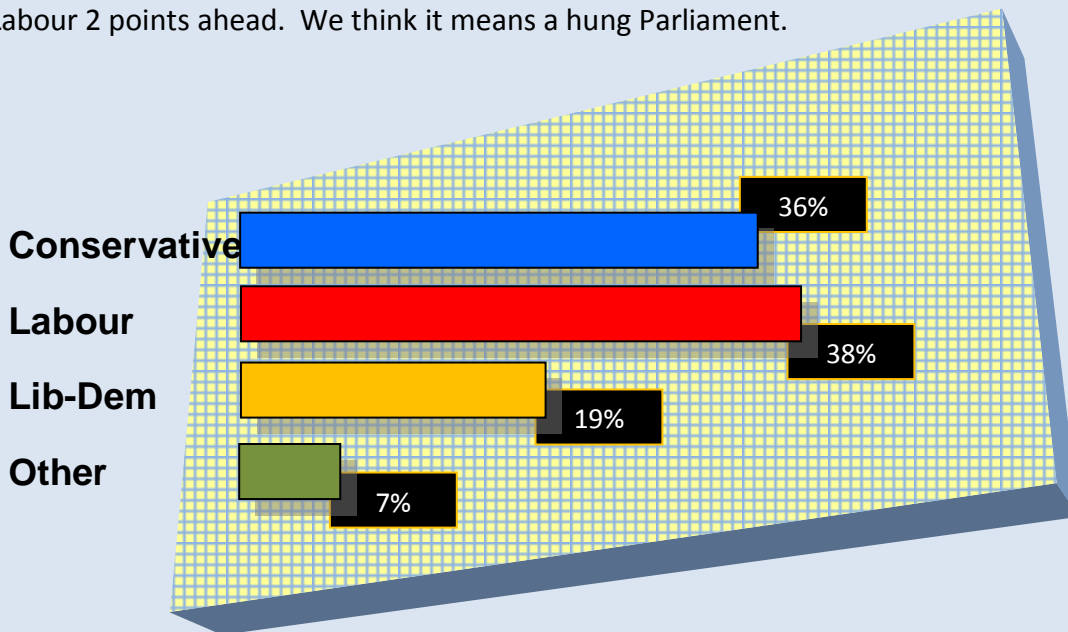


If there was a General Election today – how would you vote?
That was the question we posed to our +10,000 e-newsletter readers of health service managers.

Here's what they told us. The managers have spoken and we're not sure what they have said! Labour 2 points ahead. We think it means a hung Parliament.



... and if *nhsManagers* are right and there is a hung Parliament. What happens next?

Normally, the Prime Minister is the leader of a party with a majority in the House of Commons and dissolution takes place at his request. A hung Parliament, however, means that there is some uncertainty about who has the greatest claim to be Prime Minister.

If the two largest parties are of a similar size, the existing Prime Minister (Gordon Brown) would be entitled to stay in office until the House of Commons meets, when he could be forced out in a vote of confidence. He may, however, see the writing on the wall, and quit.

In either of these cases, the Queen would likely approach the Leader of the Opposition (David Cameron). She could immediately appoint him Prime Minister, or ask him to consult and see if he could command support in the Commons, either by entering into a formal coalition or by staving off a confidence motion.

The real problem arises if the new Prime Minister loses a vote of confidence, too. What does the Queen do then? Go back to Brown? Or what happens if Brown, instead of resigning in the first place, wants another General Election? It is one of the responsibilities of the Crown to make sure there is always a government in place and we are not faced with endless elections.

Ultimately the politicians have to work out a deal that puts someone in power without antagonising an electorate already fed up to the back-teeth with politicians!

In the meantime we would struggle on in a new-policy-free-zone. Paradise?