

Dear BBC Scotland,

I'm writing to ask for clarification on your policy regarding political interviews, specifically the six interviews broadcast by Reporting Scotland on 13th September with Vince Cable, 20th September with Jeremy Corbyn, 27th September with Theresa May, 30th September with Ruth Davidson, 5th October with Keith Brown, and 7th October with Ian Blackford. In those interviews, you did not reflect the respective strengths of political parties in Scotland, and you discriminated against some politicians.

a. In what follows, I use Scottish data rather than UK data. Given that the name of your organisation is BBC Scotland, I expect it to take a Scottish perspective, and this expectation was reinforced not only by the name of the programme which broadcast these interviews, "Reporting Scotland", but also by the strapline on its website saying "Big stories from across the country". For UK perspective, listeners will look not to yourselves but to BBC London.

b. The amount of time you gave to the four shorter interviews did not reflect the relative strength of the parties in Scotland. SNP support is broad, not to say overwhelming: seventy-four percent of all those in Scotland who are members of any political party are members of the SNP; the SNP has half the seats in the Scottish Parliament; and it took 45 percent of the vote in the Scottish 2016 Parliamentary election. The remaining parties share what members, seats and votes are left over. But your interview times were roughly similar for all four parties, with each party taking between 20 and 30 percent of the available time, and the SNP - which is larger than all the other parties put together - placed third. All the features I describe here are documented in the attached two supporting charts.

c. You also discriminated against some politicians. Forty-four percent of the time spent on interviewee interruptions was used to attack Jeremy Corbyn, 39 percent to attack Ian Blackford, and only 17 percent to attack Ruth Davidson; by contrast, Theresa May, Vince Cable and Keith Brown were not interrupted at all. Interruptions reduce the length of a speaker's turns, making it more difficult for them to be coherent and persuasive, and this is shown in the reduced turn-lengths for Blackford and Corbyn, at 11 percent and 7 percent respectively of the total relative turn-lengths for all speakers. The underlying data for the supporting charts can be found at <http://www.derek.uk/bbc> (type the URL into your browser address-bar - there's no link from elsewhere).

Your disfavouring of the SNP leaves me, rightly or wrongly, with the feeling that I have a grievance. I can see that you might wish to undermine a political party whose first stated aim in its Constitution amounts to destroying the United Kingdom, but your job as the public broadcaster for Scotland is to represent all strands of opinion fairly. Can you tell me what policy decision has led you not to reflect the strength of party support, and to discriminate against some parties?

Yours faithfully,

Derek Rogers