Trust in BBC news

Understanding audience trust

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1. Overview

Trust in BBC news remains strong, but audience perceptions are declining and the basis on which it is maintained is changing

1.1 The provision of trusted news remains one of the BBC's most important public service functions. News helps audiences understand events and issues affecting their local communities, the nations of the UK and the wider world. It can support democratic participation, provide reliable information during periods of crisis and uncertainty, and help audiences navigate an increasingly fragmented information environment. As audiences are exposed to a wider range of sources, including misinformation and unverified content, access to trusted news becomes increasingly important.

1.2 The BBC remains the UK's most widely used news provider and one of the country's most trusted sources of news, providing accurate and reliable journalism at moments of national significance, crisis and uncertainty. It continues to attract large audiences across its local, national and international news output, delivered across TV, radio and online. At the same time, the BBC has accelerated its digital-first news strategy, expanding its reach across YouTube and social media, particularly among younger audiences. Against this changing media landscape, shifts in how audiences' access, engage with and trust BBC news have implications that extend beyond the organisation itself.

1.3 Since 2017, Ofcom has been the first fully independent regulator of the BBC. Over the past decade, we have assessed its performance annually, undertaken thematic reviews and developed an extensive evidence base on how audiences use and value BBC services. One theme has remained consistently important throughout that period: trust in BBC news. This document brings together the evidence we have gathered over ten years of regulation to reflect on what we have learned about the factors that strengthen or undermine trust, how audience behaviours and attitudes have evolved, and the challenges likely to shape trust during the next Charter period.

1.4 Looking back across the past decade also reveals the extent to which the news environment has changed. While traditional news brands such as the BBC remain important sources of news, audiences are increasingly encountering their content through search engines, recommendations, social media and creators rather than through direct visits.

1.5 Against this backdrop our evidence shows that the BBC continues to retain substantial audience trust. 65% of BBC users rate BBC news highly for accuracy and 63% for trust, while its local news also remains highly valued. Perceptions of impartiality are comparatively weaker to perception scores for trust and accuracy, with 54% of BBC users rating the BBC highly.

1.6 The BBC's own data shows that ratings for trust, accuracy and impartiality have declined since 2021/22. Among all adults, between 2021/22 and 2025/26, the proportion who think the BBC is effective at providing accurate news and current affairs fell from 63% to 56%, trustworthiness from 63% to 55%, and impartiality from 51% to 45%. Our research of viewers of TV news shows that these declines are not unique to the BBC, with similar trends evident across the other PSBs, with impartiality consistently attracting lower scores than trust and accuracy.

1.7 These trends are taking place against a backdrop of wider changes in how audiences consume news, with people drawing on a growing range of providers, platforms and creators at a time when trust and engagement with news more generally have weakened. Maintaining reach and relevance will therefore increasingly depend not only on the BBC being present on the platforms audiences use, but on providing news content and formats that work for how different audiences use those platforms.

1.8 Alongside these shifts, the BBC has acknowledged that editorial failures and wider reputational issues have damaged audience confidence. While the BBC has a good overall record of complying with requirements for due accuracy and impartiality, serious editorial failures in recent years underline the importance of acknowledging mistakes and responding promptly, transparently and accountably when standards fall short.

1.9 It is also embarking on a significant programme of savings and restructuring, intended to reduce its costs by around £500 million, including changes affecting news and current affairs. This will require difficult choices about where the BBC focuses its resources as it seeks to maintain the quality and breadth of its journalism.

1.10 Our evidence suggests that declining trust in BBC news, and across public service broadcasters (PSBs) more generally, cannot be explained by changes in how audiences discover and access news alone. Over the past decade we have seen trust shaped by a wider set of structural and reputational factors, including increased competition, changing audience expectations and consumption habits, and the impact of editorial controversies and perceived shortcomings. Together, these developments have created a more challenging environment in which trust must be earned and maintained.

1.11 Reflecting on the past decade offers an opportunity not only to assess how trust in BBC news has changed, but also to consider what maintaining trust may require in the future. Published alongside our 2025/26 Annual Report on the BBC, this document supports our wider role in holding the BBC to account for its delivery of duly accurate and impartial news on behalf of audiences.

Audiences continue to value the BBC's reliability and public service role

1.12 The BBC continues to be associated with trusted journalism. Its strongest features are closely connected: accuracy, reliability, high-quality journalism and the breadth and range of its news services, including its provision of news that is relevant to audiences locally and across the nations and regions of the UK. These qualities are particularly evident during major national and international events, when audiences often turn to the BBC as an authoritative source or to verify information they have seen elsewhere.

1.13 The evidence also provides a clear picture of what audiences want from BBC News: accurate and impartial journalism that is transparent about how it is produced and verified, reflects different communities and perspectives across the UK, and is relevant and accessible in the ways people increasingly consume news.

1.14 Perceptions of trust in news differ by age, socio-economic group and where audiences consume the content they watch and listen to. Trust tends to be stronger among older audiences than younger audiences and is generally higher when BBC news is accessed through the BBC's services than when it is encountered in the context of social media and

other third-party platforms. This pattern is not unique to the BBC, with ITV and Channel 4 also receiving lower trust ratings on social media than on television.

1.15 The way in which trust is formed is also becoming more complex. While trust in the BBC has always been influenced by a range of factors, changes in how content is distributed, presented and encountered online are creating new challenges. Increasingly fragmented ways of accessing news mean audiences may encounter BBC journalism without the context and branding traditionally associated with trust in the BBC. As AI-generated and manipulated content becomes more common, audiences may also find it harder to determine what is authentic and which sources can be relied upon. The challenge for the BBC is therefore not only to produce trusted journalism, but to ensure that it remains visible, recognisable and credible wherever audiences encounter it.

Accuracy remains the strongest attribute of BBC news

1.16 Accuracy remains the factor audiences value most when choosing a news provider and continues to be a clear strength of BBC news. Audiences also expect the BBC to act as a counter to misinformation and disinformation through the verification of claims, the provision of context and the explanation of complex events.

1.17 However, strong perceptions of accuracy do not always translate into equivalent perceptions of impartiality. Concerns about bias, story selection and the range of perspectives represented remain important drivers of distrust for some audiences. The BBC's distinctive public service role, and how it is funded, means it is often held to a higher standard by audiences than other news providers and can face particularly intense scrutiny when mistakes occur.

1.18 Audiences increasingly expect impartiality to be demonstrated rather than simply asserted. Maintaining and strengthening confidence in BBC news may therefore require more than providing information about editorial processes. It may involve helping audiences understand how decisions are made, why particular editorial judgments are reached, and how the BBC responds when standards fall short. Alongside journalism that reflects the experiences and concerns of communities across the UK, greater transparency, accountability and engagement could help strengthen confidence in BBC News and maintain its relevance in a changing media environment.

The BBC has taken steps to respond, but maintaining trust will require continual adaptation

1.19 The BBC has introduced a range of measures intended to strengthen trust. These include reforms to its editorial standards and complaints handling, greater use of explanatory and investigative journalism, the development and expansion of BBC Verify, audience engagement initiatives and media literacy activity aimed particularly at children and younger audiences. The BBC is also exploring the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in areas such as translation, accessibility and verification, while developing further tools intended to help identify manipulated content. It is also working collaboratively on responsible AI, including through its involvement in programmes such as *Partnership on AI*, which brings together organisations from across industry, media, academia and civil society, and has committed to an ongoing data science research initiative with UK universities which, among other goals, seeks to understand the benefits of using technology and tools, including AI.

1.20 These initiatives provide a strong basis on which to build. However, their effectiveness will depend not only on their design and delivery, but also on whether they align with audience needs and expectations. This includes understanding how different audiences assess trustworthiness, what forms of transparency and accountability resonate with them, and how these expectations vary across the different platforms and environments in which people encounter news. As audience expectations continue to evolve, the BBC will need to ensure that trust-building measures remain effective both on its own services and in the wider digital environments where audiences increasingly encounter BBC news and news more generally.

1.21 Our recent Media Literacy Recommendations highlight the importance of evaluating media literacy interventions and building a clearer evidence base about what works. As the BBC continues to build on initiatives, programming and services such as BBC Verify, *Newsround*, Bitesize and its wider transparency and verification activity, there is scope to develop a clearer picture of who's accessing these initiatives, how they are being used, how their reach and engagement could be increased, and the extent to which they support audience understanding, confidence and trust. This could help the BBC strengthen its contribution to helping audiences navigate a more complex information environment and ensure that trust-building efforts deliver meaningful outcomes.

The BBC will need to adapt how it builds and maintains trust in the next Charter period

1.22 The Government has identified maximising public trust in the BBC as a key aim of Charter Review, alongside ensuring it remains independent, accountable and relevant to audiences across the UK. It is considering changes to strengthen governance, transparency and editorial standards, while enabling the BBC to adapt to changing technology and audience habits.

1.23 As the Charter Review progresses, the BBC will need to adapt how it delivers trusted news in response to changes in platform distribution, information integrity and increasingly fragmented audience behaviours. In the next Charter period, the BBC will need to build on its traditional strengths in accuracy, impartiality and trust, while ensuring that its journalism remains visible, recognisable and relevant wherever audiences encounter it.

1.24 These developments also have implications for Ofcom. Existing metrics of trust, accuracy, impartiality and reach remain important but may not fully capture how audiences encounter and evaluate BBC news across different platforms. In preparing for the next Charter period, we will consider what this means for how we assess the BBC's performance, including how the delivery of its news shapes audience trust, and what drives lower trust or engagement among those who use BBC news less frequently or not at all. This will help ensure our approach remains effective as the news environment evolves.

2. Trust in news has never been more important

2.1 We are now in our tenth year of regulating the BBC. During that period, we have published annual assessments of the BBC's performance, undertaken in-depth thematic reviews, and built a substantial evidence base on how audiences use and value BBC services. Among the many aspects of the BBC's performance we have considered, the provision of trusted news stands out as particularly important, given the central role news plays in the BBC's contribution to life in the UK.

2.2 Since 2017, there have been profound changes in how people access information, engage with news, and form opinions about the world around them, driving a fundamental transformation in the wider information environment. Online environments have overtaken traditional television as the primary destination for news, and news from a broad range of sources is increasingly encountered through online intermediaries, including social media, video-sharing platforms, search engines and news aggregators, alongside direct access to news providers. Our 2026 News Report shows that 82% of UK adults now access news online each month, compared with 76% who use broadcast television news. Six in ten adults consume news through social media or video sharing platforms such as Facebook (used for news by 39% of UK adults), YouTube (33%) and Instagram (26%). Our latest research on how audiences get their news shows that 73% of adults access news through online intermediaries, compared with 57% who access news directly through news providers' websites and apps.

2.3 Other research we carried out also illustrated the influence these intermediaries can have over how news is encountered. BBC news content is increasingly encountered beyond the BBC's own services, as individual stories, clips and headlines circulate online. We found that the position of news within a social media feed could affect whether people viewed and remembered it, while people generally had limited understanding of the role online intermediaries play in curating the news they see.

2.4 This changing environment means trust is influenced not only by the quality of the content itself, but also by the wider range of information and perspectives against which it is encountered and judged. At the same time, concerns about misinformation, disinformation and AI-generated content have also added new complexities to the challenge of understanding what information can be trusted.

2.5 Alongside these shifts, trust in institutions and in news more broadly has become increasingly more important for audiences. The BBC remains one of the country's most widely used and trusted news brands, with audiences continuing to turn to the BBC as an authoritative source during major news events locally, nationally and internationally, and to verify information they encounter elsewhere.

2.6 This report draws together evidence from Ofcom research, including our qualitative longitudinal studies, and wider industry analysis. Most of the findings are based on quantitative research using representative samples, while our small-scale qualitative longitudinal studies, Media Lives and Children's Media Lives, allow us to hear directly from individuals about their experiences and attitudes. We have included selected quotes from

these studies throughout the report to bring an audience perspective to the trends and issues identified in the wider evidence.

Trust in a digitally platform driven world

Changing patterns of news consumption

2.7 While the quality of journalism remains fundamental, trust in BBC news and in news more generally is also shaped by wider factors. It is influenced by how news is presented, explained, verified and made visible on digital platforms, and by how audiences experience it, and this is playing an increasingly important role in shaping trust.

2.8 There is evidence that these changing patterns of news consumption are affecting trust in news. Ofcom research found that people who use social media for news have lower levels of trust in news media and state institutions than those who use traditional media, a finding that was consistent across a range of measures of news consumption.

2.9 As audiences increasingly encounter news through short-form content, headlines, feeds and AI summaries, they may engage less with the full context of a story and have less awareness of its original source. This has potential implications for how well audiences understand the news they encounter and for the relationship between audiences and news providers.

2.10 Social media is consistently the least trusted platform for news, even for PSB news brands seen on this platform. In 2026, 64% of BBC TV news users rated it highly for trustworthiness, compared with 51% of those accessing BBC News through social media and video-sharing platforms (VSPs). This illustrates a broader challenge for PSB news: reaching audiences through social media and VSPs does not necessarily mean that the levels of trust seen among their traditional audiences will translate to their news on those platforms.

Reaching audiences in algorithm-driven environments

2.11 In this high-choice, low-attention environment, trusted journalism must compete harder for visibility and engagement. Trust is no longer established through the credibility demonstrated by brand recognition, tone and source clarity alone; it depends on repeated, meaningful exposure over time. As a result, the BBC faces a growing challenge in ensuring its reliability is recognised, particularly in contexts where audiences have a wide variety of news options, attention is fleeting and signals of trust are less visible.

2.12 To keep up with new audience trends, the PSBs have been adopting digital news strategies. The BBC has accelerated its approach to reaching audiences on third-party platforms. In January 2026, it announced a new strategic partnership with YouTube, moving beyond sharing existing content towards commissioning programming specifically for the platform, including new global news channels, live story streams and new formats. This has been followed by YouTube-first commissions targeted at younger audiences. Matt Brittin has reinforced this direction since becoming Director-General, telling Parliament in July that although the BBC remained relevant to younger people, it had "*not been going where the audience is*", and needed to become faster, experiment more and work in partnership with others.

2.13 We discuss the scope and impact of its digital-first strategy, and how it appears to be gaining traction in our latest Annual Report on the BBC. Algorithms have a growing role in

determining how audiences encounter news, influencing the prominence given to different stories and sources and shaping perceptions of which issues are most important or urgent. Social media platforms, search engines, and other intermediaries now often shape expectations around what stories are covered, the speed at which they are delivered, and the format and tone in which they are presented. As Ofcom's work on media plurality has highlighted, online intermediaries now have considerable influence over the prominence given to different news sources and stories. Meanwhile, the algorithms used to make these choices often operate in ways that are not fully transparent to audiences, meaning people may be unaware of why particular stories are prioritised in their news feeds.

The implications for trust and the breadth of news

2.14 Online platforms are reshaping not only how news is accessed, but also the information audience's encounter. While recommendation systems vary across platforms and are designed to balance a range of objectives, including responding to users' interests and engagement, online intermediaries can influence patterns of news consumption, potentially reinforcing existing preferences, amplifying polarising narratives and increasing exposure to misinformation and disinformation.[1]

2.15 In these fragmented environments, audiences encounter a complex mix of sources where journalism from traditional, trusted news organisations often sits alongside misleading or unverified content, making it harder for audiences to assess reliability. While research shows high awareness of misinformation and a clear expectation that the BBC should help counter it (through accurate reporting, explanation, and context), these conditions can still encourage selective exposure to views that reinforce existing perspectives, reducing shared understandings of what is true and, over time, undermine trust across the wider news ecosystem, including in traditional providers.

2.16 These effects may extend beyond the viewpoints people encounter to the breadth of news itself. Ofcom research found that greater reliance on online intermediaries, particularly social media and search engines, was associated with exposure to a narrower range of news topics, while greater use of PSBs for online news was associated with exposure to a wider range of topics.

The growing challenge of AI-generated content

2.17 Alongside these challenges, the rise of AI-generated content introduces further risks related to authenticity and the identification of traditionally trusted sources. As more content is created, edited or altered using AI and other technologies, audiences may find it increasingly difficult to determine what is real, how content has been produced, and which sources can be trusted. In this context, the traditional cues of credibility set out at 2.11 may be weakened, making it more difficult for audiences to distinguish authoritative journalism from misleading or artificial content. How effectively the BBC responds to these developments is likely to play an important role in maintaining audience trust, and later in this document we set out the actions and steps the BBC is currently taking to help meet this challenge.

[1] Ofcom, 2024. Online news: Research update, p. 14-18; Robertson et al, 2023. Negativity drives online news consumption, Nature Human Behaviour, 2023.

The BBC faces unprecedented challenges – but it has a good base to build on

2.18 Although trust in TV news remains relatively high, overall trust in news and institutions is declining globally. In the most recent Reuters report, trust in news more widely is currently at its lowest level at 37%, compared to 48% when the survey first started measuring this in 2015. However, trust in PSB news and BBC news specifically amongst UK audiences remains relatively high, with 67% of those that view PSB content describing it as delivering 'trusted and accurate news' well,[2] while just over three fifths of BBC audiences rated BBC news highly for trustworthiness.[3]

The BBC's enduring role and how it builds and drives trust

Figure 1: Trust in PSBs and the BBC remains high



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026

2.19 In this challenging and competitive news environment, the BBC continues to outperform other providers in terms of its reach and remains a major source of news for audiences across the UK. We are keenly aware of this through our ongoing regulation of the BBC's performance, using existing and ongoing research, including our Public Service Media Tracker and News Consumption Survey alongside third-party studies. Through these sources, we can measure overall public attitudes towards the BBC's news provision.

2.20 The BBC has also delivered strong results year-on-year in specific areas tracked across our annual reports on the BBC, mid-Charter reviews, and wider analysis. Looking across this evidence over time allows us to identify consistent themes in how audiences perceive BBC News, and the aspects of its performance, including accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality, that underpin trust.

BBC news is widely used and trusted

2.21 The BBC is the most accessed news provider when compared with other PSBs and online outlets, reaching 77% of UK adults across its own channels.[4] Among BBC news users, 63% rate its news highly for trustworthiness both on and off its own channels while 65% rate it highly for accuracy across its channels.[5] Its reach and reputation extend across local, national and international news.

[2] Ofcom Public Service Media 2025/26
[3] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026
[4] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026
[5] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026 'Highly' indicates ratings of 7-10 out of 10. This year we updated our News Consumption Survey to better capture overall perceptions of BBC News across platforms. While we can still analyse perceptions by platform, we are reporting overall BBC News perceptions for the first time.

2.22 BBC News is available across a wide range of platforms, including television, radio, its website and app, as well as third-party social media and video-sharing platforms. Access via social media and video-sharing platforms extends the BBC's overall reach to at least 80% of UK adults. These platforms are particularly important for reaching younger audiences, increasing BBC News' reach among 16-24-year-olds from 66% to 73%.[6]

2.23 This range of platforms helps the BBC serve different audiences as news consumption shifts online. The pace and pattern of that shift vary considerably by age: social media and video-sharing platforms are particularly important for younger audiences, while older audiences (those aged 75+) continue to rely more on broadcast services, with 78% accessing media via live broadcast TV and 74% via radio.[7]

2.24 As part of its digital first strategy, the BBC has invested in appealing to younger audiences, reaching 15 million followers on TikTok globally. Younger audiences tend to prefer short-form, easy access news content. Of those children and young people who do use the BBC for news, app notifications and social media posts can provide useful ways of accessing news. Two thirds of 16-24s say that they used any BBC news service each month.[8] Reflecting the shift in consumption habits, across 2025/26 BBC news reports it increased its average monthly TikTok views by more than 140% to 883 million, while monthly viewing time more than doubled to 3.2 million hours. Almost 30% of viewers were aged 18 to 24, underlining the platform's role in extending the BBC's reach among younger audiences.

2.25 The BBC's broadcast and online services are also important sources of local news and information: 33% of people aged over 16 in the UK use its website and app for local news, and 30% watch BBC One's regional news bulletins.[9] Among those who follow local news on the BBC, 81% are satisfied with its quality.[10] However, stakeholders have questioned how local its coverage is. The BBC covers wider geographical areas than local newspapers, and some audiences find that newspapers and other online sources offer more detail relevant to their immediate area. These concerns may be heightened by the growing use of social media for local news, used by 36% of participants[11], some of whom raised concerns about distinguishing fact from conjecture.

Audiences value the BBC's depth and authority

2.26 Across its local and national coverage, research finds that audiences value the BBC's emphasis on informing rather than sensationalising, which can reinforce trust. Its national and regional television bulletins are seen as offering serious, in-depth reporting, while its national and regional radio news is respected for its depth compared with local commercial radio.

2.27 The BBC also remains the 'go to' broadcaster for many audiences during domestic and international crises and events of national importance. Its coverage of the meningitis outbreak among students in Kent illustrates how a local story can draw audiences across platforms: according to the BBC's 2025/26 Annual Report, its live online pages on the

[6] Ofcom News Consumotion Survey 2026. Note: this is based on those who actively report seeing BBC news on social media and does not include other incidental use where BBC has not been attributed.
[7] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026
[8] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026
[9] Ofcom Local Media Survey 2026.
[10] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2025.
[11] Ofcom Local Media Survey 2026.

outbreak received 8 million views during that week, alongside innovative coverage on social media, including the BBC News TikTok account.

2.28 Election coverage provides further evidence of audiences turning to the BBC. Among those who consume news through broadcast television, four out of five used the BBC for coverage of the 2024 General Election. Similarly, our 2026 News Report found that 43% of those aware of the UK local elections held on 7 May 2026 accessed BBC news on linear television for related news and information, making it the most accessed form of media for coverage of those elections.

2.29 Major news events have also strengthened trust as audiences, including those otherwise less engaged, turn to the BBC for authoritative information. Research for our previous review of BBC news and current affairs highlighted the opportunity these moments provide to attract and serve the broadest range of audiences. Subsequent examples include its coverage of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, when the BBC was seen to be at its best because of the depth, speed and seriousness of its reporting.

2.30 The BBC also has a substantial international reach, reaching 467 million people each week worldwide. Research commissioned by the BBC found that, among those who use BBC news internationally, 86% say they trust its coverage.

2.31 The BBC World Service is an important part of this international reputation and can help build trust in the BBC in the UK and abroad. A recent collaborative report by the Institute for Global Prosperity and research organisation Creative Power found that it is perceived internationally as a historic, traditional institution and trusted even in countries where trust in the media is scarce. In the UK, the report notes, the BBC World Service retains broad support due to its respected and long-standing reputation internationally in comparison to the BBC News brand. The report also flags that expansion and development of the World Service can be a way in which the BBC can explore new markets and build trusted reach.

How accuracy and impartiality contribute to the 'value' of BBC news

2.32 Our previous review concluded that audiences' respect for the quality of BBC journalism should give the BBC confidence to take a bolder approach to explaining events and challenging unsupported claims where appropriate. However, as the findings below illustrate, translating this into perceptions of trust, accuracy and impartiality is not always straightforward.

2.33 Recent DCMS research drew out a distinction between audiences' perceptions of the overall "value" of BBC news and the factors that underpin those perceptions. Trust related-attributes, particularly accuracy, impartiality and reliability, are central to audience satisfaction, with BBC news widely seen as an established and authoritative source.

2.34 Alongside accuracy, impartiality remains a fundamental expectation of BBC News. Given the BBC's prominent role as a source of news in the UK, audiences expect it to deliver news that is duly impartial, and its approach to impartiality is subject to significant scrutiny. Impartiality can be an important driver of trust. However, in an increasingly polarised news environment, audiences may differ in their perceptions of what impartiality requires and whether the BBC has achieved it. As we discuss below, perceptions of impartiality can therefore both support and undermine trust.

2.35 While it is rated highly for its trustworthiness (63%) and accuracy (65%), this does not always translate across to impartiality with 54% of BBC news users rating BBC news as impartial.[12] These perceptions sit within a wider context in which trust in the BBC can also be affected by high-profile scandals involving former staff and criticism of its handling of complaints and wider culture. We also know from our previous research that perceptions of impartiality are driven by a range of factors depending on the audience's individual perspective such as what stories are being covered as well as contextual factors such as relationships with news brands; additional research finds that news brands are chosen by audiences based on personal preferences and perceived fit with their own values and identity.

2.36 The BBC remains respected for its high-quality reporting, in-depth analysis and avoidance of sensationalism, thanks in part to its legacy of continuing to provide these to audiences over the course of its existence. This longstanding reputation is reflected in consistently high levels of audience trust. However, its high-profile public service role creates high expectations – and alongside that, greater disappointments when audience needs and expectations are not met. As a result, the BBC is facing challenges, new and old, in continuing to drive and retain trust.

The BBC knows the challenge it faces

2.37 Trust and accuracy remain key strengths of BBC news; however, as already highlighted, perceptions have declined in recent years.[13] While similar trends have been observed across other PSBs, these declining perceptions present ongoing reputational challenges and pose a significant sustainability risk for the organisation. Trust underpins audiences' willingness to turn to, engage with and place value in BBC news. A sustained erosion of that trust could therefore make it more difficult for the BBC to maintain its relevance and reach across audiences, particularly as news consumption becomes increasingly fragmented.

2.38 The BBC is well aware of the forces reshaping the news environment and in maintaining and building audience trust in the ecosystem outlined above. Its new Director General recently said that it is something that "*requires constant diligence and care*". In an interview at the 2026 TV Festival in Edinburgh, he added: *"Everything we should do today should be trying to earn trust through transparency and our expertise."*

2.39 How the BBC is seen to respond to editorial controversies or errors can also have a significant influence on audiences' long-term trust. The BBC's handling of such controversies may influence audience perceptions of its transparency, accountability and editorial standards. Ofcom has also been critical of how the BBC has handled editorial concerns and has publicly emphasised that the BBC Board and Executive must take a firmer, more transparent grip when editorial failures occur.

2.40 The BBC also faces significant financial pressures. It has announced a wide-ranging programme of savings and restructuring, intended to reduce its costs by around £500 million. The first phase includes around 550 role reductions and £160 million in staff and non-staff savings, alongside reductions in commissioning expenditure and changes across its television, radio and news services. News and current affairs are among the areas affected, with the BBC announcing changes to a number of established programmes and

[12] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026.
[13] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026.

production teams. Further changes are likely as the BBC works towards its overall savings target. These financial pressures create difficult choices about where the BBC focuses its resources, creating a potential tension between the need to make savings and the investment needed to maintain the quality, breadth and relevance of BBC journalism. Decisions that reduce services or content valued by audiences could weaken the attributes that underpin trust, making it important that the BBC considers the implications for audience trust as it makes these choices.

Factors driving distrust and lower engagement with BBC news

2.41 While BBC news remains one of the most trusted news providers in the UK, trust is not universal, with perceptions varying considerably between different audience groups, and varying further depending on platform.

Figure 2: Changes in trust in BBC TV news (2018 – 2026)



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey

2.42 Amongst younger people (16 to 34-year-olds), trust in BBC news seen on television has dropped from 73% in 2018 to 61% in 2026. However, for older demographics (55+), this has remained relatively stable at 70%, down from 72% in 2018. There is a similar disparity between socio-economic groups: perceptions of trust among C2DE audiences dropped from 72% in 2018 to 61% in 2026, while for ABC1 audiences, levels have dropped from 74% in 2018 to 70% in 2026.[14]

> ***"the news is so biased and London centric"***
>
> ***"I think the news is very biased, when it should be completely neutral."***
>
> ***"I enjoy most of the output from the BBC but do find their news coverage biased at times"***

Source: Ofcom Public Service Media Tracker 2025/26

2.43 The story is similar when observing trust in news accessed via the BBC's website and app. These are significant declines, particularly among younger and C2DE audiences, and raise important questions about the BBC's ability to maintain trust across all parts of its

[14] Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2026.

audience. Understanding what is driving these differences, and how they develop over time, will be an important part of our assessment of the BBC moving forward.

2.44 Below, we highlight some of the key areas in which the BBC is struggling to drive and maintain trust.

Impartiality concerns are a key driver of distrust

2.45 Research conducted by DCMS highlighted concerns about impartiality as being a significant driver of distrust among those who do not value or engage with BBC news. Criticisms often focus on perceived bias and political influence, with some audiences believing that BBC news reflects particular viewpoints or agendas.

2.46 Some participants raised concerns that could be characterised as 'bias by omission', feeling that the BBC focuses heavily on a small number of major stories while other stories receive insufficient coverage. These concerns extend to the breadth of coverage and diversity of perspectives. Such concerns can reinforce disengagement and shape wider attitudes about the credibility of BBC news, highlighting the importance of the BBC's continued emphasis on maintaining and demonstrating impartiality.

Institutional factors also contribute to distrust

2.47 Distrust in BBC news also needs to be understood in the context of wider perceptions of the BBC as an institution. Concerns about governance, accountability and whether the BBC reflects audiences' perspectives can reinforce scepticism towards its news. Both the Government's mid-Charter Review and our own annual assessments have highlighted ongoing concerns in this area, including the need for stronger complaints handling and governance, and greater transparency and accountability.

2.48 In our first periodic review of the BBC, published in 2021, we noted that transparency is critical to maintaining public trust and support in the BBC, and that the BBC should be more open to explaining publicly the decisions it makes that affect UK audiences. We also said that while some improvements had been made within the Charter period to that point, especially with regards to complaints handling, there was still further work to be done to retain public confidence in the BBC's editorial decision-making.

2.49 Research finds that, for some individuals, disengagement is also influenced by a perceived mismatch between the BBC and their personal values. This includes concerns relating to issues such as presenter pay and the licence fee, which can shape overall attitudes towards the BBC and, by extension, its news provision.

Changing audience behaviours are reshaping trust and engagement

2.50 Low engagement with BBC news is not always driven by distrust. In many cases, it reflects changing audience behaviours, preferences and perceptions of relevance. More broadly, engagement with news has declined across many markets and platforms in recent years. Reuters Institute research shows that global consumption of TV news, news websites and apps, radio and print news has fallen significantly, while the proportion of UK adults who say they are interested in news in has dropped from 70% in 2015 to 37% in 2026. Declining engagement with BBC news should be understood partly in the context of wider changes in how audiences' access, consume and value news.

2.51 Many audiences, particularly younger and those who use BBC news less frequently, perceive other news and social media sources as offering faster updates, a wider range of viewpoints and more accessible content. There is a clear preference for short-form, easily digestible formats that are viewed as more engaging than traditional news products. While the BBC's more formal style is valued by some audiences, others, particularly younger audiences, perceive it as less suited to their consumption habits. Reaching these audiences therefore requires more than making BBC news available on the platforms they use; the content and formats also need to reflect how audiences consume and engage with news on those platforms.

2.52 Trust is increasingly being placed in individuals and personal networks rather than institutions. In some cases, audiences place greater confidence in familiar voices on social media, believing that misinformation is more likely to be challenged or corrected within their own networks. More broadly, this reflects the growing influence of creators and personality-led news consumption, which some commentators, including the former head of BBC news, have identified as a significant challenge for traditional broadcasters.

2.53 Among older audiences, there is a growing expectation that important news will reach them through conversations with friends and family, through people they follow on social media, or via a trusted group of news creators. Audiences can be highly selective about which creators they turn to, seeking out familiar names and faces that reflect either assenting or dissenting perspectives. For younger audiences, social media provides a direct connection to individual news creators with large followings and is often their first meaningful engagement with news. These relationships can play an important role in shaping how younger audiences consume and engage with news content more broadly.

2.54 Perceptions of relevance also affect engagement. Some audiences feel that other news sources better reflect local issues and community perspectives. This is linked to broader concerns about representation, with some audiences feeling that BBC news does not adequately "represent people like me" or reflect the diversity of views held across society. There is also an expectation among some groups that BBC news coverage should better capture public perspectives rather than institutional viewpoints.

2.55 Some low users of news describe a broader disengagement, citing the overwhelming and often negative nature of the 24-hour news cycle as a reason for avoiding news consumption altogether.

2.56 Taken together, these findings suggest that distrust and disengagement are often driven less by concerns about the accuracy of BBC news and more by perceptions of impartiality, institutional trustworthiness, relevance and format. Importantly, attitudes towards BBC News and decisions about whether to use it are not necessarily the same thing. Audiences may regard it as a credible source while choosing other platforms, formats or providers that better suit their habits and preferences. As we highlighted in our recent review of PSM Media, the BBC will therefore need to continue evolving its digital-first strategy by meeting audiences where they are, improving discoverability, and delivering news in formats that reflect changing consumption habits and preferences.

What audiences want from BBC news

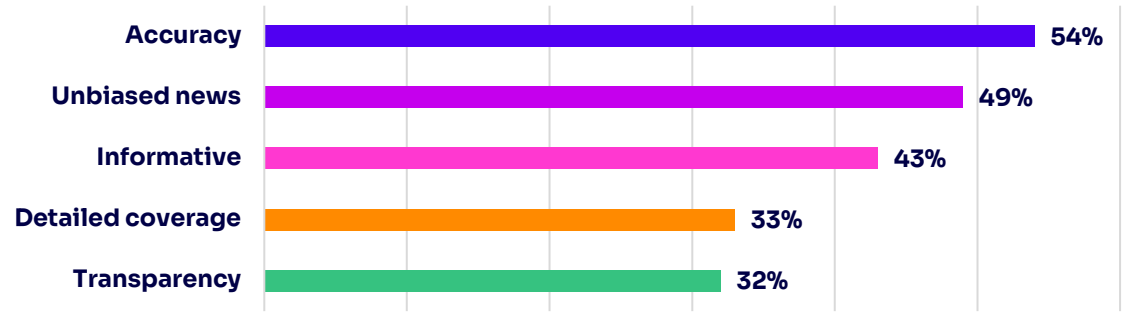
2.57 If the BBC is to remain a trusted provider of news, it must continue to adapt to changing audience needs and expectations. As we have already flagged, a substantial body of research exists in this area. We have drawn on this evidence to build a clearer picture of the

factors that audiences value most in the BBC's news provision. From this evidence, we have identified seven broad and interconnected factors which, taken together, provide a framework for understanding what audiences expect from BBC news. The following sections consider each of these in turn, and the evidence that sits behind them. This framework also provides a useful basis for considering how we can continue to hold the BBC to account on behalf of audiences, while ensuring that our approach evolves alongside changing audience expectations and priorities.

Continue to prioritise accuracy

2.58 Across the BBC's news output, its commitment to delivering news to audiences with a high degree of accuracy has proven essential in gaining, and retaining, trust. Its output is widely described as accurate, fact-checked, credible, and professional, helping it build a strong reputation among users. Audiences identify this reputation for high-quality news delivery as long-standing, with many growing up with the BBC as a news institution that is a constant and consistent part of their lives, creating a continued expectation of reliability.

Figure 3: What audiences value when choosing a news provider



Source: DCMS Research and Analysis: Value of BBC News (2025)

2.59 Recent research confirms that accuracy is audiences' leading consideration when choosing news. The BBC's established strength in this area therefore provides an important foundation for retaining trust.

2.60 Participants consistently emphasised the importance of accuracy in BBC news. They reiterated their concerns about the prevalence of misinformation and highlighted the value of having a trusted source committed to accuracy and reliability. Participants viewed this as a core role of BBC news and argued that the organisation should remain true to its public service mission.

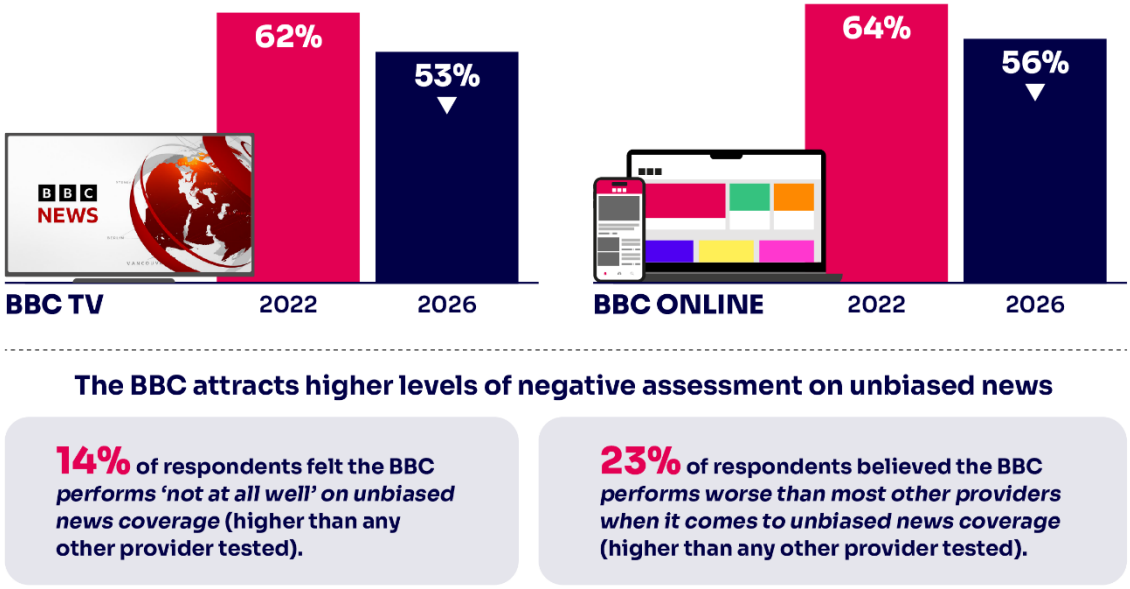
Maintain and visibly demonstrate due impartiality

2.61 Where perceptions of bias exist, trust is weakened. This challenge is amplified by social media and other online intermediaries, which shape the range and type of news that audiences encounter. While these platforms can expose people to a wider range of perspectives, they also influence expectations about which stories are covered and how balance is achieved, increasing scrutiny of perceived impartiality.

2.62 Audiences expect the BBC to address this challenge proactively, and for impartiality to remain a central focus of BBC news in the future. Participants wanted impartiality not only to be achieved, but to be clearly demonstrated, particularly when reporting on contentious issues.

2.63 This expectation comes at a time when audiences' perceptions of the BBC's impartiality have been declining. Unbiased news remains one of the most important factors in audiences' choice of news provider, yet the BBC's own data shows that the proportion of audiences rating BBC News highly for impartiality has fallen from 51% in 2021/22 to 45% in 2025/26. This decline is also evident among users of individual BBC services, including BBC TV and BBC News online. And when audiences were asked specifically about unbiased news coverage, the BBC attracted comparatively high levels of negative assessment: across the attributes tested, unbiased coverage received the highest proportion saying the BBC performed 'not at all well' (14%) and the highest proportion saying it performed worse than most or all other providers (23%).

Figure 4: Proportion of users rating each service highly for impartiality



Source: Ofcom Interactive Performance Report 2025/26; DCMS: Value of BBC News (2025)

2.64 While our data shows that other PSBs have seen similar declines, with their perception scores for impartiality also lower than their scores for accuracy and trust, these findings suggest there is a greater degree of public scepticism about the BBC's performance on impartiality and bias. [15] This may also reflect the fact that audiences hold the BBC to a higher standard than other news providers, given its unique public service role and longstanding reputation as a trusted source of news.

Show audiences how news is sourced and verified

2.65 The growing prevalence of AI-generated content is likely to increase audience expectations around transparency and verification. Audiences may expect clearer explanations of how stories are sourced, checked and verified, as well as greater visibility of the editorial processes underpinning BBC news content.

[15] Ofcom News Consumption Surveys

> ***"Sometimes mistakes can happen, but it depends who it's from. Like, if a mistake happens from BBC, you know, it's a big thing because, you know, it's a big process of how something can get published. Whereas if a mistake happened from a random social media channel, it's likely that it's just one person behind that. They might make an honest mistake. Whereas BBC, because it's publicly funded, there shouldn't be any bias."***
>
> Hazeem, 21

Source: Ofcom Adult Media Lives Report 2026

2.66 Transparency emerged as an important factor in building and maintaining trust, particularly among audiences who were more sceptical of BBC news. Participants often viewed transparency as a prerequisite for assessing claims of impartiality, believing that greater openness about editorial decision-making would help strengthen confidence in the BBC's journalism and storytelling.

2.67 This was also reflected in the quantitative findings, with transparency (32%) ranking among the five most important attributes of a news provider. Among audiences who expressed dissatisfaction with BBC news, a perceived lack of transparency was cited as one of their more significant concerns.

Act as a trusted counterweight to misinformation and disinformation

The proliferation of online news sources means that audiences are increasingly exposed to a wider range of news sources, including false or misleading content. As audiences increasingly turn to online sources in place of traditional media, they may also be less consistently exposed to trusted journalism. In this environment, it can be more difficult for audiences to distinguish between authoritative reporting and misinformation or disinformation.

2.68 Against this backdrop, audiences continue to see countering misinformation as a core responsibility of BBC news and a key reason why they trust it. Trust is reinforced when the BBC is perceived as a reliable source of accurate information and as a corrective to false or misleading narratives. Audiences expect BBC news to play an important role in helping them navigate an increasingly complex and polarised information environment.

2.69 Research published by DCMS reflected these expectations. Participants demonstrated a high awareness of the prevalence of misinformation, particularly online, and described turning to BBC news to verify stories they had encountered elsewhere. Many saw fact-checking as an important function of BBC news and wanted the organisation to continue playing a leading role in countering misinformation and disinformation.

> ***"I know we keep going back to the BBC website, but they've got that fact check thing now, haven't they? Some articles I've read will say that, you know, the source is fact checked."***
>
> Denise, 48

Source: Ofcom's Adult Media Lives Report 2026

2.70 Our annual report highlights BBC Verify and its expansion as an example of the BBC's efforts to strengthen audience trust in its news services. We note that the BBC continues to take steps to improve transparency and accountability, through such initiatives, opening its news editorial processes to greater public scrutiny. In the context of declining trust in institutions and an increasingly complex information environment, we recognise these measures as part of the BBC's broader work to maintain confidence in the accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality of its news output.

Reflect society rather than an internal BBC view

2.71 Audiences want BBC news to reflect the diversity of experiences, perspectives and concerns that exist across UK society, rather than being perceived as representing institutional viewpoints. Where audiences feel that news coverage is disconnected from their lived experiences, this can weaken perceptions of relevance, legitimacy and trust.

2.72 The BBC's commissioned thematic review of portrayal and representation found that, while BBC News and current affairs remains widely trusted, audience expectations of authenticity, tone and authority are particularly high in this genre. The review highlights that audiences are especially sensitive to coverage perceived as overly instructive, moralising, or disconnected from everyday experiences. Such perceptions can risk undermining trust and confidence in the BBC's impartiality. The review concludes that strengthening portrayal in news and current affairs requires not only greater visibility of diverse voices, but also stronger editorial proximity to audiences and more robust measurement of how people and communities are represented in practice.

2.73 A similar finding emerged in our BBC Audience Review. Some audiences, particularly those in socio-economic groups D and E, felt that BBC content, including news, did not always reflect their lives and concerns. Some felt that portrayals failed to capture the complexity of their everyday experiences and could feel stereotypical or tokenistic, although these findings extended beyond news and current affairs. Where audiences feel that coverage speaks about people rather than with them, their connection to the content can weaken, reducing trust and engagement even where editorial standards are recognised as high.

2.74 DCMS research also found that audiences wanted more opportunities for public perspectives to be reflected in news and current affairs and for the BBC to reflect the views of society rather than its own internal views. Ofcom's research found that some audiences from D and E backgrounds were increasingly gravitating towards podcasters and online creators whom they perceived as more authentic and more reflective of their experiences than traditional broadcast media.

Sustain trust in local news through relevance and presence

2.75 Relevance at the local level plays an important role in sustaining audience engagement and trust. Participants highlighted local news as a factor in their choice of news provider. While BBC local news was valued, particularly in areas with limited alternative sources, some participants felt that its broad regional approach did not always provide sufficiently local coverage. This points to the importance audiences place on news that reflects the issues and experiences of their local areas.

2.76 Participants also viewed this as increasingly important in the context of the decline of local independent news outlets. Many felt that BBC news could help fill emerging gaps in local

news provision by providing greater coverage of issues that directly affect communities, including transport, crime, business and community events.

2.77 Looking ahead, participants saw more locally relevant news as an opportunity for BBC News to better meet audiences' needs and attract audiences in the future. They felt that strengthening local coverage could help fill gaps left by the decline of independent local news outlets and ensure audiences have access to information about issues affecting their local areas. This is supported by Ofcom's Local Media Review, which highlighted the shift towards online local news and the need for the BBC, and other providers , to adapt its local offering beyond traditional broadcast, ensuring the local news it provides on its platforms is easy for audiences to find. This reinforces the importance not only of providing relevant local journalism, but ensuring it is visible, available and accessible through the services audiences use for local news.

Reaching audiences through the formats and services they value

2.78 Alongside reflecting audiences' lives and perspectives, BBC news needs to remain accessible as patterns of news consumption change. Ofcom's research indicates that different audience groups have evolving expectations of its content and services. DCMS research found that audiences generally believed BBC news serves a wide range of people through its broad portfolio of news services but identified opportunities to strengthen its appeal and relevance to different groups.

2.79 In particular, the DCMS research found that audiences felt that BBC news should continue to adapt to changing patterns of news consumption by increasing its short-form content and strengthening its presence on social media platforms to better engage younger audiences. The research indicated that younger audiences value BBC news for being concise and quick to consume, particularly through TikTok, social media content and app notifications. However, increasing competition for attention means that discoverability, recognition and relevance remain important challenges.

2.80 Participants in the DCMS research also expressed a desire for a broader mix of content, including more positive and special-interest stories, alongside greater opportunities for personalisation. Younger participants in particular highlighted options to filter content according to their interests and choose the types of news for which they receive notifications.

2.81 Participants also stressed the importance of maintaining services for older and digitally excluded audiences through television and radio news. This was seen as particularly important given that digitally excluded audiences often have fewer alternative sources of news and information and, as a result, may rely more heavily on the BBC. This underlines the importance of the BBC continuing to consider the needs of these audiences as it makes decisions about the future scope and delivery of its services.

2.82 These expectations sit within a broader shift towards increasingly fragmented digital news environments, where audiences, particularly younger people, are less likely to engage directly with traditional public service media. In this context, maintaining trust will require BBC news to remain relevant and accessible across a range of platforms and formats, while continuing to uphold the accuracy, impartiality and reliability that audiences value most.

The BBC's approach to maintaining and strengthening trust and relevance

2.83 The BBC has accelerated its digital-first news strategy to reach audiences where they are, particularly younger audiences. The BBC's new head of News, Rachel Jupp, has made this a priority, emphasising new platforms and formats alongside using technology and innovation to work more efficiently and sustainably. Its wider response to changing audience habits and the challenges facing trust in news spans editorial standards and complaints handling; audience-led journalism, fact-checking and verification, supported by media literacy; and the use of AI. Together, these changes seek to maintain the value and distinctiveness of BBC journalism while balancing reach, relevance and trust under continued financial pressure.

Strengthening editorial standards, accountability and complaints handling

2.84 In 2023, the BBC reported implementing the Serota Review recommendations and its Impartiality and Editorial Standards Action Plan, including changes to editorial standards and BBC First complaints handling. Following Ofcom recommendations on transparency, clarity and response times, it restructured its complaints team, introduced internal reporting and process reviews, and improved audience guidance.

2.85 Following the Government's January 2024 Mid-Term Review, changes to the Framework Agreement gave Ofcom duties to enforce the BBC Online Material Code and review a sample of final BBC complaints decisions not escalated to us. The wider reforms also seek to improve audiences' awareness and understanding of BBC First. Further reforms include publishing reasoned Stage 2 decisions on accuracy, impartiality and other qualifying complaints, and Ofcom–BBC correspondence where warranted; clearer expedited handling; and earlier notification of potential serious editorial breaches, with exceptional scope for Ofcom to intervene before BBC First is complete.

Strengthening trust through audience-led journalism, fact-checking, verification and media literacy

2.86 The BBC has responded to these changing expectations through a range of initiatives focused on audience engagement, transparency and verification. These include BBC Investigates, BBC InDepth, BBC Verify and initiatives such as *Your Voice* and *Your Voice, Your Vote*, which seek to make journalism more responsive to audience concerns and clearer about how stories are selected, reported and verified.[16] BBC Verify has expanded its focus on tackling false and AI-generated content and is now recognised by around a quarter of UK adults and used by millions each week.

2.87 The BBC has also continued to invest in media literacy initiatives for children and young people. These include *Other Side of the Story*, which helps 11 to 16-year-olds identify misinformation and reached approximately 77,000 weekly users in 2025/26, an increase of more than 60% year on year. Additional school-based initiatives, including workshops, the

[16] In 2025/26, BBC news used *Your Voice* livestreams to answer audience questions on issues ranging from voting and renters' rights to everyday consumer concerns, helping to create greater interaction between journalists and audiences.

AI or Real livestream and Solve the Story, have been used to strengthen news literacy, critical thinking and verification skills.

How the BBC is responding to AI

2.88 The BBC has identified AI as a key area for innovation in news production, with the aim of enhancing output while contributing to wider discussions about the responsible use of AI, including the protection of creators' intellectual property. In its Annual Plan 2026/27, the BBC outlined its intention to explore how AI can support journalism and improve service delivery, including through applications in news production and verification, as well as pilots focused on areas such as translation and subtitling. It has also committed to working collaboratively with AI providers, news organisations and technology partners to develop solutions and help shape the responsible use of AI across the sector.

2.89 The BBC is already piloting a range of AI applications across news production and distribution. These include using AI to accelerate the translation of global reporting, enabling the BBC World Service to develop pilot services in new languages and expand the reach of its content to both existing and new audiences. For example, the BBC reported that its new Polish-language World Service offer, BBC news Polska, uses AI translation technology, with human editorial oversight, to make BBC journalism available to Polish-speaking audiences. The BBC explained that the service forms part of a wider plan to bring trusted journalism to more audiences globally and that similar pilots are intended for Hungarian and Romanian language services. Such initiatives also support the BBC's efforts to counter disinformation by making trusted news content more widely available.

> ***"The BBC sometimes comes up with things, doesn't it? 'AI-generated' or 'This picture is false,' because they've got the technology to be able to determine. The likes of me and Joe Bloggs here... generally I don't think we stand a chance."***
>
> Donald, 71

Source: Ofcom's Adult Media Lives Report 2026

2.90 Alongside these opportunities, the BBC is exploring ways to address the risks posed by AI, particularly where advances in synthetic media may make it more difficult for audiences to distinguish authoritative journalism from misleading or manipulated content. To address these challenges, the BBC is investing in research and technology designed to verify the authenticity of digital content. BBC Research & Development has developed AI-powered deepfake detection tools and is investigating methods to provide journalists and audiences with greater confidence in distinguishing whether images have been manipulated, helping to reinforce trust and transparency in an increasingly complex media landscape.

2.91 The BBC's response to the growing integration of AI within the news environment will remain critical to maintaining audience trust. For audiences who are sceptical about the use of AI, transparency regarding where and how the technology is deployed, alongside a measured and responsible approach to adoption, will be essential. At the same time, audiences who are more receptive to AI may expect the BBC to make effective use of the technology to enhance the quality, accessibility and relevance of its services. Balancing these expectations while maintaining editorial integrity and public trust will be a key challenge for the organisation in the years ahead.

Summary

2.92 Taken together, the evidence suggests that the BBC remains relatively well placed, with public trust underpinned by its reputation for accuracy, reliability and high-quality journalism. However, this position cannot be taken for granted. Audience perceptions of trustworthiness, accuracy and impartiality have weakened in recent years, particularly among some groups who will be critical to the BBC's future sustainability.

2.93 These challenges are compounded by greater audience choice, increasingly fragmented news consumption, and wider reputational and financial pressures. In response, the BBC has taken steps to reform editorial standards and complaints handling, invested more in verification and media literacy, and sought to reach audiences where they increasingly encounter news. These initiatives provide a strong basis on which to build.

2.94 There are encouraging signs, evidence of increased recognition and use of BBC Verify, while specific media literacy initiatives show growing reach. However, these findings do not yet establish improvements in wider trust, skills or engagement among disengaged audiences. Continued evaluation is therefore needed to establish which measures improve confidence and help the BBC reconnect with audiences whose trust and engagement have weakened.

2.95 The BBC’s scale and reach mean it is particularly well placed to help audiences navigate misinformation and disinformation, but its ability to perform this role depends on audiences continuing to trust its journalism. Stemming and, where possible, reversing declines in trust will therefore be important both to the BBC’s future relevance and its ability to fulfil this wider public service role.

2.96 The long-term trust in the BBC will depend on meaningful improvements in audience perceptions and engagement, so that its journalism continues to be recognised as accurate, trustworthy and impartial in an increasingly competitive and complex information environment.

2.97 The following section considers the future challenges and strategic considerations that are likely to shape the BBC's ability to maintain audience trust as the news ecosystem continues to evolve.

3. What's next?

3.1 As set out in this document, the BBC continues to play a significant role in the UK news landscape, underpinned by its reach, reputation for accuracy and relatively high levels of audience trust. This section considers what's next for the BBC, as it approaches a new Charter period, and the future trust challenge this creates: how BBC news can remain relevant, visible and trusted when audiences increasingly encounter journalism through third-party platforms, algorithmic feeds, creator-led environments and more complex information spaces. These developments also raise important questions for Ofcom and how we assess the BBC's performance in the future, including whether established measures may need to evolve to ensure they continue to provide an effective assessment of how trust is developed and sustained.

3.2 Meeting this challenge starts with understanding what audiences want from the BBC. The evidence points to a clear set of expectations: accurate and impartial journalism that is transparent about how it is produced and verified, reflects different communities and perspectives across the UK, and is relevant and accessible in the ways people increasingly consume news. These expectations provide an important starting point for considering how the BBC maintains trust in the next Charter period.

What the BBC may look to do differently

3.3 In this context, trust will depend not only on the strength of the BBC's editorial standards, but also on whether audiences can recognise and understand those standards. Clear and visible sourcing, together with explanations of how information has been gathered, tested and verified, will become increasingly important, particularly on social media and other third-party platforms, where familiar markers of BBC journalism may be less prominent.

3.4 The BBC will also need to translate editorial quality more consistently into audience confidence. People increasingly judge news not only by the journalism they see, but also by whether they understand how editorial decisions are reached, how competing perspectives are weighed, how sources are used and how organisations respond when expectations are not met. Greater openness about these aspects of news production may therefore help strengthen confidence over time.

3.5 Media literacy provides one important way for the BBC to support this wider understanding. Our media literacy work highlights the role broadcasters can play in helping audiences navigate complex information environments. With its scale, reach and existing initiatives, programming and services, including BBC Verify, BBC Bitesize, *Newsround* and explanatory journalism, the BBC is well placed to help audiences understand how trustworthy journalism is produced and verified.

3.6 Building on these foundations, the BBC could make media literacy a more central part of its future news strategy, particularly for younger audiences and those who are less likely to seek out BBC news directly, by embedding trust-building principles more consistently across its services and platforms. This could include clearer explanations of how journalists verify user-generated footage, investigate emerging claims, use sources, issue corrections or deploy AI tools. It may also mean adapting transparency and media literacy messages for social media and other third-party environments, where audiences may be less likely to encounter the traditional trust markers associated with BBC-owned services.

3.7 By helping audiences understand what information is trustworthy and why, the BBC could build relationships that extend beyond individual programmes, presenters or platforms. In a fragmented media environment, this may help it move beyond protecting existing trust towards building confidence among audiences who are less likely to seek out BBC News directly.

3.8 Media literacy, verification and transparency are, however, only part of the response. The evidence reviewed in this report points to a wider challenge for the BBC, rebuilding meaningful connections with audiences whose trust and engagement have weakened, particularly among groups whose news habits are changing most rapidly.

3.9 Addressing this challenge will require a stronger understanding of how different groups assess news, what shapes their confidence in BBC journalism and how perceptions vary across platforms, communities and demographic groups. Approaches that resonate with established audiences may be less effective for younger people, light users or those who are already more sceptical of BBC News.

3.10 Strengthening the relationship between BBC News and the communities it serves will also be important. Coverage that reflects a broad range of experiences and perspectives from across the UK may help audiences see greater relevance in the BBC's journalism, while local news can make a particular contribution to connection, relevance and confidence. Making this journalism available across the range of platforms audiences use to access news may also help the BBC reach and connect with audiences who are engaging less with its traditional services.

3.11 As the BBC develops initiatives intended to support trust and audience confidence, it will be important to establish which approaches have the greatest impact. Our Media Literacy Recommendations include that broadcasters evaluate the impact of their media literacy interventions, and highlight the importance of understanding what works and build an evidence base around media literacy interventions. While initiatives such as BBC Verify may be well recognised, it will become increasingly important to understand whether they are improving audiences' ability to identify trustworthy information, assess sources critically and navigate their information environments. Such future assessment or evaluations may wish to consider a broad range of outcomes, including whether audiences have greater confidence in evaluating information, a stronger understanding of how journalism is produced, and an improved ability to distinguish between credible and non-credible sources, particularly in an era of AI-generated content.

3.12 Ultimately, sustaining trust will depend on the BBC remaining relevant as patterns of news consumption continue to evolve. This will require that it continues to reach audiences across different platforms, and that its journalism remains recognisable. Its approach must respond to the needs of different audiences and communities, and its interventions must be informed by evidence of what works. As more people encounter news through social media, video-sharing platforms and other digital environments, the BBC will need to ensure that its journalism remains distinctive, accessible and valuable wherever audiences find it.

Charter renewal provides an opportunity to strengthen trust

3.13 The Charter renewal process provides an opportunity to respond to some of the challenges identified in this review and to consider how the BBC's role should evolve as the way audiences access and engage with news continues to change. This includes how the BBC builds on its existing strengths in accuracy and impartiality, while supporting audiences to

navigate misinformation and disinformation and ensuring its journalism remains visible, recognisable and relevant across an increasingly fragmented media environment.

3.14 The Government's Green Paper proposes a number of changes relevant to these issues, including strengthening the BBC's role in supporting a healthy information environment, updating its Mission and Public Purposes, and considering stronger expectations around media literacy, verification, transparency and accountability. The Charter process will provide an opportunity to consider how these expectations should be reflected in the future regulatory framework, including how the BBC's performance is assessed.

What Ofcom may need to consider

3.15 As we have laid out in this document, trust in BBC news is increasingly shaped not only by the journalism itself, but by where and how audiences encounter it, its visibility and attribution, and the ways in which audiences judge its credibility. Existing measures provide important evidence on trust, accuracy, impartiality and reach, but future assessment may need to reflect more fully how trust is formed and maintained across different environments.

3.16 Future measures could, for example, help us understand whether the BBC's activity on media literacy, transparency and verification is delivering meaningful outcomes for audiences. Relevant indicators could include trust in BBC news across BBC-owned and third-party platforms; recognition of BBC journalism outside BBC-controlled environments; confidence in the editorial standards and verification processes behind BBC news; audiences' ability to identify trustworthy information; and whether audiences feel BBC news reflects and serves them.

3.17 As we develop the framework for assessing the BBC during the next Charter period, we will build our understanding of these issues and strengthen our evidence base where gaps remain. In particular, we will consider how we can better understand the ways audiences encounter and value BBC journalism in an increasingly complex news environment, and how this should inform our future approach to holding the BBC to account on behalf of audiences. We will continue to engage closely with the BBC as it responds to the challenges identified.