



Government urged to protect Traditional TV as report warns 5.5 million premises will lack high-speed broadband by 2040

- A new report by EY has found that over 5.5 million UK premises (18% of the total) are predicted to be without a high-speed broadband subscription in 2040;
- This comes despite the Government targeting near universal coverage by 2030 - but the report shows that uptake is another matter entirely;
- Broadcast 2040+ coalition argues that data shows broadcast services must be protected - otherwise vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, rural communities and low-income households will be the hardest hit.

[13th February, London]: 5.5 million households in the UK will struggle to watch their favourite TV shows unless Traditional TV is protected to 2040 and beyond campaigners warn today. The call comes as consultancy firm EY publishes new analysis on the feasibility of broadband networks serving as the only mechanism for universal TV services.

Despite the Government's 99% broadband coverage goal for 2030, the report predicts that there will still be a significant gap in broadband uptake ten years later in 2040. The report demonstrates that unless action is taken to protect traditional free-to-air broadcast services there is a potential to exclude those who are least likely to take up a high speed broadband subscription from TV programming including live sports, news, and entertainment. This includes vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled individuals, low-income households, and rural communities.

The report's statistical analysis identified the key barriers to broadband take-up and how this will impact access to universal TV services in 2040. Notably:

- Over 5.5m UK premises (18%) are predicted to be without a high-speed broadband subscription by 2040, despite the government's commitment to 99% broadband coverage by 2030.
- The regions with the highest proportion of premises without high-speed broadband in 2040 are predicted to be Northern Ireland (24%), North East England (21%), Yorkshire & the Humber (20%), North West England (19%), Scotland (19%) and Wales (19%).
- The uptake of high-speed broadband is only set to increase by 10% between 2022 and 2040, with more than just connectivity being a barrier to individuals adopting high-speed broadband.
- Those forecast to be without high-speed broadband will disproportionately be vulnerable groups in society, such as the elderly, disabled and low-income households.
- Ofcom, cited in the House of Lords Report on Digital Exclusion (2023), says 31% of people aged 65+ do not currently use the internet at home.
- Ofcom reported that around one-in-ten households (2.4 million UK households) find it difficult to afford their broadband service (Ofcom Communications Affordability Tracker, October 2023).

The Government's current policy only guarantees broadcast TV services are protected until the early 2030s. The communications regulator OFCOM is currently undertaking a review as to whether this cut-off date should be extended. The Broadcast 2040+ campaign is therefore calling on the Government to commit publicly to safeguarding traditional TV and radio services to 2040 and beyond.



Elizabeth Anderson, CEO of the Digital Poverty Alliance and part of the Broadcast 2040+ coalition said:

"The Broadcast 2040+ campaign's mission to safeguard the future of broadcast TV and radio is critical to helping bridge the digital divide that the UK faces. As today's report makes clear, unless we protect these platforms, we risk putting 5.5 million households at greater risk of digital exclusion and the harms that this will cause. The government must take urgent and decisive action to ensure vulnerable people across the nation are protected and no one is left behind."

Kerry, Booth, chief executive of the Rural Services Network said:

"We welcome today's report and continue to champion the Broadcast 2040+ Campaign's work to safeguard the future of Broadcast TV and radio

"In a world moving to 'digital by default' we need to ensure that we are not leaving anyone behind. As it stands, there is a risk that our rural residents with poor access to gigabit broadband connection, and poor mobile telephone connectivity, will be excluded from being able to watch television in their own homes.

"We must ensure that Government policy suits the needs of rural areas and doesn't leave rural residents at a disadvantage."

Colin Browne from the Voice of Listener & Viewer said:

"It is crucial that all citizens in the UK are able to enjoy high quality, informative and diverse programming, available on a universal basis. This report indicates very clearly that terrestrial TV and radio will continue to have an essential role for many in our country for a very long time."

Citizens Advice Cornwall Communications Officer, Wailim Wong, said:

"We are concerned about the issues highlighted in the EY report. The disparities between coverage and actual usage underscore a pressing issue that directly impacts the most vulnerable members of our community, including the elderly, disabled and those in rural areas who make-up a large proportion of people who come to see us for help.

"The digital divide poses significant challenges, and the projected figures for the South West are disheartening. This is not just an issue of internet access; it's about ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities for all, and ensuring no one is unplugged from society.

"It's more clear than ever that traditional broadcast TV and radio will continue to play a vital role in society for many years to come, and extension of protection for these services beyond 2034 is required."

Dr Michelle Cooper MBE, Chief Executive of County Durham Community Foundation said:

"This report is worrying, and the fact that the North East is predicted to have the lowest take up of broadband in 2040 of all the English regions is even more concerning. We just can't afford to be left behind. More needs to be done to bridge the digital divide and this is not just an issue of internet access; it's about ensuring inclusivity, equal opportunities for all, and ensuring no one is unplugged from education and society. It's clearer than ever that traditional broadcast TV and radio will continue to play a vital role in this for many years to come, and extension of protection for these services beyond 2034 is required."



David Coulson, Partner, Economic Advisory at EY commented:

“The EY study indicates that, despite widespread broadband coverage, universal access for all viewers should not be taken for granted. It is crucial those least likely to have high speed broadband in 2040 continue to have access to television, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled individuals, low-income households, and rural communities.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

The full report entitled “TV Distribution After 2034” can be found [here](#).

The report was commissioned by Arqiva, a broadcast infrastructure company and a member of the Broadcast 2040+ coalition.

[Regional high-speed broadband take-up (actual and forecast)]

Region	2022 Actual	2035 Forecast	2040 Forecast
Northern Ireland	66%	75%	76%
Wales	68%	79%	81%
Scotland	68%	80%	81%
Southwest	69%	81%	83%
Yorkshire and The Humber	70%	78%	80%
Northeast	71%	78%	79%
Northwest	72%	80%	81%
West Midlands	72%	80%	82%
East Midlands	74%	82%	83%
East	76%	83%	84%
Southeast	76%	83%	84%
London	77%	82%	83%
UK	72%	81%	82%

Reports citing Ofcom’s findings include; House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee Report on Digital Exclusion ([June 2023](#)); and Ofcom Digital Exclusion review ([March 2022](#)).

About EY

Ernst & Young Global Limited, trade name EY, is a multinational professional services partnership. EY is one of the largest professional services networks in the world. It primarily provides assurance, tax, information technology services (including managed services in areas like Cybersecurity, Cloud, Digital Transformation and AI), consulting, and advisory services to its clients.

About Broadcast 2040+

The Broadcast 2040+ campaign brings together over 30 organisations with one key ask: that the UK government provide a public commitment to safeguarding broadcast TV and radio to 2040 and beyond. Under the government’s current policy, these services are only guaranteed until the early 2030s. This lack of certainty about the long-term future of broadcast services is likely to have a detrimental impact on the millions of people who rely on them, including vulnerable people who are less likely to have a superfast broadband connection, the digital skills to use streaming apps, or the budget to afford subscription costs.



To date, members of the Broadcast 2040+ campaign include:

1. Age of Concern North Norfolk
2. Age UK
3. Age UK North Tyneside
4. Age UK North Yorkshire Coast and Moors
5. Age UK Shropshire Telford and Wrekin
6. Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington
7. Age UK Mid Mersey
8. Arqiva
9. BEIRG (British Entertainment Industry Radio Group)
10. Better Media
11. Boom Radio UK
12. British Broadcasting Challenge
13. CAI (Confederation of Aerial Industries)
14. Children's Media Foundation
15. Churches 4 Positive Change
16. Citizens Advice Cornwall
17. Communicorp UK
18. County Durham Community Foundation
19. Cumbria Community Foundation
20. Digital Poverty Alliance
21. Fix Radio
22. Focus4Hope
23. Frontier Smart Technologies
24. LTVN (Local TV Network)
25. National Federation of the Blind UK
26. PBS America
27. Rural Services Network
28. Silver Voices
29. Sunrise Radio
30. Talking Pictures TV
31. Campaign to End Loneliness
32. Together TV
33. UCB (United Christian Broadcasting)
34. VLV (Voice of Listener and Viewer)
35. World DAB

The campaign champions the long-term future of UK broadcasting and is calling for a firm commitment from the government to protect these services to 2040 and beyond.

In February 2023, the campaign supported over-60s campaign group Silver Voices' launch of a Parliamentary petition calling on the government to guarantee access to broadcast TV (Freeview) and radio beyond 2040. It received over 29,000 signatures with representatives from every constituency in the UK.

Other previous moments from the campaign include:

- Silver Voices research: Last year, Silver Voices, an over 60s campaign group and founding member of the Broadcast 2040+ campaign, published the landmark report *Safeguarding Universality: The Future of Broadcast TV and Radio*. The report examines in detail how the UK public feel about broadcast TV and radio services. The research found that over 80% of respondents believe broadcast TV and radio should be protected well beyond 2040, with respondents' answers ranging between 2051 and 2079. This is far in advance of the UK Government's current commitment of 2034. [Full report here](#).
- Ipsos research: Launched in 2022, Ipsos research revealed the significant negative impact of the potential loss of broadcast TV and radio, particularly for those who are vulnerable. 9 in



10 people (90%) across Great Britain want to see continued support for broadcast services.
[Full report here.](#)

- For more information about the Broadcast 2040+ campaign, see here: <https://www.broadcast2040plus.org/>
- For press enquires please email : contact@broadcast2040plus.org