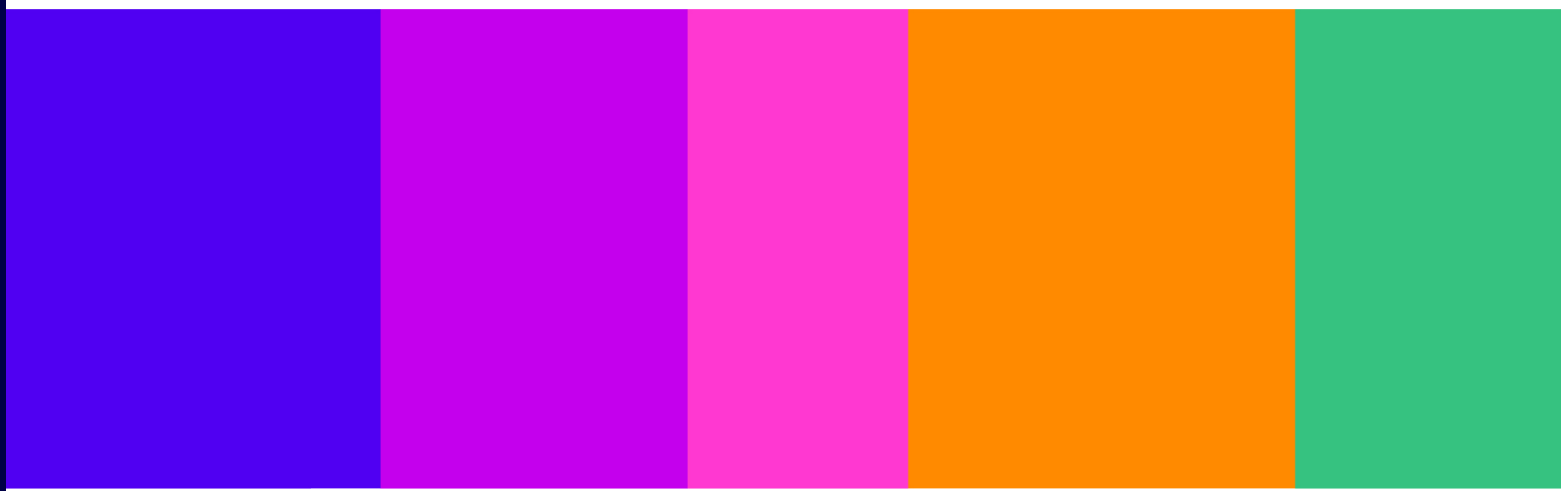


Ofcom BBC performance and public service media tracking surveys

Notification of proposed changes



Contents

Section

Overview	3
Background	4

Overview

As a producer of official statistics, Ofcom follows the guidance set out in [Changing or ceasing to publish official statistics – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](https://civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/2022/04/20/042022-changing-or-ceasing-to-publish-official-statistics). In line with this guidance, where substantial changes are made to a piece of research that is established as an official statistic, we must notify stakeholders of the changes that are planned to be made and allow a period of time for stakeholders to provide input or feedback if they wish to.

This document sets out our proposed changes to Ofcom’s BBC Performance and Public Service Media Tracking Surveys from 2025 onwards and the impact this will have on future data.

Background

BBC Performance Tracker

As regulator of the BBC, one of Ofcom's central responsibilities is to hold the BBC to account for its performance in fulfilling its Mission and delivering its four public purposes that fall within Ofcom's regulatory role, namely:

- Public purpose 1: To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them.
- Public purpose 2: To support learning for people of all ages.
- Public purpose 3: To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services.
- Public purpose 4: To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all the UK's nations and regions.

An annual quantitative tracker has been conducted each year since 2017 to include audiences' own views on the BBC's performance. The main research objectives of the study are:

- To understand the public's perception of the BBC's delivery of the public purposes.
- To understand the public's views on the importance of the public purposes.
- To evaluate the BBC's performance in comparison to traditional and emerging competitors.
- To understand brand awareness of the BBC in the wider context of the market (e.g. where do they go and find content first).

While the method of conducting fieldwork for the BBC Performance Tracker has been adapted over time, the survey is currently carried out using a mix of computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) and online panel interviewing. For Year 6 fieldwork (2022-23), our research partner, Critical Research interviewed an overall sample of 4,295 adults, aged 16+ in the UK. Interviews were conducted through online panels (2,396) or through the face-to-face CAPI approach (1,899). Within the overall total of face-to-face interviews, 146 interviews were a boost of non-users of the internet. Interviews are conducted continuously over a period of 12 months from the start of April to the end of March.

The data are initially weighted to correct the over-representation of nations, regions and areas to produce a geographically representative sample. They are then weighted by age, gender, social class, working status, and BBC TV region to match the known population profile. An additional level of weighting is added, covering volume of internet usage – hours per week. Further details of the sample frame, research methodology, weighting procedures and reporting can be found in the [Technical Report](#).

Public Service Media Tracker

Ofcom has a number of specific duties in relation to public service television broadcasting. This includes a duty, as set out in section 264 of the Communications Act 2003, to review periodically the extent to which the designated public service broadcasters (PSBs) have provided relevant television services which (taken together) fulfil the purposes of public service broadcasting.

Based on the public service purposes presented in the Communications Act, Ofcom developed a range of PSB purposes and characteristics in its first PSB review in 2005. The PSB channels (the BBC

channels, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) are expected together to fulfill these purposes and characteristics, although each PSB channel has a specific remit.

The current PSM tracking survey was developed in 2021 to reflect today's more complex media market and replaced the Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) tracker. The PSM Tracker asks about key PSB characteristics, as well as other perceptions and attitudes towards PSBs, BVoDs and SVoDs.

The PSM Tracker's main research objective are to:

- Assess audience satisfaction with PSB services.
- Understand how well individual PSB services are delivering in the marketplace, across a range of attributes, as a whole and individually.
- Understand the importance of different aspects of PSB to audiences.
- Understand the performance of BVoD and SVoD services.

The Tracker is currently conducted by a 50:50 push-to-web and online panel approach, with the online panel being supplemented by river sampling and the push-to-web approach being supplemented by a low connectivity boost and an option to complete via telephone. For 2023, our research partner, BMG interviewed an overall sample of 3,060 adults, aged 16+ in the UK:

Method	Number of completes
Push-to-web: Letter to address followed by completing online	1,516
Telephone: Letter to address followed by completing over the phone	33
Panel: stratified random sample of online panel	1,362
River sampling: Recruiting respondents via panels	149
Total	3,060

Fieldwork is carried out from February/March to December each year, in the form of five online panel batches and eight push-to-web batches, enabling a continuous period of fieldwork. The data is then weighted by region, age by gender within each nation, social grade, ethnicity and educational attainment, to match the known population profile. Further information on samples sizes and quotas, weighting, confidence levels and statistical differences can be found in the [Technical Report](#).

What we are proposing

Following a review of both surveys and their existing questionnaires, we propose to combine them into one tracker.

Both surveys will continue in their current form in 2024, and the new combined survey will begin in April 2025.

Given the similarities of both surveys both in terms of objectives, as well as content of existing questionnaires, we are confident that merging both surveys will continue to help us capture an accurate and full picture of use of and attitudes towards PSM services and will ensure that our tracking survey remains up-to-date and fit for purpose.

The exact methodology and content of the questionnaire is yet to be confirmed. The contracts for the existing surveys are both coming to an end and are due to be renewed in Summer 2024. Once we have a new contract in place, we will work with our research partner to ensure the most appropriate and effective methodology and questionnaire going forward.

The overall objective of monitoring audience perceptions toward the performance delivery of the PSM system, as well as the individual PSB providers will remain at the core. While some questions will remain largely similar to how they are currently asked in existing questionnaires, it is likely some other questions will be re-designed, removed or placed on more appropriate tracking surveys (e.g. Ofcom's VoD Survey), as well as new questions being added in.

The ability to look at changes in attitudes over time using longitudinal data will be impacted by questionnaire and methodology changes. We will work with our research partner to try to minimize the impact of these changes on trend data as much as possible.

We would like your views

If you would like any further information or if you would like to highlight any concerns for Ofcom's consideration regarding the BBC Performance and Public Service Media Trackers, please email marketresearch@ofcom.org.uk by 9am on Tuesday 7 May 2024.