

Welcome

The Research Monitor brings together published surveys and other research and insights on the economy, consumer affairs, politics and society over the past month, plus comment on some key research issues. 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.

Labour Cuts vs. Tory Cuts

Labour's recognition that a future government will need to cut public spending marks a significant shift in the Party's election strategy, reflecting economic necessity, political realities – and the public will.

In a recent [Populus poll](#) for The Times, 81% of the public agreed "it is now inevitable that there will be significant cuts in public spending after the next election regardless of the outcome of the election". A [YouGov poll](#) for The Sunday Times found that by 3 to 1, the public believes "Britain's deficit should be cut through cuts in public spending (60%) rather than tax increases (21%)".

As an [Ipsos MORI/RSA](#) survey found, few people (21%) believe that too much money is spent on public services. But 75% say "making public services more efficient can save enough money to help cut government spending, without damaging services the public receive". The key now for Labour is their credibility as a potential 'cutting government'.

The Conservatives will be pleased that they have won the battle between 'Labour investments vs. Tory cuts', but now the campaign moves on. A Populus/Times poll shows the Tories with a ten point lead over Labour (38% vs. 28%) on who could be trusted to cut spending in ways "that does not harm important public services and that minimises the negative impact on ordinary people". A few years ago the Conservatives would have been delighted by such a polling result. However, this lead is smaller than their current voting intentions lead over Labour. This points to residual public uneasiness about the Conservative approach to cuts. The battle lines in the next election will focus less on how much is being cut but where the axe will fall.

Economy

13/09/09

Economic optimism poll

BBC Newsnight/ComRes: Half the public (53%) thinks the general economic condition of the country will improve in the next 12 months. [More.](#)

07/09/09

Taxes and bonuses

Compass/YouGov: Three quarters of the public (73%) support the idea that the government should impose a new tax on all bonuses above £10,000 a year. [More.](#)

September

Saving for a house deposit

Circle Anglia/ComRes: To save for a deposit on a house almost three in ten (27%) have sold some personal items on eBay, at a car boot or garage sales. See what other things the public are doing to save money for deposits [here.](#)

Latest Woodnewton News

Woodnewton Associates has been commissioned by the **International Visual Communications Association (IVCA)** to run its member survey for the second year running. The IVCA is the trade association for the corporate communications industry, working with the UK's leading firms and with clients in government and the third sector.

The Conference Context

Read our analysis of the political opinion polls during the party conference season on Page 2.

Read our Blog:

The View from Staple Inn

Health

04/09/09 One in four senior police officers suffers depression
 ACPO: A survey of 800 superintendents and chief superintendents reveals that almost a quarter have suffered from depression with four in ten saying they do not have enough resources to work with. Full results to be published in October. [More](#).

September Poll on alcohol consumption and sexual activity
 Family Planning Association/Ipsos MORI: Eight in ten (78%) of those who have taken part in sexual activity with someone and then regretted it later had been drinking alcohol at the time. [More](#).

Media

03/09/09 Public attitude towards the BBC
 The Guardian/ICM Research: This poll shows that three quarters of the public agree that the BBC is a national institution we should be proud of (77%), though four in ten trust the BBC less than they used to (41%). [More](#).

03/09/09 Public attitude towards the BBC licence fee
 BMRB-TNS/DCSF: Half the British public agree (48%) that a small part of the licence fee should be used to support certain types of programmes on non-BBC channels. Over a third of the public (35%) think it should be used exclusively for BBC content and services. [More](#). Meanwhile Ipsos MORI have completed a survey for the BBC Trust on attitudes towards six different options for the licence fee once current spending on digital switchover is complete. You can view the results of this research [here](#).

02/09/09 Paying for news online
 paidContent:UK/Harris Interactive: Three quarters of the public (75%) say they would find another site that is free if their favourite free news website began charging for access. A third of those who already buy a newspaper (33%) would pay for online news if it included a free/discounted paper subsidy. [More](#).

Politics

The Conference Context

The political party conference season is now in full swing and with it comes a raft of opinion polling. We have seen some new types of surveys, such as [YouGov's daily tracking](#) using a representative sample of c.1,000 adults and their same-day turnaround poll of those who watched Brown's speech.

Sometimes polls can seem confusing. On 28th September an [Ipsos MORI](#) poll showed Labour had slipped to third place whilst the [YouGov tracker poll](#) had Labour nine points clear of the Liberal Democrats. To some extent this will be due to slightly different fieldwork dates as well as the usual margin of error of +/-3 percentage points. Nevertheless, it shows this is a time to treat polling with extra caution.

On past experience we would expect greater support for the Liberal Democrats post their conference (as was the case), greater support for Labour during their conference (as the [YouGov tracker](#) seems to suggest) and the Conservatives to move further ahead after their conference (we will find out next week).

But the key is to compare the parties before and after the conference season. Heading into the season, polling was pretty stable: Labour on around 26-27%, the Conservatives around 40% and the Liberal Democrats in the high teens. By late October, we'll know if this has changed.

According to this Sun / Migration Watch poll, the economy/recession is the most important issue facing Britain.

[More](#)

One in fifty of the British public (2%) has admitted to having sex with a sex worker / prostitute.

[More](#)

Almost two thirds of the public (63%) agree that downloading music from the internet without paying amounts to stealing.

[More](#)

Politics

- 28/09/09 Poll of Labour Party councillors**
 BBC Daily Politics/ComRes: Three in ten Labour councillors (31% with a sample size of 321) believe that their party's electoral prospects would improve if Labour were to change their leader. Alan Johnson MP would be the preferred choice if Gordon Brown were to step down. [More](#).
- 27/09/09 Political opinion poll**
 The Independent/ComRes: According to this poll, with David Miliband or Jack Straw as Labour Party leader, the party would have enough support to be the largest party in a hung parliament at the next General Election. [More](#).
- 24/09/09 Cameron vs. Brown**
 News of the World/ICM: The public believe that David Cameron is most in touch with issues that matter to people like them; is more trustworthy; makes the best leader for his party; is most likely to have a really good idea; most likely to get the public finances back in order; best to lead us out of recession and most likely to lead Britain in the right direction when compared to Gordon Brown. More people would rather have dinner with David Cameron than the Prime Minister as well. [More](#). A similar poll by [Populus](#) this month also shows David Cameron and the Conservative Party leading on these issues (see our [blog](#)).
- 20/09/09 Political opinion poll**
 The Guardian/ICM Research: Despite being in third place in the polls, the public has the most favourable impression of the Liberal Democrat Party (with 53% favourability) over the other two main political parties. [More](#).
- 14/09/09 Public attitude towards the European Union**
 Daily Telegraph/YouGov: Half the British public (52%) agree that greater ease of travel is the biggest advantage of Britain joining the European Union. Six in ten (61%) agree that too much immigration is the biggest disadvantage. When asked if it were to come down to a choice between accepting the Lisbon Treaty as it is or leaving the EU altogether, a quarter of the public say Britain should accept the Treaty (26%) and more than four in ten agree that Britain should leave the EU altogether (43%). [More](#).
- 02/09/09 Survey of councillors in England and Wales**
 ComRes: More than 500 councillors across England and Wales were interviewed for this study which covers issues such as the economy, the service provided by local authorities, their relationship with central government and satisfaction with their jobs. [More](#).

Three quarters of the public (73%) believe it was wrong to ask Gordon Brown to respond to rumours that he had been prescribed pills to help him cope with stress.

[More](#)

Half the public (53%) thinks it is quite possible that they would change their mind about which party they will vote for between now and the next election.

[More](#)

Society

- 24/09/09 MP survey on sustainable housing and the Government's carbon targets**
 All Party Parliamentary Group on Sustainable Housing/ComRes: Seven in ten Members of Parliament (70%) believe that over a quarter of the UK's carbon emissions comes from housing. It also reveals that a third of MPs wrongly think that the Government's target for all new homes to be 'zero carbon' is set for 2020 (in fact it's 2016). [More](#).
- 09/09/09 Survey on attitude towards transport**
 County Surveyors Society/Ipsos MORI: The latest wave of results from this longitudinal study shows that six in ten of the British public (58%) oppose the idea of having the congestion charge in other cities and towns. [More](#).
- 03/09/09 Public opinion on assisted suicide**
 Choose Life/ComRes: Only one in six of the British public (16%) agrees that doctors should be allowed to take steps to shorten the lives of seriously ill people without their consent. [More](#).
- 30/08/09 Public attitude towards climate change**
 The Guardian/ICM Research: The public is split on the idea that climate change is something individuals can fight (46% agree) or is something that will happen regardless of what individuals decide to do (52% agree). Six in ten of the public (61%) describe themselves as doing 'some green things but I know I could do more'. Only three in ten (29%) think people should consider paying more for electricity and gas bills to stop people wasting energy. [More](#).

Three in ten Lib Dem voters (30%) would be more likely to vote Labour if Labour were to hold a referendum on changing the voting system.

[More](#)

International

September World attitudes towards democracy

WorldPublicOpinion.org: This poll of 24 countries was released on the International Day of Democracy. It shows that only two in ten British adults (21%) believe they are completely free to express unpopular political views, without fear of being harassed or punished – the average of the countries surveyed is 24%. Adults in South Africa are most likely to feel free to express their opinions (45%). [More](#).

September Poll on how the west should engage with Iran

Financial Times/Harris Interactive: The poll focuses on how the public in Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany and the United States feel about the nuclear threat of Iran and how the west should engage with this country. [More](#).

Angus Reid Strategies

Canadian polling firm Angus Reid Strategies has been conducting more polling in the UK recently. Often their surveys compare attitudes of the British public to those in the United States and Canada. You can view their survey of what British adults wanted to be when they were [children](#) and attitudes towards [same-sex marriages](#).

Half the public (50%) agree that votes should be counted and results declared as soon as possible after voting finishes on election night.

[More](#)

Half the British public (49%) rate England's chances of winning the World Cup next year as excellent (6%) or good (43%).

[More](#)

Four in ten of the public (42%) believe that everyone has a guardian angel, regardless of what their religion is or whether they believe in God.

[More](#)

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