

BBC Age-related TV licence policy consultation:
submission from 96,329 members of 38 Degrees

Foreword

38 Degrees is one of the UK's biggest campaigning organisations, made up of over two million people from across the country. We are completely independent of all political parties, and funded by tens of thousands of small donations from our members.

38 Degrees believes that democracy works best when more people are involved. After the BBC announced its consultation on age-related TV licences, 38 Degrees asked its members whether to run a campaign in favour of means testing for over-75s. The results were split, and you can read more here:

<https://home.38degrees.org.uk/2019/02/05/should-we-means-test-tv-licences-for-the-over-75s/>

We then asked our members to take part in the BBC's consultation by creating a survey that matched the questions in the age-related TV licence policy consultation. 96,329 people took part and the results in this report.

If you have any questions, we'd be happy to help.

Lorna Greenwood, Campaigns Manager
lorna.g@38degrees.org.uk

Summary

96,329 members of 38 Degrees took part in a survey about the future of the age-related licence fee policy. This level of participation illustrates the enormous public interest in this matter. The questions in the survey were not mandatory, so not every respondent answered every question.

Here is a summary of the results:

- 50% (41,207) of respondents selected reforming how the licence fee works as their favourite option
- 57% (45,824) of respondents selected restoring the licence fee as their least favourite option
- 64% (59,347) of respondents are not in favour of increasing the age threshold for the free TV licence
- The two most popular options for reforming the licence fee are means testing and discounting the fee for older people
- The most popular combination for a reform in how the licence fee works would be to means test and discount the licence fee for older people

You can follow to link to see the full results here:

<https://speakout.38degrees.org.uk/surveys/1586/results/public>

Results

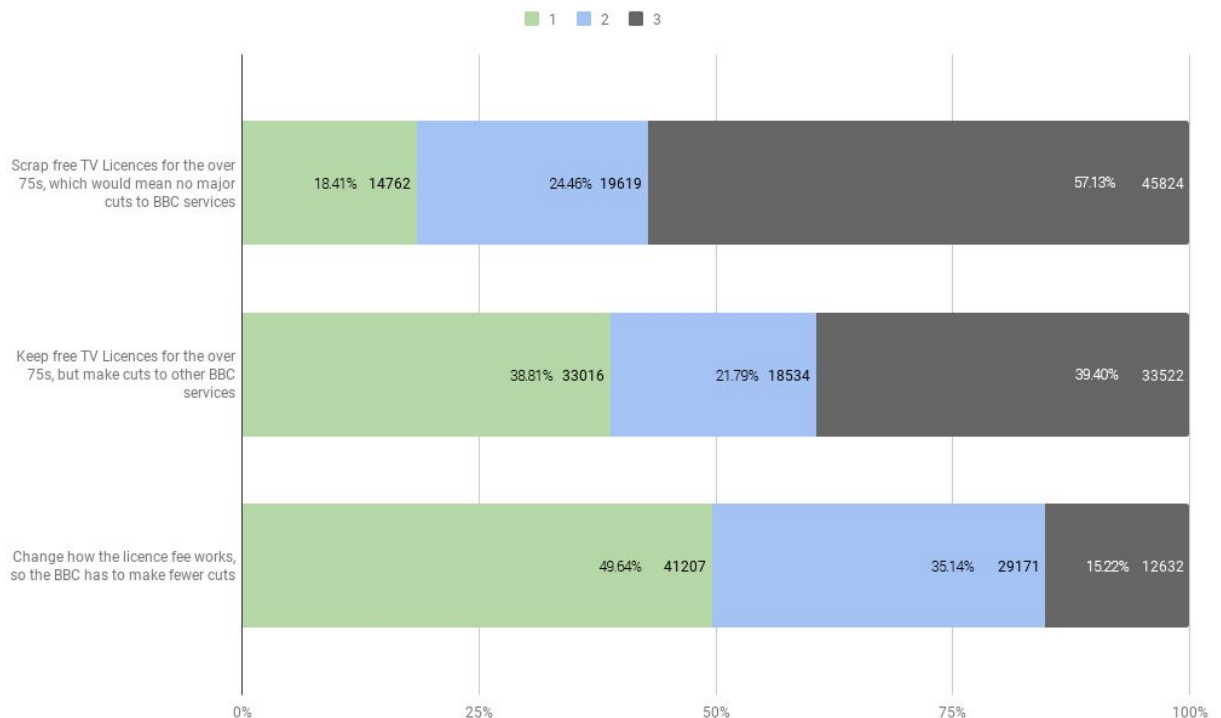
NB: The questions in the survey were not mandatory, so not every respondent answered every question.

In answer to ‘1. Your views about three overall options’

We asked members “The BBC has put forward three options for what they could do to cover the cost of licence fees.

- Keep the free TV licences for over 75s, but make cuts to other BBC services. The BBC calls this ‘copying’.
- Scrap free TV licences for over 75s, which would mean no major cuts to BBC services. The BBC calls this ‘restoring’.
- Change how the licence fee works for older people, so the BBC has to make fewer cuts. The BBC call this ‘reforming’.

Which of these do you think the BBC should do? Please rank each option below on a scale of 1 - 3, where 1 is your favourite and 3 is your least favourite.”

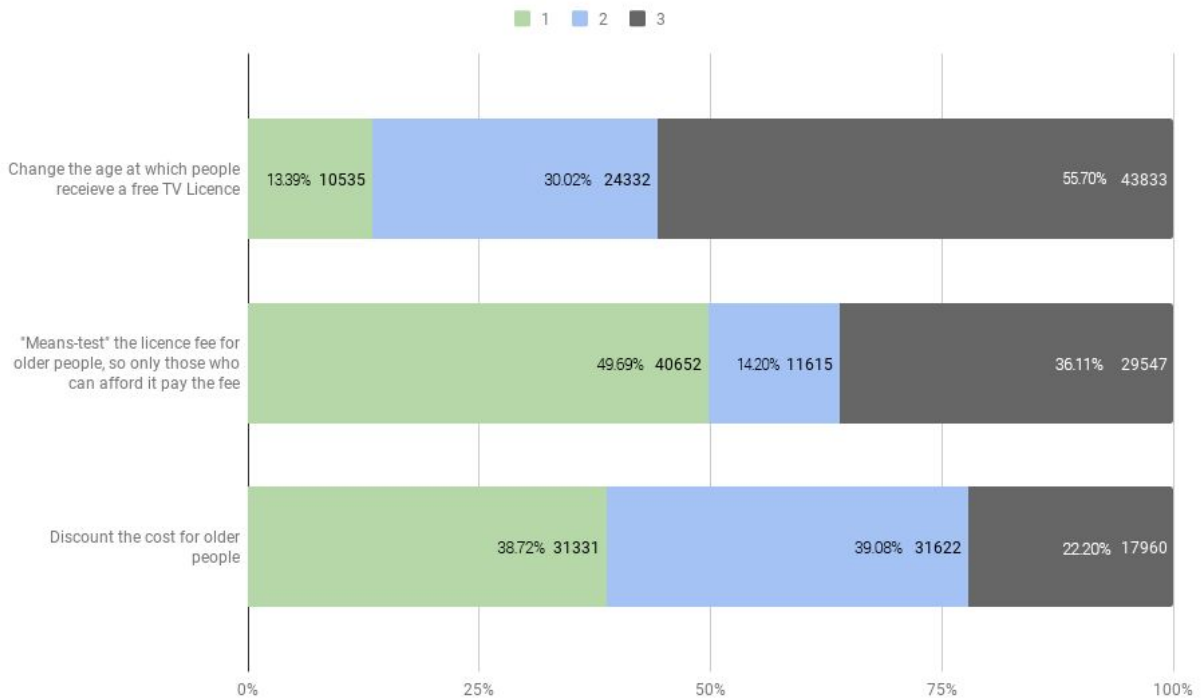


In answer to: 2a. Your views about three particular reform options

We asked members “If the BBC reformed or changed how licence fees for people over 75 work, what do you think they should do differently? Here are the options on the table:

- Discount the cost of the licence fee for older people. This would mean they would pay a bit, but not the full amount.
- Change the age when people receive a free TV licence to older than 75.
- “Means-test” the licence fee for older people, so only those who can afford it pay the fee.

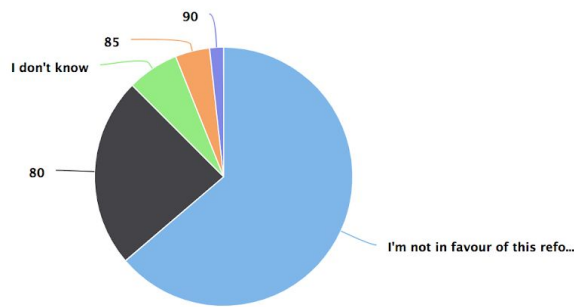
Please rank each option below on a scale of 1 - 3, where 1 is your favourite and 3 is your least favourite:”



In answer to: 2c. Your views about changing the age: what age?

We asked members “The BBC can decide what age people are given a free TV licence. Right now it's 75, but if they raised the age fewer people would receive a free TV licence meaning the BBC wouldn't have to cut as many services.

If the BBC were to select this option, at what age do you think people should get a free licence?”



Answer	# Respondents	% of respondents
I'm not in favour of this reform	59342	64
80	22081	24
I don't know	6003	6
85	4022	4
90	1619	2

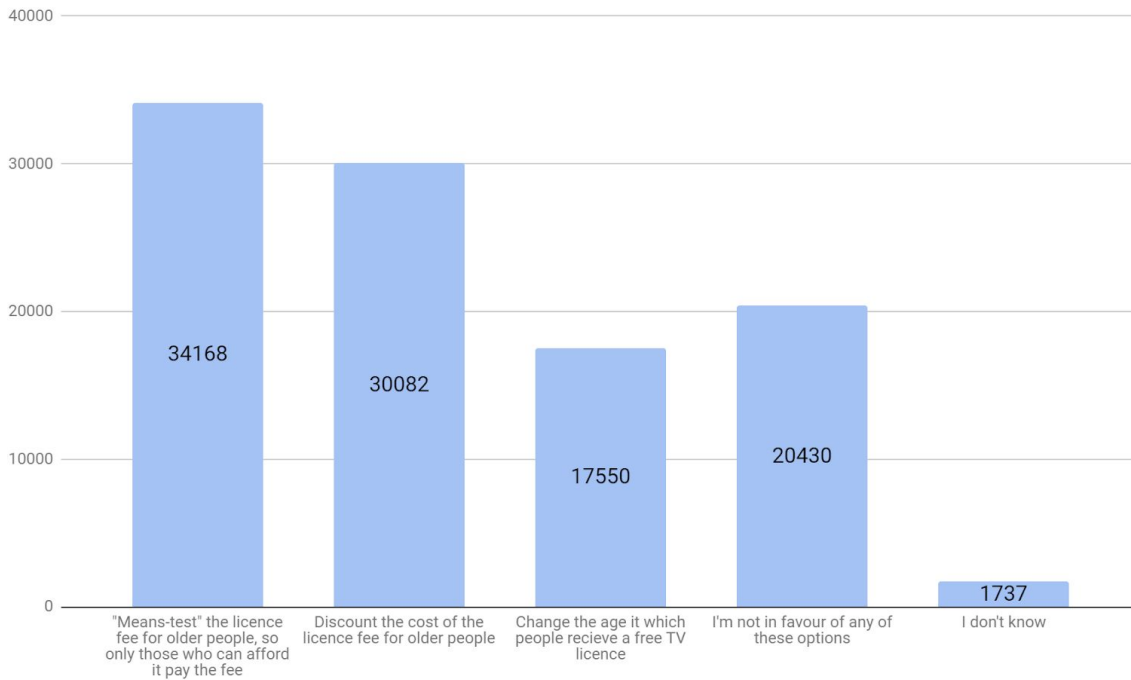
In answer to: 2d. Your view on combinations

We asked members “The BBC doesn’t have to choose just one option. They could make several changes. For example, they could raise the age for free licence fees and means test it.

If the BBC makes more than one change, which do you think they should do?

Here are the options (select as many as you like):

- Discount the cost of the licence fee for older people.
- Change the age at which people receive a free TV licence.
- “Means-test” the licence fee for older people, so only those who can afford it pay the fee.
- I'm not in favour of any of these options
- I don't know”



In answer to: 2e. Your preferred combination

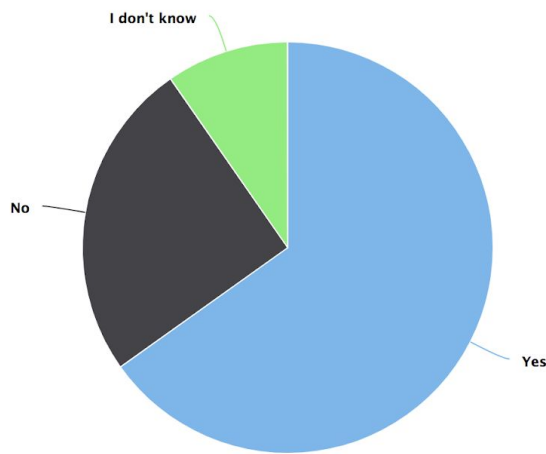
We asked members "What would be your ideal combination of these options?"

The most preferred combinations are as follows, in descending order:"

- Discount and means test: 16% (14,906 respondents)
- Discount and change the age: 11% (10,716 respondents)
- Discount, change the age and means test: 4% (3,721 respondents)
- Change the age and means test: 3% (2,782 respondents)

Additional questions

If it was an option, do you think the government should cover the cost of free licences for people over 75?



Answer	# Respondents	% of respondents
Yes	47100	65
No	18207	25
I don't know	6991	10

If you don't think the BBC should do any of the above, can you share why?

Here's a short sample of responses:

"It's the government's responsibility to fund the over 75 licence fee."

"I think that the BBC is wonderful and that every effort should be made to keep it as it is."

"Free licences should have nothing whatever to do with the way that the BBC is financed. They should be a benefit financed by the government, and not means-tested because so many miss out when benefits are not universal - and even more importantly, much of the money saved by means-testing is wasted on administration."

"The BBC is so important to Britain internally and as a form of 'soft power' that it should be well and fully and proudly funded by the UK government."

"They could start including adverts which will pay for the service."