

## The Media and Politics: What do citizens think?

The Hansard Society, Southampton University and Sheffield University

This submission speaks to the Inquiry's interest in 'the extent of public knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the media and politicians'. The findings are based on two strands of research that we have undertaken in the last year:

- The *Audit of Political Engagement*. An annual study of public attitudes to politics and the political process, the latest Audit is based on an opinion poll conducted in December 2011 by TNS-BMRB and repeated in January 2012. The Audit series is funded by the House of Commons and the Cabinet Office. The full results are published by the Hansard Society: the *Audit of Political Engagement 9, The 2012 Report: Part One* (April 2012); and the *Audit of Political Engagement 9, Part Two: Politics and the Media* (to be published on 12 July 2012).
- Fourteen mixed demographic focus groups held across Great Britain between November 2011 and March 2012, exploring public attitudes to politics and the characterisation of disaffection. This work was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-00-22-4441) whose support also aided the analysis of the survey data.
- Full details of the research base are provided in the appendices. Most members of the public understand the print-press through the prism of 'tabloid' and 'broadsheet' newspapers. However, some newspapers can be regarded as more mid-market in format and reach. For the purposes of clarity and consistency, throughout we have therefore used the following categorisation of newspaper titles: red-top, mid-market, tabloid and broadsheets. Where tabloids are referenced here, the statistics include newspapers that fall within both the red-top and mid-market categories. The newspaper titles falling under each categorisation are set out in Appendix A.

The print media claims a right to freedom from regulation in the interests of democracy. But if the media's coverage of the content and character of politics is such that it damages the public's capacity to engage in the political process then its role in our democracy may be as detrimental as it is beneficial.

We have used the survey and focus group evidence to help us to judge the role of the media in our democracy, and to explore, in particular, what the public think about the relationship between politics and the media. **Six key propositions emerge from our findings.**

***1. Most citizens are observers of, rather than active participants in, the political process and the media is the principal conduit by which they conduct that observation of politics. It is therefore crucial in providing access to, and information for, citizens about politics. Television is overwhelmingly the most common channel of communication.***

In the 2012 Audit, three-quarters of people (75%) name television as one of their main sources of political news and information. Far behind are tabloid newspapers (27%), radio (26%), news websites (20%) and broadsheet newspapers (16%).

Although 40% of respondents cite either tabloid and broadsheet newspapers as one of their top three sources of political news, the print press still has barely half the reach of television. However, the print press is still more widely used than the internet for political news, with just over a quarter of respondents (28%) identifying online sites as one of their main sources of political information. Of course, cross-pollination across the media means that the political coverage and commentary in the print press, television news and on the internet, will all influence each other, helping to set the agenda and shape the interpretation of events.

Fewer 18-24 year olds report television as a main source of information about politics (61%). This group are more likely to say they don't follow political news (16%, compared to an average of 8%). Younger age groups (18-24 and 25-34) are more likely to get their political news from a broader range of other sources (not television, newspapers or radio) than other age groups (51% compared to the 38% national average). 'Other' sources include news websites, party and charity websites, social media, leaflets and magazines, friends/family and teachers and lecturers.

Just over a quarter of the public (27%) report reading no newspaper at all. This group is particularly disengaged from politics: they are much less certain to vote (only 35%, compared to an Audit 2012 average of 48%) and their claimed interest and knowledge of politics is also lower.

## ***2. Citizens believe strongly that the media has a lot of influence over the agenda and practice of politics.***

In the 8<sup>th</sup> Audit of Political Engagement (2011), 42% of the public claimed that the media was one of the two or three institutions they believed had most impact on people's everyday lives, surpassing the influence of local councils (40%), the UK Parliament (30%), business (28%), the European Union (16%), the civil service (15%) and the Prime Minister (13%). Indeed, throughout the nine year Audit lifecycle, the media is the institution that the British public consistently believes has the most impact on their daily life.

In Audit 9 three-quarters (74%) of the public believe the media influences how people vote, three-fifths (60%) that it influences the topics politicians debate in Parliament, and 54% the decisions politicians make.

Men are significantly more likely than women to believe that the media influences how people vote (81% compared to 69%), that it influences the topics politicians debate in Parliament (64% compared to 55%), and influences the decisions politicians make (61% compared to 47%). Those from higher social grades are significantly more likely than average to believe that the media influences how people vote (88% of ABs compared to 72% of C2DEs). They are also noticeably more likely than average to think that the media influences the topics politicians debate in Parliament (74%), and somewhat more likely to think that the media influences the decisions politicians make (63%). In contrast, DEs are a little less likely to see the media as influential in these respects, reporting roughly 10% lower than average scores for both measures (49% and 45% respectively). People from lower social grades are more likely to believe that the media do not influence what politicians debate in Parliament (34% of DEs versus 24% of ABs, C1s and C2s) but this difference is not so apparent when looking at the perceived influence of the media on the decisions that politicians make.

Those who read broadsheet newspapers are much more likely to consider the media to be influential than other members of the public. Ninety-three percent believe that the media influences how people vote, 77% that it influences the topics politicians debate in Parliament, and 69% that it influences the decisions that politicians make. Red top readers and those who claim to read no newspaper at all have roughly average scores for all three measures. Mid-market readers are more likely than average to believe that the media influences how people vote, but only marginally above average in believing the media influences politicians.

In the words of two female participants in one of our London focus groups:

*'The average person picks up the paper and just believes what they see and then that's what they vote for. What we read influences us, that's why places like China censor the media don't they?'*

And

*'I think newspapers are probably one of the biggest influences on your life, the daily newspapers, whichever level you read, bad news affects us.'*

**3. Citizens, including tabloid readers themselves, perceive the coverage of politics in the tabloid media to be far more negative and distorting in its portrayal of politics and politicians than in all other media outlets.**

The Audit findings suggest that citizens appear to have quite differentiated views about the impact of a range of media sources on the coverage and portrayal of politics.

**Figure 1: Positive and negative views of media coverage of politics**

Q. Please tell me which, if any, of these types of media the statement applies to.						
	They look for any excuse to tarnish the name of politicians	They do a good job of keeping politicians accountable for their conduct	They focus on negative stories about politics and politicians	They are generally fair in their representation of politicians	They are more interested in getting a story than telling the truth	They help the public to learn about what is happening in politics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Broadsheet newspapers	20	34	21	27	23	37
Tabloid newspapers	63	29	62	15	68	25
Television news programmes	21	38	28	41	26	55
Radio news programmes	12	18	14	20	14	26
None	12	19	11	21	8	12
Don't know	15	15	13	16	12	12

Tabloids are believed to be significantly more likely than other media to be 'more interested in getting a story than telling the truth' (68%), to 'look for any excuse to tarnish the name of politicians' (63%) and to 'focus on negative stories about politics and politicians' (62%). Tabloids are three times more likely to be perceived to be negative in their approach to the coverage of politics than are the other forms of media.

The most notable new finding is that tabloid readers themselves strongly agree with the negative statements about their own newspapers of choice.

Sixty-seven percent of self-identified red top readers agree that tabloids 'look for any excuse to tarnish the name of politicians', 68% that they 'focus on negative stories about politics and politicians', whilst 73% agree that they are 'more interested in getting a story than telling the truth'. Mid-market readers are even more negative about the tabloids; 72% agree that tabloids 'look for any excuse to tarnish the name of politicians', 75% that they 'focus on negative stories about politics and politicians', and 76% agree that they are 'more interested in getting a story than telling the truth'. All of these scores are higher than the national averages as set out in Figure 1. Looking at the responses to all three negative statements collectively, 29% of tabloid-only readers can be categorised as tabloid media critics (people who identified the tabloids, but none of the other forms of media, with all three of the negative statements).

Extracts from focus groups in London and Leeds illustrate the concern:

Man (London): *'You never ever really hear positive things about politicians in general. You hardly ever hear.....politics and positivity don't go together. I can't remember the last time I heard a positive thing about a politician. Clinton, whomever, scandal. Margaret Thatcher. You hardly ever hear good news – so it's probably true that good news doesn't sell.'*

And

Man (Leeds): *'Is it that they're honest though (MPs) or is it that the media is more – more in it today to shame MPs whereas years ago they weren't.'*

Man: *But it don't help, does it...prying all the time.*

Man: *So you say good – there were good politicians in the 60s – 50s and 60s – but how do you know because the media wouldn't – weren't have been – or wouldn't have been as intrusive, wouldn't have been phone tapping and God knows what else to find out all sorts.'*

Tabloid newspapers also score well below television and broadsheet newspapers on the positive measures relating to the media's role in holding politicians to account, their impartiality and their ability to inform the public. Television coverage of politics receives the most positive response from the public, with the highest margin of difference emerging in relation to the media's role in promoting learning and information. This positive perception of television chimes with the findings of our focus groups in which participants said that they appreciated the coverage because they felt they got the message more directly, from the 'horse's mouth', as interviews could not be 'spun' (or were at least less likely to be spun) by an intermediary. Across the national population profile, this perception of television is broadly the same regardless of demographic differences such as age, gender or social class. That said, although they perform better than the other forms of media, the results are hardly a ringing endorsement of television coverage of politics. Only between four and five

people in every 10 agree that television holds politicians accountable, is fair in its representation of politics and helps the public learn about what is happening in politics.

Broadsheet newspapers are viewed much less negatively than tabloids, but not as positively as television in respect of their coverage of politics. Although radio news coverage is the public's third most common source of political information, listeners do not appear to have strong views (either positive or negative) about the nature of radio news coverage of politics and politicians.

Evidence from our focus groups suggests that the media's negative portrayal of politics can be desensitising (a word used frequently by participants) and politically disengaging. The following extract, taken from focus groups in London, is illustrative:

*Woman: 'In the media it's so much, I'm just sick of it...it's so heavy, in the media, I'm sick of it, I certainly am, I've desensitised myself. When the election comes around that's fair enough but not all the time which is what it is.'*

**4. Broadsheet newspaper readers are much more likely than tabloid readers to be engaged by and perceive themselves to be influential in politics (these effects remain even when demographic factors known to influence engagement in politics are controlled for).**

The Audit data confirms that, in terms of political engagement, it is clearly better to read some form of newspaper than none at all: people who read no newspapers at all have by far the lowest levels of political engagement. They are less likely to be interested in, and knowledgeable about, politics, and much less certain to vote.

At the other end of the spectrum, broadsheet readers, even controlling for demographic differences, are more likely to be politically engaged and feel they can exercise influence in the political process. There does appear to be a relationship between broadsheet reading and political engagement.

There is little evidence, however, that red top newspapers in particular stimulate the political engagement of their readers. Red top-only readers are significantly more disengaged from politics than readers of other newspapers: they are less interested in, and feel less knowledgeable about, politics, are less certain to vote, are less satisfied with the system of governing than the average, and are considerably less satisfied than broadsheet or mid-market readers.

Looking at newspaper readership through the prism of broadsheet versus tabloid, there is little evidence that the latter advances the political citizenship of their readers, relative even to those who read no newspaper at all. Figure 2 compares the differential impact of broadsheet and tabloid readership on the public's relationship to politics as found through nine of the Audit's key indicators of political engagement when compared to those of non-newspaper readers.<sup>1</sup> Here, using logistic regression analysis we have calculated the effects caused by different factors even allowing for the possibility that there may be several factors at play to explain a particular behaviour. We looked at some of the obvious and known factors that influence engagement with politics such as gender, age, and social class to see if these were driving the differences in impact. However, the results demonstrate that even when taking into account standard demographic variables the influence of newspaper readership can be detected.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B for the relevant multivariate logistic regression analysis tables based on the Audit data.

*Figure 2: Broadsheet and tabloid readers' relationship to politics (compared to a reference group of non-readers of newspapers)*

Political Engagement Indicator	Broadsheet-only readers (compared to readers of no newspaper at all)	Tabloid-only readers (compared to readers of no newspaper at all)
Interest in politics	6.5 times more likely to express interest	1.5 times more likely to express interest
Knowledge of politics	7.3 times more likely to claim knowledge	1.4 times more likely to claim knowledge
Certainty to vote	3.5 times more likely to be certain to vote	1.4 times more likely to be certain to vote
Voted in last general election	2.5 times more likely to have voted	1.5 times more likely to have voted
System of governing works at least reasonably well	Roughly twice as likely to consider the political system to be working well	Marginally less likely to consider the political system to be working well
Efficacy of involvement in national politics	Twice as likely to think that if people like themselves get involved in politics they can really change the way the country is run	1.5 times more likely to think that if people like themselves get involved in politics they can really change the way the country is run
Efficacy of involvement in local area	Twice as likely to think that if people like themselves get involved in their local community they can really change the way that their area is run	1.2 times more likely to think that if people like themselves get involved in their local community they can really change the way that their area is run
Influence over national decision-making	Twice as likely to feel able to influence national decision-making	No more likely to feel able to influence national decision-making
Influence over local decision-making	2.5 times as likely to feel able to influence local decision-making	No more likely to feel able to influence local decision-making

The message conveyed is a stark one. Although tabloid readers are more likely than non-readers to engage with politics, the effect is depressingly small, especially when it is considered that non-readers are by far the least politically engaged group in society. Worryingly, tabloid readers are no more positive than non-readers about their capacity to influence decision-making, and are

actually less likely than non-readers to believe that the system of government is working at least reasonably well.

In contrast, **broadsheet reading citizens are much more likely than both tabloid readers and non-readers alike to engage with and participate in politics, and to be more positive about the governing system and their own capacity to influence it.** Even when controlling for the influence of social class the effects are still evident. It is difficult to infer direct causality here; those most engaged in politics may simply be more inclined to broadsheet readership. However, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the relationship between newspaper readership and political engagement is perhaps better seen as a mutually reinforcing one.

What is clear is that there is little, if any, evidence that tabloid newspapers help to advance the political engagement of their readers.

***5. The coverage of politics in all media, but the tabloid media in particular, contributes to a sense of fatalism among citizens about their capacity to influence the political process.***

Alongside the survey we asked a separate set of questions to the same sample, to test attitudes towards the concept of a 'stealth' view of democracy.<sup>2</sup> This is a concept first advanced by a team of American academics to explain some people's perceptions of politics as a largely unpleasant feature of modern life: time-consuming and prone to corruption. Those holding such views typically see political debate as completely pointless (since sensible people already agree on what should be done). Moreover, since, on most issues, citizens hold no strong views, they are content to turn over decision-making authority to someone else. These citizens do not want to hold decision-makers to account for the details of their decisions, rather they seek a general reassurance that decisions are being made in the public interest and without undue interference or influence from partisan or sectional interests. Those with a 'stealth' democracy profile believe what is required from government is effective action rather than more talk about the issues, with decisions taken on the basis of informed or expert input rather than through a political process involving debate, mediation of interests and, if necessary, compromise.

To test the degree to which the Audit sample of the public adhere to this 'stealth' framework we asked respondents about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Elected politicians would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems.
- What people call 'compromise' in politics, is really just selling out one's principles.
- Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.
- Our government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people.

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<sup>2</sup> See J. Hibbing and E. Theiss-Morse (2002) *Stealth democracy: American's beliefs about how government should work* (New York: Cambridge University Press). Also, G. Stoker and C. Hay, 'Comparing folk theories of democratic politics: stealth and sunshine', PSA (UK) Annual Conference Paper 2012, for a fuller explanation and analysis of this concept. [http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2012/10\\_144.pdf](http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2012/10_144.pdf).

These statements clearly accord with a negative and cynical view of politics; agreement with them would suggest little or no faith in politics and politicians, and that the running of the country would be improved if politics could be taken out of the equation.

Assessing the results whilst controlling statistically for the influence of demographic and media consumption factors shows that **tabloid-only readers are twice as likely to agree with this 'stealth' view of politics than readers of no paper at all.** Although readers of no newspaper at all are less politically engaged than tabloid readers, it is tabloid readers that nonetheless have a more cynical and negative attitude to politics overall.

Strikingly, none of the other demographic factors known to influence political engagement are statistically significant in relation to this 'stealth' model of democracy. Gender, age and most importantly social class have no statistically meaningful bearing on a person's likely agreement with this negative, cynical perspective on politics; being a tabloid-only reader is the determining factor.<sup>3</sup> These results suggest that **tabloid-only readers not only have low levels of political engagement but they are consuming media that reinforces their negative evaluation of politics, thereby contributing to a fatalistic and cynical attitude to democracy and their own role in it.**

*6. Newspapers typically claim for themselves a right to freedom from regulation in the interests of democracy. We suggest that newspapers should also have a responsibility, commensurate with the extent of their influence, for the consequences of their coverage on the content and character of the democratic process and the willingness of citizens to engage in it.*

In debating the link between a vibrant and effective media and the dynamism of democracy the academic literature breaks roughly into two schools of thought which replicate to a considerable degree the current state of public opinion in Britain. The first focuses on the positive role of the media in providing access to politics and goes so far as to argue that exposure to media of all types strengthens democratic aspirations and fosters more satisfaction with democracy.<sup>4</sup> The second school of thought takes a rather more negative line on the role of the media in democracy.<sup>5</sup> The media is seen as a powerful player with an increased role in linking politics and citizens as other intermediaries such as churches, parties, trade unions have declined in their capacities. But operating according to understandable commercial pressures the media tend to give a sensationalised version of politics that focuses on drama, conflict, failure and personalities. The political parties in turn have responded by increasing their efforts to manage the media through spin doctors and closer ties with journalists, editors and even proprietors who are seen as key opinion formers. The result is much coverage of politics generates more heat than light; leaving a gap in public understanding and trust. Media coverage also tends to encourage disillusionment with politics as politicians, and the media are seen as part of an elite dynamic that largely leaves them cold.

In our survey work and focus groups we found support from citizens for both positions. The public is generally satisfied with much of the media coverage of politics, and those who are

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<sup>3</sup> These results are consistent with studies in the United States and Finland which also found that standard demographic factors did not drive stealth factors, although they did not investigate the impact of newspaper readership in their research. See, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) and A. Bengtsson and M. Malttila (2009), 'Direct Democracy and its Critics: Support for Direct Democracy and Stealth Democracy in Finland', *West European Politics*, 32:5, pp.1031-48.

<sup>4</sup> For a powerful example of this argument see, P. Norris (2011), *Democratic deficit: Critical citizens revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Y. Papadopoulos (2012 - forthcoming), *Democracy in crisis*.



dissatisfied are broadly concerned about coverage that fails to present the full facts and provide a balanced treatment of the issues. Television fares better than any other form of media, reflecting perhaps the extent to which public interest regulation addresses these challenges. However, this should not be overstated. The public do not give television a ringing endorsement: only four to five in every 10 people agree that it is fair in its representation of politics and helps the public learn about what is happening in politics. Similarly, although broadsheet readers are more likely to be politically engaged, less than four in 10 members of the public believe that they do a good job of holding politicians accountable, helping the public to learn about what is happening in politics, and are fair in their representation of politics. As for the tabloids, large proportions of the public agree – including tabloid readers themselves – that they are not seekers after truth, and they are failing to provide the information that citizens require to participate in the political process. Rather, they seem to be motivated by a desire to expose and damage politicians where they can. They do little to give politicians a fair representation or enhance understanding of politics. Perhaps most significantly, this negative and distorting portrayal of politics by the tabloid media in particular is seen by citizens (including tabloid readers) to seep into the political culture, contributing to a wider disengagement and disaffection with politics.

The following quote from a focus group in Edinburgh is illustrative:

Woman: *'.....because all we've talked about is you know...the scandals and expenses, that – that's what you, that, that's what newspapers and tabloids grab onto. And because you see that, eh, I mean you can't, you can't not go through a day without seeing something from the news or – it's a really powerful tool but it's used in the wrong way. I think it's used to, you know, it's used to sell papers. It's used to sell information rather than the, the information you want to know about or you should be hearing about, because people want to hear about somebody slept with your man down the street, rather than, you know, what's going to happen if somebody in my family has to be taken to hospital; how's that going to impact me, and you know, what is the government doing to look after it? You know you, you don't really know too much about the important side of things.'*

At the end of our focus groups all participants were invited to suggest what three things about the political process – the way politics is practised – they would most like to see reformed. Thirteen percent of the ideas that emerged could be classified as calling for the creation of a more positive media environment in which politics, through information, context, and discourse could flourish.

Yet the press, particularly the tabloids, appear to adopt a narrow perspective on their role and responsibilities in relation to our democracy. The fourth estate's right to free expression must be zealously guarded and in a competitive marketplace there is nothing wrong with attaching high priority to a desire to entertain. But, consistent with the complexity and differentiated character of the public's views, the media should also bear some responsibility, commensurate with the extent of its influence, for the consequences of its coverage on the content and character of the democratic process and the willingness of citizens to engage in it.

The public's sense of the media's portrayal of politics and its role and influence upon our democratic political culture is both mixed and highly differentiated. The response to the question of media regulation should be similarly nuanced. The part of the media that attracts greatest public support – the broadcast media – is already subject to public interest requirements. However, the tabloid media, and newspapers more generally, are where the public thinks the balance of contribution to our democracy errs towards the negative. **Given the influence that the public thinks the media has, and the**

demonstrable link between readership and political engagement, it seems appropriate to strive to balance that power and influence with some form of independent, public interest regulatory framework which recognises and is designed to stimulate the responsibilities of the press alongside its rights within our democracy. Such a framework must enable the press to develop informative, rich and entertaining content, but should also require of them that they give greater thought to purveying context and therefore balance in their coverage of politics. It should also strive to encourage the press to think more deeply about the responsibilities of their 'watchdog' role, how they hold political actors to account, how they explain the political process and how they can foster and support a more politically engaged citizenry.

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### Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

Date: 19 July 2012

Appendix A: Details of survey work and focus groups

Audit of Political Engagement 9

TNS-BMRB conducted face-to-face interviews with a representative quota sample of 1,163 adults aged 18 or above living in Great Britain.

The interviews took place between 7 and 13 December 2011 and were carried out in respondents' homes. The survey was repeated between 11 and 15 January 2012: 1,235 face-to-face interviews were carried out.

Both surveys included booster sample interviews in Scotland, Wales and with respondents from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) cultural backgrounds.

The datasets have been weighted to the national population profile of Great Britain.

For the purposes of the multivariate regression study the two survey datasets were pooled to provide a total of 2,404 cases for analysis.

	Frequency (unweighted)	Percentage
December 2011 survey	1166	49%
January 2012 survey	1238	51%
Male	1154	48%
Female	1250	52%
		12%
18-24	296	18%
25-34	432	16%
35-44	379	15%
45-54	364	15%
55-64	359	13%
65-74	310	11%
75+	263	
AB	426	18%
C1	618	26%
C2	444	19%
DE	917	38%
Red top-only	433	18%
Mid-market-only	195	8%
Tabloid-only	711	30%
Broadsheet-only	251	11%
Total	2404	100%

Newspapers were categorised by title as follows:

Type of newspaper	Newspaper title
Red tops	Sun, Mirror, People, Daily Star, Daily Record, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People, Sunday Sport
Mid-Market	Daily Express, Daily Mail, Sunday Express, Mail on Sunday
Tabloids	Red tops and mid-market newspapers (see above)
Broadsheet	Daily Telegraph, Times, Guardian, Financial Times, Independent, Sunday Telegraph, Sunday Times, Observer, Independent on Sunday

### Qualitative focus groups

Location and Date	Recruitment	Number of Participants
London 16 November 2011	Gender mix 18-35 years old AB social grades Live in urban London (zones 1-6)	12
London 16 November 2011	Gender mix 36-70 years old DE social grades Live in urban London (zones 1-6)	9
Southampton 17 November 2011	Gender mix 18-35 years old AB social grades Live in urban Southampton	12
Southampton 17 November 2011	Gender mix 36-70 years old DE social grades Live in urban Southampton	12
Gildersome, Leeds	Male	10

16 February 2012	Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Social grade mix Live in rural area near Leeds	
Gildersome, Leeds 16 February 2012	Female 18-35 years old DE social grades Live in rural area near Leeds	10
Newbury 20 February 2012	Gender mix 36-70 years old AB social grades Live in rural area near Newbury	11
Cardiff 27 February 2012	Female Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Social grade mix Live in urban Cardiff	11
Cardiff 27 February 2012	Gender mix Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Half AB social grades / Half DE social grades Live in urban Cardiff	12
Dundee 1 March 2012	Gender mix 36-70 years old AB social grades Live in rural area on outskirts of Dundee	11
Edinburgh 5 March 2012	Gender mix 18-35 years old DE social grades Live in urban Edinburgh	10
Edinburgh 5 March 2012	Gender mix Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Half AB social grades / Half DE social grades	11

## For Distribution to CPs

	Live in urban Edinburgh	
Newcastle 12 March 2012	Female Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Social grade mix Live in rural area near Newcastle	11
Newcastle 12 March 2012	Male Half 18-35 years old / Half 36-70 years old Social grade mix Live in rural area near Newcastle	11
TOTAL		153

Appendix B: Audit of Political Engagement Poll topline findings (December 2011)

Q16.	Which of these are your main sources of political news and information? You can select up to three options.	
		%
	Television	75
	Tabloid newspapers	27
	Radio	26
	News websites	20
	Broadsheet newspapers	16
	Friends and/or family	10
	Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	6
	Leaflets and magazines produced by political parties	4
	Leaflets and magazines produced by charities or pressure groups	3
	Political blogs	1
	Teachers and lecturers	1
	Political party websites	1
	Charity and pressure group websites	1
	Something else	1
	Not applicable, I don't follow political news	8
	Don't know	3

Q17.	And do you watch any of the following (when they're on)?	
		%
	Have I Got News for You	42
	Question Time	41
	Mock the Week	30
	Election coverage	22
	Prime Minister's Questions	20
	Party political broadcast	15
	Leaders' debates	9
	Daily Politics	9
	This Week	5
	None of these	27
	Don't know	*
<i>Base: All GB adults aged 18 or above whose main sources of political news and information include the television (862)</i>		

Q18.	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the media reports politics in the UK?								
	APE1	APE2	APE3	APE4	APE5	APE6	APE7	APE8	APE9
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very satisfied							4		5
Fairly satisfied							34		40
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied							21		31
Fairly dissatisfied							24		13
Very dissatisfied							14		6
Don't know							3		5
<i>Very/ fairly satisfied</i>							38		45

Q19.	Is your dissatisfaction with the way the media reports politics related to any of the following? Would you say reports often...	
		%
Don't present the full facts		47
Make little or no attempt to present a story in a balanced way		40
Try to make people unnecessarily scared or angry		27
Don't explain the matter they're discussing in a clear way		19
Make little or no effort to report positive political news		14
Are presented in a condescending way		10
Contain nothing of interest to me, my family or my work		10
Use technical language and terms people find hard to understand		8
Make little or no attempt to explain why this should matter to me		7
Make light of serious matters		6
None of these		6
Don't know		5
<i>Base: All adults aged 18 or above who are dissatisfied with media reporting of politics (220)</i>		



Q20.	Please tell me which, if any, of these types of media the statement applies to.					
	They look for any excuse to tarnish the name of politicians	The do a good job of keeping politicians accountable for their conduct	They focus on negative stories about politics and politicians	They are generally fair in their representation of politicians	They are more interested in getting a story than telling the truth	They help the public to learn about what is happening in politics
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Broadsheet newspapers	20	34	21	27	23	37
Tabloid newspapers	63	29	63	15	68	25
Television news programmes	21	38	29	41	26	55
Radio news programmes	12	19	14	20	14	26
None	12	19	11	21	8	12
Don't know	15	15	13	16	12	12

Q21.	In your opinion, how much influence does the media have on...?		
	How people vote	The topics politicians debate in Parliament	The decisions politicians make
	%	%	%
A great deal	29	17	14
A fair amount	45	43	40
Not very much	12	23	27
None at all	3	5	7
Don't know	10	13	12
<i>Great deal/fair amount</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>54</i>

Appendix C: Logistic regression models (summarised in Figure 2) (December and January surveys)

The tables for the multivariate logistic regression analysis presented in this appendix should be read alongside the survey data from Appendix B in this report and the Audit of Political Engagement 9: Part One. The numbering of questions below is not sequential. It refers to the ordering of the questions used in the original Audit survey, and those highlighted below concern only those questions that are relevant to analysis of the media and political engagement.

SE = Standard Error

CI = Confidence Interval

P = P-value (statistical significance)

Q1.	How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means you would be absolutely certain to vote, and 1 means that you would be absolutely certain not to vote?
-----	--

Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining '10, 9, 8, 7' responses) or No ('1-6'), excluding refused responses and 'don't know' cases. n=2,310

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.19* (0.09)	0.83 (0.69-1.00)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.44** (0.11)	1.55 (1.25-1.93)
	55+	1.41** (0.12)	4.08 (3.23-5.15)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.27 (0.15)	0.76 (0.57-1.02)
	D or E	-0.46** (0.15)	0.63 (0.47-0.84)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	1.24** (0.18)	3.46 (2.45-4.88)
	Tabloid readers only	0.30* (0.11)	1.35 (1.08-1.69)
	Both	1.12** (0.20)	3.07 (2.08-4.54)
	Local or other newspaper	0.13 (0.15)	1.14 (0.84-1.53)
	Constant	0.06 (0.18)	1.06

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q4.	How interested would you say you are in politics?
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Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'very interested' and 'fairly interested' responses) or No ('not very interested' and 'not at all interested'), excluding 'don't know' cases. n=2,389

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.45** (0.10)	0.63 (0.52-0.78)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.36* (0.12)	1.44 (1.13-1.83)
	55+	0.69** (0.12)	2.00 (1.57-2.56)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.38* (0.18)	0.68 (0.48-0.97)
	D or E	-0.83** (0.18)	0.44 (0.31-0.62)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	1.86** (0.25)	6.45 (3.97-10.47)
	Tabloid readers only	0.39** (0.12)	1.47 (1.17-1.85)
	Both	1.90** (0.29)	6.70 (3.76-11.95)
	Local or other newspaper	0.41* (0.16)	1.51 (1.11-2.07)
	Constant	1.11** (0.20)	3.04

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

**Q5.a** How much, if anything, do you feel you know about...politics?

Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount' responses) or No ('not very much' and 'nothing at all'), excluding 'don't know' cases. n=2,386

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.47** (0.13)	0.62 (0.49-0.80)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.45** (0.15)	1.57 (1.18-2.09)
	55+	0.98** (0.16)	2.67 (1.97-3.62)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.54* (0.26)	0.58 (0.35-0.96)
	D or E	-1.19** (0.25)	0.31 (0.19-0.50)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	1.99** (0.36)	7.33 (3.62-14.81)
	Tabloid readers only	0.34* (0.14)	1.40 (1.07-1.85)
	Both	1.68** (0.36)	5.35 (2.64-10.87)
	Local or other newspaper	0.52* (0.20)	1.68 (1.14-2.48)
	Constant	1.97** (0.27)	7.17

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q8.	Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Britain?
-----	---

Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'works extremely well and could not be improved' and 'could be improved in small ways but mainly works well' responses) or No ('could be improved quite a lot' and 'needs a great deal of improvement'), excluding 'don't know' cases. n=2,208

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.35** (0.10)	0.70 (0.58-0.85)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	-0.31** (0.12)	0.73 (0.57-0.93)
	55+	-0.07 (0.12)	0.93 (0.74-1.17)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.39** (0.13)	0.68 (0.52-0.87)
	D or E	-0.76** (0.14)	0.47 (0.35-0.62)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.61** (0.16)	1.84 (1.35-2.50)
	Tabloid readers only	-0.09 (0.13)	0.91 (0.70-1.18)
	Both	0.54* (0.18)	1.71 (1.19-2.45)
	Local or other newspaper	0.28 (0.17)	1.32 (0.95-1.84)
	Constant	-0.29 (0.18)	0.75

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q9.	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? When people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the UK is run.
-----	--

Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'strongly agree' and 'fairly agree' responses) or No ('tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree'), excluding 'neither agree nor disagree' responses and 'don't know' cases. n=1,645

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.09 (0.10)	0.91 (0.75-1.11)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	-0.03 (0.13)	0.97 (0.75-1.26)
	55+	-0.31* (0.12)	0.73 (0.58-0.94)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.08 (0.15)	0.93 (0.70-1.23)
	D or E	0.15 (0.15)	1.16 (0.86-1.56)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.62* (0.17)	1.86 (1.32-2.61)
	Tabloid readers only	0.41* (0.13)	1.51 (1.16-1.96)
	Both	0.91** (0.21)	2.48 (1.65-3.72)
	Local or other newspaper	0.43** (0.18)	1.54 (1.09-2.18)
	Constant	-0.23 (0.19)	0.80

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q13.	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? When people like me get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run.
------	---

Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'strongly agree' and 'fairly agree' responses) or No ('tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree'), excluding 'neither agree nor disagree' responses and 'don't know' cases. n=1,780

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	0.12 (0.11)	1.12 (0.90-1.41)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	-0.02 (0.15)	0.98 (0.72-1.32)
	55+	-0.45** (0.14)	0.64 (0.48-0.84)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.39* (0.18)	0.68 (0.48-0.97)
	D or E	-0.38* (0.18)	0.68 (0.48-0.98)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.78** (0.21)	2.19 (1.45-3.31)
	Tabloid readers only	0.18 (0.14)	1.20 (0.90-1.58)
	Both	0.99** (0.27)	2.69 (1.58-4.57)
	Local or other newspaper	0.21 (0.19)	1.24 (0.85-1.80)
	Constant	1.39** (0.22)	4.00

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q14.a	How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in...your local area?
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Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'a great deal of influence' and 'a fair amount of influence' responses) or No ('not very much of influence' and 'no influence all'), excluding 'don't know' cases. n=2,314

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.02 (0.09)	0.98 (0.82-1.18)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.09 (0.12)	1.10 (0.87-1.38)
	55+	-0.13 (0.11)	0.88 (0.71-1.09)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.29* (0.14)	0.75 (0.57-0.99)
	D or E	-0.37** (0.15)	0.69 (0.52-0.92)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.90** (0.17)	2.45 (1.76-3.42)
	Tabloid readers only	0.19 (0.11)	1.21 (0.97-1.51)
	Both	0.71** (0.19)	2.03 (1.39-2.97)
	Local or other newspaper	0.36* (0.15)	1.43 (1.06-1.94)
	Constant	0.79** (0.17)	2.20

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01



Q14.b	How much influence, if any, do you feel you have over decision-making in...the country as a whole?
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Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'a great deal of influence' and 'a fair amount of influence' responses) or No ('not very much of influence' and 'no influence all'), excluding 'don't know' cases. n=2,318

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	0.00 (0.09)	1.00 (0.85-1.18)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.10 (0.11)	1.11 (0.89-1.37)
	55+	0.06 (0.10)	1.06 (0.86-1.30)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.11 (0.13)	0.90 (0.70-1.15)
	D or E	-0.33* (0.13)	0.72 (0.55-0.93)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.69** (0.15)	1.99 (1.48-2.67)
	Tabloid readers only	0.12 (0.11)	1.13 (0.91-1.40)
	Both	0.69** (0.18)	1.99 (1.40-2.83)
	Local or other newspaper	0.28 (0.15)	1.32 (0.99-1.76)
	Constant	0.22 (0.16)	1.24

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q23.	<p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elected politicians would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems.</li> <li>2. What people call 'compromise' in politics is really just selling out one's principles.</li> <li>3. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.</li> <li>4. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people.</li> </ol>
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Binary variable in two categories: Agrees with 'stealth' attitudes (agrees with two or more of the statements) or Disagrees with 'stealth' attitudes (agrees with one or none of the statements). Agreement combines 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' responses and Disagreement combines 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses. Excludes 'don't know' cases. n=1,175

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.09 (0.12)	0.91 (0.72-1.16)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.30 (0.16)	1.34 (0.99-1.83)
	55+	0.27 (0.15)	1.31 (0.98-1.76)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	0.12 (0.18)	1.13 (0.80-1.61)
	D or E	0.05 (0.19)	1.05 (0.73-1.52)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	-0.18 (0.20)	0.83 (0.56-1.24)
	Tabloid readers only	0.83** (0.16)	2.30 (1.68-3.15)
	Both	0.52* (0.23)	1.67 (1.07-2.62)
	Local or other newspaper	0.37 (0.21)	1.45 (0.96-2.20)
	Constant	-0.11 (0.23)	0.89

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01

Q26.	How did you vote in the last General Election held on 6th May 2010?
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Binary variable in two categories: Yes (combining 'a great deal' and 'a fair amount' responses) or No ('not very much' and 'nothing at all'), excluding refused responses and 'don't know' cases. n=2,199

Characteristics	Independent factors	Coefficient (SE)	Odds Ratio (95% CI)
Gender	Male (Reference category)		
	Female	-0.10 (0.10)	0.90 (0.75-1.10)
Age (years)	18-34 (Reference category)		
	35-54	0.97** (0.11)	2.65 (2.12-3.32)
	55+	1.92** (0.13)	6.83 (5.32-8.76)
Social class	A or B (Reference category)		
	C1 or C2	-0.61** (0.16)	0.54 (0.39-0.75)
	D or E	-0.87** (0.17)	0.42 (0.30-0.58)
Print media readership	None (Reference category)		
	Broadsheet readers only	0.89** (0.18)	2.43 (1.72-3.45)
	Tabloid readers only	0.43** (0.12)	1.54 (1.21-1.96)
	Both	1.16** (0.21)	3.20 (2.12-4.81)
	Local or other newspaper	0.33* (0.16)	1.40 (1.01-1.92)
	Constant	0.02 (0.19)	1.02

\* P < 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01