

Note to Broadcasters

Broadcast expectations of ethnic minority audiences

Ofcom has today (3 November 2021) published new research into the expectations of minority ethnic audiences of the TV channels and radio stations that directly serve them and their cultural or religious communities. This research is the first of its kind and was conducted on behalf of Ofcom by Ethnic Dimension, a research agency that specialises in working with minority ethnic communities. We carried out this research because we became aware from our ongoing casework and previous research that ethnic minority audiences' expectations for these targeted, often smaller, services might differ to mainstream stations and channels. It is important for Ofcom that, in the context of freedom of expression, including the audience's right to receive information and ideas, we have a full and up to date understanding of such expectations while ensuring we protect audiences from harmful and offensive material in programmes.

The research involved participants from Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, and Arabic-speaking backgrounds¹ and focused on Ofcom's rules around harm, offence, hatred and abuse. It found that these channels and stations are highly valued by their audiences who told us that these services gave them a sense of belonging and connection to their ethnic communities. However, participants also identified some specific areas of concern on these services and many participants felt the same protections and mitigations they saw on mainstream services should also be more regularly put in place on targeted services.

In the report we set out in detail the areas of concern identified by participants and the mitigations they expected licensees to put in place. Ofcom expects its licensees to use this research to help inform and support their compliance with Ofcom's Broadcasting Code, in particular in relation to generally accepted standards, including Ofcom's rules on Harm and Offence (Section Two of the Code) and hatred and abuse (Section Three of the Code).

Today's research also provided us with findings about how the participants felt about Ofcom, awareness of our role and remit, and their likelihood to engage with us. It demonstrates that we have more work to do in this area. We are increasing our efforts to drive greater awareness of Ofcom among these communities, so audiences know who we are and can feel confident in their ability to raise concerns with us.

¹ This represents the minority ethnic groups with the highest number of Ofcom licensed channels and stations specifically targeted at these respective communities.