

Audience Expectations of access services across TV and Video-on-demand services

Research Plan:

Ofcom asked the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers to carry out a research project. It looked at how different groups of people used subtitles, audio description and signing on TV and video-on-demand services, including catch-up and subscription services. We refer to these features as access services.

We spoke to 55 people, across a range of disabilities and conditions. This included people who have hearing loss, sight loss, both hearing and sight loss, British Sign Language users and those with cognitive conditions.

General Findings:

- We found there are many different reasons why people use access services. Some people used more than one.
- People wanted to be able to customise the different access services they used. For example, by changing the size of the subtitles.
- People wanted these services to be easy to find and switch on. They also wanted programmes to be better labelled with whether they had subtitles, audio description or signing available.

Subtitles:

- People felt that the quality of subtitles had got better over the last few years. But, many claimed they did not watch live programmes (like news or events) because the subtitles had mistakes or did not match up with the sound correctly.
- Most people wanted to be able to change the size of the subtitles. Others wanted more options, for example, changing the colour, position or speed of the subtitles.
- To show who is speaking, some people preferred a hyphen (--) or a name label [JENNY], but other people liked different colours.

- People said a musical note was a clear way to show if music is playing. People also wanted clear and straightforward descriptions of sounds in subtitles.

Audio Description:

- People who used audio description wanted more of it to be available on TV.
- The quality of audio description was thought to be mostly good. However, some people found hearing it could be hard sometimes, if the sound of the audio description was too loud, too quiet, or overlapped with the sound of the programme.
- People liked it when the accent or tone of the audio describer was similar to the programme. But they also wanted to understand what was being said easily.
- Describing what a person looks like was seen as important, and people wanted detailed audio descriptions.
- In order for the volume of AD to increase, people would be accepting of synthetic voices (generated by computers) instead of human voices on some types of programme, like the news, as long as the quality remained.

Sign Language

Glossary

Sign-interpreted: This is when someone translates the TV programme into British Sign Language. You see the person at the side of the TV screen.

Sign-presented: This is when a TV programme is in sign language.

- British Sign Language users preferred watching sign-presented programmes. This was because they did not need to focus on an interpreter on the screen. They also thought the signing was better.
- When they watched more mainstream TV programmes, many people used subtitles. They did also use sign-interpretation. They preferred sign-interpretation for some types of programme, like the news.
- People wanted to see more sign-presented and sign-interpreted programmes. They also wanted to see the Deaf community more on screen and have Deaf sign interpreters used.

- For sign-interpretation, people said that sometimes the signing was not clear, accurate or matched with the programme well. They also wanted the sign interpreter to be a good size, so they could see their face, body and signing gestures easily.