

Project **Blueprint**

Phase 5

The coalition of the willing

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Introduction: The coalition of the willing

In the eight months remaining before the general election many voters face a dilemma. They prefer Labour to the Conservatives, but would rather have David Cameron in Downing Street than Ed Miliband. They wonder whose side the Tories are on, but doubt that Labour can be trusted with the economy or have learned the right lessons from their last spell in office.

Starting today in Birmingham David Cameron must help them resolve their quandary in his party's favour. My latest research, involving a poll of over 8,000 people and discussions with undecided voters around the country, helps to show how he can do it.

Just over a quarter of those who voted Conservative in 2010 said they would vote for a different party in an election tomorrow. Nearly three quarters of these now support UKIP, with most of the remainder going to Labour.

These "defectors" had various complaints: the cost of living, lack of progress on immigration, stagnant pay, welfare reforms that had left them worse off. (There were also some bitter complaints about Michael Gove but these came, without exception, from teachers and their relatives).

While many of these voters were attracted to UKIP by the refreshing straightforwardness of Nigel Farage, few of those moving to Labour had a positive reason. Hardly anyone we spoke to could name a single Labour proposal; most simply hoped, rather than expected, that things would somehow be better under a different government.

Most of those who have switched from the Tories say they will still consider voting for the party next May. But for the party to hold on, each voter who does defect will have to be replaced with a new one. Yet converts are thin on the ground. Around one in eight of those who did not vote for the party in 2010 say they may do so next time. These people are united by a positive view of the Prime Minister and the belief that the Tories are on the right track and need more time to finish the job. They worry that a change of government could mean going back to square one on the deficit, and undoing what progress has been made on immigration and welfare reform. They are also younger than existing Conservative voters, and more likely to be female and to work in the public sector.

Clearly, the Conservatives need more support if they are to stay in office. But to most people the election might as well be eight years away, never mind eight months. Most of the uncommitted voters who took part in my research had given it little or no thought and did not intend to until much closer to the day. There is still time for the Tories to their fortunes around before next May.

For all the constitutional issues at stake, the key to doing so lies in the economy and the future of austerity. Nearly nine in ten Tory loyalists and those who have switched to the party since 2010 said either that they were already feeling some of the benefits of the recovery or, more likely, that they were not feeling any better off yet but expected to at some point. Meanwhile, more than four in ten defectors said they had not seen an improvement in their circumstances and did not anticipate any. UKIP voters were the most likely of all to think any recovery would pass them by.

At the same time, more than three quarters of loyalists and seven in ten Tory converts said cuts needed to continue for the next five years; nearly half of defectors said either austerity was no longer necessary, or was never needed in the first place.

The task for Cameron and the Tories, then, is to build a coalition of the willing – a big enough group of voters prepared to accept continued austerity because they believe the results will be worth waiting for. Many understood that restraint was required after 2010 but are not sure why it is still needed, especially if things are supposed to be looking up. The Conservatives need to explain this – and the rewards that will follow if doubtful voters stick with it.

This may prove even harder than it sounds. Whatever the figures, sceptics will only believe in the upturn when they feel it in their pockets – and for many people the end of austerity is the very evidence they need that the recovery is real.

Nevertheless, Cameron must show his purpose is not merely a matter of dry economics but to create a country where everyone can share in the prosperity the Tories are accused of wanting to preserve for the few.

Politicians are often accused of re-fighting old battles. But at the next election, the Conservatives need the campaign they should have run at the last.

MAA
September 2014

Methodology

Quantitative

8,053 adults were interviewed online between 12 and 17 September 2014. Results were weighted to be representative of the population of Great Britain.

Qualitative

Thirteen focus groups were conducted between 19 August and 18 September 2014 in Croydon, Warrington, Leeds, Newton Abbot, Birmingham, Southampton and Ramsgate. Separate groups were held comprising the following types of voters:

- Those who voted Conservative in 2010 and say they would probably do so again in an election tomorrow (Loyalists)
- Those who voted Conservative in 2010 but say they would probably vote for a different party in an election tomorrow (Defectors)
- Those who did not vote Conservative in 2010 but say they would consider doing so in future (Joiners/Considerers)

Key points

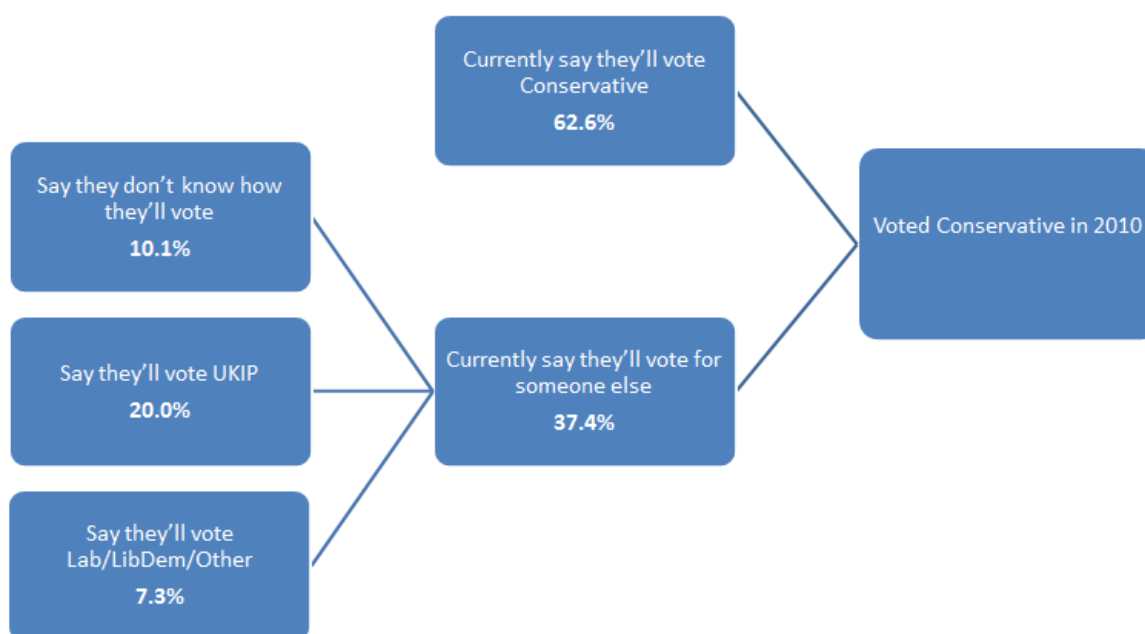
- 63% of those who voted Conservative at the 2010 general election say they would do so again in an election tomorrow. These Conservative Loyalists account for 22% of all voters.
- 27% of 2010 Conservative voters say they would vote for a different party in an election tomorrow. Of these, 73% say they would vote UKIP; most of the remainder would go to Labour.
- 9% of all voters are Joiners (who did not vote Conservative in 2010 but say they would do so in an election tomorrow). They overwhelmingly prefer David Cameron to Ed Miliband and trust the Conservatives more than Labour on the economy, and are more likely than most to rank the deficit and the debt among the most important issues facing the country.
- 2% of the electorate are Considerers (who did not vote Conservative in 2010 and would not do so in an election tomorrow, but would consider doing so in future). They also prefer Cameron to Miliband and trust the Conservatives over Labour on the economy, but when asked what are the most important issues to them are more likely than most to name the NHS – on which they most trust Labour. Only one in five Considerers says the Conservatives stand for fairness and only a quarter say the Tories are on the side of people like them.
- 88% of Loyalists and Joiners say either that they are already feeling the benefits of an economic recovery, or that they are not yet feeling the benefits but expect to at some point. However, 41% of Defectors (and 52% of all UKIP voters) say they are not feeling any such benefits and do not expect to.
- 78% of Loyalists and 70% of Joiners say austerity and cuts in public spending need to continue for the next five years. Meanwhile, nearly half (45%) of Defectors say either that austerity is no longer necessary or that it was not really needed in the first place.
- 29% of all voters say they are satisfied with David Cameron's performance as Prime Minister, and a further 34% say they are dissatisfied but prefer him to Ed Miliband. 37% say they would rather have Ed Miliband as Prime Minister.
- 59% of all voters said they most trusted David Cameron and George Osborne to manage the economy in the best interests of Britain; 41% said they most trusted Ed Miliband and Ed Balls.

The Conservative Universe

Previous phases of Project Blueprint have examined four elements of the 'Conservative Universe': Loyalists, Joiners, Defectors and Considerers. This report looks in greater detail at two types of Conservative Defector – Defectors Left and Defectors Right.

Defectors Left are those who voted Tory in 2010 but now say they plan to vote for Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the nationalist parties in Wales or Scotland, or the Green Party. Defectors Right plan to vote for UKIP or the BNP. Joiners and Considerers are merged into one pool of potential Conservative voters, those who did not vote Conservative in 2010 but now say either that they plan to vote Conservative or that they are considering it. Loyalists are those that voted Conservative in 2010 and would do so again in a general election tomorrow. These four groups are examined in greater detail below.

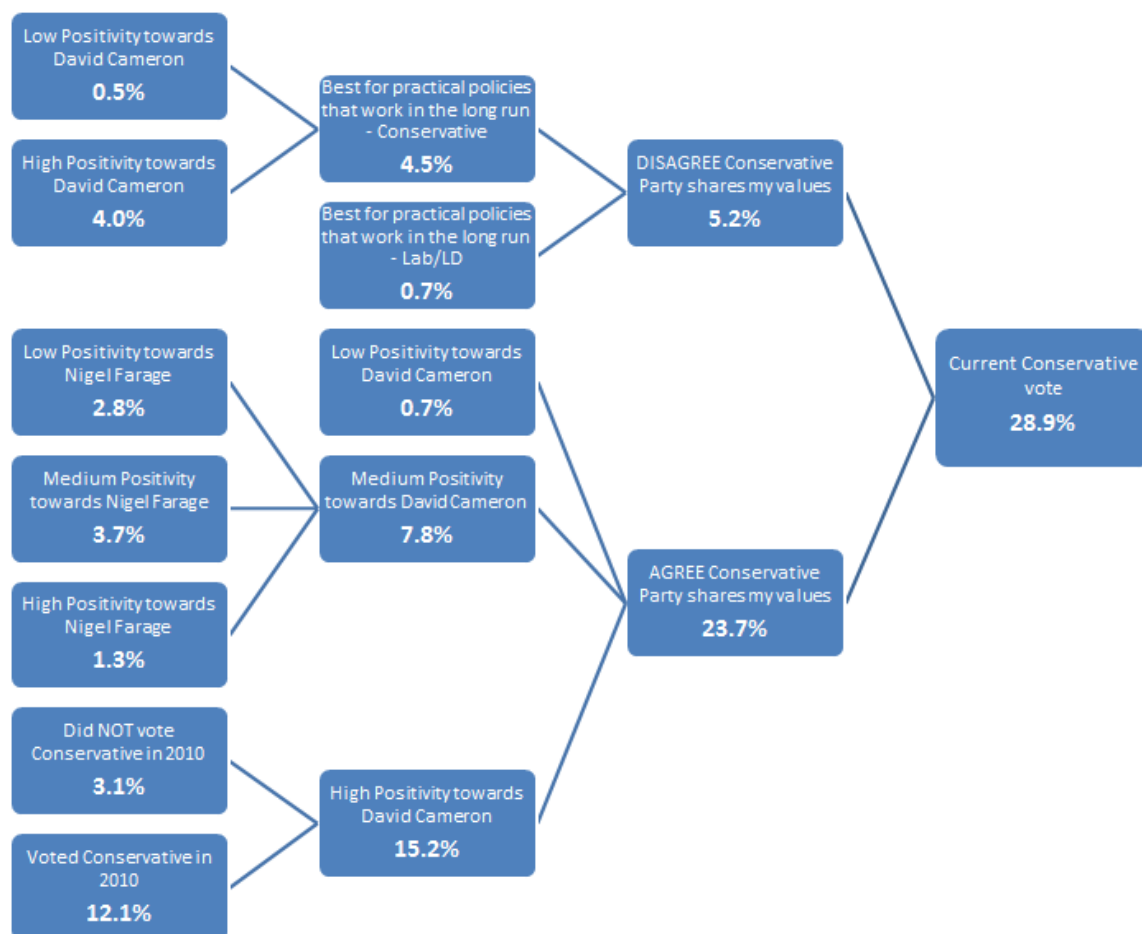
The 2010 Conservative vote



Of the 37% of the electorate who voted Conservative in 2010, 62.6% say they would do so again in an election tomorrow. This means that Tory Loyalists make up just over a fifth of the electorate (21.7%). The third who would not vote Conservative again tomorrow is split into three groups: around a half (20% of 2010 Conservative voters) say they will vote UKIP, a quarter say they will vote for Labour, the Lib Dems or some other party and the final quarter do not know how they will vote.

(These figures are not turnout weighted, unlike those in the poll summary at the back of this report. This is because we are also interested in those who say, for example, that they voted Conservative in 2010 but are not sure who they would vote for next time, or currently say that they would not vote at all.)

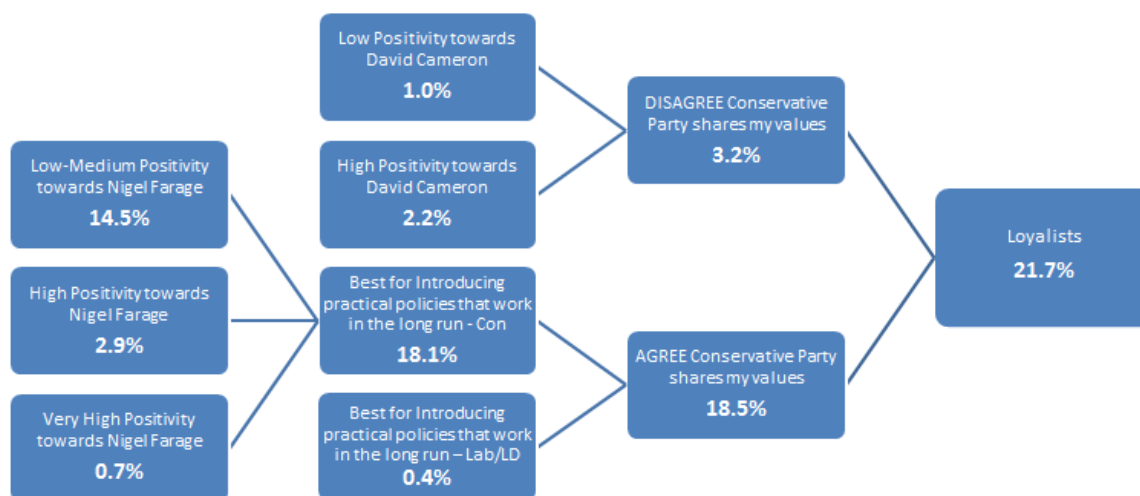
The Current Conservative Vote



Blueprint phase 5 found the same percentage of voters saying that they would vote Conservative in an election tomorrow as in the previous round, published in January: 28.9%.

A slightly smaller proportion of current Conservative voters say the Party “shares their values” than in Blueprint 4, but it remains the most powerful predictor of being current Conservative voter. Those planning to vote Conservative who do not think the party shares their values are primarily united by a belief that the Tories are best for practical policies that work in the long run. The Conservative voters who say that the party does share their values also tend to be positive or very positive about David Cameron and very few are highly positive about Nigel Farage.

Conservative Loyalists



The fact that most unites Loyalists (who voted Conservative in 2010 and say they would do so again tomorrow) is that the Conservative Party “shares my values”. Only one in seven disagrees with this statement; two thirds of this group are highly positive about David Cameron. Of those Loyalists who agree that the party shares their values, nearly all also say the Conservatives as the best party for introducing practical policies that work in the long run, and most hold a low opinion of Nigel Farage.

Conservative Loyalists constitute 21.7% of all voters and are the group most certain that they will not change their mind about which party they will vote for at the next election (91%).

57% of Loyalists are men. They are older than the general population (55, compared to an average age of 47) and more likely than average to be in social group AB. Only a quarter of Loyalists declare themselves to be atheists, compared to 38% of voters as a whole. Loyalists (and Defectors Right) are also less likely than other groups to work in the public sector (18%, compared to 24% of the whole population).

88% of Conservative Loyalists say that a Conservative government is their preferred outcome of the 2015 election; 12% would prefer a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. Loyalists are all but unanimous in agreeing that Cameron and Osborne are the best economic team (99%) and 72% are satisfied with the job that David Cameron is doing as Prime Minister. 27% say that even though they are dissatisfied, they would still rather have him than Ed Miliband.

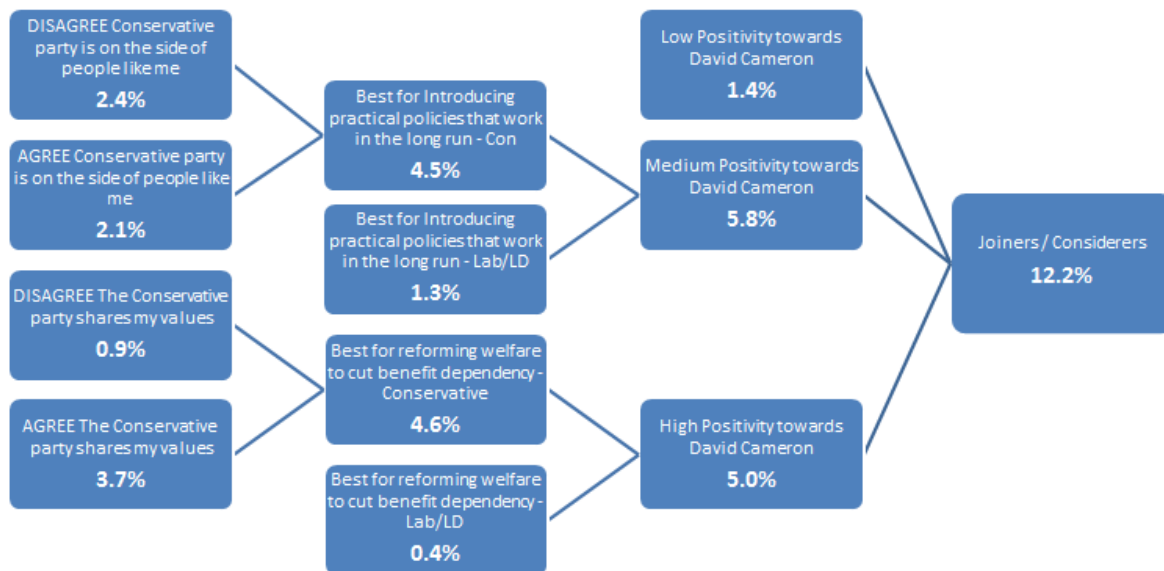
Loyalists remain slightly more positive about the Conservative Party (8.00 out of 10) than David Cameron (7.73) and significantly less positive about UKIP (3.75) and Farage (3.66). 69% say they are moving towards the Conservative party and 5% away from it. 3% say they are moving towards Labour, 7% towards the Liberal Democrats and 29% of Loyalist say they are moving towards UKIP.

31% of Conservative Loyalists are already feeling some of the benefits of an economic recovery (compared to 15% of all voters) and as a group they are much more likely than average to think that we will need to continue with austerity over the next five years (78% vs 45%).

Among this group, the Conservatives continue to hold a strong lead on all policy issues: Loyalists are at least twice as likely as other voters to think that the Party has the right approach to getting the economy growing, improving schools and the NHS, tackling the cost of living and introducing

practical policies that would work in the long run. Moreover, these voters are almost four times as likely as the general public to think that the Conservative Party is “on the side of people like me” (80% vs 23%).

Joiners and Considerers



Eight out of nine Joiners or Considerers are positive towards David Cameron. The most positive are united in the view that the Conservatives are the best party for reforming welfare and more than four fifths of these agree that the Party shares their values. Of those who take a more middling view of Cameron, most think the Tories are better at introducing practical policies for the long. However, fewer than half of these people believe that the Conservative Party is on their side.

In terms of gender balance, Joiners and Considerers mirror the population. However, their age profile is a little lower than average (44 vs 47 average) and they are more likely than the population to fall into social grades AB and C1. They are also younger than Conservative Loyalists, and more likely to be female and to work in the public sector.

Joiners and Considerers constitute 12.2% of the population and are less likely to vote than Defectors or Loyalists but are as likely to do so as the average voter. Consistent with the findings in previous waves of Blueprint, two thirds of Joiners and Considerers voted for the Liberal Democrats in 2010 (65%), just over a quarter voted Labour (27%) and 3% say that they voted UKIP. Two fifths of this group would consider voting Labour at the next election (40%), a similar proportion might vote for the Lib Dems (38%) and almost a third (30%) would consider voting for UKIP.

64% of Conservative Considerers or Joiners say that a Conservative government is their preferred outcome of the 2015 election, while 22% would prefer a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. 94% agree that Cameron and Osborne are the best economic team and 63% are satisfied with the job that David Cameron is doing as Prime Minister. 32% say that even though they are dissatisfied, they would still rather have him than Ed Miliband. Only 5% would rather see Ed Miliband as Prime Minister.

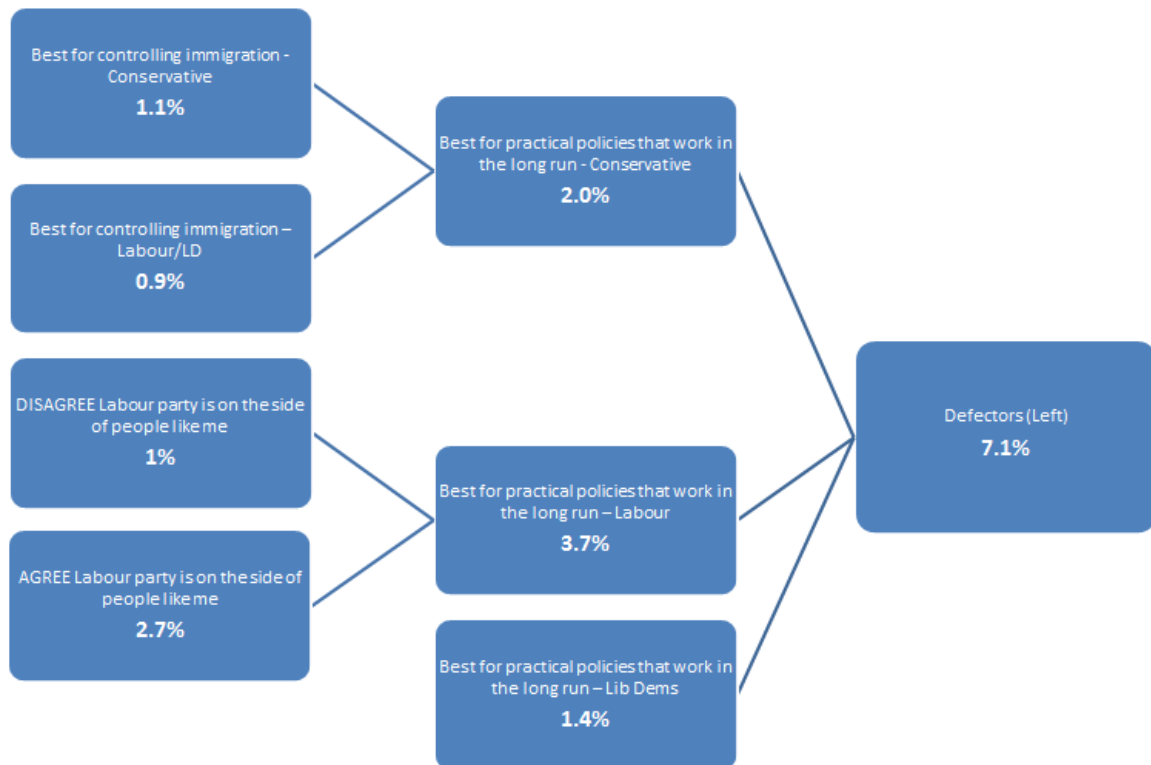
Joiners and Considerers are similarly positive about the Conservative Party (6.81) and David Cameron (6.80) and significantly less positive about Ed Miliband (2.91) than Labour (3.68). 69% of

Joiners and Considerers say they are moving towards the Conservative party and 9% away from it. 10% say they are moving towards Labour, 12% towards the Liberal Democrats and 23% towards UKIP.

A quarter (24%) of Conservative Joiners and Considerers are already feeling some of the benefits of an economic recovery, and a further 56% expect that they will feel the benefits at some point. They are also much more likely than the average voter to think that austerity was necessary (96% vs 80%) but a third believe that we do not need another five years of cuts (31%) and 64% believe further austerity is needed – compared to 78% among Loyalists and 37% of Defectors Left.

Among this group, the Conservatives hold a strong lead on nearly all policy issues. These voters are also twice as likely as the general public to think that the Conservative Party is “willing to take tough decisions for the long term” (79% vs 45%) and “wants to help ordinary people get on in life” (43% vs 22%). Half of Joiners and Considerers think that the Tories are “on the side of people like me” (50%) but only 17% of them say the same thing for Labour and 23% for the Lib Dems.

Defectors Left



Fewer than a third of Defectors Left believe that the Conservative Party is best when it comes to introducing practical policies that work in the long run, and half of these voters believe that Labour or the Lib Dems are also better at controlling immigration. Slightly more than half of Defectors Left think that Labour is the most likely to have practical policies that will work in the long term and nearly three quarters of these people also agree that Labour is on the side of people like them.

Defectors Left constitute 7.1% of all voters. Currently, 62% say they would vote Labour in a general election tomorrow, 16% would vote Liberal Democrat and 16% for The Green Party. 35% of these voters say that they would still consider voting for the Conservatives at the next general election.

60% of Defectors Left are male and 32% of them work in the public sector, compared to 24% of the general population. A larger proportion of this group fall into social grade C1, compared to the average (35% vs 29%) and they have the lowest average income of our four Conservative groups: £29,000, the same as the average amongst all voters.

Only 20% of Defectors Left are satisfied with the job that David Cameron is doing as Prime Minister, 32% are dissatisfied but would still prefer him to Ed Miliband, and 47% would rather have Ed Miliband as Prime Minister.

By a small margin, Defectors Left still trust Cameron and Osborne over Miliband and Balls to manage the economy. 49% say a Labour government is their preferred election outcome, 21% choose a Conservative government, 15% choose a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, and a further 15% pick a Labour-liberal Democrat coalition.

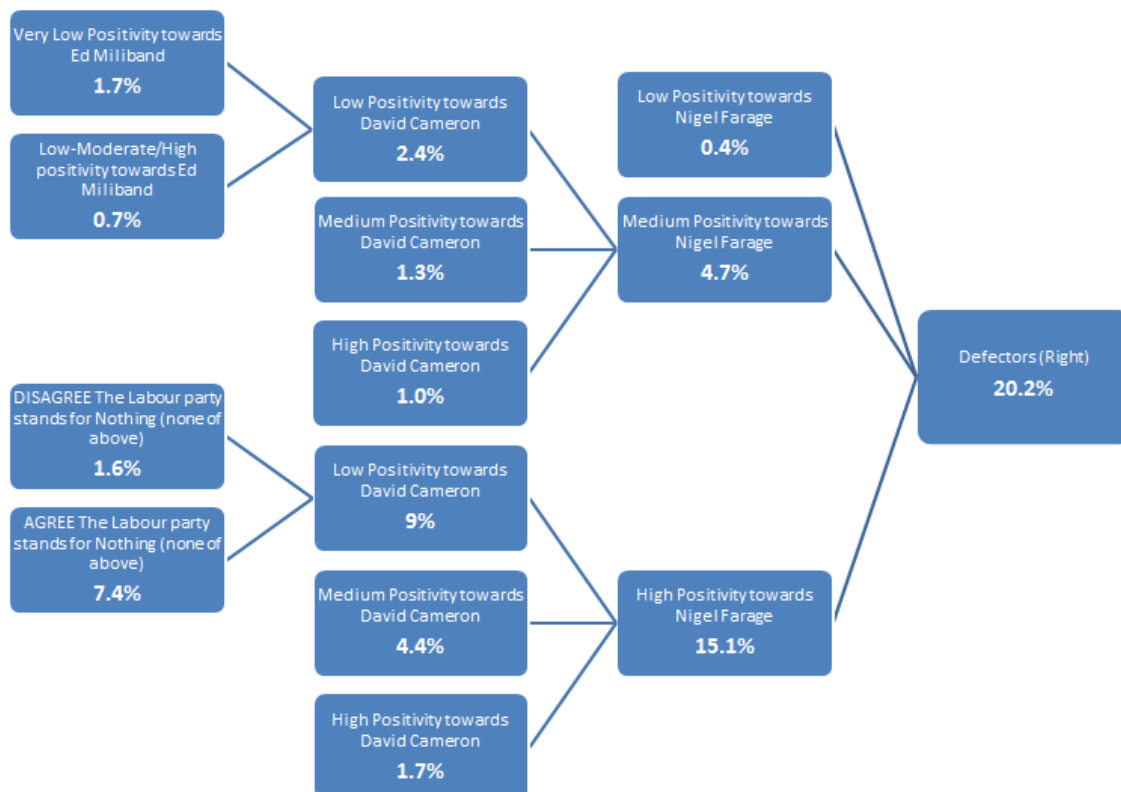
Defectors Left rate Ed Miliband (4.86) above David Cameron (4.08) and the Labour Party (5.82) above the Tories (4.04). However, Nigel Farage (3.54) and UKIP (3.45), gain similar marks to Nick Clegg (3.51) and the Lib Dems (3.79). 18% say they are moving towards the Conservative party and 70% away from it. 56% say they are moving towards Labour, 17% towards the Liberal Democrats and 30% towards UKIP.

Though fewer Defectors Left disagree that austerity was necessary (16%) than among the public as a whole (20%), nearly half now believe that we do not need another five years of cuts (46%). Almost half of Defectors Left (47%) say that they do not expect to feel the benefits of an economic recovery.

Among this group, the Conservatives lead or equal Labour on four policy areas: cutting the deficit (54% say the Conservative are best, 40% choose Labour), dealing with crime (45% vs 44%), defending Britain's interests in Europe (45% vs 45%) and welfare reform (47% vs 41%). But the Tories are beaten by both Labour and the Liberal Democrats on the NHS (15% vs 68% and 17%) and protecting the environment (17% vs 43% and 39%).

Defectors Left think that the Conservatives (51%) are more willing than Labour (31%) to take tough decisions for the long term but less competent than Labour (30% vs 39%), less fair (11% vs 48%) and less likely to be on their side (12% vs 52%).

Defectors Right



Three quarters of Defectors to the Right are very positive about Nigel Farage. Among the quarter who are less positive towards Farage half have a low opinion of David Cameron and most of these also have a low opinion of Ed Miliband. Most of those that are highly positive about Farage are less positive about Cameron and those with the lowest positivity towards Cameron also tend to agree that the Labour Party stands for nothing.

Defectors Right constitute 20.2% of all voters and 99% of these say that they would vote UKIP in a general election tomorrow. 74% of Defectors Right say that they would still consider voting for the Conservatives at the next general election.

65% of Defectors Right are male and their average age is 57, compared to the average of 47 for voters as a whole. Only 2% of this group are non-white, compared with 7% on average. 61% are married, compared with 46% on average.

Only 14% of Defectors Right are satisfied with the job that David Cameron is doing as Prime Minister. However, 77% are dissatisfied but would still prefer him to Ed Miliband, and only 9% would rather have Ed Miliband as Prime Minister. 90% trust Cameron and Osborne more to manage the economy than Miliband and Balls.

78% say that they would prefer a Conservative government after the next general election. 10% say a Labour government is their preferred outcome; 9% choose a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, and a further 4% pick a Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition.

Defectors Right rate Nigel Farage (8.29) far above David Cameron (4.49) and really don't like Ed Miliband (1.16). Similarly, UKIP (8.51) beats the Conservative Party (4.70) and the Labour Party (1.46). 3% say they are moving towards the Conservative Party and 77% away from it. 2% say they are moving towards Labour, 1% towards the Liberal Democrats and 97% towards UKIP.

61% of Defectors Right agree that austerity must continue for another five years, compared to the average of 45%. Only 10% agree that austerity was never really needed. Almost half of Defectors Right (47%) say that they have not yet felt the benefits of an economic recovery but expect to do so but two fifths (42%) say that they don't expect to feel any benefit. Only 11% have benefited already.

Among this group, the Conservatives lead Labour and the Liberal Democrats by large margins in all policy areas but fewer than a third of Defectors Right (31%) think that the Conservatives are on the side of people like them and only a quarter (26%) trust them to do what they say.

What differentiates them?

‘Correlated Components Regression’ analysis has identified the attitudes that separate the most loyal Tory voters from those who did not vote Conservative last time but would now consider it; the differences between Defectors and Loyalists; and the views that separate Considerers and Loyalists from those voters who did not vote Conservative in 2010, Don’t know who to vote for now and would not consider voting Conservative (‘Rejecters’).

Considerers v. Loyalists

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| DISAGREE | Conservative Party shares my values | 18% |
| DISAGREE | Conservative Party is on the side of people like me | 13% |
| DISAGREE | Conservatives best for tackling the cost of living | 12% |
| DISAGREE | Conservatives best for improving schools | 10% |
| DISAGREE | Positive about David Cameron, the Prime Minister | 8% |
| DISAGREE | Conservatives best for practical policies that would work in the long run | 8% |
| AGREE | Labour Party shares my values | 6% |
| AGREE | Liberal Democrats is on the side of people like me | 6% |
| AGREE | Liberal Democrats share my values | 5% |
| DISAGREE | Trust Cameron/Osborne over Miliband/Balls to manage the economy | 5% |
| AGREE | Labour best for defending Britain's interests in Europe | 4% |
| DISAGREE | I am feeling some of the benefits of an economic recovery | 4% |

The most important factors that separate Loyalists from those merely considering a vote for the Tories are all to do with their views of the Conservative Party. Almost a fifth of the difference (18%) is caused by a belief that the Party does not share their values, a further 13% by Considerers not believing that the Conservatives are on their side. The difference in voting behaviour is also driven by Considerers’ belief that other parties are better placed to tackle the cost of living and improve schools.

To a far lesser extent – a third the size of their non-identification with Conservative values – Considerers are held back from voting Conservative because they think that Labour or the Liberal Democrats do share their values.

Defectors v. Loyalists

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| DISAGREE | Positive about David Cameron, the Prime Minister | 35% |
| DISAGREE | Conservative Party is on the side of people like me | 30% |
| DISAGREE | Satisfaction with David Cameron Overall as a Prime Minister | 21% |
| AGREE | Positive about Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP | 13% |

The voting behaviour of Defectors is driven primarily by their negative attitudes towards David Cameron and, in a close second place, by their belief that the Conservative Party is not on the side of people like them. In fact, more than half of the difference between Defectors and Loyalists is caused by their views on David Cameron (35% by not being positive about him, and 21% by dissatisfaction with his job performance). Defectors are positive about Nigel Farage but this shapes their behaviour to a lesser extent than their disaffection with Cameron and the Conservatives.

Considerers or Loyalists v. Rejecters

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| AGREE | Conservative Party shares my values | 27% |
| AGREE | Conservative Party is on the side of people like me | 16% |
| AGREE | Conservatives best for getting the economy growing and creating jobs | 9% |
| AGREE | Conservatives best for practical policies that would work in the long run | 9% |
| AGREE | Conservatives best for tackling the cost of living | 6% |
| AGREE | Conservative Party is competent and capable | 6% |
| AGREE | Positive about David Cameron, the Prime Minister | 4% |
| AGREE | Conservative Party - Stands for equal opportunity for all | 4% |
| AGREE | Conservatives best for improving the NHS | 4% |
| AGREE | Conservative Party's heart is in the right place | 4% |
| AGREE | Conservative Party is clear about what it stands for | 3% |
| AGREE | Conservatives best for reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency | 3% |
| DISAGREE | Positive about Ed Miliband, the Labour leader | 3% |
| DISAGREE | Positive about Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP | 1% |
| DISAGREE | The Liberal Democrats are willing to take tough decisions for the long term | 0% |

Voters who are considering – or planning – to vote for the Conservatives are motivated most of all by the belief that the Party shares their values (27%) and is on their side (16%). These are the key reasons that they differ from Rejecters.

Considerers and Loyalists are also more likely than Rejecters to think that the Tories are the best choice on the economy and tackling the cost of living. They will vote for the Conservatives in part because they think the Party is the most likely to introduce practical policies that work in the long run and because they seem competent and capable. They also like David Cameron.

Conservative Loyalists and Considerers are not so positive about Ed Miliband and Nigel Farage, and unconvinced that the Liberal Democrats are willing to take tough decisions. These views affect their party allegiance but have a minimal effect upon their decisions compared to their beliefs about the Conservative Party.

In their own words

Focus groups were conducted among Loyalists (who voted Conservative in 2010 and say they would do so again tomorrow), Joiners and Considerers (those who did not vote Conservative in 2010 but say they would do so at the next election, or might consider doing so in the future), and Defectors (who voted Conservative in 2010 but say they would not do so in an election tomorrow).

Most participants had not realised, or at least not thought about, the fact that **the next general election** was only eight or nine months away. They often said they had not fully considered how to vote and would not do so until much closer to the time.

"It might as well be nine years away."

Considerer/Joiner

"You wouldn't even know. There's so much going on in the world there is no time to think about it"

Defector

Asked how the **government had performed overall**, Defectors from the Conservatives complained about a number of things including the cost of living, immigration, the public sector pay freeze, and the absence, as far as they were concerned, of any immediate prospect that life would improve for them.

Loyalists, Considerers and Joiners, however, usually talked about the national economy and the progress the government had made in stabilising the situation since 2010. Considerers and Joiners in particular often volunteered that more time was needed to finish the job and that a change of government at the next election would be a backward step.

"Everything's gone up and up, and today they're talking about putting up rail fares. My salary isn't going up by 4.5% or 5.5%."

Defector

"I was positive at first but everything seems so much harder. I've no idea if he's responsible but life is a lot harder now."

Defector

"They've done a good job under the circumstances. We were in a lot of debt. While they're doing the job, let them continue. If Labour get in it will dip again."

Considerer/Joiner

Though few had anything very positive to say about Nick Clegg or the Liberal Democrats, many participants, including Conservative Loyalists, said they were glad the Lib Dems were part of the **coalition government**. Most thought the party was either having no discernible impact or was restraining the Tory Party from its worst instincts; only a minority said they were frustrated that coalition was acting as a brake on progress.

"I have quite liked that it's a coalition – it's made the Conservatives more socially aware. They probably don't think it's perfect because they have to make compromises but I think it's worked."

Loyalist

"I was chuffed when they went into the coalition. I thought it would be good, and it is good, but it's really a Conservative government."

Considerer

Most Loyalists, Considerers and Joiners said they thought **the economy** had stabilised and that signs of growth were evident, even if they were not yet feeling better off themselves. They usually cited lower unemployment and more job opportunities, comparisons with growth rates in other European countries, and more construction, especially house building.

Defectors were more likely to doubt that any such recovery was happening, or to feel that they were unlikely ever to benefit if it was. They were also more likely to talk about the cost of living, though they were unclear what they expected the government to do about this. Some remembered Labour's promise to freeze domestic energy bills, but were often sceptical that the policy would work or feared it would simply result in a much bigger price rise when the freeze came to an end.

"We're in a better state than Spain and France and Greece. They must be doing something right."

Loyalist

"You've got to give it time to filter down. We're the last to feel the benefits of anything. We're out on a limb down here in Devon."

Loyalist

"I don't know where this 3% growth comes from. It must all be down south."

Considerer

"Until I see something in my bank account I will say 'prove it'."

Defector

"There is more work than there was a couple of years ago but it's not back to how it was before."

Considerer

Loyalists, Joiners and Considerers were generally united in the view that **austerity** had been necessary and should continue. For those considering switching to the Tories, willingness to take the decisions necessary to tackle the deficit, and the belief that the policy needed to continue into the next parliament were often the biggest single attraction of the party in terms of policy. These participants felt a change of government would probably mean going back to square one.

Defectors who disliked the policy had often lost out personally from austerity. If they accepted the need to control public spending in principle they usually argued that the government had aimed at the wrong targets. Some did not think of austerity as the policy of one party so much as a fact of life to which they were resigned.

"We're sick of it but we know it needs to be done. Five years just isn't enough."

Considerer

"It does seem a slap in the face when there are massive bonuses going to Chief Executives running hospitals while we get a pay freeze."

Considerer

The prevailing view among participants was that **the NHS** was getting worse. This was usually based on media reports rather than first hand experience, though some complained about the difficulty of getting an appointment with a GP. Many put this down to population pressures arising from immigration.

People's recent personal experience of the NHS was mixed, and those with criticisms to make sometimes blamed local management rather than the government. Those who felt services were declining did not usually blame specific government policies such as the coalition's NHS reforms.

"I have had a very up and down experience with the NHS this year. Whether that is down to the government or the local hospital, I'm not sure."

Loyalist

"It's worse. It takes ages to see a doctor. You can't get an appointment, it can be two weeks."

Considerer

"I'm more worried about the future. If I fell ill tomorrow I'm fairly confident I would be looked after, but whether that would be the case in five or ten years I'm not sure."

Loyalist

Participants with school-age children had few complaints about the state of **education**, though some grumbled about the clampdown on taking children out of school for holidays during term. There were mixed views on free school meals, with opponents angry that money was being wasted providing free meals to children whose parents could easily afford them.

There were some complaints about Michael Gove and his reforms, but without exception these were made by teachers or the relatives of teachers.

The prevailing view was that the government had not managed to achieve any significant reduction in **immigration**, or that numbers may even have increased. For some this was usually because the government had not been sufficiently "tough" (though there was no expectation that the other established parties would be tougher), though Loyalists were more likely to say they had tried but were constrained by the EU. Participants interpreted recent events in Calais, where migrants gathered to wait for an opportunity to get to the UK, as proof that Britain was a "soft touch" on benefits and services, rather than a place of opportunity for work. A few had heard the government talking about proposals to restrict early access to benefits for migrants.

“They’ve been embarrassed by the figures because they don’t reflect what they said they were going to achieve.”

Loyalist

“They’ve tried to be tougher but they’ve been hamstrung by the EU.”

Defector

“There are thousands in Calais waiting to come over because they can’t get the benefits in France.”

Considerer

“They promised not to let so many in but in Calais they will try and get in the boot of your car. They say they’re pinning down on them but they’re not.”

Defector

Most participants supported the principle and the detail of the government’s **welfare reforms**. There were some reservations, however, particularly among Defectors but also among some Considerers and even Loyalists who felt that some deserving cases, especially disabled people, were being treated unduly harshly.

“You hear people say there’s no point working, they’re better off not in work. It’s crazy. It’s the state’s fault. I don’t feel people don’t want to work, the state has made that choice for them.”

Loyalist

“Certain parts of society are being scapegoated. I liked the benefits cap but it was the rhetoric that went with it.”

Defector

“If you’re on the borderline they are a bit harsh.”

Considerer

When discussion turned to **Europe**, few spontaneously mentioned the referendum pledge, and many were unaware of it even when prompted. Few were enthused by the idea and only a small minority said it would be central to their voting decision.

More noticed in relation to Europe were David Cameron’s “rows” with other EU leaders. Few could remember the details, let alone the name of Mr Juncker, but there was strong approval for the PM being willing to “stand up to” Europe even if he did not win.

“He did a good job falling out with them. He stood up for himself. You’ve got to put the argument and stand your corner. You’re not always going to win but we need to know someone is saying on our behalf ‘this isn’t working for us, this doesn’t suit us’.”

Defector

“There was talk of a referendum but I’m not sure if they’ve committed to it.”

Loyalist

“I’d like a referendum but do I want another four years of Conservative government on the off-chance that we might come out of the EU? I’m more interested in things that affect my life as it is.”

Defector

Most participants, including Defectors, had a positive view of **David Cameron**. Even those who had criticisms thought he was by far the best candidate for the job.

“His job is to run the country, you don’t have to like him personally. I think he’s doing well.”

Considerer

“You can’t blame someone for being posh. It’s like saying the Queen’s posh.”

Considerer

“I wanted to hate him but I don’t because there’s stuff I think he’s doing right and it’s working out. When there is such a massive deficit as the one that was left you’ve got to make those decisions.”

Considerer

“He’s a trier, you’ve got to give him that. But he needs a rocket up his backside. He’s worried about upsetting the apple cart.”

Considerer

Most participants could not remember hearing anything specific from the **Labour Party**; they just seemed to contradict whatever the Conservatives were saying. However, a few recalled the proposed price freeze and the guarantee of a GP appointment in 48 hours – both of which met a degree of scepticism.

Though some emphasised that they did not think Labour were fully responsible for the economic crisis, Loyalists and Considerers, and many Defectors, thought overspending by the last government had been at least partly to blame. Most thought the party had shown no signs of learning its lessons and would be likely to make the same mistakes if it returned to office. There was also a widespread view that Labour might undo some of the coalition’s welfare reforms and that it might be (even) less tough on immigration.

Very few, including those who had voted Labour in 2010 and were considering doing so in 2015, had anything positive to say about **Ed Miliband**. Four years after the leadership election many still spontaneously said his brother would have been the better choice. Many said they found him weak and unconvincing, and could not picture him as Prime Minister.

"They governed for 13 years during a boom, so why were we so stretched even before we had to bail out the banks? How come we were spending more than we could afford?"

Considerer

"Labour have never been able to figure out that questioning immigration is not a racist issue."

Considerer

"I've voted Labour in the past and always looked at them as being more lenient –they're lenient at giving the money away but they run up massive debts. So I hope they've learned their lesson."

Considerer

"Miliband is the personification of Labour's problem. It doesn't really know what it wants to be, centrist like Tony Blair, or for the public sector and the unions."

Considerer

Many participants felt **UKIP** were serving a useful purpose in politics by raising issues the established parties had neglected (though a minority viewed them with distaste and thought of them as "the polite BNP"). Most had a high regard for **Nigel Farage** and thought him refreshing, straightforward, entertaining and effective, though sometimes "a bit pantomime". Several participants had voted UKIP in the European or local elections, but not as many were seriously considering doing so in the general election. The apparent lack of policies in areas of than Europe and immigration, making them rather an unknown quantity, as well as the argument that they would be able to achieve little with at best a handful of MPs, were the most important factors.

The exception to this was Ramsgate, in the Thanet South constituency for which Farage is the UKIP candidate. Here, many Defectors from the Conservatives argued that the UKIP leader would put Thanet on the map. They were so disillusioned with the other parties that they thought having him as their MP would make more tangible difference to them than the colour of the government at Westminster.

"They've opened the debate, made the others look at their policies."

Considerer

"The Euro elections were different. I haven't heard Farage on the economy or the NHS or benefits."

Loyalists

"They will probably get some MPs but it is a bit of a worry. We don't know anything about them."

Defector

"It's a last chance saloon. We were put in this mess by Labour, the Tories haven't sorted it out..."

Defector

"They will probably get some MPs but it is a bit of a worry. We don't know anything about them."

Defector

"Thanet is a deprived area. Even the donkeys have left. Farage will put us on the map. He'll go on the streets and get to know people, because he puts himself out there."

Defector

For those who intended to vote Conservative at the **next general election** but do not habitually do so, the most powerful reason was that the government needed more time to finish the job. They feared that a change of government would mean undoing the progress that had been made.

Those who did not intend to do so had usually either lost out personally from austerity and hoped (even if they did not really expect) that Labour would restore some of the cuts, or did not see any prospects of things getting better for themselves whatever recovery might be happening elsewhere.

"I view the Conservatives as the only professional ones. I would rather have someone who knows what he's doing."

Considerer

"I'm probably going to vote Conservative again. Some people take it more seriously than others. A lot of people will vote Labour because they lost benefits and things, and they didn't realise what the Conservatives were doing. They will say it was great under Labour, let's go back to that."

Considerer

"I know why it's got to be done. It's as though the country had maxed out on its credit cards and you've got to pay it all back so you have stability. I don't think we've got there yet."

Considerer

"I'd like another coalition. They have done quite well as they are at the moment. I don't know what the Conservatives would do differently if they weren't in coalition."

Considerer

"In the last year I've been as badly off as I've ever been, but we need continuity and there is too much chopping and changing. But will we see the light at the end of the tunnel? It's difficult to know if it's going to get better."

Considerer

"It's a bit of a state of chaos. Labour can try and do a better job."

Defector

Full poll results

8,053 adults were interviewed online between 12 and 17 September 2014.
Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

LOYALISTS = voted Conservative in 2010 and would do so again in an election tomorrow (1,355)

JOINERS = did not vote Conservative in 2010, but would do so in an election tomorrow (452)

CONSIDERERS = did not vote Conservative in 2010 and would not tomorrow, but would consider doing so in future (266)

DEFECTORS = voted Conservative in 2010, but would not do so in an election tomorrow (809)

1. Many people say that if there was a new general election they probably wouldn't vote at all, while others say they definitely would vote. Please say how likely you would be to vote if there was another general election?

| | % | ALL | LOYALISTS | DEFECTORS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS |
|---------------------------------|---|-----|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|
| Absolutely certain to vote (10) | | 58 | 77 | 67 | 52 | 40 |

2. If there were to be a general election tomorrow, which party do you think you would vote for?
[Excludes those saying 'Don't Know' or 'Won't Vote']

| | % | ALL | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|------------------|---|-----|-------------|-----------|
| Conservative | | 30 | - | - |
| Labour | | 35 | 33 | 15 |
| Liberal Democrat | | 7 | 24 | 4 |
| UKIP | | 19 | 30 | 75 |
| Others | | 10 | 11 | 5 |

3. Which party did you vote for in the general election in May 2010?
[All those giving a past vote]

| | % | ALL | CONSIDERERS | JOINERS |
|------------------|---|-----|-------------|---------|
| Conservative | | 37 | - | - |
| Labour | | 30 | 24 | 30 |
| Liberal Democrat | | 24 | 68 | 62 |
| UKIP | | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Others | | 5 | 5 | 4 |

4. Have you definitely decided which party you will vote for at the next general election, or do you think you may well change your mind?
[All those expressing an intention to vote]

| | % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | DEFECTORS |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---|-----|-----------|---------|-----------|
| I am pretty sure which party I will vote for | | 83 | 91 | 76 | 78 |
| I have not finally decided and may well change my mind | | 17 | 9 | 24 | 22 |

5. Which of the following parties would you seriously consider voting for at the next general election?
[All those who have not finally decided which party to vote for]

| % | ALL | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|----------------------|-----|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Conservative | 31 | 81 | 100 | 56 |
| Labour | 35 | 24 | 47 | 16 |
| Liberal Democrats | 22 | 28 | 42 | 10 |
| UKIP | 29 | 30 | 29 | 50 |
| Another party | 14 | 4 | 9 | 8 |
| Don't know/won't say | 27 | 5 | - | 21 |

6. Thinking about the state of Britain's economy and the amount the government spends and borrows, which of these statements comes closest to your view, even if you don't completely agree with any of them?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| The national economy is not yet fully fixed, so we will need to continue with austerity and cuts in government spending over the next five years | 45 | 78 | 70 | 55 | 55 |
| While a period of austerity was needed to fix the national economy, we don't need another five years of cuts in government spending | 35 | 21 | 28 | 37 | 35 |
| Austerity and cuts in government spending were never really needed to fix the national economy, it was just an excuse to cut public services | 20 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 10 |

7. And thinking about your and your family's own personal situation, which of these statements comes closest to your view, even if you don't completely agree with any of them?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| I am already feeling some of the benefits of an economic recovery | 15 | 31 | 30 | 15 | 12 |
| I am not feeling the benefits of an economic recovery yet but I expect to do so at some point | 45 | 57 | 58 | 54 | 47 |
| I am not feeling the benefits of an economic recovery and I don't expect to | 40 | 11 | 13 | 30 | 41 |

8. Here are some things that people have said about the main political parties. Please can you say whether, on balance, you think each statement is true of the Conservative Party/the Labour Party/the Liberal Democrats?

| % | ALL C / L / LD | LOYALISTS C | JOINERS C | CONSIDERERS C | DEFECTORS C |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| Willing to take tough decisions for the long term | 45 / 21 / 9 | 90 | 84 | 71 | 56 |
| Competent and capable | 31 / 23 / 8 | 82 | 76 | 55 | 36 |
| Clear about what they stand for | 32 / 27 / 11 | 78 | 70 | 45 | 30 |
| Shares my values | 26 / 28 / 13 | 85 | 72 | 32 | 34 |
| Will do what they say | 25 / 22 / 8 | 73 | 59 | 30 | 23 |
| On the side of people like me | 23 / 31 / 13 | 80 | 63 | 27 | 26 |
| Its heart is in the right place | 22 / 32 / 25 | 69 | 55 | 30 | 26 |
| Wants to help ordinary people get on in life | 22 / 41 / 19 | 72 | 53 | 26 | 26 |
| Stands for fairness | 21 / 31 / 19 | 69 | 53 | 21 | 22 |
| Stands for equal opportunity for all | 20 / 34 / 20 | 69 | 50 | 21 | 22 |
| Represents the whole country, not just some types of people | 20 / 27 / 14 | 67 | 48 | 18 | 20 |

9. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| I am <u>satisfied</u> with the job David Cameron is doing as PM overall | 29 | 72 | 73 | 45 | 18 |
| I am <u>dissatisfied</u> with the job David Cameron is doing <u>but I'd still prefer to have him as PM than Ed Miliband</u> | 34 | 27 | 25 | 43 | 67 |
| I am dissatisfied with the job David Cameron is doing and I'd prefer to have Ed Miliband as PM instead | 37 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 15 |

10. Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about the following, using a scale from 0 (very negative) to 10 (very positive), where zero means neither positive nor negative.

| Mean score | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|-----------------------------------|------|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| THE LABOUR PARTY | 4.34 | 2.26 | 3.43 | 4.11 | 2.55 |
| David Cameron, Prime Minister | 4.29 | 7.73 | 7.29 | 5.97 | 4.53 |
| THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY | 4.14 | 8.00 | 7.41 | 5.79 | 4.73 |
| UKIP | 3.78 | 3.75 | 3.16 | 3.14 | 6.34 |
| Ed Miliband, Labour leader | 3.75 | 1.83 | 2.63 | 3.37 | 2.04 |
| Nigel Farage, UKIP leader | 3.68 | 3.66 | 3.11 | 2.99 | 6.14 |
| THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS | 3.23 | 3.44 | 3.94 | 4.34 | 2.08 |
| Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister | 3.07 | 4.06 | 4.41 | 4.50 | 2.15 |

11. Whom do you most trust to manage the economy in the best interests of Britain – David Cameron and the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, or Ed Miliband and the Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|-------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Cameron & Osborne | 59 | 99 | 99 | 85 | 83 |
| Miliband & Balls | 41 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 17 |

12. Which of the following do you think is the most important issue facing Britain as a whole / you and your family? And which is the second most important? And the third?

| <i>% naming in top three: country / family</i> | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Getting the economy growing and creating jobs | 58 / 46 | 63 / 45 | 64 / 56 | 64 / 49 | 50 / 37 |
| Controlling immigration | 52 / 36 | 56 / 39 | 49 / 32 | 49 / 35 | 75 / 58 |
| Tackling the cost of living | 41 / 67 | 17 / 50 | 24 / 58 | 34 / 60 | 25 / 54 |
| Improving the NHS | 36 / 45 | 22 / 37 | 21 / 36 | 31 / 47 | 23 / 36 |
| Cutting the deficit and the debt | 26 / 19 | 46 / 35 | 43 / 27 | 31 / 22 | 28 / 21 |
| Reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency | 24 / 14 | 37 / 22 | 35 / 18 | 34 / 17 | 30 / 17 |
| Defending Britain's interests in Europe | 18 / 14 | 29 / 22 | 21 / 16 | 16 / 12 | 33 / 27 |
| Dealing with crime | 11 / 15 | 8 / 14 | 11 / 16 | 10 / 13 | 11 / 15 |
| Improving schools | 10 / 14 | 5 / 11 | 7 / 15 | 7 / 13 | 5 / 9 |
| Protecting the environment | 7 / 10 | 2 / 5 | 3 / 7 | 7 / 10 | 4 / 7 |

13. And which party do you think would have the best approach to each of the following issues – the Conservatives, Labour or the Liberal Democrats?

| % | ALL C / L / LD | LOYALISTS C / L / LD | JOINERS C / L / LD | CONSIDERERS C / L / LD | DEFECTORS C / L / LD |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Getting the economy growing and creating jobs | 46 / 44 / 10 | 97 / 2 / 1 | 90 / 8 / 3 | 71 / 22 / 6 | 75 / 20 / 5 |
| Controlling immigration | 52 / 37 / 12 | 94 / 3 / 3 | 88 / 8 / 5 | 71 / 17 / 12 | 75 / 19 / 6 |
| Tackling the cost of living | 38 / 50 / 12 | 91 / 5 / 4 | 77 / 18 / 5 | 47 / 34 / 19 | 64 / 28 / 8 |
| Improving the NHS | 32 / 54 / 14 | 80 / 13 / 8 | 61 / 27 / 12 | 36 / 47 / 17 | 54 / 34 / 12 |
| Cutting the deficit and the debt | 57 / 34 / 9 | 97 / 2 / 1 | 94 / 4 / 2 | 82 / 9 / 9 | 83 / 13 / 3 |
| Reforming welfare to cut benefit dependency | 53 / 36 / 11 | 95 / 3 / 2 | 92 / 5 / 3 | 75 / 15 / 10 | 76 / 17 / 7 |
| Practical policies that will work in the long run | 44 / 42 / 15 | 96 / 2 / 2 | 90 / 5 / 5 | 63 / 19 / 18 | 73 / 18 / 9 |
| Defending Britain's interests in Europe | 51 / 37 / 12 | 95 / 2 / 3 | 91 / 5 / 4 | 73 / 21 / 7 | 79 / 16 / 5 |
| Dealing with crime | 51 / 39 / 10 | 95 / 3 / 2 | 91 / 7 / 2 | 74 / 19 / 7 | 78 / 17 / 5 |
| Improving schools | 36 / 47 / 17 | 85 / 7 / 8 | 71 / 17 / 12 | 39 / 37 / 24 | 63 / 25 / 12 |
| Protecting the environment | 28 / 35 / 37 | 65 / 4 / 31 | 54 / 6 / 40 | 29 / 15 / 56 | 45 / 16 / 38 |

14. Would you say you are moving towards or away from the Conservatives / Labour / the Liberal Democrats / UKIP?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Towards the Conservatives | 23 | 69 | 81 | 49 | 11 |
| Neither | 34 | 26 | 15 | 32 | 26 |
| Away from the Conservatives | 44 | 5 | 4 | 19 | 63 |
| Towards Labour | 28 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 14 |
| Neither | 35 | 29 | 32 | 37 | 35 |
| Away from Labour | 37 | 68 | 62 | 47 | 52 |
| Towards the Liberal Democrats | 10 | 7 | 9 | 19 | 5 |
| Neither | 40 | 42 | 38 | 39 | 36 |
| Away from the Liberal Democrats | 50 | 52 | 53 | 42 | 59 |
| Towards UKIP | 32 | 29 | 21 | 27 | 68 |
| Neither | 34 | 38 | 37 | 31 | 18 |
| Away from UKIP | 34 | 32 | 43 | 42 | 14 |

15. The next general election is set to be held in eight months' time, on 7 May 2015. Which of the following would you most like to see as the outcome of the next election?

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| A Conservative government | 35 | 88 | 80 | 38 | 65 |
| A Conservative-Lib Dem coalition | 13 | 12 | 17 | 31 | 11 |
| A Labour-Lib Dem coalition | 17 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 7 |
| A Labour government | 36 | - | 2 | 14 | 17 |

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|--------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Male | 49 | 57 | 52 | 43 | 57 |
| Female | 51 | 43 | 48 | 57 | 43 |

Age

| % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|-------------|-------|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| 18-24 | 12 | 4 | 24 | 15 | 4 |
| 25-34 | 16 | 10 | 14 | 18 | 12 |
| 35-44 | 19 | 14 | 16 | 22 | 15 |
| 45-54 | 17 | 16 | 12 | 15 | 16 |
| 55-64 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 13 | 19 |
| 65+ | 21 | 39 | 18 | 18 | 35 |
| Average age | 47.02 | 55.12 | 43.75 | 45.04 | 53.83 |

Social grade

| | % | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|--|----|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| | AB | 27 | 37 | 35 | 25 | 29 |
| | C1 | 29 | 30 | 35 | 32 | 30 |
| | C2 | 21 | 18 | 19 | 25 | 22 |
| | DE | 23 | 15 | 12 | 18 | 19 |

Public sector

| | % of all those working | ALL | LOYALISTS | JOINERS | CONSIDERERS | DEFECTORS |
|--|--------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| | working in public sector | | 18 | 21 | 24 | 23 |