

# July Political Monitor Briefing

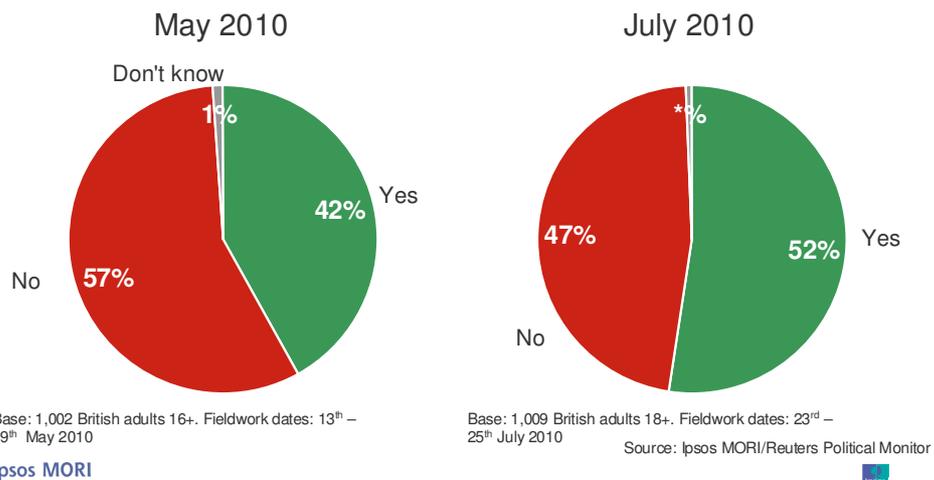
## What does the public think about 'Big Society'?

Ipsos MORI's July Political Monitor for Reuters shows that public awareness and perceived understanding of Big Society is increasing. On balance, people think it will be a good thing, with young people among the most positive about the plans. However, there is some scepticism about how it will work in practice and the motivations behind it.

**Awareness of Big Society has increased since May.** Around half of the public (52%) have heard of Big Society, an increase from just after polling day when two fifths (42%) had heard of the initiative.

### Awareness of 'Big Society' is up since May

Recently David Cameron and the Conservative Party talked about their plans to create a "Big Society" in Britain. Do you remember hearing anything about this, or not?

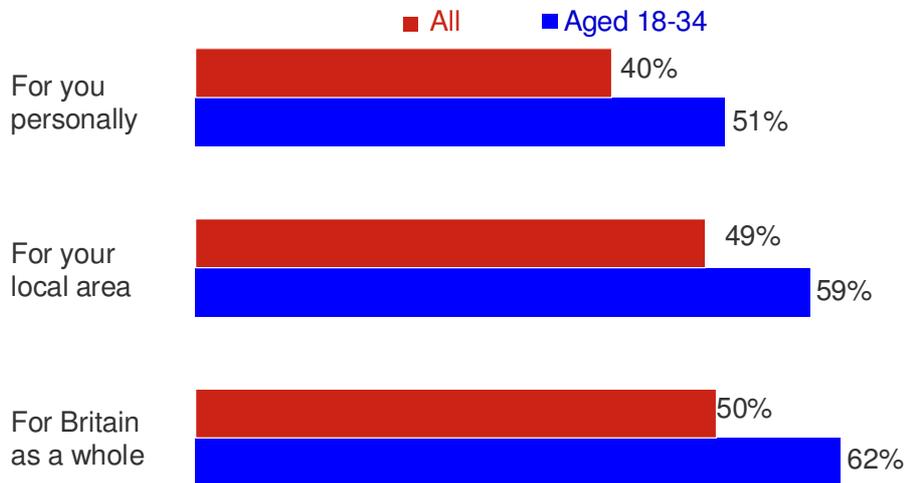


**Perceived understanding of the government's plans for Big Society has increased.** Among those who have heard of it, two in five people (40%) say they know at least a fair amount, an increase from 31% in May. However, even now only 6% say they know a great deal.

**On balance, people think it will be good for them personally, for their local area and for the country as a whole.** People are more positive that it will be good for their area and Britain as a whole than for them personally.

## Many people are positive about Big Society, young people in particular

Do you think the government's plans for a Big Society are a good thing or a bad thing...



Ipsos MORI Base: 1,009 British adults, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July 2010; 286 adults aged 18-34.

Source: Ipsos MORI/ Reuters Political Monitor



**The language used to describe the government's plans appears to have a significant effect upon how people respond to their ideas.** When people are told that the plans for creating a Big Society involve “**providing support**” to individuals there is more support for the idea compared to when it is described as “**giving responsibility**” to individuals. The importance of language is particularly marked upon those of lower social grades; only 28% of C2DEs think it is a good thing for them personally when phrased as ‘giving responsibility, up to 47% when it is described as ‘providing support’.

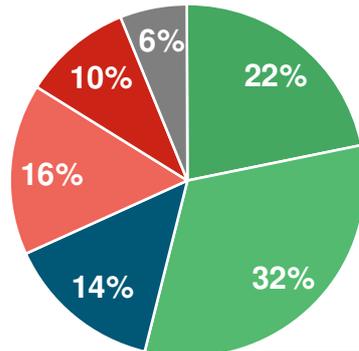
Despite general agreement that Big Society is a 'good thing', just over half of the public are sceptical about whether it will work in practice and the motivations behind it. Half (54%) agree that “**Big society is a good idea in principle but won't work in practice**” and 57% feel that “**it is just an excuse for the government to save money by cutting back on public services**”.

## Some scepticism about the motives and workability of the Big Society

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

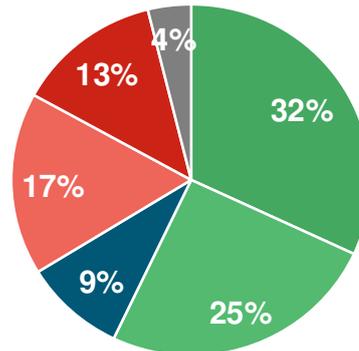
■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Tend to agree  
 ■ Neither  
 ■ Tend to disagree  
 ■ Strongly disagree  
■ Don't know

Big society is a good idea in principle but won't work in practice



Net agree = +28

Big Society is just an excuse for the government to save money by cutting back on public services



Net agree = +27

Base: 1,009 British adults, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI/Reuters Political Monitor



Those who know at least a fair amount about Big Society are more positive than the public generally about it at a personal level, but are slightly less sure that it will benefit their area or the country as a whole. They are also less sceptical about whether it will work and why the government is doing it.

Attitudes towards Big Society vary between different demographic groups:

- The government's ideas appear to be **appealing more to men than women**, particularly at a personal level (43% say it will be a good thing for themselves personally, compared to 37% of women) and women are more sceptical about how it will work in practice (57% think it won't work, compared to 52% of men).
- Despite having lower levels of awareness than the public as a whole, **younger people aged 18-34 who have heard of it are more positive about Big Society** than other age groups.
- **Labour supporters are, unsurprisingly, generally unfavourable towards Big Society**, with three-quarters saying it is an excuse to save money. Conservative and Lib Dem voters are both on balance positive, although **Lib Dem voters are less favourable than Conservative supporters**. Two-thirds of Lib Dem voters agree that 'it won't work in practice' (63%) and over half also believe it is an excuse to save money (54%). **A significant minority of Conservative supporters are also sceptical**; 42% think it won't work in practice and 38% agree it is an excuse to save money.
- **Private sector workers are slightly more positive about Big Society than those who work in the public sector**. They are more likely to see it as a good thing for the country as a whole (53% compared to 48% of public sector employees). Public sector workers are slightly more inclined to think it won't work than their private sector counterparts (60% compared to 56%). They are also more likely to think it is an excuse to cut back on public services (62%, compared to 54% of those who work in the private sector).

- **Those in the Midlands are most positive about the government's plans**, while people in the **North and in London are least likely to think it is a good thing** for themselves, for their area or for Britain. Londoners are most likely to feel it won't work in practice (58%) and that it is just an excuse to save money (65%).

### **Notes**

Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative sample of 1,009 adults aged 18+ across Great Britain. Interviews were conducted by telephone 23-25 July 2010. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

### **About Ipsos MORI**

Ipsos MORI is one of the largest, and best known research companies in the UK and a key part of the Ipsos Group, a leading global research company. With a direct presence in 60 countries our clients benefit from specialist knowledge drawn from our five global practices: public affairs research, advertising testing and tracking, media evaluation, marketing research and consultancy, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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