Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

Understanding Society

Summer 2010

Where next?

Our events

Health Frontiers

In October, the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute Health team will be launching its latest report on improving patient experience at a conference in London. The event will debate how NHS leaders need to engage their staff to drive innovation in the context of increasing pressure on public finances.

Social Research Academy

The Social Research Academy is a training programme exclusively for clients and friends to share knowledge, innovation and best practice in social research. To view the full list of courses available, visit **www.ipsos-mori.com/socialresearchacademy**

For more information about our upcoming events or if you would like to be on the mailing list, contact Anna Di Camillo, anna.dicamillo@ipsos.com

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Foreword

The speed with which the coalition government has moved over the past few weeks has been remarkable. While there is still a huge amount unknown, and therefore challenges for those in government and other public bodies trying to figure out what's coming next, that is only to be expected given the fundamental shake-up being undertaken.

Public understanding of the scale of the changes coming has been lagging behind – but people are just starting to catch on. The messages coming out most recently are helping to build the case. In particular, making the link between dealing with the debt and protecting the sovereignty of our country, our control over our own decisions and future, will strike a chord with the independent-minded British.

This was also a key factor in the Canadian experience in the mid-1990s, which has been so widely cited here. The currency crisis in Mexico and being called "an honorary member of the 3rd world" by the Wall Street Journal helped Canadian politicians convince their citizens of the need for action.

Ipsos has first-hand experience of what happened there, having worked closely with Finance Canada throughout the period – and it is very easy to spot the similarities in the approach from our government: moving quickly to send a signal to the international financial markets; a "star chamber" to decide on budgets; decentralising responsibility for prioritisation and public service delivery; and an extensive public engagement exercise.

There is a clear conundrum here for those running the public consultations – they are bound to be asked (legitimate) questions about the value of spending money on deciding how to cut spending. Doing this cost effectively is therefore essential – but we also need to make sure it's not just the loudest voices that are heard.

This is because fairness is absolutely vital to the success of the process and outcomes. Our international studies show this really is a key British social value, and we see concerns about middle class capture and the most vulnerable being left behind in a lot of our research. This was very important in Canada too, and the lesson from there (and our own budget-setting work in the UK) is this tends to result in the public saying that cuts should be very evenly spread, rather than stopping things entirely.

But there is a completely different conception of the right approach to take in these very difficult circumstances from Göran Persson, the ex-PM of Sweden (another country which dealt with a public sector debt crisis in the mid-1990s). His view is that it's pretty pointless trying to soften people up or take them with you - when the cuts actually hit, the public will really not like it and will blame you, regardless of how you involved them earlier. Therefore we shouldn't waste time on public consultation, but act as quickly as possible so that people see the benefit before the next election.

Of course, the two (decisive leadership and public involvement) are not necessarily incompatible. This initial consultation stage in the UK will be very quick and is only setting the framework for future priorities. As those involved in deciding how budgets are spent will know, however, the devil is in the detail – and it's here, at individual service and local levels that making sure we understand public needs is vital.

But David Cameron says that anyone seeing this as only about budget cuts is missing the point – this is more about changing our view of what government should do and our relationship with it. Again, the Canadian experience and our own work here points to how important it is to frame the debate this way: not just explaining why the cuts are necessary, but what lies at the end, the vision the Government is trying to achieve.

This newsletter deals with these key themes – public opinion on the role of government and the Big Society, how to deliver more for less through innovation, more involvement from charities and individual behaviour change, and how we can engage the public in these difficult decisions. We also give a quick overview of what might have been the "least boring election" ever (but already seems like an age ago).

We hope you enjoy the articles – and do let us know if you would like any more information or have other feedback. ■

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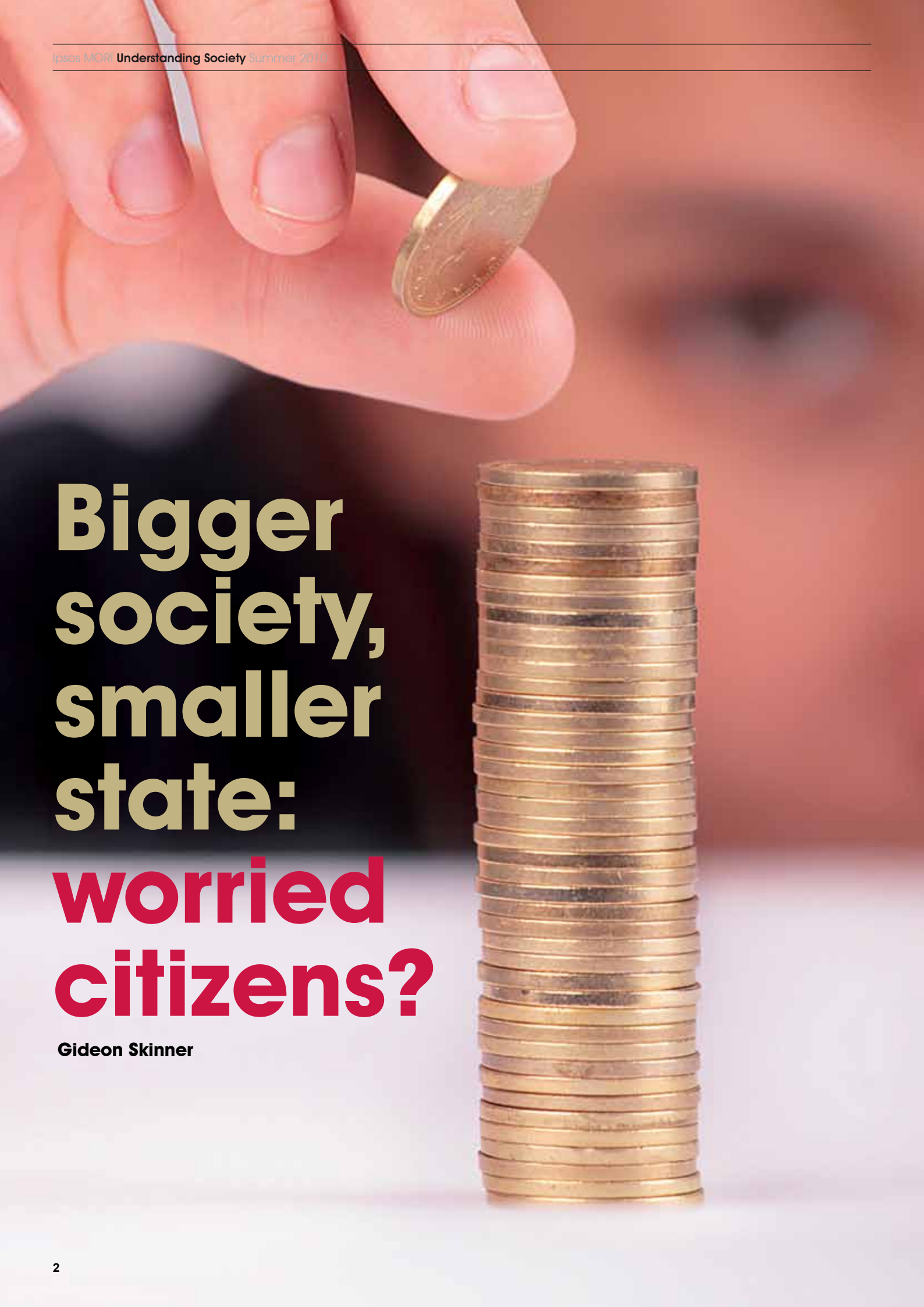


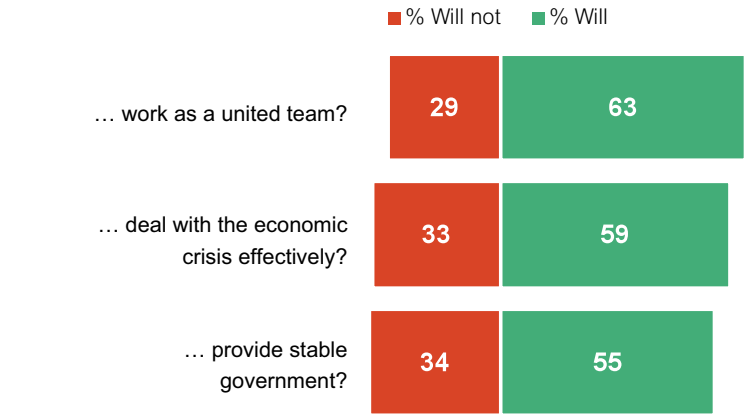
Bigger society, smaller state: worried citizens?

Gideon Skinner

The phoney war has ended. For all the talk about the size of the deficit and the need for cuts during the election campaign, now that we are facing up to the actions necessary to cut public spending, the mood feels very different. In the words of the Chief Secretary, the steps the new government has taken to make £6.2billion savings were "designed to send a shock-wave through Government departments[1]", to focus ministers and civil servants on their real priorities. Both coalition partners agree it is time for the centre to let go its hold; the key question is whether local public services and local people will take advantage of this new freedom to deliver better public services for less public spending.

The public are fairly optimistic about the new government

Q. Do you think that the new government will or will not…



Base: 1,023 British adults 18+, 12th-13th May 2010

Source: Ipsos MORI/News of the World

There is a sense that the new government needs to be given the opportunity to tackle the problem, although how long the benefit of the doubt will last is not clear. Despite concerns about the prospects of a hung parliament during the campaign, since the election result most people do think the coalition government will be a good thing for Britain, and do trust that it will be able to work together effectively to tackle the economic crisis.

There is also a clear change in some aspects of the public mood. For the first time, a majority accepts that there will have to be cuts in public spending. And the new government does seem to be striking while the iron is hot: a number of agencies have already been abolished, programmes such as ID cards scrapped, and an emergency budget announced for 22 June. This is partly to demonstrate to financial markets that the new government is serious about cutting the deficit, "to show the world that we can live within our means[2]" as the Chancellor said, but it is also a strong message for the public and those working in public services.

… all new governments tend to go through a honeymoon period, but this does chime with the public's view that it was time for a change.

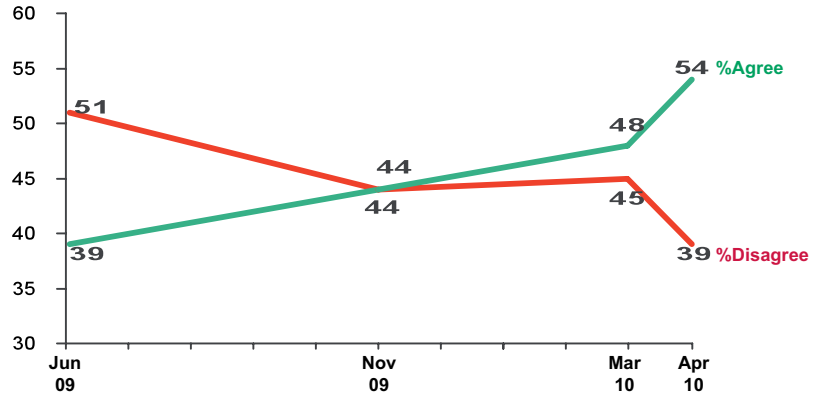
And, given the need to reduce the deficit, many of the new government's policies are in line with the public's priorities. They want to see budgets for schools and the NHS ring-fenced, are pragmatic about the involvement of the voluntary and private sectors in the delivery of services, feel that more sanctions can be used against the unemployed to encourage them to find work, and can see the argument for concentrating benefits and tax credits on those who most need it rather than universal provision. And we can't say it comes as a surprise: before the election, 70% thought that the Conservatives would cut spending, and 61% expected them to increase VAT.

But it is not clear that the public has realised the full impact of the likely cuts in public services, even if they are filtering through to those who work in the public sector themselves. The majority of people (64%) still think that most savings can be made through efficiencies alone without affecting the nature of services they receive at all. We also know that when faced with the prospect of tax rises or cuts in spending that directly affect them, people are unsurprisingly much less keen on the personal implications of the "inevitably painful times that lie ahead"[3] .

[1] http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_06_10.htm
[2] http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_05_10.htm
[3] http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/06/prime-ministers-speech-on-the-economy-51435

Growing realisation that spending cuts may be necessary

There is a real need to cut spending on public services in order to pay off the very high national debt we now have



Base: c.1000 respondents aged 16+ in England and Wales, Jun 09 – April 10 Source: Ipsos MORI

As ever, when looking for where potential controversies may lie in the future, the contradictions in the public's own mind are a good place to start. In particular, there is still a strong attachment to the view of public services as a fair, universally available security net for those who need it most. Where reforms threaten this, people are much harder to persuade; this came through very strongly in the Canadian experience in the mid-1990s, and was a key focus for government action and reassurance. So, for example, in the UK while there is strong support for more localism and devolving power to the frontline, when it is pointed out that this might lead to local variation (and the dreaded "postcode lottery"), disagreement triples. On the one hand this points to the resilience of - and pride in - the public service ethos in this country (even when it is often more of an ideal than a reality). But it makes the challenge of involving the public in making difficult decisions that much harder, if no less urgent.

... when looking for where potential controversies may lie in the future, the contradictions in the public's own mind are a good place to start.

A similar pattern is seen in attitudes towards the "Big Society". David Cameron says this has the potential to "completely recast the relationship between people and the state", both as a good in itself, but also part of the process of cutting back the role of central government. There is strong support for the principle: six in ten agree that government has tried to do too much in recent years, and 'the Big Society' does have many positive associations, described by one member of the public as *"a collective coming together and looking after each other rather than expecting the government to do it all"*. This reflects the strong narrative around 'Broken Britain' that did seem to strike a chord before the election, in particular around the perceived decline of individual responsibility.

And yet people do have concerns. Partly this reflects a lack of information: *"it's too complicated. It's very vague"*. But it also comes from some more fundamental issues, arising from the 'traditional' view of public services mentioned earlier. Will a reduction in the role of the state mean less support for those who need it most? Despite the promise to "cut with care", half of the population are worried that government and public services will do too little to help people in the years ahead. And will services still be fair – in particular there are concerns about interest group capture (*"if only the pushy parents are there, what about the other people?"*).

There are also the practical problems. We have discussed these in more detail elsewhere,[4] but it is worth mentioning again that despite the numbers who say they would be interested in getting more involved, in fact the proportion who do actually get involved in civic activities has remained stubbornly low over the last few years.[5] Although having said that, even if only a minority do get more involved, in absolute terms that still represents a huge pool of people, talent and enthusiasm to draw upon.

Both of these challenges then – building a bigger society, and taking difficult decisions about public spending and the role of the state – require the government to build support and consensus among the public. But this brings with it a number of challenges of its own for it to be a success. First, the consultation needs to be real, not a PR-ploy or rubber-stamping

[4] In particular see our recent report for the 2020 Public Services Trust, *What do people want, need and expect from public services*, available at www.ipsos-mori.com

[5] Citizenship Survey: April - December 2009, England, Communities and Local Government

exercise. Secondly, we know the public is more open to incremental changes, backed up by evidence and real-life case studies, rather than radical reform. But will this be rapid enough for the new government's desire to demonstrate to the rest of the world and international markets their determination to cut the deficit? And thirdly, the difficulty of the task should not be under-estimated. There are practical issues (such as the need to give the public the right information), but there will also have to be a culture change within government to really make it work. The prize, though, makes it worth meeting these challenges head-on: there are many examples of how deliberative engagement exercises result in a better-informed public, able to make complex trade-offs, with outcomes much better focused on what they really want.

Finally, we can't forget that all this will take place at a time of severe cuts in public spending, and put pressure on frontline services. It is very difficult to predict at this stage exactly what impact this will have on the public mood, but perhaps we can look at the recent economic crisis for some pointers. Despite warning signs throughout much of 2007, it was only in the second half of 2008 that the economic crisis really established itself in the public mind as the single biggest issue facing the country, as the focus moved away from the impact it was having on the financial sector to the impact it would have on the real economy and people's jobs. Might we see something similar in attitudes to the public spending crisis? At the moment much of the discussion is about more abstract issues such as departmental budgets. But when the impact on people's own lives becomes clear, the public mood may look very different. ■

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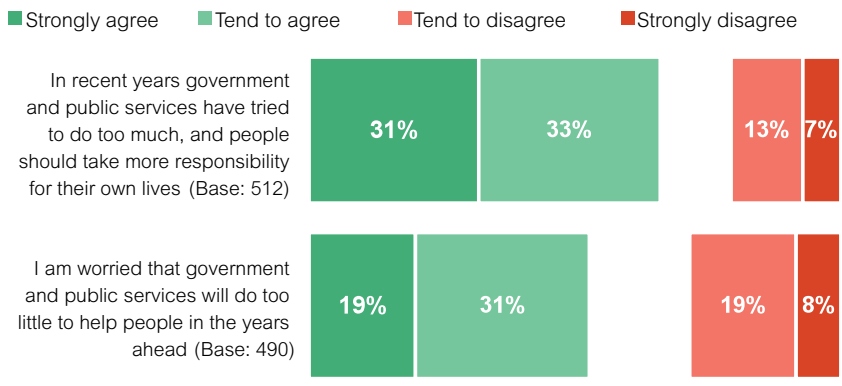
People are in favour of the principle behind Big Society, but worried about support for the most needy

Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:



Base: 1,002 adults in Great Britain aged 16+. Split sample between the two statements, 13-19 May 2010

Source: Ipsos MORI

Don't get mad, get engaged: understanding public anger about hospital closures

Jonathan Nicholls and Anna Quigley

The financial pressures currently facing the NHS are unprecedented. Despite the recent announcement that the NHS is to be protected, it is also being asked to save about a fifth of its budget over the next five years to meet the increasing costs of treatment and the needs of an ageing population. Local NHS leaders will inevitably have to look at the way in which they provide services to assess whether the same level of healthcare can be provided in a more cost-effective manner. Given the scale of the financial challenges ahead, the closure of wards – and even hospitals – is likely to feature as a potential cost-saving measure.

The argument around hospital reconfigurations is not just economic. The potential for improvements in clinical outcomes from centralising and specialising services has been well debated. Nevertheless, despite potential economic and clinical benefits, the prospect of closing or downgrading the local hospital is still one that has the power to get the public marching in the streets. And the public anger is clearly real. In areas where they have gone down the reconfiguration route, there are PCT leaders who can recount the stories of hostile, and sometimes abusive, public consultation meetings.

Understanding public anger about hospital closures

The NHS is clearly caught in something of a cleft stick. The financial arguments and potential clinical benefits from reconfiguring services mean it has to be free to consider ward and hospital closures. Yet the public backlash and potential reputational damage is clearly something it will want to avoid. The question therefore becomes one of what the NHS can do to help manage this public reaction. But in order to do this, it's important first to understand the reaction: what does this public anger mean? The research we have conducted at Ipsos MORI over the last few years provides some insights into this.

The question therefore becomes one of what the NHS can do to help manage this public reaction

1. Public expectations of the NHS

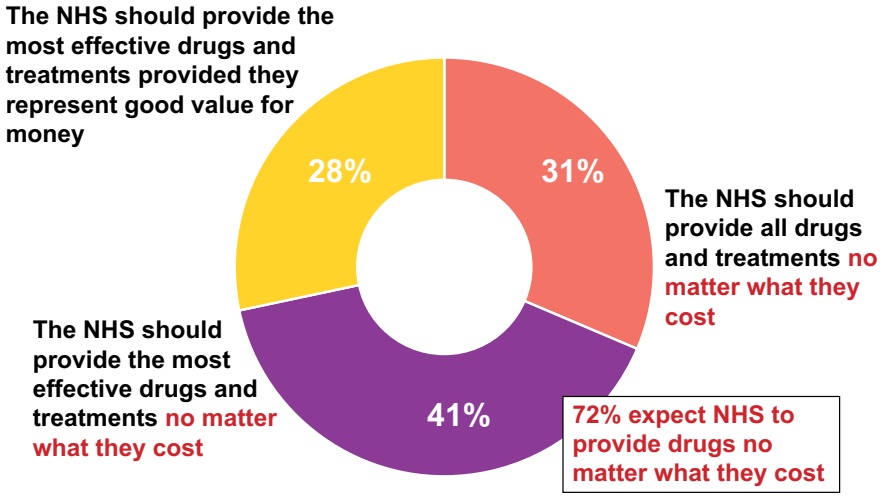
There is a huge amount of fondness for the 60-year-old institution of the NHS – and public satisfaction has never been higher. However, the expectations that come with that present the NHS with a distinct challenge.

First, there is what might be called a "psychological contract" with the NHS – our data shows 82% believe the NHS will be there for them when they need it. Our qualitative work builds on this – people feel they have paid into it so it should be there when they need it. Second, these expectations appear unbounded: around a third *strongly disagree* that there should be limits on what is spent on the NHS and 72% expect the NHS to provide drugs no matter what they cost.

2. What health means to the public

It's also useful to consider the setting for this debate – few subjects raise emotions to a greater extent than health and the system that cares for and protects our health. By its very nature, the subject is emotive and it is difficult to engage in complex debate when the issue is such a primal one. And hospitals are the clearest symbols of the NHS: they are solid and tangible. Many have a long history in the area they serve – and are seen as the 'healthcare of last resort'. It's where you go if you really need the NHS.

Public expectations



Base: British public, 18+ (1,001) 12-17 January 2006

Source: Ipsos MORI

3. Clash with the NHS narrative

We also know that the public find hospital and ward closures particularly hard to understand against the backdrop of investment that has gone into the NHS over the last decade or so. If the money going into the NHS has tripled, then how can you justify closing a hospital? Add to this the announcements that the NHS will be protected and the need for reconfigurations will be even harder to comprehend.

4. Starting the engagement on the wrong foot

Quite apart from the emotional significance of the NHS and its hospitals, we also need to consider how the NHS has sometimes approached the public engagement process. In a number of cases, the reconfiguration decisions appear to have been presented to the public as a *fait accompli* from the outset – and this seems particularly potent in stirring up an adverse reaction.

As one PCT chief executive suggested to us, don't start from the solution: a more effective way forward is to engage the public and other stakeholders in the problems and constraints that the PCT faces – then work with those stakeholders to find the best way forward. Failing to do this risks stoking up the backlash even further. One leader of a "save the local hospital" campaign has told us that their belief that the reconfiguration plans had been presented as a done deal played a key role in later events: *"it was a good thing – as it got us riled enough to get the campaign group going!"*

Implications

So, how should NHS leaders manage this public reaction? The above analysis highlights a number of implications for NHS managers:

- **Early dialogue is key** – starting from the solution risks causing an adverse public reaction. In contrast, there seem to be benefits in engaging stakeholders on what the problem is, and the constraints the local NHS has to work within – allowing the NHS and its stakeholders to co-create the most effective way forward.

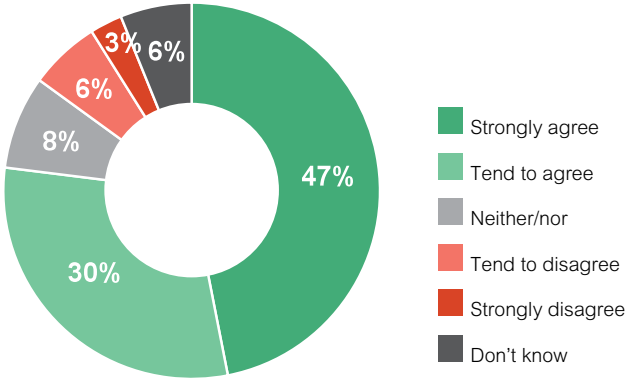
- **Be open and honest about the challenges ahead** – the public don't yet accept the case for change. This is exacerbated given that the NHS narrative is about protecting budgets and services. Nevertheless, local NHS leaders need to articulate the severity of the financial situation as a platform for discussing the need to review hospital services.

- **Recognise the emotional connection and explain the benefits clearly and rationally** – the public will often react on an emotional level when presented with a perceived threat to their health services. But they do appear to accept the principles behind reconfiguration. For instance, in *Consulting the Capital*, Healthcare for London's consultation following *A Framework for Action*, over three quarters of respondents (77%) said they agreed that ambulances should take patients directly to specialist centres, even if there was another hospital closer to them. So a simple argument about what is being gained, focusing on the clinical benefits, needs to be a central part of the communications around any change.

- **Think about who you need to communicate with** – despite the noise generated by a public consultation, representative surveys will show a much lower level of anger amongst the local population at large. Clearly, it is important for local NHS leaders to be sensitive to the concerns and anger that are felt by local residents.

Support for specialist centres

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that ambulance staff should take seriously ill and injured patients directly to these specialist centres, even if there is another hospital nearby?



Base: 3,462 respondents to consultation questionnaire, Acute care section, 30 Nov 2007– 7 Mar 2008

Source: Ipsos MORI

But equally it is important they don't over-generalise the reactions they are hearing through the consultation process: if local leaders want to run an effective engagement and communications process, they need to understand precisely who is angry and why.

- **Think about how you engage the public** – as hospital reconfigurations become more commonplace, the NHS may need to look to new and more innovative ways in how it goes about engaging local opinion. For instance, one PCT in an Ipsos MORI study had given the local campaign groups half the seats on its reconfiguration planning group; and after agreeing confidentiality ground-rules, shared all the relevant in-house information relevant to the reconfiguration plans. The fact that the PCT and campaign groups were then releasing joint press statements was a key factor in bringing down the temperature of the local media coverage.

... the NHS does have some influence over how that public reaction develops.

Proposed hospital closures do clearly appear to serve as something of a lightning conductor for public anger. What's also clear is that the anger is about more than the hospital closure itself – although it is often not as widely felt across the community as a whole as the consultation meetings would suggest.

But the NHS does have some influence over how that public reaction develops. By engaging early, by arguing the case and presenting the evidence in an open and honest debate, the NHS can help build a local coalition through which it can work out how best to survive the financial wave that is about to hit it. ■

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The future of public service reform

Emily Gray and Paul Buddery

Politicians face real challenges in taking the public with them in reforming public services. The message that we need to cut the deficit is filtering through, with recent surveys suggesting that the public are now more likely to believe that there is a need for spending cuts than they were a few months ago. But with further cuts in public spending imminent, engaging the public in a realistic conversation about proposed changes will be both important and difficult to do – in particular for those reforms that have a direct impact on the services that people themselves use.

Ipsos MORI's Central Government research team has been working with the 2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA on an ambitious qualitative project that helps to shed light on what politicians should take into account in their conversations with voters about reforms. We've tested several provisional ideas generated by the Commission on 2020 Public Services for how services might be reformed in future, looking at how people respond to different policy ideas and exploring their underlying attitudes and beliefs. In this article, Emily Gray from Ipsos MORI and Paul Buddery from the 2020 Public Services Trust take you through some of the big themes in how the public view services, and what these mean for efforts to reform public services in future.

PB: One of the things that we at the 2020 Public Services Trust were keen to look at in depth is what people value about public services. We wanted to understand more about what people are willing to trade off, and what they're not – and how this fitted with some of the policy ideas that the Trust and our Commissioners have been discussing.

EG: People really value the safety net that public services provide, and this sense of security is something that they're not willing to trade off. We hear time and again how important it is to our participants to know that core services such as the NHS and emergency services will be there when they and their families need them. People do want services to be more flexible and responsive to their needs, but not if prioritising these concerns means that the safety net is jeopardised.

Fairness is also at the heart of what people value about public services. It's very important to people that public services are delivered fairly – but people often mean different, and even contradictory, things by that. Fairness for some people means uniform standards of service across the country, while others talk of local communities getting a 'fair deal', which involves allowing different standards for different local areas. There's also fairness in the sense of resources being allocated differently, depending on how much in need or how deserving different groups in society are seen to be. These different ways of seeing fairness are often in tension in the public mind.

PB: Something I take from that is that politicians would undermine those core values of security and fairness at their peril! Policy ideas that fail to meet some combination of security and fairness are less likely to be well received. Any reforms to public services will have to maintain their essential characteristics – providing a safety net and support, with processes and outcomes which are seen to be fair.

I also think the tension between people wanting standards to be the same across local areas, but also being receptive to changes which would increase local control over public services, is important to understand.

EG: Yes - people do welcome greater local control, in theory. It makes intuitive sense to many of us that the people who live in a local area, or the frontline staff who are responsible for delivering a particular public service, are well placed to know what that local area or service needs in order to work better. There's also a sense that greater local control can play a role in empowering local people and frontline staff in ways that perhaps don't happen at the moment.

How greater local control would work in practice, though, is something that

people are less sure about. There's concern about interest group capture – will those who are most vocal and most likely to make the effort to get involved have disproportionate influence over the decisions that are taken? People also raise the question of how communities would manage to reconcile differences of opinion.

PB: This theme of localism has been one of the big policy questions we've been thinking about here at the Trust. It's encouraging that people are broadly receptive to the idea of greater local control. The challenge for policymakers now is to put the levers and tools in place that help to make that happen, and we're already seeing that with the moves towards parents and local communities being able to set up their own schools, for example.

I also find the point about people worrying that the confident middle classes might benefit more than others from greater local control an important one. That also came out when people were discussing ideas that enable greater individual control over resources, such as individual budgets.

EG: Individual budgets are a popular idea. People see having greater control over resources as important, not least because of the sense of empowerment it can provide. But there are again concerns over fairness and whether those from lower socio-economic groups, or more marginalised or vulnerable people in society, might struggle to make this work for them.

Furthermore, the research uncovers a real desire for help and guidance in navigating public services, particularly as we've discussed at times of greater need in people's lives, and this underpins the popularity of another idea for reform – that of citizen advisers. Citizen advisers would help those less able or advantaged to access services in a way that best meets their needs.

PB: Findings like this are important for our work at the 2020 Public Services Trust, because they show the need to develop concrete examples of change in public services. They also suggest to us that politicians should look to build on where successful innovation is already taking place, and that any model we develop of how to transform public services needs to be based on consent.

The next stage of our work is to look at how our citizen-centred principles for public service reform can be applied to four policy areas: welfare, education, health and public safety. Our Commission will report in summer 2010, putting forward a vision for public services in 2020 that's appropriate to the difficult times that we're currently facing. The research that we've been carrying out with Ipsos MORI is already helping us to think through the challenge of how best to engage the public in reforming public services.

Read the full report, *Citizen engagement: testing policy ideas for public service reform*, on the 2020 Public Services Trust's website: www.2020pst.org or at www.ipsos-mori.com. The research was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Communities and Local Government Empowerment Fund. ■

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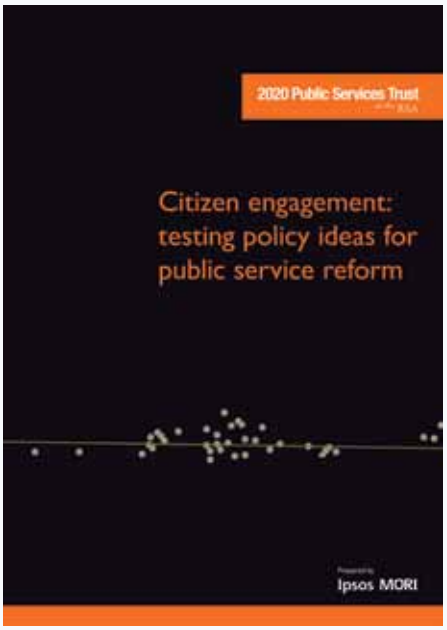

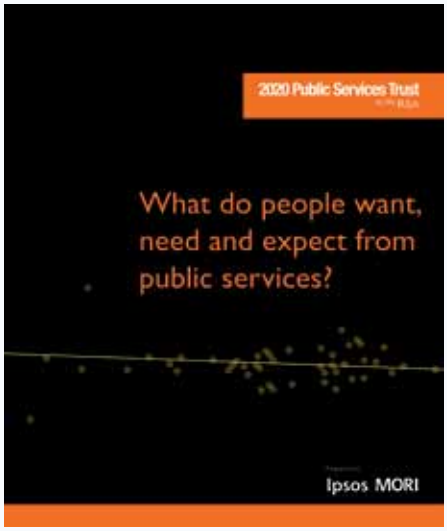

Small Change? Why innovation can make a big difference to costs

Suzanne Hall

There is one thing the new coalition government can be sure of: public services are going to have to deliver more for less. And one way to meet rising expectations about what public services should deliver while at the same time repaying the deficit is to innovate. How government should encourage this is a subject we have covered extensively in our research for both the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (and its forerunners) and the National Audit Office (NAO)[1].

When speaking about his efforts to tackle mass unemployment in the 1930s, Roosevelt said that "*It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something*". Given the current state of the economy, the conditions might be right to ensure innovation becomes a core part of government rather than just an aspirational ideal.

But for this to be the case, the public sector must make serious efforts to remove some of the barriers that currently stop innovation. In the first instance, there needs to be some consensus on what innovation actually is. While the simplest definition of public sector innovation is that it is about *new ideas that work at creating public value*[2], this is not an explanation that necessarily chimes with the experiences of those working in the public sector. After years of working towards efficiency targets, and introducing transformational programmes, public sector workers have admitted to us in our research that they can feel suspicious of change, believing it to be sometimes implemented for change's sake rather than being guided by an overarching commitment to improvement, as this quote from our research highlights.

> ***"Unfortunately, as teachers we are constantly working towards targets, and if taking a risk means we might fail to meet those targets it is easier and safer to stick with tried and tested ways of doing things. The constant focus on targets and levels does lead to a reluctance to try new ideas."***
> (Teacher)

Additionally, the prevailing culture in which government operates, where greater emphasis is placed on *discouraging* risk rather than rewarding it, does not help the generation of new ideas. What is more, the public sector operates under constant scrutiny, not only from a negative media eager to publicise mistakes, but also from Select Committees, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. None of this helps to emphasise an environment in which new ideas have permission to fail, as we are told by those working in the public sector:

> ***"Things are different in the civil service, where there is far greater scrutiny of public funds and where the media are adept at holding our political masters to account for perceived failures."***
> (Civil servant)

Our research also found that some public sector workers felt it was unacceptable to take risks with public money as well as with the health, safety and life chances of the public at large.

> ***"The NHS is slow to put in place new innovations, but this is out of necessity rather than ignorance or non-receptive Trusts. Any change to be introduced to the NHS needs to be properly considered, looking at all the possible outcomes first, after all it is patients' lives that the NHS has to deal with not just millions of pounds."***
> (Nurse)

On top of this, constant changes in government administration are not conducive to innovation; the very department responsible for innovation, BIS, has undergone three substantial structural shifts in the past few years alone. And this means that the people working there could find it hard to think far enough ahead about the long-term changes affecting society (demographic shifts and technological developments for instance), which is where the really radical solutions lie.

Yet in spite of these barriers, the public sector is home to some excellent examples of innovation. In the UK, the Pensions Transformation Programme has explored new ways of delivering front-line services, which has resulted in a shift to telephone-based provision rather than face-to-face services. Intermediaries, including those from the voluntary sector, have been crucial to this change which has helped in both improving the customer experience and increasing productivity.[3] Research for government has also become more radical; take, for instance, our Horizons work for the Government Office for Science which, based on evidence and trend data, describes different future scenarios across key areas including economics, environment, politics and society.[4]

So innovation and the public sector are clearly not incompatible, yet have often remained uneasy bedfellows. The new government must therefore understand the critical success factors in enabling innovation, and develop them. **Effective leadership** is crucial. Leaders need to establish a workplace culture in which innovation is natural and where ideas are praised, rather than undermined. Leaders should also quickly reject changes that aren't working. This is, of course, challenging as it means managers will be responsible for shouldering responsibility for a risk that has not paid off. But swift action is necessary before bad practice is embedded.

We know from our work that this style of leadership is one of the facets of the very best public sector organisations; three

[1] All quotes included in this report are taken from our work for the NAO, Ipsos MORI/NAO, Innovation: *The perspective of frontline staff* (2009)
[2] Mulgan, G., *Ready or not? Taking innovation in the public sector seriously* (2007)
[3] Varney, D., Service transformation: *A better deal for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpaper* (2006)
[4] See http://www.sigmascan.org/Live/ for more details.

in five staff working at councils rated as 'excellent' by the Audit Commission feel they have the opportunity to show initiative, compared with two in five at those rated as 'poor' (see the chart below). Yet without go-ahead from the top, few public sector workers will be willing to take the risks required to innovate.

Likewise, the **role of the line manager** should not be overlooked. Our research detailed how, very often, line managers are the first port of call for those with ideas about how working practices and policies could change for the better. Yet, unless that line manager is supportive and knows the next steps they should take, there is a real risk that these ideas will be lost in the hierarchy, and staff disheartened and discouraged from offering up their suggestions in the future. All this points to a real need for line managers who themselves know how to make these ideas happen– something which is increasingly important as frequent organisational change can make it hard for people to identify who exactly they should be speaking to in order to take their idea forward.

But management can only create the right environment in which innovation can occur and more **structural and process-orientated changes** are also needed. A commitment to piloting policies locally is one way of achieving this, as it enables learning through experience in a setting where failure is less of an issue, as illustrated by the following quote.

"In health, innovations must be properly piloted, and rapid change is not always a good idea; ideas need to be communicated and discussed within similar specialities and conclusions reached."
(Nurse)

The public sector also needs to **look more widely and take greater heed of customer views to learn lessons** about how it should change. Therefore, co-creation and user-led service design needs to become an increasingly prominent part of public life. And as citizens become more empowered, either through websites like mySociety.org or through forums like mumsnet, then this is going to become all the more important. Indeed, a recent report from the Young Foundation, *Public Services and Civil Society Working Together,* highlights both the social and financial advantages of engaging citizens in delivering the solutions to meet the challenges facing their communities.

Linked in with this, **encouraging collaboration between public sector bodies** will also be necessary. The 'silo working' culture of government has been well documented and our research has highlighted the negative effect this has when it comes to fostering new ways of working. For instance, one of our participants in the health sector remarked that "*the structure of the NHS breeds a 'them and us' culture that makes collaboration and innovation between organisations difficult as each organisation jealously guards its own turf*". Providing forums for people to come together and discuss what works (and what doesn't) will help overcome the tendency for public sector workers to go it alone, as well as providing them with authorised time and a formalised space in which to discuss how things can change.

Over recent years the public sector has got better at operating efficiently, and focusing on the needs of the customer in designing and delivering services. But much more still has to be done to ensure public services meet the needs of the public in a cost-effective manner. As one of our participants stated, the risk of failing to do so extends far further than failing to save money alone:

"If the civil service didn't innovate – in the sense of introducing genuine innovation – departments would lose not only efficiency but also – and more importantly in the long term – credibility."
(Civil Servant)

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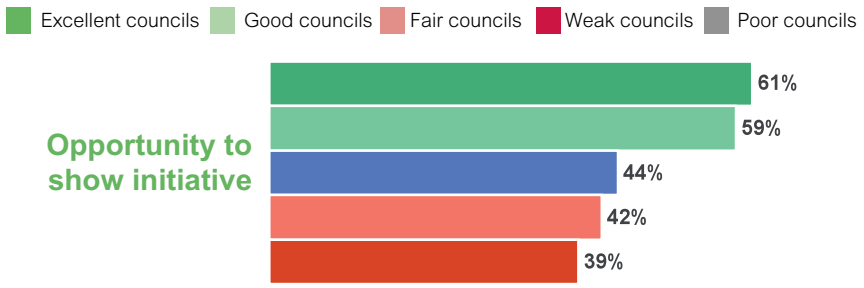
We know initiative is a characteristic of the best organisations in the public sector

% very satisfied with job factors/strongly agree



Base: 1,500 staff interviewed by phone

Source: Ipsos MORI

Understanding behaviour change

Adam Palenicek

As we have discussed throughout this newsletter, one of the pillars of the new government's approach is to encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their own lives and local areas. This is seen to have a number of benefits: a good in itself as a boost to civic life, efficiency savings as the role of the state is reduced, and better outcomes as individuals are able to design services around their own particular needs.

"Real change is not what Government can do on its own. Real change is when everyone pulls together, comes together, works together when we all exercise our responsibilities to ourselves, to our families, to our communities and to others."

David Cameron's Statement in Downing Street (11 May 2010[1]).

This concept of behaviour change - already firmly established within the public health sector – has been given new impetus within local government as well. There are more and more examples of partnerships, led by local councils, influencing and nudging desired behaviours from local citizens, such as increased recycling, reduced school absenteeism and lower childhood obesity rates. For example, in 2008 Ipsos MORI conducted a community consultation for the London Borough of

[1] http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE64A5SL20100511

Waltham Forest, and found that local residents were unhappy with the number of fast-food takeaways in town centres, with a negative impact on residents' perceptions of the borough and well-being more generally. Consequently, the council became the first local authority in the UK to ban fast-food outlets from opening within 400 metres of schools, leisure centres and parks. The ban was also supported by a variety of other interventions, including a drive to improve the quality of school meals to ensure all pupils received at least one healthy meal a day. Childhood obesity levels in Waltham Forest dropped from 22.8% of Year 6 pupils classed as obese in 2007/08 to 20.6% in 2008/09.

There are many other examples we could discuss, such as the school in North Tyneside that moved school start times an hour later which resulted in a cut in absenteeism. Or the London Borough of Sutton's *Smarter Travel* initiative which helped to achieve a 75% increase in cycling in Sutton, a 16% increase in the number of people travelling by bus, and a six per cent reduction in the proportion of residents' journeys made by car.

... the pillars of the new government's approach is to encourage individuals to take on more responsibility for their own lives and local areas.

Success is very possible through behaviour change programmes. But our research data shows that there are challenges. Sizeable proportions of the public will resist increased responsibility. There is no clear consensus on the role of the state and the balance between 'big society' and 'big government' – we are split right down the middle on whether the government should take responsibility to influence people's behaviour (e.g. to encourage healthy lifestyles), or whether they should not interfere at all.

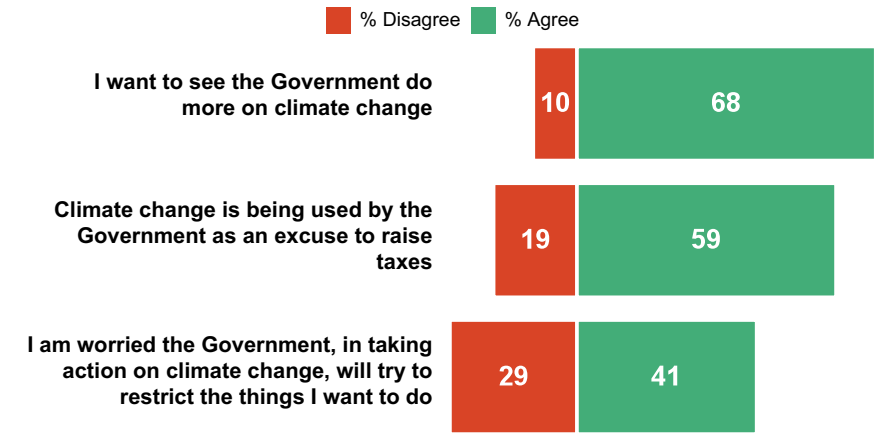
A key barrier to overcome is that the public often do not want to change their behaviour for the common good if this means they are personally inconvenienced. A 'nudge' for the benefit of the community or even the planet (in the case of recycling waste) is often not enough without outlining the tangible benefits closer to home. For example, we know that 68% want to see the government do more on climate change, but a sizeable proportion (41%) also say they are worried the government, in taking action on climate change, will try to restrict the things they want to do.

Clearly, how far citizens take responsibility for their behaviours differs in relation to the complexity of what is required of them, how confident and informed people are about the issues at stake, and whether the implications of not changing a particular behaviour are palpable.

The behaviour change ethos (popularised by books such as *Nudge* and *Influence*[2]) suggests that public service providers must consider a wide range of factors that influence how we behave - for example, our motivations, attitudes, beliefs, barriers, and current and desired behaviours. Researching these factors and "seeing the problem through individuals' eyes" is crucial to secure a personal commitment to long-term change. In short, what do people

People want more government action on climate, but are worried what the price may be

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that ...?



Base: 1,039 GB adults aged 15+, interviewed face-to-face and in home, 23-29 May 2008 Source: Ipsos MORI

[2] Thaler & Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth and happiness*, Penguin 2009.
N. Goldstein, S. Martin and R. Cialdini, *Influence: 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion*, Profile Books 2007.

feel is "a fair exchange" for changed behaviour?

The first vital step in identifying successful interventions that can 'nudge' behaviour in a particular way is to really understand what makes people act in the way they do – either through a review of available evidence or primary research where necessary. This enables a service to build a picture of the target group's motivations and attitudes. Research at this stage (both in-depth qualitative and quantitative) can also be the ideal vehicle to identify the best channels through which to target a particular group and which possible interventions might work for them. Segmenting a target audience is very important to help fine-tune interventions. Intelligently segmenting the target population by demographics, values, beliefs, knowledge and current behaviour means behaviour change interventions and associated communications have a greater chance of hitting the right notes with the right people.

The segmentation shown here is from a project Ipsos MORI conducted for NHS Mid Essex looking at how to improve the way carers access local health services. For example, 'constrained carers' identify themselves as carers, but do not access services – citing a range of burdens, or pressures, preventing them. This is in stark contrast to 'conscious engagers' who also identify with the term 'carers', but do actively engage with health services. Using detailed attitudinal and demographic profiles of these segments, Ipsos MORI provided NHS Mid Essex with tailored and actionable insights and intervention recommendations aimed at improving the health status of carers in their area.

The first vital step in identifying successful interventions that can 'nudge' behaviour in a particular way is to really understand what makes people act in the way they do

Secondly, evaluation of the behaviour change interventions must help to understand their impact, sustainability and value for money. Mixing quantitative and qualitative feedback with media monitoring and other more objective metrics (such as increase in tonnage of waste going to recycling) should be essential parts of effective evaluation.

The value of implementing behaviour change programmes among local councils is becoming widely recognised. The onus is increasingly on individual responsibility and this will only become more important with a smaller state to watch over us, and smaller budgets to support local communities. Nonetheless, gaining measurable return on investment in behaviour change programmes is vital to understand their impact on individual lifestyles and community well-being, as well as the difference they make to the bottom line. And only programmes underpinned by insight-driven and actionable research – that comes to grips with what really motivates people and what needs to be done to help them make a desired behaviour change – can ensure these objectives are met. ■

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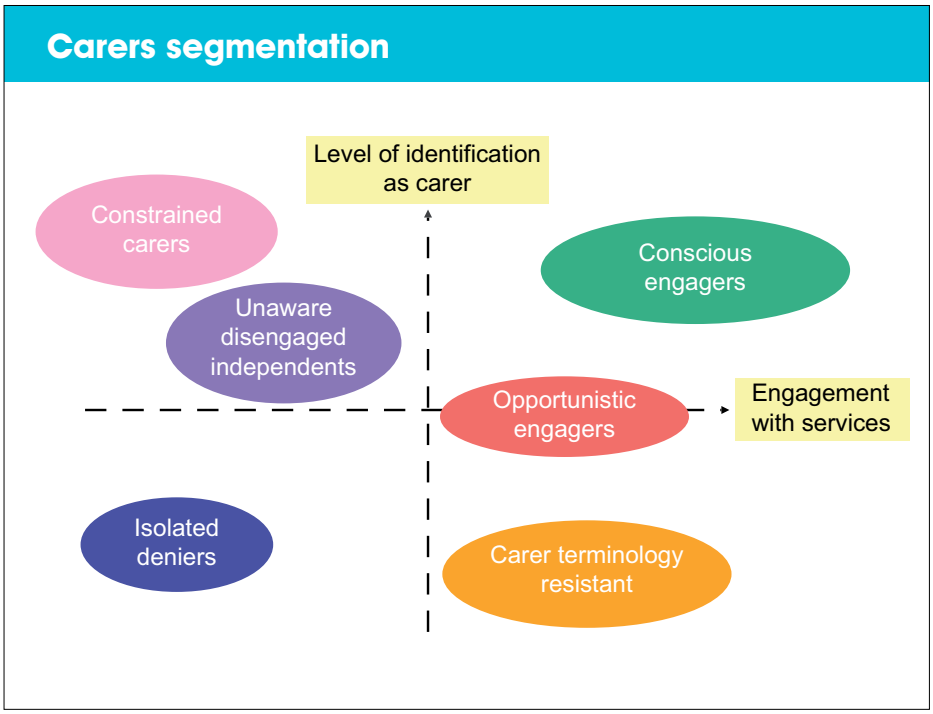
Carers segmentation



Putting the voluntary sector at the heart of the Big Society

Sally Panayiotou

The coalition has placed charitable organisations at the heart of their agenda, with the belief that a stronger society can be created by expanding the role and influence of the voluntary sector. David Cameron promises that more money will go to good causes, facilitated by the redesign of funding streams such as the new Big Society Bank and remodelled National Lottery, and exploring ways of creating a more efficient funding environment. The Big Society will transfer power and responsibility to neighbourhoods and social enterprises, while an annual Big Society Day aims to encourage greater community involvement. Young people are also embraced with the proposed National Citizens Service summer volunteering programmes (81% of the public support the programme[1]). Essentially the coalition is looking to place charitable organisations at the heart of their local community and to:

> ***"… enable social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups to play a leading role in delivering public services and tackling deep-rooted social problems".[2]***

It is certainly clear that the Big Society will require a great deal of change both through mobilising greater participation amongst the general public and change *within* the hugely diverse existing voluntary sector. Organisations within the voluntary sector have traditionally been free to identify their own priorities and set their own charitable agendas, but how does this translate to a Big Society in which people's needs are no longer necessarily met by the state?

"Big Society" has yet to be formally defined - two-fifths of the public have heard of it (42%), although only three in ten of these say they know at least a fair amount about it. This is positive as it indicates a willingness to allow local communities to develop their own picture of what Big Society looks like on the ground. As we have discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, there is support for the general principle of smaller government and bigger society; most people feel that government and public services have tried to do too much in recent years and that people should take more responsibility for their own lives. However there is also concern that government will do too little to help people in future years, and it is important to the general public that society is underpinned by a sense of fairness and equality of service provision[3].

In the first instance it's worth reminding ourselves that there is generally strong public support for charities - seven in ten (72%) feel that charities play an *essential* or *very important* role in society today[4]. Charities can clearly make a huge difference to an individual's life and strike a resonance with beneficiaries that other service providers may miss. To give just one example, in recent qualitative work with vulnerable young people living in Kent[5] a wide range of local charitable organisations were spontaneously praised. The quote illustrates one mother's experience of a charity that helps young people learn life skills and earn vocational qualifications helping her son reach a turning point in his life:

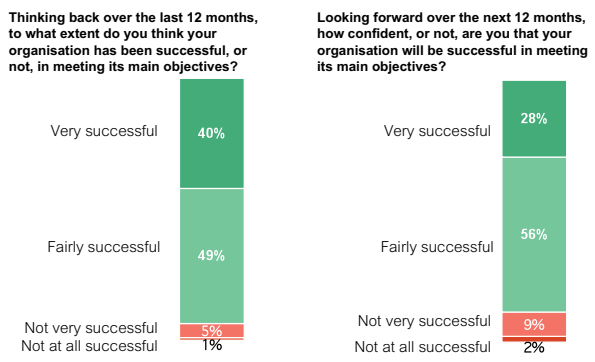
> ***"I said 'why do you act up for the teachers but you don't act up for them?' And he said 'I've got the upmost respect for them, they've been there, they've done it, they've seen it all'."***

Charitable organisations themselves also exhibit high levels of confidence in meeting their objectives, as demonstrated in the following chart.

At the same time, however, charitable organisations face a number of existing pressures, even before they expand their

[1] http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2616
[2] http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010_lowres.pdf
[3] Ibid.
[4] Charity Commission public trust and confidence in charities. Survey conducted by Ipsos MORI. 1008 respondents aged 18+ across England and Wales between February 8 and 24 2008 interviewed using a CATI methodology. Rating responses given on a scale of 0-10 where 0 means don't trust them and 10 means trust them completely. Ipsos MORI are currently conducting the 2010 survey.
[5] Thirteen groups with 11-19 year olds engaging with a range of different local children's and public services. Two discussion groups with parents of children and young people exhibiting risk-taking behaviour (with some identified as having special educational needs); and one depth interview with a parent of a child with special educational needs.

Success and confidence in meeting objectives



Base: 48,939 charities, voluntary & community groups and social enterprises in 149 Upper Tier English Local Authorities, September – December 2008

Source: Ipsos MORI

role: insufficient resources are widely cited in terms of *overall income* (39%), *financial reserves* (32%), and *volunteers* (30%)[6]. So there is a significant risk that the new initiatives outlined at the start of the article (such as the Big Society Bank) could easily be absorbed by existing needs. It should also be highlighted that new volunteers, for all their benefits, require a great deal of investment in terms of training and support.

A traditional view of voluntary organisations highlights their ability to identify 'gaps' in service provision and to step in and meet previously unmet needs - arguably with greater flexibility than their public sector counterparts. The chart below reveals that when directly compared to private companies and public authorities, the public feels that charities/not for profit organisations are better at providing a caring and compassionate service (53%) and understanding what service users need (37%)[7]. This emphasises the 'warmer' connotations that charities tend to evoke and their ability to get away from some of the barriers faced by private and public organisations.

However while there are many examples of charities working effectively with local partnerships to great success, organisations within the voluntary sector have traditionally been free to define their own charitable agenda. There are fears that the greater reliance on the voluntary sector to provide public services could threaten the dynamic culture of charitable organisations, with added levels of bureaucracy compromising the independence and passion that propels them to achieve such positive effects. Highlighting the current expectation on government to ensure equal access for all, the data shows that 39% of the public feel that public authorities would be best at *deciding exactly what type of service should be provided*. It is vital that Big Society is sympathetic to the culture of the existing voluntary sector and allows it to grow organically, with organisations still free to define their own objectives and priorities, but also ensures that a comprehensive view is taken on local service provision with an emphasis on greater partnership working across the sector as a whole.

This is further emphasised by the key baseline measure in the National Survey for Third Sector Organisations[8]: "*Taking everything into account, overall, how do the statutory bodies in your local area influence your organisation's success?*" Only 16% of organisations surveyed feel that local statutory bodies have a positive influence overall, while half (57%) are neutral and 14% critical. The analysis outlines a number of actions that public authorities can take in order to make local charities feel more involved, but it also reveals that many charitable organisations simply do not feel that working with local statutory bodies is relevant to their organisation. This needs to change – working together, which is at the heart of the Big Society, will have to become a reality if its vision is to be a success.

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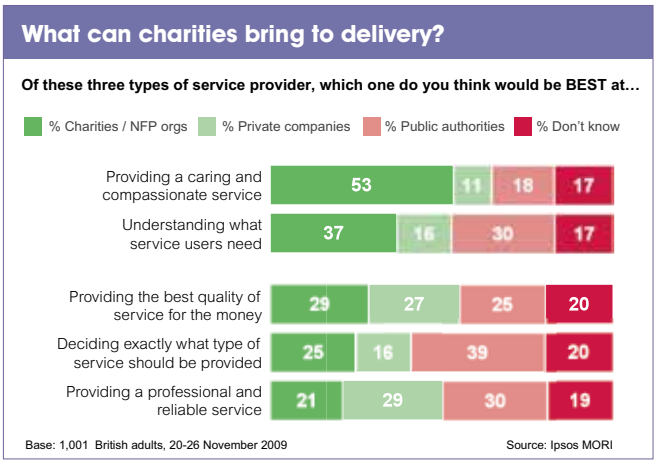
What can charities bring to delivery?



Base: 1,001 British adults, 20-26 November 2009

Source: Ipsos MORI

[6] In September 2008 Ipsos MORI invited a total of 104,391 third sector organisations across all 149 single and two-tier authorities in England to participate in the first national survey of third sector organisations. A total of 48,939 third sector organisations completed a postal questionnaire or the survey online between September and December 2008. Please visit www.nstso.com for more details.

[7] Survey conducted by Ipsos MORI. 1001 respondents aged 18+ interviewed face-to-face across England and Wales between November 20 and 26 2009.

[8] Ibid. NSTSO

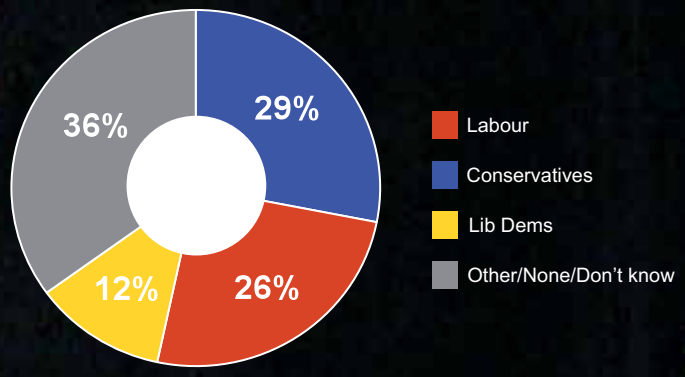
The 2010 election: least boring ever?

Roger Mortimore

Journalists love to characterise British general elections as "the most boring ever" - often within the first few days of the campaign. But nobody would have believed that in 2010. Not only was it clear from the start that there was real doubt about the outcome, but the electorate was more open-minded about switching allegiance between parties than at any election we have previously polled. Throw into this already volatile situation the new factor of the leadership debates, and the election was never likely to be dull.

No party had a clear lead on the most important issue to voters – the economy

Which party do you think has the best policies on the economy, the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats or some other party?

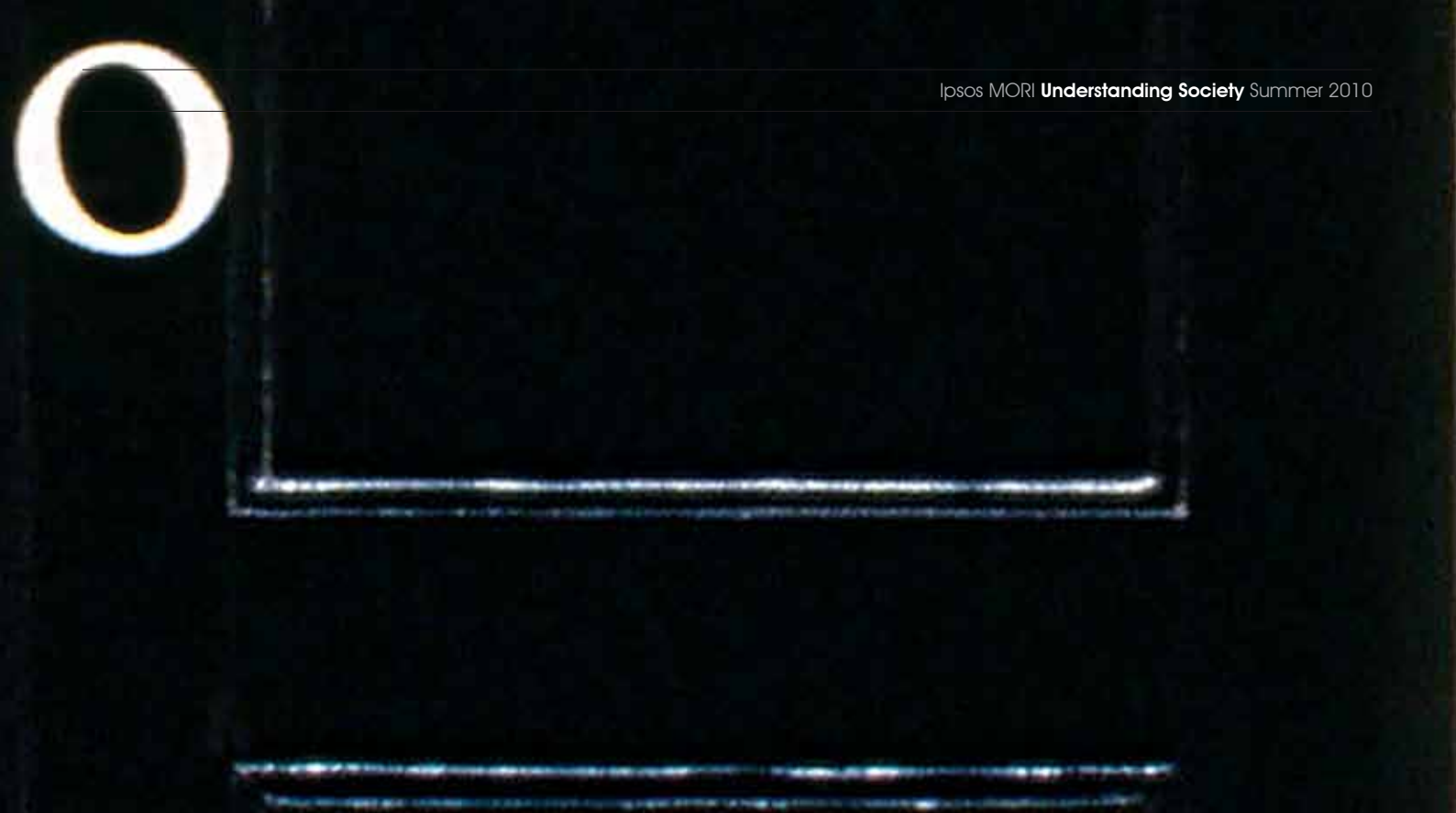


Base: 1,503 British adults 18+, 19th-22nd March 2010

Source: Ipsos MORI

Opinion polling is much more difficult under such volatile conditions than in a settled situation where most of the voters have definitely decided how they would vote. As late as a fortnight before polling day, 45% of people who told us which party they intended to vote for said they might, nevertheless, change their minds. (In 1992 the corresponding figure was 18%!) In the circumstances we, and the other pollsters, did extraordinarily well in measuring the public mood. Our final poll predicted both the Conservatives and Labour to within one percentage point of the final result and the lead exactly, while the exit poll we worked on jointly with other researchers, academics and the main broadcasters was almost perfect, within four seats of the outcome for all three parties.

This was an election in which the voters' views of the leaders mattered much more than what they thought about the parties or the issues. Even before the leadership debates, we found that for the first time in our experience people were saying that the leaders were as important as policies to their vote. This may partly explain why the Conservative lead narrowed in the months approaching the election. In mid-2009, the polls were suggesting that an immediate election would end with a Tory landslide; but by the turn of the year the lead was down to single figures, and then hardly moved before the campaign proper, which began with the Conservatives on 38%, Labour on 30% and the Liberal Democrats on 16% in the "poll of polls". Through that



same period, Gordon Brown's satisfaction ratings were slowly rising while David Cameron's were slowly declining, and although Mr Cameron was still seen as the "most capable Prime Minister" overall, on many other key characteristics such as "understanding world problems" and being "best in a crisis" it was Mr Brown who had the advantage.

Why were the issues not having more effect? One reason was simply that none of the parties succeeded in establishing a clear lead on any of the issues that mattered most to the voters. Most important of these was managing the economy. The public were almost evenly split over which party had the best economic policies, 29% choosing the Conservatives and 26% Labour, whereas 36% either didn't know or thought that no party had the best policies. Not surprising, perhaps, given that they rejected all the suggested solutions to the country's economic crisis: by substantial majorities the public opposed increasing income tax, increasing national insurance, increasing VAT and cutting spending on public services. (All while 55% continued to name the economy as one of the most important issues facing Britain.)

Of course, the "presidential" nature of the election campaign was only accentuated by the introduction of the leaders' debates, and Nick Clegg's strong performance in the first debate led to an extraordinary swing in party support. In the days before the first debate, Liberal Democrat support in the various polls was averaging only 21%. Afterwards it surged, literally overnight, to around 30%.

But this didn't last. In the final voting, the Conservatives took 37% of the vote and Labour 30%, almost exactly where they had been a month earlier, while the LibDems managed only 24%, having gained at the expense of the minor parties since the start of the campaign but far from challenging for second or even first place, as seemed possible at the height of "Cleggmania".

Perhaps we should have doubted from the start how much of this increase of LibDem support would survive all the way to the polling station three weeks later. When we looked at where that support was coming from, the LibDem surge involved no net gains from either the Conservatives or Labour – a little was drawn from minor parties, but most came from people who had previously been saying that they were not certain to vote and now claimed that they were. Naturally, this group will tend to encompass those with lower interest in elections, and perhaps lower knowledge of politics and less grounding in the issues than those who had already determined to vote.

In the end the turnout was only a disappointing 65%, higher than in 2001 or 2005 but still the third lowest in modern history. Nevertheless, even though it seems that not everybody who took an interest finally bothered to vote, we found few signs of apathy. Two in five (42%) of the public told us afterwards that they had been "very interested" in news about the election – three times as many as said that about either the last close election (in 1992) or the last election that led to a change of government (in 1997). The least boring election ever? ■

For more details about the 2010 general election campaign, and our political polling about the new coalition government, visit http://www.ipsos-mori.com/2010electioncentre or contact roger.mortimore@ipsos.com.

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