



BBC Complaints Framework

Licence fee payer quantitative research

Report - March 2008



Prepared for:

BBC Trust

Prepared by:

BMRB Media

Telephone: 020 8433 4367 / 020 8433 4068

Email: ryan.howard@bmr.b.co.uk / trevor.vagg@bmr.b.co.uk

Part of BMRB Limited (British Market Research Bureau)

BMRB/45106258

BMRB is ISO9001:2000 and ISO 20252 accredited.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	OBJECTIVES.....	2
1.2	METHODOLOGY	2
1.3	OTHER BBC RESEARCH ON THE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM	3
2	COMPLAINTS BACKGROUND	4
2.1	BROAD RANGE OF OPINION SHARERS COVERED.....	4
2.2	PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF COMPLAINING TO ORGANISATIONS.....	5
2.3	CHANNELS USED AND PREFERRED IN THE FUTURE FOR COMPLAINING.....	8
3	PROFILES OF KEY COMPLAINT GROUPS	11
4	WHAT PEOPLE COMPLAIN OR FEEL LIKE COMPLAINING ABOUT.....	13
5	CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE BBC COMPLAINTS SYSTEM.....	21
6	BARRIERS TO COMPLAINING TO THE BBC.....	26
7	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	27

1 Introduction

Under the Royal Charter and Agreement (July 2006) the BBC Trust is required to: “set and publish one or more frameworks within which the BBC and the commercial arm must handle complaints, and the procedures that are to apply to complaints...The Trust must consult publicly on any framework and its associated procedures before setting them” (Agreement, 89 (1) & (3)).

The Charter also states that: “the framework must provide for the Trust to play a role as final arbiter in appropriate cases” (Charter, 24 (2) (g)).

A draft framework was open for public consultation between 31 October 2007 and 31 January 2008. This report summarises the findings of quantitative research, conducted by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) among 1,059 adults. This research will be analysed alongside feedback from the open consultation to make a final decision on the complaints framework.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the research were to provide the BBC Trust with information to feed into the design of the final complaints framework. Specifically the BBC Trust aimed to understand:

- who currently complains to the BBC and their experiences of doing so
- who the current system is missing and why
- any differences between what people do and do not complain about
- any barriers to complaining perceived by people who don't complain

It is important to create a system that is appropriate for all licence fee payers so the BBC Trust sought to learn about the public's view of best practice for handling complaints. This would help the BBC Trust to identify and prioritise the elements of the proposed complaints framework which would lead to more positive experiences and flag any areas that are less positively perceived by licence fee payers. The research also aimed to identify perceived barriers in the complaint making process and to understand how different groups relate to the complaints system with the ultimate aim of removing barriers to make the system as accessible as possible to those who want to use it.

1.2 Methodology

A mixed-methodology research approach was employed to meet the objectives of the study. Half of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes and half were conducted online using the Lightspeed Research online access panel in the UK. This approach had the dual advantages of being both cost-effective and also offering people who may not otherwise have been available the opportunity to participate at a time convenient to them through the online route.

- 1,059 UK adults interviewed (half online, half face-to-face) between 5 September and 19 September 2007.
- Sampling points from all four of the UK nations were included.
- Detailed questionnaire (c.20 minutes duration) covering demographic profile, media consumption, weight of BBC usage and the key section exploring opinions and perceptions of the complaints system.
- The data were weighted by age, sex, social grade, working status and ethnicity and internet use to ensure they were representative of the UK population as a whole.

1.3 Other BBC research on the complaints system

BBC Management the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction survey, a continuous research programme which is conducted by IPSOS-MORI. We quote figures from this research in this report to give context to our findings. The objectives of the Customer Satisfaction survey are to track satisfaction and perceptions of individuals who have recently complained to BBC Information. This survey methodology mirrors the ways the individual made their complaint (webform, e-mail, telephone or letter). The Trust was able to add some attitudinal questions to Wave 25 of this survey, to get a robust sample of people who had made a complaint. The sample for this particular wave was 222 recent complainants. The fieldwork took place between 8 July and 17 September 2007.

As the objectives and the methodology of the two pieces of research differ, the results of each survey can also be expected to differ. Where the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction survey follows up on an actual and recent experience of the BBC complaints system, the Complaints Framework research, as documented by this report, addresses the wider UK population regarding their perceptions of the system.

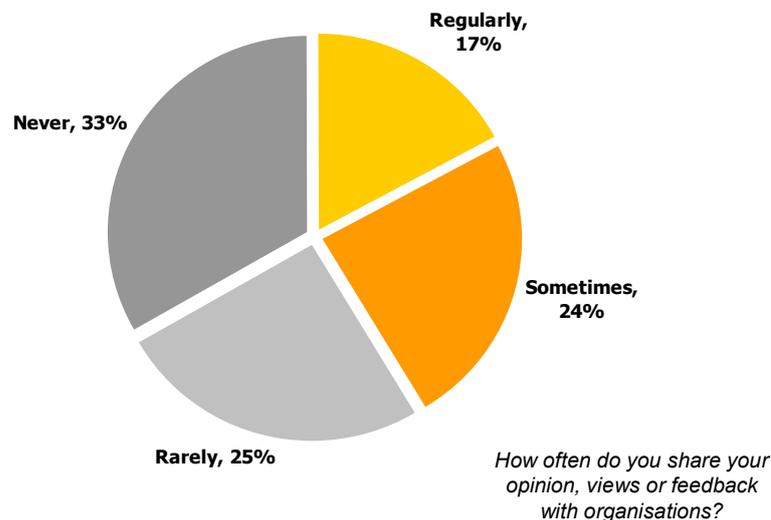
2 Complaints Background

2.1 Broad range of opinion sharers covered

To provide benchmark figures to compare with previous research carried out by the BBC Trust as part of the Audience Engagement and Purpose Remit Consultations in 2007 the sample was subdivided into a number of groups according to how often people said they shared their views, opinions and feedback with organisations in general.

As shown in Figure 1, the sample obtained through the methodology described above contained an even spread of opinion sharers. Overall, 4 in 10 respondents shared their opinions, views or feedback either regularly or sometimes.

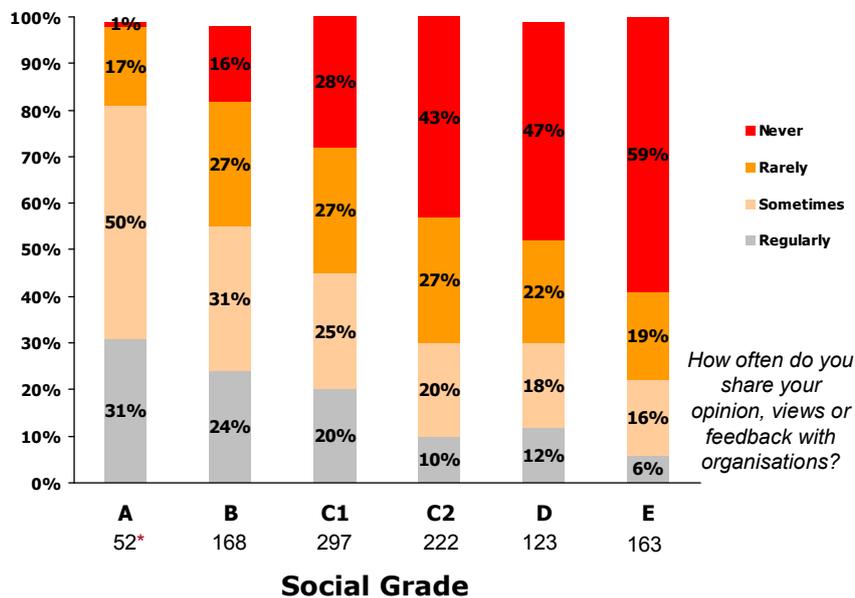
Figure 1: Broad sample in terms of frequency of sharing opinions views or feedback



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

This was done to provide perspective on licence-fee payers' attitudes towards engaging with organisations in general so that engagement with the BBC Trust can be understood in this broader context. As was the case in the previous research, **Higher Opinion Sharers** tended to be aged 25-54 and from social grades ABC1. They were more likely to have young children, and to be in full time employment. **Lower Opinion Sharers** were more likely to be aged 45+ and from social grades C2DE. They were more likely to be retired and have lower income. Figure 2 shows the strong relationship between opinion sharing and social grade.

Figure 2: People in the ABC1 social grades are more likely to give their feedback to organisations than those in lower social grades



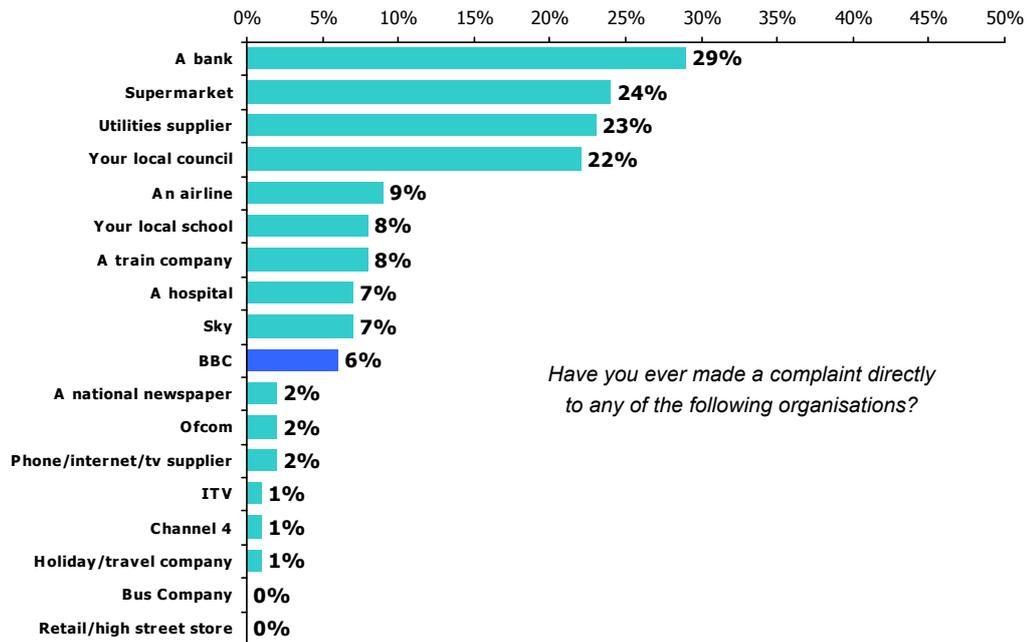
Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059). *Caution Low Base Size

Recommendations on how to engage different groups with the BBC Trust were established in the Trust's Audience Engagement research of June 2007. This can be found on the Trust's website at www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/consult/audience_engagement/quantitative_research.pdf

2.2 Previous experience of complaining to organisations

In order to understand how the BBC fits in to the wider organisational environment with regards to complaint behaviour, respondents were asked to which organisations they have previously complained. Over 65% of the sample had previously complained to an organisation. Figure 3 reveals that people are more likely to complain to organisations with which they experience more day to day contact. Generally people are less likely to have complained to media organisations, except for Sky to which people are more likely to have complained, possibly because of the direct billing relationship or the fact that Sky operates as a platform carrying many other broadcasters' channels rather than as just a broadcaster.

Figure 3: People tend to complain to organisations with which they have a lot of day to day contact

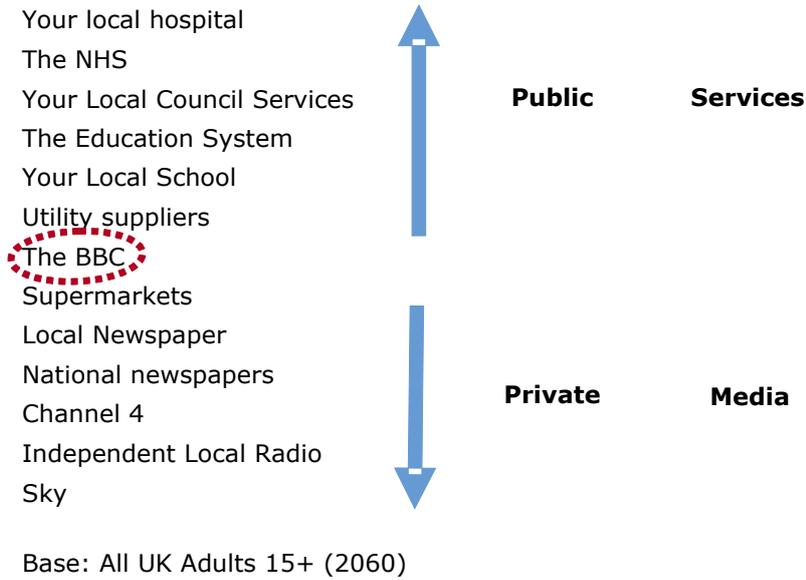


Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1,059)

This Complaints Framework survey identified that 6% of UK adults say they have previously complained to the BBC which places the BBC on a par with Sky. This may indicate that the licence fee and public ownership mean that some people have a different relationship with the BBC than most other media organisations and this in turn may be an important driver of complaining to the BBC. Indeed, this is also reflected in the types of complaints the BBC receives. This is described later in this report.

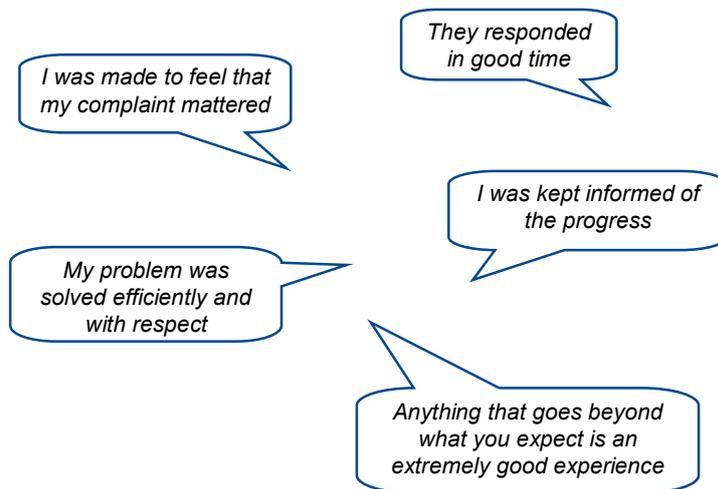
These figures echo the BBC Trust's Audience Engagement research (June 2007) where respondents' feelings about the importance of being able to have a say in the running of particular organisations varied according to the nature of the organisation. This found that 8% of adults said they have voiced their opinions, views or feedback to the BBC. This is still a small number, but it is worth noting that it was considered more important for people to have a say in the BBC than other media organisations (but as shown in Figure 4, less important than for other public services).

Figure 4: Ordered by importance of having a say in the running of particular organisations.
 (Source: BBC Trust Audience Engagement, 2007)



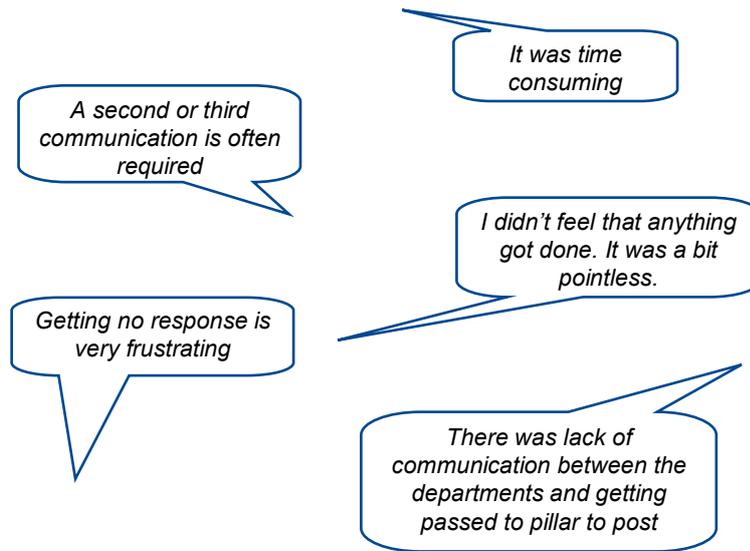
Open-ended questions were included in the survey to allow participants to describe in their own words both good and bad experiences they have had when complaining to organisations in general. As well as adding colour to the quantitative findings from the survey these questions provide the BBC with examples of best practice and things to avoid in the complaints system.

Figure 5: Good experiences when complaining to organisations



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

Figure 6: Bad experiences when complaining to organisations

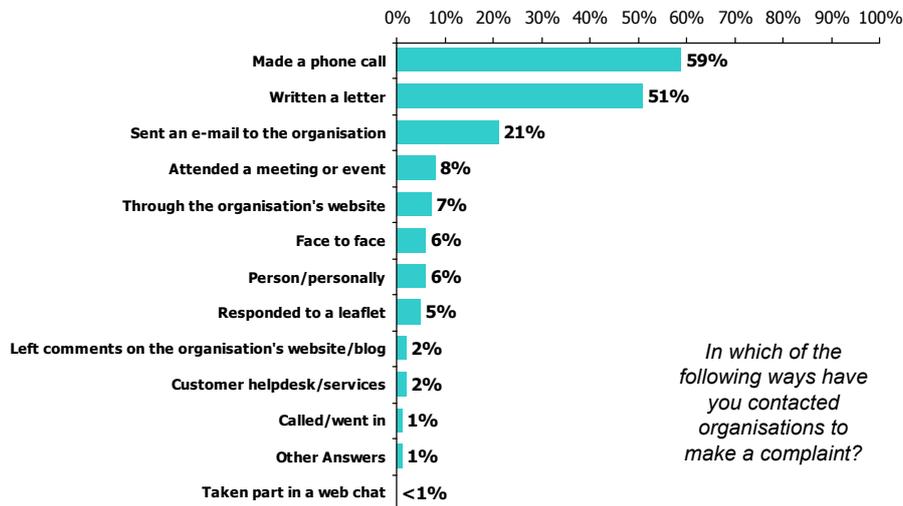


Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

2.3 Channels used and preferred in the future for complaining

Learning how individuals have complained to organisations in the past, as well as how they may wish to complain to the BBC in future is the first stage in terms of checking the proposed complaints framework. Figure 7 shows a clear distinction between the three most used channels for complaining to an organisation and other channels which may be available.

Figure 7: Generally, complaints to organisations are conveyed through channels proposed by the Complaints Framework



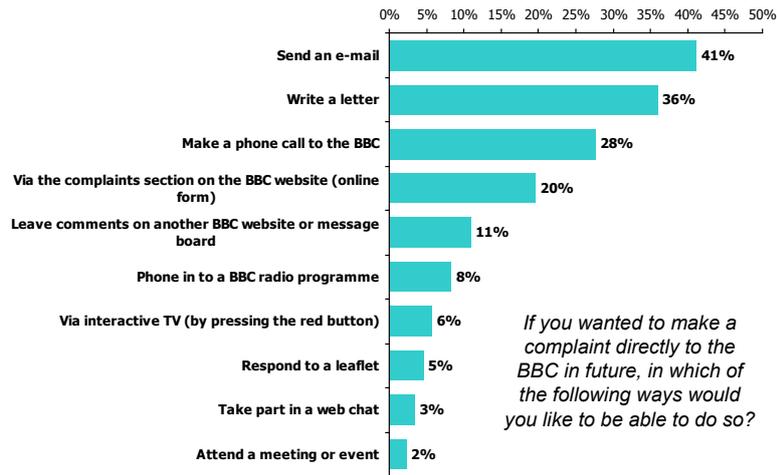
Base: All UK Adults 15+ who have made a complaint directly to other organisations (708)

This suggests offering online contact details, an address to write to and a phone number to call would facilitate the vast majority of complaints. Further evidence of the importance of offering these three routes can be found by looking at the ways different groups of people have made

complaints. ABC1 adults are more likely to have complained in writing (59%) and by e-mail (27%), while C2DE adults have complained more by phone (63%).

These figures can be compared with the desired ways in which people would like to complain to the BBC in the future, should they want to make a complaint (Figure 8), where the same 3 channels top the list. The growing importance of online communication is evident but certainly not to the exclusion of phone and letter routes.

Figure 8: Future channels desired for contacting the BBC to make a complaint support proposed methods



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

The social grade split is also present where ABC1s prefer e-mail or online methods, and C2DEs would still prefer using the phone or writing letters. The latter is also true for over 65s.

Figure 9a: Social grade difference for channels desired for complaining to the BBC in future

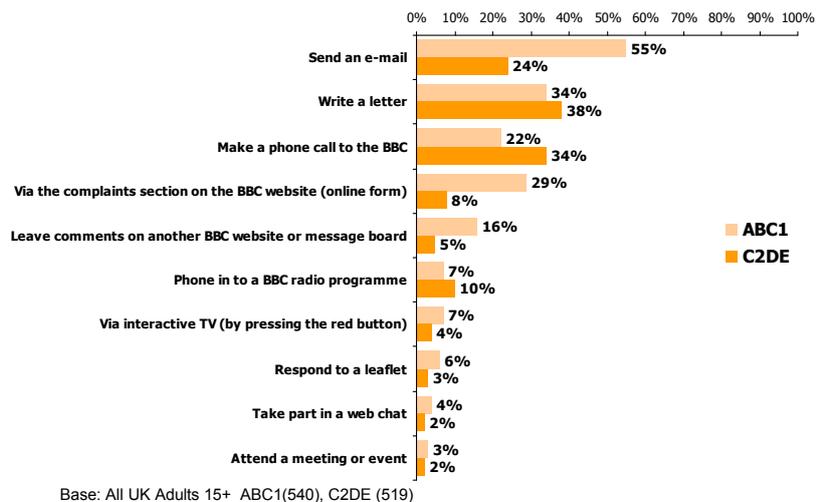
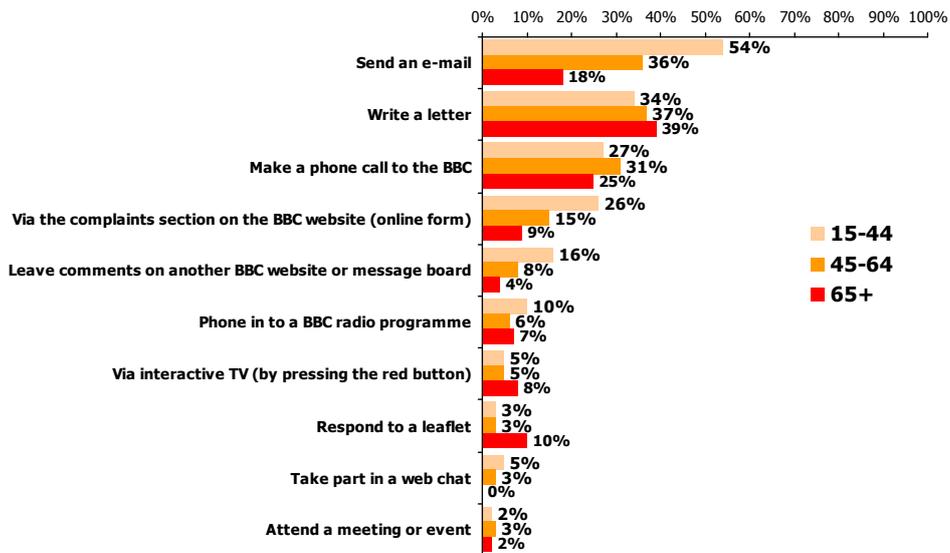


Figure 9b: Age difference for channels desired for complaining to the BBC in future



Base: All UK Adults 15+ 15-44 (625), 45-64 (311) 65+ (122)

The complaints framework proposes contact either by writing to the BBC, by making a phone call to BBC information or through the website (from which an e-mail can be sent). There is strong evidence in this research that these are the correct options to offer as they are the most commonly mentioned ways of contacting organisations now and of wanting to contact the BBC in future. However, it seems people would also like the opportunity to be able to send e-mails directly in preference to completing a web form. Three-in-ten of those who would like to contact via email also mentioned an online form whilst more than six-in-ten of those who would like an online form also mentioned e-mail.

3 Profiles of key complaint groups

This analysis is based on only the 75 respondents who said they had ever complained to the BBC in the past. The profile of this group has been examined to provide an indicative picture of the types of people who are more or less likely to complain, however it should be noted that this is too low a base size to have statistical significance when looking at individual subgroups. However, it is encouraging that the relationships between demographics, sharing behaviour, internet usage and likelihood to complain are broadly supported by the quantitative research from the Audience Engagement consultation.

As mentioned in section 2.2, the survey identified a group who have ever complained to the BBC. This group differs from the sample used in the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction survey as the latter group have *recently* complained to the BBC.

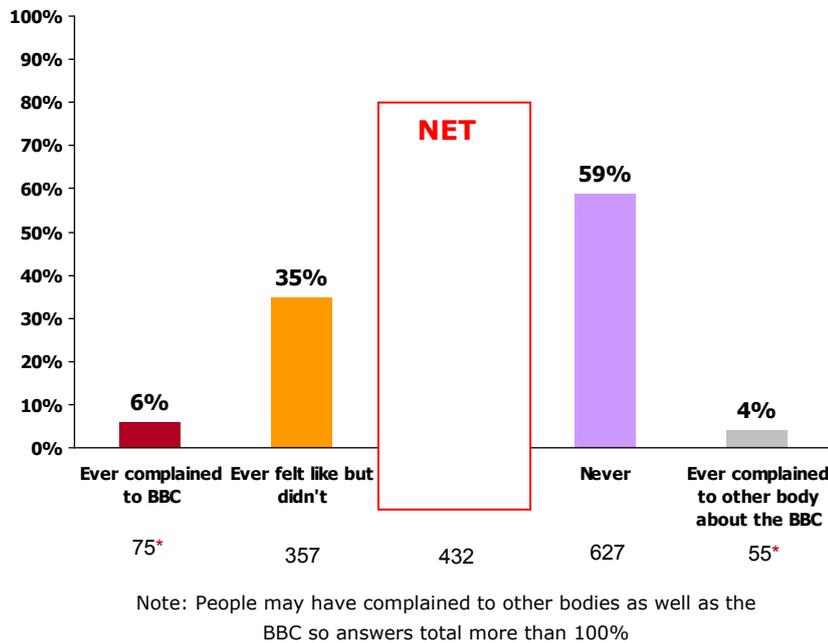
The group identified in this Complaints Framework research would (a) not perceive this survey as part of the BBC complaints system and (b) include a proportion of respondents who felt that they had complained, but whose correspondence might not have been classified as a complaint by the current complaints procedures.

In the Complaints Framework research, people who have previously complained to the BBC are more likely than the average adult to be:

- Male (65% of those who complained v 48% of all adults)
- Social grade ABC1 (74% v 55%)
- Male ABC1 (50% v 27%) – combined they represent half of all who have complained
- Aged 55-64 (27% v 14%)
- Heavy BBC share of media (67% v 41%) but low approvers of the BBC (24% v 15%)
- Classified as a high opinion sharer (69% v 41%)
- A home broadband user (75% v 51%)
- With a Sky package at home (51% v 36%)
- Disabled (25% v 19%) (further analysis showed that there was a genuine relationship between likelihood to complain and disability, independent of age and weight of TV viewing)

Figure 10 illustrates the sizes of the other groups analysed by this research. Respondents, who have not complained to the BBC, were asked whether they had ever felt like complaining. This group of people who have been minded to complain without actually going through with a complaint are important to understand in terms of creating a complaints framework that is as widely accessible as possible.

Figure 10: The survey identified respondents who have previously complained to the BBC directly, and those who felt like complaining, but did not



This group of respondents who felt like complaining but didn't are more likely than the average adult to be:

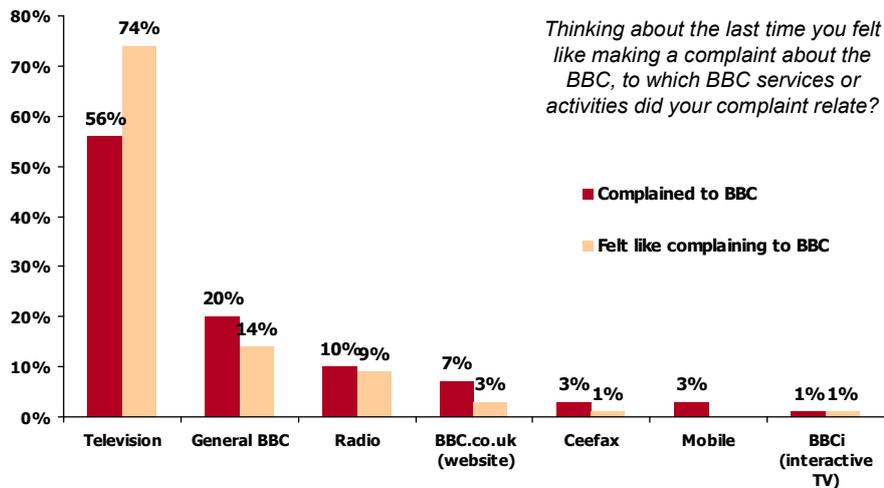
- Aged 45+ (64% v 50% of all adults) with a fairly average gender split
- Low BBC approvers (21% v 15%)
- From Scotland (12% v 8%)
- Disabled (24% v 19%)

It may have been the case that the number of people complaining to the BBC was deflated because people were choosing to complain to other bodies (such as Ofcom) about the Corporation instead. However, only 4% of adults have ever complained to another body about the BBC and half of these are people who have also complained to the BBC so we do not believe this is an important group to analyse separately in this research.

4 What people complain or feel like complaining about

Those who have previously complained directly to the BBC were asked what activity their complaint related to. Similarly those who had felt like complaining but didn't, were asked what had they wished to complain about. As shown in Figure 11, the majority of complaints relate to BBC TV. There is also a consistent pattern between those who complained and those who only felt like complaining.

Figure 11: BBC services or activities to which complaints related



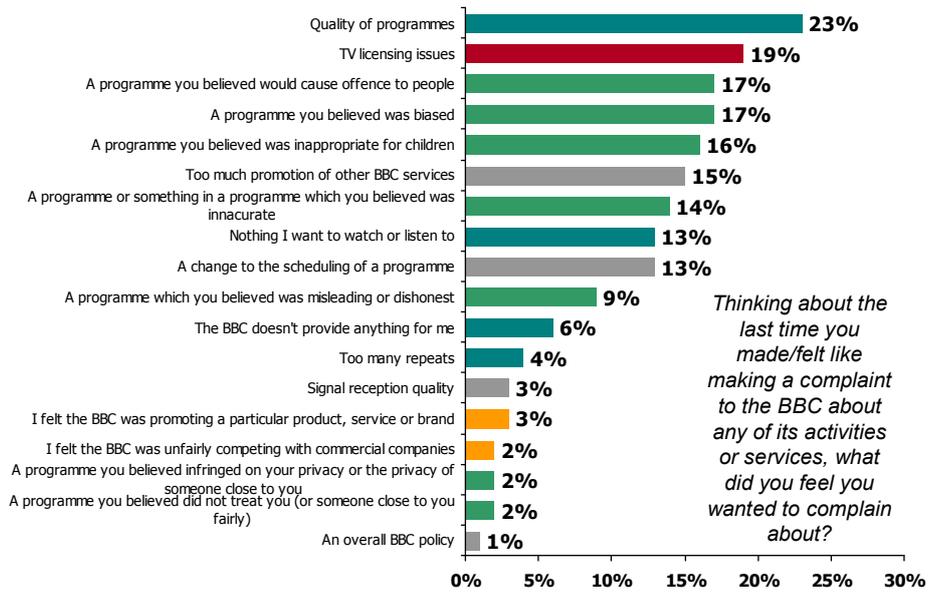
Base: All who have previously complained directly to the BBC (75*).
All who felt like complaining to the BBC but didn't (357)

* = low base size, use with caution.

29

Quality of programming, TV licensing issues, and editorial issues related to harm and offence topped the list of the types of issues about which respondents had previously made or had felt like making a complaint.

Figure 12: Types of issues which draw the most complaints



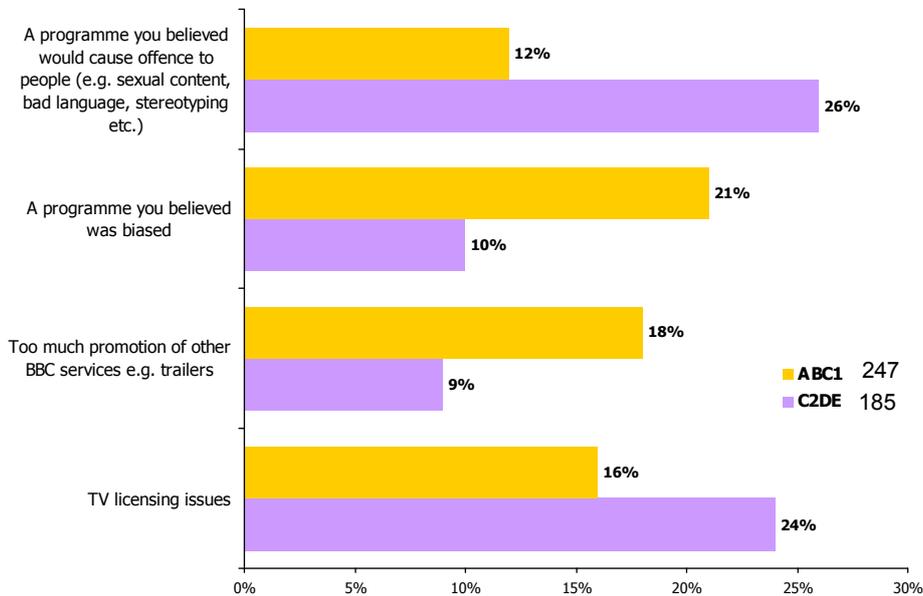
Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint (432)

30

Thinking about the last time you made/felt like making a complaint to the BBC about any of its activities or services, what did you feel you wanted to complain about?

Answers differed by social grade where ABC1s were more likely to complain or feel like complaining about issues involving bias, accuracy and appropriateness, but C2DEs felt more like complaining about "harm and offence" issues and those related to the TV licence.

Figure 13: ABC1s have a different complaints profile to C2DEs



Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint.

As per the colour code in Figure 12, different types of complaint were grouped together into 5 distinct themes for analysis.

Editorial Complaints (green)

- A programme you believed was biased
- A programme or something in a programme which you believed was inaccurate
- A programme which you believed was misleading or dishonest
- A programme you believed would cause offence to people
- A programme you believed was inappropriate for children
- A programme you believed did not treat you (or someone close to you) fairly
- A programme you believed infringed on your privacy or the privacy of someone close to you

Complaints about commercial concerns (orange)

- I felt the BBC was promoting a particular product, service or brand
- I felt the BBC was unfairly competing with commercial companies

Complaints about content quality (teal)

- Quality of programmes
- Nothing I want to watch or listen to
- The BBC doesn't provide anything for me
- Too many repeats

TV licence (red)

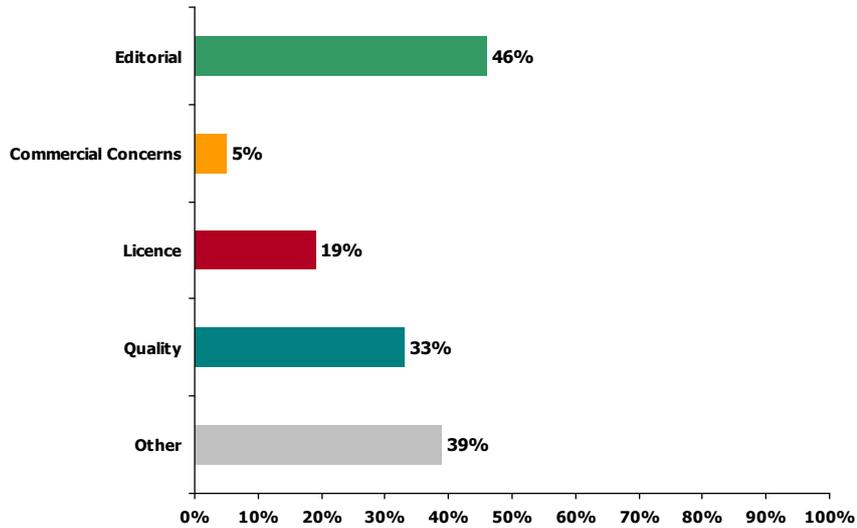
- TV licensing issues

Other Complaints (grey)

- Too much promotion of other BBC services
- A change to the scheduling of a programme
- Signal reception quality
- An overall BBC policy

This analysis shows that as the largest of the defined groups, Editorial and Quality issues draw the most complaints or prompt most people to feel like complaining (See Figure 14).

Figure 14: Editorial and Quality draw the most concern



Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint (432)

However, there were a significant proportion of complaints which fell outside of the specific categories and were classified as 'other'. The 'other' category splits fairly evenly between too much promotion of other BBC services, changes to the schedule and other answers.

Analysis within each of the categories of complaint uncovered a number of differences by theme.

Figure 15 shows each of the complaint themes as a column and displays any demographic group which is closely linked with that theme in the form of an index. For example, within the TV licence complaint theme, having low BBC approval is most closely linked with making, or feeling like making this type of complaint. The figure (323) means that people who made or felt like making complaints within the TV licence theme were more than three times more likely to be low BBC approvers than the average adult (who has an index of 100). All socio-demographic groups with an index of 125 or above within each theme are shown on the chart which is ranked to show the strongest links first.

Figure 15: Table showing index of demographic groups within each of the complaint themes compared to all adults (any group with index of 125 or above shown)

EDITORIAL Base size: 209	COMMERCIAL CONCERNS Base size: 31*	TV LICENCE Base size: 86	QUALITY Base size: 150	OTHER Base size: 126
Scotland (148)	35-54 ABC1 (278)	Low BBC approval (323)	Low BBC approval (189)	Aged 55+ ABC1 (185)
Aged 35-54 ABC1 (147)	Scotland (262)	Low BBC media share (212)	Male ABC1 (158)	Aged 55-64 (165)
Aged 45-54 (144)	Male 35-54 (252)	Aged 45-54 (177)	Male aged 55+ (156)	Disabled (162)
Female aged 35-54 (135)	Disabled (204)	Aged 55+ C2DE (170)	Disabled (155)	Male aged 55+ (157)
Low BBC approval (125)	Low BBC approval (198)	Scotland (152)	Aged 65+ (136)	Male ABC1 (146)
	Male ABC1 (186)	Non-white (150)	Aged 45-54 (135)	ABC1 (132)
	Northern Ireland (162)	Male aged 35-54 (146)	Aged 55+ ABC1 (133)	Female aged 55+ (130)
	AB (151)	Female C2DE (137)	Aged 55+ C2DE (128)	Low BBC approval (129)
	Aged 55-64 (150)	Female aged 55+ (136)		Aged 65+ (126)
	Aged 35-44 (138)	Disabled (128)		
	Aged 55+ C2DE (135)	35-54 ABC1 (126)		

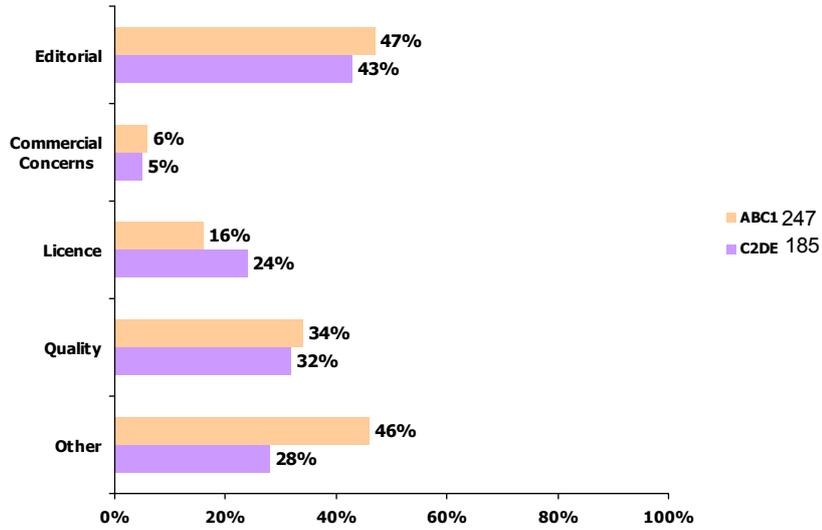
* = caution low base size

The strongest demographic skews are found amongst people who complained or felt like complaining about the licence fee. These are more likely to be people with a weak relationship with the BBC – low approval and a low share of their media time. Demographically, they are more likely than average to be older, C2DE social grade and non-white.

Age and social grade are other common factors in understanding people who are more likely to complain or feel like complaining within theme. People with editorial and commercial concerns complaints are more likely to be aged 35-54, for example, whilst those with quality, commercial concerns, TV licence and other types of complaint are more likely to have a disability than the universe of all adults.

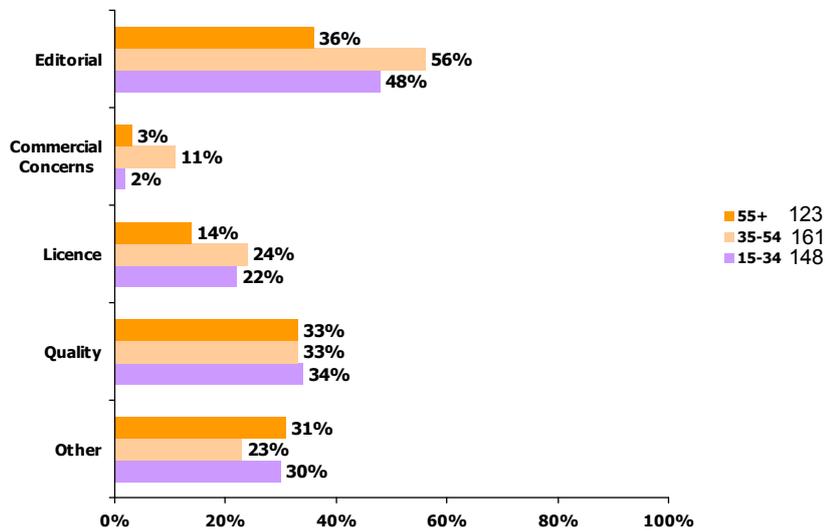
Figures 16 to 18 below illustrate the complaint type profile of these groups.

Figure 16: C2DEs more likely to complain about the licence fee



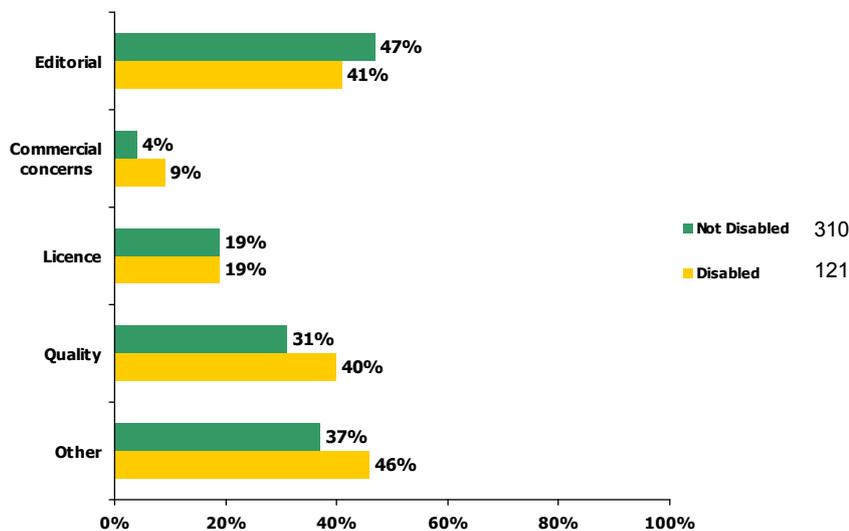
Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint – ABC (247), C2DE (185)

Figure 17: Over 55s who have complained or felt like complaining have a lower concentration of complaints in the editorial, licence fee and commercial concerns categories than other age groups



Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint – Aged 55+ (123), aged 35-54 (161), aged 15-34 (148)

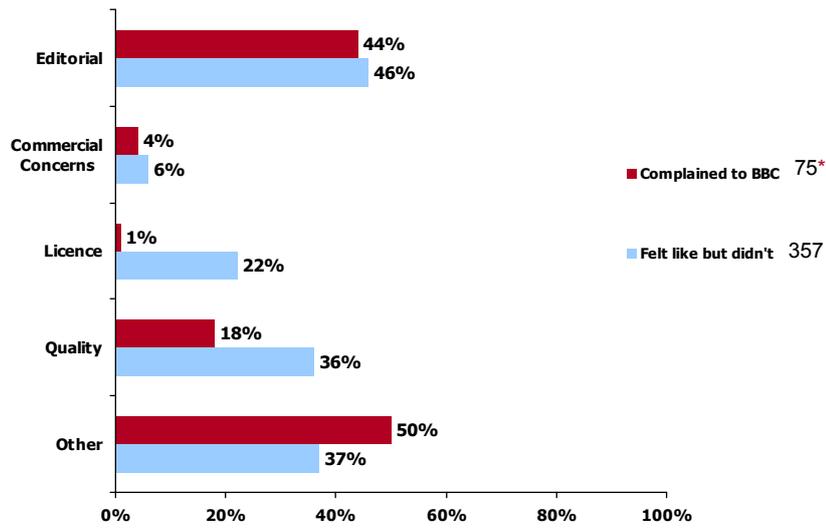
Figure 18: Of those who complained or felt like complaining, people with disabilities are more likely to complain about commercial concerns, quality and other issues than those with no disabilities



Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint – not disabled (310), disabled (121)

Despite the low base of the group which had previously complained to the BBC, significant differences can still be found between this group and the group who only felt like complaining (see Figure 19). Only 1% of people who complained to the BBC actually complained about the licence fee but over a fifth (22%) of those who felt like complaining mentioned the licence fee, suggesting that this issue may be a more latent one. Potential complaints about quality also showed a clear difference between feeling like complaining and actually going through with a complaint.

Figure 19: The TV licence produces the biggest difference between people feeling like and actually complaining



Base: All adults 15+ who felt like or did make a complaint – actually complained to BBC (75*), Felt like complaining but didn't (357)

* = low base size, use with caution

5 Current perceptions of the BBC complaints system

The proposed complaints framework proposes that BBC complaints handling:

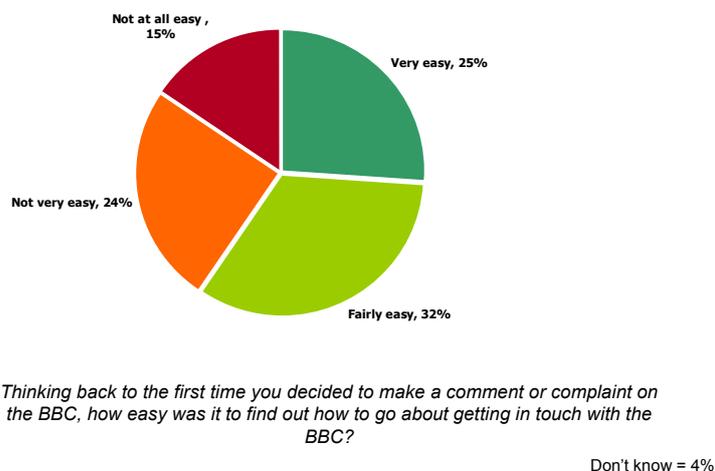
- is clear, fair, open and efficient
- enables the public to hold the BBC to account
- treats all parties with respect

Participants in this research were asked to share their current perceptions and expectations of the BBC complaints system. Generally, responses were similar across demographic groups, but perceptions differed based upon complaint behaviour and BBC share of viewing and approval. For reasons mentioned above (section 1.3), perceptions among those who had previously complained to the BBC were more negative than those reported by the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Overall, ABC1 social grades, those who have previously complained, and those who felt like complaining but didn't have more negative perceptions and expectations of the BBC complaints system than other groups.

Four in ten of those who have previously complained to the BBC felt that it was not easy to find out how to get in touch to make their complaint. Furthermore, six in ten were dissatisfied with the complaints service on the last occasion they used it. These would be key figures to improve in terms of meeting the objective for a clear, fair, open and efficient system (although bear in mind that this group includes people who may have complained a long time ago).

Figure 20: Almost 6 in 10 of those who had previously complained said it had been easy to find out how to get in touch with the BBC to do so



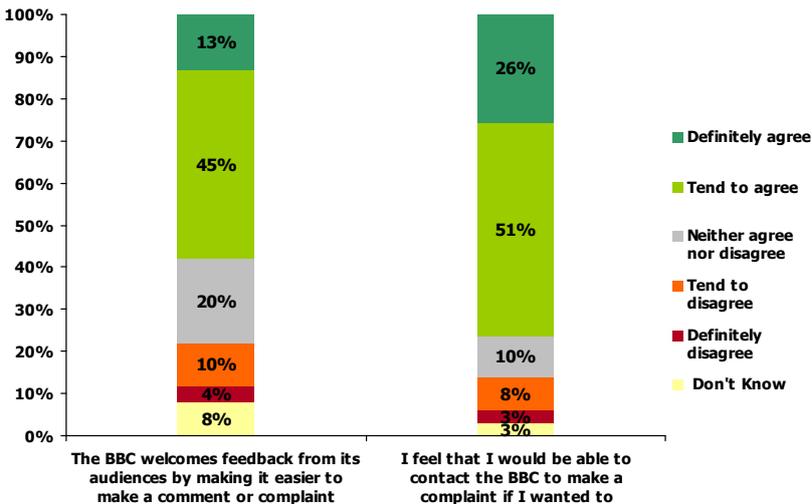
Base: All those who have previously complained directly to the BBC (75*)

Various elements of the complaints framework were measured in the survey amongst all adults, regardless of whether or not they had experience of the complaints process, in the form of attitude statements. We have ordered the themes in order of the BBC's strength in creating positive perceptions.

Accessibility

Almost eight in ten adults (76%) feel they would be able to contact the BBC to make a complaint if they wanted to, the strongest performing area in the survey. Furthermore, 58% of respondents agree that the BBC welcomes feedback from its audiences by making it easier to make a comment or complaint. This shows that 'accessibility' is already a perceived strength of the BBC complaints system. There were few demographic differences although it is interesting to note that adults in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland were all more likely to agree that the BBC welcomes feedback (67%). Agreement with being able to contact the BBC dips for both 15-24s and over 65s so perhaps accessibility messages should be targeted at either end of the age spectrum.

Figure 21: Perceptions of accessibility of the BBC complaints system



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

Respect

There is also a high consensus in the expectation that the BBC would treat complainants with respect through the complaints process, 69% of respondents agreed, making this another perceived strength of the complaints system.

Fairness

Two-thirds of adults feel they would be treated fairly throughout the process (only 8% disagreed) meaning that perceptions of fairness are already positive.

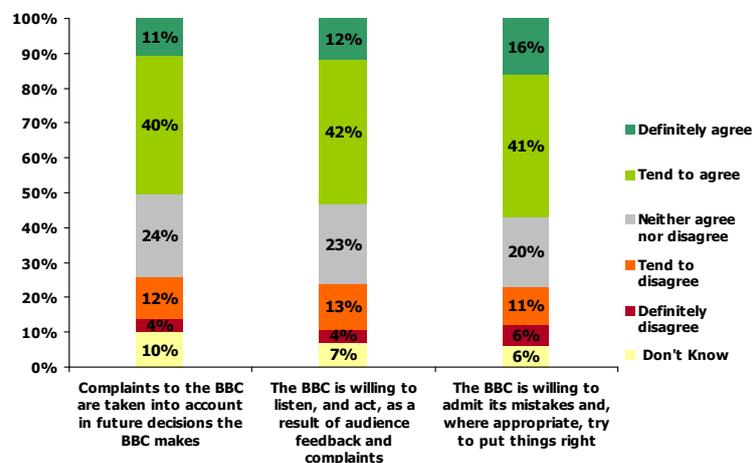
Clarity

55% of adults agree that it would be clear how to go about making a complaint in the first instance (17% disagree), and 53% agree that it would be clear what they could expect throughout the process (12% disagree).

Action-orientation

Any steps that can be taken to communicate what is done as a result of complaints received (without of course promising that every complaint will produce a change) would be advantageous in terms of improving perceptions in this area. Roughly half of adults feel the current complaints system is action-oriented.

Figure 22: Just over half of respondents agree that the BBC takes action on complaints



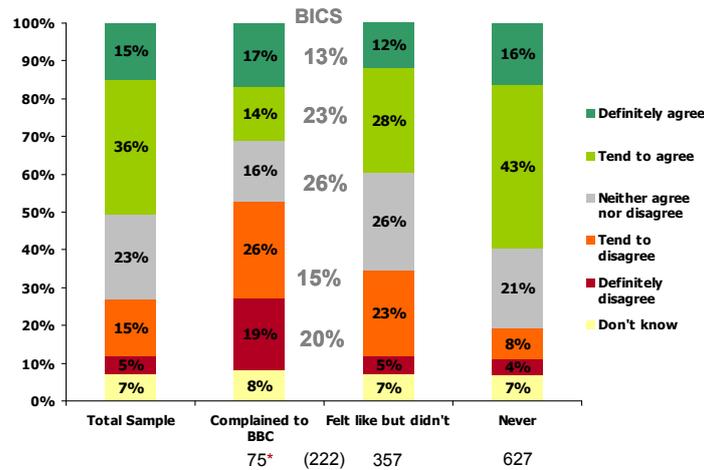
Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

The following three elements are areas in which the BBC should focus on improving perceptions. These areas received relatively the lowest levels of agreement:

Efficiency

While overall 51% of adults agree that the BBC would put the right amount of effort into dealing with their complaint, the disparity between those who have complained and those who haven't is stronger in this area. Figure 23 includes the results of the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction Survey, to show a comparison between those BBC complainants from the broader population, and those who have recently complained. In both the surveys, those who have complained to the BBC are more negative than the general population in terms of feeling that the BBC would put in the right amount of effort.

Figure 23: Complaint groups agreement to “the BBC would put the right amount of effort into dealing with my complaint” as compared to the BBC Information Customer Satisfaction Survey (percentages shown in grey text)



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)* Caution Low Base Size

Of those who had complained to the BBC or who had felt like it but had not complained there was no majority agreement that the BBC would put the right amount of effort into dealing with the complaint.

Accountability

Only 44% of adults felt that they would be able to hold the BBC to account by making a complaint (25% disagreed). Over 55s were more likely to disagree than other demographic groups.

Openness

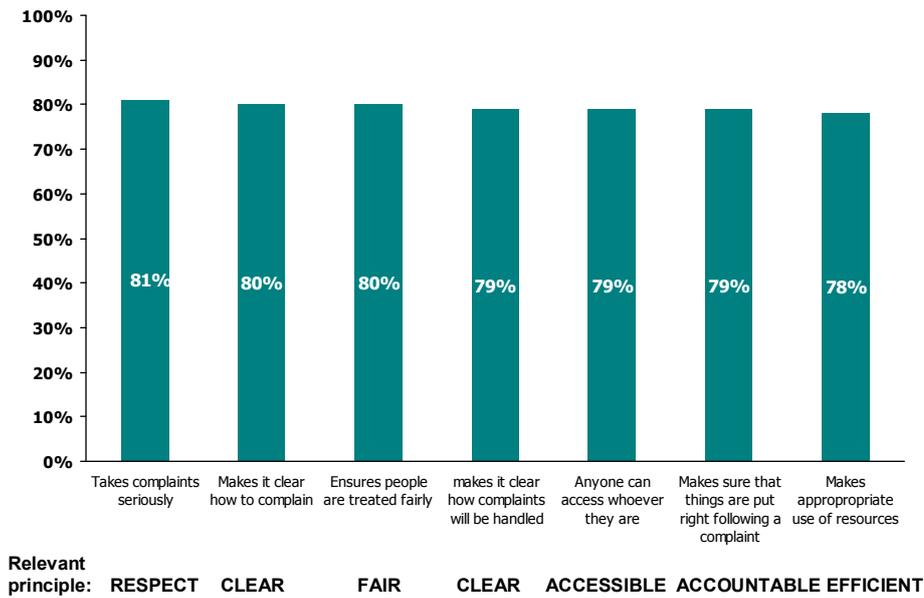
42% agreed that the BBC is becoming more open, fair and accountable (17% disagreed that this is the case).

As mentioned previously, the Complaints Framework has the following principles:

- clear, fair, open and efficient
- enables the public to hold the BBC to account
- treats all parties with respect

Another factor which could affect the BBC’s priorities for a complaints framework is the importance that licence-fee payers place on these different aspects of the system so we asked several statements to find out how important, or not, each of the principles were. It is abundantly clear that all of the potential areas identified are important to the audience (Figure 24). This is reassuring as it implies the framework broadly addresses the right areas.

Figure 24: Stated importance of the various elements of an ideal complaints system



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

More evidence to support that the conclusion that the framework broadly addresses the right areas and that nothing has been missed comes from the fact that, when provided with the opportunity to freely mention “any other words that you think should describe an ideal complaints system for the BBC”, seven out of ten respondents had nothing to add. The most common theme mentioned by those who did add something was ‘make it easy, simple, straightforward to use’ (mentioned by 5% of all who took part in the survey). This is important to consider within the principle of being open and accessible.

6 Barriers to complaining to the BBC

The BBC complaints system, not unlike other complaints systems, is prone to negative expectations. Those who felt like complaining but didn't do so, feel that their complaint wouldn't make any difference (52%) and that their complaint would not be taken seriously (25%). The latter view was more prevalent among the C2DE social grades as shown by Figure 25 below. Not knowing how to complain to the BBC among C2DE social grades is the second greatest barrier to bringing a complaint forward.

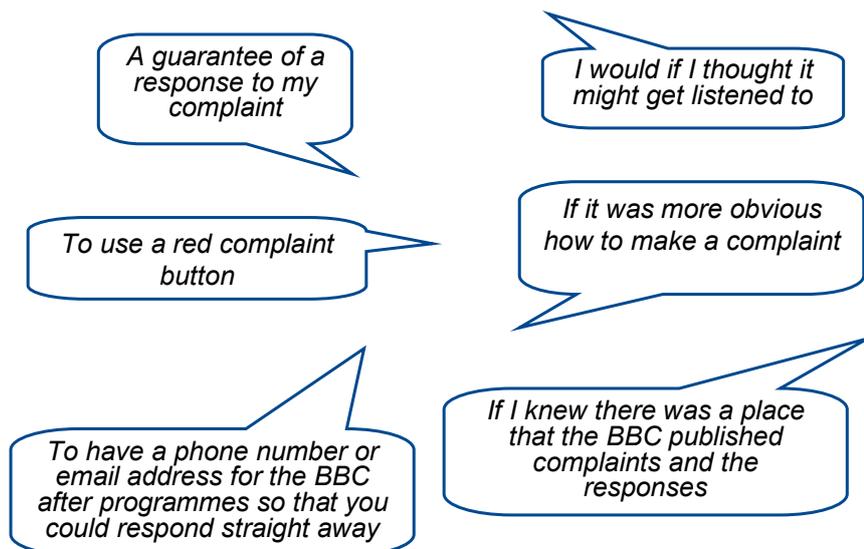
Figure 25: Barriers to complaining to the BBC

What reasons contributed to you not actually making the complaint you felt like making?	ABC1 (197)	C2DE (160)
I didn't feel strongly enough about it	17%	14%
I didn't think it would make any difference	56%	46%
I didn't think the complaints system would be accessible to me	4%	7%
I chose to tell friends or family about it instead	12%	12%
I had complained before and had a bad experience	1%	1%
I didn't feel my complaint would be taken seriously	19%	33%
I believed my complaint would not reach the right person	11%	10%
I didn't know how to complain to the BBC	19%	39%
I do not like complaining	16%	15%
Other	4%	5%

Base: All those who felt like complaining to the BBC but didn't (357)

We probed participants to discover what they felt the BBC could do to lower barriers to making a complaint and a selection of answers to illustrate the general findings are included in Figure 26.

Figure 26: *Is there anything you think would encourage you to actually make a complaint to the BBC*



Base: All UK Adults 15+ (1059)

7 Summary and Conclusions

Only 6% of adults say they have ever complained to the BBC. This is a greater percentage than for other media companies (except for Sky where there is a billing relationship). In this survey, those who have complained have a much more negative view of the complaints process than the general population, based on their experience. Closing this gap between perceptions of the complaints system and more negative experiences will be important in terms of making the complaints system a success.

People who have complained to the BBC are more likely to be male, in social grades ABC1, and heavier users of BBC Media.

A further 35% of adults have felt like complaining, without doing so. This group is vital to understand in order that the complaints framework is as inclusive as possible. The group skews towards those aged over 45 and in social grades ABC1 and also includes more than an average proportion of disabled people. They are also more likely to be low BBC approvers. There is also a higher proportion of people who felt like complaining but did not do so in Scotland.

Naturally, the BBC would want to reduce the size of this group over time, ideally by removing their desire to complain in the first place but if this is not possible, by ensuring that everyone feels comfortable with using the system and that people feel they are being listened to. The biggest barrier to actually making a complaint was the fact that people felt it wouldn't make any difference. Therefore there is a clear need to demonstrate to people that the BBC will listen and take action where a complaint is legitimate. The Trust may wish to consider ensuring that the fact that action will flow from an upheld complaint is very clearly spelled out in the revised framework, as well as requiring the BBC Executive to publicise changes made as a result of complaints.

Email, phone and letter are the most popular methods for making complaints and wanting to make complaints in the future. This is clear evidence to support the methods of communication proposed in the framework although there is an indication people would prefer to be able to e-mail directly rather than only through a web page.

All of the principles of the complaints system suggested to participants in this research were considered equally important, and nothing seemed to be missing, so all should be covered by the framework: clear, fair, open, efficient, accountable, action-oriented, respect.

The BBC should continue to focus effort on improving perceptions of its accountability and of the openness of its complaints system as these areas gained the lowest performance scores in this research.