

Portrayal of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People on the BBC

Consultation Report

September 2010



Consultation on the BBC's Portrayal of
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences

Tell us what you think

Consultation on the BBC's Portrayal of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences

Do you have views on how the BBC portrays lesbian, gay and bisexual people?

Analysis of Public Consultation on the BBC's Portrayal of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences

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Introduction

BBC Working Group and Public Consultation

In April 2009 the BBC established a Working Group on the Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences. The Working Group's aims and objectives (as set out in its [Terms of Reference](#)) were:

“To enhance the BBC's creative output and fulfil its key Public Purpose: Representing the Nations, Regions and Communities which states that the BBC should:

- Portray and celebrate the range of cultures and communities across the UK
- Provide a range of output, including original content, designed to meet the needs of the nations, regions and communities of the UK
- Provide engaging output that gives an accurate picture of the many communities that make up the UK and that informs understanding and stimulates discussion about their concerns”

To complement qualitative and quantitative audience research, the Working Group also commissioned a public consultation to enable any licence fee payer to give their views on this subject.

The principal method was through an online consultation. A web form setting out 12 questions was available via a link from the BBC website between 22 January and 02 April 2010. We were also able to offer an offline version of the consultation questions and individual submissions were subsequently fed into the analysis.

The BBC Working Group also hosted a consultation workshop for 20 invited representatives from 19 organisations on 22 January 2010 to facilitate their contribution to the consultation. A summary of the recommendations from those attendees is included at the end of the report.

About this Report

This report has been prepared by Perceptor Solutions and the BBC's Diversity Centre to inform the BBC Working Group on the Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences.

This report contains a summary of the views of the 9,404 respondents to the BBC's consultation, including the handful we received offline, and provides an analysis of the response and summarises the key themes expressed by the consultation respondents.

The number of responses received is presented here to give an idea of the strength of feeling on different questions. However, the responses represent the views of those who chose to take part in the consultation and may not be representative of the population as a whole.

Consultation respondents were free to answer as few or as many questions as they chose. Consequently, for each individual question there will be a number of respondents who have not answered. Detailed tables for each question are based on all responses given (rather than all respondents).

Profile of Consultation Respondents

The consultation gave respondents the opportunity to indicate their age, disability, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and location by nation of the UK. This information enabled an analysis (where the data was available) Although not all respondents submitted this information, this report highlights any significant differences in responses according to a particular demographic where relevant. The following tables show the available demographic information for the 9,404 respondents to the consultation.

Table 1: Age of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the age profile of respondents. 21% were aged 16-24, 23% were aged 25-34, 23% were aged 35-44, 17% were aged 45-54, 10% were aged 55-64, 4% were aged 65-74, 1% were aged 75-84 and less than 1% were aged 85 and over. 2% did not state their age. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Age	Number of respondents	% of total
16 - 24	1,896	21%
25 - 34	2,124	23%
35 - 44	2,147	23%
45 - 54	1,604	17%
55 - 64	961	10%
65 - 74	387	4%
75 - 84	76	1%
85+	22	0%
Not specified	187	2%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 2: Consultation respondents according to disability

[This table sets out the proportions of consultation respondents who have a disability. 9% indicated that they have a disability and 89% were non-disabled. 2% did not specify. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Disability	Number of respondents	% of total
No	8,341	89%
Yes	867	9%
Not specified	196	2%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 3: Ethnicity of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the ethnicity of the consultation respondents. 79% were white British, 3% were white Irish, less than 1% were white Traveller and 8% were from another white background. Less than 1% of respondents were from a mixed white and black Caribbean background, less than 1% were from a mixed white and black African background and less than 1% were from a mixed white and Asian background. 1% of respondents were Indian, less than 1% were Pakistani, less than 1% were Bangladeshi and less than 1% were from another Asian background. Less than 1% were Caribbean, less than 1% were African and less than 1% were from another black background. Less than 1% of were Chinese and 1% were from another ethnic background. 3% of respondents did not specify their ethnicity. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Ethnicity	Number of respondents	% of total
White		
White British	7,444	79%
White Irish	284	3%

White Traveller (Romany Gypsy/Irish Traveller)	18	0%
Other White Background	753	8%
Mixed		
White and Black Caribbean	35	0%
White and Black African	22	0%
White and Asian	34	0%
Other Mixed Background	103	1%
Asian or Asian British		
Indian	78	1%
Pakistani	47	0%
Bangladeshi	12	0%
Other Asian Background	38	0%
Black or Black British		
Caribbean	45	0%
African	47	0%
Other Black background	15	0%
Chinese or any other background		

Chinese	41	0%
Other Ethnic Background	140	1%
Not specified	248	3%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 4: Gender of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the gender of consultation respondents. 59% were male and 38% were female. 2% did not specify their gender. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Gender	Number of respondents	% of total
Male	5,549	59%
Female	3,616	38%
Not specified	239	2%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 5: Religion and belief of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the religion and belief of consultation respondents. 40% identified as Christian, 2% as Buddhist, less than 1% as Hindu, 1% as Jewish, 1% as Muslim, less than 1% as Sikh, and 7% as having another religion. 46% identified as having no religion and 3% did not specify a religion. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Religion and Belief	Number of respondents	% of total
Christianity	3,720	40%
Buddhism	156	2%

Hinduism	51	0%
Judaism	113	1%
Islam	110	1%
Sikhism	11	0%
Other Religion	650	7%
No Religion	4,353	46%
Not specified	240	3%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 6: Sexual orientation of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the sexual orientation of consultation respondents. 39% were heterosexual, 32% were gay, 14% were lesbian and 11% were bisexual. 4% did not specify their sexual orientation. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Sexual Orientation	Number of respondents	% of total
Heterosexual	3,649	39%
Gay	3,046	32%
Lesbian	1,337	14%
Bisexual	1,000	11%
Not specified	372	4%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 7: Nation / geography of consultation respondents

[This table sets out the geographical location of consultation respondents. 81% were based in England, 2% in Northern Ireland, 7% in Scotland, 4% in Wales. 3% categorised their location as other and 2% did not specify their location. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Nation / Geography	Number of respondents	% of total
England	7,603	81%
Northern Ireland	174	2%
Scotland	705	7%
Wales	394	4%
Other	309	3%
Not specified	219	2%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 8: Gender lidentity: same gender identity as assigned at birth

[This table sets out the gender identity of consultation respondents. 70% have the same gender identity as assigned at birth. 2% have a different gender identity to that assigned at birth. 28% of respondents did not specify. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Gender Identity: Same Gender Identity as Assigned at Birth	Number of respondents	% of total
Yes	6,554	70%
No	184	2%
Not specified	2,666	28%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 9: Gender identity: live and work full time in gender role opposite to that assigned at birth

[This table sets out the gender identity of consultation respondents. 68% do not live or work full time in a different gender role to the one assigned at birth. 3% of do and 29% did not specify. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Gender Identity: Live and Work Full Time in Gender Role Opposite that Assigned at Birth	Number of respondents	% of total
No	6,378	68%
Yes	291	3%
Not specified	2,735	29%
Total	9,404	100%

Table 10: Gender identity: sometimes occupy a gender role opposite to that assigned at birth

[This table sets out the gender identity of consultation respondents. 68% do not occupy a different gender role. 3% sometimes occupy a different gender role to the one assigned at birth and 29% of respondents did not specify. There were a total of 9,404 respondents.]

Gender Identity: Sometimes Occupy Gender Role Opposite that Assigned at Birth	Number of respondents	% of total
No	6,372	68%
Yes	302	3%
Not specified	2,730	29%
Total	9,404	100%

Executive Summary

Representation

Question 1: How important is it to you that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are reflected on television, radio and the internet?

There was overwhelming support for the principle of reflecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people across BBC services. Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) consultation respondents were more likely to think that reflection of LGB people was important. Female respondents were most likely to voice the importance of reflection of LGB people on air and on screen. Younger people were also much stronger in their views on this compared with older respondents.

For many consultation respondents, the importance of realistic and non-stereotypical portrayal was inextricably connected to, and as important as, the reflection itself. Therefore a higher volume of stereotypical portrayal of LGB people could be potentially damaging compared with greater portrayal felt to be more authentic.

The views of a minority of respondents who perceived the portrayal of LGB people as unimportant, correlated with their views of LGB sexual orientations more broadly. Many of these consultation respondents had a different

perception about the amount of portrayal of LGB people in the media – often viewing it as disproportionate to their perceived size of the LGB population.

Expectations of the BBC

There are a variety of ways that the media affects the attitudes that people have towards those who are perhaps different to themselves.

For example, some people may not know anyone who happens to be lesbian, gay or bisexual and the only time they may see or hear about them could be through broadcast media.

Question 2: Do you think the BBC has a responsibility to try and help challenge perceptions that may exist about lesbian, gay and bisexual people? If so, how?

Overall, half of all consultation responses to this question stated that the BBC does have a distinct role in challenging perceptions about LGB people.

Responses from LGB respondents were much more likely to state that the BBC does have a responsibility here. While only a third of heterosexual respondents thought that this was the case, more than twice as many LGB respondents thought this was important.

A third of consultation respondents felt that the BBC has no role in this respect. A further 17% of respondents answered instead by pointing to the BBC's role, as they saw it, to reflect life's reality.

Question 3: Thinking about when you may have seen or heard lesbian, gay and bisexual people or characters on the BBC, how would you describe the overall view that is portrayed of them? Is it negative or positive or mixed?

Overall, respondents were most likely to describe the BBC's portrayal of LGB people as mixed with a third of both LGB and heterosexual respondents holding this view. Heterosexual respondents were more likely to think the BBC's portrayal of LGB people was positive compared with LGB respondents. Half of LGB respondents thought that BBC portrayal of LGB people was either negative or stereotypical compared with just under a third of heterosexual respondents.

Range of Portrayal Across Genres

People can be portrayed in broadcast media in many different types of programmes, such as in news stories, documentaries and chat shows, and also as characters in fictional programmes such as comedy and drama.

Thinking specifically about programmes you may have seen or heard on the BBC:

Question 4: Do you think the BBC broadcasts enough programmes that include stories about lesbian, gay or bisexual people, or characters, presenters or contributors who are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

The vast majority of respondents thought that there is insufficient portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people across the BBC with 70% of respondents holding this view.

Heterosexual respondents were less likely to hold this view on the volume of the BBC's portrayal of LGB people in comparison with LGB consultation respondents. Lesbian respondents were most likely to think that there is insufficient coverage with more than double the proportion of lesbian respondents stating the same view compared with heterosexual respondents.

Just over one in 10 responses to this question reported that they thought there was an overrepresentation of LGB people reflected by BBC services.

Consultation respondents' perspectives on the quantity of portrayal were often necessarily bound to their views on the quality of that portrayal. For these respondents, quality and quantity of portrayal were inextricably linked, where the way LGB people were portrayed was as, if not more, important, as the amount of portrayal of LGB people.

Question 5: Do you think that some types of programmes do this better than other types?

There were very mixed views across responses to this question. Half of consultation respondents thought that there were programme genres which performed better in this area and the other half held the opposing viewpoint.

The programme genres mentioned most frequently by respondents were drama (including continuing drama), comedy and entertainment and factual programming.

Overall, across these areas, consultation respondents thought that drama, rather than continuing drama, held more scope for realistic and accurate portrayal of LGB people. While consultation respondents felt there was a greater volume of portrayal of LGB people through comedy and entertainment, respondents were concerned with its stereotypical nature. Consultation respondents' commentary on factual programming was that while its quality was good, there was too little of it.

Question 6: Do you think some broadcasters do this better than others?

Unlike other questions across the consultation, there was a distinct difference in the views between heterosexual and LGB consultation respondents in response to this question.

There was a range of responses to this question with commentary relating to both the quantity and quality of portrayal of LGB people. Heterosexual respondents saw no difference in performance on the portrayal of LGB people across other broadcasters, relating to both quantity and quality. Whereas the majority of LGB consultation respondents thought there were better performers in this area.

Among those consultation respondents who did think that there were better performers, three out of four pointed to Channel 4. There was also a perceived hierarchy for those consultation respondents with Channel 4 at the top, followed by the BBC and then ITV, Five and Sky.

Question 7: What do you think about the portrayal of lesbian, gay and lesbian people on our news coverage?

Almost 70% of consultation respondents thought the BBC's portrayal of LGB people through its news services is good. Heterosexual respondents were more likely to think portrayal of LGB people through news services was good. More than half of LGB respondents held the same view. However a third of respondents describe the BBC's portrayal of LGB people through its news services as poor. Lesbian respondents were most likely to be critical.

Authentic Portrayal

Thinking about its portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people across radio, television and online

Question 8: How well do you think the BBC does this?

Overall four out of 10 consultation respondents thought the BBC portrays LGB people well through its output. However, heterosexual consultation respondents were more likely to think so when compared with LGB respondents. A further four out of 10 consultation respondents described the BBC's portrayal of LGB people as fair.

Just under a fifth of respondents thought that the BBC does this badly. LGB consultation respondents were slightly more likely to describe BBC portrayal of LGB people in this way.

Even where respondents thought the BBC does well, they also thought it could do better and portray LGB people in a less stereotypical way.

It was clear from responses to this question that those taking part in the consultation often had difficulty in recalling BBC portrayal of LGB people.

Question 9: Do you think that the way the BBC portrays these people in programmes is different for each of these individual groups: gay men, lesbians, bisexual men or bisexual women?

The majority of consultation respondents overall identified differences between how lesbians, gay and bisexual people are portrayed. Female respondents were far more likely to report the greater amount of male versus female representation in this context.

A distinct hierarchy was repeatedly articulated by consultation respondents. Gay men were perceived overwhelmingly as having greater prominence across the BBC's output, followed by a severe lack of visibility of lesbian women with bisexual people considered as largely invisible.

Linked to the concerns raised about this hierarchy in the volume of portrayal of lesbian women compared with gay men and with bisexual people, was the perceived tendency for stereotyping. Concerns that there was a distinct lack of portrayal of lesbian women was frequently reported together with concerns that lesbian experience was presented as either a temporary phase or as titillation. Similarly, dissatisfaction that bisexual people are invisible across the BBC's output were also reported together with concerns that bisexual identity was too often portrayed as a behaviour and not a valid sexual orientation.

Editorial Standards

The BBC is committed to delivering the highest editorial and ethical standards in its programmes and services.

Part of the BBC's commitment is to ensure that it avoids offensive or stereotypical assumptions about people and that any descriptions about people or groups of people have a good reason to be included.

Question 10: What do you think about the language used by the BBC when it talks about lesbian, gay or bisexual people in its programmes? Is it appropriate?

Overall, the vast majority of consultation respondents think that the language the BBC uses when talking about LGB people is appropriate. Heterosexual respondents were much less likely to have any complaints with language the BBC uses in this area. LGB consultation respondents were more likely to think the BBC's use of language was inappropriate.

The most common examples of inappropriate language pointed to by consultation respondents were:

- Pejorative use of the word 'gay'
- Use of the word 'homosexual'

- Comments perceived to be homophobic made by BBC on screen and on-air presenters

There was also a commonly reported concern that there were no consequences to this type of behaviour on-air.

Consultation Respondents' Recommendations and Suggestions

Question 11: What improvements, do you think the BBC could make in its portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people?

Consultation respondents were prompted to reiterate some of the key themes already set out across the consultation, including appeals for:

- Less stereotypical portrayal
- More portrayal of LGB people
- More portrayal of LGB people integrated across all programme genres
- Portrayal of a greater diversity of LGB people
- Zero tolerance on language and homophobia
- Greater variety of LGB role models across BBC services

Just under 70% of consultation respondents who responded to this question called for less stereotypical portrayal. More portrayal of LGB people was the second most requested recommendation.

Other Issues

Question 12: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people on the BBC?

The vast majority of consultation respondents who answered this question had no further comments to make. However, of those that did, the most significant issue raised was portrayal of trans people. This concern was also raised throughout the consultation.

The BBC Working Group on the Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences had decided that its terms of reference would not include the portrayal of trans people. There were consultation respondents who took the same view. However, there were also consultation respondents who felt strongly that while the experiences of both LGB and trans people are distinctly different; their common experience of discrimination over time justified their inclusion in the scope of this work. Those respondents disagreed strongly with the decision not to look at both experiences in tandem. 384 consultation respondents identified as transgender giving the BBC a significant resource of what a considerable number of trans people think about its portrayal of LGB people, and potentially of trans people.

Other issues raised by consultation respondents were looking to Channel 4's experience and for the BBC to keep up its good work.

Main Report

Representation

Question 1: How important is it to you that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are reflected on television, radio and the internet?

Total number of respondents: 8,508

Table 11: Importance of reflecting LGB people

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 83% of respondents thought that it was important to reflect LGB people on television, radio and online. 17% said it was unimportant. The total number of responses to this question was 8,508.]

Importance of reflecting LGB people	Number of responses	% of total
Important	7,062	83%
Unimportant	1,446	17%
Total	8,508	100%

There was overwhelming support for the principle of reflecting lesbian, gay and bisexual people across BBC services. The vast majority of respondents (83%) thought that this was important.

“Extremely important, especially for young people. Young people who are gay, lesbian and bisexual often feel lonely, confused, isolated and abnormal. If they see non-stereotypical, positive role models in the media, men and women going about their work, social, spiritual, family, political and love lives in an integrated and usual fashion, they will see that their sexual feelings, experiences and attractions need not be hidden and are not unique to them, not disgusting or abnormal, and that their orientation can be lived out as just part of them in a life filled with love, integrity, work, family, friends and interests just as straight people do.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“Massively important. As an out lesbian I feel the need for all spectrums of society to be portrayed in as many different ways as possible. Hearing and seeing us represented makes me, in particular feel, like I have a place in society, that I’m not ignored and it’s no longer underground.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“It is very important that gay people are portrayed in an accurate way across all aspects of media. Growing up I never felt the gay TV comedians

were role models to me as a young gay man - the humour was full of innuendo. Now there are so many gay TV stars who are naturally funny but don't make a point about their sexuality or if they do it's not the main focus. This is as it should be." (Male, 16-24, gay)

"It's very important. I'm not a member of the LGB or T community, but homosexuality and transgender people are normal, and often they are not necessarily portrayed as normal on TV. Often when the BBC has LGB or T characters, it is the defining part of their character. There needs to be more characters who happen to be LGB or T, rather than LGB or T as central to the story or an aspect of the story." (Male, 25 - 34, heterosexual)

Lesbian, gay and bisexual consultation respondents were more likely to think that reflection of LGB people was important with 99% of lesbian women, 98% of gay men and 95% of bisexual people stating this view compared with 61% of heterosexual consultation respondents. Female consultation respondents were most likely to voice the importance of reflection of LGB people on air and on screen. Younger people were also much more likely to think this was important compared with older respondents. Whereas 91% of 16-24 year olds thought this was important, this figure dropped to 62% of respondents aged over 65.

For many consultation respondents, the importance of realistic and non-stereotypical portrayal was inextricably connected to, and as important as, the reflection itself. Therefore a higher volume of stereotypical portrayal of LGB people could be potentially damaging compared with greater portrayal felt to be more authentic.

"Extremely important. Is it important for lesbians, gay men, & bisexuals (such as myself) (LGB) to see ourselves reflected in the media, & for the rest of society to see being LGB as normal, with LGB people being open about their sexuality & not being stuck in the closet. This helps to counteract homophobic views within society, & is especially important for young people who are coming to terms with their own identity & sexuality, so they know it is OK to be LGB. It is also important to reflect the difficulties LGB people face within society, but it is extremely important that LGB people are not presented as stereotypes, as the media has been very keen to do in the past, as this misrepresents LGB people & encourages homophobia." (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

"Being gay is such a small part of who I am, so I hate the thought of being singled out because of my sexuality. I don't want 'gay storylines', I want 'storylines that happen to include gay people'. When drama is promoted within the parameters of gender and sexuality, it perpetuates the idea that my lifestyle is carnivalesque. The struggle for Civil Partnerships becomes 'that gay wedding!', and the representation of homosexual intimacy becomes 'that gay kiss!'. There is a fine line between inclusion and representing stereotypes...I'm not always convinced the BBC, or indeed other channels, strike that balance." (Male, 25-34, gay)

"I feel that my sexuality is not portrayed enough on mainstream television and when it is, we are portrayed as murderers, who scorn lost love or mad

women who feel they cannot cope with being gay (I quote the last BBC drama PAs which had the one and only lesbian on it shot herself). I could have screamed. Get rid of the lesbian by ensuring that she dies at the end of the series. Too mainstream it's been done to death and frankly I am sick of seeing it. We are not all suicidal believe or not, when our hearts are broken we are like everyone else." (Female, 45-54, gay)

"Very [*important*]. Positive portrayal is good; but accurate portrayal is actually far more important. I want to see LGBT characters that I can relate to: who are not stereotypes nor two dimensional. Make them interesting, make them varied, but make them realistic." (Male, 16-24, gay)

"I now think the time is past for TV drama series purely about gay people. In the past they served a purpose and the public's understanding of gay culture and what it means to be gay was challenged and shaped in no small way by the media. Each generation of shows seemed to progress the portrayal of gay people in a more positive way but each had its own faults. I feel that including gay characters in established and new dramas in a way that doesn't feel contrived would be the most accurate way of portraying gay people. There are very few gay people who only have gay friends and so showing series featuring only gay characters could create a feeling of mutual detachment and misunderstanding both ways between straight and gay people." (Male, 16-24, gay)

This same point of view was expressed by a proportion of those who identified portrayal of LGB people as unimportant by making the point that what was more important to them was not just being reflected, but in an accurate way.

"It's not the BBC's role to campaign on behalf of gay and lesbian people but to reflect how their sexuality is viewed in the country as a whole – so it should take into account the prejudices and fears that exist in the minds and actions of some people in this country as well as the wider and improving acceptance of people with minority sexual orientation." (Male, 55-64, heterosexual)

"I feel it is "important" only if the BBC wishes to reflect society realistically. While I do not necessarily wish to see "gay" programmes, (neither am I interested in specifically targeted "women's or "men's" programmes), I think it is important that broadcasters reflect society in all its diversity." (Male, 55-64, gay)

A minority of consultation respondents who viewed portrayal of LGB people as unimportant felt this way because of their opinion towards LGB sexual orientations. Many of these consultation respondents held a different perception about the amount of portrayal of LGB people in the media – often viewing it as disproportionate to their perceived size of the LGB population.

"Although minorities should not be ignored, there appears to be a 'Metropolitan mentality' to the representation of gay/lesbian persona within the BBC... We don't all live in London, and some of us never – or very rarely – come across gays or lesbians during a normal working day." (Male, 45-54, heterosexual)

“It’s not important to me at all. I believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people make up only a very small percentage of our population – something like 2%. Therefore to have a fair proportion of time they should have the same proportion of airtime. I believe that heterosexual married relationships are the basis of a stable society and as such they should be encouraged and that is very important to me and that that is what should be reflected on radio, TV and the internet.” (Female, 45-54, heterosexual)

“It is not important! There are lots and lots of heterosexual people about yet the TV portrays it as if the world is full of gay people There are NONE where I work, or where I socialise – it is totally over the top on TV and very London biased. Move North of London and see the real world! Yes they are there but only in the minority so portray it as that.” (Female, 45-54, heterosexual)

“I don’t think it is at all important, lesbian, gay and bisexual people can choose to live their lives however they like but I don’t want to share in that at all. I would really rather this was not shown on the television.” (Male, 25-34, heterosexual)

“Not important at all, it is totally unnecessary and damaging to young viewers.” (Male, 45-54, heterosexual)

Expectations of the BBC

Question 2: Do you think the BBC has a responsibility to try and help challenge perceptions that may exist about lesbian, gay and bisexual people? If so, how?

Table 12: BBC has responsibility to challenge perceptions about LGB people

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 50% of respondents think the BBC does have a responsibility to challenge perceptions. 33% think this is not the case and 17% state instead that they think the BBC's role is to reflect reality. The total number of response to this question was 8,485.]

BBC has responsibility to challenge perceptions about LGB	Number of responses	% of total
Yes	4,243	50%
No	2,800	33%
Reflect reality	1,442	17%
Total	8,485	100%

Overall, half of all consultation responses stated that the BBC does have a distinct role in challenging perceptions about LGB people.

Responses from LGB respondents are much more likely to state that the BBC does have a responsibility here. While only a third of heterosexual respondents think that this is the case, more than twice as many LGB respondents thought this was important. For example, 64% of lesbian respondents reflected that the BBC did have a role in this regard compared with 34% of heterosexual respondents.

Women are more likely to think that the BBC has a role in challenging perceptions (57% compared with 46%). Young people were also more likely to think this was important compared to older people (60% of 16-24 year-old respondents compared with 25% of respondents over 65).

“I think the BBC does have a responsibility to try and help challenge perceptions that exist, because many people in society... although may not be prejudiced themselves, will never come into contact (or know that they have come into contact) with someone who identifies as LGB. It can be vital that the only medium through which they are exposed helps to challenge any negative perceptions they may have.” (Male, 16-24, heterosexual)

“Yes, by showing who we are, and the diverse backgrounds we are from. We are fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces, partners, married, unmarried. Show us as being from all political classes, not just with money, and working in fashion. But as refuse collectors, gang leaders, children’s workers, doctors, fire-fighters, soldiers, etc. Don't always make an issue of our sexuality, just show us as we are, with no internal conflict. Just accepted.” (Male, 35-44, gay).

“I absolutely think the BBC has that responsibility. I think the ways to do this are:

1. To normalise gay people and romantic intimacy between gay people. So if the portrayal of a straight relationship would show a couple kissing, then that same level of intimacy is used in a gay relationship also.
2. To show that gay people are varied and normal and to not portray them all as stereotypes but just as characters with their own stories.
3. To report homophobic crime as just as important as other hate crime. I do not believe that this is currently given as much air time as it should be. The death of Michael Causer in Liverpool was not reported nationally at first and the online coverage was little more than stub articles at a time where other teen violent crime was featured prominently in the media. I wrote to the BBC to question this and never received a proper response to my concern. This reaffirms my view that gay issues, and the lives of gay people, are considered less than news worthy by the BBC (or certain people within the BBC) currently. I would like this to be dealt with.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Introduce an LGB or T couple, no sensation, no fanfare. Maybe they have kids either adopted or from previous relationships, but they are a unit. Then give them storylines much like any other. This would place them in the soap without the huge coming out. Just any other couple, with any old job, with rebellious teens and the only difference from them and the Beales, is that the parents are a same sex couple.” (Male, 16-24, gay)

“Absolutely. The "inform and educate" bit is still part of the BBC's charter and this should include informing and educating people about lesbigay lives. Part of the way it can do this is simply by including lesbian, gay, bisexual people in stories which aren't to do with lesbigay issues. For example, a news story about mortgages, or pensions, or unemployment might include a same-sex couple. This occasionally happens on property shows, but never, ever on the news, and it would be nice to see this kind of representation once in a while. LGB people aren't one-dimensional characters who are only affected by LGB problems: we have to deal with all

the other problems that come with everyday life as well!” (Female, 35-44, lesbian)

A third of consultation respondents felt that the BBC has no role in this respect.

“Actually, no...the BBC does not. It used it. When people were prejudiced, but these days most people couldn't care less about someone's sexuality.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

Even among those responses, some respondents were clear that the role the organisation does have is around accuracy of reflection:

“I'm not sure that 'challenge' is the right word. I'd want the BBC to present lesbian, gay and bisexual people as they appear in society as a whole; a character's sexuality should be just one facet of his / her make-up. I don't want LGB characters to be portrayed all the time as 'evil'; nor do I want them all the time to be squeaky clean. I just want them to be people.” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“It largely depends on what you mean by the term 'challenge perceptions'. I certainly don't think that the BBC should turn into a mindless cheerleader for gay rights – that would be more off-putting than anything else. One of the most successful ways that the BBC can challenge irrational negative perceptions of gay people is through crafting dramas and comedies with gay characters as regular ensemble members – not as occasional 'guest stars' so they can do A Very Special Gay Storyline for a limited time run.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“No. I don't think this is the role or job of the BBC and as an institution the BBC has no 'moral' mandate to try and influence or change people's views or behaviours, apart from where information is presented factually i.e. not by trying to portray characters in ways that would in themselves try and paint a very specific picture of what it means to be gay.” (Male, 25-34, heterosexual)

“I think the BBC has a responsibility to reflect honestly the range of opinions on this issue (including minority opinions, such as those reflected in (for example) some non-secularist worldviews.) In my view the BBC should not take it upon itself to shape public opinion according to the views of those with the loudest voices (what ever 'side' they may be on). If the BBC was to 'challenge perceptions' that would seem to imply that the BBC had decided that it has the right to determine what people's perceptions ought to be. It is far from self-evident that a 'public service broadcaster' has such a right. To suggest that it should do so, is to advocate that the BBC be used as a tool of social engineering. Given the influence of the BBC this would amount to an abuse of power.” (Male, 25-34, heterosexual)

A further 17% of respondents answered instead by pointing to the BBC's role, as they saw it, to reflect life's reality.

“I think that the BBC should portray the stereotypes but also balance them... for example, I know two gay men. One is incredibly camp...he is

fun loving and frivolous, a stereotypical 'gay'. The other is a quiet 'normal' man to the point that it comes to many as a shock to discover he is homosexual." (Female, 16-24, heterosexual)

"The BBC has a responsibility to reflect the wider views of society in its output. I would expect to be both sympathetic to and challenging of the spectrum of views present in today's society. I don't think it should aggressively promote the interests of any particular group." (Male, 35-44, heterosexual)

"It's not so much a responsibility about challenging perceptions – more of a duty to acknowledge that there are many LG&B people living in our society as do heterosexuals, and reflecting this in the number of GL&B people on screen. For example, in EastEnders, Christian is the only gay man in the Square more of the time. Obviously this is because viewers only get to see the lives of central characters, but still." (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

Question 3: Thinking about when you may have seen or heard lesbian, gay and bisexual people or characters on the BBC, how would you describe the overall view that is portrayed of them? Is it negative or positive or mixed?

Table 13: Overall view of LGB people and characters on the BBC

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 32% of respondents had a mixed view of how LGB people are portrayed on the BBC. 28% reported that their view was negative, 26% reported a positive view and 14% reported their view that overall the BBC's portrayal of LGB people was stereotypical. The total number of responses to this question was 6, 957.]

Overall view of LGB people and characters on the BBC	Number of responses	% of total
Mixed	2,226	32%
Negative	1,948	28%
Positive	1,809	26%
Stereotypical	974	14%
Total	6,957	100%

Consultation respondents' thoughts and perceptions of portrayal of LGB people are looked at in more depth later on but overall this is a mixed picture.

Overall, respondents were most likely to describe the BBC's performance as mixed. Approximately a third of both LGB and heterosexual respondents thought that overall the BBC's performance was mixed in this area.

"Overall, I'd say mixed. Programmes such as Torchwood and Doctor Who have been massively important in representing lesbian, gay and bisexual characters in a very inclusive but casual way. These programmes have shown that lesbian, gay and bi people are part of our world and have all the same hopes, fears and issues that straight people have. Although it is good that the BBC is making programmes such as 'Lip Service', lesbian, gay and bi people need to be included more in programmes that aren't focussed around the characters' sexuality. The BBC also needs to be more stringent in preventing its broadcasters being homophobic and reprimanding them when they are." (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

"It depends incredibly on the specific situation and this question is rather vague! I can think of many situations where radio DJs and television presenters have made jokes about gay people which, most people would laugh at because it is still seen as socially acceptable (even though it isn't!!) and this is terribly alienating to the gay community. However, I have also seen other programming that is very positive and supportive to the gay individual. I believe that rather than having such a massive difference across the board, the BBC should encourage a standard." (Female, 16-24, heterosexual)

"It is very mixed, but I would say there seems to be more emphasis on sex, and sexual relationships rather than the bigger picture of being Gay, and the social aspects, homophobia, coming out etc and I would like to see more of that." (Male, 25-34, gay)

"It's mixed probably – I can think of some positive portrayals but too often an LGB character will be the 'different' one, the one whose sexual orientation becomes the focus of a plotline or some dramatic development. There are no unremarkable LGB characters anywhere and in real life most LGB people are unremarkable!" (Female, 25-34, heterosexual)

Heterosexual consultation respondents were more likely to think the BBC's portrayal of LGB people was positive compared with LGB respondents.

"I would say it's largely positive, although I think that sometimes too much attention is paid to the fact that they are not heterosexual. I'd rather see a main character who happens to be homosexual, but the show not focusing on that part of their life. When too much attention is paid to a character being homosexual, it makes you think that it's unnatural - you don't focus on the fact that another character is heterosexual, so why do that for a homosexual character?" (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

“Generally positive of gay and lesbian people but it is somewhat exclusionary and people are often defined by their being gay than it simply being a factor. Bisexuals aren't generally taken seriously but seen as funny or titillating. This is not just on the Beeb, but the Beeb could do more to provide a diverse range of representations.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Generally positive in the fact they are not portrayed to be better or worse than anyone else and that's what's needed, sometimes programmes get the "token gay" or "disabled" person like they used to get with ethnic diversity but its getting less and someone being gay in a show is nearly sideline, which is good in some ways, but there has not been many shows centred on Gay lifestyles since Queer as Folk nearly 10 years ago.” (Male, 35 - 44, gay)

“Overall I think the portrayal of LBGT people is fairly good on the BBC. I especially liked the incidental nature of their appearance on Dr Who. Gay characters were incidental to the story but they were there. I think this is a positive step for the BBC but this may well change now that Russell T Davis is no longer in charge of Dr Who.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

Half of LGB respondents thought that BBC portrayal of LGB people was either negative or stereotypical compared with a just under a third of heterosexual respondents.

“Generally I am disappointed in the portrayal as often they fit into the stereotypes which the world gives us. Men are camp and effeminate, women are butch and manly! I am not like that. I am a normal woman in my 30s who doesn't dress or look like a man! and neither do most my gay friends. We often feel that we are not reflected in the world as this would not be interesting.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“I would say that the BBC represents gay people more than it does lesbians, yet the majority of these representations are stereotypes. The only positive gay character featured on the BBC is that of Captain Jack Harkness as seen in Torchwood. An openly gay character who certainly isn't a stereotype.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Overall I would say that the BBC's portrayal of LGB people both in programming and news stories is predominately negative. For example news articles will often describe partners/civil partners as “friends.” A case in point would be the way Andrew Cowles was described as Stephen Gately's “friend” rather than as his Civil Partner. And the fact that the BBC failed to mention or cover the murder of Michael Causer and the subsequent trial.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“The fact that few to none LGB interest stories are ever on the main National News, or even followed and covered is negative as it portrays LGB people as not being important enough or equal to anyone else.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“I think it is almost nonexistent. Name one truly meaningful, positive sustained portrayal of a lesbian, gay or bisexual character – beyond that of a "friendly buffoon" or a "troubled person" such as a "teen in crisis" who is a person in real life going about their business, dealing with relationships, work, friendships, finances, choices, parents, children, partners, government and the like, and who is not featured as a token LGBT person, or is featured in a context almost exclusively centred on his or her sex/love life.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“I cannot name a comedy show that doesn't portray anything other than a camp gay character, making the sexuality the route of the comedy rather than the character themselves. TV presenters often mention their opposite sex partners on mainstream, but I cannot recall a same sex partner being mentioned in a similar way. Programs like Strictly will often show contestants and professional dancers opposite-sex partners in domestic situations, but I can't recall seeing the same for same-sex couples?” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Some types that spring to mind:

- Gay men are tragically noble
- Lesbians are mentally ill or there for male gratification
- Bisexuals are liars/mentally ill/unable to have healthy relationships
- Bi women are straight males sexual fantasies
- Bi men are practically invisible.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“LGBT people are not a homogenous ‘type’ so any representation may be read as stereotyping; however this can be addressed by having more LGBT characters visible and representing a diversity of personalities.” (Female, 45-54, lesbian)

Range of Portrayal Across Genres

Question 4: Do you think the BBC broadcasts enough programmes that include stories about lesbian, gay or bisexual people, or characters, presenters or contributors who are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Table 14: Enough programmes with LGB people, characters, presenters or contributors

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 70% of respondents thought there were not enough programmes portraying LGB people, 19% thought that there were enough programmes portraying LGB people. 11% thought that there were too many programmes portraying LGB people. The total number of responses to this question was 7,895.]

Enough programmes with LGB people, characters, presenters or contributors	Number of responses	% of total
No	5,527	70%
Yes	1,500	19%
Too Many	868	11%
Total	7,895	100%

There is a strong view across responses to this question that there is insufficient portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Overall 70% of consultation respondents do not think there is enough portrayal of LGB people.

“It’s still pretty marginalised. It would be refreshing to have gay characters where their sexuality is not the central reason for their existing on the programme. I long to see for example a gay or lesbian character sharing a kiss without it being a bombshell moment.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“I could be wrong, but aside from the gay subplot in EastEnders are there any dramas or comedies that include LGB storylines in the schedule for the next two weeks? A quick hunt through the current TV listings brings up little, aside from EastEnders, a BBC4 program about a Gay Male Voice Choir, and a program with Peter Tatchell. Yes, I’m aware that BBC3 will be

showing (at some point this year) “Lip Service” a drama focused on the love lives of a group of Lesbians – but is that it?” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“I think the BBC gives enough 'air time' in soaps and dramas about gay issues but they are always portrayed as being scandalous and fraught with issues. It would be nice to see more characters where it isn't an issue as well as the big stories. The only openly gay presenters I can think of are those who use their sexuality as humour or as a part of their 'act' and as something which should be reacted to by the audience, rather than just an uneventful part of the programme.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“No. It has improved, but more could be done to cover events such as gay pride or a day celebrating our historic gay icons, after all some of our greatest artists and writers have been gay, a fact that is not widely recognised.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“I think that the BBC has done a brilliant job of attracting presenters and talent who are openly lesbian or gay to its output. However, more could be done to include lesbian and gay contributors to factual and current affairs programming in particular, as well as bisexual contributors, presenters and especially characters.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Not in a positive light, no. Also gay men seem to be shown far more often than women. Sandi Toksvig and Sue Perkins are the only lesbians I can think of, and they seldom appear on the Beeb anyway.” (Male, 16-24, gay)

“Not nearly enough. Of course there may be programmes where the sexual orientation of individuals is present but does not necessarily come to the fore as it's less relevant (e.g. factual or reality shows), but in drama the proportion of LGB characters should hit that 6-8% mark and should be realistically portrayed, as drama always involves relationships between people.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“I don't know. You probably do have presenters and contributors who are LGB, but unless their sexuality is known this doesn't help. My favourite is Sandi Toksvig, who talks about being a lesbian mum and what her son thinks of having two mums. Give her her own programme!!! I don't think there are enough LGB characters who are not 'main' characters. Too often the LGB person is exotic or problem-laden – fair enough if that's the story, but add in a smattering of ordinary people who just happen to be there and who just happen to be LGB. And please use LGB actors to play the parts. You wouldn't use a white actor to play a black person, now, would you?” (Female, 55-64, heterosexual)

Heterosexual respondents were less likely to hold this view on the volume of the BBC's portrayal of LGB people in comparison with LGB consultation respondents. 44% of heterosexual consultation respondents report this view. However, more than double that proportion of lesbian respondents state the same view. 95% of lesbian consultation respondents feel that the amount of portrayal of LGB people is too low.

Just over one in 10 responses to this question reported that they thought there was an overrepresentation of LGB people reflected by BBC services.

“Modern British society understands and accepts that homosexuality and that they have equality. It just seems the same stories going on and on about men and women "coming out" and they have a battle it so boring and overdone and over played. Who cares? People have lots of issues in their lives and we all have to deal with them. There are so many gay people out there and people know about it and accept it that it is a non-event. There is too much focus on this by the BBC.” (Male, 25-34, heterosexual)

“Yes. Too many token gay people and relationships in main stream programmes. Only 11% of the world’s population are gay, so why do many of the soaps suddenly have gay relationships featured in them” (Male, 45-54, heterosexual)

“I think the balance is about right on drama. I already feel it's being thrust down my throat. I think there might be too many gay presenters, but there aren't enough older women either, so the whole thing is unbalanced.” (Female, 55-64, heterosexual)

Consultation respondents’ perspectives on the quantity of portrayal were often necessarily bound to their views on the quality of that portrayal. For these respondents, quality and quantity of portrayal were inextricably linked, where the way LGB people were portrayed was as, if not more, important, as the amount of portrayal of LGB people.

“I think the BBC has the balance about right. I think it's more important how gay people are portrayed than taking a 10% demographic and saying "Right, 10% of our programming has to be gay".” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“I certainly do not find myself watching programmes and wishing that there were more gay people in them, but when gay characters appear I do find myself disappointed that their sexuality tends to be pivotal focus of their character, rather than just being a "background detail", which is what I feel is required if the BBC is to represent gay people more realistically and fairly.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“No. If there are lesbian, gay and bi people on programmes then it is not made obvious, and while it shouldn't be made a big deal of or shown as something weird and out of the ordinary, hiding it and never mentioning it suggests it is something abnormal to be hidden away and ashamed of. The programmes that are broadcast by and large tend to only include lesbian and gay characters are ratings and headline grabbers, and bi characters seem to kiss/sleep/insinuate they like the same sex once and then stick to only dating opposite sex people.”(Female, 16-24, heterosexual)

Question 5: Do you think that some types of programmes do this better than other types?

Table 15: Some types of programmes do this better than others

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 51% of respondents thought that there were some programmes which were better in this area and 49% thought that this was not the case. The total number of responses to this question was 5,680.]

Some types of programmes do this better than others	Number of responses	% of total
Yes	2,897	51%
No	2,783	49%
Total	5,680	100%

There were very mixed views across responses to this question. Half of consultation respondents thought that there were programme genres which performed better in this area and the other half held the opposing view point.

However, following deeper analysis, the clearest trends emerged relating to drama (including continuing drama), comedy and entertainment and factual programming.

Overall, across these areas, drama was felt to be the most positive in portraying LGB people. Torchwood, Doctor Who, Russell T. Davies and EastEnders all receive positive comment. Consultation respondents thought that drama, rather than continuing drama, held more scope for realistic and accurate portrayal of LGB people. Of those who responded to this question, three quarters thought that portrayal of LGB people through drama was positive.

“Dramas do it the best, it gives more room for character development.”
(Female, 35-44, lesbian)

“Definitely. Drama and soaps by their very nature tend to be better at this sort of thing. Comedy is usually the worst, focusing mostly on straight people and throwing in a gay character just for a cheap laugh - although I can't criticise all of the BBC's comedy output here, Extras handled it fairly well with the contrast between the two producers and Beautiful People is pretty great. But children's programmes are completely devoid of LGB characters, and it's still seen as massively controversial to introduce one when it really shouldn't be. Age-appropriate portrayals of straight romantic relationships are common in all but the youngest children's programming, so why not gay ones too? why is it OK for kids to watch a programme where a boy likes a girl but it's considered "adult subject matter" when a boy likes a boy, or a girl likes a girl?” (Male, 16-24, gay)

“I think mini-series dramas are probably the best type of programme for positive representations of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Although, there are probably more positive portrayals of lesbians in these than gay men (thanks to adaptations of lesbian authors' works). I think soaps have the potential to be the best but, historically, have been the worst. One particularly bad area (although these shows are not too prominent on the BBC) is American shows such as Heroes, 90210, The OC etc, where a character is suddenly written into a lesbian storyline for "sweeps" and then immediately goes back to men thereafter. One particularly good source of critique of the portrayal of lesbian, gay or bisexual people in entertainment is <http://www.afterellen.com/> (for lesbian and bisexual women) and <http://www.afterelton.com/> (for gay and bisexual men).” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

There was a concern that continuing drama in particular required more authentic portrayal of LGB people because of the reach of this genre. Respondents believe that this type of drama was more likely to sensationalise and offer more tokenistic portrayal of LGB people – albeit perhaps in part because of the sometimes characteristic sensationalist nature of continuing drama.

“Lesbian, gay and bisexual people appear in soaps, almost exclusively. This however does not mean that they do it 'better' than other types of show, it just means that they are the ones that have decided to include a lesbian, gay or bisexual character (typically with the possible storylines clearly in mind).

Factual programmes are types of programme, that presently, do this better than others (mainly because the sexuality of the presenter isn't the point of their existence).” (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

“Soap operas have been including LGBT characters for years - mostly for shock factor. A lot of the time all they get is sad stories about coming out and being rejected - and, although this is reality for a lot of LGBT people out there, it is not the only reality. Surprisingly, in the case of the BBC, I think science fiction shows, generally known for not being LGBT-friendly, are the ones doing better - even if that isn't always the case.” (Female, 25-34, heterosexual)

“Soaps always do this poorly because the nature of the show revolves around relationships, and this limits how you can use gay characters.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Soap operas seem to persist in showing gay relationships as something to be hidden and finally ended for the good of the two people involved.” (Female, 16-24, heterosexual)

There was less detailed commentary from consultation respondents in relation to both comedy and entertainment and factual programming. However, while consultation respondents felt there was a greater volume of portrayal of LGB people through comedy and entertainment, respondents were concerned with its stereotypical nature.

“Comedy is good because it gets talked about – so long as it isn’t offensive.” (Female, 25-34, heterosexual)

“More representation in comedy than drama I think. Hardly any LGBT-related stories on news programmes such as Today or PM other than negative ones or problematic ‘issues’.” (Female, 45-54, lesbian)

“Perhaps comedy has more gay characters as it is easier to portray gay characters as humorous and more difficult to portray them realistically in drama.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Chat shows and comedy seem best while sport and news seem to be lacking.” (Male, 16-24, sexual orientation not specified)

“Situation comedies are by far the worst for using clichéd queer characters.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Probably at present best done in drama. Comedy again tends to pander to stereotypes.” (Male, 55-64, gay)

“Drama is much more successful than comedy which tends to fall back on awkward stereotypes.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“On the whole I think series tend to do this best, my main problem with the BBC’s coverage of gay people is its lazy use in comedy programmes – a gay comedian making jokes about gayness is not, necessarily funny or subversive. I don’t think any type of humour should be ‘off limits’ but I think this is often done badly and without skill.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

Consultation respondents’ commentary on factual programming was that while its quality was good, there was too little of it.

“This is the sort of thing that is probably better done in documentaries than soaps. I also do not care whether someone is gay or bisexual – I care that Evan Davis asks tough questions on the Today programme (which he does, very well). I don’t care that he has a boyfriend rather than a girlfriend.” (Male, 25-34, bisexual)

“On the whole, factual programmes are better obviously, because in those cases people are not so much being “portrayed” but representing themselves, in their own words.” (Female, 25-34, heterosexual)

“For showing the general public what gay men and women are REALLY like, I don’t think you can do a lot better than documentaries, however soaps are clearly the most watched programmes... So to a large extent people’s perceptions and the onus for creating or modifying them falls within those programmes.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Fair representation of our viewpoints usually happens in the debate forums such as The Big Questions. GLBT folk are nearly always pitted against religious voices which serves to reinforce a moral statement about gays – there are plenty of us in the GLBT community who are also church goers.” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“It is always going to be easier to write representative characters into drama shows. The likes of EastEnders, Casualty, Holby City, Being Human, Gavin and Stacey all do very well in this particular regard. I can't

think of any news stories or documentaries that have included portrayals of LGBT people recently, though I may be forgetting particular examples.”
(Male, 25-34, gay)

Question 6: Do you think some broadcasters do this better than others?

Table 16: Some broadcasters do this better than others

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 64% thought that there were some broadcasters which were better in this area and 36% thought that this was not the case. The total number of responses to this question was 6,660.]

Some broadcasters do this better than others	Number of responses	% of total
Yes	4,262	64%
No	2,398	36%
Total	6,660	100%

Unlike other questions across the consultation, there was a distinct difference in the views between heterosexual and LGB consultation respondents in response to this question.

The majority of heterosexual respondents saw no difference in performance on the portrayal of LGB people across other broadcasters. Whereas the majority of LGB consultation respondents thought there were better performers in this area. 57% of heterosexual consultation respondents saw no distinction between the broadcasters. However, 77% of lesbian respondents, 80% of gay respondents and 69% of bisexual respondents could identify broadcasters who they thought perform better in this area than others.

Among those consultation respondents who did think that there were better performers, three out of four pointed to Channel 4. There was also a perceived hierarchy for those consultation respondents with Channel 4 at the top, followed by the BBC and then ITV, Five and Sky.

“Channel 4 has been and to some extent still is the best at representing lesbian, gay and bisexual people in its programming, both in terms of quality and quantity. Historically they've brought us 'Queer as Folk', the first lesbian kiss (in 'Brookside'), 'Dyke TV' and currently they are doing a good job with lesbian, gay and bi representation on programmes such as 'Skins', 'Hollyoaks' and 'Glee', factual programming such as 'Come Dine with Me' and reality programming such as 'Big Brother'.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Honestly, the BBC are probably the second best when it comes to broadcasters that portray lesbian, gay and bisexual people well across a variety of types of programme. Channel four is most likely the best at present.”(Female, 16-24, bisexual)

“Channel 4 is great. Another thing is coming out later this year on Channel 4 written by a young gay writer I know called Pete Jordi Wood and starring one of the cast of "Misfits" with a lead who is a gay character and yet the word "gay" isn't even mentioned in the entire script once. That's what we want from TV Drama I think, more roles that seamlessly integrate gay characters into lead roles in stories and yet the drama is not about the fact they are gay. That's acceptance. The time for coming out has been and gone with "Beautiful Thing". The time for interracial gay relationships happened with "My Beautiful Launderette". "Sugar Rush" and "Queer as Folk" painted contemporary, new characters from the LGBT communities into the framework of TV. If you look at those, and then you look at the now, we need to just INTEGRATE, not dramatise further the ISSUES so much.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“C4 is probably the strongest channel for LGB & T people and holds the yardstick to be measured against. That doesn't mean the BBC would have to compete with C4 on a like-for-like basis but should offer a strong and robust (alternative) LGB & T platform. I think there might be benefit from stronger coverage of Pride events and conversely, events like the Notting Hill Carnival. BBC 3 & BBC 4 have a lot of dead air time before 7 so why not fill that up a little. Why not cover the "Out Games" on BBC sport?” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“The BBC are among the best - I think Channel 4 is probably the best out there in relation to portraying gay characters. Whether it's the dramas they procure from America, (Six Feet Under, Brothers and Sisters, Ugly Betty) or homegrown drama such as Clapham Junction a few years ago. The mix of homosexual characters in Hollyoaks is also much truer to real life - especially among the young - and is something I would like to see replicated across on EastEnders. (There is never just one gay in the village)” (Male, 16-24, gay)

“BBC2 is good but sometimes I get the feeling that this is because it is less of a main stream audience and the BBC feels it is better to put us there where it is safer and less controversial and the Daily Mail might not notice. Channel 4 has always been good but has made some errors such as broadcasting A Bigger Splash very late on due to it's content, "two men making love, oh how terrible". Better than a lot of violent tosh if you ask me. I also like the way that being gay is portrayed in True Blood, which just happen to be there and just part of larger plot lines.” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“On radio no; on tv I think channel 4 probably is neck and neck if not ahead of you - they get a lot of kudos for queer as folk and I don't think BBC has anything it can put up against that.” (Male, 45-54, Gay)

“Channel 4 has always had a forward thinking approach, they had gay seasons of programmes and films in the 90s way before any other

broadcaster. This is something that BBC Four or Two could easily embark upon.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“I think the BBC suffers from drawing too much attention to gay characters - they often seem to be incongruous in dramatic or factual situations with a slight air of embarrassment that they are present. Within the BBC BBC3 and 4 are better but are still surpassed by Ch4 and E4.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“I think that when the BBC does it, it does it better than most other broadcasters, but it just doesn't do it as frequently as the others. I also think that Channel 4 can do it quite well (Beth in Brookside, Queer as Folk, Sugar Rush). However, Channel 4 also produces such shockers as the latest Hollyoaks storyline and the Brookside storyline involving Shelly, Lindsey and Lindsey's mother Jackie. Generally, i don't think ITV or Channel 5 perform very well at all in this area.”(Female, 25-34, lesbian)

Question 7: What do you think about the portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people on our news coverage?

Table 17: Portrayal of LGB people in news coverage

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 68% thought that portrayal of LGB people in the BBC’s news coverage was good and 32% thought it was poor. The total number of responses to this question was 2,805.]

Portrayal of LGB people in BBC's news coverage	Number of responses	% of total
Good	1,907	68%
Poor	898	32%
Total	2,805	100%

Almost 70% of consultation respondents thought the BBC’s portrayal of LGB people through its news services is good.

“There are some good examples – I thought the coverage of Stephen Gately’s death was admirable – but it’s restricted to stories with a legal or religious perspective (laws in India, Uganda, equality laws in the UK, ordination of gay priests etc.) There is little social coverage of every day stories with an LGB edge – e.g. Trends in civil partnership / divorce, the ‘pink pound’, gay bullying in schools etc.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Perfectly handled, no complaints whatsoever. BBC News is my most trusted source of news and the way it handles LGBT issues does it proud - superior to all other news providers in my view.” (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

“Usually fair, though occasionally one wonders why mention of sexuality is relevant to the story. However, I think the BBC is, generally speaking, better at this than most other news media. In recent years I've been genuinely moved by some human-interest news stories about the most 'screamingly gay' people, which have resisted any temptation to make silly innuendos which would have been inevitable a decade or so ago.” (Male, 25-34, bisexual)

“The infamous Have Your Say on Uganda was gobsmackingly offensive, but one thing it did do was to highlight that the BBC does not *normally* stoop to tabloid levels.” (Male, 25-34, bisexual)

“I think it would be good to see things like Pride having some decent coverage and coverage that gets beneath the whistle blowing and high camp and into the issues of why Pride still has a place in tackling and highlighting discrimination. I would like to see more attention paid to hate crime and how this affects people in everyday life and why so many people still feel too scared to come out.” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“The recent reporting of an elderly gay couple who were attacked in their home was an example of good coverage precisely because the gay aspect while central to why they were attacked, was not used as a means to deflect complete blame from the person who attacked them. It was a homophobic attack - the word 'unprovoked' shouldn't be used as it implies there is a justification for a 'provoked' attack. Just like a woman being drunk or wearing a short skirt doesn't make a sexual attack acceptable, nor should a person's sexuality be used to justify an attack on them.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“News is tricky. By definition it's negative or controversial. True of every group. Balance is key, but think about choosing "real people" examples who are from minority groups sometimes. It's a shame when you only see a Muslim on a story about Muslims or similarly a lesbian only because she's gay bashed. The BBC is generally good with staff though. I like the way Nigel Wrench is continuing to broadcast on Radio 4 and it's great to see Evan Davies and Jane Hill doing well as presenters. Presenters and reporters must be allowed to decide what's right for them, of course. But the BBC must do everything it can to reassure them that work will not suddenly dry up if they come out.” (Female, 35-44, lesbian)

Heterosexual respondents were more likely to think portrayal of LGB people through news services was good. More than half of LGB respondents held the same view. However a third of consultation respondents describe the BBC's portrayal of LGB people through its news services as poor.

“Coverage of gay people on the BBC is archaic. Gay men and women are rarely referenced and when they are it's usually in some context of HIV, objections from some religious extremists or challenges to legal changes like civil weddings. Worse of all, the BBC appears compelled to source the homophobic views of religious extremists whenever inviting a comment from someone openly gay. Remarkably strange when you think about it. Not least so because there are millions of Christians and Muslims who also happen to be gay.” (Male, 35-44, bisexual)

“It is not so much bad as invisible. Gay and lesbian people are portrayed in the news generally only when the news story is about homophobia or a "controversial" issue e.g. the Pope making statements against gay people or when there is gay-related legislation currently being debated. If the news is about an individual and it is not directly about their sexuality, then for a straight individual it might mention their wife, husband or children - I have practically never seen a gay or lesbian couple on the news except when the story was about being gay. This is rather like never seeing a black person on the news except when the story is about racism – unthinkable today, but common 20 years ago.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“I find the use of the term 'homosexual' is still used from time to time on news coverage and would prefer the use of gay or lesbian where appropriate, as the former term is too clinical and emphasises the 'sexual' aspect of being gay which is not an accurate portrayal of our identity.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“The BBC often seeks an alternative viewpoint when they just shouldn't. We don't present young earth creationists as having a serious viewpoint. We shouldn't present people who think homosexuality is a choice or a sin as being serious either (unless on a religious programme). The Newsnight report in November about homophobic violence was a chance to get a politician into the studio, to question the government on what they are doing to address the prejudice, and to hold them accountable. Instead, the Newsnight researchers brought Anne Atkins into the studio, a religious critic. The BBC should give LGBT licence payers the opportunity to hold the government accountable – especially when it gives opt-outs to religious schools to teach homosexuality is a sin if they want. This will not do.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“I can't remember anything on our local/regional news coverage ever – national news, again, it's always "an issue", and often polarised: "Gay versus Religion", 'pro gay v anti-gay' almost treating 'the gay community' as if it were a political party. I'm also not a fan of speaking about 'the (whatever) community' - ignoring the huge diversity that exists within any demographic.” (Male, 35-44, heterosexual)

Lesbian consultation respondents were most likely to be critical. A further 10% of lesbian consultation respondents raised the question **‘what coverage?’**

What coverage?!?!?!? When was the last time the 7 O'clock news broadcast something about LGBT people that now not in conjunction with a recent legislation change???? (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

I can't think of any coverage other than stories specifically about gay people, We seem less likely to feature as an incidental part of news coverage. Again, it needs to be emphasised that we are part of everyday society to 'normalise' us for others. (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

Authentic Portrayal

Question 8: Thinking about its portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people across radio, television and online, how well do you think the BBC does this?

Table 18: Authentic portrayal of LGB people: How well does the BBC do this?

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 43% of respondents thought that the BBC portrays LGB people well, 40% thought that the BBC's portrayal of LGB people was fair and 17% thought that the BBC portrays LGB people poorly. The total number of responses to this question was 5,226.]

Authentic LGB Portrayal: How well does the BBC do this?	Number of responses	% of total
Well	2,247	43%
Fair	2,090	40%
Poorly	889	17%
Total	5,226	100%

Overall, 43% of respondents thought the BBC portrays LGB people well through its output. However, heterosexual consultation respondents were more likely to think so when compared with LGB consultation respondents. 55% of heterosexual respondents reflected this view compared with 38% of lesbian respondents, 37% of gay respondents and 41% of bisexual respondents.

“Fairly well. It is getting better. Torchwood has gone some way towards helping, however while its portrayal of male gay/bi relationships is good its portrayal of female lesbian/bi relations seemed somewhat titillating. I'm excited to see how the BBC3 programme Lip Service pans out and is received.” (Female, 16-24, lesbian)

“Reasonably well. Though I think this is not a cause for complacency, and that the BBC should be always continuing to improve its portrayal, and

inform itself of changing lives, experiences and needs of LGB citizens so that its portrayal can be accurate and informative and positive. I think there are still some stereotypes in some of the portrayals. I think the BBC often comes from a mainstream/majority straight-white-nondisabled-etc position, and so any portrayal of anyone outside of that 'norm'/position of relative power and privilege is not going to be quite inline with their own experiences and self-portrayal. I think it's the difference between 'tolerance' (of the marginalised other from a position of superiority) and true acknowledgement and embracing of diversity in all its forms. Within this, though, I think the BBC does ok. I hope and trust the BBC will keep working on exploring its own underlying values and assumptions, and how that influences its response to others, including their portrayal. I'm not for a minute thinking that the BBC does not include LGB staff, and that LB writers and contributors of all types don't have access or scope within the BBC. But inclusion happens on a number of levels.” (Male, 35-44, bisexual)

“The BBC is doing well in its portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people with storylines such as Christian and Syed in Eastenders, the wonderfully diverse sexualities on display in Torchwood and commissioning new programmes such as Lip Service. However, as I've mentioned in previous answers, the BBC needs to increase the number of lesbian, gay and bi people in its fictional and particularly factual programming and include more lesbians across the board. There is also an issue with representation of bisexual people, which I'll raise below. In general, however, when it includes them, the BBC does a good job of authentically portraying the lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Generally I think the BBC does a good job in portraying gay people as positive role-models. There's a tricky line to be drawn between making it clear someone is gay and being openly celebratory about it, without it seeming like you're hitting people over the head with it, or suggesting that being gay is a prism through which we should judge that person's success, talent or worthiness, in a way we wouldn't do with heterosexual people. I think the BBC treads that line pretty well, all in all, but could do more to celebrate the achievements of gay people and make being gay more visible as an 'everyday' life for many individuals.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Looking back over BBC programmes for the last 20 years, I think the BBC has been very brave on occasions. In recent years there has been a tendency for the corporation to mostly use EastEnders as a mainstream platform for these stories. Not everyone watches EastEnders however, and it's a poor reflection on the corporation that it's been done this way recently.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Increasingly well. The portrayal is mostly fair and honest, but it is just lacking. Again I must praise the recent development of Sayeed in Eastenders as a gay Muslim man struggling with his faith and sexuality.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

40% of consultation respondents described the BBC's portrayal of LGB people as fair.

“When the BBC does something well, it is undoubtedly pioneering and worldclass. The problem is perhaps that it is too infrequent that the BBC portrays aspects of life that affect the gay population and their families. As such the portrayal of gay characters need to mature and move beyond their current one-dimensional one-liner narrative. I feel that the BBC does this better at the youth end of programming than on radio and adult/family television. I have seen little gay-outreach from BBC online.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“I think the BBC is so vast that it really does vary from programme to programme. Shows like Beautiful People are very positive, some of Chris Moyles comments and those made by Jonathan Ross about Four Poofs and a Piano I find quite offensive. Yet Radio is also home to Scott Mills. I think it is a mixed bag but the BBC could do better.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

Just under a fifth of respondents think the BBC underperforms in this area. 17% of consultation respondents viewed our portrayal of LGB people as poor. LGB consultation respondents were slightly more likely to describe BBC portrayal of LGB people in this way.

“I don't think the BBC portrays gay men and women well. They are under represented, often stereotypical depictions and not shown as part of mainstream society with mainstream societies aims, ambitions, fears and anxieties.” (Male, 35-44, bisexual)

“It could do far better with all, especially with respect to gay women and bisexuals. In specific cases, the way certain individuals within the BBC have portrayed them through characterisation has been appalling, and there are still plenty unbalanced stereotypes floating around (Yes some gay men are very camp, but most are not: not that you could tell from the majority of TV appearances)” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“I think that the BBC has good intentions, and is highly progressive with promoting the normality of homosexuality and bisexuality. However, all the storylines seem to end in heartbreak or death. Bisexuals more often than not wind up choosing to spend the rest of their lives with someone of the opposite sex, and get their 'happy ending', whereas gay couples, such as Syed and Christian or Jack and Ianto, have to go through a helluva lot of suffering before it all either ends in heartbreak or death.” (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

“As I've said before, LGBT people are usually limited to "issue of the week" portrayals or else presented in a way which is in some way isolated from the mainstream of the narrative. On Radio, 2/3 of Radio 4 seems to be Sandi Toksvig or Sue Perkins, the rest being Marcus Brigstocke.... Hardly stimulating or representative. On seriousness the portrayal of LGBT people in radio drama is generally good, especially in The Archers and various radio plays.” (Male, 45-54, bisexual)

“You follow, you rarely lead. I don't see any great thinkers from the gay community leading any of your tv, radio or online efforts. Name 1 MAINSTREAM OPENLY GAY a-lister each with a primetime TV show,

primetime Radio show or website in the BBC portfolio. I rest my case.”
(Male, 25-34, gay)

“There are still a number of incidents (such as well publicised incidents on Chris Moyles's Radio 1 show) where negative stereotypes of gay people are reinforced as a source of humour, where LGB people are the butt of jokes.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“I can't think of ANY lesbian or bisexual representation on radio (particularly on Radio 1).” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

Even where respondents think the BBC does well, they think it could do better and be less stereotypical.

“Very well but not so well. I have said this because I'm thinking of the current EastEnders storyline. The storyline, actors, etc are really good. However I don't think its done well because in the entire 6 months of it being shown on screen we have only have "2 kisses (first kiss and New Years Eve kiss), 1 hug and a suggested kiss in the alleyway and 2 second hand holding scene. For viewers to only see this much, it does not come across realistically and it can almost lead the 'casual' viewers to thinking that there is nothing to it, whereas fans such as myself know that there is so much more to it and we can only hope that the BBC take another step and start showing them properly and maybe change people's minds!”
(Female, 55-64, heterosexual)

“As I mentioned in response to previous questions; the BBC seems to be unaware that you get gay, lesbian and bisexual people who do not fit the popular stereotypes. This needs to change or the BBC is going to be left in the dust behind its leading rivals, and soon.” (Male, 16-24, bisexual)

“It is rare that you have more than one possibly two gay characters in a series. Therefore there are large areas of the gay community who are unrepresented. We rarely see black gay men on television, or older gay men, or gay guys who are into perhaps more alternative/ rock type music or gay men who DON'T lead glamorous metropolitan lifestyles!! It would be nice to see a more diverse representation perhaps over a range of media and genre. Showing a range of peoples lives with energy intelligence and wit!” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“They do okay. With Eastenders, they have Christian and Syed, but most of the romantic part of this relationship has been off screen. By not showing these characters the same respect that the straight characters, who kiss on screen and have love scenes on screen, it destroys the impact. If they were treated the same, then it would mean more. I think that networks need to bring on gay characters just the same as if they were straight and that means on screen kissing and love scenes. They also need to stick to their guns when people start getting upset instead of caving.” (Female, 45-54, heterosexual)

“On a scale from 1 to ten, with 1 being non-existent and 10 being exclusively LGBT content only, the current mark awarded would be a 3... other national broadcasters range from 1 to 2!” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

It was clear from responses to this question that those taking part in the consultation often had difficulty in recalling BBC portrayal of LGB people.

“Other than EastEnders I cannot think of another programme that has a LGB character in it. You have nothing about LGB broadcasting history or anything. Dr. Who does have a bisexual character and Torchwood has a gay character but where are the lesbians????? I mention both or Russell T Davies programmes here, however they are only on once a week for 13 weeks so really a quarter of your yearly scheduled may include a gay character do you think this is enough?????” (Male, 25-34, gay)

Question 9: Do you think that the way the BBC portrays these people in programmes is different for each of these individual groups: gay men, lesbians, bisexual men or bisexual women?

Table 19: Portrayal differences between gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men and women

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 59% thought that there were differences between how gay men, lesbian women and bisexual men and women are portrayed. 41% thought that this was not the case. The total number of responses to this question was 6,354.]

Portrayal differences between gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men and women?	Number of responses	% of total
Yes	3,749	59%
No	2,605	41%
Total	6,354	100%

Just under 60% of consultation respondents overall identified differences between how lesbians, gay and bisexual people are portrayed.

Female consultation respondents were far more likely to report this as an issue. 76% of lesbian consultation respondents were more likely to agree that this was issue when compared with respondents who identified themselves as bisexual, heterosexual or gay.

A distinct hierarchy was repeatedly articulated by consultation respondents. Gay men were perceived overwhelmingly as having greater prominence in

portrayal of LGB people, followed by a severe lack of visibility of lesbian women with bisexual people considered as largely invisible.

“Gay men? Something to point and laugh at. Lesbians? Something to fantasize about or dismiss. Bisexuals? Don’t exist.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Gay men get the most attention, then lesbians (who are far from visible) and lastly bisexuals.”(Male, 25-34, gay)

Linked to the concerns raised about the hierarchy in the volume of portrayal of lesbian women compared with gay men and with bisexual people, was the perceived tendency for stereotyping.

“Men kissing still seems to be a big deal for the BBC.” (Male, 35-44, heterosexual)

“The BBC tends to employ overtly camp gay men which is unrepresentative of the majority of gay men and a dated yet still used stereotype. There should be camp gay men that’s fine, they exist, however there should also be visibly open non camp men too as they make the majority of the gay male population. For lesbians there isn’t much representation the occasional presenter or guest on a chat or panel show does not constitute representative portrayal. Bisexual people are not often represented and are generally made to look even more promiscuous than gays and lesbians.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“I think portrayal of men is patchier in its quality, as in the portrayal of gay families. I know quite a few LGBT people with families, and news coverage is often stated in terms of families being a married man and a woman. Issues are often stated in terms of married vs. unmarried. There are a range of options which seem to fail to be mentioned, and those people have their own challenges fighting discrimination and perceptions. Being swept under the carpet does not help.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

Concerns that there was a distinct lack of portrayal of lesbian women was frequently reported together with concerns that lesbian experience was presented as either a temporary phase or as titillation.

Lesbians and bisexuals are hugely under represented across all of the BBC’s output. They’re practically invisible. I know little about lesbians and the BBC gives me no clues. All I’ve gleaned from the BBC is that you can be a straight female one day and then a lesbian the next. And then go back to being straight (Sonia in EastEnders). Or, you can present minor sports programmes. (Male, 35-44, bisexual)

“As usual women are less visible than men – this is an issue of sexism / patriarchal assumptions rather than homophobia or heterosexism.” (Female, 25–34, lesbian)

“The most under represented group are the lesbian community (besides the transgender community which is not the purpose of this survey) and this should also be addressed. Lesbians are viewed more so as women who choose their sexuality. Often characters flirt with lesbianism as a choice following a failed heterosexual relationship. This is true for a

minority but, like gay men, the sexual orientation is not a choice but is as innate as eye colour.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Lesbians are invisible on the Beeb I think apart from Casualty. The recent storyline with the lesbian paramedic staging a wedding to a man to please her father before he dies is actually quite plausible, though the kissing the registrar in front of him was obviously for dramatic effect and can be forgiven as it is a soap. Casualty has a pretty good history of characters like that.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

Similarly, dissatisfaction that bisexual people are invisible across the BBC’s output was also reported together with concerns that bisexual identity was too often portrayed as a behaviour and not a valid sexual orientation.

“Bisexual people can be fairly invisible in the real world and this is reflected in the balance in the media. Research in to bisexuals’ lives and attitudes is not often performed, but, when it is, the picture is of some concern. It would be good to see the BBC leading the way in covering their experience; when bisexual people do appear in drama I think there is a greater tendency to revert to stereotypes (confused/creepy/untrustworthy) which would not be tolerated in portrayals of gay/lesbian characters. This is by no means an exclusively BBC-related problem, however.” (Male, 25-34, bisexual)

“Bisexual men are practically invisible! When we are portrayed, it’s generally as “swingers” or “closet gays”, “cheats” or other derogatory terms. This really needs to change and our society needs some positive images and real-world role models of bi men and women in order to offset this bi-phobia and ease the burden on young people who are newly discovering their own sexuality.” (Male, 45-54, bisexual)

“Hard to think of a specific example [of portrayal of bisexual people] though I’d say the usual stereotype is of people who are ‘confused’.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

Concerns relating to stereotypical portrayal were bound up in the responses to this question and were made repeatedly.

“Gay men are over dramatised and all made to look like camp stereotypes, and never have lasting relationships. Lesbians are always butch and never seem to have lasting relationships. Bisexual people don’t even seem to be anywhere on BBC programming.” (Female, 16-24, lesbian)

“Gay men: very visible, but also frequently stereotyped as camp, effeminate and the butt of jokes. Lesbians: almost invisible, regularly mocked. Bi men: almost invisible. I can only think of the character Ianto from Torchwood. Bi Women: generally portrayed in ways that titillate straight male viewers – e.g. 90% straight woman (both of whom are dressed and acted to look like magazine covers) before returning to boyfriends/husbands. Trans people: largely invisible or treated derogatorily.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Gay men: portrayed as either camp/funny/bitchy, scared of coming out/being outed i.e. not come to terms with their sexuality, taking part in

illicit relationship with married men/others who are not out/unsure of their sexuality. Lesbians: totally unseen in the BBC. I cannot remember the last time I saw/heard/read about a lesbian in anything to do with the BBC. Bisexual men: closeted, scared of accepting their sexuality. Licentious. Very rarely portrayed in any manner in the BBC. Bisexual women: licentious. Sexually 'liberated', titillation for straight men, next to lesbians, the most underrepresented group closely followed by bisexual men." (Male, 16-24, gay)

"The LGB community is as diverse as the heterosexual community. No group of people can be fully represented and not all viewers will be satisfied. I believe that it is true of all social groups that only a very narrow 2 dimensional view is offered to viewers." (Male, 35-44, gay)

"Older gay people and those from working class or ethnic minority backgrounds are barely visible at all – their stories, which could be fascinating, are ignored."(Male, 25-34, gay)

"There are a couple of groups not mentioned in the question, transgendered and transsexual people. While I appreciate you may consider trans people separately from the lesbian/gay/bisexual issue (a transsexual for instance might exhibit a heterosexual choice in their partner) I think historically we have fought for our rights together, today campaign together on very similar grounds, and (or because) we are often discriminated against for similar reasons and in similar ways." (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

Editorial Standards

Question 10: What do you think about the language used by the BBC when it talks about lesbian, gay or bisexual people in its programmes? Is it appropriate?

Table 20: BBC's use of language when talking about LGB people

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 69% thought that the BBC's language was appropriate. 26% thought that the BBC's language was inappropriate. 5% had mixed views and 1% thought that it was too sensitive or 'politically correct'. The total number of responses to this question was 5,344. Please note each reply may contain more than one 'response'.]

BBC's use of language when talking about LGB people	Number of responses	% of total
Appropriate	3,644	69%
Inappropriate	1,373	26%
Mixed/depends	264	5%
Too sensitive/PC	53	1%
Total	5,344	100%

Overall, the majority of consultation respondents think that the language the BBC uses when talking about LGB people is appropriate. Just under 70% of consultation respondents believe that the BBC's language is suitable.

Heterosexual respondents are much less likely to have any complaints with language the BBC uses in this area with 80% of heterosexual consultation respondents reporting the same view.

"I think this is generally good, and programmes like the One Show have worked to show how important this is. It is key that this is not seen as political correctness, but that it is seen as treating people with dignity and with respect." (Male, 45-54, gay)

"Generally yes. It is down to certain personalities involved with the BBC that don't maintain this standard." (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

"I can't think of a specific incident. I do think radio and TV presenters are good at stepping in and apologising / clarifying when potentially offensive terms are used. I think both characters and presenters have to be very careful about using derogatory phrases in case this 'validates' them."
(Female, 25-34, lesbian)

"Yes it's very good. There is such a thing as being too PC. You can't portray the issues and prejudice the LGB community face in story lines unless you sometimes use offensive language. Also the LGBT community does or should have a sense of humour about itself. Some things a lot of us will find funny even if it is a bit risqué but there will always be someone who is over sensitive and what's to eliminate the ability to laugh at oneself which is an important part of life."
(Female, 16-24, bisexual)

"Yes, except for what I said about radio 4 and the use of the phrase homosexuals. I also hate it when we are referred to as gays (rather than gay people)."
(Female, 35-44, bisexual)

"In general, language used in factual/new programmes is appropriate and not derogative. Most drama's are also acceptable in this sense though some too prolifically use the camp, stereotypical language to describe the gay community alienating more so to speak 'straight acting' gay people like me who are concerned it misrepresents us to others. Also, as aforementioned, certain T.V. personalities (such as Jeremy Clarkson, Chris Moyles, etc.) seem to get away with casual homophobia, that is to say using language derogative to LGBT people without even any deep held conviction, as it is acceptable; these people set a bad example for teens and are off-putting for people like me to shows i would otherwise enjoy."
(Male, 16-24, gay)

"I think the BBC is generally good in terms of its appropriate use of language in its news and current affairs coverage, although my personal preference is not to refer to gay/lesbian men and women as "gays" or "lesbians" in the same way I find "blacks" a slightly odd turn of phrase, as it removes the sense of these groups as being "people" like everyone else, and contributes to a distancing effect of these groups from the "normal" people from whom they are being differentiated. I feel the use of language to refer to gay people or lifestyles in dramas is generally convincing and realistic."
(Male, 25-34, gay)

"There is too much effort to avoid overtly LGB terms such as boyfriend and girlfriend. Generic ambiguous terms like partner are over-favoured. It seems like the BBC is trying too hard not to offend people with an obvious statement of sexuality and this can be offensive."
(Male, 25-34, gay)

"On the whole though I think the BBC is more aware of stereotypes than other media outlets and avoids such things as overt camping up for the titillation of the straight masses."
(Male, 25-34, gay)

"Just make sure you keep up to speed with developments within the community if you are concerned about communicating in the right way. Perhaps you should consider having a steering group that occasionally looks at shows that touch on gay issues to give you regular feedback"
(Male, 25-34, gay)

LGB consultation respondents were more likely to think the BBC's use of language was inappropriate. 31% of lesbian respondents, 34% of gay respondents and 25% of bisexual respondents reported their view that the BBC uses inappropriate language – compared with 15% of heterosexual consultation respondents.

“4 Poofs and a Piano? Enough said. Stereotypes and insults paraded under the pretext of 'comedy'.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Often, but not always. e.g. plays/drama generally do quite well, but "real life" programmes, such as chat shows, interviews, fly-on-the-wall documentaries etc seem to tolerate a lot of inappropriate language and let it go unchallenged.” (Male, 35-44, heterosexual)

“I've previously heard the phrase that individuals chose/decide to be LGB (e.g. Alex decided to become a lesbian at age 29). It isn't a choice, it's part of our imprint. It might not always be totally recognisable, feelings can be confused or misunderstood or just not acted on, but they are always there. There's also an assumption that LGB couples won't have children or when they do that only one of the couple is the mum/dad. With new laws recognising non-biological parents in civil partnerships as parents with whole rights LGB families are becoming more common place. I gave birth previously and my wife is having a baby this year. We don't consider ourselves as I'm a mum of one and she'll be a mum of one. We are a family, and don't wish to be described in any other way” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“There needs to be more thought in the language used. The term 'civil-partner' should be given the same weight as 'husband' or 'wife'. I saw an article on the BBC news that referred to a mans civil-partner as his 'lover' - a mans wife would NEVER be referred to as his lover. Chris Moyles is incredibly offensive when talking about gay people, and his audience is possibly the most impressionable of all broadcasters. Across the BBC, gay people should be spoken about as normal human beings and valued members of society.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“The BBC must ALWAYS take care when referring to Trans people. Get the pronouns right! (This is relevant to the consultation as many Trans people are also LGB and many are in same-sex relationships.)” (Male, 16-24, gay)

“The notion of a 2 sided debate on that issue was every bit as offensive as the proposition, and had more than a small number of bigots posting who thought all their Christmases had come at once. Even Jan Moir isn't that crass.

There is a more nuanced debate to be had on Uganda, such as "Should we interfere with their internal politics", but "Should gays be executed" was crass in the extreme. Whoever thought that was a suitable topic for public service debate should put himself in our shoes once in a while. Or in front of a firing squad... whichever drives the point home quicker.

Jeremy Vine on Radio 2 is still pretty good value, and I like that he gets Peter Tatchell on to talk about gay issues in the news from time to time.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“There are occasional offensive slurs and off-colour jokes, but these are far less of a concern for me than the insidious nature of the heteronormative assumptions made across the board. Generally when relationships are discussed, there is an implicit assumption that these are opposite-sex relationships. Males are not asked "do you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend", they are just asked "do you have a girlfriend" for instance. It's always "wife and kids", never "partner and kids". Etc.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“The most problematic language usage is the common trend of referencing gay people as 'gays' - no one refers to 'olds' or 'disableds', for example. It comes across as dehumanising if you take out the 'people' part of 'gay people', or the 'man' out of 'gay man'.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“It swings from outrageously old-fashioned to 'right-on, but especially interested in conveying realities. 'Appropriate' is a parental term that does not accurately reflect the issues on the table here. The debate is not about what is appropriate, it may be difficult to establish what others may consider appropriate, until you ask yourselves "how would I like to be portrayed, if this programme/item were about me, my daughter, son, mother, father or best friend?" (Female, 45-54, lesbian)

The most common examples of inappropriate language pointed to by consultation respondents were:

- Pejorative use of the word 'gay'
- Use of the word 'homosexual'
- Comments perceived to be homophobic made by BBC on screen and on-air presenters

Pejorative use of the word 'gay'

“The word “gay” should not be used by presenters in the BBC to describe something in a negative way. This has consequences in the larger world and causes suffering. The BBC has a responsibility as a broadcaster to make sure language is not used in that way. The corporation’s refusal to act on this inexcusable, and very inappropriate.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Most of the time yes, but in general chat slang is creeping in. I find it highly offensive that the word gay is allowed to be used in a negative way. I have to challenge this usage at work as it is seen as being discriminatory – the BBC should do this.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

However, I am still concerned about the use of the term "gay" as a mild form of abuse or to refer to something being "lame" or "rubbish" for comedic effect - for example, by the Radio 1 DJ Chris Moyles. Although I understand that the context of the use of this word was light-hearted, humorous, not aimed at any individual and not intended to cause offence, I still feel that to use the word "gay" in this way still equates being gay with being "wrong" or "lesser" and the historical connotations of using it as a term of abuse cannot be ignored. It is a form of casual homophobia, almost

invisible to many people, that I feel needs to be addressed in the same way that racial slurs have successfully been addressed, if gay bullying and institutionalised forms of homophobia are to be tackled fully. (Male, 25-34, gay)

Use of the word 'homosexual'

"I am sick of hearing "homosexual" & "homosexuality", rather than lesbians, gay men & bisexuals. Especially on Radio 4 & Radio Wales. Don't forget the transgendered either." (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

"The BBC must also take care in its use of language. Across the media, the word "homosexual" is often used when "gay", "lesbian", "LGBT", or "same-sex" would be more appropriate. For example, the US is not debating allowing homosexuals to marry; it is debating same-sex marriage. Not all people who enter into a same-sex marriage are homosexual - many are bisexual, and those who are homosexual probably prefer the terms "lesbian" and "gay", as these terms do not carry negative medical-connotations, nor do they over emphasise the sexual nature of same-sex relationships, which are as much about love and commitment as sex. The BBC is better on this issue than many other media organisations (e.g. The Telegraph) but does not always get it right. For example an article on the BBC website dated 26 January 2010 carries the headline "UK more liberal on homosexuality, says survey" (accurate use of language) but originally carried the headline "UK more liberal on homosexuals". (Male, 16-24, gay)

"I have mentioned the use of the work 'homosexual(s)' in news and current affairs coverage. I feel that this term should be used very sparingly indeed, and 'lesbians and gay men' or 'gay people' could be used instead in most cases. The word 'homosexual' is now politically charged and is still used for its clinical, sex-focussed effect by groups in society who oppose equal rights for LGB people." (Male, 25-34, gay)

"The BBC uses the word "homosexual" far too often. This sounds old fashioned and ridiculous. It also sounds like the person saying it is offended/disgusted by it. Just have the confidence to use the word "gay" in a positive way." (Female, 35-44, gay)

"We use 'Gay all the time, and is my view the formally accepted way of describing a persons sexuality. It's only the way it's used that could prove offensive. I hate it when newsreaders or announcers use the word 'homosexual', is keeps putting the sexual connotation in the forefront, and sound so very 70s. Another total no-no. 'Practising Homosexual' it might fit into the language of an ancient bible, but not a modern day society's language. I find this offensive, as would a heterosexual if I were to ask them if they were a 'practicing heterosexual'" (Male, 45-54, gay)

Comments perceived to be homophobic made by BBC on screen and on-air talent

"Shame! All it takes is two big stars and it overwhelms the good work you try to do - it under does it. Don't be afraid of being accused of political correctness. There is no such thing as pc – people who say we're too pc

now don't understand how vital it is to get it right, to have the correct terminology. It's LAZINESS to scoff and say we're too pc. It's about exactness, correct terminology is about what's right in life, not what's restrictive - is it such a big deal for people to actually think before they speak?" (Female, 35-44, gay)

There was also a commonly reported concern that there are no consequences.

"You allow presenters and comedians to make homophobic comments and jokes all the time, with no repercussions, You only act against presenters when there's a big enough moral 'outrage', which will not happen with gay people, as we're a fairly small section of society." (Male, 25-34, gay)

"Which disappointingly the BBC decided not to uphold the complaint, I do feel that the BBC should be actively encouraging the move away from such language, as it is offensive and hurtful, and encourages bullying and hatred." (Male, 16-24, gay)

"Not only inappropriate use of language but also very poorly handled aftermath by the BBC. My view of their standing in relation to LGB issues diminished in light of how it that whole issue was handled." (Male, 35-44, gay)

"It is tough to judge the many people working at the BBC, but in this respect the organisation is only as good as its weakest link. And one such weakness, for me, was the way in which the word service covered Uganda's debate on executing gays. Both the manner in which the topic was initially presented and the way the BBC reacted was offensive and made me question for the first time whether editorial staff generally had the necessary awareness, sensitivity and education to carry out their responsibilities." (Male, 35-44, gay)

"I don't think the BBC applies it's editorial and ethical standards consistently across it's output. People such as Chris Moyles make offensive remarks and still work for the BBC. This illustrates just how ineffective the BBC standards are when applied to LGB issues. This is particularly disappointing because Moyles' programme is aimed at young people and yet he consistently reinforces negative stereotypes. Until the BBC takes real action against those who make offensive and/or homophobic remarks, it's claim to deliver the highest editorial and ethical standards is completely hollow. I thought the action in the Carol Thatcher 'gollywog' case was appropriate - how about applying the same standard to homophobic remarks?"

"Respond more pro actively to complaints, don't just dismiss with the old phrase 'there was no intent to insult...', you should tell scriptwriters and producers to apologise when they get it wrong, this must be an earnest apology otherwise viewers can see it's not mean, they should also make a pledge it won't happen again." (Female, 45-54, heterosexual)

Consultation Respondents' Recommendations and Suggestions

Question 11: What improvements, do you think the BBC could make in its portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people?

Table 21: Improvements BBC could make in its portrayal of LGB people

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 69% thought that portrayal could be less stereotypical. 17% thought that there should be more programmes portraying LGB people. 6% thought that there should be a greater diversity of LGB people portrayed. 5% thought that the BBC should have a zero tolerance on its language and challenge homophobia. 2% thought that there should be more positive role models. The total number of responses to this question was 3,298. Please note each reply may contain more than one 'response']

Improvements BBC could make in its portrayal of LGB people	Number of responses	% of total
Less stereotypical	2,298	69%
More programs	566	17%
More Diversity	200	6%
Zero Tolerance: language and homophobia	167	5%
Positive Role Models	67	2%
Total	3,298	100%

We asked consultation respondents for their ideas on improvements they thought the BBC should take to enhance its portrayal of LGB people.

Consultation respondents were prompted to reiterate some of the key themes which had been articulated across the consultation including appeals for:

- Less stereotypical portrayal
- More portrayal of LGB people
- More portrayal of LGB people integrated across all programme genres
- Portrayal of a greater diversity of LGB people
- Zero tolerance on language and homophobia
- Greater variety of LGB role models across BBC services

Just under 70% of consultation respondents who answered this question called for less stereotypical portrayal.

“Avoid the use of stereotypes and ensure LGB people of all ages and from all parts of the UK are included i.e. not just young wealthy gay men from London or possibly Manchester.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Avoid stereotypes; appoint more LGB staff to presenter/newsreader roles; mainstream LGB characters into existing/future programming rather than produce specific LGB programmes.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Programming should shy away from stereotypes, or show LGB people in a positive light. Show them as happy normal sorted people doing what everyone else in the country is doing, living lives, holding down jobs, raising children (if they have them) and dealing with same things that everyone else does in the country.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Please try not to end every single gay or lesbian love story by killing off one of the characters or forcing them to live with loneliness and regret the rest of their lives. Every time there is a gay love story, you just know its going to end in tragedy. Real life is not all "Brokeback Mountain" - gays and lesbians do walk off into the sunset together. I've been with my partner for 17 years. I'm still highly irritated by the last series of Torchwood, in which a gay couple pussyfooted around about their "relationship" and only confessed love when one of them died. It was such a boring old cliché!” (Female, 35-44, lesbian)

“More stories with happy endings - this is hugely important, especially in programmes aimed at young people. When queer people go looking for stories with them in and see only awkward coming-out stories and tragedies, it seems like queerness is a bad thing, that will only lead to bad places. This makes an ongoing difference to people's aspirations and mental health.” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“Getting rid of the default assumption that people are straight” (Female, 25-34, lesbian)

Just under a fifth (17%) of consultation respondents answering this question pointed to more visibility generally of LGB people through BBC output whether through TV, radio, news or online coverage.

“Visibility! I would like to see a few LGBT characters as part of the regular casts of TV programmes, not shoved into their own 'specialist' programme

where all the characters are gay or it's aimed at a gay audience. In daily life, there are gay bus drivers and gay post office workers and gay teachers. Heterosexual people interact with LGBT people all the time, yet this is rarely shown in TV programmes.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Have more LGBT news stories. Cover instances where religions DON'T discriminate against LGBT people - e.g. Unitarians, Pagans, Liberal Jews and Quakers are inclusive and welcoming towards LGBT people. Avoid use of derogatory terms.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“As queer people are often 'coming out' when they are younger and often still at school it would be good for there to be more representations of younger people. I know of many people who suffered terribly when they were at school from homophobic bullying. The younger people are when they are exposed to positive representations of homosexuality and queerness in general the more likely they are not to hold negative/hateful opinions about them.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“To show more: on a gardening programme, show a gay couple's garden; on a cooking competition, show gay people entering; show gay car fanatics; gay sportspeople, etc.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“More LGB characters for a start. If we work on the conservative assumption that about 10% of the population are LGB then it is fair to expect that 10% of characters and presenters on the BBC are LGB or play LGB characters.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

“Increased coverage. Gay storylines don't have to be popping up everywhere but it seems remarkable that Albert Square has never in 25 years had a lesbian resident. When storylines about gay people come up, don't over-dramatise it. I would love to be able to turn on the tv and see something that I can relate to and not have to look to the US for lesbians on tv just so I can occasionally feel represented. It is wrong that gay people have to create international websites to share information about when a lesbian is on tv because it is such a rare occurrence in their own country (this link might prove useful - www.afterellen.com)”(Female, 25-34, lesbian)

“Challenge yourselves to tell more of the LGBT story than AIDS, hatred, stereotypes, pride festivals and the "cause" of our orientation. Tell people's lives and stories. Where are transgendered people on your list? Where are their sufferings, prejudices, triumphs, experiences, loves, discriminations, families, communities” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“More of us, a greater diversity of us, and especially having us as the main protagonists in programmes much more often. Especially dramas. I cannot think of a single serious drama programme on the BBC where the main character is gay or lesbian. No police drama, no medical drama, no historical drama, nothing. Oh, and nature documentaries too, which ignore utterly the wide variety of homosexual experiences in the animal kingdom.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“More, better, now. Less filtering through middle class eyes. 10% of us pay your bills = 10% of your budget. Less endemol and posh people. ... 10 characters in a show? Like real life, one will be gay. And it will be incidental

and uninteresting. No saintly gays. Just people. Incidental.” (Male, 35-44, gay)

A minority of consultation respondents to this question took the opportunity to request a greater diversity of LGB people portrayed by the BBC in relation to gender, ethnicity, age, disability, socio-economic background, religion and geography of the UK. This issue was also often raised in response to other consultation questions.

“More diversity within this community, show that gay people are not all camp, funny, flamboyant people, some are just the opposite. Perhaps you could show the nitty gritty side of this community, such as the real life, the pressure that young and old gay people are under to fit in to TWO communities - the straight and the gay.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

“Diversity, diversity, diversity Seriously, I am generally loathe to say that the BBC should commission anything just because it ticks a certain political box, but you could go a long way to changing the current environment by taking a strategic decision to try and increase the diversity of gay experiences that are shown on the channel. Whether this is through scripted entertainment or documentaries is up to the channel but this would be a major step forward. More representation from older gay people, from those from ethnic minority or faith backgrounds would be interesting, especially considering that the central issues that are animating the gay rights movement have to do with social rather than legal change.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

One in 20 respondents answering this question chose to point to language used about LGB people on the BBC and the extent to which these consultation respondents perceive the BBC is challenging homophobia.

“Stop justifying the use of homophobic slurs by well-loved characters, as 'in keeping with the character'. Reprimand and sack BBC presenters who used homophobic language and deride and denigrate gay people. Understand that words like poof, queer and f*****t are just as offensive as words like p**i and n*****r [To avoid offence we have not written these words out in full].” (Male, 35-44, bisexual)

“Send the message that homophobic, discriminatory and stereotypical portrayals of and language about lesbian, gay and bisexual people is unacceptable by not including it in BBC content and using the strongest disciplinary measures against those employed by the BBC who do.” (Female, 25-34, bisexual)

“Also that when covering bullying that the BBC does not shy away from homophobic abuse. I must stress again it's not easy growing up gay and one area that really does need challenging is homophobia. Other stuff such as racism is rightly challenged but it seems this is an area of abuse that seems to be accepted and not challenged enough.” (Male, 45-54, gay)

“Quite frankly anything would be an improvement at this stage. I think it's policies need to be very clear about one thing - homophobia will not be tolerated. Hosts of radio and TV shows must not make any directly or

indirectly homophobic comments with a zero tolerance attitude; not three strikes, but zero tolerance and those culprits who offend will lose their jobs instantly. It is unacceptable for money received from LGB licence fee payers to pay the salaries of homophobic bigots.” (Male, 25-34, gay)

A small minority of respondents answering the question were keen to see the BBC reflecting a greater range of positive role models.

Other Issues

Question 12: Is there anything else you want to tell us about the portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people on the BBC?

Table 22: Anything else?

[This table sets out the proportions of respondents who answered this question in particular ways. 80% had no further comments to make. 14% reported concerns about the lack of portrayal of trans people. 3% suggested that the BBC look at Channel 4’s work and 2% encouraged the BBC to keep up the good work. There were a total number of 1,306 responses to this question. Please note each reply may contain more than one ‘response’.]

Anything else?	Number of responses	% of total
No	1,055	80%
Coverage of Trans people	185	14%
Watch Channel 4	40	3%
Keep up the good work	26	2%
Total	1,306	100%

80% of consultation respondents who answered this question had no further comments to make in addition to their previous responses. However, of those that did, the most significant issue was the lack of portrayal of trans people raised by 14% of respondents to this question. This concern was also raised in response to questions across the consultation.

Note on the Portrayal of Trans People

The BBC Working Group on the Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences which commissioned this public consultation decided that its terms of reference would not include trans audiences. The Working Group took the view that the most significant areas for concern for the BBC had all

related to the portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The BBC was also conscious that guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission was to study matters relating to sexual orientation and gender identity separately.

There were LGB and heterosexual consultation respondents who took the same view. However, there were also both LGB and heterosexual consultation respondents who felt strongly that while the experiences of LGB and trans people are distinctly different; their common experience of discrimination over time justified their inclusion in the scope of this work. Those respondents disagreed strongly with the decision not to look at both experiences in tandem.

384 consultation respondents identified as transgender giving the BBC a significant resource of what a considerable number of trans people think about its portrayal of LGB people, and potentially of trans people. The BBC can use this further to inform any future work on the portrayal of trans people.

“Why on earth are you not asking these questions about the reprehensibly poor coverage of trans people?” (Female, 55-64, lesbian)

“I think more needs to be done to educate people on transgenderism. The view is so narrow it unbelievable.” (Female, 35-44, bisexual)

“Trans people need a higher profile in fictional and factual programming, more positive and diverse portrayal of themselves in media roles and the ending of stereotyping, sensationalism and prurience.” (Female, 45-54, heterosexual)

“Portrayal of transgendered people should be very careful to check the terms used to make sure it does not create the same mistakes as other media sources. For example, Channel 4 made a large mistake in its documentary ‘Bodyshock – Age 8 and Wanting a Sex Change’ which used incorrect pronouns throughout. News sites also make errors regularly. As the BBC has a better reputation than Channel 4, to keep this, if there are future media presentation of transgendered people, I’d suggest contacting transgendered groups and making sure that there are no offensive errors before production / showing an article. The public is very uneducated about this issue. And the media has a responsibility to be showing them correct material.” (Male, 16-24, heterosexual)

“There is a great deal degree of LGBT invisibility in news coverage. Notably on Radio 4 (which I am most familiar with) it is rare to hear LGBT issues being discussed. However, the only item of news on Radio 4 I can recall that discussed a Transperson did use the correct pronouns (those of her identified gender) throughout which I was impressed with – it’s still regrettably rare to find this in news reporting which concerns Transpeople.” (Male, 16-24, bisexual)

“Portrayal of Trans people is often like a freak-show. This is relevant to discussion of portrayal of LGB people as many of the Trans people in question are lesbian, gay or bisexual and many of them are in long term same-sex relationships”(Male, 16-24, gay)

“Children’s Newsround could easily cover some of the stuff that’s happening now about the schools curriculum. What about covering a story about a trans young person? The ones I know are only in their teens and they’re utterly ignored by the world. No wonder they end up self-harming. What about looking at gender identity in very young children? Talk about it all. Make it normal. It’s the silence that makes these words taboo and that’s now they end up as terms of abuse.” (Female, 55-64, heterosexual)

“There are a couple of groups not mentioned in the question, transgendered and transsexual people. While I appreciate you may consider trans people separately from the lesbian/gay/bisexual (a transsexual for instance might exhibit a heterosexual choice in their partner)/ I think historically we have fought for our rights together, today campaign together on very similar grounds, and (or because) we are often discriminated against for similar reasons and in similar ways.” (Female, 16-24, bisexual)

Public Consultation Workshop, 22 January 2010

On 22 January, to mark the start of the public consultation, the BBC held a workshop with representatives from invited community and voluntary sector organisations to contribute to the consultation.

Representatives from 19 organisations attended the session.

As with the design of the online consultation, the workshop was designed to mirror as much as was possible the discussion areas explored through the qualitative audience research to facilitate broad comparisons between the outcomes of each activity.

The consultation workshop materials were also made available for other individuals and groups to run their own sessions and present their submissions, although none were received.

Each of the issues raised by the workshop attendees were also raised through the online consultation providing more than considerable overlap.

Having considered and identified positive and negative examples of portrayal and the key issues in this area, workshop attendees were asked to identify their priority areas to present to Tim Davie, Chair of the BBC’s Working Group. Those four issues were:

- Representation – amount of portrayal and range of genres (calling for a greater volume of portrayal of LGB people across BBC output)
- Consistency, longevity and happy endings (address stereotypical portrayal where portrayal of LGB lives remains sporadic, time-limited and characterised by tragedy)
- Tokenism and LGB portrayal in context (ensuring that LGB characters have equal depth as heterosexual roles to work against tokenistic portrayal)
- Priorities and editorial decisions (addressing how portrayal of LGB people and stories are covered by BBC journalists)

Appendix I (Working Group Terms of Reference)

BBC Working Group on Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Audiences

Terms of reference

Purpose

The BBC Working Group on Portrayal and Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Audiences is a task oriented team made up of staff from across the organisation set up to identify opportunities to enhance creativity and audience engagement, by considering current editorial policy and practice, and improving portrayal of lesbian, gay and bisexual people (LGB).

The Working Group has been set up to advise the Diversity Board and provide it with recommendations on how the BBC can meet its aspirations under both its diversity strategy and the public purposes in relation to LGB audiences.

The Working Group will work with colleagues internally and with Stonewall and other LGB community partners as and when appropriate, to identify and share examples of good practice to inform solutions for further improvement.

Aim

To enhance the BBC's creative output and fulfil its key public purpose: representing the nations, regions and communities which states that the BBC should:

- “portray and celebrate the range of cultures and communities across the UK
- provide a range of output, including original content, designed to meet the needs of the nations, regions and communities of the UK
- provide engaging output that gives an accurate picture of the many communities that make up the UK and that informs understanding and stimulates discussion about their concerns”

Objectives

1. To advise Diversity Board via a report with a set of recommendations identifying solutions to inform commissioning, scheduling and programme makers in general

Portrayal

- To help improve the portrayal of LGB people in output, in line with the BBC's overall diversity strategy
- Identify ways to promote accurate, incidental inclusion within BBC content

- Identify existing good practice and identify ways to share this information more widely internally and externally
- Consider commissioning genre-specific content analysis to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement
- Identify ways to monitor portrayal of LGB people routinely
- Identify how the BBC can promote more LGB writers as part of developing more accurate and authentic content.

Audience engagement

- Consider commissioning audience research with all audiences, including LGB people, to understand their perceptions and experiences
- Identify ways to measure the views of LGB audiences routinely

Communications and complaints

- Review and monitor specialist media to identify relevant commentary and concerns
- Develop a coherent story about the BBC's approach and its commitments targeted at LGB audiences
- Review the organisation's approach to responding to editorial complaints – including how the organisation reaches a line to take – and identify any recommendations

Co-ordination

- Complement and co-ordinate with work ongoing to improve employment practice and through the BBC-wide diversity action planning process

Expected Outcomes

- A report to Diversity Board with a set of recommendations
- Possible policy document for programme makers
- Possible content analysis
- Possible audience research

Working with LGBT Communities

While principally an internal group, the Working Group will work with external partners including Stonewall and other organisations inviting their views at key points during the Group's work to inform its approach.

Accountability

- Tim Davie is the Executive Board sponsor for the Working Group
- The Working Group will be facilitated and supported by the Diversity Centre
- The Working Group will report their findings and recommendations to the Diversity Board
- The Working Group's progress will be reported to the BBC Trust through the annual report on implementation of the diversity strategy in October.