
Application by News Corp UK and Ireland Limited to release the Undertakings relating to The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers

Ofcom's advice to the Secretary of State

NON-CONFIDENTIAL VERSION

Submitted on: 24 September 2021

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1. Overview

This report contains Ofcom’s advice to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport following News Corp UK and Ireland Limited’s application to release the Undertakings relating to The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers.

The Undertakings ensure the continued publication of The Times and The Sunday Times as two separate newspaper titles and provide various protections of editorial independence.

On 30 July 2021, the then Secretary of State wrote to Ofcom to request advice on whether the release of the Undertakings may be expected to operate against the following public interest considerations:

- the need for, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable, a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers in each market for newspapers in the United Kingdom or a part of the United Kingdom;
- the need for accurate presentation of news; and
- the need for free expression of opinion.

What we have found

We do not consider that the release of the Undertakings will have a material impact on plurality.

The release of the Undertakings could result in further integration and ultimately a merger of The Times and The Sunday Times. However, we consider that the impact on plurality is likely to be limited because:

- **The UK newspaper market is currently reasonably plural, and consumers increasingly get their news from a range of different sources.** The release of the Undertakings will not lead to an immediate structural change in the UK newspaper market. Even in the event of a merger of the titles, readers would still have access to a wide range of viewpoints.
- **Any diminution of editorial voice due to further integration between the titles is unlikely to be significant.** Although they have distinct voices and overlapping but distinct readerships, The Times and The Sunday Times both position themselves on the centre right of UK politics.
- **The increase in consumption of news online, and News UK’s digital strategy, means that over time the separation of the print titles will be apparent to fewer readers.**
- **There is a strong commercial rationale for the release of the Undertakings.** The newspaper industry is facing financial challenges and we generally welcome the steps that newspaper groups are taking to support the long-term viability of their titles. The release of the Undertakings could have a positive effect on plurality in the long term.

The release of the Undertakings would create the opportunity for greater proprietorial influence over the titles, which could affect free expression of opinion and accuracy of news. We consider that on balance this is unlikely to operate against the public interest because:

- **The scope for influence is constrained by the plurality of the wider market.**
- **There are commercial incentives which mitigate any impact on accuracy of news.** The economic success of The Times and The Sunday Times and their ability to attract readers and advertisers is linked to their reputation for quality, accurate and trusted news.
- **There will continue to be processes in place to protect accuracy and editorial independence.**

Ofcom is required to report to the Secretary of State by 24 September 2021. The Secretary of State will then come to an initial decision on whether to release News Corp UK and Ireland Limited from the Undertakings.

The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. Our reasoning is set out in the full document.

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 News Corp UK and Ireland Limited (News UK) and its subsidiaries are wholly-owned by News Corporation, an international media and information services group which operates mainly in the United States, Australia and the UK. The Murdoch Family Trust (MFT) holds 38.4% of the voting shares in News Corporation.
- 2.2 Times Newspapers Holdings Limited (TNHL) is a subsidiary of News UK and owns Times Newspapers Limited (TNL). TNL is the operating company that publishes The Times and The Sunday Times. ¹
- 2.3 News UK's other subsidiaries include News Group Newspapers Limited (NGN), publishers of The Sun and The Sun on Sunday; Harper Collins Publishers; and Wireless Group which operates national radio stations across the UK and local radio stations within the Republic of Ireland, including Times Radio and Talksport.

News UK's application

- 2.4 On 1 February 2021, News UK submitted a formal [application](#) to the Secretary of State to request that the Undertakings relating to The Times and The Sunday Times be released in their entirety. The Undertakings require The Times and The Sunday Times to be published as two separate newspaper titles and provide various protections of editorial independence. ²
- 2.5 These requirements have been in place since January 1981 when the then Secretary of State for Trade gave his consent to the acquisition of The Times and The Sunday Times by News International Limited (now News UK) and were referred to as conditions of consent (the 1981 Conditions). The 1981 Conditions were replaced by the Undertakings in July 2019, which preserve most of the original requirements, but with an amendment to permit the two newspapers to share resources.
- 2.6 In its application, News UK submits that there has been a material change in circumstances since 1981, and since the Undertakings came into force in 2019, which warrants their release. It argues that the newspaper industry is facing an increasingly challenging time, as the decline in print circulation and advertising spend continues. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these trends. In addition, since the Undertakings were accepted, there has been further consolidation in the newspaper industry. Against this backdrop, News UK notes that The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers are subject to restrictions which do not apply to their competitors. The costs of compliance with the Undertakings places its newspapers at a competitive

¹ TNL has two subsidiary companies (The Times Limited and The Sunday Times Limited) which are both dormant.

² Invitation to Comment: Application to release undertakings, [Annex A: Times/Sunday Times Undertakings](#).

disadvantage, without which it would have greater operational flexibility to respond to rapidly changing market conditions.

- 2.7 News UK argues that the release of the Undertakings in these circumstances would not give rise to any adverse effect on the relevant public interest considerations. It argues that it has strong commercial incentives to maintain high standards of accuracy, free expression of opinion, and strong commercial disincentives against any attempt by the proprietor to restrain or inhibit the editorial position of either title. It submits that the release of the Undertakings would not result in plurality concerns.
- 2.8 The Secretary of State opened an [invitation to comment](#) (ITC) on the request, which sought input from interested parties by 15 July 2021.

Request for formal advice

- 2.9 On 30 July 2021, the then Secretary of State made a request to Ofcom to report on whether or not any effects adverse to the public interest considerations may be expected to result from the release of the Undertakings.
- 2.10 The public interest considerations are:
- i) the need for, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable, a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers in each market for newspapers in the United Kingdom or a part of the United Kingdom;
 - ii) the need for accurate presentation of news; and
 - iii) the need for free expression of opinion.³
- 2.11 The Secretary of State also asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to provide advice relating to whether there has been a material change of circumstances, and the extent and nature of those changes, particularly in relation to the UK newspaper market.
- 2.12 Ofcom and the CMA are required to report to the Secretary of State by 24 September 2021.

Ofcom's role

- 2.13 Ofcom's role is to consider whether the release of the Undertakings may be expected to operate against the public interest, having regard to the public interest considerations specified by the Secretary of State.
- 2.14 Ofcom provides advice to the Secretary of State, who then decides whether or not she is minded to release News UK from the Undertakings, make amendments to the Undertakings or retain the Undertakings in their current form. If the Secretary of State

³ These are the public interest considerations set out in section 58 of the [Enterprise Act 2002](#).

is minded to release News UK from, or amend, the Undertakings she will consult on the matter.

Ofcom's approach

- 2.15 In recent years, Ofcom has been asked to report to the Secretary of State on media public interest considerations relevant to a number of media mergers.⁴ Although this case is not a merger, our assessment of each consideration will generally follow the approach we have taken in previous cases. We have considered the likely effects on media plurality, free expression of opinion and accurate presentation of news in the event that the Undertakings are released.
- 2.16 We have taken account of the [2004 statutory guidance from the Department of Trade and Industry](#) (the DTI Guidance) relating to the public interest considerations, recognising that some time has passed since that guidance was put in place.
- 2.17 We have also considered each of the grounds within the regulatory context for newspapers within the UK (see Section 4 below). Unlike the broadcasting sector, there is no general requirement for a newspaper owner to satisfy standards of fitness or professional conduct.⁵ Newspapers are self-regulated or subject to voluntary industry regulatory schemes. They are free to take particular editorial stances on public policy and political issues.
- 2.18 Although there have been some cases in the past in which the public interest considerations specified in relation to the current case have led to transactions being restricted or stopped, it is not necessarily contrary to the public interest for newspaper proprietors to take an interest in and influence the content of their newspapers, which may lead to newspapers expressing strong or controversial views, or for newspapers to get things wrong sometimes. We also note that it is not necessarily contrary to the public interest for newspapers to be owned or controlled by foreign nationals. Our assessment of the identified public interest considerations is made in this context.
- 2.19 Using the time available, we have relied on our existing research, published information acquired via desk research and information provided by News UK. We have not commissioned any additional research.

⁴ Ofcom, 2020. [Public interest test on the completed acquisition by Daily Mail and General Trust plc of JPIMedia Publications Limited and thus the 'i' newspaper](#); Ofcom, 2019. [Public interest test on the completed acquisitions by International Media Company of shares in Lebedev Holdings Limited and by Scalable Inc of shares in Independent Digital News and Media Limited](#); Ofcom, June 2018. [Public interest test for the acquisition by Trinity Mirror plc of publishing assets of Northern & Shell Media Group Limited](#); Ofcom, June 2017. [Public interest test for the proposed acquisition of Sky plc by 21st Century Fox, Inc.](#)

⁵ UK broadcasters must be fit and proper to hold a licence, and news that is broadcast on television and radio must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality. See [Ofcom's Broadcasting Code](#).

Plurality

- 2.20 According to the DTI Guidance, “*The concept of “a sufficient plurality of views” is [...] intended to encompass the need for a diversity of viewpoints exhibited in the relevant sector of the press. In particular, it allows consideration of the structural impact of a transaction on the overall range of views and distribution of voice within the relevant market. The test of a sufficient plurality of views is intended to enable regard to be had not only to the need for a sufficient number of views to be expressed, but also to the need for variety in those views and for there to be a variety of outlets and publications in which they can be expressed. There is a qualitative element to the plurality assessment that requires account to be taken of the context in which titles circulate and the nature of those titles – for example, one title in a particular area may be of greater significance for plurality purposes than another.*”⁶
- 2.21 Our assessment takes into account the cross-media nature of news production and consumption. We have assessed these requests in line with our [media plurality measurement framework](#), which includes television, radio, print and online news media. This framework applies a range of quantitative and qualitative metrics across the media landscape to assess plurality.⁷
- 2.22 In our work, we have taken account of the significance that Parliament has attached to the need for sufficient media plurality in the functioning of a healthy and informed democratic society,⁸ with plurality in media contributing to a well-functioning democracy through:
- i) informed citizens, who are able to access and consume a wide range of viewpoints across television, radio, online and print media from a variety of media organisations; and
 - ii) preventing too much influence over the political process being exercised by any one media owner.⁹
- 2.23 Both The Times and The Sunday Times are national titles with UK-wide reach and we have assessed plurality on this basis. We do not consider that there are issues requiring separate examination in relation to a part of the UK.
- 2.24 There have been significant developments over the past decade in the way in which news is distributed and consumed with a much greater choice of news available on multiple platforms and devices. As such, a narrow assessment of plurality in newspapers may not reflect the reality of news consumption in the UK.¹⁰ While we have considered the effect of the transaction on plurality in the market for newspapers

⁶ [DTI Guidance](#), paragraph 5.11.

⁷ Ofcom, November 2015. [Measurement framework for media plurality](#), paragraph 1.17.

⁸ Hansard, 2 July 2003. [Communications Bill](#), The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Lord McIntosh of Haringey).

⁹ Ofcom, November 2015. [Measurement framework for media plurality](#), paragraph 2.1.

¹⁰ “Newspaper” is defined in section 44(10) of the [Enterprise Act 2002](#): “means a daily, Sunday or local (other than daily or Sunday) newspaper circulating wholly or mainly in the United Kingdom or in a part of the United Kingdom”.

only, we have also considered the public interest within the context of the wider news market, which continues to undergo considerable change.

Free expression of opinion

- 2.25 The DTI guidance states that: *“In considering the impact of a newspaper merger on free expression of opinion, the CC (and before it the MMC) has focused on the potential impact on editorial decision-making of the transfer of the newspaper in question i.e. the extent to which the transaction would affect the freedom of the editors to operate without interference from the proprietor.”*¹¹
- 2.26 As part of our assessment of this public interest ground, we have considered the measures in place to promote and maintain editorial independence. We have also considered whether there are incentives for News UK to influence the editorial stance or interfere with the editors’ running of the publications, along with their ability to do so, both now and in the event that the Undertakings were released.

Accurate presentation of news

- 2.27 The DTI guidance states that: *“The impact of a relevant merger situation on accurate presentation of the news is likely to be assessed by reference to evidence of past behaviour by the enterprises in question, or by the persons with control of such enterprises, in relation to that or other enterprises, including but not limited to newspapers.”*¹²
- 2.28 Our assessment of accurate presentation of news is similar to that of free expression of opinion. We have taken into account the incentives for News UK to influence or alter accurate presentation of news, as well as its ability to do so, by considering the measures in place which currently protect accuracy and what safeguards would remain in place in the absence of the Undertakings. We note, however, that in this case, past behaviour of the newspapers in question will be affected to some extent by the Undertakings, which may cease to apply, although we can also consider past behaviour in other enterprises controlled by the same persons.

Stakeholder engagement

- 2.29 We published a [note](#) on our website on 2 August 2021 setting out the process and timetable for preparing our report on the public interest considerations set out by the Secretary of State.
- 2.30 We invited evidence from stakeholders but only received two submissions from members of the public. The then Secretary of State received four responses to his ITC;

¹¹ [DTI Guidance](#), paragraph 5.7.

¹² [DTI Guidance](#), paragraph 5.5.

three from individuals and one from an organisation: The Media Reform Coalition (MRC).

- 2.31 Five respondents (all four responses to the ITC and one response to our invitation for evidence) objected to News UK being released from its Undertakings. Among the arguments made, it was suggested that there is no reason to believe that the Undertakings are less necessary now than when they were introduced, and the financial motivation for the request is unconvincing. MRC considered that it was important both for the Undertakings to remain in place to protect against further reduction in media plurality, and to consider that *“declining newspapers circulations are not commensurate with a decline in influence”*.
- 2.32 We have considered all representations received on the public interest considerations in our assessment. We have also requested additional information from News UK which we have considered as part of our assessment.

3. Market context

- 3.1 In this section we describe the UK national newspaper market and the challenges that newspaper publishers, including TNL, face in the light of the changes in the way news is produced and consumed.
- 3.2 We then describe the market position of The Times and The Sunday Times and consider the impact that the respective titles have on their readers and the wider national agenda.
- 3.3 This context informs our assessment across all three public interest considerations.

Newspapers make a vital contribution to news plurality in the UK

- 3.4 As we have highlighted in our previous public interest tests of newspaper mergers, newspapers play a key role in the UK’s democratic process, providing a range of voices that reflect views across society and encourage debate. Newspapers make vital contributions to the UK news ecology, including by holding the powerful to account through their public interest journalism and by investing in original journalism.¹³
- 3.5 As Figure 3.1 shows, six newspaper groups publish national newspapers with a UK-wide reach. These groups publish a range of tabloid and broadsheet daily and Sunday titles, and these titles offer a variety of editorial positions and views on public policy issues.

Figure 3.1: UK-wide Newspaper Groups

Newspaper group	UK Publications
News UK (wholly-owned by News Corp)	The Times, The Sunday Times, The Sun/The Scottish Sun, The Sun on Sunday/The Scottish Sun on Sunday
DMGT (Daily Mail and General Trust)	Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday, Metro, The ‘i’
Reach plc	Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People, Daily Record, Sunday Mail, Daily Express, Sunday Express, Daily Star, Daily Star Sunday
Telegraph Media Group	Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph
Guardian Media Group	The Guardian, The Observer
Nikkei	The Financial Times

Source: Ofcom research

- 3.6 Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and English regional or local newspapers can also contain significant amounts of UK-wide and international news. Publishers of these titles include Lebedev Holdings Limited (The London Evening Standard), City A.M. Limited (City A.M), DC Thomson & Co Limited (The Sunday Post, The Courier and The

¹³ As noted in The Cairncross Review, 12 February 2019. ‘[A Sustainable Future for Journalism](#)’, Independent Report to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Evening Telegraph). The three biggest publishers of regional and local press titles are Reach plc (over 110 titles), Newsquest (over 120 titles) and National World Plc (over 100 titles; formerly owned by JPIMedia). The print market also includes several periodic news and current affairs magazines such as The Economist, The Week, The New Statesman and Private Eye.

The challenges facing newspapers continue to grow

Online news consumption has increased significantly over the past few years

- 3.7 According to Ofcom’s annual News Consumption Survey, the proportion of UK adults using the internet for news in 2013 was 32%.¹⁴ By 2021, 73% of UK adults used online sources to access news and about one in 10 (11%) only used online sources for news.¹⁵ Meanwhile 79% of UK adults used TV and 46% used radio for news, compared to 32% using print newspapers.¹⁶ People can access news content in a wide range of ways and can choose to pay for this content as well as to get it for free (e.g. free newspapers and free websites).
- 3.8 Ipsos iris provides online site and app audience use across desktop and mobile in the UK. Figure 3.2 below shows the online reach of the top 11 national news sites and apps amongst those aged 15+, with The Times and The Sunday Times ranked 11th.¹⁷

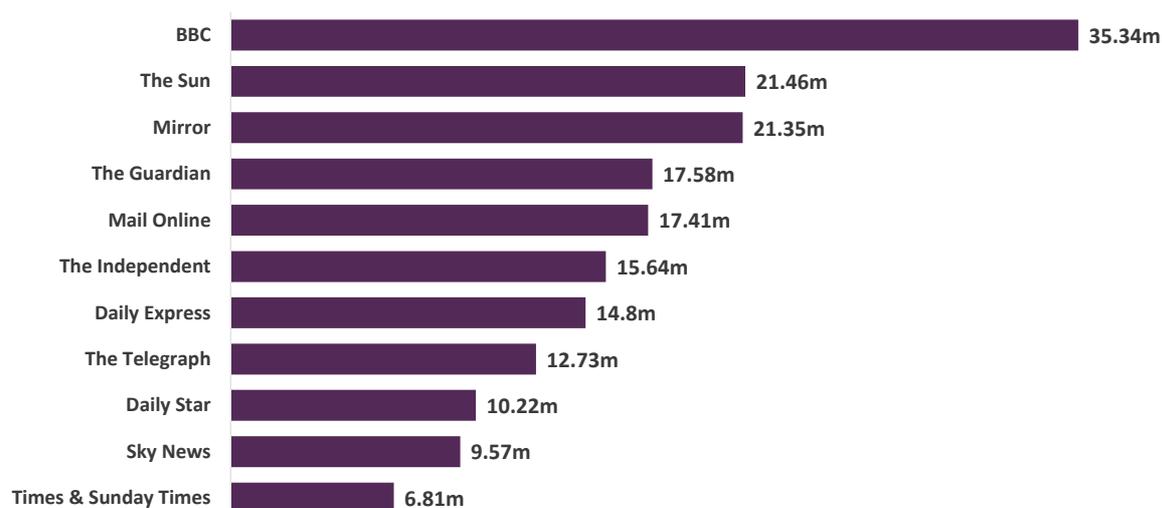
¹⁴ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2013](#), slide 9.

¹⁵ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slides 13 and 18. Base: All adults 16+. The 2013-16 and 2018-20 and 2021 Ofcom News Consumption Surveys are not directly comparable due to methodology changes, but the difference between 2013 and 2021 is indicative of growth over the period. The 2021 internet figure includes social media, podcasts and all other websites/apps accessed via any device.

¹⁶ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slide 13. Base: All adults 16+.

¹⁷ © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Ranking Report, Category: News, 1st June – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK. Note: Custom defined list by OFCOM. The figures include news related traffic only; some websites sections might not be classified as ‘News’ category. It does not include Apple News traffic.

Figure 3.2: UK online aged 15+ reach to national news brands in June 2021



Source: © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Ranking Report, Category: News, 1st June – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK. Note: Custom defined list by OFCOM. Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further. The figures above include news related traffic only; some websites sections might not be classified as ‘News’ category. It does not include Apple News traffic.

3.9 Mobile consumption has been a strong factor in the growth of online news. Sourcing news across multiple platforms is now commonplace, with news users who are online getting their news from around nine different sources on average, including social media and news aggregators, such as Apple or Google News.¹⁸ In 2021, 49% of UK adults said they use social media sources such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp for news, rising to 79% of 16-24 year olds.¹⁹

The shift from print to online has affected the finances and business models of national publishers

3.10 As a result of these changing consumption habits, newspaper publishers have experienced significant declines in their print circulation and readership and consequently their circulation revenues. Advertising has also shifted online.

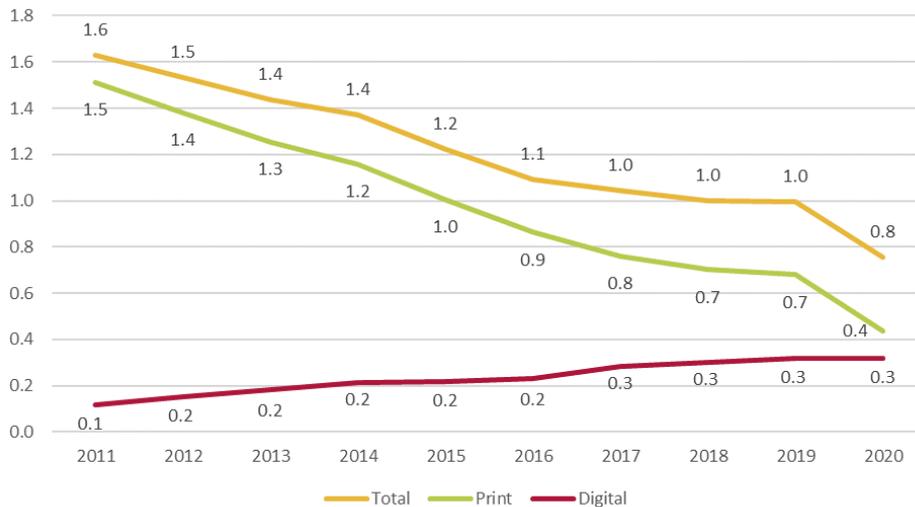
3.11 Between 2011 and 2020, total advertising revenues for national publishers fell 54% from £1.6bn per annum to £0.8bn (Figure 3.3). This was driven by a 71% reduction in print advertising from £1.5bn to £0.4bn. While digital advertising for national publishers has tripled over this period, from £0.1bn to £0.3bn, this has only offset a small proportion of lost print advertising revenues. Digital advertising is expected to drive advertising revenue growth for national publishers in the next couple of years, as

¹⁸ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slide 67. Base: All online adults 16+ who use TV, Newspapers, Radio, Internet, Magazines for news nowadays.

¹⁹ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slide 19.

advertising revenue recovers from the pandemic, with forecast increases of 18.2% in 2021 and 7.7% in 2022. ²⁰

Figure 3.3: National publisher advertising revenues, 2011-2020 (£bn)



Source: AA/WARC. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

- 3.12 In relation to print circulation revenues, in 2011, net circulation revenues for national publishers were around £1.5bn. ²¹ By 2020, we estimate they have fallen to around £1.0bn (-32%). ²²
- 3.13 In response to these trends, publishers have expanded their online operations and diversified revenue streams by generating income from digital readership in the form of subscriptions and other reader revenues. However, publishers face challenges monetising digital operations. Competition for digital advertising is illustrated by the fact that Google and Facebook together are estimated to have captured 78% of all UK online advertising revenues in 2019. ²³
- 3.14 While The Independent is fully digital and The Financial Times reportedly now generates over half of its revenue from digital sources, ²⁴ many national publishers remain

²⁰ Source, AA/WARC Expenditure Report July 2021.

²¹ In a 2012 report for Ofcom ([Measuring media plurality](#), Annex 6, p.71), Mediatique estimated circulation revenue for national publishers was £2.04bn, gross of the distributor's share. In a 2018 report for DCMS ([Overview of recent dynamics in the UK press market](#)), Mediatique applied a 28% retailers' share to calculate net circulation revenues. This implies net circulation revenues for national publishers in 2011 of c£1.5bn.

²² In a 2018 report for DCMS ([Overview of recent dynamics in the UK press market](#), p.83), Mediatique applied a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of -2.7% to estimate how net circulation revenues had changed between 2011 and 2017. Applying this CAGR to 2011 net circulation revenues for national publishers of £1.5bn gives an estimate of £1.2bn for 2017. Between 2017 and 2020, we estimate that circulation revenues fell a further 20% based on figures reported in company accounts for DMG Media, Reach plc and GMG. This gives a 2020 estimate for net circulation revenue of £1.0bn.

²³ Ofcom calculation based on gross revenue data from AA/WARC and Oliver & Ohlbaum analysis.

²⁴ Press Gazette, 15 March 2021. [Financial Times CEO: Publishers don't have to choose between ads and subscriptions - they can have both](#). The article reports the FT's CEO saying: "FT's digital content revenues are now bigger than all its other revenue streams combined and more than three times print advertising, which is the next biggest".

dependent on print revenues. For example, DMG Media, Reach plc and Telegraph still generate around 70-80% of their revenues from print.²⁵

- 3.15 Despite the increase in digital advertising and subscription-based models, reported revenue for national publishers in aggregate fell 31% over the last decade from around £3.8bn in 2011 to £2.6bn in 2020 (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Reported revenue for national publishers (£bn)



Source: Ofcom analysis based on company annual reports and financial statements. Includes revenues for reporting periods ending in the given year for Guardian Media Group plc, Reach plc, Associated Newspapers Limited, The Financial Times Limited, Times Newspapers Limited, News Group Newspapers Limited, Telegraph Media Group Limited, Independent Print Limited/Independent Digital News and Media Limited and Northern and Shell plc (until 2017). Revenue in 2020 is estimated as not all companies have published results. We estimate that reported revenues fell 13% in 2020 based on the results of national publishers which have already reported results for periods ending 2020.

- 3.16 Publishers have reduced costs to maintain profitability through reductions in staff,²⁶ reductions in printing costs²⁷ and consolidation, as well as integration of resources used by different titles within a publisher group.²⁸ Between 2011 and 2020 operating profit

²⁵ Ofcom analysis based on company annual reports and financial statements. Note that not all national publishers report a breakdown of revenue. Our estimate of the proportion of revenues associated with print were as follows: DMG Media 69% (from [DMGT Annual report 2019/20](#), pp.128 and 133; DMG Media is the publishing division of DMGT); Reach plc 80% (from [Reach plc Annual report 2019/20](#), p.114) and Telegraph 74% (from Telegraph Media Group Limited financial statements December 2020, p.21 – available from Companies House).

²⁶ Mediatique estimated that the number of frontline journalists declined from 23,000 in 2007 to 17,000 in 2017 (-26%). Mediatique, April 2018. [Overview of recent dynamics in the UK press market](#), Report for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, p.82. This is likely to have fallen further since 2017, especially following the pandemic.

²⁷ For example, The Guardian and Observer relaunched as tabloid-sized papers in January 2018 and outsourced printing to Reach plc. See [Guardian Media Group moves print titles to tabloid format as part of three-year transformation programme](#).

²⁸ Most consolidation over the last decade has involved regional publishers, but national publisher consolidation includes JPIMedia acquiring the 'i' newspaper from Johnson Press in 2018 then selling it to DMGT in 2019, and Reach plc acquiring The Daily Express and The Daily Star from Northern & Shell in 2018.

margins for national publishers ranged from -28% to +22% with the average generally between 4% and 7%.²⁹

- 3.17 As print revenues continue to fall and digital monetisation remains challenging, national publishers are likely to be under pressure to make operational changes and reduce costs further to maintain profitability.

The Times and The Sunday Times are two of the most widely read broadsheet print newspapers in the UK

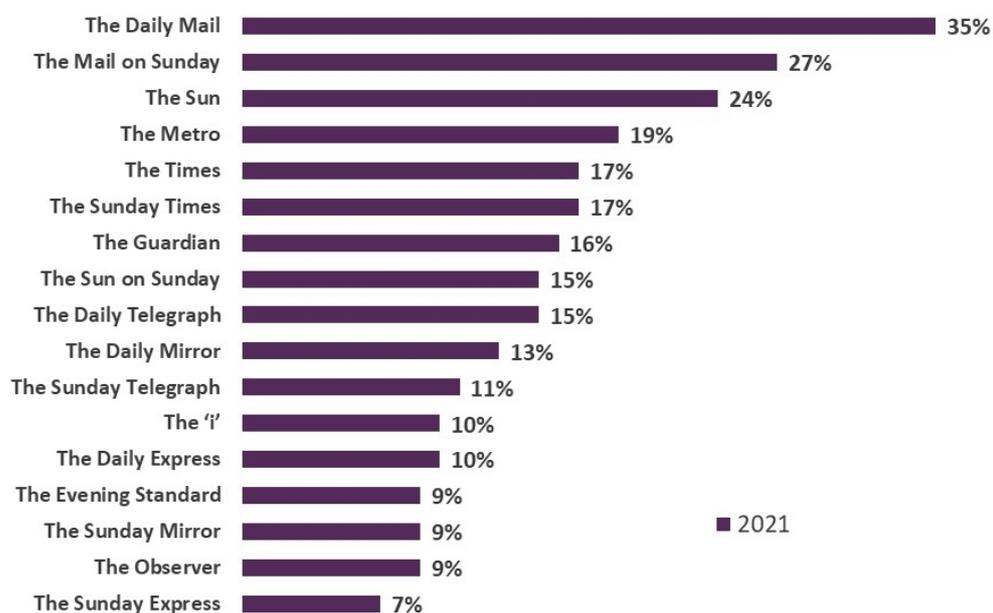
- 3.18 Given the changes in how news is produced and consumed, when considering News UK's application to be released from the Undertakings, it is appropriate that we look at the performance of The Times and The Sunday Times across print and digital.³⁰ As with all major newspapers, content from these titles is now made available through print, websites, apps and social media feeds.
- 3.19 Our News Consumption Survey data shows that, among those UK adults who use print newspapers or newspaper websites/apps for news, The Times and The Sunday Times print and digital versions have a combined reach of 20%.³¹
- 3.20 In terms of print, Figure 3.5 shows that The Times and The Sunday Times each have a reach of 17% of UK adults who use print newspapers for news, making them the joint 5th most popular UK print newspaper titles. The Times and Sunday Times are two of the most widely read broadsheet print newspapers in the UK.

²⁹ Ofcom estimate based on analysis of company reports and financial statements. Operating margin is before exceptional items. Average operating margin was calculated using financial statements between 2011 and 2020 (where available) for Reach plc, Associated Newspapers Limited, The Financial Times Limited, Times Newspapers Limited, News Group Newspapers Limited, Telegraph Media Group Limited, Independent Print Limited/Independent Digital News and Media Limited and Northern and Shell plc (until 2017). The operating margin for Guardian Media Group is excluded as losses are financed by the Scott Trust.

³⁰ The Times and The Sunday Times adopt a paywall for online access whereby readers are only able to access content by subscribing.

³¹ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slide 38.

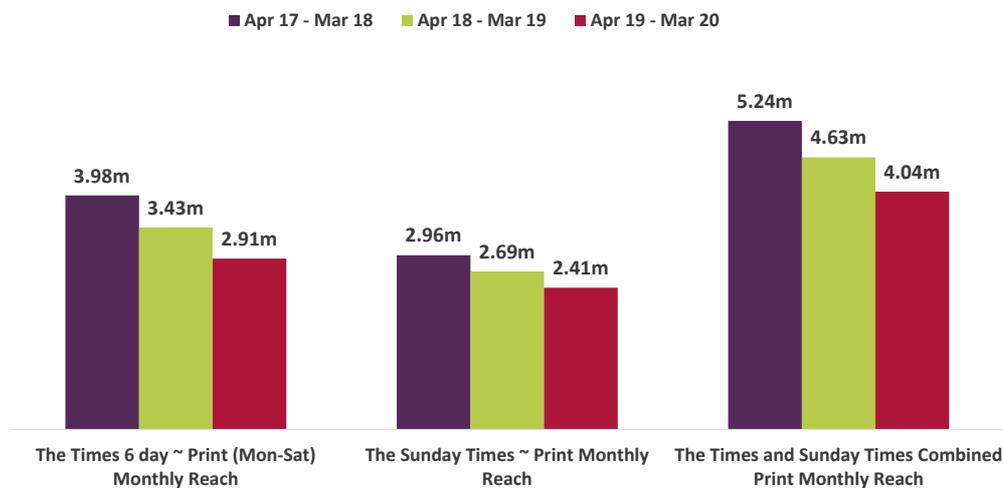
Figure 3.5: Reach of UK national print newspaper titles among print newspaper users



Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 - ONLINE sample only. Question: D3a-4a. Thinking specifically about <platform>, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: All UK adults aged 16+ using print newspapers for news – 2021=1104. Only sources with an incidence of >6% in 2021 are shown.

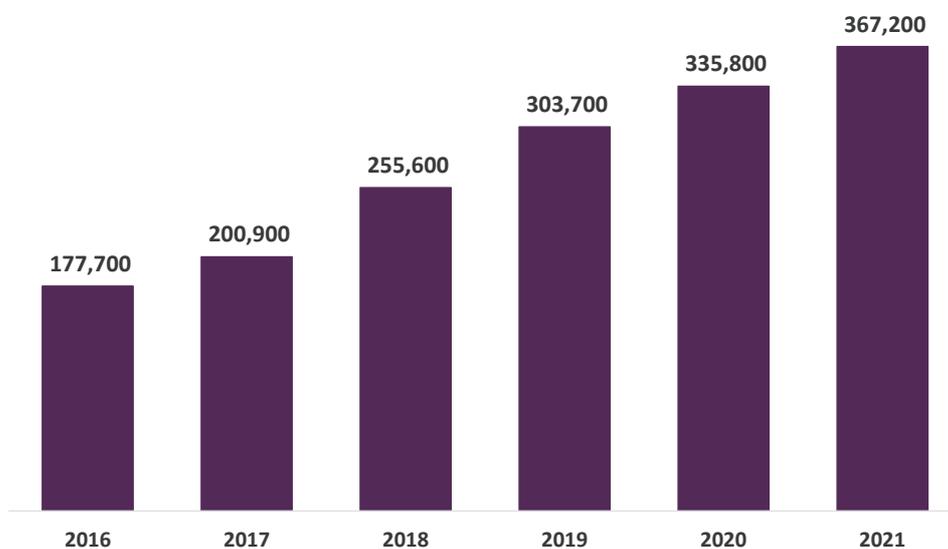
3.21 Print readership to The Times and The Sunday Times has been declining prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as shown in Figure 3.6 below. However digital subscriptions have been experiencing a year on year increase for the last six years as shown in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.6: Monthly print readership of The Times and The Sunday Times: by financial year



Source: News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021. PAMCo. Note: PAMCo print data from Mar’20 onwards has not been updated due to COVID-19 related restrictions on measurement.

Figure 3.7: The Times and The Sunday Times digital closing annual volume of subscribers in June each year

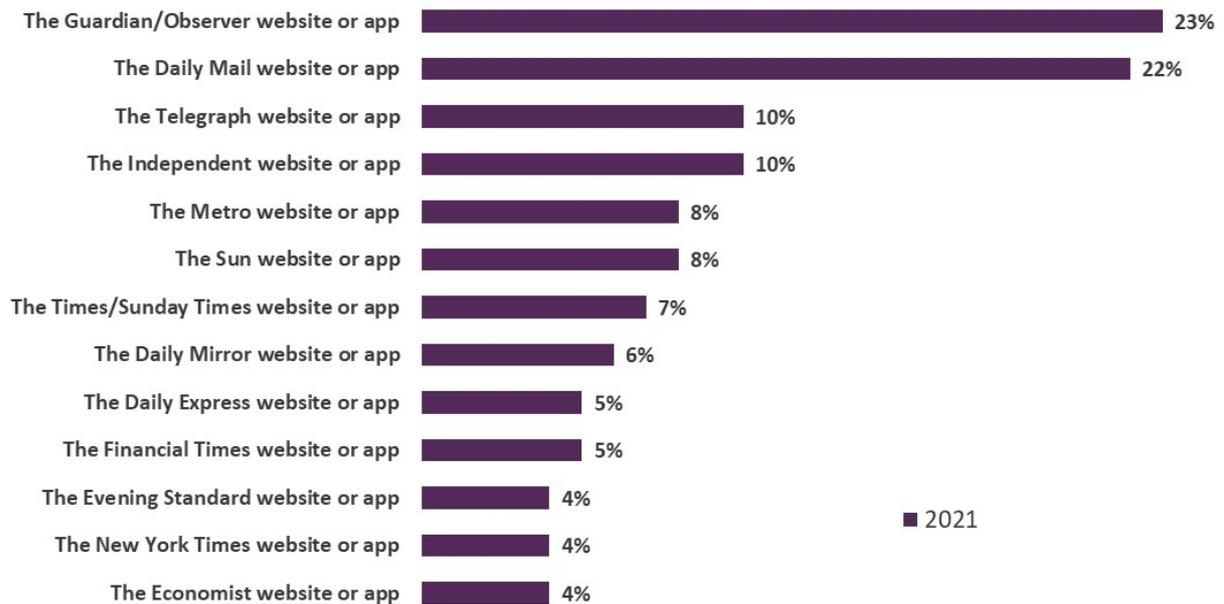


Source: News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021

3.22 Looking at digital performance, Figure 3.8 shows that The Times/The Sunday Times website/app reaches 7% of UK adults who use non-social media websites/apps for news, making it the 7th most popular UK newspaper website/app for news.³²

³² Figures 3.5 and 3.8 use different bases so the reach figures for print newspapers and newspaper website/app cannot be directly compared.

Figure 3.8: Reach of UK newspaper websites/apps among users of non-social media websites/apps



Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 - ONLINE sample only. Question: D8a. Thinking specifically about the internet, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: All UK adults aged 16+ using non-social media websites/apps for news - 2021=1555. Only sources with an incidence of >3% in 2021 are shown.

3.23 Times Radio has a reach of 2% among UK adults who use radio sources for news. ³³

3.24 In the UK The Times and The Sunday Times site and app in Q2 2021 had a combined average daily reach of 851k unique visitors aged 15+. ³⁴ The Times and The Sunday Times app in Q2 2021 had an average of 330,000 unique visitors aged 15+ in the UK visiting the app per day. ³⁵

³³ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#).

³⁴ © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, The Times and The Sunday Times, Category: News, 1st April – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK. Note: Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further. The figures include news related traffic only; some sections from The Times and The Sunday Times website might not be classified as ‘News’ category. It does not include Apple News traffic.

³⁵ © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, The Times and The Sunday Times mobile app, 1st April - 30th June 2021, All adults, UK.

Figure 3.9: UK online aged 15+ reach to The Times and The Sunday Times site or app: by month in Q2 2021

	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021
Unique visitors aged 15+	8.50m	7.57m	6.81m
Online aged 15+ reach	18%	16%	14%
Average daily unique visitors aged 15+	905k	876k	772k
Average daily online reach aged 15+	1.92%	1.86%	1.64%

Source: © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Category: News, The Times and The Sunday Times, monthly 1st April – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK. Note: Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further. The figures above include news related traffic only; some sections from The Times and The Sunday Times website might not be classified as 'News' category. It does not include Apple News traffic. Ipsos iris data only available since 2021.

- 3.25 As seen in Figure 3.9 above, 14% of online visitors aged 15 or over visited The Times and The Sunday Times site or app in June 2021. The same percentage of UK online 15-34 year olds also visited the online service.^{36 37}
- 3.26 The Times and The Sunday Times account for a relatively small share of people's total news consumption. People get their news now from a variety of sources, so it is also important to consider the performance of The Times and The Sunday Times on a cross-platform basis. There is no standard industry metric to measure cross-platform news consumption (how much people use different news sources) so instead we use the results from our bespoke News Consumption Survey. Based on the responses to this survey, we have developed a 'share of reference' metric to measure the share of total news consumption of individual providers, across different platforms or media used.³⁸
- 3.27 Using this metric, Figure 3.10 shows that The Times (0.44%), The Sunday Times (0.05%) and The Times/The Sunday Times website/app (0.19%) account for a relatively small share of people's total news consumption individually, and when combined (0.69%), particularly compared with other news sources such as the BBC (29.62%), Facebook (8.47%), ITV (6.67%) or Sky (5.49%).³⁹

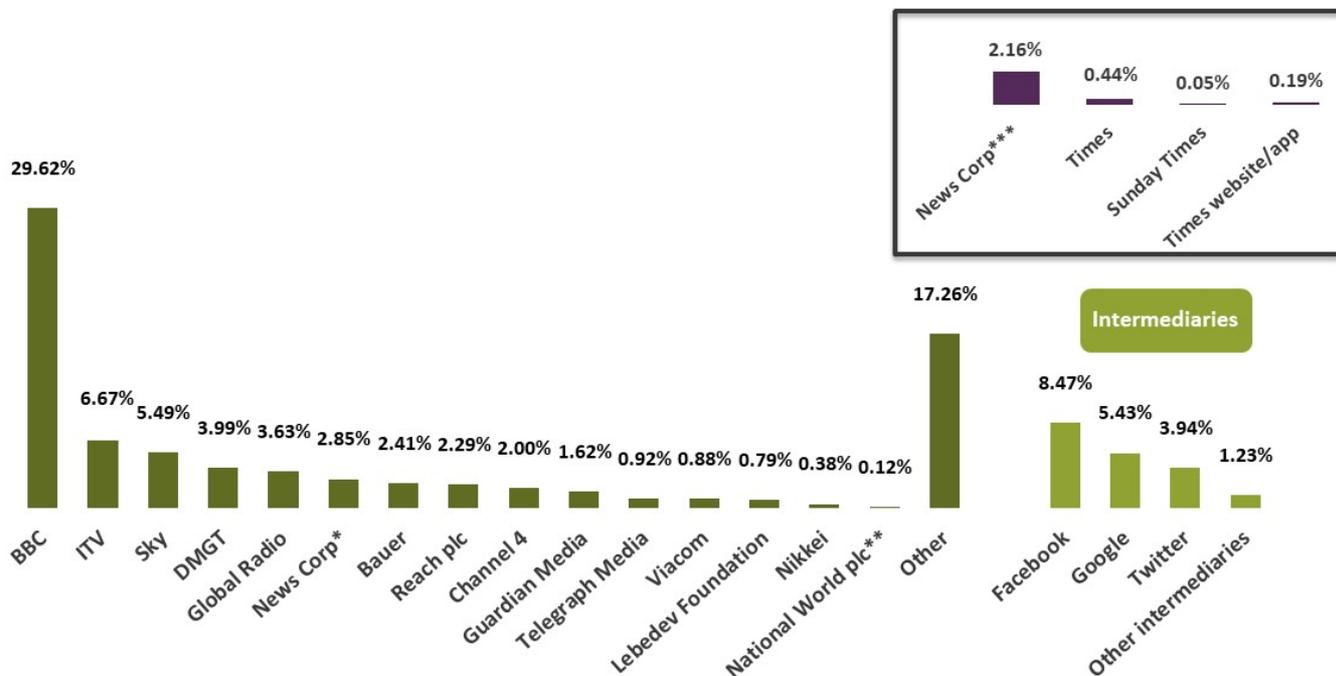
³⁶ © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, The Times and The Sunday Times, Category: News, 1st June – 30th June 2021, age: 15-34, UK. Note: Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further. The figures include news related traffic only; some sections from The Times and The Sunday Times website might not be classified as 'News' category. It does not include Apple News traffic.

³⁷ For explanation of differences between the News Consumption Survey and Ipsos Iris data please see Annex 1.

³⁸ See Annex 1 for explanation of Shares of reference.

³⁹ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2020](#).

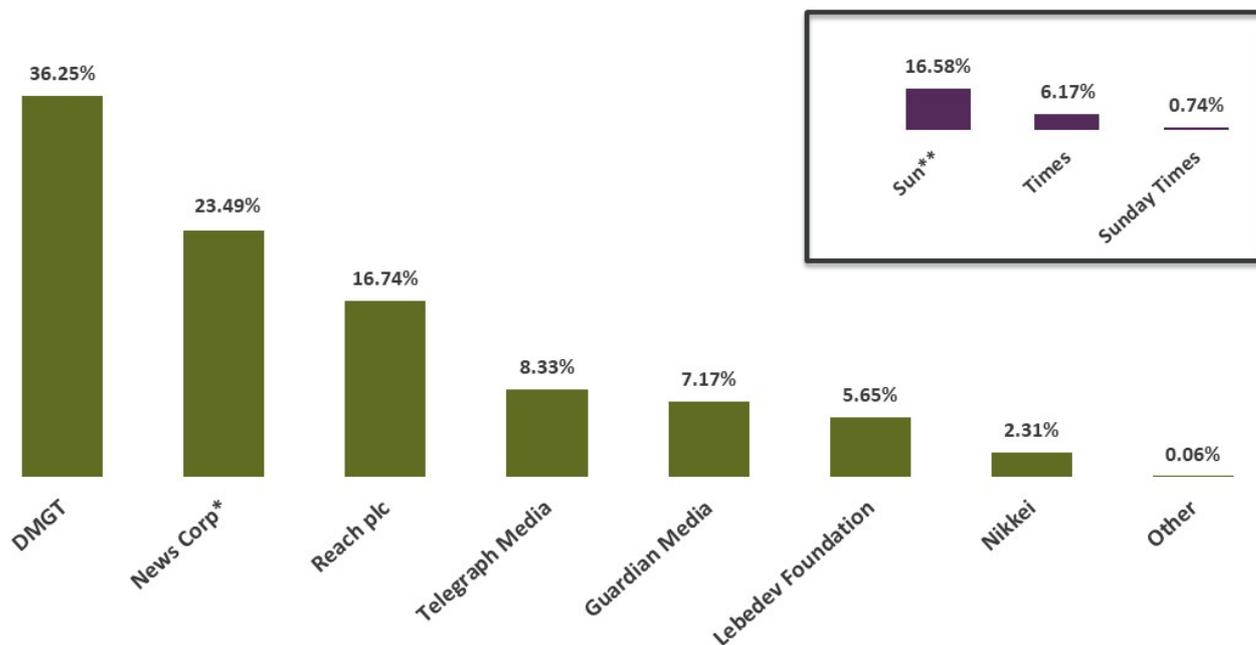
Figure 3.10: Share of reference of news providers used 'nowadays' for news, 2020



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2020. Question: D2a-8a. Thinking specifically about <platform>, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: All UK adults 16+ using TV/Newspapers/Radio/Internet/Magazines for news – 2020=4350. NOTE: 'Google'= Google News + Google + YouTube. 'Other intermediaries' includes MSN, Yahoo, AOL, Flipboard, NewsNow. The information included in this chart is based on the most up to date information we have. *Contains all News Corp titles including The Times, The Sunday Times and The Times/The Sunday Times website/app. **Formerly JPIMedia. ***Contains all News Corp titles except The Times, The Sunday Times and The Times/The Sunday Times website/app.

3.28 We can also use the 'share of reference' metric to measure the share of total print news consumption of individual providers. Figure 3.11 shows that The Times (6.17%) and The Sunday Times (0.74%) still account for a relatively small share of people's total print news consumption.

Figure 3.11: Share of reference of print national news providers used ‘nowadays’ for print news, 2020



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2020. Question: D3a-4a. Thinking specifically about <platform>, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: All UK adults 16+ using print Newspapers for news – 2020=1594. *Contains all News Corp print titles including The Times and The Sunday Times. **Contains The Sun and The Sun on Sunday.

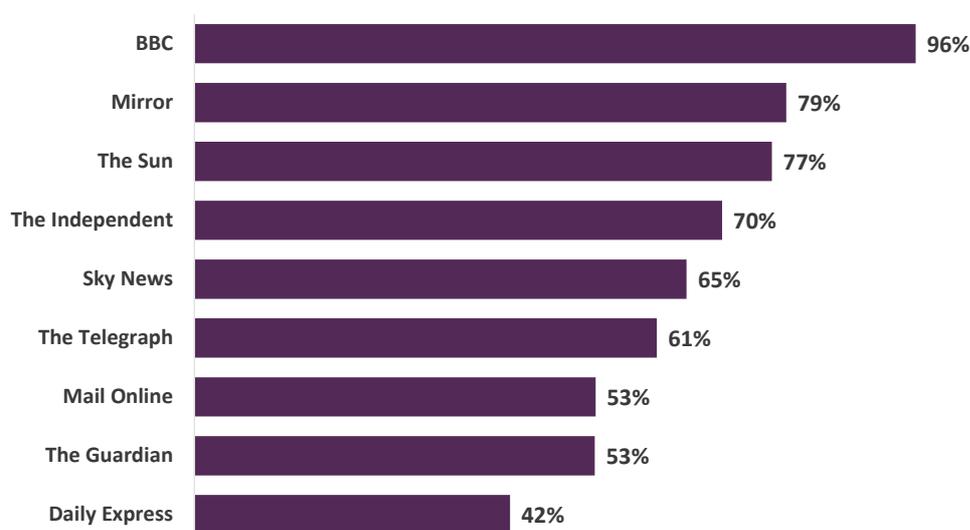
3.29 While share of reference gives an indication of the strength of voice of different news providers, it may over or understate it, depending upon the range of other news sources readers also use. It is therefore also useful to set out the number of sources used by readers. According to our survey, readers of The Times (print) use an average of 17.8 news sources.⁴⁰ The equivalent figure for readers of The Sunday Times (print) is 16.8 with users of The Times and The Sunday Times website or app using an average of 19.8 news sources. These figures are higher than the average number of sources used by readers of print newspapers in general (12.3). The 17.8 sources used, on average, by readers of The Times, include approximately 4.7 TV sources, 5.1 print newspaper sources including The Times, and radio (2.2) and magazine (0.3) sources to a lesser extent, with the remainder dispersed across a variety of online sources.

3.30 Figure 3.12 indicates which other online news sources visitors of The Times and The Sunday Times app or website also visit. For instance, 96% of The Times and The Sunday Times visitors also visited the BBC site or app in June 2021.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 online sample only bespoke analysis. Average number of sources based on sources used at least once in the last month.

⁴¹ © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Cross-visiting, 1st June – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK.

Figure 3.12: Proportion of The Times and The Sunday Times visitors who also visited the selected platforms that publish news content in June 2021



Source: © Ipsos MORI, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, Cross-visiting, 1st June – 30th June 2021, All adults, UK. Note: Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further for The Times and The Sunday Times and The Telegraph.

The Times and The Sunday Times are rated highly by their readers

- 3.31 The consumption metrics show how much The Times and The Sunday Times are used in comparison to other sources of news. However, in considering plurality, we also consider it useful to look at the impact that news sources have on readers and audiences. News sources may have a particular impact if they are trusted by their readers, viewers or listeners and can influence their opinions. A news source may also have an impact if users regard the news provider as a voice of authority. This impact may be because it operates as part of an established brand or is perceived as accurate and trustworthy.
- 3.32 Measuring the impact and influence of news sources on people’s attitudes is complex and, as with any consumer research, our News Consumption Survey has limitations in this respect.⁴² Bearing this in mind, Figure 3.13 shows that regular readers of The Times and The Sunday Times print newspapers rate those sources relatively highly across attitude statements including for ‘accurate’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘high quality’ and ‘helps me understand what’s going on in the world today’. The Times and The Sunday Times regular readers give those papers similar ratings to those given to The Guardian/The

⁴² Our News Consumption Survey uses a number of proxy measures to get an idea of the influence a news source has on its audience. These include the perceived importance, impartiality, and trustworthiness of different news sources to their regular users, as well as the extent to which news sources help regular users to make up their minds about issues. The survey also asks regular users of The Times and The Sunday Times print about their attitudes towards ‘The Times or The Sunday Times newspapers’ together, rather than individually. The survey does not provide data on how The Times/The Sunday Times website/app performs due to the sample size.

Observer and The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph by their regular readers, and higher ratings for accuracy, trust and high quality than those given to The Daily Mirror/The Sunday Mirror, The Sun/The Sun on Sunday, The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday and The Metro by their regular readers. ⁴³

Figure 3.13: Perceived importance of newspaper sources and views on their attributes among those who use each source weekly or more often, 2021

	Daily Mail/ Mail on Sunday	Sun/ Sun on Sunday	Times/ Sunday Times	Guardian / Observer	Metro	Daily/ Sunday Mirror	Daily/ Sunday Telegraph	Daily/ Sunday Express
	414	289	219	180	178	174	174	121
Is important to me personally	70%	61%	70%	76%	60%	68%	74%	77%
Is high quality	68%	56%	79%	86%	53%	63%	80%	67%
Helps me understand what's going on in the world today	72%	59%	76%	84%	57%	61%	74%	67%
Is accurate	63%	52%	74%	79%	59%	59%	71%	67%
Is trustworthy	62%	58%	74%	79%	64%	59%	71%	68%
Offers a range of opinions	65%	56%	69%	73%	58%	57%	66%	65%
Has a depth of analysis and content not available elsewhere	64%	56%	73%	79%	47%	59%	74%	69%
Helps me make up my mind	60%	55%	67%	75%	52%	58%	65%	67%
Is impartial	51%	48%	61%	66%	56%	49%	59%	57%

Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 - ONLINE sample only. Question: E2. How important is <BRAND> as a source of news to you personally? E3. And to what extent do you think the following statements apply to <BRAND> as a news source? Answer using a scale of 1 to 10. Base: All UK adults using each source for news at least weekly (or every 2-3 weeks for weekly newspapers) 2021 – bases shown above. Figures show those who rate it highly (between 7-10) for each attribute.

⁴³ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 slide 77](#). This data relates to readers views of the print version of newspapers only.

- 3.33 The perceptions that people have of the news sources they use should also be considered in the light of how these sources position themselves in the market. Data submitted by News UK supports the findings of the News Consumption Survey that a majority of readers of The Times and The Sunday Times consider it a ‘trusted’ and ‘high quality’ source. News UK data also shows a majority of adults believe the titles ‘leave you well informed’, and are ‘expert’ and ‘leading opinion’.⁴⁴
- 3.34 How readers perceive and value the titles that they read does not necessarily capture the wider impact of those titles on society. We have previously said that the press is perceived to play a particularly influential role in setting the wider news agenda, informing other news providers and being referenced beyond its own readership.⁴⁵ The Times and The Sunday Times regularly break stories of national importance, and their political and current affairs reporting plays a role in setting the wider news agenda. For instance, The Sunday Times’ 2019 reporting on the Government’s preparations for a no-deal Brexit (known as Operation Yellowhammer) led to a Humble Address motion in Parliament and the public release of the Operation Yellowhammer report.⁴⁶ That same year, a journalist from The Times found and first interviewed Shamima Begum in Syria, and in 2018, The Times first reported on alleged misconduct by Oxfam employees in Haiti.⁴⁷ The Times and Sunday Times also regularly commission and report on political polling, which contributes to a wider understanding of public opinion.⁴⁸
- 3.35 News UK provided data to show that both The Times and The Sunday Times are the most popular daily and weekly titles for senior business decision maker and business influencers. [§<]
- 3.36 [§<]⁴⁹
- 3.37 News UK also provided data which suggests that despite its low reach, The Times is equal with the Guardian as the most mentioned brand that comes to mind when asked about keeping up with the news in all its forms.⁵⁰
- 3.38 Both papers are known for their investigative journalism, and The Sunday Times has historically been particularly well regarded and its investigations have set wider news agendas. Relatively recent examples of The Sunday Times’ investigative work include reporting on the Government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic (which was shortlisted for two investigative journalism prizes), covering allegations of a potential

⁴⁴ News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁴⁵ Ofcom, June 2017, [Public interest test for the proposed acquisition of Sky plc by 21st Century Fox, Inc.](#), p.80. In this report, we cited the 2012 Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. Lord Justice Leveson recognised the widely-held view that the press can “*set the news agenda, shape culture and change perceptions*”.

⁴⁶ The Sunday Times, 18 August 2019, [Operation Chaos: Whitehall’s secret no-deal Brexit preparations leaked](#).

⁴⁷ The Times, 13 February 2019, [Shamima Begum: Bring me home, says Bethnal Green girl who left to join Isis](#). The Times, 9 February 2018, [Minister orders Oxfam to hand over files on Haiti prostitute scandal](#).

⁴⁸ YouGov, [YouGov/The Times Voting Intention Surveys](#) (accessed 21 September 2021).

⁴⁹ News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021; Ipsos Business Influencer 2020.

⁵⁰ News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021; [§<]

conflict of interest during Boris Johnson’s time as Mayor of London, and continued reporting on doping, bribery and corruption in elite sports.⁵¹

Revenue at TNL has fallen in line with industry trends

3.39 TNL, as with other national publishers, faces revenue pressures. As Figure 3.14 shows, between 2011 and 2020, reported revenues for TNL fell from £402m to £310m (-23%), less than the overall revenue reduction for national publishers over the same period (-31%). TNL’s 2020 financial statements state that the decrease in revenue in 2020 was due to a reduction in print circulation and advertising, in line with other businesses in the sector, partly offset by growth in digital subscription and advertising revenue.⁵²

Figure 3.14: Reported revenues for TNL, £m



Source: Ofcom analysis based on company financial statements from Companies House. For year ending June each year.

3.40 Considering the source of revenue, like several other national publishers, most TNL revenues ([X]) still come from print (circulation, subscriptions and advertising) as shown in Figure 3.15. Between 2017 and 2021 print circulation revenues at TNL [X] print advertising revenues [X] the fall in print advertising for national publishers over the same period (-43%⁵³).⁵⁴

3.41 TNL’s digital revenues (subscription and advertising) [X].⁵⁵

⁵¹ The Sunday Times, 19 April 2020, [Coronavirus: 38 days when Britain sleepwalked into disaster](#). The Sunday Times Insight team’s reporting was shortlisted for [The Orwell Prize for Journalism 2021](#) and [The Paul Foot Award 2021](#). The Sunday Times, 22 September 2019, [Boris Johnson, his glamorous friend Jennifer Acuri and their global trade trips](#). The Sunday Times, 10 March 2019, [Take it or leave it: Qatar’s lucrative World Cup offer to Fifa](#). The Sunday Times, 29 July 2018, [Exclusive: Qatar sabotaged 2022 World Cup rivals with ‘black ops’](#).

⁵² Times Newspapers Limited, [Report and financial statements for the year ended 28 June 2020](#), p.1.

⁵³ Source AA/WARC.

⁵⁴ TNL figures sourced from News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁵⁵ TNL figures sourced from News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021.

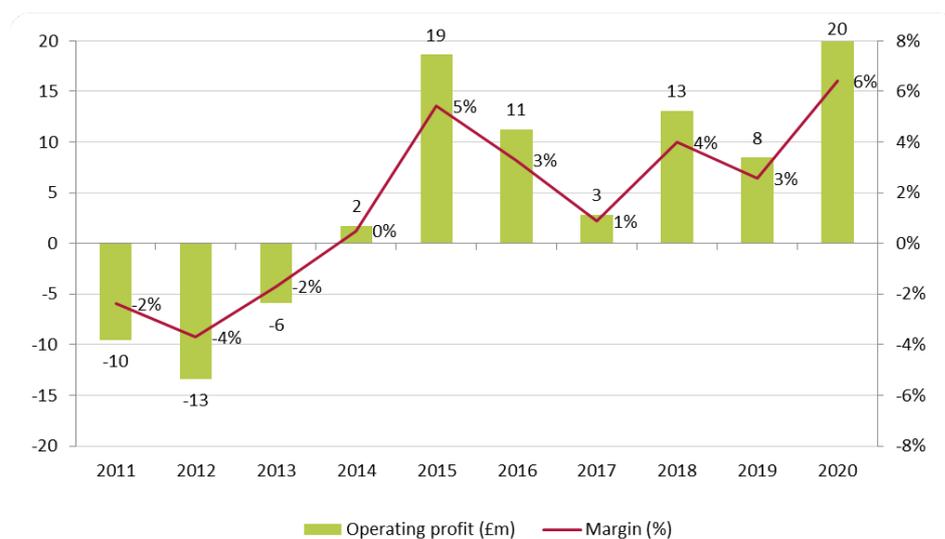
Figure 3.15: Share of total TNL revenue by print, digital and other
[redacted]

Source: Ofcom analysis based on News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021. Figures for year ending in June each year.

3.42 In terms of the relative revenue performance of The Times and The Sunday Times, [redacted].⁵⁶ In the year to June 2021, [redacted] of TNL's print revenues were associated with The Times (versus [redacted] associated with The Sunday Times), [redacted] in the year to June 2017. Between 2017 and 2021, print revenues at The Times [redacted].⁵⁷

3.43 Operating profits at TNL in the year to June 2020 were £20m, up from £8m in the year to June 2019.⁵⁸ This increase was driven by cost savings as revenues fell £20m in the year to June 2020. Operating profits were positive between 2014 and 2020, and operating margins of 0% to 6% in this period are comparable to the average for national publishers (4% to 7% between 2011 and 2020).

Figure 3.16: Operating profit and operating margin for TNL



Source: Ofcom analysis based on company financial statements from Companies House. For year ending June each year. Operating profit is before exceptional items.

3.44 In terms of the relative contribution to TNL's profit from The Times and The Sunday Times between 2017 and 2021, from revenues and costs that appear directly associated with these titles, [redacted], as shown in Figure 3.17.

⁵⁶ In its response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021, News UK said [redacted].

⁵⁷ News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021.

⁵⁸ TNL's financial statements. Operating profit is before exceptional items such as restructuring costs.

Figure 3.17: Contribution to TNL profit from The Times and The Sunday Times (£m)

[REDACTED]

Source: Ofcom analysis based on News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021. [REDACTED]

- 3.45 Although TNL's history is in print newspapers, it now has a 'digital first' policy with The Times and The Sunday Times producing content together across digital media, including the digital editions across seven days, podcasts, social media output as well as a link up with Times Radio.⁵⁹ Furthermore, its 2020 financial statements say that "*growth in digital subscriptions remains key to the ongoing success of The Times and The Sunday Times*"⁶⁰ and Emma Tucker (editor of The Sunday Times) said that "*crucially, all our future growth lies in the success of our digital products which can only succeed and make sense to readers when delivered as a 7 day offering.*"⁶¹ TNL's internal forecasts [REDACTED].⁶²

⁵⁹ News UK's Application to the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to release the Undertakings given by it under Schedule 18, paragraph

62 of the Communications Act 2003 relating to The Times and The Sunday Times ([News UK's application](#)), paragraph 1.7.

⁶⁰ Times Newspapers Limited, [Report and financial statements for the year ended 28 June 2020](#), p.1.

⁶¹ News UK's application, [Annex C: Letters from Editors and Independent National Directors](#).

⁶² News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021. News UK said that [REDACTED].

4. Regulatory context

- 4.1 In this section, we describe the current framework in which The Times and The Sunday Times operate. In the UK, newspapers are self-regulated and this wider framework will be relevant to our assessment, in the event that the Undertakings are released. We also discuss the legal background to the Undertakings and set out the safeguards provided by them.

General regulatory framework for newspapers

Newspapers are self-regulated

- 4.2 In the UK, newspapers and online news websites are self-regulated. They may handle complaints themselves or may choose to be subject to one of the voluntary industry regulatory schemes in existence – the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) or the Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS). IMPRESS has been recognised as meeting criteria set out in a [Royal Charter](#) which relate to whether the scheme is “independent of the print and online publishers it regulates, is appropriately funded, and has systems in place to protect the public”. IPSO has not sought recognition.⁶³
- 4.3 Both The Times⁶⁴ and The Sunday Times are regulated by IPSO and have signed up to its Editors’ Code of Practice (the IPSO Code). IPSO was established in 2014 and its stated mission is “To support those who feel wronged by the press”; “To uphold the highest professional standards in the UK press” and; “To determine whether standards have been breached and provide redress if so”. Other major national titles subject to IPSO (for both print and online content) include The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, and The Sun.
- 4.4 Some newspapers have decided not to join IPSO or IMPRESS and have instead established their own editorial complaints framework.⁶⁵

Newspapers are expected to be accurate but are free to be partisan

- 4.5 The IPSO Code and the IMPRESS Standards Code set out what might be seen as an industry norm for standards. For example, on accuracy, the IPSO Code states:
- i) “The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.
 - ii) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology

⁶³ See Press Recognition Panel, [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

⁶⁴ [The Times Editorial Complaints](#).

⁶⁵ For example: The Guardian ([How to make a complaint about Guardian or Observer Content](#)) and The Financial Times ([FT Editorial Code](#)).

published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.

iii) A fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.

iv) The Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.

v) A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.”⁶⁶

4.6 In addition, and as stated above in Section 2, unlike broadcasters, newspapers are free to be partisan and take particular editorial positions.⁶⁷ The IPSO Code and the IMPRESS Code do not require newspapers to be impartial nor are newspapers prevented from taking partisan positions on public policy and political issues. The preamble to the IPSO Code states that the IPSO Code “[...] *should be interpreted neither so narrowly as to compromise its commitment to respect the rights of the individual, nor so broadly that it infringes the fundamental right to freedom of expression – such as to inform, to be partisan [...]*”. Our consideration of the need for free expression of opinion in newspapers takes into account that newspapers generally are not required to present all sides of an argument, and proprietors have historically had substantial freedom to control editorial content.

The Undertakings

4.7 The Times and The Sunday Times are additionally subject to regulatory undertakings, which were originally imposed in 1981, and amended recently in 2019.

The 1981 Conditions were implemented when News UK acquired the two publications

4.8 In 1981, News International Limited (now News UK) acquired The Times and The Sunday Times from Thomson Organisation Limited. The regime for newspaper mergers as set out in the Fair Trading Act 1973 (the FTA 1973)⁶⁸ required the acquisition to be approved by the Secretary of State. The then Secretary of State for Trade gave his consent subject to certain conditions (the 1981 Conditions) aimed at protecting the public interest. In summary, the [1981 Conditions](#):

a) required the newspapers to continue as separate publications;

⁶⁶ IPSO, [Editors’ Code of Practice](#). The [IMPRESS Standards Code](#) also contains provisions regarding accuracy.

⁶⁷ Section 319 of the CA 2003 requires Ofcom to set standards for broadcast content which, among other things, secure that broadcast news is duly accurate and presented with due impartiality. These standards are set out in [Ofcom’s Broadcasting Code](#).

⁶⁸ See sections 57 to 62 of the FTA 1973.

- b) required the articles of association of TNHL and TNL to be amended prior to the transaction to provide for various protections of editorial independence, including with respect to the appointment and dismissal of editors; and
- c) restricted these articles from being altered without the Secretary of State's consent.

4.9 When the FTA 1973 was repealed in 2003, the newspaper merger regime was brought within the Enterprise Act 2002 (the EA 2002). The EA 2002 contains provisions which allow the Secretary of State to intervene in certain media merger cases that raise public interest concerns.⁶⁹ The 1981 Conditions continued in effect under the Communications Act 2003 (the CA 2003).⁷⁰ The CA 2003 also enables the Secretary of State to accept undertakings in place of any or all of the conditions given to a consent granted under the FTA 1973 newspaper merger regime.⁷¹

The Undertakings replaced the 1981 Conditions

- 4.10 In January 2019, News UK submitted an application to the Secretary of State to vary the requirements imposed by the 1981 Conditions. Specifically, News UK wanted to be able to share resources and services, including journalists, between The Times and The Sunday Times. It argued that such sharing was a necessary step to mitigate financial challenges that the two titles were facing, as a result of the decline in circulation and readership of print newspapers and the move to online news, without affecting the quality of journalism. It proposed to continue publishing the two titles as separate newspapers and maintain the other conditions intended to maintain editorial independence (which are set out below).
- 4.11 Following a consultation, the Secretary of State allowed the application and accepted new undertakings under the CA 2003, which replaced the 1981 Conditions (the Undertakings).⁷² The Undertakings came into force on 23 July 2019. They permit the newspapers to share services and resources, including journalists, to the extent that the editors agree, and also required certain amendments to the governance arrangements.
- 4.12 The Secretary of State concluded that there had been a material change of circumstances since 1981 which justified the variation in the 1981 Conditions.⁷³ He stated that the effect of the proposed changes would not materially impact on the public interest considerations: sufficient plurality of views in newspapers, accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion.

⁶⁹ And in doing so, the ability to refer the cases to Ofcom under certain public interest grounds.

⁷⁰ Under paragraph 59 of Schedule 18.

⁷¹ Paragraph 62 of Schedule 18.

⁷² Ibid. The Undertakings are treated as equivalent to undertakings given under the EA 2003. [Notice of Acceptance from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 23 July 2019.](#)

⁷³ [DCMS Letter to News UK 10 April 2019](#) sets out the Secretary of State's minded to decision.

Summary of main provisions

- 4.13 The main provisions of the Undertakings⁷⁴ require that:
- a) The Times and The Sunday Times be published as separate newspapers;
 - b) the Articles of Association of TNHL include a requirement for there to be six independent national directors (INDs), who have a role with respect to safeguarding the editorial independence of the two titles;
 - c) the Articles of Association of TNL, the newspaper-holding entity, provide that:
 - i) the appointment or dismissal of the editors of both titles must be approved by a majority of INDs of TNHL;
 - ii) the editors of each title retain control over political comment and opinion, and are not subject to any restraint or inhibition in expressing opinions or reporting news that might conflict with the opinions or interest of any of the newspaper proprietors;
 - iii) instructions to journalists are only given by the editor (or by a person with delegated authority);
 - iv) the editors retain control over the appointment, disposition and dismissal of journalists, subject only to annual budgets for editorial space and expenditure determined by the directors of TNL;
 - v) any disputes between the editors (or either of them) and the directors of TNL are determined by the INDs of TNHL;
 - d) the Articles of Association of TNHL and TNL may not be altered except with the written consent of the Secretary of State; and
 - e) a majority of the INDs of TNHL must approve News UK ceasing to be a newspaper proprietor in relation to The Times or The Sunday Times, or transferring TNHL or TNL, or selling or otherwise disposing of its interest in The Times or The Sunday Times.
- 4.14 The Undertakings also permit expressly the two publications to share resources, subject to the agreement of both editors.

The role of the INDs

- 4.15 As set out above, the Undertakings require a majority of the INDs to approve the appointment and dismissal of editors. The INDs also determine any disputes between the editors (or either of them) and the directors of TNL, and their decision is final and binding.
- 4.16 In addition, the INDs have a role in monitoring and reporting on compliance with the Undertakings. They are required by the Undertakings to meet with the editors at least

⁷⁴ Invitation to Comment: Application to release Undertakings, [Annex A: Times/Sunday Times Undertakings](#).

twice a year to discuss matters relevant to compliance with the Undertakings. The editors are responsible for raising any issues relevant to compliance with the Undertakings with the INDs, which may, for example, include any attempts to inhibit or restrain their editorial independence. Since 2019, the INDs must report on compliance with the Undertakings each year to the Secretary of State, copied to the CMA.

5. Plurality

- 5.1 In this section we consider the effect of News UK's request on the public interest consideration relating to the need for a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers.

We have considered a range of potential scenarios that could impact plurality

- 5.2 We have considered the impact of two potential scenarios that could arise in the event of the release of the Undertakings:
- i) a potential editorial merger (merging the titles under one editor ⁷⁵); and
 - ii) further integration short of an editorial merger (consolidating resources including journalists but retaining the two titles).
- 5.3 We have looked at the extent to which, if these scenarios were to arise, they would raise material concerns under the sufficient plurality ground. In doing so, we have considered both 'external plurality', i.e. the range of information and views that are provided across separate media enterprises, and 'internal plurality', i.e. the range of views that are provided within individual news organisations.

News UK's application sets out a strong commercial rationale for releasing the Undertakings

- 5.4 As set out in Section 3, the newspaper industry is facing significant challenges as the decline in print circulation and advertising spend continues. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these trends.
- 5.5 Against this backdrop, News UK notes that The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers are subject to undertakings which do not apply to their competitors. ⁷⁶ It argues that the costs of compliance with the Undertakings place its newspapers at a competitive disadvantage. News UK further states that, if the Undertakings were released, it would have the same operational flexibility as other newspaper publishers to respond to rapidly changing market conditions. News UK states that most major newspaper publishers with Sunday editions achieve cost savings through sharing back-office functions as well as reporters and editorial staff across Monday to Saturday and Sunday editions. ⁷⁷
- 5.6 As set out above, newspaper publishers are having to reduce costs to maintain profitability. Such measures include reductions in staff and resources, reductions in printing costs and consolidation and integration. Therefore, we agree that there is a

⁷⁵ The titles could continue to be published as two separately bannered publications which might be different in style, tone and content, but they would pursue the same editorial line.

⁷⁶ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 1.6.

⁷⁷ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 5.18.

strong commercial rationale behind News UK's request to release the Undertakings insofar as they require the titles to be published as separate newspapers.

- 5.7 Given the important role of newspapers in promoting plurality, we generally welcome the steps newspaper groups are taking to maintain and increase investment to support the long-term viability of their newspaper titles. This is something we have set out in previous public interest assessments of newspaper mergers.⁷⁸

Release of the Undertakings could lead to further integration and a merger of the two titles

- 5.8 The Undertakings require The Times and The Sunday Times to be published as separate newspapers. The Undertakings also contain restrictions on the sale or transfer of any interest in the newspapers.
- 5.9 With the agreement of the two editors, since the Undertakings were amended in 2019 to permit sharing of resources, a number of services and desks have been integrated. Journalistic teams are now shared in areas such as Sport, Sport production, Travel, Property, Money and Features production.⁷⁹ In total, since 2019, News UK has merged 11 desks under one editor, who reports to both the editor of The Times and the editor of The Sunday Times. This has saved [X] per annum. Staff work for both titles, depending on the story they are writing or the day of the week they work. News UK states that the editor of each title makes the final decision on content for their respective newspapers.⁸⁰
- 5.10 It seems likely that further consolidation will take place in relation to online content. News UK explained that whilst it continues to maintain a distinction between The Times and The Sunday Times content online, with separate banners, it is *“uneconomic and unnecessary for the production to be subject to the separation principles”*.⁸¹ *“TNL now produces content across the landscape of media including the digital editions across seven days, podcasts, social media output and a link up with Times Radio”* and News UK argues that *“the ‘separation of titles’ is fast becoming an artifice and impedes necessary innovation at both titles, which is required to ensure their viability.”*⁸²
- 5.11 With the Undertakings in place, News UK states that the following desks are kept separate: The Times home news; The Sunday Times home news; The Times business; The Sunday Times business; The Times comment; The Sunday Times comment; The

⁷⁸ Ofcom 2020, [Public interest test on the completed acquisition by Daily Mail and General Trust plc of JPIMedia Publications Limited and thus the 'i' newspaper \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), Ofcom 2019, [Public interest test on the completed acquisitions by International Media Company of shares in Lebedev Holdings Limited and by Scalable Inc of shares in Independent Digital News and Media Limited](#); Ofcom June 2018, [Public interest test for the acquisition by Trinity Mirror plc of publishing assets of Northern & Shell Media Group Limited](#). Ofcom, June 2017. [Public interest test for the proposed acquisition of Sky plc by 21st Century Fox, Inc.](#)

⁷⁹ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 3.6.

⁸⁰ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁸¹ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁸² [News UK's application](#), paragraph 1.7 and reiterated in News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

Times arts and culture; The Sunday Times arts and culture; The Times design and The Sunday Times design. In response to our request for information, it stated that there are “currently no plans to merge these desks or to share resources”, in light of the regulatory circumstances.⁸³ News UK’s application says that it “intends to take further steps to integrate feature desks across seven days” and “to merge editorial services across both titles including pictures, graphics, subbing and production”.⁸⁴ News UK state that “detailed plans have not been formulated for a post undertakings landscape.”

- 5.12 While we have not seen evidence of plans to integrate resources further, in view of evidence from previous sector activity, and the continued erosion of print revenues, we consider that it is reasonable to assume that, absent the Undertakings, News UK would share more resourcing between the titles in the future.
- 5.13 Further integration could have a positive effect on plurality as it could allow News UK to take cost-saving measures that would help to secure the futures of The Times and The Sunday Times. On the other hand, there could be negative effects. The potential for greater sharing of content and journalists across the titles in areas which concern editorial positioning, such as UK-focussed news, political comment and business (unlike more ‘neutral’ areas of resource sharing such as lifestyle, travel, gardening, health and sports match reporting), could lead at least to some convergence in the tone, coverage and presentation of the journalism and reporting. Over time, if News UK pursued plans to integrate other desks, this could potentially result in a diminution of the distinct editorial voice of one or other of the two titles even if they were still to exist as separate newspapers.
- 5.14 Ultimately the release of the Undertakings would also create the opportunity – via a removal of the existing requirement to publish the papers as two separate titles – for a merger between the two titles, such that they no longer existed as separate papers with separate editors.

External plurality

The release of the Undertakings would not lead to an immediate structural change in the UK newspaper market

- 5.15 If the Secretary of State were to release the Undertakings, there would not be an immediate structural change in the UK newspaper market. The number of newspaper groups with UK-wide reach would remain the same.⁸⁵ The effect of the release of the Undertakings would also not immediately lead to a reduction in the number of news sources available.

⁸³ News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁸⁴ [News UK’s application](#), paragraph 3.6.

⁸⁵ There would still be six groups: News UK, DGMT, Reach plc, Telegraph Media Group, Guardian Media Group and Nikkei, as set out in Figure 3.1.

- 5.16 However, were there to be a full editorial merger between the titles in the future, one individual newspaper title would be lost leading to a net reduction in plurality. News UK has said that it currently has no written plans for the integration of The Times and The Sunday Times⁸⁶ and the consumer and advertiser demand is there for it to keep the two titles separate. This view is supported by information provided by News UK, which suggests that the two titles attract slightly different readers. Research shows that the sectionals in The Sunday Times help the title attract harder to reach readers, including women and younger readers, and generate revenue; [3<] The Sunday Times Magazine also has a higher proportion of female readers among digital subscribers, while Home attracts younger readers.⁸⁷ Ofcom's 2021 News Consumption Survey also shows that 41% of The Times readers do not read The Sunday Times, and 39% of The Sunday Times readers do not read The Times.⁸⁸ This evidence suggests that there is some commercial incentive for News UK to provide two separate titles with separate editors [3<].
- 5.17 In addition, we do not consider that it is likely that there would be any alignment between TNL titles and News UK's other newspaper titles, The Sun and The Sun on Sunday, in the event of the release of the Undertakings. We consider that the TNL titles and The Sun titles are clearly aimed at different readers. As News UK said in its application, compared to readers of The Sun, readers of The Times are of higher socio-economic group, are older and are more likely to live in London and the South East.⁸⁹ Given these differences, there is relatively little overlap between the two readerships; of those who read The Sun (in print or online), 12% report looking at any of The Times outlets.

In the event of a full editorial merger, readers of TNL titles would have access to many other sources of news

- 5.18 The market circumstances as described in Section 3, and the financial challenges facing newspaper publishers, mean that, absent the Undertakings, a full editorial merger of the titles is a possibility. Nonetheless, we would note that in the event of a merger, and assuming a newspaper continues to be published each day by TNL, on any given day of the week there would be the same number of newspaper sources available.
- 5.19 In general, we also consider that the wider UK news market is currently reasonably plural. The large increase in the amount of news online has increased consumer choice in terms of what news is available and how consumers can access it. To that extent, we consider that even in the event of a reduction in plurality through the loss of a title, readers of The Times and/or The Sunday Times are still likely to have available to them, and consume, a wide range of viewpoints. As our research has shown, sourcing news

⁸⁶ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021 and [News UK's application](#), paragraph 7.15.

⁸⁷ Information provided by News UK in response to request for information sent on 2 August 2021. [3<]

⁸⁸ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021 online sample only bespoke analysis.

⁸⁹ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 7.15(ii).

across multiple platforms is now commonplace, with consumers getting their news from around nine different sources including social media.

Internal plurality

There may be some diminution of editorial voice due to further integration, but it is unlikely to have a material impact

- 5.20 We have considered the extent to which the potential for further integration could impact on the individual voice and character of the titles.
- 5.21 News UK's submission states that both titles have a strong history of taking different perspectives on issues of the highest political importance.⁹⁰ The example that it provided to support this was divergent positions on Brexit, with The Times opposing it and The Sunday Times supporting it. We asked News UK to provide further evidence of where the titles had taken different positions on key political or industrial matters in recent years.⁹¹
- 5.22 Based on the information we have available, while the respective editorial positions of the two titles can diverge exceptionally on certain political matters (e.g. Brexit), we consider that both titles position themselves on the centre right of UK politics. [§ 92] As such, while there might be some diminution of editorial voice if the titles integrated further, we do not consider any diminution would lead to a reduction in internal plurality that would be adverse to the public interest.
- 5.23 The view that we have taken here can be contrasted with our findings in relation to public interest assessments of other newspaper transactions. In our public interest tests of Reach Plc's acquisition of the Daily Express and Daily Star newspapers and the Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT)'s acquisition of The 'i' newspaper, the acquired titles held clearly distinct editorial positions, and this difference was mirrored in the different demographics of the newspapers' readership. In these cases, we considered a potential diminution or a change in the voices of the acquired titles could have raised plurality concerns, although the commercial incentives meant it was likely the titles would continue to take distinct editorial positions.⁹³

⁹⁰ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 7.15(i).

⁹¹ In response to our request for information dated 2 August 2021, News UK stated that "*The Times and The Sunday Times have diverged on which political party to endorse editorially at general elections. The Times solidly backed new Labour from 1997 while the ST supported the Conservatives (although moving to Labour from 2001-2005). In general, The Times was much more supportive of the Labour government and the ST more critical. The Sunday Times has been more critical of the government's performance on Covid publishing a number of detailed reports highlighting mistakes in their response.*" However, we note that since 1997 the titles have endorsed the same political party in every general election (2001 - Labour, 2005 - Labour, 2010 – Conservative, 2015 – Conservative, 2017- Conservative and 2019 – Conservative).

⁹² News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021. [§]

⁹³ Ofcom, March 2020. [Public interest test on the completed acquisition by Daily Mail and General Trust plc of JPIMedia Publications Limited and thus the 'i' newspaper.](#)

We do not consider that there are specific groups who would be impacted by a loss of editorial voice

- 5.24 Based on the demographic information provided by News UK, we also consider it unlikely that any specific reader group will lose out if a diminution in editorial voice were to happen. More than half of the readers of each title read both. News UK has told us that while The Sunday Times has a more balanced gender split than The Times, the majority of the readers for both titles are 55+ years and are similarly affluent (83% ABC1 The Times; 87% The Sunday Times).⁹⁴ In addition, 55% of readers for each title are based in London and the South (South East and South West) of England and 90% are white.

The digital output of TNL is already blurring the boundaries between the titles and is likely to become more important

- 5.25 We also think it unlikely that readers of The Times and The Sunday Times digital content would be able to detect much of a change if the titles were to undergo further integration or merge. News UK has told us that while the distinct nature of the printed editions of The Times and The Sunday Times is apparent to readers, it is less clear to online readers who visit the same site to read the content for whom the title banner is less apparent.⁹⁵
- 5.26 Over time, as more readers move online, the identification of the two titles as separate publications is likely to become even more diluted. We know from News UK's plans, and consumption trends, that the focus for The Times and The Sunday Times is moving online. As mentioned, News UK has told us that both titles have pledged to lead with a 'digital first strategy', and data shows that digital consumption is increasing and overtaking print consumption (see figures 3.6 and 3.7 above); digital monthly adult reach has increased from nearly 5m visitors in October 2017 to 9.9 million in October 2019 to a further 15m in October 2020,⁹⁶ overtaking the combined print monthly reach which has fallen from nearly 5.2m to 4m.⁹⁷ We therefore consider that, in light of the similarities in editorial voice between the two titles, the separation principle is less relevant now (and will be even less relevant in the future) than it was when the sole method of consumption was via print.
- 5.27 Although we consider it unlikely, one possible future outcome is that The Times and The Sunday Times could go entirely online, in the same way as The Independent.⁹⁸ We do

⁹⁴ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁹⁵ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

⁹⁶ Comscore MMX Multi-Platform, Times Online, October 2017, 2019 and 2020, Age: 18+, UK. Note: Data does not equate to subscribers and therefore some visitors may have only seen the paywall and not progressed any further. There was a Comscore product enhancement in September 2019 therefore there may be a break in trend when comparing data before and after this point.

⁹⁷ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021. Source: PAMCo, (Apr '17 - Mar '18) and (Apr '19 - Mar '20).

⁹⁸ We consider that this is unlikely at present given that the majority of revenue for TNL currently comes from print.

not think that this would raise additional concerns because in the longer term we see the increasing, and possibly sole, focus online as a potential scenario for most major news providers.

Conclusion on plurality ground

- 5.28 We do not consider that the release of the Undertakings will have a material impact on plurality. In the first instance, there will be no structural change to the UK newspaper market.
- 5.29 Even if there is some reduction of plurality through greater integration or merger of the titles, we do not consider that it would be adverse to the public interest, in light of the wider UK news market and the multiple news sources available. We consider that the centre right focus of the two titles means that further integration would not significantly reduce the range of voices in the market. We also note that there appears to be some overlap between the readers of the print versions of The Times and The Sunday Times and that the profiles of the two groups of readers, in terms of demographics, appears to be very similar.
- 5.30 As we have outlined in Section 3, the UK national newspaper market, including TNL, is facing significant challenges from changes in the way news is produced and consumed and it is appropriate to consider the implications on plurality in this context. News UK's submission argues that the Undertakings are acting as a barrier preventing it from taking action that would help to secure the futures of The Times and The Sunday Times. In this sense we consider that the release of the Undertakings such that they require the titles to be published as separate newspapers could benefit plurality in the long term by ensuring the continued existence of the two titles. In addition, we agree with News UK's argument that TNL's digital strategy will be important for future sustainability. To the extent that releasing the Undertakings would allow the titles to lead with a digital first strategy more easily we consider that this could be beneficial to plurality.

6. Free expression of opinion and accuracy of news

- 6.1 In this section, we consider whether, were the Undertakings to be released, there might be public interest concerns under the free expression of opinion ground and the accurate presentation of news ground.
- 6.2 For this part of our assessment, we have considered the potential for the Murdoch Family Trust (MFT), to seek to influence the editorial positions and the accuracy of news coverage of The Times and The Sunday Times. The MFT owns 38.4% of the voting shares in News Corp. Rupert Murdoch can be considered to be the beneficial owner of these shares, in addition to the 1% of voting shares that he holds himself.⁹⁹ No other shareholder controls more than 5% of the voting shares. This position gives the MFT material influence over the policy direction of News Corp and its wholly-owned subsidiaries including News UK and TNHL, which owns TNL.
- 6.3 As a result of this shareholding and corporate structure, we consider that the MFT could exercise influence over The Times and The Sunday Times and we refer to the MFT as the proprietor in this section. We also note that the CEO of News UK appoints and manages the editors of both titles.¹⁰⁰
- 6.4 This section considers the extent to which the Undertakings have acted as a constraint on the MFT's ability to influence the titles. In the scenario where the Undertakings were released, we then consider the extent to which any incentives (or disincentives) for the MFT to use its influence would mitigate any public interest concerns. Finally, we consider the extent to which other measures that will either remain in place, or that News UK proposes to introduce in lieu of the Undertakings, might protect free expression of opinion and accurate presentation of news. A number of considerations are common to these two public interest grounds, so our assessment looks at them together.

Proprietorial influence could increase if the Undertakings were released

- 6.5 News UK sets out that the request to release the Undertakings is based on commercial factors, as set out in Section 3. Whilst this indicates that the opportunity for greater proprietorial influence is not the primary driver behind the request, it is not

⁹⁹ News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021. The MFT holds 38.4% of voting shares in News Corporation. Cruden Financial Services LLC (Cruden Financial Services) is the sole trustee of the MFT. News Corporation's 2020 Proxy Statements explain that: "As a result of Mr. K.R. Murdoch's ability to appoint certain members of the board of directors of Cruden Financial Services, Mr K.R. Murdoch may be deemed to be a beneficial owner of the shares beneficially owned by the MFT. Mr K.R. Murdoch, however, disclaims any beneficial ownership of such shares." Rupert Murdoch holds a further 1% of voting stock via the K.Rupert Murdoch 2004 Revocable Trust, making his total voting shares 39.4%.

¹⁰⁰ News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021.

determinative of the likely conduct of News UK in the event of the release of the Undertakings. This is because the opportunity for greater influence over editorial matters may be a consequence of the request.

6.6 Clearly, one reason for proprietors to invest in newspapers is to influence their editorial output. There are other reasons too. Investment returns may be one, while the perceived prestige of newspaper ownership may be another. We would note that newspaper ownership is not restricted and there is currently no licensing regime for persons seeking to own newspapers.¹⁰¹ Since 1981, both The Times and The Sunday Times have been controlled by a high-profile, active proprietor with well-known views and established business links, but subject to the Undertakings.

6.7 We consider that it is unrealistic to expect a proprietor to not have any influence on the editorial output of a newspaper. Even at present, News UK appoints and manages the editors of The Times and of The Sunday Times. Increased proprietorial influence would not necessarily be problematic, but it could be if it meant that any one media owner had too much influence over the political process, or if it led to a restriction on journalistic freedom or systematic inaccuracies. We have identified two main incentives that a proprietor may have to interfere with editorial matters, including editorial stance and the accurate presentation of news:

- i) **Commercial incentives to restrict views, promote particular interests or misrepresent facts:** if a proprietor has significant commercial interests outside of its newspapers, it may have an incentive to promote those interests in its newspaper(s), or to prevent editors from running stories which may be harmful to those interests. The proprietor may also have an incentive to include or omit certain information for the same reason. Acting on this incentive could result in a newspaper changing its view or inaccurate information being presented to its readership for the commercial benefit of the proprietor.
- ii) **Political views of the proprietor:** the proprietor may wish to support certain political views or to avoid certain views being promoted or certain stories being covered. They may influence the types of campaigns supported by the newspapers and present stories from a particular viewpoint, or even alter them to the point of fabrication, to support their political ideology.

The Undertakings constrain the MFT's ability to exercise influence

6.8 A primary purpose of the Undertakings is to protect the editorial independence of The Times and The Sunday Times, with the INDs having a key role in ensuring that the editors are free to operate without interference from the proprietor. Whilst there are no specific requirements in the Undertakings to ensure the accurate presentation of

¹⁰¹ This regime for newspapers contrasts with the UK broadcasting regime, where broadcasters are required to be fit and proper to hold a broadcasting licence.

news, we consider that they offer indirect protection by ensuring that the editors maintain control of editorial output and that the influence of the MFT is limited.

- 6.9 Currently a majority of the INDs must approve the appointment and dismissal of the editors and the INDs also determine any disputes between the directors of TNL and the editors. A high number of disputes would give rise to concerns over editorial independence and of the proprietor seeking to influence the titles. News UK has told us that the INDs have not been called on to determine any disputes between the proprietor and editors in the last 10 years. ¹⁰²
- 6.10 However, News UK did note the well-publicised case in 2013 when, following the resignation of James Harding as the editor of The Times, the INDs did not accept News UK's nominated editors because the INDs needed to "*satisfy themselves that the appointments were not being made with the intention of diluting the requirement for separate titles*". ¹⁰³ The prospective candidates, John Witherow and Martin Ivens, became acting editors of The Times and The Sunday Times respectively for nine months and were eventually approved as permanent appointments after the INDs had interviewed them and received written assurances regarding compliance with the Undertakings.
- 6.11 In its 2019 application to vary the requirements imposed by the 1981 Conditions, News UK stated that the (then) proposed undertakings would not have any effect on the editors' freedom to operate without interference from the proprietor, in particular due to the fact that the role of the INDs in this regard would continue to apply. ¹⁰⁴ We can therefore infer that if the Undertakings were to be released, and the role of the INDs were to cease, the MFT might seek an opportunity to employ greater influence. This is also demonstrated by the changes proposed to the INDs, which we discuss below.
- 6.12 Past statements by Rupert Murdoch in relation to this area provide some evidence to support this view. During a 2007 House of Lords Select Committee hearing on Communications, and later reported in the Leveson Inquiry in 2012, Rupert Murdoch suggested that he would have sought to influence the editorial output of The Times and The Sunday Times if he had had the opportunity: "*Mr Murdoch did not disguise the fact that he is hands on both economically and editorially. He says that 'the law' prevents him from instructing the editors of The Times and The Sunday Times. The independent board is there to make sure he cannot interfere and he never says "do this or that" although he often asks "what are you doing". He explained that he "nominates" the Editors of these two papers but that the nominations are subject to approval of the independent board.*" ¹⁰⁵
- 6.13 In giving new evidence during the Leveson Inquiry, Rupert Murdoch indicated that he does directly influence the editorial line of The Sun (where no undertakings exist) on

¹⁰² News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021.

¹⁰³ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

¹⁰⁴ [News UK Submission to DCMS](#), 10 January 2019, paragraph 8.6.

¹⁰⁵ As reported in the [Leveson Inquiry, Morning Session, 25 April 2012](#), pp.37-38.

major issues stating, "if any politician wanted my views on major matters, they only had to read the editorials in *The Sun*." ¹⁰⁶ We recognise that other members of the MFT could also wield influence over the direction of policy, and under a different individual, or even a different proprietor altogether, the approach to editorial influence could be different.

- 6.14 Based on this information, we consider that the INDs have acted as some constraint on the ability of the MFT to influence the editorial output of the titles to date, and that removing them would increase the potential for proprietorial influence. It is, however, not possible to judge against the counterfactual of the INDs not being in place.

The influence of the MFT is constrained by the reach of the two titles

- 6.15 Ultimately, even if the proprietor were to have a greater role in the editorial positions of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, we consider that News UK's ability to influence readers' perceptions and the wider news market would be limited.
- 6.16 As we have noted, the ability of newspapers to influence which issues are considered important by the public and which are not, and to influence which issues the wider media focuses on, can extend their impact beyond their readers. However, given that the cross platform share of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* is 0.69% and the combined News Corp share is 2.85%, we consider that the ability of News UK to apply this influence beyond its titles is relatively limited. ¹⁰⁷ We also note that the MFT has recently divested other businesses which has left it with a smaller overall portfolio. In 2018, 21st Century Fox sold its 39% stake in Sky to Comcast, ¹⁰⁸ while the 2019 merger between Disney and 21st Century Fox saw the MFT sell off most of its TV and film assets to Disney. ¹⁰⁹
- 6.17 Furthermore, as noted above, readers of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* also access multiple other sources of news and more than the average news consumer. As such, they are well placed to compare information from alternative sources. Readers therefore do not rely on them as their only source of news. This might mean that readers are unlikely to be easily influenced by the editorial stances of the titles, or inaccurate coverage. Moreover, if the MFT wanted to influence the titles by not covering certain important stories, it is likely that readers would find them elsewhere, given the high level of multi sourcing in the UK in general, and particularly for readers of these publications.

¹⁰⁶ [Leveson Inquiry, Morning Session, 25 April 2012](#), p.88.

¹⁰⁷ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2020](#).

¹⁰⁸ [The Guardian](#), 26 September 2019. [Rupert Murdoch's Sky reign to end as Fox sells all shares to Comcast](#).

¹⁰⁹ [Forbes](#), 20 March 2019. [What The Disney-Fox Deal Means For Rupert Murdoch's Fortune](#). We note however that News UK has recently [announced](#) that it is launching a new TV channel, talkTV.

The MFT has a strong commercial incentive to maintain a reputation for high quality journalism and not to reduce standards of accuracy

- 6.18 Having greater ability to influence the accurate presentation of news, absent the Undertakings, does not mean that the MFT would in fact do so. This would also depend on the strength of the incentives for the MFT to use this ability.
- 6.19 News UK submits that, if the Undertakings were released, it would have continued commercial incentives to maintain high standards of accuracy at the two papers and their reputations for high-quality, independent journalism. Regarding accuracy, News UK argues that *“to do otherwise would risk serious and long-term damage to the reputation and ultimately the revenue generated by those two newspapers”*.¹¹⁰ The release of the Undertakings *“is necessary precisely to ensure that The Times and The Sunday Times can continue to sustain accurate and quality coverage of the widest array of topics.”* News UK also argues that *“any attempt by the proprietor to restrain or inhibit the editorial position of either The Times or The Sunday Times would be economically irrational and likely to result in a sharp decline in circulation numbers, subscribers [...] and online advertising revenues.”*¹¹¹ It states that *“the continued success of both The Times and The Sunday Times is inextricably linked to their longstanding reputation for quality and independent journalism.”*
- 6.20 Evidence from our research shows that readers of the titles do expect and value high-quality news that can be trusted. Our research shows that regular readers of The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers rate them highly across attitude statements including: ‘accurate’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘high quality’ and ‘helps me understand what’s going on in the world today’. In 2021, 74% of readers rated them ‘accurate’, and 79% rated them ‘high quality’. These high percentages are in line with the ratings given to The Guardian/Observer and The Daily/The Sunday Telegraph by their regular readers.¹¹²
- 6.21 Based on the information available, we agree that, in the absence of the Undertakings, there would continue to be strong reputational and commercial incentives for the MFT not to interfere in the accuracy of its journalism and news coverage. A move to less accurate presentation of news would affect the quality of the titles and likely cause readers and advertisers to move away from them, reducing circulation and advertising revenues.
- 6.22 We do not consider, necessarily, that the same incentives exist to prevent interference in editorial freedom, nor that readers have the same expectations here. As set out in Section 5, we consider that preventing an owner, or voice, having too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda is the key public interest consideration.

¹¹⁰ [News UK’s application](#), paragraph 7.4.

¹¹¹ [News UK’s application](#), paragraph 7.8.

¹¹² [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2021](#), slide 77. This data relates to readers’ views of the print version of newspapers only.

Given the cross-media share of The Times and The Sunday Times, we do not consider that that would be the case.

Other measures protect free expression of opinion and accurate presentation of news

- 6.23 In the absence of the Undertakings, we note that there will other measures in place intended to protect free expression and accurate presentation. Aside from the Undertakings, we asked News UK to provide information about any policies, processes or governance structures that are in place at The Times and The Sunday Times. This was so that we could consider what other mechanisms exist currently to ensure editorial freedom and accurate presentation of news, and also understand how employees at the two titles are expected to conduct themselves generally.
- 6.24 News UK states that it does not have any plans to change, add or remove the current processes.¹¹³ In addition, if the Undertakings were released, it would propose to amend the editors' contracts and set up a new independent committee to reflect some of the safeguards provided by the Undertakings, as set out below.

Accuracy

- 6.25 News UK provided a number of compliance policies which apply to employees of The Times and The Sunday Times. Among them, one code requires those working in editorial to comply with the IPSO Code, mentioned above, "*not only to the letter but in the full spirit of the code*".¹¹⁴ As set out in Section 4, the IPSO Code set out requirements that seek to ensure the accurate presentation of news.
- 6.26 The newspapers have established a framework for dealing with complaints in relation to accuracy. News UK has told us that "*published corrections and clarifications run well into three figures every year, not because we're getting more wrong than other publications but because we're more open about our mistakes*".¹¹⁵ It says that complaints that result in changes are rectified and recorded in the Corrections and Clarifications column. It is difficult to determine how many of these points were substantial or related to accuracy, although we note that News UK states that "*the majority of these involve quite minor points of fact, and a fair proportion require clarifications rather than correction.*"¹¹⁶
- 6.27 Some complaints have been reported to IPSO. We note that over the past five years, a small number of complaints have been successfully upheld against each of The Times and The Sunday Times. Last year, for example, four complaints (two in part) were

¹¹³ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021.

¹¹⁴ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021. [§<]

¹¹⁵ News UK's response dated 1 September 2021 to Ofcom's follow up request for information dated 26 August 2021.

¹¹⁶ [The Times Corrections and Clarifications column](#) going back five years; [The Sunday Times equivalent](#) going back to 2019.

upheld by IPSO for The Times and three (one in part) for The Sunday Times respectively.¹¹⁷

- 6.28 We consider that serious accuracy breaches, for example, those which are libellous, could lead to litigation. Over the past 10 years, around 20 defamation cases have been brought against The Times and The Sunday Times.¹¹⁸ In some cases, the newspapers have been able to successfully defend the publication. However, where a claimant has succeeded or the claim has been settled, TNL has paid damages and costs. The threat of court action and potential resulting financial and reputational consequences are likely to continue acting as an incentive to publish accurate stories.
- 6.29 We consider that even if it did influence the editorial line of the titles, the unusually high degree of multi-sourcing by its readers suggests that the MFT's ability to influence readers' perceptions and the wider news market would be limited.
- 6.30 We consider that it is unlikely that the processes in place to protect accuracy will change in the short term.

Commitments made by News UK to protect editorial freedom

- 6.31 News UK's application states that *"the editors of The Times and The Sunday Times are supportive of the Undertakings being removed and do not consider that this would give rise to any concerns over the proprietor seeking to restrict or inhibit the editorial output of the respective papers. Nor are they aware of any attempts of the proprietor to do so while the Undertakings of the Conditions have been in force."*¹¹⁹ Both editors provided written letters of support for News UK's application, noting that closer integration is needed to support the shift to a *"seven-day digital future for the two titles"* and that the assurances provided by News UK will be sufficient to protect independence.¹²⁰
- 6.32 News UK's application outlines safeguards that it proposes to put in place to maintain free expression of opinion should the Undertakings be released. These include amending the employment contracts of the editors of the two titles to include contractual provisions which guarantee editorial independence in similar terms to the Undertakings.¹²¹ Specifically, they will state that:
- i) the editors will retain control over political comment and will not be subject to any restraint or inhibition in expressing opinion or in reporting news;

¹¹⁷ News UK's response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom's request for information dated 2 August 2021. Upheld complaints by IPSO over the past five years: 2016 T:2, ST:2; 2017 T:4, ST:0; 2018 T:5, ST:5; 2019 T:1 (in part), ST:2; 2020 T:4 (2 in part), ST:3 (1 in part).

¹¹⁸ Retrieved from Westlaw on 21 September 2021.

¹¹⁹ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 7.9.

¹²⁰ News UK's application, [Annex C: Letters from Editors and Independent National Directors](#). We note that there is currently a whistle-blowing policy which allows employees to raise concerns, including concerns relating to compliance with the Undertakings (as required by the Undertakings). News UK states that it is not aware of any whistleblowing complaints regarding failure to comply with the Undertakings or suggestion of improper restraint or inhibition relating to editorial decision-making.

¹²¹ [News UK's application](#), paragraph 7.10.

- ii) instructions to journalists will be given by the editors (or those with delegated authority); and
 - iii) the editors will retain control over the appointment, disposition and dismissal of journalists, subject only to annual budgets for editorial space and expenditure determined by the directors of TNL.
- 6.33 In addition, News UK also proposes to establish an independent committee comprising of at least three people, who will mediate and make binding determinations on disputes between the editors and TNL on matters of editorial independence.¹²²
- 6.34 Although the structure and rules of the proposed committee are still in discussion, it is envisaged that it will not generally be involved in the appointment or dismissal of editors.¹²³ The only exception is where the incumbent editor raises a complaint on specific grounds – that the editor believed that their editorial independence had been restricted and that their dismissal and proposed appointment of a replacement editor was related to that. The editor could raise a complaint in relation to the potential breach of contract and in that case, the committee would then adjudicate on the dismissal of the incumbent editor and the proposed replacement appointment.
- 6.35 Unlike the INDs, in the absence of the Undertakings, the committee will not need to report on compliance to the Secretary of State each year. We would expect that there is likely to be less oversight by the committee on matters of editorial independence. For example, whereas the INDs must meet the editors at least twice a year, it is possible that the committee will only be called on when a dispute arises. This could be rare, as under the INDs, no disputes have arisen in the past 10 years.
- 6.36 We also note that News UK’s proposals are not binding or enforceable and there is nothing to stop News UK from amending the editors’ contracts or stop it from dissolving the independent committee in the future. We note that a breach of an editor’s contract would give rise to rights only for the editor concerned, and may never become public. Therefore, whilst we consider that this is a good signal of intent, we do not consider that these proposed safeguards can provide any firm guarantees that free expression of opinion would be maintained in the long term. If the Secretary of State were minded to release News UK from some of the obligations under the Undertakings but wished to ensure that certain safeguards remained, she could consider whether it would be appropriate to vary the existing Undertakings to reflect News UK’s proposals.

Conclusion on free expression of opinion ground

- 6.37 We consider that to the extent that the Undertakings have successfully supported free expression of opinion within the TNL titles, their release could create the potential for increased proprietorial influence. However, we are mindful of the wider context in which we are making this assessment. In particular, as set out in Section 5, the key

¹²² [News UK’s application](#), paragraph 7.11.

¹²³ News UK’s response dated 13 August 2021 to Ofcom’s request for information dated 2 August 2021.

consideration is preventing any one media owner, or voice, having too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda so that there is a risk that people are exposed to a narrow set of viewpoints. We do not consider this to be the case because the UK news market is currently reasonably plural, and we know that consumers are increasingly accessing news from multiple sources.

- 6.38 We note News UK's assertion that other protections will remain in place in the absence of the Undertakings, including a new independent committee and contractual provisions. These, alongside letters from the editors signaling that they believe editorial independence will be maintained, are positive signs that there is unlikely to be an increase in proprietorial influence. However, as these measures will not be binding, unless the Secretary of State decides to impose requirements, we have placed more weight on other matters in reaching our view.

Conclusion on accurate presentation of news ground

- 6.39 We consider that any incentives that there could be for the influence of the proprietor to impact accuracy of news are counter balanced by incentives to maintain it. As set out, the economic success of The Times and The Sunday Times and their ability to attract readers and advertisers are linked to their reputation for quality, accurate and trusted journalism. Readers expect The Times and The Sunday Times to deliver accurate, reliable news and would be likely to turn away from the publications if this was affected in the future.
- 6.40 We do not, therefore, consider that the release of the Undertakings will have an adverse impact on accurate presentation of news.
- 6.41 There will also continue to be internal and external regulation around the accurate presentation of news in the absence of the Undertakings. As set out at in Section 4, The Times and The Sunday Times are regulated by IPSO; they are bound by the IPSO Code, which sets out requirements for maintaining accuracy, and can be subject to enforcement. Court action for libel is also likely to act as an incentive to publish stories the titles believe are accurate.

A1. Methodology

Data sources used

A1.1 This annex outlines the core metrics and research used in the report, detailing their methodologies and the extent to which they are directly comparable with one another.

A1.2 The main sources of information used in the report are set out in the following table.

Figure A1.1: Main sources of information

Source	Methodology	Main time period used	Age range and sample size	News definition	Reach definition (how a user of a source is defined)
Ofcom News Consumption Survey (NCS) 2020	Face-to-face and online interviews on use of news sources on a variety of platforms	2019/20	4,576 adults aged 16+, including Nations' boosts	News and current affairs content in your region/nation, across the UK and from around the world.	'Use particular news source nowadays'
Ofcom News Consumption Survey (NCS) 2021	Telephone (CATI) and online interviews on use of news sources on a variety of platforms	2020/21	4,605 adults aged 16+, including Nations' boosts	News and current affairs content in your region/nation, across the UK and from around the world.	'Use particular news source nowadays'
Ipsos MORI – Ipsos iris	Ipsos iris uses a hybrid methodology combining a passively measured single-source panel data with a site-centric census measurement.	April – June 2021	10,000 single source panel aged 15+	'Category: News' data filtered by content that only relates to news related traffic.	Unique visitor to website or app in defined period

Ofcom's News Consumption Survey

- A1.3 Shares of reference are calculated by asking people which news sources they use and the frequency with which they use them. Each reference is then weighted for the frequency of use and summed. The share of each news source or provider can then be calculated based on their total number of references as a proportion of all references for all news sources. In the News Consumption Surveys conducted from 2018 to 2020, the adult (16+) research was conducted using a mixed methodology, combining online and face-to-face interviews (F2F). During the most recent period of research (2021), due to COVID-19 fieldwork restrictions, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews – these were replaced with telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews or CATI) interviews. Due to differences in how respondents answered questions about individual news sources in the 2021 methodology we have chosen to use the '2020' Share of Reference data (which uses the 2019/20 News Consumption Survey data) for this advice, as it is more robust.
- A1.4 For all other data, the 2021 survey has been used. As referenced above, during November and December 2020 and February and March 2021, due to COVID-19 fieldwork restrictions, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews. These were replaced by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI). Due to differences in the questionnaire and differences in how respondents answered questions about individual news sources between the two survey methods used, only platform level data was reported using the combined methodology adult sample. All other data reported are based on the online sample only.
- A1.5 CATI respondents were contacted through the Sample Answers' Lifestyle and Random Digit Dial (RDD) database; they then completed the survey over the phone. Online respondents, recruited from an online panel, were invited to complete the same survey separately via email. In total, 1,278 CATI interviews and 3,327 online interviews were carried out during 2020/21. Nations were over-represented during fieldwork to produce robust sample sizes for analysis. The interviews were conducted over two waves (November and December 2020 and February and March 2021) in order to achieve a robust and representative view of UK adults.
- A1.6 Respondents are asked about their news consumption. The interview begins with an introduction of how they might use news throughout the day across a variety of platforms including social media. They are also given a definition of news as "news and current affairs in [nation], across the UK and around the world".
- A1.7 The survey data has been weighted to correct for the over-representation of the Nations, with weights applied to age, gender and SEG within Nation to match known population profiles. Due to the COVID-19 enforced methodological changes, the adults' 2021 data is not comparable to data in the previous News Consumption Reports, published 2018-2020. It is only possible to make direct comparisons between the 2021 Online sample data and 2020 reweighted Online sample data.
- A1.8 As part of the prompted list for online sources we include various social media, for example Facebook and Google, that may refer or link to, or aggregate, multiple other news

sources. However, we cannot tell from our survey which news brands people are using within these sources. The survey has approximately 200 codes for different potential sources for news, as well as the option to allow respondents to nominate their own sources which yields a further 800 or so, including regional sources. This gives us a bottom-up measure of what people consider they use for news (about their Nation, the UK and internationally) and will not necessarily include every possible outlet. The survey therefore provides a granular range of news sources. These individual news sources are then aggregated into various groups or “nets” relating to their owner or publisher.

- A1.9 This is a recall-based survey. As such, it is likely to provide somewhat different results to other types of measurement. In particular, it may underestimate some online news consumption activity. It is likely to be harder for respondents to recall ad-hoc online news consumption compared to, say, the purchase of a newspaper or the watching of an evening television bulletin. On the other hand, respondents show through such surveys which news sources resonate with them.
- A1.10 The report groups news sources according to their provider. The tables below provide details on how each source has been grouped. It is important to reiterate that these sources are the ones nominated by respondents, rather than an exhaustive list of all possible news sources.

Figure A1.2: News providers and sources

News provider	Sources included
Bauer	Absolute Radio, Cool FM, Radio Borders, CFM, Kiss, Magic, Downtown, North Sound 1, Tay FM, Clyde Radio, Hits Radio, Metro Radio, City Talk, Clyde 1, Forth 1, Free Radio, Gem 106, Hallam, Key 103, Planet Rock, Radio Aire, Border/Radio Borders, City/Radio City, Rock FM, TFM, Viking FM, West FM, West Sound, Kerrang FM, MFR, Northsound 2, Moray Firth Radio, Wave 105 FM
BBC	BBC One, BBC Two, BBC Four, BBC Alba, BBC News Channel, BBC Parliament, BBC Scotland, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Wales or Cymru, BBC Radio Ulster, BBC1 Xtra, iPlayer Radio, BBC website or app, BBC iPlayer, BBC local radio services, BBC Sounds
Channel 4	Channel 4, Channel 4 website or app
DMGT	Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday, Metro, Mail website or app, Metro website or app, The i, The i website or app
Facebook	Facebook
Global Radio	Classic FM, LBC, Heart, Capital FM, Smooth Radio, Global Player
Google	YouTube, Google (general search engine), Google News (search engine just for news), GooglePlay

Guardian Media Group	The Guardian, The Observer, The Guardian/Observer website or app
ITV	ITV1 / ITV Wales STV / UTV, ITV or ITN website or app, STV Website or app
National World plc	The Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday, The News Letter, local press titles
Lebedev Foundation	The Evening Standard, The independent website or app, The Evening Standard website or app
News Corp	The Sun, The Times, The Sun on Sunday, The Sunday Times, talkSport, talkRADIO, Virgin Radio, Times Radio, U105, The Sun website or app, The Times/The Sunday Times website or app
Sky	Sky News Channel, Sky News website or app
Reach PLC	The Daily Star, The Daily Express, The Daily Mirror, The Daily Record, South Wales Echo, The Western Mail, The Daily Post, The Daily Star on Sunday, The Sunday Express, The Sunday Mirror, The People, The Sunday Mail, Wales on Sunday, The Daily Star website or app, The Daily Express website or app, The Daily Mirror website or app, local press titles, local press websites
Telegraph Media Group	The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph, The Telegraph website or app
The Nikkei	The Financial Times, The Financial Times website or app
Twitter	Twitter
Viacom	Channel 5
Other intermediaries	Yahoo news website or app, MSN news website or app, AOL news website or app, News Now website or app, Flipboard
Other	S4C, non-specific/other local print titles, foreign language sources (TV and web), other international sources, other commercial radio, local TV channels, other TV news channels, other TV non-news channels, local authority sources, community sources, Republic of Ireland sources, weather websites, news aggregators, blogs, magazines, other web or social media sources, other app sources

Ipsos MORI – Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service

- A1.11 The UK Online Measurement Company (UKOM) was formed in 2009 with a mandate from the advertising industry in the UK to establish measurement standards for digital media. UKOM appointed Ipsos MORI's – Ipsos iris solution as its exclusive partner of online media audience measurement in the UK from 2021.
- A1.12 Ipsos iris, launched in 2021, provides online site and app audience use across desktop and mobile in the UK. Ipsos iris uses a hybrid methodology that combines a nationally representative UK establishment survey, a passively measured single-source panel, and a site-centric census measurement.
- A1.13 Where 'Category: News' data is presented the data is filtered by content that only relates to the news category and thus includes news related traffic only. Some websites sections might not be classified as 'News' category and thus won't represent the national news brands' entire traffic. It does not include Apple News traffic.
- A1.14 There are differences between the News Consumption Survey and Ipsos Iris data and, while this demonstrates the difficulty of measuring reach of news sources, the differences can be explained. News Consumption Survey data shows the sources people recall using in a survey - we can therefore infer, for example, that the 7% of those who use websites/apps for news in the News Consumption Survey are people who actively use The Times/The Sunday Times website/app or remember using it. In contrast, Ipsos Iris records a much higher reach because it is a passive measurement tool - it is not based on respondent recall. For example, it therefore includes visitors to The Times/The Sunday Times website/app who may have only read one article they would not later recall the source of, or might have clicked through to the paywall and not progressed any further. The figures include news related traffic only; some sections from The Times and The Sunday Times website might not be classified as 'News' category. It does not include Apple News traffic.