

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 113

(produced 17th May 1982)

1. Introduction

The results of our latest 'tracking' study are the same as the results of the Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday, 13th May. In terms of their published polls Gallup found a 10 per cent increase in Conservative support when compared with the results of the April poll (31½% April, 41½% May). This is almost the highest level of Conservative support in any published Gallup poll since May 1979. On a similar comparison, Labour support is down from 29% to 28% and Alliance support down from 37% to 29%.

If we compare the results of this latest study with the trend in our unpublished weekly tracking studies it shows a continuation of the sharp upward trend in Conservative support we found for the first time in our previous study (conducted 28 April/3 May). Labour support has fallen back to the low point reached in late-March. Support for the Social Democrats in the latest study continues the downward trend we have found since late March - down from 27½% (24/29 March) to 19½% (5/10 May). Liberal support has fluctuated slightly in recent weeks at around 10 per cent.

The latest study found 41½% claiming they would vote Conservative, 28% Labour, 19½% Social Democrat and 9½% Liberal. Details of the trend in support for the main parties since the start of the year are shown below:-

VOTING INTENTION

(unprompted question, excluding don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL AND SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<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>1982</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	40.0
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

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

+ Includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance

2. Government Record

The tracking study conducted 5/10 May found 42% of the electorate approving of the record of the Government to date, 46% disapproved and 12% did not have a view. This is the highest level of popularity for the Government since it was elected. In early January 1982 only 23% approved of our record. Details of the trend of approval /disapproval for the record of the Government are shown 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
13/19 April	34	54	12
21/26 April	34	55	11
28 April/ 3 May	40	47	13
5/10 May	42	46	12

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs Thatcher's popularity is at its highest since the Election with 44% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 51% dissatisfied and 6% with no view. This represents a slight rise from the previous unpublished tracking study (conducted 28 April/3 May) which found 41% satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister. Mr Foot's popularity dropped further in the latest study -

- only 18% thought he is a good leader of the Opposition, 71% thought he is not and 11% did not have a view. Mr Steel's popularity remained almost unchanged.

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/ 1st 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

4. Published Polls

(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 13th May 1982)

In addition to the standard tracking questions considered above, the Daily Telegraph on 13th May 1982 included the results of a number of other questions.

Gallup found mentions of the Falkland Islands conflict as the most urgent problem facing the country having increased to 42% compared with 27% in April 1982, but unemployment still leading the list of problems with 45% mentioning (47% in April). Analysis of party support shows the Conservatives putting the Falklands as their top problem as did the Liberals, but supporters of Labour and the SDP regarded unemployment as being the most urgent problem. They found 71% of the electorate approved of the Government's actions over the Falklands.

(b) NOP (Observer 16th May 1982)

The Observer on 16th May 1982 included the results of an NOP survey conducted on 14th May in Beaconsfield. The survey found 63% claiming they would vote Conservative, 22% Alliance and 14% Labour.

NOP asked respondents 'Have events in the Falklands made you more likely to vote for the Government or less likely, or have they made no difference?' 31% replied 'more likely', 8% 'less likely', 58% 'no difference' and 3% did not have a view.

In terms of most urgent issues, NOP found inflation topping the list in Beaconsfield followed by unemployment.

(c) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 16th May 1982)

The Sunday Telegraph on 16th May 1982 included details of Gallup surveys conducted 14/15 May and 5/10 May on attitudes to the Papal visit.

Gallup asked 'Some people say that in light of the current Falkland crisis the Papal visit should be cancelled. Others say that despite the crisis, the visit should go ahead as planned. What do you think?' 63% thought it should go ahead, 24% it should be cancelled and 13% undecided.

(d) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 17th May 1982)

The Daily Telegraph on 17th May included the results of a Gallup survey conducted on 5/10 May on attitudes to the BBC.

Gallup found 62% of the electorate thought the BBC's reporting of the Falklands crisis was fair, 66% took the same view about ITV's coverage.

They asked 'The BBC in particular have been criticised for not fairly representing the British point of view. Do you think this criticism is or is not justified?' 27% thought the criticism is justified, 59% is not justified and 14% did not have a view.

(e) Audience Selection (The Sun 17th May 1982)

The Sun on 17th May included details of an Audience Selection poll conducted by telephone on 14th May 1982. The survey found 55% of the electorate claiming they would vote Conservative, 23% Alliance and 21% Labour.

Audience Selection found 49% of the electorate saying that Mrs Thatcher had contributed most to Britain's interest over the Falklands crisis.

The results of this poll should be treated with caution as telephone interviewing tends to overestimate the level of Conservative support.

(f) MORI (BBC Panorama 17th May 1982)

Panorama on 17th May included the results of an MORI poll conducted on 16th May. The survey found 48% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33% Labour, 17% Alliance and 2% for 'other' parties.

The MORI survey found 90% of the electorate wanting an immediate withdrawal of the Argentine forces in the Falklands. 70% thought a prompt return to the full British administration is essential and 62% wanted the Falkland Islands to have the final say on the future of the Islands.

If the negotiations do break down they found 59% would opt for a full scale invasion, 19% an extended blockade, 9% would occupy part of the Falkland Islands, 7% would withdraw the task force and 6% said they do not know what they would do.