

The logo features two overlapping speech bubbles. The left bubble is red with the white text 'UK' inside. The right bubble is blue and empty. Below the bubbles, the text 'Public Opinion Monitor' is written in a blue, sans-serif font, and 'Results of Tenth Survey' is written in a black, sans-serif font.

Public Opinion Monitor Results of Tenth Survey

Introduction:

The UK Public Opinion Monitor (UK-POM) is a permanent panel of 6,000 people from across the UK that is maintained by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Sussex in the UK and the University of Guelph in Canada. The aim of the panel is to understand better how people view life in the UK and how their attitudes change over time. This can include aspects of their own life (for example their health, the things they consume and relations with others), and wider society (for example rates of crime, services provided by government and the UK's relations with other countries).

The tenth survey of the UK Public Opinion Monitor was undertaken in October/November 2011, with 1,753 valid responses. The panel is broadly representative of the UK population, with sample weights used to correct for any remaining instances of over or under-representation. The major theme of the survey was on attitudes towards and use of the media in the UK.

A summary of results is provided below.

Use of the media

Respondents to the survey were first asked which forms of media they used. Television and Internet access in the home were used most frequently, by 93 per cent and 86 per cent of respondents, respectively (Figure 1). Weekly newspapers and internet at work were used least frequently.

Use of social networking sites was also surveyed. Facebook was used by almost 55 per cent of respondents, a far greater proportion than other social networking sites such as Twitter, Google+ and Linked In (Figure 2). Around 40 per cent of respondents did not use social networking sites.

Respondents were asked how much time they spend in an average day on use of various types of media (Figure 30). Television was used most frequently, with almost 77 per cent of respondents spending at least one hour per day watching television and only three per cent spending no time. Least time was spent reading a newspaper and reading a book for leisure, with 22 per cent and 25 per cent spending no time, respectively. Less than 10 per cent of respondents spent more than one hour reading a newspaper each day, whilst less than 13 per cent spent more than an hour reading a book for pleasure.

Figure 1. Use of forms of media

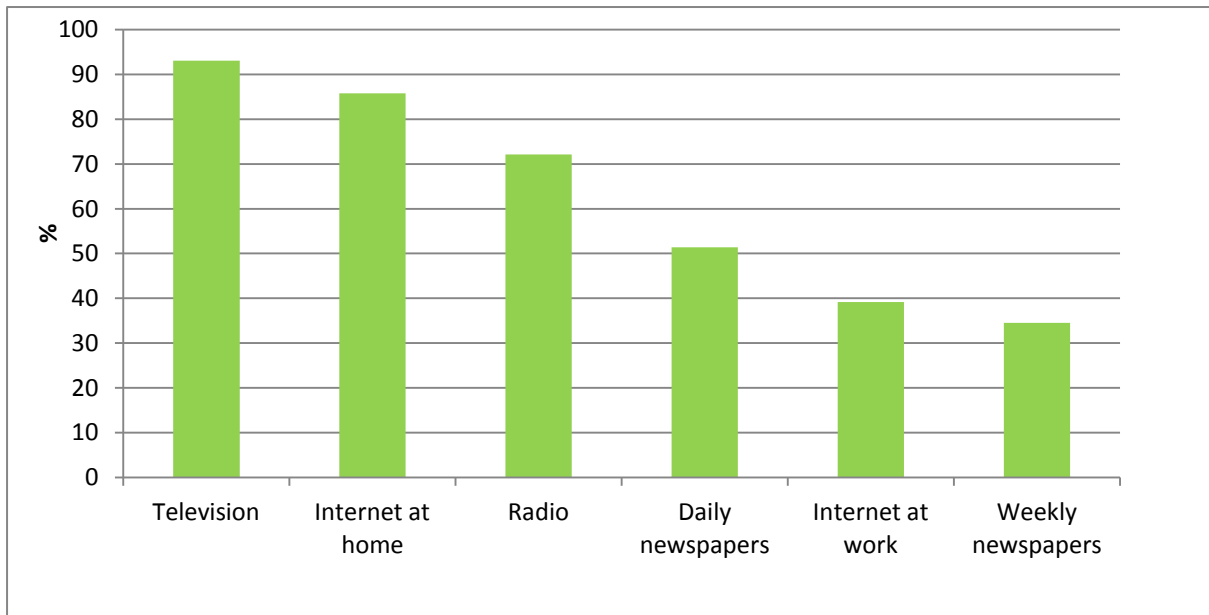
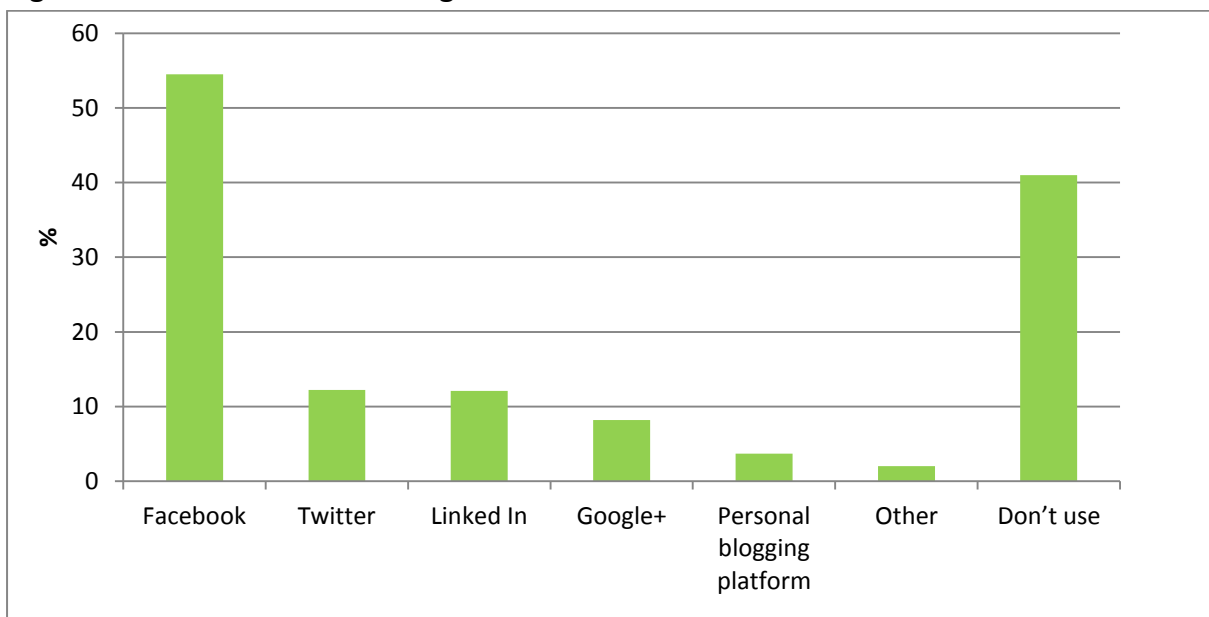


Figure 2. Use of social networking sites



The survey asked specifically about use of the media to access the news. Respondents watched the television news most frequently, with 88 per cent doing this at least three times in a normal week (Figure 4). Newspapers, and especially local newspapers, were used least frequently, although still almost 50 per cent consulted a national newspaper at least three times in a normal week. Almost 63 per cent of respondents browsed the Internet for news at least three times in a normal week.

Figure 3. Average amount of time spent using various forms of media in a normal day

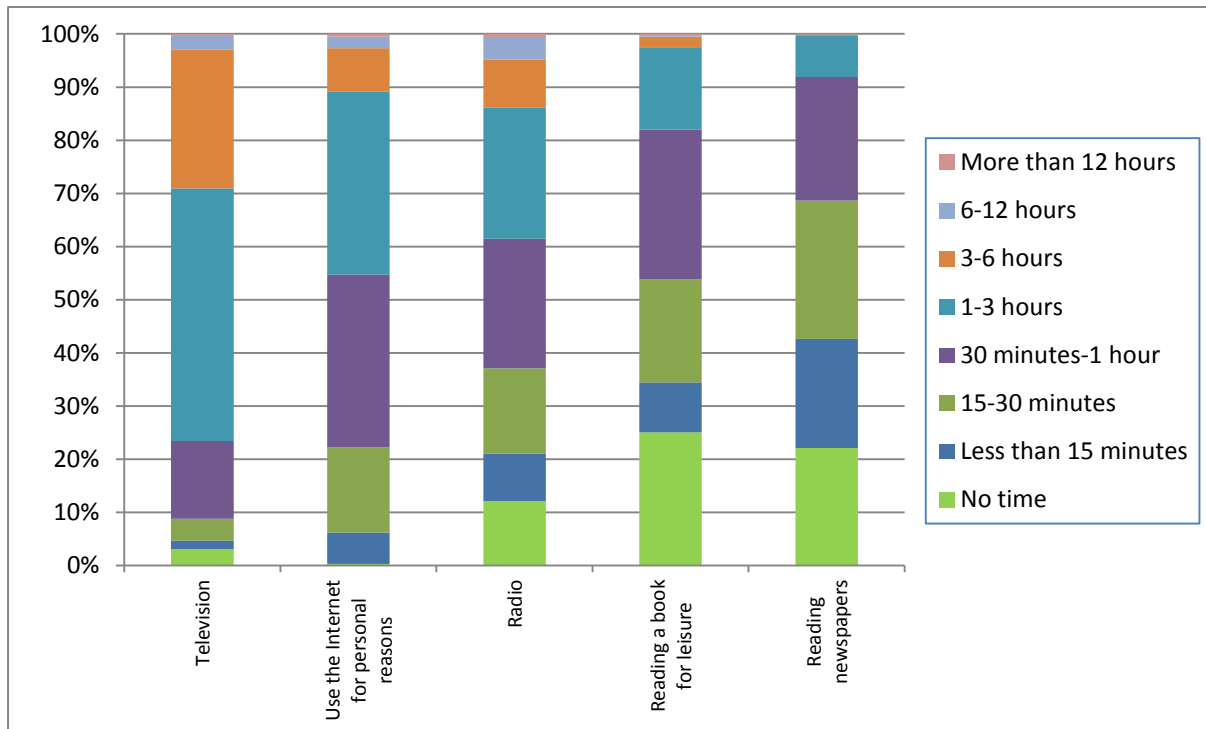
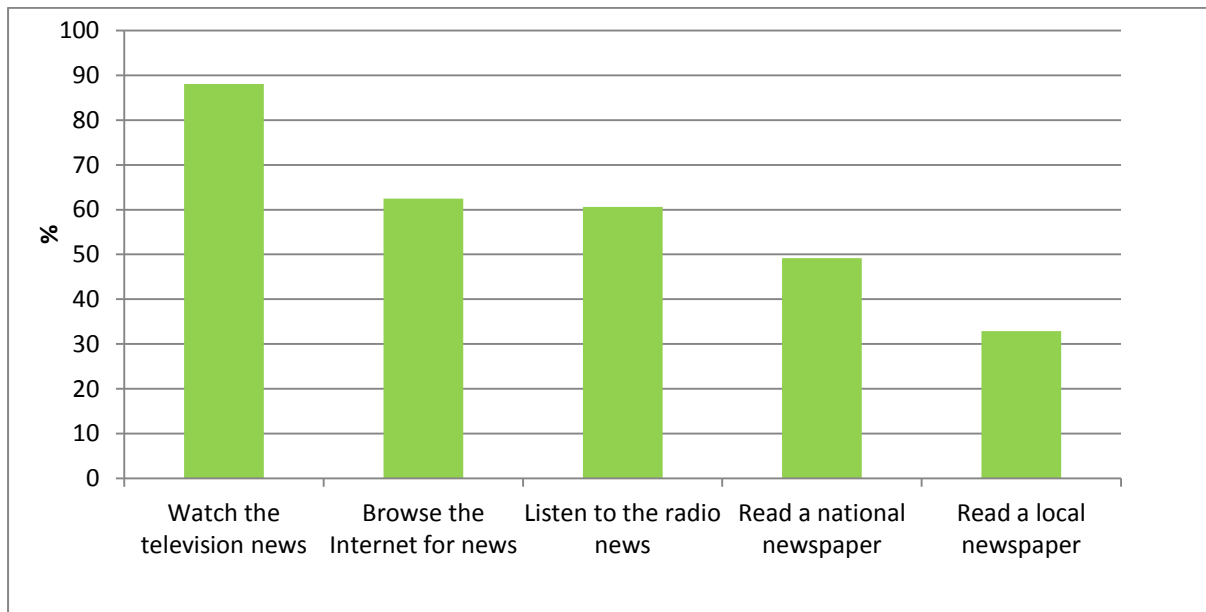
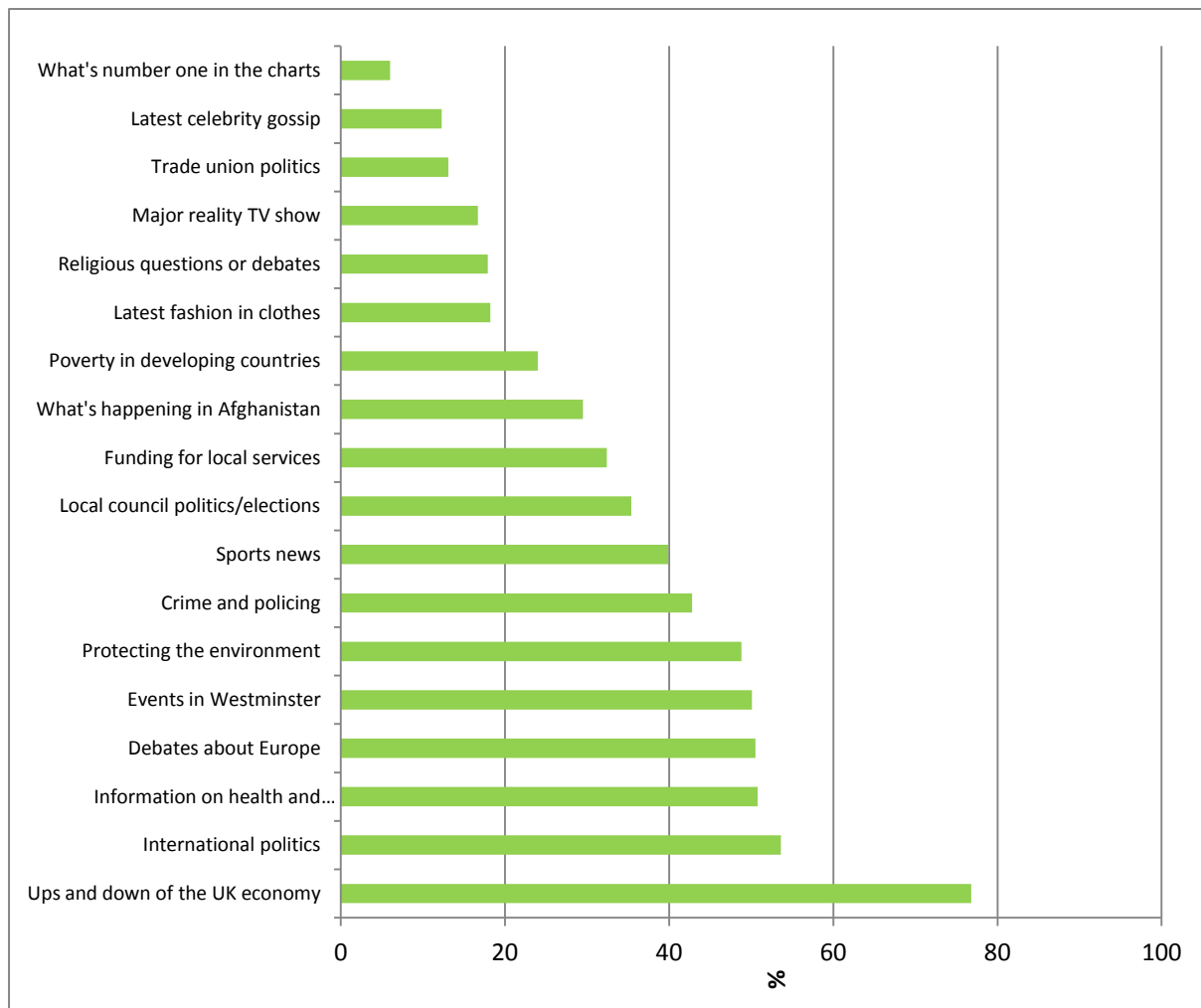


Figure 4. Use of media to access the news at least three times in a normal week



Respondents were asked which issues they generally follow or keep up-to-date with. The greatest proportion (77%) of respondents followed the ‘ups and downs of the UK economy’, followed by international politics (54%) and information of food and nutrition (51%) (Figure 5). The issues that the smallest proportion of respondents followed were ‘what’s number one in the charts’, celebrity gossip and trade union politics, all being followed by less than 15 per cent.

Figure 5. Things follow or keep up to date with



Leisure time and entertainment

Respondents were asked how much time they generally have 'for themselves' in a normal day (Figure 6). Around 19 per cent had less than one hour to themselves on average in a normal day. The greatest proportion (39%), however, had between one to three hours, whilst 22 per cent had four to six hours.

Amongst respondents, the most popular types of entertainment were comedy, documentary and drama (Figure 7), with over 30 per cent of respondents including these in their 'top three'. Least popular were celebrities, romance and religion, with less than five per cent including them in their top three.

News and engagement with the world

Respondents were presented with a range of statements that aimed to capture the engagement of respondents with the world around them (Figure 8). Whilst, around 88 per cent claimed that they generally voted in elections and 68 per cent indicate that they are generally interested in what's going on in politics, 68 per cent also indicated that they did not get involved with political protests. Only a minority of respondents play an active role in voluntary,

political or political organisations and/or are involved in voluntary work. Being involved with their neighbourhood was important for only 40 per cent of respondents.

Figure 6. Average amount of 'time for yourself' in a normal day

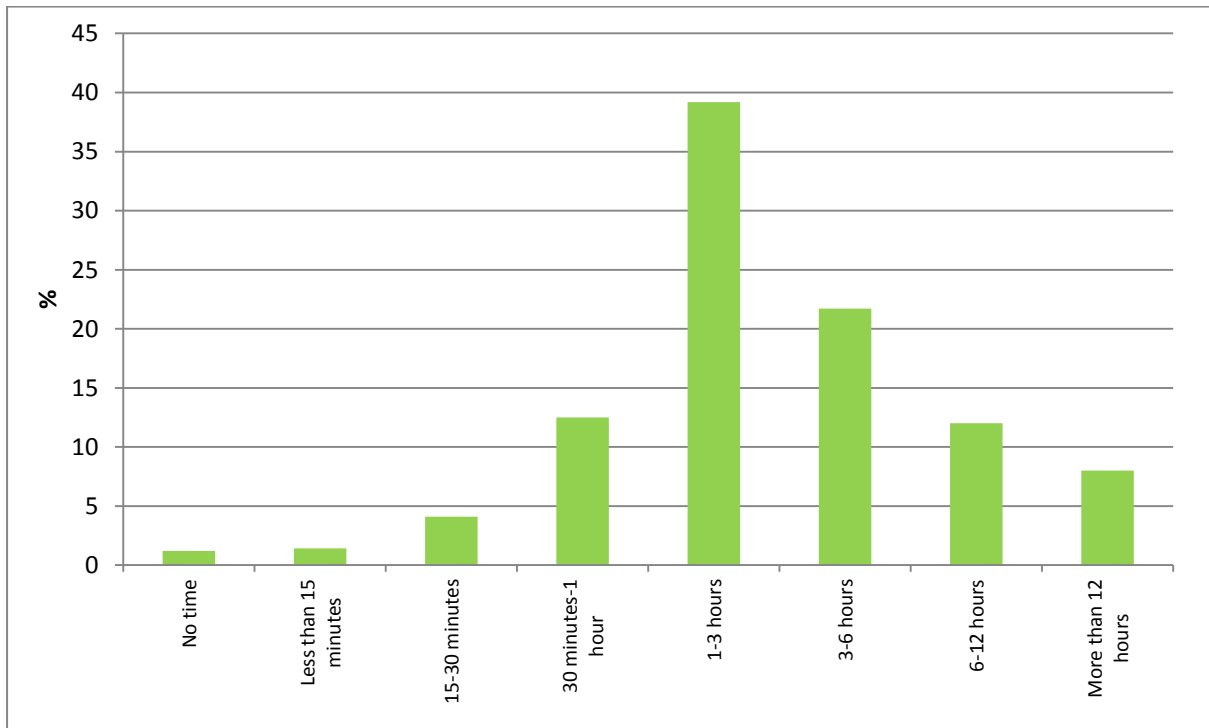


Figure 7. Top three favourite types of entertainment

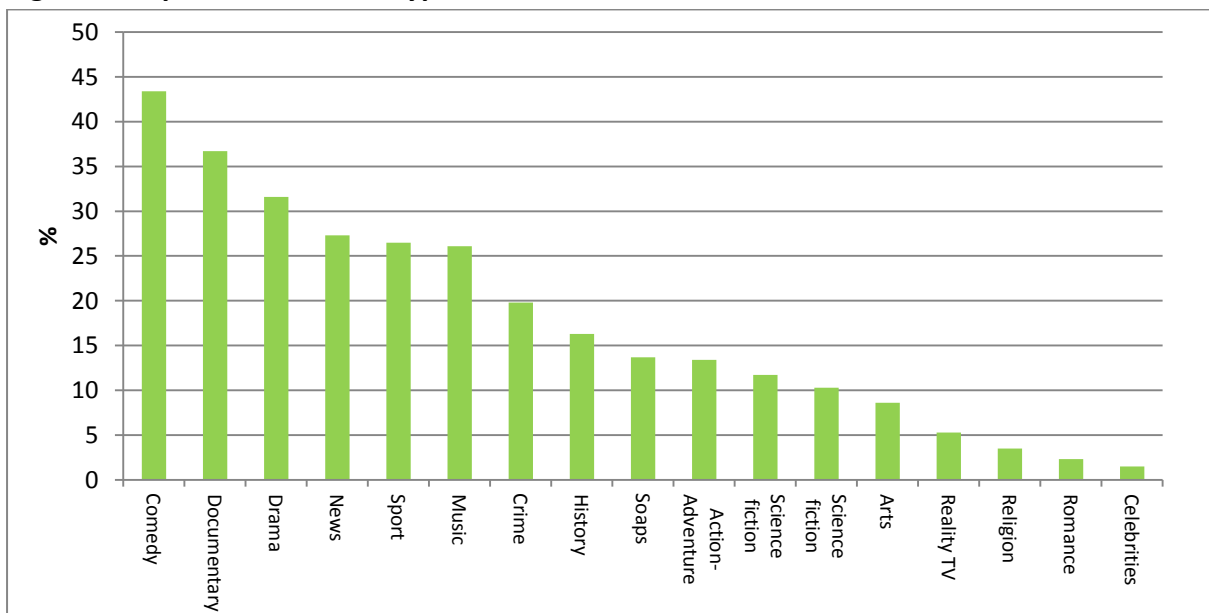
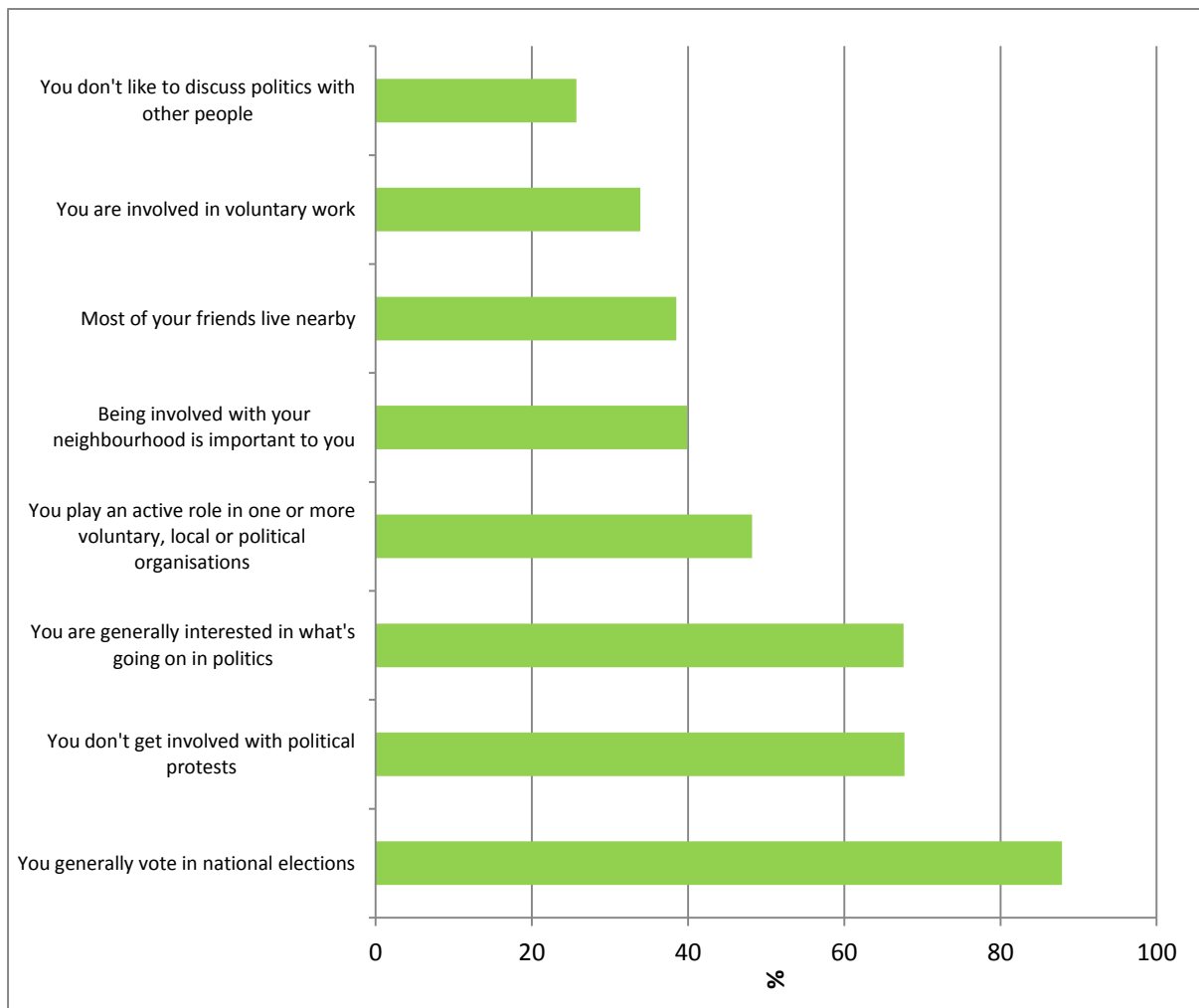


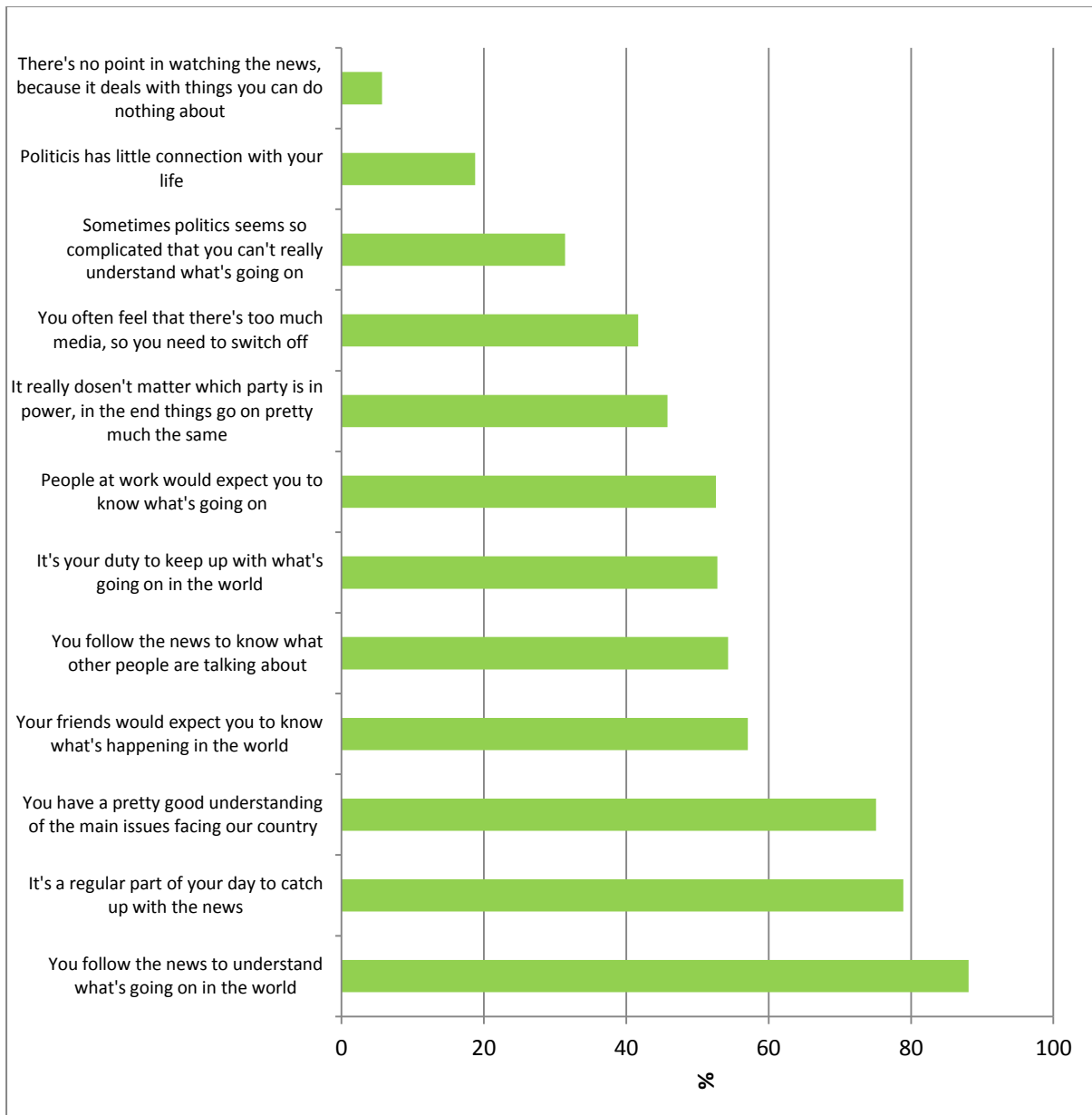
Figure 8. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements on engagement with the world



A range of statements were also presented to respondents in order to assess their propensity to follow what is happening in the world (Figure 9). Evidently, respondents were actively engaged with the news, with 88 per cent following the news to understand what is happening in the world and only six per cent agreeing that that is no point watching the news because it deals with things you can do nothing about. Further, 79 per cent indicated that it was a regular part of their day to catch-up on the news.

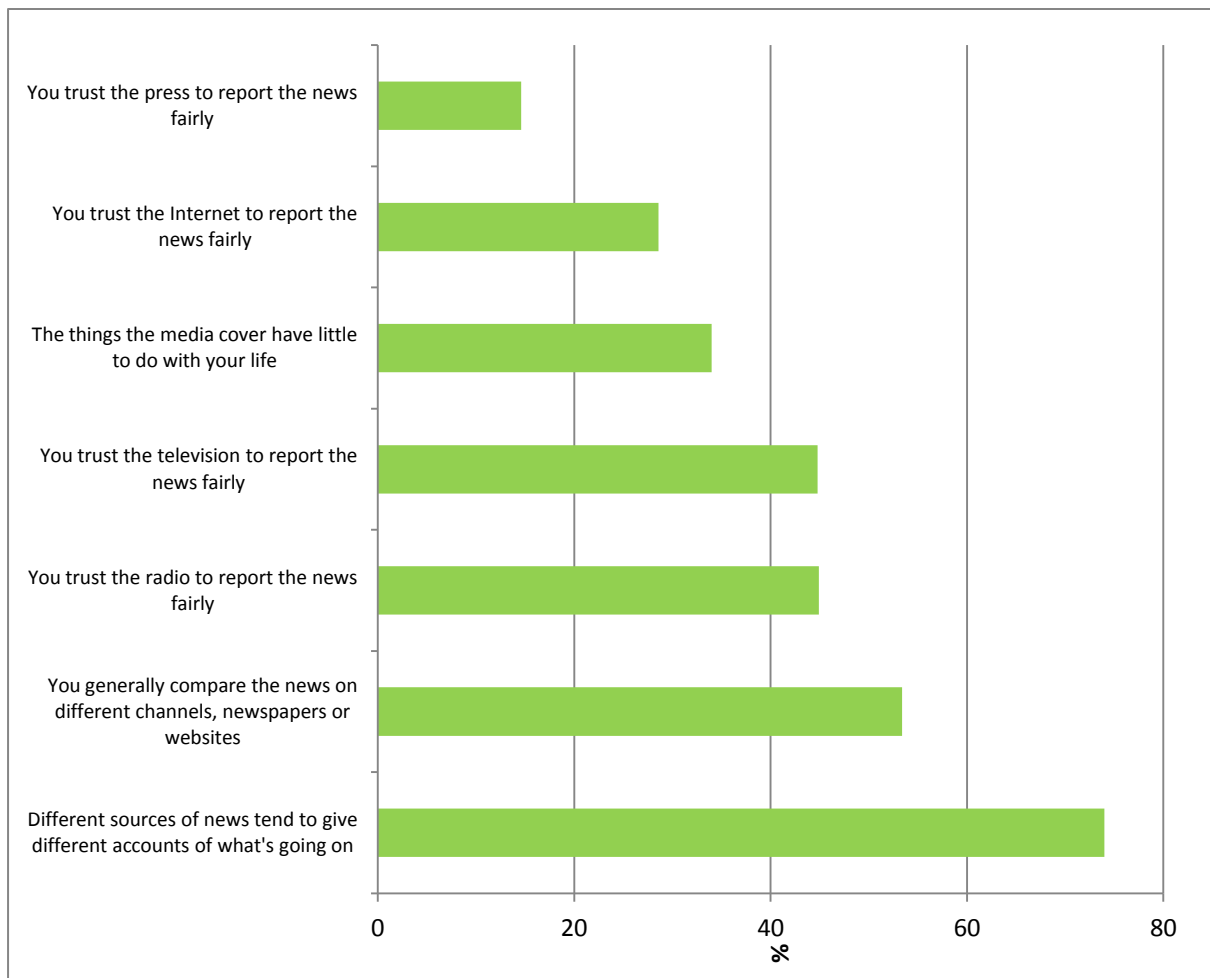
Around 75 per cent of respondents considered themselves to have a good understanding of the main issues facing the country (Figure 9). The majority were of the view that their friends and/or people at work expected them to know what is going on in the world, and followed the news so they know what other people are talking about. Around 53 per cent of respondents considered it to be their duty to keep up with what is going on in the world. Less than 19 per cent were of the view that politics has little connection with their life.

Figure 9. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements on what is happening in the world



Through a range of statements, the attitudes of respondents towards the media were explored (Figure 10). The results suggest there is relatively little trust in the media to report the news fairly and in particular the press. Thus, less than 15 per cent of respondents trusted the press to report the news fairly. There was much more trust in the television and radio, although even for these less than 45 per cent considered them to report the news fairly. This perspective on the press is reflected in the fact that 74 per cent of respondents considered different sources of news to give different accounts of what is happening, and as a result 53 per cent compared the news on different channels, newspapers or websites.

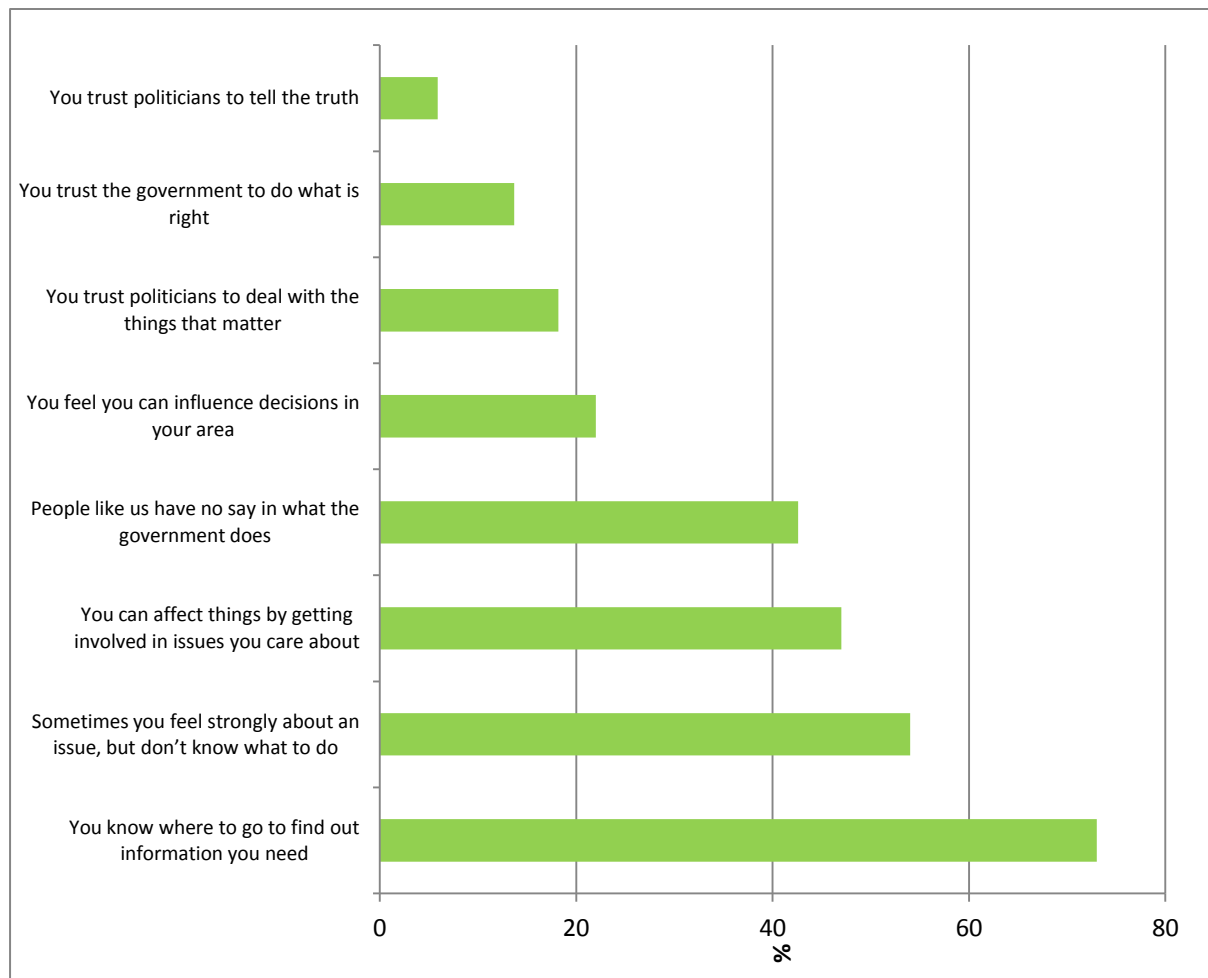
Figure 10. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements on the media



In a similar manner to above, the attitudes of respondents towards politics in the UK were explored (Figure 11). Evidently, there was a very low level of trust in politicians with only six per cent considering they could trust politicians to tell the truth. Less than 20 per cent of respondents trusted the government and politicians to do what is right or to deal with the things that matter.

The results also suggest that a significant proportion of respondents to the survey felt relatively powerless to affect change (Figure 11). Thus, 43 per cent agreed that people like themselves have no say in what the government does. Further, only 47 per cent were of the view that you can affect things by getting involved in issues you care about. The sense of powerlessness was even more acute in the case of more local issues, with only 22 per cent of respondents feeling that they could influence decisions in their area.

Figure 11. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements on politics



Gathering information and acting on important issues

Survey respondents were asked to name a public issue that had been of particular importance to them over the last three months, whether or not this issue had been reported in the media or not. A wide range of issues were reported, with dominant themes being the state of the UK and/or global economy, policy changes in the UK that had a direct impact on respondents and global political issues. Across these issues, around 45 per cent were considered by respondents to be national, 47 per cent to be international and only eight per cent local.

Respondents were asked to indicate the information sources they had used on the issue they had highlighted (Figure 12). Overwhelmingly, TV news was the most frequently cited source (82%) followed by the Internet, national newspapers and the radio. Church, university and magazines were used least frequently. Interestingly, only around 13 per cent of respondents had used social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Of the sources that had been used, TV news and the Internet were considered to have been most useful in providing relevant information (Figure 13). Social media was considered to have been most useful by only one per cent of respondents.

Figure 12. Sources used to obtain information on issue of personal importance

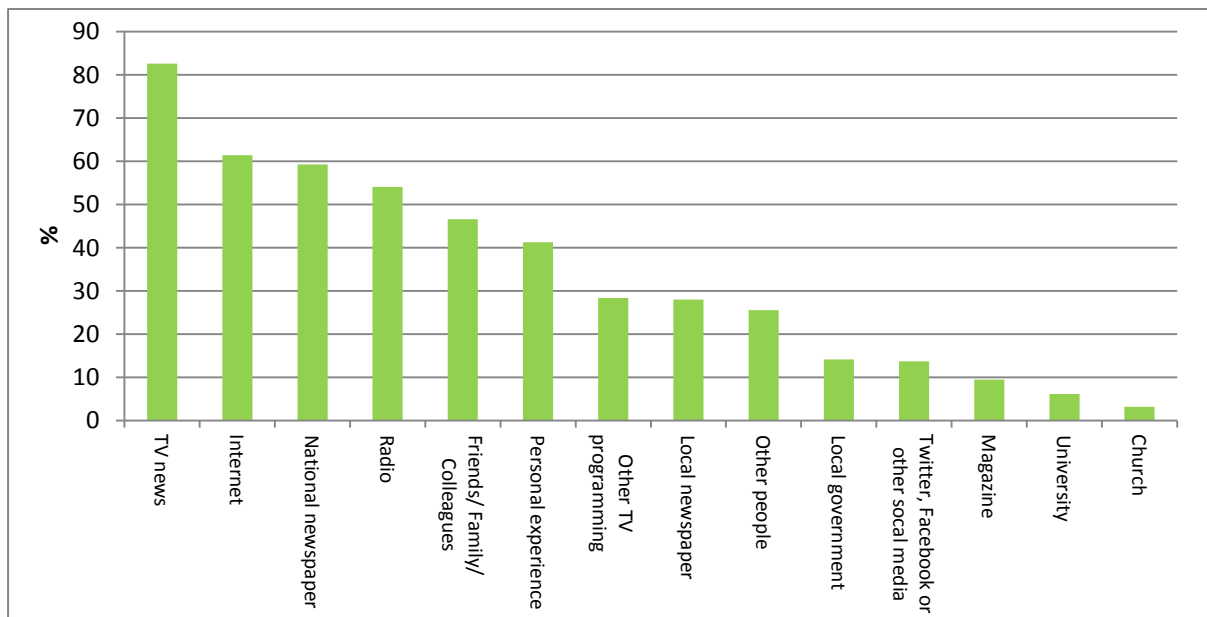
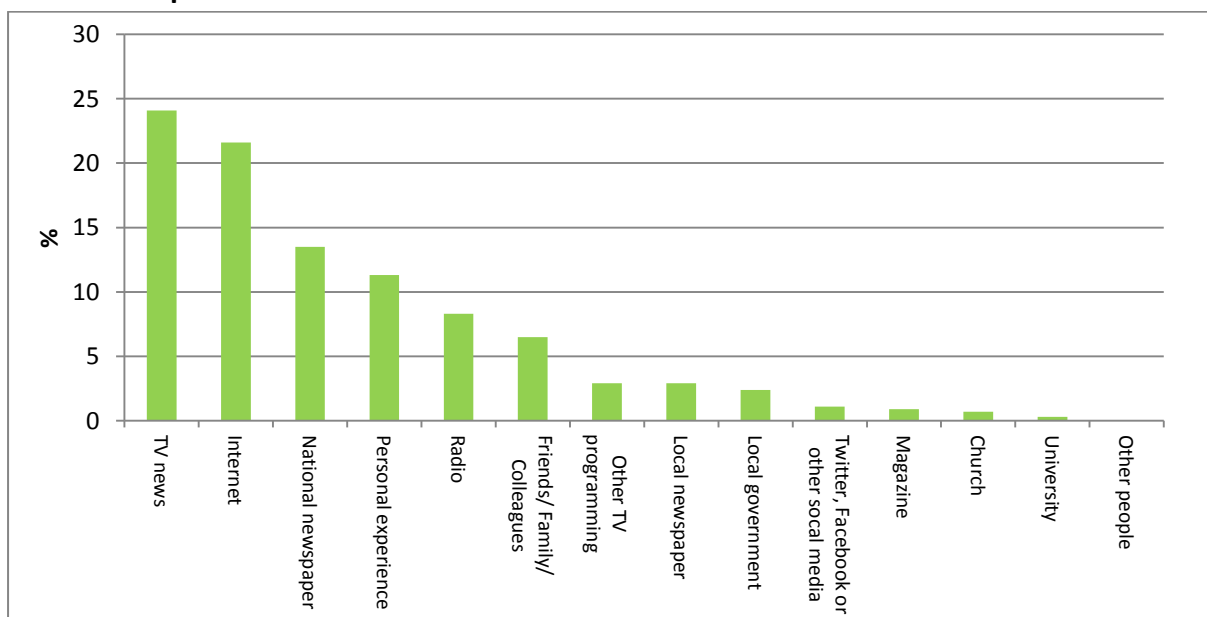


Figure 13. Sources most useful in providing relevant information on issue of personal importance



When asked about media coverage of the issue they had highlighted, 51 per cent were satisfied and only 22 per cent dissatisfied (Figure 14). Around 28 per cent indicated that they were ambivalent about media coverage on the issue.

Finally, respondents were asked what actions they had taken in response to the issues they had highlighted. The majority of respondents had discussed the issue with friend, family and/or colleagues (Figure 15). Almost half had undertaken research on the issue. Around 20 per cent of respondents had contacted their MP, councillor or the like, whilst 15 per cent had posted content on a social media site. Very few respondents had taken direct political action, such as joining a strike or a political party.

Figure 14. Satisfaction with media coverage on issue of personal importance

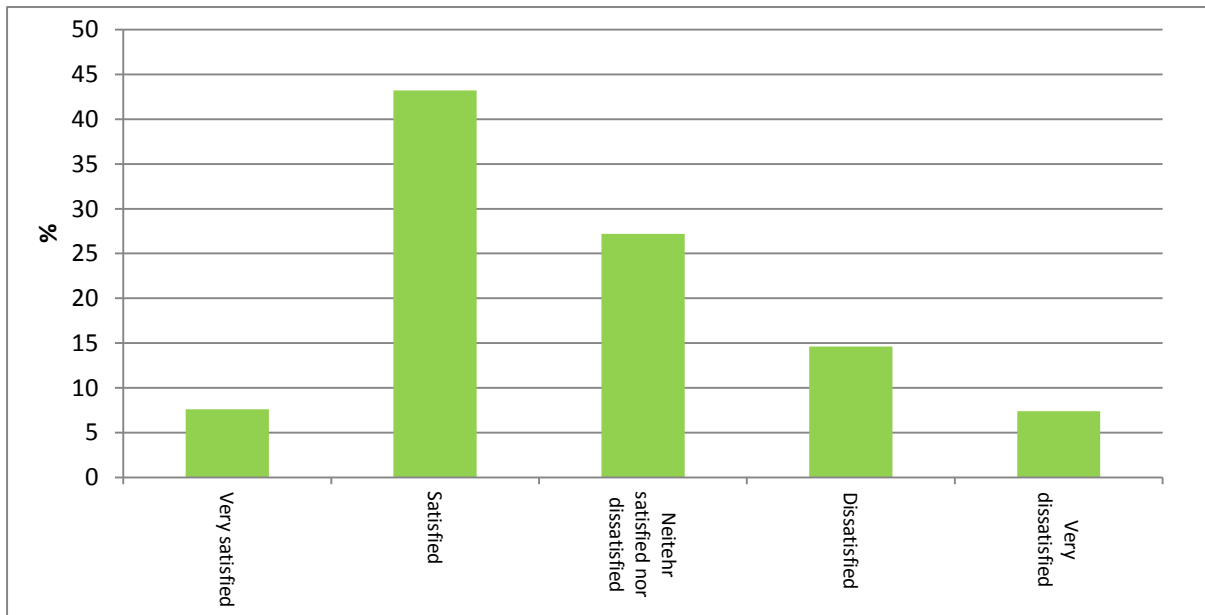
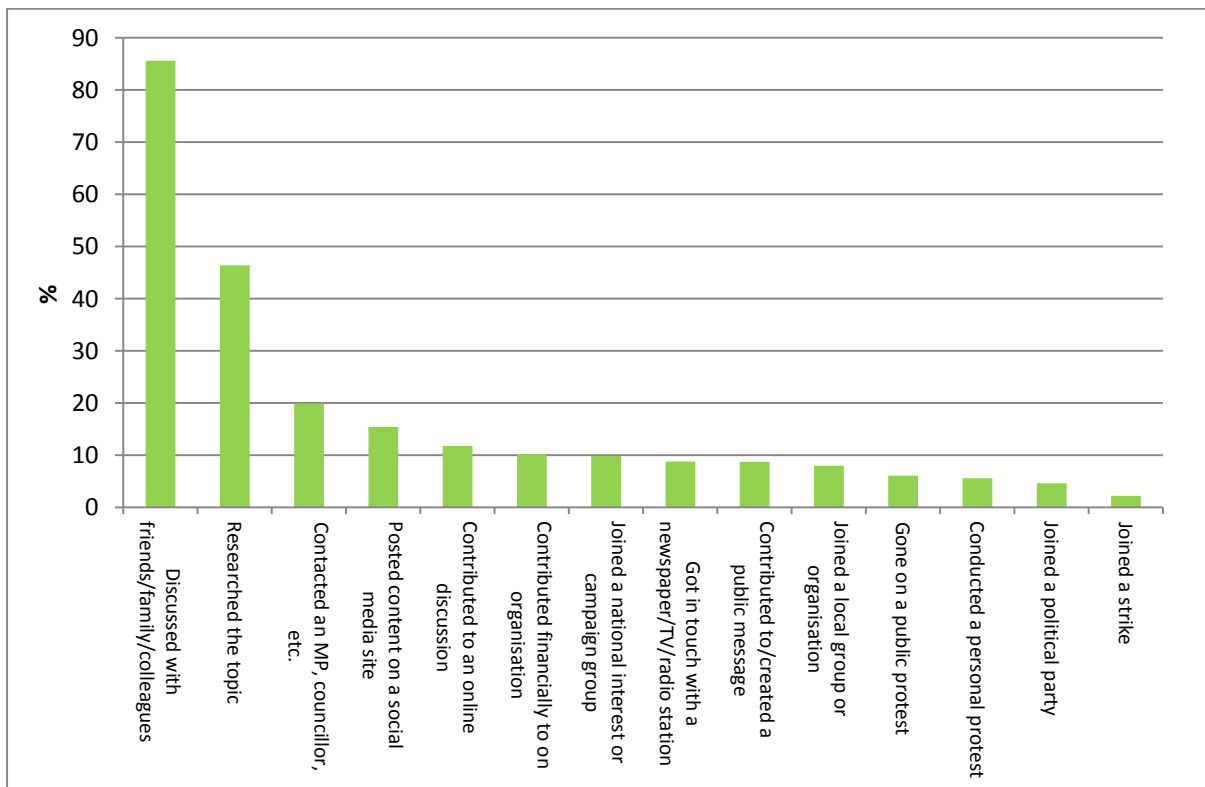


Figure 15. Satisfaction with media coverage on issue of personal importance



Further information

For more information on the UK Public Opinion Monitor and/or the results of earlier surveys, please do not hesitate to contact Spencer Henson (s.henson@ids.ac.uk) or Johanna Lindstrom (j.lindstrom@ids.ac.uk). Alternatively look at our website (www.ukpublicmonitor.org).