

Values And Voter Survey 2005

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Part 4: What This Could Mean For The 2005 Election

If people vote on identification with parties rather than issues, then on the 'popular vote', Labour looks certain to win the next election. Despite all the talk of political offers converging on 'the centre', the psychological appeal of the three main political parties remains very different. This Values and Voters Survey is the first to look at how basic individual psychology connects with how people are likely to vote.

It shows that Labour at 29% has twice the base of the Liberal Democrats (at 13.5%) and is well ahead of the Conservatives (at 20%). Together, 'other' parties make up 12% but a significant number (21%) of people declare no affiliation at all. (See discussion in Parts 2 and 3).

Our survey was not designed to predict or forecast voting. We did not ask people how they intended to vote. We also take no account of local issues or the geographic distribution of voters at a constituency level. This is not therefore, an attempt at a predictive poll. Our main claim is that this survey provides an insight about social dynamics which are important for the long and medium term evolution of politics in Britain – both within and beyond the formal Westminster system.

Politically, the picture which emerges from the Values and Voters Survey is that Labour seems to have succeeded, where the other parties have failed, in achieving a broad range of support across most of the 12 Value Modes and the three layers of Settler, Prospector and Pioneer. Whether achieved by accident or design, this is a marketing success. How secure this achievement may be, is harder to say.

Most obviously, Labour has above-average support among three of the security-driven groups – its Old Labour heartland – and in one of the esteem-driven groups ('Now People'). These fun-loving success-seeking people are likely to be many of the 'New Labour' voters which have sustained Blair in power since 1997. Interestingly, this same group is the most likely not to feel any political allegiance at all, as we showed in earlier parts of the report.

The Liberal Democrats score above average with all the inner-directed groups. They clean up among the 'concerned ethicals' and share a battle-ground with Labour among the 'transcenders', the most forward-looking experimental, least-traditional group of all.

Outside that, the LibDems barely manage to achieve an average score in only one of the esteem-driven and one of the security-driven groups.

The Conservatives show a strong bias to support among the security-driven groups – whose watchwords in marketing are known to be FUD factors: fear, uncertainty and doubt – and among the ‘happy followers’, the least assertive of the esteem-driven groups. In the inner-directed segment they reach an average score only with the ‘Flexible Individuals’, who, as the name suggests, are more concerned with exploring their own personal freedom than are the other groups in this band. Those Conservatives are likely to be libertarian in outlook whereas most of the rest of the Tory support is likely to be authoritarian.

For reasons of a lack of robustness of information in the sample size we used we were unable to detail what the 12% ‘others’ are – the Greens, nationalists, BNP, UKIP etc – but many of their votes are geographically determined rather than nationally distributed.

Unless the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives find ways to break out and attract more support from other psychological groups, Labour’s broad base looks likely to return it to power.

At first sight, the wild card might lie in the voting behaviour of the non-aligned 21%. However the psychology of these groups suggests otherwise: they are much more likely not to vote at all, than to be floating voters, and even less likely to be highly political ‘tactical voters’.

Undecided voters who will vote, and those who feel an affiliation but who may not turn out, are not detected by our survey. Because of their ‘transactional’ rather than identity or issue-driven approach to life, the broad psychological group of voters most likely not to bother at all, are likely to be the esteem-driven Prospectors. Their main needs are

- To maintain the ability to acquire and display symbols of value
- To maintain the ability to “make the dream come true”
- To do the above without “changing everything”

Some possible party battlegrounds:

- Values Modes Individually:
 - Tomorrow People- A Lib Dem “must get” as a link into the Prospectors, Tories “must hold” to have a grounding of Prospector appeal, Labour “nice to have”.
 - Now People- A Lib Dem “must get” as a link to staying in the Prospectors, prime target for Tory and Labour “to hold”. This is the Value Mode that has been most affected by the Sun newspaper in the past.
 - Happy Follower- Tory “must hold”, prime target for Labour, “nice to have” for Lib Dem
 - Golden Dreamer- Labour “must hold”, prime target for Tory to “hold onto” Prospectors, low priority for Lib Dem.

Because this is the largest Motivational Group, and the least likely to be concerned about social policies, this is the test of the electioneering skills of the parties. This is the key Group to win over in order to win the 2005 election. This is the Group most likely to be swayed by the media circus of the campaign. They want the "Big Event" and the celebrity details. They will be the volatile Group in the polls.

Among the Pioneers, the main psychological needs would appear to be:

- For politicians to become more human (remember "values" and "emotions"?)
- For the structure of politics to become more accessible to people's real needs
- Openness of motives, less coercion in Parliament

Some possible party battlegrounds:

Values Modes Individually:

- Transitional- "Must hold" (and increase numbers) for Lib Dem, "nice to have" for Labour, low priority for Tories
- Concerned Ethical - The "key must hold" for Lib Dems, prime target for the re-establishment of Labour as an ethical choice (this is the home of the anti-war vote), Tory must hold.
- Flexible Individualist- Must hold for Lib Dem, prime target for Tory, low priority for Labour
- Transcender- Must hold for Lib Dem, prime target for Labour, low priority for Tories

This is the leading edge Motivational Group and an indicator of the changes to come over the next 2 election cycles (10 years). The Lib Dems have strength in this Group that they 'must' hold onto and expand this time. This was the group that shifted and brought in the alternative to the establishment, that brought Thatcher in, and also Blair. This is the Group that contains more disaffected Labour supporters and means that Labour should beware of further alienation.

The Tories "libertarian core" has many supporters in this Group and they need to retain this Group if they are to maintain credibility this time around and prepare themselves for the next cycle.

Among the Settlers, the main psychological needs would appear to be:

- Protection from...just about everything
- More stringent controls on social behaviour
- Slowdown or reverse "all the changes"

Some possible party battlegrounds:

Values Modes Individually:

- Roots-“Key must hold” for Tories, “nice to have” for Labour, “nice to have” for Lib Dem
- Smooth Sailing- Must hold for Tories, secondary target for Lib Dem and Labour
- Brave New World- Key battleground for Tory and Labour(both must hold and increase), low priority for Lib Dem
- Certainty First- Part of the key battleground between Tory and Labour, low priority for Lib Dem

This is the home of “politics as usual” which has been talked about earlier in this paper. This has always been the key Group to attract during any election. They are the ones that traditionally have turned out to vote more than other Groups and until the mid 90's, were the largest Group. This is now the smallest Group, still likely to be the ones most likely to vote, but it is no longer the key Group.

How Politics Can Reach These People

It is often said that politicians reach the security-driven part of the population by invoking the FUD factors: fear, uncertainty and doubt. The strategy of the Australian and American right wing has been quite clearly to invoke fears about safety or security – for example of foreigners – to drive voters to them.

The recent Conservative campaign to highlight perceived problems with ‘gipsy encampments’ is quite likely to evoke a strong response from those who fear outsiders or ‘other’. Of course this doesn’t mean that the politicians and planners orchestrating these campaigns are themselves security-driven: quite often they may be esteem-driven, just ready to use any technique which succeeds. On the other hand, political planners are probably aware that such approaches can alienate people from other motivational groups. Headlines based on FUD politics are not a good guide as to how Prospectors and Pioneers are likely to vote.

The security-driven Settler Value Modes are likely to set more store by local loyalties than people from other Groups. This may simply include a candidate already being the ‘Local MP’. They are also typically very unhappy to be apart from people like themselves. Any threat to family, community and identity (local or cultural) can mobilize them, although they also like to act through familiar channels such as clubs or associations, and distrust anything new (e.g. New Labour), or any challenges to authority (e.g. issue-based campaigns). Unlike the esteem driven or inner directeds, the security driven also want leadership from authority. These tensions are particularly apparent in Labour, with its broad range of psychological support.

It's also fairly clear from the Liberal Democrat example that the politics of 'issues' beyond self-interest – the realm of the inner directeds - are almost self-selecting. They emerge as the party of 'conscience'.

To delve deep enough to understand the political dynamics of these groups properly, would require more detailed qualitative research but below are some suggestions for motivational sound-bites, or maybe mood-bites for speeches or propositions.

Who knows, these short-hands might come in useful? As Tony Blair said: "If you can't sum it up in a sentence or even a phrase, forget it."

What The Motivational Groups (Value Modes) Want From Politics

The differences between groups are actually both subtle and distinct. This table only shows a 'headline' characteristic of each, highlighting a unique difference for each group – not their *only* need but something only they would be likely to put as a priority if they gave it enough thought. These distinguishing wants will apply both to political offers at an election, and to the ongoing relationship with 'government'.

Motivational Group and Value Mode	What I most want most politics to do is to ...
<i>Settlers</i>	
Roots	give protection from external threats
Smooth Sailing	limited change, rules and routines
Brave New World	Deliver prudent leadership; small actions to meet big needs
Certainty First	give answers, duties everyone knows
<i>Prospectors</i>	
Golden Dreamers	give me a windfall (a break - finance)
Happy Followers	not sure - but it must be the right (fashionable) thing
Now People	provide some rewards - more fun, less dull, some 'stars' !
Tomorrow People	give a better different tomorrow
<i>Pioneers</i>	
Transitionals	safely deliver new possibilities
Flexible Individuals	allow individuals to fullfil their potential
Concerned Ethicals	do the right ethical thing
Transcenders	help people deal with the future - the unknown