



Press Release *Strictly embargoed until 00.01hrs Monday 20th April 2015*

Major new poll of 13,000 university students reveals how the 'Class of 2015' intend to vote in the General Election

The results of a major new political poll, **Student Politics 2015**, are to be published in a special report on **Monday 20th April 2015**. It is a unique study of how students at the UK's leading universities expect to vote in the General Election and is based on **13,039 face-to-face interviews** conducted with final year students in March 2015, just before the start of the Easter holidays.

The study has been produced by High Fliers Research, an independent market research company that specialises in student and graduate research. It centres around the question '*Which party do you expect to vote for in the General Election?*' but also examines students' backgrounds, career plans and aspirations. A total of thirty UK universities were included within the survey.

The results of the research provide a highly detailed profile of the voting intentions of this key group of 'first-time' voters and shows that whilst Labour and the Conservatives have almost identical levels of support on campus, there has been a huge surge in interest in the Green Party, at the expense of the Liberal Democrats, whose share of the vote is now barely a quarter of that recorded by a similar poll of student voters in the run-up to the General Election in 2010.

The research also reveals that the characteristics of typical Labour and Conservative student voters follow traditional political stereotypes very closely – those planning to vote Conservative include the highest-earners and those pursuing careers in banking, finance and consulting, whereas lower earners and those hoping to work in areas like teaching, the media and the charity or voluntary sector are much more likely to vote Labour.

Highlights from the *Student Politics 2015* report include:

- 31 per cent of students questioned for the survey intend to vote for Labour in the forthcoming General Election, the same proportion as the Conservative party. A quarter of finalists plan to vote for the Green Party but only six per cent are backing the Liberal Democrats and just 1 per cent are UKIP supporters. Three per cent expect to vote for the SNP.
- The Conservatives are the most popular party at 14 out of the 30 universities included within the survey and support is greatest at the universities of Loughborough, Imperial College London, the London School of Economics, Durham, Bath and Exeter.
- Labour is the leading party at 11 universities and enjoys the biggest share of the student vote at Liverpool, Lancaster, Oxford, Warwick, Manchester and Sheffield.
- The Green Party is the most popular choice for undergraduates at two universities – Leeds and Edinburgh. The Scottish National Party is the leading party at Strathclyde and Glasgow universities, and Sinn Féin is the top choice for those studying at Queen's University Belfast.

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- Almost a sixth of potential student voters remain undecided about who to support or are not intending to vote in the election at all.
- More than half the students who took part in the research said that the next Government's main priority should be to reduce the deficit.
- Two fifths of students intend to vote for the party with the most convincing leader and a third say they'll simply vote for the party that their parents support.
- Over half of final year students believe that Labour is the best party to manage the NHS and run Britain's public services whereas two-fifths think the Conservatives are most likely to manage the economy successfully. More than half of all finalists questioned said they wouldn't vote for the Liberal Democrats because they increased university tuition fees.
- Two fifths of final year students don't believe it'll make much difference to them personally whichever party wins the election and a fifth say most of their friends think voting is a waste of time.
- One in six final year students say they'd consider standing to be an MP in the future – the largest proportion of would-be parliamentarians is at the London School of Economics, Nottingham, Imperial College London, Warwick, York, Oxford and Cambridge.
- Final year students intending to vote Conservative are most likely to have attended a private fee-paying school before starting their degree, are the most confident about finding a graduate job after university, and plan to work in management consulting, investment banking, finance or marketing. They have the highest salary expectations – an average of £25,500 on graduation, £44,900 within five years and one in four thinks they'll be paid at least £100,000 a year by the age of 30. Conservative student voters are most likely to read *The Times* newspaper.
- Students supporting Labour are largely from state schools or colleges and plan to work in areas like teaching, the media and the charity or voluntary sector after university. On average, they expect to earn around £3,000 a year less in their first graduate job, compared with Conservative supporters. *The Guardian* is the newspaper of choice for Labour supporters on campus.
- Those planning to vote for the Green Party are the least certain about their future after university, with lower salary expectations and fewer planning to join the graduate job market.
- The *Student Politics 2010* survey of 13,961 final year students conducted by High Fliers Research in March 2010 showed that 37 per cent of students were preparing to vote Conservative and 23 per cent planned to support Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats. In the General Election that followed, the national vote for the Conservative party was 36 per cent and 23 per cent voted for the Liberal Democrats. Fewer than 6 per cent of finalists expected to vote for the Green Party in 2010.
- And in the *Student Politics 1997* poll of 12,091 final year students in March 1997 reported that 46 per cent of finalists planned to vote for Labour – in the subsequent election Tony Blair swept to power with 43 per cent of the national vote.

Managing director of High Fliers Research, **Martin Birchall** commented:

“Our research not only confirms that first-time voters at the country's top universities are set to vote for Labour and the Conservatives in almost equal numbers in the General Election but that there has been a huge surge in support for the Green Party on campus, taking them to within just a few percentage points of the two leading parties and an unprecedented share of the student vote. By contrast, just 6 per cent of students are planning to vote Liberal Democrat, a quarter of the number who supported the party in 2010.”

Notes to Editors:

1. **Student Politics 2015** is produced by **High Fliers Research**, an independent research company that specialises in student and graduate research. Established in 1994, the company's regular research programme includes *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* of final year university students and twice-yearly assessments of the employment prospects for new graduates. It's latest research on *The Graduate Market in 2015* published in January 2015 showed that Britain's leading employers are set to recruit the highest number of graduates for more than a decade in 2015.
2. **Martin Birchall**, Managing Director of High Fliers Research is available for interview.

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