

The **Leadership** Factor

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The Leadership Factor

It is often said that in politics, issues matter more than personalities – or ought to. Commentators sometimes lament that British politics has become increasingly presidential, and voters are often at pains to claim that when it comes to elections they look at policies rather than individuals (and, equally implausibly, that they will read all the manifestos cover to cover). But personalities do count. It is leaders who articulate and embody their cause. If the voters notice anything at all about the party conferences now getting underway, it will be the leaders. Though leaders stand on ideas, they also ask the voters to believe that they, as individuals, will have the fidelity and gumption to put them into practice.

When talking about the party leaders, people very often say that it is the important things that matter – their motives, values and competence. There is some truth here: voters do weigh these things. But they can only count in a leader's favour if people can be persuaded to listen to him. The more superficial or apparently trivial things about a leader – appearance, personality traits, how polished he is as a media performer – still matter. They can win him a hearing, allowing the voter to be connected to the things about him that really count, or they can turn the voter off before he has had a chance to make his case. Anything that stops the public seeing the leader in what he would argue is his true light is an obstacle that needs to be overcome.

Though polls ask occasional questions about party leaders, I wanted to go beyond that and explore voters' attitudes to them in depth, and the extent to which each leader is an asset or a liability – a draw or a drag – for their party. I also wanted to find out exactly how much leadership matters to a party's ability to attract (or repel) support.

As well as a nationally representative 5,000-sample poll, we conducted focus groups around the country of voters who are "in play" – people who voted in 2010 but are open to switching parties next time. To draw out their views of the three leaders, these groups were presented with a selection of 33 words, some positive, some negative and some neutral, and asked to choose the one which best summed up their view of the leader in question and to explain why. The process was repeated with a selection of 30 images, which participants could interpret however they liked. Subsequent discussion produced a "mood board" of the words and phrases which best represented the group's overall view of each leader.

This may sound to sceptics a somewhat frivolous exercise, but in fact it encouraged people to think in some depth about their opinions. It drew out the attitudes and feelings at the back of their minds to which they had probably given little conscious thought but would be an important factor in their ultimate voting decision.

What, then, do they make of the current crop? The prevailing view of David Cameron among the voters in our focus groups was largely positive. The words "competent" and "determined" were frequently chosen to describe him. Few doubted that he is up to the job, and he seemed to most to be relentlessly focused on his agenda – underlined by the regular appearance on his mood boards of a picture of an action figure.

For several participants, though, he was determined to the point of being "ruthless", particularly when it came to what they saw as the consequences of his action to cut the budget deficit. An image of a

bull in a china shop illustrated for many what they saw as recklessness in his approach. A picture of a happy family captured what was often remarked upon as an attractive facet of his character. A portrait of Churchill illustrated a widespread view that Mr Cameron was a leader for our times, faced with an enormous challenge and rising to it admirably – but also that, like Churchill in 1945, he may not be rewarded for his actions in the ballot box. Despite the generally upbeat view among these potential swing voters, for some there was also an impression of arrogance or smugness, and a feeling that he is detached from ordinary people's lives.

Labour's attempt to frame Mr Cameron as a "recognisably right wing" leader who has abandoned the centre ground seem set to miss the point, however. Apart from the fact, as I have long pointed out, that it is simply not achievable for a political party to tell a sceptical audience what they should think of its opponents, large numbers of voters do not really understand what is meant by left- and right wing. Beyond that, voters see little difference of principle between the parties. They think David Cameron is trying to sort out the mess he inherited, and even if they think he is over-doing it, only the most hostile think he is personally motivated by ideology. Rather than move swing voters, the attack is more suited to rallying the Labour base – as it was perhaps designed to do.

For many people, Ed Miliband has yet to make any impression in nearly a year as Labour leader – a point which several in the groups illustrated by presenting a blank card, or choosing a picture of grey clouds, representing nothing in particular. "Weird" was often the spontaneous verdict as soon as Mr Miliband's name was mentioned, before they had a chance to choose the card bearing the word. Many did so almost apologetically, as though they would use a kinder word if they could think of one. A number of factors were mentioned. Standing against his brother for the leadership (by far the best-known fact about him), his apparently reluctant marriage, and his manner of speaking all contributed to an overall impression of oddness. (Though "weird" may be a distasteful word to use in political discourse, it has been part of the lexicon since Tony Blair used the word three times to describe William Hague in his 1999 conference speech.)

Mr Miliband was widely thought to have been "lucky" to win the leadership in the first place, having only very narrowly beaten his brother after being picked as the favourite of the unions despite not being true leadership material. Now he was in the job he seemed to many to be "out of his depth". This view was occasionally illustrated by the choice of a picture of a boy dressed in a suit playing at doing a grown-up job. For others, though, this image represented a more optimistic view of someone who was new to the role but had potential.

Previous opposition leaders have found that the statement "I don't know anything about him" can turn quickly from meaning "he's only been there a few weeks so I haven't heard much yet" to meaning "he's not up to it". For several in the groups, Mr Miliband was already at least approaching the latter stage. For those more warmly disposed to Labour, though, Mr Miliband was a blank canvas onto which they projected what were essentially hopes, or at least the benefit of the doubt, rather than fully formed views. A picture of an ordinary house illustrated the expectation that he would turn out to represent ordinary people, and an image of light at the end of a tunnel symbolized the expectation, together with a large measure of hope, that he would eventually succeed. These views were the most prevalent in the Midlands and Northern groups.

As for the Deputy Prime Minister, the chief debate among our participants was whether Nick Clegg was ineffectual because he was weak, or because he had deliberately traded principle for office. Those who saw him as "weak" – the single most frequently chosen description of any leader – were

divided as to whether this was a failure on his part to argue his corner vigorously within the coalition (not least because he also seemed “indecisive”), or, more charitably, simply a description of his position given the number of Liberal Democrat MPs relative to the Conservatives. Either way, most thought he seemed to be making little impact and despite having good values, articulated in the pre-election TV debates, was now advocating a Tory agenda – a view frequently illustrated by the choice of a puppet on a string. While Conservatives often complain that the Liberal Democrats have too much influence within the coalition, voters are more likely to think the reverse is true.

The more cynical (but for some self-evident) view was that Mr Clegg is “calculating”: that his chief motivation was securing the best position for himself and his party. The fact that he talked to both Labour and the Conservatives after the election was cited in evidence, and there was a widespread view that he would have been equally happy accommodating himself to whichever side made him the best offer. Groups often chose a picture of a chameleon to illustrate this view.

Having found himself in the position of Deputy Prime Minister, though, there was a near overwhelming view that Mr Clegg, like Ed Miliband, seemed “out of his depth”. The groups saw him as rather a lightweight, particularly in comparison to the Prime Minister, unable to make much impression on government and unsuited to representing Britain on the world stage.

Perhaps surprisingly, though, given what is a pretty devastating verdict for a political leader, there was very little in the way of personal animosity for Mr Clegg. Indeed several said they found him likeable, and noted that he seemed remarkably composed given the relentless criticism he endures. However little impact he seemed to be making, several participants remarked that they found it comforting that he was there, including some Conservative voters. A few went as far as to say that they admired him for making the right decisions, however unpopular they were in some quarters. It was notable that these more positive views were the most prevalent in Taunton, a Lib Dem-held seat. In the poll, Mr Clegg also scored marginally but consistently better in the South West – the liberal heartland, if there is one – than elsewhere, perhaps hinting that Lib Dem seats may not tumble quite as easily at the next election as many suspect.

Nick Clegg’s predicament is somewhat different to that of the other leaders. With him it is political, rather than personal. The likeable, fresh new hope who inspired the phenomenon of Cleggmania has become the likeable chap who sold out his principles, became a puppet and now sits in Cabinet to little or no effect. For a minority, he is the likeable chap who took the difficult but correct decision to join the coalition and who constitutes an important, if rather nebulous, counterweight to the Tories in government. Either way, his fate is a function of a political decision he has already made.

If one of the great myths of politics is that issues matter more than personalities, another is that nothing matters to the fortunes of a political leader as much as events. In fact, voters rarely reassess their opinion of leaders in relation to events, and certainly not on an ongoing basis – they have better things to do. Though our groups often had clear and rather nuanced views of each leader, these were impressionistic and participants could seldom give specific examples to illustrate the characteristics they felt quite strongly that a leader possessed. While some said they had been surprised to find their opinion of David Cameron improve as he turned out to be a stronger leader than they had expected, and a number had abruptly reversed their previously positive view of Nick Clegg following the formation of the coalition or the tuition fees vote, most people’s views had been formed early and remained settled.

By and large, voters judge a leader's reaction to events, to the extent that they notice it all, through the prism of what they already think of him. The snippets of news coverage devoted to what a leader said about a particular happening are filed away in the viewer's mind along with the dozens of apparently similar clips of them speaking on long-forgotten subjects that seemed important at the time. Tone and demeanour, authenticity and consistency, are the basis of the staples of a leader's image in the public mind. Perceptions of a leader are all but impossible to shift in a big-bang moment, except for the worse. Even those leaders in whom the public see an indefinable leadership quality – an X-factor – can see their popularity wane over time through the course of events, especially if those events are of their own making: the poll tax for Mrs Thatcher, the Iraq war for Tony Blair. But those who do not seem to have the X-factor to start with will find it almost impossible to acquire it, and events will not confer it upon them.

This fact of political life is especially tough on opposition leaders (and Deputy Prime Ministers) who have even less time to earn and confirm a good reputation. Once an unfavourable view is formed it is almost impossible to shake. Most of the focus groups for this project were conducted at the height of the phone hacking scandal, during which, according to much of the Westminster media, Mr Miliband was setting the agenda and had the Prime Minister on the run. Unfortunately for Mr Miliband, judging by their assessment of him at the time, nobody had told the voters.

The same was true of the riots, the other major political event of the summer. Since our poll was completed before the riots began, we re-asked a number of questions a few weeks later to see what impact, if any, they had had on each leader's reputation. People were two and a half times as likely to say David Cameron had responded best as to say that Ed Miliband had (another rebuke to parts of the Westminster commentariat). Despite this, there had been practically no impact on opinion towards any leader – their perceived attributes, whether they were regarded more or less favourably than their parties, or the margin by which David Cameron was regarded as the best Prime Minister. Indeed, despite the phone hacking scandal and the riots, no party saw its average vote share in published polls move by more than a single percentage point between June and August.

Having been roundly panned in focus groups comprising swing voters prepared to consider parties other than the one they voted for, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband could scarcely do any worse in the poll, whose overall sample included partisans, non-voters and supporters of minor parties. While David Cameron did suffer slightly among this wider audience, he remained the only leader for whom a positive word ("determined") appeared in the top four choices of the public as a whole.

More than half of voters, forced to choose between the three, named David Cameron as the best Prime Minister, 17 points ahead of Ed Miliband, who led only among Labour voters and social group E (state pensioners, casual workers and those dependent on benefits – the group that is also least likely to vote).

Nearly a fifth of voters said they had a more favourable view of David Cameron than to the Conservative Party generally, with 62% saying their view of the two was the same. Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband, though, both appear to be liabilities to their parties rather than assets. Voters were twice as likely to say their view of Mr Clegg was less favourable than that of his party as to say it was more favourable; for Ed Miliband, the ratio is more than three to one. 2010 Labour voters were six times as likely to say their view of Labour was more positive than their view of Mr Miliband than vice versa.

More than two thirds of voters saw David Cameron as being “willing to take tough decisions for the long term”, and more than half thought him “competent and capable” – well ahead of Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg on both measures. Perhaps surprisingly, a majority thought it true of all three leaders that “his heart is in the right place”. Mr Miliband’s strongest suit is that he “wants to help ordinary people get on in life”, and more thought he stood for fairness and equal opportunity than his opponents. A majority, though, thought no leader was “on the side of people like me”, no more than a third thought that any one of them “shares my values”. Only just over a third thought Mr Cameron or Mr Miliband “will do what he says”, and only a quarter said the same of Mr Clegg. Though it remains true that the Conservatives’ big brand problem has been the perception that they are for the rich few, Mr Miliband scored only fractionally higher than the Prime Minister on representing “the whole country, not just some types of people” (33% to 30%).

The poll asked people spontaneously to name the animal which best summed up their impression of each leader. For David Cameron, the most popular choice was a lion or tiger. For Ed Miliband it was a dog, especially a puppy, a Labrador or a poodle. Nick Clegg was a cat – more specifically a pussycat, or a kitten – or a sheep, mouse, snake or weasel.

Our deeper analysis of the poll findings found that views of David Cameron were the most important factor in making people more likely to support the Conservatives – more important than Conservative policies, and much more important than negative views about Ed Miliband or Labour. The single biggest influence was the belief that David Cameron “shares my values”.

The factors that drive each party’s support provide a checklist of issues that the other parties need to neutralise in order to win over their voters. Whether a voter thinks the Conservatives or Labour have the best policy on “getting the economy growing and creating jobs” is an important indicator of which way they will lean. Meanwhile, thinking the Conservatives are best on “cutting the deficit and the debt” also makes people more likely to support the Tories – but the issue appears nowhere among the drivers of Labour support. This suggests the Conservatives will struggle to attract those currently inclined to Labour by emphasising action on the deficit – these people will need to be convinced that the Tories have the more effective plan for growth.

For those who thought David Cameron would make the best Prime Minister of the three leaders, opinions about him as an individual were the biggest factors (with being “on the side of people like me” being single the most important driver). That may seem obvious, but among those who named Ed Miliband as the best PM, their views about David Cameron and Nick Clegg were almost as important as their views about the Opposition leader himself. For the few who chose Nick Clegg, their opinions of Cameron and Miliband were even more important than what they thought of Clegg as an individual. Liberal Democrat policies were also more important for these voters than Mr Clegg himself – if they named him as best Prime Minister, it was because he happened to be the leader of a party whose policies they liked. In other words, David Cameron is the leader voters are most likely to choose as the best Prime Minister because of his own qualities – to varying degrees, those who name Miliband or Clegg do so by default.

The Prime Minister is the only leader who serves as a net attractor of voters to his party. Voters who say they are likely to switch from another party to the Conservatives at the next election have a more favourable view of David Cameron than they do of the Conservative Party generally. The same is not true for voters moving towards the Lib Dems or (especially) Labour – indeed Labour “joiners” are so much more favourable towards the Labour Party generally than to Ed Miliband that it could almost be

said they are switching to Labour in spite of him. At the same time, while three quarters of voters wavering or defecting from the Conservatives still see David Cameron as the best available Prime Minister (suggesting that it was something other than him that put them off the Tories), most of those moving away from Labour or the Lib Dems would prefer someone other than Miliband or Clegg respectively in the top job.

So while Miliband and Clegg are if anything a drag on their party, David Cameron remains a draw. Taken together, the poll analysis and focus group findings suggest that whatever the leadership factor is, a good number of voters think David Cameron – uniquely among the leaders currently on offer – has it. Even for those who are uneasy about what he is doing, there is something about the way that he does it that commands their attention. This matters, because as our analysis shows, the fuel that drives voters towards a party is made more from their views about people – whether a positive view of the party's own leader, or negative views about others – than from issues or policy.

Despite all this, Labour are ahead in the polls. There is no denying that the Conservatives face a tough few years as economic uncertainty dominates the public's agenda, and that current polls point to a potential Labour majority. But our analysis clearly shows that Labour's lead does not mean there is a settled view that Ed Miliband should be running the country rather than David Cameron. Although Labour has added the biggest vote share since the general election, the implication of our research is that this is soft. Only one in six voters saying they may switch to Labour were attracted by its leader. As the election approaches, the leadership factor will grow in importance, not diminish, as people decide who it is they want in charge. However difficult the outlook for the Conservatives, they will be pleased to have a leader who attracts voters rather than one who puts them off.

MAA

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Methodology

Qualitative

- Twelve focus groups were held in London, Taunton, Leeds, Birmingham and Northampton between 11 July and 1 September 2011. Participants had all voted in 2010 and were open to considering a different party at the next election. Separate groups of men and women were held at each venue.
- Groups were shown cards showing 33 words, some positive, some negative and some neutral, and asked to choose the one which best summed up their view of the leader in question and to explain why. The process was repeated with 30 images. “Mood boards” were then produced of the words and phrases which best represented the group’s overall view of each leader.

Quantitative

- A poll of 5,000 adults was conducted online between 22 July 2011 and 5 August 2011.
- A second poll of 2,049 adults was conducted online between 9 and 11 September 2011.

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David Cameron



Determined

Competent

Ruthless

Competent

Whatever concerns people had about the government's policies, there was little doubt that David Cameron is good at being Prime Minister.

This view was most frequently represented by participants' choice of the word 'Competent', but was also reflected in choices like 'Composed' and 'Up to the job'. Several who had not voted Conservative at the 2010 election admitted to being surprised by his performance, making them more willing to consider a Tory vote at the next election.

"Competent. He's got gravitas. He thrives on it. his face and body language – he looks like he's living to do this job. Nothing is too big a challenge".

"Competent. Initially I didn't like him much but he has stuck to his plans and is not letting people change his mind. I think he's competent and I think he will be good if he sticks to his long term plan"

"Composed. Whatever happens he never seems fazed. No matter what happens it doesn't look like it worries him. Whenever he does a statement about Afghanistan or soldiers and things he looks strong".

"Composed. He doesn't seem to change. He has presence, he's got the look. There's something about him you can't ignore."

"Up to the job. One of the most talented politicians we've had for a long time".

"Up to the job. I voted Lib Dem... but if you look at where we are and how much we owe, having seen our David's performance over the last 12 months I would be more persuaded to vote Conservative next time".

Determined

Participants in all the groups felt that David Cameron was 'Determined', but this was rather a double-edged sword.

For some, this meant he was getting to grips with difficult issues, particularly the deficit, and doing the right thing despite fierce criticism – an assessment echoed in selections like 'Right for Britain', 'Decisive', 'Bold' and 'Getting things done'.

"Determined. He's faced with not a lot of choice, quite a difficult situation. The public sector ballooned under Labour and we can't continue in that situation."

"Determined. I don't think he's made any mistakes, including tuition fees – I would put them even higher. The other thing I love about him is that he is blunt, and displays some of the qualities we have up North. He said yesterday [about the phone hacking scandal], 'there is no conspiracy, now can we cut out the b***** and get on with it'. Even though he comes from Chipping Norton I wouldn't hold it against him because he's doing a good job".

"Getting things done. I wouldn't have thought he would have impressed me, but he has got on and done things that need to be done. Not 'nice' things, but we've got to get the country back on its feet."

"Right for Britain. We've had the financial position, the NHS is knackered, issues with housing and no money... someone's got to do something about it and the only person who is standing up and saying 'tough, I'm doing it' is David Cameron. He's got a bit about him".

"Decisive. He has had to be from the word go, because of the situation he finds himself in. I don't agree with everything he's done, but he has had to do things to turn it around. He has no choice in the matter of where we are and how the world economy is".

"Bold. I don't particularly agree with how he's dealing with the economy but I do respect him because he's picked his path and he's sticking to it."

Nearly as often, though, participants saw him as being determined to follow a misguided agenda whatever the cost.

"Determined. Focused on doing what it takes. He's got a nasty agenda and he's not got the nation's best interests at heart".

“Determined. He has a determined look about him. He’s a strong calculating bloke. Doesn’t come across as sincere”.

“Determined. We’ve got the deficit and the debt, and he’s got the determination to get us out of it in four years no matter what the cost. I don’t understand why four years – why not eight years and let people keep their jobs?”

Ruthless

This perception of a single-minded approach to achieving his goals at all costs also led several to pick the word ‘Ruthless’.

This was often chosen by those who were in any case most suspicious of Tory motives.

“Ruthless. The speed at which it’s happened. The impact it has had on people, and people’s voices haven’t been heard”.

“Ruthless. Partly because you have to be to get to the top in anything, and in the coalition he has got what the Conservatives want out of it. It’s difficult to pick on one thing but that’s the general impression I get”.

“Ruthless. Takes no account of the situation of working class people. The cuts should have been made over a longer time”.



The action figure reflected David Cameron’s perceived determination to take on Britain’s problems and get things done: ““If anyone can improve things in Britain, it’s him””; “Strong, in control, kicking ass”; “Captain Cameron, going after the Deficit Monster”.



The bull in a china shop illustrated the other side of his commitment to action – that the action being taken was reckless and damaging: “I knew there would be changes but they’ve gone in and done them too soon. I didn’t think it would affect me but it did”.



Participants often chose this picture to represent Mr Cameron’s evident commitment to his family, an attractive quality which they regarded as an important part of his character and personal priorities.



The groups found Mr Cameron was a strong leader, and for some he was even “a modern day Churchill for the situation we’re in”. However, several chose the image because they thought the two may come to share the same fate: “He got kicked out after the war. I think Cameron will go the same way despite doing the job. You don’t get any thanks”.

Ed Miliband



Weird

Lucky

**Out of his
depth**





When asked to think about Ed Miliband many participants declared that they had no opinion of him one way or the other, since he had made no impression on them at all so far.

Several illustrated this by presenting a blank card.

“I don’t feel like I know him, and I’m a Labour supporter”.

“He’s failing to communicate a vision. He doesn’t have a vision or strategy. You don’t know he exists. He would be better off in accounts or something like that”.

“There’s not a lot to him. He doesn’t have the charisma you’d expect a leader to have.”

“Not on my radar. Don’t really know about him”.

Weird

This was the most commonly chosen word or phrase to describe Mr Miliband – several said they felt rather unkind choosing it but that it simply summed up their view.

As well as being an overall impression, several examples of perceived weirdness were cited, including the contest with his demeanour and the way he spoke, and his apparently reluctant marriage. The decision to stand against his brother, whom nearly all thought was better qualified, also seemed to many to be distinctly odd (as well as being the single best known fact about him).

“Weird. The whole fight with the brother thing. They should have talked about it in the shed and one of them stood. They should have had an arm wrestle”.

“It was like Cain and Abel. There was something a bit creepy”.

“Got married to further his career. That’s weird”.

“A bit strange. I find him difficult to understand sometimes. A bit of a geek. Not engaging”.

“Looks and personality matter, and frankly he’s too odd”.

Lucky

There was a very widespread view that Mr Miliband had been lucky to win the leadership. Participants knew that the result had been very close.

Several thought he also seemed lucky in that he had apparently been chosen by the unions to do their bidding, and in the sense that he was lucky to have become leader given how unqualified he seemed.

“I just think he’s a lucky guy to be standing there. I don’t think he’s leadership material”.

“Accidentally lucky, and he won’t be very lucky for very long”.

“Lucky. The unions picked him and not David. They wanted a bit of power and control and they weren’t going to get it from his brother so they plucked him out and pushed him forward”.

“He’s just lucky. He only squeezed in by a couple of votes”.

Out of his depth

Since he seemed lucky to have got the job in the first place, and was now apparently struggling to make an impression, several participants felt Mr Miliband seemed out of his depth.

There was some disagreement over whether or not he was likely to grow into the job.

“Obviously intelligent and has ideas, but can’t communicate them. Hasn’t done anything. I was joking earlier about Cameron and hug-a-hoodie but at least he was getting in the press”.

“He’s a nice guy but I don’t think he’s a leader. He won’t inspire the troops”.

“Possibly because he’s new and inexperienced. He won’t always be out of his depth. In my role I’ve felt out of my depth many times but hopefully it won’t be forever. It’s where he’s at, rather than his character”.



This picture of a boy playing at doing a grown-up job seemed apt to several participants, underlining the view that Mr Miliband seemed out of his depth: “He’s not up to it and he’s going to be found out”. For a few, though, the image signified potential: “I get the feeling that he’s a little boy doing his best to be grown up, and he’s getting there”; “he’s got the potential to be something and do something”.



This image represented what many felt was a lack of clarity and direction currently on offer from Mr Miliband: “The opposite of blue-sky thinking. A bit grey and we don’t know how it will turn out”; “the colour grey”; “I look up and see nothing. It’s a bit cloudy. Not really sure what I’m looking at”.



This picture was chosen most often in the Midlands and Northern groups where Labour identity was strongest. Though they had said they knew little or nothing about Ed Miliband, participants here projected onto him the expectation, or at least the hope, that he “represents regular everyday people” who would live in a house like this – if only because this was the priority they associated with the Labour Party.



In similar vein, those who wanted Labour to do well felt, or at least hoped, that although Mr Miliband was finding it tough there was light at the end of the tunnel. “There must be light at the end of the tunnel because it’s impossible to carry on with Clegg and Cameron”; “there’s a little bit of light. I would like to think I could give him a chance”; “he’s got a long way to go but he will get there and everyone will know who he is”.

Nick Clegg



Weak

Calculating

Indecisive

Out of his depth



Weak

The word 'weak' was chosen more often for Nick Clegg than any other word for any other leader. Many thought he had good values but seemed unable to stand up for them.

None could think of significant examples of the Lib Dems making an impact on government policy, and although some speculated that he may be arguing strongly behind closed doors he did not seem to be having much success. A few recalled the listening exercise on the NHS reforms, but some of these felt the Conservatives were getting the credit for this. For these groups, tuition fees remained emblematic of Nick Clegg's part in the coalition. A minority saw his apparent weakness was simply a statement of reality, given the relative numbers of seats for each party, rather than a direct criticism of Mr Clegg.

"He seems scared of putting forward what he truly believes, the things he said before the election".

"He's got the right morals, he just doesn't stand up for himself".

"Seems like a little puppy dog and just goes along with things. Seems really unsure of himself and backtracks. He seems totally irrelevant – you don't even think of him as Deputy, he's just there".

"The Conservatives had more of a mandate so I understand that the Lib Dems are the junior partner. But they had a coalition agreement that seemed more balanced, and it's not happening. The Tories are laughing because they're getting what they want and have a scapegoat in the Lib Dems".

"Nick Clegg spoke up on the NHS eventually, after lots of people in the NHS said GP commissioning was a disaster. But it should have been months earlier".

"He came close with the NHS thing, then fizzled out and let David Cameron take the credit for listening".

"He shouldn't come out in the media but he could be more strong-willed when talking to David Cameron".

"He was doing quite well until tuition fees. It was that that stood out – the one thing people knew them for".

Indecisive

Mr Clegg's apparent willingness to change his mind on supposedly firm principles suggested that he was indecisive, in contrast to the impression given during the election.

"He's indecisive, he changes his mind all the time. He's capitulated on his promises more than he needs to. You just look at him and think 'this man is drowning'."

"The values he did seem to have in the run-up to the election haven't come across".

"In the debates he came across as quite convincing, but now he comes across as spineless".

"Indecisive, because of the promises he's made and gone back on, like student grants. He changed his mind too quickly and easily and let a lot of people down".

"I voted for him and the Lib Dems are acceptable middle ground, but they don't come across as forceful and decisive and powerful enough... He should be more assertive and out front and standing his ground. He is the Deputy Prime Minister".

Calculating

An alternative view of Mr Clegg's willingness to go along with policies he had previously opposed was that he had deliberately traded principle for power, or at least office.

According to this widespread opinion, joining the government was an end in itself and the Lib Dems would have joined whichever party offered Mr Clegg the better deal. Some thought this was particularly cynical since the party had in some places run as the most viable anti-Conservative party.

"It was calculating to take the second place spot rather than stand up for his own views. He should have said 'I don't want to be a lapdog'."

“He sold his soul. In Somerset they were saying, if you’re Labour you should vote for us. They got those tactical votes”.

“He’s a pragmatic politician rather than a man of principle. He spoke to the Conservatives and Labour and went with whoever would give him the opportunity of power and whoever would give him a referendum on the voting system that would give him a chance of absolute power”.

“He’s playing the game to stay as Deputy”.

“He’s so happy to be in power he just backs down”.

Out of his depth

There was a widely held view that Mr Clegg seemed out of his depth as Deputy Prime Minister, as evidenced by his apparent inability to make a real impact on policy.

For many this was a function of the contrast between himself and leading Conservatives, both in terms of personality and the relative size of their parties.

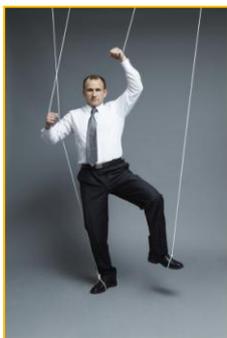
“He has a caring, good side but he is out of his depth. When I saw them together on the lawn, I thought, Cameron is a much tougher man”.

“If he was sent to America to represent our country, the Americans would laugh at him”.

“He’s been shafted, he’s a scapegoat. He’s been strong-armed. There must have been something behind closed doors that if he wanted to be part of it he would have to take the flak”.

“I haven’t seen him stamp his feet or stand up in the House of Commons and say no”.

“He looks like he’s struggling. Whether he’s got 50 seats or 300 he should still be able to stand up”.



For many participants this image captured Mr Clegg’s role in the coalition. Whether willingly or otherwise, he seemed to be doing the Conservatives’ bidding: “His strings are being pulled by Cameron and Osborne”; “His view is having to change because he’s second in command. He can’t have the final say”; “If he starts stamping his feet they will get rid of him. He doesn’t want to rock the boat because he knows the Conservatives have got the power”; “Being played by the Conservatives and David Cameron, and agreeing to everything”.



Most who selected the chameleon to illustrate Mr Clegg’s willingness to adjust to a different environment considered this a cynical and calculating feature, or an absence of real conviction.

Only a few saw it as commendable flexibility in the face of changing circumstances: “He’s constantly changing. In the debates he seemed strong and you believed what he said, but now he’s with David Cameron he’s just behind him”; “Changes his colours to suit him. If Labour had asked him, he could have done that. It wouldn’t have mattered to him”; “He would adjust to his environment, but that’s OK because life is changing all the time. He has been flexible – he had to be”.



The frequent selection of this picture underlined the view that Mr Clegg seemed out of his depth: “Overwhelmed, overburdened, walked all over”; “Sinking”; “Shouting for help, out of his depth, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing’”.



Participants often chose this image to represent what they think Mr Clegg must feel at his predicament – frustration at his lack of influence, despondency at the decline in his popularity and resignation at his party’s future prospects: “This is what he’s doing behind the scenes, when the cameras are off”; “He’s frustrated. His values are good but he’s being squashed”; “He’s starting to realise he’s not getting anything he wanted out of it”; “This is the highlight of his career”.

Although all the most popular words and images for Mr Clegg were negative, that view of him was not universal. Several were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, particularly as far as his motives were concerned, and thought he had been bold and courageous to enter the coalition. These participants chose words including ‘likeable’, ‘composed’ and ‘shares my values’.

“Likeable, compared to the other two who are arrogant and ruthless. He does listen. I warm to him more than the other two. He comes across as being human”.

“He takes a lot of flak and seems unfazed. He’s an equable character who deals with things quite calmly. It’s good because David Cameron is quite a dominant character – if he was too, there would be a punch-up”.

“He’s quite a composed character and part of a team. He’s second in command. We don’t see what goes on behind closed doors”.

“He got a lot of unfair criticism on student loans. He explained himself well but kept getting the same criticism. He got lambasted but it was unfair because he explained himself well”.

“It was a very brave decision. He has had to compromise and I don’t see that as weakness. On the fringes of the Conservative Party there are some lunatics, so having the calming influence of the Lib Dems is a good thing”.

“We don’t know what goes on behind closed doors. We won’t know until his book comes out”.

“The problem is that he really does care. You see him with his bloodshot eyes and he has obviously had a good cry about something”.

Cameron, Clegg and Miliband: Draw or Drag?

In the July poll, participants were asked how likely they were, on a 0-10 scale, to vote for each party at the next general election. Regression analysis of the polling then identified the factors that played the biggest part in moving voters up the scale – making them more likely to vote for each party.

Drivers of Conservative support

The single biggest factor in driving likely Conservative voting intention was the belief that David Cameron “shares my values”, followed by the view that the Conservatives have the best policies on the economy and the deficit.

Views about David Cameron himself account for nearly half of what makes people more likely to vote Conservative. Views about Conservative policy account for just over two fifths, and only 9% is explained by negative views of Ed Miliband.

Overall, 58% of the drivers of Conservative support are to do with people; 42% are to do with policy.

	<i>Drivers of voting Conservative</i>	Importance
1	David Cameron “shares my values”	18%
2	Conservatives have the best policy on “getting the economy growing and creating jobs”	15%
3	Conservatives have the best policy on “cutting the deficit and the debt”	12%
4	David Cameron “stands for fairness”	10%
5	David Cameron is “on the side of people like me”	9%
6	Conservatives have the best policy on “improving schools”	9%
7	David Cameron is “competent and capable”	7%
8	David Cameron “represents the whole country, not just some types of people”	6%
9	Conservatives have the best policy on “defending Britain’s interests in Europe”	6%
10	Ed Miliband <i>is not</i> “on the side of people like me”	5%
11	Ed Miliband <i>does not</i> “stand for fairness”	3%
	David Cameron statements	49%
	Ed Miliband statements	9%
	Conservative policy statements	42%
	People	58%
	Policy	42%

Predicts 64% of cases

Drivers of Labour support

Drivers of Labour support are similar, though with more emphasis on public services.

Views about David Cameron and the Conservatives are a slightly bigger factor in driving Labour support than views of Labour are in driving Conservative support.

Overall, views about people – Ed Miliband and David Cameron – play a greater role in moving people up the Labour voting scale than views about policy.

	<i>Drivers of voting Labour</i>	Importance
1	Ed Miliband is “on the side of people like me”	16%
2	Ed Miliband “shares my values”	15%
3	Labour has the best policy on “getting the economy growing and creating jobs”	13%
4	Labour has the best policy on “improving the NHS”	11%
5	Labour has the best policy on “improving schools”	9%
6	Ed Miliband is “competent and capable”	8%
7	Ed Miliband “represents the whole country, not just some types of people”	8%
8	Labour has the best policy on “dealing with crime”	8%
9	David Cameron <i>does not</i> “share my values”	6%
10	Conservatives <i>do not</i> have best policy on “getting the economy growing & creating jobs”	6%
	Predicts 62% of cases	
	Ed Miliband statements	47%
	David Cameron statements	6%
	Labour policy statements	41%
	Conservative policy statements	6%
	People	53%
	Policy	47%

Drivers of Liberal Democrat support

Support for the Lib Dems is currently driven overwhelmingly by views of the party and its leader, rather than (as was largely the case at the 2010 election) by negative views of the other parties.

As with Labour and the Conservatives, people (in this case Nick Clegg alone) account for more than half the drivers of Lib Dem support.

(The analysis of drivers of Lib Dem support is somewhat less reliable than those for the other parties, partly because so many people are grouped towards the bottom of scale in terms of likelihood to vote for them, and perhaps because factors such as joining a coalition with the Conservatives and their effectiveness in government are difficult to account for in this model).

	<i>Drivers of voting Lib Dem</i>	Importance	
1	Nick Clegg “shares my values”	21%	
2	Nick Clegg is “on the side of people like me”	14%	
3	Nick Clegg is “competent and capable”	11%	
4	Lib Dems have the best policy on “improving schools”	10%	
5	Nick Clegg’s “heart is in the right place”	9%	
6	Lib Dems have the best policy on “getting the economy growing and creating jobs”	9%	
7	Lib Dems have the best policy on “improving the NHS”	8%	
8	Lib Dems have the best policy on “defending Britain’s interests in Europe”	7%	
9	Lib Dems have the best policy on “dealing with crime”	6%	
10	Lib Dems have the best policy on “cutting taxes”	5%	
Predicts 34% of cases		Nick Clegg statements	55%
		Lib Dem policy statements	45%
		People	55%
		Policy	45%

Drivers of ‘best Prime Minister’

If people are a bigger factor than policies in driving support for the respective parties, what in turn drives perceptions of the party leaders?

Discriminant analysis of the poll findings has identified the factors most closely associated with a view that David Cameron, Ed Miliband or Nick Clegg would make the best Prime Minister, and the importance of each factor in predicting that view.

David Cameron

Opinions of David Cameron as an individual were the biggest driver for those who thought he would make the best Prime Minister of the three leaders.

His attributes were twice as important as Conservative policies in predicting whether voters saw him as the best PM; twice as important as negative views about Ed Miliband; and more than four times as important as views about Labour or Lib Dem policies.

It is notable that voters were more likely to think of David Cameron as the best Prime Minister if they did not think Labour or the Lib Dems were best on the NHS – suggesting a belief in David Cameron’s personal commitment to the NHS, even if they did not associate this with the Conservative Party generally.

Overall, two thirds of what makes people see David Cameron as the best PM were to do with people, and one third policy.

	<i>Drivers of seeing David Cameron as ‘best Prime Minister’</i>	Importance
1	David Cameron is “on the side of people like me”	18%
2	David Cameron is “competent and capable”	15%
3	Ed Miliband <i>is not</i> “on the side of people like me”	13%
4	David Cameron’s “heart is in the right place”	12%
5	Conservatives have the best policy on “cutting the deficit and the debt”	12%
6	Conservatives have the best policy on “getting the economy growing and creating jobs”	11%
7	Ed Miliband <i>is not</i> “competent and capable”	9%
8	Labour <i>do not</i> have the best policy on “improving the NHS”	9%
9	Lib Dems <i>do not</i> have the best policy on “improving the NHS”	1%
	David Cameron statements	45%
	Ed Miliband statements	22%
	Conservative policy statements	23%
	Labour/Lib Dem policy statements	10%
	People	67%
	Policy	33%

85% accuracy

Ed Miliband

For those who thought Ed Miliband would make the best Prime Minister, negative views of David Cameron and Nick Clegg were nearly as important as views of Mr Miliband himself. Indeed, the single most important factor in predicting that a voter would see Ed Miliband as the best PM was that they do not think *David Cameron* is competent and capable.

Views about the attributes of the three leaders combined to account for more than three quarters of what makes people think of Ed Miliband as the best Prime Minister.

	<i>Drivers of seeing Ed Miliband as 'best Prime Minister'</i>	Importance	
1	David Cameron <i>is not</i> "competent and capable"	16%	
2	Ed Miliband is "competent and capable"	14%	
3	Ed Miliband is "on the side of people like me"	12%	
4	Labour has the best policy on "improving the NHS"	11%	
5	Labour has the best policy on "getting the economy growing and creating jobs"	10%	
6	David Cameron <i>does not</i> "want to help ordinary people get on in life"	9%	
7	David Cameron's "heart <i>is not</i> in the right place"	8%	
8	Ed Miliband "shares my values"	7%	
9	Ed Miliband is "willing to take tough decisions for the long term"	7%	
10	Nick Clegg <i>is not</i> "on the side of people like me"	6%	
11	Lib Dems <i>do not</i> have the best policy on "cutting the deficit and the debt"	1%	
87% accuracy		Ed Miliband statements	40%
		David Cameron/Nick Clegg statements	38%
		Labour policy	21%
		Lib Dem policy	1%
		People	78%
		Policy	22%

Nick Clegg

Views about David Cameron and Ed Miliband are more important in predicting that voters will think Nick Clegg is the best Prime Minister than their views about Mr Clegg himself. In fact, opinion of Mr Clegg as an individual account for only just over a fifth of what makes people see him as the best PM.

Also uniquely among the leaders, views of his party's policies play a bigger part in determining whether they think Mr Clegg would be the best PM than views of him as an individual. The relatively small number of voters who think he would make the best PM do so because he happens to be the leader of a party whose policies they like, not because of his own qualities.

Overall, views about leaders and policies are equally important in predicting whether Nick Clegg is seen as the best PM.

	<i>Drivers of seeing Nick Clegg as 'best Prime Minister'</i>	Importance	
1	Lib Dems have the best policy on "dealing with crime"	14%	
2	Lib Dems have the best policy on "getting the economy growing and creating jobs"	14%	
3	Lib Dems have the best policy on "improving the NHS"	13%	
4	Nick Clegg is "competent and capable"	12%	
5	David Cameron <i>does not</i> "share my values"	10%	
6	Conservatives <i>do not</i> have best policy on "getting the economy growing & creating jobs"	10%	
7	Nick Clegg is "on the side of people like me"	9%	
8	David Cameron <i>is not</i> "on the side of people like me"	9%	
9	Ed Miliband <i>does not</i> "want to help ordinary people get on in life"	5%	
10	Ed Miliband <i>is not</i> "competent and capable"	4%	
89% accuracy		Nick Clegg statements	22%
		David Cameron/Ed Miliband statements	28%
		Lib Dem policy statements	40%
		Conservative policy statements	10%
		People	50%
		Policy	50%

Draw or drag?

The crucial measure of a leader's political effectiveness is their importance in attracting, holding or repelling voters.

David Cameron scored well in this respect. Practically all Conservative "loyalists" – those who voted Tory in 2010 and are very likely to do so again – saw him as the best Prime Minister. Ed Miliband scored rather lower among Labour loyalists, and only just over half of committed Lib Dem voters thought Nick Clegg would make the best Prime Minister.

81% of Conservative "joiners" – those who did not vote Tory in 2010 but are very likely to next time – saw David Cameron as the best PM. Again the figure was lower for Ed Miliband among Labour joiners (77%), and very low indeed for Nick Clegg among the admittedly tiny number of voters who have switched to the Lib Dems since 2010 (27%).

Opinion among defectors and waverers – those who voted for a party at the last election but have since moved away from it – is also telling. Three quarters of 2010 Tories who were thinking of defecting nevertheless still thought David Cameron was the best available Prime Minister – suggesting that whatever has put them off or attracted them elsewhere, it was not David Cameron who pushed them.

The same cannot be said for the other leaders. Among those considering defecting from Labour, more than half thought someone other than Ed Miliband would make the best Prime Minister (and more than two thirds of them thought it is David Cameron). Less than a fifth of wavering 2010 Lib Dems thought Nick Clegg would make the best PM.

Loyalist:	Voted for the party in 2010, and rates their likelihood of voting for the party at the next election at 8/10 or above.
Joiner:	Did not vote for the party in 2010, but rates their likelihood of voting for it at the next election at 8/10 or above.
Defector/waverer:	Voted for the party in May 2010, but rates their likelihood of voting for it at the next election at 7/10 or below.

	Conservative	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
Best Prime Minister?				
David Cameron		99%	81%	75%
Nick Clegg		0%	8%	8%
Ed Miliband		0%	12%	17%

	Labour	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
Best Prime Minister?				
David Cameron		8%	18%	37%
Nick Clegg		3%	5%	16%
Ed Miliband		89%	77%	47%

Lib Dem	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
Best Prime Minister?			
David Cameron	33%	57%	37%
Nick Clegg	57%	27%	19%
Ed Miliband	10%	16%	44%

These points are starkly underlined by looking at the same groups of voters, and whether they are more favourable towards each leader, or his party, or whether they have an equally favourable or unfavourable view of both.

Perhaps not surprisingly, loyalists of all parties were more favourable towards their party than to its leader – though by a much greater margin among Labour supporters (53 points) than Lib Dems (33 points) or, especially, Conservatives (13 points).

Among those switching to the Conservatives, David Cameron was more popular than the party generally by 41% to 23%. Indeed, of the three leaders he is the only “net attractor” to his party. Only 17% of those moving to Labour from another party were more attracted by Ed Miliband than by Labour as a whole (indeed it could almost be said that they are doing so in spite of him).

For those who voted Labour in 2010 but are now wavering, Ed Miliband seems to have been a repelling factor. 61% of those moving away from Labour thought less of Ed Miliband than they did of his party (compared to only 35% of Conservative waverers who think the same of David Cameron). Nick Clegg also appeared to have been a clear repelling factor for those wavering from the Lib Dems since the election; they were less favourable to him than to his party by a margin of 43 points.

Conservative	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
More favourable to David Cameron	19%	41%	16%
More favourable to the Conservative Party	32%	23%	35%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	49%	36%	49%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	-13%	+18%	-18%

Labour	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
More favourable to Ed Miliband	10%	17%	8%
More favourable to the Labour Party	63%	59%	61%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	27%	23%	31%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	-53%	-42%	-53%

Lib Dem	Loyalists	Joiners	Defectors & waverers
More favourable to Nick Clegg	14%	29%	7%
More favourable to the Lib Dem Party	47%	36%	50%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	40%	35%	43%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	-33%	-7%	-43%

The final part of the analysis is to look at whether voters naming each leader as the best Prime Minister see them as individuals, or the party they lead, as the principal attraction.

Again, David Cameron is the only leader who attracts voters over and above the appeal of his party. Those who think Nick Clegg or (especially) Ed Miliband would make the best Prime Minister are less favourable towards them as leaders than to the parties they lead.

In other words, while those who prefer David Cameron tend to think of him as the best PM in his own right, those who prefer Ed Miliband do so because if he were at Number 10, that would mean we had a Labour government.

	Those thinking Cameron is best PM
More favourable to David Cameron	27%
More favourable to the Conservative Party	25%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	48%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	+2%

	Those thinking Miliband is best PM
More favourable to Ed Miliband	15%
More favourable to the Labour Party	50%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	34%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	-34%

	Those thinking Clegg is best PM
More favourable to Nick Clegg	22%
More favourable to the Lib Dem Party	28%
Equally favourable or unfavourable	49%
<i>Net appeal of Leader – Party</i>	-6%

Full poll results

A poll of 5,000 adults was conducted online between 22 July and ... August 2011.

Some questions were repeated in a second poll of 2,049 adults conducted online between 9 and 11 September 2011.

1. Some people have already decided how they will vote at the next general election, and others have not yet decided which party to vote for – or whether to vote at all. How likely are you end up voting for each party on a scale of 0 to 10 – where 0 means you definitely will not vote for that party, and 10 means you definitely will vote for it?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Net 0-1	Net 9-10
Conservative	40%	4%	5%	4%	4%	11%	4%	5%	7%	5%	13%	44%	18%
Labour	38%	5%	5%	4%	4%	11%	4%	6%	6%	4%	13%	43%	17%
Lib Dem	49%	5%	7%	6%	6%	12%	5%	4%	3%	1%	2%	55%	3%

2. Below are some words that some people have used to describe various political leaders. Which *one* of these words do you think best describes David Cameron, the Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party / Nick Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister / Ed Miliband, the leader of the Labour Party?

David Cameron	Nick Clegg	Ed Miliband
Arrogant 12%	Out of his depth 21%	Out of his depth 18%
Out of touch 9%	Weak 14%	Weak 11%
Out of his depth 6%	Fake 7%	Weird 7%
Determined 6%	Indecisive 6%	Arrogant 5%
Smug 6%		

- 2010 Lib Dem voters were nearly as likely to say Nick Clegg was 'out of his depth' (20%) as Conservative voters (22%) and Labour voters (22%).
- Among those who voted Conservative in 2010, the most popular descriptions of David Cameron were 'right for Britain' (11%), 'up to the job' (10%) and 'determined' (10%).
- Labour voters were less likely to converge on one or two descriptions than other parties' voters were for their leaders. 2010 Labour voters were most likely to choose 'out of his depth', 'weak' and 'competent' for Ed Miliband.

3. Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister?

	July	September
David Cameron	52%	54%
Ed Miliband	35%	34%
Nick Clegg	13%	12%

- In July, David Cameron led Ed Miliband by 22 points among men (55% to 33%) and 13 points among women (49% to 36%).
- Ed Miliband was ahead of David Cameron only among social group E, defined as state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, the unemployed and those dependent on benefits (by 46% to 37%). Cameron was ahead among every other social group, age group and region of Great Britain.
- 28% of those who named David Cameron as the best Prime Minister nevertheless chose a negative word to describe him in the previous question; 27% of those naming Ed Miliband chose a negative word for him; 41% of those naming Nick Clegg chose a negative word for him.

4. Would you say you were more favourable to David Cameron, or the Conservative Party generally / Ed Miliband, or the Labour Party generally / Nick Clegg, or the Liberal Democrats generally?

	July poll	Leader – Party
I am more favourable towards DC than I am to the Conservatives generally	19%	0%
I am more favourable towards the Conservatives generally than I am to DC	19%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards DC than to the Conservatives generally	62%	
I am more favourable towards EM than I am to Labour generally	10%	- 26%
I am more favourable to Labour generally than I am to EM	36%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards EM than to Labour generally	54%	
I am more favourable towards NC than I am to the Lib Dems generally	14%	-14%
I am more favourable towards the Lib Dems generally than I am to NC	28%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards NC than to the Lib Dems generally	58%	

- Those who voted Conservative in 2010 were just under twice as likely to say that they were more favourable to the Conservative Party generally than to David Cameron (33%). 2010 Labour voters were the least likely to say they were more favourable towards DC than towards the Conservative Party (14%), but 2010 Lib Dem voters were much more likely to say they had a more favourable view of DC than they did of his party (26%).
- 2010 Labour voters were more than six times as likely to say they were more favourable towards the party (63%) than that they were more favourable towards Ed Miliband (10%).
- Lib Dem voters were more than five times as likely to say they were more favourable towards the Lib Dems (49%) than that they were more favourable towards Nick Clegg (9%).

The question was repeated in the September poll:

	September poll	Leader – Party
I am more favourable towards DC than I am to the Conservatives generally	21%	+3%
I am more favourable towards the Conservatives generally than I am to DC	18%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards DC than to the Conservatives generally	61%	
I am more favourable towards EM than I am to Labour generally	10%	-26%
I am more favourable to Labour generally than I am to EM	36%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards EM than to Labour generally	53%	
I am more favourable towards NC than I am to the Lib Dems generally	13%	-12%
I am more favourable towards the Lib Dems generally than I am to NC	25%	
I am no more favourable or unfavourable towards NC than to the Lib Dems generally	62%	

5. Here are some things that people have said about the main party leaders. Please can you say in each case whether, on balance, you think the statement is true or not true of David Cameron / Ed Miliband / Nick Clegg?

This question was repeated in a poll on 9-11 September 2011. The July results are given first, followed by the September results.

% saying 'true'	Cameron	Miliband	Clegg
Willing to take tough decisions for the long term	68%/65%	37%/40%	38%/35%
Competent and capable	53%/54%	36%/39%	32%/33%
His heart is in the right place	51%/55%	57%/61%	56%/55%
Wants to help ordinary people get on in life	44%/45%	60%/60%	54%/51%
Stands for fairness	43%/45%	50%/52%	47%/46%
Stands for equal opportunity for all	39%/41%	50%/52%	44%/43%
On the side of people like me	38%/40%	43%/46%	40%/38%
Shares my values	34%/37%	33%/36%	29%/29%
Will do what he says	34%/36%	33%/31%	26%/23%
Represents the whole country, not just some types of people	30%/31%	33%/34%	27%/28%

- 2010 Labour voters were the only group in which a majority did not agree that David Cameron was “willing to take tough decisions for the long term”.
- The proportion thinking David Cameron was ‘on the side of people like me’ was closely correlated with social group: 47% of As agreed, 41% of Bs, 39% of C1s, 38% of C2s, 36% of Ds and 26% of Es. The same pattern was true for ‘wants to help ordinary people get on in life’.
- While men thought it true that David Cameron’s “heart is in the right place” by 54% to 46%, women disagreed by 51% to 49%. While men thought it untrue that Mr Cameron “stands for fairness” by an 8-point margin, women thought this by a 22-point margin.
- Apart from among different sets of 2010 voters, there were not significant differences of opinion as to whether particular attributes applied to Ed Miliband.
- Nick Clegg’s attributes were also related to social grade: e.g. 44% of ABs thought he was “on the side of people like me”, compared to 39% of C2s, 36% of Ds and 30% of Es. 62% of ABs thought he “wants to help ordinary people get on in life”, compared to 53% of C2s, 48% of Ds and 44% of Es.

6. Which party do you think has the best policies when it comes to each of the following things – the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats or none of them?

	Con	Lab	Lib Dems	None
Getting the economy growing and creating jobs	33%	26%	6%	35%
Cutting the deficit and the debt	46%	17%	5%	31%
Improving the NHS	21%	31%	9%	38%
Improving schools	24%	29%	10%	36%
Protecting the environment	17%	17%	23%	43%
Dealing with crime	32%	20%	5%	43%
Defending Britain’s interests in Europe	32%	19%	7%	42%
Reforming welfare to stop scroungers and cut benefit dependency	51%	12%	5%	31%
Controlling immigration	32%	12%	6%	50%
Cutting taxes	21%	21%	8%	50%

7. From everything you've heard and read please write below what animal you think comes closest to summing up David Cameron / Ed Miliband / Nick Clegg. [Unprompted, open-ended]

David Cameron	Nick Clegg	Ed Miliband
1. Lion or tiger 2. Dog (esp. Labrador, bulldog) 3. Snake 4. Fox 5. Cat	1. Cat/pussycat/kitten 2. Sheep/lamb 3. Mouse 4. Snake 5. Weasel	1. Dog (esp. puppy, Labrador, poodle) 2. Cat 3. Snake 4. Weasel 5. Bear (esp. panda, koala)

8. After the riots last month, which political leader, if any, responded best in your view?

David Cameron	34%
Ed Miliband	14%
Nick Clegg	4%
None of them	49%