

Media Release from Diffley Partnership

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 THURSDAY 27 AUGUST 2026

Contact: Mark Diffley, 07590 595640

BURNHAM MOST POPULAR POLITICAL LEADER IN SCOTLAND

New Prime Minister records strongest favourability ratings among Scots, but Labour remains well behind the SNP in General Election voting intention

Prime Minister Andy Burnham has quickly become the most popular major political leader in Scotland, but his arrival in Downing Street has yet to translate into increased support for Labour north of the border.

New polling released today by Edinburgh-based research agency Diffley Partnership conducted using the Survation online panel, finds Burnham is the only major political figure tested to record a positive net favourability rating amongst Scottish voters.

However, despite relatively positive views of the new Prime Minister, Scottish Labour remains some distance behind the SNP in voting intention, with little evidence that Labour's improvement in polls elsewhere in Britain has been replicated in Scotland.

The survey conducted over the past fortnight also suggests there is limited public engagement with the ongoing Scottish Labour leadership contest. Most voters say they have heard little or nothing about the contest, while substantial majorities either do not know who would make the best leader or believe the contest is primarily of interest to Labour supporters.

Burnham emerges as Scotland's most popular leader

Asked whether they held a favourable or unfavourable opinion of a range of political figures, Andy Burnham was the only leader to achieve a positive net favourability score.

Some 37% of Scots view Burnham favourably, compared with 28% who view him unfavourably, giving the Prime Minister a net score of +9.

By comparison, First Minister John Swinney records a net score of -6, while Scottish Conservative leader Russell Findlay and Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton both record net ratings of -8. Reform UK leader Nigel Farage records a net favourability score of -31 among Scots.

Leader	Favourable (%)	Unfavourable (%)	Net
Andy Burnham	37	28	+9
John Swinney	33	39	-6
Russell Findlay	16	24	-8
Alex Cole-Hamilton	15	23	-8
Kemi Badenoch	25	38	-13
Nigel Farage	26	57	-31
Donald Trump	15	72	-57

The poll also finds voters are more likely than not to believe Burnham has improved Labour's electoral prospects. Nearly half (46%) agree that Labour has a better chance of winning the next General Election under Burnham, while 21% disagree.

However, opinion is more divided on Burnham's personal impact. While 37% agree that he understands the concerns of people like them, 32% disagree. Similarly, 36% believe he will be an effective Prime Minister, while 26% disagree.

Asked who would make the best Prime Minister, 45% select Burnham, significantly ahead of both Nigel Farage and Kemi Badenoch, who each attract support from 16% of voters.

No evidence of a Labour bounce in Scotland

Despite Burnham's relatively positive ratings, UK Parliament General Election voting intention figures suggest Scottish Labour has not yet experienced any meaningful improvement in support.

The SNP remains the largest party on 34%, three points higher than in the previous Scottish Survation poll conducted in April. Labour remains unchanged on 19%, while Reform UK sits close behind on 18%.

Party	UK General Election Vote Intention- 24 August 2026 (%)	UK General Election Vote Intention- Survation poll- 21 April 2026 (%)	Change
Scottish National Party (SNP)	34	31	+3
Scottish Labour Party	19	19	=
Reform UK	18	21	-4
Scottish Conservative Party	11	10	+1
Scottish Liberal Democrats	8	8	=
Scottish Green Party	5	7	-2
Restore Britain	4	-	-
Another Party	1	2	-1

While Labour has improved its position in a number of recent Great Britain-wide polls following Burnham's election as leader, these Scottish figures suggest that any positive effect has yet to materialise north of the border. The party remains 15 points behind the SNP and level with its support recorded in Survation's previous Scotland poll conducted in April 2026.

Mark Diffley, Founder and Director of Diffley Partnership said:

"Andy Burnham has made a good early impression on Scottish voters. He is the only political leader tested in this survey to record a positive favourability rating and is viewed as the best option for Prime Minister by a clear plurality of voters."

"However, the polling also suggests that Burnham's personal popularity has not yet translated into additional support for Scottish Labour. While Labour has seen some encouraging signs elsewhere in Britain, the party's position in Scotland appears largely unchanged, with the SNP continuing to hold a substantial lead."

"The findings also point to a significant challenge for whoever becomes the next Scottish Labour leader. Public awareness of the contest remains low, most voters say they have heard little about it, and many are unconvinced that the outcome will have a major impact on Scottish politics."

"While Andy Burnham appears to have succeeded in improving Labour's image, there is little evidence so far of a corresponding 'Burnham bounce' in Scotland. Turning personal popularity into votes, and rebuilding Labour's competitiveness in Scottish politics, remains a significant challenge."

Little public interest in Scottish Labour leadership contest

The survey suggests awareness and engagement with the contest to replace Anas Sarwar as Scottish Labour leader remains relatively low.

Just 4% of voters say they have heard "a great deal" about the contest, while 25% say they have heard "a fair amount". Half of voters (50%) say they have heard "not very much", while 22% say they have heard nothing at all.

When asked who would make the best Scottish Labour leader, a majority of voters (55%) say they do not know.

Among the candidates currently seeking the leadership, Michael Marra records the highest level of support, with 8% of voters selecting him compared with 7% for Joe Fagan. The survey fieldwork began before Monica Lennon did not secure the nominations required to run on the final ballot and she was the preferred candidate among 8% of all voters. A further 22% said none of the above.

Among those who voted for Labour with their 2026 Scottish Parliament constituency vote, Marra also leads, with 14% selecting him compared with 8% for Fagan, although a majority (51%) of Labour voters say they do not know who would make the best leader and 11% opted for Monica Lennon. A further 15% said none of the above.

Most voters (56%) agree that the contest is mainly of interest to Labour supporters rather than the wider public. Almost half (48%) agree that who leads Scottish Labour makes little difference to Scotland, while only 29% agree that the next leader could realistically become First Minister.

Similarly, more voters disagree (33%) than agree (29%) that the outcome of the leadership contest will make a significant difference to Scottish politics.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Please see the attached document for data tables
- Headline figures base: respondents likely to vote, factored by likelihood to vote, with undecided and refused removed
- Invitations for the survey were issued via the Survation online panel
- Results are based on a survey of 2,036 respondents conducted from 13th-24th August 2026
- Data was weighted to the profile of Scotland. Data was weighted by respondent's sex, age, region, household income, qualifications, and past vote (2024 general election, 2026 Holyrood constituency vote, 2016 EU Referendum and 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum).
- NET Favourability is calculated by subtracting the proportion of unfavourable responses from the proportion of favourable responses