



INSIGHT UK

~ SOCIAL MOVEMENT OF BRITISH HINDUS & INDIANS ~



BRITISH MEDIA AND PERCEPTION

———— A SURVEY FOR ————
BRITISH HINDUS & BRITISH INDIANS

DEC 2023



INSIGHT UK
~ SOCIAL MOVEMENT OF BRITISH HINDUS & INDIANS ~

British Media and Perception

How does the British Media portray Hindus and Indians?

Published December 2023

INSIGHT UK

www.insightuk.org
info@insightuk.org

ISBN 978-1-3999-5169-2



Executive Summary	4
Key findings	5
Introduction and Project Methodology	6
Survey Overview	7
Post Survey Analysis	9
Key survey finding on the BBC	9
Similar studies from the past	11
Conclusions	13
Appendix: Survey Results	16
References	40

Executive summary

INSIGHT UK is pleased to introduce the British Media and Perception Report, a comprehensive study conducted to gain insights into the sentiments of the British Hindu and British Indian (BHI) communities regarding their portrayal by the news media in the United Kingdom. This report marks our inaugural nationwide survey, aimed at fostering a better understanding of how community members perceive media representations.

Examining how the media portrays a particular community is essential to promote fairness, accuracy, and inclusivity. By challenging biases, stereotypes, and misinformation, we can contribute to a more informed and empathetic society that respects the diversity and dignity of all communities.

INSIGHT UK is an organisation that aims to address the concerns of the British Hindu and British Indian (BHI) communities.

From November 2022 to February 2023, a survey was conducted asking Hindus and Indians living in the United Kingdom about what they thought of the British media. We asked how they felt they were being represented and whether they felt they were being covered accurately and depicted fairly.

The 2021 census recorded 1.03 million Hindus and 1.86 million Indians in England and Wales alone [1]. To get a truly accurate reflection of this BHI population, the survey required a minimum of 385 participants to ensure a high level of confidence and a low margin of error [2]. The response far exceeded expectations with 2,061 respondents and strong representation across all regions of the United Kingdom.

Key Survey Findings

- 89% of the survey respondents feel that the British media **lacks impartiality** when it comes to reporting on matters pertaining to the Hindu community. 91% also feel that reporting on India is not balanced.
- The survey highlights a **particular distrust of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)**. The survey reveals that more than 90% of respondents perceive the BBC as the most unreliable source of information concerning Hinduism and India, followed by **The Guardian**.
- Both the BBC and Guardian have the highest number of complaints raised against them by BHI community members. 98% of complainants are dissatisfied with the responses. 11% of complainants escalated their concerns to Ofcom, of which 97% were dissatisfied with Ofcom's response.
- Data shows evidence that the Hindu community is becoming increasingly distrustful and suspicious of mainstream media. Respondents stated that media reports on India and Hindus result in negative perceptions of them.
- 59% of survey participants said they had witnessed or experienced prejudice as a result of the media reporting on Hindus and Hinduism. 70% felt the same due to reporting on India and Indians.
- A significant proportion, 86%, of respondents did not support the TV Licence fee, while 89% of participants strongly believed that a referendum should be held to consider decriminalising the Licence fee. These sentiments arose from concerns over inadequate representation and biased reporting on issues related to the British Hindu and British Indian community.
- A resounding 91% of participants expressed their preference to be identified by the media as either "British Indian" or "British Hindu" or simply "Indian." In contrast, less than 5% of respondents favoured the use of the term "Asian" as a personal identifier.
- A significant majority of respondents, 81% and 79% respectively, reported witnessing or personally experiencing prejudice or hate due to how the media portrays India or Indians, and Hinduism or Hindus. This indicates a concerning trend of negative impacts resulting from media reporting on these subjects, affecting perceptions and interactions within society.

Introduction and Project Methodology

An undertaking of this kind is unprecedented for the British Hindu and British Indian communities. INSIGHT UK aimed to gather as much data as possible not only from survey respondents but analysing articles with regards to the usage of language, narrative, and corresponding sentiment from other media outlets for the same news pieces after the survey concluded.

INSIGHT UK commissioned a data science team to analyse the survey data and then run further research on specific news pieces that covered topics relating to the BHI community.

Project phases

The survey project was split into two phases.

Survey of the members of BHI community

The first phase was to design a survey that could capture the perception of the BHI community on how Hindus, Hinduism, India and Indians are represented in British Media.

Comparative analysis of different media outlets

The second phase was to analyse the results and choose some key areas that were of particular interest, including existing reports and previous surveys. Some conclusions from this have also been documented.

INSIGHT UK commissioned a team to conduct further analysis on news articles produced by particular media organisations that were highlighted in the survey. This will cover key topics that interest the BHI community and will be released at a later date.

Published December 2023

Survey Overview

It was important to evidence any claims and conclusions with robust data that would meet the standards expected of rigorous academic research.

The final dataset gave the survey a confidence interval of 99% and a very low margin of error.

Some open ended, free-text questions were asked in the survey, which could lower the validity of the data captured. Therefore, these types of questions were kept to a minimum as it can be difficult to quantify and interpret the sentiments behind the answers given.

Questions were asked with the intention of gauging respondent sentiment on topics related to Hindus and India in the British Media. All major media outlets were presented consistently throughout the survey in multichoice options to ensure there were no assumptions or inherent bias in the questions about any particular outlet.

The survey was loosely divided into the following sections with questions designed to allow the measurement of quantifiable data.

General questions

Questions around how often news is consumed and perceptions of reliability on BHI reporting across different news formats.

Licence fee

Focus on whether the Licence fee receives support, whether it is good value for money, and if not, why not.

News about India, Hindus and Hinduism

Covering opinion on all major UK broadcasters and perceptions of reliability on topics relating to India, Hindus and Hinduism. Individuals were also asked if they had witnessed or experienced prejudice as a result of the media.

Taking up complaints

Whether respondents had taken up complaints to the media house in question or further to Ofcom.

Personal views

Gauging feelings on portrayal and how the reporting impacts the BHI community, including suggestions from respondents.

About you

Capturing demographic data about the individual, including age and location.

Post Survey Analysis

Key survey finding on the BBC

What is perhaps most surprising are the number of respondents that considered the BBC a weak source of information compared to other organisations. The survey results also show dissatisfaction at the BBC complaints process.

In 2022, the British Hindu community accounted for near 0% of the prison population [3] and achieved some of the highest attainment rates in education [4].

Religion of prisoners and the general population

England and Wales; June 2023

	Number	Prison population	% point change on 2002	Share of the general population
Christian	38,184	44%	-13.6	46%
Muslim	15,271	18%	10.1	7%
Hindu	333	0%	0.0	2%
Sikh	552	1%	0.0	1%
Buddhist	1,718	2%	1.1	1%
Jewish	489	1%	0.3	1%
No religion	26,715	31%	-0.3	37%
Other	2,218	3%	2.0	1%
Not recorded	371	0%	0.4	6%
Total	85,851	100%	..	100%

So, why is this high performing community so disaffected by the media and specifically the BBC?

Why is there a dissonance between how a typical British Indian or British Hindu lives in society and how they are reported in the media? Why do they consider the BBC partial and does any other research support this?

It therefore makes good rationale to focus on the BBC for the future stages of this work.

The scope of this survey report did not warrant any further research on specific topics and examples around the BBC. However, as the BBC was such a key highlight based on the survey results, INSIGHT UK will commission a separate document of research on more specific topics and observations following the publication of this survey.

INSIGHT UK will work with a dedicated research team to do this work.

Similar studies from the past

In 2001, the Hindu Youth Research Project was conducted by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies [5]. Only 28% of their survey respondents felt that the media positively represents Hinduism, and only 10% thought that the British press was a good source of information about Hindus and Hinduism. 72% thought the internet was a better source.

In 2005, a Memorandum to the Select Committee on BBC Charter Review was submitted by Vivekananda Centre London and the Hindu Council (UK) [6]. The written evidence concluded that the BBC failed to highlight key features of Hinduism and inaccurately portrayed the religion. Despite a fruitful meeting with the head of Religion and Ethics at the BBC, this survey suggests little has changed.

In 2006, the Runnymede Trust was commissioned by the Hindu Forum of Britain (HFB) to conduct the 'Connecting British Hindus' research project [7]. Their online survey found that over 80% of respondents were unhappy with the representation of Hindus in the national media. Focus group participants complained about the BBC's failure to include Hindus in faith-based programming and there were worries about the misrepresentation of Hindu religious practices and stereotyping.

In 2008, Alasdair Pinkerton, author of the Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, analysed the coverage of India by the BBC from 1947 (India's independence from British rule) up to 2008. Pinkerton concluded that the BBC's coverage showed a pervasive and hostile anti-India bias because of their alleged imperialist and neo-colonialist stance [8].

In 2018, VHP UK hosted its first British Hindu Conclave [21]. A report called "Proceedings of the 1st British Hindu Conclave" was presented to the BBC Head of Radio, Religion and Ethics. The report made the BBC aware of bias against Hinduism in BBC religious programmes dating back to February 2017, which included disproportionate representation of Hindus on the BBC.

The report also highlighted that BBC religious output either ignores or gives a negative image of Hinduism, including bias and misrepresentation of Hinduism in BBC Religious programmes.

Hindu and Sikh leaders have made multiple complaints of bias by the BBC [9], with a Sikh Lord quitting a BBC programme in 2019 as a result [10][11]. British Hindu social media content creators are also claiming the same [12][13].

These perceptions of partiality are not unique to the BHI community.

In 2020 a national survey found that BBC news output received the lowest impartiality score for any British broadcaster [14][15]. In 2022, the UK government announced it is reviewing whether to abolish the Licence fee, which could be replaced by a different funding model [16].

Even though some survey data was also found on Ofcom's annual research on audience attitudes for previous years, there were only a few dozen Hindu respondents to their surveys [ofcom.org.uk, 17]. This would not be enough to take a representative population sample of the Hindu population.

Conclusions

These conclusions are aimed at providing the BHI community, British Media, and British Policymakers with advice on how to tackle the problems highlighted in this survey.

BHI community

- Seek out alternative sources of news and information. You can access plenty of news sources online that do not disproportionately focus on specific narratives. The survey suggested there were common themes at play and this recommendation will reduce audiences for culprit organisations.
- Start your own social media channels to counter bias. This will increase engagement for the community and help create its own narrative.
- Speak out against bias, write letters to key organisations, and to your local politicians. This will aid in correcting misinformation.
- Raise your concerns with the media directly and ask for community leaders to talk to the media, with a voice that can represent the community. This will increase engagement for the community.
- Work with media watchdog organisations to monitor coverage of India and Hindus. This will help counter perceived bias found in the survey.
- Continue writing complaints to both media organisations and media watchdogs such as Ofcom. This will aid in correcting misinformation and hold organisations to account.

British Media

- Respond to complaints seriously, holding journalists and producers accountable for their coverage if it fails to meet acceptable standards. This is a key part of upholding their commitment to journalistic integrity whilst ensuring freedom of the press.
- Engage with key organisations in the Hindu community to aid in reviewing coverage to ensure you have balanced perspectives. This will help address concerns found in the survey.
- Encourage balanced reporting not only within a topic but across all topics, every article does not have to cover the same subject. India is a large country and there is immense opportunity to cover a much wider range

of topics including, but not limited to, Yoga, Ayurveda, Meditation and Hindu Festivals. There are also plenty of sources that record news affecting Hindus [18].

- Cover articles from the British Hindu and British Indian perspective, not just what is happening globally from a single (i.e. India) perspective.

Policymakers

- Foster media diversity by promoting and educating awareness about all communities. This will help not only address the biases that were highlighted in this survey but tackle wider issues of prejudice.
- Lobby for the fairer use of the Licence fee.
- Raise the concern of your constituents and/or members with the media.
- Policymakers could also consider initiatives to promote education and awareness about India and Hinduism locally and regionally to bypass any possible media bias, and ensure the local population is still being heard through official lines.

Alternative sources

There appears to be a generational divide in the UK when it comes to news consumption.

According to Ofcom's report "News consumption in the UK" [19][20], older people tend to get their news through mainstream Television channels and state funded (via the TV Licence fee) corporations like the BBC. However younger people are now more open to a variety of views and sources on social media, including from news organisations from abroad.

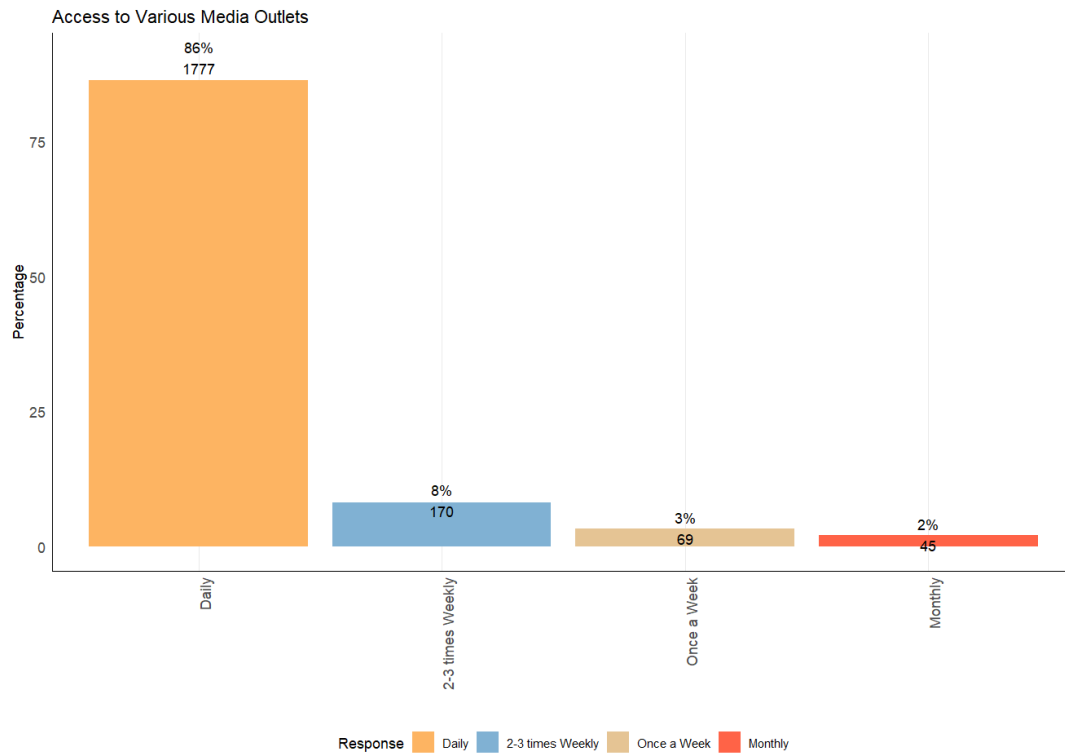
Traditionally, the chosen headline news items and topics for news channels appear to be similar at the top of each hour. This may suggest that there is a controlled or somewhat aligned narrative across all major UK broadcasters. With the changing shape of news consumption, readers and viewers now have alternative sources.

Social media may give readers and viewers a different reflection and view of what the other populations are thinking. This is something that was previously

not easily accessible. INSIGHT UK is keen to continue monitoring this changing landscape. The BHI community may already be seeking alternative sources based on their responses to the Licence fee.

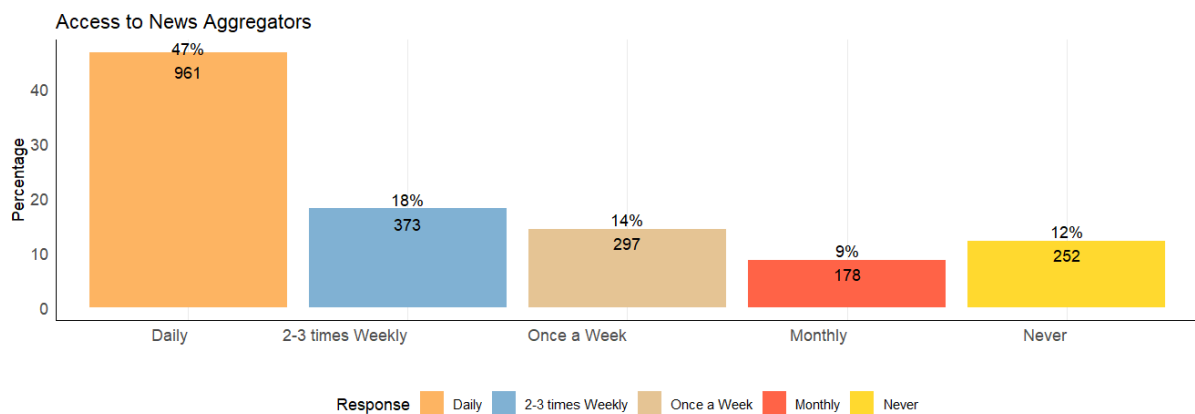
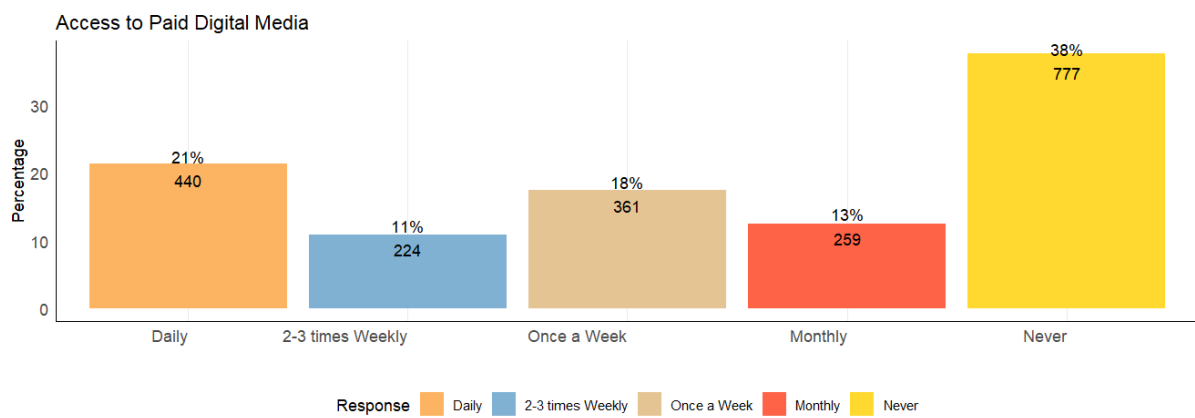
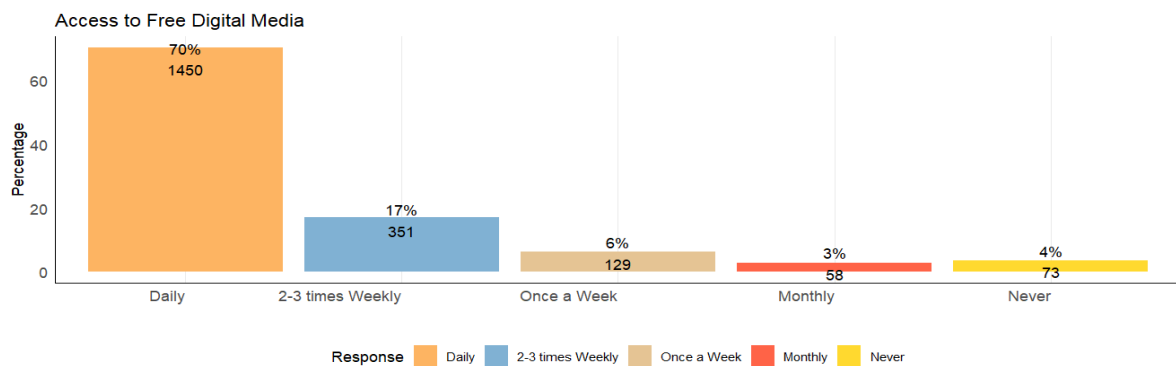
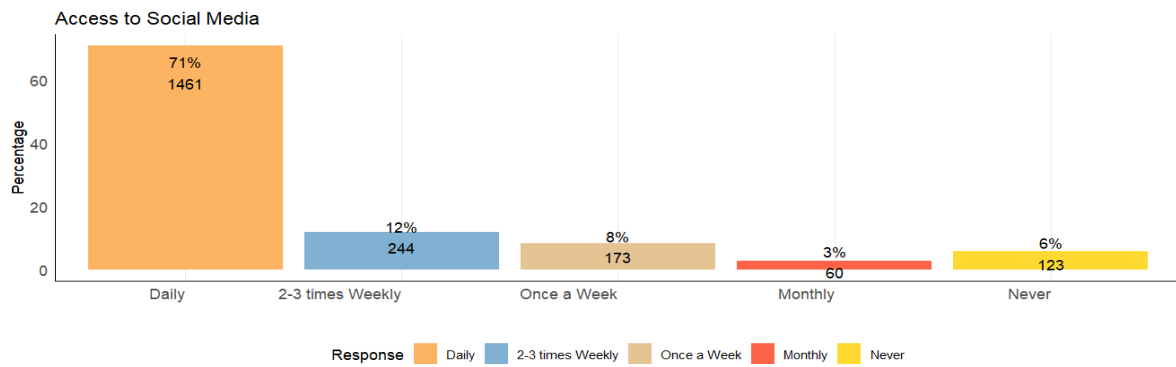
Appendix: Survey Results

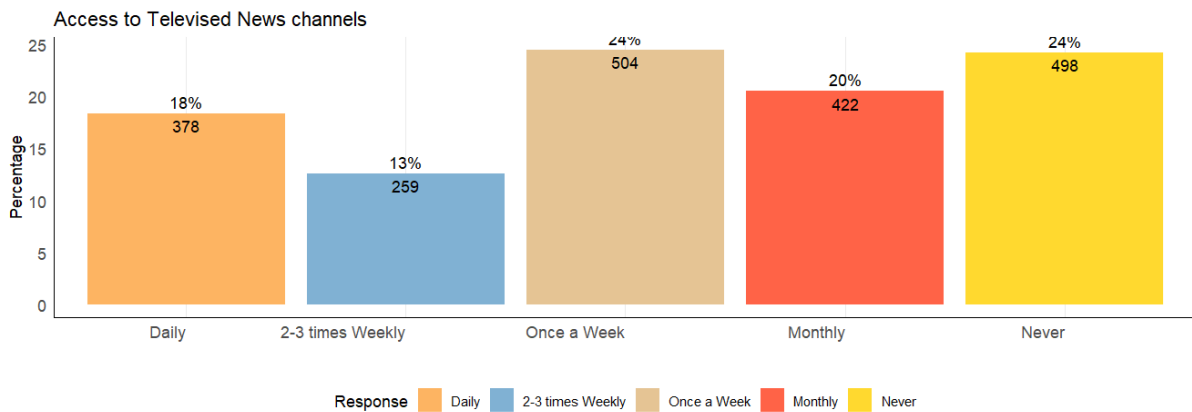
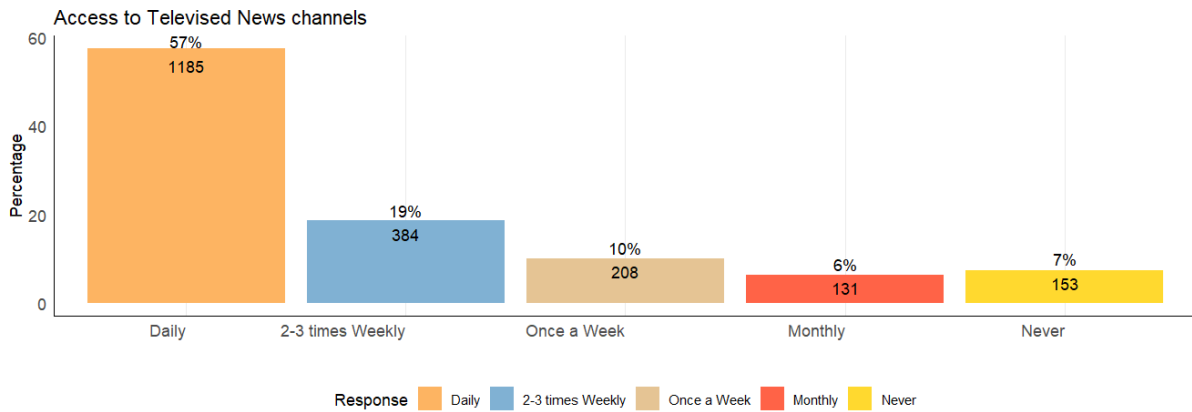
How often do you access news outlets in any form?



The data showed most respondents were regular news consumers.

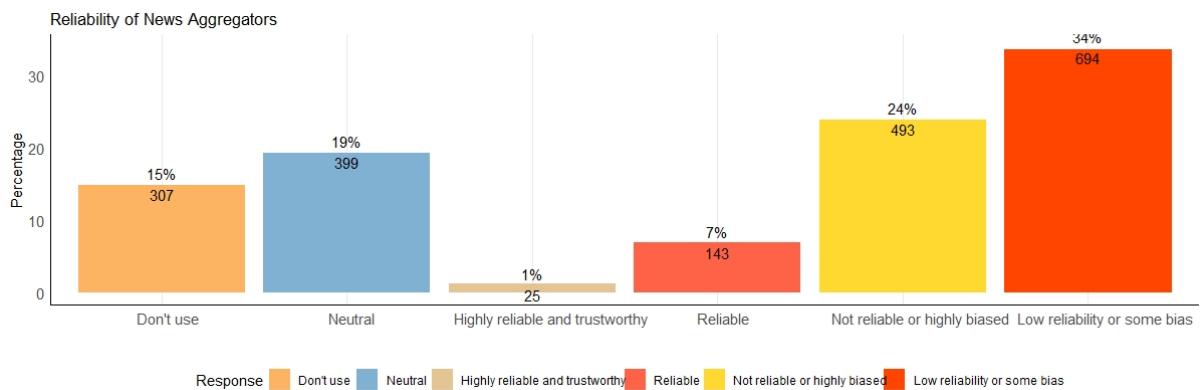
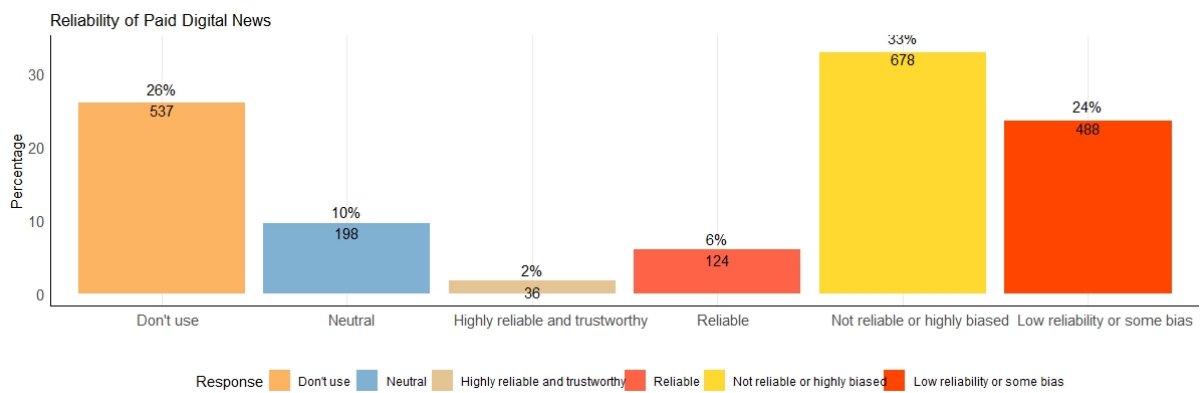
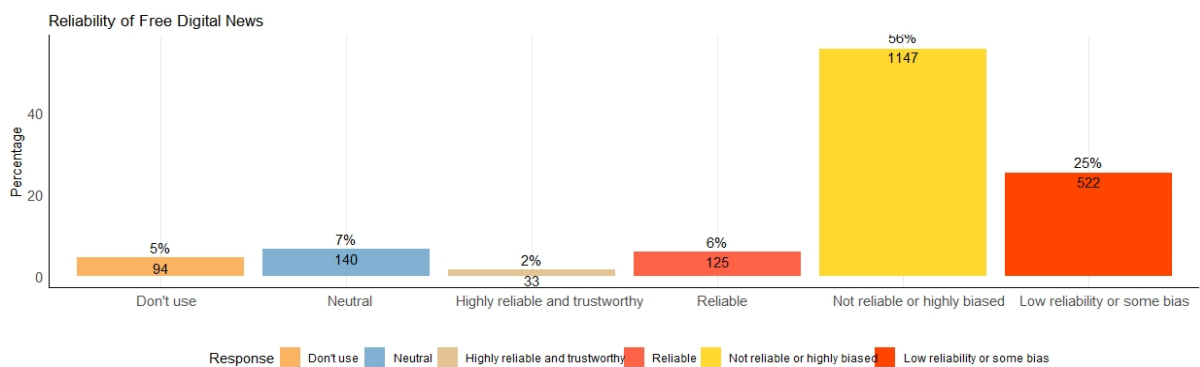
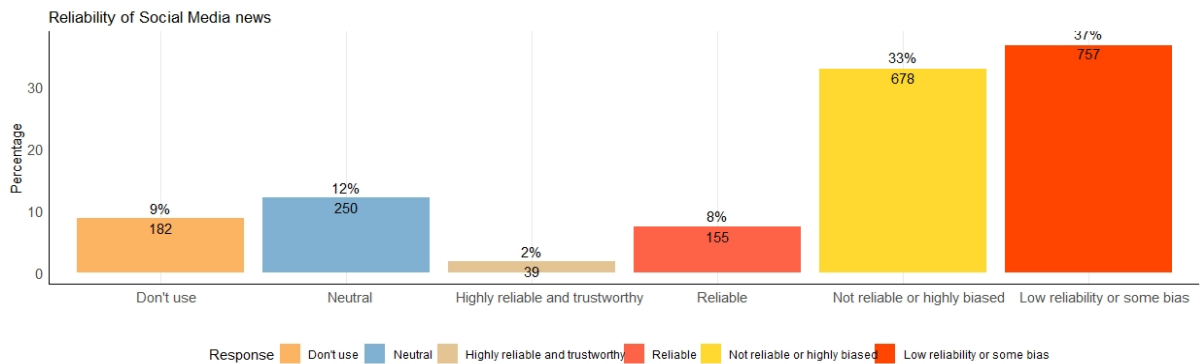
Rate on the scale as to how often you access news from the following types of media outlets.

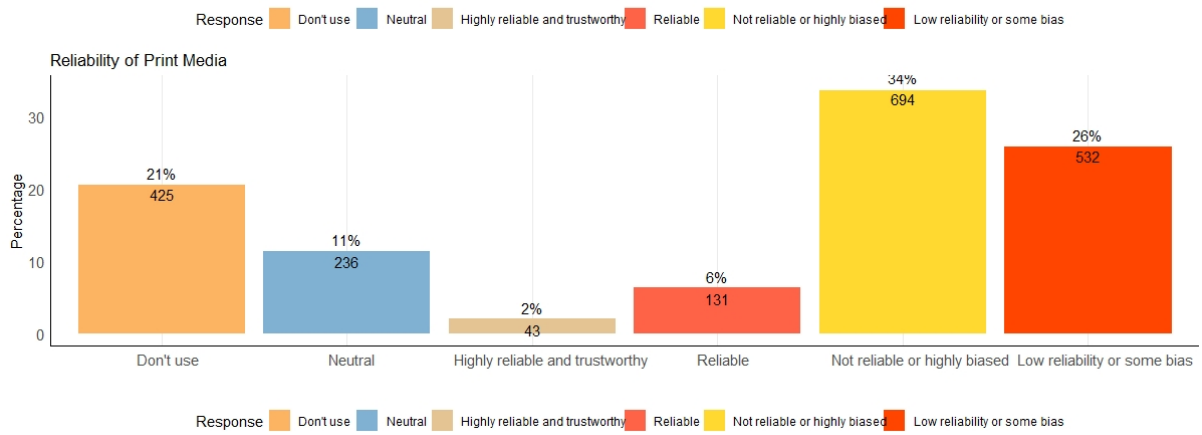
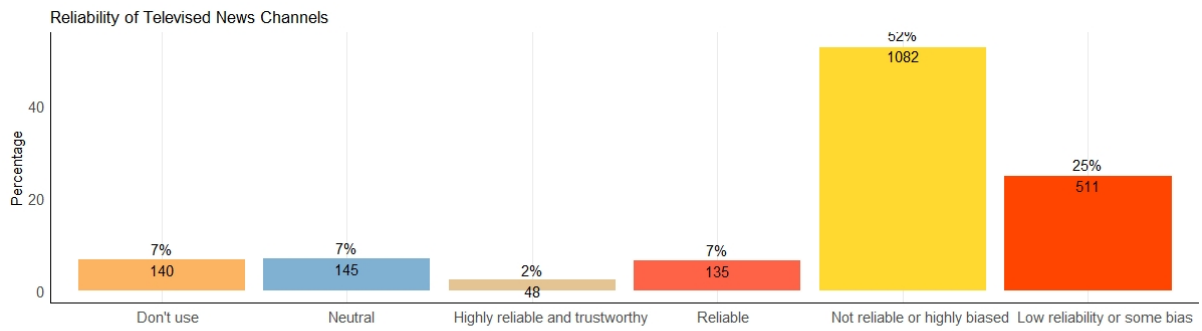




Social media and free digital media were most frequently used for news, referenced by the vast majority of respondents (1461 and 1450 respectively) that engaged with these forms of media. This is in contrast to television news channels, with only 1185 respondents consuming this media.

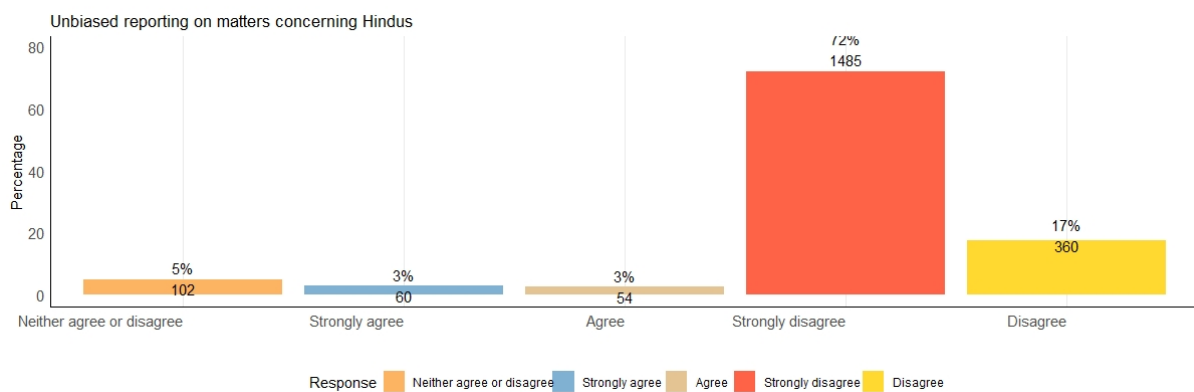
Rate on the scale as to how reliable you find these media format news coverage in general.





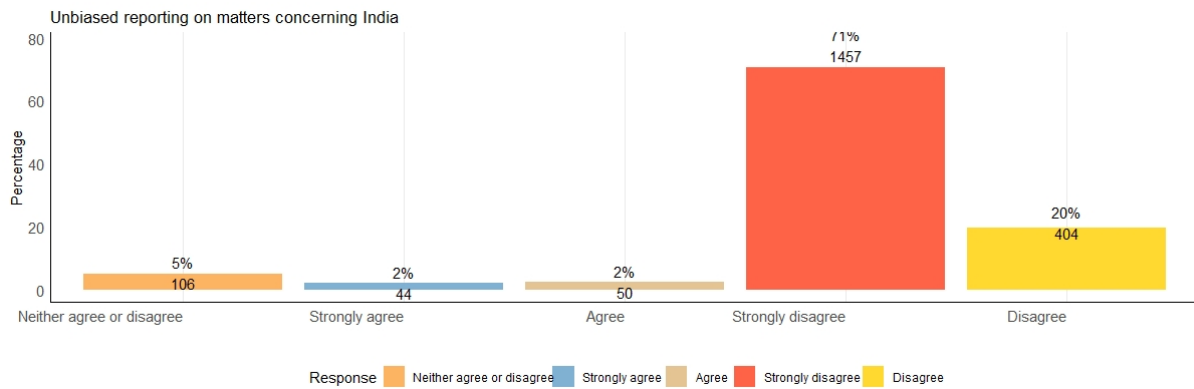
Television news channels were disproportionately seen as the least reliable of all media sources we asked respondents about.

The British media reports on matters concerning Hindus are fairly balanced (unbiased) and consistent with other faiths.



89% of respondents to our survey said they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that reporting on Hindus is balanced and consistent with other religions.

The British media reports on matters concerning India are fairly balanced (unbiased) and consistent with other countries.

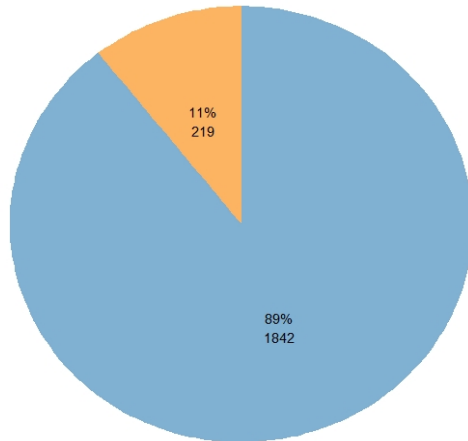


91% of respondents to our survey said they disagree or strongly disagree that reporting on India is balanced.

Do you support funding the BBC through the Licence fee?

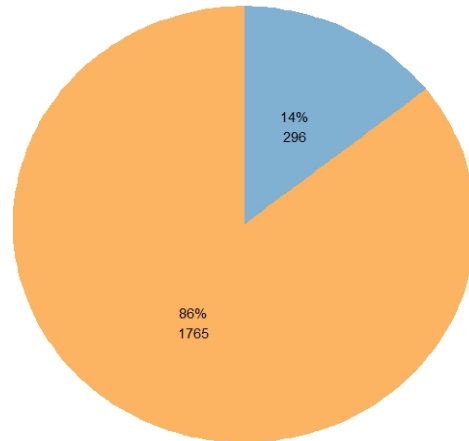
Do you think there should be a referendum to decriminalise the TV Licence fee?

Decriminalize TV Licence Fee



Response No Yes

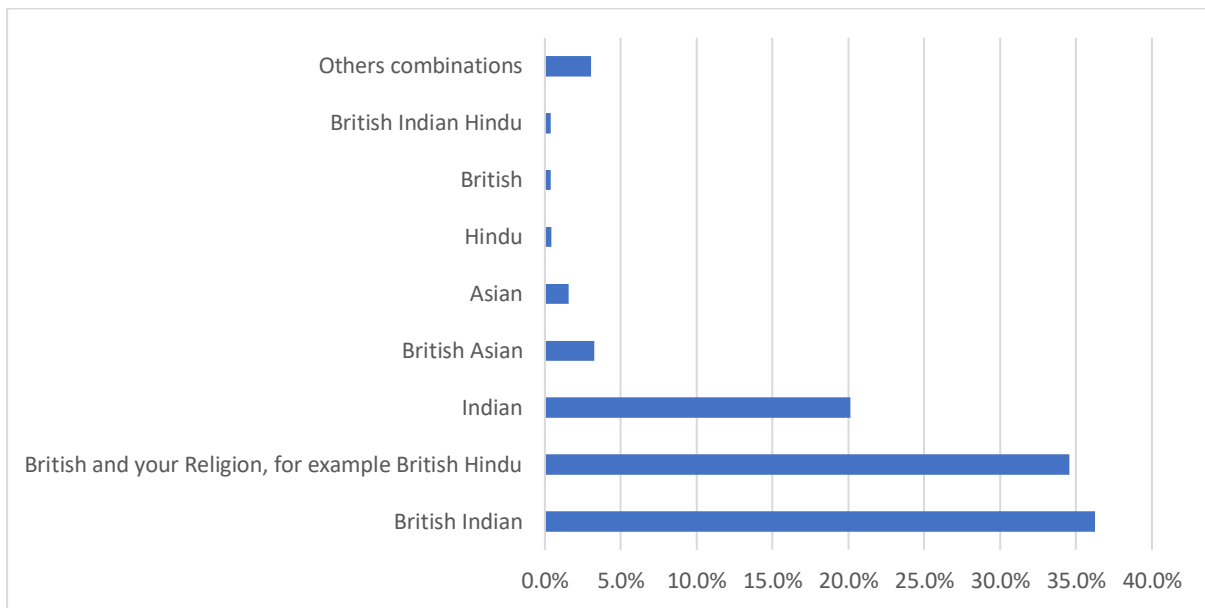
Support Funding through TV Licence Fee



Response No Yes

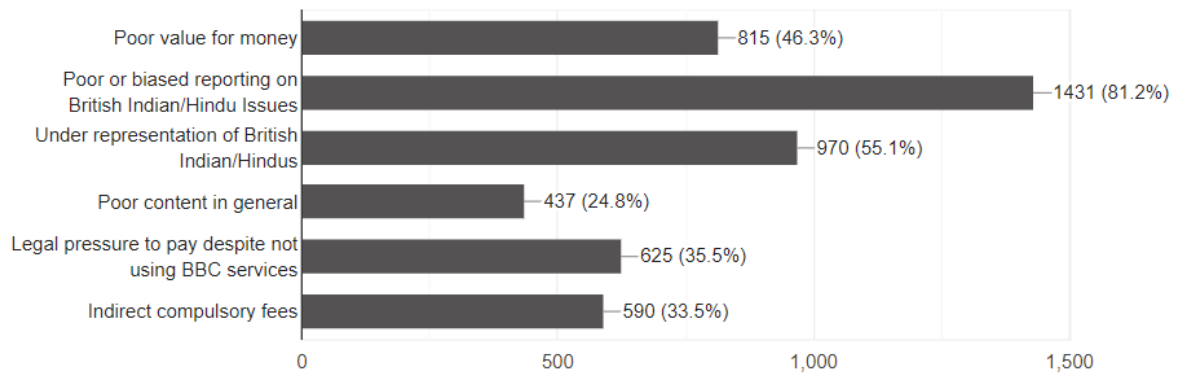
86% of respondents did not support the TV Licence fee and 89% felt that it should be decriminalised.

How would you like to be labelled by the media?



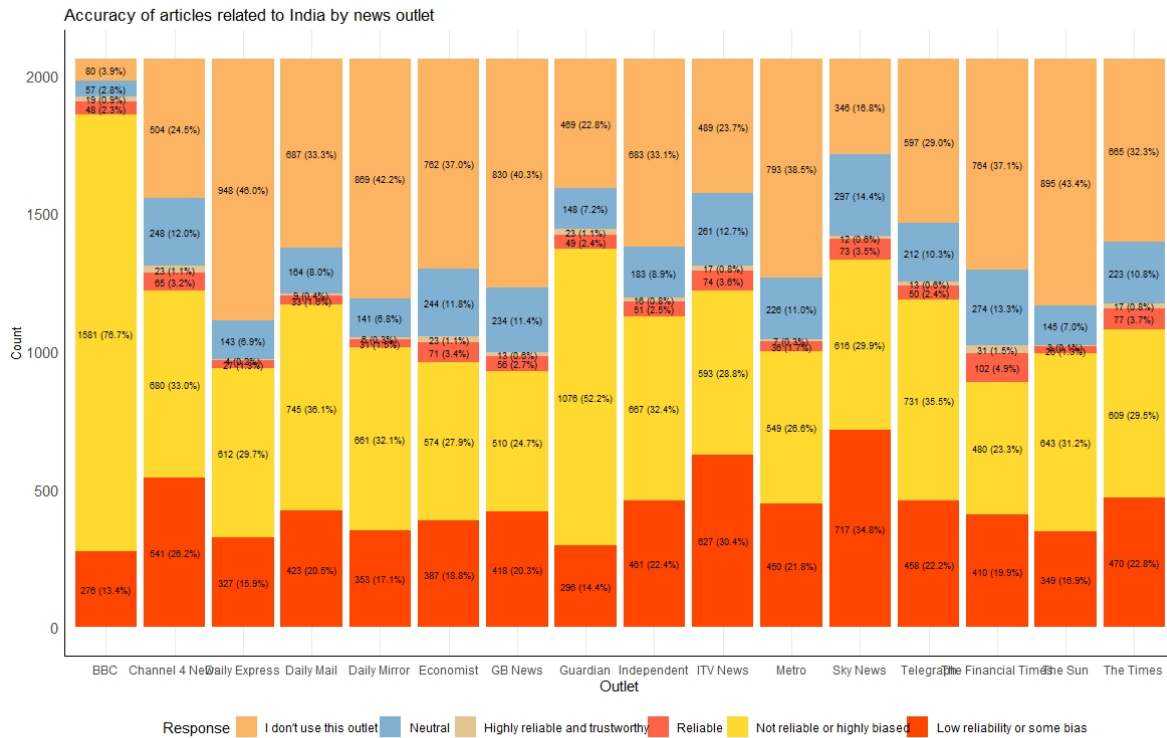
Respondents preferred to be labelled as British Indian (36.2%), British Hindu (34.5%) or Indian (20.1%) whilst only 4.9% preferred Asian or British Asian. This suggests that the BHI community rejects the 'Asian' label.

Why do you not support funding the BBC through the Licence fee?



The two main reasons for not wanting to support the BBC through the Licence fee were poor or biased coverage on the BHI community, followed by under representation.

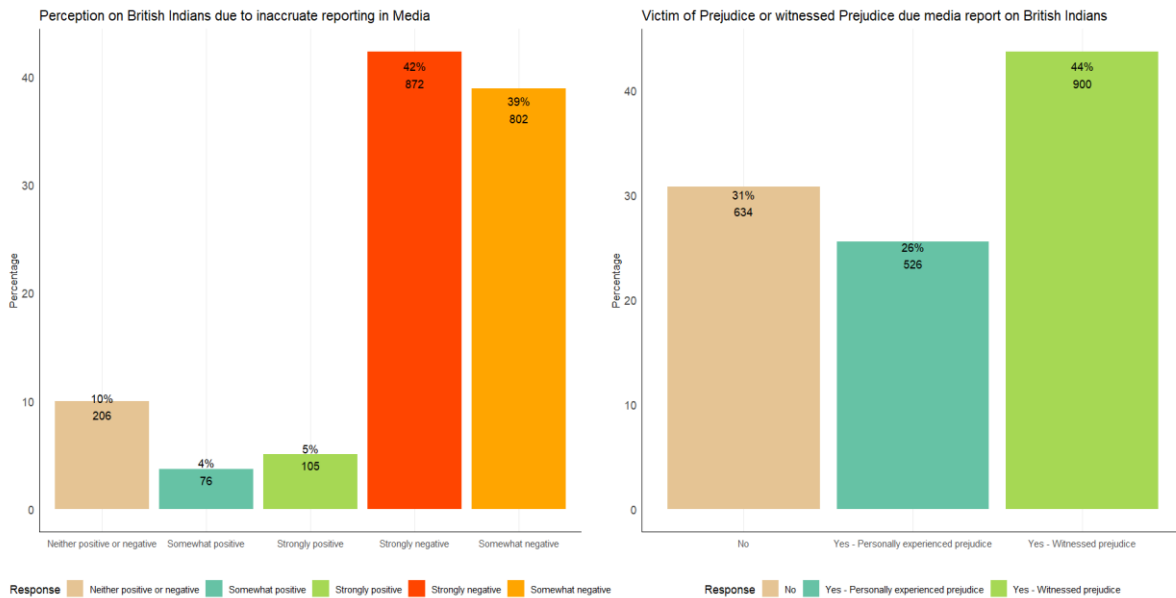
When it comes to articles related to the region of India, rate how accurately you feel events are portrayed by the following outlets.



90% of respondents felt the BBC was the worst offender with biased or highly biased reporting on India, with the Guardian coming second at 67%.

Do you think that how the media reports on India affects how British Indians are perceived. If so, how? In a positive or negative way?

Have you witnessed or experienced prejudice as a result of how the media reports on British Indians?



81% felt media reports on India results in negative perceptions of Indians. 70% of the respondents to our survey felt that media reporting of the BHI community has led to them being a victim, or witness, to prejudice.

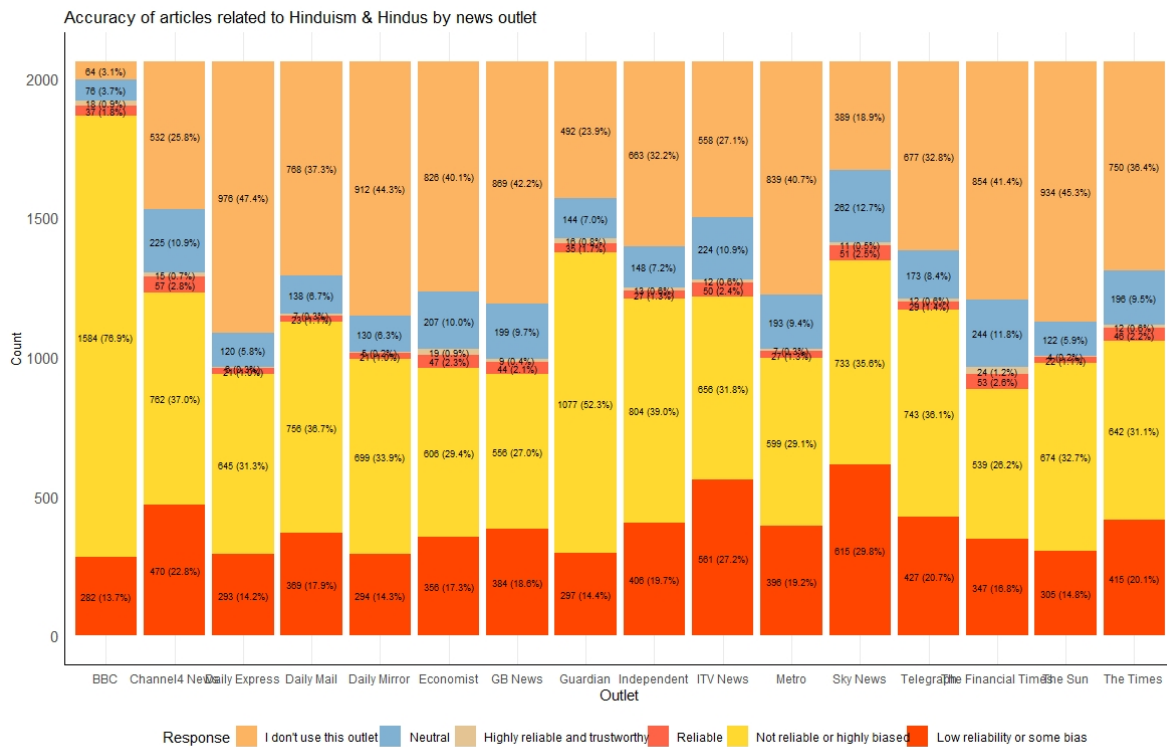
Why do you think media reporting on India creates negative perceptions of British Indians?

Various free text responses were given to this question, the most common responses were erroneous reporting.

Please give details of what prejudice you experienced.

Various free text responses were given to this question, common responses included witnessing hate on social media against Indians and being mistaken as Pakistani as a result of being branded as Asian.

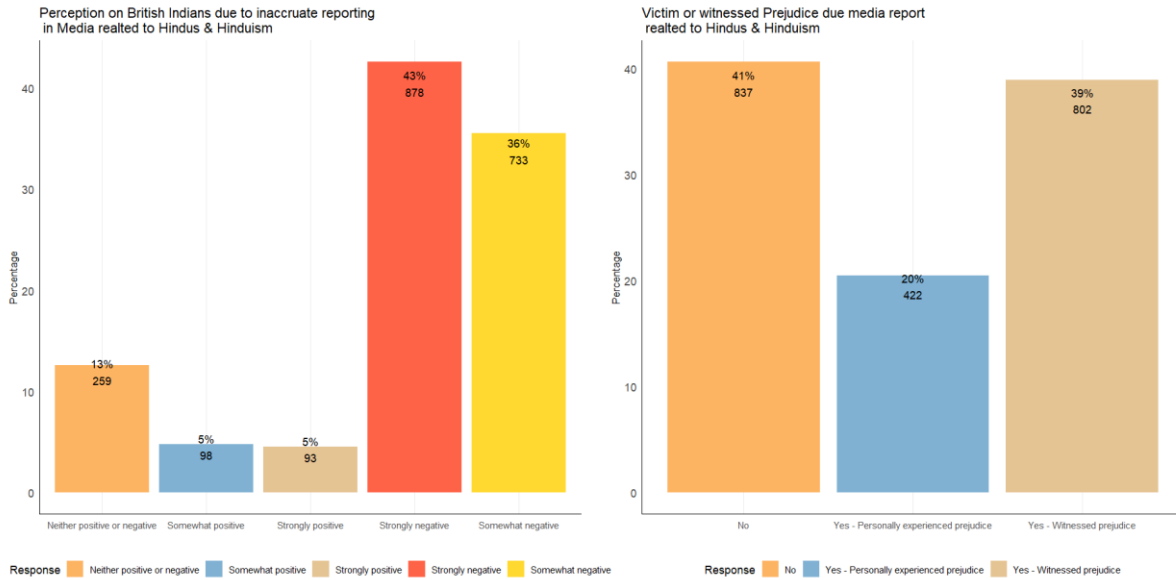
When it comes to articles related to Hindus and Hinduism, rate how accurately you feel events are portrayed by the following outlets.



91% of respondents felt the BBC was the worst offender with biased or highly biased reporting on Hindus and Hinduism, with the Guardian coming second at 67%. This data tallies very closely to the responses for coverage on India.

Why do you think media reporting creates negative perceptions of Hindus?

Have you witnessed or experienced prejudice as a result of how the media reports on Hindus?

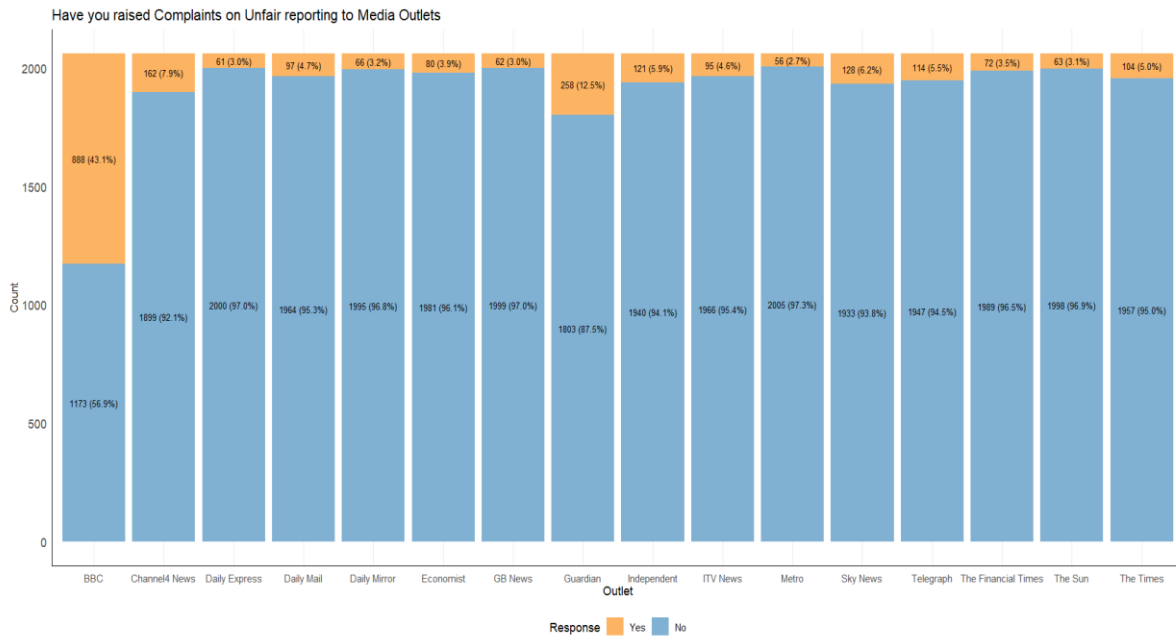


79% felt media reports on Hinduism results in negative perceptions of Hindus. 59% of the respondents to our survey felt that media reporting led to them being a victim, or witness, of prejudice against Hindus.

Please give details of what prejudice you experienced.

Various free text responses were given to this question, common responses included reporting is contributing to Hinduphobia and focus on cows, curry and caste.

Have you ever complained to the following outlets regarding factual errors, bias, unreliable sources or generally incorrect News?

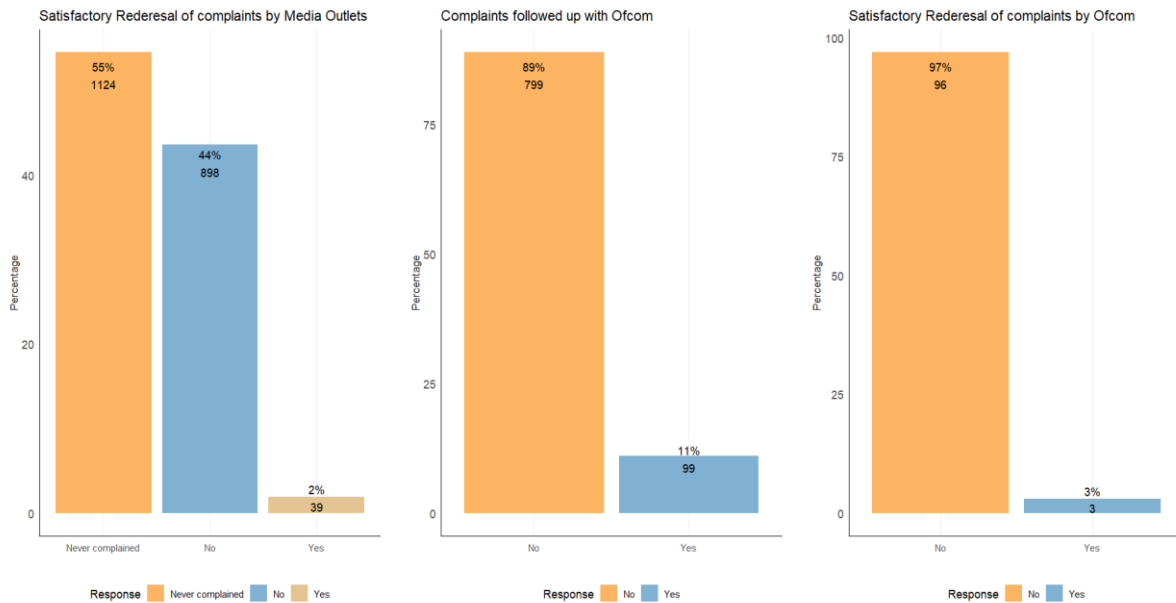


Substantially more complaints had gone to the BBC than any other outlet, with 43% of respondents complaining. The Guardian had the second most number of complaints at 12.5%. This data also tallies with both having the highest claims of bias.

Were you satisfied with their response and/or action?

If not, did you follow up by taking the complaint to Ofcom?

Were you satisfied with the response from Ofcom?



Only 2% of complainants were satisfied by the responses by the media outlet after a complaint. 11% took the complaint up with Ofcom, of which only 3% were satisfied with their response.

This data shows high levels of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of complaints processes in being able to address issues that are being raised.

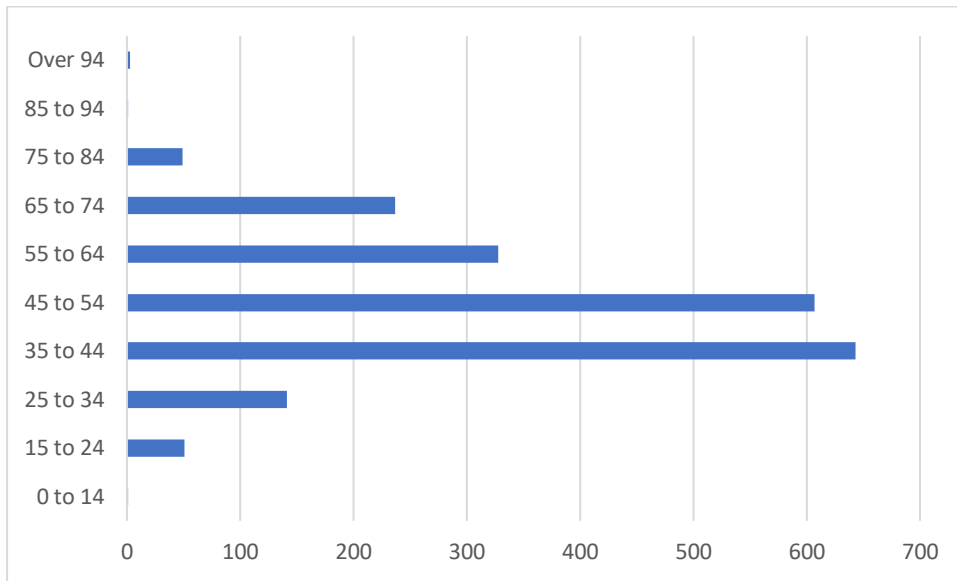
Can you describe your feelings in a few words as what you think the news media portrayal of Hindus and Indians results in?

Various free text responses, including anger, frustration and prejudice.

Do you have any suggestions to address misinformation or disinformation about Hindus and India in the media? Cite any reasons as to why you feel this exists.

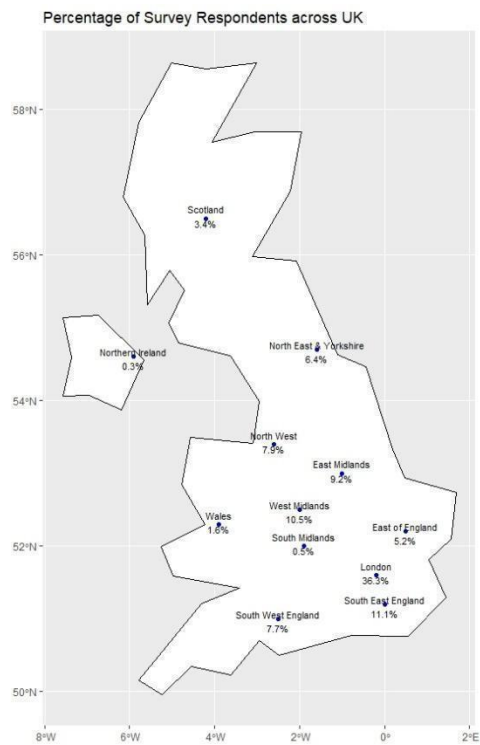
Various responses, including cancelling the Licence fee, changing left leaning reporters, more Hindu representation, decolonisation, removing the imperial and colonial hangover and using better sources.

What is your age group?



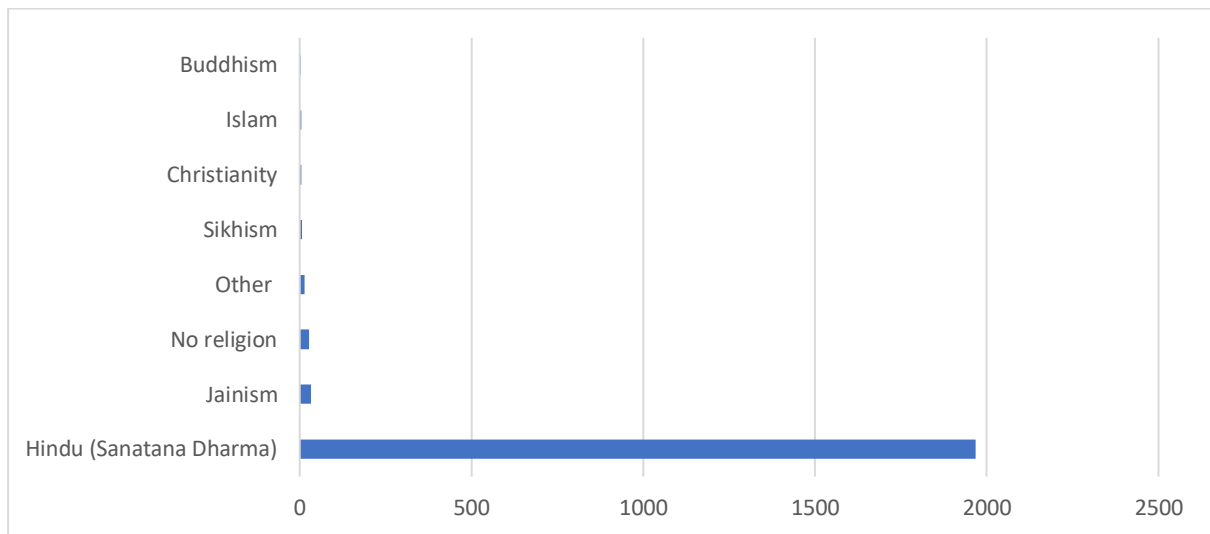
The survey received good enough representation across all age groups.

What area of the UK do you currently reside?



The survey received good representation across all regions considering where the Indian and Hindu population resides.

Which faith do you belong to?



What is your ethnicity?

Asian or British Asian - Indian	2004
Other ethnic groups - Any other ethnic group	18
Asian or British Asian - Mauritian	6
Asian or British Asian - Bangladeshi	5
Asian or British Asian - Nepali	5
Asian or British Asian - Pakistani	2
Asian or British Asian - Sri Lankan	2
White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1
Other ethnic groups - Arab	1
White - Any other White background	1
White - Irish	1
White - Roma	1

References

INSIGHT UK is not responsible for external links.

Alternative sources, including archived articles and video may also be publicly available online should any references be edited or taken down.

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>
2. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/mp/sample-size-calculator/>
3. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04334/SN04334.pdf>
4. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/britains-hindus-in-numbers-smart-rich-and-very-well-behaved-z8knkdrxh>
5. <https://ochs.org.uk/hindu-youth-research-project/>
6. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldbhc/128/128we52.htm>
7. <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/connecting-british-hindus>
8. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01439680802310324?journalCode=chjf20>
9. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/tv-radio/sikhs-and-hindus-accuse-bbc-of-promuslim-bias-922482.html>
10. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7536155/amp/Sikh-peer-quits-Today-programmes-Thought-Day-slot-35-years.html>
11. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/cogito-ergo-sum/the-anti-sikh-pro-islam-bigotry-of-the-bbc/>
12. <https://youtu.be/sN8ecyvea0s?t=40>
13. https://www.tiktok.com/@laav_patel/video/7190768653468437765
14. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/26/bbc-news-output-receives-lowest-impartiality-score-british-broadcaster/>
15. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18901196.bbc-ofcom-report-shows-corporations-impartiality-score-record-low/>
16. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/jan/16/bbc-licence-fee-to-be-abolished-in-2027-and-funding-frozen>

17. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/excel_doc/0030/239178/2-Audience-expectations-of-the-BBC-in-the-current-media-environment-data-tables.xlsx
18. <https://hindupost.in/dharma-religion/hindus-under-attack-roundup-week-118/>
19. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0027/241947/News-Consumption-in-the-UK-2022-report.pdf
20. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0025/222478/news-consumption-in-the-uk-overview-of-findings-2021.pdf
21. <https://www.asian-voice.com/Community/VHP-UK-hosts-its-first-British-Hindu-Conclave-of-2018>

ISBN 978-1-3999-5169-2



INSIGHT UK
~ SOCIAL MOVEMENT OF BRITISH HINDUS & INDIANS ~