

FACING THE FUTURE

By Madsen Pirie and Robert M. Worcester

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1. Introduction

No-one predicted the events of the previous century with any accuracy. In 1900, as Britain faced the century ahead, few predicted the technological and scientific changes which shaped it. None predicted the world wars and the totalitarian ideologies which dominated it until close to its end. Some might have guessed vaguely at the sociological trends which coloured the century, but none was sufficiently farsighted to give a coherent guide to the progress of society, and the types of lives which people might be living.

We are told that people approached the century, in Britain at least, with self-confidence and optimism. Britain's empire spanned the globe, and any basic weaknesses in her economic position had yet to manifest themselves to popular view. Yet we are forced to take this view on the basis of informed speculation. There were no opinion polls to gauge the popular moods, only anecdotal accounts based on what people said and wrote. At the dawn of the new century we have the advantage of new techniques to assess popular mood and thinking. We can explore a little below the surface of what is said and written, to ascertain the national mood. Do the British look to a confident future, or is there a sense that perhaps the best contributions of our nation are behind us, and that the torch of progress and innovation has been seized by other hands?

On the deeper, but more difficult, question of national mood, only a little research has been done. It is difficult to gauge the national mood, if indeed there is one. For three decades we have been subjected to a series of scare stories, all of which have pointed to a relatively unpleasant future. Among the dystopias offered have been a *Silent Spring*, with bird and animal life destroyed by pesticides. The *Club of Rome Report (1972)* forecast depletion of metals and minerals which would bring an end to life as we knew it. *Global 2000* promised us a world depleted of scarce resources, as our generation greedily used up the patrimony of its successors. The various oil crises presented a possible world of insufficient fuel. Pressure groups anxious to recruit members and attract funds told us that the seas were becoming an open sewer, the air poisoned, and the land degraded by toxic waste. Environmentalists made up numbers of the species allegedly heading for extinction each hour, most of which were apparently insect species not already discovered. Most recently we have been treated to scares on genetically modified foods, scares which claim that the entire bio-system of the planet is at risk. This is despite the lack of any evidence that GM foods have yet caused so much as an upset stomach.

None of these scare stories has yet turned out to be justified; none so far has become reality. Indeed, to some extent they succeeded each other like a series

of environmental crazes. The failure of each doleful prophecy to materialize does not seem to have dulled enthusiasm or credulity for its successor, any more than the patent absurdity of each fashion craze diminishes the acceptance of the next one.

It would be remarkable, however, after this 30 year barrage of doom, if people retained their optimism, and faced the future with the same equanimity and optimism which their counterparts are alleged to have shown a century ago. Some of the questions asked in this survey have attempted to explore the degree to which confidence in technological progress might have been eroded by the constant drip of gloom-laden prognosis.

The previous surveys

The Adam Smith Institute has conducted three MORI surveys already, over the past two years. The aim has been to test the mood and aspirations of the British people at this significant milestone in their development. The three previous studies all concentrated on the attitudes of young people: this one looks at the whole adult population, even though the opinions of young people can be extracted from it and examined separately.

The first ASI/MORI study was *The Millennial Generation*, and took the first look at the 16-21 year-olds, the successors to Generation X. Famously, it found them self-confident and ambitious, with 48 percent aspiring to own and run their own businesses, and 43 percent who listed "being a millionaire by 35" among their career objectives.

The Next Leaders, the second in the series, found that our university students are generally tolerant, ready to enjoy themselves, but very serious about what they have undertaken. As many as 86 percent described a university education as "among the best investments a person can make." Large majorities thought that the universities could make a better job of running their own affairs than government and civil service currently make.

The third survey concerned attitudes to citizenship and politics. Entitled *The Big Turn-Off*, it revealed that young people are less interested in politics at all levels, less motivated by it, and less likely to become involved in it. Put simply, they do not regard it as an important part of their lives. They feel less loyalty than their elders or their predecessors to their locality, their nation, or to Europe. It leaves them cold. As for citizenship, they think it is not about doing things, nor about any kind of participation or activism, but about attitudes to people, such as treating others with respect.

All of these three surveys told the same story in different ways. The generation which will shape the first half of the current century is a self-confident one, much more relaxed than its predecessors about its ability to enjoy life's opportunities. It does not see itself as oppressed or held down, either by 'the system' or by entrenched class attitudes. Indeed, it specifically excludes social background as a major requirement for success, listing education and personal qualities in its stead.

It is a tolerant generation, accepting most things in its stride except intolerance itself. It has no time for racism or religious extremism, but is laid back about lifestyle and sexuality, and fairly tolerant of drug use. Most notably, it is not a generation which looks to *political* solutions to problems. Its members see a diminished role for government, and an enhanced area in which personal decisions will shape their lives. They reject activism and involvement, especially in any kind of institutional activity.

External factors

These surveys have looked at how the British, in particular the younger generation, see themselves in terms of their aspirations and attitudes. The new survey concentrates much more on how the whole adult population sees the external factors which will shape the future. Instead of looking at what people hope they personally might achieve, it looks instead at what they expect. It asks, over a range of important issues, what they think might reasonably happen over the course of the century just unfolding.

To some extent the new survey seeks to discover whether the British people feel themselves ready for the challenges posed by the external world. Things without their control are happening and will continue to happen, and will help shape the future. A realignment of international power politics followed the 1989 collapse of the Soviet empire. Britain's role as a major supporter of US leadership of the free world has had to change. In a world no longer divided into two, Britain's role is less clear, less certain. The attempt is made to see if this uncertainty is reflected in national mood. Does Britain have a clear perception of its new role? Does it see a secure place for itself in the new world order.

Less important, but highly significant has been the rising tide of European integration. Moves towards the creation of a European power block have obviously caused Britain to question its own role and its own future. Can Britain continue to enjoy a warm relationship with the United States, and, indeed, with the English speaking world, if it is drawn inexorably into a political union with the states of continental Europe? How far have the British adjusted to the loss of sovereignty already sustained, and how far do they expect this to continue?

In addition to what might be called the geo-political questions concerning the world's alignments and any place in them which Britain might occupy, the new survey attempts to find out what the British people think might happen to Britain's scientific and cultural influence on the world, and to its sense of national identity. Specifically, people were asked if they think that in 50 years time, Britain might still be a presence in both the scientific and technical progress of humankind, and in the world's artistic and cultural achievement.

In addition to questions about whether Britain might still be an independent nation after that time, they were asked if it might still be influential, and whether the British might, by then, first think of themselves as European. They were asked, too, whether they thought that Britain might still be a monarchy half way deep into the new century.

The march of science

A series of questions was asked to determine how far the British have faith in scientific and technological developments to bring about new choices and opportunities. In the light of the aforementioned three decades of doom and gloom, the attempt was to ascertain how far this has blunted people's readiness to accept optimistic predictions about progress at face value.

Some popular predictions were put to the respondents, to find out how far the British go along with the notions of plentiful, non-polluting fuel, enhanced life expectancy, new and exotic modes of transport, and developments in communications.

Finally, some of the predictions which might have been unthinkingly accepted half a century ago were asked. Will ordinary people take holidays in space? Will cars fly? Will extra-terrestrial life be discovered? Will extinct species be recreated? The aim was to discover if the British have become more skeptical about some of the claims made by popular scientific journalists.

The social order

Regardless of any advances made by science and technology, questions were asked about the likely lifestyle opportunities which the new century might offer. People were asked if they thought that living standards would continue to rise. This is a significant question because part of the attack by the environmental lobby has been on growth itself. A streak of neo-Puritanism within the movement has urged us all to eschew higher standards and greater wealth, and learn to live more simply, and, by implication, more

happily. How far has this permeated through to the British people in the form of lowered expectations about improved standards of living?

The survey respondents were asked to say whether or not they thought that there would be increased opportunities to live rewarding lives. This was couched in general, rather than material terms, so that self-satisfaction and fulfillment were the subject, rather than greater wealth. Clearly, in terms of general optimism, this is an important question. Given the changes which people expect, and the ones they think unlikely, does the combination offer the prospects of a better personal future for people?

After a century ravaged by the suffering of two world wars and the 40 year armed stand-off of the third, a key question is whether people think that humanity might have turned the page on this type of destructive behaviour. At its bluntest, do people expect that the 21st century will witness another world war, or is peace, in its sometimes uneasy form, here to stay?

In terms of social organization, the British were asked about the pattern which their lives might take. Do they expect, for example, that there will still be a set age for retirement in 50 years time? The question is perhaps more pertinent for young people, who themselves might be affected by the answer, even though young people are alleged to regard retirement and death as something which eventually happens to other people.

The public services

The new survey devotes considerable attention to the future organization of society and its services. The four principal public services – education, health, pensions and welfare – are examined to see how far public confidence in them continues, and how much people expect from them over the course of the next half century.

People have perceived a decline in public services in Britain over the past 50 years. State industries have been privatized; state utilities have been taken into the private sector, some of them for the first time in decades, some for the first time ever. The major public services, which were provided collectively and paid for out of taxation for most people, have witnessed a rise in individual alternative provision. A series of crises has confronted all four of them, with a perception in some quarters that universal collective provision may not be the way of the future.

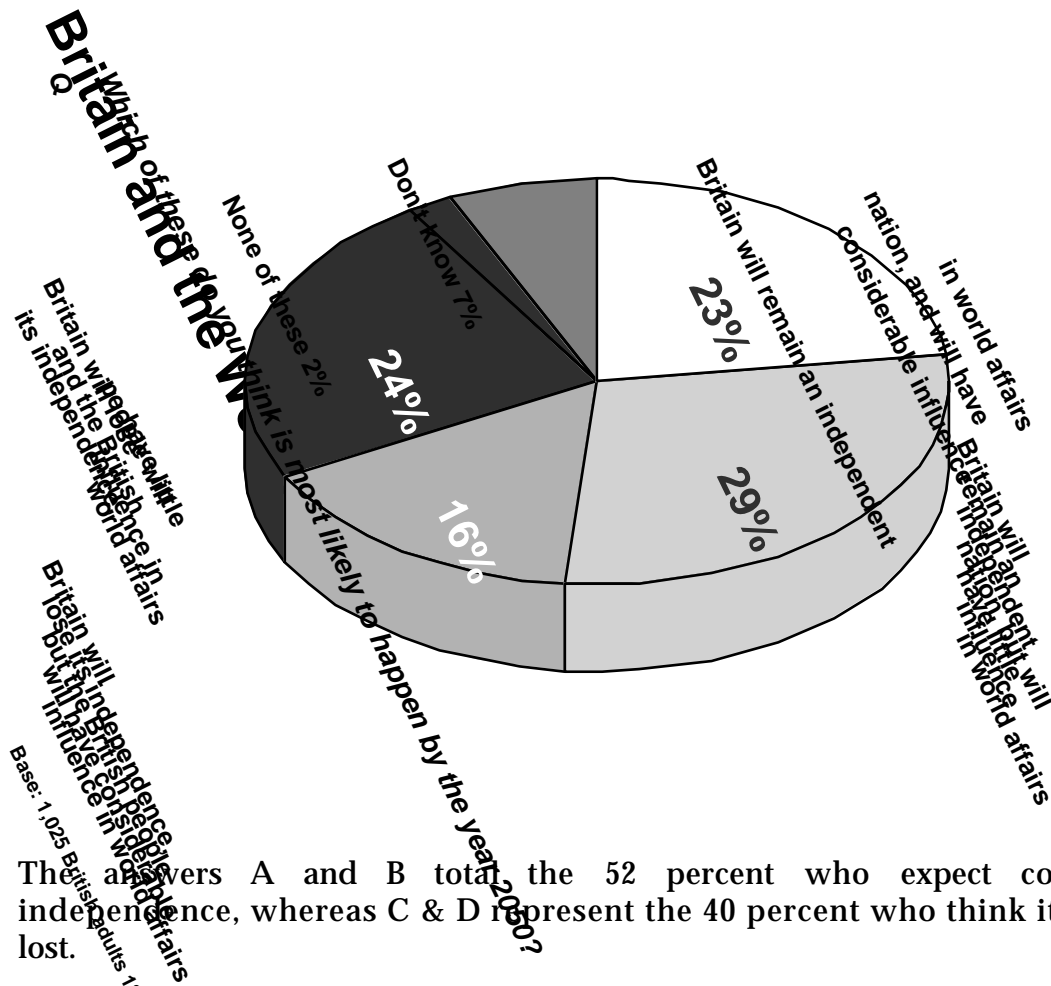
On an analytical level, it has been suggested that these mass services were provided when most people lived similar lives with similar needs. The break-up of the labour force, and its presentation with more varied and flexible alternatives has created the need for both variation and flexibility in

service provision, neither of which can be met by mass-produced, centrally planned services.

The attempt is made to see whether any of this thinking or these attitudes has entered popular consciousness, and changed the way in which people look to the future of their public services. On education, health, pensions and welfare, people were asked about the likely quality of the public service, and the degree to which they expected people to undertake private alternative provision.

2. The State of the Nation

People were asked about the future of Britain as a nation. Will it still be independent? Will it still be influential, if, indeed, it is already? A bare majority thinks that Britain in 50 years time will remain an independent nation (52 percent), compared to the four in ten, 40 percent, who think Britain will lose its independence.



The answers A and B total the 52 percent who expect continued independence, whereas C & D represent the 40 percent who think it will be lost.

On the question of optimism, those who expect Britain to have considerable influence, whether independent or not (A & C), total 39 percent. Those who expect Britain to have little influence (B & D) total 53 percent. Plainly, although a slim majority expects an independent Britain, a slightly larger majority thinks it will not be influential in world affairs.

The suggestion is that the British people expect the coming century to see a diminished role for their nation.

The breakdown

Within the overall responses there were interesting variations. Full tables appear in the appendixes. For example, insofar as likely independence is concerned, men expect it by 51 to 43 percent, women by a marginally higher 52 to 37 percent.

On British influence, men expect it by 43 to 51 percent, women by a slightly lower 36 to 53 percent. With small differences, both men and women think Britain will be independent but not influential.

A more revealing breakdown comes with age. Adding the answers over six age groups, the following table emerges:

(Table 1)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
n=	133	199	291	184	125	183
	%	%	%	%	%	%
keep independence	63	56	53	47	48	43
lose independence	26	38	40	46	44	44
considerable influence	52	40	35	30	41	38
little influence	37	54	58	63	50	49

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

What emerges most strikingly from this is the huge difference which age makes to the reply. Basically it is the younger people who are confident of their nation's continued independence, by more than two to one, 63 to 26 percent, for the 15-24 age-group. For people age over 45, the issue is finely balanced, with no overall majority either way. The older people are in Britain, the more pessimistic they seem to be about the continued independence of their nation.

On the question of Britain's influence, the youngest group (15-24) goes against the generally pessimistic view. By 52 to 37 percent, the youngsters think their country will be influential, versus the figure of 39 to 53 percent for the whole population. The youngsters' optimism about their nation's influence is not generally shared.

The breakdown into social groups shows little variation on the question of Britain's continued independence, but some variation on the question of its likely influence:

(Table 2)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
n=	223	286	217	299
	%	%	%	%
considerable influence	47	42	36	32
little influence	47	52	57	54

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Marginally more AB respondents (see Appendix for Social Class details) think Britain will be influential, whereas groups C1, C2 & DE all show substantial majorities who think the country will *not* be influential. A similar result appears for newspaper readership:

(Table 3)

readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top	none
n=	156	181	325	380
	%	%	%	%
considerable influence	48	38	39	38
little influence	45	58	52	51

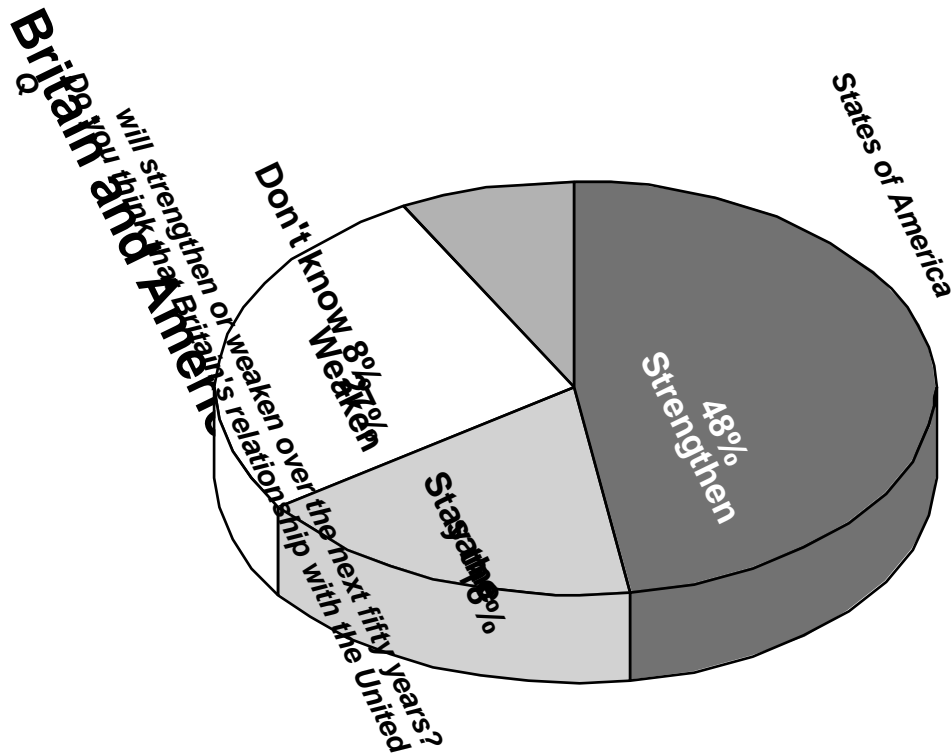
Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Again, while the answers on Britain's continued independence show little variation, the broadsheet readers seem more optimistic about their nation's influence in the future than do their middle market or tabloid equivalents, as would be expected given their readership profiles by class, if not by age.

Wonderful time with America?

The survey explores what people think might happen to Britain's relationship with the United States, and gives a 'thumbs up' to the Anglo-American future relationship:



By a clear margin, the British people expect our relationship with the USA to grow stronger. Indeed, if we combine two columns, we find that 66 percent, two out of three, expect it to strengthen or at least stay the same. The figures are roughly the same for men and women, but there are differences in the age outlook:

(Table 4)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
strengthen	56	52	46	47	39	43
weaken	23	26	31	30	32	22
stay the same	12	17	19	17	21	21
don't know	9	5	5	6	8	15

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

More younger people expect continued close relations with the US compared to their elders. Whereas the general *strengthen/weaken* ratio is 48 to 27 percent for the 15-24 year-olds it is 56 to 23 percent, and for the 25-34 year-olds it is 52 to 26 percent. Plainly, the older people are, the fewer are those who are confident of a continued close relationship with the United States.

In terms of social groups, there is a very slight tendency for groups C2 and DE to expect closer relations with the US than do groups AB and C1. Similarly with newspaper readership, there is a tendency for readers of middle market and red-top papers to expect US/UK relations to strengthen more than their broadsheet reading counterparts expect. These views also seem to cut across party lines, with no noticeable variation with voting intention.

The conclusion has to be that the British, as they enter into the new century, expect that by the middle of it, their country will still be independent, and will be closer to the United States. This is even more true of young people than of their elders.

These are especially interesting findings in light of the continuing debate about Britain's role in Europe. In the months to come, as the Chancellor's 'five conditions' are examined and the country comes closer to the promised referendum on the adoption of the Euro and the abandonment of the pound sterling, the future role of the Anglo-American 'special relationship' will come under close scrutiny.

Can Britain cut it?

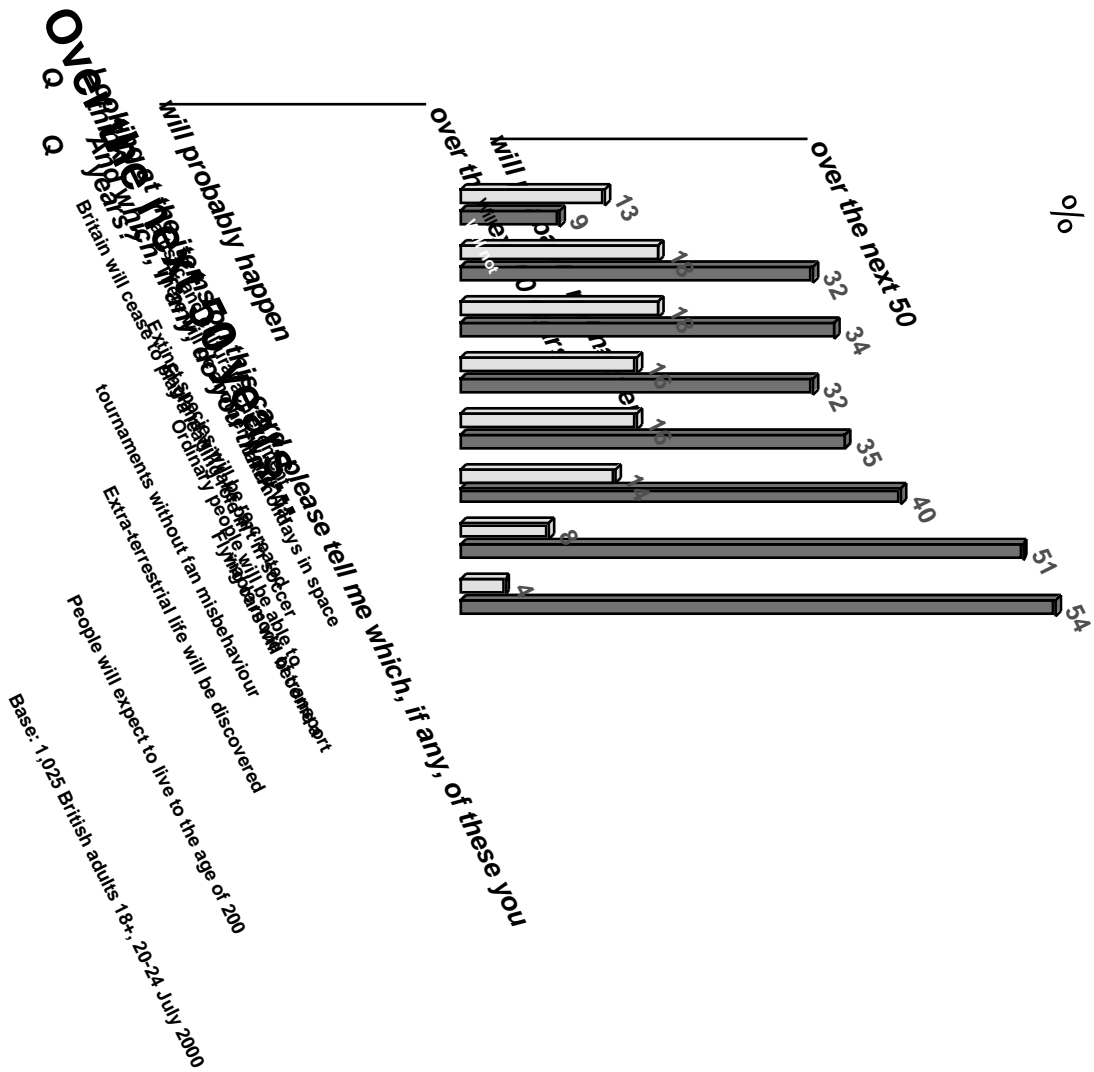
Two further questions were posed to look at the elusive issue of national confidence. From a list of 17 possible outcomes, people were asked which ones they think will probably happen over the next 50 years. The full tables and breakdown appear in the appendix.

They were asked if they think Britain will lose its cutting edge in technical and scientific innovation. Nearly a quarter, 23 percent, say that they think it *will* lose it, versus about half that, 12 percent, who say that it will not. This is a significant margin of nearly 2:1, and reinforces the pessimism about Britain's likely influence in the world.

A further question asked if they think Britain will cease to play a leading role in artistic and cultural achievement. 13 percent think that Britain will cease to play such a role, versus 9 percent who think it will not. The margin is not as great, but is still noticeable. Again, there is pessimism about the likely achievements and influence of the nation. The questions invite the respondent to assume some degree of technical and scientific lead from

Britain on the one hand, and some degree of artistic and cultural role on the other. The actual degree is unimportant, since the respondents are invited to say if they think either will continue. Plainly, more of them do *not* think so than do.

The turn of the century mood is thus not one of national self-confidence and optimism. People think Britain will still be there in half a century, but will be less influential in world affairs, in science and technology, and in arts and culture.



Optimism and age

Crucially, age is a factor, but gender matters less. The general figure for losing a cutting edge in science is 23 to 12 percent. For men this is 26 to 12 percent, for women 19 to 11 percent, showing women as somewhat less gloomy about Britain's prospects in this field.

For ceasing to lead in artistic and cultural influence, the general figure of 13 to 9 percent translates into 14 to 10 percent for men, 12 to 9 percent for women, scarcely different.

(Table 5)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
will lose science edge	12	25	26	28	29	16
will not	18	10	13	12	13	7
will lose art/culture role	12	13	14	16	12	12
will not	9	9	12	10	9	8

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Although the adult population thinks by 23 to 12 percent that Britain will lose its scientific and technical cutting edge, those young people with a view think otherwise. For them the ratio is 12 to 18 percent. Of their elders, more than twice the proportion between the ages of 25 and 64 are pessimistic about Britain's influence. As with Britain's influence in the world, it is the young people who stand out as confident and optimistic that it will still count in science and technology as it will in world affairs.

The same is not true of any artistic and cultural achievement. *Cool Britannia* loses out as a lasting influence among all age groups.

The breakdown by social class is revealing.

(Table 6)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
will lose scientific edge	29	25	24	15
will not	14	13	11	9
will lose art/culture role	13	15	14	11
will not	14	10	8	6

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The 23 to 12 percent balance for pessimism for Britain's science and technology is much more pessimistic (29 to 14) for the AB group, and declines to 15 to 9 for group D. Plainly, the higher the social group, the greater the level of pessimism about Britain's future place in science and technology.

This is not true for its artistic and cultural role. The balance of pessimism (13 to 9 percent) is reversed for group AB alone (13 to 14 percent). In this case, the higher the social group, the greater the optimism about Britain's cultural showing.

The breakdown by newspaper readership is also revealing:

(Table 7)

readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top	none
	%	%	%	%
will lose scientific edge	29	32	17	23
will not	17	15	11	11
will lose art/culture role	13	19	11	15
will not	18	12	6	9

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

It shows that more broadsheet readers (29 to 17 percent) and middle market readers (32 to 15 percent) are pessimistic about Britain's scientific role than are red-top readers (17 to 11 percent). Insofar as Britain's artistic and cultural role is concerned, only the broadsheet readers reverse the generally pessimistic view (13 to 9 percent) by a more optimistic 13 to 18 percent. More broadsheet readers, like social group AB, seem pessimistic than average about Britain's ability to cut it in science, but more are optimistic about the nation's ability to make its mark in art and culture.

King and country

By quite a large margin, the British think that their country will still be a monarchy in 50 years time. 43 percent think this likely, against 13 percent who think it unlikely. The figures are slightly higher for men (47 to 14 percent) than for women (42 to 12 percent). The age breakdown shows a fairly high consistency through the various age brackets:

(Table 8)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
will be monarchy	41	49	46	41	49	43
will not	8	13	15	12	11	15

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The picture is less consistent through the social groups:

(Table 9)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
will be monarchy	51	52	40	37
will not	14	11	15	12

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Belief in a continued monarchy appears highest among groups AB and C1, and lowest among groups C2 and DE. The picture for newspaper readership is similar:

(Table 10)

readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top	none
	%	%	%	%
will be monarchy	55	52	41	43
will not	12	13	15	11

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Again, belief that Britain will continue as a monarchy seems higher among broadsheet and middle market readers, and lowest among those who read red-tops or no papers at all. That said, belief in a continuing monarchy is high among all age groups, social groups, and readership groups, consistently

outnumbering those who think monarchy will disappear by a factor of three or four times.

European?

Many more of the British people expect Britain to remain an independent nation in 50 years time than expect it to lose its independence. An even larger proportion think that Britain's relationship with the United States will strengthen. Despite this, the question remains as to whether the British will *think* of themselves as European. The question was put to them as to whether most people living in Britain will think of themselves as European first and British second.

One in five, 21 percent, replied that they thought people would by then think of themselves as European first. This was more than the 16 percent who thought this unlikely to happen. This slight majority breaks down differently across the sexes. Men reply *will* rather than *will not* by 21 to 20 percent, whereas women reply *will* by 21 to 14 percent. In other words, whereas men are about evenly divided on the subject, it is women who give the slight lead to those who say people will think of themselves as European. The age breakdown is no less significant:

(Table 11)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
will think European first	12	19	25	20	24	25
will not	15	20	19	20	13	10

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

It is evident from the age breakdown that the overall *positive* answer to people thinking of themselves as European first and British second is largely brought about by the opinions of older people. The youngsters (15-24) do not think this likely, by 12 to 15 percent. The next group (24-34) are more or less evenly divided, and by a point do not think this likely, by 19 to 20 percent. It is in the oldest groups that the highest proportion of *positive* opinions are to be found, with those aged 55-64 scoring 24 to 13 percent, and those aged 65+ scoring 25 to 10 percent.

It should be noted that the older groups are replying what they think other people might think in the future; they themselves will not be here. Those aged over 55 will mostly be dead in 50 years time, and are hypothesizing what their successors might think. Most of those aged 15-24 will probably still be alive, and could be talking about what they, as opposed to other people, expect to think. The same is true to a lesser extent of the 24-34 age group. Thinking

of oneself as European first and British second is thus something which older people in Britain expect *other* people to do in the future.

The breakdown by social category is interesting, not because it shows any great divergence, but because it shows that opinions are more likely to be held either way in the highest categories.

(Table 12)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
will think European first	25	23	22	15
will not	20	18	17	12

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Although higher numbers in the top social groups think that their countrymen will think of themselves as European first and British second, higher numbers also think this will *not* be true. Among the DE group, less think it will happen, and less think it will not. The proportions are roughly consistent across the social groups. A breakdown in terms of newspaper readership shows that broadsheet readers are most likely to expect this, followed by middle market readers, with red-top readers pretty evenly divided.

(Table 13)

readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top	none
	%	%	%	%
will think European first	26	23	17	21
will not	17	19	16	17

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Party differences show up. Labour voters think it likely to the same degree as the general population (21 to 16 percent). Conservatives do *not* expect it, by 18 to 21 percent. Liberal Democrats expect it most of all, by 24 to 14 percent. These correspond very roughly with the perceived enthusiasm for Europe displayed by the three parties, with the Liberal Democrats coming out as the most pro-European

(Table 14)

voting intention	Lab	Con	Lib Dem	Undec/WNV
	%	%	%	%

will think European first	21	18	24	21
will not	16	21	14	12

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Again, it should be borne in mind that these results are based on the opinions of older voters, and are not shared by the younger people.

3. Science and progress

A series of questions in the survey explores the degree to which people expect scientific advances to continue. The Twentieth Century, like its predecessor, has been marked by scientific and technical progress which have added choices to the lives of ordinary people. When Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother was born, the first aircraft had yet to fly, and the automobile was experimental. The century ended with orders being placed for the first double-decker jumbo jet, and with mass travel and communications as essential parts of everyday lives.

Nonetheless, the comforting 1950s-style white and plastic future of science fiction has come under attack from environmentalists and doom-sayers, and science has been tainted with wanton and reckless progress which has outstripped humanity's moral capacity to handle it. The survey tries to discover, in a series of possible scientific developments, how far people are prepared to accept the predictions of science and the possible futures they might unfold.

There is an allied purpose, in that the questions pose, to some extent, a test of scientific literacy. Many, if not most of them, are rated as real possibilities by practising scientists, and are reckoned to stand a reasonable chance of coming about over the course of the next half-century. One has only to look at developments in the last half century to see how the pace of change has accelerated. To what degree is the general public aware of where scientific research stands in various fields, and where it is likely to go? To what degree do they keep up with scientific progress?

From earlier questions we know that people in Britain expect their country to lose its cutting edge in scientific and technical innovation. Does that expectation combine with a more skeptical view of scientific progress in general? In other words, is it just Britain which will lose its cutting edge, or science in general?

One question concerns the possible discovery of extra-terrestrial life. At a scientific level this does not refer to the little green men of popular imagination, but to cellular life at the microscopic level. Some serious scientists now suggest that such primitive life forms could be detected in deep space, below the surface of Mars, or beneath the ice oceans of Europa.

Technological experts have predicted the advent of cheap, non-polluting fuel for decades. First it was to be electricity, then nuclear energy, then fusion power. The goals proved elusive. It did not arrive on schedule, it was not cheap, and it did pollute. However, recent advances in fuel cell technology

suggest that forms of power which pollute less than fossil fuels and which may use relatively cheap and renewable ingredients, could come about in a very few years. How far has the public become inured to such predictions?

Brought up on a diet of *The Jetsons* and *Lost in Space*, TV viewers were shown the spectacle of ordinary families in space. Yet the moon landings marked the apparent end of an era, not the widely expected beginning. No-one has visited the moon since 1972, and there are no signs of the hotels in space or the pleasure trips once widely anticipated. Yet behind the scenes there are serious moves to provide the first tourist flights into space for paying customers. One rich American has paid millions for a tourist visit to the Russian Mir station. Will ordinary people be able to take holidays in space sometime within the next 50 years?

Given traffic congestion on multi-lane highways, visionaries were ready to predict the use of the third dimension, namely height, to spread the load. The use of private aircraft and air taxis has certainly multiplied, but there are no signs of the family car which can take to the skies. Will the next half century see the breakthrough? The key might be computing power, in that it was always the complexity as well as the energy needs which militated against it.

The ubiquitous mobile phone may be a curse in trains and restaurants, but it has brought mass communication to anyone who wants it. Will the next few decades see instant communication, enabling people to contact each other whenever they want, and free of charge? The latter point is important because instant communication has been available at a price for some time. Will it become universal and free to the user?

Genetic science makes news every day, usually related to illnesses and their possible cures, but sometimes to exotic trans-species activities. *Jurassic Park* raised the rather fanciful spectre of recreating dinosaurs from their DNA preserved in amber. More seriously, scientists are working on the idea that more recent losses, such as mammoths, might be recreated from preserved DNA, and perhaps cloned inside a modern elephant. Some even more recently departed creatures might be restored. At a more exotic level, some scientists are looking at the unused DNA preserved within living species to see if parts of it can be used to restore extinct ones. What do ordinary people make of this?

Finally, after a century which saw great advances in life expectancy, how far do people expect it to go? Will medical and genetic advances give us a greatly extended life-span. It is already quite reasonable to predict that babies born this year might live to see in the next century. Will progress within the next 50 years bring a life-span of 200 years within range?

The questions were asked as part of a group of 17 questions (full table in the appendix) for which people were asked to state those which they thought probably would happen, and those they thought would probably not happen.

(Table 15)

All respondents	will happen		will not	net will
	%	%	%	%
non-polluting energy will replace fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas	41	9		+32
people will be able to communicate with each other at any time, free of charge	29	16		+13
extinct species will be recreated	18	34		-16
ordinary people will be able to take holidays in space	16	35		-19
extra-terrestrial life will be discovered	14	40		-26
flying cars will become a viable mode of transport	8	51		-43
people will expect to live to the age of 200	4	54		-50

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Only two of the questions have net positive scores. These are the ones relating to non-polluting energy sources and instant, free communications. Significantly, these are probably the two which most affect everyday lives, and which are the closest to being achieved already. Some scientific writers expect both of these developments to come about well within the half century suggested, and perhaps within a decade. The first fuel cell cars are already under development, while communication becomes more widespread and less costly with each passing year.

It would appear that the British people have grown cautious in the scientific and technical predictions to which they are ready to lend credence. The breakdown of responses by age is interesting:

(Table 16)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
extra-terrestrial life will	23	18	11	10	15	10	
will not	32	45	47	41	35	35	
non-polluting energy will		37	42	38	46	53	35
will not	10	9	8	17	5	6	
holidays in space will	21	17	17	17	12	14	
will not	30	44	39	40	33	21	
flying cars will	12	6	9	8	8	7	
will not	54	59	55	55	49	33	
free communication will	27	27	30	36	39	20	
will not	15	21	18	16	10	10	
extinct species will	22	22	14	17	17	16	
will not	30	35	39	38	35	29	
live to age 200 will	6	3	2	8	2	4	
will not	54	61	62	53	52	40	

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

No age group reverses the expectations of the general population, but on many issues more of the younger groups are optimistic about progress. It is perhaps their elders who have seen it all before and are more skeptical.

On extra-terrestrial life, the 15-24 age group splits only 23 to 32 percent against, versus the general 14 to 40 percent. On holidays in space it scores 21 to 30 percent, versus the general 16 to 35 percent. On extinct species its score is 22 to 30 percent, as against the general population's 18 to 34 percent. For each of these, more young people than their elders expect it will happen, and fewer of them expect that it will not. As a group they are less skeptical about scientific advances than the population as a whole. The other noticeable feature of the age breakdown is in the responses of the group aged 65+. For most of these predictions, fewer of them think they will happen, but fewer, often considerably fewer, expect them *not* to happen. The 65+ group has the smallest proportion who do *not* expect holidays in space, flying cars, extinct species restored, or life expectancy of 200. Perhaps they have lived through enough marvels to be reticent about ruling anything out completely?

4. Life's Quality

Part of people's perception of the future concerns the likely quality of life. At its simplest, the question is whether most people expect that life for themselves and their children will be better than it was before. Most people speculate about whether the future will see them wealthier, happier, and perhaps leading more fulfilled lives. After nearly half a century of the uneasy nuclear peace, people might be more optimistic about the future and the possibilities it offers to those who will be its citizens. With the threat of imminent nuclear annihilation much diminished, people might be expected to take a more relaxed view of the future and its possibilities.

On the other hand, three decades of relentless bombardment by successive scare stories might be expected to have some impact. The notion that the planet is being ruined and that everyone will have to learn to live with more modest ambitions might have altered people's expectations about the future and the quality of life it offers. At its most trivial, even a succession of movies set in a future post-Armageddon dystopia might be expected to have altered people's perceptions of what the future might bring.

A series of questions was asked to discover, if possible, the background expectations which people have. They were asked if they think that in 50 years time, the opportunities for people to live rewarding lives will be greater than ever before. It is a simple question, and one which side-steps the notion that life might be a rat race by asking about rewarding lives. A positive answer to this question indicates optimism, whatever form those rewarding lives might take.

Bearing in mind the impact of two world wars on the Twentieth Century, with the death and misery they brought, people were asked if they thought that there might be another world war during the course of the next 50 years. A positive answer to this question would indicate a fairly dramatic level of pessimism. Humankind appears, by the turn of the 21st Century, to have found a way to live by keeping conflicts localized, and by acting collectively to confine them, to prevent them where possible, and to use sufficient force to end them where necessary. It makes for an uneasy and interrupted peace, but it seems better than the alternative. To expect a world war is to anticipate that this *modus vivendi* will prove too fragile to be sustained.

As far as Britain is concerned, given the propaganda to limit our aspirations and to live more simply, people were asked if they anticipate that in half a century the standard of living will be higher than it has ever been before. If the answer is *will*, it indicates an expectation that economic growth and wealth creation will continue, and that people will have more resources and

be able to do more things with them. A higher standard of living in Britain implies continued economic success for the nation. The implication is that we will continue to be able to produce goods and services which the world wishes to buy, and will be richer because of it.

One question asked was expectations concerning retirement. Half a century ago, when the modern welfare state was put in place, the average breadwinner was a male who left school at 16, worked for the same firm, probably in heavy industry or manufacturing, for the whole of his working life. He retired at 65, and died, on average, two years later. With a more varied economy, many new types of job, and the expectation that people will pass through different types of job in the course of a working life, retirement takes on a different meaning. Longer life expectancy makes it unrealistic, and perhaps undesirable, to think in terms of working for a few decades and then doing nothing for a few decades.

People were asked whether they thought that by the middle of the century, there might no longer be a set age for retirement. A positive answer would imply that our idea of retirement will have changed. Without a set age, we need not think of people being put out to pasture, but perhaps trading down to less demanding work, while still keeping themselves active and even productive.

As a prelude to a deeper examination (see the next chapter) about what people might expect of our collectively provided state services, people were asked whether they thought it likely that in fifty years time, the welfare state and publicly funded services will gradually disappear. As society has become more affluent, people have chosen to make personal provision in some areas, notably pensions. There has been a perception of decline in other areas of state service, and a feeling that in some areas, notably welfare, the present arrangements simply cannot continue.

The aim of the question has been to discover how far this has affected popular attitudes and expectations. Do people think that the welfare state and public services will still be there in half a century, or do they anticipate that they will gradually be replaced over the intervening period by alternative means of delivery, and other methods of achieving similar goals? The question is asked against a background in which the very basis of the collective state services has come under critical examination. Do people think that they can continue to be fixed, from what appears to be a succession of crises, or is the whole system likely to change.

Finally there is a question concerning behaviour. Concern at what are seen to be rising levels of aggression and violence in society has led people to ask if this has been part of the price we pay for the increased freedom which society offers. Without the cultural restraints which social conformity provided,

does the future hold the prospect of continued anti-social behaviour, particularly on the part of young males?

A hooligan element among football supporters is taken as a proxy for levels of aggression and violence in general, and the question asks if people in Britain think it likely that English teams will be able to participate in soccer tournaments in the next fifty years without fan misbehaviour, or whether they are resigned to a continuation into the foreseeable future of the loutishness which seems to accompany the game today.

(Table 17)

All respondents	will %	will not %	net will %
the welfare state and publicly funded services will gradually disappear		46	8 +38
there will no longer be a set age for retirement	42	14	+28
the standard of living in Britain will be higher than it has ever been before	30	11	+19
opportunities for people to live rewarding lives will be greater than ever before	25	8	+17
there will be another world war	18	32	-14
England will take part in soccer tournaments without fan misbehaviour		16	32 -16

The British people think that the welfare state and publicly funded services will gradually disappear over the next fifty years. They say this by a huge margin of 46 to 8 percent, a ratio of nearly 6:1. Of all of the questions asked, this had one of the largest margins in assent. By an overwhelming proportion, people expect Britain's welfare state and its publicly funded services to disappear. Given that these have formed the background to a large part of their lives, this will represent a major change in social organization.

It portends a society vastly different from the one we have known. If these services are not to be provided collectively from public funds, some other form of provision must develop. It might be the growth of private alternatives, or some form of insurance, compulsory or voluntary. Whatever it is, people expect the traditional service to disappear at some stage during the first half of the century. The society which promises support from cradle to grave, and which provides public services equally to all, is on the way out.

People in Britain have seen patterns of retirement change. The statutory age has been altered so that it will no longer be different for men and women. More significantly, perhaps, people have begun to choose their retirement age from a range of options, depending on their profession. Now, by a huge margin, the British people expect that there will be no set age for retirement at all within half a century. By 42 to 14 percent, a 3:1 margin, they expect the idea of a set retirement age to have disappeared.

This should be seen positively, in the light of the improved living standards and opportunities for fulfillment they expect. Instead of meaning that they will be made to work longer, it means that people will choose when they wish to cease working or to draw their pensions. The idea of a set age assumes similar lives; and people expect the developing differences to continue to dictate a pattern of different needs and different choices.

By nearly 3:1 they think that the standard of living in Britain will be higher than ever. This suggests that calls for limits on growth and a simpler lifestyle have not made the impact they might have done. People expect a higher living standard, which means that they expect economic growth in general to continue. It also means that they have confidence in Britain's ability to garner its share of this increased wealth, and to translate it into higher living standards for its citizens.

Overwhelmingly, by more than 3:1, people in Britain look to a half century which brings the opportunity to live rewarding lives. This is a huge vote for optimism. It means that, whatever else they think likely to happen, they do not expect it to impinge too much on their ability to derive satisfaction from life. They think this will be truer for their children, and that by the mid century, these opportunities will be greater than ever before. Gloom and doom have not overshadowed the sunshine.

Expectation of war is low. By nearly 2:1 they think it unlikely that there will be another world war by the time the mid point of the century has been reached. This, too, is important. It enhances and supports the previous question. War has a habit of destroying expectations and opportunities. It is in peacetime that people can plan and lay down a pattern for their life's development. War disrupts all that and thwarts their expectations. The British do not expect it.

Football hooliganism, though, is not on the way out. According to the new survey, only 16 percent think that English teams will take part in football tournaments *without* fan misbehaviour, versus the 32 percent who do not expect the misbehaviour to disappear over the course of the next fifty years. There is thus a 2 to 1 margin of those who think the hooliganism will still be with us. Depressing though this might be to those who deplore the levels of

aggression and violence, and to those who deplore their association with the game, people think the two will still be linked half a century from now. It seems that the likely outcome of measures taken by government, Home Office, police, and football's governing bodies are all treated with some skepticism. People do not expect them to be successful in eradicating football hooliganism.

It might be noted in passing that the numbers who think football hooliganism will disappear over the next fifty years are the same as those who think ordinary people will be taking holidays in space at that time. And roughly the same numbers in each case think these events unlikely.

Looking at the breakdown by age-group:

(Table 18)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
opportunities for rewarding lives will	19	21	24	25	39	29
will not	7	11	10	9	7	6
another world war will	34	21	12	17	17	11
will not	21	32	39	33	37	30
stand. of living higher than ever will	29	31	29	33	33	28
will not	13	13	11	11	9	9
no longer set retirement age will		27	39	41	50	55
42 will not	14	15	13	13	13	13
welfare, public services disappear will	26	47	57	59	46	37
will not	9	8	9	7	13	6
England football without rowdies will	18	19	15	9	20	13
will not	35	40	34	37	22	22

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

There are some striking age group differences. It is, for example, the 55-64 age-group which most expects greater opportunities for people to live rewarding lives. They score 39 percent on this, way above the lowest group, the 15-24 year-olds, on 19 percent. Indeed, except for the over 65s, this is an expectation which rises steadily with age.

More young people are gloomy about the prospects for another world war than older. Although the general population has 18 percent saying it will and 32 percent saying not, this is reversed for the 15-24 age-group, where 34 percent say will, as opposed to 21 percent who think it unlikely. Here it is the middle group of 35-44 year-olds who least expect another war.

The expectation of a higher standard of living is fairly uniform across the age brackets, with a slight tendency for people to be less skeptical about this as they grow older.

The youngsters are far less ready than their elders to expect that the set retirement age will disappear. Only 27 percent expect this, as against the 42 percent of the general population who do. It is the older groups who expect this, notably those aged 45-64. This might be confirmation once again that young people, if they think of retirement at all, think of it as something which will happen to other people.

On the likely disappearance of the welfare state and publicly funded services, it is the middle groups which most expect this. 57 percent of age group 35-44 say will, as do 59 percent of the 45-54 year-olds. This compares with only 26 percent of the 15-24 year-olds. It seems to indicate that those with more experience of welfare and the public services are most doubtful about their continuing survival.

Soccer hooliganism is expected to continue by all groups, with the youngest four brackets being the most skeptical that England teams will be able to play in tournaments without it.

5. The State Services

The state services have experienced a half-century of change; some would say upheaval. Education, health, pensions and welfare have all been subject to major and far-reaching reforms. Some of the services have been through several such transformations. Critics have alleged that constant change has itself been a source of low morale among the staff of these services, and has contributed to a general confusion and uncertainty.

Education has seen the demise of the secondary modern schools, the disappearance of the 11 plus examination, and the extinction of most of the grammar schools. The move toward universal comprehensive education came and went, as did a child-centred approach to education, and what was alleged to be an emphasis on social engineering at the expense of traditional learning. More recent moves have down-graded the role of local education authorities, extended parental choice, and given schools a much greater degree of autonomy.

Reforms in the NHS have replaced its unitary structure by a division into producers and providers. The purchasers of health care, now called Primary Care Groups, have responsibility for obtaining the total health needs of their patients from hospital trusts and specialists. The fact that the NHS does not and cannot have unlimited resources has raised the issue of rationing. The "post code lottery" has shown that some parts of the country offer patients a better chance of successful treatment, depending on the condition. Some new drugs, though effective, have been deemed too expensive for general prescription on the NHS, which long since abandoned the principle of free medication for all.

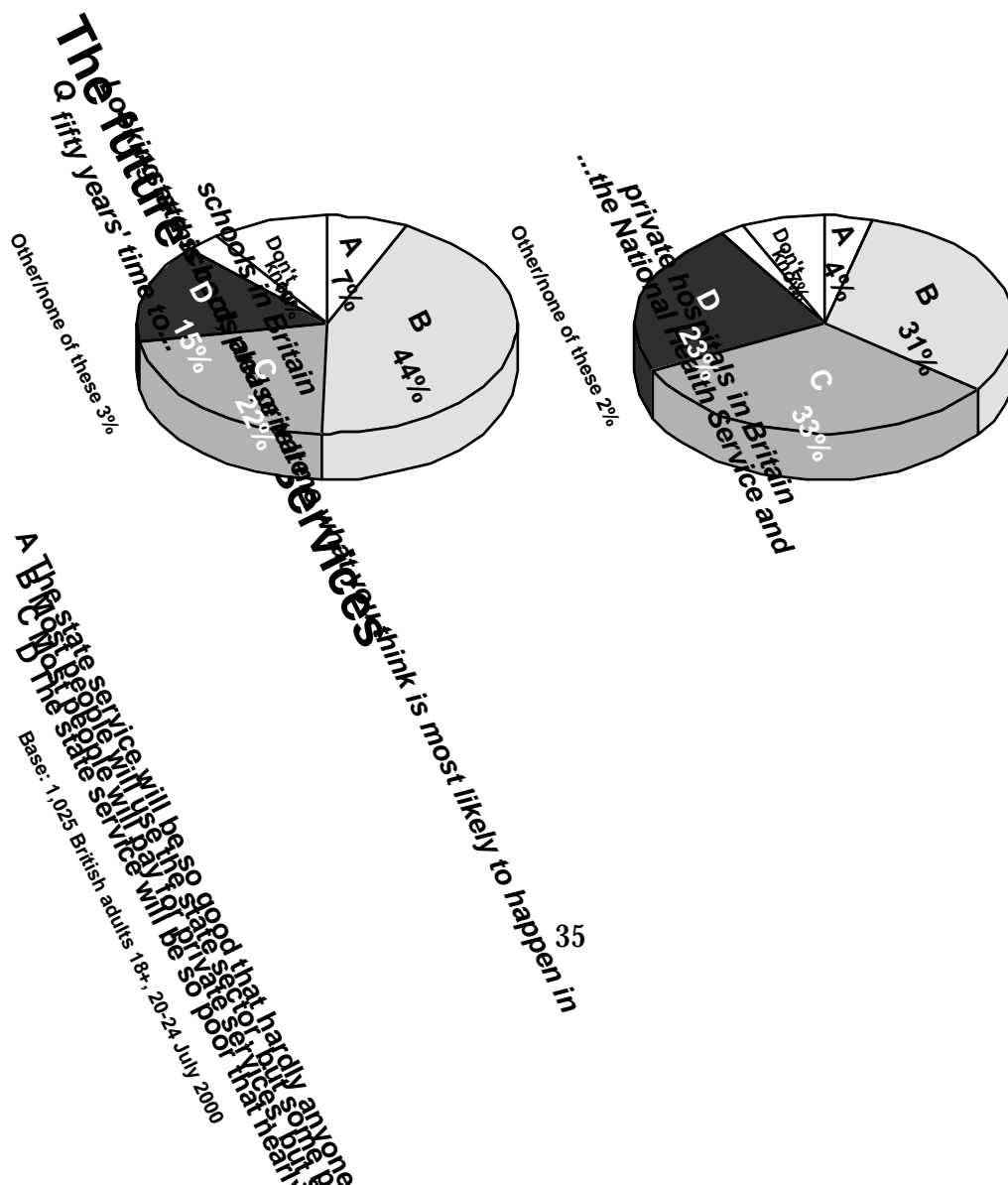
The basic state pension is now reckoned to be insufficient to support an acceptable standard of living. Its increases were linked to prices, rather than to wages, so that even though it kept its buying power, it declined steadily as a proportion of the national average wage. Soon it will be 13 percent of average wages. Those who depend on it exclusively are now entitled to income support in addition. The State Earnings Related Pension (SERPS) represented an attempt to give everyone a pension based on their life's earnings. It was always based on tax transfer from current workers, and never had any kind of fund to grow with the economic health of the nation.

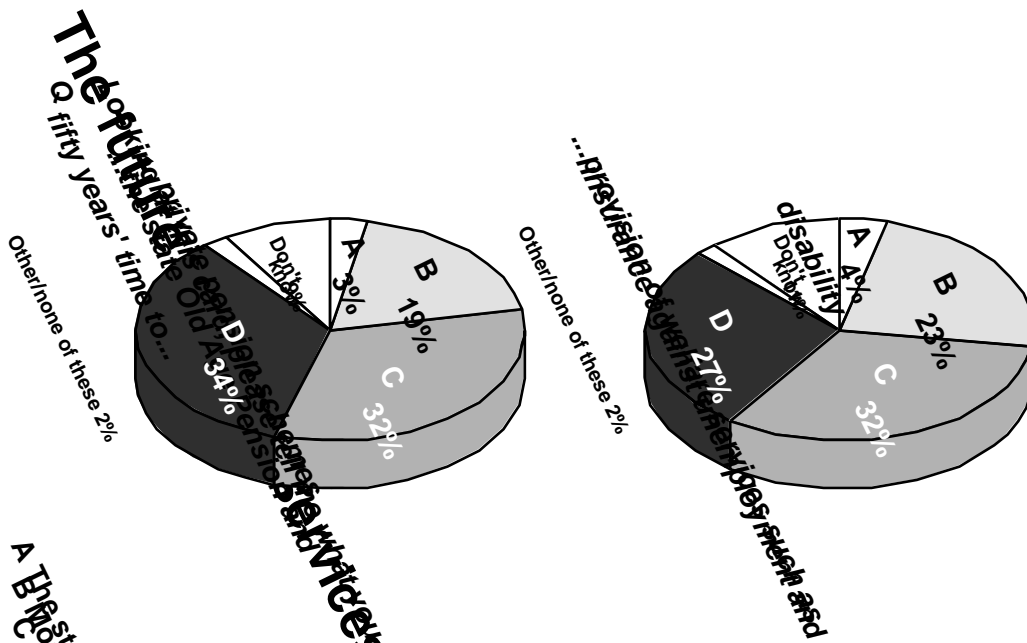
Welfare, once regarded as a temporary expedient for those who fell upon hard times, has had to cope with unemployment levels which far exceeded post-war expectations, and with a group of seemingly permanent dependants. For some housing estates it has become the main source of income, and some estimates have put the degree of fraudulent claims upon it at very high

levels. Recent changes have attempted to place the emphasis on getting people into employment and off welfare dependency.

All four principal state services have thus been subjected to critical examination, with claims that they have failed to meet their original aims, or to live up to the expectations made of them. The new survey attempts to ascertain how much this has altered people's view of what these services are likely to achieve in future, and how much people will be able to depend on them.

For each of the four services people were asked about their possible future. Would the state service be so good that hardly anyone would pay for a private alternative? Or would it be so poor that nearly everyone would? In between were the possibilities that most would use the state services, or that most would go private.





Source: MORI

The addition of the 1st and 2nd, and the 3rd and 4th responses give the following table:

(Table 20)

All respondents	schools	NHS	pension	welfare
Service	%	%	%	%
nearly everyone or use state sector	51	35	22	27
most or nearly everyone pay for private services	37	56	66	59

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The first fact which emerges is that schools represent the only one of the state services which people expect to be predominantly in the public sector in fifty years time. By 51 to 37 percent, in a margin of roughly 3:2, they expect either that

hardly anyone will go private, or that, while most will use the state service, *some* will pay extra to go private. It should be noted that, of that 51 percent, some 44 percent choose the second option. Only 7 percent think the state service will be so good that hardly anyone will go private.

For the health service the position is reversed. Only 35 percent think that 'hardly anyone' or 'some' will go private, versus the 56 percent who expect that 'most' or 'nearly everyone' will pay for private services. This represents a proportion of roughly 2:3, the opposite for expectations about schools. Again, it should be noted that of the 35 percent who expect the state service to dominate, only 4 percent opt for the strong option of 'hardly anyone' going private, as opposed to the 31 percent who think that 'some' will.

Plainly the expectation is that over the course of half a century, the NHS will become the recourse of a minority of the population. A third of those surveyed think that most people will pay for private services, and nearly a quarter think that nearly everyone will.

For pensions opinion is even more one-sided. The 22 percent who expect that 'hardly anyone' or 'some' will use private services are outnumbered 3:1 by those who expect that 'most' or nearly everyone' will. Once more, of those who believe the state sector will dominate, only 3 of the 22 percent opt for the strong choice that 'hardly anyone' will go private. Against this, of the 66 percent who think the private sector will dominate, a majority (34 to 32 percent) choose the strong answer that 'nearly everyone' will pay for private services.

Finally on welfare, a substantial majority expect private services to dominate, rather than the state service. 27 percent think that 'hardly anyone' or 'some' will use private services, versus the 59 percent who think that 'most' or 'nearly everyone' will. The 27 percent is made up of 4 percent who expect hardly anyone to go private, and 23 percent who think that 'some' will. Thus even on welfare, more than 2:1 of those surveyed think that the future will be dominated by private services rather than by the state sector.

The breakdown on schools

There is no significant difference between the sexes insofar as their expectation of state schools is concerned. The 51 percent who say all state or most state is 51 percent for men, 50 percent for women. The 36 percent who say all private or most private is 35 percent for men, 37 percent for women.

There are, however, differences between the age-groups.

(Table 21)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
all state or most state (schools)	55	50	51	54	54	41	
all private or most private		33	40	39	36	34	39

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The over 65s seem to be the least optimistic about state education. By a bare margin of 41 percent to 39 percent, they think it will be all or most state sector, rather than all or most private sector. Young people in the 15-24 age-group have the highest expectations of the state sector, with 55 percent of them expecting it to cater for all or most people in fifty years time, versus 33 percent who expect that most or all people will go private. This is still a substantial minority, even amongst the most enthusiastic group. Many of these young people will have recently been through education, overwhelmingly in state schools themselves. Some, indeed, will still be attending them. Yet one in three of these young people think that the future provision for all or most people will be private.

(Table 22)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
all or most state (schools)	64	51	45	42
all or most private	30	35	41	42

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Social group AB has the highest expectations of state schools, with 64 percent thinking the state sector will cover most or all people, as against 30 percent who think the private sector will. Compare this with group DE, where opinion is equally divided with 42 percent for each option. It seems that the lower one goes down the groups, the less confidence one has that the state system will dominate in the future.

This could represent the fact that the state education system does more for the higher social groups. Perhaps the lower social groups are more dubious about the future of state education because they are more dubious about it now. It might be that the higher social groups are better at using the state system to advantage, and are confident that there will still be good schools in the future, and that they will still be able to get their children into them.

(Table 23)

regions	North	South	Midlands
	%	%	%
all or most state (schools)	46	56	49
all or most private	40	37	35

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Confidence in the state system is highest in the South (56 to 37 percent), and lowest in the North (46 to 40 percent). People in the South seem to have a higher opinion of state schools, and expect a better future for them.

(Table 24)

Newspaper readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top
	%	%	%
all or most state (schools)	66	49	44
all or most private	27	43	43

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The state system has much more support among broadsheet readers, with two out of three (66 percent) expecting it will cover all or most people in fifty years time, as against a quarter, 27 percent, who think the private sector will instead. For tabloid (red-top) readers, however, the split is an even one, 44 percent for the state, 43 percent private. As with the social group breakdown, it could be that the state education experienced by tabloid readers is very different from that experienced by readers of papers like the *Times* and the *Guardian*. This could be why the tabloid readers are less convinced that it will survive.

The breakdown on the NHS

By 56 to 35 percent, the British think that health services in the future will be largely private rather than state. Men are more confident than women about the future of the NHS. 39 percent of men think that health will be in the state sector for all or most, whereas only 32 percent of women do. Similarly, 52 percent of men think health will be private for all or most, as against the 59 percent of women who think so. For some reason women seem to rate the NHS less highly than men do. Perhaps they have occasion to make more use of it, and thus have more experience of what it is like. Or perhaps it performs less well in treating the illnesses from which women suffer.

The differences between age groups seem minor, however.

(Table 25)

age	15-24	25-24	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
all or most state (health)	36	38	35	30	36	35
all or most private	53	57	58	60	56	49

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The majority who think that health will be provided privately in the future for all or most of the population is consistently large in every age group. The 45-54 year-olds seem least confident of a continuing state NHS, and most convinced that health will go private. They do so by a 60 to 30 percent majority, a ratio of 2 to 1.

(Table 26)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
all or most state (health)	44	35	36	29
all or most private	52	55	56	57

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Although a majority in every social group thinks that private health care, rather than the NHS, will dominate in the future, the majorities increase for the lower groups. The DE group is the least convinced that the NHS will be providing most of the health care, and most convinced that all or most people will pay for private health care. It could be that the experience of the upper social groups with the NHS has been better than that of their counterparts from the lower groups. Commentators have often made the point that the articulate middle classes are very adept at using the system to advantage, and tend to obtain better services in health as in education. This is a possible explanation for the difference.

(Table 27)

regions	North	South	Midlands
	%	%	%

all or most state (health)	35	39	32
all or most private	55	53	58

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Fewer people in the South seem pessimistic about the future of the NHS, and the Midlands most pessimistic, but the differences across the regions are not large, and a sizeable majority in each expects private treatment for most or all of the population within fifty years.

(Table 28)

newspaper readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top
	%	%	%
all or most state (health)	51	32	33
all or most private	45	61	58

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

As with schools, there is more support for the state service among broadsheet readers than among those who choose middle market papers or red-top tabloids. Indeed, only among broadsheet readers is there a slight majority (51 to 45 percent) which expects the NHS to dominate in the future. Among middle market readers the majority is the other way, with 61 to 32 percent expecting private health to dominate. Tabloid readers say the same, by 58 to 33 percent.

As was suggested for education, it could be that the experience which readers of the *Times* or the *Guardian* have of the NHS is vastly different from that undergone by readers of the *Mail* or the *Sun*. Another possible explanation is that it might be among broadsheet readers that most current private patients will be found. Thus they might be answering about a state service which a proportion of them might not expect to use personally.

The breakdown on pensions

Of the four big state services, it is pensions where people have lowest expectations of the state service. Men expect that most or all people will use private pensions, by a margin of 67 to 24 percent. For women it is slightly larger, by 67 to 21 percent.

There is one striking difference in the age group breakdown, however.

(Table 29)

age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
all or most state (pensions)		39	23	18	16	23	21
all or most private	49	71	75	75	68	62	

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Although young people in the 15-24 bracket think by a substantial margin that the future of pensions will be largely private, they do so less than any other age group. Nearly four in ten, 39 percent, expect state pensions to dominate, versus the nearly half, 49 percent, who do not. The highest percentage of any other group who expect that is only a quarter, 23 percent.

It seems to be the 45-54 year-olds, approaching retirement themselves, who have the lowest expectations for state pensions. They think, by 75 to 16 percent, that the future will be private.

The young people are, of course, furthest away from receipt of any pensions, and perhaps less likely to give it much thought. More of them than for any other group seem to think that the state will handle pensions, although nearly 1 in 2 think they will have to do it themselves.

(Table 30)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
all or most state (pensions)		20	19	25
	28			
all or most private	76	69	65	59

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The breakdown by social group shows that in every group there is never less than a 2 to 1 ratio expecting a private future for pension. It also shows that the lower one's group, the more confidence one has in state pensions, and the less one expects private pensions to dominate. The AB group favours private over state by 76 to 20 percent, whereas this goes down to 59 to 28 percent for the DE group.

Plainly, all classes are skeptical about state pensions, the upper social groups more than others.

(Table 31)

regions	North		South		Midlands	
	%		%		%	
all or most state (pensions)		22		25		20
all or most private	67		66		67	

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

There do not appear to be significant regional differences in expectations concerning state or private pensions.

(Table 32)

newspaper readership	broadsheet		middle market		red-top	
	%		%		%	
all or most state (pensions)		20		16		29
all or most private	73		79		62	

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

The red-top readers have somewhat more confidence in state pensions than their broadsheet-reading counterparts, but still, by more than two to one, 62 to 29 percent, think that the future will be mostly private.

The breakdown on welfare

The general population expects, by 59 to 27 percent, that welfare provision in fifty years time will be done by such means as private insurance rather than by state schemes. For men the margin is 58 to 30 percent, for women it is 59 to 25 percent, making the latter slightly more skeptical about state welfare. As with pensions, the young people, although still expecting most or all people to be in private coverage, do so by a lower margin than their elders.

(Table 33)

age	15-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64		65+	
	%		%		%		%		%		%	

all or most state (welfare)	36	25	26	23	28	26
all or most private	47	63	64	65	63	52

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

There is a striking consistency between the ages of 25 and 64, with more than 60 percent of each group expecting private welfare services, and less than 30 percent of each expecting state welfare still to be the dominant element.

(Table 34)

social group	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
all or most state (welfare)	29	25	27	28
all or most private	64	60	62	52

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

Only among the DE group is there less than a 2 to 1 ratio expecting private welfare to predominate, and even here the margin of those who do is still substantial.

(Table 35)

regions	North	South	Midlands
	%	%	%
all or most state (welfare)	22	35	24
all or most private	63	53	62

Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

People in the North and Midlands are more convinced than those in the South that state welfare will be replaced by private alternatives, although here again, all regions have huge margins which think so.

(Table 36)

newspaper readership	broadsheet	middle market	red-top
	%	%	%
all or most state (welfare)	35	24	29

all or most private	57	66	59
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Base: 1,025 British adults, 15+, 20-24 July 2000

Source: MORI

It is the broadsheet readers who are least pessimistic about state welfare, although even they think by 57 to 35 percent that private alternatives will cover all or most people. Perhaps they are least likely to have experience of state welfare, and think themselves least likely to do so in future? Certainly the middle market readers think, by 66 to 24 percent, that state welfare is on the way out; and so do the tabloid readers, by 59 to 29 percent.

6. Summary and conclusion

Section 1: The Nation

A majority of the British people think today, at the dawn of the new millenium, that their nation will still be independent in fifty years time, but most also think that it will not be that influential. Most expect it to lose its cutting edge in scientific and technical innovation, and lose its leading role in artistic and cultural achievement. There's some cheer in this otherwise gloomy prognostication in that the fewer of the young today are pessimistic than their elders on many of these issues.

- Britain will retain its independence, say the barest of a majority – 52 percent, with four in ten saying it will lose it. Of the young (15-24 age group), the balance for Britain keeping its independence is 63 to 26 percent (more than two to one).
- Britain will have little influence in world affairs, say another bare majority - 53 percent, with again four in ten, 39 percent, who think its influence will be considerable. More young people disagree. They say by 52 to 37 percent that they think Britain will still be influential.
- More older people think Britain will lose its independence, and more people in the lower social groups think it will lose influence.
- Only a minority express views on whether Britain will lose its cutting edge in science and technology over the next fifty years. Nearly a quarter, 23 percent, say it will lose it; half that, 12 percent, say it will not. The young who have a view, but only three in ten, disagree. The 15-24 year-olds say by 18 to 12 percent that Britain will *not* lose that cutting edge.
- Even fewer express their views on whether Britain will lose a leading role in cultural and artistic achievement. Of those who do, they say by 13 percent to 9 percent that it will lose such a role.

Whatever the fortunes of the royal family, and the constitutional changes introduced in Britain, most people think that the country will still be a monarchy in fifty years time. Slightly more men than women think so, and rather more of the higher social groups. More broadsheet readers than tabloid readers expect the monarchy to continue, but then fewer broadsheet readers express republican views.

- Britain will still be a monarchy, people say by 43 to 13 percent. This is 51 percent for group AB, but only 37 percent of group DE. Over half, 55 percent, of broadsheet readers say so, but only 41 percent of tabloid readers.

Britain will have closer ties with the USA, whatever happens with Europe, say nearly half of the population. Young people are even more emphatic that this will happen.

- Ties with the US will grow stronger, people say by 48 to 27 percent. For young people (15-24) this rises to a margin of 56 percent to 23 percent. Two out of three, 66 percent, say that US ties will strengthen or stay the same.

Will the British think of themselves in fifty years time as European first and British second? More older people are inclined to think so than the young, many of whom will be around to see. More broadsheet readers are likely to expect this than tabloid readers. Liberal Democrat supporters are most likely, then Labour, with Tories the most skeptical about it.

- Only one in five (21 percent) pick out as likely to happen that the British will think of themselves as European first and British second. One in seven, 16 percent, think this unlikely. Young people tend to disagree, on balance. The 15-24 age-group has a balance of those who think this unlikely (15 to 12 percent), as does the 25-34 age-group (by 20 to 19 percent).
- More broadsheet readers expect people to think of themselves as European first and British second (26 percent say likely, 17 percent say unlikely), than tabloid readers who are evenly split by a margin of 17 percent likely, 16 percent unlikely.
- Liberal Democrats expect the British will think themselves European first and British second by 24 percent likely to 14 percent unlikely. For Labour supporters this falls to 21 percent to 16 percent, and for Tories it is reversed to 18 percent to 21 percent.

But then fifty years ago would a majority of the British people have expected a European Union?

Section 2: Science and Progress

The British are quite skeptical of some of the predictions and claims made by scientists and scientific journalists. Many think it likely that instant, free communications and non-polluting energy will come about within 50 years time, but on none of the other options do a majority who express an opinion

think it likely to happen. In this they are probably more conservative than the scientists themselves. On many questions the young are much more likely to expect progress than their elders.

- People think it likely that **non-polluting energy sources will replace fossil fuels**, by more than four to one, 41 percent who think so, versus 9 percent who think not.
- **Instant free communication** with anyone is thought likely by nearly two to one, 29 percent likely, unlikely by 16 percent.
- Over half the population (51 percent) think **flying cars** unlikely to be developed within the next fifty years. Only 8 percent think them likely.
- Over half the population (54 percent) think a **life expectancy of 200 years** is unlikely, versus 4 percent who rate it likely to happen within fifty years.
- People think it unlikely that **extra-terrestrial life** will be discovered. 14 percent rate it likely, 40 percent say unlikely. Young people are less sure, with a quarter, 23 percent saying likely, and a third, 32 percent, unlikely.
- The British do not expect ordinary people to be **taking holidays in space by mid-century**. 16 percent think it likely, 35 percent unlikely. For young people, 21 percent say such holidays are likely, 30 percent say unlikely.
- The **restoration of extinct species** is thought likely by 18 percent, unlikely by 34 percent. For young people the ratio of likely to unlikely is closer, at 22 to 30 percent.

But then 50 years ago, would a majority of the public have thought man would have walked on the moon?

Section 3: Life's Quality

Most people in Britain today expect that the next half century will offer the ordinary man and woman better lives than now. They think that opportunities for rewarding lives will be greater, and that standards of living in Britain will be higher than ever before. They do not expect another world war. They do expect that the welfare state will wither and die, with publicly funded services disappearing (more in Section 4). The idea of a fixed retirement age will go, they anticipate. Alas, people think that football hooliganism will still be with us, and England teams will not take part in tournaments without fan misbehaviour.

- More than three to one expect people to have more opportunities to live rewarding lives. 25 percent think this likely, only 8 percent think it unlikely. Optimism on this point rises with age until 65, with the most optimistic people being the 55-64 age-group, who go 39 percent for optimism, 7 percent against.
- Nearly three to one expect higher living standards than ever before in Britain. Three in ten, 30 percent, expect this, versus 11 percent who do not.
- By nearly two to one, people reject the idea that another world war is likely. One in six, 18 percent, think it is; a third, 32 percent, think it is not.
- Young people aged 15-24 are less optimistic about world war. A third of them, 34 percent expect it, against 21 percent who do not.
- By huge margins people expect the welfare state and public funded services to wither away. 46 percent expect this to happen; only 8 percent rate it unlikely. This is a six to one margin.
- By nearly two to one people expect soccer violence to continue. Fan misbehaviour is rated likely to continue by a depressing third, 32 percent, and unlikely by only 16 percent. About the same proportion expect soccer hooliganism to stop as think that ordinary people will be taking holidays in space.

But fifty years ago, who would have thought the polite, queuing British, would be shamed throughout the world for their soccer hooligans?

Section 4: The State Services

Huge numbers of the British public expect that by 2050, most people will be paying for private provision of most public services. Asked if they thought it likely that "the welfare state and publicly funded services will gradually disappear," people made it the most widely accepted of the 17 predictions offered. This is backed up by the public's prediction of what is most likely to happen for specific services. More than half think that for health, pensions and welfare provision, most people will be relying on the private sector in fifty years time, and more than a third think that most people will be paying for private education rather than using state funded schools.

- Only tiny minorities think that the state services will be so good in fifty years time that hardly anyone will pay extra to go private. Seven percent think this of schools, four percent for health, three percent for pensions, and four percent for welfare.
- Much larger numbers expect the state service to be so poor that nearly everyone will pay to go private. 15 percent expect this for schools, 23 percent for health, 34 percent for pensions, and 27 percent for welfare.
- 37 percent think that most or nearly everyone will pay for private schools.
- 56 percent think that most or nearly everyone will pay for private health.
- 66 percent think that most or nearly everyone will pay for private pensions.
- 59 percent think that most or nearly everyone will pay for private welfare insurance.
- The higher social groups (AB) are more optimistic about the survival of public services than the lower ones (DE).
- Tabloid readers are less optimistic about the survival of public services than are broadsheet readers.
- Young people, though still pessimistic about public services, are somewhat less so than their elders.

But then who in 1950 would have expected the system of private schools to still exist by now?

Snapshot of a nation

The British appear to face the newly unfolding century with mixed feelings. They think Britain will survive, but may be less influential. It will be closer to the United States. They are skeptical about many of the predictions made for scientific advance, but confident about general advances achieved in living standards and life's opportunities. Broadly speaking they expect better times, unmarred by world wars.

They expect the welfare state and most public services to wither and die, replaced for most people by private alternatives. About 3 in 5 of them expect

this to happen to the NHS and state welfare, and 2 in 3 expect it of state pensions.

Where the young differ from their elders, they tend to be more optimistic. The notable exception to this is that more of them think a world war is likely. They do not, however, think that the British will regard themselves as Europeans first, or expect Britain to lose independence or influence.