

The Coalition One Year On – What’s the Verdict?

This summary contains the results of the latest research with the YouGovStone ThinkTank of influential people. The survey interviewed 904 leading individuals online in the UK between April 7th and 18th 2011. The YouGovStone ThinkTank includes individuals from politics, business, media, academia and the public sector.

Headline approval of the Coalition amongst our ThinkTank sits at 54%, but many Cabinet ministers, including Nick Clegg and Andrew Lansley have seen their ratings fall substantially over recent months. The Coalition’s reforming agenda has been hit and miss with this sample; the Economy scores well but Health and Defence rate poorly, as do the schools building programme, university tuition fees and The Big Society. Also support from members of the ThinkTank for the LibDems has halved since the General Election.

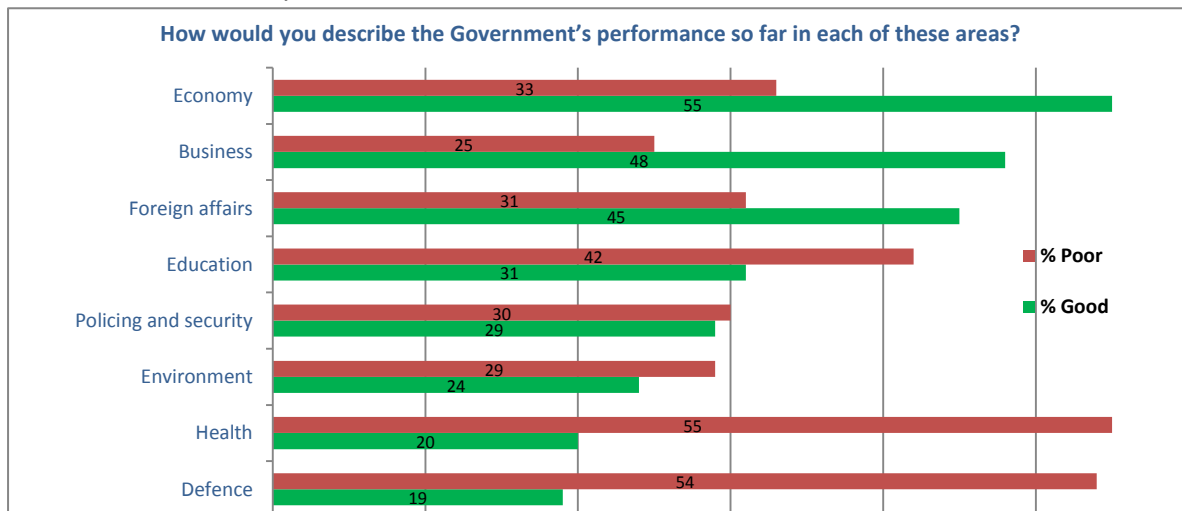
General verdict

One year on from the general election last May, the ThinkTank is quite positive about the work of the coalition Government so far. 54% believe the Government has done a very good or reasonably good job; however, a third thinks that it has done a reasonably poor or very poor job.

The panel’s opinion is divided along party lines – 54% believe the coalition is doing a good job and 54% would vote for a Coalition party if there was a General Election tomorrow. There is some dissent as 85% of Tory voters claim the coalition is doing well; a slightly lower, 75% of LibDem voters say this. Meanwhile, 82% of Labour voters think the Government has done a poor job so far, as do 72% of those who would vote for a minor party.

Policies and Politicians

Looking at how well the panel thinks key politicians are doing in their roles, what stands out is the divide between David Cameron and Nick Clegg. Whilst net approval (% that say ‘doing good job’ minus % saying ‘doing poor job’) of the Prime Minister stands at +40, net approval for Nick Clegg is at -18. Furthermore, net approval for Nick Clegg has plummeted by 61 points since the panel was asked back in June 2010, while David Cameron’s has dropped just 26 points. However, net approval has dropped for *all* Government figures since last June, by 29 points on average. The panel also scored Ed Miliband very low, with a net score of -42.



Health The panel is clearly dissatisfied with the Government’s health policies: 55% think the Coalition is performing poorly in health and equally Andrew Lansley has the lowest net approval score, at -49, of the 12 Cabinet ministers included in the survey. 60% of our panel think that the Government is doing a poor job in its policy of removing NHS Primary Care Trusts.

Education 42% thinks the Government’s track record in education is poor, and Michael Gove’s net approval is at a -33. Almost half (47%) the panel believes the Government is doing a poor job with the schools building programme, and 57% think the Government’s policy on university tuition fees is poor. This mirrors research by YouGov with the general public, of whom 52% oppose the Government’s reforms on tuition fees.

**How well do you believe each of the following are doing in their current roles?
Net approval (% who say ‘good job’ minus % who say ‘poor job’)**

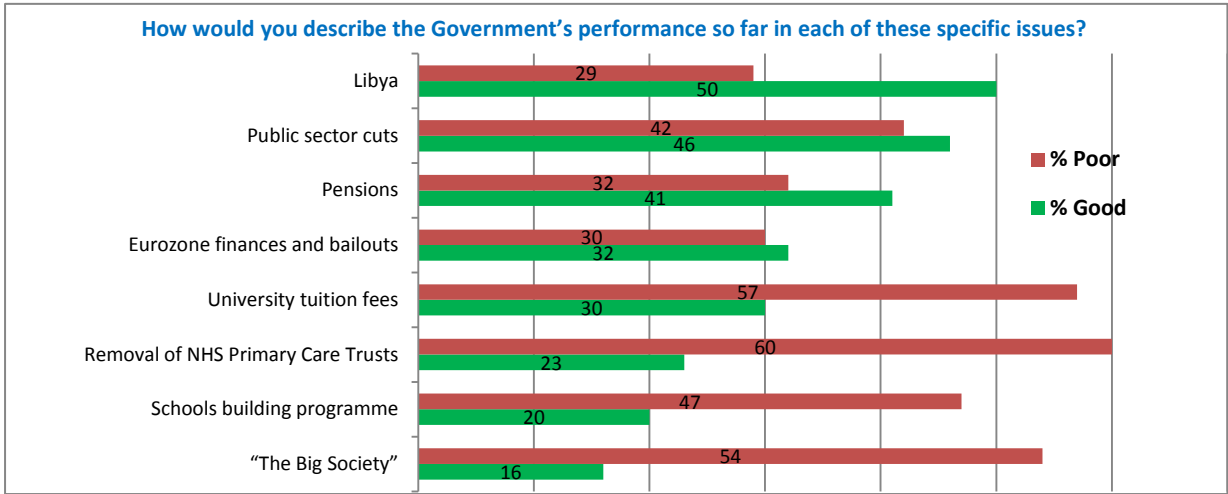
	Net approval June 2010	Net approval April 2011	Change from June 2010 to April 2011
David Cameron	+66	+40	-26
Ken Clarke	+37	+28	-9
George Osborne	+41	+21	-20
Theresa May	+23	+17	-6
Danny Alexander	+17	+11	-6
William Hague	+49	+9	-40
Jeremy Hunt	+4	-1	-5
Michael Gove	+19	-14	-33
Nick Clegg	+43	-18	-61
Liam Fox	+6	-20	-26
Vince Cable	+33	-21	-54
Andrew Lansley	+14	-49	-63

Defence and Foreign Affairs The panel generally disapproves of the Government’s performance in Defence, with 54% stating that it is doing a poor job. Similarly, Liam Fox’s net approval is -20 points. Although the panel is predominantly positive about the Government’s performance in Foreign Affairs, and half rate its handling of the Libya crisis as good, William Hague’s personal rating has dropped significantly since June, now just +9.

Business and the Economy Our respondents are a lot more positive about the Government’s performance on the Economy, where 55% describe it as good. This almost exactly mirrors the figures on the panel’s general verdict on the Government’s job so far perhaps suggesting the Government is being judged mainly on how well it manages the economy, as is often the case. George Osborne’s net approval is still relatively high, at +21. 48% think policy making in Business has been good so far, but Vince Cable’s net approval has plunged 54 points, to -21.

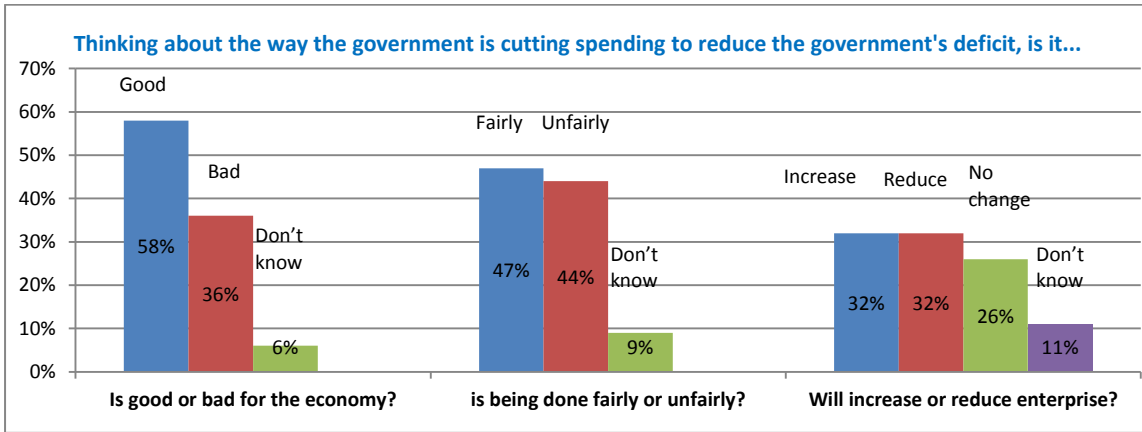
The panel is also more evenly split with regards to other matters. On public sector cuts 46% think the Government is doing well but 42% think poorly. Opinions on pensions are similarly divided (41% think Government performance has been good, 32% think poor), as are the Eurozone finances and bailouts (32% good, 30% poor).

The Big Society This is a policy with which the Government has failed to convince. More than half the panel (54%) believes the Government’s performance here to be poor (of which 30% think it very poor). This result supports research by YouGov with the general public, where 43% say they do not understand The Big Society very well, and 29% say they do not understand it at all.



Spending cuts

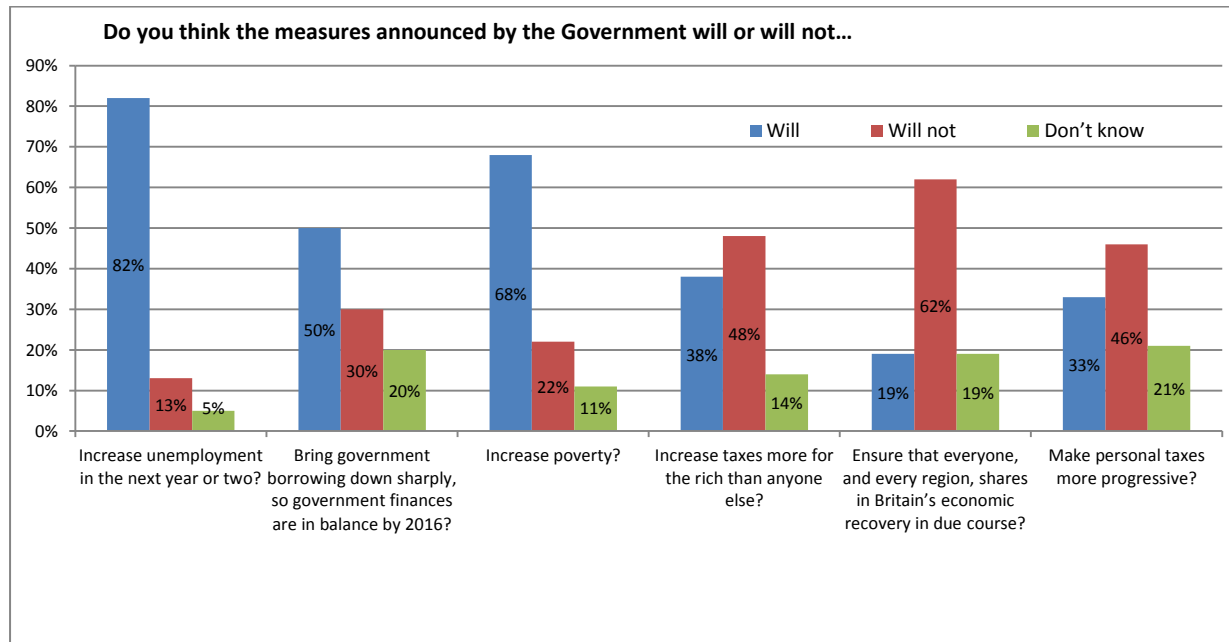
Economic policy has been one of the Government’s most contentious policy areas and the Think Tank too has mixed views on it. Although 58% believe the way spending is being cut to reduce the deficit is good for the economy, and general views of the Government’s economic performance is positive, only 47% feel that cuts are being made fairly, with 44% thinking they are unfair. Only a third believes the cuts will increase enterprise, the same proportion however believes enterprise will be reduced, and 26% think that there will be no change.



In terms of the wider effects of the Government’s economic policies, our respondents are either negative or divided. 82% think that Government policies will increase unemployment in the near future; 68% also believe that poverty will increase.

62% do not believe that the Government has ensured that everyone will benefit from any upcoming economic recovery. But 50% are confident that Government measures will be able to rebalance the government’s finances by 2016, however a third does not think so.

Interestingly, only 33% think that personal taxes are becoming more progressive under the coalition’s measures, but 46% do not. When asked directly, the panel is divided over whether new measures will increase taxes more for the rich than for others; 38% believe they will, 48% believe they will not, 48% believe they will not, 48% believe they will not.



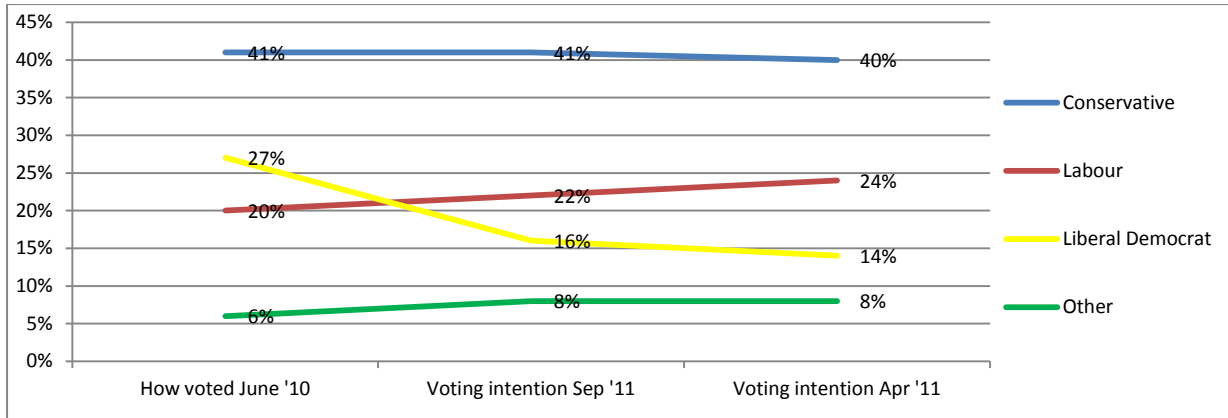
One clear trend, however, was that compared to our survey in June 2010, the panel has become more critical of the spending cuts. 9% more now think that the cuts are bad for the economy, 13% more now think they are being made unfairly, and 10% more believe that they will reduce enterprise. A quarter less now believe that the recovery will be evenly spread, 21% less think the planned rebalancing of finances in 2016 will be achieved, and 17% more think that poverty will be increased.

How the parties have been affected

An overwhelming 82% of the panel believe being in government has made the Liberal Democrats less popular. Our panel is convinced that, after a year in a coalition with the Tories, the Liberal Democrats have suffered and are now much weaker than when the coalition was first formed.

This is different for the Tories: 25% of our respondents think they are indeed now in a weaker position but 57% actually think the Conservatives are stronger now. 26% even believe the Tories will be more popular at the next election (although 28% think they will be less popular). As for the Labour party, although 35% think the party is stronger now, 45% believe it is not.

These findings are reflected in the panel’s voting intentions, shown in the table below. The Conservatives have remained stable, but it is the Liberal Democrats that have really lost the panel’s support. Support for Labour has risen slightly, but the panel still do not see it as credible as the Conservative Party. Here the figures depart from the opinion of the general public, of which, according to the latest (27/04/2011) YouGov survey, 42% would now vote for Labour if there was a General Election tomorrow.



How much longer?

Finally, the panel was asked to predict how long the coalition would last. Only half think it will complete its full term but this simple measure of the Government’s stability has increased since June 2010, when only 36% of the panel thought it would complete its full term. However, in this respect the ThinkTank is still less confident than the MPs themselves: YouGovStone research with the House of Commons in December 2010 found that a full 70% of MPs believed at that time that the coalition will go full term (and even the majority of Labour MPs interviewed stated this).

YouGovStone’s ThinkTank is a group of over 4,000 influential individuals who take part in regular online surveys. Predominantly UK based, these leaders in their field are drawn from various sectors including politics, business, media, the public sector, academia and NGOs.

PLEASE NOTE, YOUNGOVSTONE IS A PREDECESSOR OF YOUNGOV’S REPUTATION DEPARTMENT. YouGov now regularly surveys MPs, business leaders and other groups of high level decision makers in the UK and internationally. If your organisation needs to know what these individuals think, please contact Oliver Rowe, Director of Reputation Research on +44 (0)207 012 6032 or email oliver.rowe@yougov.com