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|  |  | **http://blogs.which.co.uk/mobile/files/2011/04/ofcom-logo-475x276.jpg** |

# Ofcom Business Postal Tracker: Annual technical report: Q1 to Q4 2019

## General survey description

The Business Postal Tracker Q1-Q4 2019 aimed to achieve 2000 individual interviews, representative of the profile of small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) with 0-249 employees across the UK, across a fieldwork period of 12 months. This sample size generated a robust dataset with margins of error of +/- 2-3%.

The Business Postal Tracker was carried out using a Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) methodology. The interview lasts 15-20 minutes and covers the following topic areas: volume and use of postal service, reported experience with Royal Mail and other providers, overall satisfaction, change in mail as a communication method.

Fieldwork in 2019 was conducted over four quarters, with the sample size for each quarter as follows:

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| *Table 1: Interviews by quarter* |
| **Quarter** | **Number of interviews** |
| **N** | **%** |
| **Q1/2019** | 493 | 25% |
| **Q2/2019** | 500 | 26% |
| **Q3/2019** | 462 | 24% |
| **Q4/2019** | 497 | 25% |
| **TOTAL** | 1952[[1]](#footnote-2) | 100% |

## Survey objectives

The research aims to measure the use of postal services amongst businesses in the UK.

Specific objectives are:

* To provide time-trend data that enables Ofcom to monitor these measures over time
* To provide robust data suitable for publication
* To provide data to inform Ofcom analysis, reports and decisions
* To provide analysis by population sub-groups

## Sampling approach and quotas

Considering the profile of businesses in the UK as defined by number of employees (business size), it is clear that this profile is heavily skewed towards smaller businesses. As table 2 indicates, if the final interview numbers were allowed to reflect this population it would not be possible to undertake robust analysis with organisations of 10 employees or more. For this reason, quotas were set in order to achieve a significant number of responses across all business sizes and weighting factors calculated to account for this sample design.

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| *Table 2: Profile of business in the UK* |
| **Business Size** | **N** | **%** | **Natural interview distribution** | **Quotas Set** | **Implied weight** |
| 0-9 | 4,633,585 | 96.0 | 1,920 | 1,505 | 1.28 |
| 10-49 | 167,670 | 3.5 | 70 | 330 | 0.21 |
| 50-249 | 26,905 | 0.6 | 12 | 165 | 0.07 |
| **Total** | **4,828,160** | **100** | **2,000** | **2,000** |  |

Using the quotas indicated above, quarterly targets were calculated, which were also broken down in order to achieve a final dataset which was also representative of UK businesses in terms of location.

Further controls were placed on the sample to ensure that a mixture of businesses from urban and rural locations are included in the final sample. Business postcode addresses selected for potential inclusion in the survey UK cities and towns were classified into urban and rural strata based on the classifications shown in table 3 below. The categories have been devised by the survey sample and statistics provider *UK Geographics*. Population data from UK Census 2001 were overlaid onto the *UK Geographics* categories to provide population distribution estimates by postcode. For the purposes of the Business Postal Tracker, urban regions were considered to be those in categories A-E, while rural locations were defined by categories F-G.

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| *Table 3: ONS urbanity definitions* |
| **Category** | **Description** | **Population** | **Incidence (% 16+)** |
| A | Large City | 500,000+ | 14.71 |
| B | Smaller city or large town | 100,000 – 500,000 | 19.81 |
| C | Medium town | 15,000 – 100,000 | 32.12 |
| D | Small town (within 10 miles of A,B or C) | 2,000 – 15,000 | 17.38 |
| E | Small town (more than 10 miles of A,B or C) | 2,000 – 15,000 | 1.85 |
| F | Rural area (within 10 miles of A,B or C) | 500 – 2,000 | 11.70 |
| G | Rural area (more than 10 miles from A, B or C) | 500 – 2,000 | 2.42 |

Urbanity was taken into account in the selection of the final sample and used to set quotas on location to ensure a spread of urban and rural locations were interviewed[[2]](#footnote-3). Final yearly targets, defined therefore by business size and location, are described in table 4 below.

In order to achieve the required number of final interviews sample was provided by an approved supplier in a minimum 10-to-1 ratio.

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| *Table 4: Yearly quota targets* |
| **Region** | **Business size (number of employees)** | **Total** |
| **0 to 9** | **10 - 49** | **50 - 249** |
| East of England | 100 | 20 | 10 | 130 |
| East Midlands | 70 | 10 | 5 | 85 |
| Greater London | 190 | 40 | 20 | 250 |
| North East | 35 | 10 | 5 | 50 |
| North West | 105 | 20 | 10 | 135 |
| South East | 180 | 40 | 20 | 240 |
| South West | 110 | 20 | 10 | 140 |
| West Midlands | 80 | 20 | 10 | 110 |
| Yorkshire & The Humber | 80 | 20 | 10 | 110 |
| Scotland | 185 | 45 | 20 | 250 |
| Wales | 190 | 40 | 20 | 250 |
| Northern Ireland | 180 | 45 | 25 | 250 |
| **TOTAL:** | 1,505 | 330 | 165 | 2,000 |

## Selection of respondents and fieldwork procedure

As the content of the questionnaire asks respondents to estimate the volumes of post mailed and the value of contracts with postal service providers, a screening process was undertaken at the start of interviews to ensure that respondents could provide valid responses.

After dialling the telephone number for the business indicated on the sample, interviewers were directed to ask those answering if they were able to answer questions about their organisation’s mailing processes, volumes for the postal items sent from the UK from sites for which the business is responsible and spend on mail services. If the initial contact indicated that they were not able to do this, they were asked to pass the call over to someone who was able to answer the questions.

During fieldwork interviews were carried out in strict accordance with the guidelines given to interviewers and according to the Market Research Society (MRS) codes and guidelines. During fieldwork quality control was performed in accordance with MRS guidelines. Monitoring the quality of interviews included the witnessing by a supervisor of at least 15% of each of the interviewers’ work.

## Profile of achieved sample

At the completion of fieldwork, 1952 individual interviews were achieved. These are broken down by region and business size in table 5.

As is evident in table 5, the unweighted sample achieved this year under-represents smaller businesses and over-represents larger businesses. In addition, while quotas were set in line with table 4, some quotas were relaxed to ensure that the overall target number of interviews could be achieved. Weighting factors described below were calculated at the data-processing stage in order to make adjustments to the dataset.

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| *Table 5: Achieved unweighted sample by region and business size* |
| **Region** | **N** | **Region - aggregated** | **Business size** | **Total** |
| **0-9** | **10+** |
| **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| East of England | 115 | Midlands | 252 | 12.9 | 91 | 4.7 | 343 | 17.6 |
| East Midlands | 102 |
| West Midlands | 126 |
| Greater London | 209 | South | 466 | 23.9 | 149 | 7.6 | 615 | 31.5 |
| South East | 240 |
| South West | 166 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 84 | North | 214 | 10.9 | 72 | 3.7 | 286 | 14.7 |
| North East | 55 |
| North West | 147 |
| Scotland | 228 | Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland | 524 | 26.8 | 184 | 9.4 | 708 | 36.3 |
| Wales | 237 |
| Northern Ireland | 243 |
| **Total** | **1952** |  | 1456 | 75 | 496 | 25 | 1952 | 100 |

The questionnaire used during interviews with businesses also contained some profiling information in order to check that the achieved sample contained a spread of different types of businesses and to ensure that no other factors were influencing results unduly. No firm quotas were set on these factors however.

Interviews were achieved across a range of industry (as indicated in the chart below) and in terms of the personnel with whom interviews were undertaken, the majority were divided between those working in senior management/owners and office administration/management. The majority of interviews (89%) were undertaken at head offices and 96% of those interviewed have an internet connection in the office in which they are based.

Base: All respondents (1952)

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## Sample efficiency and weighting

At the stage of data processing weights were applied to each quarter’s data independently in order that final aggregated data is representative of the population of UK businesses, whilst allowing for quarterly analysis. The profile of businesses in the UK against that of the achieved sample and the associated weighting factors are presented in the table below.

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| *Table 6: Profile of businesses for weighting* |
| **Sample regions** | **Population Profile** | **Achieved Sample** | **Weighting factor** |
| **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| **0-9 employees** |
| North | 923535 | 19 | 214 | 11 | 1.73 |
| Midlands | 1121665 | 23 | 252 | 13 | 1.77 |
| South | 1970735 | 41 | 466 | 24 | 1.71 |
| Wales, Scotland, N Ireland | 617650 | 13 | 524 | 27 | 0.48 |
| **TOTAL:** | **4633585** | **96** | **1456** | **75** |   |
| **10+ employees** |
| North | 44005 | 1 | 72 | 4 | 0.25 |
| Midlands | 50700 | 1 | 91 | 5 | 0.2 |
| South | 75220 | 2 | 149 | 8 | 0.25 |
| Wales, Scotland, N Ireland | 30535 | 1 | 184 | 9 | 0.11 |
| **TOTAL:** | **200460** | **4** | **496** | **25** |  |
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In the event, the average weight which has been applied to each quarter’s data is, as might be expected ‘1’. The modal weight by quarter (Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 2019) is 0.524/0.468/0.637/1.227 respectively, and the weights range from 0.072 for larger businesses to 2.56 for those that are smaller. The design effect for these weights is 1.76/1.77/1.98/1.17 respectively, giving an effective base of 284/283/253/429 which provides quarterly results accurate to +/- 6%.

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| *Table 7: Weighting details* |
| **Quarter** | **Modal Weight** | **Lowest Weight** | **Highest Weight** | **Design Effect** | **Effective Base** | **Results Accuracy** |
| Q1/2019 | 0.524 | 0.082 | 2.212 | 1.76 | 284 | +/- 6% |
| Q2/2019 | 0.468 | 0.093 | 2.212 | 1.77 | 283 | +/- 6% |
| Q3/2019 | 0.637 | 0.072 | 2.56 | 1.98 | 253 | +/- 6% |
| Q4/2019[[3]](#footnote-4) | 1.227 | 0.426 | 1.36 | 1.17 | 429 | +/- 5% |

1. 1,952 interviews achieved out of a possible 2,000. As evident in table 1, not all the quarters achieved their target of 500, which has been accounted for in the weighting. This may be due to a steady increase in SMEs no longer using postal services as seen by the decline in the types of post sent; this trend is more apparent amongst smaller businesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Soft targets were set on urbanity to allow a robust comparison, 75% urban and 25% rural. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. To account for shortages in 0-9 employees in previous quarters, Q4 2019 focused solely on 0-9 businesses, which resulted in special weighting. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)