

Public Opinion Background Note 85
(produced 26th April 1985)

1. Introduction

Over the last week we have had two published opinion polls - Gallup in the Daily Telegraph (25th April) and Marplan in the Guardian (25th April). The Gallup results (which are the same as the findings from our 'tracking' study) found a 3.5% Labour lead over the Conservatives and Marplan a 5% lead. Details are shown below:

Latest Polls

	<u>GALLUP</u>	<u>MARPLAN</u>
	Conducted	Conducted
	17-22 April	11-15 April
	%	%
Conservative	34	33
Labour	37.5	38
'Alliance'	26.5	28
Others	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Labour lead:	+3.5%	+5%

The results from the latest study show a fall of 2.5% in Conservative support when compared with the previous (unpublished) study conducted from 10th to 15th April. Labour support increased by 2% and Alliance support by 0.5%. The effect of these small changes was to change a 1% Conservative lead over Labour into a 3.5% Labour lead over the Conservatives. Support for the Alliance remains at around the average level of support we have had since the start of the year.

2. Voting Intention

(a) Voting Intention (excluding don't knows) - all figures are percentages

	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Lib</u>	<u>SDP</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Con lead</u>	<u>SDP &</u>	<u>Con lead</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Over</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>over</u>
						<u>Labour</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Liberal & SDP</u>
						<u>%</u>		<u>%</u>
<u>1985</u>								
3-8 Jan	35.0	35.0	11.0	17.0	2.0	0.0	28.0	+7.0
9-14 Jan	39.0	33.0	9.5	16.0	2.5	+6.0	25.5	+13.5*
16-21 Jan	39.0	34.0	10.0	16.0	1.0	+5.0	26.0	+13.0
23-28 Jan	36.0	32.0	11.0	20.0	1.0	+4.0	31.0	+5.0
30 Jan-4 Feb	34.0	37.0	10.0	17.5	1.5	-3.0	27.5	+6.5
6-11 Feb	35.0	32.0	10.5	21.0	1.5	+3.0	31.5	+3.5*
13-18 Feb	38.0	33.0	10.0	16.5	2.5	+5.0	26.5	+11.5
20-25 Feb	33.5	38.0	10.0	17.0	1.5	-4.5	27.0	+6.5
27 Feb-4 March	35.0	35.0	10.0	18.0	2.0	0.0	28.0	+7.0
6-11 March	37.0	34.0	10.5	17.0	1.5	-3.0	27.5	+10.5
13-18 March	35.0	34.0	12.0	16.0	3.0	+1.0	28.0	+7.0
21-25 March	33.0	39.5	10.0	16.0	1.5	-6.5	26.0	+6.0
27 March - 1 April	38.0	33.0	13.0	15.0	1.0	+5.0	28.0	+10.0
3 - 9 April	37.0	40.0	7.5	13.5	2.0	-3.0	21.0	+16.0
10 - 15 April	36.5	35.5	13.0	13.0	2.0	+1.0	26.0	+11.5
17-22 April	34.0	37.5	12.0	14.0	2.0	-3.5	26.5	+7.5*

(*published in the Daily Telegraph)

(b) Voting Intention (including don't knows)

	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>SDP</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Conservative lead over Labour</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1985</u>							
3-8 Jan	33.0	32.0	10.0	16.0	2.0	7.0	+1.0
9-14 Jan	36.0	30.0	9.0	15.0	3.0	8.0	+6.0
16-21 Jan	35.0	31.0	9.0	14.0	1.0	9.0	+4.0
23-28 Jan	33.0	29.0	10.0	18.0	1.0	8.0	+4.0
30 Jan - 4 Feb	31.0	33.0	9.0	16.0	1.0	11.0	-2.0
6-11 Feb	32.0	29.0	9.0	19.0	1.0	9.0	+3.0
13-18 Feb	35.0	30.0	9.0	15.0	2.0	8.0	+5.0
20-25 Feb	31.0	35.0	9.0	15.0	1.0	9.0	-4.0
27 Feb-4 March	32.0	32.0	9.0	16.0	2.0	9.0	0.0
6 - 11 March	34.0	31.0	10.0	15.0	1.0	9.0	+3.0
13-18 March	33.0	32.0	11.0	15.0	3.0	7.0	+1.0
21-25 March	30.0	36.0	9.0	14.0	2.0	8.0	-6.0
27 March-1 April	35.0	30.0	13.0	12.0	1.0	8.0	+5.0
3 - 9 April	34.0	37.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	8.0	-3.0
10 - 15 April	33.0	32.0	12.0	12.0	3.0	9.0	+1.0
17-22 April	31.0	34.0	12.0	13.0	2.0	9.0	-3.0

3. Government Record

For the third consecutive week Gallup found no change in the popularity of the Government - 32% claimed to approve of our record to date, 57% disapproved and 11% had no view. Details are shown in the table below:-

<u>1984</u>	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	
1-6 August (%)	33	52	15
8-13 August (%)	34	54	13
15-20 August (%)	36	50	14
22-27 August (%)	36	54	10
29 Aug - 3 Sept (%)	37	57	12
5-10 Sept (%)	34	52	14
12-17 Sept (%)	34	52	14
19-24 Sept (%)	35	51	14
26 Sept - 1 Oct (%)	34	53	13
3 - 8 Oct (%)	36	51	13
11-15 Oct (%)	40	48	12
17-22 Oct (%)	43	43	14
24-29 Oct (%)	41	47	12
31 Oct - 5 Nov (%)	38	51	11
7-12 Nov (%)	41	46	13
14-19 Nov (%)	38	48	14
21-26 Nov (%)	36	47	16
28 Nov - 3 Dec (%)	38	51	11
5 - 10 Dec (%)	34	52	14
12-17 Dec (%)	34	54	12

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	
<u>1985</u>			
3-8 Jan (%)	32	53	14
9-14 Jan (%)	33	54	13
16-21 Jan (%)	35	48	16
23-28 Jan (%)	33	54	12
30 Jan - 4 Feb (%)	29	59	12
6-11 Feb (%)	31	55	13
13-18 Feb (%)	33	55	12
20-25 Feb (%)	29	58	13
27 Feb-4 March (%)	34	53	13
6 - 11 March (%)	32	55	13
13-18 March (%)	31	56	13
21-25 March (%)	30	58	12
27 March - 1 April (%)	34	55	11
3 - 9 April (%)	32	57	11
10 -15 April (%)	32	54	14
17-22 April (%)	32	57	11

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Our Gallup study found almost no change in Mrs. Thatcher's popularity and almost no change in the popularity of Mr. Kinnock. The popularity of Mr. Steel and Dr. Owen improved slightly. Full details are shown in the table below:-

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr. Kinnock</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
<u>1985</u>						
3-8 Jan (%)	39	57	5	33	48	19
9-14 Jan (%)	40	54	6	36	49	15
16-21 Jan (%)	43	51	6	31	51	18
23-28 Jan (%)	40	56	5	33	52	15
30 Jan to 4 Feb (%)	38	56	6	36	49	15
6-11 Feb (%)	37	57	6	31	54	15
13-18 Feb (%)	40	55	5	31	57	12
20-25 Feb (%)	38	58	4	34	52	14
27 Feb-4 March (%)	40	54	5	31	53	16
6 - 11 March (%)	41	55	4	34	51	15
13-18 March (%)	40	55	5	32	52	16
21-25 March (%)	37	58	5	37	47	6
27 March - 1 April (%)	39	56	5	33	50	16
3 - 9 April (%)	37	59	4	43	44	13
10-15 April (%)	38	57	6	35	47	18
17-22 April (%)	38	57	5	36	48	16

	<u>Is Good</u> <u>Leader</u> %	<u>Mr. Steel</u> <u>Is Not Good</u> <u>Leader</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is Good</u> <u>Leader</u> %	<u>Dr. Owen</u> <u>Is Not Good</u> <u>Leader</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1985</u>						
3-8 Jan (%)	56	24	20	50	25	25
9-14 Jan (%)	57	26	17	52	27	21
16-21 Jan (%)	60	24	16	52	22	26
23-28 Jan (%)	57	25	18	55	21	24
30 Jan - 4 Feb (%)	55	28	18	51	25	23
6-11 Feb (%)	57	24	18	55	21	24
13-18 Feb (%)	59	24	17	57	24	20
20-25 Feb (%)	61	23	16	57	22	21
27 Feb-4 March (%)	57	25	19	52	23	25
6 - 11 March (%)	56	27	17	52	25	23
13-18 March (%)	57	27	17	53	23	24
21-25 March (%)	60	23	17	53	21	25
27 March-1 April (%)	64	21	15	54	24	22
3 - 9 April (%)	58	25	17	52	26	22
10-15 April (%)	58	24	18	49	26	25
17-22 April (%)	60	24	17	52	26	22

5. Published Polls

(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 25th April 1985)

In addition to the normal 'tracking' questions, the Gallup survey in the Daily Telegraph on 25th April included the results from a range of other questions.

Gallup asked respondents what they regarded as the most urgent problems facing the country. They found:-

MOST URGENT PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY

	All %	Conservative Supporters %	Labour Supporters %	Liberal Supporters %	Alliance/SDP Supporters %
Unemployment	89	87	90	91	92
Cost of living/prices	15	14	15	20	13
Health/hospitals	14	14	17	13	12
Law & Order	10	14	4	8	13
Defence/Nuclear Weapons	9	10	7	3	15
Housing/Rates/ Mortgages	8	6	12	8	6
Education	7	8	6	11	7

Gallup also asked which party had the best policies to deal with the key problems facing the country. Details are given below:-

BEST PARTY AT DEALING WITH KEY POLICY AREAS

	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Alliance</u> %	<u>Others</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
Inflation and Prices	44	26	11	1	18
Unemployment	17	47	13	0	24
Britain's Defence	46	23	11	0	20
Common Market	38	26	11	0	25
Strikes and Industrial Disputes	44	32	9	1	14
National Health Service	14	54	11	1	20
Education and Schools	21	45	14	1	19
Law and Order	45	25	9	1	20

The Conservatives lead Labour with regard to reputation for dealing with inflation and prices, defence, the Common Market, strikes and industrial relations and law and order. Labour leads the Conservatives on reputation for dealing with unemployment, the National Health Service and Education and Schools.

The small Labour lead has been accompanied by the Conservatives regaining the lead as the party with the best policies:

	<u>Today</u> %	<u>March</u> %	<u>February</u> %	<u>January</u> %
Conservative	32	29	35	34
Labour	30	33	25	27
Liberal/SDP	20	21	22	20
Others	1	1	1	1
Don't Know	18	16	17	17

The Conservatives are also thought to have the best leaders, a position they have held since the General Election. The current rating for the parties on the leadership question are Conservative (44%), Labour (23%) and the Liberal/SDP Alliance (20%).

When asked which of the four party leaders would make the better Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher topped the table with 34%, followed by Mr. Kinnock with 23% Mr. Steel with 19% and Dr. Owen with 15%.

Problem for Labour

This is a problem for Labour, further highlighted by the agreement of 59% of the general public, and 33% of Labour supporters, with the statement "Labour party leadership is poor now".

Majorities of the public also agree with the following negative statements about Labour:

Labour is too split and divided (67%)

Labour's policy of getting rid of all our nuclear weapons would be dangerous (67%)

It's not clear what a vote for Labour means these days (64%)

Labour has become too extreme (57%)

On the positive side, majorities agree that:

Labour would bring in real, thorough-going changes (64%)

Labour is the only party that can turn out the present Government (53%)

The public, however, holds equally critical views of the Conservatives, with majorities agreeing with the statements:

The Conservatives want to cut back too much on health, education and other services (81%)

The Conservatives are too rigid and inflexible (73%)

Causing unemployment to rise is not an acceptable way to deal with inflation (73%)

The Conservatives have failed to solve Britain's most important problems (71%)

The Conservatives look after the interests of the rich, not ordinary people (66%)

The Conservatives don't care what hardships their policies cause (65%)

Three in four, 77%, nevertheless agree that "The Conservatives provide strong leadership".

(b) Greater London Council (24th April 1985)

The Greater London Council released the results of a Harris survey conducted in Greater London from 8th to 11th April.

The study found 63% against the abolition of the GLC (74% in previous study) and 17% in favour.

The GLC found 77% interviewed in favour of an inquiry into the proposed abolition, with 12% against. Even among Conservative voters, a large majority - 63% - claimed to favour an inquiry.

In terms of voting intention, 49% claimed they would vote Labour 28% Conservative, 22% 'Alliance' and 1% for 'other' parties.