

Project **Blueprint**

Phase **2**

Lord Ashcroft, KCMG
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Contents

Introduction: It's the uncertainty, stupid	4
Methodology	6
Policy themes – the voters' view	7
Building the Conservative voting coalition: progress report	11
Poll results	18

It's the uncertainty, stupid

PROJECT BLUEPRINT, launched in May, aimed to examine the state of the Conservative voting coalition and to offer some signposts towards achieving the overall majority that I, like most Conservatives, want to see at the next election. Phase 2 of the project reviews progress towards that goal, and looks again at the government's performance in the eyes of both those who voted Conservative in 2010, and those who considered doing so but decided not to.

First, the numbers. Despite apparently momentous events, the polls have held steady over the course of the year. The Conservatives have remained close to their 37% vote share in the 2010 election, with Labour a few points ahead (with a slightly bigger lead in the Conservative-held marginals where they are in second place, as my research found over the summer).

Our analysis has found the Conservative vote looking at least as solid as it was in the first phase of Project Blueprint. We found in May that the single most important factor for 2010 Tory voters who were staying with the party was a positive view of David Cameron. This time, we have found the proportion of 2010 Tories giving the Prime Minister very high marks for his performance has actually increased.

The importance of party leadership is borne out here not only by the strong relationship between high marks for David Cameron and continuing support for the Conservatives, but the fact that three quarters of those switching to the Conservatives from other parties give him very high marks for his performance – up from two thirds in Phase 1. For former Labour and Liberal Democrat voters, though, whether or not they think the Conservatives have the best approach to the economy is the best predictor of whether they will switch to the Tories.

Encouraging though it is that our vote from the last election remains firm, shoring up the base is not the same thing as expanding the Conservative voting coalition, as we will need to do to win an overall majority in the House of Commons. There is still some way to go on this score. While the polling and analysis shows that the economy, views of David Cameron, welfare and the party's values are factors that have the potential to shift votes, our qualitative findings have helped shed further light on voters' attitudes – particularly the "considerers" who are most likely to join the Conservative voting coalition by the next election.

In our focus groups, two sets of voters – Conservative voters and considerers – shared remarkably similar perspectives on most policy issues. On the NHS, some awareness that proposed reforms were amended following a listening exercise but continued confusion about how they are intended to benefit patients; on crime, doubt as to how this government hopes to be more effective if it is cutting police numbers; on immigration, ambiguity as to whether the government was delivering on the policies they supported before the election. And more broadly, a feeling that policy decisions in all areas were being driven by an overriding focus on deficit reduction, perhaps to the detriment of the economy in general and other areas of national life.

Hovering above all of this is a cloud of uncertainty about the prospects for Britain not just in the short and medium term but for decades to come. People's anxieties about the economy go beyond job security to concerns about their pensions and the longer term prospects for their children. We found that most people are not straightforwardly pessimistic – it is just that they do not know how things are going to turn out, and do not feel they are going to get an answer soon. They are waiting for the other shoe to drop.

The debate over the necessity, scale and nature of public spending cuts continues (though it is inevitably the case that, from the individual voter's point of view, cuts affecting others seem necessary and unavoidable, while those affecting me are too deep and too quick). The eurozone

debt crisis, though, adds an important extra dimension. Most people's first reaction is to wonder whether and how much Britain will have to contribute to bailouts, and their willingness to do so is not enhanced by the fact that many see the crisis as cultural as much as economic – that is, Britain could never be quite so profligate and irresponsible as Greece. At the same time, some voters do feel a degree of relief that their own government is taking steps to address the problem of debt before it gets completely out of hand.

The scale of the problem is such that, as was the case at the height of the 2008 banking crisis, most people do not feel qualified to judge between policy prescriptions. Many would readily admit that they barely understand the questions, let alone the answers. In that sense, though the government in general seems competent and David Cameron in particular is getting to grips with problems that need addressing, it is hard to tell how they are doing week by week in relation to the big picture – the Prime Minister is not like a football manager, as one focus group participant put it. Voters find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to hope the government knows what it is doing.

For the time being, this works in the government's favour. The complexity of the economic issues at stake means that few have a firm view that the government's overall approach is wrong – and in any case, people do not think Labour is yet offering any credible alternative. Nevertheless, large numbers of voters would feel somewhat more reassured if the government were able to show that addressing the deficit was part of a wider economic strategy, and how it fits into its broader priorities for government and improving life in Britain. While most voters do recognise the deficit as an important problem, they tend to see it as one of a range of things to be dealt with, including tackling crime, improving public services and restoring the economy to growth.

This matters when it comes to expanding the Conservative voting coalition. Those who voted Conservative in 2010 are more inclined to accept dealing with the deficit as a priority, are more sanguine about cuts, and are largely willing to give the party more than one term to address the problems it has inherited. Both the focus group evidence and our poll analysis suggests that, by and large, they are sticking with the party.

The considerers, those who did not vote Conservative in 2010 but will need to next time if we are to win an overall majority, are more pessimistic and uncertain, and more worried about the effects of deficit reduction on public services – an area in which they were likely to be suspicious of the Conservatives to start with.

For these reasons, these potential Conservative voters have not yet come over to the party in large numbers. But the potential is clearly there. Despite their unease, there is no enthusiasm for Labour (not least because of their views of the relative merits of the party leaders, which I explored in *The Leadership Factor*), and switching to the Tories remains a real, if still theoretical, possibility. The few who already say they are likely to vote Conservative next time are usually doing so because they are convinced that dealing with the deficit is a priority and the government will need more time to finish the job – not because their underlying concerns about the party (essentially, the feeling that the Tories are not for people like them) have been addressed. This remains the key to converting considerers into members of the Conservative voting coalition in the volumes needed to win the majority we seek.

Meanwhile, uncertainty prevails. When will the economy recover? When will the cuts end? What will be their effect? And when will we know? When it comes to the government's performance in relation to all of these things, as focus group participants repeatedly said, the jury is still out. As one considerer put it, "I would like to see if they can persuade me that what they're doing is right".

Methodology

Quantitative

- An online poll of 8,001 adults was conducted between 26 and 31 August 2011.

Qualitative

- Two focus groups of people who had voted Conservative in 2010 but were undecided how they would vote at the next general election were held in Bury and Nuneaton on 7 and 8 September 2011.
- Two focus groups who had voted for a party other than the Conservatives in 2010 but were undecided how they would vote at the next general election and willing to consider the Conservatives were held in Bury and Nuneaton on 7 and 8 September 2011.
- Four focus groups of people who had voted for a range of parties in 2010 but were undecided how they would vote at the next general election were held in London and Northampton on 1 and 5 September 2011.

Full data tables are available at lordashcroft.com.

Policy themes – the voters' view

In the September focus groups, voters' views of the **economy** were characterised not so much by pessimism as by uncertainty and anxiety. This went beyond the immediate prospects for recovery, and encompassed considerations including pensions, their chances of ever owning a home, and the longer term economic prospects for themselves and their children. Even those inclined to be optimistic were not confident that things would be better in three or four years ("we've got to be out of recession at some point!"), and while a few were firmly pessimistic, the more common response was that they just did not know how things were going to turn out. The rising cost of living was a recurring theme: "It's a lot harder to make ends meet. If you don't have much money, there's not a lot of fun in life any more".

There was a concern that deficit reduction dominates the government's agenda, not just on the economy but in all areas of policy, and that this may be working against the goal of getting the economy growing and creating jobs ("do you stimulate the economy by putting VAT up?"). The scale and nature of cuts remained a contentious issue, and people often argued that while cuts may be necessary in principle they are being made in the wrong places (though they seldom offered alternative suggestions). Inevitably, cuts that affected other people were generally necessary and unavoidable, while those affecting the individual voter in some way were too deep and too quick. However, the eurozone debt crisis, of which people were well aware, added an important extra dimension. The first reaction was often to wonder indignantly whether Britain would have to contribute to bailouts, and how much. Several argued that the UK would not find itself in such dire straits because "the Greeks just don't pay tax. It's a cultural thing... and all they've got is olive oil and sunshine"; "the Mediterranean attitude is different". At the same time, some recognised that "the lesson for us is to spend within your means", and there was some relief that the government is addressing the issue to prevent Britain's own debts getting out of hand: "Other countries' economies are collapsing. They're trying to stop us going the same way".

As was the case during the banking crisis of 2008, the scale and complexity of the problem meant that people did not feel qualified to judge the merits of policies: "We can't judge whether they're making the right decisions as we don't know enough about it"; "it's hard to see the wood from the trees". There was a sense that you just had to hope the government knew what it was doing.

The economy and deficit reduction were the only policy areas where the views of people who had voted Conservative were distinguishable from those of people who had not. Conservative voters were more inclined to see the deficit as a critical priority, and to stick with the strategy into another parliament. Considerers were even more uncertain about prospects for the economy than Conservative voters, and more uncomfortable with specific deficit-reduction policies, but the perceived absence of a credible plan from Labour meant they were unsure what alternative was available.

The **NHS** was widely thought to be suffering because of funding cuts. The closure of some hospitals or units was cited as evidence of this: "They're closing maternity wards. They're closing Fairfield A&E". Any suggestion that such changes were designed to improve services by creating larger specialist centres was heavily discounted – since austerity seemed to be the government's *raison d'être*, people assumed that this is the driving force behind all policy decisions. The desirability of such specialist centres was partly but by no means universally accepted: "why would you want to drive for an hour when you're in labour?" Some noted that greater financial stringency may be justified on the grounds of waste and inefficiency ("A lot of people go to A&E when they don't need to"; "They're paying over the top for basic generic drugs"), but there was no recognition that the budget overall is being protected.

The listening exercise on the reforms had been noticed, and there was a sense that the reforms may as a result be less bad than they might have been (it would be a mistake to put it any more strongly than that). But still there was no understanding of what the reforms were seeking to achieve on behalf of patients.

The groups said they had hoped for and expected a tougher approach to **immigration** from a Conservative-led government but it was not clear to them that this was being delivered. Several mentioned the promise to cut the numbers entering the UK but none thought the numbers were in fact falling. Only one participant, a Conservative voter, blamed the Lib Dems for preventing more robust action. As in the previous round of Blueprint groups, nobody knew what, if anything, was changing in this area: “I definitely expected a tougher line. They said they would cut the numbers”; “they haven’t put a curb on it but I think they said they were going to”; “I don’t know what they’ve done about it because nobody’s told me”; “they can’t get Lib Dem support to go as far as they want to”; “there doesn’t seem to be any difference”; “they have let more in”.

Though many were aware of structural changes in the **schools** system, the debate seemed rather remote and academic, since most had not been affected directly. Few had firm views about the merits of free schools, other than that it seems unlikely that many will have the time or energy to go about setting one up, but the initial response is often one of confusion: “I thought schools were free anyway?” The need for discipline was a recurring theme in the groups, and a few had heard that the government seemed to be making some welcome changes here: “Gove is saying headteachers can give detention again. As it is they can only give ten minutes, otherwise they have to give 24 hours’ notice”.

Widespread support remained for **welfare reform**, both in principle and practice. There was a feeling that the government was beginning to succeed in its aims, such as reducing the number of people on incapacity benefit. One concern, however, was that while getting people off benefit and into work was laudable, rising unemployment would make this difficult. “They seem to be doing something about people scrounging off the state”; “they’re capping benefits as £25,000, which is a good wage if you’re not doing anything”; “people claiming sickness is massively reduced. That’s been brought about by this government so that’s a positive”; “they said they were getting people back to work but where are the jobs they’re going to go back to?”

When discussing **crime**, the first issue to be raised was always cuts in police numbers – which seemed immediately to kibosh the expectation that the government would be more effective in dealing with crime than its predecessor: “They are cutting the police force by 16,000. They said they would put police on the beat. How are they going to do that if they’re getting rid of them?” This was raised as the most obvious example of the government’s pursuit of deficit reduction apparently outweighing more immediate and tangible concerns: “There are too many cuts. When all those riots were going on, they didn’t have enough police to cover the streets, and they want to get rid of 30,000 more”.

Grumbles continued about soft sentencing and over-emphasis on prisoners’ human rights. Only one participant mentioned the abandonment of plans to offer 50% sentence discounts for guilty pleas: “Didn’t Ken Clarke do a U-turn? Cameron told him to”.

The riots remained at the forefront of people’s minds when discussing law and order. There was a widespread view that the riots could have been nipped in the bud if more police had been on the streets, and if they had been allowed to act more robustly (“I’m shocked they didn’t deal with it quicker and harder. It wouldn’t have happened in France, they would have battered them”; “In London the police just stood and watched because of health and safety. I bet every copper on that line wanted to wade in but they weren’t allowed”).

There was strong support among both Conservative voters and considerers for the firm sentences handed down to rioters (though unfortunately they would only serve half the time they were given), and several participants remarked that such sentences should be the norm rather than the exception. While some felt the harsh punishments showed the authorities playing catch-up having failed to halt the riots at the outset, there was also a hope that these events might spur the government to take a firmer approach to crime and disorder: “First they didn’t let the police react, then they said yes we will do something and gave eight months for stealing a bottle of Lucozade. They needed to make a stand to show they were tough”; “the problem is that sentencing for other crimes is not harsh enough. Politicians don’t take any notice of the people”.

Most participants felt strongly that the riots were not in any sense protests and could not be excused by social factors or blamed on current government policies: many of the rioters had proper jobs, and while many people have hard lives or are angry with the government the vast majority stay within the law. Participants often observed that many had probably just seen what was going on and joined in thinking they would not be caught: “young people saw it on the telly, saw there were no police, and thought ‘this is easy, I won’t get put away’.”

At the same time, there was a feeling that the riots brought to the fore a number of issues that needed to be addressed: though the rioters were essentially criminals and responsible for their own actions, what has given rise to this criminality and what can be done about it? Regular themes in the discussion included the failure of some parents to discipline their children from a very young age; the absence of values among large numbers of young people beyond ever-increasing consumption; failure to associate material rewards with hard work; a culture of rights not tempered by any sense of responsibility; and failure to understand or accept that actions have consequences.

Participants did not tend to see this as a party political issue (indeed one even noted that it was refreshing not to see politicians blaming each other for the problem). None felt strongly that David Cameron should have returned from his holiday sooner, or thought it would have made any difference if he had (“They weren’t going to say ‘oh no, stop! He’s coming back!”). Groups were shown various statements by Mr Cameron and Ed Miliband following the riots, and it was clear that elements of both resonated with the groups – but that analysis of the wider issues has to be very carefully calibrated. David Cameron’s view that there are “deep problems in our society”, including “a decline in responsibility, a rise in selfishness” rang true with many. The danger is that it seems to say that there is a general decline for which all are to blame, including people who work hard, obey the law, and do everything they can to bring up their children properly, perhaps in difficult circumstances. Any suggestion that all are responsible met an indignant response in the groups: “there are specific issues for the people who went and rioted. Is it my fault? I object to that”; “I don’t know anyone who took part in the riots, or anyone’s kids”; “I’ve got two teenage kids and I brought them up on my own and they don’t give me any trouble. If I’d seen them in the riots I would have called the police”. The Prime Minister’s view that “we need to have a clearer code of values and standards that we expect people to live by and stronger penalties if they cross the line” also has a good deal of support in principle, but to a few, coming from a Tory, this carried echoes of class: “it’s not addressing the issues that make people go on like that. It’s looking down on people”; “it’s a very Conservative way of looking at the world, moral judgment”.

Ed Miliband’s statement that “the values crisis is not confined to a so-called underclass... It can only be solved by addressing the issues right across our society, from bonuses to benefits”, also had some takers, along with his suggestion that elites in politics and business shared the blame. However, citing “a society glorifying those who make millions” while others “struggle to keep up” and “the parallel lives of those who have so much, and those who feel they have no place in society at all” sounded to many like too much of a plea in mitigation of the rioters: “I don’t look at millionaires and think they have a better life than me. People are responsible for their actions”; “it sounds like you’re making excuses, taking responsibility away from the people who are performing these actions”; “we all strive to make our lives better. I’d love to make millions of pounds a year [but I don’t riot]”.

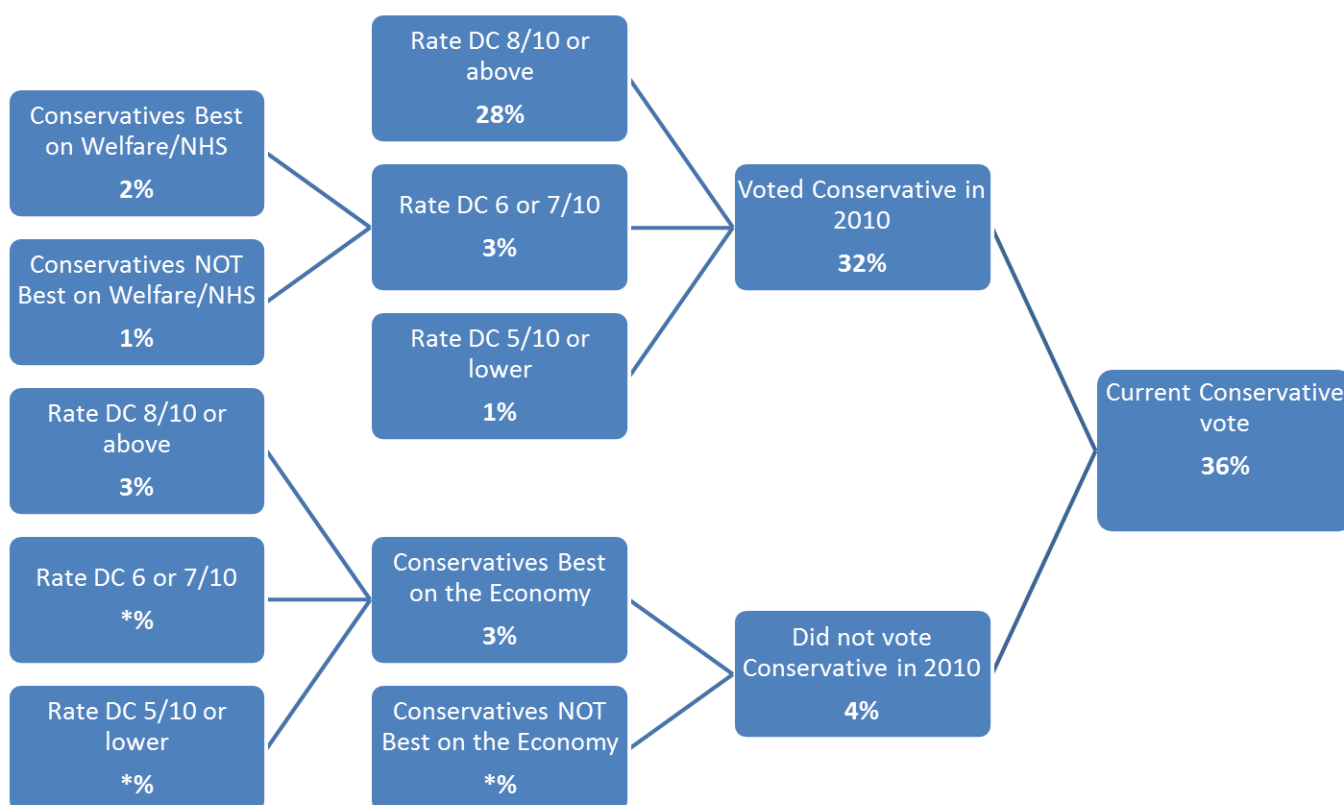
International aid is raised by focus groups from time to time, always disapprovingly. The fact that “we’re sending millions abroad when we’ve got problems at home” has been a longstanding grumble, but heightened by the need for domestic austerity. In our groups, most did not begrudge disaster relief, and the objections to a large aid budget amounted to more than simply “charity begins at home” (though people did often say this). The chief complaints were that Britain seemed to give more than its fair share compared to other countries, that we gave to countries whose economies are strong and growing, that the money often went to people other than those it was intended to help, and that many countries had little to show for decades of aid: “We give more than any other country. Why are we giving so much more, when we’re a smaller country?”; “Pakistan has got nukes. And it goes to despots in Africa. If you could guarantee it was going to the right people, but it doesn’t seem to. They just buy another plane”; “We’re putting millions or billions into India which is one of the strongest economies in the world at the moment. They own Jaguar Land Rover!”; “If we’re in so much debt, how can we help other countries?”; “Nothing has changed in Africa in the 40 years since we’ve been sending money”. The issue is not party political, and people are unlikely to be put off voting Conservative specifically because of the government’s approach to aid – but few will be attracted by it.

There was no outright opposition in the groups to Britain’s involvement in **Libya**, but no enthusiasm either. Several participants expected Britain’s involvement to be more sustained and expensive than had been intended at the outset (“it will turn into Iraq and Afghanistan and we’ll have to stay there”). Rather than praising the government for taking the initiative on the international stage, participants wondered why “we always have to be in first” when the Forces were already stretched elsewhere.

Building the Conservative voting coalition: Progress report

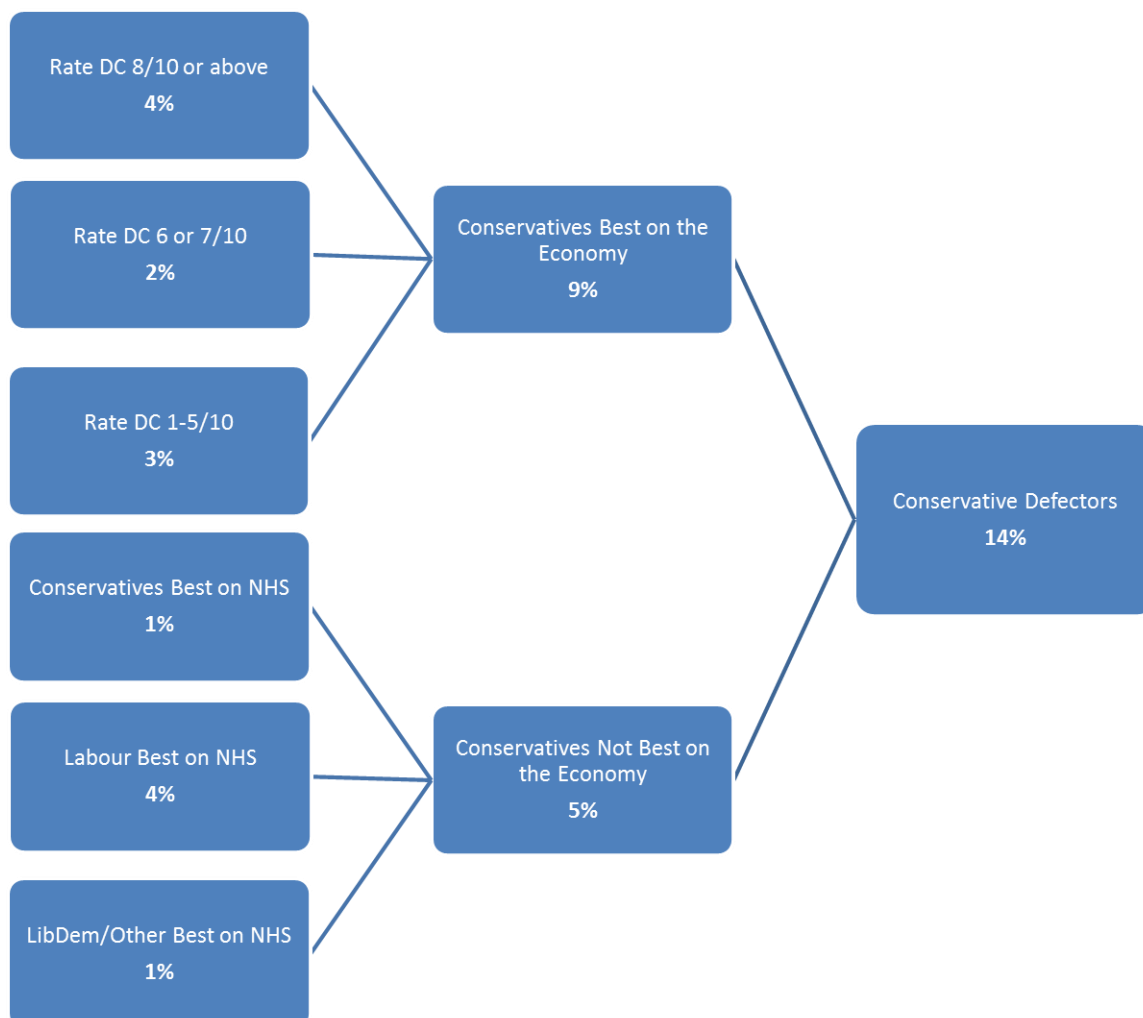
The original Project Blueprint analysis, based on polling from January 2011, identified the key drivers of Conservative support. It also divided the electorate into segments according to their characteristics – including how they voted in 2010, their views of the party leaders, which party has the best policies on different issues, and their opinion of each party’s attributes – and identified each segment’s propensity to vote Conservative. In Phase 2, based on polling in August 2011, we have tracked the changing size of these segments, and any shift in their likelihood of voting Conservative.

Breakdown of the Conservative vote



- Of the Conservatives’ 36% vote share, 32% had voted Conservative at the 2010 election (89% of current Conservative voters – slightly up from 86% in the initial Project Blueprint). The section of the Conservative vote rating David Cameron at 8 out of 10 or above is up from 24% to 28%; those rating him at 7 or below have dropped from 9% to 4%. Over three quarters of the current Tory vote share is accounted for by 2010 Tory voters who rate David Cameron’s performance at 8 out of 10 or better.
- 4% of voters said they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow although they had not done so in 2010 (down from 5% in Phase 1). Practically all of these voters thought the Conservatives had the best approach to the economy and awarded high marks to David Cameron.

Why have defectors defected?



- Our poll found 86% of those who voted Conservative in 2010 saying they would do so again in an election tomorrow (down slightly from 88% in Phase 1). 14% of the party's 2010 voters had therefore defected.
- For more than a third of these voters, the single most important factor was the view that the Conservatives did not have the best approach to the economy. This group also tended to believe that a party other than the Conservatives (usually Labour) had the best policies on the NHS.
- The remaining defectors thought the Conservatives were best on the economy also gave high or very high marks to David Cameron, suggesting that a wide range of other small factors were at play.

The Conservative gain chart

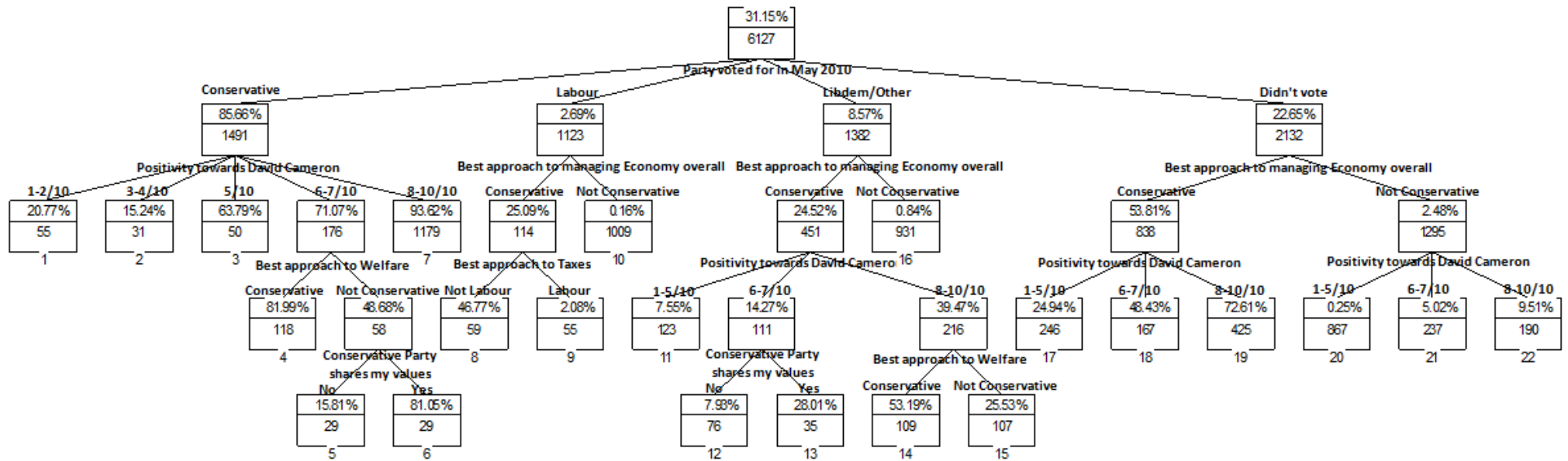
Segment no. (see Tree, p15)	How voted in 2010	% of pop in each segment (change since Phase1)	% of 2010 voters in each segment	% who would vote Con tomorrow in each segment	% of Cons current vote share [likely voters only]	Defining Features
7	Con	19.2 (+3)	29.45%	94%	27.6%	David Cameron 8+/10
4	Con	1.9 (2.1)	2.91%	82%	2.4%	DC 6-7/10; Cons best on welfare
6	Con	0.5 (-0.5)	0.77%	81%	0.6%	DC 6-7/10; Cons NOT best on welfare; Cons share my values
19	Didn't	6.9 (+2.9)		73%		Cons best on economy; DC 8+/10
3	Con	0.8 (-0.5)	1.23%	64%	0.8%	DC 5/10
14	LD/Other	1.8 (+1.3)	2.76%	53%	1.5%	Cons best on economy; DC 8+/10; Cons best on welfare
18	Didn't	2.7 (-0.6)		48%		Cons best on economy; DC 6-7/10
8	Labour	1 (-0.3)	1.53%	47%	0.7%	Cons best on economy; Labour NOT best on taxes
13	LD/Other	0.6 (-0.3)	0.92%	28%	0.3%	Cons best on economy; DC 6-7/10; Cons share my values
15	LD/Other	1.7 (-0.2)	2.61%	26%	0.7%	Cons best on economy; DC 8+/10; Cons NOT best on welfare
17	Didn't	4 (+0.6)		25%		Cons best on economy; DC 1-5/10
1	Con	0.9 (-)	1.38%	21%	0.3%	DC 1-2/10
5	Con	0.5 (-0.5)	0.77%	16%	0.1%	DC 6-7/10; Cons NOT best on welfare; Cons DON'T share my values
2	Con	0.5 (-0.4)	0.77%	15%	0.1%	DC 3-4/10
22	Didn't	3.1 (+1)		10%		Cons NOT best on economy; DC 8+/10
12	LD/Other	1.2 (-0.4)	1.84%	8%	0.2%	Cons best on economy; DC 6-7/10; Cons DON'T share my values
11	LD/Other	2 (-0.1)	3.07%	8%	0.2%	Cons best on economy; DC 1-5/10
21	Didn't	3.9 (+0.1)		5%		Cons NOT best on economy; DC 6-7/10
9	Labour	0.9 (-0.1)	1.38%	2%	0.03%	Cons best on economy; Labour best on taxes
16	LD/Other	15.2 (-)	23.31%	1%	0.20%	Cons NOT best on economy
20	Didn't	14.1 (-4.1)		0.25%		Cons NOT best on economy; DC 1-5/10
10	Labour	16.5 (+0.5)	25.31%	0.16%	0.04%	Cons NOT best on economy
			100%		36%	

Analysis of the initial 10,000-sample poll for Phase 1 of Project Blueprint identified 22 segments. The Conservative Gain Chart shows the characteristics of each segment, its propensity to vote Conservative, the proportion of the current Conservative vote share it accounts for, and its size relative to the population as a whole – as well as whether it has grown or shrunk since Phase 1.

- Segment 7, which comprises 2010 Conservative voters who rate David Cameron at 8 out of 10 or above, has grown from 16% to 19% of the population. 94% of the group say they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow. This segment now accounts for 28% of the Conservative's 36% vote share, compared to 24% in Phase 1.
- The second biggest group, Segment 10, comprises 2010 Labour voters whose most important common characteristic is that they do not think the Conservatives have the best approach to the economy. Fewer than two tenths of one per cent of this group say they would vote Conservative tomorrow.
- In segments comprising 2010 Conservative voters, propensity to vote Tory again ranges from 15% (Segment 2) to 94% (Segment 7). The common characteristics of the less Conservative-inclined among 2010 Tory voters are that they do not give high marks to David Cameron, with some also unconvinced on welfare or not feeling that the party shares their values.
- Those who voted Conservative in 2010, or have a positive view of David Cameron, or think the Conservatives have the best approach to the economy, account for more than half of those who voted in 2010. Within these segments, though, propensity to vote Conservative ranges from 94% to 2%. Increasing the conversion rate among voters who already have at least some positive views about the party will be an important part of expanding the Conservative voting coalition.
- The Voter Tree overleaf shows more clearly how support varies between different segments according to their views on different issues.

To build an election winning vote share, the Conservatives need to increase the propensity to vote Tory within each segment of the electorate, and move people from the less supportive segments to those with a higher likelihood of saying they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow. The Defining Features of the most promising segments show the arguments that need to be won, or the attitudes that need to be changed, in order to move people into a position where they are more likely to join the Conservative voting coalition.

The voter tree



The number in each bottom box shows the number of individuals in that group, out of a total sample of 6,127. The percentage in each top box shows the proportion of the group saying they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow. E.g. of the 1,491 people in our sample who voted Conservative in May 2010, 85.66% said they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow.

- For those who voted Conservative in 2010, their view of David Cameron was the factor most closely associated with their likelihood of doing so again. Nearly 94% of those who awarded him 8 or more out of 10 for his performance said they would vote Conservative at the next election (Segment 7), falling to just under two thirds of those who gave him 5 out of 10 (Segment 3).
- Those who awarded David Cameron 6 or 7 out of 10 were considerably more likely to say they would vote Conservative again if they also thought the party had the best approach to welfare (Segment 4); among those who did not, those who thought the Conservatives “share my values” were more than five times as likely to say they would vote Conservative again (Segment 6) as those who did not (Segment 5).
- For 2010 Labour voters, the factor most closely associated with whether or not they plan to vote Conservative is the economy. A quarter of 2010 Labour voters who now think the Conservatives are best on the economy say they would vote Tory tomorrow, compared to 0.16% who would not. In other words, former Labour voters are 157 times more likely to switch to the Conservatives if they think the party has the best approach to the economy.
- 2010 Lib Dem voters are on average 29 times more likely to say they would vote Conservative tomorrow if they think the Tories have the best approach to the economy. As with former Labour voters, a quarter say they will switch if they think the Conservatives are best on the economy, rising to 40% if they give very high marks to David Cameron and 53% if they also think the Conservatives are best on welfare. Those who give slightly lower marks to David Cameron are very much more likely to switch to the Conservatives if they agree that the Conservative Party shares their values.

Full poll results

8,001 adults were interviewed online between 26 and 31 August 2011. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

1. Which of the three main parties do you think generally has the best approach to the following issues?

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem
Immigration	53%	27%	17%
Taxes	41%	39%	17%
The NHS	34%	46%	16%
Schools	38%	41%	16%
Climate change and the environment	33%	29%	34%
Defence and national security	49%	36%	12%
Welfare *	36%	45%	15%
Crime and anti-social behaviour	52%	32%	13%
Relations with the EU	44%	34%	19%
Managing the economy overall	49%	35%	13%

* This finding of a Labour lead on 'welfare' may seem surprising. Questions asking specifically about reducing benefit fraud or dependency have tended to put the Conservatives ahead.

2. Regardless of which party you would vote for, please say whether you think the following words or phrases are true or not true of the Conservative Party/the Labour Party/the Liberal Democrats.

% saying true of...	CON	Lab	Lib Dem
Competent and capable	49%	34%	24%
Shares my values	37%	38%	31%
Its heart is in the right place	46%	58%	60%
Stands for fairness	39%	51%	51%
They believe in equal opportunity for all	39%	59%	57%
Honest and principled	35%	33%	37%
Tolerant and respectful towards minorities	48%	70%	65%
Clear about what they stand for	53%	39%	26%
On the side of ordinary people, not just the best off	32%	62%	51%
In touch with the concerns of people like you	33%	41%	34%

3. Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about the following individuals, using a scale from -100 (very negative indeed) to +100 (very positive indeed).

David Cameron	2.97
Nick Clegg	-13.35
George Osborne	-11.77
Ed Miliband	-11.40