



Northern Ireland (NI) Tracker Poll Results: August 2019 POLL QUESTIONS RESULTS – SUB REPORT

16th August 2019 – Version 3 – Sub Report (NI Westminster Election Polling only)

This report covers results and commentary for part of the poll-survey project
– LucidTalk (LT) NI Opinion Panel ‘Tracker Poll’ August 2019 (2,302 responses)

Topics include: (a) a NI ‘Backstop’ as part of Brexit – What are your views?, and (b) ‘What do you think about the UK Government negotiations with the EU’?, and (c) NI Westminster Election – How would you vote?,

This is a sub-report covering the results from (c) only.

Partners for this project:

The SUNDAY TIMES (Ireland and UK), the NORTHERN SLANT blog-web side, and U105 radio



Apart from the project partners listed above, this report is embargoed until 11am 2nd September 2019

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NB All commentary, is provided ‘for guidance’ and for information purposes only. This is because commentary and analyses are not meant to be absolute determinations from the poll results, as poll and market research results can be subject to differing interpretations, commentary, and conclusions.

BACKGROUND GUIDANCE RE. RESULTS: It should be stated that NI Westminster elections are very ‘candidate dependent’ e.g. this poll was run before Claire Hanna declared her intention to run in S. Belfast (i.e. if the SDLP agree her as the candidate), and of course the result in N. Down is very dependent on whether Sylvia Hermon decides to run again or not. + There are usually several ‘seat pacts’ between e.g. the unionist parties at NI Westminster elections, and perhaps between other parties as well (some of these pacts have been assumed in the forecast e.g. Fermanagh and South Tyrone – see below), - and of course we know that these pacts can have a profound impact on the final results. As such, all NI Westminster election forecasts from polling should be analysed with these ‘health warnings’ in mind.

Constitutional Position:

Neutral = typically Alliance, Green, Independents voter group, and 'Others',

Unionists = Those who vote for Unionist parties + people from a Unionist heritage background,

Nationalist and/or Republican = Those who vote for SDLP/Sinn Fein + people from a Nationalist/Republican heritage background.

Key acronyms used in this report:

Where referenced in this document the following acronyms are used:

NI - Northern Ireland

LT – LucidTalk

UK – United Kingdom

BPC – British Polling Council

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LUCIDTALK MONTHLY TRACKER POLLS - Introduction and Background

LucidTalk run scheduled regular 'Tracker' polls of their established Northern Ireland online Opinion Panel - usually on a quarterly basis. The online LucidTalk Opinion Panel (now 12,762 members) consists of Northern Ireland (NI) residents (age 18+) and is balanced by gender, age-group, area of residence, and community background, in order to be demographically representative of Northern Ireland. This is the report from LT's August 2019 NI-Wide 'Tracker' poll – poll field research period: 9th to 12th August 2019.

The objective of these scheduled and regular 'Tracker' polls is to research opinion on key issues at key points in time + track changes in trends and opinions about key topics and issues over targeted periods of time.

For this 'Tracker' poll-project the LT 12,762 member online NI Opinion Panel was invited to participate, and 2,302 responses were received, and after data auditing to ensure:

- (a) 'one person-one vote' responses, and
 - (b) the collation of a robust, accurate, and balanced representative NI sample,
- 1,252 full responses were recorded and used for analysis in terms of the final results.

Methodology – and Press Publication notes:

Polling was carried out by Belfast based polling and market research company LucidTalk. The project was carried out online from 2pm 9th August 2019 to 10pm 12th August. The project targeted the established Northern Ireland (NI) LucidTalk online Opinion Panel (12,762 members) which is balanced by gender, age-group, area of residence, and community background, in order to be demographically representative of Northern Ireland. 2,302 full responses were received, and a data auditing process was carried out to ensure all completed poll-surveys were genuine 'one-person, one-vote' responses, and also to collate a robust and accurate balanced NI representative sample. This resulted in 1,252 responses being considered in terms of the final results - the results presented in this report.

Data was weighted to the profile of all NI adults aged 18+. Data was weighted by age, sex, socio-economic group, previous voting patterns (i.e. election turnout estimation), constituency, constitutional position, party support and religious affiliation.

All data results produced are accurate to a margin of error of +/-3.5%, at 95% confidence – NOTE the slightly higher error for the MRP modelling, as per below – i.e. when compared to report V2.

All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting. For further details regarding the data analysis and data weighting methodologies used for this project – please see Appendix 1.

LucidTalk – Professional Credentials

LucidTalk is a member of all recognised professional Polling and Market Research organisations, including the UK Market Research Society (UK-MRS), the British Polling Council (BPC), and ESOMAR (European Society of Market Research organisations). The BPC are the primary UK professional body ensuring professional Polling and Market Research standards. All polling, research, sampling, methodologies used, market research projects and results and reports production are, and have been, carried out to the professional standards laid down by the BPC and AIMRO (Association of Irish Market Research Organisations).

Note to Publishers: According to agreed British Polling Council and UK IPSO procedure - Parts in Red **MUST** be published - if not in full then in a format that conveys the same meaning. NB this can be in 'small-type' e.g. in a box at the bottom of the coverage etc. Parts in black type are desirable to be included, but not essential.

See Appendix 1 of this report for further details regarding LucidTalk's Polling and Data Weighting methodologies.

LucidTalk is a member of The British Polling Council and abides by its rules: <http://www.britishpollingcouncil.org>.

FULL DATA TABLES – NI Westminster Election Polling – August 2019 (weighted results – modelled using YouGov’s MRP modelling)

The MRP (Multilevel Regression and Post-stratification) model that was used for these projections is based on YouGov’s MRP model which was very accurate in predicting the 2017 UK general election, and the prediction of Theresa May losing her overall majority – see front page article in the TIMES published on 31st May 2017, 9 days before the 2017 general election:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/latest-general-election-poll-predicts-conservatives-will-lose-seats-02zfwl8lc..>

Indeed, because Northern Ireland is a smaller population area than the whole of the UK, the results from this Northern Ireland (NI) MRP poll can be considered to be even more accurate considering the relative sample sizes related to each territory i.e. GB vs NI.

This MRP analysed NI poll, was based on a sample of 2,302 responses for which there were on average 128 responses per constituency. In the UK typical MRP models e.g. the YouGov 2017 General Election MRP modelling, a sample of 20,000 was used, equating to 31 responses per constituency. The post-stratification analysis (MRP) used age, gender, community, residence area, and past NI Assembly vote (2017), past NI 2016 EU referendum vote, and past NI European Election (2019) vote.

In terms of the MRP modelling approach, then if more detail is required then please see articles on the YouGov website e.g.: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/05/31/how-yougov-model-2017-general-election-works>

Please see below for the full results and projections for each of the 18 NI Westminster seats – please also see summary notes below the table below, highlighting some of the key points that can be concluded from the results:

LucidTalk – MRP Model Poll: NI Westminster Election seat forecast: August 2019.

NB all percentage figures shown, for each political party, for each seat projection, represents the percentage probability of winning the seat, and are NOT % VOTE SHARE projections – apart from the NI political party vote share projections on the bottom line of the spreadsheet graphic below.

Constituency	DUP	UUP	Agreed Unionist	Hermon	TUV	SDLP	SF	PBP	Alliance	Green	Other	Winner	Incumbent	Change
Belfast - East	43%	6%				1%	2%		40%	5%	3%	DUP	DUP	No Change
Belfast - North			42%			6%	31%		15%	2%	4%	Agreed Unionist (DUP)	DUP	No Change
Belfast - South	21%	5%				15%	15%		35%	7%	2%	Alliance	DUP	Alliance Gain
Belfast - West			18%			6%	55%	7%	12%		2%	SF	SF	No Change
East Antrim	36%	17%				1%	8%		31%		7%	DUP	DUP	No Change
East Londonderry	38%	6%				2%	23%		19%		12%	DUP	DUP	No Change
Fermanagh and South Tyrone			35%			9%	38%		15%		3%	SF	SF	No Change
Foyle			22%			27%	35%	1%	12%		3%	SF	SF	No Change
Lagan Valley	42%	12%				3%	4%		34%		5%	DUP	DUP	No Change
Mid-Ulster	22%	3%				9%	47%		16%		3%	SF	SF	No Change
Newry-Armagh	18%	10%				15%	43%		10%		4%	SF	SF	No Change
North Antrim	37%	10%			8%	5%	12%		21%		7%	DUP	DUP	No Change
North Down	32%	5%		43%		1%	1%		11%	5%	2%	Hermon	Hermon	No Change
South Antrim	33%	13%				3%	16%		32%		3%	DUP	DUP	No Change
South Down	21%	5%				18%	38%		17%		1%	SF	SF	No Change
Strangford	42%	12%				3%	3%		33%		7%	DUP	DUP	No Change
Upper Bann	36%	13%				4%	26%		18%		3%	DUP	DUP	No Change
West Tyrone	24%	4%				7%	42%		18%		5%	SF	SF	No Change
VOTE SHARE ESTIMATE - NI TOTAL	25%	7%	7%	2%	1%	8%	26%	1%	20%	1%	3%			

NOTES – Commentary regarding NI Westminster Election Poll Projections:

- Overall support for the Alliance Party has increased substantially in almost all constituencies apart from South Down.
- The Alliance party wins a seat from the DUP in South Belfast, comes quite close in East Belfast, South Antrim, and East Antrim. It emerges as the principle opposition to the DUP in Strangford and Lagan Valley.
- Coordination amongst the centre-ground parties would put the DUP under considerable pressure in East Belfast, and South Antrim.
- East Belfast is on a knife-edge between the DUP and Alliance party, with the DUP having a slight edge at the moment. NB if the Green party withdrew in East Belfast then the Alliance party would take a slight lead, but then again if the UUP withdrew then that would give the 'edge' back to the DUP again.
- If Lady Sylvia Hermon decides to run again in North Down then she would be the favourite to win/hold the seat, with a relatively comfortable majority. In the modelling, even if Alliance did run in North Down, their vote declines (compared to the boost they seem to be getting in other constituencies) as a lot of 'normal' Alliance supporters will support Hermon in a Westminster election contest.
- All the other seats turn out to be 'holds' for all the sitting parties.
- Belfast North turns out to still be a Unionist 'hold' i.e. the DUP (NB this is currently Nigel Dodds seat) even though this is a key target seat for Nationalists/Republicans. This is assuming that Nigel Dodds would get a 'clear run' i.e. the UUP would withdraw, but even if the UUP ran, it's doubtful that Dodds would lose this seat.
- The UUP will have big decisions to make in an upcoming Westminster election, as if they decide to stand in seats like South and East Belfast, they could be the difference between the DUP holding those seats, and losing them. But then again if they withdraw in those seats, some will ask what's the point of the UUP existing as separate political party at all i.e. separate from the DUP!
- So in summary – DUP definitely down at least one seat ie Belfast South, and they are 'in danger' in Belfast East, and Antrim South, + one of their key target seats ie North Down seems to be a comfortable 'hold' for Sylvia Hermon i.e. if she runs. NB If Sylvia Hermon decides not to run, then North Down becomes an entirely different situation and 'ball game'! – though it looks as if she will be running, particularly if there is an election this year or early next year.

Summary:

- DUP forecast to lose 1 seat i.e. Belfast South, with 2 other seats now very marginal for the DUP i.e. East Belfast, and South Antrim.
- One of their key target seats (i.e. for the DUP) - North Down, seems to be out of reach, if the sitting MP Sylvia Hermon decides to run again.
- So best case scenario is DUP down one seat to 9 (from their current 10) i.e. losing South Belfast.
- Worst case scenario for the DUP is they could be down 3 seats to 7, if they also lose East Belfast and South Antrim, and they're not going to gain North Down if Hermon runs again (which seems likely).
- All other seats are 'holds' for the sitting parties.

Appendix 1 – Background on Project Methodology and Data Weighting

LUCIDTALK NORTHERN IRELAND TRACKER POLLS – Background, Project Methodology, and Data-Weighting

LucidTalk run scheduled regular 'Tracker' polls of their established Northern Ireland online Opinion Panel - usually on a quarterly basis. The LucidTalk Opinion Panel (now 12,762 members) consists of Northern Ireland residents (age 18+) and is balanced by gender, age-group, area of residence, and community background, in order to be demographically representative of Northern Ireland. The objective of these scheduled and regular 'Tracker' polls is to research opinion on key issues at key points in time + track changes in trends and opinions about key topics and issues over targeted periods of time.

In terms of this project, polling was carried out by Belfast based polling and market research company LucidTalk. The project was carried out online for a period of 4 days from 9th to 12th August 2019. For this 'Tracker' poll-project our 12,762-member NI Opinion Panel was targeted, and invited to participate, 2,302 responses were received, and after data auditing to ensure:

- (a) 'one person-one vote' responses, and
 - (b) the collation of a robust, accurate, and balanced representative NI sample,
- **1,252 full responses were recorded and used for analysis in terms of the final results.**

These 2,302 responses data-set was used and verified as the base data-set (unweighted). Then in order to produce a robust, accurate, balanced NI representative sample, this base data-set was weighted to reflect the demographic composition of Northern Ireland. The full data-tables comprising the complete unweighted and weighted results are presented in a complementary report in excel/csv format (see below).

Data Weighting: Data was weighted to the profile of all NI adults aged 18+. Data was weighted by age-group, gender, socio-economic group, previous voting patterns, constituency, constitutional position, party support and religious affiliation, occupational grade (using data from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency - NISRA), EU Referendum Vote and the 2017 Northern Ireland Assembly election results. This resulted in a robust and accurate balanced NI representative sample, reflecting the demographic composition of Northern Ireland, resulting in 1,252 responses being considered in terms of the final results - these are the results presented in this report. Data was weighted using a raking algorithm, in R, otherwise known as iterative proportional fitting or sample-balancing. Raking ratio estimation is a method for adjusting the sampling weights of the sample data based on known population characteristics.

As part of the data weighting process two weights are calculated. These are the normal weight and the trimmed weight – with the trimmed weight being the one that is used in the results tables shown in this report. The trimmed weight is preferable as it reduces the influence of outlying observations. The total amount trimmed is divided among the observations that were not trimmed, so that the total weight remains the same. The weights are trimmed at 4 and 0.1 meaning that no observation is allowed to exceed these limits of relative importance.

For the main poll weights were/are calculated from data such as the 2016, 2017, and 2019 Northern Ireland (NI) elections, NI census estimates, and electorate election figures for gender, age, religion, constituency etc. This data analysis was then combined with previous polling information and results from LucidTalk NI polls in the last 4 years for party and constitutional position.

LucidTalk is a member of the British Polling Council (BPC) and abides by its rules: britishpollingcouncil.org.

As per BPC regulations, full Data-Tables for each LucidTalk project, including weighted and unweighted data figures for each poll question, will be published on the LucidTalk website 48-72 hours after publication of the poll results in the public domain.

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