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Young Adults & Media

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## The Viral Kony 2012 Video

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The 30-minute video released last week by the San Diego-based group Invisible Children calling for action against Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony provided striking evidence that young adults and their elders at times have different news agendas and learn about news in different ways. Those ages 18-29 were much more likely than older adults to have heard a lot about the “Kony 2012” video and to have learned about it through social media than traditional news sources. Indeed, a special analysis of posts in Twitter showed that it was by far the top story on the platform.

Moreover, younger adults were also more than twice as likely as older adults to have watched the video itself on YouTube or Vimeo. As of March 13, the video had been viewed more than 76 million times on YouTube and 16 million times on Vimeo, making it one of the most viewed videos of all time on those sites.

Special polling and social media content analysis by the Pew Research Center tracks how the “Kony 2012” video and information about it reached so many Americans in a relatively short period of time, and the critical role social media played, especially for adults under age 30.

A national phone survey in the days following the video’s release shows that 58% of young adults said they heard about the video, including 40% who said they heard a lot about it. That compares with 20% of those ages 30-49 who heard a lot about it; 18% of those ages 50-64; and 19% of those ages 65 and older.

### Young Adults More Engaged with Kony Video, Learning about It Through Social Media

*How much have you heard about an online video about an African warlord who kidnaps children into his militant army?*

	Total	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%
Heard a lot	23	40	20	18	19
Hear a little	29	18	30	30	37
Heard nothing at all	<u>48</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

*How did you first hear about this video...*

<b>From traditional media*</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>On television</i>	20	7	17	22	39
<b>On the internet</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Social media**</i>	12	27	15	5	1
<b>Talking with someone</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
Other way	1	3	*	0	1
Heard nothing about it	<u>48</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100	100	100	100

*Watched video?*

Yes (all or part)	13	23	11	8	13
No/Heard nothing about it	<u>87</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>87</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
N	814	134	205	249	194

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 8-11, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. \* Traditional media includes television, radio and newspapers. \*\*Through social networking like Facebook or Twitter.

Even more striking is the way people learned about the story: 27% of young adults first heard about it through social media such as Facebook or Twitter and another 8% learned about it via

other internet sources. The internet was more than three times more important as a news-learning platform for young adults than traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio. Some 10% of young adults first learned about the video via traditional media platforms.

For those ages 30-49, the mix of news sources was about even: 22% first learned of the “Kony 2012” video from internet sources – 15% via social media – and 21% learned from traditional media sources. Those 50 and older were much more likely to have learned of the video from traditional sources, especially television: 29% of adults ages 50-64 heard from television, newspapers, or radio, compared with 12% who heard via the internet. For adults age 65 and older, 47% learned about it from traditional sources and 5% learned from internet sources.

All those figures above apply to *all adults* in those age cohorts. If one examines the adults who had heard about the video, the numbers shift even more dramatically for social media as the top source for young adults. The figures, though from a relatively modest number of cases, suggest that perhaps half of adults 18-29 learned of the video from social media and, overall, nearly two-thirds heard first about the video from some online source.

Word-of-mouth was also a noteworthy source for those under age 65. Some 9% of young adults learned of the video by talking with someone, 7% of those 30-64 also first heard of it during a conversation, and 2% of those 65 and older learned of it that way.

In addition to hearing a lot about the video, young adults were much more likely than older adults to have watched the video: 23% of adults ages 18-29 watched it, compared with 11% of those 30-49, 8% of those 50-64, and 13% of those 65 and older.

The organization’s effort to promote the video by social media was very successful. Invisible Children noted that one of its goals in launching the video was to capture attention for it through campaigns in social media to encourage celebrity Twitter users to post about it. Those who did tweet included Oprah Winfrey, Ryan Seacrest, Justin Bieber, Alec Baldwin and Taylor Swift, and the campaign was saluted by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, who said President Obama offered his congratulations for calling attention to the campaign to stop Kony and his army.

An analysis by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism found that there were nearly 5 million tweets about the video in the week after it was posted online on March 5. The Invisible Children video portrays Kony and his Lord’s Resistance Army as a brutal force that kidnaps children to become soldiers. And the narrator, Jason Russell, asks viewers to participate in the anti-Kony movement by contacting politicians, donating money and putting up posters.

Most of that social media response supported the video's message:

- 66% of the Twitter conversation from March 5-12 supported the anti-Kony campaign
- 17% was skeptical or negative about it
- 16% was neutral (mostly consisting of people asking questions about what was going on)

In recent days, however, the tone of the conversation has shifted a bit. The first two days after the video was online, when attention on Twitter was relatively modest, 77% of the

Twitter conversation was supportive compared with only 7% that was skeptical or negative. Since March 7, when the response picked up dramatically, the percentage of tweets reflecting skepticism or criticism rose to 17%. Some of the positive responses came from notable celebrities whose posts were widely retweeted.

A large amount of the awareness of the documentary can be traced to Oprah Winfrey. After she began tweeting about the film to her 9.6 million followers on March 6, the amount of attention skyrocketed. According to Invisible Children, the video had about 66,000 views during its first day online. But the next day, when Oprah began to further publicize the effort, it received more than 9 million views.

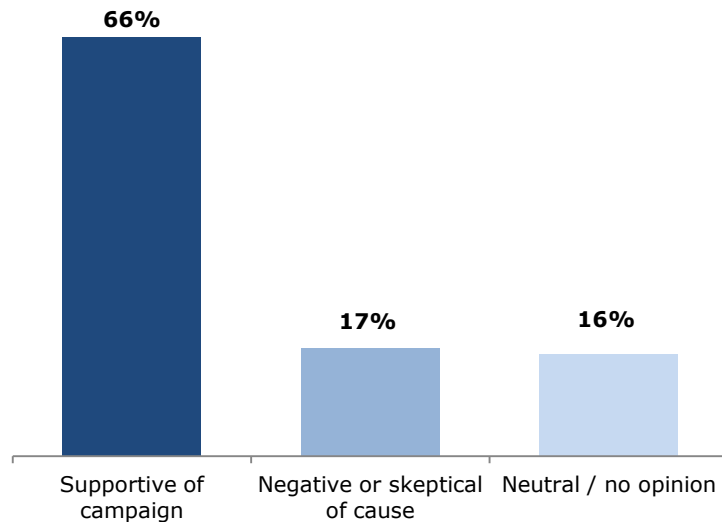
"I know, was trying to get people's attention yrs. Ago," tweeted Oprah. "But glad people are waking up to his atrocities and want to stop him."

"Was going to sleep last night and saw ur tweets about #StopKony...watched in bed, was blown away," [added](#) television host and radio personality Ryan Seacrest.

Millions of other Twitter users followed suit.

## Twitter Response to the Kony 2012 Campaign

Percent of Conversation, March 5-12, 2012



Based on Crimson Hexagon Software

PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

“Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time is NOW. Please watch and share this video,” wrote Sarah, aka @yems28.

The mainstream media also picked up on the video, and the reaction to it, with coverage on all three evening network newscasts on March 8. That was followed by a page one March 9 New York Times story headlined; “Online, a Distant Conflict Soars to Topic No. 1.” And some reporters and commentators began to raise questions about the film.

“Here’s the problem – these simple narratives can cause damage,” blogged [Ethan Zuckerman](#), a researcher at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. “By simplifying the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo] situation to a conflict about minerals, the numerous other causes – ethnic tensions, land disputes, the role of foreign militaries – are all minimized...What are the unintended consequences of the Invisible Children narrative? The main one is increased support for Yoweri Museveni, the dictatorial and kleptocratic leader of Uganda.”

Ugandan journalist and blogger Rosebell Kagumire posted an [online video](#) stating that, “I think we need to have a kind of sound intelligent campaign geared toward real policy shifts, rather than an adverse sensationalized story that is out to make just one person cry.”

And although it never became the dominant element of the conversation, some of those critiques began to surface on Twitter.

“Kony hasnt been seen in 4 years.. his army hasnt done anything in 6 years... so Invisible children will raise all this \$ n still not find him,” predicted @AudraTheRapper.

That in turn, generated something of a backlash of its own.

“Sick of cynical people commenting negatively on the stop Kony movement. Even if there are flaws, raising awareness can NEVER be a bad thing,” tweeted Shanice Dee.

## **Methodology for public opinion survey**

The survey analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 9-11, 2012, among a national sample of 814 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (487 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 327 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 150 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The margin of error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence is 4.0 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## **Methodology for Twitter analysis**

The analysis of the tone of conversation on Twitter utilizes coding procedures created by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism along with computer technology from the media monitoring firm Crimson Hexagon. This analysis is based on an examination of more than 5.4 million tweets related to the Kony 2012 movement.

Crimson Hexagon is a software platform that identifies statistical patterns in words used in online texts. Researchers enter key terms using Boolean search logic so the software can identify relevant material to analyze. PEJ draws its analysis sample from all publicly available Twitter posts. Then a researcher trains the software to classify documents using examples from those collected posts. Finally, the software classifies the rest of the online content according to the patterns derived during the training.

According to Crimson Hexagon: "Our technology analyzes the entire social internet (blog posts, forum messages, Tweets, etc.) by identifying statistical patterns in the words used to express opinions on different topics." Information on the tool itself can be found at <http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/> and the in depth methodologies can be found here <http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/products/whitepapers/>.

The time frame for the analysis is March 5-12, 2012.

PEJ used the following list of keywords in a Boolean search to narrow the universe to relevant posts:

*Kony OR “Invisible Children” OR Uganda OR “Jason Russell”*

*\*For the sake of authenticity, PEJ has a policy of not correcting misspellings or grammatical errors that appear in direct quotes from online postings.*

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MARCH 9-11, 2012 OMNIBUS  
N=814**

**PEW.1-PEW.4 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.5 How much, if anything, have you heard about an online video about an African warlord who kidnaps children into his militant army? Have you heard **[READ]**?

23	A lot
29	A little [OR]
48	Nothing at all
*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (PEW.5=1,2):**

PEW.6 How did you FIRST learn about this video? Was it from **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

**ASK IF TALKING WITH SOMEONE (PEW.6=1):**

PEW.7 Were you talking **[READ AND RANDOMIZE OPTIONS 1 AND 2]**?

**ASK IF INTERNET (PEW.6=5):**

PEW.8 Was this **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**: through social networking like Facebook or Twitter; in an email; OR on a news website or blog]?

BASED ON TOTAL	BASED ON HEARD A LOT/LITTLE	
6	13	Talking with someone
6	11	In person
*	1	Over the phone
*	*	Some other way
*	*	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
3	5	The radio
20	39	Television
3	5	A newspaper [OR]
19	36	The internet
12	24	Through social networking like Facebook or Twitter
*	*	In an email
5	10	On a news website or blog
1	1	Other <b>(VOL.)</b>
0	0	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
1	2	Other <b>(VOL.)</b>
*	1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
48	--	<i>Heard nothing about it</i>

N= [814] [437]

**ASK IF HEARD A LOT OR A LITTLE (PEW.5=1,2):**

PEW.9 Have you watched the video, or not?

BASED ON TOTAL	BASED ON HEARD A LOT/LITTLE	
13	25	Yes, watched (all or in part)
39	75	No, did not
0	0	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>
48	--	<i>Heard nothing about it</i>

N [814] [437]