

Two large, stylized arrows pointing upwards and to the right. The front arrow is blue, and the back arrow is grey. They are overlapping, with the blue arrow in front of the grey one.

# **OFCOM BBC PERFORMANCE TRACKER YEAR 8 (2024-2025) TECHNICAL REPORT**

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## 1 Preface

This document details the methodology, sampling and weighting for the 2024-2025 BBC Performance Tracker study, which has been run by Critical Research on behalf of Ofcom. This fieldwork conducted in 2024-2025 represents Year 8 of the BBC Performance Tracker.

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

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

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

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

The questionnaire used for this 2024-2025 (Year 8) fieldwork was very similar to the questionnaire that had been used for the 2023-2024 (Year 7) fieldwork. An extensive review of the questionnaire was undertaken ahead of the fieldwork conducted in 2020-2021 (Year 4), including a review of the public purpose statements and sub-statements. The review was conducted in consultation with the broader project team within Ofcom and was achieved through a substantial phase of cognitive testing and piloting, conducted pre lockdown in 2020.

The method of conducting fieldwork for the BBC Performance Tracker has been adapted over time by necessity. For the initial three years of fieldwork (conducted from 2017 to March 2020), interviewing had been conducted using a mixed method approach with a 50:50 split between online interviews conducted through online panels and face-to-face interviews conducted in-home by interviewers.

As face-to-face fieldwork was not possible in either Year 4 or Year 5 (April 2020 to March 2022) due to Covid-19, an alternative achieved through a postal approach resulting in either an online interview or completion via a paper questionnaire was conducted alongside online panel interviewing.

For the interviewing to be conducted from April 2022 to March 2023 (Year 6), April 2023 to March 2024 (Year 7) and from April 2024 to March 2025 (Year 8), it was possible to return to face-to-face interviewing, and so a mix of computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) and online panel interviewing has been used.

While this was the same broad approach as in the early years (Year 1 to Year 3), the profiles of respondents who use the internet were matched across the online and in-home interviews. meaning that sub-groups are generally better balanced in terms of interviewing mode, should this be an issue. To minimise the need for corrective weighting (by level of internet usage), the CAPI sample included a boost of non-users of the internet.

For the Year 8 fieldwork, Critical Research interviewed an overall sample of 4,338 adults, aged 16+, in the UK. Interviews were conducted through online panels (2,275) or through the face-to-face CAPI approach (2,063). Within the overall total of face-to-face interviews, 166 interviews were a boost of non-users of the internet, these were in addition to the non-users encountered in the main sample of 1,897. Both the face-to-face and online panel Interviewing was conducted each month from April 2024 to the end of March 2025.

The data are initially weighted to correct the over-representation of nations, regions and areas to produce a geographically representative sample. They are then weighted by age, gender, social class, working status, and BBC TV region to match the known population profile. An additional level of weighting was added, covering volume of internet usage – hours per week.

Details of the sampling frame, research methodology, weighting procedures and reporting are outlined in the following pages. A note on statistical reliability is also included.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Guide to Statistical Reliability

## 2 Sample design

**Face-to-face:** The study uses Census 2021 Output Areas (OAs)<sup>2</sup> as the basic building block for sampling, then uses quota control by three key variables (age, gender and household socio-economic group for the household) to control the sample interviewed within each sampling point.

The OAs in the UK were grouped into sampling units (SUs), which were then stratified by BBC region, rural/urban indicator and Small Area Deprivation Index.

- Firstly, all the SUs were sorted by region/ country.
- Secondly, the SUs were then sorted within region/ country by rural/ urban categories based on UK Geographics' (UKG) Urbanity classification.
- Thirdly, rural/ urban strata SUs were sorted by Small Area Deprivation Index.

Since region has been used as the first sorting variable, the regional distribution of SUs will be more or less in proportion to the number of residential addresses in each region. The size of a SU is measured by the number of addresses it contains. The SUs were selected with a probability proportionate to size. This ensures that all households within an SU have an equal chance of being selected, regardless of the size of the SU in which a household is situated. The number of interviews (excluding any non-user boost interviews) per SU was 11.

The following quotas were set (within each SU) to represent the population within that SU, which means the overall quotas across the UK will closely match the UK population. Quotas were set using available 2021 Census data for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

- Age (16-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65-74, 75+)
- Socio-economic group (SEG)
- Gender

For each sampling unit, socio-economic group quotas are based on the available Census 2021 variable Approximate Social Grade of Household Reference Person.

**Online:** Sample for the online part of the study was provided via online consumer panels.

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<sup>2</sup> The 2021 Census Output Areas were used as a building block for the creation of slightly larger first-stage Sampling Units (SUs) used for sampling. This approach allows 100% coverage of all UK areas.

### 3 Quotas and weighting

Quotas were set for each month of interviewing achieved through online panels, in terms of the respondent's age, gender, household socio-economic group, and region/ nation.

For the face-to-face fieldwork, quotas were set within each sampling point to reflect the population profile of that sampling point, while hitting the overall profile of UK adults. These quotas were calculated by UKG using Census data. The non-user boost interviews were allocated differentially to sampling points depending on our expectation of non-users within that point, based on the age and SEG profile. The quota variables used were nation, BBC region, urbanity, age, SEG and gender.

Interviewers were also supplied with "soft" quotas for working status and EMG group, to try to minimise the final weighting.

All data has been weighted to the following demographic profiles:

- Gender (Male, Female)
- Age (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74 and 75+)
- Nation (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) and BBC TV Region
- Urbanity (Urban, Rural)
- Social class (AB, C1, C2, DE)
- Working status (Working, Not working)
- Internet usage

The profile for internet usage was taken from the main CAPI sample as the most representative measure.

The following table shows the initial unweighted sample and the final weighted sample profile.

Figures based on UK adults	% Weighted Profile	% Unweighted Interviews achieved
Gender – Male 16+	48%	49%
Gender – Female 16+	51%	50%
Age – 16-24	11%	11%
Age – 25-44	33%	36%
Age – 45-64	33%	30%
Age – 65+	23%	24%
SEG – AB	26%	27%
SEG – C1	30%	28%
SEG – C2	18%	18%
SEG – DE	26%	27%
Working Status – working	59%	57%
Working Status – not working	39%	40%
Nation – England	84%	67%
Nation – Scotland	8%	12%
Nation – Wales	5%	11%
Nation – Northern Ireland	3%	10%
Urban areas	87%	84%
Rural areas	13%	16%

The percentages described above as ‘% Weighted’ are the targets used to weight the data. The figures for age, gender and location are taken from the 2021 Census where available. SEG profiles come from NRS published data. The ‘% Unweighted’ column shows the actual percentage of interviews achieved in the 2024-2025 fieldwork.

## 4 Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the 'true' values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95%, that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the 'true' values will fall within a specified range.

Due to the mixed method approach adopted for the BBC Performance Tracker, significance testing for these data tables is applied at the 99% level<sup>3</sup>. As the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size<sup>4</sup> (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results.

The following table compares ESS and actual samples for some of the main analysis groups.

	Actual	ESS
<b>Total</b>	4,338	3,520
<b>Gender – Male 16+</b>	2,113	1,717
<b>Gender – Female 16+</b>	2,185	1,769
<b>Age – 16-24</b>	471	378
<b>Age – 25-44</b>	1,557	1,275
<b>Age – 45-64</b>	1,277	1,065
<b>Age – 65+</b>	1,033	854
<b>SEG – AB</b>	1,160	945
<b>SEG – C1</b>	1,207	989
<b>SEG – C2</b>	786	649
<b>SEG – DE</b>	1,177	942

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<sup>3</sup> Testing at 99% can be a preferred methodology when using mixed mode to recruit and interview respondents. The rationale is that the mixed effect means that there are unquantifiable design effects due to the fact that online panels may be attitudinally different to those encountered face-to-face. Testing at a higher level means those design effects are accommodated for and there is certainty that any reported differences by demographic are significant.

<sup>4</sup> Effective Sample Size shown as Effective Weighted Sample in the data tables produced



<b>Working Status – working</b>	2,482	2,003
<b>Working Status – not working</b>	1,751	1,439
<b>Nation – England</b>	2,890	2,687
<b>Nation – Scotland</b>	533	500
<b>Nation – Wales</b>	487	462
<b>Nation – Northern Ireland</b>	428	408
<b>Urban areas</b>	3,642	2,984
<b>Rural areas</b>	696	554

The table below illustrates the required ranges for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘99% confidence interval’.

### Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels

Effective sample size	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
3,520 (Total)	1.3%	1.7%	2.0%	2.1%	2.2%
1,717 (Gender: Male)	1.9%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	3.1%
989 (SEG: C1)	2.5%	3.3%	3.8%	4.0%	4.1%
554 (Urbanity: Rural)	3.3%	4.4%	5.0%	5.4%	5.5%

For example, if 30% or 70% of a sample of 3,520 give a particular answer, the chances are 99 in 100 that the ‘true’ value will fall within the range of  $\pm 2.0$  percentage points from the sample results.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real', or it may occur by chance (because not everyone has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is 'statistically significant' – we again must know the size of the samples, the percentages giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume '99% confidence interval', the difference between two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below to be significant.

### Differences required for significant at or near these percentages

Sample sizes being compared	10% or 90% ±	20% or 80% ±	30% or 70% ±	40% or 60% ±	50% ±
1,717 vs. 1,769 (Male vs. Female)	2.6%	3.5%	4.0%	4.3%	4.4%
945 vs. 987 (SEG AB vs. C1)	3.5%	4.6%	5.4%	5.7%	5.9%