GfK NOP

GfK. Growth from Knowledge

Public Attitudes and Satisfaction: quantitative research

Report - 2009

A research report for COI on behalf of the Public Weather Service / The Met Office

Provided by: GfK NOP Social Research

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1 Introduction

The Public Weather Service (PWS) provides a range of weather information and services that allow the public to "optimise or mitigate against the impact of weather" in their daily activities. It is funded by the Ministry of Defence through the Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG) which has set it a series of requirements. To measure their effectiveness against these requirements the Central Office of Information (COI), on behalf of the PWS, commissioned GfK NOP to conduct a series of surveys to ascertain public satisfaction levels with the service they provide. This report covers the findings of 3 surveys conducted in November 2007, November 2008 and November 2009.

2 In Short

Across the three surveys

- Nearly all consider forecasts easy to understand
- Nine out of ten think weather forecasts are useful (very or fairly)
- Between seven and eight out of ten think that weather forecasts are accurate (very or fairly)
- Television is the medium used by most people most often for forecasts
- Most look at or hear a forecast at least once a day
- There has been very little movement in findings across the three waves of research

3 Key Findings

3.1 Awareness and Visibility of Forecasts

Eight out of ten see or listen to forecasts at least once a day (see p5).

Around three quarters of those who see or hear forecasts get their forecasts from television and 13% from the radio. Other media are used by far fewer respondents (see p7).

BBC TV is the channel watched most often for TV forecasts, followed by ITV. Use of other terrestrial channels is negligible and only around 4% of respondents get weather forecasts from Sky (see p13).

BBC national radio is the station listened to most often for radio forecasts followed by local commercial radio stations (see p14).

The BBC website is used most often for online forecasts followed at much lower levels by Google (see p15).

3.2 Satisfaction with Weather Forecasts

Most (90+%) find forecasts easy to understand with BBC TV followed by ITV forecasts considered the easiest to understand (see pages 16 and 17).

Two thirds (66%) consider forecasts fairly accurate (a further 8% very accurate). The most accurate forecasts are considered to come from BBC TV followed by ITV (see pages 18 and 19).

BBC TV is thought to provide the forecast most likely to give respondents everything they want from a weather forecast, followed by ITV (see p20).

Most want nothing more from forecasts (see p21).

3.3 Use of Forecasts

Around a fifth of respondents say that the weather affects their normal routine to do with work or housekeeping whilst around a third say the same about the weather affecting their normal routine to do with leisure (see pages 22 and 23).

Just over a third of respondents make a particular point of watching a forecast daily, a fifth do so sometimes and c45% just watch or listen to it if it comes on (see p24).

Just under half of respondents always pay particular attention to forecasts if they come on whilst they are watching TV or listening to the radio, a third sometimes pay attention and a fifth say that they do not pay particular attention (see p26).

Respondents are more likely to take an umbrella or change clothes as a result of a weather forecast (66% very or fairly often) than to undertake alternative activities (27% very or fairly often) or change travel plans (16% very or fairly often) (see p27).

Overall, around nine out of ten respondents in each year consider weather forecasts either very or fairly useful (see p29).

4 Detailed Findings

The full findings from the three surveys are discussed in this section. There are few differences in evidence across the three years, and even where differences are statistically significant, unless they are showing a continuing trend in any one direction little should be read from any single change. Where such trends are in evidence they are highlighted.

Demographic and regional differences are highlighted where they are consistent across the 3 waves of research. Where no differences are mentioned they are either not statistically significant or did not appear in every wave of research (which would indicate a trend).

The table below gives an estimate of the difference you would need to see between waves of the survey (based on 2200 interviews) if it were conducted using a random probability survey to be sure there is a real difference. It is not strictly applicable for a quota survey, which is what these surveys were, but it is useful as a guide. The proportions in the blue boxes represent the value of a finding and below it the difference required to indicate (at 95% levels of confidence) that it is a statistically significant difference.

	5% or 95%	10% or 90%	15% or 85%	20% or 80%	25% or 75%	30% or 70%	35% or 65%	40% or 60%	45% or 55%	50%
2200	1.3 %	1.8 %	2.1 %	2.4 %	2.6 %	2.7 %	2.8 %	2.9 %	2.9 %	3.0 %

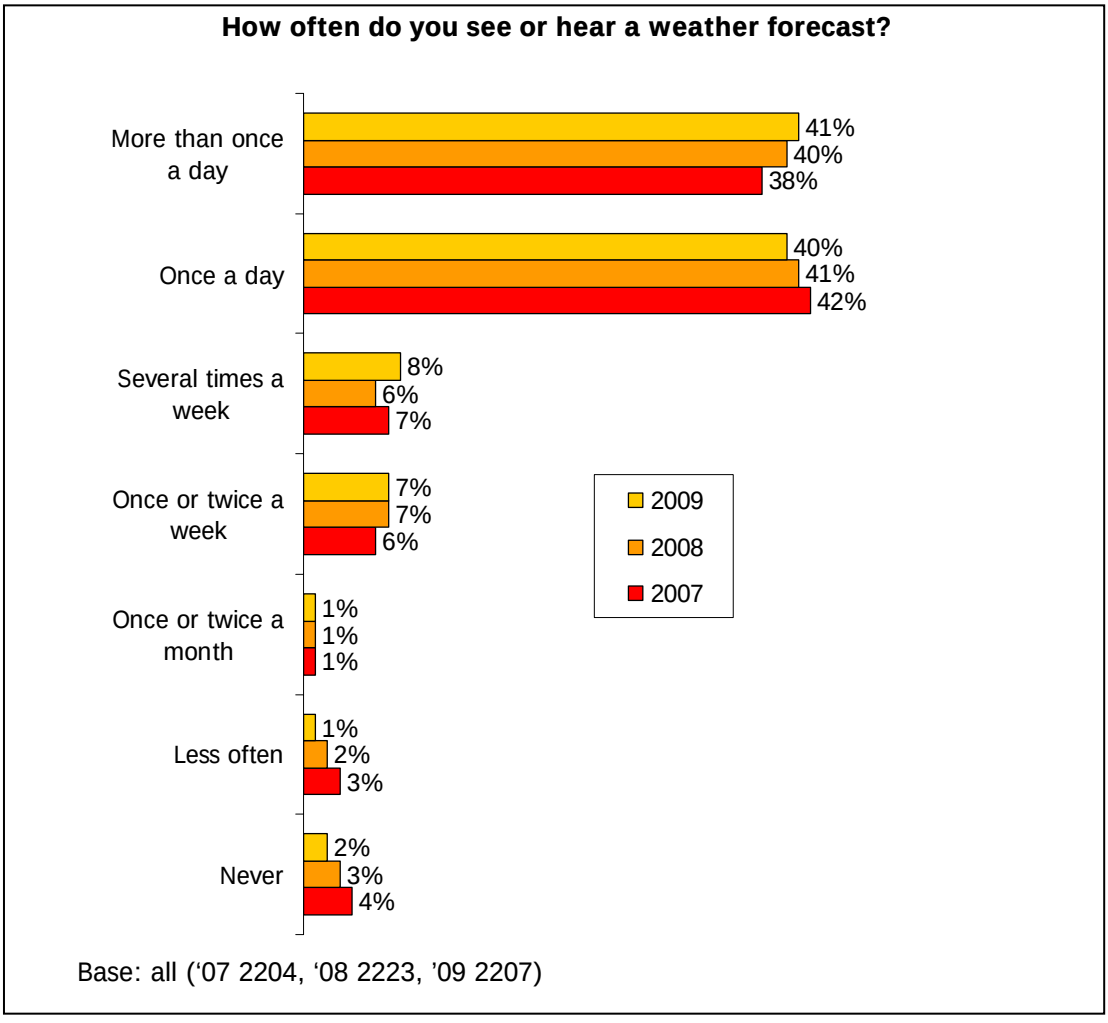
While wave on wave differences may apparently show significant differences it is wise not to read too much into this unless a trend is witnessed over more than one wave or the change is maintained in subsequent waves, hence isolated statistically significant differences have not been highlighted in the following sections.

4.1 Awareness and Visibility of Forecasts

In this section we explore frequency of seeing or hearing forecasts and where forecasts are seen or heard.

4.1.1 Frequency of seeing or hearing a forecast

To establish awareness, respondents were first asked how often they saw or heard a weather forecast. The majority indicate that they do so at least once a day, and while the differences are not quite significant there is a trend upwards for more than once a day and downward for once a day. The proportion who say 'never' or 'less often' is also dropping over time.



Age had a bearing on frequency of watching or seeing a forecast in each year, with the 16-24 year olds more likely than others to never see or hear one and older respondents more likely than others to see or hear a forecast more than once a day.

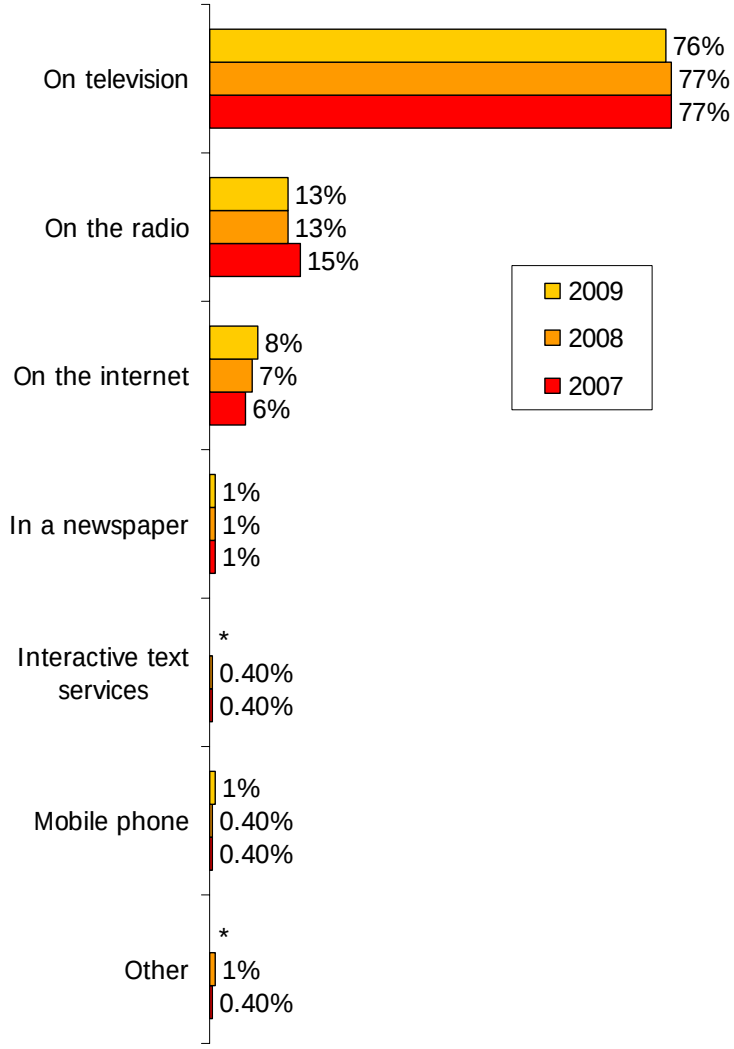
Table 1: Frequency of watching or listening to forecasts by age

	Overall	16-24 year olds			65+ year olds		
	2007-09	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Base: all	(c2000) %	(279) %	(256) %	(271) %	(432) %	(464) %	(470) %
More than once a day	35-41	19	20	20	52	55	56
Never	2-4	10	10	6	3	1	1

4.1.2 Where forecasts are seen most often

Around three quarters of those who have ever seen or heard a forecast see it most often on television. The second most common medium is radio but at a much lower level than for TV. The use of the internet for looking at forecasts is low but seems to indicate a gradual rise across the years and rises amongst the younger age groups (see overleaf). Only a very small proportion of respondents use interactive text services or mobile phones as their primary means of checking weather forecasts.

Where do you see or hear a weather forecast most often?



*=less than 0.4%

Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

In all years younger respondents (up to the age of 34 or even 44) were significantly more likely to look at forecasts over the internet than older respondents.

Table 2: Looking at forecasts via the internet by age

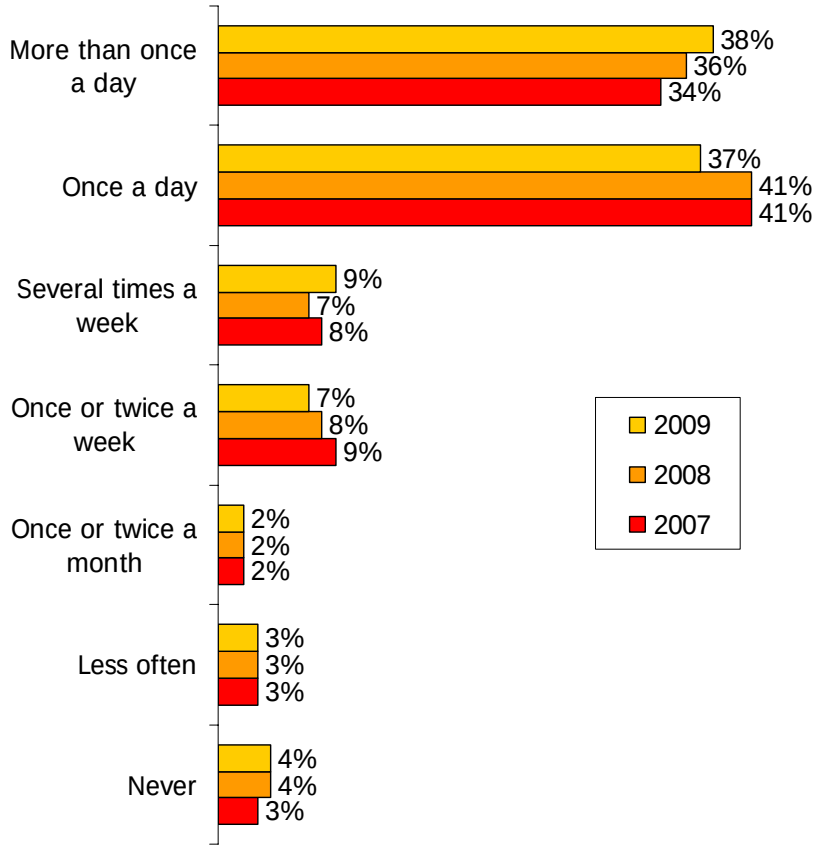
	Total	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2007	6%	13%	11%	6%	6%	3%	1%
2008	7%	10%	13%	13%	4%	2%	*
2009	8%	11%	14%	10%	9%	4%	*

*=less than 0.5%

4.1.3 Frequency of seeing or hearing forecasts, by method

Three quarters of those who see or hear weather forecasts saw a forecast on television at least once a day. Again we see an upward trend of seeing or hearing a forecast more than once a day. As with frequency of seeing or hearing forecasts at all, those aged 65+ are more likely than others to have seen a TV forecast more than once a day whereas the 16-24 years olds are more likely to say they have never seen TV weather.

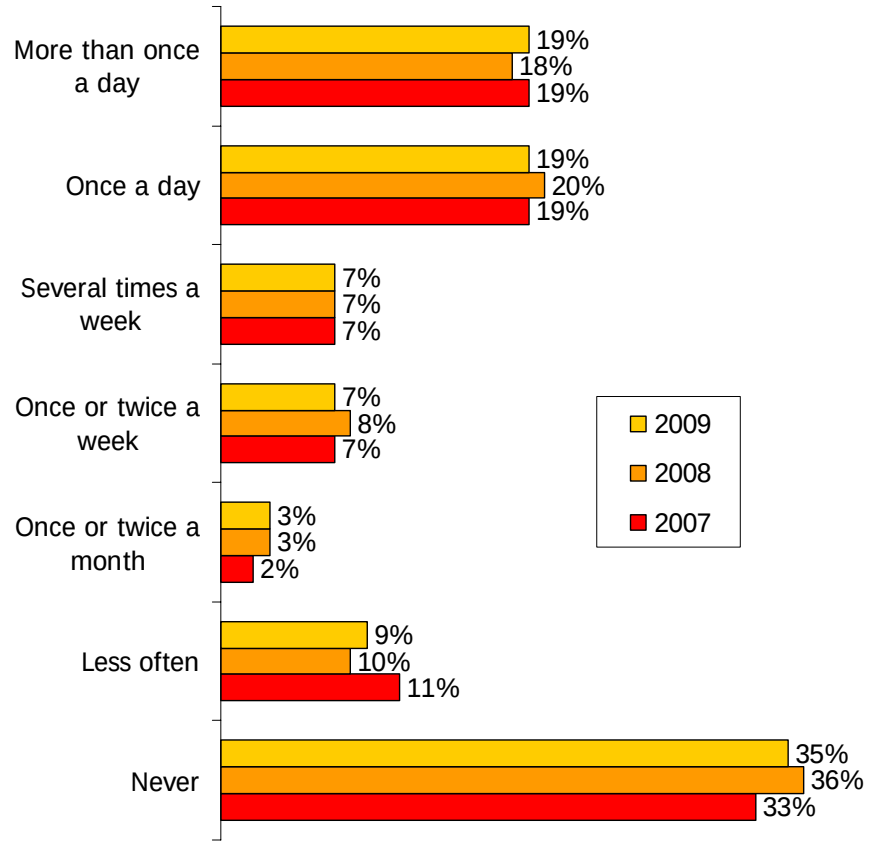
How often do you usually see a weather forecast on television?



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

As we saw earlier, fewer people use the radio rather than TV as their primary source of forecasts which explains the high proportion of 'never' in the chart below. Around two fifths of those who ever see or hear weather forecasts listen to one on the radio at least once a day.

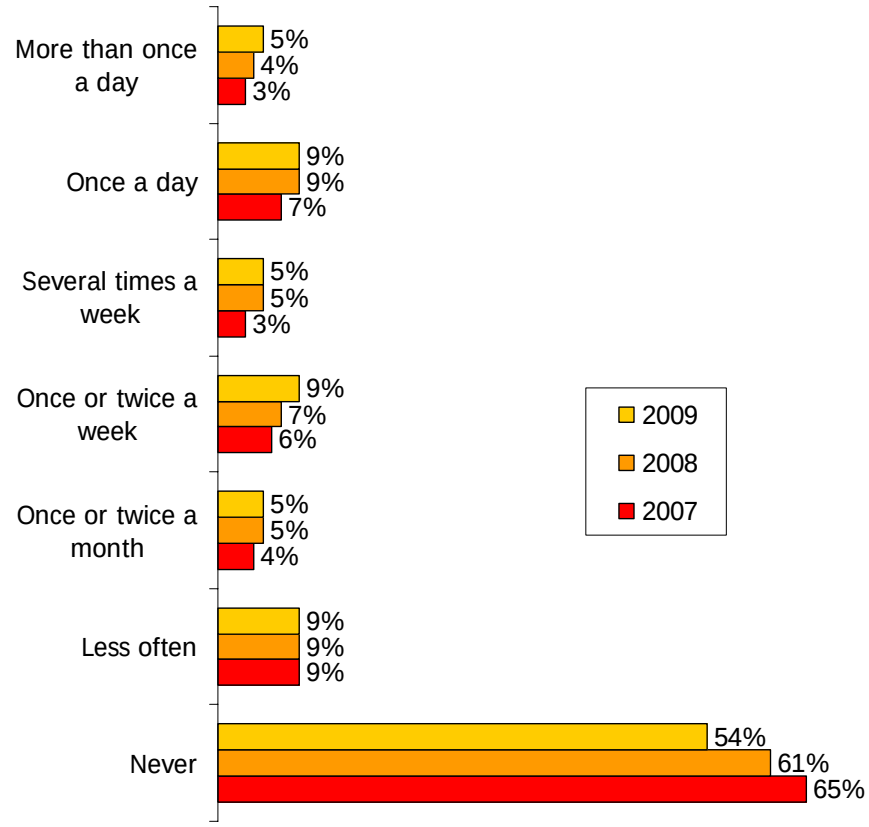
How often do you usually hear a weather forecast on the radio



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

The internet is used even less frequently than TV or radio, although there is a definite drop in the proportion who say 'never' across the 3 surveys. As we noted before the internet is more likely to be used for forecasts by the 16-44 year olds (around 18% once a day or more) than those aged 45+ (around 7-10% over the same frequency).

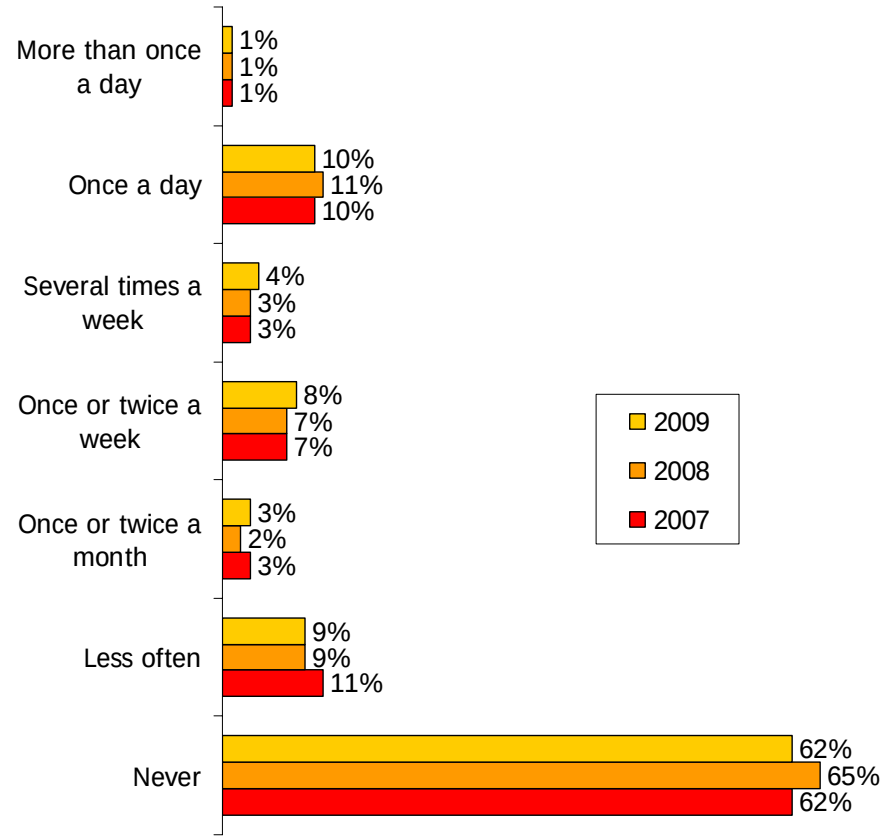
How often do you usually see a weather forecast on the internet?



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

Forecasts in newspapers are looked at about as frequently as forecasts on the internet. There exists a significant difference between those aged 65+, 16-18% of whom across all 3 years look at a newspaper forecast at least once a day, and younger respondents (7-9% of 16-24 year olds look at newspaper forecasts at least once a day).

How often do you usually see a weather forecast in a newspaper?



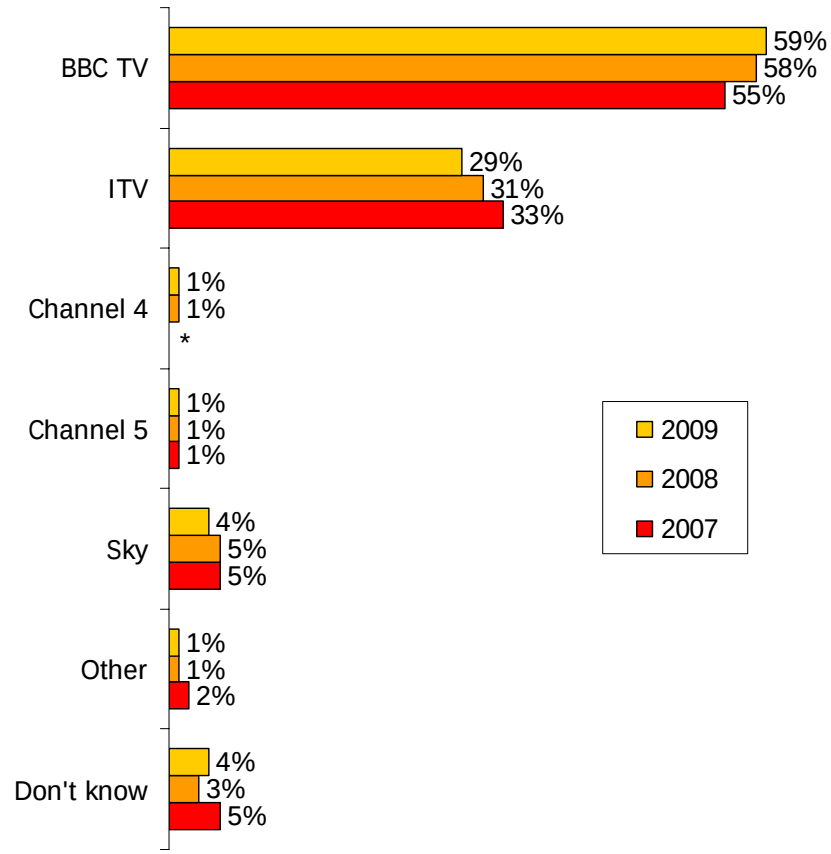
Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

Frequency of use of mobile phone weather forecasts has not been charted as this is never used by 90% of respondents.

4.1.4 Channels used

As the chart below clearly indicates, the BBC is the most popular television channel for weather forecasts, a popularity which is growing, followed by ITV which is diminishing in popularity over the three waves of the survey. Other TV channels are used by only a small minority of respondents.

On which TV channel do you see a weather forecast most often?

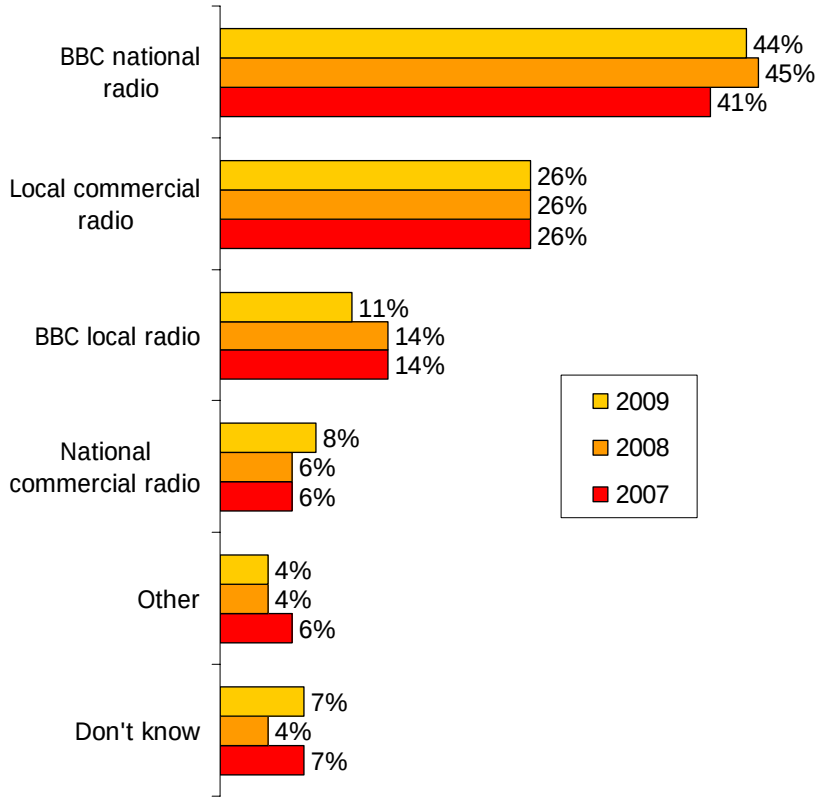


*=less than 0.5%

Base: all who ever see a weather forecast on television ('07 2061, '08 2088, '09 2078)

A similar question was asked about radio stations amongst those who hear weather forecasts via the radio. The BBC is again the most common source of forecasts, at a national level, but local commercial radio stations were the next most likely followed by BBC local radio at around half the rate of local commercial radio.

On which station do you hear a weather forecast most often

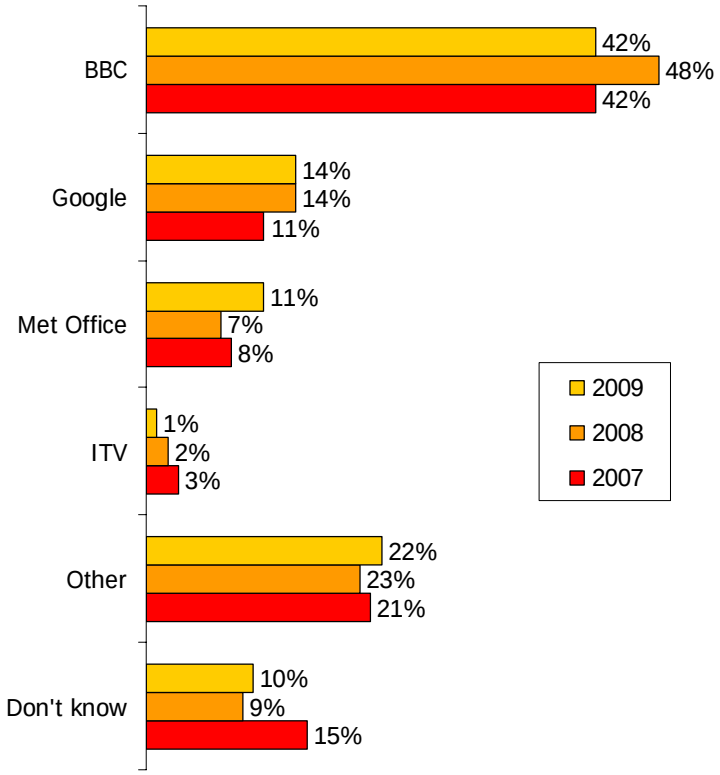


Base: all who ever hear a weather forecast on a radio ('07 1392, '08 1373, '09 1399)

Respondents in Northern Ireland were consistently more likely than others to listen to BBC local radio and those in London more likely than any other region to say 'Other'.

The BBC is again the most likely choice when it comes to getting forecasts from a website with Google the next most popular site but at much lower levels.

On which website do you see a weather forecast most often?



Base: all who ever see a weather forecast on a website ('07 699, '08 822, '09 944)

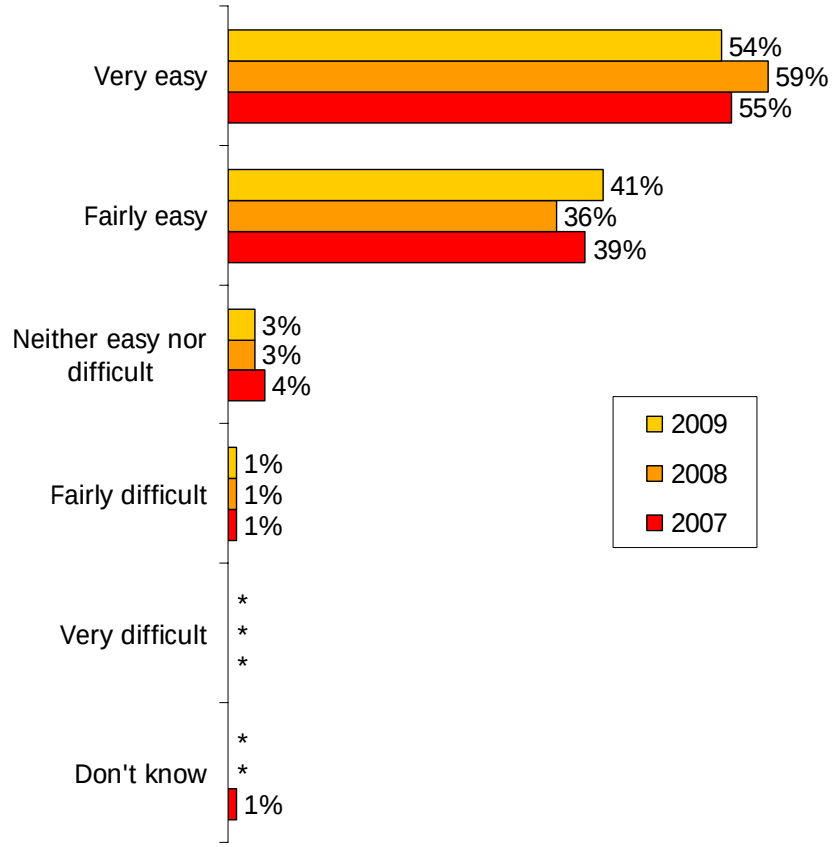
4.2 Satisfaction with Weather Forecasts

Several questions were asked about the quality of weather forecasts giving us a general feeling for how satisfied people are with them. The next sections explore ease of understanding, perceptions of accuracy and the usefulness of weather forecasts.

4.2.1 Ease of understanding

A general question on how easy or difficult weather forecasts are to understand revealed that most find it easy, with more saying 'very easy' than 'fairly easy'.

When you see or hear a weather forecast, how easy or difficult would you say it is to understand?

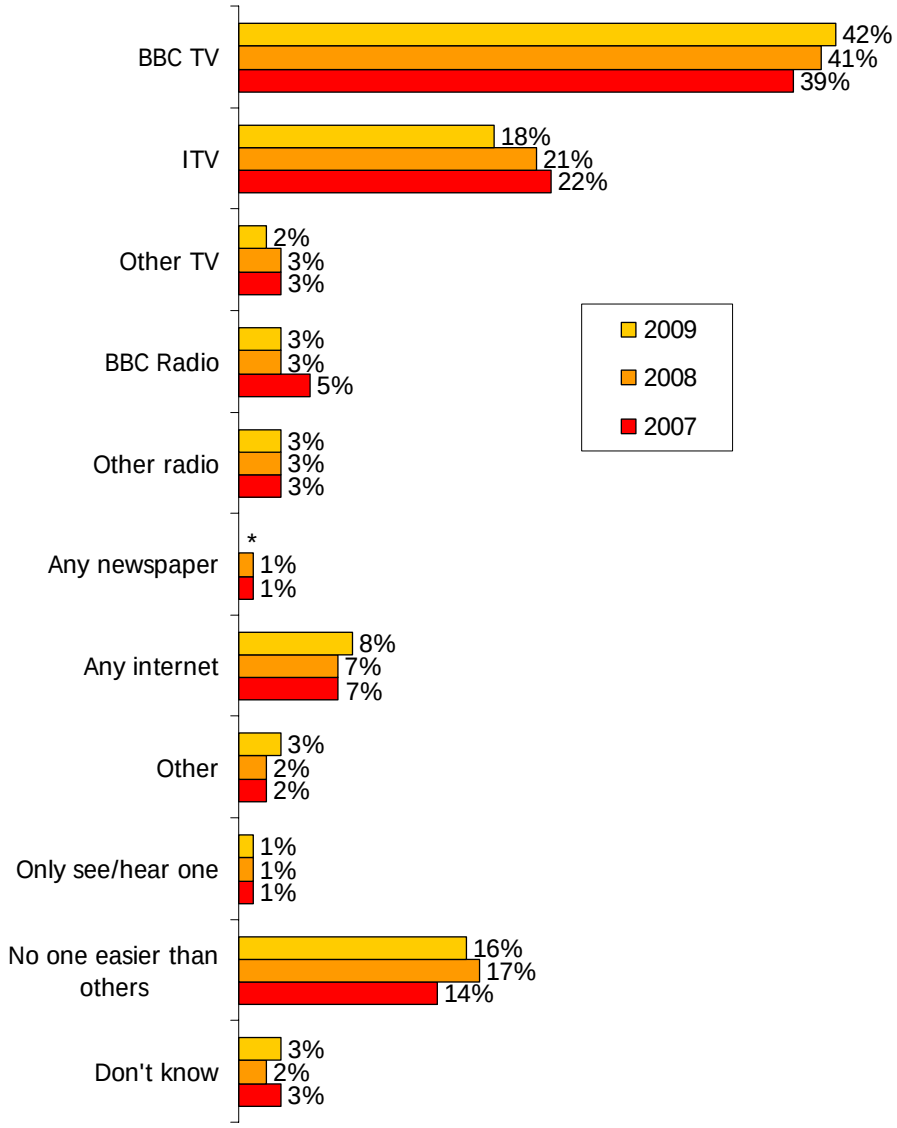


*=less than 0.5%

Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

The next chart shows which of the channels people think have the weather forecast that is the easiest to understand. The response to this question may be affected by what people watch, see or listen to on a regular basis. So they may cite their regular channel weather forecast as the easiest to understand.

Which weather forecast is the easiest to understand?



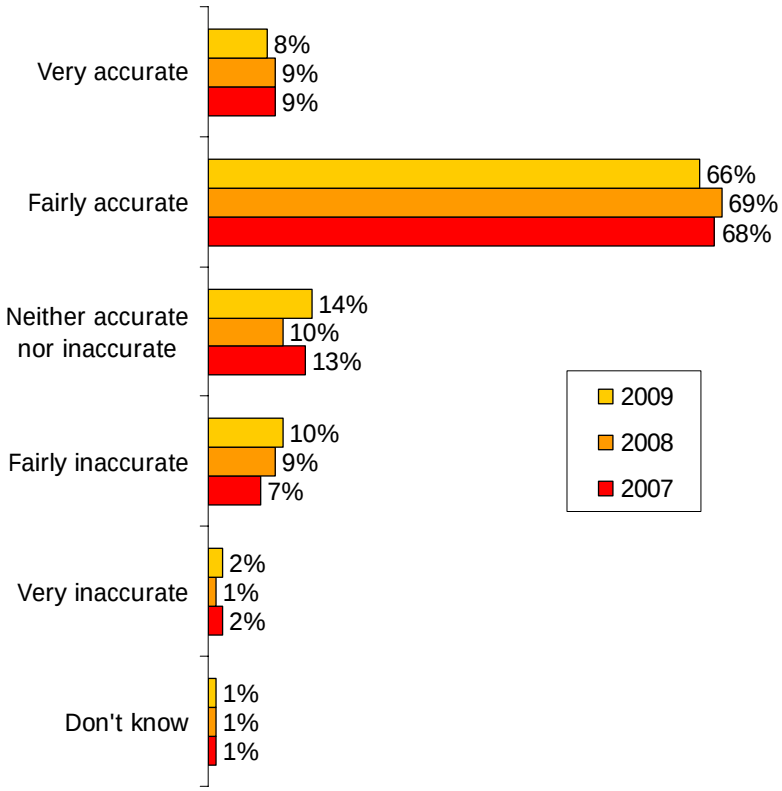
*=less than 0.5%

Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

4.2.2 Accuracy

When asked about accuracy a majority in each wave consider weather forecasts fairly accurate as the chart below indicates.

Generally speaking, how accurate or inaccurate do you think most weather forecasts are?

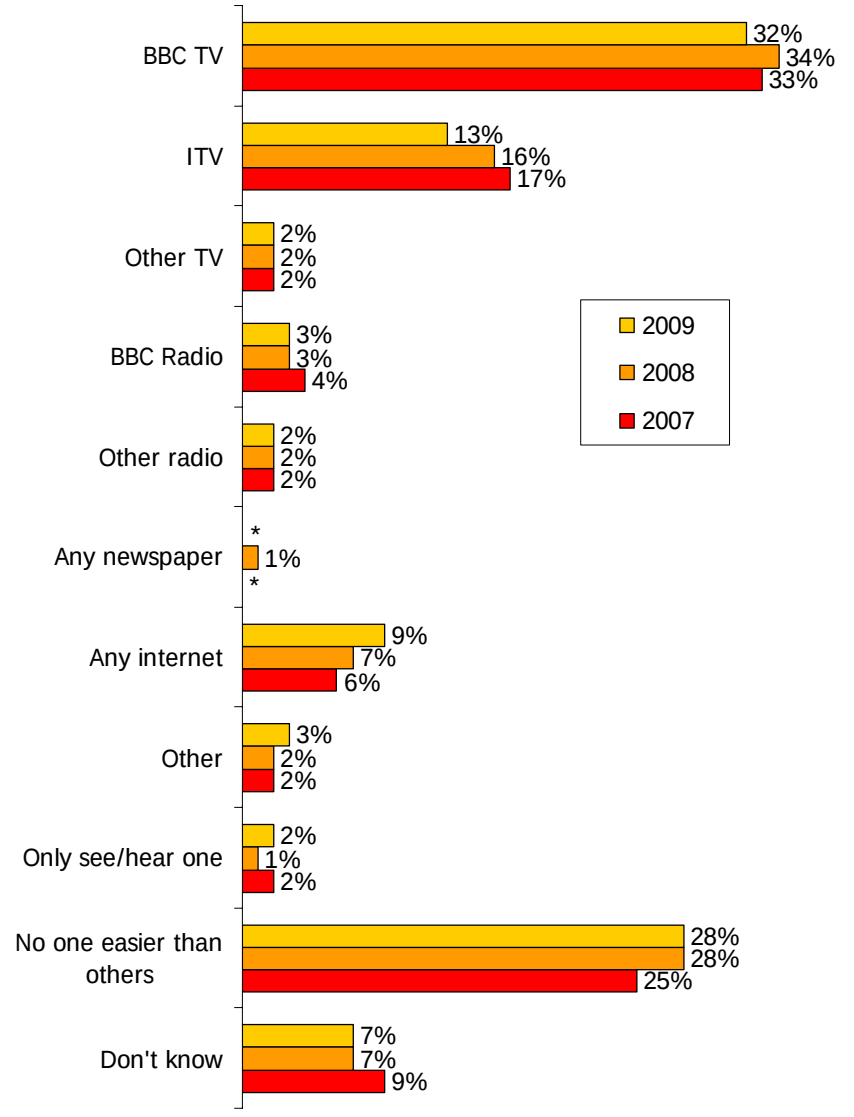


Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

More respondents in London than elsewhere think forecasts are very accurate (20%, 16% and 15% in each of the 3 years respectively).

As with ease of understanding, the BBC are considered the most accurate, followed by ITV. Again it should be borne in mind that some respondents are likely to mention only the channel they are most familiar with.

Which weather forecast that you see or hear is the most accurate?



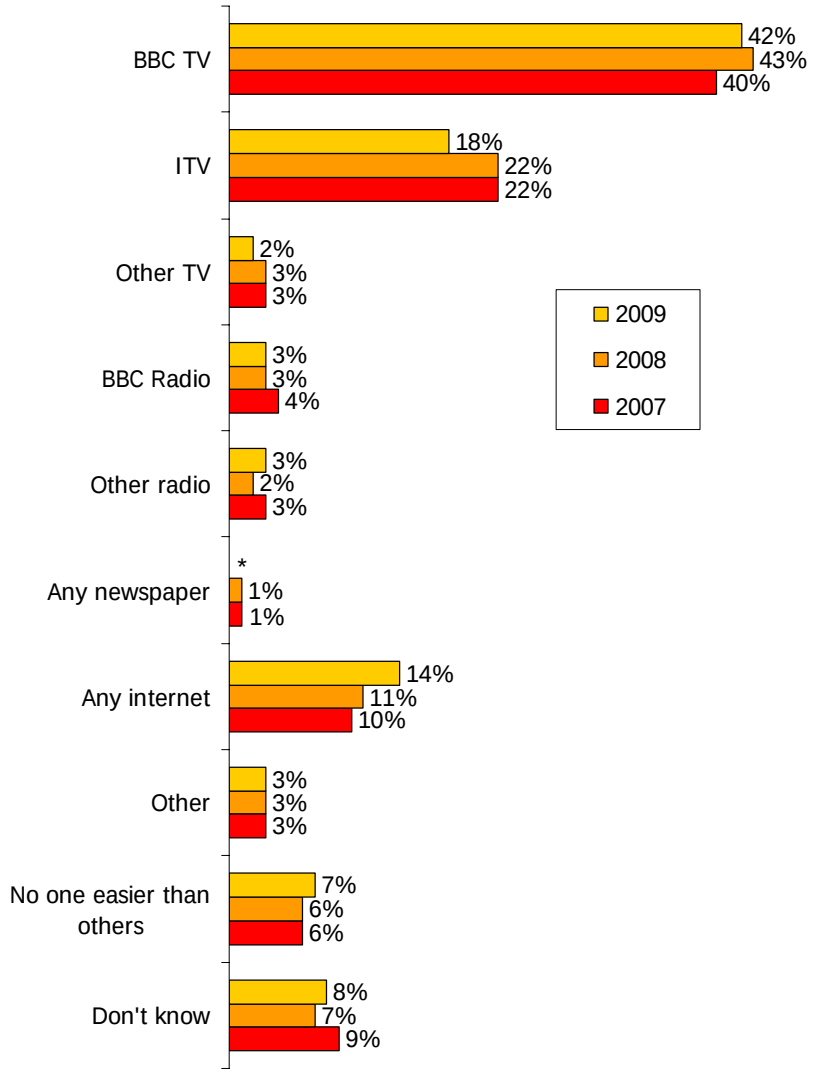
*=less than 0.5%

Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

4.2.3 Everything wanted

When asked which forecast is the most likely to provide everything wanted from a weather forecast, BBC TV was again the most popular choice, followed by ITV.

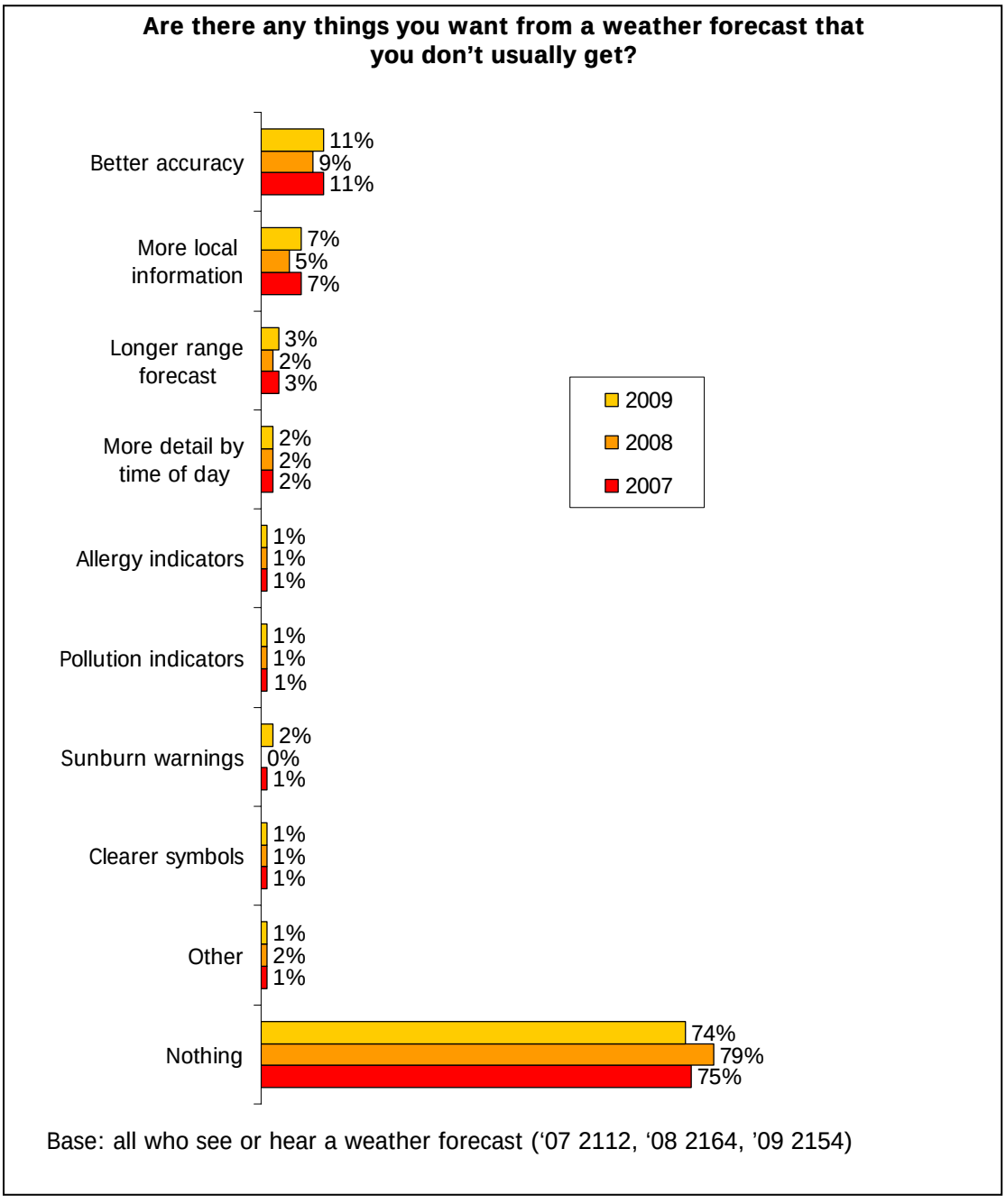
Which weather forecast is the most likely to give you everything you want from a weather forecast?



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

4.2.4 Things wanted from a weather forecast that are not usually provided

There was little consistency in what people want that is not usually provided except that the majority said 'nothing'. Other than that better accuracy came top of the requests followed by more local information and longer range forecasts. The 'other' category included such things as wind speed, driving conditions, tide times, hours of sunshine, isobars to be shown, reports on other countries, better graphics, flood warnings and jet stream information.



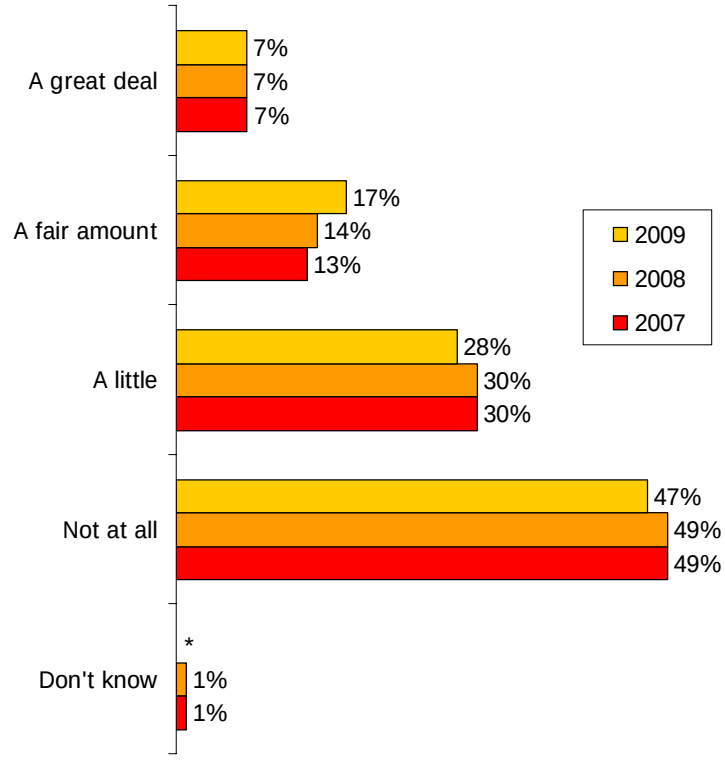
4.3 Use of Forecasts

The paragraphs in this section explore what use people make of the forecasts available, first looking at how much of an issue weather is to respondents.

4.3.1 How much weather affects normal routine

Two questions were asked of all respondents about the effect weather has on normal routine. The first of these covered work or housekeeping. As the chart indicates a fifth to a quarter of respondents say a fair amount or a great deal wave on wave. The proportion who say a fair amount is rising across the 3 surveys.

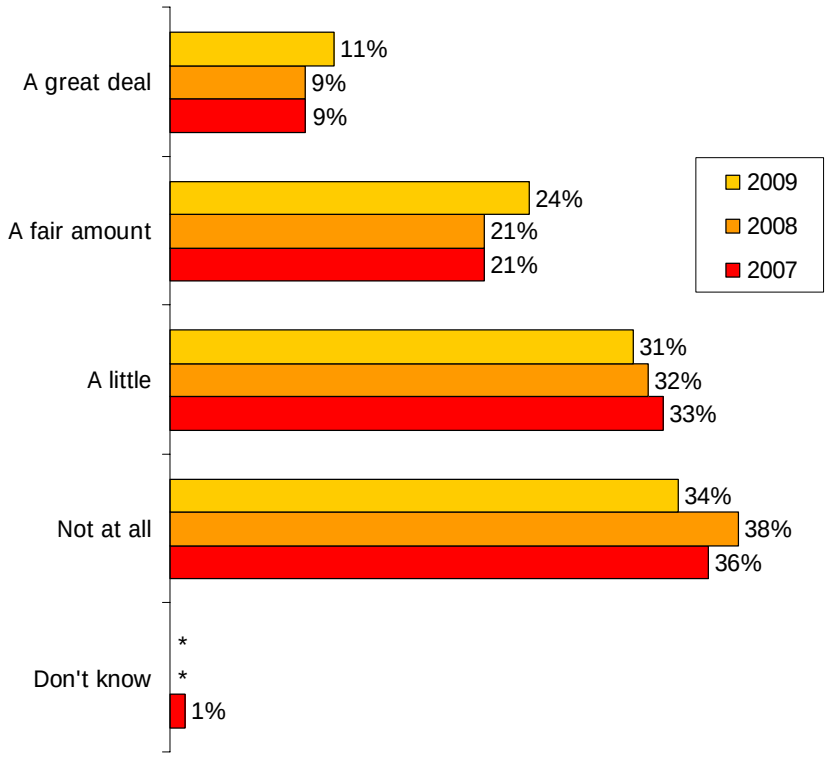
How much would you say your normal routine for work or housekeeping is affected by the weather?



Base: all ('07 2204, '08 2223, '09 2207)

The second question looked at the effect of weather on leisure activities. As can be seen below weather is more likely to have an impact on leisure than it did on work or housekeeping, with around three in ten to a third saying a great deal or a fair amount.

How much would you say your normal routine for leisure is affected by the weather?

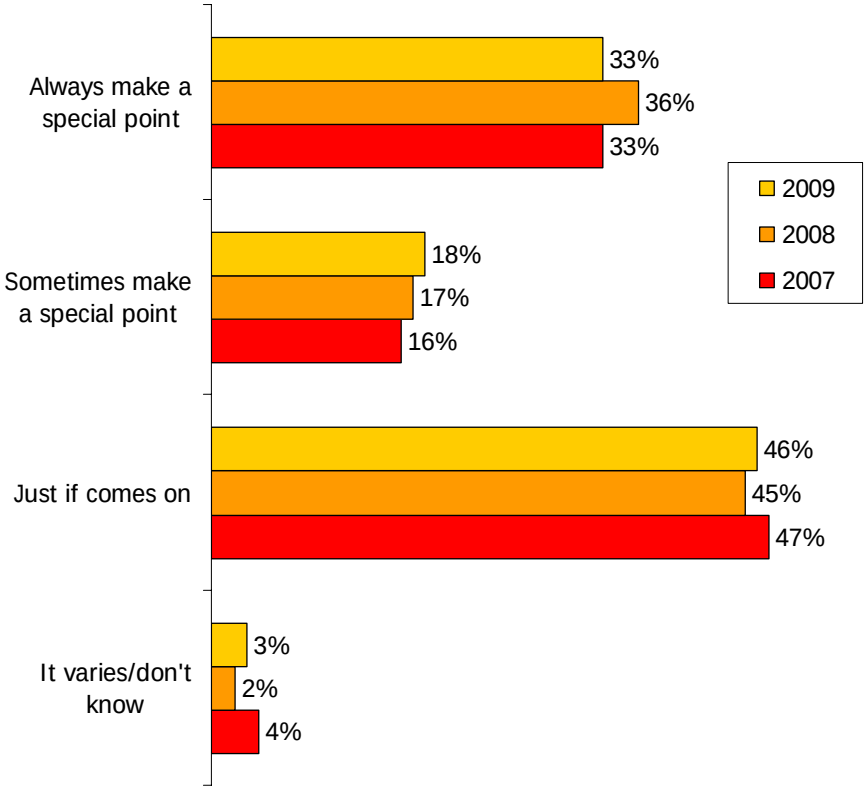


Base: all ('07 2204, '08 2223, '09 2207)

4.3.2 Whether a point is made of seeing or listening to a forecast every day

Overall there exists a split of around a third of people who make a special point of watching a forecast daily, with over 40% only watching or listening if it comes on and the balance, around a fifth, making a special point sometimes, presumably if they have a weather dependent activity coming up.

Do you make a point of hearing or seeing a forecast every day, or do you just watch or listen if one comes on while you are watching TV or listening to the radio?



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

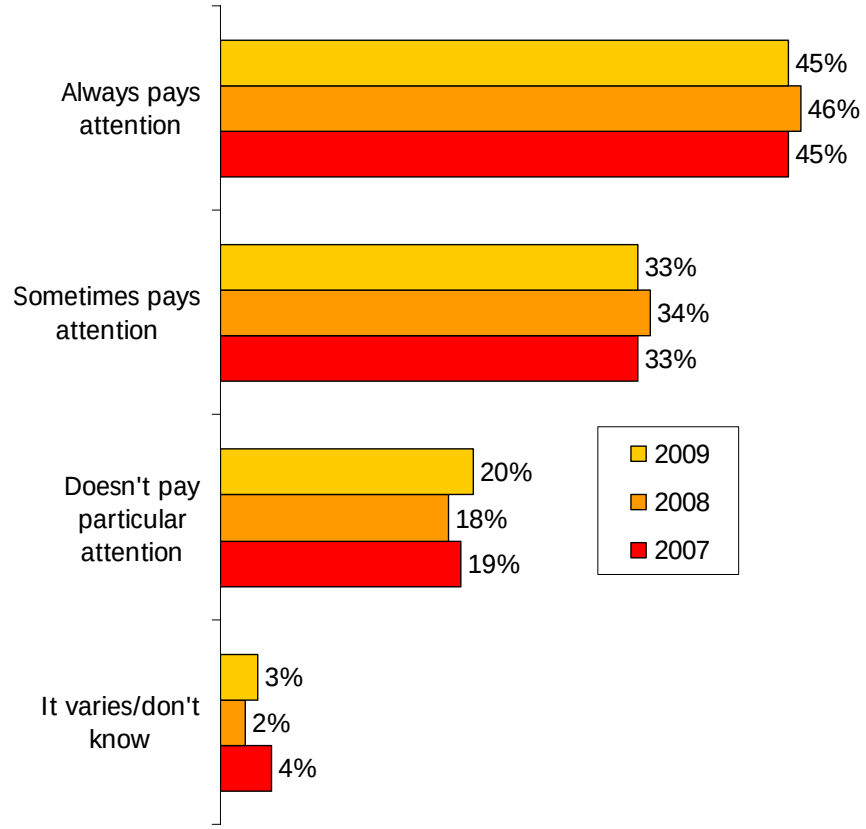
The split by whether people make a point of watching the weather daily or just happen to catch it if it comes on is driven to some extent by age, with those aged 16-34 more likely than those older to see it only when it comes on and older people more likely to make a special point of catching a forecast. This backs up the trend that some younger people are less concerned about weather.

	16-34 year olds			35+ year olds		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast	(617) %	(634) %	(628) %	(1495) %	(1530) %	(1526) %
Always makes a special point	22	23	20	38	41	39
Sometimes makes a special point	15	17	20	16	17	17
Just if it comes on	56	56	55	43	40	42
It varies/don't know	7	4	5	3	2	3

4.3.3 Whether particular attention is paid to a forecast if it comes on

Overall more people pay attention to a forecast that comes on while they are watching TV or listening to the radio, than do not.

If you are watching television or listening to the radio and a weather forecast comes on, do you usually pay particular attention to it, or not pay much attention?



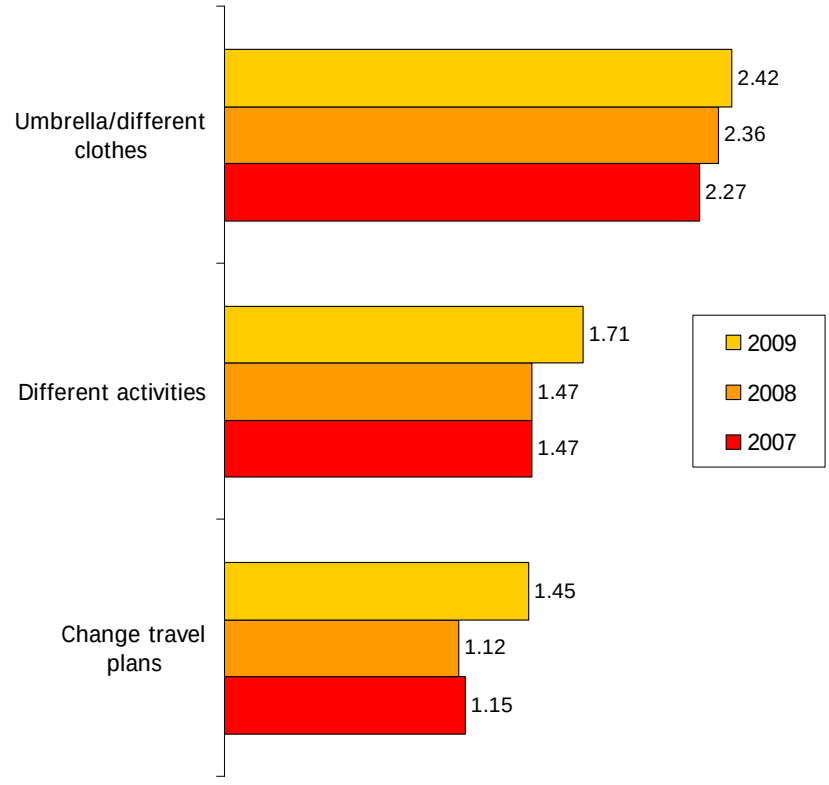
Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

There is again a difference by age with younger respondents less likely to always pay attention and more likely to sometimes pay attention or not pay particular attention.

4.3.4 Frequency of certain actions as a result of a weather forecast

Everyone who ever sees or hears a weather forecast was asked how often they took an umbrella or changed clothes, changed travel plans or undertook different activities to those planned as a result of a forecast. Since it is not possible to show a frequency chart on multiple factors for more than one survey in percentages, the chart below is in mean or average frequency where 0 is never and 4 is very often. This indicates an increasing trend to take an umbrella or wear different clothes (the difference between 2007 and 2009 is significant), a significant jump from 2007 and 2008 to 2009 to plan different activities and to change travel plans.

How often do you do each of the following as a result of a weather forecast?



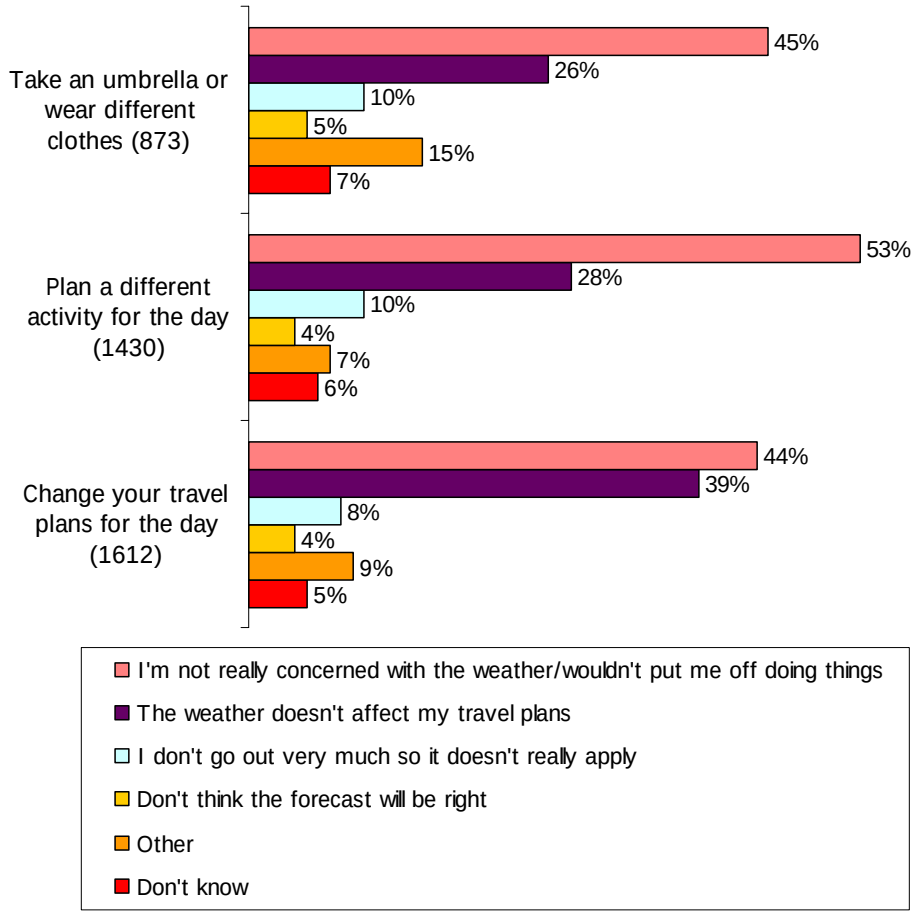
Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

Women are consistently more likely than men to more frequently take an umbrella or change their clothes as a result of a weather forecast.

4.3.5 Reasons for not taking action

For the first time in 2009 a further question was included to ask respondents who take action as a result of a weather forecast not very often, rarely or never, why that is the case. As the chart below indicates, the primary reason given was that respondents were not really concerned about the weather or that it wouldn't put them off doing things. This is followed, fairly closely in the case of whether people would change their travel plans for the day, by the weather not affecting travel plans. Other reasons came in at much lower levels. The 'other' categories included such things as always having an umbrella on them/in the car, only changing activities if they were doing something weather dependent, like sailing, or still have to get things done regardless of the weather.

You say you (take an umbrella/wear different clothes, do different activities, change travel plans) (not very often, rarely, never). Why is that?

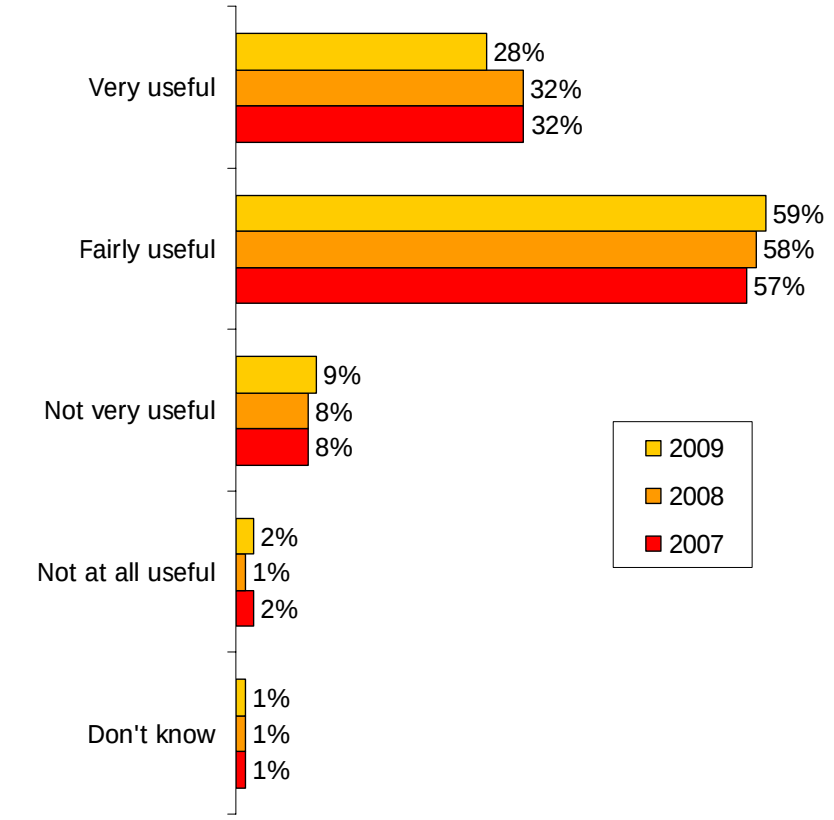


Base: All who not very often, rarely or never take action as a result of weather forecasts (number in brackets after the statements).

4.3.6 Overall usefulness of weather forecasts

The final question was about overall usefulness of forecasts and as the chart below indicates, in all 3 surveys a large majority consider them either fairly or very useful.

Overall, how useful would you say weather forecasts are these days?



Base: all who see or hear a weather forecast ('07 2112, '08 2164, '09 2154)

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Appendices

Methodology

The research was carried out through face to face interviewing in all twelve UK government regions. The survey was conducted as part of GfK NOP's Random Location Omnibus service which interviews a fresh, representative sample of around 2000 adults aged 16+ in the United Kingdom per survey.

Respondents are selected using a random location methodology with quotas set on age and by gender within working status. The size of sample within each region reflects the population distribution of the UK. Interviews are conducted by GfK NOP's own fully trained face-to-face interviewers using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) laptop computers.

With the full omnibus sample of 2000 only Northern Ireland and the North East fall significantly below the target of 100 interviews per region. In order to ensure a valid comparison with these regions a second wave of the Omnibus was run in these two regions only.

In 2007 2112 interviews were achieved between 22nd Nov and 4th Dec.

In 2008 2223 interviews were achieved between 13th and 25th November.

In 2009 2207 interviews were achieved between 5th and 17th November.

The Questionnaire

I would now like to ask you some questions about weather forecasts.

Q1 How often do you usually see or hear a weather forecast? PROMPT IF NECESSARY

More than once a day
Once a day
Several times a week
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Less often
Never
Don't know

IF NEVER GO TO Q11a. OTHERS ASK Q2
Q2 Where do you see or hear a weather forecast most often? PROMPT IF NECESSARY

On television
On the radio
In a newspaper
On the internet
On mobile phone
Interactive text services
Other
DK

Q3 How often do you usually see or hear a weather forecast

on television
on the radio
in a newspaper
on the internet
on your mobile phone

More than once a day
Once a day
Several times a week
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Less often
Never
Don't know

IF EVER TV ASK Q4
Q4 On which tv channel do you see a weather forecast most often?

BBC
ITV
Channel 4
Channel 5
Sky
Other

DK
IF EVER RADIO ASK Q5
Q5 On which station do you hear a weather forecast most often?

BBC National Radio
BBC local radio
National commercial radio
Local commercial radio
Other
DK

IF EVER INTERNET ASK Q6
Q6 On which website do you see a weather forecast most often?

Met Office
BBC
ITV
Google
Other
DK

ASK ALL WHO EVER SEE/HEAR WEATHER FORECASTS
Q7 Which weather forecast is the easiest to understand?

BBC TV
ITV
Other TV
BBC radio
Other radio
Any newspaper
Any internet
Other
Only see/hear one
None
DK

Q8 Which weather forecast that you see or hear is the most accurate?

BBC TV
ITV
Other TV
BBC radio
Other radio
Any newspaper
Any internet
Other
Only see/hear one
None
DK

Q9 Which weather forecast is the most likely to give you everything you want from a weather forecast?

BBC TV
ITV
Other TV
BBC radio
Other radio
Any newspaper
Any internet
Other
None
DK

Q10 Are there are any things you want from a weather forecast that you don't usually get? What are these?

More local information
Clearer symbols
More detail by time of day
Longer range forecast
Pollution indicator
Allergy indicators
Sunburn warnings
Better accuracy
Other (write in)
Nothing

ASK ALL
Q11a SHOWCARD A How much would you say your normal routine for work or housekeeping is affected by the weather? READ OUT

A great deal
A fair amount
A little
Not at all
DK

Q11b SHOWCARD A AGAIN How much would you say your normal routine for leisure is affected by the weather? READ OUT

A great deal
A fair amount
A little
Not at all
DK

ASK ALL EXCEPT THOSE WHO SAID NEVER AT Q1.
Q12 Do you make a point of hearing or seeing a weather forecast every day, or do you just watch or listen if one comes on while you are watching tv or listening to the radio?

Always Make special point
Sometimes make special point
Just if comes on

It varies/DK
Q13 If you are watching television or listening to the radio and a weather forecast comes on, do you usually pay particular attention to it, or not pay much attention?
IF PAYS ATTENTION ONLY TO FIRST ONE HEARD, CODE AS PAYS ATTENTION

Always pays attention
Sometimes pays attention
Doesn't pay special attention
Varies/DK

Q14 How often do you do each of the following as a result of a weather forecast? How often do you ...

Take an umbrella or wear different clothes as a result of a weather forecast
Change your travel plans for the day as a result of a weather forecast
Plan a different activity for the day as a result of a weather forecast

Very often
Fairly often
Not very often
Rarely
Never
DK

Q14b was asked in 2009 only
For each statement the respondent said 'not very often', 'rarely' or 'never' ask Q14b
Q14b You say you (statement at Q14) (not very often/rarely/never)? Why is that?

Don't think the forecast will be right/ not correct for my area
The weather doesn't affect my travel plans
I'm not really concerned with the weather/wouldn't put me off doing things
I don't go out very much so it doesn't really apply
Other (specify)
Don't know

Q15 SHOWCARD B When you see or hear a weather forecast, how easy or difficult would you say it is to understand?
IF VARIES, PROBE FOR FORECAST SEEN/HEARD MOST OFTEN

Very easy
Fairly easy
Neither easy nor difficult
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't Know

Q16 SHOWCARD C Generally speaking, how accurate or inaccurate do you think most weather forecasts are?

Very accurate
Fairly accurate
Neither accurate nor inaccurate
Fairly inaccurate
Very inaccurate
Don't know

Q17 SHOWCARD D And overall, how useful would you say weather forecasts are these days?

Very useful
fairly useful
not very useful
not at all useful

Sample Profile

	2007				2008			
	Weighted		Unweighted		Weighted		Unweighted	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	2204	100	2204	100	2223	100	2223	100
Gender								
Male	1080	49	1028	47	1089	49	1138	47
Female	1124	51	1176	53	1134	51	1185	53
Age								
16 – 24	318	14	279	13	327	15	256	12
25 – 34	364	17	393	18	358	16	419	19
35 – 44	419	19	435	20	420	19	398	18
45 – 54	348	16	348	16	356	16	367	17
55 – 64	317	14	317	14	322	15	319	14
65+	438	20	432	20	440	20	464	21
Working Status								
Full Time	982	45	856	39	944	42	845	38
Part Time	322	15	316	14	376	17	355	16
Not Working	900	41	1032	47	904	41	1023	46
Region								
Scotland	190	9	158	7	191	9	168	8
North East	112	5	201	9	97	4	200	9
North West	231	11	210	10	247	11	239	11
Yorks & Humber	185	8	177	8	187	8	162	7
Ulster	62	3	120	5	62	3	120	5
East Midlands	159	7	165	7	160	7	154	7
West Midlands	108	5	96	4	196	9	199	9
Wales	246	11	166	8	109	5	95	4
Eastern	276	13	258	12	250	11	209	9
London	254	12	257	12	276	12	254	11
South East	187	9	187	8	257	12	225	10
South West	190	9	158	7	191	9	198	9

	2009			
	Weighted		Unweighted	
	n	%	n	%
Total	2207	100	2207	100
Sex				
Male	1081	49	1057	48
Female	1126	51	1150	52
Age				
16 – 24	329	15	271	12
25 – 34	351	16	388	18
35 – 44	413	19	412	19
45 – 54	357	16	369	17
55 – 64	320	14	297	13
65+	437	20	470	21
Working Status				
Full Time	964	44	815	37
Part Time	337	15	298	14
Not Working	906	41	1094	50
Region				
Scotland	188	8	183	8
North East	97	4	210	10
North West	245	11	224	10
Yorks & Humber	188	8	174	8
Ulster	62	3	112	5
East Midlands	159	7	186	8
West Midlands	194	9	147	7
Wales	108	5	105	5
Eastern	228	10	152	7
London	271	12	272	12
South East	277	13	235	11
South West	190	9	207	9