**Do you worship the celebs?**

Do you wake up thinking of Geri Halliwell? Or wonder what Brad Pitt is eating for breakfast?

If so, you could be one of a startling number of Britons suffering from a newly identified psychological condition: Celebrity Worship Syndrome (CWS).

One in three people is so obsessed with someone in the public eye that he or she is a sufferer, say psychologists.

And one in four is so taken with their idol that the obsession affects their daily life.

*To find out if you have any CWS symptoms,* [*click here*](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/standard/article.html?in_article_id=176674&in_page_id=112)

Psychologists at the University of Leicester, who used a celebrity worship scale to rate the problems, found that 36 per cent of people suffered from some form of CWS, or mad icon disease, and that the number was going up.

**Unlikely obsessions**

While many people were obsessed with glamorous film and pop stars, such as George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez, others had unlikely objects of affection, including Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam.

One theory is that in a society dominated by TV and with a decline in extended families and communities, celebrities have taken the place of relatives, neighbours and friends for many people.

Respect for family members has been replaced by the worship of the famous.

Dr John Maltby, whose findings are published this week in the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, said: "Our findings suggest the possibility that many people do not engage in celebrity worship for mere entertainment.

"Rather, there appears to be a clear clinical component to attitudes and behaviours associated with celebrity worshipping."

**Three types of celebrity worship**

The study of around 700 people aged 18 to 60 discovered that there were three types of Celebrity Worship Syndrome.

Those with a **mild affliction** were likely to be extroverts, with a lot of friends. Their worst symptom - at least for their friends - was a passion for talking about their chosen celebrity.

Dr Maltby said: "We found that 22 per cent of our sample had the low-level form of Celebrity Worship Syndrome, while 12 per cent showed signs of the moderate form which meant they had an intense personal type relationship with their idol.

"The third group, the **hardcore CWS sufferers**, are solitary, impulsive, anti-social and troublesome, with insensitive traits.

"They feel they have a special bond with their celebrity, believe their celebrity knows them and are prepared to lie or even die for their hero.

Around 2 per cent of people had the most serious form of the syndrome, meaning their celebrity worship was borderline pathological."

**What causes CWS?**

What drives people into celebrity worship is not clear, Dr Maltby said. He suggested one possibility was that it was a substitute for more conventional relationships.

"The people we have been looking at home in on one celebrity, usually people from TV, films and sport," said Dr Maltby. "It is not necessarily a bad thing. Many people are interested in celebrities. Young men who are obsessed with David Beckham, for instance, have a very positive role model.

"We are beginning to define CWS for the first time. Research is suggesting that people with CWS may be replacing normal relationships with these relationships. If that proves to be the case, it would be very worrying for society."

**Almost a religion**

According to psychologists, fan bases often resemble religions. The strong similarity of Star Trek fans to a religious cult has been widely noted, with fans organising conventions and recruiting new followers.

The obsessiveness of celebrity followers can also resemble religious worship. For example, fans will frequently pursue an interest in one celebrity and denigrate competing stars.

Fans will also perform rituals which have parallels in religion or cults. For example, they make sure they watch all of a celebrity's television appearances and try to collect items that have been touched by their chosen star.

by JAMES CHAPMAN, Daily Mail

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-176598/Do-worship-celebs.html>