Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report for Adults

A. Preface

Ofcom is the regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, video-on-demand, telecommunications, wireless and postal communications. Ofcom regularly carries out research into these markets to stay informed on new technology developments and the impact that they might have on the sectors they regulate.

As part of their regulatory duties Ofcom monitors consumption and attitudes towards news across television, radio, print and online.

Ofcom's adult News Consumption survey has been conducted on a yearly basis, since 2013, using a face to face omnibus methodology.

Under the new Royal Charter and Agreement, regulation of the BBC has now passed from the BBC Trust to Ofcom. One of Ofcom's central responsibilities will be to hold the BBC to account for its performance in fulfilling its Mission and promoting its Public Purposes. For this assessment to be meaningful, Ofcom need it to be based in a clear understanding of a range of factors, including audiences' own views on the BBC's performance.

Because of this additional responsibility, in 2018 Ofcom sought to commission a bespoke quantitative survey that could incorporate the adult News Consumption survey and provide additional questioning that would fulfil Ofcom's regulatory requirements of the BBC.

Jigsaw Research Limited was commissioned to conduct a mixed methodology approach, combining online and face to face interviews. Face-to-face fieldwork was halted during wave 2 of the NCS adults study this year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 56 planned face-to-face interviews that had not been achieved were replaced with online interviews. We do not believe this has had a significant impact on the results. Within the sample frame nations were over-represented during fieldwork to produce robust sample sizes for analysis. Interviews were conducted over two waves of research (9th November – 8th December and 24th February – 30th March) to achieve a robust and representative view of UK adults; 2,066 face-to-face interviews and 2,510 online interviews were carried out. Interviewing periods have remained consistent over the last three years to ensure comparability.

The data has been weighted to correct for over-representation of nations and weights were applied for age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG) within nation to match known population profiles. A final weight step was taken to calibrate between the face to face and online methodologies.

Details of the sample design, research methodologies and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

B. Sample Design

B.1. Face to Face Interviewing

Jigsaw Research adopted a random location interviewing (RLI) approach to ensure that the sample was representative of UK adults. Sample frames were developed separately for each of the four nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) covering the following key subgroups - age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+), gender and socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE).

B.1.1. Random Location Interviewing

The random location interviews (RLI) were conducted using a stratified sample, to ensure an adequate representation of all groups of interest. UK Geographics generated the sampling points as follows:

- Based on the 2011 Census Output Areas, the smallest level at which the Census data is collected, containing approximately 125 addresses in England, Wales and NI and approximately 50 addresses in Scotland.
- Prior to selection, the OAs were sorted by BBC TV region and within nation/region by the UK Geographics urbanity indicator
- Sample was allocated proportionately across the 11 English BBC TV regions, based on the population aged 16+. Sample for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales would be structured to ensure at least 350 interviews per TV area

The frame of sampling points had 100% coverage of all residential areas and households. Including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

B.1.2. Quotas

The following quotas were set to represent the population of each sampling point, which meant the overall quotas closely matched the population within each BBC TV region/Nation.

- Age (16-24, 25-44, 45+)
- Gender
- Socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE)

B.2. Online Interviewing

Jigsaw Research adopted a quota sample approach to their online interviewing to ensure that the sample was representative of UK adults. The sample frame was developed at a UK level covering the following key subgroups:

- BBC TV region (East, East Midlands, London, North East & Cumbria, North West, South, South East, South West, West, West Midlands, Yorkshire, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+)
- Gender
- Socio-economic group (AB/C1/C2/DE)

C. Weighting

At the analysis stage, data from both waves and both methodologies were combined. Two stages of weighting then took place. Stage 1 was used to correct for over-representation of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish respondents and align demographics to the known UK profile. We then used a methodological weight, during Stage 2, to account for differences between the face to face and online approaches.

C.1. Demographic weights

For stage 1, the data was weighted by nation and within each nation by gender, age and socio-economic group (SEG). Rim weights were applied using targets from Nomis, April 2020 (nation, gender and age) and the 2011 Census (SEG).

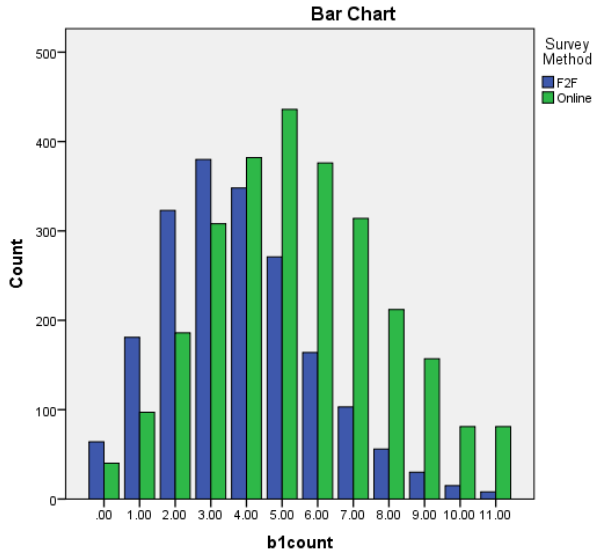
The initial unweighted sample and the weighted sample profiles are illustrated below:

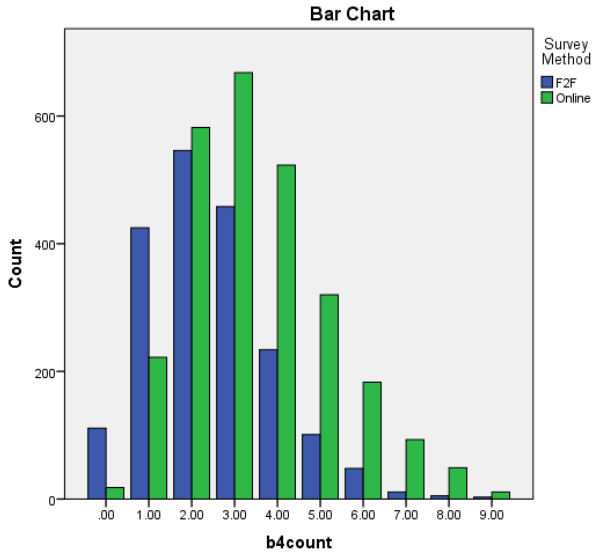
Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Nation	England	69%	83%
	Scotland	12%	9%
	Wales	10%	5%
	Northern Ireland	9%	3%
Gender	Male	47%	49%
	Female	53%	51%
Age	16-24	16%	15%
	25-34	16%	16%
	35-44	18%	17%
	45-54	17%	17%
	55-64	13%	13%
	65-74	12%	12%
	75+	8%	10%
SEG	AB	24%	22%
	C1	31%	30%
	C2	20%	22%
	DE	25%	26%

C.2. Methodological weight

A second stage of weighting was used to correct for differences between face to face and online methodologies. In the 2018 survey, it was noted that online participants were more likely to have a larger range of interests (from question B1) and a greater number of technology devices in their households (from question B4).

The demographically weighted distribution of these two questions in 2018 is shown below:





In agreement with Ofcom, a methodological weight was developed and applied to the demographic weights to produce a final weighting scheme. These weights remain consistent for each year of the study.

The final weighted sample profile is illustrated below:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Demographic weight	Demographic + Methodological weight (Final Weight)
Nation	England	83%	82.4%
	Scotland	9%	9.6%
	Wales	5%	5.4%
	Northern Ireland	3%	2.6%
Gender	Male	49%	49%
	Female	51%	51%
Age	16-24	15%	15%
	25-34	16%	15%
	35-44	17%	18%
	45-54	17%	17%
	55-64	13%	14%
	65-74	12%	11%
	75+	10%	10%
SEG	AB	22%	23%
	C1	30%	31%
	C2	22%	21%
	DE	26%	25%

D. Statistical reliability and significance

D.1. Effective sample size

This section details the variation between the sample results and the "true" values, or the findings that would have been obtained with a census approach. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95%: that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups:

Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	England	3171	2455
	Scotland	541	383
	Wales	456	327
	Northern Ireland	408	308
Gender	Male	2153	1519
	Female	2420	1693
Age	16-24	726	518
	25-34	727	505
	35-44	831	618
	45-54	766	578
	55-64	615	453
	65-74	542	381
	75+	369	213
SEG	AB	1105	820
	C1	1400	952
	C2	903	651
	DE	1163	800

D.2. Confidence interval

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

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
3,208 (Total)	1.04%	1.38%	1.59%	1.70%	1.73%
1,519 (Male)	1.51%	2.01%	2.30%	2.46%	2.51%
952 (C1)	1.91%	2.54%	2.91%	3.11%	3.18%
505 (25-34)	2.62%	3.49%	4.00%	4.27%	4.36%
308 (NI)	3.35%	4.47%	5.12%	5.47%	5.58%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 3,208 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the "true" value will fall within the range of +/- 1.59 percentage points from the sample results.

D.3. Significant differences

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

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,519 vs 1,693 Male vs Female	2.19%	2.85%	3.23%	3.42%	3.47%
952 vs 651 C1 vs C2	3.16%	4.10%	4.65%	4.92%	4.98%

For example, comparing a score of 11% for Males and 14% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.19% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.