

MONTHLY POLLING REVIEW

March 1988

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STOP PRESS: Latest published poll (Sunday Times - 3rd April 1988) found Conservative 46%, Labour 37%, Social/Liberal Democrats 8% and Social Democrats 6%. The survey was conducted by MORI from 24th to 28th March.

1. VOTING INTENTION

a) POLLS IN FIRST QUARTER 1988

<u>Origin</u>	<u>Outlet</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>	<u>Con</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>L&SD</u>	<u>SDP</u>	<u>'Owenite' SDP</u>	<u>Con Lead</u>
MORI	S.Times	6/1	48	36		15		12
Marplan	Guardian	14/1	41	39		17		2
Gallup	D.Tel	21/1	45.5	37		15		8.5
MORI	S.Times	31/1	50	36		12		14
Marplan	Guardian	12/2	43	42		14		1
Gallup	D.Tel	18/2	46	36		14		10
MORI	S.Times	6/3	46	38		14		8
Harris	Observer	6/3	47	36	12		2	11
Marplan	Guardian	10/3	45	41	8		4	4
MORI	S.Times	20/3	46	39	6		7	7
Gallup	D.Tel	25/3	42	36.5	13		6.5	5.5
Harris	Observer	27/3	46	39	11		1	7

With the exception of the Marplan polls which appear to be consistently slightly more Labour, the Conservative lead over the three months has ranged from 5.5% to 14%.

We have had three polls conducted since the Budget - Gallup (Daily Telegraph 25th March), Harris (Observer 27th March) and MORI (Sunday Times 20th March). Details are given below:-

VOTING INTENTION

<u>Fieldwork</u>	<u>MORI</u> 17-18 March	<u>Gallup</u> 17-21 March	<u>Harris</u> 23-24 March
Conservative	46	42	46
Labour	39	36.5	39
SLD	6	13	11
SDP	7	6.5	1
Others	2	2	3
<u>Conservative Lead</u>	+7	+5.5	+7

The latest Harris study found a 7% Conservative lead over Labour compared with a 11% lead in their last pre-Budget study. Gallup found a 5.5% Conservative lead compared with a 10% lead in their last pre-Budget published poll. MORI found a 7% lead compared with 8% in their last pre-Budget poll.

Before the Budget Conservative support in polls conducted since the start of the year ranged from 41% to 50% and Labour support from 36% to 42%. The post-budget figures are well within the movements found by the polling companies in pre-Budget polls conducted since the start of 1988.

Most polling organisations are currently experimenting with different ways of correctly identifying the split between "merged party" (SLD) support and "Owenite" (SDP) support. Harris are using an interviewer probe to follow up mention of the 'Alliance', MORI are using a formal follow up question and Marplan are using a show card. There will almost certainly be some fluctuation in these figures - until both polling techniques (and the parties) have settled down.

b) Comparison with 1984

Averaging the six polls published in March 1988, gives an average Conservative lead of 7%. At the same time following the 1983 General Election, the Conservative and Labour Parties were level pegging.

	<u>March</u> <u>1984</u>	<u>March</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Net</u> <u>change</u> <u>84-88</u>
Conservative	39.5	45.0	+5.5
Labour	39.5	38.5	-1.0
'Alliance'	19.0	13.0	-6.0

c) Obstacles to Voting for Parties

The Harris/Observer poll (6/3/88) tested the salience of obstacles to voting for particular parties.

When the results are compared with the period immediately prior to the last election, dislike of each party's defence policy has lessened in importance.

The main obstacle to voting Conservative remained the Party's uncaring image whilst perception of Labour's domination by the Unions as an obstacle to voting for them had increased slightly and the largest change of all was the 16% increase in the proportion of electors regarding 'disunity' as a reason for not voting for the 'Alliance'/SLD/Owenite SDP.

OBSTACLES TO VOTING CONSERVATIVE

	<u>March 1988</u>	<u>May 1987</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Not caring enough	53	55	-2
Don't like their leader	34	33	+1
Too controlled by big business	21	23	-2
Too extreme	16	14	+2
Not good at Government	10	10	-
Don't like their defence policy	9	15	-6
Will damage the economy	9	14	-5
Not united	2	3	-1
Not decisive	2	2	-

OBSTACLES TO VOTING LABOUR

	<u>March 1988</u>	<u>April 1987</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Too controlled by the unions	31	27	+4
Will damage the economy	23	24	-1
Not united	21	24	-3
Don't like their defence policy	18	29	-11
Don't like their leader	17	17	-
Too extreme	16	18	-2
Not good at government	16	13	+3
Not decisive	13	10	+3
Not caring enough	4	5	-1

OBSTACLES TO VOTING SLD/OWENITE

	<u>March 1988</u>	<u>May 1987</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Not united	47	31	-16
Not decisive	34	34	-
Not good at government	23	25	-2
Will damage the economy	9	11	-2
Don't like their leaders	9	12	-3
Don't like their defence policy	7	15	-8
Not caring enough	3	5	-2
Too extreme	3	3	-

2. SATISFACTION RATINGS AND ISSUES

(a) SATISFACTION RATINGS - LEADERS

The most recent MORI satisfaction ratings (published 6th March - Sunday Times) show no significant change in the overall pattern of voters' satisfaction. Details are shown below:-

	<u>SATISFIED</u>		<u>DISSATISFIED</u>	
	<u>March</u>	<u>Change on previous month</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>Change on previous month</u>
Mrs Thatcher	45	-1	48	+1
Mr Kinnock	35	+2	49	+1
Mr Steel	24	+1	50	-1
Mr MacLennan	11	+2	42	-1

(b) SATISFACTION RATINGS - GOVERNMENT

The latest Gallup poll (Daily Telegraph 25th March) recorded only very minor changes in the popularity of the Government. There have been only minor changes since the start of the year. Details are shown below:-

	<u>March 1988</u>	<u>February 1988</u>	<u>January 1988</u>	<u>December 1987</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Approve	42	42	40	40
Dissapprove	47	46	49	47
Don't know	12	11	11	13

(b) ISSUES

The March MORI poll found a small drop in the percentage of voters thinking the NHS was an important issue and a rise in those thinking unemployment important.

Most Important Issues - MORI

	<u>March</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>February</u> <u>1988</u>
NHS	59	64
Unemployment	49	45
Law & Order	17	15
Education	13	14
Disarmament	12	13

The slight decline in the importance given to the Health Service found by MORI is not confirmed by the latest (March) Gallup study. Details are given below:-

Most Important Issues - Gallup

	<u>March</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Feb</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1988</u>	<u>Dec</u> <u>1987</u>
	%	%	%	%
Health	65	66	61	45
Unemployment	55	54	54	63
Law and Order	9	8	8	7
Housing	8	9	10	11
Education	9	11	12	14
Defence	5	5	8	9
Cost of Living	5	5	4	6
Pensions	7	6	7	7
Other	4	5	6	7
Don't know	12	13	14	16

3. REACTIONS TO THE BUDGET

(a) MORI (SUNDAY TIMES) 20TH MARCH 1988)

The Sunday Times in 20th March included the results of some MORI questions on attitudes to the Budget. They found:-

- a) There was a high level of support for reducing the basic rate of tax to 25p.
- 60% in favour, 33% against.
- b) There was also support for the idea of a cut to 20p in the standard rate of income tax.
- 51% in favour, 35% against.

- c) 70% favoured the excise duty increase on tobacco.
65% favoured the doubling of tax on company cars.
- d) MORI found only 27% in favour of reducing the top rate of tax to 40% with 63% disapproving.
- e) Overall 43% believed the Budget was bad for them personally with 40% regarding it as good for them personally.
- f) 51% believed the Budget will get the economy going.
55% believed the Budget will keep inflation down.
64% believed the Budget will increase business confidence.

(b) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 25th March 1988)

The Daily Telegraph published on 25th March the findings from their post-Budget survey (conducted 17-21 March). They found:-

- (a) 47% thought Nigel Lawson is doing a good job as Chancellor of the Exchequer (49% after 1987 Budget).
- (b) 28% thought the Budget was 'fair' (50% after 1987 Budget). Gallup found the 1988 Budget received the worst rating on the 'fairness' question of any of the five Budgets Nigel Lawson has presented and when the findings are put into the context of previous Budgets only Geoffrey Howe's Budget in 1981 was less well received. Among Conservative supporters 54% regarded the budget as 'fair'.
- (c) 46% claimed that the Budget had made them less favourably inclined to the Government, 12% more favourably inclined and the remainder claimed to be unaffected or undecided.
- (d) Gallup asked whether the electorate approved or disapproved of a range of Budget measures. They found:-

1989 Budget Measures

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Dissapprove</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
Independent taxation of husbands and wives to be introduced	75	12	13
Basic rate of income tax cut from 27p to 25p in the pound	70	25	5
Increases in the price of cigarettes	69	22	9
Tax charge for company cars doubled	65	23	11
Tax relief only on one mortgage per home	62	23	15
Increases in the price of beer and wine	56	33	11
No increase in the price of spirits	45	42	13
Top rate of income tax cut from 60p to 40p in the pound	33	61	7
Increases in the price of petrol	27	65	8

(e) Gallup put to respondents a range of aims for the Budget and asked whether electors thought the Budget would meet these aims. They found:-

	<u>Will</u>	<u>Will Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Help the British economy to expand	52	29	19
Help prosperity	48	37	15
Bring down inflation	37	41	22
Encourage people to work harder	36	53	12
Make it easier for people like yourself to manage	30	59	11
Reduce unemployment	30	57	12

5. BROADCASTING

The IBA have recently published a book called 'Attitudes to Broadcasting Over the Years' (Barrie Gunter and Michael Svennevig).

This is based on information going back over 10 years and covers a wide range of issues related to broadcasting. One key area covered was perceptions by viewers of political bias.

The 1987 results reproduced below indicates the extent to which the BBC is seen to be biased towards the Conservatives.

	<u>ITV</u>	<u>BBC1</u>	<u>BBC2</u>	<u>C4</u>
Do channels tend to favour any particular party?: Yes:-	18	32	14	11
Which party favoured?				
Conservative	8	24	12	2
Labour	8	8	2	7
Alliance	-	-	-	1

6. COMMUNITY CHARGE

The Sunday Times (28th March) included the results from a MORI study on attitudes to the Community Charge. The survey (conducted 17/18 March) found the Community Charge opposed by 60% of the electorate (43% in July 1987) and supported by 22% (26% in July 1987). MORI found a two-to-one majority believing the present rating system is fairer than the poll tax.