

Public Opinion Background Note 146

(produced 23rd January 1983)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as the results of the Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday 20th January. The interviewing for the survey was conducted from 12th to 17th January and found a 12½% Conservative lead over Labour compared with 6½% in the previous published Gallup poll (conducted 8/13 December). This latest study found 44% claiming they would vote Conservative (43.9% in May 1979 General Election), 31½% Labour (36.9% in May 1979 General Election), 11½% Liberal (13.8% in May 1979 General Election) and 11% for the Social Democrats. Conservative support has fluctuated between 40 percent and 44 percent since early September 1982, Labour support between 28½ percent and 35 percent, Liberal support between 7½ percent and 13½ percent and Social Democrat support between 11 percent and 17 percent.

The two tables overleaf show the trend of support for the main parties since early September - the first shows support when 'don't knows' are excluded (the 'conventional' way of presenting opinion research findings) and the second shows the figures when don't knows are excluded. In the latest study Gallup found 9% of respondents who did not give a voting intention or claimed they did not know how they would vote.

If we projected these latest Gallup results forward to a General Election fought on the existing boundaries they might result in the return of a Conservative Government with an overall majority of over 100 seats.

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>1982</u>							
1/6 Sept	43.5	28.5	8.0	17.0+	3.0	+15.0	25.0
8/13 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	25.5
29 Sept/4 Oct	40.0	31.5	13.5	13.0+	2.0	+8.5	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
1/6 Dec	43.0	35.0	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+8.0	20.0
8/13 Dec	41.0	34.5	9.0	13.0+	2.5	+6.5**	22.0
<u>1983</u>							
7/11 Jan	44.0	33.0	10.5	11.0+	1.5	+11.0	21.5
12/17 Jan	44.0	31.5	11.5	11.0+	2.0	+12.5	22.5

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

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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>DON'T</u> <u>KNOW</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL</u> & <u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>								
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	-	+7.0	13.8
<u>1982</u>								
1/6 Sept	39.0	26.0	7.0	15.0	3.0	10.0	+13.0	22.0
8/13 Sept	40.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	2.0	8.0	+12.0**	21.0
15/21 Sept	38.0	29.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	11.0	+9.0	19.0
22/27 Sept	39.0	27.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	24.0
29th Sept/4th Oct	37.0	29.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	8.0	+8.0	24.0
6/11 Oct	38.0	29.0	10.0	12.0	1.0	10.0	+9.0	22.0
13/18 Oct	39.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	3.0	9.0	+11.0	21.0
20/25 Oct	37.0	27.0	11.0	13.0	4.0	8.0	+10.0**	24.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	44.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	8.0	+16.0	18.0
3/10 Nov	41.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	2.0	8.0	+10.0	19.0
10/15 Nov	38.0	31.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	10.0	+7.0**	19.0
17/22 Nov	41.0	29.0	11.0	9.0	1.0	9.0	+12.0	20.0
24/29 Nov	41.0	29.0	7.0	10.0	2.0	11.0	+12.0	17.0
1/6 Dec	39.0	32.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+7.0	18.0
8/13 Dec	37.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	3.0	10.0	+6.0**	19.0
<u>1983</u>								
7/11 Jan	39.5	29.5	9.5	9.5	1.5	10.5	+10.0	19.0
12/17 Jan	40.0	29.0	10.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+11.0	20.0

** Published polls, + includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

This latest study found, when compared both with the results of the previous published Gallup study, a sharp improvement in the popularity of the Government - the proportion of those approving of the record of the Government to date improved from 37% to 43%. The proportion disapproving fell from 50% to 43%. The latest study found almost no change in approval/disapproval of the Government when compared with the result of our first study in 1983.

Details of the trend of replies to this standard question since early September 1982 are shown below:-

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
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
1/6 Dec	42	47	11
8/13 Dec	37	50	13
<u>1983</u>			
7/11 Jan	43	44	13
12/17 Jan	43	43	14

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest published study found, when compared with the previous published study, a sharp improvement in Mrs Thatcher's popularity. In December (8/13) Gallup found 44% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister - this had increased to 49% in the latest study. On the same basis of comparison Mr Foot's popularity fell from 20% to 17%, Mr Steel's popularity improved from 60% to 62% and Mr Jenkin's popularity fell from 34% to 30%.

Details of the trend since early September 1982 of the popularity of the Leaders of the four main parties are shown in the table below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>			<u>Mr Jenkins</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>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

1982

1/6 Sept	49	45	6	14	74	12	59	20	21	35	30	35
8/13 Sept	48	47	5	16	74	10	59	21	20	37	32	31
15/21 Sept	46	49	6	14	73	12	62	19	19	33	34	33
22/27 Sept	46	50	4	16	74	11	64	20	16	35	31	34
29 Sept/4 Oct	44	51	5	27	60	13	64	19	17	36	33	31
6/11 Oct	46	48	6	25	62	13	62	22	17	35	33	32
13/18 Oct	45	50	5	23	66	11	56	25	19	34	36	30
20/25 Oct	46	50	4	20	69	12	60	22	18	35	34	31
27 Oct/1 Nov	48	48	4	20	66	14	57	24	18	35	37	28
3/10 Nov	48	48	5	23	65	11	58	24	18	34	37	29
10/15 Nov	44	52	5	22	67	12	59	22	19	37	33	30
17/22 Nov	44	51	5	25	63	11	59	20	20	33	36	31
24/29 Nov	48	47	5	18	68	14	57	22	20	31	35	34
1/6 Dec	45	51	5	23	67	10	62	18	19	35	34	31
8/13 Dec	44	53	4	20	69	10	60	23	17	34	34	31

1983

7/11 Jan	48	47	6	18	68	14	62	20	17	30	33	36
12/17 Jan	49	45	6	17	69	14	62	19	19	30	31	39

4. Published Polls(a) MORI (BBC North West 'Coast to Coast' - 20th January 1983)

The BBC North West programme 'Coast to Coast' on 20th January 1983 included details of a MORI poll conducted on 12/13 January in two SDP seats in the North West - Thornaby (Ian Wrigglesworth) and Stockton (Bill Rodgers). MORI conducted a similar poll on the eve of the SDP's formation in 1981.

In the 1981 poll when MORI asked respondents how they would vote if there was a General Election and their MP stood as a Social Democrat they found in Thornaby 36% of respondents said they would have supported Ian Wrigglesworth - in the latest poll only 18% said they would support him. In Stockton in 1981 39% said they would support William Rodgers, in the latest study only 16% said they would support him.

Asked whether on leaving the Labour Party to join the SDP their MP should have resigned his seat and stood in a by-election a majority of those questioned in both constituencies by a margin of almost two to one believed that they should.

(b) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 20th January 1983)

In addition to the standard tracking questions the Gallup survey published in the Daily Telegraph on 20th January included results from a range of other questions.

The survey found unemployment remaining the public's choice as the most urgent problem facing the country - 79% mentioning it as the top problem and 89% as one of the top two problems. The cost of living is mentioned by 28% as one of the top two problems followed by defence.

Gallup also showed respondents a list of 12 possible topics for the next election and asked them which should be concentrated on by the politicians. The replies were:-

	<u>January</u>	<u>December</u>
	<u>1983</u>	<u>1982</u>
Unemployment (%)	87	89
Cost of Living (%)	60	59
National Health Service (%)	40	42
Law and Order (%)	38	41
Defence (%)	37	30
Education and schools (%)	35	38
Housing, rates, rents (%)	34	33
Taxation (%)	28	28
Pensions (%)	27	31
Immigration, race relations (%)	25	23
Common Market (%)	23	22
Trade Unions (%)	21	20

Gallup then asked respondents which party had the best policies to deal with eight specific issues. In the table below a 'C' indicates the Conservatives ahead of Labour by the specified number of percentage points and an 'L' signifies a Labour advantage.

	<u>Party Best to Deal with Issue</u>		
	<u>January</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>November</u>
	<u>1983</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>
Britain's Defence	C32	C28	C30
Law and Order	C30	C27	NA
Inflation and Prices	C27	C24	C27
Strikes and Industrial Disputes	C15	C11	C7
Common Market	C14	C10	C10
Education and Schools	L4	L6	NA
Unemployment	L18	L19	L17
National Health Service	L22	L22	L20

The Conservative Party has an advantage with regard to reputation for dealing with defence, law and order, inflation, strikes and the Common Market. Labour has an advantage on reputation for dealing with education, unemployment and the National Health Service.

In terms of the party with the best policies overall and the best Leaders Gallup found that we have a substantial advantage over the other parties. Details are shown below:-

	<u>Best Policies and Best Leaders</u>			
	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Oct</u>
	<u>1983</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>
	%	%	%	%
<u>Best Policies:</u>				
Conservative	42	38	39	39
Labour	22	28	28	23
Alliance	16	15	14	19
Other	0	0	0	0
Don't know	20	19	19	19
<u>Best Leaders:</u>				
Conservative	53	48	46	48
Labour	13	17	19	13
Alliance	18	20	19	23
Other	0	0	0	0
Don't know	16	15	16	16

(C) MORI (Sunday Times 23rd January 1983)

The Sunday Times on 23rd January 1983 included the results of an MORI poll conducted on 18th January on attitudes to various aspects of nuclear weapons.

MORI asked respondents 'If American cruise missiles are based in this country, should they be under the joint control of the British Government or the sole control of the Americans'. 93% opted for the 'dual key' approach, compared with 2% willing to let the Americans have sole control. The study found that unilateral nuclear disarmament has only minority support. Only 23% thought that Britain should disarm unilaterally compared with 72% who think we should not. This represents a slight hardening of opinion against unilateralism since MORI asked the same question in 1981. There has also been a shift in favour of the independent British nuclear deterrent which is now backed by 59% compared with 52% in 1981. Opposition to the independent deterrent has eased from 37% in 1981 to 34% in the latest study.

The survey found 38% thought the presence of British nuclear weapons decreases the risk of attack, 31% they increase the risk and 24% did not think they have any effect.

The detailed results from the survey are shown below:-

Q. Britain should get rid of all nuclear weapons even if other countries keep theirs

	<u>All</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>18-24</u>	<u>55+</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	23	24	22	12	37	22	27	21
Disagree	72	73	71	87	58	74	69	74
No opinion	5	3	6	1	5	4	5	4

Even among Labour supporters only 37% agreed with the idea of unilateral disarmament, 58% disagreed with the idea and 5% did not have a view.

Q. Britain should allow cruise missiles to be based in Britain

	<u>All</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>18-24</u>	<u>55+</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	36	44	28	55	22	25	28	39
Disagree	54	49	58	35	69	64	61	49
No opinion	10	7	13	10	9	11	11	11

Among Conservative supporters 55% agreed with cruise missiles being based in Britain and 35% disagreed. Among Labour supporters 22% agreed with the idea of basing cruise missiles here and 69% disagreed. Among Alliance supporters 25% agreed and 64% disagreed.

Q. Has the protest at Greenham Common made you more favourable or less favourable to the campaign to prevent cruise missiles being based in Britain or has it made no difference one way or the other?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>18-24</u>	<u>55+</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
More	31	29	32	20	45	35	32	26
Less	14	13	14	20	7	14	10	18
No difference	53	56	50	57	47	50	55	54
No opinion	2	2	3	3	1	1	4	2

Q. Do you think Government spending on (a) nuclear weapons and (b) conventional non-nuclear weapons is too high, too low or about right or no opinion?

	<u>Nuclear Weapons</u>	<u>Conventional Non-Nuclear Weapons</u>
	%	%
About right	29	39½
Too high	51	17
Too low	5	30
No opinion	15	13½

(d) NOP (Observer 23rd January 1983)

The Observer on 23rd January 1983 included the results of an NOP survey conducted on 20th January on attitudes to the Franks report.

The survey found that 71% of electors feel the Government could have done more to prevent the invasion of the Falklands, but misread the warnings. Only 22% agreed with Lord Frank's conclusion that the Government 'could do nothing to prevent the invasion'. The survey found that only one in three electors (35%) believe that the Government should refuse to negotiate with Argentina about control of the islands. A majority (54%) believe 'the only way to ensure lasting peace' is if Britain negotiates with Argentina.

Asked who came out of the Falklands affair with most credit 56% said Mrs Thatcher. Asked who came out of the Falklands affair with least credit 18% said Benn, 17% Foot, 12% Reagan, 11% Lord Carrington and 11% Mrs Thatcher.

(e) NOP (Observer 23rd January 1983)

The Observer on 23rd January included details of an NOP poll conducted on 20th January on attitudes to breakfast TV. They found 37% of electors had watched BBC's 'Breakfast Time' at some time during its first four days on the air. NOP found that 79% of those who watched found the programme either 'very' or 'fairly' interesting, 26% thought it very interesting and 53% fairly interesting.

(f) Marplan (Guardian 24th January 1983)

The Guardian on 24th January 1983 included the results of a Marplan poll on attitudes to nuclear weapons conducted between January 10th and 12th. Details of the main questions asked by Marplan are shown below:-

Q. Should Britain abandon nuclear weapons, no matter what other countries do; or maintain our current nuclear capability; or improve it by spending more money on nuclear weapons?

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Age</u>				<u>Voting Intention</u>		
				<u>18-24</u>	<u>25-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
				%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Abandon	21	19	23	24	23	17	21	8	38	23
Maintain	59	57	60	55	56	65	56	67	44	62
Improve	13	20	6	14	14	11	13	19	10	10
Don't know	7	4	11	7	7	7	10	6	8	5

Marplan found only 21% of electors in favour of abandoning our nuclear weapons - including 8% of Conservative supporters, 38% of Labour supporters and 23% of Alliance supporters. 72% of respondents claimed to be in favour of maintaining or improving our nuclear weapons - including 86% of Conservative supporters, 54% of Labour supporters and 72% of Alliance supporters.

On Trident Marplan asked 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's decision to purchase at an estimated cost of £5 billion the Trident nuclear missile system?' They found:-

Approval/Disapproval Trident

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Age</u>				<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
				<u>18-24</u>	<u>25-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>			
				%	%	%	%			
Approve	25	35	16	21	27	27	22	40	16	19
Disapprove	56	55	58	65	58	53	52	38	71	69
Don't know	19	10	26	14	15	20	27	22	13	12

Marplan found only 25% of respondents in favour of the purchase of Trident - including 40% of Conservative supporters, 16% of Labour supporters and 19% of Alliance supporters. 56% of respondents claimed to disapprove of the purchase of Trident - including 38% of Conservative supporters, 71% of Labour supporters and 69% of Alliance supporters. Men are more likely than women to approve of Trident.

Marplan also asked, 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's decision to allow the Americans to base Cruise missiles on British soil?' They found:-

Approval/Disapproval Cruise

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Age</u>				<u>Voting Intention</u>		
				<u>18-24</u>	<u>25-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	27	39	15	25	24	30	29	44	14	21
Disapprove	61	55	67	64	66	57	58	44	79	69
Don't know	12	6	17	11	10	13	13	13	7	10

They found 27% approving of the decision to base Cruise in Britain - including 44% of Conservative supporters, 14% of Labour supporters and 21% of Alliance supporters. 61% of electors claimed to disapprove of the decision to base Cruise in Britain - including 44% of Conservative supporters, 79% of Labour supporters and 69% of Alliance supporters. Men are more likely than women to approve of Cruise.

On the question of the prospect for world peace Marplan asked 'Do you think the prospects for world peace are better or worse than they were a year ago? - 30% claimed they are better, 40% worse and 31% did not have a view. Marplan also asked 'How likely do you think it is that there will be a nuclear war between now and the year 2,000? 8% thought it 'very likely', 22% 'likely', 33% 'not very likely', 27% 'very unlikely' and 10% did not have a view.

(a) MORI (Sunday Times 23rd January 1983)

The Sunday Times on 23rd January included details of a MORI poll conducted on January 18th on attitudes to the construction of further nuclear power stations. The survey found 43% in favour of banning the building of more nuclear power stations and 41% against such a ban - a fairly inconclusive result.