

In This Issue

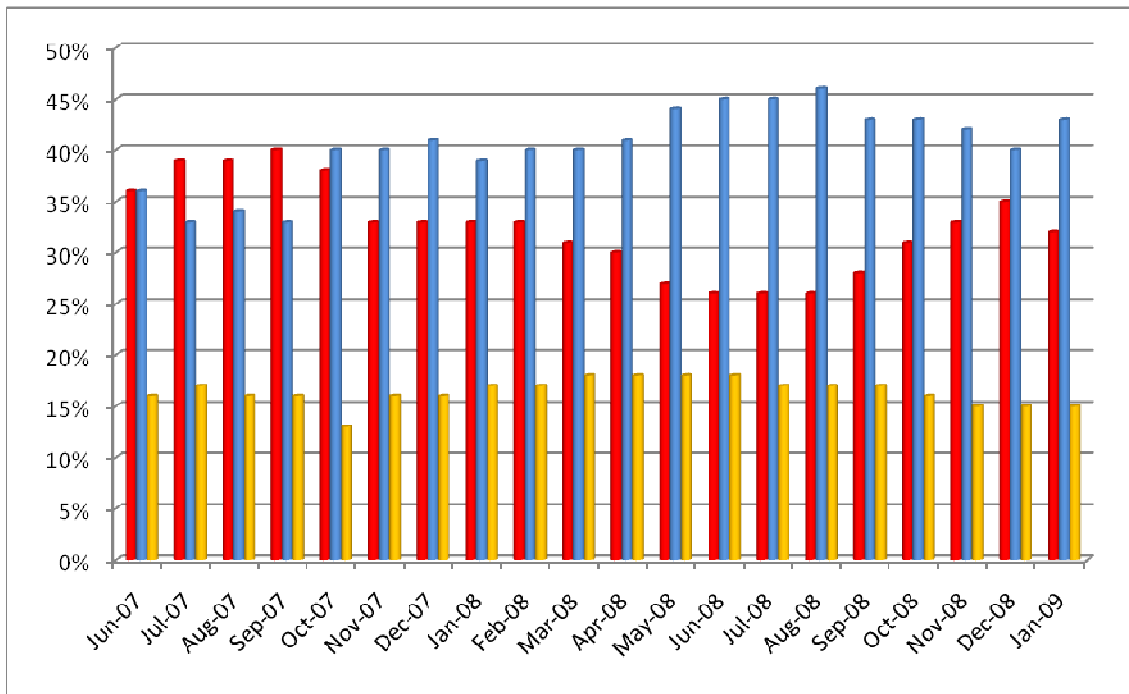
- Double-digit deficit returns
- Recession: mind the perception gap
- Right Leader?
- Racist America?
- Generational connections

You can read this issue of Populus Perspective online at www.populus.co.uk.

Double-digit deficit returns

The 'bail-out bounce', which caused a significant improvement in Labour's poll position during the autumn, has come to a halt the first polls of 2009 suggest. The government's support settled at the sub-Michael Foot level of 26% throughout the summer, according to the average of published polls, but then rose steadily to a monthly average of 28% in September, 31% in October, 33% in November and 35% in December. During this period the Conservative poll lead shrank from an average of 20% in August to only 5% in December. This pattern can clearly be seen in the chart below, which shows the monthly averages from all published polls for the period since Gordon Brown became Prime Minister.

January's Populus poll for The Times finds that the Labour poll deficit has now doubled to 10%, with a sharp upswing (from 9% in December to 15%) in the proportion of people who voted Labour in 2005 saying they would now switch to the Conservatives.

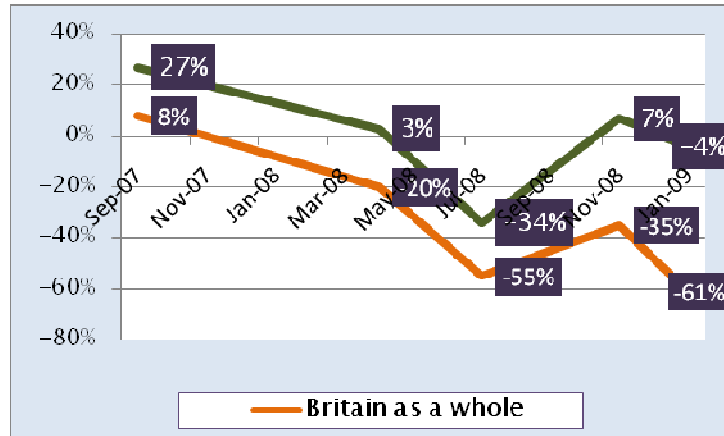


Links – <http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-the-times-poll-january-2009-110109.html>

Recession: mind the perception gap

Nearly four out of five voters (79%) expect the economy to perform badly for the country as a whole over the coming year, and net optimism/pessimism has dropped to a new low of minus 61%, according to the latest poll by Populus for The Times.

This gloomy view is to be expected, given the steady flow of bad economic news and bleak forecasts. But many people continue to see the recession as affecting others, not them. Nearly half (46%) think that the economy will do well for ‘me and my family’ this year, compared with only 18% who say this about the country as a whole. Slightly more (50%) think that the economy will do badly for their families, but, as the graph below shows, this represents a 57% difference in net optimism/pessimism when voters are thinking about their own situation as opposed to the prospects for the whole country.



Over the coming months this gap is likely to close: either people will come to feel that the economic prospects for the country are not as bad as they now seem, and will become less pessimistic about 'Britain as a whole', or - if the nation's economy performs about as badly as voters now expect - more people are likely to find that they are seriously affected by the recession than they currently expect, and pessimism about 'me & my family' will rise. Which of these scenarios unfolds will almost certainly have a profound impact on the outcome of the next election, which has to take place sometime in the next 16 months.

Links - <http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-the-times-poll-january-2009-110109.html>

Right Leader?

Ominously for Gordon Brown, the latest Populus poll for The Times finds that his lead over David Cameron as 'the best Prime Minister right now, to deal with Britain's economy in recession' has been completely eroded. In November Mr Brown had a 20% advantage over the Conservative leader on this measure now both leaders are favoured by 37% of voters; Mr Brown's rating is down 15% - though two thirds of that has gone to 'don't know' and only one third to David Cameron.

Respondents were then asked the further question of who would be the best Prime Minister 'to lead Britain forward after the next general election', on which measure David Cameron now leads Gordon Brown by 12%, up from 7% in November & only 2% in December.

Links - <http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-the-times-poll-january-2009-110109.html>

Racist America?

Despite the fact that the US has just elected its first black President, African Americans are just as likely to believe they are discriminated against, in several different walks of life, as they were forty years ago, according to a poll by Harris Interactive conducted in December.

Three quarters of African Americans (75%) believe they are discriminated against 'in the way they are treated as human beings', virtually the same proportion as thought that in 1969 (77%). 37% of white Americans think that black Americans are discriminated against in this way, 2% higher than the proportion who said this in 1969. There has been a big drop, compared with four decades ago, in the perception of discrimination in getting manual labour jobs, prices paid in shops, and getting hotel accommodation. But African Americans are significantly more likely to believe they suffer discrimination in their treatment by the police – 89% think this now, compared with 76% in 1969. More than half of white Americans (54%) think black Americans are discriminated against by the police, compared with less than one in five (19%) forty years ago.

Links –

http://harrisinteractive.com/news/flashback/2009_HarrisPollFlashBack_01_14.pdf

Generational connections

Nearly two-thirds of parents across the EU say that their child (in the age range 6–17) has a mobile phone, according to a survey recently published by the European Commission. Children in eastern European member states and Nordic countries are the most likely to have their own mobile phone. The Baltic states top the list with nearly 90% of parents saying their child has a mobile. At the opposite end of the scale, Greece and France are least likely to do so – and are the only EU states where less than half of 6–17 year-olds own a mobile phone. The UK is below the EU average, with 58% of parents saying their child has a mobile phone.

Internet use is even more widespread among children across the EU than mobile phone ownership, with an average of 75%. Internet use is lowest in Italy (45%), Cyprus and Greece (both 50%). 91% of British adults said their children use the internet, fifth highest of the 27 members states, behind only Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands (all 93%) and Finland (94%).

Half of parents whose children access the internet at home said they have installed filtering software and nearly two in five (37%) have used monitoring software to keep track of the sites their children visit.

Links – http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_248_sum_en.pdf

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