

Ofcom—supplementary written evidence (FOJ0067)

House of Lords Communication and Digital Committee Future of Journalism follow up questions

Ofcom welcomed the opportunity to give oral evidence on 25 February to the Committee's inquiry on the future of journalism. This note sets out our response to the supplementary questions raised by Committee members subsequent to the oral evidence session.

1. *How diverse are broadcasters' newsrooms and what could be done to make them more representative?*

Section 27 of the Communications Act (2003) places a duty on Ofcom to take all steps it considers appropriate for promoting equality of opportunity in terms of race, gender and disability, in relation to employment and training in the broadcasting sector, including both television and radio services.

As part of meeting this duty, we monitor the employed workforce of UK television and radio broadcasters and report annually on the diversity of the industry and of the main broadcasters; this includes gathering data on each organisation's employees in various job roles. While to date we have not produced an analysis looking specifically at the diversity of the workforce within different broadcast job categories, our most recent publication on [diversity in broadcasting](#) provides some useful insight into certain aspects of the diversity of broadcaster's newsrooms:

- Of the larger television broadcasters, minority ethnic talent in journalism is particularly underrepresented at ITV, where only 7% of these roles are filled by people from a minority ethnic background. At Sky, employees from minority ethnic backgrounds also remain under-represented in journalism (11%), whereas the UK labour market is 12%.
- Disability is significantly underrepresented across the television industry, and particularly in journalism roles. Of the UK television workforce in 2019, 7% of employed journalists were disabled, whereas the UK labour market average is 18%.

We do not have powers to collect data on the large number of the freelance population working in news and current affairs, which means we do not have a full picture of the diversity of the workforce across the industry. However, we have been engaged in discussions with ITN, the main news service provider.

- ITN has committed to various on and off-screen diversity targets, including aiming to ensure 50% of its top 20 earners are women and 20% are from minority ethnic backgrounds by 2022.
- ITN also plans to halve its gender and ethnicity pay gaps and improve the representation of disabled people.

Broadcasters are taking steps to improve the diversity of their regional, national and international newsrooms. These include:

- Warner Media (formerly Turner Broadcasting) has taken steps to increase access and social mobility by offering 32 paid internships at CNN every year and to run job shadowing and a 'CNN Open Newsroom Day' initiative. The broadcaster has also made progress on gender balance in the UK, with women in journalism roles rising from 21% in 2018 to 62% in 2019.

- Channel 4 has told us that, since the establishment of its new National HQ in Leeds, it has plans to launch a new daily show and regularly co-anchor Channel 4 News from the city.
- Scotland's STV has said that its news team has joined the BBC and others in rolling out the '50:50 Project' with the ambition of achieving an even gender balance among contributors. 'Scotland Tonight' has since gone from achieving an average of only 25% of contributors being women to 43%. It is now planning to extend the 50:50 Project to further news programming.
- STV has also publicly stated its aim to achieve an even gender split in the top 25% of roles by earnings by 2023. It has expanded its bespoke career development programme so that it is now also available to its News team.
- Recognising an underrepresentation of minority ethnic talent across its national news output, Sky has set targets to improve in this area, including 20% on-screen and 15% off-screen minority ethnic representation on Sky News.

More broadly, Ofcom has made recommendations to broadcasters in its diversity reports on how to improve diversity and be more representative of the UK in key programme-making departments and teams, including newsrooms. These include best practice measures such as setting and evaluating specific targets to improve representation, aspiring to have a workforce that is more reflective of the working population of the area that the broadcaster is based in, and engaging with Ofcom and other broadcasters to develop a collaborative and innovative approach to diversity and inclusion.

2. *How does socioeconomic background affect media literacy?*

Ofcom has a duty to promote media literacy relating to material published by electronic media, and to make arrangements for carrying out research on media literacy. Since 2005 we have carried out and disseminated research to deliver a holistic view of how both adults and children engage with the media landscape.

In 2019 we reformulated our media literacy work under our ["Making Sense of Media"](#) programme, to take account of the increasing significance of the internet in all forms of media consumption. Our Making Sense of Media ambition is to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children, through providing world-class research, and collaboration with, and coordination of, relevant stakeholders and their activities.

Our definition of media literacy is the "ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts". In our research we use a range of indicators to track the different elements of media literacy across different demographic groups. This includes both how they use different media, and the skills they have to assess and evaluate their media environment – for example the ability to recognise what is a commercial and what is an editorial message online, the extent to which content can be trusted depending on its provenance, the extent to which people are aware of the range of personal details they might provide and the differential in service or content they might receive as a consequence.

There are clear variations in patterns of use and understanding according to different socio-economic groups, which have remained consistent over recent years. Examples of variation between the highest and lowest socio-economic categories in our [2019 Adults Media Use and Attitudes report](#) include:

- **Being online:** while only 6% of adults in the AB socio-economic group are not online, this rises to 23% of those in the DE group.
- **Social media profile:** 74% of those from the AB group have a profile vs. 56% of DEs.
- **Understanding of online advertising:** 57% of search engine users in the AB group correctly identify advertising on Google vs. 37% of DEs.
- **Awareness of personal data collection by companies:** 87% of AB internet users are aware of at least one way that companies can collect personal data about them, compared to 73% of DEs.

3. How does age affect media literacy?

There are also some clear variations in patterns of media use and understanding by age, which have also remained consistent over recent years. One reminder of the differences by generation is when we consider the means we had 30 years ago for person to person communication. Back then we had landlines and letters, and these were used by all generations. Now, there are a great variety of different forms of communication device and service, with younger and older people often using quite different means to communicate.

In terms of media literacy in general, some of the key findings from our 2019 Adults Media Use and attitudes report include:

- **Being online:** while only 1% of 16-24s are not online, this rises to 19% of those aged 55-64, 33% of those aged 65-74, and 48% of those aged 75+.
- **Social media profile:** 91% of 16-24s have a profile vs. 34% of those aged 55-64 and 20% of those aged 65+.
- **Understanding of online advertising:** among search engine users, there is broad parity by age group in terms of identifying advertising on Google.
- **Awareness of personal data collection by companies:** 85% of internet users aged 16-24 are aware of at least one way that companies can collect personal data about them, compared to 63% of those aged 75+.

4. Particularly among older people, how can poor media literacy be tackled?

There are a lot of media literacy initiatives targeting older people being carried out by a wide range of stakeholders, including for example the Carnegie Trust, the Good Things Foundation, among many others. It's important that we encourage collaboration and coordination from the range of stakeholders involved in this space.

Our expanded media literacy activity over the last year emphasises the importance of this type of work, and we are bringing this range of stakeholders together, both through our advisory panel, and also our Network of c.200 organisations, so that there is more common understanding of what works, and what is best practice.

Finally, we welcome the Government's commitment to developing a media literacy strategy, and we are engaging closely with them.