

Ofcom Technology Tracker 2026 - Technical Report

This report details the methodology and technical specification for the 2026 Technology Tracker study, which has been run by Ipsos on behalf of Ofcom. The Technology Tracker has been running for over 20 years, and for the 2026 survey the main objective of the study remains consistent with the previous years: to track the access and usage habits of the UK population (aged 16+) relating to a wide range of devices and communications services.

1.1 Approach

The 2026 study used 100% face-to-face interviewing (a change from 2025, see Sample Design below). Participants were interviewed on the doorstep with the interviewer recording answers via an interactive version of the survey using a tablet device.

In total Ipsos interviewed 4,033 people aged 16+ across the United Kingdom between March 6th and June 30th 2026. Interviews were carried out across 400 primary sampling units (PSUs), set up based on census output areas (OAs). In Scotland, the census OAs are significantly smaller than in the rest of the UK, so bespoke PSUs were created made up of multiple OAs (usually 2 OAs per PSU). The size of these units (in terms of household counts) is more in line with the size of census output areas in the other nations. Ten interviews were undertaken for each PSU, and each interview took approximately 25 minutes.

In England, representative quotas were set for former government office region (GOR), with North East England (the region with the smallest population) boosted to allow for analysis. In each of the devolved nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) the sample was boosted to deliver 250 rural (including Highlands and Islands) and 250 urban participants in each nation. A boosted quota was also set for 16-17s. The entire sample was analysed to ensure it corresponded closely with the

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population in each nation on the Deprivation Index¹. Within each nation, quotas were also applied so that each was representative by age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG).

These regional quotas were then applied down to the level of each PSU to provide 400 representative snapshots of the UK population. After fieldwork, weights were applied to data so that the data is representative of the UK population by age, gender, broad SEG bands, working status and region. The participant's SEG was collected by asking them a question about the household's chief income earner's occupation.

Further details of the sampling frame, research methodology, weighting procedures and reporting are outlined in the following pages.

There were three key aspects of the survey which changed in 2026:

- Data collection changed from a mixed methodology (c.80% face-to-face and c.20% push-to web) to a single methodology (100% face-to-face).
- 14 questions were removed from the survey and replaced with new questions (see Appendix for more information).
- The question ordering was revised, with sections related to landline and mobile moved ahead of the section related to the internet.

Due to these changes, data users should exercise caution when historical comparisons with previous Technology Tracker survey data.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025>
<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-index-multiple-deprivation-2025-series>
<https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/news/new-ni-multiple-deprivation-measures-2017-lookup-tool>

1.2 Sample design

The 2026 fieldwork was conducted through a face-to-face methodology. The 2026 approach is different from the methodologies of 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025, which utilised a hybrid sample.

Under this hybrid approach in 2025, the face-to-face interviews accounted for 79% of the sample, with 19% of the sample collected through a push-to-web sample (and 19 interviews collected via a postal survey approach). This hybrid methodology was originally a mitigation strategy to deal with COVID-related complications with face-to-face data collection and had been left unchanged for the previous four years to keep the methodology consistent. In 2026 we reverted to a single methodology to reduce design effects and chose a face-to-face approach as this delivers the best representation of the offline population. This population is of particular importance, as part of the purpose of this tracker is to measure internet access at home and elsewhere.

Key measures such as home internet access and smartphone take-up were reviewed throughout fieldwork to assess the impact of methodological change on the data and the figures were consistent with expectations, providing confidence that the changes had not unduly affected the results.

The full sample consisted of 4,033 participants and was collected via a stratified random sampling method. This strategy was chosen to ensure that sample is representative of UK adults in terms of demographics, geographic spread and areas of deprivation.

1.2.1 Setting up sampling units

The target sample of 4,000 was split across 400 sampling units, giving a target of 10 interviews in each sampling unit. Census Output Areas (OAs) were used as the basic building block for sampling. In Scotland, the census OAs are significantly smaller than in the rest of the UK, so bespoke sampling units were created, consisting (mainly) of two census OAs. All OAs that were combined in this way were neighbouring.

These were then stratified by region, then within region along with the Bluewave Geographics' multipoint "Locale" classification for urbanity. Each PSU was assigned a quota specific to the demographic profile of their area, ensuring a sample which is demographically representative of each PSU by three key variables (age, gender, socio-economic grade).

A boosted sample of 500 in each of the devolved nations (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), meant that a higher proportion of the sampling units was placed in each of these regions. The remainder were split across England to be representative of former GOR by population size. Please see the table below for the breakdown of sampling units per region.

Region (former GOR)	Sampling units	Percentage of sampling units	Average number of people per sampling unit
East Midlands	21	5%	274
East of England	28	7%	290
London	38	10%	289
North East	15	4%	225
North West	32	8%	265
South East	41	10%	279
South West	25	6%	281
West Midlands	26	7%	360
Yorkshire and The Humber	24	6%	287
Scotland	50	13%	451
Northern Ireland	50	13%	452

Wales	50	13%	260
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Once the sample was extracted and sorted, it was checked for close correspondence to the UK population by deprivation - using indices of multiple deprivation (IMD).

Because of the differing profile of each region, sampling units were not created to be uniform in size, but instead a PSU is measured by the number of addresses it contains. The PSUs were selected with a probability proportionate to size. This was done by grouping the SUs into size bands, then those with a larger population were assigned a higher probability of being selected, those with a smaller population were made less likely to be selected. This ensures that all households within a PSU have an equal chance of being selected, regardless of the size of the PSU in which a household is situated. Each address selected within an PSU was assigned an ID.

In addition to the 400 PSUs, the same number of back-up units with identical demographic profiles were created so that interviewers had additional addresses to recruit from, should they fail to hit their quotas in the primary PSU.

1.2.2 Quotas

As mentioned in the previous section, the sample was designed to be representative of the UK population (with a boost in NE England and the devolved nations).

This was built from the foundations of the sample upwards. Each PSU was set individual quotas by age (16-17, 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+), gender (man, woman), and socio-economic grade (AB, C1, C2, DE).

Quotas for fieldwork were set using the 2021 Census as the primary source in creating age, gender and social grade targets. The social grade estimates for each OA in Scotland and Northern Ireland are from the 2011 census, with each 2021 OA being assigned to a 2011 OA on a best-fit basis.

The below table shows the quotas set for this project at a UK-wide level.

Demographic	Quota set	Interviews achieved - unweighted	Weighted sample
Gender – Man	49%	50%*	48%
Gender – Woman	51%	49%*	52%
Age – 16-17	4%	2%	2%
Age – 18-24	10%	8%	9%
Age – 25-44	30%	31%	36%
Age – 45-64	32%	32%	30%
Age – 65-74	13%	14%	12%
Age – 75+	11%	14%	10%
SEG – AB	21%	27%	30%
SEG – C1	32%	23%	26%
SEG – C2	22%	17%	15%
SEG - DE	25%	33%	28%

NB Some totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

*There were under 1% non-binary or "prefer not to say".

This design was selected so that the final sample is balanced and representative of the UK population as a whole.

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1.3 Fieldwork

Fieldwork took place between March 6th and June 30th 2026. On average a PSU contained 179 addresses. Only one interview could be conducted per address. If more than one person in the household met the quota a participant was selected using the birthday method (i.e. the person who will be the next to have a birthday).

All interviews were conducted via CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing), administered face-to-face.

Before fieldwork began the questionnaire underwent extensive cognitive testing and piloting to ensure participant comprehension and engagement.

Further details of the fieldwork process are explained below.

1.3.2 CAPI interviewing

Interviewers were assigned to each PSU, and within this unit they were asked to achieve interviews which reflected the PSU-level quotas based on age, gender and SEG.

The interviewers were instructed to conduct the interview in person on the doorstep, or in-home if the participant preferred, with the interviewer using a tablet device to enter participants' answers into the CAPI script with the aid of showcards for more complex questions.

1.3.3 Participant incentivisation

Participants were offered a £5 shopping voucher for completing the interview.

1.3.4 Welsh language translation

If a research participant in Wales requests to be interviewed in Welsh, the questionnaire is translated and the participant visited by an interviewer fluent in Welsh. However, as per the previous three years, there were no requests for Welsh language options as part of the fieldwork for this project.

1.4 Weighting

The survey data used for this report is weighted to ensure the data is representative of the UK population aged 16+.

Rim weighting was applied to gender, SEG, working status and region. Age weights were applied within nation. Due to challenges in achieving fieldwork quotas for SEG and younger age groups in the nations, we combined SEG groups (moving from AB, C1, C2 and DE to ABC1 and C2DE) and the age was weighted within nation instead of at the UK level as previously.

A full unweighted and weighted breakdown of the final sample can be seen in the tables below.

Demographic	Interviews achieved - unweighted	Weighted sample
Gender – Man*	50%	48%
Gender – Woman*	49%	52%
SEG – ABC1	50%	57%
SEG – C2DE	50%	43%
Working status – working	51%	59%
Working status – not working	48%	40%
Region – London	10%	13%
Region – South East	11%	14%
Region – South West	6%	9%
Region – East of England	7%	9%
Region – West Midlands	6%	9%
Region – East Midlands	5%	7%

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Region – Yorkshire & Humber	5%	8%
Region – North East	4%	4%
Region – North West	8%	11%
Region – Scotland	12%	8%
Region – Wales	12%	5%
Region – Northern Ireland	12%	3%

NB Some totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

*There were under 1% non-binary or “prefer not to say”.

This table shows the unweighted and weighted breakdown of the sample within each individual nation.

Demographic	Interviews achieved - unweighted	Weighted sample
England - 16-34	25%	30%
England - 35-54	31%	32%
England - 55-64	16%	15%
England - 65-74	14%	12%
England - 75+	15%	10%
Scotland - 16-34	20%	28%
Scotland - 35-54	31%	31%
Scotland - 55-64	18%	17%
Scotland - 65-74	17%	13%

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Scotland - 75+	13%	11%
Wales - 16-34	16%	27%
Wales - 35-54	27%	29%
Wales - 55-64	21%	17%
Wales - 65-74	20%	15%
Wales- 75+	17%	12%
Northern Ireland - 16-34	27%	29%
Northern Ireland - 35-54	36%	33%
Northern Ireland - 55-64	17%	16%
Northern Ireland - 65-74	12%	12%
Northern Ireland - 75+	9%	10%

NB Some totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

*There were under 1% non-binary or "prefer not to say".

The percentages described above as "Weighted" are the targets used to weight the data. The figures for age, gender, working status and location are taken from the 2021 Census². The "unweighted" column shows the actual percentage of interviews achieved in the March to June 2026 fieldwork.

To ensure an adequate sample size for sub-group analysis in North East England and each of the devolved nations, participants in these regions were purposefully

² Figures for weighting are calculated at a UK-wide level, rather than at PSU level as is done when designing the quotas.

oversampled. However, weighting ensures that the total sample is not skewed as the proportion of those in each UK nation or region is adjusted to be representative.³

1.5 Reporting

Throughout the data tables, significant differences are signified between sub-groups and the total result. Differences to the total are signified by a z below the percentage figure, and differences to other groups within the crossbreak set (e.g. region) are signified by other letters below the percentage figure – these letters applied to each column appear below the crossbreak name. Differences are considered to be significant at the 95% confidence level, meaning that there is only a 5% possibility that the difference occurred by chance rather than by being a real difference. This is a commonly accepted level of confidence.

The data used in this report are rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage. It is for this reason that, on occasion, tables or charts may add up to 99% or 101%. Results that do differ in this way should not have a sum-total deviance that is larger than around 1% to 2%.

In the tables and charts contained in this report, a * symbol denotes a proportion that is less than 0.5%, but greater than zero.

Because of the nature of the sample construction, quotas, and weighting used, when reporting it is necessary to state that the data represents the percentage of people aged 16+ rather than the percentage of households.

Within each wave of research, we ask a set of core questions relating to these topic areas: take-up and use of landline, mobile phone, internet, television, radio, devices, and online activities. Other questions asked may vary wave on wave.

One question was impacted by a routing error. This has meant that 46 of the 490 who were supposed to answer QT8 did not do so.⁴ The question was intended to be routed to all participants who live in Northern Ireland and have a working TV set in their home. The error was spotted during data checks after the initial fieldwork

³ 151 participants were interviewed in North East England and 500 participants were interviewed in Scotland, 501 in Wales, and 501 in Northern Ireland, but the weighted base is 163, 321, 204, and 120 respectively.

⁴ QT8 How frequently do you watch each of the following channels? (RTE, RTÉ 2, Virgin Media One, TG4)? See *questionnaire for full answer codes*.

launch and several participants were subsequently recontacted via telephone to collect their response, this meant that of the original 73 who were not asked this question, 27 were recovered.

For those who live in Northern Ireland and have a working TV set in their home 444 (91% of those qualifying for the question) were still asked the question. However, 46 weren't reached as part of the recontacting exercise.

Appendix

Guide to statistical reliability

Commented [TB1]: Put on a new line

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 rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results. The following table compares effective sample size and unweighted sample for some of the main analysis groups.

Demographic	Unweighted base	Weighted base	Effective sample size
Gender – Man	2036	1935	1608
Gender – Woman	1991	2092	1546
Age – 16-24	368	442	308
Age – 25-44	1243	1449	991
Age – 45-64	1261	1225	984
Age – 65+	1161	918	946
SEG – ABC1	2014	2294	1613
SEG – C2DE	2019	1739	1590
Working status – working	2058	2393	1638
Working status – not working	1955	1620	1592

Region – London	405	527	384
Region – South East	434	565	412
Region – South West	241	363	229
Region – East of England	279	362	264
Region – West Midlands	260	362	247
Region – East Midlands	220	283	208
Region – Yorkshire & Humber	221	323	207
Region – North East	151	163	142
Region – North West	320	441	303
Region – Scotland	500	321	467
Region – Wales	501	204	424
Region – Northern Ireland	501	120	487

The table below illustrates the survey results margins of error 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%
Total – 3149	1.0%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%
Woman – 1546	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%
SEG:C2 – 517	2.6%	3.4%	3.9%	4.2%	4.3%

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Region: North East – 142	4.9%	6.6%	7.5%	8.1%	8.2%
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For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 3,149 give a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' value will fall within the range of +/- 1.6 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 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 size	Approximate results				
	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Man – 1608 vs. Woman – 1546	2.1%	2.8%	3.2%	3.4%	3.5%
London – 384 vs. Scotland – 467	4.1%	5.4%	6.2%	6.6%	6.8%

Questions removed from the Technology Tacker since 2025

QZ7A. Which of the following age categories do the children in your household come under?

QS5. Where in your home do you have a smart speaker or smart display?

QM5. Can you access a 4G or 5G service on your smartphone?

QL5. Do you have a landline phone connection or service in your home that you pay for but that you don't use to make or receive landline phone calls?

QM3. Which of the following statements best describes how you acquired your main mobile phone?

QM13A. You said you had both a physical SIM and an eSIM. What do you use your eSIM for?

QM13B. And what do you use your physical SIM for?

QE5. How often do you personally use the internet nowadays either at home or elsewhere?

QE3A. How often does your home fixed broadband speed / home internet connection speed meet the needs of your household?

QE13. Do you or anyone in your household use a fixed wireless internet connection at home – (also known as Wi-Fi)?

QE20. Which – if any – of the following digital payment methods have you used?

QE22. Which of the following [assistive technologies] – if any – do you use?

QR5. Before today, which, if any, of these ways of listening to digital radio were you aware of?

QT2. Which of the following best describes the main TV set in your home?

Questions added to the Technology Tacker since 2025

QM15. In the past three months, have you received any text messages from organisations or businesses?

QL6. If you made a landline call to another UK landline number, would you typically be charged per minute by your landline provider or do you have a call allowance (i.e. you would not be charged per minute)?

QE2. Is anyone else who lives with you in your home able to access the internet in your home?

QE23. Which of these types of communications did you use each of these [online communications services] for?

QE24. In the past three months, through which of these [online] communications services have you received any correspondence from organisations or businesses?

QE25. Which of the following web browsers have you personally used in the past three months?

QX1. Which of the following interactions have you had with AI (artificial intelligence) services in the past 12 months?

QX2. Which of the following AI tools have you used in the past 12 months?

QX3. Which of the following types of organisations or businesses have used a chatbot to interact with you?

QX4. In the past 12 months, what have you used the generative AI tool(s) or chatbot(s) for?

QX5. Thinking about when you used a generative AI tool or chatbot in the past 12 months to make product or service comparisons, make a complaint or resolve an issue, was this in regard to your telecoms services (i.e. broadband, mobile, landline) or Pay TV?

QX6. Thinking about the last time you used a generative AI tool or chatbot, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

QT3. Were you responsible for choosing the provider for each of these services?

QP1. Which of the following [items of post] have you sent in the last 3 months?