in 2018, whereby respondents were asked about the channels they watched either regularly or occasionally. This increase in frequency was first adopted in 2018 in order to create a larger sample size per channel for analysis. Additionally, the 2019 survey retained the change made in 2018 in which the routing was extended further for BBC Three viewers – statements about this channel were asked of all who watched regularly or claimed to watch occasionally and at least once a week. In past years BBC Three typically had less regular viewers, so this broader routing was applied to ensure that a sufficient sample size was available for analysis.

The entire channel list comprised BBC One, BBC Two, ITV (or it's regional variation), Channel 4, Channel 5, BBC Three, BBC Four and BBC Scotland. Those who viewed any of these channels regularly or occasionally were also asked to consider all of the channels together for each of the research statements.

All respondents were also asked to rate how important it is that the PSB channels together fulfil the PSB purposes and characteristics. This provides useful context for the data on how the PSB channels are rated on these elements.

Across questions, respondents were asked to rate the channel in relation to a statement on a 10-point scale where 10 is the highest score and 1 the lowest.