

Commercial radio:

**A FORCE**

**FOR GOOD**

The **public value** contribution of  
commercial radio across the UK

# Introduction

Commercial radio is a force for good in the UK.

It reaches 40 million people every week, providing audiences with a range of music, entertainment, news and information, and companionship.

At a time where misinformation is rife and trust in media is falling, commercial radio stands out as a uniquely trusted medium.

This summary booklet showcases how commercial radio broadcasters deliver public value across five key areas.

## Five themes of public value



**Companionship** The value provided directly to audiences through entertainment, engagement and accessibility



**Economic impact** Contribution to the UK economy and creative industries, supporting economic growth, jobs, skills and training



**Advertisers** Effective advertising that helps businesses grow and succeed, while providing a trusted and regulated space for brands



**News** Commercial radio's contribution to informing the public through the provision of trusted news and information



**Charity** The role of broadcasters in supporting charities and raising awareness of good causes

# Policy recommendations

Government and policymakers can support the future of commercial radio and audio, along with the significant public value that the sector delivers, in the following ways:

- **Secure access to radio online and in vehicles** by promptly implementing powers within the Media Act. Government should also ensure that regulation keeps pace with technological change by guaranteeing access to on-demand audio and ensuring radio is available in cars.
- **Support viable local news** with proportionate regulation that focuses on delivering locally relevant content, rather than imposing burdensome operational quotas.
- **Safeguard BBC distinctiveness** by ensuring the BBC continues to deliver unique public value in ways that complement – not duplicate – the commercial sector, especially ahead of the 2027 Charter Review.
- **Unlock further economic growth** by streamlining regulation and modernising outdated requirements – including working with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to simplify rules on terms and conditions in radio advertising.

# The UK commercial radio industry

## More choice than ever

**300+** commercial radio stations across the UK

## Changing listening habits

**1/3** of all UK commercial radio listening now takes place online

## Record audiences

**40m** listeners every week

## Charity support

**£27m** raised for charities and good causes

## Supporting jobs and skills

**12,340** jobs supported across the country

## Trusted news

**10,000+** news bulletins broadcast every week

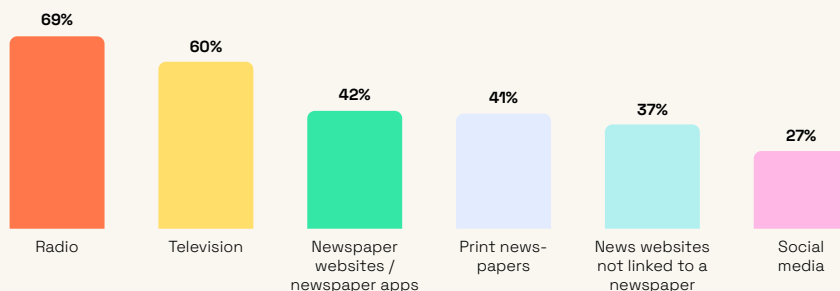
## Value to UK economy

**£683m** in GVA generated

# The most **trusted** medium

Trust is the essential factor that underpins commercial radio as force for good in the UK. Listeners trust what they hear, advertisers trust the platform's reach and effectiveness, and policymakers recognise that the trusted content broadcast to millions each week is held to the highest standards.

## Trust news to be factual and true from these sources



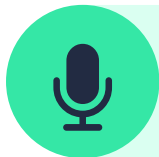
**Source:** Differentology

Q12 To what extent do you trust news stories to be factual and true, and not misleading or false, from each of the following news sources? Top 2 shown on 5-point scale.

**Base:** All respondents (3037)



**Concerns on trust** 63% of listeners are concerned or very concerned about the amount of misleading or false information presented as news



**Combating misinformation** Commercial radio is instrumental in tackling misinformation, especially in emergencies



**A safe space for advertisers** 67% of audiences trust a brand they don't know after hearing an ad on the radio - compared to just 23% for TikTok, 31% for Facebook or 34% for Instagram

# Companionship & connection

Commercial radio plays a vital role in the daily lives of listeners. Whether at home, at work, or in the car, commercial radio offers a unifying shared experience that's available freely to everyone.

In a world dominated by screens and algorithms, commercial radio provides genuine connection, entertainment, and companionship.



## Human connection

Commercial radio fulfils a variety of different needs, particularly as a source of companionship and entertainment



## Record audiences reaching

**40 million**  
people each week

## Something for everyone...



**Over  
300**

licensed commercial radio stations,  
with over 50 brand extensions covering  
a range of decades and genres



**Inclusive and  
accessible** Radio is  
fundamentally free-  
to-access across  
multiple platforms  
- FM/AM, DAB, DTV,  
online, smart speaker

# Supporting economic growth

Commercial radio plays a crucial role in the UK's creative economy. It generates over £683 million in economic value, supports thousands of jobs, and drives innovation in the creative industries.

Commercial radio champions new music, promotes live events, and invests in skills and talent across all parts of the country.



**Investment and innovation** Commercial radio generates £683m in GVA to the UK and supports over 12,000 jobs across the country



**Revenues are stronger than ever** £737m in 2024, with particularly strong growth in digital audio advertising



**Supporting the UK music and events industry** Commercial radio's value to music sales is estimated at £100m, in addition to music rights payments



**Training and skills** Broadcasters operate technical colleges, vocational training and mentorship programmes to train the next generation of talent, both on air and behind the scenes

# Advertising amplified

Commercial radio is one of the most effective and trusted platforms for advertisers. It delivers exceptional audience reach and return on investment (ROI).

Radio offers a trusted and regulated environment that provides brand safety for advertisers alongside high-quality content, a critical advantage over online platforms and social media.



**Scale and reach** Ad-funded audio combined reaches 76% of adults in the UK and continues to grow



**Return on investment (ROI)** Commercial radio delivers one of the highest short-term profit ROI for advertisers - £2.47 for every £1 spent



**Digital audio advantage** 32% of commercial radio listening is now on internet connected devices



**Building brand trust** People exposed to radio advertising within a campaign are 32% more likely to trust a brand



# News & information

At a time when trust in news is falling, commercial radio stands out as a reliable, accessible source of trusted information.

Broadcasting over 10,000 bulletins every week, commercial radio reaches diverse audiences – including those who might otherwise avoid news – and plays a crucial role in keeping people informed.



Essential news  
and information  
broadcasting over

# 10,000

news bulletins every week



**Growing appeal**  
40% of listeners  
now rely on radio  
news more than  
in the past, and  
this is even more  
pronounced  
for younger  
audiences and  
diverse groups



**Reaching audiences  
beyond the bubble**

Commercial radio has  
a unique connection  
to 1/3 of listeners who  
don't actively seek out  
news overall, but do  
tune in to commercial  
radio news



**Cut through**

# 7 in 10 listeners

hear news and follow up with an action,  
with younger audiences most likely  
to discuss what they've heard with  
family and friends



# Raising vital funds for charities and good causes

Commercial radio can harness its audience reach to raise funds and awareness for charities and good causes.

In 2024 alone, broadcasters raised £27 million for community initiatives and national appeals. Commercial radio also supports local campaigns and wellbeing initiatives, connecting listeners with causes that matter.



**Fundraising power** £27m raised for charity in 2024



**Community and social action** Broadcasters have set up dedicated charitable foundations that have improved the lives of over 500,000 people across the UK



**Emergency appeals** Stations donate valuable airtime supporting urgent appeals from the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)



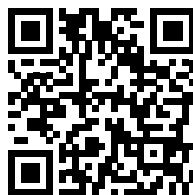
**Raising awareness** Commercial radio actively supports initiatives focusing on mental health and wellbeing, and promotes local community events

## Methodology note

*Commercial radio: A Force for Good* is based on a mix of first and third-party data sources, in addition to desk-based research. This includes RAJAR data up to Q1 2025, in addition to a quantitative online survey conducted by Differentology, a leading market research company, of a nationally representative sample of 3,037 regular commercial radio listeners.

## Read the Force for Good report in full at:

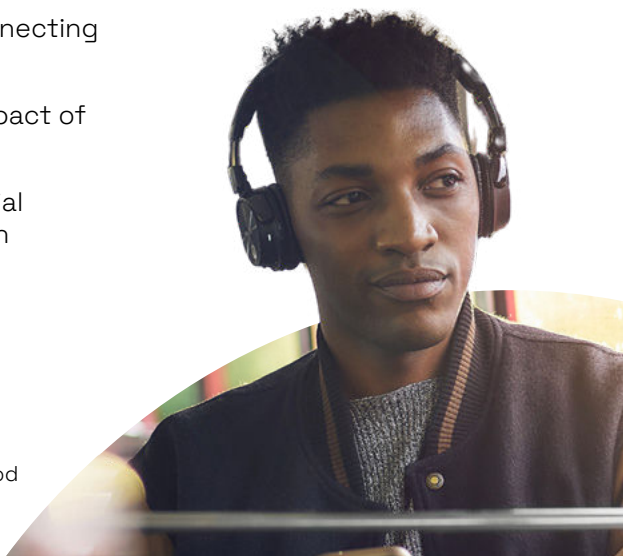
[www.radiocentre.org/forceforgood](http://www.radiocentre.org/forceforgood)



Scan me  
to read report

### ***Commercial radio: A Force for Good includes***

- New data on why commercial radio remains highly trusted by listeners
- Case studies of stations connecting with local communities
- Analysis of the economic impact of the sector across the UK
- The importance of commercial radio news in cutting through with listeners





## Contact

Radiocentre  
15 Alfred Place  
London  
WC1E 7EB

Will Thomson, Head of Policy:  
[will.thomson@radiocentre.org](mailto:will.thomson@radiocentre.org)



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