



MORI

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The Referendum Battle

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Foreword

The Prime Minister's April announcement of a referendum on the constitutional treaty for the European Union may have been unexpected but the importance of the result should not be underestimated. A successful 'yes' vote would not only help improve the efficient working of the European Union (to the UK's benefit as well as that of other members) but also greatly consolidate both British membership and influence inside the EU. A majority 'no' vote would be a famous victory for the euro-sceptics, strengthening the hand of those who want Britain to negotiate a weaker, more tenuous relationship with Europe or even leave the EU altogether. Either way, the stakes are high.

The first detailed survey of public opinion since the referendum was announced, carried out by MORI for the Foreign Policy Centre, shows that the anti constitution camp is well ahead. At present, only 31 per cent are in favour of the UK adopting the European constitutional treaty. However, the MORI poll also demonstrates that, contrary to pessimism of many commentators, the 'yes' camp could win a referendum.

Perhaps the key finding of the MORI survey is the uncertainty of opinion. Only 35 per cent have made up their minds (8 per cent are strongly in favour, while 27 per cent are strongly against). Nearly half of the electorate could change their minds, according to their view of whether a European constitution is good or bad for the UK. If the sum of those who are now opposed, but could be persuaded to shift if they thought it was in Britain's interest, is added to those in favour, the yes campaign would have 54 per cent of the voters. In addition, a significant number, about a fifth, are 'don't knows'. So there is all to play for.

Crucial for a successful 'yes' vote campaign will be a well planned and powerfully sustained campaign. To a considerable extent, the 'no' camp can afford to rest on their laurels. The pro constitutionalists, who have more ground to make up as well as a new treaty to explain, must start early and continue to the end.

The MORI survey shows conclusively that neither Blair nor the Labour Party can win the referendum on their own. Of course, it will be essential to mobilise the support of Labour voters who are at the moment split narrowly against adopting the constitution. Fortunately most of these Labour antis are 'waverers', who are likely to be persuaded by a united Labour cabinet, including Gordon Brown, John Prescott and Jack Straw. But if Liberal and Tory 'waverers' are to be won over, then the 'yes' campaign will also need the active support of the Liberal leader, Charles Kennedy, as well as pro-European Tories such as Kenneth Clarke, Michael Heseltine and Christopher Patten. It will therefore be essential for the campaign to be broadly based and able to appeal across party lines.

The 'yes' campaign will need to be conducted at different levels if it is to be successful. Despite the barrage of anti propaganda in the euro-sceptic press, half of the electorate are still in favour of British membership of the EU, compared to 41 per cent who are against it. It will therefore be helpful to the campaign to remind voters of the advantages of the British position in Europe of a 'yes' vote, as well as the disadvantages of a 'no' vote, including the possible threat to membership. However it would be unwise to overstate the membership issue or to rely solely on strategic questions.

At present a major disadvantage for the 'yes' campaign is the widespread ignorance about the European constitutional treaty in particular and the EU in general. This allows the euro-sceptic press to print scare stories and misinformation about the EU including the claims that the constitution will be a threat to national identity and will lead to a European super state. Citizens should require the government to publish a short summary of the treaty which should be available in every post office in the land. This should work to the benefit of the 'yes' camp. MORI shows that the more people know about the EU, the more likely they are in favour of it.

The 'yes' campaign needs to begin now. It is entirely legitimate for the government to argue that the referendum should be delayed until after the election given that the election is likely to take place in the early summer of 2005. But that should not be the excuse for kicking the issue into the long grass until then. The passage of the necessary legislation through parliament during autumn and winter ought to be a signal for a major effort to explain the advantages of the constitutional treaty. A conspiracy of silence by pro-Europeans – be they the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the

Foreign Secretary, the Leader of the Liberal Party or leading pro-European Tories - risks allowing opinion against the constitution to become set in stone, making a 'yes' victory even harder to attain.

Giles Radice

1. Introduction

In June 1975, the United Kingdom held the only national referendum in its history. Two years after first joining, Britain's voters decided two-to-one that the country should stay in 'the European Community (the Common Market)', as the referendum question called it. Although the European Union, as it now is, has developed apace and Britain's relationship with it – both economic and political – has changed considerably in the past thirty years, the British electorate has been offered no further opportunity to approve or arrest these developments, or to change the decision made in 1975.

Suddenly, however, the case is altered. A new constitutional settlement within the EU to accommodate the accession of ten new member states is imminent, and Tony Blair has promised that his government will not ratify the new constitution without securing approval in a referendum. British entry into the single European currency may be less urgent, but the government is committed, in principle, to joining, and a referendum has been promised on this issue as well. This government has committed itself, therefore, to the task of building majorities within the comparatively near future to win two referendums on Europe, referendums which all the opinion polls agree they would lose were they to be held tomorrow.

Nor for that matter is another referendum on EU membership entirely inconceivable. While nobody in government has openly suggested that Britain should hold such a referendum, it is plain that many Europhile campaigners regard as one of their strongest arguments the contention that a British 'no' vote to the constitution or long-term refusal to join the euro would be incompatible with continued British membership in the EU, and tantamount to a vote for wholesale withdrawal. At the other end of the scale, many Euro-sceptics would relish such a challenge, and the UKIP's 16 per cent share of the vote at the 2004 European elections make it plain that not all the public takes continued British membership of the EU for granted. A referendum on whether Britain should stay in or get out altogether is therefore, if unlikely in practice, neither entirely unthinkable nor pointless to contemplate as an exploration of the political mood.

Britain's relationship with Europe, therefore, throws up three distinct policy questions on which it is worth measuring public opinion: whether or not Britain should agree to the proposed constitution; whether or not Britain should join the euro; and whether Britain should retain EU membership at all or should withdraw altogether. The question of the constitution is the most urgent, since it must be the subject of a referendum within the next couple of years; exploring how attitudes to the constitution are related to attitudes on the other two topics may give a clearer picture of how the public mind works on European issues. This pamphlet reports the findings of a survey conducted by MORI for the Foreign Policy Centre in July 2004 to test opinion on these issues, and considers the lessons they teach on the most effective way to campaign in the forthcoming referendum on the constitution, as well as the strength of the indications they offer as to its likely outcome.

Public attitudes to all three questions have been tested more or less frequently in opinion polls, but rarely in such a way as to allow comparison of attitudes to different aspects of the debate. Further, most poll questions tend to be in the simple 'yes/no', 'vote in favour/vote against' format, giving no opportunity to discover how strongly attitudes are entrenched. But Europe is an issue on which many of the public feel uninformed, and consequently one on which it is possible that many might change their minds as the political debate unfolds – as, indeed, a lot of the public are happy to admit.

We have therefore measured attitudes on each of the three issues on a more subtle scale, which enables us to distinguish between those who feel their opinions are already set in stone and those 'waverers' who still feel it possible that they might – were the arguments to convince them – change their minds. One such question – on joining the euro – MORI has used for a number of years:

Q. 'Which of the following best describes your own view of British participation in the single currency?'

The survey offered the alternatives:

A: 'I strongly support British participation'

B: 'I am generally in favour of British participation, but could be persuaded against it if I thought it would be bad for the British economy'

C: 'I am generally opposed to British participation, but could be persuaded to vote in favour of it if I thought it would be good for the British economy'

D: 'I strongly oppose British participation'.

An earlier (November 2002) survey using this question formed the basis of the research reported in a previous Foreign Policy Centre pamphlet, *Who Are the Euro-Waverers?* Here we extend the principle to the EU Constitution and to EU membership, asking:

Q. 'Which of the following best describes your own view of British membership of the European Union?/of Britain adopting the new European constitution?'

This survey offered the following alternatives:

A. I strongly support British membership of the European Union

B. I am generally in favour of British membership of the European Union, but could be persuaded against if I thought it would be bad for Britain

C. I am generally opposed to British membership of the European Union, but could be persuaded in favour if I thought it would be good for Britain

A. I strongly support Britain adopting the European constitution

B. I am generally in favour of Britain adopting the European constitution, but could be persuaded against if I thought it would be bad for Britain

C. I am generally opposed to Britain adopting the European constitution, but could be persuaded in favour if I thought it would be good for Britain

D. I strongly oppose British membership of the European Union

D. I strongly oppose Britain adopting the European constitution

These questions allowed us to make simultaneous measures of opinions on all three issues with the same sample, measuring both the balance of opinion for and against engagement with Europe and the strength with which those views are held. To this end MORI interviewed a representative sample of 1,063 British adults aged 15+ on 22-27 July 2004.¹

2. The public's negativity towards Europe

Existing research suggests that British attitudes towards the European Union are on the whole negative, though most of the public want Britain to remain a member of the EU. This negativity seems to arise both from perceptions of the practical effects of EU membership and lack of sympathy with the 'European' ideal.

The latest *Eurobarometer* survey,² for example, finds that only three in ten think that the UK has benefited from membership of the EU – this is easily the most negative attitude of any of the 15 established member states (the average for the EU15 is 47 per cent). Only 19 per cent of Britons say they 'tend to trust' the European Union – though as the British government is no more trusted and political parties are less so, this is not necessarily significant.

Generally negative attitudes about the EU may also rest on the belief that Britain is distinct from Europe. Most Britons do not think of themselves as European – 62 per cent consider themselves 'British not European' rather

¹ The questions were carried on MORI's regular CAPI Omnibus survey. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, in home. Data have been weighted to match the known profile of the population.

² Available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm. The Eurobarometer surveys are conducted in Great Britain by Martin Hamblin Ltd and in Northern Ireland by Ulster Marketing Surveys. The latest survey is Eurobarometer 61, conducted in the Spring of 2004.

than partly or totally European. This is easily the highest level among the EU15 average of 40 per cent. (*Eurobarometer, Autumn 2003*). Similarly, in the same survey 55 per cent of Britons declared themselves ‘very proud to be British’; lest this seem unremarkable, it might be remarked that the corresponding figures for the French and Germans were 38 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. In such a climate of opinion, a supra-national body whose opponents portray it as weakening British nationality and independence needs to argue a strong case to gain acceptance.

This general impression is confirmed by the topline findings of the new survey. The table below shows the direct comparisons of parallel categories on all three questions.

	Adopting the new European constitution	Participation in the single currency	Membership of the European Union
	%	%	%
Strongly in favour	8	10	16
Generally in favour but might change mind	23	26	34
Generally against but might change mind	23	24	22
Strongly against	27	32	19
In favour	31	36	50
Against	50	56	41
Net in favour	-19	-20	+9
‘Waverers’	46	50	56
Don't know	19	8	9

At the aggregate level, we find that support for adopting the constitution ranks the lowest of the three issues – overall 31 per cent are either strongly or generally in favour of the constitution, compared with 36 per cent for the single currency and half the public for membership of the European Union. It will be seen that while opinions are fairly similar on adopting the constitution and joining the euro, the majority opposing both, rather fewer would want Britain to leave the EU altogether, the majority in this case

being on the other side. Furthermore, those who oppose joining the euro or signing the constitution are firmer in their views (more than half holding their views strongly and not feeling liable to change their mind) than are those against EU membership; at the other end of the scale a slightly higher proportion of supporters hold strong views on retaining EU membership than on the euro or the constitution.

On none of the three issues have even half the public definitely made up their minds. While there are fewer explicit ‘waverers’ on the constitution, this is accounted for by the higher number of don’t knows – not unreasonably, since the issue is a comparatively new one and media coverage of the details has been at best patchy. Only 35 per cent have strong views one way or the other on the constitution, the same proportion who do so on EU membership; a slightly higher proportion, 42 per cent, feel committed on the single currency.

The initial indications, then, are that if held today, the government would lose referendums either to endorse the constitution or to join the euro. On the other hand, the public would not vote to leave the EU. However, so many potential voters are keeping open minds on all these issues that, regardless of which side at present has the lead, all could be changed by the time a referendum is held at some point in the future. But to explore how the three issues are inter-linked, and what impact one might have on the others, we need to dig more deeply into the data.

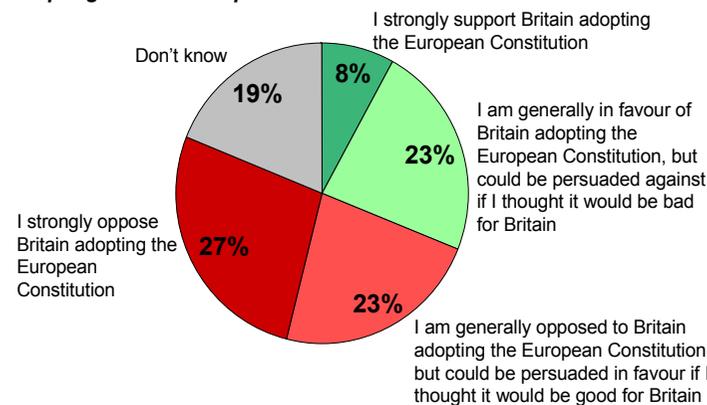
3. Current attitudes towards the Constitution

Britain’s generally negative attitude towards the European Union sheds little direct light on the more specific question of opposition to the EU constitution. Hostility to the EU does not necessarily imply opposition to a constitution which will in some ways restrict its operations. Indeed (according to Eurobarometer), Britain is in favour of ‘a constitution for the European Union’ by 42 per cent to 24 per cent. But there seems to be much less enthusiasm for the specific constitution now being proposed – or, at least, for that constitution as it is perceived, filtered through the reporting of the British media and interpreted by its political supporters and opponents.

The current balance of opinion is against Britain adopting the proposed constitution: just three in ten (31 per cent) say they support it, while half the public say they are against. However, this balance of opinion is by no means immovable. Looking at it another way, nearly half the public, 46 per cent are ‘waverers’ – they admit that they might change their minds on the issue if they could be persuaded that the arguments pointed the other way. If all those who are opposed to the constitution but say they are prepared to change their mind were to do so, that would add up to 54 per cent of the public being in favour; and a further 19 per cent declare themselves ‘don’t knows’. So in theory, at least, a referendum is winnable.

British adoption of the European Constitution

Which of the following best describes your own view of Britain adopting the new European Constitution?



Base: 1,063 GB adults, 15+, 22-27 July 2004

Source: MORI/The Foreign Policy Centre

Attitudes towards the constitution are far from uniform across the population. While men and women support the constitution in roughly equal proportions (30 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively), men are more likely to *strongly* oppose it than women (31 per cent to 24 per cent). The difference here is explained by more women saying they don’t know (which is often the case in surveys of political opinions, whether or not concerned with Europe).

Across all age groups, no more than one in 10 say they *strongly* support the constitution, whereas at least one in five say they are *strongly* opposed to it (20 per cent among 15-34 year olds, rising to 38 per cent among over 55s). As people become older, they become more anti-constitution – over 55s are more than six times as likely to be strongly against the constitution as strongly in favour of it; under-34s are only twice as likely. Furthermore, older citizens are more likely to hold firm opinions: seven in ten (72 per cent) of those aged 15-24 are either wavering or do not have an opinion about the constitution, compared with 56 per cent among those aged 55-and-over.

A similar contrast can be found in terms of social class. Middle class (ABC1) and working class (C2DE) people are equally likely to be against the constitution (50 per cent), but whereas half the remainder of C2DEs have no opinion, the remaining ABC1s are predominantly in favour, so that support is 36 per cent among the middle class but only 26 per cent among the working class; further, twice as many middle class people *strongly* support the constitution (11 per cent) than do the working class (5 per cent).

Support also increases the higher the level of educational achievement. People with no formal qualifications are nine times more likely to say they *strongly* oppose the constitution than *strongly* support it (36 per cent to 4 per cent); those with GCSEs or equivalent as their highest qualification are three and a quarter times more likely (26 per cent to 8 per cent); those with A-levels or equivalent are four times more likely (24 per cent to 6 per cent); but graduates are just one and half times more likely (18 per cent to 12 per cent).

It is no surprise that there are also marked differences in attitudes to the constitution by political allegiance. Those who say they would vote Labour if there were a general election tomorrow split narrowly against adopting the constitution, 45 per cent to 39 per cent; but 54 per cent of them are waverers and a further 17 per cent have no opinion. Conservatives are rather more decisive and very much more hostile, 69 per cent being opposed and 43 per cent strongly opposed to adopting the constitution; just 3 per cent of Tories say they are strongly in favour. Liberal Democrats are most supportive of the constitution, balanced marginally in favour (46 per cent to 42 per cent); but they are also the most open to persuasion, 62 per cent saying they have an opinion but might change their mind and another

12 per cent unsure of their view on the constitution. These differences may come to be of considerable significance in a future referendum, but it is clear that with so few minds yet made up, the situation may already have radically changed before even the formal campaign begins.

4. How Europe issues inter-relate

While the proposed constitution is a comparatively new issue, opinions on membership of the EU and of joining the single currency have been tracked much longer. When asked about whether Britain should **stay in** or **get out of** the European Union, over the past few years only about two in five have said they would vote to get out.

Q If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the European Union, how would you vote?

	May 1999	Jun 1999	Oct 1999	Jun 2000	Sep 2000	Nov 2000	Mar 2001	Apr/ May 2001	May 2001	Jun 2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Stay in	44	41	51	53	43	49	39	48	43	49
Get out	39	37	41	32	46	44	42	43	41	41
Don't know	17	22	8	15	11	7	19	9	16	10

Source: MORI

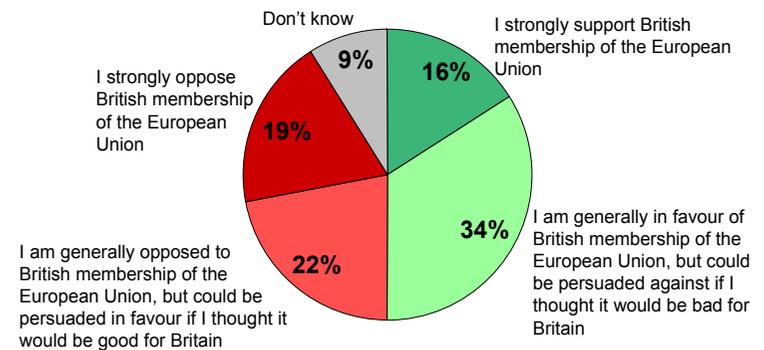
This long-term trend, however, offers only a simple yes-or-no choice. The new question, which seeks to measure the *strength* of feelings towards British membership as well as their direction, uses a four-option choice in order to distinguish those people who have ‘strong’ views from those who feel they could be persuaded to change their minds. As the chart shows, the majority of those expressing an opinion still broadly support Britain staying part of the European Union: 50 per cent are either strongly or generally in favour of membership, and 41 per cent are strongly or generally opposed, while 9 per cent don’t know (an almost identical division of opinion, in fact, to that found on the last two-way poll in June 2003).

However, there is only a minority on either side who have *strongly* held views – 16 per cent support and 19 per cent oppose. The remainder of the

public who give an opinion say they could be persuaded either way (56 per cent). True, by a margin of three to two these are currently supportive of membership, but it does show that the result of any future referendum on British membership of the EU is far from being a foregone conclusion. In fact, all things being equal, it looks as if Britain is nearer to preferring to leave the EU than it is to supporting the proposed EU constitution: to build a majority for the constitution almost all those who are ‘generally opposed’ to it would need to change their minds, while the number opposed to EU membership would be greater than those in favour of it if only a third of those ‘generally in favour’ of British membership were to switch sides.

British Membership of the European Union

Which of the following best describes your own view of British membership of the European Union?



Base: 1,063 GB adults, 15+, 22-27 July 2004

Source: MORI/The Foreign Policy Centre

MORI’s polls on joining the **single currency** in recent years have found a consistent majority against of around two-to-one, figures broadly in line with those found by ICM, NOP and Eurobarometer.

Q *If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should be part of a Single European Currency, how would you vote?*

	Mar 02	May 02	Jul 02	Sep 02	Nov 02	Jan 03	Mar 03	May 03	June 03	Sep 03	Feb 04	June 04
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
In favour	30	31	31	29	31	31	30	29	27	24	28	26
Against	55	53	55	56	55	57	56	58	59	61	60	61
Don't know	14	16	14	15	15	11	13	12	14	15	12	12

Source: MORI Financial Services/Citigroup

Again, by asking the four-way question we are able to test the strength of people's opinions about British participation in the single currency. As with views on membership of the Union, most of those who have a view say they might be persuaded to change their minds (50 per cent), equally split between those 'generally in favour' of joining the euro (26 per cent) and those 'generally opposed' (24 per cent).

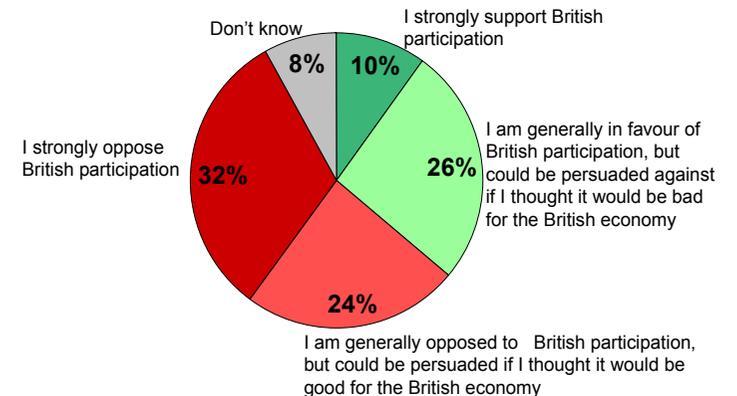
It is notable that in the case of the single currency, by contrast with that of EU membership, that the overall balance of views is less hostile when elicited by the four-way question than by the simpler for-against method: the present survey finds 36 per cent saying they are in favour of Britain participating in the single currency, either 'generally in favour' or 'strongly support' – when asked the simpler question the highest number in favour we have found since March 2002 is 31 per cent, and the most recent 26 per cent. (This may indicate that some of those who would not join the single currency 'now' nevertheless support it in principle when the time is ripe. It may also indicate that some people with 'soft' views in favour of the principle prefer to be cautious, and would not vote in favour without being more certain of its ramifications even though their general instinct is a positive one.)

However, while it seems that British public opinion on the single currency is both more fluid and less absolutely hostile than would appear from the evidence of the simple two-option polls, it is also the case that two in five

people currently seem immovable (42 per cent), with 32 per cent strongly against and 10 per cent strongly for. This level of solid opposition is rather greater than what we find in either views on membership of the EU (19 per cent strongly against) or adoption of the constitution (27 per cent strongly against).

British Participation in the Single Currency

Which of the following best describes your own view of British participation in the single currency?



Base: 1,063 GB adults, 15+, 22-27 July 2004

Source: MORI/The Foreign Policy Centre

One of the aims of this research is to see how views differ on three 'principle' questions facing the British public - support for the constitution, support for the single currency, and support for membership of the European Union.

First, let us look at those who say they have made up their minds about the constitution, roughly a third of the public. As can be seen by the following table, those who strongly support the constitution do not seem to necessarily link this with strong support for the single currency (just 58 per cent say they strongly support the euro as well as the constitution). A third of them are wavering on the euro and 7 per cent are strongly against it. However, there is a much stronger correlation between strongly supporting the constitution and supporting British membership of the EU. The vast majority (89 per cent) strongly support membership, less than one in ten (8 per cent) are wavering and, perhaps surprisingly, 3 per cent say they are

strongly against it. (It may be that these are people who feel the new constitution will be a restraint on the EU rather than an asset in its future development.)

		Adoption of the European constitution	
		Strongly support	Strongly oppose
		%	%
Participation in the single currency	Strongly support	58	4
	Wavering	33	21
	Strongly oppose	7	74
	Don't know	2	1
Membership of the EU	Strongly support	89	2
	Wavering	8	33
	Strongly oppose	3	62
	Don't know	0	3

Source: MORI/Foreign Policy Centre

Among those who are strongly against the constitution, three-quarters have also made their minds up against the euro, with only 4 per cent in favour and one in five wavering. Somewhat fewer, but still 62 per cent, are strongly against British membership of the EU. This finding is one with profound implications: the majority of those most committed against the constitution are not opposed to it on some matter of detail, thinking that there is some alternative arrangement which would make the EU run better, nor is their problem with the idea of a constitution for the EU as such. They are opposed to the very principle of British membership of the EU as well as to adopting this constitution, and the two views are presumably closely linked. It implies that it is pointless to refuse to take this group at their word and believe that they can be won over to the merits of the constitution, because the whole point of introducing the constitution is to achieve an aim to which they are implacably opposed. It suggests that there are solid principles behind their opposition to the constitution and every likelihood that they will, therefore, turn out to vote it down, forcing the government to look elsewhere for votes with which they can be countered.

Of much more direct interest to the outcome of a referendum are those who are wavering on the constitution, since their eventual voting behaviour is still in doubt. As they feel prepared to change their minds, it is they who in theory are most likely to be swung if they find that their views on the single

currency or membership of the EU conflict with their views on the constitution. It is no surprise that the vast majority of constitution waverers are also wavering both on whether Britain should remain a member of the EU (82 per cent) and on British participation in the single currency (72 per cent). When we consider this in more detail we find that two in five (39 per cent) constitution waverers are *generally* in favour of British participation of the single currency and over half (52 per cent) are *generally* in favour of British membership of the European Union. However, constitution waverers are twice as likely to be *strongly* opposed to as strongly in favour of the euro (17 per cent to 8 per cent). In contrast, they are almost five times as likely to be *strongly* in favour as strongly opposed to membership of the EU (14 per cent to 3 per cent); very few waverers are committed opponents of the Union.

Per cent of constitution waverers who:

Strongly support membership of EU	14	Strongly support participation in single currency	8
Generally in favour, but could be persuaded to oppose membership of EU	52	Generally in favour, but could be persuaded to oppose participation in single currency	39
Generally opposed, but could be persuaded to support membership of EU	30	Generally opposed, but could be persuaded to support participation in single currency	33
Strongly oppose support membership of EU	3	Strongly oppose participation in single currency	17
Wavering	82	Wavering	72
Don't know	1	Don't know	3

Source: MORI/Foreign Policy Centre

Crucially, this means that there is a qualitative difference between the majority of strong opposers of the constitution and those who are 'generally opposed' but might change their minds – they differ not just in strength of views on a single scale but in the whole foundation of those views: two-thirds of committed opponents are anti-EU in principle, while the same is true of only a handful of waverers. The latter must not be treated as if they

are simply a more moderate version of the hard-line Eurosceptics, but recognised as a different species of voter altogether.

It is plain that there would be little to be gained by either side in trying to equate the referendum on the constitution with a decision on the single currency – the waverers are too evenly split on the issue for any great advantage to be gained by suggesting that acceptance or rejection of the one must lead inexorably to the other. Since those waverers who feel strongly about the euro are twice as likely to oppose it as support it, what marginal gain there might be would probably be to the ‘no’ campaign; on the other hand it is probably harder to argue that approving the constitution must imply embracing the single currency than to argue that failing to ratify the constitution would make Britain unwelcome as entrants to EMU. There is probably little profit to be had by either side in making an issue of euro membership during the constitution referendum.

There is a stronger argument that turning the campaign into a *de facto* membership issue would be theoretically worthwhile, given that two thirds of constitution waverers are in favour of British membership, including 14 per cent strongly so and only 3 per cent strongly opposed. (Indeed 35 per cent of those currently *strongly* opposed to the constitution are either wavering or strongly in favour of Britain remaining a member of the EU, and in some cases the threat of losing EU membership might weaken the resolve of some of these apparently inexorable opponents of the constitution).

However, there is no guarantee that the public would link a ‘no’ vote in the constitution referendum to British withdrawal from EU membership, even if this were to be overtly stated in the campaign. An ICM poll for example, conducted in April 2004, suggests that currently this is not the case. In that survey, half the public (51 per cent) felt that a ‘no’ vote *would not mean* that Britain would have to pull out of the EU, even if Tony Blair said this would happen; two in five (39 per cent) felt a ‘no’ vote would have this implication. The ability to link the issues in order to make a campaign appeal on other grounds may depend strongly on the credibility of the speaker making the argument.

5. Changing minds: salience and susceptibility to influence

We know that many of the public feel prepared in theory to change their minds about whether Britain should adopt the European constitution, but we also know that getting people to change their minds can often depend on two crucial and related factors – how important the issue is to them and how much they know about it. The success of a ‘yes’ campaign may very well depend on making Europe more salient to people so that those turning out to vote in the referendum are not just those who are already concerned about Europe and generally critical about Britain’s relations with the rest of the Europe.

Existing research shows that the British public does not know much, or don’t think they know much, about the European Union. MORI also found in the *Audit of Political Engagement* survey that just one in four (24 per cent) of people claimed to know a fair amount or a great deal about the European Union – this is much lower than claimed knowledge about the Westminster Parliament (33 per cent) or local councils (38 per cent).³

The findings of successive Eurobarometer surveys paint a similar picture. Almost three-quarters of the public assess their knowledge of ‘the European Union, its policies, its institutions and bodies’ at 5 or less on a 10-point scale. More objective measurements of knowledge point in the same direction. Only 41 per cent of the British public have even heard of the EU Council of Ministers; 55 per cent say positively that they have not. More trivially, 60 per cent of the British public say it is true that ‘On the European flag, there is one star for each member country’. (It isn’t – but only 7 per cent of Britons venture to say so.)

³ MORI survey for the Electoral Commission and The Hansard Society, conducted in December 2003 and published in March 2004 as *An Audit of Political Engagement*. The report can be downloaded from the Electoral Commission’s website, www.electoralcommission.gov.uk.

In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising many feel they do not know enough to reach a firm conclusion on support for, or opposition to, the constitution.

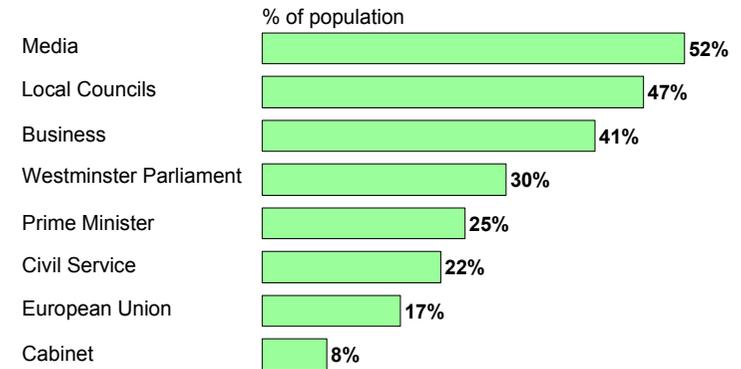
There is perhaps a tendency to presume that the British public is uniquely ignorant of and uninterested in the EU. In fact, Britain does not perform strikingly worse in the knowledge stakes than the other, supposedly Euro-aware, member states. Indeed, in the Eurobarometer ‘quiz’ question about the European flag, fewer Britons got the answer wrong than citizens of any other country in the established 15 – the average rate of wrong answers was 81 per cent! Britons scored better because they were simply more likely to admit they didn’t know the answer rather than giving the wrong one. On policy issues too perhaps the British, being less committed to the European ideal in principle than most of their neighbours on the continent, are more cautious in making their minds up on matters of detail.

Nevertheless, the British public’s acceptance that it has a low degree of knowledge of Europe’s political institutions has several implications. First, it may lead to an underestimation of the EU’s real importance, thereby reducing the issue’s salience (and feeding a vicious circle of further reluctance to find out more about it). This also implies a low level of engagement with European political institutions, and low turnout at European elections, and perhaps also at the referendums.

This feeling that, in the normal routine, Europe is not an issue to be worried about seems to reflect a perception that, at the moment at least, the EU is not important. Also in the *Audit of Political Engagement* survey at the end of last year, MORI found that the European Union is seen as having less impact on people’s everyday lives than either national or local political institutions, and less than the media and business, as illustrated in the following chart.

Impact on People’s Lives

From this list, which two or three of the following do you believe have most impact on people’s everyday lives? You can select up to three options



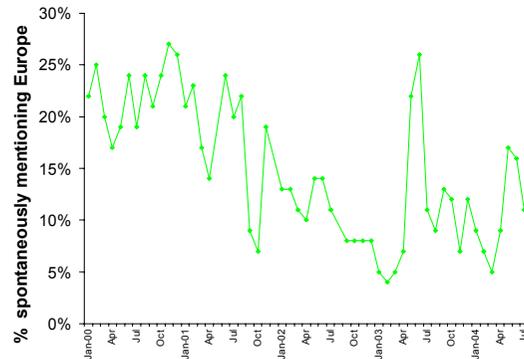
Base: 1,064 UK adults, 18+
11-17 December 2003

Source: MORI/The Electoral Commission/Hansard Society

Europe as a political issue is one whose salience is primarily media- and event-driven. As such, it contrasts with issues such as the National Health Service which, although it can be temporarily crowded out of the public’s attention by the urgency of other crises remains top-of-the-mind or nearly-top-of-the-mind for a high proportion of the public. The perceived importance of the European issue is far more variable, as the graph of responses to the ‘most important issues facing Britain’ question from MORI’s monthly Political Monitor shows. Since 2000 the salience of Europe as an issue has varied somewhat depending on different events and media coverage, but has never been seen as one of the top three issues facing the country, even in the run up to or during the recent elections. Indeed, in the past couple of years Europe has become less important, relative to other issues people mention.

Europe as an Important Issue

**What would you say is the most important issues facing Britain?
What do you see as the other important issues facing Britain?**



Source: MORI

Nevertheless, mentions of Europe rise when there is a significant degree of media coverage, whether directly prompted by events in the EU or as an outcome of domestic politics, as in the run-up to both the general election of 2001 and the European Parliament elections of 2004. But even at these times it has been a minority concern.

The low priority given to the EU cannot be simply dismissed as ‘Little Englander’ insularity; on the contrary the public recognises the importance to Britain of ‘Europe’ (rather than ‘the European Union’), as the following table trending data for three decades shows.

Q. Which of these - Europe, the Commonwealth or America - is the most important to Britain?

	1969	1984	1986	1989	1991	1993	1996	2002	2003
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Europe	21	39	39	50	52	57	45	50	42
Commonwealth	34	25	26	21	22	18	22	19	16
America	34	26	29	19	19	15	22	29	34
Don't know	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	7	10	11	2	8

Source: MORI (1969 data from Gallup poll)

Although not explicitly measured in ‘important issues’ surveys, other indications suggest that its periodic rises in salience occur predominantly among opponents of the EU rather than its supporters – the events that stimulate interest in the European issue tend to be negative stories and the political campaigns Eurosceptic rather than Europhile. The latter is unsurprising given the strength of Euro-scepticism among the public – an anti-EU campaign is seen as a possible vote-winner while a pro-EU campaign is a probable vote loser. But it perhaps emphasises how entirely the political argument over the EU in recent years has been subservient to domestic politics, to the extent that even in the European elections themselves it was only UKIP who made Europe an element in their campaign to any significant extent. A European campaign in either direction on its own merits, apart from those of UKIP and, previously, the Referendum Party, would be almost a novelty, and possibly politically damaging – yet the holding of referendums on the Constitution and (eventually, perhaps) the single currency implies that such campaigns will be needed.

The direction and extent of media coverage on European issues also suggest a vacuum waiting to be filled. According to Eurobarometer, only 11 per cent of the public feel that the media portray the EU ‘too positively’ while 27 per cent say they portray it too negatively, and while only 13 per cent think the media talk about the EU too much, 42 per cent say they talk about it too little. If these answers can be taken at face value, a media campaign of positive information about the EU would not necessarily be a failure – but how can pro-Europeans make it happen?

The second implication of low public knowledge about the EU is that it therefore falls foul of a general principle of public opinion which over the years has been shown to hold in the political and non-political spheres alike: ‘familiarity breeds favourability, not contempt’. All other things being equal, the less the public feel they know about the EU the less favourable towards it we would expect them to be.

Third and perhaps most significant, though, the less the public feel they know about the EU, the more open-minded they are likely to be on European issues, since they will accept that their current impressions may be based on inadequate understanding; but at the same time they may be more susceptible to superficial influences than would be the case if they

held solidly-formed opinions backed by information in which they felt confidence. This may mean that it is an issue on which the tabloid press is able to be particularly influential, and probably implies that ‘scare story’ campaigning (in either direction) will tend to have more impact than positive documentation of the benefits of signing or not signing the constitution – the natural tendency of the public when conscious of their own ignorance will probably be to ‘play safe’. As such, we should consider which sources of information the public are more or less likely to trust when it comes to making their decision on the constitution.

6. Trust and effectiveness

However open the public’s mind may be, the ability to influence the electorate is liable to depend on how far they trust those who are trying to do so. Two groups, in particular, are certain to be actively campaigning on one side or other in a referendum, politicians and the press. These are also the two groups that, persistently, the public tells MORI that they distrust. In the face of this, how effective is the campaigning really likely to be?

A. Political Leadership

It is unlikely that the EU or European Commission will be able to put their own case effectively, given existing distrust of European institutions among the British public. In the latest Eurobarometer survey, only 19 per cent of Britons say that they trust the EU, while 55 per cent tend not to trust it. This is a far lower level of trust than in any of the other 14 established EU member states (the next worst is in Sweden where 29 per cent tend to trust the EU). But these levels of distrust are put in the shade by the British public’s distrust for its domestic politicians: trust in the British government is at rock bottom levels (19 per cent tend to trust it, 69 per cent tend not to trust it), and for political parties worse still (10 per cent and 78 per cent respectively). (*Eurobarometer 61, Spring 2004*). Where, here, is evidence that any of those who might want to the put the case for the signing the constitution or joining the euro will even be given a hearing? Business may not do better, though the unions might (19 per cent trust ‘big companies’ and 36 per cent trade unions), even assuming they can speak with an entirely united voice. Trust in newspapers is as low (20 per cent tend to

trust the press), though the broadcast media do much better (54 per cent trust television and 59 per cent trust radio).

Q. I would like to ask you a question about much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.

	Oct-Nov 2001		Feb-Mar 2004		‘Swing’
	Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	Tend to trust	Tend not to trust	
The army	82	11	67	20	-12.0
Charitable or voluntary organisations	63	24	65	22	+2.0
Radio	65	24	59	29	-5.5
The police	65	29	55	35	-8.0
Television	71	25	54	37	-14.5
The United Nations	59	24	45	33	-11.5
The religious institutions	38	47	37	45	+0.5
Justice/the British legal system	53	39	37	50	-13.5
Trade unions	41	44	34	42	-2.5
The British parliament	47	43	25	61	-20.0
The press	20	75	20	73	+1.0
Big companies	22	65	19	65	-1.5
The European Union	31	47	19	55	-10.0
The British government	43	49	19	69	-22.0
Political parties	16	76	10	78	-4.0

Source: Eurobarometer 56, 61 (European Commission)

Base: 1,312 United Kingdom adults, 22 October-19 November 2001; 1,343 United Kingdom adults, 22 February-17 March 2004.

It is worth noting, however, that trust in various institutions is subject to fluctuations. As the table shows, it has plummeted for many of them since Autumn 2001, but the figures from that earlier survey almost certainly reflect an increased trust in the authorities and familiar institutions following the September 11 attacks, just as the most recent figures probably portray a crumbling of trust caused by continuing developments in the Iraq War and its aftermath.

It is, therefore, theoretically possible that the political institutions could rebuild trust in the coming months and years; but trust is notoriously easier to lose than to gain, and swings towards distrust of 20 per cent against Parliament and 22 per cent against the government do not bode well.

Given that it is likely that the main political parties will have different views on whether Britain should adopt the constitution (Labour and the Liberal Democrats in favour; the Conservatives opposed), the impact of the politicians on the campaign will clearly be affected by the government's, and the opposition's, general standing.

Following the Iraq war, the ratings of the Government and the Prime Minister have been at the lowest points since 1997, and so belief that Mr Blair's credibility would help the 'yes' campaign must be severely limited. In MORI's latest monthly tracking of the Prime Minister's standing, we find that by a margin of two to one, the public are dissatisfied with his performance. In fact, in only one monthly poll since January 2002 has more of the public been satisfied with the way Tony Blair is doing his job than dissatisfied. The ratings of the government generally are worse.

- Q. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way ...**
...the Government is running the country?
...Mr Blair is doing his job as Prime Minister?
...Mr Howard is doing his job as leader of the Conservative Party?
...Mr Kennedy is doing his job as leader of the Liberal Democrats?

	Satisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Don't know %	Net %
Government	27	64	9	-37
Blair	30	63	7	-33
Howard	26	42	32	-16
Kennedy	44	26	30	+18

And in recent months, there has been a great deal of discussion about the loss of trust in the Prime Minister, and the consequences this may have for him being able to convince a sceptical public to trust him on key foreign

policy decisions. This could well be a real concern. In October 2000, the public were evenly divided about whether Blair was seen as trustworthy (46 per cent) or not trustworthy (49 per cent). By February 2004, the public view had become far from divided – 32 per cent thought of him as trustworthy and 60 per cent as not.

However, the picture is no better for the main Opposition party. Mr Howard's ratings may be somewhat better than his predecessor, Mr Iain Duncan Smith, but they are still unlikely to provide a confidence boost if the Tories were to be seen to spearhead any 'no' campaign. Currently, many more are dissatisfied (46 per cent) with Michael Howard's performance than satisfied (26 per cent), and he is not yet seen as a more capable candidate for leadership of the country than is Tony Blair. Early signs also show that Mr Howard does not seem to command public trust either – in February 2004, 38 per cent thought of him as trustworthy and 40 per cent as not. Furthermore, a veracity measure should not be seen as a direct measure of effectiveness of campaigning – by June 2003, many more felt that Iain Duncan Smith was trustworthy than not (48 per cent to 36 per cent), but few would have placed him at the head of any 'no' campaign.

Perhaps the 'yes' campaign would benefit from a referendum called after the next General Election, presumably in May 2005. If Labour were to be re-elected we would expect an increase in Mr Blair's personal ratings, and if the Iraq situation becomes less volatile, the government and the Prime Minister may benefit from an increase in public confidence, should the early signs we are detecting in public perceptions of improvements in the economy and public services continue. The 'yes' campaign may also do well to seek a broad coalition with other political parties, especially the Liberal Democrats, whose leader Charles Kennedy is the only mainstream party leader to have positive approval ratings since his election, and who may be well placed to rally those who have lost faith in the government over the Iraq war.

B. The Media

The role of the press is likely to be crucial in the referendum campaign, in terms of explaining (or misrepresenting) the implications of the vote, of motivating people to vote in the first place, and of course in trying to persuade people to vote one way or another. At this stage, it seems likely

that much of the press would campaign for a ‘no’ vote, making the task ahead even more difficult.

Yet its influence should not be overstated. The public consistently tell us that journalists are among the least trusted professionals. Indeed, MORI’s latest (2004) survey shows that while one in five people trust journalists to tell the truth, the vast majority say they do not trust them (72 per cent), giving a net trust score of -52 per cent. In fact, this is lower than either politicians generally (-49 per cent net) or Government Ministers (-47 per cent). Of course, this does not mean that journalists and newspapers are not influential in changing people’s opinion – we know from much more detailed work that they can have a huge impact setting the public agenda and raising issues of concern. But the medium, as well as the message, will be important when trying to sway people’s votes.

Of course, opinions on the constitution differ by newspaper readership. The differences are broadly in line with the editorial preferences of the same newspapers – that is, regular readers of Euro-sceptic titles such as the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* are more likely to oppose adopting the constitution, as well as more likely to oppose joining the euro and staying in the EU at all, than readers of papers such as the *Daily Mirror* and *Guardian*. But it would be too simplistic to assume that this proves that newspapers can direct the opinions of their readers – after all, Britain has one of the most competitive newspaper markets in the world, and the public can choose which paper they want to read from a wide range. It is just as plausible that readers choose to read a newspaper that they agree with as that they come to their papers with an open mind and are manipulated by the wiles of Trevor Kavanagh or Polly Toynbee.

The same opportunity of choice presumably applies to the weight of coverage as to its direction – those who find their newspaper writes too little, or too much, about Europe can switch to a different one, assuming they care either way. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the power of the press to influence their readers’ political agenda by the varying salience with which issues are viewed is a real one. The point is illustrated by examination of MORI’s surveys on the issues named by the public as the most important facing the country during the first half of 2004. Over this six-month period there was a substantial rise in the number mentioning Europe or the EU, not surprising as coverage escalated in the run-up to the

European elections; but more interestingly, there were very sharp differences in the answers given by readers of different newspapers.

Q *What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?*

Q *What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?*

Unprompted mentions of ‘Common Market, EU, Europe or Single European Currency’

	1st quarter	2nd quarter
	%	%
All	7	14
Regular readers of...		
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	9	26
<i>The Times</i>	8	19
<i>The Guardian</i>	14	18
<i>The Independent</i>	10	18
<i>Daily Express</i>	5	18
<i>Daily Mail</i>	7	17
<i>The Sun</i>	5	11
<i>The Mirror</i>	7	9
<i>Daily Record</i>	7	8
<i>Daily Star</i>	5	5
<i>Evening Standard</i>	1	14
<i>Metro</i>	2	17
None of these	6	13

In the first quarter of 2004, when only 7 per cent of the public mentioned Europe or the EU as an important issue, the most likely to do so were readers of *The Guardian*, 14 per cent of whom mentioned it as one of their concerns. In the second quarter, however, as the European elections approached, overall mentions of Europe doubled, but the increase was concentrated among regular readers of the Eurosceptic dailies – notably the *Daily Express*, whose readers were three-and-a-half times as likely to say in the second quarter that Europe was an important issue as they had been in the first. Even more startling, though, are readers of London’s evening

paper, the *Evening Standard*, whose mentions of Europe as an issue rose from 1 per cent to 14 per cent, and of the commuter freesheet, the *Metro*, from 2 per cent to 17 per cent.

The precise implications of these findings are by no means obvious, and can probably only be assessed in conjunction with a detailed content analysis of the coverage of European and other issues over the period in the named titles. But they leave little room for doubt that the press has the capacity to affect public opinion on Europe.

It is essential to remember, though, that the press is neither the only, nor the most influential, news medium. As already noted, the public broadly distrusts the press, but the majority trust television and radio; furthermore, where the reach of the various newspapers is sectional, that of the BBC is almost universal. If the newspapers were the public's only source of information, their ability to suppress stories might allow them to distort the debate as their readers experienced it; but the stories which fail to appear in their newspaper will nevertheless reach their television screens. Any effect of the press must be more subtle – one of offering advice (if their readers are prepared to take it, which in most cases they are probably not) and, more insidiously, in interpreting the significance of the stories which do appear, a function which the broadcasters must also fulfil.

Past experience suggests that television is likely to be the most influential channel for campaigning material. A MORI survey for the Electoral Commission during the 2001 election found television not only the source of information about the election which had the biggest reach, but also the most trusted – radio and daily newspapers were the only other sources preferred by more than a handful of voters. In particular leaflets through the door, despite the amount of effort political parties put into them, were not seen by many as giving accurate and impartial information.

Unlike the newspapers, the BBC and other broadcasters will not be permitted to take an overt editorial line in favour of or against the constitution, and are required by law to provide balanced and impartial coverage. But, of course, even if the intention and presentation of the coverage is impartial, it would be naïve to suppose it can have no effect on the opinions of viewers. The way in which the major broadcasters cover the campaign, and the stories which they choose to include in their bulletins,

will almost inevitably have an effect on the outcome of the vote, none the less so because they avoid taking sides.

C. *Other influences*

Unlike the 1975 referendum, the main party leaderships in the forthcoming constitution referendum will be pulling the wavering voters in opposite directions. This may also be the case among leading businessmen. Although this research has not asked Captains of Industry about their views on the constitution, if they follow a similar pattern to views on the single currency, we could well have mixed messages about the economic consequences of adopting the constitution. Back in 1998, almost 80 per cent of Britain's Captains of Industry said they supported the principle of Britain participating in a single European currency. By 2003, opinion among this group was evenly divided – 47 per cent in favour; 48 per cent against.

Another way to think about leadership is to consider the views of ordinary people in society, who are active in their local communities, and who may be counted on to mobilise the vote. MORI tracks the views of this section of society through a measure of socio-political activism, and terms the most active as '*Influencers*'. Although *Influencers* make-up a small proportion of the entire population (around 7 per cent), they are much more likely to turn out to vote in the referendum (76 per cent compared to 39 per cent of non-activists), and through their community activities, are a potential key channel for either campaign.

7. Who will turn out to vote?

The level of turnout in any forthcoming referendum is likely to be a crucial factor in the result – both in terms of the outcome itself, and the legitimacy attached to it. The credibility of a narrow 'yes' vote on a high turnout might well be different to a modest 'yes' victory on a low turnout.

The level of turnout in the European Parliament elections this year may provide us with a useful reference point when considering the turnout in a future constitution referendum. Despite holding the European Parliament elections on the same day as local elections in some parts of England (with

the four northernmost regions conducted by all-postal ballots), and the mayoral/assembly elections in London, reported turnout across the UK was just 38.2 per cent. While this is a marked improvement on the turnout in the June 1999 European Parliament elections (23 per cent turnout) it is much lower than in the last General Election (59 per cent) – itself the lowest for any General Election under universal suffrage. As things stand, we may well expect a low turnout at the referendum.

Of course, the dreadful turnout at the European Parliament elections does not necessarily mean there would be a low turnout in a referendum concerning the future of Europe. However, much of the evidence to date points to the public being less prepared to take part in European events, even where they express an opinion on what should be happening. Indeed, it is worthwhile to note that often on survey questions about behaviour such as whether people will vote or have voted, we often find an amount of ‘over-claim’ – more people say they have voted, or will vote, than is actually the case. However, over-claim tends to be more marked with regard to general and (especially) local elections than for European Parliament elections, presumably because respondents do not quite feel so guilty for not taking part in the European elections or are less reluctant to admit it.

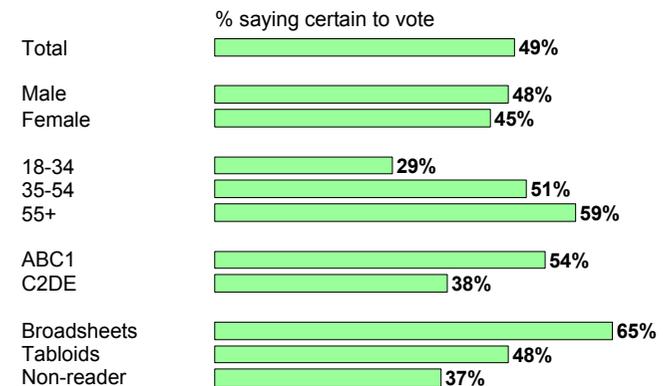
As a summary benchmark finding, our poll finds that 46 per cent say they are ‘certain to vote’ in a referendum. This is a little lower than the number who say they are absolutely certain to vote in an immediate General Election, which MORI’s regular tracking surveys consistently put at around or just over half the population – 53 per cent in this survey and almost invariably in the 50 per cent to 55 per cent range. The two figures are not directly comparable: the general election measure assesses certainty on a numeric 10-point scale where ‘10’ is defined as meaning ‘absolutely certain to vote’ and ‘1’ is ‘absolutely certain not to vote’, while for the referendum it was measured on a verbal five-point scale ranging from ‘certain to vote’ to ‘certain not to vote’. Nevertheless, a referendum turnout seven percentage points lower than a general election turnout would be perfectly plausible, and would fit the experience of 1975 when a 65 per cent turnout in the EEC referendum followed general election turnouts of 79 per cent and 73 per cent in the previous year. However, neither the 46 per cent nor the 53 per cent should in any sense be taken as predictions of turnout, and would almost certainly be considerable underestimates: the public’s

certainty of voting almost invariably increases substantially as an election approaches and moves from a hypothetical exercise to a specific future event on a known date, and the same is likely to apply to a referendum.

The survey question is useful, though, as a measure of relative certainty – who is *most* likely to vote? Turnout will not be uniform across the population. Men say they are marginally more likely to vote than women, though this is within the margin of error for the poll – and, interestingly, at General Elections women vote more often than men. Older people are more certain to vote than younger people (by a ratio of two to one when comparing over 55s and under 35s), and the middle classes (ABC1) much more likely than the working classes (C2DE). Two in three regular readers of broadsheet papers are certain they will vote, but only half of tabloid readers, and 37 per cent of those who read no daily regularly, say the same – a potentially crucial difference since the campaign as relayed through the broadsheets is likely to be very different from that in the tabloids, and those reading no papers, relying purely on the broadcasters, may see a different campaign again.

Certain to Vote

How likely are you to vote in a referendum on whether Britain should sign the new European constitution?



Base: 1,063 GB adults, 15+, 22-27 August 2004

Source: MORI/The Foreign Policy Centre

As the table shows, though, the clearest fact about likelihood of voting as of now is that opponents of the constitution are more determined to vote than its supporters. Unsurprisingly, also, waverers and don't knows are more likely to have doubts about whether they will vote at all.

Q. Which of the following best describes your own view of Britain adopting the new European constitution?

	All	'Certain' or 'very likely' to vote	'Certain' to vote
	%	%	%
Strongly in favour	8	12	12
Generally in favour but might change mind	23	21	19
Generally against but might change mind	23	25	22
Strongly against	27	33	39
In favour	31	33	31
Against	50	58	61
Net in favour	-19	-25	-30
'Waverers'	46	46	41
Don't know	19	10	8

The implication is that the lower the turnout, the more likely it is that the referendum will vote against adopting the constitution – those who are certain to vote are not only more likely than average to oppose the constitution at the moment, but more likely to consider themselves set in their opinions and therefore to be less easily persuaded in favour.

8. Mapping the battleground

The preceding discussion has laid out the context in which a British referendum on the European constitution will be fought. We now look at the voters themselves – what do we know about them that indicates how the referendum campaign can be most effectively fought, and how likely is a

win for the 'yes' campaign.

The referendum campaign must have two separate aspects: first, the campaign must persuade as many of the electorate as possible to one's own side of the argument, and second, ensure that as many of one's own supporters as possible vote while (so far as is legitimate) minimising turnout of one's opponents. Handling different groups of voters will require different mixes of these two approaches: some will be sure to vote, and the only question is which side they will support; others are already firmly committed one way or the other, but will they turn out on the day? For still others, both these questions remain in doubt.

Therefore if we view the electorate as the 'battleground' on which the 'yes' and 'no' parties will fight the campaign, we need to divide it up and identify the different campaigning tactics that will be effective with different parts of the voting public. We make this division on the basis both of their current attitude to the constitution – both which side they are on, and whether they say they hold this view strongly or might change their minds – and of how likely they say they are to vote in the referendum.

However, we have one extra piece of information, not so far discussed, which may also be relevant to predicting our respondents' behaviour in a referendum. In our survey we asked the sample to say how likely they were to vote if there was a general election. Their answer to this question is relevant to the constitutional referendum in two ways. First, because the ability of the leading political figures to influence opinion will obviously be crucial to the course of the campaign, the relationship between voters and the political parties is likely to play an important role. Those who are so disillusioned with politics and politicians that they are not sure they would bother to vote at a general election are likely to react very differently, when appealed to by those same politicians over the EU issue, to those adults who know which party they believe in and are absolutely sure they would take every opportunity to vote for it.

Second, it is important to understand that two very distinct attitudes to voting exist in Britain. Some people, still the majority, regard it as their duty to vote, one of the responsibilities of being a citizen. Others - a growing minority, especially among younger generations - feel that, while it is their *right* to vote, they are under no obligation to do so if they are

indifferent to the outcome. Indeed, they may perhaps feel that in such circumstances they *should not* vote, leaving the decision to be taken instead by those who have strong feelings one way or the other. These differing civic values will of course impact turnout at a European referendum. The former group will mostly turn out even if they are not strongly committed, and some of them might be easily swung from one side to the other. The latter are probably less likely to swing in the short-term, since those with lightly-held opinions will be less likely to vote at all, but the voting balance of the group as a whole might easily be altered by differential turnout – if perceptions of the salience of the issue change so that those on one side become more likely to feel it worth their while to vote, while those on the other side feel it less so, the number of votes recorded would change even if nobody actually switches from one side to the other. The two groups will be liable to respond to particular incidents or arguments in different ways, and any sophisticated campaign strategy for the referendum will need to consider them separately and perhaps cater to the two types of electors in different ways.

Therefore, as with our 2003 analysis, *Who Are The Euro-Waverers?*, the most useful way to proceed is to divide the electorate into five groups. The **die-hards** are those who are absolutely certain they will vote both in a referendum on the EU constitution and in a general election, and who do not think they can be persuaded to change their mind on the constitution. They make up roughly 17 per cent of the public (7.7 million adults) and, ominously for the government, they split almost four-to-one against the constitution. Since this is the group we can, in effect, count as almost certain votes for their respective camps, 6.1 million against and only 1.5 million in favour. If the ‘yes’ campaign is to win, it must make up for this deficit of 4.6 million votes by securing an even greater margin in favour among some other section of the electorate.

The diehards are matched almost exactly in number by the **civic waverers**, those who are certain to vote both in a general election and referendum, but don’t yet know for certain which way they will vote on the constitution. Most of these will feel it is their civic duty to vote, even if they don’t feel strongly about what they are voting on, and those who tend one way or the other at the moment say it is possible that they might change their minds. In total they amount to just under 18 per cent of the public (7.8 million adults), or 7 per cent currently in favour, 8 per cent currently against and 3 per cent

who don’t know.

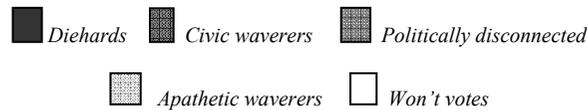
The **politically disconnected** are those who are certain that they would vote in a referendum on the euro but might not, or definitely would not, vote in a general election (11 per cent, or 4.9 million Britons). The key to this group’s involvement is whether their interest in the issue is maintained, in which case they probably will vote, or whether it falls away, in which case they might not. Each side in the referendum will be concerned to differentially shore up the resolve of their own supporters while doing nothing to encourage their opponents to turn out. While this group is equally split between those who have already made up their mind and those who have not, and therefore contains many who might potentially be swung by effective campaigning, the likely benefits will need to be offset against the risk of mobilising opponents who might otherwise not vote at all.

The same considerations apply to **those who ‘might vote’** in the euro referendum, assessing their likelihood of doing so as ‘very likely’ or ‘quite likely’ (31 per cent, 13.8 million adults); a considerably higher proportion of these than of the politically disconnected are either wavering or don’t know what their opinion on the constitution is. In many cases, no doubt, it is precisely because they have as yet no strong opinions that they see no absolute compulsion to vote.

Finally there are **those who will probably not vote** (the remaining 22 per cent, 9.8 million). These groups will be difficult to engage in any campaign, will involve disproportionate effort for the number of votes that could be gained, and so will probably only be marginal to the referendum result.

The battleground⁴

		Strongly support	Support but might change	Don't know	Oppose but might change	Strongly oppose	Total
A	Certain to vote in referendum and election	4 % 1.5m	7 % 3.2m	3 % 1.2m	8 % 3.4m	14 % 6.1m	35 % 15.5m
B	Certain to vote in referendum, might/won't vote in election	2 % 0.9m	1 % 0.6m	1 % 0.4m	2 % 1.1m	4 % 1.8m	11 % 4.9m
C	Might vote in referendum	2 % 0.8m	11 % 4.7m	6 % 2.5m	9 % 4.0m	4 % 1.8m	31 % 13.8m
D	Unlikely to vote in referendum	* % 0.1m	4 % 1.6m	10 % 4.3m	4 % 1.7m	5 % 2.1m	22 % 9.8m



A. The 'Diehards' and 'Civic waverers' – those certain to vote

When mapping the referendum battleground, the first place to start is by looking at which groups among the public will make up the core voters – these are the 'diehards' and the 'civic waverers', and constitute a third of the British public. They are distinguished not only by their certainty of voting in the Constitution referendum, but also at a General Election. The latter is important because it suggests that these groups see voting as a civic duty, and will be likely to vote in a referendum even if they do not see the European issue as particularly important. It may also mean that they are likely to have greater attachment than the rest of the public to the main political parties. They will form the bedrock of the 'no' and 'yes'

⁴ Figures in each cell are rounded to the nearest percentage point or 0.1m voters, and may not therefore sum exactly to the total in the right-hand column.'

campaigns, and those among this group who feel an attachment to a political party may well accept the guidance of their party leaders more than other groups will.

The 'Diehards' and 'Civic waverers'

		Strongly support	Support but might change mind	Don't know	Oppose but might change mind	Strongly oppose	Total
A	Certain to vote in referendum and election	4 % 1.5m	7 % 3.2m	3 % 1.2m	8 % 3.4m	14 % 6.1m	35 % 15.5m
B	Certain to vote in referendum, might/won't vote in election	2 % 0.9m	1 % 0.6m	1 % 0.4m	2 % 1.1m	4 % 1.8m	11 % 4.9m
C	Might vote in referendum	2 % 0.8m	11 % 4.7m	6 % 2.5m	9 % 4.0m	4 % 1.8m	31 % 13.8m
D	Unlikely to vote in referendum	* % 0.1m	4 % 1.6m	10 % 4.3m	4 % 1.7m	5 % 2.1m	22 % 9.8m



Indeed, the 'diehards' on both sides could well be key advocates of their respective positions, acting as 'opinion leaders', which is likely to be especially important in a forthcoming campaign given the generally low levels of trust and satisfaction with the party leaders at present. From MORI's *Influencers*⁵ index, we know that the 'diehard' group are more

⁵ The MORI *Influencers* typology identifies people who are most active in socio-political activities. Influencers are defined as those who say they have done five or more activities 'in the last two or three years' from a list of 14 ways of becoming involved in political and public life, ranging from having voted at the last general election through having written a letter to an editor to having taken an active part in a political campaign or stood for public office. The typology is useful because experience has suggested that it is an effective way of distinguishing the opinion formers in society, 'movers and shakers' who tend to be more

likely than average to have become involved in campaigning-type activities over the past couple of years. Compared with the public at large, ‘diehards’ are more likely to have:

- Presented their views to a local councillor or MP (26 per cent, as against 16 per cent among the general public)
- Urged someone outside their family to vote (28 per cent against 17 per cent)
- Been an officer of an organisation or club (13 per cent against 9 per cent)
- Taken an active part in a political campaign (7 per cent against 3 per cent)

As such, the task of the campaign as far as these groups are concerned should not be so much to persuade them to vote or to persuade them how to vote as to sign them up early on and use them as an integral part of any campaign on the ground. Unlike a general election, a referendum is not generally fought between parties and the two opposing campaigns will not, therefore, have a grass-roots machine for word-of-mouth campaigning already in place. It is the diehards on either side who can provide this.

(i) The ‘No’ diehards

Task for the ‘Yes’ Campaign: Leave them firmly alone. They are going to vote ‘no’ anyway.

The largest single sub group among the British public are the ‘no’ diehards. These are people who say they strongly oppose the constitution, and say they are certain to vote both in the constitution referendum and in a General Election. They make up 14 per cent of British adults, representing 6.1 million people. Therefore, if the ‘yes’ campaign is going to win the referendum it will need to turn out its own core supporters and convince enough waverers to vote ‘yes’ so as to outnumber the core ‘no’ vote, and then match each extra ‘no’ vote that turns out.

articulate in expressing their opinions, more vociferous in making them heard, and who generally in public opinion terms ‘punch above their weight’.

**Key characteristics – The ‘no’ diehards
14 per cent of British adults (6.1 million)**

Absolutely certain to vote in the referendum and in a general election, strongly opposed to the Constitution

	‘No’ diehards	GB public
Gender		
Male	57 %	49 %
Female	43 %	51 %
Age		
15-44	29 %	52 %
45+	71 %	48 %
Class		
ABC1 (‘Middle class’)	57 %	51 %
C2DE (‘Working class’)	42 %	49 %
Home: Tenure		
Own outright	47 %	29 %
Buying on a mortgage	39 %	44 %
Not owner-occupied	14 %	27 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted	18 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)		
Conservative	53 %	28 %
Labour	18 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	11 %	24 %
UKIP	13 %	6 %
Other	5 %	9 %
Satisfaction with the Government		
Satisfied	12 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	86 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job		
Satisfied	16 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	82 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job		
Satisfied	43 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	42 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job		
Satisfied	42 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	43 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)		
<i>The Sun</i>	17 %	16 %
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	6 %	9 %
<i>Daily Mail</i>	22 %	12 %
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	12 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	12 %	13 %
No daily paper	26 %	38 %

Demographically, this group is older and more male than the population as a whole and disproportionately drawn from the middle classes. The vast majority (71 per cent) are over 45 years old – a third are over 65. Reflecting their age, they are more likely to own their own home and are twice as likely to be retired as the public in general.

Politically, in many ways this group constitute the Government's core opponents on most issues, and it seems unlikely that either the Prime Minister or a Government-wide campaign could persuade them to change their minds. They are five times more likely to be dissatisfied than satisfied with the job Tony Blair is doing as Prime Minister, and just 12 per cent are satisfied with the way the government is running the country. They are evenly split on their rating of Michael Howard (+1 per cent net satisfied) when the general public are more likely to be dissatisfied with his performance (-14 per cent net), and are also unusually likely to be dissatisfied with the performance of Charles Kennedy. As we would expect, the majority say they would vote Conservative in a General Election – of those naming a party, 53 per cent are Tory voters. As many say they would vote for a party other than the main three at a General Election as say they would vote for Labour, mostly for UKIP (13 per cent).

Most in this group choose to read a Eurosceptic newspaper. Just over one in five regularly read the *Daily Mail* (almost twice the national average) and 12 per cent say they read the *Daily Telegraph* (again twice the national average). However, there are more *Sun* readers (17 per cent) in this group than *Telegraph* readers, and as many *Telegraph* readers as readers of all the other broadsheet⁶ quality papers put together. Overall, daily newspaper readership is an important source of information – just one in four say they read no daily newspaper regularly, compared with almost two in five nationally. Their Euroscepticism is not confined to being sure they will vote against the constitution. Almost all (92 per cent) oppose Britain joining the euro, and four in five are opposed to British membership of the EU altogether, more than half (56 per cent) strongly so.

⁶ 'Broadsheet' in this analysis is taken as meaning the 'quality press', and includes *The Scotsman* and (Glasgow) *Herald*, as well as the *Independent* and the 'compact' edition of *The Times* although they are no longer strictly speaking broadsheets.

Realistically, this can be seen as the absolute minimum vote for the 'no' campaign, and constitutes a major in-built disadvantage for the 'yes' campaign many months before the actual referendum vote. Both their greater than average respect for Michael Howard and their high readership of Eurosceptic newspapers also suggest that the 'no' campaign will find it easy to communicate with and mobilise them, as fellow-campaigners as well as voters.

(ii) The 'Yes' diehards

Task for the 'Yes' Campaign: Mobilise them as early as possible to spread the message. They should vote 'yes' anyway, but what is more important is how effective they are at persuading others to vote 'yes' as well.

Ranged against the 'no' diehards are a much smaller group of 'yes' diehards, making up only 4 per cent of the population – so small a group that there are not enough of them in the survey sample for us to form any more than tentative conclusions about who they are. It seems clear that they are predominantly middle-class rather than working class, and older than average, but on the other hand are highly unlikely to be Conservative voters. (Indeed, not a single one of the 'yes' diehard respondents in the survey declared a Conservative voting intention.) Since they are mostly found in demographic groups that are otherwise more Conservative than average, this is of some interest, but whether the reason is because natural Conservatives find it impossible to be strong supporters of the constitution or because strong supporters of the constitution find themselves unable to support the Conservatives as a result is a moot point.

Certainly, they overwhelmingly are supporters of the EU: 95 per cent *strongly* support Britain remaining in the EU, and 88 per cent support joining the euro (though only 65 per cent support it so strongly that they might not change their minds).

In any case, what is most important about this group is not who they are but how few there are. In the 2002 survey on attitudes to the single currency, the corresponding group who were strongly in favour of joining the euro and certain to vote was double the size of this group of diehard supporters

of the constitution. Consequently the task of campaigners in the referendum is that much bigger. At least it should be possible to put the message across to them, if they are willing to be mobilised: they are much more likely than average to read a broadsheet daily, especially *The Guardian*.

**Key characteristics – The ‘yes’ diehards
4 per cent of British adults (1.5 million)**

Absolutely certain to vote in the referendum and in a general election, strongly support the Constitution (Note: small base size – results indicative only)

	‘Yes’ diehards	GB public
Gender		
Male	45 %	49 %
Female	55 %	51 %
Age		
15-44	43 %	52 %
45+	57 %	48 %
Class		
ABC1 (‘Middle class’)	76 %	51 %
C2DE (‘Working class’)	24 %	49 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted	24 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)		
Conservative	0 %	28 %
Labour	54 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	34 %	24 %
Other	12 %	15 %
Satisfaction with the Government		
Satisfied	45 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	52 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job		
Satisfied	29 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	71 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job		
Satisfied	12 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	67 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job		
Satisfied	58 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	31 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)		
The Sun	17 %	16 %
Daily Mirror	14 %	9 %
Daily Mail	10 %	12 %
Daily Telegraph	6 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	35 %	13 %
No daily paper	29 %	38 %

(iii) The ‘Yes’ civic waverers

Task for the ‘Yes’ Campaign: Secure your rear by keeping them loyal. They should vote, but might be susceptible to arguments from the other side.

‘Civic waverers’ are those who are certain to vote both in a general election and referendum, but don’t yet know for certain which way they will vote on the constitution; those who currently lean in its favour, the ‘yes’ civic waverers, form 7 per cent of the public or 3.2 million adults. This is perhaps the first key group that the ‘yes’ campaign should focus on, and the aim would be to make sure they stay on-side and do not swing to the ‘no’ side, because they are very likely to vote in the referendum.

They are slightly older and considerably more middle class than the population as a whole and in many ways look like a traditional Tory type of group. It may be that some of them could be classed as pro-European Tories who are disillusioned with the current state or policies of the Conservative Party – they are less likely to vote Conservative (16 per cent vs. 28 per cent nationally) and are somewhat more critical of Michael Howard’s performance (51 per cent dissatisfied vs. 41 per cent dissatisfied nationally).

If the group does indeed consist largely of natural Tories uncomfortable with the Conservative Party, many such protesters might be expected to defect to the Liberal Democrats rather than the Labour Party, and indeed they do include a disproportionate number of Liberal Democrat voters (38 per cent as against 24 per cent nationally). An unusually high number also support minor parties apart from UKIP – 10 per cent would either vote Green or for one of the two nationalist parties. Consequently it may be important for this group that the ‘yes’ campaign is not seen as a straight fight between the two main political parties. In fact, of all the sub-groups considered in this report, the ‘yes civic waverers’ are most positive about Charles Kennedy’s performance (68 per cent satisfied vs. 44 per cent nationally), and Mr Kennedy may have a key role to play in holding the loyalty of many of this group.

**Key characteristics – The ‘yes’ civic waverers
7 per cent of British adults (3.2 million)**

Absolutely certain to vote in the referendum and in a general election, generally in favour of the Constitution, but may change their minds

	‘Yes’ waverers	GB public
Gender		
Male	47 %	49 %
Female	53 %	51 %
Age		
15-44	45 %	52 %
45+	55 %	48 %
Class		
ABC1 (‘Middle class’)	71 %	51 %
C2DE (‘Working class’)	29 %	49 %
Home: Tenure		
Own outright	34 %	29 %
Buying on a mortgage	52 %	44 %
Not owner-occupied	14 %	27 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted	14 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)		
Conservative	16 %	28 %
Labour	33 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	38 %	24 %
UKIP	2 %	6 %
Other	1 %	9 %
Satisfaction with the Government		
Satisfied	32 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	58 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job		
Satisfied	28 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	68 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job		
Satisfied	25 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	51 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job		
Satisfied	68 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	18 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)		
The Sun	5 %	16 %
Daily Mirror	4 %	9 %
Daily Mail	11 %	12 %
Daily Telegraph	8 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	28 %	13 %
No daily paper	33 %	38 %

On the other hand, the role that the Prime Minister plays in re-assuring this group needs to be considered carefully. Currently, Tony Blair’s net satisfaction rating among them is -40 per cent, among the country as a whole it is -32 per cent (giving a difference of minus eight percentage points). By contrast, the difference in net satisfaction with the way the government is running the country among this group (-26 per cent net satisfied) and the country as a whole (-36 per cent net satisfied) is plus 10 percentage points. As such, other members of the Government may be better placed than the Prime Minister to provide re-assurance.

The ‘yes civic waverers’ are clearly not ‘red-top’ tabloid readers – just 5 per cent read *The Sun*, compared with 16 per cent nationally, and readership of the *Daily Mirror* is about one-third of that across the country as a whole. In contrast, there are many more readers of the broadsheets apart from the *Telegraph* (28 per cent compared to 13 per cent, including 17 per cent who say they are regular readers of the *Guardian*), but they do also read the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*. During the campaign many, therefore, will likely be receiving the messages of the ‘no’ camp. A third, though, read no daily title regularly, and will presumably be more under the sway of the broadcasters and the regulated neutrality of their campaign coverage.

Because of their demographic profile, and type of newspaper readership, it seems far more likely that this group will be persuaded by intellectual arguments about the constitution rather than emotional sound-bites. A large proportion of them (52 per cent) are buying their homes on a mortgage, so any arguments about the impact of Britain adopting the constitution on interest rates would be of particular personal relevance, should any such implications emerge in the campaign (as might well be the case were the constitutional issue to become linked to the question of joining the euro in the future).

The ‘yes’ civic waverers are mostly pro-EU on other issues – 80 per cent favour joining the euro and 96 per cent support continued British membership of the EU – but on those issues, too, the majority are wavering. Twice as many say they might change their mind and turn against the euro as say they are strongly in favour of it, and even on the EU only 36 per cent are absolutely firm in their support for membership while 60 per cent are generally in favour but might change their minds. Only a minority, therefore, are likely to allow their support for the constitution to be buoyed

by the desirability of the euro or even the threat that a ‘no’ vote might imply Britain would have to leave the EU. For the rest, their positive feelings towards the EU may be more ambivalent. On the other hand, only a small minority (17 per cent) oppose joining the euro, let alone oppose the EU as a whole, offering little leverage for ‘no’ campaigners to attack their support for the constitution from a different angle.

(iv) The ‘No’ civic waverers

Task for the ‘Yes’ Campaign: Change their minds, or as many of their minds as possible. The referendum may be won or lost here – with a low turnout it certainly will be.

Probably the most important part of the ‘battleground’, where the referendum will be won or lost, are those voters who would currently vote ‘no’ but might change their minds. This is the pivotal group. At the moment, the ‘noes’ have the lead; but if all the wavering ‘noes’ were to vote ‘yes’ instead, the ayes would have it.

Of the wavering ‘noes’, the ‘no’ civic waverers are obviously a priority since they are the most certain to vote. It should be borne in mind that changing the mind of somebody who is certain to vote anyway is *twice* as effective as persuading a supporter who would not otherwise have voted to turn out – changing a voter’s mind not only adds a vote to your own column but subtracts one from the other side. With the 3.4 million ‘no’ civic waverers may, therefore, rest the whole fate of the referendum – and by extension of the EU constitution itself.

Who are these political Samsons? Like the other civic waverers and diehards, they are more likely to be middle class and older than the public as a whole. Interestingly, while many of them do get involved in different socio-political activities, such as contacting an elected representative or helping on fund raising activities, they are not likely to get actively involved in an overtly political campaign. Perhaps, the key to persuading this group is to demonstrate that a future ‘yes’ campaign represents a broad coalition of interests outside the narrowly political.

Labour voters are thinner on the ground among the ‘no’ civic waverers than among the rest of the public, and the group gives Tony Blair poor and the government very poor satisfaction ratings. Both Michael Howard and Charles Kennedy, on the other hand, get better than average satisfaction ratings and their parties have a healthier than normal share of the vote. Certainly Kennedy seems likely to be more effective than Blair, or any other figure identified with the government, in arguing the ‘yes’ case, though it may be that Howard is sufficiently respected here to counter him.

How possible it will be to swing the Tories in the group may depend on whether they are Conservative because they are Eurosceptic or Eurosceptic because they are Conservative, or neither: if their party choice follows from their agreement with the Tories’ line on Europe then their attitude to Howard and the party may be irrelevant to their behaviour in a referendum; on the other hand, if it is adherence to the Conservatives that has led to their Euroscepticism then they have already bought into accepting the advice of the party they trust, and may be immovable unless the Tories themselves move or do something to alienate the faith of their supporters. It is perhaps worth noting that only 3 per cent of this group would vote for UKIP, an indication perhaps of the plausible assumption that those who admit they are prepared to change their views on Europe are unlikely to hold them sufficiently as an act of faith that it would dictate their choice of political party.

The media will be an important communication channel for this group, though they mostly read newspapers that are likely to be against the constitution, in particular twice as many read *The Daily Telegraph* than the national average (there are slightly fewer *Sun* readers than average, but this is because this is a generally middle-class group). Few read either *The Mirror* or *The Guardian*, which are likely to be the most pro-European. This makes the task for the ‘yes’ campaign even more difficult and suggests that the way to this group is either through, or over the top, of the traditionally Tory/anti-European press.

**Key characteristics – The ‘no’ civic waverers
8 per cent of British adults (3.4 million)**

Absolutely certain to vote in the referendum and in a general election, generally opposed to the Constitution, but may change their minds

	‘No’ waverers	GB public
Gender		
Male	48 %	49 %
Female	52 %	51 %
Age		
15-44	39 %	52 %
45+	61 %	48 %
Class		
ABC1 (‘Middle class’)	60 %	51 %
C2DE (‘Working class’)	40 %	49 %
Home: Tenure		
Own outright	33 %	29 %
Buying on a mortgage	47 %	44 %
Not owner-occupied	20 %	27 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted	11 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)		
Conservative	39 %	28 %
Labour	25 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	30 %	24 %
Other	5 %	15 %
Satisfaction with the Government		
Satisfied	18 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	76 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job		
Satisfied	28 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	66 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job		
Satisfied	36 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	37 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job		
Satisfied	49 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	34 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)		
The Sun	12 %	16 %
Daily Mirror	3 %	9 %
Daily Mail	15 %	12 %
Daily Telegraph	12 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	9 %	13 %
No daily paper	35 %	38 %

(v) The civic waverers who ‘don’t know’

Task for the ‘Yes’ Campaign: Get them to decide in the right direction – probably at the last minute.

Finally among the public who say they are certain to vote in the referendum and in a General Election are the ‘don’t know’ civic waverers. Currently, these account for 3 per cent of the population, about 1.2 million people. The number of respondents in our survey is too small to look at their characteristics in greater depth, but it appears that many are women who do not seem to take much interest in politics, or do not do so except when they come to vote.

It should be understood that they are not ‘don’t knows’ simply because they are apathetic about the EU: 17 per cent of this group named Europe as one of the most important issues facing the country, a figure that is not only higher than the national average but higher than for the ‘no’ civic waverers, those who have a negative opinion of the constitution though are not yet utterly committed to it. Many of this group probably accept that the decision on the European Constitution is an important one and want to play their part in making it; but they simply have not decided yet which side of the argument they favour.

From this it might be tempting to assume that this group comprises civic waverers who have moved a little further along the pro-EU scale than the ‘noes’, having reached the point where the arguments seem evenly balanced, and that they ought therefore to be more easily and quickly persuaded than those who at the moment are clearly on the other side. But an examination of the numbers giving ‘don’t know’ answers on other unrelated issues suggests this is not the case. In fact they are probably mostly chronic don’t knows when it comes to views on politics and politicians – with high proportions not giving an opinion on any of the main party leaders or on the performance of the Government. In the European context, they are also the most likely not to have an opinion on Britain’s membership of the single currency or of the European Union, as well as about whether the country should adopt the constitution. Perhaps this is

because they don't want to commit at an early stage (waiting for more information about what the constitution will mean) or it may simply reflect a lack of interest in the way the issues are being discussed at present, and they intend to leave the decision until the last minute.

Though relatively small, this group cannot be ignored by the campaigners. If the race is tight towards the end they could be decisive, representing 1.2 million votes that are highly likely to be cast one way or the other. The way the votes go may well come down to whichever bandwagon seems to have the greatest momentum towards the finishing line of a campaign.

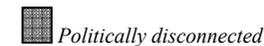
B. The 'Politically disconnected'

Task for the 'Yes' Campaign: Keep those on your side determined to vote; hope some of those on the other side will lose their determination (and take any opportunity to achieve that). Try to swing the waverers, but only if it can be done without bolstering your opponents' turnout

We now examine the 'politically disconnected'. They are defined by being certain to vote in a constitution referendum, but say they might not or will not vote in a General Election. Unlike the die-hards and the civic waverers, they are less likely to consider voting as a duty, and will presumably turn out in the constitution referendum because they are motivated by the issues. If the issue maintains its salience in the run-up and throughout the campaign, then they will vote; if it falls off some of them may not bother. Overall, they make up 11 per cent of the population, 4.9 million voters, a third of the size of die-hards and civic waverers.

The 'Politically disconnected'

		Strongly support	Support but might change mind	Don't know	Oppose but might change mind	Strongly oppose	Total
A	Certain to vote in referendum and election	4 % 1.5m	7 % 3.2m	3 % 1.2m	8 % 3.4m	14 % 6.1m	35 % 15.5m
B	Certain to vote in referendum, might/won't vote in election	2 % 0.9m	1 % 0.6m	1 % 0.4m	2 % 1.1m	4 % 1.8m	11 % 4.9m
C	Might vote in referendum	2 % 0.8m	11 % 4.7m	6 % 2.5m	9 % 4.0m	4 % 1.8m	31 % 13.8m
D	Unlikely to vote in referendum	* % 0.1m	4 % 1.6m	10 % 4.3m	4 % 1.7m	5 % 2.1m	22 % 9.8m



Only just over half the group (56 per cent) say they have definitely made up their minds on the constitution; the rest are wavering or don't know at all which side they favour. Nor are this group any more likely than average to feel that Europe is one of the most important issues facing the country. It is not immediately obvious, therefore, why they should be more certain that they will vote in a referendum on the European constitution than in a general election; it may point simply to excessive alienation from the political party contest rather than an unusually high interest in the outcome of the constitution referendum. (This finding is rather different from that in our survey of November 2002, reported in *Who are the Euro-Waverers?*, when we found that four-fifths of the equivalent group were committed to one side or the other on the euro. It means that, by comparison with that survey, the 'politically disconnected' are potentially much more persuadable, and the overall strategic significance of the group to the outcome of the referendum is correspondingly higher.)

**Key characteristics – The ‘politically disconnected’
11 per cent of British adults (4.9 million)**

Absolutely certain to vote in the referendum, but might not vote in a General Election

	‘Politically disconnected’	GB public
Gender		
Male	54 %	49 %
Female	46 %	51 %
Age		
15-44	53 %	52 %
45+	47 %	48 %
Class		
ABC1 (‘Middle class’)	52 %	51 %
C2DE (‘Working class’)	48 %	49 %
Home: Tenure		
Own outright	26 %	29 %
Buying on a mortgage	53 %	44 %
Not owner-occupied	21 %	27 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted	10 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)		
Conservative	24 %	28 %
Labour	30 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	27 %	24 %
UKIP	10 %	6 %
Other	9 %	9 %
Satisfaction with the Government		
Satisfied	30 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	64 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job		
Satisfied	31 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	62 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job		
Satisfied	21 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	57 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job		
Satisfied	44 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	31 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)		
The Sun	20 %	16 %
Daily Mirror	14 %	9 %
Daily Mail	12 %	12 %
Daily Telegraph	7 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	17 %	13 %
No daily paper	30 %	38 %

The key to the success of the campaign aimed at this group is for the ‘yes’ campaign to mobilise its own supporters and persuade those wavering to vote ‘yes’, presumably by highlighting the importance of the constitution issue, and maintaining this up to the referendum vote, while at the same time trying to minimise the salience for those 1.8 million ‘politically disconnected’ who are strongly opposed to the constitution. If, as seems quite possible, the main objection of the Eurosceptics in this group to the constitution rests on perceived threats rather than a preference for any solidly-defined alternative, it may be that so long as their fears can be allayed to some degree this will be enough to reduce their turnout even if it would not be quite sufficient to swing them fully in the constitution’s favour. For those who already support the constitution, on the other hand, emphasis of the benefits it is intended to bring and the risk of losing these were Britain not to ratify it would be a more powerful argument.

It is not possible to break down the demographic profile of this group between those supporting, opposing or wavering on the constitution because there are too few such respondents in our survey, so our analysis looks at the ‘politically disconnected’ as one group. Viewed as whole, the most striking feature is how ‘average’ they are, both in their demographics and in most of their political opinions. They are slightly more likely than the adult population as a whole to be male, and have a somewhat higher tendency to be intending to vote LibDem or UKIP rather than for the two largest parties, though ratings of the Prime Minister, of the Government and of Charles Kennedy are in line with the national average.

It seems likely, however, that this group will be reluctant to take a lead from Michael Howard – a high proportion (57 per cent) are dissatisfied with his performance so far, and so they could look at some of the minor parties for mobilisation. The ‘yes’ campaign would need to counter any arguments from these groups, presumably led by the UKIP, in order to convert undecided voters or to downplay the significance of the constitution on British life among the strongly opposed.

A more significant distinctive feature of the group, though, may be their higher than average readership of the tabloids in general and the popular tabloids in particular. Their most popular newspaper is *The Sun*, with one in five saying they read it regularly, but *The Daily Mirror* is not far behind on 14 per cent - indeed, 16 per cent if readership of its Scottish stablemate the

Daily Record is added in. Readership of both these titles is higher than the national average. The next most popular dailies are the Mail and Telegraph which have similar readership levels to those we find across the general public, as do the other broadsheets. Overall, they are more likely than average to read a daily paper. This is not a group that will lack press stimulation during the campaign, but their reliance on the red-top end of the market suggests they will tend to get – maybe because they prefer it – broad-brush coverage rather than the detailed analysis of the heavyweight qualities, which will need to be borne in mind in campaigning. Since their readership of the *Mirror* as well as the *Sun* is higher than average, there is at least a strong likelihood that both sides in the campaign will be able to reach them.

C. The ‘Might Votes’ and ‘Apathetic Waverers’

Task for the ‘Yes’ Campaign: Get as high a turnout from your side as possible; do nothing that will encourage your opponents to vote unless you can first change their minds.

The final group in our analysis are the ‘might votes’. These are made up of those who are not certain they would vote in a constitution referendum but think it is reasonably likely. This group is important because if the ‘yes’ campaign can persuade its supporters to turn out and vote, and the ‘no’ campaign fails to do this, it could go some way in tipping the balance back in their favour.

The ‘might votes’ constitute almost a third (31 per cent) of the British public, 13.8 million and if they do not vote on the day it is unlikely that the overall turnout will reach 50 per cent. One of the most distinctive features of this group is the high proportion who have not made up their minds or say they could be swayed either way. We characterise these as the ‘apathetic waverers’ – a quarter of the entire electorate who might or might not vote, and might do so in either direction. There are potentially a huge number of votes for the taking for the campaign that can both demonstrate the salience of the constitution (i.e. to encourage people to turn out to vote) and persuade them which way to vote.

The ‘Apathetic waverers’

		Strongly support	Support but might change mind	Don't know	Oppose but might change mind	Strongly oppose	Total
A	Certain to vote in referendum and election	4 % 1.5m	7 % 3.2m	3 % 1.2m	8 % 3.4m	14 % 6.1m	35 % 15.5m
B	Certain to vote in referendum, might/won't vote in election	2 % 0.9m	1 % 0.6m	1 % 0.4m	2 % 1.1m	4 % 1.8m	11 % 4.9m
C	Might vote in referendum	2 % 0.8m	11 % 4.7m	6 % 2.5m	9 % 4.0m	4 % 1.8m	31 % 13.8m
D	Unlikely to vote in referendum	* % 0.1m	4 % 1.6m	10 % 4.3m	4 % 1.7m	5 % 2.1m	22 % 9.8m

 Apathetic waverers

In fact, examination of the apathetic waverers’ characteristics show it is unrealistic to treat them as a single group: those wavering but currently in favour are sharply distinguished in some respects from those currently against the constitution; the don't knows resemble those who are currently in favour in many ways, but in one or two crucial respects they are entirely distinctive.

Nevertheless, there are a number of general observations that apply across the board. Most obviously, the apathetic waverers of all persuasions tend to be younger than the population as a whole and, as this would imply, a little less likely than average to vote Conservative. Both these factors would explain their lower certainty of voting in a referendum – turnout among the young is lower, their interest in political issues and commitment to political participation tends to be lower, and lower support for the major party which has tended in recent years to give the highest priority in its campaigning to the European issue would naturally imply that fewer of this group have had

their views reinforced and hardened by the vocal support of the politicians in whom they feel most confidence. Both pros and antis (but not don't knows) are disproportionately likely to be paying off a mortgage, a function of their age range but significant in that their economic concerns will centre round fear of high interest rates rather than, say, pensions.

Here, though, the similarities end. The **apathetic 'yes' waverers**, 4.7 million of them, are more working-class than middle-class, and although they are considerably more satisfied than the rest of the public with both the performance of Tony Blair and his government, as many of them say they would vote Liberal Democrat as Labour. Both Charles Kennedy and to a lesser extent Michael Howard are also well regarded; they seem to be a group that is simply less discontented in general with the political scene than the population as a whole. Their high regard for Blair and Kennedy might make them reasonably receptive to the campaign, which on the 'yes' side will be aimed primarily at getting them to turn out. On the other hand, they give Europe a surprisingly low priority as an important issue – just 4 per cent of them named it as important; it may therefore be a significant challenge to persuade them that the European constitution is important enough for them to go to the trouble of getting to the polling station. Perhaps this would be a group with whom the availability of alternative means of voting would be particularly effective; it is notable that they are more likely than the population as a whole, and more likely than the other apathetic waverers, to have used SMS text-messaging on mobile phones (64 per cent) have done so, and to have used interactive services on digital TV (29 per cent of apathetic 'yes' waverers, but only 15 per cent of other apathetic waverers and 17 per cent of the adult public have done so.) More than half of them don't read a daily paper regularly at all, but those that do tend quite disproportionately towards the broadsheets, with *Sun* and *Daily Mail* readership lower than average.

The four million **apathetic 'no' waverers** are more likely to support Labour or the minor parties rather than the LibDems, though paradoxically they give much lower ratings to Tony Blair and his government and slightly higher to Charles Kennedy than do the apathetic 'yes' waverers. They are a little bit less youth-dominated and are evenly spread across the social classes, and they also include slightly more women than men. Three times as likely as the apathetic 'yes' waverers to name Europe as one of the most important issues facing the country, their potential to turn out is too obvious

to ignore, but it is less obvious how much their respect for the Liberal Democrat leader or even the Prime Minister might enable their views to be swung in favour of the constitution before they do so. While they are evenly split on satisfaction with Michael Howard's performance, the Conservative leader's efforts will doubtless be reinforced by the press in the case of the higher than average numbers that read the *Sun* and *Mail*, though the (also higher than average) 16 per cent who prefer the *Daily Mirror* will presumably be pulled the other way. This group is more likely than average to read some newspaper regularly, but in most cases it is a tabloid; *Telegraph* readership is remarkably low (2 per cent) given that this is a Euro-sceptic group. Clearly they will require a very different approach from the apathetic 'yes' waverers.

There are also two-and-a-half million **apathetic 'don't know' waverers**, though this group is a little small to draw too firm conclusions about their nature from the survey data. Demographically similar to the apathetic 'yes' waverers except in being rather more likely to own their homes outright rather than on a mortgage, they are also almost as likely not to read a regular daily newspaper. Those who are likely to read a daily regularly tend even more sharply to the tabloid end of the market than the apathetic 'no' waverers, just 5 per cent reading a quality broadsheet. Like the apathetic 'no' waverers, too, they are as likely as the national average to view Europe as an important issue, but they show considerably greater resistance to the political establishment – a quarter would vote for a minor party, and their satisfaction with the government, with Michael Howard and with Charles Kennedy are all much lower than for the other apathetic waverers. Tony Blair personally, however, scores unusually well with this group (42 per cent satisfied with his performance, ten points ahead of his government's rating and 16 points better than Michael Howard's) – he may be the key to the double task of winning them over and ensuring they vote.

**Key characteristics – The ‘apathetic’ waverers
26 per cent of British adults (11.2 million)**

Might vote in referendum and...	Support constitution but may change mind	Oppose constitution but may change mind	Don't know	GB public
Gender				
Male	47 %	55 %	44 %	49 %
Female	53 %	43 %	56 %	51 %
Age				
15-44	60 %	55 %	59 %	52 %
45+	40 %	45 %	41 %	48 %
Class				
ABC1 ('Middle class')	42 %	51 %	42 %	51 %
C2DE ('Working class')	58 %	49 %	58 %	49 %
Home: Tenure				
Own outright	21 %	23 %	32 %	29 %
Buying on a mortgage	56 %	54 %	44 %	44 %
Not owner-occupied	23 %	23 %	24 %	27 %
Naming ‘Europe’ as an important issue facing Britain today, unprompted				
	4 %	12 %	14 %	11 %
Voting intentions (of those naming a party)				
Conservative	23 %	24 %	25 %	28 %
Labour	37 %	41 %	31 %	34 %
Liberal Democrat	35 %	18 %	18 %	24 %
UKIP	0 %	9 %	10 %	6 %
Other	5 %	8 %	16 %	9 %
Satisfaction with the Government				
Satisfied	44 %	36 %	32 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	49 %	60 %	54 %	66 %
Satisfaction with the way Tony Blair is doing his job				
Satisfied	41 %	33 %	42 %	30 %
Dissatisfied	54 %	57 %	51 %	62 %
Satisfaction with the way Michael Howard is doing his job				
Satisfied	34 %	32 %	26 %	27 %
Dissatisfied	30 %	35 %	34 %	41 %
Satisfaction with the way Charles Kennedy is doing his job				
Satisfied	58 %	61 %	41 %	44 %
Dissatisfied	14 %	14 %	19 %	26 %
Regular newspaper readership (Dailies)				
<i>The Sun</i>	10 %	18 %	16 %	16 %
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	9 %	16 %	11 %	9 %
<i>Daily Mail</i>	9 %	16 %	13 %	12 %
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	6 %	2 %	0 %	6 %
Any other broadsheet daily	18 %	13 %	5 %	13 %
No daily paper	52 %	31 %	49 %	38 %

Making the Case for Europe

By Mark Leonard and Richard Gowan

Tony Blair's decision to call a referendum on the constitution was a tactical manoeuvre, designed to undercut the Conservatives prior to June's European elections. It worked: while the UKIP may have temporarily galvanised diehard Euro-sceptics, the EU has hardly been an advantageous issue for the Tories – indeed, it has done them harm. As MORI has shown, Europe is scarcely a priority for the electorate, and it is likely to be overshadowed by domestic issues until next year's general election. The more the Conservatives have talked about Europe as a major concern for voters, the more they have seemed out-of-touch with voter concerns on health, education and crime.

Yet tactical decisions can have significant strategic consequences. In 1975, Harold Wilson used the referendum on the European Community to outflank the Labour left, but that year's "yes" has shaped British debates for nearly thirty years. It is still used as proof that Britons will vote for Europe in the last resort – if the political leaders they respect the most advise them to do it. The relevance of this precedent will now be tested.

The forthcoming referendum has the potential to recast Britain's relations with Europe, but not because either pro or anti-Europeans currently enjoy great momentum. Public opinion is drifting on Europe, giving both sides reason for optimism. As MORI's work shows, both a "yes" to the constitution and a "no" to continued membership of the EU are realistically conceivable. The referendum comes at a time of immense uncertainty.

But, as MORI shows, the public are unlikely to blindly follow their party loyalty as they did in 1975. Rather, attitudes towards the constitution often reveal the dissatisfaction of voters with particular parties. One of the biggest dangers for pro-Europeans is that the debate could turn into a referendum on Tony Blair – and presents the voters with a mid-term opportunity to give him a "bloody nose".

The constitution's diehard supporters (Labour and Liberal voters) and opponents (Conservatives and UKIP supporters) *do* follow party lines, but the biggest group of voters, the "waverers" are much less predictable. Four types of waverers stand out in MORI's analysis, each reflecting the political divisions of Labour's second term:

- The "yes civic waverers" (3.2 million voters; 7 per cent of the electorate) are "natural Tories uncomfortable with the Conservative Party" – **one nation Tories**. They are middle-class broadsheet readers, particularly influenced by the *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *Guardian*. Unimpressed with both Tony Blair and Michael Howard, they are strong (if perhaps temporary) admirers of Charles Kennedy.
- The "no civic waverers" (3.4 million; 8 per cent) include many **Tory loyalists**, but their commitment to a strong anti-European line is uncertain. On average they are slightly older than the one nation Tories, and their reading is more right-wing: the *Mail*, *Telegraph* and *Sun* predominate. Profoundly unhappy with both Tony Blair and his government, they are more positive towards Michael Howard. Yet this group also includes a surprisingly large number of **Euro-sceptic Liberals**, and Charles Kennedy is again held in high esteem.
- The "yes apathetic waverers" (4.7 million; 11 per cent) include remaining **Labour loyalists** with a positive view of the prime minister. But only a minority are newspaper readers, and their main source of information is the broadcast media. This largely working-class group is one of the least interested in Europe, and their faith in the prime minister will not make them turn out on referendum day.
- By contrast, the "no apathetic waverers" (4 million; 9 per cent) are primarily **Labour dissenters**: although a majority continue to support the party, they are dissatisfied with the prime minister's performance and potentially open to the charms of Michael Howard. Tabloid readers, this group may be particularly susceptible to the red top's influence.

These groups add up to a picture of public indecision and confused loyalties that points to a broader phenomenon: a lack of effective leadership on Europe in both the "no" and "yes" camps. The fact that large numbers of

present and former Tories remain waverers on the constitution indicates that, whatever the headline figures pointing in their direction, William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard have failed to make mainstream Euro-scepticism a cause to rally around. Conversely, the number of Liberals still inclined to oppose the constitution reflects Charles Kennedy's strategy of emphasising issues such as Iraq over the EU, even in June's European polls.

Yet the most striking failure to lead on Europe is that of the government. Since 1997, Tony Blair and his allies have sporadically promised to make the case for Europe. This has usually meant bursts of publicity and heroic promises to "settle Britain's relationship with Europe" followed by periods of inactivity. Following Gordon Brown's 2003 announcement that the five tests on the Euro had not been met, the prime minister recognised the need for a more sustained approach to the European question:

This is not a debate that will be won in a day or in a month, but it is a debate about our future and it requires careful and considered discussion. That is our collective purpose on this issue as a government, from now on to build a strong, pro-European consensus again in Britain and to do so, not as a rejection of Britain in favour of Europe, but on the contrary as the proper and modern expression of the true British national interest.

A year of inaction on these issues later, the prime minister returned to similar themes, if in more martial tones, on the conclusion of the constitution:

Let those of us who believe in Britain in Europe not because we believe in Europe alone but because, above all we believe in Britain, make ours. Let the issue be put. Let the battle be joined.

But as before, the sound of battle was a prelude to the Generals scrambling into the nearest ditch. After a few hectic days of interviews, the rest was silence.

But the problem does not lie with personalities alone. As MORI note, familiarity with the EU would almost certainly result in increased support

for it. But the resources put into raising public awareness of European affairs are derisory: Minister for Europe Denis MacShane has complained that the Foreign Office receives only £200,000 for this task. This is 4 per cent of the sum granted to John Prescott's department to promote regional assemblies.

The reasons for this coy approach to Europe are well-known and well-worn: differences within the government on questions such as the Euro and an excessive respect for the Euro-sceptic press both play their part. But two myths about British attitudes towards the EU also appear to underpin the government's approach. The first is that UK voters retain too much national pride to make commitments to Europe. The second is that a gradual recognition of Europe's success will change their views over time, and that a strategy of *laissez faire* is thus preferable to proselytising.

MORI's work throws both these assumptions into doubt. While it confirms the strength of British patriotism, it suggests that this patriotism is not necessarily an obstacle to trusting Europe. Note the wording of MORI's questions: many waverers inclined to vote against the constitution "could be persuaded in favour if [they] thought it would be good for Britain." A British case for Europe has the potential to reshape the debate.

At times Tony Blair has made this case. For example when he launched European defence co-operation at St Malo in 1998 he took on both the tabloids and Margaret Thatcher and argued that Britain would be safer with a strong European defence policy. A MORI poll conducted after the controversy showed that a majority of British voters were convinced. But too often making a "patriotic case for Europe" has simply translated into mild "euro-bashing". Gordon Brown's laudable determination to keep up the tempo of economic reform too easily translates into a false picture of a shining British economy held back by the basket-case of an unreformed Eurozone. Jack Straw's attempts to destroy the myth that the European constitution is a step to a super-state have led to a policy of defending British red-lines. This gives the impression of a government trying Canute-like to defend British sovereignty from voracious bureaucrats in Brussels.

The time has come for a less defensive posture on Europe and the European Union. Talk of economic reform must be bolstered by a discussion of the high levels of productivity in the Eurozone, the quality of public services in

Europe, and the merits of creating the largest single market in the world. On the constitution, we must focus less on our red-lines and more on the enormous potential for good from European integration. Ministers must go beyond platitudes about "a strong Britain in a strong Europe" and show how the measures in the constitution are the key to realising Tony Blair's vision of creating a Europe that is "a superpower, not a superstate".

The need to re-establish such politics is reinforced by the failure of the *laissez faire* argument. As MORI note, the presumption that handling the Euro on holiday would be enough to change the public mood on the single currency has proved hollow. Nor have other supposed motors of Europeanisation, such as sport, had much effect: Euro 2004 was a godsend for the UKIP, not the Liberal Democrats.

The need to make the case for Europe would thus be a political priority even without the referendum. But if the current uncertainty over Europe makes the vote a risky one, it also offers a significant opportunity for pro-Europeans. If the "natural Conservatives" and dissatisfied Labour voters now wavering on the constitution can be persuaded to back it, the tabloid belief that Britain is inherently Euro-sceptic will be swept aside. Moreover, the sclerotic hold of dogmatic anti-Europeans over the Conservative politics (and by extension national debate on the EU) will be broken. The debate can be transformed.

In the later 1990s, Tony Blair might have had the cross-party credibility to achieve this feat almost alone. MORI suggest that he no longer does. The prime minister must reach out to those figures of all parties capable of appealing to key voters. Charles Kennedy is one. But the most credible candidate to lead the pro-European cause must be Chris Patten, who combines a strong commitment to the EU with an appeal to the "one nation Tories" and "Tory loyalists" crucial to the referendum. Granting the spotlight to Patten may not come easily to the prime minister, but it would be greater act of leadership than attempting to win this fight alone.

Tony Blair, Chris Patten and other serious pro-Europeans have the opportunity to carry off another 1975 – but only if they adopt a decisively proactive strategy. It is time to lay this out, and begin to implement it.

Making the case for the constitution

If the constitutional referendum is going to be more than a tactical manoeuvre, therefore, a “big picture” strategy must be found to win it. Pro-Europeans have little other choice: the numbers are currently stacked against them so as to make a “quick win” impossible. MORI have identified the pro-European’s key tasks with regard to each element of the electorate, but it is also possible to identify key guidelines for a successful pro-constitution strategy leading up to the referendum:

1. **Don’t allow the referendum on the constitution to become a referendum on Tony Blair.** Tony Blair cannot win this campaign single-handed – and he is likely to lose it if it becomes a referendum about him. His negative opinion ratings among those waverers certain or likely to turn out means that he is unlikely to swing key voters – and some people will turn out specially to give him a “bloody nose”. It is only by working with the Liberals and pro-European Conservatives that the constitution can be won.
 - *The development of an effective co-ordinating committee (modelled on that of 1975) is essential.*
 - *The committee should be chaired by a non-Labour figure – preferably a Conservative. The best figure for this role must be Chris Patten.*
 - *The pro-European parties should make the EU an issue of common concern in the 2005 election campaign, to avoid tactical rifts influencing the later referendum. Charles Kennedy and Tony Blair must be seen to concur on this issue.*
2. **Aim to raise the turnout.** Currently, crucial supporters of the constitution - largely Labour voters - may fail to turn out. It is important that this group is targeted, and given its enduring respect for the prime minister, his intervention is still crucial here.
 - *The Labour manifesto for the 2005 election must contain a strong statement of why the government backs the constitution, co-ordinated with that of the Liberals.*

- *John Prescott should be given a “roving role” to build up a grass-roots constituency for Europe in Labour’s heartlands.*
 - *Particular attention should be given to using local party structures to spread the case for Europe in areas of high apathy.*
 - *All Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs should be given training to make the case for Europe and have targets set for activities in their constituencies. They should also be allotted time away from Westminster to achieve these targets.*
3. **Demonstrate a commitment to Britain – but not at the expense of support for Europe.** If wavering opponents of the constitution can be made to believe that it “is good for Britain”, they are liable to change their minds. Pro-Europeans must not seem more committed to the Union than the nation, but they should be wary of trashing the European Union or adopting defensive poses around “red-lines”.
 - *The government must be seen to be serious on making the EU work for the UK, especially in the current round of budgetary negotiations – but they must avoid the disastrous strategy of hiding behind red-lines which create a false sense of British isolation and contribute to the idea that the government is defending Britain from Europe.*
 - *The government should use its preparations for, and stewardship of, Britain’s presidency of the European Council in July-December 2005 to demonstrate its efficacy in Europe, and its desire to reform the EU.*
 - *Tie the constitution to broader considerations of Britain’s global profile and role, emphasising that this would be diminished by a “no” vote.*
 - *To strengthen this pro-British message, the campaign should co-opt figures from outside traditional pro-European circles. Support for the constitution from a politician such as Michael Portillo would have considerable impact.*
 4. **Tie winning on the constitution to a broader explanation of the case for Europe.** If the pro-European case is not made in a deep and sustained fashion on an ongoing basis, arguments for the constitution will have weak foundations. If familiarity breeds support, it must be a

priority. Those that feel ambivalent about the Constitution are also ambivalent about membership of the European Union – so the broader arguments for Europe will have to be won if the constitution is to be adopted

- *Tony Blair – and, perhaps more importantly, less typically pro-European politicians such as Gordon Brown – must no longer shy away from “making the case for Europe” in speeches and interviews.*
 - *The government should increase the Foreign Office budget for explaining the EU to at least £1 million a year – **but this must be seen as a good thing for British democracy and foreign policy in itself, and must be explicitly distinguished from the referendum, with its content decided by civil servants, not politicians.***
 - *The government should ensure that legislation regarding the referendum should be passed and enacted as rapidly as possible, and that it should designate state aid for both the “no” and “yes” camps, as in 1975.*
 - *Create a narrative demonstrating the linkages between the constitution and pre-existing advantages of EU membership. While avoiding scaremongering about the fall-out from a “no” vote, make it clear that we will be a much more effective member of the EU after a “yes”.*
5. ***Begin the campaign early, and control its course.*** To make its deeper case, the pro-Europeans must begin to campaign early, and those without party affiliations must do so *before* the 2005 elections. They must also ensure that the anti-European camp cannot generate the majority of press stories as the campaign develops.
- *Pro-Europeans must co-ordinate a “grid” of events and activities running from the start of 2005 to the referendum, taking account of certain and possible events (the British EU presidency, constitutional referendums in other countries, etc.) that may influence the campaign. A series of pro-European stories (and pre-prepared rebuttals) should be constructed to control this grid.*
 - *It is essential that clear and reader-friendly explanations of the constitution are devised and disseminated to ensure that*

misinformation and misconceptions do not dominate public debate.

6. ***Appeal to moderate and status quo voters.*** To divide wavering anti-constitution voters from diehard anti-Europeans, it must be demonstrated that a “no” vote will be far more radical than the waverers would want.
- *Highlight the activities and beliefs of UKIP members and other extreme anti-Europeans, underlining that their anti-European stance is tied to views that are more broadly considered unacceptable.*
 - *Demonstrate a readiness for open debate with moderate anti-Europeans to avoid accusations of arrogance and place the “no” diehards outside mainstream political debate.*
 - *Highlight the extent to which much of the constitution upholds the status quo.*
7. ***Shape the campaign to reflect the profile of key groups.*** Certain elements of the electorate require special attention. For example, MORI suggest that young people are liable both to be waverers on the constitution and to be more apathetic than their elders. It is necessary to mobilise this group by explaining the long-term significance of the referendum. Similarly, many “Labour loyalists” can only be reached through the broadcast media, which enjoys a high degree of trust more generally.
- *The pro-constitution lobby should develop publicity aimed specifically at the young (while attempting to avoid to worst sorts of patronising youth politics).*
 - *Pro-Europeans must emphasise television and radio advertising to reach potential supporters.*
 - *To make the campaign more salient to the public at large, the government should promote non-partisan references to the referendum campaign in all possible media, including entertainment programmes such as Eastenders and The Archers.*

Overall, however, the key guideline for pro-Europeans must be to approach the referendum campaign with optimism. While MORI's findings do raise many reasons for concern, they demonstrate that the constitution is not a lost cause in the UK. They suggest that Euro-scepticism is shallower than many feared after this year's European elections. And they point to ways in which the constitution can be successfully presented to an uncertain electorate. Pro-Europeans need to start preparing for the referendum campaign now, but they must do so in the belief that they can win. If they are victorious, Britain's relationship with the EU may enter a more certain and constructive phase.

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