



## **Discussion Lunch: The General Election, Trends and Analysis**

**18th January 2010**

Apex Communications and former Conservative MP, Rob Hayward, hosted a discussion lunch for political journalists on the General Election.

The presentation focused on changing social trends, polling analysis and election analysis in order to help gauge the most likely election outcome. It also sought to highlight the key battle grounds, tackle the myths surrounding polling and elections and outline the key groups each party will need to target in order to win the election.

### **Likely election date**

The last date for a declaration of a general election is on April 12<sup>th</sup>, with the election having to take place in the first week of June. However, the most likely date for the election is on May the 5<sup>th</sup>.

If this is the case it is likely the election will be called on the April 6<sup>th</sup> (following Easter Monday) with Parliamentary nominations closing on the 20th April.

Many counts, however, are now taking place on the following day and therefore, it is unlikely that we will know who is forming the next Government until Friday afternoon.

### **Local elections**

Elections are also taking place in all 32 London boroughs on May 6<sup>th</sup>, and therefore this will be the first time that the London local and General elections have will take place on the same day since the war.

There are also elections in 36 metropolitan councils, 19 unitary councils and 78 districts in England, however, there are no separate elections in Scotland or Wales and therefore they are more likely to declare the indicative results first.

### **Swing needed for victory**

To win a majority, the Tories need a swing of 6%. The only time the General Election swing has been above 6% since the war was in 1997 with a swing to Labour of 10.2%. In 2001 the Tories achieved a 1.8% swing and then a 3.1% in 2005.

### **Seats needed for victory**

Based on the 2005 projections, the boundary changes mean that the Conservatives need 117 seats in order to gain an overall majority. This includes a large number in student centres, small towns and cities and metropolitan boroughs.



## **Turnout**

There is a general decline in voter turnout in most western democracies. In the UK the 1987 turnout was 75.3%, and increased in 1992 to 77.7%. By 1997 the level had dropped to 71.4%. before the turnout plummeted in 2001 to 59.4 % (as the result was never in doubt), and only just raise in 2005 at 61.4%.

Turnout is likely to be at about 65%

## **Worker base**

The worker base is key for any party winning to wish an election. The Conservatives have continued to increase their supporter base over the past few years, while Labour has continue to decline. The number of councillors in the UK is now almost the opposite to the situation in 1997, with Labour going from around 10,000 to around 4,500 compared to the Conservatives who have gone from 4,000 to 9,500. The Liberal Democrats have actually seen a 20% decline in the number of candidates since 2005 and stay at their lowest level of around 4,000.

One additional note is that the Conservatives lost out in the because of the expenses as during that time they would have usually expected to increase their support base at that time.

## **Changing trends**

The Conservatives have greatly increase there share of the under 25s supporting them and now have by far the highest share of this age group. The over 55s growth for the Conservatives, as these are likely to be the most turned off by the expenses scandal.

Growth in support for the Conservative's faster from ABC1 social group, district towns and younger voters, while the support from managerial public sector, inner cities is growing much more slowly.

## **Opinion polls**

Looking at the opinions polls, the Liberal Democrat's poll at election times the same level that they stand at in the autumn polls. While it is suggested that they perform better in General Election through more exposure, this is only because there vote at the beginning of the year drops slightly, and ultimately they just recover their earlier position. Labour are usually over estimated and the Conservatives are generally under estimated, however pollsters have taken measures to change this.

## **Overall**

The overall analysis suggests that the Conservatives party are heading for a small majority of around 30 seats. This would leave them with around 340 seats in the new House of Commons, compare to 230 for Labour and around 50 for the Liberal Democrats.