

LABOUR LEADERSHIP CONTEST

General Election Candidates' Follow-up Survey

By Westminster Public Affairs Ltd



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ABOUT WESTMINSTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Westminster PA's award-winning consultants help our clients to shape and influence law making and policy in the UK and Europe. From multinational corporates and campaigning coalitions to think-tanks and small charities, our team can help you to develop and deliver your public affairs and media relations activities and campaigns.



After working for former Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy as his Deputy Press Secretary (2004-2006) Olly Kendall worked in lobbying and PR before founding Westminster PA. His sector experience includes transport, aviation, housing, finance, environment, gaming, digital economy, animal welfare, family law and visa policy. He contributes to the Guardian and appears as a media and political commentator on BBC, ITV and Sky News. In 2008 he won the Young Communicator of the Year award at the PRCA Awards.



Mike Williams works across a wide range of client accounts covering transport, health, academia and family law. He manages client work including public engagement events, cross-platform media launches, Westminster political lobbying campaigns and media and political monitoring. Mike has a Masters Degree in International Politics and has previously worked for a political campaign group and as a graduate case-handler for Deloitte.



David Hubert is our associate EU consultant with extensive experience in advising on policy and legal compliance in the EU as well as representing the interests of clients in Brussels. His main area of expertise is the EU internal market. As such he has expert knowledge of EU policies that affect the freedom of movement of people and services, the recognition of qualifications across the EU and common European educational standards. He works largely with professional associations, trade associations and regulatory bodies.



Dan Hartropp is our associate data and monitoring consultant. He's the founder of political analysis specialists six & two threes and is an expert in using powerful analytical techniques to help clients understand their political context and target the right people to speak to. Dan had over a decade of experience working in the Civil Service where he specialised in legislation and the use of data to solve complex operational problems.



LEADERSHIP SURVEY

THE VIEWS OF LABOUR'S GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES

OVERVIEW

Westminster PA reached out to a selection of the Labour Party's 2015 general election candidates who did not win their seats and asked them to anonymously share their first and second preference candidates for both the leadership and deputy leadership contests currently underway. The survey was undertaken between 20th and 22nd July 2015. We also asked candidates to volunteer any further thoughts on both races, to be shared – again – anonymously.

A total of 64 election candidates (almost 10% of those standing for election in 2015 for Labour) responded to both the leadership survey and deputy leadership survey. The surveys are intended only to provide a snap shot of one group of the party, albeit an arguably high-profile and influential group within local media and their local constituency parties.

We surveyed these parliamentary candidates because they represent an interesting group of the party's voting members. Many have spent years campaigning locally, they've heard the reaction from voters first-hand to Ed Miliband's leadership on the doorstep over the last five years. They're people with parliamentary ambition – they want a leader who will take their party to electoral success, helping some of them – they hope – to secure election to Parliament in 2020: in other words those who plan to stand in five years time have a strong vested interest in the outcomes of both races. What's more as local spokespeople, highly active in their constituency parties, their views arguably could have some sway over fellow activists and members. It's for these reasons that we chose to survey this particular group of Labour's activist base.

The Labour Party uses the alternative vote system for elections so second preferences are highly likely to play a role in the outcome (assuming that no candidate wins more than 50% of the membership's vote outright in the first round of voting in either race). We did not, however, survey respondents on their third or fourth preferences.

THE QUESTIONS

We posed four questions to respondents:

Q1. Who is your first preference vote for Leader of the Labour Party?

Andy Burnham / Yvette Cooper / Jeremy Corbyn / Liz Kendall / Undecided / None of the above

Q2. Who is your second preference vote for Leader of the Labour Party?

Andy Burnham / Yvette Cooper / Jeremy Corbyn / Liz Kendall / Undecided / No second preference / None of the above

Q3. Who is your first preference vote for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party?

Ben Bradshaw / Stella Creasy / Angela Eagle / Caroline Flint / Tom Watson / Undecided / None of the above

Q4. Who is your second preference vote for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party?

Ben Bradshaw / Stella Creasy / Angela Eagle / Caroline Flint / Tom Watson / Undecided / No second preference / None of the above

THE FINDINGS

Leadership Race

One leadership candidate emerges as the front runner among parliamentary candidates: Liz Kendall wins the support of almost 36% of respondents, followed by Jeremy Corbyn on nearly 22% while Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper trail behind on just over 17% each. This comes as a surprise given Kendall's lower poll ratings – particularly in the recent YouGov poll – and which has precipitated calls for her to stand aside to back either Burnham or Cooper.

This is obviously a small sample but it's interesting that parliamentary candidates apparently take a significantly different view to the wider party membership - arguably they see Liz Kendall as their best hope of winning re-election, after all they've heard first hand on the doorstep about voters' perceptions of the party and have a unique perspective of what it will take to win people back.

The other interesting finding is Yvette Cooper's strong showing on second preference votes. In fact she seems to be the second preference for many parliamentary candidates irrespective of who their first preference choice is. It means that if she is not eliminated in the first round of voting then she is highly likely to pick up a significant amount of second preferences from whoever is eliminated. Indeed even among the respondents whose first preference was Jeremy Corbyn, Yvette Cooper enjoys more second preferences than any of the other three leadership candidates.

The findings are as follows:

Candidates	1 st Pref Votes (%)	2 nd Pref Votes (%)
Andy Burnham	17.19	11.11
Yvette Cooper	17.19	49.21
Jeremy Corbyn	21.88	6.35
Liz Kendall	35.94	6.35
Undecided	6.25	7.94
No second preference	n/a	15.87
None of the above	1.56	3.17



Liz Kendall: front runner among the 64 candidates surveyed

Deputy Leadership Race

Caroline Flint and Stella Creasy emerge as the two front runners for Labour's deputy leadership election, each winning over 25% of the first preference choices.

It's a strong turn-around for Caroline Flint: our survey of Labour's parliamentary candidates in May put Flint on just 11% and Tom Watson on 30%. Their positions are almost reversed now with Watson winning just 17% of votes, marginally ahead of Ben Bradshaw on 15%.



Stella Creasy and Caroline Flint are ahead in our survey of the party's deputy leadership contest.

Indeed, Caroline Flint also emerges top in second preference votes. Much like Yvette Cooper, she attracts second preference votes from across the board. Few people are talking up Caroline Flint's chances in this contest but it seems that her support has grown over the last two months.

Our survey in May found that almost a fifth (19%) of respondents were undecided. Now, just 6% are undecided with most parliamentary candidates having now made up their minds as the election deadline draws close.

One question is why Tom Watson appears to have lost support amongst this group of the party. We asked candidates to volunteer any feedback about the candidates, the election process and the challenges facing the party. One said that, "Labour has to do more to appeal to people who voted Conservative at the last general election. I think a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn and Tom Watson would do precisely the opposite." One wonders whether the growing likelihood of a Corbyn victory could be leading people to re-evaluate their choice for deputy: are voters moving away from Watson as their deputy leadership choice, fearing the direction that a Corbyn / Watson victory would mean for the party's election prospects?

The findings for the deputy leadership race are as follows:

Candidates	1 st Pref Votes (%)	2 nd Pref Votes (%)
Ben Bradshaw	15.63%	23.44%
Stella Creasy	26.56%	21.88%
Angela Eagle	7.81%	6.25%
Caroline Flint	26.56%	26.56%
Tom Watson	17.9%	10.94%
Undecided	6.25%	6.25%
None of the above	0%	3.13%
No second preference	n/a	1.56%

Qualitative feedback

We asked respondents to offer additional thoughts or feedback about the leadership race and the challenges facing the Labour Party. The quotes below are verbatim from respondents.

Jeremy Corbyn divides opinion:

- “The decision by some MPs to nominate Jeremy Corbyn, supposedly to allow a debate has been nothing short of catastrophic...if Corbyn were to be elected leader I would no longer feel able to remain in the party.”
- “Those MP's who wished to broaden the offer by nominating Jeremy Corbyn should not be allowed to forget the potential consequences of their actions.”
- "Voting for Jeremy Corbyn means I can sleep at night."
- “Labour has to do more to appeal to people who voted Conservative at the last general election. I think a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn and Tom Watson would do precisely the opposite.”
- “Corbyn is awful.”
- “Having fought a target seat in May, I can say with absolute certainty, we will not win mine or similar seats if Jeremy Corbyn is elected party leader and he will be bottom of my list.”

Questions raised about the leadership election process and the impact on the Party:

- “The process is far too long.”
- “The public will view the Labour Party at best as navel gazing, at worst tearing itself apart. Meanwhile, they will view the Tories as taking the tough decisions which we appear incapable of taking. Furthermore, the Labour Party does not give the impression of having any capacity to govern and run the country responsibly. This was exemplified by the disarray over the welfare bill, with the 'rebels' more concerned about their egos rather than party unity.”
- “This whole process is too long. It's turning into a civil war. Very real risk of a "tea party" style movement seeking an ideological purity which just doesn't exist.”
- “We should be having the debate about "What Labour is for" first.”
- “We should not have run the deputy election until after we had selected a leader so that any failed candidates could run for deputy if they wanted to...We could then have effected a F/M ticket.”
- “It's a shame that we seem to be giving the Tories 'a free run' whilst we are concentrating on internal matters. We did this in 2010 and the effect was to give Ed a disadvantage from the start.”
- “The whole process is taking far too long, which enables two things to happen, Firstly, as in 2010 the government has the opportunity to make all the running for three months, and along with that, other parties are able to establish themselves as the principle opposition regardless of numbers. The second issue is it means the acting leader can take policy decisions which could box the new leader into a corner, regardless of their own views.”

Some respondents were most impressed by the deputy leadership field:

- “The candidates for deputy appear more credible than the candidates for leader!”
- “The Deputy Leadership candidates are much stronger than the Leadership ones.”
- “The Deputy contest is much better with a good choice of candidates, but if the Labour party really has grasped what is required, Ben should be everyone's choice - he is the only one who has won a seat from the Tories and has a non tribal approach to politics.”

ELECTION TIMETABLE

The full leadership election timetable, as agreed by the NEC, is as follows:

Date	Process
July 31 st (noon)	Supporting Nominations Close
August 12th (noon)	Last date to join as member, affiliated supporter, or registered supporter
August 14th	Ballot mailing sent out
September 10 th	Ballot closes
September 12 th	Special conference to announce result