

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 127/8

(produced 2nd September 1982)

1. Introduction

This edition of Public Opinion Background Note summarises the findings from our latest two 'tracking' studies. Gallup conducted the surveys from 11th to 16th August and from the 18th to 23rd August. The results of the survey conducted 11/16 August are the same as the results of the Gallup poll published in the Daily Telegraph on 19th August.

The surveys found very little change in the level of support for the main parties. Conservative support stood at 46% in early August (4/9 August) it fell to 44½% (11/16 August) and increased to 45½% (18/23 August). These changes show only a small drop in support from the high point of support for the Conservatives reached during the Falklands crisis (49% - 16/21 June). Support for Labour shows no signs of increasing - 28% of the electorate claimed they would vote for them in the period 4/9 August, 26½% 11/16 August and 27% 18/23 August. Social Democrat support has improved after the sharp drop we found in early August when only 13½% of the electorate claimed they would vote for them. In the survey conducted 11/16 August 17% claimed they would vote for them and 16½% in the survey conducted 18/23 August. Support for the Social Democrats remains very close to the trend of support for them that our surveys have shown since mid-May. Support for the Liberals also remains largely unchanged - at around the 10% mark. Details of the trend in support for the main parties since the start of the year are shown in the table below.

VOTING INTENTION(unprompted question, excluding
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<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>							
6/11 Jan	25.5	30.0	17.0	25.0	2.5	- 4.5	42.0
13/18 Jan	27.5	29.5	13.0	26.5	3.5	- 2.5**	39.5
20/25 Jan	30.0	27.0	14.0	26.5	2.5	+ 3.0	40.5
27 Jan/1 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	24.0	3.0	0.0	39.0
3/8 Feb	29.0	29.0	15.0	26.0	1.0	0.0	41.0
10/15 Feb	27.5	34.0	14.5	21.5	2.5	- 6.5**	35.0
17/22 Feb	26.5	33.5	14.0	22.0	4.0	- 7.0	36.0
24 Feb/1 March	31.0	32.5	11.0	22.5	3.0	- 1.5	33.5
3/8 March	30.0	33.5	11.5	21.0+	4.0	- 3.5	32.5
11/15 March	31.5	33.0	11.5	21.5+	2.5	- 1.5**	33.0
17/22 March	34.0	30.0	11.0	21.0+	4.0	+ 4.0	32.0
24/29 March	32.0	28.0	11.0	27.5+	1.5	+ 4.0	38.5
31 March/5 April	34.0	27.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+ 7.0	36.0
7/12 April	31.5	29.0	11.0	26.0+	2.5	+ 2.5**	37.0
13/19 April	31.0	30.0	10.0	26.0+	3.0	+ 1.0	36.0
21/26 April	31.5	33.0	10.5	24.5+	0.5	- 1.5	35.0
28 April/3 May	37.0	30.5	11.0	20.0+	1.5	+ 6.5	31.0
5/10 May	41.5	28.0	9.5	19.5+	1.5	+ 13.5**	29.0
12/17 May	42.0	31.0	10.0	16.0+	1.0	+ 11.5	26.0
19/24 May	45.0	27.0	11.0	15.0+	2.0	+ 18.0	26.0
26/31 May	45.5	27.0	9.5	16.0+	2.0	+ 18.5	25.5
2/7 June	48.5	23.5	11.5	14.5+	2.0	+ 25.0	26.0
9/14 June	45.0	25.0	10.0	18.5+	1.5	+ 20.0**	28.5
16/21 June	49.0	24.0	10.0	15.5+	2.0	+ 25.0	25.5
23/28 June	45.5	29.0	10.0	13.0+	2.5	+ 16.5	23.0
30 June/5 July	45.0	25.5	12.5	15.0+	2.0	+ 19.5	27.5
7/12 July	46.5	27.5	7.5	16.5+	2.0	+ 19.0**	24.0
14/19 July	44.0	27.5	8.5	18.0+	2.0	+ 16.5	26.5
21/26 July	39.0	30.5	10.0	17.5+	3.0	+ 8.5	27.5
28 July/2 Aug	43.5	30.0	8.5	16.0+	2.0	+ 13.5	24.5
4/9 Aug	46.0	28.0	9.0	13.5+	3.5	+18.0	22.5
11/16 Aug	44.5	26.5	10.5	17.0+	1.5	+18.0**	27.5
18/23 Aug	45.5	27.0	9.0	16.5+	2.0	+18.5	25.5

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

+ Includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The popularity of the Government remains high although it has fallen a significant amount since the peak during the Falklands Crisis, when 51% of the electorate claimed to be satisfied with the record of the Government to date. The latest study found 43% approving of our record in Government, 43% disapproving and 14% with no view. This compares with the situation at the start of the year when only 23% approved of our record as a Government, 65% disapproved and 12% did not have a view.

Details of the trend since the start of the year are shown in the table below:-

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
18 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
6/11 January	23	65	12
13/18 January	24	65	12
20/25 January	26	62	13
27 Jan/1 Feb	25	62	13
3/8 Feb	26	63	11
10/15 Feb	24	66	10
17/22 Feb	22	66	13
24 Feb/1 March	23	63	13
3/8 March	24	65	11
11/15 March	29	59	12
17/22 March	28	60	13
24/29 March	29	58	13
31 March/ 5 April	31	57	12
7/12 April	32	56	12
13/19 April	34	54	12
21/26 April	34	55	11
28 April/3 May	40	47	13
5/10 May	42	46	12
12/17 May	43	42	15
19/24 May	46	44	10
26/31 May	50	38	12
2/7 June	49	39	12
9/14 June	48	40	12
16/21 June	51	36	13
23/28 June	47	41	12
30 June/5 July	47	39	14
7/12 July	47	41	12
14/19 July	44	43	13
21/26 July	43	45	12
28 July/2 Aug	43	43	15
4/9 Aug	42	45	12
11/16 Aug	42	44	14
18/23 Aug	43	43	14

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs Thatcher's popularity remains very high - 49% of the electorate claimed to be satisfied with her record as Prime Minister. This compares with a peak at 55% taking this view during the Falkland Islands Crisis and only 30% taking this view at the start of the year. Mr Foot's popularity shows no sign of improving - only 13% of the electorate regard him as a good leader of the Opposition - 74% as not being a good leader. Mr Steel remains popular - the level of public approval for his leadership has remained remarkably stable since the start of the year.

Details of trends in popularity of the three main leaders are shown below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL
LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</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>1982</u>									
6/11 January	30	65	5	20	65	14	62	20	18
13/18 January	32	65	4	18	67	16	59	22	19
20/25 January	32	64	4	17	68	15	59	22	19
27 Jan/1 Feb	33	62	5	19	64	17	60	18	22
3/8 Feb	31	65	4	20	63	17	61	20	19
10/15 Feb	29	66	5	19	66	15	59	23	17
17/22 Feb	29	65	5	20	64	16	58	20	21
24 Feb/1 March	32	63	5	21	64	15	55	23	22
3/8 March	30	66	4	20	64	16	58	24	18
11/15 March	34	62	4	21	65	14	58	22	10
17/22 March	33	62	5	22	64	14	59	21	20
24/29 March	35	59	6	19	65	15	61	20	19
31 March/5 April	37	58	5	20	65	15	60	22	18
7/12 April	35	60	5	23	61	16	63	18	19
13/19 April	36	60	5	28	59	14	63	18	19
21/26 April	37	59	4	26	60	14	66	17	17
28 April/3 May	41	53	6	24	65	12	62	20	18
5/10 May	44	51	6	18	71	11	64	20	17
12/17 May	48	47	5	17	71	12	65	18	17
19/24 May	47	48	5	18	72	10	63	18	19
26/31 May	50	43	7	16	75	10	64	18	19
2/7 June	53	42	5	15	74	5	61	21	18
9/14 June	51	44	5	14	75	11	62	21	18
16/21 June	55	40	5	17	74	9	58	20	20
23/28 June	52	42	5	14	75	10	62	19	20
30 June/5 July	53	41	6	14	77	9	64	18	18
7/12 July	52	43	5	16	72	12	61	20	19
14/19 July	49	46	5	14	75	11	60	18	21
21/26 July	47	47	6	15	74	11	59	21	20
28 July/2 Aug	48	46	6	14	75	11	62	18	20
4/9 Aug	48	47	5	12	76	12	60	20	20
11/16 Aug	49	47	4	15	74	11	62	19	19
18/23 Aug	49	46	5	13	74	13	58	21	21

4. Published Polls

(a) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 190 August 1982)

In addition to the standard 'tracking' questions considered above the Daily Telegraph on 19th August 1982 also included the results of some other Gallup questions.

Gallup asked respondents whether they saw Mr Jenkins as likely to be a good leader of the Social Democrats or not. 42% thought he would be a good leader (50% July), and 31% he will not (22% July) and 27% did not have a view (28% July)

(b) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 22nd August 1982)

The Sunday Telegraph on 22nd August included details of a Gallup survey conducted from August 12th to 17th on attitudes to the police.

Gallup asked 'Have any of the things that have happened recently made you feel uneasy about our police force or hasn't your attitude been affected? Almost four out of ten electors claimed that recent events had affected their attitudes to the police and almost half of these mentioned corruption or the Countryman inquires.

Gallup asked respondents 'Which of these statements do you believe is true in the main, of the British Police Force.' They found:-

	<u>1982</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1979</u>
They are efficient and do their job well (%)	48	58	55
They are not efficient for various reasons - for example because of the way they are organised (%)	20	18	11
There are cases of corruption and violence, but these are very scattered (%)	44	45	38
Cases of corruption and violence occur too often (%)	27	16	16

There has been a decline in the proportion of the electorate thinking the police are efficient and an increase in the proportion of those thinking there are too many cases of corruption and violence. The younger age group (18 - 34) is particularly critical of the police - 32% think that corruption and violence occur too often.

The survey found 55% of the electorate thinking our system of law and order is efficient and 39% think it is not. In June 1981 the figures were 46% and 49% respectively.

(c) Audience Selection (The Sun 17th August 1982)

The Sun on 17th August included details of an Audience Selection telephone poll on attitudes to the health service dispute.

The survey found that eight out of ten electors believed that nurses should get more than the 7.9% rise being offered. However a majority are against strikes and other industrial action.

Two-thirds of those polled thought that the other health workers should also get more than the 6% they have been offered.

71% condemned the Government's handling of the dispute - only 23% approved.

(d) Research and Marketing (Wales and West) Ltd (HTV 26th August 1982)

HTV on 26th August included results of a Research and Marketing survey in the by-election seat of Gower. The survey found 48% claiming they would vote Labour, 28% Conservative, 19% SDP/Liberal and 5% Plaid Cymru. This compares with the result of the May 1979 General Election when 53.2% voted Labour, 30.5% Conservative, 9.1% Liberal and 7.2% Plaid Cymru.

When asked what they regarded as the most important issues facing Britain today, 77% mentioned unemployment, 26% inflation, 23% the economy, 13% Law and order, 7% defence/nuclear arms, 6% housing, 6% schools/education and 5% local government/rates.

(e) Systems Three (Glasgow Herald 26th August 1982)

The Glasgow Herald on 26th August included details of the results of a Systems Three poll conducted in Scotland in mid-August. The survey found 44% claiming they would vote Labour, 22% Conservative, 17% Liberal/SDP and 16% SNP. Trend details are shown below:-

	<u>Systems Three Polls -</u>		
	<u>Scotland only</u>		
	<u>August</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>General Election</u>
	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>May 1979</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Conservative	22	27	31
Labour	44	43	42
Lib/SDP	17	16	9*
SNP .	16	14	17

* Liberal only

(f) Mapla (Guardian 2nd September 1982)

The Guardian on 2nd September included details of a Maplan poll conducted from August 18th to August 20th. The survey found 41% claiming they would vote Conservative, 37% Labour, 20% Liberal/SDP and 2% for other parties. These findings are in conflict with the results of our latest Gallup 'tracking' study and we will need to wait for the results of further surveys before reaching any firm conclusions.