

Four Nations Impartiality Review Follow-up 2015: An Analysis of Reporting Devolution

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Section 1: Introduction and Overview

The scope of the study

This review of coverage of the nations and devolved politics forms part of a longitudinal study to assess whether the BBC has kept up with the pace of legislative change in the UK, in its coverage not just of the policies decided at Westminster, but in the Scottish Parliament, and Assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland. We compare coverage in 2015 with our 2007 and 2009 reports, allowing us to examine whether there have been changes in coverage since publication of our previous findings. Since 2009 more powers have been devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and devolution has become a bigger issue in UK politics following the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014. Increased local power *within* England has also been debated more prominently in recent years. We can also examine whether the improvement we reported in 2009 on BBC outlets – following the report by Professor Anthony King for the BBC Trust – has continued.

The central aim of the study remains focused on how devolution is reported in BBC network news on television, radio and online. Despite the national opt-outs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the BBC's network news remains widely watched across the UK. So, for example, as a proportion of the population in each nation, more people tune into the BBC's News at Six bulletin in Scotland and Wales – 8.8% and 9.8% respectively – than in England or in the UK as a whole (8.0% and 8.1%).¹

As in 2007 and 2009, our analysis is placed within the broad framework of questions about impartiality and accuracy, asking whether the coverage of the four nations is balanced, accurate and helpful in understanding the new political world of devolved government. We consider coverage of devolved politics in the broadest sense, including a range of devolved issues such as health and education, rather than being limited to the reporting of the everyday business of politics within Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont.

To that end we examined a range of BBC television network news and other broadcasters' network television news programmes, BBC network radio news, BBC network television and radio programmes and BBC online news, and identified any changes in the reporting within that sample of the four nations and, in particular, devolved politics or issues in our 2007 and 2009 studies.

We must acknowledge that devolution in the UK is already complex and likely to become more so. We do not underestimate the editorial challenge of properly representing devolved powers in sometimes brief radio and TV reports as well as online. This study reveals examples of excellent practice that should be acknowledged and built upon. It also identifies areas for further consideration by the BBC Trust, Executive and editors.

We are offering an analysis for discussion, and more work may be required to assess how best to communicate the devolved aspects of politics to audiences. So when, for example, we distinguish between implicit and explicit references we are not making an editorial judgement about how often they should or should not be used in coverage. But in highlighting the degree of clarity in everyday references to devolved powers we open up an empirical question as to

¹ These figures were supplied by the BBC Trust.

what audiences understand by them. An audience study, in this respect, would clearly help determine the degree of prompting needed for people to understand the geographical relevance of a story. Similarly in observing the dominance of political *process* stories over *policy* stories it is an editorial judgement for the BBC to decide if these are appropriate. Process stories may have as strong an editorial justification as those about policy.

Our study is primarily informed by a detailed media content analysis. Since devolution is a complex issue, a greater level of analysis and discursive detail is required here than with most forms of content analysis which are often limited to measuring simple categories (who is quoted, news topic etc). We have reproduced most of the categories used in 2007 and 2009 to enable direct points of comparison, but, where appropriate, we explore issues in greater detail (see Appendix for inter-coder reliability scores). As in 2007 and 2009, the study is based on a sample of four weeks of news coverage gathered during an eight-week period in October and November 2015. We examined a total of 5,732 news items across a range of BBC (television, radio and online) and other television outlets.

The full sample consisted of:

For BBC television: BBC News at One, BBC News at Six, BBC News at Ten, BBC News (BBC One Saturday and Sunday afternoons), Newsnight, Sunday Politics, and one hour per day of the BBC News Channel (5-6pm Mon-Fri, 6-7pm Sat, Sun).

For BBC radio: Today (7.30-8.30am), World at One, PM, Six O'Clock News (all Radio 4), 5 live Breakfast (7.30-8.30am).

For BBC News online: Items on the 'Home' and 'Politics' pages at 5pm Mon-Fri.

For other television: Channel 4 News (inc. Sat, Sun), ITV News at Ten, ITV News (Sat, Sun), and one hour per day of Sky News (5-6pm Mon-Fri, 6-7pm Sat, Sun).

In most cases our main unit of analysis is the 'news item', which denotes a single unit of news coverage on a particular bulletin – so, for example, a presenter's introduction followed by a reporter's package. This means that on some news programmes – especially radio – there may be more than one news item about the same news story. This allows us to distinguish between two news items in the same programme about the same story. The term 'story', by contrast, usually consists of several linked but discrete news items. So, for example, a story covered by all the news outlets in our sample will typically generate over a dozen news items. This approach is consistent with our 2007 and 2009 studies.

To complement the content analysis we carried out two case studies, allowing us to explore some issues in more depth, as well as expand upon the broader findings. In addition, we monitored other non-network media outlets during the sample period – including the BBC news bulletins from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and a relevant national newspaper for each nation – in order to look at the volume and range of stories that did not receive UK-wide network attention.

The size and scope of the sample allows us to explore broad trends. It is, nonetheless, subject to the particularities of the major news stories that may emerge during our sample time period, which may push certain types of story up the news agenda. As we shall see, the clearest example of this in 2015 is the increased news value of the SNP, following their

dramatic success in the 2015 General Election. While this occurred some months before our sample period, it meant that the SNP party conference (which was in our sample period) received much more attention than in our previous sample years. This may have led to more stories about Scotland or a greater focus on the process of politics, such as Nicola Sturgeon's leadership. But any sample period will have vagaries. We have taken the same period as was analysed in the previous studies to provide some level of consistency.

General coverage of the four nations

When we examined *all* news coverage in 2015 – not just those items relevant to devolved politics – we found that the BBC continues to produce proportionally more coverage than other broadcasters about the nations beyond England. We measured this in two ways: looking at what the item was about (e.g. a crime in Cardiff), and where the reporter was based (e.g. a crime in Cardiff with a reporter on location in Cardiff). We then isolated those items that came from one of the four nations in the UK to compare proportions.

The BBC has increased the proportion of its news coverage about Scotland, particularly in TV and radio, but overall the share of news about Wales has fallen. The proportion of news items about Scotland increased on BBC TV from 6.7% in 2009 to 10.2% in 2015, and from 7.2% to 11.6% on BBC radio. We also saw smaller increases in BBC coverage of Northern Ireland. On BBC radio, news from Wales increased marginally from 2.2% in 2009 to 2.5% in 2015, but fell significantly on BBC TV from 3.8% to 1.4%.

This pattern of coverage is reflected in BBC reporting *from* locations across the UK. The number of news items reported from Scotland increased (compared to 2009) on both television news (from 6.1% to 9.1%) and radio (7.7% to 17.8%), but we found significantly fewer news items reported from Wales. Between 2009 and 2015, news from Wales fell dramatically from 3.4% to 0.5% of news items on BBC television and 6.4% to 3.7% on BBC radio. Reporting by journalists in Northern Ireland remained roughly the same on BBC television news as 2009 – 2.7% – as did the number of items on radio (3.7%). On ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News, we also found more reporters filed stories from Scotland – up dramatically from 1.4% to 6.4% – whilst the proportion of news items featuring journalists reporting on location in Wales or Northern Ireland remained at the same low level – 1.2% and 0.3% respectively.

Coverage of devolution

Coverage of devolved politics in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rose in 2015 across all media compared to 2007 and 2009. While the share of devolution coverage remains a fraction of all news – just 3.6% – this represents more than a threefold increase since our 2007 study. This rise was significant across all BBC outlets, from 1.2% on both radio and television in 2009 to 3.9% and 3.7% respectively, with online news increasing from 3.5% to 4.0%. Increases on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News were more dramatic but from a much lower base, growing from 0.3% to 2.3%.

This rise, however, should *not* be seen as a general increase in greater coverage of specific devolved *policies* in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We divided references to devolution in those nations into news items about *policy* and items about *process* (mainly stories about elections, personalities, negotiating between parties etc). Much of the growth involves an increase in items dealing with the *process* of politics, rather than devolved areas

of policy. The biggest ongoing story involved a focus on the SNP – and Nicola Sturgeon in particular – prompted by their increased presence in Westminster.

In general, the BBC continues to have more coverage of devolved politics than other broadcasters, although the dramatic increase in coverage of political process items in Scotland on commercial news means the gap has narrowed compared to 2009.

Signposting, clarity and devolution

As we found in 2009, the relevance of stories in a devolved context is also more regularly signposted on the BBC. BBC outlets are more likely to cover the complexity of the UK's legislative system, with the policy differences between the four nations explained more frequently.

In 2009 we found most BBC news outlets had improved their signposting of the geographical relevance of stories. *These improvements have largely been consolidated but not been enhanced in 2015.* In 2009, we found that improvements in BBC coverage meant that there was a clear gap between BBC and commercial TV outlets. So, for example, in 2009, only 34.9% of news items on commercial channels located the geographical specificity of stories when they were about policy which applied to England alone, while 62.1% of BBC outlets did so. In 2015, both percentages remained largely the same (62.9% on BBC outlets, 32.2% on commercial channels).

We also found that the BBC continues frequently to report areas of responsibility which have been devolved – notably in health and education – from an English perspective, without explaining the policy relevance to viewers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or, in a sizeable minority of cases, the fact that a story only applies to England.

This is not to underestimate the challenge facing broadcasters: some areas of devolution are complex, and we found some stories where the issues are both a matter of broad UK-wide powers *and* devolved powers. Broadcasters are also wary of becoming overly repetitive. However, since there are a number of instances when BBC reporters *do* locate and explain the geographical specificity of a story quickly, clearly and efficiently, it does suggest that this good practice could be extended so that it becomes the norm.

So, while many of the improvements made in 2009 remain in place, we found that, on some news items, network broadcasters continue to demonstrate the presence of implicit English-oriented assumptions. This is manifested in two ways.

First, our findings suggest that sometimes reporters feel a greater need to locate a (devolved powers) story when it is outside England. As we have suggested, BBC reporters sometimes neglect to mention the English specificities of a news item (on 37.1% of news items about devolved issues in England), yet when reporters cover devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, they *always* refer to their geographical specificity.

Second, in 2015 we found that broadcasters including the BBC are less mindful to remind audiences, during the course of a news item, when a story's impact only extends to one part of the UK *if those news items are about England*. Specifically, news items about issues specific to England are significantly less likely to make multiple (four or more) references to their geographical specificity than news items about Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland.

While our findings in 2009 and 2015 are broadly similar, we also found two measures that indicate a decreasing degree of clarity in covering devolved politics. Firstly, the proportion of *explicit* (rather than implicit) references to devolved powers/authority on BBC outlets has fallen. So, in 2009, around half of the references to devolved powers on BBC outlets (including references which explained that powers were specific to England alone) were explicit, but in 2015 this drops to just over a quarter. Secondly, in 2015 all four nations have been governed by four different political parties (or coalitions) for some time, yet the number of substantive comparisons about devolved policies made between the nations fell from 14 news items on the BBC in 2009 to just three in 2015.

Omissions

While UK network news covered some high-profile devolved stories – notably the SNP and Plaid Cymru leaders’ conference speeches and allegations facing the First Minister in Northern Ireland – we identified a number of potentially notable stories about the emerging powers and policy responsibilities in Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont that could have been reported on the bulletin we focused on – the BBC News at Six. Of course, decisions about what to include – or exclude – are complex matters of editorial judgement which are highly dependent on the breaking news on the day. In other words, we are not suggesting these stories *should* have been included but that they *could* have been.

Section 2: The Broad Pattern of News Coverage of the Four Nations

The sample of output of all BBC and other news outlets in the study consisted of 5,732 news items, gathered over four weeks during October and November 2015. Table 2.0 (below) shows the distribution of the sample amongst television (BBC and other television news outlets), BBC radio and BBC online sources compared with 2007 and 2009. As with our 2009 study, the size of the sample increased, which primarily related to an increase in the number of items on the sampled BBC online pages. The distribution of television, radio² and online items, however, is more or less the same as in previous studies. In total, across the three sample periods, we can draw on 15,596 news items to consider the changing nature of devolved politics and of the four nations more generally in BBC television, radio and online, and other TV news outlets over a nine-year time span.³

Table 2.0: Percentage of media sample in 2007, 2009 and 2015 (N in brackets)

Media	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%
BBC TV	29.1	26.7	26.7
Other TV	22.6	23.6	18.6
BBC Radio	37.1	37.4	35.9
BBC Online	11.2	12.2	18.8
Total	100 (4687)	100 (5177)	100 (5732)

News relevant to devolution in all four nations (i.e. news items that involved topics or issues where responsibility has been devolved) accounted for 13.3% of the total sample in 2015 (compared to 7.7% in 2007 and 9.8% in 2009). This proportion was higher on BBC outlets, where 14.3% of news items were relevant to devolution (for ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News it was 9.1%). For the BBC this represents an increase compared to 2007 and 2009 (where the samples were 8.7% and 11.3% respectively). We examine these items in more detail in Section 3. In this section, we identify how – and how often – each nation appears in the news overall.

We began by establishing the location of news items for all stories based in one of the four nations (or which was about one of them), regardless of whether it concerned devolved issues. So, for example, a story about airport expansion at Heathrow was classified as relating to (or about) England, while a story about a school stabbing in Aberdeen was seen as relating to (or about) Scotland. As noted in previous reports, there are no precise benchmarks with which to evaluate the spread of stories across the UK. The concept of news value is unhelpful, because it is vaguely defined, imprecise and contested (thus any objective measure of the number of newsworthy events that occur in specific locations is impossible).

Nevertheless, in earlier reports we pointed out that coverage of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on news outlets did not reflect the population of the UK or the distribution of the audience. This is not to argue that population should determine the volume of coverage, but to note that England (in the 2007 study) was given more coverage than might be explained by the distribution of the UK-wide audience. However, in our 2009 follow-up review we found

² In 2009 we also added Radio 5 live Breakfast to our sample. This was included in this 2015 follow-up review.

³ Throughout the report we refer to *percentage point drops* not by an overall percentage.

coverage of the other three nations had increased. In 2015 this increase continued, *although not evenly across the UK*. If we exclude international news or items about the UK as a whole, the 2007 and 2009 studies found that the proportion of news items specifically related to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland increased from 11.5% to 18%.⁴ In 2015, the proportion increased further to 21.4% (see Table 2.1).

While England remains the overwhelming focus in most news items (78.4%), its dominance reduced slightly in 2015 compared to 2009 (by 3.6%), largely because Scotland received proportionally more coverage (up 4.1%). Northern Ireland maintained roughly the same degree of focus in 2015 (compared to 2009), while stories primarily about Wales fell (by 1.1%) to roughly their 2007 level. We cannot assume a correlation between the location of the population and/or audience and the geographical relevance of a news item, but we note (as we did in our 2009 study) that Wales has a larger share of the population and audience than Northern Ireland but received less coverage. As with previous reports, items related to Westminster (or about several nations) were excluded because, even if they are located in London, they often concerned matters relevant to the UK as a whole.

Table 2.1: Area of geographical relevance (by percentage) of news items (excluding Westminster and UK-wide items)⁵ (N in brackets)

	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%
England	88.5	82.0	78.4
Scotland	6.0	9.9	14.0
Wales	2.3	3.6	2.5
Northern Ireland	3.2	4.5	4.9
Total	100 (1334)	100 (1347)	100 (1511)

If we include stories from Westminster in this analysis, although the proportion of items about Westminster has fallen slightly (by 2.6%) compared to 2009, it continues to be one of the dominant locations of UK news. As a share of news primarily about England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland *or* Westminster, the latter location's share of coverage is 26.1% – higher than all the devolved nations combined.

Table 2.2 below breaks down all these data by news outlets, and includes news items about Westminster as a separate category (as we did in 2007 and 2009). The percentage-point changes in 2015 should be interpreted in the context of the 2009 figures (e.g. while commercial television news increased its coverage of Scotland in 2015 by the greatest percentage-point change, it did not cover Scotland to a greater extent than BBC radio or television news).

Scotland received more attention in 2015 across all outlets except BBC online (up 3.5% on BBC TV, 4.4% on radio and 5.3% on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News). There was also a modest increase in news items about Northern Ireland on BBC TV (up 1.3%), online (up 1.3%) and radio (up 0.5%), but not on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News (down 2.0%). By contrast, the reporting of Wales more than halved on BBC TV (from 3.8% in 2009 to 1.4% in 2015, with a 0.5% reduction on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News) and 0.1% on BBC online.

⁴ As we did in previous reports, for the purposes of clarity we focus on news items only about one of the four nations, excluding other items.

⁵ In this and subsequent tables, percentages have been rounded up and may not add up to 100%.

BBC radio was the only medium to increase coverage of Wales, but only marginally, by just 0.3% compared to 2009.

Table 2.2 also suggests that the geographical focus on Westminster fell marginally across all media by 2.6% since 2009 (and down 6.0% from 2007). This was most striking on BBC online (down 10.4%) and BBC TV news (down 3.5%) between 2009 and 2015. Nevertheless, Westminster remains a dominant lens through which a sizeable volume of news is conveyed and still – across every media type – comfortably outweighs coverage of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. Finally, coverage of England remained almost the same as 2009 (down by 0.4% as a share of all media), but increased notably on BBC online (up 11.0%) and BBC television (up 1.1%), whereas on radio it fell by 5.3% and by 3.2% on Sky, ITV and Channel 4 combined.

Table 2.2: Geographical relevance by media outlet (by percentage) including Westminster (N in brackets)

Media	England			Scotland			Wales			Northern Ireland			Westminster			Totals		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BBC TV	68.9	60.3	61.4	3.3	6.7	10.2	2.0	3.8	1.4	2.5	3.7	5.0	23.3	25.5	22.0	100 (602)	100 (522)	100 (577)
Other TV	63.5	67.5	64.3	2.9	4.1	9.4	1.0	1.3	0.8	2.1	3.3	1.3	30.5	23.9	24.3	100 (419)	100 (394)	100 (395)
BBC Radio	54.9	61.4	56.1	4.8	7.2	11.6	1.9	2.2	2.5	1.4	3.4	3.9	37.1	25.9	25.9	100 (647)	100 (642)	100 (690)
BBC online	49.0	39.0	50.0	5.7	11.2	9.4	0.7	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.1	3.4	41.2	45.0	34.6	100 (296)	100 (331)	100 (382)
Total	60.1	58.4	58.0	4.1	7.1	10.4	1.5	2.5	1.9	2.2	3.2	3.6	32.1	28.7	26.1	100 (1964)	100 (1889)	100 (2044)

Another way of considering how news outlets cover the nations is by examining how many items involve *reporters on location* across the UK. While many items are studio based, we isolated coverage when it was clear a reporter was either in England, Westminster, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland (in both live or edited packages). As Table 2.3 shows, in 2009 there was an increase in the proportion of stories featuring journalists on location outside England. We saw a further increase in 2015 (from 10.4% in 2009 to 13.5%); however, this is primarily explained by an increase in the coverage from Scotland (up 5.1%). News items featuring reporters on location in Wales, by contrast, decreased by more than half (down 2.0%), with television news in particular barely featuring journalists in any part of Wales.

The extent of the fall in items reported from England (down 4.4%) across the sample differs between media. While the number of reporters from England on BBC television remained roughly the same as in 2009, the proportion of radio reporters on location in England fell (down 6.9%) to a similar level as 2007. But perhaps the biggest shift is evident on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News, which featured far fewer reporters on location in England (down 9.9%), with far more reporting from Scotland in 2015 than in 2009 (up from 1.4% to 6.4%). Commercial broadcasters continue to rely more on reporting from Westminster (24.2% of news items) compared to BBC television (18.0%) and radio (11.4%). Journalists on commercial television continue to report rarely from Wales or Northern Ireland (1.2% and 0.3% of news items respectively).

Table 2.3: Number of items with a reporter on location (by percentage) in one of the four nations by media outlet (N in brackets)

Media	England			Scotland			Wales			Northern Ireland			Westminster			Totals		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BBC TV	72.0	69.4	69.6	3.6	6.1	9.1	1.7	3.4	0.5	2.4	2.8	2.7	20.4	18.3	18.0	100 (421)	100 (497)	100 (550)
Other TV	68.7	77.8	67.9	2.3	1.4	6.4	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.5	0.3	0.3	26.7	19.4	24.2	100 (262)	100 (351)	100 (343)
BBC Radio	62.4	70.4	63.5	9.0	7.7	17.8	2.6	6.4	3.7	3.2	3.4	3.7	22.8	12.0	11.4	100 (189)	100 (233)	100 (219)
Total	68.9	72.3	67.9	4.4	4.9	10.0	1.6	3.3	1.3	2.3	2.2	2.2	22.8	17.3	18.6	100 (872)	100 (1081)	100 (1112)

**There were occasions when reporters were in England and Scotland or England and Wales within the same news item*

Table 2.4 below looks at the main subjects covered by news items in the larger sample. The ‘Devolution (S, W, NI)’ and ‘Westminster Politics’ categories are subsequently coded in the same way as all other categories, but are highlighted to denote their special significance to the study. We have excluded some story categories which accounted for a small share of coverage (so overall subjects do not add up to 100% in Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Main topics covered by news items (by percentage) in 2007, 2009 and 2015 (excluding some subjects)

	BBC TV			Non-BBC TV			BBC Radio			BBC online			Totals		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Devolution (S, W, NI)	0.7	1.2	3.7	0.6	0.3	2.3	1.0	1.2	3.9	1.7	3.5	4.0	1.0	1.3	3.6
Westminster Politics	11.2	10.9	13.4	13.6	9.4	11.1	16.7	10.3	17.7	23	24.4	22.1	15.4	12	16.2
Business	4.0	2.4	4.0	4.0	3.2	3.4	4.5	3.3	6.5	0.8	1.1	5.5	3.8	2.7	5.1
Celebrity / Entertainment News	3.3	2.9	3.0	3.1	5.8	2.8	1.4	3.1	1.8	4.4	2.7	2.4	2.7	1.5	2.4
Crime	13.1	9.0	8.0	14.2	10.1	9.1	11.6	5.9	8.3	12.3	9.5	6.1	12.6	8.2	8.0
Disaster/Accident/Tragedy	3.4	4.6	8.5	4.3	5.2	7.9	1.7	3.8	6.3	1.3	2.7	3.1	2.7	4.2	6.6
Economy	3.8	5.4	1.8	2.5	4.1	1.4	2.4	4.2	1.8	2.3	3.9	1.4	2.8	4.5	1.7
Education	2.6	2.5	0.2	1.1	0.5	0.5	1.6	2.2	0.1	2.1	1.7	0.6	/	1.8	0.3
Environment	3.5	2.7	0.7	1.4	2.0	1.3	3.2	2.5	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.8	2.5	2.3	1.0
Europe EU	1.0	1.4	2.5	0.6	1.0	1.5	1.8	2.3	2.5	2.1	3.5	9.2	1.3	1.9	3.5
Health NHS	2.1	2.2	0.8	1.6	1.8	1.0	1.8	2.2	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.7	1.9	1.0
Health general	4.3	1.8	2.9	1.6	1.6	2.5	2.8	2.3	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.5	2.9	1.9	2.3
Immigration/refugees	2.4	0.9	3.6	1.5	0.7	5.7	1.8	0.6	2.9	3.8	1.7	2.3	2.1	8.5	3.5
International	14.7	13.7	13.7	20.6	19.8	19.2	18.6	16.3	13.8	8.7	4.8	10.3	17.8	15.0	14.1
Iraq/Afghanistan	3.7	8.8	0.9	3.4	8.5	1.2	4.3	7.3	0.8	3.3	7.7	1.2	4.0	8.0	1.0
Sport	3.6	2.3	8.8	5.6	3.4	4.1	2.8	2.8	7.2	9.3	0.5	8.2	4.4	2.5	7.2

Above all, what stands out is the increase – more than threefold since 2007 – in the share of coverage referencing devolved politics or issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland across all media (up to 3.6% in 2015, compared to just 1.3% and 1.0% in 2009 and 2007 respectively). The proportion of coverage increased across all BBC media, particularly on broadcast news (online news saw a more modest increase in 2015, but from a much higher base). The proportion of news referencing politics in the devolved nations on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News in previous years represented a tiny fraction of coverage (0.3% in 2009 and 0.6% in 2007), but in 2015 this rose dramatically to 2.3%. As we shall see shortly, this increase is largely accounted for by an increase in coverage of Scotland.

Table 2.4 also shows that the reporting of devolved politics has not replaced coverage of Westminster. With the exception of online news, all media – including non-BBC television – slightly increased their focus on Westminster politics. BBC radio increased its coverage by the largest margin – from 10.3% to 17.7% – (higher also than its share of coverage in 2007).

As pointed out in previous studies, Table 2.4 needs to be seen in the context of the wider news agenda over the sample period. Although one story did not dominate coverage over the four weeks of analysis, international news was high on the agenda (which is a broad category that encompasses politics overseas, terrorism and issues around war and conflict) as was Westminster politics, with new government announcements and tensions within the Parliamentary Labour Party in the aftermath of the election of its new leader, Jeremy Corbyn. News about sport was also higher than in previous years (with many short news items about the Rugby world cup or allegations about corruption at FIFA).

Table 2.5 breaks down the small sub-sample (3.6%) of news items about devolved politics further, by isolating those where Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland were the main subject of the news item. This gives us a picture of those news items that were most clearly related to devolved politics. Scotland, the largest of the three devolved nations with the most powers, was covered by the BBC to almost the same degree in 2015 (59.5%) as it was in 2009 (59.3%) as was Northern Ireland (30.1%). On non-BBC television the focus on Scottish devolution grew more pronounced (from 50.0% to 94.7%). Wales, by contrast, remained the least covered devolved nation, receiving marginally less focus on the BBC (down from 11.9% to 10.5%) while being ignored entirely on commercial television news (as in 2007 and 2009). As our section on omissions points out (see Section 6), this lack of Welsh coverage was in spite of significant events involving devolution occurring in the sample period, such as the publication of the 2015 Wales Bill and the possibility of enhancing the powers at the National Assembly for Wales.

Of the news about devolved politics in Scotland, many related to the SNP's conference (as it did in the 2009 study) and, to a lesser degree, the Labour party's conference in Scotland (in particular the vote against Trident). We found a number of different topics about devolved issues in Northern Ireland including ongoing power sharing arrangements at Stormont, the impact of the IRA on politics as well as a story about the safety and security of Maghaberry prison. The few items about devolved politics in Wales related to Plaid Cymru's conference and the speech by its leader Leanne Wood.

Table 2.5: Devolution items (by percentage) about Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2007, 2009 and 2015 (N in brackets)

News items related to	BBC			Non-BBC		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scotland	75.0	59.3	59.5	66.7	50.0	94.7
Wales	3.1	11.9	10.5	/	/	/
N. Ireland	21.9	28.8	30.1	33.3	50.0	5.3
Total	100 (32)	100 (59)	100 (153)	100 (3)	100 (4)	100 (19)

When we isolate the subject matter of all BBC items related to devolution, the most frequent type of story relates to party leadership (28.7%) – in particular the SNP’s Nicola Sturgeon. Discussion about the peace process in Northern Ireland made up 12.7% of coverage, whilst discussion about increasing devolved powers or being an independent country (overwhelmingly from a Scottish perspective) represented 13.8% of devolution-related reporting. By contrast, *items about health and education – the two major areas of policy devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – represented a tiny proportion of coverage about devolved politics* (6.1% and 1.7% respectively). We found that an even greater proportion of devolved coverage on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News focused on the leadership of (largely Scottish) parties (40.0% in total), rather than on specific devolved policies.

In 2007, one of the most striking of our findings was that of the 161 news items dealing with health and education, 160 related to England, with all of the BBC’s news items about health and education related only to England. In 2009, coverage of health and education remained largely England-focused, but with at least some reporting across the four nations – 104 of the 112 BBC items about health or education related to England, with eight from the three other nations.

In 2015, coverage about health and education continues, to a proportionally *greater extent than in 2009*, to be primarily focused on England (although there were more items in total about the devolved nations). We found 209 of the 220 BBC news items about health and education related to England and the remaining eleven between Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. In other words, while more than 15% of the UK population live in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, the devolved NHS services and education systems in these countries receive only 5% of the coverage. On ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News in 2009 we found two items related to health and education in Scotland and Wales, but in 2015 all items related primarily to England.

Summary of findings from the main sample

Overall we can identify five key trends:

- An increase in the proportion of news items related to Scotland across all media.
- A reduction (from an already small proportion) of items about and from Wales.

- A greater use by the BBC than commercial television news of reporters on location in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- An increase in coverage of devolved politics in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with Scotland and the rise of the SNP attracting most attention.
- Coverage of education and health – two major areas of devolved power – continue to relate primarily to England, rather than Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Section 3: News Relevant to Devolution and Devolved Issues

Within the general sample of 5,732 items, we identified 763 news items – 13.3% – that had some relevance to devolution (665 from BBC and 98 from ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News). This does not necessarily mean that these news items were reported from a devolution perspective, but that the item was about a subject that involved devolved powers or authority. So, for example, this included most items about health or education policy – largely devolved areas – even if devolved powers were not referenced. In 2009 news items relevant to devolution represented just under 10% of the total sample (445 from BBC and 60 from other TV news), compared to just under 8% in 2007 (314 and 47 respectively).

This section focuses on the 763 news items relevant to devolution, drawing on specific examples to illustrate the nature of coverage. For purposes of comparison, we have retained the coding categories used in 2007 and 2009, but we have tried to refine, simplify or develop these categories where possible or appropriate (as we also did in our previous report).

Table 3.0 below divides the sample into four broad categories:

- **Relevant powers referred to.** These include news items making specific reference to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, even if the story was not primarily about these powers. So, for example, a news item about education policy in England *that made a comparison to policy in Scotland* would be coded in this category.
- **Devolved political process.** This includes news items referring to politicians, parties or elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This would apply to a news item that considered the prospects of the SNP requesting another referendum about independence, for example, as would a report about the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party.
- **Whole UK, no reference to devolution.** This category refers to news items that are about general UK-wide issues or events, but which involve areas of devolved authority that are not referenced in the news report (referred to in Table 3.0 as ‘Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution’). So, for example, a news report about the need for citizenship education to increase political engagement in the UK that did not reference devolved education policy would be coded in this category.
- **England, or England & other.** This includes items about England (or England and at least one devolved nation, usually Wales, as in the case of stories about criminal justice) concerning policy areas where devolved powers exist. These items may specify that they refer to England (or England and at least one other nation) – a category we look at in more detail in Section 4. A news item based on an Ofsted report on English schools would be coded in this category, regardless of whether the report specified that it only applied to England.

Table 3.0: Number of news items (by percentage) relevant to devolution by media in 2007, 2009 and 2015 (N in brackets)

Devolved power	BBC TV			Other TV			BBC radio			BBC online			Total		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Relevant Powers Referred To	11.5	20.6	14.8	14.9	13.3	10.2	10.4	14.8	13.5	18.2	28.0	11.7	12.7 (46)	18.2 (92)	13.0 (99)
Devolved Political Process	14.4	2.8	14.8	4.3	/	11.2	4.9	0.9	11.2	7.6	1.4	12.9	8.0 (29)	1.4 (7)	12.5 (95)
Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution	17.3	17.7	12.6	31.9	15.0	18.4	26.4	11.4	12.2	12.1	8.0	22.1	21.9 (79)	13.1 (66)	15.2 (116)
England, or England & Other	56.7	58.9	57.7	48.9	71.7	60.2	58.3	72.9	63.1	62.1	62.7	53.4	57.3 (207)	67.3 (340)	59.4 (453)
Total	100 (104)	100 (141)	100 (182)	100 (47)	100 (60)	100 (98)	100 (144)	100 (229)	100 (320)	100 (66)	100 (75)	100 (163)	100 (361)	100 (505)	100 (763)

We can identify four main trends emerging from Table 3.0:

1. In 2009 we saw a substantial increase – compared to 2007 – in the *proportion* of news items on BBC outlets that referred to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland. However, in 2015 *all outlets reduced the proportion of items that referred to devolved policy*, in particular online news (although we note that since the overall amount of devolved coverage increased in 2015, the *number* of policy items about Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland actually increased slightly, from 92 to 99).

2. Whereas our 2009 study found a marked drop in devolved political ‘process’ items across all outlets, in 2015 coverage in this category increased strikingly across the board (from 1.4% in 2009 to 12.5%). In 2007, a Labour leadership contest in Scotland largely explained the focus on process, while in 2015 we had a new Scottish Labour leader gaining media attention during the party’s conference, the rise of the SNP – and in particular Nicola Sturgeon – including discussing the prospect of another independence referendum. To a much lesser extent, the leader of Plaid Cymru – Leanne Wood – also gained coverage about her party’s fortunes in her party conference speech.

3. Across the whole sample, the ‘Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution’ category increased marginally (up 2.1%), but there was a mixed pattern between media outlets. While the proportion fell on BBC TV (down 5.1%), on radio it remained roughly the same, whilst coverage rose in news online (up 14.1%) as it did on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News (up 3.4%).

These items do not make misleading or inaccurate statements about the application of a particular policy, they simply make no reference to areas of devolved power/policy, even though the stories categorised here did cross into areas that have been devolved. So, for example, we found a number of news items about increased surveillance in the UK from different perspectives (such as details about the Westminster government’s bill, issues about the scope of police powers or wider debates about the rights of private citizens). At the heart of the story is enhanced legal powers, but in a devolved UK this is not necessarily straightforward. Scotland has a separate legal system, and while the Investigatory Powers Bill has UK-wide relevance – to counter-terrorism – there were areas of devolved powers not explored in most news items.

4. As we found in our previous studies the most common type of nation-specific news items in Table 3.0 relates to items about England only (or England and at least one other nation). While there was a *proportionate* drop in England-only news items, the overall number of stories in this category rose from 340 to 453. The *proportional* decrease in stories about England is a consequence of the much sharper increase in the number of ‘political process’ stories about Scotland – most of which were about the SNP.

For the purposes of this review, it is particularly important to look at *how* these stories are covered. One of the main issues identified in earlier reports was the extent to which an item made it clear that news about an area of authority in England (or England or Wales) *states* whether the policy applies to just England (or England or Wales). In our previous studies, we found that many policy-related news items did not always make this clear, covering stories that were *only relevant to England* as if they were relevant to the UK as a whole, while ignoring the different policy regimes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This remained true in 2015. Our case study of the reporting of the opening of a new grammar

school on 15 October 2015 in England (see Section 4), for instance, showed that many outlets did not always point out that grammar schools do not exist in Scotland or Wales (or that they do exist in Northern Ireland), and that education is a devolved area of responsibility to these nations. Likewise, when the Minister for Higher Education (whose remit covers England only) proposed that universities in England could raise tuition fees if they improved the quality of teaching (reported on 6 November 2015), the implications for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland were not always dealt with in coverage (where different fee arrangements exist).

Of course, considering when a story is – or is not – relevant to just England (or another nation) is not easy or straightforward for journalists. In several cases we had to investigate the legal relevance of a particular story and, on occasions, seek expert guidance. So, for example, in a widely reported story on 14 October there was a landmark divorce case at the Supreme Court that only applied to England and Wales. But reports did not explain how the same judgement might not necessarily apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland because of different marriage laws. Similarly, on 16 October, there were a number of news items about a high court ruling on the legality of mobile phone use to calculate fares by Uber cars, but once again the ruling – not explained in the coverage – only applied to England and Wales.

To consider this in more detail, Table 3.1 breaks down all England-only (or England and at least one other nation, usually Wales) items to quantify how often reporters referred to or stated their geographical specificity.

Table 3.1: Proportion of England (or England and...) based news items involving devolved authority that specified their applicability (N in brackets)

	Stated policy only relates to England		Did not state policy only related to England		Total	
	2009	2015	2009	2015	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%
BBC TV	66.7	56.2	33.3	43.8	100 (81)	100 (105)
BBC Radio	58.9	63.4	41.1	36.6	100 (158)	100 (202)
BBC Online	65.2	70.1	34.8	29.9	100 (46)	100 (87)
Other TV	34.9	32.2	65.1	67.8	100 (43)	100 (59)
All BBC	62.1	62.9	37.9	37.1	100 (285)	100 (394)

The picture here is mixed. On all BBC media, the ‘England only’ relevance of a story is stated more often than not (stated in 62.9% of items, not stated in 37.1% items) – particularly in online reports and, to a lesser extent, radio. However, there remains a large proportion of BBC coverage that does not signal if a policy only relates to England (or another nation). While we noted in 2009 that the coverage of devolved politics had improved somewhat (following the 2007 study and criticism made in the King Report), by this measure, we have seen no overall improvement since then. While BBC radio and online reports have improved modestly, BBC TV appears to have become *less likely* to signal if a policy only relates to England. By contrast, we found *no* instances when news items involving devolved issues

specific to Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland failed to mention their geographical specificity.

Our 2009 report also noted that, in contrast to the BBC, coverage on commercial television had *not* improved since 2007. By this measure this remains the case in 2015. ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News did not clarify the policy relevance to England (or one of the three nations) in 67.8% of news items where they might have done so. In short, the BBC might not always be precise in explaining the specific policy relevance within an increasingly devolved UK, but it continues to do so with greater regularity than other television news outlets.

In terms of what constitutes a statement about the geographical specificity of a news item, we set the bar fairly low (as we did in 2009). If a three-minute news item contained *just one* reference to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland (or any combination thereof), it was seen as above the threshold, and categorised as a news item that specified its geographical applicability. Following the 2009 report, some questioned the extent to which these references to location were cursory or clear. So, for example, a brief mention of the story's location at the beginning of a long news item which goes on to use a number of general UK-wide terms (such as *the Minister* or *the government*) might be confusing to audiences. We explore this issue in more detail in the two case studies, but in 2015 we introduced a broad quantitative measure to record the *number of times* the reporter referred to the news item's geographical specificity. The time available to clarify such things in news programmes is limited, but there was a suspicion that reporters in England, in particular, might be less inclined to remind audiences that the story applied to only one part of the UK.

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 suggest that this suspicion is, at least to some extent, justified. Only 21% of news items about England (or England and Wales) make more than three references to the story's location, compared to almost twice the proportion (39%) during items about Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland. If we exclude BBC online, which is much more likely to make multiple references in both cases, the proportions of multiple references drop to 32% in items about Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland but to just 12% for items about England (or England and Wales).

One of the most striking disparities is on BBC radio, where 30% of news items about Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland made multiple references to location, compared to only 9% of news items during stories about England. The largest disparity, however, is on commercial TV outlets, where nearly half the news items about Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland (45%) contain multiple references, compared to just over one in ten during news items about England.

This disparity cannot be explained by the limited time available for covering news stories, since the same limits apply regardless of location. It may suggest there is, on some occasions, an unwitting metropolitan/England assumption in network news coverage, where reporting from Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland needs to be located but where the lines between a story about England and a story about the UK become blurred.

Table 3.2: Number of times the location is mentioned in news items about devolved issues in England (or England and Wales) (N in brackets)

	1 mention	2 mentions	3 mentions	4+ mentions	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
BBC TV	38.0	33.8	8.5	19.7	100 (71)
Radio	58.8	25.0	7.4	8.8	100 (148)
Online	28.7	14.9	10.3	46.0	100 (87)
Non-BBC TV	56.0	24.0	8.0	12.0	100 (25)
Total	46.2	24.2	8.5	21.1	100 (331)

Table 3.3: Number of times the location is mentioned in news items about devolved issues in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

	1 mention	2 mentions	3 mentions	4+ mentions	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
BBC TV	37.0	22.8	10.9	29.3	100 (92)
Radio	37.1	18.1	14.7	30.2	100 (116)
Online	36.5	6.3	4.8	52.4	100 (126)
Non-BBC TV	31.0	10.3	13.8	44.8	100 (29)
Total	36.4	14.6	10.2	38.8	100 (363)

Another measure we used to assess the clarity of news reporting on devolved issues was to distinguish between explicit and implicit references to devolved powers, specifically:

- Explicit references to the ability of a devolved Parliament or Assembly (or Westminster in the case of legislation in England) to make and enact policy.
- Implicit references to the fact that a devolved Parliament or Assembly (or Westminster in the case of England news items) has competence in that area. References were usually seen as implicit when they stated where the story takes place

(generally England), without detailing devolved powers or why it doesn't apply elsewhere.

As Table 3.4 shows, our 2009 report noted a significant increase in references to devolved powers/authority, from 83 references in 2007 to 530 references in 2009. In 2015 we found a further, much more modest rise – 589 references in total – which is consistent with the increased coverage of devolved politics in Scotland.

Of the 665 BBC items, we found that within a news item, 10.1% contained at least one explicit reference to a devolved power and 46.5% an implicit reference. By contrast, of the 98 items on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News, just 6.1% contained at least one explicit reference and only 24.5% an implicit reference. In other words, the BBC more regularly draws attention to specific policy powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland than commercial services do.

Since 2009, however, on BBC News we see a marked fall in the proportion of explicit references to devolved powers (from 250 to 145), and a shift towards a greater use of implicit references (from 239 in 2009 to 404 in 2015). While in 2009 around half of the references to devolved powers on BBC outlets were explicit, in 2015 this drops to just over a quarter, with a much greater reliance on implicit references.

Table 3.4: Number of explicit and implicit references in devolved relevant coverage by BBC/non-BBC outlets

Devolved Powers	BBC						Non-BBC					
	Explicit			Implicit			Explicit			Implicit		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
Total	63	250	145	8	239	404	12	17	7	/	24	33

We see a similar shift on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky News, which made 17 explicit references in 2009 and only seven in 2015.

Our case studies explore this issue in more detail. So for example, the story about the pay rise dispute for junior doctors in England was a clear area in which different policies and approaches were pursued across the four nations. Over the story as a whole, we did find explicit references in the BBC coverage of the dispute in which the relevance of devolved policies was made abundantly clear, such as the statement:

The planned reforms will affect England – the Welsh and Scottish governments have opted not to change the current contract (News at Ten, BBC One, 4 November 2015).

Many news items, however, referred simply to the English location of the story, without always specifying that this was a dispute that, *because of devolved powers relating to the NHS*, only affected England. The following statement from the World at One was fairly typical:

Junior doctors *in England* are refusing to return to talks with the government over their pay and working hours unless ministers withdraw a threat to impose a new contract. (World at One, Radio 4, 4 November 2015; *emphasis added*).

While such implicit references may be clear to those with a firm understanding of devolution, they contain a degree of ambiguity. In this instance, we are told something is happening in England, but without any explanation. It is possible, in this case, for the audience to assume (incorrectly) that all four nations were pursuing the same policy, but that only English junior doctors were voicing objections.

Finally, Table 3.5 below documents examples of good practice in the coverage of devolved politics, highlighting those instances when reporters take the opportunity to make comparisons between nations with regard to devolved issues, policies and powers. In 2015, this opportunity was enhanced by the fact that all four nations were governed by different political parties. Indeed, each administration had time to develop different approaches to public policy in key areas.

In our original 2007 study, we found only a few instances where comparisons were made between devolved nations – 27 in total – all of which were passing references rather than more substantive comparisons. In 2009 this increased to 47, most notably on the BBC (rising from 19 to 44) while comparisons on commercial television news actually fell from seven to three. Of the 44 comparisons on the BBC in 2009, around a third (14) could be categorised as substantive.

In 2015 we identified a similar number of comparisons – 59 in total on the BBC – and four by other UK broadcasters, but in keeping with earlier findings we see a shift away from more substantive comparisons. One of the few examples of these was made on the Today programme in an interview with Nicola Sturgeon. The interviewer used such comparisons to ask:

The people of Scotland of course are going to be concerned about things that affect their daily lives, whether it's – you know – schools, hospitals all the rest of it, for which you're responsible and have been responsible in government for 8 years in Edinburgh. Now just looking at, health for example, English health spending through the NHS has gone up in real terms or went up in real terms between 2009-10, 15-16 by 6%. In Scotland by 1%. Now you are getting proportional money you can spend you're making choices about how to spend it. Why are you ... refusing to increase real spending on health in Scotland by as much as they are in the rest of the UK? (Today, Radio 4, 15th October, 2015).

Such comparisons were rarely made, however, and only 5% of the BBC's comparisons were in this category.

Table 3.5: Comparisons made (by frequency) between nations in 2009 and 2015

	BBC		Other TV		BBC		Other TV		Totals 2009	Totals 2015
	Passing	Substantive	Passing	Substantive	Passing	Substantive	Passing	Substantive		
	2009	2009	2009	2009	2015	2015	2015	2015		
England and Scotland	4	2	1	0	18	2	1	0	7	21
England and Wales	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1
Scotland and Wales	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
England and Northern Ireland	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	4
Scotland and Northern Ireland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
England, Scotland and Wales	12	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	15	3
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	10
England, Wales and Northern Ireland	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	1
England, Scotland and Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
All four nations	10	2	2	0	19	0	0	0	14	19
Total	30	14	3	0	56	3	4	0	47	63

Table 3.6 below shows the political contributors interviewed in news items relevant to devolved issues or powers in 2007, 2009 and 2015. As in previous years, UK (Westminster) politicians appear most as interviewees or sources, reflecting the dominance of items based in England and the Westminster focus of news stories.

In 2009 we found the proportion of politicians interviewed from parties based outside England but within the UK (including the Westminster MPs from parties like the SNP and Plaid Cymru) doubled – from 15.9% of politicians interviewed in 2007 to 31.7% in 2009. This increase was entirely accounted for by BBC outlets, where the proportion increased from 14.8% to 32.6%. On other news outlets, the proportion fell slightly, from 21.2% to 15.4%. In 2015, the percentage spread of politicians sourced from parties based outside England on BBC outlets was roughly the same as 2009 (31.0%). On commercial television the proportion of political sources outside England nearly doubled (28.0%) – although 24.0% is devoted to the SNP and only 4.0% across all other parties outside England. On BBC outlets the SNP is the dominant (excluding Westminster MPs) voice, but amongst a much wider range of sources.

Table 3.6: Politicians interviewed (by percentage) in devolution-related items in 2007, 2009 and 2015 (N in brackets)

Politician	BBC			Other TV			Total		
	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015	2007	2009	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
UK Labour	48.0	43.2	20.0	42.4	61.5	18.0	47.5	44.3	19.9
UK Conservative	23.8	16.1	40.1	27.3	23.1	54.0	24.3	16.5	41.4
UK Lib Dem	8.7	6.5	2.9	6.1	/	/	8.5	6.1	2.6
UK Green	2.0	/	0.4	/	/	/	1.8	/	0.4
UKIP	/	/	1.0	/	/	/	/	/	0.9
SNP	5.6	13.1	6.1	21.2	15.4	10.0	7.4	13.2	6.5
Scot. Labour	2.8	1.5	3.7	/	/	2.0	2.5	1.4	3.5
Scot. Conservative	0.4	2.0	0.6	/	/	/	0.4	1.9	0.6
Scot. Lib Dem	1.6	2.0	/	/	/	/	1.4	1.9	/
Scot. Green	0.4	/	/	/	/	/	0.4	/	/
Plaid Cymru	0.4	/	3.1	/	/	/	0.4	/	2.8
Welsh Labour	/	7.5	0.2	/	/	2.0	/	7.1	0.4
DUP	1.2	2.5	1.8	/	/	/	1.1	2.4	1.7
Sinn Fein	1.2	4.0	0.2	/	/	/	1.1	3.8	0.2
UUP	0.4	/	0.2	/	/	/	0.4	/	0.2
SDLP	0.4	/	0.2	/	/	/	0.4	/	0.2
Alliance Party	0.4	/	0.8	/	/	/	0.4	/	0.7
Eng. Council Con	2.0	/	0.8	/	/	/	1.8	/	0.7
Eng. Council Lab	0.4	1.0	1.4	/	/	/	0.4	0.9	1.3
Eng. Council LD	0.4	/	/	3.0	/	/	0.4	/	/
Independent	/	0.5	/	/	/	/	/	0.5	/
Scot SNP	/	/	9.4	/	/	14.0	/	/	9.8
NI Assembly DUP	/	/	3.7	/	/	/	/	/	3.3
NI Assembly SF	/	/	1.6	/	/	/	/	/	1.5
Other	/	/	1.6	/	/	/	/	/	1.5
Total	100 (252)	100 (199)	100 (489)	100 (33)	100 (13)	100 (50)	100 (285)	100 (212)	100 (539)

Section 3: Summary of findings

Our more detailed analysis of devolved relevant stories and issues suggests five key findings:

- News relevant to devolution items increased across all media, rising from 8% of items in 2007, 10% in 2009 and 13% in 2015. The most dramatic increase was in items about political processes rather than policies (focused on the SNP), and there were more items reporting on issues in England which are devolved (such as health and education). As we saw in Section 2, this is partly because the number of health and education items on the BBC rose from 112 in 2009 to 220 in 2015.
- We saw a shift between 2009 and 2015 away from policy-related devolution news items in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland towards more process-oriented news items – notably those featuring the SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon.
- In 2009, when covering stories about England which related to policies which are devolved, BBC outlets were significantly more likely than commercial broadcasters to refer to their geographical specificity. This remains the case, although we saw very little improvement by broadcasters on this measure in 2015. Overall 62.9% of news items in BBC outlets refer to the nations-specific aspects of a story (a story about the NHS *in England*, for example) while 37.1% did not. While both radio and online coverage did improve on this measure, TV coverage on the BBC slipped a little. On commercial TV, only 32.2% of these news items made their English specificity apparent, while 67.8% did not.
- By contrast, stories about devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland *always* refer to their geographical specificity. This does suggest some implicit assumptions made by network broadcasters, who sometimes may feel a greater need to locate a story outside England than within it. In 2015, we found another indicator that broadcasters are less likely to remind audiences that a story's impact only extends to one part of the UK when stories are about England. If we exclude BBC online, 32% of news items about devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland made multiple (four or more) references to their location, while just 12% of stories about England (or England and Wales) did so.
- We found two measures that indicate a decreasing degree of clarity in covering devolved politics. Firstly, the proportion of explicit (rather than implicit) references to devolved powers/authority on BBC outlets has fallen significantly. Secondly, while we now have four nations that have been governed by four different political parties (or coalitions) for some time, the number of substantive comparisons made between devolved nations fell from 14 in 2009 to just three in 2015.

Section 4: Case Studies

Case study 1: Reporting of a new grammar school in England

We have chosen this case study to illustrate four salient points that reflect our broader findings. First, since 2007 the BBC has continued to use ‘in England’ more frequently than other channels to clearly signpost the policy relevance of stories to particular nations in the UK (an improvement identified in our 2009 report). Second, in many cases the inclusion of ‘in England’ only appears in the introduction or opening segment of a news story, rather than *throughout* a package. Third, although the relevance of a story to a nation might also be included at the outset by establishing if it is in England or not, we found many general references to ‘*the government*’ or ‘*the Secretary of State for X and Y*’ when the devolved administrations also hold power in these policy areas. Fourth, as pointed out in previous reviews, there was a missed opportunity to compare and contrast the different policy perspectives across the nations.

On 15 October 2015, the UK government announced the approval of a new grammar school site in Kent, England. The decision proved controversial because it appeared to challenge official Conservative Party policy not to extend the selection of schools based on academic ability. However, the UK government considered it an ‘annex’ close to an existing school, rather than representing the first new site for grammar school expansion in close to 50 years. While Northern Ireland has grammar schools, Scotland and Wales do not, and it is the policy of their devolved administrations not to introduce them.

We identified 21 items that reported the grammar school story on the day of the announcement. On BBC TV News (at 1pm, 6pm and 10pm) it was covered by one item and on the BBC News Channel by two items. It was not featured on Newsnight. On Radio 4, the World at One covered it once, whereas the Today programme and 6 O’Clock News each covered it over two items, as did Radio 5 live. Six online pieces were published that day. Finally, it was covered in one item by Sky News, Channel 4 and ITV News.

In England-context

In the opening headlines most BBC items clearly added ‘in England’ to introduce the government’s decision to allow the new grammar school site to be built. So, for example, the headlines for BBC television’s News at One and News at Ten, and Radio 4’s the World at One read:

The government approves plans for the first new grammar school site *in England* for 50 years (BBC News at One, 15 October; emphasis added)

For the first time in half a century a new grammar school site is approved *in England*. Ministers say it’s not a change of policy (BBC News at Ten, 15 October; emphasis added)

Labour says the government’s decision to approve *England’s* first new grammar school site for 50 years is a hugely backwards step (World at One, BBC Radio 4, 15 October; emphasis added)

As these examples illustrate, the BBC has continued a pattern identified in our previous reviews of signposting the policy relevance of stories to a particular nation, such as England. However, this was not present in every outlet we examined. Although a reference to England was made later in the introduction to a package in the BBC's 6pm television news bulletin, the opening part of the programme used the brief headline: 'The government defends the go ahead for the first new grammar school site in nearly 50 years' (BBC News at Six, 15 October). Similarly, on the BBC's News at One bulletin and some radio shows, the introduction to the package *did not* mention England nor did the headlines in any of the online stories. A brief flavour of a few include:

The first new grammar school site for 50 years has been given the go-ahead – and will open at Sevenoaks in Kent (BBC News at One, 15 October)

There hasn't been a new grammar school in Britain for 50 years, but that will change when the Education Secretary gives the go-ahead today for a new one (Today, BBC Radio 4, 15 October)

First 'new' grammar school in 50 years (BBC online, 15 October)

The persistent appeal of grammar schools (BBC online, 15 October)

In other words, it was not always clearly conveyed that the grammar school decision was relevant to England, whether it might be in Northern Ireland, or why it was not at all in Scotland or Wales.

Indeed, even while the relevance of England was acknowledged in some BBC outlets' headlines, it was not repeated frequently throughout a broadcast item. On BBC television and radio news, for example, 'England' was mentioned no more than twice. In online news, by contrast, England was regularly referenced more than four times.

In non-BBC coverage *none of* the opening headlines or introductions to the grammar school story made reference to 'in England'. Channel 4, for example, began with:

The first new grammar school in half a century is to be approved by the education secretary. How many more will follow? And will any of them make the blindest bit of difference to social mobility? (Channel 4 News, 15 October)

There aren't many subjects in education more controversial than grammar schools. For the first time in fifty years permission was given today for a new one to be built (ITV News 10pm, 15 October)

The debate over whether state schools should be allowed to select their pupils has been reignited today after the first grammar school in 50 years was given the go ahead. It got permission to open following months of legal arguing. Now critics fear that it could reopen the door to selective education (Sky News, 15 October)

While Kent – rather than England – was mentioned in the Sky News headline, at no point was England explicitly emphasised in the introductory segment of non-BBC television news.

Wider devolved relevance

Most BBC outlets sourced Nicky Morgan, the Education Secretary in England, to explain the government's decision. But her position – and her remit – was not identified as specific to England. She was introduced in the following ways:

Today, the Education Secretary wouldn't say if she supported selection but insisted that this is a one-off to meet local demand (BBC News at Ten, 15 October)

Labour are accusing ministers of bending the rules banning new grammars, but the Education Secretary insists it's merely an expansion of an existing school... Today, the Education Secretary wouldn't say if she supported selection, but insisted this is a one-off to meet local demand (BBC News at Six, 15 October)

The Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, said that the decision to open an academically selective school in Sevenoaks in Kent was a 'genuine expansion' of an existing school and not a change in policy on selection (BBC News Channel, 15 October)

But in a written statement the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, stressed that the decision to open an academically selective school, in Sevenoaks, in Kent, was a genuine expansion of an existing school (World at One, BBC Radio 4, 15 October)

The use of the generality – the Education Secretary – suggests she has a UK-wide remit. The fact that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own education ministers was not acknowledged in any of the coverage we examined.⁶

Indeed, at times 'the country' was invoked when the relevance of the policy story centred on England. So, for example, a Radio 4 headline read:

Ministers have backed plans for the country's first new grammar school site for 50 years (Today, BBC Radio 4, 15 October)

Meanwhile, the BBC News Channel anchor asked one interviewee:

On principle you think if people around the country want to open new schools, despite the law, they should in principle be allowed to do so? (News anchor, BBC News Channel, 15 October)

In a similar vein, in the closing commentary of an edited package, ITV's correspondent remarked:

There are large parts of the country where a grammar school place is simply not an option. But today's announcement must have got many wondering whether this grammar expansion really will stop in Kent or if others will try and follow suit and build new annexes to satisfy the obvious demand (ITV News, 15 October)

⁶ While the Secretary of State for Education holds power over what teachers are paid in Wales, the Education Minister at the National Assembly for Wales is responsible for deciding upon educational policies of Welsh schools.

Again, the use of the general phrase ‘the country’ by a UK-wide broadcaster would normally be understood to refer to the UK rather than just England. On the few occasions nations beyond England were referenced, there was a lack of clarity about grammar school provision across the UK. An online news item, however, did clearly state grammar schools do not operate in Scotland or Wales:

More common across the UK is the ‘comprehensive’ system, in which pupils of all abilities and aptitudes are taught together. There are no state grammars in Wales or Scotland, and although some retain the name ‘grammar school’, they are non-selective and have no special status (BBC online, 15 October).

Although online news has the luxury of more space than broadcast media, the context to grammar schools in Northern Ireland appeared contradictory at times:

There are about 24,000 state schools in England and only 164 of these are grammar schools (BBC online, 15 October)

There are only about 163 grammar schools in England, out of some 3,000 state secondaries, and a further 69 grammar schools in Northern Ireland (BBC online, 15 October)

There will now be an expectation that others among the 163 remaining grammar schools could seek to open branches in other towns (BBC online, 15 October)

There are 163 existing grammar schools, with more than 60 in Northern Ireland (BBC online, 15 October)

There was, in short, a missed opportunity to clarify the relevance of the opening of a new grammar school across the UK, and, perhaps more importantly, to signpost that education is a devolved responsibility with different policies across the UK. The legal implications appeared only relevant to England, with Northern Ireland receiving a passing mention, and Scotland and Wales almost entirely ignored.

Case study 2: Reporting the junior doctors pay dispute

This case study is based on a story about the dispute between the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt, and junior doctors in England. This was a significant story in our sample period, featured in approximately 47 news items in our sample, with peak coverage coming on 4 November, when it was covered by all the major news programmes and outlets. The story potentially highlighted clear differences between approaches, pay and conditions in the NHS in England and the other three nations.

The dispute involved the government’s commitment to a ‘7 day NHS’ in England, and a proposal to extend the hours in any week for which junior doctors are paid basic rates of pay – from the current finish time of 7pm on weekdays to 10pm, including Saturdays for the first time. Junior doctors in England were vocal in their opposition to the new contract, arguing that long hours threatened patient safety. They subsequently voted overwhelmingly to support strike action.

The case study highlights many of the features found in Case Study 1. The BBC was *more likely* than other broadcasters to signpost this as a story relevant to England, although *this varied across outlets*, with the evening BBC One bulletins and BBC online most explicit, and BBC radio – especially 5 live – the most lax.

In most cases the inclusion of ‘in England’ only appeared in the introduction or opening segment of a news story, rather than *throughout* a package. However, as in Case Study 1, we found that habitual references to ‘*the Health Secretary*’, general references to ‘*the government*’ or to ‘*the Health Minister*’ compromise this clarity. There was a missed opportunity to compare and contrast the different policy perspectives across the nations.

Degrees of clarity in reporting the England context

This was a fairly typical story relating to devolved policy in which the degree of clarity about its context varied. As in Case Study 1, the most common approach was to indicate (although not always explicitly) that it was about England during the introduction to the story, with few reminders thereafter. So, for example, in a lengthy lead story on BBC News at One on BBC One, running for just under six minutes (including a reporter package and 2-ways with Health and Political Correspondents), there was signposting in the introduction that referenced the location of the story, without explicitly referring to the devolution of the NHS:

The Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, is offering junior doctors *in England* a rise in basic pay of 11%. It comes the day before they start receiving ballot papers for strike action over the government’s plans for seven day working. The basic pay rise is offset by other measures, including what constitutes unsociable hours and some doctors say they could still lose out. Mr Hunt is writing to all 50,000 junior doctors *in England* in a last ditch attempt to persuade them not to go on strike over the new contract (emphasis added).

However, in the two-and-a-half-minute package that followed, which included repeated general references to ‘*the NHS*’, ‘*the Health Secretary*’ and junior doctors, there was no mention of the English specificity of the story. This was followed by interviews with BBC reporters including the Health Editor who only made a reference to ‘this decision for doctors in England’ at the end of his interview (around four minutes after the previous reference in the introduction), while the Assistant Political Editor discussed the story purely in the context of Westminster politics with no references to the fact that this was an English story.

On the World at One on Radio 4 we saw a similar approach, with a brief reference to England in the introduction (without making the devolved policy framework clear):

Junior doctors *in England* are refusing to return to talks with the government over their pay and working hours unless ministers withdraw a threat to impose a new contract. The British Medical Association criticised a letter from the Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, to 50,000 junior doctors promising an 11% increase in basic pay, offset by cuts to unsocial hours payments. The BMA says it will press ahead with a ballot for industrial action (emphasis added).

The subsequent report made no reference to England, referencing two British bodies – the Conservative government and the British Medical Association – as the main adversaries in the dispute:

Jeremy Hunt’s decision to approach junior doctors directly through a letter on the eve of a strike ballot has infuriated their union *the BMA*. The details of the dispute

centring on the way doctors are paid unsocial hours and weekend working, have been overshadowed by a standoff over *the government's* plan to impose the contract if there is no agreement. *The BMA* says there can be no meaningful negotiations until this threat is withdrawn. Mr Hunt says the association has misrepresented *the government's* position to its members, but he still wants to reopen talks, he says he's determined to honour *the Conservative election commitment* for a seven day NHS to ensure safe care at evenings and weekends. *The BMA* though insist the plan to impose a contract would be bad for patients and for junior doctors (emphasis added).

The BBC One news broadcasts at six and ten, were, overall, much clearer. Initially, references to England in the introduction were made (although again, without much clarity). In the BBC News at Six broadcast (much the same language was used in the BBC News at Ten) we were told that:

The Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has written to every junior doctor *in England* to try to head off industrial action over their proposed new contracts. He's offering them an 11% increase in basic pay, although some payments for unsocial hours will be reduced. Junior doctors will receive ballot papers on industrial action tomorrow; if they vote to strike over pay it would be the first time since the 1970s (emphasis added).

This was, once again, only an implicit reference to the devolution and jurisdiction of health policy. However, in the subsequent packages (in both broadcasts), there were three references to England, including one which *clearly and explicitly mentioned the devolved policy framework*:

The planned reforms will affect England; the Welsh and Scottish governments have opted not to change the current contract.

This was the most explicit mention of the story's devolved policy reference made across the broadcast news outlets on that day. The other clear references were found on BBC online, which despite the brevity of their reports also made the devolved policy context fairly clear:

- Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is writing to all 50,000 junior doctors in England in a last ditch attempt to persuade them not to take industrial action.
- Meanwhile, Prof Sir Bruce Keogh, medical director for NHS England, said doctors should consider the terms being offered.
- Scotland and Wales have said they do not want to introduce the changes, while Northern Ireland has yet to make a decision.

Titular ambiguity

As we saw in Case Study 1, the habitual reference to Jeremy Hunt as '*the Health Secretary*' without reference to the fact that his role extends to England only, is potentially confusing. At no point in the day's broadcasts was Mr Hunt referred to in a way that clarified his devolved role. This was exacerbated on the Radio 4 Today programme when Mr Hunt made statements – left uncorrected – that might have given the impression he had control over the NHS across Britain:

We do need to deliver our manifesto commitments for a seven-day NHS and I hope they honour and respect that mandate from the British people.

As Health Secretary, what I need to do is to make sure we deliver the safest possible care for NHS patients.

The point about these proposals is that we want to be able to promise *all* NHS patients that they can be confident that whichever day of the week they're admitted to hospital, they will have the same high-quality NHS care.

Misleading coverage

In some instances broadcasters presented the story without *any* reference to the specificity of its location. This occurred on Channel 4 News' report and on Radio 5 live. While Radio 5 did refer to the England focus of the story in their news headlines, their later reports on the story did not. One began:

The government's fresh pay offer to junior doctors to stop them voting to strike. They're being offered an 11% increase in their basic pay, but there will still be cuts to the extra payments they receive for working unsociable hours. The Health Secretary is Jeremy Hunt, good morning.

The interview then began:

A lot of people have been contacting us saying this isn't just about pay, it's about patient safety, a tweet earlier said to me, that it will still mean under this new deal that the same number of doctors that were there for five days will be spread over seven days, with no rota monitoring, that this will create more stress, more exhaustion and this will put patient safety at risk. Now are you prepared to make any concessions or make any negotiations on that point at all?

During the interview, the only reference to England was by Mr Hunt, who quoted 'Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, the NHS England medical director' (a reference that did not clarify the story's English specificity).

The story was repeated later in the broadcast, again without reference to its specificity to England.

The Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has told 5 live his plans to change junior doctors contracts will improve patient safety. The government has offered junior doctors an 11% rise in basic pay, but there will still be cuts to extra payments for working unsociable hours. Mr Hunt says changes to contracts are necessary to make the NHS a truly 7 day a week operation.

It is on these occasions that the use of the phrase 'The Health Secretary' is particularly confusing, implying the story is about the UK as a whole.

Missed opportunities to compare and contrast

The different approaches taken in the four nations to the issue – especially since all four administrations are run by different political parties – was a clear missed opportunity for reporters to compare and contrast health policy across the UK. Indeed, the potential impact of the new contract could have knock-on effects outside England. So, for example, the Welsh Health Minister subsequently used the dispute to make a direct pitch to junior doctors to move to Wales, where, he argued, they would enjoy better conditions than those proposed by the Secretary of State for Health at Westminster.

Section 5: Omissions

Introduction

In order to assess the flow of news stories with significance for devolved powers into the national news programmes on the BBC, we analysed news media germane to the devolved nations during the four weeks of sampled news. The purpose of this exercise (which was conducted in both previous studies) is to see broadly how many devolution-related stories there were during this sample period, and to note which ones were covered by the BBC's News at Six.

In this section, the term 'story' is used to denote an overarching topic on which several news items are based (for example, the 'opening of the SNP conference' story concerns all newspaper stories and broadcast or online items that deal with that topic). The term 'news item' – where it is used – retains the same meaning as throughout the rest of the report. For the sample, as in 2007 and 2009, we used all of the 6.30pm opt-out bulletins from the sample period – Reporting Scotland, Newline, and Wales Today (covering approximately 900 news items in total). Relevant newspapers were analysed for the same period: for Wales, the Western Mail; for Scotland, The Scotsman; and for Northern Ireland, the Belfast Telegraph.

We found 156 newspaper stories across the Belfast Telegraph, The Scotsman, and the Western Mail and 122 devolution stories in the opt-outs, giving 278 stories in total (a complete list of all stories is included at the end of this section). From this sample, we selected 100 stories that had special significance for devolved politics in the UK, based on the following two features:

- All stories that dealt with the process of devolved politics where it impacts upon relations with Westminster, or on the operation of the devolved Parliament or Assemblies. We excluded all process stories that had focused specifically on party infighting, or on opposition attacks on government parties or policies.
- Where story dealt with a high-profile policy area in which, although powers may be devolved, it could be argued that their importance may have warranted coverage on the BBC's UK-wide news media.

The breakdown of the selected stories – in different subject areas – is shown in Table 6.0, which shows *all* 100 stories which were thought to have special significance for devolved politics.

Table 6.0: Frequency of devolution-related stories with UK significance in 6.30 pm opt-out and the nations' newspapers (N=100)

	Scotland		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print
Devolution & Westminster	4	6	10	15	9	12
Health	3	2	4	2	3	3
Education	3	0	1	2	3	1
Environment	1	0	0	1	0	0
Justice	0	1	0	0	3	3
Social Policy	2	1	2	1	1	1

As we found in 2009, some of the most high-profile stories relevant to devolution were covered by the BBC's News at Six and more widely in other BBC programmes. In Scotland the SNP's conference, and most notably Nicola Sturgeon's speech was reported on the BBC's 6pm UK network news, whilst potential Lockerbie suspects also received airtime. Network coverage of stories in Wales was more limited, and revolved around Plaid Cymru's party conference. Northern Ireland, by contrast, had a greater range of devolved policy items covered, such as a running story about the First Minister's role in a loan deal involving the Assembly's finances and a report about the state of Maghaberry Prison. Table 6.1 provides a full list of devolved stories covered on the BBC News at Six. Stories have been put in bold to reflect their devolved significance according to criteria outlined above.

Table 6.1: Devolved stories covered on BBC News at Six

Date	Story Summary
Scotland	
13/10/15	Scottish Labour comments on Fiscal Charter vote
14/10/15	Questions over independent police regulator in Sheku Bayoh case
15/10/15	Two new Lockerbie suspects
15/10/15	Nicola Sturgeon opens SNP conference
17/10/15	SNP Conference: Investment plan for Scottish hospitals
21/10/15	Libyan Authorities may be willing to let Lockerbie suspects be interviewed
21/10/15	UK Gvt defeated by Lords on Onshore wind subsidy changes
30/10/15	Corbyn speech at Scottish Labour Conference, Trident disagreements
03/11/15	Glasgow bin lorry crash: Prosecutors criticised

Wales	
15/10/15	Capel Celyn reservoir and powers over water in Wales
17/10/15	SNP Conference: Leanne Wood speech
23/10/15	Plaid Conference: Leanne Wood and Nicola Sturgeon speeches
Northern Ireland	
14/10/15	Peter Robinson questioned in relation to NAMA Loan sale
17/10/15	Junior Doctor protests, NI NHS yet to decide on contracts
20/10/15	Parties unite to put the boot into 'Hokey-Cokey' DUP ministers
20/10/15	Paramilitary Report
02/11/15	Same Sex Marriage Vote
03/11/15	Government role after Michelin closure
05/11/15	Maghaberry prison report

Stories not covered by BBC's UK network 6pm news

Of course, deciding about what stories to include – and exclude – in network news is a matter of editorial judgement and will depend on context of news that day. For example, a major breaking global news story may squeeze out other stories even if they are significant. So this section indicates what stories were not covered by the BBC News at Six but it is not claiming they *should* have been covered. It should also be acknowledged that these stories may have been carried elsewhere by the BBC network.

Although the BBC News at Six did cover some of the major stories beyond England over the sample period, our review found some potentially interesting devolved areas that were not reported. So, for example, in Holyrood there were a number of stories about the Parliament's powers, including control of the winter fuel allowance or responsibility over abortion, as well as issues with the NHS in Scotland and the implications of banning alcohol-related advertising. In Wales, most strikingly, the publication of the Wales Bill that proposed enhancing the Assembly's powers was not covered, nor were any of the debates about it in the days and weeks afterwards. While there was no such debate about increasing powers at Stormont, more stable devolved areas in health, social care and education potentially could have been of interest to audiences not just within Northern Ireland but beyond. For example, a Northern Ireland health minister announced some major reforms of the NHS in Northern Ireland, which would restructure many of the nation's services.

We provide a full list of devolved relevant stories on the national opt-outs and in *The Scotsman*, *Western Mail* and *Belfast Telegraph* below, with a Y to indicate where a topic was reported on the BBC News at Six. Stories have been put in bold to reflect their devolved significance. (as outlined in Table 6.0) On occasions, dates have been added to the tables for BBC opt-outs because the stories were covered in the newspapers but not on the exact date that they were in broadcast news.

Omissions Story Tables

Scotland

Reporting Scotland – Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	SNP unlikely to join Conservatives in EU campaign	
12/10/15	Parliamentary investigation to include Isle of Mull Rally Death	
13/10/15	MSPs criticize severance payouts at college	
13/10/15	Scottish Minister promises not to means test Winter Fuel Allowance	
13/10/15	Scottish Labour comments on Fiscal Charter vote	Y
14/10/15	Scotland Bill, abortion and other powers	
14/10/15	SNP conference starts tomorrow	
14/10/15	Questions over independent police regulator in Sheku Bayoh case	Y
15/10/15	Two new Lockerbie suspects	Y
15/10/15	SNP Conference: Public opinion must change before another referendum	Y
16/10/15	SNP Conference: Councils to have power to change Business Rates	
17/10/15	SNP Conference: Investment plan for Scottish hospitals	Y
17/10/15	New law on human traffickers	

Reporting Scotland – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
20/10/15	5p bag charge reviewed one year on	
21/10/15	Libyan Authorities may be willing to let Lockerbie suspects be interviewed	Y

21/10/15	UK Government defeated by Lords on Onshore wind subsidy changes	Y
22/10/15	Sturgeon promises to do all she can for steel plants	
22/10/15	NHS Scotland must reform to cut costs	
24/10/15	Scottish Lib Dem leader addresses conference	

Reporting Scotland – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/15	Scottish Government pledges to take 2000 refugees	
26/10/15	Sturgeon opens college, criticism of mergers	
28/10/15	Row over financing of Police Scotland	
28/10/15	UK Government turns down Scottish Business Minister's attempts to join EU steel talks	
28/10/15	Former College Principal talks to Scottish Parliament Committee	
28/10/15	Parliamentary Committee report on social isolation	
29/10/15	Scottish Steel Taskforce: First meeting	
29/10/15	Corbyn and Dugdale to meet at Scottish Labour Conference	
30/10/15	Corbyn speech at Scottish Labour Conference, Trident disagreements	Y
30/10/15	Postponed Scottish Conservative conference	
31/10/15	Kezia Dugdale's speech at Scottish Labour Conference	

Reporting Scotland – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
03/11/15	Glasgow bin lorry crash: Prosecutors criticised	Y
03/11/15	Holyrood votes against renewing Trident	
03/11/15	Marine Scotland propose nature reserve	

04/11/15	Scottish Ministers promise to reverse tax credit cuts	
04/11/15	Former college principal to be recalled to committee	
04/11/15	Police Scotland inquiry into rendition kept secret	
05/11/15	No fresh appeal against Lockerbie bomber conviction	
05/11/15	Scottish Government announce number of Syrian refugees it will take	
05/11/15	Dispute over how families can be compensated for tax credit cuts	
05/11/15	BMA calls for children to be given free fruit	
06/11/15	Investigation launched into death of man on trolley in Glasgow hospital	
06/11/15	Labour release Pearson Review of Policing	
06/11/15	ScotRail fined by Transport Scotland because of poor service	

The Scotsman – Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	Bid to ban smoking in cars passes first stage	
12/10/15	Call to reduce inequality in Scotland	
13/10/15	Devolution of winter fuel payment	
14/10/15	Roseanna Cunningham attacks UK strike law plan	
14/10/15	Calls for Holyrood to appoint business secretary	
14/10/15	Abortion law to be devolved to Holyrood	
15/10/15	Nicola Sturgeon opens SNP conference	Y
15/10/15	Call for Scottish Government to drop air passenger duty cut	
16/10/15	Scotland's councils to be given power to lower business rates	
16/10/15	Criticism of BBC at SNP conference	
17/10/15	New human trafficking law in Scotland	

The Scotsman – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
19/10/15	New Sentencing Council should have been gender balanced	
19/10/15	Labour proposes Scotland seat at Bank of England	
21/10/15	Campaigners continue fight for assisted dying law	
22/10/15	Nicola Sturgeon backs steel industry on plant visit	
23/10/15	Kezia Dugdale interview: 'I just have my gut instinct'	
24/10/15	Women's Equality Party targets Holyrood seats	

The Scotsman – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/15	Kezia Dugdale demands power from London Labour	
26/10/15	Holyrood Committee calls for energy demand reduction measures	
27/10/15	Alcohol ad ban could criminalise sportswear	
27/10/15	Call for devolution to Shetland, criticism of Islands Bill	
27/10/15	Transport Scotland drafted in to help save steel	
31/10/15	Autonomous Scottish Labour could have funding difficulties	

The Scotsman – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
02/11/15	Welfare Powers in Scotland Bill	
03/11/15	Labour lodge amendment to Trident motion	
03/11/15	SNP and Labour unite to pass anti-Trident motion	
03/11/15	SNP plans regarding tax credit cuts	
04/11/15	Labour raise concerns over devolution deal delay	

04/11/15	New devolution plans should be put to referendum	
07/11/15	Alex Salmond: Give Holyrood power to call indyref2	

Wales

Wales Today –Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	Slavery numbers double in Wales	
12/10/15	Investigation into Regeneration Investment Fund for Wales	
12/10/15	Huw Irranca-Davies MP to seek selection for Assembly seat	
13/10/15	Jenny Rathbone AM sacked after criticising M4 plans	
13/10/15	RIFW Board members questioned	
14/10/15	Welsh Government Doctor expresses fears for Welsh children	
14/10/15	First Minister defends sacking of Jenny Rathbone AM	
14/10/15	FSB calls for 'Transport for Wales' organisation	
15/10/15	Two Conservative AMs not selected as election candidates	
15/10/15	WG says tidal lagoon project may collapse over funding delays	
16/10/15	Leanne Wood AM says Plaid can learn from SNP	
17/10/15	Leanne Wood AM addresses SNP conference	Y

Wales Today – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
19/10/15	First Minister calls for review of BBC's public purpose in Wales	
19/10/15	Metrics set for testing progress of Wellbeing Act	
20/10/15	Plans to transfer more powers to Wales	

20/10/15	Local Government Reform Bill will probably pass	
20/10/15	RIFW Inquiry - Land agents questioned	
21/10/15	Questions over why Welsh Government invested in call centre	
21/10/15	Call to reduce housing standards in Wales	
22/10/15	Welsh Government says Health Board will remain in special measures	
23/10/15	Plaid Conference, Nicola Sturgeon visit	Y
24/10/15	Plaid Conference, step up attack on NHS	

Wales Today – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/15	Stephen Crabb MP defends Draft Wales Bill	
27/10/15	Welsh Labour to be more independent from UK Party	
28/10/15	Welsh Government to seek advice on pancreatic cancer drug	
29/10/15	Arguments over Wales Bill continue	
29/10/15	Calls for consistency in lung cancer care	
29/10/15	GCSE Maths textbooks not yet available in Welsh	
30/10/15	Calls to develop rural economy in National Parks	

Wales Today – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
02/11/15	Work placements funded by Welsh Government	
02/11/15	Calls for Cardiff Airport to be privatised	
03/11/15	Welsh Government promises faster access to mental health treatment	
03/11/15	Row over appointment of Future Generations Commissioner	

03/11/15	Welsh Government prepares business case for third Menai straights bridge	
03/11/15	Child obesity: Health Minister wants new powers	
03/11/15	Assembly debate on Wales Bill	
04/11/15	Children's Commissioner: More should be done for children in care	
04/11/15	Welsh Liberal Democrats plan to reinvigorate high streets	
04/11/15	Assembly Members told S4C can't stand more cuts	
05/11/15	Economy Minister interview on steel	
05/11/15	Carwyn Jones says M4 relief road should cost less than £1bn	
06/11/15	Are Welsh Government's enterprise zones working?	
06/11/15	FG Commissioner row: Former Children's Commissioner comments	

Western Mail – Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	Questions over cost of creating a Welsh Traffic Commissioner	
12/10/15	New environment bill 'not enough to protect biodiversity'	
12/10/15	Huw Irranca-Davies MP sets out stall in bid to be AM next year	
13/10/15	We can get job done on Wales Bill, says Crabb	
14/10/15	Push for Assembly to have say on trade union reforms Bill	
14/10/15	Senior Civil Servants give evidence in RIFW inquiry	
14/10/15	Sacked Labour AM attacks 'ruthless' party leadership	
15/10/15	Economist calls for longer-term repayment of big investments	
15/10/15	Talks over council merger bill	

15/10/15	Capel Celyn reservoir and powers over water in Wales	Y: 21/10
16/10/15	AMs in fight for reselection as Tory candidates	
16/10/15	'Momentum' of Corbyn backers stirs alarm in Labour circles	
16/10/15	Wilson Doctrine does not apply to Assembly	
16/10/15	Should names of list candidates be on ballot papers?	
16/10/15	Put education first, it cannot be done on the cheap, union warns	
17/10/15	SNP Conference: Leanne Wood speech	Y

Western Mail – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
19/10/15	Crabb: I won't fall into trap of delaying Wales Bill	
19/10/15	Assembly's extra million will help fund Members' £10,000 pay rise	
19/10/15	AM Warns on pig disease threats	
20/10/15	Petition calls for ban on circus animals	
20/10/15	Carwyn's concerns over how BBC serves its Welsh audience	
20/10/15	'Radical' Bill will give Wales greater responsibilities, Crabb pledges	
20/10/15	Trade Union Bill: 'Explosive' crisis could hit Tories	
21/10/15	Call for 'Focus on growth' to transform economy of Wales	
21/10/15	English veto on Welsh laws' - Carwyn derides draft Bill	
21/10/15	Compulsory dog microchipping	
21/10/15	Plaid in deal with Labour on council mergers bill	
21/10/15	Decision to sell valuable public site for price of farmland was 'good one'	

22/10/15	'Momentum in Welsh education must go on'	
22/10/15	Far left: 'Welsh Labour's draft manifesto ignores Corbyn politics'	
22/10/15	Silk's Wales Bill disappointment	
22/10/15	North to South flight loses safety certificate	
23/10/15	Leanne Wood is ready to lead Wales, says Sturgeon	
23/10/15	Devolution plans would give AMs huge powers, says expert	
24/10/15	Plaid is now more socialist than nationalist, says ex-MP	
24/10/15	Plaid Conference: Leanne Wood and Nicola Sturgeon speeches	Y: 23/10

Western Mail – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/15	Call for help for families in Wales hit by bedroom tax debts	
26/10/15	Plaid's election aims	
26/10/15	Skype clinics - just one of party's ideas to rejuvenate NHS	
27/10/15	Uber taxi rivals can 'adapt or die' says AM amid techno row	
27/10/15	Government accused of 'assault on devolution' with Trade Union Bill	
27/10/15	Crabb: Furious response to Wales Bill is a sign politics is 'messed up'	
28/10/15	Challenge from Tories over Labour candidate and IWA head	
28/10/15	English votes for English Laws: A 'voice for England' to have long-term implications	
28/10/15	Union slams Plaid over 'ill-informed' party broadcast criticising NHS	
28/10/15	Autonomy plan for Welsh Labour	

29/10/15	Carwyn Jones: 'Education in our Welsh schools is on the march'	
29/10/15	AM resigns council seat after missing meetings	
29/10/15	Devolution debates can 'paralyse' economy - Crabb	
30/10/15	Devolution is failing on transport, says Crabb	

Western Mail – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
02/11/15	Rosemary Butler and Plaid criticise Wales Bill	
02/11/15	Jobs Growth Wales: Tories 'would widen jobs help'	
03/11/15	We must take action over steel crisis - Hart	
04/11/15	Tourism alliance issues funding plea to next Welsh Government	
04/11/15	Wales must do more to help those in care - children's tsar	
04/11/15	Commissioner 'will need to convince people of impartiality'	
04/11/15	Setback as word 'safe' taken out of nurse staffing bill	
04/11/15	Auditors under fire in land sale storm	
05/11/15	Children could start school aged three under Plaid plan	
05/11/15	Government criticised for not releasing the results of survey	
05/11/15	Over-50s not convinced about end-of-life care	
05/11/15	Pressure grows for a fully federal United Kingdom	
05/11/15	Lib Dems 'have plans to revive high streets'	
05/11/15	Labour under fire in publicly funded policy research row	
05/11/15	Evidence given to Welsh Assembly inquiry on World Cup transport	
06/11/15	Five Welsh laws that Westminster could have	

	vetoed	
06/11/15	PM assures Assembly on Wilson Doctrine	
07/11/15	New political party launched that aims to scrap National Assembly	

Northern Ireland

Newsline – Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	Calls for government funding for NI air ambulance	
13/10/15	Stormont vote on Special Advisers pay	
13/10/15	Queen's University makes plans as Government reduces funding	
14/10/15	Peter Robinson questioned in relation to NAMA Loan sale	Y
14/10/15	DUP confirms Minister is in China	
15/10/15	Government puts emergency department waiting times online	
16/10/15	DUP MLA Jim Wells not to be prosecuted	
16/10/15	Questions over science/technology curriculum	
17/10/15	Junior Doctor protests, NI NHS yet to decide on contracts	Y

Newsline – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
19/10/15	Assembly Members criticise DUP for revolving ministers	
19/10/15	Jim Wells MLA interview after decision not to prosecute	
20/10/15	Paramilitary Report	Y
21/10/15	Interparty talks resume at Stormont	

21/10/15	DUP MLA Jim Wells to temporarily stand aside	
24/10/15	UUP Conference, Leader's speech	

Newsline – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
27/10/15	Jim Wells threatened to resign from DUP	
27/10/15	Some charities may have to start paying rates	
28/10/15	Stormont talks continue on welfare reform and paramilitaries	
28/10/15	DUP criticised over appointment of Emma Pengelly	
28/10/15	Online legal systems considered by politicians and lawyers	
29/10/15	Stormont talks continue	
30/10/15	Impact of National Living Wage on Social Care in NI	
30/10/15	SDLP leadership debate	

Newsline – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
02/11/15	DUP blocks same sex marriage	Y
03/11/15	Government role after Michelin closure	Y
03/11/15	Protests over arts cuts	
03/11/15	Debate over transfer tests in Stormont	
04/11/15	Health Minister announces big reforms	
05/11/15	Maghaberry prison report	Y
05/11/15	Complaint about DUP leader's comments in 2006	
05/11/15	Disagreements over arts funding between parties	
06/11/15	Meeting at Westminster over Stormont talks	
06/11/15	Police Ombudsman to investigate allegations of collusion with IRA	

06/11/15	Prison Officers Assoc. comments on Maghaberry Prison	
06/11/15	NAMA Loan sale investigations: NCA to question lawyer	
07/11/15	Criticism as Primary School children sit transfer exams	

Belfast Telegraph – Week One

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/15	Nesbitt refuses to rule out return to Executive after Assembly elections	
13/10/15	Court of Appeal case over NI's gay blood ban	
13/10/15	Stormont bends rules to allow MLAs to pay tribute to football heroes	
13/10/15	Cheaper option rejected in Dept of Agriculture move	
13/10/15	DUP poised for an imminent return to Stormont seats	
13/10/15	Calls for air ambulance for NI	
14/10/15	DUP unites with Sinn Fein to kill off Bill to cut Spad wages	
14/10/15	Politicians are depressing the economy, says commerce chief	
14/10/15	Irish budget a 'wake-up call for NI'	
14/10/15	Dublin Airport hits new heights thanks to Northern Ireland passengers	
15/10/15	£1.3bn sale of property was the right thing to do: Robinson	Y: 14/10
15/10/15	Pubs must rethink NI jersey ban, says SDLP man	
15/10/15	New street lights blackout feared	

Belfast Telegraph – Week Two

Date	Story Summary	On
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		BBC
19/10/15	DUP and Sinn Fein anticipate impending paramilitary report	
19/10/15	Business chief wants OBR to advise Stormont on economics	
19/10/15	People power vital to change abortion law, says writer of Father Ted	
20/10/15	Parties unite to put the boot into 'Hokey-Cokey' DUP ministers	Y
21/10/15	Business as usual, but fresh crises loom over talks	
21/10/15	£9m in grants for new social housing that was never built	
22/10/15	Wells to take a two-week break from political arena	
22/10/15	Mandarin defends secrecy of report into failed quango	
22/10/15	Supermarkets 'failing farmers'	
23/10/15	Cuts have sent library staff morale spiralling to new low, MLAs are told	
23/10/15	Ford demands first meeting of the Executive after three month break	
23/10/15	Police don't have resources to investigate Stakeknife case	
23/10/15	Ni Chuilin accused of pouring funds into sectarian festival	
23/10/15	New permanent paramilitary watchdog proposed in talks	
23/10/15	Political impasse is hitting jobs, parties told	

Belfast Telegraph – Week Three

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/15	Get real over IRA or face the consequences, Nesbitt tells SF	
27/10/15	Union unveils new plan to boost NI living standards	

28/10/15	New bus lanes along busy city route 'will create traffic chaos'	
28/10/15	Witnesses 'bullied' at McCrea inquiry	
29/10/15	Party colleague's broadside at Pengelly's lightning rise to inner circle	
29/10/15	Minister 'upbeat' over DETI growth figures for economy	
29/10/15	DUP ministerial merry-go-round irritates voters, says Poll	
29/10/15	DUP and SF emerge from talks saying agreement close	
30/10/15	New record after 1m overseas tourists visited here last year	
30/10/15	Population to reach 2m by 2034, and age profile of society to increase	
30/10/15	Don't cut services for victims again, watchdog pleads	
30/10/15	Uncertainty over tax credits is latest obstacle, Robinson warns	
30/10/15	UUP man quits with dig at Nesbitt	

Belfast Telegraph – Week Four

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
02/11/15	Same Sex Marriage Vote	Y
02/11/15	Religious leaders urge political agreement	
02/11/15	Farry fears for future of higher education	
03/11/15	Plea to keep free prescriptions	
03/11/15	Villiers: no more cash to help seal new deal	
04/11/15	Law chief: let's go now with delayed inquests	
04/11/15	Call for 'collusion' case to be heard by coroner	
04/11/15	Nama Loan deal investigation - Developer and Layer questioned	
05/11/15	Minister 'must explain health revamp'	

05/11/15	Only one in four Catholics wants unity now: poll	
06/11/15	Hollywood star Liam in jobs plea to Stormont	
06/11/15	Arts groups won't survive huge budget cuts, MLAs told	
06/11/15	Villiers still hopeful on deal to end deadlock	
06/11/15	New laws proposed to protect children from online threats	
07/11/15	Ford's pledge over justice shake-up	
07/11/15	'Hothouse' talks over Stormont crisis loom	
07/11/15	PSNI chief dismisses calls to reveal names of IRA Army Council	

Section 6: Appendix

Four Nations Impartiality Review 2015 Instructions for Coders

Guidelines for completing coding sheet

- 1) **TV/Radio/Online:** Circle one option
- 2) **TV** – Circle appropriate programme
- 3) **Radio** – Circle appropriate radio programme
- 4) **Online** – Circle appropriate page
- 5) **Duplicate** – Indicate whether this story is duplicated from an earlier online or broadcast story
- 6) **Date** – add date programme was aired
- 7) **Type of Item/Convention** – Choose the relevant category. Apart from the ‘Anchor’ category, it is assumed that most items will contain a short introduction by the presenter.
Do not include headline summaries. Also, do not include adverts/links, or – especially on Radio 5 Live, studio chatter or UGC/audience text/email summaries

Pre-Edited

Anchor only – report presented by presenter in studio. If item being delivered only by the anchor as a standalone, with or without images or film. If the anchor piece is an introduction to a subsequent item, just add to the longer item that follows in terms of time and code the entirety as the longer item – e.g. 30 second anchor introduction to a two-way

Main presenter & package – Pre-recorded report introduced by presenter

Reporter package on location – reporter on location introduces pre-recorded report. Not in the studio and not indicated as ‘live’

Studio interview – pre-recorded interview between presenter and reporter/guest/

Studio Discussion – pre-recorded discussion between presenter and two or more respondents

Live

Anchor/reporter both live on location – live conversation between both parties in the same location (outside of main studio)

Live 2 way – Live conversation between either anchor/journalist or journalist/journalist while in different locations

Anchor/Reporter/Respondent studio interview – live interview between presenter and another reporter or respondent

Anchor/Reporter/Respondent studio discussion – live discussion between presenter and two or more respondents

Online

Stories 123 – Main stories on page; listed top, then lower left, then lower right

Top Stories – Stories in ‘Other Top Stories’ list on right hand of page

Also in News/Sport – Stories in the ‘Also in the News’ and ‘Sport Headlines’ on the relevant page

Features, Views, Analysis – Stories in the ‘Features, Views, Analysis’ bar underneath headlines

Supplementary to Story 1 – Links beneath story one, linking to related stories

- 8) **One-sentence summary of story** – summarise content of story as concisely as possible
- 9) **Story Subject** – tick one category to indicate the *main* subject focus of the story. The exception to this is if a devolution item is ticked or Westminster located in the bold outlined region of the code sheet. If this is so, you can mark another category in the main table with an ‘S’ to indicate a subsidiary focus for the story.
NB: The first category, ‘Devolved Politics (S/W/N)’ denotes devolution in, Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland.
- 10/11) **Story/Reporter location** – indicate with an ‘S’ the main location to which the story is linked. Indicate with an ‘R’ the location of the reporter, if known. (For example, if the subject of the story is relevant to the UK as a whole, but the reporter is based in Westminster, these would be coded as ‘S’ next to ‘Gen. UK’, and ‘R’ next to ‘Westm./Downing St.’)
- 12) **Devolved political focus** – Tick the category that applies to the story. Only ONE category is to be ticked

A. Irrelevant: Story has no connection to devolved politics. This is the most common category. If this is selected there is no need to continue coding.

B1. Devolution, Relevant Powers – Story about or relevant to devolution, in which explicit reference is made to devolved powers in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Concerns direct mentions of devolved powers.

B2. Non-devolution, Devolved Powers Referenced – Story in which devolution is not the main topic, but where reference is made to devolved powers in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. This usually occurs at the end of the item.

B3. Devolved Political Process – Story about ‘process’ in devolved politics in England, Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland, where specific devolved powers are mentioned (specific devolved powers doesn’t just relate to ‘policy’ but also the party itself being ‘devolved’ and the nation too. ‘Process’ here means non-policy-based political coverage, e.g. party infighting, scandals, personality driven etc.

C. Whole UK, No Ref to Devolution – news items that are about general UK-wide issues or events, but which involve areas of devolved authority that are not referenced in the news reported. E.g. a news report about the need for citizenship education to increase political engagement in the UK that did not reference devolved education policy would be coded in this category

D1. Stories about England, or England & Other (stated) - News items about England (or England and at least one other devolved nation) concerning policy areas where devolved powers exist and where it is clearly stated that this is the case. E.g. A news item based on an Ofsted report on English schools would be coded in this category, regardless of whether the report specified that it only applied to England.

D2. Stories about England, or England & other (not-stated) – Stories about either England (or England and at least one other devolved nation), where no reference is made to this fact, or where England and Wales for instance is confused with the UK

13) Relevant devolved powers referred to – where *explicitly* referred to, mark ‘E’; where story *implicitly acknowledges* that relevant devolved powers exist, mark ‘I’. Indicate which nation(s) the powers belong to. In each case indicate which nation the powers belong to (E, S, W, N).
Stories identified as implicit when journalists state where the story does apply (generally England), without detailing where and why it doesn’t apply.
Stories where references to devolved powers would have clarified the remit of the story but were not included. Mark these instances as (NR) for no reference.

14) Comparisons made across nations – tick either yes, or no, depending on whether some reference has been made to comparing powers across different nations. If ‘yes’, then tick the relevant boxes, ‘E’ for England, ‘S’ for Scotland, ‘W’ for Wales, and ‘NI’ for Northern Ireland. If the story gives a substantive description of differences in powers, mark ‘D’; if the differences are only mentioned in passing, mark ‘M’.

15) Political Party sources – if a direct contribution from a political source is used in the report, indicate to which party they belong, using numbers for each category.

INTERCODER RELIABILITY SCORES

We recoded approximately 10% of the whole sample to generate intercoder reliability scores. This was carried out per media type – BBC online, radio, television and commercial television – amongst either 3 or 4 researchers coding this material. However, for the smaller subset of news items (763 in total) this was analysed by just two researchers who were responsible for analysing *all* news relevant to devolution and devolved issues.

As the tables below demonstrate, high levels of agreement were achieved across all media. We also carried out statistical tests on relevant variables using Krippendorff's Alpha or Cohen's Kappa. All variables received strong reliability scores.

BBC RADIO

Variable	Level of agreement
Item convention	91%
Story subject	90%
Story location	91%
Reporter location	91%
Devolved focus Q	98%

BBC TV

Variable	Level of agreement
Item convention	93%
Story subject	91%
Story location	90%
Reporter location	90%
Devolved focus Q	100%

BBC ONLINE

Variable	Level of agreement
Item convention	91%
Story subject	90%
Story location	85%
Reporter location	98%
Devolved focus Q	97%

NON BBC-TV

Variable	Level of agreement
Item convention	92%
Story subject	92%
Story location	90%
Reporter location	92%
Devolved focus Q	99%

News Relevant to Devolution and Devolved Issues

Variable	Level of agreement
Nations Mentioned	90%
Implicit/Explicit	90%
Inaccuracies	90%
Comparisons	97%
Political Sources	90%