

# Student Politics 2015

Researching how students at the UK's leading universities plan to vote in the General Election



*Produced by*



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# Student Politics 2015

*Universities included in the survey.*



## Foreword

# Executive Summary

The *Student Politics 2015* survey is based on face-to-face interviews with **13,039** final year students from the ‘Class of 2015’ studying at 30 leading universities in the UK, carried out in March 2015.

The survey is the **largest** independent study of its kind and the sample includes almost a fifth of students graduating from the country’s top universities in the summer of 2015:

### Students Voting Intentions

- The survey shows there is almost identical support for Labour and the Conservatives – 31 per cent of students questioned for the research intend to vote for each party in the General Election. 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.
- Almost a sixth of potential student voters remain undecided about who to support or are not intending to vote in the election at all.

### Views on Politics

- 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 over 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.

### Profiling Students' Voting for Different Political Parties

- 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.

### Comparing Students' Voting Intentions with Previous General Election Results

- 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 the previous *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.

## Chapter 1

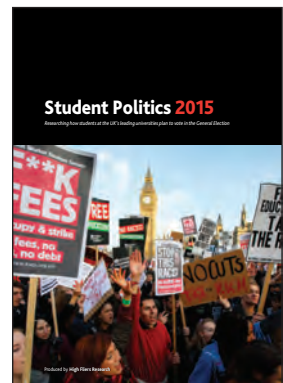
# Introduction

### 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 2015* survey took place at thirty leading universities during March 2015, just before the beginning of the Easter holidays.

The survey focused on final year students at the universities and 92 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 interviews with 13,039 UK 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 that specialises in researching students and graduates at the UK’s leading universities. Established in 1994, the company has now worked with more than 150 national & international 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 more than 18,000 final year undergraduates at the country’s most prestigious universities. The research 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 the UK’s top employers to research the latest graduate vacancy levels, starting salaries and benchmark recruitment practices. Its most recent study, *The Graduate Market in 2015* reported in January 2015 that Britain’s top employers are planning to increase their graduate vacancies by eight per cent in 2015, taking recruitment to its highest level for over a decade.

High Fliers Research hosts the UK’s only annual conference exclusively for graduate employers, *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 central London.



## Research Methodology

Fieldwork for the *Student Politics 2015* survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews with UK students at the thirty universities included in the research. Although very labour-intensive, this approach was considered essential to guarantee that a large proportion of final year students participated in the research. Interviewers for the survey were drawn from the local student community at each university and across the UK over 800 interviewers worked on the project.

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 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 *Student Politics 2015* was to interview between 10 and 15 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 13,039 finalists, a sample of 17.3 per cent (see *Table 1*).

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

**Table 1 Final Year University Students Interviewed for Student Politics 2015**

	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 finalists at university	% of finalists interviewed for survey
Aston	194	1,200	16.2	London School of Economics	214	895	23.9
Bath	245	1,615	15.2	London University College	291	2,060	14.1
Belfast Queen's University	375	2,865	13.1	Loughborough	622	2,810	22.1
Birmingham	677	3,765	18.0	Manchester	774	4,785	16.2
Bristol	503	2,615	19.2	Newcastle	510	2,780	18.3
Cambridge	523	2,610	20.0	Nottingham	799	4,450	18.0
Cardiff	634	3,190	19.9	Oxford	477	2,590	18.4
Durham	572	2,610	21.9	Reading	389	1,965	19.8
Edinburgh	353	2,520	14.0	Sheffield	583	3,200	18.2
Exeter	556	2,985	18.6	Southampton	329	2,370	13.9
Glasgow	321	2,130	15.1	St Andrews	213	850	25.1
Lancaster	361	1,780	20.3	Strathclyde	319	2,025	15.8
Leeds	887	4,920	18.0	Warwick	262	2,205	11.9
Liverpool	272	2,240	12.1	York	429	2,140	20.0
London Imperial College	124	930	13.3				
London King's College	231	2,060	11.2	<b>SURVEY TOTAL</b>	<b>13,039</b>	<b>75,162</b>	<b>17.3</b>



## Chapter 2

# Student Politics 2015



ANADOLU AGENCY

### Overview

The *Student Politics 2015* survey was timed to take place as close to the General Election as possible, whilst still being conducted during normal term-time at the UK's leading universities. In addition to the key questions about final year students' voting intentions and their views on politics, the survey included a series of questions about finalists' plans for life after university, the job applications they had made, their expectations and aspirations, and the schools they had attended before university.

The research presents a unique and highly-detailed insight into how final year students expect to vote in the forthcoming election – analysed university-by-university – as well as providing detailed profiles of students supporting each of the main political parties. Almost all of those questioned for the survey had yet to start primary school at the time of the 1997 election, so have only experienced Labour Governments and the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition formed in 2010.

It is interesting to compare this year's voting intentions with those recorded before previous elections. The *Student Politics 1997* survey of 12,091 final year students conducted by High Fliers Research 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. And the *Student Politics 2010* poll of 13,961 students 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 election that followed, the national vote for the Conservative party was 36 per cent and 23 per cent voted for the Liberal Democrats.

Within the *Student Politics 2015* survey, some 14 per cent of final year university students questioned said they were either undecided about which party to support or did not intend to vote in the election. As per the normal convention for political polling, the results presented in this report exclude these individuals.

## Students' Voting Intentions for the General Election in 2015

The results show that Labour and the Conservative parties have almost equal support on campus, with 31 per cent of finalists intending to vote for each party in the 2015 General Election (see *Chart 2.2*) – the Labour Party has the narrowest of leads, just 0.2 per cent ahead of the Conservatives. A quarter of finalists said they expect to support the Green party, compared with just six per cent who are Liberal Democrat voters. Three per cent of students plan to vote for the Scottish National Party (SNP) and one per cent for the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

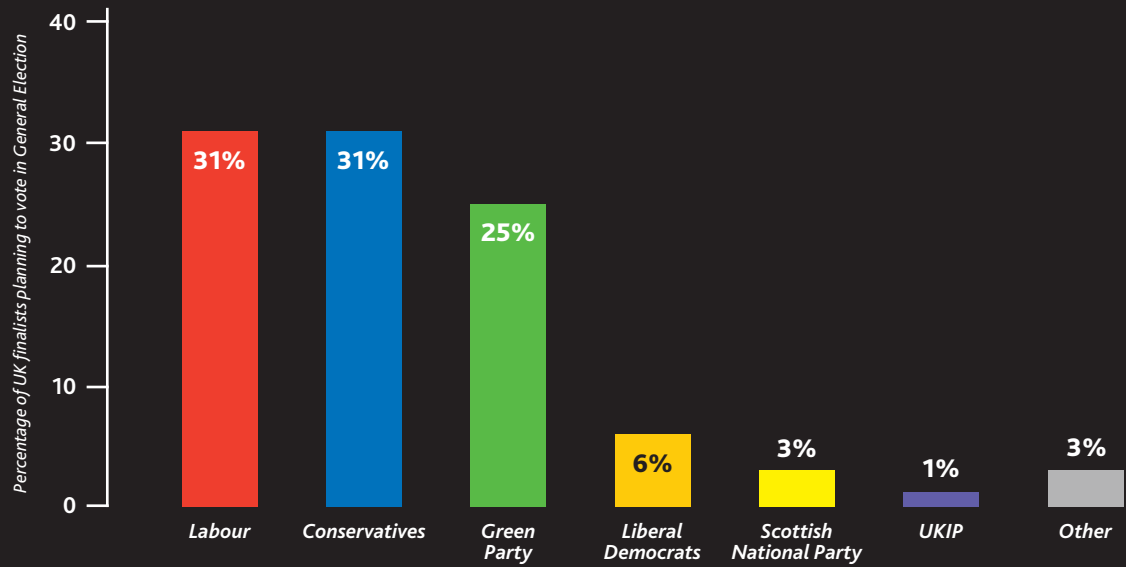
Locally, the Conservatives are the leading party at fourteen of the universities featured in the survey with Labour the preferred party at eleven universities (see *Table 2.1*). The Green party are the first choice for Leeds and Edinburgh students, the SNP are the leading party at Strathclyde and Glasgow, whereas Sinn Féin had the most support at Queen's University Belfast.

Students were also asked about their political views and opinions (see *Chart 2.3*). Over 90 per cent of finalists said they'd be voting for the party with the best policies but two-fifths said they would be influenced by the most convincing leader. Over half of final year students believe Labour is the best party to run the NHS and public services, whereas two-fifths feel the Conservatives are best-equipped to manage Britain's economy. More than half of finalists said they wouldn't vote for the Liberal Democrats because they increased university tuition fees. But nearly half of all students thought it wouldn't make much difference whichever party wins the election and almost a quarter said most of their friends think voting is a waste of time (see *Chart 2.3*).

**Table 2.1 Voting Intentions of Final Year Students for the forthcoming General Election in 2015**

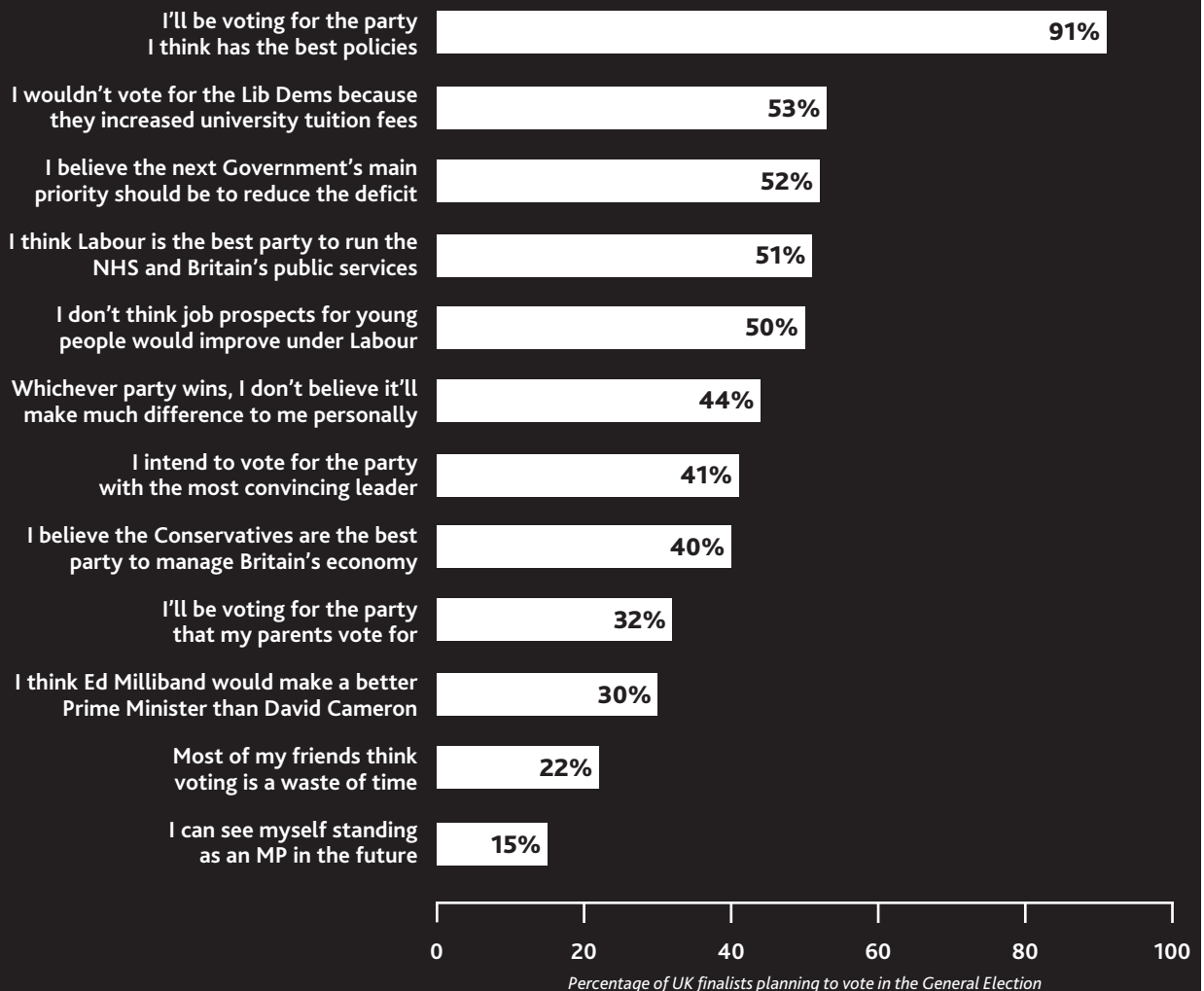
	LEADING PARTY	CONSERVATIVE % of finalists	LABOUR % of finalists	LIB DEM % of finalists	GREEN PARTY % of finalists	UKIP % of finalists	SNP % of finalists
Aston	Labour	34	34	4	18	5	-
Bath	Conservative	43	18	7	24	2	-
Belfast Queen's University	Sinn Féin	10	6	2	17	1	-
Birmingham	Conservative	40	32	5	20	1	-
Bristol	Conservative	34	24	7	33	1	-
Cambridge	Labour	31	31	12	23	1	-
Cardiff	Conservative	32	29	4	28	1	-
Durham	Conservative	45	27	8	17	2	-
Edinburgh	Green Party	19	27	8	27	1	13
Exeter	Conservative	43	21	8	26	1	-
Glasgow	SNP	6	27	6	27	1	30
Lancaster	Labour	25	44	3	23	3	-
Leeds	Green Party	28	31	5	35	1	-
Liverpool	Labour	14	48	7	27	2	-
London Imperial College	Conservative	48	20	13	13	1	-
London King's College	Labour	30	37	5	27	1	-
London School of Economics	Conservative	45	37	3	12	1	-
London University College	Labour	23	35	7	30	1	-
Loughborough	Conservative	50	29	5	13	2	-
Manchester	Labour	22	38	4	32	2	-
Newcastle	Conservative	35	27	3	29	1	-
Nottingham	Conservative	31	31	6	29	1	-
Oxford	Labour	27	42	8	22	1	-
Reading	Conservative	35	31	7	23	1	-
Sheffield	Labour	25	38	5	29	1	-
Southampton	Conservative	42	28	4	23	1	-
St Andrews	Conservative	29	24	9	22	<1	12
Strathclyde	SNP	11	31	2	11	1	43
Warwick	Labour	31	41	5	21	<1	-
York	Labour	27	36	7	25	2	-
<b>SURVEY AVERAGE</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

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



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 13,039 final year students

**Chart 2.3 Finalists' Views on Politics and the General Election**



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 13,039 final year students

## Analysis of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Student Voters

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*). Finalists expecting to vote Conservative appear to have the most ambitious career plans – 53 per cent expect to begin a graduate job after university, the highest proportion of the six leading political parties – and have applied to work in areas such as management consulting, investment banking, marketing, accountancy and finance. On average, they expect to earn £25,500 for their first job and progress to more than £44,900 within five years of graduation. By the age of 30, over three-quarters of those voting Conservative plan to own their own house or flat, two-fifths think they will have reached a senior management position, and nearly a quarter expect to be earning at least £100,000 a year.

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*). 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 £22,600 for their first job and £37,300 within five years – more than 15 per cent less than graduates who plan to vote Conservative.

Students preparing to vote Liberal Democrat are most likely to want to work in marketing, the media or consulting after graduation (see *Table 2.6*) but up a third expect to do temporary work, go travelling or are undecided what to do at the end of their studies. Just two-thirds of Liberal Democrat voters expect to be home owners by age 30, a lower proportion than either Labour or Conservative supporters.

**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>
<b>Male</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>State school or college</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>No definite plans</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Consulting</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Marketing</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>South east</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Investment banking</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Accountancy</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>South west</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Finance</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<b>Law</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Times</b>	<b>40</b>	<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	<b>£25,500</b>
<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	<b>£44,900</b>
<i>Universities with Most Support for the Conservatives</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>Loughborough</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>London Imperial College</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Be married</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>London School of Economics</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Durham</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Bath</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>Have children</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Exeter</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	<b>29</b>
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	<b>24</b>

**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>
<b>Male</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>State school or college</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>No definite plans</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Media</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>South east</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Charity or voluntary sector</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Midlands</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Research &amp; development</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<b>Consulting</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>59</b>	<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Independent</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	<b>£22,600</b>
<b>The Times</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	<b>£37,300</b>
<i>Universities with Most Support for Labour</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Lancaster</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Be married</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Warwick</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Manchester</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>Have children</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Sheffield</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	<b>27</b>
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	<b>11</b>

**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 Liberal Democrat</i>	<i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i>	<i>% of finalists voting Liberal Democrat</i>
<b>Male</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>State school or college</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>No definite plans</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Media</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>South east</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Consulting</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Research &amp; development</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>South west</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Charity or voluntary sector</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<b>Teaching</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>55</b>	<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Times</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	<b>£22,700</b>
<b>The Independent</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	<b>£38,300</b>
<i>Universities with Most Support for the Liberal Democrats</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>London Imperial College</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Be married</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>St Andrews</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Exeter</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Have children</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Durham</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	<b>29</b>
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	<b>12</b>

## Analysis of Green Party, UKIP and SNP Student Voters

Three quarters of final year students preparing to vote for the Green Party in the General Election attended a state school or college before university and almost a third were the first in their family to study for a degree (see *Table 2.7*). The strongest support for the party came from final year students at the universities of Leeds, Bristol and Manchester. Green Party voters are most likely to work in the charity or voluntary sector after graduation or in the media, teaching or marketing but an especially high proportion plan to take time off or go travelling as an alternative to joining the graduate job market. Students planning to vote for the Green Party have the lowest starting salary expectations of the six leading political parties and are the least-likely to aspire to home ownership in the decade after leaving university.

Two-fifths of university students who plan to vote for UKIP were educated at fee-paying schools and over half lived in London, the south east or south west of England before starting their degrees (see *Table 2.8*). Some 42 per cent of UKIP supporters were the first generation in their family to go to university, the highest level out of the political parties profiled by the survey. UKIP voters are keen to work in accountancy, marketing, investment banking, teaching, finance and law at the end of their degree studies and expect to earn over £24,000 for their first job, second only to the salaries anticipated by Conservative supporters. A fifth expect to be earning £100,000 a year or more by the age of 30.

Almost all of the SNP's supporters went to a state school or college before university and 90 per cent grew up in Scotland (see *Table 2.9*). The highest numbers of SNP voters are at the universities of Strathclyde and Glasgow, where it is the leading party. Final year students planning to vote for the SNP are expecting to work in teaching, the charity or voluntary sector, engineering, research & development, the media or human resources after graduation, although a quarter hope to go travelling or have no definite plans. Of the six major political parties, the SNP's voters were the least likely to get married or start a family in the years after university – just 38 per cent expected to be married by the age of 30 and only 23 per cent thought they would have had children by that point.

**Table 2.7 Profile of Students intending to Vote for the Green Party in the General Election**

<i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote for Green Party</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for Green Party</i>	<i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for Green Party</i>
<b>Male</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>State school or college</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>No definite plans</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Charity or voluntary sector</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Media</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>South east</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>London</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Midlands</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Research &amp; development</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<b>Consulting</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>62</b>	<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Independent</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	<b>£20,900</b>
<b>The Times</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	<b>£34,600</b>
<i>Universities with Most Support for the Green Party</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>Leeds</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Bristol</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Be married</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Manchester</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>London University College</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Edinburgh</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Have children</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	<b>20</b>
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 2.8 Profile of Students intending to Vote for UKIP in the General Election**

<i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote for UKIP</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for UKIP</i>	<i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for UKIP</i>
<b>Male</b>	51	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	40
<b>Female</b>	49	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	23
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	18	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	4
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	9
<b>State school or college</b>	60	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	13
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	40	<b>No definite plans</b>	11
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	42	<b>Accountancy</b>	14
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Marketing</b>	14
<b>London</b>	20	<b>Investment banking</b>	14
<b>South east</b>	20	<b>Teaching</b>	12
<b>South west</b>	13	<b>Finance</b>	11
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<b>Law</b>	11
<b>The Guardian</b>	31	<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Times</b>	27	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	£24,200
<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	23	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	£42,300
<i>Universities with Most Support for UKIP</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>Aston</b>	5	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	67
<b>Lancaster</b>	3	<b>Be married</b>	57
<b>Loughborough</b>	2	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	45
<b>Manchester</b>	2	<b>Have children</b>	40
<b>Liverpool</b>	2	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	35
<b>Bath</b>	2	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	32
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	21

**Table 2.9 Profile of Students intending to Vote for the SNP in the General Election**

<i>Final Year Students Intending to Vote for the SNP</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for the SNP</i>	<i>Final Year Students' Plans for After University</i>	<i>% of finalists voting for the SNP</i>
<b>Male</b>	51	<b>Expecting to start a graduate job</b>	39
<b>Female</b>	49	<b>Intending to do a postgraduate course</b>	23
<b>Ethnic minority students</b>	7	<b>Planning to run own business</b>	3
<i>Schools Attended before University</i>		<b>Will do a temporary or voluntary job</b>	9
<b>State school or college</b>	89	<b>Taking time off or going travelling</b>	18
<b>Fee-paying school</b>	11	<b>No definite plans</b>	8
<i>Social Mobility</i>		<i>Careers Sectors Finalists have Applied for</i>	
<b>First in family to attend university</b>	41	<b>Teaching</b>	18
<i>Home Region before University</i>		<b>Charity or voluntary sector</b>	18
<b>Scotland</b>	90	<b>Engineering</b>	13
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	3	<b>Research &amp; development</b>	13
<b>North east</b>	1	<b>Media</b>	13
<b>London</b>	1	<b>Human resources</b>	10
<i>Newspapers Students Read Regularly</i>		<i>Graduate Salaries</i>	
<b>The Guardian</b>	61	<b>Average expected starting salaries</b>	£21,400
<b>The Independent</b>	37	<b>Average expected salaries in five years</b>	£35,200
<b>The Times</b>	27	<i>Aspirations by Age 30</i>	
<b>Daily Telegraph</b>	16	<b>Own your own house or flat</b>	66
<i>Universities with Most Support for the SNP</i>	<i>% of finalists</i>	<b>Have achieved a professional qualification</b>	42
<b>Strathclyde</b>	43	<b>Be married</b>	38
<b>Glasgow</b>	30	<b>Have completed a postgraduate course</b>	37
<b>Edinburgh</b>	13	<b>Have children</b>	23
<b>St Andrews</b>	12	<b>Reached a senior management position</b>	18
		<b>Be earning at least £100,000 per year</b>	7

## Comparing Students' Voting Intentions with Previous General Election Results

This *Student Politics 2015* survey is the third poll conducted by High Fliers Research examining the voting intentions of final year students at the UK's leading universities and it is striking to see how closely the results of the two previous surveys matched the eventual General Election results in both 2010 and 1997. The timing of all three surveys has been very similar with fieldwork carried out on university campuses during March, ahead of the elections in May of each year.

In the weeks leading up to the 2010 election, the *Student Politics 2010* survey reported that 37 per cent of students were planning to vote Conservative and 23 per cent were Liberal Democrat supporters (see *Chart 2.12*). The Conservatives were the leading party at twenty universities, with the Liberal Democrats the top choice in Leeds and Warwick (see *Table 2.10*). In the General Election itself, the full national vote was 36 per cent for the Conservative party and 23 per cent for the Liberal Democrats.

The *Student Politics 1997* survey showed that 46 per cent of finalists expected to vote for Labour, 29 per cent supported the Conservative party and 16 per cent intended voting for the Liberal Democrats (see *Chart 2.13*). Labour was the leading party at a total of eighteen of the twenty-four universities featured in that year's research (see *Table 2.11*). In the subsequent election Labour secured 43 per cent of the national vote, 31 per cent of the electorate voted for the Conservative party and 17 per cent for the Liberal Democrats.

The latest research for *Student Politics 2015* suggests that the leading political party is likely to remain unchanged at two-thirds of the UK's top universities, compared to 2010, but at Oxford, Cambridge,

**Table 2.10 Finalists' Voting Intentions in 2010**

	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE
Aston	Labour	Conservative
Bath	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Belfast Queen's University	Sinn Féin	SDLP
Birmingham	Conservative	Labour
Bristol	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Cambridge	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Cardiff	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Durham	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Edinburgh	Conservative	Labour
Exeter	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Glasgow	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Lancaster	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Leeds	Liberal Democrat	Conservative
Liverpool	Labour	Conservative
London Imperial College	Conservative	Labour
London King's College	Conservative	Labour
London School of Economics	Labour	Conservative
London University College	Conservative	Labour
Loughborough	Conservative	Labour
Manchester	Conservative	Labour
Newcastle	Conservative	Labour
Nottingham	Conservative	Labour
Oxford	Conservative	Labour
Reading	Conservative	Labour
Sheffield	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Southampton	Conservative	Labour
St Andrews	Conservative	Liberal Democrat
Strathclyde	Labour	Conservative
Warwick	Liberal Democrat	Conservative
York	Labour	Conservative
<b>SURVEY AVERAGE</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Labour</b>

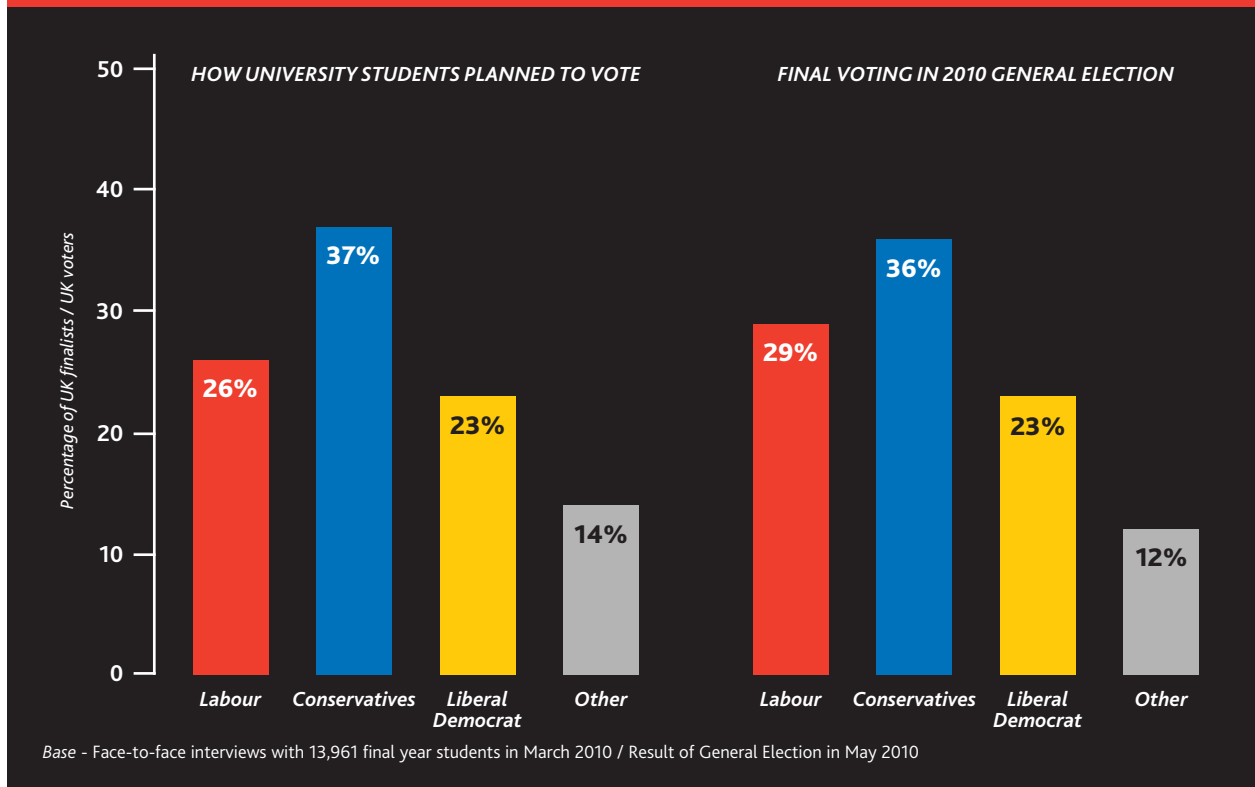
**Table 2.11 Finalists' Voting Intentions in 1997**

	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE
Aston	Conservative	Labour
Bath	Labour	Conservative
Birmingham	Labour	Conservative
Bristol	Conservative	Labour
Cambridge	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Cardiff	Labour	Conservative
Durham	Labour	Conservative
Edinburgh	Labour	Conservative
Exeter	Conservative	Labour
Glasgow	Labour	Conservative
Leeds	Labour	Conservative
Liverpool	Labour	Conservative
London Imperial College	Labour	Conservative
London King's College	Conservative	Labour
London University College	Labour	Conservative
Loughborough	Conservative	Labour
Manchester	Labour	Conservative
Nottingham	Labour	Conservative
Oxford	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Reading	Labour	Conservative
Sheffield	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Southampton	Conservative	Labour
Strathclyde	Labour	Conservative
Warwick	Labour	Conservative
<b>SURVEY AVERAGE</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Conservative</b>

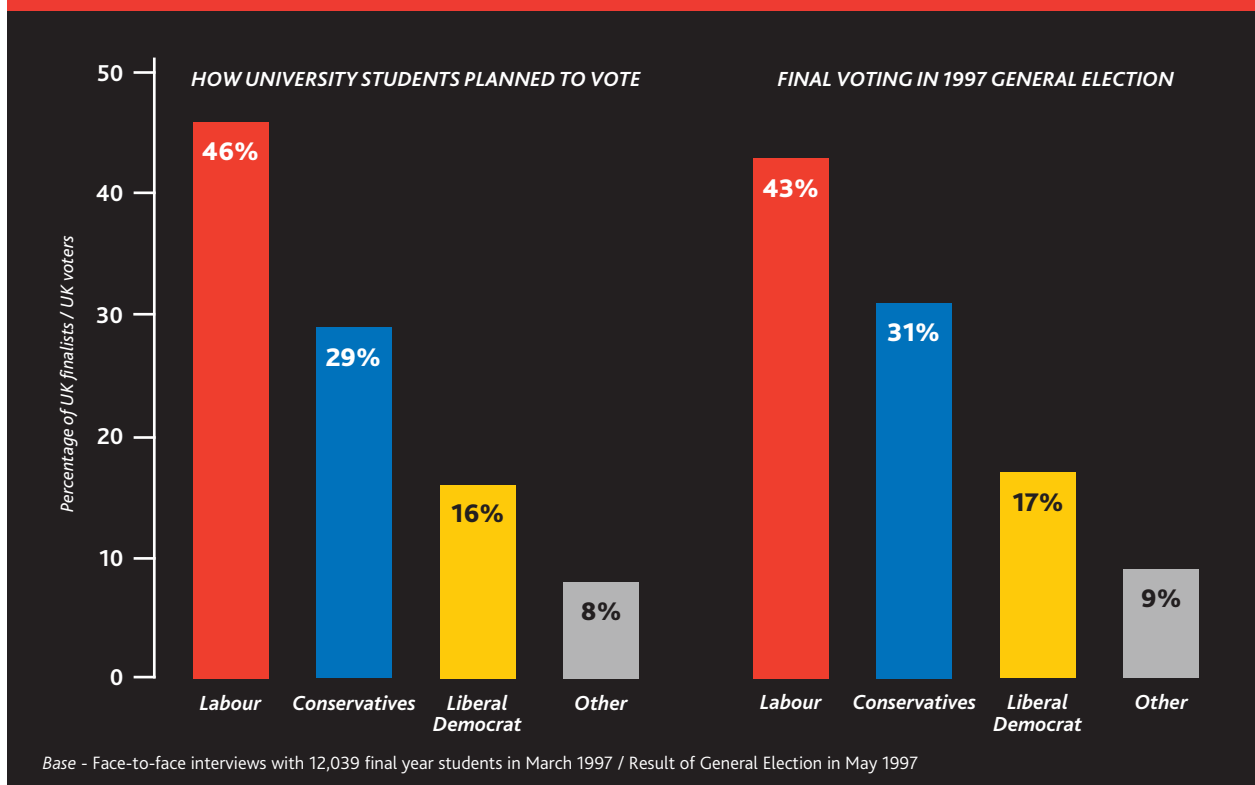


Lancaster, University College London and Manchester support has switched from the Conservatives to Labour. The Liberal Democrats have been replaced as the leading party by the Greens in Leeds and by Labour at Warwick. In Scotland, the SNP have overtaken Labour at both Glasgow and Strathclyde universities, but the Greens are the top choice in Edinburgh, displacing the Conservatives. And at the London School of Economics, support has shifted from Labour in 2010 to the Conservatives in 2015.

**Chart 2.12** Reviewing How University Students Planned to Vote in the General Election in 2010



**Chart 2.13** Reviewing How University Students Planned to Vote in the General Election in 1997



## Conclusions

**The *Student Politics 2015* survey of 13,039 final year students at thirty leading UK universities reveals how the next generation of opinion-formers plan to vote in the forthcoming General Election:**

- There is almost identical support for the Conservatives and Labour – 31 per cent of students questioned for the research intend to vote for each party. A quarter of finalists plan to vote for the Green Party but only six per cent are backing the Liberal Democrats and just one per cent are UKIP supporters. Three per cent of finalists expect to vote for the SNP.
- The Conservatives are the most popular party at fourteen out of the thirty universities included within the survey, Labour is the leading choice at eleven universities, the Green Party and the Scottish National Party have the largest share of the vote at two universities each and Sinn Féin is the leading party at Queen's University Belfast.
- Almost a sixth of potential voters remain undecided about who to support or are not intending to vote in General 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 over a fifth 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, intend working in management consulting, investment banking, finance or marketing on graduation – with one in four confident of earning at least £100,000 a year by the age of 30.
- Students supporting Labour are largely from state schools or colleges, plan to work in teaching, the media, the charity or voluntary sector or in marketing after university. On average, they expect to earn around £3,000 a year less in their first graduate job, compared with Conservative supporters.
- 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.