

# **BBC World Service Performance Review**

2016 – 2020







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## About this review

This review meets the requirement, set out in the 2016 Agreement with the Secretary of State, for the BBC to publish a review of the World Service at least once every five years:

*“35. Performance reporting and reviews of the World Service*

*(3)The BBC must review the World Service as a whole at least once every five years and such a review should, in particular, consider the performance of the World Service in delivering what is set out in the licence.*

*(4)The BBC may at its discretion also conduct more frequent reviews of particular aspects of the World Service.*

*(5)The BBC must publish any review carried out under this clause.*

*(6) In conducting reviews the BBC must take appropriate account of the views of the public in the United Kingdom and of people across the world who make up the actual or intended audience of the World Service.”*

(BROADCASTING: An Agreement Between Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation, December 2016)



# Introduction

## About BBC World Service

BBC World Service is an essential part of the BBC's global news offer: committed to accurate, impartial and independent news; contributing to the BBC's position as the world's most trusted international news broadcaster; and delivering the BBC's public purpose to reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world.

The World Service delivers news in 42 languages including English via TV, radio and digital services, serving the particular needs of audiences within each market, with correspondents on location in more countries than any other broadcaster.

Through news coverage that offers a global perspective on the world, the World Service helps audiences understand the world around them and make sense of competing views, serving as an independent, accurate and trusted guide as the range of available sources of information (and misinformation) grows.

### BBC Public Purposes

*"5. To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world:*

*The BBC should provide high-quality news coverage to international audiences, firmly based on British values of accuracy, impartiality, and fairness. Its international services should put the United Kingdom in a world context, aiding understanding of the United Kingdom as a whole, including its nations and regions where appropriate. It should ensure that it produces output and services which will be enjoyed by people in the United Kingdom and globally."*

(BBC Charter, 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2027)

## BBC World Service funding

BBC World Service has been funded by the UK licence fee since 2014, with the BBC committed to providing funding of £254 million annually until April 2022.

Since 2016, the World Service has received additional funding from the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the World2020 programme, with £34m provided in 2016/2017 and £86m in each subsequent year of the period covered by this review, resulting in an investment of over £290m between 2016 and 2020. This has enabled the biggest expansion of the World Service since the 1940s, with 12 new language services and new or expanded bureaux in locations from Cairo to Seoul, Belgrade to Bangkok.

## Global reach

In 2020 the BBC's total global reach increased by 11 per cent year on year to reach 468 million people a week – the highest number ever, on track to meet the ambition of reaching half a billion people worldwide by the BBC's centenary in 2022.

The BBC's global news services are an essential part of this mission. In 2020 total global reach for BBC News, including the BBC's commercially-funded international news services (BBC World News television channel and the 'BBC.com' online service<sup>1</sup>) was 438 million. BBC World Service is the biggest contributor to this, accounting for three quarters of the total global reach of all BBC services and 80 per cent of the reach of BBC News across the world.

During the period covered by this review, the total reach of BBC World Service has grown significantly, by 42 percent, from 246 million people on average each week in March 2016 to 351 million people in March 2020.

## BBC World Service and the UK

In addition to supporting audiences across the world with trusted journalism, BBC World Service also brings additional benefits to the UK. Its international expertise enhances the BBC's UK news services by bringing unique insights to coverage on world events, helping UK audiences to understand what is going on in the world.

Those in the UK that use the World Service hold favourable opinions of its output, with 45 per cent of its weekly audience saying that it is the best news provider for gaining an understanding of international news, far higher than most international competitors.<sup>2</sup>

Internationally, BBC World Service is one of the most recognised British brands, known for British values of quality and fairness. A recent survey by IpsosMORI for the British Council demonstrated that, amongst younger educated audiences across the world, the World Service was the best known institution across all countries included in the survey (including their home country's cultural institutions in some cases).<sup>3</sup> This research also revealed a high association between awareness of the World Service and thinking positively about the United Kingdom, including perceptions of trust, the perception that the UK supports participant's core values, and intentions to interact with the UK in the future.<sup>4</sup> This demonstrates how the BBC's strength in the world strengthens the UK's place in the world.

<sup>1</sup>From 1 July 2021, full responsibility for World News has transferred to the BBC's public service and will operate under the World Service licence, with Global News Ltd integrated with BBC Studios.

<sup>2</sup>BBC GfK Pulse Generic Survey, May 26th 2021 *Consumed brand in last week: BBC One (4334), BBC R4 (685), BBC WS (313), ITV (2542), Channel 4 (942), Guardian (705), CNN (219), RT (104), NYT (85), Euronews (96), Al Jazeera (203), Sky (1329)*

<sup>3</sup>British Council perception survey 2020, fieldwork and analysis by Ipsos MORI. Base: Q18. *Which, if any, of the following organisations have you ever heard of or seen references to? All participants in the G20 [20,612]. Used with kind permission of the British Council.*

<sup>4</sup>British Council perception survey 2020, fieldwork and analysis by Ipsos MORI. Base: *all in G20 asked about UK (18,004): aware of BBC World Service (7,457) not aware of BBC World Service (11,546) Q2a-2f Which THREE of the following countries do you find MOST attractive as a country in which to study?/as a source of arts and culture / with which to do business/trade/to visit as a tourist? Used with kind permission of the British Council.*

## International context

The period covered by this review has coincided with significant events that have impacted people across the world. The World Service has helped to shine a light on the stories that needed to be told and explained those that needed to be understood.

In the UK, there have been two general elections and a referendum which resulted in the UK leaving the European Union in January 2020. BBC World Service has helped international audiences to understand what these events have meant for Britain and its place in the world.

The World Service has also been there for audiences during significant international events. When President Trump withdrew the US from the Iran nuclear deal, BBC Persian helped international and UK services understand the impact of this within Iran. When Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi was assassinated, BBC Arabic kept audiences informed as conflicting narratives emerged over how he died. Subsequently the World Service was able to confirm how the reported leader of the alleged 15-person hit squad behind the killing had been trained in cyber surveillance techniques by a European company. During heightened tensions off the Crimean peninsula, BBC Russian and BBC Ukrainian services worked together to help audiences understand events on the ground and their implications.

A commitment to cover the topics that other media cannot or will not, has meant that the BBC World Service has also felt first-hand the implications of increased pressures on press freedom across the world during this period.

All BBC websites have been blocked in China since the World Service moved their sites to a secure internet protocol in July 2018. In Uganda, a World Service team investigating the illegal sale of government medicines was arrested in February 2019, before being released on bond. In Burundi, later that year, the BBC was banned after airing a documentary about secret detention and torture sites. In August 2019, BBC News Russian's Belarus journalists had their accreditation withdrawn after reporting on the disputed general election. BBC News Persian staff have come under considerable pressure from Iranian authorities, who have frozen their assets and launched criminal investigations against them. Family members have been called in for questioning, had their passports confiscated and been threatened. Iranian state media has falsely alleged that the BBC News Persian television encouraged unrest and violence in Iran.

The BBC has stood firm in supporting media freedom, as this represents a profound threat to the health of societies and democracies worldwide.

## The coronavirus pandemic

In the final months of the period covered by this review, January to March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic broke out across most of the world.

BBC World Service, like other media organisations across the globe, had to respond to both an immense operational and editorial challenge. The World Service restructured

its operations to provide a core news service to provide audiences with vital health explainers, separate the science from the politics, help audiences understand the wider implications of the pandemic on societies around the world and debunk misinformation as it travelled across borders.

The BBC's trusted coverage was met with a huge audience response, with digital audiences for World Service languages surging to reach an average of 208 million people per week in March 2020, up 142 per cent compared to averages across April to December 2019. There were also significant increases in markets with media restrictions – visitors to the BBC News Arabic website tripled and BBC News Russian figures doubled since December 2019, showing the value of the BBC's impartial global news at times of crisis.

BBC World Service, as a global institution, has been uniquely placed to respond to this crisis. This has underlined the important international role of the World Service as a source of accurate, trusted and impartial news.

## Changing media consumption

These events have coincided with ongoing changes around the world in how people access and consume news. Television remains an important source of news and information for many – as reflected in this report – and one that many people trust. However, the picture varies between countries (TV continues to perform strongly in parts of Africa for example) and age groups, with older users generally more likely to watch TV news. Radio continues to play an important role in communicating news and information to audiences around the world, and alongside this there has been rapid growth of podcasts and on demand audio. This expansion in digital audio looks set to continue in the coming years.

Over the last five years, the major growth story for global news – and the BBC World Service – has been the expansion in the availability and use of online news sources, in nearly all parts of the world. This digital growth includes social media platforms, which have increasingly become a major source of information for audiences, particularly among younger people. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are widely used for news, with YouTube in particular growing in importance as a destination for video and audio news in some parts of the world. Mobile news aggregators have also grown in significance over this period and play an important role in news discovery for many audiences.

This widespread digital growth means that news access has become more distributed, and the news offer for users much more fragmented across platforms and providers. Many audiences today have access to more news, information and viewpoints than ever before.

However, at the same time, the acceleration of digital consumption has increased the speed and scale at which misinformation can spread and cause harm, with the potential for significant impacts including for health and democracy. It has also opened-up more opportunities for some hostile governments to monitor and directly intervene in the news market – banning or blocking stories and/or news organisations.

## Scope

This publication fulfils the obligation in the 2016 Agreement with the Secretary of State for the BBC to publish a review of the World Service at least once every five years.

It builds upon the regular reporting undertaken through existing World Service governance processes, which help to fulfil the reporting, review and audit requirements set by the World Service licence. These include annual publication of World Service performance as part of the BBC's Annual Report and Accounts, an annual statement to the Chair of the BBC Board and the Foreign Secretary on the performance of the World Service against its licence objectives, priorities and targets, as well separate governance procedures for the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, which includes quarterly performance and financial reporting.

The review covers the 42 language services, including English, operating under the World Service licence:

- **Africa:** Amharic, French for Africa, Great Lakes, Hausa, Igbo, Oromo, Pidgin, Somali, Swahili, Tigrinya, Yoruba
- **Americas:** Portuguese, Spanish
- **Asia:** Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Marathi, Nepali, Pashto, Punjabi, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese
- **Europe:** Azeri; Russian; Ukrainian; Serbian
- **Middle East:** Arabic
- **Near East:** Afghan (Pashto, Dari); Kyrgyz; Persian; Turkish; Uzbek.
- **Learning English**

The review does not cover BBC Monitoring, BBC Media Action or the BBC's commercially-run news services, including World News<sup>5</sup> and BBC.com.

The World Service licence includes objectives and targets for BBC World Service which are decided by the BBC Board in agreement with the Foreign Secretary. The licence states that the BBC will be first required to formally report on these in 2022- however measurement against these has also been used for the purpose of this review. In doing so the review will use data from the BBC's Global Audience Measurement (GAM). GAM measures people reached in an average week, and is calculated for all BBC services, across all platforms, and in all markets. It is a de-duplicated measure built by using 240 single customer view models, one for every country in the world each year, combining measurement data for BBC radio, TV, websites and social media.

GAM is measured as a calculation for each financial year (April- March) and therefore, for the purposes of this review, 2016 – 2020 reflects the reach figures for the reporting years April 2015 – March 2016 to April 2019 – March 2020.

<sup>5</sup>BBC World News transferred to the Public Service, operating under the World Service licence, on 1 July 2021, after the period covered by this review (but would be included in future reviews of World Service activity).

## Review structure

The review considers the performance of the World Service against the objectives and targets in its licence under the following three themes:

### Part One: Growing global reach

The performance of the World Service between 2016 and 2020, including:

- (i) Total reach;
- (ii) Reach by platform: audio, TV and digital; and
- (iii) Reaching women and young people (15-24).

### Part Two: Achieving quality and impact

How the World Service is perceived by audiences internationally, against international competitors, including:

- (i) Perceptions of quality; and
- (ii) Perceptions of impact.

### Part Three: Delivering value for UK audiences

How the World Service is perceived by audiences in the UK, and the value it delivers to them directly through expertise on international news events and through supporting increased positive perceptions towards the UK:

- (i) UK perceptions of the World Service;
- (ii) Consumption of the World Service in the UK; and
- (iii) Wider benefits the World Service delivers to the UK.



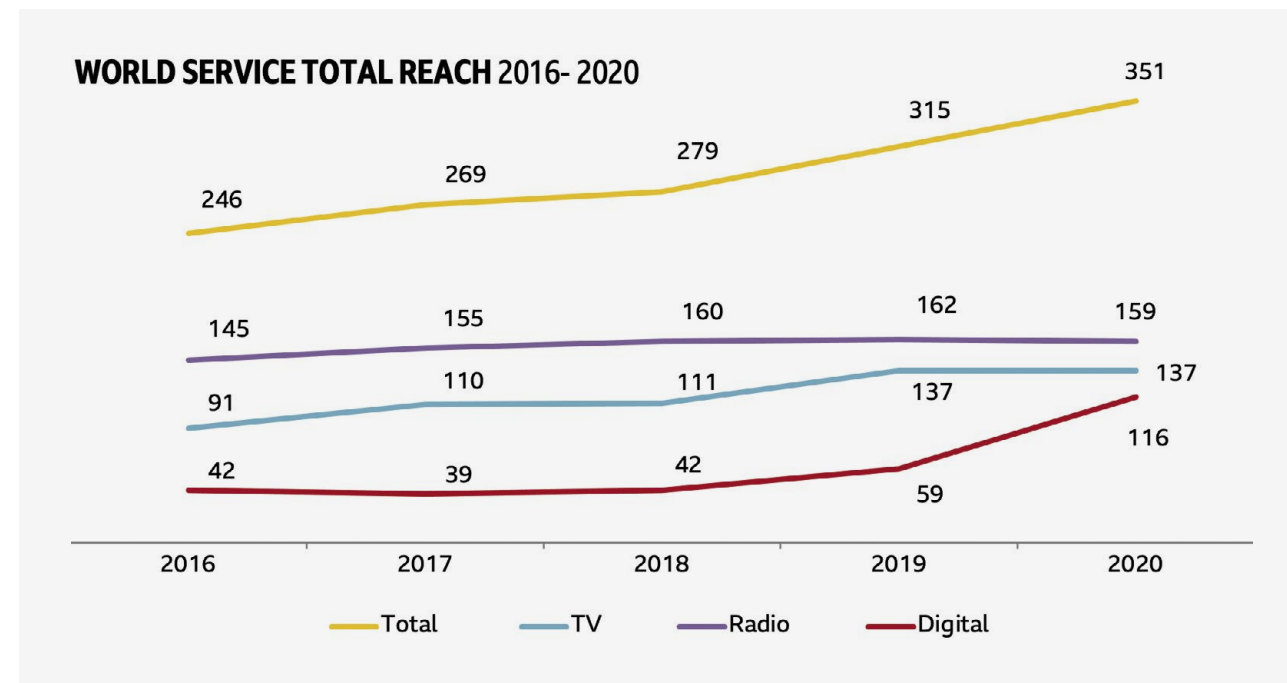
# World Service licence targets

Licence Target	2022 Target	March 2020 data	RAG
<b>To maximise the reach of all language services in line with its Remit and subject to value for money</b>  <i>(Reach)</i>	Total reach: 364m (330m by 2020, 350m by 2021)	351m	
	TV: 140m	137m	
	Audio: 160m	159m	
	Digital: 104m	116m	
	Women: 48%	38%	
	Young people (15-24): 27%	31%	
<b>To be the world's most trusted provider of accurate and independent international news and current affairs</b>  <i>(Quality)</i>	BBC to be rated higher than relevant international news competitors for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reliable</li> <li>■ Trustworthy</li> <li>■ Independent</li> </ul>	BBC rated number one for Reliable and Trustworthy and number two for Independent (versus the Guardian)	
<b>To provide accurate, impartial and independent news and current affairs covering international and national developments, so that its audiences can engage in the democratic processes as informed citizens, and to reflect the United Kingdom its culture and values to the world</b>  <i>(Impact)</i>	BBC to be rated higher than international news competitors for a range of audience indicators on understanding word events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ "Helps me gain a more in-depth understanding"</li> <li>■ "Informs my world view"</li> <li>■ "Helps me to understand what is essential to know, even if it's not of interest to me."</li> </ul>	BBC rated number one for "helps me gain a more in-depth understanding" and "informs my world view". Rated number two for "helps me to understand what is essential to know, even if it's not of interest to me" (versus Google News stand)	

To demonstrate value for money, transparency and seek alternative sources of funding where appropriate and in line with its remit  <i>(Value)</i>	Undertake regular annual and all other reviews as stated in the Framework Agreement.  Publish annual performance measures and information for the World Service.  Report annually on funding, including alternative sources of income.	Demonstrated through:  Evidencing BBC World Service's review and reporting practices (e.g. Annual Statements)  Description of work with partners to maximise reach cost effectively	
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# PART ONE: Growing global reach

## (i) Total reach



\*Please note, in this graph digital audio (which is part of Digital targets) has been included in Audio

The last few years have been a period of considerable growth for BBC World Service. In March 2020 its services – in 42 languages including English – reached 351 million people in the average week, placing it on track to meet the World Service licence target of reaching 364 million people by 2022.

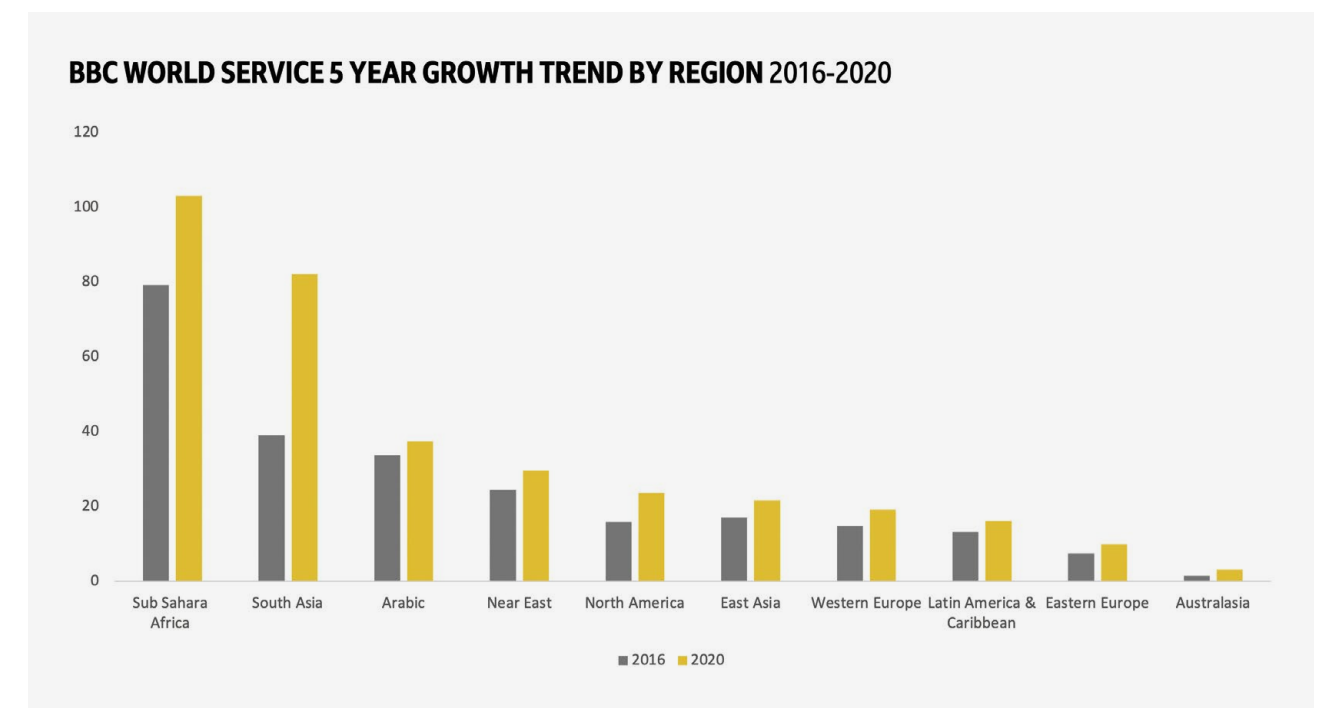
This represented significant growth of 42 per cent since 2016, with total audiences increasing by 104 million from 246 million. Underpinning this has been significant investment from the UK Government Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), with more than £290 million of grant funding provided via the World 2020 programme between 2016 and 2020.

This has enabled the World Service to carry out its biggest expansion of services since the 1940s, including 12 new language services (six across Africa, four in India and Korean and Serbian services) as well as dedicated TV programming for Africa, and enhanced newsgathering expertise around the world, including in Russia, the Middle East, and a strengthened World Service English editorial offer. This has included further

investment into high-quality investigative journalism – an essential way that BBC World Service covers the topics other media cannot or will not. The funding has enabled the expansion of bureaux in Delhi and Nairobi (now the second and third largest), supporting increased coverage. In addition, a new bureau was also opened in Belgrade to support the relaunched BBC News Serbian service. As a result, BBC World Service now has over 75 news bureaux and correspondents in locations across the world.



Across this period, the World Service has seen growth in all regions, with Sub Saharan Africa remaining the biggest single region for reach, but with the biggest rate of growth coming from South Asia, which has expanded by 110 per cent since 2016.



## CASE STUDY

### Expansion across India

Supported by the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, BBC World Service has been able to invest significantly in enhanced coverage for Indian Audiences between 2016 and 2020. This has been a period of significant events for the country, including a general election.

Four new language services – Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi and Telugu – were launched and the BBC News bureau in Delhi was expanded, adding two new television studios. The Delhi bureau is now the BBC's second largest outside the UK and acts as a video, TV and digital content production hub for the whole of South Asia. BBC Tamil has also moved into the bureau to benefit from the new production facilities.

As a result, reach in India has grown between 2016 and 2020. By March 2020 BBC World Service reached 54.7 million people in India in the average week, a 24 per cent increase from March 2019. This made India the biggest individual country for reach across the whole World Service in 2020.

Most of this reach came from World Service Languages, which rose from 15 million people per week in 2016 to 49.3 million by March 2020. BBC Hindi now has the second highest reach of all language services, with 25 million weekly audiences, of which 23.4 million came from India.



## CASE STUDY

### Investment into coverage across Sub Saharan Africa

In 2016, the World Service was reaching 79.2 million people across Sub Saharan Africa in the average week, more people than any other region. Recognising both the importance and further potential of this service, the World Service has invested substantially in growing services across this region over the last few years, supported by the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme.

In November 2018 the BBC opened a new bureau in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, now the third largest BBC bureau outside of London and Delhi. Close to 300 of the 600 BBC journalists working across Africa are now based in this new, state-of-the-art facility.

The bureau broadcasts in a total of 12 African languages plus English, and the production facilities include a television studio, two radio studios, two radio workspaces and five TV edit suites.

Another major hub was opened in Lagos, Nigeria, where three new language services are based given its strategic and economic importance to the region. There was also an expansion of the French service based in Senegal's capital, Dakar, now the BBC's fourth largest bureau. The World Service also invested in expanding its Abuja bureau in Nigeria, to support BBC Hausa coverage.

Through the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, new language services for Afaan Oromo, Hausa, Igbo, Tigrinya, Pidgin, and Yoruba have launched, as well as additional investment into TV programming across Africa. By 2020, 64 programme slots were delivered across the BBC's Africa TV offer (with 25 in Nigeria alone).

As a result, Sub Saharan Africa remained the biggest region for reach by the end of this review period. Three out of the top five countries for reach globally came from Sub Saharan Africa: Nigeria (third at 33.6 million), Kenya (fourth at 14.3 million) and Tanzania (fifth at 12.9 million). The World Service now reaches a substantial proportion of the audience in these countries: 47 per cent in Kenya, 43 per cent in Tanzania and 33 per cent in Nigeria.



## CASE STUDY

### BBC Serbian relaunched in 2018

A new bureau was opened in Belgrade, supporting a relaunched BBC Serbian service in March 2018. The Serbian service delivers content that contextualises world events for the region and puts regional developments in a global perspective. The digital-only service reached 550,000 people online per week by March 2020 and is staffed entirely from Belgrade.

### (ii) Reach by platform

During this review period, audiences across the world have increased their use of digital platforms, with an estimated 3.97 billion internet users in 2019, roughly half of the global population.<sup>6</sup> This has been fuelled by the growth in availability of cheap smartphones across the world,<sup>7</sup> with the majority of internet consumption worldwide now taking place through mobile devices (estimated 92.6 per cent).<sup>8</sup> However, there remained significant regional variation, with internet penetration remaining low in some regions – for example, fewer than 20 per cent of the population are online in Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup>

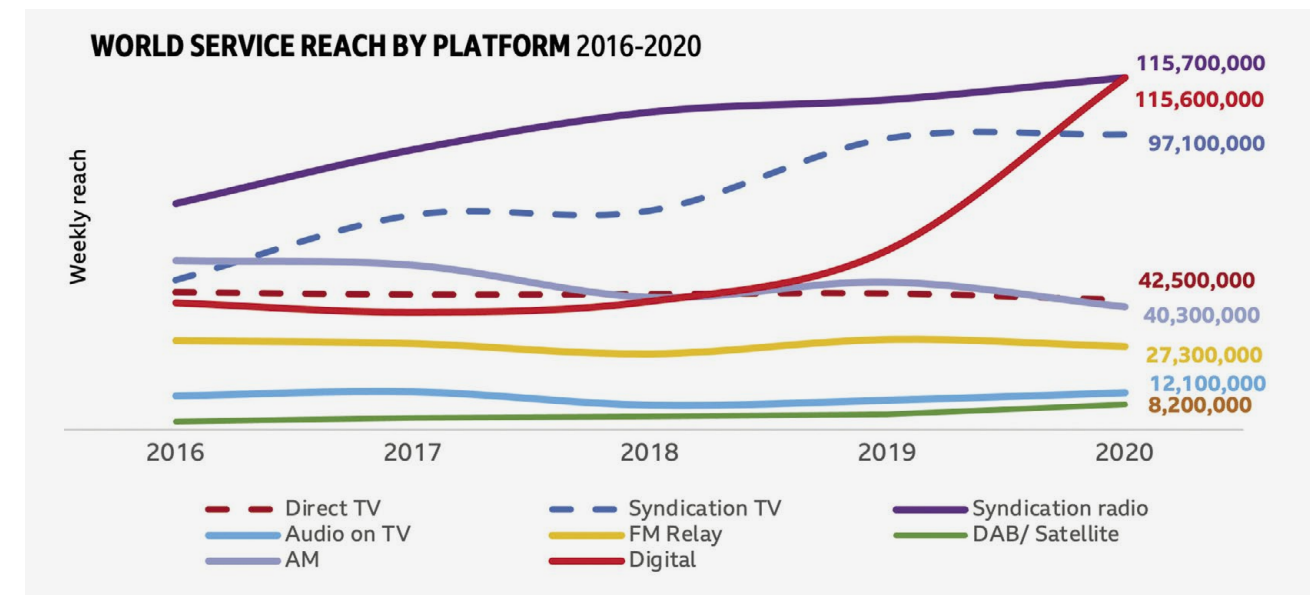
BBC World Service direct radio and TV reach remain relatively flat during this period, in line with global trends, with the largest growth coming from digital, with substantial growth of 176 per cent between 2016 and 2020 to 116 million – now accounting for 33 per cent of total reach. Alongside this, syndicated radio and TV reach have grown, supported by expansion through the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme. Therefore, TV and audio continue to be critical to the World Service, together delivering the majority of reach.

<sup>6</sup>Statista, [Number of internet users worldwide 2005 to 2019](#), November 2020

<sup>7</sup>GSMA, [Accelerating affordable smartphone ownership in emerging markets](#), July 2017

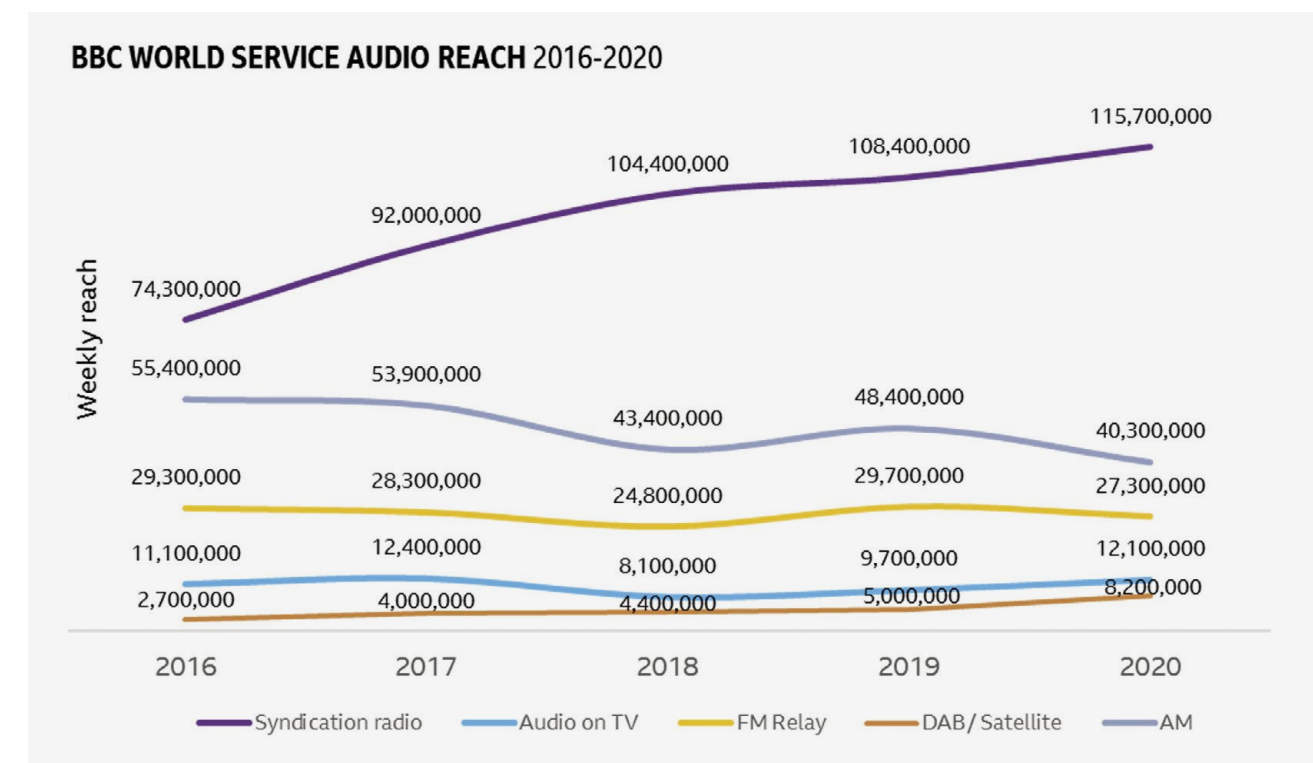
<sup>8</sup>Statista, [Global digital population as of January 2021](#), January 2021

<sup>9</sup>BBC Monitoring, [Afghanistan Media Guide](#), 10 May 2019



Syndicated reach, delivered via third party platforms and partner services, accounts for 62 per cent (217 million) of the global World Service audience, delivered through a network of over 2000 media partnerships around the globe. This activity enables the BBC to reach global audiences quickly and cost effectively on the most relevant platforms for news, in line with its international public service remit. However, with consumption of news content on owned and operated services delivering greater attribution for the BBC (and the UK), the World Service is considering how it can deepen its impact by pursuing a distribution strategy that prioritises growing the proportion of global reach that comes from its 'owned and operated' platforms.

### Audio



BBC World Service was reaching 159 million people across audio platforms in the average week by March 2020, almost meeting the licence target of 160 million people by 2022. This represented a 9 per cent increase since 2016, when reach was 145 million.

## Direct radio reach

Across this period, BBC World Service listening via radio platforms remained broadly stable. To grow direct radio reach, BBC World Service has secured around 200 FM relays and DAB placements around the world which broadcast BBC World Service around the clock in key locations. As part of FM arrangements, usually with local public broadcasters, the World Service also helps develop skills in markets through training and development.

There were significant declines in reach via short wave radio, with further rapid declines expected over the coming years. As a result, the World Service has stopped regular short-wave services across Sinhala, Tamil, Uzbek, Urdu and Hindi.

Nevertheless, despite this trend, short wave radio has remained important in some regions during this period, particularly in regions that are challenging for the BBC due to media regulation, geography, pandemic or strife. Consequently, new short wave services have been launched in Korean (September 2017) – a daily 30-minute programme also broadcast to North Korea – and for the Horn of Africa (April 2018).

## CASE STUDY

### Radio provided a lifeline news service in Jammu and Kashmir

In 2019, when the Indian government revoked the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, they took the unprecedented step of blocking digital services and phone lines in the region, leaving very few options for accessing trusted and impartial news. In response, the World Service enhanced short-wave radio programming for audiences in Kashmir, in both Hindi and Urdu, and from World Service English.

This illustrated the BBC's rare ability to access both sides of conflicts, with reporting from World Service India and Pakistan correspondents, both working in difficult circumstances under severe restrictions, with no phone or internet connection to bring reports on how Kashmiris were reacting to the move to end the area's special status. The BBC's coverage stood out for its description of what was happening on the ground, not simply relying on the government's version of events.

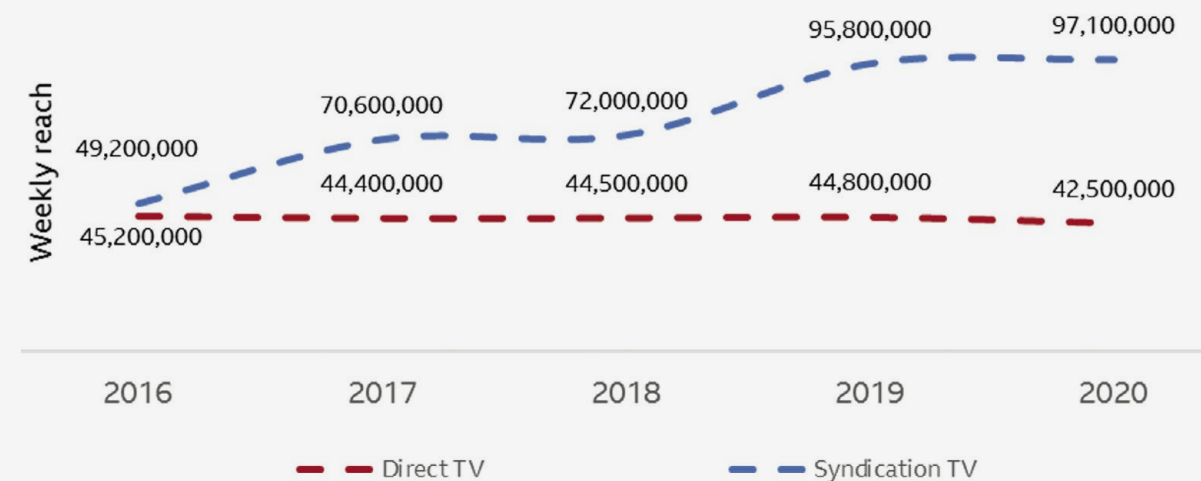
## Syndicated Radio

The most significant growth in audio consumption has come from the increased reach of syndicated radio. Between April 2019 – March 2020, this growth came primarily from increases across Sub Saharan Africa, with significant increases in Ghana (growing by three million to reach 4.4 million in 2020 – 24 per cent of the total Ghanaian radio population); Nigeria (increasing by 1.3 million to reach 20.1 million in 2020 – 18 per cent of the total Nigerian radio population); and Uganda (increasing by 2.6 million to reach 5.9 million – 25 per cent of the total Ugandan radio population).

World Service English reach also increased across syndicated radio, with this remaining an important route to audiences for the service, reaching 67 million people each week, an increase of seven million since 2016. The World Service works with over 1800 radio partners, including public service broadcasters, commercial and community stations.

## Television

BBC WORLD SERVICE TV REACH 2016-2020



By March 2020, BBC World Service was reaching 137 million people across TV platforms in the average week, on course to meet the licence target of 140 million by 2022. This represents a growth of 51 per cent since 2016, when TV reach was 91 million.

This reflects the important role that traditional broadcast television has continued to play during this period, as the explosion of news and information providers has made discoverability even more critical. TV has therefore been able to retain its primacy in meeting specific user needs, such as coverage of live events as they unfold, and news which needs to be verified visually. TV also remains particularly important in regions where digital infrastructure has been slower to develop, and there are socio-economic pressures affecting the ability to acquire smartphones.



## Direct TV

In line with market trends, direct TV consumption of the World Service has remained broadly flat during the period of this review.

However, although not a main area of growth, it has remained an important medium in key regions. Therefore, the World Service has continued to support a 24-hours a day television channel for BBC Persian and BBC Arabic audience.

BBC staff reported an increase in the number of incidents of family members being brought in for interrogation during this time, and a number of BBC journalists have received death threats. Meanwhile, the asset freeze imposed in 2017 by Iran remains in place for the majority of BBC News Persian staff, as well as an ongoing criminal investigation against them.

## CASE STUDY

### BBC Persian TV channel providing 24-hour a day access to news within a heavily-constrained media environment

In Iran, media is heavily restricted with all broadcasting controlled by the state, strict limits on political debate in domestic broadcast media and reflecting official ideology, with bans on news outlets and crackdowns on journalists commonplace.<sup>10</sup> However, although illegal to watch foreign satellite TV, there is still a big audience for foreign-based Persian-language satellite channels, with a report estimating that around 70 per cent of households taking the risk to have a satellite dish.<sup>11</sup>

Providing a 24-hour a day Persian TV news channel is therefore an important part of the World Service's role in delivering trusted news offer across the world. In March 2020 BBC Persian TV was estimated to reach 12.3 million people weekly. Broadcast from BBC studios in London, the channel is available via satellite transmission as well as being streamed live online (and available on demand) on [bbc.com/persian](http://bbc.com/persian) and via YouTube for other Persian speaking audiences. Five television programmes produced by the service are also available in Afghanistan through an agreement with Ariana News, the country's leading TV channel.

The channel covers political, social and cultural issues across news and analysis, original factual programmes as well as strands on music, arts and culture, science and technology, and sport. The original documentaries broadcast by the channel highlight the very best of Iranian and Afghan documentary-making.

BBC News Persian staff take considerable risks to produce this news service. There has been a pattern of harassment of the families of staff in Iran, which has intensified during reporting on significant events in the country, most recently BBC News Persian's coverage of the handling of the pandemic.

## Syndicated TV

Syndicated TV reach has increased during the period of the review, with the World Service working with over 80 major national terrestrial or digital channels, news channels, public and private broadcasters and satellite services.

This growth has been supported by the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme investment in television programming across Africa, where TV viewing consumption is above the global average.<sup>12</sup>

By 2020, 64 programme slots were delivered across the BBC's Africa TV offer (25 in Nigeria alone). Programmes with the largest reach included Sport Africa (7.8 million weekly reach), Africa Eye (6.9 million weekly reach) and What's New (4.3 million weekly reach). Of these, Africa Eye and What's New also brought in a high proportion of new audiences, with 30 per cent of reach to What's New coming from incremental or new audiences, and 29 per cent from Africa Eye. Two of these new programmes were produced through local co-production partnerships.



<sup>10</sup>BBC Monitoring, Iran Media guide <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c201mhww>

<sup>11</sup>BBC Monitoring, Iran Media guide <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c201mhww>

<sup>12</sup>Glance Media Insights, [Why TV consumption is strong in Africa?](#) December 2017

## CASE STUDY

### Television co-production initiatives in Nigeria and Kenya have brought impactful journalism to new audiences

As part of the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, the World Service has been able to work with two television partners through co-production arrangements to support BBC'S Africa TV offer.

The first of these, Gist Nigeria, launched in April 2019 as an initiative between the BBC and Nigeria's Channels Television. Gist Nigeria is a weekly current affairs programme and airs on Channels TV, for viewers in Nigeria, as well as on partner stations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The partnership has enabled the BBC and Channels TV to share resources and expertise to deliver in-depth reporting, focusing on the stories behind the news, and their impact for audiences. Gist Nigeria's investigation into increasing traffic jams in Lagos has examined the impact on commuter health and the city's economy, holding the authorities to account for potholes, enforcement of traffic regulations and accounting for taxes collected from motorists. Following this story, the government declared a state of emergency on Lagos's roads, promising 72 would be fixed within two months and stricter enforcement of traffic regulations.

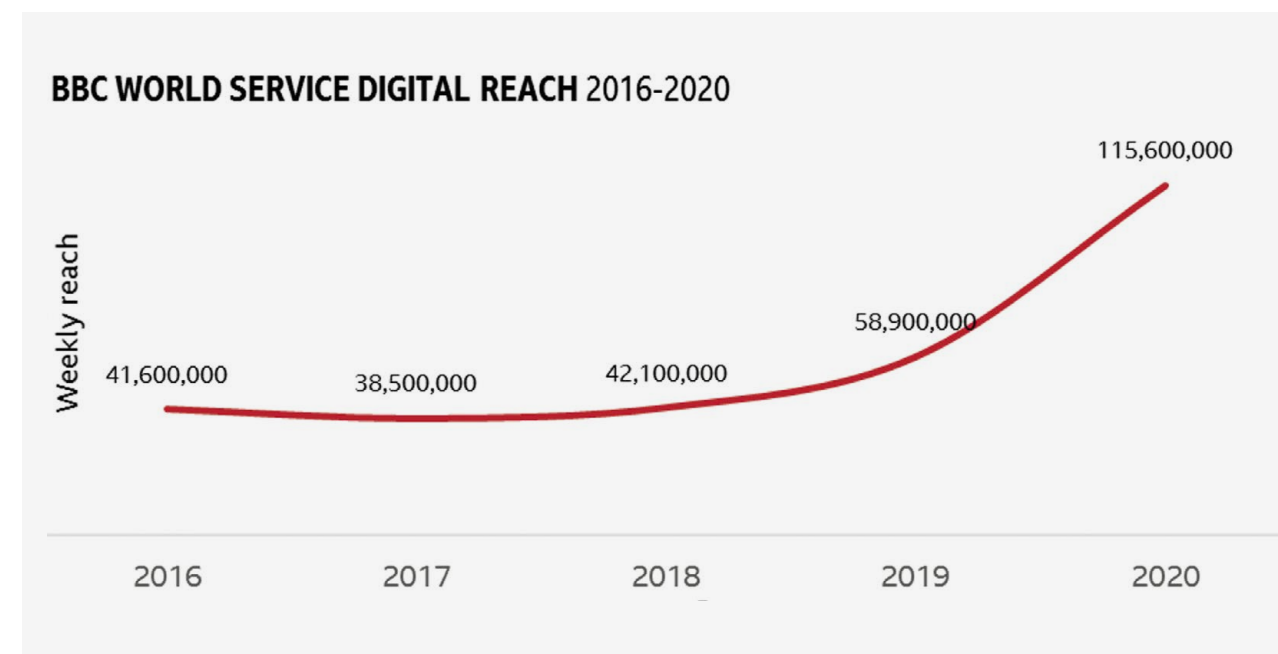
In October 2019, the World Service launched its first TV co-production in Kenya, a partnership with KTN to produce weekly programme Kenya Connects. The 30-minute current affairs television programme, targeted at young adults, focuses on stories in Kenya, how they connect with the rest of the world, and features original journalism and interviews with change-makers and influencers. The first programme on the 'brains for hire' scandal – about Kenyan essay factories – had immediate impact and was picked up by local media including the Daily Nation paper and Citizen TV website.

### BBC World News

English language TV channel BBC World News, which during this review period formed part of the BBC's commercial news offer via subsidiary BBC Global News Ltd, is an important part of the BBC's global TV offer. Weekly audience reach increased by 14 million between 2019 and 2020, to reach 112 million people weekly worldwide in 2020. This growth was driven by increase of twelve million in North America, with the remaining growth coming from countries across Sub Saharan Africa.

In July 2021, BBC World News moved into the BBC public service, operating under the World Service licence. It will continue to play an important part of the BBC's global news offer, while delivering commercial revenues through distribution and advertising (in future delivered via BBC Studios).

## Digital



By the end of March 2020, the World Service was reaching 116 million people across digital platforms in the average week, above the licence target of 104 million people by 2022.

As a result, digital platforms were contributing 33 per cent of the total reach across BBC World Service Languages and English by March 2020 – surpassing the target set of 25 per cent of total reach. World Service languages saw the highest growth, reaching a record of 102.3 million weekly unique users in the year 2019-2020, an increase of 90 per cent from the previous year and considerably higher than the 42 million people reached weekly in 2016.

Fuelling this growth has been considerable investment in digital capabilities and services. This has been supported by the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, which allocated funding specifically to help transform the World Service language service provision to meet the challenges of operating in an increasingly digital and connected world by launching new video, mobile and social first services.

This has enabled 12 new digital language services and websites to be launched between August 2017 and March 2018. After taking time to 'bed in', digital growth accelerated between 2019 and 2020.

At the end of this reporting period, digital traffic saw record peaks, with a surge caused by audiences across the world turning to the BBC to find out key information on the pandemic, with traffic surging to 254 million weekly digital users in one week in March 2020. These spikes were significant, and a clear response to a major worldwide news event, but also built on the long-term growth that World Service sites were already experiencing. Early signs now indicate that this steady growth to World Service owned websites has continued (digital World Service owned site traffic was up



43 per cent between May to October 2021 compared to July to December 2020) – although World Service remains mindful of the continued uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

During this period, the World Service has also enriched the online and social offer of all its services and expanded daily digital and TV bulletins with a focus on analysis and topical ‘near news’ programming, as well as expanding the digital audio offer.

## CASE STUDY

### World Service English digital audio has grown rapidly

Digital transformation has supported growth of World Service English’s digital audio, including its podcast offer.

Podcasts are now a significant driver of reach, growing 55 per cent from 2019 to 2020, as podcast listening has grown around the world. Research suggests that this medium helps meet the growing need of audiences for quality in-depth explainers as the number of potential online sources of information and misinformation have grown.<sup>13</sup>

Examples during this period have included: 13 Minutes to the Moon; Death in Ice Valley, produced in collaboration with Norwegian public broadcaster NRK which became a worldwide hit, topping podcast charts in several countries; award-winning Fall of the Shah, which brought a new kind of drama to World Service English with a series of different perspectives on the Iranian revolution forty years ago, starring Dame Diana Rigg.

The Global News podcast from BBC World Service English, delivered twice a day on weekdays and daily at weekends, accounted for 52 per cent of weekly podcast reach. The podcast was successful at reaching women and younger audiences, with women making up 42 per cent of the audience and 41 per cent aged 18-27.<sup>14</sup>

A new, free World Service English app, available in 35 countries, helped people access news and radio programmes in areas where mobile data is expensive or internet coverage limited.

Recognising the increasingly important role that digital will play in the future, the World Service adopted a multi-platform approach that allows TV and audio content to also be utilised on digital, and vice versa. The launch of new TV bulletins as part of the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme have been produced in such a way that

<sup>13</sup>Reuters Institute, [Digital News Report 2020, June 2020](#), Digital News Report 2019

<sup>14</sup>Spotify Analytics

enables them to be digitally distributed, and BBC Minute, created as a digital audio offer for young audiences on BBC platforms, has also been syndicated onto FM partner stations.

The World Service have invested in visual journalism teams across international bureaux, who have worked alongside London teams to support enriched data and visual journalism and animation, including across digital video, a key medium for helping audiences understand complex events and building deeper engagement.

## CASE STUDY

### Digital video skills have supported BBC News Russian coverage of Moscow protests in 2019

Digital investment enabled BBC News Russian to deliver video content for audiences in Russia in new ways, as the country has become an increasingly hostile environment for journalists.

In July and August 2019, digital video was used to report live from the streets during anti-government protests, including a special on YouTube. Teams also delivered BBC news coverage, including English-language explainers for global audiences, to provide valuable on the ground insight about what was happening.

On 10 August 2019 the protests peaked with the largest number of demonstrators in a decade taking to the streets of Moscow, with an estimated 60,000 people joining the sixth protest in a month. BBC News Russian continued to provide live coverage including a special on YouTube that was co-hosted by London and Moscow, with teams on the ground covering both the pro-opposition and pro-government events.

Learning from coverage during these events, the service then piloted a new digital-first weekly news programme for YouTube. This was alongside experimentation across live stream news programmes for big events, following the success of this format during coverage on the protests.

## CASE STUDY

### **BBC News Mundo brought stories to life with new digital skills**

BBC News Mundo, the World Service's Spanish language service, has used new digital skills to enhance coverage on key digital investigations content.

In January 2019 BBC News Mundo combined digital animation and digital animation and forensic investigative journalism to uncover the horror of policing in contemporary Venezuela. Using descriptions provided by former and current detainees, the teams built 360-degree digital animations of the inside of Venezuela's most notorious prison, first designed in the 1960s as a glitzy shopping mall. The animations were accompanied by exclusive interviews with former prison guards, who have since fled the country, demonstrating the BBC World Service's commitment to tell stories others cannot or will not.

In addition to being carried across BBC World Service and the World News channel, the content was also delivered to UK audiences, with short film about the project also running on Newsnight and BBC iPlayer.

### **(iii) Reaching women and young people (15-24)**

The World Service licence sets an objective to ensure women and young people aged 15-24 – traditionally underserved groups – are being reached, with targets for the percentage of the total World Service audience from these segments.

Within the audience segments for women and young people lie many differences between individual interests and news needs, as with any other part of society. There are also significant geographical, demographic and societal factors to consider. Nevertheless, research demonstrates inequalities in both consumption and trust across news content among the young and women across multiple countries.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Reuters Institute [Digital News Report 2021](#) June 2021

## **Women**

The BBC World Service licence sets a target that, of total reach, 48 per cent should be women by 2022.

Although the number of women that the World Service reaches has grown over the review period, the proportion of total World Service has remained at 38 per cent since 2016. Therefore, this licence commitment is not on track to be achieved by 2022.

Aware of this challenge, the World Service has placed a greater focus on improving representation of women through several initiatives.

First, by commissioning new content that seeks to represent the issues most pertinent to the lives of women. For example, within the investment into new TV programming across Africa, new programming was launched including *The She Word*, a discussion TV programme which explores the life experiences of women in today's Africa, and *Life Clinic*, which explores the health issues affecting people's everyday lives across the continent.

Second, by addressing representation on screen across its own news services. The BBC's 50:50 Equality Project, started as an experiment in 2017, has challenged teams across the whole of the BBC to ensure 50 per cent of contributors are female. World Service English and 10 World Service language teams were amongst 74 English language outlets to sign up to the initiative during this period. Results published in May 2019 showed that 74 per cent of teams recorded having at least 50 per cent female contributors, a three fold increase from 27 per cent at the start of the project.

Thirdly, through editorial outreach initiatives and events.

## CASE STUDY

### **The cross-platform 100 Women series**

The BBC World Service '100 Women' season was first run in 2012 to help capitalise on the unique reach and expertise of the BBC's language services to bring together diverse stories of women's lives and achievements from across the globe. Now established as an annual focus, it runs across the BBC's international platforms and takes a new 'solutions-focused journalism' approach to challenge teams of female experts to solve key problems facing women around the world.

In November 2018, following a year that saw the #metoo revelations, women securing the right to drive in Saudi Arabia, the abortion vote in Ireland and an unprecedented number of female candidates in the US midterms, it covered trailblazing women who have sparked positive change in the world around them.



For example, in South Korea, Park Soo-yeon's campaign to stop illegal spy-cams being put up in women's toilets, and in Peru, Cindy Arlette Contreras who became a rallying point for the Ni Una Menos movement, after she was brutally assaulted in a hotel lobby.

The series also explored femicide, as data released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) showed how an average of 137 women across the world were killed by a partner or family member every day during that year. Working with BBC Monitoring, press coverage of women killed by a person on 1 October 2018 around the world was monitored. Their regional specialists counted 47 women reported killed, apparently for gender-related reasons, in 21 different countries, and helped the 100 Women cover the women behind some of these cases, in a multiplatform report which also highlighted the different ways women are portrayed in the news agenda across the world.

However, whilst these initiatives taken together have been important for improving representation, overall they have not been sufficient to address the lower reach amongst women. The World Service is therefore conducting further research to understand what additional steps should be taken to increase the proportion of total reach from this segment. Originally expected to complete the first half of the year, this remains a top priority as we come out of the Covid pandemic, and will now be delivered in the second half of 2021.

## Young audiences, aged 15-24

The World Service licence sets a target that, of total reach, 27 per cent should be 15-24 year olds by 2022. By March 2020, the proportion was 31 per cent.

The World Service has placed an editorial focus on launching dedicated programming that seeks to represent the issues that matter most to younger audiences.

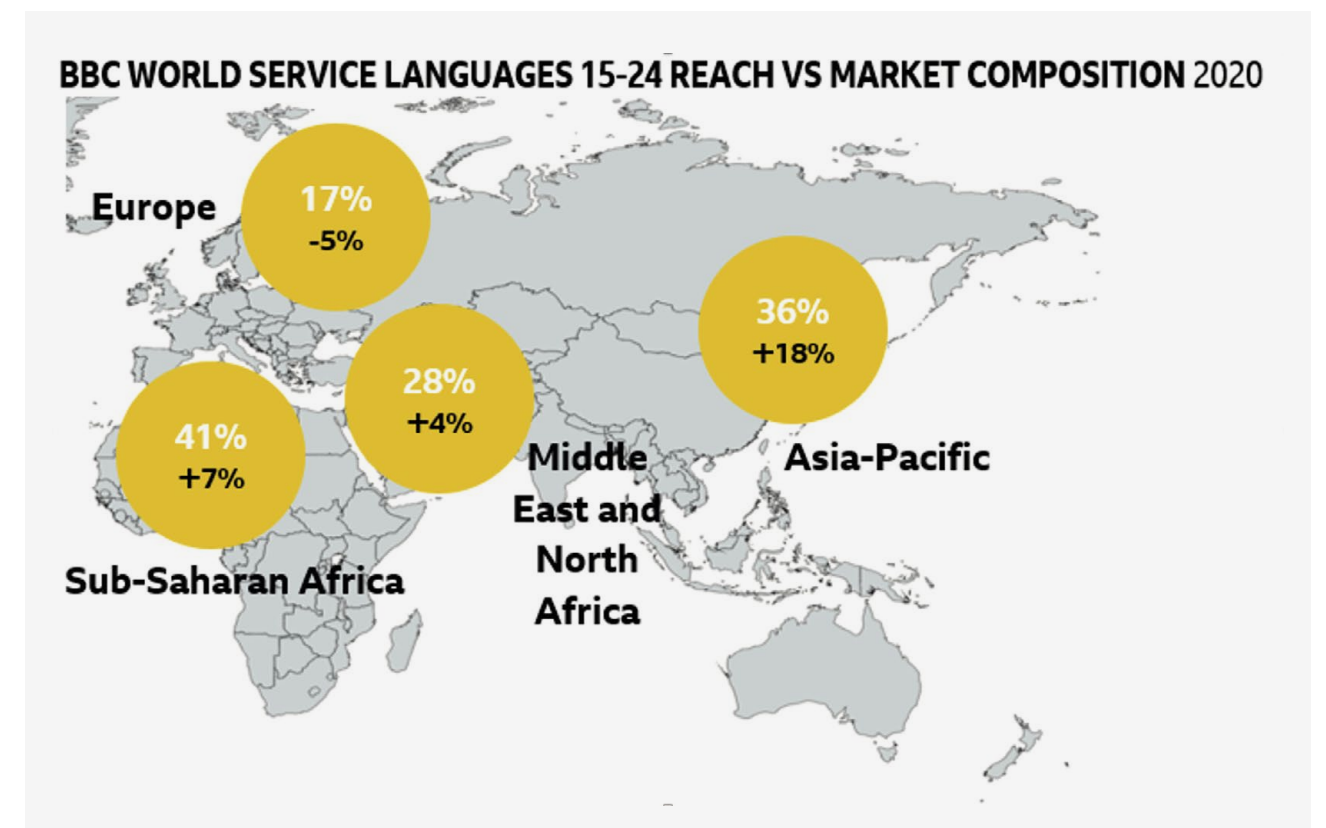
The growth has been driven by World Service languages, with 15-24 year olds making up more than one-third (34 per cent) of language service audiences in March 2020. The World Service is overperforming against the market average in many places for reach with this age range.

## CASE STUDY

### BBC Indian Sportswoman of the year

In March 2020, the World Service hosted their first ever BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year event in Delhi on International Women's Day in the presence of Indian Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju. The award went to Indian badminton star and World Champion PV Sindhu, who won the maximum number of votes. A lifetime achievement award was also handed over to the legendary Indian track star PT Usha.

A number of celebrities, influencers and media figures were present, including two of the other nominees (sprinter Dutee Chand and para-athlete Mansi Joshi) as well as Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum, including the deputy speaker of the upper house. The event was widely covered in the Indian media.



## CASE STUDY

### Youth focused TV programme Actu Jeunes

As part of investment into TV programming across Africa, the World Service launched Actu Jeunes in 2018. This weekly TV programme, aimed at 11-16 year olds across francophone countries in Africa, seeks to keep them up to date with what's happening in the world they live in.

The programme features several distinct segments, including one which gives young people a chance to tell their own stories about their lives, and a fake news and Reality Check for Kids segment which will help audiences distinguish between trustworthy news stories and sources and fake content that is being shared online.

## CASE STUDY

### Youth focused audio bulletin BBC Minute

BBC Minute is a dynamic 60-second news bulletin aimed at young audiences around the world. BBC Minute was first launched in 2015, but has benefitted from investment from the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme, which enabled new video versions of the bulletin since 2017.

Although created to be digital-first, the programme is also syndicated across partner radio stations. It is now distributed in English by over 30 partnerships around the world in different countries, including China, Indonesia, Laos, Zambia and Sudan. Other language versions have also been produced, for example Spanish and Hindi. In 2019-2020, a third of the BBC Minute audience via WSE syndicated radio in Sub Saharan Africa were aged 15-24.

## Growing global reach – key points

- **Total reach:**  
BBC World Service reach has **grown 42 per cent**, from 246 million in 2016 to 351 million in 2020, exceeding the milestone in the licence of reaching 330m by 2020 and placing World Service on track to meet the 2022 licence target of 364 million.
- **Audio:**  
reach has **grown 9 per cent** from 145 million in 2016 to 159 million in 2020, almost meeting the 2022 licence target of 160 million.
- **TV:**  
reach has **grown 51 per cent**, from 91 million in 2016 to 137 million in 2020, on track to meet the 2022 licence target of 140 million.
- **Digital:**  
reach has **grown 176 per cent**, from 42 million to 116 million in 2020, surpassing the 2022 licence target of 104 million.
- **Women:**  
while numbers have grown in absolute terms, the proportion of total World Service reach from this segment has **remained stable at 38 per cent** per year since 2016, and it will be challenging for the World Service to reach its licence target of 48 per cent by 2022.
- **Young people (15-24):**  
the proportion of total World Service reach by this segment has **grown to 31 per cent** by 2020, exceeding licence target of 27 per cent by 2022.



# Part Two: Achieving quality and impact

The World Service contributes to the BBC’s international news mission by providing accurate, impartial and independent news and programming of the highest quality to address the global gap in the provision of trusted international news.

The World Service licence sets a target of the BBC to be rated higher than relevant international news competitors for the following measures: (i) reliable; (ii) trustworthy; (iii) independent; (iv) “Helps me gain a more in-depth understanding”; (v) “Informs my world view”; (vi) “Helps me to understand what is essential to know, even if it’s not of interest to me.” The relevant competitor set is defined as being other global, international providers with a similar scope, budget and size and may vary in different markets. The licence stresses that the BBC World Service should actively sustain its strong reputation as the most trusted international news provider globally and aim to be one of the most trusted news providers in countries where it operates.

In addition, a target is set for the BBC to be rated higher than international news competitors for a range of audience indicators on understanding of world events, including: (i) “Helps me gain a more in-depth understanding”; (ii) Informs my world view”; “Helps me to understand what is essential to know, even if it’s not of interest to me”.

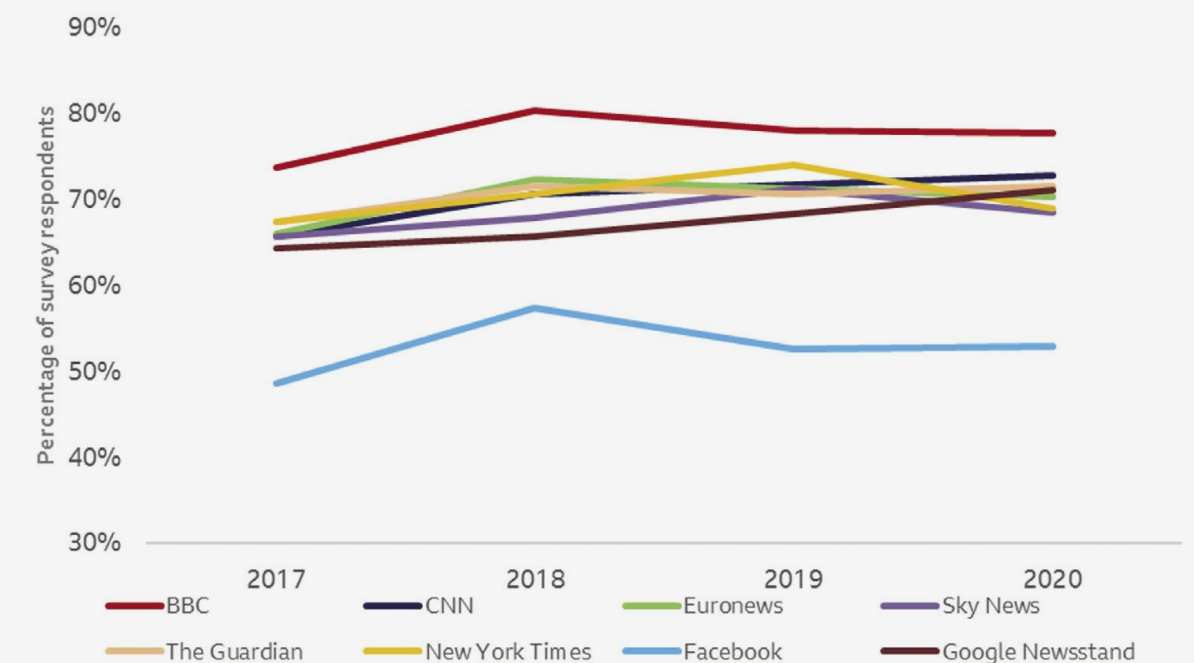
The World Service conducts a brand tracker survey within key countries to assess audience perceptions around the world and understand how it is succeeding against these licence obligations.

## Quality

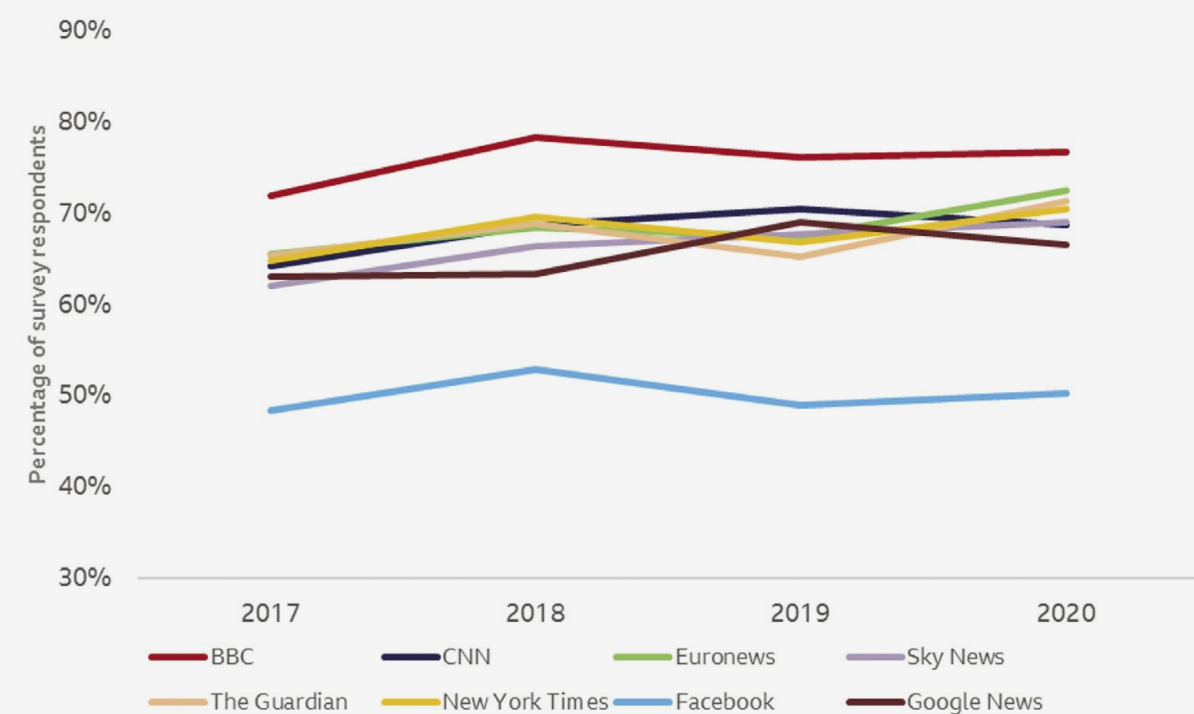
According to BBC’s brand tracker surveys, the World Service has remained number one for trust and reliability scores against other international news platforms during this period, results that are also corroborated from external research.<sup>16</sup> This achieves the licence target for the BBC to be rated higher than relevant international competitors.

<sup>16</sup>Reuters Institute, [Digital News Report 2020](#), June 2020, and Global Web Index 2019

RATINGS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS PLATFORMS AS RELIABLE 2016-2020



RATINGS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS PLATFORMS AS TRUSTWORTHY 2016-2020



However, the BBC recognises that its role in providing trusted news is becoming even more important. As the ways in which audiences can access news continues to grow, there is evidence that trust is under increasing pressure. In a Reuters Institute poll across countries in January 2020, 38 per cent said they trust most news most of the time – a fall of four percentage points from 2019; and only 46 per cent said they trust the news they use themselves.<sup>17</sup>

This has been exacerbated by a global battle for influence, with well-funded state backed actors using state-sponsored news provision as an extension of state influence.

The World Service, as the most trusted international news brand, is working to support trusted journalism by tackling the growing challenge of disinformation. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the dangers of misinformation.

The World Service has enhanced its fact-checking services (such as Reality Check) and supported media literacy programmes during the period of this review. It has also supported the wider journalism sector through training initiatives for young talent, as well as events that bring media expertise together around common goals, such as the Beyond Fake News conferences.



<sup>17</sup>Reuters Institute, [Digital News Report 2020](#), June 2020

## CASE STUDY

### The Beyond Fake News editorial, media literacy and training project

In November 2018 World Service launched the *Beyond Fake News* project, with conferences across India and in Nairobi including representatives from major tech giants as well as attendees from NGOs, media, and politics. These conferences discussed challenges and potential solutions to the fake news problem.

Media literacy '*Real News*' workshops were run in India and Kenya, taking trained World Service staff into schools to help bolster students' ability to judge whether the news they see is real or fake.

World Service Audiences published research findings into the drivers of audience behaviour in sharing 'fake news' in India, Kenya, and Nigeria.

In February 2020, ahead of the planned Serbian parliamentary elections, the Beyond Fake News team visited Belgrade to host a one-day conference with trusted news providers across the Western Balkans, sharing practices of how to fight disinformation.

The work done by the World Service's language teams, including the English service, to tackle disinformation is supported by BBC Monitoring. BBC Monitoring is part of the wider BBC World Service Group, and delivers essential media insight from over 150 countries, with specialisms in places where there is a deficit of reliable news and information.

Their insight and expertise has been an essential part of helping UK and international audiences understand false information during the pandemic. Insight from BBC Monitoring has helped BBC journalists to understand the complex nature of misinformation and how it travels across borders, ranging across the entire spectrum of misinformation challenges – from how misleading information has accidentally gone viral to how some state narratives have deliberately tried to mislead audiences with information on their handling of the pandemic.



## CASE STUDY

### BBC World Service has been tackling the “infodemic” caused by coronavirus misinformation

The World Service’s important role in tackling disinformation came into greater focus as it helped respond to coronavirus myths and rumours in UK and international coverage, which have ranged from 5G mast causation to the protective properties of garlic and drinkable silver.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization declared as early as February 2020 that “we’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic,” with misinformation spreading “faster and more easily than this virus.”<sup>18</sup>

BBC’s well established expert teams, including BBC Trending, Reality Check and BBC Monitoring, worked together as part of an anti-disinformation unit alongside the User Generated Content team and other expert correspondents in the UK and in World Service’s international bureaux to provide a dedicated service covering and debunking misinformation with daily reports, weekly round-ups and special investigations. This included round-ups of viral harmful misinformation for Indian and African audiences. BBC Africa also set up a Covid-misinformation hub.

The BBC also worked in partnership with other content publishers and platforms to tackle the problem and promote trusted sources of news and public information including as part of the Trusted News Initiative.

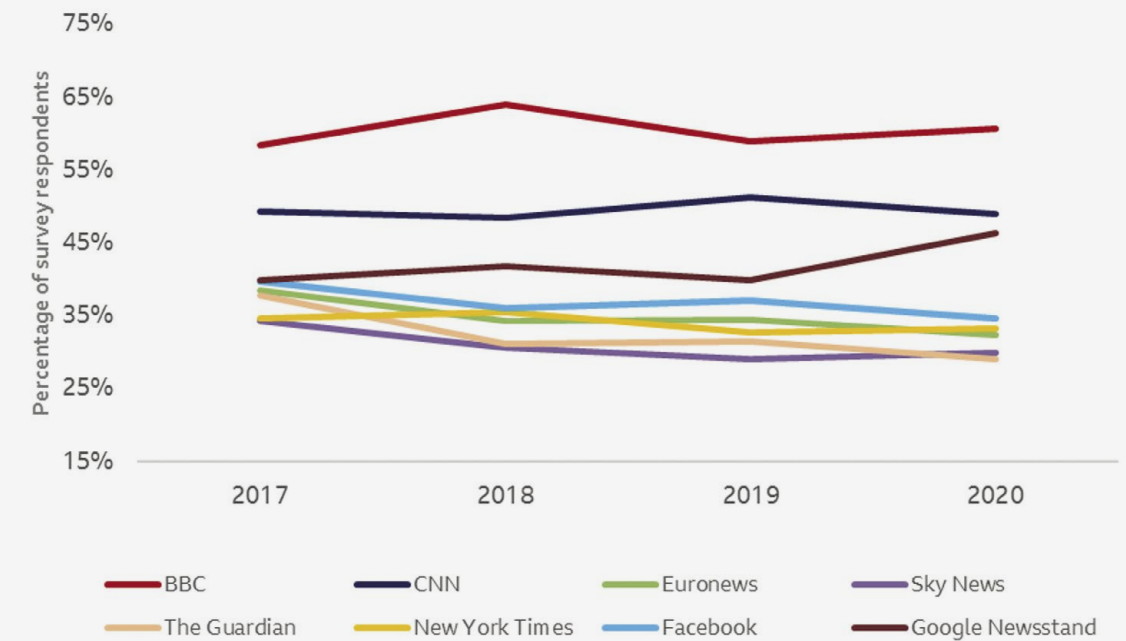
To support these efforts the BBC also bolstered its commitment to media literacy to help audiences navigate the issues surrounding ‘fake news’ and better understand what was fact or fiction, with interventions that targeted all age ranges.

### Impact

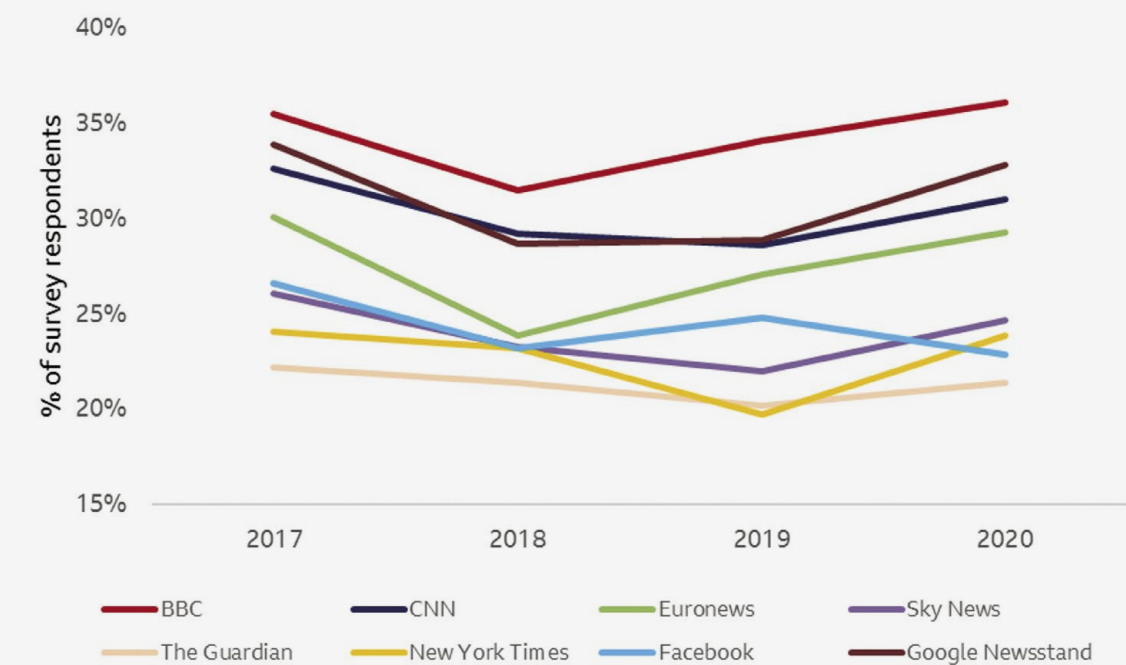
The BBC’s brand tracker surveys have demonstrated that the World Service has remained the number one platform for helping audiences to gain a more in depth understanding to inform their world view. This achieves the target set out by the World Service licence for the BBC to be rated higher than relevant international competitors on these measures.

<sup>18</sup>UN Department of Communications, [UN tackles ‘infodemic’ of misinformation and cybercrime in COVID-19 crisis](#), 31 March 2020

RATINGS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS PLATFORMS FOR HELPING TO GAIN A MORE IN DEPTH UNDERSTANDING 2016-2020



RATINGS OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS PLATFORMS FOR 'INFORMS MY WORLD VIEW' 2016-2020



One way that the BBC World Service has driven impact through its journalism is through its continued commitment to investigations, contributing to accountability and good governance and improving the welfare and economic development of citizens across the world.

## CASE STUDY

### Impact of Africa Eye's investigative journalism

Africa Eye was launched in April 2018, through the FCDO grant funded World 2020 programme. It is a bi-weekly TV and online investigations series broadcast in English, Swahili and French, and the first of its kind from the BBC.

The investigative journalism programme has made huge impact across Africa since its launch.

Africa Eye's very first episode, Sweet Sweet Codeine, made in conjunction with BBC News Pidgin, exposed addiction to codeine cough syrup by thousands of Nigerian children. It saw a ban on codeine-based syrup announced by the Nigerian government less than twenty-four hours after the first screening.

A subsequent episode, Cameroon atrocity: Anatomy of a killing, has been hailed as a masterclass in investigative journalism by various institutions, including the Columbia Journalism School and CNN Reliable Media sources newsletter. It won the RTS award for News Technology. The programme forensically analysed a viral video showing Cameroonian soldiers killing women and children and forced the Cameroonian government to acknowledge that the incident had happened, despite its earlier claims of it being 'fake news'.

Another exclusive documentary focused on an investigation by an undercover journalist into corruption in African football, exposing cash payments to dozens of referees and officials. The exposé sparked immediate and strong reaction across Africa. President Nana Akufo-Addo dissolved the Ghana Football Association over what he called 'the widespread nature of the apparent rot impacting the game'. Ghanaian police also launched investigations into the officials featured in the report.

Africa Eye's investigation into the massacre in Khartoum in June 2019 used geolocation technology to verify deaths and perpetrators, countering the narrative from the military leadership of Sudan.

In Senegal, President Macky Sall promised to 're-establish the truth' after an Africa Eye and Panorama investigation revealed his brother had allegedly benefited from lucrative dealings in the gas sector.

The Sex for Grades investigation into sexual harassment by lecturers at some of West Africa's top universities had a global impact. The culmination of a year-long investigation and more than 55,000 words of testimony, the investigation was prompted by calls from our audience to investigate issues of concern. Legislation has since been changed, with BBC's Africa Eye cited as the impetus.

## CASE STUDY

### Impact of BBC News Arabic investigative journalism

'Idlib Double Tap' exposed how Russian planes were bombing civilian areas in Syria using the illegal 'double tap technique' (hitting an area with an airstrike, waiting for first responders to show up, and then hitting again to cause maximum impact and deaths). The investigation service won an Amnesty Media Award in the Broadcast News category, recognising excellence in human rights journalism and commending journalists and editors who have the courage and determination to tell important human rights stories by putting their lives on the line.

BBC News Arabic's extraordinary investigation into the exploitation of vulnerable girls and young women by some Shia clerics at some of Iraq's holiest shrines had a major impact across society, and on social media, with many praising it for raising awareness of a difficult and very sensitive subject. In a statement, gained by the World Service in response to the investigation, one of the most important spiritual leaders in Shia Islam, Grand Ayatollah Al Sistani, clarified the rules around 'pleasure marriage', which promises to be hugely influential in ending wrongdoing by clerics. The investigation raised awareness of this issue in the UK and globally.

### Achieving quality and impact – key points

- The BBC was rated as the number one international news provider on measures for quality (trustworthy and reliable) and impact ('informs my world view' and 'helps me gain a more a more in depth understanding') in March 2020, achieving the licence target for the BBC to be rated higher than relevant international competitors on these measures.

# Part Three: Delivering value for UK audiences

In addition to providing news for audiences across the world, BBC World Service delivers benefits to audiences in the UK, including providing expertise and insight into complex international situations.

## UK audience value

UK audiences are directly served by the BBC's domestic news services (including TV and radio news bulletins and news and current affairs programmes on mainstream TV channels and radio stations; the BBC News Channel and the BBC News website and app).

Audiences for these domestic services benefit from World Service insight and expertise, which helps power the BBC's UK facing international news output. The value of this has been especially evident during news events from regions with low media freedoms, where the World Service have been able to provide specialist insight to support enriched UK coverage.

In addition to this wide indirect reach, the World Service directly reaches four per cent of UK adults in an average week. Those UK audiences hold favourable opinions of output: 45 per cent of its weekly audience think it is the best news provider at providing understanding of international news – higher than most competitors.<sup>19</sup> This research also demonstrates the World Service has more audience impact with its content than its closest international competitor, CNN.<sup>20</sup>

UK audiences agree that the World Service helps to inform UK audiences about international events and the UK's place in the world better than any other brand, for example 38 points more than CNN for its own audience.<sup>21</sup>

A clear majority also believe that the World Service is effective at fulfilling its public purpose of reflecting the UK to the world (67 per cent of audiences in 2017/18, 65 per cent in 2018/19 and 66 per cent in 2019/20 agreed with this statement).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>BBC GfK Pulse Generic Survey, May 26th 2021 Consumed brand in last week: BBC One (4334), BBC R4 (685), BBC WS (313), ITV (2542), Channel 4 (942), Guardian (705), CNN (219), RT (104), NYT (85), Euronews (96), Al Jazeera (203), Sky (1329)

<sup>20</sup>BBC GfK Pulse Generic Survey May 26th 2021 – Consumed brand in last week: BBC WS (313), CNN (219). Proportion of weekly audience who were impacted by the brand after consuming; Better Understanding BBC 55%, CNN 45%, Opinion shift 15% to CNN 7%

<sup>21</sup>BBC GfK Pulse Generic Survey May 26th 2021 – Consumed brand in last week: BBC One (4334), BBC R4 (685), BBC WS (313), ITV (2542), Channel 4 (942), Guardian (705), CNN (219), RT (104), NYT (85), Euronews (96), Al Jazeera (203), Sky (1329); The WS fulfils its public purpose: informing its audiences worldviews, and giving an understanding of the UK's place in the world, BBC World Service 71%, CNN 33%

<sup>22</sup>IPSOS Mori, BBC Annual statements

## CASE STUDY

### BBC News Russian has helped UK audiences to navigate disinformation surrounding the Skripal poisoning

In 2018, BBC News Russian helped to lead the BBC's coverage of the Skripal poisoning and the events that followed. The insight provided by BBC News Russian and BBC Monitoring specialists was essential to understand how Russia was using media assets to influence public opinion abroad.<sup>23</sup> BBC News Russian and BBC Monitoring worked together with UK teams to help audiences understand the role of disinformation during these events, such as the analysis piece: Sergei Skripal and the Russian disinformation game.

## CASE STUDY

### BBC News Persian provided unique insight into the news surrounding the killing of Iranian General Soleimani, a top news story for UK audiences in January 2020

In January 2020, Iranian General Qasem Soleimani was killed as part of a US operation. The subsequent ongoing tensions between the US and Iran then became a major story for audiences in the UK.

On 3rd January 2020, when the US killed top Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani, 10.3m UK unique visitors came to BBC News Online – 40% higher than the figure for an average weekday (based on April – December 2019). News of the general's death was the second-biggest story for UK users across that week, and the following week (w/c 6th Jan), the second and third biggest stories related to US troops being attacked in retaliation, and the Ukrainian plane that might have been brought down by Iranian missiles in error.

Here, expertise from BBC News Persian and BBC Monitoring's Iran desk helped give UK audiences unrivalled access to what was happening and its implications, including reactions from Iranian analysts and discussions, with BBC News Persian correspondents conducting multiple live appearances for BBC outlets.

<sup>23</sup>BBC Monitoring, [Russia Media guide](#), 9 February 2021



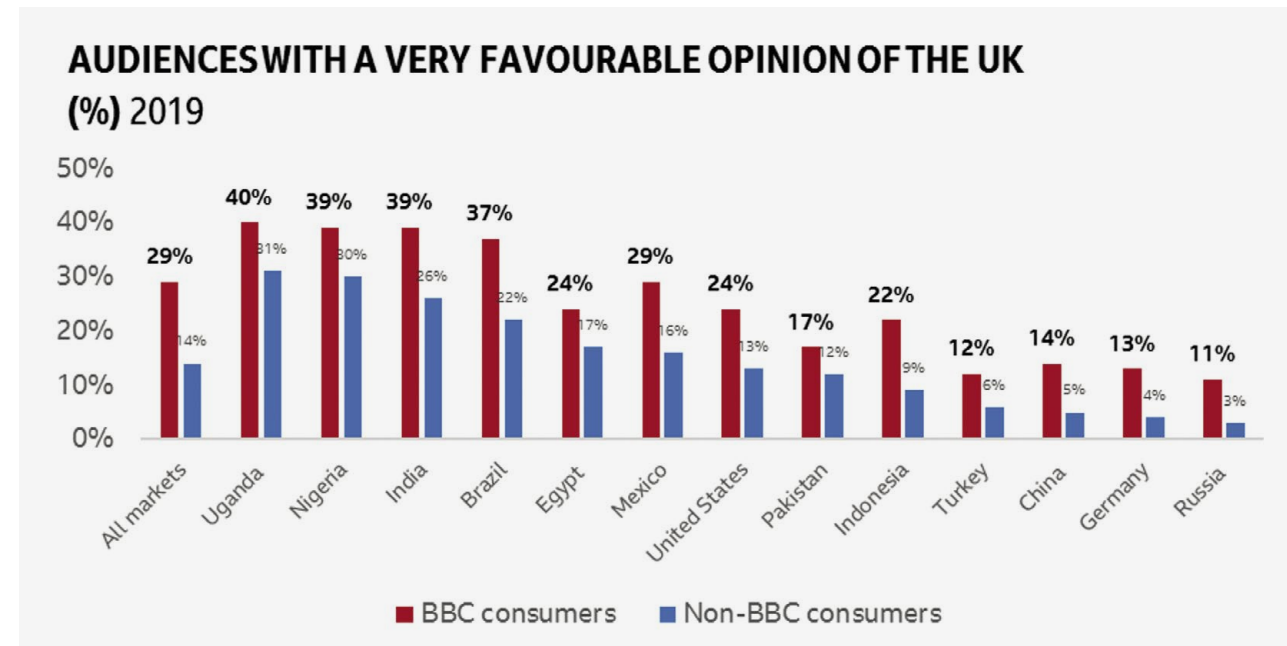
## Value to the UK

Through its role as the most trusted international news provider, BBC World Service delivers substantial benefits to the UK by creating positive sentiment towards the United Kingdom.

A recent survey by Ipsos Mori demonstrated that, amongst younger audiences, BBC World Service is the best-known institution across all countries included in the survey (mainly excluding, but sometimes including their home country cultural institutions).<sup>24</sup>

It also found that awareness of the World Service is strongly linked to a range of positive perceptions of the UK, including perceptions of trust, the perception that the UK supports participants' core values, and intentions to interact with the UK in the future.<sup>25</sup>

The BBC's global research project into understanding impact in 2019 showed that BBC consumers are significantly more favourable to the UK than non-BBC consumers, irrespective of a country's historical ties with the UK:



A Populus (now Yonder Consulting) survey found that the BBC is “one of the top three ‘iconic’ British brands that carry the story of Global Britain.”<sup>26</sup>

As the UK forges a new relationship with the world, following the departure from the European Union, the World Service can continue to play a significant ‘soft power’ role that delivers benefits back to the UK.

<sup>24</sup>British Council perception survey 2020, fieldwork and analysis by Ipsos MORI. Base: Q18. Which, if any, of the following organisations have you ever heard of or seen references to? All participants in the G20 [20,612]. Used with kind permission of the British Council.

<sup>25</sup>British Council perception survey 2020, fieldwork and analysis by Ipsos MORI. Base: all in G20 asked about UK (18,004): aware of BBC World Service (7,457) not aware of BBC World Service (11,546) Q2a-2f Which THREE of the following countries do you find MOST attractive as a country in which to study?/as a source of arts and culture / with which to do business/trade/to visit as a tourist? Used with kind permission of the British Council.

<sup>26</sup>Yonder Consulting, [British Icon Index II How home-grown brands, industries and institutions carry the story of modern Britain to the world](#) 2018

## Delivering value for UK audiences: key points

- BBC World Service reaches around four per cent of UK adults in an average week directly, with those that do listen to the World Service holding favourable opinions of output (with 45 per cent of UK weekly audience saying that the World Service is the best news provider at giving understanding of international news, far higher than competitors) meeting the licence obligation.
- UK audiences primarily benefit from World Service journalism through its contribution to the BBC's domestic news service during global events,
- Audiences in the UK agree that the World Service is effective at fulfilling its public purpose of reflecting the UK to the world in 2020.
- A wide range of research evidence demonstrates the wider value of the World Service to the UK, including:
  - (i) Recent IpsosMORI research which found that, amongst younger audiences, the World Service is the best-known institution across all countries included in the survey (sometimes including their home country cultural institutions);
  - (ii) BBC global research project into understanding impact demonstrated that BBC consumers are significantly more favourable to the UK than non-BBC consumers, irrespective of a country's historical ties with the UK;
  - (iii) Populus survey found that the BBC is “one of the top three ‘iconic’ British brands that carry the story of Global Britain”.