

Public Opinion Background Note 69/70  
(produced 13th January 1985)

1. Introduction

This first edition of Public Opinion Background Note in 1985 summarises the results of the last 'tracking' study conducted in 1984 (conducted 12-17 December) and the first of our 1985 studies (conducted 3-8 January). The December 1984 survey found a continuation of the trend of support for the main parties as shown in our previous 1984 'tracking' studies with the Conservatives having a 7% lead over Labour compared with 12% in the previous study conducted from 5th to 10th December. Our first 1985 'tracking' study found the Conservative and Labour parties 'neck and neck' - both with 35% of the electorate claiming they would support them. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions as to whether these results mark the start of a permanent change in trend. The last two studies found almost no change in support for the Alliance - 28% claiming they would vote for them in both studies.

2. Voting Intention

(a) Voting Intention (excluding don't knows) - all figures are percentages

	<u>Con</u> %	<u>Lab</u> %	<u>Lib</u> %	<u>SDP</u> %	<u>Others</u> %	<u>Con lead Over Labour</u> %	<u>SDP &amp; Liberal</u> %	<u>Con lead over Alliance Liberal &amp; SDP</u> %
<u>1984</u>								
1-6 August	38.0	36.5	9.0	14.0	2.5	+1.5	23.0	+15.0
8-13 August	36.0	39.0	9.5	13.0	2.5	-3.0*	22.5	+13.5
15-20 August	38.5	37.5	9.5	12.0	2.5	+1.0	21.0	+17.5
22-27 August	35.5	38.0	11.0	14.0	1.5	-2.5	25.0	+11.5
29 Aug - 3 Sept	41.5	35.0	10.0	11.5	2.0	+6.5	21.5	+20.0
5-10 Sept	37.0	36.0	11.5	14.0	1.5	+1.0*	25.5	+11.5
12-17 Sept	35.5	38.0	9.5	15.0	2.0	-2.5	24.5	+11.0
19-24 Sept	36.5	34.0	11.0	16.0	2.5	+2.5	27.0	+9.5
26 Sept - 1 Oct	37.0	34.0	13.0	15.0	1.0	+3.0	28.0	+9.0
3-8 October	39.0	34.5	9.0	16.0	1.5	+4.5	25.0	+14.0
11-15 October	41.5	34.0	9.0	14.0	1.5	+7.5	23.0	+18.5
17-22 October	44.5	32.0	6.0	15.5	2.0	+12.5*	21.5	+23.0
24-29 October	42.0	32.0	9.0	15.0	2.0	+10.0	24.0	+13.0
31 Oct - 5 Nov	39.0	38.0	9.0	11.0	3.0	+1.0	20.0	+19.0
7-12 Nov	44.5	30.5	9.0	14.5	1.5	+14.0	23.5	+21.0
14-19 Nov	43.0	30.0	13.0	14.0	1.0	+13.0	27.0	+16.0
21-26 Nov	40.0	28.0	14.0	15.5	2.5	+12.0	29.5	+10.5
28 Nov - 3rd Dec	42.0	30.0	9.0	17.0	2.0	+12.0	26.0	+16.0
5-10 Dec	39.5	31.0	10.5	17.0	2.0	+8.5	27.5	+12.0
12-17 Dec	38.5	31.5	11.0	17.0	2.0	+7.0	28.0	+9.5
<u>1985</u>								
3-8 Jan	35.0	35.0	11.0	17.0	2.0	0.0	28.0	+7.0

(\*published in the Daily Telegraph)

(b) Voting intention (including don't knows)

	<u>Conservative</u> %	<u>Labour</u> %	<u>Liberal</u> %	<u>SDP</u> %	<u>Others</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Conservative lead over Labour</u> %
<u>1984</u>							
1-6 August	34.5	33.5	8.0	12.0	2.0	10.0	+1.0
8-13 August	33.0	36.0	9.0	12.0	2.0	8.0	-3.0
15-20 August	35.0	34.0	9.0	11.0	2.0	10.0	+1.0

(b) Voting Intention (including don't knows) continued...

	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>SDP</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Conservative lead over Labour</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<u>1984</u>							
22-27 August	33.0	36.0	10.0	13.0	2.0	6.0	-3.0
29 Aug - 3 Sept	38.0	32.0	9.0	10.0	2.0	8.0	+6.0
5-10 Sept	34.0	33.0	10.0	13.0	1.0	9.0	+1.0
12-17 Sept	33.0	35.0	9.0	14.0	2.0	8.0	-2.0
19-24 Sept	33.0	31.0	10.0	15.0	2.0	9.0	+2.0
26 Sept - 1 Oct	33.0	30.0	12.0	13.0	2.0	10.0	+3.0
3-8 October	35.0	31.0	8.0	14.0	2.0	9.0	+4.0
11-15 October	38.0	32.0	9.0	12.0	2.0	7.0	+6.0
17-22 October	41.0	29.0	6.0	14.0	2.0	9.0	+12.0
24-29 October	38.0	29.0	9.0	14.0	1.0	8.0	+9.0
31 Oct - 5 Nov	36.0	35.0	9.0	10.0	2.0	9.0	+1.0
7-12 Nov	41.0	28.0	8.0	14.0	1.0	8.0	+13.0
14-19 Nov	39.0	27.0	12.0	12.0	1.0	9.0	+12.0
21-26 Nov	36.0	25.0	13.0	14.0	2.0	10.0	+11.0
28 Nov - 3 Dec	39.0	28.0	8.0	15.0	3.0	8.0	+11.0
5 - 10 Dec	36.0	29.0	10.0	15.0	2.0	8.0	+7.0
12-17 Dec	35.0	29.0	10.0	15.0	2.0	9.0	+6.0

1985

3-8 Jan	33.0	32.0	10.0	16.0	2.0	7.0	+1.0
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3. Voting Intention - Long Term

The results from our 'tracking' studies are available aggregated on a monthly basis from the weekly studies. These provide a measure of the trend of support for the parties over a longer period than that considered in Section 2 above. The table below shows the level of support for the main parties in August 1983 (first post-election figures); December 1983 and December 1984 in the main socio-economic groups.

Voting Intention (excluding don't knows)

	<u>Conservative</u>			<u>Labour</u>			<u>Alliance</u>		
	<u>Aug 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1984</u>	<u>Aug 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1984</u>	<u>Aug 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1983</u>	<u>Dec 1984</u>
TOTAL:	43.9	42.3	38.4	26.9	37.3	31.5	27.6	19.0	28.3
Men	41.7	41.9	37.7	29.6	38.7	33.3	26.7	17.6	26.4
Women	45.9	42.6	39.0	24.4	36.1	29.7	28.4	20.4	30.2
<u>Age</u>									
18-24	42.5	37.6	32.5	30.3	42.5	38.0	25.1	18.1	26.7
25-34	42.1	41.6	38.0	24.8	35.1	32.0	31.2	21.3	27.4
35-44	45.1	45.8	39.8	23.7	32.8	27.7	29.2	19.4	31.0
45-64	43.2	42.3	38.3	27.6	37.9	31.2	27.7	19.0	29.4
65+	46.8	43.7	43.6	27.9	38.8	28.5	24.5	17.0	26.2

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Voting Intention (excluding don't knows)

Class	Conservative			Labour			Alliance		
	Aug 1983	Dec 1983	Dec 1984	Aug 1983	Dec 1983	Dec 1984	Aug 1983	Dec 1983	Dec 1984
AB	61.6	64.9	50.4	9.6	12.3	17.2	27.8	21.7	31.2
C1	51.3	50.1	49.3	18.4	27.6	20.2	28.8	21.9	29.0
C2	41.2	36.8	33.7	28.6	42.8	36.1	28.3	18.2	28.9
DE	31.4	29.4	27.8	41.2	53.0	43.8	25.7	16.2	25.5
<u>Trade Unionists</u>									
Trade Unionist	33.9	30.5	29.0	33.4	46.5	37.9	30.9	21.7	31.0
Non-Trade Unionist	49.4	48.4	43.4	23.3	32.5	28.0	25.7	17.6	26.9

In the electorate as a whole, Conservative support has fallen from 43.9% in August 1983 to 38.4% in December 1984. Labour support has increased from 26.9% to 31.5% and Alliance support has increased from 27.6% to 28.3%. The major falls in Conservative support have been in the 18-24 age group (down from 42.5% to 32.5%) in the AB social class group (down from 61.6% to 50.4%), in the C2 social class group (down from 41.2% to 33.7%). Among men Conservative support has dropped from 41.7% in August 1983 to 37.7% in December 1984 and among women support has dropped from 45.9% to 39.0%.

#### 4. Government Record

The latest two 'tracking' studies confirmed the downward trend in the popularity of the government found in our 28th November to 3rd December study. The latest study found 32% claiming to approve of the record of the government to date (38% 28th November to 3rd December) and 53% claiming to disapprove of the record of the government (51% 28th November to 3rd December). Details of the trend of approval/disapproval of the record of the government are shown in the table below:-

1984	GOVERNMENT RECORD		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
1-6 August (%)	33	52	15
8-13 August (%)	34	54	13
15-20 August (%)	36	50	14
22-27 August (%)	36	54	10
29 Aug - 3 Sept (%)	37	57	12
5-10 Sept (%)	34	52	14
12-17 Sept (%)	34	52	14
19-24 Sept (%)	35	51	14
26 Sept - 1 Oct (%)	34	53	13
3 - 8 Oct (%)	36	51	13
11-15 Oct (%)	40	48	12
17-22 Oct (%)	43	43	14
24-29 Oct (%)	41	47	12
31 Oct - 5 Nov (%)	38	51	11
7-12 Nov (%)	41	46	13
14-19 Nov (%)	38	48	14
21-26 Nov (%)	36	47	16

	<u>Government Record</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	
<u>1984</u>			
28 Nov - 3 Dec (%)	38	51	11
5 - 10 Dec (%)	34	52	14
12-17 Dec (%)	34	54	12
<u>1985</u>			
3-8 Jan (%)	32	53	14

5. Popularity of Political Leaders

The latest two 'tracking' studies found a continuation in the downward trend of popularity for Mrs. Thatcher - down from 44% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs. Thatcher as Prime Minister (28th November - 3rd December) to 39% in the latest study. Mr. Kinnock's popularity remains unchanged over the same period with only 33% regarding him as a good leader of the opposition. Mr. Steel's popularity dropped marginally over the same period - down from 58% regarding him as a good leader of the Liberals to 56% in the latest study. Dr. Owen's popularity fell more sharply from 56% regarding him as a good leader of the SDP to 50% taking the same view in the latest study. Details of the trend are shown in the table below:-

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Mr. Kinnock</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
<u>1984</u>						
1-6 August (%)	39	57	4	34	42	24
8-13 August (%)	39	56	5	37	44	19
15-20 August (%)	41	54	5	35	45	20
22-27 August (%)	40	55	5	38	42	19
29 Aug - 3 Sept (%)	42	52	6	38	44	13
5-10 Sept (%)	40	56	5	43	37	20
12-17 Sept (%)	40	54	6	38	40	22
19-24 Sept (%)	39	54	7	37	45	18
26 Sept - 1 Oct (%)	40	54	5	35	45	19
3 - 8 Oct (%)	42	52	6	36	48	16
11-15 Oct (%)	43	51	5	36	46	18
17-22 Oct (%)	50	44	6	35	48	17
24-29 Oct (%)	47	48	5	41	41	17
31 Oct - 5 Nov (%)	43	52	5	37	44	19
7-12 Nov (%)	48	48	4	39	44	17
14-19 Nov (%)	45	50	5	32	49	19
21-26 Nov (%)	42	52	6	31	50	19
28 Nov - 3 Dec (%)	44	51	5	33	51	16
5 - 10 Dec (%)	43	52	5	36	49	15
12-17 Dec (%)	40	53	7	36	50	14
<u>1985</u>						
3-8 Jan (%)	39	57	5	33	48	19

	<u>Mr. Steel</u>			<u>Dr. Owen</u>		
	<u>Is Good Leader</u> %	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %	<u>Is Good Leader</u> %	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u> %	<u>Don't Know</u> %
<u>1984</u>						
1-6 August (%)	57	26	17	48	24	28
8-13 August (%)	55	23	21	50	23	28
15-20 August (%)	59	24	17	46	26	27
22-27 August (%)	59	24	18	51	24	25
29 Aug - 3 Sept (%)	58	25	16	50	24	26
5-10 Sept (%)	59	23	17	53	20	27
12-17 Sept (%)	60	23	18	55	22	23
19-24 Sept (%)	58	26	16	54	23	23
26 Sept - 1 Oct (%)	58	27	15	49	26	25
3- 8 Oct (%)	59	25	16	53	24	23
11-15 Oct (%)	54	29	17	55	22	22
17-22 Oct (%)	57	26	17	59	20	21
24-29 Oct (%)	61	22	17	57	21	22
31 Oct - 5 Nov (%)	56	28	16	54	24	22
7-12 Nov (%)	56	27	17	54	23	23
14-19 Nov (%)	61	21	17	54	24	22
21-26 Nov (%)	61	20	20	50	22	28
28 Nov - 3 Dec (%)	58	25	16	56	22	22
5 - 10 Dec (%)	57	27	16	55	25	20
12-17 Dec (%)	58	25	16	54	24	22
<u>1985</u>						
3-8 Jan (%)	56	24	20	50	25	25

6. Published Polls

(a) Marplan (Guardian 21st December 1984)

The Guardian on the 21st December included details of a Marplan survey conducted from 6th to 10th December. This round 41% claiming they would vote Conservative, 32% Labour, 26% Alliance and 1% for 'other' parties. Details of the trend in support for the main parties found by Marplan are shown in the table below:

Voting Intention - MARPLAN

	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Election</u>
Conservative	41	42	38	39	36	44
Labour	32	33	37	38	39	28
Alliance	26	24	23	21	24	26
Other	1	1	2	2	1	2
Conservative Lead	9	9	1	1	-	16
Labour Lead	-	-	-	-	3	-

6. Published Polls

(b) MORI (Evening Standard, 20th December, 1984)

The Evening Standard on 20th December included details of a MORI survey conducted from 10th to 10th December. This found 40% claiming they would vote Conservative 30% Labour, 22% Alliance and 2% for 'other' parties. Details of the trend of support for the main parties as found by MORI are shown below:-

Voting Intention - MORI

	<u>General Election 1983</u> %	<u>Oct 1984</u> %	<u>Nov 1984</u> %	<u>Dec 1984</u> %	<u>Change since General Election</u> %
Tory	44	44	43	40	-4
Labour	28	35	35	36	+8
Alliance	26	20	19	22	-4
Others	2	1	3	2	0
Tory	16	9	8	4	-12