

Public Opinion Background Note 100
(produced 11th August 1985)

1. Introduction

Gallup conducted the interviewing for our latest 'tracking' study from 31st July to 5th August. The survey found 36.5% claiming they would vote for one of the so-called 'Alliance' parties, 36.5% Labour and 25% for the Conservatives. This is the lowest level of Conservative support found in any survey conducted by Gallup since December, 1981. Conservative support has dropped from 30% in mid-July, to 25% in this latest study. This level of support can be contrasted with 35% who claimed they would vote Conservative at the start of the year. 'Alliance' support has increased from 28% at the start of the year to 36.5% in the latest study. Labour support has remained almost constant throughout the year - 35% at the start of the year compared with 36.5% now.

A MORI survey conducted on Friday, 9th August and published in the Sunday Times on 11th August, found 37% claiming they would vote Labour, 33% Conservative, 29% for one of the 'Alliance' parties and 1% for an 'other' party.

With such substantial differences between two polls conducted so closely together - Conservative vote 33% MORI and 25% Gallup, 'Alliance' support 29% MORI and 36.5% Gallup, we will need to await the results of further surveys before drawing any firm conclusions.

Full details of the trend of support for the main parties since January 1985 showing voting intentions when those respondents not giving details of voting intention are excluded and when they were included as a separate group are shown in the tables in section 2 below:

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</u> <u>Over Labour</u>	<u>SDP &</u> <u>Liberal</u>	<u>Con lead</u> <u>over Alliar</u> <u>Liberal & S</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1985								
3-8 Jan	35.0	35.0	11.0	17.0	2.0	0.0	28.0	+7.0
9-14 Jan	39.0	33.0	9.5	16.0	2.5	+6.0	25.5	+13.5*
16-21 Jan	39.0	34.0	10.0	16.0	1.0	+5.0	26.0	+13.0
23-28 Jan	36.0	32.0	11.0	20.0	1.0	+4.0	31.0	+5.0
30 Jan-4 Feb	34.0	37.0	10.0	17.5	1.5	-3.0	27.5	+6.5
6-11 Feb	35.0	32.0	10.5	21.0	1.5	+3.0	31.5	+3.5*
13-18 Feb	38.0	33.0	10.0	16.5	2.5	+5.0	26.5	+11.5
20-25 Feb	33.5	38.0	10.0	17.0	1.5	-4.5	27.0	+6.5
27 Feb-4 March	35.0	35.0	10.0	18.0	2.0	0.0	28.0	+7.0
6-11 March	37.0	34.0	10.5	17.0	1.5	+3.0	27.5	+10.5
13-18 March	35.0	34.0	12.0	16.0	3.0	+1.0	28.0	+7.0
21-25 March	33.0	39.5	10.0	16.0	1.5	-6.5	26.0	+6.0
27 March - 1 April	38.0	33.0	13.0	15.0	1.0	+5.0	28.0	+10.0
3 - 9 April	37.0	40.0	7.5	13.5	2.0	-3.0	21.0	+16.0
10 - 15 April	36.5	35.5	13.0	13.0	2.0	+1.0	26.0	+11.5
17-22 April	34.0	37.5	12.0	14.0	2.0	-3.5	26.5	+7.5*
24-29 April	33.5	38.0	10.0	16.5	2.0	-4.5	26.5	+7.0

3. Government Record

In the latest study Gallup found the lowest level of approval for the record of the Government since 1981. They found 25% claiming to approve of our record in Government, 61% disapproving and 14% did not have a view. The current situation can be compared with the position at the start of the year when 32% claimed to approve of our record to date. Details of the trend are shown in the table below:-

	<u>GOVERNMENT RECORD</u>		
	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
<u>1985</u>			
3-8 Jan(%)	32	53	14
9-14Jan(%)	33	54	13
16-21 Jan(%)	35	48	16
23-28 Jan(%)	33	54	12
30 Jan-4 Feb(%)	29	59	12
6-11Feb (%)	31	55	13
13-18 Feb(%)	33	55	12
20-25 Feb(%)	29	58	13
27 Feb - 4 March(%)	34	53	13
6-11 March(%)	32	55	13
13-18 March(%)	31	56	13
21-25 March(%)	30	58	12
27 March - 1 April(%)	34	55	11
3 - 9 April (%)	32	57	11
10-15 April (%)	32	54	14
17-22 April (%)	32	57	11
24-29 April (%)	31	55	14
1 - 6 May(%)	31	56	13
6-13 May (%)	28	58	14
15-20 May(%)	27	60	13
23-28 May (%)	28	60	12
29 May-3 June (%)	27	59	14
5 - 10 June (%)	26	61	13
12-17 June (%)	31	59	9
19-24 June (%)	28	60	12
26 June-1 July (%)	30	57	12
3-8 July (%)	29	58	12
10-15 July (%)	28	59	13
17 - 22 July(%)	28	60	12
24-29 July (%)	26	61	13
31 July - 5 Aug (%)	25	61	14

4. Popularity of Political Leaders

Gallup found 32% claiming to be satisfied with Mrs. Thatcher as Prime Minister (39% at the start of the year), 63% dissatisfied (57% at the start of the year) and 5% with no view (5% at the start of the year). Mrs. Thatcher's popularity has dropped from 40% in late June to 32% in this latest study. Mr. Kinnoch's popularity has fluctuated around the 36% level since the start of the year. The popularity of Mr. Steel and Dr. Owen both improved slightly in the latest study. Details of the trend of approval/disapproval for the leaders of the four main parties are shown in the table on the following page.

	<u>Mrs Thatcher</u>			<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Mr. Kinnock</u>	
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>		<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
1985						
3-8 Jan (%)	39	57	5	33	48	19
9-14 Jan (%)	40	54	6	36	49	15
16-21 Jan (%)	43	51	6	31	51	18
23-28 Jan (%)	40	56	5	33	52	15
30 Jan to 4 Feb (%)	38	56	6	36	49	15
6-11 Feb (%)	37	57	6	31	54	15
13-18 Feb (%)	40	55	5	31	57	12
20-25 Feb (%)	38	58	4	34	52	14
27 Feb-4 March (%)	40	54	5	31	53	16
6 - 11 March (%)	41	55	4	34	51	15
13-18 March (%)	40	55	5	32	52	16
21-25 March (%)	37	58	5	37	47	6
27 March - 1 April (%)	39	56	5	33	50	16
3-9 April (%)	37	59	4	43	44	13
10-15 April (%)	38	57	6	35	47	18
17-22 April (%)	38	57	5	36	48	16
24-29 April (%)	37	57	6	35	48	16
1 - 6 May (%)	37	58	5	36	49	16
6 - 13 May (%)	36	59	5	38	45	17
15-20 May (%)	32	63	5	36	47	18
23-28 May (%)	35	60	5	35	49	16
29 May-3 June (%)	34	61	5	34	50	16
5 - 10 June (%)	34	61	6	33	49	17
12-17 June (%)	38	56	8	37	51	12
19-24 June (%)	36	59	5	34	51	15
26 June-1 July (%)	40	56	5	37	46	17
3-8 July (%)	36	58	6	37	48	16
10-15 July (%)	34	60	5	38	47	15
17 - 22 July (%)	34	61	6	32	52	15
24-29 July (%)	31	63	6	34	49	16
31 July - 5 Aug (%)	32	63	5	36	49	15

	<u>Mr Steel</u>			<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Dr Owen</u>	
	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>		<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1985						
3-8 Jan (%)	56	24	20	50	25	25
9-14 Jan (%)	57	26	17	52	27	21
16-21 Jan (%)	60	24	16	52	22	26
23-28 Jan (%)	57	25	18	55	21	24
30 Jan - 4 Feb (%)	55	28	18	51	25	23
6-11 Feb (%)	57	24	18	55	21	24
13-18 Feb (%)	59	24	17	57	24	20
20-25 Feb (%)	61	23	16	57	22	21
27 Feb-4 March (%)	57	25	19	52	23	25
6 - 11 March (%)	56	27	17	52	25	23
13-18 March (%)	57	27	17	53	23	24
21-25 March (%)	60	23	17	53	21	25
27 March-1 April (%)	64	21	15	54	24	22
3 - 9 April (%)	58	25	17	52	26	22
10-15 April (%)	58	24	18	49	26	25

(Cont.)

	<u>Mr Steel</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Dr Owen</u>		<u>Don't Know</u>
	<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>		<u>Is Good Leader</u>	<u>Is Not Good Leader</u>	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1985						
17-22 April (%)	60	24	17	52	26	22
24-29 April (%)	60	22	18	51	24	25
1 - 6 May (%)	65	20	15	54	22	24
6 - 13 May (%)	64	19	16	56	21	23
15-20 May (%)	60	24	16	51	23	25
23-28 May (%)	65	20	15	52	26	21
29 May-3 June (%)	61	22	17	49	27	24
5 - 10 June (%)	62	22	16	53	25	22
12-17 June (%)	63	22	15	56	23	21
19-24 June (%)	63	21	16	51	25	23
26-June-1 July (%)	62	20	18	52	24	25
3-8 July (%)	64	20	16	50	25	25
10-15 July (%)	65	20	15	54	24	22
17-22 July (%)	64	21	15	51	26	23
24-29 July (%)	64	21	14	56	24	20
31 July - 5 Aug (%)	67	18	15	57	20	23

5. Published Polls

(a) Audience Selection (Sun, 7th August, 1985)

The Sun on 7th August included details of an Audience Selection poll conducted by telephone on 5th August 1985.

Audience Selection asked 'would you vote Labour if legal controls on unions are scrapped?' - 74% claimed they would not, 17% they would, and 9% did not have a view. They also asked 'would you vote Labour if unions decided where investment cash goes?' - 62% claimed they would not, 31% they would and 7% did not have a view.

(b) Harris (ITN News, 8th August, 1985)

ITN News on 8th August included details of a Harris survey conducted on 7th August. They asked 'The BBC Board of Governors has recently decided to suspend the planned television showing of a documentary about opposing leaders of extremist organisations in Northern Ireland. Do you approve or disapprove of the BBC's decision not to show the programme?'. 37% claimed they approved, 46% disapproved and 17% did not have a view. When asked 'Do you think it is right or wrong that known members of extremist organisations, such as the IRA, should be allowed to appear on national television?' - 31% thought it was right, 58% wrong and 11% did not have a view.

Harris also asked 'Do you think that showing TV programmes about extremist organisations in Northern Ireland increases or decreases public support for such organisations, or does it have no effect?'. 26% thought such programmes might increase public support, 26% decrease, 36% have no effect and 12% did not have a view.

(c) MORI (Sunday Times, 11th August, 1985)

In addition to a voting intention question, the MORI survey (conducted 9th August) and published in the Sunday Times on 11th August, looked at attitudes to the BBC strike.

(c) MORI (Sunday Times, 11th August, 1985) Cont.

MORI found only 6% said that the BBC should not be independent and that the Government should be able to decide what was broadcast, 50% thought the BBC should be completely free from Government influence in deciding which programmes to show, 22% thought the Government should be able to stop particular programmes and 15% that it should be allowed some influence on programmes' policy.

41% thought Leon Brittan was right in his efforts to stop the programme, 51% thought he was wrong.

MORI asked whether the electorate thought the BBC was right to show the McGuinness programme with amendments. 40% thought it should be shown without amendments, 28% it should not be shown at all, 23% it should be shown with amendments and 9% had no view.

On the question of BBC finance, 31% favoured all advertising, 31% part licence fee and part advertising, 27% compulsory licence as now, 7% voluntary subscriptions to receive BBC programmes and 4% had no view.