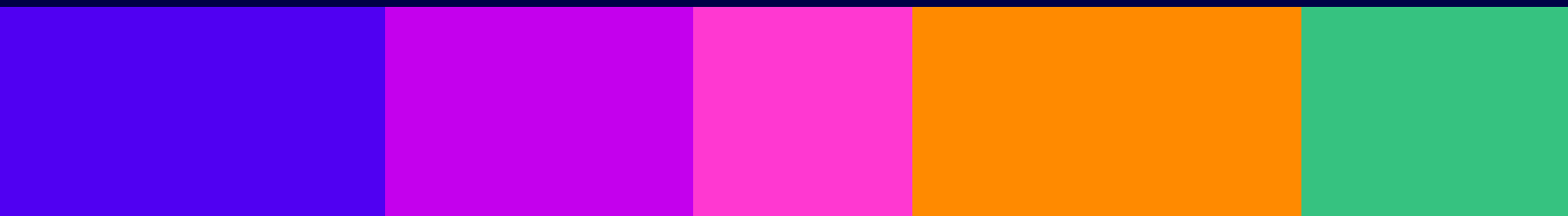
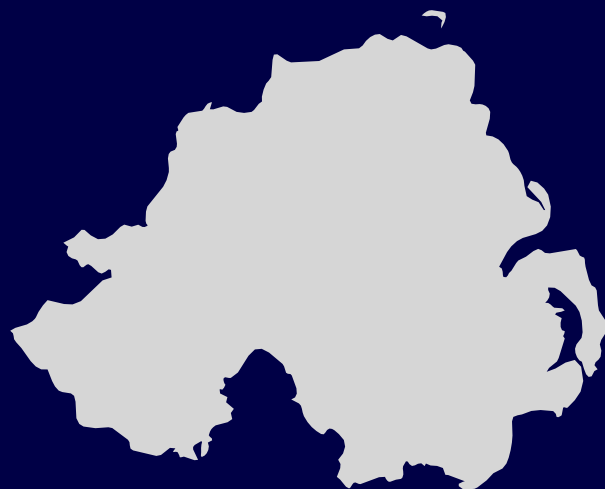


Media Nations

Northern Ireland 2024

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Overview

Introduction

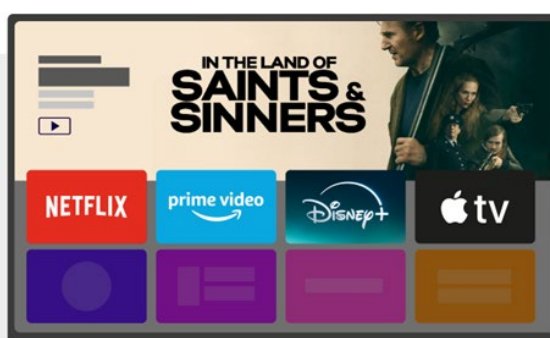
This *Media Nations: Northern Ireland* report reviews key trends in the media sector and sets out how audiences are served in Northern Ireland. We adopt a cross-platform perspective, reviewing broadcast TV and radio, as well as digital delivery including online video and audio streaming.

The report provides trends and analysis based on several datasets, including data collected directly from licensed television and radio broadcasters (for output, spend and revenue), Ofcom's own consumer research and Barb and RAJAR data (for audience consumption).

In addition to this Northern Ireland report, there are separate reports for the [UK](#) as a whole, [Scotland](#), and [Wales](#).

Key findings

71% of households in Northern Ireland receive an SVoD service such as Netflix, Amazon Prime or Disney+



Blue Lights was the most-watched programme in Northern Ireland in 2023



TV was the most popular source of news about Northern Ireland for people in the Nation

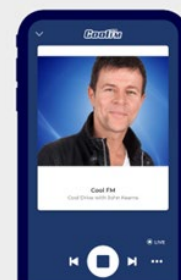
With BBC One used by 36% and UTV used by 34%



Local radio accounted for over 60% of all listening in Northern Ireland



More than 9 in 10 adults listened to radio every week in Northern Ireland



Source: Barb, Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024, RAJAR.

TV and video

Market developments

***Blue Lights* recommissioned**

The BBC has ordered two more six-part series of police drama *Blue Lights*. The programme, which was co-created and written by Declan Lawn and Adam Patterson, launched to more than seven million viewers last year.

Blue Lights was in the top ten new drama series of 2023 across all broadcasters and streamers, and the first episode had the biggest average audience (378,000 on BBC One) of any broadcast title in Northern Ireland in 2023. BBC Studios will distribute both new series internationally in addition to series one and two.

Netflix takes over new Lisa McGee project from Channel 4

How to Get to Heaven from Belfast, the new series from *Derry Girls* creator Lisa McGee, has moved to Netflix from Channel 4. Produced by Hat Trick Productions, the comedy thriller will start shooting in Northern Ireland later this year. The project was announced by Channel 4 in August 2023.

The network cited creative changes and high costs, as well as a lack of US co-production partners, in explanation for the move. “*We loved Lisa McGee’s How to Get to Heaven from Belfast and offered a substantial licence fee to be its UK home,*” a Channel 4 spokesperson said.

“Unfortunately, due to changes in editorial direction as the development process progressed, coupled with rising costs and the recent cooling in the US co-production market, it became impossible to get the right international partner and funding plan in place. We wish Lisa and Hat Trick Productions all the best and look forward to working together on future projects.”

Northern Ireland indies secure five new BBC network co-commissions

The BBC has commissioned five new unscripted programmes as part of its Hot House initiative, with support from Northern Ireland Screen. The programmes, which are co-commissioned for BBC Factual and BBC Northern Ireland, will be broadcast to audiences in Northern Ireland and across the UK on BBC network and BBC NI television.

The commissions include a new 15-part series for BBC Daytime, featuring *MasterChef’s* Anna Haugh, a new six-part series on competing to become an art dealer, single documentaries exploring motorcycle racing and First Holy Communions, and a new reality game show pilot.

The five successful indies were Below The Radar, DoubleBand Films, Stellify Media, Alleycats Films and Walk On Air Films.

Also commissioned through the scheme for BBC Northern Ireland were *Nazis, U-boats and Spies* from Alleycats Film and *Sheep Dog Showdown* from Stellify Media. A new BBC Arts co-commission examining the life of Belfast-born author of the Chronicles of Narnia, CS Lewis, by Walk On Air films has also been moved forward to the development stage.

The Hot House development initiative was designed to be an additional way of generating co-commissioned projects with BBC Network, and BBC NI will continue to support other network projects pitched by independent production companies outside the scheme.

BBC announces recipients of Small Indie Fund 2024

Five Northern Ireland companies have received funding in the latest set of awards made by the BBC's Small Indie Fund. The Northern Ireland Indies selected under the scheme for 2024 were: Afro-Mic Productions; Big Mountain Productions; Fabel Productions; HopSkip Studios Ltd; and Out of Orbit.

The Small Indie Fund supports the growth of UK companies with turnover below £10m across drama, entertainment, comedy, factual, daytime and children's genres, and this year, BBC Film. All the recipients receive strategic investment and a BBC commissioning editor as a mentor to help them grow. With the inclusion of BBC Film, the companies will receive around £1.5m in total this year.

TV services and devices

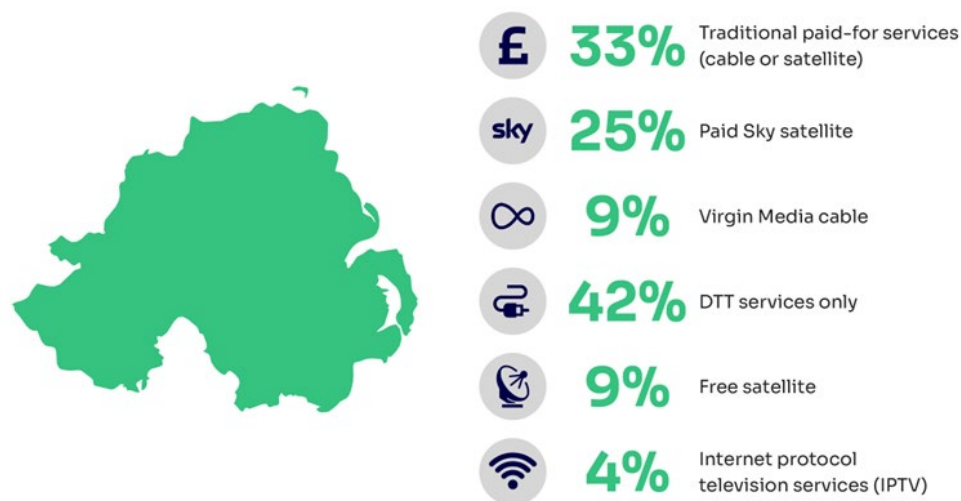
Four in ten households in Northern Ireland rely on DTT for their television services

Television set ownership remained stable in Northern Ireland, present in 97% of homes, ahead of the UK average of 94%. The presence of paid-for TV services such as Sky or Virgin Media fell from 38% in Q1 2023 to 33% in Q1 2024, which may be the result of the increased cost of living, encouraging households to make savings.

Forty-two per cent of households in Northern Ireland rely on DTT (delivered through an aerial) as their only TV platform, nine percentage points ahead of the UK as a whole. Free satellite through either Freesat or Sky is present in a further 9% of homes.

Internet protocol television (IPTV) services remain a relatively minor presence in the households of Northern Ireland, with only 4% receiving services such as TalkTalk, BT Vision or YouView.

Figure 1: Take-up of TV platforms in Northern Ireland: Q1 2024



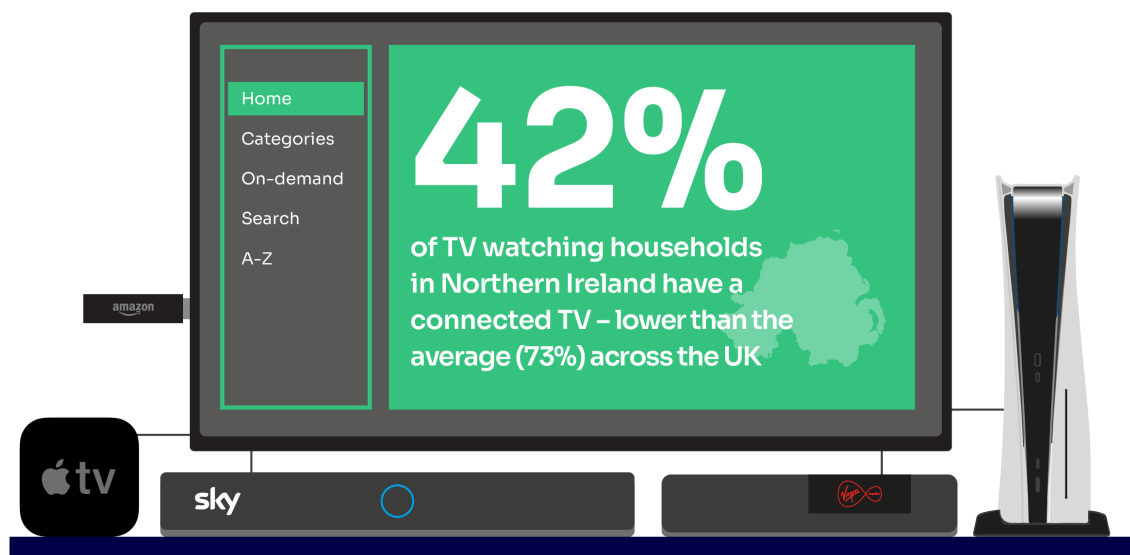
Source: Barb Establishment Survey Q1 2024. 'DTT services only' includes households with an aerial only and not cable, satellite or IPTV. IPTV includes BT Vision, TalkTalk or YouView. In the 2023 report this included Plusnet; this service is no longer available and has been removed from the survey.

Half of TV users in Northern Ireland have connected TVs

There are several ways in which TV users in Northern Ireland can connect their TVs to the internet. This can be through a 'smart' TV that connects directly to the internet, or through set-top boxes provided by pay-TV providers like Sky, Virgin Media or BT. External devices like streaming sticks and games consoles can also provide internet access to people's TV sets.

In 2024 about two in five (42%) of TV users with the internet at home in Northern Ireland have a connected TV, using one of these methods. This is lower than the average across the UK, where 73% of TV homes have a connected TV. TV users in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK overall to connect their TV to the internet via a smartphone (17% compared to 10% in the UK overall).

Figure 2: Connected TVs in Northern Ireland: 2024



Source: Ofcom Technology Tracker 2024. Question T6: Do you or does anyone in your household use the internet to watch content on your TV set using any of these methods? Base: TV-watching households with an internet connection they use. Total UK (3,497), Northern Ireland (410), England (2192), Scotland (453) and Wales (442).

Broadband in Northern Ireland

Almost nine in ten (87%) homes in Northern Ireland had an internet connection (measured in the first half of 2024), and 84% had fixed broadband.¹ In 2023, 98% of all homes in Northern Ireland were able to receive superfast broadband (download speeds of at least 30 Mbit/s). Of those households with availability, 74% were using a superfast (or faster) service, up from 73% in 2022. Full-fibre services were available in 91% of households in Northern Ireland. Take-up in these homes was 39%.²

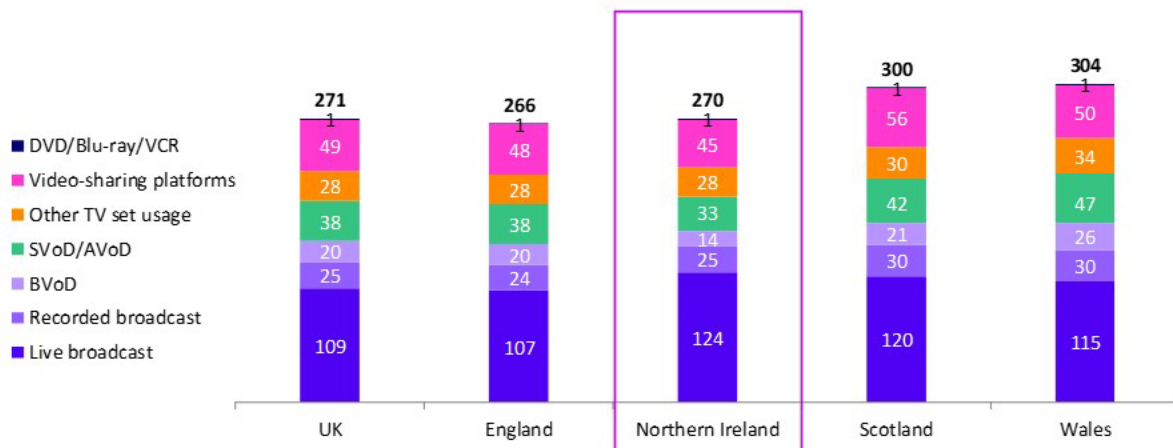
Viewing trends

Total in-home audiovisual viewing

Northern Ireland continued to watch less video, on average, than other UK nations

On average, people in Northern Ireland watched 4 hours 30 minutes of video content per day in 2023, the least among the UK nations. They watched the most live broadcast TV of any nation (2 hours 4 minutes), while watching only 25 minutes of recorded TV and 14 minutes of broadcaster video-on-demand (BVoD). All broadcaster content – including live TV, recorded TV and BVoD – accounted for 60% of video viewing time (2 hours 43 minutes), with 12% spent on subscription video-on-demand (SVoD, such as Netflix) and advertising video-on-demand (AVoD, such as Pluto TV) services. Seventeen per cent of time was spent on video-sharing platforms such as YouTube.

Figure 3: Total in-home daily video viewing minutes per person, by platform and nation: 2023



Source: Barb as-viewed on TV sets and other devices using the home's WiFi network. 'Broadcaster content' includes live TV, recorded playback and BVoD. 'Other TV set usage' includes viewing to some SVoD/AVoD/VSP that cannot be definitively measured, as well as some unmeasured broadcast channels, some EPG/menu browsing, viewing when the audio is muted, piracy, unmeasured box-sets/pay-per-view content, and non-video internet activity through a PC or other device connected to the TV. 'SVoD/AVoD' excludes viewing of NOW,

¹ Ofcom Technology Tracker 2024.

² Ofcom analysis of provider data. Please refer to [Connected Nations 2023 UK report](#) and [Connected Nations Northern Ireland report 2023](#) for more information.

which is captured within BVoD along with Sky Go/Sky TV On Demand (these two services stream the same content, so measured viewing cannot be separated).

Broadcast TV viewing in Northern Ireland

Where our data comes from

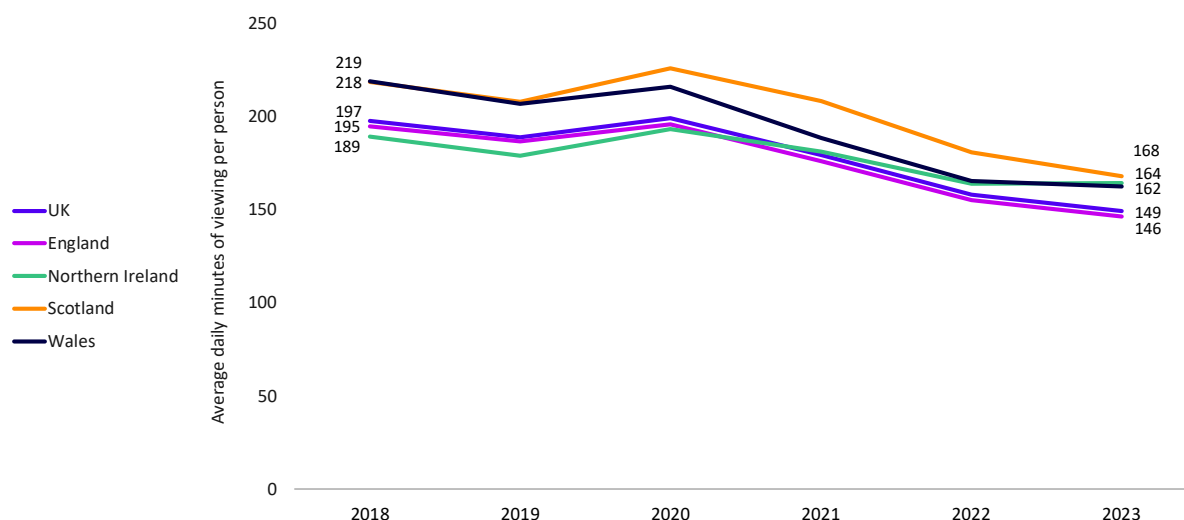
Most of the viewing data comes from Barb Audiences Ltd (Barb), the industry's standard for understanding what people watch. This includes viewing of broadcast TV through TV sets and via devices attached to TV sets, such as computers, streaming devices and set-top boxes. It also includes some viewing for online streaming services and for devices not connected to the TV being watched at home via WiFi. Barb does not capture out-of-home viewing to SVoD services or video-sharing platforms.

Unless otherwise stated, Barb figures quoted for broadcast TV are for 28-day consolidated viewing on a TV set. Consolidated viewing includes viewing of programmes at the time they were broadcast (live viewing) as well as from recordings on digital video recorders (DVRs) and through online BVoD services (e.g. BBC iPlayer, ITVX and Sky Go/Sky TV On Demand) up to 28 days after the first broadcast (time-shifted).

Northern Ireland's broadcast TV viewing remained stable in 2023

While Northern Ireland had the largest amount of viewing to live broadcast TV (programming watched at the time it was broadcast, excluding any recorded catch-up or on-demand), as stated above, it had the second highest level of broadcast viewing (this includes live, recorded, and catch-up on-demand broadcast content, on TV sets only, within 28-days of the original broadcast). On average, people in Northern Ireland spent 2 hours 44 minutes per day watching broadcast TV on the TV set in 2023. This was stable since 2022, compared to the UK average decline of 5.6%. Northern Ireland was the only UK nation in which average TV viewing time did not decline.

Figure 4: Average daily minutes of broadcast TV viewing per person, by nation: 2018-2023



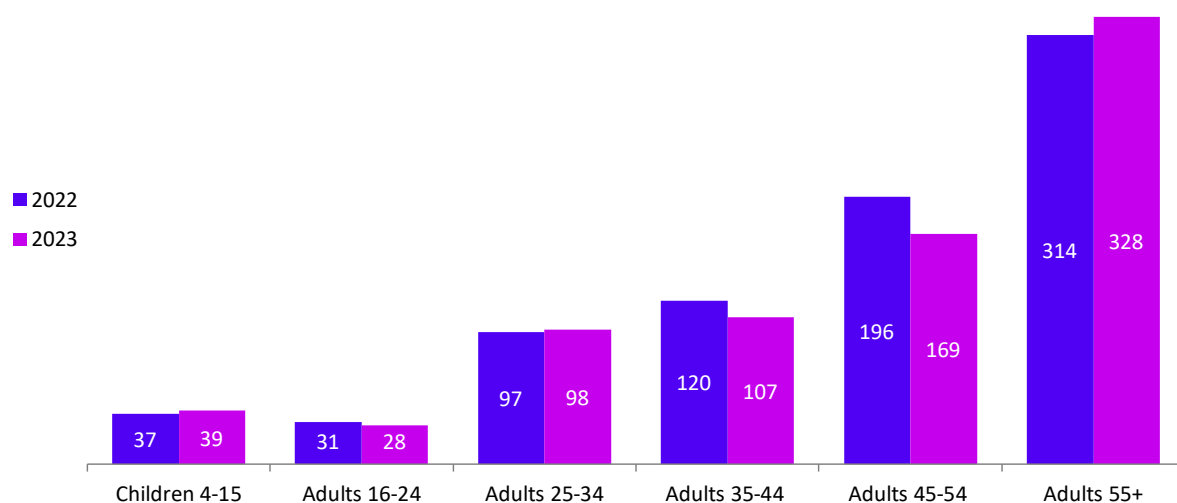
Source: BARB 28-day consolidated. Individuals (4+). TV sets only.

In line with the general trend across the UK, older people in Northern Ireland watched more broadcast TV on the television set than younger viewers. The over-54s watched more than any other age group, at an average of 5 hours 27 minutes per day, up by 4.2% since 2022.

Adults aged 45-54 watched an average of 2 hours 47 minutes per day, down 13.7% since 2022. This was the biggest percentage decrease of all the age groups and a greater decline than the UK average for this age group (10%).

In line with the UK and other nations, those aged 16-24 watched the least amount of broadcast TV, at an average of 28 minutes per day, down by 8.6% since 2022.

Figure 5: Average daily minutes of broadcast TV viewing in Northern Ireland, by age group: 2022-2023



Source: Barb 28-day consolidated, TV sets only. Small year-on-year differences in minutes are often not statistically significant.

Drama, entertainment and rugby union dominated the most-watched programmes in Northern Ireland in 2023

The first-ever episode of Belfast-set police drama *Blue Lights* was the most-watched programme in Northern Ireland in 2023, with an average audience of 378,000 viewers on BBC One. Nearly half of all of those in Northern Ireland watching TV at the time watched it – a 47% share of viewing. UTV’s entertainment shows *I’m A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here!* and *Britain’s Got Talent* were the second and third most-watched programmes, with average audiences of 358,000 and 342,000 viewers respectively.

In fourth place was UTV’s coverage of Ireland vs England in the Six Nations Championship. This match, which Ireland won 29-16, was watched by an average 310,000 viewers. In sixth place, Ireland’s narrow defeat by New Zealand, 24-28, in the Rugby World Cup quarter-final, was watched by an average 293,000 viewers on UTV. Northern Ireland and Wales were the only nations whose top ten most-watched programmes included any rugby union coverage in 2023, both featuring a Six Nations and a Rugby World Cup match.

Figure 6: Top ten most-watched programmes in Northern Ireland: 2023

Rank	Title	Channel	Date broadcast	Average audience (000s)	Share* (%)
1	Blue Lights	BBC One	27/03/2023	378	46.9
2	I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!	UTV	22/11/2023	358	48.0
3	Britain's Got Talent	UTV	22/04/2023	342	56.0
4	Six Nations Championship	UTV	18/03/2023	310	65.8
5	Strictly Come Dancing	BBC One	02/12/2023	308	47.2
6	Rugby World Cup	UTV	14/10/2023	293	48.9
7	Malpractice	UTV	23/04/2023	274	44.0
8	New Year's Eve Fireworks	BBC One	31/12/2023	256	46.0
9	Happy Valley	BBC One	15/01/2023	250	34.2
10	Emmerdale	UTV	18/09/2023	250	40.2

Source: Barb 28-day consolidated including catch-up and on demand, on TV sets and other devices using the home's WiFi network, individuals 4+. Highest-performing episode of each title only, so does not include the second most-watched episode of I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! (20 November on UTV), for example. Channels include +1 channels where applicable. *Share denotes the programme's audience as a percentage of the total audience for broadcast TV in the slot that the programme was on.

The main five public service broadcasting channels account for more than half of total broadcast viewing in Northern Ireland

What is public service broadcasting?

Public service broadcasting (PSB) is currently provided in Northern Ireland by the BBC, UTV (holder of the Channel 3 licence in Northern Ireland), Channel 4 and Channel 5. Although all the BBC TV services are PSB channels, only the main channels of the other broadcasters are. In return for providing PSB services such as news and original productions, these broadcasters receive certain benefits: access to spectrum (the radio waves that support wireless communication) to broadcast their services; prominence on electronic programme guides on television (EPGs); and in the BBC's case, the licence fee.

In 2023, the main five PSB channels accounted for a combined 50.4% share of the total broadcast TV audience in Northern Ireland, down slightly on 2022 (52.5%). BBC One and UTV had very similar audience shares; joint highest among the individual PSB channels, at just over 19%. UTV had the highest audience share compared to the Channel 3 licence-holders in the UK and the nations while Channel 5 had the lowest audience share in Northern Ireland, at 3.4%. The audience shares of BBC One, BBC Two and Channel 5 in Northern Ireland were the lowest among the UK and the nations, as was the case in 2022.

Figure 7: Share of broadcast TV viewing for the five main PSB channels, by nation: 2023 (%)



Source: Barb. BBC areas, all individuals (4+). Excludes any +1 channels.

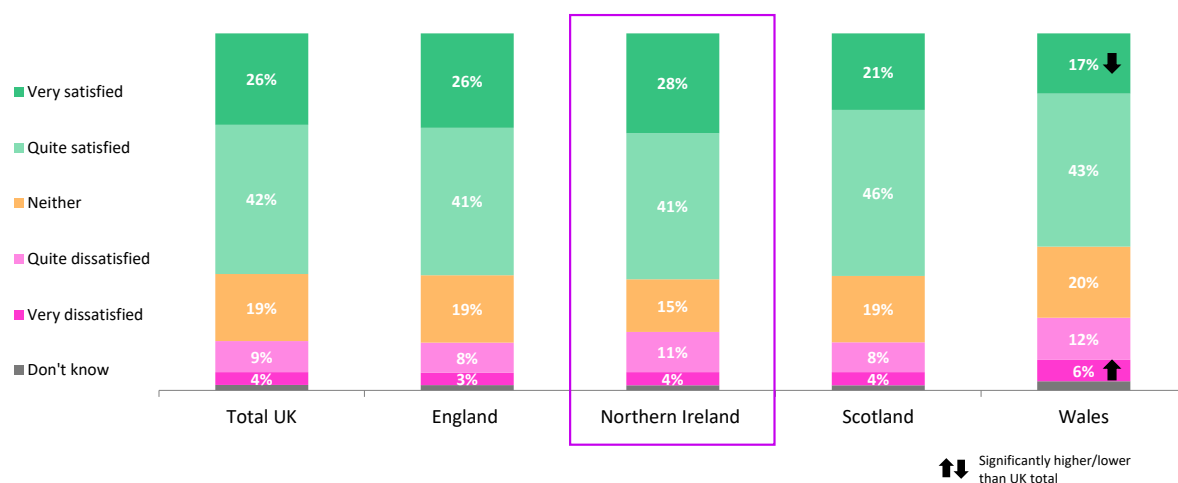
Audience attitudes and sentiments to PSBs

Overall, seven in ten viewers in Northern Ireland continue to say they are satisfied with PSB channels

Ofcom's Public Service Media Tracker (PSM) found that in Northern Ireland, about seven in ten (69%) PSB viewers³ said they were satisfied with PSBs overall, remaining in line with the UK total (67%). About one in seven (15%) said they were dissatisfied, in line with the UK total, and returning to levels seen in 2021 (2021 12%; 2022 7%).

³ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023 defines PSB viewers as all who have watched a PSB channel/service in the last six months

Figure 8: Satisfaction with PSBs overall, UK total and by nation: 2023

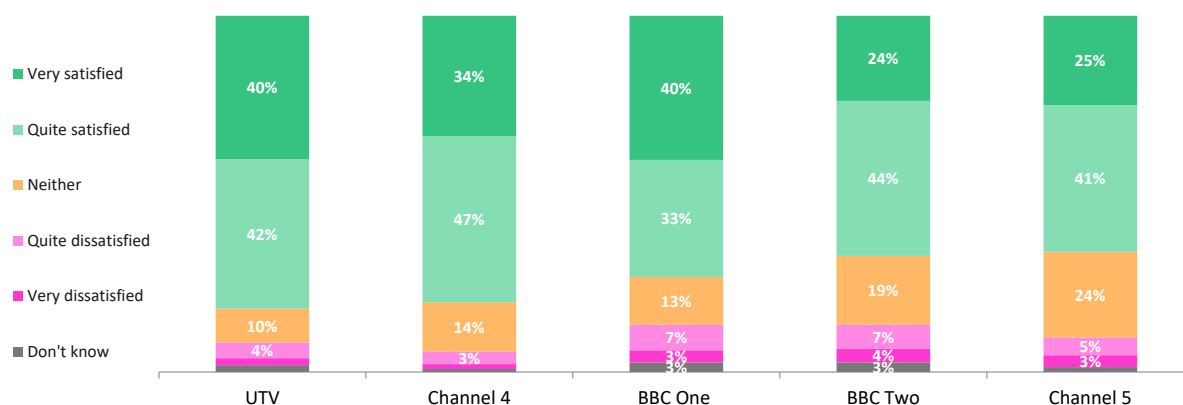


Source: Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023. Question 28. And now, if you think about ALL the public service broadcaster channels combined, how satisfied are you that combined, they provide the different elements asked about in the previous question? Base: All who have watched PSB channel/service in last 6 months, Total UK (2,841), Northern Ireland (230), England (2,029), Scotland (293) and Wales (289). Note, not showing percentage labels under 4%.

About four in five PSB viewers in Northern Ireland say they are satisfied with UTV and Channel 4

When asked to consider PSB channels individually, about four in five viewers in Northern Ireland said they were satisfied with UTV (82%) and Channel 4 (80%), followed by around three-quarters for BBC One (73%). Slightly lower proportions said the same for BBC Two (67%) and Channel 5 (66%).

Figure 9: Satisfaction with individual channels: 2023



Source: Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023. Question 23. Thinking about some of the specific channels you have watched in the last 6 months, overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with these TV channels? Base: All who have watched... in last 6 months, UTV (195), Channel 4 (200), BBC One (199), BBC Two (164) Channel 5 (175). Note, not showing percentage labels under 3%.

Trusted and accurate UK News is considered one of the most important elements of PSB in Northern Ireland

In 2023, our PSM tracker asked respondents⁴ to consider the three most important attributes for PSBs to deliver to society overall. Just over two in five (42%) audiences in Northern Ireland ranked *‘a wide range of different types of programmes, such as drama, comedy, entertainment or sport’* in their top three, followed by *‘trusted and accurate UK news’* (40%) and *‘programmes that help me to understand what is going on in the world today’* (30%).

When looking at the percentage ranking the different attributes first, audiences in Northern Ireland were more likely than the UK total to rank *‘programmes that feature my region/country’* (10% vs 3%).

For viewers in Northern Ireland, PSBs are seen to deliver well on programmes made for UK audiences, and a wide range of programmes

Around seven in ten PSB viewers in Northern Ireland said PSBs delivered *‘well’*⁵ on *‘programmes made for UK audiences’* (69%) and *‘a wide range of programmes, such as drama, entertainment, comedy or sport’* (68%). Around two-thirds said the same for *‘trusted and accurate UK News’* (66%), *‘appeal[ing] to a wide range of different audiences’* (64%), *‘programmes which feature people from different backgrounds’* (64%) and *‘broadcast events that bring the nation together for a shared viewing experience’* (64%).

When looking at PSB attributes relating to representation and the local area, three in five viewers said that PSBs delivered *‘well’* on *‘programmes that are relevant to me’* (60%) and *‘regional programmes that keep me informed about my area’* (59%). Over half said that PSBs delivered *‘programmes that feature people like me’* (55%) and *‘programmes that feature Northern Ireland’* (52%).

There was some variation in attitudes towards individual PSB channels – for example, viewers in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK total to say that BBC TV channels (60% vs 50%), UTV and ITV TV channels (62% vs 46%) do *‘well’* to provide *‘programmes that feature my region/country’*. The same was true for UTV and ITV TV channels providing *‘regional programmes that keep me informed about my area’* (66% vs 48%) and for *‘programmes that feature people like me’* (54% vs 45%).⁶

⁴ This question was asked of all respondents who completed the survey online, excluding those who completed over the telephone.

⁵ The Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker uses questions asking respondents to say how *‘well’* or *‘badly’* different elements are being provided, using a 1-10 scale where 1 means extremely badly and 10 means extremely well. When referring to *‘well’* throughout this report, it is a NET of scores 7 to 10.

⁶ Ofcom’s Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

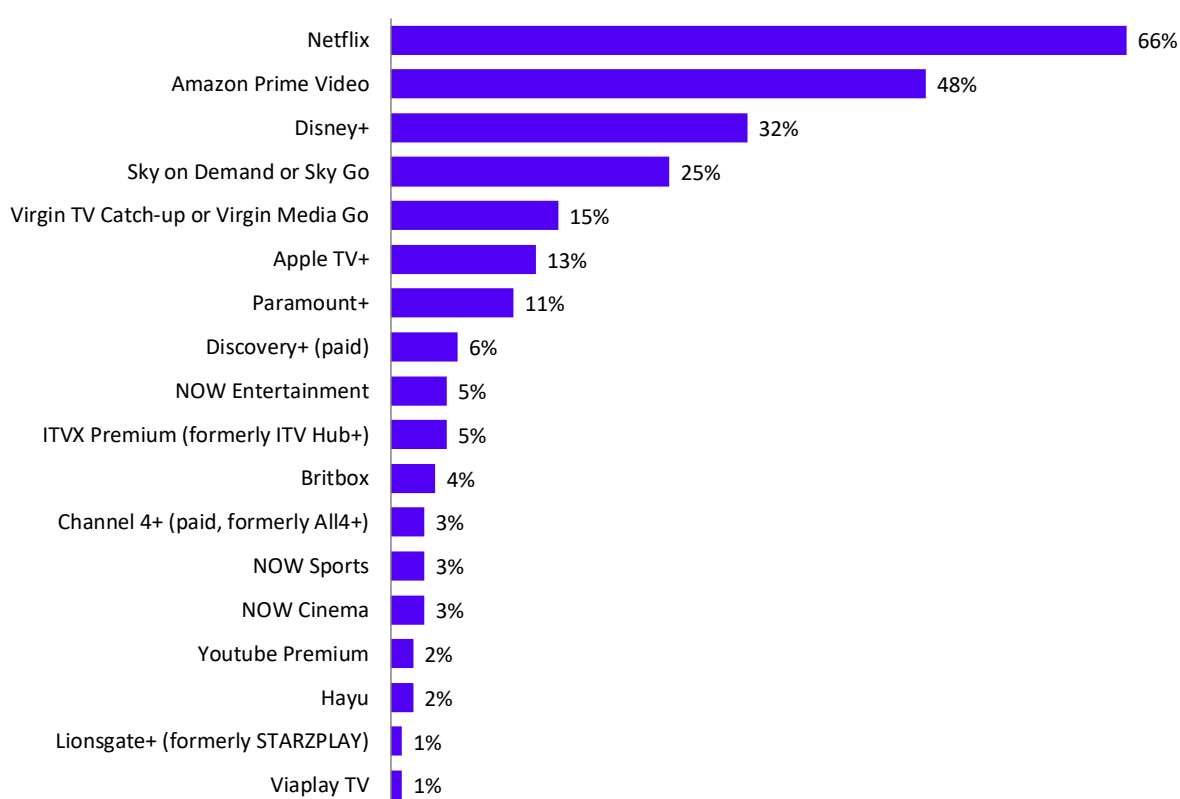
Video-on-demand viewing trends

Viewers have a wide choice of subscription services

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of households that received SVoD services rose in Q1 2024, with 71% of households reporting having at least one of them, up from 68% in Q1 2023.⁷

Netflix is the most popular SVoD service in Northern Ireland, followed by Amazon Prime Video and Disney+, but there are also many smaller SVoD services available that collectively have significant reach. These include services such as Apple TV+ and Paramount+, and genre specialist services such as Hayu (reality TV).

Figure 10: SVoD services used in Northern Ireland to watch programmes, films or other video: 2024

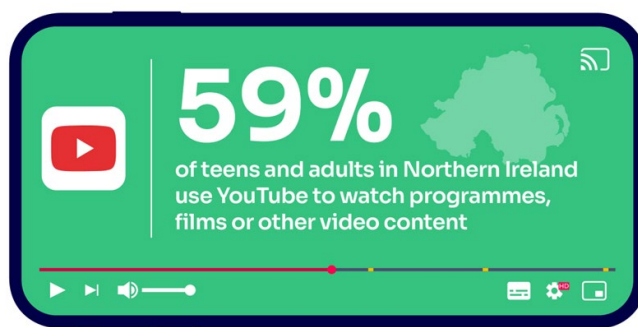


Source: Ofcom VoD Survey 2024. Combined online and CATI adults/teens aged 13+, Northern Ireland. Services personally used in the last three months (fieldwork February – March 2024). Note: in the 2023 Media Nations reports we reported the claimed reach figures for these services using only the online sample. This year's figures are therefore not comparable due to using the fuller online and CATI sample.

⁷ Barb Establishment Survey Q1 2024. Following changes to the Barb Establishment Survey questionnaire household penetration of Discovery+ and Paramount+ rose sharply, this change captures households with passive subscriptions such as those with certain Sky packages.

Fifty-nine per cent of teens and adults in Northern Ireland claimed to have used YouTube to watch programmes, films or other video content in the three months before the fieldwork.⁸

In Northern Ireland the most popular form of content viewed on YouTube are videos under 15 minutes (62%), followed by 'YouTube Shorts' (51%). Thirty-nine per cent reported using YouTube for videos longer than 15 minutes, while 17% reported watching full-length programmes or films on YouTube.⁹



Ofcom's PSM Tracker shows that levels of satisfaction with SVoD services remained high; more than four in five viewers in Northern Ireland said they were satisfied with Disney+ (88%) followed by Netflix (83%) and Amazon Prime (83%).

BVoD remains comparable with SVoD, with most consumers using multiple streaming services

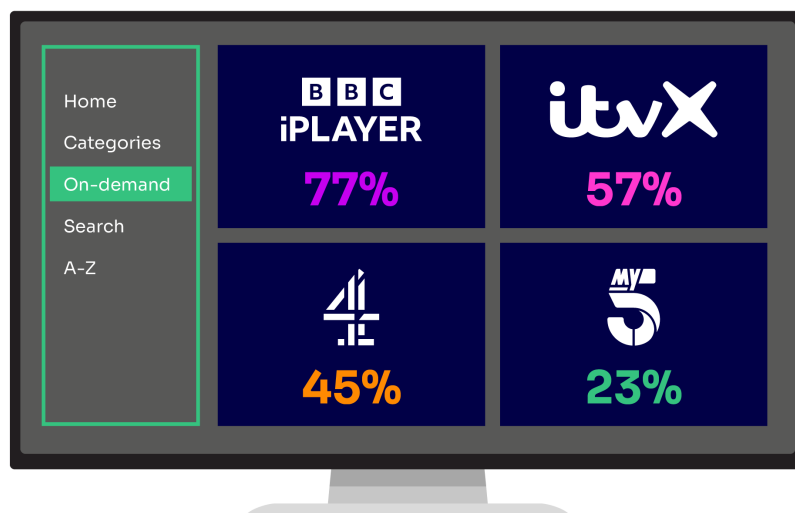
About nine in ten (91%) adults and teens in Northern Ireland claim to have used a free-to-view service (any streaming service not behind a paywall, including YouTube), slightly higher than the other UK nations.

Claimed use of the individual PSB VoD services in Northern Ireland remained stable year on year. Nearly four in five people in Northern Ireland (77%) reported using BBC iPlayer in the three months before the fieldwork at the beginning of 2024, with just under half (45%) using Channel 4 streaming and nearly a quarter using My5 (23%) over the same period. Fifty-seven per cent of adults and teens in Northern Ireland said they had used ITVX.

⁸ Ofcom VoD Survey 2024 (combined online and CATI sample). Note: some YouTube figures appear different between the nations, but the figures are not significantly different to each other.

⁹ Ofcom VoD Survey 2024 (online sample). Note: the 'short videos' category does not include 'YouTube Shorts'. YouTube Shorts are videos of 60 seconds or less. Similarly, long videos do not include full-length programmes or films.

Figure 11: PSB video-on-demand services used to watch programmes, films or other video in the past three months: 2024



Source: Ofcom VoD Survey 2024 combined online and CATI adults/teens aged 13+, Northern Ireland. Claimed reach for services personally used in the last three months (fieldwork February – March 2024). Note: in the 2023 Media Nations reports we reported the claimed reach figures for these services using only the online sample. This year's figures are therefore not comparable due to using the fuller online and CATI sample.

Overall, audiences in Northern Ireland are satisfied with BVoD services

When asked about satisfaction with different BVoD services, four in five (80%) viewers of each channel in the last six months said they were satisfied with BBC iPlayer, and about three-quarters said the same for ITVX or ITVX Premium (77%), and Channel 4 or Channel 4+ streaming service (75%). Seven in ten viewers said they were satisfied with My5 (70%).¹⁰

BVoD viewers¹¹ in Northern Ireland said they had used BVoD services ‘to catch up on programmes that I have missed on TV’ (61%) and so they can ‘watch what I want, when I want’ (47%). In 2023 there was a decrease in those that said they used BVoD services to ‘watch specific programmes or box-sets’ (2022 43%; 2023 31%). The most frequently-cited reasons for not using BVoD services related to preferring other services, not being interested in the programmes available or not having access to the service.¹²

News sources

Most-used news sources in Northern Ireland

Ofcom’s News Consumption Survey found that just under half of all people 16+ in Northern Ireland (44%) claimed to use BBC One for news in general, making it the most-used news source, followed by ITV1/ UTV (41%). BBC News Channel was the only other TV channel in the top ten news sources used in Northern Ireland. Social media ranked highly too, with Facebook the third most popular

¹⁰ Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

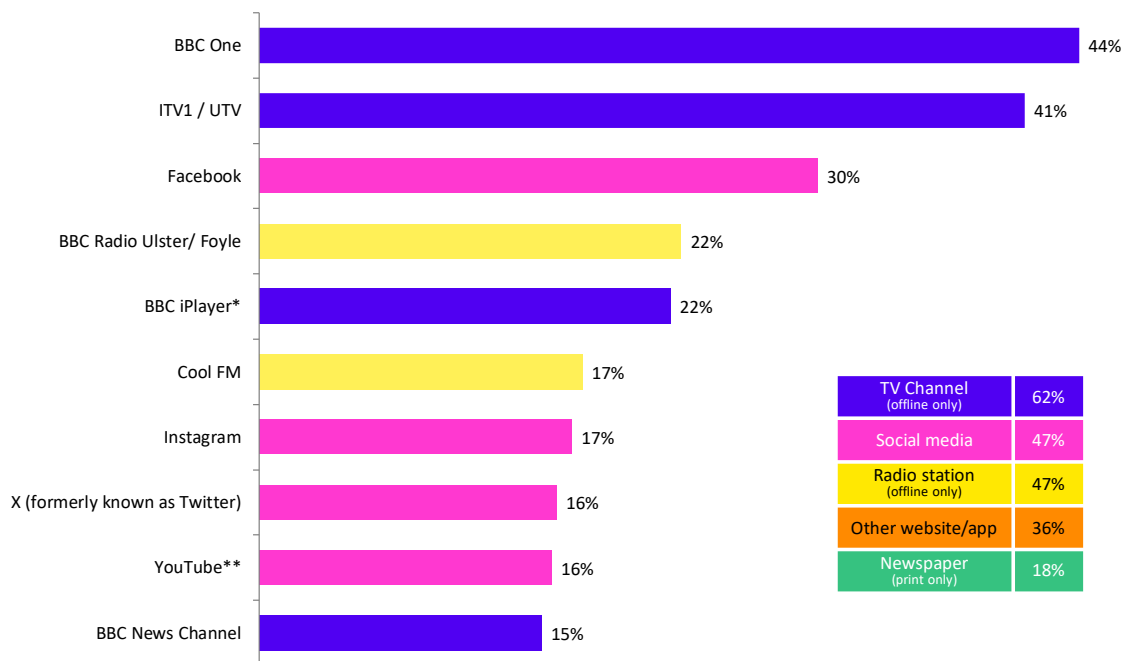
¹¹ BVoD viewers are defined as those who have watched at least one BVoD service in the past six months.

¹² Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2023.

source of news (30%). Instagram (17%) and X (16%) also featured within the top ten. BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle was the most-cited radio station (22%), while Cool FM (17%) also featured prominently. No newspapers made the top ten.

In terms of using video-on-demand services for news, the most popular was BBC iPlayer, which 22% of people 16+ in Northern Ireland claimed to use for news. Channel 4 (10%) and ITVX (9%) also appeared in the top 20 news sources.

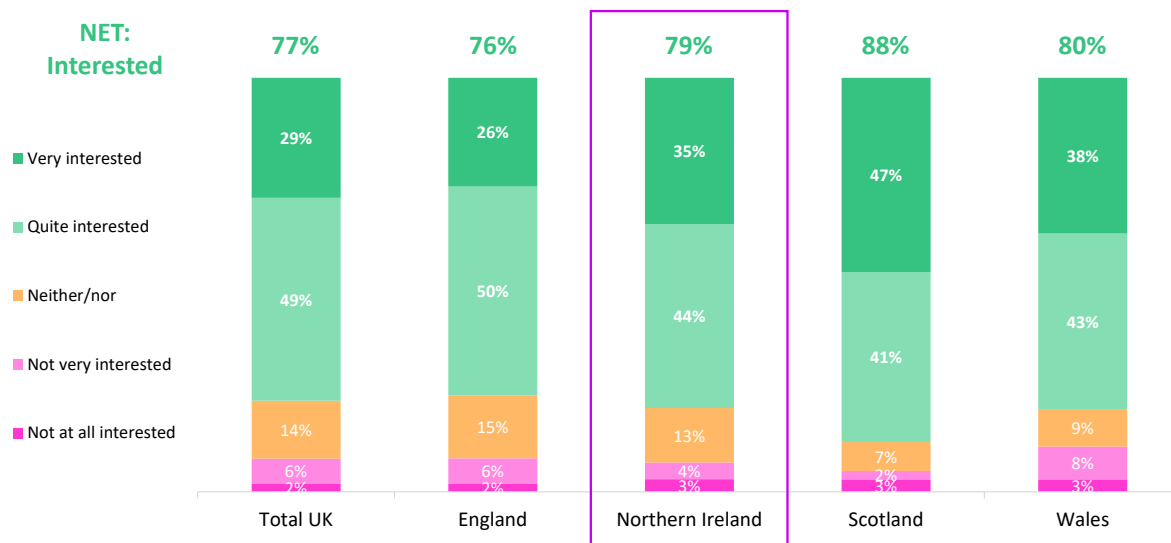
Figure 12: Top ten sources of news in general in Northern Ireland: 2024



*Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024 – Combined F2F and ONLINE sample Question: C1. Which of the following platforms do you use for news nowadays? D2a-8a. Thinking specifically about <platform>, which of the following do you use for news nowadays? Base: All people 16+ in Northern Ireland – 2024=614. *BBC iPlayer and ITVX added in 2023. **YouTube moved from ‘other online’ to ‘social media’ in 2024 and is therefore not comparable with 2023.*

Just under two in five people 16 and over who follow news claim to be ‘very interested’ in news about Northern Ireland (35%), rising to 79% who are either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ interested. As shown below, those who live in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are more likely to be ‘very interested’ in news about their nation.

Figure 13: Level of interest in news about own nation, by nation: 2024



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024 – Combined F2F and ONLINE sample Question: F3. How interested are you in news about your NATION/REGION? Base: All people 16+ who follow news 2024 - Total=5,250, England=3,404, Scotland=647, Wales=635, Northern Ireland=564.

Television sources were the most popular sources for news about Northern Ireland, for people in the nation. Just under two in five used BBC One for this (36%), followed by UTV (used by 34%). BBC Radio Ulster/ Foyle (19%) and Facebook (15%) were the most-used radio and online sources for news about Northern Ireland.

Figure 14: Sources used to access news about own nation: 2024

England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales	
BBC One	26%	BBC One	36%	BBC One	27%	BBC One	31%
Facebook	16%	UTV	34%	STV	27%	ITV WALES	23%
ITV1	16%	BBC Radio Ulster/ Foyle	19%	Facebook	21%	Facebook	18%
BBC news online	7%	Facebook	15%	BBC news online	10%	Any Wales based news sites/apps	11%
Instagram	6%	Cool FM	13%	BBC Scotland TV	8%	BBC news online	11%
BBC News Channel	5%	BBC news online	11%	Instagram	7%	BBC Radio Wales	6%
WhatsApp	5%	X (formerly Twitter)	8%	Clyde 1/ Forth 1/ West Sound/ Tay FM/ Northsound/ MFR	7%		
X (formerly Twitter)	5%	Any NI based news sites/apps	6%	BBC Radio Scotland	6%		
YouTube	5%	RTE Channels/Virgin Media One	6%	X (formerly Twitter)	6%		
		The Belfast Telegraph	5%	Sky News Channel	6%		
		U105	5%	BBC News Channel	5%		
				YouTube	5%		
Don't follow region news	11%	Don't follow Nation news	2%	Don't follow Nation news	3%	Don't follow Nation news	9%

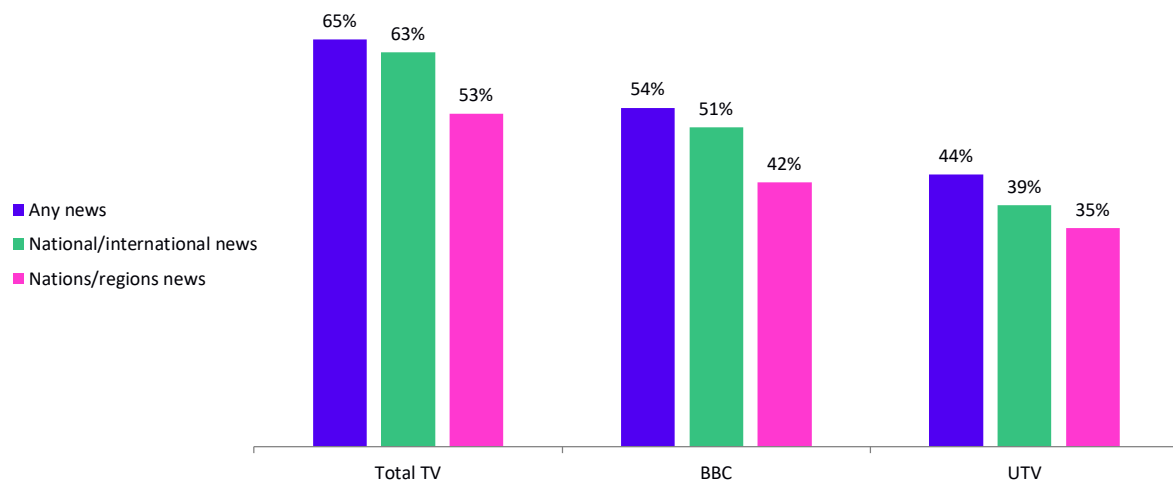
Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2024 – COMBINED F2F & ONLINE sample Question: F6. From which of the following sources do you get news about what is going on in NATION/REGION nowadays? Base: All people 16+ using TV/newspapers/radio/online/magazine for news 2024 – England=3,340, Scotland=632, Wales=627, Northern Ireland=545 Only sources with an incidence of 5%+ in each nation are shown.

Viewing of news from the nations/regions was especially high in Northern Ireland

Looking now at the way news viewing was split between broadcasters and news types, nations/regions news viewing was especially high in Northern Ireland compared to the UK average. Fifty-three per cent of people 16+ viewed nations/regions news per week, compared to 40% for the UK overall. Overall news viewing in Northern Ireland was some way ahead of the average for the rest of the UK, with 65% of people aged 16+ viewing any news on any TV station each week, compared with 57% for the UK as a whole.

Nations/regions news viewing in Northern Ireland was high on UTV/ITV1. Forty-four per cent of adults in Northern Ireland watched UTV/ITV's news coverage per week, 15 percentage points ahead of the UTV/ITV1 UK average and the highest of any UK nation. However, nations/regions news was still more likely to be viewed on the BBC (42%).

Figure 15: Average weekly reach for news in Northern Ireland, by broadcaster: 2023



Source: Barb, all transmissions, 28-day consolidated, average weekly reach 3+ mins %, people 16+. Region: BBC Northern Ireland. Genre: nations/regions news; UK/international news. National/international news refers to network news programmes which contain the same content UK-wide. Nations/regions news refers to news programmes that are broadcast from and to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, or regions within those nations. Programme examples include UTV Live and BBC Newsline.

TV programming for and from Northern Ireland

How we report spend on programming

The analysis in this section covers programming made in Northern Ireland for viewers in Northern Ireland, as well as programming made in the nation and broadcast UK-wide. It focuses on first-run UK originations, which are programmes commissioned by or for a licensed public service channel with a view to their first showing on television in the UK in the reference year.

Spend on this content includes all costs incurred by the broadcaster associated with making programmes. These include both direct and indirect production costs for in-house productions and licensing costs for commissioned programmes, but exclude costs related to marketing and distribution.

How we present financial data

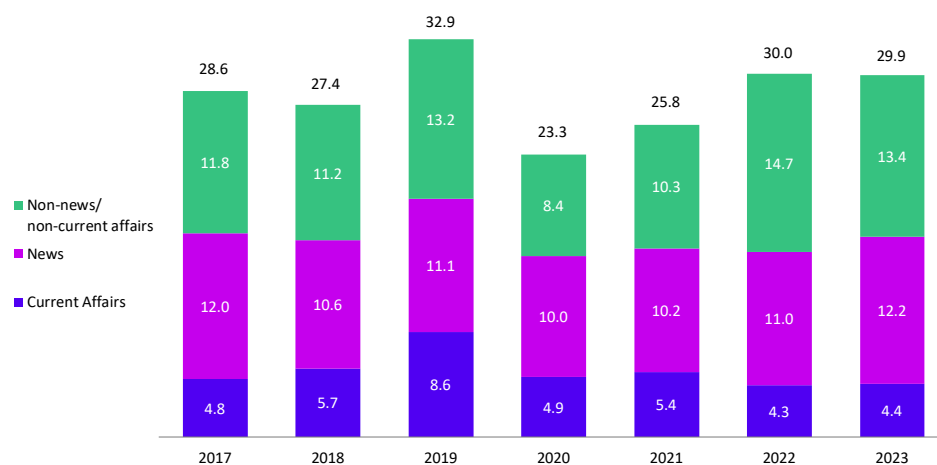
Financial data quoted in this report is presented in nominal terms, meaning that historical data has not been adjusted to account for inflation. In our [interactive report](#), users can view financial data in either nominal or 'real' (CPI-adjusted) terms, with users easily able to switch between the two.

Increases in PSB first-run news spending for Northern Ireland were offset by declines in non-news/non-current affairs

Of the total spend of £29.9m in 2023, news and non-news/non-current affairs were almost equally large components, at 41% and 45% of total spend respectively.

News had the largest proportional growth in first-run spend, increasing by 10.9% year on year (£1.2m) to £12.2m. PSB spend on non-news/ non-current affairs programming for Northern Ireland has decreased by 8.8% (£1.3m).

Figure 16: PSB spend on first-run UK-originated content for Northern Ireland, by genre: 2017-2023 (£m)



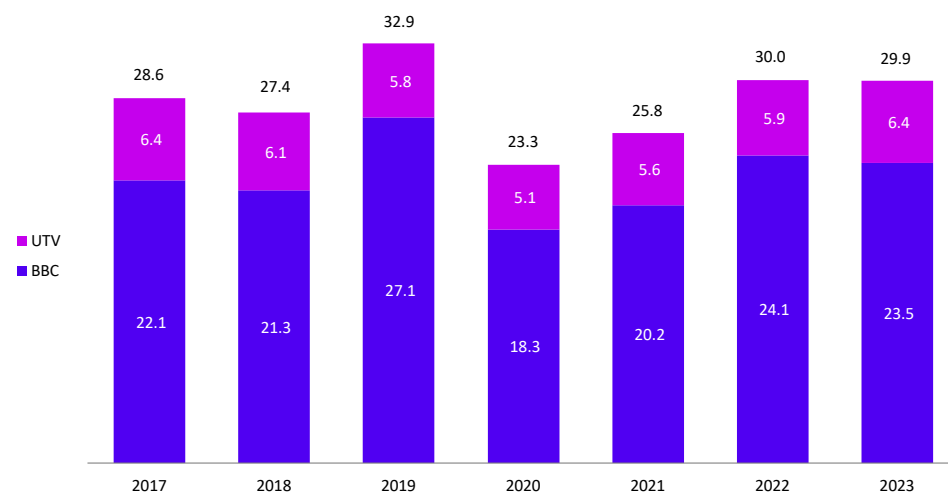
Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

News spend increased from both BBC and UTV, while BBC spend dropped overall

The BBC contributes the most to overall Northern Ireland first-run spending, with this contribution declining by 2.3% in 2023, mostly due to reductions in spend for non-news/non-current affairs, while its news spend increased.¹³

UTV's spending on first-run content rose by 8.3% year on year to £6.4m, driven by spend on news programmes.

Figure 17: BBC and UTV spend on non-network first-run UK-originated content for Northern Ireland: 2017-2023 (£m)



Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

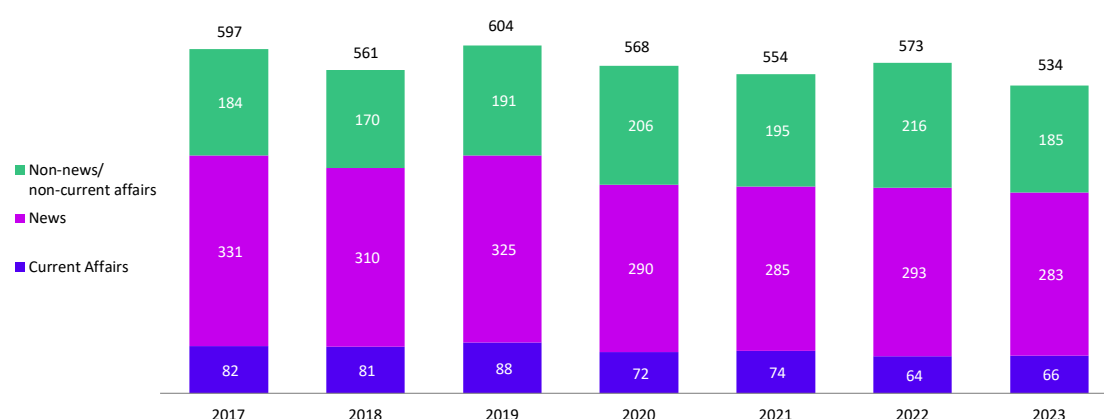
¹³ This may include some co-commissions between BBC network and non-network services. In 2022, if such programmes were broadcast on regional opts first, the spend is captured as part of the BBC's regional programming spend.

BBC hours of first-run content in Northern Ireland declined by 7% to 534 hours

The decline in hours has been driven by news and non-news/ non-current affairs. The largest proportional decrease has been for non-news/non-current affairs, which dropped by 31 hours to 185 hours (14.4%), driven by a change in sports provision on BBC2.

Overall, news content makes up the largest amount of the BBC's output for Northern Ireland, comprising 53% of first-run hours.

Figure 18: BBC hours of first-run UK-originated content for Northern Ireland, by genre: 2017-2023



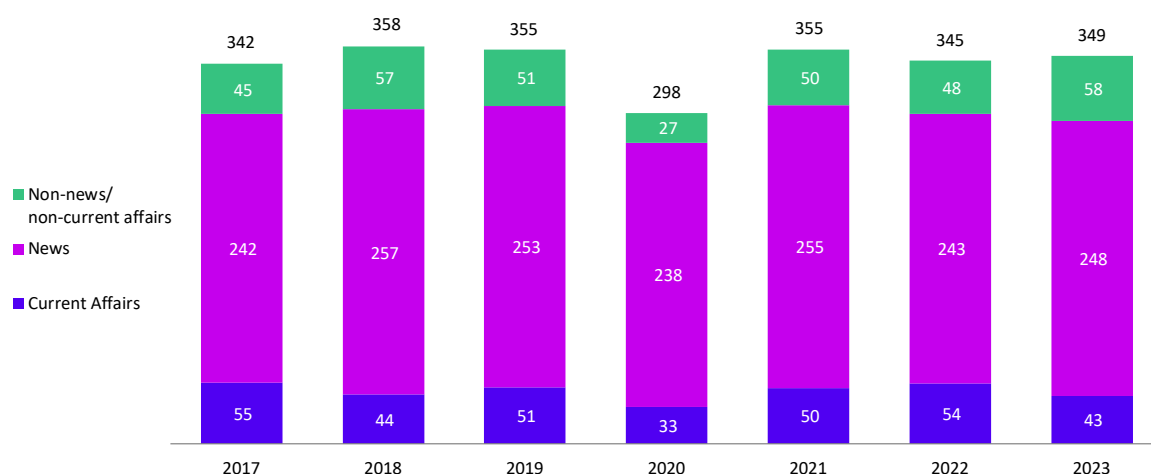
Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

UTV hours of first-run content for Northern Ireland increased slightly year on year, with 349 hours of programme output

The vast majority of UTV first-run output is news content, comprising 71% (248 hours) of first-run programming on the channel.

UTV slightly increased its hours output by 1.2% compared to 2022, driven both by news and non-news/ non-current affairs. UTV's current affairs output reduced by 20.4%, totalling 43 hours.

Figure 19: UTV hours of first-run UK-originated content for Northern Ireland, by genre: 2017-2023



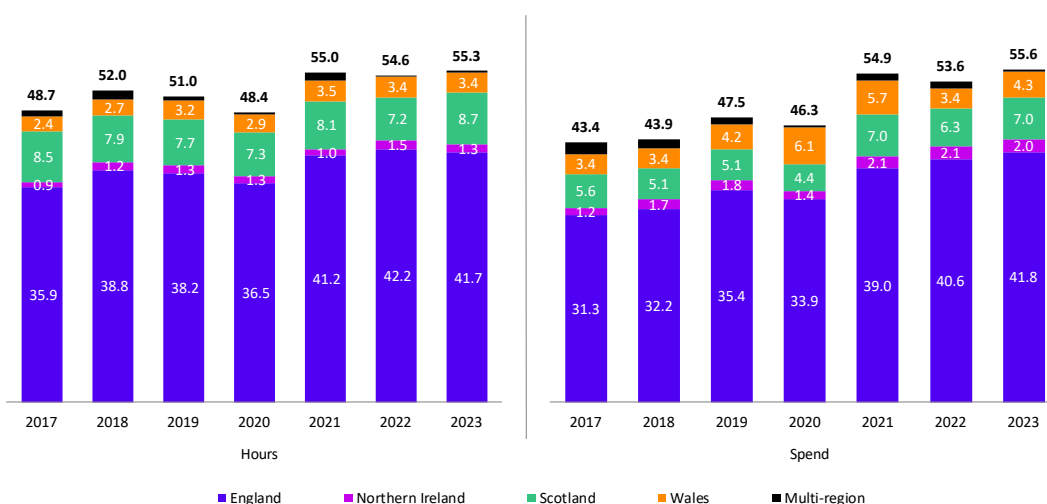
Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

Network content produced in Northern Ireland

Public service broadcasters must make programmes in a range of places around the UK for broadcast on their network TV channels. The broadcasters have quotas relating to this, in terms of the proportion of qualifying hours and the proportion of qualifying spend that must be attributable to areas outside London. The BBC has individual quotas for each of the UK nations, and Channel 4 also has an out-of-England quota. ITV and Channel 5 are not specifically required to make content outside England.

Across all the PSBs, 2.0% of qualifying first-run network spend was allocated to programmes qualifying as Northern Ireland productions, and 1.3% of hours – lower than for the other nations. The proportion of spend and hours have both held relatively steady between 2022 and 2023, while spend has seen growth over the longer trend: it was 2.0% of PSB qualifying spend in 2023, compared to 1.2% in 2017.

Figure 20: Proportion of qualifying network hours and spend outside London, all PSBs combined: 2017-2023 (%)



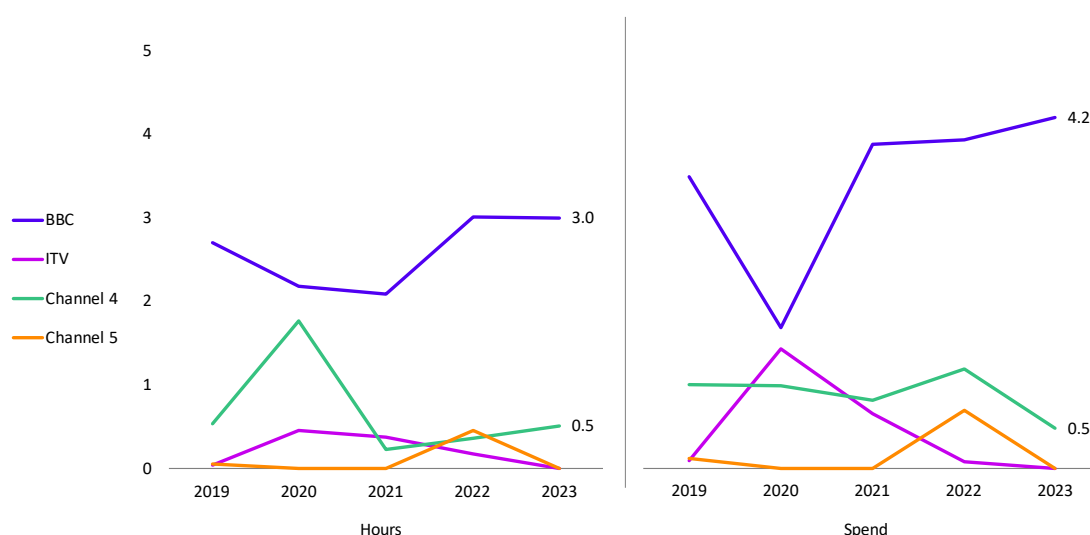
Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

The BBC increased proportions of spend on network content made in Northern Ireland

The BBC, which is responsible for the majority of qualifying network content made in Northern Ireland, increased the proportion of its network spend from 3.9% to 4.2% in 2023. However, absolute hours reduced slightly, and this proportional rise is a result of fewer hours produced in the English regions. The proportion of qualifying hours was steady at 3.0% in both years. This year's programmes no longer include the sport programmes made in 2022 (*The Irish League Show* and *The Ulster Rugby Show*), while this year's commissions include dramas such as *World on Fire*, *Blue Lights* and *Woman in the Wall*, entertainment like *The Finish Line*, and factual such as *Clive Myrie's Italian Road Trip*.

ITV and Channel 5 did not produce qualifying programmes in Northern Ireland in 2023. Channel 4 decreased its spend but maintained its qualifying hours year on year (0.4% in 2022, compared to 0.5% in 2023), producing *Britain's Most Expensive Houses* and *Lyra*, among others.

Figure 21: Proportion of qualifying network production in Northern Ireland, by PSB: 2017-2023 (%)



Source: Ofcom/broadcasters.

The Irish Language Broadcast Fund provided £3.1m in content funding in 2023-2024

The [Irish Language Broadcast Fund](#) (ILBF) was launched in 2005 with the aim of funding Irish-language content and fostering the Irish-speaking independent production sector in Northern Ireland.

Of the 2023/24 funding, £3,155,000 came from the UK Government's Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport¹⁴ through the British Film Institute, and €1m from the Irish Government's Department of Tourism, Culture, Gaeltacht, Arts, Sports and Media via Northern Ireland Screen, which manages the fund.

The ILBF continued to fund a broad range of Irish language content in 2023/24, for broadcast primarily on TG4, BBC Northern Ireland and RTÉ. The Fund also supported a range of digital,

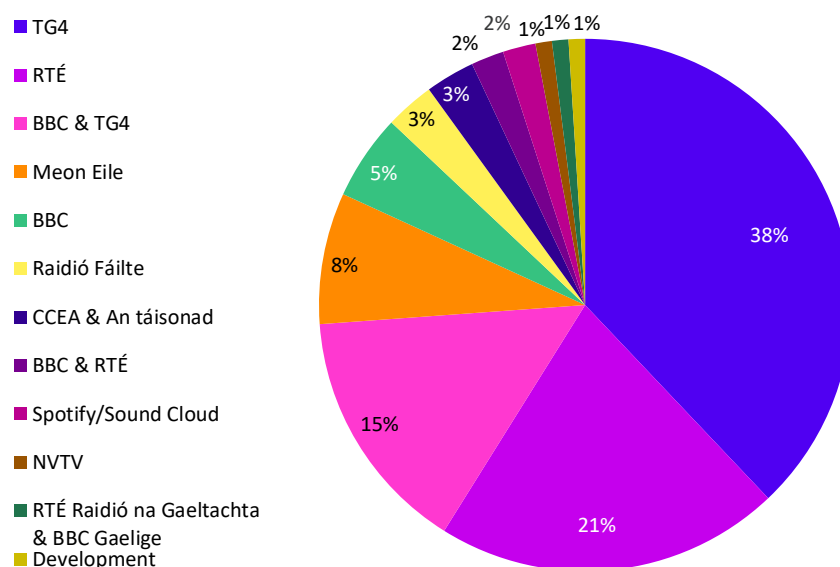
¹⁴ The department was termed this way at the time of funding being allocated. Now, the departments are named Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

educational and audio content.

Recent programming highlights include Below The Radar's *999 Faoi Oiliúint* which aired on both RTÉ One and BBC Two – achieving a reach of 75k and a share of 7% on RTÉ, and a reach of 41k and a share of 3% on BBC Two. Macha Media's *Men's Sheds* aired on TG4. This emotive series covered a year in the life of ten communities focused on sheds across the country, as they opened their doors and introduced viewers to their members. Imagine Media's documentary *Ré Réabhlóide: CLG agus Cogadh na gCarad* aired on RTÉ. In this programme Gráinne McElwain explored how the GAA across Ireland helped to heal and bridge the bitter divisions created by the Civil War. DoubleBand Film's *Ciotóg*, a documentary about rising Belfast boxer Seán McComb, aired on TG4. *Ar an Sliabh 2*, a documentary series which captured the stories of people who live and work in remote mountainous areas across Ireland, also returned to RTÉ.

Big Mountain Productions' third series of *Peataí!* aired on RTÉ, having previously aired on BBC NI; Waddell Media's second series of *Éadaí SOS* aired on TG4, having previously aired on BBC NI; Imagine Media's *Gunnadóir na Gaillimhe*, which told the story of British sniper Paidí Ó Doibhlinn, aired on TG4 and Below the Radar's series on bogs, *Rúin na bPortach*, aired on TG4 and BBC NI.

Figure 22: ILBF funding recipients: 2023-2024



Source: Northern Ireland Screen. Note: funding hours relate to financial commitments made during the financial year, but which may not have been broadcast in the same financial year.

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund provided £1m in funding in 2023-24

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) was established in 2011 to provide finance for the production of film, TV, radio and digital productions on Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language in Northern Ireland.

USBF funding to the amount of £1m comes from the UK Department for Culture, Media & Sport through the British Film Institute to Northern Ireland Screen, which manages the fund.

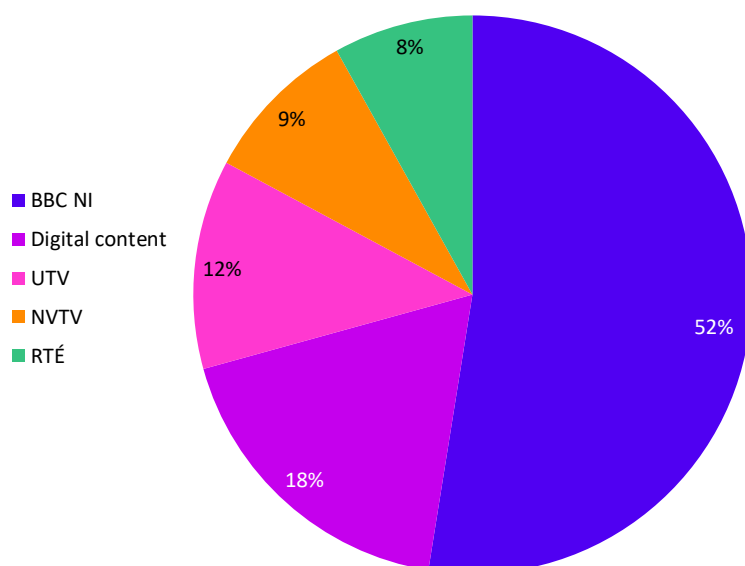
Sixteen projects received funding from the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) in 2023-24. They included seven TV productions, one year of content on Belfast-based local TV channel NVTV, six digital projects, one TV development project and additional funding for one TV production.

USBF-funded content over the period included factual entertainment, observational documentary and interactive content, including educational material. Commissioned highlights include RTÉ documentary *Andrew Trimble: For Ulster and Ireland* in which rugby player Andrew Trimble discovers and dissects his Ulster-Scots roots, *Paula McIntyre's Hamely Kitchen USA* which sees the well-known chef cross the Atlantic to learn about – and cook – dishes with shared cultural heritage, and the return of Joe Mahon with his popular ten-part UTV travelogue *Mahon's Way series 4* to showcase the history, heritage and people of Northern Ireland from an Ulster-Scots perspective.

Digital highlights included animated learning resource *Fi & Mac*, poetry projects *The Woven Word*, *Across Ulster in Twarthy Poems* and *Charlie Gillen Poetry Dramatisations*, and the launch of 12-part monthly Ulster-Scots podcast *Thran*.

Finally, NVTV launched its *Yr7 content* in Jan 2024, both as linear broadcasts and online via its new Ulster-Scots website. Funded by the USBF, the website provides a platform for all NVTV content as well as online programmes from other production companies, also funded by the USBF.

Figure 23: USBF funding recipients: 2023-2024



Source: Northern Ireland Screen. Note: funding hours relate to financial commitments made during the financial year, but which may not have been broadcast in the same financial year.

Radio and audio

Market developments

More radio stations for Belfast and Lisburn

Radio listeners in Belfast and Lisburn have a number of new stations they can listen to since a new digital multiplex went live in January 2024. The Belfast and Lisburn small-scale DAB multiplex launched with nine services: Like One; Like Pop; Like Retro; Danceland; DancelandANTHEM; Tomorrowland OWR; Like Country; Belfast 89 and Radio Lisburn Live.

Small-scale DAB multiplexes were introduced to create a low-cost pathway for city-based commercial and community radio stations to make the transition to digital broadcasting. Ofcom is currently in the process of licensing multiplexes and stations across the UK.

On average, there are currently 10-11 services per multiplex. Each can carry more than 20 stations, with city-based locations proving most popular with service providers.

The Belfast and Lisburn multiplex is the second to launch in Northern Ireland, with the Derry multiplex having launched in 2022. A third multiplex, covering Newry, Banbridge and the surrounding area started broadcasting in July 2024.

Radio availability and coverage

Radio services in Northern Ireland are provided by the BBC and by the commercial and community radio sectors. Broadcasts from the Republic of Ireland can also be received in parts of Northern Ireland.

The BBC’s UK-wide services are available throughout Northern Ireland on AM/FM and DAB radio. In addition, the BBC broadcasts BBC Radio Ulster and BBC Radio Foyle on FM and DAB.

As of March 2024, there were two UK-wide commercial stations, nine local commercial licences (following the closure of the Downtown AM medium wave service) and 16 community radio stations broadcasting on AM/FM in Northern Ireland. Sixty-eight stations broadcast on DAB, comprising 56 UK-wide commercial and 12 local commercial stations, an increase of ten from the previous year.

Figure 24: Number of commercial and community radio services in Northern Ireland, by broadcast technology: March 2024

	AM/FM	DAB
UK-wide commercial	2	56
Local commercial	9	12
Community	16	N/A

Source: Ofcom. Note: the number of services on commercial multiplexes listed here includes all commercially-licensed services carried on each multiplex, meaning that a service may be counted more than once. Not all services are available in each location. Community Radio licences are analogue licences, but holders of these licences may also hold a commercial DSP (digital sound programme) licence to simulcast their licensed Community Radio service on a DAB multiplex. The data in the table relate to UK-wide and local multiplexes only. Community-DSP (C-DSP) licences allow for a community radio service to be broadcast on a designated small-scale DAB multiplex.

The coverage of national and local DAB multiplexes was unchanged in March 2024 from the previous year. BBC DAB services covered nearly nine in ten homes (87.3%) and 79.3% of major roads, while local commercial DAB services covered the same proportion of homes (87.5%) and a slightly higher proportion (87.8%) of major roads. Small-scale DAB multiplex coverage in Northern Ireland grew by 26.5 percentage points to reach almost a third (32.1%) of homes by March 2024.

Figure 25: DAB coverage as of March 2024

		BBC	Commercial			Small-scale
			Digital One	Sound Digital	Local DAB	
UK	Homes	97.4%	91.7%	82.6%	92.0%	25.6%
	Major roads	87.4%	80.2%	72.6%	76.8%	NM
England	Homes	98.4%	94.8%	86.7%	93.4%	25.2%
	Major roads	94.5%	93.9%	89.8%	87.4%	NM
Northern Ireland	Homes	87.3%	85.4%	56.8%	87.5%	32.1%
	Major roads	79.3%	86.9%	55.0%	87.8%	NM
Scotland	Homes	95.3%	81.7%	69.0%	85.4%	32.1%
	Major roads	69.1%	45.5%	33.6%	45.6%	NM
Wales	Homes	92.2%	67.5%	56.9%	82.6%	17.6%
	Major roads	78.1%	53.3%	37.7%	60.9%	NM

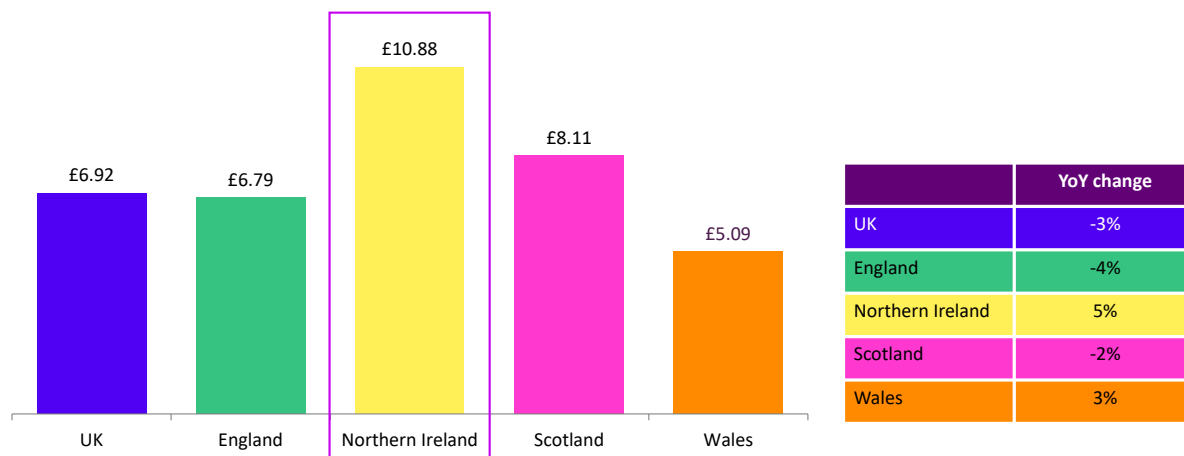
Source: Arqiva, BBC, Ofcom. Note: Coverage of small-scale DAB is measured on a homes-only basis. 'NM' denotes levels are not measured.

Commercial radio revenues

Per-capita commercial radio revenues grew in Northern Ireland between 2022 and 2023

Per-capita commercial local radio revenues grew by 5% year on year in Northern Ireland to a total of £10.88.

Figure 26: Per-capita commercial radio revenues, by nation: 2023 (£)



Source: Ofcom, broadcaster returns. These figures relate solely to total relevant turnover reported against AL licences (local analogue commercial), and in relation to advertising include both local and national advertising revenues, i.e. not only the revenues which relate to adverts aimed at the specific nation. As mid-year 2023 population estimates were not available at the time of publication, 2022 mid-year population data has been used for both 2022 and 2023.

Live radio listening in Northern Ireland

Where our data comes from

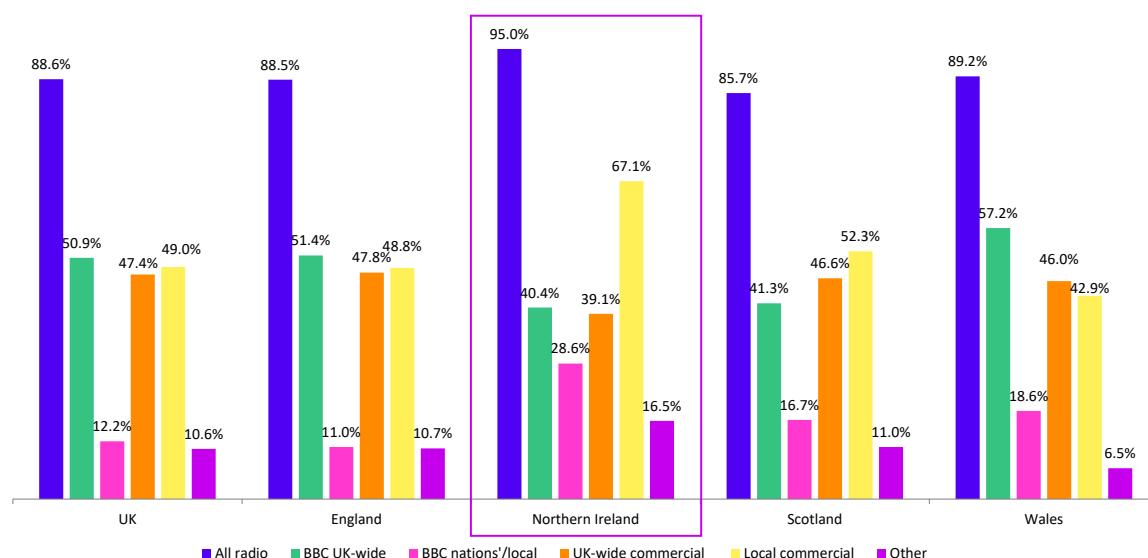
Our figures on live radio listening come from RAJAR, which refers to adults as those aged 15+. We have used 'adults' here in line with this definition.

Radio remains more popular in Northern Ireland than in other nations in the UK, with reach increasing year on year

Radio continues to reach the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland, and listening has increased from 2023 levels: more than nine in ten (95.0%) of the adult population (1.5 million) now tune in for an average of 21 hours 42 mins each week.¹⁵ Figure 27 shows the reach of different broadcast sectors and how they vary by nation. Just over two-thirds of adults in Northern Ireland (67.1%) listen to local commercial radio at least once a week – higher than in England, Scotland, Wales and the UK as a whole – and just under three in ten (28.6%) listen to the BBC's nations'/ local output, also higher than in the other nations.

¹⁵ Source: RAJAR Q1 2024.

Figure 27: Weekly reach of radio, by sector and nation: Q1 2024

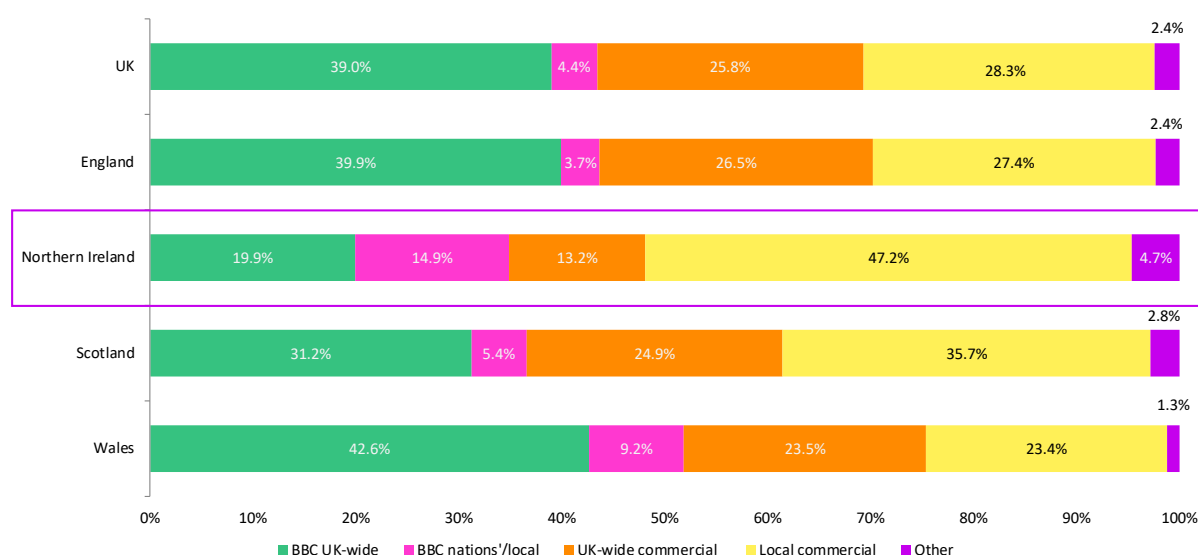


Source: RAJAR Q1 2024; all radio TSA, BBC Radio Ulster TSA, BBC Radio Scotland TSA, BBC Radio Wales TSA, BBC local radio in England TSA. Weight: Automatic weighting.

Listening to local radio – both BBC and commercial – in Northern Ireland is much higher than anywhere else in the UK

Local radio continues to perform well with audiences in Northern Ireland and now accounts for 62.2% of total radio listening – nearly twice the UK average (32.8%). The majority of this listening is to local commercial radio, while UK-wide commercial stations fare less well in Northern Ireland (as illustrated in Figure 28).

Figure 28: Share of radio listening, by sector and nation: Q1 2024



Source: RAJAR Q1 2024; all radio TSA, BBC Radio Ulster TSA, BBC Radio Scotland TSA, BBC Radio Wales TSA, BBC local radio in England TSA. Automatic weighting.

Drilling down further, there is some variation across Northern Ireland in the services people listen to. BBC Radio 2 was the only UK-wide station to feature in the top five most-listened to services across Northern Ireland in Q1 2024 – the rest all have a more regional or local focus. Local commercial

stations Cool FM and Downtown Radio were both in the top five across Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole, with Q Radio and U105 also making appearances. BBC Radio Ulster accounted for 16.2% and 14.8% of listening in Northern Ireland and Belfast respectively, and was again the most popular BBC station in Northern Ireland.

Figure 29: Top five stations in Northern Ireland and Belfast, ranked by market share: Q1 2024

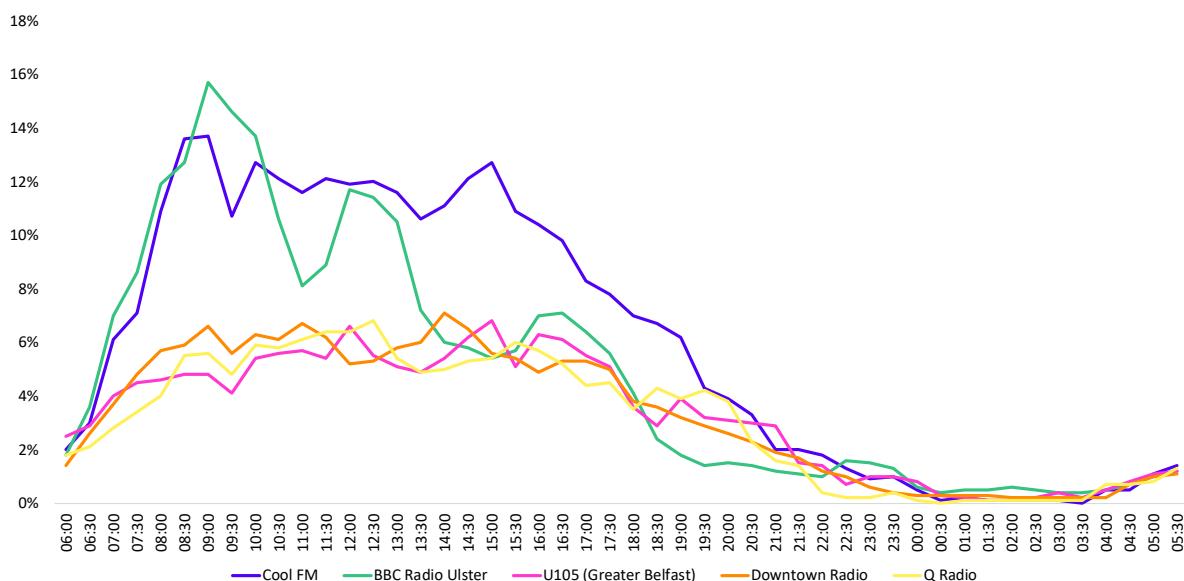
Area	Rank	Station	Weekly reach %	Market share %	Broadcaster
Across Northern Ireland	1	BBC Radio Ulster	29.6	16.2	BBC
	2	Cool FM	33.8	14.6	Bauer
	3	Downtown Radio	19.1	10.2	Bauer
	4	Q Radio	23.7	8.2	Independent
	5	BBC Radio 2	16.4	7.6	BBC
Across Belfast	1	Cool FM	35.8	16.6	Bauer
	2	BBC Radio Ulster	28.5	14.8	BBC
	3	U105	20.3	9.9	News Broadcasting
	4	BBC Radio 2	16.8	7.3	BBC
	5	Downtown Radio	14.5	7.0	Bauer

Source: RAJAR Q1 2024; BBC Radio Ulster TSA; U105 Belfast TSA; Weight: automatic (each station weighted by its own weight).

Listening patterns for Northern Ireland-based stations

Weekday radio listening tends to have a distinct shape across the day: a morning breakfast peak followed by lower levels in the early afternoon and another peak in the late afternoon/drivetime slot. Of the Northern Ireland-based stations listed in the table above, Cool FM most closely resembles this pattern, while listening to BBC Radio Ulster appears more irregular, with reach dropping in the mid-morning before picking up again during lunchtime. In contrast, listening to local commercial stations other than Cool FM have lower levels but more consistent reach across the day.

Figure 30: Reach across the day to selected Northern Ireland-based stations, half-hours Monday-Friday: Q1 2024



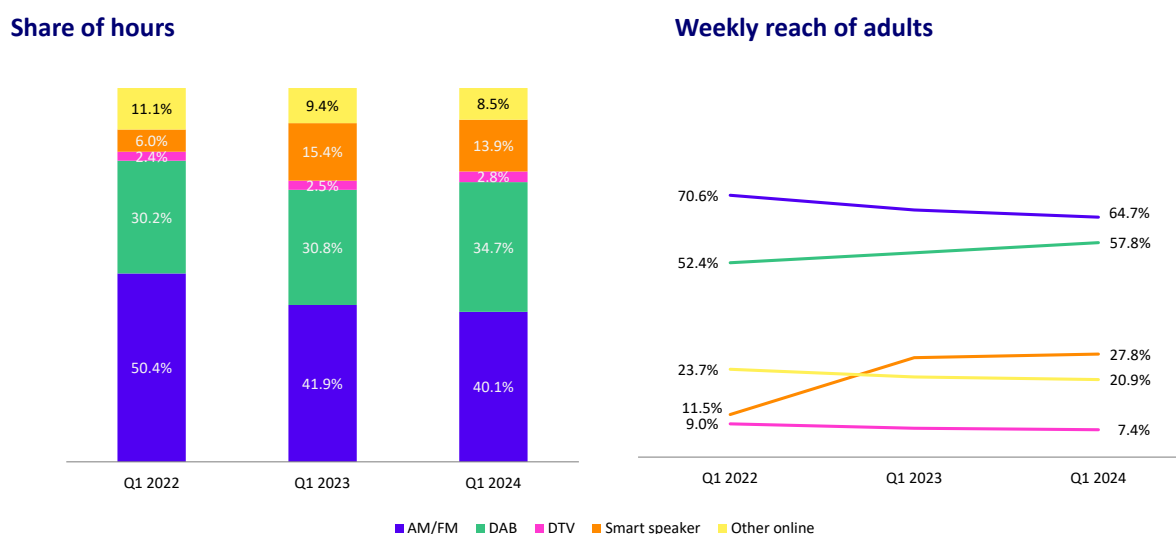
Source: RAJAR Q1 2024; Individual station TSAs; six-month weighting; Monday-Friday (6am-6am).

While still the most popular platform, analogue listening continues to decline while DAB's reach hits another record high

The popularity of local radio and Northern Ireland/ Ireland-based stations means that analogue radio continues to outperform digital and online in terms of both reach and share. AM/FM radio is used by two-thirds of adults in Northern Ireland each week, accounting for 40.1% of total listening.

However, the gap between analogue and DAB is narrower than ever before. Although analogue is still the most popular platform for live radio listening, the number of people using DAB in Northern Ireland is at a record high, reaching 57.8% of adults each week. DAB's share of listening hours also increased by 2.9 percentage points between Q1 2023 and Q1 2024, while analogue's share dipped to 40.1% of total hours.

Figure 31: Weekly reach and share of radio listening hours in Northern Ireland, by platform

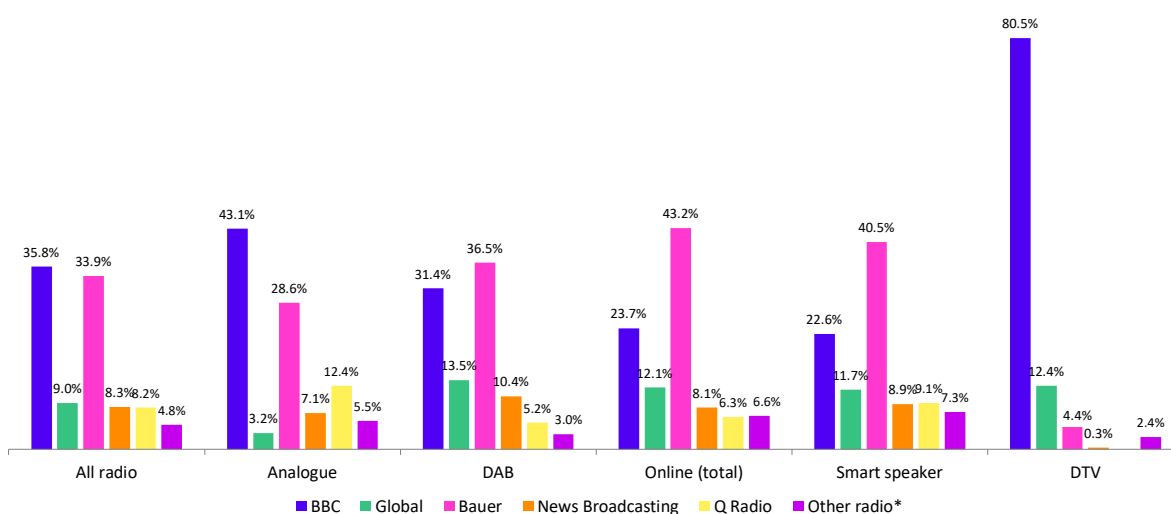


Source: RAJAR; BBC Radio Ulster TSA. DTV refers to digital television.

Commercial radio leads online listening while BBC has the lion's share of analogue hours

Across all platforms, the BBC and Bauer have almost equal shares of radio listening in Northern Ireland (at 35.8% and 33.9% respectively), with the rest spread across Global, News Broadcasting, Q Radio and other stations (Republic of Ireland-based services, community radio and small-scale digital stations). However, the balance shifts when looking at analogue compared to online listening. BBC stations account for more analogue hours than any other broadcaster, while Bauer has the greatest share on DAB (36.5%), smart speakers (40.5%) and other online devices (i.e. smartphone apps, desktop browsers), at 43.2%. The BBC is the next most listened-to broadcaster on smart speakers, accounting for a quarter of radio listening on these devices.

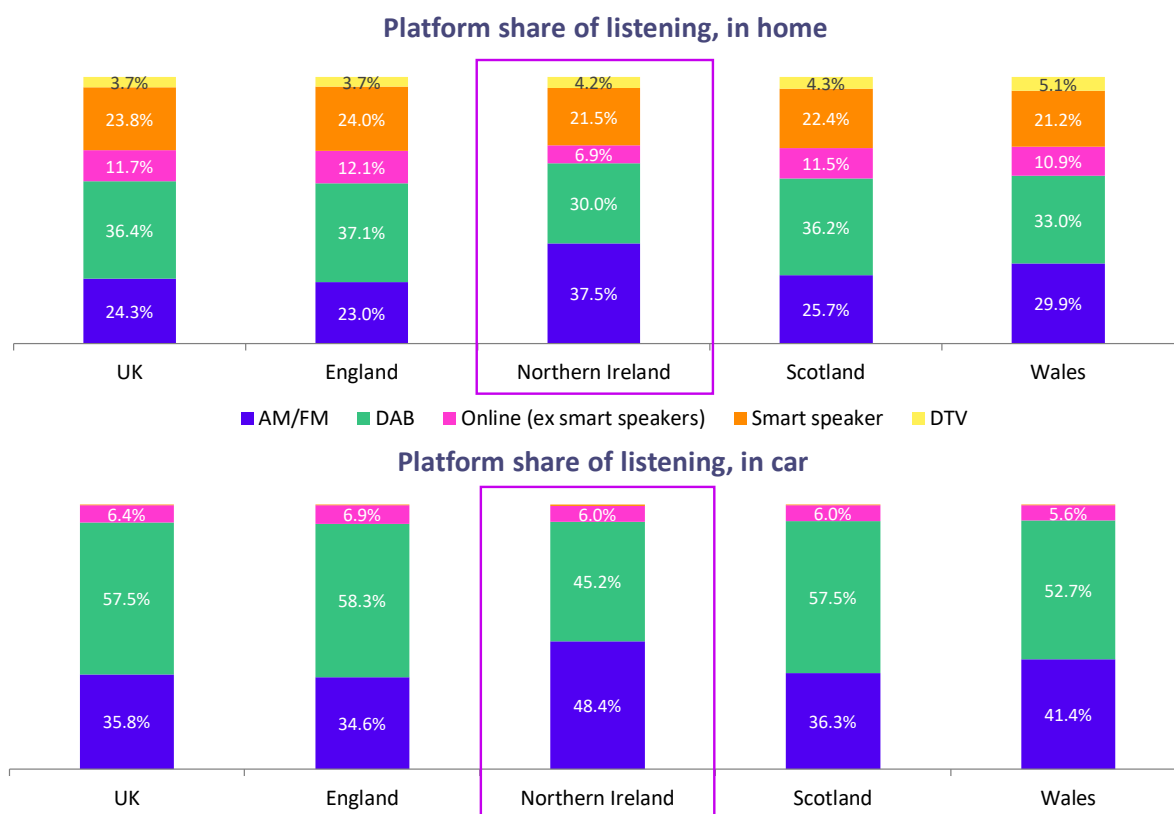
Figure 32: Broadcasters' market share in Northern Ireland, by platform: Q1 2024



Source: RAJAR; BBC Radio Ulster TSA. DTV refers to digital television.

People's choice of platforms for radio listening depends largely on where they are and the devices they have access to. Figure 33 shows that there are differences in the way people listen to the radio at home and in the car. It highlights the greater reliance on AM/FM for listeners in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole and the other nations.

Figure 33: Platform share of listening, by nation: at home and in the car: Q1 2024



Source: RAJAR Q1 2024; All Radio TSA; BBC Local Radio in England TSA; BBC Radio Ulster TSA, BBC Radio Scotland TSA; BBC Radio Wales TSA; six-month weighting.

Online listening in Northern Ireland

Four in ten households in Northern Ireland have a smart speaker, three times higher than the proportion with an in-home DAB radio

Four in ten households (40%) in Northern Ireland have a smart speaker, in line with the UK as a whole (41%).¹⁶ Amazon continues to be the most popular brand by far; more than four in five homes in Northern Ireland (84%) with smart speakers have an Amazon Echo, followed by the Google Home / Google Nest at 9%. The most popular place to have a smart speaker remains the kitchen, with over two-thirds of smart speaker owners having one there (68%), followed by the living room (39%) and bedroom (24%).

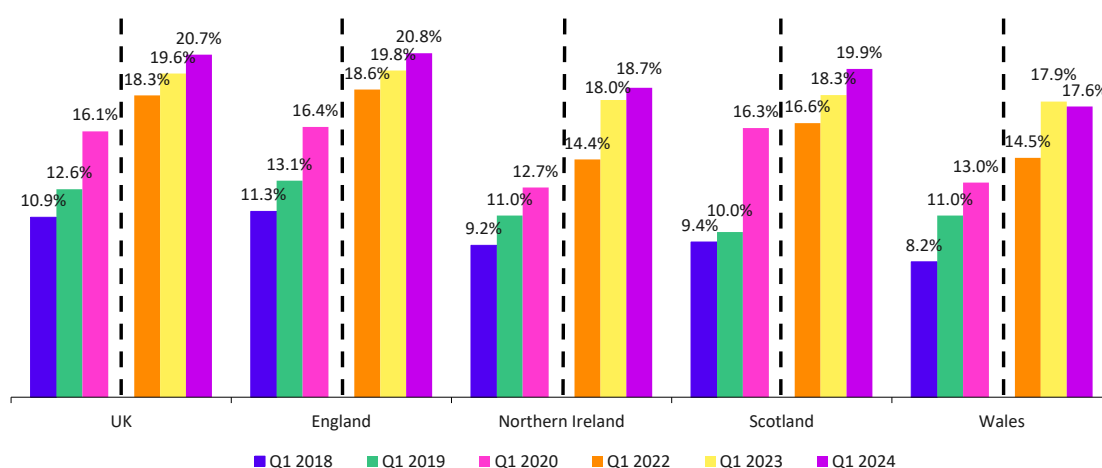
¹⁶ Ofcom Technology Tracker 2024.

In comparison, just over one in ten (13%) households in Northern Ireland have a DAB radio at home while nearly half (48%) have one in the car, taking total household penetration of DAB radios to 53%.¹⁷

Weekly reach of podcasts inches higher, but less than one in five adults listen each week

Of course, smart speakers allow people to listen to more than just radio: they can also stream music, audiobooks and podcasts from a range of online services. Podcasts are slowly becoming a fixture of people's audio diet, with nearly one in five (18.7%) adults in Northern Ireland listening to them once a week in Q1 2024.¹⁸ This remains lower than the UK reach figure of 20.7%, and year-on-year growth has slowed compared to 2022-2023. However, the overall trend is still upwards. With more crossover between podcasts and traditional media (e.g. podcasts supplementing TV viewing for specific programmes, and in some cases even being broadcast on TV), we may see more people starting to listen in the next couple of years.

Figure 34: Weekly reach of podcast listeners, by nation: 2018-2023



Source: RAJAR; dotted lines indicate suspension of fieldwork due to the Covid-19 lockdowns. This led to subsequent changes in methodology, so comparison with previous quarters should be made with caution.

¹⁷ Ofcom Technology Tracker 2024.

¹⁸ RAJAR Q1 2024.