

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 160
(Produced 30th April 1983)



1. Introduction

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study from 20th to 25th April and interviewed 1018 electors throughout Great Britain. The survey found a 13% Conservative lead over Labour compared with 13½% in the previous unpublished study (13/18 April) and a 15½% lead in a NOP poll published in the Birmingham Post (Thursday 28th April). Conservative support now stands at 45% (44% in early January), Labour at 32% (33% in early January) and Alliance support at 20% (21½% in early January). Although these national figures conceal some regional variations and our surveys have found some fluctuations there has been remarkable little change in the level of support for the parties since January. The latest figures show us with slightly more support than at the May 1979 General Election, Labour support having fallen and the combined level of Liberal and SDP support just over 6 percentage points higher than the level of Liberal support in May 1979.

Details of support for the parties are shown overleaf:-

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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> DEMOCRAT	<u>OTH</u>	<u>LEAD</u> Con over Lab	<u>LIBERAL & SOCIAL</u> 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	-	1.5	-9.0	13.0
<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
17/21 Feb	44.5	34.5	9.0	10.0+	2.0	+10.0	19.0
24/28 Feb	42.0	29.0	10.0	17.0+	2.0	+13.0	27.0
2/7 March	42.0	28.5	12.0	15.0+	2.5	+13.5	27.0
9/14 March	47.5	24.0	10.0	16.5+	2.0	+23.5	26.5
17/21 March	39.5	28.5	10.5	17.5+	3.0	+11.0**	28.0
24/28 March	44.0	33.0	9.5	12.0+	4.5	+11.0	21.5
31 March/5 April	42.0	36.0	9.0	12.0+	1.0	+0.0	21.0
6/11 April	40.5	35.0	10.0	12.5+	2.0	+5.5**	22.5
13/18 April	44.5	31.0	9.5	12.5+	2.5	+13.5	22.0
20/25 April	45.0	32.0	9.0	11.0+	3.0	+13.0	20.0

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

VOTING INTENTION

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(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>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
17/21 Feb	41.0	31.0	8.0	9.0	1.0	9.0	+10.0	17.0
24/28 Feb	38.0	26.0	9.0	16.0	1.0	10.0	+12.0	25.0
2/7 March	39.0	25.0	11.0	14.0	2.0	8.0	+13.0	25.0
9/14 March	42.0	21.0	9.0	15.0	1.0	11.0	+21.0	24.0
17/21 March	36.0	26.0	10.0	17.0	3.0	8.0	+10.0	27.0
24/28 March	41.0	31.0	9.0	11.0	1.0	8.0	+10.0	20.0
31 March/5 April	38.0	33.0	8.0	11.0	1.0	8.0	+5.0	19.0
6/11 April	37.0	32.0	9.0	11.0	2.0	9.0	+5.0	20.0
13/18 April	41.0	29.0	9.0	12.0	1.0	8.0	+12.0	21.0
20/25 April	41.0	29.0	8.0	10.0	2.0	10.0	+12.0	18.0

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

2. Government Record

This latest study found 43% of the electorate approving of our record in government - 43% in early January 1983 and 45% disapproving - 44% in early January 1983.

Details of the trend of approval/disapproval for the Government since the start of the year 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>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
17/21 Feb	41	46	13
24/25 Feb	39	49	12
2/7 March	43	47	10
9/14 March	42	44	13
17/21 March	41	48	11
24/28 March	44	44	12
31 March/5 April	39	48	13
6/11 April	38	49	14
13/18 April	41	44	15
20/25 April	43	45	12

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Compared with early January there has been almost no change in the popularity of any of the leaders of the four main parties. In the latest study 47% of the electorate claimed to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 47% dissatisfied and 6% did not have a view. 20% regarded Mr Foot as being a good Leader of the Labour Party and 68% as not being a good Leader. 63% regarded Mr Steel as being a good Leader of the Liberals and 17% as not being a good Leader. Mr Jenkins was much less popular with only 30% regarding him as a good Leader of the SDP, 40% as not being a good Leader and 30% not having a view.

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-</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>Is</u>	<u>Is</u> <u>Not</u>	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<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
17/21 Feb	46	49	5	18	71	11	63	18	19	35	36	29
24/28 Feb	45	50	5	17	71	12	66	14	20	37	33	30
2/7 March	47	49	4	20	70	10	69	15	15	35	34	30
9/14 March	48	47	5	16	71	13	67	15	18	36	32	32
17/21 March	47	48	5	19	71	10	69	14	17	39	35	26
24/28 March	50	46	4	25	64	11	66	16	17	29	45	26
31 March/5 April	45	50	5	22	63	11	66	16	17	31	45	24
6/11 April	44	50	5	21	64	15	64	17	19	31	41	29
13/18 April	49	47	4	22	67	11	65	19	16	31	42	28
20/25 April	47	47	6	20	68	12	63	17	20	30	40	30

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4. Published Polls(a) ORC (ITN News at One 29th April 1983)

The ITN News at One programme on 29th April included details of an ORC poll conducted in Cardiff NW on 27th and 28th April. The study found 48% claiming they would vote Conservative, 26% Labour, 19% SDP/Liberal and 7% Plaid Cymru. Details are shown below:-

Cardiff NW Voting Intention

	<u>April</u> <u>1983</u>	<u>1979 General</u> <u>Election Result</u>	<u>Change</u>
	%	%	%
Conservative	48	51.0	-3
Labour	26	33.2	-7
SDP/Liberal	19	13.7	+5
Plaid Cymru	7	2.1	+5

The survey also found some potential for an increase in the SDP/Liberal Alliance vote which could happen in the by-election campaign. When those interviewed were asked who would be their second choice of candidate, the majority of those intending to vote Labour or Conservative, who said they might consider a second choice, plumped overwhelmingly for the SDP/Liberal candidate. Among Conservative voters 46% said that they would not change their vote, but a further 39% said that their second choice would be the SDP/Liberal candidate. Among Labour voters 36% said that they would not change their vote, but 41% said that their second choice would be the SDP/Liberal candidate. Of those intending to vote for the SDP/Liberal candidate only 22% said they would not change their vote. A further 38% said that if they changed their vote then their second choice would be the Labour candidate and 27% said they would vote for the Conservative candidate.

Of those who voted Conservative in 1979 77% said that they would vote Conservative in the by-election and 13% said that they would vote for the SDP/Liberal candidate and 6% for the Labour candidate. Of those who voted Labour in 1979, 61% said they would vote Labour in the by-election and 21% said they would vote for the SDP/Liberal candidate and 11% Conservative.

Conservative supporters appeared most determined to vote with 86% saying they were absolutely certain to vote/certain to vote, compared with 72% of Labour supporters and 76% of SDP/Liberal Alliance supporters.

As far as the issues in the by-election are concerned those interviewed indicated that issues affecting Great Britain as a whole were likely to be more important than local issues. A total of 47% of the electors surveyed thought that issues affecting Great Britain would be most important in this campaign as compared with 38% who thought that local issues would be most important and 3% thought Welsh issues would be most important.

(b) MORI (Standard 25/26/27 April)

The Evening Standard on 25th, 26th and 27th April included details of a MORI survey conducted in Greater London between 7th and 14th April. The survey found Ken Livingstone being extremely unpopular. Details of the voting intention question from the survey are shown below:-

Voting Intention - Greater London

	<u>Greater London</u>	<u>G.B.</u>	<u>Last G.L.C. Election (1981)</u>	<u>Difference from last G.L.C. Election</u>
	%	%	%	%
Conservative	42	43	40	+2
Labour	32	34	42	-10
Alliance	24	22	14	+10
Other	2	1	4	-2

When MORI asked respondents whether they thought Ken Livingstone was doing a good job 26% claimed to be satisfied with him as Leader of the G.L.C., 58% dissatisfied and 16% did not have a view. When analysed by Party support the key figures are:-

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>
Conservative (%)	10	78
Labour (%)	50	35
Alliance (%)	20	66

(c) NOP (Birmingham Post 28th April 1983)

The Birmingham Post on 28th April 1983 included details of a nationwide NOP survey which found a 15½% Conservative lead over Labour. NOP found 46½% claiming they would vote Conservative, 31% Labour and 20½% Alliance.

In the East Midlands Conservative support is 7½% higher than in May 1979, Labour 13% lower and Alliance 4% higher than the Liberals, but in the West Midlands Conservatives are 2% down on 1979, Labour 7½% and Alliance 11% up on the Liberals in 1979.

(d) MORI (Sunday Times 1st May 1983)

The Sunday Times on 1st May included details of a MORI poll conducted between April 21st and 25th. The study is called an 'election panel' which means that the same individuals are interviewed repeatedly about their political views - this process of reinterview tends to make respondents in such studies atypical of the electorate as a whole.

When MORI asked electors how they would vote in a General Election 45% claimed they would vote Conservative, 30% Labour and 23% Alliance - a 15% Conservative lead in line with other polls. When MORI asked electors outside Greater London and Scotland how they would vote in the local government elections 40% claimed they would vote Conservative, 35% Labour and 22% Alliance.