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Press release

OLDER VIEWERS MOST SWITCHED ON TO SWITCHOVER 16-24s LEAST AWARE OF MOVE TO DIGITAL TV

Two-thirds of the population are aware of the UK's switchover to digital television, with older viewers the most aware of any age group, according to new research by Digital UK and media regulator Ofcom.

The first quarterly results from the new Switchover Tracking Survey show that, in the three months to June of this year, 66% of those surveyed had heard about the switchover process. Awareness was highest in the Border TV region, where switchover begins in 2008, with 82% of people aware of the change.

Across the UK as a whole, awareness is highest among those aged 65-74, at 78%, and lowest among the 16-24 age group, at 47%.

The national survey of more than 2,500 adults also shows a marked increase in public awareness following Digital UK's first information campaign, which began in May. The campaign, featuring friendly robot Digit AI and comedian Matt Lucas, was the first to run across BBC and commercial channels.

Following the campaign, awareness increased by 13 percentage points nationally and by 11 points in the Border region.

West Country and Wales, the TV regions that will follow Border in the switchover sequence, also have above-average awareness of switchover. In West Country, 77% of people are aware, and in Wales 71%.

Publication of the findings coincides with the announcement of the national switchover flagship project in Whitehaven, Cumbria. Switchover in Whitehaven will now take place ahead of schedule in 2007, increasing the number of channels available through a normal aerial from four to 18.

Ford Ennals, Chief Executive of Digital UK said: "These results are encouraging and demonstrate that the message about switchover is getting through, particularly to older viewers.

"We still have a lot of work to do in order to ensure everyone knows about switchover and understands what they need to do to prepare. This includes knowing that all televisions need to be able to receive a digital signal. Nevertheless, this is a good start to our programme of communication and support, one we will continue to build on in the coming months and years."

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Jim Egan, Ofcom Strategy Director, said: “The switchover tracker research will provide valuable intelligence on consumer attitudes and expectations in the run up to full digital switchover. It will also be an important means of monitoring progress in the critical years ahead.”

The Digital UK campaign featured national and regional advertising backed up with information leaflets sent to 3m homes in the first three television regions to switch (Border, West Country and Wales). It prompted 20,000 calls to the Digital UK information line (08456 50 50 50) and 130,000 visitors to its website (www.digitaluk.co.uk). The next phase of Digital UK’s campaign is due to begin in the autumn with national and regional communications, including in the fourth TV region to switch, Granada, for the first time.

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Notes to editors

Ofcom/Digital UK Tracker conducted by GfK/NOP. Sample: 2,522 face to face interviews April-June 2006. Future results to be published quarterly.

TV Region	Awareness %	Satisfaction with digital TV %
National	66	77
Border	82	79
West Country	77	80
Wales	71	83
Granada	64	83
West	75*	n/a
STV/Grampian	62	84*
Central	66	72
Yorkshire	67	74
Anglia	68	79*
Meridian	79	71*
London	59	77
Tyne Tees	68*	86*
Ulster	NA	NA
Age 16-24	47	80
Age 25-34	60	83
Age 35-44	65	79
Age 45-54	75	71
Age 55-64	75	74
Age: 65-74	78	73
Age 75+	63	81*

*Small sample size – indicative only

The Digital UK/Ofcom switchover tracker survey delivers quarterly results. The percentage point increase figure denotes the difference between awareness levels in April and May/June.

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About switchover

Switchover will make it fairer, as more people will be able to access more digital services than they can today. Currently, one in four UK households cannot get the full range of digital TV services available free through an aerial and the Government wants everyone to have a choice of affordable digital TV options. Only switchover can change this.

Switchover starts in each of the television regions in the following years:

2008: Border

2009: West Country; Wales; Granada

2010: Grampian, West; Scottish

2011: Central; Yorkshire; Anglia

2012: Meridian; Carlton/LWT; Tyne Tees; Ulster

About Digital UK

Digital UK was launched in September 2005 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation to co-ordinate the UK's switch to digital television. Its main responsibilities are to:

- Co-ordinate the technical roll-out of digital terrestrial television across the UK, region by region, to a timetable agreed by Government.
- Communicate with the public about digital switchover, ensuring everyone knows what is happening, what they need to do, and when.
- Liaise with TV equipment manufacturers, retailers, digital platform operators and consumer groups to ensure understanding of and support for the switchover programme

Digital UK was set up at the Government's request, in recognition that switchover would require cross-industry co-ordination. The company is headed by Ford Ennals (Chief Executive) and Barry Cox (Chairman) and its board members are:

- The public service broadcasters: the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, five, S4C and Teletext;
- The digital-terrestrial multiplex operators: National Grid Wireless and SDN;
- Two Representative Director positions representing 'The Supply Chain Group' (manufacturers, retailers and aerial installers).

It is wholly funded by its board members the public service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, five, S4C, Teletext), and the digital terrestrial multiplex operators.

About Ofcom

Ofcom is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. For further details please visit www.ofcom.org.uk.

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