

BBC Bias Against Brexit: News-watch surveys since the 2016 referendum

Since the EU Referendum on 23/06/2016 News-watch has compiled 11 reports, conducted under accepted academic principles. These reports stretch to 1,583 pages analysis of 81 hours of the BBC's post-referendum Brexit coverage.

There has been only one programme which has examined the opportunities of Brexit. N.B. not 'promoted' those opportunities; just explored them.

The surveys show that the BBC has put Brexit under sustained negative attack since the Referendum, through inequality in the time given to interviewees, choice of story, and 'bias by omission.' For instance, the BBC has not considered whether the ideas behind the 'project' of European integration are still valid today.

Date Completed	Survey Title	BBC EU coverage	Hours Monitored	Remain contributors %	Leave contributors %	Ratio	Report page-length	Notes
June 2016	Newsbeat (during Referendum)	2h 35m	24h 7m	45%	30%	9:6	137	Leading news programme for young people. Imbalance despite special impartiality requirements
September 2016	Brexit Collection	11h 30m	11h 30m	58%	23%	5:2	243	Radio 4 programmes about Brexit
December 2016	'Today': Business News	12 h 40m	12h 40m	52.5%	16.3%	3:1	308	Six months of Today's Business News slot, 156 programme editions
April 2017	'Today': Article 50 activation	5h 5m	17h	49%	34%	6:4	123	
June 2017	General Election 2017	11h	100h	50%	37%	5:4	142	
November 2017	'Today': Winter 2017 Survey	7h 30m	68h	51%	27%	2:1	88	Focused on latest round of Brexit negotiations
February 2018	Brexit: a Guide for the Perplexed	1h	1h	75%	12.5%	6:1	58	Figures are for main interviews, excluding montage sequences.
March 2018	Britain at the Crossroads	4h 47m	6h	53%	30%	5:3	198	Day of special Brexit programmes one year before scheduled departure date. Included 'Brexit Lab', the only BBC programme exploring opportunities of Brexit.
September 2018	Brexit: A Love Story?	4h	4h	48%	41%	5:4	143	R4 series about history of EU-UK relationship. Word-count statistics were 9:4, significantly worse than headcount figures presented here
October 2018	'Today' coverage Salzburg/Brussels EU 'summits'	16h 7m	85h	57%	18%	3:1	71	Excluding supporters of Theresa May's Chequers deal, who were categorised separately.
January 2019	'Today' coverage of first 'Meaningful Vote'	4h 47m	9h	55%	23%	2:1	72	Excluding supporters of Theresa May's Brexit deal, who were categorised separately.
Total¹		81h 1m	338 h 17m	52%	27%		1,583	

Going further back, of 4,275 guests talking about the EU on BBC Radio 4's Today programme in survey periods between 2005 and 2015, only 132 (3.2 per cent) were supporters of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

In 274 hours of monitored BBC EU coverage between 2002 and 2017, only 14 speakers (0.2 per cent of the total) were left-wing advocates for leaving the EU. Yet there was a strong Eurosceptic movement within Labour and the Trade Unions at the time.

¹ Speaker proportions in the 'Total' row are based on the 2,003 speakers who contributed to the 11 surveys, not an average of each column. Across the 11 surveys, 1,045 speakers (52%) were pro-EU or Remain supporters and 549 (27%) speakers were anti-EU or Leave supporters. A further 371 (19%) offered a neutral or factual opinion and, in the most recent two surveys, 38 (2%) spoke in favour of Theresa May's proposed deal with the EU and were categorised separately.