[GB] Third Annual Survey of Television Content

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Pursuant to its duty under the Broadcasting Act 1990 (section 153), the Broadcasting Standards Council published its third annual report on television content during 1994. The report, based on studies of violence, sexual activity and bad language, deals with both the proportion and frequency of incidents and the response of viewers. The research is based on sample periods of primetime television. The content analysis covered some 450 hours of satellite and terrestrial television programmes from BBC1, BBC2, ITV, C4, Sky One, the Movie Channel, Sky Movies and Sky Movies Gold over two one week periods.

As regards bad language: 46% of terrestrial television programmes included some bad language (somewhat of an increase over previous years), the majority being from a religious origin (40%) or were 'mild bad language' (20%). 76% of satellite television programmes contained such language, again the majority of incidents contained 'mild bad language'. The rate of incidence remained steady: one incident every 8 minutes for terrestrial and one incident every 4 minutes on satellite television.

As regards sexual activity (two-thirds of the coded scenes being kissing), terrestrial output has changed little over three years; 'less than 1/2% of the broadcast time recorded'. Double that figure, 1%, was noted for satellite broadcast time monitored, up from 0.6% in the 1993 sample period. As regards violent incidents, 3-4% of monitored time included such incidents on terrestrial television. The proportion was similar to previous years and the rate of occurrence had also not increased. On satellite television, incidents were slightly up - from 9% to 10%. The pattern of violent incidents differed in that 'a smaller number of incidents was more widely dispersed through a greater number of programmes'.

The stength and frequency of audience concern was derived from an Audience Monotoring Panel of 425 viewers who responded to 19.000 individual programmes. 53% of the monitors noted at least one programme that gave rise to concern in the two-week monitoring period. Most concern was expressed by persons over 55, women and those with children in the viewing household. The incidents which were most likely to be noted as giving concern were violence in 'pre-Watershed' (before 21:00 hours) programmes and bad language and sexual activity in post-21:00 programmes.

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Monitoring Report 111 (third annual report on television content of the Broadcasting Standards Council)

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