

Whitehouse Consultancy – Retrospective Legislation Survey

METHODOLOGY NOTE

ComRes interviewed 2,052 GB adults online between 25th and 27th April 2014. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 18+. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

All press releases or other publications must be checked with ComRes before use. ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.

To commission a voting intention poll or a public opinion survey please contact Katharine Peacock: katharine.peacock@comres.co.uk

To register for Pollwatch, a monthly newsletter update on the polls, please email: pollwatch@comres.co.uk

Retrospective Punishments Survey

ONLINE Fieldwork: 25th-27th April 2014

Absolutes/col percents

Table 1

Q.1 The following question is about changes in UK law which are backdated so people can be punished for breaking these laws before they came into effect, even if their actions were legal at the time they did them. Would you support or oppose people being punished retrospectively in each of the following scenarios?

Base: All respondents

	Gender			Age						Social Grade				Employment Sector	
	Total	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE	Public	Private
Unweighted base	2052	1003	1049	223	306	361	386	320	456	566	611	363	512	249	804
Weighted base	2052	1006	1046	244	346	346	366	305	447	549	569	447	488	273	876
<u>The Government wishes to reduce the amount that is paid out in unemployment benefit. It passes a law to reduce this benefit but applies this retrospectively over five years. Anyone who received the higher rate of benefit over the past five years must now pay back the difference.</u>															
Support	315 15%	172 17%	142 14%	38 16%	79 23%	50 14%	43 12%	38 13%	66 15%	124 23%	76 13%	61 14%	54 11%	41 15%	169 19%
Oppose	1439 70%	701 70%	738 71%	150 61%	191 55%	241 70%	276 75%	243 80%	339 76%	374 68%	408 72%	313 70%	344 71%	196 72%	559 64%
Don't know	298 15%	132 13%	166 16%	56 23%	76 22%	55 16%	47 13%	23 8%	41 9%	51 9%	85 15%	73 16%	89 18%	36 13%	149 17%
<u>Many people are using a legal tax planning scheme which allows them to pay a lower rate of income tax. The Government decides to abolish this scheme but does so retrospectively. Everyone who paid a lower rate of income tax using this arrangement over the last ten years must now pay back the difference.</u>															
Support	551 27%	325 32%	226 22%	27 11%	82 24%	79 23%	101 28%	97 32%	164 37%	156 29%	143 25%	123 27%	129 26%	80 29%	219 25%
Oppose	1123 55%	521 52%	602 58%	149 61%	173 50%	193 56%	204 56%	172 56%	233 52%	324 59%	324 57%	227 51%	248 51%	151 55%	468 53%
Don't know	379 18%	160 16%	218 21%	68 28%	91 26%	74 21%	61 17%	35 12%	49 11%	68 12%	102 18%	97 22%	111 23%	42 15%	190 22%
<u>HMRC (the Government's tax office) has a large backlog of tax cases. The Government passes a law to say that, rather than having to prove that people owe them money, HMRC can now demand payment upfront and take money directly from people's bank accounts. If people want to challenge the decision, it is up to them to take HMRC to court. This is applied retrospectively to all existing tax disputes from the past ten years.</u>															
Support	256 12%	152 15%	103 10%	22 9%	50 15%	47 13%	28 8%	30 10%	79 18%	77 14%	65 11%	53 12%	61 13%	33 12%	99 11%
Oppose	1447 70%	700 70%	747 71%	145 60%	210 61%	232 67%	298 81%	243 80%	318 71%	407 74%	403 71%	310 69%	326 67%	200 74%	606 69%
Don't know	349 17%	153 15%	196 19%	76 31%	85 25%	67 19%	40 11%	31 10%	50 11%	64 12%	101 18%	83 19%	101 21%	39 14%	171 20%

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	Gender			Age						Social Grade				Employment Sector	
	Total	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE	Public	Private
Weighted base	2052	1006	1046	244	346	346	366	305	447	549	569	447	488	273	876
<u>The Government reduces the speed limit on the motorway from 70mph to 60mph, but also decides to apply this change retrospectively over the last ten years. This means that anyone who drove above 60mph on the motorway during the last ten years can be fined or punished for doing so, even though the speed limit at the time was 70mph.</u>															
Support	117 6%	55 5%	62 6%	17 7%	35 10%	22 6%	19 5%	11 3%	13 3%	34 6%	21 4%	30 7%	31 6%	16 6%	64 7%
Oppose	1698 83%	841 84%	857 82%	177 73%	244 71%	268 77%	315 86%	281 92%	413 93%	477 87%	477 84%	368 82%	375 77%	227 83%	681 78%
Don't know	237 12%	110 11%	127 12%	50 21%	66 19%	56 16%	32 9%	13 4%	20 5%	37 7%	70 12%	49 11%	81 17%	30 11%	132 15%
<u>The Government realises that due to a problem in the wording of the Mental Health Act, some people who have been sectioned may have been detained illegally. The Government changes the law and backdates these so that anyone who was sectioned illegally under the old rules can no longer challenge the decision.</u>															
Support	257 13%	136 14%	121 12%	30 12%	54 16%	48 14%	39 11%	40 13%	46 10%	86 16%	62 11%	56 13%	53 11%	35 13%	130 15%
Oppose	1259 61%	645 64%	614 59%	121 50%	183 53%	196 57%	236 64%	211 69%	313 70%	354 64%	355 62%	258 58%	292 60%	172 63%	497 57%
Don't know	536 26%	224 22%	312 30%	93 38%	109 31%	101 29%	91 25%	54 18%	88 20%	109 20%	152 27%	132 30%	143 29%	66 24%	250 28%

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Base: All respondents

	Region												
	Total	Scotland	Wales	NET: England	North East	North West	Yorkshire & Humberside	West Midlands	East Midlands	Eastern	London	South East	South West
Unweighted base	2052	186	112	1754	88	243	175	192	156	176	215	310	199
Weighted base	2052	185	103	1765	82	226	185	185	144	205	267	287	185
<u>The Government wishes to reduce the amount that is paid out in unemployment benefit. It passes a law to reduce this benefit but applies this retrospectively over five years. Anyone who received the higher rate of benefit over the past five years must now pay back the difference.</u>													
Support	315 15%	26 14%	13 12%	276 16%	12 14%	28 12%	25 13%	39 21%	24 17%	21 10%	56 21%	43 15%	28 15%
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Don't know	298 15%	17 9%	7 7%	274 16%	14 17%	31 14%	40 21%	21 11%	17 12%	41 20%	50 19%	38 13%	23 12%
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Oppose	1123 55%	104 57%	56 54%	962 55%	38 47%	115 51%	92 50%	98 53%	92 64%	119 58%	144 54%	155 54%	110 59%
Don't know	379 18%	24 13%	13 13%	341 19%	17 21%	46 20%	46 25%	33 18%	21 15%	43 21%	54 20%	55 19%	26 14%
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Support	117 6%	6 3%	6 6%	105 6%	11 14%	8 4%	15 8%	9 5%	5 4%	8 4%	27 10%	11 4%	10 6%
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Don't know	536 26%	43 23%	25 24%	468 27%	16 20%	67 29%	55 30%	38 20%	35 25%	59 29%	81 30%	75 26%	42 23%