

## **MAJORITY OF INFLUENTIALS DO NOT SEE A CLEAR VISION EMERGING FROM ANY OF THE THREE MAIN PARTY CONFERENCES**

**In a recent YouGovStone survey on the party conference season with 811 ‘influentials’, most respondents did not see a clear vision for the future emerging from the Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat conferences. Even a majority of those respondents that would vote Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat at the next General Election do not see their respective party’s conference as offering a clear vision. For the survey, YouGovStone interviewed 811 members of its online ThinkTank of 4000+ influential Britons, drawn from politics, business, media, academia, NGOs, the public sector and beyond.**

### Overall verdict

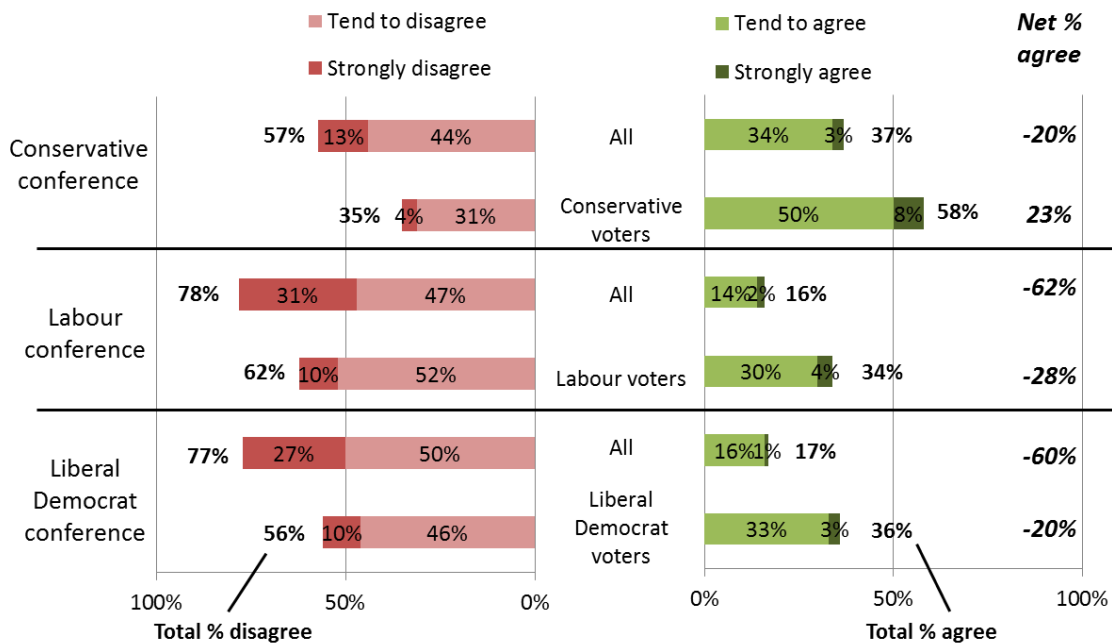
Panellists were not very impressed by any of this year’s three main party conferences. Asked how far each of the main parties laid out a clear vision for the future at their conferences, none of them fare very well. Although 37% agree the Conservative conference achieved this, a majority of 57% disagrees. For the other two parties, the majority of influentials did not see a clear vision for the future emerge from their conferences, with 78% and 77% disagreeing. Even 62% of those who would vote for Labour at the next General Election did not see a coherent blueprint emerging from their party’s conference, and a majority of likely Lib Dem voters say the same.

A similarly negative picture emerges when the panel is asked about how successful they thought the main conferences were in promoting the parties to the electorate. The Conservative conference came off best, even though only a third of respondents believe that it had been successful. For Labour and the Liberal Democrats the ThinkTank panel is even more critical, with only 16% and 18% respectively believing these conferences helped promote the parties to the electorate; 58% and 50% respectively think they have been unsuccessful.



## 'THE PARTY LAID OUT A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE'

To what extent do you agree with this statement when applied to each of the main three political party conferences.



Base: 808 'UK influentials'; 'voters' based on those who stated they would vote for this party at the next general election

### Conservatives

Turning to the Conservative conference, one major issue was the party's defiant affirmation of its deficit reduction plan. 57% of the panel agree that 'sticking to the deficit reduction plan is the best thing the Government can do to lead the UK through the current world economic crisis.' This figure rises to 68% for those panellists working in business, but only 12% of likely Labour voters agree.

Another question that featured was how the party leadership will negotiate the path between the Tory base, its coalition partner and the electorate. 50% of the panel believe that 'David Cameron has alienated the Tory base by conceding too much to his coalition partners'. Nevertheless the Conservative leadership is seen to be in a difficult position, with two thirds of the panel arguing that 'the Conservatives need to continue modernising themselves to be able to win elections outright in the future.' This figure is the same for those who would vote Conservative on the ThinkTank panel.

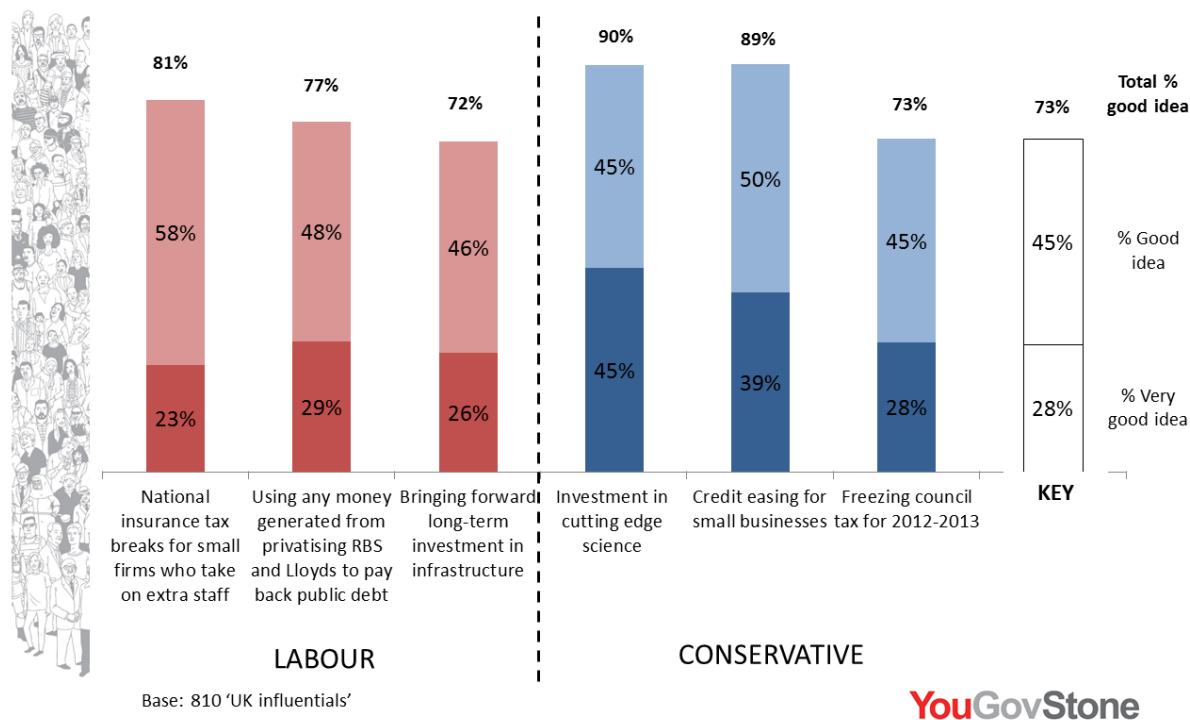
Of the main policies announced at the Conservative conference, the top three in the eyes of the panel were investment in cutting edge science (90% agree it is a good or very good idea), credit easing for small businesses (89% agree), freezing council tax for 2012-2013 (73% agree). However, the announcement that employee rights would be reduced is not seen by the ThinkTank as a good idea; only 29% see this as constructive whereas 51% state that this is a bad or very bad idea. However, 42% of Business respondents welcome the policy.

### Liberal Democrats

Following the first conference in government for the modern Liberal Democrat party, nearly half the panel (47%) agree that 'the Liberal Democrat party is far more divided internally than either the

Labour or the Conservative party', although a significant proportion, (37%) disagree. Respondents are more agreed that the Liberal Democrats do not have a clear policy profile and are not very well differentiated from the other parties, with 72% concurring with this. And although 57% of the ThinkTank agree that the Lib Dems have been punching above their weight in the Coalition government, only 18% of the panel see the party recovering in the polls by the time of the next election; three quarters do not think the Lib Dems will recover.

## Top 3 policies announced/outlined at Conservative and Labour conferences



### Labour

The panellists have equally mixed views towards the Labour party. Only 23% believe that Labour is doing a good job as the main party of the Opposition, with just under three quarters disagreeing. Even many likely Labour voters are critical, and so only 49% think their party is forming a good Opposition, whereas 48% do not. At the same time however, it is not clear what alternative strategy the party should be pursuing, as 63% disagree that 'Labour's policy review is a waste of time, it should concentrate on attacking the Government now.'

The YouGovStone ThinkTank is similarly critical of Labour's economic competence. Asked how convincing they find the current Labour leadership's alternative strategy for running the economy and reducing the deficit, as outlined at the party's conference, 27% said they find it somewhat unconvincing, and a further 42% even stated it was very unconvincing. Panellists working in Business were even more critical, with 80% describing Labour's economic alternative as somewhat or very unconvincing. Nevertheless these figures are skewed along party lines, as likely Labour voters are far more likely to support their party's alternative, with 70% in favour.

However, when confronted with specific policies that Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls outlined at the conference, panellists agreed more with the policies than the above figures would suggest. The top 3

policies in the eyes of the panel were: National Insurance tax breaks for small firms who take on extra staff, with 81% thinking it a good idea; using any money generated by privatising RBS and Lloyds to pay back public debt (77%); and bringing forward long-term investment in infrastructure (72%).

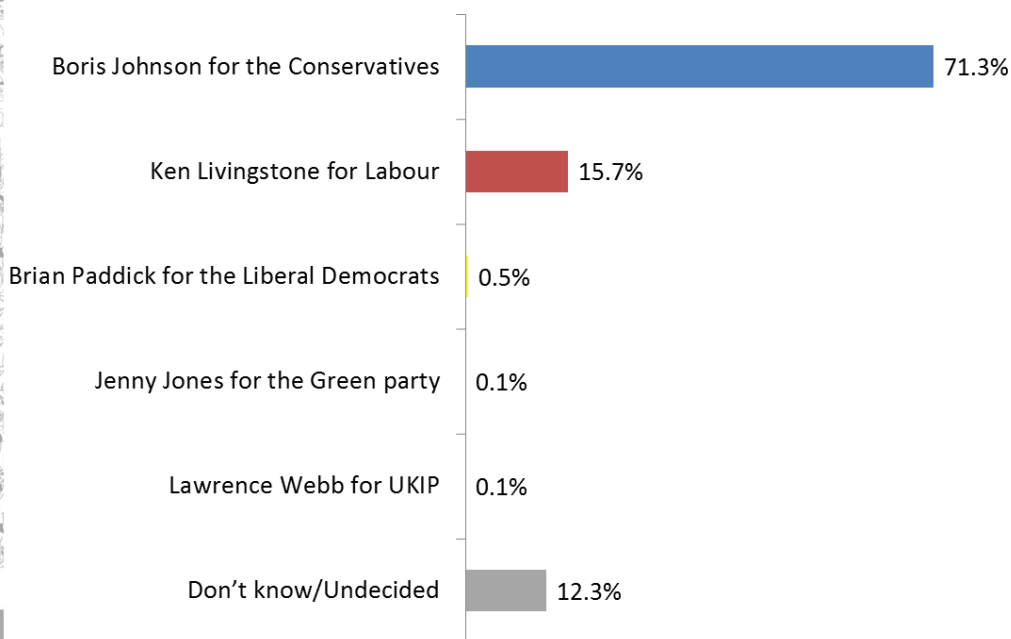
The ThinkTank was also asked about 'Blue Labour', a term with which only 35% are familiar; a full fifth of the panel has never heard of it, with another fifth professing itself 'not familiar at all' with it. However, respondents were then given a more detailed description of the movement: "Blue Labour is a recent concept in Labour thinking that argues that the party must revitalise itself through distancing itself from state-centric policies, taking a more conservative stand on issues such as immigration and crime, emphasising local communities and relationships and opposition to neoliberal economics." Given this characterisation, a majority of respondents (56%) are in favour of the Blue Labour movement. Interestingly, those who say they would vote Conservative are far more in agreement with Blue Labour tenets, at 76%, than likely Labour voters themselves, at 34%.

## Mayor of London

Turning to the mayoral election next year, the 'influentials' believe Boris Johnson set to win. 47% of those eligible to vote would choose Boris Johnson, with Ken Livingstone far behind at 26%, and Brian Paddick third, with 8%. Even 9% of those respondents that vote Labour nationally would choose Boris Johnson for mayor next year. Similarly, when asked to predict who will actually win the election, 71% of respondents see Boris Johnson as entering a second term. Only 16% believe Ken Livingstone will return to power. This is reflected in the positive appraisal of Boris Johnson's tenure so far. Although his mean rating is 5.6 out of 10 where 0 is 'very poor' and 10 is 'very good', 37% give his work a score of 7 or above out of 10, and only 18% give him a score of 3 or less.



## Who do you think will win the election for Mayor of London next year?



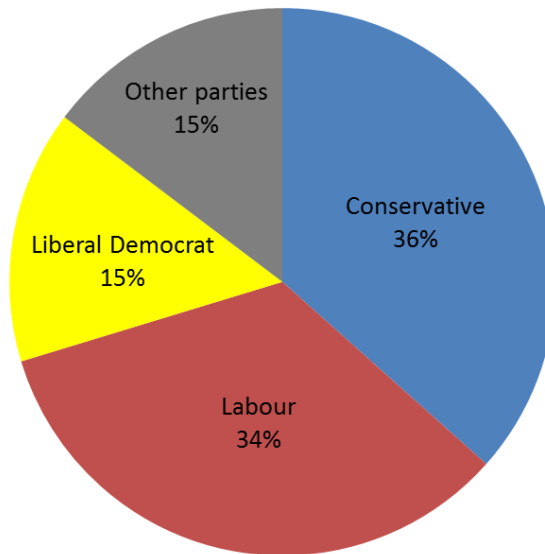
Base: 811 'UK influentials'

Finally, panellists were asked to predict how they believe the voting share would fall at the next general election. The chart below shows their prediction.



And what share of the vote do you think each of these will obtain at the next general election?

(For reference, in the 2010 general election the parties got the following share of the vote: Conservative 36%; Labour 29%; Liberal Democrats 23%; Other parties 12%.)



Base: 593 'UK influentials'

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**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](mailto:oliver.rowe@yougov.com)