

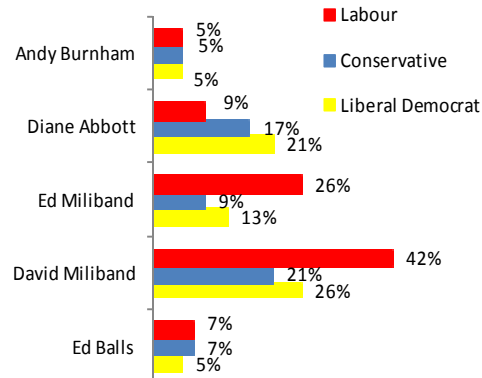
1 in 5 of YouGovStone's 'ThinkTank' panel of influential people correctly predicted Ed Miliband's surprise victory in the Labour leadership race, but the vast majority of our panel predicted his brother, David would win. This comes as our panel's support for the LibDems drops and the rating of individual Cabinet members also falls.

Ed Miliband pulled off a surprise at the Labour conference by being installed as the new party leader, with just 18% of 'influentials' predicting this outcome. Only 16% of our panel demonstrated a personal preference for Ed Miliband, although he was more popular amongst Labour voters on our panel, with 26% indicating he would be their first choice.

David Miliband led the candidates in terms of personal preference amongst our panel. 25% of 'influentials' wanted him to be the next Leader of the Opposition, followed by Ed Miliband on 16%, with Diane Abbott a close third (15%).

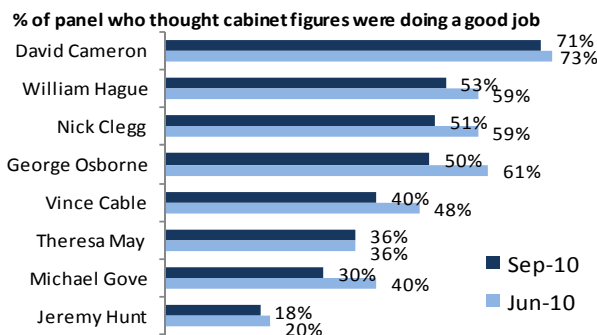
This level of preference for Abbott was most prevalent in LibDem respondents, while Tory party supporters were twice as likely to prefer her as their Labour counterparts. At the same time, Tory support for David Miliband was half that of Labour support. This suggests a dose of self interest in the result, with Conservative supporters preferring a Labour leader less popular among Labour supporters on the panel.

Preferences for Labour leader by party I would vote for



Cameron's approval rating outstrips Cabinet – Support for Cabinet drops – LibDem support falls

Research conducted in September, before the party conference season, shows support for Prime Minister David Cameron still remains very high amongst the panel of 'influentials'. 71% of respondents believe he is doing a good job, 18% better than the next highest member of his cabinet, Foreign Secretary William Hague (53%), followed by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (51%). Cameron's Tory party is still the most popular among our panel, with 41% of respondents intending to vote Conservative if a General Election was held tomorrow.



Among our panel the popularity of cabinet ministers is falling. Chancellor George Osborne's figures show the largest drop, down by 11% since June. However he is still 30% ahead of Alistair Darling's rating just over a year ago in the same job.

'Influentials' support for the Liberal Democrats is also falling with just 16% of them pledging to vote for them, down from 27% in June. Previous LibDem

supporters seem to have moved to the 'Don't Know' category, becoming key swing voters.

The BBC

In the face of dramatic public spending cuts our panel of 'influentials' believes the BBC should follow suit. 71% believe that the license fee should either be frozen or reduced, with 28% believing it should continue to rise. Support for a freeze was highest amongst those involved in culture and leisure and was lowest amongst those working in the media.

A majority of the respondents believe the BBC's independence is being threatened by recent events. 82% declare concern about Mark Thomson's meeting in Downing Street to discuss the BBC's handling of cuts in public spending of which 45% are very worried about its effect on the corporation's independence. 63% also believe the practice of top BBC executives meeting Government officials to discuss programme matters is either a risk to the BBC's independence or is absolutely wrong.

Finally, 61% believe the cuts that BBC top executives have recently promised to make in their own pay do not go far enough, with just 1% believing they went too far.