

PUBLIC OPINION BACKGROUND NOTE 921. Introduction

With all opinion research we are in a position of looking at what public opinion was and not what it is at the present moment. The Party's Gallup 'tracking' study allows us to look at the level of support for the main parties approximately a week ago, but before the Crosby by-election. The interviewing for the survey was conducted from 18th to 23rd November and found for the first time in any of our tracking studies a significant lead for the Social Democrats over both the Conservative and Labour Parties. Earlier unpublished surveys have found a  $\frac{1}{2}\%$  lead for the Social Democrats and the Social Democrats 'neck and neck' with Labour, but this is the first survey to find them with a substantial lead on an unprompted voting intention question. Gallup found 25 $\frac{1}{2}\%$  of the electorate claiming they will vote Conservative, 26% Labour, 32% Social Democrat and 14% Liberal. If we combine the level of unprompted support for the Liberals and Social Democrats, Gallup found 46% of the electorate claiming they will vote for one of the Alliance parties - the highest level of combined support we have ever found.

Our next Gallup 'tracking' study will have been conducted largely after the Crosby by-election.

Details of the trend in support for the main parties in the standard Gallup unprompted voting intention question from both our unpublished 'tracking' studies and Gallup's published polls are shown in the table below and on the attached graph.

(please see following page)





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

	<u>CON</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SOCIAL</u> <u>DEMOCRAT</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>LEAD</u>	<u>LIBERAL +</u> <u>SOCIAL 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>1981</u>							
3/8 June	31.0	40.0	14.0	12.5	2.5	-9.0	26.5
9/15 June	29.5	37.5	18.0	12.5	2.5	-8.0**	30.5
16/22 June	32.0	37.0	15.5	13.0	2.5	-5.0	28.5
24/30 June	29.0	40.0	17.0	12.0	2.0	-11.0	29.0
1/6 July	30.5	39.5	14.0	13.0	3.0	-9.0	27.0
8/13 July	30.0	40.5	14.5	12.0	3.0	-10.5**	26.5
15/20 July	29.0	36.0	16.0	17.0	2.0	-7.0	33.0
22/27 July	26.0	38.0	13.0	21.0	2.0	-12.0	34.0
29 July/3 Aug	25.5	40.0	11.5	20.5	2.5	-14.5	32.0
5/10 Aug	27.0	36.0	15.0	19.0	4.0	-9.0	33.0
12/17 Aug	28.0	38.5	13.0	19.0	1.5	-10.5**	32.0
19/24 Aug	29.0	34.0	17.0	18.0	2.0	-5.0	35.0
26/31 Aug	26.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	2.0	-15.0	31.0
1/7 Sept	25.0	41.0	15.0	16.0	3.0	-16.0	31.0
9/14 Sept	32.0	36.5	11.5	17.5	2.5	-4.5**	29.0
16/21 Sept	25.0	36.5	16.0	19.0	3.5	-11.5	35.0
23/28 Sept	24.5	33.5	16.5	24.0	1.5	-9.0	40.5
30 Sept/5 Oct	26.0	38.0	12.0	21.0	3.0	-12.0	33.0
7/12 Oct	27.0	31.0	12.5	26.5	3.0	-4.0	39.0
14/19 Oct	28.5	34.0	12.5	22.0	3.0	-5.5	34.5
21/25 Oct	29.5	28.0	13.5	26.5	2.5	+1.5**	40.0
28 Oct/2 Nov	26.5	29.0	13.0	29.5	2.5	-2.5	42.5
4/9 Nov	26.5	28.5	14.5	28.5	2.0	-2.0	43.0
11/16 Nov	26.5	29.0	15.0	27.0	2.5	-2.5**	42.0
18/23 Nov	25.5	26.0	14.0	32.0	2.5	-0.5	46.0

\* First Gallup post-Election survey

\*\* Published Polls

The latest study found a very slight drop in Conservative support (down from 26½% 11/16 Nov to 25½% in the latest study), a drop in Labour support (down from 29% to 26%), a very slight drop in Liberal support (down from 15% to 14%) but a sharp increase in support for the Social Democrats (up from 27% to 32%) The period after both the Warrington and Croydon N.W. by-elections saw a jump in support for the Alliance parties and a similar jump may well take place after the Crosby by-election.

Gallup also asked respondents 'If an election were to take place tomorrow and the following candidates were standing in your constituency, how would you vote?' They found:-

	<u>11/16 Nov 1981</u>	<u>18/23 Nov 1981</u>
	%	%
Conservative	25½	25
Labour	28	25
SDP/Liberal Alliance	43	48
Some other party	3½	2



On this unprompted question the changes in support for the main parties are roughly parallel to the changes we found in our unprompted question.

## 2. Government Record

Our latest study found no significant change in the level of approval for the record of the Government - 22% approved and 66% disapproved. Details are shown below:-

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u> %	<u>Disapprove</u> %	<u>Don't know</u> %
<u>1979</u>			
13/18 June	34	41	25
<u>1981</u>			
3/8 June	26	60	14
9/15 June	26	63	11
16/22 June	29	59	12
23/30 June	23	67	10
1/6 July	24	63	13
8/13 July	23	66	11
15/20 July	23	66	11
22/27 July	23	66	11
29 July/ 3 August	23	65	12
5/10 August	23	64	13
12/17 August	23	66	11
19/24 August	26	64	10
26/31 August	23	64	13
1/7 September	23	65	13
9/14 September	26	63	11
16/21 September	21	67	11
23/28 September	21	66	13
30 Sept/5 Oct	21	70	10
7/12 October	20	68	12
14/19 October	24	65	12
21/26 Oct	24	62	13
28 October/ 2 November	23	66	10
5 November	27	64	9
11/16 November	23	66	11
18/23 November	22	66	12

## 3. Popularity of Political Leaders

Almost no change in the popularity of Mrs Thatcher or Mr Foot but a sharp improvement in Mr Steel's popularity. Even with a very slight improvement of his popularity only 18% of the electorate thought Mr Foot is a good leader of the Labour Party.

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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>1981</u>									
3/6 June	36	58	6	29	41	21	59	19	22
9/15 June	33	61	6	28	48	24	61	18	21
16/22 June	34	60	6	29	50	21	60	20	21
24/30 June	30	65	5	28	52	21	60	19	21
1/6 July	31	62	7	25	54	21	60	17	23
8/13 July	30	65	5	25	52	23	56	20	24
15/20 July	31	65	4	22	59	19	59	19	22
22/27 July	26	68	6	23	55	22	59	21	21
29 July/ 3 Aug	27	68	5	26	53	20	57	23	20
5/10 August	30	65	5	27	56	17	62	18	21
12/17 August	28	66	6	23	57	20	61	18	21
19/24 August	33	61	6	25	51	24	63	19	19
26/31 August	28	66	6	29	52	20	60	20	21
1/7 September	28	67	5	29	52	19	63	18	19
9/14 September	32	62	6	28	54	18	56	21	23
16/21 September	27	68	5	28	52	20	64	16	20
23/28 September	28	67	5	25	57	18	64	17	19
30 Sept/ 5 Oct	27	68	6	31	49	20	60	20	20
7/12 Oct	26	68	6	28	50	22	62	19	18
14/19 Oct	31	62	7	31	50	20	64	15	21
21/ 26 Oct	33	62	5	27	54	19	64	20	16
28 Oct/ 2 Nov	29	65	6	25	59	16	64	19	17
4/9 Nov	32	64	3	24	62	14	68	16	16
11/16 Nov	28	66	6	16	67	17	64	17	19
18/23 Nov	29	66	5	18	68	14	69	15	16

4. Published Polls(a) O.R.C. (Weekend World 29th November 1981)

An O.R.C. opinion poll conducted in October/November looked at attitudes among members of the Social Democrat Party.

O.R.C. found that 52% of SDP members wanted Roy Jenkins to be the first leader and only 27% Shirley Williams - the survey was conducted before Shirley Williams' victory at Crosby.

O.R.C. found only 7% of the SDP membership in favour of withdrawal from the E.E.C., 92% against withdrawal and 1% not having a view. On the question of unilateral nuclear disarmament O.R.C. found 22% in favour and 76% against.

34% of SDP members saw the party standing for radical changes but 64% saw it standing for moderate reforms.

72% of SDP members wanted a further curtailment of trades union immunities and 67% claimed they would be in favour of banning the closed shop.



Attitudes of SDP members on major policy issues

	<u>In favour</u>	<u>Against</u>
	%	%
Withdrawal from the European Communities	7	92
Incomes Policy	89	9
Government investment aid for certain industries	79	19
Unilateral disarmament	22	76
Legislation putting employees in the board room	73	25
Curtailing trade union immunities	72	24
Leaving nationalised/private industry frontier where it is now	72	26
Leaving private schools as they are	28	72
Assemblies in English regions	31	67
Outlawing the closed shop	67	31
Reducing tax relief on mortgage-interest payments	32	64
National assemblies in Scotland and Wales	56	41
Wealth tax	63	34
Raising tax to pay for higher public spending	55	41

(b) O.R.C. (Commission for Racial Equality)

An O.R.C. survey conducted for CRE was published last week.. The survey conducted between December 1980 and March 1981 looked at attitudes among the white and ethnic minority population, The survey found:-

## i. Employment

1. Both whites and ethnic minority respondents considered unemployment to be the most important problem in their own area. For ethnic minority people racial/colour prejudice was the next most important issue. Both these issues were barely mentioned in a similar study in 1975.
2. Two thirds of all ethnic minority respondents but 78 per cent of West Indians, and 85 per cent of the Africans considered ethnic minorities had worse jobs in Britain. Four out of ten whites also agreed with this.
3. The majority of both whites and ethnic minorities felt that it is more difficult for ethnic minority people to get jobs than whites (76 per cent ethnic minorities and 55 per cent whites).
4. More ethnic minority respondents had experienced unemployment than whites. For example, over half (58%) of the young (18-24) West Indians had been unemployed for a month or more, compared with 36 per cent of young white respondents.
5. Ethnic minority respondents were more likely than whites to agree with the statement: 'in time of high unemployment it is ethnic minority people who are most likely to be unable to get jobs'. (88% of West Indians and 80% of Asians agreed with the statement). However it is interesting to note that 61 per cent of the white respondents also agreed with this statement.



ii. Education

6. Ethnic minorities were more likely to feel that 'it is difficult for ethnic minority children to do well at school because teachers expect them to do badly', 37 per cent of all ethnic minorities agreed with this, 57 per cent of the West Indians but only 25 per cent of the Asians. On the other hand only 15 per cent of the whites believed this to be true whilst 56 per cent disagreed.
7. Seven out of ten ethnic minority respondents (8 out of 10 West Indians) disagreed that ethnic minority children have brought down the standards of education in schools. Half of the whites also disagreed, although 24 per cent agreed with this proposition.

iii. Housing

8. Just over half the ethnic minority respondents (53%) considered their housing to be worse than that of whites. A similar number of the white respondents (32%) thought ethnic minority housing was worse.
9. As far as the overall housing conditions in their area were concerned, 24 per cent of ethnic minority respondents said they were 'bad' or 'very bad' as against 34 per cent who thought they were 'good' or 'very good'. However, 51 per cent of the West Indians considered housing condition 'bad' or 'very bad' and only 25 per cent considered them 'good' or 'very good'.

iv. The Police

10. Nearly half of the ethnic minority sample and 39 per cent of the whites thought relations between ethnic minorities and the police had deteriorated over recent years. This rises to nearly half of those whites in the middle age groups.
11. There was a marked difference between whites and ethnic minorities when asked about relations between the police and ethnic minorities in the respondents' area. The white respondents were very much more likely to say that things have not changed (62%) or have got better (10%) whereas the ethnic minority respondents were more likely to say that things have not changed (39%) or have got worse (33%). West Indians were more likely (57%) than any other group to say that relations with the police have got worse. The Chinese were least likely to say this.
12. More West Indians felt that police pick on Afro-Caribbeans unfairly (26% West Indians against 2% whites and 6% Asians) But the younger the respondents (both ethnic minorities and whites) the more likely they were to say the police were unfair.
13. The views of ethnic minority respondents and of the whites regarding who was usually to blame for any 'trouble' between ethnic minorities and the police were also quite different. For example 59 per cent of West Indians (67% aged 18-24) blamed the police for such 'trouble'. In contrast only ten per cent of whites thought the police were most to blame

Most commonly blamed by whites (37%) for trouble between the police and ethnic minorities were ethnic minority young people. One quarter of the ethnic minority respondents also blamed their own young people for causing trouble with the police.



14. Six out of ten ethnic minority respondents felt that they had worse relations with the police than the white community. Seven out of ten young people and eight out of ten of those born in Britain were of this opinion. West Indians (57%) were twice as likely as Asians to think that the police-ethnic minority relations were worse than the police-white relations.

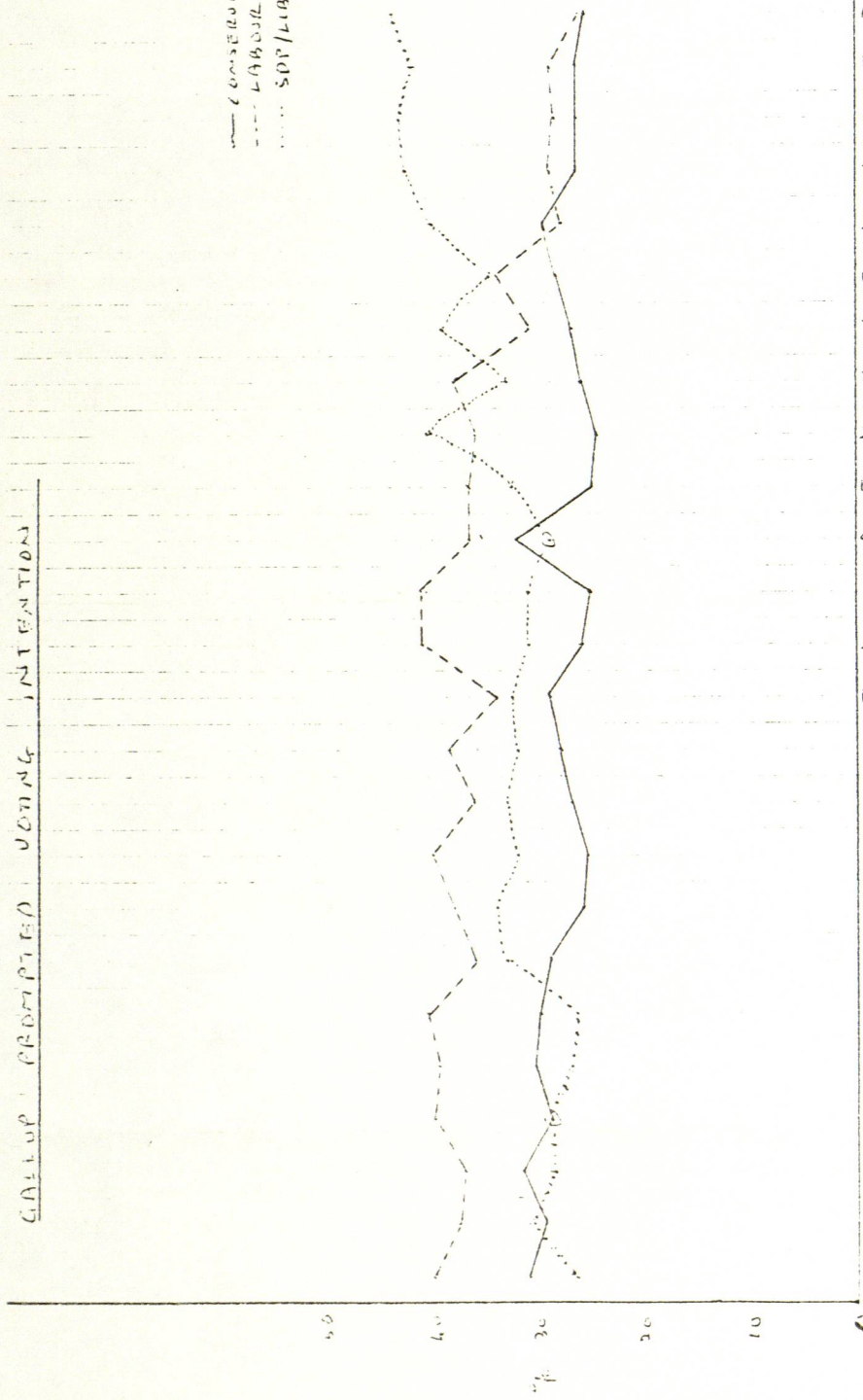
v. Race Relations

15. Nearly half of the ethnic minority respondents and one third of the whites thought that race relations were getting worse in the country as a whole. Only 18 per cent of ethnic minorities and 25 per cent of whites thought they were getting better. This situation is dramatically different from that revealed in a similar study in 1975 (at that time 44% of ethnic minorities and 32% of whites thought race relations were getting better). Most noticeable is the change in the opinion of the ethnic minority population between these years.
16. When asked whether or not they thought feelings between whites and ethnic minorities in the country would get better, worse or stay the same, over the next five years, respondents did not display much optimism. More than half (53%) of the ethnic minorities thought race relations would get worse as did 43 per cent of whites.
17. Almost eight out of ten white respondents clearly stated that they do not mind ethnic minority people being in this country. On the other hand, only a tiny minority of eight per cent said they always minded them being here. The younger the person the more likely they were to accept the presence of ethnic minorities in this country.
18. Finally, ethnic minority respondents markedly (69%) felt disadvantaged in their overall position in British society, compared with whites. For example, 85 per cent of the respondents of African origin and 83 per cent of West Indians considered ethnic minorities were in a worse position in British society than whites; 92 per cent of young West Indians felt this way.



CALLUP - PROMPTED VOTING INTENTION

- - - - - CONSERVATIVE  
 - - - - - LABOUR  
 - - - - - SDP/LIB ALLIANCE



18/23 NOV  
 11/16 NOV  
 4/9 NOV  
 28 OCT / 3 NOV  
 21/25 OCT  
 14/14 ●  
 7/12 OCT  
 30 SEPT / 5 OCT  
 23/8 SEPT  
 16/21 SEPT  
 9/14 SEPT  
 1/7 SEPT  
 26/31 AUG  
 19/24 AUG  
 12/17 AUG  
 5/10 AUG  
 29 JUL ●  
 22/27 JULY  
 15/20 JULY  
 8/13 JULY  
 1/6 JULY  
 24/31 JUNE  
 16/22 JUNE  
 9/15 JUNE  
 2/6 JUNE