



April 2020

Audience expectations in a digital world: Clips & scenarios

Ipsos MORI research for Ofcom

Contents

Introduction	3
Workshop clips	6
Ian King Live	6
Steve Allen	6
A Family at War	7
Emmerdale	8
ITV News	9
OMG: Painted, Pierced and Proud	10
The Sex Business: Pain for Pleasure	11
Workshop scenarios	13
Radio – hate speech	13
TV political interview – misleading content	14
Online video – commercial references	15
TV interview – commercial references	16
Asian language TV channel – harm and offence	17
TV talk show – harm and offence	18
Additional clips	20
Jago Pakistan Jago	20
Qutab online	21
Shomoyer Sathe	22
Q Radio Breakfast Show	23
Genderquake	24
Teen Life	25
Celebs Go Dating	26
Nick Ferrari	27
Roast Battle trailer	27
Gogglebox	28
Additional scenarios	30
Radio news item – misleading content	30
Radio Music Show – harm and offence	31
Religious TV Channel – hate speech	32
Late Night TV Show – harm and offence	33
Radio Phone-in – harm and offence	34

Introduction

Warning: this report contains offensive language and graphic descriptions which may cause offence.

Ofcom commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct research to help them understand how audience expectations of audio-visual content are evolving in a digital world. The research explored participants' changing attitudes towards content standards and their experiences of programmes across platforms including: TV, radio, catch-up, subscription and video sharing services. This study provides an updated picture of audience expectations, building on previous research commissioned by Ofcom in 2014 and 2011.

The research involved six day-long (six hours) deliberative workshops with members of the public across the UK. In addition, we conducted nine mini-groups and 24 in-depth interviews with specific groups: participants from a minority ethnic background, LGB participants, participants aged 16 to 21, transgender participants and disabled participants. Fieldwork was conducted across the UK between 26th September and 19th November 2019.

During the discussions, participants were played a number of audio and visual clips and shown a range of hypothetical 'programme scenarios' to stimulate discussion about how content standards could be applied. These scenarios were developed to support discussions, although many were based on themes from real programmes that had been broadcast on TV or radio or were available online. This report describes participants' detailed attitudes towards each of the clips and scenarios included in the research. For each clip or scenario, a brief description is given, alongside setting out where each was discussed during the research. The tables at the end of this document also summarise which clips and scenarios were used in each group. Further details of the overall findings are available in the thematic report, including appendices which set out the methodology in greater detail.

Throughout, we have referred to "participants" and provided evidence through verbatim comments which have not been attributed to protect anonymity. Quotations have been attributed providing information on key characteristics such as location and how they were involved in the research. We have also provided information on the approximate age of participants at the public workshops.

Table 1 – Summary audio and visual clips

Please note that some of the clips outside of the workshops were only shown to a small number of participants. Where this is the case, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.

AUDIO / VISUAL CLIPS	Page number	Workshops (n=6)	Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group (n=1)	Indian (Punjabi) mini-group (n=1)	Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group (n=1)	Black African mini-group (n=1)	Jewish mini-group (n=1)	LGB mini-groups (n=4)	Paired interviews with young people aged 16-18 and 18-21 (n=10)	Transgender depths (n=6)	Disability depths (n=8)
Ian King Live	6	✓									
Steve Allen	6	✓									✓
A Family at War	7	✓				✓					
Emmerdale	8	✓							✓		
ITV News	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
OMG: Painted, Pierced and Proud	10	✓									✓
The Sex Business	12	✓						✓		✓	
Jago Pakistan Jago	20		✓	✓							
Qutab online	21		✓	✓	✓						
Shomoyer Sathe	22				✓						
Q Radio	23								✓	✓	
Genderquake	24									✓	
Teen Life	25					✓		✓			
Celebs Go Dating	26							✓			
Nick Ferrari	27						✓				
Roast Battle trailer	27						✓				
Gogglebox	28										✓

Table 2 – Summary of hypothetical scenarios

Please note that some of the scenarios outside of the workshops were only discussed with a small number of participants. Where this is the case, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.

HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS	Page number	Workshops (n=6)	Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group (n=1)	Indian (Punjabi) mini-group (n=1)	Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group (n=1)	Black African mini-group (n=1)	Jewish mini-group (n=1)	LGB mini-groups (n=4)	Paired interviews with young people aged 16-18 and 18-21 (n=10)	Transgender depths (n=6)	Disability depths (n=8)
Radio – hate speech	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
TV political interview – misleading content	14	✓							✓		
Online video – commercial references	15	✓	✓						✓		✓
TV interview – commercial references	16	✓									
Asian language TV channel – harm and offence	17	✓									
TV talk show – harm and offence	18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Radio news item – misleading content	30						✓				
Radio music show – harm and offence	31							✓			
Religious TV channel – hate speech	32		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Late night TV show – harm and offence	33										✓
Radio phone-in – harm and offence	34									✓	

Workshop clips

During the workshops, participants were played a number of audio and visual clips to stimulate discussions. They were asked to consider the acceptability of each clip before discussing it as a group.

Ian King Live

Background

Description: **News report where the presenter says “fuck” (believing his microphone is switched off) in response to a technical error. The accidental offensive language is followed by a brief explanation of the technical error and an apology.**

TV channel: **Sky News**

Date: **30th July 2015**

Time: **18:47**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**

Findings

This clip was generally seen as acceptable by participants. They viewed the swearing (saying “fuck”) as accidental and it was not considered particularly serious provided it was a one-off. Participants recognised that the presenter was clearly embarrassed and apologised and this is the response they expected following this type of incident. Overall, this example was seen as something that broadcasters should be dealing with, rather than being a matter for Ofcom.

“It was a mistake and he apologised immediately. We’ve all done it and said sorry. It is one of those things.” [Newcastle workshop, 36-55]

By contrast, a few participants felt the presenter showed a lack of professionalism and argued that standards should be set to ensure that this kind of swearing did not become a regular issue. They thought the broadcaster should also monitor whether this presenter repeatedly uses offensive language and take appropriate disciplinary action if this is the case.

“I understand it was a mistake but still don’t think it should have been on. In that sort of job there’s a sense of professionalism.” [Bridgend/ Cardiff workshop, 18-36]

Some participants expressed concern that children might have been watching and could have heard the presenter’s language. However, this was not seen as a serious worry because it was on a news channel. Participants said they would be more concerned if this was broadcast somewhere children were more likely to come across it.

Steve Allen

Background

Description: **Radio talk show where the presenter discusses a news report about a blind man who intends to use a guide horse rather than a guide dog. The presenter makes negative and**

disparaging remarks about the blind man.Radio station: **LBC**Date: **1st October 2018**Time: **04:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**
- **Depth interviews with disabled people**

Findings

Participants' reactions to this example changed as the clip continued, typically moving from initial laughter (due to the tone of the presenter, who said he found the story "stupid" and "ludicrous") to increasing offence. The extended length of the commentary (lasting one minute) and the tone used meant many participants felt it was targeting and belittling a blind person in an offensive way. There was a sense that society's views towards disabled people have changed and this style of humour is no longer acceptable. This was particularly an issue for disabled participants, who overall felt the content was unacceptable.

"Yes, it is a bit unusual. . . But if like he said – 'how are you going to take it [the guide horse] on the tube' - if that was the end, it would have been fine. It's the attitude, tone of his voice, making fun, taking the mick, and I thought that was so wrong."

[Bangor, disabled depth interview]

However, some participants emphasised that the presenter was only joking, and this type of humour should not be taken too seriously by people. Familiarity with the presenter also made the clip more acceptable to some because they felt this kind of content is what audiences expect from him.

"That came across to me like he was having a laugh. Well, I'd take it as a joke. I didn't think it was offensive." [Solihull workshop, 18-36]

The 4am timing generally made the clip more acceptable because fewer people would likely be listening. However, there were some concerns about people coming across it accidentally – particularly older people or those with young children who might be awake early in the morning.

"He's making fun of blind people. Time of day doesn't matter."

[London workshop, 54-85]

A Family at War**Background**

Description: **A drama film made in the 1970s about a family in World War II, featuring racist behaviour and racially offensive language, including "wog".**

TV channel: **Talking Pictures TV**Date: **19th November 2017**Time: **20:15**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**

- **Black African mini-group**

Findings

Participants were divided as to the acceptability of this clip, with discussions focusing on the role of historical TV dramas. There was general agreement that, as a minimum, there should be a warning about the language used, as the word “wog” was used a number of times during the clip. Views were split between:

- Participants arguing that the language and behaviours used in the clip were unacceptable and offensive today – and should therefore not be broadcast regardless of the historical context.
- Participants emphasising the importance of reflecting what happened at the time and realistically portraying the past.

“It’s like if I went and watched a film on slavery now, that was filmed and made today, in 2019, it’s going to still have derogatory terms in it because it’s depicting a time. That’s what drama and TV is about.” [Manchester, Black African mini-group]

Participants discussed whether this kind of drama can be an educational tool, helping people see and understand how attitudes have changed. However, there were also concerns about children seeing this content, not being aware of the context and adopting racially offensive terms without knowing this could cause offence.

“It’s not ok. We should be trying to get away from those sorts of attitudes. It was needlessly shown.” [Antrim workshop, 36-55]

Being shown on a niche channel made the clip more acceptable for many. Participants had different expectations of mainstream channels, where many would not expect to come across this type of content.

During the discussion of this clip, participants were also asked whether it would be acceptable for a song that featured offensive language (the words “pussy” and “shit”) to be played on the radio during the day, for example at 8.30am during the school run. They generally thought this was unacceptable. Participants were surprised that this language is included in the well-known 1970s song *Greased Lightning*. There was disagreement about whether it was acceptable for this specific song to be played or whether broadcasters should use an edited version during the day.

Emmerdale

Background

Description: **A soap episode featuring a storyline about the rape of a long-standing female character. In the clip, the female character is seen continually asking the male character to leave her home before he grabs her and forces her onto the bed (the scene ends here).**

TV channel: **ITV**

Date: **8th May 2019**

Time: **19:00 (shown just before 19:30)**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**

- **Paired depth interviews with young people**

Findings

The clip was uncomfortable and upsetting for participants, but it was generally considered acceptable. Different views among participants were based on whether they thought 7pm was too early for the scene to be broadcast, particularly given the distressing nature of the content.

“7pm is quite early in the evening to be showing a scene like that. I don’t like watching stuff like that.” [Belfast, paired young person depth interview]

On the other hand, soaps were recognised as playing an important role in raising awareness and educating people about social issues. But participants felt that this needed to be done sensitively and a few worried that this example could normalise or encourage violence against women.

The storyline was felt to be crucial and participants found it difficult to assess this clip of a single scene in isolation. Regular viewers who had been following the story tended to see it as more acceptable because they knew how this scene fitted the wider context, including how the story continued (with the attacker eventually facing retribution).

“If it followed a theme and it highlighted domestic abuse, I can understand it. If it was just gratuitous, then no.” [Solihull workshop, 54-85]

Participants emphasised the importance of a warning in advance and signposting to advice provided after the programme finished as essential to make the clip acceptable. There were some concerns that warnings and guidance might be missed, particularly for on-demand services where participants worried viewers might skip these parts of the show.

ITV News

Background

Description: **News report on the day of Lee Rigby’s murder in South East London, featuring distressing images of the murderer holding a bloodstained weapon, talking to camera and an indistinct image of the victim’s dead body (and, later, the bodies of the perpetrators) lying some distance away in the background.**

TV channel: **ITV**

Date: **22nd May 2013**

Time: **18:37**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**
- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**
- **Black African mini-group**
- **Jewish mini-group**
- **Paired depth interviews with young people**

Findings

The clip was upsetting to watch for many participants and the images were considered very graphic. There was a clear divide between those who found the graphic nature of the clip unacceptable and those who felt it was important for the news to accurately portray real life events in a detailed way.

“It was reporting of news that happened.” [London workshop, 18-36]

There was significant concern for the victim’s family and the effect of seeing shots of the body of the victim on their wellbeing, especially as it may have been shown before they were informed. Participants also worried that the video could upset audiences and that it could glorify violence and spread the perpetrator’s message.

The timing of the broadcast was seen as too early by some, who felt it might mean children had been watching and audiences might not have been expecting such graphic content pre-watershed. Concerns were also expressed about the footage being broadcast shortly after the events had taken place, with some participants believing this could have fuelled further violence at a time of heightened tensions.

“I think it’s too graphic, it’s upsetting, and it’s on daytime TV. Like, children are watching, a man with blood on his hands, and with a dead body on the floor, he’s still got the knife, and they’re still walking around like, ‘Oh, look at me, I’m superman, I’ve done this’.”

[Manchester, Black African mini-group]

The warning was noted by participants and this was thought to be clear and effective. But some felt the footage might have been more acceptable on a news broadcast later in the evening. There was some cynicism about broadcasters showing the footage before the watershed in order to be the first programme to broadcast it and therefore attract ratings.

OMG: Painted, Pierced and Proud

Background

Description: **Documentary about extreme body modification, including interviews with a contributor who had deliberately amputated her finger as a form of ‘body art’. Footage is shown of the amputation with some blurring.**

TV channel: **Channel 5**

Date: **2nd July 2017**

Time: **22:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**
- **Depth interviews with disabled people**

Findings

Participants’ views were divided on the acceptability of this clip. Many described the clip as something they would not want to watch but they thought it was acceptable to broadcast, particularly because it may interest other people. On the other hand, some thought the clip was too graphic and risked promoting and glamorising self-harm (particularly for younger and vulnerable audiences). They therefore

considered it unacceptable. They argued that people can search for this kind of content online and make an active choice to view it if they are interested, but that it should not be on broadcast TV.

The nature of the programme as a documentary with blurring and a warning was seen to make it more acceptable. Late evening (10pm or later) was considered an appropriate time to broadcast this type of content, but there were queries about the programme being available on-demand and how access would be restricted for younger or other vulnerable audiences.

“I think we’re hearing it, it was blurred out, it’s that wee bit more acceptable because you’re not really seeing it. An okay time for it to be on, and if the kids happen to come across it, it’s blurred so they can’t really see anything.” [Perth workshop, 18-36]

However, the title of the programme was seen as potentially misleading in terms of audiences knowing what to expect from the content. There was also concern it would be easy to miss the warning if you had switched on later in the programme.

Some felt the light-hearted tone of the female contributor made it less upsetting to watch as the amputation was not portrayed violently. Others thought the tone made the clip less acceptable because it could encourage people to do something similar, particularly as there was no medical advice or other support mentioned. Indeed, participants thought the programme would have been more acceptable if it included the views of a medical practitioner as well as the female contributor’s perspective. There were also concerns about the welfare of the female contributor in the programme, with participants worrying about her wellbeing and suitability for being part of a show like this.

“Clearly it is something that has caught on. Somebody does it because somebody else does it. Somebody, somewhere is going to say: well, I never thought of that, I’m going to do that.” [Newton Abbot, disabled depth interview]

The Sex Business: Pain for Pleasure

Background

Description: **Documentary about sex workers featuring graphic and extreme sexual content, including:**

- **blurred shots of male clients having their genitals restrained, stapled, kicked, slapped and nailed to a board by sex workers;**
- **angled (so masked) shots of a male sex worker putting his fingers into a woman’s vagina; and**
- **unmasked shots of female sex workers caning and whipping male clients’ hands and buttocks.**

TV channel: **Channel 5**

Date: **Various dates**

Time: **22:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Workshops**
- **LGB mini-groups**

- **Depth interviews with transgender people**

Findings

Participants' views were divided on the acceptability of this clip:

- Some felt the content was acceptable in a documentary shown after the watershed and could be educational and of interest to audiences.
- Others thought the clip was unacceptable due to the graphic nature of the sexual content, which they considered too strong for broadcast TV.

“There’s no place for that stuff on TV – it’s completely unacceptable.”

[Antrim workshop, 36-55]

Some participants felt more graphic content was typically shown late in the evening on this channel, meaning that audiences might be expecting it. Some felt the title and warning were also seen as clearly flagging the content to viewers, making the clip more acceptable.

“The title said what it is. It was on late at night, with a warning. Nobody was doing something they didn’t want to do.” [Newcastle workshop, 36-55]

There were worries that children might still be awake and come across the programme, particularly as it included graphic footage from the outset. However, some participants argued that parents should be responsible for making sure children are not watching inappropriate content after the watershed. This was therefore not seen as only an issue for Ofcom or the broadcaster alone, but something parents also had some responsibility for. Even so, other participants regarded 10pm as too early for this kind of content to be broadcast on a mainstream channel.

Workshop scenarios

These hypothetical 'programme scenarios' were created to stimulate discussion during the workshops about how content standards could be applied. They were developed to support discussions, although many were based on themes from real programmes that had been broadcast on TV or radio, or were available online. Participants were asked to consider the acceptability of each scenario before discussing it as a group.

Radio – hate speech

Background

Description: **A local radio station broadcast a discussion on the rise of social tensions in the local area at 10pm. This included a clip from a prominent right-wing commentator encouraging white residents to make minority ethnic residents “feel unsafe and unwelcome living in our area”.**

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**
- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**
- **Black African mini-group**

Findings

The scenario was widely seen as unacceptable because the material broadcast could encourage racism and incite violence. Participants emphasised this was particularly unacceptable as the broadcaster had chosen to play the clip (in contrast to a live broadcast where someone might say something similar without warning).

“It’s an audio clip. So, they intentionally played the clip, but they could have chosen any other clip to make the point. . . They knew what the person said and chose to broadcast it.”

[Newcastle workshop, 18-36]

Some of those taking part in the mini-groups suggested these kinds of comments had the potential to put pressure on community cohesion. They felt it could result in fear and anxiety among some communities.

“I think it’s inappropriate because it’s likely to promote violence and possibly racial tensions in the area.” [Manchester, Black African mini-group]

There was disagreement about whether this kind of clip could ever be played, often tied to the motivations behind doing so. Participants emphasised the importance of providing a warning and having a full, well-moderated discussion as ways of making the scenario more acceptable. For example, by highlighting how this kind of speech is unacceptable or providing wider context or alternative views to challenge what was said. Panel shows and documentaries were seen as the best format for this kind of discussion and there was some suggestion that a panel on this issue should be made up of people from

a range of ethnicities and communities. But even with these changes there was still widespread concern among participants that playing the clip gave these views airtime and should not happen.

“There should be some control there. Even if there is a warning there should be some control on what is being said. There has to be something to protect the listener.”

[Birmingham, Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group]

There were worries about similar clips being shared online. However, participants felt that audiences would be less likely to come across this kind of content online without actively searching for it.

TV political interview – misleading content

Background

Description: A week before a general election, a political discussion show on a major TV channel features an interview with a well-known government politician. The politician is discussing reasons why the public should vote for his party. During the interview, the politician states the government has cut immigration by more than 20%. The presenter strongly challenges this and states there is no evidence immigration levels have dropped. In fact, official documents publicly available before the interview confirm the politician was correct. However, the politician continues the discussion without correcting the interviewer, nor does the interviewer correct his mistake.

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**
- **Paired depth interviews with young people**

Findings

Overall, this example was considered unacceptable by participants. However, there was general scepticism about politics and a sense that this sort of thing happens all the time and was therefore not as serious as some of the other issues discussed by participants. In this context, participants struggled to identify any serious harm caused, although there were a number of concerns that it could have an impact by misleading people or result in misperceptions about the politician.

“I don’t think Ofcom should look at this unless it was a big issue and a really senior politician. You can’t fact check everything said.” [Antrim workshop, 36-55]

Participants saw it as the responsibility of the presenter or the programme to check the facts. There was some acknowledgement that mistakes can be made, but participants felt there should be a correction later in the programme or afterwards, as soon as the issue is identified.

“Due to the format they don’t have anyone from the other party there to challenge, so it’s their [production team’s] responsibility to get the facts right from both sides.”

[Newcastle workshop, 18-36]

They also argued it would help if the politician challenged the facts. However, it was not necessarily seen as the interviewee’s responsibility to do this and participants felt it would be depended on the time available in the programme. The seniority of the politician was also considered important by some, who felt this example would be less acceptable if it involved a high-ranking politician, such as the Prime Minister, rather than a less well-known backbench MP.

There was some concern that the presenter might be politically motivated, rather than making a straightforward mistake. Participants felt this would be unacceptable.

“If he has targeted the politician because he doesn’t like him then that’s an issue.”

[Newton Abbot, paired young person depth interview]

The findings from a similar hypothetical scenario, ‘Radio news item – misleading content’, discussed in the Jewish mini-group, are outlined on page 30.

Online video – commercial references

Background

Description: **A famous reality star uploads a video to a video-sharing site discussing her new book that describes a diet plan. She claims the plan is more effective than anti-depressants and chemotherapy and she urges anyone with ongoing medical problems to “give it a go”. No scientific evidence is given in the video. The video ends with her saying the diet plan is available for £50 a month and explaining how to sign up.**

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**
- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Paired depth interviews with young people**
- **Depth interviews with disabled people**

Findings

The example was widely seen as unacceptable with significant concerns raised about the financial motivations of the celebrity. Participants were very worried about the impact on teenage girls following the celebrity online and other vulnerable groups, as well as on anyone who might be influenced by what was said. There was a sense that there should be more rules around online influencers because of the impact they can have.

“I think it’s a scam and vulnerable people would be taken in by it.”

[Newton Abbot, disabled depth interview]

Participants were also played a related real-life radio clip from Harbour Radio GY, 31 August 2017. This included a presenter talking about people’s experiences of fighting and “curing” cancer by changing their diet, including her own. Reactions to the radio clip differed:

- Some thought it was even more serious than the online video scenario because of the link with cancer and the idea that people stopping treatment could put lives at risk.

“I think this is the lowest of the low – you can’t get much worse.”

[London workshop, 54-85]

- Others considered it less serious as the presenter was seen as sharing her personal views and experiences without asking for money.

“I was more sympathetic having heard it. She’s not saying, ‘Don’t have chemo.’ She is just telling her story and someone else’s, which is fantastic. It didn’t do any harm. She wasn’t saying, ‘You’ve got to do this or that.’” [London workshop, 18-36]

Participants emphasised the importance of including a disclaimer during the radio programme, even if they supported the idea that the presenter should be allowed to share her experiences. For example, the disclaimer could say that people should always talk to their doctor or the programme could provide wider medical advice from a professional and link to other sources to offer alternative views.

The local nature of the radio station and the relatively small numbers of people who might be listening did not make a difference to views. Their primary concern was to avoid harm for any listeners.

“Totally unacceptable. There is no medical opinion, it hasn’t been proven to work. They are risking their lives.” [Perth workshop, 54-85]

TV interview – commercial references

Background

Description: **A popular morning TV show includes a celebrity interview in which the interviewee mentions that he has started giving his children a specific brand of dairy-free milk. He explains that it has helped stop his children’s stomach problems and he thinks it tastes better than other milk substitutes. He mentions the specific brand seven times and explains it is available in most supermarkets. This is not challenged by the presenter.**

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**

Findings

Participants were less concerned about this scenario compared to many of the other examples they considered during their discussions. They were divided between those who were immediately sceptical about the motivations of the celebrity and possible financial links to the brand and those who thought it was acceptable to share genuine personal experiences of a product.

“Seems like adverting, I’m not bothered one way or the other, but I’ve got the ability to establish that that is advertising. Would that sway me one way or the other, I doubt it.” [Newcastle workshop, 36-55]

There was some concern about the influence of celebrities and the way it could mislead audiences. But participants suggested that the advice could also help people with similar problems.

“If he really believed in the product and he was sharing his experience, that would be acceptable.” [Solihull workshop, 18-36]

Participants felt the example would be less acceptable if the celebrity was in fact a brand ambassador for the product and was not open about this in the interview. This was regarded as potentially misleading.

Participants thought there was a role for both the interviewer and the guest, suggesting:

- The interviewer should have challenged the guest or highlighted that other products were available
- The celebrity should be transparent about their role (if they had one) and any financial links to the product
- There were suggestions the programme could also clarify the role of the guest either at the beginning of the programme or after it was broadcast if the producers were not aware of the relationship at the time.¹

Asian language TV channel – harm and offence

Background

Description: **An Urdu-language lifestyle magazine programme hosts a make-up contest. One contestant is given light-coloured make-up to apply and a second contestant is given dark make-up. The contestant with the light-coloured make-up is judged to have been made to look “more beautiful” because “complexion should be fair” and “people are not very keen on brown skin tone”.**

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**

Findings

This example was more challenging for workshop participants to discuss. Some felt they did not have enough knowledge of the culture and experiences of Asian people who might watch this type of programme to make a judgment. Participants were unclear whether the Broadcasting Code applied given the show was produced abroad and broadcast in Urdu. They also assumed that because non-Urdu audiences would not watch the channel, the extent of the impact in the UK would be limited. Even so, many had concerns about this kind of content being broadcast in the UK if it goes against the expectations of wider society.

“Well, if the people watching it think it’s acceptable, then obviously it’s appropriate for them. I disagree, but who are we to tell them what’s acceptable? I have no idea how to handle it.” [Solihull workshop, 18-36]

By contrast, workshop participants who were familiar with the historical context of lighter skin being seen as more attractive in some communities strongly believed the example was racist and harmful. For example, there were concerns that the clip could cause harm by encouraging audiences to buy skin whitening products. There were calls for a warning about the safety of skin whitening products as a minimum.

¹ Rule 9.4 in the Broadcasting Code requires that: “Products, services and trade marks must not be promoted in programming”. This means that, even if the role of the guest was clarified in the programme as some participants suggested, any promotional content in the programme would still raise issues under the Code.

“It’s harmful, not offensive. Offensive is putting it too lightly. I know how serious these situations are. It’s harmful.” [London workshop, 18-36]

But this was not the perception of all participants, with some making comparisons to the use of fake tan to darken skin, and not seeing this scenario as problematic.

A clip (of the programme *Jago Pakistan Jago*) showing a real TV example of this scenario was shown in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi mini-groups. A discussion of the clip can be found below on page 20.

TV talk show – harm and offence

Background

Description: **A TV talk show includes a panel discussion about introducing classes in schools about LGBT relationships for children. Guests discuss the topic and give different perspectives (e.g. gay father, Christian mother, LGBT charity, Muslim father). The religious guests voice their personal beliefs on homosexuality, saying gay sex is a sin. Other guests express the view that not teaching children about different relationships encourages homophobia.**

Discussed in:

- **Workshops**
- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**
- **Black African mini-group**
- **Jewish mini-group**
- **LGB mini-group**
- **Paired depth interviews with young people**
- **Depth interviews with disabled people**

Findings

The example was seen as acceptable because the panel format meant different perspectives were being shared, rather than one view dominating. Participants generally felt that if the debate had not included a mix of views and attitudes, the scenario would have been less acceptable.

“I think that this is the views of different people. If you have a programme, people should be able to say what they believe in. Having both views makes it more ok.”

[London workshop, 54-85]

Indeed, some participants felt that this type of content could have a positive impact and promote understanding of differing points of view.

“I scored it quite highly [acceptable] purely on the educational element and making people aware, younger people, that it’s okay to talk about it, it’s a thing, it goes on.”

[Cardiff, LGB mini-group]

Participants did not feel that the timing of the show (breakfast TV) had a bearing on its acceptability. They thought that it was appropriate to have these kinds of discussions on morning TV. Participants were

more divided over whether a warning was needed, with many seeing this as unnecessary. They generally felt a preview would be helpful to give audiences a choice whether to watch or not, especially for LGBT viewers who might find the discussion upsetting.

There were mixed opinions over the role of the presenter: some felt they should intervene and challenge views, others thought they should remain neutral as long as the debate included a range of views.

“If they’re not inciting any hate, I think it’s okay.” [Solihull workshop, 18-36]

However, participants emphasised the importance of the presenter using an appropriate style, tone and approach to questioning guests. Some workshops were shown a real-life TV example of this type of scenario, with clips of editions of Good Morning Britain, ITV, 21 March 2019 and/or 27 March 2019 shown during discussions of the scenario. There were some concerns about one presenter shown in the clip being forceful in their approach to questioning a guest. This approach was seen as unacceptable by some and regarded as potentially bullying the guest. In this way, professionalism was seen as important, even where presenters have a role to challenge or provide an alternative perspective to others on a programme.

Additional clips

During the research, participants were played a number of audio and visual clips to stimulate discussions. They were asked to consider the acceptability of each clip before discussing it as a group or with the interviewer. Different clips were shown to different participants and we have highlighted the relevant groups in the background information section.

Jago Pakistan Jago

Background

Description: A regular Urdu language lifestyle morning show. This edition of the programme featured a make-up competition in which contestants were asked to apply dark make-up on volunteer models. In the process several comments were made by presenters which appeared to criticise and denigrate people with darker skin, including the use of words such as “negro”.

TV channel: **HUM Europe**

Date: **15th March 2018**

Time: **09:32**

Clip shown in:

- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**
- *As this clip was only shown to a small number of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Overall, participants had mixed views on this clip:

- Those who thought it was acceptable viewed it as a light-hearted entertainment show, promoting make-up for all skin tones
- Those who thought it was not acceptable felt the content reinforced negative stereotypes about darker skin tones. They found the use of the word “negro” (spoken in English to describe the darker shade of make-up) offensive. Younger participants were often more aware of the potential for offence than older participants who tended not to find this offensive.

“I don’t think they were insulting anyone. It was all light hearted. And they were doing a task. It wasn’t intentionally making fun of any colour of people.”

[Leicester, Indian (Punjabi) mini-group]

In most cases, participants felt it was important to avoid giving the impression that a lighter skin tone was more attractive than darker skin tones. However, there was no consensus on whether this example did this.

Participants expected this kind of content on Asian programmes and they felt that a similar competition would be handled differently on a British channel. However, views on the acceptability of broadcasting this content on an Asian channel in the UK were mixed.

“I just don’t think they should be teaching other children that if you have black skin colour, you’re undesirable – I don’t agree with that. I get it that in Asian communities if you’re whiter, you’re more beautiful, but I don’t think it’s right.”

[London, Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group]

A few participants felt it was acceptable for the programme to be broadcast but wanted a warning against the safety of skin lightening products, highlighting that these can be dangerous.

Qutab online

Background

Description: **A current affairs TV programme examining societal issues in Pakistan. This edition of the programme included the repeated use of CCTV footage of a woman being fatally shot, which was shown on a continuous loop. The footage clearly showed the woman being shot, collapsing and gasping for breath.**

TV channel: **Samaa**

Date: **Thursday 21st June**

Time: **15:05**

Clip shown in:

- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**

Findings

The clip was widely seen as reflecting real life and raising awareness of violence against women – something that was important for many participants. In addition, participants felt that including details of the punishment for the perpetrator would help discourage similar behaviour.

“It is acceptable because this is the reality. People should know such things and what is happening in the world.” [Leicester, Indian (Punjabi) mini-group]

However, the detail of the gun being fired was considered too graphic and participants expressed concerns about the way the clip was shown on repeat in a loop. Second-generation participants were particularly uneasy about the repetition as they felt showing the clip multiple times made it more likely to harm audiences.

Participants also expressed other concerns – for example:

- They felt the broadcaster’s PG rating was misleading and did not reflect the graphic nature of the clip.
- Revealing the victim’s identity by referring to their name throughout the programme was seen as problematic by some, particularly younger participants.

British channels were also described as more careful when broadcasting similar content compared to Asian channels in the UK. Some participants believed the same rules were not applied to Asian channels

in the UK and believed that these channels were unregulated. Reflecting this, participants felt they would be more surprised to see this type of graphic content being broadcast on a loop if it was shown on a British channel. However, some older participants felt this clip was less concerning than the footage of Lee Rigby's murder shown on ITV News (see page 9). This was because they felt the ITV News clip could fuel tensions between communities in the UK, compared to this clip which they felt was in the public interest to show. There were mixed views about whether the Urdu-language version should be broadcast in the UK.

“What is acceptable to Pakistani people may not be acceptable to British viewing... This certainly won't be shown on British TV in the way it was shown on Asian TV. And the PG is completely wrong.” [Birmingham, Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group]

Shomoyer Sathe

Background

Description: **A regular live talk show, in which a presenter moderates a political debate among guest contributors. At the time this programme was broadcast, national elections were due to be held in Bangladesh. During the programme a discussion about the upcoming election becomes heated and the presenter loses control of the guests who are aggressive towards each other and trade insults, including using the word “kafir”.**

TV channel: **NTV**

Date: **23rd April 2018**

Time: **23:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- *As this clip was only shown to one mini-group, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Some participants found the clip funny, particularly those who were first-generation Bangladeshi. They were familiar with the politicians and how they frequently changed their position on issues, and felt that the clip reflected this.

However, the behaviour of the politicians during the show was widely seen as unacceptable by both first- and second-generation participants. There were concerns about the use of religiously offensive language such as the terms “Kafir”² and “Murtad”³ which were used in an insulting way and the personal attacks made by the panellists. Participants agreed that the moderator should have done more to manage the conversation, for example by having security remove guests if their behaviour became out of control.

² “Kafir” refers to people who have no faith in religion (Islam in this case) and is generally a derogatory insult in Bengali conversation, but when said to a Muslim person it is similar in effect to the word “murtad” and, therefore, highly offensive.

³ “Murtad” refers to a person who leaves his religion (Islam in this case) and is a highly offensive insult in Bengali conversation, particularly because under extreme applications of sharia law the penalty for apostasy is death.

“You have political debates like Question Time and Newsnight on British TV, but it is all controlled. That is how it should be. You can have opposing views and people have a right to debate, but there needs to be some control.” [Birmingham, Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group]

Linked to this, participants worried about the impression the clip would give of Bangladeshi people and their culture – both to their children and wider non-Bangladeshi audiences. This led participants to suggest that the show should not be broadcast in the UK.

“If the younger generation see the show, they will think all Bangladeshi people are like that.” [Birmingham, Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group]

Q Radio Breakfast Show

Background

Description: **Radio breakfast show discussing a Topshop customer who had complained about Topshop not having gender-neutral changing rooms. One presenter misgenders the customer (who identifies as non-binary) and says they should use the male changing room as “biologically male” people should not be allowed to use female changing rooms for the security of other customers.**

Radio station: **Q Radio**

Date: **9th November 2017**

Time: **Breakfast show**

Clip shown in:

- **Paired depths interviews with young people**
- **Depth interviews with transgender people**

Findings

This clip was widely considered to be unacceptable. Although participants believed it was important for programmes to include conversations about gender-neutral changing rooms, they felt this particular example lacked a mix of different views. Concerns included:

- The presenter was considered uninformed and taking an offensive tone in the way they used different pronouns ('her/him/it') to refer to the customer's gender.
- The language was felt to be unacceptable and insensitive. For example, the use of the pronoun "it" was considered dehumanising.

“It's an important discussion to have, I agree with that, while there maybe should have been a bit more of a balanced debate going on, they both seemed to be transphobic.”
[Manchester, transgender depth interview]

Participants felt that broadcasting the clip during the day was worse as this type of content might influence children's attitudes towards transgender people.

There were also concerns about the potential negative impact of depicting transgender people as predatory due to the reference to customer security. Participants felt this was particularly concerning as it reflected other stories, for example about criminals claiming to be transgender and committing crime.

They worried about whether this could encourage negative stereotypes and potentially lead to violence against transgender people.

In general, participants did not feel that a warning would make the content more acceptable. Participants also had mixed views about whether an apology would make the clip more acceptable. While participants felt they would welcome an apology, there was a sense that the damage had been done and it would not change the situation.

“It was pretty unacceptable when he was like ‘he/ she/ it’...it’s not really on.”

[Newton Abbot, young people paired depth interview]

Genderquake

Background

Description: One-off panel show debating issues around defining gender and gender identity, with a range of high-profile trans activists on the panel. The debate was recorded in front of a live audience, in which there were a number of female hecklers who persistently shouted out abuse directed towards the panel, disputing the fact that one panellist was “even a woman” and claiming that the panellist was “a man lecturing women”. The abuse was challenged by the presenter and, more strongly, by the panel.

TV channel: **Channel 4**

Date: **May 2018**

Time: **21:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Depth interviews with transgender people**
- *As this clip was only shown to one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Participants welcomed the opportunity for transgender panellists to have a voice through the programme. However, there were concerns about one female heckler being transphobic and derailing the discussion. While some suggested that this was just showing the reality of abuse faced by trans people, there was also a clear view that this heckler was not dealt with appropriately by the programme presenter.

“I have seen content like that before... I haven’t felt offended but just sad for the person that they feel that way... you are broadcasting the harsh reality.”

[Edinburgh, transgender depth interview]

Participants felt this heckling was not so much of a problem during a debate, or if it was based on a single comment. But given the repeated nature of the abuse they felt it should have been addressed more effectively during this section of the programme, for example, by the presenter more strongly challenging or removing the heckler.

“People being offensive in the studio audience were not dealt with appropriately, they shouldn’t have been allowed to continue.” [Manchester, transgender depth interview]

Participants had concerns about safety, worrying that the situation on the programme could have become violent. They also felt there was too much emphasis placed by the presenter on the idea that the panel contributors should simply not listen to the heckler. This was seen as placing responsibility on the person receiving abuse in an inappropriate way.

There were some suggestions that there was an incentive for the show to include audience members with controversial opinions. For example, they suggested that the heckler could have been planted in order to increase viewers or gain greater attention for the show.

“Perhaps she was planted there...to get a reaction.” [Manchester, transgender depth interview]

Teen Life

Background

Description: **Film about gay conversion therapy, set and produced in Ghana and featuring a young male character who has a relationship with another male character. On discovering the relationship, the character’s father arranges for counselling to “cure” him of homosexuality. The clip shows the young character, after being encouraged by his father, giving a speech to other young people about being “healed” of homosexuality.**

TV channel: **VATV (View Africa TV)**

Time: **Post-watershed**

Clip shown in:

- **Black African mini-group**
- **LGB mini-groups**

Findings

Participants felt the clip could be harmful, especially to young people in African communities struggling with their sexual orientation. Participants generally felt that if different opinions had been explored or the young man had ended up rejecting ‘conversion’ the clip would be more acceptable.

“I do think that message is dangerous. I wouldn’t want my nieces and nephews to think that was true.” [Birmingham, LGB mini-group]

There were mixed views on the acceptability of the clip as part of a drama and whether this would be different in other genres. However, showing the clip as part of a documentary that included rounded factual information was seen as likely to be more acceptable by providing greater context.

“There was no-one saying this is actually a lie. I think, yes, if there was somebody with an opposed opinion, I think it would be better.” [Cardiff, LGB mini-group]

There was a shared sense from some in all the groups that the clip was more acceptable because it was produced outside of the UK. This was because it was seen as reflecting the cultural norms where the film was made. Participants felt it would be less acceptable if it had been produced in the UK. This made it harder for them to reach a consensus on the acceptability of broadcasting this clip in the UK.

“In certain spaces, that will be acceptable, that will be the norm... but in the Western world that’s definitely not acceptable, you know, it’s not what we see as our norms and values.”

[Manchester, Black African mini-group]

Celebs Go Dating

Background

Description: **Reality TV show featuring a former female Love Island contestant going on two dates with women.**

TV channel: **E4**

Date: **August 2019**

Time: **21:00**

Clip shown in:

- **LGB mini-groups**
- *As this clip was only shown to one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

There were aspects of the clip that were seen as positive by participants, including portraying two women on a date on mainstream TV. But there was some concern that it did not accurately represent a typical lesbian date. For example:

- Camera angles and the male voiceover were viewed as inappropriate by some, because they overly sexualised what was happening
- Some of the comments in the voiceover were considered to be different to how heterosexual dates are portrayed on the same programme

“I think it’s positive that it was incorporated to be the norm, which is why I did think they, kind of, sexualised it a little bit more than they would have normally, if it was a straight date.” [Cardiff, LGB mini-group]

Overall, views ranged from these issues making the clip completely inappropriate to it being uncomfortable but not a serious problem. Those familiar with the show, and other similar programmes, argued that the commentary is part of the style of the show and was to be expected. Others felt that the clip perpetuated potentially harmful stereotypes about women, generally, and lesbians and bisexual women in particular.

“It took us back twenty years, with the stereotype of a heterosexual male fantasising over two women.” [Birmingham, LGB mini-group]

The timing and the channel of the broadcast did not make a difference to how participants said they felt about the clip.

Nick Ferrari

Background

Description: **A member of the public calls into a live radio discussion programme to comment on a debate about the portrayal of Muslim people in the media. The clip includes the caller making antisemitic statements including that Jewish people control the media.**

Radio station: **LBC**

Date: **9th July 2019**

Time: **08:20**

Clip shown in:

- **Jewish mini-group**
- *As this clip was only shown to one mini-group, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Despite disagreeing with what was said, participants in the Jewish mini-group thought the clip was acceptable because it was a live broadcast. They felt that this meant not much could have been done to stop the caller sharing these views.

“It’s live radio so it is hard to say, like, ‘you can’t broadcast that’.”

[Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Although participants recognised that the presenter did try to challenge the speaker, they felt the situation was difficult to handle. For example, they did not believe the guest should have been cut off as this would have infringed their freedom of speech.

“[The presenter] was stuck between a rock and a hard place with this one.”

[Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

The context of the clip was very important, as participants felt it was hard to make a judgement without hearing what the caller had been responding to earlier in the programme. The caller was also regarded as being fairly incomprehensible, so it was hard to understand what was being said. This was seen as reducing the potential impact on children who might be listening, making the clip more acceptable.

Roast Battle trailer

Background

Description: **Trailer for a programme called “Roast Battle”, which features two comedians telling jokes as they attempt to ‘roast’ each other. In the trailer, the presenter makes a joke based on racial stereotypes, asking one of the comedians, “You’re not Jewish?”. The comedian responds “No”, to which the presenter replies “Somebody needs to tell your face”. The second comedian is then seen laughing and holding his nose.**

TV channel: **Comedy Central extra**

Date: **14th September 2018**

Time: **17:27**

Clip shown in:

- **Jewish mini-group**
- *As this clip was only shown to one mini-group, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

When first viewing the clip, participants initially missed the joke based on racial stereotypes, regarding it as acceptable. On probing, there was a recognition that older generations (not present in the group) might be more sensitive to the stereotype of Jewish people having large noses and the use of potentially offensive language in the clip.

“I don’t personally find it as bad, but I think it’s a generational thing. Potentially older people would.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Broadcasting the trailer during the day was considered acceptable, as participants felt it was too subtle and fast-paced for children to be able to pick up on the potentially offensive content. The timing of the broadcast itself (10pm on a comedy channel) was also seen as acceptable. Participants felt this type of content reflected what they expected to be shown during a late-evening comedy show.

The context, tone and the profile of the comedian was also seen as making it more acceptable. Participants reflected on the fact that audiences have a choice about watching the show or not.

“This [channel] is not something kids are watching... comedy does take the rip on all sorts of things and people, so you have to be prepared if you’re watching something like that.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Gogglebox

Background

Description: **Episode from a popular, fly-on-the-wall TV series where members of the public view recent television shows and give their opinions on them. In the clip, the Gogglebox narrator introduces a television clip about a character who uses a wheelchair, referring to the character as “an invalid”.**

TV channel: **Channel 4**

Date: **08/05/2019**

Time: **21:00**

Clip shown in:

- **Depth interviews with disabled people**
- *As this clip was only shown to one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Participants often missed the use of the word “invalid” when watching the clip initially. On further probing, their views were split based on their understanding of the meaning of the word. Some felt “invalid” was acceptable as an accurate descriptor of a person in a wheelchair, while others considered the word offensive and derogatory.

“I don’t think the word should be used full stop.” [Newton Abbot, disabled depth interview]

“I don’t see anything offensive with the word.” [Belfast, disabled depth interview]

Some participants worried this type of content might normalise the use of similar language, which could result in harm to disabled people. However, the clip was seen as more acceptable as part of an entertainment show.

In some cases, participants felt it would have been more acceptable if a programme contributor had used the word rather than the programme’s narrator. This was because the latter would suggest the producers had made the decision to include this potentially offensive language in the script.

Additional scenarios

These hypothetical ‘programme scenarios’ were created to stimulate discussion about how content standards could be applied. They were developed to support discussions, although many were based on themes from real programmes that were broadcast on TV or radio, or available online. Participants were asked to consider the acceptability of each scenario before discussing it as a group or with the interviewer. Different scenarios were shown to different participants and we have highlighted the relevant groups in the background information section.

Radio news item – misleading content

Background

Description: **A three-hour national radio news programme included a 15-minute item on the historical and recent persecution of Christian populations around the world. Statistics on populations and crime rates were given by the presenter in the introduction. During this section, the presenter made inaccurate claims that the Christian population had declined in Israel in the last two years, when, in reality, it had grown.** *This scenario has similarities with the ‘TV political interview – misleading content’ scenario discussed in the public workshops as both include a programme making a factual error. It is described on page 14.*

Discussed in:

- **Jewish mini-group**
- *As this scenario was only discussed with one mini-group, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

This scenario was widely regarded as unacceptable by participants. They felt news should be accurate and argued that broadcasting false information can have a serious impact, especially on politics. There was a sense that this type of issue should not arise because there are researchers and fact-checkers who work on programmes to ensure information is accurate.

“News has a massive influence on politics. Homework should have been done. News definitely influences.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Participants thought that the mistake should be corrected as soon as possible by the programme. They also argued for consequences for whoever got it wrong, whether this was the presenter or a researcher. Some felt those responsible should be dismissed, while others thought an apology would be enough.

“It’s their one job to tell factual things.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

While participants recognised that the impact of this scenario would be less serious on a smaller channel or station, they still felt it would be unacceptable in principle because of the importance of ensuring facts are correct. Participants were concerned about the potential impact that broadcasting false information could have on supporting stereotypes and potentially leading to discrimination.

“I think the problem is the fact that if somebody already has anti-Zionist thoughts, then you see that information and it further backs it up, and who knows that could be the cracking point for some reason.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Radio Music Show – harm and offence

Background

Description: **An hour-long radio music programme which explores the history of pop music, includes a current music star commenting that pop music used to be thought of as “a bit gay”. The programme is well-received and secures high listener figures. It later becomes apparent that the pop star has made homophobic comments on historic social media accounts.**

Discussed in:

- **LGB mini-groups**
- *As this scenario was only discussed with one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Participants saw this language as derogatory and felt that it should have either been edited out or challenged by someone on the programme.

“Let’s be honest, it gets you all the time. It is derogatory, and you don’t know who’s listening to the programme and I think they should have just cut it out.”

[Birmingham, LGB mini-group]

However, this was not seen as a particularly serious issue and some participants found it entertaining.

“I just thought that was funny.” [Cardiff, LGB mini-group]

The pop star’s social media history did not always matter to participants. However, for some, the pop star’s history of sharing homophobic views added context to the comment, making it seem more derogatory. More recent comments were seen as much less acceptable than those from many years ago because of how attitudes in society have changed.

Some participants also argued that the public generally find homophobic content more acceptable than other kinds of discriminatory content such as racism. This was thought to be due to the use of religious arguments as a defence for expressing views which could be considered homophobic (for example, that gay relationships are a sin). They felt that discriminatory content aimed at the LGB community was more likely to be broadcast and would be met with less public outrage than, for example, discriminatory content aimed at racial groups.

“It’s far easier for people to take the piss out of the LGBT community.”

[Birmingham, LGB mini-group]

Participants were divided over whether or not broadcasters should pre-check the social media accounts of contributors before they appear in a programme. Some felt that this would be a waste of time and very difficult for broadcasters, others thought it would be helpful in protecting audiences from contributors who might express offensive views.

Religious TV Channel – hate speech

Background

Description: **A religious TV channel aimed at an Asian community broadcast two programmes in which a well-known religious scholar spoke at length about historical religious texts. Different versions of this scenario were shown in different groups:**

- **In the mini-groups with participants from a minority ethnic background, the scholar made a number of remarks suggesting that Jewish people were in control of the media and the world banking system and alleged that Israel, and therefore Jewish people, were responsible for having distorted the text of the Qur'an for their own ends.**
- **In the LGB groups and transgender depth interviews, the scholar suggested that gay people were "sinners" who were acting in contradiction to "the natural order" of the world.**

Discussed in:

- **Pakistani (Urdu) mini-group**
- **Bangladeshi (Bengali) mini-group**
- **Indian (Punjabi) mini-group**
- **Black African mini-group**
- **Jewish mini-group**
- **LGB mini-groups**
- **Depth interviews with transgender people**

Findings

Both versions of the scenario were generally seen as unacceptable by participants because they were considered harmful and could incite hatred due to the discriminatory language used (towards Jewish or LGB people). Participants felt that ensuring this kind of content is not broadcast was seen as a priority for regulators and government.

The one-sided nature of the scenario made it more unacceptable than a clip being played as part of a wider debate, or if someone challenged these views during the broadcast. Having a range of views was important to participants. They questioned the motivations of programme makers for there being no challenge to the views expressed in the programme, arguing that it was more likely they intended to push a particular opinion or even incite hatred. By contrast, a debate including these views could be educational or thought-provoking.

"This was not a discussion... The remarks were made to instigate. It should not be shown on any channels." [Leicester, Indian (Punjabi) mini-group]

The religious nature of the show divided participants with some arguing that religious people should be able to share their beliefs.

"I was stuck on that one, because it's a religious thing, the show is for religion, so you expect to hear stuff about religion." [Manchester, Black African mini-group]

By contrast, the religious aspect made the scenario even more concerning for some in the mini-groups with participants from a minority ethnic background. They felt the religious standing of a scholar could have a greater influence over certain people, especially as the channel is aimed at a particular community.

“The fact that it’s on an Asian TV channel is worse because everyone could watch it, but you are targeting a particular religious group to incite hatred.” [Glasgow, Jewish mini-group]

Late Night TV Show – harm and offence

Background

Description: **A late-night TV show, presented by a well-known comedian, broadcast an episode in which the presenter gave his thoughts on London Fashion Week, which finished on the day the episode was recorded. He commented on a story about a fashion label using a model who had lost an arm in an accident, saying he didn’t think the model was particularly beautiful and that she was only used because of “political correctness”.**

Discussed in:

- **Depth interviews with disabled people**
- *As this scenario was only discussed with one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

The scenario was generally considered unacceptable by participants. However, there were some differences in views, particularly in terms of how serious the issue was. On the one hand, the presenter was seen as making an offhand comment reflecting their personal opinion, which could be something viewers might agree with. On the other hand, some thought the language was derogatory and harmful to the model, people with physical disabilities and the wider public.

“The whole thing is insulting – she had an accident and lost her arm, but at the end of the day she is still a model... Then saying she is not particularly beautiful – that’s horrible.”
[Bangor, disabled depth interview]

There was some sympathy for the presenter, feeling he should be able to share his opinion. Participants also acknowledged that if you are a public person, there is an assumption that people will make judgements on your appearance.

“If you are in certain lines of jobs it goes with the territory. If you don’t want people to comment on you, you don’t go into modelling or politics.”
[Newton Abbot, disabled depth interview]

However, the blunt tone and remarks towards the model were considered offensive and unnecessary, regardless of whether it was consistent with the presenter's usual style. Participants felt that it would have been better as part of a discussion with different perspectives or commentators presenting varied views on the topic.

“That would be better because you would discuss whether it’s right and wrong. Two different opinions.” [Newton Abbot, disabled depth interview]

Participants’ expectations differed depending on the platform. They felt they would be more likely to come across this sort of content on social media, or local TV and radio, rather than on mainstream TV channels or radio stations.

Radio Phone-in – harm and offence

Background

Description: **A national radio station, well-known for its phone-in format, held a discussion on a news story of a transgender man who had given birth to a baby. The man applied to be officially identified as the child’s father but was told he must officially register as the mother. A number of callers featured on the programme. One caller strongly disagreed with what the man was doing, saying “there are only two genders – male and female – and only a mother can give birth to a baby, not a man”.**

Discussed in:

- **Depth interviews with transgender participants**
- *As this scenario was only discussed with one group of participants, the findings should be considered indicative. More research would be needed to understand these issues in greater detail.*

Findings

Views differed on how acceptable this scenario was. On the one hand, some participants considered it to be harmful and transphobic and therefore unacceptable. On the other, having a discussion about these themes was regarded as necessary as society navigates the language to use in these situations.

“[By saying this] you are harming people by saying that trans men are actually women.” [Edinburgh, transgender depth interview]

Participants generally thought it was important for people to give their opinions, arguing that freedom of speech was valuable, and that these kinds of programmes should reflect societal views.

The scenario was deemed more acceptable if this type of phone-in discussion was a typical format for the station. If the format was unusual, participants had concerns over why the broadcaster would single out this issue for a call-in and whether they were seeking inappropriate, and potentially offensive, views.

“I disagree but I guess they are free to air that view in public... [it would] probably be wrong to censor it.” [Edinburgh transgender depth interview]

Participants also acknowledged that the live nature of the programme and the involvement of members of the public made it difficult to control what was said. Some participants felt this meant it was even more important for the presenter to challenge the caller. More generally, including a variety of views was seen as a way to make the scenario more acceptable.

“It’s better that you can phone in, the public can actually have their say, the only thing is you can’t control what they say.” [Manchester transgender depth interview]

If the presenter had made the comments, participants felt the scenario would have been less acceptable. They argued the presenter had a duty to maintain professionalism and people are more likely to be influenced by the opinion of a presenter as opposed to a member of the public calling in.

Participants acknowledged that the impact of the scenario might be more limited on a smaller radio station, but generally felt this did not make a difference to how acceptable they thought it was.

For more information

3 Thomas More Square
London
E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 3059 5000

www.ipsos-mori.com
<http://twitter.com/IpsosMORI>

About Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute

The Social Research Institute works closely with national governments, local public services and the not-for-profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. This, combined with our methods and communications expertise, helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.