

Public Opinion Background Note 142

(produced 6th December 1982)

1. Introduction

The Gallup organisation conducted the interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study from 24th to 29th November and they interviewed 951 electors. The survey found a very sharp increase in Conservative support from 41½% (17/22 November) to 46½% in the latest study. Labour support fell from 33% to 32% over the same period. Alliance support fell from 23% to 19%. It is too early to conclude whether these figures represent a permanent upward movement in Conservative support - we will need to wait for the results of further surveys before drawing any firm conclusions. If this latest jump in Conservative support is confirmed it will take our support back almost to the peak of support reached during the Falklands Crisis when 49% claimed they would vote Conservative (16/21 June). The current level of support compares with the situation at the start of 1982 when 25½% claimed they would vote Conservative. Labour support has fluctuated between 23½% and 35% in 1982. The latest study found 32% claiming they would vote Labour - only 2 percentage points higher than in early January 1982 when 30% claimed they would vote Labour. The combined level of Liberal/Social Democrat support has fallen from 42% in early January 1982 to 19% in the latest study. If the findings from this latest study are confirmed they will represent the lowest level of Alliance support this year. It is perhaps worth pointing out that some evidence exists that opinion polls are tending to underestimate the level of Social Democrat support.

Details of the trend of support for the main parties since the start of 1982 are shown in the table overleaf.

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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL & 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
13/13 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
3/3 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
3/3 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	- 13.0	26.0
26/31 May	45.5	27.0	9.5	16.0+	2.0	+ 13.5	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**	23.5
16/21 June	49.0	24.0	10.0	13.5-	2.0	- 25.0	23.5
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	16.0-	1.0	- 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	-13.0	22.5
11/16 Aug	44.5	26.5	10.5	17.0+	1.5	-16.0**	27.5
18/23 Aug	45.5	27.0	9.0	16.5-	2.0	-13.5	25.5
25/30 Aug	40.0	32.0	11.5	16.0-	1.5	- 8.0	26.5
1/6 Sept	43.5	28.5	8.0	17.0-	3.0	-15.0	25.0
9/13 Sept	44.0	30.5	8.5	14.5-	2.5	-13.5**	23.0
15/21 Sept	42.0	33.0	8.0	15.0+	2.0	- 9.0	23.0
22/27 Sept	43.0	29.5	12.5	13.0+	2.0	-13.5	26.5
29 Sept/4 Oct	40.0	31.5	13.5	13.0+	2.0	+ 3.5	26.5
6/11 Oct	42.5	32.0	10.5	13.0+	2.0	+10.5	23.5
13/18 Oct	43.0	31.0	9.0	13.5+	3.5	+12.0	22.5
20/25 Oct	40.5	29.0	12.0	15.0+	3.5	+11.5**	27.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	48.0	31.0	8.5	11.0+	1.5	+17.0	19.5
3/10 Nov	44.0	33.0	9.0	12.0+	2.0	+11.0	21.0
10/15 Nov	42.0	35.0	8.0	13.0+	2.0	+7.0**	21.0
17/22 Nov	41.5	33.0	9.0	14.0+	2.5	+8.5	23.0
24/29 Nov	46.5	32.0	7.5	11.5+	2.5	+14.5	19.0

* First Gallup Post-Election Survey, ** Published Polls, - includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The latest Gallup study found a sharp improvement in the level of approval of the record of the Government - up from 39% (17/22nd November) to 44% in the latest study. We will need to await the results of further surveys before drawing any firm conclusions based on this survey. The latest findings compare with a peak of 51% claiming to be satisfied with the record of the Government during the Falklands Crisis. Details of the trend from this Government record question since the start of the year are shown below.

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/13 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
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
1/6 Sept	41	45	14
8/13 Sept	40	48	13
15/21 Sept	38	49	13
22/27 Sept	38	50	12
29 Sept/4 Oct	36	51	13
6/11 Oct	40	47	13
13/18 Oct	38	48	14
20/25 Oct	40	49	11
27/Oct/1 Nov	42	45	13
3/10 Nov	41	45	15
10/15 Nov	39	48	13
17/22 Nov	39	47	13
24/29 Nov	44	44	13

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The study conducted from 24th to 29th November found an improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity - Gallup found 48% of the electorate claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 47% dissatisfied and 5% not having a view. This compares with 30% who claimed to be 'satisfied' with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister in early January, 65% dissatisfied and 5% with no view. The study found a fall in Mr Foot's popularity - it found 18% approving of his record as Leader of the Opposition. This is still higher than the nadir of approval for Mr Foot reached in August when only 12% approved of his record as Leader of the Opposition. Mr Steel's popularity dropped very slightly in the latest study. Details of the trend of approval for the leaders of three main parties 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	13	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	
11/16 March	34	62	4	21	65	14	58	22	19	
17/22 March	33	62	5	22	64	14	59	21	20	
24/29 March	35	59	5	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	23	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	13	74	13	58	21	21	
25/30 Aug	44	50	4	18	72	10	61	19	20	
1/ Sept	49	45	5	14	74	12	59	20	21	
8/13 Sept	48	47	5	16	74	10	59	21	20	
15/21 Sept	46	49	5	14	73	12	62	19	19	
22/27 Sept	46	50	4	16	74	11	64	20	18	
29 Sept/4 Oct	44	51	5	27	60	13	64	19	17	
6/11 Oct	46	48	5	25	62	13	62	22	17	
13/18 Oct	45	50	5	23	66	11	66	25	19	
20/25 Oct	46	50	4	20	69	12	60	22	18	
27 Oct/1 Nov	48	48	4	20	66	14	57	24	18	
3/10 Nov	48	48	5	23	65	11	58	24	18	
10/15 Nov	44	52	5	22	67	12	59	22	19	
17/22 Nov	44	51	5	25	63	11	59	20	20	
24/29 Nov	48	47	5	18	68	14	57	22	20	

4. Published Polls(a) MORI (Daily Express 1st December 1982)

The Daily Express on Wednesday 1st December 1982 included details of the results of a MORI study conducted between November 18th and 24th. The survey found 43% claiming they would vote Conservative, 35% Labour, 21% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties. Details of the trend of support for the parties is shown below:-

	<u>MORI Voting Intention</u>		
	<u>November</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>
	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1981</u>
	%	%	%
Conservative	43	43	27
Labour	35	32	27
Alliance	21	23	44
Other	1	2	2

MORI also found:-

- Labour has lost support among the 18 to 24 age group and we have a 2% lead.
- Among trade unionists Labour has lost 10% of its support since the last election.
- The two nation divide in Britain is still marked. A Labour lead of 17% in Scotland and 4% in the North of England becomes a Conservative lead of 6% in the Midlands and 22% in the South.
- In support from home-owners we lead Labour by 55 - 24 per cent. Council tenants reverse it and give a 54 - 21 per cent lead to Labour.

(b) Gallup (Channel Four News 28th November 1982)

The Channel Four News programme on 28th November included details of a Gallup poll conducted from 17th to 22nd November on attitudes to the Common Market.

Gallup asked 'Generally speaking, do you think that British membership of the Common Market is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad.' 25% thought our membership was a good thing, 46% a bad thing, 22% neither good nor bad and 7% did not have a view. Details of the answers to this question among the supporters of the main parties are shown over:-

Membership of the Common MarketGood/Bad

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
		<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Good	25	34	16	24	27
Bad	46	34	53	47	47
Neither	22	26	21	23	22
Don't know	7	6	10	6	5

When Gallup asked 'If you were to be told tomorrow that the European Community (Common Market) had been scrapped would you be very sorry about it, indifferent or relieved', they found 19% claiming to be 'very sorry', 34% 'indifferent', 42% 'relieved' and 5% with no view.

Gallup found only 10% of electors seeing the Common Market as being united, 78% divided and 12% having no view.

Gallup asked 'Do you think the Government's policy on the Common Market has been too tough, not tough enough or about right.' 5% of electors thought our policies have been too tough, 54% 'not tough enough,' 28% about right and 13% did not have a view.

When Gallup asked about how electors would vote on a referendum on membership 36% claimed they would vote to stay in, 54% to leave and 10% that they would not vote or did not know how they would vote.

(c) Economist Intelligence Unit (The Economist 4th December 1982)

The Economist on 4th December included details of an Economist Intelligence Unit survey conducted from 10th to 27th September among the unemployed. Among the unemployed E.I.U. found 23% claiming they would vote Conservative, 54% Labour and 18% Alliance. The E.I.U. asked the unemployed who they blamed for unemployment. They found:-

Who blamed for unemployment?

	<u>Chief blame</u>	<u>Some blame</u>
	%	%
Nobody/world economy	47	47
Thatcher/this Government	24	28
Government and politicians generally	14	25
Trade Unions	3	7
Workers themselves	1	1
Bosses	1	4
Don't know	10	8