

APPENDIX B



BBC Trust – Nations' Impartiality Review

Executive Summary - March 2008



Prepared for:

BBC Trust

Prepared by:

BMRB Media

Telephone: 020 8433 4416/ 020 8433 4068

Email: matthew.littlestone@bmrB.co.uk / trevor.vagg@bmrB.co.uk

Part of BMRB Limited (British Market Research Bureau)

BMRB/45106258

BMRB is ISO9001 and BS7911:2003 accredited, and is working to the requirements of ISO20252 the international market research quality standard.

Copyright: survey findings and deliverables are normally intended for use within the Client's organisation or its consultants and other associate organisations such as advertising agencies. Should the Client intend wider circulation of the survey findings and deliverables, the Client should inform BMRB prior to such disclosure and agree the form and content with BMRB. The client should acknowledge BMRB as the source of the information with wording acceptable to BMRB.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	BACKGROUND.....	2
1.2	OBJECTIVES.....	2
2	METHODOLOGY	2
2.1	THE SAMPLE	2
2.2	THE QUESTIONNAIRE	3
2.3	CLASSIFICATIONS	4
3	KNOWLEDGE OF DEVOLVED NATIONS POLICIES.....	5
3.1	NHS PRESCRIPTIONS	5
3.2	SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILY	9
3.3	REGULATION OF TELEVISION AND RADIO	14
3.4	INTEREST IN OTHER NATIONS	17
3.5	SUMMARY	18
4	RELEVANCE/BALANCE/ACCURACY	19
4.1	RELEVANCE AND BALANCE	19
4.2	ACCURACY.....	25
4.3	SUMMARY	31
5	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	32

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The BBC Trust is currently monitoring the impartiality of BBC output in terms of coverage of the four nations in network programmes and online news. This has arisen as a result of feedback from public consultations, research of audiences and concerns raised by the Audience Council. The Audience Council, whose role is to ensure licence fee payers' views are considered by the BBC Trust, have previously raised the issue of the lack of attention paid in the news and current affairs coverage to the devolved nations. The review, carried out by Professor Anthony King, will investigate whether the BBC adequately and appropriately covers news of the devolved nations and their policies, as well as the UK population's reaction to them.

Feeding into the review, BMRB Media undertook audience research on 2,000 adults to consider these issues and this report summarises the findings of this quantitative research.

1.2 Objectives

The BBC Trust wants to assess the impartiality of BBC's factual news coverage of the four nations of the UK on radio, television and online. The aim of the study, in assessing the BBC's coverage, is to consider the audience's perspective on the key issues of

- Knowledge
- Relevance
- Balance
- Accuracy

2 Methodology

2,000 interviews were conducted by Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) among UK adults aged 16 and over. Telephone interviewing was chosen as it was the most cost effective and time efficient.

2.1 The sample

All adults aged 16 and over who reside in the UK were eligible to take part in the survey. Quotas were set on regions, and there were 500 interviews conducted in each of the four nations, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Weighting was placed on nation, age, sex and social grade to ensure the sample was nationally representative of the UK.

Table 1; Sample proportions for weighted variables

Total Respondents (N=2000)	
	Weighted(%)
Social grade	
AB	25.2
C1	28.1
C2	20.7
DE	25.0
Refused	1.4
Age groups	
16-24	15.0
25 – 34	16.0
35 – 44	19.0
45 – 54	16.0
55+	14.0

Weighted (%)	London	Rest of England	Scotland	NI	Wales	
Men	6.0	34.2	4.0	1.4	2.4	48.0
Women	6.0	37.3	4.5	1.6	2.6	52.0
	12.0	71.5	8.5	3.0	5.0	

2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was an average length of 15 minutes, although timings were dependent on viewer and listenership of BBC news and current affairs. The interviews took place between 12th February and 2nd March 2008.

2.3 Classifications

In the analysis we classified respondents according to frequency of BBC consumption. Scores were assigned for viewership, listenership and access of BBC news online. These were then totalled, and divided into quartiles;

- Non/very light
- Light
- Medium
- Heavy

It is worth noting that although both consumers and non-consumers of BBC news and current affairs were interviewed, only consumers were asked questions regarding balance, accuracy and relevance.

We also analysed respondents in terms of the BBC Trusts' approval ratings; the approval score is their overall impression on a scale of 1 to 10 of the BBC generally, where 1 means extremely unfavourable and 10 means extremely favourable. Respondents were assigned a high approval rating (8-10 out of 10), middle approval, (5-7 out of 10) and low approval (1-4 out of 10) depending on the approval score of the BBC.

In addition respondents were also classified by various regions (London/Home Counties/Rest of England, South/Middle/North), by demographics and respondents who watch or listen to BBC news and current affairs programmes 'very often'.

Throughout this report, all of these sub-groups are referred to only if the finding is significantly different from that among people in the UK as a whole.

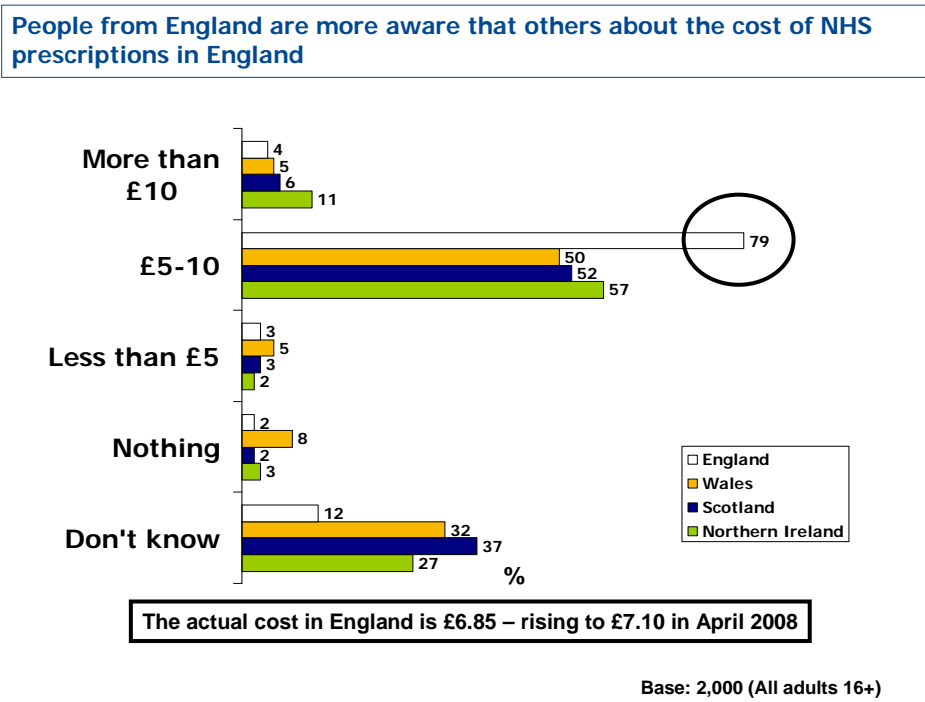
3 Knowledge of devolved nations policies

Knowledge was to be established by investigating whether, and to what extent, respondents knew of information regarding news of the devolved nations in the UK and various policies.

3.1 NHS Prescriptions

One of the key issues that the BBC Trust wishes to assess is the population’s knowledge of policies and news in the devolved nations. In the first instance this was assessed by asking respondents what the NHS prescription fee was in the devolved nations.

Figure 1: “Approximately what do you think is the standard charge for NHS prescriptions in England?”

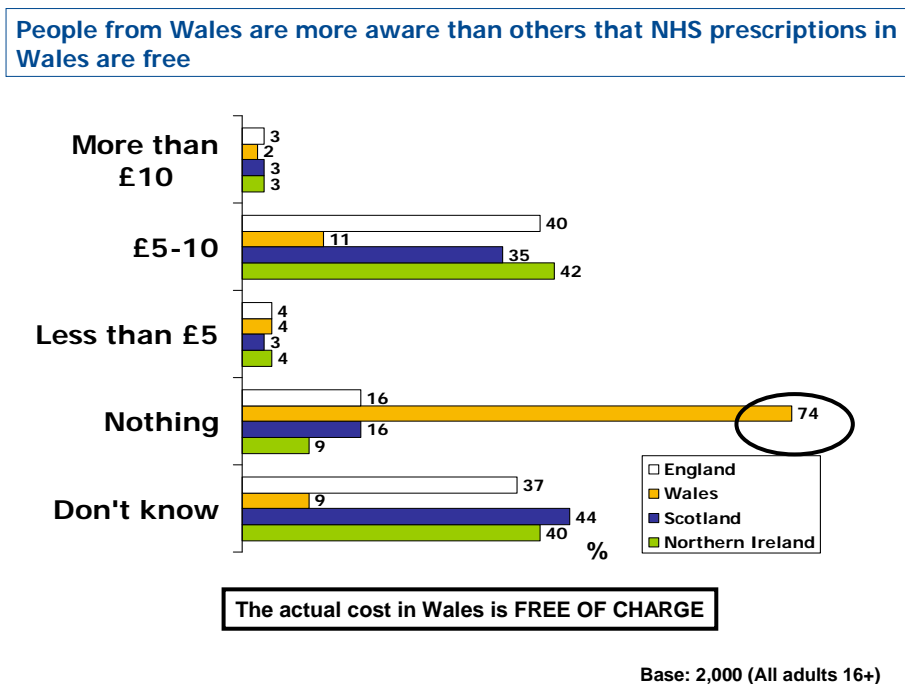


As may be expected, a higher proportion of people who live in the relevant nation are more accurate in their knowledge of the correct prescription cost than people in the other nations. Respondents who live in England are more aware than people in other nations of the cost of prescriptions in England, with 79% accurately stating that the cost is between £5-£10 (Figure 1). There is lower awareness among respondents from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (50%/52%/57%). Among respondents who claim to watch The One Show very often, the percentage of people who are aware of the cost increases to 81%. Age also affects knowledge of NHS prescriptions in England, rising from 63% of respondents aged 16-24, peaking at 84% for 45-54 year olds, and then decreasing to 66% among 65+ age group. This however may be an

artefact of the age group proportions in England, which follow a similar pattern, or may reflect the fact that the full time students and the over 60 population in England do not have to pay NHS prescriptions, and therefore their level of knowledge is lower than other age groups.

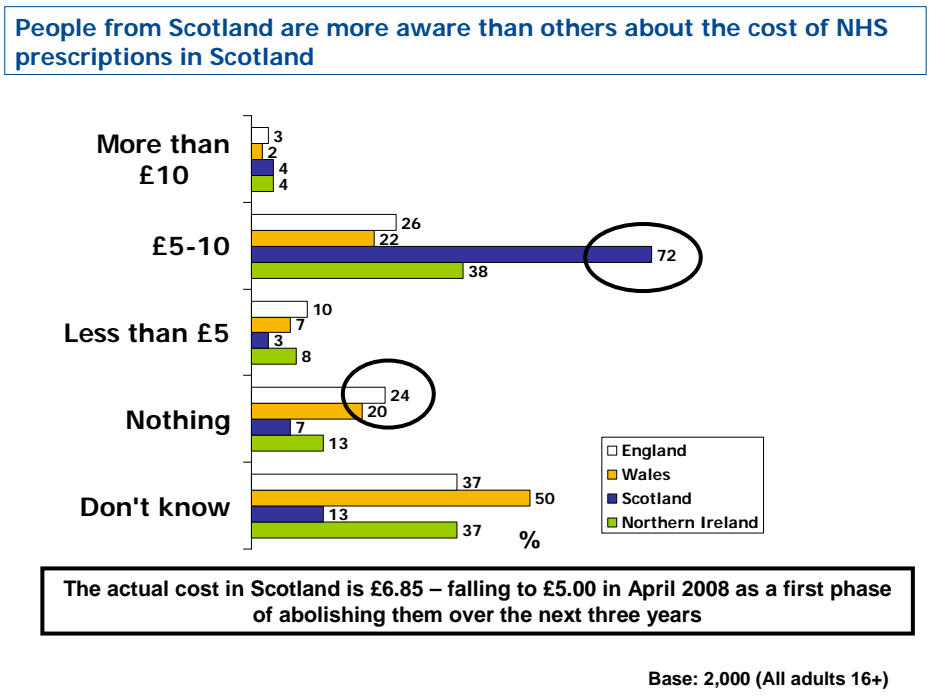
In general, people are more aware of the correct cost in England, than they are of the correct cost in other nations.

Figure 2: "Approximately what do you think is the standard charge for the NHS prescription in Wales?"



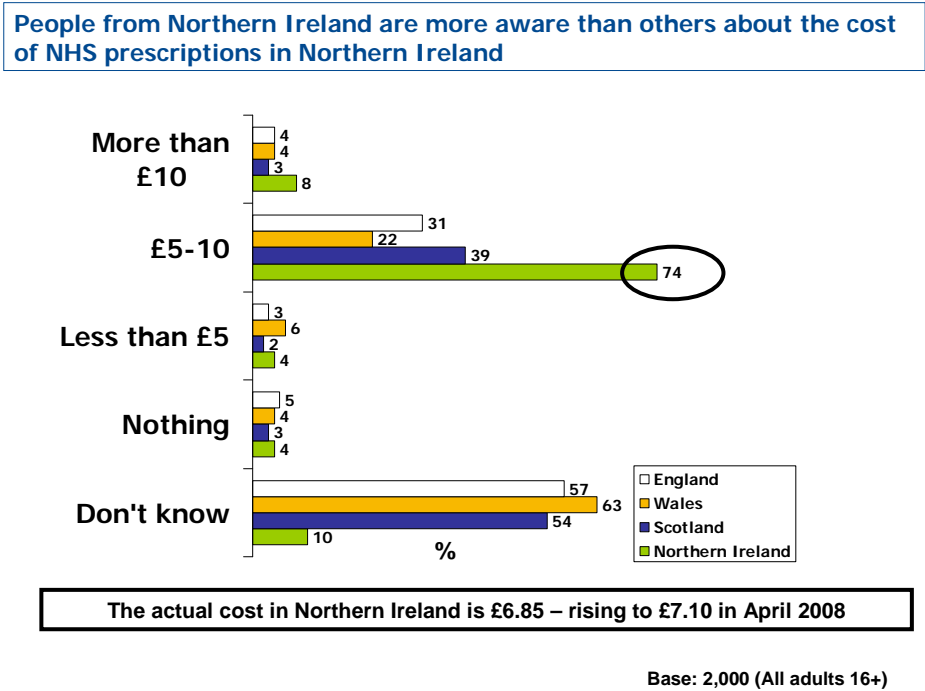
As seen in Figure 2, the percentage of respondents who live in Wales who are aware of the NHS prescription charge is 74% but, as expected, is lower for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland (16%/16%/9%). Knowledge of the prescription charge in Wales is higher among the 45+ age group, increasing from 13% among all respondents aged 35-44 to 25% among 45-54 year olds. Heavy BBC viewers are more likely to be accurate than lighter viewers in their knowledge of NHS prescriptions, with 27% aware that there is no cost, and this increases as BBC consumption becomes heavier. Only 13% of people who have non/very light BBC consumption are aware there is no cost, 14% of people who have light BBC consumption, and 18% of people with medium BBC consumption are aware.

Figure 3; "Approximately what do you think is the standard charge for NHS prescriptions in Scotland?"



In Scotland the proportion of people who are aware of the NHS cost is 72%, and there is higher knowledge of this among 25-34 age group of all respondents (54%). Respondents that live in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have lower levels of awareness (26%/22%/38%). The NHS cost in Scotland is to be abolished gradually over the next three years, and this information may be reflected in the fact that 20% of people who live in Scotland and 24% of people who live in England, believe that there is currently no cost for prescriptions in Scotland (Figure 3).

Figure 4; "Approximately what do you think is the standard charge for NHS prescriptions in Northern Ireland?"

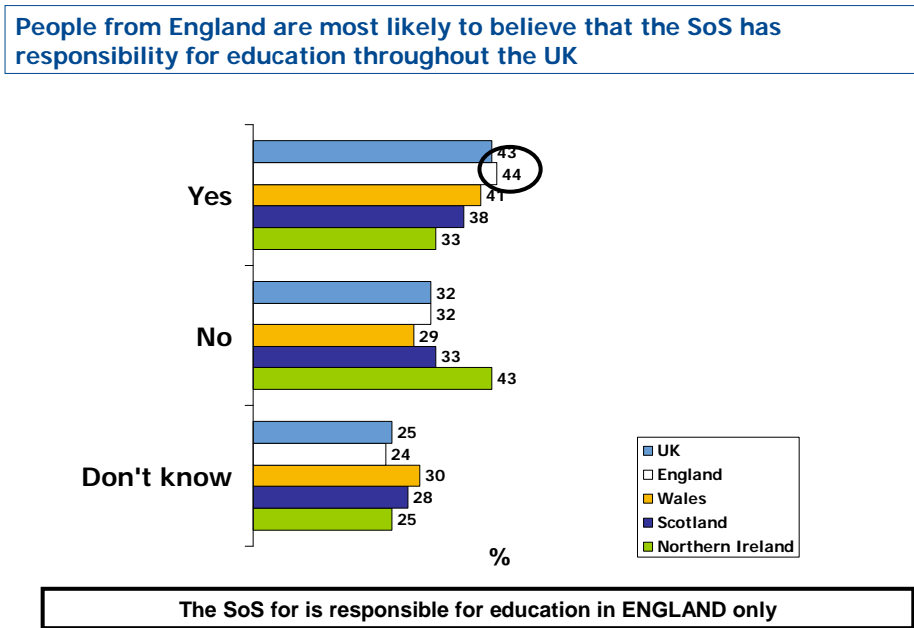


Consistent with findings in the other nations, people who live in Northern Ireland are more aware that the cost of NHS prescriptions is between £5-£10 (74%), and respondents from England, Wales and Scotland have lower awareness (31%/22%/39%) (Figure 4). There is increased awareness among 25-44 year old age group, with approximately 45% responding with the correct answer.

3.2 Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Family

In order to assess respondents' knowledge of the devolved nation's policies, respondents were also asked whether the Secretary of State for children, schools and families ('SoS') had responsibility for education throughout the UK, or each individual nation. In actual fact the SoS has responsibility for education in England only.

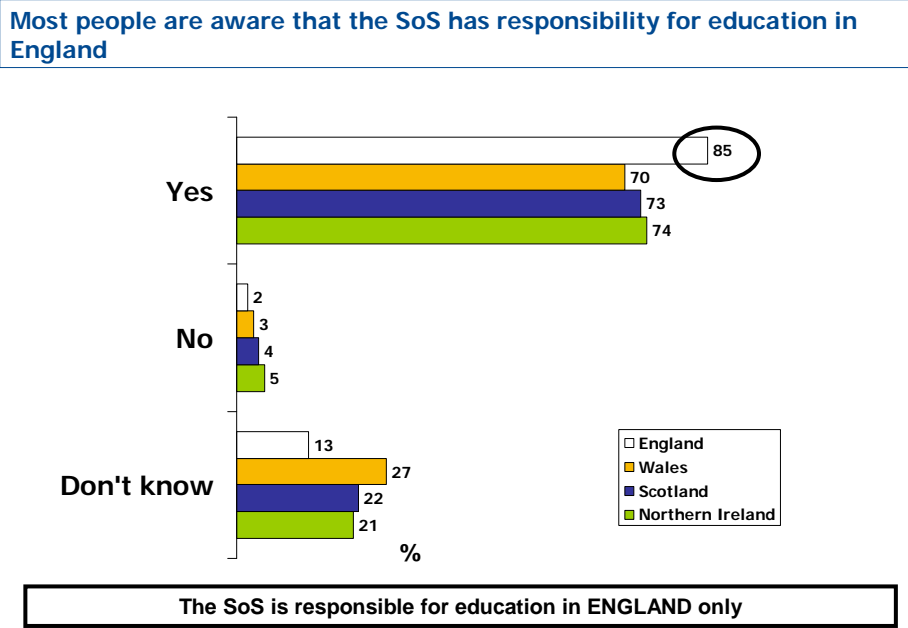
Figure 5; "As far as you are aware is he responsible for primary and secondary education throughout the United Kingdom?"



Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

Respondents who live in England are more likely than respondents in other nations to believe that the Secretary of State has responsibility for education throughout the UK (44%) (Figure 5). The older the respondent, the less likely they are to believe this, declining from 51% for 16-24 year olds to 36% for the 65+ age group. 53% of Panorama viewers believe the SoS has responsibility throughout the UK. Respondents in Northern Ireland are more aware than other nations (43%) that the SoS has no responsibility throughout the UK. One in four respondents is unsure of the SoS responsibilities.

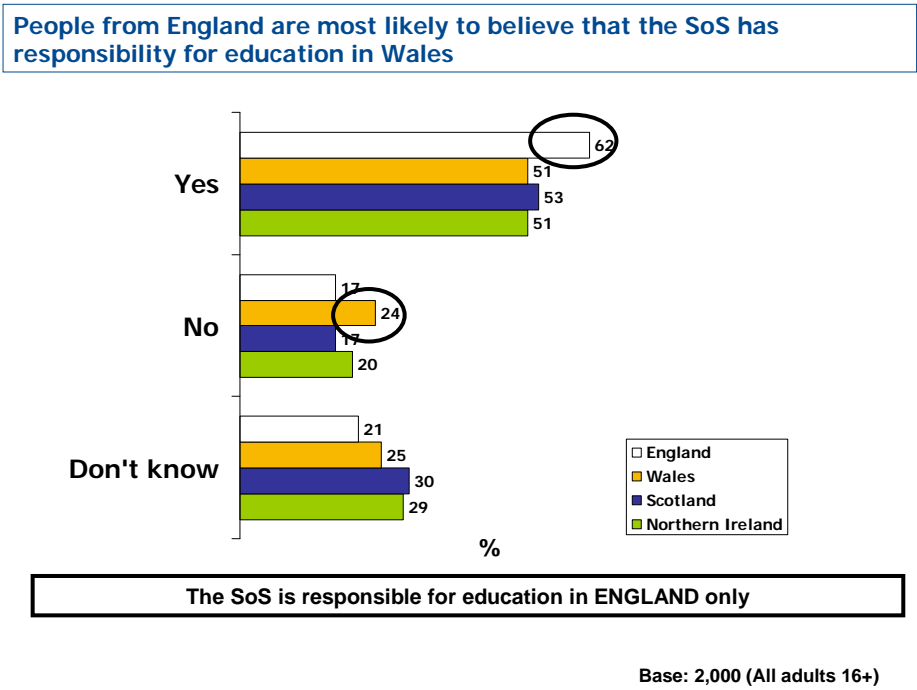
Figure 6; "As far as you are aware is he responsible for primary and secondary education in England?"



Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

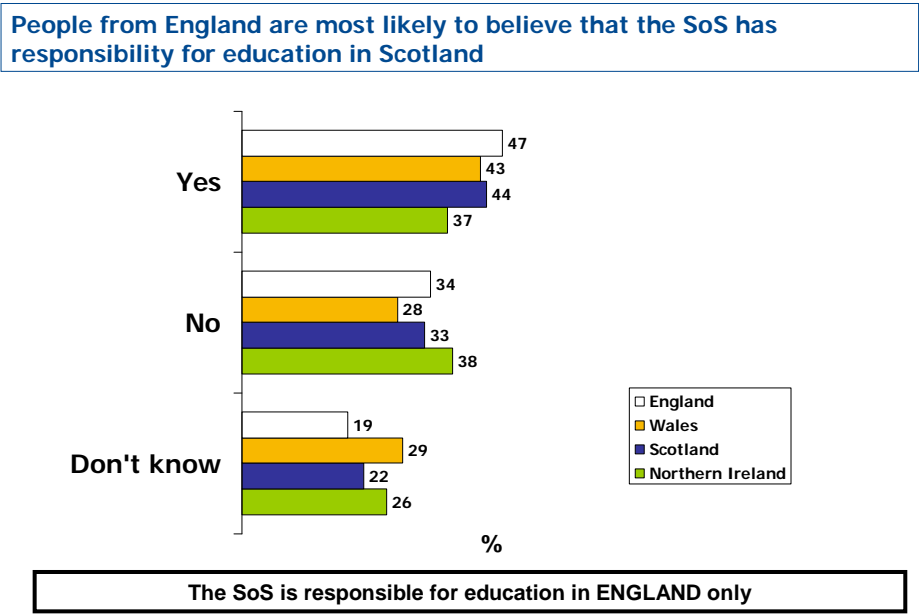
Based on all respondents, 85% of people from England were aware that the SoS has responsibility for education in England only (Figure 6). A total of 88% of the social grade ABC1 are aware of this, and 94% of people who very often listen to the Today programme are also aware, although this may be because these listeners are skewed heavily towards living in England.

Figure 7: "As far as you are aware is he responsible for primary and secondary education in Wales?"



As can be seen in Figure 7, people who live in England are also more likely (62%) to believe that the SoS has responsibility for education in Wales than other nations. Awareness that the SoS has no responsibility for education in Wales is higher for respondents who live in Wales (24%) than other nations. The older the respondent is the less likely they are to believe this, with 68% of 16-24 year olds and 45% for the 65+ age group believing the SoS is responsible for education in Wales.

Figure 8; "As far as you are aware is he responsible for primary and secondary education in Scotland?"

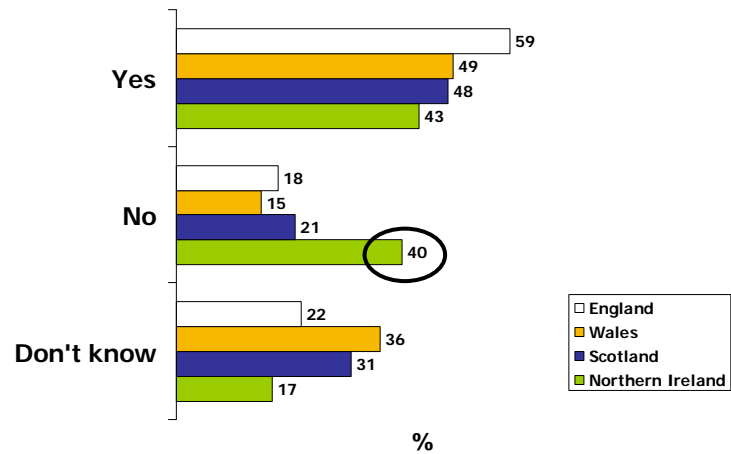


Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

One third of respondents from Scotland do not believe that the SoS has responsibility for education in Scotland, which is lower than those in England and Northern Ireland (34% and 38% respectively). However, again the highest proportion of people (47%) who believe that the SoS has responsibility in Scotland are people who live in England (Figure 8).

Figure 9: "As far as you are aware is he responsible for primary and secondary education in Northern Ireland"

People from Northern Ireland are most likely to know that the SoS has no responsibility for education in Northern Ireland



The SoS is responsible for education in ENGLAND only

Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

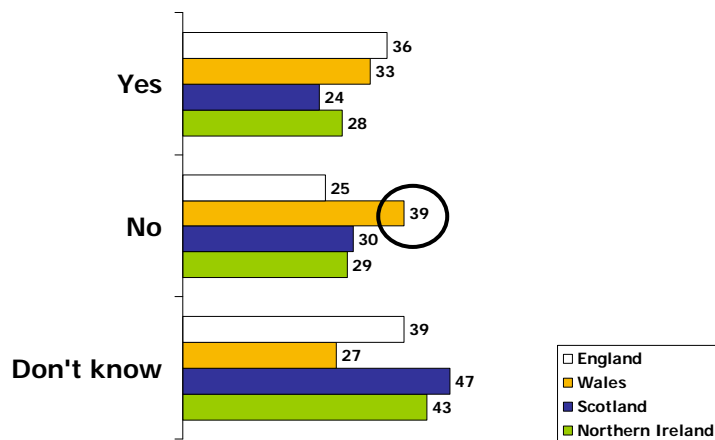
People who live in Northern Ireland are more aware than other nations that the SoS has no responsibility within this nation (40%) (Figure 9). A high proportion of Panorama viewers (71%) believe erroneously that SoS has responsibility in Northern Ireland.

3.3 Regulation of Television and Radio

Knowledge of the devolved governments policies and responsibilities was also ascertained by asking about regulation of television and radio in the devolved nations. In actuality OFCOM regulates television and radio in the UK, and does so in conjunction with the BBC Trust for BBC services.

Figure 10; "Are the Welsh assembly and welsh assembly government responsible for regulating radio and television broadcasting in Wales?"

People from Wales are most likely to be aware that the Welsh Assembly is not responsible for TV and Radio in Wales

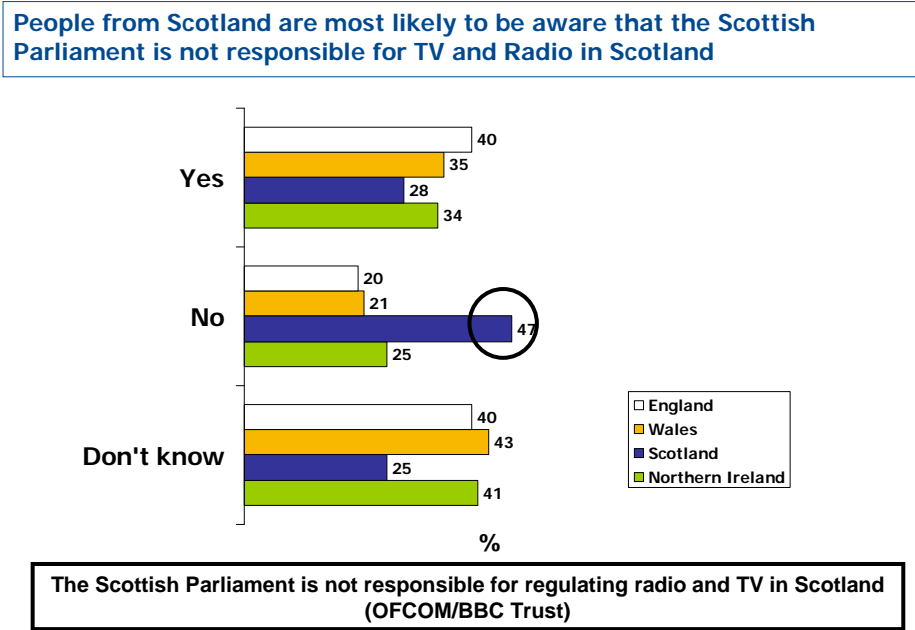


The Welsh Assembly is not responsible for regulating radio and TV in Wales (OFCOM/BBC Trust)

Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

As can be seen in Figure 10 above, 39% of people from Wales are aware that the Welsh Assembly is not responsible for TV and Radio in Wales, significantly more than any of the other nations. Of all respondents the 65+ age group is most aware of this, with 35% answering 'no' to this question. Only 16% of non/very light BBC consumers are aware of this.

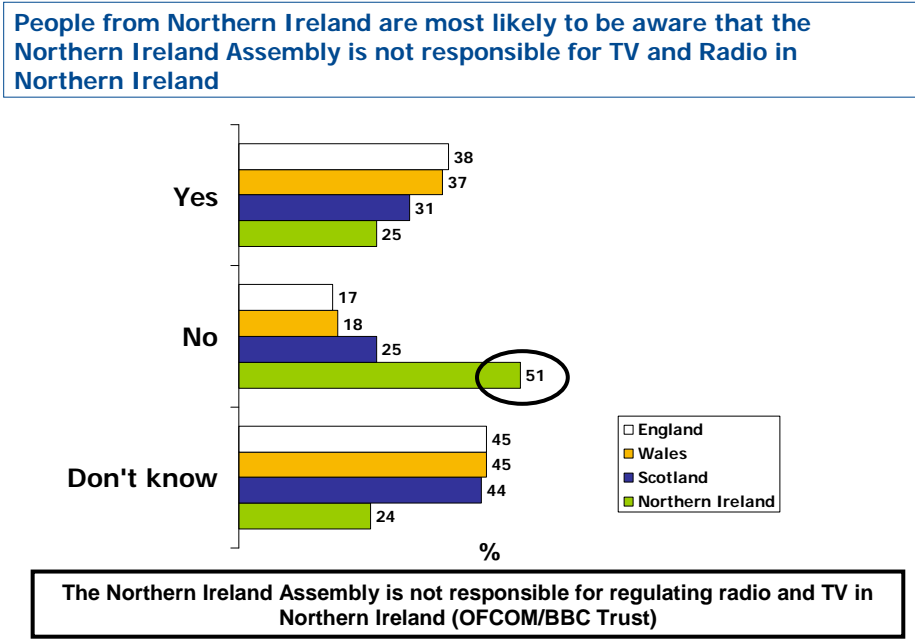
Figure 11: "Are the Scottish Parliament and Government responsible for regulating radio and television broadcasting in SCOTLAND?"



Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

People from Scotland are more likely to be aware that the Scottish Parliament is not responsible for TV and Radio in Scotland, with 47% responding correctly (Figure 11). Awareness is lowest among non/very light BBC users (14%).

Figure 12; "Are the Northern Ireland Assembly and Government of Northern Ireland responsible for regulating radio and television broadcasting in NORTHERN IRELAND?"



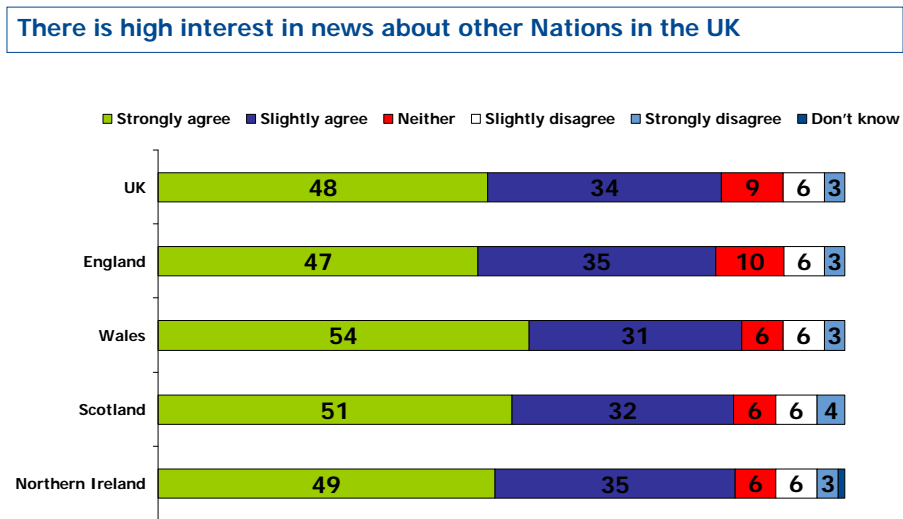
Base: 2,000 (All adults 16+)

Over half (51%) of people from Northern Ireland know that the Northern Ireland Assembly is not responsible for TV and Radio in Northern Ireland (Figure 12), and again awareness is lowest among non/very light BBC consumers (11%).

3.4 Interest in other nations

Feeding into the BBC Trust’s key issues in the review this research looked at the interest level respondents have in the policies of other nations.

Figure 13: Agreement with statement “I am interested in what’s going on in the other Nations of the UK”

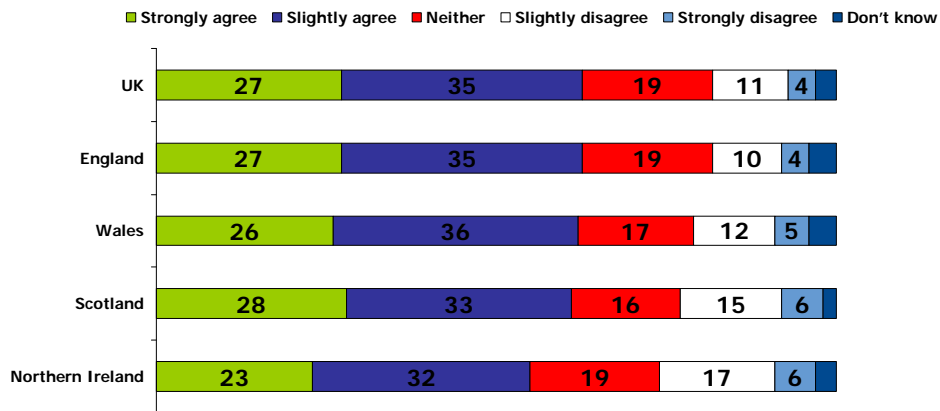


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Of the UK population as a whole, 82% are interested in news about other nations in the UK, and this increases to 97% among people who listen very often to the Today programme, and 94% of people who watch Newsnight very often also agree. People in Wales are more likely than the other nations to strongly agree that they are interested in news about other nations in the UK (54%).

Figure 14: Agreement with statement “It is important that I understand key political processes and public policies within each Nation of the UK”

People are generally keen to understand politics in all UK Nations



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

There is a lower percentage (62%) of people in the UK as a whole (ie all nations combined) who agree that it is important to understand about politics and public policies within each nation of the UK. As seen in Figure 14, this interest level is the lowest in Northern Ireland (55%), and they are less likely to strongly agree (23%) than the other nations.

3.5 Summary

In general, residents of each nation are aware of news and policies within their own country, however awareness of situations within other nations of the UK is lower. Respondents state that they are keen to understand more about the political process in other UK nations.

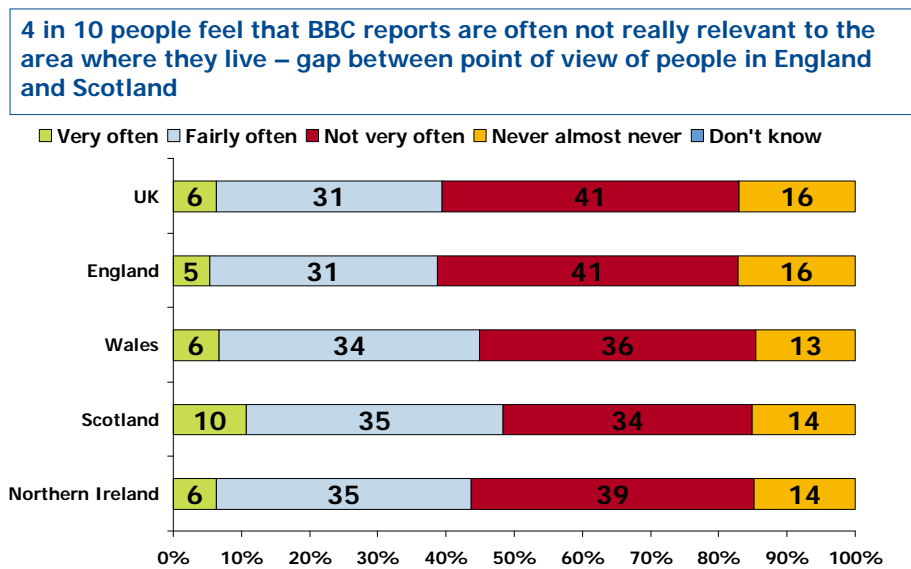
There are some differences in awareness of policies between nations. Respondents in England are more likely to believe that the policies and news that applied to them, also applied in other nations. In Wales, people are more likely to be aware about free NHS prescriptions, but less knowledgeable about policies regarding education and regulation of television and radio. In Scotland people are unsure about who is responsible for education in their country and people who live in Northern Ireland are the most clear of all the nations as to the various situations asked of them; however their stated interest in the politics is lower than other nations.

4 Relevance/Balance/Accuracy

Relevance and balance were assessed by considering the audiences perspective on how relevant BBC news and current affairs is to them personally, or if it is specific to certain regions. The accuracy of BBC output was identified by considering the audiences perspective on factual correctness and correct identification of the nations differing policies.

4.1 Relevance and Balance

Figure 15: “When you watch or listen to the BBC news or current affairs programmes we mentioned a moment ago, such as the ‘Today’ programme or the ‘10 O’clock News’, how often do you feel that particular reports are not really RELEVANT to the region or nation where you live?”

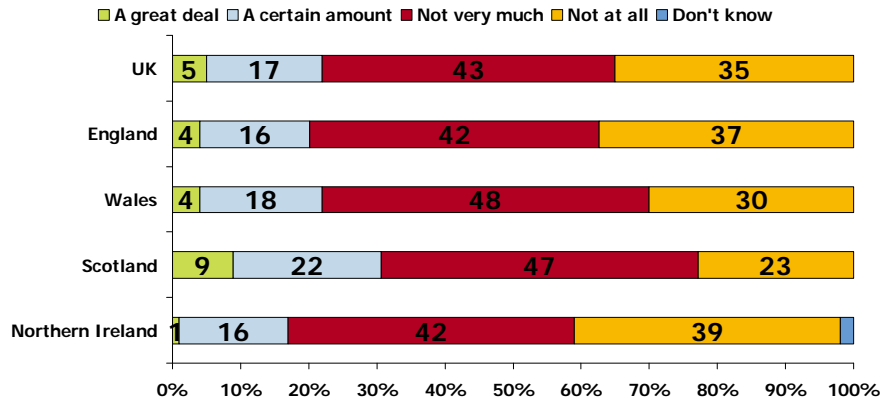


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Almost 4 in 10 (37%) of the UK population as a whole feel that BBC reports are often not really relevant to the area where they live, however only a small proportion feel this way very often. There seems to be a gap between the points of view of people who live in England (36%) and people who live in Scotland (45%) (Figure 15). People who live in Scotland are more likely than other nations to feel this way very often (10%), and a higher proportion of people who live in England feel that BBC reports are not really relevant not very often and never/almost never (41%/16%) This is the lowest among respondents who listen to the Today programme (25%) and almost half (49%) of Panorama viewers feel output is often not really relevant to them.

Figure 16: “You have just stated that you feel there are often news reports not really relevant to the region or nation where you live. How much does that annoy or bother you?”

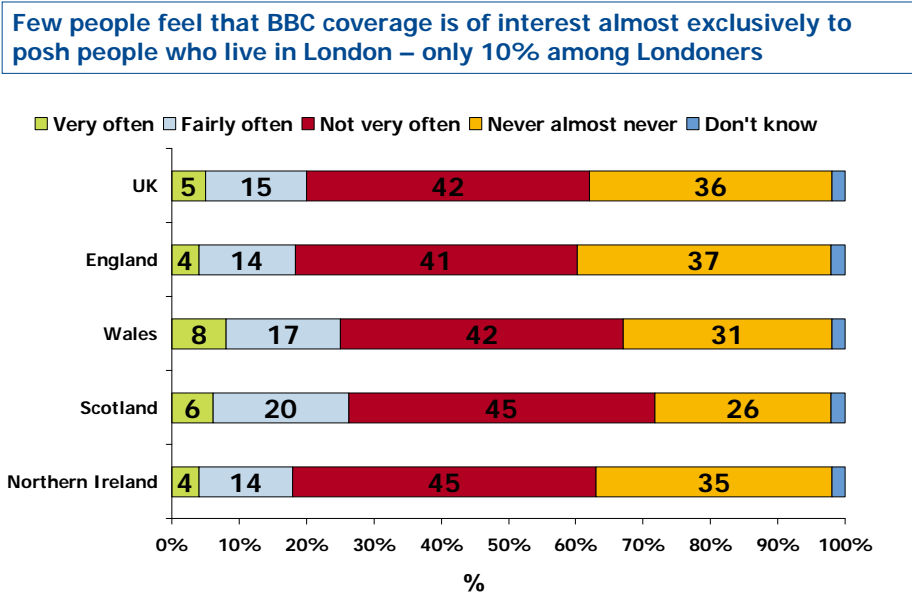
Of those who find news often irrelevant, most state that it does not annoy them –Scotland people being a slight exception



Base: 761 (All respondents who feel that particular reports on the BBC are not really relevant to their region or nation)

However of those who find the news irrelevant only 22% of the UK population (ie all four nations) state that it annoys them and only 5% of the UK population state that it annoys them a great deal. For people who live in Scotland this is slightly higher with 31% of the population being annoyed, 9% a great deal and 22% a certain amount (Figure 16). For low BBC approvers this is higher at 28%, and is higher still for viewers of the 10 o'clock news (33%).

Figure 17: “Some people also say that, when they watch or listen to BBC news and current affairs programmes, some of the coverage doesn’t really relate to the real world, that it’s of interest almost exclusively to posh people who live in London. How often do you feel that way?”



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

A large majority of people – roughly three-quarters of BBC listeners and viewers – never or seldom felt that BBC coverage is of interest almost exclusively to posh people who live in London. However, a substantial minority of 20% of BBC listeners and viewers throughout the UK, that is all four nations, feel that the BBC coverage is of interest “almost exclusively to posh people who live in London” with 5% very often feeling this way.

As seen in Figure 17 above, this is higher for people who live in Scotland (26%), which supports the finding that a higher proportion of people from Scotland believe BBC news and reports often do not relate to them. People in Wales (25%) were also more likely to feel BBC coverage is of interest “almost exclusively to posh people who live in London” A total of 37% of respondents from England never or almost never feel that coverage is of interest exclusively to posh people, compared to 26% of people from Scotland and 31% of people from Wales.

There were also variations within region in England. Whilst the average figure for feeling BBC coverage is of interest “almost exclusively to posh people who live in London” is 19% only 10% of people living in London felt this way compared to 29% in the North of England.

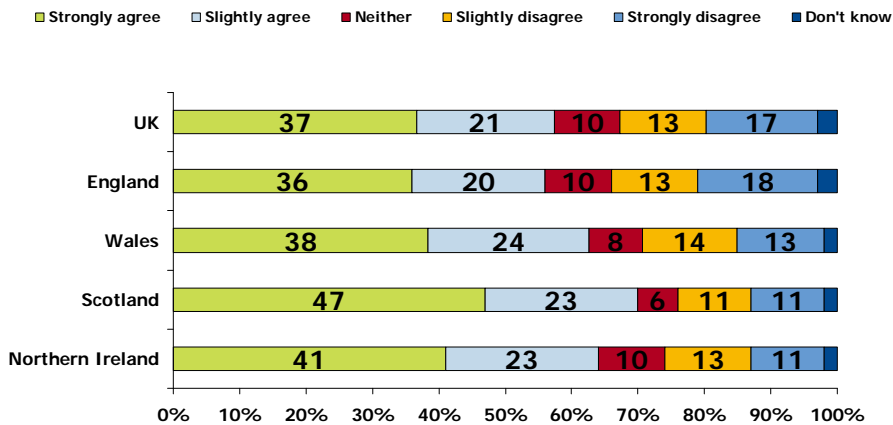
Respondents with a low BBC approval rating are more likely to believe this (34%), and this decreases as approval rating increases, with 23% of people with middle BBC approval rating and 15% of respondents with a high BBC approval rating believe this.

The tendency for low BBC approval rating to be more likely than the average to believe BBC output is often not relevant to them, but only to specific regions, suggests that relevance may

have an impact on level of approval of the BBC. This could also be inferred by the finding that people from Scotland are more likely than people from other nations to believe that BBC output is not relevant to them, and a higher proportion of people from Scotland have a low BBC approval rating than other nations.

Figure 18: Agreement with statement "I rely on local newspapers to provide the most relevant news for my area"

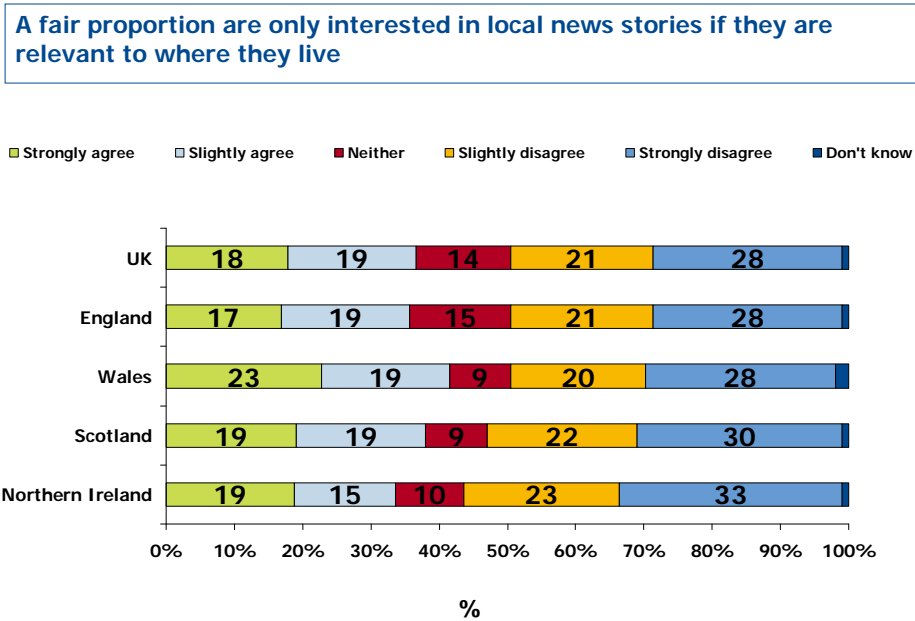
The fact that few are annoyed by irrelevant BBC news, is backed up by the fact that most rely on local newspapers for local news



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

The results show that less than a quarter (22%) of people in all four nations of the UK are annoyed by irrelevant BBC news and this may be because the majority (58%) of people rely on local newspapers for local news (Figure 18). People from Scotland are more likely to agree with this statement, with 47% of respondents strongly agreeing, compared to 36% of people from England. This is higher among the 16-24 year old age group (76%) and decreases as age increases, with 50% of the 65+ age group agreeing with the statement. Of the non-white population, 64% agree that they rely on local newspapers to provide relevant local news, and 68% of respondents who have low BBC approval agree.

Figure 19: Agreement with statement “I am only interested in local news stories if they are relevant to where I live”

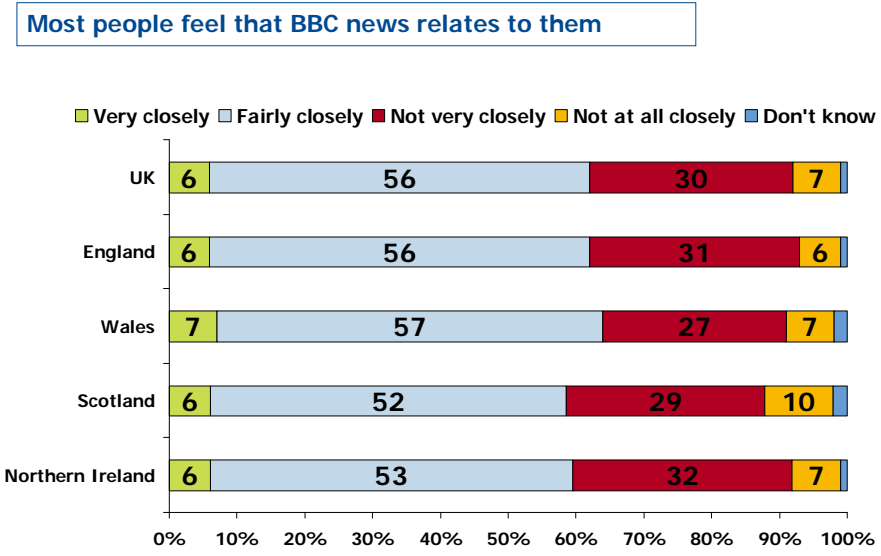


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Over one third (36%) of people in the UK as a whole are only interested in local news stories if they are relevant to where they live, and this increases to 46% of people who very often watch Panorama. Of the nations the highest percentage of people who are only interested in local news stories if they are relevant to where they live, are from Wales (41%) with 28% strongly agreeing with the statement (Figure 19). People from England are the most indifferent with 15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

This may seem incongruent to our previous finding that a high proportion of people are interested in news from other nations, however this may be explained by people over emphasising their interest in news and current affairs. It is also worth considering the distinction between interest in local news from other nations (for example a small area in Scotland) and news that people may be interested in from the nation as a whole.

Figure 20: "Thinking generally about the BBC's news and current-affairs programmes, how closely do you feel they relate to you and things that personally interest you?"



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

The majority of people in all four nations in the UK (62%) feel that the BBC news relates to them, although only 6% believe it relates to them very closely. This is fairly similar among the nations with less than 5 percentage points difference between them (Figure 20), and there is also little difference between the nations in how closely the respondents feel the news relates.

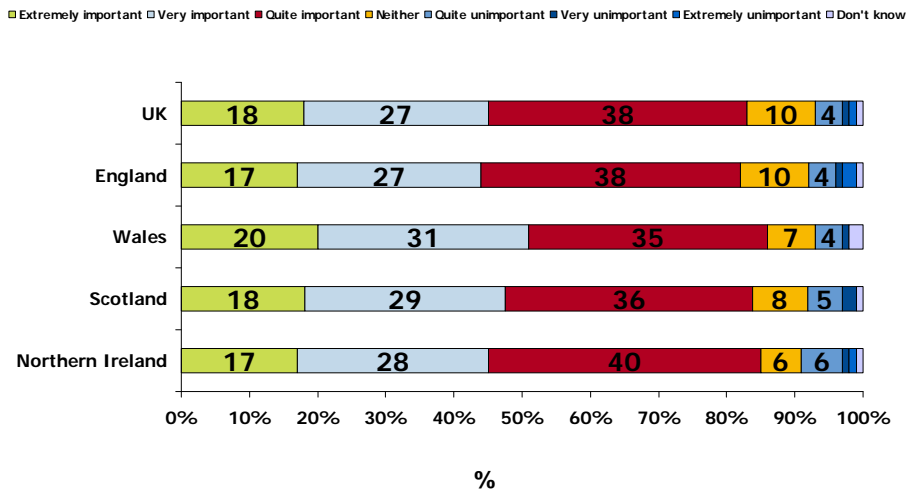
However, there are substantial differences within region of England. Two-thirds of BBC listeners and viewers in the south of England (66%) feel the BBC's news output relates very or fairly closely to them and one third (33%) feel it does not. This is in contrast to the north of England where 52% feel BBC news programmes relate closely to them and 45% feel they do not.

As may be expected this does differ with BBC consumption and approval, with only 31% of respondents with low BBC approval believing BBC news relates to them, rising to 73% for respondents with high BBC approval. A total of 71% of respondents with heavy BBC consumption also believe this, and the percentage is slightly higher than the average (67%) for the age group 65+.

4.2 Accuracy

Figure 21: “How important or unimportant is it, for you personally, that the BBC accurately and fairly represents the various nations to the rest of the UK?”

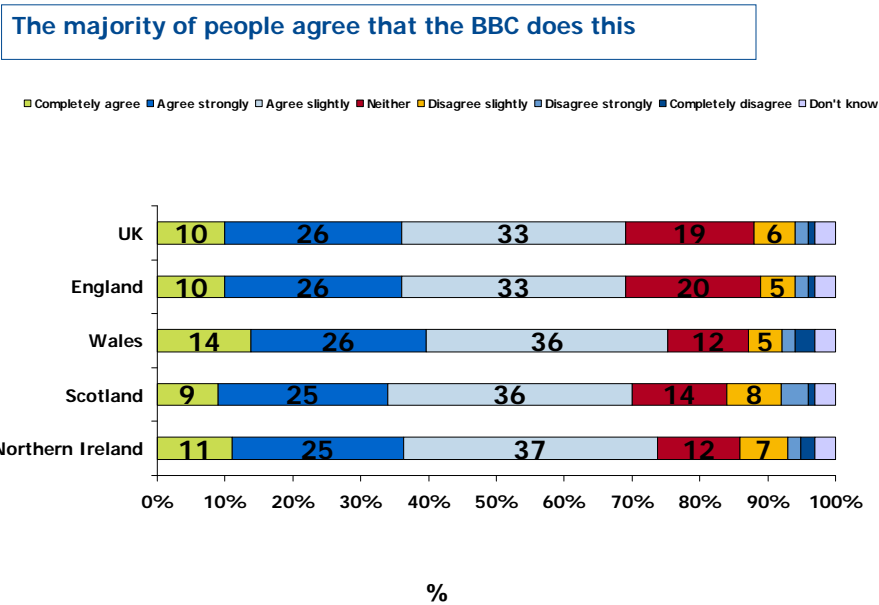
Most people feel that it is important that BBC's news accurately reflects nations to the rest of the UK



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

For 83% of respondents across the UK it is important that the various nations, regions and communities are accurately and fairly represented to the rest of the UK by the BBC (Figure 21), and this is particularly high among heavy BBC consumers (92%). It is also high among the age group 65+ (91%) and among Newsnight viewers (94%).

Figure 22: "And to what extent do you agree or disagree that the BBC does accurately and fairly represent the various nations to the rest of the UK?"



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

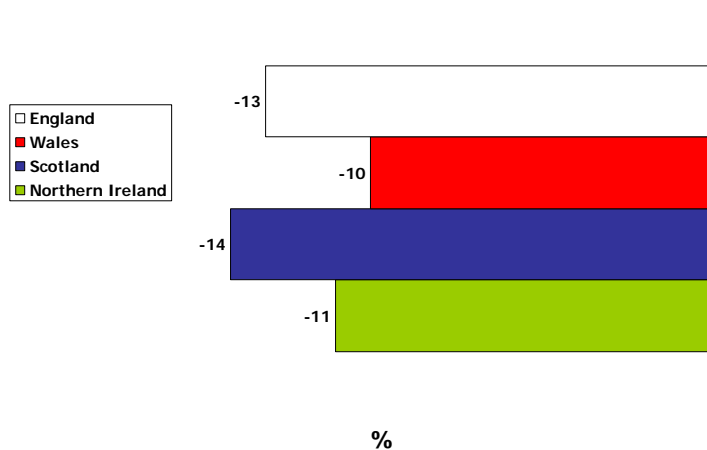
Most people in the four nations agree that the BBC does in fact accurately and fairly represent the various nations, regions and communities to the rest of the UK however only a small proportion of the entire UK population completely agree (10%). This percentage is lowest among people who live in England (69%) and the highest in Wales with 76% of people agreeing with this (Figure 22). Wales are more likely to completely agree that the BBC does this (14%) and people from England are again more likely than the other nations to be indifferent (20%). A large proportion of BBC News online users also agree with this (87%).

For the following chart, the percentage of respondents who agree that the BBC does in fact accurately and fairly represent the various nations, regions and communities to the rest of the UK was subtracted from the percentage of respondents who agree that it is important that the various nations, regions and communities are accurately and fairly represented. This was to determine whether there was any difference between the level of importance people assign to the BBC undertaking this task, and how well it is perceived to actually undertake this task.

Figure 23

Relevance gap

There is a gap between importance and performance – in particular for people in England and Scotland

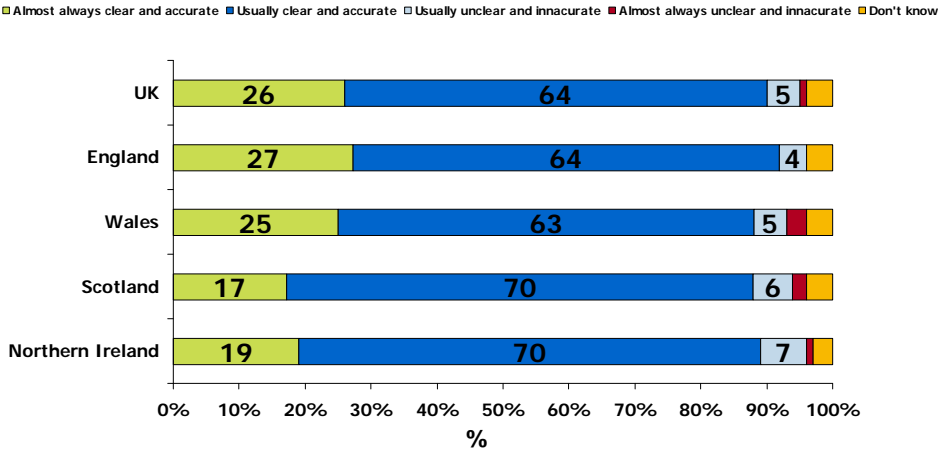


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

There does seem to be a gap between the importance of representing the various nations accurately and fairly, and how well the BBC actually does this. This is particularly evident for England and Scotland with a 13% and 14% gap between performance and importance (Figure 23).

Figure 24: “From you own experience, when you watch or listen to BBC news programmes, do you think they are almost always clear and accurate in this regard, usually clear and accurate, usually unclear and inaccurate, or almost always unclear and inaccurate?”

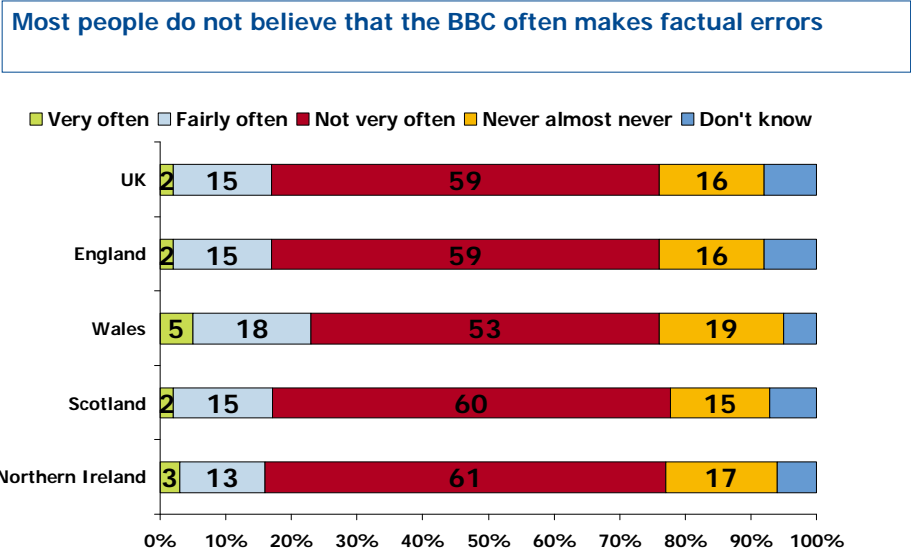
Despite this gap, the vast majority of people still feel that the BBC reporting is clear and accurate



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Despite this gap, 90% of people in the UK as a whole believe that the BBC is clear and accurate in reporting whether a particular story relates to the UK as a whole or only to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, and just over a quarter (26%) believe this almost always happens. This is significantly different between England and both Northern Ireland and Scotland, with 27% of people from England believing the BBC is almost always clear and accurate, whereas only 17% of people in Scotland and 19% of people in Northern Ireland believe this (Figure 24). This percentage drops to 65% among low BBC approvers, but increases to 95% among higher approvers, and is similar (a difference of 4%) between nations.

Figure 25: “In reporting whether particular news stories relate to the whole UK or only some part of it, how often – again speaking from your own experience – do BBC news programmes make what you regard as straightforward factual errors?”

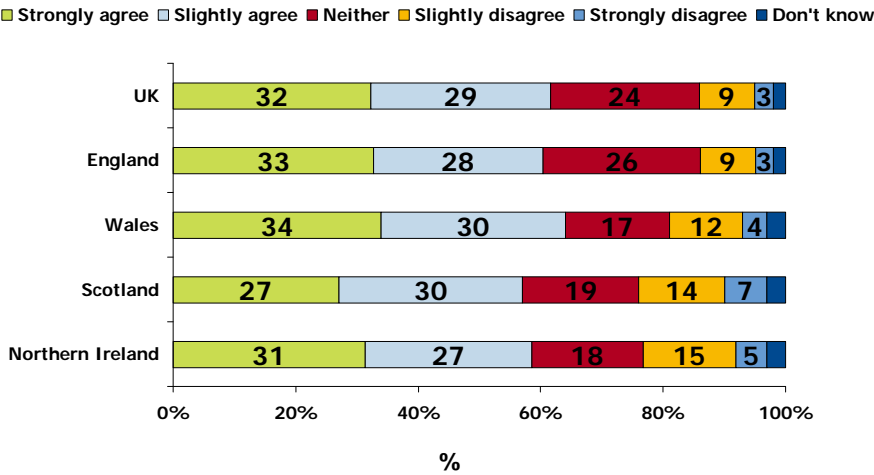


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Three quarters of the population (75%) in all four nations of the UK do not believe that the BBC often makes factual errors and the proportion who believe this happens very often is small, only 2% in the UK. A total of 23% of people who live in Wales believe this, which is higher than the other nations (Figure 25). This is also higher among low BBC approvers (28%).

Figure 26: Agreement with statement “The BBC has better coverage of news from other parts of the UK than anyone else”

Most people agree that the BBC has better coverage of UK news than anyone else

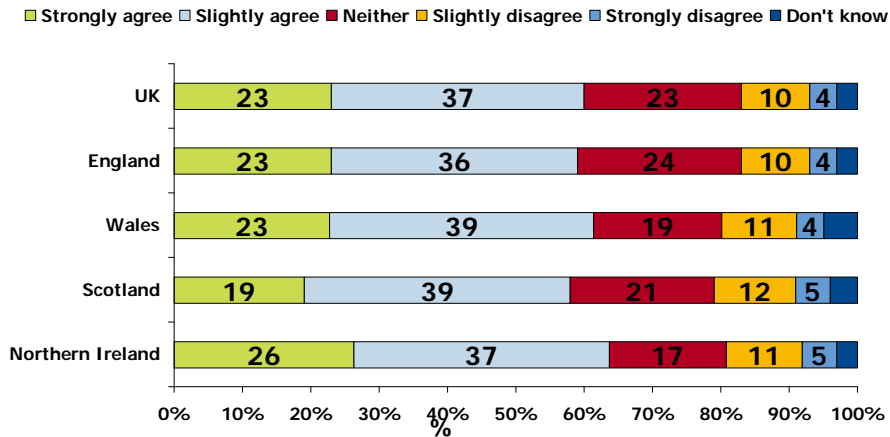


Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

In the UK as a whole, a total of 61% of the population agree that the BBC has better coverage of UK news than anyone else. This is lower in Scotland with 56% of respondents agreeing with this, and highest in Wales with 64% of respondents agreeing (Figure 26). A lower proportion of people in Scotland strongly agree with this statement (27%) than people in other nations. As may be expected a high proportion of heavy BBC consumers agree with this (71%), and 75% of the non-white population also agree. For viewers of BBC output the proportion of respondents who agree is high for Panorama and Newsnight (81%/84%).

Figure 27: Agreement with statement “Watching or listening to news and current affairs programmes or content on the BBC has raised my awareness of the key political processes and public policies within each Nation of the UK”

Most people agree that watching the BBC has raised their awareness of the key political processes within the UK Nations



Base: 1,937 (All adults 16+ who consume BBC News or current affairs)

Over half of the respondents (59%) in the UK agree that watching the BBC has raised their awareness of the key political processes within the UK (Figure 27). A lower proportion of people in Scotland strongly agree with this statement (19%) than the other nations.

Within England there is a higher level of agreement in the South (67%) than the Midlands (54%) or the North (50%). There is also a big difference between low BBC approval (26% agree) and high BBC approval (70%). Again a higher percentage of heavy BBC users agree (76%) and over three quarters of viewers or listeners of Today, Panorama and Newsnight (77%/78%/80%) also agree.

4.3 Summary

Over a third (37%) of respondents feel that BBC news reports are not relevant to the area where they live but it doesn't bother them as they get their local news from other sources.

There is a negative gap between the importance that BBC news relates to them, and how well it does relate to them. Despite this, the majority of respondents still feel that BBC news in general is clear and accurate, and that the BBC is still better than anywhere else for providing them with news about the other nations in the UK.

There are also some differences in audience perspective between the four nations. People who live in England are least likely to feel that news stories are irrelevant to their local area.

However, there is a negative gap between importance of BBC News accurately and fairly reflecting news from the nations and its performance in doing so.

Respondents in Wales are slightly more likely to believe that the BBC makes factual errors and that some of the coverage doesn't really relate to the real world. They are also more likely to be only interested in local news stories if they are relevant to where they live.

These respondents from Scotland are more likely to feel that news stories are irrelevant to the area where they live – and they are most likely to be annoyed by this. However, they are also most likely to rely on local newspapers for their local news. There is also a negative gap between importance of BBC News accurately and fairly reflecting news from the nations and its performance.

People from Northern Ireland are less likely to agree that the BBC has better coverage of news from other parts of the UK than anyone else, and they are most likely to disagree that they are only interested in local news stories if they are relevant to where they live.

5 Summary and Conclusions

This survey assessed the UK population's knowledge of devolved nations and their policies, and there is evidence that knowledge of policies and situations within people's own country is high, but is less extensive about other nations. For example, with regards those who live in England, there is quite a high level of awareness of the cost of NHS prescriptions in England. However people in England are also more likely to erroneously believe that the cost of NHS prescriptions in Wales is £5-10, around the same amount as the cost in England. This would suggest that people in England believe that the policies that apply to them also apply to other nations. Interestingly, almost one in five people in England believe that there is no cost for prescriptions in Scotland. As the price for NHS prescriptions is being abolished over the next three years, this finding suggests that people in England may have heard about this, but not taken in the full details of the story. This suggests that people may be vaguely aware of policies in other nations, without having extensive, detailed knowledge.

Around one in four people in the UK believe that the BBC news or current affairs is often irrelevant to the area where they live. However, this may not be as negative as it first appears. On closer inspection, the proportion of people in the UK who believe that BBC output is irrelevant very often is actually quite small. In addition, of those that find it irrelevant, it annoys relatively few of them.

It is important to the UK population that the BBC is accurate in their reporting of UK nations to the rest of the UK. Although people perceive that the BBC actually does this quite well, there is a gap between the importance that people place on accuracy and how accurate they feel that the BBC actually is. Despite this the majority of people believe that the BBC is factually

accurate most of the time, and ultimately it is still considered to have better coverage of news from other parts of the UK than any other source.

Appendix A

BBC Trust – End of fieldwork report

- The fieldwork period was from 12th February – 2nd March.
- We achieved 200 interviews with each interview lasting on average 15 minutes.
- We also filled the quotas you set, as below
 - England – 500
 - Northern Ireland – 500
 - Wales – 500
 - Scotland - 500
- The total number of interview hours spent on this was 1447 and there were 78 interviewers.