

Recognition and approval of politicians



While the Party conferences and the resignation of Dr Liam Fox have brought the personalities of government into stark relief in the media during October, a YouGov-Cambridge study finds large parts of the population fail to even recognise many major politicians. Women, the young and the socially disadvantaged all recognise fewer and incumbent politicians fare better than those in opposition. Approval mirrors closely events in the news, but interestingly also reflects levels of recognition for members of government.

Method:

Respondents were presented with a series of politicians' photos and asked to identify them from among a long list of political figures. If they were unsure they were asked not to guess. These recognition data were used to supplement and deepen attitudinal insights.

There are few surprises in overall recognition rankings but levels for many politicians are remarkably low

- Party leaders, ex-leaders and long-standing politicians feature highest in terms of public recognition.
- Little change since July implies a negligible role for short-term exposure and events (July dataset: http://cdn.yougov.com/today_uk_import/yg-archives-pol-sun-politicianrecognition-030811.pdf)
- Seismic shifts in the political landscape do have impact though. Recognition of Liam Fox has increased from 34% to 50% in the past 3 months.

Politician	Position	% Recognise	Politician	Position	% Recognise
David Cameron	Prime Minister	98	Harriet Harman	Deputy leader of the Labour party	55
William Hague	Foreign Secretary	85	Theresa May	Home Secretary	54
Nick Clegg	Deputy PM	82	Michael Gove	Education Secretary	32
Ed Milliband	Leader of the Labour party	81	Chris Huhne	Energy Secretary	31
Ken Clarke	Justice Secretary	77	Danny Alexander	Chief Secretary to the Treasury	29
IDS	Work and Pensions Secretary	68	Andrew Lansley	Health Secretary	19
Vince Cable	Business Secretary	66	Yvette Cooper	Shadow Home Secretary	19
George Osborne	Chancellor of the Exchequer	61	Phillip Hammond	Defence Secretary	16
Ed Balls	Shadow Chancellor	56	Douglas Alexander	Shadow Foreign Secretary	14

The Incumbent effect is strong

- Politicians in government are consistently better recognised than their counterparts in the shadow cabinet:

- William Hague (85%),
Douglas Alexander (14%)

A difference of **-71%**

- Theresa May (54%),
Yvette Cooper (19%)

A difference of **-35%**

- George Osborne (61%),
Ed Balls (56%)

A difference of **-5%**

Splits by age, social grade and gender imply significant differences in political engagement and highlight areas of potential political gain

Gender:

- For all politicians save for David Cameron (M 98%, F 98%), a significantly lower percentage of female respondents correctly recognise the photo.
- The highest split is for Liam Fox, with 19% divide (M 60%, F 41%). Vince Cable and George Osborne both have a 17% recognition split, George Osborne (M 71%, F 54%), Vince Cable (M 74%, F 57%).

Age:

- A similar story characterises the breakdown across ages. In all cases the over 60s correctly recognise a far higher percentages of politicians

then those 18-24. The average percentage of 18-24 year olds who recognise each politician is 39%, 25-39 is 46%, 40-59 is 53% and 60+ is 62%.

- Two politicians who buck the trend are Michael Gove, who 27% of those aged 18-24 recognise as opposed to 22% of 25-39 and Theresa May who 43% of 18-24 year olds recognise as opposed to 37% of 25-39. Both work in areas more directly relevant to the young-education and the home office.

Class:

- Respondents from lower social grades have consistently lower recognition scores than those from higher with an average of 47% for C2DE compared to 56% for ABC1.

Approval ratings mirror the news cycle

- In the wake of the largely successful prosecution of the war in Libya, William Hague is a stand out performer for approval with the only positive score of +20%.
- The controversies of NHS, Education and Sentencing reform can be linked to the poor showings of Ken Clarke (-16%), Michael Gove (-16%) and Andrew Lansley (-28%).

There is a significant link between approval and recognition for members of government

- Within the current cabinet approval and recognition are significantly linked. Higher approval ratings are correlated with greater levels of recognition, with a Pearson's Chi-squared value of 0.6.

[See the survey details and full results here](#)