



# Access Services Audio Description: Research into awareness levels

Research Document

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## Section 1

# Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2004, Ofcom published its Code on Television Access Services, extending to some 70 channels' obligations to provide subtitles, signing and audio description (Television access services) on a gradually increasing proportion of their programmes<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 In 2006, Ofcom undertook the Access Service Review, which revealed a significant lack of awareness of audio description, both among the general UK population and the visually impaired community. Fewer than 40% of UK adults and 37% of the visually impaired community were aware of audio description services, compared with awareness levels of 90% for subtitling and 86% for signing services. The Review concluded audio description awareness levels needed to increase in order to confer the maximum benefit of this service to the visually impaired community<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.3 The Access Services Code places an obligation on broadcasters to *“demonstrate they are taking effective steps to publicise awareness of their television access services through other means, [other than through the electronic programming guide] including periodic on-air announcements and information in publications aimed at persons likely to benefit”*<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.4 To this end, Ofcom facilitated a substantial communications campaign involving 16 broadcasters and the RNIB, aimed at raising awareness of audio description services. The Audio Description Awareness Campaign consisted of promotional trails broadcast across the schedules of more than 70 channels over a 6 week period during February/March 2008, and was supported by a range of off-screen activity including continuity announcements and BBC local radio trails. The RNIB provided additional support for the campaign through press and radio advertisements, radio and print features, digital forums and direct mail.
- 1.5 Ofcom commissioned GfK NOP Media to conduct bespoke quantitative research to assess the impact of the broadcasters' campaign. The primary objective of the research was to test audio description awareness levels within both the UK population as a whole and more specifically the visually impaired community. Research was conducted before and after the campaign, to measure how successful the initiative had been in raising awareness.
- 1.6 The research was also designed to:
  - establish awareness levels of audio description within the visually impaired community;
  - investigate usage of audio description services, as well as other tools used to access television, within the visually impaired community;
  - understand media consumption among groups of visually impaired people, and identify any differences that might exist from the UK population as a whole;

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<sup>1</sup> Code on Television Access Services. See <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/ctas/>

<sup>2</sup> Television Access Services Review Statement. See <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/statement/>

<sup>3</sup> Code on Television Access Services, paragraph 33. See <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/ctas/>

- understand the needs and preferences of users and potential users; identifying barriers to use of audio description services, and measuring levels of satisfaction among current users.

This report details in full the findings of the research project.

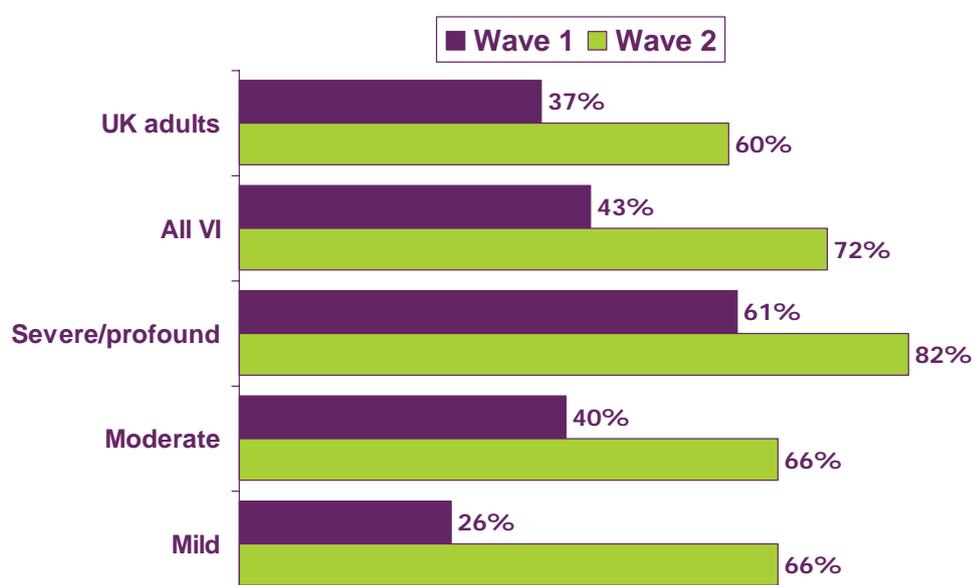
## Section 2

# Executive Summary

## Awareness of audio description services

- 2.1 The Audio Description Awareness Campaign was successful in raising awareness of audio description, among both the core target of the visually impaired community and the UK population as a whole.
- 2.2 Prior to the campaign 37% of the UK population and 43% of the visually impaired community were aware that audio description was available on some TV programmes<sup>4</sup>. Immediately following the campaign, 60% of UK adults were aware of this service. Awareness remained higher among people with all levels of visual impairment, with 72% of the visually impaired community aware of the service following the campaign.

**Figure 2.1 Awareness of audio description before and after campaign**



Q. Before today, were you aware that this feature was available on some TV programmes? Base: All UK adults (1008, 1018); All respondents with a visual impairment (280, 296); Severe/profound (101, 114); Moderate (75\*, 62\*); Mild (104, 120). \* = small sample size.

- 2.3 Those with a severe or profound visual impairment remained most likely to be aware of audio description; awareness among this group rose from 61% in the first wave of research conducted prior to the campaign, to 82% in the second wave of research conducted after.
- 2.4 The largest growth in awareness was among those with a mild visual impairment. 66% of people with a mild visual impairment are now aware of audio description; this

<sup>4</sup> Ofcom's Access Services Review, conducted in 2006, found that 40% of UK adults and 37% of the visually impaired community were aware of audio description services. Results from the first wave of the Audio Description Awareness Research (shown in Figure 1.1 above) found that in January 2008, awareness of audio description among the visually impaired community stood at 43%, a slight increase on the previous research. The first wave of Audio Description Awareness Research also found that awareness within the UK population as a whole had fallen slightly since the previous research (from 40% to 37%). For full details of the previous research see *Provision of Access Services: Research Study* (<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/accessservs/provision.pdf>).

group is now as likely to be aware of audio description as those with a moderate visual impairment.

- 2.5 The research indicates that awareness is highest among visually impaired respondents who are registered as blind or severely sight impaired, or those who belong to an organisation for the visually impaired (93% and 90% of these groups respectively were aware following the campaign). This highlights the important role played by such organisations in raising awareness by providing information about audio description to the visually impaired community.
- 2.6 The campaign has clearly been successful in increasing awareness levels of audio description, however further efforts may be required as 28% of all visually impaired people remain unaware of the service. The research shows that 34% of people with a moderate or mild visual impairment have not heard of audio description, while 18% of those with a severe or profound visual impairment are not aware of a service that is designed to help them to enjoy television programmes and could be of potential benefit to them.

### **Recall of audio description promotions and resulting action taken**

- 2.7 32% of UK adults, 51% of all visually impaired people, and 66% of those with severe/profound visual impairments claimed to have seen or heard adverts about audio description during the period of the campaign.
- 2.8 The majority of those claiming to recall promotions about audio description said they had seen or heard them on TV. However, those with severe or profound visual impairments were more likely than average to claim to have heard the campaign on the radio.
- 2.9 Across the general UK population as well as the visually impaired community, nearly 9 out of 10 of those who claimed to have been aware of the audio description campaign said they found the advertising informative.
- 2.10 Overall 38% of visually impaired respondents who recalled seeing or hearing a promotion about audio description during the campaign took some form of action as a result. Among those with a severe or profound visual impairment this figure rose to 40%. The most common action taken as a result of seeing or hearing promotions was to tell a friend or family member about Audio Description, with 22% of visually impaired people who recalled seeing/hearing the promotions doing this. In addition, 11% of those who claimed to recall the promotions sought out further information elsewhere as a result, rising to 15% of those with a severe/profound visual impairment.

### **Current use of audio description**

- 2.11 Currently, use of audio description appears to be related to severity of visual impairment. 40% of respondents with a severe/profound visual impairment claim to use the service, compared with 11% of those with a moderate impairment. Among those with a mild visual impairment, only 2% claimed to use audio description to help them enjoy television programmes.
- 2.12 However, there is also a correlation between impairment and awareness of audio description; those with a severe/profound visual impairment are both more likely to use the service, and more likely to be aware of it. The first wave of research found that awareness levels prior to the campaign were lowest among those with a mild visual impairment, who are least likely to be using the service.

## Future use of Audio Description

- 2.13 The research indicated that there was room for further interest in, and usage of audio description, as interest in using audio description was found to be high among those who had been unaware of the service. 62% of this group claimed that they would be interested in using the service when it was described to them (27% were 'very interested' and 35% were 'fairly interested'). This suggests that uptake of audio description may increase if awareness continues to grow.
- 2.14 Among those who were unaware of audio description, females were more likely than males to express an interest in using the service. However, females with visual impairment are more likely to be older (aged 55+) and less likely than average to receive digital television, suggesting that some of this group do not currently have access to the service.
- 2.15 The research also found that some of the visually impaired people who became aware of audio description as a result of the campaign are not interested in using the service (see section 4.4 *Audio Description Usage: Future use of Audio Description*).
- 2.16 The research found that increasing the amount of audio described programming would be the main way of increasing usage among the visually impaired community, with between 27% and 28% of respondents in each wave of the research agreeing that this would encourage them to use audio description on TV programmes more often.
- 2.17 While the campaign has driven awareness, the research also indicated that there is a need for more information about how to access audio description to be communicated to the visually impaired community. Those saying that knowing how to access audio description would encourage their use of the service doubled, from 9% of visually impaired respondents in wave 1 to 18% of visually impaired respondents following the campaign.
- 2.18 The research also established that around 3 in 10 users of audio description (32% in wave 1; 29% in wave 2) didn't know which organisation(s) they would contact if they were unable to access audio description services on TV programmes, suggesting there is a need to provide further information about the service and how to access it.

## Attitudes towards audio description

- 2.19 The majority of visually impaired respondents who claimed to have used audio description feel that the overall standard of audio description services on TV is improving over time. While respondents had a number of suggestions for how the service could be improved further, the majority are satisfied with the current standard of audio description services available to them, and nearly all users of audio description feel that using the service improves their understanding and enjoyment of TV programmes.

## Conclusions

- 2.20 The Audio Description Awareness Campaign resulted in 72% of the visually impaired community and 60% of UK adults being aware of the service following the campaign, a significant increase in awareness. However, nearly 3 in 10 visually impaired people remain unaware of audio description.
- 2.21 While usage of audio description is currently related to severity of visual impairment as well as awareness, the research indicates that there is potential to increase usage of audio description across all visually impaired groups if levels of awareness

continue to rise. The research also identified that usage of audio description within the visually impaired community would also increase if more detailed information about the service was communicated to potential users.

## Section 3

# Background

## Background

- 3.1 Audio description (AD) is a service currently available on some television programming and comprises a separate audio track in which a narrator uses spaces in the original sound track of a programme to describe on-screen action, body language and facial expressions for the benefit of people with visual impairments. The narration is specifically produced for each programme, allowing those who have difficulties seeing the TV screen to hear what they cannot see on the screen. The service is available on all digital platforms; however, Freeview and Freesat viewers need to buy an AD enabled set top box or TV to access the service, as it is not currently available as standard in all boxes.
- 3.2 The 2003 Communications Act requires Ofcom to implement ten year quotas set by parliament for audio description, subtitling and sign language. These ‘access services’ are provided by TV channels that meet certain affordability and audience size criteria (81 channels in 2008). The maximum quota set for audio description is 10% of programming, compared with targets of 80% for subtitling and 5% for sign language.
- 3.3 When the Communications Act was framed, audio description was only provided on a few satellite channels, and on some digital terrestrial channels, but equipment to receive audio description on digital terrestrial channels was not available. By 2004, with encouragement from Ofcom, the number of services with audio description was set to increase significantly, and both cable and satellite providers had either made audio description available over their platforms, or were planning to do so. Moreover, set top boxes equipped to receive digital terrestrial channels with audio description had become available. As a result it was clear that many more people stood to benefit from audio description. With advice from its Advisory Committee on Older and Disabled People, Ofcom decided to accelerate progress towards the statutory target, so that it would be achieved in five years rather than ten. Ofcom also suggested that, as awareness and usage of audio description grew, there might be a case for recommending changes to the statutory target in due course.
- 3.4 Ofcom’s 2006 Access Service Review examined levels of awareness and take up for audio description. The research revealed a significant lack of awareness of audio description, both among the general UK population and the visually impaired community. Fewer than 40% of UK adults and 37% of the visually impaired community knew about audio description in 2005-6, compared with awareness levels of 90% for subtitling and 86% for signing.
- 3.5 Ofcom considered the main obstacle to wider adoption of audio description to be low awareness, and that usage of audio description would increase as awareness of the service grew.
- 3.6 The Access Services Code places an obligation on broadcasters to “*demonstrate they are taking effective steps to publicise awareness of their television access services through other means, [other than through the EPG] including periodic on-air announcements and information in publications aimed at persons likely to benefit*”.
- 3.7 Based on the need to increase awareness of audio description, Ofcom initiated a joint campaign with 16 of the broadcasters obliged to provide audio description services and the RNIB to promote awareness of audio description. Between 1<sup>st</sup>

February and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008, promotional trails were screened across more than 70 television channels to explain what audio description is and invite viewers to find out more about the service via a telephone helpline or website.

- 3.8 In addition to the TV promotions the campaign also included additional broadcast initiatives such as continuity announcements and visual cues, as well as off screen promotion including web activity and BBC local radio trails. The RNIB provided additional support through press and radio ads, radio and print features and direct mail.

## Objectives

- 3.9 At the end of 2007, Ofcom commissioned GfK NOP Media to conduct a piece of quantitative research to investigate, among other things:
- Awareness of audio description pre and post campaign.
  - Usage of audio description (and other tools used by the visually impaired to access TV).
  - Television consumption among visually impaired groups.
  - Attitudes towards audio description.
  - The impact of the broadcasters' information campaign on specific groups of visually impaired people and the UK population as a whole.
- 3.10 The research was conducted among a nationally representative sample of respondents, as well as a robust sample of visually impaired respondents, across a range of levels of visual impairment.
- 3.11 Two waves of research were conducted: the first wave took place in January 2008, prior to the Audio Description Awareness Campaign launch. The second wave was conducted following the campaign in March 2008. The research was structured in this way so that the results from wave 1 would provide a benchmark for levels of awareness of the service (which had changed slightly since Ofcom's 2006 Access Service Review<sup>5</sup>), and to provide a comparison for levels of awareness in wave 2, in order to measure possible growth in awareness following the campaign.

## Methodology

### Overview

- 3.12 The relatively low incidence of visual impairments within the UK population was the main challenge to overcome in designing the research, as it was important that the research could gather the views of robust samples of people with different levels of visual impairments, ranging from mild to profound. Within each wave of the research, a two-phase approach was adopted: interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of the UK population, and also with a separate sample of visually impaired respondents.

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<sup>5</sup> Ofcom's Access Services Review, conducted in 2006, found that fewer than 40% of UK adults and 37% of the visually impaired community were aware of audio description services. Results from the first wave of the Awareness Research found that in January 2008, awareness of audio description among the visually impaired community stood at 43%, a slight increase on the previous research.

## Phase 1: Nationally Representative Sample

- 3.13 Minute Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey among adults aged 18+ in the UK. Interviews were completed among a nationally representative sample in each wave (quotas were set and data has been weighted by gender, age and region within the UK to match the known population profile).

A total of 2026 interviews were completed:

Wave 1: 1,018 respondents between 9th-16th January 2008

Wave 2: 1,008 respondents between 15th-25th March 2008

## Phase 2: Visually Impaired Boost

- 3.14 5 minute CATI survey conducted with visually impaired respondents, who were pre-recruited and invited to take part by calling a Freephone number that linked to the interviewing centre.

A total of 576 interviews was conducted as follows<sup>6</sup>:

Wave 1 (9th – 31st January 2008)	Wave 2 (15th-30th March 2008)
280 Total	296 Total
101 Severe/Profound	114 Severe/Profound
75 Moderate	62 Moderate
104 Mild	120 Mild

## Recruitment of visually impaired respondents

- 3.15 An online screener questionnaire was sent to members of GfK's online panel of about 300,000 UK adults, which identified whether they or someone they knew (e.g. a friend/relative) had a visual impairment. Eligible contacts (those who were visually impaired themselves, or who had a friend/relative with a visual impairment) were then sent details of how to take part in the survey, including a Freephone number that they could call at their convenience<sup>7</sup>. Respondents who called in to take part in the survey were also asked to pass on details of the survey to visually impaired friends or relatives, so as to 'snowball' the sample. A £10 incentive was offered to all visually impaired respondents who called in to take part.
- 3.16 In addition, GfK NOP Media and Ofcom also liaised with several organisations and charities to identify and recruit eligible participants for the research. This was extremely useful in recruiting those with severe or profound visual impairments. However, efforts were made to ensure that the overall sample contained a mix of those who belonged to organisations for visually impaired people, and those who did not.
- 3.17 Respondents identified as having a visual impairment who had previously taken part in research for Ofcom<sup>8</sup>, and who had agreed to take part in further market research, were also invited to take part. In the second wave, a screener question was added to

<sup>6</sup> Respondents were grouped according to Ofcom's classification of visual impairments (see *Classification of visually impaired groups* overleaf).

<sup>7</sup> Respondents were instructed to call the Freephone number provided between 10am and 8pm, over a period of between 10 days and a fortnight in each wave of fieldwork. A voicemail service was set up so that respondents calling when the line was busy (or calling out of hours) could leave their details for an interviewer to call them back.

<sup>8</sup> This research was not associated with audio description.

the survey, in order to exclude any respondents who had previously taken part in the first wave of research or any other research about audio description that may have been taking place at the time.

- 3.18 Recruitment was monitored closely to ensure the sample included a spread of visually impaired adults aged 18-80, as well as to provide a sufficient sample among each level of visual impairment.
- 3.19 For more information on the demographics of visually impaired groups interviewed as part of this research and the differences between them, refer to Annex 1.

### Classification of visually impaired groups

3.20 In order to establish each individual's level of visual impairment, respondents were asked to choose the statement that best described their level of visual impairment from a list (ordered from profound to mild). The table below shows the list of statements, and the categories that respondents were grouped into on this basis:

<b>Which of these best describes your sight with glasses or contact lenses if you normally use them? Please imagine you are in a room with good lighting.</b>	
Totally blind / cannot see at all <sup>9</sup>	<b>Profound</b>
Cannot tell by the light where the windows are	
Cannot see the shapes of furniture in the room	<b>Severe</b>
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend if close to his or her face	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend if he or she is at arm's length	
Cannot see well enough to read a newspaper headline	<b>Moderate</b>
Cannot see well enough to read a large print book	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend across a room	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend across a road	<b>Mild</b>
Have difficulty seeing ordinary newspaper print	
Have difficulty seeing the buttons on the remote control	
Have difficulty seeing the picture on the TV screen	
Have difficulty seeing small details on screen	

### Sample structure

- 3.21 Efforts were made to ensure that the overall sample of visually impaired respondents in wave 2 would be as similar as possible to those interviewed in wave 1. However, given the methods used to recruit this low-incidence group, some differences in the sample wave-on-wave were to be expected.
- 3.22 In wave 2, a smaller proportion of respondents with a moderate visual impairment were interviewed. The overall sample of visually impaired respondents interviewed in each wave differed as follows:

	Wave 1	Wave 2
Severe/Profound	36%	39%
Moderate	27%	21%
Mild	37%	41%

3.23 In the absence of known statistics about the profile of the visually impaired population in the UK, wave 2 data was weighted to match the profile of wave 1 at the overall

<sup>9</sup> Statement added in Wave 2.

level (36% severe/profound, 27% moderate, and 37% mild) to ensure comparability between waves. Weighted data has been used when reporting on the total sample of respondents with a visual impairment in wave 2 throughout this report. However, when reporting on individual groups of visually impaired respondents in wave 2 (i.e. severe/profound, moderate, or mild) data has not been weighted.

- 3.24 The boost sample is not designed to be statistically representative of the UK's visually impaired population. Respondents who have severe/profound visual impairments have been purposefully over-sampled, so that sufficient interviews could be completed among each group to allow comparisons to be made between samples of different levels of visual impairment.

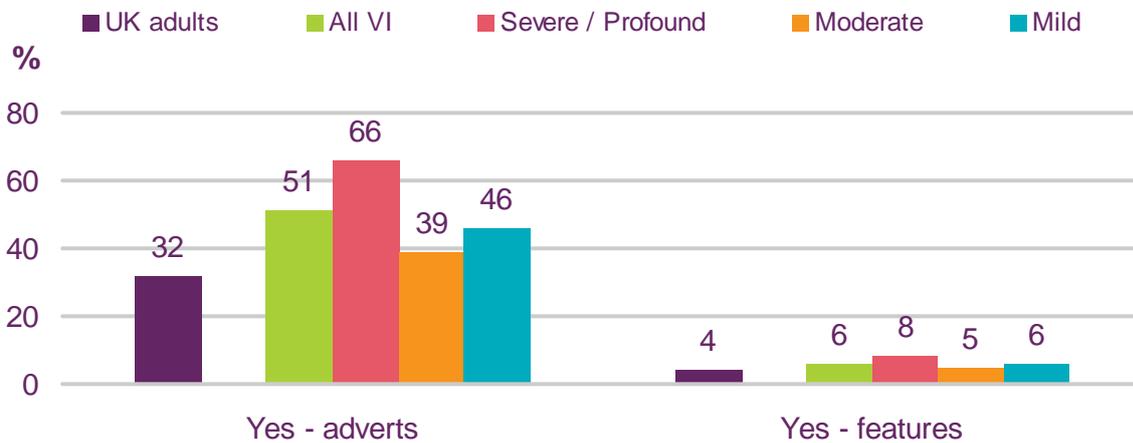
**Section 4**

# Audio Description Awareness

## Campaign Overview

- 4.1 Between 1<sup>st</sup> February and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008 a campaign promoting audio description awareness was conducted by an alliance of broadcasters and the RNIB and facilitated by Ofcom. Promotional trails were screened across more than 70 television channels over a 6 week period,
- 4.2 While each broadcaster produced their own audio description trail to fit their brand, the central message of all the promotions was designed to be the same. Trails were required to explain what audio description is, and provide viewers with ways to find out more about the service. Broadcasters were asked to provide both a helpline number and website address within the trail and were encouraged to feature the new audio description logo devised by the RNIB.
- 4.3 The campaign used the advertising measuring system of Television Ratings (TVRs) to determine the size of the campaign, the division of promotions across channels and to measure impacts achieved. The campaign was a medium to large scale initiative and had a TVR rating of 650. The number of trails each channel was required to provide was determined by the size of the audience, i.e. the larger the channel the more promotions they would have to show. The campaign was supported by a range of additional activity including continuity announcements and BBC local radio trails. The RNIB provided additional support for the campaign through press and radio advertisements, radio and print features and direct mail.

**Figure 4.1 Awareness of audio description promotions**



Q. In the past month, have you seen or heard any adverts or features about audio description? Base: All respondents in wave 2. All UK adults (1008); All VI (296); Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62\*); Mild (120). \* = small sample size.

- 4.4 After the campaign 32% of UK adults and 51% of people with a visual impairment claimed to recall seeing or hearing an advert about audio description within the past month. Among those with a severe or profound visual impairment, 66% said they remembered seeing or hearing an advert promoting audio description.
- 4.5 Recall of print articles and radio features about audio description was much lower, with 4% of UK adults and 6% of visually impaired people claiming to have seen or heard features about audio description within the past month. This reflects the fact that television promotions were the primary media used within the Audio Description

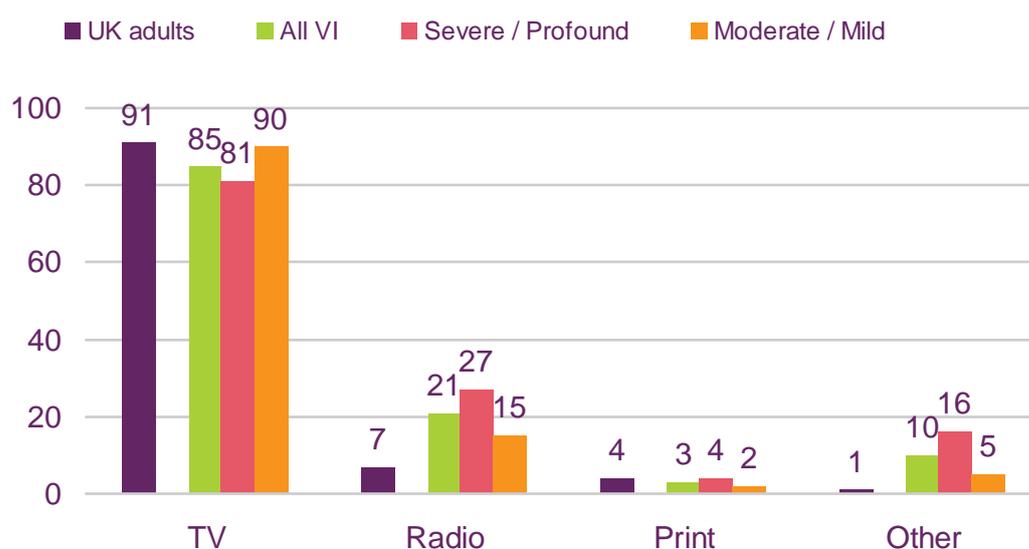
Awareness Campaign, with radio and print providing additional support. Those with a severe or profound visual impairment were slightly more likely to recall having seen or heard features, at 8%.

- 4.6 Among those who currently use audio description, 63% recalled seeing or hearing adverts or features about the service in the past month.

### Exposure to campaign

- 4.7 91% of UK adults who recalled seeing or hearing adverts or features about audio description claimed to have seen/heard them on television. Thus TV promotions were the key driver of awareness, highlighting the impact of the broadcast campaign. Overall, those with a visual impairment were slightly less likely to have claimed to have seen or heard promotions on TV (85%), particularly those with severe/profound visual impairments (81%). It should be noted that those with severe/profound visual impairments watch less television than average (see Annex A1.3 *TV viewing*), and also that this group are more likely to have other sources of information about audio description services (see section below on *Drivers of Awareness*). However, those with a moderate or mild visual impairment were as likely as the rest of the UK population to claim to have seen/heard adverts or features on TV (90%).

**Figure 4.2 Where saw or heard adverts or features about audio description**



Q. Where did you see or hear these adverts or features about audio description?

Base: All respondents who recalled seeing or hearing adverts or features about audio description in the last month. UK adults (340); All VI (161); Severe/Profound (77\*); Moderate/Mild (84\*). \* = small sample size.

- 4.8 Awareness of print and radio promotions or features was lower than awareness of TV promotions or features, reflecting the media mix used in the campaign. Given the amount of print and radio promotion within the overall campaign these media gained reasonable levels of awareness. Recall of adverts/features in print was low among the UK population as a whole as well as among the visually impaired community. However, those with a visual impairment were much more likely than the rest of the UK population to have recalled hearing radio adverts or features – 21% of visually impaired respondents who recalled having seen or heard adverts/features said they had heard them on the radio, rising to 27% of those with a severe/profound impairment.

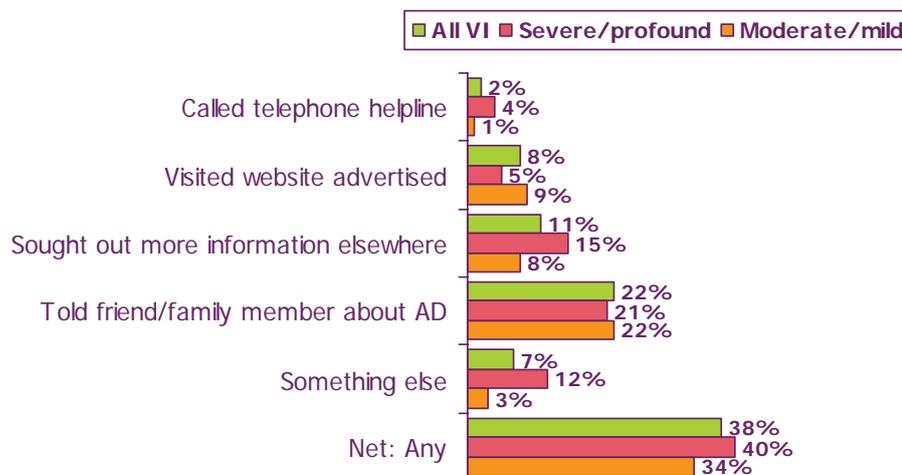
- 4.9 A number of visually impaired respondents said they remembered seeing or hearing adverts/features through sources other than TV, radio, or print. These respondents

tended to have seen/heard adverts or features through talking newspapers, in information from organisations for visually impaired people, or through the RNIB’s recent communications related to audio description.

### Reactions to promotions

- 4.10 Attitudes towards the promotions for audio description were consistent across the visually impaired community and the UK population as a whole, with nearly 9 in 10 saying that they found them very or quite informative. Those with a visual impairment were slightly more likely to find them ‘very informative’ than the rest of the population.
- 4.11 Overall, 38% of visually impaired respondents who claimed to have seen or heard adverts about audio description took some form of action as a result, as shown in Figure 4.3 below. Those with a severe/profound visual impairment were more likely to take action (40% of this group compared with 34% of moderate/mild) and in particular to seek out more information elsewhere (15%, compared with 8% of moderate/mild). These results are positive, particularly when we bear in mind that prior to the campaign, 43% of visually impaired people were already aware of audio description, and may be less likely to take action in response to the campaign as a result. Among the general UK population, 2% told a friend or family member about audio description, the most likely action taken among this group.
- 4.12 Within the visually impaired community, 22% of those who claimed to have seen or heard adverts told a friend or family member about audio description. All visually impaired groups were equally likely to do this, highlighting the importance of word of mouth in spreading awareness of the service within the community. 11% sought out more information elsewhere as a result of exposure to the promotions (rising to 15% among those with severe/profound impairments). Those with a severe or profound visual impairment were less likely to visit the website advertised than those with a moderate or mild visual impairment, but were more likely than average to have called one of the telephone helplines advertised during the campaign, highlighting the importance of providing suitable channels of information for people with different levels of visual impairment.

**Figure 4.3 Actions taken by visually impaired as a result of seeing or hearing adverts about audio description**



Q: What, if anything, did you do as a result of seeing or hearing these adverts about audio description?

Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who recalled seeing or hearing adverts about audio description in the last month. All VI (154); Severe/profound (75\*); Moderate/mild (79\*). \* = small sample size.

4.13 A small number of respondents said they did ‘something else’ as a result of seeing or hearing the adverts about audio description; these tended to mention such things as looking in the TV listings for details of programmes that contained audio description, contacting service providers or organisations in relation to audio description, and looking into or buying equipment that would give them access to audio description services.

## Recall of logo

4.14 The Audio Description Awareness Campaign also saw the launch of the audio description logo devised by RNIB, which featured in the majority (but not all) of the promotional trails within the campaign. Respondents who claimed they had seen or heard adverts or features about audio description were asked to give a description of the logo if they had seen it.

Of those claiming to recall what the logo looked like, many gave descriptions of the logo, such as:

“White box with black lettering”

“It was a big logo in a box”

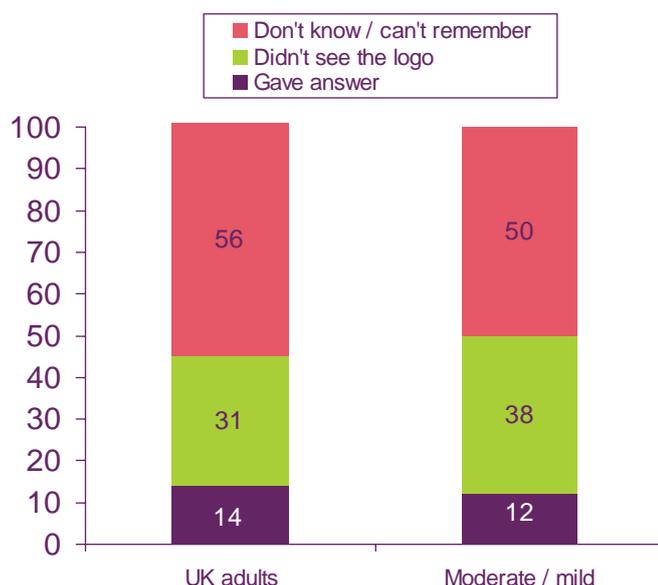
“A TV with a little AD in it”

“Square speech mark”

“It’s like a square caption box, not a speech bubble”

“It might have AD written on it”

**Figure 4.4 Recall of audio description logo**



Q: Do you recall what the audio description logo looked like?

Base: All respondents who recalled seeing or hearing adverts or features about AD in last month.

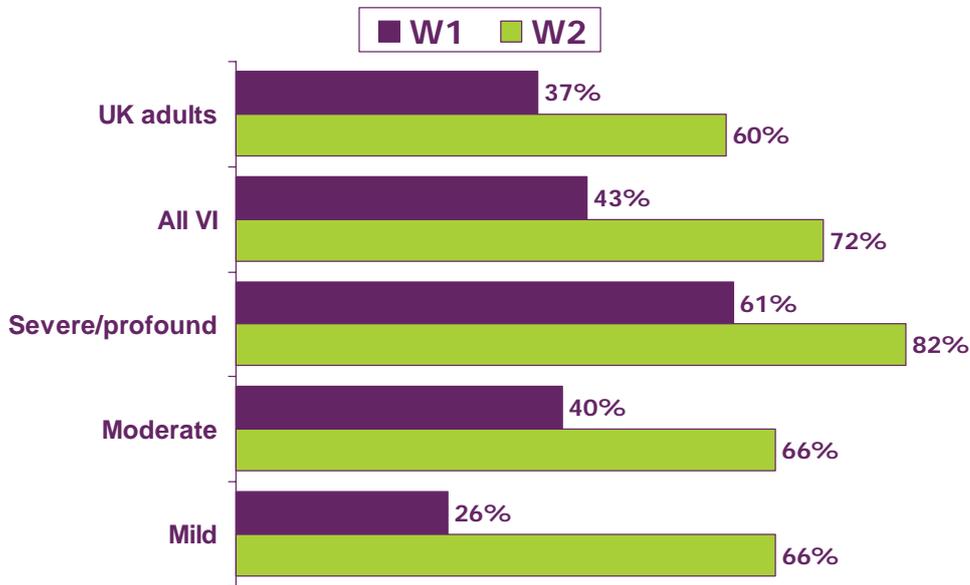
UK adults (340); Moderate/mild visual impairment (84\*). \* = small sample size

4.15 A number of respondents’ comments about the logo mentioned specific adverts they had seen, rather than the logo itself. Among the specific executions recalled was Channel 4’s advert featuring a woman wearing a red dress, which was mentioned frequently.

## Audio Description Awareness Levels

4.16 The Audio Description Awareness Campaign has been successful in significantly increasing awareness of the service, particularly among the target group of visually impaired people. This can be seen by comparing (prompted) awareness figures before and after the campaign, as shown in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5 Awareness of audio description before and after campaign**



Q. Before today, were you aware that audio description was available on some TV programmes? Base: All UK adults (1008, 1018); All respondents with a visual impairment (280, 296); Severe/profound (101, 114); Moderate (75\*, 62\*); Mild (104, 120). \* = small sample size.

4.17 Awareness of audio description within the UK population rose significantly from 37% before the campaign to 60% after it. Awareness of the service among visually impaired groups also grew significantly as a result of the campaign, from 43% to 72%.

4.18 Post-campaign awareness remains higher among visually impaired groups, with 72% overall and 82% of those with a severe/profound visual impairment now aware of the service.

4.19 Those people with a mild visual impairment were least likely to be aware of audio description before the campaign; however, following the campaign they are as likely to be aware as those who have moderate visual impairments. 66% of people within both these groups are now aware of the service.

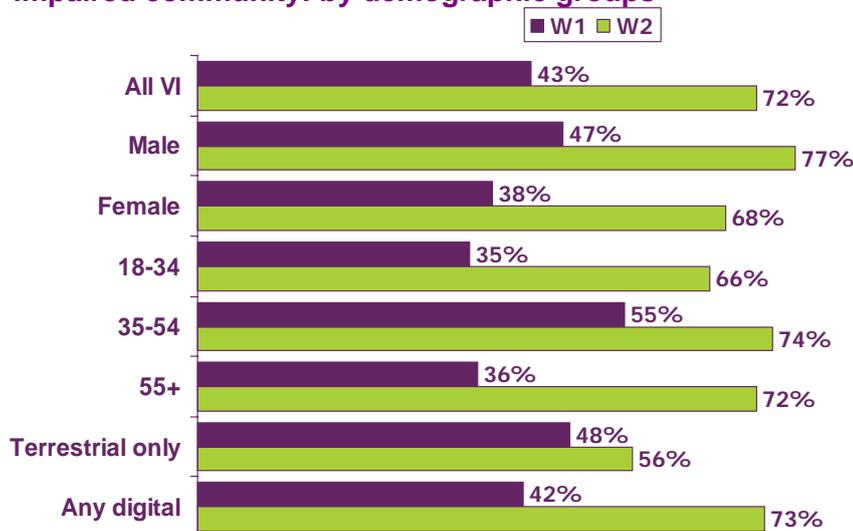
### Awareness within the visually impaired community

4.20 Within the visually impaired community, the largest growth of awareness as a result of the campaign was among those aged 55+. Prior to the campaign, 36% of 55+ were aware that audio description was available on some TV programmes; this doubled to 72% after the campaign (see Figure 4.6).

4.21 Across both waves of the research, visually impaired males were more likely to be aware of audio description than visually impaired females (by a margin of 9 percentage points in each wave). Visually impaired respondents in digital television households were more likely to be aware of audio description than those in analogue-only households, indicating that those with digital television were likely to have experienced greater exposure to the campaign, as a result of the large number

of digital channels promoting the service. Similar differences in awareness between males/females and digital/non-digital households also exist within the general UK population (see Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.6 Awareness of audio description before and after campaign within visually impaired community: by demographic groups**



Q11: Before today, were you aware that Audio Description was available on some TV programmes? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment. Wave 1: All VI (280); Male (131); Female (149); 18-34 (52\*); 35-54 (98\*); 55+ (130); Terrestrial only (31\*\*); Any digital (247). Wave 2: All VI (296); Male (129); Female (167); 18-34 (58\*); 35-54 (122); 55+ (116); Terrestrial only (27\*\*); Any digital (264). \* = small base size. \*\* = extremely small base size. Data should be treated as indicative only

4.22 Awareness of audio description is highest among those who are registered as severely sight impaired or blind, or those who are members of organisations for people who are blind or sight impaired (93% and 90% of these groups respectively in the second wave of research). This suggests that these organisations play an important role in raising awareness of audio description among potential users. Those who are registered as blind or severely sight impaired are also more likely to receive information about audio description (from bodies such as Social Services) than those who are not registered. It is also important to bear in mind that those who are registered as sight impaired/blind or belong to organisations are more likely to have severe/profound visual impairments (see Annex A1.2), and may therefore take an increased interest in audio description as they are traditionally the group most likely to use the service.

**Figure 4.7 Awareness of audio description before and after campaign: within visually impaired community**

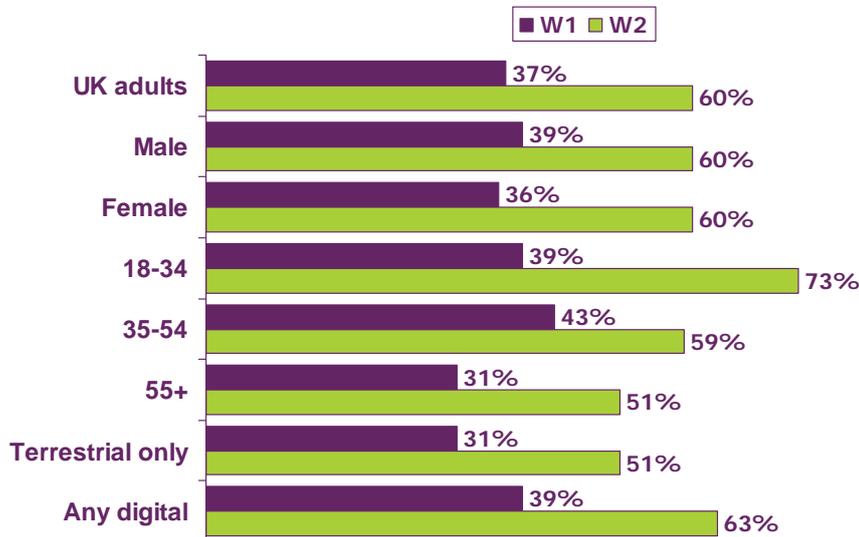


Q. Before today, were you aware that audio description was available on some TV programmes? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment. Wave 1: All VI (280); Registered severely sight impaired or blind (62\*); Registered sight impaired or partially sighted (99\*); Not registered (117); Member of organisation (86\*); Non-member (194). Wave 2: All VI (296); Registered severely sight impaired or blind (94\*); Registered sight impaired or partially sighted (50\*); Not registered (147); Member of organisation (104); Non-member (192). \* = small sample size.

## Awareness within the UK adult population

- 4.23 Both waves of the research revealed that those with digital television in their households were more likely to be aware of audio description, compared with those who could only receive analogue terrestrial television. The results demonstrate that awareness of audio description is higher among those who have access to the service and reflects the fact that those viewing digital television channels were more likely to have experienced increased exposure to promotions during the campaign.
- 4.24 Among UK adults, the largest growth in awareness following the campaign was among those aged 18-34. 18-34 year olds are now the group most likely to be aware of audio description, while those aged 55+ remain least likely to be aware of the service. Men and women are equally likely to be aware of audio description following the campaign.
- 4.25 The fact that those aged 55+ within the general population remained the group least aware of audio description suggests that they could be a potential target group for future communications about the service. As visual impairments correlate with age, this is the age group most likely to benefit from the service within the general UK population.
- 4.26 The high level of awareness among those aged 18-34 within the general population highlights the potential for these groups to raise awareness of audio description with older relatives through word of mouth. Word of mouth is an important means of information reaching the visually impaired community, as can be seen from the section on *Drivers of awareness* below.

**Figure 4.8 Awareness of audio description before and after campaign: UK adults: by demographic groups**



Q. Before today, were you aware that Audio Description was available on some TV programmes? Base: All respondents.  
 Wave 1: UK adults (1018); Male (489); Female (529); 18-34 (280); 35-54 (366); 55+ (372); Terrestrial only (179); Any digital (833).  
 Wave 2: UK adults (1008); Male (476); Female (532); 18-34 (257); 35-54 (374); 55+ (377); Terrestrial only (185); Any digital (807).

- 4.27 Awareness of audio description is higher within the visually impaired community than the rest of the UK population, in all but one demographic group. In both waves of the research, awareness of audio description was higher among those aged 18-34 within the nationally representative sample than those in the same age range from the

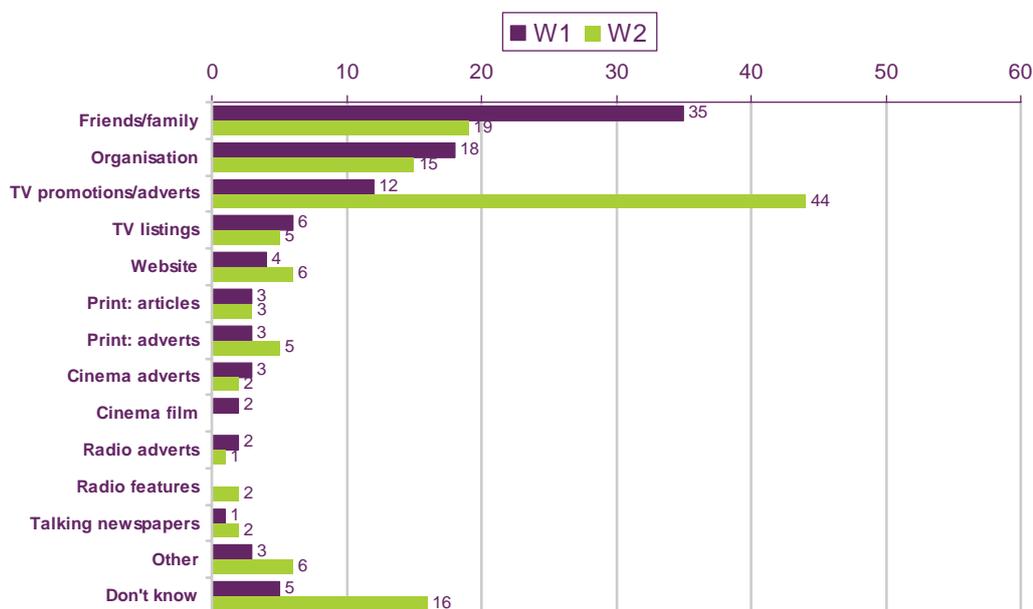
sample of visually impaired respondents (by 4 percentage points in wave 1 and 7 percentage points in wave 2). This demonstrates that the campaign was successful in reaching 18-34s in general as this group saw the largest growth wave on wave among the UK population as a whole.

4.28 The discrepancy between the two groups of 18-34 year olds may be explained in part, by how these two groups access digital TV. More than half (57%) of the channels that carried the audio description promotions can only be accessed via cable or satellite platforms (See Annex 2). Some of these channels attract a larger proportion of 18-34s than other demographics. As there appears to be higher Freeview ownership amongst those aged 18-34 with a visual impairment (41%) compared to the comparable nationally representative group (30%) this group would not have had as many opportunities to see as many campaigns as the average 18-34 year old, thereby possibly going some way to explaining the higher awareness levels amongst the average 18-34 year old compared to the 18-34s with a visual impairment. Among the other age groups, there are large differences in awareness between visually impaired age groups and the same groups within the UK population (awareness is 15 percentage points higher among visually impaired people aged 35-54, and 21 percentage points among those aged 55+).

### Drivers of awareness

4.29 All respondents who said they were aware of audio description were asked how they became conscious of the service. The results suggest that the increase in awareness between waves is chiefly due to the TV promotional campaign in February and March 2008. However, another interesting point to note is the important role that family and friends play in raising awareness of audio description via word of mouth within the visually impaired community, as highlighted in both waves of the research.

**Figure 4.9 How became aware of audio description: Visually impaired**



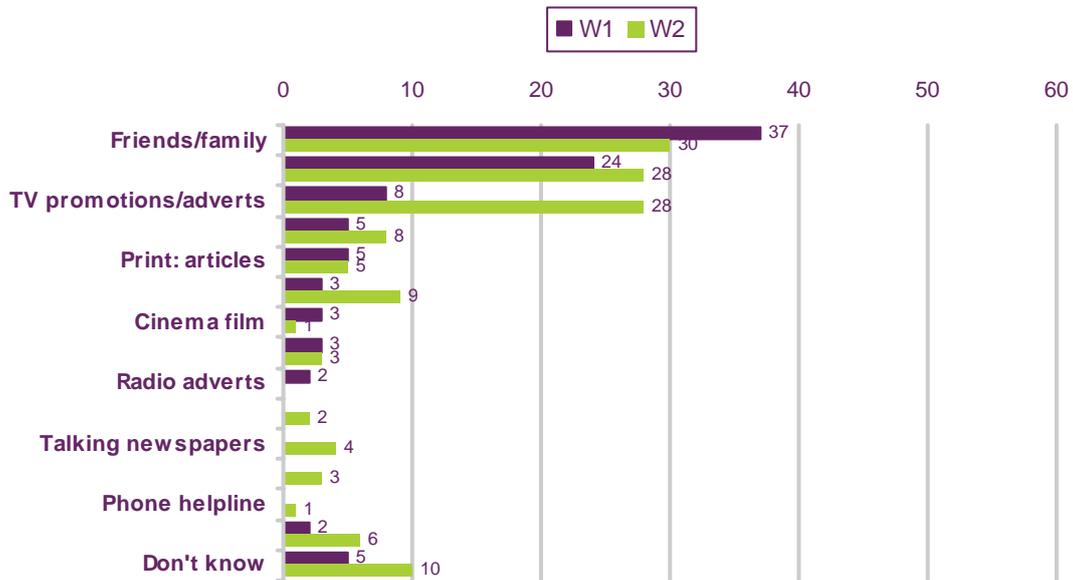
Q. How did you become aware of audio description? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment aware of audio description before today. Wave 1 (119); Wave 2 (213).

4.30 Prior to the broadcasters' campaign, visually impaired people tended to become aware of audio description through friends and family (35% became aware of the service in this way in wave 1). In wave 2, TV promotions/adverts became the key driver of awareness for the visually impaired community as a whole. The growth from

12% to 44% following the campaign demonstrates how the recent campaign was fresh in people’s minds when fieldwork was carried out.

- 4.31 However for those with a severe or profound visual impairment, friends and family remained the principle way of becoming aware of audio description following the campaign, with 30% mentioning family/friends compared with 28% mentioning TV promotions/adverts. The results suggest that the visually impaired community, and specifically those with severe/profound impairments, have been reached both directly and indirectly by the campaign.
- 4.32 Importantly, organisations play an equal role in raising awareness among the severe/profound groups, and the increase between waves in those saying that they became aware of audio description through an organisation may also reflect the roles that various organisations played in the campaign.

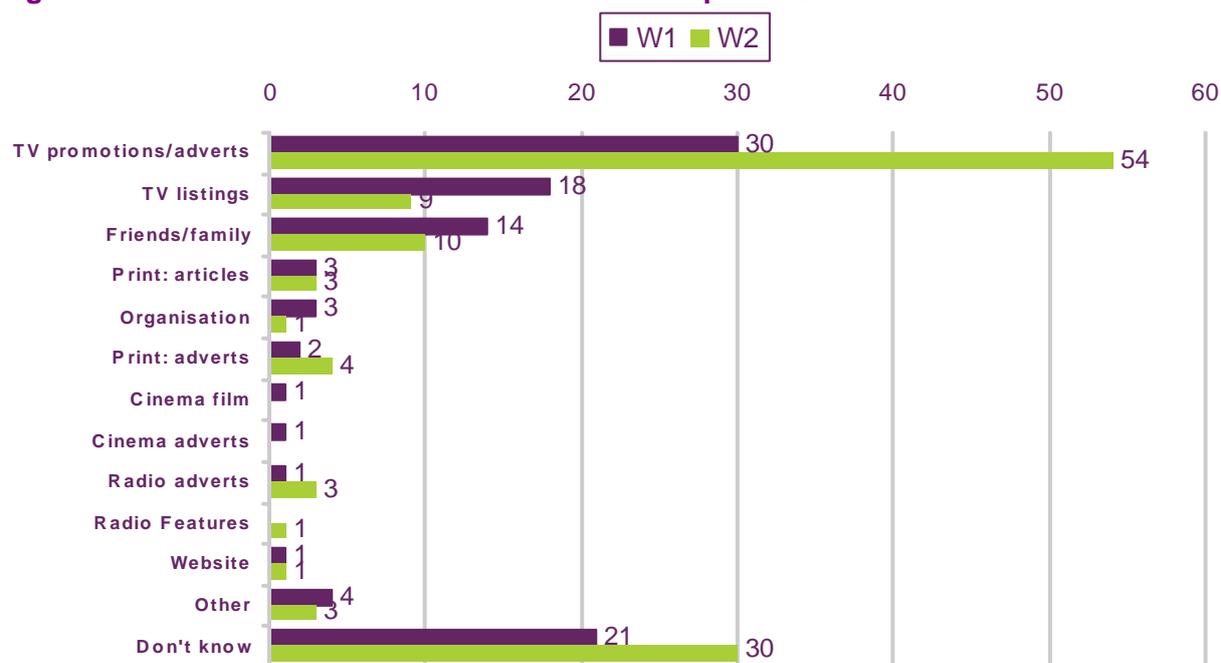
**Figure 4.10 How became aware of audio description: Severe/profound**



Q. How did you become aware of audio description? Base: All respondents with a severe/profound visual impairment aware of audio description before today. Wave 1 (62\*); Wave 2 (93\*)

- 4.33 By contrast, those with a moderate or mild visual impairment are much less likely to become aware of audio description through organisations, and much more likely to have become aware through TV promotions or adverts. This reflects the fact that these groups watch more television than those with a severe/profound impairment (see Annex A1.3), and are also less likely to be members of organisations for people who are blind or partially sighted (see Annex A1.2). Those with moderate or mild visual impairments who said they became aware of audio description through TV promotions/adverts rose from 16% in wave 1 to 56% in wave 2.

**Figure 4.11 How became aware of audio description: UK adults**



Q. How did you become aware of audio description? Base: All UK adults aware of audio description before today. Wave 1 (379); Wave 2 (603)

4.34 30% of UK adults who knew of audio description in wave 1 became aware through TV promotions or adverts. In wave 2, 54% of UK adults aware of the service mentioned TV promotions/adverts, highlighting the impact of the television campaign. TV listings and friends/family are also common ways of the general UK population becoming aware of audio description.

## Audio Description Usage

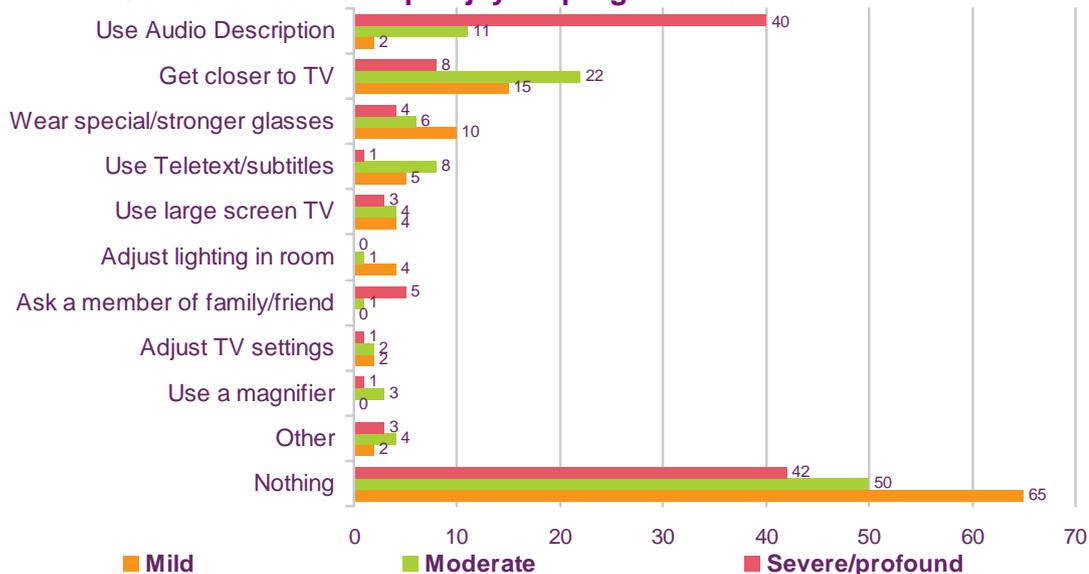
### Current use of audio description

4.35 Audio description has been available via some digital TV platforms since 2001, and is one of a number of tools that visually impaired people can use to help improve their enjoyment of TV programmes. In order to assess current usage levels of these tools and to identify differences between each of the visually impaired groups, the research asked visually impaired respondents whether they used any tools or services to help them enjoy TV programmes.

4.36 While the visually impaired community are more likely to have digital television than the general UK population (see Annex A1.3 *TV viewing*), those with a severe or profound visual impairment are more likely to receive Freeview than any other digital TV service. For this group, whose annual income is lower than other groups, Freeview offers a cheaper way to receive digital television than other TV platforms. However, at the moment only a limited range of Freeview equipment offers audio description functionality, while the service is available as standard on most subscription satellite and cable equipment. This suggests that at present, a significant proportion of people with a severe/profound visual impairment may not have access to audio description, despite having purchased digital TV equipment, and despite the fact those with a severe/profound visual impairment are most likely to use audio description.

- 4.37 The research found that current use of audio description appears to be related to severity of visual impairment as well as awareness. 40% of the severe/profound group claim to use it on average across the two waves of research (among those with a moderate impairment, 11% said they use the service). By contrast those with a mild visual impairment rarely use the service, with only 2% of respondents from this group saying they use the service to help them enjoy TV programmes in each wave of research.
- 4.38 Usage of audio description is lower among those with a moderate or mild visual impairment, who are less likely to be aware of audio description than those who are severe/profound, and more likely to rely on alternative tools to help them enjoy TV programmes. Respondents with a moderate impairment were most likely to get closer to the TV (22%, compared with 11% using audio description). A smaller proportion of people in this group wear special/stronger glasses (6%), use a large screen TV (4%) or use Teletext/subtitles to help them understand what is happening on screen (8%). Respondents with a mild visual impairment were also most likely to get closer to the TV (15%), wear special/stronger glasses (10%), use a large screen TV (4) or use Teletext/subtitles (5%), while 65% of this group said they do not do anything or use any tools/services when watching TV.
- 4.39 However, although the research also found that although those with a mild/moderate visual impairment are less interested in using audio description than those with a severe/profound impairment; 18% of mild and moderate groups said they would be encouraged to use audio description if they had more information about the service. In addition, 27% of those with a moderate visual impairment said they would be encouraged to use audio description if they had more information on how to access it. See sections *Future use of audio description*; and *Barriers and drivers to audio description usage*.
- 4.40 For people with a severe or profound visual impairment, use of tools other than audio description is low. 42% of this group do not do anything or use any tools/services when watching TV, suggesting there is a large proportion of this group who could potentially benefit from using audio description. The research also found that the majority of those with a severe/profound visual impairment, who did not use any tools or services when watching TV, were not aware of audio description, again suggesting that uptake will increase if awareness levels grow further.

**Figure 4.12 Services used to help enjoy TV programmes**



Q. Bearing in mind that you have sight problems, do you do anything or use any services to help you enjoy TV programmes? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment in Waves 1 & 2 combined (576); Severe/profound (215); Moderate (137); Mild (224)

**Figure 4.13 Frequency of watching TV programmes that contain audio description**

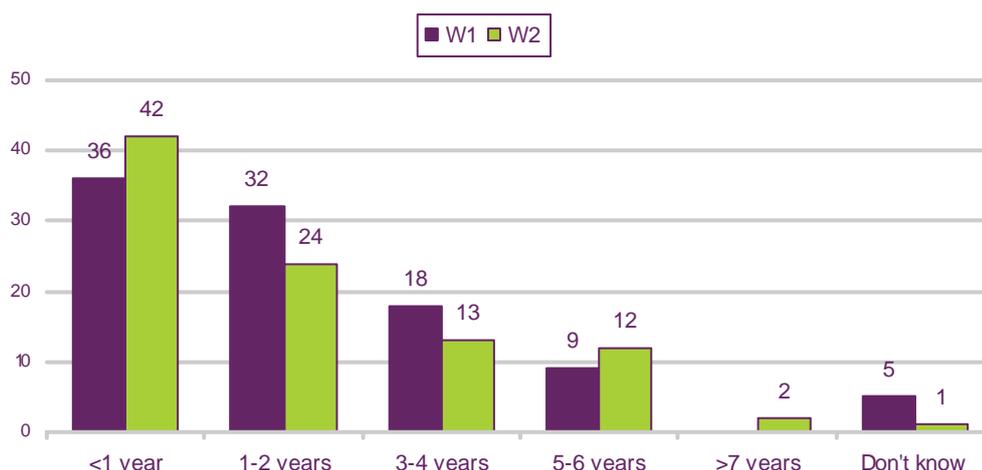


Q. Do you watch TV programmes that contain audio description to enable you to follow programmes more easily? This could be either at home or elsewhere. Base: All respondents aware of audio description before today. Wave 1: All UK adults (1018); All VI (280); Severe/profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104). Wave 2: All UK adults (1008); All VI (296); Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62\*); Mild (120). \* = small sample size.

4.41 Among all of the visually impaired groups, a larger proportion of respondents claimed to have used audio description in wave 2 than in wave 1 (see Figure 4.13). While the increase in usage after the campaign is not statistically significant (a significant difference is one we can be reasonably sure exists in the population), the results suggest that a larger proportion of visually impaired people may now be using audio description as a result of the increased awareness of the service following the campaign.

4.42 This theory is also supported by an increase in the proportion of visually impaired users interviewed following the campaign who said that they had been using audio description for less than 1 year, as shown in Figure 4.14 below.

**Figure 4.14 Length of time using audio description**



Q. For how long have you been watching TV programmes that have audio description on them? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who have used audio description. Wave 1 (78\*); Wave 2 (107) \* = small sample size.

- 4.43 The increase in those who have used the service for less than a year should be treated as indicative only. However both points taken together appear to indicate an increase in usage of the service.
- 4.44 When prompted, 8% of the UK population claimed to have used audio description in wave 1, with 9% in wave 2 claiming to have used the service. The results again show that use of audio description to date has been closely related to severity of visual impairment, as well as levels of awareness.

**Future use of audio description**

- 4.45 Despite increased levels of awareness following the Audio Description Awareness Campaign, 28% of visually impaired people remain unaware of the service. The majority of those who had not been aware of the service claimed that they would be interested in using audio description, after the service was explained to them as part of the interview. Hence the lack of *awareness* among this group does not reflect a lack of *interest* in the service, and suggests that usage of audio description would grow if awareness continues to increase.
- 4.46 Among the visually impaired respondents who had been unaware of audio description, females were more likely than males to express an interest in using the service. However, it is important to note that visually impaired females are more likely to be older (aged 55+ and therefore more likely to experience increased impairment) while also being less likely to be digital viewers, which suggests that currently a significant proportion of this group who could benefit from audio description do not have access to the service.

**Figure 4.15 Interest in using audio description following campaign**



Q13: If audio description was available on the TV programmes that you watch, how interested do you think you would be in using it? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment in wave 2 not aware of audio description before today (83\*). \* = small sample size.

- 4.47 By comparing stated levels of interest in using audio description before and after the campaign among those who are aware of the service, we can see that not all those who became aware as a result of the campaign are interested in using the service.

**Figure 4.16 Interest in using audio description before and after campaign**



Q. If audio description was available on the TV programmes that you watch, how interested do you think you would be in using it? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment aware of AD before today. Wave 1: All VI (119) Severe/Profound (62\*); Moderate/Mild (57\*). Wave 2: All VI (213); Severe/Profound (93\*); Moderate/Mild (120). \* = small sample size.

- 4.48 Following the audio description campaign, the proportion of those aware of the service who are actually interested in using it has fallen slightly. Those who are less interested tend to be those with moderate and mild visual impairments, as can be seen from Figure 4.16 above. As has already been mentioned people particularly with mild visual impairments are more likely to use other methods, as opposed to audio description, to help them watch TV. Therefore due to the large growth in awareness of the service following the campaign; larger numbers of people with mild and moderate visual impairments are now aware of the service, however are less interested in actually using it. Therefore the effect this has is that as the number of people aware of the service grows, the overall proportion of these who are interested in using it diminishes slightly.
- 4.49 Following the campaign 66% of people with a mild visual impairment were aware of audio description, compared with only 26% of this group prior to the campaign. While the results indicate that some of the people with moderate/mild visual impairments who became aware as a result of the campaign are not interested in the service, the second wave of research also found that 18% of those with a moderate or mild visual impairment claimed that ‘having more information about audio description’ would increase their **usage** of the service. This suggests that **interest** in the service may increase among these groups if more information is provided to them on how to use the service.
- 4.50 Among those with a severe or profound visual impairment, the level of interest has remained steady despite the increase in those aware as a result of the campaign, with around 90% saying they were interested in using the service in both waves. These results suggest that on average, around 9 out of 10 people with a severe or profound visual impairment would be interested in using audio description if they were aware of the service, of which 7 in 10 would be ‘very interested’ in using it. These figures indicate that increasing awareness of audio description to the remaining 18% of severe/profound who are still unaware of it would likely drive increased usage of the service.

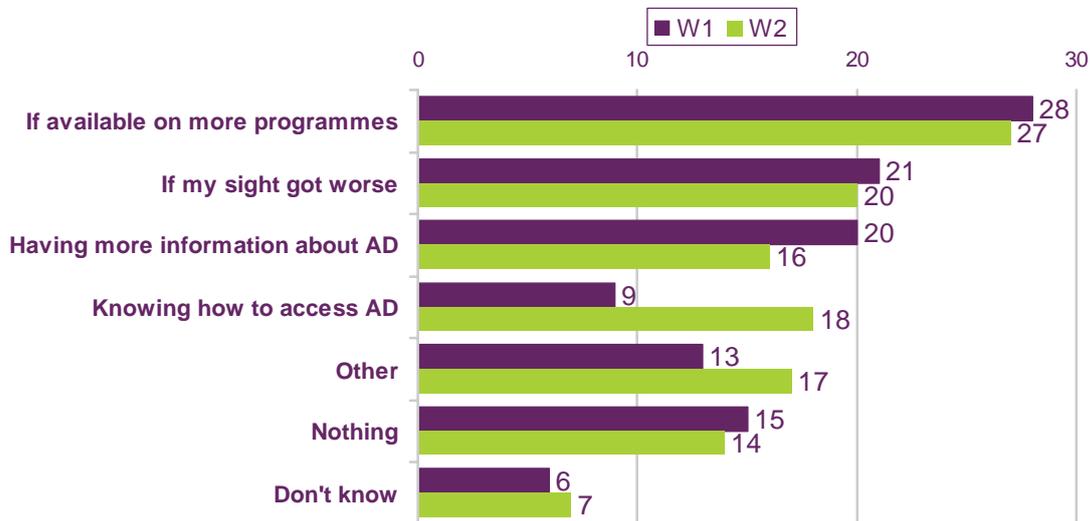
### Barriers and drivers to audio description usage

- 4.51 One of the objectives of the research was to identify barriers and drivers of audio description usage. All respondents with a visual impairment were asked: “What, if anything, would encourage you to use this audio description on TV programmes

more often?” Availability is the most frequently mentioned barrier, with more than 1 in 4 respondents in both waves of the research saying that they would use audio description more often if it was available on more programmes (28% in wave 1; 27% in wave 2). 1 in 5 respondents in each wave said that they would use the service more if their sight got worse (21% in wave 1; 20% in wave 2).

- 4.52 While these figures held stable before and after the campaign, the proportion of respondents who said that having more information about audio description would encourage them to use it more often dropped, from 20% before the campaign to 16% after it. This indicates that the campaign was successful in raising awareness and informing people of the service. However, there was a corresponding growth in those saying that knowing how to access audio description would encourage them to use it more often, from 9% before the campaign to 18% after it.
- 4.53 Together, these results suggest that while the campaign was successful in communicating a basic level of information about audio description, more detailed about how to access and actually use the service needs to be provided to those who might benefit from the service, in order to increase take up of the service.

**Figure 4.17 What would encourage use of audio description: All VI respondents**



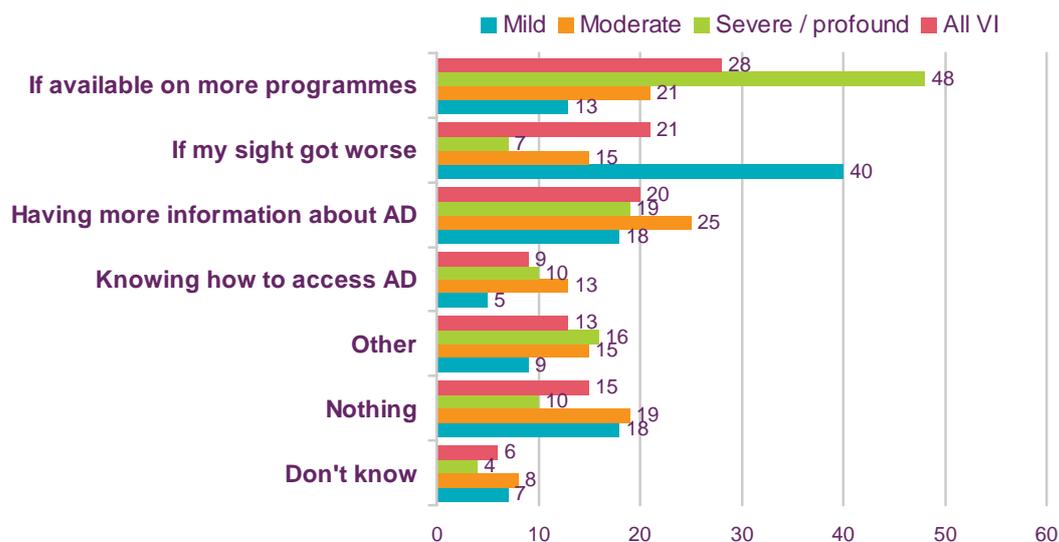
Q16: What, if anything, would encourage you to use this audio description on TV programmes more often?  
 Base: All respondents with a visual impairment. Wave 1 (280); Wave 2 (296).

- 4.54 The barriers and drivers to usage of audio description were different for each level of visual impairment. Before and after the campaign, availability of programmes that feature audio description was found to be the main barrier to usage for those with a severe or profound visual impairment, with 48% claiming this in wave 1, and 46% claiming it in wave 2. For those with a mild visual impairment, who are less likely to be using audio description, the main reason they would use the service more is if their sight got worse (40% in wave 1, 37% in wave 2). Nearly 1 in 5 respondents with a mild or moderate visual impairment in both waves say that nothing would encourage them to use the service more often (between 16%-19% of these groups in each wave).
- 4.55 The impact of the campaign can be seen in more detail by looking at the views of each group before and after the campaign, as represented in Figures 4.18 and 4.19.
- 4.56 The factors that would encourage usage within each visually impaired group are largely the same before and after the campaign. However, there is a difference before and after the campaign in relation to those who think that having more

information about audio description would encourage their usage, and those who think that knowing how to access audio description would do so.

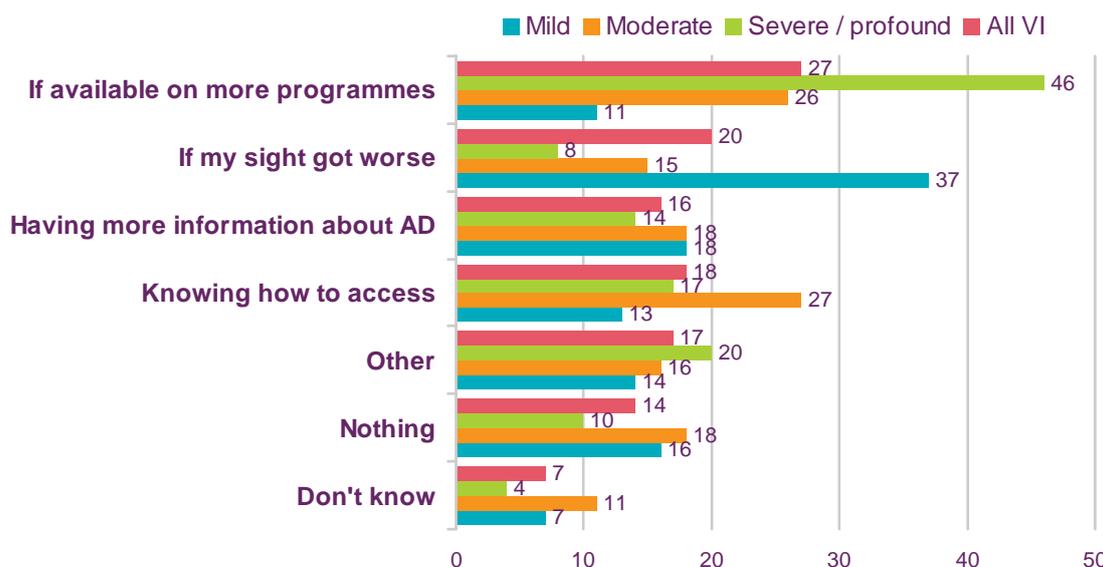
4.57 Before the campaign, 20% of visually impaired respondents thought that having more information about audio description would encourage their usage of the service. This was highest among those with a moderate impairment (25%) followed by those with a severe/profound impairment (19%). Following the campaign, only 16% of all visually impaired respondents felt that more information would encourage them to use audio description more often, while those with a severe/profound visual impairment were least likely to say this.

**Figure 4.18 What would encourage use of audio description: before campaign**



Q. What, if anything, would encourage you to use this audio description on TV programmes more often?  
 All respondents with a visual impairment in Wave 1 (280); Severe/Profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104).  
 \* = small sample size.

**Figure 4.19 What would encourage use of audio description: after campaign**



Q. What, if anything, would encourage you to use this audio description on TV programmes more often?  
 All respondents with a visual impairment in wave 2 (296); Severe/Profound (114); Moderate (62\*); Mild (120)  
 \* = small sample size.

- 4.58 After the campaign, knowing how to access audio description is recognised as a more significant barrier to usage than having more information among all but the mild group. Overall, those saying knowing how to access audio description would increase their usage has doubled, from 9% in wave 1 to 18% in wave 2. In particular, those with moderate visual impairments are most likely to feel that knowing how to access the service would encourage their use of it, and in wave 2 this has become the most influential barrier (and potential driver) to usage among this group (followed closely by availability).
- 4.59 The shift in respondents' perception of drivers and barriers to usage following the campaign suggests that now that the campaign has raised awareness and provided a basic understanding of what audio description is, there is a desire for more detailed information about how to access the service.

### 4.5 Satisfaction with audio description

- 4.60 The majority of respondents who have used audio description feel that the overall standard of audio description on TV is improving. However, in wave 2, respondents are less likely to say that the service is 'getting better' and more likely to say it is 'unchanged'. This reflects the increase in relatively new users of audio description in wave 2 compared with wave 1 (those using the service for less than a year; see Figure 4.14), who have not been using the service long enough to see it develop over time.

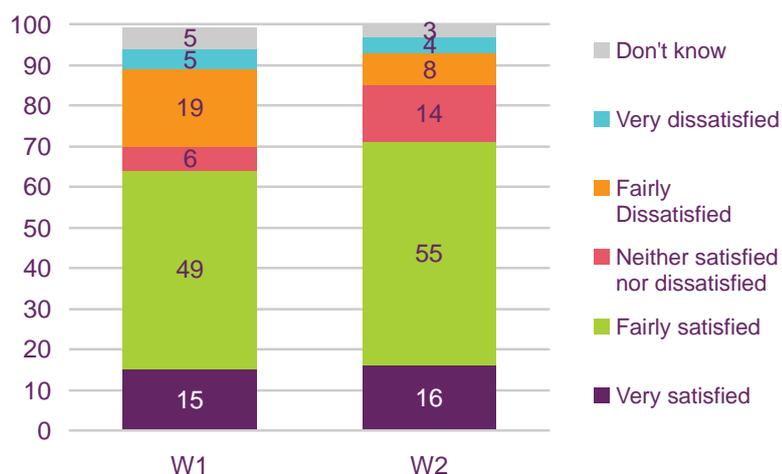
**Figure 4.20 Overall standard of audio description on TV**



Q: Generally, do you feel that the overall standard of audio description on TV is getting better, getting worse or remains unchanged? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who have used audio description. Wave 1 (78\*); Wave 2 (107). \* = small sample size.

- 4.61 Following the Audio Description Awareness Campaign there was a slight increase in users' level of satisfaction with the current audio description services available, with 71% of users following the campaign claiming to be very/fairly satisfied (compared to 64% of users before the campaign), while a larger proportion said that they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. Importantly, those saying they were fairly or very dissatisfied with the current audio description services available had halved following the campaign, from 24% of visually impaired users of AD in wave 1 to 12% of visually impaired users in wave 2, suggesting that the campaign promoted a positive attitude towards the service provided.

**Figure 4.21 Satisfaction with audio description**



Q. Overall to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the current audio description services available? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who have used audio description. Wave 1 (78\*); Wave 2 (107). \* = small sample size

4.62 Respondents were asked to give a comment to explain their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current audio description services available. As the majority of respondents in each wave felt satisfied with the services currently available, the majority of comments were also positive, with only a few negative remarks about the service.

Positive comments tended to mention the following:

1) **Something is being done about audio description.** Broadcasters are now making efforts to ensure that people with visual impairments are provided with suitable services that meet their needs. A typical remark is: “A few years ago there was absolutely nothing, but now they’re addressing it and encouraging people who can’t see properly to use it.”

2) **Audio description enhances the TV viewing experience.** Typical comments from respondents are that “it brings television to life” and “it makes watching television more fun”.

3) **Audio description promotes equality, independence and social inclusion.** A number of respondents mentioned the fact that as a result of audio description they are able to join in and engage with others about television programmes. E.g.: “It gives equality. I can talk about TV programmes to people – I can feel that I can take part in understanding TV programmes”.

4.63 Similarly, respondents’ comments highlighted the independence that they can obtain from using audio description: “I don’t need someone there to explain to me what’s going on”; or “audio description allows me to watch and to take part and spend time watching TV with my partner”.

4.64 However, many respondents’ comments mentioned that while they were largely happy with the service, there is room for improvement: “It’s good, but there’s always room for improvement”. Respondents who answered in this way frequently mentioned the following:

1) **Amount of programming.** Respondents were keen to have more audio described programming made available, on a wider range of channels.

2) **Range/type of programmes.** Some respondents felt that audio description was being prioritised on certain types of programming (such as very popular programmes and soaps), and wanted the service made more widely available across a range of genres, particularly films and documentaries.

3) **Information.** Respondents wanted clearer information about when audio description was going to be on a programme.

4) **Other platforms.** Some respondents voiced concerns about the availability of audio description for on-demand and catch-up television services. Respondents also mentioned a lack of audio described DVDs and videos, again calling for increased availability.

4.65 In addition, there were a small number of negative comments recorded about the service. These tended to mention technical difficulties that individual users had experienced when using the service, or objections to the style of narration used in the programming.

4.66 Despite various comments being made in relation to the current audio description services available, nearly all users of audio description agreed that the service improves their understanding and enjoyment of TV, as shown in Figure 4.22 below.

**Figure 4.22 Attitudes towards audio description**

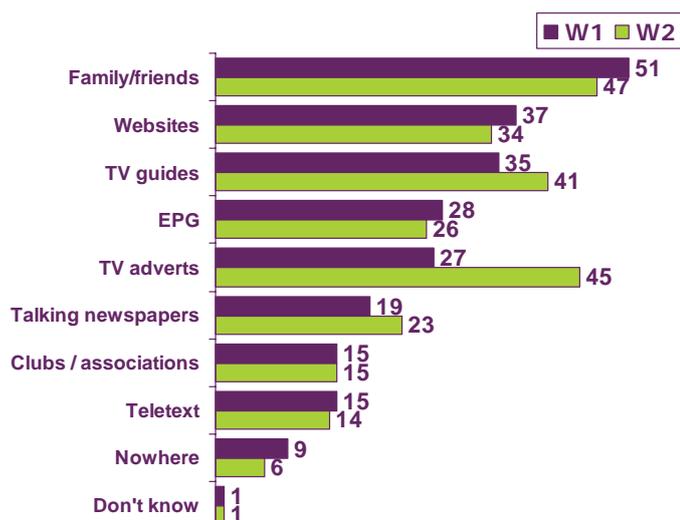


Q. To what extent would you say audio description on TV programmes improves your understanding and enjoyment of them? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who have used Audio Description. Wave 1 (78\*); Wave 2 (107)  
 \* = small sample size.

### Sources of information about audio description

4.67 According to the research findings, visually impaired people are most likely to obtain information about television programmes which contain audio description from their family and friends, with around half of visually impaired users of audio description claiming to obtain information in this way. Websites, TV guides, Electronic Programming Guides (EPG) and TV adverts are the next most common ways of getting information about programmes that feature audio description.

**Figure 4.23 Sources of information about audio description**



Q. From which, if any, of these sources do you obtain information about television programmes which contain audio description? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment who have used Audio Description. Wave 1 (78\*); Wave 2 (107)  
\* = small sample size.

- 4.68 The impact of the Audio Description Awareness Campaign can be seen in the increased proportion of those claiming to get information on audio description programmes from TV adverts following the campaign. With 45% now claiming to obtain information in this way, TV adverts are equal with family and friends as the chief sources of information about the service. Following the campaign, the proportion of users who get information about television programmes which contain audio description from TV guides has risen from 35% to 41%, suggesting that users have become more aware that this information exists in TV listings.
- 4.69 The research also highlighted that there is some potential confusion around who is responsible for audio description services. Respondents were asked “Which organisation or organisations, if any, do you think you would contact if you were unable to access audio description services on TV programmes or wanted to complain about them?” In both waves respondents were most likely to say they would contact the RNIB, BBC, Sky or Ofcom. However, in wave 2 following the campaign a wider range of service providers and broadcasters were mentioned, showing the influence of the campaign across the range of channels and service providers supporting it (it should also be noted that audio description promotional trails ran with different creative across different broadcasters).
- 4.70 The results also reflect the fact that while Ofcom monitors the amount of television output that is audio described, audio description requires the support and co-operation of a range of broadcasters and organisations to reach potential beneficiaries. Similarly, consumers are responsible for ensuring they can access the service by purchasing suitable television equipment, and may thus associate the service with their television service provider.
- 4.71 In each wave of research respectively, 32% and 29% of users of audio description said that they didn’t know which organisation(s) they would contact if they were unable to access audio description services on TV programmes or wanted to complain about them. This highlights a potential challenge, in that the majority of respondents were unaware of where they could go to for advice or help with the service.

## Conclusion

- 4.72 The Audio Description Awareness Campaign successfully increased levels of awareness, resulting in 72% of the visually impaired community and 60% of UK adults being aware of the service immediately following the campaign. However nearly 3 in 10 visually impaired people still remain unaware of audio description.
- 4.73 While usage of audio description is currently related to severity of visual impairment as well as awareness levels, the research indicates that there is potential to increased usage of audio description across all visually impaired groups if awareness levels continue to rise, as interest in using audio description was found to be high among those who were not previously aware of the service.
- 4.74 However, the research also identified that a lack of understanding about how to access audio description services is a barrier to use for some visually impaired people. While the campaign has driven awareness across all visually impaired groups, the proportion of those saying that knowing how to access audio description would encourage their use of the service doubled following the campaign, from 9% of visually impaired respondents before to 18% of visually impaired respondents after.
- 4.75 Nearly all current users of audio description feel that using the service improves their understanding and enjoyment of TV programmes, demonstrating the clear benefits that the service can bring to visually impaired people.
- 4.76 Together, the results suggest that providing more information about how to access audio description to visually impaired groups will increase take up and usage of audio description. In turn this would confer the benefits of the service a greater number of potential users.

## Annex 1

# Visual Impairments

## Visual impairments in the UK

- A1.1 3% of the nationally representative sample interviewed in each wave were visually impaired. Of these, the majority had a mild visual impairment, while a small number had moderate, severe or profound visual impairments<sup>10</sup>.
- A1.2 In order to establish each individual’s level of visual impairment, respondents were asked to choose the statement that best described their level of visual impairment from a list (ordered from profound to mild). The table below shows the list of statements, and the categories that respondents were grouped into on this basis:

**Figure A1.1 Classification of visually impaired groups**

<b>Which of these best describes your sight with glasses or contact lenses if you normally use them? Please imagine you are in a room with good lighting.</b>	
Totally blind / cannot see at all <sup>11</sup>	<b>Profound</b>
Cannot tell by the light where the windows are	
Cannot see the shapes of furniture in the room	<b>Severe</b>
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend if close to his or her face	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend if he or she is at arm’s length	
Cannot see well enough to read a newspaper headline	<b>Moderate</b>
Cannot see well enough to read a large print book	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend across a room	
Cannot see well enough to recognise a friend across a road	<b>Mild</b>
Have difficulty seeing ordinary newspaper print	
Have difficulty seeing the buttons on the remote control	
Have difficulty seeing the picture on the TV screen	
Have difficulty seeing small details on screen	

- A1.3 Given the absence of known statistics about the visually impaired population in the UK, the research was designed to interview robust samples of each level of visual impairment, allowing comparisons to be drawn across groups. For this reason, those with severe and profound visual impairments have been purposefully over-represented in the data, and it should be noted that the figures should not be considered statistically representative of the visually impaired population as a whole.

<sup>10</sup> In previous research, conducted as part of Ofcom’s Access Services Review, the incidence of those with a visual impairment was found to be higher (5.6% of the UK population). However, this difference can be attributed to the different methodologies used in the each piece of research. The Access Services Review research consisted of in-home face-to-face interviews, in which respondents were asked whether *anyone* in the household had a visual impairment. By contrast, the Audio Description Awareness Research consisted of telephone interviews, in which respondents were asked if *they themselves* had a visual impairment (rather than anyone living in their household). See *Provision of Access Services: Research Study* ([www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/accessservs/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/accessservs/)).

<sup>11</sup> Statement added in Wave 2.

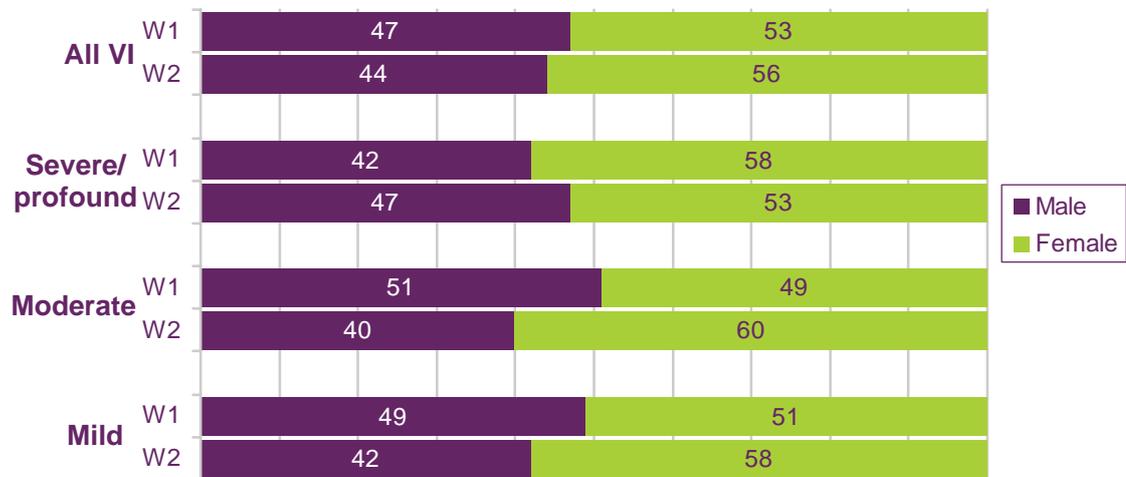
## Demographics of visually impaired groups

A1.4 The research revealed clear differences between each of the visually impaired groups – severe/profound, moderate and mild – and also between the visually impaired community and the rest of the population. This section looks at the demographic differences between each of the visually impaired groups, highlighting any differences from the UK population in general.

### Gender

A1.5 The visually impaired community is comprised of a higher proportion of females than the rest of the UK population, and visually impaired respondents in both waves of the research were more likely to be female than male (women made up 53% of visually impaired respondents in wave 1, and 56% in wave 2).

**Figure A1.2 Gender of visually impaired groups**



Q. Are you?... Base: All respondents with a visual impairment.  
 Wave 1: All VI (280); Severe/profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104)  
 Wave 2: All VI (296); Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62); Mild (120)  
 \* = small sample size.

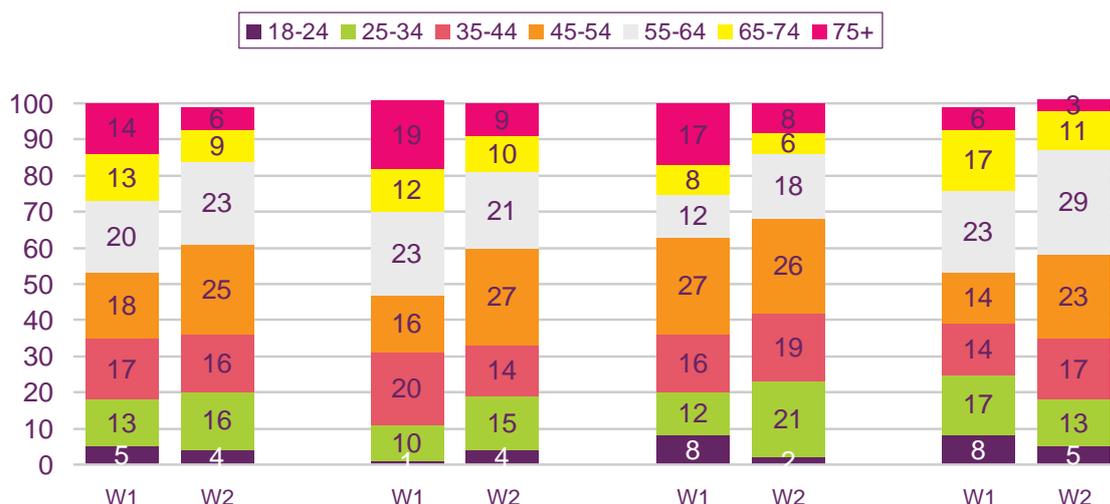
A1.6 In wave 1, those with a severe or profound visual impairment only were more likely to be female, with a nearly even gender split among the moderate and mild groups. In wave 2, a greater proportion of the severe/profound group were male, while the moderate and mild groups were comprised of a greater number of females than in the first wave of research.

### Age

A1.7 Severity of visual impairment is correlated with age, with respondents aged 65+ making up a larger proportion of the severe/profound group than they do in the moderate or mild groups. Many people experience age-related macular degeneration, or other conditions that result in their sight getting worse as they grow older.

A1.8 The split between those aged 45+ and those aged under 45 years old remained relatively stable across all groups of visual impairments between both waves. Within each category of visual impairment, around 1 in 3 respondents were younger than 45, and around 2 in 3 were aged over 45. However, among those aged over 45, a greater proportion of interviews in the second wave of research were completed with those aged 45-64 than in the first wave of research; similarly, a smaller proportion of interviews were completed with those aged 65+

**Figure A1.3 Age of visually impaired groups**



Q. Which of the following age groups do you belong to? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment  
 Wave 1: All VI (280); Severe/profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104). Wave 2: All VI (296);  
 Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62); Mild (120). \* = small sample size.

### Working status / household income

- A1.9 Visually impaired people are less likely to be working than the rest of the UK population, with around 2 in 5 visually impaired working full or part time compared with around 3 in 5 in the UK as a whole. As a result, annual household income is lower among the visually impaired community than the UK average.
- A1.10 Those with severe or profound visual impairments are more likely to be not working as a result of their disability, and also slightly more likely to be retired than the other visually impaired groups, as this group contains a greater proportion of those aged 65+ than the others.
- A1.11 In wave 2, respondents with a visual impairment were slightly more likely to be working than in wave 1. This is largely because of differences in the age profile of each group in wave 2, as a greater number of respondents interviewed were of working age.

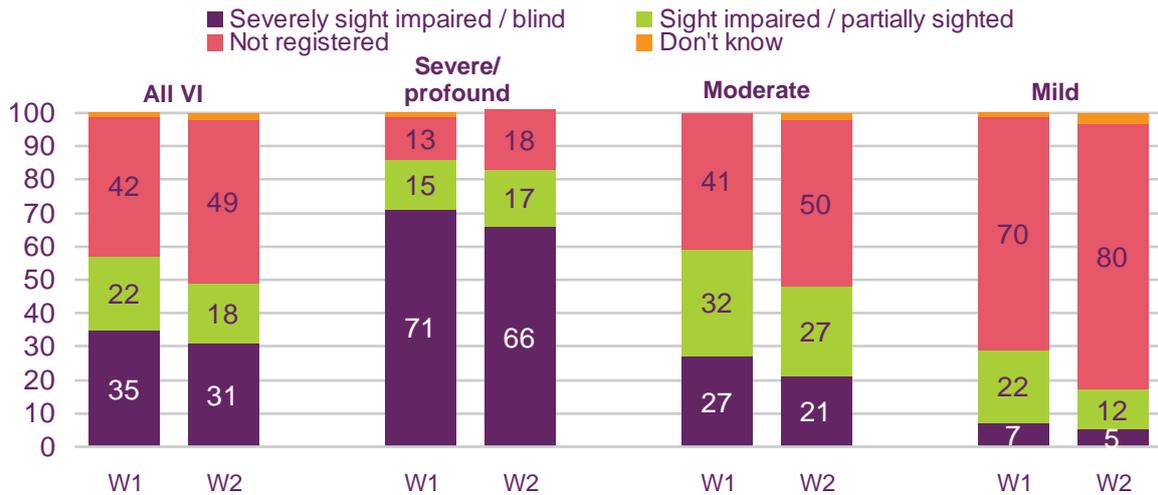
### Ethnicity

- A1.12 In each wave of research, the proportion of visually impaired respondents who were from minority ethnic groups was similar to the UK average (8% and 7% among the visually impaired sample in the first and second waves of research respectively).

### Likelihood of being registered partially sighted or blind

- A1.13 Around 1 in 5 visually impaired respondents in each wave were registered as partially sighted (22% in wave 1; 18% in wave 2), and 1 in 3 in each wave registered as severely sight impaired or blind (42% in wave 1; 49% in wave 2).
- A1.14 Likelihood of being registered partially sighted or blind increases with severity of visual impairment. More than 4 out of 5 respondents with a severe/profound impairment were registered partially sighted, severely sight impaired or blind in each wave, compared with around half of all respondents with a moderate impairment, and around a quarter of respondents with a mild visual impairment.
- A1.15 In the second wave of research, respondents were slightly less likely to be registered partially sighted, severely sight impaired or blind.

**Figure A1.4 Likelihood of being registered partially sighted or blind**

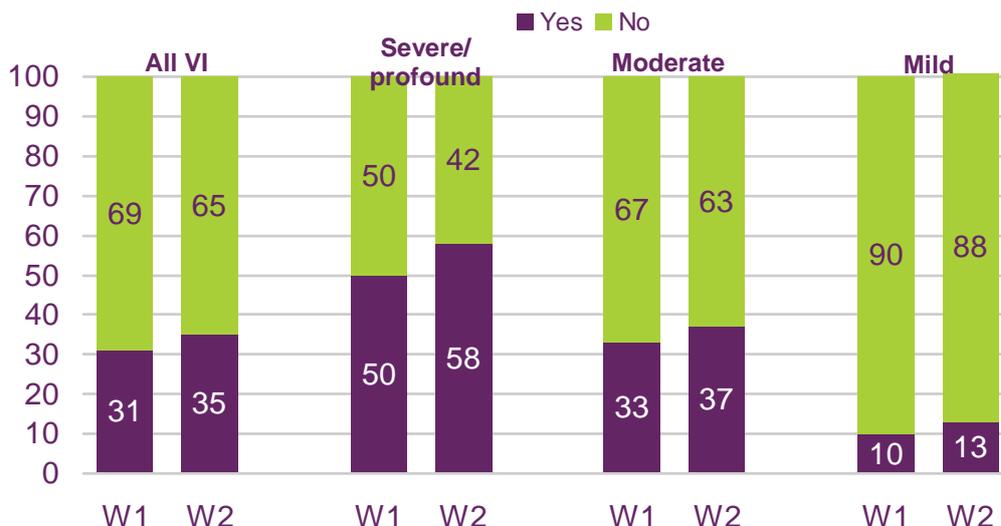


Q. Are you registered as partially sighted or blind? Base: All respondents with a visual impairment  
 Wave 1: All VI (280); Severe/profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104)  
 Wave 2: All VI (296); Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62\*); Mild (120)  
 \* = small sample size.

**Likelihood of membership of organisations for people who are blind or sight impaired**

- A1.16 Likelihood of membership of organisations increases with the severity of an individual’s impairment. Overall, 1 in 3 visually impaired respondents belong to an organisation for people who are blind or sight impaired, while among those with severe or profound visual impairment 50% of the respondents interviewed in wave 1, and 58% of those interviewed in wave 2 were members of an organisation. Around 1 in 3 moderate (33%-37%) and 1 in 10 mild (10%-13%) were members of organisations in each wave.
- A1.17 In the second wave of research, respondents were slightly more likely to be members of organisations for people who are blind or sight impaired than in the first wave of research.

**Figure A1.5 Likelihood of membership of organisations**



Q. Are you a member of any organisations for people who are blind or sight impaired?

Base: All respondents with a visual impairment. Wave 1: All VI (280); Severe/profound (101); Moderate (75\*); Mild (104). Wave 2: All VI (296); Severe/profound (114); Moderate (62\*); Mild (120). \* = small sample size.

A1.18 A1.18 Among the organisations respondents were members of, the most commonly mentioned organisations were:

- RNIB (10% of all visually impaired respondents belonged to the RNIB in wave 1; 13% in wave 2).
- Guide Dogs for the Blind (6% of visually impaired respondents in wave 1; 3% in wave 2).
- Local blind associations or societies (10% of all visually impaired respondents in wave 1, 11% in wave 2).
- Other organisations (16% in wave 1, 19% in wave 2).

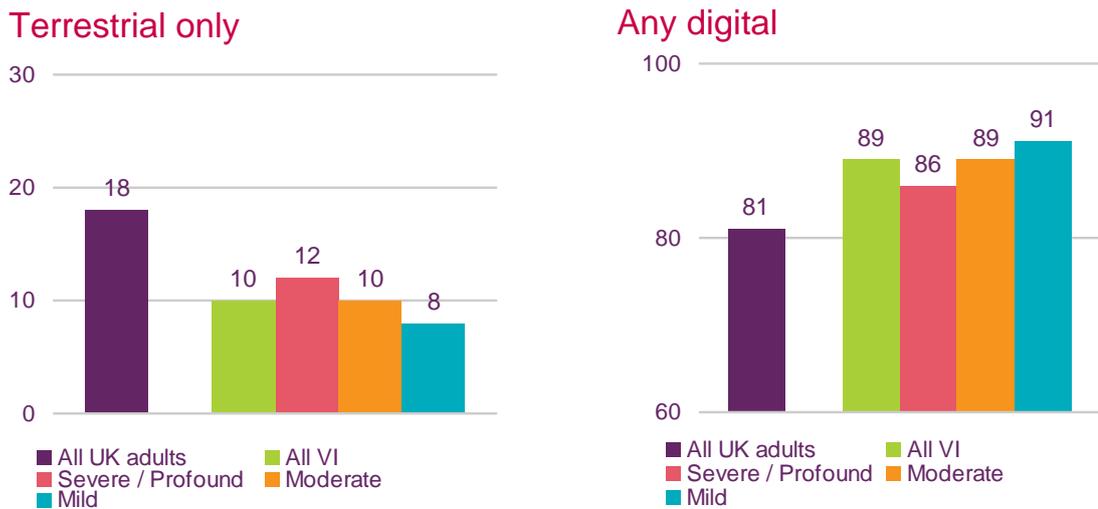
## TV viewing

### Digital vs. Analogue

A1.19 People with visual impairments are more likely than average to have digital television in their households (89% of visually impaired respondents live in multi-channel homes, compared to 81% of the UK as a whole). However, differences exist between the visually impaired groups, in that those with a severe/profound visual impairment are less likely to have digital than those with a moderate or mild visual impairment (86% among severe/profound, compared with 89% among moderate and 91% of those with a mild visual impairment).

A1.20 This is related to weight of TV viewing, as those with a severe/profound visual impairment watch less television, on average, than those with moderate or mild impairments (see *Weight of TV viewing* below).

**Figure A1.6 Types of television received in household**



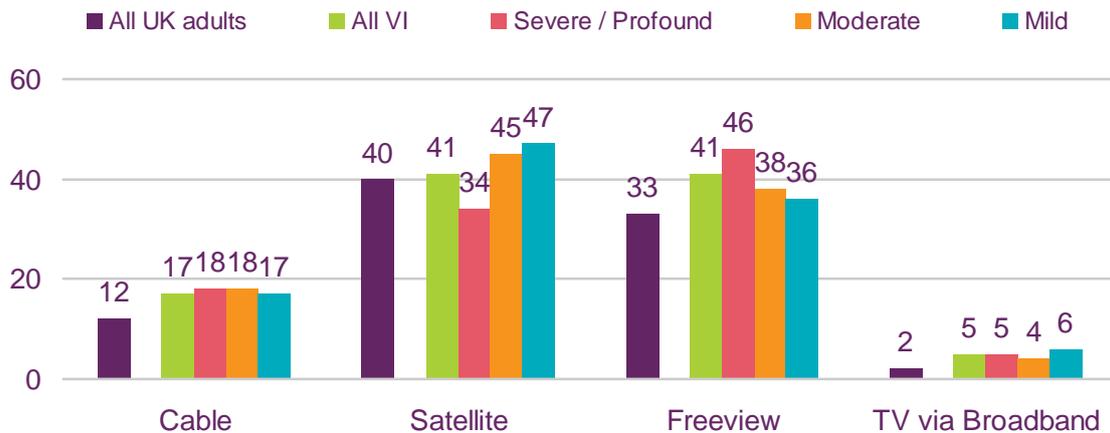
Q. Which, if any, of these types of television does your household receive at the moment? Base: All respondents in waves 1 & 2 combined. All UK Adults (2026); All VI (576); Severe/profound (215); Moderate (137); Mild (224).

A1.21 Demographic differences among the visually impaired community reflect those seen among the UK population as a whole. Men are more likely to say they have digital TV than women (91% and 87% respectively), while those aged 55+ are the least likely to have digital TV (84%, compared with 89% of visually impaired respondents overall).

**Choice of platform**

A1.22 Level of visual impairment also affects the type of digital television service available in the household. Those with a moderate or mild visual impairment are much more likely to have satellite than those with a severe/profound visual impairment, while Freeview is the digital platform of choice among those with severe or profound visual impairments.

**Figure A1.7 Digital TV platforms received in household**



Q. Which, if any, of these types of television does your household receive at the moment? Base: All respondents in waves 1 & 2 combined. All UK Adults (2026); All VI (576); Severe/profound (215); Moderate (137); Mild (224).

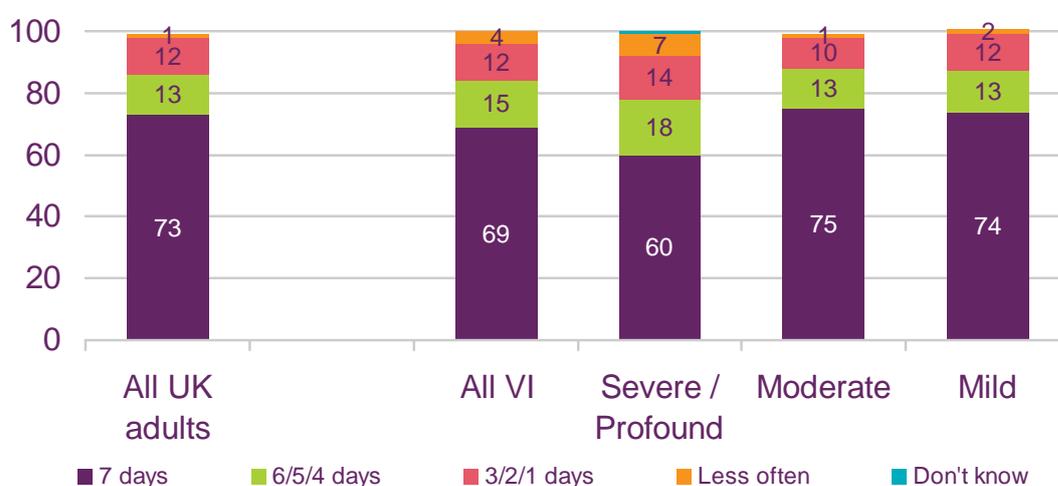
A1.23 This is partly due to the fact that people with severe/profound impairments tend to watch less television, but also due to the fact that household income tends to be

lower among this group. For this group, Freeview offers a cheaper option for receiving digital television than satellite, cable, or TV via broadband.

## Weight of TV viewing

A1.24 On average, the visually impaired community watch a similar amount of television to the rest of the UK population. However, differences do exist between the various levels of visual impairment. Those with a severe/profound visual impairment are less likely to watch television every day than those with a moderate or mild visual impairment, while those with a moderate or mild visual impairment are slightly more likely than the UK average to watch TV every day. Furthermore, 7% of respondents with a severe or profound visual impairment said they watch TV less often than one day a week, indicating that some people within this category rarely watch television at all.

**Figure A1.8 Number of days watch television in an average week**



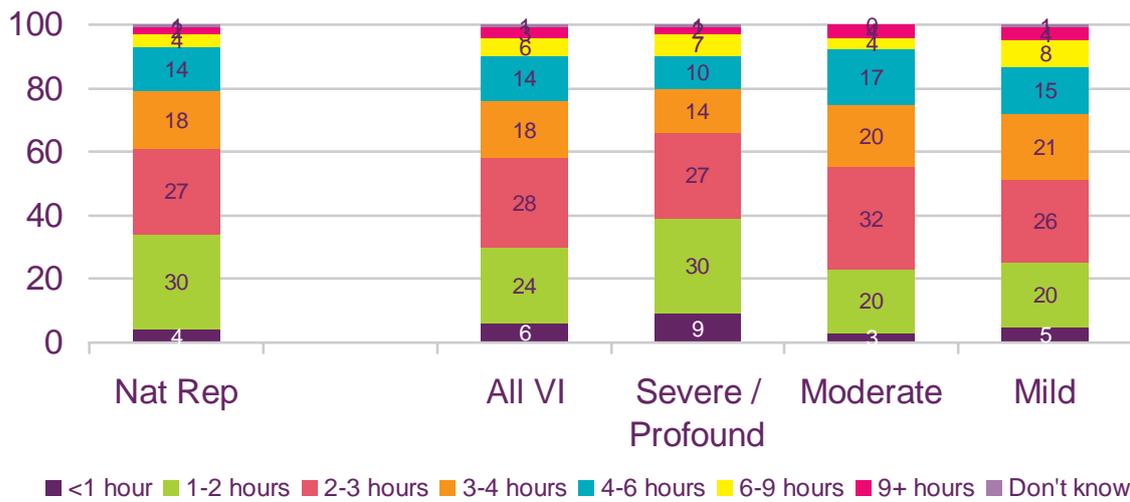
Q. During an average week on how many days do you personally watch television?

Base: All UK adults in wave 1 only (1018) / All respondents with a visual impairment in Waves 1 & 2 combined (576); Severe/profound (215); Moderate (137); Mild (224).

NB Weight of TV viewing questions were only asked of nationally representative sample in Wave 1.

A1.25 Respondents with severe/profound visual impairments watch less television in a given day than average, while those with a mild visual impairment watch more in a given day than average. 9% of severe/profound watch less than an hour in a given day, compared with between 3% and 5% for those in the moderate and mild groups. Nearly 2 in 5 people with a severe/profound visual impairment watch less than 2 hours of television in a given day (39%), compared with around 1 in 4 of those with moderate and mild visual impairments (23% and 25% respectively) watching this amount. Those in the moderate or mild category of visual impairment are the heaviest viewers, most likely to watch 4 or more hours of television on a given day.

**Figure A1.9 Number of hours spent viewing in an average day**



Q. On a day when you personally watch television, for about how many hours do you view?  
 Base: All UK adults in wave 1 only (1018) / All respondents with a visual impairment in Waves 1 & 2 combined (576); Severe/profound (215); Moderate (137); Mild (224).  
 NB Weight of TV viewing questions were only asked of nationally representative sample in Wave 1.

- A1.26 As with the larger UK population, visually impaired people who are not working are heavier TV viewers than those who are working, both in terms of the number of days they watch television in an average week, and the number of hours viewed on any given day.
- A1.27 For analysis of specific tools and services, including Audio Description, used by each visually impaired group, refer to section 4.4 *audio description Usage* above.

## Annex 2

Promotions for the Audio Description Awareness Campaign appeared on the following services.

BBC1	Sky Movies Indie
BBC2	Sky Movies Modern Greats
BBC4	Sky Movies SciFi/Horror
Bravo	Sky Movies Screen 1
Bravo +1*	Sky Movies Screen 2
Bravo 2	Sky News
CH4	Sky One
CH4 +1*	Sky Premiere
Challenge TV	Sky Premiere +1*
Challenge TV +1*	Sky Real Lives
Dave	Sky Real Lives 2
Dave +1*	Sky Sports 1
E4	Sky Sports 2
E4+1*	Sky Sports 3
Film4	Sky Sports Active 1
Film4 +1*	Sky Sports Active 2
Five	Sky Sports Extra
Hallmark	Sky Sports News
ITV	Sky Three
Living	Sky Two
Living +1*	The Disney Channel
Living TV 2	The Disney Channel+1*
More4	TMF
More4 +1*	Trouble
MTV Base	Trouble +1*
MTV Dance	UKTV Documentary
MTV Hits	UKTV Documentary +1*
MTV One	UKTV Drama
MTV R	UKTV Drama +1*
MTV Two	UKTV Food
Nat Geo Wild	UKTV Food +1*
National Geo	UKTV Gardens
National Geo +1*	UKTV Gold
Nick JR	UKTV Gold +1*
Nick Jr 2	UKTV History
Nickelodeon	UKTV History +1*
Nickelodeon Replay*	UKTV People
Nicktoons	UKTV Style
Paramount	UKTV Style 2
Paramount +1*	UKTV Style Plus*
Paramount Comedy 2	VH1
Sky Movies Action/Thriller	VH1 Classic
Sky Movies Classics	Virgin1
Sky Movies Comedy	Virgin1 +1*
Sky Movies Drama	
Sky Movies Family	

\*Denoted services are time shifted versions of the channel of the same name