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Public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio: Quick Reference Guide

Ipsos MORI research for Ofcom

Warning: this guide contains highly offensive language and discussion of content which may cause offence.

Ipsos MORI



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Introduction

Warning: this guide contains highly offensive language and discussion of content which may cause offence.

How to use this Guide

Ofcom commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct research to help them understand public attitudes towards offensive language on TV and radio. This document serves as a Quick Reference Guide summarising views towards the acceptability of individual words on TV and radio. We have also developed a full summary report that this Guide should be read in conjunction with, which contains additional findings related to offensive content including: blackface, misgendering, deadnaming and mimicking accents.

This document aims to provide all stakeholders, but broadcasters in particular, with useful information about how acceptable or unacceptable viewers and listeners regard the broadcast of specific potentially offensive words.

The importance of context

During the research, participants were asked about their views on the acceptability of specific words and phrases being broadcast on scheduled TV both before and after the watershed (9pm to 5.30am). There is no watershed on radio, where the broadly comparable concept of times “when children are particularly likely to be listening” is used.¹

Participants typically had clear views about how offensive different words were, but often struggled to rate the acceptability of broadcasting them on TV and radio without additional contextual information. This was particularly difficult for respondents in the quantitative survey, who were asked for their spontaneous views on the acceptability of 186 English words before and after the watershed in isolation, without any further information or discussion with others.

“It was often difficult to judge [acceptability] for either before or after the watershed without knowing the context in which the word was used.” - England, Female, Survey Open Response

Although, there was an acceptance that certain words and phrases were stronger than others, there was widespread agreement that most words could be broadcast on TV or radio in the right circumstances. In considering the overall acceptability of the use of a word, participants considered three broad questions:

- **What was broadcast?** Including the perceived strength of the word, and any historical or cultural norms around the language.
- **How was it broadcast?** Including expectations based on contextual factors such as the timing, type of programme (including genre and style of show), channel or station, who was involved (including the person using the language and the person/people being spoken to), and any mitigating actions such as warnings or apologies.
- **Why was it broadcast?** Including the perceived purpose or intention behind the language used. Participants considered the possible motivations of broadcasters,

¹ This refers to between 06:00 and 09:00 and 15:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday during term time; and between 06:00 and 19:00 at weekends all year around, and in addition, during the same times from Monday to Fridays during school holidays. See https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/40541/offensive-language.pdf

programme makers, presenters, and contributors to assess whether the use of language was reasonable within the context.

The summary report provides full details of attitudes towards these different contextual factors, which formed an essential part of how participants judged the acceptability of potentially offensive words on TV and radio. This means the findings in this Guide should be treated with care and reviewed in conjunction with the full summary report.

Methodological note

The following analysis brings together the findings from the quantitative survey with findings from the qualitative groups, in which participants discussed the strength of around 25 words. The words discussed in each group differed to ensure all 186 English words were covered at least twice across the qualitative research. In this Guide, we have categorised each word into one of three broad groupings:

- **Mild:** Words in this category are unlikely to concern audiences in most circumstances and require limited context.
- **Moderate:** These words have a greater potential for offence than mild words, and a higher level of context should be considered based on what audiences would reasonably expect.
- **Strong:** These words are perceived as highly offensive and need to have a clear and strong contextual justification for broadcast.

Below we have provided a summary table for each category of offensive language. This is based on the overall pattern of views seen in the ratings for each word assessed in the survey, alongside findings from the qualitative discussions.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the acceptability of each word being broadcast on TV or radio and this provided a starting point for the categorisation. We have brought these findings together with insights from the qualitative research where it was possible to have further discussion about the strength and meaning of each word in different contexts. This means some words have been assigned to categories based on insights from the qualitative research with the general public and minority audiences. **Words which were familiar to fewer than 40% of quantitative respondents are highlighted with an asterisk (*) and these findings should be treated with additional caution.**

Our approach means that qualitative participants spent more time discussing certain words than others, particularly those related to discriminatory language and the words used in the clips and scenarios. It should also be noted that participants **were not provided with definitions** of the words included in the research in either the qualitative or quantitative data collection. Familiarity with the words was therefore self-reported, and the extent to which participants knew about how words or phrases can be used in an offensive way is likely to have varied. The research did not seek to validate participants' interpretations of the meaning of each word.

Furthermore, while there was consensus about the acceptability of some words in specific contexts, there were also different views and significant debate. This is reflected on further in the summary report and the descriptions of each word below.

In each section, words have been listed in alphabetical order according to their category. ***Warning: this guide contains highly offensive language and discussion of content which may cause offence.***

Views of participants on general swear words

How research participants generally rated swear words		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Bint Bitch Bloody Bigger Chav Cow Crap Damn Douchebag Effing Feck Ginger Git Minger Pissed Pissed off Sod off Uppity	Bastard Bellend Bloodclaat* Bumberclat* Dickhead Shit Shite Son of a Bitch Twat	Fuck Motherfucker

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Bastard	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Bellend	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Bint	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Bitch	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants recognised how <i>bitch</i> is often used to convey emotion and reflect real-life, for example in a drama. 	High level of recognition.

Bloodclaat*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Low level of recognition.
Bloody	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Bugger	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Bumberclat*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Low level of recognition.
Chav	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Cow	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants regarded cow as mild or not offensive as it was perceived as unlikely to cause harm, even if directed towards an individual. 	High level of recognition.
Crap	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants regarded <i>crap</i> as mild or not offensive as it was perceived as unlikely to cause harm, even if directed towards an individual. Parents were more likely to want to limit the potential for children to come across this swear word. 	High level of recognition.
Damn	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants regarded <i>damn</i> as not offensive, but parents expressed concerns over children hearing and using the word. 	High level of recognition.
Dickhead	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Douchebag	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Effing	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Feck	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.

Fuck	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although <i>fuck</i> was categorised as strong, moderate and mild by different groups of qualitative participants, they largely agreed it should not be aired before the watershed on television or, on radio, at times when children are particularly likely to be listening in order to protect children. Older participants from the general public were more likely to rate <i>fuck</i> as strong, while those in the middle age category consistently saw it as moderate. Younger participants held more mixed views. Those who felt <i>fuck</i> was not strongly offensive suggested that it tended to be used in a more general way rather than targeting an individual or group (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). Participants found accidental use of the word more acceptable, particularly if it was clearly a mistake and was followed up by a timely apology. 	High level of recognition.
Ginger	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Git	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Minger	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Motherfucker	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seen as one of the least acceptable words before the watershed and at times when children are particularly likely to be listening by survey respondents. 	High level of recognition.
Pissed	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Pissed off	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.

Shit	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Shite	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Sod Off	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Son of a Bitch	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Twat	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.

Views of participants on references to body parts

How research participants generally rated words for body parts		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Arse Balls Bawbag* Choad*	Arsehole Beaver Bollocks Clunge Cock Dick Fanny Knob Minge Prick Pussy Snatch Tits	Cunt Gash Japs eye Punani Pussy hole

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Arse	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Arsehole	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Balls	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Bawbag	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish participants in the qualitative research rated it as not offensive or mild. 	Low level of recognition.
Beaver	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Bollocks	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Choad*	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Low level of recognition.

Clunge	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Cock	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Cunt	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seen by survey respondents as one of the least acceptable words before the watershed on television or, on radio, at time when children are particularly likely to be listening. During qualitative discussions, <i>cunt</i> was viewed as particularly strong and participants described how they would be offended if it was used towards them. It often generated strong personal reactions, and participants had mixed views about its acceptability, even late at night. Some felt it was acceptable for broadcast after the watershed, particularly if used in a general rather than a targeted way. They felt that <i>cunt</i> could be used if reflecting reality or when trying to portray strong negative emotion, particularly in programmes where such language would be expected (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Dick	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Fanny	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Gash	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Japs eye	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Knob	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.

Minge	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Prick	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Punani	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Pussy	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants felt that body parts related to typically female anatomy were often more offensive than typically male body parts, suggesting that word relating to the vagina such as <i>pussy</i> were often used as insults to infer weakness. This had the potential to add further offence due to perceptions of misogyny (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Pussy hole	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Snatch	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Tits	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.

Views of participants on sexual references

How research participants generally rated sexual references		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Bang Bonk Frigging Ho Tart	Jizz MILF Shag Skank Slag Slapper Spunk Tosser Wanker Whore	Cocksucker Cum Nonce Prickteaser Raped (in a sporting context) Slut

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Bang	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Bonk	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Cocksucker	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Cum	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Frigging	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Ho	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Jizz	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
MILF	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Nonce	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.

Prickteaser	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Raped (in a sporting context)	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants found this highly offensive. They felt it was never acceptable to use in a sporting context and trivialised sexual assault (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	
Shag	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Skank	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Slag	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Slapper	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Slut	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Spunk	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Tart	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Tosser	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Wanker	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Whore	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.

Views of participants on political references

How research participants generally rated political references		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
a Karen Boomer Gammon Libtard* Nat* Remoaner Snowflake TERF*	Femi-nazi Yoon*	

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
a Karen	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Boomer	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Femi-nazi	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Gammon	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>gammon</i> was not always recognised by participants. Those who were familiar with it, felt it was less offensive than other derogatory words because it focuses on people's attitudes rather than their identity. Commonly seen as a humorous term for when people get angry about politics (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	Medium level of recognition.
Libtard*	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Low level of recognition.
Nat*	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Low level of recognition.

Remoaner	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Snowflake	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, participants had mixed levels of recognition of <i>snowflake</i> as an offensive term. It was commonly associated with younger people or being overly sensitive but was not seen as particularly offensive (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
TERF*	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Low level of recognition.
Yoon*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Low level of recognition.

Views of participants on references to race, nationality and ethnicity

How research participants generally rated words related to race, nationality and ethnicity		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Cracker Freshy* Jew Jock Nazi Oriental Taff Uppity	Bud Bud* Chinaman Coconut Coloured Curry Muncher Honky Jap Kraut Monkey Paddy Sheep Shagger Slope Tinker	Ching Chong Chinky Coon Darky Gippo Golliwog Golly Half-caste Jungle Bunny Kike* Negro Nigger Nig-nog Paki Pikey Raghead Sambo Spade Spic Uncle Tom Wog Yid

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Bud Bud*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, Bangladeshi participants saw it as stronger than Indian and Pakistani participants who didn't find it offensive or saw it as mild. 	Low level of recognition.
Chinaman	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Ching Chong	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, Chinese participants saw this as strongly offensive. 	
Chinky	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, Chinese participants saw this as strongly offensive. 	High level of recognition.
Coconut	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>coconut</i> was generally perceived as mild or moderate among participants from South Asian communities, although opinions were mixed. In contrast, those who saw <i>coconut</i> as offensive felt it was a derogatory term for South Asians and broadcasting it on TV or radio would make use of the word more acceptable. Black participants generally regarded the term as offensive and perpetuating racial stereotypes. They felt it was only used when a Black person did not fit society's stereotypical view of how they should be (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). Largely regarded as more acceptable if said between people of the same ethnicity. 	Medium level of recognition.
Coloured	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	High level of recognition.
Coon	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Cracker	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Curry Muncher	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second-generation South Asian participants saw it as more strongly offensive compared to first generation 	Medium level of recognition.

	South Asian participants who tended to rate it as moderate or mild.	
Darky	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Freshy*	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Low level of recognition.
Gippo	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from Traveller and Gypsy communities saw <i>gippo</i> as an offensive term, and felt it stereotyped their community. They felt that <i>gippo</i> was used on TV and radio in a way that would not be allowed for other racist words, trivialising the stereotyping of Traveller communities (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	Medium level of recognition.
Golliwog	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Golly	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Half-caste	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Honky	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Jap	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Jew	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the word <i>Jew</i> was not seen as inherently offensive, Jewish participants felt there was a difference between Jewish and <i>Jew</i>, preferring the former 	High level of recognition.

	<p>term (see Chapter 3 of the summary report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They described how <i>Jew</i> was often accompanied alongside a negative word, like 'dirty', when being used to discriminate against Jewish people. 	
Jock	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Jungle Bunny	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Kike*	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Low level of recognition.
Kraut	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Monkey	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Nazi	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Negro	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Nigger	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the qualitative research, members of the general public tended to view <i>nigger</i> as a particularly strong word and unacceptable for broadcast without very strong contextual justification. Black participants also viewed this word as very strong. For some Black participants, the racist connotations and historical context of the word meant they felt it was never acceptable for broadcast, even if used by a Black person in a reclaimed way. In some cases, Black participants distinguished between the word <i>nigga</i> which they felt could be used as a term of endearment within certain Black communities comparing this with the word <i>nigger</i> which is used to offend. Although there was discussion about use of <i>nigger</i> in a reclaimed way (see 	High level of recognition.

	<p>Chapter 4 of the summary report), participants from the Black community largely felt that it should not be used on TV or radio without strong justification given the highly derogatory nature of the word and the historical context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This contrasted with views from the general public and other groups who were less clear on the acceptability of people from the Black community using <i>nigger</i> in a reclaimed way on TV or radio. • The abbreviation 'n-word' was widely recognised by qualitative participants across groups. 	
Nig-nog	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	Medium level of recognition.
Oriental	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative participants from the Chinese community generally rated <i>Oriental</i> as either not offensive or mild, seeing it as a descriptive word. • However, they reflected that there were better ways to describe someone's ethnicity and acknowledged that some people do find it offensive. • Generally seen as less offensive when used to describe an object, such as food or artwork, than a person (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Paddy	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	High level of recognition.
Paki	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative participants from South Asian communities widely rated <i>Paki</i> as 'strong' and saw it as unacceptable for broadcast on TV before the watershed or on radio at times when children are particularly likely to be listening. • First generation participants were more likely to see the word as strongly offensive, describing how they had 	High level of recognition.

	<p>experience of it being used towards them as a form of abuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In contrast, second generation participants were more likely to have experience of using the word in a reclaimed way among their friends, although they still rated the word as strong. • The abbreviation 'p-word' was widely recognised by South Asian participants but was not always familiar to the general public (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	
Pikey	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants from Traveller and Gypsy communities described <i>Pikey</i> as an offensive term for Travellers and did not think it should be used on TV or radio. • They explained how it is often said to make fun of their community and encouraged offensive stereotypes (see Chapter 3 of the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Raghead	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated as strongly offensive by South Asian participants in the qualitative research. 	Medium level of recognition.
Sambo	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Sheep Shagger	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	High level of recognition.
Slope	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Spade	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Spic	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Taff	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Tinker	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	Medium level of recognition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from Traveller and Gypsy communities found it strongly offensive. 	
Uncle Tom	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Uppity	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The racial connotations of the word were not widely recognised by qualitative participants. Views towards the word varied among Black participants in the qualitative research, ranging from not offensive to moderate. 	Medium level of recognition.
Wog	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Black participants in the qualitative research. 	High level of recognition.
Yid	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widely regarded as derogatory and highly offensive by Jewish participants during the qualitative research. There was no consensus on the acceptability of using it affectionately between people from the Jewish community. During qualitative discussions, some Jewish participants recognised the use of the word in a positive way in relation to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. While some felt this was an acceptable use of the term others still found this usage offensive. However, most familiar with this use of the word felt that it would be unlikely to be broadcast on TV and radio in this context. 	Medium level of recognition.

Views of participants on references to sexual orientation and gender identity

How research participants generally rated words related to sexual orientation and gender identity		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Fairy Mincing Nancy Pansy Queen Transsexual	Bender Bent Bummer Fag Homo Lezza Ponce Poof Queer that's Gay	Batty Boy Butt Bandit Chick with a Dick Dyke Faggot Fudge Packer Gender Bender He-She Muff Diver Rugmuncher Shemale Shirt Lifter Tranny

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Batty Boy	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Bender	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Bent	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Bummer	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Butt Bandit	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Chick with a Dick	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>Chick with a Dick</i> was repeatedly seen as strongly offensive. It was widely considered to be outdated and not acceptable to air before the 	High level of recognition.

	watershed (see Chapter 3 in the summary report).	
Dyke	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGBTQ+ participants tended to agree that <i>dyke</i> could be used in a reclaimed way by lesbians to self-identify or among friends. In this context, the word was not seen as offensive and LGBTQ+ participants were familiar with it being used in this way. However, they felt it should only be used after the watershed as audiences could misunderstand why it was acceptable to use between friends but not more widely (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Fag	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, some participants from LGBTQ+ communities described using <i>fag</i> among their friends and felt it was more acceptable than <i>faggot</i>. However, this view was not shared by all LGBTQ+ participants, with some considering both words as strong and unacceptable to broadcast. There was some discussion about the term <i>fag hag</i> being used affectionately by people within the LGBTQ+ community (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Faggot	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Faggot</i> was seen as 'strong' by qualitative participants, including those from the LGBTQ+ community who emphasised how <i>faggot</i> was more likely to be used as an insult. 	High level of recognition.
Fairy	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research <i>fairy</i> was perceived as mildly offensive. 	High level of recognition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They described how it was an outdated term that stereotyped gay men as effeminate. 	
Fudge Packer	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Gender Bender	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
He-She	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>he-she</i> was repeatedly seen as strongly offensive. It was widely considered to be outdated and not acceptable to air before the watershed, particularly by trans and non-binary participants (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	Medium level of recognition.
Homo	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Lezza	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Medium level of recognition.
Mincing	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Muff Diver	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Nancy	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Pansy	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Ponce	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Poof	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Queen	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Queer	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was some confusion among participants at the general public 	High level of recognition.

	<p>workshops about the acceptability of <i>queer</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the one hand, participants understood it had been used in a derogatory way in the past and felt it could be used to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people, for example by describing an individual as 'a queer'. Using the word as an insult was widely seen as unacceptable for broadcast on TV or radio, without clear contextual justification such as in a drama or documentary about homophobia. However, participants also noted that <i>queer</i> is included within the acronym LGBTQ+ and is therefore being used in a way that was not seen as offensive to describe sexual identity and a broader community. For some general public participants, this made the word acceptable for broadcast including by those both within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	
Rugmuncher	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Shemale	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Shirt Lifter	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
That's Gay	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The word gay was not seen as offensive by participants but use of '<i>that's Gay</i>' was typically considered derogatory. It was felt that the phrase suggested being gay was a negative thing and would be unnecessary to use on TV or radio. LGBTQ+ participants felt it was not acceptable to air before the watershed in most circumstances over concerns that children could use the term. 	High level of recognition.
Tranny	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>tranny</i> was repeatedly seen as strongly offensive. It was widely considered to be outdated, derogatory and not acceptable to air before the watershed without strong justification. Trans participants referred to this word as the 't-slur', finding it strongly offensive and not acceptable to broadcast on TV or radio (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	
Transsexual	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trans and non-binary participants often rated <i>transsexual</i> as mildly offensive, describing it as an old-fashioned descriptive term. 	High level of recognition.

Views of participants on religious references

How research participants generally rated religious references		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
God Goddamn Jesus Christ Jew	Bible Basher Fenian* Hun Muzzie* Papist Prod* Taig* Tarrier*	Kike* Yid

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Bible Basher	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Fenian*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants from Northern Ireland rated it as strongly offensive. 	Low level of recognition.
God	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some recognition among qualitative participants that it could offend religious people. 	High level of recognition.
Goddamn	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Hun	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants from Scotland rated it as strongly offensive. 	Medium level of recognition.
Jesus Christ	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, participants reflected that <i>Jesus Christ</i> was often 	High level of recognition.

	<p>used in place of more offensive swear words and tended to feel it was acceptable to use on TV or radio at any time of day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was some recognition that its use in this way could be seen as offensive to Christians. 	
Jew	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the word <i>Jew</i> was not seen as inherently offensive, Jewish participants described how <i>Jew</i> felt more like a label or implied that religion was all someone was, rather than being a person who was Jewish. 	High level of recognition.
Kike*	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by Jewish participants in the qualitative research. 	Low level of recognition.
Muzzie*	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>Muzzie</i> was not familiar to all South Asian participants. Once the term was explained, some felt it would be acceptable as it was simply describing someone's religion, though they did question why 'Muslim' would be shortened. Those that did recognise the word were more likely to view it as offensive, although some felt it could be acceptable if used by Muslims to describe themselves. For example, as part of a comedy set or routine (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	Low level of recognition.
Papist	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	Medium level of recognition.
Prod*	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, there were mixed views towards <i>Prod</i>, with one Scottish group describing this as 'strong', while another saw it as 	Low level of recognition.

	'moderate' (see Chapter 3 in the summary report).	
Taig*	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants from Northern Ireland rated it as strongly offensive. 	Low level of recognition.
Tarrier*	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p>	Low level of recognition.
Yid	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widely regarded as derogatory and highly offensive by Jewish participants during the qualitative research. There was no consensus on the acceptability of using it affectionately between people from the Jewish community. During qualitative discussions, some Jewish participants recognised the use of the word in a positive way in relation to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. While some felt this was an acceptable use of the term others still found this usage offensive. However, most familiar with this use of the word felt that it would be unlikely to be broadcast on TV and radio in this context. 	Medium level of recognition.

Views of participants on references to mental health and physical ability

How research participants generally rated words related to mental health and physical ability		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Cretin Div Handicapped Looney Mental Mentally Challenged Nutter Special Tone deaf Wheelchair bound	Deaf and dumb Dwarf Flid* Midget Moron Psycho	Cripple Invalid Mong Retard Schizo Spastic Window Licker

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Cretin	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Cripple	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, participants felt <i>cripple</i> had derogatory connotations and suggested a person was damaged or not whole. 	High level of recognition.
Deaf and dumb	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Div	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	Medium level of recognition.
Dwarf	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Flid*	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	Low level of recognition.
Handicapped	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.

Invalid	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	High level of recognition.
Looney	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Mental	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, participants felt that <i>mental</i> was less offensive than some of the words associated with mental health as it tended to be used in a general way, for example to describe an experience rather than directed at an individual. However, there were concerns about the use of <i>mental</i> to describe a person or when associated with violent behaviours (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Mentally Challenged	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Midget	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Mong	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.
Moron	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Nutter	Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.	High level of recognition.
Psycho	Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.	High level of recognition.
Retard	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>retard</i> was seen as derogatory and reflecting the stigma surrounding mental health. 	High level of recognition.
Schizo	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated as strongly offensive by participants with a mental disability involved in the qualitative research. 	Medium level of recognition.

Spastic	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the qualitative research, <i>spastic</i> was rated as strongly offensive by participants with a mental disability. 	High level of recognition.
Special	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p>	High level of recognition.
Tone deaf	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative participants including those with a physical disability saw this as not offensive. 	High level of recognition.
Wheelchair bound	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants in qualitative groups generally did not find the term <i>wheelchair bound</i> offensive, seeing it as a descriptive term for someone's medical condition. Participants with a mental or physical disability widely perceived <i>wheelchair bound</i> as not offensive (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). 	High level of recognition.
Window Licker	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p>	Medium level of recognition.

Views of participants on non-English words

The non-English words were not tested in the quantitative research. The findings below are based on nine focus group discussions with first and second generation participants from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities (see Chapter 3 in the summary report). Definitions for these words can be found in the summary report.

How research participants generally rated non-English words		
Mild Unlikely to concern in most circumstances and requiring limited context	Moderate Greater potential for offence than mild words and a higher level of context should be considered	Strong Perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification
Fitnah* Kutta Uloo ka patha	Kaafir Kaala/kaali Murtad*	Behnchod Chooray Chamaar Habshi/habshan* Machod

Word	Acceptability	Recognition
Behnchod	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the Indian qualitative groups explained <i>behnchod</i> and <i>machod</i> were more commonly used as part of Punjabi culture (e.g. rap songs) and subsequently perceived the words as more acceptable than other groups. However, they still acknowledged they would not want them aired on TV or radio before the watershed. 	High level of recognition.
Chooray	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once explained, the words were generally considered unacceptable and problematic in reinforcing Asian cultural stereotypes around light skin. 	Medium level of recognition.
Chamaar	Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.	Medium level of recognition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once explained, the words were generally considered unacceptable and problematic in reinforcing Asian cultural stereotypes around light skin. 	
Fitnah*	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often unfamiliar across groups with South Asian participants. Those that were familiar with <i>fitnah</i> saw it as not offensive. 	Low level of recognition.
Habshi / habshan*	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These were not generally recognised but were seen as strong by groups that were familiar with the terms as they understood it to translate to <i>nigger</i>. 	Low level of recognition.
Kaafir	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Kaafir</i> was not seen as offensive as a descriptive term for someone who is not Muslim. However, Bangladeshi and Pakistani participants felt it could become highly offensive if it was used to question someone's faith. 	High level of recognition.
Kaala / kaali	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistani participants predominantly viewed the word as mild, Indian groups as moderate and Bangladeshi groups perceived it to be strongly offensive. Pakistani groups tended to be more relaxed about the word as it is commonly used in conversations in Pakistan but not as an insult. Participants from the Indian and Bangladeshi groups, particularly younger participants, felt the word was a racist and discriminatory term. 	Medium level of recognition.
Kutta	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where recognised, <i>kutta</i> was widely seen to be a mildly offensive word. A hypothetical scenario in which a discussion between two guests on a 	Medium level of recognition.

	<p>Pakistani political show gets heated and they call one another <i>kutta</i> and <i>uloo ka patha</i> was seen as being unprofessional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was generally regarded as unacceptable to use the words on TV in this context, although the situation was also regarded as comical due to the way the politicians were behaving. 	
Machod	<p>Strong. Highly offensive, requiring clear contextual justification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the Indian qualitative groups explained <i>behnchod</i> and <i>machod</i> were more commonly used as part of Punjabi culture (e.g. rap songs) and subsequently perceived the words as more acceptable than other groups. However, they still acknowledged they would not want them aired on TV or radio before the watershed. 	High level of recognition.
Murtad*	<p>Moderate. Context should be considered based on what an audience would reasonably expect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often unfamiliar across groups with South Asian participants. Those that were familiar with <i>murtad</i> were divided between seeing it as strongly offensive or not offensive. They suggested the word refers to someone who is no longer a Muslim and is generally not offensive as a term. However, they argued the intent behind its use can impact how it is seen. 	Low level of recognition.
Uloo ka patha	<p>Mild. Unlikely to cause concern in most circumstances, requiring limited context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where recognised, <i>uloo ka patha</i> was widely seen to be a mildly offensive word. A hypothetical scenario in which a discussion between two guests on a Pakistani political show gets heated and they call one another <i>kutta</i> and <i>uloo ka patha</i> was seen as being unprofessional. It was generally regarded as unacceptable to use the words on TV in this context, although the situation was 	Medium level of recognition.

	also regarded as comical due to the way the politicians were behaving.	
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