



*Cover image: Collected answers to the question  
“What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you think of Boris Johnson?”*

© Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC  
June 2013

**Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC** is an international businessman, author and philanthropist. He is founder and Chairman of the Board of Crimestoppers, a member of the Board of the Imperial War Museum and a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum Foundation, Chairman of the Trustees of Ashcroft Technology Academy, Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University and Treasurer of the International Democrat Union. From 2005 to 2010 he was Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party.

His previous political books and research papers include *Smell The Coffee* (2005), *Minority Verdict*, *What Future For Labour?*, *What Future For The Liberal Democrats?* (2010), *Crime, Punishment & The People*, *Project Blueprint*, *The Leadership Factor* (2011), *Degrees of Separation*, *The Armed Forces & Society*, *Blue Collar Tories*, *Project Red Alert*, *They're Thinking What We're Thinking: Understanding The UKIP Temptation* (2012), *What Are The Liberal Democrats For?* and *Marginal Territory* (2013).

For more information please go to [www.lordashcroftpolls.com](http://www.lordashcroftpolls.com). You can also follow Lord Ashcroft on Twitter: @LordAshcroft

# Contents

---

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction: Are you serious?</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Methodology</b>                    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Key points</b>                     | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Borisworld</b>                     | <b>10</b> |
| <b>What they say</b>                  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Full poll results</b>              | <b>20</b> |

## Introduction: Are you serious?

---

What do we know about Boris Johnson? That he is the most popular politician in the country. That he raises the spirits in gloomy times. That he is a Tory who was elected, and then re-elected, in a predominantly Labour city. And that some think the magic that helped ensure his two personal victories would do the same for his party if, one day, he led it.

It is not a ridiculous idea. But in politics, things are seldom as straightforward as that. I decided to look further into the proposition that Boris is the answer. What is the nature of his appeal, and how far does it stretch beyond London? What do people think he believes, and does it matter? Does being a successful Mayor qualify him to lead a country? Would he boost his party's popularity, or would it erode his own? What kind of voters are the most eager to see him in Downing Street, and who is more doubtful? And if Boris is the answer, what exactly is the question?

My poll of 8,000 people, together with focus groups in Eastleigh, Taunton, Huntingdon, Warrington and Leeds, showed that Boris's popularity is by no means confined to the capital. He was thought more likely than any other senior politician to be strong, likeable, a "people person", up to the job, a winner, and someone who gets things done.

Majorities in all regions apart from Scotland thought him "different from most politicians, and in a good way". We asked for the first word or phrase that came into people's minds when they thought of Boris; the collected answers largely paint a picture of fondness and sometimes even admiration that is unique for a contemporary politician.

Boris is also the second most recognised politician in Britain, after the Prime Minister. In a world where only 72% can correctly identify a picture of Nick Clegg (most often confusing him with George Osborne), 62% can accurately name an image of the Chancellor (most often confusing him with Ed Miliband), 64% correctly name a photo of William Hague (most often confusing him with Iain Duncan Smith, and sometimes with Ross Kemp), 55% can put the right name to Theresa May (most often confusing her with Harriet Harman), and only one in ten can correctly identify Philip Hammond (most often muddling him up with Jeremy Hunt, and sometimes with Julian Assange), it is quite something that Boris achieves recognition above 90%.

Two thirds of voters, including majorities of all parties' supporters, thought Boris was doing well as Mayor of London. But while just over half in our poll thought being Mayor was a serious job and that Boris had shown he could take on real responsibility, 42% thought the job was "mainly about generating publicity for the city rather than running anything". People in the groups often referred to him as the Lord Mayor, and many assumed the role was mainly ceremonial or ambassadorial; though they thought he did a brilliant job of promoting the city, many were surprised to learn he had executive authority in important areas like transport and policing.

Most knew about Boris's prosperous background but this hardly ever mattered to people; wherever he came from, he seemed to be in touch and down to earth. People often remarked that he regularly managed to get himself into trouble, though few could recall specific incidents. Reminding them helped prove that Boris is given the benefit of the doubt to an extent that other politicians can only dream of. While people will reflexively question the motives and intentions of MPs for saying and doing the most straightforward things, most of our participants went out of their way to put a generous interpretation on the most controversial episodes in Boris's career. Though they often knew he led a colourful private life, they strongly agreed with him that this was none of their business.

Despite the impression that he speaks his mind, most people were at a loss to say where he stood politically, either in general or on any particular issue. If pushed to guess, people usually

said he probably wanted a tougher immigration policy and was in favour of gay marriage, but they were unsure about his views on Europe: in the poll, 30% said they thought he wanted to stay in the EU, 27% thought he wanted to leave, and the rest didn't know. Similarly, though people often said he refused to toe the party line, nobody could remember an instance of him disagreeing with David Cameron or the government.

In the focus groups, the prospect of Boris one day becoming Prime Minister was usually raised by participants themselves; it was to them an obvious part of any conversation about him. When asked who would make the best PM, each of the three party leaders or Boris, David Cameron came out narrowly ahead on 33%, two points ahead of Ed Miliband, four points ahead of Boris and 26 points ahead of Clegg. Among Conservatives, Cameron was the clear winner over Boris, by 81% to 18%. UKIP supporters were the only group among whom Boris was the favourite.

When we asked about how they would handle different aspects of the job, Boris beat Cameron only on "understanding ordinary people" (and Miliband beat them both). Cameron was the clear leader when it came to representing Britain internationally, making the right decisions even when they are unpopular, leading a team and doing the job overall. There was less to choose between the three on "having a clear idea of what they want to achieve", presumably more because it seemed equally untrue of them than equally true.

Only just over a third of voters overall, including around half of Conservative and UKIP supporters, said in the poll that Boris would be "capable of running the country as Prime Minister". As the groups helped to show, this hides a more nuanced set of thoughts. For some it was conceivable that he could do the job as the Boris they thought they knew, doing the "showbiz" while others conducted the serious business. They felt this would carry the potential for disastrous or at least hilarious consequences, which is why many felt the Conservative Party would never take the risk of installing him as leader. The more prevalent view was that in Downing Street Boris would have to tone down his approach, and would have more limited scope to say what he thought – in which case he would lose much of what appealed to people about him in the first place.

Asked whether they would be more or less likely to vote Conservative if Boris were leader, half said it would make no difference; just under a quarter said it would make them more likely. UKIP supporters were the most inclined to say they would be more likely to vote Tory with Boris in charge. Lib Dem voters were equally divided as to whether he would make them more or less likely to vote Conservative, and more Labour voters said he would reduce the chances of them voting Tory than that he would raise them. UKIP voters and those aged 18 to 24 were the only groups among whom a majority thought the Conservative Party would be more likely to win a general election if Boris led it.

The overlap between UKIP-inclined voters and those who most strongly back the idea of Boris as Prime Minister is surely no coincidence. The fact that Boris has been among the most outspoken supporters of immigration and gay marriage shows that this is nothing whatsoever to do with policy. Instead it shows that people's stated desire to see him in Number 10 says less about Boris himself than it says about them, and crucially their own view of politics and political leadership.

Those for whom politics is the hard grind of sorting out difficult problems most value competence and statesmanship and want to be able to picture their leaders in the company of Obama and Merkel. (That is not to say Boris lacks these qualities, rather that they are not the things they most closely associate with him). Existing Conservative supporters largely fall into this group; they have after all signed up to the drudgery of deficit reduction. This helps explain why, adore Boris though they do, they much prefer the idea of Cameron as Prime Minister, and

fewer of them than average think the party would be more likely to win an election with Boris as leader.

The idea of Prime Minister Boris appeals most to those who have the most jaded view of what politics can achieve for the country and themselves. Though they often think Boris is cleverer and more competent than he is sometimes given credit for, this is beside the point. It is the antithesis of the idea that serious times call for serious people; rather, in an age when our problems seem beyond the capacity of governments to solve, we might as well have a leader who cheers us all up.

In electoral terms, the question is whether Boris as leader would win for the Conservatives voters from Labour and the Lib Dems, and those who have moved to UKIP or stopped voting altogether. For those on the fringe, one of the big attractions of Boris (as of UKIP) is that he is 'none of the above': this lot are no good; if only we could put someone else in charge. Once there, though, would Boris make mainstream politics attractive to those who have rejected it? More likely, the slog and compromise of it all would dull for them the Borissian lustre. As Mayor he can claim the credit for some real achievements, while the fact that times are hard is not his responsibility. But in government, or when asking people to put him in government, he would find the blame for all sorts of things laid at his door. The benefit of the doubt would be harder to come by.

In his London campaigns Boris undeniably attracted voters who usually support other parties. As our research shows, this would be less likely to work in a general election. Otherwise Labour and Lib Dem supporting voters backed Boris as Mayor on a personal mandate and a personal manifesto; for many, the fact that he was a Tory was incidental. Asking them to vote for a Conservative government, inhabited by the Conservative Party and implementing Conservative policies but with Boris at the helm, would be a rather different proposition. The uncommitted and uninterested, meanwhile, would give him a hearing, but Boris alone would not be a good enough reason for them to vote Tory.

There is no doubt that Boris is a great asset to his party, and I think his time as Mayor has shown that he is up to the demands of executive office. But ultimately, were it to come to pass, the fact of having Boris as leader would not make the things that stop people voting Tory go away, and it would be a gamble to assume he would trump them. The question "are you serious?" would not just be one the voters asked of Boris: it would demand an answer of a party that thought an entertaining new leader would be enough by itself to win them over.

MAA  
June 2013

# Methodology

---

## QUANTITATIVE

- 8,051 adults were interviewed online between 26 April and 6 May 2013. In addition, 2,054 adults were interviewed online between 12 and 14 June 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.
- Full data tables are available at [LordAshcroftPolls.com](http://LordAshcroftPolls.com)

## QUALITATIVE

- Twelve focus groups were held in Eastleigh, Taunton, Warrington, Leeds, Huntingdon and Nuneaton between 28 May and 13 June 2013.



## Key points

---

- 91% of poll participants correctly identified a picture of Boris Johnson – second only to David Cameron (91%) and well above Ed Miliband (77%) and Nick Clegg (72%).
- 53% (including 42% of Labour voters and 49% of Liberal Democrats) agreed Boris was “different from most politicians, and in a good way”. Only 7% thought he was different in a bad way. One fifth thought he was the same as most other politicians and 18% thought he was “not really a politician at all”.
- Boris beat all other senior politicians on a number of personal characteristics including being “strong”, “likeable”, “a people person”, “a winner” and someone who “gets things done”. Though people were aware that Boris often found himself at the centre of controversy, few could remember specific incidents; they were more likely to think this part of his appeal than to think less of him as a result.
- More than half (53%) thought Boris believed Britain should take a tougher approach to immigration. They were more likely to think he supported gay marriage (37%) than opposed it (20%), but were quite evenly divided as to whether he wanted Britain to remain in the EU (30%) or leave (27%). Though people often said spontaneously that Boris spoke his mind and did not toe the party line, very few could remember him taking a position on an issue or disagreeing with Cameron or the government.
- However, only 29% regarded him as the best available Prime Minister, behind David Cameron (33%) and Ed Miliband (31%). Conservative voters preferred Cameron as Prime Minister by 81% to 18%. UKIP voters were the only group who were more likely to name Boris (64%) than a current party leader.
- Boris beat Cameron when it came to “understanding ordinary people”, though this was thought more likely to be true of Ed Miliband than either of them. However, Cameron was ahead of both on “representing Britain in international negotiations”, “making the right decisions even when they are unpopular”, “having a clear idea of what he wants to achieve”, “being able to lead a team” and “doing the job of Prime Minister overall”. Conservative voters gave Cameron a clear lead on all measures apart from “understanding ordinary people”. Boris led on all measures among UKIP supporters.
- Just over a third (35%) said Boris “would be capable of running the country as Prime Minister” and 32% said he “would change Britain for the better” if he did so. There was a widespread view that if he became PM he would have to “tone down” his approach, which would take away much of what appealed to people about him in the first place.
- A majority (57%) agreed “being Mayor of London is a serious job and Boris Johnson has shown he can take on real responsibility”. 42% thought the job was “mainly about generating publicity for the city rather than running anything.” Two thirds, including majorities of all parties’ supporters, thought Boris was doing a good job as Mayor.
- A majority of UKIP supporters (57%) said the Conservative Party would be more likely to win a general election with Boris as leader. Overall 39% said this, with 36% saying it would make no difference. Conservative voters (31%) were the most likely to say Boris as leader would reduce the party’s chances of winning an election.
- 35% of UKIP supporters said they would be more likely to vote Conservative if Boris were leader – more than for any other party. Overall 23% said this, and 50% said it would make no difference. Among Labour voters the proportion saying Boris would make them less likely to vote Tory (19%) was higher than the proportion saying he would make them more likely to do so (15%).

# Borisworld

---

Analysis of our poll produced five segments of opinion towards Boris:

---

## Borisophiles

- 21% of voters
- Conservative-leaning, well informed, older
- More positive than average about Cameron and Boris
- Say Boris is different from most politicians, in a good way – but say it would make no difference to their voting intention if he were Conservative leader
- As Mayor, Boris has shown he can handle real responsibility, and is capable of being PM

**Like to say: “He’s not really a buffoon. He’s cleverer than he looks.”**

---

## Boris Realists

- 29% of voters
- Labour-leaning; more than usually favourable to Miliband
- Less positive than average about Boris; more likely to say Boris is the same as most politicians
- Say Boris has done a fairly good job as Mayor, but he doesn’t really run anything
- No difference to voting intention if he were leader; wouldn’t make a very good PM

**Like to say: “I don’t know whether I’d vote for him, but I’d want to hear what he had to say.”**

---

## Boris Fanatics

- 21% of voters
- Conservative/UKIP leaning
- Slightly more pro-Cameron than average; more negative than average about Miliband
- Much more positive than average about Boris; different from most politicians, in a good way
- Say he has done a very good job as Mayor and shown he can take real responsibility
- Say they would be more likely to vote Conservative if Boris were leader
- Boris would appeal beyond the South East, be a good PM and change Britain for the better

**Like to say: “He’d be a breath of fresh air. He can’t make things worse than they are already.”**

---

## Boris Sceptics

- 20% of voters
- Labour-leaning, well informed; more likely to be pro-gay marriage, pro-EU and pro-immigration
- Less positive than average towards Cameron and Boris; more positive about Miliband
- Say Boris is the same as most politicians; hasn’t been a good Mayor, and doesn’t run anything
- (Even) less likely to vote Conservative if Boris were leader; not capable of being PM.

**Like to say: “He’s fun but I can’t take him seriously. Would you want him making decisions?”**

---

## Rejectionists

- 9% of voters.
- Don’t know who they will vote for, if anyone
- Very low opinions of all politicians, and no interest

**Like to say: “Boris who? Didn’t he win Wimbledon?”**

---



More than half (53%) thought Boris was “different from most politicians, and in a good way”, while only one in five thought him “basically the same as most politicians” and just one in 14 said he was different but in a bad way. Nearly a fifth (18%) said he was “not really a politician at all”.

Conservative voters were the most likely to think of Boris as being different and better (72%), followed by UKIP voters (63%). However, Labour voters (42%) and Liberal Democrats (49%) were more likely to think this than any of the alternatives. Scotland (47%) was the only region in which a majority did not think Boris was different from most politicians in a good way.

## ‘Lord Mayor of London’

Overall, two thirds said that from what they know or have heard, Boris was doing a good job as Mayor of London. This included clear majorities in every region and among all parties’ voters.

However, there was some disagreement as to what the job of Mayor of London actually was. Just over half (57%), including more than three quarters of Conservatives, 69% of UKIP voters and nearly half of Labour voters, agreed that “being Mayor of London is a serious job and Boris Johnson has shown he is capable of taking on real responsibility”. A minority (42%, including only 39% of Tory voters) thought the job was “mainly about generating publicity for the city rather than running anything”.

The focus groups revealed a widespread view that the position was essentially ceremonial (indeed people often referred to him as the ‘Lord Mayor’). Rather more thought the most important part of the job was to promote the city – which they thought he did extremely well, particularly during the Olympics – and were surprised to learn that the Mayor had executive authority in areas including transport and policing.

*“With the Olympics, the transport had to be up and running and ready to go, so he must have had something to do with that.”*

Huntingdon

*“What he did for the Olympics was amazing. People were holding their breath for him to cock it up, but he didn’t.”*

Eastleigh

Despite this, and despite being outside London, participants in most groups could name a couple of things Boris had done during his time as Mayor, including Boris Bikes, banning alcohol on public transport, the abolition of bendy buses, and the removal of Sir Ian Blair as Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

*“He’s an ambassador, selling the city. The city can run itself whether he’s there or not.”*

Eastleigh

*“He’s a figurehead. Lord Mayors open fêtes.”*

Nuneaton

## The life and times of Boris

Most focus group participants knew something about Boris's background, but often argued that his privilege was not a barrier because he was "down to earth" and seemed to have more "empathy" than most politicians. For some, his background and aristocratic aura was even part of his appeal: "It's like the days of the Raj, with his wiff-waff and all the rest of it". None of the few who knew of his Bullingdon Club membership were inclined to hold it against him.

*"Boris was the one smoking behind the bike sheds, Cameron was the one reporting him to the teacher. That's the impression you get."*

Huntingdon

*"I think he's more grounded than Cameron because he rides his bike around London. He's literally got his feet on the London streets."*

Huntingdon

*"He doesn't present himself as being a stuck-up toff. You don't have to speak like a cockney to be in touch with people."*

Huntingdon

*"He brightens your day a bit. Makes you smile."*

Huntingdon

Most participants knew little about his career before becoming Mayor, and few knew that he had already been an MP (leading them to cite a lack of wider political experience as a potential downside to his becoming PM).

For most, it was an established fact that Boris regularly finds himself in some sort of trouble or controversy, though most could not recall specific incidents. Many mentioned his reputation as a "ladies' man" and his reported affairs, but few if any thought this disqualified him from his current or future job. People in a number of groups knew that accusations of racism had been made. Few could recall details, though some mentioned remarks he had made about Islam following the 2005 London bombings (and few remembered the "piccaninnies" *Telegraph* piece of 2002). Pressed further, the overwhelming view was that Boris was by no means racist; he just had a habit of putting things in a provocative way. Several people compared him to Prince Philip in this respect; "he opens his mouth first and thinks later."

Nearly everyone remembered him getting stuck on a zipwire, however, and thought the incident had reflected well on him, showing his preparedness to get stuck in and an ability to laugh at himself (indeed a number wondered if the mishap had been staged).

*"He's had plenty of children, been divorced, had affairs. It's quite normal."*

Nuneaton

*"I don't think he's racist. He just has a habit of saying the wrong thing."*

Eastleigh

*“The zipwire! Only Boris could have done that... Maybe it was a ruse.”*

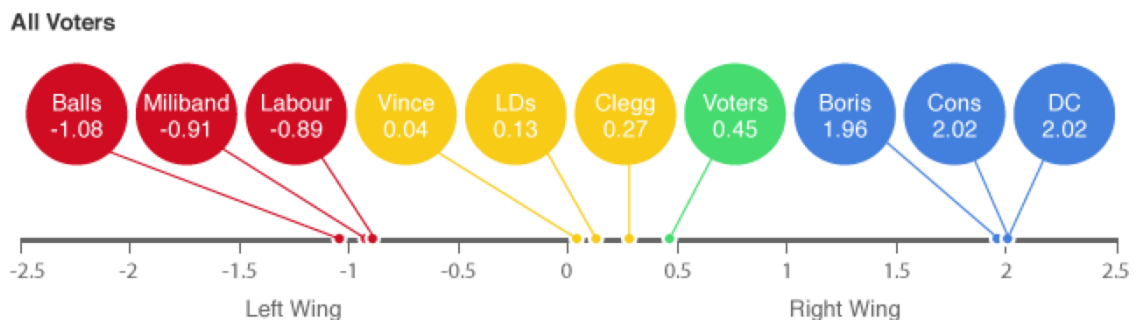
Leeds

Several participants observed that while his colourfulness as a character was his biggest attraction, it could also prevent him from rising further – or would need to be muted. His knack for “getting away with it” would also be hard to sustain in a more senior job.

## Where does he stand?

Despite knowing more about him and having a clearer view about his personal qualities than they did of most politicians, participants were usually stumped when asked where he stood politically. Though they often said that one of the things they liked about him was that he speaks his mind, most could not remember hearing him express a view on any political issue.

In a separate poll for my paper *What Are The Liberal Democrats For?*, published in March 2013, I asked where people put different politicians on a spectrum from left to right on a 10-point scale. Voters as a whole saw put Boris some way to the right of themselves, but fractionally to the left of David Cameron and the Conservative Party. Conservative voters put Boris and the party in exactly the same position, slightly to the right of themselves. UKIP voters put Boris slightly to the right of the Conservative Party, and themselves to the left of both.



*From What Are The Liberal Democrats For?, March 2013*

In our current poll, people were slightly more likely to say they thought Boris would want Britain to stay in the EU (30%) than leave (27%), while a quarter did not know. A similar proportion said they did not know what he thought of gay marriage, though respondents were more likely to think him in favour of it (37%) than against (20%). A majority (53%), including 60% of Conservative voters, thought Boris would favour a tougher approach to controlling immigration, with only 17% (and only 14% of UKIP voters) thinking he would prefer a more liberal policy.

The focus groups showed that much of this would have been guesswork, or an inference from what people thought the wider Conservative Party believed, or – particularly in the case of immigration – an extension of what they themselves hoped he might think. On gay marriage, several people deduced that he might be in favour because he is “liberal, liberated”, “open-minded” and “doesn’t seem a fuddy-duddy”. Though several remarked that he was a maverick who did not toe the party line, nobody recalled any substantial disagreement between Boris and Cameron or the government.

*"He says it how it is. With a very posh voice."*

Warrington

*"I honestly don't think I have heard him express much in the way of political views.  
He's more of a personality."*

Eastleigh

*"No idea whether he's more right wing or not. I think he has his own form of politics."*

Huntingdon

*"We don't know what he thinks. That's why some people are drawn to him."*

Nuneaton

### **Prime Minister Boris?**

Focus group participants usually introduced the subject of Boris as a potential Prime Minister spontaneously (whether they thought this would be a good idea or not). They regarded this as a natural part of any conversation about Boris, and most had the impression that he himself wanted the job, although some thought he had been at pains to deny the fact.

In our poll only 35% thought Boris "would be capable of running the country as Prime Minister", though this included a majority of Conservative voters (52%) and 47% of UKIP supporters. Only a third of Liberal Democrats and a quarter of Labour voters agreed. Slightly fewer thought Boris "would change Britain for the better if he became PM": 32% overall, including 45% of Tories.

In discussing Boris's suitability to be PM most people focused on his persona. Some thought he was good fun as Mayor but simply too "crackers" to go any further.

*"You wouldn't want him to run the country. He's OK to run London, and all those crazy people"*

Leeds

*"Do we want someone on zipwires making decisions about the NHS and education and going to war?"*

Nuneaton

*"He's the main figurehead in London but I would prefer Cameron to be in charge of the nuts and bolts."*

Warrington

*"Him having his finger on the button would be a worry. 'What does this one do?'  
Booff!"*

Taunton

A few thought he could carry on as now, doing "the showbiz" as PM while advisers carried out the serious business behind the scenes. This would effectively mean a significant change in the idea of what a Prime Minister is for, towards a more presidential role.

However, these people thought such a scenario carried the potential for disastrous or at least hilarious consequences, making it unlikely that the Conservative Party would want to take the risk of installing him as leader.

*"You'd just be waiting for him to put his foot in it."*

Leeds

*"Looking at how the country is, could Boris make things worse?"*

Huntingdon

*"He would be excellent until it all went tits up."*

Eastleigh

*"I think he would scare the living daylights out of too many people. I don't think the party would take the risk."*

Taunton

The more prevalent view was that in Downing Street Boris would have to tone down his approach. But this, combined with the inevitably limited scope to say what he thought, would take away what appealed to people about him in the first place.

*"He says what he thinks. But it's because he isn't PM that he's allowed to do that."*

Leeds

*"Cameron is a very cool character. Boris looks like he has fallen out of bed or accidentally slept in a hedge, or forgot his notes or didn't have any notes in the first place. If he turned up with a smart haircut and a beautifully tailored suit, we'd say 'who are you and what have you done with Boris?'"*

Taunton

*"He would become watered down, to appeal to the most people."*

Warrington

However, there was also a view among some participants that Boris was more serious, competent and determined than his image suggested. For these people, he was cleverer than he sometimes allowed people to think, and incidents like the removal of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner – and the fact of his having become Mayor in the first place – showed him to be decisive and resolute.

*"I think he's strong and won't be walked over. He knows how to make himself heard. If he says he's going to do something it will get done."*

Eastleigh



*"He deliberately comes over as a bit of a buffoon so he doesn't seem to be a threat, so he can do more... Maybe he could achieve more because people aren't expecting much of him."*

Huntingdon

*"I don't think he'd be afraid to make decisions. He's not a ditherer."*

Eastleigh

Aside from the question of whether or he was capable of doing the job, some felt that the theatre surrounding him made it hard for people to know whether they were seeing the real Boris – and also, therefore, whether they would want to see him in Number 10.

*"I don't know where he sits, where he's coming from."*

Warrington

*"The buffoonery is a trait that endears him to people but we've got to know he can run something."*

Warrington

A number of people said they were not sure they wanted Boris to be Prime Minister, or at least not yet, but thought he had something to offer and would like to see him in some other capacity.

*"Is there another position for him, not leader of the party? I can't see people trusting his positions and taking him seriously."*

Warrington

*"I'd like him to be leader of the Opposition. He's vivacious and would have lots of interesting things to say, but if he were leader of the country that would scare me a bit."*

Warrington

In our poll, when asked directly who would be the best Prime Minister – each of the three party leaders or Boris – David Cameron came out narrowly ahead with 33%. Ed Miliband was second with 31%, and Boris third on 29% (and Clegg fourth on 7%). However, while men preferred Cameron over Boris by 35% to 29%, women were evenly divided between the two (30% for each). Younger voters were closely divided between the two, while those aged 65 or over preferred Cameron to Boris by 43% to 27% (with 26% for Miliband).

Cameron was the clear winner among Conservative voters, 81% of whom said he would make the best PM, well ahead of Boris on 18%. UKIP supporters were the only group among whom Boris was the clear favourite, with 64% saying he would be the best PM.

When asked about how they would handle different aspects of the job, Boris beat Cameron when it came to "understanding ordinary people", with 38% saying he would do this best

compared to 18% saying it of the current PM (though 44% thought it was most likely to be true of Miliband). Otherwise, Cameron was the clear leader: the most capable of “representing Britain in international negotiations (44%, with Miliband on 31% and Boris on 25%), “making the right decisions even when they are unpopular” (40%, with 32% for Miliband and 28% for Boris), “being able to lead a team” (37%, with 33% for Miliband and 30% for Boris) and “doing the job of Prime Minister overall” (37%, with 34% for Miliband and 29% for Boris). There was less to choose between the three on “having a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve” (Cameron 34%, Miliband 35%, Boris 30%).

Conservative voters also put Boris ahead of Cameron on “understanding ordinary people”, but by a narrow margin (47% to 44%). Otherwise they put Cameron ahead on all measures with between 75% (“having a clear idea what they want to achieve”) and 85% (“representing Britain in international negotiations”).

Among current UKIP supporters Boris led on all measures, with between 55% (“representing Britain in international negotiations”) and 68% (“understanding ordinary people”).

## **Electoral impact**

Just under half (46%) of all respondents agreed that Boris “might be popular in London, but he wouldn’t go down as well outside the South East of England”. Conservative voters (41%) were the least likely to think this. The proportions agreeing with the statement were similar in the South East (45%), the Midlands (46%) and the North (46%), slightly lower in Wales and the South West (41%), but higher in Scotland (52%).

Fewer than three in ten (28%) said they would be more likely to vote Conservative if Boris were standing to be their local MP, while nearly half (48%) said it would make no difference. UKIP voters were the most inclined to say it would make them more likely (41%), followed by those who already said they would vote Tory (36%). As many Labour voters said they would be less likely to vote Conservative if Boris were their local candidate as said would be more likely (17% each).

Half of all respondents said it would make no difference to their likelihood of voting Conservative if Boris were the leader. Just under a quarter (23%) said they would be more likely to do so, including just over a third of those saying they would vote UKIP tomorrow (35%). Current Lib Dem voters were almost evenly divided as to whether Boris as leader would make them more likely to vote Tory (24%) or less likely (22%). Among Labour voters, more would be less likely (19%) than more likely (15%), with more than half (59%) saying it would make no difference if Boris were leader.

This was reflected in the groups. Several people said they liked the idea of having Boris as their MP, though the prospect seemed extremely unlikely since he was particularly suited to London. Most said that if he were leader, they would be no more or less likely to vote Conservative than they were now, for three main reasons. First, the personality of the leader would not be a good enough reason in itself to vote for a party; policies were more important, and it was not clear how if at all the party’s policies would change if he were in charge. Second, if he were party leader Boris would have to change, in which case he could lose some of his attraction. Third, aside from its (toned down) new leader, the Conservative Party as a whole would look much the same as it does now.

In our poll, UKIP voters (57%) and 18-24s (53%) were the only groups in which a majority thought the Conservative Party would be more likely to win a general election with Boris as

leader. Overall, 39% said he would make the party more likely to win, with 36% saying it would make no difference and 25% he would make such a result less likely.

Fewer Conservative voters than average (37%) thought Boris would make the party more likely to win an election; they were also more likely than most (31%) to think he would make victory less likely. While people in the Midlands (43%) and the South East (41%) were more likely than average to think the Conservative had a better chance of winning with Boris as leader, those in the North of England (35%) and Scotland (26%) were less likely.

*"It would make me listen. I wouldn't necessarily vote for them but it would make me want to see what he was going to do."*

Taunton

*"I wouldn't say 'Boris is standing, we've got to have him'. We don't know what he stands for really."*

Nuneaton

There was also a widespread view, particularly among those who had not voted Tory at the last election, that it would not reflect well on the Conservative Party if it appeared to think that installing Boris as leader was the answer to its problems. For some, it would suggest that the Tories had decided to appeal mainly on the basis of personality or celebrity rather than their record or plans.

*"I think the Conservatives know people like him. But it would suggest we were a bit shallow, that we can't see through the guise."*

Leeds

*"It would show they were desperate, because they were moving away from policies and what they're trying to do, and trying to appeal with character instead."*

Warrington

# Full poll results

Full data tables are available at [LordAshcroftPolls.com](http://LordAshcroftPolls.com)

8,051 adults were interviewed online between 26 April and 6 May 2013. In addition, 2,054 adults were interviewed online between 12 and 14 June 2013. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

- Here are some pictures of people you may or may not recognise. In each case, please can you say whether you recognise this person. If you do recognise the person, please can you write who you think it is.

|                | % saying they recognise | % correctly identifying | Most often confused with | Sometimes confused with              |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| David Cameron  | 96                      | 94                      | -                        | -                                    |
| Boris Johnson  | 94                      | 91                      | -                        | -                                    |
| Ed Miliband    | 89                      | 77                      | David Miliband           | Bert from <i>Sesame Street</i>       |
| Nick Clegg     | 80                      | 72                      | George Osborne           | Peter Jones from <i>Dragons' Den</i> |
| William Hague  | 82                      | 64                      | Iain Duncan Smith        | Ross Kemp                            |
| George Osborne | 74                      | 62                      | Ed Miliband              | Tom Hanks                            |
| Theresa May    | 60                      | 55                      | Harriet Harman           | Sarah Millican                       |
| Michael Gove   | 35                      | 29                      | Nigel Farage             | John Selwyn Gummer                   |
| Jeremy Hunt    | 28                      | 18                      | Seb Coe                  | Bob the Builder                      |
| Philip Hammond | 23                      | 10                      | Jeremy Hunt              | Julian Assange                       |

- Please can you say whether you think each of the following words and phrases are true or not true of each of the following people. If you don't know, please say so.

| %                              | Cameron | Johnson | Miliband | Clegg | Hague | Osborne |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|-------|-------|---------|
| Smug                           | 53      | 34      | 32       | 35    | 33    | 48      |
| Arrogant                       | 51      | 34      | 28       | 31    | 30    | 47      |
| Out of touch                   | 51      | 24      | 33       | 44    | 30    | 46      |
| Out of their depth             | 40      | 19      | 40       | 53    | 21    | 40      |
| Understands Britain's problems | 39      | 45      | 40       | 33    | 39    | 28      |
| Weak                           | 32      | 12      | 37       | 50    | 20    | 31      |
| Competent                      | 42      | 50      | 33       | 26    | 47    | 27      |
| Explains things clearly        | 42      | 36      | 34       | 32    | 42    | 24      |
| Strong                         | 44      | 55      | 27       | 17    | 40    | 27      |
| Fair                           | 32      | 47      | 42       | 36    | 38    | 21      |
| Likeable                       | 37      | 71      | 36       | 40    | 38    | 15      |
| A people person                | 32      | 70      | 37       | 35    | 27    | 10      |
| Listens                        | 34      | 50      | 42       | 36    | 35    | 18      |
| Decisive                       | 44      | 51      | 27       | 18    | 42    | 33      |
| On my side                     | 23      | 32      | 31       | 19    | 23    | 15      |
| Up to the job                  | 38      | 55      | 27       | 20    | 42    | 23      |
| Gets things done               | 42      | 58      | 22       | 18    | 38    | 30      |
| A safe pair of hands           | 29      | 34      | 24       | 17    | 35    | 18      |
| A winner                       | 32      | 55      | 20       | 13    | 24    | 15      |

3. Which of the following do you think best described Boris Johnson?

| %   | ALL | Con | Lab | LD | UKIP |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| He's different from most politicians, and in a good way | 53  | 72  | 42  | 49 | 63   |
| He's different from most politicians, but in a bad way  | 7   | 3   | 12  | 9  | 3    |
| He's basically the same as most other politicians       | 19  | 12  | 24  | 20 | 16   |
| He's not really a politician at all                     | 18  | 10  | 21  | 19 | 18   |

4. Would you be more or less likely to vote Conservative, or would it make no difference, if...

| %   | ALL | Con | Lab | LD | UKIP |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| <b>...Boris Johnson were standing to be your local MP</b>     |     |     |     |    |      |
| I would be more likely to vote Conservative                   | 28  | 36  | 17  | 30 | 41   |
| It would make no difference                                   | 48  | 47  | 58  | 45 | 40   |
| I would be less likely to vote Conservative                   | 13  | 9   | 17  | 19 | 13   |
| <b>...Boris Johnson were leader of the Conservative Party</b> |     |     |     |    |      |
| I would be more likely to vote Conservative                   | 23  | 26  | 15  | 24 | 35   |
| It would make no difference                                   | 50  | 48  | 59  | 47 | 42   |
| I would be less likely to vote Conservative                   | 17  | 17  | 19  | 22 | 15   |

5. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following pairs of statements on a 0-10 scale, where 0 means you strongly agree with the first statement and 10 means you strongly agree with the second:

Please indicate the extent to which you think Boris Johnson agrees with each of the following pairs of statements on a 0-10 scale:

| Net agreement %   | ALL |       | Con |       | Lab |       | LD |       | UKIP |       |
|---|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|----|-------|------|-------|
|   | Me  | Boris | Me  | Boris | Me  | Boris | Me | Boris | Me   | Boris |
| Britain should remain a member of the EU                          | 36  | 30    | 33  | 32    | 46  | 32    | 50 | 36    | 12   | 31    |
| 5/10  | 21  | 20    | 18  | 18    | 20  | 19    | 16 | 17    | 9    | 16    |
| Britain should leave the EU                                       | 44  | 27    | 49  | 32    | 34  | 30    | 35 | 29    | 80   | 27    |
| Gay marriage should be introduced                                 | 42  | 37    | 34  | 37    | 49  | 39    | 45 | 39    | 24   | 35    |
| 5/10  | 19  | 19    | 18  | 19    | 18  | 18    | 17 | 18    | 19   | 19    |
| Gay marriage should not be introduced                             | 39  | 20    | 48  | 26    | 33  | 22    | 38 | 21    | 58   | 17    |
| Britain should take a tougher approach to controlling immigration | 73  | 53    | 78  | 60    | 63  | 49    | 67 | 52    | 90   | 56    |
| 5/10  | 10  | 13    | 6   | 11    | 13  | 14    | 11 | 12    | 1    | 12    |
| Britain should have a more open-door approach to immigration      | 17  | 17    | 16  | 19    | 24  | 21    | 22 | 21    | 9    | 14    |

- 23% said they did not know Boris Johnson's view of EU membership, 24% did not know his view of gay marriage, and 17% did not know his view of immigration.

6. From what you know or have heard, what kind of job do you think Boris Johnson is doing as Mayor of London?

| %                    | ALL        | Con | Lab | LD  | UKIP |
|----------------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| <b>A good job</b>    | <b>66%</b> | 87% | 55% | 69% | 77%  |
| Neither good nor bad | 18%        | 9%  | 23% | 19% | 14%  |
| <b>A bad job</b>     | <b>7%</b>  | 1%  | 13% | 5%  | 3%   |
| Don't know           | 9%         | 3%  | 8%  | 6%  | 6%   |

- Majorities in all group – age, social group, region, employment sector and party support – said they thought Boris Johnson was doing a good or very good job.

7. Here are some things people have said about Boris Johnson. Please could you say whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

| <i>% agreeing</i>  | ALL       | Con | Lab | LD | UKIP |
|--|-----------|-----|-----|----|------|
| <b>Being Mayor of London is mainly about generating publicity for the city rather than running anything</b>              | <b>42</b> | 39  | 49  | 48 | 44   |
| <b>Being Mayor of London is a serious job and Boris Johnson has shown he is capable of taking on real responsibility</b> | <b>57</b> | 78  | 46  | 59 | 69   |
| <b>Boris Johnson might be popular in London, but he wouldn't go down as well outside the South East of England</b>       | <b>46</b> | 41  | 57  | 50 | 46   |
| <b>Boris Johnson would be capable of running the country as Prime Minister</b>   | <b>35</b> | 52  | 25  | 34 | 47   |
| <b>Boris Johnson would change Britain for the better if he became Prime Minister</b>                                     | <b>32</b> | 45  | 24  | 32 | 43   |

- Agreement that Boris Johnson would go down less well outside the South East was similar in the South East (45%), the Midlands (46%) and the North (46%) – but slightly lower in Wales and the South West (41%) and higher in Scotland (52%).

8. Which of the following do you think would make the best Prime Minister?

| %                    | ALL        | Con | Lab | LD | UKIP |
|----------------------|------------|-----|-----|----|------|
| <b>David Cameron</b> | <b>33%</b> | 81  | 7   | 25 | 21   |
| <b>Ed Miliband</b>   | <b>31%</b> | 1   | 76  | 11 | 11   |
| <b>Boris Johnson</b> | <b>29%</b> | 18  | 13  | 17 | 64   |
| <b>Nick Clegg</b>    | <b>7%</b>  | 1   | 3   | 47 | 4    |

9. Thinking about David Cameron as Prime Minister, and Ed Miliband or Boris Johnson if they were to become Prime Minister, who do you think would do a better job when it came to...

| %  | David Cameron | Ed Miliband | Boris Johnson |
|--|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>Representing Britain in international negotiations</b>      | 44            | 31          | 25            |
| <b>Making the right decisions even when they are unpopular</b> | 40            | 32          | 28            |
| <b>Understanding ordinary people</b>                           | 18            | 44          | 38            |
| <b>Having a clear idea of what they want to achieve</b>        | 34            | 35          | 30            |
| <b>Being able to lead a team</b>                               | 37            | 33          | 30            |
| <b>Doing the job of Prime Minister overall</b>                 | 37            | 34          | 29            |

- Conservative voters put Boris Johnson ahead on understanding ordinary people (47%, compared to 44% for David Cameron). Otherwise they put Cameron ahead with between 75% (having a clear idea of what they want to achieve) and 85% (representing Britain in international negotiations).
- Among current UKIP supporters, Boris led on all measures with between 55% (representing Britain in international negotiations) and 68% (understanding ordinary people).

**10. If Boris Johnson were leader of the Conservative Party, do you think the Conservative Party would be more likely to win a general election, or less likely, or would it make no difference?**

| %   | ALL       | Con | Lab | LD | UKIP |
|---|-----------|-----|-----|----|------|
| <b>More likely to win a GE with Boris as leader</b> | <b>39</b> | 37  | 39  | 37 | 57   |
| <b>No difference</b>                                | <b>36</b> | 32  | 36  | 38 | 30   |
| <b>Less likely to win a GE with Boris as leader</b> | <b>25</b> | 31  | 26  | 25 | 13   |

- Apart from UKIP supporters, 18-24s were the only group in which a majority thought the Conservative Party would be more likely to win a general election with Boris as leader (53%).
- People in Scotland (26%) and the North of England (35%) were less likely than average to think the Conservatives more likely to win with Boris as leader. People in the Midlands (43%) and the South East (41%) were slightly more likely to think so.