

Women's support for Blair ebbing away [GB] ^[1]

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Source: Daily Telegraph

Format: Article

Publication Date: 6 May 2004

AVAILABILITY
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EXCERPTS

Tony Blair is suffering a sharp loss of support among key groups of women whose votes were crucial in helping Labour win the last two general elections, according to research published yesterday.

Dissatisfaction is particularly high among women aged between 45 and 54, with 71 per cent saying they are unhappy with the Government and 64 per cent discontented with the performance of Mr. Blair.

Older women over the age of 55, who account for 18 per cent of the electorate, are also deserting. Because of the ageing population this group is an increasingly important target for political parties.

The research by the polling agency Mori was commissioned by the Fawcett Society, the campaign group for equality between men and women.

Dr Katherine Rake, the director of the society, said last night, "Women voters are the key to the electoral success of all political parties - this was a lesson Labour learnt the hard way in 1992."

"Labour will need to think carefully about how it adapts its politics and communication strategy if it is to persuade the disillusioned, dissatisfied and deserting female voter to back Labour at the next election."

Senior Labour figures including Alan Milburn, the former health secretary, are pushing Mr Blair to focus on issues such as improving child care and creating conditions for a better "work-life balance" for working parents. The findings will strengthen the case for "women-friendly" policies to be included in the next Labour manifesto.

- reprinted from the Daily Telegraph

Region: Europe ^[2]

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