



U.S. AGENCY FOR
GLOBAL MEDIA

UNITED STATES
BROADCASTING
BOARD OF
GOVERNORS

USAGM Research & Evaluation



APPROACH TO RESEARCH

For any media organization, understanding the audience is critical to developing programming that is appealing and impactful. USAGM has a unique challenge in that our audiences are located in more than 100 countries with diverse specialized media environments. Moreover, as a U.S. government agency, USAGM has an obligation to be a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars and demonstrate the effectiveness of our programs to Congress and other stakeholders.

USAGM collects research data to understand the composition of our audiences, how they consume media in general, how and how often they consume USAGM media, what topics are appealing to them, and whether our programming is influential.

This information is collected via extensive surveys in our markets conducted by reputable research firms that contract with the agency. The surveys are in-person (or by phone in places like Iran where researchers are unable to operate freely), and are nationally representative. For example, a sample survey size in a country is 1,500–2,000 completed interviews representative of urban/rural audiences, male and female audiences, and different age groups. Once data are collected, USAGM and the research directors at its networks review and vet the data for accuracy and reliability before accepting audience or impact measurements.

Survey research is augmented by measurements of our digital and social media platforms, which offer almost instantaneous feedback on the performance of USAGM media online. USAGM is undertaking a large data visualization project to better utilize the information we receive from these platforms and enable these data to inform editorial decisions in USAGM networks for better targeting of audiences.

All of this research is unclassified, and available to interagency partners upon request. USAGM is currently building a portal for interagency colleagues to more easily access our data.

USAGM SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Survey Data:

USAGM Surveys
Omnibus Surveys
Ratings Data

Digital Metrics:

Website Analytics
Social Media Analytics (from platforms and third-party services)
Digital Ratings and Comparison Tools

Anecdotal:

Evidence on guest appearances, impact stories, news pick-ups, government reactions, etc.

Other:

Databases (CRM, etc.)
Internal quality review

IMPACT MODEL

USAGM has developed an Impact Model to serve as a framework for collecting data on our audiences and measuring the effectiveness of our media programming. The Impact Model is comprised of over 30 indicators organized around the Agency's mission: to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. Core indicators (in red) are consistently applied across markets. Optional indicators (in blue) are applied in the markets where they are relevant.

	GOALS	INDICATORS — HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT
Inform	Goal: Reach Target Audiences	Weekly reach (among general population) Weekly digital visits Weekly reach among vernacular speakers Weekly reach among target segment (women, youth, influential, online influential, etc.) Weekly reach among population with access to broadcast platform Alternative reach indicators for denied areas (e.g. results of refugee or traveler surveys) Additional digital reach indicators (e.g. deliberate video views)
	Goal: Provide Value	Exceptional (unique) information Trustworthiness/credibility Perceived level of interest Broadcast quality (audience) Objective information Recognition of quality or prestige of service
Engage/Connect	Goal: Engage Target Audiences	Digital engagement actions Shared something from broadcaster weekly Likely to recommend broadcaster to others Audience participation/facilitate dialogue among audience Inspired user to learn more about a topic Expanded internet access
	Goal: Engage/Connect Media Market	Citizen journalism submissions Number of affiliates Content co-creation with affiliates Capacity building Content downloaded by affiliates
	Goal: Create Loyalty	Audience likely to continue to use Appointment listening/viewing Deliberate digital brand usage News source preference
Be Influential	Goal: Be Influential with People	Increased understanding of current events Helped users form opinions on important topics Anecdotes about impact related by audiences or services Increased understanding of U.S. society Increased understanding of U.S. foreign policy
	Goal: Be Influential with Media	Driving the news agenda/high-profile news pickups Improvements in journalistic practices Influence on media operators
	Goal: Be Influential with Governments	Attention (positive or negative) from public officials

LIMITATIONS ON SURVEY DATA

USAGM's audience and impact research faces several limitations, primarily due to restrictions on access to our markets. USAGM is not able to conduct representative survey research on its audiences in North Korea, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Eritrea, or Tibet. For some of these cases, USAGM conducts traveler or defector surveys in a third country to collect information on our audiences and media use habits. These reports offer qualitative information on our impact in these restricted areas.

USAGM is also unable to conduct nationally representative surveys in countries with active conflict or in which a significant part of the country is inaccessible. These markets include Syria, Yemen, parts of Somalia, and Eastern Ukraine.

The restrictive political and media environments of other countries require USAGM to modify its research techniques. In these markets, which include Iran and Uzbekistan, researchers use landline and mobile phones to conduct nationally representative surveys.

REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Each year, USAGM is required to report to Congress on the fulfillment of its mission. The Performance and Accountability Report summarizes USAGM's progress on each impact objective. Below is an excerpt from the FY18 report on our top indicators:

Impact Performance Goal 1.1: Reach significant audiences.

Measured Weekly Audience (in millions)	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Target	FY 2019 Actual
USAGM	226	278	278	345	337	350
VOA	187.7	236.6	236.8	275.2	265.0	280.9
RFE/RL	23.6	26.9	25.8	33.9	34.2	37.6
RFA	7.5	6.4	6.9	50.7	49.5	50.7
MBN	25.7	27.5	25.7	24.7	27.0	24.3
OCB	NA	NA	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0

Notes:

- FY 2019 targets are from the FY 2020 Congressional Budget Request and were based on significant proposed budget decreases.
- Audience estimates do not include data for Eritrea, North Korea, Oman, or Tibetan and Uyghur regions of China, because political risk has made it impossible to carry out representative surveys in the target regions. Restricted areas represent a significant portion of the countries and regions targeted by RFA language services.

Impact Performance Goal 1.2: Provide programming that audiences find trustworthy.

Program Credibility ¹ – percentage of weekly audience who consider information to be very or somewhat trustworthy	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Target	FY 2019 Actual
	Simple average		Weighted average			
VOA	86	86	83	84	82	83
RFE/RL	88	87	80	77	77	73
RFA	84	86	93	77	77	77
MBN	86	82	80	80	80	75
OCB	NA	NA	97	97	100	97

1 Beginning with FY 2017, the scores for program credibility are weighted averages, based on audience size, of all program credibility scores obtained by an entity. In previous years, these scores were simple averages of the scores by country. Scores from FY 2016 and prior years are not comparable to the FY 2017 and subsequent scores. The FY 2017 weighted averages were first reported in the performance section of the FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification.

LANGUAGE SERVICE REVIEW

The annual Language Service Review (LSR) is a comprehensive internal assessment of the languages in which USAGM networks broadcast. The process fulfills the Congressional mandate in the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 to “review, evaluate, and determine, at least annually, after consultation with the Secretary of State, the addition or deletion of language services.”

USAGM analyzes data in key areas that shape priorities, including press freedom, political freedom, civil liberties, economic freedom, instability, and human development indices from nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, and the United Nations Development Programme). These indicators are combined into a prioritization index that enables USAGM to evaluate changing conditions worldwide. In recent years, LSR has incorporated into this prioritization the State Department’s global ranking of USAGM language services relative to U.S. foreign policy priorities.

As part of the LSR, USAGM considers how the Agency’s mission is carried out by the networks in each target country and region. Informed by research and analysis on competitive landscapes, USAGM language services set priority goals for the coming year.

The results of this strategy review include summaries of the political context, media environments, target audiences, foreign policy elements, and USAGM objectives in each country and region. It also includes goals and performance targets, based on the Impact Model, for each USAGM target area for the fiscal year. Language and support services will be measured on progress toward these goals and targets, giving USAGM an opportunity to define success, monitor performance, and take corrective actions when goals are not met.

In addition to the LSR, USAGM networks conduct yearly reviews of their language services and their programming in order to maintain high quality broadcasts and to help the language services progress toward their strategic goals.



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