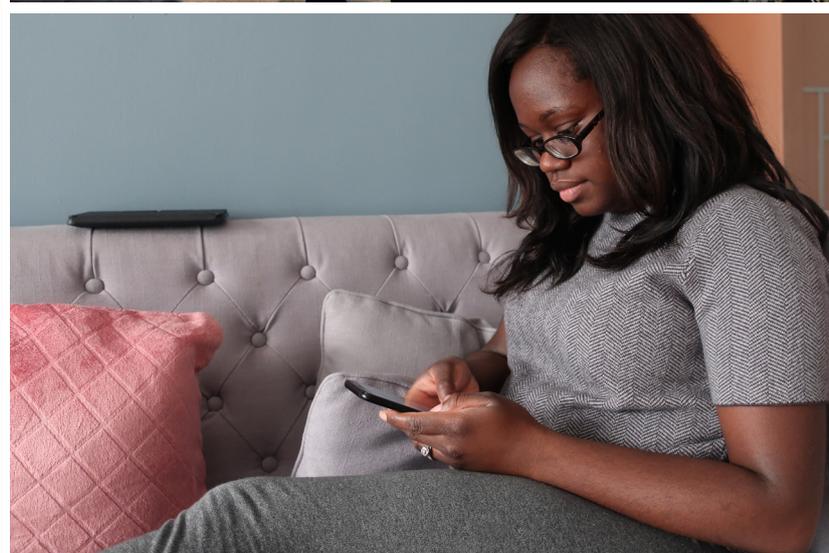
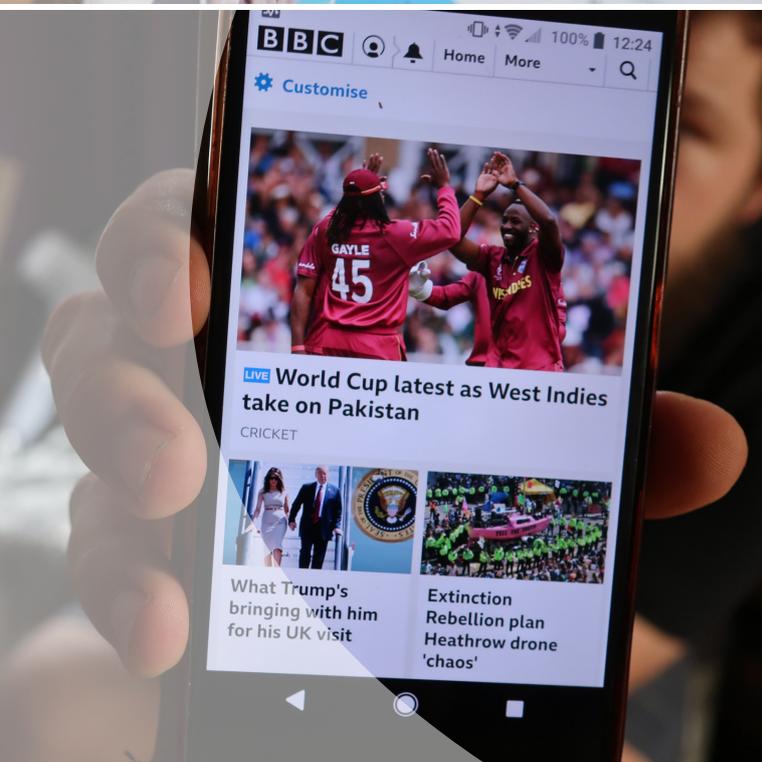
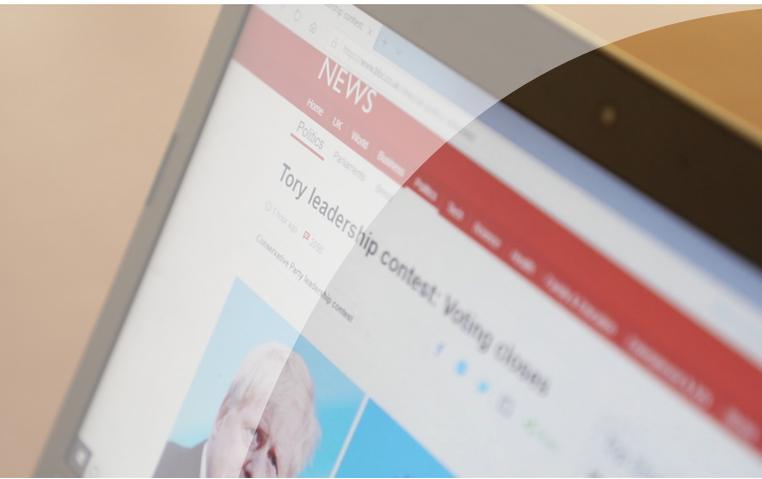


Review of **BBC news** and **current affairs**



Published 24 October 2019

[Welsh version available](#)

Contents

Overview	3
Background to Ofcom’s review	6
Overview of BBC news and current affairs	8
The quality of BBC news and current affairs	11
Engagement with BBC news and current affairs	21
What we expect the BBC to do	30
Annex 1: Key facts and Figures	31

Overview

Ofcom has carried out a detailed review of BBC news and current affairs

Providing high-quality, trusted news and current affairs is central to the BBC's remit. At a time of highly political and polarised debate, the need for accurate, trustworthy and robust journalism is as important as it has ever been.

In March, we launched an in-depth review of BBC news and current affairs, putting audiences at the heart of our research. Over the spring and summer, we gathered views from people across the country. We commissioned research to give us a detailed insight into how people get their news, and we looked at the range and depth the BBC offers compared to other news providers. We also spoke to around 50 media organisations, industry bodies and academics across the UK.

Here is a summary of our main findings, along with our recommendations to the BBC. We have also published on our website the range of evidence that has informed this.

Accuracy is central to the BBC's reputation

The BBC remains the UK's primary source for news. Despite an uncertain political environment, it has maintained its reputation among most people for trusted and accurate reporting.

Audiences told us that these were a news provider's most important attributes, particularly during breaking news stories. In a world of fake news and disinformation online, they said they turn to the BBC for a reliable take on events. However, some people we spoke to told us that their trust in the BBC had been damaged by reputational issues, such as its handling of the gender pay dispute.

Accurate news provision must continue to be the main priority for the BBC. Maintaining an intense focus on this is the best way for the BBC to retain and strengthen its reputation. As long as people continue to turn to the BBC at important moments, it has the opportunity to attract and serve the broadest range of audiences.

Greater confidence in how it achieves due impartiality

Audiences recognised that the BBC faces greater scrutiny than other media organisations.

Our research found that people's views of the BBC's impartiality are shaped by a range of factors, with only some relating directly to its news and current affairs content. Some told us their views were influenced by the BBC brand, its funding mechanism and its portrayal in wider media. When it came to content, audiences perceived the BBC as giving too much coverage to extreme voices, while others criticised 'false equivalence' in its reporting.

Those who were critical of the BBC's impartiality also tended to hold the strongest political views. The current polarised political climate presents a challenge to the BBC in how it approaches due impartiality.

Broadcasting rules do not require the BBC or other broadcasters to be absolutely neutral on every issue within news and current affairs, but they must be duly impartial. This means journalists should take context into account when considering how to achieve due impartiality. They should feel able to challenge controversial viewpoints that have little support or are not backed up by facts, making this clear to viewers, listeners and readers.

Our research shows that audiences have respect for the calibre of the BBC's journalism and expect its reporters to investigate, analyse and explain events. This should give the BBC confidence to be bolder in its approach.

Better at representing the whole of the UK

BBC News is seen by some as representing a white, middle class and London-centric point of view that is not relevant to their lives.

The BBC's heritage and longevity can inspire trust, but we also heard the BBC described as Westminster-focused and speaking for, and to, a small section of society. Some viewers told us they see the BBC's television bulletins as stuffy and limited in range.

The perceived lack of diversity in BBC reporters and presenters, or the lack of different viewpoints, was also raised by people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The BBC should better represent the whole of the UK with authentic news and current affairs content that feels relevant and engaging to all audiences.

The BBC's Director General has spoken of the need for it to better reflect the diversity of UK society. Audiences told us they want to see more news about their communities, reported by people with a deeper understanding of the area. People outside London thought the BBC could improve how it reflected and reported on their lives. People from minority ethnic groups told us they want to feel their voice is represented.

With its unparalleled local and regional newsgathering resources, the BBC should be able to represent the whole country authentically through a variety of style, tone and subject matter.

Engaging younger audiences online

The BBC is the UK's most-used online news source. But it has long been aware of the challenge it faces in attracting and engaging younger people, who are increasingly consuming news via social media and news aggregator services.

Our research found that, when people consume news in this way, their engagement is typically fleeting, meaning they may read only a headline or brief paragraph before moving on. For some whom we spoke to, the BBC is just "one of many" online news providers.

Although the BBC's online news services currently reach a broad audience, our work suggests that its heavier online users are generally those in older age groups who are already well served by BBC television and radio, rather than the younger audiences who are turning away from those platforms.

As more people rely on social media and aggregator platforms for news, the BBC's online content needs to do more to stand out – or risk losing its reputation and status as a trusted voice. We believe that transparency about its approach will aid trust in the BBC. The BBC should publish the steps it is taking to help all audiences – especially younger people – to understand and engage with the world around them.

Linking to online sources outside the BBC

The BBC's internal website links provide an important service for online users. These links connect readers to 'explainers' elsewhere on the BBC website, as well as in-depth analysis and commentary, helping them gain a better understanding of stories in the news. But our work indicates that the BBC could provide more links to external, third-party content. External links support the wider industry and benefit audiences by providing access to a wider range of material.

Following the publication of this report we will gather evidence, including formally requesting information from the BBC, to establish if it should do more to link to outside sources. As part of this, we will look at the BBC's performance in this area, as well as the wording of the current licence condition, to determine whether it remains appropriate, given changes in news consumption.



Background to Ofcom's review

This review looks at the BBC's news and current affairs output, and considers how it can better serve people across the UK

The BBC's role as one of the UK's main providers of news and current affairs is long established. More than three in four people in the UK regularly turn to the BBC for news – more than the next two most-popular news providers combined.

Ofcom's role, on behalf of UK audiences, is to ensure that the BBC fulfils its Mission and Public Purposes. One way the BBC Charter allows Ofcom to do this is through in-depth reviews "addressing any specific issue of concern" that we identify (Article 51(3)). These reviews help us understand what people think about aspects of BBC output and identify how the BBC could serve audiences better.

In our [first annual report on the BBC](#), published in October 2018, we concluded that the BBC was performing well against its Public Purpose relating to news and current affairs (set out in the box below). This reflected the views of audiences, who told us they rated BBC news and current affairs highly for its investigative journalism, high-quality commentary and accuracy.

However, we also identified some areas to examine more closely. The BBC received lower scores for its depth of analysis and for helping people make up their minds about events. Many people who said the BBC was important to them personally rated it less highly for impartiality and offering a range of opinions. We wanted to understand why.

Public Purpose 1: to provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them.

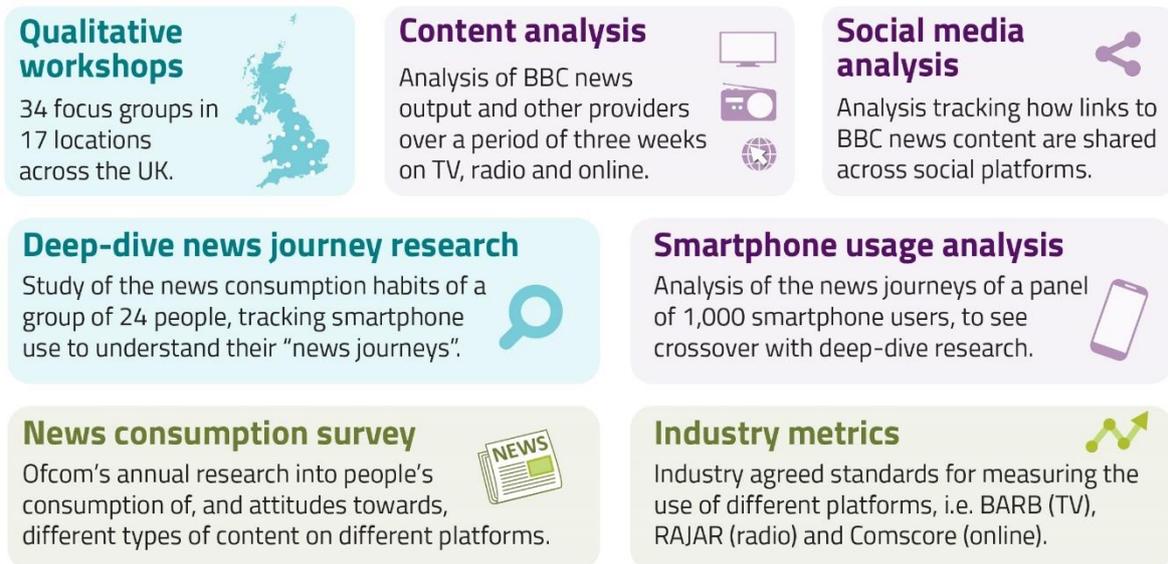
The BBC should provide duly accurate and impartial news, current affairs and factual programming to build people's understanding of all parts of the United Kingdom and of the wider world. Its content should be provided to the highest editorial standards.

It should offer a range and depth of analysis and content not widely available from other United Kingdom news providers, using the highest calibre of 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.

- Article 6(1), BBC Charter

Since we launched our review, our extensive research programme has taken us right across the United Kingdom. We have asked people in detail about their news habits, what matters to them about the news and current affairs they watch, listen to and read, as well as the role that BBC news and current affairs play in their lives. Full summaries and reports providing further insight into the research and analysis underpinning this review can be accessed on our [website](#).

Figure 1: Research conducted as part of our review of BBC news and current affairs



To help inform our work, we also met with stakeholders across the UK, including broadcasters, newspaper groups, media journalists, professional bodies and academics – as well as Ofcom's advisory bodies in each of the UK nations. Some chose to speak in confidence, wishing to talk frankly about the challenges the BBC faces and how it responds to them. Many of these points were mirrored in findings from our audience research. Some spoke to us more formally about specific issues, and all of these discussions are reflected in our findings.

Finally, we held several meetings with senior BBC staff to understand their approach to delivering news and current affairs content which will continue to serve audience needs.



Overview of BBC news and current affairs

Three in four UK adults now watch, read or listen to BBC news

The days when people caught up with the news at set times of day, and heard little in between, are long gone. Half of adults now use social media for news, and vast numbers of stories are available 24-7 through a wide range of online platforms and devices.

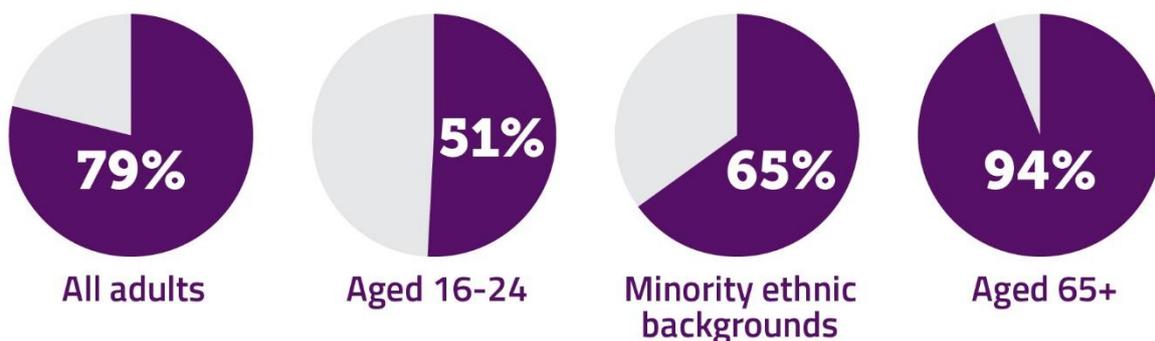
The BBC's mission, which is set by Parliament in its Charter, requires it to serve all audiences. Making its news and current affairs output available on television, radio and online is part of its mission.

Further data on people's consumption of news and current affairs across all platforms, output hours and programme spending can be found in Annex 1: 'Facts and figures'.

Television

Despite the growth of online news, television is still the main way people access news. Television news continues to be watched by 79% of adults according to our research, although there are big differences between demographic groups:

Figure 2: BBC News television viewing by demographic group



Source: BARB 2018/19

Across its TV channels in 2018, the BBC broadcast around 23,000 hours of news and current affairs content, accounting for just under half of its overall output. The majority of those hours (77%) were accounted for by the BBC News and BBC Parliament channels. Around two-fifths of BBC One's schedule comprises news and current affairs programmes.

Figure 3: Hours of UK news and current affairs by each BBC service

Service	Hours in 2013	Percentage of hours in 2013	Hours in 2018	Percentage of hours in 2018
 BBC One	3548	42%	3613	43%
 BBC Two	898	12%	1353	17%
 BBC Three	181	6%	-	-
 BBC Four	121	4%	157	5%
 BBC News	8760	100%	8760	100%
 BBC Parliament	8760	100%	8760	100%

Source: Ofcom/BBC. Note: Figures exclude nations' and regions' content.

Adults watching news on television in 2018 did so for an average of around half an hour each day. Of the total time spent watching news, 69% was to BBC One. However, the overall time spent watching news on TV has been declining, mainly due to falling viewing of the BBC News channel.

The most-watched news programmes on TV in 2018 were the BBC's *News at Six* bulletin, followed by its *News at Ten* bulletin and then the ITV *Evening News*.

Online

Our research shows that two-thirds of adults now go online for news. Almost half now say they regularly use social media, with around one in six citing Facebook and Twitter as the news sources they use most often. In March 2019, the BBC News website was the most visited news site in the UK, reaching 64% of the adult online population, just ahead of Daily Mail Online (63%).

In the context of all the different platforms and sources people say they use for news, the BBC News website/app is fourth behind BBC One, ITV and Facebook.

On social media, our research shows that, among those who follow news organisations, the BBC is the most likely to be followed, especially on Facebook and Twitter.

Radio

Around two-fifths of adults say they use radio for news. While the research shows that listening to the radio tends to be more of a passive, incidental activity, listeners value radio news, especially when stories are breaking.

News provision on BBC radio varies by network, but like most radio stations in the UK, they generally provide short bulletins at the top of the hour. In addition to these bulletins across all stations, Radio 1 provides two 15-minute bulletins each weekday; Radio 2's Jeremy Vine show covers news and current affairs topics in a phone-in each weekday; around two-fifths of Radio 4's weekday schedule consists of news and current affairs; and three-quarters of Radio 5 live's output is dedicated to the genre.

In addition to broadcast radio, the BBC offers news and current affairs in podcasts, through a combination of catch-up programmes, repurposed broadcast material and bespoke content on BBC Sounds. An example of this is the award-winning *Brexitcast*.

According to our research, around three quarters of adults say they use BBC radio for news, with around one in eight listeners saying Radio 2 is their main source for news, and Radio 4 their most-used source for current affairs. Away from traditional radio, the research we commissioned earlier this year found that BBC iPlayer Radio and BBC Sounds are more likely than any other podcast services to be used for seeking out news and current affairs content.

The quality of BBC news and current affairs

In an era of increased fake news and disinformation, there is growing public concern about misleading content online. Ofcom research shows that this can harm public trust, and potentially have serious implications for democratic processes in the UK. Many people struggle to check the validity of online news content and look to established news providers to sort fact from fiction.

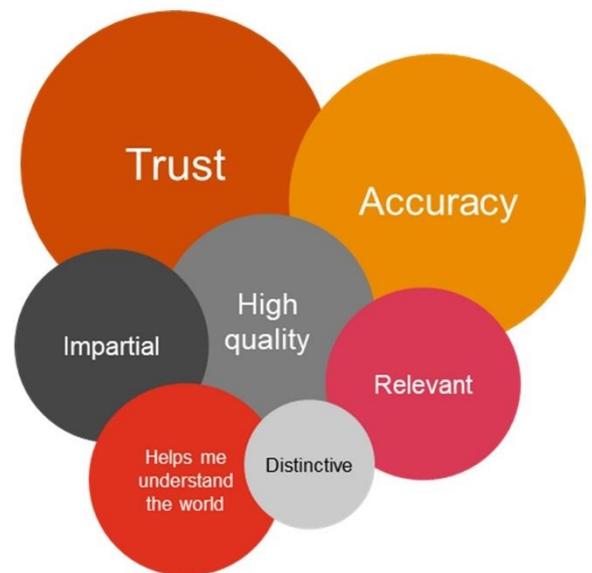
The BBC is aware of this challenge and has acknowledged the important role it has in helping maintain trust in UK media. The BBC's latest [Annual Plan](#) noted the growing partisanship and fragmentation in politics and the media. In the Plan, the BBC said it was seeking to strengthen its commitment to explaining what events mean, and why they matter, in order to sustain audience trust in the BBC.

Audiences told us that the most important attributes of any news provider were 'accuracy' and 'trust'. They value the BBC for these characteristics.

People in our focus groups consistently saw 'trust' and 'accuracy' as the most important characteristics of BBC News. This was true of users of all platforms, including those who consumed less BBC content or were less interested in topics such as politics or international news. People typically rated the BBC highly for providing accurate and high-quality news and current affairs. This is consistent with our [annual news consumption research](#), which shows that seven in ten viewers of BBC News rate it as trusted and accurate.

In our focus groups, people gave a number of reasons as to why they trusted the BBC. For some, it was because they had watched the BBC for a long time and had confidence that it delivered accurate and trusted news. Others expected higher standards from the BBC than from commercial providers because of its licence-fee funding.

Figure 4: Audience valued characteristics of news providers



NB. Size of circle represents prevalence

Source: PwC Research, Ofcom's Review of BBC News and Current Affairs

The trust which many people place in BBC news content was reflected in our analysis of social media, which looked at the volume and discussion of BBC news links shared publicly. This analysis indicated that the vast majority of people who shared BBC news content on social media platforms did so in a way that suggested they thought the information was reliable, using the content of articles to share trusted information or back up their own view. Most of those who shared BBC online news stories did so without question, simply forwarding the link and presenting it as fact. Only a small minority shared the information in a way that indicated they did not accept the BBC as a reliable or trusted source.

"When you grow up in the UK it's like a piece of the furniture. You know they are striving to be trustworthy."

Female, 19, Belfast

This reputation for accuracy and trust sends audiences to the BBC during breaking news and to verify facts

Accuracy was important to people because they had a strong desire to avoid 'fake news' and to have access to a reliable, accountable counterpoint to the range of coverage and opinion that they came across. At certain times, such as when a story was breaking, some people told us they sought out the BBC to provide an authoritative take on events. This was true both of people who typically engaged less with the BBC and those who used it frequently. Users of social media and news aggregators told us that although these platforms offered an array of perspectives during breaking news events, they were aware that they carried a greater risk of 'fake news'.

Some audiences told us that other news providers, such as Sky News, could be quicker than the BBC in reporting breaking news. But audiences also told us they valued the BBC's reliable take, and would turn to it as a trusted and accurate source when major events were taking place. When people were actively seeking out information about a particular story or topic, the BBC was a popular choice including to check facts.

"I think the BBC are one of the most trusted sources. This has a lot to do with the fact that this channel has been ingrained in me since I was a child, watching the Test Card. Reliable and well-respected."

Female, 65, Bangor

Stakeholders we spoke to were generally positive about the BBC's reputation for providing reliable, accurate news, recognising this as one of the organisation's major strengths. They also highlighted the BBC's leading role in working with the industry to protect audiences from disinformation.

Many people acknowledged the challenge for the BBC in reporting during a polarised political environment and said that it continued to retain their trust. However, this picture was not universal. The BBC as an organisation has experienced a number of controversies which have proved damaging to its reputation. For some of the audiences we spoke to, controversies such as the Jimmy Savile scandal and the more recent gender-pay dispute had affected their trust in the BBC more generally. This translated to the trust they placed in the BBC's news provision, suggesting that institutional events can have a long-term effect on the way that the BBC's news provision is perceived.

Recommendation:

Accurate news provision must continue to be the main priority for the BBC. Maintaining an intense focus on this is the best way for the BBC to retain and strengthen its reputation. As long as people continue to turn to the BBC at important moments, it has the opportunity to attract and serve the broadest range of audiences.

While trust and accuracy rate highly, perceptions of the BBC's impartiality are more complex

Audiences we spoke to identified impartiality as a core characteristic of a good news provider, along with trust and accuracy. The BBC was spontaneously cited during our focus groups as providing impartial coverage. But overall, audience views on impartiality were more complex than those on trust and accuracy.

Data from our 2019 news consumption survey show that audiences rate the BBC lower for impartiality than for trust and accuracy, with almost one in five rating the BBC's impartiality as 'low'.

Figure 5: Percentage of regular users rating each attribute highly (7-10) for BBC across platform

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>TV</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Online</i>
Is accurate	71%	72%	74%
Is trustworthy	71%	72%	71%
Is impartial	59%	64%	61%

Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2019

A smaller proportion of BBC TV news viewers consider it to be impartial than viewers of ITV, Channel 4 or Sky News. Participants in our research told us they thought the BBC's approach to impartiality was held up to a higher degree of scrutiny by the press, politicians and the public because of its unique status and its requirement to serve all audiences.

Since 2017, when we were given duties to regulate the BBC, we have not found it to be in breach of the 'due impartiality' requirements of the Broadcasting Code. When we consider whether programmes are duly impartial, we take into account contextual factors such as genre and the service on which the material is broadcast. Importantly, the Broadcasting Code does not require the BBC to give equal balance to different views, and due impartiality is not the same as neutrality.

The BBC has a right to freedom of expression and audiences have a right to receive information and ideas without unnecessary interference. This is a fundamental right that enables free speech and the flow of ideas and information from the media to the public.

The meaning of 'due' impartiality

"Due" is an important qualification to the concept of impartiality. Impartiality itself means not favouring one side over another. "Due" means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. So "due impartiality" does not mean that an equal division of time has to be given to every view, or that every argument and every facet of every argument has to be presented. Context is important.

The decisions which the BBC, and all broadcasters, take in complying material to be duly impartial should always be taken with freedom of expression in mind.

Brexit on Radio 4

Last year, Ofcom assessed an extensive amount of content on BBC Radio 4 about the UK's exit from the EU, following a collective complaint from ten individuals, including some parliamentarians. Exceptionally, and to provide guidance to broadcasters, Ofcom decided to publish the reasoning for its decision that the content did not warrant further investigation in its [Broadcast and On-Demand Bulletin](#).

We identified various editorial techniques used by the BBC to preserve due impartiality. These included: presenters challenging the viewpoints of guests; newspaper reviews; specialist correspondents providing additional analysis; personal views clearly indicated as such; satirical targeting of a range of figures; and the inclusion of viewpoints from politicians with differing views, representatives of industry bodies and members of the public.

Our research found that audience views on the BBC's impartiality were influenced by many factors, only one of which was the BBC's news and current affairs content.

- People with strong political views generally saw the BBC as too left or right wing, depending on their personal political persuasion. Our social media analysis suggests that those with the strongest political views were the most likely to make critical comments about the BBC. Although they represented only a small proportion of comments about BBC content, negative views circulated further than praise as people reaffirmed previously held positions.
- Some people were suspicious that the BBC's reporting was influenced by the government because of its funding model.
- Those less engaged with BBC coverage often based their perceptions of BBC impartiality on other sources, such as newspaper reports, other media or word of mouth.

"I trust them to give the facts but I am less trusting that they are not biased towards the government."

Female, 38, Larne

When based on content, perceptions of impartiality in the BBC's political coverage often related to current affairs programmes such as *Question Time* and *Newsnight*. These views were formed not just from people's experience of watching the programmes, but also from how these programmes were reported in the press. Social media analysis revealed that these programmes were divisive among the minority of people who used that platform to criticise the BBC's news and current affairs.

Our research indicated that people are increasingly avoiding spaces and programmes where their ideas are challenged. The people who commented online on the current affairs programmes above appeared to do so in ‘echo chambers’, where their views were not questioned regularly. When they did watch programmes where opposing views were represented, or their own views were strongly challenged, they seemed to find this deeply uncomfortable.

Some audiences felt the BBC could improve its approach to due impartiality

Some people raised concerns about the BBC’s approach to impartiality. These all related to the way in which the BBC includes controversial viewpoints.

There was criticism of the BBC for giving what was felt to be undue prominence to ‘extreme’ political views. Freedom of expression includes the ability to reflect a wide range of voices and opinions, which is central to the BBC’s role. But people told us they considered the way the BBC reflected these ‘extreme’ views was sometimes at the expense of more moderate or ‘typical’ perspectives. Audiences also thought that such views could sometimes go unchallenged, or were not challenged appropriately.

“The BBC need less ‘noise’ in lengthy, complex issues like Brexit. Less totally polarised opinions - more of a mix and moderacy.”

Female, 72, Swansea

As examples, they cited current affairs panel shows such as *Question Time*, and the use of vox pops (short interviews with members of the public) in news packages. This was consistent with our social media analysis, which found that the online discussion surrounding the BBC’s current affairs panel shows

provoked a more negative reaction, particularly from those who held strong political views.

Lastly, some people identified what they saw as ‘false equivalence’, where equal weight was given in a debate to views with an unequal factual basis. This was particularly true of younger audiences on a range of stories including Brexit.

To complement our research, we undertook an analysis of 300 complaints we received relating to BBC impartiality from December 2018 to February 2019. None of these were upheld as a breach of the due impartiality requirements of the Broadcasting Code. However, the main themes that emerged from these complaints were broadly in line with our focus-group findings above, including perceptions that undue prominence was given to extreme views; or that there was ‘false equivalence’. Other themes included reporters and presenters providing insufficient challenge to the viewpoints of guests, and that interviewers and guests talked or shouted over each other, leading to lower-quality debates.

Our research indicates, that at a time of political polarisation, audiences with concerns about perceived bias in the BBC’s news coverage are unlikely to be reassured by content that gives space to voices with which they passionately disagree. Giving 50:50 airtime to opposing views can lead to false equivalence, as opposed to due impartiality.

The BBC recognises this. Its Annual Plan, which it published earlier this year highlights that UK society is experiencing a divisive period, and it recognises the consequent role it has to play in

bringing people together and promoting social cohesion. The BBC outlined its wish to stand up for its role “like never before”, as it formed an important part of what it described as its “enduring contract” with audiences.

The BBC has previously addressed the issue of ‘false equivalence’ in its reporting and put in place initiatives to address this. But our research shows that the way it approaches due impartiality is still a concern for some people. It also shows that audiences value journalism that seeks to cut through opposing viewpoints to deliver clarity and inform them about the world.

BBC Breakfast assessment

While undertaking our review, the BBC’s approach to due impartiality attracted particular public scrutiny.

‘BBC Breakfast’ 17 July 2019, Ofcom assessment

In October 2019, Ofcom [published its assessment](#) of this episode of *BBC Breakfast*. The programme featured a discussion between presenters Naga Munchetty and Dan Walker about comments made by President Donald Trump which had been widely criticised as racist. Following an interview with a supporter of President Trump, Dan Walker asked Naga Munchetty about the comments and she spoke about her personal experience of racism. She also stated that she was *‘not here to give my opinion’*.

The original decision of the BBC’s Executive Complaints Unit (ECU) was that the comments made by Naga Munchetty had partially breached the impartiality requirements of the BBC’s Editorial Guidelines. Following public criticism, the Director General of the BBC overturned the original decision by the ECU.

Ofcom assessed the programme as a whole under the due impartiality requirements of the Broadcasting Code (the Code). Taking into account all relevant contextual factors and the editorial techniques used by the BBC, we found that alternative viewpoints on the political debate surrounding President Trump’s language were sufficiently represented.

We also assessed the specific exchange between Dan Walker and Naga Munchetty. In this instance, the relevant rules of the Code required essentially the same standards for news presenters as the BBC’s Editorial Guidelines. To help preserve due impartiality, news presenters and reporters may not express their own views on matters of political controversy. Naga Munchetty’s own experience of racism was not a matter of political controversy, and so this aspect of the presenters’ exchange did not engage the Code’s due impartiality rules.

Other aspects of the brief exchange did engage these rules, as President Trump’s statements were a matter of political controversy. We took into account several contextual factors, including that the format was a news magazine programme with a long-established style of informal discussion between presenters; that Dan Walker asked Naga Munchetty direct questions about her own experience; and the specific nature of her remarks. Overall, we found that this part of the programme did not raise issues under the due impartiality rules.

For these reasons, and taking into account the right to freedom of expression, Ofcom's assessment was that the programme would not breach the due impartiality rules of the Code and did not raise issues warranting investigation.

Our assessment also highlighted our concerns around the lack of transparency of the BBC's complaints process and the reasons for the decisions that it reaches, which we are addressing as a matter of urgency.

This case highlights some of the concerns audiences raised about the BBC's approach to due impartiality during our research.

Much of the criticism directed at the BBC on this issue focused on whether it had made a judgement that racism required due impartiality. The ECU did not publish the full reasoning behind its decision, and nor did the Director General when he subsequently overturned it. This lack of transparency and clarity surrounding both decisions created widespread public confusion about the BBC's position on an important matter of editorial policy. In particular, it created a perception that the BBC had misunderstood the requirements of due impartiality as they relate to racism.

As we set out above, audience perceptions around due impartiality are complex and not always based on the content of programmes alone. The BBC has said it intends to focus this year on strengthening perceptions of impartiality. If it is to succeed, it must recognise that those perceptions are driven by deeply held views about its brand and heritage, not just the content of its programmes.

This case underlines the need for the BBC to be transparent and clear in the way it deals with complaints, not just for the public but also for journalists who use decisions such as this as guidance to determine their approach.

Recommendation:

Broadcasting rules do not require the BBC or other broadcasters to be absolutely neutral on every issue within news and current affairs, but they must be duly impartial. This means journalists should take context into account when considering how to achieve due impartiality. They should feel able to challenge controversial viewpoints that have little support or are not backed up by facts, making this clear to viewers, listeners and readers.

Our research shows that audiences have respect for the calibre of the BBC's journalism and expect its reporters to investigate, analyse and explain events. This should give the BBC confidence to be bolder in its approach.

Audiences praised the professionalism and seriousness of BBC reporting, but this did not always equate to depth of coverage or scrutiny

As well as the BBC's presentation of the news, we wanted to use our review to understand more about the range and depth of material that the BBC offered across its platforms.

This aspect of its coverage was not always a primary concern for the people we spoke to during our research. Audiences spoke highly of the professionalism of the BBC presentation, its tone, structure and consistency of delivery. And while they told us they regarded BBC output across TV, radio and online as a benchmark for high-quality news provision, this was only part of the reason they chose to engage with BBC content.

We commissioned content analysis to examine range and depth in more detail. This looked at the news and current affairs output of the BBC, as well as a range of comparable providers over a sample three-week period in June 2019. This period included President Trump's visit to the UK, the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the Conservative Party's leadership contest.

The BBC is expected to offer a range and depth of analysis and content not widely available from other UK news providers. In broad terms, and across its varied television, radio and online output, we found that it did so over the time period we looked at. There was a strong overall focus on topics such as politics, economics, business and international affairs in the BBC's coverage. Compared to the other major television bulletins, for example, the BBC focused more heavily on war and conflict stories, such as civil unrest in Sudan and diplomatic tensions between the US and Iran.

Our researchers found that the BBC provided a higher level of policy information and analysis than other broadcasters, as well as useful background and context to the issues to help audiences. However, as with participants in our audience research, our content analysis identified that BBC journalists did not always challenge or counter-balance claims.

For example, in coverage of the Conservative leadership contest, the content reviewers identified that some assertions from the leadership candidates were not challenged by BBC journalists when doing so would have helped shed light on the claims and counter-claims of different policy positions. In coverage of Brexit during the sample time period, the reviewers observed that all of the news providers they looked at – including the BBC – largely reported developments from a UK political perspective, without including a spread of European viewpoints to help better inform audiences about alternative perspectives or considerations. The risk is that, while the BBC may succeed in reporting the day's events, it may not always provide the scrutiny and breadth of analysis that helps audiences understand and follow stories as they develop.

Some media organisations were concerned about the scope of the BBC's online news provision and its willingness to link to other sources

During the course of our review, we spoke to a number of industry stakeholders who felt that the BBC had expanded its editorial scope online into areas that were traditionally the domain of newspapers. They expressed particular concern about what they saw as a prevalence of stories about lifestyle, celebrity or entertainment topics on the BBC News website, questioning the extent to which it was appropriate for the BBC to offer such material.

The BBC told us that although news items on the big stories of the day such as political or economic developments remain relevant for all audiences, their research shows that younger audiences are interested in a broader range of news including topics such as the environment and culture. To engage these harder-to-reach audiences, the BBC said that its strategy has been to adapt the tone and agenda of its online and other digital output to make it more relevant to their lives. For example, in recent years the BBC has published more content under the *BBC Stories* brand, which provides online video documentaries and in-depth features on cultural and societal issues.

We asked the researchers undertaking the content analysis to look at the editorial focus of the BBC News website and app as part of their assessment of the range and depth of BBC output. To do so, they compared the top featured topics on the BBC News website and app on each day during the sample period with those of a range of other news providers.

This showed that BBC news online broadly reflects the BBC's broadcast news agenda, consistently giving prominence to challenging topics such as politics, business, economics and international affairs. This editorial focus was comparable to those offered by providers such as The Telegraph and The Guardian online, as well as BuzzFeed and The Huffington Post. The online versions of The Sun, Daily Mail and Mirror focused their top headline topics more on lifestyle, celebrity and entertainment news.

Commercial news providers also argued that the quality of the BBC's online news coverage fell short when it came to sourcing or attributing stories. They felt the BBC could do more to drive traffic to their websites.

Under its Operating Licence, the BBC must ensure that it provides adequate links to third-party online material, particularly within news. The aim is not solely to provide support to the wider news industry; provision of these links also contributes to the BBC's delivery of Public Purpose 1 by helping users access a wealth of information in addition to its own content. In doing so, the Operating Licence notes that the BBC should exercise careful judgment about the links that it offers.

The BBC told us it is focused on improving the quality, rather than the volume, of links within news items when looking to comply with this condition. We examined this area also as part of our content analysis. This work identified that most of the online news providers, including BBC News, supplied internal rather than external links within its news items, as shown on the following page.

Figure 6: Breakdown of sample of news items that include an internal or external links on BBC News homepage (website and app) and selected subpages (website)

		Internal links (%)	External links (%)
BBC News homepage	BBC News website	84.8	15.2
	BBC News app	83.1	16.9
BBC News website subpages	Health	84.3	15.7
	Science	70.5	29.5
	Politics	88.2	11.8
	World	73.3	26.7

Source: Ofcom content analysis

Figure 7: Breakdown of sources for external links in sample of news items on the BBC News website’s homepage:



Source: Ofcom content analysis. The remaining proportion of external links were to sources such as other social media, UK legal and political bodies and international legal and political bodies

The researchers also looked at the destination of external links. Of those on the BBC News homepage, around 40% were to tweets, one in five to business organisations, and one in eight to UK newspaper sites. In contrast, over 80% of the external hyperlinks on the Daily Mail Online and The Mirror went to sites offered by broadcasters, newspapers and other online publishers.

The BBC’s internal website links provide an important service to online users. These links connect readers to ‘explainers’ elsewhere on the BBC website, as well as in-depth analysis and commentary, helping them gain a better understanding of stories in the news. But our work indicates that the BBC could provide more links to external, third-party content. External links support the wider industry and benefit audiences by providing access to a wider range of material.

Next steps:

Following the publication of this report we will gather evidence, including formally requesting information from the BBC, to establish if it should do more to link to outside sources. As part of this, we will look at the BBC’s performance in this area, as well as the wording of the current licence condition to determine whether it remains appropriate, given changes in news consumption.



Engagement with BBC news and current affairs

Some audiences are less engaged with BBC news and current affairs

Despite strong overall reach figures, there are long-standing variations in consumption of BBC News by demographic group.

BBC News consumption

Three quarters of all adults use BBC News across all of its platforms but this falls to 58% in the 16-24 age group.

57% of adults watched news across BBC TV in 2018/19 compared to 46% of people from minority ethnic groups.

23% of 16-24 year olds watched BBC TV news in 2018/19, a drop of over a third of the audience in five years.

For current affairs, there was a similar picture:

BBC Current affairs consumption

28% of adults watched current affairs programming across BBC TV in 2018/19, down by a fifth compared to five years ago.

8% of adults aged 16-24 watched current affairs across BBC TV in 2018/19 almost half who watched five years ago.

23% of minority ethnic adults watched current affairs across BBC TV in 2018/19 and this has dropped by just 5% since 2013/14.

BBC News is perceived by some as representing a mainly white, middle-class and London-centric point of view

A lack of diversity in the stories that the BBC covered, and the reporters and presenters on screen, was a strong concern raised by some people we spoke to during our research. This was especially true of younger people and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some audiences also felt that the BBC's news coverage represented a narrow view, with a disproportionate focus on south-east England and Westminster in particular.

When the BBC's news coverage did portray their lives, or cover stories that were important to them, people from a range of different demographic groups raised concerns with the approach the BBC took to this coverage.

People from minority ethnic backgrounds told us that the BBC was not "noticeably better" than other broadcasters at portraying issues affecting their communities. Some were critical of a lack of positive portrayal of certain minority ethnic groups. They wanted the BBC to reflect their communities more accurately and to give greater prominence to "their face and their voice".

Equally, some people reported lower trust in news broadcasters, including the BBC, on the grounds that minority groups were often disproportionately featured in coverage of negative issues such as knife crime and gang violence.

Younger people also questioned how far BBC news coverage was "talking to me". They typically saw the BBC's news provision as "dry and boring". Rather than reflecting their interests, the BBC was often perceived by this group as being more relevant to their parents. Younger audiences typically wanted to understand news from a global perspective. They were interested in international news and thought the BBC focused too much on the UK.

"I think it's important for the BBC to capture diversity that's extremely important. We live in a multicultural society and actually sometimes it can have quite a westernised, white middle-class view in terms of delivery and content."

Female, 34, Bristol

"[The] BBC to me is London-based. It's London-based programming, around Parliament, around the tube. If the tube breaks down it's all over the news. If there are stabbings in London, headlines. Stabbings anywhere else, further down."

Male, 70, Newcastle

Audiences told us they value more ‘opinion-led’ and ‘gritty’ investigative journalism

One aspect of BBC news that did resonate with 16-24 year olds was ‘opinion-led’ journalism. People within our research regularly cited programmes presented by Stacey Dooley and Reggie Yates as standout examples of this. They told us this type of journalism helped them to make sense of the world and was presented in a more engaging way that they could relate to.

Radio also stood out as providing more “diverse” and “interesting” content which reflected the lives of a range of audiences. Some audiences told us that radio presenters were more willing to challenge and offer opinion than TV presenters, which they found more divisive but also more engaging.

People we spoke to said that they liked investigative programmes that contained “gritty exposés” and personal perspectives. Channel 4 was seen by younger audiences in particular to do this better than the BBC and to tackle topics which felt more relevant to them.

To understand the types of topics covered by BBC current affairs, our researchers examined episodes of BBC *Panorama*, Channel 4 *Dispatches* and ITV’s *Tonight* between June 2018 and June 2019. We found that, for all these programmes there was a strong focus on health and education topics. For example, a third of *Panorama* episodes centred on health or NHS-related issues, as did a similar proportion of *Tonight* episodes. *Dispatches* and *Panorama* both featured an international topic in roughly one in every eight episodes.

Although the BBC’s current affairs programming was seen to be more opinionated and challenging than its news output, some people thought it did this less successfully than other broadcasters such as Channel 4.

People want to see BBC news and current affairs output that focuses more on the lives and concerns of communities right across the UK

The BBC has significant newsgathering operations and dedicated offices across the nations and regions of the UK. This resource provides the BBC with a unique opportunity to ensure that all parts of the UK are represented and provided for in their news and current affairs coverage.

Despite this, some people we spoke to in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were critical of the way in which the BBC represented stories that related to their lives in its UK news coverage. This was most prevalent on issues of devolved policy areas, such as education and health, which affect audiences differently across each nation of the UK.

They felt that the difference was often not recognised at all, or only briefly mentioned at the end of a news story as an afterthought.



Figure 8: Focus group locations

We undertook content analysis to find out how well the BBC, and other news providers, explained the devolved aspects of health and education stories in UK-wide news output across TV, radio and online. Put simply, our analysis examined whether the news items that covered health or education-related issues clarified that public policy could diverge in these areas in the different nations of the UK.

“BBC television news seems to cover education and health type news as if what is happening in England is also happening in Scotland, but it’s not. It is completely different, a different way of running the system.”

Female, 56, Stornoway

The BBC did better than its competitors in this respect. However, in the stories our analysis covered that *could* have included a reference to the devolved aspects of health or education policy (taking into account the nature of the story and how relevant devolution was to the topic), the BBC did not make any such reference in almost half of cases (45.5%). Across BBC and commercial news, when some relevant devolved information was included, it was often based on implicit references, such as ‘in England’ or ‘NHS England’, rather than explicitly spelling out differences in devolved policy-making for audiences in each nation.

Audiences outside London and south-east England said they often found that there was a disproportionate amount of focus on those areas, and the politics of the ‘Westminster bubble’. Some believed the BBC did not give enough attention to how the lives of people across the country were affected by different types of news story. Audiences in the English regions felt that the BBC could provide more coverage of the places where they lived in its national news output. They commented that this would provide a wider range of viewpoints from around the country to which audiences could relate.

Last year, we reported that the people who work for the BBC are not wholly representative of the UK population. This is still the case twelve months on.

One of the main findings of our [Review of Representation and Portrayal](#) at the BBC last year was that, for the BBC to produce authentic content which resonates with all audiences, the people who work on programmes must represent the diversity of the UK.

As part of our research last year, we spoke to people who worked for the BBC. Many of them acknowledged that diversity and inclusion has become an increasing focus of the broader conversation and culture at the BBC, with a shift in the culture of issues around diversity and inclusion increasingly moving to the fore. However, we heard from some employees, including BBC programme makers, who felt that the BBC has tended to draw programme makers from a limited pool of people, which lacked ethnic and class diversity. While the BBC is aware of these issues, it can be a slow process to effect change due to the size of the organisation.

The BBC has a set of workforce diversity targets for both on and off-screen employees which have to be reached by 2020. While progress has been made, with less than a year to go there is still work to be done to meet all of these targets. The BBC is aware of the challenge in this area, and over the last year has published five separate reports from its different diversity workstreams, reviewing the culture and progression of those from diverse backgrounds at the BBC. A member of the executive committee or a senior leader sponsored each review, and 128 recommendations were developed overall. The BBC has told us that 50% of these recommendations have now been completed and 48% are in progress. The progress of this work is overseen by the executive committee and the BBC Board on a regular basis.

The findings of our recent [diversity in broadcasting report](#) make clear that although improvements have been made in advancing both representation and inclusion across particular areas of the BBC's workforce, helped by a number of targeted initiatives, improvement in other areas has been slower. For example, progress in the representation of people from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly at senior levels, as well as women at senior levels, has been less significant.

Given the BBC's public targets in these areas, the rise in the proportion of minority ethnic employees leaving the BBC in the last year (from 16% in 2017 to 20% in 2018) is concerning. We would have expected to see retention of such employees increasing.

Similarly, there has not been any noticeable improvement in the representation of women at either senior levels or across the organisation as a whole. The BBC will have to make significant progress on the current 43% figure for women in senior management if it is to reach its target for 50:50 representation for women at senior levels by next year.

As should be the case, we acknowledge that the BBC leads the way in collecting diversity workforce data, so that it can better understand the make-up of its workforce. This should allow it to better target interventions to improve representation in each area of its work. Nevertheless, there remain some gaps in its workforce data, and we also note that the figures above relate to the BBC's *overall* workforce. Although the BBC does publish figures on the diversity of those working in news and current affairs, this is reported across the whole division and does not provide detailed information on specific roles, particular programmes or channels. The BBC could be more transparent in this area, to ensure that its programming reflects the diversity of the UK population.

Recommendation:

The BBC should better represent the whole of the UK with authentic news and current affairs content that feels relevant and engaging to all audiences.

The BBC's Director General has spoken of the need for it to better reflect the diversity of UK society. Audiences told us they want to see more news about their communities, reported by people with a deeper understanding of the area. People outside London thought the BBC could improve how it reflected and reported on their lives. People in minority ethnic groups told us they want to feel their voice is represented.

With its unparalleled local and regional newsgathering resources, the BBC should be able to represent the whole country authentically through a variety of style, tone and subject matter.

BBC News has good overall reach online, but this doesn't tell the whole story

Many aspects of the overall picture of online engagement with BBC News appear to be positive. Our [annual survey of news consumption](#) suggests that the BBC is the most-used news source online, reaching 64% of adults who use online services. Almost half of people who consume news on their smartphone access BBC News. The BBC is also the most commonly followed news organisation across all social media sites. However, further analysis suggests there are significant differences between demographic groups. Industry data suggest that in the past year there has been a 10% decline in adults aged 16-34 accessing BBC online news, compared with a 6% increase among over 55s.

Social media has fundamentally changed how audiences engage with news online

Half of all adults now use social media for news, and this rises to more than three quarters of 16-24 year olds.

To better understand how people engage with news content online, and the role that the BBC plays, we commissioned research to map the ways in which people consume online news. Our study identified three typical 'news journeys':

<p>Habitual consumption </p> <p>Accessing news content, usually through one source, regularly, as part of a routine.</p> <p><i>"TV news in the morning and in the evening, sort of six o'clock for the local news and the national news"</i> Male, 62, Yorkshire</p>	<p>Goal-driven consumption </p> <p>Actively looking for news content to either fact-check, hear about breaking news or extra information around a topic.</p> <p><i>"If I hear some kind of quirky fact or an interesting story... I'm going to go to my laptop and I will search Google"</i> Male, 45, London</p>	<p>Incidental consumption </p> <p>Accidentally coming across news while doing something else, usually through social media, word of mouth or notifications.</p> <p><i>"I definitely see news articles without seeking for them. So, for example, if I'm just going through my phone, let's say Snapchat for example, there'll always be clickbait articles that you can see"</i> Female, 27, London</p>
--	---	---

For **habitual news journeys**, audiences told us that BBC News had always been the first port of call; it was part of their routine and many had grown up watching the BBC with their parents. On smartphones, we found these journeys often took place in the morning or at night, indicating they were part of a daily routine. Sky News and the BBC News app were the most frequently visited news sources during these journeys.

For **goal-driven journeys**, the BBC was seen to be a reliable source for finding out more information on particular topics. And as we set out in more detail above, people visit it during breaking news events.

Incidental journeys were when people came across news content, usually on social media feeds or as a result of a push notification from a ‘news aggregator’ app such as Apple News or Upday. At these times, people generally had a different mindset. They were on these platforms to be entertained or to catch up with friends, rather than actively to seek news. At these times the BBC is vying for the attention of the user with other online activities.

When people come across news incidentally, they spend less time engaging with the content

People in our study generally saw a large quantity of news content during the day on their smartphones; this came through social media feeds or news aggregators. This frequent scrolling through news content meant they were less likely to actively seek out content (on TV, radio or online) as they always felt up to date. For some, social media was their only source of news.

Our research suggests that people engage actively with news when they have a specific goal in mind – for example, to check facts or find out more about a breaking story. At these times, they are more likely to read at least part of an article as opposed to skimming headlines.

“When it comes to seeing an article online I may just read the title and the first few lines. You know, the bold bit, the bold print.”

Male, 45, London

When people consumed news incidentally, however, they did it in a more passive way. On social media, people would rarely look beyond the headline. When they did click on articles accessed through news aggregators or social media, we saw a similar pattern, with people reading only the first few paragraphs before returning to their social feed. This meant they typically spent less than a minute on each item of news content consumed on their device if they came to it from social media. Importantly, when people consumed news in this way, they were much less aware of the source of the story they were reading or watching.

The BBC is struggling to ‘cut through’ to some groups online, and its brand is not resonating with younger people

“I think the BBC needs a bigger online presence ... I never see their articles when I’m on Twitter.”

Female, 27, London

The BBC has weaker engagement with younger, social-media focused audiences who consume news more incidentally. These audiences are less aware of the BBC News app and website.

Our research found that those people who typically used the BBC as part of a **habitual news journey** or **goal-driven journey** tended to be on higher-than-average incomes and aged over 24. Generally, they were also strong consumer of the BBC’s news on TV and radio. These audiences were already engaged in the BBC’s news content on other platforms and were well served by the BBC.

Typically, **incidental journeys** were more likely to be taken by younger audiences (16-34 year olds) who were less well-off. They did not generally engage with BBC news content on TV or radio. When they did engage online, it was very often fleetingly.

Our research confirmed that the BBC faces a challenge with its brand among younger audiences. Our focus group research found that the BBC's news brand is largely driven by TV news, which is seen as "serious, informative, trustworthy – but politics-heavy". The BBC's online brand was seen as more inclusive and having a broader appeal. But younger audiences told us that BBC online struggled to stand out from the range of news options available to them.

This was also consistent with our social media analysis. This found that when people engaged with BBC content by sharing, they were overwhelmingly positive. But when people discussed 'BBC News' as a brand more generally, the majority of comments were negative. They included criticism such as that journalistic standards were declining; that the BBC was giving controversial viewpoints a platform; and dissatisfaction with the BBC's coverage of Brexit more generally.

News aggregators and the challenge of personalisation

What's a news aggregator?

News aggregators are websites or apps which collate a range of content from a variety of different sources. Aggregators contain stories from news publishers and broadcasters, and some also include their own news content.

Some of the news content is tailored to the individual user by an algorithm. This is based on sources the individual has previously accessed and topics they have searched for. Some aggregators also use editors to curate articles which will be the same for every user. Some of the main brands are Apple News, Google News, Uday and Yahoo.

During our research we observed that news aggregators were widely used by the participants in our study. The use of them has led to a more personalised news experience. Some people whose consumption we closely tracked had a very narrow range of sources and topics. Our research showed that this presents the BBC with a number of challenges.

- **Some people do not come across BBC content online at all.** This was true of a small number of people in our study, whose news aggregator and social media feeds did not feature the BBC at all. Although the BBC's overall reach online is currently strong overall, news aggregators have the potential to reduce it. The greatest impact would be on groups, such as younger people, who are less likely to engage with BBC news content on TV or radio. Our smartphone analysis found that people who regularly used news aggregators to consume news were the least likely of the groups we identified to use the BBC's news app. The BBC's news website did not rank among the top websites they visited; Facebook, Twitter and Google featured in the top five.
- **People engage less with news provided through aggregators.** One of the groups whose news journeys had the lowest BBC engagement was made up of people who used instant messaging and news aggregators.
- **Personalisation can narrow people's exposure to different views.** Increased personalisation raises the risk of people communicating in 'echo chambers' where they rarely come across content that challenges their views.

If these trends continue, they could pose a significant risk to the BBC fulfilling Public Purpose 1. This requires that the BBC engages all audiences, so they can participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens. There is a risk that if the BBC is able to reach certain audiences only fleetingly via social media, it will struggle over time to meet this obligation.

In its Annual Plan, the BBC acknowledges it must continue to adapt its news services if it is to serve all audiences, especially those it finds hardest to reach. It identifies younger audiences as a priority and is seeking to develop new formats that reflect how these groups consume news online, with the aim of reaching seven in ten young adults every week. Our research makes clear the importance of progress in this area for the BBC, if it is to deliver against its own priorities. Otherwise there is a risk that, over time, increasing sections of the population may be lost to it.

Recommendation:

Although the BBC's online news services currently reach a broad audience, our work suggests that its heavier online users are generally those in older age groups who are already well served by BBC television and radio, rather than the younger audiences who are turning away from those platforms.

As more people rely on social media and aggregator platforms for news, the BBC's online content needs to do more to stand out – or risk losing its reputation and status as a trusted voice. We believe that transparency about its approach will aid trust in the BBC. The BBC should publish the steps it is taking to help all audiences – especially younger people – to understand and engage with the world around them.

What we expect the BBC to do

During this review, we have had hundreds of conversations with audiences across the UK about what they value, like and dislike in BBC news and current affairs. Time and again people reiterated the importance they place on the BBC as a universally-available and accessible source of accurate and trusted news. Even those who offered sharply critical perspectives acknowledged the challenges posed for the BBC by a polarised political environment and the disparate expectations of all the audiences it is required to serve.

Nevertheless, our research suggests that there is scope for BBC news and current affairs content to be more representative, engaging and informative. We have sought to root our recommendations in these audience expectations. It is now time for the BBC to consider how it plans to meet these.

We will meet the BBC on a regular basis to discuss the steps it is taking in each of the areas we have identified. To ensure transparency, we expect the BBC to report on progress against each of the recommendations in its next annual report.

The research in this report shows that changing patterns of media consumption are affecting not only where people find out about the news, but also how they interact with it and their expectations of the content they see and hear.

The impact of these changes goes beyond the BBC. If public service news and current affairs content is to continue to reach and inform all audiences, providers will need to consider how they meet the requirements of people who do not instinctively turn on the TV or radio to find out about events in the world.

Ofcom will return to these themes as part of its *Small Screen: Big Debate* programme of work around public service broadcasting. We look forward to engaging with broadcasters and audiences to understand how the long-established principles of public service news media can succeed over the next decade.

Annex 1: Key Facts and Figures

		April 2018 to March 2019	April 2013 to March 2014
Market context	Total Mins spent watching broadcast TV per day	3 hrs 09 mins	3 hrs 47 mins
	Percentage of radio listeners with DAB set	64.4%	42.6%
	Percentage of listening hours through a digital platform (DAB, online DTV)	52.9%	32.5%
	Percentage of households with broadband *	82%	77%
	% of adults who use their mobile phone to access the internet *	71%	57%
TV	Total spend by BBC on news and current affairs **	£175m	£170m
	Total spend by BBC on news and current affairs as a proportion of total spend**	13%	12%
	Total spend by BBC on news **	£136m	£127m
	Total spend by BBC on news as a proportion of total spend**	10%	9%
	Total spend by BBC on current affairs **	£39m	£43m
	Total spend by BBC on current affairs as a proportion of total spend**	3%	3%
	Total hours output by BBC on news and current affairs**	22,643	22,268
	Total hours output by BBC on news and current affairs as a proportion of total output**	49%	46%
	Total hours output by BBC on news **	20,480	20,424
	Total hours output by BBC on news as a proportion of total output**	44%	42%
	Total hours output by BBC on current affairs**	2,163	1,844
	Total hours output by BBC on current affairs as a proportion of total output**	5%	4%
	Average minutes viewed per day to National News genre across total TV – all individuals	14.1 mins	16.7 mins
	Average minutes viewed per day to National News genre across total TV – 16-24s	2.8 mins	4.5 mins
	Average minutes viewed per day to National News genre across BBC (all individuals)	10.6 mins	12.5 mins
	Average minutes viewed per day to National News genre across BBC (16-24s)	1.7 mins	3 mins
	Average weekly reach (3+ mins) to BBC News at six (adults 16+)	12.7m	14.5m
	Average weekly reach (3+ mins) to BBC News at ten (adults 16+)	14.6m	16.2m
	Average weekly reach (3+ mins) to BBC News channel (4+)	11.7%	16.9%
	Average minutes viewed per day to current affairs genre across total TV - all individuals	2.4 mins	2.9mins
	Average minutes viewed per day to current affairs genre across BBC – 16-24s	0.5mins	1 min
Average minutes viewed per day to current affairs genre across BBC - all individuals	1.9 mins	2.4 mins	
Average minutes viewed per day to current affairs genre across BBC – 16-24s	0.4 mins	0.7 mins	
Average weekly reach (3+mins) to Question Time by all 16+	4.1m	4.8m	
Average weekly reach (3+mins) to Panorama by all 16+	3.7m	4.0m	
Radio	Total listening to radio by all adults 15+	88.8%	89.6%
	Total listening to radio by 15-24s	81.3%	85.3%
	Listening to Today Programme by all 15+	12.8%	13.6%
	Listening to Jeremy Vine by all 15+	12.8%	12.9%
Online	Total online population accessing BBC News website (18+)***	63.7%	63.4%

TV viewing data source- BARB

For programme viewing data the peak month across the time period has been selected.

Radio listening data source- RAJAR

*Ofcom Technology Tracker – Jan-Jun 2019 vs Jan-Jun 2014

**Spend source: Ofcom/BBC Figures have been adjusted for CPI (2018 prices). Figures include spend on programmes; Hours source: Ofcom/BBC – 2018 vs 2013 full year

***Comscore - March 2016 vs March 2019