

# **Marginal Territory**

**Political opinion in the seats that will decide the 2015 election**

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**March 2013**

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# Introduction

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Marginal constituencies decide the outcome of elections. In 2010, though the Conservatives did not achieve the national vote share they wanted, the party's targeting strategy meant it won 23 more Labour seats and 9 more Liberal Democrat seats than it would have done on a uniform swing. Had it not been for the Conservative performance in the marginals, Labour would have been the largest party and would have continued in government.

The voters in marginal seats receive, no doubt to their delight, a great deal more attention from the parties than anyone else. But not all marginal seats are the same. Not only are they contested by different parties, they are home to different kinds of people and face a variety of different circumstances. Not only can the state of play in the marginals look rather different from the national polls, different kinds of marginal seat can look rather different from each other.

Now that we are past the midway point in the parliament – and now that it's clear that the constituency boundaries will not be changing before the next election – I decided it was time for a proper look at the marginal territory where it will be decided who enters 10 Downing Street on 8 May 2015 and whether or not they have an overall majority at their command. This study is based on over 19,000 online interviews in 213 constituencies throughout Great Britain – mainly those for which the Conservatives and Labour will be competing directly, and those the Liberal Democrats will be defending against either of the bigger parties.

At first glance the findings seem to offer little encouragement for the Conservatives. Labour is ahead in all the clusters of Tory-held seats Ed Miliband will be targeting, and at this stage of the parliament the figures suggest there is little prospect of Cameron gaining further seats from Labour. With two years to go this study is a snapshot not a prediction, but on the basis of this poll Labour would be elected with a large majority.

It is notable, though, that the swing to Labour in the seats the party will be aiming to take from the Conservatives is lower than that implied by the national polls. In particular, Labour are moving fewer voters in the Tory-held Southern Towns & Suburbs, London and parts of the North they might hope. The swings in different clusters of seats suggest that Labour would gain all but 16 of the 109 most marginal seats (requiring a swing of up to 11%) the Tories are defending against them. But if, as often happens, the race tightens as the election approaches, the evidence is that Labour will find it harder to move votes in these places than it does elsewhere.

The data will make uncomfortable reading for the Liberal Democrats. As is often the case, very different results emerge from Lib Dem-held seats according to whether you ask the standard voting intention question – “if there were an election tomorrow, which party would you vote?” – or a version which reminds them of their local circumstances – “and thinking specifically about your own constituency and the candidates who are likely to stand there, which party's candidate do you think you will vote for?” Even on this second question, the results imply a swing to the Conservatives of around 5 points. On these

figures, Cameron stands to gain 17 seats from his coalition colleague in England and Wales. The findings suggest that one of these would be Eastleigh, which would fall to the Conservatives on the basis of the swing the cluster of similar seats. This backs up the findings of my election-day poll which showed the by-election result would not necessarily be repeated at a general election.

In reality, as Eastleigh showed, an election against the Lib Dems is never over until it's over, and there will be a large number of very fierce fights. But things look a good deal bleaker for the party in seats where Labour are second. The implied 17-point swing would deprive Nick Clegg of all but two Lib Dem seats where Labour are currently second: Ross, Skye & Lochaber, and Orkney & Shetland (where in 2010 Alistair Carmichael received nearly six times as many votes as his nearest challenger). Labour also stand to gain two seats – Cambridge and Leeds North West – where they are currently third.

In the urban English seats where Labour are challenging the Liberal Democrats there was less difference between the standard and local voting intention questions than elsewhere. In these seats only 55% of voters knew they had a Lib Dem MP, well below the 69% in seats the party is defending against the Conservatives. And as I found in my recent study *What Are The Liberal Democrats For?*, the party's performance either locally or nationally matters less for people who voted Lib Dem thinking it a left-wing alternative to Labour who are angry it joined the coalition in the first place.

Overall, though, Liberal Democrat MPs outscore their Labour and Conservative counterparts on most positive attributes, especially being a local person with roots in the area, and staying in touch with constituents through newsletters and leaflets. This was reflected in measures of local campaign action: voters in Lib Dem seats have noticed more activity from their incumbent party than is the case in Labour or Conservative-held marginals.

Across the Battlegrounds the Conservatives' biggest asset remains David Cameron, who leads as best Prime Minister everywhere except the Lib Dem-Labour Battleground, and having the clearest vision of where they want to take the country, where they lead across the board (though substantial numbers say this is not true of any party). The Tories also lead on the economy everywhere except the Lib Dem-Labour seats.

Despite Labour's clear lead on voting intention throughout the seats it is defending or challenging, the Lib Dem-Labour Battleground was the only one in which the proportion saying the party had learned the right lessons from its time in government and could be trusted to run the country again, or had done a pretty good job and had no lessons to learn, was greater than the proportion saying they could not yet be trusted – and then by only 40% to 39%. 7% of all those who said they were going to vote Labour said the party had not learned its lessons and could not yet be trusted to govern.

Meanwhile, only just over half of 2010 Liberal Democrat voters (54%) said the party did the responsible thing by entering the coalition, and only 40% said they had shown they were a responsible party of government. More than half, though, said they had managed to get some of their policies put into action, and three quarters said they had made the government more moderate than if the Conservatives were governing alone.

Asked about their expectations of what would happen after 2015 under different governments, people were strikingly pessimistic, thinking most things would stay the same or get worse whatever the result. More expected an increase in unemployment, and that NHS care would get worse, under a

Conservative government than under Labour; more thought that public spending and debt, and the numbers claiming benefits when they could work, would rise under Labour than the Tories.

Overall, just under a quarter of the full sample (24%) said a Conservative government with an overall majority would be their preferred election outcome. 30% said they wanted a Labour government. 12% said they wanted a coalition between the Liberal Democrats and Labour, and only 7% wanted more of what we have now.

According to recent national published polls, on a uniform swing Labour would win a majority of 114. According to the results of this survey of the marginals, Labour would gain 109 seats, and the Conservatives would suffer at net loss of 75. This would give Ed Miliband 367 seats in the House of Commons – a Labour majority of 84.

While this hardly sounds like good news for the Tories, it shows that things are at least a little less bad than the national polls suggest.

There is too much further data to summarise here or chart on the following pages. Full tables for all Battlegrounds are available to explore on [LordAshcroftPolls.com](http://LordAshcroftPolls.com).

MAA  
March 2013

# Methodology

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19,119 adults in 213 constituencies were interviewed online between 29 January and 18 February 2013. Results have been weighted to be politically representative of all adults living in their respective clusters of seats. The constituencies included in each Battleground were as follows:

## **Conservative-held Labour targets (sample 8,890)**

Aberconwy, Amber Valley, Basildon S & Thurrock E, Battersea, Bedford, Blackpool N & Cleveleys, Brentford & Isleworth, Brigg & Goole, Brighton Kemptown, Bristol NW, Bromsgrove, Broxtowe, Burton, Bury N, Calder Valley, Camborne & Redruth, Cannock Chase, Cardiff N, Carlisle, Carmarthen W & S Pembrokeshire, Chatham & Aylesford, City of Chester, Cleethorpes, Clwyd West, Colne Valley, Corby, Crawley, Crewe & Nantwich, Croydon C, Dartford, S Derbyshire, Dewsbury, S Dorset, Dover, Dudley S, Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale, Ealing C & Acton, Elmet & Rothwell, Enfield N, Enfield, Southgate, Erewash, Filton & Bradley Stoke, Finchley & Golders Green, Gillingham & Rainham, Gloucester, Gravesham, Gt Yarmouth, Halesowen & Rowley Regis, Harlow, Harrow E, Hastings & Rye, Hendon, High Peak, Hove, Ilford N, Ipswich, Keighley, Kettering, Kingswood, Lancaster & Fleetwood, NW Leicestershire, Lincoln, Loughborough, Milton Keynes N, Milton Keynes S, Morecambe & Lunesdale, Northampton N, Northampton S, Norwich N, Nuneaton, Pendle, Peterborough, Plymouth Sutton & Devonport, Portsmouth N, Preseli Pembrokeshire, Pudsey, Reading E\*, Reading W, Redditch, Rochester & Strood, Rossendale & Darwen, Rugby, Scarborough & Whitby, Sherwood, Shipley, NE Somerset, South Ribble, Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stevenage, Stockton S, Stourbridge, Stroud, Swindon N, Swindon S, Tamworth, Thanet S, Thurrock, Vale of Glamorgan, Warrington S, Warwick & Leamington, N Warwickshire, Watford\*, Waveney, Weaver Vale, Wirral W, Wolverhampton SW, Worcester, The Wrekin

*\* This Battleground includes seats where the Lib Dems came second in 2010 but Labour are likely to be the main challengers to the Conservatives*

## **Labour-held Conservative targets (sample 3,450)**

Birmingham Edgbaston, Birmingham Northfield, Bridgend, Delyn, Derby N, NE Derbyshire, Dudley N, Gedling, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Nottingham S, Telford, Vale of Clwyd, Walsall N, Walsall S, Blackpool S, Bolton W, Chorley, Gt Grimsby, Halifax, Middlesbrough S & E Cleveland, Morley & Outwood, Wakefield, Wirral S, Dagenham & Rainham, Eltham, Exeter, Hampstead & Kilburn, Harrow W, Luton S, Plymouth Moor View, Southampton Itchen, Southampton Test, Tooting, Westminster North

## **Liberal Democrat-held seats with Conservatives in second place (sample 3,351)**

Aberdeenshire W & Kincardine, Argyll & Bute, Bath, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk, Brecon & Radnorshire, Cambridge, Carshalton & Wallington, Cheadle, Cheltenham, Chippenham, Colchester, N Cornwall, N Devon, Mid Dorset Mid & Poole N, Eastbourne, Eastleigh, NE Fife, Hazel Grove, Kingston & Surbiton, Leeds NW, Lewes, N Norfolk, Portsmouth S, Sheffield Hallam, Solihull, Somerton & Frome, Southport, St Austell & Newquay, St Ives, Sutton & Cheam, Taunton Deane, Thornbury & Yate, Torbay, Twickenham, Wells, Westmorland & Lonsdale, Yeovil

## **Liberal Democrat-held seats with Labour in second place (sample 2,010)**

Bermondsey & Old Southwark, Birmingham Yardley, Bradford E, Brent C, Bristol W, Burnley, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross, Cardiff C, E Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh W, Hornsey & Wood Green, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey, Manchester Withington, Norwich S, Orkney & Shetland, Redcar, Ross, Skye & Lochaber

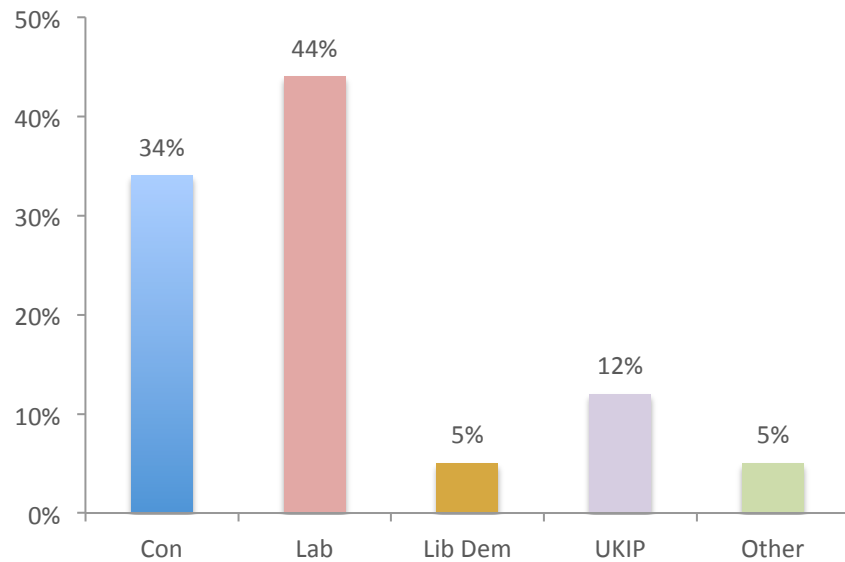
## **Other seats**

Aberdeen N, Arfon, Ayrshire N & Arran, Brighton Pavilion, Carmarthen E & Dinefwr, Ceredigion, Dundee E, Dundee W, Falkirk, Gordon, Llanelli, Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles), Ochil & South Perthshire, Wyre Forest, Ynys Mon

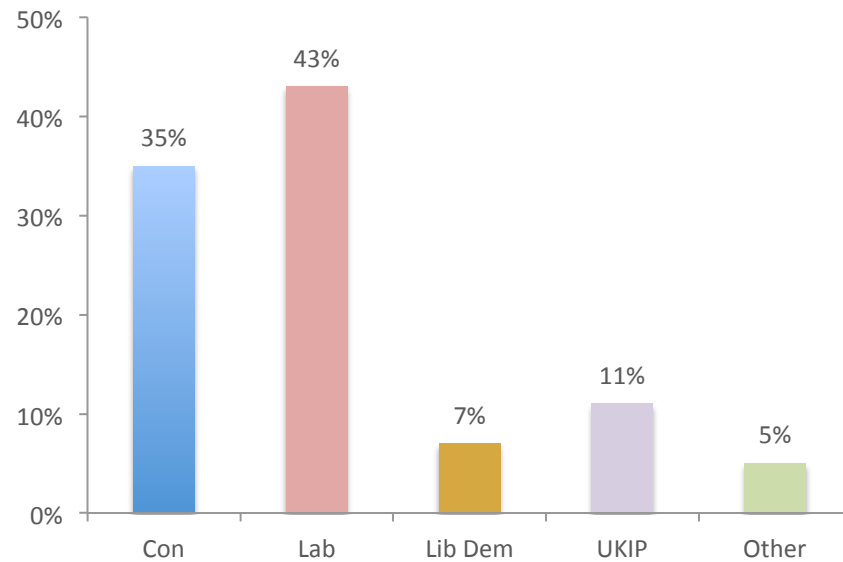
## Conservative-held Labour targets: all seats

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If there were an election tomorrow...



And thinking about your own constituency...

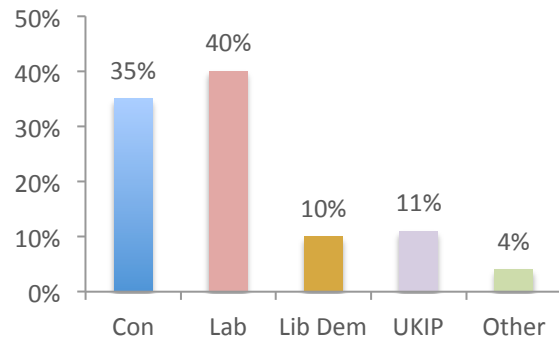


Total sample: 8,890

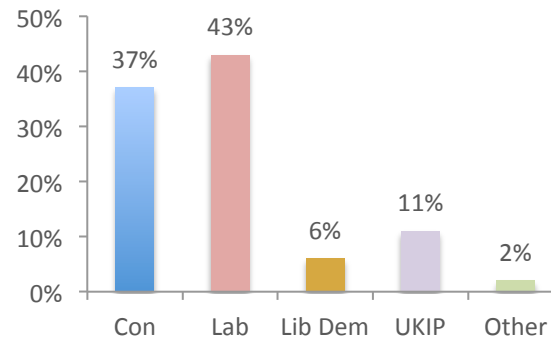
Swing since 2010 general election: 8.1% Conservative to Labour (based on "own constituency" voting intention)

# Conservative-held Labour targets by cluster

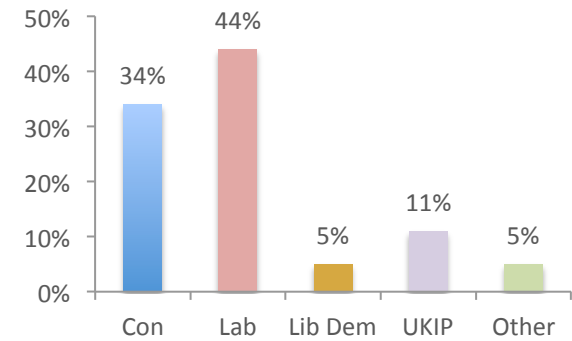
### Southern Towns & Suburbs



### Thames Estuary



### Midlands



**Total sample:** 2,088  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 7.5% Conservative to Labour

Bedford, Bristol NW, **Camborne & Redruth**, Crawley, Filton & Bradley Stoke, Gloucester, Ipswich, Kingswood, **Milton Keynes N**, Milton Keynes S, Norwich N, Peterborough, Plymouth Sutton & Devonport, **Portsmouth N**, **Reading E**, Reading W, NE Somerset, Stevenage, Stroud, Swindon N, Swindon S, Watford

**Total sample:** 908  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 10.5% Conservative to Labour

Basildon S & Thurrock E, Chatham & Aylesford, **Dartford**, Gillingham & Rainham, Gravesham, Harlow, Rochester & Strood, Thurrock

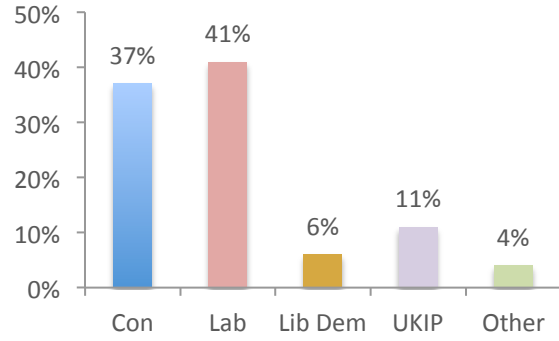
Labour gain  
 Conservative hold

**Total sample:** 1,297  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 9.5% Conservative to Labour

Amber Valley, **Bromsgrove**, Broxtowe, Burton, Cannock Chase, Corby, S Derbyshire, Dudley S, Erewash, Halesowen & Rowley Regis, High Peak, **Kettering**, NW Leics, Lincoln, Loughborough, Northampton N, Northampton S, Nuneaton, Redditch, Rugby, Sherwood, Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stourbridge, Tamworth, Warwick & Leamington, Warwickshire N, Wolverhampton SW, Worcester, **The Wrekin**



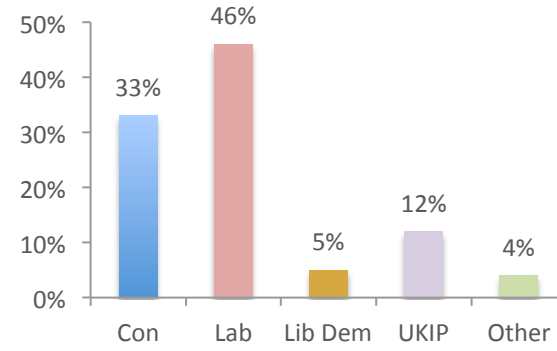
### Industrial North



**Total sample:** 1,148  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 5.9% Conservative to Labour

Bury N, Calder Valley, Colne Valley, Dewsbury, Keighley, Pendle, Pudsey, Rossendale & Darwen, Shipley, Stockton S

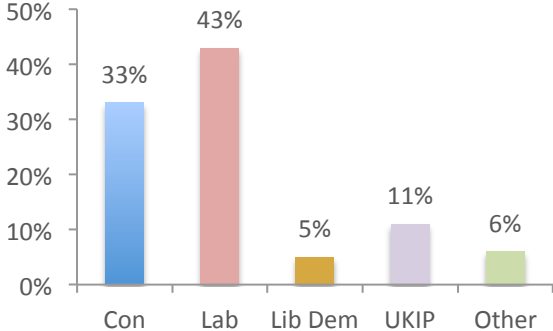
### Northern Provincial



**Total sample:** 1,263  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 10% Conservative to Labour

Blackpool N & Cleveleys, Brigg & Goole, Carlisle, Chester, Cleethorpes, Crewe & Nantwich, Elmet & Rothwell, Lancaster & Fleetwood, Morecambe & Lunesdale, Scarborough & Whitby, S Ribble, Warrington S, Weaver Vale, Wirral W

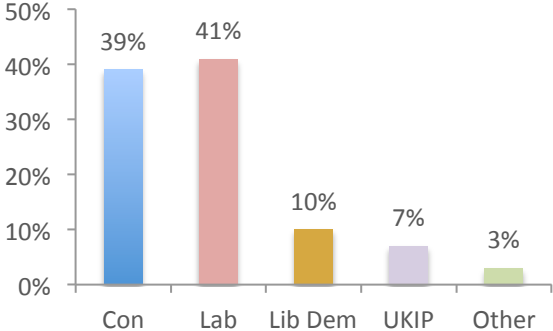
### Southern Seaside



**Total sample:** 1,072  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 8% Conservative to Labour

Brighton Kemptown, Dorset S, Dover, Gt Yarmouth, Hastings & Rye, Hove, Thanet S, Waveney

### London

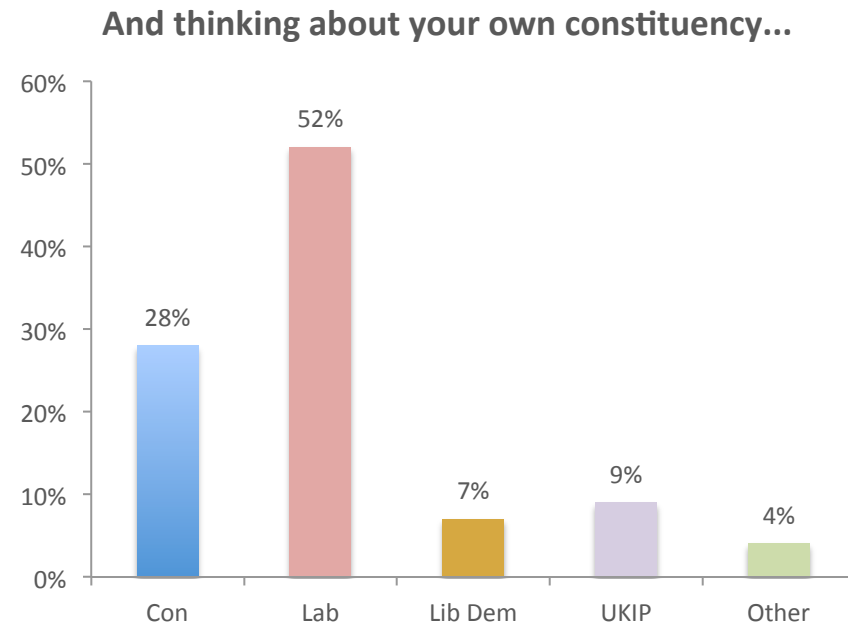
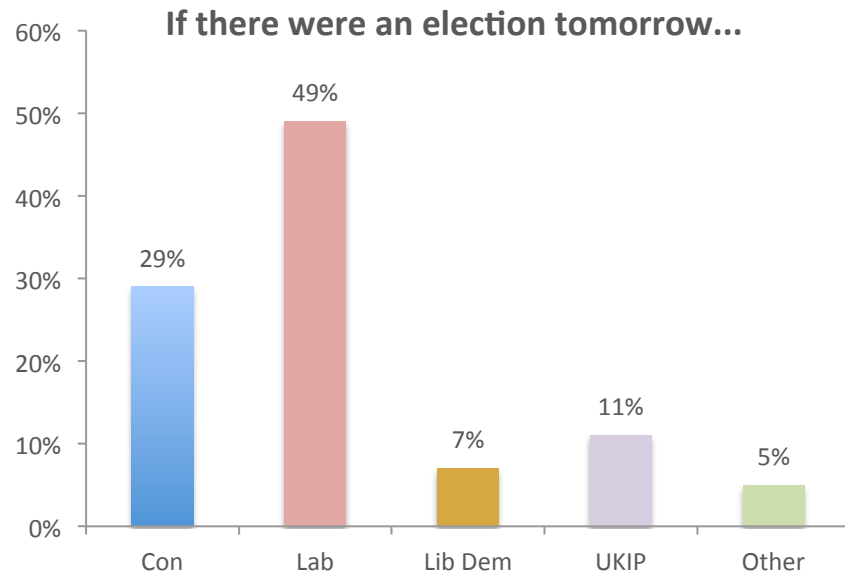


**Total sample:** 1,133  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 5% Conservative to Labour

Battersea, Brentford & Isleworth, Croydon C, Ealing C & Acton, Enfield N, Enfield Southgate, Finchley & Golders Green, Harrow E, Hendon, Ilford N

# Labour-held Conservative targets

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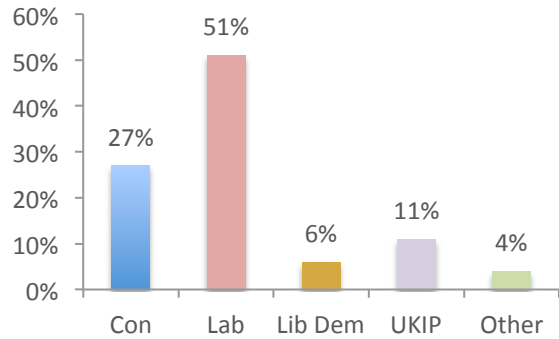


**Total sample:** 3,450

**Swing since 2010 general election:** 10.1% Conservative to Labour

# Labour-held Conservative targets by cluster

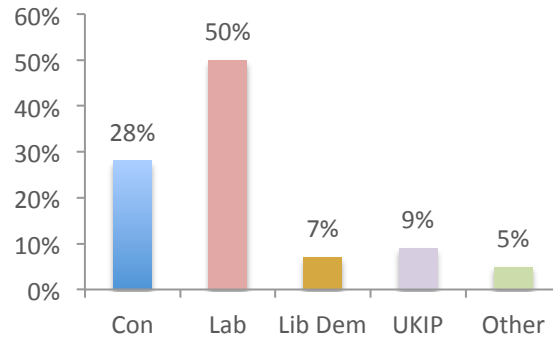
### Con Northern targets



**Total sample:** 974  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 10.5% Conservative to Labour

Blackpool S, Bolton W, Chorley, Great Grimsby, Halifax, Middlesbrough S & E Cleveland, Morley & Outwood, Wakefield, Wirral S

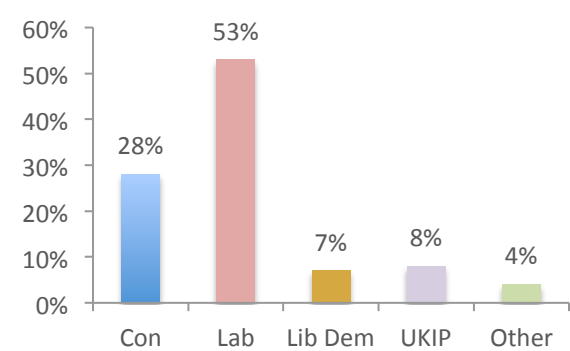
### Con Midlands Targets



**Total sample:** 1,075  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 9.2% Conservative to Labour

Birmingham Edgbaston, Birmingham Northfield, Derby N, NE Derbyshire, Dudley N, Gedling, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Nottingham S, Telford, Walsall N, Walsall S

### Con Southern Targets



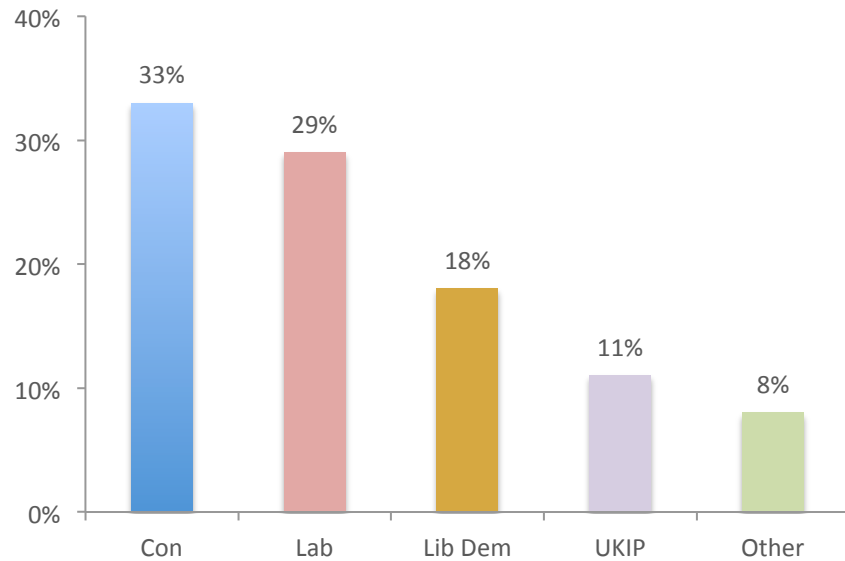
**Total sample:** 1,137  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 10.4% Conservative to Labour

Dagenham & Rainham, Eltham, Exeter, Hampstead & Kilburn, Harrow W, Luton S, Plymouth Moor View, Southampton Itchen, Southampton Test, Tooting, Westminster N

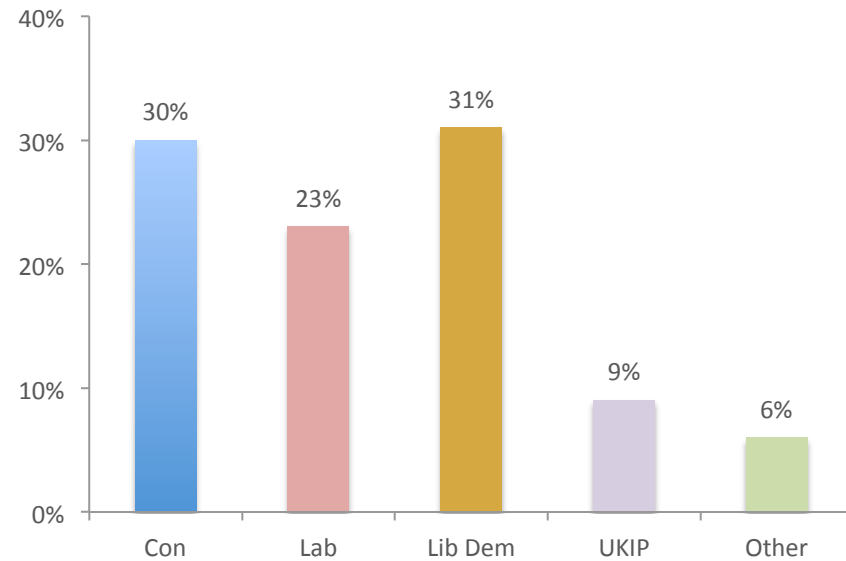
# Liberal Democrat-held seats with Conservatives in second place

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If there were an election tomorrow...



And thinking about your own constituency...

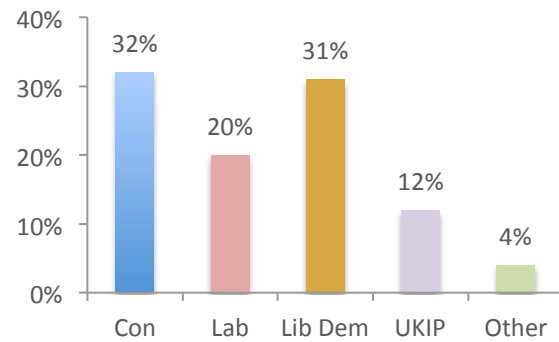


**Total sample:** 3,351

**Swing since 2010 general election:** 4.8% Liberal Democrat to Conservative

# Lib Dem seats with Conservatives in second place in England & Wales, by cluster

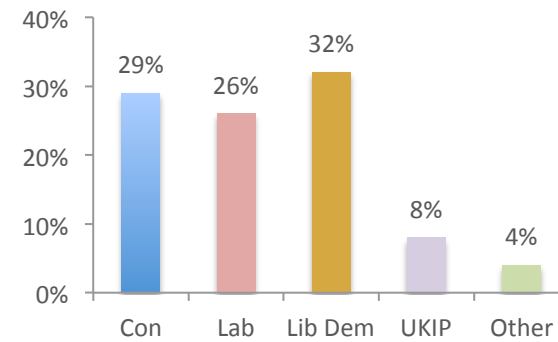
### Lib Dem Rural



**Total sample:** 1,288  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 5.5% Lib Dem to Conservative

Berwick-upon-Tweed, Brecon & Radnorshire, Chippenham, N Cornwall, N Devon, Mid Dorset & Poole N, Lewes, Norfolk N, Somerton & Frome, St Austell & Newquay, St Ives, Taunton Deane, Thornbury & Yate, Wells, Westmorland & Lonsdale, Yeovil

### Lib Dem Towns & Suburbs

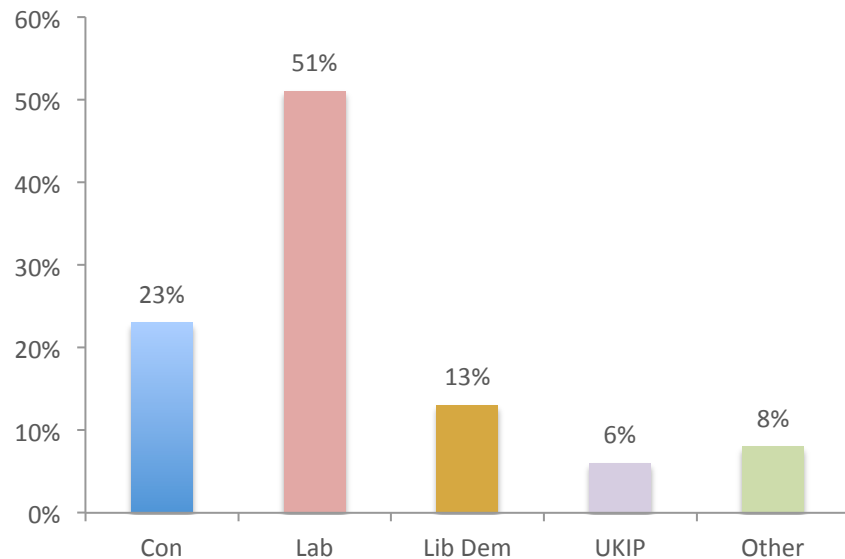


**Total sample:** 1,561  
**Swing since 2010 GE:** 4.9% Lib Dem to Conservative

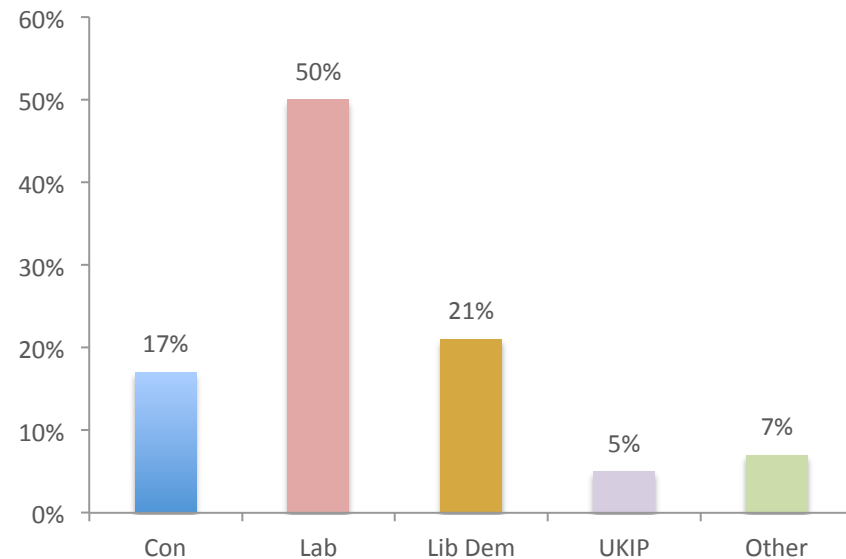
Bath, Cambridge, Carshalton & Wallington, Cheadle, Cheltenham, Colchester, Eastbourne, Eastleigh, Hazel Grove, Kingston & Surbiton, Leeds NW, Portsmouth S, Sheffield Hallam, Solihull, Southport, Sutton & Cheam, Torbay, Twickenham

# Liberal Democrat-held seats with Labour in second place in England & Wales

If there were an election tomorrow...



And thinking about your own constituency...



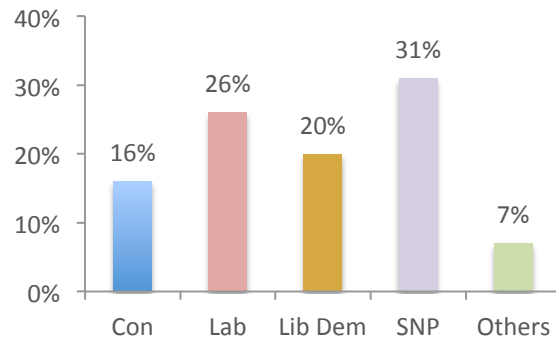
Total sample: 1,361

Swing since 2010 GE: 17.1% Lib Dem to Labour

Bermondsey & Old Southwark, Birmingham Yardley, Bradford E, Brent C, Bristol W, Burnley, Cardiff C, Hornsey & Wood Green, Manchester Withington, Norwich S, Redcar

# Scotland by cluster

### Lib Dem Scottish seats



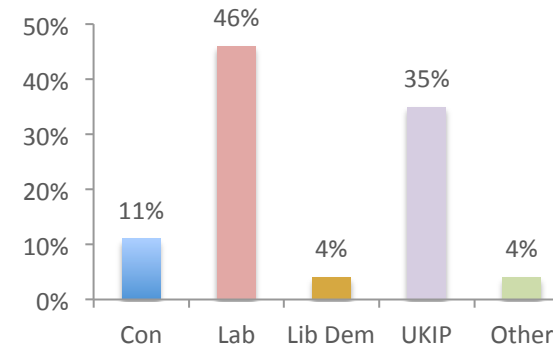
**Total sample:** 1,151

**Swing since 2010 GE:** 8.3% Lib Dem to Conservative

13.4% Lib Dem to Labour

Aberdeenshire W & Kincardine, Argyll & Bute, **Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk**, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross, E Dunbartonshire, **Edinburgh W**, NE Fife, Gordon, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey, **Orkney & Shetland, Ross, Skye & Lochaber**

### SNP v Labour battlegrounds



**Total sample:** 772

**Swing since 2010 GE:** 3.5% Labour to SNP

Aberdeen N, N Ayrshire & Arran, Dundee E, Dundee W, Falkirk, Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles), Ochil & S Perthshire



# Parties and issues

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## Certainty of voting intention

Overall, Labour voters were the most likely to say they have definitely decided how to vote or are very unlikely to change their mind (86%, compared to 81% of Conservatives and 70% of Liberal Democrats).

In Conservative-Labour and Labour-Conservative marginals, Labour voters were very slightly more likely than Conservatives to say their vote was unlikely to change (86% to 82% and 88% to 85% respectively).

In Lib Dem-Conservative marginals, Conservative, Labour and Lib Dem voters were almost equally likely to be sure (77%, 78% and 76% respectively).

## Likelihood of switching

In Conservative-held Labour targets, 47% of those who voted Liberal Democrat in 2010 rated their likelihood of considering Labour at the next election at 7 or more out of 10; 21% said this of the Conservatives. 36% of 2010 Conservative voters said they would consider UKIP.

In Labour-held Conservative targets, 16% of 2010 Lib Dem voters and 7% of 2010 Labour voters said they would consider voting Conservative. 48% of 2010 Lib Dem voters said they would consider Labour.

In Lib Dem-held Conservative targets, 18% of those who voted Lib Dem in 2010 gave a high likelihood of considering the Conservatives; 43% said this of Labour. 36% of Conservative voters from 2010 said they were likely to consider UKIP, and 13% said they would consider the Lib Dems.

In Lib Dem-held Labour targets, 36% of those who voted Lib Dem in 2010 gave a high likelihood of considering Labour at the next election.

## Tactical voting

Overall, nearly three quarters of the full sample (73%) said they would vote for the party or candidate they most wanted to win, rather than for “a party or candidate who is not my first choice, but who can stop a party I don’t like from winning” (12%). Conservative voters were the least likely to say they would vote tactically (6% overall, rising to 10% in Lib Dem-Labour marginals), and Liberal Democrats the most likely, with 14% of all Lib Dem voters saying they

would vote to stop another party from winning. Tactical voting is most prevalent in Lib Dem-Conservative marginals, where 17% of Labour and 14% of Lib Dem voters said they would vote to stop a party they dislike.

## The coalition, or a Conservative majority?

Just over half (53%) of the full sample said they would rather have the current coalition government than an overall Conservative majority (47%). 15% of Conservative voters said they would rather have the coalition with the Liberal Democrats than a Conservative majority. 21% of Labour voters and 12% of Lib Dems said they would rather have a Tory majority than the current coalition.

## Most important issues facing Britain

% naming in top three issues	ALL	Con-held Labour targets			Labour-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Labour targets		
		Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD
Getting the economy growing & creating jobs	66	64	74	73	66	73	65	62	80	67	65	72	79
Controlling immigration	46	55	37	29	52	36	30	54	30	26	46	32	25
Improving the NHS	35	20	50	35	18	49	33	18	51	33	14	51	32
Cutting the deficit & debt	34	49	26	38	57	26	30	59	23	39	51	26	52
Reforming welfare & the benefits system	28	40	22	37	37	18	30	43	23	31	35	17	24
Britain's relationship with the EU	19	22	17	16	23	13	14	25	17	20	20	12	14
Dealing with crime	13	11	13	10	11	16	15	10	13	11	9	13	14
Improving schools	11	5	15	10	6	17	19	5	16	11	8	19	18
Defence and national security	10	10	9	3	11	11	6	9	10	9	9	7	4
Protecting the environment	8	3	9	12	3	10	21	4	15	19	4	14	16

## Qualities of local MPs

Thinking about what you want from your local MP, which of the following are important to you?

% naming as important	ALL	Con-held Labour targets			Labour-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Labour targets		
		Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD
Is an ordinary person in touch with ordinary people	56	52	62	51	49	62	43	51	60	50	48	55	53
Willing to put local area before party & vote against whips	55	55	58	62	54	51	60	56	61	61	56	52	71
Honest with expenses	46	44	45	45	45	49	56	48	50	51	50	46	54
Friendly and approachable	43	43	45	46	40	50	50	42	48	52	41	42	53
Is a local person with roots in the area	42	43	46	40	36	46	43	47	42	43	42	36	49
Has lots of real world experience	40	44	39	36	43	40	44	49	40	42	49	35	37
Keeps in touch through newsletters and leaflets	27	31	28	29	30	35	31	28	31	37	26	26	32
Is a senior MP who party leadership listens to	14	17	12	8	17	16	10	20	18	17	23	13	22

And for each of the things you mentioned, how well do you think your current MP fulfils those criteria?

% of those naming each quality saying 'well' or 'very well'	ALL	Con-held Labour targets			Labour-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Con targets			Lib Dem-held Labour targets		
		Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD	Con	Lab	LD
Is an ordinary person in touch with ordinary people	39	61	27	42	40	60	49	46	48	81	54	37	77
Willing to put local area before party & vote against whips	27	46	17	24	24	42	34	34	27	58	35	24	52
Honest with expenses	32	51	24	33	37	50	47	44	39	62	36	35	66
Friendly and approachable	53	72	40	50	49	64	56	66	66	91	59	56	83
Is a local person with roots in the area	55	72	45	53	48	67	62	68	66	93	66	62	89
Has lots of real world experience	40	63	30	40	36	62	56	45	42	78	36	38	64
Keeps in touch through newsletters and leaflets	44	55	32	46	26	55	50	59	48	80	49	45	79
Is a senior MP who party leadership listens to	39	43	29	49	28	64	56	50	37	87	37	53	70

- Of those saying “being honest with their expenses” was an important quality in an MP, nearly half (49%) did not know whether or not this was true of their own MP.

## Local MPs and parties

Below two thirds of voters knew which party their MP represented. In Labour-Conservative Battleground seats 60% of voters correctly said they had a Labour MP (and 10% thought they had a Tory), and 62% of voters in Conservative-Labour seats knew their MP was a Conservative (while 10% thought their MP was from Labour). Voters in the Lib Dem-Conservative Battleground were the best informed, with 69% correctly saying their MP was a Lib Dem. Only just over half (55%) of voters in Lib Dem-Labour seats knew they had a Lib Dem MP.

Overall, 23% voters said they did not know which party their MP represented.

## The government’s record

Just under a quarter (24%) of the full sample said they approved of the government’s record to date, and 58% disapproved. 50% of 2010 Conservative voters, 7% of 2010 Labour voters and 20% of 2010 Liberal Democrat voters said they approved of the government’s record; there was little variation in this pattern between Battlegrounds.

Three quarters of current Conservative voters approved of the government’s record and 12% disapproved; 4% of current Labour voters approved and 89% disapproved; and 35% of current Lib Dem voters approved, while 42% disapproved.

## Best Prime Minister

Asked which of the three main party leaders would make the best Prime Minister, nearly 49% of the full sample named David Cameron, 39% Ed Miliband and 12% Nick Clegg. Conservative voters were most consistent across the Battlegrounds with between 97% and 99% naming Cameron, while between 82% and 89% of Labour voters named Miliband.

Liberal Democrat voters were more divided. In the Conservative-Labour Battleground, 39% of Lib Dems named Cameron, as did 38% in the Lib Dem-Labour Battleground. Only 21% did so in Labour-Conservative seats, and 27% in Lib Dem-Conservative seats.

## Party attributes

*Which party do you think...*

	ALL	Con-held Labour targets	Labour-held Con targets	Lib Dem-held Con targets	Lib Dem-held Labour targets
<b>...best reflects your values</b>					
Labour	<b>32</b>	33	35	24	35
Conservative	<b>26</b>	28	23	29	18
Liberal Democrat	<b>11</b>	9	11	18	15
<b>...best represents the interests of people like you</b>					
Labour	<b>31</b>	32	35	22	33
Conservative	<b>24</b>	26	21	26	16
Liberal Democrat	<b>10</b>	8	9	17	13
<b>...has the clearest vision of where they want to take Britain</b>					
Labour	<b>21</b>	21	24	15	23
Conservative	<b>30</b>	31	28	33	24
Liberal Democrat	<b>5</b>	4	5	9	6
<b>...do you most trust to steer the economy out of trouble</b>					
Labour	<b>25</b>	25	29	19	29
Conservative	<b>32</b>	34	28	35	24
Liberal Democrat	<b>5</b>	3	5	8	6
<b>...most understands your part of the country</b>					
Labour	<b>27</b>	29	36	15	31
Conservative	<b>19</b>	23	16	20	11
Liberal Democrat	<b>9</b>	5	6	22	13

## **The economy**

Exactly half of the full sample thought that in two or three years time the economy would be no better, or even worse, than it is now. 29% thought the right decisions are being made and things will improve significantly by that time. The degree of optimism varies between voters: 76% of current Conservatives (and 56% of 2010 Tory voters), 39% of current Lib Dems (and 25% of 2010 Lib Dems) and 9% of current Labour voters (and 10% of 2010 Labour voters) said they expected the economy to improve in the next two or three years. Men were more likely to be optimistic (32%) than women (26%), but they were equally likely to be pessimistic (50%).

Just under half the sample (47%) thought their area had fared about the same as other parts of the country. Slightly more thought their area had fared worse (21% overall, and 29% of Labour voters) than thought they had fared better (17%). People in Battleground seats in the North, whether held by Labour or the Conservatives, were the most likely to think their areas had fared worse than other parts of the country. Seats in London, and Liberal Democrat Towns and Suburbs, were the most likely to think they had fared better.

## **Trust in Labour**

Just under half the full sample (47%) said Labour had not learned the lessons from what went wrong during its time in government and could not yet be trusted to run the country again. Just over a third (35%) either said they had learned the right lessons and could be trusted (24%) or that they had no lessons to learn (11%). Overall, 7% of those who had said they intended to vote Labour said the party had not learned the right lessons and could not yet be trusted to govern again. Liberal Democrat-held seats with Labour in second place were the only Battleground in which the proportion saying Labour could now be trusted to run the country again (40%) was bigger than the proportion saying Labour could not yet be trusted (39%).

## **Trust in the Liberal Democrats**

Only just over half (54%) of 2010 Lib Dem voters said the party did the responsible thing by entering the coalition, and only 40% said they had shown they were a sensible party of government. 37% said they could never trust the Lib Dems now even if they left the coalition, and 62% (nearly as many as among voters as a whole) said they were not sure what the party now stood for. More than half said they had sold out their principles and 61% said they had broken their promises and sold out their supporters. However, more than half (58%) said that by entering the coalition the Lib Dems had managed to get some of their policies put into action, and two thirds said they had made the government more moderate than if the Conservatives were governing alone. Fewer than half (42%) said they offered policies that were different and distinctive from those of the other parties.

## Local campaign activity

*Thinking about the last three months, have you...*

	ALL	Con-held Labour targets	Labour-held Con targets	Lib Dem-held Con targets	Lib Dem-held Labour targets
<b>...received leaflets, newspapers or surveys from</b>					
Conservatives	7	9	7	4	1
Labour	7	7	11	4	6
Liberal Democrats	10	5	5	27	20
<b>...received a personal visit from</b>					
Conservatives	1	1	2	0	1
Labour	2	2	3	2	2
Liberal Democrats	1	1	1	3	2
<b>...received a telephone call from</b>					
Conservatives	1	1	2	1	1
Labour	1	1	2	1	2
Liberal Democrats	1	1	1	2	1
<b>...received an email from</b>					
Conservatives	7	9	5	5	2
Labour	5	4	9	3	4
Liberal Democrats	4	1	2	9	9

## Expectations of Conservative and Labour governments

*If, after the next election, there is a Conservative government with David Cameron as Prime Minister/a Labour government with Ed Miliband as Prime Minister, do you think...*

	Conservative government	Labour government
...the amount of tax paid by people like you will ...increase	49	43
...decrease	4	7
...the level of unemployment in Britain will ...rise	44	33
...fall	17	20
...standards of education in schools will ...get better	13	16
...get worse	31	25
...standards of healthcare in the NHS will ...get better	10	24
...get worse	48	25
...the amount of immigration into Britain will ...rise	39	46
...fall	19	7
...the amount of government debt will ...go up	39	52
...go down	21	7
...the level of public spending overall will ...rise	22	52
...fall	38	8
...the amount of wasteful spending by government will ...increase	41	46
...decrease	17	11
...the number of people claiming benefits when they could work will ...rise	28	43
...fall	28	10
...Britain's economy overall will ...get stronger	19	17
...get weaker	37	37



## **Preference of coalition**

In Conservative-Labour and Lib-Dem Labour Battlegrounds, Liberal Democrat voters were quite evenly divided as to whether they would prefer their party to enter a coalition with the Conservatives or Labour after the next election (should the party be in a position to choose). In Lib Dem-Conservative Battlegrounds, however, Lib Dem voters preferred a coalition with Labour by 46% to 35%.

## **Preferred election outcome**

Just under a quarter of the full sample (24%) said a Conservative government would be their preferred outcome of the next election, while 30% said they wanted a Labour government. 12% said they wanted a coalition between Labour and the Liberal Democrats; only 7% said they wanted another Conservative-Lib Dem coalition.

Preference for a Conservative government was highest in Lib Dem-Conservative seats (29%) and Conservative-Labour seats (26%). Preference for a Labour government was highest in Labour-Conservative seats (36%) and Lib Dem-Labour seats (34%).