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September 2016

Attitudes to potentially offensive language and gestures on TV and radio

Research report

Warning: this report contains a wide range of words which may cause offence.

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1 Foreword

TV and radio are a part of our daily lives. Whether we're at home, work or travelling in a car, most of us switch on or tune in at some point during the day. Live TV continues to have the greatest reach of all UK media formats, with 92% of people watching each week in 2016. Furthermore, nine in ten adults tuned into the radio, listening for an average of three hours daily.[1]

Our job at Ofcom is to set and enforce the rules that help protect viewers and listeners from harmful and offensive content on TV and radio. To do this, it's essential that we keep up to date with what people consider offensive, and what they expect of broadcasters. As times change and people's attitudes shift, it's also important that broadcasting rules strike the right balance. Broadcasters need to be able to reflect real life situations, while being aware of what people consider offensive, and why.

Our new research is the most comprehensive we have conducted in this area, and looks at what audiences think about a wide range of offensive language – including, for the first time, some newer and obscure language and gestures.

The research involved an online survey, focus groups and in-depth interviews – and included people of all age groups living across the UK, as well as disabled people, people from ethnic minority communities, Gypsies and Travellers, and people from the LGBT community.

As we've seen in many other Ofcom research studies, most of the participants in this research recognised the importance of the 9pm watershed on TV – before that time, content that's unsuitable for children is restricted – and its role in protecting children.

Participants felt the time of broadcast was most important when considering whether offensive language was acceptable in programmes. They tolerated some mildly offensive language before the watershed, but all agreed that offensive gestures are not generally acceptable at that time.

Viewers and listeners also judge the tone and delivery of offensive language. Many participants said there is a clear divide between the emotional impact of discriminatory and racist words compared to 'general' swear words.

People draw the line at racist and discriminatory language – participants felt this was the most unacceptable of all. Most people see these words as derogatory and insulting. Many were concerned about them being used in programmes at any time, unless there's very clear justification for it in the programme and how it's presented to the audience.

All these findings will help us reach decisions when we investigate potentially offensive language in programmes. We'll also share them with broadcasters so they can better understand what today's audiences think about language used on TV and radio.

Tony Close
Director of Content Standards, Licensing and Enforcement at Ofcom
September 2016

[1] *The Communications Market Report 2016*, Ofcom

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1 Executive summary

Warning: this report contains a wide range of words which may cause offence.

Introduction

As the regulator for the UK communications industries, one of Ofcom's important responsibilities is to set standards for offensive language in TV and radio content, and to assess if there are breaches of the rules in Ofcom's Broadcasting Code. Ofcom commissioned this research to inform its decisions about potentially offensive language. The research aimed to assess how perceptions of this language differed based on context, and by different demographic groups.

The main objectives for this research were:

- to understand current public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio;
- to establish a contemporary barometer of offensive language in terms of acceptability; and
- to give Ofcom an understanding of the contextual factors which influence the acceptability of offensive words on TV and radio – both generally and in particular.

This research follows two previous Ofcom studies on attitudes to potentially offensive language, carried out in 2005 and 2010. The 2016 study builds on the previous research by: (i) including a larger number of words; (ii) involving a broader range of minority groups as participants; and (iii) considering potentially offensive gestures for the first time.

The research used a mixed methodology involving 248 participants in total, from around the UK. It comprised a series of face-to-face focus groups and in-depth interviews, and a separate quantitative online survey of 150 potentially offensive words and gestures followed by an online community discussion with the same participants.

General attitudes to potentially offensive language

Participants clearly recognised the need to maintain broadcasting standards

There were few spontaneous concerns about offensive language and gestures on TV and radio. However, most participants agreed that broadcast standards played a crucial role in enabling parental choice and control over their children's viewing and listening habits. There was also general agreement that there should continue to be rules and standards around the use of offensive language and gestures on TV and radio.

Participants wanted TV and radio to reflect real life where appropriate

Participants' main concerns were protecting children from harm and avoiding offence, particularly to minority groups, but there was a general desire to allow TV, and radio in particular, to reflect real life as far as possible, where appropriate and suitable for the likely audience.

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How participants experienced and thought about strong language on TV and radio

Participants emphasised the importance of context when evaluating potentially offensive language, but had some key concerns

Participants recognised that assessing potentially offensive language on TV and radio was not always straightforward. Case-by-case judgements were required. Participants took into account a number of contextual factors, which were grounded in some key concerns around language and gestures. The most important of these concerns were to protect children and not to offend or hurt, particularly minority groups. Avoiding personal social discomfort and personal offence were also important concerns, but seen as less relevant or significant in many of the circumstances considered.

There was a broad range of views at the outset, but the role of context tended to increase in importance

Initially, there was a spectrum of views about how much offensive language should be allowed on TV and radio, from those who thought there should be very little, to those who said they were unconcerned about the issue. As the discussion progressed and participants considered a range of examples, there was an overall movement towards the middle of this spectrum, with the role of context becoming even more important to most participants.

The importance of context

Whether or not they were personally offended by specific offensive language or gestures was not usually participants' starting point. Instead, they were more likely to reflect on the acceptability of language or gestures in a particular context, including whether others would be offended or harmed. Participants considered the following contextual factors particularly important when making judgements about the acceptability of potentially offensive language on TV or radio. Further details are in the full report.

1. The time of broadcast, and the potential and likely audiences

The time a particular programme was broadcast emerged as, perhaps, the strongest driver of the views on acceptability. Participants directly linked the time of broadcast to the potential viewers or listeners. For television, the 9pm watershed was considered crucial for managing expectations around offensive language, but some mild language was seen as acceptable in the run-up to the watershed.

Participants evaluated both the *potential* audience (all those who might reasonably be expected to see or listen to a broadcast) as well as the *likely* audience (the most likely audience, given the time of broadcast and the target audience). In general, participants were fairly conservative and defaulted to the potential audience as the most important consideration when deciding on acceptability. However, participants gave specialist channels, and programmes unlikely to appeal to children, more leeway before the watershed.

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2. The frequency or repetition of potentially offensive language

Participants thought that repetition exacerbated the impact of the language. They pointed out that the programme makers could have made different choices, and assumed that the producers wanted to draw attention to the language through the repetition.

Swearing substitutes, and the bleeping-out of offensive language, were viewed as less acceptable when used frequently. Participants considered that most people would often understand what the actual swear word was supposed to be, and therefore the effect was similar to using the actual word, especially if it was repeated.

3. Audience expectations of broadcasters, programmes, genres and medium

These varied based on participants' experiences and associations of watching TV and listening to the radio. They saw offensive language or gestures that were out of line with audience expectations as much less acceptable, because they could cause discomfort, surprise or shock.

Participants generally saw offensive language as more problematic on radio. They thought of radio as a more intimate medium, and one on which strong language is not often used. Another important consideration was that radio is often on in the background at home, in the car, and in public spaces such as shops where children could be listening without parental control, and therefore care should be taken about the language used.

4. Audience expectations of live and pre-recorded programmes

Participants were tolerant of occasional, accidental strong language on live TV and radio before the watershed. They acknowledged the limits of broadcaster control in live programming, particularly when contributors had been invited on to, or called in to, a programme. Participants found offensive language in live programmes much less acceptable when they felt that professional broadcasters had acted negligently, or had intentionally used strong language.

5. The role of mitigating actions such as warnings, bleeps or apologies

Participants thought that the various mitigating actions taken by broadcasters helped manage expectations, moderated the level of offence, and reduced the likelihood of harm; for example, by helping parents better manage the language and gestures their children come across. However, these mitigating actions did not make excessive use of offensive language acceptable before the watershed.

- Participants considered that warnings were essential to signal the type of language viewers or listeners might expect in a programme, so they could make an informed choice about watching or listening.
- Before the watershed, bleeping of offensive language must be done effectively. And it must not be excessive, because repeated bleeping can simply draw attention to the strong language, especially for children.
- Apologies following the use of offensive language help to increase acceptability before the watershed, especially in the case of accidental uses. However, apologies must be sincere and must be made soon after the incident, preferably by the person responsible.

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6. *The perceived tone and intent of programmes*

Participants took into account the reasons why they thought programme makers had included potentially offensive language. They looked at the overall programme and thought about why editorial decisions had been taken; for example, to reflect reality, to highlight the emotion of a particular scene, or to shock. They assessed whether, in their view, these decisions were justified, and they noted the importance of individual choice in terms of viewing or listening to content that includes strong language.

Participants considered that the tone or delivery of offensive language can increase or decrease its acceptability. An aggressive, malicious, angry or mocking tone heightened the impact of language for participants, increasing its emotional intensity.

Acceptability of specific words and gestures

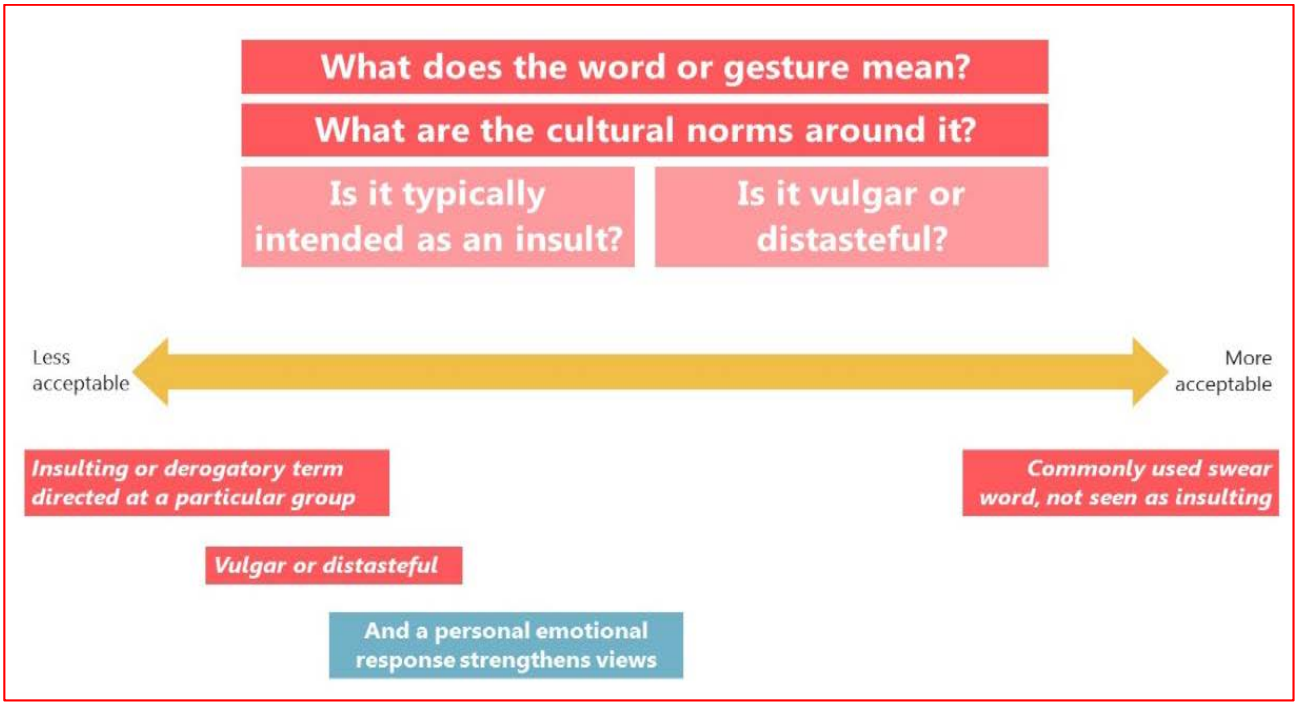
Unfamiliar words

Not all of the 150 words and gestures used in the quantitative research (listed on page 15) were recognised by the participants. This limited the feedback that we could collect regarding these little-known terms. The least recognised words (those recognised by only a minority of participants, and set out on page 39) were typically slang terms relating to body parts or sex, as well as some racial, ethnic or religious slurs.

How words and gestures were evaluated

Participants assessed words and gestures based on their understanding of their meaning and cultural norms, particularly the extent to which the words were considered insulting, derogatory, vulgar or distasteful, as summarised in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Key questions and steps when evaluating words and gestures



Debated words

Participants found it most difficult to decide on acceptability when a word can be used in different ways in different contexts, or when the meaning was perceived to have changed (or to be changing). This was relevant to their evaluation of specific words in two main ways:

1. Some terms were thought to have been '**reclaimed' by those whom they were originally intended to insult**. This included some strong discriminatory words like 'nigger' and 'queer'.

2. There were differing views on the acceptability of a small number of historical insults, because their use was thought to have **changed over time**. These included words like 'cretin', and 'loony'. Some of these terms were thought to have lost their clear status as direct references to a particular disability or mental condition. Other words like 'coloured' were largely unacceptable for younger people but seen as less problematic by some older participants.

While participants were unable to reach consensus on these words, this debate emphasised the changing nature of language. Many words that were acceptable in the past are now often considered unacceptable, but it is also possible for words to move from being unacceptable to more acceptable, because their use and meaning has changed.

Overall perceptions of different categories of words

The groups of potentially offensive language and gestures fell into two broad categories: general swear words - those with clear links to body parts, sexual references, and offensive gestures; and specifically discriminatory language, whether directed at older people, people of particular religions, people with mental health or disability issues, LGBT people, or racist language.

General and other non-discriminatory language

- For **general swear words**, the emotional impact associated with particular words was important. In particular, certain words like 'fuck' or 'motherfucker' were regarded as among the strongest offensive language and not acceptable before the watershed, with some respondents having concerns about their frequent use after the watershed.

- Words with clear links to **body parts** like 'cunt', 'gash' or 'beef curtains' were in general viewed in a way analogous to the more, or most, offensive general swear words. However, many respondents thought the less crass or vulgar words (such as 'balls' or 'tits') were the more acceptable before the watershed.

- **Sexual references** like 'cocksucker' or 'prick teaser' were typically evaluated in a similar way to the more, or most, offensive general swear words. They were seen as distasteful and often unnecessary, but acceptable if used in line with audience expectations after the watershed.

- **Offensive gestures** were viewed as broadly unacceptable before the watershed, but mostly acceptable after it. The 'blow job' gesture was the least acceptable because it was perceived as the most vulgar.

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Discriminatory language

- Unlike other forms of discriminatory language, respondents had few concerns about the terms assessed in this report that were potentially insulting to **older people**. These were mildly distasteful to some of the older participants, but many (of a range of ages) found them inoffensive or even, to some extent, humorous.

- Many of the words that were discriminatory on **religious** grounds were unfamiliar to some of the participants. However, those who were familiar with words such as 'Taig' and 'Fenian' viewed them as generally offensive and potentially unacceptable.

- Views on words relating to **mental health** and **disability** differed greatly. Words such as 'spastic', 'mong' or 'retard' were seen as insulting and derogatory, and therefore viewed as being as unacceptable as the strongest racist insults, with their use requiring significant contextual justification. On the other hand, words such as 'nutter', 'loony' or 'mental' were seen as more commonly-used mild insults, and were therefore much more acceptable, both before and after the watershed.

- Stronger **homophobic** and **transphobic** terms such as 'faggot', 'homo', and 'chick with a dick' were seen as very problematic by participants. This was, again, because of the insulting and derogatory nature of the language. These words were considered much less acceptable than general swear words.

- **Racist language** such as 'coon', 'nigger' and 'wog' were among the most unacceptable words overall; they were seen as derogatory, discriminatory and insulting. Many participants were concerned about these words being used at any time, with their use requiring significant contextual justification. Other words in this category were more open to debate; participants had differing views about their acceptability after the watershed, based on how insulting they were perceived to be.

Further details about specific words within each category can be found in Chapter 5.

Participants' suggested broadcast guidelines

Participants agreed on many concerns about how language and gestures on TV and radio ought to be regulated, and a relatively consistent set of suggested guidelines emerged across the research:

1. Ofcom and the broadcasters should consider the potentially offensive nature of language and gestures in their wider context when assessing their acceptability.

2. The likely audience should be taken into account (noting that not all channels are the same) – but the potential audience is also important before the watershed on TV, or at times when children are particularly likely to be listening to radio.

3. The 9pm television watershed continues to act as an important way of protecting children, but also helping adults who do not want to encounter offensive language.

4. Before the 9pm television watershed, or when children are particularly likely to be listening to radio, any offensive language should be relevant and serve a purpose – and not be very strong, frequent or gratuitous.

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5. Potentially offensive language related to race, sexuality, gender identity, and disability should be treated with the most care.

6. Ofcom and broadcasters should take into consideration what is generally acceptable to most viewers, while protecting minorities.

7. Broadcasters should, in general, be held to higher standards for pre-recorded programmes than for live broadcasts, but they should take reasonable steps to avoid offensive language during live programmes before the watershed.

8. Warnings are important so that audiences know what to expect, and they should be as specific as is appropriate.

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2 Introduction

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Background and objectives

As the regulator for the UK communications industries, one of Ofcom's responsibilities is to set standards for offensive language in TV and radio content, and to assess potential breaches of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code. In order to inform its decisions about potentially offensive language broadcast on TV and radio, and to explore public attitudes, Ofcom commissioned the quantitative and qualitative research set out in this report. The research aimed to assess how perceptions differed based on context, and by different demographic groups.

The main objectives for this research were:

- to understand current public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio;
- to establish a contemporary barometer of offensive terms in terms of acceptability; and
- to give Ofcom an understanding of the contextual factors which influence the acceptability of potentially offensive words on TV and radio – both generally and in particular.

Previous research

This research follows two previous studies on attitudes to potentially offensive language, carried out in 2005 and 2010. The 2016 study builds on the previous research by: (i) including a larger number of words, (ii) involving a broader range of minority groups, and (iii) assessing potentially offensive gestures for the first time.

In the 2005 study, participants considered that potentially offensive language was increasingly prevalent. Participants' views sometimes diverged about which words were more or less offensive, in part based on the context. However, there was a general consensus about the importance of protecting children and young people from offensive language. For most of the radio listeners in the research, content on radio did not present a problem. Participants' opinion was that regulation was still important; the majority were in favour of the watershed on TV and felt that the regulation at that time was dealing with potentially offensive language in about the right way.

The 2010 research again showed that participants' responses to the potentially offensive language varied depending on the context of each of the clips or words. Contextual factors included the audience, the intent of the language, and social acceptability. While the television watershed remained important, some participants felt that the 9pm watershed should be later at the weekend as children stay up later, and that a more 'staggered' watershed should be considered.

Overall, the 2016 findings were broadly consistent with the previous research, especially in identifying some key contextual factors that influenced whether language or gestures were seen as acceptable or not. The 2016 research considered contextual factors in greater depth than before, in an attempt to develop and add nuance to the previous findings. In addition, this 2016 report includes new research findings on offensive *gestures,* in addition to words, attitudes to offensive language on radio compared to TV, and attitudes to offensive words when used in live as opposed to pre-recorded programming. The study also includes a much wider range of potentially offensive words than the previous research.

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3 Methodology

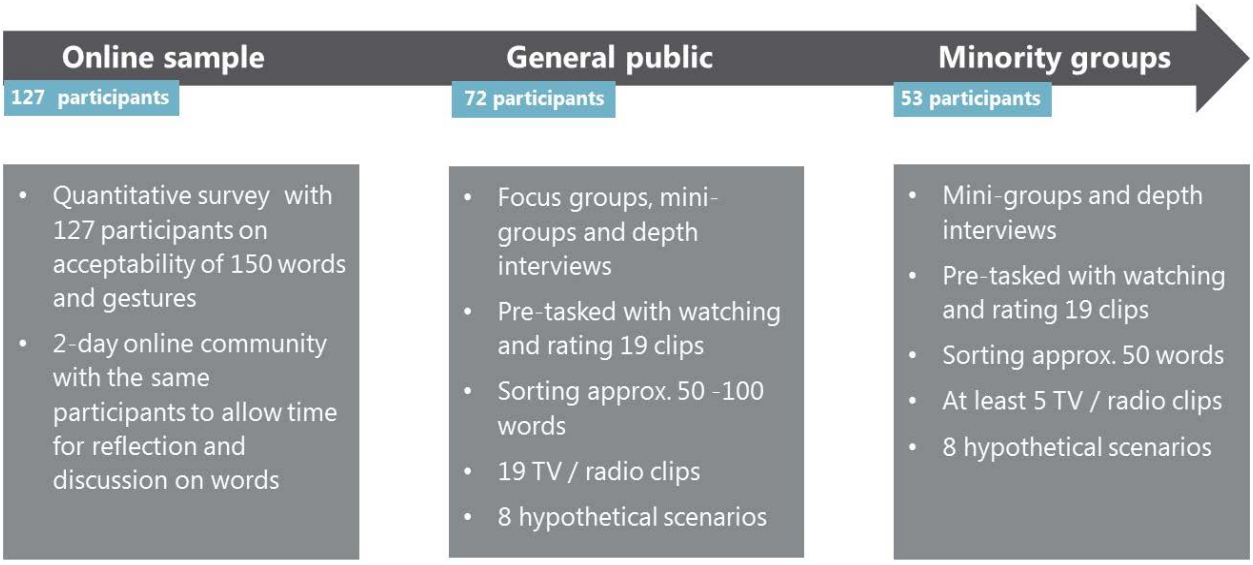
Overview

The research used a mixed methodology involving 248 participants in total from around the UK. It comprised a series of face-to-face focus groups and in-depth interviews, and a separate quantitative online survey followed by an online community discussion with the same participants.

This mixed methodology design offered the breadth and depth necessary for participants to evaluate 144 potentially offensive words and six gestures, 19 programme clips that included potentially offensive words and gestures, and eight hypothetical scenarios involving potentially offensive words broadcast on TV or radio. This wide variety of material was used to understand participants' views on a broad range of language and gestures in different contexts. The online survey, carried out as part of the online community exercise, offered the breadth to measure the relative acceptability of the full list of 150 specific words and gestures pre- and post-watershed, while the focus groups and in-depth interviews enabled detailed exploration and deliberation around the use of individual words and gestures in context.

The sample of participants was recruited as detailed below. The minority groups included people from specific ethnic minority backgrounds, the LGBT community, Gypsies and Travellers, and disabled people.

Figure 3.1: Sample overview



The online sample contained participants from around the UK. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted across the UK, in London, Chippenham, Stockport, Cardiff, Belfast and Paisley. The focus groups and online community exercise were carried out in February 2016 and the in-depth interviews between February and April 2016. A full methodological write-up is in the appendices to this report.

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Conducting fieldwork

Online sample

Participants first rated all 150 words and gestures based on their acceptability pre- and post-watershed, through an online survey. The word order was randomised, with participants considering 30 words per day over five days, to maintain engagement. On days six and seven participants took part in a moderated online community in which they had an opportunity to reflect with others on the words they had evaluated over the previous days. These discussions were based around structured questioning and activities.

Face-to-face sample

Participants reviewed all 19 clips of TV and radio programmes before attending the focus groups. During the face-to-face groups and interviews, participants discussed their initial evaluation of the clips, before describing their general views on the acceptability of potentially offensive language and gestures. They then sorted approximately 50 words and gestures based on perceptions of their acceptability pre- and post-watershed, before reviewing ten of the clips in more detail (five clips during the shorter in-depth interviews). The words and clips were shown in rotation to ensure that all 19 clips were thoroughly reviewed during the fieldwork. Participants then evaluated eight hypothetical scenarios involving the broadcast of potentially offensive words or gestures, to further explore contextual factors around their acceptability. Finally, they were asked to construct guidelines to help assess the acceptability of offensive language on TV and radio, describing their priorities and how they thought standards should be applied by Ofcom and broadcasters.

Interpreting the data

The research was designed to explore *why* participants held certain views about potentially offensive language and gestures, so the principal method was qualitative. However, some care needs to be taken when interpreting the results of the fieldwork.

A large number of participants were included from a wide range of backgrounds, but the sample was not intended to be statistically representative of the wider UK population. In particular, the small numbers in the minority samples limited the broader conclusions we could draw.

Quotes have been included to illustrate and highlight key points, which were either shared by a large number of participants, or which reflect the strong views of a smaller subset.

Television and radio clips

The selection of clips used, and the reasons for their inclusion, appear in the table below. In order to facilitate the discussion, participants were shown clips rather than full-length programmes. Therefore, while participants were not able to respond to the programmes in their full and original context, the clips were chosen to include enough information to allow participants to have a general understanding of the context of the programme as a whole. Participants were shown the title, channel, date, and time of original broadcast of each programme, to further enable them to see the programmes in a realistic context. Participants' responses should be understood with this in mind. More detail is available in the appendices.

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Table 3.1: Summary of the clips reviewed by participants

Clip	Broadcast time/date	Broadcast Channel	Language	Context
Television				
Big Brother	12.15pm Saturday 7th August 2014	Channel 5	'pissed' / 'pissed off'	Very frequent use of mild offensive language between housemates. Broadcast at lunchtime on a weekend.
Countdown To Christmas Trailer	9.30am Wednesday 24th December 2014	Comedy Central	'bloody', 'bitch'	Language used in trailer for a comedy show broadcast on Christmas Eve pre-watershed.
Dermot Dances for Comic Relief	1.20pm Friday 13th March 2015	BBC Red Button	'fuck'	Accidental use of offensive language on a live programme. Presenter promptly broadcast an apology.
Dog and Beth: On the Hunt	4pm Friday 14th November 2013	CBS Reality	'shit', 'motherfucker', 'bitch'	Repeated bleeped and uncensored offensive language during a documentary-style reality show. Originally broadcast post-watershed and then edited for pre-watershed transmission.
Don't Tell the Bride	8.30pm Tuesday 17th February 2015	BBC Three	'pikey'	Potentially offensive language used in a reality television programme but not directly targeted at member of Traveller community.
Emmerdale	7pm Friday 22nd May 2015	ITV	'bitch'	Soap opera on a public service broadcasting channel. Language directed at a child but with adults present in the scene comforting the child.
Father Ted	8pm Saturday 23rd May 2015	More4	'fepp'/'feck'	Comedic context. Repeated use of language as a substitute for swearing. Channel does not attract significant child audience.
Fawlty Towers	9.20pm Tuesday 21st April 2015	Gold	'nigger', 'wog'	Racist language used in a 1970s comedy programme. Clear warning beforehand and used in a comedic context.

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Live European Rugby Challenge Cup	3.15pm Saturday 17th January 2015	BT Sport 1	'rugmunchers', 'vegetables'	Potentially offensive language used by a TV commentator during a live rugby match.
Peter Kay's Car Share	9.30pm Friday 22nd May 2015	BBC One	'spastic'	Language used in a comedic context in reference to The Spastic's Society.
Smokey and the Bandit	3pm Sunday 16th August 2015	ITV	middle-finger gesture	Hand gesture used during a film on a Sunday afternoon
Strictly Come Dancing	6.35pm Saturday 24th October 2015	BBC One	'bollocks'	Family programme. The presenter seemed unaware of the potential offensive nature of the language used and said it without intent to offend. An apology issued by other presenters immediately afterwards.
The Angels' Share	9pm Wednesday 15th October 2014	Film4	'cunt'	Very offensive language during a drama film. Broadcast on a specialist film channel just after the watershed. A warning was broadcast beforehand.
World's Craziest Fools	7pm Monday 30th June 2014	BBC Three	'bitch'	The inclusion of repeated use of potentially offensive language pre-watershed in the lyrics of a backing music track during a reality television programme.
The X Factor	20.50pm Sunday 18th November 2012	ITV	'effing'	A public service broadcasting channel. Family viewing programme.

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Clip	Broadcast time/date	Broadcast Channel	Language	Context
Radio				
Breakfast Show	06.35am Thursday 13th August 2015	Kiss Radio	'fucking'	Accidental use of offensive language during a pre-recorded morning travel report. Apology broadcast shortly afterwards.
Jeffery Bernard Is Unwell	2.30pm Saturday 15th August 2015	Radio 4	'fuck'	Repeated use of offensive language on radio pre-watershed. Programme is a serious drama and a warning was broadcast beforehand. Station has little appeal to children.
Occupy The Airwaves	2pm Saturday 25th June 2014	Phonic FM	'fucking'	Offensive language accidentally broadcast in a music track requested by a listener. The track was stopped on-air by the DJ and an apology issued.
The Official Kiss Top 40	5.45pm Sunday 2nd November 2014	Kiss Radio	'God', 'ass', 'shit', 'fucking'	Potentially offensive language in a music track pre-watershed.

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Word and gesture list

Table 3.2: Full list of words and gestures included in the research

General	Race and ethnicity	Body parts	Sexual orientation/ gender identity	Mental/physical condition	Religious insults	Hand gestures	Sexual references	Older people
Bastard	Chinky	Arse	Batty boy	Cretin	Fenian	Blow job	Bonk	Coffin dodger
Bellend	Choc ice	Arsehole	Bender	Cripple	God	Iberian slap	Bukkake	FOP*
Bint	Coloured	Balls	Bum boy	Div	Goddamn	Middle finger	Cocksucker	Old bag
Bitch	Coon	Beaver	Bumclat	Looney	Jesus Christ	Two fingers with tongue	Dildo	
Bloody	Darky	Beef curtains	Bummer	Mental	Kafir		Ho	
Bugger	Dago	Bloodclaat	Chi-chi man	Midget	Kike	Two fingers	Jizz	
Bullshit	Gippo	Bollocks	Chick with a dick	Mong	Papist	Wanker	Nonce	
Cow	Golliwog	Clunge	Dyke	Nutter	Prod		Prickteaser	
Crap	Gook	Cock	Faggot	Psycho	Taig		Rapey	
Damn	Honky	Cunt	Fairy	Retard	Yid		Shag	
Dickhead	Hun	Dick	Fudge-packer	Schizo			Skank	
Feck/Effing	Jap	Fanny	Gay	Spastic/Spakka /Spaz			Slag	
Fuck	Jock	Flange	Gender bender	Special			Slapper	
Ginger	Kraut	Flaps	He-she	Vegtable			Slut	
Git	Nazi	Gash	Homo	Window licker			Tart	
Minger	Negro	Knob	Lezza/Lesbo				Wanker	
Motherfucker	Nigger	Minge	Muff diver				Whore	
Munter	Nig-nog	Prick	Nancy					
Pissed	Paki	Punani	Pansy					
Pissed off	Pikey	Pussy	Poof					
Shit	Polack	Snatch	Queer					
Sod off	Raghead	Tits	Rugmuncher /Carpetmucher					
Son of a bitch	Sambo		Shirt lifter					
Twat	Slope		Tranny					
	Spade							
	Spic							
	Taff							
	Wog							
	Wop							*'Fucking old person'

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Hypothetical scenarios

A table outlining the hypothetical scenarios discussed with participants is set out below. This summary shows the various contextual factors that might affect the acceptability of the offensive language which the scenarios aimed to explore. For example, in Scenario 2, participants were asked what difference it made that the potentially offensive language used was said with a malicious tone, and they were asked to consider the time of broadcast, which was just after the 9pm watershed in the case of TV, or when children were particularly likely to be listening, in the case of radio.

Table 3.3: Summary of scenarios reviewed by participants

	TV/Radio	Hypothetical scenario	Variables	Transmission time
Scenario 1	TV	A football player says 'cunt' off camera when running by a TV reporter covering a football game. The word is loud and clearly audible. It is followed by an immediate apology. Saturday 1.30pm on a popular sports channel.	Strong language, unexpected, live TV, mitigation, general language	Pre-watershed
Scenario 2	TV	A character in a popular drama maliciously calls another character a 'Paki'. Wednesday 9.05pm on a popular TV channel watched by many people.	Potentially offensive racist language, intent	Boundary of the watershed
Scenario 3	Radio	Listening to a popular radio drama in the early evening, a character says 'chick with a dick' when referring to a transgendered person. Before the programme was aired a warning was issued about potentially offensive language. Monday, 7.30pm on a popular radio channel.	Sexual orientation, intent, warning	Boundary of time when children particularly likely to be listening.
Scenario 4	Radio	Listening to your favourite radio programme in the evening on talk radio, an interviewee says 'mong' multiples times when referring to people with Down's syndrome. 9pm on a popular talk-back radio channel.	Language related to disabled, genre, intent	Time when children not particularly likely to be listening
Scenario 5	TV	On a TV channel aimed at younger adults, you are watching a stand-up comedy show that uses the words 'dick' and 'pussy'. Tuesday 8.45pm on a popular TV channel.	Sexual references, genre, channel	Boundary of the watershed
Scenario 6	TV	You are watching a specialist arts TV channel on Sunday evening at 6pm. The film you are watching includes multiple uses of 'jizz', 'cocksucker' and 'slag'.	Likely audience, sexual references	Pre-watershed
Scenario 7	TV	You are watching the news with your family, which includes your 10-year-old child. A politician is doing a speech but behind him a member of the crowd makes the middle finger gesture to the camera. No apology is issued. Mon 6.15pm on a popular TV channel.	Potentially offensive gesture, mitigation, live broadcast, accidental	Pre-watershed
Scenario 8	Radio	You are in the car and you are flicking through radio stations in the morning. You stop on one and a hip hop song includes 'shit', 'fuck', 'whore', and 'bitch' multiple times. Thursday 8am on a commercial radio station breakfast show.	Strong language, audience expectation	Time when children particularly likely to be listening

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4 Understanding acceptability and the role of context

This chapter explores and evaluates the drivers influencing the acceptability of potentially offensive language on TV and radio. It draws on the in-depth interviews and the online community and group discussions to summarise general attitudes to potentially offensive language, the nuances and dynamics of views on acceptability, and how different contextual factors played a role in shaping the participants' views.

General attitudes to potentially offensive language and gestures on television and radio

Participants clearly distinguished between personal use of language and the need to maintain broadcasting standards

From the outset, participants distinguished between personal use of language and the need to maintain broadcast standards on TV and radio. Despite participants saying that the maintenance of broadcast standards was a priority for them, they expressed few spontaneous concerns about offensive language and gestures on TV and radio. Indeed, they often found it difficult to come up with recent examples of language they considered problematic on TV or radio.

> *I can't remember any time I was seriously offended.*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, Chippenham

Although there were few concerns overall, participants were very clear that there should continue to be rules and standards around the use of offensive language and gestures on TV and radio. They recognised that increased on-demand and online access to audio-visual and audio material has changed the way in which we watch TV and listen to the radio. However, they said they still valued the 9pm watershed for TV, and restrictions on offensive language on radio, because it helped them have control over their viewing and listening.

While there were often wider discussions about consumer choice and access to content more suitable for adults, offensive language remained an important consideration. In particular, all participants agreed that broadcast standards played a crucial role in enabling parental choice and control when it comes to their children's viewing and listening habits.

> *TV and radio play an important part in shaping and influencing our society so the programmes on them should reflect our morals and values – even through the language that is used.*
> Female, 35-44, ABC1, Cardiff

> *I'm not offended but it makes me feel uncomfortable – I think about how other people may feel.*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, Chippenham

Participants wanted TV and radio to reflect real life where appropriate

As participants discussed offensive language and gestures on TV and radio, they tended to quickly adopt a citizen view, i.e. taking account of the probable views of others and the impact on society as a whole, rather than prioritising their personal 'consumer' preferences. Their main concerns were protecting children from harm and avoiding unnecessary

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offence, particularly to minority groups. Even so, they almost always balanced this attitude by recognising that careful thought should be given to how language and gestures are used in specific contexts on TV and radio. There was a general desire to allow TV, in particular, to reflect real life wherever this was appropriate and suitable for the likely audience.

Participants often referred to the importance of allowing programme makers to have creative freedom, and giving people choice about whether or not to consume content that included strong language and gestures. But they also wanted to ensure that people had the choice *not* to come across strong language and gestures, if that was their preference.

> *As long as it's in the context of the programming and not gratuitous, then I really don't see why any language should be off limits after the watershed. Programmes need to be able to reflect real life in what they portray on screen. Without this, we are just peddling a sanitised view of the world.*
> Male, 35-44, ABC1 London

Participants underlined the need for broadcast standards to regulate potentially offensive language and gestures, while recognising that applying these standards was not always straightforward. They argued that case-by-case judgements were often required.

How participants experienced and thought about strong language

Participants emphasised the importance of context when evaluating potentially offensive language – but had some concerns

Whether or not participants were personally offended by specific language or gestures was not usually their starting point. They were more likely to reflect on the acceptability of language or gestures in a particular context, including whether others could be offended or harmed. They considered a number of contextual factors when making judgements about the acceptability of language on TV or radio. These are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

> *I think context is hugely important. If the context is correct, most words are acceptable.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, London

However, it is worth highlighting that participants' consideration of the contextual factors was grounded in the following key concerns around offensive language and gestures, starting with those most discussed, and ending with the least frequently discussed.

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Figure 4.1: Summary of participants' key concerns around offensive language and gestures

Concern	Participant reasoning
Protecting children	Preventing children accidentally coming across strong language because they might copy it, or ask difficult questions that might be inappropriate for their age. Parents should have choice and control over the language their children come across.
Not offending others, particularly minorities	Clear recognition of changed and changing cultural norms. This was particularly important for language insulting to minority groups.
Avoiding social discomfort	Some language seen as embarrassing or simply inappropriate for a situation rather than insulting, but still unacceptable if not expected. Most common among parent-child relationships.
Being personally offended	Usually insulting language directed at them, people like them, or those they care about. But also very strong, vulgar language.

The strongest spontaneous priorities were to protect children, and not offending or hurting others, particularly minority groups. Avoiding personal social discomfort, embarrassment and personal offence were also important concerns, but were seen as less relevant in many of the circumstances that participants considered. While specific judgments varied between participants, this broad hierarchy of concerns was similar across demographic groups, including parents, non-parents, young and old.

> *I agree that certain things should be not screened before the watershed to protect children in particular from learning these things ahead of time. But I also believe that all language, if it is used in society could be able to be broadcast at some time.*
> Male, 35-34, C2DE, Swansea

> *Humiliation of others is not pleasant and uncomfortable to watch.*
> *Male, 55-64, ABC1, London*

There were both emotional and rational responses to potentially offensive language

Participants' reactions to the clips, scenarios, words and gestures they evaluated were a mixture of emotional and rational responses. Strong emotional responses were most closely linked to personal offence, and to offence on behalf of individuals or groups of people they particularly cared about. In these cases, participants were either offended themselves, or could personally empathise with why others might be offended by specific language.

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> *[Cunt] shouldn't be used. For someone to say it – it's offensive to me as a woman. It's unnecessary!*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, London

Participants displayed more detached, rational responses to specific language in certain contexts. In these cases, they took a more analytical approach, deciding whether they thought others might be offended by language or gestures even when they themselves did not have a personal, emotional response. These more rational responses were often closely linked with respecting cultural norms and protecting others. Participants took a 'citizen view', meaning that they took into consideration the likely views of different types of people, and the potential to offend or harm others in society as a whole.

> *I personally find it hard to watch comedy programmes which feature people being humiliated, so I would be unlikely to watch that sort of programme anyway, but I do not like to see people with a disability or vulnerable people being made fun of.*
> Male, 25-35, C2DE, Belfast

> *I'm not offended by it. I'm offended for others.*
> Male, 35-44, C2DE, Bristol

The importance of context

Context plays a key role in shaping views of acceptability of language and gestures

Participants were generally thoughtful and articulate when considering the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. Their opinions about individual words and gestures are important and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. But contextual factors were strong drivers of opinion and influenced the emotional responses to certain language and gestures and in what contexts they were more or less acceptable. As discussion developed, it became clear that these factors were often more important than the specific language used, and are therefore worth considering in detail before we review the categories of words and gestures.

> *The main factor that makes language or gestures on TV and radio more or less acceptable is the context in which they have been used.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Kent

The importance of context emerged early in participants' discussions. For example, the role of context was often one of the first things they reflected on when considering the acceptability of the TV and radio clips they reviewed before taking part in the research. Many emphasised from the start that different and specific contexts could make the use of the same word or gesture completely acceptable or completely unacceptable.

> *It's the context of how the word is used. If they say [Paki] to make people laugh, or to degrade them – that's different.*
> Male, 35-44, C2DE, Leicester

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There was a broad range of views at the outset, but the role of context tended to increase in importance

Not all participants started from the same position. There was a spectrum of views at the start of the discussions about how much strong language should be allowed on TV and radio, from those who felt there should be very little, to those who said they were unconcerned about this issue. As the discussions progressed and participants considered a range of examples, there was an overall movement towards the middle of the spectrum, with the role of context becoming more important to most participants.

Key contextual considerations

The main contextual factors that acted as drivers of participants' views on acceptability can be grouped into six broad areas. These will be discussed in detail in the rest of this chapter:

1. The time of broadcast and consideration of the likely and potential audiences
2. The frequency or repetition of potentially offensive language
3. Audience expectations of broadcasters, programmes and genres
4. Audience expectations of live and pre-recorded programmes
5. The role of mitigating actions such as warnings, bleeps or apologies
6. The perceived tone and intent of programmes

When considering examples of clips or scenarios, participants tended to think in terms of a set of common questions they asked themselves that related to contextual factors. They did not work through these systematically, but generally considered most or all of these questions when making decisions about the acceptability of potentially offensive language and gestures.

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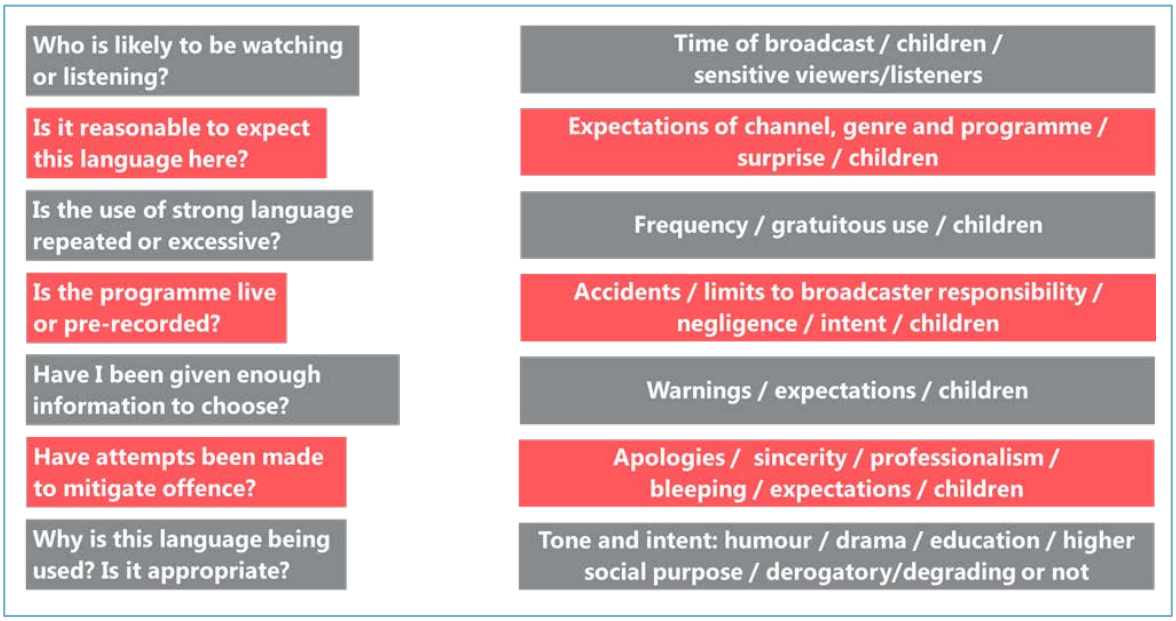
Figure 4.2: Participant concerns and how they related to contextual factors



These questions, and the contextual factors underpinning them, overlapped in participants' minds and did not work in a simple or linear way. When considering a particular use of language, participants took into account multiple factors, and weighed the relative strength of each of these in their decisions about acceptability. Overall judgments about the acceptability of language tended to be instinctive, based on the perceived tone of the programme, cultural norms, personal values and the contextual factors discussed in this chapter.

> *The time of broadcast definitely plays a role, as the target audience differs depending on the time. Working adults are more likely to be watching TV at night when the kids are asleep whereas kids usually watch TV in the afternoon after school. So in the end it's really just about who gets exposed to what.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, London

> *Warnings are useful and can inform the viewer before they are subject to the content, for example in Big Brother where the content is unpredictable and can be highly offensive, and then after seeing the warning the decision is with the viewer if they watch or not.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Cardiff

While consistent views about specific clips and scenarios often emerged, participants did not always agree. This made it difficult to develop an overall hierarchy based on the weight given to each of the contextual considerations, because this varied based on the detail of each clip, scenario or example reviewed by participants.

The time of broadcast and consideration of the likely and potential audiences

Strong language should be broadcast at an appropriate time

Overall, the time a programme was broadcast emerged as the strongest contextual driver of views on the acceptability of offensive language and gestures. This is because participants directly linked the time of broadcast to the potential audience, despite taking account of changes in the ways people consume media online and on demand.

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The 9pm watershed was considered crucial for managing expectations around language

The watershed on TV (or considering when children were particularly likely to be listening, in the case of radio) was seen as a good way of striking a balance between protecting children and respecting adult freedoms to watch TV or listen to radio when they wished. It was highly valued by almost all participants.

> *The role of the watershed is important to regulate what is accessible mostly in my opinion to children…I don't have children but I do still think it is important for society to have this guideline.*
> Male, 25-34, C2, Sussex

> *The watershed works really well in filtering what is shown before 9pm. I feel that the same standards should be met on radio as TV in regards to the language used before 9pm.*
> Female, 18-24, C1, Aberdeen

Most participants expected pre-watershed broadcasts on television to limit potentially offensive language wherever possible. When assessed individually and not in any particular context, there were a relatively large numbers of words that were seen in general as unacceptable before the watershed and often considered unnecessary during the day. Participants struggled to envisage why offensive language would need to be used before the watershed, particularly earlier in the day. Even many of those without children said they personally appreciated being able to turn on their TV and not be surprised by stronger language before the watershed.

> *The watershed at 9pm is extremely important to separate programmes for children or not. In fact, a lot of families watch TV together in the evening, and it can be so unpleasant for parents when offensive language is suddenly used in a movie and or a TV show.*
> Female, 45-54, C2DE, Brighton

Some mild offensive language seen as acceptable in the run-up to the 9pm watershed

After further discussion, most participants said they expected some gradient of language around the watershed. Generally, they thought that some milder offensive language was acceptable before the watershed, but this should not go too far. Participants found strong language at 9pm, and soon after 9pm, acceptable as long as care was taken with the programmes shown immediately before the watershed. For example, in their opinion shows suitable for older children shown just before 9pm should not be followed immediately by the most offensive language, because these children could still be watching.

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Figure 4.3: Participant expectations around the watershed transition

A small minority argued for an extended watershed, with the most offensive and frequent offensive language not broadcast until after 10pm. They considered 9pm was still too early, and had concerns about the transition between pre- and post-watershed standards.

> *In the immediate hour or so afterwards* [i.e. after 9pm] *maybe there should be a gradient so that the most offensive words (e.g. cunt, nigger, etc.) are not used at 9 to 10pm.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, London

However, most participants disagreed. This was because they considered the current approach achieved the right balance between creative freedom and adult choice on the one hand, and respecting children and other sensitive audiences on the other.

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip:	The Angels' Share, Film4, Wednesday 15th October 2014, 9pm
Issue:	Use of the most offensive language very soon after the watershed in a film broadcast on a specialist film channel, with a warning beforehand. The word 'cunt' was first broadcast at 9.15pm.
Verdict:	Most participants felt the clip was acceptable because there was a clear warning before the programme and viewers expect strong language after the watershed. Without the warning, having this most offensive language shortly after the watershed would have been problematic for many.

> *This is after 9pm and it's up to the parents to take control of what their children are watching. If as an adult you are offended by the language and violence you just should not watch.*
> Female, 24-34, C2DE, Manchester

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Participants emphasised the role of warnings if strong language was used at a time when it might not be expected

Warnings have an important role to play in mitigating concerns about the time of broadcast, particularly around the watershed. Participants were very clear that there should be warnings to reduce surprise and help them make choices about their viewing and listening. These will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

> *It is important to consider the audience when deciding what time a programme should be aired because the later it gets in the evening the less likely it is to be under-18s so the risk is a lot less. Programmes that are aimed at younger adults (18+) are often aired just after the watershed but it's still likely that there will still be some underage viewers present.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Hythe

Many participants assumed that radio had the same or a similar watershed to TV. When told about the current framework for radio (with specific and tighter restrictions on offensive language at times when children are particularly likely to be listening), most felt that more radio programmes needed warnings to signal strong language. This would allow parents or sensitive adults to switch stations if they wished. The different expectations of TV and radio will be discussed later in this chapter.

Participants considered both the potential audience and the likely audience

Related to their support for the watershed on TV, participants often considered the potential audience (those who might reasonably be expected to see or listen to a broadcast) as well as the likely audience (the most probable, audience given the time of broadcast and the target audience). In general, participants were fairly conservative and defaulted to the wider (i.e. potential) audience as an important consideration when deciding on acceptability.

Many words and gestures were seen as more unacceptable if there was a reasonable chance that children might be part of the potential audience. Participants often discussed the example of a child picking up a remote control and flicking to an inappropriate channel and were concerned because they considered there was a limit to the protection parents can offer their children. Most participants considered that all broadcasts before the watershed should take the potential audience into account.

Participants gave specialist channels and programmes unlikely to appeal to children some leeway before the watershed

However, participants also considered the likely audience of a programme. For example, daytime programmes that are not aimed at attract younger audiences, or that appear on niche channels, were given more leeway than programmes targeting children or broadcast on mainstream channels or stations. Participants recognised the role of audience expectations, the channel or programme's target audience, and freedom of choice, and were more willing to allow some offensive language in these contexts during the day.

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> *I think the Radio 4 audience tend to be well-educated adults, so I don't think those who listen would be offended by swearing if they knew to expect it.*
> Female, 55-64, ABC1, Stockport

However, this latitude was often offered with some reluctance, and in general did not extend to strong, excessive or gratuitously offensive language. Some participants were uncomfortable with providing any significant flexibility for more specialist programming, arguing that offensive language is largely unnecessary during the day.

> *Children are off school on Saturdays, which means they could land on the channel, hearing the swear words which could have an influence and they would think it's OK to use that word.*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, London

Resolving possible differences between potential and likely audience was difficult for participants. They felt that each needed to be weighed alongside other contextual factors. For instance, when reviewing the clips and scenarios, many participants accepted mild language on niche channels before the watershed. Some also made exceptions for arts programming containing strong language broadcast during the day. But these decisions were usually debated, with different views of the importance of taking into account the potential and likely audience.

> *The broadcasters think they 'know' their audience but in practical teams they cannot and do not know every viewer/listener they will attract.*
> Male, 65-74, ABC1, Belfast

The frequency or repetition of potentially offensive language

Frequent use of offensive language (especially before the watershed) must be justified by the context

Frequent use of potentially offensive language was considered more problematic by participants, often seen as excessive or unnecessary. They thought repetition exacerbated the impact of the language, and viewed it as deliberate and intentional. Participants pointed out that the programme makers could have made other choices, and assumed they wanted to draw attention to the language through repetition.

Given this, participants thought there should be a good reason for frequent use of offensive language, particularly during the day - more so than for occasional use of the same language.

> *I think the swear word used repetitively is unacceptable, especially at 2.30pm!*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, London

If, in the participants' opinion, there was a good reason for repeated strong language, and this mirrored likely audience expectations, then most felt it was acceptable after the watershed; for example, in genres such as reality documentaries and hard-hitting dramas that attempt to reflect real life.

Many worried that children were much more likely to pick up and copy repeated language, and this was seen as particularly problematic before the watershed, even for milder language. The effect of repeated mild offensive language for participants was to make it less acceptable, and more akin to using stronger language.

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Children tend to repeat what they hear whether they understand it or not.
Female, 18-24, ABC1, Wrexham

Swearing substitutes were seen as more problematic when used frequently

Swearing substitutes that sound very similar to the offensive word (e.g. 'feck') were viewed by some participants as much less acceptable if they were repeated more than a few times. Participants thought that most people would understand what the actual swear word was supposed to be, and therefore the effect was similar to using the real word, especially if it was repeated. This was seen as problematic because children would be more likely to pick up swearing substitutes if they were used repeatedly. These concerns were greater pre-watershed (because of the potential child audience), and much less post-watershed, when the audience would be much more likely to expect such language.

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip:	Father Ted, More4, 23rd May 2015, 8pm
Issue:	Swearing substitutes
Verdict:	The frequent use of swearing substitutes such as 'feck' was problematic for some, pre-watershed; they felt that children might pick up these unfamiliar but repeated words. While a minority made the argument that the Father Ted clip was clever and funny, many found it unacceptable pre-watershed because of the repeated use of 'fupp' and 'feck', which was considered gratuitous; some did not realise that the words were substitutes for 'fuck' (especially older participants, who thought the scene contained actual swearing).

Audience expectations of broadcasters, programmes and genres

Participants had varying expectations of different media, channels and programme genres

Participants made assumptions about the types of language and gestures they expected on or in different media, channels and programme genres. Strong language or gestures out of line with expectations were seen as much less acceptable because they could cause discomfort, surprise or shock. Expectations were based on participants' experiences of and associations with watching TV and listening to the radio. These varied based on genre and channel for TV, and between TV and radio. There was less evidence for differing expectations of different radio stations or radio programme genres.

Expectations are important. Early in the morning I expect clean content with no swearing because anyone can be listening.
Male, 18-24, C2DE, Chippenham

The watershed is there to protect children from exposure to bad language or offensive behaviour; however, it also acts as a guide for parents and adults. People know to expect worse language and offensive behaviour after 9pm.
Female, 25-34, ABC1, London

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Participants said they wanted to make informed choices about the language they (and their children) were exposed to. If they considered they would be unable to do so in a particular context, they were more likely to consider the language unacceptable. This was the case even if they had deemed the language acceptable in other contexts.

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip:	Don't Tell the Bride, BBC Three, 8:30pm
Issue:	Use of 'pikey' pre-watershed. Word used to describe the venue for a hen party.
Verdict:	Some believed 'pikey' was unacceptable because it is offensive to Travellers and should not have been broadcast, particularly pre-watershed. However, the term 'pikey' being used in a general way, as here, to mean something of poor quality – rather than as an insult directed at Travellers – made it acceptable for others. Some pointed out that the programme genre was a reality show, and the language should be expected because it simply reflected the views and use of language by the contributors. On balance, for most participants, this language was acceptable because the word was not directed at an individual and the language reflected real life in the context of a reality show aired immediately before the watershed. However, the use of the word in this context was not acceptable for participants from the Traveller community because, in their view, 'pikey' is offensive and was being used to describe something negatively.

Participants expect more strong language to be used in certain genres of programme and at certain times

Although this is not an exhaustive list, the examples below highlight how participants' expectations varied, and point to some of the main types of programmes in which participants expected there to be strong language:

After the watershed, hard-hitting dramas were given more latitude, as participants expected the dialogue to reflect real-life use of offensive language and gestures.

Participants were quick to pick up on the appropriate role for potentially offensive language in educational contexts. For example, very strong racist language used in a documentary about racism was considered acceptable if it was there to reflect or report on real life. This extended to some use of milder language in documentaries before the watershed.

> *If there is a documentary I would expect to hear associated terms, which in general may be found offensive, however in a historical or educational sense it would be acceptable.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Cardiff

Strong language in comedy was expected and enjoyed by many participants. Even those who did not like this type of comedy thought it was acceptable, provided the language used was in line with audience expectations and was broadcast after the watershed.

Expectations were also linked to the time of broadcast and likely audience of a programme. Mitigation (e.g. in the form of warnings or apologies) helped manage participants' expectations, particularly if there was a sudden change around the time of the watershed, or between different genres on a channel very soon after the watershed.

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Participants had different expectations of different TV channels

There were differing expectations for long-established channels that are designed to have wide appeal, like BBC One and ITV. These were thought to have a broader potential audience, and participants did not expect strong language on these channels before the watershed. On the other hand, channels like Channel 4 and Channel 5 were given more leeway by participants because they are associated with youth culture, more experimentation and a less formal tone. Overall, participants had more conservative expectations of mainstream TV channels (and in particular those of the BBC) than specialist TV channels. They felt that some specialist channels were targeted at and more likely to be watched by adults, and were therefore less likely to be viewed by children without supervision.

> *You tend to see less swearing and rude gestures [on the BBC], whereas ITV, Channel 4 and 5 have more entertaining programmes which is why they use certain language that is completely different to the BBC, as they use the language to suit the channel.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, Birmingham

> *People definitely expect higher standards from the BBC due to the type of programmes shown.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Hythe

Potentially offensive language was generally seen as more problematic on radio

Participants thought of radio as a more intimate medium, where offensive language was not often used. Indeed, many participants could not recall ever hearing swearing on the radio. As a consequence, they thought that strong language would feel more intrusive and unexpected on radio than it did on TV. Another important consideration was that radio is often on in the background at home, in the car, and in public spaces such as shops. As a result, children could be listening without parental control and therefore radio broadcasters should take care about the language used.

> *I think radio should have higher standards. On TV you're distracted, but on radio you're more focused on the language.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Stockport

Audience expectations of live and pre-recorded programmes

Participants were generally tolerant of occasional, accidental strong language on live TV and radio

Participants distinguished between strong language and gestures used during live programmes, and similar language included in pre-recorded programmes. In their opinion pre-recorded programmes should be held to a higher standard (particularly pre-watershed with TV, or with radio when children are particularly likely to be listening) because broadcasters have complete control over what is broadcast and should therefore be held responsible for any unacceptable language.

> *If it was a pre-recorded show I would have more of a problem, but live is OK because it's real life.*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, London

Participants were willing to give live programmes greater latitude in two main ways:

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- they acknowledged the limits of broadcaster control in some circumstances, particularly where an external third party is involved (e.g. someone in a crowd swearing during a news broadcast or a sporting event); and
- participants recognised that even professional broadcasters might use strong language accidentally during a live programme. This greater latitude was extended to the strongest language (e.g. 'fuck'), as long as it was judged to be a genuine accident, did not happen frequently, and was perceived to be without malicious intent.

Provided broadcasters took reasonable steps to avoid offensive language being heard frequently on live programmes, participants were generally sympathetic to the challenges of regulating it. For instance, most said they would tolerate occasional, accidental strong language but expected broadcasters to avoid repeated swearing wherever possible.

> *There will sometimes be something said or done accidentally for which an apology will be needed but I would expect broadcasters to be professional and alert and that such instances would be rare.*
> Female, 55-64, ABC1, Hertfordshire

> *If a word is used accidentally on a live show, then it is fine if a one-off. Mistakes can occur, so whilst not ideal I have no issue with this.*
> Male, 18-24, ABC1, Cardiff

Participants acknowledged the limits of broadcaster control in live programming, particularly when a third party is involved

Most participants considered occasional use of offensive language during live broadcasts unproblematic; they recognised the limits of broadcaster control. For example, some mentioned hearing offensive language from the crowd in football matches. Others recalled live news reports where people standing behind politicians used the middle finger gesture. Although not ideal, most participants had sympathy for the broadcasters in these circumstances, provided they were seen as not intentionally trying to broadcast the language or gesture and had made efforts to minimise it.

On the other hand, participants were clear that it was normally not acceptable for offensive language or gestures to be broadcast deliberately in live programming before the watershed. On reviewing the clips and scenarios, they felt able to judge whether or not a specific use of strong language was accidental (by looking at the overall context and the way the language was used) and whether a broadcast apology was sincere.

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CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip: Live European Rugby Cup Challenge, BT Sport 1, 17th January 2015, 3:15pm

Issue: Use of 'rugmuncher' and 'vegetable' by a commentator to describe the players.

Verdict: Most concluded that the use of this language in this clip revealed an ignorance or prejudice on behalf of the commentator. This was seen as offensive language a professional broadcaster should not use, even in a live setting. Overall it was judged unacceptable because the language was thought to reflect offensive views and was not considered accidental, although some participants recognised the word 'vegetable' as part of common rugby parlance.

Immature and derogatory language for anyone. Do they think people are stupid? Apologies not accepted.

Female, 18-25, C2DE, London

SCENARIO CASE STUDY

Scenario 1: A football player says 'cunt' off camera when running by a TV reporter covering a football game. The word is loud and clearly audible.

Issue: Third party swearing and limits to broadcaster responsibility.

Verdict: Participants recognised the limits to broadcaster responsibility in this scenario. Most agreed that the broadcast of this word was not ideal, but the broadcaster could not be held responsible as long as they had taken reasonable steps to prevent it. An apology would also mitigate offence/increase acceptability in this case.

On live TV we can't help what the audience/players say or do but I definitely wouldn't expect it from presenters or hosts on a show.

Female, 25-34, ABC1, London

The player is just standing in the background and he swears; it's not the broadcaster's fault and it's in the heat of the moment. It's fine.

Male, 24-35, Leicester

Participants found language much less acceptable when they felt professionals had acted carelessly, or intentionally used strong language in live programmes

Participants were much less tolerant of anything they considered to be the result of professional negligence in live programmes. Many argued that broadcasters should be held to a higher standard because they know what is expected of them as a part of their job. For example, several of the clips reviewed by participants included radio stations playing the version of songs with the full lyrics, rather than the radio edit. Most participants considered this careless, and therefore unacceptable because music tracks should be checked before being broadcast.

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In terms of the live environment… common sense and professionalism should prevail […] in a live broadcast anyone involved should in theory be a professional.
Male, 35-44, C2, Belfast

Another key consideration in judging such instances was the tone and perceived intent. Participants found seemingly deliberate or planned use of strong language unacceptable. They were critical of examples of professional broadcasters using swearing substitutes in live programmes. They also took into account whether or not, in their opinion, the potentially offensive language reflected the speaker's real, prejudiced views, particularly in the case of derogatory or discriminatory language. These concerns were particularly relevant for pre-watershed live programmes.

Racism on live TV is inexcusable. An apology after something like that would make no difference; they have just showed their attitude towards people of that race.
Female, 25-34, C1, Manchester

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clips: The Official Kiss Top 40, Kiss 100 FM, 2nd November 2014, 5.45pm and Occupy The Airwaves, Phonic FM, 25th June 2014, 2pm.

Issue: DJs playing versions of tracks with strong language during the day.

Verdict: Participants judged this unacceptable and thought that the DJs and their production teams had acted unprofessionally.

I thought it wasn't acceptable. Those versions shouldn't be available. Why was it in the studio?

Female, 25-34, ABC1, Glasgow

The role of mitigating actions such as warnings, bleeps or apologies

Mitigations were thought to help manage expectations, moderate personal offence, and reduce the likelihood of harm

Participants valued warnings, apologies and the bleeping out of offensive language before the watershed, and saw a role for warnings, in particular after the watershed. They appreciated broadcasters taking steps to reduce the impact of strong language and gestures at times when children or sensitive audiences might be listening or watching. When used well, these measures served to shape expectations and increase personal choice. They also allowed parents to better manage the potentially offensive language and gestures their children came across. However, such mitigating actions did not make excessive use of strong language acceptable before the watershed.

I think it [a broadcast apology] might make a difference to those who might take offence. If the presenter apologises, it's an acknowledgement that the swearing shouldn't have taken place, that it's not common place for that programme at that time, and makes the person who swore aware they made a mistake.
Male, 25-34, C2DE, Cambridge

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Warnings were considered particularly helpful in informing choices – but could be improved

Warnings were considered important pre- and post-watershed, even by adults who accepted or even enjoyed strong language in certain contexts. Participants were of the view that warnings were essential in signalling the type of language they could expect in a programme, so they could make an informed choice about watching or listening. However, even given a warning, participants still did not expect pre-watershed TV programming, or radio programmes broadcast when it was particularly likely children would be listening, to contain frequent uses of offensive language. Participants also thought warnings could be improved by being more specific, consistent and accurate.

The clips were commonly thought by participants to be more acceptable, at least in part, if there were appropriate warnings or apologies. A Fawlty Towers clip (Gold, Tuesday 21st April 2015, 9.20pm) had mixed responses in terms of acceptability because of the use of strong racist language (in this case 'nigger' and 'wog'). But most participants valued the warning before the show, and this was a very important factor for those who deemed the clip acceptable.

> *They had a warning at the start and it was after 9pm. It shows the person's ignorance* [i.e. of the character who used the word "nigger"]. *He is stupid. It makes a difference. You laugh at him; he is just an idiot.*
> Male, 18-24, Chippenham

Some participants suggested permanent, visible warnings throughout programmes that contain strong language (and other content more suitable for adults). They had concerns that children or more sensitive adults might tune in to a programme mid-broadcast and therefore miss the warnings. For them, a permanent warning would make a viewer's choice to watch a programme more informed.

> *A warning only has an impact when you start watching a programme from the very beginning, if you turn over mid-way through you wouldn't see that warning. Maybe there should also be information about language use in the TV guide or listings, so decisions to watch are better informed.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, London

Some participants also wanted more specific warnings, to give them a better understanding of the type of language to expect. For example, a warning about strong language might mean 'fuck' (general) or 'nigger' (racial). These participants wanted a more specific indication of the type of offensive language to help them make an informed decision about whether to continue watching or listening.

> *Ensure that more programs have warning messages on the actual types of words that are used rather than just stating that foul language is being used. This can sometimes be vague, as you don't know what type of foul language is actually being used and might not be as bad as you thought – so must be made clearer to the audience who are watching at home.*
> Male, 25-34, C2DE, Belfast

Bleeps helped increase acceptability before the watershed, provided they were used effectively

Bleeping was considered by most to increase the acceptability of strong language before the watershed, provided two main concerns were addressed. Firstly, use of bleeping must not be excessive before the watershed, as repeated bleeping

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can simply draw attention to the amount of strong language, especially for children. Secondly, bleeping must be done effectively. Some participants were of the view that bleeping is sometimes not done well or consistently, and audiences could make out the language used, so largely negating the value of the bleeping. Some argued that the mouth of the person using the offensive language should be 'blurred', particularly pre-watershed, to avoid children understanding the words.

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip: Dog and Beth: On the Hunt, CBS Reality, Friday 14th November 2013, 4pm

Issue: Repeated use of 'shit', 'motherfucker', and 'bitch' with some bleeping

Verdict: Most participants felt that the Dog and Beth clip was an example of poor bleeping as the words were still audible. It was therefore unacceptable because of the time of broadcast, repeated strong language and ineffective bleeping.

Even with the warning, 4pm is too early to broadcast that level of profanity. Young kids would readily be watching TV at that time and likely when parents are busy doing other things. It also seemed simply bizarre that some words were bleeped out and others were not.

Female, 65-74, C2DE, Belfast

Apologies help mitigate offence but should be immediate and sincere

Apologies following the use of strong language help to increase acceptability before the watershed, particularly in the case of accidents (as discussed previously). Participants recognised the limits of broadcaster control, the challenges of live broadcasting, and had sympathy with those who made genuine mistakes.

However, participants considered that for an apology to be effective it must be sincere, happen soon after the incident, and preferably be made by the person responsible. These factors show that the broadcaster and person who used the offensive language understand that professional standards around language have not been met, take their responsibilities seriously, and demonstrate real contrition. This approach also serves as a good model for children watching or listening, according to parents, because children can understand what inappropriate language is. Apologies viewed as insincere did not usually increase acceptability for participants, and in fact tended to exacerbate the offence by angering or frustrating them.

However, participants highlighted the limited role of apologies, even if genuine, in some circumstances. If a broadcaster was seen to be careless or apologised too late (particularly in the context of a live programme), or to have deliberately used strong language in an inappropriate context, an apology was not seen as sufficient to mitigate potential offence. In these circumstances, the use of the offensive language or gesture would continue to be seen as unacceptable.

> *I think that apologies after a show for the offensive language are too late!*
> Male, 55-64, ABC1, Manchester

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The perceived tone and intent of programmes

Participants thought about why programme makers had included potentially offensive language

Participants considered the intention behind the use of offensive language, and this shaped their views on acceptability. For example, they took account of whether the offensive language was used accidentally and an apology was broadcast.

CLIP CASE STUDY

Clip: Dermot Dances for Comic Relief, BBC1 RED Button, 13th March 2015, 1.20pm

Issue: During a live programme following his attempt to dance for 24 hours for Comic Relief, Dermot greeted a friend, saying 'Oh fucking fantastic to see you!'

Verdict: Participants felt this was not problematic as it seemed to be a genuine accident and Dermot appeared not to notice that he had sworn on camera. He also apologised immediately.

I thought he was funny. I don't think that slip up would've been picked up by people and he was also away with the fairies.

Female, 18-24, C2DE, Chippenham

They also looked at the overall programme and thought about why editorial decisions had been taken; for example, to reflect reality, highlight the emotion of a particular scene, or to shock. They assessed the validity of these intentions, and noted the importance of individual choice for the audience, in terms of viewing or listening to content that includes strong language.

Some perceived intentions increased acceptability, while others had the opposite effect

Most participants considered some offensive terms unacceptable and unnecessary in all, or almost all, circumstances, but for many even very strong or discriminatory language could be justified and acceptable in limited contexts – e.g. in a serious documentary, news or a hard-hitting drama. But if participants thought the intention was to make light of offensive language, or if insults against a particular group were glorified by programme makers, this was viewed as less acceptable.

> *I think whether language fits the tone of the programme is a genuine concern. I would not like to hear derogatory language on children's programming but if it is on the news, documentary, or essential for the portrayal of a situation that is intended to mimic life in society, then I cannot see an issue with any language.*
> Male, 35-34, C2DE, Swansea

For example, most participants initially rejected words like 'faggot' or 'nigger', considering them unacceptable. But on reflection many could see a place for using them, where they would not be intended to cause harm or offence, but served other, more positive purposes. This might include educating people about current or historical discrimination in a documentary, or demonstrating the impact of these kinds of insults in a dramatic setting.

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However, strong discriminatory or degrading language was almost universally deemed unacceptable if those referred to were likely to feel insulted or hurt, taking contextual factors into account. Again, the wider context and intent of the programme or item played a large role in participants' thinking.

> *I think it's vital, the tone – the aggression that is applied to a word can dramatically change the tone and atmosphere.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Cardiff

Many evaluations of acceptability centred on the intent or tone of a programme, even for some of the strongest language considered by participants. These responses to two scenarios illustrate acceptable and unacceptable contexts for discriminatory language:

SCENARIO CASE STUDY

Scenario 2:	A character in a popular drama maliciously calls another character a 'Paki'. Wednesday 9.05pm on a popular TV channel watched by many people.
Issue:	Perceived intent and genre of programme.
Verdict:	Scenario 3 was considered acceptable because of the genre and because it was after the watershed. Use of a word such as 'Paki' in a dramatic context were considered acceptable provided the intent was not to condone racism generally. *It depends on how this is said. If it did not generally show racism to be acceptable then it is fine.* Female, 25-34, ABC1, Glasgow

SCENARIO CASE STUDY

Scenario 4:	Listening to your favourite radio programme in the evening on talk radio, an interviewee says 'mong' multiples times when referring to people with Down's syndrome. 9pm on a popular talk-back radio channel.
Issue:	Perceived intent and genre of programme.
Verdict:	Scenario 4 was viewed as unacceptable due to multiple uses of a discriminatory word. Most felt this was unacceptable because it could be seen as endorsing the discrimination and did not serve a comedic, dramatic, or educational purpose. *After once it should be warned and then cut off. It's derogatory.* Female, 55+, ABC1, Stockport

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Participants felt that the emotional tone or manner of delivery could also increase or decrease acceptability

How language was delivered, in the specific context of a programme, was another important consideration for participants. An aggressive, malicious, angry or mocking tone heightened the impact of language for participants, increasing the emotional intensity. This was also the case if the language was mixed with sexual or violent themes. If the language matched the expectations of the likely audience and was intended to reflect real life, this was more acceptable; participants considered that viewers or listeners could make an informed choice. However, if the language was used in an unexpected context, or before the watershed, aggressive delivery made it less acceptable as it was much more jarring or shocking for participants, and especially for children.

> *I'd need more info as to the rest of storyline, but it's the intent again – aggressive, derogatory, etc. is no good.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Stockport

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5 Acceptability of words and gestures

Chapter 5 outlined the main contextual considerations that participants used in deciding on how acceptable they found potentially offensive language and gestures. This chapter summarises participants' views of specific words and gestures. It is important to emphasise that participants found it difficult to make categorical judgments about individual words or gestures without taking the specific context into account. Nevertheless, they were able to describe different levels of acceptability within and between groups of words (e.g. racist language compared to general swear words).

The number of words included in the research means that not all were discussed by participants in detail, either during the face-to-face or the online discussions. It is also worth emphasising that participants gave their views on the overall acceptability of words without being given any detail of how a specific word was used in a particular context. Crucially, participants made it clear that context was central to them in reaching a considered view of the acceptability of any specific, potentially offensive, language on television or radio (see Chapter 5).

Rather than present a word-by-word analysis, this chapter provides overall feedback on groups of words, and evaluates how acceptable, in very general terms, participants found them, both before and after the watershed. It also highlights the reasons participants gave for certain words being more or less acceptable, again in very general terms. Individual participants' views of words and gestures varied considerably; some words that were personally very offensive to some were seen as unproblematic by others. Here we summarise overall participant views, while seeking to reflect any debate around specific words, gestures and groups of words.

This chapter draws on qualitative data collected throughout the research. It includes:

- Results from the online survey, in which participants were shown the full list of 150 words and gestures, and asked to rate acceptability, both before and after the watershed, for all those they were familiar with. Due to the relatively small size of the participant sample, the findings from the online survey are treated as illustrative rather than statistically representative, and so are not presented numerically in this section. The online survey was followed up by an online community discussion that allowed participants to reflect on their views and interact with each other.

- Specific words and gestures as discussed in the face-to-face focus groups, in-depth interviews, and mini-groups. Each focus group or in-depth interview participant reviewed a sub-set of around 50 of the potentially offensive words and gestures. Participants sorted the words and gestures based on their acceptability pre- and post-watershed, and discussed the acceptability of words and gestures throughout.

Unfamiliar words

Not all words were familiar to participants, and this limited the detailed feedback that could be collected on little-known terms. The least familiar words (those that were recognised by less than 40% of participants) were on the whole slang terms relating to body parts or sex, as well as some ethnic or religious slurs. These words are indicated in this and following chapters with an asterisk (*). Older participants recognised fewer words overall, tending not to recognise more recent slang terms.

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Oh, I don't recognise a lot of these words. They mean nothing to me!
Female, 75+, ABC1, Greater London

Figure 5.1: Examples of unfamiliar words

Least recognised words in the online survey (<40%)

Beef curtains
Bloodclaat
Bukkake
Bumclat
Chi-chi man
Choc ice
Dago
Fenian
FOP
Gook
Kafir/Kufaar
Kike
Papist
Rapey
Sambo
Slope
Spic
Taff
Taig
Wop

However, even if participants were not familiar with a particular word and were therefore not personally offended, they were clear that care should be taken over the use of these words, because they assumed they were potentially offensive in some way. This was especially important if they were likely to be discriminatory or derogatory towards groups or individuals.

How words and gestures were evaluated

Participants assessed potentially offensive words and gestures based on what they understood their meaning to be, and the cultural norms around that word, particularly the extent to which the words were considered insulting, derogatory, vulgar or distasteful. The diagram below summarises the key questions considered, and steps taken, in evaluating the acceptability of individual words or gestures.

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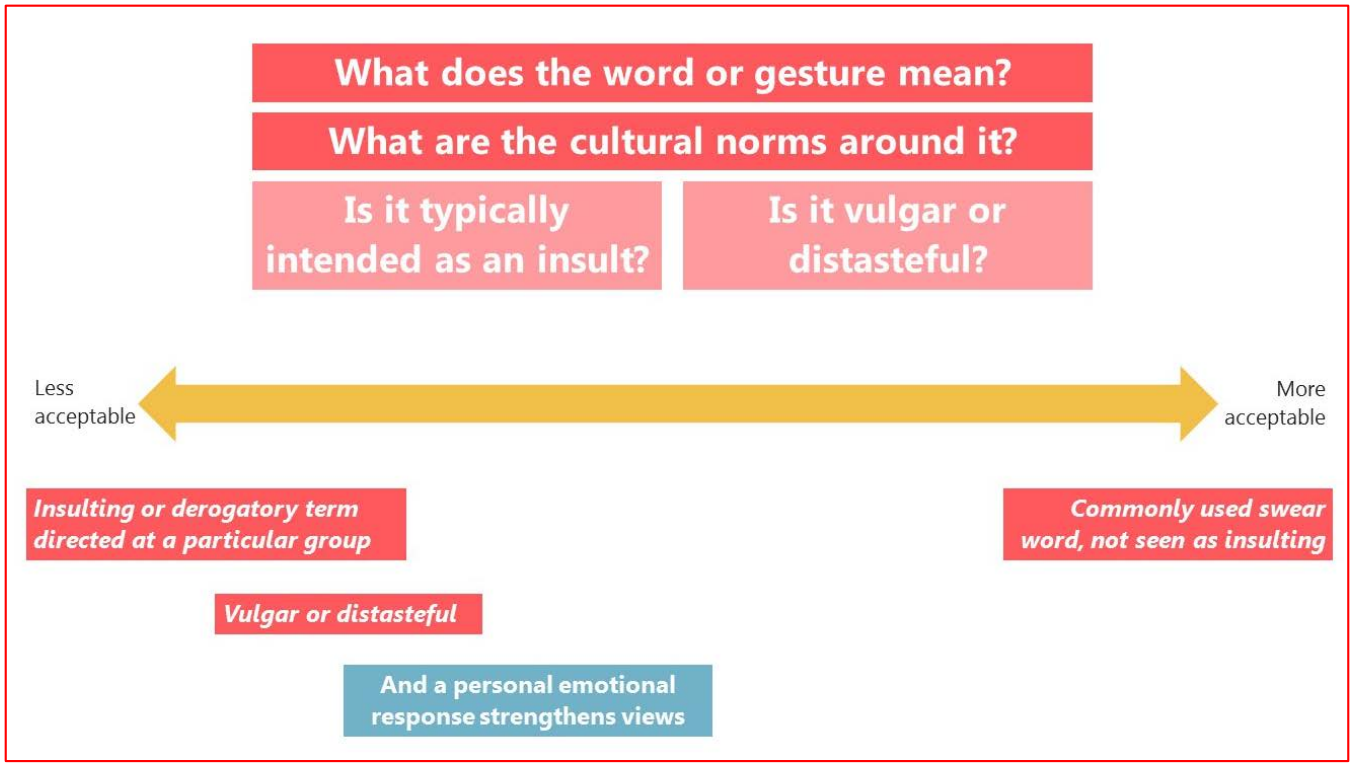
Figure 5.2: Key questions and steps in evaluating words and gestures



Terms that were seen as either insulting or distasteful (or both) were less acceptable. Examples of the most problematic words included 'cunt', 'Paki', 'nigger', 'fuck', and 'motherfucker'. Insulting language was seen as particularly problematic when it related to ethnic, religious or sexual minority groups.

At the other end of the spectrum, some words and gestures were seen as much more acceptable because they have different cultural norms associated with them, even if their original meanings had been either insulting or vulgar. Examples included general swear words like 'shit', 'bloody', 'cow' and 'git'.

> *As society adapts and cultural norms change, the language we use, and its acceptability, changes too. As an example, the phrase 'bloody hell' used to be considered strong 'swearing' language even though the two words bloody and hell are hardly coarse. Nowadays, that phrase has no real power to shock, save for older people with a different cultural upbringing.*
> Male, 25-34, C2DE, Leeds

Overall perceptions of categories of potentially offensive language and gestures

Participants had differing views in general about the various categories of potentially offensive words and gestures they were asked to classify by level of acceptability. Their reactions suggested that the groups of potentially offensive language and gestures fell into two broad categories: (a) general swear words and those with clear links to body parts, sexual references, and offensive gestures; and (b) specifically discriminatory language, whether directed at older people, people of particular religions, people with mental health issues or a disability, LGBT people, or people from an ethnic minority.

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General and other non-discriminatory offensive language and gestures

- For general swear words, the emotional impact associated with the term was important. In particular, more vulgar words like 'fuck' or 'motherfucker' were not acceptable before the watershed, with some participants having concerns about their frequent use after the watershed.

- Some words with clear links to body parts like 'knob', 'gash' or 'beef curtains' were viewed as stronger than some of the general swear words (like 'arsehole', 'crap' or 'shit'); they were seen as vulgar and unnecessary most of the time. Other potentially offensive words associated with body parts (such as 'balls' or 'tits') were considered by many participants as milder, and more acceptable before the watershed. The word 'cunt' evoked very strong reactions from many participants, and was widely regarded as unacceptable before the watershed on TV.

- Sexual references like 'cocksucker' or 'prick teaser' were typically evaluated in a similar way to stronger general swear words. They were seen as distasteful and unnecessary, but acceptable in general after the watershed if used in line with audience expectations, and depending on the individual word and context.

- Offensive gestures were viewed as broadly unacceptable before the watershed, but mostly acceptable after the watershed. The 'blow job' gesture was the least acceptable as it was perceived as the most vulgar.

Discriminatory language

- Unlike other forms of derogatory language, there were fewer concerns about the words identified as potentially and specifically insulting to older people. These were seen as mildly distasteful by some older participants, but many participants of a range of ages found them humorous or inoffensive.

- Many of the words discriminatory on religious grounds were unfamiliar to a number of participants. However, those who were familiar with words such as 'Yid', 'Taig' and 'Fenian' viewed them as generally offensive and potentially unacceptable.

- Views of words relating to mental health and disability differed greatly. Words such as 'spastic', 'mong' or 'retard' were seen as insulting and derogatory, and therefore viewed in general as being on the whole as unacceptable as the strongest racist insults, with their use requiring significant contextual justification. On the other hand, words such as 'nutter', 'loony' or 'mental' were seen as more commonly used mild insults, and therefore much more acceptable, both before and after the watershed.

- The strongest homophobic and transphobic terms such as 'faggot', 'batty boy', and 'chick with a dick' were seen as very problematic by participants. This was again because of the insulting and derogatory nature of the language. On the whole, these words were considered much less acceptable than the more general offensive terms.

- Overtly racist language such as 'coon', 'nigger' and 'wog' were among the most unacceptable words overall. These terms were viewed as derogatory, discriminatory and insulting. Many participants were concerned about them being used at any time, with their use requiring significant contextual justification. Other words in this category were debated and evaluated differently by participants, particularly in their level of acceptability after the watershed, based on how insulting they were perceived to be.

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Debated words

Participants found it most difficult to decide on acceptability when potentially offensive words can be used in different ways, in different contexts, or when they perceived that the meaning had changed (or was changing).

> *There are…graduations of severity for even words that refer to the same group, person or behaviour…and these would likely differ in order depending on the individual and the generation to which that individual belongs. But at face value there are noticeable graduations in severity for words of the same meaning.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, Manchester

This was relevant to their evaluation of specific words in two main ways:

1. Some terms were thought to have been 'reclaimed' by those they have been used to insult. This included some strong discriminatory words like 'nigger' and 'queer'. These caused considerable debate among participants (including among ethnic minority and LGBT participants). For example, some participants considered that it had become acceptable for a black person to call another black person 'nigger' in a social context, but that it was definitely unacceptable for a white person to do so. Other racist words like 'Paki' were not viewed as having been reclaimed to the same extent.

> *They take the piss out of everyone in comedy and it's funny. If you are worried about racism in this [clip], then you need to fuck off back to where you came from!*
> Male, 35-44, Pakistani, C2DE, Leicester

2. There were also different views on the acceptability of a small number of historical insults because their use was thought to have changed over time. These included words like 'cretin', and 'loony'. Some of these terms, particularly those linked to mental health, were thought to have lost their clear status as insults towards people with a specific mental or physical condition. On the other hand, 'coloured' appeared to have moved in the opposite direction, and was unacceptable for many younger people, while some older participants did not view it as derogatory.

> *If they are said just to be insulting then it's ignorance, but they* [loony, mental and coloured] *are not offensive to me personally because they are normal words.*
> Male, 65-74, C2DE, Belfast

While participants were unable to reach consensus on these words, this debate emphasised the changing nature of language. Many words deemed acceptable in the past are now widely considered unacceptable, including some of the terms used to insult minority groups. But it is also possible for words to move from being unacceptable to more acceptable because their use and meaning has changed.

> *I call people 'mental' if they are extreme, so it's funny, not derogatory.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, London

Perceptions of specific examples of potentially offensive language and gestures

For each of the two broad categories described above, we break down the potentially offensive language and gestures into further groups (e.g. for non-discriminatory language we split the research material into general swear words/body parts, sexual references, and offensive gestures). We then set out the individual words, phrases and gestures in four

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groups according to their general level of acceptability, as determined by the research. These groups are based on views of general acceptability before and after the watershed in the case of TV, or when children are particularly likely to listening in the case of radio. The tables summarise the overall views of participants, although some words were debated, with individuals and groups rating them differently.

Non-discriminatory words are grouped as milder words (of little concern), medium words (potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed), strong words (generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed), and finally, the strongest words (highly unacceptable pre-watershed, but generally acceptable post-watershed).

Participants found discriminatory language much less acceptable on the whole, and depending on the individual word and context, they did not distinguish as clearly between acceptability pre- and post-watershed. The groups here are: milder words (of limited concern), medium words (potentially unacceptable), strong words (generally unacceptable), and the strongest words (highly unacceptable at all times – strong contextualisation required).

As discussed in the previous chapter, participants considered context to be of vital importance. Given that the words assessed in this research were largely evaluated by participants in isolation from any context, the findings reported here must be interpreted with care. Individual words and gestures can become significantly more or less acceptable depending on contextual factors, including the genre of programme, the frequency of use, the tone of delivery, whether individual words were thought to have multiple meanings, and how widely recognised they were.

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Non-discriminatory language

General swear words and body parts

Milder words *(generally of little concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)*
Arse Bloody Bugger Cow Crap Damn Ginger Git God Goddam Jesus Christ Minger Sod-off	Arsehole Balls Bint Bitch Bollocks Bullshit Feck Munter Pissed/Pissed off Shit Son of a bitch Tits	Bastard Beaver Beef curtains* Bellend Bloodclaat* Clunge Cock Dick Dickhead Fanny Flaps Gash Knob Minge Prick Punani Pussy Snatch Twat * Among the least recognised words	Cunt Fuck Motherfucker

'Milder words' were those that participants felt expressed strong emotions, or were used as light-hearted insults. Many of these were thought to be in common use, including in front of children, and therefore mostly acceptable before the watershed. Participants also thought these words were often used in humorous ways. Concerns about religious terms (such as 'God' and 'Jesus Christ') were linked to their use as expletives, rather than in their religious context.

> *We think they're more everyday words. No problem.*
> Female, 25-34, ABC1, Stockport

> *They* [the words 'arse' and 'bugger'] *are not intended to be shocking and you will hear them pretty well used by most people; these words are not aimed at any religious, gender or racial groups.*
> Male, 35-44, C2, London

'Medium words' were those more often employed as stronger insults, as well as some words considered more distasteful depending on how they were used. They were regarded to be potentially unacceptable before the watershed, although there was some debate among participants.

> *I do think that there is a difference between words that are used specifically to disparage a person's sex like 'bitch' and words like 'bloody' which are used as adjectives. I think the former are much less acceptable before the watershed because some consideration needs to be given as to how well younger people might understand the nuance of how certain words are used, and these words are almost always used in an aggressive manner.*
> Male, 45-54, ABC1, Edinburgh

Words such as 'cock', 'pussy' and 'minge' were seen as significantly stronger; a number of participants described them as more graphic, vulgar, or rude. Overall, this group of words were deemed generally unacceptable before the watershed. We have placed them in a group described as 'strong words'.

Some words were viewed as having multiple meanings. Participants recognised that the word 'pussy' could be used to refer, innocently, to a cat or tiger, and thought this was clearly acceptable. Using the word to refer to someone as weak was seen by some as potentially more problematic.

> *"Pussycat" is fine but "Stop being such a pussy" puts the word in a different and more offensive context.*
> Female, 35-44, ABC1, Manchester

Participants agreed, however, that the word 'pussy' was potentially much more offensive when used as a slang term for vagina.

The words 'beef curtains' and 'bloodclaat' were recognised by less than half of those who completed the online survey. However, among those familiar with these words, both were considered generally unacceptable for broadcast before the watershed.

Participants classed a small number of terms such as 'fuck', 'motherfucker' and 'cunt' as the strongest and most offensive terms in this category of non-discriminatory language. They were seen to express very strong emotions, or to be rude and aggressive insults. The cultural norms around these words meant they were less acceptable to use in front of children. They were considered unacceptable before the watershed by the vast majority of participants.

Responses to the word 'cunt' were particularly strong. A significant number of participants were uncomfortable with its use even after the watershed. Women were more likely to say it was completely unacceptable, based on its strong vulgar cultural associations. Some women and a few men said they were personally offended and would prefer 'cunt' not to be used on TV or radio at all. In general, most participants acknowledged that 'cunt' was less acceptable and were offended on behalf of others, even if it did not provoke a strong personal emotional reaction for them.

> *I think it is just maybe something instilled in me over the years because 'cunt' is perceived as being a shocking word and I know my mum and dad would never have said it, and so it is a word I would never use. Also maybe as it is slang for female genitalia and so is quite gender specific, but trying to be said in a shocking degrading way and as I am a woman that bugs me more.*
> Female, 35-44, ABC1, Cardiff

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Sexual references

Milder words *(generally of little concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)*
Bonk	Shag Slapper Tart	Bukkake* Cocksucker Dildo Jizz Ho Nonce Prickteaser Rapey* Skank Slag Slut Wanker Whore * Among the least recognised words	

Words relating to sex were evaluated in a similar way to body part words and general swear words. Again, many participants did not recognise some words in this category such as 'bukkake'.

Participants' view overall was that the majority of these words were unacceptable before the watershed because they were crass, unnecessary, and inappropriate for children to hear. Words like 'bonk' and 'shag', however, were seen as referring to sex in a general manner, often in more humorous and light-hearted ways, and were therefore more acceptable.

Sexual slurs, and more graphic sexual references like 'cocksucker', 'whore', 'rapey', and 'jizz', provoked stronger responses from participants. They were considered less acceptable because of their vulgarity, and because they were more likely to be used as insults directed at individuals. Similarly, words such as 'slut', 'skank' and 'slag' were seen as derogatory and vulgar, while words like 'wanker' and 'dildo' were seen as rude. Taken together, these strong words were considered generally unacceptable before the watershed but mostly acceptable after it. While there were concerns about the use of these words, insults based on sexual references were not thought to be as severe as the worst insults targeted at those with a disability, or those of a particular ethnicity, sexuality or gender identity.

> *Words like 'whore' and 'slut' are offensive, as the context in which they are used is usually a man being abusive to women.*
> Female, 25-34, C2DE, Glasgow

> *Words like 'shag' are used in jovial way.*
> Female, 35-44, ABC1, Manchester

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Offensive gestures

Milder gestures *(generally of little concern)*	Medium gestures *(potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)*	Strong gestures *(generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed)*	Strongest gestures *(highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)*
	Iberian slap Middle finger Two fingers	Blow job Two fingers with tongue (cunnilingus) Wanker	

Offensive gestures were placed in two broad groups of acceptability. More commonly used gestures like 'the middle finger' were considered more acceptable because participants viewed them as generally rude rather than very vulgar. By contrast, more overtly sexual gestures (like 'blowjob') were less acceptable because most found them more distasteful and vulgar. These gestures were typically considered acceptable only after the watershed.

> *Sexual gestures have to be after the watershed. It can make a woman feel uncomfortable. But the middle finger is used by everyone, so it's OK.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, London

Discriminatory language

The following five groups of potentially offensive words are all forms of discriminatory language. Participants' responses suggested that their views on the acceptability of this type of offensive language on TV and radio differed from their response to the non-discriminatory offensive language and gestures discussed above. In general, discriminatory language was seen as potentially more problematic than more general offensive language.

Views of acceptability of this type of offensive language were less influenced by the time of broadcast. A number of participants considered that stronger forms of discriminatory language were potentially unacceptable both before and after the watershed (although context was an important factor). As a result, it was more difficult, with discriminatory language, to draw general conclusions about the acceptability of these words before and after the watershed. In general, however, participants expected broadcasters to exercise particular care regarding the broadcast of the strongest discriminatory language.

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Older people

Milder words *(of limited concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable at all times – strong contextualisation required)*
Coffin dodger Old bag	FOP* * Among the least recognised words		

There was little concern about potentially offensive language specifically relating to old people. The words 'coffin dodger' and 'old bag' were not considered problematic by most. The word 'FOP'[2] was the least recognised of all the words surveyed, but was considered potentially offensive by those familiar with it.

Case study: Older people (75 years+)

Older participants typically started with a lower willingness to tolerate swearing, wanting to ban some words completely. Having looked at examples of the use of particular words in context, however, they became more willing to accept the use of potentially offensive language in some circumstances.

Many were aware that their views of racist and homophobic language were different to those of younger generations, and they now felt they should judge words according to current social norms rather than their own feelings.

On specific terms that could be insulting to older people:

Most did not recognise 'FOP' or' coffin dodger'. Those that did were not greatly offended, with some even finding 'coffin dodger' humorous.

'Old bag' was considered mildly offensive but not a term they would always expect to be an insult, as they said it depended on the context and intent.

> *'Coffin dodger', what's that? Someone who dodges coffins? Ha-ha. That's funny!*
>
> *Female, 75+, ABC1, Greater London*

[2] An acronym for 'fucking old person'

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Religious insults

Milder words *(generally of little concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable – strong contextualisation required)*
		Fenian* Kafir* Kike* Papist* Prod Taig* Yid * Among the least recognised words	

The majority of the words in this category were unfamiliar to a considerable number of the participants. However, these words were generally problematic for those participants who recognised them. Views on acceptability also depended on perceived religious sensitivity. Many participants, even if they did not know the full meaning of the words, were wary of religious terminology because they were worried that people of faith might be offended. These words were considered generally unacceptable before the watershed but broadly acceptable after it, based on the desire to protect religious minorities.

> *Words like 'Fenian', 'Prod', 'Taig', etc. in my opinion are unacceptable to the people who normally use them. A Protestant might call a Catholic a 'Fenian' and think nothing of it, but the same person would object to being called a 'Prod' by a Catholic and vice versa.*
> Male, 55-64, ABC1, Glasgow

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Sexual orientation and gender identity

Milder words *(generally of little concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable – strong contextualisation required)*
Gay	Bummer Fairy Pansy	Bender Bum boy Bumclat* Dyke He-she Homo Lezza /Lesbo Muff diver Nancy Poof Queer Rugmuncher /Carpetmuncher Tranny * Among the least recognised words	Batty boy Chi-chi man* Chick with a dick Faggot Gender bender Fudge-packer Shirt lifter * Among the least recognised words

Most of these derogatory terms, relating to either sexual or gender identity, were seen as very problematic by all participants who recognised them. As a category, they were viewed as insulting, derogatory and discriminatory. As with some racist terms, many participants could not envisage how the stronger words could be used in a non-discriminatory way.

> *The majority of the words I found offensive were racist or homophobic. One of the main reasons I would not like to hear them on the radio/TV is that in 2016, when so much has been achieved promoting equality and acceptance, to begin using such words would be a step backwards.*
> Male, 25-34, C2DE, Swansea

The word 'gay' was debated because it has multiple meanings and is used in multiple ways. Participants considered that it was acceptable when used as a simple identifier for homosexual people. Participants also discussed the use of 'gay' to mean 'not cool' or 'not very good'. This caused some concern as it was considered potentially derogatory. While LGBT participants found this use of 'gay' less acceptable than participants generally, they did not consider it strongly offensive.

> *I think humour can make it a little more innocent. However, even when words are used in jest they can be found offensive, such as "that's gay" - due to it having a negative connotation this would be offensive to the homosexual community and therefore wouldn't be funny.*
> Female, 44-55, Cardiff

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Words like 'bummer', 'fairy' and 'pansy' were medium in terms of acceptability. Participants thought of these words as rather dated and not often used now in a derogatory sense. However, they were still seen as potentially problematic when intended to insult gay people. Many pointed out that some of these words are now used in the gay community in a humorous way. This meant that they were not always used as insults, thereby complicating decisions about acceptability and making context particularly important.

Words such as 'dyke', 'poof' and 'rugmuncher' were seen as strong and problematic. Participants objected to these types of words on the basis of being intentionally hurtful towards LGBT people. The terms were seen as generally unacceptable except in specific circumstances. For instance, as mentioned in the debated words section, some of these sexual orientation words like (such as 'poof', 'queer', and 'dyke') were seen as having been 'reclaimed' by the people they were originally intended to insult as expressions of their identity. In these circumstances the words were not considered offensive.

Terms such as 'batty boy', 'chick with a dick', and 'faggot' were seen as among the strongest language, and much more likely to be used as insults. Many participants argued these were mostly unacceptable in society in general as they are particularly discriminatory and derogatory. As a result, they were seen as potentially problematic when broadcast on TV and radio, with their acceptability highly dependent on the context. In part, participants wanted to avoid children coming across these words, but there were also powerful concerns about protecting gay and transgender people from being offended or insulted.

> *Words such as 'faggot' are unacceptable because they have historically been used by groups in power to dehumanise and marginalise minority groups. They should not be used in their original meaning, but may be used in order to discuss the struggles of these minority groups.*
> Female, 18-24, ABC1, Nottingham

While there was low recognition of the words 'bumclat' and 'chi-chi man', these terms were considered comparable to the most offensive words of this type, by those who did recognise them.

Case study: Lesbian, gay and bisexual people

LGB participants had nuanced views on the use of potentially offensive language. Their main concerns were focused on transphobic language and the strongest homophobic language.

Words that they saw as milder homophobic language were acceptable if they were used in a descriptive rather than an insulting way, largely because some homophobic terms were perceived as rather old-fashioned and had been 'reclaimed' by some in the LGB community. These included words like 'pansy', 'nancy', 'poof' and 'queer'. However, views about which words had been 'reclaimed' were not completely consistent across different discussions, indicating that the use of these words continues to evolve. Many LGB participants considered that if these words were used as an insult they would in general be acceptable only after 9pm.

In their opinion, stronger homophobic language like 'dyke', 'batty boy', 'faggot', 'fudge-packer' and 'rugmuncher' required significant contextual justification. A minority of LGB participants thought this stronger homophobic language was never acceptable on TV and radio.

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Case study: Transgender people

Transgender participants had strong concerns about the use of transphobic language on TV and radio. In particular, they were apprehensive about it having a detrimental impact on vulnerable transgender people, given the high suicide rate in the community. Terms like 'he-she' and 'chick with a dick' were associated with the pornography industry and considered highly offensive to members of the trans community who have either chosen to not have surgery, or who are unable to.

There was some support for not allowing stronger transphobic language at all, unless there was a very compelling reason for it to be used.

Mental health and physical disability

Milder words *(of limited concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable at all times – strong contextualisation required)*
Cretin Div Loony Mental Nutter Psycho	Midget Schizo Special Vegetable	Cripple	Mong Retard Spastic/Spakka /Spaz Window licker

The main concern about this group of words was ensuring that disabled people, and those with mental health problems, were not insulted or offended. While some terms were viewed as unacceptable in most contexts – making them in general as unacceptable as strong insults aimed at other minority groups – there were mixed views on other words.

Participants thought that some potentially offensive words in this category were commonly used as general and light-hearted insults, and that the original link with specific mental health problems was no longer clear. For example, words like 'cretin', 'loony', and 'nutter' were considered milder because of the way they are used in contemporary society. Many participants noted that some of these words also had meanings that were not necessarily, or strongly, insulting (e.g. 'mental'), making acceptability even more dependent on context.

> *I see why 'nutter' and 'psycho' would make people uncomfortable and words like 'div' – but they are not necessarily bad; they are funny sometimes.*
> Male, 18-24, C2DE, Chippenham

Medium words such as 'special', 'midget' and 'schizo' were more problematic. Participants considered in general that they were more insulting and often specifically linked with particular mental health problems or disabilities. Some participants were particularly sensitive about these words because of their own experiences, or the experiences of friends and family.

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> *For example, 'vegetable' is not a word that would offend me, but if you were a parent of a child that had been injured in an accident or born in this state it might cause your blood to boil.*
> Male, 35-44, ABC1, Belfast

For participants, the most offensive words were those such as 'spastic', 'mong' and 'retard'. In their opinion, these were the most derogatory, and were often used in ways likely to be hurtful towards people with disabilities. As with other strong forms of discriminatory language, participants emphasised that broadcasters should be very careful when using them. They should ensure that there are good reasons for doing so, and that any potential harm and offence are appropriately mitigated.

> *Words that refer to mental health issues are not OK. People are trying to tackle stigma so anything like that shouldn't be used.*
> Female. 18-24, C2DE, London

Case study: Disabled people

Disabled participants said they found insulting language about disabled people very offensive. They considered some words never acceptable in general – including 'spastic', 'retard' and 'cripple' – because they were assumed to be used only as insults. But the Peter Kay clip (which mentioned the word 'spastic') divided views; some felt that the comedic context made it more acceptable, while others disagreed.

> *The word 'spastic' is highly offensive and it should never be used in jest.*
> Female, disabled, Manchester

> *His* [Peter Kay's] *reaction to the female character who said 'spastic' made a difference. He was rolling his eyes at her and showing disapproval towards her.*
> Female, disabled, London

Disabled participants had mixed views on words like 'loony' and 'nutter', which some regarded as old-fashioned. Some believed they were not always used as strong insults against disabled people, emphasising that much depended on the context and the intent of the speaker.

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Race and ethnicity

Milder words *(of limited concern)*	Medium words *(potentially unacceptable)*	Strong words *(generally unacceptable)*	Strongest words *(highly unacceptable at all times – strong contextualisation required)*
Jock Hun Nazi	Coloured Gippo Kraut Pikey Taff*	Choc ice* Dago* Gook* Honky Jap Negro Polack Raghead Slope* Spade Spic* Wop*	Chinky Coon Darky Golliwog Nigger Nig-nog Paki Sambo* Wog * Among the least recognised words

Participants had strong views about these words. Racist terms were the most unacceptable category overall because participants considered these words were usually used in a way that was derogatory and discriminatory to others. Participants thought they should normally be broadcast only in limited circumstances and in context, for example in news, drama, or documentary programmes to explore or expose prejudice.

> *They're offensive to difference races…'raghead', 'chinky', 'Paki'.*
> Male, 35-44, C2DE, Leicester

However, participants did make some significant distinctions regarding the acceptability of words within this category. Terms such as 'Jock' or 'Nazi' were felt to be historical insults whose meaning and use had changed and softened over the years. Indeed, some Scottish participants did not find 'Jock' offensive and others expected 'Nazi' to be used mainly in educational contexts. Although there was limited concern about the use of 'Hun' as a derogatory reference to German people, the word was seen as less acceptable by those familiar with its use as a sectarian insult. In general, though, these words were of limited concern.

Terms such as 'pikey' or 'kraut' were debated because some participants saw them as insulting and derogatory to specific groups – and therefore less acceptable – while others viewed them as having developed into more general insults.

> *Calling the Traveller community 'knackers', 'pikeys' etc – this is highly offensive to them. They are disadvantaged people who deserve equal rights, the same as anybody else.*
> Male, 35-44, ABC1, Hertfordshire

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Case study: Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsy and Traveller participants had strong concerns about negative portrayal of their community on TV in particular. While language plays an important role in this, how they are represented more generally was often the key issue for these participants.

Use of the word 'pikey' was generally considered unacceptable by Gypsy and Traveller participants, because it is not one that has been adopted by the community itself. Its use was seen either as a direct insult, or as making a negative association with Gypsies and Travellers.

> *'Pikey' is associated with something crap – it is not OK, even though it's not an insult directed at a person.*
> Male, Traveller, London

There was general agreement on strong words. Most found these unacceptable in most instances. Terms such as 'Jap', 'Negro', or 'Gook' were seen to be racist and hurtful towards people who were in these ethnic groups. These words tended to have a historical connotation of racism, and promoted strong and immediate reactions for most participants. They urged caution over the broadcast of these words because they recognised they are generally unacceptable in society. Some of the words in this group were not recognised by a considerable number of participants, perhaps reflecting their more historical use. But the participants who were familiar with these words considered them offensive, and those who learnt their meaning during discussion came to similar conclusions.

'Polack' was the most debated word in this category. Older participants tended to think this word was an acceptable and accurate descriptor of Polish people. Many participants, on the other hand, argued that this word was unacceptable because it was offensive to Polish people in the same way as the other words in this category.

The strongest words in this category were deemed offensive and unacceptable in society generally, and many participants considered they were potentially problematic, even when broadcast after the watershed. Overall, participants indicated that great care should be exercised with these strongest words, and broadcasters should not use them without very good reasons.

> ['Nigger'] *is bringing people down… it's derogatory and unacceptable.*
> Female, 45-55, ABC1, Stockport

> *Words that are used to offend specific groups of people, such as 'Jap', 'faggot', 'dyke', 'nigger', etc. are mostly unacceptable. Some of these words carry with them a history of oppression that took a long time to be corrected; therefore, I believe that they should be mostly avoided.*
> Male, 25-34, C2DE, London

Two specific ethnic minority groups included in the research were Pakistani men (in Leicester) and Afro-Caribbean women (in London). They had distinctive views on potentially offensive language, reflecting the complexity of language, ethnicity and identity.

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Case study: Pakistani men

The Pakistani men took a 'citizen' perspective generally, similar to most other participants across the discussions. They saw themselves as more conservative than average in a UK context. They considered protecting their children in accordance with their beliefs as a private matter for them. They were often not personally offended by racist language. They acknowledged its role in drama and comedy; for example, taking into account the historical context of the *Fawlty Towers* clip.

> *As parents we wouldn't want them listening to the language on TV, but we are not offended.*
>
> Male, 24-35, C2DE, Leicester

Where language was intended to single out or insult a particular ethnic group, however, they then considered it was not acceptable. They considered most ethnic insults to be inappropriate before the watershed.

Case study: Black Afro-Caribbean women

The middle-aged black women took a more conservative view. Words related to race and disabilities were not acceptable for them because of their history of being associated with discrimination and oppression. They were keen to ensure that children were protected from potentially offensive language as much as possible.

These participants were offended by the use of racist language in most contexts. For instance, the *Fawlty Towers* clip was deemed unacceptable by most, even with a clear warning and taking account of the comedic and historical context. They pointed to a generational divide in the black community about the use of 'nigger', which they themselves found deeply offensive. However, they said their children used the term in everyday life in common conversation.

> *My niece and her peers have no issues with these racial words. It is just how they relate to each other. It is not a derogatory term any more* [for them].
>
> Female, 35-44, C2DE, London

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6 Participant guidelines

This chapter draws together participants' views on the overall factors they thought Ofcom should take into account when regulating potentially offensive language and gestures on TV and radio. Below we summarise the main themes that emerged, with a brief commentary around each.

Participants shared many concerns about how language and gestures on TV and radio should be regulated, and a relatively consistent set of guidelines emerged across the research.

> *If people showed whatever whenever, it would become a minefield. There are so many channels, how would you know what you could rely on? We need consistency – a set of rules.*
> Male, 25-34, ABC1, Stockport

Suggested broadcast guidelines

1. Ofcom should consider language and gestures in their wider context

Participants agreed that it was not usually possible to decide on the acceptability of language and gestures without taking the full context into account. They emphasised the importance of Ofcom doing so when investigating complaints and enforcing standards on TV and radio, and the importance of broadcasters doing so when deciding how to make programmes compliant with the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

> *It's hard to think of words on their own. We have to put them into the context they are used.*
> Male, 25-34, C2DE, Sussex

2. The likely audience should be considered (noting that not all channels are the same) – but the potential audience is also important before the watershed, on TV, and when children are particularly likely to be listening, on radio

For participants, the potential audience for a programme (on radio or television) was often as important a consideration as the likely audience. Few were willing to take the risk that children, in particular, might come across much (or any) offensive language before the watershed, or (on radio) at times when children were particularly likely to be listening.

> *It matters who is watching and listening. A radio play in the daytime is likely to have an adult audience. However, there may also be pre-school children exposed to language here.*
> Female, 35-44, DE, Edinburgh

After further discussion, most participants were willing to accept some offensive language earlier in the day if children were unlikely to be watching or listening. They recognised the importance of audience expectations, the channel or programme's target audience, and freedom of choice. This willingness to accept some stronger language earlier in the day did not extend to frequent and gratuitous use of offensive language, and a minority of participants argued that strong language is unnecessary during daytime broadcasting.

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3. *The 9pm television watershed should continue because it acts as an important way of protecting children in particular, but also adults who do not want to come across strong language*

There was very wide support for continuing to have a 9pm watershed on TV, and for radio broadcasters taking particular care when children are likely to be listening. Protecting children from inappropriate language and gestures was the most important priority, but participants also wanted to ensure that adults who prefer to avoid offensive language or gestures are able to do so.

The watershed on TV was seen as striking an appropriate balance between protecting audiences and allowing people to choose to enjoy programmes with offensive language. Participants described the watershed as playing an important role, allowing people to feel comfortable watching TV during the day – but permitting stronger material to be shown after 9pm. They wanted Ofcom and broadcasters to maintain standards around the watershed, even in a world in which access to material digitally and on-demand continues to grow rapidly.

> *The watershed at 9pm is extremely important in order to separate programmes suitable for children or not. In fact, a lot of families watch television together in the evening, and it can be so unpleasant for parents when offensive language is suddenly used in a movie and /or a TV show.*
> Female, 45-54, C2DE, Brighton

4. *Before the television watershed, or when children are particularly likely to be listening to radio, any offensive language should be relevant and serve a purpose – and it should not be very strong, frequent or gratuitous*

Participants wanted to understand why offensive language was used before the watershed or when children are particularly likely to be listening to radio, before deciding on its acceptability. At these times they wanted the language to be relevant to the context (e.g. to reflect real life in a documentary), and, if appropriate, to serve a purpose (e.g. educating young people about an important topic).

> *I think it's important to be able to portray scenes in context with the story, specifically if they're centred on a point in history where racist or specific derogatory viewpoints might have been commonplace for the purposes of the story.*
> Male, 35-44, ABC1, Manchester

However, participants did not expect strong (or frequent mild) offensive language before the watershed, or when children were particularly likely to be listening to radio, even when such language had a clear purpose, and even if mitigating actions were used (e.g. warnings or bleeping-out offensive language in pre-recorded programmes). They thought that at these times potentially offensive language (and gestures) should be limited.

5. *Potentially offensive language related to race, sexuality, gender identity, and disability should be treated with the greatest of care*

Participants were clear that discriminatory and offensive language aimed at minority groups was, in general, the least acceptable of all the types of offensive language discussed. They wanted Ofcom to act to ensure in particular that minority

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groups are protected from offence and potential harm through the use of these type of words on TV and radio. Close attention should be paid to avoid normalising, or even encouraging, discrimination against these groups. Taking into account the views of people from minority groups was also important to participants.

> *If it's racist or used as an insult, it's not right.*
> Female, 18-24, C2DE, London

6. Ofcom and broadcasters should take into consideration what is generally acceptable to 'most people', while protecting minorities

Despite these consistent concerns about protecting minorities, participants also wanted Ofcom and broadcasters to take into account how words and gestures are used in society more generally. They did not want language, on TV in particular, to be bland, and as such, not reflect real life. Rather than banning words completely, participants could see how almost all offensive language might be acceptable in some contexts (e.g. news and current affairs, drama and educational programmes), provided it was not broadcast in ways that would encourage or condone discrimination. They also noted that language relating to minority groups is complicated, and evolving, as a result of changes in wider culture. Ofcom and broadcasters need to be aware of commonly accepted meanings but also how they change, to ensure that regulation is in line with public use of, and attitudes towards, language.

> *Words and gestures that are aimed at particular groups are actually offensive against most citizens of the UK today as most of us live in communities where we know people from those groups and are friends of many.*
> Male, 45-54, C2DE, Middlesex

7. Broadcasters should in general be held to higher standards for pre-recorded programmes than for live broadcasts, but they should take reasonable steps to avoid offensive language during live programmes before the watershed

Participants were willing to give live broadcasts more leeway if strong language was used either in a way that is outside the control of programme makers, or because of a genuine error or accident on the part of a broadcaster. This included accidental use of strong language before the watershed.

> *Sometimes you just can't help it with live things.*
> Female, 65-74, C2DE, Belfast

Pre-recorded programmes were held to higher standards because participants felt deliberate decisions had been made about what language to include.

This leeway for live broadcasts did not apply if participants felt there was either a deliberate use of offensive language, or professional negligence on the part of broadcasters. They expected them to take reasonable steps to guard against strong language before the watershed.

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8. Warnings are important so that audiences know what to expect, and should be as specific as appropriate

The view of participants was that warnings were a very important source of information about forthcoming programmes and allowed them to make better viewing or listening choices, for themselves and on behalf of their children. But in their opinion, warnings could be more specific about the type of strong language to expect within a programme. A few participants also wanted broadcasters to consider using permanent warnings (e.g. as part of electronic TV guides or on screen throughout programmes) to further improve the effectiveness of warnings and increase consumer choice and control.

> *Warnings do make a difference; as a parent you can decide if your child is ok to be exposed to certain content. Similarly, if you dislike foul language you will know it is not for you.*
> Female, 35-44, C2DE, Edinburgh

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7 Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology in detail

Recap of aims

The main aims of this research were to understand public attitudes towards language and gestures on TV and radio, and to give Ofcom an understanding of the contextual factors which influence the acceptability of offensive words, both generally and in particular. This included consideration of the role of the watershed (and radio boundary) in determining whether language and gestures on TV and radio were acceptable or not.

Research outline and considerations

This research updated previous waves (2005 and 2010) but had some important aspects that had to be taken into account:

Aspect	Challenges
Discuss 150 words and gestures in detail	Cover all 150 words and gestures in a robust manner; avoid participant fatigue and surface-level judgements in order to understand drivers of opinion and nuance.
Review all 19 TV and radio clips in detail	Ensure all 19 clips are covered in a robust yet feasible manner due to time constraints in the groups and in-depth interviews.
Geographical representation	Ensure the research is conducted with participants from across the UK, including rural and city locations.
Ethnic minority inclusion	Ensure the inclusion of participants from a range of ethnic minorities.
Minority inclusion	Ensure the inclusion of participants from minority groups in society including LGB, transgender, disabled and Travellers.

We therefore had to design a research approach that was in-depth but also wide in terms of topic coverage and participant sample. In order to best understand these issues, the research used a mixed method approach involving 248 participants in total from around the UK.

The approach was primarily qualitative in order to deep-dive into the meaning and nature of offence, the role of the watershed and contextual factors in considerations of acceptability. It involved focus groups, mini-groups and in-depth interviews.

The research approach also included an online component. This consisted of an online survey where participants gave an assessment of each word in the list (30 words a day) over five days to cover the 150 words and gestures, followed by two days of moderated discussion exploring the reasoning behind their opinions. This online component was conducted with different participants to the face-to-face discussions. The online discussion contained individual blogging exercises as well as group discussions to harness the best of unbiased responses and the cross-cutting experience of group perspectives.

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The face-to-face element of the research was important to delve into the complexity and depth of language and gesture acceptability on TV and radio. This aspect considered responses to word types, television and radio clips, and hypothetical scenarios, and was designed to understand participants' responses in context.

These participants were given a pre-task to complete before attending their group or interview which involved watching or listening to the clips via an online platform and rating the acceptability of the language followed by a brief statement outlining their reasoning. This enabled them to view each example of potentially offensive language in context as well as to consider their own opinions on the language prior to attending a group or interview. This also had a practical time-saving benefit as we did not have to show all of the clips in their entirety in the groups and could use the time to delve more deeply into the issues.

Then, during the face-to-face discussion, a selection of clips were discussed further to gain more in-depth insights into participants' views on language acceptability, as well as the drivers of these. Due to time constraints not all clips were shown again during the discussions. Instead, the clips were randomised across the sample so that all clips were covered across the sample.

Further, face-to-face discussions were structured to move from simple decontextualized words to consideration of the language in more complicated ways by evaluating the clips and hypothetical scenarios. In this way, the research was able to gain a deep understanding of participant reasoning about the acceptability of language on TV and radio.

Discussion groups were chosen around demographic similarity (age, life stage, ethnicity, disability, and sexual identity) to make them more open with regard to potentially sensitive issues such as offensive language. The demographic breakdowns per groups are discussed in more depth below.

Sample structure

Groups were recruited based on a number of factors including socio-economic status, gender, age, and number of children. All focus groups were three hours in length and involved between eight and ten participants (ten participants were recruited per group); all mini groups were three hours in length and involved between four and six participants (six participants were recruited per group); all in-depth interviews were one and a half hours in length and were conducted with one or two participants.

Recruitment screeners were tailored specifically for minority groups to ensure relevance. These can all be found in Appendix B. More detail on the sample structures are in the following tables.

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'Mainstream' groups

Methodology	No.	Location	Date	Quotas
Focus groups (8-10 participants)	1	Wiltshire (suburban / rural) Viewing facility	15th Feb	• No children • Aged 30-55 • ABC1 • Mixed gender
	2	Wiltshire (suburban / rural) Viewing facility	15th Feb	• No children / empty nesters • Aged 55-65 • ABC1 • Mixed gender
	3	Manchester	17th Feb	• No children • Aged 30-55 • ABC1 • Mixed gender
	4	Glasgow	18th Feb	• Children 0-12 • Aged 20-45 • ABC1 • Female
	5	Cardiff	17th Feb	• Children 13-17 • Aged 30-55 • C2DE • Mixed gender
Mini-groups (4-6 participants)	1	Manchester	17th Feb	• No children / empty nesters • Aged 55-65 • ABC1 • Mixed gender
	2	Belfast	18th Feb	• No children / empty nesters • Aged 65-75 • C2DE • Mixed gender
In-depth interviews	1	Glasgow	18th Feb	Aged 75-80, ABC1, Male
	2	Cardiff	17th Feb	Aged 75-80, C2DE, Female
	3	Belfast	18th Feb	Aged 75-80, CDE2, Male
	4	Greater London	22nd Feb	Aged 75-80, C2DE, Female
	5	Greater London	25th Feb	Aged 75-80, ABC1, Male
	6	Greater London	26th Feb	Aged 75-80, ABC1, Female

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Minority groups

The minority group sample is outlined below:

Methodology	ID.	No.	Location	Date	Quotas
Focus groups	1	9	London	23rd Feb	Ethnic minority • Black African / Black Caribbean • Female • Aged 30-54 • Children 13-17
	2	9	London	23rd Feb	LGB • Female
	3	9	Manchester	24th Feb	LGB • Male
Mini groups	1	6	Leicester	23rd Feb	Ethnic minority • Pakistani • Male • Aged 30-49 • Children 0-12
In-depth interviews	1	3	London	2nd & 3rd March	Disabled • 1 hearing impairment; 1 visual impairment, 1 mobility impairment
	2	3	Manchester	24th Feb	Disabled • 1 mental health; 1 disability impairment; 1 mobility impairment
	3	3	London and Lancaster	8th March,16th March and 27th April	Transgender
	4	8	London	23rd Feb, 25th Feb and 9th March	Travellers • Irish Traveller Women • Romany Traveller Women • Irish Traveller Men • Roma Men • Roma Women

Pre-task

Participants completed a pre-task before their groups or in-depth interviews. This primed participants to the language and also provided a baseline of their attitudes before the face-to-face discussions.

The pre-task involved watching/listening to 19 clips (all of which had been cut from programmes that Ofcom had received complaints about), giving a 1-10 rating based on how acceptable the language is on TV or radio, and then providing open-ended responses discussing their rating. This pre-task was carried out via an online survey or via a paper survey and a DVD of the clips, to ensure that participants of low digital literacy could also take part. The full pre-task document sent to participants can be seen in Appendix D.

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On average, the clips were around 1 minute 30 seconds in length, cut with the aim of giving participants enough of a feel for the programme but also to focus on the language in question. The clips all started with a title screen outlining the programme name as well as the TV channel, time and date it was broadcast to give further contextual detail.

Discussion flow

The full discussion guides used for the groups and in-depth interviews can be found in Appendix E.

Stimulus

Participants were tasked with sorting 150 words and gestures (six gestures) based on levels of acceptability into four categories: acceptable before the 9pm watershed, acceptable after the 9pm watershed, never acceptable for broadcast on TV or radio, or do not recognise. These words and gestures were split into three equally-sized piles. Each group was split into two smaller groups and each of those sorted a word pile (two piles of words were discussed per group). The word piles and gestures were rotated across all groups to ensure all were discussed. When words were deemed to be potentially offensive to particular groups (for instance, ethnic minorities), the words were prioritised to discuss with participants from those demographics.

Participants who took part in the in-depth interviews were tasked with sorting 50 words and two gestures.

To help understand the dynamics of contextual factors when considering the levels of acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio, participants were given a number of hypothetical scenarios occurring on TV or radio involving certain words or gestures, and were tasked with placing these on a matrix of acceptable-unacceptable and personal offence-offence on behalf of others. The list of scenarios can be found in a later section of this document.

Word and clip selection

In selecting the words which were included in the list to be discussed by participants, Ofcom included gestures for the first time in this research, and added a selection of words about which it had received complaints from viewers and listeners since the previous wave of research in 2010.

The clips were from both radio and TV shows and included content broadcast at various times, from a range of channels and of different programme types. They included programmes that Ofcom had found in breach of the broadcasting rules, as well as programmes Ofcom had not. Full details of the clips are included in Chapter 3. Participants did not view or listen to programmes in their entirety but instead viewed clips edited to show the immediate context, and to give key details such as time and broadcast channel.

An overview of participants' responses is outlined overleaf.

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Clip name	Response from participants	Important contextual factors
Television		
Fawlty Towers	**Mixed**. Participants took into account the historical nature of the show, the warning, and the fact that the comedy made fun of the ignorant character using the racist language. Language like 'nigger' and 'wog' were simply unacceptable for others.	Programme type, historical date of original broadcast, mitigation, intent and tone
Emmerdale	Most found it **acceptable** as it was a drama portraying 'real life' and therefore had a higher purpose; the child was not in a vulnerable position as the other adults comfort her in the clip; it was clear 'bitch' was used for strong effect and not gratuitous.	Time, intent and tone
Dog and Beth: On the Hunt	**Unacceptable**. Strong language was used before the watershed when it's likely that children could be watching. Gratuitous use of strong language and inconsistent bleeping.	Time, likely and potential audience, frequency and repetition, expectation
Dermot Dances for Comic Relief	Mostly **acceptable**. This was an accident that occurred on live TV and there was an apology given soon after. It was on the BBC red button service, rather than a mainstream TV channel so there was less likelihood of many people being offended	Live, mitigation, platform/channel, genuine accident, likely audience
Big Brother	**Mixed**. Pre-watershed broadcast at a time when children may be likely to be watching. The gratuitous use of 'pissed off' also made it unacceptable to many. Others found the language 'pissed off' mild and acceptable pre-watershed.	Time, frequency and repetition, expectation
Peter Kay's Car Share	**Mixed**. While seen as offensive by some, other noted that the Spastics' Society used to exist, and the fact that this was said in the context of a comedy programme meant no malice was intended. Others baulked at the idea of making fun of disabled people and found it unacceptable.	Intent and tone
Don't Tell the Bride	Some debate but deemed **acceptable**. Some felt the use of 'Pikey' showed the character to be ignorant, which was the point of reality TV show; others felt the clip was derogatory to Travellers and shouldn't be broadcast. Offensive to Gypsy and Traveller participants.	Intent and tone, time, expectations
Smokey and the Bandit	Mostly **acceptable**. The intent of the gesture was seen as somewhat comedic and the moment as very fleeting.	Intent and tone, frequency and repetition
The Angels' Share	Mostly **acceptable**, but some debate among those who advocated a gradient of language around the watershed. The language ('cunt') fitted with the characters, and the film thus was deemed as mostly acceptable as it is broadcast post-watershed (even if at 9pm).	Programme type, time, expectation, likely audience
Father Ted	Most felt this was **unacceptable** because the use of 'fepp' and 'feck' was gratuitous; many did not realise the words were substitutes for 'fuck' (especially older participants); some picked up on the word 'shite' before the watershed. A minority argued that it was clever humour (pointing to the 'no swearing' sign as a symbol of pre-watershed conditions).	Frequency and repetition, time,
The X Factor	Most said this was **unacceptable** as the celebrity seemed to use this on purpose and should have known better; it would have been easy to use another word. Another concern was that lots of children were likely to be watching, making it unacceptable	Time, expectation, likely audience, intent and tone

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World's Craziest Fools	**Mixed.** Some felt the language acceptable and not as bad in a backing track; others felt the language too strong for 7pm and unnecessary.	Time, frequency and repetition
Live European Rugby Challenge Cup	Some debate over the word 'vegetable' directed against mentally ill (**unacceptable**), but some saw this as acceptable rugby parlance; those who did know what 'rugmunchers' meant felt this was **unacceptable**. The apology didn't mitigate offence for most, as the commentator was a professional and the language seemed to be a reflection of his regular language (i.e. not really an accident).	Intent and tone, mitigation, unprofessional
Strictly Come Dancing	Mostly **acceptable**. A genuine accident on live TV and not meant with malice, followed by an apology.	Live, intent and tone, mitigation
Countdown To Christmas Trailer	Mostly **unacceptable** if participants recognised the swearing, but many missed the swearing. Unacceptable as broadcast pre-watershed during Christmas when children would be watching.	Time, likely audience, expectation
Radio		
The Official Kiss Top 40	Mostly **unacceptable**. Even though it was a mistake and an apology was given, most said a professional presenter should know better. The time of day meant young people were likely to be listening.	Time, likely audience, expectation, negligence
Breakfast Show	**Mixed**. Seemed like a genuine mistake and followed by an apology. However, some don't agree as it was strong language ('fucking') and the broadcaster was a professional	Time, likely audience, programme type, negligence, mitigation
Occupy The Airwaves	Mostly **unacceptable**. Even though it was a mistake and an apology was issued, professionals should know better and should have checked the song they were going to play.	Time, programme type, negligence
Jeffery Bernard Is Unwell	**Mixed**. Those who knew the play and listen to Radio 4 say it was acceptable because of the dramatic context and it fitted with the character. Others felt children may be listening if they flicked over, and therefore deemed it unacceptable.	Programme type, potential audience, likely audience, time

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Scenarios

A table outlining the hypothetical scenarios and participant responses can be found below. The Variables column relates to areas of discussion which may change how acceptable participants find each scenario. For example, in scenario 2, it was asked what impact it had that the potentially offensive language used was said with a malicious tone. The last column in the table summarises the key contextual factors that played a role in participants' considerations.

	TV / Radio	Hypothetical scenario and time/channel	Variables	Transmission time	Participants' overall views	Important contextual factors
Scenario 1	TV	A football player says '**cunt**' off camera when running past a TV reporter covering a football game. The word is loud and clearly audible. It is followed by an immediate apology. Sat 1.30pm on a popular sports channel.	Strong language, unexpected, live TV, mitigation, general language	Pre-watershed	**Mixed**. Because of the very strong language pre-watershed, some felt it was unacceptable, although many said that it was acceptable as it was an accident; the broadcaster cannot control everything and an apology was issued.	Live, time, likely audience and potential audience, mitigation
Scenario 2	TV	A character in a popular drama maliciously calls another character a **Paki**. Wed 9.05pm on a popular TV channel watched by many people.	Racial language, intent	Boundary of the watershed	Mostly **acceptable.** This was due to the dramatic context and after the watershed; the usage of the word was not condoned, but it reflects reality if a person (character) would speak like this.	Time, intent and tone, expectations
Scenario 3	Radio	Listening to a popular radio drama in the early evening, a character says '**chick with a dick**' when referring to a transgendered person. Before the programme is aired a warning was issued about potentially offensive language. Mon, 7.30pm, on a popular radio channel.	Sexual orientation, intent, warning	Boundary of time when children particularly likely to be listening.	**Acceptable** because of the warning. Participants were uncomfortable with the language as it was derogatory towards transgendered people, but also in a dramatic context, so it was acceptable.	Mitigation, expectations, intent and tone
Scenario 4	Radio	Listening to your favourite radio programme in the evening on talk-back radio, an interviewee says **mong** multiple times when referring to people with Down's syndrome. 9pm on a popular talk-back radio channel.	Language related to disabled, genre, intent	Time when children not particularly likely to be listening	**Unacceptable**. Most focussed on the multiple instances of mong, which they argued reflected malicious intent. Even after a time when children are particularly likely to be listening, most felt it unacceptable. It was a broadcaster's responsibility to cut off the speaker quickly.	Frequency and repetition, intent and tone

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Scenario 5	TV	On a TV channel aimed at younger adults, you are watching a stand-up comedy show that uses the words **dick** and **pussy**. Tues 8.45pm on a popular TV channel.	Sexual references, genre, channel	Boundary of the watershed	**Mixed.** Some saw this as acceptable given the context of stand-up comedy. Others questioned what 'younger adults' meant and were concerned about very young children prior to the watershed.	Time, intent and tone, likely and potential audience, expectations
Scenario 6	TV	You are watching a specialist arts TV channel on Sunday evening at 6pm. The film you are watching includes multiple uses of **jizz**, **cocksucker** and **slag**.	Likely audience, sexual references	Pre-watershed	Most saw this was **unacceptable** due to the sexual nature of the language pre-watershed. However, a minority point out that it was a specialist TV channel and children were unlikely to be watching and it was therefore acceptable.	Time, likely and potential audience, frequency and repetition
Scenario 7	TV	You are watching the news with your family, which includes your 10-year-old child. A politician is doing a speech but behind him is a member of the crowd doing the **middle finger** gesture to the camera. No apology is issued. Mon 6.15pm on a popular TV channel.	Mitigation, live TV, accident	Pre-watershed	Most felt it was **acceptable**. Somewhat comedic. Showing political feeling against politicians and therefore linked to reality. Participants said that broadcasters cannot control everything, but also felt an apology would make it more acceptable.	Live, mitigation, intent and tone
Scenario 8	Radio	You are in the car and you are flicking through radio stations in the morning. You stop on one and a hip hop song says **shit**, **fuck**, **whore**, **bitch** multiple times. Thurs 8am on a commercial radio station breakfast show.	Expectation	Time when children particularly likely to be listening	All said **unacceptable**. Strong language pre-watershed. Violates expectations. Children very likely to be listening.	Time, expectation, likely and potential audience

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Appendix B: Recruitment Screeners

Online recruitment screener

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is . . . from Ipsos MORI, the market research company. We are currently inviting some people to speak to us about their attitudes towards offensive language and gestures; I wonder if you could help me?

Before you agree to take part, we need to give you some information about the topic of the research. We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom is responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language and gesture. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why people feel the way they do.

This research will require that you will assess a range of words in terms of their acceptability on television or radio. The words that will be shown and discussed relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general language that might be considered offensive by some. We want to make sure you are aware of the material that will be discussed, and agree to take part on that basis.

The answers you give will form part of a market research study. They will be analysed along with those of many others and will never be linked back to you personally. All quotes will be anonymised. The results will be used for the purposes of this market research study, which will feed into a public report.

To say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer you <INSERT AMOUNT AND IF VOUCHER/CASH>.

We are looking for particular groups of people; therefore, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

Q1 Would you be interested in taking part?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK & CLOSE

Q2 Do you or any members of your immediate family work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity?

Journalism/the media	1	THANK & CLOSE
Advertising	2	
Public relations (PR)	3	
Market Research	4	
TV/Radio	5	
Central Government	6	
No, none of these	7	CONTINUE
Don't know	8	

Q3 Have you taken part in market research before?

No	1	GO TO Q.6
Yes	2	GO TO Q.4

Q4 How many focus groups or online discussions have you taken part in overall?

Less than 2	1	CONTINUE
3-5	2	CONTINUE
6+	3	THANK AND CLOSE

Q5 When was the last time you participated in activity for a market research company?

1-3 months	1	THANK & CLOSE
4-6 months	2	THANK & CLOSE
7-9 months	3	CONTINUE
10+ months	4	CONTINUE

Q6 CODE SEX (DO NOT ASK)

Male	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS
Female	2	

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- 66 male
- 67 female

Q7 Which of the following devices do you have access to?

Smartphone	1	THANK AND CLOSE
Tablet	2	
PC / Laptop	3	CONTINUE
Internet TV / IPTV	4	THANK AND CLOSE
Cable TV	5	
Satellite TV	6	
None of these	7	

ONLINE COMMUNITY
All to have access to a computer (code 3)

Q8 Which of these best describes your household? SINGLE CODE ONLY. TAKE AGE OF OLDEST CHILD

Parents of children under 3	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
Parents of child 3 -6 years old	2	
Parents of child 7-12 years old	3	
Parents of child 13-15 years old	4	
Parents of child 16-17 years old	5	
Empty nesters (Parents whose children have all left home)	6	
Household of adults (all 18 or over); never had children	7	
Not stated	8	THANK AND CLOSE

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- Mix of codes 1-5 across 55 participants
- Rest to fall out -- mix of codes 6-7

Q9 WRITE IN & CODE EXACT AGE

Exact Age ☐☐

18-24	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
25-34	2	
35-44	3	
45-54	4	
55-74	5	
75-80	6	
81+	7	THANK AND CLOSE

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- Mix of codes 1-5

Q10 Which of these best describes your current situation?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Working - Full-time (30+ hrs)	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS SEE BELOW
Working - Part-time (9-29 hrs)	2	
Unemployed	3	
Retired (Please list previous occupation)	4	
Homemaker	5	
Student	6	
Other (please state)	7	

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- Recruit a mix of codes 1-7

Q11 Occupation of chief income earner

Position/rank/grade	
Industry/type of company	
Quals/degree/apprenticeship	
Number of staff responsible for	

PROBE FULLY AND CODE SOCIOECONOMIC GROUP FROM ABOVE:

A/B	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
C1	2	
C2	3	
D/E	4	

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- 20 coded 1
- 40 coded 2
- 40 coded 3
- 33 coded 4

Q12 What type of television do you have at home?

Free to view (e.g. Freeview / Freesat or other free view method) - (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, Five and a range of digital channels including BBC Three, BBC Four, E4 etc.) - Includes TV with digital TV / internet built in	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
Pay- Cable (Virgin)	2	
Pay TV - Sky or BT	3	
No TV at home	4	THANK AND CLOSE

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- 70 coded 1
- Rest a mix of codes 2-3

Q13 How often do you...

a) Watch television at home?
b) Listen to the radio?

	Every day	Most days	Once a week	Less than once a week	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
TV	SEE QUOTAS BELOW				THANK AND CLOSE
Radio	SEE QUOTAS BELOW				

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- TV
  - Min of 80 to be coded 1-2
  - 20 coded 3-4
  - Rest to fall out
- Radio
  - Min of 80 to be coded 1-3
  - 20 coded 3-5
  - Rest to fall out

Q14 How would you describe the area in which you live?

Rural	1	CONTINUE
Urban	2	
Suburban	3	

RECRUIT A GOOOD MIX ACROSS CODES 1-3

Q15 Have you been Resident in the UK for longer than 12 months? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

Q16 Which of the following ethnicities do you feel describes you best? SINGLE CODE ONLY

White	British	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS
	Irish	2	
	Any other white background	3	
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	4	
	White and Asian	5	
	Any other mixed background	6	
Asian or Asian British	Indian	7	
	Pakistani	8	
	Bangladeshi	9	
	Any other Asian background	10	
Black or Black British	Caribbean	11	
	African	12	

	Any other Black background	13	
Chinese or Other Ethnic group	Chinese	14	
	Any other background	15	

ENSURE ALL PARTCIPANTS CAN COMFORTABLY USE AND UNDERSTAND ENGLISH

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- 23 mix of codes 3-15
- Rest codes 1 (and some 2 is ok)

Q17 Which of the following best describes your religious beliefs? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Christian	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Catholic	2	
Muslim	3	
Sikh	4	
Jewish	5	
Buddhist	6	
Islamic	7	
Hindu	8	
Agnostic	9	
Atheist	10	
Other please state	11	
Prefer not to say	12	

Q18 Do you have access to internet in your home via broadband?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

ONLINE COMMUNITY

- All to have broadband internet access

Q19 Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. It is up to individuals to decide whether the programmes/shows they watch/listen to are suitable for themselves						
b. There should be tighter restrictions on the sort of programmes/shows that						

are shown/broadcast on television and radio						
c. The watershed is essential for maintaining standards and decency on television						
d. After the watershed all language is acceptable on television						
e. I think there is too much violence on television and on the radio						
f. I have never been offended by anything I have seen on television or heard on radio						

- RECRUIT A MIX OF POSITIVE (CODES 1-2) AND NEGATIVE (4-5) ANSWERS TO ALL STATEMENTS.
- RECRUIT A MIX OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STATEMEENTS TO ONLINE COMMUNITY

Q20 Please choose one from the following statements about raising complaints [SINGLE CODE]

a. I have never complained to companies about goods/services /experiences	1	CONTINUE TO Q23
b. Occasionally I will communicate to companies to complain about goods/services /experiences, but only if things are particularly bad	2	CONTINUE TO Q21
c. I often communicate to companies when I am dissatisfied with goods/services /experiences	3	CONTINUE TO Q21

- RECRUIT A MIX

Q21 Have you ever submitted a complaint to Ofcom or a media company for anything related to TV or Radio?

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Q22
No	2	CONTINUE TO Q23

Q22 What was the complaint concerning?

Q23 Which of the following activities have you ever under taken on the internet?

	Yes	No
	1	2
	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW.	
a. Information (personal) – finding information for leisure time, looking at news websites or apps or adult-only websites, looking at websites for news about, or events in your local area b. or the local community		
c. Email - sending and receiving emails		
d. Buying and selling - buying and selling things online		
e. Government sites – completing government processes online (e.g. tax credits, driving licence, car tax, passport, tax return) or finding information about public services provided by local or national government		
f. Information (work / college / school) – finding information for work/ job/ studies, doing an online course to achieve a qualification or looking at job opportunities		
g. Health - finding information about health related issues		
h. Banking/ paying bills - banking and paying bills online		
i. Social Media - looking at social media sites or apps or sharing links to websites or online articles- perhaps on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit or LinkedIn		
j. Downloading software		
k. Communications - using Instant Messaging or making or receiving telephone or video calls l. over the internet (e.g. Skype)		
m. Watching video clips – watching online or downloading short video clips such as music videos or comedy clips		
n. Music - listening to or downloading music online		
o. Watching TV content– watching online or downloading TV programmes or films		
p. Radio – listening to radio stations online		
q. Civic involvement – looking at political or campaign or issues websites, sign an online petition or contact a local councillor or your MP online		
r. Games – playing games online		

s. Uploading/ adding content to the internet – setting up or maintaining a website or blog or uploading or sharing videos or photos online or contributed comments to a website or blog		

- NARROW USERS ARE THOSE EVER HAVING CARRIED OUT 1-6 OF THE TASKS
- MEDIUM USERS ARE THOSE EVER HAVING CARRIED OUT 7-10 OF THE TASKS
- BROAD USERS ARE THOSE EVER HAVING CARRIED OUT 11-17 OF THE TASKS

ONLINE COMMUNITY
- Recruit 15 narrow users
- Recruit 28 medium users
- Rest to be broad users

AT END OF RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE RECRUITER SAY:

This research involves completing an online survey and engaging in some discussion in an online community. This will be over 7 days. For the first 5 days you will need to spend 15-20 minutes a day. On the final two days you will need to spend about 30-45 minutes in online discussion.

You will receive £ [INCENTIVE AMOUNT] as a token of our appreciation of your time and help. It will take place [DATE].

ASK ALL

Q24 Do you agree to participate in the research?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

Thank you very much for your help with this study. I will contact you a day or 2 before the research starts to confirm that you are still able to attend. Please note that you will be unable to attend the online community unless this re-screening has occurred and once this has been done you will be sent your invitation and, if appropriate, your homework task.

Your details will be held electronically for internal administration purposes.

FINALLY:

Q25 Do you give permission for us to pass your name and telephone (mobile / landline) contact details onto the researcher in case they need to contact you in the event of non-arrival at the interview?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER:

I confirm that I have conducted this interview face to face/by telephone (DELETE WHERE APPROPRIATE) with the named person of the address attached and that I asked all the relevant questions fully and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specification and within the MRS Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Interviewer Signature:……

Interviewer name (CAPS):……

Date:……

TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL PARTICIPANTS:

By agreeing to participate in this Ipsos MORI research on offensive language on behalf of Ofcom, I consent to being video and audio recorded during online community and for my words to be quoted anonymously from the community and that these words and footage can be used for analysis and reporting purposes by Ipsos MORI and Ofcom, which will be used to inform a public report.

I understand that the research is anonymous, and that will not be identified by name in Ipsos MORI's findings.

Name (PRINT)……

Signed……

Date……

Telephone contact number……

Mainstream sample recruitment screener

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is . . . from Ipsos MORI, the market research company. We are currently inviting some people to speak to us about their attitudes towards offensive language and gestures; I wonder if you could help me?

Before you agree to take part, we need to give you some information about the topic of the research. We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom is responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language and gesture. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why people feel the way they do.

This research will require that you will assess a range of words in terms of their acceptability on television or radio. The words that will be shown and discussed relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general language that might be considered offensive by some. We want to make sure you are aware of the material that will be discussed, and agree to take part on that basis.

The answers you give will form part of a market research study. They will be analysed along with those of many others and will never be linked back to you personally. All quotes will be anonymised. The results will be used for the purposes of this market research study, which will feed into a public report.

To say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer you <INSERT AMOUNT AND IF VOUCHER/CASH>.

We are looking for particular groups of people; therefore, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

Q1 Would you be interested in taking part?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK & CLOSE

Q2 Do you or any members of your immediate family work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity?

Journalism/the media	1	THANK & CLOSE
Advertising	2	
Public relations (PR)	3	
Market Research	4	
TV/Radio	5	
Central Government	6	
No, none of these	7	CONTINUE
Don't know	8	

Q3 Have you taken part in market research before?

No	1	GO TO Q.6
Yes	2	GO TO Q.4

Q4 How many focus groups or online discussions have you taken part in overall?

Less than 2	1	CONTINUE
3-5	2	CONTINUE
6+	3	THANK AND CLOSE

Q5 When was the last time you participated in activity for a market research company?

1-3 months	1	THANK & CLOSE
4-6 months	2	THANK & CLOSE
7-9 months	3	CONTINUE
10+ months	4	CONTINUE

Q6 CODE SEX (DO NOT ASK)

Male	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS
Female	2	

FOCUS GROUPS
- Mixed – 5 males and 5 females
- Single gender – 10 of each gender

MINI GROUPS
- Mixed – 4 of each gender

IDIs
- 3 males and 3 females

Q7 What type of television do you have at home?

Free to view (e.g. Freeview / Freesat or other free view method) - (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, Five and a range of digital channels including BBC Three, BBC Four, E4 etc.) - Includes TV with digital TV / internet built in	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
Pay- Cable (Virgin)	2	
Pay TV - Sky or BT	3	
No TV at home	4	THANK AND CLOSE

FOCUS GROUPS
- Each group to have 5 coded 1
- Rest a mix of codes 2-3

MINI GROUPS
- Each group to have 4 coded 1
- Rest a mix of 2-3

IDIS

- 3 coded 1; rest a mix of codes 2-3

Q8 How often do you...

c) Watch television at home?

d) Listen to the radio?

	Every day	Most days	Once a week	Less than once a week	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
TV	SEE QUOTAS BELOW				THANK AND CLOSE
Radio	SEE QUOTAS BELOW				

FOCUS GROUPS

- Max of 2 per group coded 3-4 for TV and 3-5 for radio

MINI--GROUPS

- Max of 2 per group coded 3-4 for TV and 3-5 for radio

IDIS

- Max of 1 out of 6 coded 3-4 for TV and 3-5 for radio

Q9. Which of these best describes your household? SINGLE CODE ONLY. TAKE AGE OF OLDEST CHILD

Parents of children under 3	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
Parents of child 3-6 years old	2	
Parents of child 7-12 years old	3	
Parents of child 13-15 years old	4	
Parents of child 16-17 years old	5	
Empty nesters (Parents whose children have all left home)	6	
Household of adults (all 18 or over); never had children	7	
Not stated	8	THANK AND CLOSE

IDIS, FOCUS GROUPS and MINI GROUPS

- Recruit according to spec
- IDIs to fall out

Q10 WRITE IN & CODE EXACT AGE

Exact Age ☐☐

18-24	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
25-34	2	
35-44	3	
45-54	4	
55-74	5	
75-80	6	
81+	7	THANK AND CLOSE

IDIs, MINI GROUPS, FOCUS GROUPS

- Recruit to spec

Q11 Which of these best describes your current situation?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Working - Full-time (30+ hrs)	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS SEE BELOW
Working - Part-time (9-29 hrs)	2	
Unemployed	3	
Retired (Please list previous occupation)	4	
Homemaker	5	
Student	6	
Other	7	

MINIGROUPS AND FOCUS GROUPS

- A mix of codes in each group where relevant

IDIS

- To fall out

Q12 Occupation of chief income earner

Position/rank/grade	
Industry/type of company	
Quals/degree/apprenticeship	
Number of staff responsible for	

PROBE FULLY AND CODE SOCIOECONOMIC GROUP FROM ABOVE:

A/B	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS BELOW
C1	2	
C2	3	
D/E	4	

IDIS, MINI GROUPS and FOCUS GROUPS

- Recruit to spec

Q13 How would you describe the area in which you live?

Rural	1	SEE BELOW
Urban	2	
Suburban	3	

AIM TO RECRUIT A GOOD SPREAD ACROSS SAMPLE

Q14 Which of the following ethnicities do you feel describes you best? SINGLE CODE ONLY

White	British	1	QUOTA
	Irish	2	
	Any other white background	3	
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	4	
	White and Asian	5	
	Any other mixed background	6	
Asian or Asian British	Indian	7	
	Pakistani	8	
	Bangladeshi	9	
	Any other Asian background	10	
Black or Black British	Caribbean	11	
	African	12	
	Any other Black background	13	
Chinese or Other Ethnic group	Chinese	14	
	Any other background	15	

ENSURE ALL PARTCIPANTS CAN COMFORTABLY USE AND UNDERSTAND ENGLISH

IDIS, MINI GROUPS and FOCUS GROUPS

- Recruit codes 1-2
- Record for profile sheet

Q15 Have you been resident in the UK for longer than 12 months? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

Q16 Which of the following best describes your religious beliefs? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Christian	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Catholic	2	
Muslim	3	
Sikh	4	
Jewish	5	
Buddhist	6	
Islamic	7	
Hindu	8	
Agnostic	9	
Atheist	10	
Other please state	11	
Prefer not to say	12	

Q17 Which of the following devices do you have access to?

Smartphone	1	IF 3 NOT CODED, RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND GO TO Q.18
Tablet	2	
PC / Laptop	3	
Internet TV / IPTV	4	
Cable TV	5	
Satellite TV	6	
None of these	7	

MINI-GROUPS, FOCUS GROUPS, IDIS

- Most participants ideally to have access to a computer but no firm quota

Q18 Do you have access to internet in your home via broadband?

Yes	1	IF 1 NOT CODED, RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND GO TO Q19
No	2	

MINI-GROUPS, FOCUS GROUPS, IDIS

- Most participants to ideally have access to broadband but no firm quota

Q19 Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. It is up to individuals to decide whether the programmes/shows they watch/listen to are suitable for themselves						
b. There should be tighter restrictions on the sort of programmes/shows that are shown/broadcast on television and radio						
c. The watershed is essential for maintaining standards and decency on television						
d. After the watershed all language is						

acceptable on television						
e. I think there is too much violence on television and on the radio						
f. I have never been offended by anything I have seen on television or heard on radio						

- RECRUIT A MIX OF POSITIVE (CODES 1-2) AND NEGATIVE (4-5) ANSWERS TO ALL STATEMENTS.
- FOCUS GROUPS, IDIS AND MINI-GROUPS TO CONTAIN A MIX OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Q20 Please choose one from the following statements about raising complaints [SINGLE CODE]

a. I have never complained to companies about goods/services /experiences	1	CONTINUE TO Q23
b. Occasionally I will communicate to companies to complain about goods/services /experiences, but only if things are particularly bad	2	CONTINUE TO Q21
c. I often communicate to companies when I am dissatisfied with goods/services /experiences	3	CONTINUE TO Q21

- RECRUIT A MIX

Q21 Have you ever submitted a complaint to Ofcom or a media company for anything related to TV or Radio?

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Q22
No	2	CONTINUE TO Q23

Q22 What was the complaint concerning?

Q23 Which of the following activities have you ever under taken on the internet?

	Yes	No
	1	2
	SEE NOTE BELOW	
a. Information (personal) – finding information for leisure time, looking at news websites or apps or adult-only websites, looking at websites for news about, or events in your local area or the local community		
b. Email - sending and receiving emails		
c. Information (work / college / school) – finding information for work/ job/ studies, doing an online course to achieve a qualification or looking at job opportunities		
d. Social Media - looking at social media sites or apps or sharing links to websites or online articles- perhaps on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit or LinkedIn		
e. Communications - using Instant Messaging or making or receiving telephone or video calls over the internet (e.g. Skype)		
f. Watching video clips – watching online or downloading short video clips such as music videos or comedy clips		
g. Music - listening to or downloading music online		
h. Watching TV content – watching online or downloading TV programmes or films		
i. Radio – listening to radio stations online		
j. Uploading/ adding content to the internet – setting up or maintaining a website or blog or uploading or sharing videos or photos online or contributed comments to a website or blog		

NO FIRM QUOTA, BUT MOST USERS IDEALLY SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE INTERNET TO LOG IN AND VIEW THE ONLINE CLIPS (i.e. CODED 1 FOR g, b, and a).

IDIS, FOCUS GROUPS, AND MINIGROUPS

- Max of 15 to require DVDs for pre-tasks as a result of low digital literacy
- Rest to fall out

AT END OF RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

RECRUITER SAY:

The group discussion / in-depth interview will take place on [DATE] at [TIME] and will take place at [VENUE]. It will last [TIME] hours.

Ahead of the group / IDI you will be required to watch / listen to a few video / radio clips and answer some questions about them. This will take about 1 hour to complete. The clips will be available online. You will be given log in details to log in and complete this task 2-3 days before you go to the group / IDI.

If you are unable to access the internet to complete the task, you can be sent a DVD of the clips and a paper questionnaire to fill out ahead of the group / interview.

Q24 Will you be able to complete the task online?

Yes I can.	1	CONTINUE
No I can't. I want to complete this task via DVD and paper	2	CONTINUE TO Q25

Q25 Please confirm one of the following:

I can play the DVD with sound. I have a registered postal address which the DVD and paper questionnaire can be posted to	1	CONTINUE
I cannot play a DVD or I do not have a registered postal address	2	THANK AND CLOSE

You will receive £ [INCENTIVE AMOUNT] as a token of our appreciation of your time and help.

The group discussion / in-depth interview will be audio-taped / videotaped / observed by someone with an interest in this research – for example from the company for whom it is being conducted / taking place in a viewing facility, where one or more people who have an interest in this research will be able to see you and hear what you say.

Thank you very much for your help with this study. I will contact you a day or 2 before the research starts to confirm that you are still able to attend. Please note that you will be unable to attend the group / in-depth / online community unless this re-screening has occurred and once this has been done you will be sent your invitation and if appropriate your homework task. Your details will be held electronically for internal administration purposes.

FINALLY:-

Q26 Do you give permission for us to pass your name and telephone (mobile / landline) contact details onto the researcher in case they need to contact you in the event of non-arrival at the interview?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER:

I confirm that I have conducted this interview face to face/by telephone (DELETE WHERE APPROPRIATE) with the named person of the address attached and that I asked all the relevant questions fully and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specification and within the MRS Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Interviewer Signature:.....

Interviewer name (CAPS):.....

Date:.....

TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL PARTICIPANTS:

By agreeing to participate in this Ipsos MORI research on **offensive language** on behalf of **Ofcom**, I consent to being video and audio recorded during **a group discussion/in-depth interview and for my words to be quoted anonymously** and that these words and footage can be used for analysis and reporting purposes by Ipsos MORI and Ofcom, which will be used to inform a public report.

I understand that the research is anonymous, and that will not be identified by name in Ipsos MORI's findings.

Name (PRINT)……

Signed…… …

Date……

Telephone contact number……

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr)	
Full Name	
Address & Postcode	
Telephone no. (home)	
Mobile no.	
Email address	

BAME sample recruitment screener

Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is . . . from Ipsos MORI, the market research company. We are currently inviting some people to speak to us about their attitudes towards offensive language and gestures; I wonder if you could help me?

Before you agree to take part, we need to give you some information about the topic of the research. We are conducting this research on behalf of Ofcom, the communications regulator. Ofcom is responsible for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with a set of broadcasting standards, including rules on the use of offensive language and gesture. This research is designed to get an understanding of what members of the public feel is acceptable language and what is not acceptable on television and radio, in what context, and the reasons why people feel the way they do.

This research will require that you will assess a range of words in terms of their acceptability on television or radio. The words that will be shown and discussed relate to body parts, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental and physical conditions, race and religion, as well as more general language that might be considered offensive by some. We want to make sure you are aware of the material that will be discussed, and agree to take part on that basis.

The answers you give will form part of a market research study. They will be analysed along with those of many others and will never be linked back to you personally. All quotes will be anonymised. The results will be used for the purposes of this market research study, which will feed into a public report.

To say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer you <INSERT AMOUNT AND IF VOUCHER/CASH>.

We are looking for particular groups of people; therefore, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

Q1 Would you be interested in taking part?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK & CLOSE

Q2 Do you or any members of your immediate family work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity?

Journalism/the media	1	THANK & CLOSE
Advertising	2	
Public relations (PR)	3	
Market Research	4	
TV/Radio	5	
Central Government	6	
No, none of these	7	CONTINUE
Don't know	8	

Q3 Have you taken part in market research before?

No	1	GO TO Q.6
Yes	2	GO TO Q.4

Q4 How many focus groups or online discussions have you taken part in overall?

Less than 2	1	CONTINUE
3-5	2	CONTINUE
6+	3	THANK AND CLOSE

Q5 When was the last time you participated in activity for a market research company?

1-3 months	1	THANK & CLOSE
4-6 months	2	THANK & CLOSE
7-9 months	3	CONTINUE
10+ months	4	CONTINUE

Q6 CODE SEX (DO NOT ASK)

Male	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS: Leicester: recruit 10 males London: recruit 10 females
Female	2	

Q7 What type of television do you have at home?

Free to view (e.g. Freeview / Freesat or other free view method) - (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, Five and a range of digital channels including BBC Three, BBC Four, E4 etc.) - Includes TV with digital TV / internet built in	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Pay- Cable (Virgin)	2	
Pay TV - Sky or BT	3	
No TV at home	4	THANK AND CLOSE

Q8 How often do you...

e) Watch television at home?

f) Listen to the radio?

	Every day	Most days	Once a week	Less than once a week	Never
	1	2	3	4	5
TV	RECORD				THANK AND CLOSE
Radio	RECORD				

Q9. Which of these best describes your household? SINGLE CODE ONLY. TAKE AGE OF OLDEST CHILD

Parents of children under 3	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS Leicester: recruit 10 with Children 0-12 London: recruit 10 with Children 13-17
Parents of child 3 -6 years old	2	
Parents of child 7-12 years old	3	
Parents of child 13-15 years old	4	
Parents of child 16-17 years old	5	
Empty nesters (Parents whose children have all left home)	6	THANK AND CLOSE
Household of adults (all 18 or over); never had children	7	
Not stated	8	

Q10 WRITE IN & CODE EXACT AGE

Exact Age ☐☐

18-24	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS Leicester: recruit 10 aged 20-45 London: recruit 10 aged 30-55
25-34	2	
35-44	3	
45-54	4	
55-74	5	
75-80	6	
81+	7	THANK AND CLOSE

IDIs, MINI GROUPS, FOCUS GROUPS

- Recruit to spec

Q11 Which of these best describes your current situation?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Working - Full-time (30+ hrs)	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Working - Part-time (9-29 hrs)	2	
Unemployed	3	
Retired (Please list previous occupation)	4	
Homemaker	5	
Student	6	
Other (please state)	7	

MINIGROUPS AND FOCUS GROUPS

- A mix of codes in each group where relevant

IDIS

- To fall out

Q12 Occupation of chief income earner

Position/rank/grade	
Industry/type of company	
Quals/degree/apprenticeship	
Number of staff responsible for	

PROBE FULLY AND CODE SOCIOECONOMIC GROUP FROM ABOVE:

A/B	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
C1	2	
C2	3	
D/E	4	

Q13 How would you describe the area in which you live?

Rural	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Urban	2	
Suburban	3	

Q14 Which of the following ethnicities do you feel describes you best? SINGLE CODE ONLY

White	British	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS Leicester: recruit 10 Pakistani London: recruit 10 Mixed Black African / Black Caribbean
	Irish	2	CLOSE
	Any other white background	3	
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	4	
	White and Asian	5	
	Any other mixed background	6	
Asian or Asian British	Indian	7	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS Leicester: recruit 10 Pakistani
	Pakistani	8	
	Bangladeshi	9	
	Any other Asian background	10	
Black or Black British	Caribbean	11	RECRUIT TO QUOTAS Leicester: recruit 10 Black African / Black Caribbean
	African	12	
	Any other Black background	13	
Chinese or Other Ethnic group	Chinese	14	CLOSE
	Any other background	15	

Q15 Have you been resident in the UK for longer than 12 months? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

Q16 Which of the following best describes your religious beliefs? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Christian	1	RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE
Catholic	2	
Muslim	3	
Sikh	4	
Jewish	5	
Buddhist	6	
Islamic	7	
Hindu	8	
Agnostic	9	
Atheist	10	
Other please state	11	
Prefer not to say	12	

Q17 Which of the following devices do you have access to?

Smartphone	1	IF 3 *NOT CODED*, RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND GO TO Q.19
Tablet	2	
PC / Laptop	3	
Internet TV / IPTV	4	
Cable TV	5	
Satellite TV	6	
None of these	7	

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO **DID NOT** SELECTED 3 AT Q17

Q18 Do you have access to internet in your home via broadband?

Yes	1	IF 1 NOT CODED, RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND GO TO Q19
No	2	

Q19 Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. It is up to individuals to decide whether the programmes/shows they watch/listen to are suitable for themselves						
b. There should be tighter restrictions on the sort of programmes/shows that are shown/broadcast on television and radio						
c. The watershed is essential for maintaining standards and decency on television						
d. After the watershed all language is acceptable on television						
e. I think there is too much violence on television and on the radio						
f. I have never been offended by anything I have seen on television or heard on radio						

RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE

Q20 Please choose one from the following statements about raising complaints [SINGLE CODE]

a. I have never complained to companies about goods/services /experiences	1	CONTINUE TO Q23
b. Occasionally I will communicate to companies to complain about goods/services /experiences, but only if things are particularly bad	2	CONTINUE TO Q21
c. I often communicate to companies when I am dissatisfied with goods/services /experiences	3	CONTINUE TO Q21

RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE

ASK ONLY THOSE WHO SELECTED Q20 A

Q21 Have you ever submitted a complaint to Ofcom or a media company for anything related to TV or Radio?

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Q22
No	2	CONTINUE TO Q23

Q22 What was the complaint concerning?

Q23 Which of the following activities have you ever under taken on the internet?

	Yes	No
	1	2
	SEE NOTE BELOW	
a. Information (personal) – finding information for leisure time, looking at news websites or apps or adult-only websites, looking at websites for news about, or events in your local area b. or the local community		
c. Email - sending and receiving emails		
d. Information (work / college / school) – finding information for work/ job/ studies, doing an online course to achieve a qualification or looking at job opportunities		
e. Social Media - looking at social media sites or apps or sharing links to websites or online articles- perhaps on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit or LinkedIn		
f. Communications - using Instant Messaging or making or receiving telephone or video calls over the internet (e.g. Skype)		
g. Watching video clips – watching online or downloading short video clips such as music videos or comedy clips		
h. Music - listening to or downloading music online		
i. Watching TV content – watching online or downloading TV programmes or films		
j. Radio – listening to radio stations online		
k. Uploading/ adding content to the internet – setting up or maintaining a website or blog or uploading or sharing videos or photos online or contributed comments to a website or blog		

RECORD FOR PROFILE SHEET AND CONTINUE

AT END OF RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

RECRUITER SAY:

The group discussion / in-depth interview will take place on 23rd February at 6.30pm and will take place at [VENUE]. It will last 3 hours.

Ahead of the group you will be required to watch / listen to a few video / radio clips and answer some questions about them. This will take about 1 hour to complete. The clips will be available online. You will be given log in details to log in and complete this task 2-3 days before you go to the group.

If you are unable to access the internet to complete the task, you can be sent a DVD of the clips and a paper questionnaire to fill out ahead of the group / interview.

Q24 Will you be able to complete the task online?

Yes I can.	1	CONTINUE
No I can't. I want to complete this task via DVD and paper	2	CONTINUE TO Q25

Q25 Please confirm one of the following:

I can play the DVD with sound. I have a registered postal address which the DVD and paper questionnaire can be posted to	1	CONTINUE
I cannot play a DVD or I do not have a registered postal address	2	THANK AND CLOSE

You will receive [INCENTIVE] as a token of our appreciation of your time and help.

The group discussion will be videotaped and observed by someone with an interest in this research – for example taking place in a viewing facility, where one or more people who have an interest in this research will be able to see you and hear what you say.

Thank you very much for your help with this study. I will contact you a day or 2 before the research starts to confirm that you are still able to attend. Please note that you will be unable to attend the group / in-depth / online community unless this re-screening has occurred and once this has been done you will be sent your invitation and if appropriate your homework task. Your details will be held electronically for internal administration purposes.

FINALLY:

Q26 Do you give permission for us to pass your name and telephone (mobile / landline) contact details onto the researcher in case they need to contact you in the event of non-arrival at the interview?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER:

I confirm that I have conducted this interview **face to face/by telephone (DELETE WHERE APPROPRIATE)** with the named person of the address attached and that I asked all the relevant questions fully and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specification and within the MRS Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Interviewer Signature:……

Interviewer name (CAPS):……

Date:……

TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL PARTICIPANTS:

By agreeing to participate in this Ipsos MORI research on **offensive language** on behalf of **Ofcom**, I consent to being video and audio recorded during **a group discussion/in-depth interview and for my words to be quoted anonymously** and that these words and footage can be used for analysis and reporting purposes by Ipsos MORI and Ofcom, which will be used to inform a public report.

I understand that the research is anonymous, and that will not be identified by name in Ipsos MORI's findings.

Name (PRINT)……

Signed…… …

Date……

Telephone contact number……

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr)	
Full Name	
Address & Postcode	
Telephone no. (home)	
Mobile no.	
Email address	

Appendix C: Survey and tasks for online participants

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

This research is on behalf of Ofcom. Ofcom is the organisation that regulates television, radio, telecommunications and post in the UK. Within broadcasting, Ofcom has a responsibility for ensuring that television and radio programmes comply with certain standards, including rules on the use of offensive words and gestures. Ofcom wants to understand what people think about the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. Over the next 5 days you will be asked for your views on different words, phrases and gestures. On days 6-7 you will then take part in an online discussion on these words and gestures on a different online platform. A full overview of the research has been sent to your email address that you supplied for this research.

Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints from the general public about the use of potentially offensive language (or gestures) on television and radio.

Each day you will be shown 30 words/gestures. You will be asked a small set of questions relating to the acceptability on television and radio of the words / gestures you know. This should take you between 10-15 minutes per day.

You'll be asked to consider each word / gesture separately. Please take your time over each word / gesture and reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and associations and how these inform your views on acceptability, both before and after the 9pm watershed.

Questions for Survey

Variable name: Word_rec
ASK ALL 1. To what extent are you familiar with these words / gestures?
SINGLE CODE PER ROW
DOWN THE SIDE • LIST ALL 30 WORDS PER DAY. RANDOMISE WORD ORDER ACROSS DAYS
ACROSS THE TOP 1. Seen/heard before today and familiar with it/know what it means 2. Seen/heard before today but not very familiar with it/don't really know what it means 3. Never seen or heard before today

Variable name: Person_accept
ASK FOR EACH WORD CODED 1 OR 2 IN Q1 2. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate this word or gesture? Please think about its acceptability on the TV or radio…
SHOW EACH WORD INDIVIDUALLY
RANDOMISE WORD ORDER
SINGLE CODE
(a)…for broadcast before the watershed (before 9pm) (b)…for broadcast after the watershed (after 9pm)

Discussion guide for reflective discussion

Hello,

Thank you for joining and welcome. We are really looking forward to hearing from you.

We are [INSERT MODERATORS]. We work for Ipsos MORI, which is an independent research agency. We're on hand to explain anything you're not sure about as well as to facilitate discussion. We look forward to hearing from you and chatting about your thoughts, feelings and experiences about offensive language and gestures on TV and radio.

These next two days are very important. They are about detail and depth. Please give as much detail as possible in your answers – examples, explanations, and full descriptions – as they really help us understand your thoughts and feelings better. In this way, we can give Ofcom the detail they need when thinking about acceptable / unacceptable language and gesture on TV and radio, and the factors that make that language or gesture more or less acceptable.

You will need to spend a minimum of 30 minutes per day responding to the task and completing it satisfactorily to receive your incentive. You might want to 'bookmark' this page so you can come back to it over the course of the community. You can click the 'Get Started' button to create your login account with your email address. Please familiarise yourself with the platform and look out for any activities on your home page.

Please note that by signing into the community you are giving your consent for anything you post or comment on being quoted anonymously and used for research purposes. Your insights will be used to inform a publicly available report for Ofcom.

If you have a question about the research (e.g. the incentives or you don't understand a task and would like clarification), please message us through this platform or contact:

Thank you once again for your continued participation and we value your insights.

Online activities

Day 1

[Individual blog]

Greetings! Welcome to the first task.

Today is the first day of discussion about acceptability of language and gestures on television and radio.

Whereas the previous 5 days we were just looking at what you found acceptable or unacceptable, we now want to find out as much as possible about why you found certain words / gestures more or less acceptable or unacceptable.

As a reminder, we have attached a list of all the words. Do feel free to add your own words not on the list when answering the questions.

- Thinking about words / gestures you found mostly acceptable on TV and radio in the 5-day survey, why do you feel they are mostly acceptable? Are some words / gestures milder than others? Why / why not?
- Thinking about words / gestures that you found mostly unacceptable on TV and radio in the 5-day survey, why do you feel they are mostly unacceptable? Are they all equally unacceptable or are there differences (and if so, are they big or small differences)?
- What factors / reasons separate mostly acceptable from mostly unacceptable language or gestures broadcast on TV or radio for you?
- Were there any words / gestures you were unsure about in terms of their unacceptability? What were some of your considerations, feelings, and thoughts around these types of words?
- Think about some of the following to get you started in answering the main questions:
- Were certain types or groupings of words / gestures more / less acceptable than others?
- What sorts of people would find certain language or gesture more or less acceptable on TV/radio? What sorts of people would find certain language or gesture more or less unacceptable?
- Which situational or contextual factors might affect the acceptability of the broadcast of particular language / gestures?

Please give as many real-life examples and as much detail for your reasons as possible to help make your points. The more insights you give the more it will help both us and Ofcom understand your viewpoints.

MODERATOR TO PROBE FOR CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS THROUGHOUT

- Intent of words used (e.g. accidental use vs. deliberate abuse/humiliation)
- Who the words are directed against (e.g. against a child, vulnerable person or minority group)
- Frequency of words
- Possible justification e.g. was the usage gratuitous?
- Genre of programme – e.g. the role of humour
- Children watching / listening and considerations of the watershed / time of radio broadcast
- Audience expectations of a programme, broadcaster or time of broadcast

Day 2

Task 1 [Individual blog]

Greetings!

Thanks for all your posts yesterday; it was really interesting to hear more about your opinions on levels of acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio, and why.

We are going to continue this discussion today but this time we would like you to think about levels of acceptability of language or gesture we have been discussing but particularly related to whether it is broadcast before, close to (e.g. 8.45pm or 9.15pm), or generally after the 9pm broadcasting watershed.

For reference, we have attached a list of all the words we are interested in discussing.

- What do you feel is the role of the watershed at 9pm on television as regards offensive language?
- Which types of words / gestures (giving specific examples where possible) do you feel are acceptable / unacceptable before the watershed at 9pm on television?
- Thinking again about the factors which determine levels of acceptability for you, what makes you say that? What are the main considerations?
- Which types of words /gestures (giving specific examples where possible) do you feel are acceptable / unacceptable after the watershed?
- Thinking again about the factors which determine levels of acceptability for you, what makes you say that? What are the main considerations?
- Thinking about the types of words /gestures you would consider generally unacceptable before the watershed, to what extent does this consideration change if they appear close to the watershed (either just before or after)?
- Does being close to the watershed impact your perception of the acceptability of a word or gesture, or not?
- If so, what is it about these words in particular that would make them acceptable close to the watershed compared to others?

Please give as many real-life examples and as much detail for you reasons as possible to help make your points.

MODERATOR TO PROBE FOR CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS THROUGHOUT

- Intent of words used (e.g. accidental use vs. deliberate abuse/humiliation)
- Who the words are directed against (e.g. against a child, vulnerable person or minority group)
- Frequency of words
- Possible justification e.g. was the usage gratuitous?
- Genre of programme – e.g. the role of humour
- Children watching / listening and considerations of the watershed / time of radio broadcast
- Audience expectations of a programme, broadcaster or time of broadcast

Task 2: Group discussion [sequenced from task 1]

Thank you for completing all the tasks. This final task is a group discussion. Up until now you have been engaging individually with Ipsos moderators. This last task gives you an opportunity to discuss these issues with other people taking part in the research. Please respond to each other and compare and contrast your thoughts, feelings, and opinions – but please be polite and respectful of differing opinions / experiences.

We would like you to consider the following general questions, intended to encourage you to reflect on many of the issues brought up over the last 7 days.

- What are your overall reflections about what factors make language or gestures on TV and radio more or less acceptable / unacceptable? Are some more important or less than others? If so, which?
- What, if any, do you feel is the role of the following aspects in your thinking about acceptability of language or gestures on TV or radio?
- The way in which the language or gestures are used. For example, does it makes a difference if it is accidental compared with a deliberate use of language / gesture?
- The extent to which types of language / gestures 'fit' with a certain programme or type of programme e.g. comedy, drama, news.
- The intent behind the use of particular language or gestures e.g. humour compared to humiliation of a vulnerable individual?
- Time of broadcast / presence of under 18s / profile of likely audience of a programme. Does who is watching / listening matter?
- The channel of broadcast where you see / hear the language / gesture. Are there different expectations for different channels?
- The role of pre-programme warnings before offensive language included in a pre-recorded programme. Do warnings make a difference? Is the effect of a warning the same before and after the watershed (e.g. because of the argument that children watching unsupervised would ignore warnings)?
- The role of apologies e.g. (a) broadcast after the use of offensive language in live programmes, or (b) broadcast after offensive language mistakenly included in a pre-recorded programme. Do such apologies make a difference? What factors might make an apology more or less effective e.g. how soon it was broadcast after the use of the inappropriate language? Its tone? How often it was made?

Are there any words/gestures that we have not spoken about that you may find unacceptable for TV or radio?

Thank you!

Appendix D: Pre-task for face to face sample

Survey introduction

[NOTE: This survey was hosted on Survey Monkey which is an online survey platform. The video clips were 'privately' hosted on Vimeo and participants saw the embedded videos within the survey.]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

This is the pre-task stage of the research to be completed before the focus groups and should take you between 30-60 minutes to complete. In the survey you will be asked for your views on acceptability of language and a few gestures on TV and radio, as well as watch/listen to and answer questions on a selection of TV and radio clips.

Please make sure you complete this survey as it will form part of what we discuss in the focus groups and will ensure you receive your full incentive.

Please take your time over each question and clip to reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and associations and how these inform your views on acceptability.

If you have any questions, please contact: [INSERT CONTACT DETAILS]

General questions

You will now be shown a selection of clips for you to watch or listen to. After this, please answer two questions about the clip. Please provide as much detail as possible in your answers as this helps us understand your views.

Clip questions

[Participants shown clips in random order. Each clip had a title page showing the name of the show, channel, the date and time of broadcast. Basic information about each show was also presented to participants prior to each clip.]

Example:

Clip 1	
Title	Title, channel, date, time
Description	

1) On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally unacceptable and 10 is totally acceptable, how would you rate the language (or in a couple of cases) gestures in this clip? Please think about acceptability on the TV or radio.

2) Based on your rating in the previous question, why do you feel that way? Please think about the reasons why you feel the language / gesture is acceptable / unacceptable. Please answer in full and consider aspects such as the time of broadcast, intent, expectations of a channel or programme, the likely audience, the frequency of usage, and other factors important for you.

List of clips

Clip 1	
Title	*Fawlty Towers*, GOLD, Tuesday 21st April 2015 , 9.20pm
Description	*Fawlty Towers* is a BBC television sitcom that was first broadcast on BBC2 in 1975 and 1979.

Clip 2	
Title	*Emmerdale*, ITV, Friday 22nd May 2015, 7pm
Description	*Emmerdale* is a long-running British soap opera set in Emmerdale, a fictional village in the Yorkshire Dales. Emmerdale Farm was first broadcast on 16 October 1972. Episodes air on ITV weekday evenings at 7pm, with a second Thursday episode at 8pm.

Clip 3	
Title	*Dog and Beth: On the Hunt*, CBS Reality, Friday 14th November 2013, 4pm
Description	*Dog and Beth: On the Hunt* is an American reality television series that focusses on a family who fly to various bail bondsmen businesses around the United States as they assist in apprehending criminals.

Clip 4	
Title	*Dermot Dances for Comic Relief*, BBC Red Button, Friday 13th March 2015, 1.20pm
Description	Dermot O'Leary danced non-stop for 24 hours to raise money for Red Nose Day 2015. He commenced the dance at 7.20pm on 12 March 2015, live during *The One Show* and finished at 7.20pm on Red Nose Day 2015 on 13 March 2015. The BBC Red Button service broadcast uninterrupted coverage of the event.

Clip 5	
Title	*Big Brother*, Channel 5, Saturday 7th August 2014, 12.15pm
Description	*Big Brother* is a reality TV programme. "Housemates" live together in a specially designed house where they are recorded by cameras and microphones at all times and they are not allowed any contact with the outside world. The housemates try to win a cash prize by avoiding eviction from the house.

Clip 6	
Title	*Peter Kay's Car Share*, BBC One, Friday 22nd May 2015, 9.30pm
Description	*Peter Kay's Car Share* is a British TV sitcom set around supermarket assistant manager John Redmond (Peter Kay) and promotions rep Kayleigh Kitson (Sian Gibson) and their participation in a company car share scheme.

Clip 7	
Title	*Don't Tell the Bride*, BBC Three, Tuesday 17th February 2015, 8.30pm
Description	Don't Tell the Bride is a British reality TV series that first aired on BBC Three on 8 November 2007. The show's format consists of a couple who are given £12,000 to spend on their wedding. However, they must spend three weeks apart without contact, and the bridegroom must organise every aspect of the event.

Clip 8	
Title	*Smokey and the Bandit*, ITV, Sunday 16th August 2015, 3pm

Description	*Smokey and the Bandit* is a 1977 film about a former thrill-seeking trucker's attempt to bootleg a truckload of beer to settle a bet, and a small town Texas sheriff's attempts to stop him on behalf of his jilted son.

Clip 9	
Title	*The Angels' Share*, Film 4, Wednesday 15th October 2014, 9pm
Description	*The Angels' Share* is a Scottish comedy-drama film directed by Ken Loach, released in June 2012. It tells the story of a young Glaswegian father who narrowly avoids a prison sentence. Determined to turn over a new leaf he and his friends, from the same community payback group, visit a whisky distillery and a route to a new life becomes apparent.

Clip 10	
Title	*Father Ted*, More4, Saturday 23rd May 2015, 8pm
Description	*Father Ted* is a British sitcom that follows the misadventures of three Roman Catholic priests who live in a parish on the fictional Craggy Island, located off the west coast of Ireland. It originally aired over three series from 21 April 1995 until 1 May 1998 on Channel 4.

Clip 11	
Title	*The X-Factor*, ITV, Sunday 18th November 2012, 8.50pm
Description	*The X Factor* is a British reality television music competition to find new singing talent, contested by aspiring singers drawn from public auditions.

Clip 12	
Title	*World's Craziest Fools*, BBC Three, Monday 30th June 2014, 7pm
Description	*World's Craziest Fools* is a comedy series in which the A-Team's Mr T tracks down the world's 'craziest fools': bad drivers, soldiers, brainless builders to silly sportsmen, bungling burglars to crazy cops. The show is a mix of clips, animation and comic phone calls.

Clip 13	
Title	*Live European Rugby Challenge Cup*, BT Sport 1, Saturday 17th January 2015, 3.15pm
Description	This is a live broadcast of a match from the European Rugby Challenge Cup.

Clip 14	
Title	*Strictly Come Dancing*, BBC One, Saturday 24th October 2015, 6.35pm
Description	*Strictly Come Dancing* is a British television show, featuring celebrities with professional dance partners competing in a Ballroom and Latin dance competition. The show has run on BBC One since 15 May 2004, primarily on Saturday evenings, often with a following Sunday night results show.

Clip 15	
Title	*Countdown to Christmas Trailer*, Comedy Central, Wednesday 24th December 2014, 9.30am
Description	The *Countdown to Christmas Trailer* is a trailer shown on Comedy Central detailing what will be on the channel on Christmas Eve and includes short clips from each show.

Radio clips

Clip 16	
Title	*The Official Kiss Top 40*, Kiss FM, Sunday 2nd November 2014, 5.45pm
Description	*The Official Kiss Top 40* is weekly countdown of the singles chart. Kiss FM plays hip hop, R&B, urban and electronic dance music

Clip 17	
Title	*Breakfast Show*, Kiss FM, Thursday 13th August 2015, 6.35am
Description	Kiss is a radio station that specialises in urban and dance music. The weekday breakfast show is presented by Rickie Haywood Williams, Melvin Odoom and Charlie Hedges between 6-9am. Kiss FM plays hip hop, R&B, urban and electronic dance music.

Clip 18	
Title	*Occupy The Airwaves*, Phonic FM, Saturday 25th January 2014, 2pm
Description	*Occupy The Airwaves* is a show broadcast three times a week on Phonic FM, a community radio station based in Exeter. Phonic FM's output is predominantly alternative, non-commercial music.

Clip 19	
Title	*Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell*, Radio 4, Saturday 15th August 2015, 2.30pm
Description	This is a biographical play about the life of infamous journalist and alcoholic Jeffrey Bernard. The play had a number of runs in the West End and starred various actors including Peter O'Toole and Tom Conti. This radio adaptation, broadcast during Radio 4's regular afternoon drama slot, stars John Hurt. Radio 4 broadcasts a variety of spoken-word programmes including news, drama, comedy, science and history.

Appendix E: Focus group, mini group and in-depth discussion guides

Focus group and mini-group discussion guide

	Time	Discussion area	Overview
A	20 mins	Introduction and warm-up	Introduce the research and do warm-up discussion with participants. Pre-task recap.
B	15 mins	General attitudes towards offensive language (and gestures) on television and radio. The nature and meaning of offence and acceptability.	Explore general attitudes and background issues about the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. Examine the idea of 'generally accepted standards'. Investigate spontaneous drivers of personal offence compared to offence on behalf of others relating to language and gestures on TV and radio.
C	35 mins	Word sort	Evaluate a selection of words and consider contextual factors that influence levels of acceptability pre / post and close to the watershed, or when children are listening for radio.
D	10 mins	Coffee break	Refresh participants
E	45 mins	Reviewing clips: language and gesture in context	Review video / radio clips to understand the contextual drivers of the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio.
F	30 mins	Scenario evaluation	Evaluate the acceptability of different hypothetical scenarios of language / gestures / contextual variables.
G	20 mins	Guidelines of acceptability of language and gestures	Draw out general guidelines on acceptability and offence relating to language / gestures on TV and radio.
H	5 mins	Wrap up	Any final questions.

A	Introduction
20 min	<u>Introduction and overview (5 min)</u> EXPLAIN • Moderator introduction • About Ipsos MORI – independent research company; MRS • People behind the glass or observing, audio and video recording • Confidentiality • Warning about potentially offensive language and gesture; feel free to take comfort breaks as required Today we're keen to understand your views on the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. We are going to talk for about 3 hours, and hopefully you'll find it an interesting and enjoyable experience. This research is on behalf of Ofcom. Ofcom ensures that television and radio programmes comply with standards, including rules on the use of offensive words and gestures. Ofcom wants to understand what people think about the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio.

	Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints from the general public about the use of potentially offensive language (or gestures) on television and radio. EXPLAIN GROUND RULES AND IMPORTANT BACKGROUND • I am an independent researcher and I have no connection to Ofcom or the subject we will be talking about. • Honesty is especially important for this research as we will sometimes be discussing issues that may make some uncomfortable. It is important to note that some people may find some language offensive while others may not. • It is fine to hold a different view. Some people may even enjoy strong language / gestures on television and not be offended. This is fine as we want to talk to a range of people with a range of opinions. • Let's air our views but also remember to be respectful of other viewpoints <u>Ice-breaker (15 min)</u> PARTICIPANTS TO BREAK INTO PAIRS TO DISCUSS. PARTNERS REPORT BACK ABOUT EACH OTHER TO THE GROUP • Let's break into pairs and introduce yourselves to each other. • Your partner will introduce you to the group. • Also, thinking back to the clips we asked you to watch, discuss the clips you felt strongly about and why PROBE AROUND KEY POINTS FROM PRE-TASK: • How did you find it overall? • Have any strong feelings? • Which clips did you find unacceptable and why? • And which clips did you find acceptable or unproblematic and why? o Is this the case for all viewers / listeners? Why / why not? o What would make the clips unacceptable? • What language / gestures / clips do you think a … would've felt strongly about and why? o Typical viewer o Older person o Parent with younger children o Parent with older children o Someone who is from a minority (ethnic / sexual / disabled)?
B	Explore general attitudes to offence and the nature and meaning of offence and acceptability
15 mins	• Explore general impressions of offensive language on TV and radio • Explore understanding of personal offence compared to offence on behalf of others <u>Group discussion: general understanding (15 min)</u> So let's start by having a general discussion about offensive language on TV and radio. • When thinking generally about offensive language / gestures, what comes to mind? o Associations or feelings?

	o Words? o Images? o Experiences? • Do offensive language and gestures on TV concern you? o Is it something you notice? o Is it something that you are concerned about hearing? Or your family hearing? o Before watching the clips can you remember that last time you heard swearing or offensive language on TV? o When was the last time something stood out/shocked you – why did it? • What about offensive language on radio? o Before listening to the clips can you remember that last time you heard swearing or offensive language on radio? o When was the last time something stood out/shocked you – why did it? • How do you think your personal views on language / gestures on TV / radio compare to people in general in the UK? • Many people use offensive language in real life in certain situations, to what extent should TV / radio content reflect real life? o PROBE: What would we lose if there was no strong language on TV and radio? • What, if any, limits are there to this? o Why/why not? o When/when not? o Expected vs. unexpected viewing or listening? o PROBE around contextual factors • Overall, when do you think it is ok to use potentially offensive language and gestures on TV / radio? o How do you think about this? How does it make you feel? o What are the main reasons that make something more acceptable or less acceptable? o MODERATOR RECORD REASONS ON FLIPCHART Explore different POVs: • If no parent groups probe for 'what would parents think' and vice versa • If older group probe for what would younger people think and vice versa • If male group probe for females' views etc., What about words that relate to specific communities? Are they ever acceptable? When/what context (PROBE fully for contextual factors). • Ethnicity • Religion • Sexuality • Other groups
C	Word sort
35 mins	Aim: Evaluate a selection of words and pictures of gestures and consider contextual factors that influence levels of acceptability pre / post and close to the watershed. • STIM – 2 DISCRETE SETS OF 50 WORDS • GROUP TO SPLT INTO 2 AND SORT THE WORDS INTO PILES • MODERATOR TO PROBE IN DEPTH AS CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ARISE • WORD SORTS TO BE FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION ABOUT THE REASONS WORDS HAVE BEEN SORTED IN THIS WAY, AND THE CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS OF ACCEPTABILITY

- MODERATORS ALSO TO CONCENTRATE ON ISSUES OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH VIEWING OR LISTENING OF STRONG LANGUAGE / GESTURES MAY BE UNEXPECTED COMPARED TO EXPECTED (E.G. FLICKING THROUGH CHANNELS OR CHILDEN WATCHING CONTENT BY THEMSELVES)

Part 1: word sort (25 min)

I'd like us to go into more detail on some specific words we're particularly interested in so we're going to do some word sorting exercises.

Ok great, in a minute we will break into two even groups. Each group will get a pile of 50 words and I want you to work together to sort the words into one of three piles according to how acceptable you think the word is for TV and radio. I'd like you to spend around 10 minutes on this sorting task. Please make sure to discuss your opinions with the other members in the group. I'll also be asking a few questions and taking notes for further discussion. After this word sort, we will join up again and discuss the reasons for our decisions.

The three piles I want you to sort the words into are:

- Acceptable pre-watershed (before 9pm)
    - This means that the words are usually acceptable before the watershed but depending on the context
- Only acceptable post-watershed
    - This means that the words are only ever acceptable post-watershed
- Never acceptable
    - This means the words are never acceptable 24 hours a day
- Don't recognise
- WRITE UP THE ABOVE CATEGORIES (ACCEPTABLE PRE-WATERSHED (BEFORE 9PM); ONLY ACCEPTABLE POST-WATERSHED; NEVER ACCEPTABLE; DON'T RECOGNISE) FOR PARTICIPANTS TO REFER TO
- GIVE THE GROUPS THEIR 50 WORDS TO SORT AND INSTRUCT THEM TO BEGIN AND REMIND THEM WHEN THEY HAVE 5 MINUTES LEFT
- OBSERVE THE SORTING PROCESS AND TAKE NOTES OF POINTS OF DISCUSSION AND AGREEMENT/DISAGREEMENT TO REFER TO IN THE DISCUSSION ONCE THE SORTING EXERCISE HAS FINISHED

Ok great, that was really interesting! It looks like you've got your three piles in order so now I'd like us to discuss these in more detail.

- MODERATOR TO WRITE KEY POINTS ON A FLIPCHART
- SPEND ABOUT 5 MINUTES ON AVERAGE DISCUSSING EACH WORD PILE
- MODERATOR TO DISCUSS EACH PILE ACROSS THE TWO GROUPS, STARTING FROM ACCEPTABLE BEFORE THE WATERSHED.
- So starting off with the 'Acceptable pre-watershed (before 9pm)' pile, please tell us which words you put in this pile? EACH GROUP TO GIVE A SUMMARY OF THEIR WORDS.
- Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here?
    - EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING
    - INCLUDE BOTH GROUPS FOR AGREEMENT / DISAGREEMENT
    - EXPLORE DISAGREEMENT WITHIN GROUPS

- Would there ever be any instances when any of those words may be moved to another pile? If so, when and why?
- MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES:
    - Intent
    - Frequency of use
    - Type of / broadcast / programme / genre
    - Time / watershed
    - Young people watching / listening
    - Channel / platform
    - Live vs. pre-recorded
    - Impact of mitigation – such as apologies / pre programme warnings / bleeping
    - Potential effect on audience who may accidentally come across it;
    - Any other material and relevant contextual factors
- What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference?
- Now moving onto the **'Only acceptable post-watershed'** pile, please tell us which words you put in this pile? EACH GROUP TO GIVE A SUMMARY OF THEIR WORDS.
- Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here?
    - EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING
    - INCLUDE BOTH GROUPS FOR AGREEMENT / DISAGREEMENT
    - EXPLORE DISAGREEMENT WITHIN GROUPS
- Would there ever be any instances when any of those words might be moved to another pile? If so, when and why?
- MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES.
- What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference?
- Now moving onto the **'Never acceptable'** pile, please tell us which words you put in this pile? EACH GROUP TO GIVE A SUMMARY OF THEIR WORDS.
- Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here?
    - EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING
    - INCLUDE BOTH GROUPS FOR AGREEMENT / DISAGREEMENT
    - EXPLORE DISAGREEMENT WITHIN GROUPS
- Would there ever be any instances when any of those words might be moved to another pile? If so, when and why?
- MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES.
- What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference?

MODERATOR TO TAKE A PHOTO OF THE WORD PILES THEN COLLECT THE WORD CARDS

Part 2: Summary themes (10 min)

Ok let's quickly summarise some key themes about how we make decisions about what is acceptable language / gestures on TV / radio.

	MODERATOR TO WRITE DOWN ON FLIPCHART
	
	• What are some of the main things you think about when deciding whether language / gesture is acceptable on TV / radio?
	  o What makes you feel strongly?
	• What would make words / gestures deemed unacceptable pre-watershed (9pm) become acceptable?
	  o PROBE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS BRIEFLY – ESPECIALLY TIME AND EXPECTATIONS.
	• What would a TV and radio look like with no bad language or gestures?
	  o What would be lost/ gained?
	  o Is this desirable or not?

D	Coffee break
10 min	Coffee break to refresh
E	Reviewing clips and thinking about acceptability

45 min	Aim: Review video / radio clips to understand the contextual drivers of the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio
	
	STIM – CLIPS (AND CLIP ROTATION SHEET)
	
	Now we are going to spend the next part of the evening reviewing some of the clips we asked you to watch before coming to the group. We are going to review the clips and have a discussion about your thoughts and feelings about the language / gestures in these clips. There is no right or wrong answer.
	
	• MODERATOR TO SHOW 10 CLIPS, MAKING SURE TO SHOW THREE FROM EACH OF THE CATEGORIES A, B, AND TWO EACH FROM CATEGORIES C, D (SEE THE CLIP ROTATION)
	
	DISCUSSION OF EACH CLIP ABOUT ACCEPTABILITY
	
	Before each clip:
	
	• REMIND PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THE TIME AND CHANNEL OF BROADCAST
	
	After each clip:
	
	• REINFORCE PERSONAL VS. GENERAL STANDARDS AS BASIS OF PARTICIPANTS' JUDGEMENTS
	• What did you think of this clip when you originally watched it?
	• What are your personal views on the acceptability of the language and gestures in this TV clip?
	• PROBE ON SPECIFIC LANGUAGE / GESTURES IN THE CLIP
	
	• USE PROBES AROUND CONTEXT THROUHGOUT
	  o Intent
	  o Frequency of use
	  o Type of / broadcast / programme / genre
	  o Time / watershed
	  o Young people likely to be watching / listening

	o Channel / platform o Live vs pre recorded o Impact of mitigation – such as apologies/pre programme warnings/bleeping o Potential effect on audience who might accidentally come across it o Expected vs. unexpected viewing / listening • To what extent does the language / gesture fit with your expectations of the show if you were watching / listening when it was originally broadcast? Does this play a role in your thinking or not? • To what extent does the watershed (9pm) play a role in your thinking about acceptability? • If you do not feel it is offensive, what would make it offensive and why? If you think it is offensive, what would make it less offensive and why? • Thinking about the viewing / listening public as a whole, would you say this language / gesture is generally acceptable to use on TV? Why/why not? How does this compare with your personal view? • What about among parents whose children may be watching?
F	Scenario evaluation
30 min	Aim: understand and evaluate decision making criteria for acceptability of language / gestures on TV / radio based on hypothetical scenarios • STIM – SCENARIOS • ACTIVITY INVOLVES PARTICIPANTS PLACING SCENARIOS ONTO A MATRIX OF ACCEPTABLE – NOT ACCEPTABLE AND PERSONAL OFFENCE – ON BEHALF OF OTHERS AND TALKING THROUGH THEIR REASONS. <u>Introduction</u> • DIFFERENT SCENARIOS AND HOW YOU THINK ABOUT ACCEPTABILITY OF LANGUAGE / GESTURES ON TV / RADIO • WORKING TOGETHER, PLACE SCENARIO ON THE MATRTIX OF ACCEPTABILITY • NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWER, BUT ABOUT DISCUSSION OF REASONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS • ALL WORKING AS A GROUP • USE SCENARIOS 1- 8 AND COMPLETE AS MANY AS YOU HAVE TIME • USE THE WALL OR THE FLOOR WITH POST-ITS For each scenario: • Thinking about this scenario on TV / radio, to what extent do you find the language / gestures acceptable? USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES • What is it about the scenario that makes it acceptable / unacceptable? • Is this scenario about personal offence or offence on behalf of others? • If we could change the scenario slightly, what would it make it less acceptable than it is now? • What would make it more acceptable than it is now?
G	Guidelines on offensive language / gestures

20 min	Aim: draw out general guidelines on acceptability relating to language / gestures on TV and radio STIM – ACTIVITY SHEET So far, we've sorted words, watched clips and discussed hypothetical scenarios about acceptable language / gestures on TV / radio. Now we are going to put ourselves in Ofcom's shoes in the Broadcast Standards team and think about important guidelines for regulating language / gestures on TV / radio. • MODERATOR TO BREAK GROUP INTO 2 Pretending that you work in Ofcom and you have to regularly decide on whether language / gestures on TV / radio is acceptable or not, write down some overall guidelines that you think would help you and your team at Ofcom think fairly and clearly about making your decisions. • What are the main rules or guidelines you would use? What makes sense to you and why? • Please remember that the guidelines do not have to satisfy everyone but they just need to be fair and clear. Also take into consideration that broadcasters would have to know about and then follow these guidelines. • What are the most important things to take into account and why? Think about things like time of broadcast, expectations of the programme or channel, the likely audience, intent, and other factors we have discussed today. • What would you say to someone who challenged your guidelines? <u>Group discussion (10 min)</u> • MODERATOR TO WRITE MAIN GUIDELINES ON A FLIP CHART AND PROBE FOR DETAIL • What is the most important thing about this guideline? • How would this guideline work in practice? • What would the UK public think? • What about the broadcasters? • Any disagreements? Could we modify this guideline somehow? o If so, what would make it better? ASK ALL • One thing before we wrap up. Ofcom's position is that three words are not allowed before the watershed. What do you think they are? MODERATOR TO GET RESPONSES • They are fuck, motherfucker, and cunt. Do you agree with this? • How does this compare to your views in the word sort? More conservative or less? • Would you put any more words into the not-allowed pre-watershed pile now that you know Ofcom's position?
H	Wrap Up
5 min	QUESTIONS FROM THE BACKROOM THANK AND CLOSE

In-depth interview discussion guide

	Time	Discussion area	Overview
A	10 mins	Introduction and warm-up	Introduce the research and do warm-up discussion with participants.
B	10 mins	General attitudes towards offensive language (and gestures) on television and radio. The nature and meaning of offence and acceptability.	Explore general attitudes and background issues about the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. Examine the idea of 'generally accepted standards'. Investigate spontaneous drivers of personal offence compared to offence on behalf of others relating to language and gestures on TV and radio.
C	20 mins	Word sort	Evaluate a selection of words and consider contextual factors that influence levels of acceptability pre / post and close to the watershed, or when children are listening for radio.
D	20 mins	Reviewing clips: language and gesture in context	Review video / radio clips to understand the contextual drivers of the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio.
E	15	Scenario evaluation	Evaluate the acceptability of different hypothetical scenarios of language / gestures / contextual variables.
F	10 mins	Summary discussion	Reflect on the word sort, clips m, scenario to draw our general conclusions on acceptability and offence relating to language/ gestures on TV and radio.
G	5 mins	Wrap up	Any final questions.

A	Introduction
10 min	<u>Introduction and overview</u> EXPLAIN • Moderator introduction • About Ipsos MORI – independent research company; MRS • Audio and video recording • Confidentiality • Warning about potentially offensive language and gesture; feel free to take comfort breaks as required Today we're keen to understand your views on the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. We are going to talk for about 90 minutes, and hopefully you'll find it an interesting and enjoyable experience. This research is on behalf of Ofcom. Ofcom ensures that television and radio programmes comply with standards, including rules on the use of offensive words and gestures. Ofcom wants to understand what people think about the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio. Ofcom will use this research to inform its decisions when it receives complaints from the general public about the use of potentially offensive language (or gestures) on television and radio.

	EXPLAIN GROUND RULES AND IMPORTANT BACKGROUND • I am an independent researcher and I have no connection to Ofcom or the subject we will be talking about. • Honesty is especially important for this research as we will sometimes be discussing issues that may make some uncomfortable. It is important to note that some people may find some language offensive while others may not. • It is fine to hold a different view. Some people may even enjoy strong language / gestures on television and not be offended. This is fine as we want to talk to a range of people with a range of opinions. <u>Introduction and pre-task review</u> • Please tell me a little bit about yourself. So you watched some clips before this interview. We are going to talk about how you felt about them. PROBE AROUND KEY POINTS FROM PRE-TASK: • How did you find it overall? • Have any strong feelings? • Which clips did you find unacceptable and why? • And which clips did you find acceptable or unproblematic and why? o Is this the case for all viewers / listeners? Why / why not? o What would make the clips unacceptable? • What language / gestures / clips do you think a … would've felt strongly about and why? o Typical viewer o Parent with younger children o Parent with older children o Someone who is from a minority (ethnic / sexual / disabled)?
B	Explore general attitudes to offence and the nature and meaning of offence and acceptability
10 mins	• Explore general impressions of offensive language on TV and radio • Explore understanding of personal offence compared to offence on behalf of others So let's start by having a general discussion about offensive language on TV and radio. • When thinking generally about offensive language / gestures, what comes to mind? o Associations or feelings? o Words? o Images? o Experiences? • Do offensive language and gestures on TV concern you? o Is it something you notice? o Is it something that you are concerned about hearing? Or your family hearing? o Before watching the clips can you remember that last time you heard swearing or offensive language on TV? o When was the last time something stood out/shocked you – why did it? • What about offensive language on radio?

	o Before listening to the clips can you remember that last time you heard swearing or offensive language on radio? o When was the last time something stood out/shocked you – why did it? • How do you think your personal views on language / gestures on TV / radio compare to people in general in the UK? • Many people use offensive language in real life in certain situations, to what extent should TV / radio content reflect real life? o PROBE: What would we lose if there was no strong language on TV and radio? • What, if any, limits are there to this? o Why/why not? o When/when not? o PROBE around contextual factors • Overall, when do you think it is ok to use potentially offensive language and gestures on TV / radio? o How do you think about this? How does it make you feel? o What are the main reasons that make something more acceptable or less acceptable? o MODERATOR RECORD REASONS ON FLIPCHART Explore different POVs: If older group, probe for what would younger people think and vice versa What about words which relate to specific communities? Are they ever acceptable? When/what context (PROBE fully for contextual factors) • Ethnicity • Religion • Sexuality • Other groups
C	Word sort
20 mins	Aim: Evaluate a selection of words and pictures of gestures and consider contextual factors that influence levels of acceptability pre / post and close to the watershed • STIM – SET OF WORDS o FOR OLDER IDIS, ROTATE WORD GROUPS A, B, C ACROSS SIX IDIs AS WELL AS ALL WORDS RELATING TO OLD PEOPLE • SORT THE WORDS INTO PILES • MODERATOR TO PROBE IN-DEPTH AS CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ARISE • WORD SORTS TO BE FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION ABOUT THE REASONS WORDS HAVE BEEN SORTED IN THIS WAY, AND THE CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS OF ACCEPTABILITY • MODERATORS ALSO TO CONCENTRATE ON ISSUES OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH VIEWING OR LISTENING OF STRONG LANGUAGE / GESTURES MAY BE UNEXPECTED COMPARED TO EXPECTED (E.G. FLICKING THROUGH CHANNELS OR CHILDEN WATCHING CONTENT BY THEMSELVES) <u>Part 1: word sort (10 min)</u> I'd like us to go into more detail on some specific words we're particularly interested in so we're going to do a word sorting exercises. I will give you a pile of 50 words and I want you to work together to sort the words into one of three piles according to how acceptable you think the word is for TV and radio. I'd like you to spend around 15 minutes

on this sorting task. I'll also be asking a few questions as we go along and then we will discuss the words in each pile.

The three piles I want you to sort the words into are:

- Acceptable pre-watershed (before 9pm)
    - This means that the words are usually acceptable before the watershed but depending on the context
- Only acceptable post-watershed
    - This means that the words are only ever acceptable post-watershed
- Never acceptable
    - This means the words are never acceptable 24 hours a day
- Don't recognise
- WRITE UP THE ABOVE CATEGORIES (ACCEPTABLE PRE-WATERSHED (BEFORE 9PM); ONLY ACCEPTABLE POST-WATERSHED; NEVER ACCEPTABLE; DON'T RECOGNISE) FOR PARTICIPANTS TO REFER TO
- GIVE THE PARTICIPANT THEIR 50 WORDS TO SORT AND INSTRUCT THEM TO BEGIN AND REMIND THEM WHEN THEY HAVE 5 MINUTES LEFT
- OBSERVE THE SORTING PROCESS AND TAKE NOTES OF POINTS OF DISCUSSION

Ok great, that was really interesting! It looks like you've got your 3 piles in order so now I'd like us to discuss these in more detail.

- SPEND ABOUT 5 MINUTES ON AVERAGE DISCUSSING EACH WORD PILE
- MODERATOR TO DISCUSS EACH PILE, STARTING FROM ACCEPTABLE BEFORE THE WATERSHED.
- So starting off with the **'Acceptable pre-watershed (before 9pm)'** pile, please tell me which words you put in this pile.
- Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here?
    - EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING
- Would there ever be any instances when any of those words may be moved to another pile? If so, when and why?
- MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES:
    - Intent
    - Frequency of use
    - Type of / broadcast / programme / genre
    - Time / watershed
    - Young people watching / listening
    - Channel / platform
    - Live vs pre recorded
    - Impact of mitigation – such as apologies / pre programme warnings / bleeping
    - Potential effect on audience who may accidentally come across it
    - Any other material and relevant contextual factors
- What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference?
- Now moving onto the **'Only acceptable post-watershed'** pile, please tell me which words you put in this pile?
- Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here?

	o EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING • Would there ever be any instances when any of those words may be moved to another pile? If so, when and why? • MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES. • What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference? • Now moving onto the **'Never acceptable'** pile, please tell me which words you put in this pile? • Now, thinking about the words in this pile as a whole, what do these words have in common that made you put them in this pile? Why did you put them here? o EXPLORE DETAIL FOR SOME WORDS BUT MORE IMPORTANT TO GET A SENSE OF THE GENERAL REASONING • Would there ever be any instances when any of those words may be moved to another pile? If so, when and why? • MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY AREAS OF INTEREST AND IF THESE WOULD CHANGE ACCEPTABILITY. USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES. • What about if this word was fairly close to the watershed cut off of 9pm, would this make a difference? <u>MODERATOR TO TAKE A PHOTO OF THE WORD PILES THEN COLLECT THE WORD CARDS</u> <u>Part 2: Summary themes (10 min)</u> Ok, let's quickly summarise some key themes about how we make decisions about what is acceptable language / gestures on TV / radio. • What are some of the main things you think about when deciding whether language / gesture is acceptable on TV / radio? o What makes you feel strongly? • What would make words / gestures deemed unacceptable pre-watershed (9pm) become acceptable? o PROBE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS BRIEFLY – ESPECIALLY TIME AND EXPECTATIONS. • What would a TV and radio look like with no bad language or gestures? o What would be lost/ gained? o Is this desirable or not?
D	Reviewing clips and thinking about acceptability
20 min	**Aim: Review video / radio clips to understand the contextual drivers of the acceptability of language and gestures on TV and radio** STIM – CLIPS Now we are going to spend the next part of our discussion reviewing some of the clips we asked you to watch. We are going to review the clips and have a discussion about your thoughts and feelings about the language / gestures in these clips. There is no right or wrong answer. • MODERATOR TO SHOW 5 CLIPS (Fawlty Towers, Peter Kay's Car share, Don't tell the bride, Live European rugby and Occupy the Airwaves) • DISCUSSION OF EACH CLIP ABOUT ACCEPTABILITY *<u>Before each clip</u>:*

	• REMIND PARTICIPANT ABOUT THE TIME AND CHANNEL OF BROADCAST *After each clip:* • REINFORCE PERSONAL VS. GENERAL STANDARDS AS BASIS OF PARTICIPANT'S JUDGEMENTS • What did you think of this clip when you originally watched it? • What are your personal views on the acceptability of the language and gestures in this TV clip? • PROBE ON SPECIFIC LANGUAGE / GESTURES IN THE CLIP • USE PROBES AROUND CONTEXT THROUHGOUT o Intent o Frequency of use o Type of / broadcast / programme / genre o Time / watershed o Young people likely to be watching / listening o Channel / platform o Live vs pre recorded o Impact of mitigation – such as apologies / pre programme warnings / bleeping o Potential effect on audience who may accidentally come across it o Expected vs. unexpected viewing / listening • To what extent does the language / gesture fit with your expectations of the show if you were watching / listening when it was originally broadcast? Does this play a role in your thinking or not? • To what extent does the watershed (9pm) play a role in your thinking about acceptability? • If you do not feel it is offensive, what would make it offensive and why? If you think it is offensive, what would make it less offensive and why? • Thinking about the viewing / listening public as a whole, would you say this language / gesture is generally acceptable to use on TV? Why / why not? How does this compare with your personal view? • What about among parents whose children may be watching?
E	Scenario evaluation
15 mins	Aim: understand and evaluate decision making criteria for acceptability of language / gestures on TV / radio based on hypothetical scenarios • STIM – SCENARIOS. TRY AND GET THROUGH AS MANY AS YOU CAN. DO IN RANDOM ORDER. • ACTIVITY INVOLVES PARTICIPANT PLACING SCENARIOS ONTO A MATRIX OF ACCEPTABLE – NOT ACCEPTABLE AND PERSONAL OFFENCE – ON BEHALF OF OTHERS AND TALKING THROUGH THEIR REASONS. Introduction • DIFFERENT SCENARIOS AND HOW YOU THINK ABOUT ACCEPTABILITY OF LANGUAGE / GESTURES ON TV / RADIO • PLACE SCENARIO ON THE MATRTIX OF ACCEPTABILITY • NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWER, BUT ABOUT DISCUSSION OF REASONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

	For each scenario: • Thinking about this scenario on TV / radio, to what extent do you find the language / gestures acceptable? USE CONTEXTUAL PROBES • What is it about the scenario that makes it acceptable / unacceptable? • Is this scenario about personal offence or offence on behalf of others? • If we could change the scenario slightly, what would make it less acceptable than it is now? • What would make it more acceptable than it is now?
F	Summary discussion
10 min	Aim: draw out summary reflections on acceptability relating to language / gestures on TV and radio So far, we've sorted words, watched clips and discussed your views on acceptable language / gestures on TV / radio. • Thinking back over our chat, how would you describe your views about offensive language on TV and radio? • What are the main things that make words / gestures offensive for you? What are the main things to think about? • For you, what generally separates acceptable from unacceptable language on TV and radio? • If you can put yourself in Ofcom's shoes, and remember that they decide on complaints, what are two or three things you feel should guide their thinking about language / gestures on TV and radio? • What would you say to someone who wasn't offended by the same language that you may feel is offensive? • One thing before we wrap up. Ofcom's position is that three words are not allowed before the watershed. What do you think they are? MODERATOR TO GET RESPONSES • They are fuck, motherfucker, and cunt. Do you agree with this? • How does this compare to your views in the word sort? More conservative or less? • Would you put any more words into the 'not allowed pre-watershed' pile now that you know Ofcom's position?
F	Wrap Up
5 min	• Anything you would like to add? • Any questions? THANK AND CLOSE

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