

Public Opinion Background Note 150  
(produced 18th February 1983)

1. Introduction

The results from our latest Gallup 'tracking' study are the same as those published in the Daily Telegraph on 17th February - compared with the January published poll (conducted 12/17 January) this survey found a fall in the Conservative lead over Labour from 12½% to 11%. The results of this Gallup study can be compared with two other recent published surveys giving an analysis of voting intention.

Published Surveys

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRATS</u>	<u>LIBERAL &amp;</u> <u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRATS</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD CON OVER</u> <u>LABOUR</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gallup (9/14 Feb)	43.5	32.5	10.5	11.5	22.0	2.0	11.0

  

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>ALLIANCE (LIBERAL</u> <u>&amp; SOCIAL DEMOCRAT)</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD CON</u> <u>OVER LAB</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
MORI (3/9 Feb)		45	32	21	13.0
Marplan (7/9 Feb)		49	28	22	21.0

Although the interviewing for the MORI study was completed before our Gallup study it found a similar level of support for the parties. Gallup found 43½% claiming they would vote Conservative (MORI 45%), 32½% Labour (32% MORI) and 22% for one of the Alliance parties (21% MORI). Gallup found a 11% Conservative lead over Labour and MORI a 13% lead. The results of the Marplan study are significantly out of line with all other published studies - they found 49% claiming they would vote Conservative, 28% Labour and 22% for one of the Alliance parties - giving a Conservative lead over Labour of 21%. These Marplan results should be treated with caution as they are so significantly out of line with all other published surveys.

Our Gallup tracking study has found almost no change in the level of support for the main parties since the first study in 1983. In early January (7/11 January) Gallup found 44% claiming they would vote Conservative - 43½% in the latest study (9/14 February), in early January 33% claiming they would vote Labour - 32½% in the latest study, and 21½% in early January claiming they would vote for one of the Alliance parties - 22% in the latest study.

If the level of support found in the Gallup and MORI studies was duplicated at a General Election it would result in the return of a Conservative Government with a comfortable majority.

The two tables overleaf show the trend of support for the main parties since early September 1982 - the first shows support when 'don't knows' are excluded (the 'conventional' way of presenting opinion research findings) and the second shows the figures when don't knows are included. In the latest study Gallup found 8% of respondents who did not give a voting intention or claimed they did not know how they would vote.

Voting Intention(unprompted question, excluding  
don't knows)

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL &amp; SOCIAL</u>
				DEMOCRAT		Con over Lab	DEMOCRAT
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<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>							
1/6 Sept	43.5	28.5	8.0	17.0+	3.0	+15.0	25.0
8/13 Sept	44.0	30.5	8.5	14.5+	2.5	+13.5**	23.0
15/21 Sept	42.0	33.0	8.0	15.0+	2.0	+9.0	23.0
22/27 Sept	43.0	29.5	12.5	13.0+	2.0	+13.5	25.5
29 Sept/4 Oct	40.0	31.5	13.5	13.0+	2.0	+8.5	26.5
6/11 Oct	42.5	32.0	10.5	13.0+	2.0	+10.5	23.5
13/18 Oct	43.0	31.0	9.0	13.5+	3.5	+12.0	22.5
20/25 Oct	40.5	29.0	12.0	15.0+	3.5	+11.5**	27.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	48.0	31.0	8.5	11.0+	1.5	+17.0	19.5
3/10 Nov	44.0	33.0	9.0	12.0+	2.0	+11.0	21.0
10/15 Nov	42.0	35.0	8.0	13.0+	2.0	+7.0**	21.0
17/22 Nov	41.5	33.0	9.0	14.0+	2.5	+8.5	23.0
24/29 Nov	46.5	32.0	7.5	11.5+	2.5	+14.5	19.0
1/6 Dec	43.0	35.0	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+8.0	20.0
8/13 Dec	41.0	34.5	9.0	13.0+	2.5	+6.5**	22.0
<u>1983</u>							
7/11 Jan	44.0	33.0	10.5	11.0+	1.5	+11.0	21.5
12/17 Jan	44.0	31.5	11.5	11.0+	2.0	+12.5**	22.5
18/25 Jan	47.5	30.5	9.0	11.0+	2.0	+17.0	20.0
27/31 Jan	45.0	31.0	10.0	12.0+	2.0	+14.0	22.0
2/7 Feb	43.0	30.0	11.0	13.0+	3.0	+13.0	24.0
9/14 Feb	43.5	32.5	10.5	11.5+	2.0	+11.0**	22.0

\* First Gallup Post-Election Survey, \*\* Published Polls, + includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTH</u>	<u>DON'T</u> <u>KNOW</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL</u> & <u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>								
May (GE)	43.9	36.9	13.8	-	5.5	-	+7.0	13.8
<u>1982</u>								
1/6 Sept	39.0	26.0	7.0	15.0	3.0	10.0	+13.0	22.0
8/13 Sept	40.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	2.0	8.0	+12.0**	21.0
15/21 Sept	38.0	29.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	11.0	+9.0	19.0
22/27 Sept	39.0	27.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	24.0
29th Sept/4th Oct	37.0	29.0	12.0	12.0	2.0	8.0	+8.0	24.0
6/11 Oct	38.0	29.0	10.0	12.0	1.0	10.0	+9.0	22.0
13/18 Oct	39.0	28.0	8.0	13.0	3.0	9.0	+11.0	21.0
20/25 Oct	37.0	27.0	11.0	13.0	4.0	8.0	+10.0**	24.0
27 Oct/1 Nov	44.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	8.0	+16.0	19.0
3/10 Nov	41.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	2.0	8.0	+10.0	19.0
10/15 Nov	38.0	31.0	7.0	12.0	2.0	10.0	+7.0**	19.0
17/22 Nov	41.0	29.0	11.0	9.0	1.0	9.0	+12.0	20.0
24/29 Nov	41.0	29.0	7.0	10.0	2.0	11.0	+12.0	17.0
1/6 Dec	39.0	32.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+7.0	18.0
8/13 Dec	37.0	31.0	8.0	11.0	3.0	10.0	+6.0**	19.0
<u>1983</u>								
7/11 Jan	39.5	29.5	9.5	9.5	1.5	10.5	+10.0	19.0
12/17 Jan	40.0	29.0	10.0	10.0	1.0	9.0	+11.0	20.0
18/25 Jan	43.0	28.0	8.0	10.0	1.0	10.0	+15.0	18.0
27/31 Jan	40.0	28.0	9.0	11.0	2.0	10.0	+12.0	20.0
2/7 Feb	39.0	27.0	10.0	12.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0	22.0
9/14 Feb	40.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	1.0	8.0	+10.0	20.0

\*\* Published polls, + includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The latest study found a slight further fall in the popularity of the Government - 39% claimed to approve of the record of the Government, 49% disapproved and 12% did not have a view. This compares with the situation at the start of the year (7/11 January) when 43% claimed to approve of the record of the Government, 44% disapproved and 13% did not have a view.

Details of the trend of replies to this standard question since early September 1983 are shown below.

GOVERNMENT RECORD

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1982</u>			
1/6 Sept	41	45	14
8/13 Sept	40	48	13
15/21 Sept	38	49	13
22/27 Sept	38	50	12
29 Sept/4 Oct	36	51	13
6/11 Oct	40	47	13
13/18 Oct	38	48	14
20/25 Oct	40	49	11
27 Oct/1 Nov	42	45	13
3/10 Nov	41	45	15
10/15 Nov	39	48	13
17/22 Nov	39	47	13
24/29 Nov	44	44	13
1/6 Dec	42	47	11
8/13 Dec	37	50	13
<u>1983</u>			
7/11 Jan	43	44	13
12/17 Jan	43	43	14
18/25 Jan	45	43	12
27/31 Jan	41	44	15
2/7 Feb	40	48	12
9/14 Feb	39	49	12

### 3. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest 'tracking' study found a slight fall in Mrs Thatcher's popularity - down from 46% (2/7 Feb) to 45% in the latest study (9/14 Feb). This compares with 48% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister in early January (7/11 January). Gallup found a marginal improvement in the popularity of Mr Foot, Mr Steel and Mr Jenkins.

Details of the trend since early September 1982 in the popularity of the leaders of the four main parties are shown in the table below:-

#### POPULARITY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</u>			<u>Mr Jenkins</u>		
	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Dis-sat.</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is</u>	<u>Is Not</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1982</u>												
1/6 Sept	49	45	6	14	74	12	59	20	21	35	30	35
8/13 Sept	48	47	5	16	74	10	59	21	20	37	32	31
15/21 Sept	46	49	6	14	73	12	62	19	19	33	34	33
22/27 Sept	46	50	4	16	74	11	64	20	16	35	31	34
29 Sept/4 Oct	44	51	5	27	60	13	64	19	17	36	33	31
6/11 Oct	46	48	6	25	62	13	62	22	17	35	33	32
13/18 Oct	45	50	5	23	66	11	56	25	19	34	36	30
20/25 Oct	46	50	4	20	69	12	60	22	18	35	34	31
27 Oct/1Nov	48	48	4	20	66	14	57	24	18	35	37	28
3/10 Nov	48	48	5	23	65	11	58	24	18	34	37	29
10/15 Nov	44	52	5	22	67	12	59	22	19	37	33	30
17/22 Nov	44	51	5	25	63	11	59	20	20	33	36	31
24/29 Nov	48	47	5	18	68	14	57	22	20	31	35	31
1/6 Dec	45	51	5	23	67	10	62	18	19	35	34	31
8/13 Dec	44	53	4	20	69	10	60	23	17	34	34	31
<u>1983</u>												
7/11 Jan	48	47	6	18	68	14	62	20	17	30	33	36
12/17 Jan	49	45	6	17	69	14	62	19	19	30	31	39
18/25 Jan	51	44	5	18	72	10	61	20	19	33	35	31
27/31 Jan	47	48	5	18	70	13	61	19	21	33	35	32
2/7 Feb	46	49	5	15	72	13	60	22	17	31	40	29
9/14 Feb	45	50	5	17	72	11	62	21	17	33	39	28

4. Published Polls(a) MORI (The Standard 15th February 1983)

The Standard on 15th February included details of a MORI study conducted between February 3rd and 9th. Details of the trend of support for the main parties in MORI surveys since November are shown in the table below:-

	<u>MORI Voting Intention</u>			
	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	42	42	44	45
Labour	33	35	35	32
Alliance	23	21	20	21
Others	2	2	1	2
Conservative Lead	9	7	9	13

MORI also asked similar questions to Gallup with regard to attitudes to the record of the Government and to the leaders of the main parties. The general trend is similar to that we found in our Gallup 'tracking' studies.

	<u>MORI Attitudes</u>			
	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>
	%	%	%	%
<u>Government</u>				
Satisfied	38	38	41	39
Dissatisfied	51	51	48	51
<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>				
Satisfied	47	47	49	46
Dissatisfied	46	45	43	46
<u>Mr Foot</u>				
Satisfied	22	22	19	18
Dissatisfied	60	60	62	64
<u>Mr Steel</u>				
Satisfied	42	42	43	43
Dissatisfied	28	27	27	29
<u>Mr Jenkins</u>				
Satisfied	27	25	24	25
Dissatisfied	36	37	37	40

MORI also asked respondents 'What are the most important issues facing Britain today?' They found the importance of defence and disarmament has increased dramatically since November 1982 - up from 14% to 39%. Details are shown overleaf:-

	<u>Issues</u>			
	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>
	%	%	%	%
Unemployment	87	83	85	88
Defence/disarmament	14	25	28	39
Prices/inflation	29	24	28	26
Union/strikes	6	5	6	10
Law and Order	10	13	11	7
Education	8	6	8	7

Electors were asked what they think the general economic condition of the country will be like over the next 12 months. Twice as many (45%) said things will get as worse as reckon will improve (23%). Of the others 27% think things will 'stay the same' and the rest did not have a view.

MORI found a massive Conservative lead of 26% over Labour in the London TV area, 9% in the Midlands, 16% in Scotland and 1% in Northern England.

(b) Gallup (Daily Telegraph 17th February 1983)

The Daily Telegraph on 17th February included details of a Gallup study conducted between 9th and 14th February. In addition to the standard 'tracking' study questions Gallup also asked a range of other questions.

Gallup showed respondents a list of 12 possible topics of likely concern at the next General Election and asked respondents which of them should be concentrated on by the politicians. They found:-

	<u>Most Important Issues</u>		
	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Dec</u>
	%	%	%
Unemployment	89	87	89
Prices	64	60	59
Law and Order	48	38	41
Defence	48	37	30
NHS	48	40	42
Education	43	35	38
Taxation	41	28	28
Housing	40	34	33
Pensions	39	27	31
Unions	35	21	20
Race	30	25	23
Europe	29	23	22

The percentage selecting the defence issue has increased from 30% in December 1982 to 48% in the latest study.



When Gallup asked respondents what they regarded as the most urgent problems facing the country. Details for the supporters of the main parties are shown below:-

	<u>Most Urgent Problems</u>				
	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>SDP</u>
	%	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>
Unemployment	87	85	91	83	89
Cost of living/prices	19	17	22	17	19
Defence/Nuclear Weapons	19	19	16	19	31
General Economic Problems	10	10	10	9	15
Strikes/Trade Unions	10	16	3	8	9
Health/Hospitals	7	7	7	7	5
Law and Order	7	8	6	10	5
Housing/Rates	5	4	6	8	4

The importance of the defence/nuclear weapons issue has increased considerably since last year - concern over this issue is particularly high among SDP supporters.

Gallup asked respondents whether they saw the main parties as being united or divided at the present time. They found:-

	<u>Parties - United/Divided</u>		
	<u>United</u>	<u>Divided</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Labour (%)	12	82	5
Conservative (%)	66	25	8
Alliance (%)	34	42	24

Labour is seen as being a divided party by 82% of respondents (12% united). The Conservatives are seen as being united by 66% of respondents - 25% divided. The Alliance was seen as being united by 34% of respondents and by 42% as divided. When asked which party was seen as having the best policies and best leaders they found:-

	<u>Best Policies - Best Leaders</u>	
	<u>Best Policies</u>	<u>Best Leaders</u>
	%	%
Conservative	41	48
Labour	26	16
Liberal	8	13
Social Democrats	4	5
Alliance	4	4
Other	1	1
Don't Know	16	14

The Conservatives are seen as having the best policies by 41% of the electorate and the best leaders by 48% of the electorate.

Gallup also asked respondents which party do you think has the best policies on a range of issues? They found:-

	<u>Best Policies</u>				
	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>SDP/Alliance</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Inflation/Prices (%)	48	24	9	0	18
Unemployment (%)	24	40	12	0	23
Britain's Defence (%)	49	24	10	0	17
Common Market (%)	36	27	10	0	27
Strikes and Industrial Disputes (%)	44	30	9	0	18
National Health Service (%)	26	43	10	0	21
Education and Schools (%)	33	37	11	0	19
Law and Order (%)	45	22	8	0	25

The Conservatives have a lead with regard to dealing with inflation and prices, Britain's defence, the Common Market, strikes and industrial relations and law and order. Labour have a lead on reputation for dealing with unemployment, the national health service and education and schools.

Gallup asked respondents a range of questions on economic policies. They found:-

	<u>Economic Policies</u>				
	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Quite Important</u>	<u>Not very Important</u>	<u>Not at all Important</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
There are tax cuts right across the board (%)	37	30	22	8	4
The standard rate of income tax drops to 25p (%)	38	31	18	7	5
Inflation is cut to below 5% (%)	52	28	12	3	4
Unemployment is drastically reduced (%)	85	10	2	1	
The economic situation substantially improves (%)	77	16	3	1	3

85% thought it 'very important' that unemployment be drastically reduced, 77% the economic situation substantially improves, 52% that inflation is cut to below 5%, 38% that the standard rate of income tax drops to 25p and 37% there are tax cuts right across the board.

Gallup asked 'Have you ever voted for, or considered voting for the Alliance between the Social Democrats and the Liberals?' - 6% claimed they had voted for the Alliance 31% they had considered voting for the Alliance and 64% they had never considered voting for the Alliance. They also asked 'The Alliance between the Social Democrats and the Liberals has not been doing so well recently in the opinion polls and local elections. Why do you think this is?' They found 19% mentioning the Alliance having

no definite policies, 17% they are not united, 12% an untried party, 8% not enough publicity and 7% not powerful enough.

(c) Marplan (Guardian 17th February 1983)

The Guardian on 17th February included details of a Marplan poll conducted between 7th and 9th February. The survey found 49% claiming they would vote Conservative, 28% Labour, 22% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties. details of the trend of support for the parties in Marplan studies is shown below:-

	<u>Marplan Voting Intention</u>			
	<u>Feb</u> <u>1983</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>1983</u>	<u>Dec</u> <u>1982</u>	<u>Nov</u> <u>1982</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	49	48	44	46
Labour	28	30	32	34
Alliance	22	21	23	18
Others	1	1	1	2
<hr/>				
Conservative lead	21	18	12	12

(d) NOP (Daily Mail 18th February 1983)

The Daily Mail on 18th February 1983 included details of a NOP poll conducted in Bermondsey on 15th/16th February. They found that among those who said they are certain to vote that 34% claimed they would vote for Peter Tatchell (Labour), 28% for Simon Hughes (Liberal/SDP), 24% for John O'Grady (Real Bermondsey Labour), 11% for Robert Hughes (Conservative) and 4% for 'other' parties.

(e) ORC (Weekend World 13th February 1983)

The Weekend World programme on 13th February 1983 included details of an ORC survey on attitudes to nuclear weapons. The survey was conducted 9/10 February.

ORC asked respondents 'Do you approve or disapprove of the Government's plans to accept the basing of Cruise Missiles in Britain?' 39% of respondents claimed to approve of the basing of Cruise Missiles in Britain, 47% disapprove and 14% did not have a view. ORC asked respondents whether they would prefer keys to fire Cruise Missiles to be held by USA or jointly by USA and Britain. Only 4% wanted the keys to be held by the USA, 89% jointly by USA and Britain and 7% did not have a view. They also asked 'If the keys to fire the missiles were held jointly by America and Britain, would you be more likely or less likely to accept the Cruise Missiles?' 37% claimed to be more likely, 8% less likely, 50% it would make not difference and 5% did not have a view.

When ORC asked 'Who do you think is more to blame for non progress of the arms reduction talks between America and Russia?' - 15% blamed America, 31% blamed Russia, 43% both equally and 10% did not have a view. When asked 'If America now made concessions to break the deadlock would you be more likely or less likely to support the basing of Cruise in Britain?' - 21% claimed they would be more likely to support Cruise, 13% less likely, 55% make no difference and 12% had no view.

ORC asked 'Should Britain buy the Trident nuclear missile system to replace the present British nuclear deterrent?' - 37% thought we should buy Trident, 40% we should not buy Trident and 23% did not have a view.

In terms of voting intention ORC found 49% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33% Labour, 17% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties.