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As bad as each other

Recent controversies have brought the issue of sleaze back onto the media agenda.

The latest Populus poll for The Times found that a substantial majority (almost three-quarters of respondents) believe that the Labour Government is about as guilty of sleaze as the previous Conservative Government.

Tellingly, however, while 69% of those polled feel that Labour is tainted by financial sleaze now, only half (51%) believe the Conservatives today are similarly tainted.

The poll also found that most voters do not want to see an outright ban on MPs employing family members, paid for out of the public purse as long as they are suitably qualified and do the job they're paid for. 59% take this view, compared with 38% thinking that MPs should be barred from ever employing family members.

Links – <http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-voting-intention-030208.html>

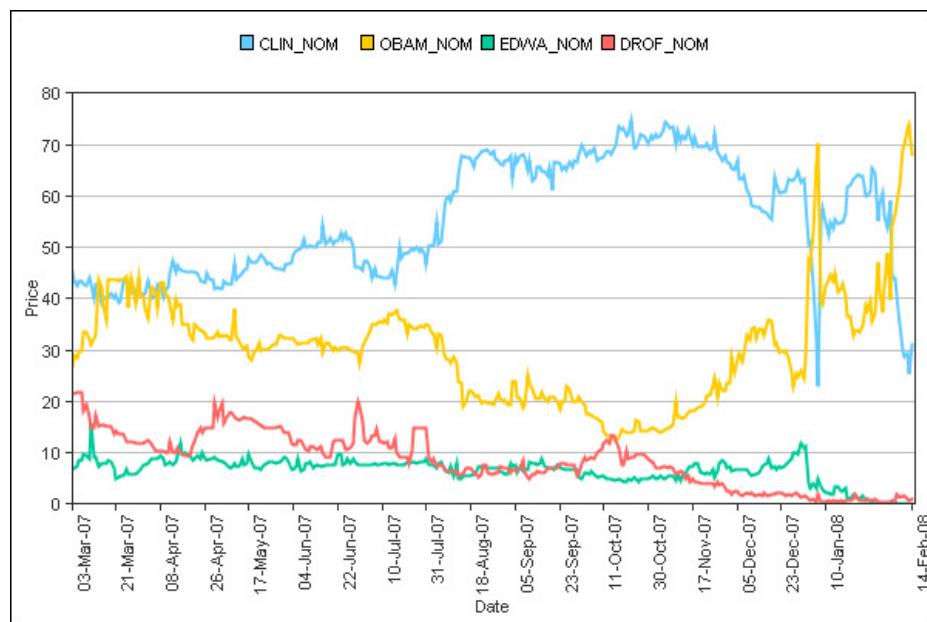
Chips are in for McCain

The abrupt withdrawal of Mitt Romney last week brought the race for the Republican Presidential nomination effectively to an end. Their candidate will be Senator John McCain, at 71 the oldest person ever to seek a first term as President (Ronald Reagan was older when re-elected in 1984).

In a further historical footnote, it is now certain that the next President of the United States – the 43rd person to hold the post – will be only the third candidate ever elected directly from the Senate (following Warren G. Harding in 1920 and John F. Kennedy in 1960).

Democrat deadlock

The unresolved question, of course, is whether John McCain faces Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton in November's election. The Iowa Electronic Markets, where people trade in the probability of candidates winning – and which has a good record of accuracy historically – now has Senator Obama as the strong favourite, as the graph below shows.



Obama has won seven consecutive primaries since Super Tuesday and has established a narrow lead in national polls among registered Democrats. Polls pitting both remaining Democrats against Mr McCain show him ahead of Mrs Clinton 47/45, but behind Mr Obama 44/48. Most significantly, Senator Obama has now established a lead in the number of Democratic Convention delegates committed to him, which is almost impossible now for Hillary Clinton to overhaul.

Her hopes now rest on performing better than expected in the Wisconsin primary on 19th February – already widely written-up as a certain Obama win, though the latest polls in the state put him only 4% ahead and she led there until ten days ago – and then winning the two significant states available on 4th March, Texas and Ohio.

There is nothing Mrs Clinton can now do to alter the fact that through the primary process Senator Obama will have won more states, more votes and more delegates. She will depend on the argument that she has won all the *big* states: New York, Florida, California and Texas and Ohio. Currently she also has a substantial lead in

the next major state to vote, Pennsylvania (22nd April). For the Democrats to win the White House, the Clinton campaign argues, they will need to take at least four of these six states, where it is Hillary, not Barack Obama who has succeeded in motivating people to vote during the primaries.

This argument may or may not work. But what is clear is that if Senator Obama beats Senator Clinton in either Texas or Ohio, her campaign would almost certainly fold. The latest poll in Ohio puts Senator Clinton far ahead (51/37). In Texas no polls have been done since the end of January, when Senator Clinton led by 10% (48/38).

Silver sex

Nearly half of people over 50 say their sex life is more fulfilling now that it was when they were in their 20s and 30s, according to a poll by Populus for Saga.

Sixty-five percent of the over-50s surveyed describe themselves as 'sexually active', of whom 46% say they have sex at least once a week, 26% once a fortnight and 15% on a monthly basis.

The research also found that only one in ten people over-50 uses contraception to avoid potential infection, a finding borne out by data from the Health Protection Agency showing rising incidence of sexually transmitted infections among over-45s who are not in stable relationships.

Links – <http://www.populus.co.uk/saga-sagapopulus-panel-191207.html>

Economic clouds

Only a third of people expect to be able to maintain their existing lifestyle comfortably in 2008 according to a recent Populus poll for ITV News. A further third say they will struggle to maintain their current lifestyle, while the remaining third say they will have to cut back on their spending.

Nearly all (94%) are confident that they will be able to keep up with their rent or their mortgage, while four out of five say they will be able to reduce their non-mortgage debt in 2008. This confidence chimes with recently released [repossession data](#) which showed that there were 10% fewer repossessions than predicted in 2007.

At the time of the survey, nearly half (44%) rated the economic record of Gordon Brown as Prime Minister and his Chancellor Alistair Darling as neither good nor bad. However, those who came down one way or the other were more likely to rate their record to date as poor (36%) than good (20%).

When it came to who people would most trust to handle the economy in 2008, a third said no party, a third said Labour and a quarter said the Conservatives. However, a month later (1 February to 3 February) in a Populus poll for The Times, when people were asked who they would trust to deal with economic problems in the coming months the Prime Minister and Chancellor did not fair so well. Gordon Brown

and Chancellor Alistair Darling were less trusted (33%) than David Cameron and Shadow Chancellor George Osborne (36%).

Regional breakdowns of these responses showed that David Cameron and Shadow Chancellor George Osborne were trusted by more people than Gordon Brown and Chancellor Alistair Darling in all parts of England and Wales. Only in Scotland – by a 3:1 margin – are Gordon Brown and his Chancellor (both, of course Scots representing Scottish constituencies) trusted more to manage the economy through difficult times than the Conservative Party's English duo.

Links – <http://www.populus.co.uk/itv-news-economic-confidence-poll-100108.html>

<http://www.cml.org.uk/cml/media/press/1492>

<http://www.populus.co.uk/the-times-voting-intention-030208.html>

Buying a holiday? Check the Greenprint

Holiday makers are increasingly concerned about the environmental and social impacts of the holidays they take. However, while consumers are demanding greener and more socially responsible holidays, this demand is going unmet by holiday companies. The findings come from the latest Populus Concerned Consumer Index – a monthly poll that identifies and surveys those who care enough about social, environmental and ethical issues to change their purchasing behaviour accordingly.

Of the Concerned Consumers interviewed, who make up just under half the adult population, 91% wanted information on local health and safety standards, nearly nine out of ten (88%) wanted information on the impact on the local economy and the use of local suppliers and employees and four out of every five (78%) want to see carbon labels introduced for holidays. But Concerned Consumers do not think holiday companies give them enough information “to make an informed choice about which holiday to choose.”

Only one in five Concerned Consumers (18%) believe that holiday companies are doing enough to tackle social and environmental issues. Worryingly for holiday companies, Concerned Consumers say they are prepared to act unilaterally to reduce the environmental and social impact of their holidays. Nearly three quarters (73%) intend to take more holidays in the UK, and nearly two thirds (65%) will choose destinations that can be reached by train or boat rather than flying. 79% plan to “make an effort” to find out more about the impact of their holidays while a similar number will choose ‘low-impact’ or ‘eco-friendly’ holidays; four in ten claim to favour working holidays where they can contribute to society or the environment.

Links – <http://www.populus.co.uk/concerned-consumer-index-280108.html>

Biodiversity

It is a word often featured in mainstream news reports and in political debate, but two-thirds of EU citizens have no idea what 'biodiversity' means, according to a new study published by the European Commission.

Despite this, when told that biodiversity is "*the term given to the variety of life on Earth (such as plants, animals, oceans) which forms the web of life of which we are an integral part*", two thirds (67%) claim to be making personal efforts to stop biodiversity loss with half of this group saying they would like to do even more. One in five (21%) people said they did nothing because they do not know what to do.

Seventy percent of people across the European Union see biodiversity loss predominantly as a global rather than a national issue. Overall, 35% of people felt that the impact of biodiversity loss will not be felt by them, but will be felt by their children. The same amount (35%) believe that it will affect them, but later in their lives and not now. More than half (54%) view pollution and man-made accidents (such as oil spills) as the most important threats to biodiversity. Sixty-one percent strongly believe that stopping the loss of biodiversity is 'a moral obligation'.

Links – http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_219_en.pdf

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**Populus, Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT.
T: +44 (0)20 7253 9900**