

Public Opinion Background Note 132

(Produced 26th September 1982)

1. Introduction

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study from 15th to 21st September. Gallup interviewed over 900 electors throughout Great Britain. The survey found 42% claiming they would vote Conservative, 33% Labour, 15% Social Democrat, 8% Liberal and 2% for 'other' parties. These unpublished results can be compared with results of the previous published survey conducted from 8th to 13th September which found 44% claiming they would vote Conservative, 30½% Labour, 14½% Social Democrat, 8½% Liberal and 2½% for 'other' parties. Support for the Social Democrats has remained around the 15/16% mark since early May. Liberal support has fluctuated between 7½% and 11% since late February. Support for the Conservatives has dropped to 42% compared with 49% at the peak of the Falkland Islands crisis - it remains considerably higher than at the start of the year when only 25½% of the electorate claimed they would vote Conservative. Labour support has increased from the nadir reached in early June when only 23½% claimed they would vote Labour. Details of the trend in support for the main parties are shown overleaf:-

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
25/30 Aug	40.0	32.0	11.5	15.0+	1.5	+ 8.0	26.5
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

* First Gallup post-Election survey

** Published Polls

+ Includes those saying they would vote for the Alliance.

2. Government Record

The latest 'tracking' study found a slight fall in Government popularity with 38% approving of our record to date, 49% disapproving and 13% not having a view. This compares with the peak of 51% approving of the record of the Government during the Falklands crisis and the 23% approving at the start of the year.

Details of the trend of approval for the record of the Government are shown in the table 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>			
6/11 January	23	65	12
8/18 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
25/30 Aug	37	52	11
1/6 Sept	41	45	14
8/13 Sept	40	48	13
15/21 Sept	38	49	13

3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Mrs Thatcher's popularity dropped slightly in the latest 'tracking' study - 46% claimed to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 49% claimed to be dissatisfied and 6% did not have a view. This level of satisfaction is still much higher than at the start of the year when 30% claimed to be satisfied with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, 66% dissatisfied and 6% did not have a view.

Mr Foot's popularity remains extremely low with only 14% satisfied with him as leader of the opposition, 73% dissatisfied and 12% with no view.

Mr Steel's popularity remains almost unchanged - 62% claimed to be satisfied with him as leader of the Liberals, 19% dissatisfied and 19% did not have a view.

Details of the trend in these standard 'tracking' questions since the start of the year are shown in the table below:-

POPULARITY OF POLITICAL
LEADERS

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr Foot</u>			<u>Mr Steel</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>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	73	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
25/30 Aug	44	50	6	18	72	10	61	19	20
1/ Sept	49	45	6	14	74	12	59	20	21
8/13 Sept	48	47	5	16	74	10	59	21	20
15/21 Sept	46	49	6	14	73	12	62	19	19

4. Published Polls(a) Marplan (Guardian 23rd September 1982)

The Guardian on Thursday 23rd September 1982 included details of a Marplan poll conducted in early September on public attitudes to a range of aspects of the current political situation. Some of the key findings are summarised below:-

(a) Defence

Marplan asked respondents ' Bearing in mind the current international situation on the one hand, and Britain's economic situation on the other, do you think we ought to be increasing military spending, holding it at the present level, or cutting it?' Among the electorate 30% thought we should spend more on defence, 46% the same, 19% less and 4% did not have a view. 41% of Conservative supporters, 25% of Labour supporters took the view we should spend more on defence, as did 23% of Alliance supporters. 50% of Conservative supporters, 40% of Labour supporters and 54% of Alliance supporters took the view that our spending on defence should remain the same. 5% of Conservative supporters, 32% of Labour supporters and 20% of Alliance supporters thought our spending on defence should be less.

Military Spending

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Labour</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Alliance</u> <u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%
More	30	41	25	23
Same	46	50	40	54
Less	19	5	32	20
Don't know	4	3	4	3

In the area of nuclear disarmament they asked 'Should Britain abandon nuclear weapons, maintain current nuclear capability or improve it by spending more money?' 31% of electors thought we should abandon nuclear weapons, 51% maintain them, 15% improve them and 3% did not have a view. Among Conservative supporters 17% thought we should abandon our nuclear weapons, among Labour supporters 43% and among Alliance supporters 32%. Details are shown below.

Nuclear Weapons

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Labour</u> <u>Supporters</u>	<u>Alliance</u> <u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%
Abandon	31	17	43	32
Maintain	51	61	42	56
Improve	15	19	13	8
Don't know	3	3	2	4

(b) Trade Unions

Marplan found 66% of the electorate, including 85% of Conservative supporters, 45% of Labour supporters and 70% of Alliance supporters claimed to be unhappy about the way trade unions operate at present.

Marplan also asked, 'Would you like to see further changes in the law to restrict the power of trade unions or do you think they are subject to enough restrictions already?' 48% of the electorate thought there should be further changes in the law (including 69% of Conservative supporters, 27% of Labour supporters and 50% of Alliance supporters). 47% of the electorate thought we have had enough changes already (including 28% of Conservative supporters, 67% of Labour supporters and 44% of Alliance supporters).

(c) Common Market

Marplan found 51% of respondents in favour of Britain withdrawing from the Common Market, 41% in favour of staying in, and 8% not having a view. Among Conservative supporters 57% wanted us to stay in, 34% withdraw and 9% did not have a view. The situation was reversed among Labour supporters with 69% in favour of withdrawal, 26% wanting us to stay in, and 6% not having a view. Support among the Alliance was more evenly balanced with 42% wanting Britain to withdraw, 51% stay in, and 7% not having a view.

Marplan also asked 'Do you think the question of whether we stay in or pull out should be decided by Parliament or by a further referendum?' 25% thought the matter should be decided by Parliament, 72% via a referendum and 3% did not have a view.

(d) The Economy

Marplan asked respondents 'Thinking about the economy, which do you think should be given the higher priority, keeping down inflation or keeping down unemployment?' Among the electorate 30% selected inflation, 64% unemployment and 6% did not have a view. Among Conservative supporters 47% selected inflation, 44% unemployment and 9% did not have a view. Among Labour supporters only 17% mentioned inflation, 79% unemployment and 4% did not have a view. Among Alliance supporters 24% mentioned inflation, 70% unemployment and 6% did not have a view.

When Marplan asked 'Do you think a prices and incomes policy is a good thing or a bad thing?' 55% of the electorate thought it was a good idea, 26% a bad idea and 19% did not have a view. Among Conservative supporters 63% thought a prices and incomes policy was a good thing - 23% bad and 15% did not have a view. Among Labour supporters 46% thought it was a good thing - 35% bad and 19% did not have a view. Among Alliance supporters 64% thought it was a good thing, 19% a bad thing and 18% did not have a view.

(e) Nationalization

In response to the question 'Concentrating on state owned industries, would you like to see state ownership reduced, extended or the present balance maintained?' 44% of the electorate wanted state ownership reduced, 39% maintained as at present, 14% extended and 3% did not have a view. Even among Labour supporters 27% wanted state ownership reduced, 44% maintained as at present, 23% extended and 6% did not have a view. Among Conservative supporters 65% wanted state ownership reduced,

25% maintained as at present, 8% extended and 2% did not have a view. Among Alliance supporters 42% wanted state ownership reduced, 48% maintained as at present, 7% extended and 2% did not have a view.

State Ownership

	<u>All</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Alliance</u>
		<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>	<u>Supporters</u>
	%	%	%	%
Reduce	44	65	27	42
Extend	14	8	23	7
Maintain as now	39	25	44	48
Don't know	3	2	6	2

(f) Taxation

Marplan found overwhelming support for the simple slogan 'cut taxes' much of it fell away when Marplan put two possible consequences of this policy - cuts in social services or cuts in aid to industry. Opposition to tax cuts which lead to lower social service standards are especially strong among Liberal/Social Democrat supporters.

(g) The Electoral System

Marplan asked respondents 'Do you think the present voting system should be changed so that parties in the House of Commons would get a share of the seats more closely in line with the proportion of votes cast for them, or do you prefer the present voting system?' 45% of the electorate wanted a change in the voting system, 49% did not want a change and 6% did not have a view. Among Conservative supporters 39% wanted a change in the electoral system, 56% wanted no change and 4% did not have a view. Among Labour supporters 39% wanted a change, 54% no change and among Alliance supporters 70% wanted a change in the electoral system and 24% no change.

(b) Gallup (Sunday Telegraph 26th September 1982)

The Sunday Telegraph on 26th September included details of a Gallup survey conducted between September 15th and 21st. Gallup asked 'Would you like to see Mr Foot carry on as Labour leader or should someone else take over? - 27% thought he should carry on, 62% be replaced and 11% did not have a view. Among Labour supporters 39% wanted Mr Foot to carry on as leader and 55% think he should make way for another leader. As Gallup have found over the past three years the vast majority (87%) of the electorate see Labour as a divided party. Gallup found 18% seeing Labour as a party of the far left compared with only 9% in 1980. A further 25% regarded Labour as substantially leftist while in 1980 20% did so.

When shown a list of names and asked who they would not like to see leading the Labour Party, Benn headed the list with 61% among the electorate and 51% among Labour supporters. Mr Healey with 14% and 24% respectively came second on the disliked list.

Overall, the general public feels that Labour's policies are too Socialist, while Labour supporters tend to think that they are about right. Despite the health workers dispute and the TUC's Day of Action, one in two (49%) of the electorate felt it was a good thing for the Labour Party to have a close relationship with the unions and 38% took the opposite view.

(c) Marplan (Guardian 21st September 1982)

The Guardian on 21st September included the results of a Marplan poll conducted between 8th September and 10th September. The survey found 42% claiming they would vote Conservative, 37½% Labour, 19% Alliance and 1½% for 'other' parties.

(d) The Sunday Times (26th September 1982)

The Sunday Times on 26th September included details of a MORI poll conducted on 24th September on attitudes to the health service dispute. The survey found massive support for the nurses' claim for a better deal. 83% wanted the Government to increase its offer to the nurses. 44% wanted the nurses to be paid their 12% in full and a further 10% believed they should get even more than they have claimed.

The survey also found seven in ten electors wanting the Government to increase the 6% it has offered to the ancillary workers. One in three respondents wanted the ancillary workers to get their full claim or even more.

MORI found that the electorate thought the Government has mishandled the dispute - thought the Government has handled the dispute badly and only 18% thought they had handled it well.

Public support for the day of action was split - 45% supported it, and 49% opposed it and 6% had no view. Among trade unionists 41% were against it and 52% in favour.

The survey found 42% claiming they would vote Conservative, 29% Labour, 26% Alliance and 3% for 'other' parties.

(e) Central TV (22nd September 1982)

Central TV on 22nd September included details of a survey in Birmingham Northfield conducted by an academic from Wolverhampton. The survey found 40% claiming they would vote Conservative, 40% Labour and 18% Alliance. These figures are after adjustment - the programme was not clear how the adjustments have been made. The unadjusted figures found 47% claiming they would vote Labour, and 37% Conservative.

It is not clear from the reported findings how the survey was conducted - the results should be treated with considerable caution.