



Public opposition to regional and localised pay

Summary and analysis of polling, June 2012

Two recent opinion polls by Survation show the government's plans for regional pay has met with voter opposition and public unease.

Immediately following the Budget the pollsters asked about the fairness of the policy of freezing public sector pay outside London and the South East, twice as many saw the policy as unfair rather than fair.

Q: The government is proposing to freeze the pay of public sector workers outside of London and the South East. Do you think this is fair or unfair?

- 56 per cent of voters saw the policy as 'unfair'
- 28 per cent saw the policy as 'fair'
- 15 per cent didn't know

There was a notable gender divide with 33 per cent of men thinking the policy would be fair but with just 23 per cent of women agreeing. Although there is strong opposition among Labour and Liberal Democrat voters on grounds of fairness, there was still only limited support for the Treasury proposal from Conservative voters. In fact only one in two voters who voted Conservative at the last general election believe regional pay is fair.

Percentage of people who believe a freeze in the pay of public sector workers outside of London and the South East is fair according to how they voted at the 2010 general election:

- 50 per cent of Conservative voters
- 24 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters
- 13 per cent of Labour voters

Q: The government has said cutting real terms public sector wages will help boost job growth in the private sector. Do you think this policy will help or harm regional economies outside of London and the South East?

- 45 per cent say plans to cut real terms public sector wages will harm regional economies outside London and the South East
- 22 per cent saying neither help nor hinder
- 17 per cent saying they will help
- 17 per cent are unsure

Percentage of people who believe cutting real terms public sector wages will help boost job growth in the private sector according to how they voted at the general election:

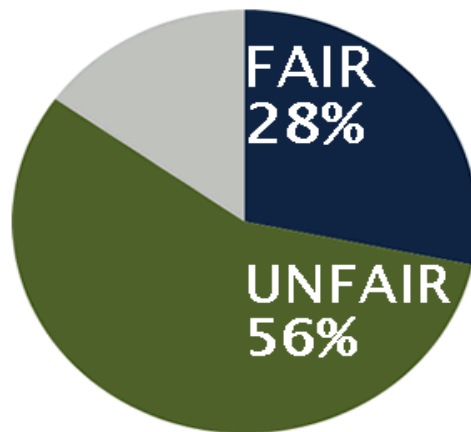
- 32 per cent of Conservative voters
- 12 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters
- 8 per cent of Labour voters

Interestingly, there is not a strong geographical divide among voters on who think the policy will help regional economies and little variation among age or class. Only

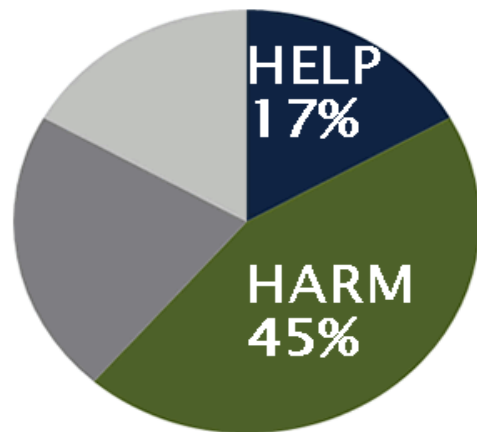
14 per cent of people in the North and Scotland believe the policy will help boost job growth, with 19 per cent in the Midlands and Wales, and 17 per cent in the South thinking the same.

This initial poll from 30 March 2012 showed little enthusiasm and confidence in regional pay and a strong sense from voters that it would be both unfair and harmful. Full data tables are available here:

Is the proposal to freeze public sector pay outside London & the South East **fair** or **unfair**?



Will the plans to cut real terms public sector wages **help** or **harm** regional economies outside of London & the South East?



Source: Progressive Polling/Survation
 Tables: <http://survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Regional-Pay-Complete.pdf>

<http://survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Regional-Pay-Complete.pdf>

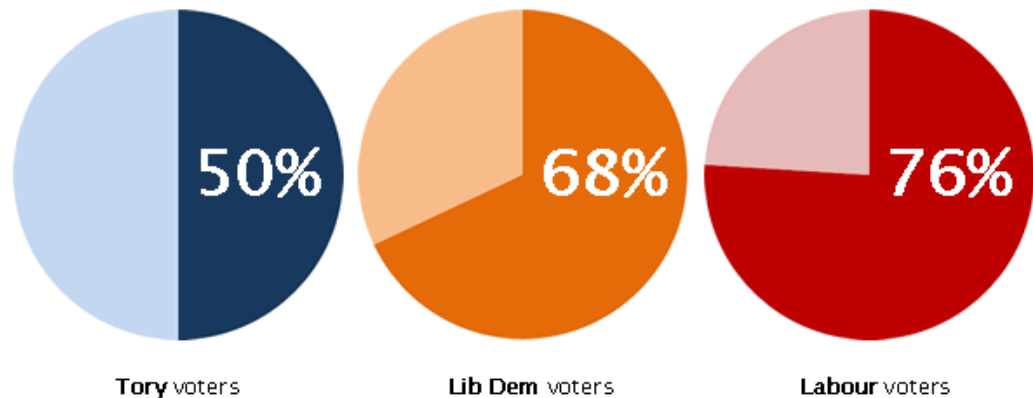
The Pay Fair campaign has consistently highlighted the likely consequences and risks that regional pay would have for public services and crucially many regional economies that would experience the reduced wages and demand. The TUC also commissioned Survation in June 2012 to explore public opinion on both of these aspects.

The first finding was that 65 per cent of voters thought schools in relatively low pay regions would find it harder to attract and retain good teachers as a direct consequence of regional pay. Twenty one per cent disagreed and 14 per cent didn't know.

As the chart below shows, this was also a view shared by one in two current Conservative voters, thereby demonstrating concern about the impact of regional pay on services across the political spectrum.

Regional public sector pay? No thanks

% saying it will make it harder for schools in areas with low private sector wages to attract and retain good teachers if regional public sector pay is introduced



Source: TUC/Survation; full tables: <http://tinyurl.com/regional-pay-poll-06-12>

Q. If regional pay is introduced it will mean that teachers in areas with low private sector wages will be paid less compared with teachers in areas with high private sector wages. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion on the effects this would have?

- 65 per cent say it will make it harder for schools in areas with low private sector wages to attract and retain good teachers
- 21 per cent thought it would not make it harder for schools in areas with low private sector wages to attract and retain good teachers
- 14 per cent didn't know

The second question of this poll asked the importance of an independent economic assessment of the likely implications for regional economies outside London and the South East. This is something which the government has not undertaken, merely asking the Pay Review Bodies to report on how it can be implemented.

Q. The government has not published an independent study on the likely impact of regional public sector pay on regional economies outside of London and the South East. How important is it that the government commissions and publishes an independent study on the likely impact of this policy before deciding if it should proceed?

- 75 per cent thought it was important
- 6 per cent said it was unimportant
- 8 per cent didn't know

Seventy five per cent of voters overall want to see an independent economic impact assessment of regional pay, however 79 per cent of Liberal Democrat and 74 per cent of Conservative voters were just as keen to see an independent economic impact study. While 27 per cent of voters said it was 'quite important', a further 49 per cent said it was 'very important'.

Full data tables for this poll are available here:

<http://survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Regional-Pay-II-Complete-1.pdf>

Conclusion

The TUC believes that the government has to date failed to make a credible case for regional pay. The polling demonstrates that voters believe that such a policy would be unfair, harmful for regional economies outside of London and the South East and would have negative implications for services such as schools in low-pay areas. The government does not appear to have considered the full implications of the policy and has not undertaken an independent economic assessment of the consequences, which the public clearly expect.