

Public Opinion Background Note 129(produced 5th September 1982)1. Introduction

The MORI opinion poll published in the Daily Star on Saturday 4th September was conducted between August 19th and 24th and found a 14% Conservative lead over Labour. The survey found 44% claimed they would vote Conservative, 30% Labour, 24% Liberal/SDP Alliance and 2% for 'other' parties. Our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was conducted after the MORI survey, between August 25th and 30th and found only an 8% Conservative lead over Labour. The survey found 40% claiming they would vote Conservative (45½% 18/23 August), 32% Labour (27% 18/23 August), 15% Social Democrat (16½% 18/23 August). The table shows a comparison of recent surveys.

MORI, Gallup and Marplan polls

	<u>MORI</u>	<u>Marplan</u>	<u>Gallup</u>
	(19th/24 Aug)	(18th/20 Aug)	(25th/30 Aug)
	%	%	%
Conservative	44	41	40
Labour	30	37	32
Liberal/SDP Alliance	24	20	26½
Other	2	2	1½

The results of our Gallup study confirm in part the results of the Marplansurvey conducted between August 18th and 20th which found 41% claiming they would vote Conservative, 37% Labour, 20% Liberal/SDP and 2% for 'other' parties. It would appear that there was a drop in Conservative support and increase in Labour support at the end of August. We will need to wait for the results of further surveys before we can draw firm conclusions as to whether these changes represent a permanent change in the balance of support between the Labour and Conservative parties. There is no evidence in any of the surveys to indicate any improvement in the level of support for either of the Alliance Parties.

The table on the following page shows the level of support for the main parties, when those respondents who did not give an answer to the standard voting intention questions are excluded. As can be seen even after the latest fall in support 40% of respondents claim they will vote Conservative - this compares to 25½% at the start of January and 49% at the 'peak' of support during the Falklands Crisis. The combined level of Liberal and Social Democrat support in the latest study was 26½% compared with 42% in early January 1982. The combined support for the two Alliance Parties has remained around the 25% level since early Sep.

VOTING INTENTION(unprompted question, excluding
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> DEMOCRAT	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u> DEMOCRAT
<u>1979</u>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	+ 7.0	13.8
13/16 June*	42.0	43.5	13.0	-	5.0	- 9.0	13.0
<u>1980</u>							
6/11 Jan	25.5	30.0	17.0	25.0	2.5	- 4.5	42.0
13/18 Jan	27.5	29.5	13.0	26.5	3.5	- 2.5**	39.5
20/25 Jan	30.0	27.0	14.0	26.5	2.5	+ 3.0	40.5
27 Jan/1 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	24.0	3.0	0.0	39.0
3/8 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	26.0	1.0	0.0	41.0
10/15 Feb	27.5	34.0	14.5	21.5	2.5	- 6.5**	35.0
17/22 Feb	26.5	33.5	14.0	22.0	4.0	- 7.0	36.0
24 Feb/1 March	31.0	32.5	11.0	22.5	3.0	- 1.5	33.5
3/8 March	30.0	33.5	11.5	21.0+	4.0	- 3.5	32.5
11/15 March	31.5	33.0	11.5	21.5+	2.5	- 1.5**	33.0
17/22 March	34.0	30.0	11.0	21.0+	4.0	+ 4.0	32.0
24/29 March	32.0	28.0	11.0	27.5+	1.5	+ 4.0	38.5
31 March/5 April	34.0	27.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+ 7.0	36.0
7/12 April	31.5	29.0	11.0	26.0+	2.5	+ 2.5**	37.0
13/19 April	31.0	30.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+ 1.0	36.0
21/26 April	31.5	33.0	10.5	24.5+	0.5	- 1.5	35.0
28 April/3 May	37.0	30.5	11.0	20.0+	1.5	+ 6.5	31.0
5/10 May	41.5	28.0	9.5	19.5+	1.5	+ 13.5**	29.0
12/17 May	42.0	31.0	10.0	16.0+	1.0	+ 11.5	26.0
19/24 May	45.0	27.0	11.0	15.0+	2.0	+ 18.0	26.0
26/31 May	45.5	27.0	9.5	16.0+	2.0	+ 18.5	25.5
2/7 June	48.5	23.5	11.5	14.5+	2.0	+ 25.0	26.0
9/14 June	45.0	25.0	10.0	18.5+	1.5	+ 20.0**	28.5
16/21 June	49.0	24.0	10.0	15.5+	2.0	+ 25.0	25.5
23/28 June	45.5	29.0	10.0	13.0+	2.5	+ 16.5	23.0
30 June/5 July	45.0	25.5	12.5	15.0+	2.0	+ 19.5	27.5
7/12 July	46.5	27.5	7.5	16.5+	2.0	+ 19.0**	24.0
14/19 July	44.0	27.5	8.5	18.0+	2.0	+ 16.5	26.5
21/26 July	39.0	30.5	10.0	17.5+	3.0	+ 8.5	27.5
28 July/2 Aug	43.5	30.0	8.5	16.0+	2.0	+ 13.5	24.5
4/9 Aug	46.0	28.0	9.0	13.5+	3.5	+18.0	22.5
11/16 Aug	44.5	26.5	10.5	17.0+	1.5	+18.0**	27.5
18/23 Aug	45.5	27.0	9.0	16.5+	2.0	+18.5	25.5
25/30 Aug	40.0	32.0	11.5	15.0+	1.5	+ 8.0	26.5

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

+ Includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The latest 'tracking' study found a sharp drop in the popularity of the Government 37% of respondents claimed to approve of our record in government, 52% disapprove and 11% did not have a view. Approval of the record of the Government has tended to drift downwards since the peak reached during the Falklands Islands Crisis when Gallup found approval for the record of the Government reaching 50%. Even after the latest fall the popularity of the Government remains much higher than at the start of the year when 23% approved of our record, 41% disapproved and 25% did not have a view.

Details of the trend since the start of the year are shown in the table below:-

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
6/11 January	23	65	12
13/18 January	24	65	12
20/25 January	26	62	13
27 Jan/1 Feb	25	62	13
3/8 Feb	26	63	11
10/15 Feb	24	66	10
17/22 Feb	22	66	13
24 Feb/1 March	23	63	13
3/8 March	24	65	11
11/15 March	29	59	12
17/22 March	28	60	13
24/29 March	29	58	13
31 March/ 5 April	31	57	12
7/12 April	32	56	12
14/19 April	34	54	12
21/26 April	34	55	11
28 April/3 May	40	47	13
5/10 May	42	46	12
12/17 May	43	42	15
19/24 May	46	44	10
26/31 May	50	38	12
2/7 June	49	39	12
9/14 June	48	40	12
16/21 June	51	36	13
23/28 June	47	41	12
30 June/5 July	47	39	14
7/12 July	47	41	12
14/19 July	44	43	13
21/26 July	43	45	12
28 July/2 Aug	43	43	15
4/9 Aug	42	45	12
11/16 Aug	42	44	14
18/23 Aug	43	43	14
25/30 Aug	37	52	11

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs Thatcher's popularity showed a marked drop in our latest 'tracking' study - Gallup found 44% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister (49% 18/23 August). As with voting intention and Government popularity Mrs Thatcher's popularity still remains much higher than at the start of the year when 30% claimed to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 65% dissatisfied and 5% did not have a view.

Mr Foot's popularity improved slightly in the latest study - 18% thought he is a good leader of the Labour Party, 72% thought he is not and 10% did not have a view.

Mr Steel remains popular and the latest study found no real change - 61% of electors thought he is a good leader of the Liberals, 19% thought he is a bad leader and 20% did not have a view.

Details of the trends in popularity of the three main leaders are shown below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-</u> <u>sat.</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1982</u>									
6/11 January	30	65	5	20	65	14	62	20	18
13/18 January	32	65	4	18	67	16	59	22	19
20/25 January	32	64	4	17	68	15	59	22	19
27 Jan/1 Feb	33	62	5	19	64	17	60	18	22
3/8 Feb	31	65	4	20	63	17	61	20	19
10/15 Feb	29	66	5	19	66	15	59	23	17
17/22 Feb	29	65	5	20	64	16	58	20	21
24 Feb/1 March	32	63	5	21	64	15	55	23	22
3/8 March	30	66	4	20	64	16	58	24	18
11/15 March	34	62	4	21	65	14	58	22	10
17/22 March	33	62	5	22	64	14	59	21	20
24/29 March	35	59	6	19	65	15	61	20	19
31 March/5 April	37	58	5	20	65	15	60	22	18
7/12 April	35	60	5	23	61	16	63	18	19
13/19 April	36	60	5	28	59	14	63	18	19
21/26 April	37	59	4	26	60	14	66	17	17
28 April/3 May	41	53	6	24	65	12	62	20	18
5/10 May	44	51	6	18	71	11	64	20	17
12/17 May	48	47	5	17	71	12	65	18	17
19/24 May	47	48	5	18	72	10	63	18	19
26/31 May	50	43	7	16	75	10	64	18	19
2/7 June	53	42	5	15	74	5	61	21	18
9/14 June	51	44	5	14	75	11	62	21	18
16/21 June	55	40	5	17	74	9	58	20	20
23/28 June	52	42	5	14	75	10	62	19	20
30 June/5 July	53	41	6	14	77	9	64	18	18
7/12 July	52	43	5	16	72	12	61	20	19
14/19 July	49	46	5	14	75	11	60	18	21
21/26 July	47	47	6	15	74	11	59	21	20
28 July/2 Aug	48	46	6	14	75	11	62	18	20
4/9 Aug	48	47	5	12	73	12	60	20	20
11/16 Aug	49	47	4	15	74	11	62	19	19
18/23 Aug	49	46	5	12	74	13	58	21	21
25/30 Aug	44	50	6	18	72	10	61	19	20

4. Published Polls

(a) MORI (Daily Star 3rd September)

The Daily Star on 3rd September included details of a MORI survey conducted between August 19th and 24th on attitudes of trade unionists.

MORI asked respondents whether they thought strikes should be declared without first holding a secret ballot of all union members concerned. Among Trade Unionists 84% wanted a secret ballot before a strike and among the electorate as a whole 80%

As in a number of previous studies the MORI survey found overwhelming agreement among electors with the view that trade unions have too much power. This view was held by 71% of people in the electorate and 62% of union members.

MORI found that 65% of electors believe that the unions are controlled by a few extremists and militants, 64% of trade unionists held the same view.

When asked who they thought was to blame for Britain's economic problems, 40% of the electorate and 52% of trade unionists took the view that bad management was more to blame for Britain's economic problems than the unions.

(b) N.O.P. (Observer 5th September 1982)

The Observer on 5th September included details of a NOP poll conducted in late August on attitudes towards unemployment.

The survey found that approximately 25% of Britain's workers have been unemployed at some point in the last year. In terms of blame for unemployment the survey found 31% blaming the Government, 20% the world recession, 6% high wage demands, 6% the trade unions and 5% laziness among workers.

When asked about the future more than two-thirds of respondents thought that none of the political parties had the right answer to cure unemployment and 64% said they did not believe politicians who said they could solve unemployment. However 46% believed that there are some steps that could be taken to reduce unemployment.

The survey found 71% of electors thought that trade unions have too much power and the majority of electors (including a majority of trade unionists) believe that union leaders are out of touch with the views of their ordinary members. But when trade unionists were asked whether they thought the leaders of their own unions were out of touch with their members only 48% thought they were out of touch and 45% thought they were in touch.

The NOP survey found widespread backing for the election of union leaders by secret postal ballot - 64% approved of this idea. Just under two-thirds of respondents believed that workers in essential services like health workers, firemen and the police should lose the right to strike in return for a guaranteed annual pay rise.

In terms of voting intention NOP found 44% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33% Labour and 20% for one of the Alliance Parties.

(c) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 5th September 1982)

The Sunday Telegraph on 5th September 1982 included the results of a Gallup survey on attitudes to the Trade Unions. The interviews for the survey were conducted between August 25th and 30th. The summary below includes some material made available to us by Gallup and not included in the Sunday Telegraph report.

Gallup asked respondents whether they approved or disapproved about six ideas for the reform of the law on trade unions:-

	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Trade Union</u>
	%	<u>Members</u>
	%	%
<u>Closed shops should be established only if a majority of workers vote for them</u>		
Approve	69	72
Disapprove	21	21
Don't know	10	7
<u>No strikes to be called unless there is a postal ballot of union members involved</u>		
Approve	83	79
Disapprove	11	16
Don't know	6	5
<u>A ban on secondary picketing - that is a ban on picketing a company not directly involved in a strike</u>		
Approve	67	63
Disapprove	25	29
Don't know	8	8
<u>Public money to be used to encourage a wider use of trade union secret ballots</u>		
Approve	40	39
Disapprove	46	48
Don't know	14	14

	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Trade Union</u>
	%	<u>Members</u>
		%
<u>Removal of the right of those in key public service industries to strike in return for a guaranteed wage increases</u>		
Approve	46	46
Disapprove	36	39
Don't know	18	18
<u>A secret ballot on whether or not to pay the political levy to the Labour Party</u>		
Approve	48	50
Disapprove	33	33
Don't know	19	17

69% of the electorate (72% of trade union members) approved of the proposal that 'closed shops should be established if a majority of workers vote for them'. 83% of the electorate (79% of trade union members) approved of the proposal that 'no strikes to be called unless there is a postal ballot of union members involved'. 67% approved of the idea of a 'ban on secondary picketing - that is a ban on picketing a company not directly involved in a strike' (63% of trade unionists took this view). 40% of respondents approved of 'public money to be used to encourage a wider use of trade union secret ballots' - 46% disapproved of the idea. Among trade union members 39% approved and 48% disapproved. The idea of 'the removal of the right of those in key public service industries to strike in return for guaranteed wage increases' was approved by 46% of respondents (disapproved by 36%). Among trade unionists 46% approved and 39% disapproved. On the question of the political levy 48% of respondents (50% of trade unionists) approved of the idea of 'a secret ballot on whether or not to pay the political levy to the Labour Party'. 33% of the electorate, including 33% of trade unionists disapproved of the proposal.

Gallup asked 'Do you think that workers on strike at a factory or company should or should not be able to picket the factory so long as the picketing is peaceful?' 80% thought they should (86% of trade unionists) and 16% (11% of trade unionists) thought they should not.

On the question of secondary picketing Gallup asked 'Do you think that people who are not employed by a particular factory or company where there is a strike should or should not be able to support the strike by joining the picketing?' 23% thought workers not employed at a factory should be allowed to join the pickets (including 29% of trade unionists). 71% took the view that workers not employed at a factory should not be allowed to join the pickets (including 65% of trade unionists).

When Gallup asked 'Do you think that strikes for political reasons are or are not justified they found only 24% thinking they are justified (28% of trade unionists) and 63% they are not justified (59% of trade unionists). 54% of respondents including 48% of trade unionists thought that trade union leaders should be sent to prison for defying the law. 34% of the electorate, including 40% of trade unionists thought they should not be sent to prison.

Gallup asked a number of questions on wage increases. They found:-

	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Trade Unionists</u>
	%	%
<u>Q. In the present situation should trade unions hold back wage claims or go ahead with them ?</u>		
Hold back	37	25
Go back	48	62
Don't know	15	11
<u>Q. As a measure to combat inflation would you yourself be willing or not to accept a wage increase over the next 12 months that is about half the rise in the cost of living ?</u>		
Yes	49	48
No	31	39
If everyone did	6	6
Don't know	15	7
<u>Q. As a measure to combat inflation would you yourself be willing to accept no wage increase at all over the next 6 months?</u>		
Yes	41	39
No	37	47
If everyone did	6	5
Don't know	15	9

43% of respondents (including 38% of trade unionists) approved of the Government's plans to reform trade Union law. 32% of respondents (including 42% of trade unionists) disapproved. Gallup also asked 'Do you think the Government's plans to reform trade union law are helping or harming industrial relations in this

country'. 18% (14% of trade unionists) thought they are helping, 50% (60% of trade unionists) thought they are harming and 10% (11% of trade unionists) thought they are having no effect.

(a) Audience Selection (The Sun 6th September 1982)

The Sun on 6th September included details of an Audience Selection survey on attitudes to trade union leaders. They found that only 30% of electors thought union leaders represent their members views - 70% thought they did not. They found only 32% thinking trade unions are good for Britain, 46% bad for Britain and 22% did not have a view. 77% of respondents thought the trade unions have too much power - 7% too little power and 16% 'about the right amount of power'.

The survey found nearly 8 out of 10 electors supporting the idea of secret ballots before a strike. Audience Selection also found two out of every three electors taking the view that union leaders should be elected by secret ballot for a fixed term instead of for life. A similar number - including a clear majority of union members want the closed shop abolished. On the question of secondary picketing 62% believe picketing should be limited to those directly involved in a dispute.

(e) MORI (Panorama 6th September 1982)

A MORI survey conducted for Panorama found 45% of trade unionists claiming they will vote Labour, 33% Conservative and 18% Liberal - SDP Alliance. This compares with the situation in the May 1979 General Election when 33% of trade unionists voted Conservative, 51% Labour and 13% for the Liberals.