



# UK audience attitudes towards broadcast media

A summary of findings

Research

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# Contents

Section		Page
1	About this document	2
2	Executive summary	3
3	Methodology	5
4	Attitudes towards programme standards	6
5	Awareness of regulation	17
6	Attitudes towards advertising and other commercial activities	25

## Section 1

# About this document

This report explores UK adults' attitudes and opinions towards television and radio broadcasting, and related areas such as programme standards, advertising and regulation. It summarises the findings set out in the accompanying chart pack analysis of the research results (Annex 1).

The research findings from Ofcom's Media Tracker study provide a valuable source of information on consumers' attitudes, and help inform Ofcom's work on broadcasting standards.

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom has a duty to draw up, and from time to time revise, a Code for television and radio services, covering programme standards. This includes the protection of under-18s, the application of generally accepted standards to provide adequate protection from the inclusion of harmful or offensive material, sponsorship, product placement in television programmes, and fairness and privacy. This is known as the Broadcasting Code and came into effect in July 2005.

Ofcom recognises that people's views on what are generally accepted standards are subject to change over time, and so should be explored by ongoing consumer research. This report is one of a range of sources that Ofcom uses in undertaking its broadcasting standards duties.

## Section 2

# Executive summary

This year's *UK Audience Attitudes Towards Broadcast Media* report show that adults' opinions and attitudes towards have broadly remained consistent over time.

### Opinions around the quality of television programmes

Attitudes towards programme standards are fairly steady state and opinions towards the quality of television programmes have largely remained unchanged since 2008. The 2016 data reports that a majority of UK adults felt that the quality of programming has stayed the same (54%). Three in ten adults (29%) felt that programming quality had worsened in the past year, and one in seven (14%) of adults felt programme standards had improved.

Among those who felt programme quality had worsened in 2016, the main reasons for the drop in quality were: more repeats, a lack of variety and an overall lack of quality. In contrast, those who felt programmes had improved said it was due to better quality of content and a wider range of programming.

Age tends to be the key driver of attitudes towards various aspects of broadcast media. For example, regarding TV programme standards, it is older adults (aged 55 and over) who are more likely to feel that TV programme standards had worsened in the past 12 months.

### Opinions on offensive content

As seen in previous years, levels of personal offence in response to seeing something on television remained at one fifth of adults (19%). When those offended were asked what types of things offended them, the top three mentions were related to sexual content (33%), violence (31%) and bad language (31%). Among those offended, the most common reaction towards the offensive material was to switch over to a different channel (43%).

Close to four in ten adult viewers felt there was too much violence on TV (37%), while one in three felt there was too much swearing (33%) and one in five (22%) too much sex. Adults aged 55+ were, more likely to say that there is too much of each of these types of content on TV while younger adults aged 16-34 were less likely to say this.

Opinions around the amount of offensive content acceptable to viewers have changed over recent years with fewer adults agreeing there to be 'too much' sexual content, violence and bad language on TV.

## **Awareness of media regulation**

Awareness of media regulation remains high among all adults. For example, nine in ten adults are aware of the watershed, and two in three adults (68%) consider 9pm to be an acceptable time for programmes unsuitable for children to start to be broadcast. This latter measure has increased from six in ten (60%) in 2015.

However, as with levels of tolerance of particular types of content, awareness of the watershed differs by age. Awareness is higher among older than among younger adults.

Awareness that television programmes are regulated, with rules and guidelines about what can and can't be shown was still high in 2016 (81%). While more than six in ten (63%) are aware of radio regulation.

## **Awareness of advertising standards**

In contrast with awareness about media regulation, adults' awareness of advertising standards remains relatively low. For example, the majority of adults did not recognise the 'P' symbol that indicates product placement in television programmes; less than two in ten adults correctly identified the symbol as signifying product placement – with this being particularly true of those aged 65 and over.

## **Opinions on television advertising**

While the overall incidence of concerns about TV advertising has decreased since last year (from 39% to 35%), older viewers (aged 55+) continue to be most likely to be concerned.

A majority of TV viewers continue to feel that there are too many advertising breaks than they are really happy with (55%), with this also being the most common mention among the one in three viewers (35%) who say they have any concerns about TV advertising.

## Section 3

# Methodology

The fieldwork for the Media Tracker study was conducted for Ofcom by the research agency Saville Rossiter-Base, using face-to-face interviews conducted in respondents' homes. The interviewing was conducted across four equal waves (February, May, August and November 2016) to counter potential seasonality issues. Over the four waves of fieldwork, a sample of 2,069 adults aged 16+ were interviewed and then weighted to be representative of the UK adult population. The data presented here are based on the weighted sample.

### Changes in approach and time-series data

Several changes in approach were made to the Media Tracker study in 2014, including a change of research agency, a questionnaire review and a method change, moving from paper and pencil (PAPI) to computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). There were other structural survey changes in 2005 and 2008<sup>1</sup>.

Any comparisons over time should therefore be made with caution and treated as indicative only, as variances in the results may be due in part to changes in the methodology, and not necessarily indicate a shift in consumer attitudes.

Where shown, vertical dashed lines are used within the Figures in the report to show where there were changes in interview method in 2008 or in 2014.

### Testing for significant differences

Data from 2015 and 2016 are tested against each other for any statistically significant differences. Significant differences are shown within the Figures in this report, using arrows, and the text underneath the Figures explains the testing that has been conducted in each case. These differences are highlighted at the 95% level, meaning that where findings are commented on, there is only a 5% or smaller probability that the difference between the samples is by chance. All sub-group data are from 2016 only, and measures for individual age groups (16-34/ 35-54/ 55-64/ 65+) are tested for against the all-adult measure. Testing is also conducted between socio-economic groups (ABC1/C2DE), by gender and between parents/ non-parents.

**Any differences reported here comparing 2015 and 2016 data, or comparing 2016 sub-group data, are statistically significant differences.**

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the questions in the Media Tracker study have been tracked for some years, and before 2005 were published in the ITC's *The Public's View* survey. Please see [http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/uploads/The\\_Publics\\_View\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/itc/uploads/The_Publics_View_2002.pdf) for further details on the content, results and methodology.

In 2005 this survey became Ofcom's Residential Tracker, which in 2008 split into two separate surveys: the Technology Tracker and the Media Tracker. Key changes in the methodology occurred between the 2005 and 2008 surveys, including switching from continuous research to two dipstick waves, and moving from paper-and-pencil interviewing (PAPI) to computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

## Section 4

# Attitudes towards programme standards

This section provides a summary of the findings relating to traditional broadcast content on television. Adults with a TV set were asked about their opinion on a range of topics, including the quality of TV programmes, whether they had found anything on TV to be offensive, their opinion on the amount of sex, violence and swearing on TV, and any exposure to harmful content.

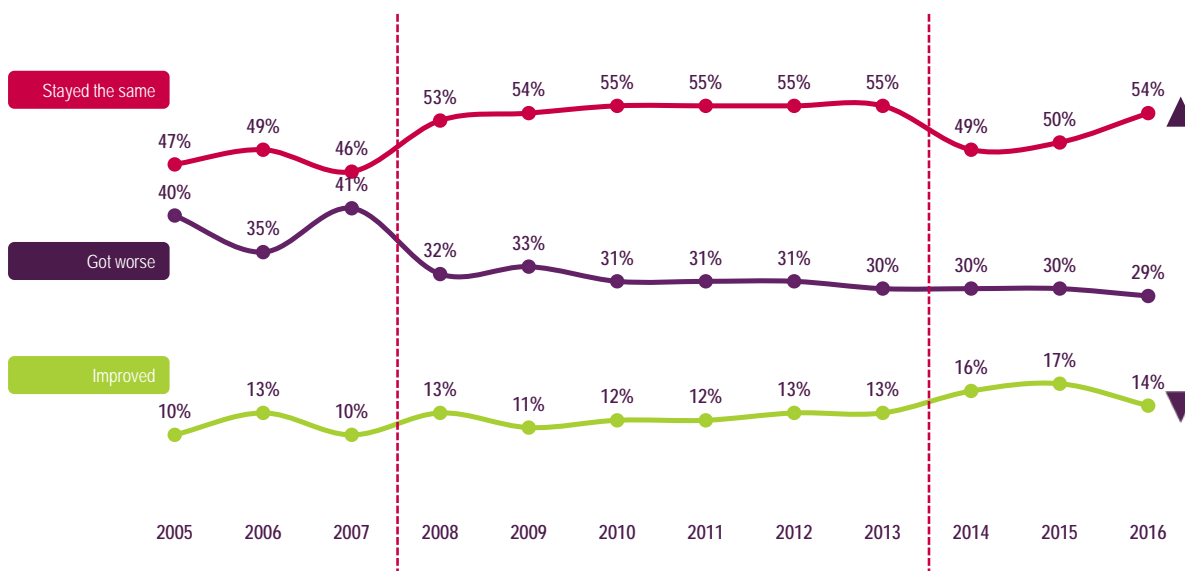
### 4.1 Quality of TV programmes

#### Opinions towards the quality of television programmes have largely remained unchanged since 2008

When looking at longitudinal trends, opinions towards the quality of programming standards among UK adults have broadly stayed the same since 2008. In terms of 2016 data, when asked whether TV programmes had improved, stayed the same or got worse over the past 12 months, more than half (54%) of adult viewers said they had ‘stayed the same’ (Figure 1).

Twice as many adults felt that programmes had ‘got worse’ (29%) as those who felt that programmes had ‘improved’ (14%). There have been some movements in opinions noted when comparing the data to 2015 with significantly more adult viewers saying that TV programmes had ‘stayed the same’ (54% vs. 50% in 2015) offset by fewer viewers saying that that TV programmes had ‘improved’ (14% vs. 17% in in 2015). The proportion stating that programmes had ‘got worse’ is unchanged since 2015 (29%).

**Figure 1: Opinion on the quality of programmes over the past 12 months (% adults with a TV)**



Q20 - Do you feel that over the past year television programmes have improved, got worse or stayed about the same? ‘Don't know’ responses not charted.

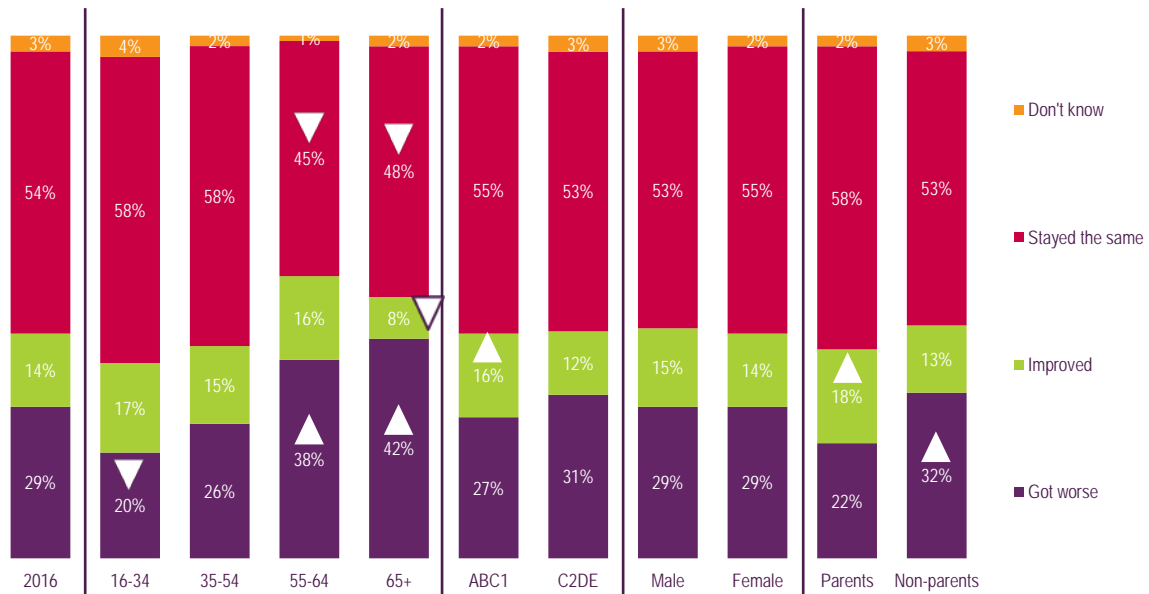
Base: All with any TV sets (2022); Prompted, single code. Base prior to 2014: all with TV, but excluding those never watching.

Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016. Dashed line to show where survey method changed.

As shown in Figure 2, adults aged 55 and over are more likely than all adults to say they feel that TV programmes had ‘got worse’ (38% for 55-64s and 42% for 65+ vs. 29%) as are non-parents (32% vs. 22% among parents).

Adults in ABC1 socio-economic groups are more likely to say that TV programmes had ‘improved’ compared to those in C2DE groups (16% vs. 12%) as are parents<sup>2</sup> compared to non-parents (18% vs. 13%).

**Figure 2: Opinion on the quality of programmes over the past 12 months (% adults with a TV) : 2016 sub-groups**



Q20 – Do you feel that over the past year television programmes have improved, got worse or stayed about the same?

Base: All with any TV sets in 2016 (2022); aged 16-34 (573); 35-54 (628); 55-64 (336); 65+ (485); ABC1 (1038); C2DE (983); Male (950); Female (1072); Parents (576); Non-parents (1446).

Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that any differences by parental status for any given measure are likely to mirror those seen by age, as parents are younger than non-parents.

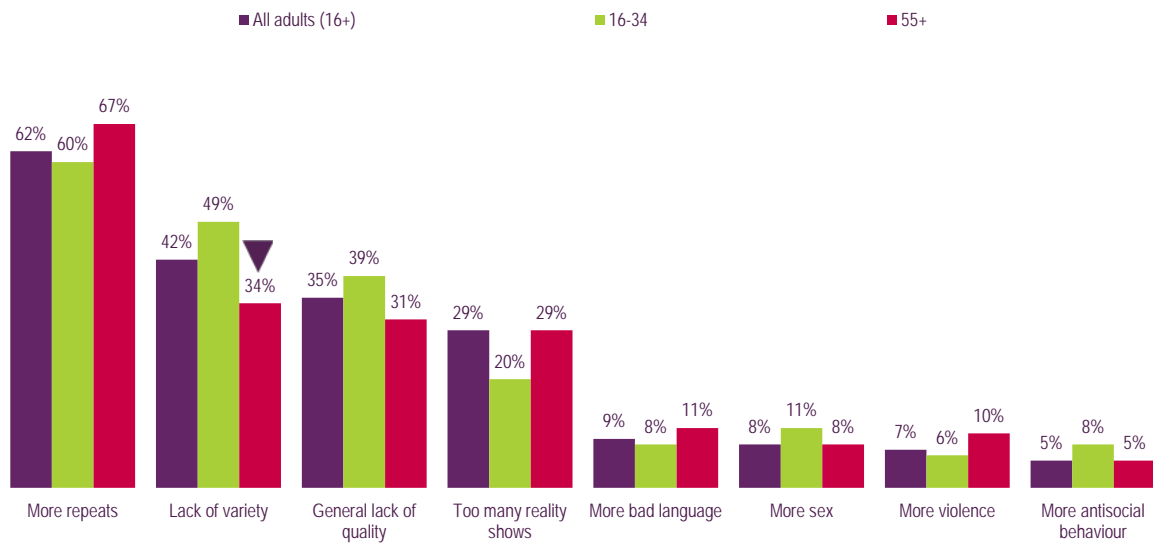


**Among those who think that TV programmes have got worse in the past year, the main reason is ‘more repeats’, followed by lack of variety and general lack of quality**

Among those who said programmes had got worse (29% of all UK adult viewers), the top four reasons given were ‘more repeats’ (62%), ‘lack of variety’ (42%), ‘general lack of quality’ (35%) and ‘too many reality shows’ (29%).

There was little variation in responses between the youngest (16-34) and the oldest (55+) adults who felt that programmes had got worse. However those aged 55 and over are less likely than all to say that programmes have got worse because of a ‘lack of variety’ (34% vs. 42%).

**Figure 3: Top reasons given for programmes getting worse in past 12 months**



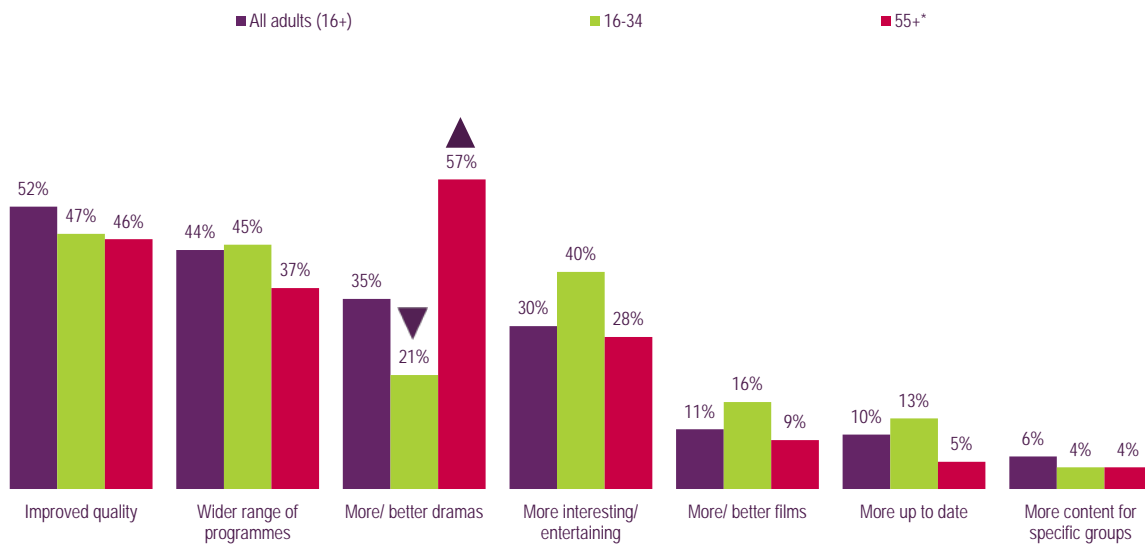
Q22 - In what ways do you think that the television programmes have got worse over the past year?  
 Base: All saying programmes ‘got worse’ over past year (634); 16-34 (121); 55+ (350). Unprompted, multicode.  
 Only top individual responses are charted. Significance testing shows any difference between either age group and all adults in 2016.

## Adults who think that TV programmes have improved over the past year say that this is mostly due to improved quality or a wider range of programmes

Among those who thought programmes had improved (14% of all UK adult viewers), the top four reasons given were: 'improved quality' (52%), 'wider range or programmes' (44%), 'more/ better dramas' (35%) and more interesting/ entertaining' (30%).

The reasons given for programmes having improved over the past 12 months are broadly consistent among the youngest and oldest adults (Figure 4). However, those aged 55+ are more likely to say it is due to more/ better dramas (57%) while 16-34s are less likely to say this (21%).

**Figure 4: Top reasons given for programmes having improved in past 12 months**



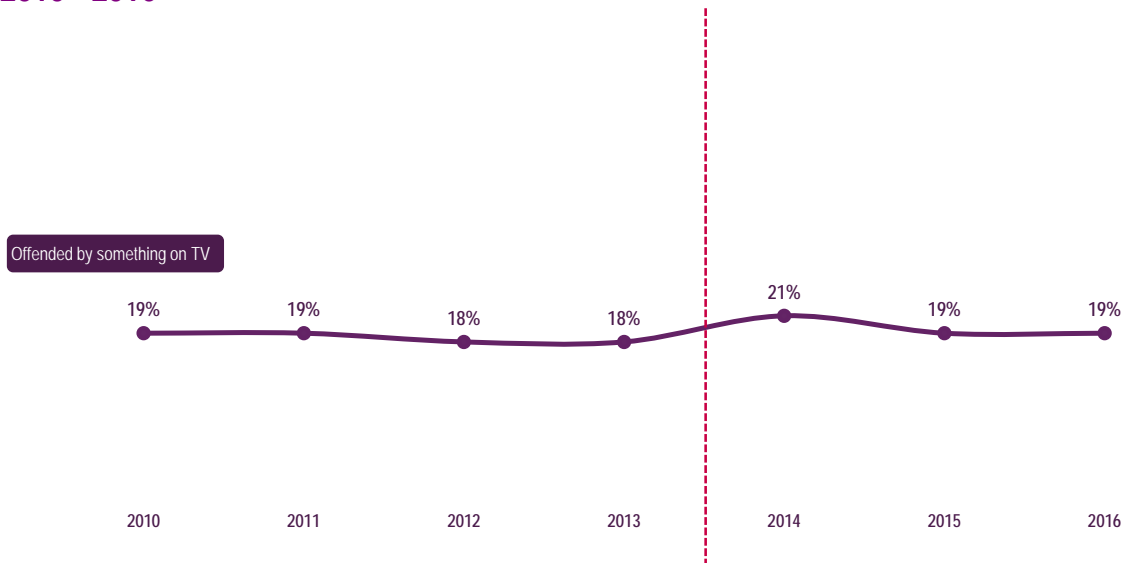
Q21 - In what ways do you think that the television programmes have improved over the past year?  
 Base: All saying programmes 'improved' over past year (274); 16-34 (104); 55+ (83). Unprompted, multicode. Only top individual responses are charted.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between either age group and all adults. \*Caution: base under 100, treat as indicative only

## 4.2 Levels of offence on TV

**A fifth of UK adults have been offended by something on television in the past year which is unchanged since 2010.**

As shown in Figure 5, one-fifth (19%) of adult viewers in the UK said they had personally found something on television offensive in the past 12 months. This figure is unchanged compared to 2015 and has largely been unchanged since 2010 (a different question was asked prior to 2010).

**Figure 5: Overall % of respondents who have been offended by something on TV: 2010 - 2016**



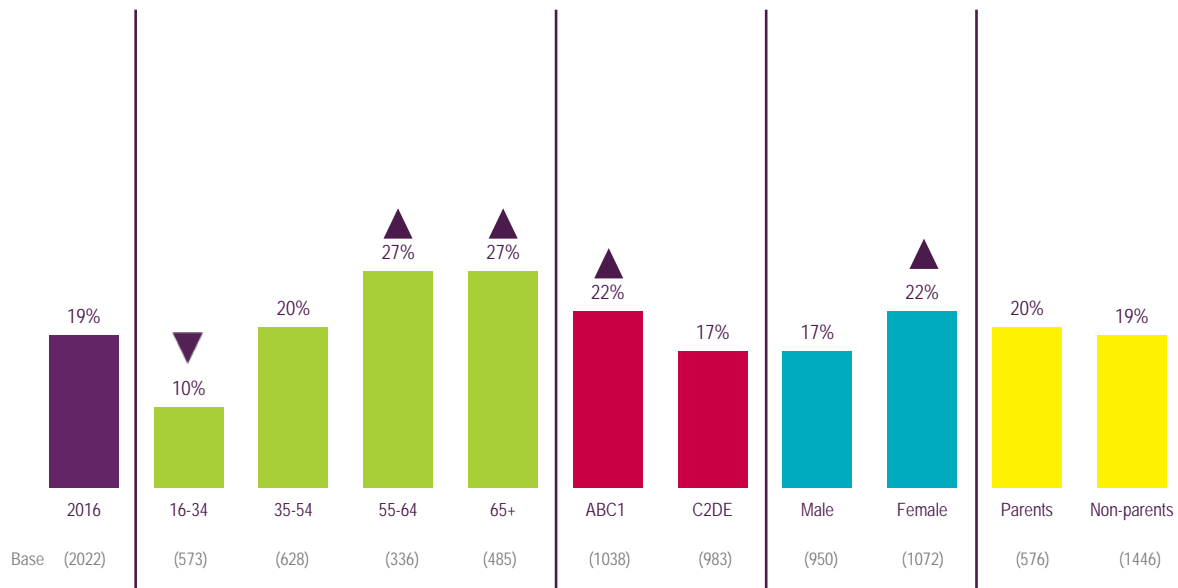
Q41 - In the past 12 months, have you personally found anything on television to be offensive?  
 Base: all with any TV sets (2022) in 2016. (Prompted, single code)./ Base pre 2014: All respondents.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016. Dashed line to show where survey method changed.

**Older viewers aged 55 and over are more likely to have been offended by something on TV.**

As shown in Figure 6, those aged 16-34 (10%) were the least likely to have been offended, while over-55s (27% for both 55-64s and for those aged 65+) were more likely than all viewers to be offended. More adults in the ABC1 socio-economic groups were offended (22%) than in the C2DE groups (17%), as were more women (22% vs. 17% for men).

While not shown in Figure 6, as a means of comparison, only 3% of radio listeners said they had heard something offensive on radio in the last 12 months; this is also unchanged compared to 2015.

**Figure 6: Overall percentage who have been offended by something on TV (% of adults with a TV)**



Q41 - In the past 12 months, have you personally found anything on television to be offensive?

Base: all with any TV sets (as indicated on chart). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016.

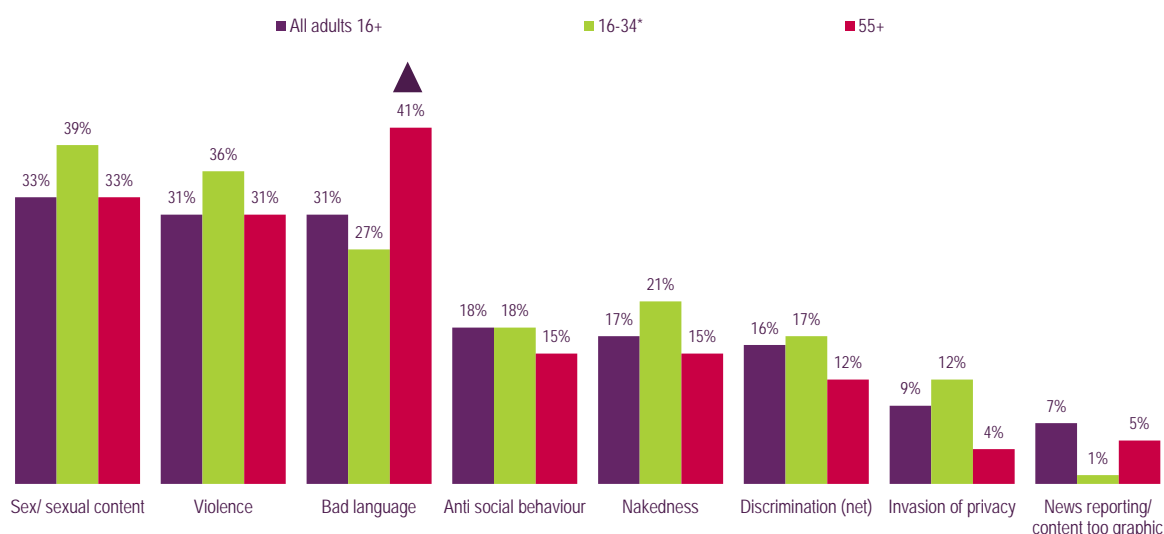
**The main types of offensive content on television are sexual content, violence and bad language.**

As shown in Figure 7, among those who had been offended by something on television (19% of all), three main types of content stand out: sex/ sexual content (33%), violence (31%) and bad language (31%). Whilst not shown in the figure, sexual content, violent content and bad language have been the main three drivers of offence over time (as reported in previous years).

Older adults (aged 55+) were more likely than all adults to say they had been offended by bad language (41% vs. 31%).

Although not shown in Figure 7, women are more likely than men to say they were offended by two types of material: sex/ sexual content (42% vs. 20%) and nakedness (21% vs. 11%). Men were more likely than women to say that the content that offended them was news reporting or news content that was too graphic (10% vs. 5%).

**Figure 7: Type of material which offended**



Q42 - What kind of things offended you?

Base: All who said they'd seen something offensive in last 12 months (19% of adults with any TV sets) (391), 16-34 (56), 55+ (218). Unprompted, multicode. Top reasons charted (over 5%).

Significance testing shows any difference between either age group and all adults. \*Caution Base under 100, treat as indicative only.

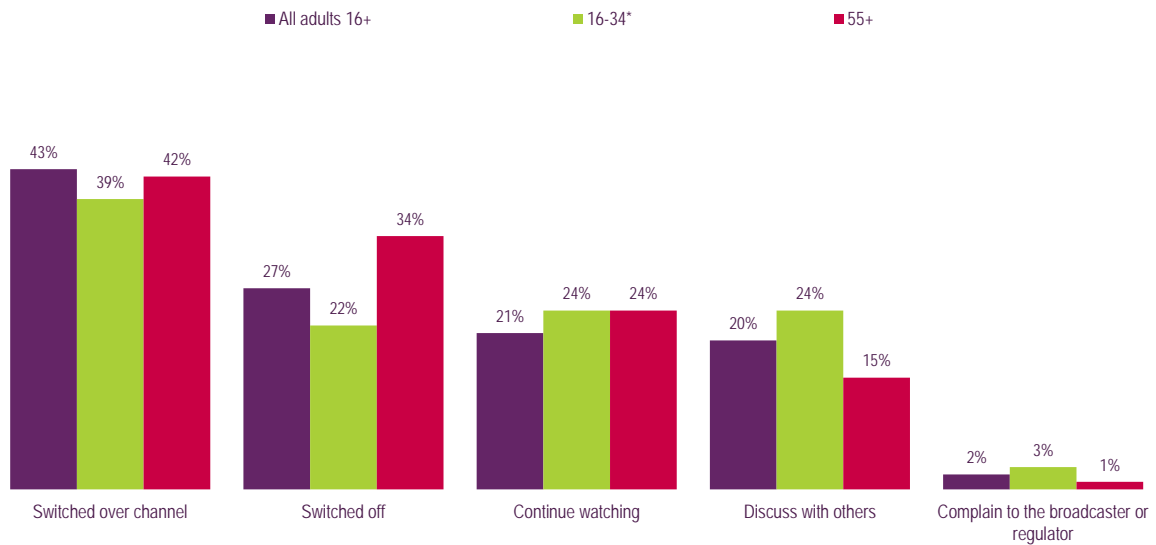
### Those offended by something on television are most likely to react by switching channels

As shown in Figure 8 below, there are no differences in each of these reactions to offensive content among those aged 16-34<sup>3</sup> or for those aged 55 and over, compared to all adults.

Just over two in five (43%) who had seen something offensive said they reacted by switching channels. In contrast, about a quarter (27%) reacted by switching off the TV completely. Similar proportions either continued watching (21%), or reacted by discussing it with others (20%).

<sup>3</sup> The base size for adults aged 16-34 is under 100 (56 interviews) so should be treated as indicative only

**Figure 8: Reaction following offence by something on television**

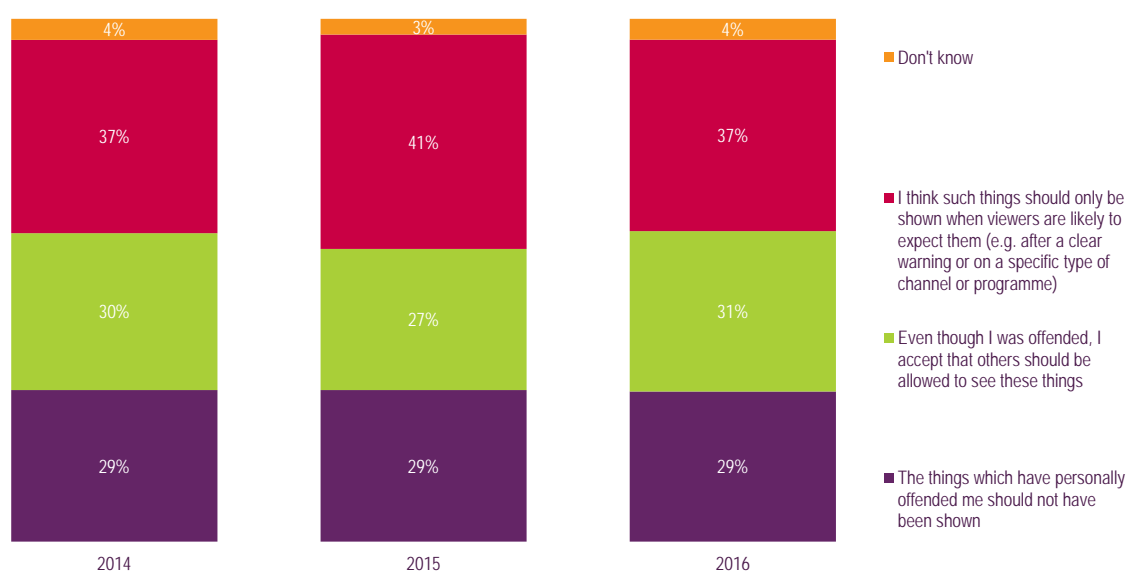


Q44 – How did you react when you were offended by what you saw on television? In other words, which, if any, of these things did you do?  
 Base: All who said they'd seen something offensive in last 12 months (19% of adults with any TV sets) (391); 16-34 (56); 55+ (218). Unprompted, multicode.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between either age group and all adults. \*Caution: Base under 100, treat as indicative only.

In 2016, among those who had been personally offended, just under four in ten (37%) agreed with the statement “I think such things should only be shown when viewers are likely to expect them (e.g. after a clear warning or on a specific type of channel or programme)”. Around three in ten (29%) agreed instead with the statement: “The things which have personally offended me should not be shown”, while a similar number (31%) accepted that: “others should be allowed to see these things”. (Figure 9).

Each of the measures is unchanged compared to 2014 and 2015.

**Figure 9: Attitudes towards offensive material: 2014 -2016**



Q45 – Which of these statements best describes your attitude towards the things which have offended you on TV in the last 12 months?

Base: All who said they'd seen something offensive in the last 12 months (19% of adults with any TV sets) 2014 (421); 2015 (398); 2016 (391). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016

### 4.3 Attitudes towards sex, violence, swearing and harmful content on TV

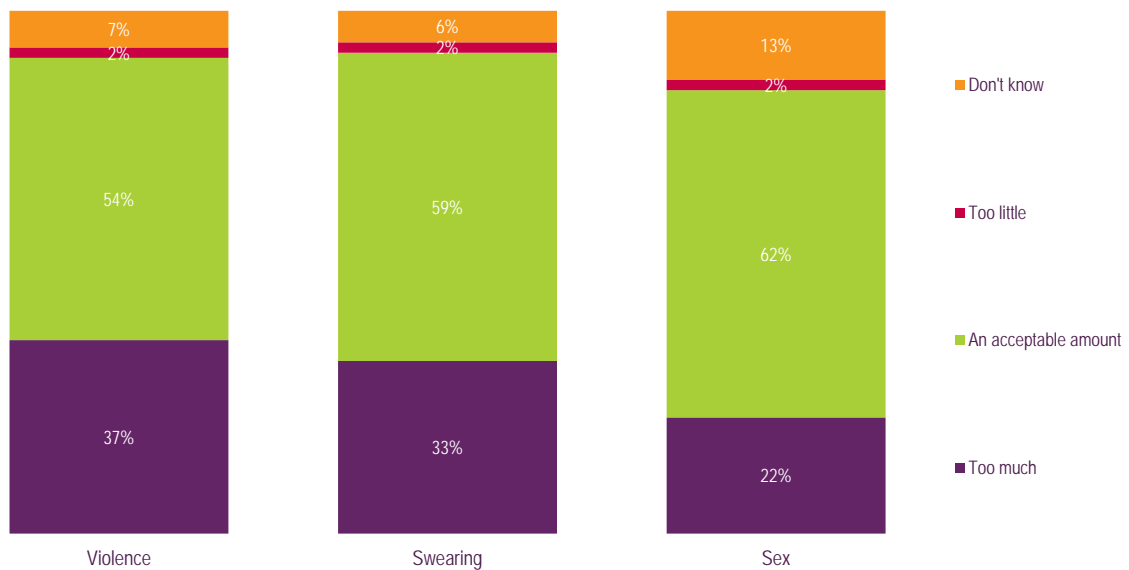
**At least one in three adults think there is too much violence and swearing on television; one fifth say there is too much sex**

Most adults felt there was ‘an acceptable amount’ of sex (62%), swearing (59%) or violence (54%) on television. Very few felt that there was ‘too little’ of each type of content (2% for each).

As shown in Figure 10 close to four in ten adult viewers felt there was ‘too much’ violence (37%), while one in three felt there was ‘too much’ swearing (33%) on television, and one in five (22%) ‘too much’ sex.

While not shown in Figure 10, fewer adults than in 2015 said that there was ‘too much’ violence (37% vs. 41% in 2015), swearing (33% vs. 38%), or sex (22% vs. 25%) on television. While a change was made to the answer options available at these questions back in 2014, the longer term trend dating back to 2001 shows a decline in the opinion that there is ‘too much’ sex, violence and swearing on television - of at least twenty percentage points. For example, in 2001 62% of adults felt there was ‘too much’ violence (37% in 2016), 54% felt there was ‘too much’ swearing on television (33% in 2016) and 44% felt there was ‘too much’ sex on television (22% in 2016).

**Figure 10: Opinion on the amount of sex/ violence/ swearing on TV: 2016**



Q46 – Do you think, in general, that there is too much, too little or an acceptable amount of each of the following on television? Sex? Violence? Swearing?

Base: All with any TV sets in 2016 (2022). Prompted, single code.



As shown in Figure 11 below, attitudes towards the amount of sex, violence and swearing on television in 2016 differ by age. Compared to all adults, older adults (over-55s) were more likely to feel there was 'too much' of each of these types of content, and younger adults (aged 16-34) were less likely to feel there was 'too much'.

Women were more likely than men to feel there was 'too much' of each of violence (44% vs. 30%), swearing (36% vs. 29%) and sex (28% vs. 16%) on television.

**Figure 11: Overall % of adult viewers stating there is 'too much' violence, sex and swearing on TV (% of adults with a TV)**



Q46 - Do you think, in general, that there is too much, too little or an acceptable amount of each of the following on television: Sex? Violence? Swearing?

Base: All with any TV sets (2066); 16-34 (573); 55+ (821). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between either age group and all adults.

Section 5

# Awareness of regulation

This section provides a summary of the findings relating to the protection of children and the watershed. It also addresses issues surrounding awareness of and attitudes towards media regulation

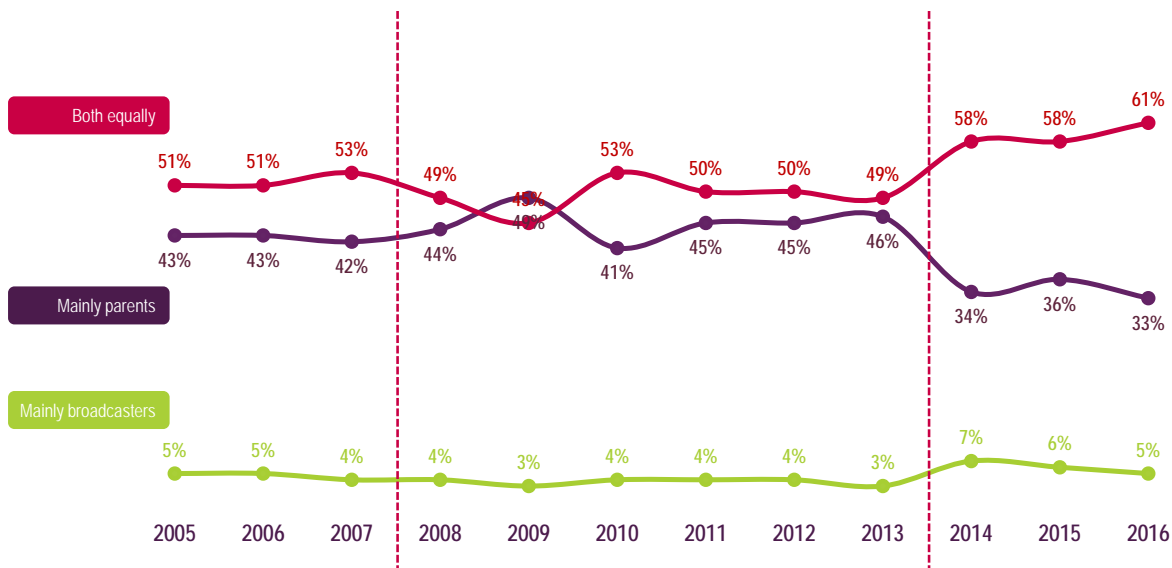
## 5.1 Protection of children and the TV watershed

### The majority of adults believe parents and broadcasters are equally responsible for ensuring that children are protected from unsuitable television content

Six in ten (61%) of adult viewers felt it was equally the responsibility of broadcasters and parents to make sure that children did not see unsuitable programmes. A third (33%) felt it was mainly parents' responsibility, and 5% felt it was mainly the broadcasters' responsibility. Each of these measures is unchanged since 2015.

As shown in Figure 12, the longer term trend since 2005 shows a shift away from feeling that it is mainly the responsibility of parents in favour of it being the joint responsibility of parents and broadcasters.

**Figure 12: Opinion on whose responsibility it is to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming (% of adults with a TV): 2005-2016**



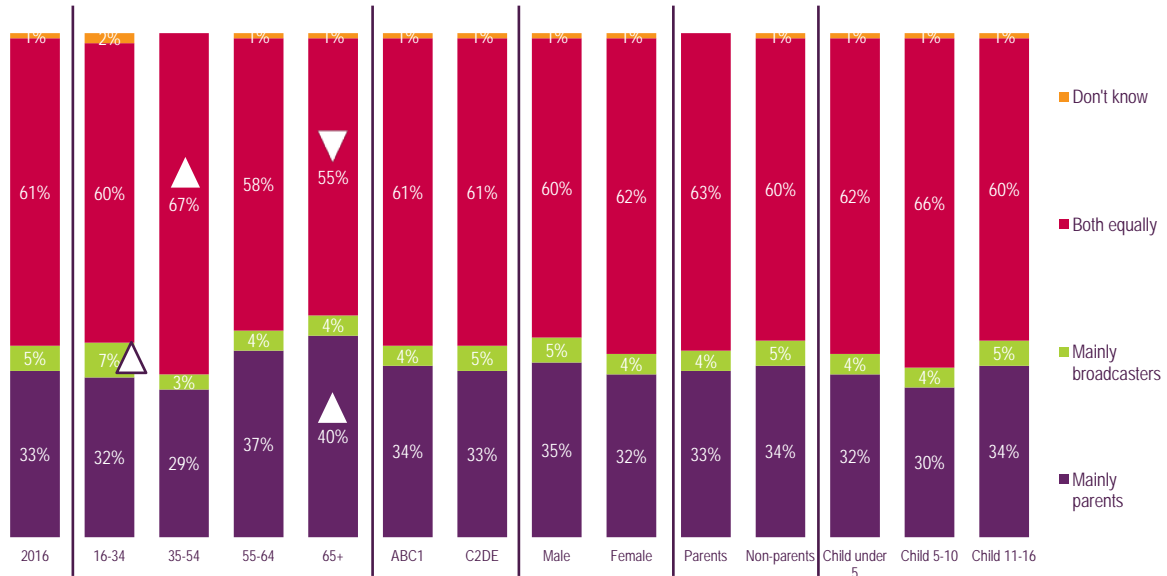
Q37 - Do you think it is mainly the responsibility of the parents, the broadcasters, or both equally, to make sure that children don't see unsuitable programmes?

Base: all with any TV sets (2022). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016. Base pre-2014: All respondents. Dashed line shows where survey method changed.

As shown in Figure 13, where views differ as to whose responsibility it is to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming in 2016, this is attributable to the age of the respondent: Younger respondents (aged 16-34) are more likely than all adults to feel the responsibilities lie mainly with broadcasters (7% vs. 5% for all) while older respondents (aged 65+) are more likely to feel it is mainly the responsibility of parents (40% vs. 33%). Significantly more of 35-54s (67%) than overall (61%) feel the responsibility should be shared equally between broadcasters and parents.

**Figure 13: Opinion on whose responsibility it is to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming (% of adults with a TV): 2016 sub-groups**



Q37 - Do you think it is mainly the responsibility of the parents, the broadcasters, or both equally, to make sure that children don't see unsuitable programmes?

Base: All with any TV sets in 2016 (2022); aged 16-34 (573); 35-54 (628); 55-64 (336); 65+ (485); ABC1 (1038); C2DE (983); Male (950); Female (1072); Parents (576); Non-parents (1446); Parents of child aged under 5 (272); aged 5-10 (321); aged 11-16 (276). Prompted, single code.

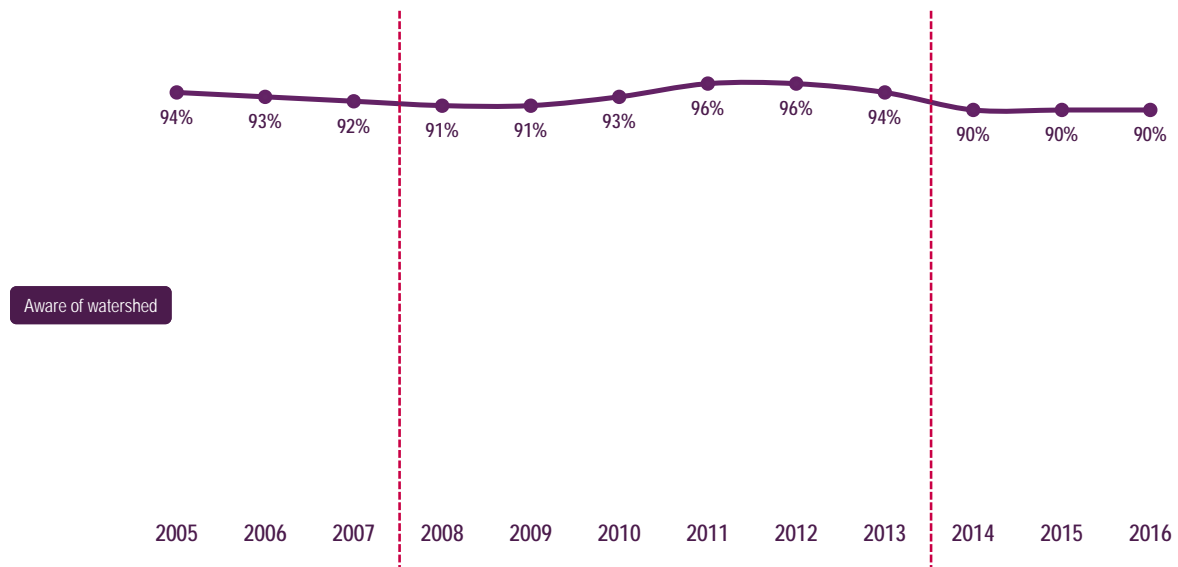
Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender, between parents and non-parents, between parents of any age group and all adults in 2016

## Awareness of the 9pm watershed remains high among UK adults – with little variation over time

As shown in Figure 14, nine in ten (90%) adult viewers were aware that broadcasters must not show television programmes that are unsuitable for children until after a certain time in the evening. This figure is unchanged since 2015, with awareness of the watershed at a consistently high level since 2005.

When given the chance to choose a time at which TV channels *should* be allowed to broadcast programmes that may be unsuitable for children, two in three of adult TV viewers said “about 9pm” (68%) which is higher compared to 2015 (60%).

**Figure 14: Awareness of the TV watershed (% of adults with a TV): 2005 - 2016**

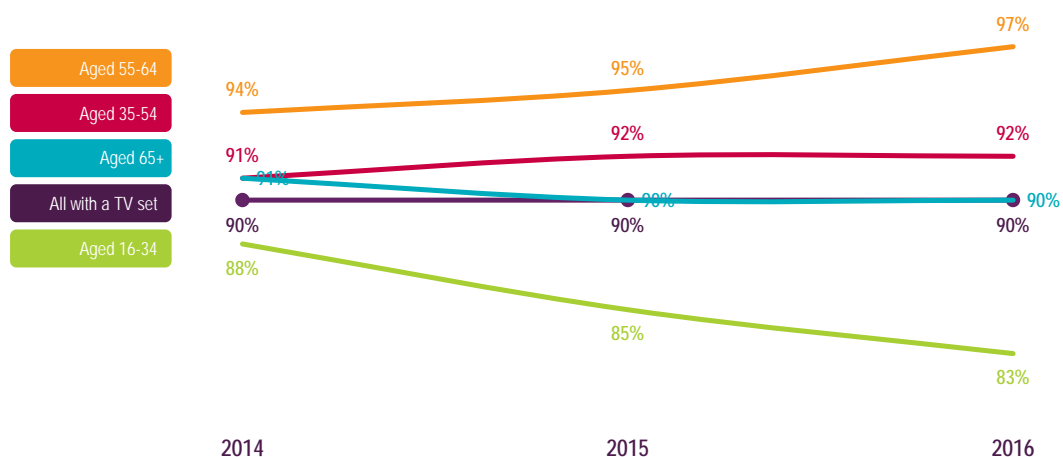


Intro to question: Broadcasters are required to only show television programmes which are not suitable for children only after a certain time in the evening. Q38 - Before today, were you aware of this?  
 Base: All with any TV sets (2022) Prompted, single code.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016. Base pre 2014: All with TV, but excluding those never watching. Dashed line to show where survey method changed.

In 2016, awareness of the watershed is high among all demographic groups with little variation in this incidence by gender, socio-economic group, parental status, or by age of child in the household. Compared to all adults (90%), those aged 16-34 are less likely to be aware of the watershed (83%) with awareness near universal among 55-64s (97%).

As shown in Figure 15, compared to 2015, there has been no change in the awareness of the watershed by age. Since 2014, however, 16-34s are less likely to be aware of the watershed (83% vs. 88% in 2014).

**Figure 15: Watershed awareness: 2014-2016, by age**



Intro to question: Broadcasters are required to only show television programmes which are not suitable for children only after a certain time in the evening. Q38 - Before today, were you aware of this?

Base: All with any TV sets (2,022). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016.

## 5.2 Awareness of broadcast media regulation

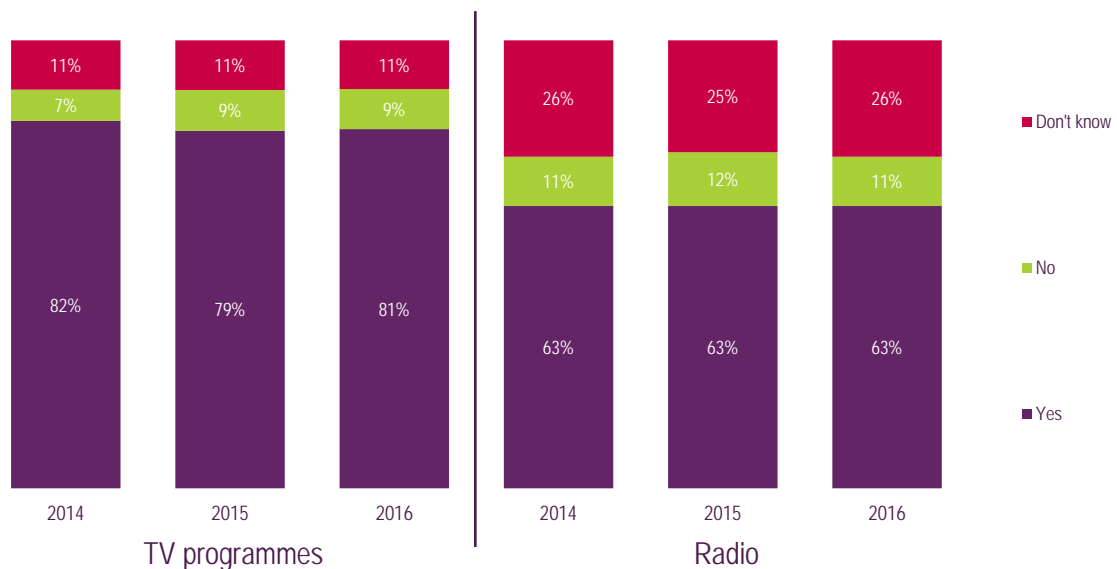
### Awareness that broadcast media are regulated remains high among UK adults

Eight in ten (81%) UK adults believe that TV programmes are regulated, with rules and guidelines about what can and can't be shown, while fewer UK adults - around six in ten (63%) - believe that radio is regulated (Figure 16). Awareness of either type of broadcast regulation is unchanged since 2015.

In 2016, compared to all adults, awareness of both television and radio regulation is higher among 35-54s and 55-64s and lower for 16-34s. Awareness of both types of broadcast regulation is also higher for men (compared to women) and among those in ABC1 households (compared to C2DEs).

Two in five adults name Ofcom as the regulator for television (40%) and for radio (39%), and these incidences are both unchanged since 2015.

**Figure 16: Whether broadcast media are currently regulated (% of all adults)**



Q30/ Q34 – As far as you know, are TV programmes regulated? As far as you know, is the radio regulated in terms of what can be broadcast? (When needed note was used to define – “By regulation I mean rules or guidelines about what can and can't be shown/ broadcast”)

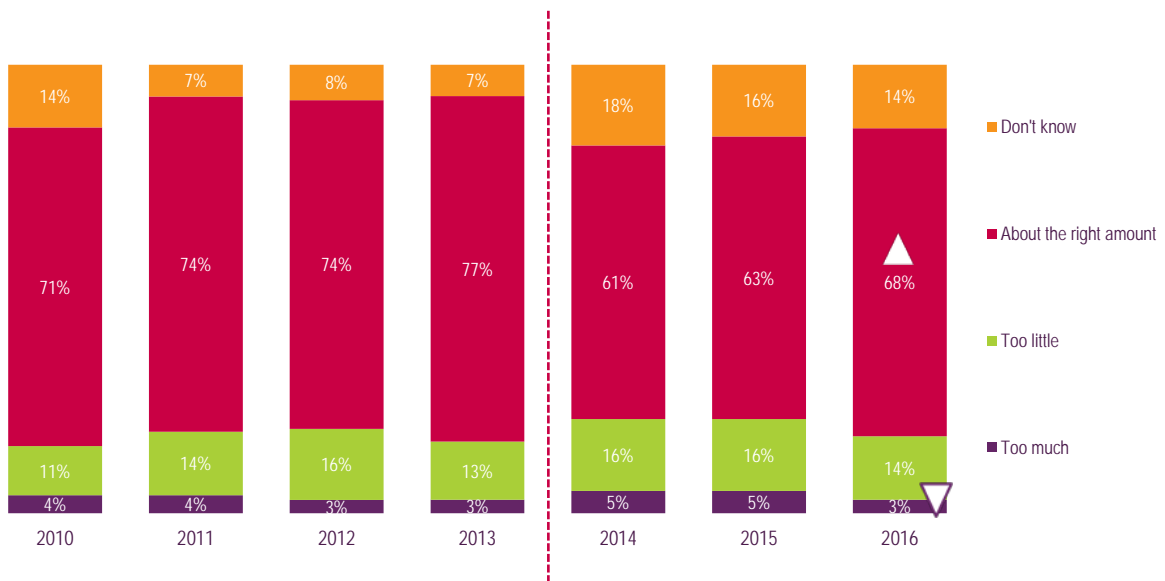
Base: All respondents 2014 (2074); 2015 (2107); 2016 (2069). Prompted, single code. Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016

## Adults are more likely to say that there is the right amount of regulation on TV compared to 2015

In 2016, two thirds of adults (68%) said they felt that there was ‘about the right amount’ of TV regulation, which is higher compared to 2015 (63%). One in seven (14%) felt there was ‘too little’ regulation, unchanged from 2015, with a similar proportion who were unsure (14%). Less than one in twenty (3%) felt there was ‘too much’ regulation, which is less likely than in 2015 (5%). (Figure 17).

In the last 5 years (since 2011) there appears to be a shift away from adults saying there is ‘about the right amount’ of regulation, towards them being unsure.

**Figure 17: Opinion of current levels of TV programme regulation: 2010-2016**



Q32A – Do you think the amount of regulation for TV programmes as a whole is too much, too little or about the right amount?

Base: All respondents 2014 (2074); 2015 (2107); 2016 (2069). Prompted, single code.

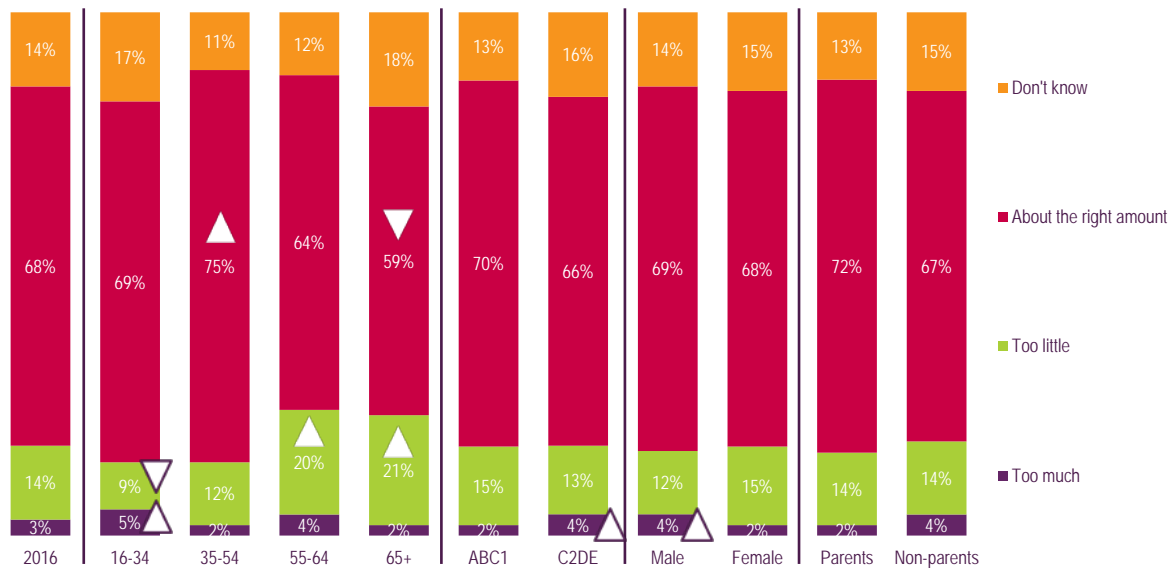
Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016. Dashed line shows where survey method changed.

As shown in Figure 18 below, the majority of adults (68%) feel there is ‘about the right amount’ of regulation on TV, one in seven (14%) feel there is ‘too little’ regulation and only three percent feel there is ‘too much’ regulation.

Three quarter of adults aged 35-54 say there is ‘about the right amount’ of regulation, which is more likely compared to all (75% vs. 68%). Older adults are more likely to say there is ‘too little’ regulation on TV (20% for 55-64 and 21% for those aged 65 and over vs. 14% for all).

The proportion who say there is ‘too much’ regulation is also low for each demographic group. In 2016 adults aged 16-34 are more likely than all adults to say there is ‘too much’ regulation on TV (5% vs. 3%). This view is also more prevalent among those in C2DE households (4% vs. 2% for ABC1s) and among men (4% vs. 2% for women).

**Figure 18: Opinion of current levels of TV programme regulation: 2016 sub-groups**



Q32A – Do you think the amount of regulation for TV programmes as a whole is too much, too little or about the right amount?  
 Base: All respondents 2016 (2069); aged 16-34 (596); 35-54 (640); 55-64 (342); 65+ (491); ABC1 (1063); C2DE (1005); Male (980); Female (1089); Parents (587); Non-parents (1482). Prompted, single code.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016



### Two thirds of adults also feel there is the right amount of regulation on radio

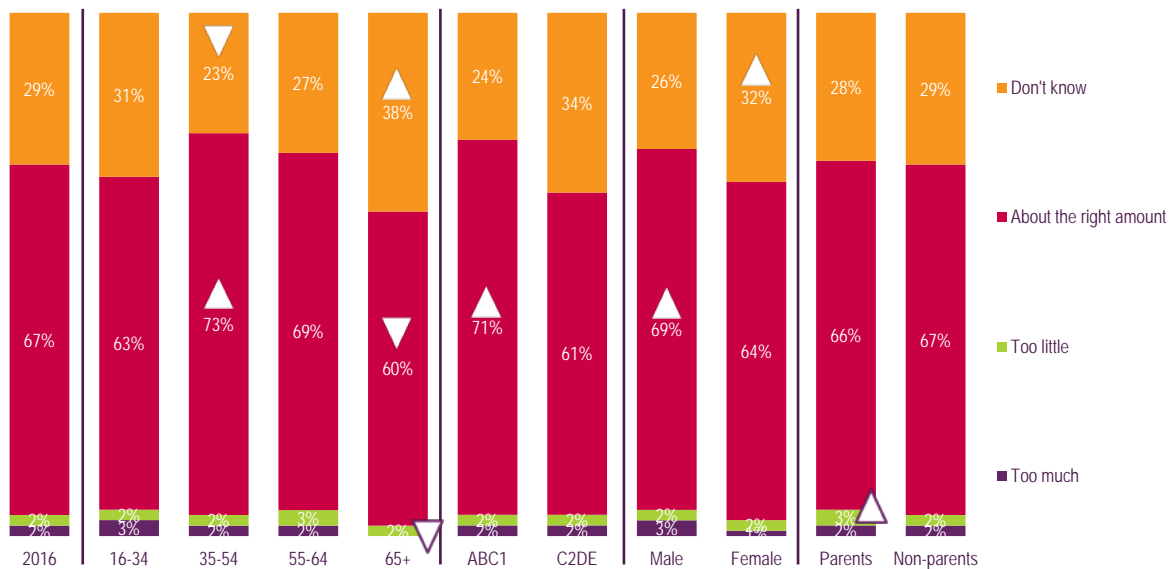
In 2016, two thirds of adults feel that there is ‘about the right amount’ of radio regulation (67%). Very few adults feel there is either ‘too much’ (2%) or ‘too little’ regulation on radio (2%).(Figure 19).

Compared to all, adults aged 35-54 are more likely to say there is ‘about the right amount’ of regulation (73% vs. 67%). This is also true for adults in ABC1 socio-economic group compared to C2DEs (71% vs. 61%) and for men compared to women (69% vs. 64%).

Adults aged 65 and over are more likely to say they are unsure (38% vs. 29%) and as such are less likely to say there is ‘about the right amount’ of regulation (60% vs. 67%) or that there is ‘too much’ regulation (0% vs. 2%).

As shown in Figure 19 below, the proportion who say there is ‘too little’ regulation is low for each demographic group.

**Figure 19: Opinion of current levels of radio regulation: 2016 sub-groups**



Q36 – Now thinking about radio as a whole, do you think the amount of regulation is too much, too little, or about the right amount?

Base: All respondents in 2016 (2069); aged 16-34 (596); 35-54 (640); 55-64 (342); 65+ (491); ABC1 (1063); C2DE (1005); Male (980); Female (1089); Parents (587); Non-parents (1482). Prompted, single code.

Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016

## Section 6

# Attitudes towards advertising and other commercial activities

This section provides a summary of the findings relating to awareness of and attitudes towards television advertising and other commercial activities such as sponsorships, product placements and promotions. It examines viewers' opinions of the frequency of television advertising as well as their concerns about advertising.

## 6.1 TV advertising, sponsorship, product placement and promotions

### Only a minority of adults recognise the 'P' symbol to indicate product placement

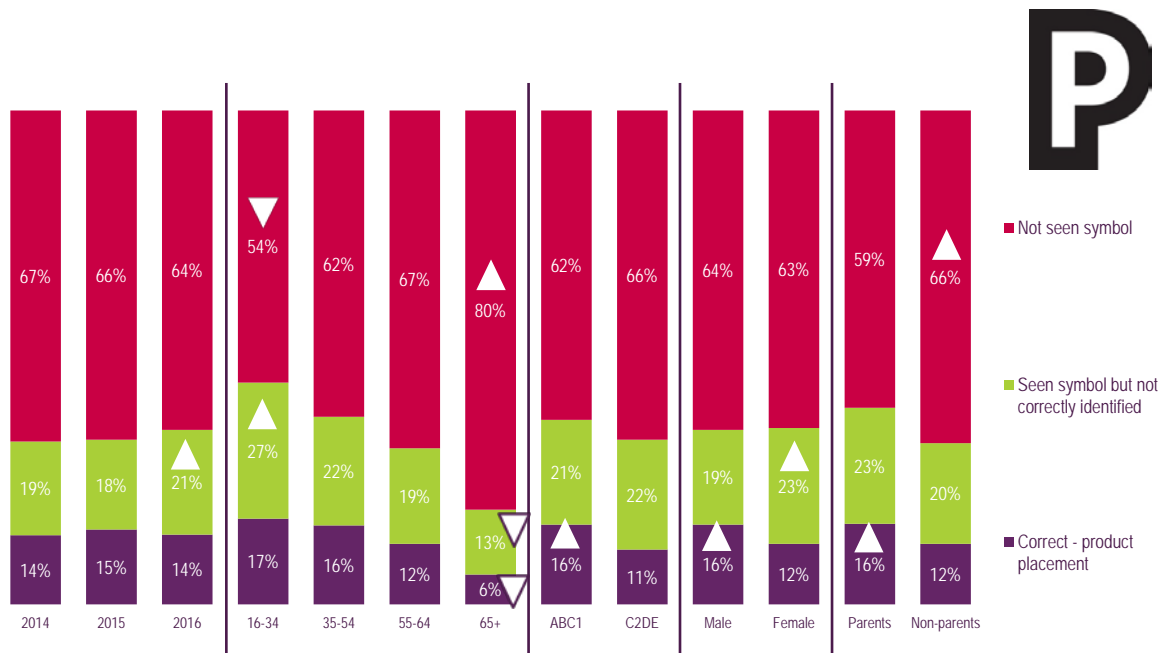
Adult viewers were shown the 'P' symbol (see Figure 20), designed to let viewers know that an Ofcom-licensed TV channel, or the programme-maker, has been paid to show products in that programme (i.e. product placement). They were then asked if they had ever noticed the symbol at the beginning or end of a TV programme, or following an advertising break. Those saying "yes" were asked if they knew – without any prompting – what the symbol meant.

Among adult viewers, more than three in five (64%) said they had not seen the 'P' symbol, (consistent with the findings in 2015). This response was more likely among over-65s (80%), and did not vary by gender or socio-economic group.

A further one-fifth of adult viewers (21%) said they had seen the symbol, but could not correctly identify what it was used for, an increase compared to 2015 (18%). In 2016, this response was more likely among adults aged 16-34 (27%), and among women (23% vs. 19% for men).

In total, 14% of adult TV viewers correctly identified that the symbol was used to indicate product placement in the TV programme. ABC1 adults were more likely to identify the symbol compared to C2DE adults (16% vs. 11%) as were men, compared to women (16% vs. 12%). Parents were also more likely than non-parents to identify the symbol (16% vs. 12%). Over-65s were less likely to correctly identify the symbol (6% vs. 14%).

**Figure 20: Awareness of product placement symbol (% of adults with a TV)**



Q23 – Have you ever noticed this symbol featured at the beginning or end of a TV programme, or following an advertising break? IF YES - Do you know what this symbol is used for?

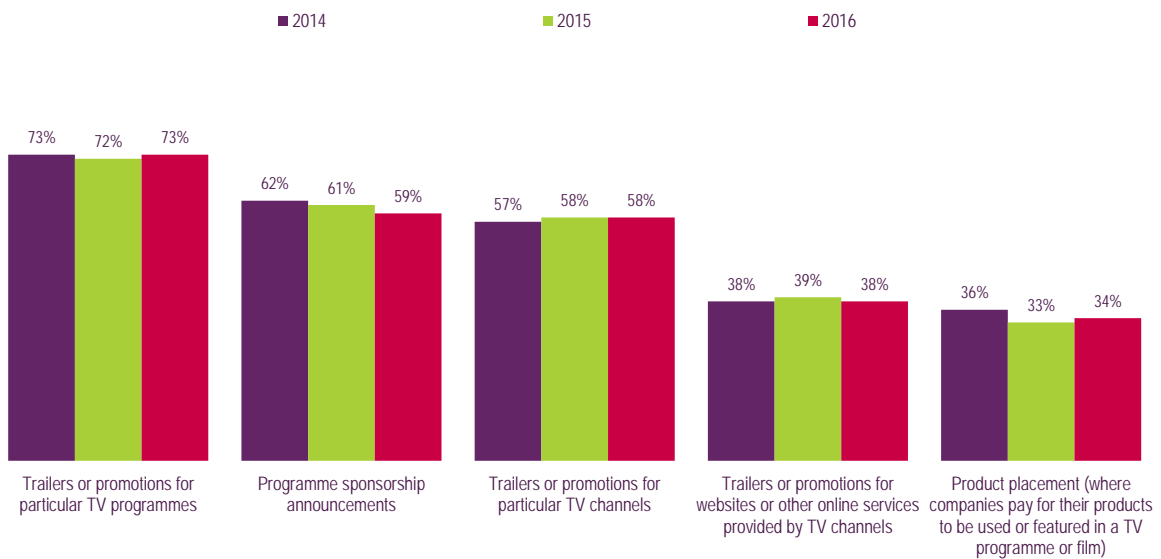
Base: All with any TV sets in 2014 (2016); 2015 (2052); 2016 (2022); aged 16-34 (573); 35-54 (628); 55-64 (336); 65+ (485); ABC1 (1038); C2DE (983); Male (950); Female (1072); Parents (576); Non-parents (1446). Prompted, single code. Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016 and between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016.

## Awareness of commercial messages are unchanged since 2015

Adult viewers were shown descriptions of different types of commercial messages on television, and were asked to say which they were aware of (Figure 21). There are no significant differences in awareness of each of the different types of commercial messages compared to 2015

More than half were aware of trailers or promotions for TV programmes (73%), programme sponsorship announcements (59%) and trailers or promotions for TV channels (58%). Less than half of adults were aware of trailers or promotions for TV channel websites or other online services (38%) or product placement (34%).

**Figure 21: Awareness of commercial messages (% of adults with a TV)**



Q24 - Which of the following, if any, are you aware of on television?

Base: all with any TV sets in 2014 (2016); 2015 (2052), 2016 (2022). Prompted, single code.

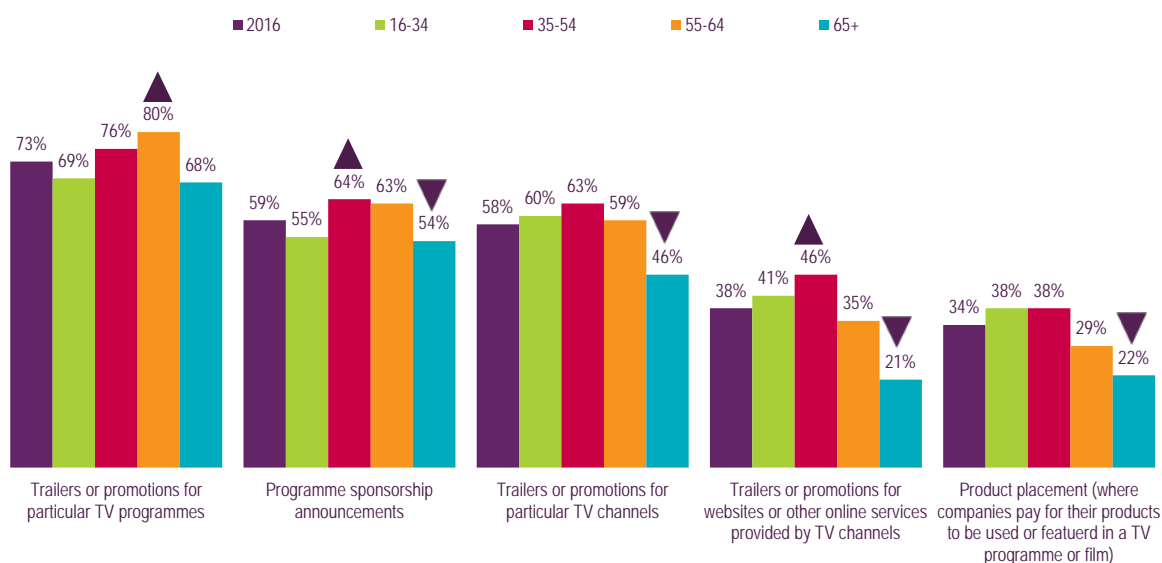
Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016.

As shown in Figure 22, awareness among 16-34s does not differ to that seen for all adults for each type of commercial message. Adults aged 35-54 are more likely to be aware of programme sponsorship announcements (64% vs. 59%) and trailers or promotions for TV channel websites or other online services (46% vs. 38%), while 55-64s have higher awareness of trailers or promotions for TV programmes (80% vs. 73%). Adults aged 65 and over are less likely than all adults to be aware of four of the five types of commercial message – the exception being trailers or promotions for TV programmes.

While not shown in Figure 22, adults in ABC1 households are more likely than those in C2DE households to be aware of each type of commercial message: trailers or promotions for TV programmes (77% vs. 68%), programme sponsorship announcements (64% vs. 54%), trailers or promotions for TV channels (62% vs. 53%), trailers or promotions for TV channel websites or other online services (43% vs. 32%) or product placement (40% vs. 27%). Men are also more likely than women to be aware of trailers or promotions for TV channel websites or other online services (43% vs. 34%) or product placement (37% vs. 31%).

The arrows indicate where differences are seen between any age group and all adults.

**Figure 22: Awareness of commercial messages (% of adults with a TV): 2016, by age**



Q24 - Which of the following, if any, are you aware of on television?

Base: all with any TV sets in 2016 (2022); aged 16-34 (573); 35-54 (628); 55-64 (336); 65+ (485). Prompted, multicode.

Significance testing shows any difference between any age group and all adults.

## 6.2 Frequency of television advertising

### More than half of all adults feel that the number of advertising breaks is already too high

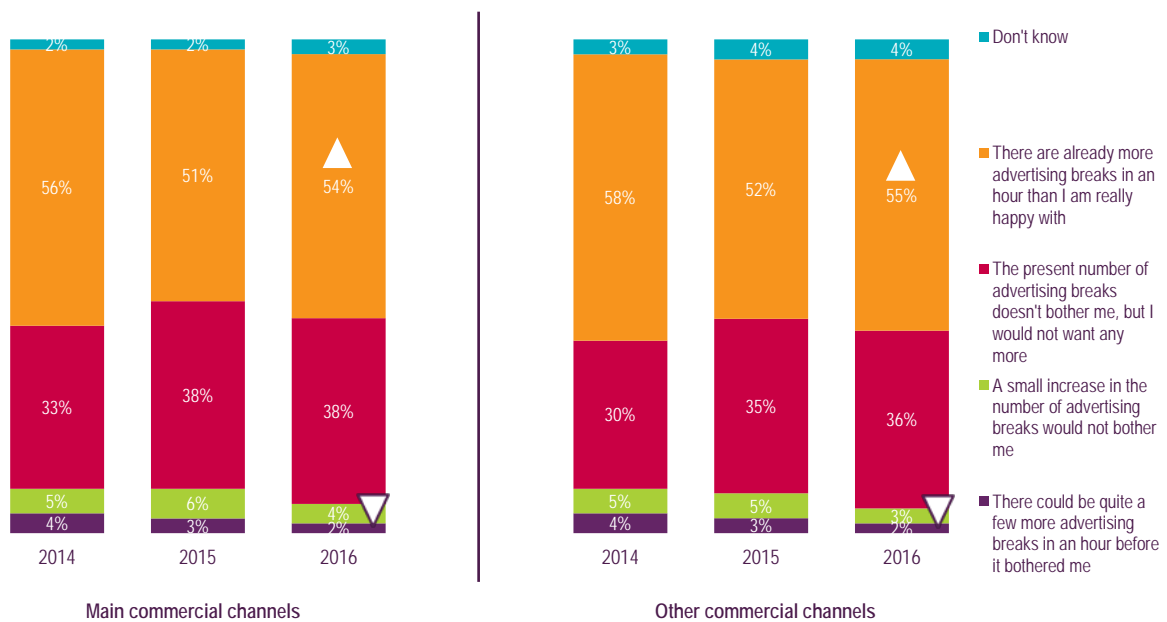
TV viewers were asked which of four statements best described how they felt about the frequency of advertising breaks on the main commercial free-to-air channels, as well as on the other commercial channels (Figure 23).

More than half of all TV viewers said there were already more advertising breaks in an hour than they were really happy with, both on the main commercial channels (54%) and on the other commercial channels (55%). Both of these responses were more likely compared to 2015 (up from 51% and 52% respectively), following a comparable decline between 2014 and 2015.

Around two in five said the present number of advertising breaks on the main commercial channels (38%) and on the other commercial channels (36%) did not bother them, but they would not want any more; both of these are unchanged since 2015.

Less than one in ten said either a small increase in the number of advertising would bother them on the main or on the other commercial channels (4% and 3% respectively) and both these responses are less likely compared to 2015.

**Figure 23: Opinion of frequency of advertising breaks (% of adults with a TV)**



Q26 / Q27– Which of these statements best describes how you feel about the frequency of advertising breaks on the main commercial free-to-air channels – that is ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5/ on the other commercial channels – all the other channels with adverts except for ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5?

Base: All with any TV sets in 2014 (2016); 2015 (2052); 2016(2022). Prompted, single code. Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016.

### 6.3 Concerns about television advertising

#### Concerns among viewers about TV advertising are lower compared to 2015

Adult television viewers were asked whether they had any concerns about advertising on TV. As shown in Figure 24, one in three adult viewers (35%) said they had any concerns about TV advertising, which is lower compared to 2015 (39%).

In 2016, compared to all viewers, those aged 16-34 are less likely to say they have concerns (25% vs. 35% for all) while those aged 55-64 (47%) or aged 65 and over (45%) are more likely to have concerns. Viewers in ABC1 households are more likely to have concerns than those in C2DE households (38% vs. 32%).

Viewers who had any concerns (35% of all) were then asked, without prompting what it was that concerned them about TV advertising. One in five viewers said they were concerned about 'too many advertising breaks' (21%) and around one in ten said they were concerned about 'advertising breaks that go on for too long' (9%). Less than one in twenty said they were concerned about 'inappropriate advertising before the watershed' (3%).

**Figure 24: Concerns about advertising on TV: 2014-2016 and by sub-groups in 2016**



Q25 – Do you have any concerns about advertising on television? IF YES – What do you have concerns about?  
 Base: All with any TV sets (as indicated on chart). Unprompted, multicode.  
 Significance testing shows any difference between 2015 and 2016, between any age group and all adults in 2016, between socio-economic groups, by gender and between parents and non-parents in 2016