

Public Opinion Background Note 149

(Produced 11th February 1983)

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1. Introduction

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our latest private tracking study from 2nd to 7th February and Gallup interviewed 930 electors throughout Great Britain. The study found 43% claiming they would vote Conservative, 30% Labour, 11% Liberal and 13% for the Social Democrats - these figures exclude don't knows (9% in this study). Compared with the previous study (conducted 27/31 January) it found a 2 percentage points fall in Conservative support, a 1 percentage point fall in Labour support, a 1 percentage point increase in Liberal support and a 1 percentage point increase in Social Democrat support. These changes in opinion research terms are not significant. Since the first Gallup study in 1983 (conducted 7/11 January) Conservative support has fallen from 44% to 43%, Labour support from 33% to 30%, Liberal support has increased from 10% to 11% and Social Democrat support increased from 11% to 13% - again differences which are not significant in opinion poll terms.

The present state of support for the Conservative Party with 43% of the electorate nationally claiming they would vote Conservative compares very favourably with the situation at the May 1979 General Election when 43.9% voted Conservative. The 30% claiming they would vote Labour compares with 36.9% who actually voted Labour in May 1979. In May 1974 13.8% of the electorate voted Liberal - the latest study found 24% claiming they would vote for one of the Alliance parties.

We have available from our 'tracking' study a monthly analysis of surveys conducted during the month - this provides a useful insight into the level of support for the parties among the key socio-economic groups and in the main regions. The table below shows a summary of the findings of the January 1983 aggregate analysis compared with the profile of support from the parties in May 1979.

Profile of Support for the Parties May 1979 - January 1983

	<u>May 1979</u> <u>General Election</u> <u>(Gallup)</u>	<u>January 1983</u> <u>Gallup</u> <u>Aggregate Analysis</u>	<u>Change May 1979</u> <u>Jan 1983</u>
	%	%	%
<u>Men</u>			
Conservative	44.7	44.1	-0.6
Labour	42.7	32.3	-10.4
Liberal	10.1	8.0	-2.1
Social Democrats	-	13.8	+13.8
Others	2.6	1.9	-0.7
<u>Women</u>			
Conservative	49.3	45.5	-3.8
Labour	39.1	30.6	-8.5
Liberal	10.3	12.4	+2.1
Social Democrats	-	9.6	+9.6
Others	1.3	1.9	+0.6

Conservative support among men since the election has remained almost stable - it fell by 0.6 percentage points, Labour support fell by 10.4 percentage points. Conservative support among women has fallen by 3.8 percentage points, Labour support has fallen by 8.5 percentage points.

Class

	<u>May 1979</u> <u>General Election</u> <u>(Gallup)</u>	<u>January 1983</u> <u>Gallup</u> <u>Aggregate analysis</u>	<u>Change May 1979 -</u> <u>Jan 1983</u>
	%	%	%
<u>AB</u>			
Conservative	66.9	62.2	-4.7
Labour	19.1	14.3	-4.8
Liberal	12.9	8.9	-4.0
Social Democrats	-	13.6	+13.8
Others	1.8	1.3	-0.5
<u>C1</u>			
Conservative	56.0	56.1	+0.1
Labour	31.0	19.0	-12.0
Liberal	11.2	10.9	-0.3
Social Democrats	-	12.7	+12.7
Others	1.9	1.3	-0.6
<u>C2</u>			
Conservative	43.0	40.6	-2.4
Labour	45.2	36.1	-9.1
Liberal	9.4	9.7	+0.3
Social Democrats	-	11.8	+11.8
Others	2.3	2.6	+0.3
<u>DE</u>			
Conservative	36.3	31.1	-5.2
Labour	52.9	45.6	-7.3
Liberal	9.1	11.2	+2.1
Social Democrats	-	9.6	+9.1
Others	1.7	2.6	+0.9

Conservative support among the AB group has fallen 4.7 percentage points and Labour support has fallen 4.8 percentage points. Conservative support among the C1 group has remained almost unchanged, but Labour support has fallen 12 percentage points. Conservative support among the C2 group has fallen 2.4 percentage points and Labour support has fallen 9.1 percentage points. Conservative support in the DE group has fallen 5.2 percentage points and Labour support by 7.3 percentage points.

Age

	<u>May 1979</u> <u>General Election</u> <u>(Gallup)</u>	<u>January 1983</u> <u>Gallup</u> <u>Aggregate analysis</u>	<u>Change May 1979 -</u> <u>Jan 1983</u>
	%	%	%
<u>18-24</u>			
Conservative	43.6	39.6	-4.0
Labour	44.5	38.0	-6.5
Liberal	8.6	7.3	-1.3
Social Democrats	-	11.9	+11.9
Others	3.3	3.3	0.0
<u>25-34</u>			
Conservative	47.3	39.5	-7.8
Labour	38.3	34.1	-4.2
Liberal	13.1	10.8	-2.3
Social Democrats	-	13.2	+13.2
Others	1.5	2.2	+0.7
<u>35-44</u>			
Conservative	47.8	50.6	+2.8
Labour	39.4	25.1	-14.3
Liberal	10.0	10.7	+0.7
Social Democrats	-	12.0	+12.0
Others	2.8	1.8	-1.0
<u>45-64</u>			
Conservative	46.9	47.1	+0.2
Labour	41.4	30.1	-11.3
Liberal	10.3	9.8	-0.5
Social Democrats	-	11.4	+11.4
Others	1.4	1.7	+0.3
<u>65+</u>			
Conservative	49.8	46.3	-3.5
Labour	40.8	31.0	-9.8
Liberal	8.6	12.6	+4.0
Social Democrats	-	9.3	+9.3
Others	0.9	0.9	0.0

Conservative support among the 18-24 age group has fallen by less than Labour support has fallen. Among the 25-34 age group Conservative support is down more than Labour. In the 35-44 age group Conservative support has increased whilst Labour support has dropped dramatically. Conservative support in the 45-64 age group has increased slightly, but Labour support has fallen. In the 65+ group Conservative support has fallen much less than support for Labour.

Region

	<u>Conservative Support</u>		
	<u>May 1979</u>	<u>January 1983</u>	<u>Change</u>
	%	%	%
North	42.1	37.3	-4.8
North West	46.0	37.5	-8.5
North East	43.6	44.8	+1.2
West Midlands	53.3	48.4	-4.9
East Midlands	50.8	49.8	-1.0
East Anglia	57.1	57.9	+0.8
South West	53.6	49.0	-4.6
South East	53.0	55.2	+2.2
London	45.6	44.1	-1.5
Wales	32.2	30.5	-1.7
Scotland	31.4	32.6	+1.2

Conservative support in the North West is down 8.5 percentage points, in the West Midlands down 4.9 percentage points, in the North down 4.8 percentage points and in the South West down 4.6 percentage points. Conservative support increased slightly in the North East, East Anglia, South East and Scotland.

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 9% 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> 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
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
2/7 Feb	43.0	30.0	11.0	13.0+	3.0	+13.0	24.0

* 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
2/7 Feb	39.0	27.0	10.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	22.0

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

2. Government Record

The latest study found a slight fall in the popularity of the Government - 40% claimed to approve of the record of the Government, 48% disapproved and 12% did not have a view.

Details of the trend of replies to this standard question since early September 1982 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>			
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
2/7 Feb	40	48	12

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest study found a slight fall in the popularity of all four political leaders.

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-</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>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1982</u>												
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
8/13 Dec	44	53	4	20	69	10	60	23	17	34	34	31
<u>1983</u>												
7/11 Jan	48	47	6	18	68	14	62	20	17	30	33	39
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
2/7 Feb	46	49	5	15	72	13	60	22	17	31	40	29

4. Published Polls(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 9th February 1983)

The Daily Telegraph on 9th February 1983 included details of a Gallup poll conducted between January 28th and February 3rd on attitudes to nuclear weapons.

Gallup asked respondents 'It has been suggested that Britain should give up relying on nuclear weapons for defence whatever other countries decide. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?' Gallup found 28% thought unilateral disarmament was a good idea, 65% a bad idea and 7% did not have a view. Details of the answers to this question for the supporters of the main parties are shown below:-

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Labour</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Liberal</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>SDP</u> <u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Good idea	28	14	43	36	34
Bad idea	65	82	48	56	62
Don't Know	7	4	9	8	4

14% of Conservative supporters thought unilateral disarmament was a good idea (82% bad idea). Among Labour supporters 43% thought unilateral disarmament was a good idea - 48% a bad idea. 56% of Liberal supporters and 62% of SDP supporters thought unilateral disarmament was a bad idea.

Gallup also asked respondents 'Taking everything into account, including the cost, which of these comes closest to your view of what armed forces Britain should have to reduce the chances of a war?' The replies from the electorate and from party supporters are shown below:-

	<u>All</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>SDP</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Britain should have only a few or no weapons of any kind	8	4	14	9	7
Britain should be strong in conventional non-nuclear weapons but no nuclear weapons	22	15	29	36	25
Britain should rely on nuclear weapons with only a small conventional non-nuclear force	9	7	13	4	6
Britain should rely both on nuclear weapons and a strong conventional non-nuclear force	54	69	36	46	59
Don't Know	7	5	8	5	3

Support for Britain having both nuclear weapons and a strong conventional non-nuclear force is strong - held by a majority of electors, and by a majority of Conservative and SDP supporters.

A substantial majority (66%) of the electorate and 82% of Conservatives believe it is best for Britain's security that we have nuclear weapons here. Labour supporters are more evenly divided 47% thinking it is best for Britain to be a nuclear base and 44% taking the opposite view.

(b) Marplan (Week in Politics)

The BBC programme 'Week in Politics' recently included the results of a Marplan study conducted between January 24th and 26th. The survey found 46% claiming they will vote Conservative, 31% Labour, 22% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties. Details of the trend of support for the parties in Marplan studies is shown below:-

	<u>1983</u>		<u>1982</u>	
	<u>Jan 24/26</u>	<u>Jan 10/12</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Nov</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	46	47	43	45
Labour	31	30	32	33
Alliance	22	21	23	20
Other	1	2	1	2

When Marplan asked respondents which issue they regarded as the most important facing the country they found 84% mentioned unemployment, 41% law and order, 29% inflation and 25% nuclear weapons.

Marplan also asked 'Which of the following people would be the best Prime Minister for Britain?'- 50% selected Mrs Thatcher, 22% David Steel, 18% Michael Foot and 10% Roy Jenkins.