

# Daily Mail says welcome to midBritain

**Owen Gibson**  
Media correspondent

Middle England is dead, long live midBritain. The publisher of the Daily Mail, long considered the house journal for middle England, has coined the term in an attempt to rebrand what it considers the "offensive" and "outdated" stereotypes associated with its core readership.

Having established that 47% of the population are so-called midBritons, defining them as "aspirational with a sense of purpose", and recruited a representative sample of 5,000 of them, it plans to take on polling firms such as YouGov by regularly canvassing their opinion.

Linda Grant, group marketing services director at Associated Newspapers, said: "People conjure up an image when they

**The proportion of the population the Mail describes as midBritons. It says such people are open-minded and aspirational**

**47%**

hear it but they can't really define it. The Mail and middle England are synonymous but the idea of middle England is outdated."

The results of the group's research, published today, claim that rather than being "old fashioned, narrow-minded and conservative", such people are "interested in others' opinions", are "influential, engaged and vocal", and worry about the economy and the environment. They have a high level of disposable income and are the "ultimate consumers with the power to make or break almost any brand".

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**Mail says goodbye to middle England**

It's either a land populated by Hyacinth Buckets and Victor Meldreys peering over the privet hedges as they mutter about the neighbours, polish their car and fret about house prices. Or it's the diminishing heart of all that is good about our sceptred isle. And if its definition and geographical location remain imprecise, though Tunbridge Wells is often cited as its spiritual home, middle England has always had a house journal.

So it is something of a surprise to find the publisher of the Daily Mail and the Mail on Sunday jettisoning the phrase and spending a "substantial sum" on defining a new term for a large proportion of its readership: MidBritain. "The Mail and middle England are synonymous but the idea of middle England is outdated," says Linda Grant, group marketing services director at Associated.

What began as an internal research tool is now a 5,000-strong polling panel and will be used by Associated to help decide on everything from editorial campaigns to advertising messages.

The people identified by the Mail's research, which – as well as quantitative and qualitative studies – included ethnographic studies where researchers go and live with families, make up 7% of the population. They are "the UK's superconsumers with the power to make or break any brand", and are aspirational with a sense of purpose". Grant says 61% of Mail readers fall into the MidBritain camp.

Some of the findings are surprising (they are eco-aware), others are more predictable ("the lack of awareness of immigrants coming into the country" scored three times higher than any other political issue as a cause for concern). And a single statistic – that eight out of 10 voted in the last general election – more eloquently indicates what binds Gordon Brown in an odd-couple friendship with Mail editor in chief Paul Dacre than any amount of cod psychology.

Grant says the research shows how marketing departments are moving

way from age and old-fashioned demographic terms. "We all get a little bit hung up on youth, but it's so hard to pin someone down by whether they're 30, 40 or 50 these days," she says.

She is robust in her defence of the project's research credentials. "It's shining a light on a section of the population that perhaps feels a bit under-represented," she claims.

**Owen Gibson**

