In conjunction with other tools of target audience analysis (TAA), ARK relies heavily on the conduct of large sample surveys to identify groups or categories as potential target audiences (PTAs); to assess social, economic, psychological and other conditions in the general population and within specific groups and categories; to identify motives and vulnerabilities; to measure impact; and to distinguish mediums and formats for effective communication.

Due to the challenge of implementing large sample surveys that are representative and robust in an active conflict environment such as Syria, ARK utilises innovative survey methodologies carefully tailored to fit the purpose. Past national surveys, for example, have used dual-frame random digit dialling (RDD) designs, with corrections to control for damaged communications infrastructure (e.g., destroyed cell towers, use of mobile phones rather than landlines by internally displaced families) and demographics. Other surveys have been implemented in specific provinces with a customised variant of respondent-driven sampling (RDS), a link referral method far more robust than the conventional “snowball sample”, adapted for use with general populations. Other examples have involved the use of satellite imagery to achieve a representative sample. These are methods that have been designed to work in environments like Syria where more standard approaches to surveying are not feasible.

ARK has previously conducted media surveys in Syria, and ARK employees have a wealth of collective experience conducting similar studies in conflict-affected areas such as Iraq and Lebanon. In order to devise effective communications campaigns, media landscape analysis is a significant part of developing a distribution strategy for communications products, to ensure they are seen by the widest possible portion of the target audience.

A recent ARK media landscape analysis was conducted by surveying a national sample of Syrian respondents, who were asked for details about their media usage habits. The questionnaire was designed by ARK’s in-house researchers with experience of conducting similar studies to inform media deployment, and included questions on type of media (and social media) consumed, where media is accessed, how frequently it is accessed, and at what time of day, in 30 minute segments. Through understanding exactly when certain media were accessed, at what time and by whom (demographically and attitudinally), the campaign team was able to make recommendations for targeting media products throughout the country to ensure maximum reach. The charts below depict some example findings: radio listening by time of day of stations with pro-/anti-regime programming (left) and most trusted television channels (right).

Figure 1: Example Graphics from Syria Survey