

Research into parents' and teenagers' opinions and concerns on pre-watershed television programming

1 Introduction

Background

Following Ofcom decisions in April and May 2011 on *The X Factor*¹ and two music videos (Flo Rida and Rihanna²), Ofcom undertook a number of actions concerning the 9pm watershed. These include issuing new Broadcasting Code guidance on the watershed – specifically about the suitability of material in music videos broadcast before the watershed and material in pre-watershed programmes that attract large family viewing audiences.

In addition, in relation to its recommendation of ensuring the content of pre-watershed television programming better meets parents' expectations, the recent Bailey Review (June 2011) indicated that Ofcom should extend its research on the views of parents about the watershed.

Ofcom already undertakes research among parents about the level of concerns related to the type of content that their children watch on television³. We also measure parents' views about the time of the watershed and whose responsibility it is to protect children⁴. According to our Media Tracker research (2010), over three-quarters (77%) of parents believed the 9pm watershed is at about the right time. This compared with 10% who felt it was too late and 12% who said that it was too early. A similar proportion of parents (73%) thought that the amount of regulation of television was 'about right'. This compared with 3% who thought there was too much regulation of television, and 13% who thought there was too little. Ofcom's Children's Media Literacy research in 2011 indicates that just under one-third of all parents (31%) have concerns regarding the content of the TV programmes that their children watch. Longitudinal data from this research indicate that these parental concerns have reduced over time (36% in 2009 compared to 31% in 2011).

Ofcom has also conducted more detailed research in this area from time to time⁵. In our latest research we wanted to explore in detail the type of concerns and the type of programmes broadcast before the watershed that may generate concerns. We also wanted to undertake specific research on attitudes towards music video content broadcast pre-watershed. Therefore, in order to explore these issues in more detail and help inform Ofcom's planned updating of the guidance to the Broadcasting Code, we commissioned bespoke quantitative research in July 2011 among parents and also teens aged 12-17. The results of these surveys are detailed in this document. In future, we intend to add some of the questions posed in these surveys to our ongoing research.

¹ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb180/obb180.pdf>

² <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb180/obb180.pdf>; and <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb181/obb181.pdf>

³ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/media-literacy-audit-reports/>

⁴ <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/reviews-investigations/public-service-broadcasting/annrep/psb11/>

⁵ Previous Ofcom research on these issues was conducted in 2005:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/radio-research/environment.pdf>

To provide useful background context to the issues dealt with in the July 2011 research, we also detail in this document a summary of results from Ofcom's regular Media Tracker research⁶, focussing on parents' opinions on television, and analysis of BARB data⁷ on children's music video channel viewing.

Summary of key findings

- In Ofcom's new 2011 research, the majority (58%) of all parents surveyed⁸ were not concerned by the types of programming their children had watched on television before 9pm in the previous 12 months. Thirty-four percent (34%) of parents were 'not at all concerned' and 24% of parents were 'not very concerned'. The level of concern was lower among younger parents, parents whose eldest child was aged 0-3 or 16-17, and those in socio-economic groups C2DE.
- A third (33%) of all parents surveyed expressed some level of concern regarding the programming their children had seen on TV before 9pm in the last 12 months. Nine per cent (9%) were 'very concerned' and 24% 'fairly concerned'. The level of concern was higher among older parents, parents whose eldest child was aged 10-14, and ABC1s.
- The top spontaneous (unprompted) concerns among all parents surveyed were violence (20%), sexually explicit content (17%), offensive language (17%), unsuitable content for younger people/children (9%), and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature (9%). When all mentions of anything sexual were aggregated the total figure for all parents concerned about any sexual content was 21%⁹.
- The top five types of programming causing concern among all parents surveyed were soaps (14%), film (14%), reality programmes (12%), music videos (11%) and dramas (7%).
- Of the 33% of all parents surveyed who expressed concern regarding the programming their children had seen on TV before 9pm, 70% said they switched off or switched over as a result of seeing something concerning for their child. This compared with 28% who said they discussed the issue with their child and the 4% who said they made a complaint.

Parents: music video concerns

- As a total of all parents surveyed, 11% had concerns about programming that had been shown on TV in the last 12 months and mentioned music videos as a type of programming that caused concern. The level of concern regarding music videos was higher among parents aged 35-44, female parents, parents whose eldest child is aged 10-14, and ABC1s.
- The top spontaneous (unprompted) concerns regarding music videos as a percentage of all parents were sexually explicit content (6%), overtly sexual performance (6%), offensive language (5%), nakedness/naked body parts (5%),

⁶ Ofcom's Media Tracker is a UK representative survey of approximately 2,100 adults (aged 16+) conducted twice a year (April and October). The survey explores attitudes and opinion towards various media including television and radio. Thirty percent of the sample are parents.

⁷ British Audience Research Board.

⁸ A total of 1054 parents were surveyed. As a weighted base, this represents 1175 parents.

⁹ This aggregated figure is made up of the number of parents that gave at least one of the following responses: sexually explicit content, overtly sexual performances, nakedness, and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature.

generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature (4%) and violence (4%). When all mentions of anything sexual were aggregated the total figure for *all* parents concerned about any sexual content in music videos was 10%⁵.

- 72% of the parents with a concern about their child's pre-watershed viewing said they switched off or switched over as a result of seeing something concerning for their child. In addition 30% said they discussed the issue with their child while 8% said they made a complaint.

Teens: music video concerns

- The majority of teens (66%) surveyed¹⁰ said they had not seen any programming on TV before 9pm in the previous 12 months that had made them uncomfortable or they had found offensive¹¹.
- Just under a quarter (23%) of teens said they had seen programming on TV before 9pm in the previous 12 months that had made them uncomfortable or they had found offensive.
- The top spontaneous (unprompted) concerns measured as a percentage of all teens were sexually explicit content (7%), offensive language (4%), violence (4%), nakedness/naked body parts (2%), news (1%) and animals being killed/mistreated (1%). When all mentions of anything sexual are aggregated the total figure for sexual content concerns among all teens measured 8%.
- The top types of programme causing concern measured as a percentage of all teens are film (7%), soaps (6%), reality TV (5%), music videos (4%) and dramas (4%). These are followed by documentaries (3%) and news (2%).
- Over half (51%) of teens surveyed either switched off or switched over if they saw something uncomfortable or offensive. Just under half (48%) said they discussed it with their family and/or friends. Sixteen percent (16%) said they continued watching and 14% said they did nothing.
- As a total of all teens surveyed, 4% had concerns about programming that had been shown on TV in the previous 12 months and mentioned music videos as a type of programming causing concern. This totalled 28 teens in our survey.
- It is not possible to report reliably on the detail of the offence within music videos because of the small base size of teens concerned. There were only 28 teens who were concerned of the 768 teens surveyed. However the data do indicate sexual content and offensive language are among the items that cause offence.

¹⁰ A total of 768 teens were surveyed.

¹¹ Respondents were reminded to think of the things they watch on TV during the day and evening up until 9pm throughout the survey.

2 Bespoke Ofcom research 2011: parents' opinions on their children's viewing of pre-watershed television programming

Objectives and methodology

This section details the bespoke research commissioned by Ofcom to understand the views of parents regarding their children's television viewing before 9pm. It was designed to complement what we already know from the Media Tracker analysis about parents' views on what they watch themselves, by adding insight into parents' opinions on the programming their children watch. The core purpose of the research was to understand the scale and depth of concerns among parents, regarding pre-watershed programming, with a particular interest in music videos.

The research covered the following areas:

Pre-watershed programming:

- the proportion of parents with concerns with regard to pre-watershed programming and their children's viewing;
- the nature of their concerns;
- the type of programme causing concern; and
- parents' response to their child being exposed to inappropriate content.

Music videos:

- the proportion of parents with concerns regarding music videos;
- the nature of their concerns; and
- their response to their child being exposed to inappropriate content.

The data come from a face-to-face interviewer-administered omnibus survey conducted among a representative sample of 1054¹² GB parents/carers of children aged 0-17. The omnibus survey was run by Kantar Media as part of the TNS CAPI (computer aided personal interviewing) omnibus. Fieldwork took place between 22 July and 2 August 2011.

In the introduction to the survey the following introduction was read out: *'I'd like to ask you about your views on what is shown on TV nowadays and the types of programmes your children watch. By children, I specifically mean children aged 17 or younger. I would like you to think about TV programmes that are on during the day and evening up until 9pm'.*

Throughout the survey, respondents were also reminded to think of the programming that their children watch on TV during the day and evening up until 9pm.

In addition to the parents' survey, Ofcom also commissioned a similar survey among children/teens aged 12-17 using the TNS online teens omnibus survey. This was an online self-completion survey. This survey was run among a representative sample of 768 children/teens over the same period. For simplicity, the 12-17 age group sample is referred to as the 'teen sample' throughout this section.

A similar questionnaire was used for both the parents' and the teens' surveys. The methodology differences should be noted (face-to-face versus online) because this means direct statistical comparisons cannot be made between the two data sets.

¹² The parent data are weighted to ensure they are representative of the GB population. The weighted base is 1175.

Detailed findings: parents opinions on pre-watershed programming

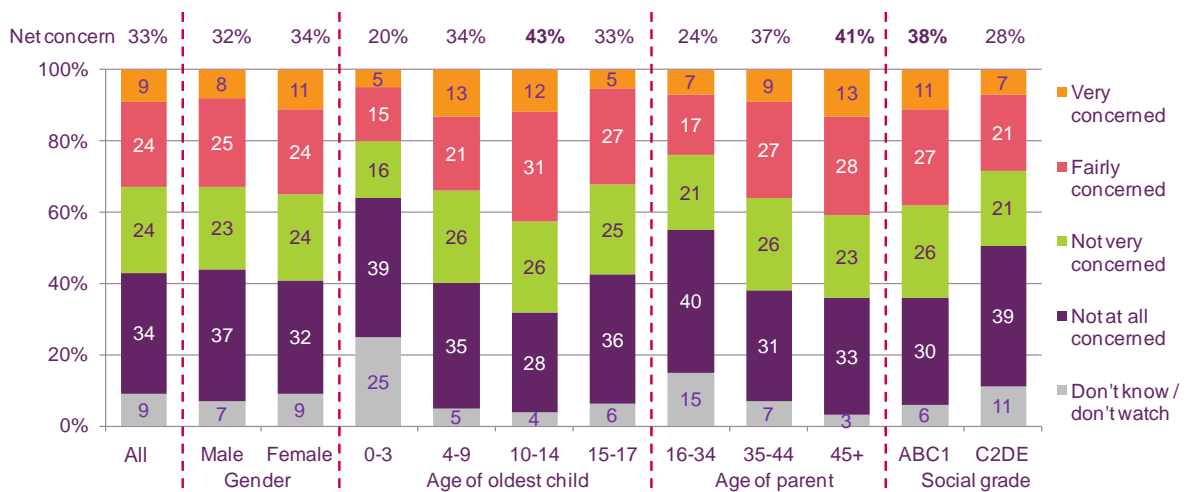
The majority of parents (58%) were not concerned by the programming their children had watched on television in the previous 12 months (Figure 1.1)

Parents were asked the following question: "Thinking about your child's/children's television viewing in general, how concerned are you, if at all, by the types of things your child/children has seen on TV in the last 12 months?" The question used a prompted response with a four point scale, offering 'very concerned', 'fairly concerned', 'not very concerned', 'not at all concerned' as response options.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of parents were 'not at all concerned' and 24% of parents were 'not very concerned' about their child's pre-watershed viewing in the last 12 months. A further 9% stated either that they 'don't know' or said their child does not watch much TV nowadays. Levels of concern were significantly lower (as measured by higher numbers of those parents expressing they were 'not at all concerned') among younger parents (aged 16-34), C2DEs and parents whose eldest child was at the younger age range (aged 0-3) or older age range (aged 16-17).

Nine percent (9%) of respondents said they 'very concerned' and 24% 'fairly concerned' regarding their child's pre-watershed viewing. Levels of concern was significantly higher (as measured by those parents expressing they were 'very/fairly concerned') among older parents, parents whose eldest child is aged 10-14 and those in ABC1 households.

Figure 1.1 Level of concern among parents regarding children's pre-watershed viewing



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP1 I'd like to ask you about your views on what is shown on TV nowadays and the types of programmes your children watch. By children, I specifically mean children aged 17 or younger. I would like you to think about TV programmes that are on during the day and evening up until 9pm. So, thinking about your child's/children's television viewing in general, how concerned are you, if at all, by the types of things your child/children has seen on TV in the last 12 months?

Base: All parents (n=1175).

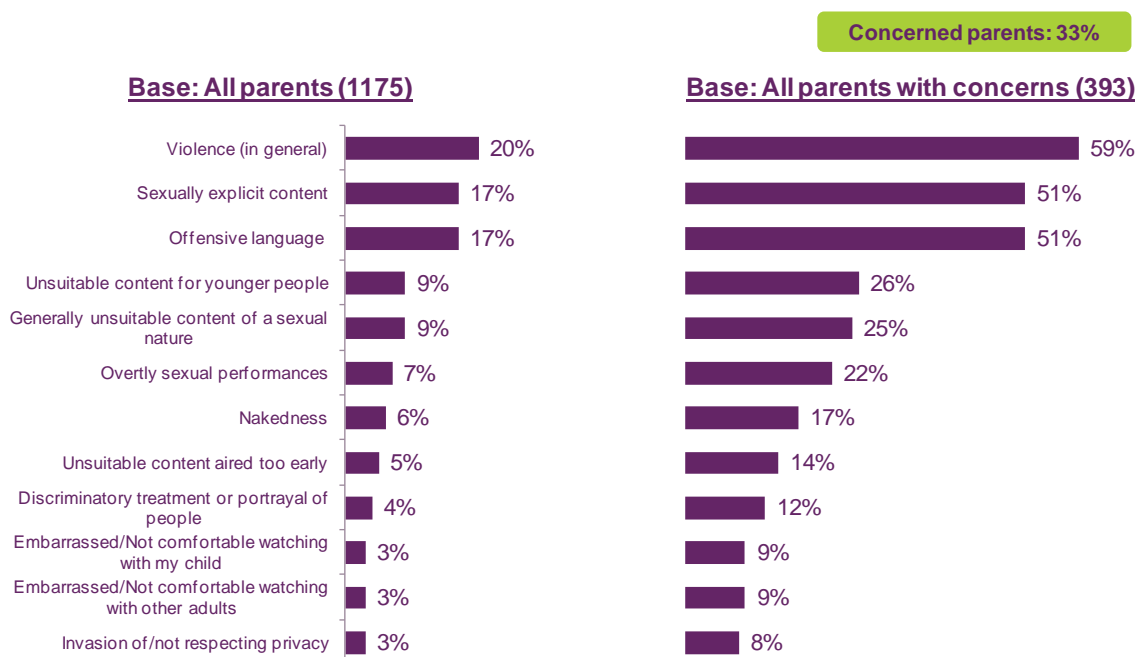
The top three unprompted concerns were violence, sexually explicit content and offensive language (Figure 1.2)

Parents were asked what concerned them about their child/children's pre-watershed programme viewing. Responses were unprompted so that they were not influenced by pre-determined concerns. Respondents were asked to give as much detail as possible. If they made several comments about the same type of concern, each would be coded separately.

Looking at the data as a proportion of all parents surveyed, one-in-five (20%) expressed concerns about violence, one-in-six (17%) were concerned about sexually explicit content and one-in-six (17%) were concerned about offensive language. Just under one-in-ten (9%) of all parents mentioned unsuitable content for younger people/children and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature. Three percent (3%) reported being embarrassed by watching some content with their children and 3% reported being embarrassed by watching some content with other adults. When all mentions of anything sexual are aggregated the parents referencing sexual content concerns totalled 21%¹³.

When looking at the data as a proportion of those parents who were concerned about their child's pre-watershed viewing (33% of all parents surveyed), the figures for the top five unprompted concerns among these parents are: violence (59%), sexually explicit content (51%), offensive language (51%), unsuitable content for younger people/children (26%), and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature (25%). When all mentions of anything sexual are aggregated the net figure for parents with any sexual content concerns was 62%⁷.

Figure 1.2 Type of concern among parents regarding children's pre-watershed viewing of programmes



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP2 What kinds of things concern you about the things your child/children sees on TV? Again, I would like you to think specifically about things that your child/children watch during the day and evening up until 9pm. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE. Top concerns charted.

Base: All parents (n=1175). Base: All parents very/fairly concerned (n=393).

¹³ The aggregated figure is made up of the number of parents that gave at least one of the following responses: sexually explicit content, overtly sexual performances, nakedness, and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature.

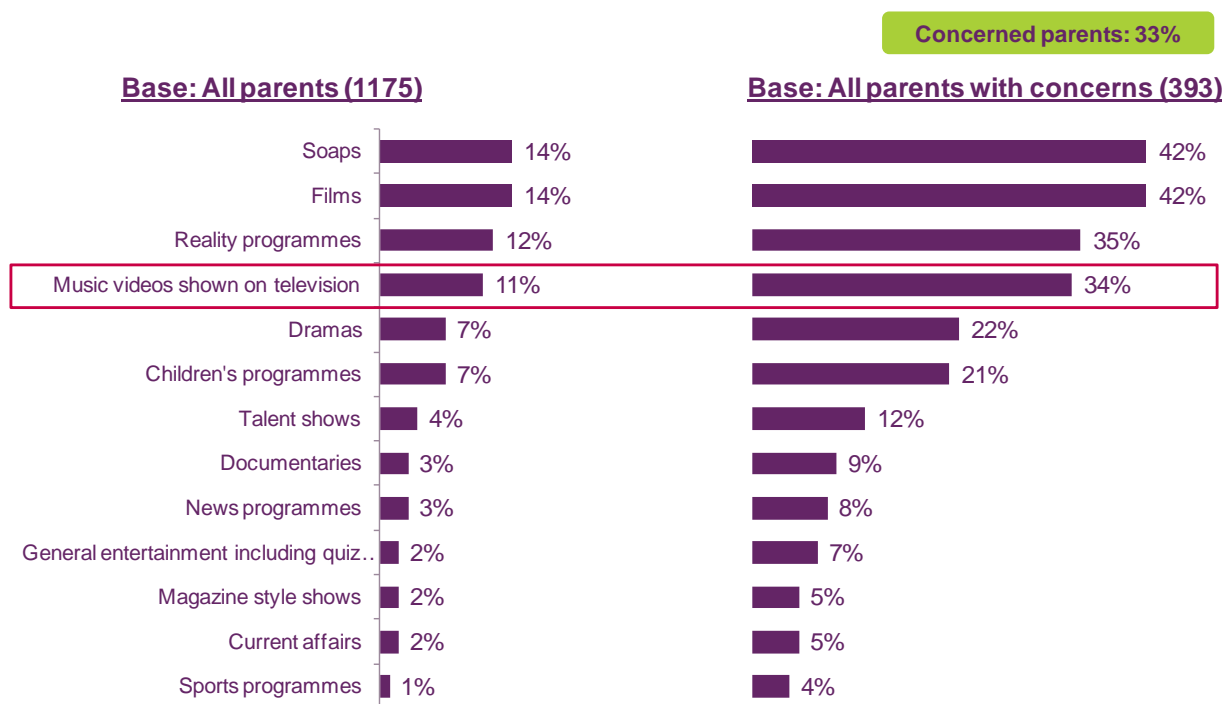
Soaps and films were the types of programme that caused most concern (Figure 1.3)

Parents were asked what types of programmes concerned them regarding their child/children's television viewing. This question was prompted with a list of genres/programme types and respondents could give multiple responses.

When analysing the data as a proportion of all parents, the top two types of programme that caused most concern were soaps (14%) and films (14%). These were followed by reality programmes (12%), music videos (11%), dramas (7%) and children's programmes (7%).

The corresponding figures among a base of parents concerned about their child's pre-watershed viewing were: soaps (42%), film (42%), reality programmes (35%), music videos (34%), dramas (22%) and children's programmes (21%).

Figure 1.3 Genre of programming causing concern regarding children's pre-watershed viewing



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP3 What types of programme concern you regarding your child's television viewing? You can say more than one programme type if appropriate.

Base: All parents (n=1175). Base; All parents very/fairly concerned (n=393).

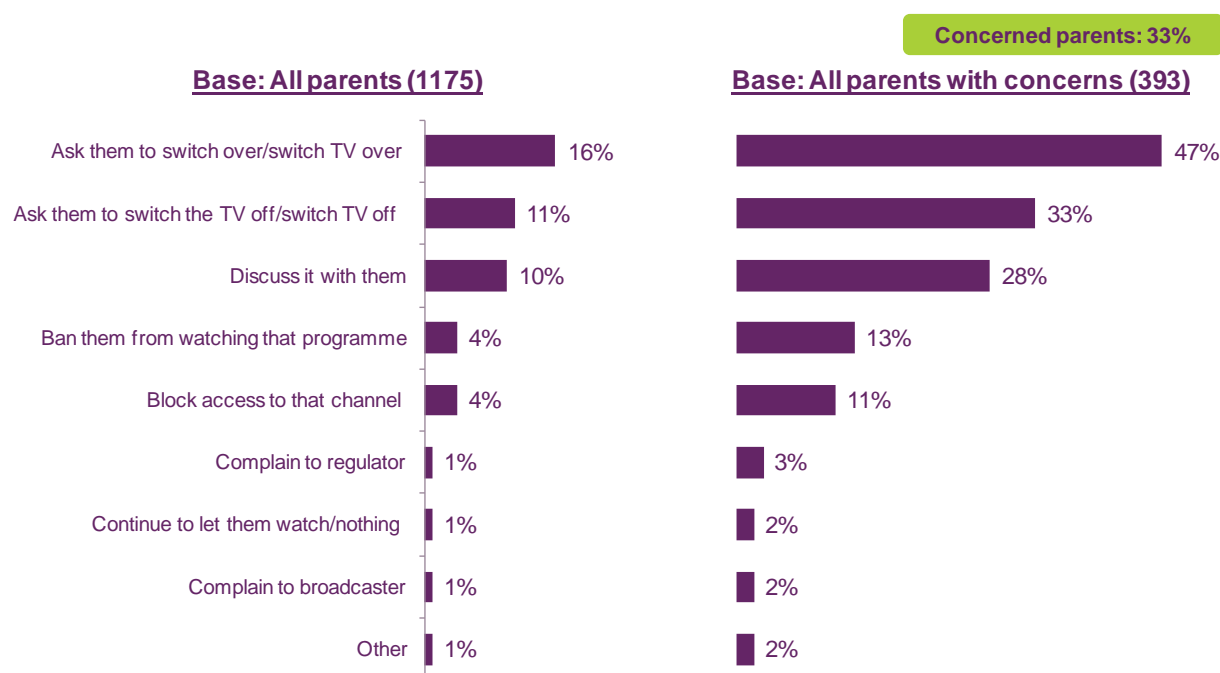
The most common response to seeing programming on television which causes concern about children's viewing is to switch over/switch off (Figure 1.4)

Parents who had concerns about their child's pre-watershed viewing were asked what they did/how they reacted when they saw programming on television which caused concern about their child/children's viewing. This question was prompted with a list of possible responses and respondents could give multiple responses.

When analysing the data as a proportion of all parents surveyed, just under a quarter (23%) said they switched off or switched over as a result of seeing something concerning for their child (16% switch over/11% switch off). One-in-ten (10%) said they discussed the issue with their child, while 4% said they banned future viewing of that programme and 4% said they blocked access to the channel. Just 1% said they made a complaint.

The corresponding figures among a base of parents who said they had concerns about their child's pre-watershed viewing was 70% who switch off or switch over (47% switch over/33% switch off), 28% who said they discussed the issue with their child, 13% who said they banned future viewing of that programme, 11% who said they blocked access to the channel and 4% who said they made a complaint (2% to the broadcaster and 2% to the regulator).

Figure 1.4 Reaction to seeing pre-watershed programming that causes concern



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP4 How do you react when you see something on TV that your child\children is\are watching that concerns you? In other words what do you generally do? Again, I would like you to think specifically about things that your children watch during the day and evening up until 9pm.

Base: All parents (n=1175). Base: All parents very/fairly concerned (n=393).

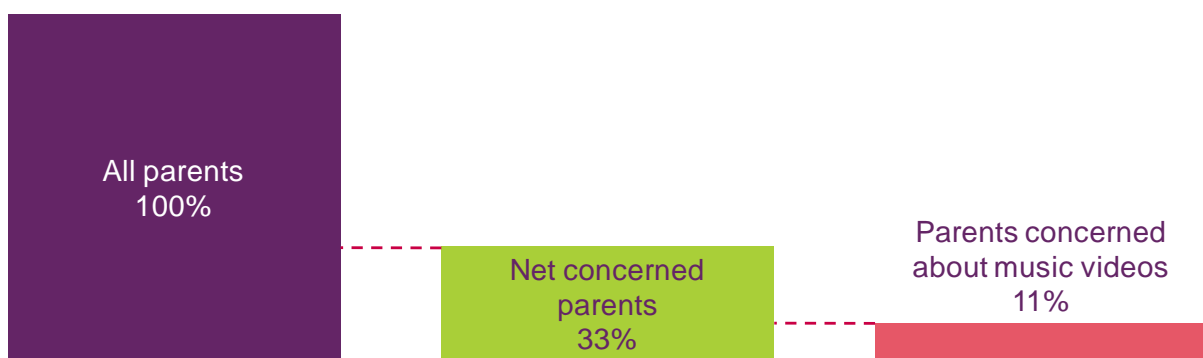
Just over one-in-ten (11%) of parents expressed some concern regarding music videos pre watershed (Figure 1.5)

As we have already shown, 33% of all parents expressed some level of concern regarding the programming their children had seen on TV before 9pm in the previous 12 months (see 'Net concerned parents' in Figure 1.5 below).

One-third (34%) of these parents with concerns mentioned music videos as a genre of programming that caused concern. Therefore, as a total of all parents surveyed, 11% had concerns about music videos shown on TV pre-watershed in the previous 12 months.

Female and ABC1 parents were more likely to be concerned about music videos compared to males and C2DEs.

Figure 1.5 Core incidence of concerns summary



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

Music video concerns centred on sexually explicit content, overtly sexual performances and offensive language (Figure 1.6)

Those parents who gave music videos as a genre of programming that caused them concern were then asked specifically what concerned them about the things their child/children sees in music videos. Responses were unprompted so that they were not influenced by pre-determined concerns. Respondents were asked to give as many details as possible. If they made several comments about the same type of concern, each comment would be coded separately.

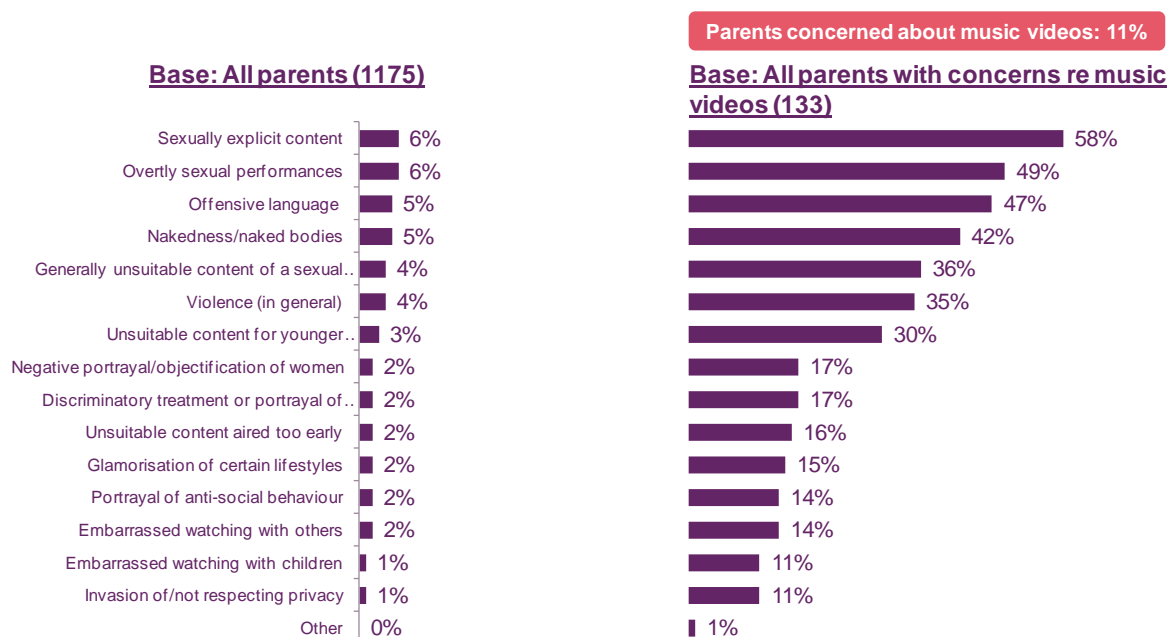
When analysing the responses as a proportion of all parents, one-in-sixteen (6%) expressed concerns regarding sexually explicit content, a similar number (6%) expressed concerns regarding overtly sexual performances. One-in-twenty (5%) mentioned offensive language and naked bodies/nakedness. When all mentions of anything sexual are aggregated, the proportion of all parents referencing sexual content in music video totalled 10%¹⁴.

When looking at the same data as a proportion of those parents who said they were concerned about music videos (11% of the total sample), the figures for the top five unprompted concerns are sexually explicit content (58%), overtly sexual performances (49%), offensive language (47%), naked bodies/nakedness (42%), generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature (36%). When all mentions of anything sexual are aggregated the

¹⁴ The aggregated figure is made up of the number of parents that gave at least one of the following responses: sexually explicit content, overtly sexual performances, nakedness, and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature.

net figure for parents with any concerns about sexual content within music videos was 88%¹⁵.

Figure 1.6 Type of concern regarding children's pre-watershed viewing of music videos



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP5 You mentioned music videos as one of the things on TV that concerns you regarding your child's/children's viewing. Thinking specifically about these music videos, what kinds of things concern you? Again, I would like you to think specifically about music videos that your children watch during the day and evening up until 9pm. DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODE. Top concerns charted.

Base: All parents (n=1175). Base: All parents who express concerns about music videos (n=113).

The most common response to seeing something concerning in a music video that a child is watching is to switch over/switch off (Figure 1.7)

Parents were asked how they generally reacted when they saw something that concerned them in a music video that their child/children was/were watching. This question was prompted with a list of possible options (see Figure 1.7) and respondents could give multiple responses.

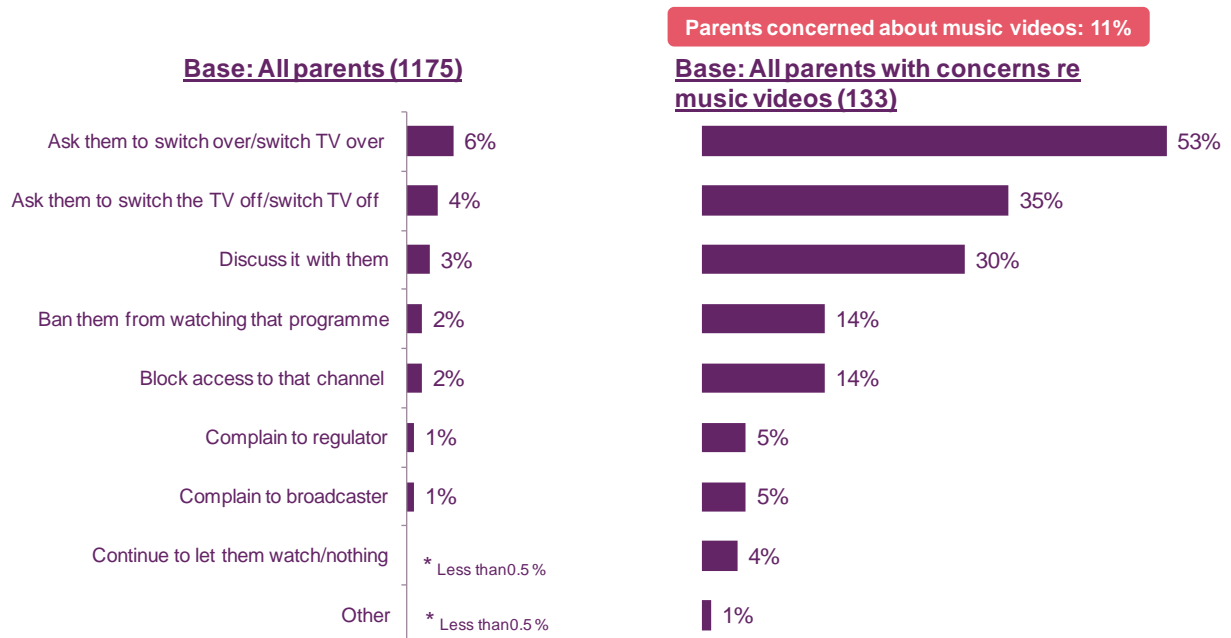
When analysing the data as a proportion of all parents, under one-in-ten (8%) said they switched off or switched over as a result of seeing something concerning for their child (6% switch over/4% switch off – some did both depending). Three percent (3%) said they discussed the issue with their child. Two percent (2%) said they banned future viewing of that programme and 2% said they blocked access to the channel. Just under 1% said they generally make a complaint.

The corresponding figures among a base of those parents who said they were concerned about music videos were: 72% said they switch off or switch over (35% switch over/30%

¹⁵ The aggregated figure is made up of the number of parents that gave at least one of the following responses: sexually explicit content, overtly sexual performances, nakedness, and generally unsuitable content of a sexual nature.

switch off – some selected both as a common reaction), 14% said they discussed the issue with their child, 14% said they banned future viewing of that programme and 5% said they blocked access to the channel while 5% said they made a complaint to the regulator and 4% said they complained to the broadcaster.

Figure 1.7 Reaction to seeing pre-watershed music videos that cause concern



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QP6 How do you react when you see something on a music video that you feel concerned about your child seeing? In other words what do you generally do? Again, I would like you to think specifically about music videos that your children watch during the day and evening up until 9pm.

Base: All parents (n=1175). Base: All parents who express concerns about music videos (n=133).

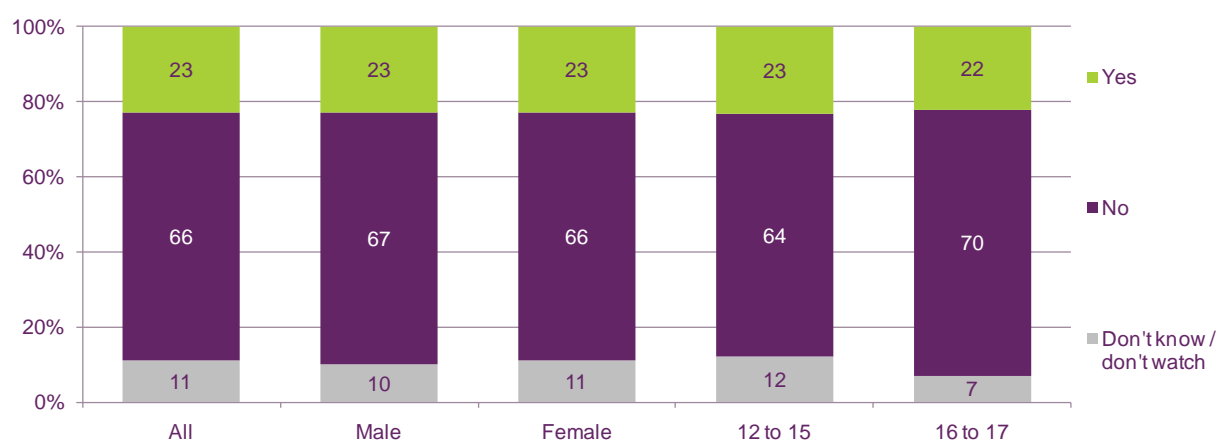
Detailed findings: Teens' opinions on pre-watershed programming

The majority of teens (66%) are not concerned by pre-watershed programming¹⁶ (Figure 1.8)

Two-thirds (66%) of teens surveyed said 'no' when asked if they had personally seen programming on television that made them feel uncomfortable to watch or that they had considered to be offensive in the last 12 months. A further 11% said 'don't know'. There were no significant differences in levels of concern across the sub-groups.

Just under one-quarter (23%) of all teens said they had seen programming that had made them feel uncomfortable or that they had found offensive in the last 12 months. Again, there were no significant differences in levels of concern across the sub groups.

Figure 1.8 Level of concern regarding pre-watershed programming



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QT3 Now, we would like you to think about things shown on TV that some people may find uncomfortable or offensive to watch, we would like to ask you how you personally feel about this type of material. Again, we would like you to think specifically about TV programmes that are on during the day and evening up until 9pm. In the last 12 months, have you personally seen anything on television that made you feel uncomfortable to watch or that you considered to be offensive?

Base: All GB teens who watch TV nowadays (n=768)

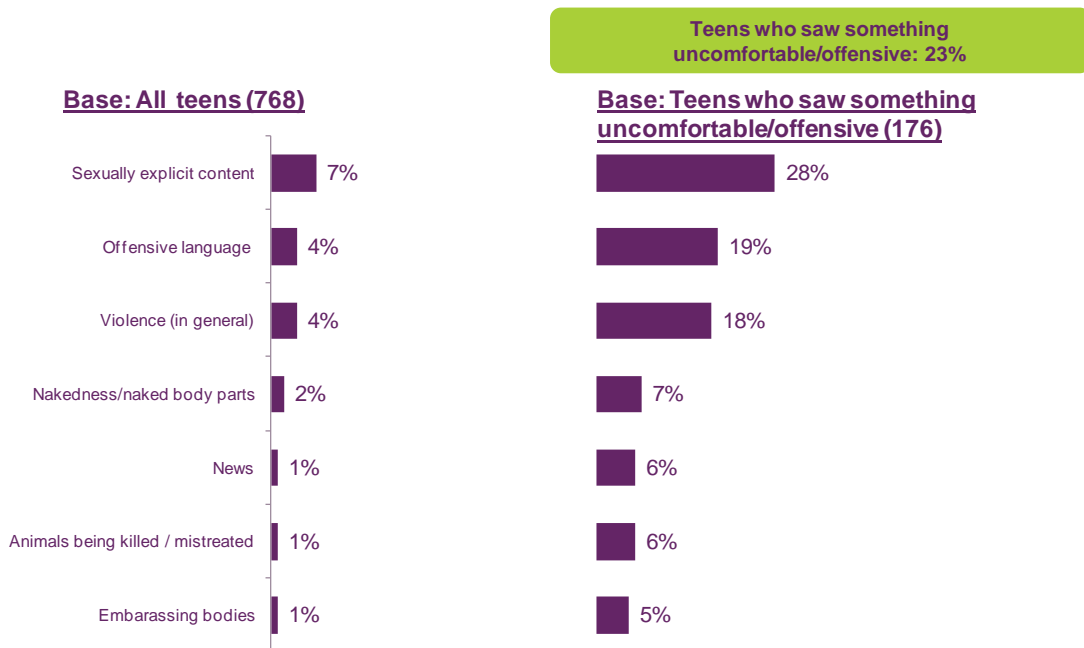
¹⁶ Respondents were reminded to think of the programming they watch on TV during the day and evening up until 9pm throughout the survey.

The top concerns among teens were sexually explicit content, offensive language and violence (Figure 1.9)

Sexually explicit content was the most common thing to make teens feel uncomfortable or offended (7% of all teens surveyed mentioned this). This was followed by mentions of offensive language (4%) and violence (4%) among all teens surveyed.

When analysing the data as a proportion of teens that said they had seen something uncomfortable or offensive, 28% mentioned sexually explicit content, followed by offensive language (19%) and violence (18%).

Figure 1.9 Types of concern regarding pre-watershed programming



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QT4 What kinds of things that you saw on television made you feel uncomfortable or offended you? (pre-watershed)

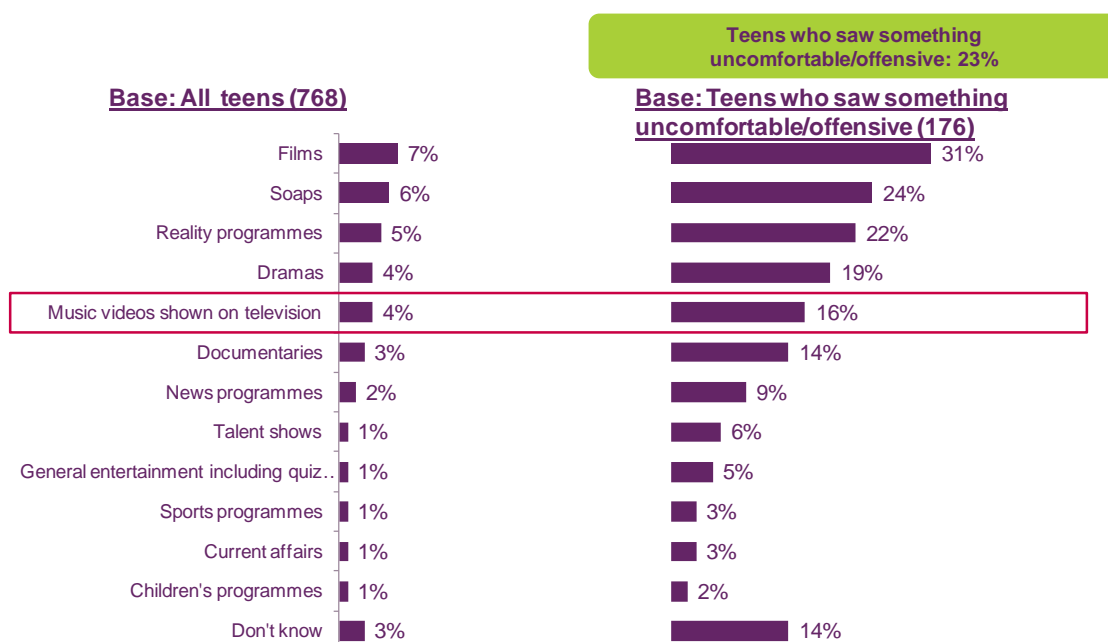
Base: All GB teens who watch TV nowadays (n=768)/Base: All GB teens who saw something uncomfortable or offensive pre-watershed (n=176).

Film was the most likely genre of programming to cause concern among teens (Figure 1.10)

Films caused offence or discomfort to 7% of all teens in the previous 12 months. This was followed by soaps at 6% and reality programmes at 5%. Dramas were a concern for 4% of all teens surveyed as were music videos shown on television, which was the fifth stated genre of programming to cause offence or discomfort.

The corresponding figures among a base of teens that said they had seen something uncomfortable or offensive were: films cited by 31%, followed by soaps (24%), reality programmes (22%), dramas (19%) and music videos shown on television at 16%.

Figure 1.10 Genres of concern regarding pre-watershed programming



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QT5 What type of programme was it? (pre-watershed)

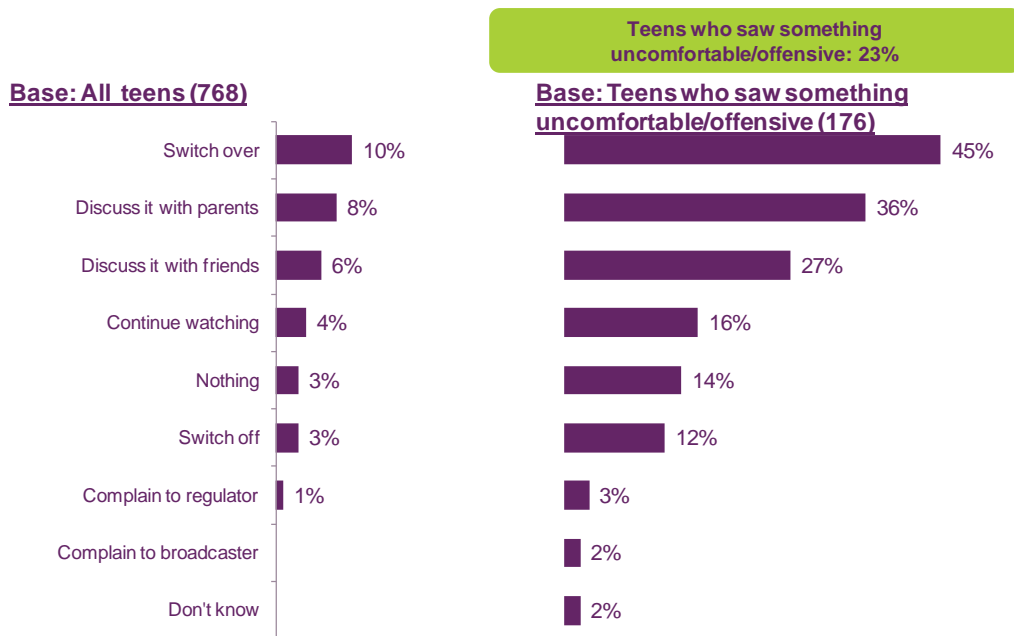
Base: All GB teens who watch TV nowadays (n=768)/Base: All GB teens who saw something uncomfortable or offensive pre watershed (n=176).

The most common response to seeing something concerning among teens is to switch over/switch off (Figure 1.11)

When looking at the data as a proportion of all teens surveyed, one-in-ten (10%) switched over as a result of feeling uncomfortable or being offended by pre-watershed programming on TV in the last year. Discussing it with parents was the second most common reaction to seeing something uncomfortable or offensive at 8% of all teens. This was followed by discussing it with friends which was cited by 6%.

When looking at the data as a proportion of teens that said they had seen something uncomfortable or offensive in programming on pre-watershed TV, 45% switched over, 36% discussed it with parents, 27% discussed it with friends, while 16% continued to watch the programme in question.

Figure 1.11 Reaction to seeing pre watershed programming that causes concern



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

QT6 How do you react when you see something that concerns or offends you on television? What do you generally do? (pre-watershed)

Base: All GB teens who watch TV nowadays (n=768)/Base: All GB teens who saw something uncomfortable or offensive pre watershed (n=176).

Just 4% of teens expressed concern regarding music videos (Figure 1.12)

As already detailed, 23% of all teens expressed some level of discomfort/offence regarding what they had seen on TV pre-watershed in the last 12 months. Four percent (4%) of teens mentioned music videos as a genre of concern. This totalled 28 of the 768 teens surveyed.

As the base size of those teens offended by music videos was very small, it is not possible to report reliably on the detail of the offence. However the data does indicate sexual content and offensive language are among the items that cause offence.

Figure 1.12 Core incidence of concerns summary



Source: Ofcom omnibus research, July 2011

Music channel viewing BARB data

According to BARB, music channels represent a small proportion of people's total TV viewing. The 31 music channels we analysed attracted a combined 1.3% share of total television viewing across all individuals (aged 4+) between June 2010 and May 2011, increasing to an average 2.4% share of children's viewing (aged 4-15). Shares among both individuals and children remain consistent when looking at viewing pre- and post-watershed (9pm).

In terms of audience reach to the music channels, which can be seen as an indication of exposure, around three-in-four individuals (76%) viewed at least three consecutive minutes of any one of the music channels across the 12 month period. Eighty per cent (80%) of children watched at least three minutes in the same period.

While a high proportion of people have seen some music channel content across the course of the year, average weekly reach figures (a better proxy for 'regular' exposure) suggest most viewers watch music channels infrequently. In a typical week, 22% of individuals viewed at least three consecutive minutes, compared to 25% of children. Older children aged 10-15 were more likely to have seen three consecutive minutes than younger children aged 4-9 (31% compared to 17% respectively). Across all age groups analysed, reach was highest among 16-19 year olds (40% reach). In terms of pre- and post-watershed, weekly reach figures fall sharply post-watershed. Pre-watershed, the average weekly reach for individuals was 17% compared to 11% post-watershed. Amongst children, the figures fall much more dramatically – 27% and 9% respectively – and this is reflected in changes across both younger and older children. Among young children pre-watershed weekly reach was 16% compared to just 5% post-watershed. Across older children, reach falls from 27% to 13%.

In terms of the average audience age profile of these channels, over four-in-five were adults aged 16+ (83%) while less than one-in-five (17%) were children. This remains consistent through the day, with children accounting for relatively greater proportions of the total audience between 6-9am (20%) and 3-6pm (21%). Post-watershed, the proportion of the average audience represented by children tails off significantly (to around 11%), largely due to lower viewing by 4-9 year olds.

3 Media Tracker survey

Introduction

This section looks at selected relevant data from Ofcom's 2010 Media Tracker survey, focusing on results from parents of children under 18 living with children in the household. Aspects of the Media Tracker that are set out below include opinions on TV programme standards and regulation as well as television content that respondents considered to be offensive and harmful.

The Media Tracker covers the personal views of respondents on television and is therefore distinct from parents' opinions on the content their children actually watch. The parental results are broadly in line with those for both all respondents and non-parents (respondents either without children in the household or with children in the household but not parents). It has been highlighted on the charts where there are significant differences between the parent and non-parent samples.

The Media Tracker has a UK representative quota sample of approximately 2,100 adults (aged 16+), 30% of whom are parents. Interviews are face-to-face using Paper and Pencil interviewing (PAPI) technique and the questionnaire is conducted in two dip-stick waves in order to counter seasonality issues. Typically the first wave is conducted in April, with the second wave in October.

Further analysis from the Media Tracker is published as part of Ofcom's Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Annual Report. The report, containing further results from the 2010 Media Tracker, is available here: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/reviews-investigations/public-service-broadcasting/annrep/psb11/>

Summary of key findings

- Since 2002 the opinion that programme standards have stayed the same over the last year has tended to increase (40% in 2002 to 55% in 2010). This compares to a fall in the numbers stating standards had got worse (47% in 2002 to 31% in 2010). Those who feel standards have improved have remained fairly consistent at around 10-15%.
- Older respondents were more likely to believe that programme standards have deteriorated, with 48% of over 65s stating they felt programme standards had worsened in the last year. Among parents only 24% of respondents felt programme standards had become worse, while 16% (significantly higher than non-parents) felt standards had improved.
- The reasons given by parents for worsening standards were led by quantity and quality concerns rather than harm and offence issues. The most common reason was more repeats at 15% of all parents, following by lack of variety (9%), too many reality shows (7%) and lack of quality (also at 7%). More offensive language, more sexual content and more violence reasons each stood at 2%.
- Over three-quarters (77%) of parents believed the 9pm watershed is about right. This compared with 10% who felt it was too late and 12% who said that it was too early. A similar proportion of parents (73%) thought that the amount of regulation on television was 'about right'. The corresponding figures for all adults are 74% think the watershed is about right, 8% think it is too late and 13% think it is too early.

- Around one-in-five parents (19%) say that they have seen something offensive on television in the last 12 months. This figure is the same (19%) for both parents and non parents alike. Sex and sexual content, along with offensive language, were the most common causes of offence, cited by 8% and 7% of all parents respectively. Soaps were the most common type of programmes to cause offence at 7% (significantly higher than non-parents), followed by dramas at 6%¹⁷.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of parents said that they had seen something on television that they considered harmful to either themselves, other adults or children. Parents were more likely to say they had seen harmful content for children than non-parents (14% compared to 9%). Among those who had seen any type of harmful content, over half (9% of all parents) cited violence, followed by the second most common content type, anti-social behaviour, at 4%.

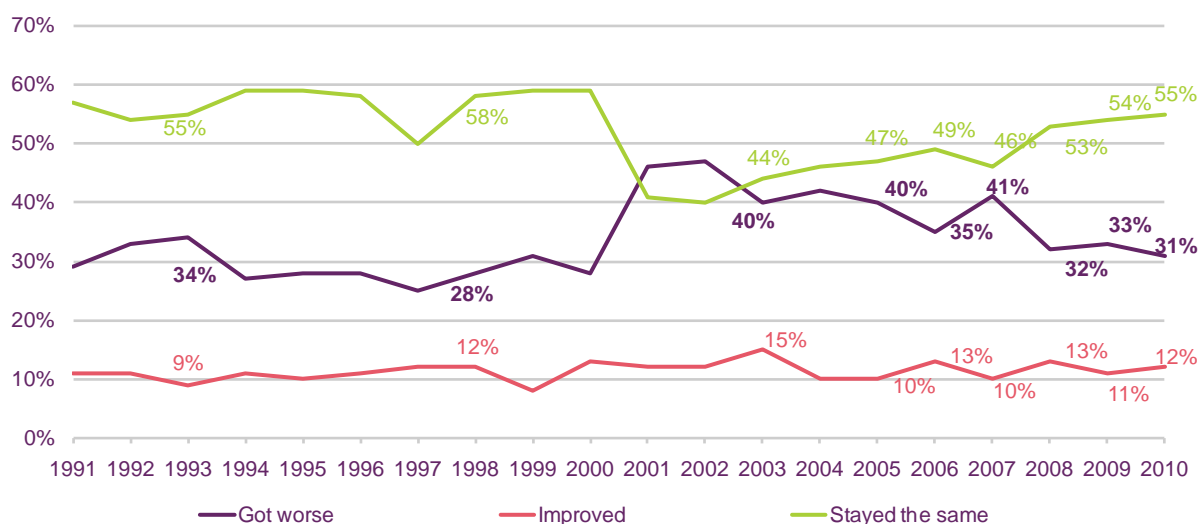
Opinion on programme standards

Those considering programme standards to have gotten worse appeared to be on a downward trend (Figure 1.13)

Looking at the all respondents sample across Media Tracker surveys since 1991, it is possible to get an overview of the long term trend of opinion on programme standards.

Figure 1.13 shows that since 2002 the opinion that programme standards have stayed the same over the last year has tended to increase (40% in 2002 to 55% in 2010) compared to a fall in the numbers stating standards had got worse (47% in 2002 to 31% in 2010). Those who feel standards have improved have remained fairly consistent at around 10-15%.

Figure 1.13 Opinion on programme standards over the last 12 months (all respondents): 1991-2010



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker.

Q - Do you feel that over the past year television programmes have improved, got worse or stayed about the same? Base: All respondents. Note: methodologies have varied slightly over time.

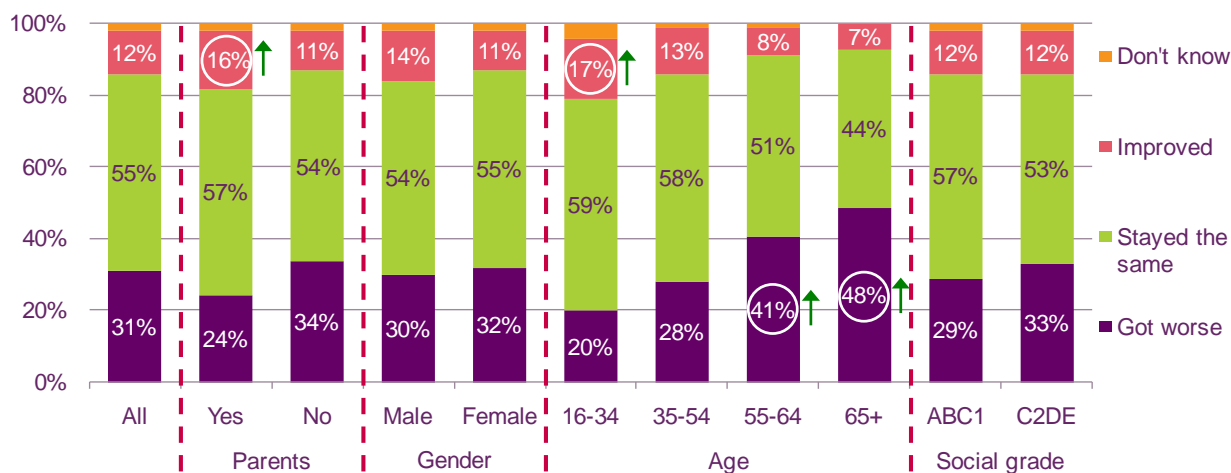
The view that programme standards are worsening increased with age (Figure 1.14)

¹⁷ This question did not include music channels in the list of programme genres, although respondents were able to state 'any other' programme.

The 2010 survey results on opinion of programme standards by demographic are broken out in Figure 1.14. It shows a positive correlation between older age demographics and the likelihood to say that programme standards have got worse. Nearly half (48%) of over 65s and 41% of 55-64 year olds said that programme standards had become worse, compared to just 20% in the 16-34 age group and 28% for 35-54s.

Parents were less likely to say standards had fallen at just under a quarter (24%) compared to a third (34%) of non-parents. Parents, along with the 16-34 age group, were the most likely to view programme standards as improved over the last year at 16% and 17% respectively. With the exception of over 65s, over half of respondents across all demographics believed programme standards had stayed the same over the past year.

Figure 1.14 Opinion on programme standards over the last 12 months by demographic



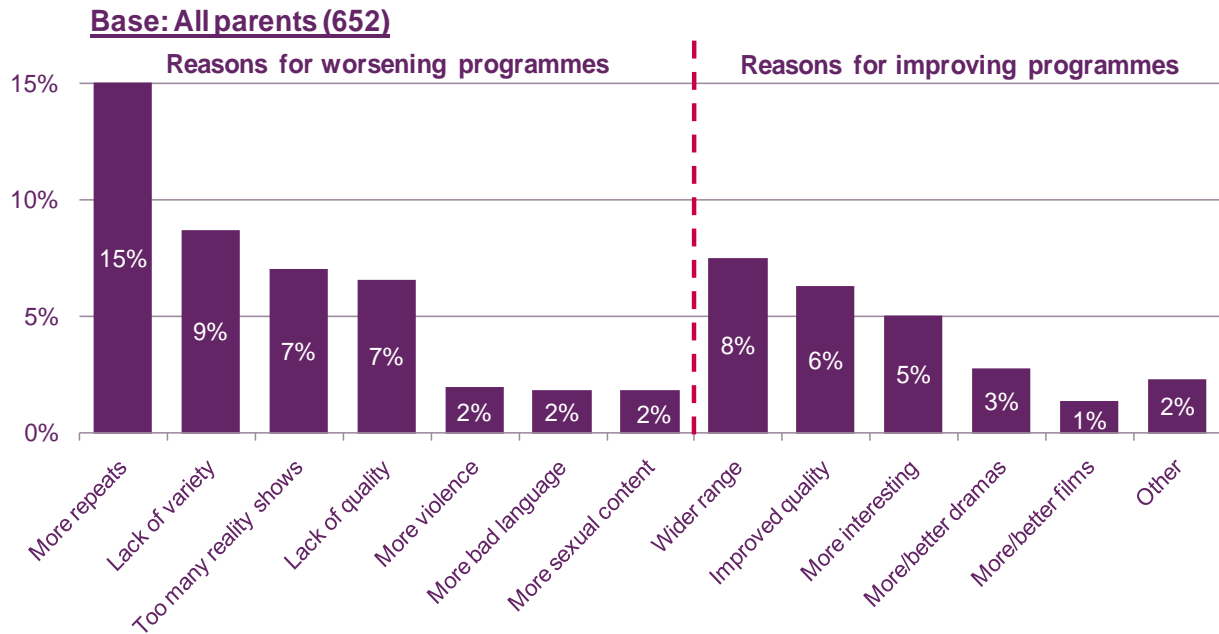
Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - Do you feel that over the past year television programmes have improved, got worse or stayed about the same? Significant differences to all respondents circled.

Reasons given for worsening standards were predominantly led by quantity and quality rather than harm and offence issues (Figure 1.15)

Reasons not associated with harm and offence drove the reasons for worsening standards (Figure 1.15), 15% of parents gave more repeats as an unprompted reason for programmes getting worse while 9% suggested lack of variety. Increasing amounts of bad language, violence and sexual content each individually were mentioned by 2% of parents who said programme standards had got worse in the past year.

Figure 1.15 Top reasons given for programmes getting better or worse



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

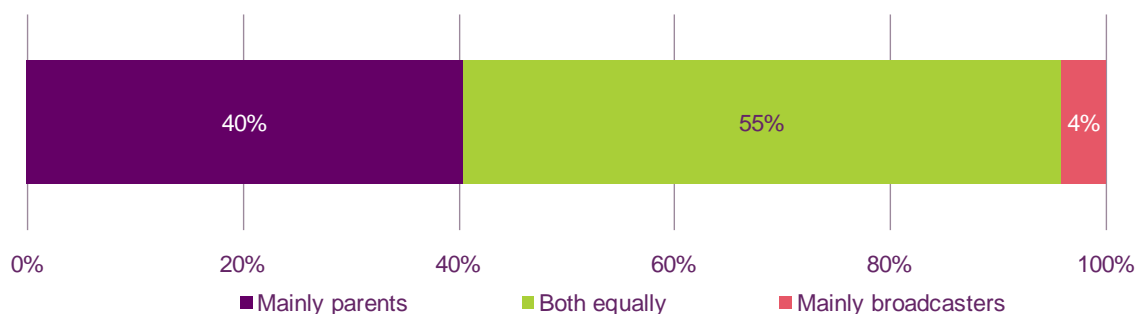
Q - In what ways do you think that television programmes have got worse/have improved over the past year? Base: All parents (652). Multicode, unprompted. Top reasons charted. Note: there are no significant differences to non-parents.

Opinions on responsibility and regulation

Over half (55%) of parents stated broadcasters and parents had equal responsibility to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming (Figure 1.16)

The vast majority (95%) of parents believed that parents have some responsibility to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming. This was made up of 40% who believed it was mainly the parent's role and 55% who saw it as an equal responsibility with broadcasters. Only 4% in 2010 said that it was mainly broadcasters' responsibility.

Figure 1.16 Opinion on whose responsibility it is to ensure children do not see unsuitable programming



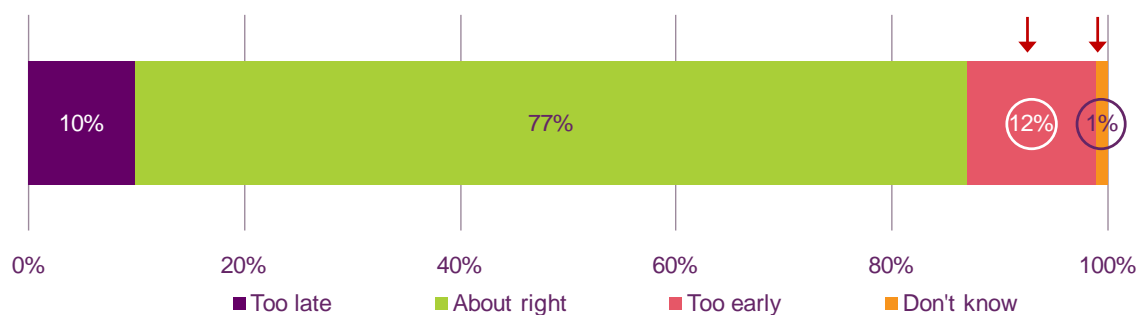
Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - Do you think it is mainly the responsibility of parents, broadcasters or both equally, to make sure that children don't see unsuitable programmes? Base: Parents with TV and children in the household (649). Note: there are no significant differences to non-parents.

Over three-quarters (77%) of parents believed the 9pm watershed is at about the right time (Figure 1.17)

After being told that the UK watershed was set at 9pm, three-quarters (77%) of respondents answered they felt this was about right. The number of parents who believed the watershed was too early (12%) was significantly lower among non-parents (16%).

Figure 1.17 Opinion on current time of watershed



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

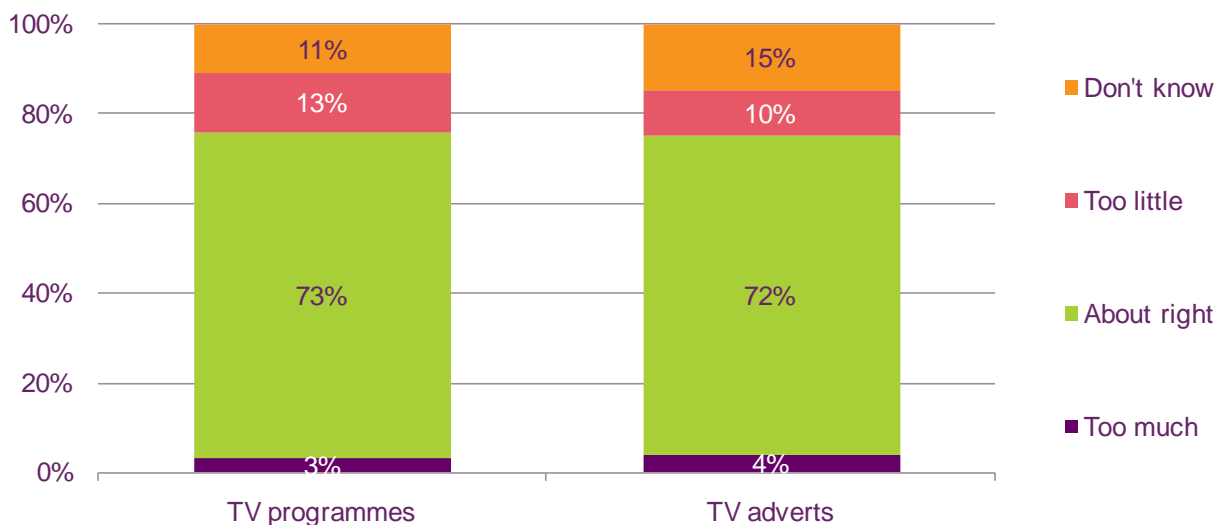
Intro to question: On TV channels the time after which these programmes unsuitable for children may be shown is 9pm. Q - Do you think this is....?

Base: Parents with children in household (649). Significant differences to non-parents circled.

The vast majority of parents (87%) believe that TV programmes are regulated (Figure 1.18)

When respondents were asked if they thought TV programmes were regulated, 87% of parents thought they were. For adverts, this figure fell to 67%. These are similar to awareness figures measured across the total adult sample (85% thought TV programmes were regulated, 67% of all adults thought TV adverts were regulated). Following this question, all respondents were asked for their opinion on the amount of regulation in each respective area. The majority of parents considered the current level of television programme and advert regulation to be about right at 73% and 72% respectively in 2010 (Figure 1.18).

Figure 1.18 Opinion on current levels of television regulation



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - Do you think the amount of regulation for [television] is: i) Too much? ii) Too little? iii) About the right amount? Base: Parents with children in household (649). Note: there are no significant differences to non-parents.

Opinion on offensive material

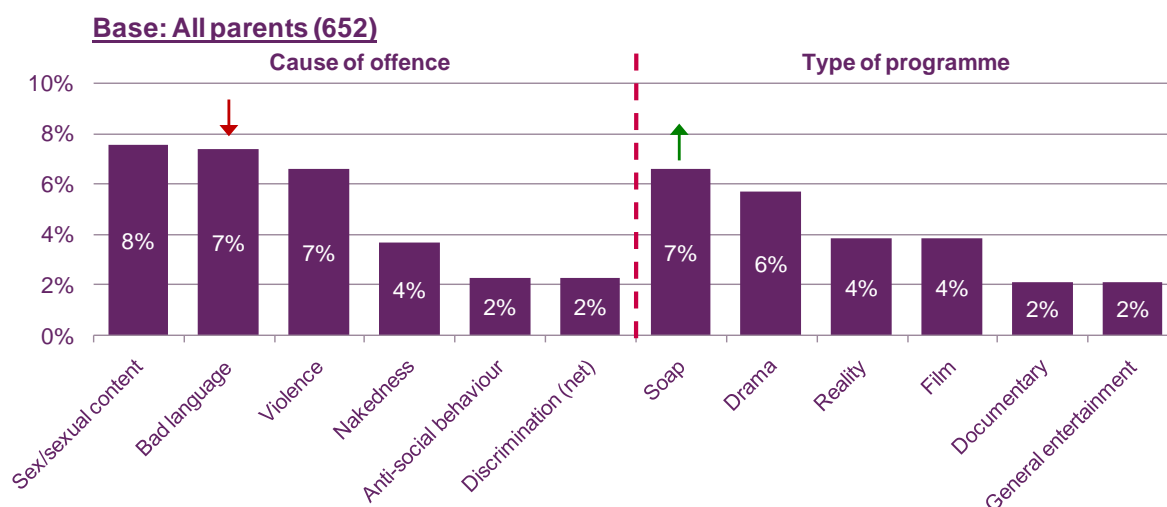
Soaps and dramas were the most likely programmes to cause offence¹⁸ (Figure 1.19)

Nearly one-in-five (19%) of parents that said they had viewed offensive material on television in the last 12 months. The most common was sexual content, with 8% of parents stating that they had been offended by sexual content in the last year. Offensive language (7%) and violence (7%) were the second and third most common causes. Nakedness (4%) was more likely to feature as a cause among parents compared to 2% of non-parents saying it had offended them. Offensive language was a less common response from parents at 7% compared to 10% of non-parents who gave it as a cause of offence.

In terms of the programme genres generating offence, soaps were the most common among parents at 7%. This was significantly higher than the 4% citing soaps in the non-parents sample. Other programme types included drama (6%), reality and films (both with 4%).

¹⁸ This question did not include music channels in the list of programme genres.

Figure 1.19 Type of material which caused offence



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - What kind of thing offended you? And Q - Can you say what type of programme it was, looking at this list? Base: All parents (652). Cause was multicode, unprompted. Top reasons and programme types charted. Significant differences to non-parents circled.

Parents were more likely to be comfortable with sexually explicit channels being available in the adult section of the EPG (Figure 1.20)

The level of agreement and disagreement with several statements relating to potentially offensive material is shown in Figure 1.17. For sexually explicit programmes, over half (52%) of parents felt content should be restricted to subscription channels. There was a significantly higher level of agreement among parents compared to non-parents (64% agreement compared to 58%) that sexually explicit channels in the 'adult' section of the electronic programme guide (EPG) did not cause concern as it was possible to block them.

Parents were more likely to disagree that sexually explicit programmes should be freely available on any channel after the 9pm watershed at 59%. This compares with 53% of non-parents and 55% across the whole sample.

On violent content, 48% felt this should be restricted to subscription channels. Over half (52%) disagreed that violent films should be freely available on any channel after the 9pm watershed.

Figure 2.1 Opinion on statements relating to potentially offensive material

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Not stated/ No opinion
Sexually explicit programmes should never been shown on TV	22% ↓	22%	52%	3%
If people want to watch sexually explicit programmes they should be allowed to but only on subscription channels	55%	17%	25%	3%
Sexually explicit channels in the 'adult' section of the electronic programme guide (EPG) don't bother me. I can block them if I want	64% ↑	18%	11%	7%
Sexually explicit programmes should be freely available on any channel after 9PM	22%	17%	59% ↑	2% ↓
If people want to watch particularly violent programmes they should be allowed to but only on subscription channels	48%	18%	30%	4%
Particularly violent films should be freely available on any channel after 9PM	29%	16%	52%	3%

Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - I am going to read out some statements and I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with them. Base: Parents with TV and children in household (649). Significant differences to non-parents circled.

Opinion on harmful content

Violence was the most commonly identified type of harmful content (Figure 1.21)

Over four-fifths (81%) of parents said they had not viewed any content they considered to be harmful over the last 12 months. In total, 16% had seen content they considered to be harmful. Parents were more likely to have seen what they consider to be harmful television content for children (14% of parents compared to 9% of non-parents).

Of those that said they had seen harmful content, violence was the most common kind, mentioned by 9% of all parents. Anti-social behaviour was the second most common at 4%, although significantly lower than non-parents. Alcohol and substance abuse followed at 3%. Portrayal of self harm (2%) and cult/paranormal (1%) also were significantly more common among parents than non-parents. Among the high number of responses citing 'other' types of harmful content (6%), issues relating to sexual content accounted for a third of responses, representing 2% of all parents.

Figure 2.2 Respondents seeing what they consider to be harmful content



Source: Ofcom Media Tracker 2010.

Q - Have you seen anything on TV in the last 12 months that you thought was harmful either to yourself, other adults or children? Multicode, unprompted. Base: All parents (652). Significant differences to non-parents circled.