



# News consumption in the UK 2015

## Executive summary

Research Document

Publication date: 16 December 2015



## About this document

This executive summary and accompanying slide pack report provides key findings from Ofcom's 2015 research into news consumption across television, radio, print and online. The slidepack can be found here: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/tv-radio/news-media/>

The aim of this report is to inform an understanding of news consumption across the UK, and within each UK nation. The findings are published as part of our range of market research publications that examine people's consumption of, and attitudes towards, different types of content on different platforms.

The report provides data on various news consumption measures, including the sources and platforms used, the use of local news, the perceived importance of different outlets for news, attitudes to individual news sources, the reasons people follow news, and news consumption in the nations. It also compares this year's news consumption findings with those from the past two years, where possible.

The report also provides 'share of references' data. This is a cross-media measure used by Ofcom to compare the share of individual news sources, consumed across all platforms.

# Contents

Section		Page
1	Introduction	1
2	News consumption in the UK	2
3	Attitudes towards news, and reasons for following news	10
4	News consumption in the nations	13
5	Methodology	19



## Section 1

# Introduction

This executive summary provides the key findings from Ofcom's 2015 research into news consumption across the four main platforms: television, radio, print and online. Further detailed information is available in the chart pack report which accompanies the document, available at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/tv-radio/news-media/>.

This research is published as part of our market research range of publications, which examine the consumption of content, and attitudes towards that content, on different platforms. The aim of the report is to inform understanding of news consumption across the UK, and within each nation.

The report details various findings relating to the consumption of news: the sources and platforms used, the perceived importance of different outlets for news, attitudes to individual news sources, reasons to follow news, the use of local news, and news consumption in the nations. It provides details of our cross-platform news consumption metric: 'share of references'. The report also compares this year's findings related to news consumption with those from the past two years, where possible.

The report uses a variety of data sources. The primary source is a news survey commissioned by Ofcom and conducted by Kantar Media in September/October 2015, comprising a face-to-face omnibus survey of 2921 people across the UK. This includes boosts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure a minimum sample size of 350 in each devolved nation. This is the default source unless otherwise specified. Other sources include:

- metrics on television viewing from BARB;
- newspaper readership figures from the National Readership Survey; and
- online consumption metrics from UKOM/comScore.

Any direct comparisons between the quantitative research we have commissioned and the data from the industry measurement systems should be made with caution because of:

- methodological differences, e.g. claimed or measured consumption, face-to-face surveys or diary-based methods, and differing sample sizes and data collection periods;
- time period differences e.g. 'nowadays' is used in the Kantar Media survey, compared to real-time recorded consumption (BARB) or recency (average issue readership) for newspapers; and
- differing definitions of news, e.g. set by the provider (as in BARB) or self-defined by the people we questioned.

## Section 2

# News consumption in the UK

## 2.1 Platforms used for news ‘nowadays’

### Two-thirds of adults say they use TV for news, compared to three-quarters in 2014

Nine in ten adults in the UK (89%) say that they follow news<sup>1</sup> (on any platform) (figure 1<sup>2</sup>).

Television is by far the most-used platform for news, with 67% of UK adults saying they use TV as a source of news. However, there has been an eight percentage point decrease since 2014 (75%), following a three percentage point decrease between 2013 (78%) and 2014<sup>3</sup>.

The number of people who use the internet or apps for news has remained the same since 2014, with just over four in ten (41%) doing so, compared to just under a third in 2013 (32%). Newspapers are used by three in ten (31%), which represents a decrease of nine percentage points since 2014 and 2013 (when 40% of UK adults said they used newspapers for news). There has also been a decrease in those that say they use radio as a source of news (from 36% in 2014 to 32% in 2015).

One in ten (10%) of adults say they don’t follow news, compared to 5% in 2014 and 7% in 2013 (figure 1.2).

### Those aged 55+ are more likely than those aged 16-24 to use TV, newspapers and radio for news consumption, while the opposite is true for the internet/ apps

Around half (51%) of people aged 16-24 use TV for news, compared to 86% of those aged 55+. A similar pattern can be seen for consumption of news through newspapers (21% of 16-24s vs. 44% aged 55+) and through radio (23% vs. 37%). Conversely, consumption of news online through any device is considerably higher for those aged 16-24 (59%) than for over-55s (23%) (figure 1.3).

Men are more likely than women to use any of the four main platforms for news (TV, internet, newspapers and radio). Seven in ten (69%) men use TV for news, compared to 65% of women. The same is true for the internet (45% vs. 37%), newspapers (34% vs. 27%) and radio (35% vs. 29%).

People in the AB socio-economic group are more likely than those in the DE socio-economic group to consume news on any of the four main platforms: TV (71% vs 67%), the internet (50% vs. 29%), newspapers (38% vs. 26%) and radio (46% vs. 23%).

Of the four main platforms, three in ten (31%) respondents use only one platform for news, with just under two in ten (19%) using only the TV alone, 11% using only the internet, 3%

---

<sup>1</sup> The definition of news, used for questions about consumption in the news survey, was: “By ‘news’ I mean news and current affairs in your region (England)/in Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland (in respective nations), across the UK and around the world”.

<sup>2</sup> Figure references relate to the charts that can be found in the News Report slidepack publication at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/tv-radio/news-media/>

<sup>3</sup> The extent of change this year might have been affected by a range of factors including seasonality, the news stories current at the time of the fieldwork, or a modification to the introduction of the questionnaire, among other things.

using radio alone, and 2% using only newspapers (figures 1.4 and 1.5). The use of TV alone is more pronounced among over-55s (26%) and those in the DE socio-economic group (28%) than among 16-24s (13%) and those in the AB socio-economic group (14%). One in five (20%) people aged 16-24 report that they only use the internet for news, compared to just 2% of those aged 55+.

## 2.2 Multiple and single sourcing of news

### The average number of sources that people use for news has remained consistent year on year

Looking within each platform at the different sources of news people might use, the number of people who use just one source remained at a similar level to 2014; 44% of TV users said they used just one source (42% in 2014) compared with 43% of internet users (45% in 2014), 34% for newspapers (35% in 2014) and 60% for radio (62% in 2014) (figure 2.1).

Given that fewer people say they are following news in 2015 than in 2014, the number of sources used, across all four main platforms, is lower than last year: 3.5 compared to 3.8 in 2014 and 3.7 in 2013. But the average number of news sources used within each platform has remained stable: TV (2.0 sources in both 2014 and 2015) newspapers (1.9 in both 2014 and 2015), radio (1.5 vs. 1.4 in 2014) and internet (2.1 vs. 2.0 in 2014) (figure 2.3).

At the wholesale level<sup>4</sup>, the majority of those who consume news use no more than three providers (77%), unchanged since 2014; 32% of them use only one provider (figure 2.4). The figures are very similar on a retail level; 71% of those who consume news use no more than three providers and 30% use only one provider (figure 2.5).

### Four of the six main news sources are on TV

The top two news sources, in terms of reach among UK adults, are both TV channels. BBC One is by far the most-used (at 48%), followed by ITV/ ITV Wales/ UTV/ STV News, with just over a quarter (27%) of people saying they use it as a source of news. BBC One has had a five percentage point decrease in reach since 2014 (53%). The BBC website or app remains the third most-used news source: just under a quarter (23%) of people say they use it. The BBC News Channel comes next (at 14%), followed by the Sky News channel (12%) which decreased by five percentage points since 2014. Facebook<sup>5</sup> is now the joint-fifth highest news source in terms of reach, used by 12% of UK adults, an increase of five percentage points since 2014. The most-used radio stations are BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 2 (both 8%), while the most-used newspapers are *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* (both 6%) (figure 2.6).

<sup>4</sup> 'Wholesale' means the company that provides the news for the given source. This is distinct from 'retail', by which we mean the branded title/ service through which the news is provided. The wholesale category is derived from responses given about individual news titles.

<sup>5</sup> Digital intermediaries such as Facebook draw on content from a range of online news providers. It is beyond the scope of this survey to ascertain which providers within Facebook are being used. However, in Section 2.6 we explore how people are getting to news within social media.

## 2.3 News consumption via television

### Total hours of national and international news viewing have decreased since 2013

BARB figures show that each adult watched 108 hours of national and international news on television<sup>6</sup> in 2014 (figure 3.1). This represents a decrease of seven hours since 2013 (when the average number of hours was 115) and 13 hours since 2011 (when the average was 121 hours)<sup>7</sup>.

The majority of TV news viewing in 2014 was on BBC One or BBC Two (65.8%), with a further 12.9% on ITV, 11.2% on BBC News and 4.9% on Sky News. Taken together, news on the BBC main channels and BBC News accounted for 77% of all viewing of the genre. Adding news viewing via the BBC to news viewing via ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, 94.5% of viewing of news on TV was via the main PSB broadcasters.

People aged 16-24 each watched just 25 hours of news on television in 2014, compared to 189 hours for those aged 55 and over. Although the BBC channels account for the majority of news viewing for 16-24s, this group is more likely than older viewers to consume news on ITV (18.0% vs. 12.5% for those aged 55+) and Channel 4 (5.8% vs. 2.3% for those aged 55+). Total hours of viewing of news among 16-24 year olds has decreased each year (by eight hours since 2010). In the same period, viewing hours have fluctuated for over-55s, with an overall decrease of five hours between 2010 and 2014 (figures 3.2 and 3.3).

### BBC One is still by far the most-used TV channel for news

More than seven in ten (72%) adults who use television for news use BBC One, a figure largely unchanged since 2014 (71%) and 2013 (73%) (figure 3.4). As well as being used by the largest proportion of people, BBC One is the most frequently accessed channel, across all TV news sources, with 76% of those who use it for news doing so once a day or more frequently (figure 3.5).

ITV is the next most-used television channel for news, with 41% of adults who use TV for news watching it on ITV, similar to 2014 and 2013 (both 43%). Sixty-three per cent of those who use this channel for news use it at least once a day.

The BBC News channel is the third most popular TV channel for news; one in five (20%) adults say they use it for news, compared to 19% using Sky News (which has had a 4pp decrease since 2014). Channel 4 is next (with 12%), then BBC Two (7%), Channel 5 (4%), Al Jazeera (the English version) (4%), BBC Three (3%), CNN, BBC Four and BBC Parliament, all on 2% and finally, Russia Today with 1%<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> BARB listed channels only

<sup>7</sup> At an overall level, there has been a decrease in time spent watching any kind of broadcast TV by all individuals aged 4 and above in recent years. After holding steady at around four hours per person a day between 2010 and 2012, average daily viewing fell to 3 hours and 52 minutes in 2013, and to 3 hours and 20 minutes in 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Only sources with an incidence of 1% or more are cited here

## 2.4 News consumption via radio

### BBC Radio 1 has had a six percentage point decrease since 2014 in the proportion of people who say they use it for news

Around a third (32%) of UK adults say they consume news through radio. Of these, seven in ten (71%) say they use any BBC radio station for this purpose; similar to the figure in 2014 (75%). Just over four in ten (41%) UK adults say they use commercial radio to consume news, compared to 39% in 2014 (figure 4.1).

RAJAR<sup>9</sup> figures indicate that the BBC network stations Radio 2, Radio 4 (including 4 Extra) and Radio 1 have the highest average weekly reach (29%, 21% and 20% respectively in Q3 2015). Respondents to the Ofcom news survey who listen to news on the radio are more likely to name these three sources than any other station (26% for BBC Radio 4, 25% for Radio 2 and 14% for Radio 1). BBC Radio 1 experienced the largest year-on-year decrease (six percentage points since 2014) of all the radio stations. The most popular commercial radio station is Heart FM, with one in ten (10%) of radio users saying they listen to it for news, followed by Capital FM (8%).

The use of different BBC radio stations for news is differentiated by age: 47% of 16-24 year-olds who use radio for news say they use BBC Radio 1, compared to just 4% in the 55+ age group. The situation is reversed for BBC Radio 4; 11% of 16-24s say they listen to news on this station, compared to 37% of those aged 55+. Men are more likely than women to say they listen to BBC Radio 4 (30% vs. 22%). Those in the AB socio-economic group are considerably more likely than those in the DE group to listen to BBC Radio 4 (46% vs. 14%).

## 2.5 News consumption through newspapers

### The reach of national newspapers has decreased considerably in the past ten years, with reach among all adults decreasing by more than 27 percentage points since 2005

According to NRS<sup>10</sup> figures, the reach of national newspapers has declined considerably in the past ten years, with reach among adults falling by 27 percentage points since 2005 (from 72.4% of all adults in 2005 to 45.4% in 2015) (figure 5.1). Nevertheless, reach has been relatively stable year on year (48.1% in 2014). Reach of national newspapers varies by age group: 29.3% of 15-24s are print newspaper readers, compared to 67.9% of over-65s.

When print and online<sup>11</sup> readership is combined<sup>12</sup>, the *Daily Mail* is the most widely-read news title in the UK, with around 5.5 million users (compared to just over six million in 2014) (figure 5.5). *The Sun* follows with 5.2 million users, compared to 5.8 million in 2014. Looking at readership levels of print-only newspapers, *The Sun* was the most popular (with just under 5.2 million users vs. 3.5 million for the *Daily Mail*). Conversely, looking at readership for websites only, the *Daily Mail* had 1.8 million users, while *The Sun* had 0.06 million. *The Sun*'s lower online readership could be explained by its paywall, whereas the *Daily Mail* offers its website content free of charge.

Among the 31% of respondents in the Ofcom news survey who said they consumed news through newspapers, the most used titles were: *The Sun* (20%), the *Daily Mail* (19%), the *Daily Mirror* (13%), the *Metro* (12%) and *The Times* (9%) (figure 5.6). Of these, *The Sun* had

<sup>9</sup> Radio Joint Audience Research

<sup>10</sup> National Readership Survey

<sup>11</sup> The data include visits using laptop and desktop computers only

<sup>12</sup> Using Ofcom analysis of NRS/comScore PADD, March 2014 and 2015

the largest decrease year on year (by six percentage points). There has been an increase of four percentage points in both the daily 'free-sheets' (the *Metro* and the *Evening Standard*) since 2014 (from 10% to 14%).

Newspaper readers aged 16-34 are more likely than older readers to read *The Sun* (27%) and the *Metro* (25%) (15% of those aged 55+ say they read *The Sun* and 5% say they read the *Metro*). Older readers are more likely to read the *Daily Mail* (27% vs. 14% of 16-34s). Men are more likely than women to read *The Sun* (23% vs. 17%), while women are more likely to read the *Daily Mail* (22% vs. 16%). All other differences by gender were negligible.

## 2.6 News consumption via the internet

### Online news consumption varies considerably by age, socio-economic group and gender

Four in ten (41%) UK adults say they use the internet for news. Six in ten (59%) UK adults aged 16-24 say they use the internet or apps for news, compared to just under a quarter (23%) of those aged 55+. Over half (53%) of those in the ABC1 socio-economic group use online sources for news, compared to a third (32%) of those in the C2DE socio-economic group. Men are more likely than women to say they use internet for news (45% vs. 37%).

Looking at the specific devices that UK adults use to access news via the internet, a quarter (25%) of UK adults say they access news on a mobile phone, up by four percentage points since 2014. This compares to 20% who say they use a computer, laptop or netbook to access news (down by four percentage points since 2014) and 13% use a tablet for news (the same as in 2014). Two in five (42%) 16-24s say they use a mobile phone to access news, compared to 8% of over-55s (figure 1.3).

### 'Traditional' news sources are used most for online news, but social media is also popular

Of those who use the internet or apps for news, around half (51%) say they use the website or apps of TV and radio companies to get news (figure 6.1). More than two in five (43%) respondents say they use social media sites<sup>13</sup>. This is followed by 37% who say they use search engines, 28% who use websites or apps of newspapers, 17% who use websites or apps of news aggregation sites<sup>14</sup>, 16% who use websites or apps of online news organizations, 6% who use websites or apps of news magazines and 5% using blogs.

These figures differ considerably by age group; about six in ten (61%) 16-24s who use the internet/ apps for news say they use social media sites, compared to just over a quarter of those aged 55+ (26%) (figure 6.2). This pattern is reversed for search engines; 47% of 55+s and 32% of 16-34s say they use these for news. People in the DE socio-economic group are more likely than those in the AB group to use social media sites for news (52% vs. 40%). ABs are more likely than DEs to use the websites or apps of newspapers, news magazines, TV and radio companies and online news organisations.

---

<sup>13</sup> Note: Throughout, we are not able to categorise further the types of news sources that respondents may be accessing through their social media, search engine, or aggregator consumption. This survey question asked respondents about whether they got news from a list of types of online news. For social media, this was phrased as 'social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc' (Q3b1).

<sup>14</sup> The survey question asked respondents whether they got news from 'websites or apps that bring together news from different news providers such as MSN, Yahoo, Google News, or the home page of your internet service provider such as Tesco or Virgin. This might also include apps like Flipboard, Nuzzel or Smart News that are designed for mobiles and tablets' (Q3b1).

When we put together the various types of online news source, those from ‘traditional’ news media such as TV, radio, and newspapers are used most (by 64% of online news users), while ‘digital first’ news sources (excluding social media, search engines and blogs) are used by 28%. Ten per cent of online news users use only social media sites for news, rising to 16% of those aged 16-24.

At a more granular level, we asked about sources for online news by showing respondents a range of possible sites/apps and asking which ones they used (figure 6.6). Over half (56%) of online news users said they used the BBC website or app, compared to 59% in 2014. Facebook was the second most popular response, up by 12 percentage points since 2014 (from 17% to 29%). This was followed by the Google search engine (15%) and the Sky News website or app (14%).

### **Breaking news is the main type of news that people say they get from social media, and one in five get celebrity news from it**

When asked which types of news they got from social media, over half of those who did this chose breaking news (55%) (figure 6.11). UK news was nominated by half (50%), followed by local news (42%), headlines (38%) and foreign or international news (37%). Celebrity news was chosen by 22%, followed by campaigning news (15%), in-depth analysis (10%) and news about the nations (8%). Breaking news and UK news rose to 58% and 57% respectively for 16-24s, compared to 41% and 46% for those aged 55+ . Around a third (32%) of 16-24s who get news stories from social media get celebrity news from this platform, compared to 11% of over-55s.

### **News sites/apps are more likely to be used directly by respondents, although social media is also popular**

We wanted to understand where people were more likely to find out about news – through social media posts, or directly from news organisations’ websites/apps. Respondents who said they get news stories on social media were asked whether they ‘mostly’ accessed news via any type of social media posting, or alternatively, directly from the websites or apps of news organisations. Overall, 30% of those who used social media for news said they ‘mostly’ accessed their news stories through social media posts, compared to 38% who said they ‘mostly’ accessed them directly from the websites/apps of news organisations (figure 6.10). A further three in ten (31%) said they accessed them equally on social media posts and on news organisations’ websites or apps. The proportion accessing their news mostly from social media posts increased to 43% for 16-24s, compared to 20% for over-55s. Women who access news through social media are more likely than men to say they mostly get their news via social media posts (37% vs. 24%), and those in the DE socio-economic group are more likely than those in the AB socio-economic group to say this (43% vs. 17%).

### **Routes to online news vary: the most popular way is to use an app to go direct to the home page of a news provider**

We asked respondents how they accessed online news, to understand more about whether people tend to go direct to the home pages of news providers, whether they use social media, or whether they go straight to particular news stories. We also wanted to understand *how* they went to these destinations – via an app, a URL, a bookmark, etc.

More than a third of online news users say they go ‘most times’ or ‘often’ to the homepage of a news provider by using an app (36%) (figure 6.5). Three in ten (28%) say that they go ‘most times’ or ‘often’ to a news story via a link shared on social media by a friend or person they follow. A similar proportion (27%) say they go to the home page of a news provider by selecting a URL, or by searching for news using a search engine. Around a quarter (26%)

say they go to a news story via a website/app of an aggregator of online news such as Yahoo, and 22% that they go to a news story via a link shared by a news organisation.

## 2.7 Local news use

### TV is the most popular platform for accessing local news

When asked how they accessed local news, a third (33%) of those who consume news in the UK said they watched regional and local broadcasts on BBC TV (figure 7.1<sup>15</sup>). This was followed by around one in five (21%) who used printed local or regional newspapers, 20% who accessed local news through regional and local broadcasts on ITV/ STV/ ITV Wales/ UTV, 18% through word of mouth, 16% through social media and 11% via local commercial radio.

At an aggregated level, 43% of news consumers use local or regional TV to access local news, compared to 23% who use any press (newspapers and magazines), 18% who use internet or apps (excluding social media and blogs) and 18% who use local or regional radio.

### 16-24s are more likely than over-55s to access local news via social media, while the reverse is true for local/regional broadcasts on the BBC and ITV/ STV/ ITV Wales/ UTV

There is considerable variation in the ways in which different age groups access local news. Those aged 16-24 are more likely than over-55s to access local news via social media (32% vs. 4%) (figure 7.2). The same pattern can be seen for the websites or apps of TV and radio companies (11% vs. 5%), websites or apps of local or regional newspapers (10% vs. 5%) and websites or apps of other news outlets (6% vs. 1%). The reverse is true for regional and local broadcasts on BBC TV (43% of 55+ vs. 23% of 16-24s) and ITV/ STV/ ITV Wales/ UTV (25% vs. 11%). Those in the 55+ age group are more likely to access local news via printed local or regional newspapers (27% vs. 15%). Those in the AB socio-economic group are more likely than those in the DE group to say they access local news through regional and local broadcasts on BBC TV (37% vs. 28%). The pattern is reversed for local news consumption through regional and local broadcasts on ITV/ STV/ ITV Wales/ UTV (24% in the DE socio-economic group compared to 18% in the AB group).

## 2.8 Share of references

Currently, there is no industry measurement system that measures news across all platforms, using a consistent methodology and a consistent definition of news. To provide a view on the relative consumption of news sources across TV, radio, print and online, and the share accounted for by each provider, we have created the 'share of references' metric, using the data from our consumer research.

Ofcom's 'share of references' measure is calculated by asking people which sources of news they use 'nowadays', and how frequently they use them. If a respondent uses more than one source from a particular provider, each of these is counted<sup>16</sup>. The share of each provider is then calculated as the aggregate number of references, expressed as a proportion of all references for all news sources. This produces a cross-media metric with a consistent methodology and a consistent definition of news across all platforms. It is also possible to use this metric to look at each platform separately.

<sup>15</sup> Responses relating to Local TV as a distinct TV channel have not been included in the chart data due to likely respondent misinterpretation of the question.

<sup>16</sup> Frequency figures are factored for each source, and these factored figures are then summed to create a total for each source.

### **There has been a five percentage point increase in the share of references for internet or apps since 2014**

Television has a 40% share of references; this is largely the same as last year (42%). This is followed by the internet (32%), which is up by 5 pp since last year. Radio has a share of 17% (compared to 19% in 2014) and newspapers have a share of 10% (12% in 2014) (figure 8.1).

At the wholesale level, the BBC has a 44% share of news consumption, followed by 11% for ITN (which produces news for ITV, Channel 4 and 5), Sky (6%), Global Radio (4%), DGMT (4%), News Corp (3%), Trinity Mirror (2%) and Guardian Media Group (2%) (figure 8.2)<sup>17</sup>. There have been no statistically significant changes since 2014 at the wholesale level for any single provider, although there has been an increase in the share of reference for “other” (22%, up from 19% in 2014).

At the retail level, the BBC (44%) is followed by ITV (9%), Facebook (7%), Sky (6%) and commercial radio (6%) (figure 8.3). The only significant change since 2014 has been the four percentage point increase in the share of references for Facebook (from 3% in 2014).

---

<sup>17</sup> In our 2015 advice to the Secretary of State on a Measurement Framework for Media Plurality, we noted that although Sky News Radio provides bulletins for commercial radio stations, many commercial stations source, produce and broadcast their own news content. We, therefore, no longer consider it appropriate to aggregate all commercial radio consumption to Sky as a wholesale provider. We now consider that the two largest radio groups, Global Radio and Bauer Radio, are wholesale providers of news (with a 4% and 1% share of references respectively), and are currently assessing the extent to which other commercial radio broadcasters (together providing a 1% share of reference) also operate as wholesale providers of news content. Global Radio and Bauer Radio are therefore shown at the wholesale level in our data. While we assess the provision of other commercial radio broadcasters' news content, these are included within “other”. This methodology has been applied to the current and historic data shown on the charts in the accompanying slidepack. Previously-published data is not comparable.

## Section 3

# Attitudes towards news, and reasons for following news

## 3.1 Importance of news sources

**BBC One was nominated as the most important news source by 29% of news users, almost three times as many as nominated ITV (10%)**

When asked to indicate the single most important news source to them personally, over half (53%) of those who consumed news in the UK chose a TV channel. This compares to just under a quarter (23%) who said a website or app, 12% who chose a radio station and 9% who nominated a newspaper. This has remained largely unchanged since 2014 (figure 9.1).

Around half (51%) of 16-24s say their most important news source is a website/app, up six percentage points since 2013 (45%). Those aged 16-24 are less likely than over-55s to name a TV channel as their most important news source (31% vs. 67%). A similar pattern emerges for radio (7% of 16-24s vs. 11% of 55+) and newspapers (6% of 16-24s vs. 13% of 55+). Six in ten of those in the DE socio-economic group (62%) say that a TV channel is their most important source of news, compared to 49% in the AB socio-economic group. Those in the AB socio-economic group are more likely than those in the DE socio-economic group to say that websites or apps (24% vs. 18%) and radio (17% vs. 9%) are their most important news sources (figure 9.2).

Around three in ten (29%) of those who consume news in the UK nominate BBC One as their single most important news source, the same as last year (28%). BBC One has nearly three times as many mentions as the next two sources, ITV (10%) and the BBC website or app (8%), and nearly six times as many as the BBC News channel (5%). Facebook has seen a significant increase in the proportion of people who say it is their single most personally important news source (from 2% in 2014 to 5% in 2015).

Users of each news source were also asked how important that source was for them. For television, 62% of those who watched BBC TV for news rated it between seven and ten out of ten. Sky News was similarly rated by 51% of its viewers, ITV by 48% and Channel 4 by 43%. For newspapers, *The Guardian/Observer* was rated between seven and ten by 63% of its users, local paid-for weeklies by 49%, and the *Daily/Sunday Express* by 45%. Across websites/apps, the *Guardian/Observer* site was rated between seven and ten by 67% of its users, while the BBC site was similarly rated by 59%, Facebook by 53% and the Sky News website by 51%.

## 3.2 Attributes of news sources

**BBC TV was rated highly for ‘accuracy and reliability’ and ‘trustworthiness’**

Users of TV news were asked to consider whether the news sources they used were ‘trustworthy’, ‘accurate and reliable’, ‘impartial and unbiased’, or ‘offer a range of opinions’ or ‘help me make my mind up’, and to give each source a ranking between one and ten. We have compared users who rated the source highly (7-10 out of ten). In general, ratings for trust and accuracy were higher than for impartiality and for ‘helps me make my mind up’. Six in ten viewers of BBC TV news rated it highly for accuracy and reliability (62%) and trustworthiness (59%), while around half of viewers of the Sky News channel rated it highly

for offering a range of opinions (54%) and helping them to make their mind up (44%) (figure 9.4).

Nearly seven in ten (68%) of BBC radio users rated it highly for accuracy and reliability, compared to 47% of commercial radio listeners rating commercial radio in this way. Similarly, BBC radio was rated higher than commercial radio for trustworthiness (66% vs. 53%), impartiality (60% vs. 43%), 'offers a range of opinions' (63% vs. 38%) and 'helps me make my mind up' (51% vs. 32%) (figure 9.5).

*The Guardian/Observer* was rated highly by its users for every attribute, including accuracy (72%), trustworthiness (67%) and 'helps me to make my mind up' (60%). *The Times* was also rated highly by its users for accuracy and reliability (55% rated it highly) and trustworthiness (53%). In comparison, *The Sun* was rated relatively low for all attributes, including 23% for both accuracy and 'helps me make my mind up' and 24% for accuracy and reliability (figure 9.6).

In general, people using websites for news are more likely than those who use other platforms for news to rate websites highly for 'offering a range of opinions'. Unsurprisingly, given the sites' aggregation of third-party news sources, this is particularly true for users of Twitter (61% rated highly), Facebook (59%), and YouTube (48%), relative to other attributes (figure 9.7).

Ratings by users were highest overall for the BBC website or app; the Sky News website or app, and the *Guardian/Observer* website or app. Ratings were lower for users of Facebook, YouTube, and the *Daily Mail* site, with the exception of 'it offers a range of opinions' for Facebook and YouTube.

Over half of users of the *Guardian/Observer* and Sky News website/apps rated them highly for 'it helps me make my mind up' (54% and 53%), followed by 45% of those who use the BBC website or app, and 44% of those who use the ITV website/app. Among social media, three in ten users of Facebook and Twitter rated these sites highly for helping them make up their minds (both 29%), as did 23% of YouTube users.

### 3.3 Reasons to follow news

#### Half of UK adults say they follow news to find out 'what's going on in the world' and to know 'what's going on across the UK'

Almost half (48%) UK adults said they followed the news 'to find out what's going on in the world' and 'to know what's going on across the UK' (figure 9.8). These figures were lower than in 2014 by ten percentage points and eight percentage points respectively. The next most-cited reasons were: 'to know what's going on in my local area' and 'to know what's going on in [respective nations]' (both 43%), followed by 'because I feel it's important to keep informed about certain issues' (32%). There was a decrease in the number of people who said they followed the news for all the reasons cited. This may be linked to the six percentage point increase in the number of people who said they did not follow news (from 6% in 2014 to 12% in 2015).

#### Over-55s are more likely than 16-24s to claim more reasons for following the news

Reasons for following news are broadly similar among those aged 16-24 and among those aged over 55. However, over-55s are more likely to cite most of the reasons, perhaps illustrating their stronger engagement with news (figure 9.9).

Younger age groups are more likely than those aged 55+ to nominate 'to pass the time when waiting/travelling/commuting/bored' (14% of 16-24s vs. 8% of 55 and overs), perhaps reflected in the higher proportion of 16-24s who consume news via the internet on a mobile phone (42% vs. 8% of over-55s). Those in the 16-24 age group were also more likely to say they followed news in order 'to be knowledgeable for my job/work/studies (19% 16-24s vs. 9% aged 55+).

## Section 5

# News consumption in the nations

## 4.1 England

### Platforms and sources used for news 'nowadays'

People living in England are less likely than those in Wales and Northern Ireland to say they use television to access news (66% vs. 72% in Wales and 75% in Northern Ireland) (figure 10.1). They are also less likely than those in Scotland and Northern Ireland to use newspapers for news (29% vs. 39% in Scotland and 36% in Northern Ireland). Three in ten (31%) people in England consume news through radio, fewer than in Scotland (37%). People in England are also less likely than those in Northern Ireland to access news through the internet (41% vs. 49%). The generally lower levels of news consumption in England compared to the other nations is due to the higher proportion of people who say they do not use any of these platforms for news (11% compared to 5% in Scotland, 8% in Wales and 6% in Northern Ireland).

Just under half (47%) of adults in England say they use BBC One for their news, followed by ITV at 26%. Half of the top ten news sources used by people in England are from the BBC; including - in addition to BBC One - the BBC website or app (22%), the BBC News channel (14%), BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 2 (both 8%). Five of the top ten news sources used by people in England were TV channels, together with two websites/ apps (BBC website or app and Facebook), two radio stations and one newspaper (*The Sun*) (figure 10.12).

### Multiple sourcing of news

People in England use an average of 3.4 news sources across all platforms, compared to 3.8 sources in 2014. On average, the number of sources that people in England use on each platform is 1.9 TV sources, 1.9 newspaper sources, 1.5 radio sources and 2.1 internet sources. These figures are similar to 2014 (figure 10.2).

### Single most personally important news source

When asked to indicate the single most important news source to them personally, over half (53%) of those in England who consumed news chose a TV channel (figure 10.3). This is the same as the UK population as a whole, and similar to every other UK nation. The proportion of news users in England who said that any newspaper (9%), radio (12%) or internet source (23%) was their most important source was the same as for the UK as a whole.

BBC One was considered the most important news source by 30% of news users in England, the highest figure for any news source. This was higher than in Scotland (23%) but similar to Wales and Northern Ireland.

### News about England

When asked how interested they were in news relating to England, 75% of news users in England said they were either 'very interested' or 'quite interested'. Fourteen per cent of news users across the UK said they were either 'not very interested' or 'not at all interested'. Comparing these results to the other nations, news users in England were more likely than

those in Scotland and Wales to say they were 'not very interested' in news about England<sup>18</sup> (10% vs. 4% and 8% respectively) (figure 10.5).

The most common source for news users in England to access news about their region was BBC One (36%), followed by ITV (17%), the BBC website or app (9%), Facebook (7%), the BBC News channel (4%), any local daily paper (3%) and the Sky News channel (2%) (figure 10.7).

### **Share of references and cross-platform reach**

The share of references across platforms is largely the same for England as it is for the UK as a whole (41% for TV, 32% for internet or apps, 17% for radio and 10% for newspapers) (figure 10.8). The share of references by retail provider is unchanged since 2014, with the exception of the share of reference for Facebook, which is now 7%, up by four percentage points (figure 10.10).

In terms of cross-platform audience reach for wholesale news providers, the figures for both England and the UK as a whole are broadly the same. Cross-platform reach for Sky (20%) and News Corp (12%) in England have both decreased (by four and five percentage points respectively) (figure 10.11).

## **4.2 Scotland**

### **Platforms and sources used for news 'nowadays'**

Sixty-five per cent of people in Scotland say they use TV to consume news, less than in Wales (72%) and Northern Ireland (75%), and broadly similar to England (66%) (figure 10.1). Those in Scotland are more likely than the UK average (39% vs. 31%), and more likely than people in England (29%) to use newspapers to access news. This is much the same for radio (37% in Scotland compared to 31% in the UK and 31% in England). Forty-five per cent of people in Scotland use the internet for news, which is similar to the UK average and other nations.

Just under half of adults in Scotland say they use BBC One for news (46%), followed by STV (27%) and the BBC website or app (26%). Both BBC One and STV have seen a decline since 2014 (by nine and ten percentage points respectively). Of the top ten sources for news in Scotland, the first two are TV channels – BBC One and STV – followed by the BBC website/app. The Sky News channel is fourth, and Facebook fifth, followed by the BBC News Channel, The Daily Record and BBC Radio 4 (figure 10.13).

### **Multiple sourcing of news**

People in Scotland use an average of 3.8 news sources across all platforms, compared to 3.9 sources in 2014. By platform, people in Scotland use 2.1 TV sources, 2.1 newspaper sources, 1.3 radio sources and 2.4 internet sources (figure 10.2).

### **Single most personally important news source**

Just under half (47%) of those in Scotland who consume news chose a TV channel as their most important news source (figure 10.3). This is similar to the UK population as a whole, and to every other UK nation. Similarly, the proportion of news users in Scotland who named

---

<sup>18</sup> News users were asked about news relating to their respective nation

any radio (10%) or internet source (26%) as their most important news source was similar to the UK as a whole and to each UK nation.

The proportion of news users in Scotland who named any newspaper source as their most important news source (15%) was significantly higher than the UK as a whole (9%) and every other UK nation (9% in England and Wales and 5% in Northern Ireland).

### **News about Scotland**

When asked how interested they were in news relating to Scotland, 82% of news users in Scotland said they were either 'very interested' or 'quite interested', while 7% said they were 'not very interested' or 'not at all interested' (figure 10.5). Forty-five per cent said they were 'very interested' in news about Scotland; significantly higher than the proportion who said the same about their respective nation in England (28%) and Northern Ireland (35%), and similar to the figure in Wales.

The most common way to access news about Scotland is via a TV set (58%), followed by newspapers (31%), radio (26%) and social media sites (21%). The average number of ways in which people in Scotland access news about Scotland is 2.1, compared to 2.3 in Northern Ireland and 1.9 in Wales (figure 10.6).

The most popular news source used to access news specifically about Scotland is BBC One; a third (33%) of news users in Scotland say they use it for this purpose (figure 10.7). This is followed by ITV (20%), the BBC website or app (12%), Facebook (9%), the Sky News channel (6%), and the BBC News channel and other local commercial radio stations (both 4%). The proportion of news users in Scotland who use the Sky News channel to access news about Scotland (6%) is significantly higher than the proportion who use it in other nations (2% in England and Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland).

### **Share of references and cross-platform reach**

The share of references across platforms is largely the same for Scotland as it is for the UK as a whole (37% for TV, 36% for internet or apps, 16% for radio and 11% for newspapers) (figure 10.8). The share of references for the internet or apps has increased (up by 11 percentage points from 25% in 2014). The share of references by provider, for both wholesale and retail, is also largely the same in Scotland as it is for the UK as a whole (figures 10.9 and 10.10).

In terms of cross-platform audience reach for wholesale news providers, the figures for Scotland and for the UK as a whole are broadly similar. Cross-platform reach for ITN (37%) in Scotland is down by 12 percentage points since 2014 (figure 10.11).

## **4.3 Wales**

### **Platforms used for news 'nowadays'**

More than seven in ten (72%) people in Wales use TV for news, similar to Northern Ireland (75%), but higher than the figure in England (66%) and Scotland (65%) (figure 10.1). A third of people (33%) people in Wales use newspapers for accessing news, while a similar proportion (34%) use the radio for news. Thirty-eight per cent of people in Wales use the internet for news consumption, lower than the proportion in Northern Ireland (49%).

Over half (55%) of adults in Wales use BBC One for news, followed by ITV Wales (35%) and the BBC website or app (22%) (figure 10.14). There were three TV channels among the top ten news sources in Wales (BBC One, ITV Wales and the Sky News Channel), three

websites or apps (BBC website or app, Facebook and Google search engine), two radio stations (BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 4) and two newspapers (*The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*).

### **Multiple sourcing of news**

People in Wales use an average of 3.6 news sources across all platforms, compared to 4.0 sources in 2014. By platform, people in Wales use 1.9 TV sources, 2.0 newspaper sources, 1.6 radio sources and 2.2 internet sources (figure 10.2).

### **Single most personally important news source**

Over half (53%) of those in Wales who consume news chose a TV channel as their single most important source of news (figure 10.3). This was the same as the UK population as a whole and largely similar to every other nation. The proportion of people in Wales who chose any newspaper (9%), radio (12%) or internet source (23%) as their most important source was the same as for the UK as a whole.

BBC One was considered the most important news source by 31% of those in Wales, the highest for any news source. This was higher than the respective figure for Scotland (23%) but largely on a par with that for England and Northern Ireland.

### **News about Wales**

When asked how interested they were in news relating to Wales, 80% of news users in Wales said they were either 'very interested' or 'quite interested', while 10% said they were 'not very interested' or 'not at all interested' (figure 10.5). Thirty-seven per cent said they were 'very interested' in news about Wales; this is significantly higher than the proportion who said this about their respective nation in England (28%).

The most common way to access news about Wales is broadcast TV via a TV set (66%), followed by newspapers (24%), radio (23%) and social media sites (21%). The average number of ways in which people accessed news about Wales was 1.9 (figure 10.6).

The most popular news source for accessing news about Wales was BBC One, with four in ten (41%) news users in Wales saying they used it for this purpose. This was followed by ITV Wales (26%), the BBC website or app (9%) and Facebook (8%) (figure 10.7).

### **Share of references and cross-platform reach**

The share of references across platforms is broadly the same for Wales as it is for the UK as a whole (43% for TV, 28% for internet or apps, 20% for radio and 9% for newspapers) (figure 10.8). For wholesale share of references, the BBC share of reference in Wales is larger than that in Northern Ireland and Scotland (figure 10.9). Both the retail and wholesale share of references for Guardian Media group were lower in Wales, compared to the other nations.

In terms of cross-platform audience reach for wholesale news providers, the figures for both Wales and the UK as a whole are broadly the same. Cross-platform reach for Sky (18%) in Wales is down by 11 percentage points since 2014 (figure 10.11).

## 4.4 Northern Ireland

### Platforms used for news ‘nowadays’

People in Northern Ireland were more likely than those in England and Scotland to say they used TV for news (75% vs. 66% and 65%) (figure 10.1). They were also more likely than people in England to consume news via newspapers (36% vs. 29%). News consumption in Northern Ireland via radio was similar to all other UK nations, while using the internet for news was higher in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales (49% vs. 41% and 38%).

Six in ten (60%) adults in Northern Ireland said they used BBC One for news, followed by UTV (46%) and the BBC website or app (29%). Radio listeners in Northern Ireland were much more likely to say they listened to BBC Radio Ulster (42%) than were radio listeners in Scotland listening to BBC Radio Scotland (18%), or listeners in Wales to BBC Radio Wales/Cymru (16%). The top ten news sources used in Northern Ireland comprise four TV channels (including the Sky News channel and Channel 4), three websites or apps (including Facebook and Google search engine), two radio stations (BBC Radio Ulster and Cool FM) and one newspaper (The Belfast Telegraph) (figure 10.15).

### Multiple sourcing of news

People in Northern Ireland used an average of 4.3 news sources across all platforms, compared to 4.6 sources in 2014. By platform, people in Northern Ireland used an average of 2.1 TV sources, 2.3 newspaper sources, 1.6 radio sources and 2.4 internet sources (figure 10.2).

### Single most personally important news source

Over half (54%) of news users in Northern Ireland named a TV source as their most important news source; this was similar to all UK nations and to the UK as a whole (figure 10.3). The proportion of news users in Northern Ireland who chose a radio station (11%) or an internet source (25%) as their most important source was similar to those in the other nations. Five per cent of those who consumed news in Northern Ireland chose a newspaper as their most important news source; significantly less than the proportion who chose this medium in Scotland (15%).

### News about Northern Ireland

When asked how interested they were in news relating to Northern Ireland, 76% of news users in Northern Ireland said they were either ‘very interested’ or ‘quite interested’, while 15% said they were ‘not very interested’ or ‘not at all interested’ (figure 10.5).

The most common way to access news about Northern Ireland was by television on a TV set (71%), followed by radio (33%), newspapers (26%), word of mouth (25%) and the websites or apps of TV and radio companies (21%) (figure 10.6). The proportion of news users in Northern Ireland who said they used TV and radio companies’ websites or apps, and word of mouth, was significantly higher than among news users in Scotland or Wales. The average number of ways in which people accessed news about Northern Ireland was 2.3.

The most popular news source used to access news specifically about Northern Ireland was BBC One: over half (55%) of news users in Northern Ireland said they used it for this purpose (figure 10.7). This was followed by UTV (40%), the BBC website or app (18%) and Facebook (10%). The proportion of news users in Northern Ireland who said they used BBC One, UTV, the BBC website or app, or other local commercial radio stations to access news

about their nation was significantly higher than the proportion of news users who said this in each of the other UK nations.

### **Share of references and cross-platform reach**

The share of references across platforms was largely the same for Northern Ireland as it was for the UK as a whole (41% for TV, 32% for internet or apps, 16% for radio and 11% for newspapers) (figure 10.8). In terms of wholesale share of references, while Northern Ireland is significantly lower than the other nations for Global Radio (0% compared to 5% in Scotland and 4% in both England and Wales), it was also significantly higher than the other nations for Bauer (5% compared to 1% in all of the other nations). In terms of the retail share of references, Northern Ireland was significantly higher than England for ITV (13% vs. 8% in England).

In terms of cross-platform audience reach for wholesale news providers, the figures for both Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole are broadly similar (figure 10.11).

## Section 6

# Methodology

In total, 2921 interviews were conducted, using Kantar's face-to-face omnibus.

### 5.1 Omnibus sampling method

The omnibus uses a comprehensive address-based system using PAF and CD-Rom, cross-referenced to the census data. For each wave, 143 sample points are selected and, within the selected primary sampling points, a postcode sector is chosen. Postcode selection within primary sampling points alternates between A and B halves to reduce clustering effects. All interviews are conducted via the field team and in accordance with strict quality control procedures. Quotas (by gender, working status and presence of children) are set during interviewing to ensure representivity. Any sample profile imbalances are corrected at the analysis stage through weighting.

### 5.2 Nations' boosts

A standard wave of the UK omnibus (c2060) provides samples of roughly 175 in Scotland, 100 in Wales and 60 in Northern Ireland. However, in order to provide robust analysis by nation, fieldwork boosts took place to ensure a minimum sample of 350 respondents for each. To achieve this in the most efficient manner, it required four waves of the regular GB omnibus, plus a stand-alone Northern Ireland wave. The sample sizes achieved per nation were as follows:

- England = 1782
- Scotland = 367
- Wales = 422
- N. Ireland = 350

### 5.3 Weighting

The following weighting matrix was applied to the data to address any imbalances.

Region	Total sample	Sex		Age			Working status	
		Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	Working	Not working
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SOUTH EAST	14%	7%	7%	4%	5%	5%	8%	5%
LONDON	12%	6%	6%	5%	5%	3%	8%	5%
NORTH WEST	11%	5%	6%	3%	4%	4%	6%	5%
EAST	9%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%	6%	4%
WEST MIDLANDS	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
SOUTH WEST	9%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%	5%	4%
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
EAST MIDLANDS	7%	4%	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%
NORTH EAST	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
<b>ENGLAND TOTAL</b>	<b>84%</b>	41%	43%	26%	29%	29%	49%	35%
SCOTLAND	9%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%
WALES	5%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%
NORTHERN IRELAND	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
<b>NATIONS TOTAL</b>	<b>16%</b>	8%	8%	5%	5%	6%	9%	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	49%	51%	31%	34%	35%	58%	42%

## 5.4 Sources

*Mid-2010 Population Estimates* from ONS (latest currently available) for age, gender and region (including nations).

*Annual Population Survey* (ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 28 February 2012] for working status