

The Research Monitor

July 2009

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Welcome

The Research Monitor brings together the main polls and insights across economic, consumer, political and social research in the past month.

This is a free service to our clients and friends. We also offer a more tailored service including in-depth analysis of what the latest research and the current state of opinion means for your organisation or campaign.

Afghanistan – an unwinnable war?

July saw a large increase in British military deaths in Afghanistan and the highly publicised row between the Government and the Opposition (and the military top brass) about the adequacy of equipment for soldiers on the frontline. It is no surprise then that several polling firms were commissioned to ask the public about their views on Afghanistan. Overall the surveys provide us some clear insights into public attitudes. They show how the public is divided on Britain's continual involvement in the war and suggest there is strong public scepticism about what can be achieved there.

Two polls conducted in the first half of July, by [ICM](#) (for the Guardian/BBC Newsnight) and by [Populus](#) (for ITN News) show that two thirds of the public (67%) say they feel they understand the purpose of Britain's mission in Afghanistan and there is a strong consensus that the main reasons for being there are 'as part of international fight against Al Qaeda terrorists' (80% say that this is one of the main reasons) and 'to help the Afghan Government to fight the Taliban' (78%).

These surveys reveal, however, that the public is split down the middle in terms of its support for British military presence in Afghanistan. The ICM survey shows that 46% of the public supports the 'British military operation in Afghanistan' and 47% oppose it. Interestingly, further sub-group analysis reveals that the key opponents of British military presence is over-65 year olds, with more than half (53%) opposing the war.

Perhaps one of the explanations for the public opposition is the high level of concern about military equipment. According to the Populus poll, three quarters of the public (75%) believe that 'British service personnel in Afghanistan are inadequately supplied or equipped' and a [ComRes](#) poll (for The Independent), conducted towards the end of the month, also found that 75% of the public agree that 'British troops do not have the equipment they need to perform their role safely in Afghanistan'. And adding further pressure to the Government is a [YouGov](#) poll, conducted 16 - 17 July, which found that 60% of the public believe Gordon Brown is 'deliberately trying to fight the war on the cheap' – three times the proportion who believe the Prime Minister 'is doing his best to provide British troops with the equipment they need', (20%).

Finally, perhaps the most troubling results for the Government are that three in five people (58%) who believe that war in Afghanistan is unwinnable (ComRes/The Independent) and approaching half the public in both the Populus and YouGov surveys felt the objective of stabilising Afghanistan and preventing it becoming a terrorist stronghold was a worthwhile objective but not at the cost of high levels of British casualties.

Latest Woodnewton News

Is the current economic turmoil changing the way that governments engage with the public?

Woodnewton's, **Mark Gill** presented to a seminar of Finance Ministry officials from around Europe, hosted by Das Progressive Zentrum in Berlin in July, sheds some light. To download the presentation [click here](#).

We have a blog! Follow us from our '[view from Staple Inn](#)'.

Spy scandals in the 1960s led to MI5 leading a major employee awareness campaign across the public service. **James Humphreys** examines how it was done, including training, a film, leaflets, posters and even a handbook penned by a leading spy writer!

His report also looks at what lessons it holds for modern communicators struggling to communicate security and Information Assurance. [Read the report](#).

Consumer

- 23/07/09 British attitudes to tipping at home and on holiday**
 M&S Money/YouGov: Three in ten British adults (30%) are more likely to leave a tip when they are on holiday than at home. The survey also shows that three quarters of Brits (73%) leave between 5% - 15% of the bill as a tip when going out for a meal in a restaurant on holiday. [More.](#)
- 19/07/09 Microsoft tops 'Superbrands' poll**
 Superbrands UK/The Centre for Brand Analysis: In a shortlist of 500 'Superbrands', selected by a panel of industry experts and then voted for by a YouGov panel of British consumers, Microsoft tops the list based on quality; reliability and distinction. Rolex (2nd) and Google (3rd) complete the top three. View the full list of the top 500 Superbrands [here.](#)
- 09/07/09 British men planning to spend more during a week's holiday than British women**
 Travelx/YouGov: This poll reveals that the average British holidaymaker plans to spend around £525 on a week's holiday this year. The survey also shows that men plan to spend around £100 more than women per week during their break. [Read more here.](#)
- 08/07/09 Consumers show clear understanding for car scrappage scheme**
 GfK Automotive: A poll of British motorists shows that nine in ten (87%) are aware of the Government's car scrappage scheme and seven in ten (72%) understand the level of financial support the scheme offers. Read more about consumer awareness about the scheme [here.](#)

Six in ten of the British public (58%) believe that high street retailers should not buy salmon from suppliers that kill UK seals.

[More](#)

Economy

- 03/07/09 Spending plans for children and parents this summer holiday**
 Populus: A survey of children (7 – 16 year olds) and parents shows that one third (35%) of children will get more money from their parents during the summer holidays than normal with six in ten (58%) children planning to spend that money on sweets/ice cream, going to the cinema (39%) or computer games (37%). Parents give, on average, around £10.50 per week to their children during the holiday break, up from an average of £8.69 normally. [More.](#)
- 02/07/09 Attitudes to the economic recession and affects on buyer behaviour**
 BBC Radio 5 Live/ComRes: Only one in eight (12%) of the British public believe that the economic recession is behind us and things are starting to improve while two thirds (67%) know someone who has lost their job in the recession. To view the full results for this survey, please click [here.](#)
- 01/07/09** In a **People/YouGov** poll on behaviour during the recession, half (52%) of British adults feel they have less money now than they did last year, with four in ten (43%) feeling less optimistic about their family's future than they did the year before – only one in ten (11%) feel more optimistic. View the YouGov poll [here.](#)

Ipsos MORI's Issues Index reveals that British adults believe the Economy (37%) is the most important issue facing Britain today.

[More](#)

Politics

Public Spending

- 23/07/09 If you were Chancellor of the Exchequer, what would you do?**
 People/YouGov: This poll asked respondents to imagine that they are the Chancellor of the Exchequer, planning Britain's budget for the next year. More than half (56%) of British adults would not spend the £5 billion set aside for the ID card scheme, but instead spend it on increasing the state pension by £8 per week for one year (36%) or cutting the basic rate of income to 1p for one year (20%). Four in ten (42%) adults would spend the money set aside for new helicopters for the Army as planned, with three in ten (29%) saying the £6 billion should be spent on 21 new hospitals. View the full results [here.](#)

Politics

19/07/09 Cuts in public spending are 'inevitable'

The Times/Populus: The Times' monthly poll of political opinion across various issues reveals that eight in ten (81%) British adults believe that, regardless of the outcome of the next General Election, significant cuts in public spending is inevitable. View the full results [here](#).

08/07/09 Labour spending vs. Conservative cuts?

BBC Daily Politics/ComRes: Four in ten (39%) of the British public think that David Cameron is more open and honest about the need to cut public spending, with only a quarter of public thinking the same for Gordon Brown. Around half (48%) of the British public agree that the Conservatives will be same as Labour at managing public finances, only three in ten (28%) agree that they would be better than Labour. Read more [here](#)

21/06/09 Attitudes to public spending

Ipsos MORI's Public Spending Index shows that six in ten (59%) of the public disagree that the Government's policies will improve the state of the Britain's economy, an improvement of 5 points since September 2008. Eight in ten (79%) agree that making public services more efficient can save the government enough money to avoid public sector cuts. The NHS (82%), schools (58%) and care for the elderly (46%) are the top three services that the public believes should be protected from cuts. Read more from the Index [here](#).

Two in ten (22%) British adults think that the Houses of Parliament should be sold to pay for residential care for 6,000 elderly people.

[More](#)

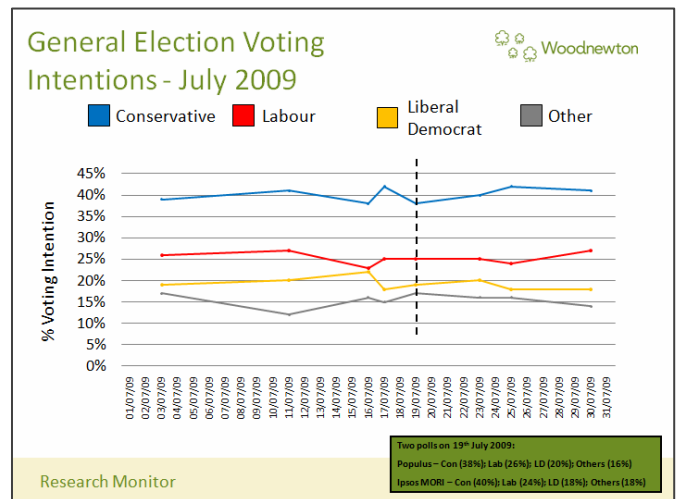
Iraq and Afghanistan

25/07/09 The Independent/ComRes: Three quarters (75%) of the public agree that British troops lack the equipment they need to perform their role safely in Afghanistan. [More](#)

17/07/09 Sunday Times/YouGov: Six in ten (60%) British adults think that Gordon Brown is deliberately trying to fight the war 'on the cheap'. [More](#)

11/07/09 ITN News/Populus: Six in ten (59%) of the public believe that British troops should withdraw from Afghanistan. More on public attitudes to the war [here](#).

11/07/09 The Guardian/BBC Newsnight/ICM: The public is split on their support (46%) and opposition (47%) toward the military operation in Afghanistan. [More](#)



MPs' Expenses and Constitutional Reform

03/07/09 Lords' opt for 'business as usual'

ComRes: This poll of 100 Peers in the House of Lords reveals that only one in eleven (9%) agree that the House of Lords should be entirely elected, with half (48%) saying it should be entirely appointed. Just under two thirds (63%) agree that the public will view Peers more negatively as a result of the expenses revelations. Read more [here](#).

Society

23/07/09 Public attitudes to driving

RAC Foundation/Ipsos MORI: This survey on public attitudes to car use and congestion shows that three quarters (77%) of drivers would find it difficult to adjust their lifestyles to being without a car. [More](#).

Society

- 17/07/09 Public opinion on UK population increase**
 Migration Watch/YouGov: Eight in ten (81%) of the British public say they feel worried about a population of 70 million by 2028. Two in ten (22%) call for net immigration for Britain to be reduced to 50,000 a year while three in ten (32%) opt for a 'one in one out' system. A further 22% say that people should be allowed to leave the country, but no one should be able to come in. [More](#)
- 10/07/09 British attitudes on sex**
 Sunday People/YouGov: This survey asking the public about their sexual history reveals that half of the public (48%) have had between 1 – 5 sexual partners, four in ten (39%) having between 6 – 50. The British public, on average, have sex six times a month with 16% of the public stating that they have been unfaithful to their current partner. [More](#)
- 06/07/09 Strong support for ban on use of sun beds for under-18s**
 Cancer Research UK/YouGov: Almost all (87%) of the public support a ban on the use of sun beds for under-18s. Read more [here](#)
- 03/07/09 Public split on how life on earth evolved**
 British Council/Ipsos MORI: Four in ten (38%) of the public believe that God had no part to play in the evolution of the earth and that it was down to natural selection, though a similar proportion of people (41%) believe that the process was either guided by God (25% agree) or that God created all life on earth (16%). Read more [here](#).

Seven in ten (70%) of the public agree that the English view Andy Murray as British when he wins but Scottish when he loses.

[More](#)

Three quarters of the public (74%) believe the law should be changed so that a doctor could assist someone to commit suicide without facing prosecution .

[More](#)

International

- July Costa Rica – the happiest country in the World**
 The New Economics Foundation: In July, the NEF published their (Un)Happy Planet Index 2.0 which ranked countries based on life expectancy, life satisfaction and the country's carbon footprint. Costa Rica, according to the survey, is the happiest country in the World with seven of the top ten countries coming from South America. Zimbabwe comes bottom of the list of 143 countries with the United States of America ranked at 114. Read the full report of the Happy Planet Index 2.0 [here](#).
- July European attitudes to climate change**
 TNS/Eurobarometer: Global poverty and the current economic downturn seems to be taking precedence over the issue of climate change according to this Eurobarometer poll. When asked what was the most serious problem currently facing the world, climate change came third on the list. In only two countries (Sweden and Cyprus) did the results show an increase in the number of people who said that climate change is the most serious problem compared to Spring 2008. Despite this, seven in ten (67%) Europeans agree that climate change is a very serious problem. Read more on the issues and insights on attitudes to climate change [here](#).
- July Europeans attitudes in 2009**
 TNS/Eurobarometer: The 'Europeans in 2009' survey covers a range of issues such as life satisfaction; concerns; assessment of the current economic situation , awareness and opinion on the image of the European Union and European institutions and information and the media. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).
- 29/06/09 International attitudes to the financial crisis**
 Financial Times/Harris Interactive: The Financial Times monthly poll of public opinion in Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany and the United States shows that the Spanish (49% concerned) and Italians (47%) are the most concerned about losing their jobs in the next year due the recession. The number of people who would rate their government as good at handling the global financial market crisis has decreased in Great Britain, France, Spain and Germany since November 2008. Read more on this international survey [here](#).

Over half of women (56%) and just under half of men (46%) would change their weight over other aspects of their physical appearance.

[More](#)

According to the Happy Planet Index 2.0 the United Kingdom is the 74th happiest country in the World.

[More](#)