2013 Impartiality Review:
Breadth of Opinion in Coverage of Religious Issues

Qualitative research report
Prepared for

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The BBC is required to deliver duly accurate and impartial news and treat controversial subjects with due accuracy and impartiality.

This qualitative research report is part of a broader 2013 review for the BBC Trust which also includes a content analysis piece by Cardiff University. It constitutes the audience voice within this review.

The review examines in detail the implementation of one particular principle of impartiality: breadth of opinion, concentrating on BBC news and current affairs output.

The requirement on breadth of opinion is expressed in the BBC Editorial Guidelines:

“Across our output as a whole, we must be inclusive; reflecting a breadth and diversity of opinion… the BBC is committed to reflecting a wide range of opinion across output as a whole and over an appropriate time frame so that no significant strand of thought is knowingly un-reflected or un-represented”

Breadth was intended to be evaluated by the audience across BBC services and platforms and over time, not necessarily through any one individual programme or item.

The Cardiff University study looks at three ‘controversial subjects’: Europe, Immigration and religion.

The qualitative research looked in detail as an example at one of these topics: religion. It also examined, in less detail, which findings were transferable to reflecting breadth in other controversial areas, particularly the example issues of EU membership and Immigration.

1.2 Research Objectives

These were as follows

Overall: Is breadth of opinion spontaneously important to the audience?

• How would an audience member judge it?

• What indicators do the public look for in the output to judge impartiality?

• How are breadth of opinion and impartiality related?

• Do the public actively seek a plurality of views
  o Across a range of broadcasters or in other media?
  o How and when?

• What is ‘sufficient breadth’ of opinion?

The BBC: Do people understand the BBC provides a breadth of opinion?
• What are audience expectations of the BBC in breadth of opinion?
• Do people hear their own voice, and do they know where to find it?
• Are there opinions or points of view people feel are excluded?

BBC output: do the audience expect breadth of opinion to be found across the range of the BBC’s output (TV, Radio and online) and is this easy to find?
• Do people perceive there are key flagship programmes within which it is important to reflect breadth of opinion, notwithstanding the fact that the BBC’s commitment is to reflect breadth over its entire output?
• What differences exist between news and current affairs services and platforms, TV, Radio and Online – why?
• Are the audience aware more detailed content is available on the website?
• What is the role of UGC /social media? Do Audiences think this enhances breadth?
• Over what time frame do people expect to read, see or hear breadth of opinion?

When stories about religion and ethics are covered by the BBC what breadth of opinion is included?
• Does/should that breadth of opinion include major religions, minority religions, and secular and humanist views?
• Do people see their own viewpoints reflected sufficiently?

What key transferable learnings are there from our research into breadth of opinion and impartiality in religion?

1.3. Research rationale and sample

The research was designed with three considerations in mind

a) To create an honest environment for respondents of religion and no religion, different denominations and degrees of religious enthusiasm to give their views

b) To include a spectrum of engagement with and interest in news

c) To capture not just audience perceptions or impressions of the BBC but prompt with as much real programming as possible

Religion is an area in which respondents are known to be sensitive about unintentionally offending others. Therefore, to elicit response we conducted homogeneous focus group: separating out Atheists, Catholics, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and Protestants, and splitting enthusiastic Christians from less observant so all could speak without restriction.

Having analysed census data and religious websites we were careful to include a core of the ‘very religious’: defining them as those whose religion guides their life decisions and
determines their outlook. These tended in our sample to be Muslims or ‘Evangelical’ Christians (Groups 7 and 9 below).

We also sampled a larger number of people who were nominally religious but to whom being Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Protestant or Sikh was a cultural as well as a religious identity. A proportion worshipped irregularly. We recruited a spectrum of denomination, attitude and observance reflecting published data (Groups 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10).

Finally we included those of ‘no religion’. Some were lapsed observers, others second or third generation Atheists or Agnostics.

We used ‘same culture’ moderators to enhance trust and to interpret issues that ‘outside’ moderators might not automatically understand (e.g. Jewish emotions about Israel).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 Group Discussions with Pre and Post task: 3 hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Agnostics</td>
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<td>2. Atheists</td>
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<td>3. Christian - Catholic</td>
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<td>7. Christian Protestant: Evangelical</td>
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<td>8. Jewish</td>
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<td>9. Muslim Pakistani and Bangladeshi</td>
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<td>10. Hindu and Sikh</td>
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<th>3 Telephone depth interviews with Pre and Post task: 2 hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Buddhist</td>
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<td>2. Roman Catholic ‘Liberal’</td>
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<td>3. Humanist /National Secular Society</td>
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<th>6 Face to face depths with Pre and Post task: 2hr</th>
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<td>4. Roman Catholic ‘Traditional’</td>
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<td>5. Muslim Pakistani</td>
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<td>6. Muslim Pakistani</td>
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1 The proportion of ‘non-believers’ in the population is debated: some use their religion as a ‘cultural descriptor’. The 2011 Census (of Wales and England only, asking “What is your religion?”) reports 59% of the population as nominally Christian. But the British Social Attitudes Study 2010 (excl. NI) says 50% of the population have no religion (“Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?”). 10% of people were weekly churchgoers in 2007 (Tear Fund). So some self-defining as ‘Christian’ or ‘Moderate Christian’ for our research might well be seen as very unobservant and almost secular by the ‘very religious’ in our sample.
The BBC Audience is ‘all licence fee payers’ so we included a full social range from social group A through to E, broad ages (25-65 plus) and a range of terminal education achievement. We included all the British Nations and as many regions as possible.

**Spectrum of news engagement**

The respondents were all from the 80% plus of the population who consume News.

We used Ofcom’s well proven spectrum of news engagement and disengagement to ensure a spread of usage. At its simplest, the ‘News Engaged’ are heavy consumers of news and use three or four news platforms (TV, Radio, online etc.). They tend to be interested in International as well as National news.

At the opposite end of the spectrum the ‘News Disengaged’ are less assiduous daily consumers of news, use fewer platforms, may be more interested in local news, may dip into National news mainly when there is something that particularly interests them going on, and include celebrity news and sport in their definition.

All, at least occasionally, watched BBC evening news (6pm or 10pm). There was wide use of many other broadcasters and a spectrum of high to low approval of the BBC.

**How the research was constructed (see Fig 1 below, Sample)**

The research took around two weeks for each respondent to complete.

It first involved a detailed pre-diary examining breadth of opinion in religious stories online, on TV and radio across many broadcasters.

Respondents then attended an interview or focus group where they discussed the concept of breadth of opinion, drew on the real examples from their diaries and watched five edits of clips and web pages about religion, belief or ethics from BBC news and current Affairs programming and web pages on five topics:

- Gay marriage
- Women Bishops (coverage of Synod vote)
- Wearing religious symbols in the workplace
- Assisted Dying: Tony Nicklinson Court Case
- You Tube video which was ‘offensive to Islam’ (murder of American ambassador)

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2 For full transcripts of the audio and video clips used see appendix
Finally, a proportion, (around half the sample) completed a short post-task diary in which they followed up some stories to see whether breadth of opinion developed over time. They also examined in detail what they felt breadth of opinion and impartiality meant in various formats such as phone-ins and packages.

The respondents were not told at the outset that the project was for the BBC. This was only revealed after they had completed their diaries and responded to the first few clips. This meant that it was possible to contextualise their view of the BBC within their total media use and see, to a certain extent, how the BBC delivered breadth of voice relative to other broadcasters and news sources.

Study structured as ‘a journey’: reviewing real materials, not just impressions

![Diagram]

**Pre Task**
- 7 day diary (unbranded)
- Assessing breadth of opinion in religious stories,
- Whether the piece would contribute positively long term

**10 x 3hr focus groups and 9 x 2hr depth interviews**
- Discussed meaning of breadth of opinion and impartiality
- Viewed and discussed example BBC clips on religious topics

**Post task**
- 4 day diary looking at how BBC handling of stories develops subsequently
  - (religious and non)
  - What they finally think of breadth of opinion on BBC

**Fig 1**

**Opinions from across the spectrum proved valuable**

The research was demanding both intellectually and in terms of respondents’ time.

For some the level of analysis was different from anything they had attempted before.

“The hardest thing I’ve ever done”

Protestant: Moderate, Scotland

Sophistication of analysis and interpretation differed, as did the ability of respondents to always detach themselves from the ‘controversial issue’ itself and talk about the coverage. However, it was extremely valuable to reflect and shadow the population of licence fee payers in this way. We did not only speak to articulate and confident Radio 4 listeners but also parts of the audience who do not always get the chance to express their opinions so clearly. The opinions of this segment are important to a study on breadth of opinion because these respondents picked up sensitively on members of the public in the broadcast coverage who found it harder to speak or got overlooked. This made it clear how the BBC and its interviewers need to act to facilitate the contribution of the more ‘silent’ sectors of the audience.
2. Management Summary

The research examined notions of breadth of opinion and impartiality in BBC coverage of religious and ethical issues in news and current affairs programming. Oxygen conducted 10 extended focus groups and 9 depth interviews in the Nations and Regions with a range of religious and non-religious groups. Participants were licence fee payers aged 25-65+ of mixed sex, social class, media use and engagement with news and the BBC.

Participants kept diary commentaries on coverage of religious and ethical stories, then attended a research session to discuss whether the BBC achieved breadth of opinion across time and output. They commented on five edits of coverage of religious topics from the BBC.

The audience feel the BBC does a ‘good’ job at providing breadth of opinion over time and across output, and that it is impartial.

The small minority who came to the research with an existing opinion that the BBC lacked impartiality in the main revised their opinion having looked at BBC output in detail.

However, there were two caveats about BBC impartiality in coverage of religion. Firstly, the BBC is sometimes seen by the very religious as ‘Secular’ (by which they mean ‘non-religious’) in its approach to content, rather than completely un-biased or neutral.

Secondly, the UK media as a whole are felt to fall down on breadth of voice in their depiction of Muslims. One piece of example BBC coverage shown was felt to share this problem.

Choice of religion as a test was demanding. Religion guides some individuals’ lives and forms their identity, so is highly emotive for them. But levels of religious knowledge are highly polarised in modern Britain. A large number of unbelievers at the opposite end of the spectrum know little about religion, are almost entirely indifferent to it and find it extremely difficult to understand the ‘world view’ of the believer.

The objective of the audience with contentious news issues like religion is to understand the issue and come to a personal view. They may not have a view of their own to start with.

Because of this, it is important when reporting religion that the BBC pitches its content with this possible lack of knowledge in mind, providing context or sometimes explaining the basics of religious positions.

This helps non-believers’ understanding. It also satisfies a desire in religious believers to have their positions outlined in the public space however briefly, and to feel understood.

Breadth of opinion is seen as part of impartiality. ‘Impartial’ coverage, for the audience, incorporates ‘both’ or ‘all’ sides of an argument. However, the audience find breadth of opinion contributes to more than just impartiality, it also contributes to the mission of ‘educate and inform’.

The audience nowadays look across a range of different broadcast sources if they are interested in a story. They say this is because they want different perspectives or ‘more information’ to form their view, rather than just more ‘opinions’. ‘On demand’ facilitates this, and the audience also feel that though most broadcasters follow impartiality guidelines there are observable differences in the types of issues they cover and the questions they ask.
We were asked whether the audience ‘find their own voice’ or view on the BBC and if not, whether they know where to find it. Firstly, it is important to say that the audience want to hear all relevant mainstream strands of thought on a topic, not just their own.

Most do say they hear their view on the BBC. However if a group’s religious or cultural position is not accurately presented in flagship programmes over a sustained period they are nowadays likely to ‘opt out’ of some parts of a broadcaster’s output and supplement with additional broadcast or online sources, not to look deeper within the original broadcaster for views that more closely match their own. Media fragmentation and digital facilitate this.

Audience impression of ‘good’ BBC breadth of opinion can be hampered by unintentional executional factors such as dominant visuals or the positioning of interviews in a package. The audience places great reliance on ‘neutral’ interviewers and presenters to facilitate opinion, giving ‘equal’ weight to opinions which represent major and reasonable strands of thought. They should listen, balance the media experience and ability of speakers well, and give all speakers ‘fair time’. All this contributes to the achievement of breadth of voice.

In an ‘on demand’ age the timeframe for news is felt to be immediate. Therefore reporting at least the two relevant sides of an argument is felt to be necessary from the point of a story breaking. However, the audience are understanding and realistic about the time constraints on broadcast news: for example, that short bulletins are a vehicle for fact rather than opinion.

Online (tablet, PC, phone) is a powerful support in delivering a breadth of opinion quickly. Breadth comes across to the audience particularly clearly in this medium. Although some do so, the audience believe that they will not always pick up complementary broadcast content which delivers breadth well such as phone-ins, studio debates and documentary. Some may not be highly motivated to seek complementary content, for others discovery is serendipitous and they find that broadcast cross links are not universal.

The audience feel context is key both to understanding a story, and then to deciding whether the BBC carries adequate or appropriate breadth of opinion on that story across its output. The question of ‘what is appropriate breadth?’ differs from issue to issue but the BBC is felt to carry more ‘political’ or ‘establishment opinion’ than other channels. More direct comment from affected or experienced individuals in the ‘real world’ and a more responsive analysis of UGC to ensure the BBC are answering the audience’s developing questions could lead, they feel, to more fresh and relevant content.

The answer to “What is sufficient or appropriate breadth?” differs by issue. On an issue like EU membership respondents say they will be interested in reliable economic views: those of businesses and employers, more than political ones. On immigration they say they are keen to push aside the propaganda on both sides of the debate and uncover more facts, again to come to a personal view.

To summarise, although members of the public want and like to hear their positions accurately referenced on the BBC, ‘good breadth’ need not be just a mechanistic attempt to replicate the licence fee payer profile in all broadcast opinion. An ‘ideal’ BBC breadth of opinion encompasses all the groups nominally affected by or experienced in an issue. In addition, the audience want more than just un-informed or emotional ‘opinions’ on the BBC, but opinions that are both informing and representative of the major strands of thought on any given issue.
Detailed findings

3.1. Audience definition of ‘religious or ‘ethical’ stories

These were not found to be abundant in the media and some commented that they had found it difficult to find enough to watch for their diaries. A couple pointed out that the BBC News website does not have a tab for ‘Religion’ as it does for other categories. The most commonly referenced stories with a bearing on religion were abortion, gay marriage, women bishops, ‘Malala’s’ shooting, resignations of The Pope and The Archbishop of Canterbury, topical stories on scandals, halal meat and horsemeat. Muslim respondents were extremely focussed on Islamic news stories and usually anything in the Middle East or Africa including Mali was listed as a ‘religious’ story, both by Muslim and by many other respondents.

3.2. Religion, Secularism, perceived BBC performance on breadth of opinion

The BBC was felt by the vast majority of respondents both from religious groups and non-believers to deliver a reasonable breadth of opinion in religious coverage when taken over time and across the output. Overall the BBC was also felt to be reasonably impartial in its coverage.

There were two caveats to this

1. The BBC outlook can be perceived as 'non-religious' rather than truly 'un-opinionated' or neutral. A 'Secular' bias or opinion is definitely not seen by the 'very religious' as the same as having 'no' point of view on religion. This segment often feel the BBC shows an overtly 'non-religious' outlook in its presenter language, framing of issues or individual interviewing style and also that there can be an implicit assumption in BBC language that the audience shares a 'non-religious' belief framework.

2. UK broadcasters are felt to fall down on impartiality, context and breadth of voice in their depiction of Muslims. This is felt by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. One of the example BBC films chosen for the research was felt to share this generic problem.

Some respondents (e.g. Jews) who arrived at groups feeling the BBC was biased against their particular religion, or in general, revised their opinion after studying the output in detail.

Perhaps paradoxically, religious respondents showed a tendency to rate the BBC higher on breadth of opinion in its general broadcasting than they did on its specific coverage of religion.

This was usually because religion is a topic they were very close to and they could therefore see subtleties that had been missed. ‘Perfect’ reporting of this topic was seen as difficult.

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3. The dissenters to this were a small group who had an opinion that the BBC had a ‘viewpoint’ (usually one aligned with ‘the establishment’) and edited the framing of stories and the opinions it put forward accordingly. There were one (possibly two) respondents in the sample who strongly believed the BBC to be biased in its general outlook on arrival and maintained that opinion at the end of the group or interview.

4. The ‘very religious’ tended to conflate the terms ‘Secular’ and ‘non-religious’ to mean the same thing.
The less committedly religious and the Agnostic, on the other hand, could interpret the BBC as treating many views equally rather than having an anti-religious bias or favouring any one belief system:

“Things like the Higgs Boson, all that kind of thing, thirty years ago you’d have had someone from a religious group saying ‘this is all against what we are taught by the Bible’, and all that kind of thing. Nowadays it is more blasé. It is all more socially acceptable to believe a lot of different things so I think the news try very hard to be neutral. I often think it is very neutral. They have just got different sides and when they can’t get one person from the other side they always say “So and so couldn’t be reached for comment…” so as to let you know they couldn’t get to both sides of the argument… but they tried!”

Christian, Wales

There was also a ‘common ground’ across the whole sample of a belief in human rights etc. with which the BBC was felt to be aligned.

Religious Coverage proved a very tough test of impartiality and breadth of opinion.

“I think the group discussion made me aware of just how diverse the viewers are and how difficult it must be to take account of everyone’s opinions”

Christian, Wales (post task quote)

“A lot of Jews don’t necessarily like the reporting of the BBC. But it’s to do with everyone’s own bias, because I think if you asked people who are really left of centre for example they would say the BBC is accurate reporting. I think impartiality and accuracy is near enough impossible in terms of religious or contentious attitudes in Broadcasting”

Jewish, North London

As the quotes above indicate, religion is an extremely emotive topic. For the most deeply religious it is their definition of truth and the whole point of their lives. Religion is a lot more than just an ‘opinion’ for them.

For the less committed, religion may be primarily a cultural identity but still a very emotional area in which they have incomplete control of their feelings and a strong sense of ‘rights and wrongs’.

However, the UK is a polarised society in terms of knowledge of religion. Not all the BBC Audience feel strongly about religion. Religious and non-religious viewpoints in the UK are nowadays very far apart.

There were plenty of culturally Christian and some Sikh or Hindu respondents in the sample who could be deemed ‘Secular’ in outlook in the view of the ‘very religious’ in the sample. For example, they shared a position on Gay or Womens’ rights at variance with those holding the strictest positions in their own religions, but completely aligned with the predominant ethical and legal framework observed by UK employers and educators. The

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5 This is close to the dictionary definition of ‘Secular’
NHS/Public sector as major employers, and the comprehensive school education system appeared to be major influencers of thought and attitude here.

On the non-religious end of the spectrum, the definitely Atheist and Agnostic, we found several individuals who were almost entirely ignorant of religious theory or practice.6

Some Atheist and Agnostic respondents did not know simple fundamentals about religion. The importance of the Bible: “it’s just a book”, or the full significance of The Prophet Mohammed to Muslims. Many associated religion chiefly with negatives, such as (to them inexplicable) Middle Eastern and African wars and conflict in Northern Ireland, or even with child abuse scandals. They found it hard to identify with or understand a religious world view versus accepted secular belief frameworks (for example Feminism or equal civil rights).

Lack of religious knowledge was most prevalent among respondents from second generation Atheist or Agnostic families; they had simply had very little contact with religion. Furthermore, their views on religion seemed unlikely to be expanded via a lively workplace discussion or a social conversation:

“With religion, everyone is worried about offending someone and their beliefs so it is a bit of a taboo subject!”

Agnostic, Bristol.

The majority of Atheist and Agnostic respondents were indifferent to religion rather than aggressively ‘Anti-Theist’: “it just isn’t relevant to me”. The small minority in the sample who were anti-religion tended to have had experience of a religion but have lapsed from it

We therefore found that the very religious respondents in the groups (Muslim, Christian or ‘other’) tended to understand each other, identify with one another’s issues and dilemmas and stick together ‘for religion’ in general versus the advance of ‘Secularism’. They saw themselves as ‘all religious people’ in a secular (for some, anti-religious) society.

3.3. The audience objective: to gain understanding of issues

When approaching a controversial topic like Europe, immigration or religion, the objective of most audience members is to gain better understanding of the issue from news, factual and current affairs programming. Though some have pre-conceptions, and a minority have very strong views, not everyone has an opinion on every single religious issue and news story. It was more common in this sample to come to media in the hope of forming one’s opinion.

The audience wanted to form a view they felt was fair, to be truthfully informed on topics and at a minimum ‘to get the facts’. Broadcaster impartiality was important to this: a servant to the audience’s objective.

The majority of respondents want to hear all relevant views. Not just their own;

“All the views to form your view”

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6 Our sample was ‘licence fee payers’ aged 25+. Parents reported that their children in school or recent leavers had a better education in comparative religion than they themselves did, presumably owing to the RE and Citizenship curriculum.
Some, often those who don’t yet have an opinion or who are slightly less news engaged, love debate and ‘others’ opinions’ almost as entertainment and find this a good way to ‘thrash out’ their own view. A BBC programme like Nicky Campbell’s ‘The Big Question’, proved valuable to respondents here

“I watch it to broaden my mind”

Christian, Scotland

Others, particularly the news engaged, claim they first or ‘mainly’ want to know the facts, with ‘informed’ opinion supplementing them.

Context in coverage and reporting was, perhaps because of this, seen by a number of respondents as even more important than breadth of opinion. Without context, “the background”, “where the speakers are coming from” they could not begin to engage or understand an issue.

“Joe Bloggs has got to be able to understand it…the background information and how it got through to where it did.”

Christian, Wales

3.4. Whether and how the audience seek a plurality of views

The audience look across a variety of broadcasters to form their opinions.

The sample in the research included both news engaged and disengaged (see below, Fig 2)

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<th>News engaged “BBC”</th>
<th>Less news engaged “BBC”</th>
<th>Localists’</th>
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<tr>
<td>Engage with Serious news purposes (understanding education, information)</td>
<td>Pick up key BBC bulletin e.g. 6pm (with local news)</td>
<td>‘Intro’ Local news, often BBC</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Radio 4</td>
<td>• Look little further</td>
<td>• ILR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Serious’ BBC current affairs: Any Questions, Newsnight, Panorama etc.</td>
<td>• Often women with small children</td>
<td>• Any local newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Multiple platforms including BBC online</td>
<td>• Internet for ‘catch up’</td>
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<tr>
<th>News Grazers</th>
<th>Engage also with news as Entertainment</th>
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<tr>
<td>News engaged “Alternative”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• ‘Smorgasbord’ of online news with Google as gateway</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Channel 4 TV and other PVR</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Triangle sources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Often multi-cultural /BME</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| News disengaged | |
| Variety of radio including Radio 1 and 2, Heart, Breeze | |
| • Phone-ins: opinion as entertainment/gossip. | |
| • Social media: Yahoo, Facebook | |
Not all the audience members are interested enough in news and current affairs to look further than basic news reports. However, if they wish to, they have wide choice of broadcaster and platform.

Fewer respondents are nowadays bound by the discipline of a broadcast schedule. Those who are, tend to be older. News and background information is ‘on demand’ for the majority.

There are many relatively new choices of digital TV channel, particularly for international news.

A common claimed pattern with National news reporting was to start with the 6pm news (often BBC, their loyalty to this much enhanced and bound by the local news report). Then to add additional early evening TV coverage from Channel 4 or Sky rolling news for more coverage if they were interested. Viewers sometimes had a tablet or Smartphone to hand to follow up a story online, especially when relaxing late at night.

For some the news journey begins online: during the day or at work:

The internet is not always used to gain ‘more depth’, there are two main ways online is used:

- Sometimes users just capture new headlines as they come in during the day, and look no deeper.
- Others start on TV or radio then look at the internet for further depth on tablet, PC or even phone.

The BBC News App was very popular out of home in our sample. BBC News Online was well used but Google was the key gateway for many into online news, providing access to many different online news providers including online newspapers.

Women with young families were particularly dependent on ‘on demand’ news.

Respondents looked further across platforms and broadcasters in four main instances

- If they were very interested in a story
- If they wanted more context /background on a story (e.g. TV then online)
- As a matter of course (Triangulation)
- To find a viewpoint closer to their own

Those who looked across sources as a matter of course tended to be those who habitually ‘triangulated’ news. This phenomenon (referenced in the Arab Spring research) was most common among Muslim and other BME or minority respondents in our sample. These groups definitely felt they were British but usually also had another National or cultural

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7 Some made for mobile sites including the BBC have fewer browsing links than the main site which slightly restricts tablet and phone users

8 Women in general, older Asian women and mothers of very young children in particular, reported they had less leisure to pursue TV news due to family and housework demands.
identity. Sometimes this was an identity that led them to be slightly more mistrustful of a British establishment position (Irish, African ancestry). They tended to believe that there might be stories or particularly other angles on stories, particularly with International news that were less likely to be covered by UK domestic media. These might be political (e.g. the Assad regime side of story) or religious (Islamic). Such respondents might well believe that every single broadcaster has a different opinion or angle and they need to form their own view by looking at all. They did not necessarily believe any one broadcaster was impartial.

Habitual triangulation was less common among white British, very culturally integrated and Christian respondents – they tended to trust the UK media perspective (including the BBC) and were also likely to find that domestic news views chimed with their own:

“Because you agree with it, you don’t look for the other side of it.”

Jewish, North London

“We accept that the TV news is impartial, and don’t question it”

Evangelical Christian, London

A belief that TV news from all broadcasters in the UK ‘has to be impartial by law’ was voiced several times in the research.

The final instance where people looked further was when they felt the view given by a broadcaster on a consistent basis was uncomfortable from a faith or cultural perspective. This was more common among the very religious or on cultural-political issues. It only rarely meant an individual would abandon viewing a broadcaster completely. It was far more common to abandon an element of the output (usually news) or stop following a particular story on that broadcaster for a period.

These individuals seemed much more likely to go and look at another broadcaster than they were to look further or deeper within a broadcaster they see as ‘un-aligned’

Examples were

The BBC and coverage of Gaza. Two or three Jewish respondents in the sample claimed to have stopped following BBC news because it made them “too angry”, and switched to Channel 4 and Sky supplementing with Israeli or other news sources “that show the good side too”. They had not, however, stopped using the BBC.

Evangelical Christians with coverage of gay marriage. One particular respondent’s week-long pre task diary reflected this. Normally almost a ‘solus’ follower of BBC online and news, a few days into his diary he had looked over to Telegraph Online to find a view more aligned with his own. He believed his own view (that Gay Marriage was strictly forbidden in Scripture) was missing in the BBC news coverage he had seen over his initial media diary period. Reading Telegraph Online coverage and comment gave this respondent validation. He didn’t necessarily feel that everyone in the UK shared his views, but he was looking for reassurance that he was not alone in his particular perspective and that there was a constituency ‘out there’.
Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus who wanted more depth on stories from ‘back home’ that were not covered or they felt were being covered in significantly more depth in home media also supplemented. This was usually with Asian channels or You Tube (example stories: Pakistani Politics, the bus rape case interviews, murder of Anni Dewani).  

3.5. **Audience understanding of ‘breadth of opinion’ and ‘Impartiality’**

3.5.i. **The audience are not looking for ‘more views’, but for more information**

If people were looking across platforms at stories they were interested in or ‘wanted more on’ they were almost always looking not for a plurality of opinions but for ‘more information.’

On the whole, if they picked up individual views it was incidental to that process.

In one example of a woman looking further into a story, abortion, the views and experiences of affected women had in fact proved much more helpful to the respondent in forming her opinion than ‘more facts,’ but that had been a serendipitous development in her search.

Respondents were also not looking so much for the views of individuals, but for different ‘perspectives’ or strands of thought: hence looking across different broadcasters and news sources to get their perspective, and those of the journalists within them.

The benefits of ‘breadth of opinion’ do not, in the Audience’s mind, ‘begin and end’ at impartiality. The benefit of a breadth of opinion to most is that you understand the story better i.e. breadth of opinion contributes strongly to the way news ‘educates and informs.’

3.5.ii **How are ‘impartiality’ and ‘breadth of opinion’ related?**

Breadth of opinion was found to be a consistent part of impartiality: ‘not one sided, showing both or all sides of the argument.’ However the audience judgment is that it is only one part. It is, for example, possible to be impartial simply by reporting fact.

The audience judged ‘impartiality’ on all the criteria in the table overleaf.

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9 The view that the BBC did not cover ‘world’ stories in depth was not fully borne out when looking at user views and usage across the total output. In the diaries, we found online news users (often BME) following, for example, the Mali Timbuctu coverage via the BBC Website and some older Muslims following the World Service or BBC Urdu. The more critical respondents’ view was largely driven by flagship TV coverage, particularly the shorter evening news bulletins on BBC vs. Channel 4 at 7pm (which they associated with the in depth international perspective). We encountered few in this sample watching BBC News 24/World News. It may be the case that some mainstream UK BME respondents simply do not know where to find more in depth World coverage on the BBC: especially if they are not big online or radio users. The BBC is seen as good at pointing up key world events accurately, factually, but briefly, on BBC TV news which some respondents then want to follow further. They may not always know where to follow them up within the BBC.
### 3.5.iii Key indicators of impartiality

**Audience’s checklist: indicators of impartiality**

- Factual, truthful, honest, accurate
- Contextualised, enough background
- ‘Not one sided’; ‘showing both or all sides of the argument’
- An ‘unbiased’ interviewer or presenter script
  - Tone of voice
  - Sort of questions asked
  - Absence of an overt political/religious position in interviewer
  - No opinion proffered by the presenter
    
    **“To me impartial is that the news presenter wouldn’t project his opinion, you wouldn’t pick up at all on how he feels”**
    
    Northern Ireland, Protestant
  - Giving enough time to each interviewee: ‘listening’
  - Letting people speak even if their views are extreme
    
    **“Everyone is entitled, even someone who represents the BNP. Let their views be heard; they will probably be shown up for what their view is”**
    
    Northern Ireland, Catholic
  - In the case of religion, not being ‘scornful’ but ‘respectful’ : both in the attitude of the interviewer and the attitude encouraged among other guests in a debate

- Balanced number and ability of speakers on both sides
- Careful use of emotive images or language
- Maintaining an orderly and calm environment for broadcast debate
3.5.iv. Is breadth of opinion spontaneously important, what is understood by it?

Many said that, before coming to the group, they had never thought about the issue of breadth of opinion. This was partly because the vocabulary used was not seen as familiar or natural, ‘a wide range’ of opinion or views was much better understood.

But many also took much of the news ‘on trust’ (i.e. did not subject it to much scrutiny) or had not seen delivering breadth as a particular responsibility either of broadcasters, or specifically the BBC

Breadth of opinion was noticed most frequently in the omission

“It occurs to me most obviously when I feel that I am aware of an angle of opinion that is just not even mentioned”

Evangelical Christian, London

“I did see a programme on abortion the other night that was all Catholics, to be fair it did dawn on me that there might have been a view missing!”

Agnostic, Bristol

Lack of breadth of opinion occurred to people far more when they had strong involvement in an issue or story and were particularly knowledgeable about it

- A religious situation: Gay Marriage etc.
- Northern Ireland
- Causes abroad (e.g. Africa/Middle East) particularly for BME/Immigrant populations
- Muslim issues

“If you are watching something you have a vested interest in… so it is news of something happening here you’re more aware. If they are not asking xyz you know what is missed out. Mali or things in Africa, I don’t have the knowledge so you tend to accept the information you are given”

Protestant, Northern Ireland

The audience ideal and desire is not just to hear ‘opinions’ but nearer the BBC Editorial Guidelines’ wording - to hear opinions that represent ‘all significant’ strands of thought

Extreme opinion can be seen as trivial: part of ‘media as entertainment’ not media as educator or informer. The audience do not want just emotional positions, or positions with ‘an angle’ that are badly justified or not based in fact.

“I have stopped watching so much TV, even BBC, since the ‘Jeremy Kyle’ phenomenon kicked in: where you get one extreme opinion up against another just for entertainment”

Buddhist, Norfolk
“In 10 or 15 minutes with people with polar opposite views you are not going to get much progress or compromise. One person is going to argue black is white and one white black”

Northern Ireland, Catholic

The audience say ‘valuable opinions’ to them are those which

- Explain others’ positions,
- Are from individuals directly affected by an issue\(^\text{10}\),
- Or are particularly well informed (expert)

The research objectives asked what “sufficient” breadth of voice was?

From an impartiality perspective, people believe or know that in the telling of a story there should be ‘at least two’ sides represented.

They do not always make a spontaneous leap to more than two views when initially talking about this issue but this usually becomes a consideration when they begin to consider particular situations.

For example, two speakers may be extreme and the respondent’s own view is not an extreme one. It is therefore apparent that a key opinion is missing. The definition then tends to expand to “all the parties who are involved in the issue or affected by it.” A request for the middle or “average” view in addition to the extremes is extremely frequent in the sample. Polarised views were felt to be particularly common when Politicians were over-represented.

“Sufficient” breadth of opinion also depends on the individual story:

- Different stories have different people involved with and affected by them.
- An ‘important’ story demands more length and breadth of coverage.
- Or a story may demand that the respondent take some final view, action or decision. For example, a European vote demands the respondent be ‘au fait’ with all the key arguments. Opinion is the necessary fuel for the final decision.

The context always makes a difference. Without this, the audience cannot decide whether all significant and appropriate strands of thought have been covered.

“You don't really know whether there is the right breadth of opinion unless you know the topic very well”

Atheist, Manchester

Finally, simply including a very wide range of opinion is not enough and can sometimes obfuscate more than it clarifies. Sometimes, it is claimed, too much badly chosen ‘opinion’ can confuse the audience.

\(^{10}\) This is not the same as having for example a financial ‘interest’ which could, for the audience, give an interviewee a ‘biased’ angle: the audience tend to mean adversely affected, unfairly disadvantaged or ‘with experience of’ an issue.
This applies particularly if opinion is uninformed or emotional. It also applies if arguments are recondite (the ‘angels on pinheads’ debates of a group of initiates), off-topic, or don’t sum up or clarify the basic position of a key group in an argument. The latter problem seemed to be particularly common in religious coverage.

We had examples in the stimulus where the opinions given were obscure arguments, not related to the main issue under debate, or not simple enough for the listener. For example a spokesperson can be nominally be invited to contribute from the correct group but fail to explain that group’s core strand of thought (see Women Bishops example below).

Therefore, for the Audience, breadth of opinion is not just the tokenistic inclusion of all licence fee payer groups. It is a quality issue too. Opinion has to be appropriate to the issue, illuminating, directed by the broadcaster to comment relevantly, and well chosen.

3.5.v. The impression of breadth can be impeded or hampered by executional factors

In news packages the audience find there can be unintended emphases in editing including dominant visuals, or particularly impactfulful speakers. Sometimes the position of a key opinion in an edit was felt to affect takeout and impact. Respondents claimed the beginning and end of an interview or package were the most impactful for them.

“If they are going to use emotive images which they have to because it is news and what is going on is emotive, then perhaps you need to balance it with an emotive image from the counter argument”

Jewish, North London

In interviews and panels respondents felt it was important that interviewees were well balanced in ability and media training. If interviewees were not balanced in ability then they wished the interviewer to be very vigilant in offsetting any negative effects.

Some interviewees were found to be more impactful on screen than others. Or sometimes on TV or radio a media-savvy interviewee could be put up against one who had not been media trained.

“They had someone from the NHS talking about abortion with all their statistics and then a lady from a charity putting the other view. She simply didn’t have the words or the numbers and the interviewer needed to give her more time to speak”

‘Traditional Catholic’ Depth, Glasgow

For some in the sample (7 or 8 respondents at most), this argument for balance and fairness of representation in a debate went as far as requesting absolutely ‘equal numbers on each sides of the debate’ on panels or in triad interviews (e.g. ‘Newsnight’). This view was not widespread across the sample and seemed to be most significantly felt for certain media formats where more pressure was potentially put on vulnerable respondents, but it did exist.

It was also felt to be important to an impression of breadth that the interviewer did not cut off prematurely views that they did not agree with, intimidate shy or slow interviewees, ignore any portions of an audience, or give interviewees unequal time. The less articulate interviewee should, it was felt, be protected and encouraged.
“Victoria Derbyshire (Radio 5 live) on abortion, it was really fair, all opinions and all sides. It had British people, people calling in from Southern Ireland, people saying the usual stuff that it shouldn’t be allowed. I didn’t agree but it was still their opinion and given equal weight: that is good”

“X Presenter (R4) seems to control it a lot; if he doesn’t like an answer he will cut it off. If he does he will expand it. He and the producer have a lot of control”

Atheists, Manchester

These views were put forward by many, but particularly by our less confident respondents, who tended to be the most sympathetic to unconfident interviewees and also the keenest to hear all views.

3.6. Audience expectations and judgment of the BBC

There are higher than average expectations of the BBC from the majority.

There were slightly less clear expectations or sense of BBC identity from British Asians in the sample, and some contradictory views over its editorial stance.

For everyone, including British Asians, the chief heritage, obligation and strength of the BBC was felt to be in being factual and accurate. In this it was felt the BBC could ideally balance other views in the media that were felt to be more extreme, less factual and less impartial.

“They all (Broadcasters) have a responsibility to be impartial and have breadth but the BBC is an institution…it is British. It is what we are about and we need to bring it across to the world”

Jewish, North London

“For me, it is more important the BBC gets it right (i.e. factually) than gets a wide range of opinion because some opinions are just nonsense. They must interview 10 for every one that gets on the telly. They are choosing the representative opinions”

Atheist, Manchester

Some felt the BBC had a particular responsibility to increase understanding via the unbiased depiction of ‘difficult’ groups and issues:

“At the very least the BBC should not make things worse!”

Catholic male depth, Hull, in reference to You Tube Clip stimulus

“I would like to get a blend of both fact and opinion…As it is the BBC they have a role in providing that breadth…it is more educational…whereas if you get just extreme views or race views it is hard to do that”

Agnostic, Bristol

The Jewish group gave the example of biased coverage of immigration in the media in general which it felt the BBC could be well placed to correct. For example the view that British jobs are often depicted in other media as under threat from migrants. They felt that there are clear ‘factual’ counter arguments to be put. For example that British people refuse to apply for certain positions. Education using statistics was also advocated.
News channels are seen as different from each other

Respondents had a view that channels differ in their philosophy and outlook, they are not all the same. They believe the rules of impartiality in TV news are the same, but that channels demonstrably cover different aspects of news, ask different questions, and have different perspectives. It is felt to be easier to flick between them and compare this than it once was.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views and ‘Images’ of News and current affairs providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al Jazeera</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used much outside the Muslim/Asian sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More ‘balanced’ than some watching it for the first time expected (Jews), A different, ‘World’ perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sky</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International, fast, good for breaking news, Impartial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Worldwide news’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Watchable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More sensational and less accurate than the BBC on breaking news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of interviews with members of the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Channel 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive, Detailed, in depth, (7pm news programme in particular leads this), alternative and able to be brave/challenging, Good for BME and world issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ITV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human interest, ‘of the people,’ less serious in image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BBC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual, accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not so “World” oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong in UK Local and National news: pre-eminent for most in this Establishment, ‘Lots of Politicians’, ‘Stuffy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slower, more correct, less sensational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciously multicultural in education and outreach (Muslims)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe to watch and less controversial: ‘no body parts’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should the BBC represent all views?

There is not a well-developed spontaneous view that the BBC should represent all licence fee payers’ opinions over the course of time as some kind of ‘statutory obligation’.

People do expect the relevant breadth to the issue, with everyone allowed to comment and with no view obviously left out or continuously misrepresented over time.

(It was usually only when a personal view was felt to have been left out consistently over time that any mention of the ‘licence fee’ and ‘just inclusion’ tended to come up).
We prompted on whether some views were felt to be over represented by the BBC or others heard ‘too rarely’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views heard ‘Too often’</th>
<th>Views heard ‘too rarely’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians:</td>
<td>‘Ordinary people’, by which respondents meant a number of different things:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Politicians don’t add to the debate or to breadth because they are not giving their honest view, it’s the party line” Manchester, Atheist</td>
<td>The people directly affected by or with experience of the issues under debate (especially those negatively affected): rather than politicians or people speaking for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activists/ ‘Experts’ and the front persons of ‘interested’ organisations sometimes over used in preference to direct reports from those they nominally represent</td>
<td>Second guessing the missing 'layman’s' question: “The type of question the ordinary man might ask”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Those people like Tatchell don’t know everybody - though they give the opinion that they do” Manchester, Atheist</td>
<td>The middle ground of opinion: “People like some of us who don’t care as much (as the extremists) about politics and religion” Catholic, Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigners and activists, like Politicians, are sometimes perceived to lack passion and ‘speak to a script’: therefore can fail to convey religious or human arguments fully.</td>
<td>This was not seen as giving a voice to people who were indiffere nt or passive, but those who had a clear ‘middle view’ in the conflict and who, furthermore, felt they now represented a large constituency of opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional feeling that individual activists, over-used, risking poorer diversity of voice.</td>
<td>‘The ordinary man on the street’ This was usually a ‘code’ for wanting to hear more ‘non PC’ views. This was wanted in order to confirm that one’s own prejudices or fears were actually widespread in the population and therefore valid “if we mention this we come across as being racist” Never hearing such views was seen as a sign of suppression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment voices</td>
<td>Ordinary voices as a way of exploring one’s own opinion or educating oneself - “I just like to hear other people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Church of England and the Establishment feel comes through more with the BBC” (Catholic, Northern Ireland)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within religion, Muslims and Anglicans. Noted by most, but particularly by Hindus and Sikhs (who feel left out) and by Catholics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme edges of the religious or political debate (Northern Irish and Muslim respondents in particular felt this)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have seen these people from the DUP and Sinn Fein talking every day for the last 25 years. I know what they are all going to say before they open their mouths” Catholic, Northern Ireland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Extreme, then at the other end too moderate…no one in the middle” Muslim, London</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The secular argument or negative depiction of religion (by the very religious)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A report including the public that was particularly praised was a 2-3 minute report on the Peace Walls in Belfast carried on BBC Northern Ireland’s Newsline programme. Both Catholics and Protestants felt it was exemplary.

Man: “It was BBC, 2-3 minutes long. In Belfast since the peace process the peace walls have not been coming down, in fact there have been more peace walls now than there ever was at the height of the troubles…. I did think the coverage was fair. They interviewed ordinary people on the ground, walking in the streets coming out of shops, a variety of ages on both sides of the wall and the consensus was we would love this wall to come down but we are not ready yet…”

Woman: I saw it too; it was very truthful of the locals

Man: no politicians, no churchmen, no big hitters, just the ordinary commentator … ‘I’d love to see it but not ready sadly, we are not a normal integrated society’ so it was a very fair piece of journalism for me and not tainted by politicians”

Catholics, Northern Ireland

Did people hear their own voice on the BBC and if not did they know where to find it?

The majority interviewed did feel they heard their own religious or ethical voice or view on the BBC.

A smaller proportion of the audience felt their religious strand of thought was either absent or mis-represented in the obvious BBC ‘flagship’ programmes.

- Jews felt the Israeli political position was not accurately reported by the BBC though in general the Jewish voice was represented on other issues (It should be noted some of them also felt coverage of Israel was slightly ‘improving’ on the BBC)

- Muslims and Evangelicals feel their voice is nominally heard but their view or position not understood – i.e. their core theological argument is not properly depicted. They are most likely to complain that the BBC position is either “Secular” or anti-religious.

- Religious denominations of smaller size (e.g.; Buddhists) or even English Catholics\(^\text{11}\) were in general content with representation, seeing it in line with their proportion in the population. There was a Buddhist plea for more visibility of UK Buddhist voice in the UK Media not just a ‘Tibetan’ or ‘Eastern’ mental association for the religion.

- There was some feeling among BME respondents that Far Eastern, African or ‘non-European’ religious mind sets were not well understood in the UK Media as a whole. This did not appear to be a comment aimed specifically at the BBC.

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\(^{11}\) The research was done during the Magdalen laundry story and continuing sex abuse scandals. Therefore Catholics’ seeming acceptance of lower representation may have been partly driven by the fact that they were very aware of negative representation in the media as a whole i.e.; were in some cases relieved when Catholics were not in the news. Along with other Christians they would have liked ‘good’ Christian works such as food banks to be better represented. “The priest who offered to do a service of blessing for those poor babies buried in a mass grave at the crematorium (Mortonhall)” ‘Traditional Catholic’, Glasgow.
Sikhs and Hindus felt their depiction should be in line with their presence in the population, but had strong issues with what they saw as consistently ‘excessive’ reporting of Muslim issues and positions in flagship media.

“I find when there’s a news story about religion, it’s about Islam and Christianity, none of the other religions are touched”

Sikh/Hindu, Birmingham

- They particularly want to hear their own views depicted in the clearly relevant stories (e.g.; Sikh problems with turbans at airports; Religious Symbols)
- BBC local news to some extent compensates for gaps in the National coverage by reporting community issues and events in depth (Birmingham)

Secularists/ Humanists felt their views were reflected on the whole but that the BBC could be too ‘establishment’ in their outlook on occasions. For example Secularists feel that all should be treated equally in terms of their views being questioned and there should not be exceptions via tradition.

- “Sometimes, with senior churchmen like Bishops, they can be very deferential on the BBC. Everyone’s view should be questioned. They give Bishops and Archbishops a pretty easy ride in my opinion. They should be questioned equally, like politicians.”
  
  Secular Humanist, Lancashire

- R4 ‘Thought for the Day’, it was noted, was closed to Atheists.

Should breadth of opinion include major religions, minor religions, and Secular and Humanist views?

It was agreed that all of these should be included over time and where opinion was substantially different or relevant (e.g.; a Secularist might be an ‘original’ interviewee on the topic of faith schools and might challenge a perceived ‘establishment’ position that these were ‘a good thing’).

Otherwise it was felt involvement should be in rough proportion to the religion’s incidence in the population.

The view was that the presenter or interviewer must be the neutral pivot around whom any views flex. He or she should not be identified with any one of them and should help the audience understand them all.

Whatever their actual expectations, religious groups of a smaller size are extremely pleased when their views are referenced and sought on religious issues, and this increases satisfaction with the BBC.
Do all groups know where to find ‘their own voice’ on the BBC?

Groups who don’t hear their own view or voice on the BBC in flagship programmes don’t necessarily know where to go to look for it within the wider output.

But, more to the point, they are not particularly motivated to look for their own voice.

They either see this as hard work or ‘beside the point’.

“The main part of the BBC is the Ten O’ Clock News or the Six O’ Clock News, if they don’t do enough in that particular media…you have to go down so deep to get that breadth of opinion and yes it is probably available somewhere, but can you imagine watching the news and then listening to the radio, and then going online, and then watching the chat shows just to get that breadth of opinion? The average person isn’t going to consume that much information to get that so I think yes it is on offer, but it is not easily accessible”

Muslim, London

BBC Flagship programmes matter most to minority groups in terms of projecting their view as valid in society. They feel they can find their points of view in other media channels and broadcasters easily if they want reporting or editorial viewpoints they have better affinity with.

The BBC is judged more on some output than the rest

Flagship programmes do definitely exist. They are not seen as superior to other BBC programmes but are more identified with the ‘voice of the BBC’. 

The audience find it very hard to spontaneously see the BBC as one whole: and particularly to see its entire editorial output as intentional and planned. When it was exposed during the course of the research and they thought about it consciously, the audience could see that breadth of opinion on current or topical affairs is actually present across the entire BBC output spectrum, from serious programming through to lighter programming.

However the audience have difficulty spontaneously seeing the latter programme types as intentional ‘organs’ of the BBC.

3.7 The audience view on what constitutes ‘Flagship Programming’

TV news, particularly BBC News at Six and News at Ten and the Internet, BBC Online and the BBC News app were particularly important to respondents.

TV (including TV News) is seen as particularly impactful, hence forming the strongest impressions. The News at Six in particular was a lynchpin of BBC viewing for many respondents in the regions and nations because of a habitual slot in family viewing and the local news element.

“It is most important to get on the BBC 6 O’ Clock News because that is all some people are going to watch”

Agnostic, Bristol.

Some particular news programmes were seen as ‘flagship’ for Radio listeners: particularly
Today and PM for Radio 4. Radio 5 live and the hourly radio news bulletins were taken note of but were shorter so less authoritative, more factual and functional.

‘Serious’ current affairs programmes were also associated with the BBC’s ‘official voice’: Radio’s ‘Any Questions’, TV’s ‘Panorama’, ‘The Politics Show’ and ‘Andrew Marr’, and the most mentioned, ‘Newsnight’ and “Question Time”. The latter were deemed particularly appropriate vehicles for breadth of voice and to have a very “sensible” range of opinion.

Other output was not so formally identified with ‘the voice of the BBC’.

Local radio was seen as particularly good at delivering ‘my voice’, but was less identified with the ‘official’ voice of the BBC.

Nicky Campbell’s ‘The Big Question’ was well received and used by religious audiences (though it was not seen as a specifically religious programme).

Phone-ins such as Radio 2’s Jeremy Vine, BBC Radio Scotland’s ‘Call Kaye’; and Radio 5 live Victoria Derbyshire attracted strong praise. They were seen as exceptionally strong at delivering egalitarian breadth of voice, respecting the caller, ‘double guessing’ the ‘Common Man’s’ questions, clarifying issues and hence educating and being skilled and original in their probing of topical issues.

However these latter shows serve more to entertain, be enjoyed and make the channel ‘listenable’. Presenters get much of the credit for the breadth and skill employed. This output is not always seen as the ‘intentional’ work of ‘the BBC’.

Nevertheless, regardless of whether ‘the credit’ is aggregated back; this BBC output does definitely provide a breadth of opinion the audience value and this was acknowledged in the groups.  

3.8. How Platforms work together in delivering breadth

The audience may, or may not, pick up on more than just the broadcast ‘flagship’ coverage.

As referenced above, some have a traditional viewing pattern and pick up on ‘later’ current affairs programmes like ‘Newsnight’, which are occasionally referenced on news programmes earlier in the day. They may deliberately follow up on a story of special interest.

If a story runs a long time and is important they feel they will often pick up some coverage over a long period in ‘documentary’ special e.g.; on a programme like Panorama, and some expect that to be provided automatically for stories that are ‘big’ enough.

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12 We prompted briefly with screen grabs of religious and ethical factual and BBC Religion and Ethics website content. The majority was unknown and of interest only to the most religious in the sample or teachers. For example, we had a Muslim grandparent interested in using more of it in his regular religious education of his grandchildren (he already used BBC material and felt it was a particularly safe and accurate source). We did not actually prompt on CBBC coverage, but we got very positive feedback on its diversity and religious coverage both from Muslims and also instances of Christian and Agnostic parents, grandparents and children watching news stories, including religious news, on it. CBBC was felt to be exemplary in its diversity of voice and contextual provision and its activities were clearly identified as a ‘BBC’ activity by these groups.
But many respondents feel they will not automatically pick up on additional breadth on a story across wider BBC broadcast current affairs or factual output, especially on average, shorter time frame stories.

There are several reasons for this:

- Not all have a neat, tidy or regular viewing pattern. Picking up on phone-ins or documentary specials for these people can be purely serendipitous, dependent on a compelling interest in subject matter or how high profile the speakers are.

- Not all ‘can be bothered’ to look, and for some the headline news ‘is enough’.

- Awareness and use of red buttons and cross programme links on TV is inconsistent: at least one group (Wales) strongly advocated more cross referencing and linking.

However, BBC Online users do feel links work very well in the online medium, linking them through to other web articles which they then explore and use.

“The BBC website has got good factual stuff on it. Usually on their website, on one side they have got some added information and some opinion on there and I’ll look into that.”

Older Muslim Male Depth, Bradford

In short, the audience have access to an ‘on demand’ framework which means they do not need to plan viewing as much as they did in the past. They are also not aware of everything available on the BBC or the website: “you have to know it’s there”.

All this contributed to a conclusion by the audience that the timeframe for getting across good breadth of opinion was more or less instant. This was framed by the internet and ‘on demand’ context. News breaks very quickly.

TV and Internet were felt to be disproportionately significant for communicating an immediate audience impression of breadth of opinion.

The internet is seen as excellent at getting a breadth of opinion across. Most respondents thought primarily of reading in this medium - i.e.; online written news reports. These are felt to have a dispassionate style in which it is ‘crystal clear’ when opposing views are cited. Not all respondents watch online video for breaking news as they may be out of home.

The audience believe two particular BBC media: TV and Online in combination, should provide the appropriate breadth of opinion almost immediately and that they cannot afford to get initial coverage ‘wrong’.

Furthermore, if a story runs on, the audience notice if the coverage fails to develop and include all relevant viewpoints and emerging arguments over time in the flagship platforms. An example of this is the Gay Marriage story (see below).

The audience are sophisticated and forgiving about what can be achieved on platforms in terms of breadth of opinion.

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13 Though online links do not reference across ‘out of their silo’ e.g. to live or upcoming TV or radio
“It depends on the type of programme. If you are watching the news, that isn’t always set up for an opposing view. Watching the news I am not always going to expect breadth of opinion. Whereas watching a show like ‘Question Time’ or ‘The Big Question’. Those shows pick people in the audience to make sure there is a balance”

Evangelical, South London.

Some news reports are short. They include no opinion, just fact, and this is fine by the audience. The length constraints of news programmes are understood.

If views are included on news then they feel that at least the two sides of an argument should be covered. The exception to this comes when the two sides are extremes which are perceived to have been over-exposed (see-saw), in that case then a more moderate or ‘typical’ public view is also wanted.

3.9 Audience views on comment (UGC)

The overt inclusion and invitation of Audience comment by any broadcaster enhances the impression of breadth of opinion. The audience feel their point of view is invited and that the broadcaster is inclusive.

The audience poll on BBC NI Sunday morning was liked for this reason, and Sky and other broadcasters who use ‘ticker tape’ and other on screen comment were recalled.

Some users of wider online comment and websites consistently commented that BBC sites did not particularly appear to invite comment or make it visible. The frame of reference for these comments was sometimes respondents using sites with very dominant audience comment such as You Tube rather than other news broadcasters’ sites like Sky. However, some using the latter news sites persisted in commenting (despite similarity of design) that online comment on the BBC was lower profile.

Regular BBC website users responded that the opportunity to comment on BBC news sites was present but sometimes inconsistent. They knew that comment and ‘Editors Picks’ were present and pointed out their position at the bottom of the page.

“Some BBC articles you can comment on, some you can’t. I think it is down to the moderators. I do it all the time”

Evangelical, London

“I didn’t know it (comment) was there
It is not always there
It says ‘what is your opinion’? – it asks, but there are not comments there already”

Agnostics, Bristol

One respondent in particular (who was mainly a Sky News user) wondered if the device of ‘Editor’s Picks’ was perhaps an attempt to be ‘leading’ by the BBC: He had missed the option to read other comments on ‘click through’.

Regular users of the BBC site, however, understood the ‘Picks’ mechanic.
“You can read all 1065 (comments) if you want to but that assumes you don’t have a life!”

Agnostic, Bristol

Other respondents felt that because they understood the BBC site to be moderated comment could take a while to appear or could be removed: again something they felt could be misunderstood if people were used to using un-moderated comment sites.

Audience comment on the BBC sites was not particularly respected by more serious ‘news engaged.’ The standard of contributions to this and many other online forums was questioned by them in comparison to the journalistic comment they valued more on the BBC.

The audience expect BBC online comment to be used and fed back and reflected in coverage. If it is not then it contributes to any suspicion of its lack of importance.

**UGC: ‘Undercover listening’**

In minority communities (Northern Irish Catholics, Muslims and Sikhs) there was some evidence of online comment being monitored as an ‘undercover’ method of understanding the breadth and nature of opinion in the ‘majority community’.

Such respondents felt that they could find out about close friends and workmates’ views on issues this way, whether they were Northern Irish Protestants or White ‘Christians’ without actually discussing views in a social context (which could be embarrassing or even detrimental to friendship).

BBC online comment was understood to be moderated, and also felt to be ‘moderate’ versus comment for example, on the Daily Mail Online or NI Loyalist Facebook groups.

Occasionally, personal use of online comment gave an opportunity to ‘correct’ opinions minority community respondents felt were extreme or unfair anonymously on such forums, but the majority of our respondents were just ‘lurkers.’
3.10 Audience evaluation of breadth of opinion on five specific stories

As outlined above, as well as discussing their own examples of stories, in the focus groups research respondents watched five sets of clips of programmes and web pages from BBC News and Current Affairs selected by the BBC Trust from five stories. The next section of the report describes the audience’s view on whether breadth of opinion was achieved, across output, on these five stories:

- Gay marriage
- Women Bishops (coverage of Synod vote)
- Wearing religious symbols in the workplace (Christian Legal Centre cases)
- Assisted Dying: Tony Nicklinson Court Case
- You Tube video which was ‘offensive to Islam’ (leading to murder of American Ambassador Chris Stevens and three others)

An overview of the findings and some ‘rules of play’ arising from the review of these clips prefices this section (overleaf 3.10.i.)
3.10.i. Overview of findings: facilitating breadth of voice

- Religious stories need more simplification and context for the majority of the Audience.

- Coverage of religious stories on the BBC should quickly and simply explain the core religious viewpoint, either via voiceover or interview.

- This is to help the secular understand the viewpoint of the religious, and also to satisfy the religious:
  - Agnostics and Atheists sometimes do not understand any core religious position
  - The religious want their view explained and ‘out there’: accurately, not in detail

- TV editing particularly, visualisation, any imbalance of impact from chosen speakers or the way a report is begun and ended can have strong and unintentional effects on communication, rendering the audience take out less impartial and broad than intended

- The audience want to hear moderately expressed opinion in order to facilitate true breadth of opinion in broadcasting.
  - This may, for example, be expressed with Muslim coverage as wanting to hear “more moderate Muslims”
  - Divergence from a core tenent of faith may in fact be hard to find, but if so, all want these views impactfully but unemotionally expressed

- In order to ensure proper breadth of opinion the BBC is felt to be responsible for creating disciplined or ‘controlled environments’ in which all speakers are facilitated, speakers are found who can express views calmly and respondents are balanced.

- The BBC is felt sometimes by the very religious to depict stories from a “Secular” or “non-religious” rather than an entirely neutral angle

- The very religious feel that the BBC should not ‘take the part of the Secular’ in condemning, ‘mocking’ or failing to understand religious arguments and the BBC should not tolerate this point of view in studio audiences either: they should undertake to explain the basic view, encourage speakers to explain those basic views too, and treat religious views with respect and, occasionally, more patience.

- Less committed religious people, Agnostics and Atheists do not on the whole detect this bias or feel it is an issue and feel that most people ‘get their say’.

- Respondents felt that they would like to hear from slightly fewer activists, interest groups and politicians and more ‘affected’ members of the general public and those with a ‘middle’ or ‘mainstream’ view. This would, it was felt, improve the quality of opinion. It would enhance their understanding, reduce repetitive ‘see-saw’ arguments and help them form their own point of view.
3.10.ii. Gay Marriage

- News at Ten TV News package with David Cameron
- Sunday Morning Live: Studio Debate, Audience Vote
- BBC News online Scotland web page
- The Today Programme: Radio interview with Sikh cleric
- Radio 5 Live presenter invites audience to phone in

Background

Gay Marriage was a controversial topic for quite a few respondents, who came to the groups already prepared to comment on their views of it based on diary entries.

The research took place in the period leading up to the vote in the House of Commons in February 2013 and so this was a topical issue. Respondents in fact felt that recent coverage of this period leading up to the vote was repetitive and had missed out some constituencies of opinion. This was felt to be the case in many media channels, not just in BBC output.

Those ‘opposed’ to gay marriage were in a minority overall, but included most of the Evangelical Christian group, some older male Christians, the more devout religious groups (including Muslims) and a few who had personal rather than religious objections to same sex relationships.

The rest of the sample, including particularly younger moderate Christians, women and the majority of Atheists and Agnostics were open minded on the topic or positive towards it.

Evangelical Christians in particular felt that their own view had been omitted from the media as a whole and given little voice.

“In terms of the balance it has very much been ‘this is what is happening: It's a good thing’...there has been virtually no consideration given to the alternative points of view”

Evangelicals, London

Overview

The BBC flagship news coverage shown reflected audience criticism of the media in general.

Firstly, it appeared to feature largely political commentary and interviews,

“I have seen more on the topic of how MPs are going to vote than I have on the actual subject”

Atheist, Manchester

And, secondly, it was felt to be tonally in favour of gay marriage.
There was some opinion in the sample that Gay Marriage had been a sudden tactical ‘vote grabber’. Therefore the focus on political interviewees both annoyed respondents and did not convert the opinions of those who opposed the legislation.

The BBC coverage was felt to be ‘pro’ gay marriage, as a human rights issue. This perceived stance was fully acceptable and comfortable to some respondents, including many younger Christians; since they thoroughly agreed with it.

**Breadth of opinion**

Overall the audience agreed that the breadth of opinion canvassed on the BBC edit had shown enough nominal breadth and impartiality, (it included Sikh and Christian religious groups, a gay spokesperson, a trenchant ‘voice of the common man’ - and more than enough politicians), but that the choice of interviewees could have been more relevant.

**More ‘appropriate’ Gay spokespeople were requested**

The inclusion in the footage of an interview with an Activist, Peter Tatchell was not seen as the most appropriate choice of Gay commentary on this subject. This was largely because he was not seen by the audience as a spokesperson for those who wished to marry.

Respondents were interested in gay marriage as an ethical and “human” issue over and above just hearing news about the vote, and most wanted to be able to understand it (not all automatically did) and form their own view. Gay people in relationships were seen as the most relevant interviewees, as they were the ones affected by the legislation.

“They are the people affected by it: it is their LIVES!”

Protestant, Northern Ireland

“It should be about getting that understanding of what it really does mean to be married in Church yet it is people not in that situation giving you their opinions of it… the people you should choose are the people who can broaden your perspective of the meaning of it”

Atheist, Manchester

The vast majority of the sample wanted to hear from ‘ordinary’ gays, usually from those who wished to marry on why they wanted to get married. Some (including gays) also wanted to hear the views of some gays who might not wish to get married (“who are all these Gays wanting to go off and get married in Cathedrals!”). There was a clear, consistent appetite for understanding how Gay people felt about marriage versus civil partnership.

“It would be very good if they had interviewed someone who had a civil partnership and still wanted to marry, that would tell us what the difference was”

Catholic, Northern Ireland
In addition to this the BBC and other broadcasters were felt to have obsessed over the religious view and missed some questions about civil marriage that the audience found interesting.

- The emphasis was seen as having been too much on religious marriage by some who were in a civil partnership:

  “What is The State now saying marriage is? It used to be a man and a woman…what is the importance of marriage… and if marriage is enshrined in legislation can we just overturn it? …or is it for bringing up children? That bit of the debate is missing and I am kind of lost.”

  Catholic, Northern Ireland

- There was much interest in the legal and parenting rights differences that might exist between civil partnership and marriage.

- And in response to Peter Tatchell’s comments. Would heterosexuals now want civil partnership? - Why?

The BBC coverage shown attracted a few criticisms, either of following a rather unchallenging or ‘woolly’ line from Government, or reinforcing minority views in the sample that there was convergence between the BBC position and the ‘establishment’ one

“Cameron puts it like some happy religious club that we all want to get into, but it is a human rights issue”

Catholic, Northern Ireland

“In my opinion the gay marriage (clip) was a bit ‘easy journalism’…it assumed we all think this way. We needed different, more challenging views to make people think. That is what I mean about the BBC being educational”

Agnostic, Bristol

**Religious spokespeople**

The religious spokespeople interviewed in the clips were from the Christian Legal Centre/Christian Concern (a campaigning organisation), The Quakers and the Sikh faith. Muslims and Jews were also referenced by David Cameron and this was felt by respondents of those faiths to be very positive. Again it was felt there had been a good attempt at breadth of opinion but that some of the individual choices were inappropriate.

Those who already felt the BBC had some bias in their coverage were critical of the choice of Quaker spokespeople in two interviews.

They understood the ‘accepted practice’ of looking for a balanced ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ argument in a news report but felt it did not work in this case since in their view there was no ‘truly Christian’ opposite opinion.

The choice of the Quakers for interview was therefore felt to be disingenuous by some Evangelical or Older Christians:
“They are there to support BBC bias”

Evangelical, London

“All religions feel the same on this one…so they struggled to find an opposite opinion”

Christian, Scotland

Some non-Evangelicals and Agnostics felt the Quakers were just too small to ‘count’ as a major strand of thought (20,000 members)

Other Christians pointed out that there was in fact significant debate over gay marriage even within some Evangelical churches, and certainly in the less Evangelical, and it might therefore have been possible to get an ‘opposite’ opinion from within a larger denomination.

The interview with Lord Singh in the test stimulus was appreciated as appropriate and original by those who registered it.

Unfortunately, we faced an issue of maintaining our very mixed audience’s engagement with the two longer radio interviews we included from Radio 4. These had quite complex arguments and language and were also ‘one on one’, which respondents reported made them harder to concentrate on and sometimes less ‘interesting’ to them.

Some of the Sikh audience who heard this interview failed to pick up that the interviewee was a Sikh, other denominations sometimes ‘forgot’ the interview when commenting.

Multiple interviewees and more basic arguments outlining a religious position appeared to lead to a more noticeable and engaging debate for mainstream listeners.

This observation may also reinforce the importance of including minority interviewees in TV flagship media or online.

Stating the Christian position

Christians tended to want their basic theological Christian position stated more clearly and simply. Preferably direct from a Christian rather than via reported views.

“Whether you are challenging me or my religion that is fine, but you have to hear us as well”

Evangelical, London

Other coverage of Gay Marriage on the BBC was seen as mixed through to exemplary on Breadth of Opinion

Jeremy Vine’s coverage of Gay Marriage was followed by a few respondents in their diaries. Again, political involvement in the debate was felt too great but it was felt good attempts were made to develop breadth of opinion over time

“The day after the vote being passed was a poor programme…a slanging match between two MPs, no breadth or information. Jeremy was trying to step in but they carried on having a go…The previous day he had one against and one for, it was better”

Christian, Wales
One factual radio programme, ‘Beyond Belief’, produced in Scotland for Radio 4 was praised as exemplary by two Agnostics in Bristol, who had found it independently and listened to it. It addressed many of the spontaneous criticisms levelled at the flagship coverage.

The moderator of the programme was perceived to be skilful and the three guests highly relevant. They included a senior Muslim cleric, who expressed his negative views honestly and in a moderate manner, an academic who listed what he observed were the relatively small number of biblical references to homosexuality, and a priest.

There was an interview with a gay woman who wished to be married in her church, not because it was a ‘step further’ than civil partnership but for the social approval and support of the congregation.

This was felt to have increased respondents’ personal understanding and respondents would have liked more of this type of opinion ‘above the waterline’.
3.10. iii.

**Women Bishops: good breadth of opinion, problems with comprehension**

Clips included

- News at 10 News package (Synod ‘No’ vote)
- Radio 4 interview John Humphrys with Synod members
- Online report from BBC Wales

There was tolerance of the high level of coverage of this Anglican issue on the BBC.

“It’s the main religion in Britain”

Catholic, Northern Ireland

Atheists and Agnostics claimed they would just have ‘blanked it out’ (along with a great deal of other religious coverage).

“When it comes on the news I just put the kettle on”

Atheist, Manchester

The breadth of opinion in the clips and web excerpts was felt to be appropriate in terms of people chosen for interview. The only suggested addition from the audience was the view of ‘ordinary’ Anglican congregations.

However the outcome of the coverage was not felt to be entirely successful by the audience as one side of the argument came across more clearly and understandably to them than the other, and there was believed to be more sympathy with one side of the argument in the way the TV news report was edited, visualised and written.

For most non-believers and many believers the key issue with the reporting shown, was that there was too little context for them to make sense of the story.

The low level of knowledge of religion of some was compounded by what others found to be the unfamiliar, or in one Christian respondent’s words, “medieval” workings of the Anglican Church.

“What is the ‘General Synod’?”

Agnostic, Bristol

Some misunderstood the events completely e.g.; as a rejection by male bishops, or thought the motion had been rejected by a majority.

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14 Lay members of synod were not felt to equate to this in the audience view: possibly another indication that the audience struggled to understand ‘who was who’ and ‘what was what’ in the story.
“I would have liked some charts and diagrams”

Atheist, Manchester

The report was not felt to reprise the very basic pro and anti arguments but was pitched at a relatively high level of understanding.

Therefore despite the interviews being with the ‘right’ people some respondents didn’t understand what Susie Leafe, the ‘no’ representative, was saying on the steps of Synod and thought that she too was part of the ‘yes’ campaign.

This had been a long running story (years not months) but non-believers (and some believers) said that their problem was that even after a lot of historical coverage they still did not feel that the fundamental arguments on the ‘no’ side had been covered and that they understood them.

“I have been watching this for years now, and I am still no wiser as to what anyone’s arguments are against women being bishops!”

Christian, Scotland

The BBC TV package tested, which ran on the night of the vote, was felt to be slanted in favour of a yes vote by the majority of the sample. That is, it was felt to display the Secular affinity the BBC is believed to have by some religious groups, rather than a totally neutral standpoint.

The BBC ‘view’ was interpreted by respondents as that women bishops were desirable. This was conveyed to them by “emotive” visuals, “crying and hugging” and by the use of language in the TV report.

“They did seem to say ‘devastating’ about six times! … and ‘The Church of England is ‘in turmoil’… they really like, relished it”

Christian, Wales

In the view of religious respondents the story and the issue in both the radio and TV was framed more as a Women’s’ rights story than a religious one.

This was hardly noticeable to the majority of the sample, who were basically non-religious or less committed and they saw the vote very much in that light.

However, it was picked up strongly by those closer to religious communities who felt it was evidence of a lack of understanding of the religious mind-set.

“It seemed to be portrayed as a bad thing, a shocking thing, more in the dark ages. But you know, it may not be a sex argument for them (Synod) it may be a religion argument”

Catholic, Northern Ireland

For the Radio 4 piece: the Today programme John Humphrys interviewed a Pro and Anti Synod member on the morning of the vote. Opinions were divided on whether the interviewer stance facilitated an impression of breadth.
Most of the respondents felt the interviewer gave the ‘no’ campaigner a harder time than the ‘yes’ campaigner.

Some felt this was entirely justified: the interviewer was trying to ‘provoke’ Susie to state her Christian opinion and position more clearly, and the arguments she was using were relatively complex:

“*She was being very cautious with the words she was using*”

Evangelical, London

Other respondents interpreted the interviewer stance negatively and perceived it as partial:

“He mocked the woman who was defending the churches…was really aggressive”

Jewish, North London

“He sounded like an atheist but as a reporter, you’re not meant to come across like that…because that’s your own view coming out”

Muslim, London

The online reporting, by contrast with radio and TV seemed very clear to respondents and contained a number of opinions on Women Bishops in the Church in Wales: though these were again clerical.

The ‘yes’ and ‘no’ arguments were felt to come across better on radio than on TV as more time was possible, and the interviewees were felt to have been given time.

But overall the arguments and coverage came across as relatively obscure to a non-religious audience: “it was all ‘inside the box’”.

Overall, respondents wanted more context and a more basic exposition of the ‘anti’ argument across both TV and Radio in order to make the breadth of religious opinion actually included accessible both for non-believers and non-Anglicans.
3.10.iv.

**Religious Apparel in the Workplace: a complex story, BBC online contributed breadth of opinion and full context**

- BBC Breakfast interview:
  Christian Concern, National Secular Society
- Radio 4 interview, Bishop Michael Nazir Ali
- BBC Asian network presenter introducing phone in
- And an interview with a phone in guest

The story was of four cases taken to the court in Strasbourg by the Christian Legal centre and campaigned on by the National Secular Society.

The arguments in the coverage were found to be complex to follow. The audience felt trying to cover all four cases in one news piece was difficult.

The audience’s own natural interests tended to gravitate much more to the human interest story of the rights and wrongs of cross-wearing at work. However, much of the debate on BBC Breakfast and radio centred on the therapist who had doubts about counselling gay clients. This was found to be confusing: “I didn’t know why the man from the National Secular Society kept going on about gay rights”

Most viewers felt that there was some kind of ‘hidden agenda’ behind the story

And for most respondents the story had also now gone on ‘too long’ in the UK media:

“I couldn’t believe it when the cross story came up AGAIN this week”

Atheist, Manchester

As usual, the audience’s own objective and instinct was to come to an understanding or some kind of personal view on the case based on common sense, and this was a difficult thing to do as it was fundamentally a story about a carefully formulated test case put forward by a campaigning organisation.

The TV spokespeople were seen to be lawyers or activists and the arguments therefore relatively complex, oblique and ‘careful’.

“It is a pre-rehearsed script of what they were all going to say…but you’d like unscripted questions really”

Catholic, Northern Ireland

Therefore the audience tended to want to hear more from those actually involved.

- From the nurse/ BA employee
- The health and safety argument of the employer
- The shape and size of the cross - and ‘was it a risk’?
The interviewers on BBC Breakfast were felt to be ‘doing a good job’ and ‘asking all the right questions’. And the Radio 4 interview with Bishop Nasir Ali was ‘doing its best to be impartial’, but again centred on what the audience had already found to be somewhat obscure legal and human rights arguments.

Overall BBC Online was felt to be the ideal and most illuminating medium to study the story and do it justice:

“What I wanted to hear was more peoples’ opinions (the defendants) and I got that off the online… I really like explanation. They went into each of the four persons’ stories, they explained what happened, and gave their opinions in quotes. That is enough for me”

Christian, Wales

Finally, respondents were aware that the case had been covered in the newspapers but in a more one sided way. The BBC was felt to have done better in bringing breadth and clarity:

“I remember hearing about this one, my wife said look at this it’s disgusting, they wouldn’t do this to a Muslim… or whatever! But that was the view of the paper: you didn’t hear both sides of it with that. But it did whip up a storm and it did bring to our attention that we are a ‘Christian nation’”

Christian, Wales

There was also a brief clip on wearing the Hijab from the Asian Network. The audience comments on this chiefly related to interviewer stance.

As someone doing a background piece to invite callers, the interviewer was felt to expose and balance the potential arguments well.

Muslim respondents liked this, restating the general feeling of religious respondents in this research on religious points of view, which is “you may not agree with all the views but you need to see them out there”.

Unfortunately, the same interviewer was then felt by some to be rather “cruel” with a subsequent female caller, demonstrating the point some had made earlier on how important it is felt to be not only to interview a broad range of people, but to facilitate response:

“He was intimidating; he didn’t have respect for her opinion. It’s alright for say, John Humphrys to do that with David Cameron as ‘he is a big boy and he can take it’ but with her you should be softer, encourage her to say her opinion whether you agree with it or not”

Evangelical, London

There was agreement that there did not necessarily need to be any additional religions commenting in the Strasbourg case as it was a specifically Christian one.

However, if the BBC were to do a broadcast piece more generally about religious symbols at work all respondents felt Sikhs should be included in the debate because they had well known religious obligations on dress. Any other group with religious obligations that were unknown to the audience, who were suffering inconsistent treatment, or who were at a perceived disadvantage at work or school were also felt relevant for future inclusion.
3.10.v. Tony Nicklinson: Assisted Dying

- Any Questions – Rev Lucy Winkett
- BBC News at Six News package about Tony Nicklinson’s High Court Battle
- Tony Nicklinson radio interview with Lord Charlie Falconer, BBC Radio Somerset
- Newsnight: Studio Debate with Eddie Mair and three interviewees: Tony’s daughter, Graham Miles, who had himself suffered a severe stroke, and Dr Ferguson, Care not Killing

The sample of clips taken as examples of BBC coverage of this ‘ethical’ story was seen as having the most appropriate breadth of opinion of the stimulus tested. The selection was praised as tactful, sensitive, sympathetic and involving. Its ‘depth’ was also praised, particularly by Muslim respondents.

The choice of interviewees was felt to be relevant, and even imaginative: great technical efforts had been put into helping Tony, in particular, give his opinion.

“Very good, the family, him, judges, doctors, another person in the same - no, sorry, ‘similar’ - circumstances. The interviewer did his bit of interviewing then faded into the background so you were not aware of anything from him. It was helluva good”

Christian, Wales

The coverage was also felt to cover the core strands of thought. The lawyers and doctor summarised the legal position well

“The legal aspect was clear…you can take your own life but not involve someone else.”

Evangelical, London

A religious point of view (i.e.; stating overtly that self-harm was wrong in the eyes of God) was not felt to be necessary in this context. This was felt even by believers, including Muslim and Catholic respondents.\(^{15}\)

This was because this was Tony’s specific story, and he was an Atheist.

In a debate on the general issue of ‘mercy killing’ then more conventional religious viewpoints would have been felt to be relevant by respondents.

\(^{15}\) There was, in fact, a religious contributor, the Rev Lucy Winkett (Any Questions). However, as in other instances in this research, because the most basic religious viewpoint (i.e. the Church is pro /anti-euthanasia and why) was not referenced in her clip, the debate being on more subtle points, her significance as Christian minister was missed by many. However there were no negative views on her relevance as a commentator in this context, as she was presumed to deal with such situations regularly as a priest.
If there were any detractors at all to the piece it was those who felt that in an ethical issue it is slightly easier to achieve breadth, as "no one will get up in arms". A couple of people wondered if the depiction of Tony’s condition was so moving and sympathetic that this in itself constituted bias.

Finally, the set-up of the ‘Newsnight’ studio debate at the end proved a good example of the audience’s slight dissent on how debates should be staffed in order to ensure good breadth of opinion.

This particular set-up caused disquiet for a minority who believed that debates should be exactly balanced with equal numbers on both sides.

Tony Nicklinson’s daughter Lauren was in the studio debate with Eddie Mair, Graham Miles who had suffered a severe stroke but overcome some of its negative effects, and a doctor from ‘Care Not Killing’.

Those unhappy with this felt that the structure of the interview was ‘two against one’, and also, worse, “a young girl against two older men”, one of them (Dr Ferguson) “clearly used to being in a studio.”

Most people felt in this instance that Lauren Nicklinson was a person well able to handle herself and that Eddie Mair was protective, making the situation fine.

Those who disagreed felt they detected a well hidden nervousness in Lauren’s manner and would have liked to see “another expert, on her side included on the panel.” This in their minds would have constituted a more ideal balance in terms of being fairer and protecting the “pro” point of view.
3.10.vi.

You Tube Video Offensive to Islam: How TV execution can unintentionally dominate audience takeout and drown out breadth of voice

- BBC News package with Jeremy Bowen
- Phone in with Jeremy Vine on Radio 2
  (Two Muslim callers)
- Online report BBC World News Middle East

The story examined was the murder of the American Ambassador to Libya and his staff (which was followed subsequently by the death of other individuals) in rioting following the publicising of an amateur You Tube video about The Prophet Mohammed.

**Taken as a whole, the range of material we showed to illustrate this story improved the impression of breadth of opinion that respondents had formed on this story before the research.**

In fact, many respondents arrived at the focus groups already feeling that Muslims were quite poorly depicted in the media as a whole. There was even evidence of curiosity about the other side of the ‘extremist’ story from non-Muslim respondents: “They tell us that Jihadists never want to speak to the West and that is why we don’t hear their point of view I suppose.”

“One view I think I hear too often is that Islamists are terrorists …there is blatant generalisation that all Islamists are terrorists when it is such a wide religion incorporating so many different aspects and I think it is extremely discriminatory in general in the news”

Protestants, Northern Ireland.

The clips selected for comment included a TV news package, a radio phone in and an online ‘in depth’ piece. Overall there was felt to be reasonable breadth of voice and balance across these as a whole.

However, one particular component of the coverage selected: a news package voiced by Jeremy Bowen showing Muslim protests and scenes of burning in Libya received consistent negative comment from respondents across all the groups, including non-believers, Christians, Muslims and Jews.

A smaller proportion of respondents experienced the package as just factual: ‘nothing out of the way’.

Where respondents had negative feedback this was almost entirely due to two pieces of video footage. Some respondents found it hard to focus on Jeremy Bowen’s script as their attention was caught up with the pictures on screen.
• Firstly the pictures of burning and of men with guns were the overwhelming impressions for some respondents (see screen-grabs above and below).

• Secondly the clip of a Muslim man expressing anger was interpreted consistently by respondents as emotional, agitated or aggressive.

Almost no notice at all was taken of the presenter’s script by some respondents. The ‘more moderate’ Muslim voice, which was present in placards shown being held up by the crowd and in the presenter script (transcript below which spoke of violent extremists exploiting ‘legitimate anger’) was noticed by only a minority of respondents.

Why was this an issue?

The respondents found the video of protestors frightening.

Much of the negativity in response to the TV package centred around the effect that such footage was thought by respondents to have on race relations and possible future terrorism at home in the UK (and hence on respondents’ own personal safety) rather than on what the situation meant for specific other countries or as ‘news’.

The context of global terrorism and local violence was what loomed in the background of response. This made respondents (including non-Muslim Asians) feel personally threatened. In consequence, some simply wanted the coverage of violence ‘not broadcast’ in case it added to what was seen as previously similar coverage ‘in the media’ and made the situation more dangerous:

“They are causing more problems by making it so dramatic”

Jewish, North London

Respondents often failed to take enough context out of the TV piece in terms of where the conflict was happening and why. To some the media currently felt dominated by stories of violent disruption in Muslim countries in the Middle East and Africa.

For these respondents, Middle Eastern or African countries were undifferentiated from each other. The footage of rioting, which they saw as stereotypical, was just ‘more of the same,’ and furthermore, the situation was beyond their control.

This meant some respondents claimed to switch off from this particular coverage, and all other such coverage on UK news.

Therefore while this particular package was not carrying the full spectrum of breadth of opinion broadcast on the story by the BBC, and was part of cumulative coverage of the story, respondents felt it ideally needed to convey more breadth of opinion (see below p.47)

The text of the report and some stills are below:

President Obama has condemned the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, in which the American Ambassador was killed. Chris Stevens and three other Americans died in the attack last night, during protests against an American video, posted online, which is said to ridicule the Prophet Mohammed. Our Middle Eastern editor, Jeremy Bowen, has more details.
Jeremy Bowen: In the darkness and confusion during the attack on the US Consulate, witnesses said the area was cordoned off by heavily armed, bearded men, who looked like Jihadist fighters. The attack was linked with a row about an American film protesters said insulted the Prophet Mohammed.

Man in street: He’s our Prophet. He’s the best human in the world, so we have to have about (? 00.45) just to stop this film. Stopping the film is our hope, is our relationship with the Americans.

Jeremy Bowen: By the morning, the US Consulate in Benghazi was in ruins, but this wasn’t the first attack on foreigners in the city. In June, the British Ambassador’s convoy was hit. No one was killed, and the UN has also been targeted.

Chris Stevens: My name is Chris Stevens-,

Jeremy Bowen: US Ambassador, Christopher Stevens started his time in Benghazi as envoy to anti-Gaddafi rebels. The Libyan government say he was killed by the old regime’s loyalists. In Washington, there’s speculation that the attack might have been to mark the anniversary of 9/11.

President Obama: There is absolutely no justification to this type of senseless violence. None. The world must stand together to unequivocally reject these brutal acts. Already many Libyans have joined us in doing so, and this attack will not break the bonds between the United States and Libya.

Jeremy Bowen: Libya is trying to turn the wreckage of Gaddafi’s dictatorship into a democracy. A new Prime Minister has just been named after the recent elections, but the killings of the Americans show, once again, that in the new Libya, armed groups continue to have real power, and to act seemingly with impunity. In Cairo, demonstrators blaming the US for the anti-Islam film are at the American Embassy for the second night running. It’s a challenge for Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood-led government, which has condemned the film, while calling for restrained protests. In Libya, too, the government will want this kind of demonstration, pro-America but against the film. The danger remains, though, that violent extremists might try to exploit what will be viewed across the region as legitimate anger.
What would have aided their understanding, in the view of respondents, was:

- Description of, (or even showing) the video\(^\text{16}\): this would, in their view, have helped them understand what was so exceptionally offensive and why views were held.

- More calmly or moderately articulated views that would help them understand this situation. “A sane Muslim who can articulate without going crazy.” If the situation was in fact exceptional, a minority occurrence, then they felt their fear would have been overcome and they would have found themselves better able to engage with the story and the grievance. The audience really did want to understand Muslim attitudes better in this case. Clearly these sort of views may not have been available to reporters on the scene, and some respondents pointed this possibility out in explanation.

**Taken as a whole the balance of the BBC material improved the impression of breadth**

The Jeremy Vine piece describing the video strongly improved most of the audience’s understanding and also their impression that the BBC was providing a breadth of voice and impartiality. The piece was felt to have a clear introduction which set out location and issues, particularly the reason for Muslims’ feelings of offence, and the rioting.

“I liked with the radio interviewer he introduced the story: someone has posted a video, it is this, this and this. This is what has happened. And he said about all the countries it had affected. Whereas in the TV news [respondent felt] it just went straight into there is fighting in Libya no story behind it. I got a better story from the radio than the TV”

Agnostic, Bristol

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\(^{16}\) Some hypothesised the BBC might have withheld this to stop British Muslims going online to look and unrest being generated. They did not speculate that the BBC might have deemed it offensive to Muslims to broadcast it.
The two Muslim interviewees picked for the Vine clip were seen by a few as implausibly and unrepresentatively “Westernised” (i.e.; the other end of the ‘moderate’ spectrum). By others as “very impartially” depicted and giving a balancing voice to the TV.

However, one of these interviewees, a journalist, produced what turned out to be transformational information for most respondents, which was that the Prophet Mohammed had been described as a paedophile in the YouTube video.

The interviewee played down the importance of this, but this was seen by most respondents as extremely offensive, and as going a long way to explain why Muslims were as upset as they were. It made the distress of the protestors more understandable:

“I was shocked, to be honest”

Atheist, Manchester

“Well obviously, the same thing said about Jesus, we would think the same way”

Protestant, Northern Ireland

Respondents felt more of such context in the TV coverage might therefore have helped them: a description of the video and why it was a problem put forward by more moderately spoken and reasonable Muslim spokespeople.

The website text balanced the picture for those who were able to read it in detail (there was only brief exposure for most in the session as the clip scanned the text quickly, but some of the more internet literate respondents also looked at a live link):

“What Jeremy Bowen was writing looked sensible and reasoned: thoughtful comments”

Agnostic, Bristol

However, the contextual information on BBC online: for example the link-through Q&A on the film, was seen as very good, but “too hidden” for them to have found it in the normal course of a ‘news day’. The clarification of the issue on Jeremy Vine was equally seen as too serendipitous and ‘accidental’ to mean that the BBC had given them the context they ideally wanted on the story

Muslims saw some positive, as well as negative things in the coverage

Muslims in the sample were generally extremely sensitive to any depiction of Muslims in the media, spoke about this a great deal, and came to the groups with a number of general examples to debate.

Paradoxically their view of the BBC TV package in some respects was not quite as negative as that of non-Muslim respondents. The younger Muslims in particular felt the presenter had tried hard to explain some background. The piece drew praise for doing some things ‘right’ in

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17 There was some inter-religion ‘solidarity’ in the response to this and the shock was felt more among people who had some religious background and knowledge, even if they were now ‘lapsed’.
their view: for example there was no overt defence of the right to freedom of speech for those who made the film.

But crucially, they did all definitely want other British people to understand better the close relationship they felt they had with their Prophet, which explained the high level of offence, and they would have ‘improved’ the piece by spelling this out much more clearly.

They wanted moderate Muslim voice(s) in such films explaining the nuances of Muslim response and offence more calmly. This was a theme consistent with Christian people who wanted their base position clearly set out in such stories even if it was only dealt with briefly.

It was also clear that vocabulary chosen in commentaries receives huge scrutiny. For example, reference to the word “Jihadist” in the report was picked up by a number of Muslims, who found the very word inflammatory. The context of the way it was used by the presenter i.e.: “they looked like Jihadist fighters” was not picked up, again indicating the ‘undetailed’ way in which people appeared to listen to this report.

“The words they are using should be more sensible, words hurt if they are the wrong ones”

Muslim female depth, Bradford

The pros and cons of other words such as ‘Islamist’ and ‘Extremist’ were also discussed in depth.

All, Muslim and non-Muslim, wanted less of the final takeout to be centred on shouting/aggressive Muslims, pictures of burning and destruction and guns.

Different views

There were a few trenchant voices who differed on the approach of this particular piece. They were usually Agnostic, Atheist or Humanist18 but included some in the religious groups.

These individuals were of the opinion that someone had “actually been killed” as a result of these riots on the day in question and that this was the main point which should come across in the news reporting.

They felt that it would be wrong to give in to feelings of ‘fear’ or ‘deference’ towards the Muslim faith by trying to hide what was actually going on in the streets of Libya:

“This, more than anything, was the BBC trying to be anti-provocative… with extreme behaviour the news job is to report it not conceal it. It happened. How do we stop it?”

Secular Humanist, Lancashire

The view expressed by President Obama, that this violence is unacceptable whatever the provocation, was the one which they felt the BBC should have firmly adopted, and the

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18 As has been noted above, our respondents in most of the ‘religious’ groups excepting Muslims and Evangelicals were on a spectrum from high religious commitment through to ‘religion as cultural identity’ so shared a ‘Secular’ perspective on a number of issues.
featuring of the Obama clip was endorsed as the logical representative of the murder victim rather than as a symbol of “establishment” or “American anti-Muslim” opinion.

**Sikhs and Hindus**

Sikhs and Hindus were chiefly concerned that coverage of Muslim offence with the West and violence against it would spark social unrest which would impact badly on them as British Asians. Otherwise they were not enthusiastic about commenting on the story at all, as many saw it as just another example of how much attention Muslim issues received in the UK media versus those of other South Asian communities.

**Coverage of Muslims on the BBC in general**

There was quite an appetite in the sample (often seemingly driven by pure curiosity) for programmes that explained the Muslim point of view and culture.

Several men and women picked up on a BBC documentary called “Make me a Muslim,” about British converts to Islam and wearing the veil, and a Radio 2 piece (again Jeremy Vine):

“A Muslim and a Christian talking about ‘do we all believe in the same God’? - it said we all use the same Bible, we all use the Old Testament. It was completely balanced not biased; I would have listened to it anyway in the car even if I hadn’t been doing this project. In fact I didn’t want to get where I was going as I wanted to hear the end.”

Christian, Glasgow
3.11. Brief Commentary on how findings transfer to other controversial topics: Examples EU Membership and Immigration

The research findings on how the BBC and its presenters and interviewers can individually facilitate a good breadth of opinion and enhance Audience contribution were transferable to other contentious topics.

Respondents urged the BBC to tailor the chosen comment and opinion on any topic to make it relevant to the issue in hand and to the audience objective, which is ‘to form a view.’

They wanted issues simplified, contextualised, and moderated with facts.

3.11. i. EU Membership/The EU

On European membership it was felt a personal voting decision would have to be made. They expected coverage to go on ‘a long time’.

Respondents were very clear about what they needed to know to make a voting decision. Most people who were undecided felt their final decision on this topic would be on an economic rather than emotional basis, so the informed reports of businesses and employers on what an exit would mean for the economy and for employment were felt to be of key importance.

The audience felt that big and small businesses, Multinationals, businesses in the Nations and different sectors (e.g. manufacturing) might have valid and different perspectives.

The ideological opinions of politicians, and the views of activists or special interest groups, should they felt, be minimised except in so far as they genuinely ‘informed’ the debate (ie unless the individuals knew something interesting, were being honest or had some facts).

(Respondents felt it possible that for example MEPs had financial or personal ‘interest’ and might find it hard to divorce that from impartial commentary).

The assumption of many was that it was likely government would have an agenda in pushing the outcome of an EU vote one way or another (as they felt it had with Gay marriage). In those circumstances they find excessive political comment in the media becomes less useful and interesting (because it is more repetitive, more polarised - ‘see saw’ - and less honest).

There was mild curiosity from a few about how people in other EU countries saw the benefits of membership (i.e.; was the British population more negative or ‘ungrateful’ than the rest of the EU?).

There was another group who had effectively made up their minds already on the EU: largely because they felt very negatively about EU immigration and saw EU membership more or less as a one-dimensional migration issue.

These people wanted to hear the view of the ‘ordinary person’ expressed, often because they felt it was being suppressed. “I know what people will say on the streets of Hull, and you don’t hear that view on TV!”

If it came to a vote and this constituency did not hear the anti-migration point of view on the BBC they would probably have thought that as with Gay marriage this was because the BBC
was “toeing the establishment line”. It would have been frustrating for them. However the majority of the audience (see below) want a range of more informed arguments put forward on migration by the BBC.

3.11.ii. Immigration

For immigration it was felt by most that more comment should come from employers, statisticians, immigrants, other European countries’ experiences and economists: not just opinion ‘from the man in the street’ or interested politicians.

The role of the BBC was, it was felt, to reduce confusion or prejudice (this was particularly the religious view), help people form a better view and ‘question.’ Also to offset less balanced views in other media channels using statistics, factual analysis and main strands of thought.

“The BBC I find is fairer in bringing out what the actual thing is. I mean, I read on the Daily Mail, I think it was an article basically a snapshot as to who we have in the UK at this time. So what’s the ratio of black people, to white people, to Asian people, to all types of people who have come into the country. The comments that were on there (online) were, you know obviously not very nice basically…and then you have gone onto the BBC where they are kind of, they report all these things but it is just, you know, ‘we want you to know, this is information,’ it is not about creating or inciting hatred or inciting a skewed view, it is very ‘this is what it is.’

Hindu/Sikh Birmingham

To summarise, in the view of the audience, ‘opinions’ (including emotional and extreme opinions) need to be heard in order to satisfy all sections of the audience. However those opinions should not go unchallenged when they are aired. The best way to challenge them, it was felt was in calm, well moderated environments and by the use of fact, including surveys and polls.

There was a clear belief among those who held strong opinions – for example against immigration – that their feelings were in fact the majority feeling but were being suppressed by “PC.” Not hearing their opinions, or only hearing one dominant argument in the media over a long period of time, tended to reinforce that belief and reduce their satisfaction with the media.
4. Appendix

Transcripts, Discussion guide, Pre and Post tasks, Personnel

Gay Marriage Transcript

BBC News At Ten

**Fiona Bruce:** The government is planning on introducing legislation allowing same sex marriages to take place in churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious buildings in England and Wales. David Cameron said he was a massive supporter of the institution of marriage and he didn’t want gay people to be excluded, but he also insisted that no church would be forced to hold a gay wedding. This report from Gary O’Donoghue.

**Gary O’Donoghue:** Giving same sex couples the right to get married, has been government policy for some time, but until now ministers have said churches and other religious places of worship would not be allowed to hold the services. Now, David Cameron says, individual religions will be able to opt-in to conducting gay marriages.

**David Cameron:** I’m in favour of gay marriage because I’m a massive supporter of marriage and I don’t want gay people to be excluded from a great institution. But let me be absolutely 100% clear, if there is any church or any synagogue or any mosque that doesn’t want to have a gay marriage, it will not, it absolutely must not, be forced to hold it.

**Gary O’Donoghue:** Supporters of gay marriage know there’s significant opposition inside the Conservative Party and today’s announcement will harden it.

(Video of protesting same sex marriage supporters with placards)

**Peter Bone MP (Conservative):** Lots of people, particularly from the churches, write to me and say, ‘If this goes through, I am never going to vote Conservative again in my life.’ It’s causing an enormous amount of disunity within the party. I think it’s the wrong issue, brought forward at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons.

**Gary O’Donoghue:** The Church of England believes marriage has to involve a man and a woman and like the Catholic Church, it is strongly opposed to a change in the law.

(Video of congregations and Eucharist)

**Gary O’Donoghue:** Officials here at Lambeth Palace, the headquarters of the Church of England, describe the plan as divisive. Though they take some comfort from the fact that the whole church would have to decide to opt-in, not individual parishes. But, not all religions share their concerns.

Britain’s 20,000 Quakers have been demanding the right to marry gay couples for several years. It’s a matter, they say, of religious freedom.

**Helen Drewery, Quakers in Britain:** We want to be able to celebrate Quaker weddings in exactly the same way, whether the couple are different sex or same sex, and we want that to be fully recognised by the law.

(Silence 02.19-03.04).
BBC News Scotland Politics online news report including various quotes from church leaders and politicians and links to ‘more on this story’

**Sunday Morning Live Northern Ireland Version**

**Samira Ahmed**: … The British public largely supports it. Fighting too hard?

**Andrew Marsh, Christian Concern**: No, it’s the role of the church to speak with clarity and with compassion of God’s good purpose for human relationships and their flourishing. So, in the context of this debate, to set forth how these changes are not just small tweaks, but represent a fundamental challenge to our understanding as a society of marriage, of family, of gender and how we structure our society.
Samira Ahmed: Alright, Andrew. Well, that is the question for our text vote. Is the church wrong to oppose gay marriage? If you think it is, text the word ‘vote’ followed by ‘yes’. If you disagree, text ‘vote’ followed by ‘no’. Our text number is 81771. Texts will be charged at your standard message rate and for full terms and conditions visit bbc.co.uk/sundaymorninglive. We’ll show how you voted at the end of the programme.

Peter Tatchell, civil partnership. Wasn’t that the thing that was supposed to be the answer for gay couples and isn’t that enough?

Peter Tatchell, Human Rights Campaigner: I think segregating gay and straight couples into separate legal institutions, is fundamentally wrong. To have a system of sexual segregation, where gay couples are banned from civil marriages and heterosexual couples are banned from civil partnerships, that’s just not right.

Samira Ahmed: So, you want it both ways, too.

Peter Tatchell: That’s right. We’re not only campaigning for the right of gay couples to have a civil marriage, but also for the right of heterosexual couples to have a civil partnership, if they wish. We believe the issue of equality goes both ways, for gay and straight couples.

Samira Ahmed: Straightforward equality, John?

John Gaunt (Broadcaster): Well, I think, you know, I can find it hard to get too worked up about the whole issue, to be honest. I think there are much more important things to discuss. However, I think the church has got a right to say no, they don’t want to conduct gay marriages. I think, is between a man and a woman, personally myself. I think, there are civil partnerships, don’t really understand why the homosexual and lesbian community now want to ape the heterosexual relationships.

Samira Ahmed: Isn’t it something admirable?

John Gaunt (Broadcaster): Peter, is just wanting, as per usual, to keep pushing back the barriers, because it is right. What will happen is, as soon as it happens, then churches will be challenged through the human rights laws, which people have a right to do. So, I think the churches, if they want to stand up to the (? 05.09) if we live in a liberal society, should work both ways.

Today Programme Interview with Lord Singh of Wimbledon

Sarah Montague: Lord Singh, first of all. Where do you stand on this question of legalising gay marriage?

Lord Singh: I’m more concerned about the assault on the English language on the meaning of marriage, because it’s generally understood that marriage means the union of a man and a woman, and it’s defined as such. Sikh’s believe-, we believe in that union. It’s a union of equal partnership, and with obligations to look after children and contribute to society. Now, Sikhism teaches total respect for other ways of life. So, we have total respect for gays and lesbians, that is so. We’re delighted that there’s a Civil Partnership Act. We believe that that gives gays and lesbians everything they need, equality. This, we believe, is a sideways assault on religion. It is an attempt, by a vocal secular minority, to attack religion. Gays and lesbians have all the rights they have.
Sarah Montague: Let me bring in Rachel Muers here. Rachel Muers, what about that argument, that, actually, you can get true equality within the framework of a civil partnership, and this is a sideways assault on religion?

Rachel Muers: Well, for Quakers and other religious communities, as you know, recognising and celebrating same sex marriage is part of our religious commitment. So, for us to have the full religious meaning of marriage, we’re actually looking, we’re welcoming this consultation of same sex marriage, but we’re hoping we’ll get to the point where we can recognise and celebrate marriages of same sex couples in religious ceremonies. I think, it’s really important-,

Sarah Montague: So, in churches. You’re looking forward to the point where you can have-,

Rachel Muers: In Quaker meeting houses, yes. Which, of course, is not in the current consultation proposals. It’s something for which we’ve been working as a religious community since 2009, when we decided, after very long consideration, through our religious processes, that this was what we wanted to do as a community, to affirm and celebrate the gift and blessing of marriage to same sex couples.

Sarah Montague: They’re not going far enough for-,

Radio 5 live: Presenter invites audience to a phone in

Presenter: Maria Miller, the Culture Secretary, says she wants to make marriage more relevant to today’s society. The Conservative Home Office Minster, James Brokenshire, told us, ‘Everyone should be able to enjoy a happy marriage.’ Marriage is a positive thing, it’s a great thing. I’m, you know, delighted that I’m in a happy marriage and that’s something that all people, of all sexualities, should be able to be able to benefit from. Would allowing gay men and women to get married, strengthen the institution of marriage? (TC: 00:07:57)

Women Bishops Transcript

News at Ten Package

Sophie Raworth: Good evening. The Church of England is in turmoil tonight after the General Synod voted narrowly against allowing women to become bishops. The outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who’d pushed for a ‘yes’ vote, spoke of his deep personal sadness. Campaigners, who’d been arguing for women bishops for decades, described the defeat as a devastating blow to the church. Emily Buchanan’s report contains some flash photography.

Archbishop of York: It was carried in the House of Bishops and Clergy, and lost in the House of Laity.

Emily Buchanan: In the end, it was down to a handful of votes among lay members of the church. Then, just hugs and tears, those who had hoped women could become bishops, were stunned.
Christina Rees, Synod Lay Member: I'm actually in a state of shock and, I feel, the House of Laity of the General Synod has betrayed the Church of England at large, and betrayed the whole country's trust in the church.

Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to Parliament: Women should not be barred from being in the House of Bishops. It’s ridiculous, in today’s society, to have a boys’ club of men who make decisions on behalf of the church. It does not make sense.

Emily Buchanan: The ‘no’ voters didn’t think the proposal gave traditionalists enough protection.

Susie Leafe, Synod Lay Member: It’s nothing to do with winners or losers. As I said in my speech, we’re looking to go forward as a united church and the measure that we had before in (? 01.39) wasn’t going to allow us to do that.

Emily Buchanan: It’s been a day of high emotion. Those in favour of women bishops, are devastated knowing that it will be years before this issue is debated again. Traditionalists are trying not to be too triumphalist, but the reality is, that a small vocal minority has prevailed.

Well over 100 speakers took part in the debate.

Member of Clergy Speaking in Debate: It would be a devastating blow to the morale of many, not least our female clergy.

Member of Clergy Speaking in Debate: The code of practice cannot enshrine theological conviction. If this legislation is not clear, then what hope can there be that a code of practice will ever work?

Emily Buchanan: It’s been twenty years since women were first allowed to become priests in the Church of England. After today, the stained glass ceiling is firmly in place.

BBC Radio 4 Today Programme

John Humphrys: It seems extraordinary, that in 2012, one the best known organisations in England has a well known rule that says women aren’t allowed to be bosses, they can become middle managers, but that’s it. The idea that a woman could, actually, run the organisation, well, forget it. It seems less extraordinary, when you know that the organisation in question is the Church of England. Today, after a couple of thousand years, give or take, it may vote to change the rules. The General Synod, the church’s national assembly, will vote, yet again, on the question as to whether to allow women to be bishops. This time they might say yes, but it’s going to be a close vote. Let’s talk to two women on either side of the debate. I’m joined here, in the studio, by the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, who is one of the most senior women in the Church of England. She’s a vicar and she’s chaplain to the Commons’ Speaker, and Susie Leafe, who is a lay member of the General Synod. Therefore, your vote, Ms. Leafe, could be the one that decides it because some say it’s the lay members that will determine it and it could be down to a vote or two. And, you’re against women being bishops, why?

Susie Leafe: I think it’s a bit strong to say that I’m against that.
John Humphrys: But you won't be voting in favour.

Susie Leafe: I certainly won’t be voting in favour of this measure. Before us, is a piece of legislation, and what we’re trying to do is to find a way of moving forward as a church together. There are, at least, three different theological convictions about the role of women and men in the church. All three sides, think that men and women are entirely equal, there’s no doubt about that.

John Humphrys: No doubt about it, but you don’t want a woman to be a bishop?

Susie Leafe: No doubt about it. I think it’s a little like saying I don’t want a-, a man can’t be a mother.

John Humphrys: Is it? Really?

Susie Leafe: Yes. A bishop is a father of a family, and we have mothers in the family and we have fathers in the family. We need both.

John Humphrys: The mothers are very junior to the fathers. It’s a bit like saying fathers-, the man can be the father and the boss, the woman can just be the mother.

Susie Leafe: I think it’s very worrying, isn’t it, when we start talking about the church in terms of bosses.

John Humphrys: It’s a reality.

Susie Leafe: No, not at all. We model ourselves on Jesus Christ, who came, not to be served, but to serve. All our leaders are there to serve. They’re not bosses. They’re not more important than anyone else.

John Humphrys: The Archbishop is not more important than you? With respect to you, I mean, you know.

Susie Leafe: With respect, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the youngest child in our church are absolutely equal in the eyes of God and in the eyes of-

John Humphrys: In the sight of God but not in the eyes of the Church.

Susie Leafe: Absolutely not. In the eyes of the Church we see each other as equals. We have different roles and different responsibilities to play, but it’s really important that we don’t start bowing down to our bishop.

John Humphrys: Different but equal, Rose Hudson-Wilkin?

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: I’m no doubt that we’re all equal before God, and, actually, equal before each other. I believe that women who are made in the image of God equally, as men, should not be disbarred from being involved in the leadership of the church.

John Humphrys: You should be allowed to become a bishop? Is what you’re saying?

Rose Hudson-Wilkin: All women, who are called in the role, ought to be allowed to serve in that role.
**John Humphrys**: So you’re argument against Susie Leafe, when she says that you’re all serving just in different ways, that doesn’t go far enough, you’re saying?

**Rose Hudson-Wilkin**: It doesn’t go far enough. I think the church has been the poorer over the years.

**John Humphrys**: For not having women bishops?

**Rose Hudson-Wilkin**: For not having women in its top leadership. Absolutely. The church has been the poorer. We are happy to have men, it doesn’t matter what kind of men as long as it is men, they have male genitalia. It is quite ridiculous.

**John Humphrys**: The idea that Jesus wouldn’t have envisaged a woman bishop? At least, I think that’s what Susie Leafe is saying.

**Susie Leafe**: I’m not sure that Jesus would have envisaged bishops at all.

**John Humphrys**: Indeed, there is that. You got to find your authority somewhere, haven’t you, and Jesus is the boss.

**Susie Leafe**: Absolutely.

**Rose Hudson-Wilkin**: Jesus worked within the parameters in which he could. So the argument that is being used today, that he only had twelve men and that—, for me, it’s like saying, but he only had Jews. (TC: 00:06:35)

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Display of BBC News Website report on the decision by the General Synod
Wearing Religious Symbols at Work

BBC Breakfast Report and Interview

Bill Turnbull: They say their faith in God has been undermined, and this week, four British Christians who claimed they had been discriminated against because of their faith, are going to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights. Shirley Chaplin lost her job as a nurse after she refused to take off a crucifix she’d worn around her neck for 30 years. Her employers said it was a Health and Safety risk.

Susanna Reid: Nadia Eweida has a similar story. She worked for British Airways and was told she couldn’t wear her cross visibly at work.

Bill Turnbull: Gary McFarlane lost his position as a relationship therapist because he admitted he would find it difficult to counsel same sex couples.

Susanna Reid: Well, they’ll be at the court in Strasbourg tomorrow to argue that British laws are failing to uphold their religious freedom. So, let’s talk about this with Andrew Marsh from the Christian Legal Centre, who will be there as well, and Keith Porteous Wood, who is from the National Secular Society. Very good morning to you all. Andrew, why do you think this is religious discrimination rather than, I suppose, on the one hand, Health and Safety and in another case, asking an employee to counsel same sex couples, it’s part of the job, isn’t it?

Andrew Marsh, Christian Legal Centre: Well, I think that at the heart of the issues for all four of these individuals is the fact that they are Christian and what they wanted was-,
they’re very gentle individuals, we represent Gary and Shirley-, nothing more than to allow their Christian faith to reflect their presence in the workplace and their practise in the workplace. If we take Gary, for example, he, as a relationships counsellor, was involved in a sex therapy course and training for a new area, and in the context of that, he, when pressed, expressed that he might have a conscientious objection to giving sex therapy, not relationship counselling, sex therapy to homosexual couples, if that situation ever arose. So, a gentle hesitation expressed, and yet the response was that he was dismissed for gross misconduct, and I think that, because of his Christian faith. So, the issue, I think, that is really at stake, and a crucial question in these cases is this, could these individuals have been reasonably accommodated, their Christian faith respected, their conscience respected, without detriment to anyone else?

Bill Turnbull: Are Christians being picked on?

Keith Porteous Wood National Secular Society: Absolutely not. Why the National Secular Society have fought this case so hard, is that we believe it will create a hierarchy of rights with religion at the top, and that’s going to be a nightmare for employers and for gay people. This kind of accommodation that Andrew has suggested is very dangerous, because it’s actually suggesting that it’s acceptable to discriminate against gay people which undermine their self-worth, their sense of being 100% part of the community. It’s like saying about Rosa Parks, the icon of the American Civil Rights Movement, that if there had been a second bus coming along-, a second bus company that would have allowed black people to be equally treated on the bus, then she had no right to complain. And thank goodness, that wasn’t what happened and the American Civil Rights was born.

Susanna Reid: Okay. Andrew, the issue of wearing a cross at work around the neck, now that could be seen as a simple expression of faith. It’s not a requirement of faith, and yet, there is a requirement that Health and Safety law is adhered to. So, if you can wear a cross in another way, why not?

BBC Radio 4 Today Programme Interview

Justin Webb: Are British Christians being persecuted, singled out and forced to accept things that their beliefs suggest to them are wrong? Four Christians go to the European Court of Human Rights today to try and get findings against them in the British courts, overturned. They are supported by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, who’s the former Bishop of Rochester, and I spoke to him earlier and put it to him that Christians in the UK seem to be trying to seek special status that the rest of the population don’t have.

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali: Well, I think it matters because belief or faith is not just something that people believe inside of themselves and their minds and hearts, but they need to express their faith or belief in different ways. A manifestation of belief is safeguarded in all the international conventions, you know, whatever that expression may be, it ought to be safeguarded if it is reasonable.

Justin Webb: I suppose that’s the point, isn’t it? That what the courts have found in Britain, is that it’s not reasonable, that, actually, what Christians appear to be wanting is a, kind of, special status that the rest of us don’t have.
Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali: No, this is not the case. Take for example, the wearing of a cross. People of other faiths have a right to wear and Hijab or, the Sikh’s, the Kara (ph 04.53) and so forth, it’s the other way round. It’s Christians who have been singled out in this particular matter. I think there are two particular issues that need to be considered further, which the courts, I’m afraid, have not. There is a long and venerable tradition in British law to respect conscience, whether that is in conscientious objection during armed conflict, even in other matters like, even, the Abortion Act, for instance, but this recent spate of legislation has not done so. The other reasonable accommodation, where employers and service providers are bound to respect the consciences of their employees insofar as it does not actually undermine the business or the service provision, again the courts have not taken this doctrine into account.

Justin Webb: Are you saying that someone who is gay, who is discriminated against, a service that is available to other people, is not provided to that person, that they’ve just got to lump it?

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali: No, I’m not saying that all.

Justin Webb: That seems to be the implication of what you’re saying?

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali: I mean, take the case of the Islington Borough Council. The service that the law requires the council to provide could have been provided by the other registrars, who were willing to do so.

Justin Webb: Yes, but you’re then, as a gay person, a second class citizen because some people won’t have anything to do with you.

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali: No, not at all. The service is still provided, whilst respecting the conscience of Christians, and indeed people of other faiths, I mean, nearly every other faith has a similar position in this matter.

BBC Asian Network Phone-In

Nihal: Should a mother, wearing a niqab, have been banned from a parents evening? The incident happened after 40 year old, Maroon Rafique, refused to take her veil off. She was reportedly told by staff at the Manchester College, that face coverings weren’t allowed for security reasons. A statement from the college says that it applies a single dress code to all college users and that at all times, it needs to be able to identify all individuals easily, in order to maintain safety and security, and therefore ask that faces are clearly visible whilst indoors. There you go, that’s what they’ve got to say. What do you think? Send me a text on 81869. Email nihal@bbc.co.uk. Does it make common sense that you should see someone’s face, especially if they are turning up to a parents evening where they will have to discuss matters pertaining to their child, so security is important. After all, you’re not going to discuss, as a teacher, with someone who you can’t clearly identify. Or do you feel that this is going too far? It’s discriminatory? That it really doesn’t matter that she cannot show her face or that she doesn’t show her face? That it really is irrelevant and that if she visits the school all the time, as I’m sure she does, you would know by her voice or by her identification, whichever she brings with her, that she is the mother of said young person. So, where do you stand on this? You may believe that Islamically, you are not required to
wear the niqab and it’s a personal choice and therefore, if you decide to wear it, you have to take the brunt of what people think about it.

(Silence 08.23-08.30)

**Nihal**: Vijay got in contact with us, this afternoon. Hello, Vijay.

**Vijay (listener)**: Hello, Nihal.

**Nihal**: Do you agree with the school, or do you think they’re being discriminatory?

**Vijay (listener)**: I agree with the school.

**Nihal**: Okay. Why?

**Vijay (listener)**: Yes. Well, you know, if you’re talking to someone, you need to see their face, their expression, after all this is a Christian country.

**Nihal**: Do you not use the phone?

**Vijay (listener)**: Sorry?

**Nihal**: Do you use the phone?

**Vijay (listener)**: Phone? Yes.

**Nihal**: I can’t see you now, but we’re having a perfectly civilised conversation.

**Vijay (listener)**: Well, no, but this is a Christian country. People living here, people coming into the country, they know the rules and regulations. What we do here, what is accepted, what is not accepted. To me, it’s basically a sign of oppression and it shouldn’t be allowed.

(TC: 00:09:26)

**Assisted Dying**

**BBC Radio 4 Any Questions**

**Kate Brown (Audience Questioner)**: Kate Brown. In the light of the Tony Nicklinson case, and today’s news of Mr L’s case who is best qualified to make life and death decisions for others? Or should decisions be avoided altogether?

**Jonathan Dimbleby**: Tony Nicklinson, of course, has since died after the courts did not allow what he wished, which was for a doctor to help him to die. Mr L has had the decision that the life support system should be taken away from him, which was after a court case which the family was resisting, suspended, because a doctor confirmed that there were signs of consciousness, because he, I think he blinked. Lucy Winkett (ph 00.47).

**Lucy Winkett**: I don’t think anybody who saw Tony Nicklinson’s face after he had lost his court case, felt anything other than huge compassion and empathy for him and for his family, and the same will go, of course, for Mr L. It goes without saying it’s a very difficult issue, this, and the law is a blunt instrument. In my own work as a priest, I can see that these conversations are subtle, they are clearly very difficult, and if we’re trying to make grand generalisations about what should happen in every case, in my experience, that simply
doesn’t work. So where do we go from there? We say that, perhaps the law is as back from these issues as it possibly can be, and that every case is taken on a case by case basis. There is, however, a big difference between asking someone to assist you while you are able to end your own life, and the law permitting someone to kill you.

(End of discussion, 01.58).

**New at Six: News Package**

**George Alagiah** 58-year-old Tony Nicklinson was an active family man until he had a stroke in 2005. Since then, he’s been almost completely paralysed, and communicates by blinking his eyes. He wants a doctor to be able to end his life without facing prosecution. Today, with the help of his family, he took his case to the High Court. This report from our medical correspondent, Fergus Walsh.

**Fergus Walsh:** Tony Nicklinson’s fervent wish is to be allowed to die. Almost completely paralysed, he communicates using a computer, which tracks his eye movements, allowing him to slowly build words which it voices for him. Can you sum up for me why you want a doctor to be allowed to take your life?

**Tony Nicklinson:** It is wrong that I should be discriminated against just because I am disabled, such that I cannot take my own life. The ability to decide when, where and how one’s life will end is a basic human right.

**Fergus Walsh:** Before his stroke, he travelled the world, sky dived and played rugby. Now, too disabled to come to court, his wife and daughters were there for him.

**Jane Nicklinson:** It’s his choice. His life is unbearable to him, and we support him 100%, knowing the kind of person that he was before he had the stroke. He just can’t cope with life as it is now.

**Fergus Walsh:** This goes further than any previous attempt to challenge the law on assisted suicide as murder. Mr Nicklinson’s lawyers said there was no sign Parliament would introduce a law to allow him to die with dignity, so it was open to the courts to intervene and rule that a doctor would not be prosecuted if they took his life. The court will also consider the case of another paralysed man, known only as ‘Martin’, who also wants help to die. The Crown will argue that whatever sympathy is felt for him and Mr Nicklinson, it is for Parliament, not judges, to amend the law. The challenge also troubles doctors who care for the terminally ill.

**Dr Victoria Wheatley Palliative Medicine Consultant:** The law is very clear that health care professionals and doctors should not kill their patients, and if we change the law in any way, then it becomes blurred, and there are all sorts of risks to vulnerable patients, if we did that.

**Fergus Walsh:** Tony Nicklinson is now on Twitter, and has amassed nearly 30,000 followers in a week. He could live another twenty years. Pure torture, he says. His fate is now in the hands of judges. Fergus Walsh, BBC News.

(End of TV report, 04.33).
BBC Radio Somerset Interview

Tony Nicklinson: Hello. I am Tony Nicklinson, and I have locked-in syndrome. Recently, I contributed to Lord Falconer’s report about assisted dying. The Commission decided that terminally ill people should have the right to die with dignity, but it said that it couldn’t condone a doctor killing me. Today, I am going to ask him why.

Lord Falconer: Because allowing, in any circumstances, one person to kill another would be a massive change, in both the moral and the practical view that the law takes about taking other people’s lives. You can take your own life, and the Commission thinks you should be assisted to do so, if the safeguards are met, but you should never be in a position where there is a lawful means of being killed by somebody else.

Tony Nicklinson: Do you think the law should give up on me and leave me to suffer, because my situation is complicated?

Lord Falconer: It’s not because of any feelings that the law or the Commission have towards you or people in your position. It is because what would the ramifications be? I understand why you take a different view. I still think it would be too dangerous, I think, to allow.

Tony Nicklinson: Personally, what do you think should happen to people in my position?

Lord Falconer: If you win your legal case, and again, as I understand your legal case, you are saying to the courts, tell me whether or not it would be lawful in some circumstances for somebody to take your life, as opposed to you being assisted to commit suicide. I mean, it’s for the courts to decide what view they take in relation to that, but my own view is that, if they said it would be possible for somebody to take your life, as opposed to you committing suicide, I think that would be a step too far.

Tony Nicklinson: I am satisfied that the Lord Falconer has answered my questions, and we must agree to differ on the question of someone killing another.

(End of interview, 06.36).

‘Newsnight’ Debate

Eddie Mair: Given your concern about his suffering, have you and the family discussed helping him die without the aid of a doctor?

Lauren Nicklinson (daughter): Yes, we have, and it’s not an option. There’s no way that Dad will let Mum risk going to prison at all. He would rather do 30 years, and know that his suffering would end, that Mum could spend the rest of her life, for the next however many years in prison. That’s not an option for her.

Eddie Mair: What about you?

Lauren Nicklinson: No. I’m not strong enough to do that, and no way would I ever let my sister do that. Maybe we’re selfish, I don’t know, but-

Eddie Mair: Well, stay with us. Thank you very much for now. I want to turn to you, Graham Miles, because you’re in a position, more than most people, to understand from a
personal experience, what he’s going through. You had a stroke, and were severely incapacitated. Tell me about that.

**Graham Miles:** I had a brain stem stroke, and I was unconscious for several days, and when I came out of it, I had a problem, and because of my background and my nature, I studied the problem, set an objective which, at that time, was to breathe, and I proceeded to achieve it.

**Eddie Mair:** I want to turn to you, Dr Andrew Fergusson, from Care Not Killing. How do you view what’s happened to Tony Nicklinson today?

**Dr Andrew Fergusson** (Care Not Killing): Well, let me just make the point that, first, that every clinical situation is different. I don’t think we can compare Graham with Tony. I very much regret that I don’t think there’s going to be any clinical improvement in Tony’s case. I’ve seen a lot of medical reports, and so on. I don’t think today’s verdict was a surprise for either side, and, tragic though the situation is for Tony and the family, I think we need to look at the big picture. Care Not Killing exists partly to campaign against a change in the law, partly to encourage more resources in caring, and encourage a change in our attitudes to people with disabilities. All the major disability rights groups are represented within us. Disabled people at large see a change in the law as a very real threat. There’s a study from France, 65 patients with locked-in syndrome, British Medical Journal last year, 72% of them were happy with life, and only 7% of them ever seriously thought about suicide. I’m not blaming Tony when I say that. He is who he is, but most people come to terms with these things.

**Eddie Mair** Lauren, what do you say to those arguments?

**Lauren Nicklinson:** I say each to their own. I mean, research looks at samples, how long ago was it? Were there any religious attitudes as part of that? Because of there were, I’m sorry, but we’re an atheist family, and we really resent having any sort of religious or faith system put upon us. It means nothing to us. Research is research. You can poke holes in most pieces of research. Dad wants to die.

(End of interview, 09.42).

**You Tube Video Offensive to Islam**

**News at 10 Package**

**Huw Edwards:** President Obama has condemned the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, in which the American Ambassador was killed. Chris Stevens and three other Americans died in the attack last night, during protests against an American video, posted online, which is said to ridicule the Prophet Mohammed. Our Middle Eastern editor, Jeremy Bowen, has more details.

**Jeremy Bowen:** In the darkness and confusion during the attack on the US Consulate, witnesses said the area was cordoned off by heavily armed, bearded men, who looked like Jihadist fighters. The attack was linked with a row about an American film protesters said insulted the Prophet Mohammed.
Muslim Protestor: He's our Prophet. He's the best human in the world, so we have to have about (? 00.45) just to stop this film. Stopping the film is our hope, is our relationship with the Americans.

Jeremy Bowen: By the morning, the US Consulate in Benghazi was in ruins, but this wasn’t the first attack on foreigners in the city. In June, the British Ambassador’s convoy was hit. No one was killed, and the UN has also been targeted.

Chris Stevens: My name is Chris Stevens.-

Jeremy Bowen: US Ambassador, Christopher Stevens started his time in Benghazi as envoy to anti-Gaddafi rebels. The Libyan government say he was killed by the old regime’s loyalists. In Washington, there’s speculation that the attack might have been to mark the anniversary of 9/11.

President Obama: There is absolutely no justification to this type of senseless violence. None. The world must stand together to unequivocally reject these brutal acts. Already many Libyans have joined us in doing so, and this attack will not break the bonds between the United States and Libya.

Jeremy Bowen: Libya is trying to turn the wreckage of Gaddafi’s dictatorship into a democracy. A new Prime Minister has just been named after the recent elections, but the killings of the Americans show, once again, that in the new Libya, armed groups continue to have real power, and to act seemingly with impunity. In Cairo, demonstrators blaming the US for the anti-Islam film are at the American Embassy for the second night running. It’s a challenge for Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood-led government, which has condemned the film, while calling for restrained protests. In Libya, too, the government will want this kind of demonstration, pro-America but against the film. The danger remains, though, that violent extremists might try to exploit what will be viewed across the region as legitimate anger. Jeremy Bowen, BBC News.

BBC Radio 2 Jeremy Vine Phone In

Jeremy Vine: We are discussing a film and the response to it. Protesters have taken to the streets in Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. In Egypt, more than 200 people have been injured in violent clashes with riot police. In Yemen, demonstrators storm the grounds of the American Embassy in Sana’a, the capital, and burnt the US flag. It sounds like the start of another Arab Spring, but this time, the reason for the anger sweeping the Middle East is not oppressive government and lack of freedom. It is an amateurish American video uploaded on YouTube that insults and ridicules the Prophet Mohammed. ‘The Innocence of Muslims’, the title, first appeared online in July. Cheaply produced, with poor acting and little in the way of story line, it seemed destined for obscurity. Only when the film was more recently posted, with Arabic translation, did it lead to a wave of violence, which, as we reported yesterday, has already led to the death of the American Ambassador to Libya, along with three other consuls staff, in the city of Benghazi.

Speculation has been rife as to who exactly made the film that is now at the centre of so much controversy. Its production has so far been loosely linked to right-wing extremists, hard core evangelical Christians and Israeli donors. The focus now seems to be on an Egyptian Christian businessman called Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, whose California home
has been placed under police protection. So could Christian communities in the Middle East be behind it as well, and how has this badly made video on YouTube caused so much unrest? Let’s talk first to a British Arab journalist, S. Good afternoon.

S: Good afternoon.

**Jeremy Vine**: Have you seen it, first of all?

S: I have, and I was expecting, I was preparing myself, to be offended, to find this, you know, an incredibly difficult thing to watch. In fact, it’s not. It’s ridiculous. It’s silly. All the way through, the production values are almost non-existent. The insults keep on coming. It’s very, very clunky. It seems to roll from one insult to another. There isn’t any kind of story arc, or narrative.

**Jeremy Vine** It makes fun of the Prophet Mohammed, does it?

S: It does. It portrays him as a kind of some Beavis and Butthead character, very, kind of, foppish, silly, you know, someone who hasn’t got any morals. Someone who is a paedophile, who abuses children, who sells children to buy weapons, who takes whichever woman he wants, who executes just for fun. He portrays the first Muslim as a donkey. You know, they’re very, very clunky clichés. All the way through this, we’ve got this terrible, terrible, kind of, orientalist, you know, almost ‘Allo, ‘Allo style accents. It looks like a cheap South American soap opera. The sets are non-existent. It’s all green screen sets. You know, it’s more Monty Python than any kind of narrative or even any kind of critique or some way of insulting people.

**Jeremy Vine** In Exeter, listening carefully, is A You are a Muslim, A?

A: Yes, that’s right.

**Jeremy Vine** Have you seen the film, by the way?

A: I have seen the thirteen-minute trailer. I don’t know if it’s the whole film.

**Jeremy Vine** I think the whole thing is fourteen minutes long, so you’ve got-

A: Okay, then, I have seen it, yes.

**Jeremy Vine** It obviously is quite insulting towards the Prophet Mohammed, but what did you think?

A: Well, I think that it is insulting for the religion, Islam, towards the Prophet Mohammed. I still think that it’s within the limits of the exercise of freedom of speech. I think that the Muslims around the world should mature, grow up, learn to deal with these things. It is not inciting against violence, inciting violence against them personally, so I think that, as long as it’s just criticising or insulting a religion, we can deal with that. It’s nothing to, you know, it’s not going to do anything against the religion itself.

**Jeremy Vine** M in Oldham has also called in about the film about Islam. He says the people behind this film seem to have a fairly ignorant view of Islam, but the Koran teaches people to live in peace, so why are Muslims in Libya killing each other over this video? J is in Thatcham in Berkshire. ‘In both this case and the case of the Danish cartoons a couple of
years ago, both went unnoticed for a long time, before extremist Islamist preachers discovered them and then misused them for their own ends. However, this does not take away from the fact that the makers of the film should have stopped and considered whether, if a similar film was made about their own religion, they would find it offensive.'

**Questions to Jeremy Bowen on the BBC News Website**
## Discussion Guide for BBC Trust Impartiality Review: Breadth of Opinion in Religious coverage

### 1. Background

**Objectives / Questions**
- Explain project, confidentiality, and the fact that they are from similar faith/no faith background to reassure respondents
- Set etiquette: keep calm and listen to others even if they differ from you. Our job is to make sure you all get a chance to comment. Some people find it easy to talk and some don't so if we interrupt you at any point it’s just to make sure we have all views, and if we ask you your opinion we are not ‘picking on you.’
- Also we are doing a lot in a short time so we may need to move the discussion on from time to time, if we cut you off please forgive us, it will just be about sticking to the questions we need to answer.
  - Just to remind you, we are talking about what a particular broadcaster can do to be more impartial and include good breadth of opinion so we need to be focussed on that. Less on anyone’s personal feelings about the religious or ethical issue itself.
- Explain how the session will work: first we'll go through the thoughts they've already recorded and brought along, then we will looking at some example clips, jot down private thoughts and discuss them as a group. The final part following up on the rest of your thoughts and looking at some live websites

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<th>Specific questions</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>Explain project, confidentiality, and the fact that they are from similar faith/no faith background to reassure respondents</td>
<td>6.15pm 5 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set etiquette: keep calm and listen to others even if they differ from you. Our job is to make sure you all get a chance to comment. Some people find it easy to talk and some don't so if we interrupt you at any point it’s just to make sure we have all views, and if we ask you your opinion we are not ‘picking on you.’</td>
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### 2. Go through the diary pre task done by all respondents. Gather initial impressions about breadth of opinion and impartiality

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<th>Diary pre task audits all channels’ coverage of religious issues not just the BBC’s</th>
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<td>First I’d like to concentrate on page 1 and 2 of your diary outlining your first impressions about impartiality and breadth of opinion.....</td>
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- Had the issue of whether there was ‘enough ‘breadth of opinion in news, discussions, documentaries or phone-ins ever occurred to you before you did the diary?
  - Those who say ‘yes’ – when does it occur, why is that?
  - Those who say ‘no’ – any reasons for that?
- Is it important to you? – Why, why not?

**WRITE ‘BREADTH OF OPINION’ ON FLIPCHART**

- How would you define what ‘a good or wide breadth of opinion’ in broadcasting or online means nowadays?

**PROBE WHAT AUDIENCE UNDERSTAND (OWN WORDS)**

- Do they understand ‘a wide range of opinion’ – is that clearer at all – what do they understand by it?
- Going on to the specific word or concept of ‘impartiality’ in broadcasting and online (write on flipchart). Tell me what that means to you?
(BBC) impartiality as far as they are concerned

What indicators do audiences look for in the output in order to make judgments about impartiality

Does it seem the BBC currently provides breadth of opinion when covering ethical/religious stories – evidence

Do people perceive their own religious and ethical viewpoints are included in coverage? (Do people know where to find their view if they want it?)

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<th>3. Feedback on the individual religious topics and stories noticed during the week of viewing</th>
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- Note spontaneously, prompt on whether having good breadth of opinion is in fact an important part of that impression of impartiality: how important a part?
- What type of thing/example is important in giving you an impression of impartiality in news, discussions, documentaries etc.? (gather a couple of examples: probe on different formats e.g. panels, interviews, packages, internet reports)
- Ok we said that the example we were going to look at in this research was going to be Religion and ‘Religious issues’
- When we said ‘stories about religion and religious issues’ what sort of story or topic occurred to you – list a few (flipchart)
- Reference the stories on the flipchart
- Did you feel these stories were reported impartially during the period of the diary or when you’ve followed them beforehand – any examples, reasons for that?
- On the whole at the beginning of your diary did you have the general impression that views similar to yours are reflected in news, discussion programmes, documentaries and phone-ins about religious issues?
  - Are there any views you felt you hear too often?
  - Which? - In any context in particular?
  - Or views you feel are often left out
  - Which? - In what context?
- Finally, had you got an impression that any particular broadcaster or channel was better or less good than any other on achieving breadth of opinion? …or impartiality?
  - Probe for what they feel spontaneously
  - Then (if time) show flashcards: Al Jazeera, Sky, ITV, BBC, Channel 4, Websites e.g. Guardian/Telegraph, to pick up prompted views

3. Feedback on the individual religious topics and stories noticed during the week of viewing

- Now let’s look at your diary, a story each, day by day going through the week get a mix of what you have seen on TV, Radio and Online; also on different channels
- Preferably stories you would have followed anyway rather than ones they have ‘found specially’ for the research
- Try for a range of formats: documentaries, phone ins, discussions, news and ‘Sunday’ religious programmes

Individual news stories from diaries

For each respondent (repeat 3-7 times as time permits):

- Example topic (if more than one person has covered a topic bring all into the discussion)
- Is this a story they had already been following?
- What did you notice about the breadth of opinion covered?
- Why did you feel this way?
- Within the time/length limits was breadth adequate?
- Would this piece contribute to an overall good impression of breadth from this channel over time? - Why/why not?
- Probe Audience on how they experience a story ‘over time’
  - Perception of constraints of media formats (time-length)
  - Are there ‘flagship programmes or platforms (radio, internet, TV) that particularly form opinion or influence your overall impression: which, why?
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Did/does evolving or additional coverage on other BBC platforms add effectively to an impression of breadth of opinion within the BBC over time – what kinds of coverage on what platforms? How and why?</td>
<td>Gather up diaries for BBC viewers/ moderator to look through while respondents are doing viewing task in the next section so Moderator can follow up anything they say at the end</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Viewing and discussion task – in this section show x 5 sets of edited news and current affairs clips: Women Bishops, Wearing Religious Symbols in The Workplace, You Tube Video Offensive to Islam, Assisted Suicide, Gay Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there enough context in news and current affairs reports?</td>
<td>OK we’re going to ask you to do some private viewing</td>
<td>95 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>When stories that are about religion and ethics are covered by the BBC what breadth of opinion is included?</td>
<td>Show edited sections of clips one by one</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does/should that breadth of opinion include major religions, minor religions, and secular and humanist views – anything else?</td>
<td>For each</td>
<td>45 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whether and how the public in reality seek a plurality of views across a range of broadcasters and other media.</td>
<td>• Invite Spontaneous thoughts on the pieces, and then probe…</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where – do they know where to go on the BBC?</td>
<td>• Did you get an impression of breadth of opinion (or a wide range of opinion) from these? Where from?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Did you get an impression of impartiality – where from?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How did you judge that?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Any important views left out? (probe whether they heard, saw or read views similar to their own here)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Any given too much weight/included when you felt they should not have been?</td>
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<td>• As a few pieces of coverage taken together did it give an impression of impartiality from this channel – why/why not?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How appropriate did you think the voice/comment – or lack of it – was here? (probe expert /non expert, range of religions/denominations, number of voices, balance of pro/ anti)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Probe what is ‘reasonable’ or ‘enough’ breadth of opinion in the view of this group of respondents based on what they have seen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Probe specifically here and below on what that means for each group, Non-Christian views, Non Anglican Christian views / Secular views /Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• In your view how significant’ does a strand of thought have to be to get included?</td>
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<td>• Realistically, would you use all these sources (radio, online, TV) in the course of your daily life?</td>
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<td>• In ‘real life’ where would/do you get your most or more important impressions from? – TV, radio, online?</td>
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<td>• Have you ever gone to more sources for certain stories?</td>
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<td>• Get examples of when they have and haven’t done this</td>
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<td>• Why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Was it to get a wider range of opinion? For some other reason?</td>
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<td>Contribution of each piece to breadth of opinion over time</td>
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<td>• Where it seems appropriate and helpful occasionally re-state that this is only one set of excerpts from the whole story and may be typical or untypical</td>
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<td>• Thinking of the whole context of your experience of BBC coverage over time…</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Was this ‘typical’ in terms of how broad BBC opinion on this story seemed to be?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o What impression did you get of breadth of opinion from</td>
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<td>What is changing in behaviour if anything?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What should the role of User Generated Content and Social Media be? Do audiences consider this enhances breadth of opinion? When and why?</td>
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<td>Expectations of the BBC in particular</td>
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**Live website review**

- Ask respondents who finish early/are internet literate to navigate two/three web links of their choice on their tablet or phone
- Observe across sample whether younger respondents or older ones have different expectations or behaviour e.g. based on recent experience of education system/multicultural environments, social media or technology
- Comment – is there scope to comment?
- What role does comment play in the impression the BBC/other broadcasters and news sources give of breadth of opinion?
- Do they have to comment themselves to feel that audience comment is important: what effect does comment have?

**BBC Expectations**

- If the fact that all the clips are BBC does not arise in the first feedback break bring it up at the end of the section
  - Ok what channel do you think these clips were from – a variety or just one? – collect reasons
  - If BBC has not arisen, draw it to respondents attention that all the clips were all BBC
  - Did that overview of what is on offer improve your impression of the BBC’s breadth of opinion or impartiality at the beginning of your log or make it worse?
  - Do you feel that the BBC do provide a breadth of opinion on religious and ethical stories over time and across output – yes/no and why (Go back to what they felt individually before they came and compare if possible)
  - Let’s summarise how you felt the BBC did there – what would your verdict be at this point on whether it gives a good enough breadth of opinion or “a wide range of opinion”? – say on a hypothetical scale of 1-7?
  - Why do you say that?
  - In this area of achieving good breadth of opinion do you expect the BBC to do anything differently from the way other broadcasters do it e.g. type of opinion it needs to include, whether it needs to cover the whole country, how much emphasis it gives certain groups
  - Do your expectations of the BBC in this area of religion differ from your expectations of what ITV, or Sky, or Al Jazeera or Channel 4 should do (adapt example brands for individual groups’ viewing preferences) – why?

**5. Exposure of wider BBC Religious and Ethical output.**

**Wrap up of whether the editorial objectives are being delivered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are the audience aware that more detailed content is found on the BBC’s website?</th>
<th>If time review Polyboards/booklets, which cover</th>
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<td>BBC Religion and Ethics website</td>
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<td>BBC Schools RE websites</td>
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<td>Local radio schedule – Religious Broadcasting</td>
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<td>Religious broadcasting schedule</td>
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<td>Factual schedule</td>
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<td>Twitter/Facebook sites</td>
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8.45 pm 30 Mins
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<th>Do respondents feel they understand BBC Trust objective by the end of the session?</th>
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<td>Would they now know where to go within the BBC? Over what timeframe do people expect to see and hear a breadth of opinion?</td>
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</table>

**Transferable findings**

Broden out from Religion and Ethics to ensure feedback is relevant to whole BBC output: particularly topics which are contentious

Discuss if time:

- Have you ever seen any of this material before?
- *Would* you ever see it in real life do you think?
- What is your impression of BBC’s breadth of opinion now you have seen all this too?

**Wrap up – editorial guidelines**

Expose statement

*“The BBC are committed to reflecting a wide range of opinion across output as a whole and over an appropriate timeframe”* (board)

The rest of this statement says “so no significant strand of thought is knowingly unreflected or under-represented”

- How do they now feel about that objective? Do they support it?
- What do they *understand* by those words now? (probe exactly - ascertain whether progressed on journey of understanding)
- Do they feel the BBC are achieving it across their out-put as a whole (i.e. looking at TV, radio, online combined)
- Re confirm what are the most important parts of ‘output’ in getting the impression of breadth (probe for example whether very important to their impression that over time the 6pm or 10pm main TV news has this breadth or whether it is relevant if some of the breadth is in drive-time, or online: or it is important when a story first breaks? is e.g. a programme like Today/’Newsnight’ disproportionately important for them?)
- Based on what they have seen today for the stories we’ve examined what is this ‘appropriate’ timeframe – does it differ by type of story?
- What is the ‘appropriate’ time frame?
- Do they now feel as far as they can tell that the BBC is actually providing this breadth over an appropriate timeframe?

**Flipchart exercise – transferable learnings**

- What ‘rules’ can we now formulate on what is most important to give you personally an impression of breadth of voice (flipchart) – who, what, when, where? (flipchart)
- If you were going to apply the rules you have formulated on breadth of opinion to the coverage of other issues what would that mean – who would you include?
- On an issue such as an EU referendum how do your ‘rules’ apply? What is adequate and impartial breadth of opinion here, why?
- (If time) On an issue like immigration how do your ‘rules’ apply? What is adequate and impartial breadth of opinion here, why?

6. **Explain post task:** to think further in a ‘real life’ context about formats and how a story develops over time – just on the BBC and using BBC examples this time.

- We are asking you on a voluntary basis to follow up the specific stories we looked at in the group – in your diary or in the clips over the next week in another diary and see how they develop.
- You may be more aware now of what you see and hear – see if
you feel the impression of breadth of voice develops positively or negatively or not at all - write down why.

- Looking at other topics not just religion and how they are reported in news and current affairs we'll ask you to think about the specific formats we showed you and explained here – discussion programmes, packages etc. and just reconsider your feedback on whether you feel the way you evaluate impartiality or breadth of opinion in any of these are different – how does breadth of opinion come across on a phone in or a discussion or a TV Package or interview (explain what this is) keep thinking about this – not just for religion but for any topic

- Finally jot down anything on the last page that you think differently about after the group has finished and you've thought about it further: revisit anything you said about the BBC or another broadcaster - your final verdict if you like!

Thanks and close
Explanation and background

We are conducting a research project for a major broadcaster. 

A bit of background first of all. We want to look at one aspect of ‘impartiality’ in news and current affairs. 

If a TV or radio programme is ‘impartial’, then you are left with the impression that it was neutral. It was not biased.

We want to look in particular at ‘breadth of opinion’, which we could also call ‘range of opinion’, or ‘range of views.’

We want you to look at whether or not you feel there is a breadth, or range of opinion in news, discussions, documentaries, and phone-ins on TV, online and on radio when controversial stories are being reported.

In particular, how do you personally judge what is ‘enough' breadth or range of opinion to make the coverage of a story appear impartial to you?

For this project we’ve chosen to ask you to look at breadth of opinion in the coverage of religion and ‘religious issues’ as an example only. We could equally have chosen something else e.g. politics, immigration, Europe or education but we decided on religion as our example.

During the project we will ask you to take into consideration not just what happens on one night with one news report on TV for example – but the overall impression you get over a period of time.

It may be that many or no religious news stories come into the media in the 2-3 weeks the project covers but we hope some will!

At the group discussion we will show you some clips but because we want your spontaneous, genuine personal opinion we will also be asking you to start thinking about the issue before you come.

So we will want you to write down some information for us while you are viewing and listening to your normal everyday programmes on TV, Radio and also online on mobile or PC.

Please fill in page 1&2 on the first day you start the project, Then do the daily log of ‘what you notice’ for 7 days.
P1 & 2: Please complete these questions **before** you start the diary

**Just write a couple of sentences at most for each question below**

1. Firstly: is whether there is enough *breadth of opinion* in news, discussions, documentaries, or phone-ins on TV, Radio or Online something that has ever occurred to you before?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. If so - when and why? – If not, why not?

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3. What type of thing is important in giving you an impression of impartiality in news, discussions, documentaries, phone-ins etc?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. Is having ‘a good breadth of opinion’ an important part of that impression for you? – Why?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Thinking specifically of the *coverage of religion* in news, discussions, documentaries and phone-ins has ‘breadth of opinion’ in these kinds of stories or ever occurred to you as an issue? - Why?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Has **impartiality** ever occurred to you as an issue in the coverage of religion or ‘religious issues’? - Why?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Looking back, did you notice if there was’ breadth of opinion in the reporting of these religious or ‘religious issue’ stories?

   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Cont/
8. What News stories can you think of that have touched on religion or ‘religious issues’ \(^{19}\) in the past year or so – write a few down

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

9. Were they reported ‘impartially’ in your view?

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10. What made you feel those stories were reported impartially or not impartially? Give an example of how you judge this.

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11. On the whole do you feel views similar to your own are reflected in news, discussion programmes, documentaries and phone-ins on religion and religious issues?

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12. Are there any views you definitely feel you hear too often? – Which?

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13. Or anyone’s views you feel are often left out – again, which?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

14. Finally, do you think any channel (ITV, Sky, BBC, Al Jazeera, Channel 4, etc.) differs from another in achieving “impartiality” or “good breadth of opinion”?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

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\(^{19}\) The definition of ‘religious issues’ is up to you; if appropriate include any ‘moral’ or ‘ethical’ issues religious groups regularly discuss or comment
7 Day Viewing, Listening, and Online log – Please fill in every day for 7 days

Instructions

Over the next week (7 days) we will ask you to watch TV, follow online (PC or Phone) and listen to the radio just as you normally would, but being just a little bit more alert, thinking about this issue of breadth or range of opinion in religious coverage. Which may not be something you usually think about.

Please note down any stories that come up this week which are either clearly stories about religion - or which are issues you think clearly deserve a religious perspective on them.

This can be in national or local news, discussion programmes, documentaries or phone-ins

Please feel free to include specifically religious programming (e.g. Sunday programmes) if you normally follow such programmes.

Please **DO NOT** include what you read in newspapers or periodicals
Day One (fill in date and day of week) ............................................................

Only write about religious stories or stories about issues that could be linked to religion in your view. Think specifically about breadth of opinion. Review the programme/piece of coverage as only one building block among many other news reports that might contribute over time to either a biased or an ‘impartial’ impression. (For example some news reports are only a couple of minutes long, within those restrictions did any particular report give a reasonable breadth of opinion?)

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Day Two (fill in date and day of week) ..................................................  

Only write about about **religious stories** or stories about issues that could be linked to religion in your view. 
Think specifically about **breadth of opinion**. Review the programme /piece of coverage as only one building block among many other news reports that might contribute over time to either a biased or an ‘impartial’ impression. 
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Day Three (fill in date and day of week) ............................................................

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Day Six (fill in date and day of week) ............................................................

Only write about religious stories or stories about issues that could be linked to religion in your view.
Think specifically about breadth of opinion. Review the programme /piece of coverage as only one building block among many other news reports that might contribute over time to either a biased or an ‘impartial’ impression.
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Only write about about **religious stories** or stories about issues that could be linked to religion in your view.

Think specifically about **breadth of opinion**. Review the programme /piece of coverage as only one building block among many other news reports that might contribute over time to either a biased or an ‘impartial’ impression.

(For example some news reports are only a couple of minutes long, within those restrictions did any particular report give a reasonable breadth of opinion?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic covered (e.g., abortion, new religious leader, School RE)</th>
<th>Medium (TV, radio, online PC/App)</th>
<th>Time (e.g. 9am 6pm)</th>
<th>How long watched/read/listened (mins)</th>
<th>Channel (e.g. Channel 4, BBC 3, Radio Ulster, Google News)</th>
<th>Programme name (e.g. Dispatches, Today)</th>
<th>What I felt/noticed about programme’s ‘breadth of opinion’ (Describe why you feel this way)</th>
<th>Within its time limits Was breadth of opinion reasonable? – Why?</th>
<th>Would this programme/coverage contribute to an impression of good ‘breadth of opinion’ in regard to this story over time? - Why?</th>
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**Thank you.**

We look forward to seeing you at the research group. Please do remember to bring this along
YOU DON'T NEED TO KEEP A FULL DIARY AGAIN BUT FOR FOUR DAYS WHEN YOU ARE FOLLOWING USING NEWS OR CURRENT AFFAIRS MEDIA ON THE BBC ONLY WATCH WITH THE THINGS WE DISCUSSED IN THE GROUP IN MIND AND WRITE DOWN SOME THOUGHTS. THE DAYS YOU COVER DON'T NEED TO BE CONSECUTIVE

- Look over 3-4 days ONLY for any more coverage of any of the 'religious' or 'ethical' stories you followed before the group or any that came up during the group to see if they develop over time. As we explained at the group some news reports are very short and can’t include a complete spectrum of points of view: we’d like you to think about whether the BBC manages to develop a good or impartial breadth of opinion as the stories develop over a period of time when you consider different reports in different places e.g. TV, Radio, Online?

- Again over the 3-4 days with some other topics not just religion – think, do you generally see a good breadth of opinion from the BBC – or not? Why? Please try. as you watch, to think about how you judge this in all the formats we discussed e.g. documentary, phone in, discussion panel, studio debate, TV/Radio news report, Interview

AT THE END OF THE 4 DAYS FILL IN THE LAST TWO PAGES

- Summarising how you judge whether different types of programme formats are impartial

- Whether you've changed your mind about anything you said following the interview
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**FOR ANY OTHER BBC STORIES WHERE YOU NOTICE THE ISSUE OF BREADTH OF OPINION – NOT RELIGION, BUT OTHER ISSUES, E.G. EUROPE, DEVOLUTION, IMMIGRATION – ANYTHING THAT COMES UP THAT IS IMPORTANT OR INTERESTING TO YOU**

<p>| OTHER STORIES (NOT RELIGION) WHERE BREADTH OF OPINION AND       | STORY ONE                                                                 | STORY TWO                                                                 |
| IMPARTIALITY IS IMPORTANT TO ME                                | When and where was the coverage, what was the programme title?             | When and where was the coverage, what was the programme title?             |
| Did you think that the BBC coverage got a good breadth of      |                                                                           |                                                                           |
| opinion across? Or not?                                       |                                                                           |                                                                           |
| Why do you say that?                                          |                                                                           |                                                                           |
| Could it have been improved? How?                             |                                                                           |                                                                           |</p>
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| Could it have been improved? How? | | |

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| Why do you say that? | | |
| Could it have been improved? How? | | |

Thinking about the following different ‘formats’ of programme: what factors (e.g. choice of guests, interviewer attitude etc.) are **most important** when judging if the BBC is putting across a good breadth of opinion and being truly impartial?
Write in what is important to you under each of the 8 headings – such programmes could handle any topic, not just religion

1. Phone-ins on radio (e.g. Jeremy Vine)

2. Panel debates with an audience

3. Live interviews done over the phone or by satellite on TV or radio?

4. News report packages made up of lots of different clips and interviews and a presenter

5. Documentaries

6. Factual programmes e.g. on History or Science

7. Current affairs programmes on special topics (e.g. ‘Newsnight’)

8. Online news reports
“Cooling off” thoughts and Summary

1. How well do you now feel the BBC offers a breadth of opinion over time and across all its different outputs, radio, online, TV?
   - Coverage of Religion? (Circle) VERY     QUITE    NOT VERY    NOT AT ALL
   - Coverage of other issues? (Circle) VERY     QUITE    NOT VERY    NOT AT ALL

2. What exactly is a good breadth of opinion? (please write in your own definition of the term)

3. Following the group discussion did you change your mind about anything/ develop your thinking on anything you said or thought? If so, what? (write in)

4. Anything extra you’d like the BBC to do in terms of putting across a good breadth of opinion? (write in)

5. Looking back, do you feel you expressed your views strongly and honestly in the interview? Do you want to add something or take any view back having had time to think about it and look at more TV, Radio or online coverage? (write in)

PLEASE ADD ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO SAY ON THE BACK OF THIS PIECE OF PAPER OR BELOW AND SEND IT BACK IN TO US TO ARRIVE BY (INSERT DATE).........................

WE MAY RING YOU BRIEFLY TO ASK YOU A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS IF ANYTHING IS UNCLEAR PLEASE WRITE IN THE BEST CONTACT DETAILS BELOW

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THIS PROJECT
Personnel and Timings

- The research was moderated by Drusilla Gabbott and Stephen Pickthall of Oxygen Brand Consulting
- Alongside associates
  - Irna Qureshi (British Asian Groups)
  - Karen Cooper (Jewish Groups, Further Afield).
- The bulk of recruitment was via Viewpoint Field: our profound thanks to Vicky Heritage and her team on the ground
- The research was conducted between Jan 24th and March 13th 2013