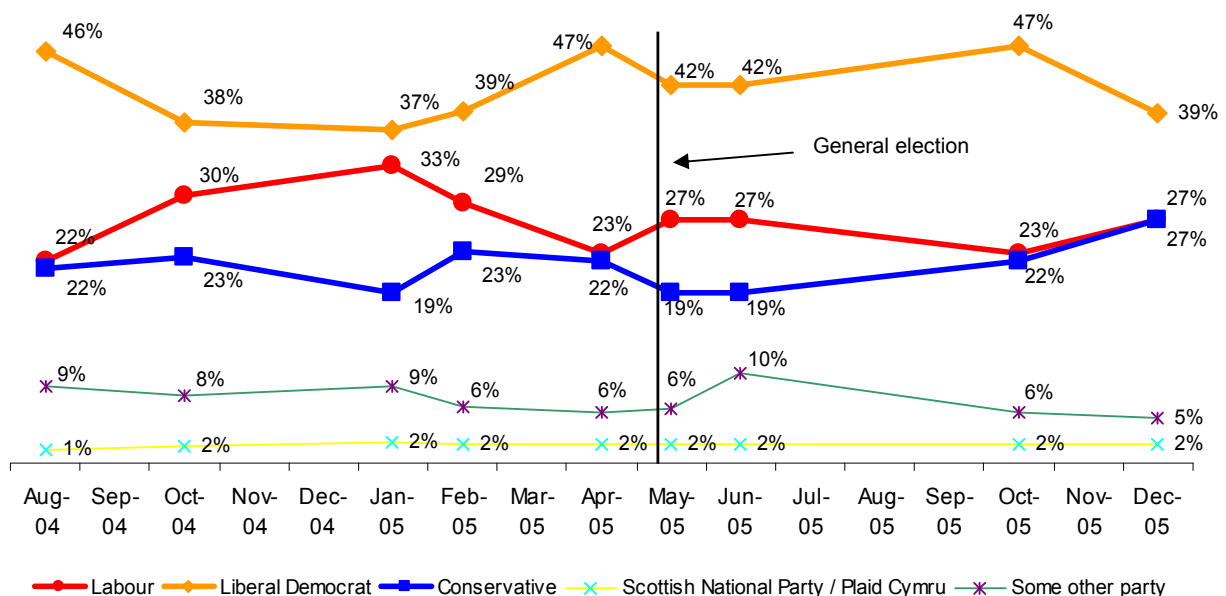


Conservative resurgence

A recent Opinionpanel poll shows that 27% of UK students would now vote Conservative in an immediate general election – the highest proportion of the student vote since our polling began in August 2004. The Liberal Democrats remain in the lead with 38% of the student vote.

How would you vote if there were a general election tomorrow?
 August 2004 - December 2005



•Excludes all those unlikely to vote, and those saying 'don't know' and 'would not vote'
 •Bases (December 2005 - 716, October 2005 - 722, June 2005 - 575, May 2005 - 698, April 2005 - 660, February 2005 - 632, January 2005 - 610, October 2004 - 588, August 2004 - 648)
 •Data for May 2005 and June 2005 are from questions phrased 'How did you vote in the recent general election?'

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Conducted 7th-14th December 2005, our poll mirrors national trends: students have taken kindly to the new leader of the Opposition, and David Cameron's election seems to have netted the Conservatives a seven point boost. This has come almost exclusively at the expense of the beleaguered Liberal Democrats, who, although still student favourites, lost eight points since our previous poll in October 2005.

Having lagged in third place behind the Liberal Democrats (46%) and Labour (25%) in October 2005, December saw the Conservative party's popularity rise to 27%, putting them on level pegging with Labour (27%). The Liberal Democrat's fall to 38% will be cause for concern among the party for whom students are key target voters. Party leader Charles Kennedy has come under fire recently after concerns about his performance were raised by party members.

When asked which party they thought would win the next UK General Election, students still anticipate a Labour victory, but the playing field is now more hotly contested. In October 2005, 80% of students expected Labour to win the next election but in our latest poll this figure had dropped back to 65%. Conversely, in October, just 15% of students – regardless of who they personally supported – thought the Conservatives would win the next election but our latest poll shows this number doubling to 31%. Support for the Liberal Democrats remained constant with just 4% expecting them to form the next government.

Over two thirds (69%) of students said that they were likely to vote in the event of an immediate general election.

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Methodology

The latest study is based on 1078 on-line interviews with students in their first to sixth years of study at 118 UK Higher Education Institutions. The fieldwork took place between 7th December and 14th December 2005. Post-research, the panel was weighted according to the national pattern for gender, year of study and university type as defined by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record 2002/3.