



## Public Opinion Monitor Results of Twelfth 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 12th survey of the UK Public Opinion Monitor was undertaken in April 2012 with 2,842 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 famous people, celebrities and their work in the public domain.

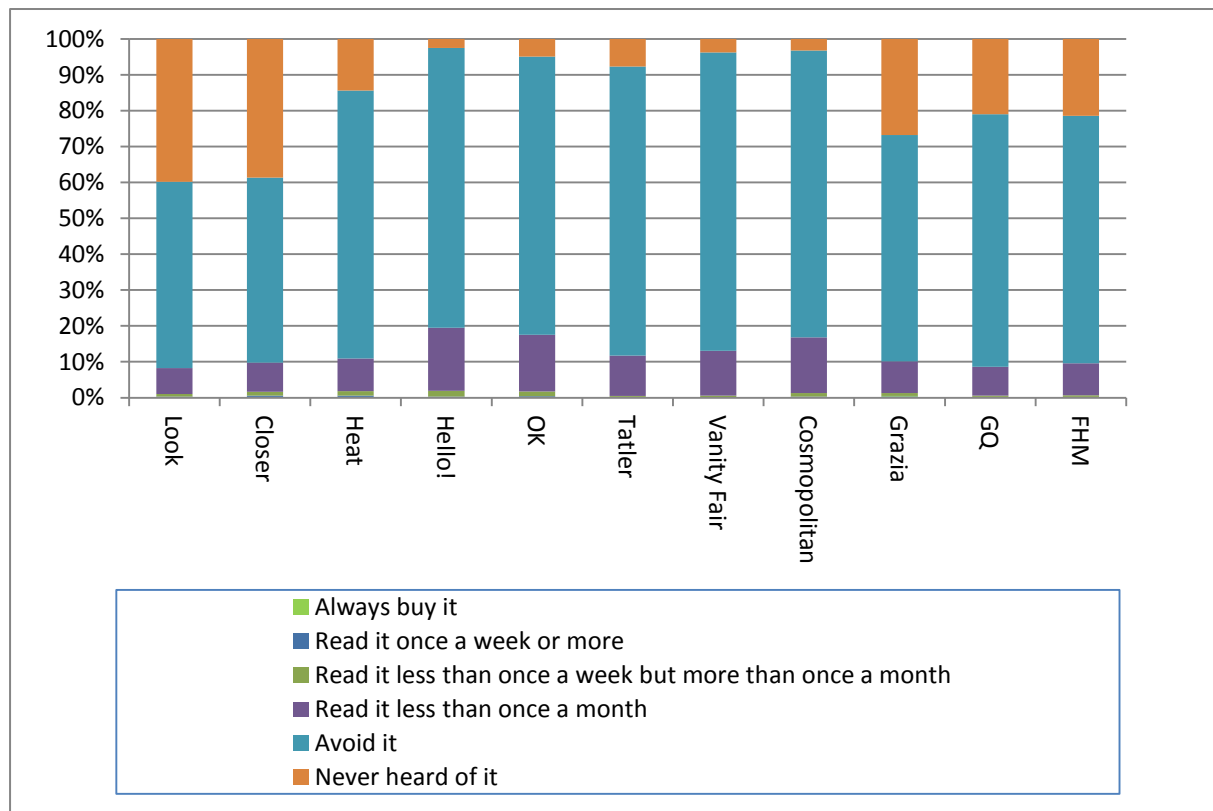
A summary of results is provided below.

### **Engagement with news about celebrities**

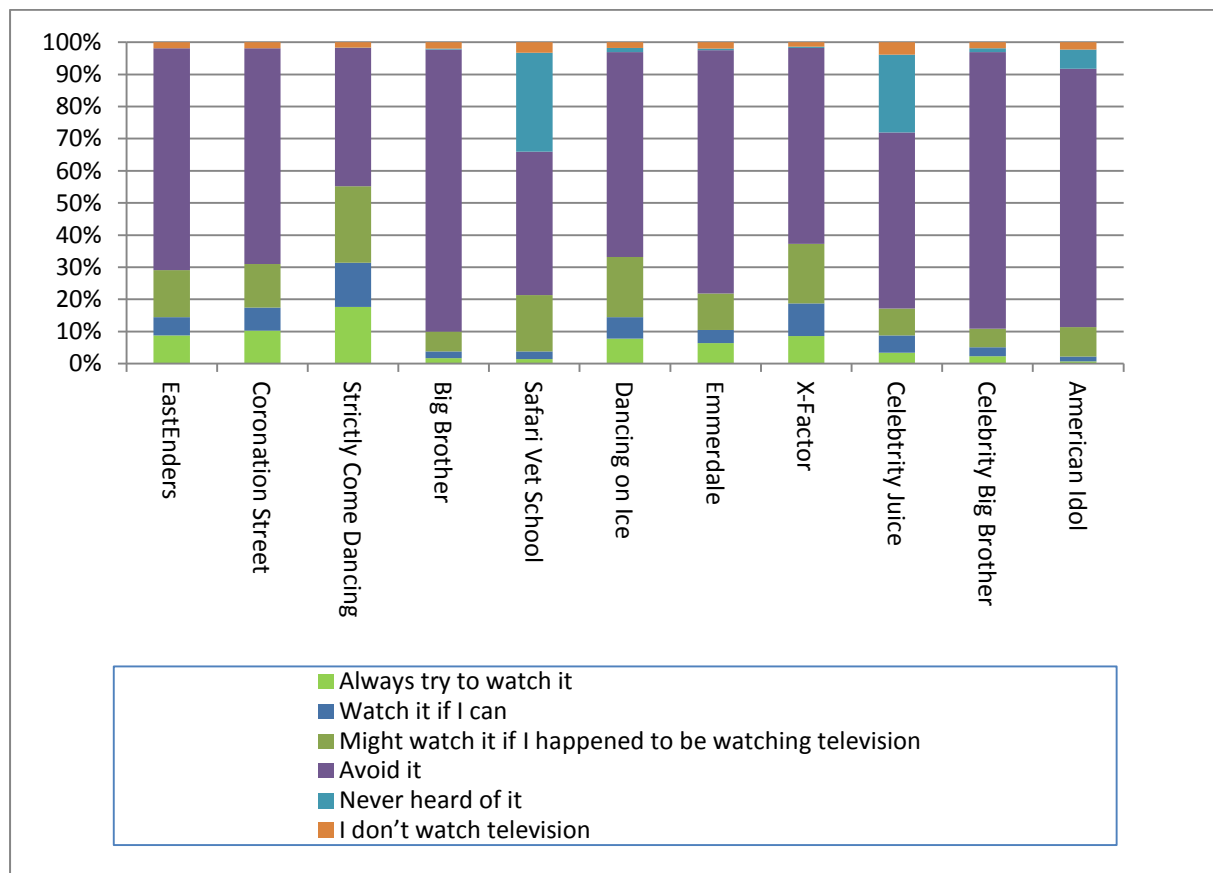
As a starting point the survey enquired about the extent to which respondents read magazines that typically have a significant content of news about celebrities, and watched television programmes featuring popular celebrities. Overall, respondents had very limited engagement with such magazines (Figure 1) with at least 50 per cent indicating that they tried to avoid each of the titles presented. Even with the most popular titles, Hello, OK and Cosmopolitan, less than 20 per cent of respondents indicate that they read the magazine more than once per month.

There was evidently greater engagement amongst respondents with television programmes featuring popular celebrities (Figure 2), notably Strictly Come Dancing. Further, very few respondents indicated that they had not heard of the programmes that were presented, suggesting at least widespread awareness of these television programmes. At the same time, however, a significant proportion of respondents, in many cases greater than 50 per cent, indicated that they tried to avoid these programmes.

**Figure 1. Engagement with selected magazines in their hard copy or online format**

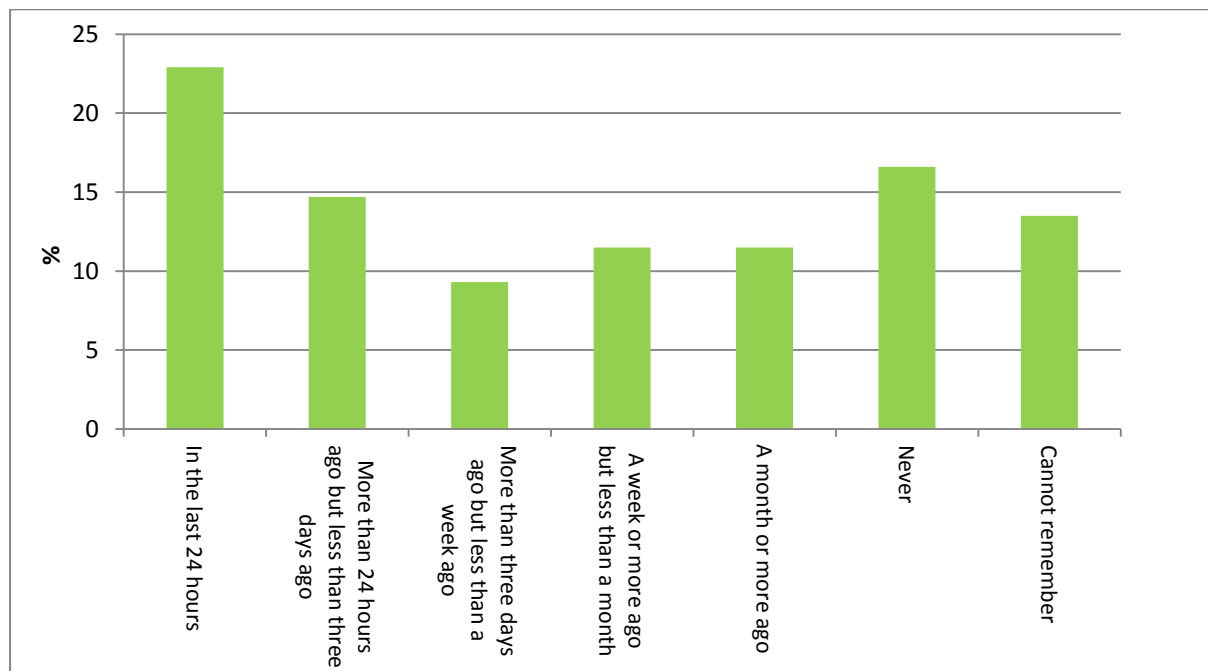


**Figure 2. Viewing of selected television programmes screened in the last year**



Whilst these suggest that most respondents to the survey had limited active engagement with the media in terms of reading magazines known for celebrity news and/or watching television programmes featuring celebrities, many had still looked at news about celebrities in the media. Thus, 23 per cent had looked at news about celebrities in the last 24 hours, whilst a further 22 per cent has done so in the last week (Figure 3). Only 17 per cent claimed they had never looked at news about celebrities.

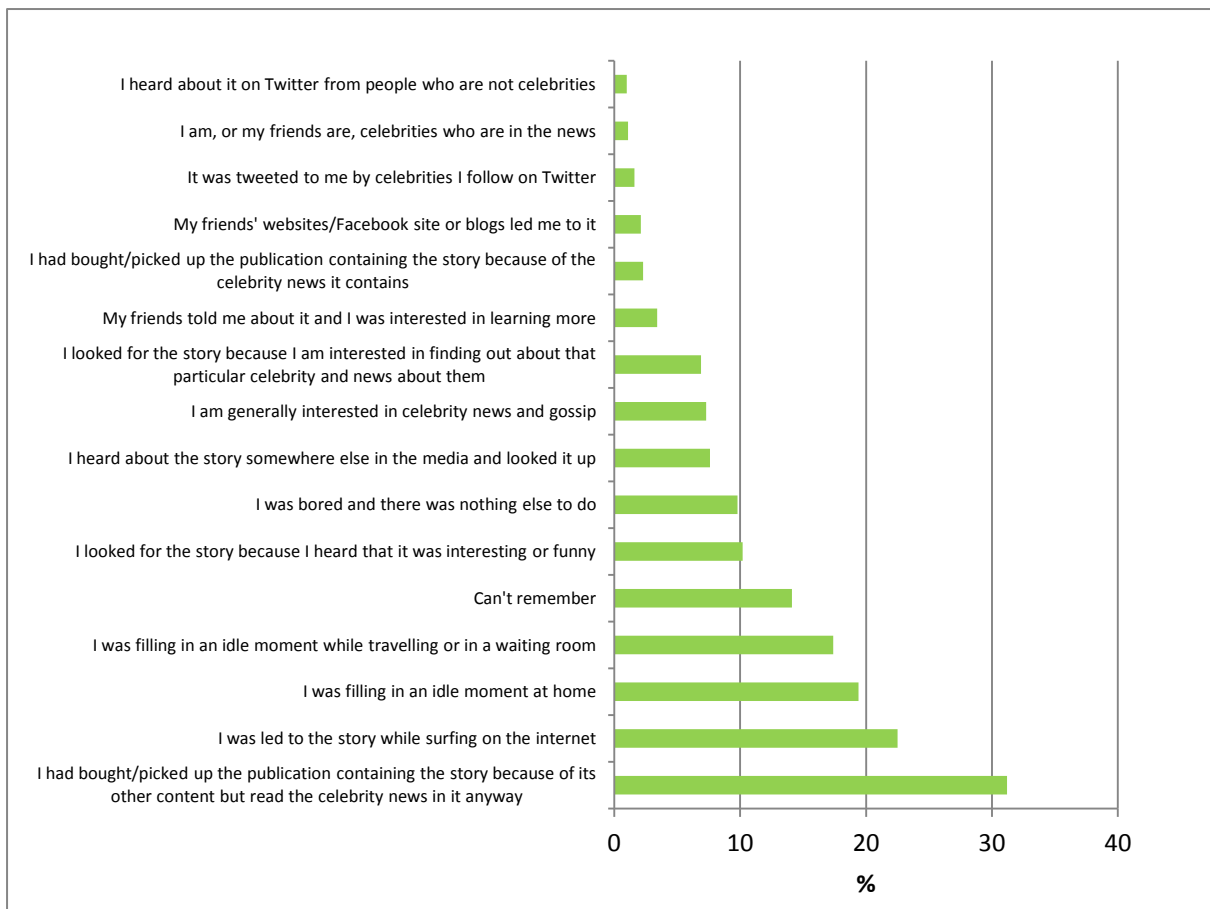
**Figure 3. Occasion last looked at news about celebrities in any media**



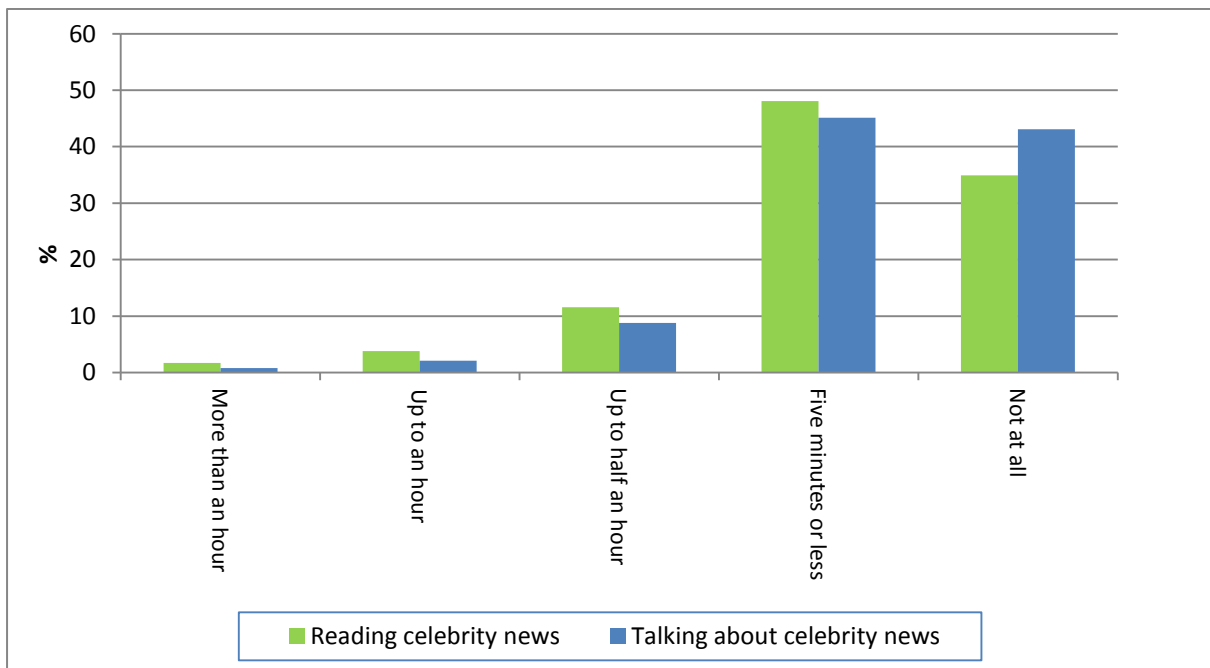
Respondents were asked why they had read particular stories about celebrities. Over 30 per cent indicated that they had bought or picked up a publication because of other content but had read the celebrity news anyway (Figure 4). This gives further credence to the fact that many respondents appeared not to seek out celebrity news, but were exposed to and attended to it anyway, through their more general use of the media. Indeed, a further 41 per cent of respondents indicated that they had recently read news about celebrities having been led to the story whilst either surfing the internet or spending idle time at home.

Whilst a significant proportion of respondents seemed to pay at least some attention to celebrity news, this was evidently not a major preoccupation with most. Only 17 per cent indicated that they spent up to half an hour or more per week reading news about celebrities (Figure 5). Indeed, 48 per cent reported spending only five minutes or less per week reading news about celebrities, whilst 35 per cent claimed to spend no time at all. Even amongst respondents who spent relatively large amounts of time reading news about celebrities, little time was spent talking about this news with others. Thus only, 11 per cent reported spending half an hour or so or more per week talking about celebrity news.

**Figure 4. Reason read particular stories about celebrities**



**Figure 5. Time spent reading and talking about celebrity news every week**



Respondents who reported spending some time reading celebrity news were asked about their behaviour more generally in talking about news with others. Approximately, 72 per cent

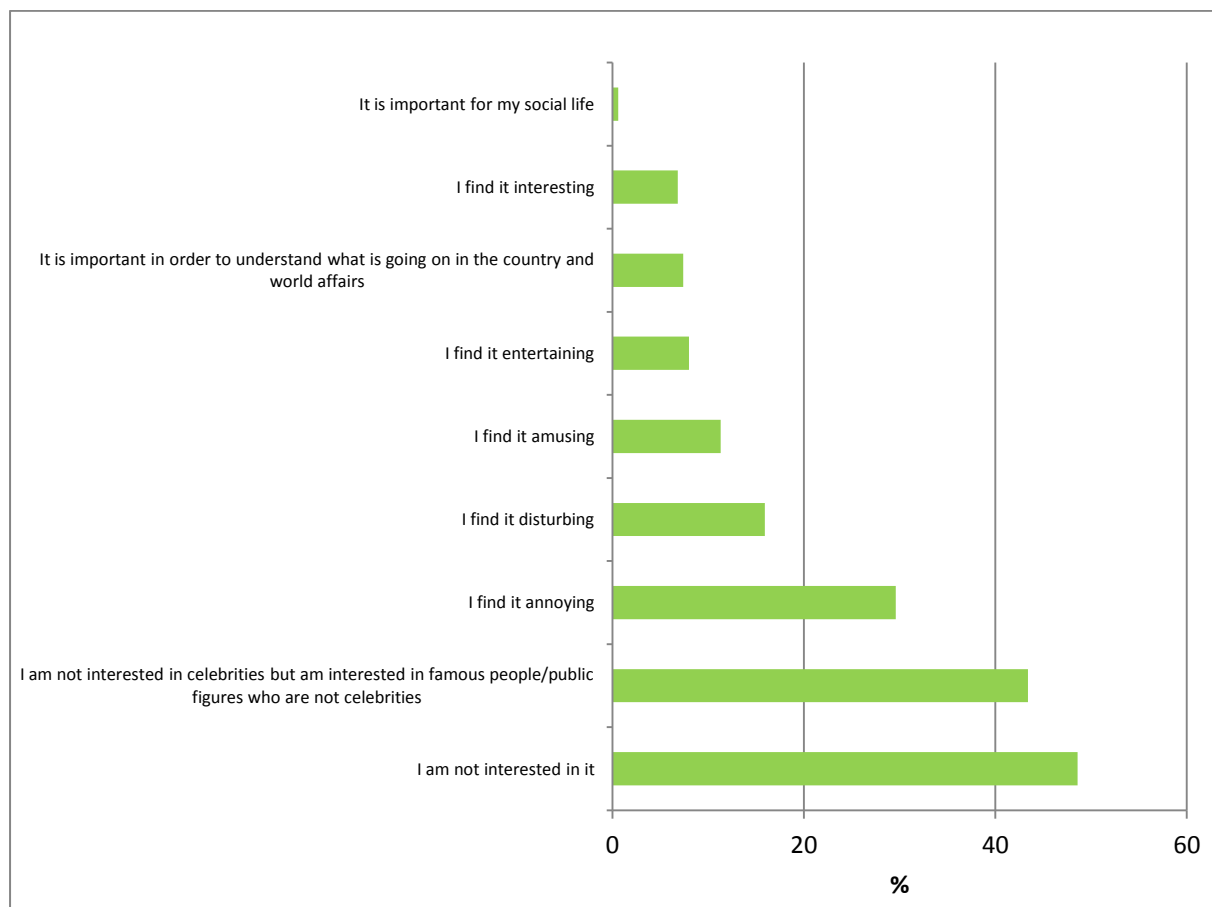
reported talking about news in general with others, but not news about celebrities. The remaining 28 per cent claimed not to talk about any news with others.

As well as the print and television media, people are exposed to news about celebrities through various forms of social media. Just over 26 per cent of respondents used Twitter, although less than seven per cent followed celebrities on Twitter. A much greater proportion (61%) of respondents used Facebook, Google+ or some other form of social media, although only five per cent reported following celebrities in this way.

### Attitudes towards news about celebrities

Respondents were asked about their general attitudes towards news coverage of celebrities. The results suggest a distinction in the interest in famous people who are or are not considered celebrities. Thus, whilst 49 per cent indicated no interest in news relating to celebrities (Figure 6), 43 per cent expressed an interest in news about famous people or public figures who are not celebrities. Around 30 per cent considered news about celebrities not to be interesting, and 16 per cent found it annoying. Only seven per cent of respondents indicated that they find news about celebrities interesting.

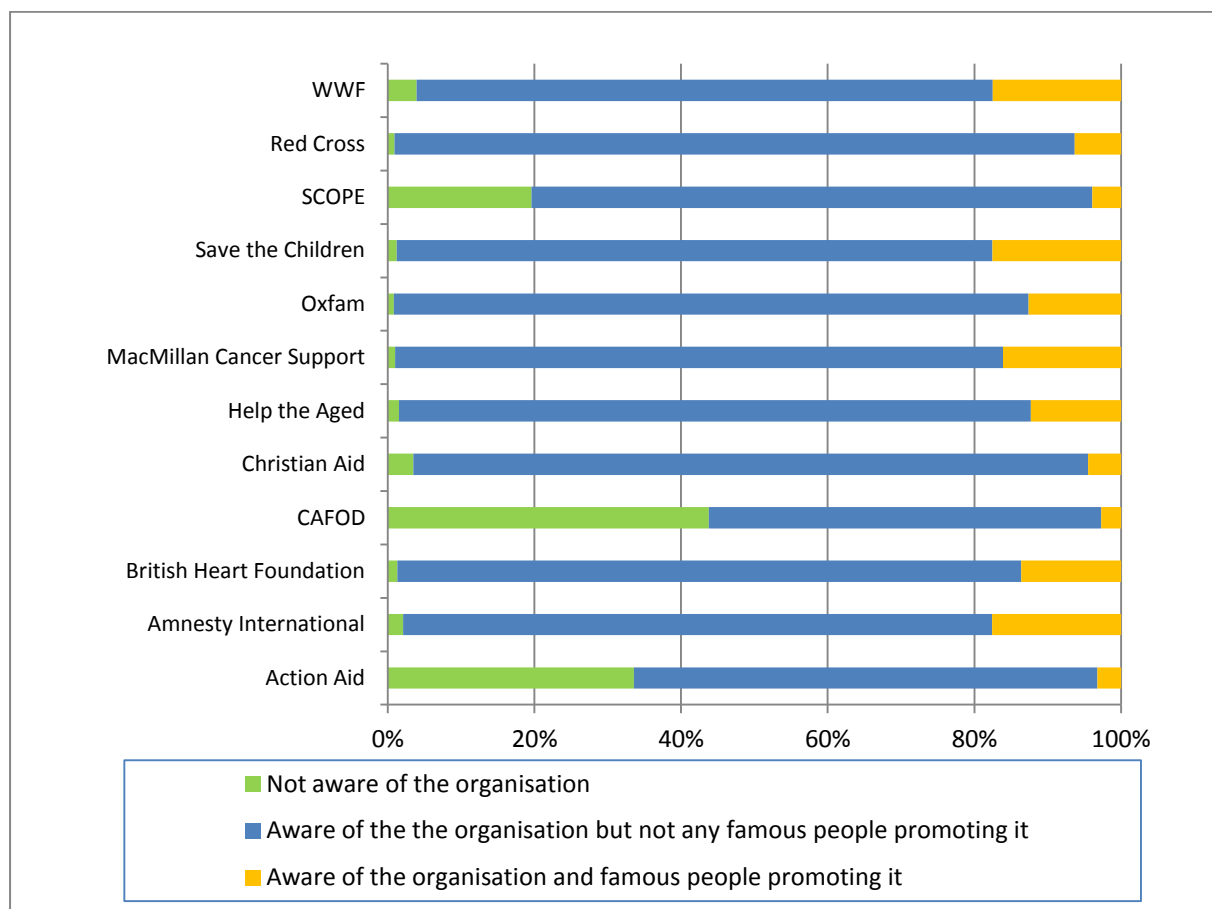
**Figure 6. General attitudes to news coverage of celebrities**



## Celebrities and charitable causes

The remainder of the survey focused on celebrities and the promotion of charitable causes. Respondents were presented with a number of organisations and charities, some of which predominantly work in the UK and some of which have an international focus. Overall, there was a high level of awareness of these organisations, although there were appreciably lower levels of awareness for some, notably CAFOD, SCOPE and Action Aid (Figure 7). Relatively few respondents, however, were aware of any celebrities in relation to these charities and organisations. Thus, even in the case of Amnesty International, Save the Children and WWF with the highest level of association with famous people, less than 20 per cent of respondents were able to make such a link.

**Figure 7. Awareness of celebrities in relation to selected charities and organisations**

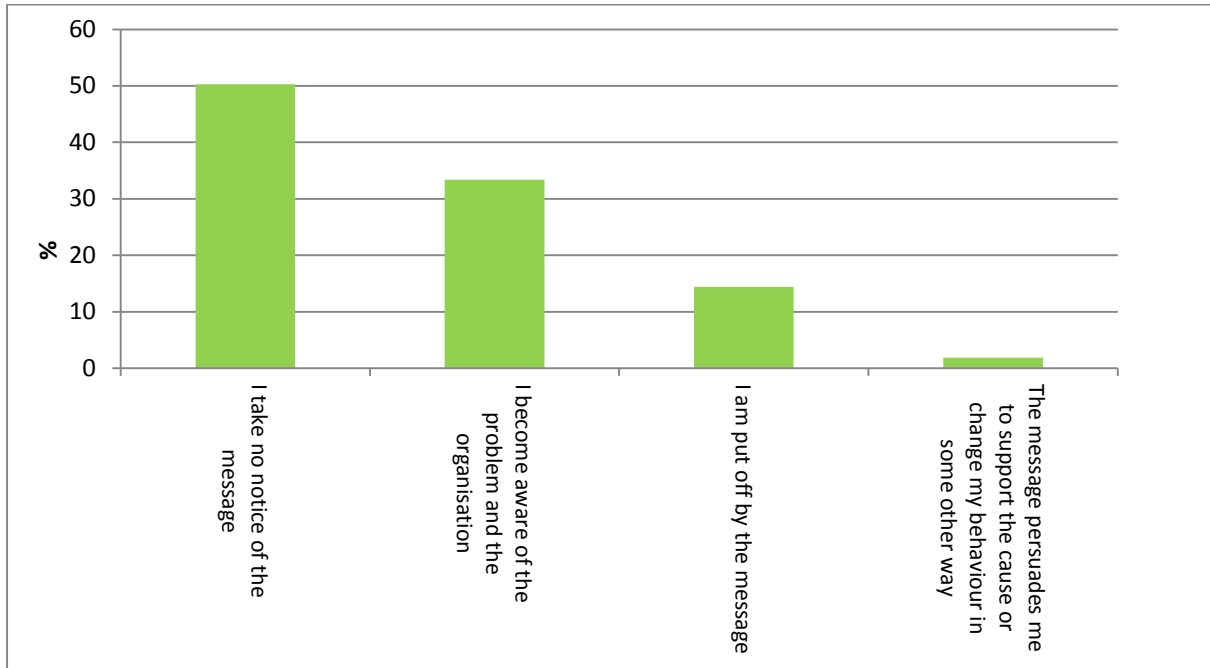


When asked about their reaction when celebrities promote charities and organisations such as those in Figure 7, around 50 per cent of respondents indicated that they take no notice of the message (Figure 8). A further 14 per cent indicated, more extremely, that they are put off the message. Conversely, 33 per cent indicated that they become more aware of the problem and/or charity or organisation when it is promoted by a celebrity.

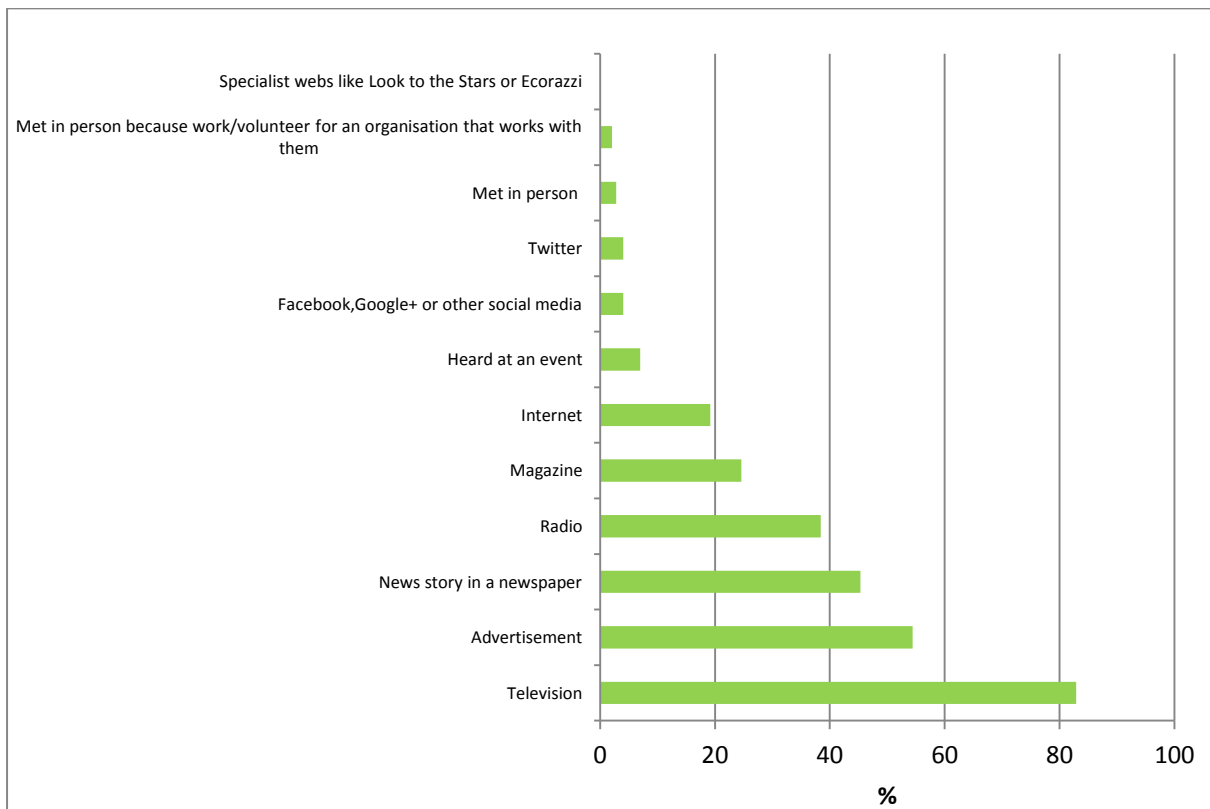
The predominant way in which respondents had encountered messages from celebrities for charities and organisations was through television (Figure 9), and to a lesser extent

advertisements and news stories in newspapers. Very few respondents had encountered such messages through the internet, and especially through twitter, Facebook, Google+ or other forms of social media.

**Figure 8. Reaction when celebrities promote charities and organisations**



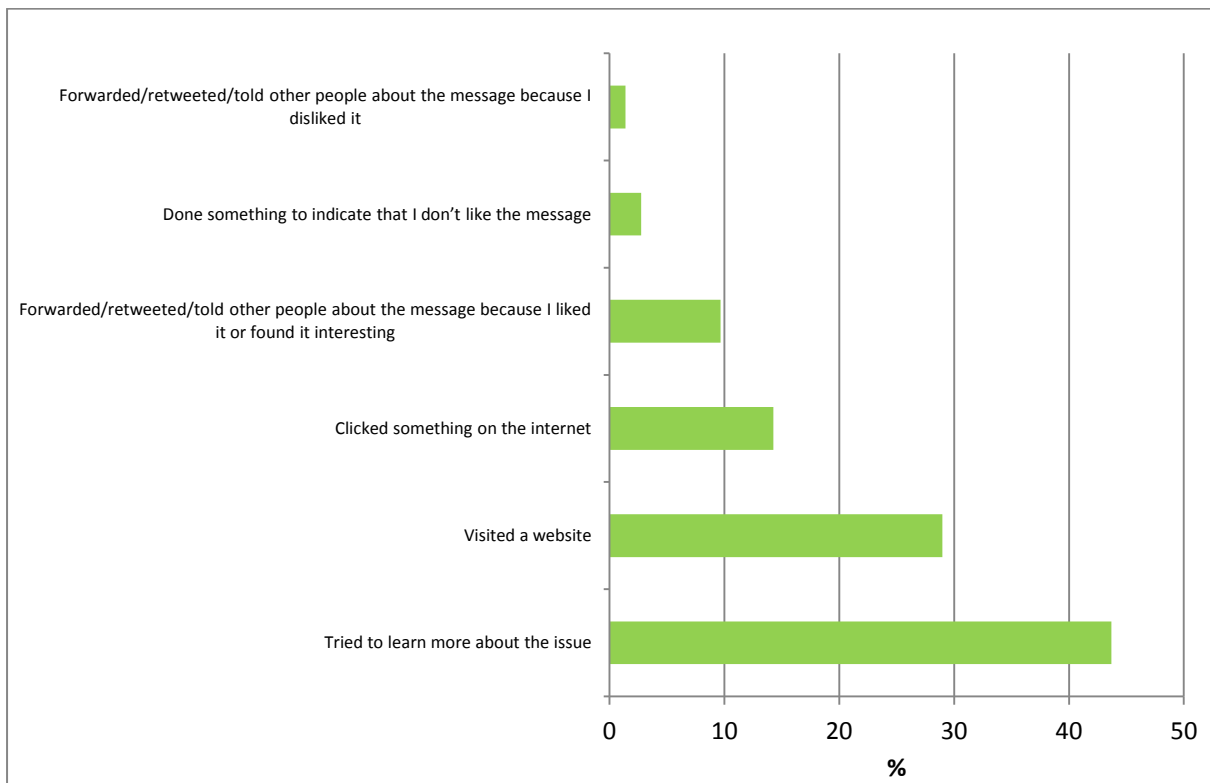
**Figure 9. Forms in which encountered famous people’s messages for good causes**



The survey results suggest that respondents see their own response to campaigns for charities and organisations featuring celebrities as somewhat different to the response by the population as a whole. Thus, only 11 per cent indicated that they pay more attention to campaigns fronted by celebrities. At the same time, 55 per cent felt that others pay more attention to such campaigns than they do themselves. This, perhaps, suggests a certain degree of lack of recognition, or even denial, of the level of attention given to messages for good causes by celebrities.

The vast majority, almost 79 per cent, of respondents claimed never to have been persuaded to do anything by a celebrity’s message for a good cause. Of the 21 per cent who had, 44 per cent indicated that they had made efforts to learn more about the issue, whilst 43 per cent had visited a website and/or clicked a link on the internet (Figure 10).

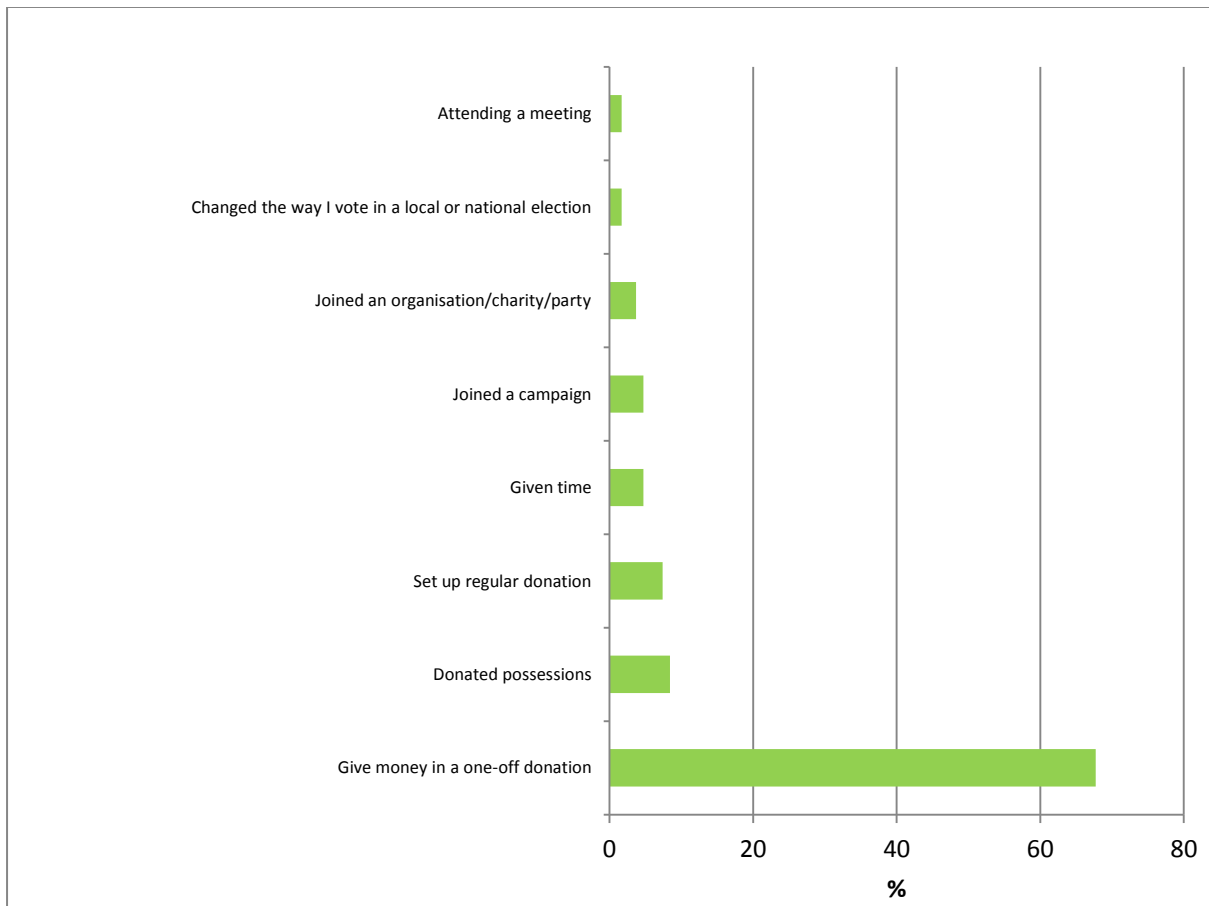
**Figure 10. Response to a famous person’s message for a good cause when persuaded to do something**



Respondents were asked about any more concrete actions taken when they had become more deeply involved in a cause following a message from a celebrity. Around 68 per cent indicated that they had made a one-off donation (Figure 11). A further eight per cent had donated possessions and seven per cent had started making a regular donation. Very few had actually joined a campaign, joined an organisation, changed the way they voted or attended a meeting. This suggests that the chief impact of celebrities is to stimulate donations rather than bring about deeper commitments and actions by members of the public.



**Figure 11. Actions taken in response to a famous person’s message for a good cause when persuaded to do something**



Finally, respondents were asked for their views on efforts by celebrities to talk about poverty in other parts of the world (Figure 12). The results suggest a certain degree of ambiguity or even dissonance amongst respondents. On the one hand, famous people are considered to be good at raising awareness of poverty in other parts of the world and by using the media to such ends, they are considered to be putting their fame to good use. On the other hand, many are of the view that celebrities should give more of their own money to reduce poverty overseas. A significant minority, furthermore, are of the view that celebrities spend too much time fundraising rather than challenging the very reasons why global poverty exists, and even supporting the fight against poverty as a means to self-promotion.

### **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](mailto:s.henson@ids.ac.uk)). Alternatively look at our website ([www.ukpublicmonitor.org](http://www.ukpublicmonitor.org)).

**Figure 12. Attitudes towards famous people talking about poverty overseas**

