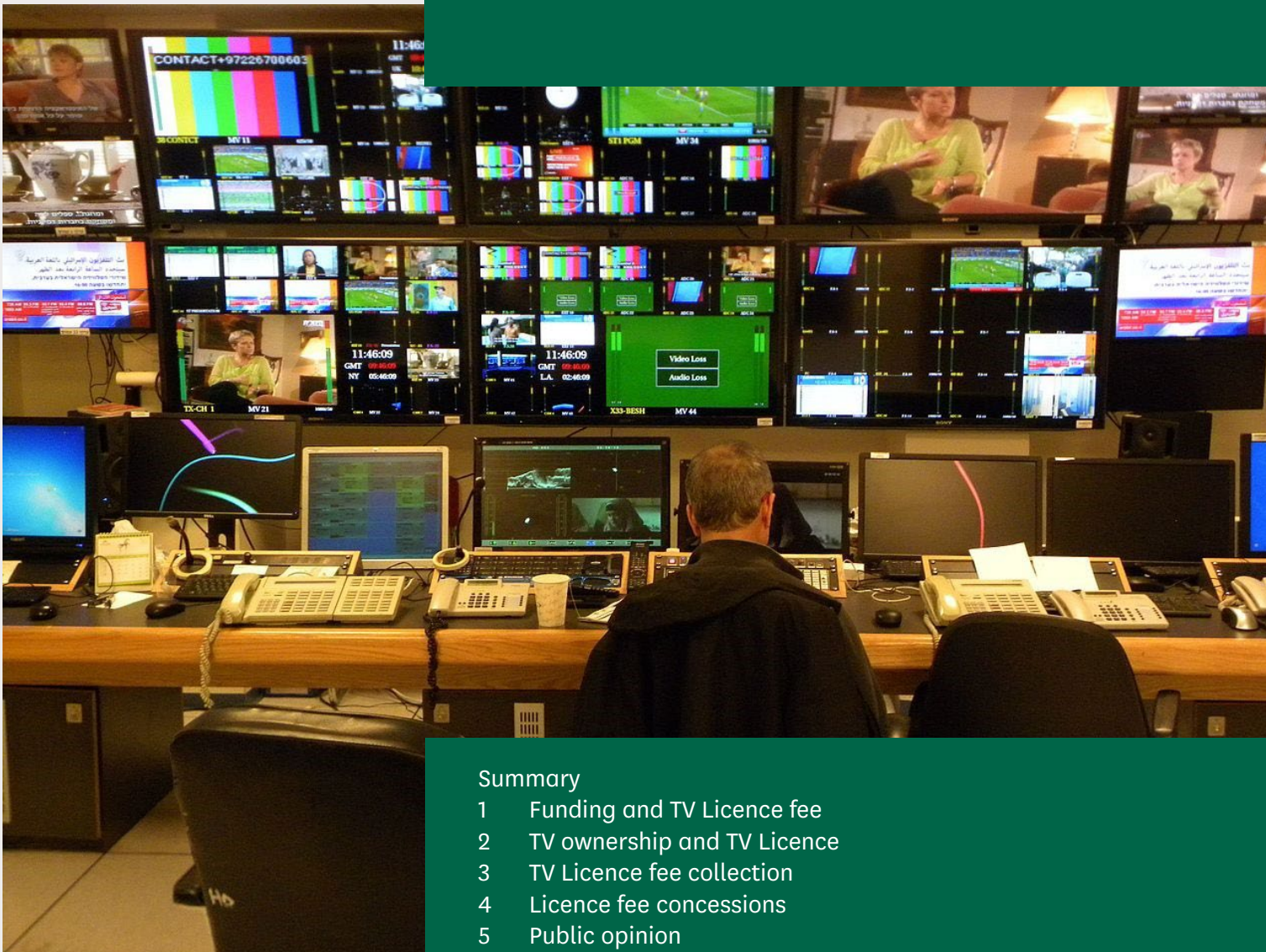


Research Briefing

By
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8 March 2024

TV Licence Fee Statistics



Summary

- 1 Funding and TV Licence fee
- 2 TV ownership and TV Licence
- 3 TV Licence fee collection
- 4 Licence fee concessions
- 5 Public opinion
- 6 Changing viewing habits
- 7 International comparisons
- 8 Appendix tables

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Summary

This briefing provides statistics on the TV Licence fee and general television viewing trends. Licence fee concessions and payment amounts are set by Parliament under *the Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004* (as amended). As stated by [TV Licensing](#):

It is an offence to watch or record television programmes as they are being shown on any channel and on any broadcast platform (terrestrial, satellite, cable and the internet) or download or watch BBC programmes on demand, including catch up TV, on BBC iPlayer without a valid TV Licence.

Currently the [annual TV Licence fee](#) is £159 for colour and £53.50 for black and white. From April 1 2024, it will be £169.50 and £57 respectively.

Licence fee revenues reached just over £3.74 billion in 2022/23

TV Licence fee revenues in 2022/23 were £3.74 billion which was higher than the 2010/11 figure of £3.51 billion (in cash terms).

The Licence fee accounted for 65% of BBC funding in 2022/23

Total BBC income in 2022/23 was £5.73 billion, 65% of which came from Licence fee revenues. The remaining 35% or £1.99 billion came from commercial and other activities (such as grants, royalties and rental income).

97% of households owned a TV at the beginning of 2022

In 2022, around 97% of all households in the UK owned a TV set compared with 1956 when only 36% of all households had a TV.

TV Licence evasion rose from 5.50% in 2012/13 to 10.31% in 2022/23

The BBC estimates that the evasion rate rose from 9.38% in 2021/22 to 10.31% in 2022/23. The main drivers for this increase have been attributed to changing viewing habits, a slowing of household growth and cost of living pressures.

Audience share of the BBC decreased between 2008 and 2023

The BBC's share fell from 34% in 2008 to 32% in 2023, ITV's fell from 23% to 22%, while Channel 4's fell from 12% to 10%.

The TV Licence fee in the UK was the 4th highest compared to other countries in Europe

The [TV Licence fee](#) in the UK was ranked 4th highest compared to other European countries in January 2023 by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

1 Funding and TV Licence fee

The TV Licence fee is used to fund the BBC and other services including Welsh broadcaster S4C, and infrastructure projects such as delivery of superfast broadband.¹

Data on BBC funding and TV Licence fee revenues are available in [BBC annual reports](#).

Total BBC income in 2022/23 was £5.73 billion compared with £5.33 billion in the previous year. The BBC received around £3.74 billion or 65% of its total funding from the TV Licence fee in 2022/23, a decrease of 1.6% from the £3.8 billion reported in 2021/22. The decrease was explained as being due to flat licence fee pricing and a decline in paid-for licences.² Licence fee prices are due to rise in line with inflation from April 2024 with a colour TV Licence to cost £169.50 annually and a Black and White TV licence to cost £57.³

The remaining 35% or £1.99 billion came from commercial and other activities (such as grants, royalties and rental income).

1.1 TV Licence fee revenues

In 2022/23, the BBC's revenue from the licence fee was £3.74 billion which was higher than the 2012/13 figure of £3.66 billion (in cash terms). It was also the first decline in TV licence revenue since 2019/20.

In the past the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had been responsible for covering the TV Licence cost for those aged 75 and over. The BBC received this income as a grant. The total value of the DWP annual contribution was calculated based on: "the full cost of the relevant Licence (colour or black and white)."⁴

From 2018/19, the BBC began to take on part of the responsibility for funding TV Licence fees of those over 75, which had previously been met fully by the government.⁵ The broadcaster has had to cover the full cost of these Licences since 2020/21.⁶ (See section 4.2 for more information).

¹ BBC, [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#), p61

² BBC, [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23](#), p50

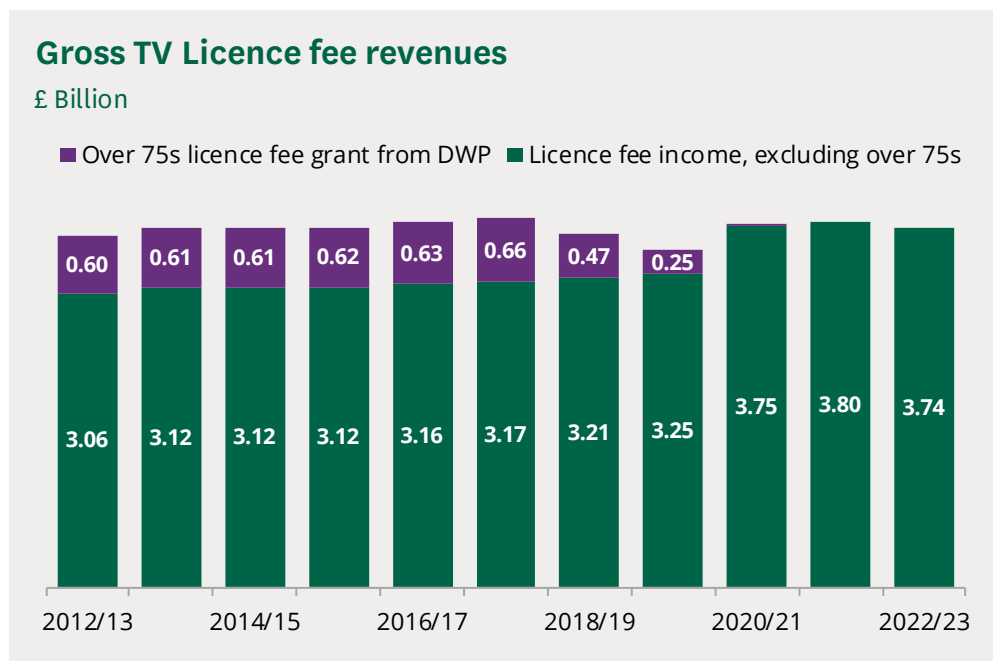
³ TV Licensing, [How much does a TV Licence cost](#)

⁴ TV Licensing, [Licences facts and figures](#), [Accessed 7 January 2019]

⁵ Frontier Economics, [Review of Over-75s Funding – A report prepared for the BBC](#), November 2018, p6

⁶ BBC, [Important notice from the BBC about TV licences for people aged 75 or over](#), 29 July 2021

The chart below shows TV Licence fee collection revenues and over 75s Licence cost reimbursement value from the DWP. TV Licence fee revenues had grown from £3.51 billion in 2010/11 to £3.69 billion in 2018/19 (in cash terms). It decreased to £3.52 billion in 2019/20 before increasing to £3.75 billion in 2020/21.



Source: [BBC Annual Report and Accounts](#), Various Years

The increase in 2020/21 on the previous year was attributed to raising £186 million more from TV licences for those aged 75 and over than from the DWP grant. It was also due to the annual licence fee increasing with inflation.⁷ However the £435 million received from the over-75s in 2020/21 was less than the £656 million received from the DWP in 2017/18 which was the last year that over-75 TV licences were fully funded by the DWP.⁸

The share of the DWP grant as a proportion of the total Licence income was around 16% to 17% between 2010/11 to 2017/18. In 2019/20, the TV Licence cost for over 75s covered by the DWP was around £0.25 billion (7% of the total Licence fee income), a decrease from £0.47 billion (13% of the total Licence fee income) in the previous year.⁹

The BBC estimated a loss of £400 million over the remaining period of the current charter due to the licence fee freeze in 2022/23 and 2023/24.¹⁰

⁷ NAO, [Departmental Overview 2020-21: The BBC group](#), October 2021, p8

⁸ Ibid

⁹ BBC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21](#), p208

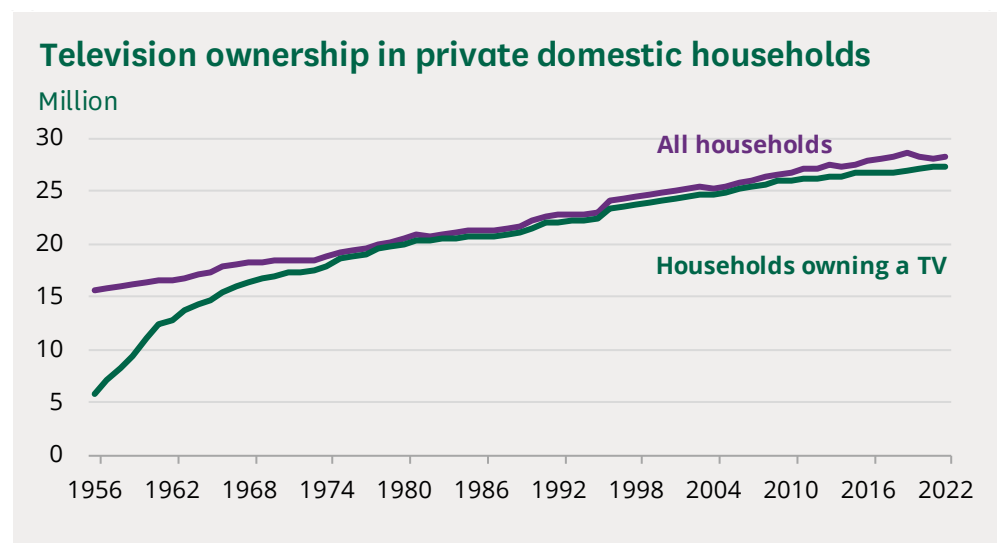
¹⁰ NAO, [Departmental Overview 2022-23: The BBC group](#), October 2023, p10

2 TV ownership and TV Licence

2.1 Long-term rise and a recent fall in TV ownership

Data on household TV ownership is available from BARB's quarterly establishment survey. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, publication of the survey was disrupted.¹¹ The survey is now behind a paywall with the last publicly available quarterly data being for Q1 2020. Data from 2020 has been obtained from the [International Video Federation](#) (IVF)

In 2022, around 27 million or 97% of all households in the UK owned a TV set. The number of households owning a TV increased by 4.7 times over the last 60 years, compared to 1956 when only 5.7 million or 36% of all households had a TV.¹²



Sources: [International Video Federation](#), Television Audience Measurement, Joint Industry Committee for Television Audience Research, Barb, [ONS Families and households in the UK: 2022](#)

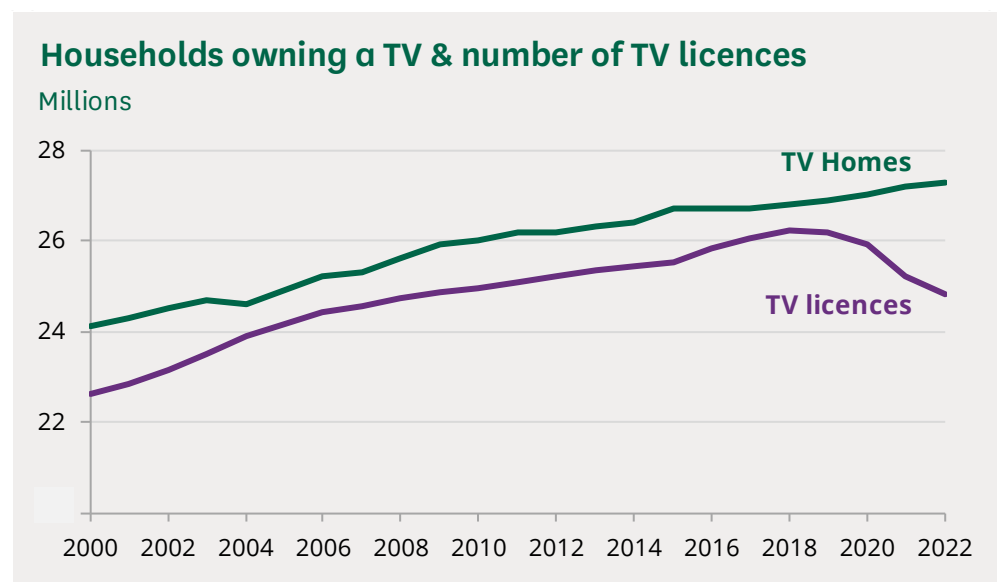
¹¹ BARB, [BARB releases Establishment Survey results for Q2 2021](#), 26 August 2021

¹² The Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (Barb) published data on TV ownership since 1956. This information was previously provided from the Barb website – *TV ownership section* which has been discontinued. The latest figures for the number households owning a TV can be obtained from BARB's [Establishment Survey](#) page which since 2020 has been put behind a pay wall.

2.2

TV Licence and TV ownership

In 2021/22, there were around 24.8 million TV Licences in force. The number of TV Licences was around 9% lower than the number of homes owning a TV in 2022, compared with 6% lower in 2000/01. (caution should be taken when comparing these figures see below notes).¹³



Sources: BBC annual reports, Barb, IVF

A person does not have to own a TV set to be required to pay an annual TV Licence fee. As stated on the TV Licensing website:

It is an offence to watch or record television programmes as they are being shown on any channel and on any broadcast platform (terrestrial, satellite, cable and the internet) or download or watch BBC programmes on demand, including catch up TV, on BBC iPlayer without a valid TV Licence.¹⁴

From September 2016, a TV Licence was required by law in order to use the BBC iPlayer.¹⁵

¹³ TV Licence data shows total number of Licences in force, rather than number of households with a Licence. Some households may require more than one Licence (like student accommodation). TV Licence figures are estimates of the number of Licences in force and do not include concessionary Licences. Reporting month for TV ownership and TV Licence data is different.

¹⁴ TV Licensing, [Why do I need a TV Licence](#)

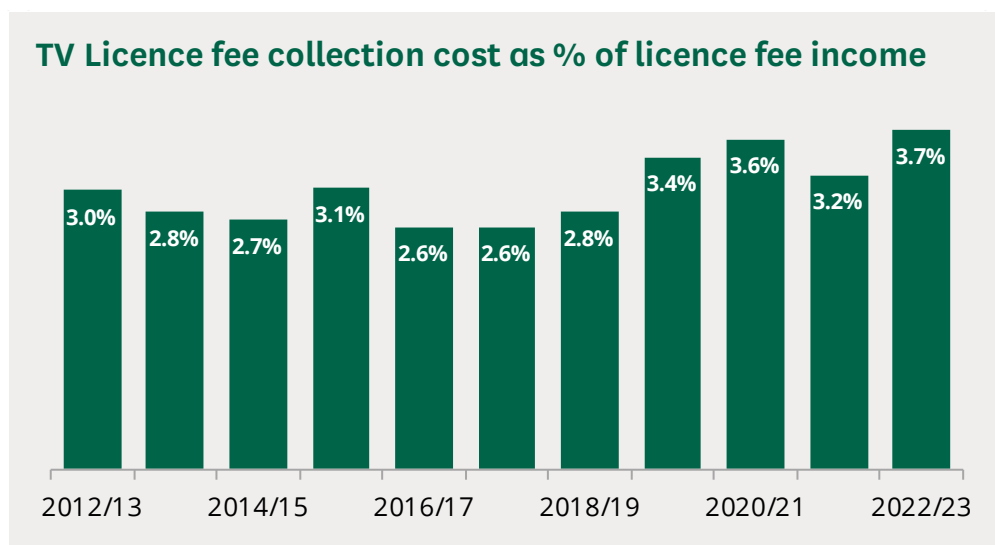
¹⁵ [The Communications \(Television Licensing\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

3 TV Licence fee collection

3.1 TV Licence fee collection cost

Information about TV Licence fee collection costs is available in the [BBC Annual Report and Accounts](#) publications. In 2022/23, the cost of the licence fee collection was £137 million compared with £122 million in the previous year.

The chart below shows the Licence fee collection cost as a proportion of total Licence fee revenues.¹⁶ Licence fee collection costs accounted for 3.7% of total income from TV Licensing in 2022/23. The figure for 2022/23 was the highest figure since 2008/09.



Source: data for 2008/09-2014/15 TV Licencing FOI response - [How is TV Licensing funded and what is the cost of collecting the TV Licence fee?](#); for 2015/16 onwards [BBC Annual Report and Accounts](#), various years

¹⁶ Including DWP funding for the 75-and-over concession

3.2 Licence fee evasion

The BBC's Licence Fee Unit has estimated the rate of TV Licence fee evasion using Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) data.

The estimated evasion rate increased in each year from 2014/15 to 2018/19. The general increase in the evasion rate has partly been explained as being due to a change in viewing habits and the closure of the iPlayer loophole in 2016. It has also been put down to changes in people's incomes and the cost of the TV Licence as well as Television Licensing enforcement activities.¹⁷

In 2019/20, the BBC used a second evasion rate measure that looked at the average annual evasion rate over the 12 months of that year as opposed to the evasion rate at the end of the financial year.¹⁸ This measure is believed by the BBC to be a more reliable measure of the evasion rate as it is less likely to be subject to monthly variations in the rate that can occur based on how people consume media.¹⁹

The chart below shows that the estimated Licence fee evasion rate rose from 6.69% in 2018/19, to a high of 10.31% in 2022/23.²⁰ The high in 2022/23 has been attributed to a number of factors including a change in viewing habits, slowing of household growth and cost-of-living pressures.²¹

The BBC estimates that every percentage point reduction in the evasion rate amounts to an extra £43 million in revenue.²²

¹⁷ Ibid; [p36](#)

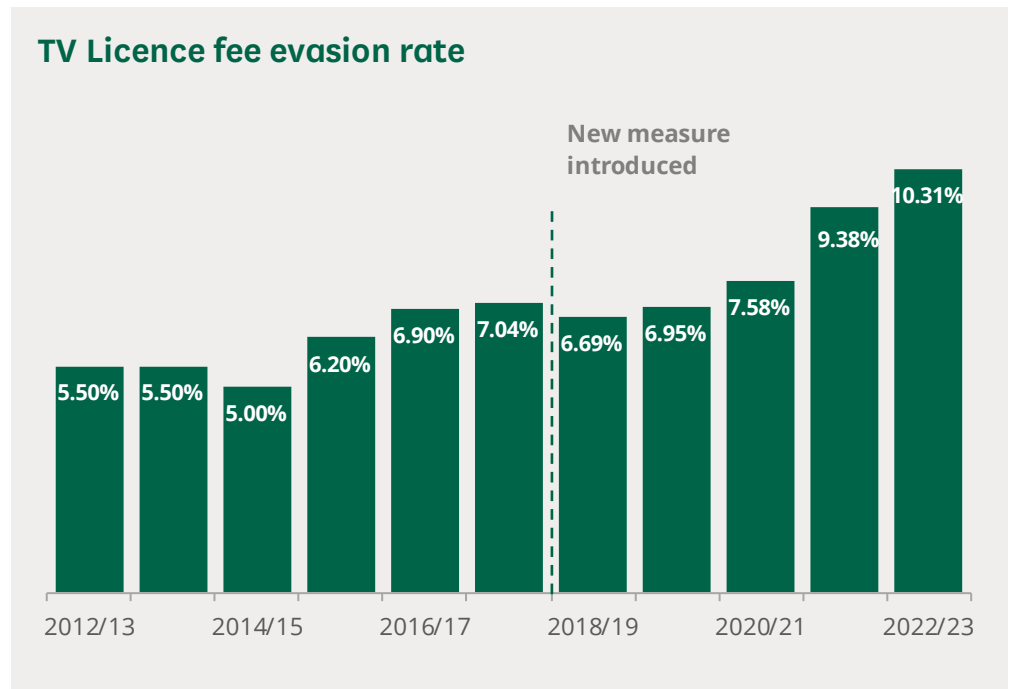
¹⁸ BBC, [Television Licence Fee Trust Statement for the year ending 31 March 2020](#), p35. Though the annual average measure was introduced in 2019/20, the figure for the previous year was also calculated.

¹⁹ BBC, [Television Licence Fee Trust Statement for the year ending 31 March 2022](#), p37.

²⁰ The BBC calculates the evasion rate to two decimal places in order to show some trend in the rate of evasion. It is not currently considered possible to improve the accuracy of the calculated figure to one decimal place as the input data requires a level of estimation.

²¹ BBC, [Television Licence Fee Trust Statement for the year ending 31 March 2023](#), pp29-30

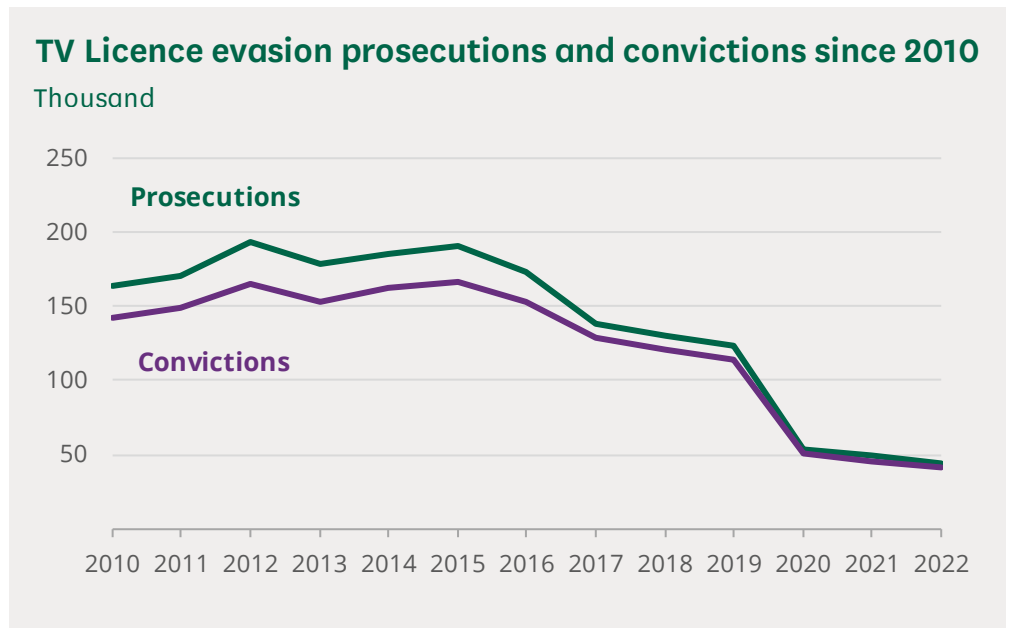
²² Ibid



Source: [BBC Trust Statement](#), various years

The chart below shows the number of prosecutions and convictions for TV Licence evasion since 2010. In 2022, there were 44,245 prosecutions and 40,654 convictions for TV Licence evasion. Of the 40,654 convicted, 30,193 were women (74%). There was a sharp fall in the number of prosecutions and convictions in 2020 and 2021 compared with 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and reduced court activity following the first lockdown in March 2020.²³ Prior to 2020, both prosecutions and convictions had been declining since 2015.

²³ MOJ, [Criminal Justice Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, year ending December 2020 \(annual\)](#), 20 May 2021, p8



Source: MOJ, [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022](#), Outcomes by offence Data Tool, 18 January 2024 (Accessed 05 March 2022)

4 Licence fee concessions

4.1 Types of concessions

The Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/692) (as amended) set out the concessions that are available. The following are eligible:

- [People aged over-75 who are in receipt of Pension Credit.](#)
- [People who are blind \(severely sight impaired\).](#)
- [People who live in qualifying residential care and are disabled or over 60 and retired.](#)
- [People who live in qualifying residential care homes and sheltered accommodation.](#)
- [Businesses that provide units of overnight accommodation, for example hotels and mobile units.](#)²⁴

4.2 TV Licence for over 75s

TV Licences for all people aged over 75 were free from November 2000 until August 2020.

Why was the concession changed?

In July 2015, a funding deal was agreed between the Government and the BBC. A key element of the deal was that the BBC would take over the funding of free licences for the over-75s. Responsibility for the cost of the concession fully transferred to the BBC in June 2020. A BBC consultation on the future of the licence fee for the over-75s ran from November 2018 to February 2019.²⁵ This sought views on three options:

- copying the existing scheme for the over-75s.

²⁴ TV Licensing website, [Are there any concessions available?](#) (accessed 8 March 2024)

²⁵ [BBC launches consultation on TV licences for older people](#), BBC news [online], 20 November 2018 (accessed 8 March 2024)

- restoring the universal licence fee that existed in the past, meaning no concession.
- reforming the scheme.

In June 2019, the BBC announced that free licences for all of the over-75s would end and that, from 1 June 2020, a free licence would only be available to people in receipt of Pension Credit.²⁶ Implementation of the change was delayed until 1 August 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁷ According to the BBC, over 1.5 million households could get a free licence under the new scheme. The cost to the BBC would be £250 million a year, depending on take-up. For further background, see the Library Briefing [Free TV Licences for the over-75s](#) (PDF)(May 2023).

A Library insight on [The Local Impact of Changes to Free TV Licences for over-75s](#) (August 2020) gives information on the relationship between Pension Credit and free TV Licences, including local data on those affected and looks at who is and isn't claiming.

5 Public opinion

5.1 Attitudes towards TV licensing

In 2010/11, [TV Licensing](#) developed an index monitoring attitudes towards TV Licensing. Data collection for this index was commissioned from Harris Interactive. These estimates were produced using surveys of the general population and TV Licence evaders.²⁸

Data suggests that TV Licensing was more positively viewed among the general population in 2015/16 compared to 2010/11. Delayers (those who pay the licence fee late) and evaders, however, had more negative attitudes in 2015/16 than six years before. Delayers & evaders' views towards TV Licensing had been more positive than those of the general population in 2013/14. It has

²⁶ BBC website, [BBC Board decision on licence fees for older people](#) (accessed 8 March 2024)

²⁷ GOV.UK, [Government and BBC's joint statement on delaying the TV licence fee for over 75s](#), 16 March 2020 (accessed 8 March 2024)

²⁸ Please refer to – TV Licence fee collection NAO publication – [section 2.17](#) for more details on the methodology.

since become more negative than in 2010/11. This was a decrease from an index score of 104 in 2013/14 to 99 in 2015/16.

The number of complaints to TV Licensing can give an indication about overall satisfaction and attitudes towards TV Licensing. The NAO has published data on consumer complaints related to TV Licensing in its [TV Licence fee collection](#) publication.

Data suggest that the number of complaints as a percentage of TV licences in force decreased from 0.1% in 2010/11 to 0.04% in 2019/20.²⁹ There were 11,100 complaints received in [2019/20](#). In 2020/21, it increased to 0.08% (20,904 complaints), the highest proportion since 2011/12. The increase in complaints was attributed to delays in responding to customer queries while adapting to remote working and social distancing during the pandemic.³⁰ In 2022/23, the number of complaints received was 9,804, representing 0.04% of TV licences in force.³¹

6 Changing viewing habits

This section provides a short overview about changes in TV viewing habits over time.

6.1 Fewer live TV viewers

The proportion of viewers choosing “Catch-up” TV versus live broadcast increased rapidly over the last decade.

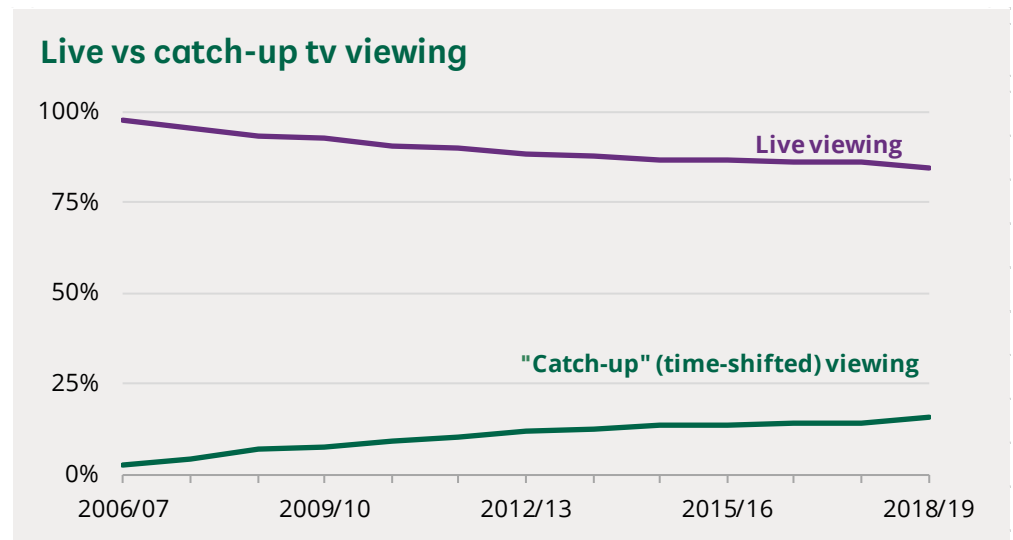
Live versus “Catch-up” TV viewing was captured on The Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board (BARB) website which was discontinued in 2020.

The chart below shows live vs time-shifted TV viewing as a proportion of total viewers. In September 2019, around 16% watched “catch-up” television. This is almost a 14 percentage point increase compared with September 2006.

²⁹ The 2019/20 and 2020/21 figures have been calculated by dividing the number of complaints received in those years with the number of licences in force as reported in the BBC annual report for those years.

³⁰ TV licensing, [Annual Review 2020/21](#) (PDF)

³¹ TV licensing, [Annual Review 2022/23](#) (PDF)



Note: figures are as at September each year, based on earliest September estimates available on BARB website (recording date varies between 1 and 8 September)

Source: BARB, Catch-up & live TV compared, accessed 6 January 2020

More recent data from [Ofcom's Media Nations 2023 report](#) showed that live TV accounted for 44% of total video viewing and when combined with recorded playback and broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD), all content from broadcasters accounted for 60% of total video viewing on all devices. TV sets accounted for 82% of total video viewing across all devices.³²

When age is taken into consideration, viewers aged 16 to 34 were more likely to watch various video on demand services than older age groups. Of adults aged 75+, live TV accounted for 79% of total video viewing for this age group.³³

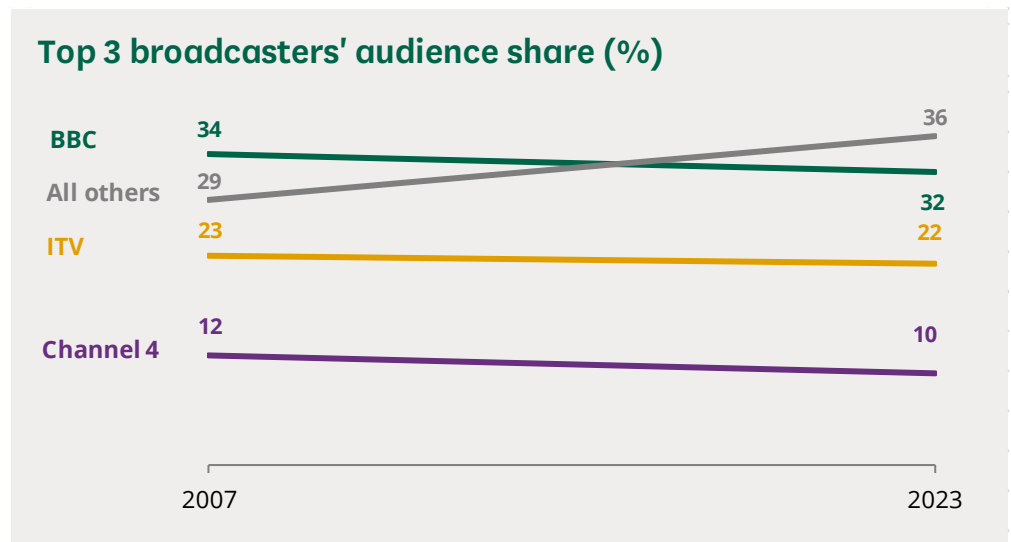
6.2

BBC audience share decreasing

The chart below shows the audience share of the top three most viewed broadcasters. The data suggests that the audience share of the top 3 broadcasters decreased since 2007. The BBC's share fell from 34% in 2007 to 32% in 2023, while ITV's fell from 23% to 22% and Channel 4's fell from 12% to 10%.

³² Ofcom, [Media Nations 2023 report](#), 3 August 2023, p6

³³ Ibid; p8

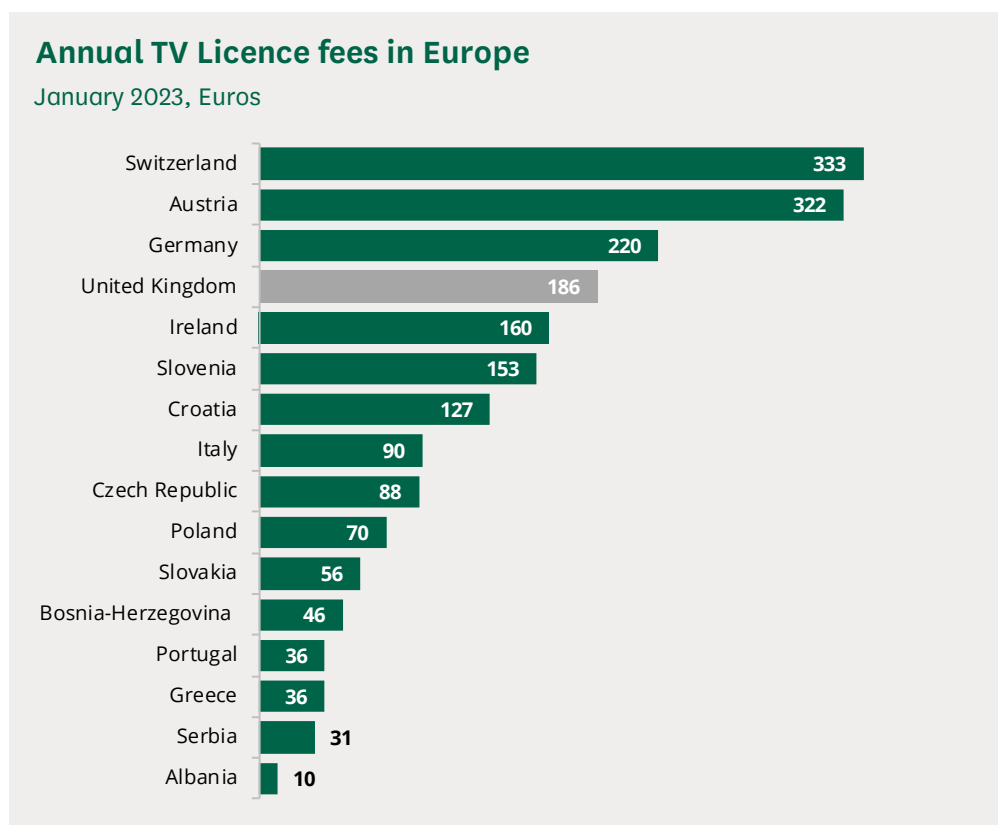


Sources: BARB, [BARB Trends in Television Viewing 2017 \(PDF\)](#), Table 5, February 2018, p6
BARB, [Monthly viewing by channel/service](#), Total broadcaster viewing average for 2023

7

International comparisons

The chart below illustrates the TV Licence fee rate in Europe.³⁴ These figures were published by the [European Broadcasting Union](#) in December 2023. The TV Licence fee amount in the UK was ranked 4th highest compared to other countries as of January 2023. The average fee paid in EU countries was a 124 Euros.

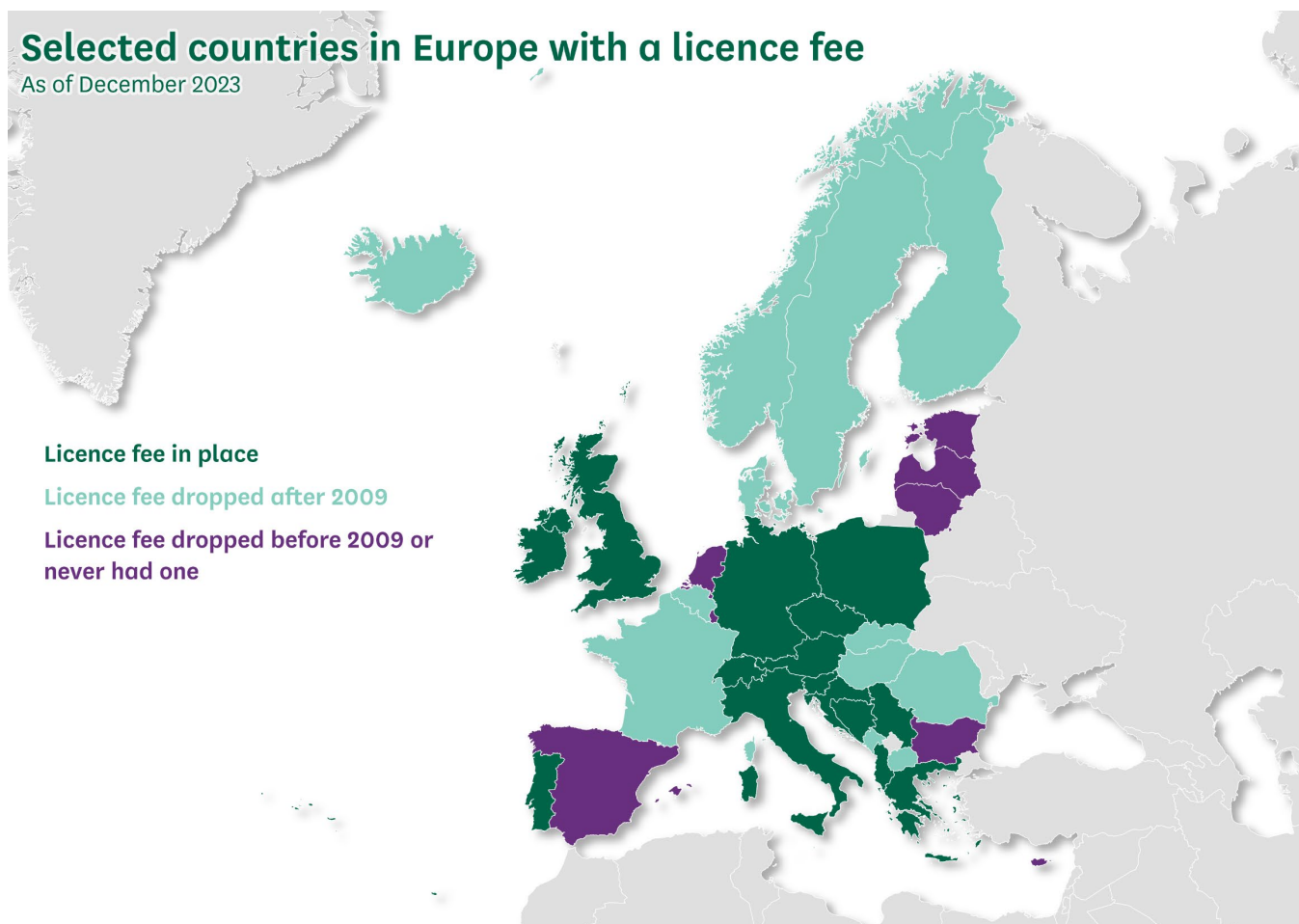


Notes: The benchmarking exercise also involves converting the fees from national currencies to euros. Exchange-rate volatility may have strong implications for data comparability and may affect the results in euros, such as in the case of Switzerland and the UK with the major fluctuations in the CHF/EUR and the GBP/EUR exchange rates in the last few years.

Source: EBU, [Public Version: Licence Fee 2023](#), December 2023

The below map shows selected countries in Europe that currently have licence fees in place, have abolished their licence fee since 2009 or abolished it prior to 2009 or never had one.

³⁴ Excludes the following EBU members, Algeria, Jordan and Israel



Note: In Belgium, Brussels and the Flemish region abolished the licence fee in 2001. The Walloon region abolished it in 2018.

Source: EBU, [Public Version: Licence Fee 2023](#), December 2023

The following should be taken into consideration when making Public Service Media (PSM) licence fee comparisons between countries as they are not equivalent given the different licence fee models:

- VAT-Whether VAT is charged or not creates a methodological caveat for licence fees, since the 2023 VAT rates ranged from 0% to 10% from country to country.
- Top-slicing: PSM do not always receive full fee -In several countries the total amount collected is shared between various beneficiaries. The fee may therefore be set at a higher level than in comparable countries where it exclusively funds the activities of the PSM.
- PSM rely on the fee to differing extents-In several markets, PSM do not rely heavily on licence fee income as they have other significant sources of revenue in their funding mix, typically state grants or advertising.
- National specificities and scope of remit-A striking case is that of Switzerland, where the licence fee converted to Euros remains the highest of all EBU countries: under its public service remit, SRG SSR provides broadcasting services in the four national languages. Such a

pluralistic policy results in significant additional costs compared to other markets of a similar size.³⁵

Additional information

Detailed information about TV Licence fee collection, concessions and complaints is available on the [TV Licencing website](#).

³⁵ EBU, [Licence Fee and Household Charges 2023 \(public version\)](#), December 2023, p11

8 Appendix tables

This section provides data used in line charts and other graphs in which actual values are not visible from data labels. The data associated with all charts in this paper is available for download as an Excel spreadsheet on the [parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk) website:

[TV Licence fee statistics – House of Commons Library briefing](#)

Gross TV Licence Fee Revenues and Collection Cost					
Not adjusted for inflation (£million)					
Year	Over 75s licence fee grant from DWP	Licence fee income, excluding over 75s	Total TV licence fee income	Licence fee collection cost	
2010/11	579	2,934	3,513	124	
2011/12	588	3,018	3,606	126	
2012/13	597	3,059	3,656	111	
2013/14	608	3,118	3,726	102	
2014/15	613	3,122	3,735	101	
2015/16	622	3,121	3,743	115	
2016/17	630	3,157	3,787	82	
2017/18	655	3,175	3,830	101	
2018/19	468	3,206	3,674	103	
2019/20	253	3,250	3,520	119	
2020/21	3	3,747	3,750	136	
2021/22	-	3,800	3,800	122	
2022/23	-	3,740	3,740	137	

Source: [BBC Annual Report and Accounts](#), Various Years

Live vs catch-up TV viewing

Year	Time-shifted viewing	Live viewing
2005/06	2%	98%
2006/07	3%	97%
2007/08	4%	96%
2008/09	7%	93%
2009/10	7%	93%
2010/11	9%	91%
2011/12	10%	90%
2012/13	12%	88%
2013/14	13%	88%
2014/15	14%	86%
2015/16	14%	86%
2016/17	14%	86%
2017/18	14%	86%
2018/19	16%	85%

Note: figures are as at September each year, based on the earliest September estimates available on BARB website (recording date vary between 1 and 8 September)

Percentages have been rounded and may not add up to 100%

Source: BARB, [Catch-up & live TV compared](#), accessed 6 January 2020

Annual audience share % by broadcaster

	BBC	ITV	Channel 4	Other channels
2007	34	23	12	29
2008	34	23	12	29
2009	33	23	11	30
2010	33	23	11	30
2011	33	23	11	32
2012	34	22	11	33
2013	32	23	11	34
2014	33	22	11	34
2015	33	21	10	36
2016	32	21	10	36
2017	32	22	10	36
2018	31	23	10	36
2019	31	23	10	36
2020	32	22	10	36
2021 ^c	33	21	10	36
2022 ^d	33	22	10	35
2023 ^d	32	23	10	36

Notes: figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding

a) December 2021 figures only

b) Average monthly figures over the course of the year

Sources: BARB, [Trends in Television viewing 2017 \(Table 5\)](#), February 2018, p6

BARB, Viewing Report, various years

BARB, [Monthly viewing by Channel/Service](#), Total Broadcaster Viewing

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