

Preface

The Residential Postal Tracker for Q4 2013 has been run by Saville Rossiter-Base on behalf of Ofcom. The objective of the survey is to accurately measure and assess usage and attitudes towards postal services among UK adults (aged 16+) and to understand their postal needs and reactions to potential changes in the postal services. Robust reporting is required on an annual basis for particular sub-groups within the UK adult population, combining all of the data collected over the course of a calendar year. The sub-groups required for annual reporting are:

- All UK adults
- Different age groups
- Different socio economic groups
- Different household income levels
- People with disabilities
- People who are housebound – or have difficulty leaving the home
- Minority ethnic groups
- Each of the four UK nations
- Each of the nine Government Office regions in England
- The border areas of Northern Ireland
- The East of the River Bann vs. West of the River Bann in Northern Ireland
- The Highlands & Islands in Scotland (and the Scottish Islands in isolation)
- Urban vs. Rural areas, at a UK level and within each of the four nations
- Areas that are both rural and remote, at UK level and within each of the four nations
- UK ‘offshore’ locations - combined
- People who do not have access to the internet at home

Quarterly reporting is limited to those sub-groups where a sufficiently robust volume of interviews have been conducted in that timeframe, taking the weighting of the data into account.

Quadrangle RED interviewed a sample of 1,228 adults aged 16+ in the UK, including 39 boost interviews with housebound adults and 18 boost interviews with adults from minority ethnic groups. Interviews were carried out across 99 different sampling points in the UK, face-to-face, in-home. A consistent quota of interviews was allocated to each month of interviewing in Q4 2013; with interviews conducted from 1st to 24th October, 1st to 24th November and 1st to 24th December 2013.

The data are initially weighted to correct the significant over-representation of nations, regions and areas to produce a geographically representative sample. They are then weighted by age, gender, social class, working status, region and urbanity to match the known population profile, with corrective weighting applied to address the additional interviews conducted with housebound adults and those from minority ethnic groups. Details of the sampling frame, research methodology, and weighting procedures are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.

Sample Design

Output Areas (OAs)¹ are used as the basic building block for sampling, using quota control by three key variables (age, gender and SEG) to control the sample interviewed within each sampling point.

First Stage

The OAs in the UK were grouped into sampling units (SUs), which were then stratified by region and rural/ urban:

- firstly, all the SUs were sorted by region,
- the SUs were then sorted within region by rural/ urban.

The sample extracted was checked for close correspondence to the UK population in terms of the Deprivation Index for Great Britain. Currently there is no deprivation index for Northern Ireland. Since region has been used as the first sorting variable, regional distribution of SUs will be more or less in proportion to the number of residential addresses in each region.

Second stage

The size of a SU is measured by the number of addresses it contains. The SUs were selected with a probability proportionate to size. This ensures that all households within an SU have an equal chance of being selected, regardless of the size of the SU in which a household is situated. The number of interviews per SU was 12.

Quotas

The following quotas were set (within each SU) to represent the population within that SU, which means the overall quotas across the UK will closely match the UK population. Quotas were set using 2001 Census data for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

- Age (16-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65-74, 75+)
- Socio-economic grade (SEG)
- Gender

Certain SUs were allocated additional quotas to achieve interviews with housebound adults and adults from minority ethnic groups.

¹The 1991 Census Data was classified using Enumeration Districts (ED's). The 2001 Census data has been classified using Output Areas (OAs). These areas are essentially the same, but with slightly different boundaries.

Fieldwork

Interviewers were provided with specific addresses. The average SU contains around 130 households in England and Wales and 160 households in Scotland, thus affording tight control over the addresses the interviewers called at. All interviews were conducted in the home, using pen and paper.

Reporting

The sample is drawn on the basis of households within SUs, while quotas are set on the basis of adult population profiles. The data is then weighted to the profile of UK adults and so the data is representative of adults aged 16+. Therefore, when reporting it is necessary to state that the data represents the percentage of adults rather than the percentage of households.

Weighting

The data are weighted to the national UK profile using target rim weights for age, gender, socio-economic group (SEG), working status and region. The following table shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile.

Figures are based on UK adults	% Weighted	% Unweighted
	Census profile	Interviews achieved
Gender – Male 16+	48%	48%
Gender – Female 16+	52%	52%
Age – 16-34	33%	27%
Age – 35-54	35%	35%
Age – 55+	33%	38%
SEG – AB	25%	20%
SEG – C1	29%	28%
SEG – C2	18%	22%
SEG – DE	27%	30%
Working Status – working	56%	49%
Working Status – not working	44%	51%
Region – London	16%	6%
Region – South East	14%	7%
Region – East of England	8%	6%
Region – South West	4%	4%
Region – East Midlands	5%	6%
Region – West Midlands	12%	6%
Region – Yorkshire & Humber	7%	7%
Region – North East	4%	6%
Region – North West	13%	7%
Region – Scotland	9%	16%
Region – Wales	5%	11%
Region – Northern Ireland	3%	15%

The percentages described above as ‘% Weighted’ are the figures from the 2001 Census data describing the UK adult profile and these figures were used to weight the data. The ‘% Unweighted’ column shows the actual percentage of interviews achieved in the Q4 2013 fieldwork.

Appendix A – Quotas

The following quotas were set at the outset of the Q4 2013 fieldwork:

Adults 16+	Quotas set	Interviews achieved Q4 2013: Weighted	Interviews achieved Q4 2013: Unweighted
Gender – Male	48%	48%	48%
Gender – Female	52%	52%	52%
Age – 16-24	13%	15%	12%
Age – 25-44	35%	37%	34%
Age – 45-64	32%	31%	32%
Age – 65+	20%	17%	22%
SEG – AB	22%	25%	20%
SEG – C1	30%	29%	28%
SEG – C2	22%	18%	22%
SEG – DE	27%	27%	30%

Appendix B - Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the “true” values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. 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 & actual samples for the analysis groups with an ESS of at least 200.

	Actual	ESS
Total	1,228	633
GENDER: MALE	589	301
GENDER: FEMALE	639	332
AGE: 16-34	334	177
AGE: 35-54	426	232
AGE: 55+	468	232
SEG – ABC1	582	315
SEG – C2DE	644	324
WORKING: YES	606	322
WORKING: NO	622	320

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

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels					
Effective sample size	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	±	±	±	±	±
633 (All respondents)	2.4%	3.2%	3.6%	3.9%	4.0%
301 (Male)	3.5%	4.6%	5.3%	5.6%	5.8%
232 (Aged 55+)	3.9%	5.3%	6.0%	6.4%	6.6%
315 (SEG ABC1)	3.4%	4.5%	5.2%	5.5%	5.6%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 633 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of ± 3.6 percentage points from the sample results.

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 have to 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:

Differences required for significant at or near these percentages					
Sample sizes being compared (sub-groups or trends)	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
	±	±	±	±	±
301 v 332 (male vs. female)	4.7%	6.2%	7.1%	7.6%	7.8%
315 v 324 (ABC1 vs. C2DE)	4.7%	6.2%	7.1%	7.6%	7.8%