

Public Opinion Background Note 86
(produced 6th May 1985)

1. Introduction

The interviewing for our latest Gallup 'tracking' study was completed before the local government elections on 2nd May. The survey was conducted from 24th to 29th April and found nationally very little change in the level of support for the parties when compared with the results of the previous study conducted from 17th to 22nd April.

This survey found 33.5% claiming they would vote Conservative (34% in previous study and 35% at the start of the year), 38% Labour (37.5% in previous study and 35% at start of the year) and 26.5% Alliance (26.5% in previous study and 28% at start of the year).

Gallup, for an article published in the Daily Telegraph on 2nd May analysed separately those respondents from this survey living in areas with local council elections and found 36% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33.5% Labour and 29% 'Alliance'.

Full details of the trend of support for the main parties since January 1985 showing voting intention when those respondents not giving details of voting intention are excluded and when they were included as a separate group are shown in the tables in section 2 below:

2. Voting Intention

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

1985	Con %	Lab %	Lib %	SDP %	Others %	Con lead Over Labour %	SDP & Liberal %	Con lead over Allie Liberal & %
3-8 Jan	35.0	35.0	11.0	17.0	2.0	0.0		
9-14 Jan	39.0	33.0	9.5	16.0	2.5	+6.0	28.0	+7.0
16-21 Jan	39.0	34.0	10.0	16.0	1.0	+5.0	25.5	+13.5*
23-28 Jan	36.0	32.0	11.0	20.0	1.0	+4.0	26.0	+13.0
30 Jan-4 Feb	34.0	37.0	10.0	17.5	1.5	-3.0	31.0	+5.0
6-11 Feb	35.0	32.0	10.5	21.0	1.5	+3.0	27.5	+6.5
13-18 Feb	38.0	33.0	10.0	16.5	2.5	+5.0	31.5	+3.5*
20-25 Feb	33.5	38.0	10.0	17.0	1.5	-4.5	26.5	+11.5
27 Feb-4 March	35.0	35.0	10.0	18.0	2.0	0.0	27.0	+6.5
6-11 March	37.0	34.0	10.5	17.0	1.5	+3.0	28.0	+7.0
13-18 March	35.0	34.0	12.0	16.0	3.0	+1.0	27.5	+10.5
21-25 March	33.0	39.5	10.0	16.0	1.5	-6.5	28.0	+7.0
27 March - 1 April	38.0	33.0	13.0	15.0	1.0	+5.0	26.0	+6.0
3 - 9 April	37.0	40.0	7.5	13.5	2.0	-3.0	28.0	+10.0
10 - 15 April	36.5	35.5	13.0	13.0	2.0	+1.0	21.0	+16.0
17-22 April	34.0	37.5	12.0	14.0	2.0	-3.5	26.0	+11.5
24-29 April	33.4	38.0	10.0	16.5	2.0	-4.5	26.5	+7.5*
							26.5	+7.0

(*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
24-29 April	31.0	35.0	9.0	15.0	2.0	8.0	-4.0

3. Government Record

The latest study found such a marginal change in the popularity of the government that we have had effectively no movement on this measure since early April. We have had 31%/32% approving of our record to date in every survey since then.

Details of the trend on this measure of public opinion since the start of the year are shown in the table below:-

<u>1985</u>	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</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
24-29 April%	31	55	14

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Changes in the popularity of the leaders of the four main parties in the latest study, when compared with the previous survey, are so small as to be insignificant. Details are shown in the tables 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
24-29 April (%)	37	57	6	35	48	16

	<u>Mr. Steel</u>			<u>Dr. Owen</u>		
	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</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 (%)	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
24-29 April (%)	60	22	18	51	24	25

5. Published Polls

(a) Harris (Channel 4 News, 30th April 1985)

Channel 4 News on 30th April included the results of a Harris survey on attitudes to the Western Economic Summit conducted on 29th April.

Harris found 97% claimed to know Mrs. Thatcher would be attending the Summit, 90% Mr. Reagan, 48% Mitterrand, 18% Kohl, 2% Mulroney, 2% Nakasone and 1% Craxi. Only 40% of respondents correctly identified Gorbachov as the Russian leader.

In terms of image, Mrs. Thatcher scored well even among Labour and Alliance supporters.

Image of Mrs. Thatcher
(% agreeing with statement)

	All %	Conservative Supporters %	Labour Supporters %	Alliance Supporters %
Does Good Job Representing Our Country Abroad	48	84	20	42
A Strong And Effective Leader At Home	61	89	36	61
Attractive Personality	31	51	17	21
Trying To Make The World a Safer Place	40	66	20	34
Upsets Other Leaders	49	38	54	58

Harris also asked respondents whether they thought Mrs. Thatcher's style would make them more or less likely to support the Conservatives at the next election. 27% claimed it was 'more likely' to make them support the Conservatives, 45% 'less likely' and 22% thought it made no difference.

The Harris study also included a voting intention question which found 39% claiming they would vote Conservative, 36% Labour, 22% for one of the 'Alliance' parties and 2% for 'other' parties.

(b) MORI (GLC)

The GLC released on 2nd May the results of a MORI poll conducted in Greater London which found 38% claiming they would vote Conservative, 50% Labour and 16% 'Alliance'.

(c) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 2nd May 1985)

The Daily Telegraph on 2nd May included details of a Gallup study on attitudes to the local government elections conducted from 24th to 29th April.

5. Published Polls
Gallup (cont.)

When asked whether it mattered who wins the local elections, 43% said it mattered a lot. 17% said it mattered a little and 38% said it didn't matter.

Just over one in three, 38%, were "very concerned" about the level of rates in their area, with 27% "somewhat concerned", 22% "not very concerned" and 9% "not concerned at all".

Despite this concern about the level rates, a majority, 58%, were at least "fairly satisfied" with the way their local council was running things, while 21% were "not very satisfied" and 13% were "not at all satisfied".

A majority 53%, blamed the Government for recent increases in rates, while 31% blamed local authorities.

There were divisions along party lines in the replies to this question, with a majority of Conservatives blaming the local authorities, and majorities of both Labour and Alliance supporters blaming the Government.

In spite of the concern about increasing rates, one in two, 49%, wanted more spent on local services even if it meant further rate rises.

Replies to the question: "People have different views about whether it is more important to reduce rates or keep up local government spending. How about you? Which of these statements comes closest to your own?" were:

Rates being cut, even if it means some reduction in local services, such as schools housing and welfare facilities: 14%

Things should be left as they are: 30%

Local services such as schools, housing and welfare facilities should be extended even if it means some increases in rates: 49%

On the other hand, the balance of opinion approved by a margin of 45% to 37% of the Government limiting the amount of rate increase that a local council can levy.

Again there were significant differences by party supporters with a majority of Conservatives 64%, approving and a majority of Labour supporters, 53%, disapproving. Alliance supporters tended on balance to approve.

Gallup also asked people whether they would approve or disapprove of a local income tax to replace rates, and a similar question about a poll tax in place of the rates. The replies to these two questions were:

	Local Income Tax %	Poll Tax %
Approve	34	42
Disapprove	35	39
Don't Know	30	18

Another way to try to reduce costs is the privatisation of certain services. People in the counties were almost evenly divided on this question, with 47% agreeing with the idea and 44% disagreeing.

5. Published Polls
Gallup (cont.)

When asked which services should be run by private firms, those supporting the idea put refuse collection at the top of the list, mentioned by 54% of the group. This was followed by street cleaning (31%), housing repairs (31%), road repairs (30%), and public transport (20%). Further down were house building (24%), and gas supplies (11%).

When asked if they wanted an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process this time through a local referendum before the council could pass a major rate increase, a major 70% approved of the idea. Less than one in five 16% disapproved and 14% were undecided.

Although the public generally approved of the idea of the Government limiting rate increases, almost one in two (42%) felt that the local councils do not have enough independence from the Government. On the other hand, 12% felt they have too much independence, and 34% thought the relationship was about right.

8.5.85.