

Digital TV switchover: Viewer response so far

By 31 March 2010, around a fifth of UK households had been through digital TV switchover. While still relatively early days for the programme, it is an appropriate time to explore public reaction to switchover and its impact on viewers.

Our focus was on those people who got digital television because of switchover. Some had recently switched from analogue to digital TV on their main set, others had converted secondary sets around the home. We wanted to understand how these late converters felt about the process, about getting digital TV and what difference, if any, it has made to their lives. We found:

- The majority of late converters have noticed improvements in watching television since switching.
- The vast majority of people found it easy to switch.
- TV switchover helped a significant proportion of late converters to feel more confident with consumer technology.

This paper reports these findings in more detail.

Switchover has improved the experience of watching television

The majority of those who switched to digital because of switchover said that digital television has improved their overall enjoyment of watching and they would not want to go back to analogue.

- 90% said digital TV was better or as good as analogue.
- Nearly a third (30%) said that they noticed improved sound and picture quality.
- One-in-three (31%) wished they had converted to digital television earlier than they did.
- There was also a perceived improvement in TV reception. The majority (60%) of late converters thought that digital TV was better than their previous analogue TV reception, while 30% believed it was the same.

A smooth switchover experience

The research suggests that the consumer experience at switchover was generally positive, with most people feeling confident about making the change.

- Only a minority of people experienced problems. Just 2% of late converters said that they felt confused about using the new equipment, while 4% felt confused about installing the new equipment. Around eight-out-of-ten (78%) said they did not feel confused about anything related to digital switchover.
- Freeview is the most widely used platform across the regions already switched. All Freeview viewers had to retune their set at switchover, and over three quarters (77%) said they felt confident about doing so. However, 17% did not feel confident about the process. Confidence around retuning was lower among Freeview users who started using the service only three months or less before switchover, with 31% saying they didn't feel confident.

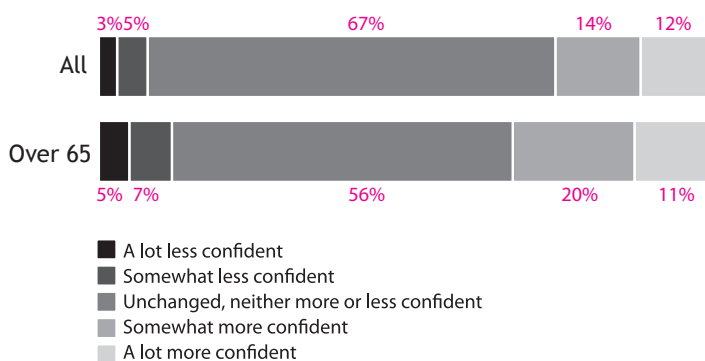
TV switchover may open a gateway to other technologies

One of the most interesting findings concerned the wider impact of switchover on attitudes towards new technologies, particularly among older viewers. The act of switching to digital TV, and experiencing the associated benefits, seems to have given some late converters more confidence with technologies and an appetite to try new things.

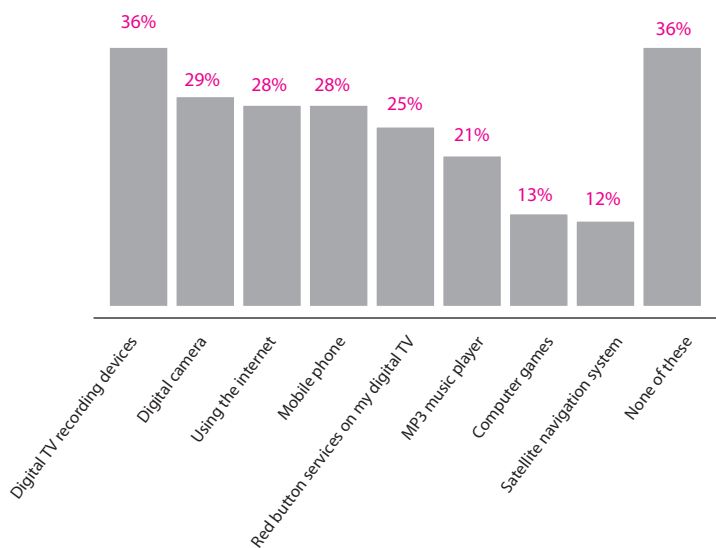
- More than a quarter of people who got digital TV because of switchover (26%) said that they felt more confident using technology generally. Among older people (65+) this increased to 31%.

- 64% of those people who said they felt more confident with new technology (25% of all late converters overall) said they are planning to try other new technologies as a result: 36% said they would try digital recording devices; 29% will try digital cameras; 28% thought they would use the internet for the first time; 28% said they would try mobile phones.

Q: In what way has getting digital TV influenced how you feel about using technology in general?



Q: Are you currently thinking about starting to use any of the following technologies?*

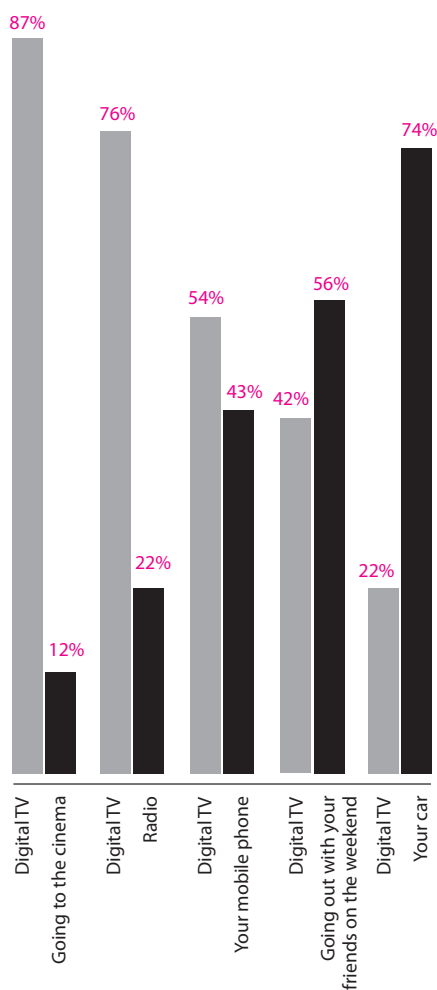


* Among those who felt more confident with technology following switchover

Digital television ranks highly amongst other sources of entertainment

Respondents were asked to compare watching digital television with other sources of entertainment and life comforts. The majority of digital television viewers said they would rather give up going to the cinema (87%) or listening to the radio (76%) than lose out on watching digital TV. However, digital TV is still less important to consumers than going out with friends on the weekend, as 56% of people would rather go out with their friends. In terms of life comforts, over a quarter of viewers (26%) said they would choose digital television over their car, while the majority of people would give up their mobile phones before giving up digital television (54%).

Q: If you had to choose between keeping Digital TV or the following other forms of entertainment, which would you choose?



Methodology

1. All data from BRMB/TNS telephone omnibus survey across all regions that have switched to Digital TV (Border, West Country, Wales, Granada and West). Fieldwork dates 30th April - 3rd May 2010 and 7th May - 9th May 2010. Sample: 479 TV homes across all regions switched including 216 late converters

2. Late converters are defined as those who upgraded to digital TV because of digital switchover