

General Election 1983 Public Opinion Review 3  
(produced 29th May 1983)

1. Introduction

On Sunday 29th May the newspapers published four opinion polls and we received the results of our third private 'State of Battle' survey conducted by ORC on 27/28 May. Details of the results from these polls are shown below:-

Latest Opinion Polls - Sunday 29th May 1983

	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Oth</u>	<u>Con Lead</u>
MORI (Sunday Times)* (conducted 24/25 May) (%)	46	30	23	1	16
Gallup (Sunday Telegraph) (conducted 24-26 May) (%)	49	31½	18	1½	17½
Marplan (Sunday Mirror) (conducted 27th May) (%)	49½	31	19	½	18½
Harris (Observer) (conducted 26/27 May) (%)	47	30	21	2	17
ORC (Harris) (Private Poll) (conducted 27/28 May) (%)	46	32	20	2	14

\* panel study - should not be directly compared with the other studies.

In looking at the results of these latest polls it is worth considering the following points:-

- (a) In the five latest surveys Conservative support has not changes to any great extent when compared with the previous published and unpublished polls. Our support has varied from 46% to 49½%. The MORI study published in the Sunday Times is a 'panel' study involving interviewing the same individuals on a number of occasions and should not be directly compared with the other studies. In addition, this MORI research was conducted from 24th to 25th May - before a number of surveys published towards the end of last week and well before the other surveys available on Sunday.
- (b) Labour support has tended to drift downwards and we do seem to have had a slight (but at present not significant) movement of support to the Alliance.
- (c) Alliance support in the latest polls ranges from 18% to 23% in the Sunday Times (to 21% if the Sunday Times is excluded) and is very slightly upon the trend in previous published polls. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions as to whether the results represent the start of a significant movement to the Alliance.

## 2. Voting Intention

Since the start of the campaign we have had 38 published and unpublished polls giving details of voting intention - the results from all these surveys are shown below:-

### GENERAL ELECTION 1983

#### Voting Intention

(excluding don't knows)

<u>Fieldwork Dates</u>	<u>Poll and Publication</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Oth</u>	<u>Con Lead</u>
4-9 May	Gallup (D. Tel)	971	49	31½	17½	2	17½
5-6 May	Harris (Observer)	1053	46	38	15	1	8
6-7 May	ORC (PRIVATE POLL)	2307	44	34	20	2	10
6-7 May	Gallup (PRIVATE POLL)	2103	46	31	20	2	15
6-7 May	NOP (Mail on Sunday)	1058	47	34	18	1	13
6 May	MORI (Panorama)	1090	45	34	20	1	11
5-11 May	MORI (Standard)	1824	46	32	22	0	14
10 May	MORI (Daily Star)	1047	46	31	21	2	15
9-11 May	Marplan (Guardian)	1457	46	34	19	1	12
11 May	Harris (TV Eye)	1048	52	31	17	0	21
11-16 May	Gallup (Daily Tele.)	946	46	33	19	2	13
12 May	MORI (D. Express)	964	49	34	15	2	15
13-14 May	ORC (PRIVATE POLL)	2092	48	34	16	2	14
16 May	MORI (Daily Star)	1090	44	37	17	2	7
16 May	Audience Sel (Sun)	1154	46	31	21	2	15
17 May	Audience Sel (Sun)	507	44	33	21	2	11
16-17 May	NOP (Daily Mail)	1584	49	31	18	2	18
17-18 May	Harris (TV Eye)	1053	45	35	17	3	10
17-18 May	MORI (Sunday Times Panel)	960	47	30	21	2	17
19 May	MORI (Daily Express)	1100	46	37	16	1	9
19-20 May	Harris (Observer)	1052	45	36	18	1	9
20 May	Marplan (Sunday Mirror)	1250	47	34	18	1	13
20-21 May	ORC (PRIVATE POLL)	2064	46	34	19	1	12
18/23 May	Gallup (unpublished)	916	46	33	20	1	13
23 May	MORI (Daily Star)	1068	51	33	15	1	18
23 May	Audience Selection (TV AM)	1071	45	32	20	3	13
20/23 May	Gallup (Daily Telegraph)	1700	48	33	18	1	15
23 May	NOP (Daily Mail)	1104	52	33	14	1	17
23/25 May	Marplan (Guardian)	1422	47½	32½	19	1	15
24/25 May	MORI (Sunday Times Panel)*	1023	46	30	23	1	16
24 May	Audience Sel (Sun)	557	45	32	21	2	13
24/26 May	Gallup (Sunday Tel)	2015	49	31½	18	1½	17½
26 May	MORI (Express)	1088	51	29	18	2	22
26 May	Harris (TV Eye)	1045	48	33	18	1	15
26 May	ORC (PRIVATE POLL)	1050	49	32	18	1	17
26/27 May	Harris (Observer)	1029	47	30	21	2	17
27 May	Marplan (Sunday Mirror)	1325	49½	31	19	½	18½
27/28 May	ORC (PRIVATE POLL)	1893	46	32	20	2	14

\* Panel study should not be directly compared with the other studies.

3. Harris Poll (Observer 29th May 1983)

The Observer on 29th May included details of a Harris poll conducted on 26/27 May on attitudes to the Alliance.

Harris asked respondents about reactions to a possible Alliance government's policies in a range of areas. They found:-

Do you think the Liberal/SDP Alliance if elected to power, would or would not:-

	<u>All</u> <u>Electors</u>	<u>Lib/SDP</u> <u>Supporters</u>
	%	%
<u>Reduce Unemployment</u>		
would	44	79
would not	39	11
don't know	17	10
<u>Keep Inflation Down</u>		
would	36	61
would not	39	22
don't know	24	17
<u>Bring about better Industrial Relations</u>		
would	44	73
would not	33	10
don't know	24	17
<u>Care about the interests of people like you</u>		
would	63	91
would not	23	5
don't know	14	3
<u>Govern. in the interests of the country as a whole</u>		
would	65	95
would not	21	4
don't know	14	2
<u>Keep its Promises</u>		
would	46	79
would not	33	13
don't know	21	8

Almost two thirds of all electors think an Alliance government would care about the interests of people like them, and would 'govern in the interests of the country as a whole'. On specific policy issues, however, voters are less certain about how well an Alliance government would perform. As the table above shows, only a minority think an Alliance government would succeed in reducing unemployment, keeping inflation down or bringing about better industrial relations. There is a high level of 'don't knows' on

reactions to specific issues in the context of a possible Alliance government. There is potential for the Alliance in the fact that the number expressing optimism about the likely performance of an Alliance government greatly exceeds those who say they will vote Alliance.

Harris in this study asked respondents on a range of issues which party they trusted to make the right decisions. This new question found:-

Trust most to take right decisions on:-

	<u>Unemployment</u> %	<u>Education</u> %	<u>Inflation</u> %	<u>Health Service</u> %
Conservative	37	40	58	34
Labour	30	31	21	39
Alliance	17	13	10	12
Don't know	17	16	11	15

The only issue on which we do not lead the other parties with regard to 'trust' to deal with is with regard to the health service. We lead Labour and the Alliance on unemployment, education and inflation.

4. Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 29th May 1983)

The Sunday Telegraph on 29th May included details of a Gallup poll conducted on 24th - 26th May. Gallup asked which party had the best policies to deal with 8 specific policy areas. They found:-

Best Party to Deal with

	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
Inflation (%)	57	20	9
Britain's defence (%)	56	19	11
Law and Order (%)	52	19	8
Strikes and Industrial disputes (%)	50	26	9
Common Market (%)	49	22	11
Education and schools (%)	37	33	11
Unemployment (%)	32	36	13
National Health Service (%)	30	42	10.

Apart from the issues of unemployment and the National Health Service we lead Labour with regard to reputation for dealing with all the issues included by Gallup.

Gallup also asked respondents how certain they are to vote for the Party they mentioned in the standard voting intention question on 9th June. They found:-

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
		<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%
Very certain	78	82	81	66
Fairly certain	12	10	8	22
Not very certain	7	5	7	10
Don't know	3	3	4	2

Gallup asked those who were not 'very certain' which party they might vote for if they changed their mind. Gallup found a potential for substantial degree of switching with the Alliance the main party to gain.

5. Harris (Weekend World 29th May 1983)

Weekend World on 29th May included the results of Harris surveys conducted in Conservative/Labour marginal seats and seats either held by the Liberals or with the Liberals in a strong second place. The interviewing for these surveys was conducted from 25th to 27th May. Harris found:-

(a) Conservative/Labour Marginals

	<u>18/19 May</u>	<u>25/26 May</u>
	%	%
Conservative	43	44
Labour	41	38
Alliance	15	16
Others	1	2

There has been almost no change in the position of the Conservative Party in the Conservatives/Labour marginals and Labour support has fallen slightly.

(b) Alliance Marginals - Liberal Chances

	<u>18/19 May</u>	<u>25/26 May</u>
	%	%
Conservative	48	43
Labour	23½	20
Alliance	27½	36
Others	1	1.

In these seats, either held by the Liberals or with the Liberals in a strong second place we have lost support over the last week and the Alliance have gained. However we still retain a significant lead over the Alliance in this type of marginal seat.

In Liberal held seats 44% claimed they would vote Alliance (Liberal), 35% Conservative and 20% Labour. In Conservative held seats regarded as marginal to the Liberals Harris found 52% claiming they would vote Conservative, 30% Alliance (Liberal) and 16% Labour.

6. Sunday Times Panel

The Sunday Times on 29th May included details of the findings from the latest MORI 'panel' study conducted on May 24 - 25. The 'panel' technique used by MORI in this study involves the same electors being interviewed on a number of occasions - the technique has a number of problems including a tendency for an increased level of political awareness among panel members - making them unrepresentative of the electorate as a whole.

The table below shows the results of the latest study - the key finding is that although the total numbers claiming they will vote for each party has changed little - many individuals have changed their minds.

How the Voters Are Changing Their Minds

<u>Poll</u> May 17/18	<u>Breakdown of Results of latest Survey (May 24/25)</u>					<u>Poll</u> May 24/25
Conservative 42%	Stay Tory 40%	To Labour under ½%	To Alliance 1%	To Don't Know 1%		Conservative 42%
Labour 27%	Stay Labour 25%	To Tories ½%	To Alliance 1%	To Don't Know ½%		Labour 28%
Alliance 19%	Stay Alliance 18½%	To Tories ½%	To Labour under ½%	To Don't Know ½%		Alliance 21%
Don't Knows 10%	Stay Don't Know 5%	To Tories 1%	To Labour 2%	To Alliance 1%		Don't Knows 8%

7. Harris (TV Eye 27th May 1983)

TV Eye on 27th May included details of a Harris survey conducted on 26th May. The survey looked at attitudes to Michael Foot and a possible Labour government. They found 35% saw the Labour Party as a deeply divided Party, 42% as a party which is really divided but is giving the appearance of unity for the election and only 12% saw it as a united party.

Harris asked respondents 'Some people believe that Britain should give up all nuclear weapons whatever other country's do. Other people believe that Britain should keep nuclear weapons as long as the Russians have them.' Only 22% wanted us to give up our nuclear weapons, 73% keep them and 5% did not have a view. They also asked 'Do you believe that a Labour Government would or would not get all nuclear weapons out of Britain irrespective of what other country's do.' 33% believed a Labour government would get all nuclear weapons out of this country and 53% that they would not.

Harris also asked 'Do you think that the Labour Party could or could not bring down unemployment without sending prices rocketing up again.' - 21% believed they could, 68% they could not and 11% did not have a view. They also asked 'Do you think that a Labour Government or a Conservative Government would be most likely to take actions which would result in lower unemployment in the long term' and found 42% selected a Labour Government and 38% a Conservative Government.

OPERATION FAST FEED BACK.

5  
SUMMARY OF WEEK MON 23rd TO FRI 27th MAY 1983.

- 1/ We expected this week to be tougher but Labour handed it to the Conservatives on a plate.

By Friday this led to euphoria among our callers but they began to comment "don't be overconfident."

- 2/ In answer to a direct question our panel overwhelmingly said they saw no real threat coming from the Alliance but they did expect them to improve their position by one or two points by today.

- 3/ Conservative manifesto has proved to be an outstanding success and is holding up throughout the campaign.

The Socialist manifesto is seen as a compromise, expensive and unreal.

The Alliance manifesto is seen as highlighting the paucity of their programme.

- 4/ CONSERVATIVE PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS - considered even better than the early ones.

- 5/ CONSERVATIVE PRESS CONFERENCES - whereas in the first week there was heavy criticism of Mrs Thatcher's taking over in an unfortunate way by the end of the week her dominance was seen to be a bull point.

However the conference at which the Finnegan issue was raised was judged to be our worst.

- 6/ T.V. INTERVIEWS - Thatcher, Parkinson, Heseltine continue to be good and Howe has come very well out of his performance this week.

- 5/ For SOCIALISTS the week was a disaster largely because of the defence issue but Foot is seen as getting out of his depth and living in the past.

MANIFESTO is proving a burden for them - "What is the cost?" "Will they really produce jobs?"

PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS - no impact.

PRESS CONFERENCES - MANY WERE DISASTEROUS.

However Hattersley had a considerable impact with his "prices" speech and although he had distorted reality the Conservative party has yet to answer adequately.

- T.V. INTERVIEWS - Foot continued weak and muddled. Shore continued quite good. Healey not so much in evidence.

6/ For ALLIANCE a bad week when it became clear that they have suddenly realised they cannot be a Government or hold balance of power. Steel appeared shocked at one stage but towards the end of the week had made a recovery.

MANIFESTO - HAS made no ground with the electorate.

PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS - no impact.

PRESS CONFERENCES - the problem of Jenkins emerged and by Friday it became clear he is seen as a liability.

T.V.INTERVIEWS - Beith impressed.

7/ CONSERVATIVE PARTY - STRONG POINTS :-

Mrs Thatcher's leadership.  
Manifesto.  
Press advertisements.  
Very smooth organisation.  
Falling inflation.  
Defence posture.

WEAK POINTS :-

Future hope for unemployed.  
No speedy answer to Hattersley.  
Finnegan.

8/ SOCIALIST PARTY :- STRONG POINTS :-

Labour lacks strong points and has been preoccupied with it's internal problems.

WEAK POINTS :-

FOOT...FOOT...FOOT.  
Defence disagreement.  
Withdrawal from E.E.C.  
Cost of programme.

9/ MAJOR POINTS FOR CAMPAIGN NEXT WEEK :-

1. We need to spell out the broad points of the manifesto.
2. Start attacking Alliance more energetically highlighting paucity of programme, weakness of candidates and Jenkins problem.
3. Keep out of the gutter - our integrity is already carrying us through.
4. Exploit Williamsburg.

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