

Data > Audience Data | October 27, 2023

UK's biggest online publishers in September 2023: News UK and Mail Metro Media fall out of top ten

Press Gazette's ranking of the biggest online publishers in the UK, using Ipsos iris data.

By Aisha Majid



COUNTER MADNESS: UK banks will shut their 1,000th high street branch next month - see if your local is going

Reach-owned, Mirror.co.uk, 27 October 2023

Six news publishers were among the top 20 biggest online organisations in the UK in September, according to Press Gazette's updated ranking.

Taking the top spots again, however, were the tech giants in a top five unchanged from our last ranking in March.

Google parent Alphabet was the UK's biggest online organisation by audience size (49.5 million visitors, 99% reach among the UK online population over 15) followed by Facebook and Instagram owner Meta (48 million, 96% reach), Amazon (44.8 million, 90% reach) and Microsoft (43.2 million, 86% reach).

Top 25 organisations by UK online audience Reach, September 2023

	Publisher	Audience ⁺	Y-o-Y change in audience (%)	Audience reach (%)
1	Alphabet	49.5m	0.4%	99%
2	Meta	48m	-0.9%	96%
3	Amazon	44.8m	1.1%	90%
4	Microsoft	43.2m	4.3%	86%
5	BBC	37.7m	-2.6%	75%
6	Reach	34.9m	-6.5%	70%
7	eBay	31.6m	-0.0%	63%
8	Apple	31.4m	7.2%	63%
9	Paypal	31.2m	7.4%	62%
10	UK Government	29.3m	-0.7%	59%
11	Mail Metro Media	28.8m	-10.9%	58%
12	Sky	27.3m	2.3%	54%
13	News UK	26.9m	-14.6%	54%
14	NHS	26.6m	-14.9%	53%
15	J Sainsbury	26.4m	10.3%	53%
16	X Corp. (previously Twitter)	23.6m	-17.4%	47%
17	Bytedance	23.6m	23.5%	47%
18	The Independent and The Evening Standard	23.2m	-8.8%	46%
19	Wikimedia Foundation	21.9m	-8.3%	44%
20	Spotify Music	21.8m	15.4%	44%

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris, 1-30 September, Adults 15+. Ipsos iris is endorsed by UKOM [Download image](#) [PressGazette](#)

Largest among the news publishers on the list was the BBC, which ranked fifth overall, according to Ipsos iris. Its websites and apps were accessed by 37.7 million people (75% reach), although the data includes visitors to the BBC's non-news content as well.

Commercial news giant Reach was just behind the BBC in sixth place (34.9 million people, 70% reach). Despite maintaining their positions in the ranking both the BBC and Reach saw year-on-year falls in their audience of 3% and 7% respectively.

Mail Metro Media, publisher of Mail Online, Metro and the i, was ranked ninth in Reach's ranking but fell to 11th (audience of 28.8 million, down 11% year-on-year).

Meanwhile News UK slipped to thirteenth from eighth in March (audience of 26.9 million in September, down 15% year-on-year).

Sky, whose content like the BBC is not just news, (rank 12, audience of 27.3 million, 54% reach) and The Independent and The Evening Standard (rank 18, 23.2 million people, 46% reach) also made the top 20.

Sky was the only news publisher in the top 20 to see year-on-year audience growth (up 2%).

Tiktok owner Bytedance saw the largest year-on-year growth among the entire top 20. The Chinese company was ranked 17th with an audience of 23.6 million (up 24% year-on-year).

Despite ranking in the bottom half of the table for reach, Bytedance was third for time spent (21.4 billion minutes, up 144% year-on-year) due to TikTok's addictive algorithm.

Bytedance could not, however, beat Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram owner Meta which ranked top for time spent again (75.2 billion minutes, up 3% year-on-year), followed by Alphabet (57.5 billion minutes, down 1%).

X (formerly known as Twitter) saw an increase in time spent on its platform following a fall in March. Audiences spent 6 billion minutes with the Elon Musk-owned platform in September, up 26% year-on-year.

Top 25 organisations by UK online audience Engagement, September 2023

	Publisher	Total mins ⁺	Y-o-Y change total mins (%)	Avg mins per person	Page views	Y-o-Y change page views (%)
1	Meta	75.2bn	3%	1,566	4.6bn	2%
2	Alphabet	57.5bn	-1%	1,160	27.6bn	-2%
3	Bytedance	21.4bn	144%	906	151.1m	78%
4	Microsoft	11.9bn	57%	276	5.9bn	-5%
5	BBC	9.6bn	-4%	255	3.3bn	23%
6	Amazon	9.3bn	8%	208	4.1bn	-13%
7	Apple	6.1bn	93%	195	174.3m	-45%
8	X Corp. (previously Twitter)	6bn	26%	253	1.3bn	-55%
9	Spotify Music	4.8bn	74%	220	65.2m	7%
10	eBay	3.1bn	-8%	96	1.4bn	-22%
11	Mail Metro Media	1.8bn	-22%	63	594m	-15%
12	Sky	1.5bn	-13%	54	398.1m	-16%
13	News UK	926.8m	-21%	34	318.4m	-30%
14	Reach	875.2m	-25%	25	888.6m	-23%
15	UK Government	830.5m	36%	28	891.3m	6%
16	J Sainsbury	721m	37%	27	503m	-6%
17	Paypal	420.4m	-2%	13	680.3m	-2%
18	Wikimedia Foundation	399.2m	-28%	18	375.2m	-44%
19	NHS	291.4m	-34%	11	330.9m	-35%
20	The Independent and The Evening Standard	179.7m	-0%	8	105.6m	-12%

Source: Ipsos, Ipsos iris, 1-30 September, Adults 15+. Ipsos iris is endorsed by UKOM [Download image](#) [PressGazette](#)

Spotify (4.8 million minutes, up 74%) and Apple (6.1 billion minutes, up 93%) were also among the sites that saw significant gains in time spent.

The BBC bucked the page views trend among news organisations, with all others in its list reporting a decline. Page views to the BBC numbered 3.3 billion in September (up 23% year-on-year).

Ipsos iris replaced Comscore as the industry-recognised standard in 2021. Ipsos iris data is partly derived from a panel of 10,000 people aged 15 and over that is designed to be nationally representative. The participants have meters installed across 25,000 personal devices to passively measure website and app usage.

This data is combined with data from participating websites which are tagged so all devices visiting the site can be identified and logged.

As of January 2022, Ipsos increased the sources of embedded browser traffic (web content viewed within a mobile app) counted in its data. Its monthly data now includes webpages consumed within other mobile app embedded browsers such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Google News and Instagram, as well as Facebook which has been counted in its data since 2021. Ipsos has also updated its total internet population figures to align with the latest Pamco survey estimates.

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February 2023

Six news publishers were among the top 20 biggest online organisations in the UK in February, according to the latest data from Ipsos iris.

The top of the list was dominated by two tech giants - Google parent Alphabet and Facebook and Instagram owner Meta - who were the only website publishers to reach more than 90% of the UK's online population.

Largest among the news publishers on the list was the BBC, which ranked fifth overall. Its websites and apps were accessed by 38.9 million people (78% of the UK online population over 15) - although Ipsos' data includes visitors to the BBC's non-news content as well.

It was followed by Reach (37.9 million people, 76% reach, the UK's sixth biggest online organisation).

News UK was ranked eighth (30.1 million people, 60% reach) while Mail Online publisher Mail Metro Media came in ninth (29.6 million people, 59% reach).

Sky (rank 15, audience of 26 million, 52% reach) and The Independent and The Evening Standard (rank 16, 24.6 million people, 49% reach) also made the top 20.

The Guardian, which has regularly appeared among the top 20 online organisations in the UK, did not make February's top 20 ranking, coming in 23rd place with a 6% year-on-year audience fall to 20.7 million. Future also came outside the top 20 in 22nd place (down 14% year-on-year).

The Independent and Evening Standard was the only news publisher in the top 20 to see year-on-year audience growth (0.1%). The biggest audience declines among publishers included Mail Metro Media, whose audience was down 11%, and News UK and Sky, both down 7%.

The NHS sites saw the biggest year-on-year fall in audience size, reaching 27.7 million people (down 17% year-on-year compared to February 2022). The UK government (29.5 million people, down 12%) also saw a large fall.

Alphabet was the UK's biggest online publisher reaching 49.5 million people (99% reach, no change year-on-year). It was followed by Facebook owner Meta, which reached 48.2 million people over 15 (97% reach, a fall year-on-year of 1%).

Tiktok owner Bytedance first entered the top 20 organisations list in January, coming in 20th place for reach (audience of 21.5 million) in our February ranking.

But Bytedance ranked third for time spent (19.3 billion minutes), due to the popularity of TikTok. Audiences, however, spent most time with Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram owner Meta (72.9 billion minutes, up 1% year-on-year).

Twitter, which was acquired by Elon Musk last year, saw a large fall in time spent with the platform (3.5 billion minutes, down 22% year-on-year). Reach also saw a major fall in time spent with its sites and apps (1 billion minutes, down 28%), the second-biggest decline in the top 20 after the NHS.

Mail Metro Media (2.4 billion minutes spent in total) in contrast saw a large increase of 16% in time spent with its digital properties.

March 2022

Google and Facebook's parent companies are by far the biggest website publishers in the UK reaching 99% and 98% of the country's online audience in March 2022, according to data from Ipsos.

The Independent and The Evening Standard saw a 2% month-on-month increase in its audience to reach 25.1m people (50% of UK internet users aged over 15). The Guardian (ranked 20th) also saw a 2% increase month-on-month to 22.5m people (45% of internet users) according to this month's list of the top 20 online organisations in the UK.

Reach (ranked fifth) and Mail Metro Media (ranked ninth) were the only two other news publishers that had slightly bigger audiences in March than February. The sites and apps of Reach, the UK's biggest publisher, were accessed by 39.1m people (up 1%). Meanwhile 33.4m people logged onto Mail Metro Media's digital properties (also up 1%).

The other news publishers in the list saw small audience falls. BBC (ranked sixth and the second-best placed news organisation after Reach) reached 38.7m people (down 1% month-on-month) while News UK (ranked 12th) reached 31.7m people (down 2%). Two other news providers' audiences were unchanged from the previous month: magazine specialist Future (24m people, ranked 19th) and broadcaster Sky (27.9m, ranked 14th).

Occupying the top four spots in the table as in previous rankings were Google-owner Alphabet (49.5m people - 99% reach), Meta (48.9m people - 98% reach), Amazon (44.9m people - 90% reach) and Microsoft (39.8m people - 80% reach). None of these four tech giants however, saw a significant change in audience numbers.

PayPal (ranked 11th) was the only organisation in the top 20 to see a significant change in audience size compared to March. The well-known fintech company reached 31.8m people (64% reach).

This month, although the number of people accessing the sites and apps of the UK's leading organisations was largely unchanged, users spent more with them. Ten of the top 20 organisations saw double-digit increases in the amount of time spent with their digital properties. They included Mail Metro Media (2.4bn minutes spent in total, 14% increase month-on-month), Sky (1.9bn minutes, 20% increase) and The Independent & The Evening Standard (231m, 18% increase).

Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram was once again the company that UK audiences spent the most time with. Over 70bn minutes were spent with the organisation's sites (10% increase month-on-month). Only Alphabet came close with UK audiences spending 57bn minutes with its sites in March.

The BBC was the most engaged-with news brand by far. Audiences spent 9.2bn minutes (up 8% month-on-month) with its digital properties during the month, although that includes not only news but time with its other content such as entertainment programming and sports. The second-best placed news publisher was Mail Metro Media. It was followed by Sky and Reach (1.5bn minutes).

Most organisations saw a corresponding increase in page views in March. The Evening Standard and The Independent saw the biggest increase in the number of pages visited among the top 20 with 148.2m page views (up 17% month-on-month).

Ipsos iris replaced Comscore as the industry-recognised standard in 2021. Ipsos iris data is partly derived from a panel of 10,000 people aged 15 and over that is designed to be nationally representative. The participants have meters installed across 25,000 personal devices to passively measure website and app usage.

This data is combined with data from participating websites which are tagged so all devices visiting the site can be identified and logged.

As of January this year, Ipsos increased the sources of embedded browser traffic (web content viewed within a mobile app) counted in its data. Its monthly data now includes webpages consumed within other mobile app embedded browsers such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Google News and Instagram, as well as Facebook which has been counted in its data since 2021. Ipsos has also updated its total internet population figures to align with the latest Pamco survey estimates. As a result, Press Gazette has not made comparisons with previous monthly data.

February 2022

The BBC and Mail Metro Media were the only two of the top 20 online organisations by UK audience reach to see a month-on-month audience gain, according to data from Ipsos iris.

The BBC, which was the biggest newsbrand in the list by reach, saw a 1% month-on-month rise in audience reaching 39.3m people in the UK in February.

Mail Metro Media's audience was similarly up 1% reaching 33.2m people in February, making it the country's ninth largest online organisation. The Lord Rothermere-owned group entered the top ten last month for the first time since Press Gazette began reporting on this metric in October 2021.

The BBC, which reached 79% of UK internet users aged over 15, was the only newsbrand to make it into the top five publishers, according to the industry's UKOM-endorsed Ipsos iris data.

Ahead of the BBC, as in most previous rankings, were Google-owner Alphabet (49.6m people - 99% reach), Meta (48.7m people - 98% reach), Amazon (44.7m people - 90% reach) and Microsoft (39.4m people - 79% reach). The three US tech giants occupying the top three spots were the only organisations to reach at least 90% of the population.

Narrowly outside the top five was the UK's highest commercial national and regional publisher, Reach. The Mirror and Manchester Evening News publisher reached 38.8m people (down 1% month-on-month).

News UK (ranked 11th) reached 32.4m (65% of internet users), Sky (ranked 14th) reached 28m people (56%), The Independent and Evening Standard (ranked 17th) reached 24.6m people (49%) while Future's sites (ranked 19th) were accessed by 24.2m people (42% reach).

The Guardian, which entered the top 20 ranking for the first time last month, appeared again in 20th place however its audience of 22.1m was 7% down month-on-month. In total, the top 20 includes eight news and magazine publishers.

The NHS's sites saw the biggest audience fall among the top 20 organisations, with its February traffic down 9% month-on-month.

When it comes to engagement, UK audiences spent more time with Facebook and Instagram owner Meta than any other online organisation in February. Over 64bn minutes were spent with the organisation's sites, which was 9% lower than January but still significantly more than any other publisher. Only Alphabet came close with UK audiences spending 53.1bn minutes with its sites in February.

The BBC was the most engaged-with news brand by far. Audiences spent 8.5bn minutes with its digital properties during the month, although that includes not only news but time with its other content such as entertainment programming and sports. The second-best placed news publisher, Mail Metro Media, saw its sites and apps used for a collective 2.1bn minutes. It was followed by Sky (1.6bn minutes) and Reach (1.4bn minutes).

There was a notable drop in page views across the board, with Future and The Evening Standard and The Independent seeing the biggest falls in number of pages visited among the news brands. Magazine publisher Future's page views were down 29% month to 186m views, while there were 121.7m page views for The Evening Standard and The Independent's sites (a fall of 15%).

January 2022

Three of the top ten online organisations by UK audience reach are news providers, according to data from Ipsos iris.

Among the top 20 leading online organisations in the UK, Reach came out as the UK's biggest news publisher by audience size. The national and regional publishing giant reached 39m people (78% of all internet users), putting it ahead of the BBC (38.7m - 78% reach).

In previous months, the BBC and Reach have jostled for the position of top news organisation, according to the industry's UKOM-endorsed Ipsos iris data.

Mail Metro Media entered the top ten (in tenth position) for the first time since Press Gazette began reporting on this metric for the top UK online organisations in October. The company, whose 18 sites include dailymail.co.uk, metro.co.uk and inews.co.uk, reached 33m people aged over 15 (66% reach) in January.

A Mail Metro Media spokesperson said: "Mail Metro Media is delighted to be included in the top ten online organisations in the UK. Our mission is testament to our quality journalism and highly engaging, trusted content delivered to millions of loyal customers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Together our digital brands, which include MailOnline, the UK's largest and most engaged daily news site, Metro.co.uk and inews.co.uk, deliver over two billion minutes every month, with an average of 66 minutes per reader, which demonstrates the loyalty of our engaged audience."

The Guardian also entered the top 20 ranking for the first time since October. The Guardian's brands reached 23.7m people online (48% reach).

Out in front, as in previous months, were four US tech giants. The UK's biggest brand by audience, Google owner Alphabet, reached 48.9m people (99% of internet users). It was closely followed by Meta (previously known as Facebook), which reached 49m people (98%). Amazon (45.1m people, 90% reach) and Microsoft (42m people, 81% reach) were the remaining two brands accessed by more than 40m people online in January.

As of January, Ipsos has increased the sources of embedded browser traffic (web content viewed within a mobile app) counted in its data. Its monthly data now includes webpages consumed within other mobile app embedded browsers such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Google News and Instagram, as well as Facebook which has been counted in its data since 2021. Ipsos has also updated its total internet population figures to align with the latest Pamco survey estimates. As a result, Press Gazette has not made comparisons with previous monthly data.

In total, the top 20 includes eight news and magazine publishers.

News UK (ranked 11th) reached 32.3m (65% of internet users), Sky (ranked 15th) reached 28m people (56%), The Independent and Evening Standard (ranked 18th) reached 25m people (50%) while Future's sites (ranked 19th) were accessed by 24.1m people (48% reach).

Despite recent reports of Facebook's user base declining for the first time, UK audiences spent more time with Meta than any other online organisation in January. Over 70bn minutes were spent with the organisation's sites, which include Facebook and Instagram - 15% more than second-placed Alphabet (59bn minutes).

The BBC was the most-engaged-with news brand, with audiences spending 9.1bn minutes with its digital properties in January. That figure includes, however, time spent with the corporation's non-news content such as its entertainment programming. It was followed by Mail Metro Media (2.2bn minutes), Sky News (1.8bn minutes) and Reach (1.7bn minutes).

The Guardian, while coming in 20th position for reach, did relatively better for engagement as each user spent an average 41 minutes with its content in January, putting it in 13th place on this measure. Reach in contrast did worse on its engagement ranking (12th) compared to its audience size ranking (5th).

December 2021

The BBC reclaimed its top spot as the biggest news websites publisher in the UK by audience in December, according to data from Ipsos iris.

The public broadcaster saw a 5% month-on-month growth in audience reaching 39.8m internet users age over 15 (80% reach) in December overtaking Reach, which ranked higher than the BBC last month according to UKOM endorsed Ipsos iris data.

Reach's large portfolio of digital brands, which include the Manchester Evening News and Liverpool Echo, saw a small 0.2% drop in audience compared to November, reaching 38m people (76% reach).

Topping the table were the same four US tech giants that have led the ranking since Press Gazette began publishing figures on the reach of online organisations in the UK in October. The UK's biggest brand by audience, Google owner Alphabet, reached 49.5m people - almost everyone who used the internet in the UK.

Meta (previously known as Facebook), which reached 48.7m people (98% reach), and Amazon (46m people, 92% reach) were the only two other brands to cross the 90% threshold.

The NHS sites continued their strong month-on-month increase in audience. The health provider's sites reached 7% more people (audience of 39.8m) in December than in November as people are keen for information on the evolving pandemic.

In addition to the BBC and Reach, four other news publishers made it into the top 20 list. Mail Metro Media (ranked 12th) reached 31.1m people (62% of internet users), News UK (ranked 13th) reached 30.1m (60%), Sky News (ranked 16) reached 27m people (54%), and The Independent and The Evening Standard brands (ranked 18) were accessed by 22.8m (46% reach).

The Independent and Evening Standard along with the NHS sites saw the greatest month-on-month audience growth (7%).

Meta was the online organisation with which most time was spent in December. UK adults spent over 55bn minutes with the organisation's sites, which include Facebook and Instagram.

The BBC was the most-engaged-with name in news, with audiences spending 8.8bn minutes with its digital properties last month. It was followed by Mail Metro Media (2.1bn minutes) whose Mail Online brand was the most engaged with newsbrand in the UK according to the last Pamco release earlier in January. Looking only at newsbrands, it was closely followed by Sky News (1.8bn minutes) and Reach (1.6bn minutes).

When it comes to average time spent per person with the brand, BBC sites came out ahead of Amazon and Microsoft. Despite the US giants' significantly larger reach compared to the BBC, online audiences spent on average 222 minutes with the BBC's content compared to 206 for Amazon sites and 199 minutes for Microsoft.

November 2021

Reach overtook the BBC to become the homegrown publisher with the biggest audience in the UK, according to data from the UKOM endorsed UK standard for online audience measurement.

Reach's audience across national brands including the Mirror, Express, Star and Daily Record as well as dozens of regional sites grew by 0.2% month-on-month to hit 38.1m people (76% reach) in November.

This put it ahead of the BBC (38m people) whose sites saw a 2.7% drop in audience compared to last month. Last month BBC was the leading publisher in the UK.

Both publishers were, however, once again eclipsed by four US tech giants which were the only website publishers to reach more than 40m people in the UK in November. Alphabet, which includes Google's home page for search and YouTube, was the leading online organisation reaching 49.5m people aged over 15 in the UK - 99% of people in the country who used the internet.

Sites by Meta - previously known as Facebook - which include Facebook and Instagram were the second most popular, reaching 48.8m people (98% of internet users over 15). Amazon reached 45.9m (reach of 92%) and Microsoft reached 40.6m people (reach of 81%).

Last month six organisations reached more than 75% of web users. In November NHS websites expanded this list of six sites to seven as more than 37m people (75% of internet users aged over 15) accessed an NHS site in November, likely spurred on by increasing interest in information about Covid-19 since the emergence of the Omicron variant.

Reach, the highest-ranked homegrown site, was also the highest ranked newsbrand in November, according to the Ipsos iris metric for measuring online audiences.

Three other newspaper brands made it into the top 20 - the same three as October. Mail Metro Media (whose online brands include MailOnline, Metro.co.uk and inews.co.uk) reached 30.8m people (62% reach), News UK sites were accessed by 29.2m people (59% reach) and The Independent and Evening Standard reached 21.4m people (43% reach). All three newsbrands saw month-on-month falls in audience with The Independent and Evening Standard recording the biggest drop at 5.7%. Reach was the only newsbrand in the top 20 to not see a smaller audience in November than October.

Media company Hearst, which counts Cosmopolitan.com and Harpersbazaar.com in its large portfolio of brands, reached 21.2m people (43%). Last month, Hearst saw the biggest month-on-month increase in visitors of any organisation among the top 20. In November however, the company's audience shrank by 4.4%.

Future ranked one of the biggest month-on-month audience increases of the top 20 - second to only Sainsbury's. The magazine publisher and media company's online audience grew 6.8% in November to reach 20.9m.

October 2021

Four US tech giants are the only website publishers to reach more than 40m people in the UK each month, according to data from the UKOM endorsed UK standard for online audience measurement.

Alphabet websites which include Google's home page for search and YouTube reached 49.7 million people aged over 15 in the UK in October - everyone in the country who used the internet.

Facebook sites which include Facebook and Instagram were the second most popular, reaching 48.7 million people (98% of internet users over 15), while Amazon reached 45.7 million (reach of 92%).

Only two other organisations reached more than 75% of web users. Microsoft sites reached 41.1 million people (82%), while 39.1 million people (78% of internet users over 15) accessed a BBC site in October. The BBC was also the highest-ranked news provider, although the data includes visitors to all BBC sites - not just its news pages.

The second-highest ranked news provider was Reach whose sites were accessed by up 38 million visitors (76% reach).

Three other newsbrands made it into the top 20, according