Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report for Adults Online (only) approach

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 2017 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.

From December 2017 until March 2020, Jigsaw Research conducted a mixed methodology approach, combining online and face to face interviews. However, during the last two years of research, Jigsaw were unable to do this consistently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since online methodologies tend to underrepresent low/non internet users, Jigsaw conducted a combination of online and telephone interviews during November/December 2020, March/April 2021 and November/December 2021, to ensure that these groups had the opportunity to express their views. In March/April 2022, Jigsaw reverted to the preferred methodology of conducting online and face to face interviews, to be consistent with previous and future years.

In total, the face to face survey achieved 1,086 interviews, with the nations over-represented during fieldwork. This data has been weighted to correct for this over-representation, with weights being applied by age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG) within nation, to provide a representative view of all UK adults. The online and face to face data has been combined to provide a snapshot of opinion across both methodologies during March/April 2022.

To ensure that any trend data within this publication is comparable, we have also decided to publish the online data separately, as we did in 2021. The 3,423 online interviews have been weighted by age, gender, nation/region, working status and ethnicity to ensure they are representative of 'recent' internet users, as found in the ONS Internet Users research (published on 6th April 2020).

The online interviews were conducted over two waves of research, from 6th November - 5th December 2021 and 7th March - 3rd April 2022, whilst the face to face interviews were conducted from 7th March - 3rd April 2022

The two fieldwork periods have remained consistent over the last five years to ensure comparability.

Details of the online sample design and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages, as well as a note on statistical reliability. A separate technical report is available for the combined online and face to face data.

B. Sample Design

Online Interviewing

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

- Age (16-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-74/75+)
- Gender
- Nation/Region
- Working status (Employed/unemployed)
- Ethnicity (White, Mixed/multiple ethnic background, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian background, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Any other ethnic group)

C. Weighting

The online data has been weighted by nation/region, gender, age, working status and ethnicity to be representative of 'recent' internet users, as found in the ONS Internet Users research (published on 6th April, 2020).

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

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Nation	North East	4%	4%
	North West	9%	11%
	Yorkshire & the Humber	6%	8%
	East Midlands	6%	7%
	West Midlands	9%	9%
	East of England	8%	9%
	London	15%	14%
	South East	11%	14%
	South West	6%	9%
	Scotland	9%	8%
	Wales	9%	5%
	Northern Ireland	7%	3%
Gender	Men	47%	49%
	Women	52%	50%

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Weighted
Age	16-24	19%	14%
	25-34	15%	18%
	35-44	18%	17%
	45-54	17%	18%
	55-64	14%	16%
	65-74	11%	11%
	75+	7%	6%
Working Status	Employed	55%	66%
	Unemployed	45%	34%
Ethnicity	White	80%	88%
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	2%	1%
	Indian	6%	2%
	Pakistani	2%	2%
	Bangladeshi	1%	1%
	Chinese	3%	1%
	Other Asian background	1%	1%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	4%	3%
	Other ethnic group	1%	2%

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 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 from the online data:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	North East	134	118
	North West	324	277
	Yorkshire & the Humber	208	186
	East Midlands	222	184
	West Midlands	291	235
	East of England	266	228
	London	497	375
	South East	379	329
	South West	218	197
	Scotland	320	284
	Wales	308	268
	Northern Ireland	254	231
Gender	Men	1,623	1,272
	Women	1,792	1,414
Age	16-24	634	413
	25-34	514	407
	35-44	613	509
	45-54	577	482
	55-64	476	394
	65-74	365	314
	75+	244	207

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Working Status	Employed	1,875	1,564
	Unemployed	1,548	1,239
Ethnicity	White	2,731	2,293
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	68	51
	Indian	221	198
	Pakistani	68	58
	Bangladeshi	31	26
	Chinese	105	94
	Other Asian background	34	31
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	145	124
	Other ethnic group	12	20

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% ±
2,688 (Total)	1.13%	1.51%	1.73%	1.85%	1.89%
1,272 (Male)	1.65%	2.20%	2.52%	2.69%	2.75%
890 (C1)	1.97%	2.63%	3.01%	3.22%	3.28%
407 (25-34)	2.91%	3.89%	4.45%	4.76%	4.86%
231 (NI)	3.87%	5.16%	5.91%	6.32%	6.45%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,688 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 1.73 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:

Effective sample sizes being compared	**10% or 90% ±**	**20% or 80% ±**	**30% or 70% ±**	**40% or 60% ±**	**50% ±**
1,272 vs 1,414 Male vs Female	2.40%	3.12%	3.53%	3.74%	3.79%
890 vs 443 C1 vs C2	3.60%	4.69%	5.31%	5.63%	5.70%

For example, comparing a score of 11% for Males and 14% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.40% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.