

Produced by



High Fliers Research Limited

King's Gate

1 Bravingtons Walk

London N1 9AE

Telephone: 020 7428 9000

Website: www.highfliers.co.uk

All information contained in this report is believed to be correct and unbiased, but the publisher does not accept responsibility for any loss arising from decisions made upon this information.

© **High Fliers Research Limited 2010**. All rights reserved.

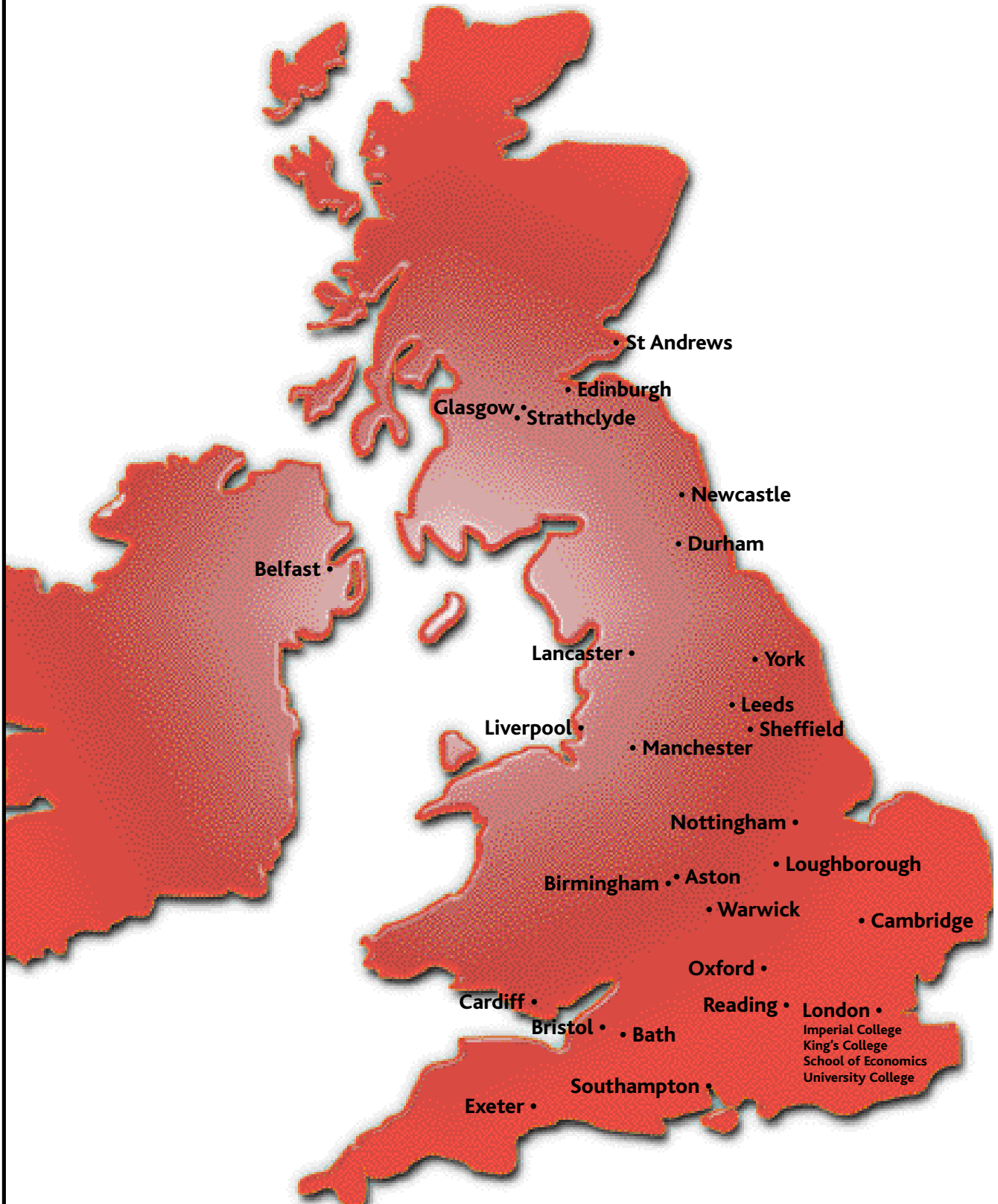
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, High Fliers Research Limited.

Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| 1. Introduction | 7 |
| About the Research | 7 |
| Survey Organisers | 7 |
| Fieldwork for the Survey | 8 |
| 2. Student Politics 2010 | 9 |
| Overview | 9 |
| Students' Voting Intentions | 10 |
| Analysis of Students Intending to Vote for the Major Political Parties | 12 |
| Conclusions | 14 |

Student Politics 2010

Universities included in the survey.



Foreword

Executive Summary

The *Student Politics 2010* survey is based on face-to-face interviews with **13,961** final year students from the ‘Class of 2010’ studying at 30 leading universities in the UK, carried out in March 2010.

The survey is one of the **largest** independent studies of its kind and the sample includes a fifth of students graduating from these universities in the summer of 2010:

Students’ Voting Intentions

- 30% of students surveyed plan to vote Conservative in the election, compared with 21% for Labour, 19% for the Liberal Democrats, 6% for the Green Party and 6% for other parties including the Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru.
- A large proportion – almost one in five students – remain undecided about who to vote for.
- The Conservatives are the leading party at 20 of the 30 universities included in the survey and support is greatest at the universities of Durham (46%), St Andrews (46%) and Reading (44%).
- Labour is the top choice at just six universities – the London School of Economics (32%), York (29%), Strathclyde (28%), Liverpool (28%), Aston (28%), Sheffield (26%) and Glasgow (26%).
- The Liberal Democrats are the most popular party at two universities – Leeds (26%) and Warwick (24%). Sinn Féin is the leading party for students at Queen’s University Belfast (22%).
- *Student Politics 1997* – a similar poll conducted thirteen years ago by High Fliers Research with over 12,000 final year students from the ‘Class of 1997’ – reported that 29% of students planned to vote Labour in that year’s General Election, ahead of 18% who planned to vote Conservative and 10% who supported the Liberal Democrats.

Views on Politics

- Two thirds of students intend to cast their vote based on policies, a sixth will vote for the most convincing leader and one in seven say they’ll vote for the party that their parents support.
- A quarter of final year students don’t believe it’ll make much difference to them personally whichever party wins the election – and one in six students say most of their friends think voting is a waste of time.
- Only 13% of students questioned thought that Labour had handled the economic crisis well and a third said they thought the Government should have done more to help graduates find work during the recession.
- A quarter of students say they don’t think that the prospects for young people will be any better under the Conservatives.
- Just one in twelve final year students say they’d consider standing for an MP in the future. The largest proportion of would-be parliamentarians is at York, St Andrews, Cambridge, University College London, Reading, Oxford and Warwick.

Profiling Students' Voting for the Major Political Parties

- Conservative voters are most likely to have attended a private fee-paying school before starting their degree, have the lowest student debts, are the most confident about finding a graduate job after university and plan to work in investment banking, management consulting, marketing or the law. They have the highest salary expectations – an average of £22,900 on graduation, £40,800 within five years and one in five thinks they'll be paid at least £100,000 per annum by the age of 30. Conservative voters are most likely to read *The Times* or the *Daily Telegraph*.
- Students supporting Labour are largely from state schools or colleges, have higher student debts and plan to work in areas like teaching, the media and the charity or voluntary sector after university. On average, they expect to earn a starting salary of £20,900 and progress to £36,100 within five years. Only one in ten Labour voters expects to earn £100,000 by the age of 30. *The Guardian* is the newspaper of choice for Labour supporters.
- Liberal Democrat supporters are the most uncertain about their career prospects, have the highest student debts and the lowest graduate salary expectations – an average of £20,200 for their first job.

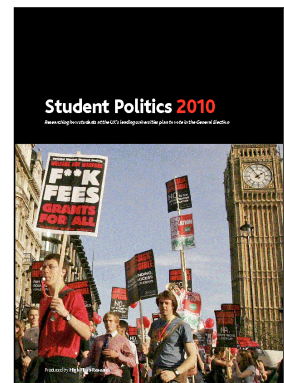
Chapter 1

Introduction

About the Survey

With over two million individuals in either full or part time education in the UK, university students represent a key part of the British electorate. The *Student Politics 2010* survey took place at thirty leading universities during March 2010, just before the beginning of the Easter holidays.

The survey focused on final year students at the universities and 93 per cent of those questioned were age 22 or younger and will therefore be first-time voters in the forthcoming General Election. The research was based on face-to-face to interviews with **13,961 students** on-campus and included a random selection of students, balanced to match the profile of subjects studied at the university.



The key question posed was ‘Which political party do you expect to vote for in the General Election?’ but it also included a number of demographic and lifestyle questions to help build up a detailed profile of student voters. This included their career plans, likely employment sectors and expected starting salaries.

Survey Organisers

High Fliers Research Limited is an independent market research company which specialises in student and graduate research. Established in 1994, the company has now worked with over 120 leading employers to measure the impact of their recruitment activities on campus and help them understand their position in the graduate market.

The company is best-known for **The UK Graduate Careers Survey**, its innovative annual survey of over 16,000 final year undergraduates at the country’s leading universities. The survey gives employers a unique insight into the career expectations and aspirations of final year students – just weeks before they graduate – and provides a definitive record of their search for a graduate job.

Since 2002, High Fliers Research has also conducted regular surveys of Britain’s top employers to research current graduate vacancy levels, starting salaries and benchmark the latest recruitment practices.



High Fliers Research hosts the UK’s only annual conference exclusively for graduate recruiters, *The National Graduate Recruitment Conference*, at the five-star Grove Hotel in Hertfordshire each September. It also runs monthly one-day professional training courses for new graduate recruiters throughout the year at the High Fliers Research Centre in London.

Internationally, the company works closely with the **Australian Association of Graduate Employers** and the **South African Graduate Recruitment Association** to carry out their annual surveys of graduate employers, new graduate joiners and graduates in-work.

Fieldwork for the Survey

Fieldwork for the *Student Politics 2010* survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews. This is clearly very labour-intensive but this approach was considered essential to guarantee that a large proportion of final year students participated in the research. Interviewers for the fieldwork were drawn from the student community and over 800 were recruited by local university managers.

Interviews for the survey were timed to take place during March, in the final days of the spring term, just before the start of the Easter holiday. At each university, a team of up to 35 interviewers conducted 25 interviews each during a six-day period. Every interviewer was provided with several university departments from which to select students at random to take part in interviews. This helped ensure that the proportion of students from different subjects at each university interviewed for the survey mirrored closely the proportion of students present at the university.

After the interviews had been completed, approximately 5 per cent of the original sample were re-interviewed by the survey's full-time research team to confirm the validity of the data and make sure the fieldwork had been completed correctly.

The overall target for the survey was to interview between 15 and 20 per cent of the final year population at each of the universities in the study. In total, the survey included face-to-face interviews with 13,961 finalists, a sample of 19.3 per cent (see *Table 1.1*).

Throughout this report, universities are identified just by their town or city name, except for the London colleges which are listed separately.

Table 1.1 Final Year Students Interviewed for Student Politics 2010

| | Number of finalists interviewed for the survey | Estimated number of UK finalists at university | % of finalists interviewed for survey | | Number of finalists interviewed for the survey | Estimated number of UK finalists at university | % of finalists interviewed for survey |
|---------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Aston | 290 | 940 | 30.9 | London School of Economics | 163 | 690 | 23.6 |
| Bath | 292 | 1,390 | 21.0 | London University College | 359 | 2,090 | 17.2 |
| Belfast Queens University | 463 | 2,500 | 18.5 | Loughborough | 493 | 2,530 | 19.5 |
| Birmingham | 718 | 3,810 | 18.8 | Manchester | 820 | 5,030 | 16.3 |
| Bristol | 443 | 2,240 | 19.8 | Newcastle | 610 | 2,740 | 22.3 |
| Cambridge | 539 | 2,380 | 22.6 | Nottingham | 707 | 3,850 | 18.4 |
| Cardiff | 629 | 3,130 | 20.1 | Oxford | 521 | 2,730 | 19.1 |
| Durham | 545 | 2,970 | 18.4 | Reading | 386 | 2,100 | 18.4 |
| Edinburgh | 541 | 2,750 | 19.7 | Sheffield | 674 | 3,270 | 20.6 |
| Exeter | 553 | 2,200 | 25.1 | Southampton | 553 | 2,410 | 22.9 |
| Glasgow | 438 | 2,360 | 18.6 | St Andrews | 208 | 700 | 29.7 |
| Lancaster | 309 | 1,540 | 20.1 | Strathclyde | 334 | 2,210 | 15.1 |
| Leeds | 849 | 5,160 | 16.5 | Warwick | 435 | 2,090 | 20.8 |
| Liverpool | 407 | 2,430 | 16.7 | York | 280 | 1,760 | 15.9 |
| London Imperial College | 150 | 810 | 18.5 | | | | |
| London King's College | 252 | 1,450 | 17.4 | SURVEY TOTAL | 13,961 | 72,260 | 19.3 |

Students' Voting Intentions

The results of the research show that the Conservative party has considerably more support than either the incumbent Labour Government or the Liberal Democrat party (see *Chart 2.2*). Almost a third of finalists said they expected to vote for the Conservatives in the General Election, compared with around a fifth who support Labour or the Liberal Democrats. More than a sixth of final year students were undecided about who to vote for at the time of the survey.

Locally, the Conservatives are the leading party at twenty of the universities featured in the survey (see *Table 2.1*). Labour is the preferred party at just seven universities – Aston, Glasgow, Liverpool, the London School of Economics, Sheffield, Strathclyde and York. The Liberal Democrats are first choice for Leeds and Warwick students whereas Sinn Féin has the most support at Queen's University Belfast. Just seven per cent of students at Glasgow and Strathclyde said they expect to vote for the Scottish Nationalist Party and only three per cent of those in Cardiff support Plaid Cymru. Students at Imperial College London and Queen's University Belfast are the least certain about who to vote for.

Students were also asked about their political views and opinions (see *Chart 2.3*). Two-thirds said they'll be voting for the party with the best policies but a sixth intend voting for the most convincing leader. A quarter think it won't make much difference whichever party wins the election and one in six finalists said that their friends view voting as a waste of time. A third of students feel that Labour hasn't done enough to help graduates find work during the recession and only 13 per cent said they believe the Government had handled the economic crisis well. A quarter of finalists are concerned that employment prospects for young people will be no better under the Conservatives.

Table 2.1 Voting Intentions of Final Year Students for the forthcoming General Election 2010

| | CONSERVATIVE % of finalists | LABOUR % of finalists | LIB DEM % of finalists | GREEN PARTY % of finalists | OTHER % of finalists | UNDECIDED % of finalists | LEADING PARTY |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Aston | 22 | 28 | 12 | 3 | 7 | 28 | Labour |
| Bath | 31 | 16 | 22 | 8 | 4 | 19 | Conservative |
| Belfast Queen's University | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 43 | 44 | Sinn Féin |
| Birmingham | 31 | 27 | 18 | 5 | 2 | 17 | Conservative |
| Bristol | 31 | 21 | 22 | 7 | 4 | 15 | Conservative |
| Cambridge | 26 | 19 | 26 | 8 | 4 | 17 | Conservative |
| Cardiff | 27 | 19 | 25 | 7 | 7 | 15 | Conservative |
| Durham | 46 | 17 | 20 | 3 | 4 | 10 | Conservative |
| Edinburgh | 39 | 19 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 11 | Conservative |
| Exeter | 39 | 15 | 20 | 6 | 3 | 17 | Conservative |
| Glasgow | 16 | 26 | 18 | 10 | 11 | 19 | Labour |
| Lancaster | 26 | 20 | 21 | 5 | 3 | 25 | Conservative |
| Leeds | 24 | 22 | 26 | 6 | 3 | 19 | Liberal Democrat |
| Liverpool | 20 | 28 | 18 | 7 | 7 | 20 | Labour |
| London Imperial College | 21 | 19 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 44 | Conservative |
| London King's College | 32 | 21 | 16 | 7 | 4 | 20 | Conservative |
| London School of Economics | 21 | 32 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 24 | Labour |
| London University College | 34 | 21 | 20 | 5 | 2 | 18 | Conservative |
| Loughborough | 43 | 18 | 14 | 3 | 4 | 18 | Conservative |
| Manchester | 28 | 26 | 19 | 7 | 3 | 17 | Conservative |
| Newcastle | 33 | 25 | 20 | 5 | 5 | 12 | Conservative |
| Nottingham | 40 | 21 | 15 | 7 | 3 | 14 | Conservative |
| Oxford | 30 | 22 | 21 | 8 | 3 | 16 | Conservative |
| Reading | 44 | 15 | 12 | 6 | 4 | 19 | Conservative |
| Sheffield | 16 | 26 | 26 | 7 | 2 | 23 | Labour |
| Southampton | 38 | 20 | 18 | 7 | 4 | 13 | Conservative |
| St Andrews | 46 | 13 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 12 | Conservative |
| Strathclyde | 16 | 28 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 36 | Labour |
| Warwick | 24 | 19 | 24 | 7 | 5 | 21 | Liberal Democrat |
| York | 28 | 29 | 22 | 6 | 3 | 12 | Labour |
| SURVEY AVERAGE | 30 | 21 | 19 | 6 | 6 | 18 | Conservative |

Chart 2.2 How Final Year Students Plan to Vote in the forthcoming General Election 2010

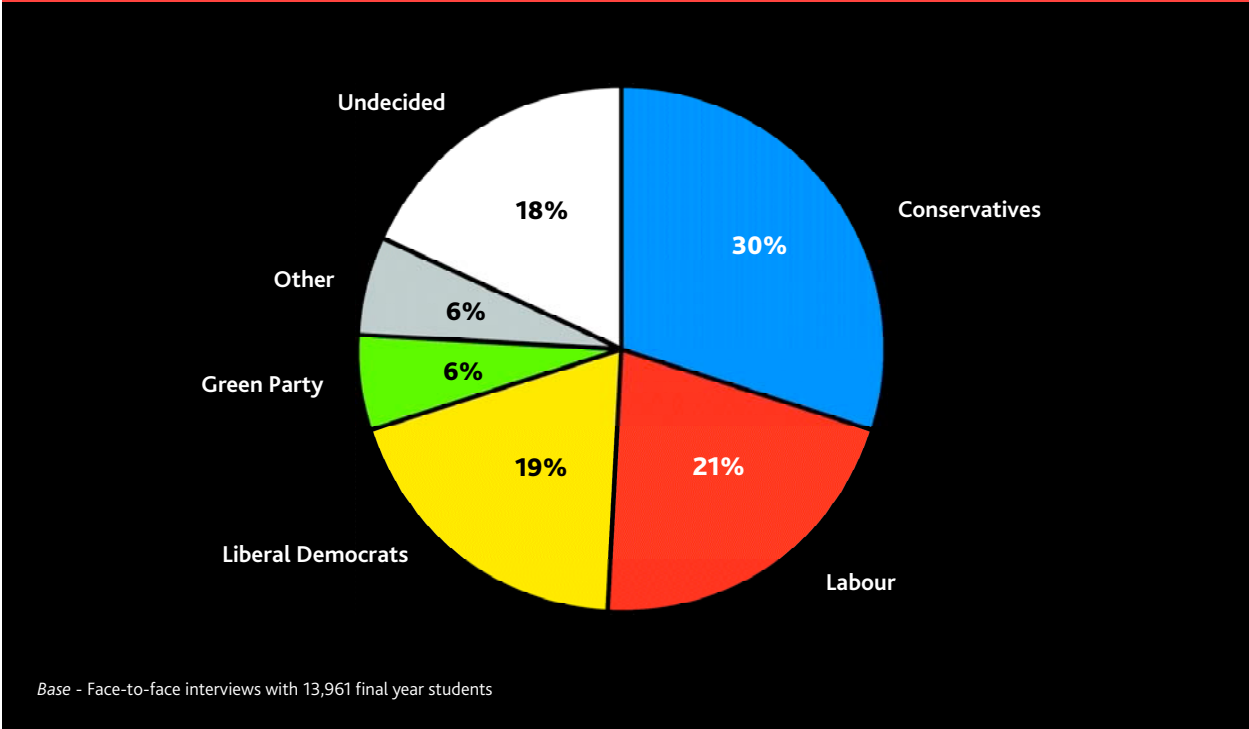
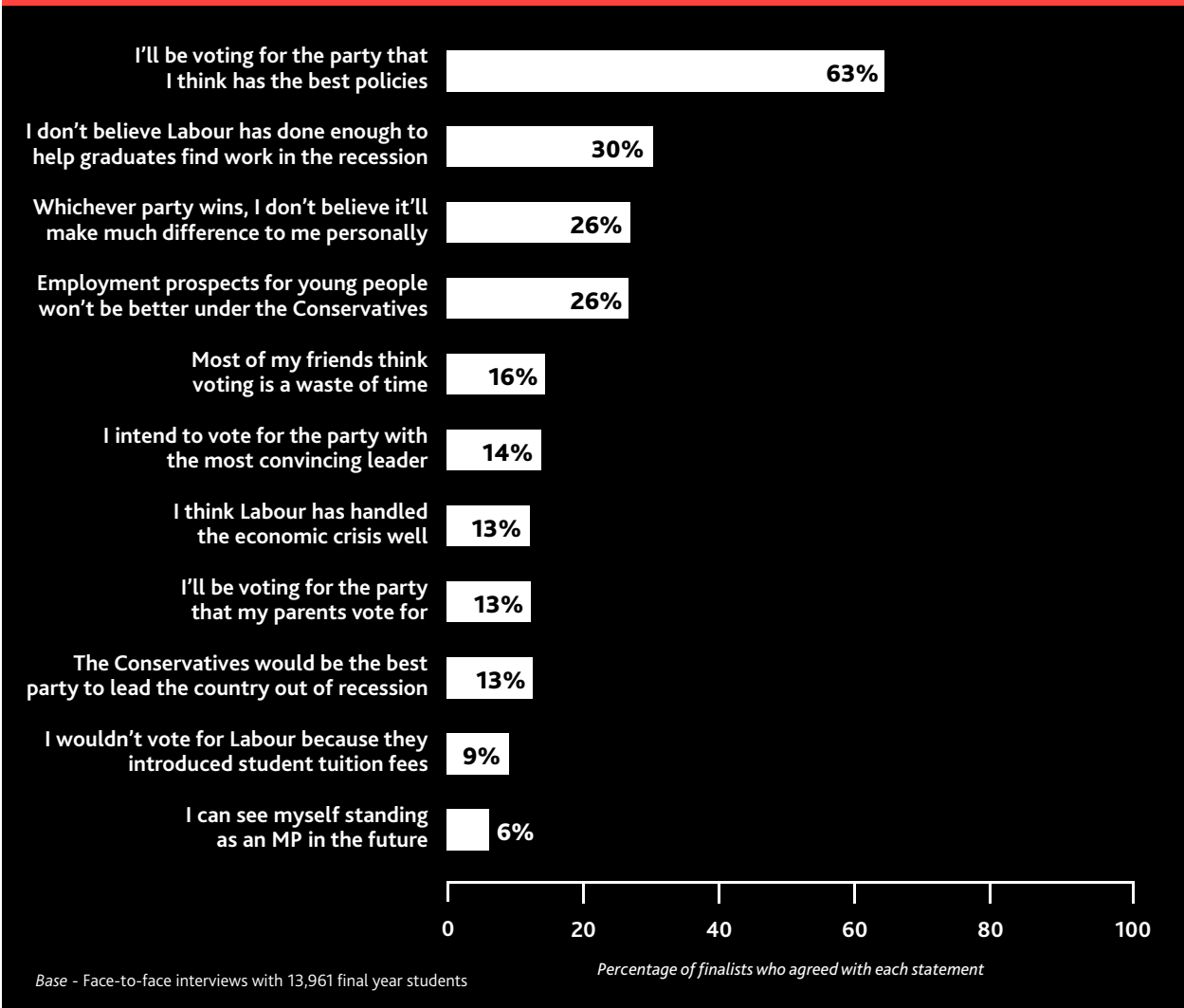


Chart 2.3 Final Year Students' Views on Politics and the General Election



Analysis of Students Intending to Vote for the Major Political Parties

In addition to questioning final year students about their voting intentions, the survey also explored their background, career plans and ambitions for life after university. This additional data makes it possible to profile the students intending to vote for each of the three major political parties.

The results of this analysis show that students planning to vote for the Conservatives in the election are the most likely to have attended a private fee-paying school and that more than two-fifths had lived in London or the south-east of England before starting university (see *Table 2.4*). Conservative supporters expect to have the lowest student debts – an average of £15,800 – and are keen readers of *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers. Finalists expecting to vote Conservative appear to have the most ambitious career plans – 42 per cent expect to begin a graduate job after university, the highest proportion of the three political parties, and have applied to work in areas such as investment banking, management consulting, law and marketing. On average, they expect to earn £22,900 for their first job and progress to more than £40,000 within five years of graduation. By the age of 30, most of those voting Conservative plan to own their own home or flat, two thirds think they will be married and a fifth expect to be earning at least £100,000 per annum.

By contrast, final year students intending to vote for Labour in the election are the most likely to have attended a state school or college before university (see *Table 2.5*). They expect to graduate with higher student debts – an average of £16,900 – and are loyal readers of *The Guardian* newspaper. Lower numbers of Labour supporters think they'll find a graduate job after university and those that do plan to work in areas like teaching, the media, charity & voluntary work and research & development. They expect to earn an average of £20,900 for their first job and just over £36,000 within five years – approximately 10 per cent less than graduates who plan to vote Conservative. Fewer Labour voters aspire to own a house by the age of 30 or think they'll get married. Only one in ten believes they'll be earning a salary of £100,000 by this point in their career

Table 2.4 Profile of Students intending to Vote for the Conservatives in the General Election

| <i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote Conservative</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Conservative</i> | <i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Conservative</i> |
|---|---|--|---|
| Male | 49 | Expecting to start a graduate job | 42 |
| Female | 51 | Will do a temporary or voluntary job | 6 |
| Ethnic Minorities | 10 | Intending to do a postgraduate course | 22 |
| <i>Schools Attended before University</i> | | Taking time off or going travelling | 18 |
| Private fee-paying schools | 47 | No definite plans | 12 |
| State school or college | 38 | <i>Career Sectors Finalists have Applied For</i> | |
| Grammar school | 15 | Marketing | 17 |
| <i>Home Region before University</i> | | Media | 14 |
| South East | 23 | Investment banking | 13 |
| London | 18 | Management consulting | 12 |
| The Midlands | 14 | Law | 12 |
| <i>Student Debts</i> | | Teaching | 12 |
| Average expected graduation debts | £15,800 | <i>Graduate Salaries</i> | |
| <i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i> | | Average expected starting salaries | £22,900 |
| The Times | 49 | Average expected salaries in five years | £40,800 |
| Daily Telegraph | 22 | <i>Aspirations by Age 30</i> | |
| The Guardian | 18 | Own your own house or flat | 84 |
| <i>Universities with Most Support for the Conservatives</i> | <i>% of finalists</i> | Be married | 64 |
| Durham | 46 | Had holidays in ten or more countries | 46 |
| St Andrews | 46 | Have achieved a professional qualification | 45 |
| Reading | 44 | Have children | 38 |
| Loughborough | 43 | Have completed a postgraduate course | 31 |
| Nottingham | 40 | Be earning at least £100k per year | 19 |
| Edinburgh | 39 | Set up own business | 16 |

Table 2.5 Profile of Students intending to Vote for Labour in the General Election

| <i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote Labour</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Labour</i> | <i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Labour</i> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Male | 50 | Expecting to start a graduate job | 36 |
| Female | 50 | Will do a temporary or voluntary job | 9 |
| Ethnic Minorities | 19 | Intending to do a postgraduate course | 23 |
| | | Taking time off or going travelling | 17 |
| | | No definite plans | 15 |
| <i>Schools Attended before University</i> | | <i>Career Sectors Finalists have Applied For</i> | |
| State school or college | 65 | Media | 16 |
| Private fee-paying school | 21 | Teaching | 16 |
| Grammar school | 14 | Marketing | 14 |
| <i>Home Region before University</i> | | Charity or voluntary work | 13 |
| London | 20 | Research & development | 110 |
| South East | 15 | Accountancy | 10 |
| The Midlands | 14 | | |
| <i>Student Debts</i> | | <i>Graduate Salaries</i> | |
| Average expected graduation debts | £16,900 | Average expected starting salaries | £20,900 |
| | | Average expected salaries in five years | £36,100 |
| <i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i> | | <i>Aspirations by Age 30</i> | |
| The Guardian | 39 | Own your own house or flat | 76 |
| The Times | 34 | Be married | 59 |
| The Independent | 15 | Have achieved a professional qualification | 44 |
| <i>Universities with Most Support for Labour</i> | <i>% of finalists</i> | Had holidays in ten or more countries | 40 |
| London School of Economics | 32 | Have children | 39 |
| York | 29 | Have completed a postgraduate course | 37 |
| Liverpool | 28 | Set up own business | 13 |
| Aston | 28 | Be earning at least £100k per year | 10 |
| Strathclyde | 28 | | |
| Birmingham | 27 | | |

Table 2.6 Profile of Students intending to Vote for the Liberal Democrats in the General Election

| <i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote Liberal Democrat</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Lib Dem</i> | <i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i> | <i>% of finalists voting Lib Dem</i> |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Male | 43 | Expecting to start a graduate job | 29 |
| Female | 57 | Will do a temporary or voluntary job | 11 |
| Ethnic Minorities | 11 | Intending to do a postgraduate course | 28 |
| | | Taking time off or going travelling | 18 |
| | | No definite plans | 14 |
| <i>Schools Attended before University</i> | | <i>Career Sectors Finalists have Applied For</i> | |
| State school or college | 61 | Media | 20 |
| Private fee-paying school | 23 | Teaching | 18 |
| Grammar school | 16 | Charity or voluntary work | 17 |
| <i>Home Region before University</i> | | Marketing | 14 |
| South East | 20 | Research & development | 12 |
| London | 15 | Law | 9 |
| The Midlands | 14 | | |
| <i>Student Debts</i> | | <i>Graduate Salaries</i> | |
| Average expected graduation debts | £17,700 | Average expected starting salaries | £20,200 |
| | | Average expected salaries in five years | £34,000 |
| <i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i> | | <i>Aspirations by Age 30</i> | |
| The Guardian | 41 | Own your own house or flat | 73 |
| The Times | 35 | Be married | 54 |
| The Independent | 19 | Have completed a postgraduate course | 44 |
| <i>Universities with Most Support for the Liberal Democrats</i> | <i>% of finalists</i> | Had holidays in ten or more countries | 43 |
| Leeds | 26 | Have achieved a professional qualification | 42 |
| Sheffield | 26 | Have children | 33 |
| Cambridge | 26 | Set up own business | 10 |
| Cardiff | 25 | Be earning at least £100k per year | 8 |
| Warwick | 24 | | |
| Bristol | 22 | | |

Conclusions

The *Student Politics 2010* survey of 13,961 final year students at thirty leading UK university reveals how the next generation of opinion-formers plan to vote in the forthcoming General Election:

- 30 per cent of students questioned for the research intend to support the Conservative party, well ahead of the 21 per cent who will vote for the Labour Party and the 19 per cent who intend to back the Liberal Democrats.
- The Conservatives are the most popular party at twenty out of the thirty universities included within the survey. Labour is the leading choice at just seven universities.
- A large proportion – almost a fifth of voters – remain undecided and 12 per cent plan to vote for other parties.
- Two-thirds of students intend to vote based on policies, a sixth will vote for the most convincing leader and one in seven say they'll simply vote for the party that their parents support.
- A quarter of final year students don't believe it'll make much difference to them personally whichever party wins at the election and one in six say most of their friends think voting is a waste of time.
- Final year students intending to vote Conservative are most likely to have attended a private fee-paying school, expect to have the lowest student debts on graduation and intend to work in investment banking, management consulting or marketing – with one in five confident of earning at least £100,000 per annum by the age of thirty.
- Students supporting Labour are largely from state schools or colleges, have higher student debts and plan to work in teaching, the media and charity or voluntary work after graduation. On average, they expect to earn around £2,000 less in their first graduate job than Conservative supporters.
- Those planning to vote Liberal Democrat are the least certain about their future after university, with lower salary expectations and fewer planning to join the graduate job market.