

BBC Rich List 2020

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Introduction

The BBC has held a privileged role in the British television, radio and online landscape over many years, dominating the media environment. While alternative media platforms provide content that the public is willing to optionally pay for, the BBC enjoys a taxpayer-funded guarantee which shields them from competitive pressure. This is because of taxpayers being forced to pay a TV licence fee, with a potential custodial sentence for non-payment, regardless of whether they use BBC services.

The BBC TV licence fee has increased again this year in April 2020 to £157.50.¹ This note shows the pay and remuneration of the BBC's top senior executives and 'stars' once again enjoying bumper pay rises.

Key findings

- The highest paid 'star' in 2019-20 was **Gary Lineker**, with a **£1,752,500 salary**. This is the same as what he received in 2018-19.
- The highest paid executive in 2019-20 was **Tony Hall**, the former director general. He received a total of **£471,000 in salary and taxable benefits**. This includes access to a car and driver.²
- There were a total of **253 senior leaders** at the BBC in 2019-20. Their pay bill came to £37.5 million, or **£148,221 on average**.³
- **Zoe Ball**, a Radio 2 presenter, received **£1,362,500 last year** and £372,500 in 2018-19. This amounted to a **£990,000 pay rise**, or 266 per cent. This is in spite of her show losing one million listeners.⁴
- In **2019-20**, **Fiona Bruce** received **£452,500** for 40 episodes of *Question Time* and 50 presentation days on BBC One. This compares to a **salary of £257,500 the previous year** and 100 presentation days for BBC One and 10 episodes of *Question Time*.
- **Piers Wenger** (controller, drama commissioning) was the second highest paid senior staff member not on the executive committee. He was paid **£272,500**. He claimed £130 on a night at a **4-star spa hotel outside Venice** which has 68 different treatments.⁵ He also expensed **£6,597 on a return flight to Los Angeles**.⁶ The BBC has recently pledged £100 million of its TV budget to produce "diverse and inclusive content".⁷
- Median earnings **across the BBC were £45,500** in 2019-20.⁸ This is double median earnings in the North East of England and **83 per cent higher than median earnings across the UK** (£24,897).⁹

¹ BBC, *Do I need a TV license fee and what does it pay for?*, 10 July 2020, www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-51376255, (accessed 15 September 2020).

² BBC, *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20*, 15 September 2020, p. 77.

³ *Ibid*, p. 73.

⁴ Sweney, M., *Zoe Ball's BBC Radio 2 show loses a million listeners*, *The Guardian*, www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/may/14/zoe-balls-bbc-radio-2-show-loses-a-million-listeners, (accessed 15 September 2020).

⁵ BBC, *Piers Wenger central bookings q2 2019-20*, 2020,

<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/managementstructure/biographies/pdf/Q2-1920/piers-wenger-central-bookings-q2-2019-20.pdf>, (accessed 15 September 2020).

⁶ BBC, *Piers Wenger central bookings q4 2019-20*, 2020, <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/whoweare/central-bookings/piers-wenger-cbs-q4-2019-20.pdf>, (accessed 15 September 2020).

⁷ BBC, *BBC commits £100m to increasing diversity on TV*, 22 June 2020, www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-53135022, (accessed 15 September 2020).

⁸ BBC, *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20*, 15 September 2020, p. 79.

⁹ ONS, *Earnings and hours worked, place of residence by local authority: ASHE Table 8.7a*, 29 October 2019, www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityshetable8, (accessed 15 September 2020).

Table 1: 20 highest salaries for on-air talent, 2019-20

Name	Platform/Channel	Programme(s) or role	Total salary (£)
Gary Lineker	Multiple	Match of the Day: Premier League and FA Cup, Sports Personality of the Year	1,752,500
Zoe Ball	Radio 2	Zoe Ball Breakfast Show	1,362,500
Graham Norton	Multiple	Weekly show on Radio 2, BBC television fee for a range of programmes and series, BAFTA film and TV awards	727,500
Steve Wright	Radio 2	Steve Wright in the Afternoon and Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs	477,500
Huw Edwards	BBC One	BBC News at Six and Ten, election night and news specials	467,500
Fiona Bruce	BBC One	Question Time and BBC One	457,500
Vanessa Feltz	Radio 2 and BBC London	Early Breakfast Show, Radio London Breakfast Show, Radio 2 cover	407,500
Lauren Laverne	Radio 4 and 6	Radio 6 Breakfast Show, 6 Music Recommends, Desert Island Discs, Mercury Music Prize	397,500
Alan Shearer	Multiple	Match of the Day: Premier League and FA Cup	392,500
Stephen Nolan	Multiple	The Nolan Show on Radio Ulster, Nolan Live on BBC One (Northern Ireland), Stephen Nolan Show on 5 live	392,500
Ken Bruce	Radio 2	Mid Morning Show, Eurovision Song Contest, Radio 2 Live in Hyde Park	387,500
Emily Maitlis	Multiple	Newsnight, BBC documentaries and Election Programme	372,500
Claudia Winkleman	Radio 2	Weekly show on Radio 2, BBC television fee for a range of programmes and series	367,500
Andrew Marr	BBC One and Radio 4	Andrew Marr Show, Radio 4's Start the Week, documentaries for BBC One and election night	362,500

Name	Platform/Channel	Programme(s) or role	Total salary (£)
Scott Mills	Radio 1 and 5	Radio 1's The Scott Mills Show, Radio 5's The Scott Mills and Chris Stark Show on Radio 5 live	347,500
George Alagiah	BBC One	News at Six and Ten	327,500
Jeremy Vine	Radio 2	Daily show on Radio 2, Election Programme	322,500
Nicky Campbell	Radio 5	Breakfast Show, Your Call	302,500
Nick Robinson	Multiple	Today, Political Thinking, Panorama on Brexit, Election Specials	297,500
Laura Kuenssberg	Multiple	Political editor, Election Night, two BBC Two documentaries	292,500

Table 2: 20 highest remunerated senior executives, 2019-20

Name	Job title	Total remuneration (£)
Tony Hall	Director general	471,000
Charlotte Moore	Director, content	401,000
Kerris Bright	Chief customer officer	366,000
Matthew Postgate	Chief technology and product officer	347,000
James Purnell	Director, radio and education	347,000
Francesca Unsworth	Director, news and current affairs	342,000
Glyn Isherwood	Chief financial officer	335,000
Ken MacQuarrie	Director, nations and regions	328,000
Bel Samra	Group commercial director	327,500
Bob Shennan	Group managing director	338,000
Sarah Jones	Group legal counsel	282,500
Piers Wenger	Controller, drama commissioning	272,500
Ian Haythornthwaite	Chief financial and operating officer (nations and regions)	242,500
Patrick Holland	Controller, BBC Two and BBC Four	227,500
Dan McGolphin	Controller, iPlayer and programming	227,500
Kate Phillips	Controller, entertainment commissioning	222,500
Shane Allen	Controller, comedy commissioning	222,500
Alison Kirkham	Controller, factual commissioning	222,500
Barbara Slater	Director, sport	222,500
John Shield	Director, communications and corporate affairs	221,000

Methodology

All salary and remuneration data has been taken from the BBC's 2019-20 Group Annual Report and Accounts. Expenses data for Piers Wenger is from the "Senior staff" webpage of the BBC.¹⁰

Only salary data is provided for on-screen talent (table 1) and for many of the entries in table 2. This therefore means that the figures presented do not include pensions, expenses or bonuses. Exceptions to this are members of the executive committee, many of which are in table 2.

Tim Davie – the current director general – has been excluded. This is because in his previous role as CEO, BBC Studios he was "not paid for, or subsidised by, the licence fee."¹¹ His current salary is £450,000 until September 2021.¹²

The salary or remuneration figures in tables 1 and 2 are the mid-points in the £5,000 bands provided.

¹⁰ BBC, *Piers Wenger*, 2020, www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/whoweare/piers-wenger, (accessed 15 September 2020).

¹¹ BBC, *BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20*, 15 September 2020, p. 78.

¹² BBC, *Tim Davie CBE, Director-General*, 2020, www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/whoweare/tim-davie, (accessed 15 September 2020).