

The Centre for Welsh Studies, a right-of-centre organisation, have published findings from a new Welsh opinion poll today. The poll was conducted online by Survation, a highly reputable survey agency. It is clearly welcome that we have different polling companies conducting work in Wales, and different organisations conducting research into what people in Wales think.

The new poll asks some questions about the economic implications of Covid-19 and the best approach for reviving the Welsh economy. But of more direct concern to this blog, the poll also asked about Senedd voting intentions. Coming so shortly after our most recent Welsh Political Barometer poll (and with the fieldwork dates for the two polls largely overlapping), this should allow us to compare directly Survation's results to those of YouGov. I have shown previously [[here](#) and [here](#)] that different polling agencies appear to report small but potentially important different levels in party support. ICM and Sky Data have both shown higher support for Plaid Cymru than in comparable Barometer polls; for the last couple of years ICM have also shown lower support for the Conservatives. The record of [accuracy](#) of YouGov Welsh polls in recent elections suggests that our Barometer readings are generally pretty accurate; nonetheless, it would be interesting to see how Survation's findings compared with last week's ones from YouGov.

However, whenever analysing polling it is always important to look at the question wordings. Here is what Survation asked:

“In the next Assembly election you will be given two votes. Your first vote will be for a single person to represent your constituency in the Welsh Assembly. If the election were tomorrow, which party would you be most likely to vote for with your first, constituency vote?”

AND

“Your second vote will be a party list vote to elect representatives from your region of Wales by a form of proportional representation. If the election were tomorrow, which party would you be most likely to vote for with your second, regional list vote?”

There is one obvious thing wrong with this - referring to the Senedd by its old name. There is also something much less obvious, but possibly more important for the findings - the wording of the list vote question, with such an explicit framing of it as a 'second vote'. This is an issue that, with the very considerable help of YouGov, I [investigated](#) in the past. Put simply, the explicit use of the term 'second vote' for the regional list ballot seemed to confuse some people into thinking that they were being asked for their second preference. And this mattered because it generated some highly implausible findings on regional list voting intentions.

It is highly unfortunate that a similar problem seems to have occurred with this new poll. It ought not to affect the constituency vote findings; but it means that even before seeing the figures I was not inclined to put much confidence in the regional list vote results.

(I want to be clear: I am emphatically NOT suggesting the question was deliberately flawed to generate particular results. I have absolutely no reason to believe this).

The findings that were generated were as follows (with, for ease of comparison, last week's Barometer findings presented alongside). First, the constituency vote figures:

Party	Survation/CWS	YouGov/Barometer
Labour	40%	34%
Conservative	26%	31%
Plaid Cymru	18%	22%

Liberal Democrats	7%	5%
Brexit Party	8%	3%
Greens	?	3%
Others	2 (including Greens)	3%

And here are the list vote figures:

Party	Survation/CWS	YouGov/Barometer
Labour	36%	32%
Conservative	23%	28%
Plaid Cymru	22%	24%
Liberal Democrats	7%	5%
Abolish the Assembly	?	4%
Brexit Party	10%	3%
Greens	?	3%
Others	2% (including Greens & ATA)	1%

There are some striking features in these results. The first is the stronger performance of Labour, on both votes, in the Survation/CWS poll. This might be thought to be a reflection of the poll coming slightly later than the Barometer poll, with a further impact of negative public attitudes to the UK Government's handling of Covid-19. But the Survation fieldwork actually began earlier than YouGov's, and also finished slightly earlier. This may, though, be significant: Survation began sampling literally the day after the Dominic Cummings story broke, and the initial reaction to this may have shaped the results. Alternatively, it may simply be that Survation's sampling and weighting methods have produced a systematically higher level of Labour support. We should note that this poll included 16 and 17 year olds (who will be able to vote next May) in their sampling; in our January Barometer [poll](#), we found that this added about 1% to Labour's support level, and placed the Conservatives about the same amount lower.

While placing Labour higher, Survation's reading gives lower support for both Plaid Cymru and the Conservatives. This may reflect Survation's sampling and weighting methods and, particularly for the Tories, the timing of the poll. Alongside this, though, is a surprisingly strong showing for the Brexit Party. Having scored 3 percent on both votes in the latest Barometer poll, Survation have them on 8 percent for the constituency vote and 10 percent for the regional list vote. This is not a level of support that the Brexit Party have approached in any of the other four Welsh polls published this year (three Barometer polls plus the March BBC/ICM poll) - all of which have had the Brexit Party below 5 percent support on both votes.

Given that greater support for the Brexit Party is reported across both votes, this cannot be *solely* down the question wording issue I discussed above, although that may play a role in the Brexit Party doing particularly strongly on the list vote. Some of those indicating that they would support the Brexit Party here may be supporters of other parties (particularly Conservatives) who might choose the Brexit Party as their second choice. We

should also note that it is very surprising, based on all the other evidence we have on recent Welsh public preferences, that support for 'other' parties is so low in this new poll, alongside support for the Brexit Party being so high. However, from the available information it appears as if survey respondents were only presented with the options of choosing five parties (Labour, Conservative, Plaid, Lib-Dems, and Brexit) plus 'Another Party'. A somewhat broader menu of options is typically given to respondents to Barometer polls. This may also help explain the strangely high level of support recorded here for the Brexit Party.

What might be the implications in terms of seats of the figures in this latest poll? Using the standard assumption of uniform national swings since the last Senedd election, not a single constituency seat is projected to change hands! This would leave the balance of constituency seats as it was in 2016, namely: **27 Labour, 6 Conservatives, 6 Plaid Cymru, and 1 Liberal Democrat.**

For the regional list seats, the following outcomes are projected:

**North Wales: 2 Conservative, 1 Plaid, 1 Brexit**

**Mid and West Wales: 2 Labour, 1 Plaid, 1 Brexit**

**South Wales West: 2 Conservative, 1 Plaid, 1 Brexit**

**South Wales Central: 2 Conservative, 1 Plaid, 1 Brexit**

**South Wales East: 2 Plaid, 1 Conservative, 1 Brexit**

This means an overall projected outcome for the Senedd of:

**Labour: 29 seats (27 constituency + 2 list)**

**Conservative: 13 seats (6 constituency + 7 list)**

**Plaid Cymru: 12 seats (6 constituency + 6 list)**

**Brexit Party: 5 seats**

**Liberal Democrats: 1 seat**

It is very welcome that we have had another major polling agency assessing party support in Wales with this new poll. It is also welcome that Survation were able to include 16 and 17 year old respondents. However, I do have some concerns about the manner in which the regional list vote intention question was phrased; and also about the set of responses presented to those completing the survey. For these reasons, I suspect that support for the Brexit Party is over-stated in this poll.

*Survation polled 1,051 respondents aged 16 and above via the internet, between 22 May and 31 May 2020. All the tables are available [here](#).*