

## **Freedom of Information: Right to know request**

Thank you for your request:

*"Attitudes to Potentially Offensive Language and Gestures on TV and Radio", Research Report, 2016, IPSOS MORI and OFCOM. This report ranks potentially offensive terms, for example, the table on page 44 ranks terms into 4 levels: mild, medium, strong and strongest. I have read the report carefully, particularly the methodology which makes clear that ranking are obtained from individuals who participated in the research. But the report gives an aggregate, or average, ranking for "all" individuals. I request information on the method of aggregation that was used. I emailed the IPSOS MORI authors of the report several weeks ago but have not received a reply. The reason I request this aggregation is that I am doing research at the London School of Economics into rankings of the sort used in the report and think my research may lead to improved ways of establishing the potential offensiveness of terms."*

The research was designed to explore why participants held certain views about potentially offensive language and gestures, so the principal method was qualitative. A large number of participants were included from a wide range of backgrounds, but the sample was not intended to be statistically representative of the wider UK population.

As part of this, an online lab was used to test views of specific words and gestures in more detail. During the online lab, 127 participants rated each of the 150 words/terms/gestures in terms of how acceptable they thought they were before and after the watershed. They also discussed the reasons for their ratings, and the importance of context in evaluating words and gestures.

During the extended group discussions and depth interviews, participants grouped a subset of 50 words into categories, based on whether they were generally acceptable before the watershed, after the watershed, or never acceptable.

All of these discussions and ratings informed the categories for each word or gesture. The words and gestures are grouped, based on participants' responses, to reflect a general hierarchy of acceptability. These groupings reflect a broad range of responses, and therefore much of the nuance of participants' reasoning about acceptability is de-emphasised.

As such, the mild, medium, strong, and strongest categories were not created solely from the quantitative ratings, but from an analysis across the qualitative and quantitative findings and cannot therefore be precisely defined.

#### Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for undertaking internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact:

Steve Gettings  
The Secretary to the Corporation  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London SE1 9HA

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF