

FEEDBACK

TO THE MARKET COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

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"Double Interview" Survey Disclosed Vast Body of Swingers

In a politically turbulent year such as 1973, one elector out of every three probably switches political affiliation for at least a month.

This astonishingly large swinging vote was disclosed by Australia's first large-scale "Double Interview" survey, conducted by the Roy Morgan Research Centre Pty. Ltd. In this survey an Australia-wide cross-section of 1535 electors was interviewed in August 1973, and again interviewed (without prior notice) in October 1973.

On both occasions they were asked the same questions on many subjects. It was unlikely they remembered in October many of their answers in August.

18% Switch in a Month

When asked their present voting intention in a "secret ballot" in October, 18% marked their papers DIFFERENTLY compared with their marks in a similar "secret ballot" in August. That 18% excludes switching between the Liberal and Country parties.

Every month, changed circumstances, of course, would cause some people to join or leave the Australia-wide total of switchers. It is probable that over a year about a third of all electors are swinging voters for varying periods.

That, of course, is a vastly greater body than the 10% of actual switchers (as distinct from bombasts in pubs and at parties) disclosed by the maximum rise and fall in the votes for L-CP and A.L.P. at Federal elections.

Further evidence that the swinging vote is much greater than 10% (and probably between 20% and 40%) is provided by a Morgan Gallup Poll taken soon after the Federal election last May.

Of 1900 electors then interviewed, 16% said they had decided how to vote only in the fortnight before voting day. Another 9% decided 3 or 4 weeks before voting day, and 16% a few months before it. The other 59% had decided "a long time ago", and probably included relatively few swingers.

There may, of course, be no connection between WHEN people decide how to vote and whether they are swingers. For instance, some people who never decide until election eve may always end up by voting the SAME way.

Nevertheless, it is likely that most of the 25% who decide their vote in the month before the election, and many of the 16% who decided a few months before it, were "swinging voters" at some time during 1973/74.

Profile of the Swingers

Answers in the Double Interview survey have been analysed by demographic characteristics. The following table compares the profiles of swingers (as classified by the Double-Interview survey) with profiles of electors normally obtained in Morgan Gallup Polls:

	Electors in Morgan Gallup Poll %	"Swingers" in Morgan "Double Interview" Survey %
Sex		
Men	49	48
Women	51	52
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Age		
Under 20	4	4
20-34	34	34
Total under 35	38	38
35-44	19	19
45+	43	43
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Occupation of Household Head		
White collar	48	42
Blue collar	52	58
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Religion		
Catholic	25	28
Protestant	66	61
None, other Xian	8	10
Others	1	1
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
Where Live		
Capital cities	63	72
Country areas	37	28
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

It can be seen above that in August-October 1973 there were more "swingers" in the capital cities than in the country, and slightly more among blue collar workers than among white collar workers. The most significant finding, however, is that the age of the swinging voter was similar to the age of the voting population.

This suggests that a political party should not concentrate on any one particular age segment of the community. If any extra effort is to be made on one segment, then it would be advisable to concentrate on blue collar workers living in the capital cities and larger urban areas.

A detailed computer report is available. It shows the political parties which electors said they would switch to and from. Answers are analysed by all demographics and media habits — newspaper, magazines, TV and radio.