



Commercial radio:

A FORCE

FOR GOOD

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

Executive summary

Commercial radio in the UK is a force for good. It reaches 40 million people each week, providing audiences with a diverse mix of music, entertainment, news and information, and companionship.

Against a backdrop of declining trust in information and institutions, where online spaces are increasingly saturated with mis- and disinformation, **commercial radio stands out as a uniquely trusted medium**. It offers a regulated, brand-safe, and reliable environment for both listeners and advertisers. This trust forms the foundation for the broad public value that commercial radio delivers.

This report outlines how commercial radio acts as a *force for good* across five core themes:

1. COMPANIONSHIP AND CONNECTION – commercial radio provides vital human connection, entertainment, and companionship to millions, fostering a sense of shared experience and community. The choice of radio stations and podcasts has grown substantially in recent years, and audio remains universally accessible and free-to-access across all platforms.



2. SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH – the sector contributes £683 million in gross value added (GVA) to the UK economy and supports 12,340 jobs. Revenues are stronger than ever, reaching £737 million in 2024. Commercial radio continues to invest in UK talent, skills and content, supports the music industry (contributing over £100 million in music sales annually, plus £60 million in royalties), and promotes a wide range of live events across the country.



3. ADVERTISING AMPLIFIED – commercial radio delivers exceptional audience reach and offers one of the highest short-term profit return on investment (ROI) - higher than any other digital channel at £2.47 for every £1 spent. The trusted and regulated environment of radio provides brand safety for advertisers, a critical advantage over online platforms and social media.



4. NEWS AND INFORMATION – with over 10,000 news bulletins broadcast each week, commercial radio is a crucial source of trusted news and information. It has a unique ability to reach audiences “beyond the bubble” of highly engaged news consumers and plays a key role in informing the public, including younger and diverse audiences who have increased their reliance on radio as a source of news.



5. CHARITABLE IMPACT – commercial radio is a powerful fundraising force, raising £27 million for charities and good causes in 2024 alone through initiatives like Global’s Make Some Noise and Bauer’s Cash for Kids. Stations also actively support appeals by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), raise awareness for initiatives focusing on mental health and wellbeing, and support local community events.



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.



Contents

Executive summary	2
CEO foreword	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Radio is the most trusted medium	8
3. Commercial radio: a force for good	11
• Companionship and connection	12
• Supporting economic growth	16
• Advertising amplified	20
• News and information	25
• Raising vital funds for charities and good causes	32
4. Securing the future	37



CEO foreword

At a time when media is transforming and trust in information sources is increasingly under pressure, the resilience and reliability of commercial radio really stands out. This enables it to play a uniquely valuable role in the lives of millions of people across the UK.

Every day commercial radio stations not only provide entertainment and music, but also trusted news, meaningful human connection and a powerful sense of community. They do all this while being universally accessible and free at the point of use. These qualities are the foundation of the public value that our sector provides.

This report, *Commercial Radio: A Force for Good*, sets out the wide-ranging contribution of commercial radio across five core areas: from its unparalleled ability to foster connection and companionship, to the essential role it plays in informing the public, supporting economic growth, amplifying charitable efforts and offering incredible value to advertisers.

The evidence shows that the public value impact of commercial radio is stronger than ever. With revenues reaching £737m in 2024, our industry plays an important role in the creative economy, supports thousands of jobs across the country, while remaining one of the most trusted and effective platforms for advertisers. It is also proud to support UK music, talent, journalism and creativity at every level.

To continue delivering this value, we need a policy and regulatory environment that keeps pace with change. From ensuring continued access to radio in an increasingly digital world, to modernising outdated regulatory burdens, there are clear opportunities for action that will unlock even greater benefits for listeners and the economy.

Commercial radio is a cornerstone of everyday life for tens of millions. It informs, entertains, connects and uplifts, while managing to combine its impact with integrity. I am proud to be part of an industry that continues to be a force for good, shaping the future of media with trust and purpose.

Matt Payton

Matt Payton
Radiocentre CEO



1. Introduction

Commercial radio in the UK is thriving. Audiences are at record levels, reaching 40 million people each week. With more choice than ever, this enduring popularity is testament to the investment and innovation from broadcasters amidst dramatic changes in the way that audiences access and engage with media.

Broadcasters provide listeners with a broad mix of music, entertainment, trusted news and information, and companionship. It is this diverse content proposition that underscores commercial radio's unique public value contribution. Radio stands out as a crucial source of human connection and shared experience for audiences as media consumption becomes increasingly online, atomised and fragmented.

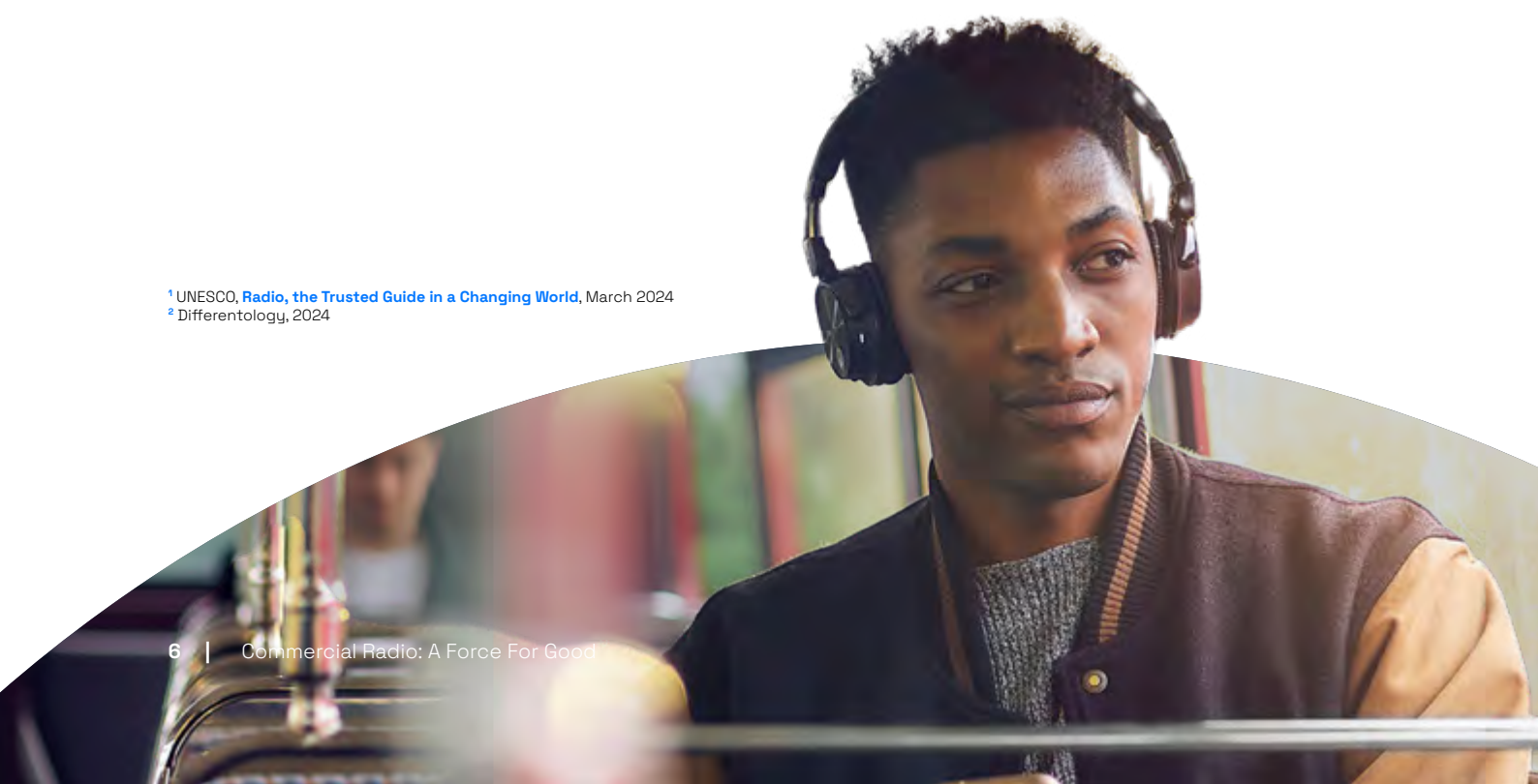
Commercial radio is an integral part of the UK's creative industries. In addition to its important economic contribution, the industry offers unmatched exposure and reach for emerging and established artists. Many of the UK's globally successful acts owe their breakthrough and sustained popularity to the airplay and promotion provided by commercial stations. The choice of stations has also grown significantly in recent years to offer a wide range of music genres, ensuring that audiences have access to whatever they want, be it the latest pop anthems or specialist stations focusing on a specific genre or decade.

Underpinning all of this is the fact that radio is consistently found to have very high levels of trust as a medium, as highlighted recently by UNESCO¹, which recognised radio as a '*triumph of accessibility, immediacy, and intimacy, and there is a strong public-interest case for protecting it and our access to it*'. Commercial radio's continued growth and success is built upon this trust; it is the very thread that connects it so effectively with audiences and advertisers alike.

This report showcases commercial radio's overall positive social, cultural, and economic impact. It draws on a range of industry sources, as well as new research commissioned by Radiocentre², and provides a comprehensive summary of the broad public value that commercial radio delivers using a framework structured around five themes. These themes are the foundation of what makes commercial radio a 'force for good'.

¹ UNESCO, [Radio, the Trusted Guide in a Changing World](#), March 2024

² Differentology, 2024



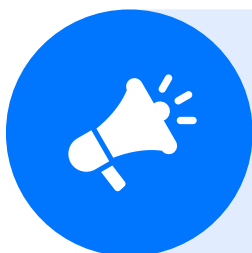
Five themes of public value



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



Economic impact Commercial radio's direct and indirect contribution to the UK economy and creative industries, including gross value added, employment and investment in skills and training



Advertisers The effectiveness and return on investment that stations deliver to advertisers, along with their role as a trusted and regulated space to safeguard brand safety



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

2. Radio is the most **trusted** medium

Trust is the essential factor that underpins commercial radio as a 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 upheld to the highest standards.

Trust is more important than ever in the current political climate. The Reuters Institute finds that more people than ever are turning away from news in the UK³. Radiocentre's research⁴ also finds a drop in the number of people who say they access news daily, with 62% of respondents saying they have actively avoided news in the last year.

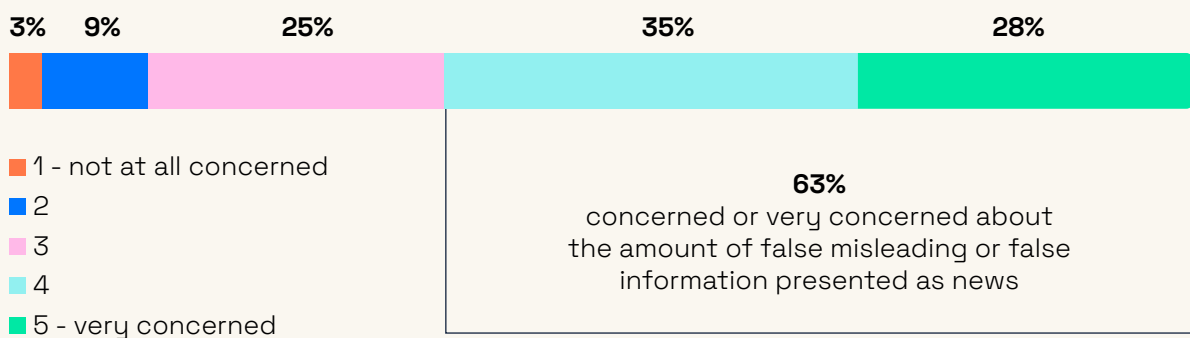
The key reasons cited for news avoidance were:

- **Lack of trust**
- **Limiting exposure to bad news**
- **Information overload**

This declining trust in news, information and institutions is compounded by the growing amount of misinformation people regularly encounter online: 43% of UK adults said that they had encountered misinformation or 'deep fakes' in the previous month – and among those who encounter it, seven in ten see it online⁵.

Concerns about misleading or false information presented as news remains very high: 63% of respondents to our study were concerned or very concerned about misinformation in the news.

Concerned about misleading or false information presented as news



Source: Differentology

Q11 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not at all concerned' and 5 is 'very concerned', how concerned are you about the amount of misleading false information presented as news that might appear in different media?

Base: All respondents (3037)

³ Reuters Institute, [People are turning away from the news. Here's why it may be happening](#), February 2025

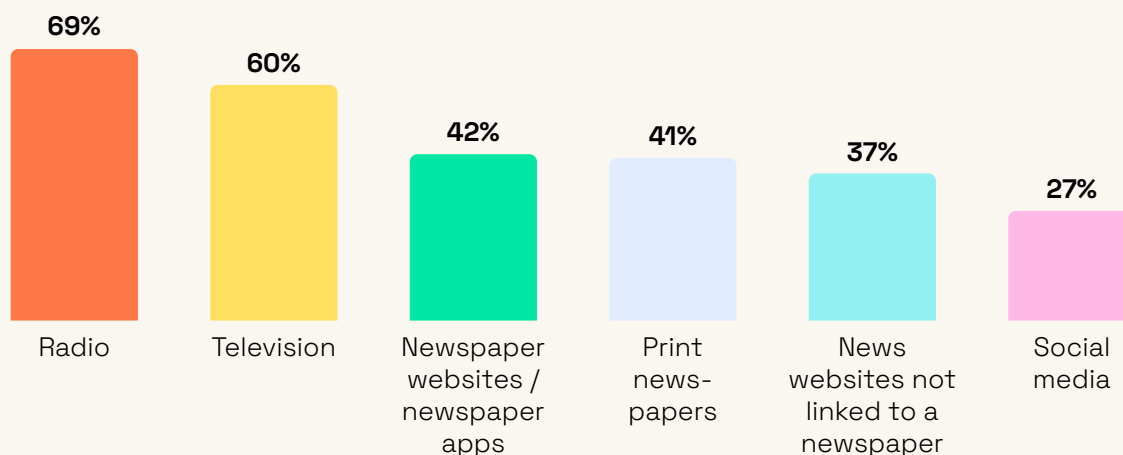
⁴ Differentology, 2024

⁵ Ofcom, [Mis and disinformation report](#), November 2024

The advent of generative AI has now turbocharged the speed with which misleading or false information can spread, particularly on social media. Our research⁶ finds that there were widespread concerns about AI, with 7 in 10 being concerned about it being misused on social media to, for example, generate fake news or spread hate or speech or other harmful content.

In a context of low levels of public trust in media overall, **radio stands out as the most trusted news source compared with other media** - 69% of respondents to our survey trust news on radio to be factual or true, in stark contrast to social media which is least trusted at 27%⁷.

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)

Tackling misinformation

Professional commercial radio news teams uphold the highest journalistic principles by bringing clear and unbiased information to listeners. This is particularly important during times of emergency – where the spread of false or misleading information can have devastating consequences.

For example, during the riots in the wake of the tragic 2024 Southport murders, social media was used as a vehicle to rapidly spread conspiracy theories and misinformation in ways that fomented violence and public disorder around the country.

To counterbalance and rebut this misinformation, commercial radio broadcasters ensured that they were extremely careful about the language used in their reports – only including verified and factual information in bulletins.

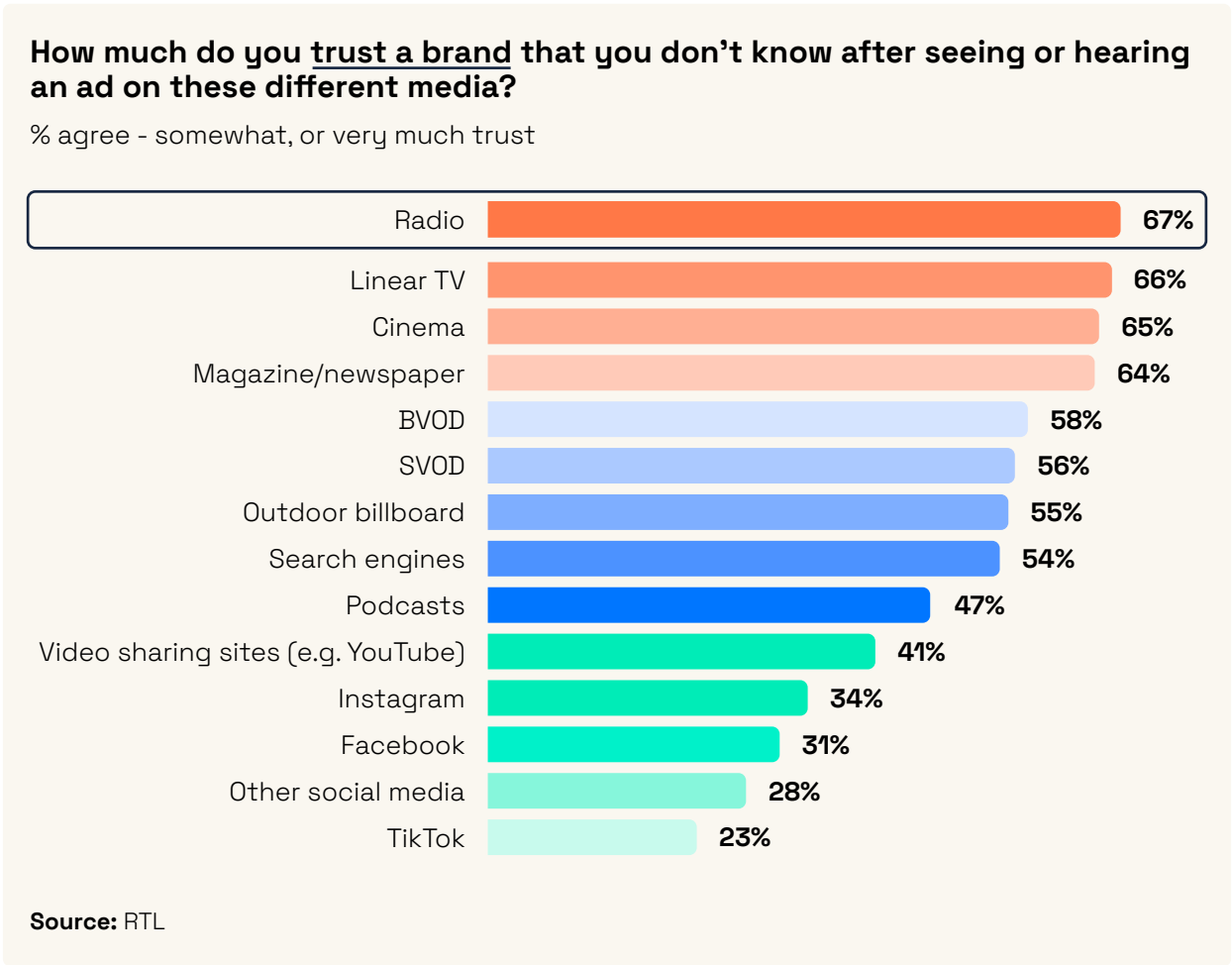
On multiple occasions broadcasters clarified misinformation spread on social media for listeners, exposing falsehoods and sharing accurate official information from local police forces, as well as broadcasting interviews with experts on misinformation in order to help educate audiences.

⁶ Differentology, 2024

⁷ Differentology, 2024 (Data note: references to 'radio' from this survey combine results for both commercial radio and BBC radio. In instances where the results have been disaggregated, there is an explicit reference to 'commercial radio' or 'BBC radio')

Commercial radio is an Ofcom regulated medium that holds itself to the highest professional and journalistic standards. This includes advertising, where radio scripts are cleared by the Radiocentre Clearance team against the relevant code from the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and Ofcom before they go on air. In 2024, the Clearance team reviewed over 35,000 scripts, with just six radio ads (or 0.02% of the total) receiving upheld complaints. This is proof that proactive self-regulation works and is a core reason why commercial radio remains so trusted by audiences.

It also means that commercial radio has a powerful ability to enhance perceptions of brand trust. A recent report from RTL⁸ highlights how 67% of listeners in the UK and Europe 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.



This highlights the sharp contrast between commercial radio and unregulated social media platforms. Recent developments, including reduced content moderation and fact-checking on major platforms like X, Facebook and Instagram, have heightened concerns⁹ about the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and harmful content online.

Unlike commercial radio, where news and advertising is regulated by broadcasting codes and advertising standards, social media operates with extremely limited oversight, making it easier for unverified information and increasingly AI-generated falsehoods to spread rapidly.

⁸ RTL AdAlliance, [The New Life of The Living Room 2025](#), March 2025
⁹ The Guardian, [Ditching of Facebook factcheckers a 'major step back' for public discourse, critics say](#) | Meta, January 2025

3. Commercial radio: a force for good

The trust that audiences place in commercial radio forms the bedrock upon which our sector delivers its broad public value.

The following sections will explore the ways in which commercial radio is a tangible ‘force for good’ across the five themes:



Companionship and connection



Supporting economic growth



Advertising amplified



News and information



Charitable impact



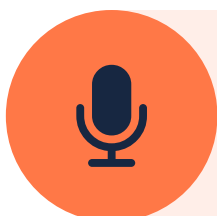
Companionship and connection



Record audiences Reaching 40 million people each week



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



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

Record audiences – Commercial radio audiences remain strong, reaching 40 million people each week (up from 36 million five years ago). This is testament to how broadcasters have embraced innovation to keep radio strong and relevant. The past decade has seen transformational changes to how people consume media, yet radio has continued to thrive and remains a vital part of listeners' daily lives.

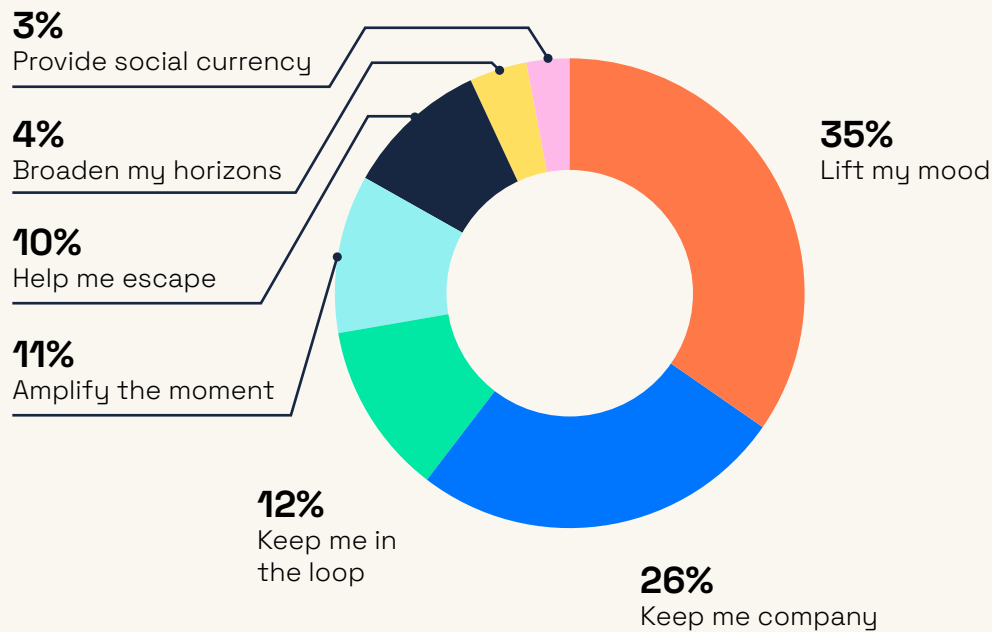
Human connection – Commercial radio is a crucial source of companionship for audiences, with people listening for 14 hours per week on average¹⁰. Our Generation Audio¹¹ report highlights how commercial audio, and in particular live radio, effectively addresses listener need-states – from providing an escape from everyday life, to amplifying the moment and lifting people's mood. Crucially, the report identified a new need state 'keep me company' which has grown due to changing living and working patterns since the pandemic.

Live radio offers people a vital human connection that cannot be replaced by playlists, algorithms or AI. In a time where generative AI can rapidly create synthetic content, the authenticity of the human voice on commercial radio – with its genuine warmth, empathy, and spontaneity – becomes more valuable than ever.

¹⁰ RAJAR, Q1 2025

¹¹ Radiocentre, [Generation Audio](#), November 2023

Why we listen - commercial audio meets seven different listener need states



Source: Generation Audio Share of total listening (duration)

Base: 490,464 commercial listening minutes

Accessibility and inclusivity – Commercial radio remains free-to-air, making it easily and universally accessible across a wide range of platforms – broadcast (AM/FM/DAB) and online streams – including a growing share now taking place on voice-activated devices like smart speakers. Radio and audio that is funded commercially (by advertising) ensures that the public has access to high-quality entertainment and trusted news at a time of increasing cost-of-living pressures and subscription overload.

A companion in the car – For millions on their daily commute, school run, or family holiday, commercial radio provides a free, effortless and resilient source of entertainment, news, and companionship. In-car listening accounts for over a quarter (26%¹²) of total radio listening hours. Radio is also the dominant audio format in cars, accounting for 74%¹³ of the total share of in-car audio listening.

Research consistently shows that radio is an essential part of the in-car experience for drivers, with 91%¹⁴ of recent and prospective car buyers saying that it was important that their recent or next vehicle has DAB/DAB+ or FM radio.

¹² RAJAR, Q1 2025

¹³ Ofcom, [Audio listening in the UK](#), May 2025

¹⁴ Radio Today, [Radio remains an essential part of the in-car experience](#), June 2023

Reaching diverse audiences – Commercial stations reach 71% of listeners from lower socio-economic groups compared to 48% by the BBC. Similarly, commercial radio also reaches 62% of listeners from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to 38% by the BBC.

And there's something for everyone. From stations like Lyca Radio, Sunrise Radio, and Panjab Radio serving the UK's Asian communities, to Fix Radio - a station specifically for tradespeople. For children, there's Fun Kids Radio, while for older listeners, Boom Radio has built an incredibly loyal following.

Listeners from lower socio-economic groups:



Commercial radio



BBC radio

Listeners from ethnic minority backgrounds:



Commercial radio



BBC radio

Source: RAJAR Q1 2025

Weekly reach (%) of specified audiences

Base: C2DE Adults 15+; Specified ethnic minority background Adults 15+

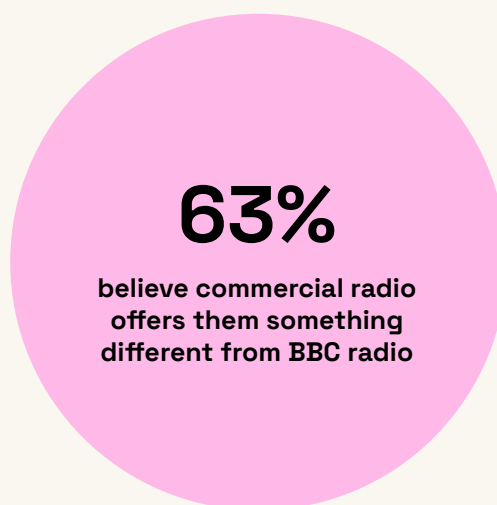
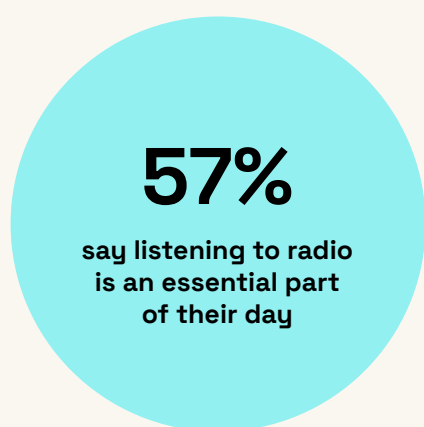
Entertainment and discovery – Listeners tune into their favourite radio stations for the unique mix of music, news, entertainment and companionship. Commercial radio remains a crucial platform for breaking new artists and supporting established acts.

Alongside the music, radio provides listeners with relevant context as well as engaging conversation, interviews, and essential news and information that keeps audiences informed and connected.

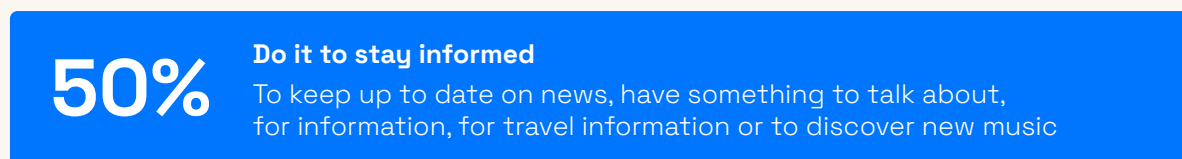
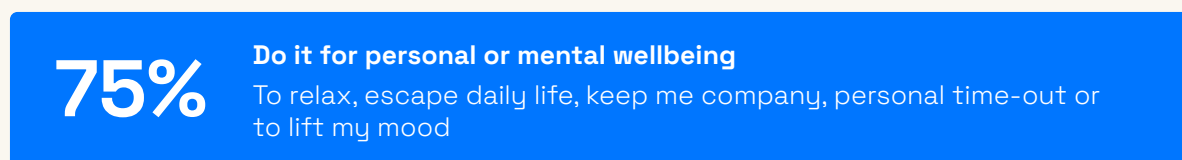
A safe space and unifying experience – Live radio offers a shared listening experience that brings people together. This is a welcome ‘safe space’ for audiences that contrasts with the often polarising, algorithmically driven, and potentially toxic or harmful content that is rife in some online environments.

In an increasingly atomised and fragmented media landscape, commercial radio offers a counterpoint to these ‘echo chambers’ of online content and continues to foster an important sense of community and shared experience.

Radio fosters trust by fulfilling a variety of different needs and having a positive impact on listeners’ mental health



Why do you listen to radio?



Source: Differentology

Q30 Here are some statements people have made about radio. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree. Top 2 shown. Q29 What are your main reasons for listening to the radio?

Base: All respondents (3037)

Supporting economic growth



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

Value to UK economy – Audio is an important part of the UK's creative industries, with commercial radio alone generating around £683m in gross value added (GVA) to the economy and supporting 12,340 jobs across the country¹⁵. Commercial radio also makes an important revenue contribution to the advertising industry, which supports 5% of all employment¹⁶ in the UK.

Revenue growth – Commercial radio revenues bounced back since the pandemic, reaching record levels in recent years. Total revenue reached £737 million in 2024, a 3% increase from 2023¹⁷. Digital audio advertising is a key growth driver for commercial broadcasters, with digital revenues rising by 8% in 2024 to £78 million.

¹⁵ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Commercial Radio, [Valuing Radio: How commercial radio contributes to the UK](#), December 2018

¹⁶ Advertising Association, [Advertising Pays 2025: Powering the UK's Changing Economy](#), May 2025

¹⁷ Radiocentre, [Ad Revenues and Forecasts](#) [accessed June 2025]

Economic impact of commercial radio



£683m

GVA



12,340

jobs supported



£737m

revenue in 2024



£160m

value to music
industry

Investment and innovation – Radio is at the heart of the UK’s creative industries. World-leading broadcasters invest heavily in UK audio, with jobs and talent nurtured across a wide-range of specialist areas including audio production, presentation, journalism, music programming, digital and video production, engineering, marketing and advertising.

Beyond audio, commercial broadcasters have evolved into multimedia businesses, incorporating Out of Home advertising platforms. This allows them to offer comprehensive cross-platform solutions to significantly broaden reach and effectiveness for advertisers, which in turn strengthens the industry’s economic contribution.

Value to the music industry – Commercial radio continues to play an important role in music discovery. Although there are more platforms than ever for finding new music, radio is still a more popular top discovery method than streaming or social media among all consumers¹⁸. Commercial radio amplifies the careers of UK artists and generates significant economic value for the music industry – value to music sales is estimated at over £100m¹⁹ (in addition to around £60m in music rights payments).

Promoting live music, tours, festivals – Commercial radio is deeply embedded in the UK’s live music and events economy. Stations are active promoters and sponsors of live events, tours, and festivals – ranging from gigs that provide opportunities for breaking artists to major concerts featuring established acts.

Whether it’s the concerts and festivals in cities across the UK, live podcast shows at the Royal Albert Hall, or sell-out stadium events at venues like Wembley and the O2 Arena, commercial radio remains an integral part of the UK’s live music and events ecosystem.

Skills, training and diversity – Commercial operators are committed to training the next generation of talent in UK audio – both on air and behind the scenes. Some examples of this work are provided below.

¹⁸ MIDIA Research, [Music discovery is not dead, just evolving – the industry needs to evolve with it](#), May 2025

¹⁹ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Commercial Radio, [Valuing Radio: How commercial radio contributes to the UK](#), December 2018

The Global Academy

The Global Academy is a state-funded school for 14–19 year-olds that uniquely blends academic learning with hands-on industry experience in the media, broadcast, and digital sectors. Designed to address the growing skills gap and support the UK’s creative economy, the Academy offers students access to professional-standard studios, real-world projects, and mentorship from leading industry figures. Established by Global in 2016, it equips young people with the technical skills, creativity, and confidence needed to succeed. Ofsted recently rated the Academy “Outstanding” for its Sixth Form provision, noting exceptionally high student outcomes and strong vocational qualifications. The Global Academy is a powerful example of how education and industry can come together to create pathways to employment, drive social mobility, and give young people the best start in the industry.



Bauer Media Audio

Bauer provides a **News Mentoring Programme** across the UK which offers guidance and training for journalism students in their final year, supporting them as they make their next step in becoming professional broadcast journalists. **The Bauer Academy** also delivers workplace training and apprenticeships across media, digital, and leadership roles, with a strong emphasis on upskilling both new and existing talent. Its programmes are designed to address skills shortages and future-proof leadership within UK businesses.



Grassroots talent - Smaller independent commercial radio stations also play a vital role in nurturing future talent by providing crucial entry-level employment, valuable on-the-job training, and opportunities to develop a diverse range of skills essential for a career in the audio industry.

For example, Radio Exe in Devon has funded places for 16–18-year-olds who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to take a Level 3 journalism qualification. One former apprentice became Britain's youngest newsreader at 16 and is now doing his Level 3 through the Bauer Academy. Radio Exe also works with the University of Exeter, providing a work experience placement for students under their Pathway's programme.

Creative Access Masterclasses - Radiocentre has partnered with Creative Access (the UK's leading diversity and inclusivity organisation in the creative industries) and the BBC to deliver a series of radio masterclasses. These sessions are specifically designed for individuals from communities historically under-represented in the creative industries.

The masterclasses aim to showcase different career pathways in the radio industry. Each event features a panel of talent and audio professionals from both commercial radio and the BBC to highlight the vast array of roles available, both on air and behind the scenes.



Advertising amplified



Scale and reach Commercial 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 connected devices



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

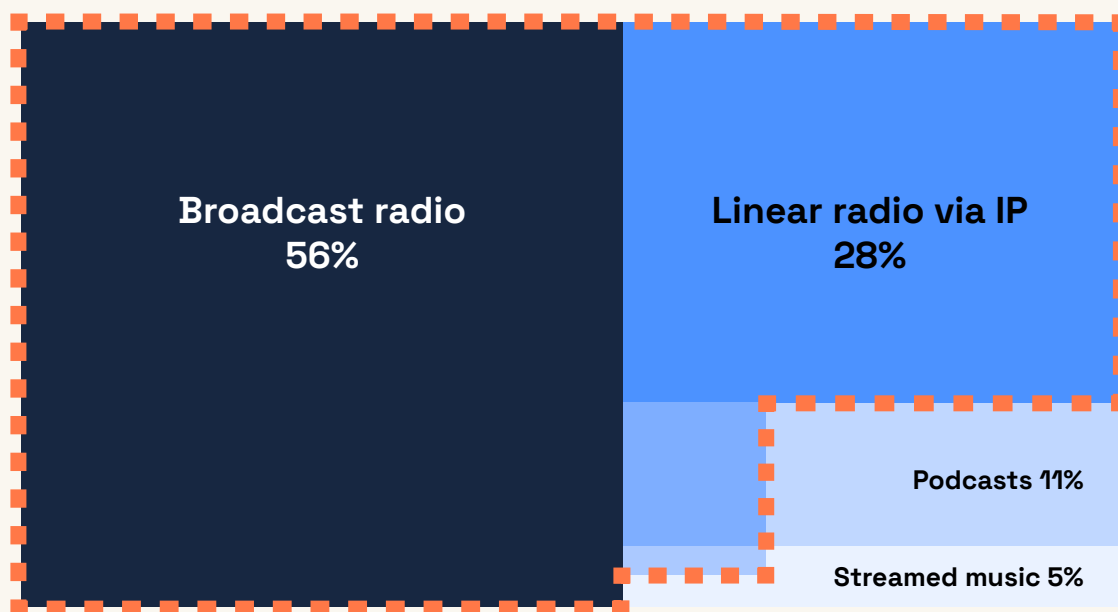
Scale and reach – The broader ad-funded audio landscape (including radio, podcasts, and ad-supported music streaming, but excluding BBC or subscription music services) reaches 76% of UK adults weekly, an audience that has grown by 5.3 million over the past six years. Commercial broadcasters are central to this, accounting for nearly 90% of all commercial audio listening hours and an 87.5% share of commercial audio advertising revenue in 2024.

Market data reveals how a media budget spent on audio advertising delivers multiple times more audience impressions than in any other medium²⁰. These factors combined mean that mass audience reach is more readily attainable and affordable through commercial audio than other media.

²⁰ Ebiquity, [Re-evaluating Media](#), 2020

Share of total UK commercial audio listening time

Commercial broadcasters provide access to c.90% of UK commercial audio listening - area in orange box below.

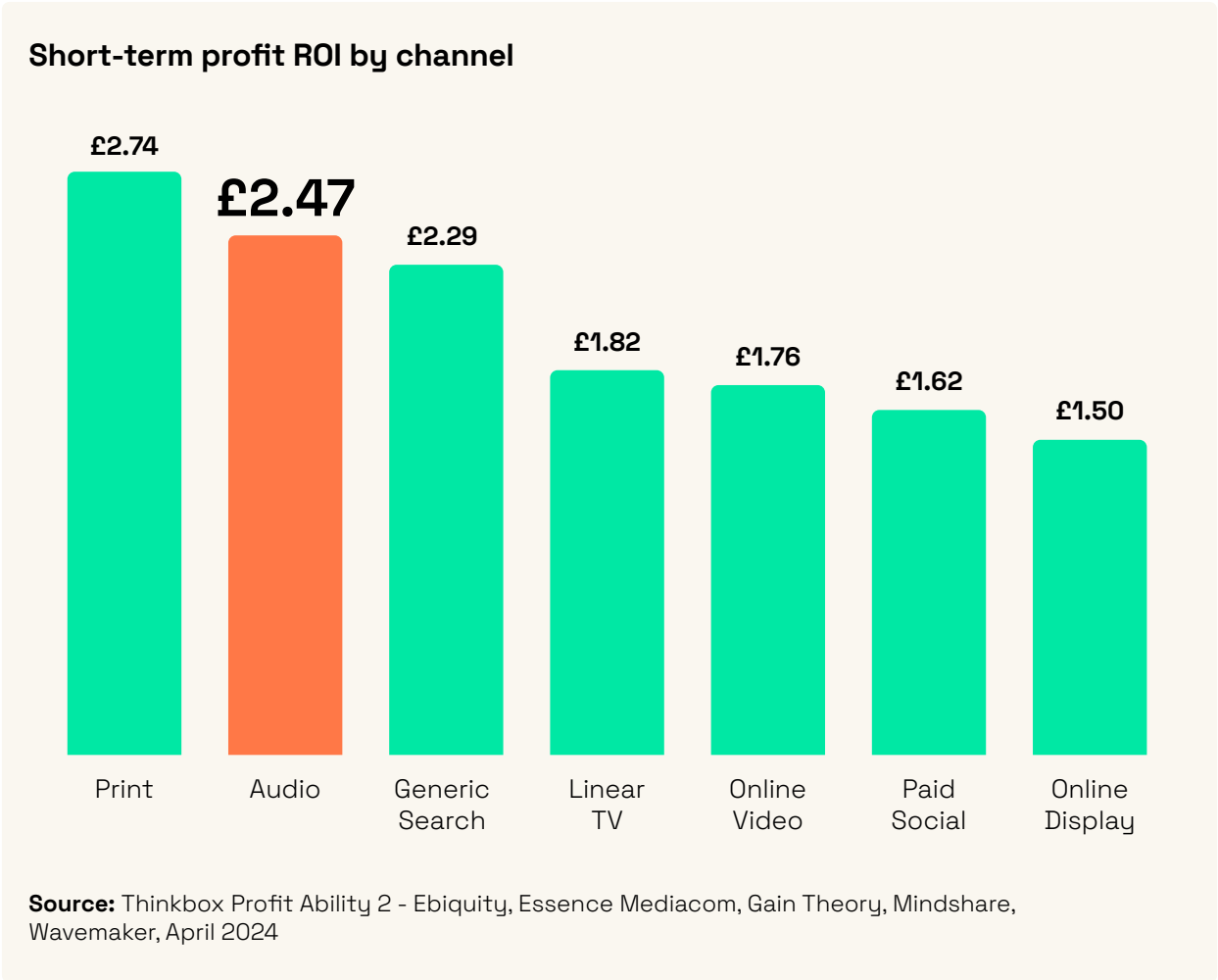


Source: Radiocentre analysis of RAJAR MIDAS Summer 2024.

Base: % Share of total UK commercial listening time by audio format. Includes ad-funded listening only. Broadcaster radio is FM/AM and DAB. Linear radio via IP is live radio listening on connected devices.

Return on investment – The most recent and comprehensive study of advertising campaign performance reveals how short-term profit ROI derived from audio (£2.47) significantly outperforms all other digital advertising channels. Commercial radio’s short-term contribution to advertisers is therefore estimated at £1.8bn in total²¹.

Furthermore, strategically reallocating advertising budgets from other media towards radio can enhance overall campaign ROI by as much as 8.5% when radio constitutes around 20% of the media mix²².

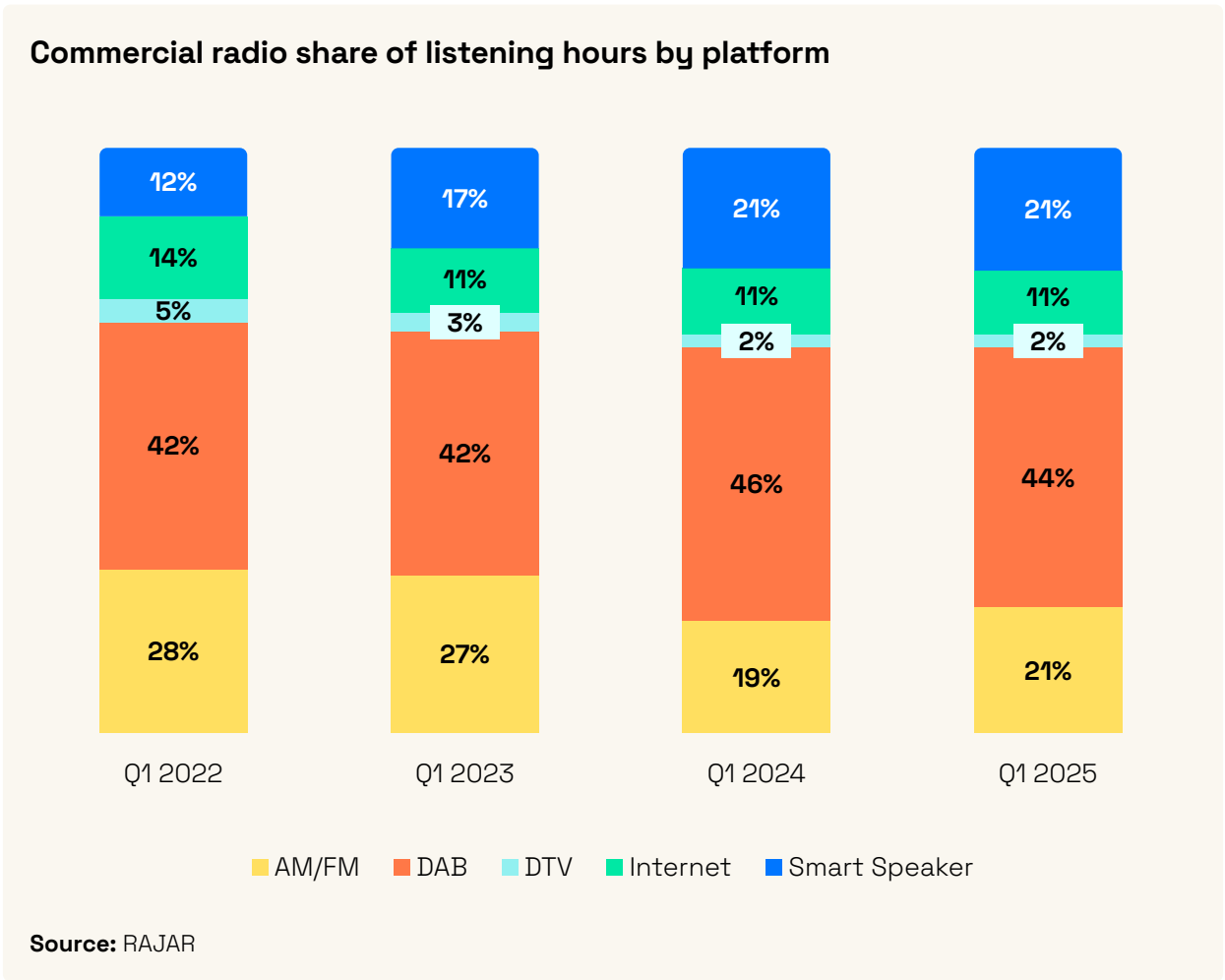


²¹ This is calculated by multiplying the average short term profit ROI by the total industry advertising revenue (2.47 x £737m)
²² Radiocentre, [Radio for growing ROI](#) [accessed May 2025]

Digital audio advantage – Connected devices are transforming listening habits. Online listening to live radio now accounts for almost a third (32%) of all commercial radio listening – with smart speakers alone accounting for 21%²³. This is a higher proportion than radio overall or BBC radio, which has not seen listening migrate online at the same rate.

Commercial broadcasters have capitalised on this shift by making their content easily accessible on connected devices, providing listeners with direct access to live radio and related podcast content via broadcaster apps.

Digital audio enables advanced targeting based on behavioural and in-market data such as location, interests, and habits, offering more efficient targeting of in-market audiences and precise location-based targeting.



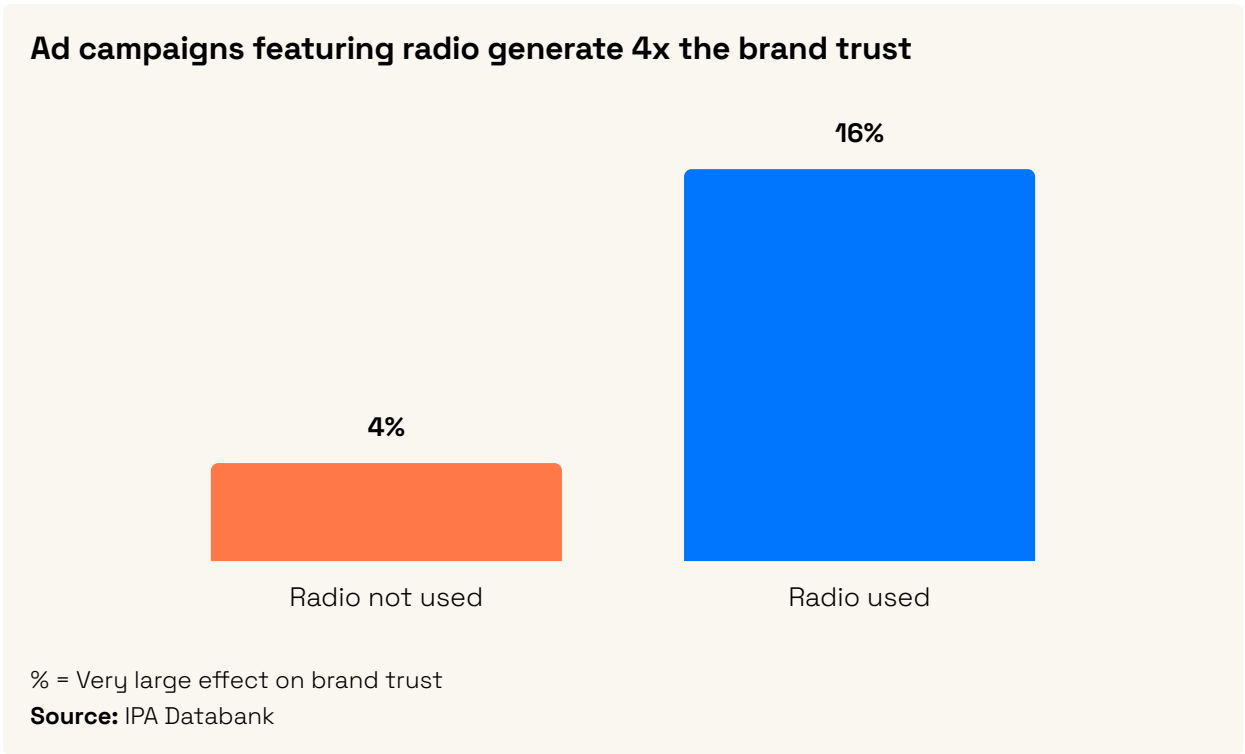
²³ RAJAR, Q1 2025

A safe space for advertisers – As an Ofcom-regulated medium, commercial radio provides a brand-safe environment for advertisers, which is a crucial differentiator from many social media platforms. The proliferation of misinformation, AI-generated material, and toxic content on social media is an increasing concern for brands.

The absence of robust content moderation on many social media platforms means ads can appear alongside inappropriate or harmful material, which poses risks to brand reputation. In contrast, commercial radio’s regulated content and established editorial controls offer a trusted environment which ensures that ads are not undermined by association with harmful content.

Building brand trust – For consumers, brand trust ranks as one of the top considerations when it comes to purchases. IPA Touchpoints data, which includes a measure of the extent to which advertising is trusted by each medium’s audience, shows that trust in radio advertising is higher than for other media when measured in this way²⁴.

In addition, analysis of the IPA Databank highlights how campaigns that feature radio generate 4x the level of brand trust as those without radio (see below). Finally, Radiogauge data²⁵ shows that people exposed to radio advertising within a campaign are 32% more likely to trust a brand.



²⁴ IPA Databank
²⁵ Radiocentre, [Radiogauge Predict Home Page](#) [accessed May 2025]

News and information



Essential news and information Broadcasting over 10,000 news bulletins every week



Growing appeal 40% of people are relying on radio news more than in the past, and this is even more pronounced for younger audiences and diverse groups



Cut through 7 in 10 hear news and follow up with an action, with young people more likely than older groups to discuss what they've heard with family and friends

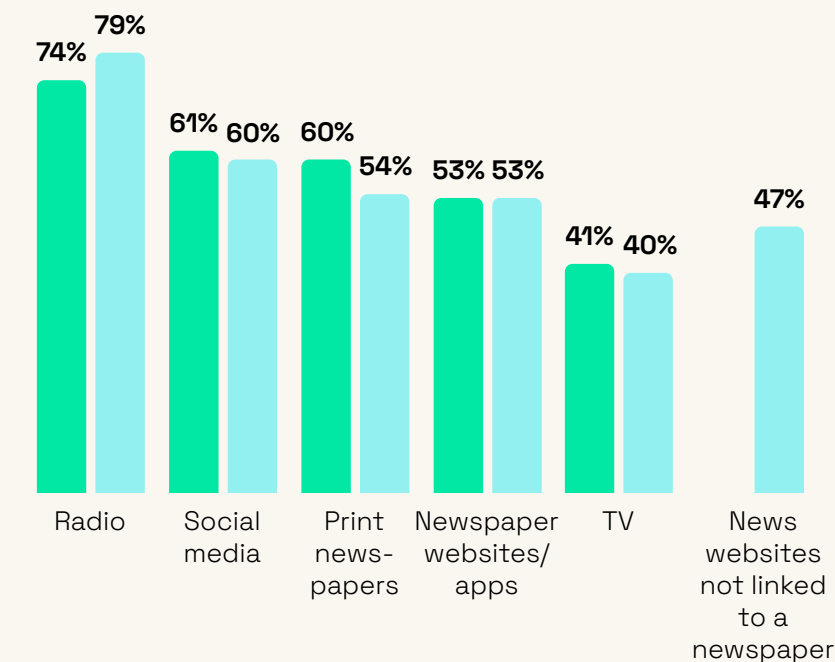


Reaching audiences beyond the bubble Commercial radio has a unique connection to 1/3 of listeners who don't actively seek out news overall, but primarily rely on commercial radio news

Rhythm and news – Although people primarily listen to commercial radio as a source of entertainment, they still receive essential news and information through regular succinct bulletins that seamlessly integrate into their daily routines. Unlike other news sources, commercial radio news is generally heard passively while listeners carry out other activities.

Our research shows that radio is the number one source for accessing news in the morning, cited by 79% of respondents – and when broken down by audio source, commercial radio comes out top at 68% (compared to BBC radio on 60%).

Radio is the top source for accessing news in the morning



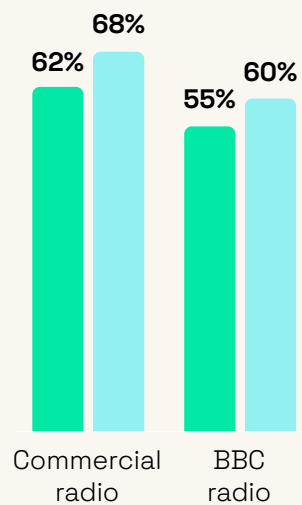
■ 2020 ■ 2024

Source: Differentology

Q4 On an average week, when do you usually watch, read or listen to news on the following types of media?

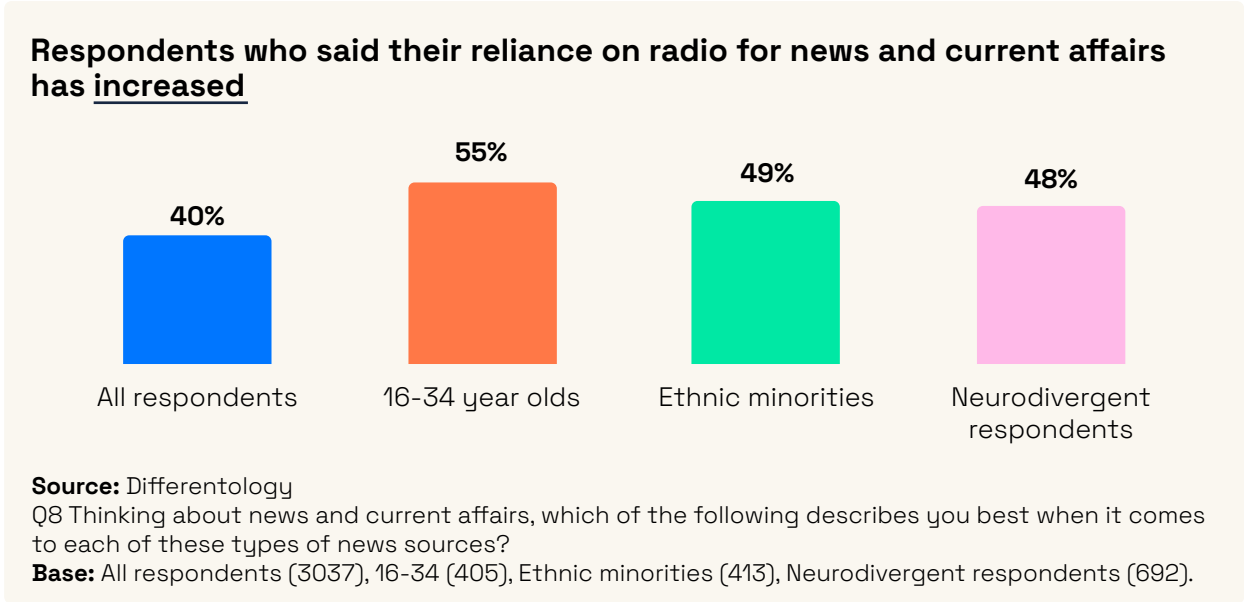
Base: Varies by type of media being used (3037-2071)

Top audio source for accessing news in the morning

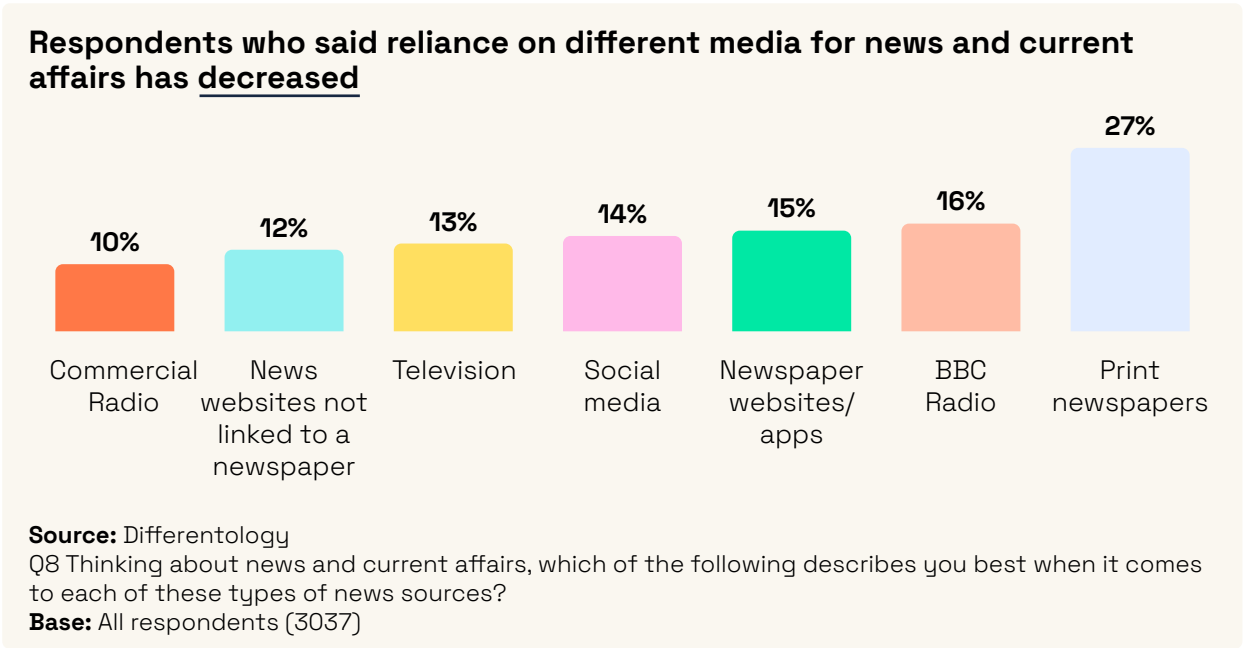


Growing appeal – At a time when news avoidance²⁶ is on the rise, radio’s appeal as a news source has grown – 40% of respondents to our study reported relying more on radio for news and current affairs (i.e. hard news) than they did in the past. This is even more pronounced for younger listeners (55%), ethnic minorities (49%), and those who identify as neurodivergent (48%).

If this was applied to the total commercial radio audience it would mean that over **6 million**²⁷ **young people** have increased their reliance on radio as a source of news.



Commercial radio has also had a higher retention rate for listeners who rely on it for news than any other media. Only 10% of people said their reliance on commercial radio had decreased compared to the past, in contrast to more people who said they had reduced their reliance on social media (14%), BBC radio (16%) and print newspapers (27%).



²⁶ Reuters Institute, [People are turning away from the news. Here's why it may be happening](#), February 2025
²⁷ This is calculated using data from RAJAR Q1 2025 - commercial radio reaches 11.7m 15-34 year olds.

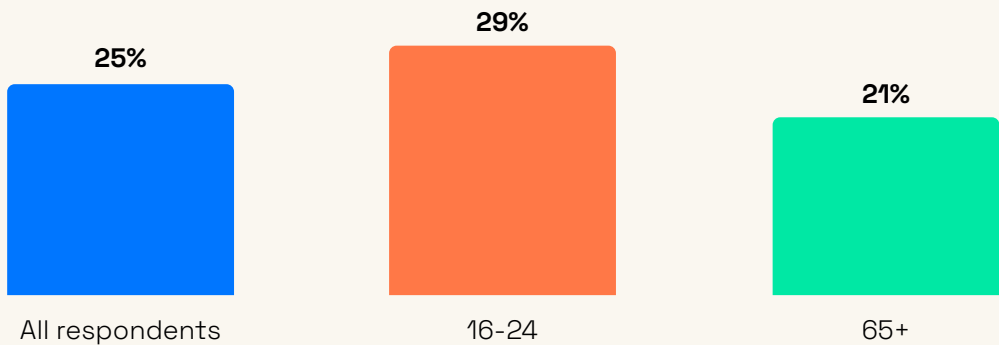
Cut through – Commercial radio news is an important driver of discussion and debate, acting as a catalyst for further discovery: 7 in 10 people hear news on commercial radio and follow up with an action – whether that is discussing what they’ve heard with family and friends, following up to find out more online, or switching on the news on television.

Commercial radio news cuts through to younger people in particular, who are more likely than older listeners to discuss what they’ve heard with family and friends.

Top three actions from listeners after hearing commercial radio news

- 1 Discussed** what they’ve heard with family and friends
- 2 Searched** for more information online
- 3 Turned on the TV** with a specific purpose to watch the news

Younger people are more likely to discuss what they’ve heard on the news with friends or family

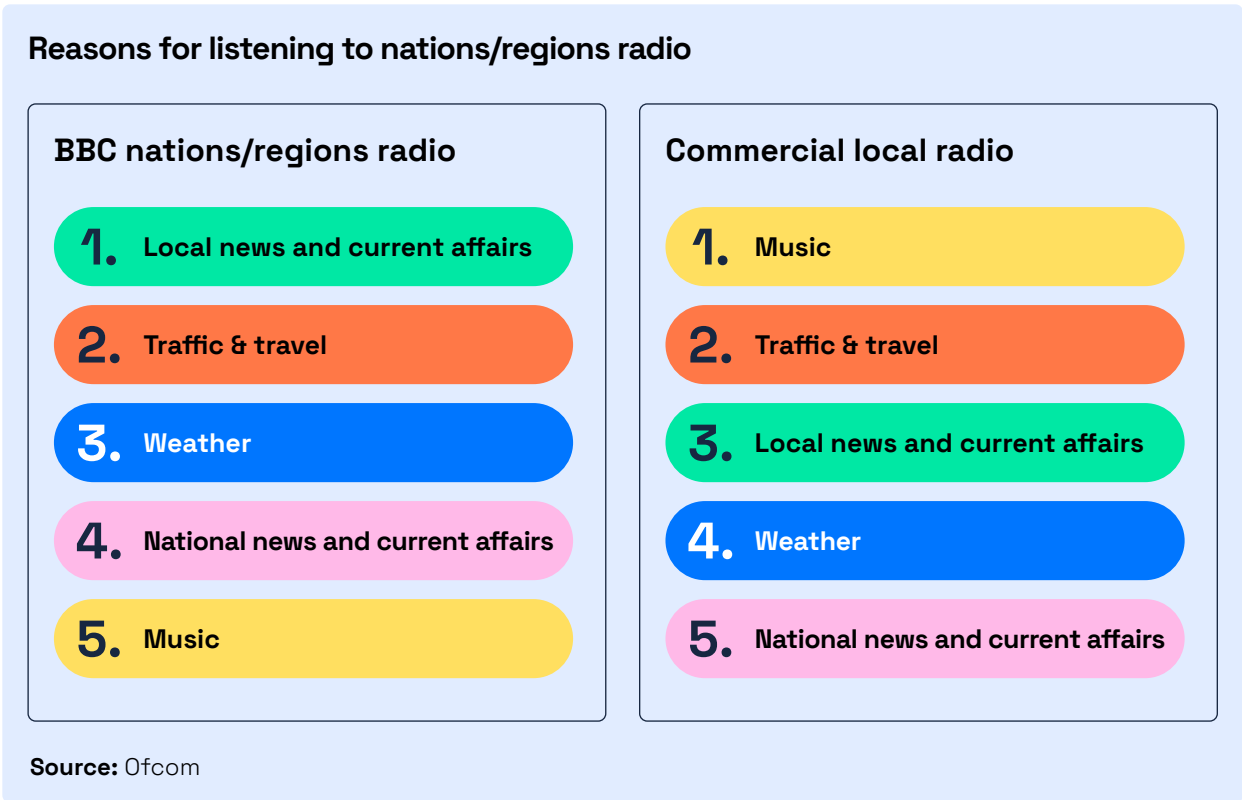


Source: Differentology
Q26 In the last month, which of the following actions, if any, have you taken as a result of hearing news updates on commercial and BBC radio stations?
Base: All respondents (3037), 16-24 (405), 25-34 (594), 35-44 (632), 45-54 (562), 54-65 (434), 65+ (410)

Striking the right balance – The UK news ecosystem is made up of a diverse mix of TV, radio, national and local papers, social media and messaging apps.

As audiences increasingly combat information overload and news fatigue across other media, the regular updates throughout the day currently heard across commercial radio stations around the UK strikes the right balance, cutting through in order to inform listeners of what is going in the world around them – both locally and nationally – whilst providing music and entertainment.

This is supported by Ofcom research²⁸ which finds that while news is important to listeners, it is generally not the driver for why people choose a particular local commercial radio station – instead the most valued output is music, followed by traffic and travel. This is in contrast to BBC Local Radio which people choose primarily for its local news and current affairs output.



Resilience in an emergency – Commercial radio’s role as a trusted news source becomes critical during national or local emergencies. The resilience of broadcast radio (via FM/AM and DAB) is a key national asset.

When power cuts or internet outages disrupt other forms of communication, as seen recently during major power failures in Europe, radio broadcasts can continue to operate²⁹, providing a vital and reliable lifeline of information, public safety announcements, and reassurance to communities.

²⁸ Ofcom, [Review of local media in the UK](#), November 2024
²⁹ The Guardian, [‘Any radios?’ Rush to buy supplies in Madrid as blackout hits](#), April 2025

Reaching audiences ‘beyond the bubble’ – Commercial radio news resonates with audiences ‘beyond the bubble’ of highly engaged news consumers in a way that other media cannot. Over a third of commercial radio listeners – “Outsiders” – are less interested in news overall, but the most likely group to turn to commercial radio as their primary news source.

Outsiders generally skew older, are much more likely to be female and to come from a C2DE background. They also are less likely to live in London and the South-East. Outsiders’ reliance on commercial radio as a news source has grown since 2020, and they are three times more likely to rely on commercial radio for regular news updates than BBC radio.

Commercial radio audience groups

Outsiders

Like to **stay informed**, but do not usually go out of their way to stay up-to-date. They will listen to or watch when news comes on the radio / TV, **but do not usually seek it out**.

(c.14.2m of commercial radio listeners in the UK)

Enthusiasts

Have a **keen interest** in news and check for updates regularly.

(c. 15m of commercial radio listeners in the UK)

Super-seekers

Love **staying up-to-date** with news and are constantly checking for the latest updates on different media.

(c. 10.5m of commercial radio listeners in the UK)

Key groups of news consumers

2%
Avoiders*

26%
Super-seekers

35%
Outsiders

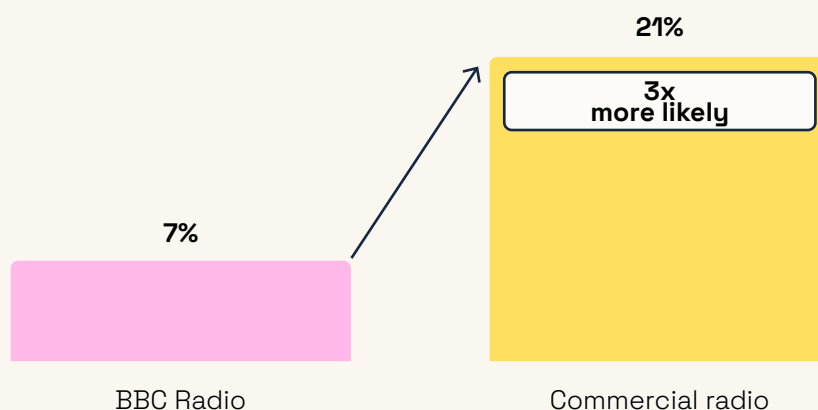
37%
Enthusiasts

Source: Differentology

S10 Which of the following best describes you when it comes to keeping up to date with news?

Base: All Respondents (3037) ***Avoiders:** have no interest in news and actively avoid it if they can (circa 0.7m of commercial radio listeners in the UK)

Most useful audio news source for regular news updates (Outsiders)



Source: Differentology

Q10 Please can you tell us which news source you find most useful, as well as which other sources you also use for the following?

Base: Outsiders (998)

Innovation with audio formats – Podcasts are a growing space for listeners to consume in-depth audio news and current affairs content – this is especially true for younger demographics who have increased their podcast consumption more than average³⁰.

Ofcom³¹ finds that news and current affairs podcasts have the highest daily listening of any genre. The podcast format lends itself to more in-depth analysis, in a complementary way to the shorter, regular news bulletins that listeners hear on radio.

In recent years, commercial radio broadcasters have launched successful news and current affairs podcasts such as The News Agents, a daily news and current affairs podcast. Other examples include The Turnout, which focused on encouraging young voters to turn out for the 2024 general election.



³⁰ Differentology, 2024

³¹ Ofcom, [Media Nations 2024](#), July 2024

Raising vital funds for charities and good causes



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 to support urgent DEC appeals



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

Fundraising power – Radio has always been a strong “call-to-action” medium, and commercial stations continue to galvanize and support charity campaigns. The emergence of more national commercial radio networks means that campaigns can now reach mass audiences to raise awareness and funds for charities and other good causes. In 2024, a total of £27m was raised across the industry.

Community and social action – A number of commercial operators have established their own charities, including Global’s Make Some Noise, which supports hundreds of small charities, and Bauer’s Cash For Kids, which focuses on helping vulnerable children. These initiatives are able to leverage radio’s intimate connection with listeners to generate support for vital community services across the country.

Global's Make Some Noise

Global's Make Some Noise delivers grants to hundreds of small charities in local communities across the UK. In 2024, the charity raised a staggering £3.8m during its annual fundraising appeal and every year, on Global's Make Some Noise Day, presenters from all of Global's stations come together to inspire donations and raise awareness.



Cash for Kids

Bauer's Cash for Kids supports children and young people across the UK who are affected by poverty, illness, neglect, and those with additional needs. In 2024, 23 regional teams delivered on their "raised local, stays local" promise, helping 509,580 children and raising over £21m for their Mission Christmas Appeal in gifts and donations. Cash for Kids Day, the charity's annual fundraiser, also returned in May 2025 raising over £1m to combat food poverty in the school holidays.



Rooted in communities

In addition, smaller commercial radio stations across the UK are rooted in communities and able to make significant contributions to their local areas through their own dedicated charitable activities, often focusing on grassroots initiatives, and by actively supporting a wide range of local causes and community events. For example:



Nation Radio runs an annual Toy Appeal in partnership with The Parenting Network.



More Radio and **Isle of Wight Radio** collect over 12,000 toys each year in their Christmas Toy Appeal, along with 10,000 tins for foodbanks, and have raised thousands of pounds for local charities through promotions like 'Sing for Sussex'.



Radio Exe work extensively with Devon charities – such as Devon Air Ambulance and Hospiscare – to promote their work, in addition to putting voices on air for help for local good causes.



KMFM runs a 'Tonnes of Tins' campaign which last year managed to deliver close to 10 tonnes of dry and tinned food to food banks across Kent. In addition, the station's 'Give a Gift' campaign focuses on getting presents to children in hospital or in less fortunate situations over the festive season. Last year, it distributed 14,000 gifts to hospitals, care homes, and end-of-life charities.



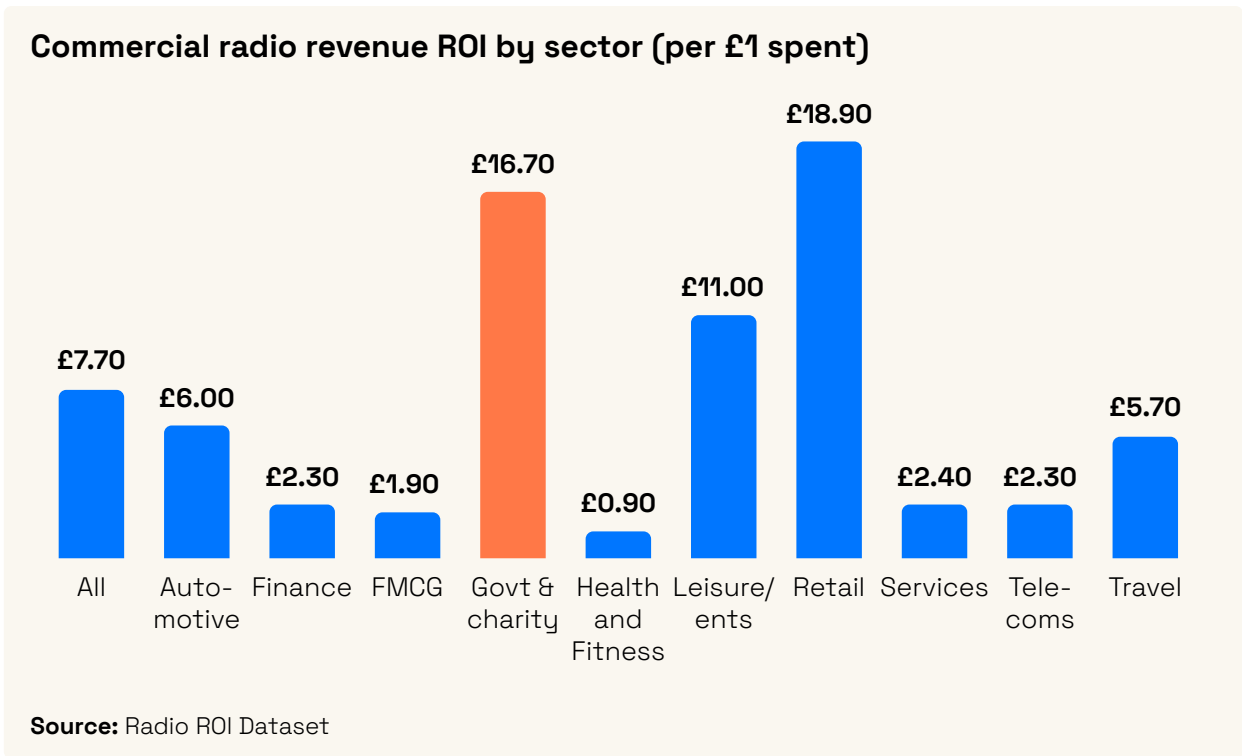
Original 106, which broadcasts across Aberdeen, Tayside and Fife, supports local charities with annual food bank and toy appeals. Recently the station has also been supporting the 'Trapped by RAAC' campaigns, which calls for urgent government action and fair compensation for homeowners in Aberdeen and Tayside who are living in unsafe, unsellable homes built with potentially dangerous RAAC concrete.



DEC appeals – Commercial radio stations are active participants in the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeals. This relationship enables rapid, coordinated responses to international humanitarian crises, with stations donating valuable airtime to support urgent appeals.

A recent appeal was held in response to the desperate situation in Myanmar following a powerful earthquake. The wider campaign raised over £23m in donations³².

Charity ROI – Radio is a highly relevant and effective medium for charity brands. Research highlights that people exposed to radio advertising are 52% more likely to interact with the advertised brands online. For the government and charity sector, radio ROI averages at £16.70 for every advertising pound spent, which places it second behind retail³³.



Wellbeing and mental health – The commercial radio industry has a long history of supporting initiatives that focus on mental health and wellbeing.

Previous initiatives include the Mental Health Minute, a campaign supported by the Royal Foundation which featured an important message about mental health that simultaneously broadcast across commercial, BBC and community radio.

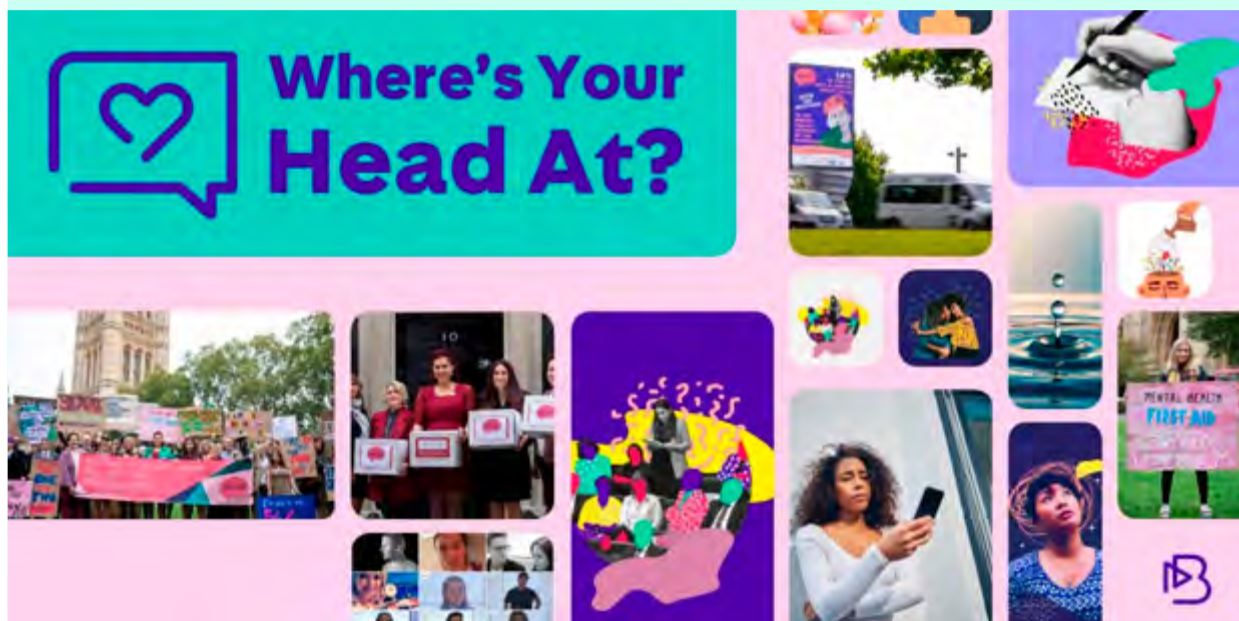
Broadcasters also support a number of their own initiatives that underscore the importance of mental health awareness.

³² Radiocentre, [DEC Myanmar appeal raises over £23 million with help from commercial radio](#), May 2025
³³ Radiocentre, [Radio for Charity Brands](#) [accessed May 2025]

Where's Your Head At?

The **Where's Your Head At?** campaign was launched by Bauer in 2018 and continues to put a spotlight on the need for seismic change in society when it comes to our openness, understanding and support for mental health. This is all the more important given the impact of social media on young people's mental wellbeing.

In 2025, Bauer teamed up with YoungMinds, a leading mental health charity, to air a series of radio messages across Bauer's stations to help young people use social media more safely³⁴. The aim is to support more mindful use of social media and encourage conversations about how much time people spend on their phones.



Balls to Monday

In 2025, Capital launched a campaign titled “Balls to Monday”, to raise awareness of testicular cancer following the diagnosis and treatment of Capital Breakfast’s Chris Stark.

Presenter Jordan North got himself checked live on air to show his support, helping remove the stigma around discussing men's health and highlight the importance of early detection³⁵.



³⁴ Radio Today, [Bauer and YoungMinds launch new mental health radio campaign](#), May 2025

³⁵ On The Radio: [Capital Breakfast host Jordan North gets checked live on-air](#). March 2025

4. Securing the future

Commercial radio is a force for good in the UK, creating value and having a positive tangible impact across many different facets of society and the economy. While remaining very popular, radio and audio faces a number of challenges as the wider media landscape continues its transformational shift in distribution from traditional broadcast platforms to online and connected devices.

Government and parliamentarians 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

As listening continues to shift online, harnessing the powers in the Media Act that guarantee unfettered access to UK radio on smart speakers will support radio broadcasters as they invest and innovate in digital audio. 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. Safeguarding the future availability and prominence of radio in vehicles is essential to secure continued access to trusted news, information and entertainment on the move.

Support for viable local news

Commercial radio stations continue to deliver highly trusted, regular news bulletins (including local news). Any regulation from Ofcom to underpin this provision must prioritise the quality and relevance of this local news content (the output) and not focus unduly on operational elements of the newsgathering process (the input). New and costly quotas would risk undermining the viability of local news while providing no clear benefit to audiences.

Safeguard BBC distinctiveness

The BBC is still the single biggest player in UK audio – with almost double the market share of its closest commercial competitor. Even minor interventions by the BBC can significantly impact the broader radio market. With a new BBC Charter due in 2027, it is essential that the unique features of radio are taken into account, with a particular focus on ensuring that BBC radio services are distinctive. The BBC's best and most unique content is, highly valued by listeners and complements commercial radio. For the future viability of the entire radio and audio sector, it is crucial that all BBC audio services – both existing and new – are genuinely distinctive and deliver clear public value.

Unlock economic growth

Too many radio ads are burdened with long and garbled terms and conditions (Ts&Cs) that frustrate listeners, as well as deterring potential advertisers. There is an opportunity to champion improved consumer communication by updating FCA rules (to be consulted on shortly) on Ts&Cs in radio ads that both support listener protection and boost economic activity.

Methodology note

This report 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. The data was collected in February 2024.

Contact

Radiocentre
15 Alfred Place
London
WC1E 7EB

020 7010 0600

Will Thomson, Head of Policy:
will.thomson@radiocentre.org

Find out more about Radiocentre
policy and research at:
www.radiocentre.org/policy



