

PAPUA NEW GUINEA BROADCAST MEDIA AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

RESEARCH BRIEF

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This brief summarises key insights from a national audience study conducted in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The study was designed and led by the Media Development Initiative (MDI) under the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development unit (ABCID), in collaboration with our Pacific partners. MDI is a long-standing development program designed to build capacity and capability in PNG's media sector. MDI is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and has been implemented by ABCID since 2005. MDI operates under the umbrella of Australia's Building Community Engagement in PNG (BCEP) governance program.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Unless otherwise stated, photographs in this report are sourced from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives.

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Cover photograph: A remote village community in the hills of Arawa in central Bougainville Island.

INTRODUCTION

This brief summarises key audience trends in Papua New Guinea's (PNG) media sector, drawing on findings from a nationally representative survey of citizens conducted across all four regions of the country. The findings provide an evidence-based snapshot of content preferences, platform use, engagement patterns, and demographic variation across broadcast and digital media environments.

METHODOLOGY

The findings are based on a national phone survey of 1,502 respondents conducted across PNG's 22 provinces. Surveys were administered in English and Tok Pisin and distributed via a national telecommunications network. The sample included 68% rural and 32% urban respondents, with proportional representation across the Highlands (32%), Southern (26%), Momase (22%) and Islands (20%) regions.

Respondents represented a broad demographic mix in terms of age, gender, education, and employment status.



Traditional stilt houses in Palembe, a village located along the middle reaches of the Sepik River in the East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Radio is widely used for information and has broad reach

Survey respondents most commonly cite access to news, public information and emergency communication as reasons for using radio, indicating these are among the most valued types of content. Frequent radio listening is more common among men, urban residents, and those in part-time or casual work, and less common among unemployed respondents. Higher levels of education are also associated with more frequent listening.

Findings indicate that radio (AM, FM and shortwave services) remains available across a broader geographic spread than television, including in rural and remote provinces. However, access—particularly in more remote areas—depends on the availability of functioning receivers, such as shortwave radios, and transmitters such as radio towers.



2. Television engagement is concentrated in urban and employed audiences

Television engagement is concentrated around major urban centres, with significantly lower viewing levels in many rural provinces. Frequent television viewers are more likely to be employed, and access to television (free-to-air and/or subscription digital services) is strongly associated with urban location, higher education and employment status. While television remains central for live sport and news, findings suggest it does not have the same overall reach as radio.



3. Audience preferences differ by gender, geography and education

The study identifies significant differences in content preferences across demographic groups in the sample, across both radio and television platforms. Sports and news are more popular among men, while dramas attract higher female engagement. Rural audiences show stronger engagement with sport, movies and dramas, while urban and university-educated respondents demonstrate greater interest in news and documentaries.

4. Platform choice is closely linked to content type

Audiences in PNG do not consume all content equally across platforms. Sporting events (e.g. rugby finals) are primarily consumed on television, reflecting the visual and communal nature of live fixtures. Music performs strongest on radio, while news has a strong presence across both radio and television. Movies and dramas are more commonly accessed via YouTube and other mobile phone-based platforms, particularly among younger audiences.



5. Digital use is uneven

Respondents reported varying levels of social media use, with most not regularly using any common social media platforms. Among sampled social media users, Facebook (54%), WhatsApp (39%) and YouTube (31%) are the most commonly used platforms. Social media users in the sample tend to be younger, urban and more educated, while rural and lower-education groups are less likely to use these platforms. Among those accessing online content, the large majority do so via smartphones, and negligible use of computers or tablets. Content use is largely centred on news, sport, and entertainment.



CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that radio and television remain central to media use in PNG, with radio providing broader geographic reach and television more concentrated in urban and employed audiences. Digital use is present but uneven, concentrated among younger, urban and more educated groups and primarily accessed via smartphones. Gender, geography and education levels influence audience content preferences.

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Rabaul township in the East New Britain province of Papua New Guinea.