

Ofcom



Ofcom Annual Report on the BBC 2023-2024

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Contents

Section

1. Overview.....	3
2. Transforming BBC services for UK audiences.....	7
3. Performance against the Public Purposes.....	21
4. The BBC in the nations and regions	53
5. Protecting fair and effective competition	62
6. Content standards	70

1. Overview

The BBC delivers to audiences through its Mission to inform, educate and entertain. It is also required to deliver its Public Purposes and, as set out under the Royal Charter, the BBC Board must set the BBC's strategy, budgets and creative remit. Ofcom is responsible for holding the BBC to account on behalf of audiences, using the tools set out in our [Operating Framework](#). We do this in three ways: overseeing the BBC's performance in delivering its Mission and Public Purposes; protecting fair and effective competition; and regulating content standards in BBC programming. Every year, as required by the BBC Charter and Agreement, we publish a report on the BBC's performance in these three areas, and how we have carried out our role.

This is our seventh Annual Report on the BBC, and the first full assessment under the new Operating Licence we published in March 2023 which modernised our regulation of the BBC. In this main report, we summarise the BBC's performance across the areas of our regulation in the 2023/24 financial year, while also examining more recent plans and changes to BBC services.

The BBC has continued to deliver its remit this year. We base our assessment on a wide range of evidence, including the extensive consumer research and stakeholder engagement Ofcom conducts throughout the year. Further detail can be found in our interactive performance report and in Annex 1, which includes our assessment of the BBC's compliance with the specific regulatory requirements under the BBC Operating Licence.

The BBC continues to face challenges in reaching younger audiences, though it is still widely used and valued overall

Although faced with increased competition from media platforms and streamers, the BBC continues to be the most used UK media brand across TV, radio and online. 61% of adults view the BBC favourably, which is similar to when we started reporting in 2017/18.

However, there are clear challenges from online competition and financial pressures. All public service broadcasters (PSBs), including the BBC, are finding it increasingly difficult to connect with audiences moving online. In particular, 16-24 year olds only spend 13% of their total in-home video time on PSB services and 5% with the BBC compared to the over 35s, who spend 50% and 23% respectively.¹ This poses a significant risk for the future sustainability of PSBs and is a key driver to the BBC transforming itself and increasing its investment in online services. At the same time the BBC must also ensure it continues to deliver to all audiences, including the minority without or with limited internet access at home.

The BBC plays a significant role in delivering high-quality news and current affairs that audiences can trust

The BBC is an important and trusted source of duly accurate and impartial news. For generations it has contributed to UK society, informing citizens and supporting democratic debate. Today, its news output continues to be well used with high levels of audience trust.

¹ Barb as-viewed 2023

The past year has seen escalating international conflicts and multiple national elections taking place around the world. We've also seen audience habits changing rapidly, with younger audiences in particular turning to social media for news. At the same time there has been a rapid rise in online mis and disinformation, which has meant audiences can struggle to identify what to trust. This has been further exacerbated by concerns about the potential use of artificial intelligence and the race to make effective use of its opportunities.

These challenges highlight both the importance of the BBC's role and the need for it to find new ways to deliver to audiences, wherever they are, and to retain their trust. The BBC has made clear efforts to innovate in this space. It is investing in its online services, developing its new fact-checking and transparency tool, BBC Verify, producing tailored short-form content for social media sites such as TikTok and enhancing its news app functionality. It has stated a commitment to supporting audiences' media literacy and we are keen to see how this work can develop in line with its Mission to inform and educate.²

Almost nine in ten UK adults use the BBC each week, and changes to its services can have a large impact on audiences. In recent years it has announced a number of restructures to news and current affairs teams, partly to address funding challenges, but also to increase investment in its [online services](#). While we understand the BBC's rationale, we would have serious concerns if cost cutting ultimately restricted the BBC's ability to deliver high quality news and current affairs that audiences can trust. We will continue to monitor these services to ensure that the BBC continues to fulfil its vital role in providing news and current affairs for audiences. Our PSM review is also considering the impact that changes in the news ecosystem have on audiences and will consider what needs to be done to ensure trusted and accurate news is available to audiences where they want to consume it.

The BBC is developing its services to better reach all audiences, but it has not explained its overarching strategy for reaching DE audiences.

In delivering its remit, the BBC has always found it easier to reach and satisfy some audience groups more than others. We regularly monitor audience satisfaction, identifying less satisfied or lighter users of BBC services. Younger and DE³ audiences are less likely to engage with the BBC, with 78% of 16-34s and 79% of DE audiences using at least one BBC service each week compared to 86% of adults overall. DE audiences are also less likely to be positive towards the BBC for 'reflects the lives of people like me' at 44%, compared to 50% for all UK adults.⁴ It is critical that the BBC, as a publicly funded organisation at the heart of the PSB system, finds ways to appeal to and connect with audiences across the UK, despite their increasingly fragmented media habits. This is clearly important for the future sustainability of the BBC but also critical for the BBC to continue to deliver its Mission and Public Purposes.

We recognise the BBC is implementing individual initiatives to better meet DE audience needs and it takes time to influence audience satisfaction levels. However, this has been a longstanding issue for the BBC and it has not been clear about what its overarching plans are

² [BBC response to Ofcom's consultation on its Three-Year Media Literacy Strategy](#), June 2024

³ People from D and E groups are often referred to as having lower socio-economic status, being from lower income households or from working class backgrounds. They are more likely to be older, unemployed or in insecure work, have a disability or be retired with only a state pension. These groups are highly diverse and make up almost a quarter of the UK population.

⁴ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

for increasing satisfaction for this group. More broadly we think the BBC could better explain whether its initiatives have had a positive impact and how it is assessing what is and isn't working for audiences.

The BBC has met its requirements for protecting fair and effective competition and complying with content standards in BBC programming

The BBC's underlying regulatory framework is also being reformed, through changes to the Framework Agreement. We expect these will reflect the recommendations from the Government's [Mid-Term Review of the BBC](#) (MTR) and will focus on regulation of the BBC's content standards and on competition. We will consult on changes to our competition guidance and a draft of the BBC Online Material Code as part of these changes once the updated Framework Agreement is published by Government.

As part of the MTR, the Government recommended that we publish our view on the BBC's position in the local news sectors and set out our approach to considering the competition impact of future changes to BBC local news services. Today we have published Part 2 of our review of local media in the UK which addresses these recommendations in detail, as well as setting out our assessment of the impact of the BBC's recent changes to online local news in England on commercial local news providers. We also bring together views on a range of possible ideas put forward to us that could support the future sustainability of local news provision across the sector.

The BBC needs to continue to consider its impact on its competition as it makes changes to its public services. Many UK media providers face similar challenges to the BBC, and it therefore needs to ensure it is striking the right balance between delivering for audiences while also ensuring it doesn't limit their choice of UK media providers. The BBC has increased efforts to engage with stakeholders on its service changes this year and we have seen this across the assessments we carried out in 2023/24.

In content standards the BBC has seen an increase in due impartiality complaints over the last year, driven in part by the Israel/Gaza conflict. Of those standards complaints we assessed we didn't identify any that raised issues warranting investigation under our Code. However, we did uphold two fairness and privacy complaints.

Alongside this report we have today published mystery shopping research into the BBC's complaints handling under the BBC First process. This follows our 2022 periodic review on how Ofcom regulates the BBC in which we told the BBC it needed to urgently improve the BBC First process and made a series of recommendations to simplify the process. We are pleased to see that the BBC has implemented changes following our recommendations, and that this latest research indicates that BBC First is delivering well for audiences as a result of our regulation.

Next steps

In May the Media Act 2024 became law; the legislation is designed to protect public service broadcasting while fostering innovation. Alongside our implementation of the various cross-industry measures of the Act, we are feeding into discussions between Government and the BBC about any necessary changes to the BBC's Framework Agreement to reflect this.

In the next couple of years, we will also be conducting a periodic review assessing the overall extent to which the BBC is fulfilling its Mission and promoting the Public Purposes, which will inform the Government's Charter Review.

Our approach and the purpose of this document

As highlighted above, this is the first year we have fully assessed the BBC under the new Operating Licence published in March 2023. This increased our oversight of the BBC's online services and increased the transparency requirements on the BBC, while allowing it more flexibility to respond to changing audience behaviours. The BBC has now published a greater amount of detail on its output and what it delivers for audiences in its regulatory reporting, providing increased transparency for Ofcom and stakeholders.

Our Annual Report on the BBC is one part of how we hold it to account under the new Operating Licence, providing a snapshot of the broad range of information we review on an ongoing basis and an assessment of how the BBC has delivered against its Mission and Public Purposes for 2023/24. We have committed to providing updates on important changes in these annual reports, even if these changes are still being implemented or occurred after the reporting year end.

As part of our ongoing monitoring programme, we engage regularly throughout the year with stakeholders and with the BBC and its specialist teams to understand how it is delivering for audiences and the creative economy. In addition, we scrutinise any relevant changes it proposes to make to enable us to intervene swiftly if necessary.

The structure of the chapters of this report is as follows:

- **Transforming BBC services for UK audiences** – Discusses how the BBC is delivering to all audiences and specific changes the BBC has recently made or plans to make to its services.
- **Performance against the Public Purposes** – Includes our assessment of BBC performance under the Public Purposes against the performance measurement framework.
- **The BBC in the nations and regions** – Gives examples of how the BBC has delivered for audiences in each of the four nations as well as key data points on the BBC's performance.
- **Protecting fair and effective competition** – Explains how we have regulated the BBC's impact on competition.
- **Content standards** – Sets out the BBC's performance under the BBC First system, our enforcement oversight of BBC content enforcement and our preparations for new duties relating to BBC editorial standards.

2. Transforming BBC services for UK audiences

The BBC's Mission is to serve all audiences in the UK by providing duly impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain. It is charged with delivering a service to reach and engage with all audiences across the UK's nations and regions. The BBC faces ongoing challenges, both from audiences of all ages increasingly moving away from broadcast services to consuming more content from a range of online services, but also as a result of the financial pressures caused by recent inflation and [licence fee freezes](#).

In this section we provide an overview of how the BBC is delivering to all audiences and then discuss specific changes the BBC has recently made or plans to make to its services.

Our view on the BBC's delivery for all audiences

The BBC continues to be popular and is used by the majority of people in the UK

Despite the growing competition from content available on other services, the BBC continues to attract a large proportion of the UK population with our data indicating that 86% of adults⁵ and 69% of children aged 3-16 used the BBC every week across 2023/24.⁶ Over two-thirds (69%) of adults watch BBC TV content weekly,⁷ while nearly half (47%) listen to the BBC's audio services.⁸

The BBC's reach is high amongst those aged 55+ with nine in ten (92%) saying they use its services each week, and the same is true for audiences in AB households (91%). Overall weekly use across the four nations is also high, ranging from 83% in Scotland to 87% in Wales.⁹

Audiences continue to have a positive perception of the BBC, with 61% UK adults saying this, and that they would miss it if it wasn't there (59%).¹⁰ In comparison to other PSB channels and services, among all adults, BBC TV channels and BBC iPlayer perform well, in terms of favourability.¹¹

However, certain audience groups continue to be less satisfied or lighter users of BBC services

Despite both overall BBC reach remaining high and stable year on year and perceptions being broadly positive, the BBC has identified certain audience groups who use it less or who are less

⁵ [Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24](#).

⁶ [Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24](#).

⁷ Barb 2023/24. Across live, recorded playback, BBC iPlayer on TV & other devices (3+ min reach, all adults 16+).

⁸ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

⁹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁰ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹¹ [Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023](#). All respondents were asked 'On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means extremely unfavourable and 10 means extremely favourable, what is your overall impression of...[service]?'.

satisfied. These include younger audiences (16-34s), audiences in D and E socio-economic groups,¹² audiences from minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled audiences.¹³

Media use varies across both demographics and services, for example, younger and DE audiences are less likely to engage with the BBC, with 78% of 16-34s and 79% of DE audiences using at least one BBC service each week compared to 86% of adults overall.¹⁴ Analysis has regularly shown that attitudes about representation and portrayal on the BBC are also lower amongst certain audiences. For example, amongst DE audiences 44% are positive towards the BBC for *'reflects the lives of people like me'* compared to 50% for all UK adults.¹⁵

While the challenge of trying to serve younger audiences is not unique to the BBC, it has and continues to face difficulties in reaching these audiences.¹⁶ We noted in our [first Annual Report on the BBC](#) in 2018 that it needed to do more to serve this group and since then, the use of online content services by younger audiences has only grown with more time spent on video sharing platforms (VSPs) and social media.¹⁷ While the BBC does provide content on these platforms, it is mainly repurposed and shortened content used to try and drive audiences back to its services, in line with its current strategy. Among 16-34s, average time spent with the BBC per day has declined from 75 minutes in 2017, to 46 minutes in 2023, a greater decline compared to all adults.¹⁸

Last year we published a [BBC Audiences Review](#) which considered the factors that may drive lower BBC satisfaction levels among DE audiences. We found that although DE audiences are a diverse group,¹⁹ they watch a relatively high amount of BBC TV, viewing on average 53 minutes each day in 2023 compared with those from AB households who watched 42 minutes on average.²⁰ Nevertheless, they said that the BBC had a reputation for being "dry" and serious compared to other broadcasters and services and they wanted the BBC to experiment with producing "edgier" content. Overall, they felt that while the BBC still produces some quality programming, to them it no longer stood out in a crowded market.

While our own monitoring data does not currently indicate significant differences for minority ethnic audiences, the BBC reports more negative perceptions among these groups. For example, 45% of audiences from minority ethnic groups agree that the BBC is effective in providing *'programmes, content and services that are relevant to them'*, compared with 56% of white audiences and 54% of all UK adults.²¹ For disabled audiences, even though they spend more time each day watching BBC TV content than non-disabled audiences,²² they are less likely to be positive about the BBC for *'reflects the lives of people like me'* and *'includes people like me'* than those without a disability.²³

¹² Socio-economic classification is typically based on occupation and includes categories: A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

¹³ [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.148.

¹⁴ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁵ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁶ BBC, [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.45. Last year the BBC missed reach and personal relevance targets it set for 16-34s.

¹⁷ Barb as-viewed. Audiences aged 16-34 spent 34% of their in-home daily video viewing time on VSPs.

¹⁸ Ofcom modelling from BBC Compass data, Barb and RAJAR.

¹⁹ DE audiences are more likely to be older, unemployed, have a disability or be retired with only a state pension. These groups make up almost a quarter of the UK population.

²⁰ Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only.

²¹ Analysis provided by the BBC, conducted by Ipsos UK for the BBC.

²² Barb.

²³ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

The BBC has been taking steps to better meet the needs of these diverse audiences

Given changing media habits, the BBC has to reach audiences who increasingly watch and listen online, while also delivering for those who rely on more traditional broadcast TV and radio services, so no audiences are left behind. It has strategies and initiatives aimed at improving BBC services for all,²⁴ as well as more targeted plans to improve reach and satisfaction for lighter or less satisfied users of BBC services. For example, the BBC has developed its digital products by improving the functionality of its online services, increasing awareness of its output via initiatives such as marketing on third-party platforms, and through content-specific strategies such as its focus on backing homegrown British storytelling and content.²⁵

The BBC continues to develop its digital services for younger audiences (16-34) to make them a destination of choice. To increase brand awareness and drive traffic back to BBC services, it has expanded the boxsets available on BBC iPlayer and has started developing tailored content for third-party platforms. It also outlined the success of targeted acquisitions such as *Gossip Girl*, which have attracted younger audiences to BBC iPlayer and led them to other BBC content.²⁶ The BBC has also sought to attract younger audiences by commissioning high-impact content that performs well with this age group, such as *The Traitors*.²⁷ Despite the fall in overall reach to younger audiences, there has been an increase in the average number of weekly active under 35 accounts using BBC iPlayer (4.1 million), which met the BBC's target.²⁸ Younger audiences are also more likely than older audiences to agree that BBC iPlayer provides 'programmes that are different to what I usually watch' well.²⁹

To attract DE audiences, the BBC has specific content initiatives, and it has said it will continue to provide long-term returnable hits which resonate well with this group, for example *Sort Your Life Out*,³⁰ and the creation of more high-impact British content that typically appeals to these audiences, such as *Gladiators*.³¹ In its Annual Plan for 2023/2024, the BBC highlighted that both its content acquisitions and marketing plans would help attract underserved audiences.³²

The BBC is working to improve authentic representation and portrayal of minority ethnic and disabled audiences across its output in similar ways. It is focused on creating high-impact content that appeals to these audiences and has diverse representation of cast and contributors, such as in

²⁴ These include [Value for All, Across the UK](#), focus on high-impact content, [Creative Diversity Commitments](#) and its [Impartiality Plan](#).

²⁵ As set out in its [Digital-first BBC](#) approach and its [BBC for the Future](#) plan.

²⁶ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2024](#), p.38.

²⁷ The BBC notes *The Traitors* continues to be the biggest new entertainment brand in the market for 16-34s. Our analysis of Barb data shows this to have been popular among 16-34s, with an average audience of 1.9 million 16-34s per episode across broadcast TV and BBC iPlayer, up until end of March 2024.

²⁸ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.46.

²⁹ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023, 16-34, 59% and 55+ year olds, 47%.

³⁰ Ofcom's Barb analysis found that Season 4 of *Sort Your Life Out* was watched by 1.5 million C2DE viewers on average per episode, across TV and BBC iPlayer (accounting for over two-fifths of the audience).

³¹ *Gladiators* had an average audience of 2.7 million C2DE viewers per episode across TV and BBC iPlayer.

³² BBC, [Annual Plan 2023/24](#), p.19 and p.56.

*Strictly Come Dancing*³³ and programmes such as *Black Ops* and *Man like Mobeen*.³⁴ It has also been developing its accessibility services, for example starting a [subtitling trial](#) on BBC Sounds and a new feature on BBC iPlayer making 'Audio Described' and 'Signed' content more easily discoverable.³⁵ We discuss the BBC's creative diversity commitments and other plans for these audiences further under Public Purpose 4 in Section 3 of this report.

These audience groups are neither discrete nor homogenous and there are overlaps between them. For example, minority ethnic groups in the UK population tend to have a younger age profile and disabled audiences are more likely to include a higher proportion of DE households. Therefore, having specific groups in mind for improving output should ultimately result in more representation for a wider range of audiences because of these overlaps.

We expect the BBC to clearly explain how it will evaluate the audience impact of its changes

Future success for the BBC depends on its ability to understand its audiences and their preferences, in order to connect with them across its services. The BBC's plans set out in [A BBC for the Future](#) to launch a large-scale public engagement process reaching a million people, should help this.³⁶

The BBC is clearly undertaking many individual initiatives to innovate and create content reflecting and appealing to different demographic groups. We appreciate that with any new strategy or initiative it takes time to effect change. Nevertheless, it's important that the BBC explains clearly how it is evaluating the performance of its plans and considering audience impacts. We plan to engage further with the BBC on this over the forthcoming year as its plans are implemented.

We consider that, in line with its new Operating Licence requirements, the BBC has significantly improved the quality of its reporting in its Annual Plan and annual reporting, for example, in its [Delivering Our Mission and Public Purposes \(DoMaPP\) report](#). However, while the BBC has clearly explained its plans to attract younger audiences, it needs to set out its overall approach to increase audience satisfaction for other demographic groups, such as DE audiences, more clearly.

The BBC is continuing to develop its digital services to ensure all audiences can easily discover important content

In our [Operating Licence statement](#) published last year, we explained there was a risk that online audiences would not be exposed to a broad range of new and important PSB content in the way they previously were on traditional broadcast TV programme schedules. Indeed, increasing numbers of audiences are watching online and by the first quarter of 2024, around two-thirds (67%) of UK households, including a third of those with over 74s, had subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services.³⁷ At the same time, weekly reach of broadcast TV has continued to decline.³⁸ We therefore

³³ Barb, 28-day consolidated, TV sets only. 21% of disabled individuals watched *Strictly Come Dancing* on average each week in 2023/24, compared to 16% of all individuals.

³⁴ Barb as-viewed, total audience across TV and BBC iPlayer. For *Black Ops* and *Man Like Mobeen*, 17% and 30% of the audience respectively was from a minority ethnic background.

³⁵ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.28.

³⁶ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p45.

³⁷ Barb Establishment Survey Q1 2024 (households that have at least one paid-for SVoD).

³⁸ Barb, 28-consolidated, TV sets only.

introduced new conditions to require the BBC to explain how it makes certain content, such as news, easily discoverable on its online services.³⁹

[The BBC sees digital transition](#) as important and has continued to develop BBC iPlayer, BBC Sounds and its website and apps, to ensure it can continue to reach all audiences with a broad range of content. Over the past year it has been improving the design of its user interfaces, homepages, content rails⁴⁰ and category tabs,⁴¹ and enhancing personalisation for signed-in profiles. We have been encouraged to see these developments and the information the BBC has published for the first time on its approach to discoverability in its DoMaPP report. Given its importance, we will continue to engage with the BBC as it further develops its plans in this area. We will build on and update our approach to assessing its performance to ensure we hold the BBC to account, given ongoing developments. We further discuss discoverability in Section 3 of this report.

News and current affairs

As audiences consume more of their news online, the BBC must continue to deliver trusted and accurate news and current affairs across its services. As it makes changes in this important area of its output, we continue to closely monitor the impact for audiences.

The BBC is the most used source of news in the UK

At a time of highly political and polarised debate, the need for the BBC to deliver the standard of trustworthy, duly accurate and impartial journalism expected of it is as important as ever. This is particularly the case in the context of divisive international conflicts and concerns about technological developments including those in artificial intelligence, the delivery of news feeds via algorithms and the emergence of ‘deepfake’ content. Three-quarters (75%) of UK adults say it is important for society that the BBC provides ‘*news and information to help people understand what is going on in the world*’.⁴²

Among the large number of competing news providers available online and on TV and radio, the BBC continues to be the UK’s most used. Audiences remain positive about the BBC’s overall provision of news and current affairs, with seven in ten (69%) rating it positively for providing ‘*news and information to help people understand what is going on in the world*’, consistent with previous years.⁴³ The BBC’s cross-platform reach for news continues to cover a large proportion of UK audiences (68%), though this has declined from 73% in the previous year. BBC One remains the most used source of news across all platforms, above Facebook and ITV in joint second place, followed by BBC iPlayer.⁴⁴

³⁹ This includes news and current affairs, informal learning content, original UK content and content for the nations and regions.

⁴⁰ Rails are the horizontal rows of content on the homepage of online services like BBC iPlayer which help users navigate particular categories or themes in the library of content.

⁴¹ Category tabs are menus of content available to audiences on online services and are organised by genre.

⁴² Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

⁴³ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

⁴⁴ [Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024](#).

The BBC is innovating to build audience trust, amidst a challenging news environment

As we set out in the [Terms of Reference](#) for our latest PSM review earlier this year, more UK adults now consume news online (71%) than any other way. More than half of UK adults (52%) are now accessing news through social media.⁴⁵ While trust in the BBC remains high, news providers overall have seen declines in levels of trust and perceptions of impartiality in recent years. For the BBC, perceptions of trust among regular BBC TV users remained relatively high (68% in 2024), while 57% of regular viewers rated the BBC highly for '*impartial news coverage*' this year. Similarly high levels were observed among regular viewers of other PSBs, such as ITV (68% trustworthy, 62% impartial) and Channel 4 (72% trustworthy, 64% impartial).⁴⁶



Given the challenging news environment, the BBC has been innovating by developing the BBC News app, putting more news content on social media and VSPs and evolving its online news services to make a more appealing digital offer to retain and build trust through transparent news reporting. The BBC's new transparency and fact-checking feature, BBC Verify, provides greater insight for audiences into the long-practiced approach journalists take to check the accuracy of information they receive, and how this has changed amidst the growth in online mis and disinformation. This year, BBC Verify has covered difficult and divisive topics such as conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, and fact-checked statements and figures provided by politicians during the UK 2024 General Election campaign. A new 'Content Credentials' feature also launched this year which confirms where an image or video originated, and how its authenticity was verified, to help counter disinformation when users share information outside the BBC's platforms.⁴⁷ [Our research](#) shows that BBC Verify is the most likely fact-checker website to be used by UK adults, with one in

⁴⁵ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

⁴⁶ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

⁴⁷ BBC, [New technology to show why images and video are genuine launches on BBC News, March 2024](#). This builds on the BBC involvement in founding the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity, or C2PA which created the technical standard.

five UK adults aged 16+ (21%) saying they have used it.⁴⁸ Early indications from the BBC's analysis also suggests that BBC Verify is having a positive impact on perceptions of BBC News and the BBC more widely and in March 2024, it announced an expansion of BBC Verify and its launch in multiple countries.⁴⁹

In line with its new discoverability requirements discussed above, the BBC has been developing BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds to make its online news and current affairs content more discoverable. This has included providing reactive live streams on both services including during the UK General Election. On BBC Sounds, the live news stream pilot brought existing news content together from across the BBC's services, including an audio feed from the BBC News Channel, and reached nearly 135,000 unique users across the three-week pre-election period.⁵⁰ The news stream has now been introduced as a permanent feature on BBC Sounds providing another route for audiences to find news content from across the BBC. The BBC has also sought to improve the discoverability of local news by adding a bespoke section on the BBC News app.⁵¹

Attracting younger audiences is a particular challenge for traditional news providers. The BBC has been seeking to build its news reach with these audiences through short-form video content and using social media platforms to build its brand online. Almost half (45%) the average daily users of the BBC News TikTok account are aged 18-24. Its rolling average monthly viewing has increased by 113% from 48.7 million views in April 2023 to 103.7 million in March 2024.⁵² In November 2024 the BBC had 17 million subscribers to its BBC News page on YouTube.⁵³

We are monitoring changes to the BBC's news services, with a focus on its commitment to investigative current affairs

The BBC has continued to implement previously announced changes to its news and current affairs programming and has recently announced further cuts it plans to implement next year. In November 2023 the BBC said it would be [reformatting *Newsnight*](#) as a 30-minute late-night debate, discussion and interview programme, and that it would no longer have a dedicated reporting team. The BBC committed to greater investment in investigative reporting through a central BBC News investigations unit, bringing together existing talent and creating new reporting roles. Some stakeholders raised concerns that this internal restructure could potentially lead to less breadth in the BBC's investigative reporting. However, our initial analysis of *Newsnight* viewing figures since the changes were implemented in May 2024, show average audience levels have increased. Though this was in the context of an election period, when interest in current affairs is heightened,⁵⁴ we recognise that seeking to reformat and modernise, while at the same time seeking efficiencies, can result in positive outcomes for audiences.

⁴⁸ [Ofcom Mis and Disinformation – Susceptible Groups, 2024, YouGov](#). Base: Politically representative UK adults aged 16+ from YouGov's online panel.

⁴⁹ BBC, [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), p.16.

⁵⁰ BBC Data.

⁵¹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.19.

⁵² BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.19.

⁵³ [BBC News, YouTube](#) [last accessed 22/11/2024].

⁵⁴ Barb 28-day consolidated, adults aged 16+. Average audience per *Newsnight* episode covering the six weeks immediately prior to the change in duration and six weeks immediately following the change. Note: average audience size also remained higher in the six weeks following the general election result.

Further cuts were [announced](#) in October this year to deliver savings of £24m in news and current affairs. This is planned to result in a net reduction of 155 roles and scheduling changes on BBC Public Services. The BBC also plans to close its Asian Network News Team replacing the drive time news programme with a British Asian focused weekly evening news commission and *Newsbeat* bulletins. The changes will affect the BBC's ability to meet its Operating Licence requirement for BBC Asian Network and it will be requesting a reduction in the news and current affairs quota to reflect the planned changes in output.⁵⁵

In August this year, [we approved the BBC's request](#) to change the Operating Licence to reduce the number of news hours it is required to broadcast on the BBC Scotland channel in peak time. It plans to launch a new 30-minute regional news programme to be shown at 7pm, five-days a week, replacing the current nightly one-hour news programme, *The Nine*. Though not subject to regulatory approval, the BBC also plans to introduce a new Scotland-focused current affairs podcast and an enhanced BBC Scotland online news service, though the BBC has told us the new content will not launch until early 2025. These changes are part of the BBC's ongoing plans to adapt and modernise its news and current affairs output in Scotland to meet the changing needs of audiences. We expect the BBC to review the performance of the BBC Scotland channel changes and to outline clearly how it has delivered to audiences in Scotland. We'll review the initial impact of these changes as part of our monitoring over the next year. The BBC's news output in the nations is also covered under Public Purpose 4 in Section 3 of this report.

While the BBC is seeking to modernise its news and current affairs output and combining reporting teams into single multiplatform hubs to do this, many of its changes to both network and nations and regions current affairs output in recent years have focused on internal efficiencies. The BBC will need to ensure that with these changes, it continues to deliver a wide breadth of investigative current affairs programming. We will continue to engage with the BBC on this throughout the year and will be asking it to explain how high-quality investigative journalism is being protected, paying particular attention to planned changes to services, to ensure it is delivering for audiences.

Local radio and online provision in England

In October 2022 the BBC [announced plans](#) to modernise its local services by reducing expenditure on its broadcast services, through increased content sharing between local radio stations, to reinvest into online content. This was met with considerable public criticism, and we committed to monitoring the audience impact of the changes. This section provides an update on the implementation of these changes and our view on the audience impact.

The BBC has now completed the roll out of changes to modernise its local services in England

The BBC is required to provide content of interest and relevance to audiences in the English regions across its platforms. It has specific obligations to provide news and information for the English regions online, and of relevance to the area and communities of each of its local radio stations. As set out in Part 1 of our [Review of local media in the UK](#), the BBC continues to play a crucial role in the local media ecology, making an important contribution to both audiences and industry.

⁵⁵We will consult on the proposed change to the Operating Licence after the BBC submits its request.

The BBC completed roll out of changes to local radio in January 2024 and its online local services in June this year. The new online content introduced was predominantly news articles, with local radio news bulletins remaining unchanged and available throughout the day on each station (along with sports programming), reflecting the importance of protecting local news in the BBC's output.



The BBC continues to provide local content in line with its Operating Licence requirements and has provided examples of its output in its reporting and in information provided to Ofcom in local radio station case studies. For example, BBC Radio Merseyside played a central role as part of the BBC's coverage of the *Eurovision Song Contest* hosted in Liverpool in May 2023, providing alternative commentary by local talent in a 'Scouse' accent.⁵⁶ Additionally, the BBC's 'Make a Difference' campaign and awards has provided local radio listeners an opportunity to publicly acknowledge individuals who make an impact in their local communities. This year, the campaign received 14,000 nominations, a 40% increase year-on-year.⁵⁷

We have closely monitored the roll out of the local radio changes and have conducted internal analysis of listening data to assess their impact, based on the information available so far.⁵⁸ According to RAJAR, across the twelve months to the first quarter 2024, BBC local radio in England reached an average of 5.1 million adults aged 15+ each week, down from 5.2 million in the same period 2022/23. Since the BBC completed its roll out in January 2024 reach of these stations has continued to decline, in line with the trend prior to the changes. The decline in audience numbers for shared programming slots is no greater than to the protected local programming (from 9am to 2pm on weekdays), though as was the case prior to the changes, the shared programming slots continue to be those with lower audience numbers across the day.⁵⁹

The roll out of changes to local radio have resulted in little change in the audience profile of BBC local radio in England. Older listeners aged 55+ remain the core audience (55% of the overall audience), and though still a small proportion of listeners, there has been a slight increase in those

⁵⁶ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.91.

⁵⁷ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.87.

⁵⁸ In order to ensure adequate sample sizes on the RAJAR survey, smaller stations can require six or even 12 months' worth of diaries so these are not all currently available.

⁵⁹ RAJAR Q3 2024.

from minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled listeners since 2019.⁶⁰ We know from listener correspondence that some disabled listeners, particularly those who are blind and partially sighted, have been disappointed by aspects of the changes including those outside our remit such as editorial decisions including presenter changes. The BBC has provided complaints information which shows that, in line with our comparatively small number, complaints were higher when the changes were announced and have declined gradually since shared programming was introduced.⁶¹

The BBC's changes to its local online services have also been completed with an updated local online news offer for 43 different areas in England, including four new local "indexes" (sub-regions) launched in Wear, Peterborough, Wolverhampton and Bradford, all available on the BBC website and News app.⁶² Last year the BBC reported that online traffic to BBC local stories had increased by over a fifth compared to the previous year⁶³ and the number of online local stories increased from 967 in June 2023 to 1,675 news stories in March 2024.⁶⁴ In 2023/24, average weekly traffic to BBC local news online in England was 14.8 million.⁶⁵

[Our research](#) showed that audiences had a largely positive attitude towards the BBC local services changes in England, with only a few being aware of the BBC's plans to reduce funding for local radio to invest in online services. When highlighted, most of those we spoke to were either neutral or actively positive as it seemed a reasonable change given societal shifts. We note the BBC has not yet completed a review of the impact of its changes on particular audience groups as it has [committed to](#). We will engage with the BBC on this and expect to see its review in due course.

Our local media review emphasised the important role the BBC plays in the local media sector

Last year we outlined our plan to undertake work to better understand local media provision in the UK. In July this year, we published our [interim report](#) which: provided a snapshot of the availability of local media, particularly local news, across the UK; gave insights into how people are using it, including findings from our new [qualitative consumer research](#) into audience attitudes towards local media in the UK; and covered the key themes from discussions with stakeholders. The report noted that the BBC's local online news content is an area of contention, with some regional publishers of the view that the BBC duplicates commercial output, though others felt the BBC contributes to the plurality of the local news landscape and helps meet audience needs, including those who are increasingly moving online.

⁶⁰ In Q3 2019 listeners from minority ethnic backgrounds made up 10% of BBC local radio station audiences in England, while disabled listeners made up 13%. In Q3 2024 these figures were 13% and 16% respectively.

⁶¹ Before the roll out of the changes (April to August 2023) the BBC received 595 complaints, whilst during the roll out (September to December 2023) the BBC received 479 complaints. After the changes were implemented (January to March 2024) the number of complaints reduced to 103.

⁶² The BBC provides online news for each nation, including Scottish Gaelic and Welsh language output. There is a single news area or "index" for Northern Ireland, while online news is provided for six index areas in Scotland and five index areas in Wales. England is divided into nine regions, each split into smaller areas totalling 46 indexes; e.g. the East Midlands region includes indexes for Derby, Leicester, Northamptonshire and Nottingham.

⁶³ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.92. and [Online traffic to BBC Local news stories in England increases by over a fifth](#), October 2023.

⁶⁴ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.92.

⁶⁵ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.86.

The second part of our review is published alongside this annual report and addresses the recommendations made by Government in its MTR. It said that we should publish our view on the BBC's position in the local news sector, as well as set out our approach to considering the competition impact of future changes to BBC local news services. Our final report also takes a wider look at the local media landscape in the UK and collates views on a number of potential ways the local news sector, across TV, radio, print and online, could be supported. More broadly, as many of the challenges impacting the local news sector can also be observed in the wider news landscape, Ofcom's PSM review will continue to consider many of the issues we have highlighted in our local media review.

Commissioning for the nations and regions

The BBC continues to implement changes set out in its Across the UK (ATUK) plans and in relation to its plans to invest in more unique high-impact content. This section considers the impacts of the changes the BBC is making to its commissioning approach in the nations and regions. Further analysis of the BBC's performance in the nations and regions is set out under Public Purpose 4 in Section 3 of this report.

The BBC continues to implement its Across the UK plans

Last year, we set out our initial thoughts on impacts for audiences and the creative economy as a result of the ATUK plans⁶⁶ and committed to monitoring this over the coming years.

The BBC has TV network spend and output requirements for each nation and has also made spend commitments in its ATUK plans. Despite wider financial challenges, it allocated 60% of its qualifying network TV spend outside of London (up from 54% in 2021 and 58% in 2022)⁶⁷, and says it is on track to achieve its ATUK target of "over 60% sustainably by 2026".⁶⁸ It also reported it is on track to meet its radio and music target of 50% by 2027/28, currently at 44%.⁶⁹ We have reviewed the distribution of spend increases year on year and, unlike 2022, which was largely driven by spend in the English regions, in 2023 there was a small increase in the proportion of spend in each nation.⁷⁰

In line with spend changes, the BBC has continued to move productions and jobs outside of London. It has relocated several network radio programmes to Cardiff, Glasgow and Belfast, as well as expanding BBC Radio 3's classical music hub in Salford over the past year.⁷¹ It has continued to build production focus and partnerships in the West Midlands and North East of England. For example, it has [begun to implement](#) plans to relocate production of *Masterchef* and *Silent Witness* to Birmingham and supported three trainee production placements on *Charlotte in Sunderland*. It also continues to work on rebalancing network commissioning decision making across the UK by

⁶⁶ The BBC's [Across the UK](#) plan was launched in 2021 and intends to shift a greater proportion of its creative and journalistic activities out of London between 2021/22 and 2027/28. The plan aims to increase job and training opportunities as well as improving representation and portrayal on screen/radio & in production.

⁶⁷ Ofcom analysis of BBC data

⁶⁸ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.22.

⁶⁹ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.22.

⁷⁰ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

⁷¹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.83-84.

increasing the number of commissioners outside of London, with 41 in 2023/24,⁷² up from 30 in 2022/23 and 24 in 2021/22.

We track a number of audience metrics across the year as they are an important part of assessing BBC performance. Given the BBC is continually evolving and making changes to better meet audience needs, it is not always easy to attribute changes in audience attitudes to a specific BBC initiative such as these. They can also take time to feed through to impact audience views. Nevertheless, we have been monitoring this and have seen that audience attitude figures have remained stable; this is further discussed in Section 3 under Public Purpose 4.



The BBC published two reports in the last year setting out that its investment outside of London has positively impacted the creative economy. Firstly, it [published a report](#) on the economic contribution of Series 1 to 13 of the Cardiff-based production *Doctor Who*. The BBC estimated that since 2005, it has generated more than £134m of gross value added in Wales and contributed to the employment of approximately 170 crew roles per series, with 67% based in Wales. It also published [an economic report](#) on its Bristol-based Natural History Unit. It explained that the unit had benefitted workforce and talent development in the Bristol region, as well as attracting international investment and being globally recognised as the central hub for natural history production.

[A further report](#) published by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics in September 2024 said that the BBC's partial relocation from London to Salford in 2011 had had a positive impact on creative jobs in the region, with each BBC job creating on average 0.55 additional jobs in the creative industries by 2017. The BBC is also making progress on building production focus in the North East and West Midlands and has begun construction on its new Birmingham headquarters. It says this will provide a catalyst for wider regeneration in Digbeth, supporting relocation of major strands of programming such as *MasterChef*.^{73 74} In November 2024, the BBC [published a report](#) forecasting that its commitment to the West Midlands will generate £282m in gross value added to the region by 2031.

⁷² BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/2024](#), p.22.

⁷³ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.23.

⁷⁴ BBC, [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), p.41.

The BBC continues to focus on producing high impact content to represent and portray audiences in the nations and regions

The BBC continues to implement its high-impact strategy, which for the nations involves reducing programming on opt-out services⁷⁵ to fund the commissioning of a smaller volume of bigger, more ambitious and high-impact content which it believes has a strong sense of locality but also has a greater appeal beyond the nation or region that commissioned it. For example, the programme *Blue Lights* has seen success across the network and in its production base of Northern Ireland - it was in the top 10 new drama series of 2023 across all broadcasters and streamers and was the most watched programme on TV in Northern Ireland, across all channels and all genres in 2023.⁷⁶

The strategy also involves delivering high-impact content through co-commissions between its cross UK network and nations specific teams. This year this involved 48 co-commissions (19 in Scotland, 18 in Wales, and 11 in Northern Ireland) with titles including *Highland Cops*, *Paranormal* and *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland*.⁷⁷

Last year, we highlighted producer concerns that increased spend on co-commissioning had the potential to impact the genre spread of commissions made for audiences in the nations and regions.⁷⁸ More recently questions have been raised by stakeholders in the nations about whether decision making is sufficiently balanced between the network and nations teams, and about the allocation of spend across the nations.

On share of commissions by genre, we have found that as in 2022, investment has been well spread across genres in both hours and spend. BBC network commissioners have told us they strive to achieve positive representation and portrayal that appeals to UK wide audiences with a combination of content approaches, including universal stories clearly set in a specific location, such as *Shetland*, and specific stories unique to particular areas, such as *Sherwood*. They have also explained the co-commissioning process with the nations, including how they align development opportunities and have joint sign-off for commissions. Stakeholders in the nations have also told us that co-commissions can be a useful springboard into further network commissions. We continue to monitor spend in the nations and note that as the length of commissioning cycles is often more than 12 months, spend is likely to vary. It is therefore necessary to consider trends over a longer time period before drawing any firm conclusions.

Progress updates are important, as is ensuring that each UK nation continues to benefit from these plans

The BBC's plans appear to be on track to meet most of its commitments and we welcome the information it has published on its output and engagement in the nations and regions. Stakeholders have however queried why the BBC has committed to 15 fewer hours of high-impact content in each of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but to an increase in English regions in its 2024/25 Annual Plan.⁷⁹ While we consider that the hours of output are only one part of the picture, and understand that hours will fluctuate based on creative ideas, we expect the BBC to ensure each nation continues

⁷⁵ An opt-out service is a national or regional variation of a BBC channel (for example, BBC Two Wales).

⁷⁶ Barb.

⁷⁷ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.26-30.

⁷⁸ Ofcom, [Annual Report on the BBC 2022/23](#), p.17.

⁷⁹ BBC, [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), p.77-78.

to benefit from its plans. We will follow up with the BBC to better understand how it is evaluating the impact of its changes and adapting its plans if needed to better deliver for audiences.

The BBC also continues to provide more information on its commissioning approach and engagement for stakeholders in its annual [commissioning supply report](#). However, as we and the [National Audit Office](#) noted last year, as well as the [Public Accounts Committee report](#) in April, we think the BBC could improve on the tracking and measurement of its plans and provide clearer evaluation of their impact on audiences.

3. Performance against the Public Purposes

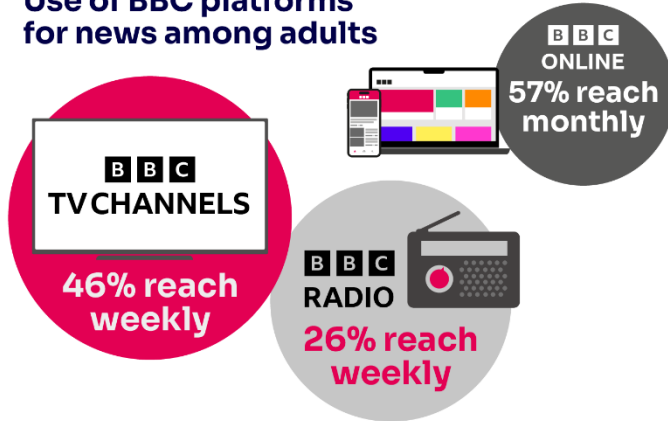
In this section we set out our assessment of BBC performance under the Public Purposes in relation to the [Performance Measurement Framework \(PMF\)](#) for the period of April 2023 to March 2024. The PMF sets out our approach to the monitoring and assessment of the BBC's performance in promoting its Public Purposes and fulfilling its Mission. The four performance measures that form the PMF are Availability, Consumption, Impact and Contextual factors.

In [Annex 2](#) we provide a summary of the data sources we have used for each performance measure in this year's assessment and guidance on how to access and navigate this data in our interactive performance report.

PUBLIC PURPOSE 1

To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them

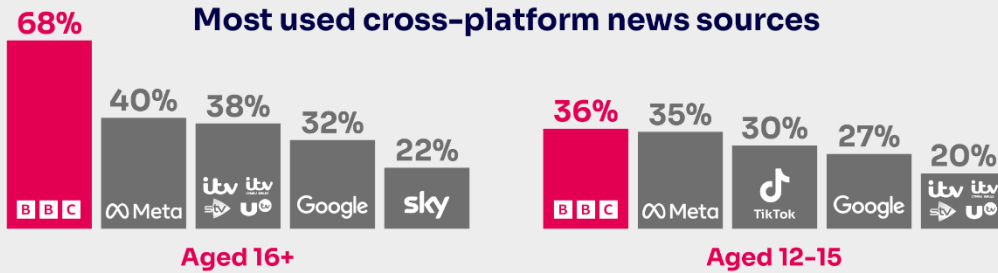
Use of BBC platforms for news among adults



Network news and current affairs output

2023	22,533 hours
2022	22,456 hours
2021	22,508 hours
2020	22,980 hours
2019	22,859 hours

Most used cross-platform news sources



Audience views of the BBC

News and information to help people understand what is going on in the UK and the world

69% POSITIVE

News coverage that is impartial - not favouring one side over another

56% POSITIVE

News coverage of what is going on in my local area

53% POSITIVE



76% said "TV..."
72% said "Online..."
68% said "Sounds..."
66% said "Radio..."
65% said "iPlayer..."

...helps me understand what is going on in the world today"

Adequate links*

Links to other external pages 79%

Links to other media organisations 27%

Sources used: Barb (3+ minutes weekly reach); Ofcom 2024 Adults and Teens News Consumption Surveys; Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Ipsos Iris (changed from Compass data by Ipsos in 2022/23); Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; BBC DoMaPP; NB: Meta = Facebook + Instagram + Threads + WhatsApp, and Google = Google News + Google + YouTube.

PP1 Summary

- The BBC remains the most popular source of news in the UK, with BBC One being the single most used source overall and audiences continuing to value the role the BBC plays in news provision.
- Perceptions of impartiality fell this year, driven by multiple factors including many which do not directly relate to the BBC's news and current affairs output. It has continued to implement its impartiality recommendations following the Serota review.
- Audience perceptions of the BBC News Channel have remained consistent with those before changes were made, but reach has fallen year on year with news consumption on broadcast TV generally in decline compared to online news consumption.

The Royal Charter states: The BBC should provide duly accurate and impartial news, current affairs, and factual programming to build people's understanding of all parts of the United Kingdom and of the wider world. Its content should be provided to the highest editorial standards. It should offer a range and depth of analysis and content not widely available from other United Kingdom news providers, using the highest calibre presenters and journalists, and championing freedom of expression, so that all audiences can engage fully with major local, regional, national, United Kingdom and global issues and participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens.

In this section we set out how the BBC has delivered in relation to its obligations for Public Purpose 1 (PP1). We outline recent developments and go on to provide a high-level overview of the BBC's performance across its services including audience views.

PP1 this year: Key highlights and developments for 2023/24

As set out in Section 2, May 2023 saw the launch of BBC Verify, which seeks to build audience trust to tackle mis and disinformation by increasing transparency in how the BBC verifies news sources. Other developments included the re-designed BBC News app and new news rails on BBC iPlayer with content curated by the BBC's news team to better aid discovery of news and current affairs.

We committed to monitoring the BBC News Channel

The BBC News Channel

Last year, we examined the impact of changes to the BBC News Channel (combining its News and World News into a single channel). Our initial analysis found no significant impact on average daily audiences.

In the second year following this change, a recent survey of UK viewers to the channel carried out by the BBC shows that perceptions remain positive.⁸⁰ A majority of viewers in the first quarter of 2024 gave a high overall rating of the channel, with a large proportion saying the BBC News Channel offer has stayed the same.⁸¹ While viewing of news on broadcast TV overall is dropping compared to online news consumption, the year on year decline to the BBC News Channel was greater (23%) than

⁸⁰ BBC News Channel UK Audiences Review (internal), April 24, "Perceptions of BBC News channel viewers in past 3 months" (% excluding 'don't knows') provided overall rating & whether the channel is better, the same or worse."

⁸¹ BBC analysis: GfK Pulse 5minex survey, March 2024.

the overall TV news decline (9%). As discussed in Section 2, this decline is more prevalent for younger audiences.⁸²

The BBC News Channel now sits as part of the live pages on the BBC news website, the BBC News app and BBC iPlayer. We can see the BBC is investing in its online news provision, and we will explore the challenges of delivering high-quality news that audiences can trust in our upcoming PSM review.

The BBC remains an important news source in a changing sector

As discussed, the ways in which audiences are accessing news reflects broader sector shifts away from traditional platforms, such as print newspapers and TV, towards online sources. The BBC however, remains an important source of news with just over two-thirds (68%) of adults using at least one BBC service for news, though this figure is lower than last year (73%).⁸³ Despite the trends, BBC One continues to be the single most used news source overall, with just over two in five of adults (43%) saying they use it, down from 49% the previous year. BBC News Online reached around a third (32%) of UK adults on average each week in 2023/24, remaining consistent with previous years.⁸⁴



The BBC is the most popular source for news for children and it has the highest overall reach for 12–15-year-olds with over a third (36%) saying they use it to follow news.⁸⁵ Nearly a third (32%) of children aged 3-16 say they watch *Newsround* on CBBC or on BBC iPlayer at least weekly, and one in ten (8%) say the same for the *Newsround* website. Those aged 8-11 are the most likely to use both (41% and 13%, respectively). Among 8–16-year-olds that use the *Newsround* website or watch the bulletin on CBBC or BBC iPlayer, 71% said they found it useful.⁸⁶

⁸² Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only. Adults 16+.

⁸³ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024. Retail news provision figure.

⁸⁴ BBC data: Compass by Ipsos.

⁸⁵ Ofcom Teens News Consumption Survey 2024.

⁸⁶ Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24.

BBC TV and BBC iPlayer

Overall network news and current affairs output remained stable in 2023. News output increased by 305 hours but this was slightly offset by a fall in current affairs output of 228 hours.⁸⁷ BBC spend on news and current affairs network TV programming fell by 4% in nominal terms in 2023, and as set out in Section 2, we expect further savings to be made over the coming year as the BBC seeks to transform its news operation.

News and current affairs viewing on BBC broadcast TV channels has continued to fall over time. Average weekly reach to news on BBC TV channels fell from 52% of adults in 2022 to 46% in 2023⁸⁸ and while the proportion of adults watching current affairs programmes on BBC broadcast TV channels was stable year on year in 2023 (11% of adults on average per week), this has fallen from 20% in 2019.⁸⁹ These figures reflect broader sector trends; for example, overall, weekly reach of broadcast TV news across all providers has continued to fall, from 61% of adults in 2022 to 55% in 2023.⁹⁰ However, as discussed in Section 2, the BBC made changes to BBC iPlayer to make its news more prominent and average viewing to news on BBC iPlayer is up year on year.⁹¹ According to BBC account data, *BBC Breakfast* and *Panorama* can feature in the top programmes that attract less frequent BBC iPlayer viewers back to BBC iPlayer, both among audiences overall and 16-34s.⁹²

BBC Radio and BBC Sounds

BBC radio services remain popular with audiences for listening to the latest news. BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 4, and BBC Radio 1 are three of the most listened to stations in the UK and continue to be the most-used radio stations for news,⁹³ with regular news bulletins and other focused news and current affairs output. BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme has the highest reach of any dedicated BBC radio news/current affairs programme, with an average of 5.7m adults listening each week across 2023/24.⁹⁴ In its Annual Plan the BBC says that proposed changes to the BBC Radio 4 schedule will see news and current affairs being prioritised with planned extensions to two of its programmes.⁹⁵

One in five (22%) UK adults who use radio for news now say they use BBC Sounds for news.⁹⁶ *The News Quiz* on BBC Radio 4 regularly appears in the top 10 on-demand BBC radio programmes each quarter, and *NewsCast* continues to be a popular podcast, including among under 35s.⁹⁷ Both BBC Radio 2's *Jeremy Vine* show and BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme also regularly attract less frequent BBC Sounds users back to BBC Sounds, according to BBC data.⁹⁸

⁸⁷ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

⁸⁸ Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only, adults age 16+. Reach criteria: 3+ consecutive minutes. Genre: national/international news.

⁸⁹ Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only, adults aged 16+. Reach criteria: 15+ consecutive minutes.

⁹⁰ Barb 28-day consolidated, adults age 16+. Reach criteria: 3+ consecutive minutes.

⁹¹ Barb as-viewed, adults aged 16+, all news genres.

⁹² BBC supplied data- BBC iPlayer account activations quarterly data; these are known as 'activations' – BBC accounts that have not used BBC iPlayer within the previous 13 weeks.

⁹³ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

⁹⁴ RAJAR Q1 2024, 12-month weight, includes the Mon-Friday and the Saturday editions.

⁹⁵ BBC, [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), p.57. *The Media Show* will be extended from 30 minutes to an hour and Radio 4's investigative news programme – *File on 4* – will be extended to 42 minutes.

⁹⁶ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

⁹⁷ BBC Sounds quarterly data.

⁹⁸ BBC supplied data- BBC Sounds account activations quarterly data.

Adequate links

The BBC must provide and report on “adequate links” to material provided by third-parties across its online pages.⁹⁹ The BBC began publishing data on this last year and we collect additional information from the BBC as part of our annual compliance request. This year, the BBC analysed a sample of 1,324 stories across BBC News and BBC Sport online across four days in January and March 2024. Of these, 79% contained links to external pages, with 27% of those containing links to other media organisations and 44% to government and regulatory bodies.¹⁰⁰ Although this is an increase in the number of stories containing links compared to last year’s sample (up from 46%), the number and type of links will be driven by the news agenda at the time of sampling, so it is not appropriate to draw any firm conclusions.

Confidence in the quality of BBC news and current affairs output remains high

As highlighted earlier in this report, audiences remain positive about the BBC’s overall provision of news and current affairs.¹⁰¹ It is rated relatively well across different services for ‘*helps me understand what’s going on in the world today*’; over seven in ten regular users say this for BBC TV (76%) and BBC Online (72%), while around two-thirds say the same for BBC iPlayer (65%), BBC Sounds (68%) and BBC Radio (66%).¹⁰² Compared to other PSBs and commercial outlets, the BBC performs comparatively well on this and other attributes.¹⁰³ Among children and parents, around three in five (55%) agree that ‘*news and information from the BBC helps [me/my child] to understand what is going on in the UK and the world*’.¹⁰⁴ More information about these statements, including by demographic groups, is included in our accompanying [interactive performance report](#).

Perceptions of impartiality fell this year, as demographic differences persist

Trusted and accurate news is consistently a priority for audiences, as one of the most important elements of the PSM system.¹⁰⁵ Impartiality remains an important aspect of the BBC’s performance for which we continue to monitor audience perceptions. It is driven by multiple factors, many of which do not directly relate to the BBC’s news and current affairs output and therefore changing audience perceptions of the BBC’s due impartiality is a complex process. It continues to be perceived less favourably compared to trustworthiness and accuracy. Among regular users, 57% rate BBC TV highly for impartiality, a decline from last year, with users of ITV News rating ITV 62% for impartiality, and 64% of Sky’s regular users scoring it highly. However, taking into account different

⁹⁹ Paragraph 3, Schedule 2 to the Agreement: “Ofcom must impose on the BBC the requirements they consider appropriate for ensuring adequate links to material provided by third parties from BBC Online”.

¹⁰⁰ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.20.

¹⁰¹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁰² Excludes Radio 4 and Radio 5, which are measured separately and are rated 79% and 70% respectively.

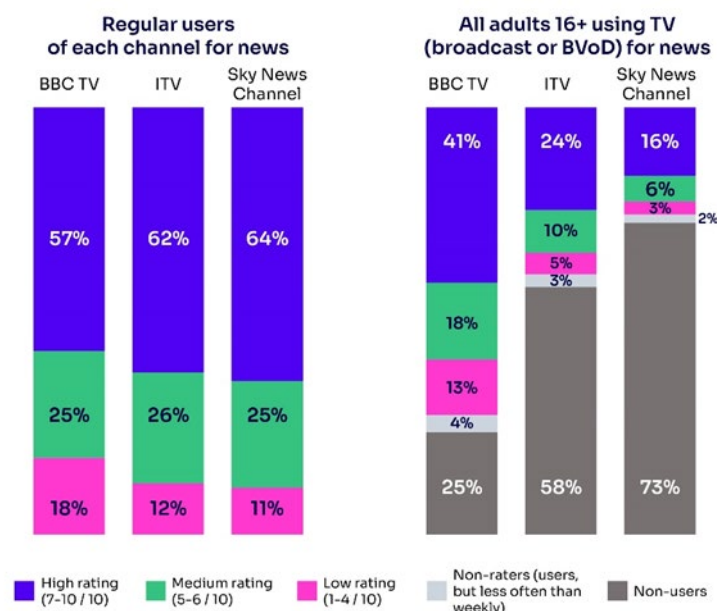
¹⁰³ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Ofcom BBC Children’s Performance Tracker 2023/24. Parents answer on behalf of 3-7-year-olds, children aged 8-16 answer directly.

¹⁰⁵ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023; 49% select ‘trusted and accurate UK news’ in their top three most important elements for PSBs to deliver to society overall. Base: all respondents except those who completed over the telephone.

broadcasters' share of the total TV audience, BBC TV reaches a much broader audience, and so 41% of all TV audiences rate BBC TV highly for impartiality, compared to 24% for ITV and 16% for Sky.¹⁰⁶

Figure 1: Perceptions of impartiality of TV broadcast news among regular users of the channels and all adults using TV for news in 2024.



Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024; Question: D2a. Thinking specifically about television, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? 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 adults 16+ using each source for news at least once a week: BBC TV = 2961, ITV = 1782, Sky News Channel = 1014 & All using TV (broadcast or BVoD) for news = 4010. NOTE: Attribution statements were only asked of regular users (defined as using at least weekly); less frequent users and non-users were not asked to rate these statements

Consistent with previous years, a lower proportion in DE audiences (50%) rated the BBC highly for providing *'news and current affairs that is impartial'*, compared to 56% for adults overall.¹⁰⁷

Last year we said the BBC must continue to challenge and ask difficult questions of itself as it embeds its impartiality recommendations.¹⁰⁸ The BBC has continued to do this and has established a new monitoring framework so its Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee can oversee progress, upcoming milestones and outcomes from its [Serota Review](#) and [Impartiality Plan](#).¹⁰⁹ It has also published its second independent thematic review, focused on coverage of migration and is rolling out the recommendations over 2024/2025.¹¹⁰ In May the BBC announced its third thematic review which will consider how accurately and authentically the BBC portrays and represents

¹⁰⁶ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁰⁸ The BBC stated in its [Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23](#) that it had implemented all recommendations from the [Serota Review](#) and all objectives from its [Impartiality and Editorial Standards Action Plan](#).

¹⁰⁹ BBC email to Ofcom 3 October 2024.

¹¹⁰ BBC, [Independent Thematic Review of the Impartiality of BBC Content on Migration](#), 2024.

different groups and communities across the UK.¹¹¹ Complaint volumes received by Ofcom about the due impartiality of the BBC's content increased from 918 complaints last year to 1,785 complaints over 2023/24, driven in part by the Israel-Gaza conflict, though no complaints were assessed as raising issues which warranted investigation. Further information on the BBC performance on due impartiality and due accuracy is covered in Section 6 of this report.

We welcome changes the BBC has made to its online services to make news and current affairs more easily discoverable

The BBC has explained in its DoMaPP how it has made its news and current affairs output more easily discoverable on its online services in line with its licence conditions. For example, on BBC iPlayer, the 'New and Trending' rail featured on the homepage is used to showcase live news programmes, news bulletins and current affairs programming such as *BBC Breakfast*, *Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg* and *Panorama*. It has also introduced a new, editorially curated 'News' rail and local news is also made discoverable on a 'Local News' rail. On BBC Sounds, audiences are exposed to news and current affairs through the 'Latest News Playlist' and through the 'Local to me' rail. An updated BBC News app launched in July 2023 aiding discoverability of local news based on user postcodes. The 'My News' page also gives audiences the opportunity to follow multiple local topics, and UK nations are positioned prominently in the suggested topics list making local content easy to find.¹¹² Ensuring its news and current affairs content is more easily discoverable is something the BBC has clearly focused on over the last year. We will engage with the BBC on further understanding how audiences respond to service developments and how these impact their viewing and listening.

Compliance against the Operating Licence conditions

Alongside our broader performance assessment, we consider the BBC's compliance against the specific requirements set out in the Operating Licence. This year, the BBC met all of its PP1 requirements. Our overall assessment of BBC compliance with the Operating Licence is provided in [Annex 1](#).

¹¹¹ BBC, [Thematic Review of Portrayal and Representation Terms of Reference](#), May 2024

¹¹² BBC, [Delivering Our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.19.

PUBLIC PURPOSE 2

To support learning for people of all ages

CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Weekly audience reach of Bitesize and BBC Teach



Ratings of BBC Bitesize

88% of users, aged 4-16 say:

"BBC Bitesize is helpful"

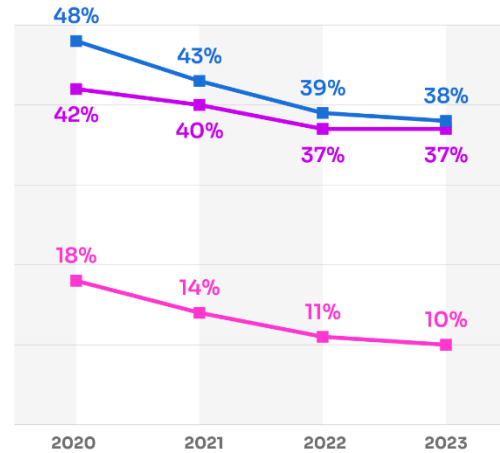


of parents of under 16s rate the BBC positively for supporting **younger children** with their learning



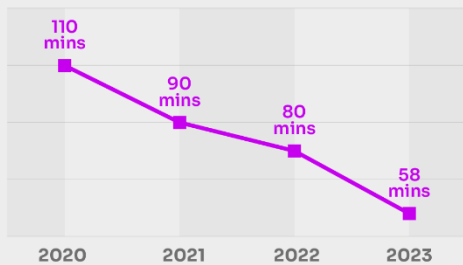
of parents rate the BBC positively for supporting **teenagers** with their learning

Weekly audience reach of CBeebies and CBBC



ADULTS' INFORMAL LEARNING

Average monthly adult viewing of informal learning content to BBC channels



Ratings of BBC's learning content among UK adults

'Programmes and content that help people to learn about new things'

61% POSITIVE

'Explores issues and ideas that people may not have come across before'

53% POSITIVE

'Inspires people to try new activities, hobbies or interests'

50% POSITIVE

Partnerships



445 partnerships ▼ 502 in 2022/23

Sources used: Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Barb (3+ minutes weekly reach); BBC supplied data- Piano Analytics; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24.

PP2 Summary

- Audiences continue to rate the BBC well for its delivery of Public Purpose 2 (PP2) for both children and adults.
- Though the wide availability of online and educational services presents increasing challenges for the BBC in reaching younger audiences, its BBC Bitesize formal learning content and its service for teachers continues to be well used.
- This year we have seen success in the implementation of the BBC's animation strategy with the volume of animated content and viewing of it increasing.

The Royal Charter states: The BBC should help everyone learn about different subjects in ways they will find accessible, engaging, inspiring, and challenging. The BBC should provide specialist educational content to help support learning for children and teenagers across the United Kingdom. It should encourage people to explore new subjects and participate in new activities through partnerships with educational, sporting, and cultural institutions.

PP2 this year: Key highlights and developments for 2023/24

In April 2023, the BBC announced a £6m investment into BBC Bitesize using new technology to make learning content more personalised and relevant to younger audiences. It also introduced the Little Learners App, a collaboration between CBeebies and BBC Bitesize that provides games based on the Early Year Foundation Stage curriculum to reach more children. For adults, the BBC has supported informal learning through new documentaries on a wide range of subjects including climate change as part of its new series called *Rare Earth*.

We have been monitoring the implementation of the BBC's Animation strategy

Last year, we highlighted the [BBC's strategy](#) to better appeal to 6-12 year-olds by showing more animation. Whilst we noted there had been an increase in output and viewing to first-run UK originated animation on CBBC in 2022, we said it was too early to determine whether it was helping better appeal to this age group and we would monitor this. We have found that the content with the highest proportion of its audience being 4-15 year-olds includes animated programmes, such as *Monster Loving Maniacs*, *Grizzy and the Lemmings* and *Transformers: EarthSpark*.¹¹³ In line with trends over the last five years, we have seen that as a proportion of viewing to CBBC this year, animation has increased year on year making up 46% of viewing to the CBBC channel by 6-12 year-olds in 2023. Average viewing minutes have also increased year on year and compared to 2019. This increase is notable considering the backdrop of continuous overall declines in broadcast viewing.¹¹⁴

The volume of children's animated content across the BBC increased year on year, from 1,778 hours in 2022 to 2,003 hours in 2023. However, acquisitions declined slightly from 94 hours to 90 hours, as did first-run originated hours (from 14 in 2022 to 9 in 2023) with all the increase in output attributed to repeats.¹¹⁵ Although we know the lead time for animated titles can be long¹¹⁶ and viewing has

¹¹³ Barb TV sets only, 28-day consolidated highest occurring titles based on highest 4-15s profile.

¹¹⁴ Barb TV sets only, 28-day consolidated, children aged 6-12.

¹¹⁵ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹¹⁶ Ofcom, [Annual Report on the BBC 2022/23](#), p.27.

increased, given the significance of younger viewers to longer term sustainability of the BBC, we will continue to monitor this.

BBC children’s formal learning content is valued by audiences

The BBC serves children of all ages by providing content to support their formal learning across the UK through BBC Bitesize. It also offers support for teachers through BBC Teach.

According to BBC data, weekly use of BBC Bitesize remains stable compared to last year, at around 1.5 million unique UK visitors on average.¹¹⁷ Around half (47%) of children aged 4-16 say they use BBC Bitesize for their schoolwork or homework, consistent with previous years and the majority of these (88%) say they find it helpful, with three quarters (73%) saying they would miss it if it was no longer available. However, there remain differences in use by socio-economic background, with those in D and E households less likely to use it than those in A and B households (38% vs. 57%).¹¹⁸

This year, the BBC launched BBC Bitesize podcasts to help students revise for their GCSEs, covering biology, chemistry, physics and English literature. Some of the GCSE podcasts were among the top BBC podcast plays when looking at the percentage of audiences aged under 35.¹¹⁹ The BBC also highlighted ‘The Other Side of the Story’, a new service within BBC Bitesize designed to help students with media literacy and navigating fake news and disinformation.¹²⁰

It has been developing its offering for schools, for example, publishing new classroom video collections and assembly frameworks for BBC Teach.¹²¹ Use of BBC Teach has also grown amongst both primary and secondary school teachers, with an overall increase of 11% year on year in traffic, the highest increase since 2020/2021.¹²² Awareness has also risen, with 79% of primary school teachers saying they are aware of it (74% last year), and 71% of secondary school teachers (up from 67%).¹²³

Use of and attitudes to children’s informal learning is broadly consistent with last year

The BBC’s informal learning content for children is delivered through BBC TV channels including CBeebies and CBBC, on the BBC website and children’s apps, and on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. CBeebies content has a target audience of children aged 6 and under, while CBBC targets 6-12-year-olds. Viewing to CBBC and CBeebies has remained broadly stable year on year, among their target audiences, a positive compared to the declines seen in previous years.

Our research shows that the provision of high-quality, UK made programmes for children by PSBs remains important to parents.¹²⁴ As in previous years, parents of children who watch CBBC or CBeebies continue to rate it positively; around three-quarters say ‘*high quality programmes for children*’ are delivered well (73%; 78%, respectively), and the same for a ‘*wide range of UK made*

¹¹⁷ BBC supplied data - Piano Analytics.

¹¹⁸ Ofcom BBC Children’s Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹¹⁹ BBC Sounds Quarterly Reports.

¹²⁰ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.21.

¹²¹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes](#), 2023/24, p.25.

¹²² BBC supplied data - Piano Analytics.

¹²³ BBC supplied data - DJS Research Student and Teacher Tracker (2023/24).

¹²⁴ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023 - 78% of parents say it is important for PSB channels and services combined to ‘*provide a wide range of high quality and UK-made programmes for children*’.

content for children' (75%; 78%).¹²⁵ Among children who watch CBeebies at least weekly, around four in five agree 'there are lots of different types of CBeebies programmes' (80%) and 'CBeebies programmes teach them about the world' (78%). Similarly, CBBC is perceived highly positively, with weekly viewers aged 3-16 giving ratings of 76% and 74% across each statement.¹²⁶

The BBC noted several examples of content it broadcast in 2023/24 that encouraged and supported children's informal learning. This included CBBC's *Horrible Histories* and *Operation Ouch* which included special editions on the NHS and on the topic of cancer. On CBeebies, a new series, *I Can Do It You Can Too*, uses peer to-peer learning to help young children develop skills, by watching children of their own age demonstrate how to do a variety of things. The BBC plans to continue investing in learning content, such as launching a new series in 2024/25, focused on coding concepts and originating from the makers of *Numberblocks*.¹²⁷

In line with changes made to the BBC's Operating Licence, our full assessment of children's genre programming can now be found in the Public Purpose 3 section below.



Attitudes to the BBC's adults informal learning remain stable, as does its investment

The BBC provides content that supports adults' informal learning across its platforms, including factual programming in a range of genres such as arts, religion, history, and science. We consider other genres provided by the BBC in further detail under Public Purpose 3 of this section.

Informal learning on the BBC remains important to audiences, with 70% of UK adults saying that 'programmes and content that help people to learn about new things' is important to society overall. Three in five (61%) rate the BBC well for delivering on this purpose, consistent with previous years.¹²⁸ However, for BBC broadcast TV, viewing to informal learning content has continued to fall year on year, with total minutes viewed per adult declining, and at a greater rate than the previous year. This fall is consistent across age groups and also reflects overall declines in broadcast TV viewing.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹²⁶ Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹²⁷ BBC, [Annual Plan 2024/25](#), p.29.

¹²⁸ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹²⁹ Barb TV sets only, 28-day consolidated. Average weekly minutes dropped from 19 minutes per adult in 2022 to 13 minutes in 2023.

The BBC's informal learning output increased to 5,112 hours in 2023, with spend also increasing year on year in nominal terms. Within this, first-run UK-originated output increased slightly, from 756 hours in 2022 to 780 hours in 2023, though it remains considerably below that of pre-2021 levels.¹³⁰ As a proportion of the BBC's total TV output, total informal learning output was just over 10%, slightly below that reported across the past ten years.¹³¹

In audio, three in five (60%) BBC Sounds users listen to educational podcasts on the platform.¹³² Some of the most popular podcasts this year have included some related to education and learning, such as *You're Dead to Me*, *Just One Thing with Michael Mosley* and *Uncharted with Hannah Fry*.¹³³ Some factual podcasts have also attracted audiences back to BBC Sounds including *Witness History* from the BBC World Service and BBC Radio 4's *Women's Hour*.¹³⁴

The BBC has continued to develop new partnerships

The BBC partners with many different types of organisations such as industry bodies, charities, community groups and other media organisations and uses them to help deliver its Mission and Public Purposes. Partnerships can offer expertise in specific areas, and often help the BBC reach a wider audience.

In 2023/24 the BBC participated in 445 partnerships and collaborations across the UK in a range of different areas.¹³⁵ For example, it initiated a new campaign in its ongoing partnership with Micro:bit Educational Foundation to relaunch the Micro:bit (pocket sized computers designed to inspire creative thinking in children), offering devices and teacher resources free to UK primary schools. The BBC reported that 90% of UK primary schools have been provided with them.¹³⁶

Last year we noted that the BBC had told us it has begun to progress its work on developing a framework to assess the impact of its partnerships. It also noted it was working to create creative content partnerships projects to improve its reach and relevance with particular audiences, including those within DE socio-economic groups. This year the BBC has told us it has continued to improve the auditing and data it collects on better understanding the impact of its partnerships. It also highlighted in its DoMaPP report some of the new partnerships it has entered into, such as with ASDA supermarkets where it has taken existing partnership work it is doing on 'Tiny Happy People' to new audiences and communities.¹³⁷

The BBC has taken steps to make learning content easily discoverable

Under the new Operating Licence, the BBC is required to make its online informal learning content easily discoverable. The BBC says its categories tabs on BBC iPlayer prominently display a list of genres including: arts, science & nature, history, and content from across the nations and regions. On BBC Sounds, it has reported making its content easily discoverable and accessible by, for

¹³⁰ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹³¹ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹³² Ofcom, Podcast Survey.

¹³³ BBC Sounds Quarterly Data.

¹³⁴ BBC supplied data - Sounds accounts activations quarterly data.

¹³⁵ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.31.

¹³⁶ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.25.

¹³⁷ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.25. THP partners include: National Literacy Trust and the Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities (OHID) as well as the DfE.

example, exposing audiences to podcasts through personalised recommendations on the 'Recommended For You' or 'Discover' rails. As discussed earlier, assessing BBC performance in this area is something we plan to further develop over the coming years, particularly to better understand impacts for audiences.

Compliance against the Operating Licence conditions

Alongside our broader performance assessment, we consider the BBC's compliance against the specific requirements set out in the Operating Licence. This year the BBC met all of its PP2 requirements. Our overall assessment of the BBC's compliance with the Operating Licence is provided in [Annex 1](#).

PUBLIC PURPOSE 3

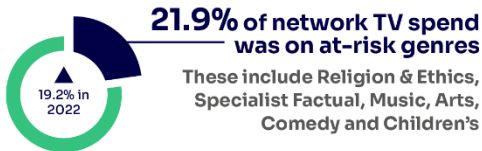
To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services

ORIGINALITY

First-run originated hours and spend

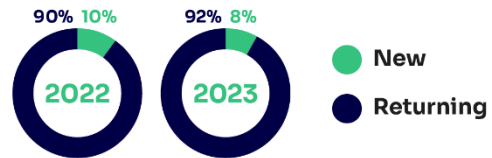


BBC network TV spend on at-risk programmes



INNOVATION

Hours of BBC new and returning TV originations

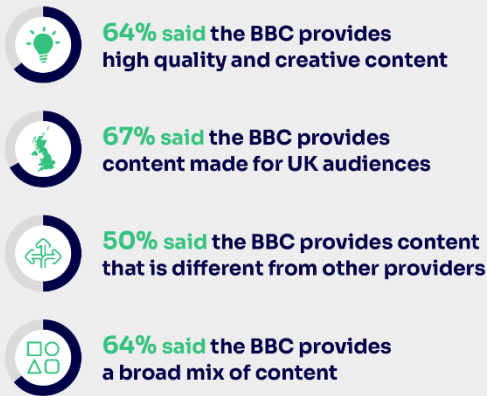


Production companies working with the BBC



AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS

Positive ratings of the BBC's distinctiveness amongst adults



Positive ratings of BVOD...

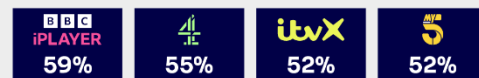
...for providing a wide range of different types of programmes



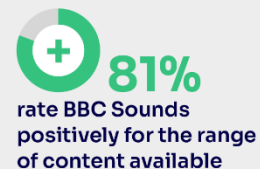
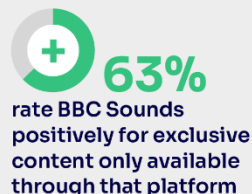
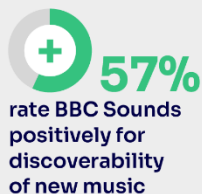
...for providing programmes about science, arts, culture and religion



...for providing programmes I was not previously aware of



Positive ratings of BBC Sounds



Sources used; Ofcom analysis of BBC data; BBC Commissioning Supply Report; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

PP3 Summary

- Overall, the BBC has performed well in most areas to deliver a broad range of distinctive output and services to UK audiences, but with varying levels of satisfaction for different demographic groups.
- It has continued to provide a mix of content to audiences in line with the additional flexibility it gained through the new Operating Licence published last year. However, while the number of hours of first-run originated content has fallen slightly, reach and audience satisfaction have remained stable.
- The BBC demonstrated the importance of audiences being able to easily discover innovative and distinctive content and 59% of viewers said BBC iPlayer performed well delivering programming they were not previously aware of.

The Royal Charter states: The BBC should provide high quality output in many different genres and across a range of services and platforms which sets the standard in the United Kingdom and internationally. Its services should be distinctive from those provided elsewhere and should take creative risks, even if not all succeed, in order to develop fresh approaches and innovative content.

Distinctiveness is not just a measure of how the BBC compares to other broadcasters, but of the unique value it offers to audiences. It sits at the heart of what we expect the BBC to do. We consider the following key factors (the five pillars of distinctiveness) against the performance measurement framework:

- the quality of the BBC's output;
- the mix of genres and output;
- the amount of original output produced in the UK;
- the level of risk-taking and innovation; and,
- the range of audiences it serves.

Distinctiveness does not mean that every BBC programme needs to be different to those from other providers. Our assessment considers the BBC as a whole and across its services against these pillars.

PP3 this year: key highlights and developments for 2023/24

The BBC won 44% of the BAFTA Television and Television Craft awards and 70% of the Royal Television Society (RTS) Television awards in 2023/24. This included a BAFTA for its coverage of the *Eurovision Song Contest 2023* and for *Celebrity Race Across the World*. The BBC continues to invest in new and original content, such as animation through its [Ignite scheme](#). The BBC's audio content also performed well, winning 61% of the categories at the Audio and Radio Industry Awards (ARIAS).¹³⁸ Discoverability of the BBC's digital music offer was improved via a new personalised music rail on BBC Sounds and the BBC delivered live and specially recorded music including via the 'BBC Introducing' brand which hosted 225 new artists across 12 key music stages in 2023.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ The Radio Academy, [Audio and Radio Industry Awards](#), 2024.

¹³⁹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.74 and p.65

Audiences continue to rate the BBC positively for providing high quality content

High quality and creative content remains important to audiences; three-quarters (74%) continue to say it is important to society that the BBC provides this and as with previous years, around two-thirds (64%) of UK adults rate the BBC highly for provision of *'high quality and creative content'*. In line with the trends we discussed in Section 2, those from AB households are more likely to rate the BBC positively on this than those in DE households. For children aged 3-16, around half (53%) rate it highly for *'the BBC has high quality shows I enjoy/my child enjoys'*.¹⁴⁰

After reaching its highest ever level in 2022, the BBC's total TV spend decreased by 9% in nominal terms to £1.59bn in 2023, while spend on first-run UK originations fell by 11% to £1.28bn. This was primarily due to 2022 being a sport-heavy year, with events such as the Winter Olympics, men's FIFA World Cup and Commonwealth Games, but also because spend was inflated in 2022 due to deferred output post-Covid and higher production costs due to Covid-related protocols.¹⁴¹



Three in five (62%) of those who have watched in the past six months say BBC TV channels delivered well on *'broadcast events that bring the nation together for a shared viewing experience'*, with a similar proportion saying the same for BBC iPlayer (65%).¹⁴² Some of the most watched broadcast TV programmes included the BBC's coverage of live events such as the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, the *Eurovision Song Contest* and the Women's football World Cup.¹⁴³ In addition, the BBC covered Glastonbury across TV, radio, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds, [breaking previous digital audience records](#) with content being streamed 50.3m times as of June 2023.

Across its different services, the BBC continues to deliver a broad range of content, including at-risk genres

In assessing the range of output the BBC offers audiences, we have looked separately at the BBC's audiovisual and audio output.

¹⁴⁰ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁴¹ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹⁴² Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁴³ Barb TV sets only, 28-day consolidated, all individuals 4+.

BBC TV and BBC iPlayer

The BBC continues to provide a broad mix of genres, including at-risk content.¹⁴⁴ Among viewers in the past six months, both BBC TV channels and BBC iPlayer perform well for delivering ‘a wide range of different types of programmes, such as drama, comedy, entertainment or sport’ (64% and 72%, respectively).¹⁴⁵ 50% of hours on BBC TV come from at-risk genres and BBC iPlayer retains a balance of hours across different genres, both consistent with previous years.¹⁴⁶

Across the PSB channels, the BBC accounts for the majority (60%) of first-run UK-originated hours of at-risk genres and the majority (66%) of associated spend. In 2023, the BBC’s first-run UK-originated spend on at-risk genres was flat in nominal terms at £267m (versus £266m in 2022), however, hours decreased from 1,430 in 2022 to 1,372 in 2023 (-4%), returning to the trend seen before 2022.¹⁴⁷ Given that the decline was spread across a number of genres, is consistent with the BBC’s high-impact strategy of delivering fewer, high-quality hours of content and that spend remains stable, we do not have concerns at this stage about the slight decline.

Despite the fall, on TV, average weekly reach to at-risk genres overall remained stable year on year, and average weekly viewing time per person increased, from 29 to 31 minutes between 2022 to 2023, with increases specifically in the music, specialist factual and comedy genres. There was a similar pattern in viewing behaviours on BBC iPlayer.¹⁴⁸ Audience perceptions of at-risk genres provision also remains broadly positive, with 57% saying BBC TV channels deliver well for ‘programmes about science, arts, culture and religion’, and 62% saying the same for BBC iPlayer.¹⁴⁹

Last year, we explained the BBC planned to double spend on arts and classical music on BBC Two and make BBC Four predominantly an archive channel.¹⁵⁰ The shift to BBC Two was to maximise reach, given its audience profile is larger and reaches more C2DE and younger audiences. The BBC also said it would prioritise new arts and music series of scale which would drive viewing on BBC iPlayer.¹⁵¹

The overall volume of arts and classical music TV output was relatively stable until 2022, however, in 2023 it fell to its lowest level (1,040 hours), reflecting the BBC’s high impact strategy. Output also declined on BBC Two, from 283 hours in 2022 (a high since 2010), to 252 hours in 2023, but this remains above the average of the previous five years. In line with the BBC’s plans, overall spend to this genre increased significantly between 2021 to 2022 and on BBC Two it more than doubled. Although spend on BBC Two in 2023 fell, it was still more than 70% higher than levels in 2021. Overall spend to the genre in 2023 was also up on 2021 by 9%.¹⁵²

Overall viewing of arts on BBC TV, specifically on BBC Two and BBC Four, declined again year on year, although viewing of music content rose, partly driven by increased viewing to events such as

¹⁴⁴ The Agreement lists genres that provide a particular contribution to the Mission and Public Purposes and are underprovided or in decline across PSBs. We refer to these genres as ‘at-risk’ and they include music, arts, religion, other specialist factual content, comedy and children’s programming.

¹⁴⁵ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Ofcom analysis of broadcaster and Ampere data.

¹⁴⁷ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹⁴⁸ Barb.

¹⁴⁹ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁵⁰ Ofcom, [Modernising the BBC’s Operating Licence](#), 2023, p.26.

¹⁵¹ BBC, [BBC Four Licence change request](#), 2022.

¹⁵² Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

Glastonbury and *The Proms*. Viewing to arts on BBC iPlayer remained stable.¹⁵³ With any changes, there is the potential for impacts on audiences and as viewing to arts programming has fallen again, we plan to follow up on this with the BBC.

Children's case study

In Public Purpose 2, we explored the range of informal learning programming provided for children and use and perceptions of the services featuring it. Here we highlight the range of services and programming the BBC offers children across TV, radio and online.

Overall use of the BBC remains consistent year on year, with seven in ten (69%) 3–16-year-olds consuming any BBC content each week. There is some variation by demographics, with those in AB households more likely to use it than those in DE households (78% vs 60%).¹⁵⁴

Over a quarter of 4-15-year-olds are using BBC iPlayer at least weekly (27%), an increase from 24% on the previous year. This remains highest among children aged 4-6 (35%), with weekly use among children aged 13-15 at 19%.¹⁵⁵ Some of the most requested programmes on BBC iPlayer from CBeebies and CBBC include *Hey Duggee*, *Bluey*, *Bing*, *The Dumping Ground* and *Malory Towers*.¹⁵⁶

Nearly three in five (57%) children say they like the BBC, and around half (48%) say they would miss it if it wasn't there.¹⁵⁷ A majority of parents with children who have watched CBeebies (78%), CBBC (75%) or BBC TV channels/iPlayer (74%) in the last six months say they provide 'a wide range of UK-made content for children' well.¹⁵⁸

Total children's TV output decreased marginally by 1% in 2023. This was primarily due to a 13% drop in first-run originations, though spend on these was up slightly compared to last year. This was in line with the BBC's strategy to focus spend on programming likely to be the most impactful, such as new children's drama, *A Kind of Spark*.¹⁵⁹ Total spend on children's TV content increased slightly year on year, up 3% on 2022.¹⁶⁰

Online platforms are also important in ensuring the BBC reaches children across different ages and demographics. In 2023/24, use of the CBeebies YouTube channel grew, with UK video views rising by 15%, following 12% growth in the previous year.¹⁶¹ Last year, we highlighted the BBC's use of games and apps to reach certain audiences. Since 2022/23, use of CBBC web games has declined from just over 123,000 UK average weekly unique visitors (or browsers), to just over 101,000, whilst use of CBeebies web games has remained steadier (approximately 76,000 to 70,000). There is a mixed picture for specific CBeebies apps; for example, with *Playtime Island* showing declines, *Get Creative* increasing, and *Story Time* consistent year on year.¹⁶²

The BBC is working to connect with and appeal to children, across a range of genres beyond children's programming. For example, the BBC seeks to stay relevant through family entertainment shows such as *Gladiators*, which was one of the most popular programmes among 4-15s, averaging

¹⁵³ Barb.

¹⁵⁴ Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁵⁵ Barb as-viewed.

¹⁵⁶ BBC supplied Data - AV Analytics.

¹⁵⁷ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁵⁸ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁵⁹ BBC, [Annual Plan 2023/24](#), pg.57.

¹⁶⁰ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹⁶¹ BBC supplied data.

¹⁶² BBC supplied data - Piano Analytics.

1.5 million viewers per episode for this age group.¹⁶³ Its strategy to produce high-impact content of appeal to children (particularly 8-11s) appears to show early signs of positive impact, with reach across BBC services to this group remaining steady at 68%.¹⁶⁴

BBC Radio and BBC Sounds

As in previous years, audiences remain positive about the BBC's online audio and broadcast radio services, and the range of content provided by them. Three quarters (76%) of people who listened to BBC Radio in the past 3 months gave a positive satisfaction rating, and a slightly higher proportion (82%) said the same of BBC Sounds.¹⁶⁵ Both perform favourably against other commercial platforms.

BBC Radio 2 continues to be the most listened to station, with a quarter of UK adults aged 15+ tuning in each week (25%), followed by BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 1.¹⁶⁶ Our analysis of new music output shows that the proportion of new music played on BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 2 remains high relative to comparable stations, at 61% and 23% respectively; the average repeat rate remains low, and the number of new music tracks played remains consistent year on year.¹⁶⁷ Last year we highlighted the importance of new music across BBC stations, and noted some falls in the amount of music played from new and emerging UK artists on BBC Radio 2 as reported by the BBC, so committed to monitor this. This year the figures have risen but we note they are still lower than in 2021/22. We will therefore continue to keep this under review as we consider this a key mark of distinctiveness.¹⁶⁸

Around a third of UK adults say that BBC Radio performs better than other radio stations in providing high-quality output and a broad mix of radio content.¹⁶⁹ According to the BBC's data, three-quarters (75%) of UK adults rate BBC radio programmes as content they would not hear elsewhere, compared to two-thirds (65%) who say the same of non-BBC radio programmes.¹⁷⁰ Around three in ten (28%) rate BBC Radio better than others for '*provides radio content that is different from other providers*'; only around one in ten (11%) rate it worse than others.¹⁷¹

We have continued to work with the BBC to better understand and measure the range of content available on BBC Sounds. As of April 2024, there were over 7,900 distinct titles available – a 3% increase from April 2023 – with over 315,000 episodes available on-demand across eleven top-level genres: factual, music, entertainment, news, comedy, sport, drama, religion & ethics, learning, children's and weather.

BBC Sounds is one of the most used services in the UK for podcasts (used by 43% of podcast listeners), and the third most frequently used podcast provider.¹⁷² Some of the most popular podcasts on BBC Sounds this year include continuing series such as *Things Fell Apart* and *Limelight*. Radio programmes such as *The Archers*, *Drama on 4* and *Friday Night Comedy* are also popular and

¹⁶³ Barb as-viewed, all devices across TV and iPlayer.

¹⁶⁴ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24

¹⁶⁵ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁶⁶ RAJAR Q1 2024; 12-month weight.

¹⁶⁷ Ofcom analysis of RadioMonitor and Official Chart Company data.

¹⁶⁸ The proportion of music played from new & emerging UK artists grew from 8% in 2022 to 12% in 2023 & the proportion of additions to the BBC Radio 2 playlist by new and emerging UK artists rose from 14% to 16%.

¹⁶⁹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁷⁰ BBC Pulse Panel; BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.146.

¹⁷¹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

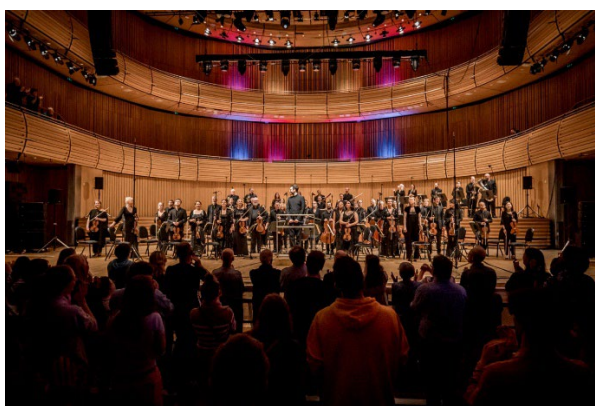
¹⁷² [Ofcom Podcast Survey 2024](#).

among under 35s, audiences enjoy listening to *Radio 1 Anthems*, *In Our Time* and the *Traitors Unlocked*.¹⁷³ BBC podcasts are also available on non-BBC services such as Spotify, which helps BBC content reach and be discovered by new audiences.

BBC Sounds remains well-regarded by users and performs particularly well for its '*range of content*' (81% of users say it is good for this), '*ease of navigation*' (80%) and '*ease of use*' (83%), which are seen as some of the most important features for online audio streaming.¹⁷⁴

BBC website/apps

The BBC provides a variety of different online services, for a range of audiences. Around four in five (78%) people aged 16+ who have used BBC websites or apps in the past 3 months say they are satisfied with it, consistent year on year. Around three in ten (32%) say that BBC online provides higher quality content than others; 36% say about the same; 9% say worse than others. Similar proportions say the same for '*provides a broad mix of content*' and '*appeals to a wide range of different online audiences*'.¹⁷⁵



The BBC remains highly rated for providing content made for UK audiences

The amount the BBC spends on original UK programming is an important indicator of its commitment to offering viewers a variety of fresh material and contributes greatly to the BBC's unique identity. Spend on first-run originations declined by 11% in nominal terms from 2022's peak to £1.28bn, but this was primarily due to higher levels of spend on sports programming last year.¹⁷⁶ Its first-run UK-originated hours declined by 3% year on year, from 22,153 in 2022 to 21,503 in 2023, but this level remains broadly in line with previous years.

Audiences continue to rate the BBC highly for '*programmes made for UK audiences*', with two-thirds of viewers in the past six months (67%) saying this for BBC TV channels, and over seven in ten (72%) saying this for BBC iPlayer.¹⁷⁷ Around a third (34%) of UK adults say that BBC Radio '*provides radio content made for UK audiences*' better than other providers.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ BBC Sounds Quarterly Data.

¹⁷⁴ [Ofcom Audio Survey 2024](#).

¹⁷⁵ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁷⁶ Ofcom analysis of PSB data.

¹⁷⁷ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁷⁸ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

The BBC has previously highlighted its approach to acquisitions, and the importance of using these to deliver a wide range of output and to meet audience needs, especially underserved audiences. As a proportion of total hours, acquisitions have remained at a similar level to 2023, however, spend on acquisitions rose slightly from 3.3% of the total to 4.2% in 2023.¹⁷⁹ The BBC has highlighted the variety of ways that content can count as an acquisition, from broadcasts of performing arts and pre-buys, through to UK content commissioned by third parties. Examples include new programmes such as *Colin from Accounts*, *Snowfall*, *Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy* and *Navalny*.¹⁸⁰ We also discussed in Section 2 the BBC's approach of using acquisitions to attract younger audiences.

The BBC continues to experiment with new formats, although audiences continue to rate risk-taking lower than other areas

As in previous years, around half of UK adults think the BBC performs well for providing 'content that dares to be different' (49%) and 'content that is different from other providers' (50%).¹⁸¹ Our PSM Tracker shows BBC TV channels and BBC iPlayer perform broadly in line with other PSBs for providing 'programmes different in their approach to other providers'.¹⁸² Given the concepts of risk-taking and innovation are complex and can mean different things to different people, we take into account a number of factors (for example, new series or formats, different producers, or development of new products) to understand how risk-taking and innovation feature in the BBC's work.

On BBC TV, the number of new series decreased in 2023 to 201 (311 in 2022 and 276 in 2021), following an increase last year due to the relaunch of the BBC Three channel. The number of returning series rose slightly in 2023, to 430. In terms of hours, around 6% of first-run originated hours were new series in 2023, a decrease on previous years (1,146 in 2020 to 626 in 2023).¹⁸³ While hours of first-run originated content is only one indicator of risk taking and there will be variations between years driven by creative ideas and how popular new series are, we plan to follow up with the BBC because of the decline. In 2023/2024, the BBC reported it used 64 new TV production companies this year, compared to 68 in 2022/23.¹⁸⁴

In the [BBC's Annual Report](#), it highlighted the BBC Proms in Gateshead as an example of a new format, being the first weekend-long Proms festival outside of London. It reported that 95% of the audience were attending a Prom for the first time, demonstrating the importance in new formats in attracting a wider range of audiences. The BBC has also been experimenting with technological innovation and this year outlined the [launch of its first Gen AI pilots](#), focused on where Gen AI can bring benefits for audiences and staff. It highlighted examples of pilots that are looking at translating news articles into multiple languages, to deliver for more audiences; developing chatbots to aide learning on BBC Bitesize; and streamlining how content is labelled and organised.

¹⁷⁹ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹⁸⁰ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.37.

¹⁸¹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/34.

¹⁸² Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

¹⁸³ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

¹⁸⁴ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.12.

The BBC continues to be well-used but there are differences between certain demographic groups

The final pillar of distinctiveness is the range of audiences the BBC serves. We discussed this in detail in Section 2. Figure 2 below sets out the variation in reach across BBC services and demographic groups. Further information is included in the accompanying [interactive performance report](#).

Figure 2: Table showing the variation in reach across BBC services and demographic groups

	Adults 16+	16-34	35-54	55+	AB adults	DE adults
Any BBC	86%	78%	85%	92%	91%	79%
BBC TV channels	55%	24%	51%	81%	55%	57%
BBC iPlayer	29%	23%	33%	32%	37%	21%
BBC Radio	56%	42%	56%	67%	66%	46%
BBC Sounds	21%	20%	20%	23%	25%	15%
Apps/Sites	71%	56%	74%	80%	78%	61%

Sources: Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker; Barb as-viewed, reach criteria for TV and BBC iPlayer 15+ consecutive minutes; RAJAR (adults 15+); Ofcom Audio Survey 2024; Ipsos iris, Online Audience Measurement Service, monthly reach in March 2024, UK internet users aged 15+, excludes distributed content, and BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds sites and apps.

Audiences are positive about discovering new BBC content

Under the new Operating Licence, the BBC is required to make its original UK content easily discoverable on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. Audiences generally rate the BBC’s online services positively for discovering new and important content. Around three in five (59%) of viewers in the last six months said BBC iPlayer performed well delivering ‘*programmes I was not previously aware of*’, and a slightly lower proportion (53%) said the same of ‘*programmes that are different from what I usually watch*’. These are all broadly in line with other PSB services. For both statements, younger audiences are more likely to rate BBC iPlayer well, compared to older audiences.¹⁸⁵ Around six in ten BBC Sounds users (57%) say it is good for discovering new music.¹⁸⁶ Around half (47%) of users of BBC iPlayer rate it good for its personalisation options.¹⁸⁷

The BBC have identified acquisitions as an important part of its approach to attracting underserved audiences and to help them discover new BBC content they might not otherwise have come across. The BBC has outlined that on average, infrequent users of BBC iPlayer who access the service to watch an acquisition typically go on to view a further four other shows in the next 13 weeks.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023; statement ‘*programmes I was not previously aware of*’ 16-34 (65%) compared to 55+ (55%) and statement ‘*programmes that are different from what I usually watch*’ 16-34 (59%) compared to 55+ (47%).

¹⁸⁶ [Ofcom Audio Survey 2024](#).

¹⁸⁷ [Ofcom Video on Demand Survey 2024](#).

¹⁸⁸ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.38.

Compliance against the Operating Licence conditions

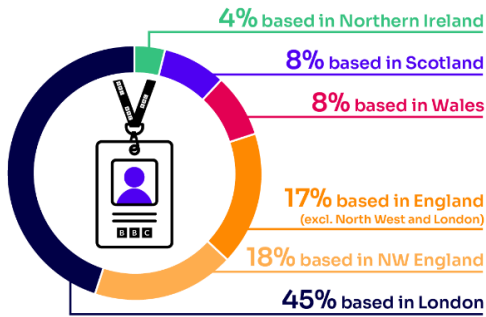
Alongside our broader performance assessment, we consider the BBC's compliance against the specific requirements set out in the Operating Licence. This year, the BBC met all of its PP3 requirements. Our overall assessment of the BBC's compliance with the Operating Licence is provided in [Annex 1](#).

Sources used: Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; Ofcom analysis of BBC data supplied in response to Ofcom’s EDI /UK public services workforce survey 2024. Aggregated ‘visible’ employee data for 31 March 2024; Broadcaster returns submitted to Ofcom; Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024 *NB. Question on local radio referred to: 'News bulletins on your local BBC radio station' in England and replaced 'local BBC radio station' with BBC Radio Scotland/Ulster/Foyle /Wales or Cymru.

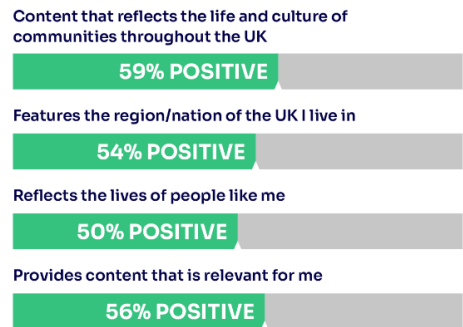
PUBLIC PURPOSE 4

To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the UK

Spread of the BBC’s workforce across the UK



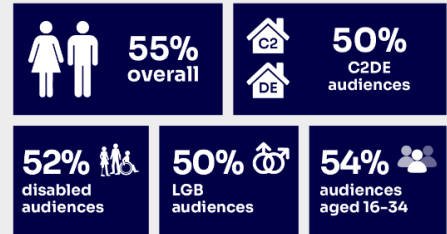
Ratings of the BBC’s delivery of Public Purpose 4



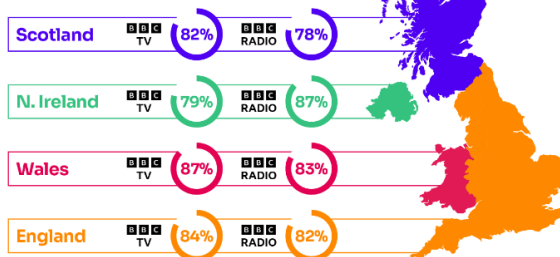
TV access services on BBC in 2023

	Quota	BBC ONE	BBC TWO
signing	5%	6.2%	5.5%
AD	10%	22.5%	27%
subtitles	100%	100%	100%

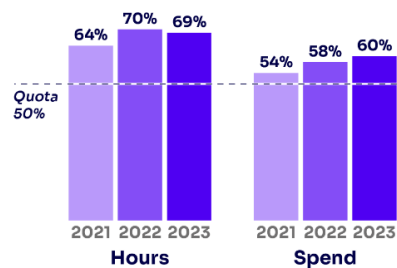
Positive ratings that the BBC ‘includes people like me’



Satisfaction with local news on BBC TV and regional Radio stations



Proportion of qualifying BBC network hours and spend made outside of London



PP4 Summary

- Overall, audience reach remains high in each of the nations and 59% of UK adults rate the BBC positively for reflecting the life and cultures of communities across the UK. Spend in the nations remained stable year-on-year.
- The BBC is meeting its commitments for diverse commissioning but there remains more to do to better represent disabled people and those from a working class background off-screen / off-air. We are still expecting an updated workforce diversity and inclusion plan for the coming years.
- The BBC's changes have made its local and nations and regions content more easily discoverable on its online services with for example, the addition of local rails on BBC Sounds.

The Royal Charter states: The BBC should reflect the diversity of the United Kingdom both in its output and services. In doing so, the BBC should accurately and authentically represent and portray the lives of the people of the United Kingdom today and raise awareness of the different cultures and alternative viewpoints that make up its society. It should ensure that it provides output and services that meet the needs of the United Kingdom's nations, regions, and communities. The BBC should bring people together for shared experiences and help contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom. In commissioning and delivering output the BBC should invest in the creative economies of each of the nations and contribute to their development.

In this section we set out how the BBC has delivered against Public Purpose Four (PP4). We outline recent developments and go on to provide a high-level overview of the BBC's performance against its requirements for both diversity and production & programming in the nations and regions.

PP4 this year: Key highlights and developments for 2023/24

In line with its commitment to improving representation and portrayal and increasing diversity, the BBC delivered a range of programming across its services such as *Rose Ayling-Ellis: Signs for change* which helped audiences understand people with hearing impairments, and championing British black culture through radio programming such as *The Carnival Family*. It also delivered programming that helps bring communities together across the nations and regions, including BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend in Dundee and the associated outreach events for local young people,¹⁸⁹ and live television coverage of the Men's Senior All-Ireland Football Final, which was broadcast to a network audience for the first time.¹⁹⁰ It has continued to redistribute production of its network programming across the UK in 2023/24. BBC Radio 2 launched two key daytime strands in Birmingham and its new Early Breakfast Show broadcast its first year from Cardiff. BBC Radio 3's classical music hub in Salford has expanded and *The Listening Service* and *Words and Music* have moved more output to Salford. Additionally, Asian Network has been consolidated into one base in Birmingham.

¹⁸⁹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.76.

¹⁹⁰ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.93.

Diversity

Representation and portrayal remain important to audiences

The BBC has a role to play in reflecting UK society back to itself and bringing the nation together. 70% of UK adults say it is important for society that the BBC provides ‘*content that reflects the life and culture of communities throughout the UK*’.¹⁹¹ Our analysis shows that audiences’ overall impression of the BBC is closely linked to it providing content that is relevant to, and includes people like them, indicating the importance of the BBC reflecting the diversity of UK audiences in its output. While a majority (59%) of UK adults consider the BBC does represent the lives of UK society,¹⁹² satisfaction with PP4 is lower than for the other Public Purposes. When compared to the other PSBs however, the BBC is seen to perform broadly in line on diversity, for both BBC TV and BBC iPlayer.¹⁹³

The BBC is required to measure and report on audience groups who are less satisfied with BBC services than others^{194 195} and we also monitor audience attitudes towards the BBC’s delivery of its Mission and Public Purposes. Figure 3 below shows attitudes towards the BBC for ‘*content that is relevant for me*’.¹⁹⁶

Figure 3: % of each audience group rating the BBC positively or negatively for the statement ‘provides content that is relevant to me’

	Overall	16-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2DE	Minority Ethnic	White	Disabled	Non-disabled
Positive % (7-10)	56%	53%	56%	60%	60%	52%	59%	56%	53%	58%
Negative % (1-4)	19%	18%	19%	19%	17%	21%	10%	20%	24%	16%

Source: Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24. Ratings are based on audiences selecting a score between 1 and 10 for a statement. **Bold** indicates significantly different from the overall figure.

The BBC is meeting its commitments for diverse commissioning

The BBC has made a number of ongoing commitments in its [Diversity Commissioning Code of Practice](#) (DCCoP), with the aim of authentically representing and portraying the diverse communities of the UK. The commitments relate to both on-air/on-screen diversity and to the production teams

¹⁹¹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

¹⁹² Ofcom Performance Tracker, 2023/24 question: ‘*content that reflects the life and culture of the communities throughout the UK*’.

¹⁹³ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023; for example, statement ‘*programmes which feature people from different backgrounds*’, BBC TV channels (59%), ITV TV channels (52%), Channel 4 TV channels (55%) and Channel 5 TV channels (44%). The same statement For BBC iPlayer (63%), ITVX or ITVX Premium (54%), Channel 4 or Channel 4+ streaming service (62%), My5 (56%).

¹⁹⁴ Less satisfied with the BBC compared with the UK average and/or their comparator groups.

¹⁹⁵ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.148

¹⁹⁶ Additional data is shown in [our interactive performance report](#) published alongside.

creating that content. This year it says that it is now meeting all its commitments¹⁹⁷ and representation on-screen of disabled people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds has improved.¹⁹⁸ As outlined in Section 2 however, disabled people in particular are nevertheless more likely than other groups to rate the BBC negatively. The BBC's reporting of on-screen representation data doesn't currently refer to specific minority ethnic groups, but we expect the BBC to continue to focus on how it can better represent these audiences, in line with its own work on this.¹⁹⁹



The BBC is investing in people and content to drive diversity

We welcome the wide range of initiatives the BBC has committed to in an effort to truly embed diversity in its workforce and the content and commissioning process. This includes schemes such as the Diverse Talent Development Fund,²⁰⁰ the [TV Access Project](#) and the BBC Elevate scheme.²⁰¹ We said last year that as it develops and implements its new diversity and inclusion strategy, the BBC will need to clearly assess which of its many initiatives are delivering progress and which are not working. This year the BBC provides some assessment, such as detailing the number of participants that have been promoted in its [Accelerator Programme](#). We would welcome a more comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives next year, particularly on the persistent under-representation of disabled people²⁰² and those from a working-class background (see workforce data below).

This year, an increased proportion of productions (82%) met the BBC's target of 20% diverse production teams (including minority ethnic groups, disabled people and those from low socio-economic backgrounds). End of Production (EoP) reports, detailing delivery of diversity commitments, were completed for 97% of eligible independent productions in 2023/24, up from 50% in 2022/23.²⁰³ These reports are key for demonstrating the diversity of its suppliers, and the BBC has set out actions it will take where the commitments are not met.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ See [Annex 1](#) of this report for more detail.

¹⁹⁸ The BBC reports that the Creative Diversity Network's Diamond data shows year-on-year increases in on-screen actual representation of disability (from 8.8% in 2022/23 to 9.2% in 23/24) and ethnicity (from 27.9% in 22/23 to 29.3% in 23/24). [Diamond](#) is an online system used by multiple broadcasters to obtain diversity data on the programmes they commission.

¹⁹⁹ See the [BAME We're Not the Same](#) report and [terminology review](#).

²⁰⁰ A fund of £2.3m to support production companies develop underrepresentation on- and off-screen, including writers, actors, presenters, and contributors, through targeted initiatives.

²⁰¹ Providing mid-career production placements for deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent individuals.

²⁰² It remains at 10% of those who provided information, compared with 18% of the working age population.

²⁰³ EoP reports were introduced in April 2022.

²⁰⁴ Though we note the BBC says it has not encountered producers disregarding requirements, noting there can be issues outside producers' control which affect delivery.

The BBC has concluded its three-year commitment to invest £112m in diverse content across TV and radio and actually invested £243.3m, significantly exceeding its plans.²⁰⁵ It subsequently commissioned the Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity to conduct a [review](#) of the impact of these commitments. The review set out a series of recommendations on how the BBC should best design, promote, implement and monitor such future investments. The BBC has now developed new creative diversity commitments which increase its commitment to £80m annually and raise the targets for TV production teams across ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic diversity across all production roles. It has also published new inclusive production principles aimed at fostering an inclusive culture across all productions. We welcome these developments and in particular the goal of aligning diverse on-air storytelling with stronger off-air representation in senior production roles and leadership within production companies.

In its own workforce, the BBC's representation of diverse socio-economic backgrounds is broadly static, with 27% of staff who provided information coming from a working-class background (down slightly from 28% last year), compared to the working population average of 39%.²⁰⁶ The BBC's diversity and inclusion plan ended in 2023 and a new plan is now overdue; we understand a new plan remains in development. As in last year's report, we again urge the BBC to set itself bold and challenging new goals to continue to drive progress.

Nations and Regions

We highlighted BBC progress on its ATUK and high impact content plans in Section 2. In this section, we report on how the BBC has delivered for audiences and the creative sectors in relation to its PP4 requirements across the nations and regions. In the following section we set out more about the BBC's work in each of the individual nations.

The BBC continues to invest in network content across the UK

The BBC is required to ensure that a certain proportion of its TV content spend and output are made outside of London, known as regional production quotas. In 2023 the BBC met its requirements in each nation, and overall spend outside of London on qualifying network productions increased from 58% in 2022 to 60% in 2023. The proportion of qualifying network spend increased for each nation, with the greatest rise in Wales – up from 5.4% in 2022 to 7.9% in 2023, mainly driven by drama titles such as *Wolf*. While the number of qualifying network hours made outside of London fell in 2023 – largely due to 2022 being a sports heavy year – this remained near its highest level in proportional terms, at 69% of qualifying network hours. Investment in network production in the nations and regions was well spread across different genres, for both hours and spend.²⁰⁷

The BBC also met its network radio requirements for spend outside of the M25 in 2023/24, reaching 38.5% (39% in 2022/23).²⁰⁸ As set out in section 2, the BBC has relocated some of its network radio programming across regional and national hubs including Cardiff, Birmingham and Salford.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ BBC's Creative Diversity Commitment (launched in April 2021 and ended March 2024) aimed to invest at least £112m of existing commissioning budgets on diverse content across TV and Radio.

²⁰⁶ The figures we use in this report to describe the BBC's workforce are not directly comparable to those in the BBC's own reporting in its Equality Information Report ("EIR"). See the compliance Annex for details.

²⁰⁷ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

²⁰⁸ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.81.

²⁰⁹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission & Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.83.

As we noted last year, under its ATUK plan the BBC committed to delivering a long-running drama series for the nations within three years from March 2021. It has told us it is likely to announce this in its 2024/25 Annual Report.

Spend on nations & regions programming was stable in 2023, but output fell

Spend on first-run UK originations produced for the nations and regions in 2023 was consistent with 2022, with slight increases in Scotland and Wales offset by a decrease in England. In line with the BBC's high-impact strategy, first-run originated output for the nations and regions continued to fall, with a 4% drop since 2022.

Across all four nations, for TV, spend on first-run originated news and current affairs fell by 3% and 19% respectively.²¹⁰ The volume of the BBC's regional news and current affairs output also fell by 4% in 2023, from 5,414 hours to 5,189 hours. Within this, news hours decreased by 4% year on year (from 4,951 to 4,763), while current affairs hours dropped by 8% (from 463 to 426). The decline in news output in England was primarily driven by the end of dedicated regional TV news programmes for [Cambridge and Oxford](#) as their news bulletins were combined with those in neighbouring areas. Current affairs output in England fell as a result of the BBC's decision not to renew the current affairs series *We Are England*. We discussed in Section 2 the changes the BBC has been making to investigative journalism in the English regions, but it is still too early to assess their effects. We will therefore continue monitoring the impact for audiences over the coming year. Overall news and current affairs output across the other nations was more stable.



In 2023/24, the average weekly traffic to BBC Nations news online was 18.2 million unique visitors across the UK.²¹¹ Our News Consumption Survey found that 40% of UK adults use the BBC for news about their nation; this is highest among adults in Northern Ireland (51%), and lower among adults in England (39%), Wales (41%) and Scotland (44%).²¹² We have continued to monitor audience perceptions of local and regional news. Consistent with previous years, around half (53%) of UK adults are positive towards the BBC for provision of 'news coverage of what is going on in my local area'. Around one in five (19%) remain negative towards the BBC for this, rising to a quarter (26%) in Wales.²¹³ When looking at specific types of BBC content, the majority of adults who follow local

²¹⁰ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

²¹¹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.86.

²¹² Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

²¹³ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/23.

news on BBC regional TV (83%) or on BBC nations or local radio (82%) say they are satisfied with the quality of local news they provide. A similar proportion say the same for current affairs/politics programmes for their region on BBC TV (79%).²¹⁴

For non-news / non-current affairs genres, spend on first-run originations rose slightly overall but with variations across the nations, however overall output fell.²¹⁵ This decrease is consistent with what the BBC set out in its request to make changes to the Operating Licence in 2022.²¹⁶ In line with its high-impact strategy, it explained that output on opts would decline slightly as it focused on delivering fewer high-impact representation and portrayal hours on both the opts and the network.

Spend on local radio content fell slightly by 2% year on year to a total of £196m, mainly driven by the BBC local radio changes in England discussed in Section 2. Associated investment in online content rose by nearly 4% in 2023/24 in nominal terms, with the greatest growth in Scotland.²¹⁷

While overall reach in each nation remains high, some attitudes differ between them

Cross-platform reach in each nation remains high overall, ranging from between 83% of adults using BBC services weekly in Scotland up to 87% in Wales,²¹⁸ though there are variations for specific services across the nations and regions. For example, the west of England has the highest weekly reach to BBC TV channels (67%), whilst London has the lowest (57%);²¹⁹ for radio, the South East has the highest weekly reach (68%), and London the lowest (49%).²²⁰ Further information is available in our [interactive performance report](#).

We are encouraged to see for the third year that overall impressions of the BBC remain consistent across the nations, with around three in five rating the BBC positively, and one in six negatively.²²¹ However there is variation between the English regions, with those in the North of England less likely to be positive (55%) and those in the Midlands more likely to be positive (70%). However, as with previous years, there are some differences with specific aspects of its delivery across the nations.²²² For example, audiences in Wales are more likely to rate the BBC negatively for having content that is relevant to them or *'includes people like me'*, something we will continue to monitor in future.²²³

The BBC is helping UK audiences discover nations and regions content online

Under the new Operating Licence, the BBC are required to make news, information and sport for the English Regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland easily discoverable on BBC online. It is also required to make Gaelic, Welsh, Irish and Ulster-Scots content on BBC Online easily discoverable.

²¹⁴ Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024.

²¹⁵ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

²¹⁶ Ofcom, [Consultation on the BBC's request to change the Operating Licence](#), 2022.

²¹⁷ Ofcom analysis of BBC data.

²¹⁸ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

²¹⁹ Barb 28-day consolidated. BBC areas. Reach criteria: 15+ minutes.

²²⁰ RAJAR.

²²¹ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

²²² Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

²²³ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24.

The BBC set out information on discoverability in its DoMaPP report, for example it referred to the launch of bilingual titles on BBC iPlayer for BBC ALBA to help audiences to discover Gaelic content.²²⁴ Personalisation has also played a key part in the BBC's approach to discoverability of nations and regions content. On BBC Sounds, content is displayed in bespoke rails for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions. Content available on these rails is dependent on the postcodes of users' signed-in profiles. On the BBC Sport website and app, audiences can discover sports content for the English regions through live pages. Online news stories for the nations and regions are now more easily discoverable through searchable tags, for example, by town and area, to make relevant content more accessible and relevant to audiences.

Compliance against the Operating Licence conditions

Alongside our broader performance assessment, we consider the BBC's compliance against the specific requirements set out in the Operating Licence. This year, the BBC met all but one of its PP4 requirements. It did not meet the condition to ensure that 1,043 hours are allocated to news and current affairs on BBC Radio Foyle as it only delivered 743 hours. Our overall assessment of the BBC's compliance with the Operating Licence is provided in [Annex 1](#).

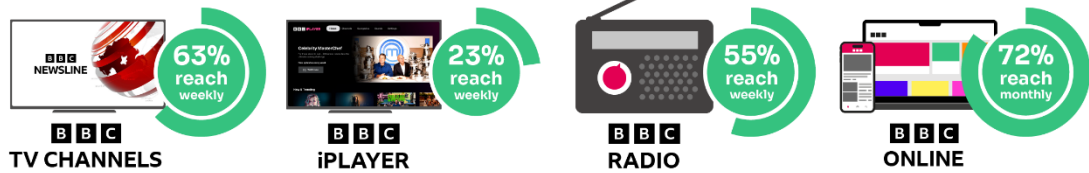
²²⁴ Examples include *Fuaim na Fèise / Scotland's Festivals* and *Druthag na Hearadh / A Little Drop of Harris*.

4. The BBC in the nations and regions

In the following pages we set out how the BBC has delivered for audiences in each of the four nations as well as key data points on the BBC's performance. This is distinct from our assessment of the BBC's performance under Public Purpose 4.

NORTHERN IRELAND

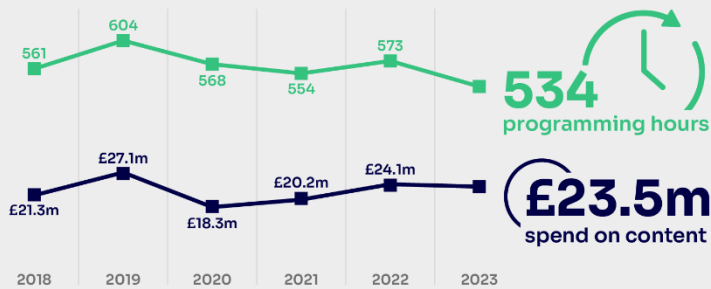
Average reach of BBC sources in Northern Ireland



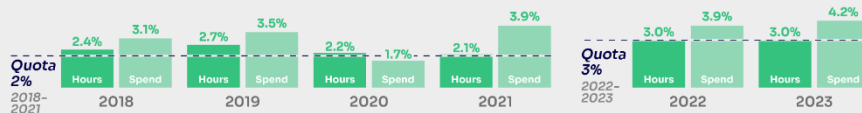
Cross BBC Children's reach | **67% reach**

BBC RADIO FOYLE | BBC RADIO ULSTER | **30% reach**

First-run originated hours and spend in Northern Ireland



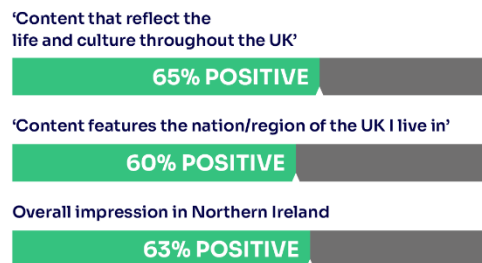
Qualifying network hours and spend produced in Northern Ireland



Programme share of BBC Series *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland*, set in Northern Ireland



Positive impressions of the BBC among adults in Northern Ireland



Sources used: Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Barb (15+ minutes reach); RAJAR; Ipsos iris, Online Audience Measurement Service, internet users aged 15+, March 2024, custom selection defined by Ofcom; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24.

Audiences remain positive about the BBC, and its network TV spend and output has remained stable between 2022 and 2023

Two thirds (65%) of audiences in Northern Ireland are positive towards the BBC for its provision of ‘content that reflects the life and culture throughout the UK’, with a slightly lower proportion saying the same for ‘content that features the nation/region of the UK I live in’.²²⁵ In 2023, 4.2% of the BBC’s qualifying network production spend was in Northern Ireland (up 0.3 percentage points since 2022) and the BBC also met its quota of 3.0% for qualifying network hours produced in Northern Ireland.²²⁶

BBC Northern Ireland produced award winning programming

This year BBC Northern Ireland produced 11 co-commissions (two fewer than 2022/23) including the BAFTA winning documentary series *Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland*, which explored the Troubles through archive footage and the stories of victims and survivors, which attracted a 24.2% share of viewers at the time in Northern Ireland, and 5.8% in the UK.²²⁷ Across the UK, the programme had an average audience of 3.6 million on BBC iPlayer across 2023.²²⁸ It was [screened](#) in schools in a BBC collaboration with the Northern Ireland Education Authority to improve children’s understanding of Northern Ireland’s past.

Changes were made to BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle, but the BBC breached one of its licence conditions

This year saw the roll out of changes to evening and weekend schedules on BBC Radio Ulster. Following changes to morning news programming last year, the BBC launched an hour long *North West Today* breakfast news programme on BBC Radio Foyle in January. This aimed to increase local news and analysis from the North West region of Northern Ireland. In June, the BBC informed us it had breached its BBC Radio Foyle news and current Affairs condition by failing to meet its quota; further details are set out in [Annex 1](#). Weekly reach of these services has remained stable at 30% of Northern Ireland’s population over the last year.²²⁹ It broadcast 260 hours of indigenous minority language programmes, including Irish and Ulster-Scots - an increase of 12 hours compared to last year and 20 hours above its quota.²³⁰

The ‘Hot House’ scheme was launched to help develop Northern Ireland’s indie sector

BBC Northern Ireland worked with Northern Ireland Screen on the [Hot House initiative](#), a development programme supporting local independent production companies to secure network commissions. This initiative delivered five new unscripted programmes which were co-commissioned with BBC Factual and BBC Northern Ireland to be broadcast on BBC network services and BBC Northern Ireland to audiences across the UK. The five successful indies were *Below the Radar*, *DoubleBand Films*, *Stellify Media*, *Alleycats Films* and *Walk On Air Films*.

²²⁵ Ofcom BBC Performance Tacker 2023/24

²²⁶ Ofcom/BBC.

²²⁷ Barb 28-day consolidated viewing, TV sets only.

²²⁸ Barb as-viewed, all devices, accumulated average audience across the whole time period.

²²⁹ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.163.

²³⁰ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.124.

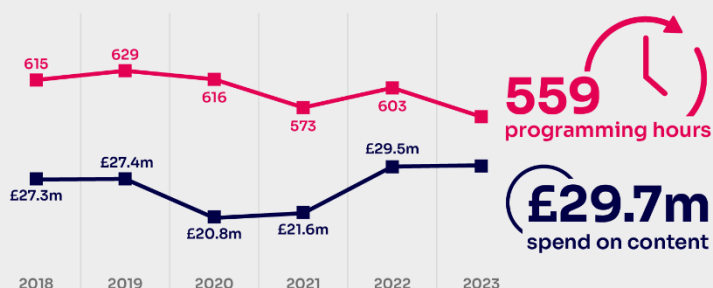
WALES

Average reach of BBC sources in Wales

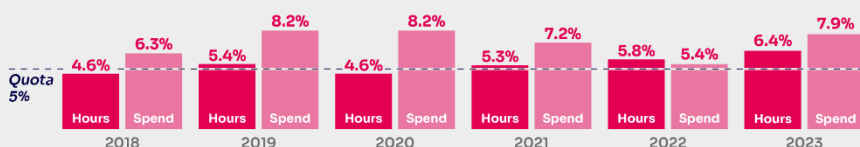


Cross BBC Children's reach | 69% reach | **BBC RADIO WALES** | 13% reach | **BBC RADIO CYMRU / CYMRU 2** | 4% reach

First-run originated hours and spend in Wales



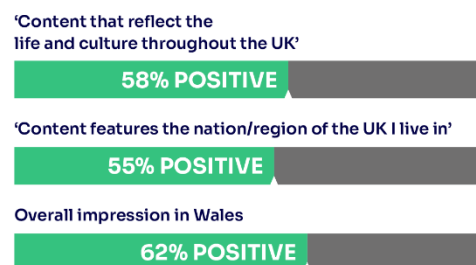
Qualifying network hours and spend produced in Wales



Programme share of BBC Series *Steeltown Murders*, set in Wales



Positive impressions of the BBC among adults in Wales



Sources used: Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Barb (15+ minutes reach); RAJAR; Ipsos iris, Online Audience Measurement Service, internet users aged 15+, March 2024, custom selection defined by Ofcom; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24

The BBC's Welsh dramas helped boost network TV spend and output in Wales this year

The proportion of qualifying network spend in Wales increased to 7.9% in 2023 (up 2.5 percentage points from 2022) and the proportion of qualifying network hours in Wales increased by 0.6 percentage points to 6.4%.²³¹ The BBC produced 18 co-commissions in Wales, up from 13 in 2022/23. It delivered four major Welsh dramas on BBC One, including *Steeltown Murders*, a true crime drama set in Port Talbot and co-produced by Welsh production company Severn Screen and All3Media International. The drama attracted a 24.7% share of viewing in Wales, 5.9 percentage points higher than its average share across the rest of the UK.²³²

Our research has found that adults in Wales are more likely than the UK average to rate the BBC negatively for having 'content that represents the life and culture of communities throughout the UK', (17% vs 12% for UK overall) but had similar views to all UK adults for 'featuring the region/nation of the UK that I live in' (55% in Wales rated the BBC positively for this statement vs 54% for the UK overall).²³³

Changes were made to BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru 2, and more radio shows moved to Cardiff

In June 2023, BBC Radio Wales relaunched *Radio Wales Breakfast*, with the new show prioritising news and current affairs from Wales, the UK and internationally. BBC Radio 1's weekday breakfast show was also moved from London to Cardiff, with new hosts Sam MacGregor and Danni Diston as part of the BBC's ATUK plans. In January 2024, Ofcom approved the BBC's request to increase the number of Welsh-language hours on BBC Radio Cymru 2,²³⁴ and the new service launched in March 2024 (further details on our decision are set out in Section 5 of this report).

The BBC announced a new Board Member for Wales

It was [announced](#) in June that Michael Plaut would become the new BBC Board member for Wales, following Dame Elan Closs Stephens' term ending as Board member and Acting Chair in March 2024.

BBC Comedy and Creative Wales launched a Regional Partnership Scheme, as Cardiff was BBC City of Comedy 2023

BBC Comedy [announced](#) a Regional Partnership Scheme with Creative Wales focused on supporting local comedy talent and diversifying the production pipeline. The comedy supplier, Expectation, will work with a Wales-based indie company Sixteen Media on co-developing various comedy projects. Cardiff was the BBC's City of Comedy 2023, and May saw a three-day comedy festival hosted by the BBC. The festival attracted nearly 6,000 attendees and included talent-led talks, panels, screenings, short film nights, live stand-up comedy and a BBC Radio 4 recording.

²³¹ Ofcom/BBC data.

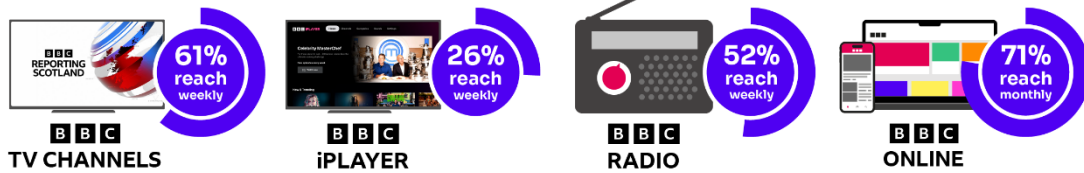
²³² Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only.

²³³ Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24

²³⁴ Ofcom, [Statement: The BBC's proposals for BBC Radio Cymru 2](#), 2024.

SCOTLAND

Average reach of BBC sources in Scotland



Cross BBC Children's reach
65% reach

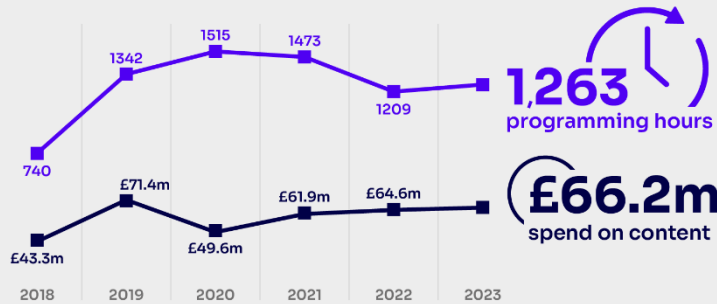
BBC SCOTLAND
14% reach

BBC RADIO SCOTLAND
18% reach

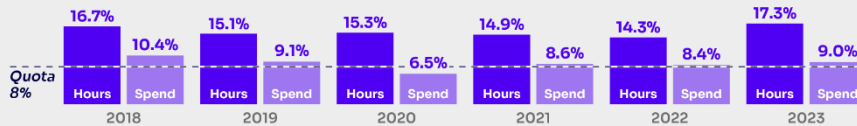
BBC ALBA
46% reach*

BBC RADIO NAN Gàidheal
52% reach*

First-run originated hours and spend in Scotland



Qualifying network hours and spend produced in Scotland



Programme share of BBC Series *Highland Cops*, set in Scotland



UK share: 6.6%

Scotland share: 10.9%

Positive impressions of the BBC among adults in Scotland

'Content that reflect the life and culture throughout the UK'

58% POSITIVE

'Content features the nation/region of the UK I live in'

56% POSITIVE

Overall impression in Scotland

60% POSITIVE

Sources used: Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Barb (15+ minutes reach); RAJAR; Ipsos iris, Online Audience Measurement Service, internet users aged 15+, March 2024, custom selection defined by Ofcom; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24; BBC ALBA and BBC nan Gàidheal: *TRP PRAEG Panel based on Gaelic community 16+ in Scotland.

TV network spend and hours produced in Scotland increased, as did the number of co-commissions

In 2023, the proportion of qualifying network spend in Scotland increased slightly to 9%, up from 8.4% in 2022,²³⁵ and the proportion of qualifying network TV hours rose by 3 percentage points, to 17.3%. In Scotland the BBC produced 19 co-commissions in 2023/24, seven more than in 2022/23, including *Highland Cops*, a co-commission from BBC Scotland and BBC Two, produced by Firecrest Films. On BBC Two, it had an audience share of 10.9% in Scotland, compared to 6.6% in the UK.²³⁶

Among adults, perceptions of the BBC are no different in Scotland than the rest of the UK. However, children in Scotland are less likely than the total to be positive towards the BBC for the statement 'the BBC has shows with people like me in them' (48% vs. 53%).²³⁷

Dundee hosted BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend

Dundee hosted Radio 1's Big Weekend in May 2023, with the BBC partnering with Dundee City Council to deliver the three-day event. The Council [concluded](#) it attracted 33,652 unique visitors to Dundee, with a total economic impact of £3.7m. It also said 94% of people overall were satisfied with the event. Prior to its Big Weekend, BBC Radio 1 ran a series of Life Hack events in Dundee which involved outreach activities about mental health aimed at young people.

Scotland celebrated its 100th year of Gaelic broadcasting

The BBC held events to celebrate 100 years of Gaelic broadcasting and delivered special programmes on BBC Radio Nan Gàidheal and BBC ALBA. It also committed to providing a Gaelic interface for BBC iPlayer. In March, BBC ALBA announced the commission of *An t-Eilean (The Island)*, a crime thriller set in the Outer Hebrides, being produced by BAFTA-winning Black Camel Productions, and supported by Screen Scotland.

The BBC announced co-funding for new titles in Scotland

In line with its high-impact strategy, BBC Scotland, BBC Content and Screen Scotland [announced](#) in late 2023 they were seeking to co-fund a returnable factual entertainment series and premium history programming aimed at Scotland based production companies.

In August 2024, we approved the BBC's request to reduce the level of news required on the BBC Scotland channel

The BBC is launching a new 30-minute regional news programme at 7pm on weekdays, to replace the daily one-hour news programme, *The Nine*. To make this change, the BBC requested a variation to the Operating Licence, which we [approved](#). Alongside this, the BBC is making editorial changes such as the launch of a new podcast focusing on current affairs in Scotland.²³⁸ The changes will begin to come into effect in early 2025 and we expect the BBC to monitor the impact of the changes, including for different demographic groups.

²³⁵ Ofcom/BBC data.

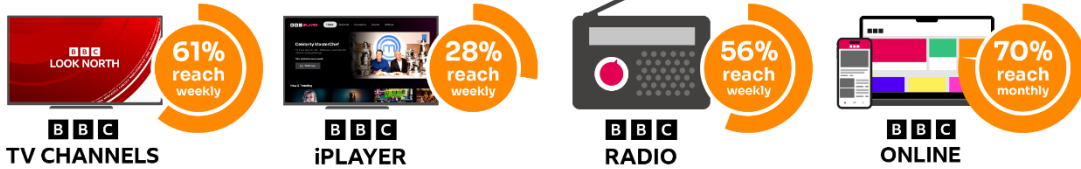
²³⁶ Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only. *Highland Cops* was broadcast on BBC Scotland before BBC Two where it got a 9.2% share of viewing in Scotland.

²³⁷ Ofcom Children's BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24

²³⁸ Ofcom, [Statement: BBC Scotland channel news provision](#), 2024, p.3.

ENGLAND

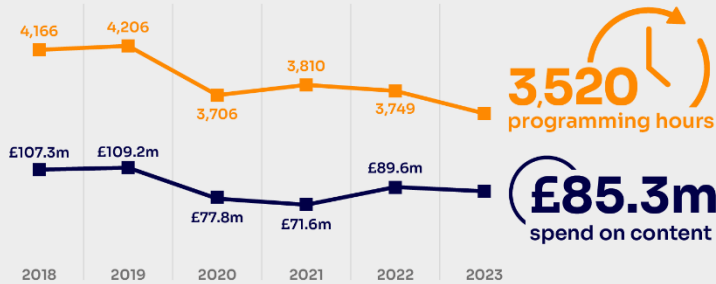
Average reach of BBC sources in England



Cross BBC Children's reach | **70% reach**

BBC RADIO LOCAL | **11% reach**

First-run originated hours and spend in England



Qualifying network spend and hours produced in English regions



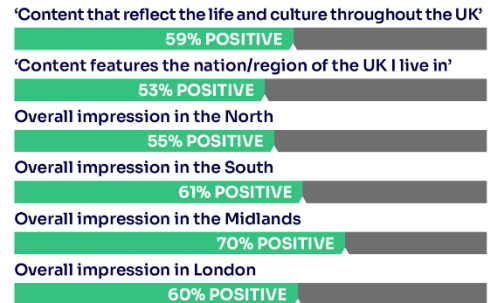
Programme share of BBC Series *Robson Green's Weekend Escapes*



UK share: 9%

NE England share: 15%

Positive impressions of the BBC among adults in England



Sources used: Ofcom analysis of BBC data; Barb (15+ minutes reach); RAJAR; Ipsos iris, Online Audience Measurement Service, internet users aged 15+, March 2024, custom selection defined by Ofcom; Ofcom BBC Performance Tracker 2023/24; Ofcom BBC Children's Performance Tracker 2023/24

Network TV spend remained stable but hours have slightly reduced from 2022 to 2023

The proportion of qualifying spend in the English regions remained stable in 2023 at 38.2% (38.0% in 2022).²³⁹ However, qualifying network hours fell by 4.8 percentage points to 41.8% though it remains well above the 30% quota. In 2023/24 the BBC delivered programming portraying different English regions such as *Beyond Paradise* in the South West, *This Town* in the West Midlands and *Boat Story* in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. One popular show was Season 2 of *Robson Green's Weekend Escapes* which had a 15% viewing share in the North East, compared to 9% in the UK.²⁴⁰

The BBC launched new local online news services in England

In 2022, the BBC [outlined plans](#) to strengthen local online news provision on the BBC News website and app in 43 communities across England. It has now made these changes, including creating new online news pages for Wear, Peterborough, Wolverhampton and Bradford, which resulted in a 21% [increase](#) in online traffic to BBC Local news stories in England in July to September 2023 versus the same period the previous year. We consider changes to local services in more detail in Section 2 of this report and in Part two of [our Local Media Review](#) published alongside this report.

The BBC has moved more radio shows out of London this year

BBC Radio 1Xtra launched a new weekday show from Birmingham in early 2024, and now shows broadcast between 10am-4pm come from outside London each weekday. In Salford, BBC Radio 4 commissioned a new show *Café Hope*, BBC 6 Music is produced there and BBC Radio 1's *Early Breakfast* moved to Salford in July 2024.

The BBC broadcast Eurovision 2023 from Liverpool

In May 2023, Liverpool hosted *the Eurovision Song Contest* on behalf of Ukraine. The BBC's coverage included live programming on BBC One, BBC iPlayer, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Sounds, alongside related BBC Sounds podcasts and special coverage on BBC Radio Merseyside including 'alternative Scouse commentary'.²⁴¹ The event was watched by over 10 million TV viewers²⁴² and led to the BBC and the European Broadcasting Union winning the UNESCO City of Music award and the production team winning the Live Event BAFTA award.

The BBC entered new partnerships in England's creative sector

In June 2023, the BBC Concert Orchestra [announced](#) a partnership with the Universities of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent to offer students performance, composition, and production experience. The BBC also partnered with Create Central and other West Midlands based creative organisations to launch 'Write Across Birmingham and the Black Country' in February 2024 to support the development of up to 12 local emerging writers.

²³⁹ Ofcom/BBC data.

²⁴⁰ Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only.

²⁴¹ BBC, [Delivering our Mission and Public Purposes 2023/24](#), p.91.

²⁴² Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only.

5. Protecting fair and effective competition

Summary

- In January 2024 we approved BBC Radio Cymru 2 extending its Welsh-language hosted hours and becoming a new UK Public Service in its own right.
- We found the BBC's proposed extension of BBC Radio 2 on BBC Sounds was material in July 2024 and directed it to stop and complete a public interest test (PIT) if it wanted to explore it further.²⁴³ However, we agreed with the BBC that its proposed extensions to BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 3 on BBC Sounds were not material, and it could proceed with the changes. In September 2024, we agreed with the BBC that its proposed Phase 2 developments to BBC Bitesize were not material.
- We are currently assessing the BBC's PITs for its proposed new DAB+ radio stations and changes that it plans to make to BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra.
- We continue to monitor the BBC's commercial and trading activities to ensure they do not gain an unfair competitive advantage because of their relationship with BBC Public Service.

Introduction

As a large, publicly funded organisation operating across TV, radio and online, the BBC can have a significant impact on competition, both positive and negative. Ofcom's role is set out in the Charter and Agreement and requires us to protect fair and effective competition in the UK and to put in place rules for the BBC's public service and commercial activities.

When the BBC proposes a change to its public service activities, it is responsible for assessing whether proposed changes may be 'material' (a materiality assessment).²⁴⁴ Some changes are expected to be made to the Framework Agreement in relation to materiality and the processes for considering such changes. In this reporting period a change was considered material if the BBC was launching a new UK public service or making a change to an existing service that may have a significant adverse impact on fair and effective competition. Where a change was material, the BBC was required to conduct a public interest test which Ofcom was required to review. Ofcom was then required to carry out a BBC Competition Assessment (BCA) or a shorter assessment, to assess whether the public value of the proposed change justified adverse impact on fair and effective competition. We have set guidance on the procedures, timescales and approach applicable to the assessment of material changes.

If the BBC proposes changes to its commercial activities, we may consider proposals to assess whether its relationship with BBC public service would represent an unfair competitive advantage as set out in our [published guidance](#).

²⁴³ Ofcom, [Review of the BBC's materiality assessment of proposed new music streams on BBC Sounds](#), 2024.

²⁴⁴ Clause 7(7) of the Agreement. A change is material if the BBC is launching a new UK public service or making a change to an existing service that may have a significant adverse impact on fair and effective competition.

In this chapter we set out an update on recent work conducted under our BBC competition monitoring programme and Local Media Review, provide our latest assessment of the audio-visual and audio markets and report on the BBC's activities in the reporting period 2023/24.

BBC competition monitoring programme

DCMS published its [Mid-Term Review of the BBC Charter](#) in January 2024 and expects to publish an updated Framework Agreement (FA) which reflects the Mid-Term Review. We expect the FA updates will include the following:

- 1) Ofcom should have discretion over whether or not to conduct a BCA or a shorter assessment following a BBC PIT.
- 2) Ofcom should have the power to use a shorter assessment to approve a BBC change with conditions.
- 3) New BBC services are not automatically considered material changes.

Once the FA is published, we plan to issue a consultation on updated competition guidance which will set out how we expect to run the relevant processes in light of these changes.

The BBC has proposed to make changes to BBC Sounds, to Radio 5 Sports Extra and to launch new DAB+ radio stations

In February 2024, the BBC announced plans to launch new DAB+ extensions for BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 3, which will also be available on BBC Sounds. It said it also intends to extend the broadcasting hours of BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra.

We reviewed the BBC's materiality assessment of proposed new music streams on BBC Sounds

In May, the BBC sent us a materiality assessment of its proposed new extension streams to BBC Radio 1, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 3 on BBC Sounds and we [published](#) our materiality decision in July. We said we agreed with the BBC that its proposals for BBC Radio 1 and 3 were not material and it could proceed with its plans. The BBC launched [BBC Radio 3 Unwind](#) on 4 November and [BBC Radio 1 Anthems](#) on 8 November 2024. We also agreed that the BBC's proposed changes to BBC Radio 1 Dance were not material.

However, we disagreed with the BBC on its materiality assessment of the BBC Radio 2 extension stream and found it was a material change. We directed the BBC to stop carrying out the proposal and to conduct a PIT should it wish to launch the stream.

We are considering the BBC's PITs on new DAB+ music stations and changes to the broadcast hours of Radio 5 Sports Extra

Earlier this year, the BBC carried out PITs on the proposed music stations and changes to BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra where it considered whether the public value of these changes justifies any adverse impact on competition. This process included consultation with stakeholders. The BBC Board concluded that the proposals met the public interest test.

The BBC published its proposals in its [PIT submission](#) on 21 November. We published an [invitation to comment](#) on the same day and will conclude our initial assessment by 19 December 2024 on the

appropriate form of competition assessment, taking account of any input from stakeholders. We will then have up to six months to complete this assessment and will consult with stakeholders on our provisional view before coming to a final decision.

We published our view on BBC Bitesize developments

Following on from its phase 1 changes, the BBC proposed further changes to BBC Bitesize to introduce additional functionality including:

- integrating third-party Artificial Intelligence learning tools;
- exploring the potential for chatbot interface and assessment functions; and
- aligning the BBC Bitesize app and web platform to deliver a seamless proposition to audiences.

We reviewed the BBC's materiality assessment of its Phase 2 BBC Bitesize developments and concluded in [September 2024](#) that the changes were not material.²⁴⁵ In reaching our view we noted the BBC's proactive engagement with stakeholders, which had largely been supportive.

We have published Part 2 of our Local Media Review

In January 2024, Government recommended in its Mid-Term Review that we publish our view on the BBC's position in the local news sector and set out our approach to considering the competition impact of future changes to BBC local news services, as we have done previously for the [audiovisual and audio sectors](#). We have addressed these recommendations in detail in Part 2 of our Local Media Review, alongside the findings from our monitoring of the changes to BBC local online news on competitors. Our evidence and analysis can be read in full in Annex 2 and 3 of our [Local Media Review](#). In summary, based on the current market context, our views are:

- a) For local radio, audiences generally tune into the BBC nations/local radio for different reasons and for different content than they do for local commercial radio. We therefore consider it unlikely the BBC increasing local news on its local radio services would significantly impact competitors.
- b) For regional TV news, we consider there is more potential for viewing to switch from Channel 3 regional news to the BBC if the BBC increased or enhanced its offer, but it is very difficult for us to assess the extent of any competitive impact of prospective changes without knowing what these might be.
- c) For online local news we committed to monitor the impact of the BBC's expanded output of local news stories, and of its new local news indexes. We have found that since the BBC increased its local online news output over 2023, its page views have increased. We also found that commercial local (and non-local) online news viewing has declined since 2022. However, our analysis does not find significant evidence that the two are causally linked. It appears the decline in commercial page views is part of a longer-term trend predating the BBC's changes, although we recognise that these changes may be contributing to some degree.

²⁴⁵ We received a note from the BBC on phase 1 in February 2024 and agreed with the BBC the changes were 'business as usual' and did not require a materiality assessment.

- d) Looking ahead, we recognise that increased BBC online local news forms part of the headwinds facing local publishers and there may be some local areas where BBC viewing is displacing commercial viewing. In addition, it is possible that future BBC changes will have a different impact on commercial publishers. For example, our qualitative research noted that if the BBC provided more localised online content, people might choose it over alternative online sources, suggesting greater potential for substitution. Therefore, some future BBC changes may require further consideration by the BBC and Ofcom.

Our findings provide a starting point for any future competition assessment and the BBC and Ofcom will still need to consider the competition impact of material changes the BBC intends to make and take into account how these changes may affect competition. We also plan to provide an update of our view on the BBC's position in the local news sectors on a yearly basis in our Annual Report on the BBC. We will continue to closely monitor market developments including through regular engagement with stakeholders.

Market assessment

We carried out work to assess the BBC's position in the audiovisual and audio sectors

Alongside our publication of the revised competition guidance in 2022, we also set out our high-level views on the competitive conditions in the audiovisual and audio sectors, including how potential changes by the BBC could have an impact on competition within each of these sectors.²⁴⁶ We further committed to providing an update on these competitive conditions in our Annual Reports on the BBC and this was welcomed by DCMS in its Mid-Term Review.

We have therefore set out in [Annex 2](#) of this report, our most recent estimates on the share of viewing and listening to the BBC and commercial operators. These indicate a broadly similar picture to those from the previous year. In particular:

- The viewing shares show that the BBC still has a relatively large share of viewing (in comparison with other domestic broadcasters) and viewing of BBC iPlayer has remained relatively small at c.4% (although it has also remained the largest broadcasting video-on-demand (BVoD) service); and
- The listening shares show that BBC's online audio content continues to account for a small share of listening (c.4%) while BBC's radio portfolio still accounts for a sizeable proportion of listening, although its share of all radio listening has been declining.

Based on our analysis of the recent data, our high-level view on the BBC's position within the audiovisual and audio sectors is as we set out last year:

- Changes to BBC iPlayer are unlikely to have a significant impact on the viewing share – and therefore revenues – of domestic competitors. They are therefore not expected to carry a significant risk of crowding out.²⁴⁷ However, we recognise that the risk could be higher if the

²⁴⁶ Ofcom, [Statement: How Ofcom regulates the BBC's impact on competition – Changes to guidance and requirements, 2023](#).

²⁴⁷ If the BBC changes its public services in a way that leads audiences to switch away from commercial services to the BBC's services, commercial providers' revenue may diminish. This may in turn limit commercial providers' ability to invest in their services, reducing the overall choice, quality and range of content available

impact of a specific change was expected to fall on a concentrated pool of domestic commercial providers. Such a change would be more likely to require closer scrutiny.

- Changes to the BBC’s broadcast TV services may have the potential to have a bigger impact on domestic competitors and so could pose a higher risk of crowding out than changes to BBC iPlayer.
- Changes that only affect BBC Sounds are unlikely to have a significant impact on the listening share – and therefore the revenues – of domestic competitors and we do not expect a significant risk of crowding out. However, similarly to our view on BBC iPlayer above, we consider that further scrutiny will be required for changes which could have a larger impact on a smaller pool of domestic competitors. This is highlighted by our review of the BBC’s materiality assessment of new streams on BBC Sounds where we considered, as discussed above, that the proposed BBC Radio 2 extension stream could have a significant adverse impact on fair and effective competition.
- Changes to the BBC’s radio services which result in a significant increase in listening have the potential to have a bigger impact on domestic commercial radio providers. As such, we consider there is a higher risk of crowding out from such changes, compared to changes that are limited to BBC Sounds.

Our work in 2023/24 to protect fair and effective competition

This section outlines our work in protecting fair and effective competition in relation to the BBC’s public service activities, commissioning, distribution, and its commercial activities.

Our review of the BBC’s proposed changes to its public service activities

We approved the launch of BBC Radio Cymru 2 as a new UK Public Service

In September 2023 the BBC completed its PIT on its proposal to extend the number of originated Welsh-language hosted hours broadcast on BBC Radio Cymru 2. As this was a new UK Public Service, we carried out a competition assessment of the proposal. We consulted on undertaking a shorter assessment because (i) we were satisfied that the BBC had provided the potentially affected parties with a suitable opportunity to comment; and (ii) the competition assessment the BBC had undertaken of the potential impact was appropriate and proportionate. Our assessment [concluded](#) that the additional public value of the proposal justified the likely impact on competition.

for UK audiences. We refer to this effect as ‘crowding out’. Crowding out is not the only way in which the BBC can harm competition – for example, there is a risk that BBC activity may cause harmful impacts on services elsewhere in the UK media supply chain.

In March 2024, we put in place new Operating Licence conditions²⁴⁸ for the new service to ensure it delivered content of interest and relevance to audiences in Wales; music of relevance for audiences in Wales; and regular and daily news bulletins. The BBC was also required to report to Ofcom on the intended frequency of its news bulletins on the service which it has done, with news bulletins simulcast from Radio Cymru.



There were no changes to consider to non-public service activities

The BBC is involved in some activities that are not UK Public Services, but which still directly or indirectly fulfil the Mission and Public Purposes. Non-service activities include participation in services such as Freeview. Where the BBC makes changes to a non-service activity it will need to consider whether the change is a ‘material’ change in the same way that it must consider changes to its UK Public Service activities.

We have not considered any changes to non-service activities in the reporting year.

Competition in commissioning

There’s been a marked increase in BBC’s contestability of relevant hours of TV

The Agreement sets out specific targets that the BBC must meet in relation to increasing the proportion of content commissioned for its public services through a contestable process. We monitored the BBC’s progress in meeting its targets and are satisfied with its performance, in particular that it has met its target for contested audio hours.

²⁴⁸ Ofcom, [Operating Framework for the BBC](#).

Figure 4: Table outlining contestability for television, radio and online content

Platform	Contested to date 18/19	Contested to date 19/20	Contested to date 20/21	Contested to date 21/22	Contested to date 22/23	Contested to date 23/24	Target
TV	56%	62%	64%	62%	63%	77%	100% By 31 December 2027
Radio	35%	48%	53%	55%	62%	61%	60% by 31 December 2022 (met)
Online	44%	62%	59%	72%	80%	82%	100% by 31 December 2027

Source: BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24, p.136.

The BBC made substantive progress toward its targets for 100% of TV and online relevant hours of content to be contestable by 31 December 2027. In 2023/24 the BBC invited tenders to produce programmes such as the UK coverage of the *Eurovision Song Contest* semi-finals and grand-final, *DIY SOS*, *Blue Peter* and *Sports Personality of the Year*.²⁴⁹

The BBC remained above the target of 60% of relevant radio hours to be contestable by 31 December 2022.²⁵⁰ The BBC [announced](#) a new Terms of Trade agreement with the audio sector for audio commissions. This agreement increases the funding for production companies and allows more opportunity for them to exploit their IP and distribute commercially. The BBC also announced its Radio Indie Development Fund would return for 2024/25 and it plans to invest in Audio UK’s Audiotrain training programme.

We speak to TV producers and radio industry representative bodies as part of our ongoing sector engagement and monitoring programme. No significant issues about competition within the commissioning process were raised.

We’ve not received any complaints regarding BBC distribution

Ofcom has set requirements regarding the way the BBC distributes its public services. We can also consider complaints about distribution of the BBC’s public services where the complainant has not been able to resolve the issue through the BBC’s complaints process. In this reporting year we did not have any complaints regarding BBC distribution.

²⁴⁹ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.6.

²⁵⁰ BBC, [Commissioning Supply Report 2023/24](#), p.6.

No issues were found arising from our work monitoring the BBC's commercial activities

We carry out ongoing monitoring of the BBC's performance in relation to its commercial activities, including assessing the annual reporting information provided by the BBC under our rules. The BBC reported that its commercial arms delivered £1.9b in sales and EBITDA of £199m in 2023/24.²⁵¹ There were no concerns arising from our review of its compliance with our commercial and trading activities reporting requirements in 2023/24.²⁵²

Since publishing our review of BBC Studios we have sought assurances in the two areas we were not satisfied that the BBC had appropriate controls and procedures in place to ensure that it is operating in line with our regulation. We are satisfied these matters are resolved and we have [published](#) a letter from the BBC updating us on its approach to secondary content sales.

We did not have any complaints regarding the BBC's compliance with our commercial and trading activities requirements.

We agreed with the BBC's materiality assessment on the transfer of some audio production activity to BBC Studios

The BBC proposed partially transferring audio production activity from the UK Public service to BBC Studios in November 2023. We [agreed](#) with the BBC that the proposed change will not result in a significant risk of market distortion or unfair competitive advantage as a result of BBC Studios relationship with BBC Public Service.

²⁵¹ BBC, [A year of investment in growth for BBC Commercial](#), 2024.

²⁵² Ofcom, [The BBC's commercial and trading activities](#), 2023

6. Content standards

Summary

- As part of our role monitoring the BBC's complaints handling processes, Ofcom has today published the findings of a large-scale mystery shopping exercise to reach an initial view of the effectiveness of recent changes made by the BBC. We are pleased to see that the BBC has made progress in several areas.
- In 2023/24 overall BBC complaint volumes to Ofcom increased, driven in part by due impartiality complaints relating to coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict.
- There were no BBC content standards investigations launched over 2023/24, but there were eight BBC Fairness and Privacy investigations, of which two were upheld. Ofcom had concerns about the BBC's engagement with Ofcom in one of the upheld cases.
- Ofcom did not issue any Opinions regarding the BBC's observation of its Editorial Guidelines in the content of its online material over 2023/24.
- Ofcom is preparing for new duties arising from DCMS' Mid-Term Review which was published in April 2024.

Our approach to enforcing BBC content standards in 2023/24

Ofcom is responsible for regulating all areas of the BBC's content standards.²⁵³ Our Broadcasting Code ("the Code") sets out the standards that we require all broadcasters (including the BBC) to meet.²⁵⁴ The BBC also has its own [Editorial Guidelines](#) ("the Guidelines").²⁵⁵ Ofcom and the BBC have a separate [arrangement relating to online material](#).

In this section we discuss:

- the BBC First system in action in 2023/2024 and our assessment of the progress the BBC has made with its complaints handling through our Mystery Shopping research;
- Ofcom's oversight of the BBC's enforcement of content standards (including due impartiality); and
- Ofcom's preparations for new duties relating to BBC editorial standards.

The BBC just missed its complaints response targets in 2023/24

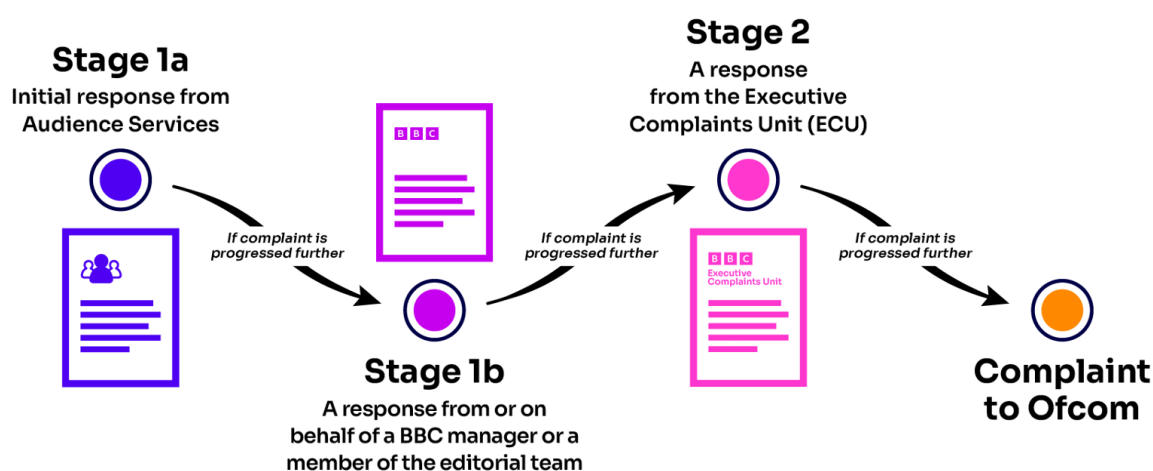
²⁵³ Ofcom has set [procedures](#) to handle complaints about the BBC's TV, radio and on-demand programmes that have been referred to us, as well as complaints about the BBC's online material.

²⁵⁴ The BBC also has to comply with the Code's requirements on [fairness](#) and [privacy](#). Complaints under fairness and privacy are handled under separate [procedures](#).

²⁵⁵ The Guidelines incorporate the requirements of the Code, with some differences which mean the Guidelines go further in some areas.

Unlike other broadcasters, the BBC can resolve audience complaints prior to them being escalated to Ofcom via their own BBC First system.²⁵⁶ Figure 5 below shows the stages of the process.

Figure 5: The process for audiences who have complained about the BBC



The BBC’s own complaints statistics show that it received 179,743 complaints in 2023/2024, 49,380 fewer complaints than in the previous year.²⁵⁷ This year, 92% of Stage 1 complaints were answered within the KPI targets set by Ofcom against a target of 93%.²⁵⁸ This compares with 97% answered within the KPI targets in the previous year.

A key part of the BBC First system is the investigations carried out at Stage 2 of the BBC’s complaints process. These investigations are normally undertaken by the BBC’s Executive Complaints Unit (ECU) which aims to complete 80% of its investigations within 20 working days for standard Stage 2 complaints and 35 working days for more complex Stage 2 complaints.²⁵⁹ In 2023/24, 78% of complaints were concluded at this stage within these targets.²⁶⁰

The ECU dealt with 594 complaints at Stage 2 of the BBC’s complaints process in 2023/2024. Of these, the ECU found 35 breaches of editorial standards, where its Editorial Guidelines had not been adhered to.²⁶¹ We acknowledge one complex case attracted several complaints which impacted the

²⁵⁶ This system, known as ‘BBC First’, was implemented by Parliament and reflects the [BBC’s Charter and Agreement](#). With the exception of Fairness and Privacy complaints which can be made directly to Ofcom, a complaint must normally have completed the BBC’s complaints process before the complainant can submit their complaint to Ofcom.

²⁵⁷ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.123.

²⁵⁸ In its Annual Report (p.123), the BBC explained that the KPI at Stage 1A was not met principally because of a large spike in the volumes of complaints in March 2023 around a presenter’s use of social media and due to the complexity of complaints received relating to coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict. The BBC said that turnaround times recovered to 95% across the final quarter of the year (Jan-Mar 2024).

²⁵⁹ The ECU is tasked with considering complaints impartially and independently of the interests of the BBC’s programme-makers and content providers.

²⁶⁰ In its Annual Report (p.123), the BBC said its failure to meet KPIs at Stage 2 for 2023/24 was mainly due to one [complex case](#) related to a news report on a demonstration against the proposed extension of London’s Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which attracted 44 upheld complaints, all of which went beyond the target date for response.

²⁶¹ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.123.

Stage 2 KPI's for 2023/24. However, we expect the BBC to continue to focus on meeting its Stage 2 KPIs in the future.

Our new mystery shopping research shows the BBC has improved its complaints handling

We monitor how BBC First is performing and delivering for audiences in several ways.

In its Annual Report, the BBC outlined changes it has introduced over the last year to improve its complaints handling. For example, it has enhanced the role of the Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee (EGSC) in the oversight of its complaints and is continuing to seek new ways of making its complaints process simpler and more responsive to audiences.²⁶² This year, we have carried out a mystery shopping exercise of BBC First to understand the effectiveness of recent changes the BBC has made to its complaints-handling processes.

Ofcom's mystery shopping research – BBC Complaints Process

In 2022 as part of our review of the [Future Regulation of the BBC](#), we carried out our first mystery shopping exercise of 50 BBC complaints. Following this, the BBC put in place several changes to its complaints-handling processes. We committed to conducting a further review of the BBC First process before the end of the current Charter period in 2027, to assess the impact of these changes. However, ahead of that review we have commissioned mystery shopping research on a much larger scale, testing over 500 BBC complaints, to reach an initial view.²⁶³

We have published the report [A Mystery Shopping Exercise of the BBC First Complaints Process](#) today alongside this Annual Report on the BBC. Overall, this research paints a positive picture and indicates that the changes the BBC has made to its complaints process following our 2022 review are delivering well for audiences. For example, complainants said that the BBC's complaints website is easy to use and they were able to make initial contact with the BBC easily. This research also found that the majority of responses to complaints were timely, responses were clear, the explanation/rationale easy to understand and that information on how to escalate a complaint was provided.

The research also identified some areas where improvements could go further and we have encouraged the BBC to address these.

Ofcom's Complaints Determinations

In our 2022 review we revised our requirement for the BBC to publish its reasoning in 'not upheld' Stage 2 decisions.²⁶⁴ In 2023/24 the BBC increased its transparency in this area:

- between 4 July 2022 and 31 March 2023 the BBC published its reasoning in 188 not upheld cases; and

²⁶² BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.123.

²⁶³ Ofcom conducted 506 mystery shopping journeys testing the BBC's three - stage complaint system across different methods including telephone, online (webform), letter and textphone. Ofcom created 465 unique complaints, some of which were used to test two methods (for example telephone and then online).

²⁶⁴ The BBC is required to publish its reasoning for (i) all decisions related to a complaint about due accuracy or due impartiality that reach the final stage of its complaints process and (ii) all decisions related to a case where the BBC has received more than 100 complaints about the item at Stage 1a.

- between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 the BBC published its reasoning in 186 not upheld cases.²⁶⁵

We welcome the BBC's increased transparency, as by explaining why the BBC did not uphold these complaints audiences and stakeholders are given more confidence in the decisions taken. We expect to see this level of reporting continue.

Ofcom continues to oversee the BBC's enforcement of content standards (including due impartiality)

Serious editorial breaches

Since our June 2022 review, the BBC has been reporting potential serious editorial breaches across its content to Ofcom.²⁶⁶ By alerting Ofcom to these breaches at an early stage, we are able to assess whether there are any exceptional circumstances which would cause us to intervene in the complaint. We welcome this development and expect to see it continue.

Over the 2023/24 period, Ofcom was alerted by the BBC to two serious editorial breaches²⁶⁷ related to BBC North East and Cumbria and a BBC News article.²⁶⁸ Ofcom did not consider it necessary to take any further regulatory action with these breaches, given the steps already taken by the BBC.

Complaints referred to Ofcom

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the BBC's final decision, they can refer the matter to Ofcom.²⁶⁹ Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 we received 2,709 complaints about BBC content. Of these, only 153 had completed the BBC's complaints process first and we referred the remainder back to the BBC. Figure 6 below provides an overview of complaints dealt with under the BBC First System for the 2023/24 period.

²⁶⁵ BBC emails to Ofcom on 16 July 2024 and 12 November 2024.

²⁶⁶ We have established a [protocol](#) for communication between the BBC and Ofcom where cases fall under the BBC's procedures for self-initiated investigations of potential breaches of editorial standards and fast-tracked cases.

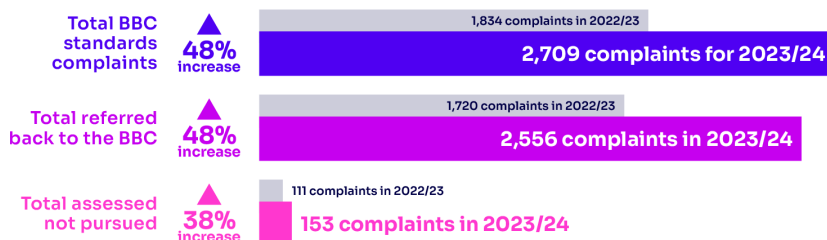
²⁶⁷ In addition to the serious editorial breaches, the BBC reported that it referred [two complaints](#) to the ECU from the Board of Deputies of British Jews and from Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) about coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict under the [Procedure for fast-tracked editorial complaints](#) agreed with Ofcom. These related to an editorial breach that was broadcast on the BBC News Channel. Neither of these complainants subsequently escalated their complaints to Ofcom.

²⁶⁸ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.124.

²⁶⁹ Complainants can also come to Ofcom if they consider, following the resolution of a complaint by the BBC, that the imposition of a sanction may be appropriate, or if the BBC has failed to resolve a complaint within the time period set out in its procedures.

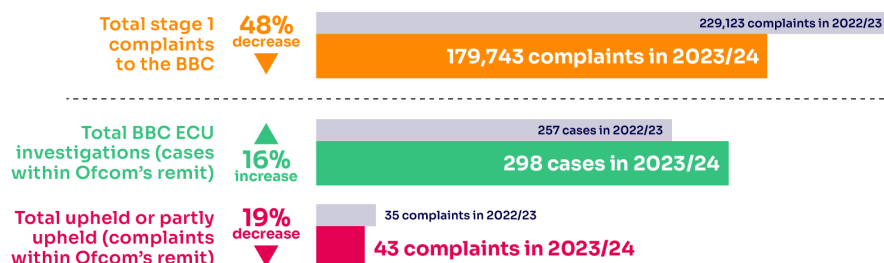
Figure 6: Overview of complaints dealt with under the BBC First system in 2023/24

Complaints to Ofcom



No complaints were assessed as raising issues which warranted investigation.

Complaints to the BBC



This year, Ofcom began to publish details of complaints which the BBC has already upheld or partly-upheld under the BBC First system and which we have decided not to investigate. In these cases, we carefully consider the steps taken and the final position reached by the BBC and, where we decide we will not be opening an investigation, we clearly state our rationale for taking no further action in our Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin.²⁷⁰ This was implemented following a recommendation in DCMS Mid-Term Review (see below).²⁷¹

Due impartiality and due accuracy complaints

Complaint volumes received by Ofcom about the due impartiality of the BBC's content increased over 2023/24, driven in part by coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict. Ofcom assessed 1,785 such complaints (57% of all BBC complaints to Ofcom), compared to 918 complaints the previous year (39%) and 594 complaints in 2021/22 (19%). These figures include both BBC Standards and BBC Online Material complaints.

Of the 1,785 complaints (618 cases):

- 99 complaints (88 cases) were not pursued/not accepted as we did not consider they raised issues warranting investigation;
- the remaining 1,686 (530 cases) were referred to the BBC to complete the BBC's complaints process; and
- no cases were referred for investigation.

²⁷⁰ [Ofcom Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin](#), BBC Standards complaints assessed, not pursued, p. 4.

²⁷¹ DCMS, [BBC Mid-Term Review 2024](#), Annex C, Recommendation 3.18.

In addition to Ofcom’s work to monitor the BBC’s due impartiality, the BBC carries out its own investigations to ensure due impartiality standards are maintained. During the 2023/24 period, three of the 13 cases that the BBC’s ECU upheld or partly-upheld related to due impartiality.²⁷² Since the start of the current Charter period in 2017, the BBC’s ECU has upheld or partly-upheld cases in 32 instances (out of a total of 160) where it found that the appropriate standard of due impartiality had not been applied.²⁷³

BBC complaints related to the Israel-Gaza conflict

Since 7 October 2023 we have received a high number of complaints relating to the BBC’s coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict (constituting almost 50% of the total complaints to Ofcom about the due impartiality of the BBC’s content in 2023/4). From the 7 October 2023 – 31 March 2024 period:

- i) Ofcom assessed and closed 931 such complaints;
- ii) 821 of these related to due impartiality; and
- iii) of these, only 11 had completed the BBC’s complaints process first and therefore we referred the remainder back to the BBC.

Taking into account any action taken by the BBC in individual cases, we did not consider that any of these complaints raised issues warranting investigation under our Code or involved exceptional circumstances which would cause us to intervene in the complaint before it had completed the BBC First process.

Throughout the conflict Ofcom has engaged with parliamentarians and representatives of Jewish and Muslim communities regarding the BBC’s coverage.

UK General Election

We also assessed complaints about the BBC’s news and current affairs coverage during the UK General Election period (30 May - 4 July 2024), but found no complaints raised issues warranting investigation under the Code. We will provide a full update on this in next year’s Annual Report as it falls outside this reporting period.²⁷⁴

BBC thematic and internal reviews

In addition to its investigations, the BBC also carries out thematic reviews to ensure it holds itself publicly accountable for meeting the highest standards of impartiality across its output. The reviews are conducted independently of the BBC and incorporate an assessment of all audience complaints on a particular topic and engagement with key stakeholders and experts in the area. As mentioned in our last Annual Report on the BBC, the first [review on taxation, public spending, government borrowing and debt](#) was published in November 2022. In March 2024 the BBC published its [review of the impartiality of BBC content on Migration](#), which highlighted both strengths and weaknesses in this area. It is currently working on its third impartiality review, which will examine how accurately and authentically the BBC portrays and represents different groups and communities across the UK. The outcome of this review will be published next year.²⁷⁵ We welcome these thematic reviews and

²⁷² BBC response to s.135 Notice of 2 July 2024.

²⁷³ These figures do not include cases outside Ofcom’s remit.

²⁷⁴ This is because the UK General Election is covered by the 2024-2025 reporting period.

²⁷⁵ BBC Media Centre, [Thematic review of portrayal and representation in BBC output confirmed](#), 29 May 2024.

the fact that the BBC has been actively following up with programme-makers the implications of the reviews' findings.

In addition to these thematic reviews, the BBC carries out internal content reviews which assess the extent to which the BBC meets editorial standards in key news and current and other affairs content. In its Annual Report, the BBC said that learnings from these reviews include the importance of timely and robust editorial discussion, enhancing the range of perspectives and contributors in BBC content and maintaining editorial standards through a period of change and resource constraint. There are six content areas currently under review this year covering programmes across the BBC's divisions of News, Nations and Content.²⁷⁶

Fairness and privacy complaints

Ofcom has a duty to ensure broadcasters avoid unjust or unfair treatment or unwarranted infringements of privacy of individuals or organisations who appear in or are directly affected by programmes as they are broadcast (or in connection with the obtaining of material included in them, in the case of privacy). Such Fairness and Privacy complaints are made by the individuals or organisations participating in or otherwise directly affected by programmes as broadcast, or in the making of programmes.²⁷⁷ Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 we assessed 40 complaints about alleged unjust or unfair treatment or an unwarranted infringement of privacy in BBC programmes, compared to 24 the year before.

We also completed eight fairness and privacy investigations into BBC programmes. Two of these were upheld and full details can be found in Broadcast and on Demand Bulletin [Issue 497](#) and [Issue 496](#). In one of these cases (*The Detectives: Fighting Organized Crime*) Ofcom had significant concerns regarding the BBC's poor co-operation during Ofcom's investigation. In particular, the BBC's initial responses to Ofcom's requests for information about its compliance processes in the production of the programme were not comprehensive. Additionally, its representations on Ofcom's Preliminary View and revised Preliminary View differed substantially from its original position and added to the time taken for Ofcom to adjudicate on this case. Given our concerns about the BBC's engagement in this case and the consequent impact on Ofcom's consideration of the complaint, and following our final adjudication, Ofcom held a compliance meeting with the BBC in June 2024 to discuss the BBC's approach to compliance with the fairness and privacy requirements of the Code.

Online material complaints

In May 2017 Ofcom and the BBC entered into a separate [arrangement relating to online material](#), under which Ofcom can consider and give an independent Opinion on whether the BBC has observed the relevant BBC Editorial Guidelines. Ofcom is due to be given new powers to regulate the BBC's online material, which we explain further below.

This year we assessed and closed a total of 45 complaints (42 cases) about the BBC's online material, compared to 297 complaints (55 cases) last year.²⁷⁸ A further 355 complaints (183 cases) about BBC

²⁷⁶ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24](#), p.123.

²⁷⁷ The BBC First system does not apply to fairness and privacy complaints, and unlike complaints about BBC content standards, these can be made to Ofcom in the first instance.

²⁷⁸ The reason for the significant decrease is due to one online material article in the previous year (2022/23) that generated a high number of complaints. This was the online article: ['We're being pressured into sex by some trans women'](#) (original title), since retitled: *'The Lesbians who feel pressured to have sex and relationships with trans women'*, BBC News website, 26 October 2021.

online material were referred to the BBC under the BBC First process or found to be outside of our remit. Of the 42 cases assessed in 2023/24, all were closed as ‘not accepted’ following our assessment, meaning we did not consider that they raised potentially substantive issues under the relevant BBC’s Editorial Guidelines that warranted consideration by Ofcom.

Ofcom is preparing for new regulatory duties relating to BBC content standards

Actions coming out of DCMS’ Mid-term Review

In January 2024 the then Government published the [Mid-Term Review of the BBC](#). This looked at, among other things, the effectiveness and regulation of: the BBC’s editorial standards and impartiality and its complaints process. As part of the MTR, DCMS made recommendations to Ofcom and the BBC which are due to be finalised in a forthcoming revised Framework Agreement.

The revised Framework Agreement will give Ofcom new powers to implement some of the recommendations. As well as improving the way we publicly explain how we deal with complaints which the BBC has already upheld or partly-upheld under the BBC First system (see above), we are also working in other areas discussed in the MTR:

BBC Online Material Code

Ofcom is due to be given new powers to regulate the BBC’s online material in the same way as we currently do for the BBC’s broadcast and on demand content. This will include the BBC News and Sport websites, BBC branded content on third-party video sharing platforms, social media platforms and accounts, as well as educational and learning resources. Once the Framework Agreement has been published, this will enable Ofcom to deliver a BBC Online Material Code that reflects the principles that underpin the Broadcasting Code. We expect to consult on a draft of the BBC Online Material Code once the revised Framework Agreement has been published.

Ofcom review of ECU decisions

We are working with the BBC to put in place a process to conduct regular reviews of a sample of the ECU’s decisions which would not normally come to Ofcom.²⁷⁹ We will be publishing the outcome of our first review in next year’s Annual Report on the BBC.

We are working with the BBC to raise awareness of BBC First

Ofcom and the BBC have been working together to identify ways to raise audiences’ awareness of BBC First and to better communicate to complainants our respective roles in the complaints process.

In addition to our preparations for our new duties, and following the commitments made in our Review of BBC Regulation in 2022, Ofcom will conduct a further review of the BBC First system. We will also undertake new research to update our understanding on audience perceptions of the BBC’s due impartiality.

²⁷⁹ For example, cases where the complainant does not refer or escalate their complaint to Ofcom.