

Measuring the say-do gap: using passive data to accurately capture online news habits

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SRA Conference

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**How many of you have
read a Daily Mail article
online this month?**

There are many different ways to access news online



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Trump faces 100 YEARS behind bars if he's convicted of federal charges - including espionage - over classified documents, as sources claim outraged ex-president was blindsided by indictment

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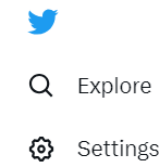
Donald Trump indicted for second time, amid allegations ...
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How can Ofcom explore the scale and effect of online news consumption when so much of it is done inadvertently?



Research Goal

Ofcom need to explore the scale of subconscious news consumption online



Challenge

How can we measure something that is subconscious?

Getting the same people to fill in a survey, and agree to have their usage tracked, allowed us to answer a complex question



Quant Survey

Can tell us what % of people claim to use online news



Passive Device Data

Can tell us what % of people actually use online news



Combination

What % of people unaware they consume news online

Our novel design surveyed participants after passive data had already been collected

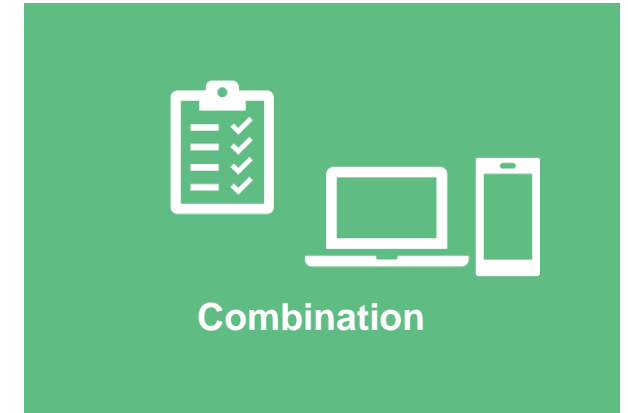
OLD



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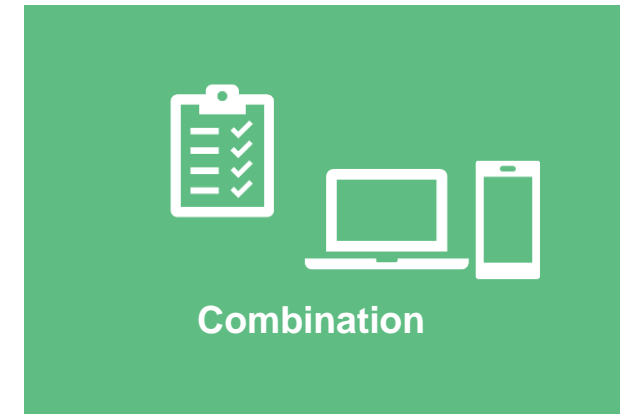
NEW



+



=



Extra care taken to make the most of the opportunity and maximise the validity of results

**1,805
potential
news
sources**

104 apps

**59,000+
urls**

**211,000+
visits**

Harnessing the opportunity of Ipsos iris

- 10,000 panellists
- Endorsed by UKOM
- Recruited to be nationally representative of online population
- Uses software to track online activity across multiple devices

Improving validity

- Separate Nat Rep study conducted using traditional online research panel
- Comparison between distribution of responses
- Weighting used to minimise error between sample frames

Device tracking data helped confirm our theory about the passive nature of news consumption



Quant Survey

The online survey told us that **79%** of people consume online news...

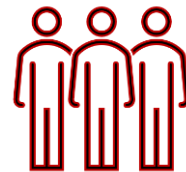


Passive Device Data

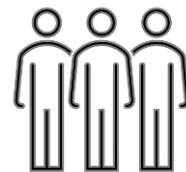
... but the device data revealed a large group of 'passive' news consumers



79% claimed to use online news



19% claimed not to use online news – but did!

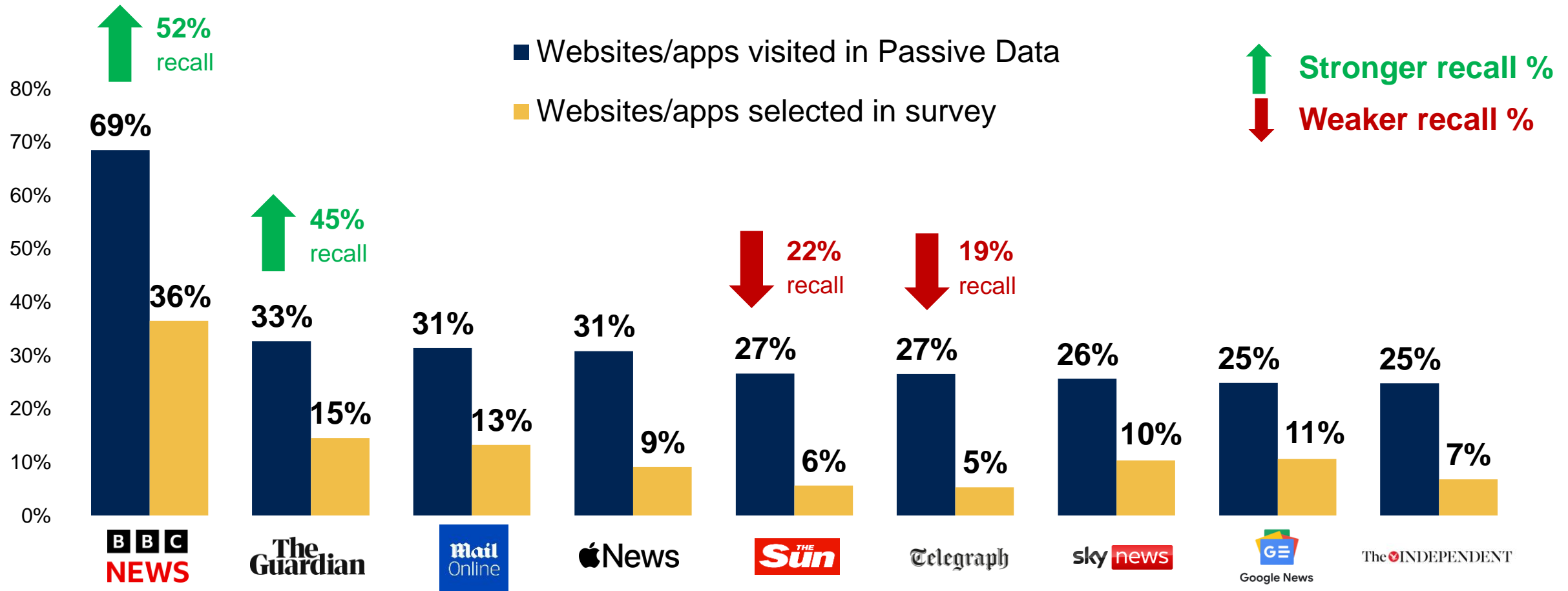


2% claimed not to use online news and didn't

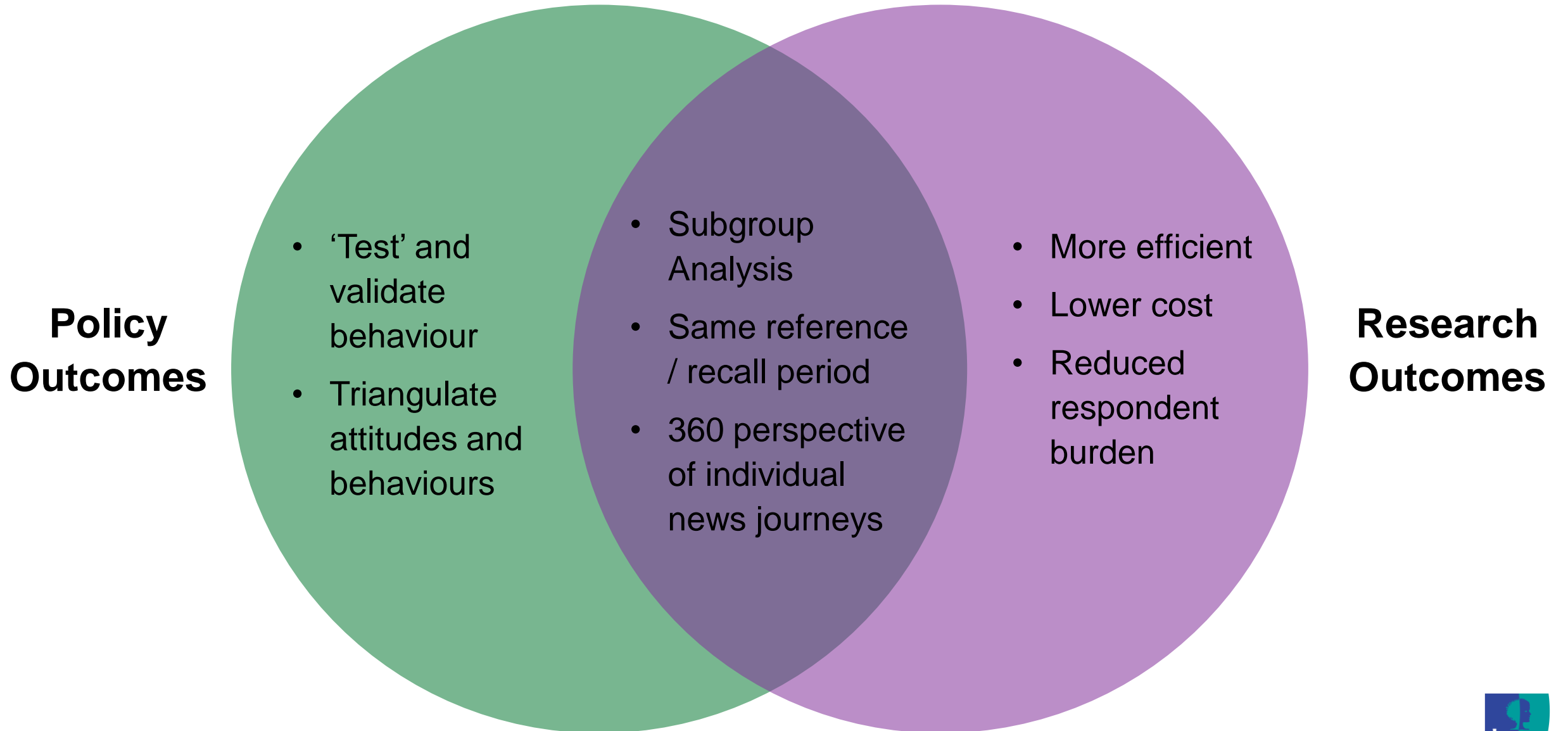
Actual reach of online news...

98%?

Matching the survey to the tracking data allowed us to build deeper insights into passive news consumption

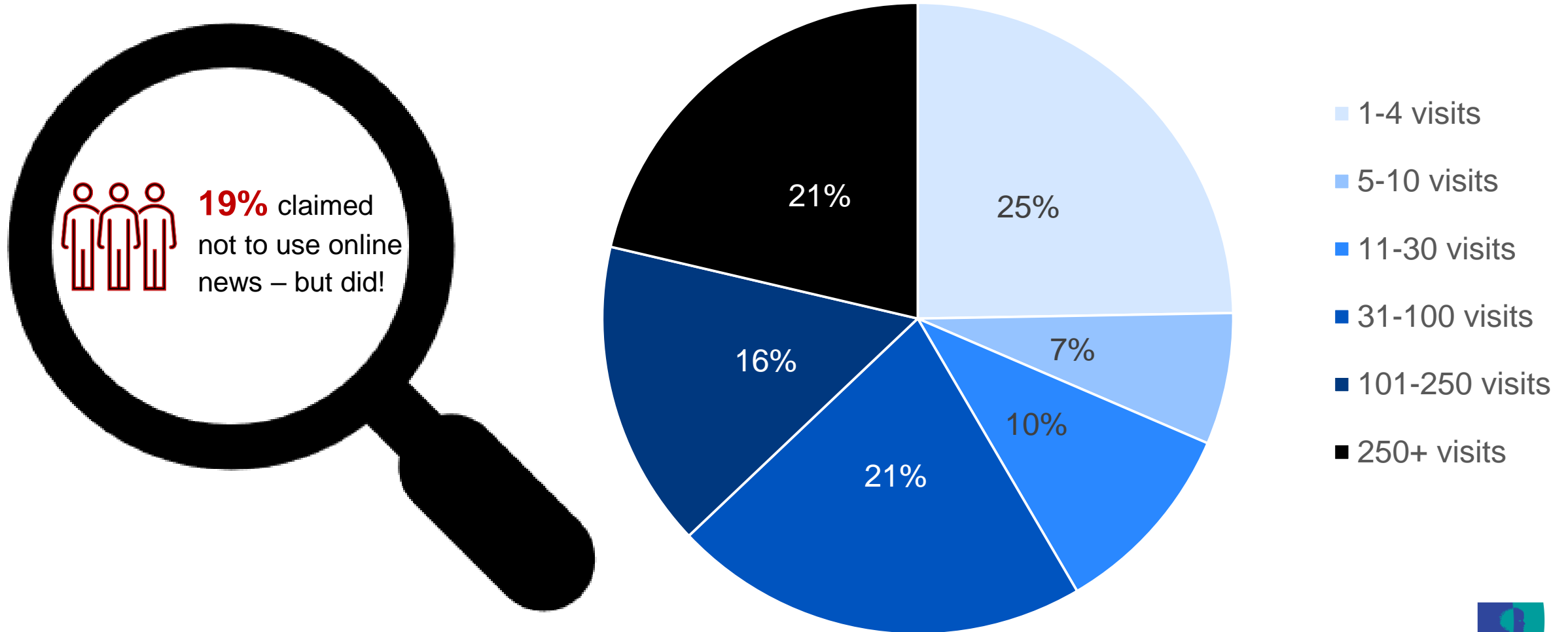


The design improved policy and research outcomes

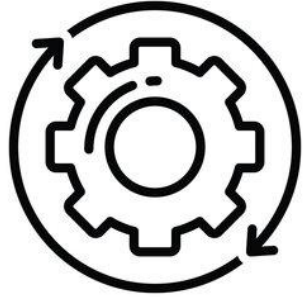


For example... using number of visits as a proxy for estimating intention to consume news online

How many online news site visits constitutes a “wrong” answer to the survey question?



Always room for improvement, but also clear limitations



Opportunities to optimise future studies

Exact matches for time periods of activity

Risk of dual use

Hard to judge intention

Time spent vs number of visits



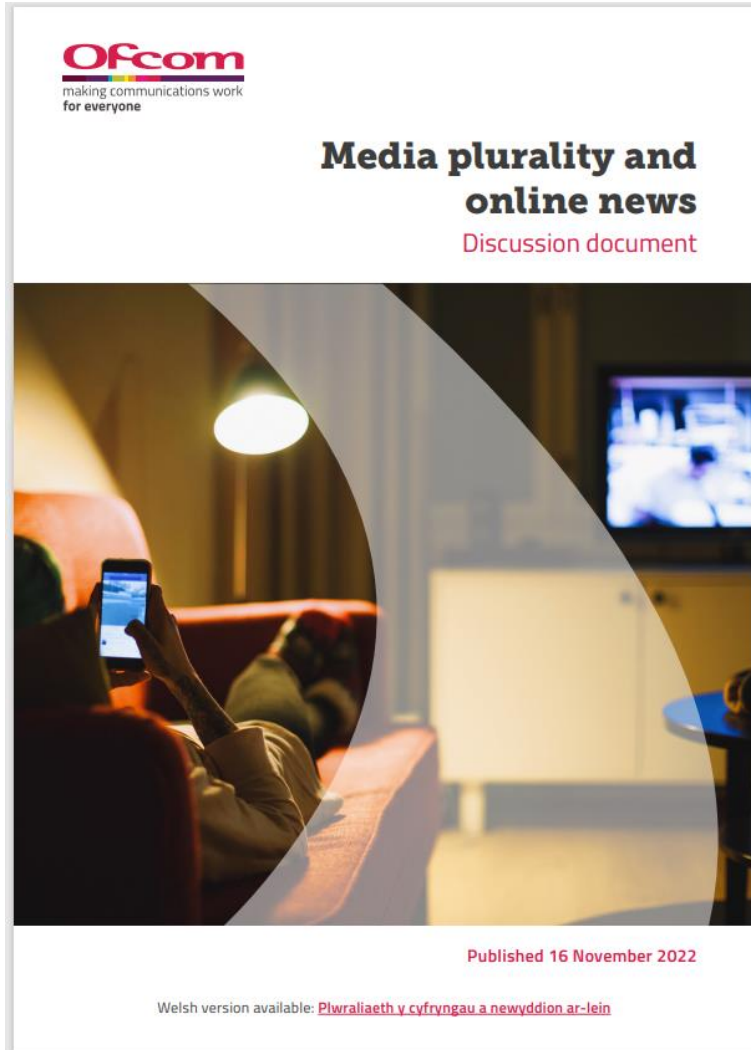
Limitations of current passive technology

Poor performance on iOS

Non-response for those unwilling or unable to download passive tracking software

Limited data on social media (esp within app)

Reflections on using the survey vs. passive data method



Answered the key research question



Offered us some unexpected insights



But still left us with questions