

BBC Breadth of Opinion Review

Content Analysis

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Introduction

The principle of impartiality is central to the BBC's philosophy and its remit as a public service broadcaster. The BBC Trust is responsible to Licence Fee payers for ensuring the BBC provides duly impartial news and programming on controversial subjects. To this end, the Trust conducts an annual review. In 2007 the BBC published "From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: safeguarding impartiality in the 21st Century" – a report by John Bridcut on the pressures on traditional notions of impartiality in the digital age. The report looked at the huge changes in broadcasting, online coverage and in British society more generally and put forward 12 new principles – at the heart of which was a new approach to achieving impartiality: a diverse range of opinion rather than representing binary political views.

"Impartiality today requires a greater subtlety in covering and counterpointing the varied shades of opinion – and arguably always should have done. Whereas opinion used to be balanced in simple alternatives – and could be measured in tilts of the seesaw or swings of the pendulum – nowadays a more appropriate metaphor might be the many spokes of the wagon wheel... The wheel is not exactly circular, it has a shifting centre, the 'spokes' are not necessarily evenly spaced, nor do they all reach the edge of the wheel, nor does one 'spoke' necessarily point in a directly opposite direction to another. So opinion is not confined to 'left' and 'right' but ranges through 360 degrees. One opinion is not necessarily the exact opposite of another, nor do they all reach the extremity of available argument."

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/review_report_research/impartiality_21century/report.pdf, accessed February 21, 2013)

The Bridcut report was intended to consolidate a new approach by programme makers. The BBC had already moved beyond seeking to achieve impartiality through a simple "binary" balance of views and the Bridcut report sought to underline a more sophisticated approach appropriate to the digital age and the changing social and political environment. The BBC seeks to achieve due impartiality either within individual items and reports or across a series of programmes but it makes an additional commitment which was strengthened by Bridcut's work to reflect a breadth and diversity of opinion across its output as a whole. Since then, the technological, political and social changes have only strengthened arguments in favour of the more diverse "wagon wheel" approach.

Greater access to social media and the uptake of mobile technology has fed an increasingly rapid news cycle and an increasingly diverse environment for public debate. This is encouraging a more open approach to public debate by broadcasters through the inclusion of user-generated content, audience participation genres, "vox pops" and social media as well as easier access to opinion formers, experts, eyewitnesses and others directly involved in news events. Media organisations are increasingly aware of the need to directly involve the audience and provide opportunities for their participation.

The explosion in sources of news and information available on the internet and other digital platforms has led some to question the relevance of impartiality in the 21st century. With media convergence, others question whether it is even enforceable as national and

international, regulated and unregulated, content sit side by side. This debate is representative of a growing reflection on journalistic principles, such as objectivity and balance, among scholars and practitioners.

These debates highlight, on the one hand, the values of journalism ethics on which these concepts are based, but on the other hand also demonstrate the difficulties of putting these principles into practice, and the competing pressures with which they sometimes clash.

In this context, an approach to impartiality which broadens the scope of opinion, rather than limiting it, is clearly a key response to such pressures.

This review of breadth of opinion in BBC news programmes takes place against this backdrop. The Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies has carried out a content analysis to shed light on the breadth of opinion in the BBC's news offering, and any changes that have taken place since the publication of the Bridcut report in 2007. We have carried out two studies:

- (1) A study of the breadth of opinions in the BBC's coverage of three topics: Immigration, Religion in the UK and UK's Relationship to Europe, in 2007 and in 2012, examining a range of news and current affairs programming, as well as online stories.
- (2) A study of the breadth of topics and views in the selected news programmes of the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, in 2007 and 2012.

We were asked to find out answers to the following research questions:

- **Which voices, views and groups are heard in BBC programming?**
 - What are occupational and demographic features and political affiliations of news sources?
 - Do these sources represent a broad spectrum of opinion?
 - Which minority opinions are given expression?
 - How does BBC programming include public opinion?
- **Is there evidence of a move from a “seesaw” view of impartiality towards a “wagon wheel” model between 2007 and 2012?**
 - Have there been any shifts in the direction and breadth of opinion in programming on immigration, religion in the UK and the UK's relationship with the EU?
- **How does the breadth of topics in routine news covered by the BBC compare to that of the other main broadcasters?**
 - Is the range of topics featured on the BBC comparable to those on ITV and Channel 4?
 - Which topics are most prominent on the news agendas of the respective broadcasters?
 - What is the respective prominence assigned to each topic?

- What is the range of sources used by the different broadcasters, nations and regions on particular stories?

To answer these questions, we carried out large-scale content analyses of programming, with an eye to monitoring changes between 2007 and 2012. Clearly this analysis is of “snapshots” of coverage which may reasonably raise questions and be indicative of issues rather than provide comprehensive conclusions. After a review of the headline findings, this report discusses each of the two studies in turn.

Headline findings:

BBC coverage of immigration, religion in the UK and UK's relationship with the EU

1. There is no clear statistical evidence of a change of approach between 2007 and 2012 to reporting the three topics – although there is a slight increase in the breadth of opinions represented across the years of our samples in BBC coverage of religion, immigration and the UK's relationship to Europe.
2. There is a striking dominance of party political voices in the output and topics analysed. This has increased between 2007 and 2012 in stories about the UK's relationship with Europe, where the debate is dominated by British mainstream political positions.
3. Although political voices dominate, and the ruling party has a larger share of voice, the Conservative dominance in 2012 is by a notably larger margin than Labour dominance in 2007 (although the two governments were at different points in the electoral cycle), and there is only a relatively limited presence of Liberal Democrats across both years.
4. In coverage of the UK's relationship to Europe, the EU was frequently framed as a problem, and from the vantage point of British national interests.
5. The coverage of Christianity is largely framed by debates within the Church of England, while the coverage of Islam is framed by (negative) debates ABOUT Islam.
6. In coverage of religion and immigration there was greater breadth of opinion represented online and in radio phone-in programmes, in part by virtue of their use and encouragement of audience comment.
7. UGC and social media comment have an insignificant presence in "issue" coverage of the type analysed here.
8. Stories on religion featured the greatest diversity of source types, and the smallest proportion of political sources.
9. Immigration stories included voices of immigrants and members of the public, but were framed by politicians, whose statements were often presented as "facts".
10. It may be difficult to implement a "wagon wheel" approach in hard news coverage, where the emphasis is on news provision, rather than opinion. (i.e. "Who, What, When" rather than "How or Why")

Breadth of topics and views across broadcasters 2007 & 2012

1. “Ordinary people” – members of the public, victims and witnesses – are the most frequently used source type overall.
2. There is a striking similarity in the numbers of stories by topic across the two years suggesting the news agendas of the programmes sampled have not altered significantly in five years. BBC programmes cover more political stories. Channel 4 News covers the most international news stories.
3. BBC nations use a larger number of sources than ITV nations. On network programmes, Channel 4 News uses the most sources – possibly by virtue of its longer duration.
4. The news agenda of nations news programmes is led by crime and sport. Network coverage across channels is led by politics and crime.
5. BBC programmes feature business sources to a greater degree than ITV or Channel 4.
6. Both Channel 4 News and Radio 4’s Today programme ran significantly fewer stories in the 2012 sample compared with 2007.
7. The Today programme relies heavily on BBC journalists to express professional judgements and views.
8. Despite forming a coalition government in 2010 the Liberal Democrats as a political source fell between 2007 and 2012 on some programmes.

Study 1:

Content analysis of BBC coverage of immigration, religion in the UK and the UK's relationship to Europe in 2007 and 2012

Has the BBC's commitment to a new understanding of impartiality – one which recognises the importance of a range and breadth of opinion – led to changes in its coverage since the publication of the Bridcut report in 2007? Our first study investigated this key question, and the answer seems to be a qualified no: there is no clear and unambiguous evidence of significant shifts between 2007 and 2012, even if there were changes in the most prominent topics on the agenda between the two years, and the voices and views heard as a result. Further, it is not possible to describe a straightforward “wagon wheel” of opinion on the three topics overall, even if the coverage across the range of programming and platforms we examined did give a sense of a range of opinion, and from a variety of sources – though with a strong emphasis on the views of Westminster politicians. There were, however, shifts in terms of the political orientation of the most prominent sources – correlated with a change in government from Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition, as well as other shifts in terms of the demographics of news sources which cannot be explained purely as the result of specific news events within our sample periods.

Our work in this study focuses on the content analysis of selected BBC coverage on the three topics of immigration, religion in the UK and the UK's relationship to the EU. We examined weekday coverage over a month-long period between October 15 and November 15 in 2007 and 2012, respectively.ⁱ On television, we examined BBC News at Ten (BBC One), BBC Breakfast 7-8 am (BBC One), and Newsnight (BBC Two). On radio, we coded the Today programme from 7-8.30 am (Radio 4), Newsbeat at 12.45 pm (Radio 1), and 5 Live Breakfast, Your Call 9-10 am (Radio 5 Live). The sample was chosen, first of all, to include a mixture of broadcast and online coverage.ⁱⁱ Secondly, we wanted to measure the breadth of opinion across a range of programming, including flagship programmes such as the Today programme, Newsnight, BBC News at Ten, as well as “softer” news programmes such as BBC Breakfast, and audience participation on Your Call. This sample inevitably delivers “snapshots” that provide a partial view of the breadth of opinion in BBC programming. First, our sample represents only a small fraction of news and current affairs programming, and second, it does so only over a limited and specific period of time. As the report explores in more detail, the time frame we focused on means that certain stories and sources were particularly prominent whilst others – significant during other periods – might be entirely absent. This means that our findings may not reflect the exact distribution of sources and stories in the BBC news provision in general, but is an accurate reflection of what occurred in this particular time span, and indicative of broader patterns.

Our research team examined thousands of news reports on television and radio during this period, but coded only stories relevant to the three topics. Over the sample period, we identified a total of 254 stories on these topics, out of which 85 appeared on television programmes and 169 on radio. Further, we identified 246 relevant online stories from the BBC News website. Altogether, our first study is based on the analysis of 500 stories. Appendix 1 describes the criteria we used for selection of stories in this study, while Appendix 3 describes our operational definition of a story across both of our studies.

Table 1: Number of stories by programme and platform

Platform and programme	Number of stories	Percentage of overall sample
Online	246	49.2%
Radio	169	33.8%
Today (7-8.30 am) Radio 4	137	27.4%
Breakfast, Your Call (9-10 am) Radio 5 Live	22	4.4%
Newsbeat (12.45 pm) Radio 1	10	2.0%
TV	85	17.0%
BBC News at Ten BBC One	32	6.4%
BBC Breakfast (7-8 am) BBC 1	33	6.6%
Newsnight BBC Two	20	4.0%
Total	500	100%

As Table 1 demonstrates, online coverage on the three topics accounted for the largest number of stories in the sample. This is not surprising given there is no constraint on time or space devoted to news stories online, resulting in more extensive coverage and a larger volume of stories published. The second-most prominent programme was Today, Radio 4’s flagship morning news programme. As we will discuss in more detail below, the sample for the programme may be slightly skewed due to the inclusion of “Thought for the Day” – the programme segment devoted to reflection from a faith perspective on topical issues and news events, during every day of the sample. Nonetheless, even when correcting for this anomaly, the Today programme still accounts for the majority of stories broadcast. This may also be explained by the length of the programme coded in the study – an hour and a half a day, compared to thirty minutes to an hour for most of the other programmes. But it also relates to the programme format, which tends to contain a large number of different stories, compared to Newsnight – the only other BBC programme of comparable length – which provides in-depth coverage of a few stories.

On each of the three topics, the number of stories breaks down as follows:

Table 2: Story topic by year

	2007	2012	Total
Religion	83 (31.1%)	60 (25.8%)	143
Immigration	93 (34.8%)	56 (24.0%)	149
EU	91 (34.1%)	117 (50.2%)	208
Total	267 (100%)	233 (100%)	500

There were a larger number of stories on religion and immigration in 2007 than in 2012, whilst the EU appeared to be a more salient topic during our sample period in 2012 than it had been in 2007, and also accounted for the most stories overall – just over two fifths of our entire sample. This distribution of stories does not necessarily indicate a shift in the editorial priorities of the BBC, but rather reflects the prominence of specific news events during the sample period which related to the three topics. So, for example, during October and November 2007, the Lisbon Treaty was being negotiated and was central to the news agenda, and therefore featured in many of the stories about the UK’s relationship to the EU. During the same period, questions around the relationship between Radical Islam and terrorism were prominent in the religion sample. In 2012, by contrast, the most salient news events in the EU sample included discussions over British views and actions on the EU budget, whilst a large number of the religion stories focused on the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Across both years, a significant number of the immigration stories were occasioned by the release of government and council reports and statistics. So, for example, on October 16 and 17 2007, all the programmes and platforms we studied featured stories about a new report, prepared to advise government ministers on the social impact of immigration. The report suggested that increased immigration has put pressure on the delivery of public services, and that almost every region of the UK has experienced difficulties in housing, health, education and crime as a result (e.g. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7048205.stm>, accessed January 16, 2013). Other events that were prominent in the immigration sample included high-profile extradition cases, such as those of Muslim cleric Abu Qatada and computer hacker Gary McKinnon.

The three topics often made it to the top of the news agenda of the television and radio programmes in which they appeared. As Table 3 below demonstrates, immigration was the most newsworthy of the three, making up more than half of all instances where one of the three topics led the news agenda. A quarter of all stories on immigration led the news agenda for the programme in which they appeared, and almost half of immigration reports appeared among the first three stories.

Table 3: Topic by location in news agenda – top three stories (television and radio only)

	Lead story	2nd story	3rd story	Total top 3	Total stories
Immigration	20 (55.6%*)	11 (39.3%)	7 (36.8%)	38 (45.8%)	80
EU	7 (19.4%)	8 (28.6%)	9 (47.4%)	24 (28.9%)	70
Religion	9 (25.0%)	9 (32.1%)	3 (15.8%)	21 (25.3%)	86

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of lead, 2nd or 3rd stories accounted for by each topic

As the table also demonstrates, stories about religion appeared to be the least newsworthy of the three topics. Altogether, only one in ten (nine out of 86) religion stories led the news agenda, and only a quarter of stories on religion appeared in the top three items on a news programme.

What this cursory overview demonstrates is that whilst the three topics were rarely the focus of coverage in their own right, they were frequently a central theme in an important news story. As we will discuss in more detail later, there were variations across the topics in this respect. However, what this means is that the emphasis of stories was not so much on providing a range of opinion about a topic as it was on reporting ongoing news events. This did occasionally, but not always, lead to the reporting of a range of opinions on the topic. So, for example, within our sample of reports on the UK’s relationship to Europe, the stories about Britain’s negotiations on the EU budget in 2012 frequently focused on the parliamentary machinations over the issue rather than opinions on the subject.

One lengthy Today programme report on the topic, from November 1 2012, discussing Prime Minister’s Questions from the previous day, is symptomatic of this approach. It opened with a discussion of David Cameron’s willingness to exert veto rights on the budget, and then moved on to quote opposition and government politicians’ views on David Cameron’s position. Ed Miliband, the opposition leader, criticised Cameron, suggesting that “he has thrown in the towel even before these negotiations have begun ... he can’t even convince his own backbenchers. He is weak at home, he is weak abroad.” One Conservative MP was quoted later in the story, saying: “I have confidence that the PM will deliver the best deal he can for Britain and when he comes back he will have my absolute support in that and the support of my colleagues. But do you go into negotiations saying your starting position is that you’re prepared to give up £300 million a year?”

Such stories, while informing audiences about important political developments, do not enter into more fundamental discussions which may reveal the range and breadth of opinions on the UK’s relationship to Europe. They are typical in providing an insight into the respective positions of the main political parties, and the government’s policy directions. But the voices that are heard in such reports are mainly those of politicians, rather than of a broader and more diverse range of individuals and groups. This, indeed, is representative of the sample as a whole across both years as discussed in more detail below. It means that the emphasis in the sample for both of our studies is largely on official framing, contestations and interpretations of ongoing news stories, with less of an emphasis on including a broader

debate. As Study 2 also documents, this is not unique to BBC programming. Instead, it is a well-established pattern in journalism overall and has implications for the diversity of opinion which we will discuss further.

At other times, opinion came across as linked to the sharing of factual information. A Today programme report (November 14, 2007) discussed the two-tier workforce in the UK – with immigrants in the second tier, suffering poor working and living conditions. The main source for this report was a trade union official who expressed his concerns about the exploitation of immigrant labour. While this report focused on highlighting specific industry practices, it also prominently included views on immigration. The trade union representative was quoted as follows:

The awful reality, all too often, is the national minimum wage or less, illegal deductions for transport, housing, unspecified administration charges, no contracts of employment, zero hours contract of employment, compulsory overtime, having to pay for their own safety equipment and, in extreme cases, racial harassment and violence... the sad reality in modern day Britain is, at its most extreme, a modern day form of slave labour... Yes, we need managed migration but what we do not need is a debate that summons up – “There’s two million about to land on our shores and they’re going to decamp from submarines at midnight”.

Whilst this source expressed concern about the debate on managed migration, later sources in the story discussed the difficulties in addressing the problem of the exploitation of the immigrant workforce, rather than the broader issues of migration. This story was typical of the way in which opinions on the three topics made their way into the reports. Even if the reports were not necessarily about the pros and cons of immigration as such, they may, in some cases, offer sources an opportunity to express the broader views underlying assessments of developments in a particular news story.

Some stories cut across more than one of the three topics. In 2007, one of the most prominent topics of stories about immigration dealt with the influx of workers from other EU countries, and the ways in which this demographic shift affected British society and the delivery of public services. In the TV and radio sample, this topic accounted for 13 stories, or a total of 5.1% of the whole sample on those platforms across both years. All of these stories appeared in 2007, making up a total of 8.0% of TV and radio reports in that year. Among stories just on the topic of immigration, they made up 14.0% of stories in 2007.

For each story, we analysed, among other things, the demographics, professions and political affiliations of each source, and included up to 16 sources for each story, accounting for both direct and reported speech.ⁱⁱⁱ Appendix 5 discusses in more detail how we coded sources. Overall, our sample included a total of 2165 sources – 1168 (54%) in 2007 and 997 (46%) in 2012. As Table 4 demonstrates, there were a particularly significant number of sources online.

Table 4: Number of sources by platform and year

	2007	2012
Online	516 (44%)	631 (63%)
Radio	372 (32%)	239 (24%)
TV	280 (24%)	127 (13%)
Total	1168 (100%)	997 (100%)

However, this distribution is not surprising given the larger number of stories in our online sample. When correcting for the respective number of stories, we find that the average number of sources per story is in fact roughly similar across platforms.

Table 5: Average number of sources per story by platform and year

	2007	2012
Online	4.83	4.70
Radio	3.61	3.62
TV	4.87	4.51

Looking at the types of sources overall across the three topics would give us a skewed view of the BBC's reporting practices, because of the specificity of the topics – for example, religious leaders are over-represented due to our inclusion of Thought for the Day throughout the sample (they account for 39 sources in 2007 and 62 in 2012; all in the religion sample), and EU Commissioners are also over-represented (18 sources in 2007 and 33 in 2012; all in the EU sample) due to the focus on the UK's relationship with Europe.

Table 6: Overall distribution of source types, by year*

Source Type	2007	2012	Total
Political sources (including politicians and spokespersons)	582 (49.4%)	541 (54.8%)	1123 (51.9%)
Member of the public	133 (11.3%)	85 (8.6%)	218 (10.1%)
Media/journalists	85 (7.2%)	74 (7.5%)	159 (7.3%)
Public Sector	76 (6.5%)	26 (2.6%)	102 (4.7%)
Religious leader	59 (5%)	79 (8.0%)	138 (6.4%)
NGOs/activists/charities/pressure group	44 (3.7%)	43 (4.4%)	87 (4.0%)
Academic/expert/science/tech/medical	33 (2.8%)	22 (2.2%)	55 (2.5%)
Judiciary/legal	26 (2.2%)	38 (3.9%)	64 (3.0%)
Think Tank	22 (1.9%)	11 (1.1%)	33 (1.5%)
Business/private company/economy	17 (1.4%)	18 (1.8%)	35 (1.6%)
Trade Union	16 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	16 (0.8%)
Military	2 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.1%)
Other	83 (7.0%)	50 (5.1%)	133 (6.1%)
Total	1178 (100%)	987 (100%)	2165 (100%)

*Please note that in this table and subsequent ones, column percentage totals may sometimes be just above or beyond 100% due to rounding error.

Given these caveats, it is more meaningful to consider sourcing patterns for each of the three topics individually. However, one trend that cuts across the topics is the predominance of political sources, accounting for almost half of all sources in the sample as a whole. Media or journalist sources were also among the most important sources, making up 7% of sources in both years, primarily accounted for by the use of BBC specialist correspondents or editors as expert commentators on unfolding news stories, and by references to reports from other media. They were far more frequently used than any other single profession. Between the two years, there was a significant reduction in public sector sources. Similarly, the use of business sources remained static whilst trade unionists seem to have disappeared from the debate.

If we look in detail at the most frequently cited political sources, there is a clear pattern: Westminster sources are by far the most prominent voices heard in BBC coverage, and the incumbent government outranks the opposition. As a group – based on adding up *all* the references to sources in this category – government ministers and members of Cabinet topped the chart of source types. Among this group, the most frequently quoted individual in 2007 was Foreign Secretary David Miliband, who appeared 13 times (1.1%), whereas in 2012, Home Secretary Theresa May accounted for 15 source citations (1.5%). The table demonstrates that MPs were also frequently used as sources in both years.

The Prime Minister was the most important *individual* source in both years, far outranking anyone else, even if the opposition leader was also highly prominent in the news across both

years.^{iv} Such sourcing decisions demonstrate that it is more difficult for groups and individuals outside of the main political parties to get a voice.

Table 7: Most prominent types of political sources, by year*

	2007	2012
Single Individuals		
Prime Minister	46 (3.9%)	53 (5.3%)
Leader of the Opposition	27 (2.3%)	15 (1.5%)
Groups		
Government Cabinet and Ministers	90 (7.7%)	67 (6.7%)
Members of Parliament	67 (5.7%)	95 (9.5%)
Shadow Cabinet and Ministers	46 (3.9%)	15 (1.5%)
Labels		
“Conservatives”	28 (2.4%)	18 (1.8%)
“Government”	26 (2.2%)	35 (3.5%)
“Labour”	7 (0.6%)	22 (2.2%)
“Lib Dems”	7 (0.6%)	1 (0.1%)

*These include both direct speech sources, and ones that are quoted or referred to. The percentages are of all sources in each year.

Table 7 above looks at the prevalence of particular political source types. It allows us to examine, first of all, how frequently the incumbent Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition were used as voices. In both years, the Prime Minister was the most newsworthy single source: in 2007, Gordon Brown was quoted 46 times (3.9% of all sources in 2007) whereas in 2012, David Cameron made an appearance 53 times (5.3% of sources in 2012). It also demonstrates that David Cameron was far more successful in making it into the news as opposition leader than Ed Miliband, at least on the three topics studied. Opposition politicians were, perhaps not surprisingly, less prominent than the incumbents. In 2007, there were an almost equal number of references to “conservatives” and “government” (28 and 26, or 2.4% and 2.2%). By contrast, in 2012, “government” was referred to 35 times (3.5%), and “Labour” just 22 times (2.2%). Similarly, the prevalence of sources representing the Shadow Cabinet and Ministers had gone down from 3.9% of all sources under David Cameron’s opposition leadership in 2007, to 1.5% under Ed Miliband in 2012. This points to a cautious conclusion that Cameron was a more newsworthy opposition leader than Miliband in the context of the three topics, and that his coalition government has likewise been more

successful in attracting coverage than the Labour leadership that preceded him. It might also reflect the tail end of a long period of Labour rule, with the opposition making ground, against the early years of a Conservative-led coalition government with the opposition re-grouping.

This pattern is also highlighted in the analysis of references to sources for which a political affiliation could be determined.

Table 8: Political affiliation of sources, by year

	2007	2012
Conservative	123 (41.0%)	136 (48.4%)
Labour	135 (45.0%)	74 (26.3%)
Liberal Democrat	27 (9.0%)	17 (6.0%)
Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition	0 (0.0%)	14 (5.0%)
UK Independence Party	8 (2.7%)	4 (1.4%)
Scottish National Party	0 (0.0%)	24 (8.5%)
Other	7 (2.3%)	12 (4.3%)
Total	300 (100%)	281 (100%)

As this table demonstrates, the Conservative Party has consistently accounted for around between two in five to almost half of all sources with clear political affiliations, whereas Labour went down significantly between the two years – from almost half to just over a quarter. Together, the two main parties accounted for almost nine in ten party-political sources in 2007, going down to just over three in four in 2012. Other party affiliations which appeared in much smaller numbers included Plaid Cymru, DUP, the BNP, Sinn Fein, Alliance, as well as Independents. These, however, were almost absent from coverage on the three topics. For example, despite the BNP’s attempts at participating in public debate on immigration and the election of their leader, Nick Griffin, as an MEP in 2009, they only appeared as a source on one occasion. Similarly, the decline in the prominence of the UK Independence Party as a source – from 2.7% to 1.4% of political affiliations – was somewhat surprising: after all, UKIP had been heralded as a great success story after winning 13 seats in the 2009 European Parliament election to the European Parliament, beating the Labour Party in gaining 16.5% of the vote, and the party also performed well in the 2010 General Election,

even if it stopped short of gaining a seat in the House of Commons.¹ Nonetheless, as we will later discuss in more detail, the Eurosceptic views held by UKIP were well represented by other sources, primarily from the Conservative Party.

The more frequent appearance of the Scottish National Party in 2012 relates to stories around the party's proposal for Scotland's independence from the UK, and the consequences for EU membership that might result. This news event was very prominent in our online sample, but almost absent from television and radio coverage.

What is clear is that individuals from the world of formal politics, and especially from Westminster, dominate public debate on the three topics in our sample – a pattern replicated across the news agenda in our second study.

Here, it is also illustrative to consider the relative salience of different sources types. Our study included up to 16 sources for each story. If we compare the presence of politicians and members of the public in terms of their prominence within the stories, a clear pattern emerges: Whereas politicians account for 52.9% of the first eight sources, and members of the public just 8.2%, the pattern for the last eight sources is very different. Here, political sources make up 42.1%, whereas members of the public increase to 27.7%. This indicates that members of the public tend to appear much later in news stories than official sources, rarely contributing to shaping the lens through which news events are reported.

By contrast to politicians, members of the public were used as sources a total of 133 times in 2007 (11.4%), and 85 times in 2012 (8.5%). They were often included through vox pop interviews appearing late in a story, as when a report on post office closures featured interviews with pensioners about how their lives would be affected by the lack of local services, or when a feature on Derry-Londonderry having been voted a top tourist destination included interviews with locals. As such, they were not primarily setting the agenda for debate, but *reacting* to unfolding news events. This is consistent with research on media representations of citizens which demonstrates that even though ordinary people appear frequently in the news, this does not necessarily mean that they frame public debate or provide new perspectives on political issues. As we will demonstrate, however, there were several occasions – and on several platforms – where members of the public were given a voice and offered a range of views on the contentious topics we examined.

As the table below demonstrates, members of the public are a far more significant presence on the phone-in programme, Your Call and in online stories. Despite the importance attached to social media and UGC, we found very few stories that used the possibilities of these forms – two stories in 2007 and none in 2012 used UGC. Similarly, there was little evidence for a surge in the use of social media – in 2007, 22 social media sources were used across seven stories, and in 2012 there were 29 social media sources also across seven stories.

¹ Given the BBC is confident it has responded appropriately to the increased popularity of UKIP this figure may be a function of the dates or programmes sampled.

Table 9: The use of members of the public as sources across platforms and programmes

	N(%)
BBC Online	90 (41.28%)
Breakfast, Your Call	47 (21.56%)
Newsnight	20 (9.17%)
Newsbeat	20 (9.17%)
BBC News at Ten	18 (8.26%)
Today (7.00-8.30am)	16 (7.34%)
BBC Breakfast (7.00-8.00am)	7 (3.21%)
Total	218 (100%)

The relatively high frequency of members of the public as sources online in part, could be ascribed to the fact that some stories in the online sample were based on audience participation, such as the Twitter Q & A with BBC Home Affairs correspondent Dominic Casciani on Muslim cleric Abu Qatada’s release from prison, published on November 13, 2012 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20318205>, accessed January 22, 2013). This was not a conventional news report as such, but rather part of the published content offered on the BBC website.

Though audience participation came in the form of *questions* for the BBC correspondent – clearly constructed as the expert in this case – these questions also, for the most part, contained opinions and judgements:

Question from Eugene Organ on Facebook: Doesn’t this illustrate the need for the wheels of justice to turn quicker albeit just as carefully? #askbbcdomc

Question from Lea Panvini Rosati on Facebook: Can a justice minister or the PM overrule this sentence and pack this gentleman off to Jordan asap? #askbbcdomc

At the same time, this example also illustrated a broader trend in the coverage of using specialist BBC journalists and correspondents as sources providing analysis, demonstrated by the high frequency of media/journalist sources discussed above.

In addition to the prevalence of political sources, middle-aged males were also over-represented in the coverage. Where the gender of the source could be determined, males outnumbered females by four to one in 2007 and three to one in 2012.

Table 10: Gender of sources, by year*

	2007	2012
Male	552 (80.4%)	423 (75%)
Female	135 (19.6%)	141 (25%)

*This table only includes sources for which the gender could be determined. In a significant number of cases, such identification was not possible. Note that the percentage figures in the table refer to the percentage within each year, rather than across the sample as a whole.

Although there is still a long way towards gender parity, there was a marked change between the two years, which covers over significant differences between the samples, discussed in more detail later. In terms of the age of sources, the vast majority in both years was in the age group between 35 and 64 – a total of 84% of the sources whose age could be determined fell into that category. Similarly, among all sources whose ethnicity could be determined, 87% were white, with 9.6% Asian or Indian sources, and just over 3.3% black sources. Whereas the pattern for gender is unrepresentative of the population as a whole, the proportions of sources representing the most important ethnic groups in the UK are roughly in line with the demographics of the population: According to 2011 census data, individuals identifying themselves as white accounted for 86% of the English and Welsh population, whereas Asian groups made up 7.5%, and black 3.3% (http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf, accessed January 26, 2013).

Religion in the UK

Our findings on the coverage of religion in the UK in October and November 2007 and 2012 demonstrate, first of all, that religion as a topic provides a more diverse range of source types and backgrounds than the two other topics. Nonetheless, at a time when, according to the British Social Attitudes Survey², religiosity is on the decline among members of the British public, non-religious voices are given only a limited hearing in stories on the topic.

Religion was rarely a topic in its own right, but rather came up as a central element in stories on a wide range of other issues prominent on the news agenda. It was not usually the case that opinions delivered a straightforward “yes-no” or “for-and-against” position on a particular religion – or indeed on religion as a concept. Rather, our sample revealed the complexities of religion as a site for debates over competing values and world views. So, for example, stories with a religious element dealt with arguments around abortion, the death of a Jehovah’s Witness after refusing blood transfusion on religious grounds, and the controversy surrounding a Sikh student excluded from school for wearing a religious bracelet. A common pattern, however, was that Christianity in general, and the Church of England in particular, was covered due to its central role in British society, whereas other religions – particularly Islam – were covered when they became newsworthy due to controversies or problems. This tendency may, however, have been more pronounced due to the major news event of the appointment of Justin Welby as the new Archbishop of Canterbury in 2012.

In general, stories with a religious element enabled discussions not just about faith, but about the challenges of diverse groups coexisting in a multicultural society – a similar theme to that characterising many of the stories in the immigration sample. Among the stories that had identifiable subtopics – a total of 91 across both years – such subtopics often related to matters of values, rights, ethics and morality. The table below illustrates all subtopics that featured in four or more stories across the two years.

Table 11: Most frequent subtopics in religion stories, across 2007 and 2012*

	N (%)
Religious rights & law	12 (13.2%)
Specific religion	12 (13.2%)
Cultural aspects of religion	10 (11.0%)
Terrorism	6 (6.6%)
Religious tolerance	5 (5.5%)

² http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb_html/index.php?bericht_id=1000001&index=&lang=ENG
Note: This survey covers Great Britain, but not Northern Ireland.

Ethics and morality	5 (5.5%)
Religion and crime	4 (4.4%)

*Only coded where there were clear subtopics.

There were a total of 143 stories on religion across the two years – 83 in 2007 and 60 in 2012. These stories appeared most frequently in the radio programmes within our sample, which accounted for three out of five stories on the topic.

Table 12: Religion stories by platform

Platform	N(%)
Radio	83 (58.0%)
Online	41 (28.7%)
TV	19 (13.3%)
Total	143 (100%)

However, if we look more closely at these, a large percentage of stories about religion on Radio 4's Today programme were the Thought for the Day feature on the programme. Thought for the Day accounted for 59% of all Today programme reports on the topic, and a total of 30% of all religion stories across all platforms. Topics included commentaries on a diverse range of issues – some contentious, and some not – such as the right to wear a veil, people's relationships to nature, Sikh teachings on wealth and profit, the art work of Damien Hirst, and the role of religion in the 2012 US Presidential elections. As the table below demonstrates, a variety of different religions were represented within the feature – but Christianity clearly outweighed all other faiths.

Table 13: Religions discussed in Thought for the Day

Religion	N(%)
Christianity/CoE/CiW/CoS/Catholicism	25 (58.1%)
Islam	3 (7.0%)
Sikhism	3 (7.0%)
Judaism	1 (2.3%)
Hinduism	1 (2.3%)
Not possible to say/does not apply	10 (23.3%)
Total	43 (100%)

Though the percentage figures here are based on a small sample and should therefore be taken with a grain of salt, they are nonetheless suggestive. They indicate that Thought for the Day well represented the diversity of religions within the UK. In the 2011 Census in England and Wales, Christianity was the largest religion, with 33.2 million people (59.3% of the population). The second largest religious group was Muslims, with 2.7 million people (4.8% of the population). (<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html>, accessed January 4, 2013). In 2011, around a quarter of the population reported that they had no religion. More strikingly, the 2012 Social Attitudes survey suggested that exactly half of the British population does not belong to any religion (http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb_html/pdf/chapters/BSA28_12Religion.pdf, accessed January 30, 2013). This represents a sharp decline over the past few decades where, for example, in the 1983 Social Attitudes Survey, just 31% reported having no religion (http://ir2.flife.de/data/natcen-social-research/igb_html/pdf/chapters/BSA28_12Religion.pdf, accessed January 30, 2013).

research/igb_html/pdf/chapters/BSA28_12Religion.pdf, accessed January 30, 2013). The significant secular strain within British society is not reflected in Thought for the Day, where “faith” was, for the most part, understood in relation to a religious affiliation rather than broader conceptions of spirituality. The relatively large number of “not possible to say” refers to occasions when the commentary did not necessarily report from the vantage point of particular identifiable religious beliefs, but rather offered a more general faith-based perspective on ongoing news events.

Given the fact that Thought for the Day is representative of a deliberate attempt at reflecting the diversity of religions in the UK by giving voice to a broad variety of perspectives roughly in keeping with the distributions of religious affiliations in the population, it is not surprising to see a relatively close match between the two.

In the religion sample overall, however, the spread of religions – as substantively covered in stories – did not mirror the demographics of the population as closely, but rather reflected what we might describe as the newsworthiness of each religion: the extent to which individuals or events associated with each religion makes it into the news.

Table 14: Main religion in story by year*

	2007	2012
	N(%)	N(%)
Christianity/CoE/CiW/CoS/Roman Catholicism	33 (39.8%)	38 (63.3%)
Islam	23 (27.7%)	8 (13.3%)
Sikhism	6 (7.2%)	0 (0%)
Jehovah’s Witness	6 (7.2%)	0 (0%)
Judaism	2 (2.4%)	3 (5.0%)
Hinduism	2 (2.4%)	2 (3.3%)
Other/not possible to say/N/A	11 (13.3%)	9 (15.0%)
Total	83 (100%)	60 (100%)

* Note that the percentage figures in the table refer to the percentage within each year, rather than across the sample as a whole.

As this table shows, Christianity was somewhat less prominent as a religion that was *explicitly* discussed in stories across the sample. The broad tendency was that the Christian faith was reported on because of its central role in society, while other religions were included mainly when they became a “problem” or gave rise to contentious debates, as discussed in more detail below.

The breadth of topics discussed is also mirrored in terms of the breadth of sources across a range of indicators, including religion, source types and ethnicity.

Table 15: Religion of sources (2007 and 2012 combined)

Religion	N(%)
Christianity	102 (37.6%)
Islam	42 (15.5%)
Roman Catholicism	16 (5.9%)
Sikhism	13 (4.8%)
Judaism	11 (4.1%)
Hinduism	8 (3.0%)
Jehovah's Witness	4 (1.5%)
Agnostic/Atheism	2 (0.7%)
Other/Not possible to say	73 (26.9%)
Total	271 (100%)

As this table demonstrates, the religions of sources represented a broad spectrum. Although Christian sources were by far the most frequent, there was also a significant presence of sources representing the other main religions. Considering the Census data discussed above, non-Christian sources are, if anything, over-represented in the sample compared to the demographics of the populations of England and Wales which it covers. The most striking data here is the very limited presence of clearly identified atheist or agnostic sources – whilst in the population overall, these account for between a quarter and half of all individuals, as discussed above. However, we will later discuss the fact that questions around the continued relevance of religion were occasionally raised by sources, so that secular points of view were, in fact, represented.

The background of the sources is also significantly different in the religion sample compared to the general pattern of dominance by Westminster political sources, evident in the sample overall, and also prominent in Study 2. In stories about religion, political sources played a much more limited role. In particular, the most frequent source types in both years were religious leaders, followed by members of the public and political sources.^v

The table below, based on a thematic aggregation of all source types, demonstrates this diversity.

Table 16: Distribution of sources in religion sample, by year

Source type	2007 N (%)	2012 N (%)
Religious leaders/texts	57 (21.8%)*	78 (40.8%)
Member of the public	53 (20.2%)	37 (19.4%)
Political sources	41 (15.6%)	13 (6.8%)
Public sector	30 (11.4%)	5 (2.6%)
Media/journalists	16 (6.1%)	18 (9.4%)
NGOs/charities/activists/pressure groups	16 (6.1%)	13 (6.8%)
Academics/expert/science/tech/medical	14 (5.3%)	8 (4.2%)
Judiciary/legal	14 (5.3%)	8 (4.2%)
Think tank	7 (2.7%)	0 (0%)
Business/private company/economy	2 (0.8%)	3 (1.6%)
Other	12 (4.6%)	8 (4.2%)
Total	262 (100%)	191 (100%)

*Note that the percentage figures in the table refer to the percentage within each year, rather than across the sample as a whole.

Though political sources were still significant voices here, it remained a much more varied picture, with a significant presence of members of the public – albeit one strongly marked by audience participation genres. This is also highlighted by an analysis of the ethnic backgrounds of sources in the religion sample. Here, in sharp contrast to the pattern in the overall sample, which featured 87% white sources – or almost nine out of ten sources, just three out of five sources – or 61.4% – were white in stories about religion. The largest non-white source group was Asian and Indian, accounting for just over three in ten – 31.4% of sources. This, then, shows an over-representation of non-white sources within the religion sample compared to the demographics of the population as a whole – something which would be explained by the nature of the topic, which, like that of immigration, frequently touches upon the interests and concerns of ethnic minority groups. This was illustrated, for example, in a series of stories about the relationship between Islam and terrorism which were prominent in the sample in 2007.

Stories and opinions in 2007

Stories on the relationship between Islam and terrorism or extremism accounted for a full 23.1% of all reports on Islam, with an additional 11.5% of stories about Islam dealing with issues of fundamentalism and extremism. In 2007, debates over the relationship between terrorism and Islam were especially salient on the news agenda, and often gave rise to broader debates about values and world views and their relationships with religion. Some of these accounts contained criticism of society's treatment of Muslims – one story, for example, focused on the release of a new report suggesting that Muslims are demonised in

the media, whilst another quoted Abu Bakr, a British Muslim man who was released without charge after being held over an alleged plot to kidnap and behead a soldier. Abu Bakr suggested that “Britain is becoming a police state for Muslims” (a view rejected by the Prime Minister). A Today programme feature included a personal plea from two former suspected terrorists regarding the ways in which an extension of the 28-day detention law might breed resentment among already-marginalised groups. Here, the Shadow Home Secretary was also quoted, saying: “We do not want to create a recruiting circle for terrorists in our over-enthusiasm for repressive measures which we don’t actually need.”

During the same period, a Your Call phone-in programme, broadcast on November 6, 2007, was devoted to the topic of how to stop teenagers from being “groomed into terrorism” following a comment from the Head of MI5 suggesting that such grooming might be taking place. This programme offered the widest range of opinions on religion in any story in the sample. One of those phoning framed the problem more broadly, describing religion in general as the source of the problem:

One solution is to ban all religious teaching practices in schools. There is no place for any kind of religious brainwashing in the British education system, especially Christianity and Islam that have brought death and misery to millions. (Phil)

This secular position, questioning of the place of religion in society, was represented only by a very limited number of sources. However, for the vast majority of callers – many of whom were Muslims and spoke on the basis of personal experience – the central argument was about the dangers of linking the religion with terrorism:

I’m a Muslim and I’m a very passionate Muslim. I don’t like my faith being linked to terrorism... My worry is how these remarks [about links between Islam and terrorism by head of MI5] will be taken up by those people who do not differentiate between an ideological term and are thinking, “well, all Muslims must be grooming their 15 year olds.” (Angem, female Muslim in Blackburn)

Callers were careful to point out the distinctions between Islam as a religion, and the radicalised, “dangerous” version characterising a small minority.

It’s a political, very specific type of religion that we’re talking about. We’re not talking about all Muslims [but a] small, isolated minority. So we need to make sure we’re not generalising people. I’m a Muslim myself ...with the rise of making Muslims synonymous with terrorism, we’ve had a rise in attacks against Muslims, not just Muslims, Sikhs, Asians. I think it’s important to have reasoned negotiations of real social risk. (Hinda, female Muslim in Leeds)

I think it’s because of an infiltration by...a small minority of imams, the mosques, not just within the Muslim religion. (Lawrence – ex-serviceman)

Within the community we are a bit miffed ourselves trying to locate who these people are. (Saleem, male Muslim in Blackburn)

Yet other callers suggested that inequality and social injustice were generating the conditions for such grooming:

If we want to stop teenagers from being groomed, we have to take away the causes and reasons which are angering these teenagers. (Faruq – British Muslim)

The presenter wrapped up the programme by summarising:

We have to make a difference; we have to differentiate between the religion and fanatical followers of a particular religion... There is a danger of generalising Muslim people as one big homogenous lump.

Notably, positions that were critical of Islam as a religion were not included in this programme – although they were to a limited extent heard in other audience participation programmes in both years, including a Your Call programme on October 17, 2012 on whether race was a factor in preventing computer hacker Gary McKinnon’s extradition to the United States. Here, a caller – identified only as Melanie – stated: “I’m sick to death of these blooming British Muslims playing the race card to excuse about the blooming terrorism, for an excuse that’s going to kill their own people and us, and the American citizens and the West. They don’t want to live over here with our rules so why don’t they go back to Pakistan or wherever.” The inclusion of this position – representative of a strong anti-Islam view which might be associated with extreme right-wing politics – is indicative of a trend whereby audience participation programmes, especially around religion and immigration, sometimes offered a forum for a broader range of views by virtue of its inclusion of the voices of members of the public.

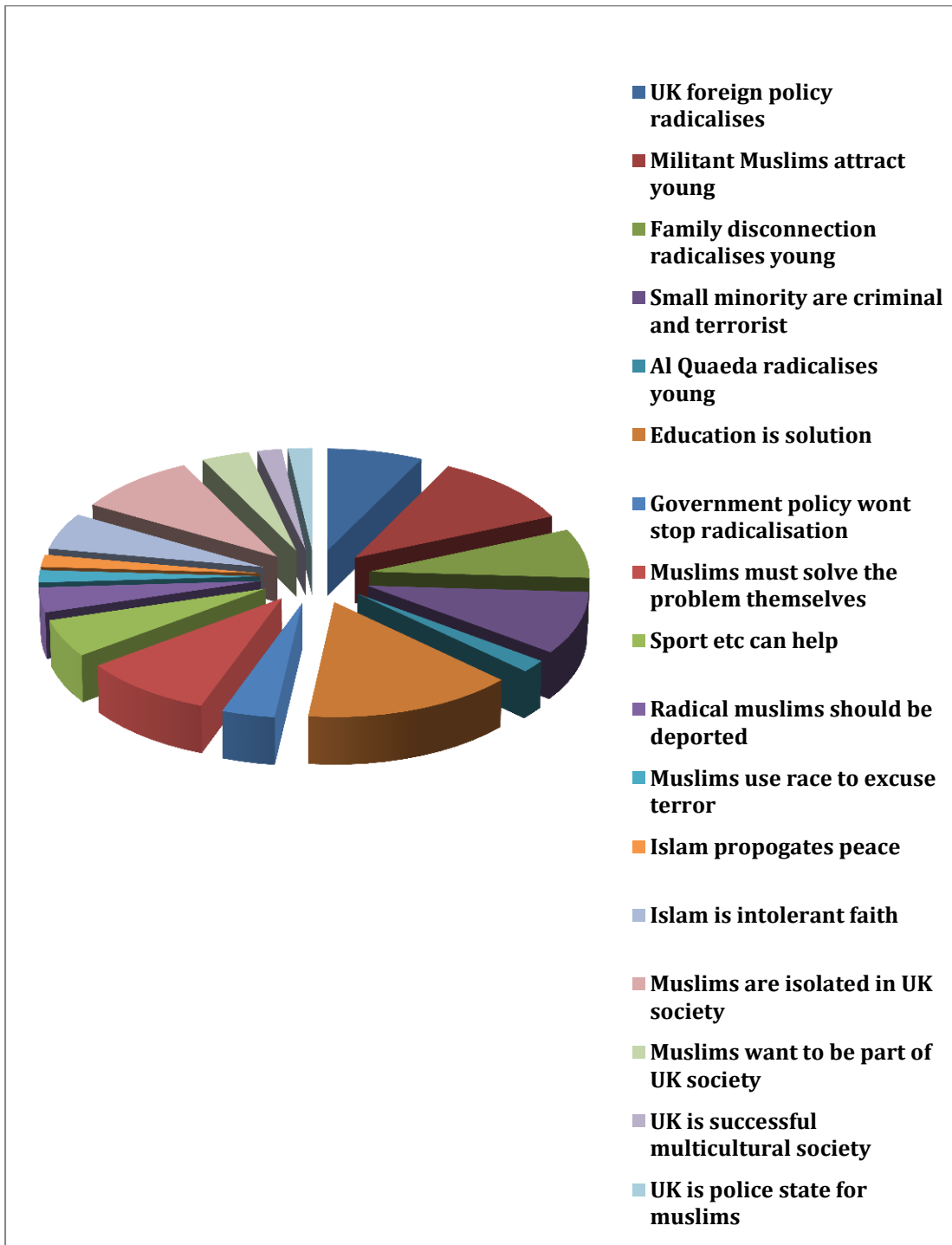
Nonetheless, this relatively scarce representation of anti-Muslim opinions is significant, as a YouGov poll indicated that 50% of people associated Islam with terrorism, 58% associated Islam with extremism, and 69% believed that Islam encouraged the repression of women (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10251827>, accessed January 30, 2013). Clearly, the fact that stories about Islam were so frequently about terrorism and extremism demonstrates the salience of this association in coverage.

It is also useful to note that this programme was representative of the trend whereby genres which included audience participation – particularly Your Call and online news – might be more likely to include a broad range of sources, and that this on occasion included opinions that were not heard elsewhere. Within the religion sample, 23 members of the public appeared in Your Call and 40 online, together accounting for 70% of all instances where members of the public appeared in the religion sample.

As the most significant representation of debate on religion in 2007, we have mapped the breadth of opinion – or the “wagon wheel” evident in stories about the relationship between Islam and terrorism below. The chart covers all types of programming and combines all source types, demonstrating the range and frequency (in terms of the number of times a certain position is expressed) of particular views in these stories. It should be noted that this

representation of the breadth of opinion, like those that follow, include only *opinions*, and exclude any information-based statements made by sources.

Wagon wheel 1: Breadth of opinion on the relationship between Islam and terrorism/extremism



The chart demonstrates that discussions over religion are not for or against a particular religion, but rather encapsulate complex and multi-faceted debates. Here, views are expressed on the *causes* of extremism (UK foreign policy, the role of Al Quaeda in radicalising the young), and the *solutions* (e.g. education, community action, activities including sports, and deportation), but also include broader assessments of Islam (that the religion propagates

peace/is an intolerant faith; that Muslims are isolated in UK society/that Muslims want to be part of British society) that often represent opposing views. As the chart demonstrates, the most prominent opinions – including the idea that education is the solution to the radicalisation of young people, and that it is only a small minority of Muslims who are criminals and terrorists – represent a relatively positive view of the problem. More negative assessments (e.g. “Muslims use race to excuse terror,” “Radical Muslims should be deported,” “Islam is an intolerant faith”) are present, but in relatively smaller numbers.

In 2007, another series of stories covered the controversy over whether a Sikh student should be allowed to wear a religious bracelet to school, and gave rise to broader issues of tolerance in a multicultural society. For instance, one Sikh participant in a BBC Breakfast studio discussion suggested that wearing the bracelet “reminds us of our obligations to society... What great harm does it do? Do we want to be a more intolerant society? Because that is what is happening.” The controversy over the bracelet accounted for the relatively frequent appearance of Sikhism in 2007 compared to 2012. Also in 2007, Jehovah’s Witnesses were prominent in the news agenda when a woman who adhered to its strict tenets refused a blood transfusion after childbirth and subsequently died. The prominence of this story in our sample meant that in 2007, a religious orientation that has such a limited following in the UK that it is not even recorded in Census data became more newsworthy than Judaism, Catholicism and Hinduism put together.

Stories and debates in 2012

In 2012, by far the most prominent set of stories was about the appointment of Justin Welby as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. This indicates a contrasting treatment of different religions: whereas events occurring within the Anglican Church associated with the “majority religion” – Christianity – are newsworthy in and of themselves, other religions – including Sikhism and Islam – are covered primarily when they give rise to controversies or problems. Though this may in part be the result of the presence of an important story focusing on a change at the top of the Church of England during our sample period, the contrast is nonetheless striking.

Many of the stories about the appointment focused on the reactions of high-profile religious and civic leaders, discussing Justin Welby as an individual, and what his background and approach might mean for the future of the Church of England. In a BBC Breakfast story on the appointment (November 9, 2012), the Reverend Dr Giles Fraser described Welby’s appointment as “a creative and imaginative choice. It is a daring one. He needs to be more than just about the Church”, whilst the Reverend Sally Hitchiner discussed the key question of Welby’s views on homosexuality: “With homosexuality, we do not know. He has not said what his views are on it. It might be that he has views one way or the other. But he doesn’t want that to be the key issue people think about with him.” On the very next day, BBC Breakfast featured a discussion of newspaper reactions to the appointment, where the Reverend Stephen Lowe commented: “He was a treasurer of a major oil company and has

built up something of a reputation for his ability around the financial world, a lot of respect there.”

Some of these stories offered opportunities for broader debates on the future direction of the Church of England which also encompassed discussions about the role of religion in society. For example, three online stories about the appointment included extensive debate on its broader implications, many of them framing it in the context of a crisis about the relevance of the Church. Two stories, “Viewpoints: What should new archbishop’s priorities be?” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19731559>, accessed January 27, 2013) and “Reaction as Justin Welby becomes Archbishop of Canterbury” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20269113>, accessed January 27, 2013) looked at the reactions of religious figures and observers to the appointment. A third story, “Justin Welby named as next Archbishop of Canterbury” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20264520>) included 592 audience comments, moderated through the *Editor’s Picks* feature – “a selection of comments submitted which are well-expressed and add new perspective or insight but generally reflect the balance of opinion we receive” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/about.shtml>). In this case, 13 comments were selected – several of them quoted below. Together, these stories provided a range and breadth of opinion on key controversies surrounding the appointment.

A significant number of comments focused on the role of the new Archbishop in addressing divisions in society, underpinned by what was frequently an emphasis on the need for tolerance of diversity in a multicultural society:

The next Archbishop of Canterbury will lead an institution which is becoming increasingly separated from its roots. Many people, especially young people, feel it is pompous and out of touch – they genuinely feel that its moral standards are lower than those of society. At the moment the perception is that it is anti-everything and sadly, racist, sexist and homophobic. Our new leader will need to find a way of communicating a faith that is positive and life-enhancing. This cannot be changed by speaking about it – he will need to lead the Church by acting differently on these issues, and work out how the Christian faith can be good news for the whole of our modern society. At the local level people find Christians engaged, kind, warm and generous – the same cannot be said of the institution. At this time of global economic turmoil he also needs to be unequivocally on the side of the poor and underprivileged both here and abroad. This will demand courage and integrity and a willingness to engage with politics in a meaningful way. (Canon Rosie Harper, vicar of Great Missenden and chaplain to the Bishop of Buckingham)

In this difficult economic period, it is both young people and those from minority faith backgrounds who are suffering disproportionately. Interfaith understanding is so important and so relevant in such a diverse and connected society, and we have seen the effects that prejudice and misunderstanding can cause in recent national and international news (Richard Wilson, project manager of the interfaith organisation Interact)

Whilst the message of the gospels is strong and needed more than ever the church needs to understand how people live their lives today, look at its evangelistic strategy and how to get the message across to all age groups. (Chris Lenton, Audience Comment, Editor's Picks)

If the CofE is to remain an Established Church of the State it has to do a better job in creating consensus on moral issues on behalf of all faiths (and non-faith based ethical groups) so that the UK has a sub-set of shared values that bind us. I'd like to see a UK Council of Faiths chaired by the new Archbishop to foster this national cohesion amongst diverse faiths. (Stephen of Woking, Audience Comment, Editor's Picks)

Given that homosexuality is one of the most contentious issues dividing the Church of England, it took centre stage in discussions around the appointment:

Whoever gets the job needs to decide what the institution's policy on homosexuality is going to be. The issue is ripping the Church apart, but more importantly it is interfering with the human rights of many people in the gay community, who have absolutely nothing to do with the Church. (Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society)

He does need to take very seriously the desire of gay and lesbian Christians to have relationships blessed in church and honoured and recognised by the Church and that includes both civil partnerships and, ultimately, equal marriage. On the whole the Church is a safe place (for gay and lesbian Christians) but it's just that we are not fully equal alongside everybody else in the Church and it's certainly not a safe place in other parts of the Anglican Communion. Homophobia is having a disastrous effect in places like Uganda and Nigeria and that is something that Rowan Williams has had to try and confront, not very successfully, and I hope Justin Welby's steeliness demonstrates itself in relations to the Communion and that he has the confidence to say to people that such behaviour against lesbian and gay people really is intolerable. (Rev Colin Coward, Director of Changing Attitude)

Congratulations to him. I hope he not only "engages" the gay community, but supports the ordination of openly gay people, and is bold enough to take a stand against the anti-gay, witchcraft-branch of the Anglican church in Africa, regardless of the financial cost. (Daniel Bunbury, Audience Comments, Editor's Picks)

Homosexuality remains an issue made complex by ignorance and prejudice. There are many gay people in the church I'm part of and serve in, and all are welcome. If we as Christians believe that Jesus loves us, died for our sins on the cross and rose again offering life to all who believe in him, then why do we the Church exclude so many on the basis of orientation? (Andrew Carr, Church of England lay reader, Dartford, Kent)

The homosexual agenda that is being promoted here and there in the church, and by different governments here and there, if that is the agenda he is coming to promote, of course we will not be part of it. (Nigerian Anglican leader Nicholas Okoh)

Finally, some of those contributing to the debate – whether used as sources by the reporter or commenting through the website – raised even more fundamental questions about the continued relevance of religion in society, consistent with the increasingly secular orientation of a section of British society:

Best wishes to Justin Welby. As a born-again atheist I may agree with many of the comments about the dwindling significance of the C of E, but we should not underestimate the potential for good when an educated and humane person is given a prominent place in the establishment. If we remove such intellectual believers from the cultural space marked “religion”, who will fill the vacuum? (Tim Bull, Audience Comment, Editor’s Picks)

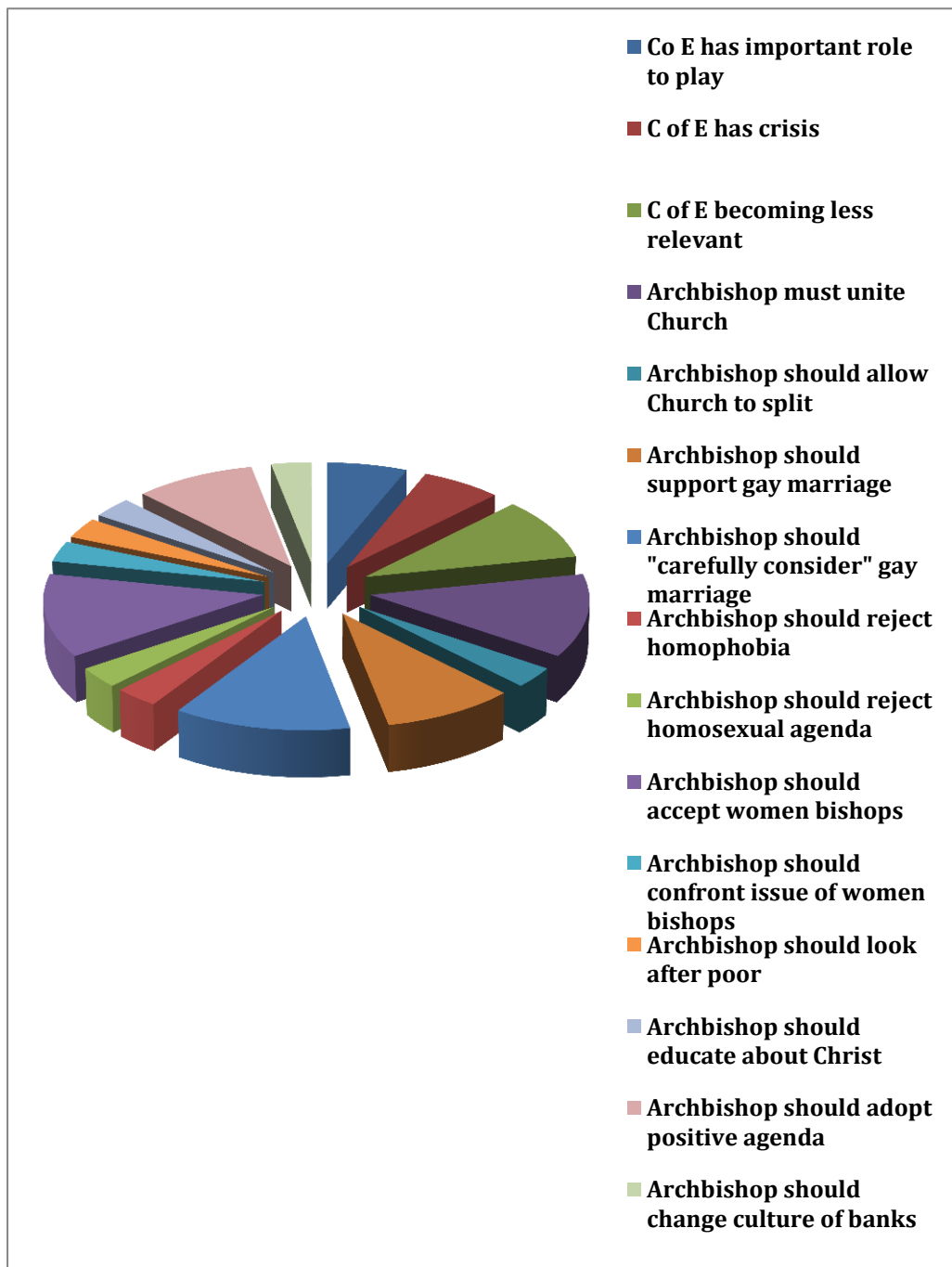
Church attendances show this is irrelevant to most people. I am still shocked that the Prime Minister has to be involved in the selection of this non-entity who represents a tiny minority view. It is high time this anachronism was removed from our constitution. (Geordie Athiest [*sic*], Audience Comment, Editor’s Picks)

Here, both of the explicitly atheist points came from comments made by audience members, as opposed to news sources that were used by the BBC in covering the story.^{vi} Another contributor to online comments about the appointment used it as an opportunity to criticise what he perceived as the elitist background of the new Archbishop – a point that was not raised by sources used by the BBC:

Yet another out of touch incompetent Eton rich boy who had his greedy snout in the corporate private sector trough before joining the gravy train of the CofE. He will have no idea about the issues facing his congregations/parisioners [*sic*] and the bible would suggest Jesus Christ would never recognise him as a leader of his faith. Rich men and the kingdom of god are not compatable [*sic*]!

Overall, this story – central to the news agenda – offered members of the public, key observers and religious leaders a voice in framing the debates surrounding the new appointment, whether it be in terms of key issues of sexuality, poverty, divisions in the Church or its relevance to society more broadly. The breadth of opinion on the appointment of Justin Welby is reflected in the chart below, indicating the salience of debates over the future direction of the Anglican Church and, associated with that, the key tasks facing the newly appointed Archbishop.

Wagon wheel 2: Breadth of opinion on the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury



This chart graphically illustrates the fact that the most significant views on the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury relate to the issues of gay marriage and, associated to that, homophobia within the Church, with a second strain of debate around the appointment of women bishops. Whilst views against gay marriage were present in the debate, no sources explicitly argued against the appointment of women bishops – somewhat surprising given the fact that the proposed legislation fell short of the two-thirds majority required for it to pass in the Synod.

More than anything, the discussion over Justin Welby's appointment highlighted some of the important ways in which controversies over religion often relate to clashing values and world views – themes that were also apparent in other closely related stories in the 2012 religion sample, such as when Cardinal Keith O'Brien was named Stonewall's Bigot of the Year after his high-profile attacks on proposals to legalise same-sex marriage, which he had characterised as a "grotesque subversion of a universally accepted human right", as well as in discussions over the ordination of women bishops in the Church of England.

Summary

Religion stories were notably diverse in terms of subject matter and included perspectives on a wide variety of religions. They included a range of views and shed light on the role of faith in a multicultural society. Only in rare cases, however, did these stories reflect the increasingly secular orientation of British society.

The BBC coverage in 2007 and 2012 gave voice to discussions over the direction of the Church of England in the future, the relationship between Islam and terrorism, and questions around tolerance and religious freedom in debates over the public display of religious symbols. It seems that, in particular, online and radio phone-in genres, which also included audience participation, enabled broader debates on the most contentious issues relating to religion.

In general, it appeared that the coverage of Christianity was reported through debates within the Church of England such as the discussion of the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury – while coverage of Islam was reported through a more negative framing of the religion, given the emphasis on terrorism and extremism.

The UK's relationship to the EU

Of our three topics, the sample examining the UK's relationship to the EU was the most strongly dominated by political sources. Across 2007 and 2012, politicians accounted for more than seven out of ten sources, and were used almost ten times as frequently as the second-largest source category – media and journalist sources. The dominance of political sources meant that there were fewer opportunities for non-party political opinions to be expressed. The sources used in this sample were also the least reflective of the population overall with respect to gender and ethnicity.

Further, the ways in which stories were framed and sources used constructed the EU as a problem – consistent with public opinion, which has increasingly hardened on the UK's relationship with the Union. A Guardian/ICM poll carried out in late December 2012 thus found that if offered a referendum on Britain's membership, as proposed by David Cameron, a slight majority – 51% – of respondents “would vote to take Britain out of the EU, against just 40% who say they would vote to stay in”

(<http://m.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/26/eurocepticism-growing-voters-poll>, accessed January 30, 2013). By contrast, a 2001 ICM poll, using a slightly differently worded question, indicated that 68% of respondents wanted Britain to remain a member of the EU (<http://m.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/26/eurocepticism-growing-voters-poll>, accessed January 30, 2013).

Across the two years there were a total of 208 stories on the EU, distributed across platforms as follows:

Table 17: Distribution of stories across platforms in the EU sample, by year

	2007 N(%)	2012 N(%)	Total
TV	19 (20.9%)*	13 (11.1%)	32 (15.4%)
Radio	21 (23.1%)	17 (14.5%)	38 (18.3%)
Online	51 (56.0%)	87 (74.4%)	138 (66.3%)
Total	91 (100%)	117 (100%)	208 (100%)

*Note that the percentage figures in the table refer to the percentage within each year, rather than across the sample as a whole.

The online platform contributed by far the largest number of stories on this topic. This topic comprised the largest number of stories in Study 1 – two out of five stories dealt with the UK's relationship to the EU. Despite the large number of relevant stories, however, the diversity of source types was far more limited than in the other samples, as indicated by a range of measures.

Table 18: Distribution of sources in the EU sample, by year

Source type	2007 N (%)	2012 N (%)
Political sources	273 (65.0%)	431 (79.2%)
Media/journalists	36 (8.6%)	40 (7.4%)
Member of the public	18 (4.3%)	11 (2.0%)
Business/private company/economy	12 (2.9%)	10 (1.8%)
NGOs/charities/activists/pressure groups	10 (2.4%)	7 (1.3%)
Academics/expert/science/tech/medical	10 (2.4%)	1 (0.2%)
Think tank	7 (1.7%)	10 (1.8%)
Public Sector	7 (1.7%)	5 (0.9%)
Judiciary/legal	6 (1.4%)	5 (0.9%)
Trade Union	2 (0.5%)	0 (0%)
Other	39 (9.3%)	24 (4.4%)
Total	420 (100%)	544 (100%)

As this table highlights, political sources were by far the most prominent, making up more than 6 in 10 sources in 2007, and almost 8 in 10 in 2012. Given that media sources constituted the second-largest source category, there was very little space within the EU debate for a broader range of sources. Among these, members of the public were the most prominent outside the media-politics nexus, with business or private enterprise sources accounting for the next-largest group, just ahead of NGOs and charities. The presence of just two trade union sources in 2007, and none in 2012, is particularly striking given that a significant area of legislative intervention in the EU is around workers' rights. Because all non-political sources combined were in the minority across both years, most of the stories were reported through institutional framing and opinions.

Given the high frequency of political sources, it is instructive to examine the make-up of political sources in finer detail. The table below analyses all the political source categories that appeared 10 or more times in 2007 or 2012 within the EU sample.

Table 19: Distribution of top political sources in the EU sample, by year

	2007	2012	Total
PM	40	46	86
MP	13	66	79
EU Commissioner	18	33	51
Gov Minister	12	39	51
Non-UK Government*	24	15	39
Non-UK Politician	10	24	34
Leader Opposition	14	15	29
'Conservatives'	11	18	29
'Government'	7	22	29
'Labour'	5	22	27
'MPs'	5	16	21
1st Dep Min. (Scotland)	0	21	21
MEP	5	11	16
MSP	2	14	16
Foreign Secretary	13	2	15
Shadow Minister	3	10	13
Govt. Spokesperson	2	11	13
President EU Comm.	11	1	12

*Refers to reference to governments outside of Westminster and the devolved nations.

As this table demonstrates, the Prime Minister was once again the most frequently used individual source. And even if the topic was centrally about Europe, the majority of these sources – in terms of both types and frequencies – represented Westminster: out of 18 source categories, 11 were associated with the British government, with two source categories (MSP and First Deputy Minister) representing Scotland. The most prominent non-Westminster sources included non-UK governments (those beyond Westminster and the devolved nations) and EU commissioners. The dominance of Westminster sources had, as we discuss in more detail below, significant consequences for the nature of the debate.

Sources in the EU sample were also the least representative of the general population in terms of gender and ethnicity. In cases where the ethnicity could be discerned, 95.5% of sources in 2007 and 98.8% in 2012 were white. The sample was also heavily male-dominated; in 2007 men accounted for 93.4% of sources, decreasing to 78.1% in 2012.

Stories and debates in 2007

The event that attracted by far the largest quantity of coverage in 2007 was reporting of the Lisbon Treaty. The reporting on the UK's relationship to Europe was linked to a series of conflicting arguments put forward by the main political parties in Westminster regarding the nature and legitimacy of the treaty, plus a discussion of how Conservative backbenchers were putting pressure on their party leader to adopt a more Eurosceptic line.

Online News

Online news featured one unique angle on this story which didn't appear in broadcast news. This concerned an unofficial local poll on whether to conduct a national referendum on the treaty which was carried out in the Leicestershire village of Broughton Astley. The BBC website reported that 95% of voters had backed the call for a referendum and cited the comments of village resident Ron Clements who stated that Gordon Brown "should be quaking in his boots about the vast groundswell of opinion that lies behind the call to give people the vote" (Villagers call for EU referendum, BBC website 2 November 2007). The next most significant area of coverage involved discussion of the EU's role in various areas of regulation. In this section there were two articles on attempts by the EU to liberalise the telecoms sector. This was framed as a contest between the European Commission who wanted to open up the sector and the Spanish and German governments who didn't want to cede these powers to the EU. There were also two articles looking at an export ban on British livestock to the EU following the foot and mouth epidemic, two articles on carbon emissions, and single articles on EU fisheries policies, share dealing and wine classification. A breakdown of the proportion of space (by word count) given to different story categories can be seen in the table below.

Table 20: Story topics in the 2007 online EU sample as measured by proportion of total coverage

Story topic	Proportion of total coverage	Raw word count
Lisbon Treaty	43.2%	10950
Regulation & consumer/ environmental protection	16.2%	4110
Crime and anti-terror legislation	13.0%	3298
EU aid to UK	4.3%	1099
British Bill of Rights/ Constitution as counterpoint to EU legislation	4.3%	1098
EU immigration policy	4.1%	1047
EU's trade and diplomatic links to the Developing World	2.8%	704
Gordon Brown's speech on The UK's relationships to EU & US	2.8%	701
Debate on whether Tony Blair will become President of EU Council	2.6%	660
Incorrect EU budget accounts	2.4%	597
EU support for Galileo sat-nav system	1.7%	436
EU economic forecast	1.2%	313
Trade dispute over French support to national air carrier	0.8%	203
BBC website shortlisted for EU award	0.6%	145
Total	100%	25361

EU crime and anti-terrorism legislation also attracted media attention. Two articles focused specifically on new EU policies to counter the terrorism threat such as heightened internet surveillance and increased collection and cross border sharing of air passenger information. These articles featured both proponents of the new measures as well as some opponents who suggested that they would impinge on civil liberties. A second strand of reporting in this area dealt with attempts by Britain to persuade the EU to adopt a new Directive which would tighten the laws on the sale of replica guns which, police sources claimed, could be easily converted into fully functioning firearms. As the table indicates, online news also covered a

series of other stories which didn't appear anywhere in BBC broadcast news output, such as the controversy over the Economic Partnership Agreement trade deals with the developing world. Overall then there was a great deal of overlap between online and broadcast coverage though online news did have a slightly broader focus during 2007.

Broadcast News

BBC television and radio also heavily covered the issue of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty which accounted for exactly 70% of coverage (in terms of total seconds of airtime) across all broadcasts channels (see table below). Coverage of the treaty focused on three core questions. Firstly, had Britain secured its "red lines" on opt-outs from the treaty which threatened its national interests? Secondly, was the treaty an entirely new agreement or was it a repackaged version of the EU constitution which had been abandoned after a number of member states had failed to ratify it? Thirdly, if the treaty was an attempt to reintroduce a version of the constitution should a referendum be held to ratify it? Broadcast news coverage primarily covered two clear perspectives on these issues. These were the perspectives of the two major parties (Labour and Conservative) whose spokespersons accounted for 46% of all interviews and reported statements. This figure of 46% heavily underestimates the airtime given over to representatives of the Labour and Conservative parties because their spokespersons accounted for many of the major interviews on the treaty whilst most of the other featured sources such as Press outlets, EU bureaucrats or member state politicians were often only represented via brief recorded or reported statements. Notably, representatives of civil society organisations such as trade unions or pressure groups were largely absent from coverage.

Table 21: Story topics in the 2007 broadcast EU sample as measured by proportion of total coverage

	Lisbon Treaty	Crime/ Anti-terrorism	Regulation/ Environment	Immigration	Subsidies to Wealthy landowners	EU Citizens' Summit	Incorrect EU Budget Accounts	Total Secs
News at Ten	66.3%	----	----	16%	----	----	17.7%	1063
Newsnight	72.6%	----	10.0%	----	----	16.6%	0.8%	2494
Breakfast News (TV)	41.7%	----	27.2%	29.9%	1.2%	----	----	1189
Today	74.9%	1.3%	21.7%	1.4%	0.7%	----	----	5551
Breakfast (Radio)	84.9%	15.1%	----	----	----	----	----	79
Newsbeat	100%	----	----	----	----	----	----	84
Total secs	7322	83	1776	601	56	415	207	10460

The position of the Labour government was that Britain would sign the Lisbon Treaty because the government had secured the opt-outs which protected its national interests. Furthermore, Labour argued that the agreement was a completely different document to the EU constitution which didn't involve a fundamental shift of power to Brussels, and that for this reason there was no need for a public referendum:

It is not a constitution...the constitutional idea has been abandoned (David Miliband, Foreign Secretary, Today programme, October 16 2007)

He [Head of the EU Scrutiny Committee] couldn't deny that the opt-in that we've got, every single justice and home affairs measure, has been secured in the legal text (David Miliband, Foreign Secretary, Today programme, October 16 2007)

The document does not shift the fundamental balance of power, and therefore should be scrutinised by parliament in the same way that previous treaties have been. (David Miliband, Foreign Secretary, Today programme, October 16 2007)

The protections that we have negotiated defend the national interest. We are putting in place new procedures to lock in the protection of our interests. We will oppose any further suggestions for institutional change in this Parliament and the next. (Gordon Brown, BBC News at Ten, October 22 2007)

The red lines are clearer than ten days ago. The red lines are thicker than ten days ago and the red lines are better defended than ten days ago (David Miliband, News at Ten, October 15 2007)

The position of the Conservatives was diametrically opposed to that of the Labour party. They argued that the treaty was substantively similar to the EU constitution which as they pointed out the Labour Party had offered a referendum on in their manifesto. This, they suggested, meant that the referendum would lead to a major transfer of power to the EU, and that the claims that were being made by the Labour party that their red lines could be defended were questionable because the opt-outs could be challenged by the EU courts in the future. For the Conservatives it was imperative that the Prime Minister offer a national referendum on the treaty:

The documents [EU constitution and Lisbon Treaty] are almost, effectively, entirely the same (William Hague, Newsnight, October 18 2007)

This treaty is, in substance, no different from the EU constitution (David Davis, Today programme November 13 2007)

The government's abandonment of its manifesto commitment to a referendum is a breach of trust with the nation as serious as any of us have known in modern times (William Hague, Today programme November 13 2007)

It will give enormous amounts of powers to the EU without the say-so of the people who the European Union are supposed to represent ... people voted for a free trade area, and what we instead have, is a drive towards a federal European state which nobody in this country has been told about (David Davis, Today programme November 13 2007)

They signed a constitution that transfers, gets rid of our right to say 'no' in 60 areas. They are creating a permanent EU president, a foreign minister, and a diplomatic service. This is a significant transfer of power from Britain to Brussels. That's why there ought to be a referendum (David Cameron, October 19 2007)

As was the case across the three topics, Britain's third party, the Liberal Democrats struggled to be heard in this debate. Whilst across all news programmes government spokespersons secured 32 source appearances (interviews or reported statements) and the Conservatives 21, the Europhile Liberal Democrats only managed two. However, in one interview Vince Cable did get across the Liberal Democrat perspective which was that they favoured a full referendum on EU membership (which they strongly supported) rather than a vote on the treaty itself:

The public should decide on the issue of whether Britain should remain a committed member of the European Union. A great deal has changed since the Harold Wilson referendum in 1975 (News at Ten, October 22 2007)

UKIP, whose political philosophy is primarily based on opposition to the EU, and who, as mentioned above, have made significant strides recently, made just two appearances. Nonetheless, the party's political views were amply represented by other sources. In terms of other views, media reactions to the controversy were referenced ten times with the majority

(seven) of references being made to Eurosceptic newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Times* and *Sun*:

[Journalist quoting from Sun newspaper] This act of betrayal will haunt Mr Brown till the end of his political days (Today programme, October 19 2007)

The Sun says that Gordon Brown has rolled over in an abject surrender on the EU Constitution (Today programme, October 23 2007)

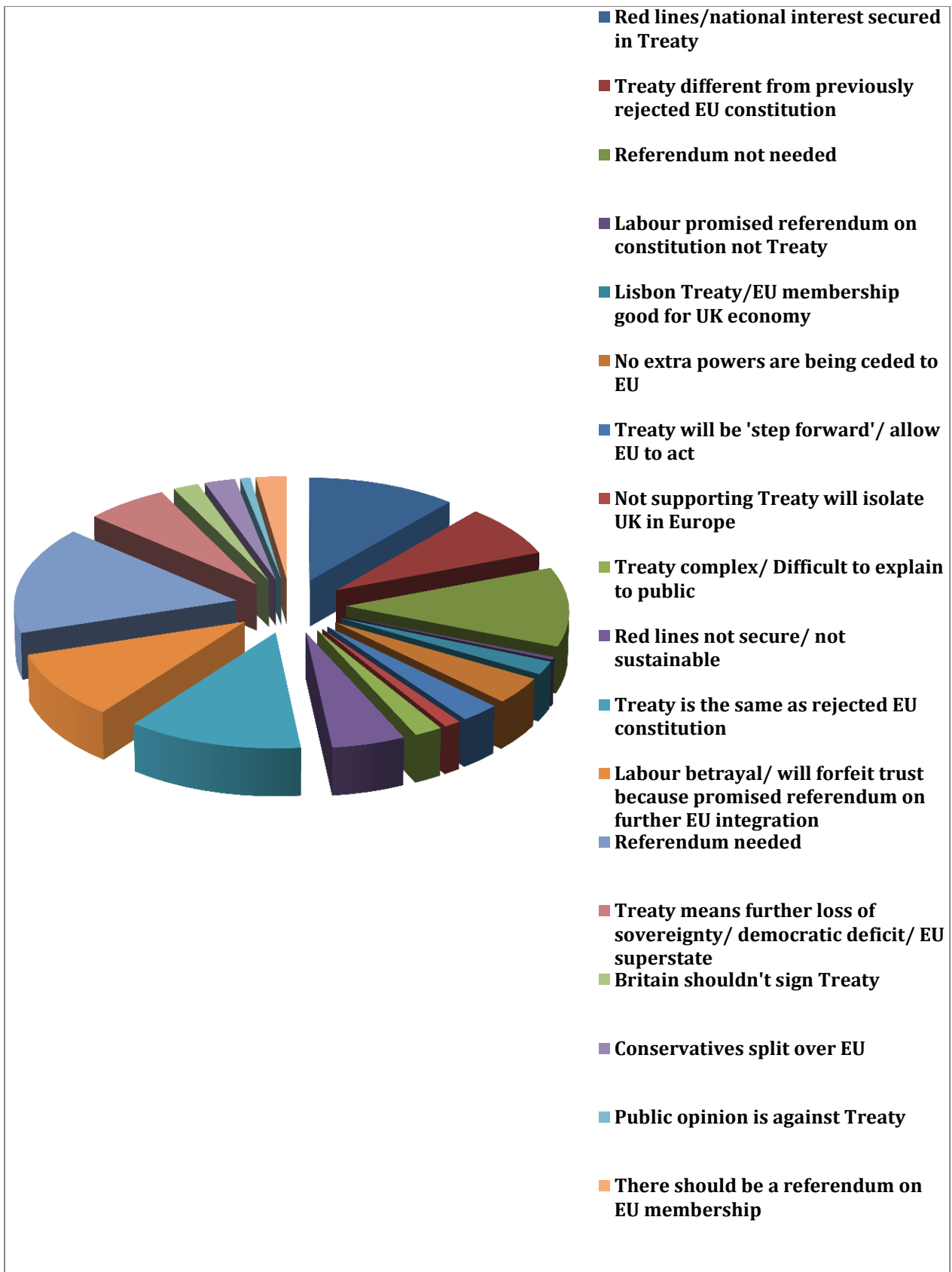
The Times says that yesterday's debate on the EU Lisbon treaty provided an indication of Gordon Brown's intent to turn crucial debate across the country into a party political nit-picking session. (Today programme, October 23 2007)

[Journalist quoting from Daily Telegraph newspaper] Brown is reneging on a promise to hold a referendum (Today programme, October 18 2007)

[Journalist quoting from Daily Mail newspaper] The new treaty is 96% identical to the defeated constitution don't let Britain down by signing up (Today programme, October 18 2007)

The chart below shows the breadth of opinions on the Lisbon Treaty.

Wagon wheel 3: Breadth of opinion on Lisbon Treaty



The chart highlights that the reporting of the Lisbon treaty was largely dominated by the perspectives of the two main parties (Conservative and Labour) and the debate was focused around the procedural issues of “red lines”, “opt-outs” and referendums. There was very little extra-parliamentary opinion from areas of civil society or substantive debate about what the Lisbon treaty actually involved. There were also limited attempts to actually make the case for Europe making a positive contribution to Britain. Instead most of the debate focused on the Conservatives stressing that the EU was further encroaching on British sovereignty and Labour insisting that this was not the case. So despite the limited presence of UKIP there was a greater proportion of opinion which framed Europe as a threat than an opportunity. On the whole, it appears that the way in which the story of the Lisbon Treaty was told in BBC programming tended to reflect a narrow range of opinion, strongly focused on issues of national sovereignty, and tensions between the two main Westminster political parties.

Stories and debates in 2012

In 2012, the EU coverage was dominated by the budget negotiations – a story which far outweighed all others across platforms. However, as the discussion below indicates, there were significant differences between online and broadcast agendas during our sample period.

Online News

The BBC website published a total of 87 separate news stories during our 2012 sample period – a substantial increase over the 51 we encountered in our 2007 sample. Once again, the range of online EU stories was wider than those featured in broadcast news. The distinctive character of the BBC’s online output can be seen by the fact that one very widely covered story – the position of a future independent Scotland within the EU – didn’t appear once in our broadcast news sample but featured in 21 online reports. This story revolved around a single relatively narrow debate – had the SNP leader Alex Salmond been entirely accurate when he claimed that he had taken legal advice over whether an independent Scotland would be able to remain within the EU as a successor state? Online news featured the views of Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs and MSPs who challenged Salmond over his assurances that he had taken advice from legal counsel and questioned whether he had broken the ministerial code. This debate also accounted for the high frequency of Scottish voices among the top political sources in 2012. However, by far the most covered story on the BBC website was the debate over the EU budget negotiations which accounted for 42% of the total coverage.

Table 22: Story topics in the 2012 online EU sample as measured by proportion of total coverage

Story Area	Proportion of total coverage	Raw word count
EU budget negotiations	42.0%	18226
Future of an independent Scotland in EU	24.1%	10501
Debate over the future of Britain in the EU	11.4%	4926
Regulation & consumer/ environmental protection	5.9%	2543
Labour's changing stance on EU	5.1%	2203
EU banking reform	4.5%	1956
EU plans for female quotas on company boards	3.7%	1593
EU aid to UK	1.9%	811
Calls for elected President of EU	1.4%	616
Total	100%	43375

The focus of this story involved both hard news reports on the progress of negotiations as well as debates between the parties at Westminster over the appropriate budget settlement. After the government lost the vote over its proposed settlement in parliament there was a steady stream of stories commenting on this aspect of the long-running story. Linked to the debate over the EU budget was a further selection of stories which concentrated on the debate over what should Britain's position be within Europe. These largely focused on dissent within the Conservative party over EU membership and demands for a referendum. Another set of stories was tied to a statement from the Labour MP Gisela Stuart that indicated that the party was considering its pro-EU position. As in 2007 there were a selection of stories about EU

regulation and regional development aid to the UK though these were a smaller proportion of total stories as compared with 2007.

Broadcast News

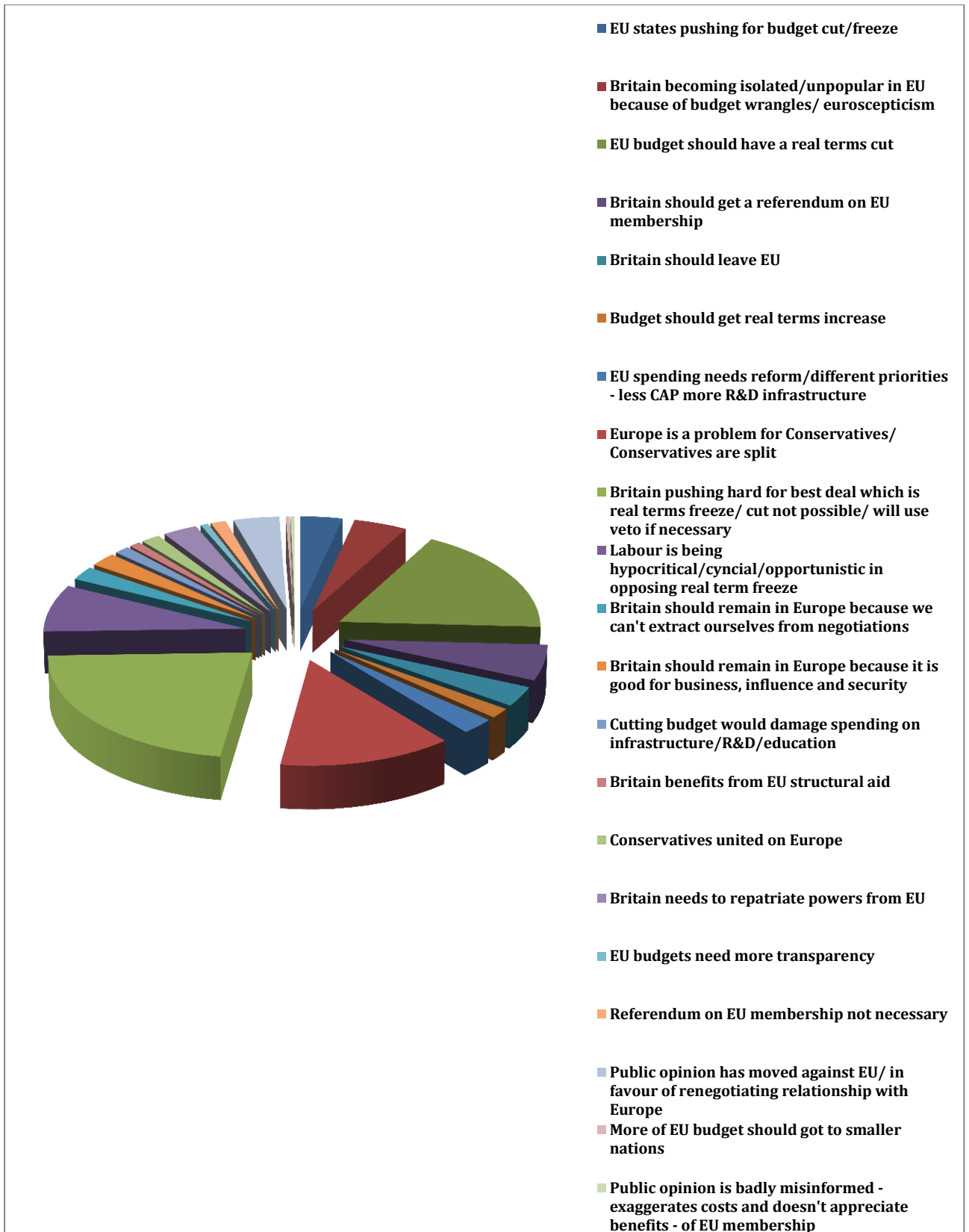
As with the online sample, the dominant story in the 2012 broadcast sample focused on the negotiations over the EU budget, accounting for 20 of the 33 bulletins in this period.

Table 23: Story topics in the 2012 broadcast EU sample as measured by proportion of total coverage

	EU Budget	EU Criminal Justice	EU Banking reform	Labour's changing stance on EU	EU plans for female quotas on company boards	Total Secs
News at Ten	74.4%	23.7%	1.9%	----	----	1179
Newsnight	100%	----	----	----	----	1681
Breakfast News (TV)	44.7%	14.4%	----	----	40.9%	792
Today	67.9%	8.4%	16.1%	0.6%	7.0%	9588
Breakfast (Radio)	100%	----	----	----	----	602
Newsbeat	100%	----	----	----	----	14
Total secs	10036	1202	1566	54	998	13856

Most of the coverage of the budget was – as in coverage of other major news items concerning the UK’s relationship to Europe – focused around the political sparring between, and within, the Conservative and Labour parties. This was the case across platforms and programmes, as demonstrated in the chart below, showing the breadth of opinion on the EU budget.

Wagon wheel 4: Breadth of opinion on the EU budget



The focus on political sparring meant that much of the information about the actual substance of the budget, as well as the pros and cons of EU investment policy, tended to be lost in the perspectives of sources cited in reporting, which focused on the debates over whether the government should support a real term freeze in EU spending. As a result, BBC coverage tended to focus on a number of key parliamentary perspectives.

One argument which was put forward by both the Labour Party and a number of Conservative backbenchers – suggested that in the midst of a recession and a major austerity drive it was unacceptable for the EU budget to be frozen in real terms, but instead it should be cut. This perspective was widely featured across BBC radio and television:

It is extraordinary, last surgery I did, I had a number of police officers coming in. They were saying why when their pay is frozen, why were benefits being increased by inflation? I found that difficult enough to explain, without trying to explain to them that, while their pay is frozen, the EU should have an inflationary increase or more. (Conservative MP, Newsnight, October 26 2012)

Underlying this disquiet was also said to be a concern that much of the EU budget was either wasted or spent, as another Conservative MP put it, on “things that have no impact on people’s daily lives” (Newsnight, October 26 2012). It was also reported that a number of Tories were seeking to widen the debate to the question of an in-out referendum on Britain’s membership of the EU. As one put it, “leaving the EU is no longer unthinkable, it is no longer a marginal view held by mavericks ... it is a legitimate point that is starting to go mainstream” (Conservative MP, Newsnight, October 26 2012). This argument was tied to the view that Britain would be no worse off outside the EU under a free trade agreement:

If you say to business, the worst I think we will get is a Swiss-style free trade relationship and we should trade freely with the whole world, not just a declining part of it (Conservative MP, Newsnight, October 26 2012)

Since this position was at odds with the view of the party leadership this opened up a further strand of news coverage which focused on the historic divisions within the Conservative party over the issue of Europe. This became a major theme in coverage especially after 53 Tory MPs revolted against their leadership and defeated the government in the Commons vote on the budget. As one prominent journalist put it:

The “bastards” are back. David Cameron proves unable to command even his own party over the issue of Europe. And the spectre which haunted the Major government, tonight left him without a majority in the House of Commons (Newsnight, October 31 2012)

In British politics party rifts are traditionally seen as intensely newsworthy especially so if they have the power to derail policy. Since the issue of Europe is seen as a historic fault line within the Conservative party the strong focus on this theme is not unexpected. The position of the government on the budget negotiations, which also featured prominently in coverage, was that they would have preferred a cut but that this was not possible and the best that was

realistically achievable was a real terms freeze. The Prime Minister was also reported as sharply criticising the Labour party for political opportunism.

In coverage, the positive case for supporting the EU budget did not come across strongly in the otherwise dominant voices of Westminster politicians. Instead it was most prominently made in an interview on the Today programme with Richard Corbett, an advisor to the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. Corbett argued that it wasn't just the level of spending that was important but also what it was spent on, and that in recent years it had moved away from agricultural subsidies to more worthy areas such as research and development (Today programme, October 25 2012). Corbett also argued that it wasn't a one way street, with some of Britain's contributions returning to the UK via regional development aid and contracts to business such as the EU-funded Tagus bridge project in Portugal which was built by a British contractor.

In terms of the broader debate over the UK's relationship with the EU, support for Britain remaining with the Union tended to be framed in terms of economic arguments. The Europe Minister made the case that EU membership brought advantages in terms of trade, market access, foreign direct investment and influence over European foreign and security policies (Newsnight October 26 2012). Business representatives made the case purely on economic self-interest and suggested that the debate was skewed because the population were misinformed about the scale of British contributions to the EU:

The interesting thing is so many people in this country, when asked how much they think we contribute to the EU, they will say something along the lines of 20-25% of our GDP or national income. Reality is it's about 1%. It is not as much as people think ... I think the business community is obviously by and large in favour of our membership of the EU because it so good for us economically. (Newsnight, October 26 2012)

Overall then the coverage of this story was structured around the Labour and Conservative party debates on the budget and Britain's place within the EU as well as on the impact of this divisive issue on Conservative party unity. Perhaps surprisingly, bearing in mind the electoral success and increased prominence and popularity of UKIP, they were only featured as a source on one occasion in our 2012 sample, which actually represents a fall as compared to 2007.

Summary

Comparing the samples for 2007 and 2012, the one obvious area of difference is that in the 2012 sample, the debate over Europe has widened to the question of whether the UK should even remain a member of the EU. However, the continuities between the two sample periods are perhaps more prominent than the points of departure. Both years see a sharp focus on Europe as a problem for the UK, particularly in terms of national sovereignty. Both years also see Westminster voices and in particular the views of the Conservative and Labour parties, dominating coverage. Even if stories are frequently framed through the assumption of an adversarial relationship between the UK and the EU, this framing comes across almost solely

through an emphasis on tensions at Westminster. In both years much of the coverage could be characterised as relatively narrow and procedural – with much coverage devoted to stories about political meetings and negotiations. UKIP barely merits a mention whilst the positive case for Europe tends to be framed solely in terms of economic benefits and political influence. There is very little room for sources presenting a broader range of views, and for substantive information about what the EU actually does and how much it actually costs. Further, across both years the sample is heavily influenced by white male sources. When placed in the context of coverage on our two other topics, this indicates that because of what we might describe as the institutional emphasis of EU stories, linked to debates over the EU treaty and budget, as well as because of tensions between the major parties over the UK’s relationship to Europe, this is a topic area which does not generally encourage a broader representation of opinion because the reporting – and the views of the sources interviewed – largely focuses on political infighting. The reliance on Westminster sources means that the relationship of the UK with the EU is usually covered within a framework where the EU is seen as a threat.

Immigration

Although immigration was the most frequently reported of the three topics, it is important to note that this did not mean that debates over the nature and consequences of immigration were central to the news agenda. As with the EU sample, stories on immigration frequently focused on political infighting over the management of immigration, as well as reactions to official government reports and statistics. However, our analysis demonstrates that though political sources once again strongly framed the debate, stories about immigration also occasionally gave voice to a broader and more diverse range of sources, including immigrants and asylum seekers, as well as members of the public. In total, the immigration sample featured 149 stories, with 93 in 2007 and 56 in 2012. They were distributed across platforms and by year as follows:

Table 24: Immigration stories by platform and year

Platform	2007 N(%)	2012 N(%)	Total
TV	26 (28.0%)	8 (14.2%)	34 (22.8%)
Radio	34 (36.6%)	14 (25.0%)	48 (32.2%)
Online	33 (35.4%)	34 (60.7%)	67 (45.0%)
Total	93 (100%)	56 (100%)	149 (100%)

As this table demonstrates, the most immigration stories appeared in the online sample, and with a more substantial number of stories in 2007 in the sample overall, many of them occasioned by allegations around the government's handling of illegal immigrants. The fact that many of the stories related to the actions and reactions of government (as well as, in several cases, local councils) was reflected in the distribution of sources, as shown in the table below.

Table 25: Distribution of sources in the immigration sample, by year

Source type	2007 N (%)	2012 N (%)
Political sources	268 (54.0%)	97 (38.5%)
Member of the public	62 (12.5%)	37 (14.7%)
Public Sector	39 (7.9%)	16 (6.4%)
Media/journalists	33 (6.7%)	16 (6.4%)
NGOs/charities/activists/pressure groups	18 (3.6%)	23 (9.1%)
Trade Union	14 (2.8%)	0 (0%)
Academics/expert/science/tech/medical	9 (1.8%)	13 (5.2%)
Think tank	8 (1.6%)	1 (0%)
Judiciary/legal	6 (1.2%)	25 (9.9%)
Business/private company/economy	3 (0.6%)	5 (2.0%)
Religious leaders/texts	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)
Military	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)
Other	33 (6.7%)	18 (7.1%)
Total	496 (100%)	252 (100%)

While political sources were less prevalent in the immigration sample than in coverage of the UK's relationship with the EU, they still accounted for more than half of all sources in 2007, declining to two out of five in 2012. Public sector sources had a greater presence here than in the other two samples – perhaps reflecting the fact that a number of stories dealt with how immigration affects public service delivery. Trade union sources accounted for a non-trivial proportion of sources in 2007, having been used 14 times, whereas they completely disappeared in 2012 – a decline which is surprising given the fact that immigration is an area which has clear implications for the labour market.

Sources on immigration came closer to representing the diversity in the British population overall than the EU sample discussed above (even if it remained male-dominated) – overall, more than three out of four sources were male, though the ratio improved between the two years – from almost eight out of 10 in 2007 to seven out of 10 in 2012, as shown in the table below.

Table 26: Gender distribution in the immigration sample, by year

Gender	2007	2012	Total
Male	217 (78.3%)	102 (71.8%)	319 (76.1%)
Female	60 (21.7%)	40 (28.2%)	100 (23.9%)
Total	277 (100%)	142 (100%)	419 (100)%

For the small minority of sources for whom the ethnicity could be determined, 78% were white in 2007, decreasing to 72% in 2012. As with the religion sample, this suggests an over-representation of non-white sources in relation to the population as a whole. Among ethnic minority groups, the largest presence was Indian/Asian individuals, together accounting for 8.3% of sources across both years. This slight skew in ethnic balance of the source population may have to do with the nature of the topic. In particular, despite a large number of stories on EU immigration in 2007, a significant number of immigration stories were linked to stories of illegal immigrants from outside the European Union, many of whom were of non-white ethnic backgrounds.

Stories and debates in 2007

The 93 news stories identified in the 2007 sample were based on 41 distinct events – a larger number than the sample in 2012, which covered a wider range of topics (however, when adjusted for the larger number of news items, the range of topics was slightly more diverse in 2012 compared to 2007).

Three events were covered across all three platforms and by each programme included in our sample. These focused on 1) local government council reactions to official immigration figures, and their plea for extra payments to cope with the unacknowledged pressures placed upon local services by migrant numbers; 2) the government’s admission that inaccurate official statistics had underestimated the number of migrant workers in the UK and apologies for the incorrect figures; 3) a story about the discovery that illegal immigrants had been employed by the Home Office.

The coverage of these stories either extended for several consecutive days (illegal immigrants at the Home Office row), were introduced in a single news item and picked up for more extensive coverage several days later (local government councils extra funds to cope with migrants plea) with the addition of new elements and slightly different emphases which developed the story further, or ran for several days with a later news item adding new elements (inaccurate statistics on foreign workers). As the most widely and intensely covered incident, the set of stories on illegal immigrants at the Home Office has been selected for more detailed analysis.

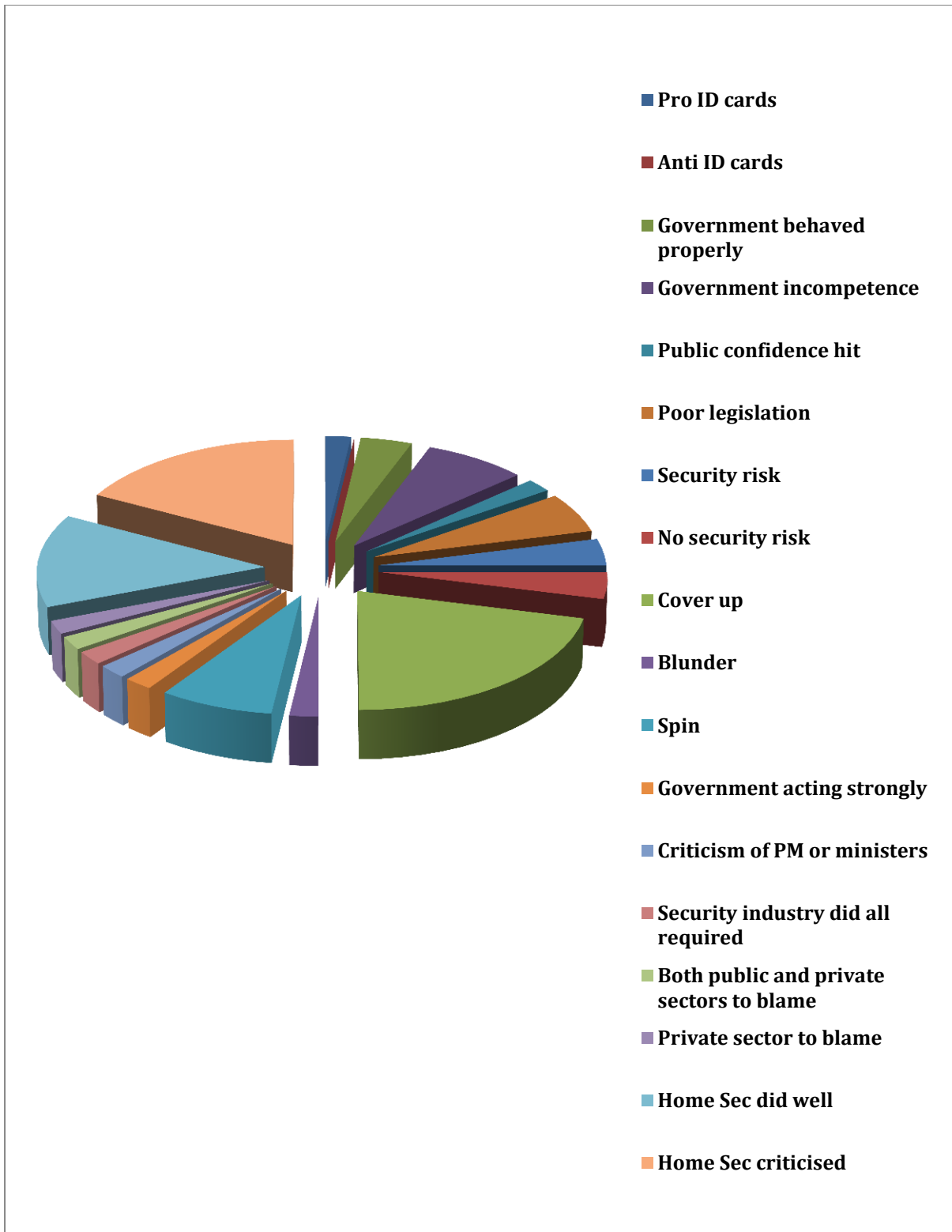
This set of stories focused on the row surrounding the employment of illegal immigrants at the Home Office, and was reported in 12 news items overall. Coverage began online on the BBC website on November 11 2007, and continued online on November 12 2007, as well as on television (Newsnight) and radio (Today and Breakfast, Your Call). On November 13 2007 the story appeared across all coverage (BBC Online; BBC Breakfast, News at Ten and Newsnight; BBC Breakfast, Today and Newsbeat), before a final report on radio only (Today) on November 14 2007.

A second element highlighted how, allegedly, a leaked email revealed that the Home Office had known about this and had covered it up. This accusation was then fiercely denied by the then Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith.

Across the coverage the sources were overwhelmingly political and Westminster based. Consistent with our findings on the other topics, the media served as an important source category, as seven of the 12 news stories cited media sources, including two pieces in which the only source was either the journalist or another media voice telling the story (Newsnight, November 14 2007, Today programme, November 14 2007). Other voices cited included the police (BBC Website, November 11 & 12 2007) and 'regulators' (Today and Breakfast, Your Call, November 12). Aside from Westminster politicians, civil servants were quoted in more than one news item (News at Ten, Newsnight and Today, November 13 2007), as well as one security guard working at the Home Office (Newsnight, November 13 2007).

As the chart below shows, the opinions were relatively narrow, focusing on allegations and responses regarding the government's handling of the situation.

Wagon wheel 5: Breadth of opinion on the illegal immigrants row



As the chart demonstrates, the dominant views expressed framed the event in terms of whether it constituted a cover-up on the part of the Home Secretary, and whether she and the government had responded competently. There was no space within the discussion for

broader issues around illegal immigration in Britain, and the discussion was largely reduced to internecine fighting.

Another important story in 2007 concerned the findings of a report to advise ministers on the social impact of immigration. One article on the report, published on Wednesday October 17, contained the most sources across the 2007 online immigration sample (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7048205.stm>, accessed January 30, 2013). The story is interesting to examine for the relative prominence given to particular sources and views. After a brief summary of the findings of the report, the story went on to cite the statements of ministers on the “clear benefits” of migration to the British economy. It then discussed the findings of the report in more detail, based on the experiences from different regions in the UK, some of them reporting concern about the adverse effects of immigration on crime, health and education. The first directly quoted source in the story was Immigration Minister Liam Byrne, who said it was important to “strike a new balance” in immigration policy, and went on to say:

That means looking at the wider benefits to the British economy on the one hand, but it means we have to take into account the wider impact on British public services and life as well.

We need to weigh both things up before we take big decisions on immigration including whether to keep restrictions on Bulgarian and Romanian workers.

The second source was Damian Green, shadow minister for immigration, who expressed the need for migration quotas:

We say of course you should look at the economics, at the effects on public services, on demand for housing, school places and so on, and that then the government should set an explicit limit every year.

The pattern of according most prominence to a source representing government, immediately followed by a member of the opposition holds true across our sample. Subsequent sources in the story included Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah from the centre-left Institute of Public Policy Research, providing an analytical perspective:

“It is clear that migration brings huge economic benefits to the UK,” said Dr Sriskandarajah.

“It is also clear that, although recent migration is presenting new challenges in areas which have received large numbers of newcomers, most local communities around the country are coping very well.

“The key for policymakers will be to tap into the economic potential of immigrants while designing public services that can meet the needs of changing and diverse populations.”

This position was counter-balanced by Sir Andrew Green, chairman of the anti-immigration pressure group, Migrationwatch UK, who said migration on the scale Britain was currently facing was having a “huge impact” with “little economic justification”:

He added the government must look at cutting the numbers of migrants from non-EU countries.

“You cannot do anything about the eastern Europeans because they are members of the EU and their numbers are likely to decline as the level of these economies come up,” he said.

“Three quarters of migrants come from the rest of the world.”

This story well demonstrates how sources were carefully balanced in reporting – but in such a way that there was, in stories where immigration as a general topic was discussed, a tendency to take a seesaw rather than a “wagon wheel” approach. Put more simply, this story presented immigration primarily as a topic on which there were arguments for and against, rather than a broader range of views.

Stories and debates in 2012

In 2012, 56 stories identified focused on immigration. 22 of these were broadcast in television or radio programmes and 34 in online news. The range of immigration story topics covered was wider in online news than in broadcast news reporting. In the majority of online stories, multiple sources were cited which introduced a range of differently nuanced informative points and emphases of perspective to the story. However, the extent to which this range of sources introduced information represented as *points of fact* or information more explicitly represented *positions, views* or *opinions* varied from story topic to story topic. This is important when assessing the strength of the range of views introduced and whether stories are confined to representing two broad sides of an argument (a “seesaw” of opinion), or a more diverse spectrum of views (a “wagon wheel”).

Just two events were covered across all three platforms: online, television and radio. The first of these reported a serious backlog in the number of immigration cases to be processed by the UK Border Agency. This story emerged due to concerns raised by the Home Affairs Select Committee that the pressures at the UK Border Agency should not be dealt with by granting an amnesty to illegal immigrants. The second story focused on the deportation case of the cleric, Abu Qatada, as the Special Immigration Appeals Commission tribunal ruled on the latest attempt by the UK government to deport him to Jordan. The first of these most widely and intensely covered stories has been selected for more detailed analysis.

This set of stories, focusing on a serious backlog of immigration cases at the UK Border Agency was reported in all three radio programmes (Today; Breakfast, Your Call; Newsbeat), BBC Breakfast on television and in three BBC website pieces on November 9 2012.

It examined the issue of whether the UK Border Agency should resort to an amnesty for immigrants without the right to be in the UK following a Home Affairs Select Committee

report expressing a concern that this could be an outcome due to the pressures facing the agency. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the sources cited were (in all but one news item) often largely or exclusively official and Westminster based. The Select Committee, its Chairman Keith Vaz, the report of the Committee, and/or other “MPs” associated with the Committee were heavily cited as sources in news items across media types. In addition, “Government”, the Immigration Minister or the UK Border Agency featured strongly as sources on the “other side” of the argument.

These official sources tended either to express or refute the possibility of an amnesty and the size and direction of the immigration cases backlog *as points of fact*. For example, in the Your Call programme on the topic, one point of fact introduced by the Select Committee as a source is offered as a contrast to another offered by the Immigration Minister:

The government is taking action to remove illegal immigrants from the UK and denies they’ll be given an amnesty. (Government)

The number of outstanding cases is spiralling out of control. (Home Affairs Select Committee)

In some instances, however, these points of fact were introduced in a more colourful or pejorative way or as imperatives, as, for example in this quote from Keith Vaz, the Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee in one BBC Online piece:

Entering the world of the UKBA is like falling through the looking glass. The closer we look, the more backlogs we find, their existence obscured by opaque names such as the “migration refusal pool” and the “controlled archive”. UKBA must adopt a transparent and robust approach to tackling this problem instead of creating new ways of camouflaging backlogs. (Keith Vaz)

Other sources, in addition to political or official sources at Westminster were cited in the Newsbeat news item. The sources here also included an immigrant male, male and female members of the public, and an ex-worker of the UK Border Agency. Through these voices, this piece also introduced *more explicitly expressed views or opinions* on the immigration system and immigration as an issue more generally. For example, the first source in this item introduced the view that all immigrants should be returned to their country of origin:

Send all the immigrants back to where they come from and let us lot get on with what we’re doing. (Female member of the public)

Later, both supportive and other hostile views towards immigrants and immigration were introduced by members of the public, reflecting their relative prominence in the sample:

I’d give them at least one chance to try and find work. It’s like Australia, you’ve got to put something into their country to get something out. (Male member of the public)

The government needs to look after their own people before others. (Male member of the public)

Why should immigrants be given the chance to work? There's not enough for UK residents as it is. (Male member of the public)

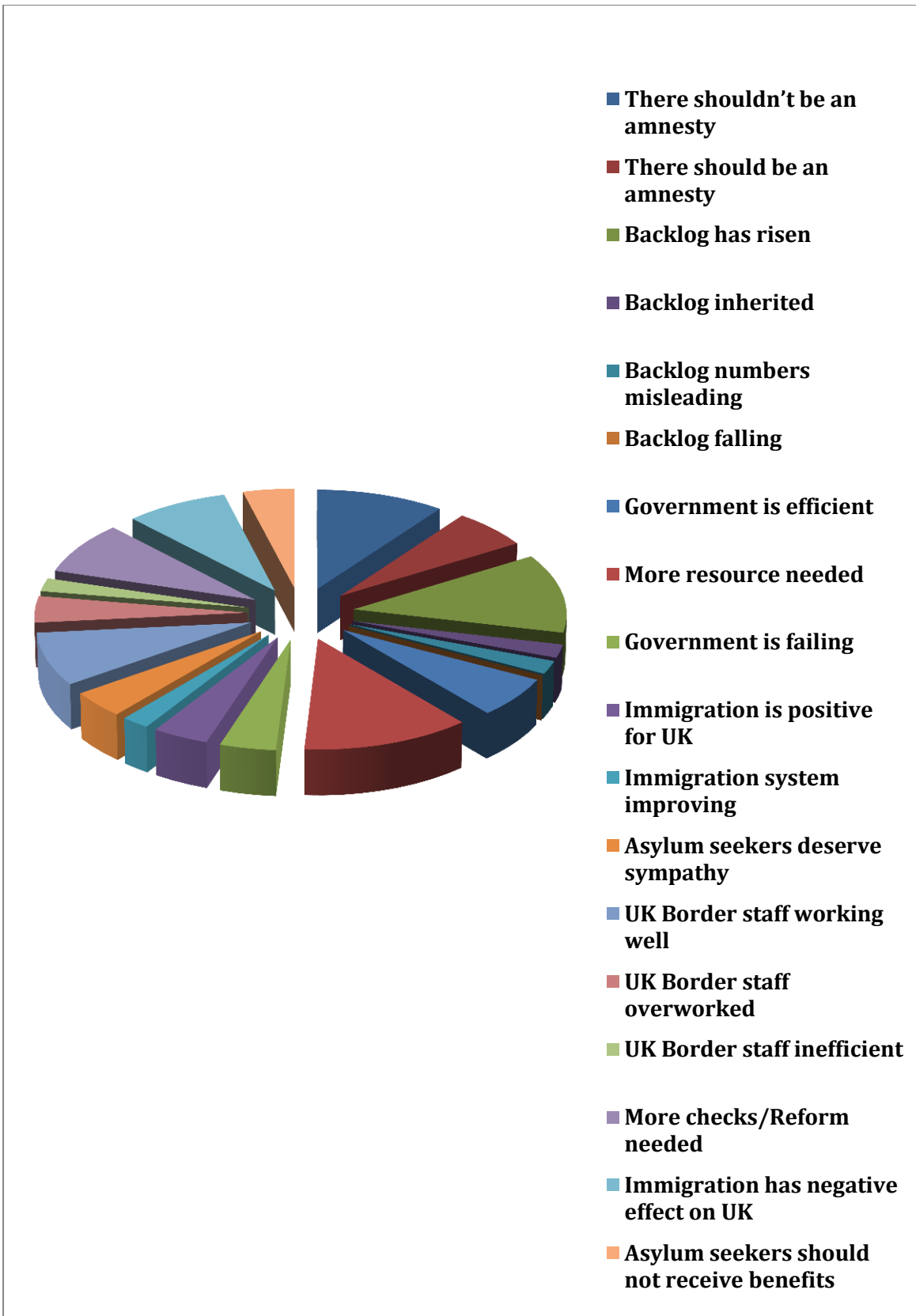
Asylum seekers are seeking a better life. (Female member of the public)

Differently nuanced *views about experiences* of the immigration system were also introduced by non-official sources with particular positions such as an ex-worker of the UK Border Agency who expressed the view that there are too few employees at the UK Border Agency and so workers are overstretched, as well as an immigrant male from Turkey.

You don't see much asylum seekers or nothing like that. Used to be quite a lot of lorries coming through. If a English man, you know, I'd say it's better. As a foreign man, you don't get papers any easier. (Male Turkish immigrant)

The varied views on immigration are broadly representative of views in England, Scotland and Wales, according to the British Social Attitudes survey. The 2011 survey found that three quarters of the population would like to see a reduction in immigration (e.g. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19621020>, accessed January 30, 2013; <http://bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/read-the-report/immigration/views-of-immigration.aspx>, accessed January 30, 2013). This represents a hardening of attitudes, as evidenced in the comparison to 1995, where just 63% favoured a decrease in immigration (<http://bsa-29.natcen.ac.uk/read-the-report/immigration/views-of-immigration.aspx>, accessed January 30, 2013). Nonetheless, “nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) perceive the economic impact of migration to be neutral or positive and slightly more than half (51 per cent) feel the same way about the cultural impact”. Such views are also apparent in the comments made by members of the public, reflecting the complexities of the debate.

Wagon wheel 6: Breadth of opinion in asylum cases backlogs stories



This chart highlights that most of the opinions cited on the immigration backlog case sought to frame it with respect to the performance of the UK Border Agency and the government's handling of the backlog. Nonetheless, the discussion did include a small number of broader views – including the ideas that immigration has a negative/positive effect on the UK, the asylum seekers deserve sympathy/that they should not receive benefits.

Summary

Our immigration sample reflected the overall pattern of dominance by political sources, even though members of the public were also prominent. In cases where this could be ascertained, the sources in the immigration sample were more ethnically diverse than the population overall, perhaps also linked to the nature of stories about immigration, which often pertain to non-white population groups.

Nonetheless, our qualitative analysis of the immigration backlogs case demonstrated that debates over immigration were usually framed by politicians, whose statements were often presented as “facts”. Finally, in examining the coverage of a report on the consequences of immigration, we suggested that the BBC coverage on controversies around the topic might be closer to a seesaw model than a wagon wheel.

Overall, we found that despite the presence of views on the social impact of immigration, the most prominent sets of stories in each of the two years focused on political infighting – in 2007, over the employment of illegal immigrants at the Home Office, and in 2012, over the backlog in the processing of asylum cases – and were framed in terms of tensions between the two main parties. Information and opinions provided through these stories tended to focus on the specific case, rather than on the larger story of how immigration may affect British society for better or worse. Just as in the case of the EU debate, the broader context, in terms of both information and opinions, has limited presence in the BBC programming we examined.

Study 1: Conclusion

Our studies provide limited evidence of a change in the reporting of opinion to reflect a “wagon wheel” approach. This is perhaps not surprising, given the nature of hard news reporting, which is characterised by events, immediacy and an interest in the activities and controversies of politics, and the opinions of political leaders first and foremost. Our research has provided evidence for the difficulties of reconciling a news agenda which is focused on covering the most important events with the desire to represent a broad array of opinion – at least for flagship news programming. Where there is limited time or space to report on a breaking or ongoing news event, and the emphasis is on getting information out to the public, stories are rarely able to contain a broad range of opinion within a brief time span. Instead, long-standing conceptions of impartiality seem to prevail, where it is understood in terms of a seesaw model focused on generating a balance between the two main Westminster parties. As our research demonstrates, such news reflects a relatively narrow range of sources – primarily political leaders, with the Prime Minister remaining the most newsworthy and widely quoted individual source, and other government figures just behind him. This, in turn, is closely connected to another striking tendency, particularly apparent in our samples of stories on the UK’s relationship to Europe and on immigration: the stories on these topics which topped the news agenda largely dealt with tensions and fights between the main Westminster parties, rather than the broader issues associated with the societal impact of the EU and immigration.

Beyond the Labour and Conservative parties, other parties – including the Liberal Democrats – have a very limited presence. Smaller parties, or those associated with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, are usually confined to stories relating to specific issues or special interests they represent, as when the Scottish National Party appeared in stories about the bid for Scottish Independence. Further, our research has demonstrated that media sources – usually correspondents asked to give their professional judgement on a story or issue - are prominent across 2007 and 2012, making up a greater presence than any profession outside of politics.

Members of the public are, however, given voice in various formats and platforms, and are included particularly prominently through participatory features such as Your Call and online discussion. This indicates the importance of audience participation platforms as a vehicle for giving voice to a more diverse range of voices on the three topics. In the sample overall, they tend to appear much later – and therefore less prominently – in news stories than political sources, therefore rarely contributing to shaping the lens through which news events are reported.

Across our three topics, it is generally the case that a range of opinions are given voice in BBC programming. But they do not all have equal prominence or newsworthiness. The authority to define the framing of news events is largely in the hands of official sources – particularly politicians representing government. The institutional emphasis of reporting on the three topics also means that the dominant news events focus on the drama of political infighting, as opposed to providing broader context and information about the broader social debates on religion, immigration and the UK’s relationship to Europe. These tendencies are not necessarily a flaw of BBC programming but rather representative of the institutional

focus of national news provision. As we shall see in Study 2, such practices prevail across Channel 4 and ITV news programmes as well.

Study 2:

Content analysis of breadth of topics and views across broadcasters in 2007 and 2012.

Our work in this study focuses on a content analysis of coverage across BBC, ITV and Channel 4, designed to trace the diversity of topics and views across these channels in network, nations and regions broadcasts, during selected periods in 2007 and 2012.

Our findings suggest that coverage of crime and politics tops the news agenda in network coverage, and political sources are the most frequent. The Today programme uses media and journalist sources most frequently, with significant attention given to the political sources which dominated our sample in Study 1. However, if we examine all programmes combined, we find that members of the public appear more frequently than any other type of source. Coverage in nations broadcasts – across Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland – is heavily focused on crime and sports, and uses members of the public, victims and witnesses most often as sources. At the regional level, crime is also central to the news agenda, and there is more of an emphasis on “softer” news topics, including lifestyle and celebrity and entertainment news, and a much more limited presence of political sources than at nations and network levels.

Though there are variations in the relative frequency of topics and sources, one trend is clear: BBC nations coverage uses a larger number of sources than its competitors, whereas at network level, Channel 4 News features the most sources. This variation is likely to be primarily a function of the length of broadcasts. Channel 4 News is a sixty minute bulletin in comparison to the thirty minute slots allocated to BBC and ITV network and nations news. Furthermore BBC network and nations bulletins are longer than those on ITV because they do not feature advertising breaks.

We examined five composite weekdays of news coverage within a month-long period during October and November in 2007 and 2012, respectively. The days selected for our sample were Monday October 15, Tuesday October 23, Wednesday October 31, Thursday November 8, and Friday November 16, with each date covering a different day of the week, from Monday to Friday. The rationale for creating a composite week, as opposed to choosing an actual week, was that it minimised the chances of a single high profile story skewing our sample. A composite week is thus likely to produce more general findings. Nonetheless, as we discuss in more detail, some stories – such as the Jimmy Savile sex abuse story – were present on the news agenda throughout the study.

On television, we examined, for network programming, BBC News at Six, Channel 4 News, and ITV News at 6.30 pm, the latter two produced by ITN. To investigate coverage in the nations, we coded BBC and ITV news programmes for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland at 6.30 pm. For our regional sample, we examined BBC Bristol and Manchester at 6.30 pm, and the corresponding ITV Bristol and Manchester programmes – The West Country Tonight

and Granada Reports at 6.00 pm. On radio, we coded the BBC Today programme between 7.00 and 8.30 am. The sample was chosen to include a mixture of network, national and regional coverage across the four nations, so that topics and views could be compared across years and broadcasters, and representative days of the week.

By contrast to Study 1, which focused just on the coverage of three selected topics, Study 2 is based on *all* news reports on television and radio within our sample. We identified a total of 1717 stories in total, out of which 1467 appeared on television programmes and 250 on radio. Altogether, these stories featured 4307 sources, averaging out at just over 2.5 sources per story.

Table 27: Number of stories by programme and platform

	2007 N (%)	2012 N (%)	Total
Radio			
Today	148 (16.6%)	102 (12.4%)	250 (14.6%)
TV Network			
Channel 4	77 (8.6%)	39 (4.7%)	116 (6.8%)
BBC News at Six	61 (6.8%)	42 (5.1%)	103 (6.0%)
ITV 6.30pm	33 (3.7%)	49 (6.0%)	82 (4.8%)
TV Nations			
BBC Northern Ireland	76 (8.5%)	54 (6.6%)	130 (7.6%)
BBC Wales	71 (7.9%)	82 (10.0%)	153 (8.9%)
BBC Scotland	65 (7.3%)	80 (9.7%)	145 (8.4%)
ITV Scotland	57 (6.4%)	63 (7.7%)	120 (7.0%)
ITV Northern Ireland	49 (5.5%)	62 (7.5%)	111 (6.5%)
ITV Wales	28 (3.1%)	34 (4.1%)	62 (3.6%)
TV Regions			
BBC Bristol	53 (5.9%)	33 (4.0%)	86 (5.0%)
BBC Manchester	46 (5.1%)	75 (9.1%)	121 (7.0%)
ITV Bristol	62 (6.9%)	46 (5.6%)	108 (6.3%)
ITV Manchester	68 (7.6%)	62 (7.5%)	130 (7.6%)
Total	894 (100%)	823 (100%)	1717 (100%)

As the table demonstrates, there was a slight decline in the number of stories between the two years. Overall, BBC Radio 4's Today programme accounted for the largest number of stories among the programmes in the sample. This could be explained by the length of the programme we coded, which was an hour and a half each day, as well as the programme format, which had a tendency to cover a large number of different stories. In 2007 Channel 4 News topped the chart of story numbers among network television news programmes. This could similarly be accounted for by the programme length (at 60 minutes, with the other BBC and ITV news programmes being 30 minutes long).

However, in 2012 ITV News at 6.30 took the lead, with Channel 4 declining. Combined, the three network news programmes featured a smaller number of stories in 2012 than 2007. This could be partly explained by the coverage of a number of major news stories during our sample composite week in 2012, such as the Jimmy Savile abuse case, the debates over Scottish independence, and the story about false child abuse allegations made against Lord McAlpine, which all received in-depth coverage across the network programmes.

Looking at the national news programmes together, BBC broadcast a larger number of stories than their ITV counterparts. As stated earlier this is likely, at least in part, to be due to the extra length of BBC network and nations coverage which does not feature a commercial break. This pattern, however, did not hold true for regional programmes, where ITV had a larger number of stories than did the BBC for both Bristol/West Country and Manchester/Granada in 2007, with a more even distribution in 2012.

Nonetheless, covering a larger number of stories may not guarantee that a greater variety of views are represented. On the contrary, there is a necessary trade-off between the breadth of reporting – as reflected in the number of stories – and the number of stories. To inform our understanding and examine the appearance of these stories in greater detail, we ascertained the length of coverage devoted to stories in each programme across the two years. Each story was timed by our research team and then coded into increments of length based on seconds, as illustrated in Tables 28 and 29.

Table 28: Story length across programmes in 2007

	Length (secs)									
<u>Programme</u>	0-30	31-60	61-120	121-180	181-360	361-540	541-720	721-1080	1081+	Total
Radio										
Today	33	23	20	17	35	14	3	3	0	148
Network TV										
Channel 4	32	9	2	6	12	12	2	1	1	77
BBC News at Six	17	0	11	20	13	0	0	0	0	61
ITV 6.30	6	1	3	16	5	2	0	0	0	33
Nations TV										
BBC Northern Ireland	21	11	14	17	9	4	0	0	0	76
BBC Wales	16	6	9	20	14	2	1	0	0	68
BBC Scotland	16	2	16	22	6	3	0	0	0	65
ITV Scotland	25	5	5	13	6	2	1	0	0	57
ITV Northern Ireland	14	7	4	16	7	1	0	0	0	49
ITV Wales	4	1	5	12	6	0	0	0	0	28
Regions TV										
ITV Manchester	19	9	11	16	10	3	0	0	0	68
ITV Bristol	16	5	7	22	8	2	1	1	0	62
BBC Bristol	11	3	7	25	6	0	1	0	0	53
BBC Manchester	16	2	2	17	8	1	0	0	0	46
Total	246	84	116	239	145	46	9	5	1	891

As the above highlights, by far the largest number of stories appearing in our sample in 2007 was under 30 seconds long. Such short stories tended to be presenter-only news items. The Today programme and Channel 4 News included the highest number of these, in addition to stories falling within the longer time increments, which again may be explained by the longer running time of these programmes. BBC nations programming featured a fairly modest

number of presenter-only stories. ITV Wales also had a small amount of shorter stories, instead devoting between two and three minutes to the majority of their stories.

Table 29: Story length across programmes in 2012

	Length (secs)									
Programme	0-30	31-60	61-120	121-180	181-360	361-540	541-720	721-1080	1081+	Total
Radio										
Today	19	10	20	12	23	9	2	6	1	102
Network TV										
ITV 6.30 pm	13	0	0	21	12	1	1	1	0	49
BBC News at Six	7	1	5	16	10	2	1	0	0	42
Channel 4	4	2	0	6	14	4	4	5	0	39
Nations TV										
BBC Wales	26	6	4	29	13	1	1	0	0	80
BBC Scotland	31	7	14	20	7	0	0	1	0	80
ITV Scotland	22	7	5	24	3	0	1	0	0	62
ITV Northern Ireland	26	5	9	16	5	1	0	0	0	63
BBC Northern Ireland	6	8	11	18	9	0	0	0	1	53
ITV Wales	10	3	3	11	4	1	1	0	0	33
Regions TV										
BBC Manchester	31	4	5	19	15	1	0	0	0	75
ITV Manchester	24	7	2	17	11	1	0	0	0	62
ITV Bristol	13	5	1	10	11	2	2	2	0	46
BBC Bristol	5	2	3	8	14	1	0	0	0	33
Total	237	67	82	227	151	24	13	15	2	818

In 2012 there was a striking change cutting across the lengths of stories within the programmes. The Today programme and Channel 4 News both vastly reduced the number of 30 seconds and under presenter-only stories. This also explains the decrease in the number of stories on Channel 4 in 2012 discussed above, suggesting that the channel may have opted for a smaller number of longer stories. By contrast, BBC Scotland increased their amount of presenter-only stories, as did BBC Wales and ITV Northern Ireland, and the regional broadcasters with the exception of ITV and BBC Bristol. Overall, there was an increase in the proportion of stories in the longer 121-180 seconds range, which tends to be formed by general news packages (consisting of, for example, the reporter presenting a story from an outside location). The proportion of stories in the much longer 721-1080 seconds range also increased, perhaps in reflection of high-profile stories that merited longer reports, such as the Jimmy Savile sexual abuse story. The pattern suggests a trend towards increase in longer stories on the programmes committed to in-depth reporting – Today and Channel 4 News – while presenter-only stories which are less likely to include a range of sources and, hence, views increased elsewhere. To unravel and explore these patterns further, it is useful to focus on the story topics appearing with these programmes. Of the stories coded in our sample overall, the 10 most frequently appearing topics were as follows:

Table 30: Top ten story topics by year, across broadcasters*

Topic	2007	2012	Total
Sport	156 (17.4%)	175 (21.3%)	331 (19.2%)
Crime (Individual)	140 (15.7%)	130 (15.8%)	270 (15.7%)
Entertainment/celebrity	40 (4.5%)	39 (4.7%)	79 (4.6%)
Lifestyle	55 (6.2%)	33 (4.0%)	88 (5.1%)
Accident/Disasters	49 (5.5%)	35 (4.3%)	84 (4.9%)
UK Politics**	40 (4.5%)	43 (5.2%)	83 (4.8%)
Law and Order	44 (4.9%)	35 (4.3%)	79 (4.6%)
Environment	39 (4.4%)	28 (3.4%)	67 (3.9%)
Health (General)	34 (3.8%)	31 (3.8%)	65 (3.8%)
Business	27 (3.0%)	30 (3.6%)	57 (3.3%)
Other topics	270 (30.2%)	244 (29.6%)	514 (30.0%)
Total	894 (100%)	823 (100%)	1717 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform.

**Includes references to politics in the devolved nations

Altogether, these top ten topics account for seven in ten stories, making up the vast majority of the sample. Perhaps the most significant finding here is that looking at the overall picture across broadcasters, there appears to be an emphasis on subject areas conventionally associated with a more popular or tabloid news agenda, including sports, crime, and celebrity/entertainment news. Secondly, there is a remarkable degree of similarity in term of the proportion of stories that fall into each category across the two time periods. This is especially striking because the two time periods were five years apart and featured a completely different set of news stories. There are likely to be at least two key factors underlying this pattern. Firstly, it may be a function of the allocation of journalists to particular ‘beats’ which generate a steady stream of stories in particular subject areas, as well as regular programme features, such as the dedicated sports coverage at the end of each broadcast. Secondly, it is related to particular fairly consistent news values held by journalists and editors who determine the structure of bulletins. It should also be noted that – as we discuss in more detail below in our analysis of regional programming – frequency does not necessarily straightforwardly translate into newsworthiness. If we analyse instead which topics made it to the top of news programmes across the board, crime was the topic attracting the most lead stories, at 41 out of 141 in our sample. UK politics came a distant second with 22 stories, and accidents and disasters third with 11 lead stories.

Although the two most frequent story topics remained fairly consistent across both comparative years, there were some minor differences in terms of the frequency of other topics. For example, during 2012, national politics, business, and war and conflict appeared more frequently while the frequency of lifestyle, law and order, environment and accidents or disasters as story topics declined. However, such changes were quite modest and it is the continuities in the proportion of stories devoted to particular topics which stand out much more clearly than the changes. Across both years, “softer” topics such as sports, entertainment and celebrity news, and lifestyle were more frequently reported than a series of conventional “hard news” topics which did not make it into our top ten. These include topics such as international politics, local politics, NHS, and the economy.³

Our research challenges conventional understandings of sourcing patterns in one important respect: most research on journalistic sources suggests that ordinary people only rarely make it into the news, but this study suggests that in fact, the most widely covered source type was members of the public consulted for their opinions or caught up in news stories as victims or witnesses. In distinction to Study 1, political sources came a distant second, with public sector sources being the third most frequent.

Table 31: Top three source types in all programmes combined, by year

	2007	2012	Total
Member of the public/victim/witness	607	509	1116
Political sources	313	476	789
Public sector	201	188	389

However, these three salient source types did not play the same role in the news agenda: whereas all three appeared often in stories about crime, members of the public were used widely in reporting on lifestyle (108 times) and sport (91 times); political sources – perhaps predictably – were most frequently drawn upon in stories about UK politics (226 times) and international politics (75 times). Public sector sources – a category including police and teachers – were consulted most often in news relating to law and order (55 times) and education (41 times).

Not only do members of the public appear frequently, but their opinions are also often included through journalistic inferences about public opinion, as when a correspondent talks about “the public mood on Europe” or “the feeling among the people of Manchester”, or references to public opinion polls, to mention just a few examples. We coded for the types of references to public opinion, and found that many members of the public appeared in vox pop

³ This may be due to the frequency of small items of softer news (eg multiple sports stories) and their place in the mix of items rather than the overall prominence or importance given to individual sports, entertainment or lifestyle stories.

interviews. ITV Bristol included the largest number, accounting for 14% of vox pops by including 61 such interviews during our sample period, closely followed by BBC Scotland which featured 60. Inferences about public opinion constituted the second-most frequent way of referencing public opinion. The Today programme featured the most inferences – 27, or 14.5% of all instances, trailed by Channel 4 News with 26. However, evidence-based references to public opinion were scarcer, with public opinion polls only being referenced 42 times. Almost a quarter of these references appeared on BBC Wales, where polls were discussed a total of 10 times.

The figures reported so far cover over significant differences between the types of programming we examined – network, nations and regions. Also, there were notable differences between broadcasters and programme types, where the Today programme was characterised by a distinctive news agenda. This, in turn, reflects the different news values and programme formats which inform the diversity of topics.

The distribution of top story topics (those appearing more than ten times) across network television on BBC News, ITV News and Channel 4 News is as follows:

Table 32: Top story topic by year and network broadcaster*

	2007			2012			Total
	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30 pm	Channel 4	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30	Channel 4	
Crime (Individual)	16 (26.2%)	11 (34.4%)	15 (19.5%)	5 (11.9%)	10 (20.4%)	6 (15.4%)	63 (21.0%)
UK Politics**	3 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.6%)	5 (11.9%)	10 (20.4%)	6 (15.4%)	26 (8.7%)
International Politics	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.3%)	10 (13.0%)	2 (4.8%)	3 (6.1%)	4 (10.2%)	21 (7.0%)
Accidents/Disasters	2 (3.3%)	2 (6.3%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (2.3%)
Law and Order	4 (6.6%)	1 (3.1%)	4 (5.2%)	2 (4.8%)	1 (2.0%)	2 (5.1%)	14 (4.7%)
Health	4 (6.6%)	2 (6.3%)	3 (3.9%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.6%)	12 (4.0%)
Sport	3 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.1%)	2 (4.1%)	2 (5.1%)	10 (3.3%)
War / Conflict	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.9%)	3 (7.1%)	3 (6.1%)	1 (2.6%)	10 (3.3%)
The Economy	3 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.9%)	3 (7.1%)	1 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (3.3%)
Other topics	26 (42.6%)	14(43.8%)	34 (44.1%)	18 (42.9%)	18(36.7%)	17(43.6%)	127 (42.3%)
Total	61 (100%)	32 (100%)	77 (100%)	42 (100%)	49 (100%)	39 (100%)	300(100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform. The overall total and percentages is based across the sample, with the above stories being the top topics (appearing ten times and over).

**Includes references to politics in the devolved nations

Crime carried out by individuals topped the table as the most frequently appearing story topic across the network broadcasters. This could be understood by the tendency of news programming to focus on criminal cases that have UK-wide interest and news appeal. For example, during our sample period in 2007, the dramatic trial for the murder of British exchange student Meredith Kercher in Perugia, Italy took place and the serial rapist Mark Campbell was jailed. In 2012, the drama surrounding sexual abuse allegations against broadcasting veteran Jimmy Savile unfolded, as did stories surrounding the list of alleged child abusers presented to David Cameron live on ITV. However, across all channels there was a significant fall in the frequency of stories focusing on crime from 2007 to 2012. The proportion of stories focusing on national politics appears relatively low in our 2007 sample with ITV News not featuring a single politics-led story over the entire sample period. In 2012 the topic had a much higher profile across all channels. In terms of international politics it is clear that this is consistently a much stronger focus for Channel 4 News than the other

broadcasters. Topics that also featured in the network broadcasts, but appeared fewer than ten times are environmental news, Europe/EU, lifestyle, NHS-related stories, science/technology, and entertainment news.

Overall, the diversity of topics for the BBC network programming did not change significantly between our 2007 and 2012 sample periods, with 22 of the 37 topics being covered by the BBC News at Six in 2007 and 21 in 2012. ITV News at 6.30 covered 17 in 2007 and 22 in 2012, showing a slight increase. Channel 4 News, on the other hand, demonstrated a relative decline in terms of diversity, reducing from 29 in 2007 to 20 in 2012. This might mean that a smaller number of discrete stories or topics are covered in more detail and in greater length; a question which we will later investigate in more detail.

We have separated out BBC's Today programme for the analysis of topics on the basis that its agenda and news selection appeared rather distinctive, as demonstrated by the table below, which highlights the most frequently appearing story topics.

Table 33: Top story topic by year on the Today programme*

	2007	2012	Total
Sport	18 (12.2%)	13 (12.7%)	31 (12.4%)
International politics	14 (9.5%)	11 (10.8%)	25 (10.0%)
Law and Order	12 (8.1%)	8 (7.8%)	20 (8.0%)
Health	10 (6.8%)	6 (5.9%)	16 (6.4%)
Lifestyle	9 (6.1%)	6 (5.9%)	15 (6.0%)
War / Conflict	8 (5.4%)	5 (4.9%)	13 (5.2%)
UK politics**	8 (5.4%)	4 (3.9%)	12 (4.8%)
Business	7 (4.7%)	5 (4.9%)	12 (4.8%)
Crime Individual	5 (3.4%)	5 (4.9%)	10 (4.0%)
Arts (High)	6 (4.1%)	4 (3.9%)	10 (4.0%)
Celebrity/Entertainment News	4 (2.7%)	6 (5.9%)	10 (4.0%)
Total (includes topics not in table)	148 (100.0%)	102 (100.0%)	250 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year. The overall total and percentages is based across the sample.

**Includes references to politics in the devolved nations

As the table shows, the Today programme featured sports news most frequently, followed by stories about international politics, law and order and health. Compared to the network programmes, there was much less emphasis on crime and on accidents and disasters – whilst individual crime appeared as the ninth-most frequent topic, there were less than ten stories about accidents and disasters in the programme across the two years. The Today programme has a reputation for hard-hitting news reporting and interviewing with a political focus – most recently, veteran Today presenter John Humphrys has won the Harvey Lee Award, given by the Broadcasting Press Guild, for his “fearless inquisition” (e.g. <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/radio-4-today-programmes-john-humphrys-wins-award-for-his-tenacious-and-fearless-interviewing-8533739.html>, accessed 13 March 2013). Despite this reputation, the programme format appears to enable detailed coverage of “softer” news areas, including the arts, celebrity and entertainment news, and lifestyle stories. Indeed, these topics are more frequent within the Today programme than in the network news broadcasts examined above. Nonetheless, as discussed above, if such softer topics only rarely make it into the lead stories, this is also true on the Today programme. Though the numbers are so small that the statistics are merely indicative, rather than conclusive, it appears that stories on

national and international politics and law and order were the most likely to appear at the top of the programme, whereas stories about lifestyle were much further down the agenda, the first such item appearing as the fifth story in a programme.

The top four topics – sports, international politics, law and order, and health – saw a slight decline in coverage between 2007 and 2012. In exchange, topics such as religion, health/NHS and Europe/EU – whilst not among the most frequently covered – received slightly more attention in 2012, perhaps due to major ongoing news stories. These included the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury and the debates over the EU budget documented in Study 1. However, notwithstanding these small variations one is again struck by the remarkable level of consistency in the proportion of stories devoted to particular subject areas across the two time periods. Overall, BBC Radio 4's Today programme covered thirty story topics through our sample, representing the greatest diversity of topics among all the programmes we examined.

The significant political emphasis of the network broadcasts is also reflected in the distribution of sources, which has significant similarities to what we found in Study 1. As the table below demonstrates, routine network news across all topics – as embodied in our sample – is marked by the high frequency of political sources, though with a significant presence of “ordinary people” – members of the public, witnesses or victims.

Table 34: Distribution of sources by year and network programme*

	2007			2012			
Source	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30 pm	Channel 4	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30	Channel 4	Total
Political sources	22 (15.1%)	15 (14.9%)	58 (28.0%)	66 (38.6%)	65 (35.7%)	95 (51.1%)	321 (32.3%)
Member of the public/victim/witness	60 (41.1%)	34 (33.7%)	38 (18.4%)	35 (20.5%)	57 (31.3%)	19 (10.2%)	243 (24.5%)
Public sector	20 (13.7%)	11 (10.9%)	29 (14.0%)	5 (2.9%)	14 (7.7%)	13 (7.0%)	92 (9.3%)
Academic/expert/science/tech/medical	4 (2.7%)	8 (7.9%)	20 (9.7%)	4 (2.3%)	7 (3.8%)	12 (6.5%)	55 (5.5%)
NGOs/activists/charities/press ure group	6 (4.1%)	5 (5.0%)	14 (6.8%)	8 (4.7%)	6 (3.3%)	15 (8.1%)	54 (5.4%)
Business/private companies/economy	11 (7.5%)	6 (5.9%)	5 (2.4%)	19 (11.1%)	7 (3.8%)	4 (2.2%)	52 (5.2%)
Media/journalists	3 (2.1%)	3 (3.0%)	6 (2.9%)	14 (8.2%)	3 (1.6%)	11 (5.9%)	40 (4.0%)
Judiciary/legal	5 (3.4%)	5 (5.0%)	7 (3.4%)	2 (1.2%)	3 (1.6%)	1 (0.5%)	23 (2.3%)
Sports person	2 (1.4%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.8%)	4 (2.2%)	3 (1.5%)	13(1.3%)
Military	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (1.2%)	3 (1.6%)	1 (0.5%)	9 (0.9%)
Think tank	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.6%)	2 (1.1%)	7 (0.7%)
Trade union	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	6 (0.6%)
Religious leader	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.3%)
Other	9 (6.2%)	13 (12.9%)	26 (12.6%)	10 (5.8%)	8 (4.4%)	9 (4.8%)	75 (7.8%)
Total	146 (100%)	101 (100%)	207 (100%)	171 (100%)	182 (100%)	186 (100%)	993 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform. Please note that the category “sports person” has been separated out for the presentation of general source data in Study 2 as this source type was prominent here, whereas it was not significant in the coverage of the three topics examined in Study 1.

Political sources accounted for a third of all sources over the two comparative years. All three network broadcasters substantially increased their inclusion of these sources between 2007 and 2012. The prevalence of this source type is particularly noticeable on Channel 4 News

where more than half of all those quoted in 2012 came from the world of politics. The second most frequent category was “ordinary people” – members of the public/victim/witness. They accounted for a quarter of all sources, with Channel 4 News and BBC News at Six reducing their frequency of use in 2012, and ITV News at 6.30 increasing theirs. Public sector workers sharply decreased as a source within BBC and Channel 4 News within 2012, while media/journalists saw an increase – consistent with patterns detected in Study 1. Another finding worth noting is that the BBC consistently features the voice of business more frequently than its competitors (in spite of some criticisms that the BBC has an “anti-business” agenda; e.g. George Osborne, Daily Telegraph, 14 February 2012). The BBC also featured a larger number of media/journalist sources in 2012 than the other programmes.

Once again, the Today programme – while sharing an emphasis on political stories with other network programming – used sources rather differently from the television broadcasters.

Table 35: Distribution of sources across the Today programme

Source	2007	2012	Total
Media/Journalists	51 (19.8%)	64 (25.3%)	115 (22.5%)
Political Sources	59 (23.0%)	55 (21.7%)	114 (22.4%)
Academic/expert/science/tech/medical	34 (13.2%)	21 (8.3%)	55 (10.8%)
Member of the public/victim/witness	23 (9.0%)	24 (9.5%)	47 (9.2%)
Business/private companies/economy	18 (7.0%)	21 (8.3%)	39 (7.6%)
NGOs/activists/charities/pressure groups	7 (2.7%)	10 (4.0%)	17 (3.3%)
Public sector	9 (3.5%)	11 (4.3%)	20 (3.9%)
Sports person	10 (3.9%)	8 (3.1%)	18 (3.5%)
Religious leader	10 (3.9%)	6 (2.4%)	16 (3.1%)
Military	8 (3.1%)	4 (1.6%)	12 (2.4%)
Judiciary/Legal	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.8%)	10 (2.0%)
Trade Union	7 (2.7%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (1.6%)
Think Tank	1 (0.4%)	6 (2.4%)	7 (1.4%)
Other	17 (6.6%)	15 (5.9%)	32 (6.3%)
Total	257 (100%)	253 (100%)	510 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform. Please note that the category “sports person” has been separated out for the presentation of general source data in Study 2 as this source type was prominent here, whereas it was not significant in the coverage of the three topics examined in Study 1.

As the table indicates, the Today programme relied heavily on media/journalists as sources – a significant pattern for this programme which differentiates it from the television news programmes we examined. The 2007 figure increased in 2012, whereas the second most frequent source, individuals from the world of politics, declined slightly. Academics and experts were also prominent here – more so than across other network programmes. This points to a more interpretive and in-depth style of journalism, where stories are contextualised and analysed by “expert” sources, whether in the form of academics, experts or specialist correspondents and editors. Appearances of member of the public/victim/witness as sources remained relatively stable, while there was a reduction in the number of academics and other experts used as sources.

Since it is clear that political sources are a central category across network programming, we conducted a further analysis to examine the relative frequency of politicians representing particular parties. This can be seen in the table below, which illustrates the dominance of the two main parties as sources across network programming.

Table 36: Distribution of political sources across network programming

Source	2007			2012			Total
	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30	Channel 4	BBC News at Six	ITV 6.30	Channel 4	
Conservative	2 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	8 (26.7%)	22 (53.7%)	27 (54.0%)	29 (52.7%)	89 (43.8%)
Labour	8 (44.4%)	8 (88.9%)	15 (50.0%)	7 (17.1%)	11 (22.0%)	11 (20.0%)	60 (29.6%)
Liberal Democrat	5 (27.8%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (23.3%)	3 (7.3%)	6 (12.0%)	2 (3.6%)	23 (11.3%)
SNP	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.0%)	3 (5.5%)	8 (3.9%)
Independent	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.0%)	2 (3.6%)	5 (2.5%)
China Communist	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.0%)	3 (5.5%)	5 (2.5%)
US Republican	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.6%)	4 (2.0%)
Green	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (1.0%)
UKIP	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.0%)
None (Explicit)	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.0%)
US Democrat	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (1.0%)
Trade Unionist	1 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)
Total	18 (100%)	9 (100%)	30 (100%)	41 (100%)	50 (100%)	55 (100%)	203 (100%)

The balance of power in Westminster is roughly reflected in sourcing patterns, with a shift from Labour to Conservative between the two years. More than anything, the table illustrates the preponderance of Westminster political voices over minority parties.^{vii} In line with our findings in Study 1, it was the case that despite the improved performance of the Liberal Democrats in the 2010 elections and the fact that they are currently in government in coalition with the Conservative Party they actually *fell* as a proportion of political sources between 2007 and 2012 on BBC News at Six and Channel 4 News. Parties with significant public support, as evidenced by opinion polling and electoral success, such as UKIP on the right or the Green Party on the left, garnered only limited representation – in large part due to the dynamics of news reporting explored in more detail in Study 1 above. Our research in Study 1 on coverage of Britain’s relationship to Europe demonstrated that the Eurosceptic views aligned with UKIP policies were amply represented, though it is not clear that the left-leaning, pro-environment views of the Green Party are captured by other sources. Overall, this research suggests that the range of political debate in broadcasting is still closely indexed

to parliamentary ratios despite the commitment to a wagon wheel approach. Though the world of politics is covered in detail across the network broadcasters, it is also one which is understood primarily with reference to the two main parties.

The following table breaks down the top story topics (those featuring more than ten times) covered in terms of their appearance on BBC and ITV nations programming:

Table 37: Top story topics by year and nations broadcaster*

Story Topic	2007		2012		Total
	BBC Nations	ITV Nations	BBC Nations	ITV Nations	
Sport	48 (22.7%)	37 (27.6%)	55 (25.7%)	41 (25.8%)	181 (25.2%)
Crime (Individual)	30 (14.2%)	21 (15.7%)	29 (13.6%)	37 (23.3%)	117 (16.3%)
UK Politics**	15 (7.1%)	10 (7.5%)	13 (6.1%)	3 (1.9%)	41 (5.7%)
Accident/Disaster	9 (4.3%)	11 (8.2%)	9 (4.2%)	10 (6.3%)	39 (5.4%)
Lifestyle	11 (5.2%)	11 (8.2%)	9 (4.2%)	4 (2.5%)	35 (4.9%)
Law and Order	10 (4.7%)	6 (4.5%)	9 (4.2%)	4 (2.5%)	29 (4.0%)
Environmental News	11 (5.2%)	2 (1.5%)	9 (4.2%)	7 (4.4%)	29 (4.0%)
Education	9 (4.3%)	2 (1.5%)	13 (6.1%)	4 (2.5%)	28 (3.9%)
Business	8 (3.8%)	3 (2.2%)	9 (4.2%)	6 (3.8%)	26 (3.6%)
Health General	8 (3.8%)	1 (0.7%)	7 (3.3%)	7 (4.4%)	23 (3.2%)
Entertainment/celebrity	7 (3.3%)	5 (3.7%)	8 (3.7%)	3 (1.9%)	23 (3.2%)
War/conflict	6 (2.8%)	3 (2.2%)	7 (3.3%)	5 (3.1%)	21 (2.9%)
Health NHS	4 (1.9%)	3 (2.2%)	4 (1.9%)	5 (3.1%)	16 (2.2%)
Local politics	4 (1.9%)	4 (3.0%)	4 (1.9%)	3 (1.9%)	15 (2.1%)
Transport	3 (1.4%)	3 (2.2%)	5 (2.3%)	4 (2.5%)	15 (2.1%)
Arts	3 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (2.8%)	4 (2.5%)	13 (1.8%)
Crime (General / Corporate)	5 (2.4%)	2 (1.5%)	5 (2.3%)	1 (0.6%)	13 (1.8%)
Other topics	20 (9.5%)	10 (7.4%)	13 (6.1%)	11 (6.9%)	54 (7.5%)
Total	211 (100%)	134 (100%)	214 (100%)	159 (100%)	718 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform. The overall total and percentages are based across the sample, with the above stories being the top topics (appearing ten times and over). The figures in this table and others referring to “BBC nations” and “ITV nations” are based on combining the data for all BBC nations and ITV nations programming for ease of presentation.

**Includes references to politics in the devolved nations.

As the above table shows, the most frequent story topic on the nations news broadcasts across both years was sports-related news. This could be accounted for by the format of both BBC and ITV national opt-outs, which have sports news sections towards the end of all their shows

– again replicating the tendency discussed above whereby sports news might be the most *frequent* but not always the most *newsworthy*. Sport sections tend to include a large number of “presenter-only” shorter stories (where the presenter reads a short news report, usually lasting under 30 seconds) and results round-ups of national and regional sports news. Across both years, BBC nations broadcasters had a greater number of stories about sport, but the relative percentage of ITV nations stories focused on the topic was greater. Following sport, the second most prominent story topic focused on crimes committed by, or against, specific individual people.

One clear finding that emerges from this analysis is the remarkable degree of consistency in the proportion of stories allocated to various subject areas on the BBC across the two time periods, despite the relatively limited sample period. There is less consistency across ITV nations coverage which saw a sharp increase in the proportion of stories devoted to crime and a significant fall in the number of political stories. It might be tempting to see this as evidence of ITV adopting a more sensationalist approach to news in the nations. However, ITV also reduced the proportion of its stories devoted to areas such as lifestyle, law and order and entertainment news whilst increasing coverage of topics such as education and environmental news. This suggests that there hasn’t been a move in the ITV nations coverage towards a more tabloid agenda. However, care must be taken in reading too much into these figures, given that many topics outside of sports and crime were featured in relatively few stories. Other topics that also appeared in the nations broadcasts, but less than ten times, included consumer news, industrial relations, celebrity news, the economy, science and technology, and agriculture.

An examination of the broader diversity of topics demonstrates that in 2007 the BBC covered 32 different topics out of the 35 that we coded for in our nations sample, with ITV nations programming covering just 26. In 2012, the BBC coverage reduced its breadth to 25 topics, with ITV maintaining 27.

Differences in the news agenda between network and nations programming also inform the selection of sources, and we examine these patterns in Table 38 below, taking a closer look at the relative frequency of source types across nations broadcasters.

Table 38: Distribution of sources by year and nations broadcaster*

	2007		2012		Total
	BBC Nations	ITV Nations	BBC Nations	ITV Nations	
Member of the public/victim/witness	136 (24.4%)	82 (24.8%)	124 (26.3%)	74 (20.8%)	416 (24.2%)
Political sources	77 (13.8%)	55 (16.7%)	87 (18.4%)	65 (18.3%)	284 (16.6%)
Sports person	83 (14.9%)	52 (15.8%)	56 (11.9%)	60 (16.9%)	251 (14.6%)
Public Sector	61 (10.9%)	40 (12.1%)	40 (8.5%)	45 (12.6%)	186 (10.8%)
Business/private companies/economy	34 (6.1%)	18 (5.5%)	37 (7.8%)	33 (9.3%)	122 (7.1%)
NGOs/activists/charity/pressure group	31 (5.6%)	12 (3.6%)	29 (6.1%)	13 (3.7%)	85 (5.0%)
Academic/expert/science/tech/medical	35 (6.3%)	21 (6.4%)	16 (3.4%)	14 (3.9%)	86 (5.0%)
Judiciary/Legal	19 (3.4%)	7 (2.1%)	13 (2.8%)	13 (3.7%)	52 (3.0%)
Media/Journalists	11 (2.0%)	5 (1.5%)	9 (1.9%)	8 (2.2%)	33 (1.9%)
Trade Union	11 (2.0%)	2 (0.6%)	11 (2.3%)	3 (0.8%)	27 (1.6%)
Military	12 (2.2%)	7 (2.1%)	3 (0.6%)	5 (1.4%)	27 (1.6%)
Religious leader	9 (1.6%)	10 (3.0%)	3 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	22 (1.3%)
Think Tank	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)
Other	39 (7.0%)	18 (5.5%)	44 (9.3%)	23 (6.5%)	124 (7.2%)
Total	558 (100.0%)	330 (100.0%)	472 (100.0%)	356 (100.0%)	1716 (100.0%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform.

The fact that nations programming is less focused on stories about politics means that political sources play a less significant role in terms of sourcing patterns, appearing just two thirds as frequently as “ordinary people” – members of the public/victim/witness – who topped the chart. This could be partly explained by, and be connected with, the prominence of crime stories, which was the second most frequent within nations coverage. The frequency of individuals from the world of sports – just behind politicians – could also be understood with reference to the relatively high frequency of sports stories. However, a trend that cuts across the nations programmes strongly is the increased frequency of political sources, with both ITV and BBC including more of these in 2012. There are also other patterns that appear to hold up across both time periods. For instance the BBC consistently features civil society groups such as NGOs, pressure groups and trade unions more prominently than ITV though it

should be noted that the representation of organised labour is at a very low level across all channels. In terms of the overall number of sources featured there is a clear pattern: BBC nations programming features a strikingly higher number of sources than ITV. Again it should be stressed that this is partly a function of the fact that BBC nations programming does not include commercial breaks. Nonetheless, the figures for the two broadcasters are so drastically divergent here that this is likely to only explain a portion of the difference.

For regions programming, sport and crime also topped the frequency charts, with the third place taken by entertainment/celebrity stories and the fourth by lifestyle reporting, indicating less emphasis on formal politics – whether local, UK or international.

Table 39: Top story topics across 2007 and 2012 for regional broadcasters*

Story Topic	BBC Bristol	BBC Manchester	ITV Bristol	ITV Manchester	Total
Sport	13 (15.1%)	34 (28.1%)	19 (17.8%)	43 (33.1%)	109 (24.5%)
Crime (Individual)	10 (11.6%)	26 (21.5%)	14 (13.1%)	30 (23.1%)	80 (18.0%)
Entertainment/ celebrity	5 (5.9%)	11 (9.1%)	10 (9.3%)	9 (6.9%)	35 (7.9%)
Lifestyle	8 (9.3%)	6 (5.0%)	7 (6.5%)	10 (7.7%)	31 (7.0%)
Local politics	8 (9.3%)	4 (3.3%)	9 (8.4%)	1 (0.8%)	22 (4.9%)
Environmental News	6 (7.0%)	5 (4.1%)	7 (6.5%)	3 (2.3%)	21 (4.7%)
Accident/Disaster	6 (7.0%)	5 (4.1%)	7 (6.5%)	3 (2.3%)	21 (4.7%)
Law and Order	5 (5.9%)	3(2.5%)	3 (2.8%)	5 (3.8%)	16 (3.6%)
Arts	3 (3.5%)	4 (3.3%)	6 (5.6%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (3.1%)
Health General	2 (2.3%)	5 (4.1%)	4 (3.7%)	3 (2.3%)	14 (3.1%)
Business	2 (2.3%)	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.7%)	5 (3.8%)	12 (2.7%)
Health (NHS)	6 (7.0%)	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.8%)	2 (1.5%)	12 (2.7%)
Other	12 (14.0%)	16 (13.2%)	15 (13.9%)	15(11.5%)	58 (13.0%)
Total (overall sample)	86 (100%)	121 (100%)	108 (100%)	130 (100%)	445(100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform.

This table demonstrates that within regional programming, “softer” news topics are central to the news offering – including news on entertainment and celebrity as well as lifestyle reporting. In terms of frequency, these topics take precedence over topics including local politics as well as unfolding news events around accidents and disasters. The implication that formal politics is less significant in regional news also holds up when we take a more detailed look at the relative prominence and newsworthiness of particular topics. Here, stories about crime by far dominate the top of news programmes – with a whopping 58 crime stories in the top three items across our regional sample. By comparison, stories about accidents and disasters, and local politics come joint second, each contributing just eight stories to the top three items within all the regional news programmes studied. Sports stories, while topping the frequency chart, make up only six of top three stories here.

Just as with nations programming, the emphasis on crime in regional news also seems to shape source composition, as indicated by the table below, though with some interesting shifts across the two years studied.

Table 40: Distribution of sources by year and regional broadcaster*

	2007		2012		Total
	BBC Regions	ITV Regions	BBC Regions	ITV Regions	
Member of the public/victim/witness	100(42.6%)	136 (46.4%)	91 (39.1%)	79 (30.6%)	406 (39.9%)
Sports person	21 (8.9%)	27 (9.2%)	33 (14.1%)	28 (10.9%)	109 (10.7%)
Business/private companies/economy	25 (10.6%)	44 (15.0%)	16 (6.9%)	20 (7.8%)	105 (10.3%)
Public Sector	18 (7.7%)	15 (5.1%)	32 (13.7%)	29 (11.2%)	94 (9.2%)
Political sources	11(4.7%)	15 (5.1%)	15 (6.4%)	31 (12.0%)	72 (7.1%)
NGOs/activists/charities/pressure group	18 (7.7%)	8 (2.7%)	18 (7.7%)	19 (7.4%)	63 (6.2%)
Academic/expert/science/tech/medical	7 (3.0%)	10 (3.4%)	13 (5.6%)	16 (6.2%)	46 (4.5%)
Judiciary/Legal	8 (3.4%)	9 (3.1%)	4 (1.7%)	4 (1.6%)	25 (2.5%)
Religious leader	4 (1.7%)	3 (1.0%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	9 (0.9%)
Military	2 (0.9%)	5 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (0.8%)
Media/Journalists	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.1%)	1 (0.4%)	6 (0.6%)
Trade Union	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	2 (0.9%)	3 (1.2%)	6 (0.6%)
Other	21 (8.9%)	20 (6.8%)	3 (1.3%)	26 (10.1%)	70 (6.9%)
Total	235 (100%)	293 (100%)	233 (100%)	258 (100%)	1019 (100%)

*The percentages reported here are column percentages – the percentage of frequency for each topic across the year and platform.

The most salient feature of regional programming is the relative scarcity of political sources – here, they are included in the news less than a fifth as often as “ordinary people”. Whilst such a sourcing pattern may be consistent with the community orientation of regional news, it is also noteworthy that politicians appear less frequently than individuals representing sports, business, and the public sector. Having said that, there was a significant increase in the use of political sources by ITV in 2012. As in the nations programming, the BBC’s regional broadcasters include civil society groups such as NGOs, pressure groups and trade unions more frequently than ITV, whilst ITV in 2007 and, to a lesser extent in 2012, use more sources from the world of business and the economy. For both broadcasters, however, the presence of business sources declined between 2007 and 2012.

In examining source composition, we also looked to demographics where these could be ascertained. Backing up findings from Study 1 with evidence from this general study of routine news coverage across broadcasters, we found a striking pattern of gender imbalance, which was most conspicuous in network and nations programming, but remained pronounced at the regional level.

Table 41: Gender across programmes*

Programme	2007		2012	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Network radio				
Today	144	36	110	40
Network TV				
BBC News at Six	73	39	97	28
Channel 4	108	38	99	36
ITV 6.30 pm	53	18	91	53
Total network	378	131	397	157
Nations				
BBC Scotland	125	27	80	34
BBC Wales	108	46	101	44
BBC Northern Ireland	102	18	59	11
ITV Scotland	70	31	84	25
ITV Wales	42	32	52	20
ITV Northern Ireland	67	12	61	14
Total nations	514	166	437	148
Regions				
BBC Bristol	78	36	69	32
BBC Manchester	55	28	74	44
ITV Bristol	80	50	85	34
ITV Manchester	87	39	77	26
Total regions	300	153	305	136
Total	1,192	450	1,139	441

*This table only includes sources for which the gender could be determined. In a significant number of cases, such identification was not possible. This was more likely to be the case for reported speech where the gender of the source was

not clear or not explicitly identified (as in references to “MPs,” “a report”) Note that the percentage figures in the table refer to the percentage within each year, rather than across the sample as a whole.

The gender ratio – heavily skewed in favour of males over females – remains largely stable across the two years with some slight changes: at the network level, women make up just over a quarter of all sources, increasing slightly from 26% to 28% between the two years. At nations level, the figure was at 24% in 2007 and 25% in 2012. By contrast, women are used as sources slightly more frequently at the regional level, making up a third in 2007, but declining to three in ten in 2012. Despite this disparity, ITV News at 6.30 still showed a sharp increase in the number of female sources. Another striking aspect is that while BBC News at Six, ITV Wales, and ITV Scotland increased the number of male sources from 2007 to 2012, the number of female sources went down.

These patterns of sources and story topics highlight some interesting differences in terms of the diversity of topics across the broadcasters, and the diversity of sources. However, the exact ways in which this demonstrates a breadth of views is more difficult to ascertain purely on the basis of a large-scale quantitative analysis of topic and source patterns. A more qualitative look at how views were reported differently by the programmes we studied will help shed light on these differences. We therefore now turn to the coverage of views on one particular story across the different news platforms in each of the two years. The stories we have selected are the ones that were most widely covered by the programmes we studied during the sample period.

2007 Case Study

Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer report, 31 October 2007

This story focused on the release of a report on diet, lifestyle and cancer, issued by the World Cancer Research Fund, and based on the work of international medical experts. It was illustrative of the prominence of health and lifestyle topics within the news agenda across the board, and also demonstrated the significant attention paid to the release of reports in routine news. Reporting on this story appeared on the Today programme, BBC News at Six, ITV News at 6.30 and Channel 4 News on Wednesday 31 October 2007.

The story focused on a report that investigated the link between diet and cancer, and was described as the largest and most comprehensive inquiry into the role of lifestyle in the disease. The report alleged a link between alcohol intake, eating too much processed or red meat and cancer, with the running theme of the report being that lifestyle played a more central role in the acquisition of the disease than previously thought. Another theme running through the coverage of this story centred on obesity, with the report recommending a Body Mass Index as low as can be achieved, without being underweight.

Multiple sources were cited in all news packages reporting this story. However, there were significant differences between the broadcasters and the sources and views they included. While Channel 4 News and the Today programme focused more on the official and expert sources and views, BBC News at Six and ITV News at 6.30 featured more opinions from

members of the public. All programmes, with the exception of Today included criticism of the report that questioned whether individuals would adopt these new measures, if there was a need to, and the subsequent impact it would have on society (for example, the question of whether the “fun” would be removed from daily diets was pursued by both BBC News at Six and Channel 4 News). In addition, the possibility of the report acting as a “scaremonger” was also raised by ITV News at 6.30, whilst BBC News at Six touched upon the proliferation of reports offering advice on what to eat.

Official/Expert Sources

The chairman of the report panel, medical expert Professor Sir Michael Marmot, served as an important voice in almost all of the stories. He appeared as a full phone interviewee on the Today programme and as a direct speech source on ITV News at 6.30. His comments sought to summarise and underline for viewers the main findings of the report:

The less processed meats you eat, the lower the risk of cancer. That means sausages and bacon. The best amount to eat of those is none at all. (ITV News at 6.30)

Further, his comments were covered as reported speech on BBC News at Six, and as part of a studio discussion on Channel 4 News, alongside Chris Lamb from the Meat and Livestock Commission. When asked by Channel 4 News presenter Jon Snow about the report resulting in “the fun being taken out of the English/British diet,” Marmot maintained the dietary recommendations suggested by the report:

I would dispute that. Firstly, I think our recommendations would more or less fit within the current pattern of the British diet. It’s changing the emphasis. And secondly, I would dispute that the things that cause cancer are necessarily fun. (Channel 4 News)

However, in opposition to this, Chris Lamb spoke in favour of meat eating as part of a balanced diet, and sought to reassure viewers:

Most people eat bacon as a treat, as a Saturday breakfast, or an occasional bacon sandwich in the week. There’s been a lot of studies over time, but at the end of the day, it’s about balance. When you talk about eating meat, you frequently eat it with vegetables, with carbohydrates. It’s part of a balanced meal ... in anything, there are people who go to excess. It’s the people who go to excess on anything who ought to be concerned. The average consumer is okay. (Channel 4 News)

Channel 4 News was the only programme in our sample that gave a voice to the meat industry. However, ITV News at 6.30 also included an opposing view to the report. The reporter asked: “Yet with a different health food warning almost every week, isn’t this just adding to the scaremongering?” The story then included the view of Professor Karol Sikora, who was presented as an expert on cancer, and was portrayed eating a plate containing processed meat:

It is really true that these rather nice looking sausages here should not be touched? I think that’s false. If one limits the amount of meat, if one limits the amount of alcohol, then there’s no problem. (ITV News at 6.30)

Overall, Channel 4 News utilised the largest number of official/expert sources. In addition to the studio discussion, they included reported speech on this topic from the government, who claimed that they had made progress on obesity, and the Department of Health, which admitted that it knew it had to “go further and faster”. The project director for the report, Professor Martin Wiseman, was given direct speech airtime, explaining the composition of processed meat and how the report produced good evidence that this can promote cancer within the body. Finally, the item included the view of Dr Angie Page, an academic in Physical Activity and Public Health at Bristol University, who argued that unhealthy eating needs to be explored further and in more depth:

We need to eat to live, so it’s not that we can’t get people to eat, but essentially we need to find the trigger switch which facilitates unhealthy eating. And that may well be when a child is perhaps out and about with friends, they may have the financial means and the environmental ability in terms of shops nearby which to obtain food.
(Channel 4 News)

ITV News at 6.30 also gave voice to a medical expert, in the form of Ursula Arens, from the British Dietetic Association, who confirmed that her advice would be “to eat less meat”.

Members of the Public

BBC News at Six and ITV News at 6.30 took a sharply different overall focus from Channel 4 News in their reports on the study. Instead of primarily incorporating views or discussions from official and expert sources, these programmes presented general news packages filmed on location that featured a series of vox pops with members of the public, discussing how the findings of the report could impact on their lifestyle. BBC News at Six featured a young black male working out at the gym. Initially, he was shown endorsing the main findings of the report and stressing the importance of regular exercise:

I think if you’re reasonably healthy, you work out often enough and you look after yourself, you have a more than decent chance of staving off things like cancer. (BBC News at Six)

Supporting this, another member of the public, who had survived bowel cancer (thus being the only stated person in the coverage across all the programmes in our sample who had developed the disease) was introduced:

It’s up to us to want to take responsibility for our own health and know what we’re putting into our bodies. If you had a car you put the wrong fuel into, it wouldn’t work. Our bodies are much more precious than that. (BBC News at Six)

However, this was followed by a contrasting point of view. The young male featured earlier was shown questioning the feasibility of members of the public following these recommendations and presented as feeling “overloaded by advice on what to eat”:

I think it’s very over-optimistic to think that people are going to exercise every day and not eat red meat and not drink and whatever else. It’s just not going to happen.
(BBC News at Six)

This view was subsequently underlined by the reporter, who asked “and if it’s not going to happen to a healthy person like him, some question how many of the rest of us will listen?” This public questioning of the report was extended into the studio discussion with the reporter that followed the general news package. They summarised this opinion by informing the presenter that “a lot of people have been emailing into the BBC today, asking ‘will anyone actually do it?’” No emails were shown or read out to illustrate this. The reporter then concluded the discussion with her own view that “the problem is, I think a lot of people will say, ‘it’s too much, I can’t do any of this at all’.”

ITV News at 6.30 also focused on members of the public, primarily looking at what they described as a “typical family at home”, consisting of male and female parents and two young male sons. The report showed them having meals at home, and showed a week’s food diary of the family. It then featured one of the young boys expressing his fondness for meat, stating “I like the occasional burger; I like the occasional McDonalds.” The mother of the family stated:

I think our diet’s quite healthy. We do eat meat, not every day... I do balance it. I think, everything in moderation. (ITV News at 6.30)

However, the dietician Ursula Arens, as mentioned earlier, was introduced and examined the family’s food diary. She advised the family that they should make a strong effort to reduce their meat intake even further.

An interesting element of the coverage of this news story was the use of images of the public within the reports. BBC News at Six and Channel 4 News both used shots of people walking in public when mentioning the problem of obesity. These shots were often from the neck down only and involved close-up shots on stomachs and torsos in general.

A closer analysis of the coverage of this news story suggests some salient points and differences in the reporting of views surrounding the Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer report. Official and expert sources were dominant on Channel 4 and the Today programme, with Channel 4 News the only programme to give a voice directly to the meat industry. In contrast, BBC News at Six and ITV News at 6.30 placed an emphasis more strongly on how the report would impact on members of the public, and subsequently devoted time to them expressing their views. Although members of the public featured in these two reports, only one of these programmes, BBC News at Six, featured a view from a cancer survivor. It included criticism that questioned the adoption of these lifestyle changes by the general public, and the subsequent impact it would have on society, reflecting an attempt at balancing opinions on the topic.

If this story exemplifies the strong presence of lifestyle news, the main story covered across the programmes in our 2012 sample serves as a useful contrast, as it was characterised by a focus on conventional politics.

2012 Case Study

The Police and Crime Commissioners Election Results in England and Wales, 16 November 2012

Our 2012 story looked at the introduction of the new Police and Crime Commissioner roles across England and Wales – framed through a focus on the low voter turnout to the elections. The emphasis on low turnout included reporting of the potential responsibility of the government, in terms of questioning the lack of publicity devoted to these new elections, and the decision to hold them during the month of November.

The story led the news on the Today programme, BBC News at Six, ITV News at 6.30, BBC Wales, ITV Wales and Channel 4 News on 16 November 2012. Multiple sources were cited in all news packages reporting this story.

Political sources were frequently included throughout all the news items. Within this, the key theme – repeated across programmes – was the exchange of views between Labour and Conservative politicians. Yvette Cooper, Labour Shadow Home Secretary, appeared on three of the programmes to express Labour’s opposition to the elections, while David Hanson, Shadow Policing Minister, appeared on two. Both politicians described the elections as a “shambles” (a view and term which was mentioned at the very start of both Channel 4 News and ITV News at 6.30 stories), placing the blame for the low voter turnout on the government:

They chose to spend £100 million on these elections rather than spend it on 3,000 police officers instead. That is bad for policing, it’s bad for democracy and it’s also bad for the taxpayer too. (Yvette Cooper, BBC News at Six)

Well, we warned the government that this was the wrong policy at the wrong time and I think that these P&C elections have proved to be a shambles as a result of the government’s decisions. (Yvette Cooper, ITV News at 6.30)

The Conservative viewpoint was expressed on BBC News at Six and Channel 4 News by Theresa May, Home Secretary, who stated:

I think this was money well spent. I think the police and crime commissioners will make a difference to people, they will make a difference to policing and across the country, to cut crime. (BBC News at Six)

A similar view was expressed by David Cameron on BBC Wales, ITV Wales, Channel 4 News and ITV News at 6.30. The debate between Labour and Conservative surrounding the formation of, and low participation of voters in, the Commissioner elections was highlighted further by a studio discussion following a general news package, on Channel 4 News. This featured Yvette Cooper, Labour Shadow Home Secretary, and Grant Shapps, Conservative Party Chairman. Both expressed strong views concerning the elections, with Cooper

maintaining the position that they were a “shambles”, and Shapps emphasising that five million people did go out to vote, and predicting that when they next take place, in four years, there will be a much more substantial turn out. As such, this story exemplified the trend, amply documented in Study 1, of framing major political news with reference to tensions between the two main political parties.

After Westminster politicians, the next political sources included across the programmes were the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. BBC’s Today programme included an interview with Angus Macpherson, the new Commissioner in Wiltshire, whereas ITV News at 6.30 included direct speech from the West Midlands Police Commissioner, and ITV Wales Tonight also included views from the new Commissioners in North Wales, Gwent, South Wales and Dyfed-Powys. Some Commissioners talked about the demanding nature of the job and how they planned to fulfil the role, but Alun Michael, South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner expressed his frustration at the government’s handling of the elections, for all prospective candidates:

It’s been quite an exhausting campaign, mainly because the government didn’t really frame the whole election correct, but that’s been a problem for all the candidates.
(ITV Wales Tonight)

However, the most noteworthy difference between channels and programmes was in the extent to which they included members of the public as sources. BBC Wales included vox pops with five members of the public and BBC News at Six featured vox pop views from six different members of the public in Swindon, who were asked if they had voted in the elections (two out of the six confirmed that they had). The following views were presented:

I didn’t know anything about it. I haven’t heard anything about it as of yet. Nothing at all, I’m sorry. [Reporter: Do you know who the candidates were?] Nope. No, not a clue. [Do you know who won?] No! Someone good hopefully. [Do you care?] Not overly. I’m a bit ambivalent I’m afraid. (Female and Male members of the public)

Didn’t know it was happening, no. No, I wasn’t aware. Too busy watching I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here. (Male member of the public)

[Reporter: Do you think you knew enough about the candidates?] Definitely not. Nothing’s been advertised that much, I don’t think. (Male and Female members of the public)

We did not vote because they did not send any information through. I forgot. (Female member of the public)

I have voted, because I feel it's a shame to waste your vote, but, no, there wasn't very much information at all. I had to work quite hard to find any information really.
(Female member of the public)

Yes, I voted. [Reporter: Can you tell me who you voted for?] I don't know, I don't remember to be honest. (Female member of the public)

This news story also included another interview with a member of the public who had strongly opposed the elections, and expressed this by spoiling their ballot paper. The story included a credited photograph of their spoiled paper, which had the words "do not politicise the police" written across it. The BBC Today programme also mentioned receiving emails from listeners that were asking for a discussion around the spoiled ballots. They then put this question to Professor John Curtice, a polling expert at Strathclyde University who was being interviewed on the programme. He stated:

A figure of above 3% [spoiled ballots] does at least raise eyebrows, and it raises questions as to whether some people didn't simply fail to cast a valid vote because they were confused by the system, but maybe some people amongst that miniscule 15.8% who did turn out actually went to the polling station and then said, "hang on" and spoil their ballot paper to declare they didn't think it was a terribly good idea.

ITV News at 6.30 also featured a short segment that included vox pops with three members of the public in Coventry, who expressed similar views concerning a lack of information about the candidates and election, and general voting apathy, as evident in the BBC vox pops:

I meant to [vote], but I forgot. (Female member of the public)

What police election was that? (Male member of the public)

I made a point of finding out of who there was to vote for and what they were standing for... [Reporter: And after which you chose not to vote?] I did, yes. (Female member of the public)

ITV Wales and Channel 4 News instead focused on political sources, and featured no views from members of the voting public. This is an interesting decision, considering a key theme within the story focused on the low voting turnout.

Whereas all programmes covering the story in our sample prominently used political sources, with an emphasis on the debate between Labour and Conservative, the BBC had a stronger

focus than the other channels on views from voters, in part because the low turnout was a key element of the story. By contrast, ITV focused more on viewpoints from the newly elected Commissioners.

Study 2: Conclusion

Our research for the second study, comparing breadth of topics and sources across 2007 and 2012 for the BBC and its main competitor broadcasters, highlights a striking similarity in the story topics across the two years, suggesting the news agendas of the programmes sampled have not altered significantly in five years.

Having said that, there were noticeable differences between broadcasters and programme types. For example, at network level, BBC News at Six covered more political stories, whilst Channel 4 News featured the most international news stories. Whilst sports and crime were frequently covered across the board, lifestyle stories and other “softer” news topics took precedence over political ones in the regional sample. A more fine-grained analysis of the relative newsworthiness of particular topics – rather than their frequency – across the sample and at the regional level demonstrated that crime stories topped the news agenda, making for the most frequent topic of lead stories, while political stories were prominent at the beginning of newscasts despite their more modest frequency. Sport – while consistently reported with great frequency – was much less likely to make it into the top three stories than these other topics.

The study also demonstrated different sourcing patterns – some of them related to programme length. For example, BBC nations used a larger number of sources than ITV nations. On network programmes, Channel 4 News featured the most sources. BBC programmes featured business sources to a greater degree than ITV or Channel 4, whilst the Today programme relied heavily on journalists to express professional judgements and views. As in Study 1, political sources were highly salient in network coverage. However, coverage was largely dominated by the two main parties, and despite becoming part of the coalition government in 2010 Liberal Democrats were used less frequently as sources in 2012 than they were in 2007.

In nations and regions programming, members of the public were most widely used as sources, far outweighing all other groups. In the regions, political sources appeared less frequently than individuals representing sports, business, and the public sector. This reflected a news agenda where political stories played a much less significant role, and the main form of politics covered took place at the local level.

Our qualitative case studies demonstrated the different use of sources on the same stories, and how such editorial choices contribute to framing accounts in particular ways. In the 2007 story, on dietary research, BBC News at Six and ITV News at 6.30 emphasised how the report would impact on members of the public, and subsequently devoted time to their views. Channel 4 News, on the other hand, was the only programme to feature the views of the meat industry. In the 2012 story, on the Police and Crime Commissioners elections, the BBC had a stronger focus than the other channels on views from members of the voting public, due to voting turnout being a key element of the story. On the whole, the reporting of the story gave strong prominence to Westminster political sources and the party-political battle lines they represented, backing up our key finding in Study 1 which suggests that an emphasis on tensions and conflicts between the main political parties may limit the diversity of views in news coverage.

Appendix 1: Selection of relevant stories in Study 1

TV and Radio samples: To identify relevant stories in the underlying sample, we coded any report which included one of the three topics as a central theme. For this to be the case, there needed to be a substantial mention of the relevant story topic, rather than a passing mention. This we defined in terms of the topic being mentioned by sources in the story (at least once) and the report itself. If there was uncertainty, the story was discussed among members of the coding team until a consensus was reached over whether or not the story was relevant, and in some cases which of the three story topics it related to. On some occasions there was the potential for crossover. When this was the case the story topic that was most prominent was deemed to be the overriding story topic. This process was generally far more straightforward in terms of identifying stories relevant to immigration and the UK, and the UK's relationship to the EU than stories about religion in the UK. Below, we have gathered a selection of borderline cases and how decisions were made on these. Please note that in both studies there were missing programmes – these are listed in Appendix 2.

Religion

The David Black murder:

This story involved a murder in a sectarian context. We decided not to code the story, as this theme was not sufficiently apparent throughout the piece.

The murder of Rev John Suddards

This story focused on a man obsessed with religion who murdered a vicar. This was coded because the murderer explicitly mentioned he committed the crime because he disliked Christians and declared himself the Antichrist. However, when Christianity was not mentioned as a reason for the crime, it was not coded.

Stories about the Orange Order

These stories were coded only when religion was explicitly discussed.

The UK's relationship to the EU

We encountered some stories within this topic that were not coded, as they were not specifically about the UK's relationship with the European Union. Instead, they focused on EU leaders, or the Euro Crisis, or other European Countries' relationships with the EU. Some stories also had the theme appear for just a small part of the story: for example, a story about Scottish Independence that mentions EU just at the end and a story on David Cameron's

response to the Queen’s Speech, that briefly mentions the EU reform treaty. Both of these stories were not coded, since the theme did not appear as a driving force in the coverage.

Immigration

The Gary McKinnon and Abu Qatada cases of extradition were discussed. The McKinnon case was not coded, unless discussion was specifically relating to immigration or religion. For example, a 5 Live Breakfast, Your Call single issue programme was coded as the discussion regarded whether race or religion was a determinant in his non-extradition and the role they play in extradition in general. The Abu Qatada extradition case is a good example of where a potential crossover in the three topics could occur. Abu Qatada was often referred to as a “Muslim Cleric” which brings religion into the story, but the extradition case itself was the dominant part of the story. Therefore stories containing Abu Qatada were coded as an immigration story.

Online sample: To identify relevant stories we used the BBC website search facility. First, we specified the dates of our sample. After this we limited our search to the category of “News” again using the BBC’s own classification system on the website. With regards to keywords we created a substantial list of keywords to include in our search but after piloting them, it was felt that they were too specific, yielding too many results. For example, when searching for religion stories, we decided against going into searching for specific religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism etc) or specific issues (Abortion, Blood Transfusions) due to the volume of stories and any potential weighting of keywords or topics. With this in mind we kept the search terms relatively simple. The keywords we decided upon were as follows:

EU	IMM	RELIGION
EU	Immigration	Religion
European Union	Immigrant	Faith

We subsequently filtered out stories not relevant to our sample e.g. EU stories not in relation to Britain or Religious stories from abroad, and stories captured by the search that related to BBC programme descriptions rather than straight news stories.

Our strategy of identifying the sample on the basis of search, as opposed to going through all stories in the online archive for the sample period, was made on the basis of logistical consideration. It invariably left some relevant stories out, whilst potentially over-representing others (for example, our online sample had a far larger number of stories about Scottish independence and its implications for the UK’s relationship to Europe than the broadcast samples) but nonetheless represents a systematic and feasible approach of locating relevant coverage.

Appendix 2: Missing Data

Study 1

Radio One Newsbeat: 31/10/2007

BBC News at Ten: 16/10/2012 and 13/11/2012

Breakfast: 16/10/2012, 17/10/2012, 13/11/2012, 14/11/2012

Newsnight: 16/10/2012 and 13/11/2012

Appendix 3: Operational definition of the story as unit of analysis

The approach chosen to count stories in this project was to analyse a story in its entirety, and as completely as possible. This means that the total amount of time one story appears throughout an entire programme was counted as one story. For a story to be counted as a separate news report the topic being covered had to be different. The various elements included in the news story were not treated as separate entities but were instead combined as part of the same story. It was decided to count the stories in this way because it would best show the entire breadth of opinion within a particular news story. This means that the sources that appear in each story across a news programme will be more accurately represented. For example, if the Prime Minister is used as a source in a story that was spread throughout a news programme they would be recorded as a source once, rather than multiple times. The total length of time a source appears in direct speech (or in quotation marks online) was also recorded.

The length of the story which was recorded included the total amount of time a particular programme dedicated to a particular story. This makes the comparison of how much time different programmes dedicated to different topics easier and more comprehensive.

Differentiating Between Stories and Decisions Regarding Story Topic

Occasionally a news programme would cover two stories that could potentially be coded as the same news story because they were very similar, but were in fact two separate stories. A similar process to uncertain source categories was used with respect to differentiating news stories. The coding team would discuss the stories and decide whether or not they should be treated separately, and what story topic category they should be entered into. For example, ITV West Country on 16 November 2012 carried two stories relating to the Bristol Mayoral election and the election of Police and Crime Commissioners that could have potentially been coded as one local politics story. However, they were treated as separate stories because although they occurred on the same day they were covered using very different angles that made each story distinctive.

The stories not coded for were the weather, and anything not referring to a specific topic. For instance, informal conversation between the presenters – and occasionally between reporters and presenters.

The Amount of Time Dedicated to a Particular Story

The way that the stories are constructed across different media platforms means that news stories are usually fragmented and spread out across a programme. This meant that accurately timing the length of a story included a lot of stopping and starting of the recording of length. How this differed across media platforms is as follows:

Broadcast

The structure of the broadcast news meant that stories could appear in the headlines, and then in the main body of the programme, as well as in the news round-up at the end of a programme. This length of time was added together and constituted one story to be analysed.

At the other end of the scale are stories that are very short snippets but because they were separate stories they were treated as individual pieces. This was particularly evident in Study 2: when broadcasters would cover sport they would cover several brief stories in a very short space of time. Another example of small, short length stories is the round up at the end of programmes such as Newsnight where several stories appearing on the front pages of the next day's newspapers are summarised.

The different lengths of story were particularly evident with radio programmes as these tended to be longer in length than programmes found on broadcast. The Today programme for instance might cover a story multiple times across the entire programme.

For example, on 16 October 2012 the Today programme covered a story about Home Secretary Theresa May discussing the government's plan to opt out of EU law and order measures. In total this story was covered for approximately 24 minutes, but this was spread throughout the hour and a half of programme that was coded.

The other story format found predominantly on radio which produced lengthy coverage of specific stories was single issue programmes on 5 Live Breakfast, Your Call. This meant that the entire programme was analysed as one story. For example, a radio phone in on Breakfast, Your Call about the gay rights organisation Stonewall calling two senior members of the Catholic Church "bigots". This rarely happened in broadcast programmes and there was only one instance where a single issue programme appeared on television. This was a Newsnight special about the debates surrounding immigration to the UK that was broadcast on 8 November 2007 and was simulcast on Radio 5 Live.

Online

A story for the sample of stories taken from BBC Online was classed as each article found using the search terms detailed in Appendix 1.

Appendix 4: The Coding Process

A coding manual was created to inform the coders of how each variable was being defined and when it should be coded for. The coding manual was primarily used as a reference guide and instruction manual to increase the consistency and reliability of the coding, and to make sure that everyone involved in the coding knew what they were looking for. The following example demonstrates what was meant by “Types of Report” and when to code for one of the types of report “Presenter Only”:

Types of Report (for TV news and radio):

Please indicate the type of report that is used within the story, for television and radio news programmes. The different types are defined as follows:

Presenter Only: Must be standalone or 30 seconds plus, featuring no images. It should feature the presenter talking to the camera or microphone, with no interruptions.

The coding manual also contained the decisions made by the coders as to which way they might code a category if it was not completely clear. These decisions were made by consensus where each individual coder was able to voice how they might code something. This aided in maintaining the consistency of the coding and that the same variables were not being coded differently by different people. An example of where this occurred was in the coding of certain sources, for instance it was decided by the coders that a lawyer should be recorded in the judiciary category. Another example is party political Special Advisors who were recorded as civil service but their political affiliation was also recorded.

The coding scheme was extensively piloted and altered prior to the conduct of the content analysis by the research team as a whole.

Intercoder reliability tests were carried out on 5% of the sample in both studies by two reliability coders who were part of the research team, using intercoder agreement as the measure. For all the variables discussed in the report, the tests resulted in agreement above 80%. One variable – the nationality of sources – was not used in the discussion as a result of low intercoder reliability.

Appendix 5: Coding the Sources

A source was counted when it was deemed to have contributed to the construction of, or was included in, a news story. Numbers were used on the coding sheet to indicate the order that each source appeared in, and these numbers corresponded to other variables on the coding sheet such as, gender, age, religion, political affiliation and so on. There were also certain categories of sources that could be defined further and their specific names entered into a space on the coding sheet. This was done for Think Tanks, NGOs, Pressure Groups and Trade Unions. The rationale behind this was that if one of these four types of sources appeared often enough when it came to the data inputting and analysis they would appear as a standalone source. This was similarly used for the “other” category where if something appeared often enough to be significant when it was input and analysed the source became a standalone variable. For instance, sources such as “family/friends”, “student” and “prisoner” were created in this way.

The list of sources that could be coded for was as exhaustive as possible to ensure that there were not too many “others” found in the sample, and that each source category would be mutually exclusive. This meant that the sources used in news reports were separated into an extensive list of categories. The following list shows a selection of the UK political source categories:

- PM (Prime Minister)
- Government Minister
- Leader of the Opposition
- MP (General)
- Government Department
- Civil Servant

There were anonymous political sources which rather than coding as anonymous came under broader categories such as “Labour”, “Conservatives”, and “Lib Dems” etc. This differentiation of different source types was carried out for all expected major source categories that were going to appear in the news.

Separating sources in this way meant that the coding would be as systematic and straight forward as possible, reducing the potential for error. The amount of categories reduces the possibility that a source could potentially be coded in two different categories. When there were instances of sources where their category was uncertain this was discussed within the coding team and a decision about where the source should be placed made. The decisions made over where to categorise a source would then be entered into the coding manual for

future reference. An example of a source of this type was political Special Advisors, because whilst being part of the Civil Service they are political appointments, and there was a category for political party members. The team discussed Special Advisors and decided that they should be coded as Civil Service but their political affiliation should also be coded.

Sources, however, were not just coded for when they appeared. They were broken down into how they appeared, or more accurately how they were used in the construction of, or included in, the stories as follows:

Direct Speech – This means that the source has been used directly as in the source speaks directly on screen or voice in radio.

This was different for the online stories where direct speech was coded when the source appeared in quotation marks.

Reported Speech – This is where the source is quoted or paraphrased by the presenter/programme and does not appear directly. When reported speech is used by a presenter/programme it tends to be preceded by key words such as “said”, “admitted”, “stated”, “revealed”, “announced” and so on.

An example of each of these types of speech can be found in a Newsnight story about immigration figures on 29 October 2007. In the segment David Cameron, as Leader of the Opposition, appears directly on screen to talk about the figures. Whereas the Labour “government” is said to have “admitted” that immigration figures were wrong but did not appear directly on screen.

First an example of direct speech from David Cameron appearing directly on screen:

Something we got wrong was trying to combine Asylum and Immigration together and what actually we have done here, which I think is right, is to say, let’s look at the part of immigration we can actually control and that is immigration by people from outside the European Union that are coming here to work, that is something we can and should control, as part of a sensible policy on population, so we don’t put too much pressure on schools and hospitals and housing so we can really deliver the things people in this country want.

Second an example of reported speech from the presenter reporting on what the government had said:

The government admitted there are hundreds of thousands more foreign nationals working in the UK since 1997 than the figures they had released.

The statistics contained in this report are reported and direct speech added together.

Source Demographics

It was not just the appearance of the sources that was coded for. Other attributes of the sources were also recorded to further breakdown and attempt to gain the best picture of the breadth of opinion. These are the other categories that sources could be coded for:

Political Affiliation – This was recorded when the political affiliation of a source was explicitly stated e.g. Labour Leader Ed Miliband. The list of political affiliations covered all of the main political parties in the UK as a whole, and in the devolved parliament and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It also included smaller, but prominent political parties like UKIP.

Length of Time (or words if online) Allocated to Each Source – This is the time allocated for each source which was the total amount of time that a source appeared/spoke in direct speech per story.

Type of Evidence Used by a Source When Expressing Their View/Opinion – This was recorded when a source provided evidence for their opinion, and this type of evidence ranged from public opinion to government reports.

Gender – The gender of the source was recorded but the gender had to be obvious such as being visible on screen or audible.

Visible disability or Impairment – This was only recorded if the disability or impairment of the source was visible on screen or explicitly stated.

Age – The ages of the source were only recorded when they were visible on screen, and these were placed into age ranges.

Nationality – This was recorded in a similar way to political affiliation in as much as it was only recorded when the nationality of the source was explicitly mentioned. For example, “Dutch Prime Minister”.

Ethnicity – The ethnicity of the sources were recorded when they appeared on screen or when the source’s ethnicity was explicitly mentioned.

Religion – This was recorded in a similar fashion to Political Affiliation and Nationality and was recorded when the religion of the source was explicitly mentioned. However, religion was also recorded when a member of a particular religion, a Rabbi for example, appeared but if no religion was explicitly stated they would have been recorded as Jewish.

ⁱ These periods were selected to avoid major events which would distort comparison, to fit with the BBC Trust's cycle of reviews, and to ensure full archive material for comparable periods was available.

ⁱⁱ Appendix 1 describes the process whereby relevant stories on the three topics were identified in both broadcast and online samples.

ⁱⁱⁱ A decision was made to include up to 16 sources for each story to account for a broad range of sources. There were just 10 stories in Study 1 which had more than 16 sources. These were mostly from Your Call programmes. We decided that changing the coding framework to include a larger number of sources would over represent "members of the public" (i.e. audience members calling in to the radio programme) as a source category compared to others, and would also overcomplicate our statistical analysis by introducing a large number of additional source variables. Nonetheless, the stories that featured more than 16 sources were, by their very nature, also likely to include a broad range of opinion, and therefore were included as a prominent part of the qualitative analysis reported here.

^{iv} This statistic excludes the Today programme's Thought for the Day, which skewed the sample given that they almost always used religious leaders as the main source.

^v This is also true when taking out "Thought for the Day" – where religious leaders are always the main source.

^{vi} We did not count comments (including Editor's Picks) on online stories as sources, but included them in our qualitative analysis.

^{vii} It should be noted that international political sources, such as the China Communist Party and the US Republican Party are clearly only relevant to international stories.