

IMPARTIALITY REVIEW

RELIGION

The review of the BBC's coverage of religion attached was commissioned by the Board of Governors in November 2003, and presented to the Board in July 2004.

Unlike the Governors' most recent impartiality review (of the BBC's coverage of the European Union) – which was conducted entirely outside of the BBC's management chain – the Religion review was supervised and prepared by BBC staff and presented to the Board by the Deputy Director-General.

At their meeting in July 2004 the Governors endorsed the recommendations proposed by the independent panel. The BBC management team has since reported on progress and the Governors will comment on this in the Annual Report & Accounts to be published later this year.



Impartiality Review

Religion

Report to the BBC's Board of Governors

July 2004

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Introduction

In 2003 the BBC's Board of Governors instigated a programme of regular reviews of the impartiality of the BBC's output. The reviews are commissioned twice a year on selected topics and are largely qualitative, based on opinions of an expert panel which is asked to critique the BBC's output, and discussions with the audience, through focus group research. Quantitative analysis of the BBC's output and its competitors' also supports the review.

BBC Governors commissioned a report in November 2003 to consider in detail the impartiality of the BBC's coverage of Religion. This review focused on two separate issues:

- The first is whether in the eyes and ears of the people who know—leaders and members of the faith communities themselves— the BBC gets its coverage of the world of religion right. Is it on the right agenda? Is it accurate? Fair? Unbiased? Does it explain things well?
- The second is an expression of what an inevitably committed audience within the faith communities would like to see and hear more of in the BBC's coverage and expression of the great world faiths and the portrayal of what faith means for the lives of ordinary people.

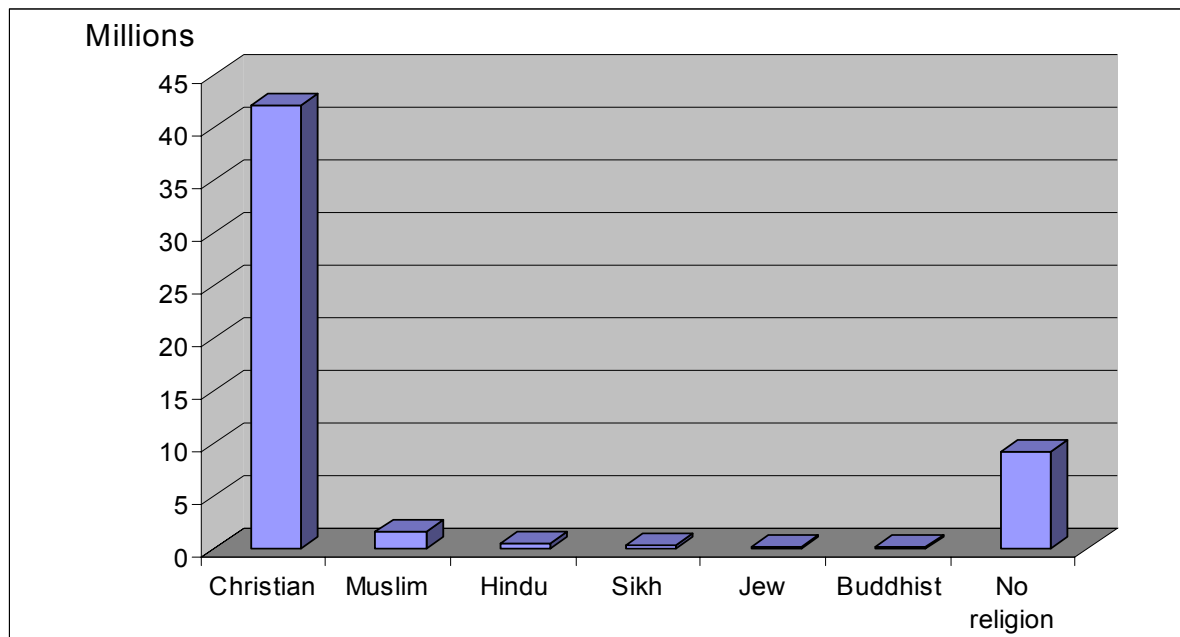
This report is based on two main research elements:

1. A specialist panel review of the BBC's coverage of religion: A panel of seven members of Britain's faith communities, each of whom was a leading figure within their respective community, met in May 2004 to review coverage of religion and religious issues in a range of BBC output on radio and television. The panel was chosen to reflect the diverse religious make-up of the UK, with three panellists representing the largest Christian traditions (Anglicanism, Catholicism, Free Church movement), one representing the Hindu community, one representing the Jewish community, one the Sikh community and one the Muslim community. This report is based on their response to the output and resulting recommendations (see pages 8 to 13).
2. Focus group research was commissioned from MORI to discover what audiences among Britain's faith groups thought about the BBC's religious output. Ten focus groups across the UK were held during May-June 2004. Each of the groups was conducted with practising members of the main religious communities in the UK today, including Anglicans, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and the Jewish faith. The groups viewed and listened to specially tailored clips from BBC Radio and Television. The report is based on their discussion of these (see pages 14 to 28).

Also included as appendices is background data on religious affiliation in the UK (pages 2 to 5) and analysis of the volume of religion output on BBC Television and Radio, with comparisons made to competitors (pages 6 to 18).

Northern Ireland has a unique religious history and experience and is not included in this report (although for completeness the output of BBC Northern Ireland is cited in the output analysis). A similar study is planned to take place in Northern Ireland shortly. One Religion focus group took place in Scotland.

Context: Religious affiliation in the UK



Source: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics

The 2001 United Kingdom Census is a key guide to the religious make-up of the nation. Over 92% of those who filled in census forms chose to answer the voluntary question on religious belief. These responses showed that the clear majority of the UK population is allied to a major faith, though not necessarily to an organised religion. Of that majority group, more than nine out of ten identified with Christianity. Only 16% of those who responded to this census question stated that they had no religion.

As *The Guardian* noted in a leader column on the day following the enthronement of Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury:

*“The Church of England provides an extensive institutional and collective bond for many more people than we might otherwise imagine in what is often seen as an atomised and secular society... [R]eligion in general and the Church in particular are not marginal anachronisms doomed to terminal decline in modern society. On the contrary, they seem to be remarkably resilient and enduring parts of the social order.”*¹

A January 2004 opinion survey by ICM for the BBC TWO programme, *What the World Thinks of God*, revealed that more than half of those questioned believe in an afterlife and two-thirds in God or a higher power.²

In addition to Christianity, Britain is today—as it has been historically—home to a range of other flourishing faith communities. As well as one-and-a-half million Muslims, there are more than 500,000 Hindus and 325,000 Sikhs in England alone.

But we should be clear that while there is an important religious sensibility in Britain, most people do *not* formally practise their faith. This report, though, is about the views of those who do. It records their perceptions of the fairness of media coverage generally and, specifically, of BBC programme output.

Conclusions

I. Religion remains an important feature of life in the UK

The data already cited from the 2001 UK census show that it is wrong to think that agnosticism and atheism are typical of BBC audiences. Over 75% of the UK population identifies with a religion and of those over 90% with Christianity. Research for this report shows that members of all faith groups in Britain believe that religion should feature naturally in programmes across all genres and should not, as they see it, be ghettoised in particular time slots and formats. They cited the BBC TWO series, *A Country Parish*, as an example of a successful religious programme in a peak time slot in which religion is depicted as an integral part of everyday life. Viewing the generality of output, faith leaders and focus group members worry that broadcasters may belong to a largely secular, metropolitan élite that is not much interested in them as audiences or overly concerned about their sensibilities.

II. News: a mixed picture

Strengths

Faith groups think that the majority of people derive most of their knowledge of religion from the news. So the power of news coverage to influence opinion about faiths is felt to be particularly strong. This is clearly both a prized opportunity and a heavy responsibility. There was an acknowledgement of the work done by programme-makers—in Religion & Ethics and Nations & Regions particularly, but also by the specialist correspondents in News—to reflect religious beliefs, practices and values and their influence on people's lives. The skill and creativity of specialist correspondents and reporters (notably Robert Pigott and Martha Doyle) in bringing to air a range of perspectives on multi-faith Britain are generally acclaimed. And since the attacks of September 2001 on the United States, overall coverage of faiths other than Christianity is widely thought to have improved. The News output of the BBC Asian Network, together with some Current Affairs programming (notably on Radio), are praised for their accuracy and richness.

Representation & use of language

But group members and faith leaders believe this to be tempered by both the amount of broadcast time and the prominence of occasional negative and inaccurate coverage, most often in News and Current Affairs output, which betrays ignorance of key issues. The use of what is felt to be inaccurate or highly-charged language (e.g. "fundamentalist" and "extremist") to describe Muslims and members of other minority faiths can cause offence. Minority voices within Islam articulating extreme points of view are thought sometimes to receive disproportionate coverage that harms the image of the faith overall. And there is also criticism that some contributors appear too frequently, insufficiently reflecting the diversity of voices available.

All faith groups believe that more needs to be done to improve research on and contacts with faith groups in Britain. Evangelical Christians are exercised about how the issue of homosexuality and the Christian faith is often discussed; it is not always appreciated by programme makers that references to "gay Christians" can be controversial in themselves. Many Jews perceive coverage of the Middle East conflict to be hostile to Israel and, by extension, to them as a faith community. Roman Catholics are generally worried by what they think is the negative depiction of Catholicism. It is not disputed that child abuse by priests, the health of Pope John Paul II or Vatican teaching on sexual morality are newsworthy. It is the repeated presentation of these aspects of Catholicism alone that leads to a sense of being under attack.

Our journalism will not, of course, always please our diverse audiences. It is not designed primarily to please. But the dynamics of news coverage can sometimes lead to simplifications that harden into orthodoxy. Faith group leaders think that Religion & Ethics, together with BBC Online and Research & Analysis, provide valuable sources of expertise which can be further exploited by programme areas. In particular, more can be done with web resources to ensure accuracy about three key areas: tenets of faith; religious practices and their meaning; and the subtle—but crucial—differences among confessions, traditions and denominations.

III. Depiction of religion in non-core output can appear stereotypical

For some members of faith groups the depiction of religious characters in drama and entertainment output can seem stereotyped, out-of-date and occasionally offensive. It is felt that such figures are highlighted *because* of their faith, rather than seen as normal people who also have a religious belief. For example, some Christians think Dot Cotton in *EastEnders* is made deliberately unappealing to audiences by her eccentric traits and hypocritical behaviour. Others, though, after having viewed a scene of her at prayer in church, think she is convincing. The Chairman of the specialist panel suggested that US television drama was noticeably more successful at integrating characters with a religious dimension into screenplays without making them seem odd or having to distort plotlines. This was not just a Christian perspective. Despite the period of time which has elapsed since *Birds of a Feather* was first transmitted, Jews still vividly recall the character of Dorien Green as a distorting agglomeration of Jewish stereotypes unacceptable even in a comedy programme. And Muslims remember the drama *Spooks* as having, in their eyes, wilfully misrepresented Islam in an episode dealing with a group of young Muslims who have trained as suicide bombers. These are all characterisations in peak time programmes on BBC ONE which have left impressions on faith groups that endure long after the programmes have been transmitted.

IV. Much of the BBC's core coverage of religion is appreciated

Those who regularly practise their faith—whether they are members of religious congregations or faith leaders—look to the BBC for programming on religion. The range and depth of output on Radio are regularly praised, particularly from such key suppliers as Religion & Ethics and Nations & Regions. *Thought for the Day* (Radio 4 and N&R versions), *Pause for Thought* (Radio 2), *Sunday* (Radio 4) and *Choral Evensong* (Radio 3) are often mentioned. The BBC Asian Network is much appreciated by Hindus, Sikhs and younger Muslims. The quality of other programmes, such as one-off dramas and series (e.g. *Beyond Belief* (Radio 4)), is applauded, while Nations & Regions coverage on Television and Radio is often congratulated for its local knowledge, involvement and simple creativity. BBC Online is valued as an educational and information resource and, by some users, as a playback-on-demand facility for programmes. On Network Television, BBC ONE's *Songs of Praise* is widely recognised. Awareness of *The Heaven and Earth Show* is less marked, partly as a result of scheduling which emerges as an important issue for religious groups.

V. Scheduling means that audiences often miss religious programmes

Although faith groups are appreciative of much core output, they are startlingly ignorant of when it is broadcast. Programmes which they say they would be interested in pass them by sometimes because they clash with their religious routine, for example the scheduling of *The Heaven and Earth Show* at 10.00am on Sundays on BBC ONE when many practising Christians are at church, or because they do not know they are there or even what they are about. They contrast the scheduling of BBC religious programmes with, for example, Channel 4's decision to transmit *Children of Abraham* at peak time on a Sunday evening. Channel 4's impact is greater and its commitment can therefore *appear* stronger whatever the truth about the actual amount of output. In addition, the current scheduling pattern is perceived to be inconsistent over the year in a way which marginalises "positive" coverage of faith in core output while "negative" coverage (which is thought to dominate News programmes at prime time) reaches a much wider audience. The focus group members along with some panel members felt that the BBC could do better marketing and promotion of its religious output and that it could also be more effectively targeted at specific religious groups. Such efforts would help in fulfilling the BBC's commitment "to placing significant religious programmes prominently in the schedule".¹

VI. Demand for a wider range of religious programmes is strong

The BBC faces many demands to do more. Audiences ask not just whether individual items are fair but how religion is portrayed by broadcasters in terms of the overall mix of output on Television, Radio and Online. In straightforward, quantitative terms they believe this to be deficient. Unsurprisingly, faith groups would like more coverage of religion in general and their own faith in particular, although they are realistic about the amount of specialist programming that can be provided.

Their aspirations take a variety of forms. They do not believe that there is enough programming which reflects the importance of religion in daily life. They interpret this as a bias against religion. This finding may not be surprising. But it is important because it influences perceptions these groups have about the *seriousness* which the BBC attaches to the subject. Personal experiences of how faith influences the way people live their lives are a particularly valued and popular format. Members of faith groups also seek programmes which feature debate, discussion and education about religion to inform themselves, their children and people of other religions (and of none) about tenets of faith and religious perspectives on topical issues—the disappearance of such programmes as *Heart of the Matter* was mentioned in this context. They feel that the multi-cultural aspects of our society are often well portrayed, but that the *multi-faith* dimension of British life could be more fully and creatively reflected across the output. Inter-faith discussion is thought to be especially relevant here: all groups, except Christian evangelicals, would like more of it. Worship and devotion remain important to all groups (for some this is especially true at key religious festivals), and minority faith groups value local coverage and would like to see and hear more of it. All faith groups think the tone and content of some existing religious output could be more in tune with the times. For example, Christian denominations (especially evangelicals) are keenly sensitive to the portrayal of

¹ *Building public value: Renewing the BBC for a digital world*, BBC, 2004, p. 71.

churches in decline when the reality across the country is more nuanced: some denominations are thriving and increasing.

Specialist Panel

Membership and Methodology

A specialist panel representing Britain's faith communities was convened to conduct a review of the BBC's coverage of religion.

The panel's task was to review the range of BBC programming that covered religious issues and religious experience in News, Drama, Entertainment and Documentaries and contemporary factual as well as Religion & Ethics, and to draw up recommendations based on their findings. This review was based on their response to tapes of BBC Radio and Television output tailored specifically for their faith group and contemporaneous viewing and listening, as well as their past experiences as viewers, listeners and online consumers.

Having viewed and listened to the output, the panel met in plenary session on 27th May 2004. The issues they discussed ranged from scheduling, character depiction and news coverage to drama and misuse of language. They were also able to question Alan Bookbinder, Head of BBC Religion & Ethics, about his Department's output and to express their views on BBC religious output in general.

The panel was chosen to reflect the diverse religious make-up of the UK in 2004, though in the knowledge that the full diversity of religious belief in the UK could only be accommodated within a panel of unmanageable size.

Three of the panellists represented the largest Christian traditions—Bishop Graham Cray for Anglicanism, Bishop Kieran Conry for Catholicism and Rev. Dr. Myra Blyth for the Free Church movement. The majority of Hindu temples in the UK are affiliated to the National Council of Hindu Temples, and its General Secretary, Bimal Krishna das, was invited to speak for the Council on the specialist panel. The contemporary Jewish community in the UK is mostly Orthodox in affiliation and this was reflected in the choice of Rabbi Barry Marcus of the Central London Synagogue as a panel member. He is also a member of CRAC. The Sikh representative, Dr. Parvinder Singh Garcha, is part of the leadership of one of the largest gurdwaras outside India, in one of the densest areas of Sikh population in Britain. Iqbal Sacranie is Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, which is an umbrella organisation for over 400 Muslim organisations in the UK.

Each panel member is a leading figure within their faith community, retaining close contacts with grassroots opinion through pastoral care of dioceses or congregations or through their work. The specialist panel has a wealth of experience of BBC output, both as consumers of BBC Radio, Television and Online services and as occasional contributors, advisors and spokesmen or spokeswomen. Regular contributors to BBC strand output—for example, Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*—were not invited and nor, in general, were members of CRAC.

The panel members were:

The Rt. Rev. Graham Cray

Bishop of Maidstone (Chair). The Rt. Rev. Graham Cray was formerly principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge—an Anglican theological college—and recently chaired the working party which presented to the General Synod the report on the Mission Shaped Church, on fresh expressions of what “church” means.

Bimal Krishna das

For the past thirteen years Bimal Krishna das has been the General Secretary for the National Council of Hindu Temples, which brings together the different traditions of Hinduism. He is also the Communications Officer for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—the Hare Krishna movement.

The Rt. Rev. Kieran Conry

The Rt. Rev. Kieran Conry became in 2000 the Roman Catholic Bishop of Arundel & Brighton in succession to Cormac Murphy O'Connor, following the latter's appointment as Archbishop of Westminster. He is a former private secretary to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Bruno Heim, and his successor, Archbishop Luigi Barbarito. Kieran was appointed Monsignor in 1984 and was for seven years the Director of the Catholic Media Office in London.

Iqbal Sacranie, O.B.E.

Iqbal Sacranie is Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain and he also runs an accountancy firm in Surbiton.

The Rev. Dr. Myra Blyth

Former Deputy General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Rev. Dr. Myra Blyth is currently a lecturer in liturgy and ecumenical studies at Regent's Park College in Oxford, and she is Moderator of the Churches Commission on Racial Justice.

Dr. Parvinder Singh Garcha

For the past four years, Dr. Parvinder Singh Garcha has been a Trustee of Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha in Southall, west London. He has been a GP since 1991 and serves on the Professional Executive Committee for the Hounslow area in Middlesex.

Rabbi Barry Marcus

Since 1995, Rabbi Barry Marcus has been Rabbi at the Central Synagogue in London. He now also serves as a member of the Chief Rabbi's cabinet.

Conclusions & Recommendations

I. Portrayal

Contemporary British society is vibrant, diverse and, contrary to many pre-conceptions, religious. The majority of the population is allied to a major faith, though not necessarily to organised religion: religion plays a greater part in the lives of Britons than most secular-minded metropolitan broadcasters allow. By focusing on these realities, channel controllers, schedulers and programme-makers in both Radio and Television can be encouraged to see religion as something which should break out of the so-called “God slots” and enrich many streams of BBC output, including BBC TWO and BBC THREE, where it is often absent.

“The BBC cannot ignore the high level of allegiance to religion that the 2001 census revealed. There are key issues in society, such as teenage pregnancy rates and violence, and the faith communities have something to contribute to help remedy the problems. There seems to be a stigma attached when the faiths take the high moral ground.”

“News often features stories about the breakdown of society, yet rarely was there anything about the transformative nature of religion – only rituals. The nation is the worse for it.”

The panel recommends that:

- (i) programme-makers be actively encouraged to portray the reality of religion through lived examples in a variety of programme genres; not as something detached from or marginal to everyday life, but as a community with something valuable to contribute.
- (ii) training be made available, perhaps in the form of seminars, to provide programme-makers, commissioners and schedulers with a full picture of how varied religion in our society is and why it matters.
- (iii) fuller religious coverage be offered to younger viewers and listeners through the opportunities provided by the growth in digital services both for debate and understanding and for celebration of faith. Festivals offer a particularly good opportunity to achieve this.

II. Scheduling

It follows from this that, by seeing faith less as a private matter and more as a way of understanding the world which has the power to transform lives, religion becomes something which significantly influences the debate about who we are, how we live our lives and what we aspire to be.

Accordingly, the **panel recommends** that:

- (iv) scheduling of religion specific output, in particular, is reviewed so that programmes are transmitted at more “user-friendly” times.

(v) programmes, such as *Songs of Praise*, and items within programmes, such as *Thought for the Day*, which successfully contribute to the debate on how we live our lives, should retain their prominent slot within the schedules.

III. Knowing the Subject – News and Factual Programmes

In its coverage of Northern Ireland, the BBC has demonstrated its ability to cover highly controversial and divisive subject matter with skill and sensitivity. The panel believes similar care needs to be applied to coverage of the diverse faith communities in Britain today. Yet too often they are being defined by News coverage where the emphasis on the confrontational leads to distorted perceptions—with potentially dangerous results. Inaccurate vocabulary used in programmes can give rise to needless offence. To aggravate the problem, there is a lack of consultation with outside sources of knowledge in the programme-making process, and contacts used by newsrooms frequently seem limited and predictable; across departments, editors, producers and researchers need to be better briefed.

“A BBC One O’clock News report about a request to use a Yorkshire river to scatter funeral ashes, inaccurately grouped together both Sikhs and Hindus, whose funeral rites are different. No Sikhs were interviewed in the piece.”

“BBC programme makers must try much harder to convey the clear impression that these extremists are utterly isolated in the Muslim community.”

“The BBC’s Religious Affairs reporter Martha Doyle’s piece on a Sikh London Marathon runner was very good, but why were there no first generation contributors? Do the BBC lack translators?”

Furthermore, to deliver impartiality and diversity the communities need to be allowed to speak and to recognise themselves in the BBC’s output. The panel is disturbed that extreme points of view are often portrayed as exemplifying mainstream opinion when they don’t.

“Television seems to perceive a need to add a layer of drama or sensation to make religion acceptable, whereas Radio religion seems willing to offer people time to present reasoned arguments and ordinary experience. Television seems to have lost its nerve in this respect.”

“The experience of many faith leaders is that the media forces them to have their debate in public, which is not always helpful; the BBC should acknowledge the effect this is having on the faiths. The Archbishop of Canterbury has asked for the different sides to take a time of reflection over the issue of homosexuality, but the media doesn’t like this silence. The more trust there is on both sides then researchers and producers will know why the faith leaders sometimes turn down interview requests.”

“Panorama: Sex and the Holy City was a good (bad?) example of ‘ghetto’ religious broadcasting; the Catholic Church presented as preoccupied with a narrow field of interests – contraception, condoms, celibacy and child-abuse.”

The panel recommends that:

(vi) the expertise that exists within the Corporation—notably in Religion & Ethics (including Online), BBC Asian Network, and World Service Factual—should be better utilised by programme makers.

(vii) religious contact databases be formalised and kept up-to-date;

(viii) better contacts should be established between the religious communities keen to be consulted and programme editors in areas where errors in content and tone can lead to a breakdown in trust with the BBC.

IV. Knowing the Subject - Drama

The portrayal of religious people in drama can have a powerful effect in influencing audience attitudes, in either a positive and negative way.

“Although a recent episode of Holby City had a positive message of the value of tradition and of the ability of a person from one religious tradition [Islam] to advise someone from another [Hinduism], the episode concentrated on the stereotypical theme of arranged marriages.”

“EastEnder Dot Cotton’s conversation with a statue of Jesus reflected a level of devotional piety which would resonate with many of the 50-plus age group, and would be recognisable to those younger. It was real, and a great discussion point for the soap watchers at work next day.”

“A really sympathetic view of religious character and realistic expression of prayer. One slight reservation with regard to characterisation of Dot as a little eccentric—religion is still not allowed to be part of ‘ordinary’ people’s lives.”

Accordingly, **the panel recommends that:**

(ix) drama producers take care to avoid inflammatory and clichéd storylines and characters who are mere stereotypes. Producers should instead be encouraged to portray religion as a natural part of a character, rather than as an excuse to mark them out as “different.”

Focus Groups (MORI)

Membership and Methodology

Background and Objectives

The key objective of this particular study was to evaluate what the BBC's audience among different faith groups thinks about the BBC's output for their religion. Specifically, the research explored:

- General consumption of media;
- Views on how participants felt their religion was perceived by others;
- How the media represents their religion;
- Views on current religious programming on the BBC; and
- What they would like from the BBC's religious programming.

Methodology

Ten focus groups were conducted with practising members of the main religious communities in Britain today. The table below details the composition of the groups as well as when and where they were conducted.

Group Composition

Group	Religion	Date	Location
1	Anglican	11 May 2004	Cheltenham
2	Evangelicals (including Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and Pentecostals)	12 May 2004	Birmingham
3	Roman Catholic Scotland	10 May 2004	Edinburgh
4	Roman Catholic England	11 May 2004	Cheltenham
5	Muslim ²	13 May 2004	Oldham
6	Muslim	6 May 2004	Luton
7	Hindu	13 May 2004	Leicester
8	Sikh	12 May 2004	Birmingham
9	Jewish	5 May 2004	North London
10	Evangelicals (Methodists, Pentecostal ³)	7 June 2004	South London

Source: MORI

During the groups, specially tailored clips from BBC Radio (from 2004) and Television (many from 2004) were played, which specifically addressed issues of importance for each faith, and people's opinions about these were discussed. There was some overlap in items played where these were of general interest to the different religions.

² The Muslim group: Oldham was mixed gender and aged 18-35. The group in Luton was all male and aged 35+

³ Including black-led Churches

Interpretation of the Data

Qualitative research involves an interactive process between the moderators carrying out the research and those being researched. It provides a way of probing the underlying attitudes of participants, and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insight into attitudes, and the reasons for these, which could not be probed in as much depth with a structured questionnaire.

However, it must be remembered that qualitative research is designed to be illustrative rather than statistically representative. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with perceptions rather than facts, though these perceptions *are* facts to those who hold them.

Throughout the report, use is made of verbatim comments from participants. These have been selected to exemplify a particular view of a body of participants, although it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of the participants as a whole. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, these comments are anonymous.

Publication of the Data

As the BBC has engaged MORI to undertake an objective programme of research, it is important to protect the BBC's interests by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of findings. As part of our standard terms and conditions of contract, the publication of the findings of this research is therefore subject to the advance approval of MORI and the BBC. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

Key Findings

Overview

- Members of faith groups appreciate being asked for their views about media coverage of religious issues and, specifically, BBC output.
- Many participants have access to digital services in their homes, and consume the output of religious channels aimed at their faith communities. Evangelical Christians together with Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs rely more on digital and cable services for religious-specific programmes (God Channel, Zee TV, Sony, B4U). They tend to watch and listen to BBC News output for news coverage; BBC News 24 and BBC News output on BBC ONE and BBC TWO are regularly consumed by those interested in news programmes. These services are thought by participants to be a key source of information on religion for the public at large.
- Participants were recruited on the basis of their consumption of BBC ONE, Radio 2 and Radio 4. Recognition of BBC core religious programming and Online services is highest among Christian denominations. Hindus and Sikhs show significantly greater awareness of BBC Asian Network output than Muslims and value it. These results are broadly consistent for men and women and for different age groups.
- Members of faith groups attach very high importance to the BBC fully representing multi-faith and multi-cultural contemporary Britain as part of its overall public service responsibility to inform and educate.
- All groups want more broadcast coverage of religion in general and their own faith in particular.

How Groups Perceive Religious Output

- The diversity and depth of religious coverage on Radio are widely welcomed; Online services are valued for similar reasons. However, while faith groups appreciate the importance for broadcasters of high audiences for Television, they strongly criticise the smaller number and range of programmes shown, along with the editorial stance of some of them.
- The output of BBC Nations & Regions—including Local Radio—and of the BBC Asian Network is generally thought to cover religious issues and practice knowledgeably and imaginatively. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs consume these services more than other groups and feel Local and Regional output better caters for their festivals and religious interests.
- Faith groups think most religious programming is marginalised by being scheduled at times when those most likely to be interested find it difficult to watch or listen. This means that what they perceive as negative coverage (see News programmes below), reaches a much wider audience than more positive coverage.
- Faith groups think that stereotypes of religious issues and figures dominate output across genres. This view is held with particular conviction by Jews and evangelicals outside the Church of England.

- Participants think that, since the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, there has been noticeably more coverage of minority faiths, especially Islam, in News programmes. However, the clear differences between religions have sometimes been obscured, causing offence to such groups as Sikhs.
- News programmes are thought to focus on the negative or sensational aspects of religion, and the prevailing sense is that the news is bad news. In addition, some faith groups—Muslims, Jews and Roman Catholics—feel themselves to be under particularly close journalistic scrutiny. Roman Catholics think they have received harsh treatment in recent months with coverage of Catholicism concentrating heavily on allegations of sexual abuse against priests; criticism of the Pope; and conservative teaching on moral issues. Jews are affronted by most BBC News coverage of Israel and the conflict in the Middle East which they think is hostile.
- Concerns about fairness and balance in news coverage worry all participants—especially those from minority faiths. They get particularly upset by what they regard as the misuse of such terms as “fundamentalist”, “extremist” and “terrorist” which they perceive as uninformed and hostile to their faith.
- Interviews with religious dissidents or representatives of extreme faith groups are thought to polarise views, under-represent the opinions of the majority and lead the public at large to feel that those who practise their faith are abnormal.
- Participants enjoy light-hearted and humorous programming on religious subjects and characters, provided that it is respectful in its approach.

How Could the BBC Better Meet the Needs of Faith Groups?

- Participants seek more “user friendly” transmission times for religious programming.
- All groups want more religion in the storylines, characters and overall presentation of “mainstream” programme output, especially at peak time. The full range of religious experience and the different ways that religion impacts on people’s lives should be reflected to counter the impression that all religions are exclusive.
- Groups want religious output to be more realistic and representative, with religious people portrayed as normal, with human frailties, rather than strange. Consequently, participants want to see and hear more of the joy of religion reflected in programmes as there is a tendency for output to seem very serious.
- As well as a difference in tone, groups seek more personal stories of faith, along with discussions, debates and educational programmes which give audiences food for thought. However, they place a high premium on such programmes being representative, with the background, religious practice and ethos of contributors carefully considered.

- With the exception of evangelical Christians, members of all other faith groups want more multi-faith programming, including inter-faith elements.
- All faiths feel the BBC needs to be better informed on key tenets of religious belief and practice, especially in non-core output, so that different faith groups are not erroneously grouped together and that differences among denominations, confessions and traditions are properly respected.
- In order to help ensure accuracy in output, the minority faiths in particular wish to see their representatives involved in the programme commissioning process.

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Main Report

Media Consumption

Prior to more detailed discussions on religion and religious programming, participants were asked to discuss what they currently watch on television and listen to on the radio.

Participants consume a wide range of media – both on television and through other media. Specifically they mention:

- BBC News;
- Soaps (especially *EastEnders*);
- Sports;
- Drama;
- Lifestyle programmes (such as travel, home improvements);
- Documentaries;
- Comedies;
- Reality TV; and
- Music.

Viewing and listening habits are relatively consistent among all the faith groups (in terms of the ranges of programmes consumed). There are, however, some differences: many of the Hindu, Sikh and younger Muslim participants are regular listeners to the BBC Asian Network, which they feel covers programming that relates

to their culture and religion. Similarly, they rely on non-terrestrial TV for programmes specific to their culture and religion.

Some of the Evangelical Christians in the Birmingham group regularly view the God Channel for religion-specific programmes. In the London group, however, participants' viewing and listening habits tend to focus on religion-specific programmes. Therefore, most participants watch the God Channel and listen to Premier Radio.

Among all the faith groups, most people say they watch or listen to the BBC specifically for its news (although not exclusively). It is worth noting here that participants were recruited on the basis that they are consumers of the BBC.

Perceptions of different religions

Participants were asked for words and phrases that other people would use to describe their religion. Below we have detailed the responses for each group. It is important to note that participants, on the whole, think other people view their religion in a negative way. As such, people are often defensive when talking about their religion. This is an interesting finding given all participants say religion plays an important and positive role in their own lives.

How people view our religion

Anglicans	Catholics	Evangelical Christians	Jews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuffy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obscure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much formality/strict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not caring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypocritical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wouldn't really know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Closed shop" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultish/peculiar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social club
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative indifference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money grabbing (American influence) • Bible-bashers • Lively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of rules

Source: MORI

How people view our religion

Muslims	Sikhs	Hindus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not really sure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacred cow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamentalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing a turban 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaceful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male dominated (mentioned in the Oldham group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a beard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetarianism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge would be low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confuse us with Buddhists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couldn't tell the difference 	

Media portrayal of religion

In line with the words and phrases that participants feel other people may use to describe their religion, there is a strong sense that religion (for all the faith groups) is portrayed negatively in the media. Many feel that religious characters tend to be stereotyped on TV and are generally portrayed as being 'different' or 'abnormal' whereas non-religious characters are depicted as the 'norm'.

I think every time you see a documentary or film, especially some of these soaps, they always portray the religious person as a bit of a nutcase, wild and crazy.

Male, Evangelical Christian

Media too often portrays the traditional

Across all groups, and particularly among Christians, there is a sense that religious programmes depict a very traditional and stereotypical view of religion. This is, in part, due to the fact that views of a religion's hierarchy are frequently represented, rather than those of the ordinary member.

Harsh, aggressive, strict. They never show the forgiving side of it. I think it's more individuals that they're portraying rather than Islam itself.

Female, Muslim

Among the Evangelical Christians, there is a strong feeling that their branch of Christianity, which they feel is lively and 'funky', is not represented—and when Christianity is portrayed, it is always 'mainstream Christianity' (Anglicanism/Catholicism) that is shown.

Among the Christians, there is a feeling this view is exacerbated by programmes that focus on church services rather than highlighting how their faith impacts on their everyday lives and ethos and feel the emphasis is on 'churchiality not spirituality'.

I think we've got a really stuffy image that comes over on the television. I really think it concentrates too much on church services, and the spiritual side of things is not represented very often, or enough.

Female, Anglican

Many of the participants in the Hindu, Sikh and younger Muslim groups say that arranged marriages are often associated with their religions. When they are presented in the media, the extreme cases are always highlighted rather than examples from contemporary life which they feel are far removed from the traditional view of arranged marriages.

It's like arranged marriages as well. A lot of people think that if you're Asian, whether you're Hindu or as long as you've got brown skin, that you have an arranged marriage or you're going to—and it's not like that at all, I don't think, any more. It may still be in some places, but

they automatically assume because things they've seen on telly or they've heard.

Female, Hindu

Dramatic licence

The Catholic groups in particular feel that the general public often learn about their religion through period and historical dramas. They acknowledge that their faith was often in those days seen as strict, and focused on the fear of God. As such, they feel that people in general still perceive their religion as old-fashioned and full of stereotypical characters. Indeed, they feel there is rarely a 'balanced' person portrayed as a Catholic, but rather 'sex maniacs' or dishonest people.

The films definitely have stereotypes. There's always, well, every time you've got an airport there's always a nun going through it.

Female, Catholic

Most American films tend to portray the gangster where one brother became a priest and the other one was the gangster.

Male, Catholic

What was very good was The Simpsons. It was so accurate. They had two rabbis on the programme and they say the blessings properly. There are times when it's done well, but not usually.

Male, Jewish

As well as debates and discussions, many feel that religious characters or storylines are often stereotyped. The character of Dot Cotton in *EastEnders* is highlighted by many groups, especially the Christians. The Jewish group mention characters that are often exaggerated or caricatured to emphasise their 'Jewishness' (such as the character of Dorien Green in *Birds of a Feather*). It is interesting to note here that, when the Christian groups were shown the clip of Dot Cotton in church, they were pleasantly surprised at her positive portrayal. However, some (mainly those in the London Evangelical group) feel that she will always be viewed negatively in terms of religion because of the way she has been portrayed in the past.

Dot Cotton, she's seen as a Bible-basher. It's a caricature. You see her drinking, smoking, gossiping. That's not what Christianity is about.

Female, Evangelical Christian

News coverage

There is a prevalent view that the news is the main source of information from which people derive their perceptions about different religious groups and by its very nature tends to focus on the negative aspects. Many of the Roman Catholics feel that stories about abuse of children by priests and the hierarchy's response to them give people a skewed view of their religion. Similarly, Jewish participants feel that coverage of their religion is inextricably linked with what they perceive to be negative coverage about the conflict in the Middle East. They also feel that this is often one-sided and portrays Israelis more negatively than Palestinians.

The news always covers the sensational aspects of religion, whether it's child abuse or whatever. The things that catch a wider audience are negative.

Male, Catholic

Well, my personal opinion is that you can take it or leave it in terms of religious programming, but the real thing that annoys people the most is how Israel is portrayed on the news.

Male, Jewish

The Muslim groups feel that, in the current climate, references in the media to *Muslim terrorists* or *Islamic fundamentalists* are unhelpful. The Hindu and Sikh groups feel similarly: when news about Hindus is shown (particularly news from India), Hindus feel they are often referred to as extremists or fundamentalists and Sikhs say they are often portrayed as being militant or defensive.

Your average English person won't really go and communicate with an Asian person. They'll watch the TV or they'll say something and something will be on there which says such a country's been attacked or been raided and oh, what is it? It's Muslims, it's the Taliban or whatever. They automatically presume, they'll just paint everybody with the same brush and say, "Right, they're all like that."

Female, Muslim

It's "Oh, Islamic terrorists," and then you hear the words like "Hindu fundamentalists".

Male, Hindu

That said, the Anglican group feel that the media is making a concerted effort to portray non-Christian religions in a positive light. Indeed, many of the Christians do not feel they have enough coverage in the news.

Other religions, I think, get quite good press. There seems to be a drive at the moment in the television world, there has been over the last few weeks or months even, to portray Islam in a positive light.

Male, Anglican

You don't see much about Catholicism in the news, and if you do there isn't much. Only when it is exposed in the newspapers.

Male, Catholic

Among the Evangelical groups, particularly among the London group, there is criticism of the way the media talks about homosexuality and Christianity. They dislike the fact that the media refers to 'gay Christians' and feel that the media should not link lifestyle and religion—for example, they say that if someone is a thief and a Christian the person would not be referred to as a Christian thief.

Little representation of certain religions

The Sikh and Hindu groups feel their religions receive very little (or no) coverage in the mainstream media (*i.e.* programmes broadcast at peak time for the majority rather than for minority audiences). Prior to September 11th 2001, they feel religious programming focused primarily on Christianity, and since then there has been a greater focus on Islam. While they recognise that their religions are less conspicuous, they nevertheless feel that their numbers and activities entitle them to more representation than they currently receive.

The Evangelical Christians also feel that their branch of Christianity gets little (or no) representation and that Christian coverage focuses on the traditional, which bears little relevance to them. In the London Evangelical group, there is a strong feeling that Christianity as a whole gets little coverage in the media and that the media pays greater attention to Islam.

Islam, Hindus, Buddhists, New Age—they get all the coverage. But when it comes to Christianity, it's right at the bottom of the pile.

Male, Evangelical Christian

Perceived media approach to representing religions

Across the board there is a feeling that religious subjects and/or programmes are approached in an imbalanced way; *i.e.* that the extreme views are often represented rather than the view of the 'ordinary' or moderate person. For instance, many people feel that when discussions or debates are presented, the view of the extremists is given, which is then challenged by a dissident. Many feel that this is done to be provocative and generate debate, but that the wider audience (who may have little religious knowledge) get a distorted picture of that religion, rather than the reality. This, they feel, results in the view that religious people are abnormal or 'not all there'.

They want someone provocative who is weird and strange and controversial. Someone who's actually going to get up there and say something normal just doesn't count.

Male, Jewish

It seems to be the two extremes, doesn't it? The institution in terms of how we've been brought up, how we should behave and you do your dutiful bit and repeat everything that the priest says. Or it's all white and perfect, the perfect family. It's all extreme cases. So I don't think there is balance, it is either one or the other. It is not reflecting how we live our lives as individuals.

Male, Catholic

Scheduling

Among all groups, one of the major criticisms of religious programming is the times at which they are aired. Many feel that religious programmes are shown at times when no-one can, or wants, to tune in. For instance, the Christians feel that most programmes aimed at people of their faith are shown on Sunday mornings: when most are actually at church. They are also critical of some of the weekday coverage that is given, as it often is aired very early in the morning.

Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs complain that programmes relating to their religion are shown or aired either very early in the morning or very late at night. For many, this is indicative of the perceived lack of importance attached to religious programming by broadcasters.

If the BBC does any programmes about Judaism, it's always very late at night when nobody is there, nobody can really watch it, or it's hardly ever done.

Female, Jewish

Because normally Prayer for the Day is on at six in the morning—now, who's up at six in the morning?

Male, Evangelical Christian

There is also a feeling that religious programming shown very early or very late at night often covers religion positively, which is a key requirement across all groups. The younger Muslim group mention the programmes shown on the BBC to mark Ramadan as examples. Therefore, while programming may be balanced, the fact that negative coverage (such as the news) reaches a wider audience compared with positive coverage means that most people will only be exposed to negative portrayals. This, in turn, is felt to exacerbate the stereotypical perceptions that non-religious audiences may have of different faith groups.

Yeah, but the thought of someone who's an extremist on primetime because that's the time when everybody will listen to it. Whereas all the good points, they're on at silly a.m. hours when nobody else is listening to them anyway.

Female, Muslim

As well as scheduling, participants feel that religious programmes are simply not advertised. This issue was particularly explored in the London Evangelical Christian group but is mentioned in some of the other groups—or highlighted by the fact that, in some groups, few people are aware of the BBC's current output. There is a feeling that if programmes were better advertised then people would tune in—even if they are on at difficult times.

I would go out of my way to watch any religious programme because it is novel. It's like a programme about black people, it's not on often, so when it's on, I'll watch.

Female, Evangelical Christian

Representation across different media

Television, particularly terrestrial television, is seen as prioritising religion less than radio. However, it is also recognised that terrestrial television is geared towards high ratings, and therefore is more restricted in terms of the types of programmes it can show. Radio is seen as being more representative of its audiences' needs, and having more balanced views. Furthermore, participants feel it also has more informative and in-depth programmes. For example, programme formats such as 'phone-ins' are seen as being able to incorporate the views of the ordinary person who rings in to make comments, rather than the polarised views often aired on television news broadcasts.

Radio 4 has had some good discussions with Christian and non-Christian battling it out, so that's been a little bit fairer.

Male, Evangelical Christian

On the radio they have talk shows, the public do get their say so you do hear one side and you get the ones that are against and the ones that are for and the ones that make sense. So you get both sides of the story on the radio because people phone in and stuff, don't they?

Female, Muslim

There is some criticism among the Evangelical Christians in the London group that, when debating some issues, there is a lack of balance. The issue of evolution is highlighted, and many feel that the views of creationists are never given.

When they have debates, they always get a humanist to counter what the Bible says, but when they discuss evolution they never get a creationist to give their views. Why is that?

Male, Evangelical Christian

Among terrestrial television channels, Channel 4 is perceived by all the faith groups as 'sticking its neck out' and therefore accommodating people of their faith through their scheduling, and at peak times. Programmes mentioned include *Children of Abraham* and *Sharia TV* (the latter is watched despite being on quite late at night). However, the BBC is felt to have provided some very popular programmes for minority religions in the past, most notably *The Mahabharat* and *Network East*, which are mentioned by participants in their 30s and 40s in the Hindu and Sikh groups. The Muslim groups also mention programmes specifically for Ramadan.

The Muslim, Hindu and Sikh groups say they do not access religious programmes from mainstream media because it does not cater for their religion. Rather, they rely on satellite and cable channels for their religious and cultural programming. Zee TV, MA TV (in Leicester), Sony and B4U are given as examples. As such, most within these faith groups had satellite and cable access. Similarly, within these groups, regional television and radio (both commercial and public stations) as well as the BBC Asian Network are seen as having better coverage of religious affairs than national media, as well as better representation in terms of presenters and contributors. The Hindu and Sikh groups feel that regional media are particularly good because they have their 'ears close to the ground' and are therefore able to produce programmes that are well-researched and more accurate than those produced for national radio or television.

We're in the West Midlands, you know, it's multi-cultural, it's got a big Asian community, so I think on local TV is definitely better. I mean, when I was living in Leicester it was the same there. You just get so many local presenters, Sikhs, Hindus, etc.

Male, Sikh

But there is nothing in the UK on mainstream; to see Asian programmes you have to subscribe to Asian channels.

Male, Muslim

The Evangelical Christians, mostly those in London, also say they do not access terrestrial television for religious programming. Most in the London group and some in the Birmingham group say they watch the God Channel on satellite and digital TV. Others that are mentioned include TBN, UCB TV and the Revelation Channel. Similarly, within the London group all listen to Premier Christian Radio.

Faith groups' preferences

These preferences are remarkably similar across each of the different faith groups and fall into the following categories:

Personal narratives

The majority of the people taking part in the group discussions responded very positively towards clips showing personal narratives. Participants say they enjoy listening to stories about ordinary people and everyday life. They also feel this presents positive role models for younger generations in their faith groups, or those who are questioning, or looking for, their faith. In the London Evangelical group, there is a desire to see programmes that show how religion has saved/helped people—for instance, drug addicts that have turned to Christianity and kicked the habit.

Reflecting everyday life

Among all groups, there is a strong perception that the BBC needs to ensure a more 'real life input' into its religious coverage. At present, many feel that religious coverage presents the views of a religion's hierarchy—for example, the views of bishops, cardinals or imams rather than ordinary members of the congregation. This, they feel, tends to portray the more traditional views (a criticism levelled at religious programming generally). The Evangelical Christians are also keen to point out that they want programming that shows them as a distinct group, rather than being 'lumped together' with mainstream Christianity.

There is also a feeling that those responsible for the current content and style of programming are out of touch with religion in everyday life and little (if any) consultation with faith groups takes place. Participants suggest that programme makers should consult the ordinary members of the different faith groups for content, style and representation. Some feel that researchers/programme makers need to be of the religion they are researching or making programmes about in order for fair and accurate representation to be achieved.

I mean, the thing with these programmes as well is: who actually decides the content of the programme? Because I think if Sikhs were deciding the content they'd be a lot different to that. I think that's an English-Establishment idea of what the Sikh is.

Male, Sikh

Do they have Christian researchers? If they had a board of Christians and different denominations perhaps discussing and choosing what programmes would be suitable.

Female, Evangelical Christian

Programmes debating religion

Across the board people want programmes which make them think and reflect on their faith, or issues within their faith. They also call for issues to be covered in a balanced and thoughtful way. Most feel that these are covered most effectively in programmes which debate religion.

A Mass on TV wouldn't really interest me. What would be interesting is an insight into the Catholic church as an organisation, the changes that are going on within. That would attract my attention.

Female, Catholic

This is particularly the case at festival time, when they feel the media should recognise their beliefs and acknowledge their faith by showing programmes relevant to them. In many of the groups the lead up to Christmas is mentioned as an example

of how a religious festival is currently marked, although Christians would like to see more done at Easter and feel that is their most important festival. There is also some feeling, especially among the Evangelical Christians, that more Christian epics should be shown to mark festivals—such as *Jesus of Nazareth*.

In the Hindu and Sikh groups, local radio, as well as the BBC Asian Network, is felt to provide good coverage of religious festivals, whereas the Muslim groups feel more could be done in this area, although they do acknowledge there have been programmes specifically marking Ramadan.

Multi-faith programmes

There is a desire for more multi-faith programmes, where people from the different religions are represented, among all groups except the Evangelical Christians. The Evangelical group in London are slightly more positive about multi-faith programming than those in Birmingham. However, they do feel that Christianity is so distinct from other religions that showing it in a multi-faith context could dilute it.

People feel multi-faith programmes are important because:

- They help to educate people about different religions; and
- They show people from different religions interacting, which is a reflection of what happens in daily life.

People feel that multi-faith issues can be shown in a number of different genres. The most frequently mentioned format is a discussion forum style, where people from different faiths debate a specific issue. However, they feel representation of multi-faith issues could apply to different formats, such as drama and comedy. In both the Muslim groups, a TV clip that was particularly popular came from *Casualty* showing a Muslim doctor talking to his Hindu patient.

I want to hear about other religions as well as my own religion.

Female, Sikh

The UK is multi-cultural community and the BBC has a worldwide audience, I think they should follow every religion, be better that way.

Male, Muslim

Educational programmes

Most people want two types of programmes, one for themselves, and one which helps to educate non-religious audiences about their faith by portraying a true and accurate picture. These, they feel, should highlight the basic concepts of different religions. There is also a particular need to educate children about different faiths.

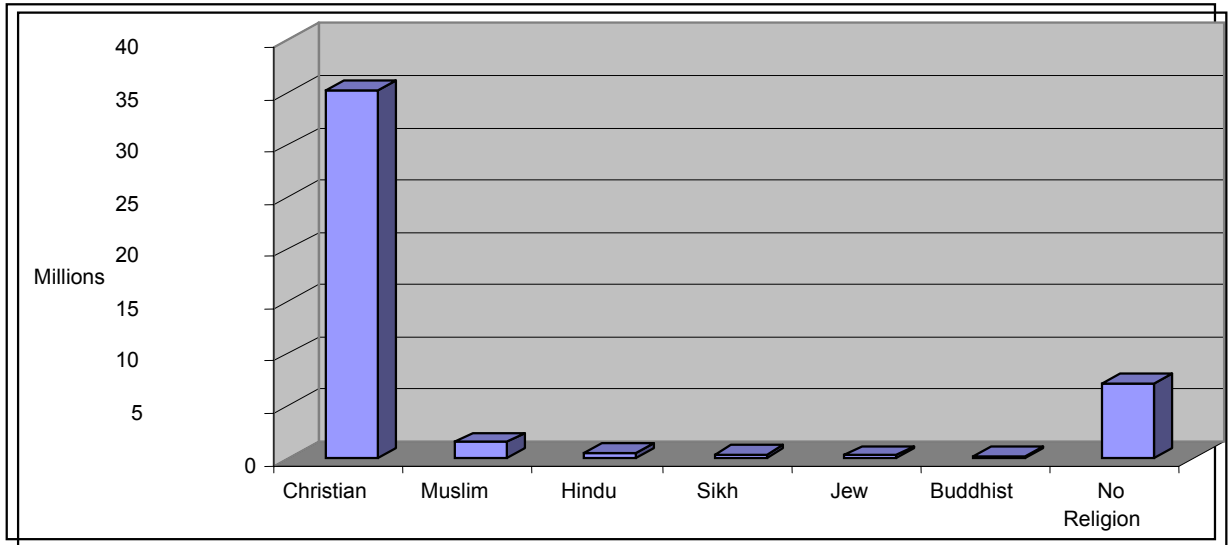
Most, particularly the Christians, are keen that these are portrayed in a non-pious way and show how faith affects everyday lives, through both the ethos by which people live their lives and the way they help others. There is a big call for this type of coverage not to be confined to a religious-specific programme, such as a *Heaven and Earth* format, but also to include popular shows broadcast in peak viewing time by showing 'realistic' and 'non-stereotypical' characters of different faiths.

Appendix A

UK Religion in context Key data

RELIGION IN CONTEXT – KEY STATISTICS

The UK Religious Community as revealed by the 2001 Census



Source: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics

The Figures: Community Numbers by Religion 2001

RELIGION	England	Wales	Scotland	N. Ireland	TOTAL UK
Christianity	35,251,244	2,087,242	3,294,545	1,446,386	42,079,417
Islam	1,524,887	21,739	42,557	1,943	1,591,126
Hindu	546,982	5,439	5,564	825	558,810
Sikh	327,343	2,015	6,572	219	336,149
Jew	257,671	2,256	6,448	365	266,740
Buddhist	139,046	5,407	6,830	533	151,816
No Religion	7,171,332	537,935	1,394,460	45,909	9,149,636
TOTAL	49,138,831	2,903,085	5,062,011	1,685,267	58,789,194

Community percentages by Religion, by country 2001

RELIGION	England %	Wales %	Scotland %	N. Ireland %	TOTAL UK %
Christianity	71.74	71.90	65.08	85.83	71.58
Islam	3.10	0.75	0.84	0.12	2.71
Hindu	1.11	0.19	0.11	0.05	0.95
Sikh	0.67	0.07	0.13	0.01	0.57
Jew	0.52	0.08	0.13	0.02	0.45
Buddhist	0.28	0.18	0.14	0.14	0.26
Other Religions	0.29	0.24	0.53	0.07	0.30
No Religion	14.60	18.53	27.55	2.72	15.56
Not Stated	7.69	8.06	5.49	11.15	7.62
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

2001 Census

- People in Northern Ireland were most likely to say that they identified with a religion (86%) compared with those in England and Wales (77%) and Scotland (67%). About 16% of the UK population stated that they had no religion. This category included agnostics, atheists, heathens and those who wrote Jedi Knight. The Census religion question was a voluntary question, nevertheless, over 92 per cent of people chose to answer it.
- The 2001 Census collected information about ethnicity and religious identity. Combining these results shows that while the population is more culturally diverse than ever before, White Christians remain the largest single group by far. In England and Wales, 36 million people (nearly 7 out of 10) described their ethnicity as White and their religion as Christian.
- Majorities of Black people and those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds also identified as Christian (71 and 52 % respectively). In total there were 810,000 Black Christians and 347,000 Christians from Mixed ethnic backgrounds.
- Among other faiths the largest groups were: Pakistani Muslims (658,000) and Indian Hindus (467,000), followed by Indian Sikhs (301,000), Bangladeshi Muslims (260,000) and White Jews (252,000).
- The Indian group was religiously diverse. 45% of Indians were Hindu, 29% Sikh and a further 13% Muslim. By contrast the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups were more homogenous, Muslims accounting for 92% of each ethnic group.
- Some faith communities were concentrated in particular ethnic groups. For example, 91% of Sikhs were Indian and 97% of Jews described their ethnicity as White. Other faiths were more widely dispersed; significant proportions of Buddhists were found in the White, Chinese, Other Asian and Other Ethnic groups.
- Overall, 15% of the English and Welsh population reported having no religion, although variation by ethnicity was marked. Just over half of all Chinese people, and one quarter of people from mixed ethnic backgrounds, stated they had no religion. Asian, Black African and Irish people were least likely to have no religious affiliation. Fewer than 1 in 200 Pakistanis and Bangladeshis reported having no religion.

Church Attendance

Average Sunday Church Attendance in England in 2000

Anglican	1,063,300
Baptist	280,000
Catholic	990,400
Independent	150,200
Methodist	372,600
New Churches	248,400
Orthodox	25,600
Pentecostal	216,400
United Reformed	112,000
Other Churches	94,800
TOTAL	3,553,700

Average Sunday Church Attendance in Wales in 2000

Church in Wales	62,300
Baptist	22,500
Catholic	43,800
Methodist	15,600
Presbyterian Church of Wales	23,800
Union of Welsh Independents	16,300
Other Churches	39,500
TOTAL	223,800

Average Sunday Church Attendance in Scotland in 2000

Episcopal	19,500
Baptist	24,800
Catholic	211,200
Church of Scotland	248,600
Independent	45,000
Other Presbyterian	22,600
Other Churches	30,700
TOTAL	602,400

Social Trends

- While Catholic and Jewish wedding rates have remained virtually static over the past century, Church of England weddings have fallen from a 68 per cent rate in 1987 to a 22 per cent rate today while civil ceremonies have risen in the same time from 14 per cent to 64 per cent.
- In 1975 the percentage of births outside marriage was 9.2%; by 2001 40% of births were outside marriage.

What the World Thinks Of God

The following were the key results of the United Kingdom ICM poll for the BBC programme *What the World Thinks of God* (based on 1001 interviews in January 2004)

- 46% said they had always believed in God.
 - 67% said they believed in God or a higher power.
 - 79% believed in God, a higher power or a sense of spirituality.
 - 28% pray regularly; 18% at a time of crisis; 23% at religious events such as marriages and funerals; 4% at religious festivals, 25% never.
 - Asked who is more influential – God or David Beckham? – 56% said God and 37% David Beckham.
 - 51% didn't believe that "death is the end," 40% believed "death is the end"
-

Appendix B

Output Analysis

Statements of Programme Policy

BBC Network Core Religious Output

The following information is designed to give some context to the perceptions of the expert panel and the focus groups.

The Statements of Programme Policy made by the BBC included in 2003/4 a commitment for a total of 112 hours of religion on BBC ONE and BBC TWO. The commitment for 2004/5 is the same. The detail of that commitment across Television channels and Radio networks and its fulfilment are provided in the tables below:

<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Performance</u>
<i>BBC ONE</i> 80 hours of religious programmes as part of a commitment to 112 hours across BBC ONE and BBC TWO	87 hours of religious programmes as part of a total of 124 hours of religion across BBC ONE and BBC TWO
<i>BBC TWO</i> 20 hours of religious programmes as part of a commitment to 112 hours across BBC ONE and BBC TWO	37 hours of religious programmes as part of a total of 124 hours of religion across BBC ONE and BBC TWO
<i>Radio 2</i> 150 hours of religious output in peak time	163 hours of religious output in peak time
<i>Radio 4 (LW + FM)</i> 180 hours of religious programming	182 hours of religious programming
<i>Asian Network</i> "Broadcast early morning devotional programmes throughout the year and mark the major festivals with specially commissioned programmes"	"Regular religious programming totalled 11 hours a week with special programming marking major festivals"

Television

The table below lists religious output by hours broadcast in Network Television over the last three years.

Network Television Hours of Religious Output 2004/2003/2002

BBC ONE			BBC TWO			BBC THREE/ BBC CHOICE			BBC FOUR/ BBC KNOWLEDGE		
2003/4	2002/3	2001/2	2003/4	2002/3	2001/2	2003/4	2002/3	2001/2	2003/4	2002/3	2001/2
87	84	102	37	33	18	13	-	4	30	18	55

Source: BBC Annual Reports 2002, 2003, 2004

In the review of Television in the 2004 Annual Report the Governors state:

"Consultation with our independent advisory body, the Central Religious Advisory Committee (CRAC), has already highlighted some disquiet over the place of religion in the BBC ONE schedule. Work will be undertaken in the next year to assess the effectiveness of the religion strategy we approved in 2002 which promised high impact religious programming on BBC ONE alongside Songs of Praise and The Heaven and Earth Show. While research indicates that the BBC remains the preferred channel for religion, we are concerned that there may not be enough landmark output in peak time to make a regular impact with viewers"

Source: BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2003/2004, pp. 25-6.

And CRAC itself is cited in the 2004 Annual Report as follows:

"This year the Committee praised Radio for the range, quality and vitality of its religious programming. BBC Radio 4's Beyond Belief was particularly commended for the intelligence of its approach and its commitment to diversity not only between faiths but within them. The Committee also noted with appreciation the range of high quality religious programming on BBC Radio 2 and BBC World Service.

On television the picture was more mixed. The Committee found much good programming, with observational documentaries, such as When the God Squad Came to Town, praised for their presentation of religious themes and subjects in an accessible and engaging way. There was concern however at what the Committee perceived to be a lack of understanding of religious faith on the part of some programme makers. There was a widespread view, for instance, that Noah's Ark had proceeded on the incorrect assumption that most Christians hold a literal belief in the flood story and that such false assumptions are too frequently in evidence.

The Committee raised other concerns such as the late and variable scheduling of religious programming on television and is yet to be convinced that the correct balance has been struck between the commitment to regular, continuing series and one-off documentaries.

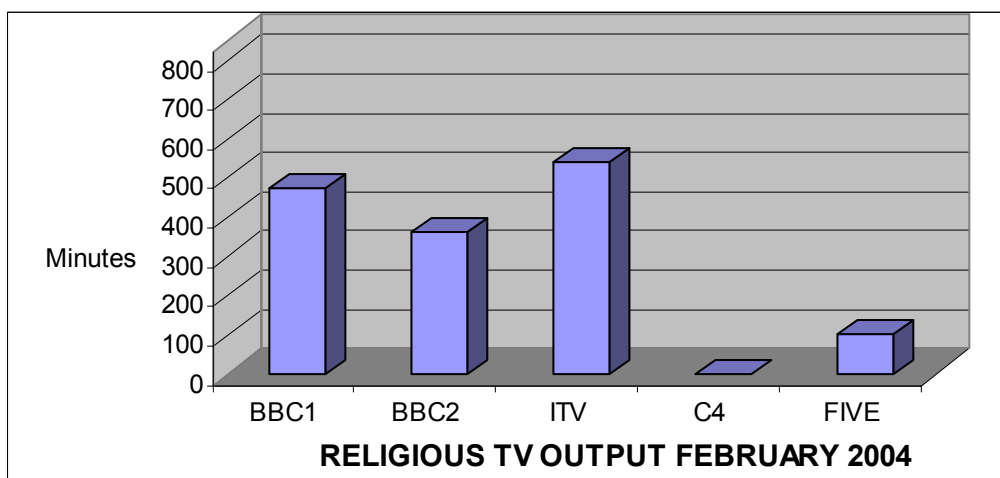
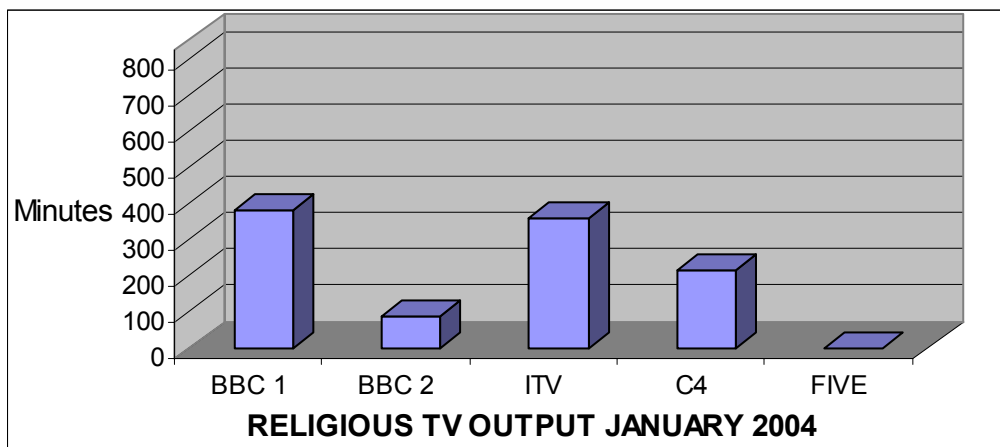
The Committee will keep these questions under review over the coming year while also reviewing its own role and workings with a view to playing a more proactive, supporting role for programme makers.”

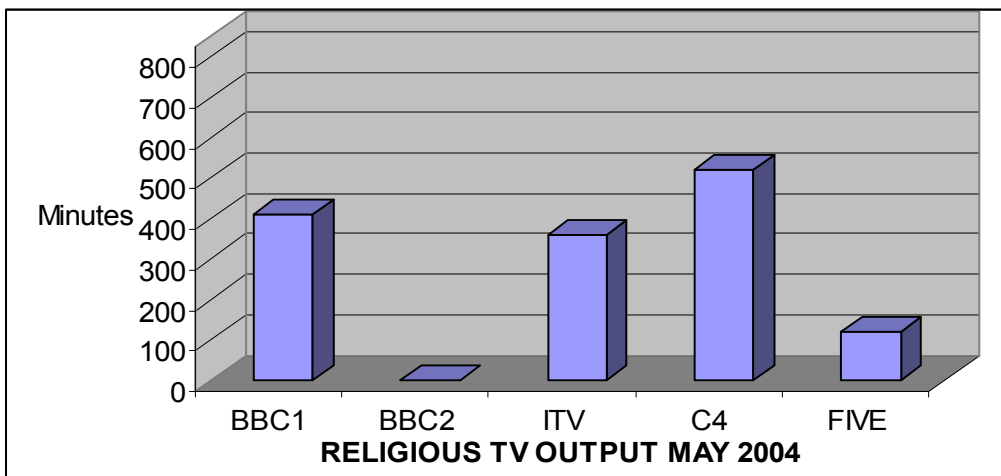
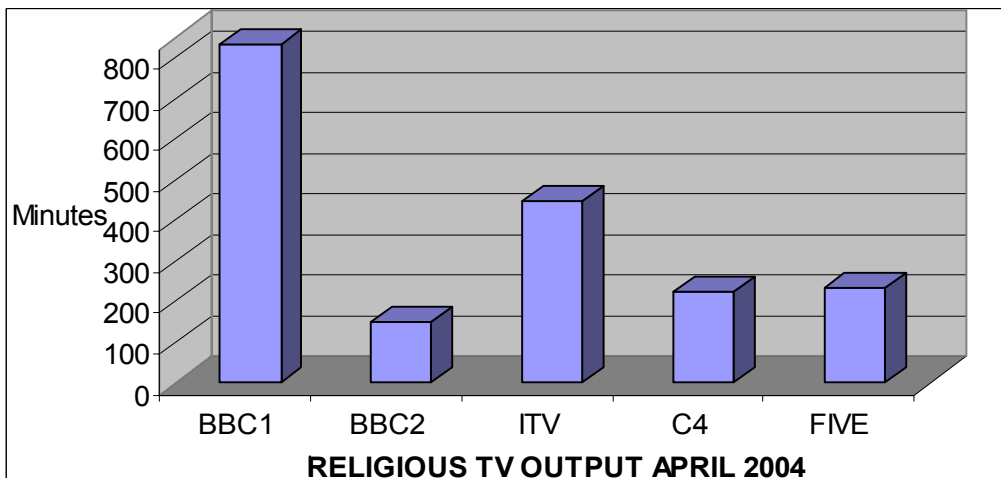
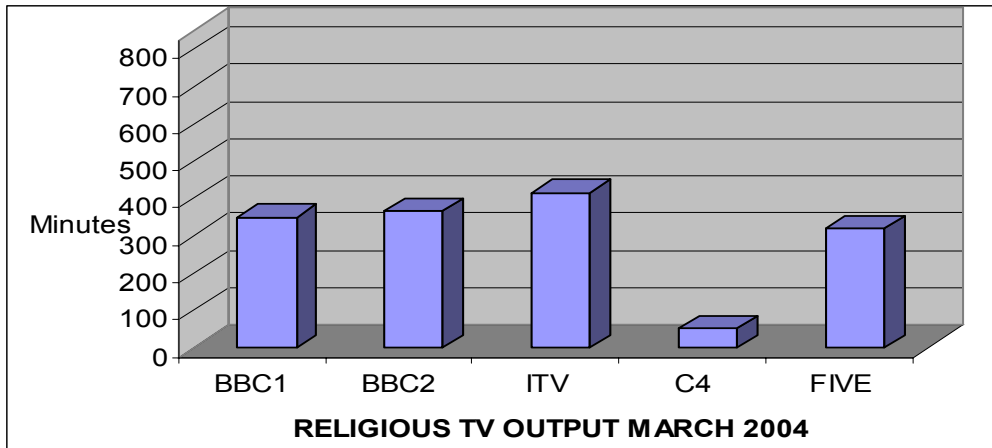
Source: BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2003/2004, p. 77

Performance January-May 2004

BBC ONE’s commitment to *The Heaven and Earth Show* and *Songs of Praise* and ITV’s commitment to *My Favourite Hymns* and *The Storykeepers* mean that these networks show the greatest consistency when it comes to hours devoted to religious output. As might be expected in a month which included the festivals of Easter and Passover, religious programme output on BBC ONE doubled in April. BBC TWO’s religious output is patchier. In March *The Battle For Britain’s Soul* and *A Seaside Parish* helped boost its output to 6 hours. But in January there were ninety minutes, in April two hours and in May no religious programme output at all.

Religious Television Output, Terrestrial Channels, January – May 2004





Source: Radio Times

Audience Figures for BBC Television Religious Programmes

Television 2004

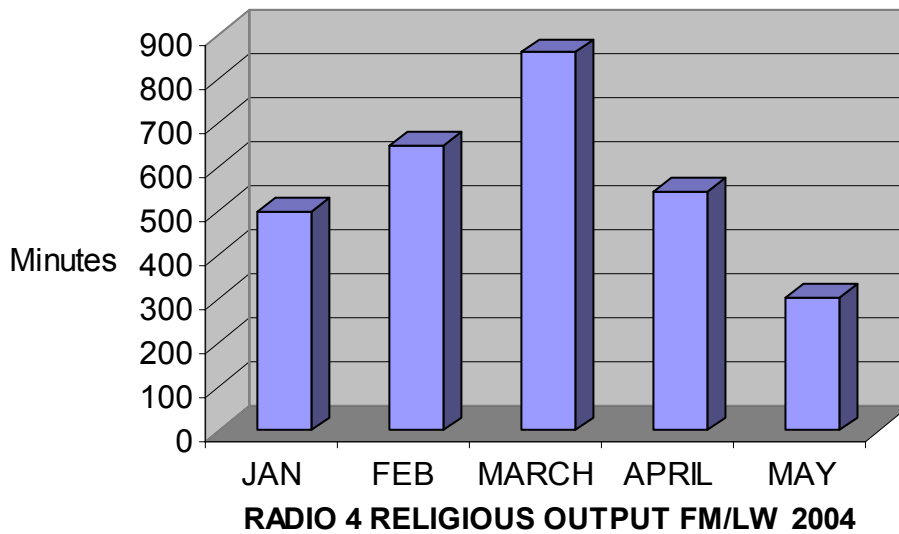
Heaven & Earth BBC ONE (average 2003/04)	1.0 million	15.3% share
Songs of Praise BBC ONE (average 2003/04)	3.5 million	20.0% share
What the World Thinks of God BBC TWO	1.7 million	7.0% share
The Battle for Britain's Soul BBC TWO	2.0 million	9.25% share

Source: BBC Audience and Consumer Research

Radio

Radio 4 remains the largest broadcaster of Religion & Ethics programming across all BBC platforms. The network's programming includes the weekly strands *Sunday* and *Something Understood*; the *Daily Service* and *Thought for the Day*, as well as such series *The Moral Maze*, *Beyond Belief* and *The Choice*.

Radio 4 Total Religious Programming output for Q1 and Q2 (part) 2004



Source:
Radio Times

Audience Figures for BBC Network Radio Religious Programmes

Radio 2004

Thought for the Day Radio 4	2.7 million
Sunday Radio 4	1.6 million
Sunday Worship Radio 4	1.7 million
Daily Service Radio 4 LW	0.62 million (estimate)
Something Understood Radio 4	0.41 million
Good Morning Sunday Radio 2	2.2 million
Sunday Half Hour Radio 2	0.41 million
Pause for Thought Radio 2 6.16am/9.15am	1.5 million/4.7 million
Choral Evensong Radio 3	0.25 million (estimate)

Source: RAJAR

Sources:

- UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends No 4.
- English Church Census 2000
- National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO
- *BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2002/2003; 2003/4*