

IN THIS ISSUE

- Rosy Picture of Green Reality
- Baghdad Storm in Washington
- European Mobiles
- Reservations on Green Taxes
- Next Stop Des Moines?
- Meet the Neighbours

Rosy Picture of Green Reality

A Populus poll for The Times has revealed the extent of the gap between what people claim they do to help the environment and the action they take in reality.

The poll asked whether people do a range of things in their daily lives that would improve energy efficiency, reduce waste and cut carbon emissions. More than half of those surveyed said that they take all but one of the steps tested – the exception being participation in car-pooling schemes (which a surprisingly high 28% claimed to do).

Eight out of ten people said that they always turn the television off with the button on the set, or at the wall, rather than by using the standby button on a remote control. There is no available data to prove the accuracy of this unlikely claim. This is not the case, however, when it comes to recycling: while more than three quarters (76%) of people say they “recycle everything in the household that can be recycled”, official statistics reveal that in fact only 22.5% of all household waste is recycled in Britain – a third of the rate in the Netherlands.

The poll found that nearly two thirds of people (65%) said they “only buy energy saving light bulbs”. This claim is flatly contradicted by a study by the National Consumer Council, published in May 2006, which found that low-energy bulbs currently have only 11.5% of the total light bulb market, and on current trends will have only 13% by 2020.

Other areas in which people’s claims sit uneasily with the empirical evidence include transport. 54% of people said they “make a conscious effort to take fewer flights”, but Department of Transport figures show that the number of airline passengers has risen by 27% since 2000. And while more than half (56%) said they tried to use public transport “whenever possible”, the number of bus journeys outside London actually fell last year by 4%, according to the DfT.

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_11_07_times_p.htm

Baghdad Storm in Washington

The key to the recent Republican defeat in the US Mid-term elections seems, perhaps unsurprisingly, to have been Iraq. Voters who approved of President Bush's handling of Iraq voted Republican by an average margin of 90% to 10%, according to the ABC News exit poll, while those disapproving of the administration's approach to Iraq voted Democrat by an average of 83% to 17%. The fatal problem for the Republicans was, therefore, the decline in support for the war in Iraq, from 51% two years ago, when Mr Bush was re-elected to 42% now – compounded by the fact that those who oppose the war regarded it as a more important election issue than did supporters of the war.

Largely because of Iraq, the proportion of Americans regarding the country as being “on the wrong track” was at its highest level (55%) on an election day since 1994 – the year that Newt Gingrich's 'Contract With America' gave the Republicans a Congressional majority for the first time since 1953 – and which they then lost this month.

The exit poll data revealed some other stark divides between the backers of the two parties. Married people voted for Republican Congressional candidates by a 5 point margin; single people voted Democrat Congressional candidates by a margin of more than 20% . The Republicans won among white voters, albeit by a narrower than usual margin of 51% to 47%. But black Americans voted Democrat by 85% to 15%. People describing themselves as ‘born again’ Christians voted by a wide margin for the Republicans but Catholics voted narrowly for the Democrats, as atheists did overwhelmingly. Younger voters (18–29 year-olds) backed the Democrats by a huge margin (60% to 38%); university graduates voted 53%/45% for the Democrats – their best performance among this group since 1982 (and also precisely the overall split between the parties among all voters).

European Mobiles

Nearly 8 out of 10 Europeans now own a mobile phone, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey. They are most common in Sweden (95%), followed closely by Finland (91%) and The Netherlands (91%). 85% of people in the UK have a mobile. Mobiles are as prevalent in the EU's newer members as elsewhere – the ownership rate in the Czech Republic (87%), Estonia (86%), Slovenia (85%), Latvia (84%) and Slovakia (81%) is higher than in France (79%) and Germany (76%).

70% of adults across the EU support the European Commission's desire to curb high ‘roaming charges’ on the use of mobile phones abroad, according to the poll.

More than half (53%) of Europeans use their mobile while travelling abroad (while a quarter of those questioned answered spontaneously that they never travel abroad). More than half (59%) of respondents said they would use their mobile phone more abroad if prices were lower – rising to 64% in the UK and 78% in Malta. In all countries, less than half of respondents said they had a good idea of the price they paid when making or receiving a phone call in another EU country – with 29% saying this overall.

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_269_en.pdf

Reservations on Green Taxes

Recent research has shed light on public attitudes to proposals to introduce “green taxes” to discourage environmentally harmful behaviour by individuals and businesses. In the November Populus poll for the Times, more than half (53%) said they personally were “willing to pay significantly higher petrol prices, car taxes and air fares.” However, 71% said new green taxes on petrol and airline tickets would only be acceptable if other taxes were cut to compensate, and 60% said that unless big polluters like America and China introduced green taxes too, there was little point in Britain doing so.

In a separate Populus poll for the BBC Daily Politics programme, people were similarly sceptical about green tax proposals. More than two thirds (69%) thought such taxes would “unfairly hit poor people, while rich people will be able to continue to drive and fly just as much as before”. 62% felt green tax proposals were nothing to do with the environment but were designed simply to raise more revenue for the government.

This research coincides with a study by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, which found rising concern about climate change around the world. 46% of Americans said they saw global warming as a “critical threat”. 47% of people in China and 51% in India said the same, and concern was particularly high in South Korea (67%) and Australia (68%).

43% of Americans agreed that “global warming is a serious and pressing problem” and that steps should be taken to combat it now “even if this involves significant costs” – a higher proportion than those saying “its effects will be gradual, so we can deal with the problem gradually” (37%). Only 17% thought that “until we are sure that global warming is really a problem, we should not take any steps that have economic costs”.

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_11_07_times_p.htm

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_11_03_Daily_Politics_p.htm

Next Stop Des Moines?

Despite the Democrat triumph in the Congressional elections, the polls still suggest that the (currently) leading possible Republican candidates for President, John McCain and Rudy Giuliani would comfortably beat any of the (currently) likely Democrats. Hillary Clinton, newly (and overwhelmingly) re-elected as a New York Senator and strong favourite for the Democratic nomination for President, would lose to either of these Republicans by a 15% margin, according to a McLaughlin Associates poll of those voting in the mid-term elections.

The big new Presidential hope for the Democrats is Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, whose book 'The Audacity of Hope' is a best-seller and whose rising media profile was recently capped by a Time magazine cover with his picture under the headline 'The next President?' Obama was first elected to the Senate only two years ago and would be, by a margin, the least experienced Presidential candidate chosen by either party in modern times, as well as, more significantly, the first African American. Despite the excitement about Senator Obama among the media and political classes, 40% of American voters have never heard of him. The view they form of him as he enters their consciousness will determine whether or not he becomes a credible candidate for President and whether he stands a better chance of winning the White House than his party's other possible standard-bearers.

Meet the Neighbours

Nearly three quarters (72%) of people in European Union countries would support further enlargement of the EU provided the process does not go too fast, according to a recently published Eurobarometer survey. More than two thirds (68%) consider relations between the EU and its neighbours – which include Russia, Ukraine and Belarus – to be good. 70% agree that the EU should offer neighbouring countries a different type of relationship which falls short of full membership, in parallel to the enlargement process.

The survey, which also explored knowledge and attitudes to the EU's neighbouring states, found that 30% of respondents claimed to have met someone from Morocco, and 23% had met someone from the Ukraine. 36% said they had never met anyone from one the EU's neighbouring countries.

Three quarters of people agreed that helping the EU's neighbours would enable companies based in the EU to expand their markets. Nearly two thirds (64%) thought that such countries should be given easier access to EU markets.

Human rights (39%), peace (38%) and democracy (37%) were the values respondents felt best represented the EU. The market economy was some way behind on 26%, with "individual freedom" still further down the list at 12%.

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_259_sum_en.pdf

If you found this edition of *Perspective* informative and would like to receive other briefings periodically, simply email perspective@populuslimited.com with your name and position and we will confirm you on our database. If you do not wish to receive any further information from Populus email perspective@populuslimited.com typing the word *unsubscribe* in the subject line.

If you know anyone else who might like to receive *Perspective* please let us know their e-mail address and we'd be delighted to add them to the circulation list.

Populus, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AY.

T: +44 (0)20 7253 9900