

# Golley Slater National Survey Shows Government Has Uphill Struggle To Build Public Support



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Whichever party forms the next Government faces a major challenge in restoring battered public confidence and this is brought home forcefully in Golley Slater's latest quarterly monitor - Dialect 2 - which tracks consumer opinion throughout the UK.

Published today, Dialect 2 revealed that the vast majority of people (over 2,000) questioned want a change in government with 71% of those in the Midlands, followed by London & South East and South West of England tying on 67%, and Yorkshire coming in third at 64%. People in Scotland are happier with their government than the rest of the UK as less than half population (48%) want a change in government.

Commenting on the report's findings Golley Slater's Chief Executive Chris Lovell said: "Many issues are exorcising the public's minds and highlight the difficulties facing the new Prime Minister post-election. As you will see from the results, there are concerns across the spectrum of public services. The million dollar question is whether we are prepared to pay higher taxes for better public services. We put this question to respondents in our survey and the overwhelming majority were against this suggestion. Less than 27% would be willing to pay higher taxes for improved services. The loudest dissenters were those in the Midlands (61%), East Anglia (58%) and Yorkshire (56%). As consumers, we want it all, but don't always want to foot the bill! This

is a big challenge for the next government, particularly in the current economic climate.”

Summary of Dialect 2 (full report available from [www.golleyslater.com/dialect.php](http://www.golleyslater.com/dialect.php))

**Weak Government Policy:** The majority of respondents do not believe that current government policy is addressing big challenges. Top of the list of concern is care for the elderly. The over 85 year old age group is predicted to increase from 1.33m (2.2% of the population) to 7m (8.2% of the population) by 2080. Faith in government policy to deal with growing elderly care needs stands at just 14.2% to 30% of respondents across the regions, with the Midlands having the least confidence at 14.2%%. By contrast, government is seen to give much greater attention to areas such as equality, ethnic minorities, equal opportunities and religious tolerance.

**Failure to Improve Public Services:** Despite a desire to see positive outcomes from a newly elected government, the majority of respondents do not believe there will be an improvement in public services. The most sceptical are those living in Scotland with 64% feeling there will not be a positive change, closely followed by Wales on 60% and the North West and Yorkshire tying on 56%. [The results for Wales and Scotland may be due to the fact that public services are devolved in these countries.]

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**Shortcomings on Jobs, Education and Skills:** Respondents did not applaud local government track record on job creation, education and skills development. In relation to employment opportunities, in most regions over 50% of respondents said government had not helped to develop employment opportunities in their region. The result was worst in the North of England with 61% responding negatively to the question. This is compounded by the fact that across the regions there is a very low level of confidence in job security, with the figure standing at 7% of respondents in East Anglia, falling to 3% of respondents in the South West of England.

On the education/skills front, the Midlands leads with 65% stating that they do not believe school leavers are being equipped and skilled for employment in the 21st century; closely followed by Yorkshire and South West of England on 62%, with the remaining regions and Scotland standing at 53%-58% negative response. Respondents felt

government should focus on skills that are transferrable and sustainable in an economy that is highly geared to service over manufacturing.

In Poor Healthcare: The debate about postcode lottery in public healthcare may lie behind the feedback on the quality of free public healthcare. Sixty-three per cent of the respondents in the South West of England said healthcare was very good/good, with Scotland on 62% and the North of England at 60%. Others were less complementary – for example, only 48% of the population in Wales were positive and the rest of the regions stood between 45% and 59%. All regions were asked to rate the level of healthcare from very poor to average - the poorest results were from Wales (52%), North West (45%) and Yorkshire (44%).

The UK media regularly covers stories on undesirable social behaviour and Dialect 2 asked for views on a range of these including diet & exercise, sexual behaviour, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, drink driving, domestic violence and crime. The majority of the respondents across the regions are not convinced that government is changing attitudes and behaviours to more responsible/positive ones:

- Drug Abuse – Just 20% to 31% of respondents across all regions felt government was making an impact on drug abuse, leaving large numbers of people feeling that problems were not being addressed. The majority felt government is not changing attitudes and behaviours, with the highest levels of concern coming from Wales at 67% of respondents, Scotland and Midlands tying with 61.90% and then North East on 59.10%.
- Domestic Violence – Another disturbing set of figures. Just over 7% to 28.40% of respondents felt that government was not changing attitudes and behaviour. The highest negative responses came from the South West, Midlands and Wales, with figures ranging from 61% to 62%.
- Sexually Transmitted Infections/Teenage Pregnancy – Again, the majority of respondents felt that the government is not making significant impact in this area with between 43% and nearly 56% giving a negative response to the question. The most negative responses came from London & South East (55.60%), Wales (52.90%) and the Midlands (51.80%).

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- Crime Prevention – Between 50% and 69% of respondents were not convinced that government is addressing criminal behaviour. Most believe the UK needs more police, longer prison sentences and a reduction in drug abuse.
- Drink Driving – Between 38% and 50% of respondents felt that government messages on drink driving were getting through to the public, with the best results coming from the North West (51.10%) but dropping off significantly to 38.20% in London & South East. The majority of the figures were in the 40 per cents.
- Alcohol Consumption – By contrast to the results on drink driving, the majority of respondents do not believe that government is changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption. Just 27% to 34% responded positively to this question, with the highest percentage of disbelievers being in the Midlands (60.20%), followed by the South West (59.60%) and London & South East (58.20%).
- Diet & Exercise – On a more positive note, across the regions between 46% and 58.70% of those questioned felt government is changing people's attitudes towards diet and exercise. The highest results came from Yorkshire (58%), North West (55.1%) and the South West of England (53.80%).

Further details on the results, together with respondents' views on public spending on cultural activities, transport and quality of life/lifestyle can be seen in the full Dialect 2 report.

Golley Slater's Dialect 2 Report also highlights trends in traditional and new media consumption and the trust consumers have in both traditional and new media, comparing this quarter's results with the previous report.

As each political party vies for our attention and tries to persuade the British public that only they will bring about positive change, they are embracing new media (eg Gordon Brown was interviewed on Twitter last week) to reach audiences. How effective their efforts are will depend on whether they shift from one-way dialogue (pushing out messages) and start listening to both offline communities and communities on social networks such as Facebook which now has 23 million members in the UK alone. Dialect 2 shows an upward trend in the uniform levels of use of new media across the UK, particularly Facebook.

Despite the growing passion for new media, traditional media is still king in terms of public trust, so the use of traditional media is still vital. National TV news comes top of the list in Scotland and all regions in England. Taking pole position is London & South East where over 22% of respondents place the greatest trust in the National TV, closely followed by South West and North West of England where over 21% of communities in each region trust national TV news more than any other news source. The Golley Slater survey shows that TV is the most important medium as demonstrated by the large numbers of the people tuning into the political Leaders Debates.

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Seven to ten per cent of respondents across all regions trust radio (national and regional). Of the online news sources monitored (blogs, Twitter, Google, specialist websites), Google ranked highest, with trust levels ranging between 6.9% (Yorkshire) to 3.7% (South West of England). Locally, regional newspapers are still top dog, followed by local radio, regional TV and then the internet.

Dialect 2 Report also covers respondents' views on public spending on cultural activities, transport and quality of life/lifestyle. The full report can be downloaded from Golley Slater's website - [www.golleyslater.com/dialect.php](http://www.golleyslater.com/dialect.php).

Golley Slater is a full service [marketing agency](#).

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