

Spring 2014 Directive

Part 1: Politics and Politicians

This time next year the General Election will be upon us, and like the politicians who are already on the campaign trail, we are gearing up for it! However, rather than announcing a new policy or manifesto, we are issuing a Directive about politics and politicians.

This Directive is intended for everyone, regardless of political views or how politically active they are. Mass Observation has been collecting views about politics since it began in 1937 and replies to Directives like this, rather than opinion polls, can help to capture a fuller picture of what people really think about politics.

Please start each part of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number, sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember *not to identify yourself* or other people inadvertently within your reply. It is best to use initials instead of real names.

Firstly...start your Directive response by stating your current or past occupation.

Do you have/or have you had any association with politicians? Maybe you are an MP, local councillor, or have campaigned for a local candidate? Please let us know without disclosing anything that may identify you or others.

Moving on...consider the following people:

- Politicians
- Doctors
- Lawyers
- Scientists.

Do you associate any characteristics with each group? If you were in conversation with somebody and these kinds of people were referred to, what would be your attitude be?

You and the current Government

The Coalition Government has been in Parliament since 2010. How have the last four years been for you? Have you been affected by any changes in policy? Has your local area changed?

Please share any thoughts you may have about the current Government's policies.

How do you feel about:

- David Cameron
- Ed Miliband
- Nick Clegg
- William Hague
- George Osborne

Please feel free to share any other comments about any other politicians.

The main political parties

How do you feel about:

- The Conservative Party
- The Labour Party
- The Liberal Democrats
- The Scottish National Party
- The UK Independence Party

We are interested in your immediate reaction to these political parties, but would also like to know more about how your attitude towards them has developed over the years.

Voting

Turnout at the most recent General Election in 2010 was 65.1%. This is an increase on the previous Election, but still the third lowest figure since 1945. Is it important to vote? Could anything be done to increase the number of people voting?

Local Elections

How much interest do you and other people you know take in local elections? How important do you think that they are? Did you vote in your last local election? Do you consider your local council to be a effective/ineffective one? Why?

Looking ahead

Imagine that Labour win the General Election in 2015. How might life change for you personally? How would life be different for the whole country?

Part 2: Scottish Referendum 2014

The second part of this Directive continues with the theme of politics. It considers the upcoming referendum in September, which will decide whether or not Scotland will become an independent country. This is a issue that is keenly reported on in the news, but what does it mean to you? We are eager to collect the thoughts and opinions of Scottish and non-Scottish Mass Observers.

Please start part 2 of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

To start...how would you describe your nationality? How would you describe your relationship to Scotland?

The referendum in the media

Have you been following the news about the Scottish referendum? Where do you get your information from (e.g. newspapers, TV, radio, the internet, Twitter)? Do you feel that the subject is adequately and impartially reported on by the media?

Practicalities...

Matters of debate have included:

- Currency
- Control of the North Sea oil revenues
- Management of defence and military
- UK debt
- Pensions and the costs of living
- Membership of the European Union
- How national services (such as the BBC, NHS) would be administered

Please share any thoughts on these issues, or any others not in this list.

The political parties

What do you think about the Scottish National Party and Alex Salmond?

How impressed have you been by their argument in favour of their 'Yes campaign' for an independent Scotland?

What about the other main political parties (The Conservatives, Labour, Lib Dem etc.)? How convincing have you found their debates on the subject?

Has there been a political speech on the subject that has stuck in your mind? Please give details.

Imagine that Scotland gets independence... will Scotland be better or worse off? What about the rest of the UK? Will it be better or worse off?

How will Scottish independence affect you personally?

Special task

Please keep a diary (starting any date) for two weeks recording any mention (e.g. in conversation, on TV, in the newspaper) of Scotland or the referendum and your reactions to the subject.

Part 3: Eurovision

And now for something completely different....Eurovision! Love it, hate it or barely even notice it. What do you think about Europe's biggest song contest?

Please start part 3 of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

Please start your Directive response by saying if you (or if you have ever) watch Eurovision.

Do you enjoy the programme?

Please share any thoughts about the performances; the songs; the countries involved, the competition rules and the presentation of the programme itself.

According to the official Eurovision website 170 million viewers across 36 countries tuned in to watch the event in 2013. Why is the contest so popular?

The UK has not won Eurovision since 1997. Why do think that it has been such a long time since the UK has won?

Have you ever voted (via the phone, or online) to support a Eurovision act? Please give details about why you voted for this act.

If you watch Eurovision please let us know if there is anything you do to enrich the enjoyment of your viewing. e.g. preparing special food; developing personal voting system; hosting parties, wearing fancy dress.

Observational task – a diary for 10th May 2014

This year, the final of Eurovision will be broadcast from Copenhagen on **10th May 2014**. Please write about how you spend the evening (even if you don't watch the programme). We are interested to hear about what you did, what you ate, who you saw and any thoughts you may have had. Please record any mentions of Eurovision and your reactions to the contest. If you do watch it, we would be grateful if you could share your thoughts about the programme and what you thought of the acts including any voting you may have carried out.

Please post your response to: **Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP** Or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk
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