

Ofcom News Consumption Technical Report for Adults Combined online & CAPI 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, initially using a face to face omnibus methodology.

Under the new Royal Charter and Agreement, regulation of the BBC passed from the BBC Trust to Ofcom. One of Ofcom's central responsibilities is 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, STRAT7 Jigsaw conducted a mixed methodology approach, combining online and face to face interviews. However, during the next two years of research, they were unable to do this consistently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since online methodologies tend to underrepresent low/non internet users, STRAT7 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, STRAT7 Jigsaw reverted back to the preferred methodology of conducting online and face to face interviews, to be consistent with previous years. This mixed methodology has now been used for the past three years, with the latest fieldwork running from 5th November – 6th December 2024 and 3rd – 28th March 2025. NB: *These two interviewing periods have remained broadly consistent over the last seven years to ensure comparability.*

Within the sample frame, the nations have been over-represented to produce robust sample sizes for analysis. The data has been weighted to correct for this over-representation and weights have been applied to match known population profiles. A final weight step has then been taken to calibrate between the face to face and online methodologies.

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

B. Sample Design

Face to Face Interviewing

STRAT7 Jigsaw 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).

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 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.

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)

Online Interviewing

STRAT7 Jigsaw 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

At the analysis stage, data from 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 CAPI 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	Demographic weight
Nation	England	50%	84%
	Scotland	16%	8%
	Wales	16%	5%
	Northern Ireland	17%	3%
Gender	Men	47%	49%
	Women	53%	51%
Age	16-24	12%	13%
	25-39	23%	25%
	40-54	26%	25%
	55-74	28%	27%
	75+	11%	10%
SEG	AB	21%	22%
	C1	30%	30%
	C2	22%	22%
	DE	26%	26%

The online data was 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	Demographic weight
Nation	North East	3%	4%
	North West	8%	11%
	Yorkshire & the Humber	4%	8%
	East Midlands	6%	7%
	West Midlands	7%	9%
	East of England	6%	9%
	London	16%	14%
	South East	9%	14%
	South West	5%	9%
	Scotland	13%	8%
	Wales	13%	5%
	Northern Ireland	10%	3%
Gender	Men	52%	49%
	Women	48%	50%
Age	16-24	13%	14%
	25-34	18%	18%
	35-44	17%	17%
	45-54	17%	18%
	55-64	11%	16%
	65-74	14%	11%
	75+	9%	6%
Working Status	Employed	64%	66%
	Unemployed	36%	34%

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Unweighted	Demographic weight
Ethnicity	White	82%	88%
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	2%	1%
	Indian	6%	2%
	Pakistani	1%	2%
	Bangladeshi	0%	1%
	Chinese	5%	1%
	Other Asian background	1%	1%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2%	3%
	Other ethnic group	1%	2%

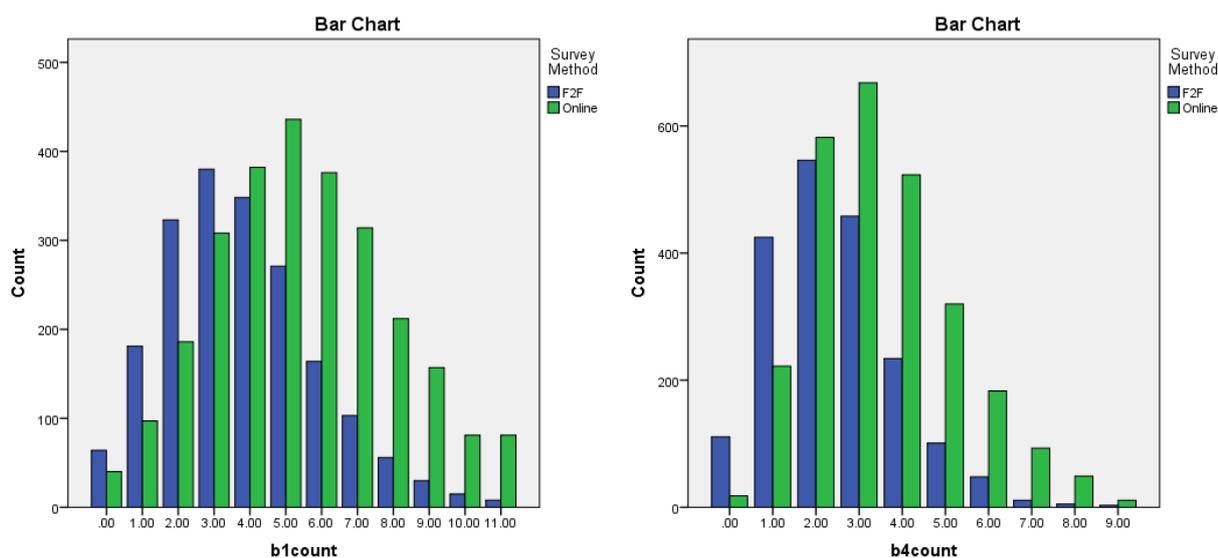
Prior to adding the methodological weight, the maximum and minimum individual respondent weights were 4.99 and 0.015 respectively.

C.2. Methodological weight

A second stage of weighting was used to correct for differences between the face to face and online methodologies and to realign the distribution of the face to face and online interviews.

As in previous surveys, 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. These weights remain consistent with previous years of this study.

The final weighted sample profile for the CAPI is illustrated below:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Demographic weight	Demographic + Methodological weight (Final Weight)
Nation	England	84%	84%
	Scotland	8%	8%
	Wales	5%	5%
	Northern Ireland	3%	3%
Gender	Men	49%	49%
	Women	51%	51%
Age	16-24	13%	13%
	25-39	25%	25%
	40-54	25%	26%
	55-74	27%	27%
	75+	10%	9%
SEG	AB	22%	26%
	C1	30%	34%
	C2	22%	19%
	DE	26%	20%

The final weighted sample profile for the online is illustrated below:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Demographic weight	Demographic + Methodological weight (Final Weight)
Nation	North East	4%	4%
	North West	11%	11%
	Yorkshire & the Humber	8%	9%
	East Midlands	7%	7%
	West Midlands	9%	8%
	East of England	9%	10%
	London	14%	13%
	South East	14%	14%
	South West	9%	9%
	Scotland	8%	8%
	Wales	5%	5%
	Northern Ireland	3%	3%
Gender	Men	49%	48%
	Women	50%	52%
Age	16-24	14%	14%
	25-34	18%	17%
	35-44	17%	16%
	45-54	18%	18%
	55-64	16%	17%
	65-74	11%	12%
	75+	6%	7%
Working Status	Employed	66%	62%
	Unemployed	34%	38%

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Demographic weight	Demographic + Methodological weight (Final Weight)
Ethnicity	White	88%	89%
	Mixed/multiple ethnic background	1%	1%
	Indian	2%	2%
	Pakistani	2%	1%
	Bangladeshi	1%	1%
	Chinese	1%	1%
	Other Asian background	1%	1%
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	3%	3%
	Other ethnic group	2%	1%

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 combined online and CATI data:

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Nation	England	2,636	1,844
	Scotland	663	519
	Wales	664	399
	Northern Ireland	610	478
Gender	Men	2,258	1,161
	Women	2,304	1,294

Weighting Category	Sub-group	Actual interviews achieved	Effective sample size (ESS)
Age	16-24	585	320
	25-34	770	405
	35-44	787	448
	45-54	741	399
	55-64	587	319
	65-74	628	340
	75+	472	284
SEG	AB	1,204	634
	C1	1,403	734
	C2	865	468
	DE	1,143	626

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% ±
2,458 (Total)	1.19%	1.58%	1.81%	1.94%	1.98%
1,161 (Men)	1.73%	2.30%	2.64%	2.82%	2.88%
734 (C1)	2.17%	2.89%	3.32%	3.54%	3.62%
478 (NI)	2.69%	3.59%	4.11%	4.39%	4.48%
405 (25-34)	2.92%	3.90%	4.46%	4.77%	4.87%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 2,458 gives a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within the range of +/- 1.81 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 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:

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,161 vs 1,294 Men vs women	2.52%	3.27%	3.70%	3.92%	3.96%
734 vs 468 C1 vs C2	3.69%	4.80%	5.42%	5.73%	5.80%

For example, comparing a score of 11% for Males and 14% for Females, the scores will need to be at least 2.52% different (using the table) to indicate a significant difference.