

BBC NEWS AND THE SCOTTISH SIX

SCOTTISH CONSUMERS' VIEWS ON VALUE
FOR MONEY AND THE LICENCE FEE

About the Scottish Consumer Council

The Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) was set up by government in 1975. Our purpose is to promote the interests of consumers in Scotland, with particular regard to those people who experience disadvantage in society. While producers of goods and services are usually well-organised and articulate when protecting their own interests, individual consumers very often are not. The people whose interests we represent are consumers of all kinds: they may be patients, tenants, parents, solicitors' clients, public transport users, or simply shoppers in a supermarket.

Consumers benefit from efficient and effective services in the public and private sectors. Service-providers benefit from discriminating consumers. Balanced partnership between the two is essential and the SCC seeks to develop this partnership by:

- carrying out research into consumer issues and concerns;
- informing key policy and decision-makers about consumer concerns and issues;
- influencing key policy and decision-making processes;
- informing and raising awareness among consumers.

The SCC is part of the National Consumer Council (NCC) and is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry. The SCC's Chairman and Council members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland. Future appointments will be in consultation with the First Minister. Martyn Evans, the SCC's Director, leads the staff team.

Please check our web site at www.scotconsumer.org.uk for news about our publications.

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The SCC assesses the consumer perspective in any situation by analysing the position of consumers against a set of consumer principles.

These are:

ACCESS

Can consumers actually get the goods or services they need or want?

CHOICE

Can consumers affect the way the goods and services are provided through their own choice?

INFORMATION

Do consumers have the information they need, presented in the way they want, to make informed choices?

REDRESS

If something goes wrong, can it be put right?

SAFETY

Are standards as high as they can reasonably be?

FAIRNESS

Are consumers subject to arbitrary discrimination for reasons unconnected with their characteristics as consumers?

REPRESENTATION

If consumers cannot affect what is provided through their own choices, are there other effective means for their views to be represented?

The Scottish Consumer Council
March 2004

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The Review of the BBC's Royal Charter was launched with a public consultation in December 2003. One of the key questions in the consultation asks how well the BBC serves the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, including Scotland. Focusing on news programming, the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) wanted to know whether consumers in Scotland felt that they were getting value for money in return for their licence fee. Five years on from devolution and the original *Scottish Six* debate, we also thought it timely to find out consumers' views on this issue.

The SCC commissioned NFO System Three to carry out research into attitudes towards the BBC's news provision.

QUESTIONS

- ?? The BBC Six O'clock News is currently produced for viewers across the UK and is broadcast from London. How satisfied are you with this arrangement for producing and broadcasting this programme?
- ?? Instead of the UK Six O'clock News, would you support or oppose BBC Scotland producing a Scottish Six O'clock News programme, which would cover Scottish, UK and International news?
- ?? How much value for money do you feel that the BBC's news coverage gives you as a Scottish viewer, in return for your TV licence fee?

Using NFO System Three's CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) Omnibus, Scottish Opinion Survey, a representative sample of 916 adults living through Scotland was interviewed in-home. The survey was carried during the period 5th – 16th January 2004. This was prior to the publication of the Report of the Hutton Inquiry.

Degree of satisfaction with current provision of a UK Six O'clock News is lukewarm

Only 7% of people claimed to be very satisfied with the BBC's current arrangements for producing a UK Six O'clock News. Another 44% indicated that they were quite satisfied, while one fifth (21%) reported that they were quite or very dissatisfied with this situation(see figure 1). Respondents from the lower socio-economic groups were found to be less supportive of the current arrangement, with 44% of respondents from group DE indicating satisfaction compared with 60% of those from group AB (see figure 2).

Figure 1

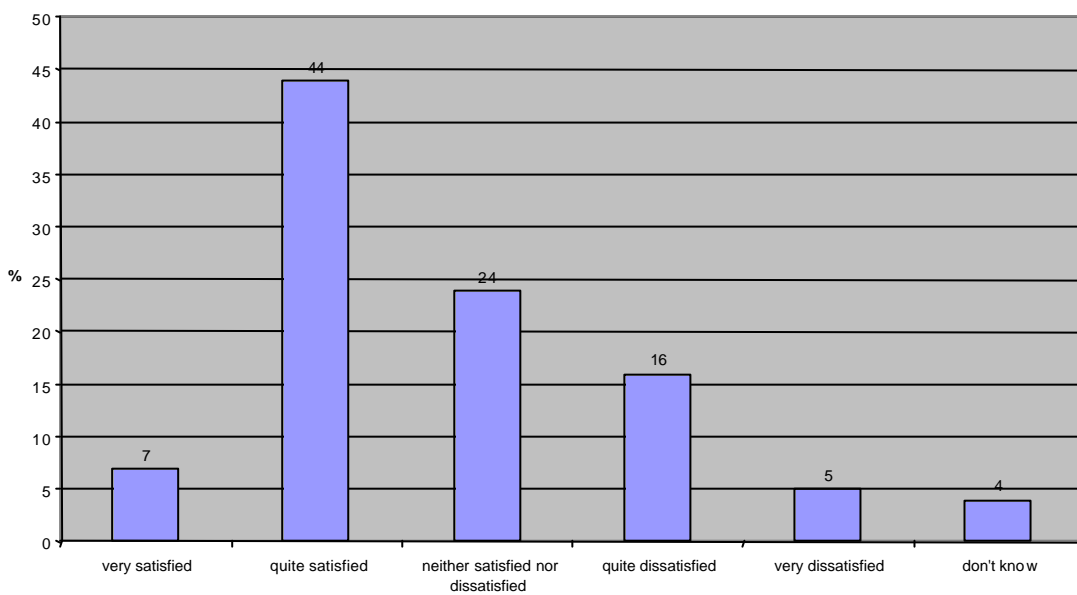
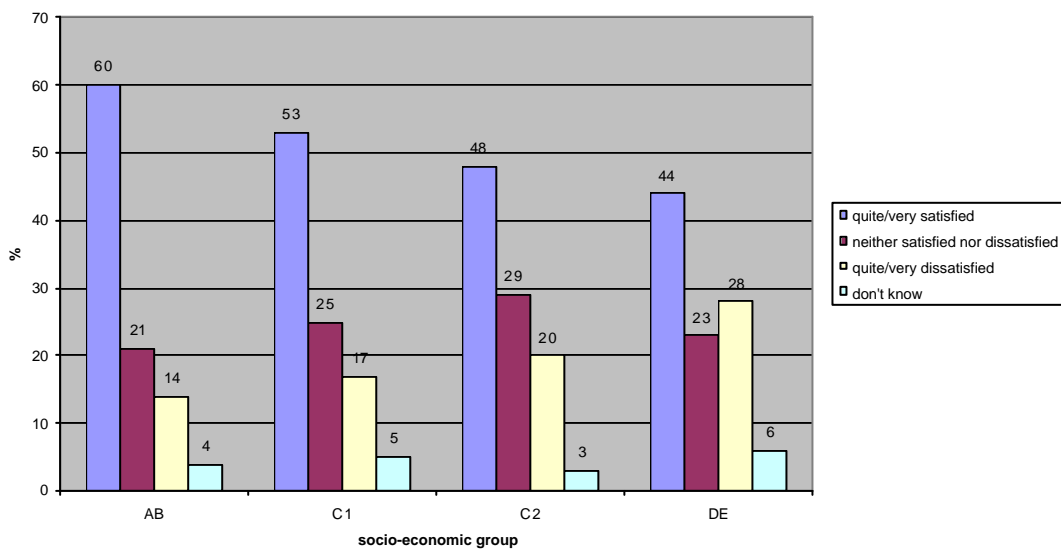


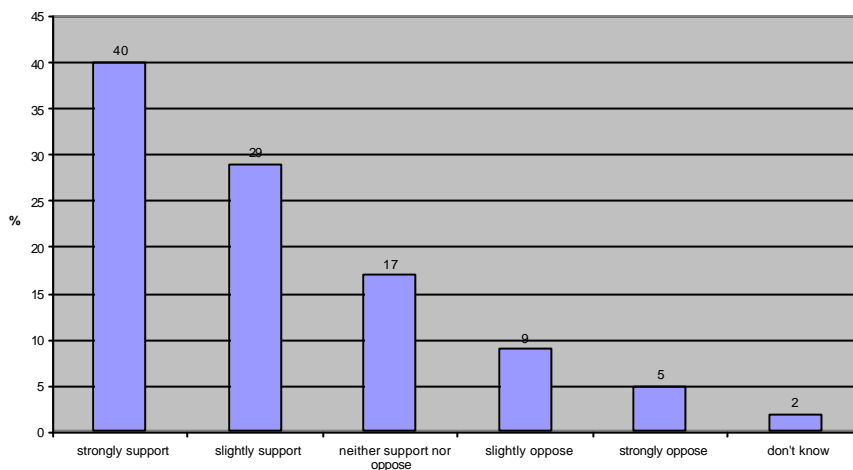
figure 2



The majority of Scots would support a BBC Scottish Six

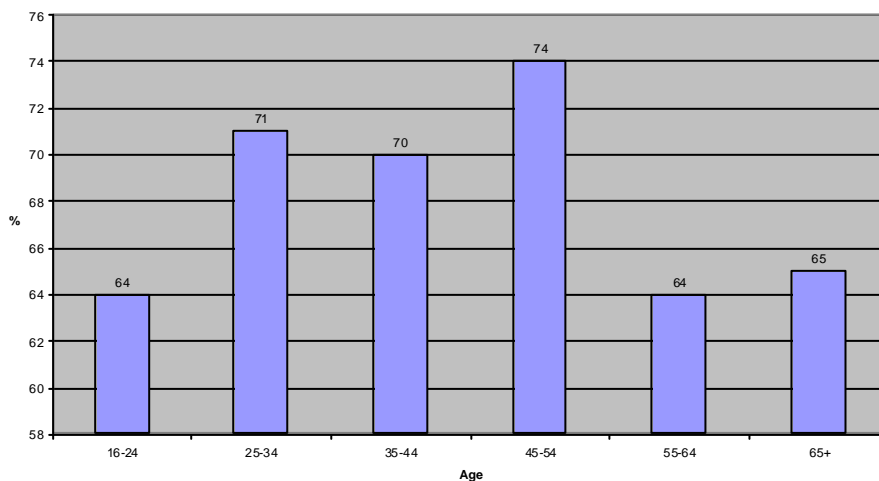
The majority of respondents indicated that they would be in favour of the creation of a Scottish Six. Sixty nine per cent showed slight or strong support for a Six O'clock News programme produced by BBC Scotland that would cover Scottish, UK and international news. Fourteen per cent of respondents were opposed to such a change, while 17% neither supported nor opposed the proposal (see figure 3).

Figure 3



Support was greater for a Scottish Six among the lower socio-economic groups with 72% of respondents supporting a Scottish Six, compared with 61% from group AB. Respondents from the North of Scotland were also found to be more supportive (71%) than those from the West or East/South (both 66%). Women (70%) were seen to be more in favour of a Scottish Six than men (66%), while those in the youngest and oldest age categories were found to be less supportive (see figure 4).

Figure 4



Less than half felt that they received good value for money from the BBC

Almost half the respondents (48%) felt that the BBC's news coverage gave them quite or very good value for money as a Scottish viewer, in return for their TV licence fee. Meanwhile, over one third (34%) felt that the current BBC news coverage provided quite or very poor value for money, and a further 14% indicated that it gave neither good nor poor value for money (see figure 5). As with the previous two questions there could be seen to be a split along socio-economic lines with almost two thirds (65%) of respondents from group AB indicating that the current provisions gave good value for money, compared with 39% of those from group DE (see figure 6).

Figure 5

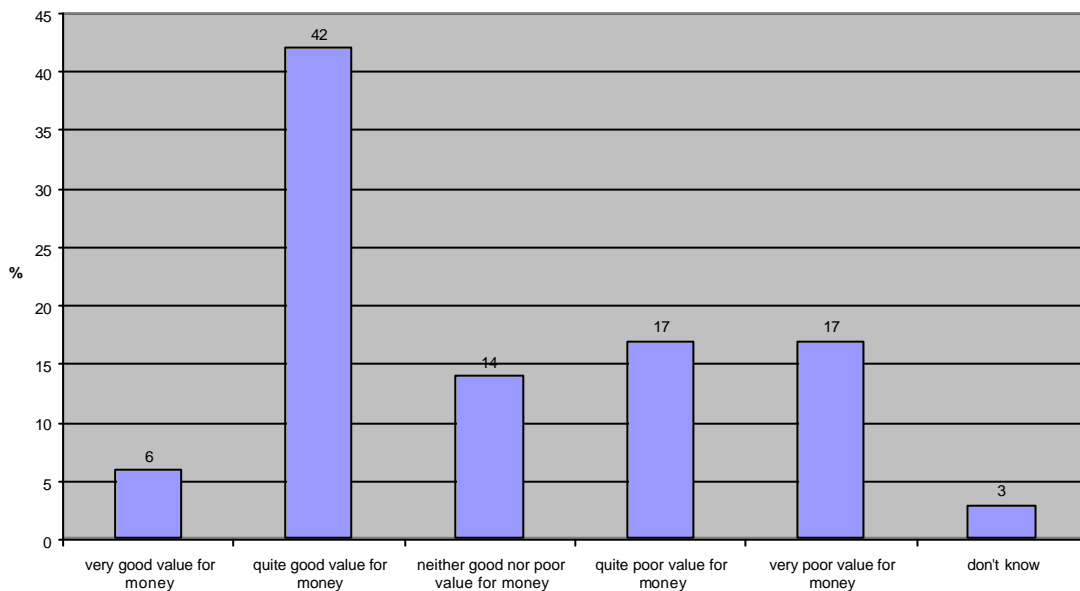
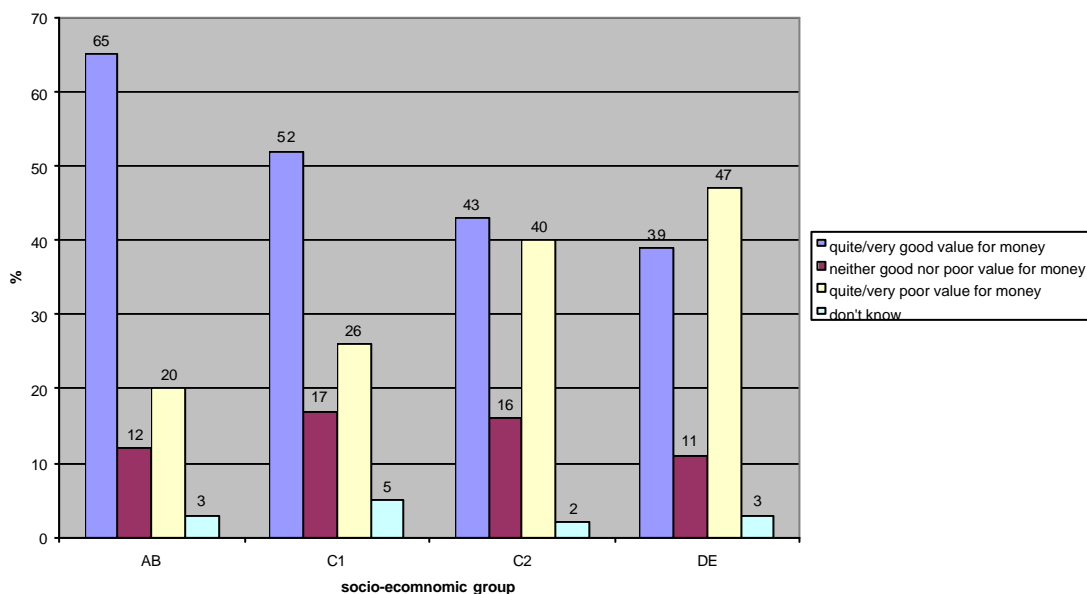


figure 6



Conclusions

The results relating to satisfaction with the current arrangement for producing and broadcasting the BBC Six O'clock News and to the value for money that it provides to Scottish viewers indicate that there is a large minority in Scotland that is unhappy with the current provision. These results support the finding that a majority of respondents would support BBC Scotland producing a Scottish Six O'clock News programme that would cover Scottish, UK and International affairs.

The research reveals particular issues surrounding the attitudes of people in the lower socio-economic groups, suggesting that they feel less well-served by the BBC.