

Ofcom publishes its Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2012

On 8 August the communications regulator Ofcom published its report for 2012. Ofcom is required by the Communications Act 2003 to assess how the designated public service broadcasters, taken together, fulfill their public service purposes. (The public service broadcasters are the BBC, ITV, ITV Breakfast, Channel 4, Channel 5 and S4C.)

Among the headline findings from the report are that PSB channels continue to remain popular, with viewing of BBC One and Channel 5 remaining broadly stable over the last five years (although viewing of BBC Two, ITV and Channel 4 has declined over this period). The five main PSB channels and their portfolio of channels accounted for 73% of all television viewing in 2012, a decrease from 74% in 2011.

Click [here](#) for the press release with the headline findings.

Ofcom report shows further fall in amount of religious broadcasting

The Ofcom report includes data collected from broadcasters on the amount of time they devoted to individual programme genres over the year.

The data on Religion/Ethics (in Part D of the report) shows that, between them, BBC One, Two, Three and Four, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 transmitted 229 hours of religious broadcasting in 2012, down from 236 in 2011. In 2007 the figure was 293. The most startling decrease by far for an individual broadcaster was on ITV, which in 2007 showed 47 hours of religion and in 2011 and 2012 just 2 hours. BBC Four also registered a drop in hours, from 44 in 2011 to 16 in 2012.

Two channels bucked the overall trend. BBC 2 showed more religion in 2012 - 50 hours - than in any of the previous five years. And Channel 5 showed 26 hours of Religion in 2012, reversing the downward trend of the previous three years. But overall the figures make for discouraging reading.

The figures on religious broadcasting follow below. You can access the full Ofcom report by clicking [here](#).

Fig 30 Religion/Ethics programming output hours



Source: Ofcom/broadcasters
Note: Spend is given in 2012 prices

BBC Trust Impartiality review looks in depth at the Corporation's coverage of religion

In July the BBC Trust published the results of a review of the breadth of opinion reflected in BBC output. The review closely examined three subject areas: Immigration, the EU and religion and ethics. The Trust commissioned a report from Stuart Prebble, a highly experienced broadcaster (who at one time was in charge of commissioning religious programmes for the ITV network), together with content analysis and audience research conducted with individuals representing a range of religious (and non-religious) views. In his report Stuart Prebble says: "If there is a criticism of the BBC's coverage of religion and ethics, it may be that while the BBC does reflect aspects of minority religions, it appears to some to do so through the prism of Christianity." By way of example, he notes how in the BBC Two series Westminster Abbey, a visit by the Dalai Lama was "treated with an awe and curiosity that would have been more appropriate for a visit by Obi-Wan Kenobi" and draws a parallel with how some adherents of minority religions feel about the how they are treated by the BBC; "as slightly exotic and slightly mysterious creatures".

There is much more in this multi-faceted review, including the audience research, which makes for interesting reading. Click [here](#) to go to the page from which all the documents can be downloaded.

Channel 4 records a 'first' with its Ramadan Season

In July, Channel 4 became the first UK broadcaster to show - on air and online - the Muslim call to prayer. The Channel showed a number of special programmes, supported by online content, during its [4Ramadan season](#), which also saw sunrise and sunset times being given during the Channel 4 News weather. [4Ramadan](#) was produced by Watershed. and

A [YouGov poll](#) released shortly before the broadcasts started showed 52% of respondents opposed to the broadcaster's decision and only 26% supportive. No question was asked, however, about the reasons for opposition or support.

Convincing start for The Story of the Jews

The opening episode of [Simon Schama's history of Judaism on BBC2](#) attracted a very respectable 2.19 million viewers - more than Celebrity Big Brother being broadcast at the same time on Channel 5, although subsequent episodes have done less well.

British Social Attitudes Survey 2012 shows decline in 'religious attachment' but increase in diversity

A key finding of the [2012 BSA Survey](#), released in September, was that religious attachment has declined. According to the survey summary, there is "a marked decline in the proportion who describe themselves as belonging to a particular religion". In 1983 around 2 in 3 (68 per cent) considered themselves to belong to one religion or another. In 2012 only around half (52 per cent) did so. The summary goes on to note that "this decline is in practice a decline in attachment to Anglicanism; in 1983 two in five people (40 per cent) said they were Anglican, and the Church of England could still reasonably lay claim to being England's national church (and thus, arguably, to some extent its fount of moral authority). But now only 20 per cent do so. In contrast, the proportion saying they belong to a religion other than Christianity has tripled from two to six per cent. Britain's religious landscape has not only become smaller but also more diverse."

New study to explore the history of RE broadcasting

Professor Stephen Parker of the University of Worcester is undertaking a study into the history of religious educational broadcasting programmes and the use of religious programmes in RE. The study 'Faith on the Air: a religious educational broadcasting history, 1920-present' is funded by the Leverhulme Trust. To read more, click [here](#).

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