



RADIOCENTRE

# BREAKING NEWS

How listeners value commercial radio news





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# OVERVIEW

This report highlights new research that explores commercial radio listeners' views on news and trust.

It identifies the key strengths of radio in providing regular, concise updates to listeners at key points throughout the day and features powerful case studies that demonstrate the unique value of commercial radio news.

With a weekly audience of 36 million listeners the impact of news on commercial radio should not be underestimated. Yet its role in providing news and information is often overlooked, alongside the core music and entertainment programming.

For the first time this report offers an industry-wide perspective on how much our listeners really value this content and how it compares to other media in different contexts.

## Methodology

Radiocentre commissioned third party research company Other Lines of Enquiry to conduct a survey sampling 1,200 commercial radio listeners.

A robust weight of frequent (46%) and infrequent (54%) BBC radio listeners were included. Quotas were applied in order to ensure all demographics were nationally representative.

# KEY TAKEOUTS

## SCALE OF RADIO NEWS

Commercial radio continues to play a huge role in providing news and information

With 36 million listeners tuning in every week and over 26 million followers on social media the number of people getting news and information from commercial radio is at an all-time high.

Despite the availability of news from multiple-sources listeners value updates and regular bulletins provided by commercial stations:

- 79% agree commercial radio provides helpful, concise updates on the news throughout the day
- 77% agree commercial radio helps them stay informed of what's happening in the world around them
- 57% use commercial radio as a prompt to go and find out more about particular stories.

## ROLE OF RADIO NEWS

Commercial radio is a key source of regular news updates throughout the day

This research underscores commercial radio's strengths as a news provider, especially in certain contexts and at particular points throughout the day.

Listeners said they value regular news updates:

- during local emergencies (when 60% turn to radio)
- in the morning (when 83% turn to radio)
- when in car (when 85% turn to radio).

## TRUST IN RADIO NEWS

Radio is considered the most trusted medium in an era of fake news

Radio is consistently found to be the most trusted source of news and information available to audiences in the UK and Europe.

- 77% of people said they see radio as a trusted source of national news, more than any other media
- Only 15% trust social media for national news
- 61% said they were concerned about the rising trend of fake news.

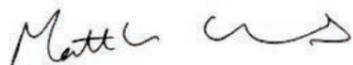
# FOREWORD

There are more ways to consume news and information than ever before, but it is clear that commercial radio continues to play a crucial role.

Radiocentre's new research highlights the importance of this role for listeners whether it's providing headlines in the morning, updates when travelling in a car or breaking news throughout the day. In any democracy it is also crucial that the public are able to have confidence that the news and information they receive is accurate and trustworthy, so it is also great to see that listeners recognise the value of radio in this area.

I'm a big backer of radio, and I want to help the industry grow and to support the valuable role radio plays in the lives of millions of listeners across the country. I've been impressed by how the radio industry has embraced new technologies over a generation and continues to do so.

That is one of the reasons why my department is seeking to update some of the outdated rules on radio formats and production, enabling stations to use technology to meet the needs of listeners, while safeguarding local news and programming in a digital age. Let us work to ensure radio's best days still lie ahead.



The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Minister of State for Digital

*"I'm a big backer of radio, and I want to help the industry grow and to support the valuable role radio plays in the lives of millions of listeners across the country."*

# INTRODUCTION

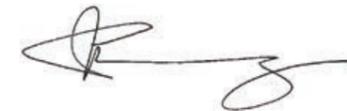
With 90% of the population tuning in each week the appetite of audiences for voices on live radio is as strong as ever.

Despite the range of alternatives available in our digital age, a record number of listeners turn to commercial radio for the great combination of music, entertainment, news and information on offer from stations across the UK.

The value of this output is sometimes difficult to quantify and in the case of local information, news updates, community and charity appeals – what is commonly referred to as radio's public value – this contribution is not always acknowledged or understood.

For the first time this new report looks specifically at how listeners value commercial radio news and the vital part it plays delivering breaking news right across the country. These results shine a light on the key role played by commercial radio in keeping listeners up-to-date throughout the day, providing news during emergencies and giving listeners news they can trust.

It also features extraordinary case studies that encapsulate how news teams across the country go above and beyond to bring audiences vital information that remains a fundamental part of commercial radio.



Siobhan Kenny  
Radiocentre CEO

*"For the first time this new report looks specifically at how listeners value commercial radio news and the vital part it plays delivering breaking news."*



# SCALE OF RADIO NEWS

The way people consume news and information is changing, but the overall scale and impact of news on commercial radio is greater than ever.

Our listeners have a strong interest in news and see commercial radio as an important way to stay informed.

36 million listeners tune in to commercial radio every week

We live in a world of 24/7 news consumption, breaking news is a normal part of our daily routine. The nature of these news stories varies enormously, from major national or international incidents to local news and information.

Against this background it's easy to overlook commercial radio's role, drawing on news teams across the country, to provide listeners with reliable up-to-the-minute updates they can access effortlessly throughout the day.

Commercial radio audiences are at an all-time high with 36 million listeners tuning in every week. In addition to this massive reach from broadcast radio, commercial stations have also adapted to digital platforms, harnessing social media to engage with audiences even when they aren't listening.

This innovation means that commercial radio has over 9 million Twitter followers and more than 17 million people engaging with stations on Facebook.

## Reaching out to modern Britain

The broad reach of commercial radio is made up of a diverse audience. Independent industry figures reveal that commercial stations reach 66% of the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic audience, compared to a 48% reach by BBC services.

Commercial radio also reaches 66% of listeners considered to be in a lower socio-economic classification (C2DE), compared to 55% reached by the BBC. 5 million commercial radio listeners do not tune in to any other type of radio service.

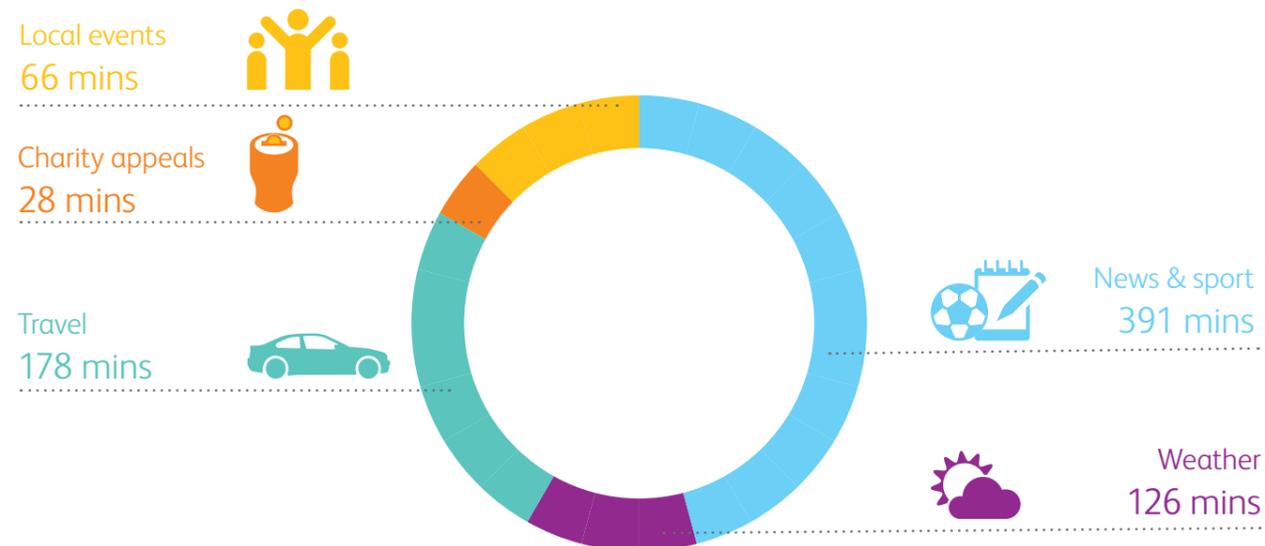
50% of the population listen to local commercial radio each week, more than any other form of local media.

## Public value

Radiocentre conducts regular surveys of the significant public value provided by the commercial radio sector. This includes everything from news and sport, to travel, weather and local information, to charity appeals and support for local events.

Our *Action Stations* report found that this amounts to an average of 13 hours 15 minutes each week and provided incredible case studies of the fantastic work that stations do.

## THE AVERAGE PUBLIC SERVICE OUTPUT OF A UK COMMERCIAL STATION



13 hours and 15 minutes of public value broadcast each week



## Value to listeners

Commercial radio reaches huge audiences and provides a variety of output but we wanted to understand more about how listeners value news and information.

We also sought to establish how much interest listeners had in keeping up-to-date with news headlines and the results were really encouraging.

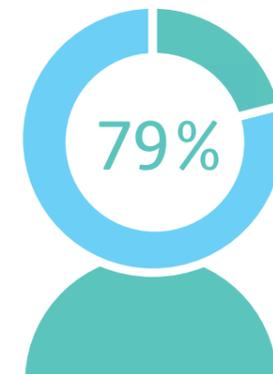
**88%** of respondents declared themselves to be interested or very interested in keeping up-to-date with the latest news.

**2%** said they were not interested or not at all interested.

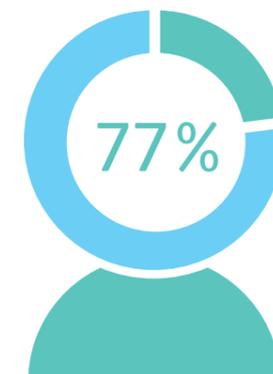
*Question: On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all interested and 5 being very interested, how interested are you in keeping up-to-date with the latest news?*

We asked listeners about how they value radio news on commercial stations.

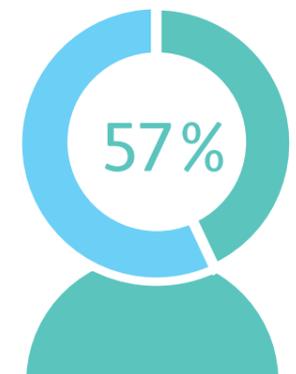
### LISTENERS TOLD US THAT COMMERCIAL RADIO...



...gives helpful, concise updates on the news throughout the day



...helps me stay informed of what's happening in the world around me



...prompts me to find out more about news stories

*Question: Thinking about news updates on commercial radio, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.*



Mims Davies MP  
Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Commercial Radio

“As a former commercial radio journalist I know first-hand the importance of stations providing accurate, high-quality regular updates for listeners. It’s clear that listeners place significant value on the news and information provided by commercial radio.

“The unique public value provided by stations right across the country should therefore not be underestimated. In my role as Chair of the APPG on Commercial Radio, I will work closely with the industry over the coming years on areas that impact the way they operate.”

# ROLE OF RADIO NEWS

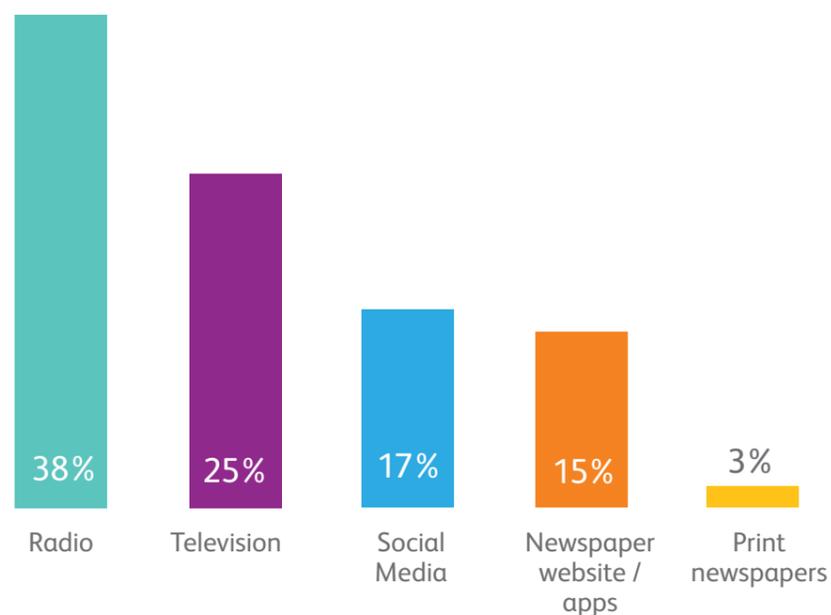
## Strongest for updates throughout the day

Listeners have an appetite for news and we wanted to understand more about the kind of news people were turning to commercial radio for compared to other media.

Radio wouldn't necessarily come out as the best medium for in-depth analysis. However this research has underscored that for regular updates throughout the day radio is particularly strong.

Radio dominates as the most useful source for regular updates throughout the day overall, with commercial radio (22%) preferred to BBC (16%).

### RADIO IS THE MOST POPULAR SOURCE FOR REGULAR NEWS UPDATES



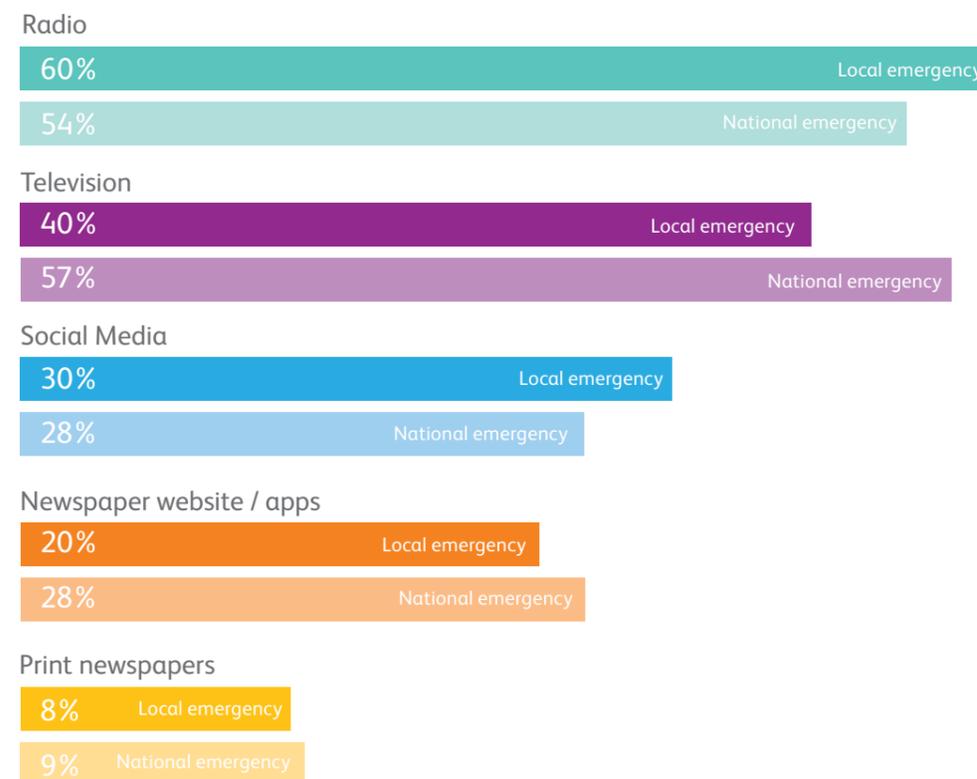
Question: Please can you tell us which news source you find most useful for the following?

Radio is also a crucial source of news updates during emergencies.

In the case of national emergencies radio is second only to television. While during local emergencies radio is considered the best place for regular updates throughout the day.

Our research also found that commercial radio (44%) is preferred to BBC radio (33%) for these local updates.

### RADIO IS THE MOST POPULAR MEDIUM FOR NEWS UPDATES DURING LOCAL EMERGENCIES



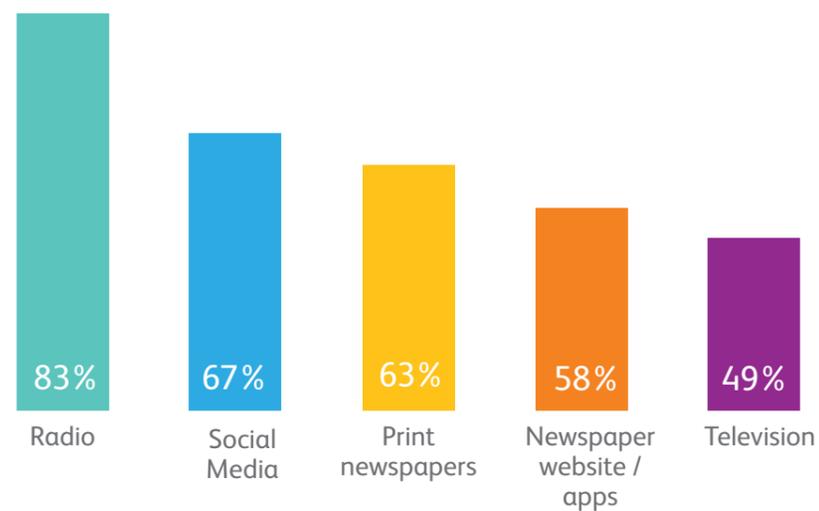
Question: During a national/local emergency, which of the following news sources do you consider to be the best for regular news updates across the day?

## Strongest in the morning

It is important to understand when listeners access news and so our survey looked across the day.

Radio is the dominant news source first thing in the morning (cited by 83% of listeners overall), with 72% turning to commercial radio and 65% to BBC radio. This result demonstrates how radio fits into the lives of listeners at that time of day.

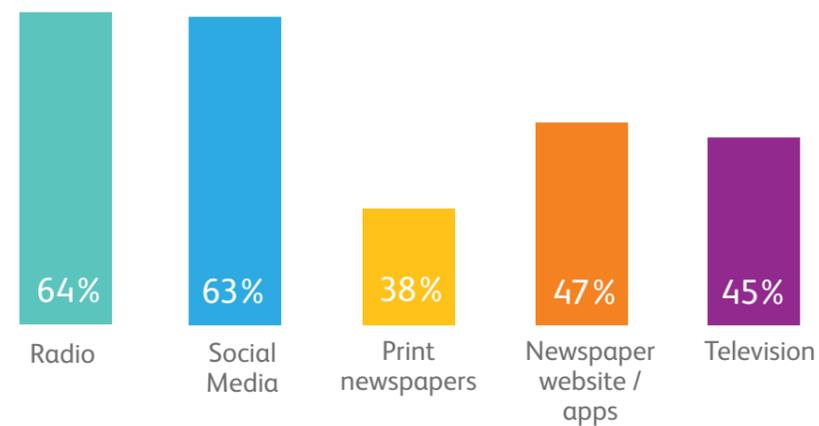
### RADIO IS THE MOST POPULAR MEDIUM FOR ACCESSING NEWS IN THE MORNING



Question: On an average day, when do you usually access news on the following types of media?

Looking at other times, radio is still strong in the afternoon, but social media begins to pick up momentum.

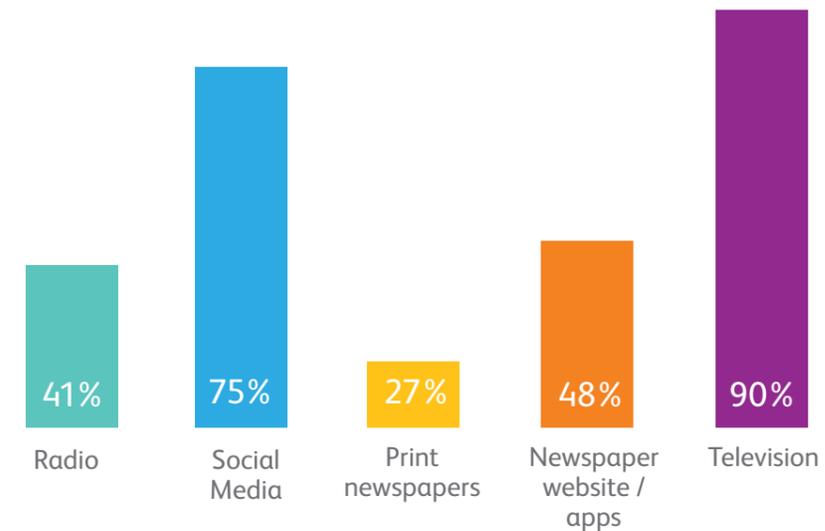
### RADIO IS THE MOST POPULAR MEDIUM FOR ACCESSING NEWS IN THE AFTERNOON



Question: On an average day, when do you usually access news on the following types of media?

Unsurprisingly television leads in the evening, most likely driven by the traditional half hour news programmes across the main channels at that time of day. However, this is also radio's strongest point as a news provider for 16-34 year olds.

### TV IS THE MOST POPULAR MEDIUM FOR NEWS IN THE EVENING



Question: On an average day, when do you usually access news on the following types of media?

### 16-34 YEAR OLDS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO ACCESS NEWS VIA COMMERCIAL RADIO IN THE EVENING

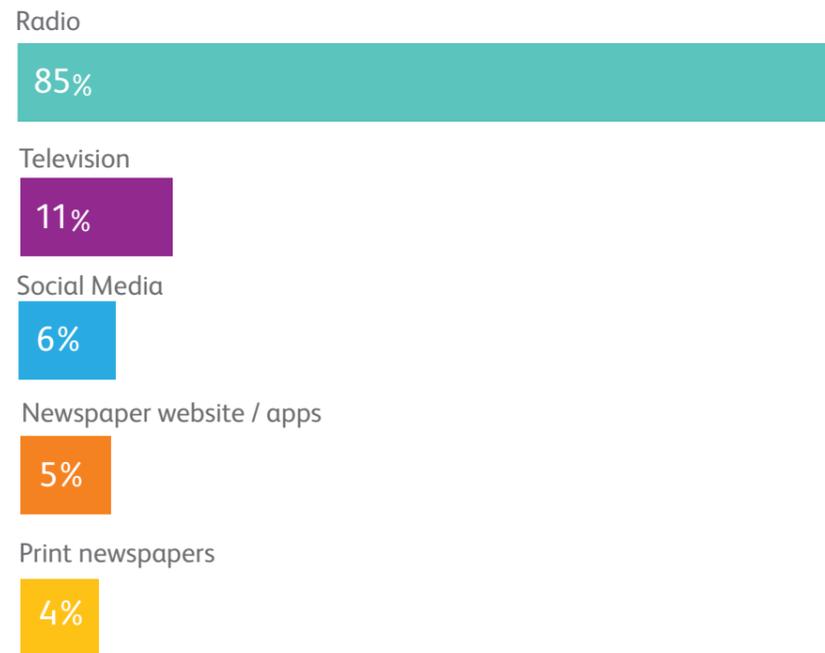


## Strongest in the car

Radio is the dominant media for keeping listeners in touch with the news when they are in their cars.

Previous studies show that radio listening has remained strong in car, as audiences continue to recognise the role of radio in providing news as well as traffic and travel bulletins.

### RADIO IS THE MOST DOMINANT SOURCE OF NEWS IN THE CAR



*Question: When travelling in a car, which, if any, of the following news sources would you use to keep you in touch with the news?*

Our survey shows that commercial radio (66%) leads the BBC (45%) for in car listening by quite some margin.

These findings are consistent with other research that demonstrates the continuing importance of radio in the car, including a study by Global Traffic Network (GTN).

GTN serves over 250 commercial radio stations around the UK, reaching around 27m adults with its traffic, travel and entertainment news. In 2017 GTN published independently commissioned research that explored listeners' views on traffic and travel bulletins. The study found:

- 91% of listeners will get their traffic and travel information from radio when they're in the car
- 79% of listeners will turn the radio up when traffic and travel comes on
- 73% of listeners think traffic and travel bulletins are an important part of their favourite radio station.

Audiences continue to recognise the role of radio in providing news as well as traffic and travel bulletins



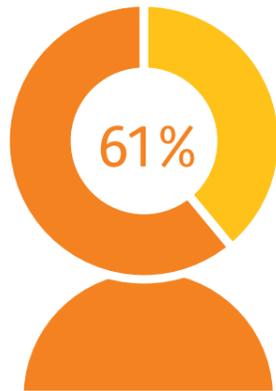
# TRUST IN RADIO NEWS

## Audiences consider radio to be the most trusted source of news and information

Trust in media is a highly contentious issue. In an era of fake news, trust is vital and this is of huge concern to listeners.

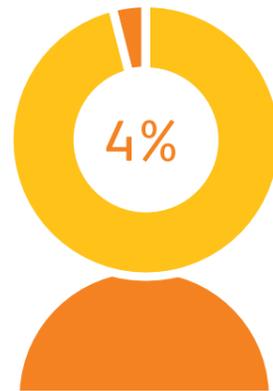
71% of listeners felt that commercial radio provides them with news that they can trust

### FAKE NEWS IS BIG NEWS



61% of listeners were concerned or very concerned about fake news

Question: 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 rising trend of 'fake news'?



4% of listeners were not concerned about fake news

It is essential that commercial radio stations retain their reputation for providing information that meets the high threshold of accountability, trust and accuracy expected by listeners. Rumour and speculation, prevalent in rolling news and on social media, has no place on radio.

This background helps explain strong levels of trust in commercial radio. Our survey found 71% of listeners felt that 'commercial radio provides me with news I can trust'.

Perhaps the biggest disruptor to trust in news has been the fake news phenomenon. Given this uncertainty we felt it important to ask listeners which medium they felt was the most trusted. 77% of listeners said they see radio as a trusted source of national news, more than any other media.

### RADIO IS THE MOST TRUSTED MEDIUM

Radio

77%

Television

74%

Print newspapers

48%

Newspaper website / apps

45%

Social Media

15%

Question: To what extent do you trust national news stories from each of the following news sources?

Our findings were consistent with the latest research conducted by the European Commission (Eurobarometer 86, 2017) which concluded that radio is the most trusted media across Europe. Trust in radio is increasing while at the same time trust in social media continues to fall to an all-time low. Ofcom's survey of UK news consumption (June 2017) also found that radio was most trusted news source, followed by television, press and social media.



### Brand safety when advertising

The issue of advertising and brand safety was thrown into the spotlight in early 2017 when The Times uncovered digital ad placements of major UK brands on popular mainstream websites alongside content promoting terror and other offensive or illegal material.

Advertisers using radio can be confident that all of their ads are used in a safe and trustworthy environment.



Flowers on Westminster Bridge following terrorist attack in March 2017

# COVERING BREAKING NEWS

## MAJOR INCIDENTS

Commercial stations are primed to bring listeners up-to-the-minute coverage on local and national emergencies. Typically these are adverse weather conditions or traffic incidents. However, a number of serious major incidents rocked the country in 2017.

Each emergency requires an immediate response and yet how this is tailored by stations will vary depending on a given situation. Editorial judgement is paramount and stations have well-rehearsed plans for covering major events. This experience is what sets radio apart from social media when it comes to providing accurate, trusted information.



### Grenfell Tower

Tragedy struck London in the early hours of 14th June 2017 when Grenfell Tower was engulfed by fire. The catastrophic event cost the lives of at least 80 people and thrust into the public sphere the safety of cladding on high-rise buildings.

Commercial radio stations across London and the country covered the news of the fire, altering programming and sending reporters to the scene.

LBC provided rolling coverage from 3am, with instant eyewitness accounts and a team of reporters at the scene. A specially extended Nick Ferrari at Breakfast show brought immediate reactions from London's Mayor, emergency services and Londoners with their accounts of the fire. Heart and Capital London provided an extra 30 bulletins on that day alone during their daytime programming.

### London Terrorist attacks

A series of terror attacks – Westminster Bridge, Borough Market and Finsbury Park – hit London in 2017. Each time, despite inherent dangers, reporters from commercial stations in London rushed to the scenes of these incidents, often arriving just minutes after the attacks took place.

Following the Borough Market attack on 3rd June LBC provided immediate rolling coverage while other Global brands provided snap coverage within an hour. From midnight Capital and Heart featured breaking bulletins every 15 minutes over the next 12 hours. Capturing the moment, Global's news teams were able to put the accounts of eyewitnesses on the air within minutes of the first report coming through.

### Manchester bombing

As the horror of the bombing of the Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena on 22nd May 2017 became clear the news team at Manchester station Key 103 leapt into action as soon as reports of an incident were received. The station rightly held back on immediately tweeting or sharing some of the pictures being circulated on social media as many were from a previous training exercise and nothing to do with the events of that night.

Key 103's team mobilised reporters, drafting in extra resources from the surrounding areas, in order to be able to cover the scene of the incident as well as local hospitals. The team's local response was so fast that Sky and other broadcasters from around the world used their initial reports from the arena.

Once the enormity of the event became clear, Bauer's entire City Network – covering England and Scotland – dropped their local schedule and took one programme hosted by presenter Darryl Morris who was at the concert when the bomb went off.

Other Manchester stations – including XS Manchester and Smooth, Capital and Heart – opted out of their scheduled programming in order to provide extra news coverage throughout the night. During the rest of the week Global's 21 newsrooms across the country delivered an extra 1,242 bulletins on top of the normal news output.

### Commercial radio unites for One Love Manchester

Commercial stations across the country worked in partnership with the BBC to provide a special broadcast of the One Love Manchester benefit concert live on Sunday 4th June. The emergency fund set up to help families affected by the bombing, supported by the One Love Manchester concert, raised over £17m.



## LIVE AND LOCAL

As the most popular medium for news updates during local emergencies commercial radio has a significant role providing listeners with vital information. Delivering accurate, trusted up-to-the-minute hyperlocal updates is what sets commercial radio apart from its competitors.

### Hyperlocal updates

Listeners to commercial radio cherish regular updates. For those on the move, the latest travel bulletins are essential for keeping journey times down and during major weather events local updates provide vital information to residents.

During an emergency local commercial radio stations regularly provide:

- on air flash alerts outside news bulletins
- breaking news tweets
- reporters on the ground
- extended overnight coverage.

Flooding can impact a large area of the country in a short space of time. In recent years devastating floods in Northern England meant that emergency services needed to be able to communicate immediately with residents, which is where commercial radio stands out. In one particularly devastating storm a local commercial station – The Bay in North Lancashire and South Cumbria – temporarily became the only local news source available providing a lifeline to local communities.

In early 2017 a potential tidal surge along some of the East Coast of England meant the Army had to be drafted in to help evacuate residents. KCFM, Lincs FM and Compass FM all broadcast special live programming ensuring that only the most up-to-date and accurate information was broadcast.



Independent Radio News (IRN) provides its subscribers of any size with a central resource of national and international news content to supplement the work of local news teams. IRN provides hourly bulletins to commercial stations, alongside story audio and scripts that stations can adapt for local relevance.

With major events often breaking out of hours, IRN has a strategy to ensure vital stories get wide coverage. News bulletins are altered for major stories and ultimately programme directors may choose to change their output to reflect a breaking story.

### Delivering local news and information to listeners

Over the past decade rapid developments in technology have given stations the ability to deliver high-quality, locally relevant content from anywhere in the country. Networked stations have the capability to provide nationally popular output across the day with journalists on the ground to report on local news.

It is this very technology that has enabled commercial stations across the UK to provide relevant breaking reports to millions of listeners throughout the day. It is now easier than ever for journalists to remotely conduct interviews, feeding back into studios that can edit and distribute content.

The provision of local news for multiple stations from one location allows stations to produce well-resourced popular content across the network, while at the same time providing tailored local output and links between the music that are targeted only at a particular local area. On a typical weekday morning this means that tailored local news, traffic and travel updates reach the right listeners, at the right time, in the right place.



## POLITICS

Audiences listen to and engage with political news on commercial radio in more ways than ever.

Stations understand the demand for updates on politics and work with MPs and other elected officials to deliver relevant news on issues that matter.

### Elections

Throughout the 2017 General Election campaign commercial radio kept listeners abreast of the latest headlines, with stations like Heart, Absolute Radio, Magic, KMFM and The Breeze providing a platform for discussion with local candidates as well as party leaders.

In order to deliver results as they came in reporters also attended counts for first-hand experience and interviewed the successful candidates. The Bauer City Network of stations including Radio City, Radio Clyde, Key 103, Radio Forth and Metro Radio produced all-night election specials. Other local stations such as those in the Lincs FM Group undertook a huge operation in order to provide overnight coverage of election night at every count in their local areas. This meant that its stations were able to engage directly with winning MPs, providing listeners with up-to-the-minute interviews and assessments of the results.

### Leading Britain's Conversation

The recent political turmoil has led to more listeners than ever tuning in to LBC. Political interest has understandably increased in the wake of these major events and LBC has been at the forefront, bringing listeners interviews with top politicians from across all parties and creating memorable radio interview moments.

LBC has state-of-the-art studios which means that in a radio interview footage is captured, instantly edited and can be shared within minutes on social media. Radio soundbites are now moments that receive significant engagement online, boosting the reach of stations beyond traditional listeners.

Over the course of the EU referendum and the 2017 General Election LBC and Global's newsroom conducted interviews across the country with campaigners and parliamentarians.



## ABOUT RADIOCENTRE



Radiocentre is the industry body for commercial radio. We work on behalf of stakeholders who represent 90% of commercial radio in terms of listening and revenue.

We perform three main functions on behalf of our members:

- drive industry revenue by promoting the benefits of radio to advertisers and agencies through a combination of marketing activity (e.g. events, advertising, PR, and direct mail), research, and training
- provide UK commercial radio with a collective voice on issues that affect the way that radio stations operate, working with government, politicians, policy makers and regulators to secure the best environment for growth and development of the medium
- ensure advertising messages on commercial radio stations comply with the necessary content rules and standards laid out in the BCAP Code of Broadcast Advertising and the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

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





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Sound, commercial, sense