TrustLens

A tool to help research communicators identify the best channels to reach their audiences

Looking through the Trust Lens

This tool explores which news and information sources are most used – and most trusted – by each of the UK's five trust segments identified in the **Trust in Scientists survey 2026.**



The UK has a fragmented media ecosystem

The different segments of the UK public use and trust different sources. Some place greater emphasis on online platforms, while others prefer mainstream media or a more balanced mix of news and information sources.



Reach the people you want to engage

Researchers must be better able to reach these different segments of the public – especially those with low trust who may be critical of scientists, disengaged from research or feel betrayed by institutions.



Make more informed choices for your communications

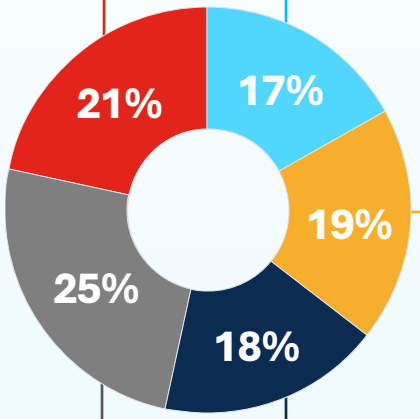
Looking at your audience through this Trust Lens may help you identify more effective channels for your communication and build stronger engagement with your research. Could your current plans be accidentally excluding people from your research communication?

The five trust groups that make up the UK

This tool is based on the findings from the Trust in Scientists survey 2026, carried out by Sense about Science and the Policy Institute at King's College London, administered by YouGov, and funded by Wellcome (8–11 May 2026).

Segmentation analysis was used to split 4,262 UK adults aged 18+ into groups with distinct positions on trust in scientists. Further details can be found in the technical appendix of the report.

This survey shows that in the UK, while trust in scientists is moderately strong (63%), this trust is fragile. The population differs in levels of engagement, trust, and feelings of betrayal by scientists and institutions.



Science Critics (21%) - 872 people

Lowest trust in every type of scientist measured. Most likely to believe scientists are dishonest or self-serving. Skew right-leaning and Reform-voting

Science Advocates (17%) - 795 people

Trust scientists almost universally and act on it – most likely to challenge misinformation, back science funding, and see scientists as sharing their values

Contented Trusters (19%) - 811 people

Trust scientists generally, but less convinced on climate scientists. Least likely to feel let down by leaders or institutions

Betrayed Trusters (18%) - 788 people

Trust scientists almost as much as advocates, but feel deeply let down by leaders and institutions, with distrust more about betrayal rather than scepticism

Disengaged Trusters (25%) - 996 people

Moderately trusts scientists but has the lowest engagement – most likely to have paid no attention to science news and least likely to act on it

User guide

Researchers and communications teams can use this tool to review their research communication plans and outputs for public audiences, and to reflect on whether current strategies are likely to deliver their goals.

How do I use the Trust Lens?

- Each slide shows a segment's most used outlets for news and information (rows 1 & 2) and their most trusted sources (row 3), ordered from most to least.
- The size of each icon is proportional to how much a segment uses that source (rows 1 & 2) and trusts that source (row 3).
- Exact values (percentages for usage and weighted average scores for trust) can be found beside each icon.

When should I use it?

a) When planning engagement and outreach to identify appropriate channels to reach audiences.

b) As a reflection tool on past engagements.

c) Alongside our TrustMapper tool, to identify how you could reach any under-represented trust groups.

Considerations & limitations

- This tool is not designed to be an exhaustive list of outlets, or imply that you should only use the top outlets for each segment.
- Outlets not listed here will still be very valuable, but make sure to consider their reach and trustworthiness.
- **The listed outlets are intentionally broad, capturing *where* each segment is consuming news.** It's worth thinking at the granular level for your communication – what parts of a news programme or which online communities are you going to target?

At a glance

BBC News leads usage across all segments. Family and friends are considered most trustworthy in three.

These outlet categories are intentionally broad, and each will need more investigation (e.g. which newspapers, online communities, or segments of a news programme?).

Segment	1st by usage	2nd	3rd	Most trusted
Science Advocates	BBC News **(68%)**	Newspapers & magazines **(29%)**	YouTube / Family & friends **(16% – tie)**	BBC News **(6.20)**
Contented Trusters	BBC News **(66%)**	Newspapers & magazines **(27%)**	Sky News **(18%)**	BBC News **(6.13)**
Betrayed Trusters	BBC News **(54%)**	Newspapers & magazines **(20%)**	Sky / ITV / YouTube / Facebook / Family & friends **(17% – tie)**	Family & friends **(5.23)**
Disengaged Trusters	BBC News **(50%)**	ITV News **(23%)**	Newspapers & magazines **(16%)**	Family & friends **(5.91)**
Science Critics	BBC News **(26%)**	YouTube **(20%)**	Facebook / GB News **(17% – tie)**	Family & friends **(5.10)**

Usage shows the top three media sources selected for news. Trust is the weighted average trust score (0–10). Ties are shown.

The UK population

BBC News reaches more people than any other source, but **family and friends** are the most trusted for news and information

Media Usage

BBC News	Newspapers & magazines	ITV News	YouTube	Sky News	GB News	Channel 4 News
52%	21%	16%	15%	15%	9%	8%

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

Facebook	Family & friends	Instagram	X / Twitter	TikTok	Podcasts	Reddit	WhatsApp	Bluesky	Telegram	Truth Social
15%	13%	11%	8%	7%	6%	5%	5%	1%	1%	0%

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends	BBC News	Channel 4 News	ITV News	Sky News
5.47	5.00	4.99	4.97	4.57

Science Advocates

Heaviest mainstream news diet, with **BBC News** trusted above other sources and **Instagram** the most used social media source for news

Media Usage

68%	29%	16%	14%	12%	11%	2%
BBC News	Newspapers & magazines	YouTube	Sky News	Channel 4 News	ITV News	GB News

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

16%	14%	11%	11%	10%	9%	6%	5%	4%	1%	0%
Facebook	Instagram	Podcasts	Reddit	Facebook	X / Twitter	TikTok	WhatsApp	Bluesky	Telegram	Truth Social

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
BBC News 6.20	Channel 4 News 6.11	ITV News 5.59	Family & friends 5.30	Newspapers & magazines 5.02

Contented Trusters

Broadcast-first news diet, with **BBC News** the most trusted source and **Facebook** the main social channel

Media Usage

66%	27%	18%	15%	13%	8%	7%
BBC News	Newspapers & magazines	Sky News	ITV News	YouTube	GB News	Channel 4 News

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

15%	14%	11%	7%	7%	5%	5%	5%	1%	0%	0%
Facebook	Family & friends	Instagram	X / Twitter	TikTok	Podcasts	Reddit	WhatsApp	Bluesky	Telegram	Truth Social

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
BBC News 6.13	Channel 4 News 5.86	ITV News 5.99	Family & friends 5.80	Sky News 5.53

Betrayed Trusters

A broad news diet, with strong use of traditional broadcast media, and the most active on **Facebook**, yet **family & friends** outrank every outlet on trust

Media Usage

BBC News	Newspapers & magazines	ITV News	YouTube	Sky News	Channel 4 News	GB News
54%	20%	17%	17%	17%	11%	7%

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

Facebook	Family & friends	Instagram	X / Twitter	TikTok	Podcasts	Reddit	WhatsApp	Bluesky	Telegram	Truth Social
17%	17%	15%	10%	10%	7%	7%	5%	1%	0%	0%

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends	Channel 4 News	BBC News	ITV News	Sky News
5.23	4.92	4.86	4.82	4.34

Disengaged Trusters

Facebook above **Instagram** for news but the lightest social media diet overall, and trusting **family & friends** over any outlet

Media Usage

BBC News	ITV News	Newspaper & magazines	Sky News	YouTube	GB News	Channel 4 News
50%	23%	16%	15%	9%	8%	5%

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

Facebook	Family & friends	Instagram	TikTok	WhatsApp	X / Twitter	Podcasts	Reddit	Bluesky	Telegram	Truth Social
15%	11%	9%	6%	5%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends	ITV News	BBC News	Channel 4 News	Sky News
5.91	5.27	5.17	4.95	4.94

Science Critics

Lightest news diet of any segment, and the only one where **GB News** and **YouTube** outrank most broadcasters

Media Usage

26%	20%	17%	15%	14%	12%	5%
BBC News	YouTube	GB News	ITV News	Newspapers & magazines	Sky News	Channel 4 News

Social Media + Personal Source Usage

17%	11%	10%	10%	8%	7%	5%	3%	1%	1%	0%
Facebook	X / Twitter	Family & friends	Instagram	WhatsApp	TikTok	Podcasts	Reddit	Telegram	Truth Social	Bluesky

Most Trusted Sources

1	2	3	4	5
5.10	3.67	3.24	3.16	3.10
Family & friends	GB News	Online news sites & platforms	ITV News	Channel 4 News

Resources and links

Thinking about the communications ecosystem is only the first step of many. Each tile below links to resources that may give more context on the trust segments, support your messaging, and help you to consider your plans for engagement.

Trust in Scientists Survey 2026

King's College London | Sense about Science | Wellcome

Full results of the survey with executive summary, data visualisations, and context. Learn about the drivers of trust, demographics of different trust segments, and what could be done to improve trust in scientists in the UK.

Communicating your research results

The Health Foundation

Use this to adapt and present your findings to audiences; it includes templates for creating messages and planning your communications.

Scientific trustworthiness on social media

RAND Europe & Wellcome Trust – Public Trust in Science

Maintaining public trust in science and scientists requires attention at the individual, institutional, and system levels. This study explores how scientists and institutions can demonstrate scientific trustworthiness, and how these signals are recognised, negotiated or challenged by social media audiences.

Guide to being a media officer

Stempra

Stempra's guide on how to communicate responsibly draws on the essentials of good research communication, and gives support on how to pitch, target, and get your story out there

Trustworthy Communications

senseaboutscience.org
hello@senseaboutscience.org

Find out more:

Trustworthy Communication and Engagement