

## USAGM Research and Performance Assessment

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 a wide variety of 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 SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

#### Survey Data:

USAGM Surveys  
Omnibus Surveys

#### Digital Metrics:

Website and App Analytics  
Social Media Analytics  
(aggregated and analyzed  
in the USAGM Data Portal)

#### Anecdotal:

Evidence on guest appearances,  
impact stories, news pick-ups,  
co-productions with media partners,  
government reactions, etc.

#### Other:

Databases (CRM, etc.)  
Internal Records



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 impactful.

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.

## LIMITATIONS ON SURVEY DATA

### **Not able to conduct representative research on audiences in:**

North Korea  
People's Republic of China  
Eritrea  
Tibet

*For some of these cases, USAGM conducts limited online surveys, as well as traveler or defector surveys in a third country to collect information on our audiences and media use habits.*

### **Unable to conduct nationally representative surveys in countries with active conflict or in which a significant part of the country is inaccessible:**

Syria  
Parts of Somalia  
Occupied territories of Ukraine

### **Restrictive political and media environments require USAGM to modify its research techniques:**

Iran  
Belarus  
Uzbekistan

*Researchers use landline and mobile phones to conduct nationally representative surveys.*

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. These quantifiable measures are complemented by qualitative data. To provide a more comprehensive and holistic assessment of USAGM's programming, the agency collects structured anecdotal data that captures the impact of content produced by its networks, such as pick-ups of their coverage by other major news media, reactions from government officials, or visible policy change. These data and analytics are compiled, sorted, and presented in the USAGM Data Portal, informing editorial and strategic decisions. Interagency partners can be granted access to the USAGM Data Portal upon request.



## IMPACT MODEL

The USAGM Impact Model serves as a framework for collecting data on our audiences and measuring the effectiveness of our programming. The Impact Model comprises over 35 indicators organized around the agency's mission: to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. The model looks beyond sheer audience size to assess the change that USAGM's network and entity programming has made in the lives of audience members, in the local media sector, and among governments.

## IMPACT MODEL

	GOALS	INDICATORS — HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT
Inform	Goal: Reach Target Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekly reach (among general population)</li> <li>Weekly reach (among strategic audiences as defined)</li> <li>Alternative indicators of use for denied areas</li> <li>Average weekly digital visits</li> <li>Average weekly digital video views</li> <li>Average weekly digital audio plays</li> <li>Average weekly article views</li> <li>Additional digital reach indicators</li> </ul>
	Goal: Provide Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustworthiness/credibility</li> <li>Recognition of quality or prestige of service</li> <li>Addressing disinformation</li> </ul>
Engage/Connect	Goal: Engage/Connect Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average weekly digital engagements</li> <li>Additional digital engagement indicators</li> <li>Submissions of user-generated content</li> <li>Likely to recommend broadcaster to others</li> <li>Audience participation/facilitation of dialogue among audience</li> <li>Expanded internet access in a country</li> <li>Expanded digital access to USAGM content via USAGM-supported tools</li> <li>Additional examples of facilitating internet freedom</li> </ul>
	Goal: Engage/Connect Local Media Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of affiliates</li> <li>Content co-creation</li> <li>Capacity building</li> <li>Content downloaded by affiliates from Direct</li> </ul>
	Goal: Create Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely to continue to use</li> <li>Average weekly number of institutional app users</li> </ul>
Be Influential	Goal: Be Influential with People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased understanding of domestic news</li> <li>Increased understanding of international news</li> <li>Increased understanding of U.S. society</li> <li>Increased understanding of U.S. foreign policy</li> <li>Broadcaster helps form opinions on important issues</li> <li>Impact on People</li> </ul>
	Goal: Be Influential with Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving the news agenda/news pickups</li> <li>Unique coverage of important events relevant to USAGM mission</li> <li>Improvements in journalistic practices</li> <li>Influence on broader narratives in the market</li> </ul>
	Goal: Be Influential with Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attention from government officials or institutions</li> </ul>

## REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Each year, USAGM is required to report to Congress on the fulfillment of its mission. USAGM’s Agency Performance Plan and Agency Performance Report (APP/APR) is an integrated report that connects the agency’s strategic goals, its impact and agility objectives, its performance in the preceding five years, its forecasts for the next two years, and a summary of the verification and validation of performance measures used in the report. Below is an excerpt of two key indicators from USAGM’s FY25 APP/FY23 APR:

### USAGM MEASURED WEEKLY AUDIENCE — AGENCY TOTAL (in millions)<sup>1</sup>

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
<b>USAGM</b>					
Target	337	354	380	394	427
Actual	350	354	394	410	420 <sup>2,3</sup>

### USAGM MEASURED WEEKLY AUDIENCE — NETWORK TOTAL (in millions)<sup>1</sup>

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
<b>VOA</b>					
Target	265	282	305	309	339
Actual	281	278	312	326	354 <sup>2</sup>
<b>RFE/RL</b>					
Target	34.2	37.7	36.2	37.3	41.7
Actual	38.1	41.1	37.2	40.6	42.1
<b>RFA</b>					
Target	49.5	49.5	55.0	60.0	59.8
Actual	50.7	49.5	59.8	58.3	Unreportable <sup>3</sup>
<b>MBN</b>					
Target	27.0	28.0	32.0	34.0	31.0
Actual	24.3	27.5	31.1	27.4	34.1
<b>OCB</b>					
Target	2.0	1.2	1.2	1.0	NA
Actual	1.0	1.0	1.0	NA	0.8

<sup>1</sup> Measured weekly audience is the estimated number of adults in target areas that accessed USAGM programming or online materials in the past week.

<sup>2</sup> FY 2023 reporting for VOA’s global audience does not include data for China due to government restrictions limiting USAGM’s ability to conduct comprehensive surveys of its programming reach since FY 2018.

<sup>3</sup> RFA global measured weekly audience is unreportable at this time due to conditions that have prevented USAGM survey questions about RFA’s Mandarin and Cantonese programming in China since FY 2018. Audience data is only available for four of RFA’s nine language services

## PROGRAM CREDIBILITY

Percentage of weekly audience who consider information to be very or somewhat trustworthy

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
<b>VOA<sup>1</sup></b>					
Target	82	82	80	82	81
Actual	83	83	81	83	85
<b>RFE/RL</b>					
Target	77	74	75	76	79
Actual	73	75	74	78	78
<b>RFA<sup>2</sup></b>					
Target	77	76	77	78	80
Actual	77	76	77	77	98
<b>MBN<sup>3</sup></b>					
Target	80	80	70	73	74
Actual	75	68	70	70	81
<b>OCB<sup>4</sup></b>					
Target	100	97	97	NA	NA
Actual	97	97	97	NA	NA

1 VOA: FY 2023 does not include prior higher trust reported from China (89%), which lifted FY 2019-FY 2022 reporting results.

2 RFA: FY 2023 results only include data from Cambodia and Myanmar.

3 MBN: FY 2023 results only include data from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

4 OCB: No reportable data for FY 2023.