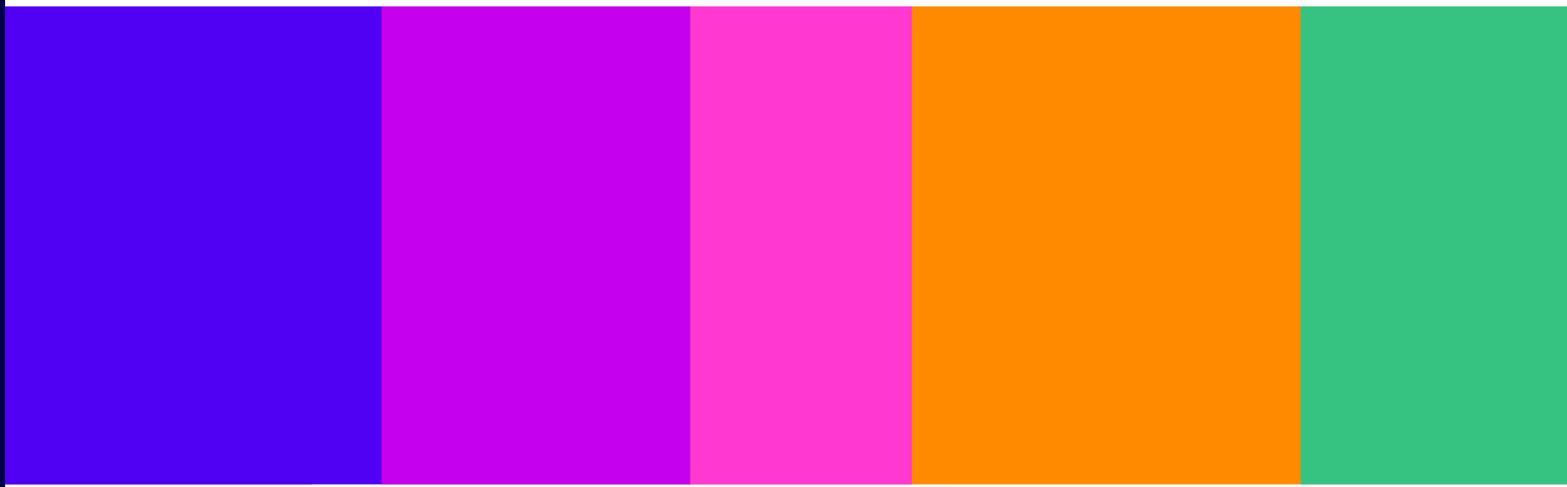


# Survey on TV viewing among BSL users

---

Results of online questionnaire among BSL users on their usage and satisfaction with accessible programming on TV and on-demand services

Published 15 May 2023



# Contents

---

## Section

1. Overview: Survey on TV Viewing Among BSL users.....	1
--	---

## Annex

A1. Data Tables .....	5
-----------------------	---

# 1. Overview: Survey on TV Viewing Among BSL users

## Background

---

- 1.1 Ofcom consulted with British Sign Language (BSL) users to understand more about their usage of and satisfaction with accessible programming on TV and on-demand services.
- 1.2 A short questionnaire was provided to respondents which looked particularly at:
  - sign-interpreted programming, which is where a signer on the corner of the screen translates the dialogue into sign language
  - sign-presented programming, which is where all the characters and presenters use sign language; and
  - subtitled programming, which is where text on screen represents speech and sound effects
- 1.3 This summary is based on the overall responses across all ages. The full breakdown of responses, including by age, is provided in Annex One.

## Methodology

---

- 1.4 Ofcom asked the questions in an online questionnaire and provided a BSL video for each question. We promoted the survey on our website and social media channels and asked charities and groups representing deaf people to promote the survey. The survey was open between April and July 2021.
- 1.5 Ofcom received a total of 185 responses from individuals who use BSL to communicate. Some respondents answered on behalf of another adult or a child under 16 in their household. **This sample size is limited and not representative of BSL users in the UK.** Therefore, the findings in this summary should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive.

## Summary of findings

---

- Almost half of respondents said that they used BSL as their first language to communicate and a similar proportion used a combination of English language and BSL to communicate<sup>1</sup>.
- A higher proportion of respondents said that they watched subtitled programmes on TV (around nine in ten) compared to those who watched sign-presented programmes (around eight in ten) and sign-interpreted programmes (around seven in ten).<sup>2</sup> However, more respondents preferred watching sign-presented programmes than sign-interpreted or subtitled programmes<sup>3</sup>.
- Around one in ten respondents said that they couldn't follow TV programmes at all using subtitles only (i.e. not using signing)<sup>4</sup> while around eight in ten said they rely on sign-interpretation to some degree to follow TV programmes<sup>5</sup>.
- Fewer than two in ten respondents said that they were satisfied with the availability of sign-presented programmes on TV, though around half said they were satisfied with the quality.<sup>6</sup> There was also low satisfaction with the availability of sign-interpreted programmes on TV (only two in ten were satisfied) while more than six in ten were satisfied with the quality<sup>7</sup>.

## Detailed summary of findings

---

### Signing needs, preferences and use

While most respondents said they were able to follow subtitled programmes to some extent, more respondents preferred to watch sign-presented than subtitled programmes.

- 1.6 When asked to what degree they are able to watch TV programmes without sign-interpretation, about three in ten respondents said they were unable to follow programmes without sign interpretation, about half said they could follow TV programmes without sign interpretation but with some difficulty and just two in ten said they did not have any difficulty at all following TV programmes without sign-interpretation.<sup>8</sup>
- 1.7 When asked about whether they could follow TV programmes with subtitles only and no sign-interpretation, one in ten said they were unable to follow TV programmes with subtitles only. More than four in ten said they could follow programmes with subtitles only but with

---

<sup>1</sup> See Respondent breakdown in the Annex

<sup>2</sup> See Question 6 in the Annex

<sup>3</sup> See Question 7 in the Annex

<sup>4</sup> See Question 5

<sup>5</sup> See Question 4

<sup>6</sup> See Questions 14 and 15

<sup>7</sup> See Questions 10 and 11

<sup>8</sup> See Question 4

some difficulty and a similar proportion said they could follow programmes easily with subtitles only.<sup>9</sup>

- 1.8 However, when asked what formats they prefer, almost half of respondents said they preferred to watch sign-presented programmes. Almost four in ten respondents preferred subtitled programmes while sign-interpreted programmes were preferred by only around a sixth of participants.<sup>10</sup>

#### There was a high level of awareness of sign-presented content on different TV channels

- 1.9 Awareness of sign presented programmes was high for all services we asked about. Awareness and viewing were highest for BBC2 signed programmes where almost nine in ten said they were aware and have watched them. When asked about BSL Zone on Together TV, almost six in ten said they were aware of and had watched this service. A further two in ten said were aware of the service though they hadn't watched any sign presented programmes on it. Half of respondents were aware of and had watched BSL Zone on Film 4 while three in ten were aware of the service without watching it.<sup>11</sup>

#### Sign-presentation was preferred to sign-interpretation across all genres, although this was less pronounced for news and current affairs

- 1.10 Overall, drama, films, documentaries, and comedies were the most watched genres on TV by respondents (by at least seven in ten), while children's programmes and soaps were least watched (by about a third).<sup>12</sup> News and current affairs were watched significantly more than other genres with sign-interpretation, while there was generally a more even split of viewing of sign-presented genres.<sup>13</sup>
- 1.11 When asked how they would prefer to watch each of the genres, sign-presentation was preferred to sign-interpretation across all genres. Sign-presentation was preferred by a wide margin across most genres, although this was less pronounced for news, current affairs and sports.<sup>14</sup> Similarly for watching on-demand programmes, sign presentation was preferred to sign interpretation across all genres.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> See Question 5

<sup>10</sup> See Question 7

<sup>11</sup> Question 12a-c

<sup>12</sup> See Question 3

<sup>13</sup> See Question 8

<sup>14</sup> See Question 16

<sup>15</sup> See Question 22

## Satisfaction with availability and quality of signed programmes on TV

---

Satisfaction with the availability of both sign-interpreted and sign-presented programmes on TV was low, though a higher proportion said they were satisfied with the quality of these programmes

- 1.12 Only a fifth of participants said they were satisfied with the availability of sign- interpreted programmes on television.<sup>16</sup> Satisfaction with the quality of sign-interpretation was higher (albeit with room for improvement) with more than six in ten satisfied. The highest level of satisfaction was amongst those who preferred sign-interpreted programmes<sup>17</sup>.
- 1.13 Satisfaction with the availability of sign-presented programmes on TV was even lower with just over one in ten satisfied and more than seven in ten stating they were dissatisfied<sup>18</sup>. While satisfaction with availability was low, about half said they were satisfied with the quality of sign-presented programmes.<sup>19</sup> This higher level of satisfaction was mainly driven by those who said they prefer sign-presented programmes on TV.

## Signing for on-demand programming

---

Satisfaction with the quantity of programmes on BSL Zone on-demand was higher than satisfaction with the availability of sign-presented programmes on TV services.

- 1.14 Overall, just under half of those who watch BSL Zone on-demand were satisfied with the quantity of programmes, while just over half were satisfied with the quality.<sup>20</sup> Of those minority of respondents who had not watched BSL Zone on-demand, two thirds were aware of programmes on the BSL Zone on-demand websites/app<sup>21</sup>.
- 1.15 When asked where they would most like to see more sign-presented and sign-interpreted programmes on demand overall, the most popular destination was catch up services such as BBC iPlayer, All4, and ITV Hub<sup>22</sup>. Other services such as Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) and BSL Zone were also mentioned.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> See Question 10

<sup>17</sup> See Question 11

<sup>18</sup> See Question 14

<sup>19</sup> See Question 15

<sup>20</sup> See Questions 17 and 18

<sup>21</sup> See Question 19

<sup>22</sup> Since the survey was carried out, ITV Hub has been replaced by ITV X

<sup>23</sup> See Questions 20 and 21

# A1. Data Tables

## Respondent Breakdown by Age

Age	Number	% of total
Under 16	19	11%
16-34	49	26%
35-54	97	52%
55-74	17	9%
75+	1	1%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Respondent Profile

	Number	% of total
Can you or the person you are answering for communicate using BSL?		
Yes	185	99%
No	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100%</b>
Which of the following best describes how well you or the person you are answering for know and use BSL?		
I/ they use BSL as my/ their first language rather than English to communicate	89	48%
I/they use both English and BSL equally to communicate	83	45%
I/ they do not use BSL to communicate a lot	13	7%
I/they do not use BSL to communicate at all	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q1: Thinking about when you watch TV, which of the following platforms do you use?**

	Total	Under 16	16-34	35-54	55-74	75+	Prefer not to say
Base	185	19	49	97	17	1	2
Live broadcast TV (for example through Freeview or a Sky/Virgin box)	142	14	36	72	17	1	2
Recorded TV via a digital video recorder (DVR)	81	8	21	43	8	0	1
BBC iPlayer	158	13	46	84	13	0	2
ITV Hub	92	11	26	48	7	0	0
All4	80	8	27	38	6	0	1
My5	54	5	12	32	5	0	0
Amazon Prime	125	11	36	71	6	0	1
Now TV	33	6	12	14	1	0	0
Disney Life	55	10	18	26	1	0	0
Sky Go (on-demand service such as the Sky Cinema or Sky Sports App)	35	6	13	13	3	0	0
BT TV Online Player (including the BT Sport App)	23	3	9	7	4	0	0
UKTV Play	12	2	2	6	2	0	0
BSL Zone on-demand (the website and app)	137	8	35	80	12	0	2

**Q2: And which of the following devices do you/the person you are answering for use to watch TV?**

	Total	Under 16	16-34	35-54	55-74	75+	Prefer not to say
	185	19	49	97	17	1	2
Smart TV (for example Apple TV/ Amazon Fire TV)	136	16	36	73	10	0	1
Computer (PC, laptop or tablet)	147	14	44	79	8	0	2
Smartphone	120	15	33	63	7	0	2
Games console	37	8	12	16	1	0	0
Streaming Stick (for example, Google Chromecast/ Amazon Fire)	38	8	9	19	2	0	0
Set top Box (for example, Freeview, Sky or Virgin boxes)	89	13	25	40	10	1	0
Other	5	1	0	3	1	0	0

**Q3: Which of the following types of programmes do you (or the person you're answering for) regularly watch on TV? TICK ALL THAT APPLY**

	Total	Under 16	16-34	35-54	55-74	75+	Prefer not to say
Base	185	19	49	97	17	1	1
News	120	10	30	63	14	1	1
Current affairs	83	5	48	10	1	1	2
Documentary	155	11	89	14	1	1	2
Comedy	134	10	71	10	1	1	2
Drama	142	11	74	13	1	1	2
Films	152	16	82	11	1	1	2
Soaps	63	6	35	8	0	0	0
Sport	78	8	42	6	1	1	1
Children's programmes	60	17	27	2	0	0	0
Light entertainment (such as reality programmes, game shows)	107	10	55	8	1	1	2
None of these	-		-	-	-	-	-

**Q4: To what degree are you (or the person you are answering for) able to follow TV programmes without sign interpretation?**

Age	Total	I/they can't follow TV programmes at all without signing	I/they can follow TV programmes without signing but with some difficulty	I/they can easily follow TV programmes without signing
Total	185	54	93	38
Under 16	19	7	10	2
16-34	49	8	28	13
35-54	97	34	46	17
55-74	17	4	9	4
75+	1	0	0	1
Prefer not to say	2	1	0	1

**Q5: To what degree are you (or the person you are answering for) able to follow TV programmes using subtitles (where a text on screen represents the speech and sound effect) only and not sign interpretation**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>I/they can't follow TV programmes at all with subtitles only</b>	<b>I/they can follow TV programmes using subtitles only but with some difficulty</b>	<b>I/they can easily follow TV programmes using subtitles only</b>
Total	185	21	80	84
Under 16	19	10	5	4
16-34	49	2	20	27
35-54	97	9	47	41
55-74	17	0	8	9
75+	1	0	0	1
Prefer not to say	2	0	0	2

**Q6: Do you (or the person you're answering for) ever watch any .... TICK ALL THAT APPLY**

Age	Total	Sign interpreted programmes on TV -where a signer is visible on one side of the screen	Sign presented programmes on TV – where all the presenters or characters use sign-language	Subtitled programmes on TV – where text on screen represents the speech and sound effects	None of these	Don't know
Total	185	128	150	167	1	1
Under 16	19	15	15	12	1	0
16-34	49	36	35	48	0	1
35-54	97	63	83	89	0	0
55-74	17	12	14	15	0	0
75+	1	1	1	1	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	1	2	2	0	0

**Q7: And generally what type of programmes do you (or the person you're answering for) prefer watching on TV...**

Age	Total	Sign interpreted programmes on TV -where a signer is visible on one side of the screen	Sign presented programmes on TV - where all the presenters or characters use sign-language	Subtitled programmes on TV – where text on screen represents the speech and sound effects	Don't know
Total	161	26	76	57	2
Under 16	16	3	8	5	0
16-34	43	7	20	16	0
35-54	84	12	41	29	2
55-74	15	4	6	5	0
75+	1	0	0	1	0
Prefer not to say	2	0	1	1	0

**Q8: There are some sign interpreted programmes on TV. And which of these do you/ the person you are answering for ever watch sign interpreted**

	Total	Under 16	16-34	35-54	55-74	75+	Prefer not to say
News	115	8	33	61	12	0	1
Current affairs	72	4	20	40	7	0	1
Documentaries	0						
Comedy	40	5	8	25	2	0	0
Drama	47	6	12	29	0	0	0
Films	35	8	9	17	1	0	0
Soaps	40	3	11	24	2	0	0
Sports	23	4	3	13	3	0	0
Children's programmes	55	13	10	30	2	0	0
Light entertainment (such as reality programmes, game shows)	33	5	5	19	4	0	0

**Q9: How often, if at all, do you (or the person you're answering for) use sign interpretation to enable you/ them to follow TV programmes more easily...**

Age	Total	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very rarely	Not at all
Total	128	31	29	1	51	16
Under 16	15	5	2	6	2	0
16-34	36	3	13	15	5	0
35-54	63	19	12	25	6	1
55-74	12	4	2	4	2	0
75+	1	0	0	0	1	0
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	1	0	0

**Q10: Overall, how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the availability of sign interpreted programmes on TV...**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	128	17	32	18	52	8	1
Under 16	15	0	6	2	7	0	0
16-34	36	4	5	6	20	0	1
35-54	63	8	19	8	22	6	0
55-74	12	4	2	2	2	2	0
75+	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	0	1	0	0

**Q11: And how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the quality of sign interpreted programmes on TV...**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	128	20	62	23	12	10	1
Under 16	15	2	5	2	2	3	1
16-34	36	3	15	10	4	4	0
35-54	63	13	35	8	5	2	0
55-74	12	2	7	2	1	0	0
75+	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

**Q12a: Are you or the person you are answering for aware of and have you/they watched any sign presented programmes on any of the following? - BBC2 (e.g. See, Hear)**

Age	Total	Aware and watched	Aware but not watched	Unaware	Don't know
Total	183	153	25	2	3
Under 16	18	11	4	1	2
16-34	48	40	7	1	0
35-54	97	85	12	0	0
55-74	17	14	2	1	0
75+	1	1	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	2	0	0	0

**Q12b: Are you or the person you are answering for aware of and have you/they watched any sign presented programmes on any of the following? - BSL Zone on Together TV**

Age	Total	Aware and watched	Aware but not watched	Unaware	Don't know
Total	183	105	43	32	3
Under 16	18	10	1	5	2
16-34	48	23	15	10	0
35-54	97	62	21	13	1
55-74	17	7	6	4	0
75+	1	1	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	2	0	0	0

**Q12c: Are you/ the person you are answering for aware of/ have you watched any sign presented TV programmes on any of the following - BSL Zone on Film4**

Age	Total	Aware and watched	Aware but not watched	Unaware	Don't know
Total	183	90	51	40	2
Under 16	18	5	4	8	1
16-34	48	21	18	9	0
35-54	97	53	25	18	1
55-74	17	8	4	5	0
75+	1	1	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	2	0	0	0

**Q13: And which of these types of TV programmes do you (or the person you're answering for) ever watch sign presented? Numbers saying yes**

	Total	Under 16	16-34	35-54	55-74	75+	Prefer not to say
Base	150	15	35	83	14	1	2
News	80	10	16	44	9	0	1
Current affairs	67	5	12	41	7	0	2
Documentary	82	8	20	47	5	0	2
Comedy	70	7	16	42	3	0	2
Drama	77	6	19	46	4	0	2
Films	52	6	12	30	3	0	1
Soaps	32	4	4	20	3	0	1
Sport	26	6	5	10	4	0	1
Children's programmes	70	14	14	38	3	0	1
Light entertainment (such as reality programmes, game shows)	34	4	7	20	2	0	1
None of these	-		-	-	-	-	-

**Q14: Overall, how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the availability of sign presented programmes on TV ...**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	150	10	11	19	30	79	1
Under 16	15	1	1	1	3	9	0
16-34	35	2	3	5	4	21	0
35-54	83	6	5	9	20	43	0
55-74	14	1	2	4	2	4	1
75+	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Prefer not to say	2	0	0	0	1	1	0

**Q15: Overall, how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the quality of sign presented programmes on TV ...**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	150	29	45	29	21	24	150
Under 16	15	2	6	2	3	2	15
16-34	35	8	11	7	6	2	35
35-54	83	17	23	14	11	18	83
55-74	14	2	4	6	0	1	14
75+	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Prefer not to say	2	0	1	0	1	0	2

**Q16 Would you (or the person you're answering for) prefer to see sign interpretation or sign presentation on the following types of TV programmes?**

	<b>Sign interpretation</b>	<b>Sign presentation</b>	<b>No preference</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
News	76	85	18	3	1
Current affairs	50	97	24	7	5
Documentaries	38	110	24	6	5
Comedy	25	107	33	12	6
Drama	19	114	32	12	6
Films	25	98	38	17	5
Soaps	24	94	41	17	7
Sports	32	77	49	20	5
Children's	23	119	24	11	6
Light entertainment	26	99	39	11	8

**Q17: Overall, how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the quantity of programmes on BSL ZONE on demand**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	138	33	29	29	25	20	2
Under 16	9	1	3	2	1	2	0
16-34	35	9	5	9	7	5	0
35-54	80	17	18	14	17	12	2
55-74	12	6	3	2	0	1	0
75+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	0	0	2	0	0	0

**Q18: Overall, how satisfied are you (or the person you are answering for) with the quality of programmes on BSL ZONE on demand**

Age	Total	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Total	138	42	34	24	19	17	2
Under 16	9	2	5	2	0	0	0
16-34	35	10	7	8	7	3	0
35-54	80	22	19	13	10	14	2
55-74	12	7	3	1	1	0	0
75+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	2	1	0	0	1	0	0

**Q19: There are some on-demand programmes on BSL Zone (on its website and app). Are you (or the person you're answering for) aware of these programmes.**

\*This question was asked only of those respondents who said they don't watch BSL Zone on-demand

Age	Total	Aware but not watched	Unaware	Don't know
Total	48	31	14	3
Under 16	11	4	5	2
16-34	14	10	4	0
35-54	17	13	3	1
55-74	5	3	2	0
75+	1	1	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0

**Q20: Sign presentation is when all the characters or presenters in the programme use sign language. On which one of these services, if any, would you (or the person you're answering for) most like to see more sign presented programmes ...**

Age	Total	Catch-up services (such as BBC iPlayer)	SVOD (e.g. Amazon Prime)	BSL Zone on demand	No preference/ none	Don't know
Total	185	73	40	43	21	8
Under 16	19	9	4	3	3	0
16-34	49	22	11	9	6	1
35-54	97	38	23	24	7	5
55-74	17	4	2	6	3	2
75+	1	0	0	0	1	0
Prefer not to say	2	0	0	1	1	0

**Q21: Sign interpretation is when a signer on one side of the screen translates the programme into sign language. On which one of these services, if any, would you (or the person you're answering for) most like to see more sign interpreted programmes...**

Age	Total	Catch-up services (such as BBC iPlayer)	SVOD (e.g. Amazon Prime)	No preference/ none	Don't know
Total	185	92	20	56	15
Under 16	19	14	3	1	1
16-34	49	27	7	13	5
35-54	97	44	10	32	5
55-74	17	7	0	9	4
75+	1	0	0	1	0
Prefer not to say	2	0	0	0	0

**Q22 Thinking about on-demand services overall, would you (or the person you're answering for) prefer to see sign interpretation or sign presentation on the following types of TV programmes?**

	Sign interpretation	Sign presentation	No preference	None	Don't know
News	75	83	19	3	5
Current affairs	57	94	22	5	7
Documentaries	42	110	21	6	6
Comedy	20	114	36	10	5
Drama	24	114	32	10	5
Films	27	98	40	16	4
Soaps	24	96	46	12	7
Children's	20	116	33	9	7
Light entertainment	27	100	42	8	8