

Public Opinion Background Note 148

(produced 6th February 1983)

1. Introduction

The interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study was conducted by Gallup from 27th to 31st January 1983. Compared with the results of our previous unpublished study (conducted 18/25 January) this latest survey found a slight fall in Conservative support. The survey found 45% claiming they would vote Conservative (47½% 18/25 January), 31% Labour (30½% 18/25 January), 10% Liberal (9% 18/25 January) and 12% Social Democrat (11% 18/25 January). The Conservative lead over Labour fell from 17% (18/25 January) to 14% in this latest study. These findings if projected into a General Election result could result in a Conservative majority of around 100 seats.

The two tables overleaf show the trend of support for the main parties since early September 1982 - 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 included. In the latest study Gallup found 10% of respondents who did not give a voting intention or claimed they did not know how they would vote.

Voting Intention
(unprompted question, excluding
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u>
				DEMOCRAT		Con over Lab	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
18/25 Jan	47.5	30.5	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+17.0	20.0
27/31 Jan	45.0	31.0	10.0	12.0+	2.0	+14.0	22.0

* 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
18/25 Jan	43.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	10.0	+15.0	18.0
27/31 Jan	40.0	28.0	9.0	11.0	2.0	10.0	+12.0	20.0

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

2. Government Record

This latest study found a sharp fall in the popularity of the Government - 41% claimed to approve of the record of the Government, 44% disapproved and 15% did not have a view. This compares with the situation immediately after the General Election when 34% claimed to approve of the record of the Government, 41% disapproved and 25% did not have a view.

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
18/25 Jan	45	43	12
27/31 Jan	41	44	15

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Gallup found a slight fall in Mrs Thatcher's popularity - the proportion of the electorate claiming to be satisfied fell from 51% to 47%. There was no change in the popularity of the leaders of the other three parties.

Details of the trend since early September 1982 in 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-sat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't 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/1Nov	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
8/1 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
18/25 Jan	51	44	5	18	72	10	61	20	19	33	35	31
27/31 Jan	47	48	5	18	70	13	61	19	21	33	35	32

4. Published Polls(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 4th February 1983)

The Daily Telegraph on 4th February 1983 included details of a Gallup survey conducted from 20th to 25th January on attitudes to the Franks report. Details of the main findings are shown below:-

	<u>Franks Report</u>		
	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
There is no point now in raking over events in the Falklands (%)	69	24	7
The Government should have done more to prevent a war over the Falklands (%)	67	25	8
It would make sense to try to agree with Argentina on the future of the Falklands (%)	65	26	9
We should continue to keep forces on a war footing in the Falklands even if it weakens our defence in Europe (%)	54	32	14
It is not worth £424 million a year from now on to keep the Falklands British (%)	53	35	12
Mrs Thatcher has exploited the Falklands for her own political gains (%)	50	41	9
The Prime Minister was at least partly to blame for Argentina's invasion of the Falklands (%)	47	42	11
I have a higher opinion today of Mrs Thatcher because of the Falklands War (%)	39	48	13

Opinions on the Falklands differ on party lines. For example 64% of Conservatives, but only 17% of Labour supporters agreed that their opinion of Mrs Thatcher had improved. Similarly, while 73% of Labour supporters thought the Prime Minister was at least partly to blame for Argentina's invasion of the Falklands, 22% of Conservatives did so.

The charge that Mrs Thatcher exploited the Falklands for her own political gain was supported by 73% of Labour voters, but by only 25% of Conservatives. A large majority of Conservatives disagree that the Prime Minister was to blame for the invasion (70%) and disagree with the view that Mrs Thatcher exploited the situation for political ends (71%).

(b) System Three (Glasgow Herald 1st February 1983)

The Glasgow Herald on 1st February 1983 included details of a System Three poll conducted in Scotland from January 8th to 17th. Details of the results are shown below:-

Voting Intention - Scotland

	<u>January</u> <u>1983</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1982</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1981</u>	<u>General Election</u> <u>May 1979</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservatives	30	28	15	31
Labour	45	45	40	42
SDP/Liberal	11	15	27	9*
SNP	14	11	17	17

* Liberals only.

The survey found 30% claiming they would vote Conservative, 45% Labour, 11% Alliance and 14% SNP.

(c) MORI (Daily Express 1st February 1983)

The Daily Express on 1st February 1983 included details of a MORI poll conducted from 20th to 26th January.

The survey found 44% claiming they would vote Conservative, 36% Labour, 19% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties. Since the previous MORI study (December 1982) MORI found a two percentage point increase in Conservative support, a one percent increase in Labour support, and a two percentage point fall in Alliance support. MORI found that we have regained a 10% lead over Labour about women - this lead had dropped to 2% in December.

The study found rising public concern over nuclear weapons with 21% saying disarmament is an important issue.

MORI also asked a range of questions about the party leaders. Details are shown overleaf:-

Attitudes to Party Leaders

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>	<u>Mr Foot</u>	<u>Mr Steel</u>	<u>Mr Jenkins</u>
	%	%	%	%
Good in a crisis	46	5	8	6
Capable leader	44	11	30	14
Grasps home problems	35	25	27	21
Talks down to people	43	8	5	13
Out of touch	47	17	7	17
Good personality	27	7	29	9
More honest	26	19	26	12
Too flexible	25	14	5	8
Sound judgement	24	10	20	14
Grasps world Problems	24	20	2	20
Narrow-minded	19	21	6	10
Trustworthy	18	12	21	10
Inexperienced	16	14	22	11

d. Marplan (Guardian 7th February 1983).

The Guardian on 7th February included the results of a Marplan poll conducted between 24th and 26th January. The survey found 46% claiming they would vote Conservative, 30% Labour, 22% Alliance and 2% for 'other' parties - these figures have been calculated to exclude 'don't knows'.

Marplan asked 'Some people say they will do everything they can to stop the siting of Cruise missiles at Greenham Common and Molesworth even if it means breaking the law. Do you think their position is justified or unjustified.' 39% thought their position is justified, 50% unjustified and 11% did not have a view.

They also asked respondents 'Which of these issues do you think will be most important in the next General Election?'

Which of these issues do you think will be most important in the next General Election?

	<u>Age Group</u>							<u>Voting Intention</u>			
	Total	Men	Women	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Con	Lab	L/SD	
Base	1459	701	758	207	509	459	285	553	355	258	
Defence/											
Disarmament	59	62	57	65	63	58	50	62	55	64	
Education	36	29	42	31	39	34	37	33	39	37	
EEC	20	24	16	17	19	24	17	19	20	22	
Health/Social											
services	47	43	50	35	45	50	52	39	56	51	
Housing	22	19	25	23	20	21	27	17	34	15	
Immigration/race											
relations	25	26	25	24	22	28	29	29	21	24	
Inflation	45	45	45	42	49	46	38	47	49	42	
Law & Order	55	57	53	38	48	59	71	60	48	55	
N. Ireland	22	20	24	23	22	23	21	23	22	24	
Public Ownership	9	11	7	6	8	11	8	12	9	6	
Unemployment	90	89	90	94	94	88	82	87	92	94	

Respondents could name as many issues as they wished.

Marplan asked respondents 'Which of these statements comes closest to representing your own opinion as to whether taxes should be raised or lowered in the next budget?' They found 18% taking the view 'The Government should cut taxes even if it means reducing the levels of public provision of health, education and welfare' and 80% took the view 'There should not be further cuts in Government provision of health, education and welfare even if that means that taxes cannot be cut.' 2% of respondents did not have a view.