

Room for optimism

Sterling

\$1.6844

- The highest level since early August, after G20 finance ministers agreed over the weekend to keep stimulus measures in place. It was also aided by the Bank of England's decision last Thursday to print an additional £25 billion, rather than the £50 billion many economists had expected, and by the declining dollar

Retail sales

+3.8%

- Last month's rise in retail sales was driven in part by improvements in the housing market, but Stephen Robertson, director-general of the British Retail Consortium, admitted that the figures were flattered by comparison to a dreadful period last year

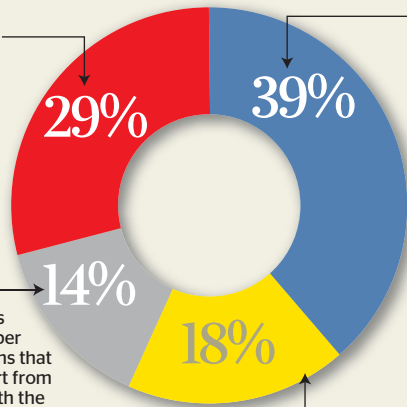
Voting intentions

Labour 29%, down 1

Labour suffered no significant change despite a difficult month that saw Europe and uncertainties over the future of the war in Afghanistan dominating the headlines

Others 14%, up 2

UKIP saw its numbers increase from 2 to 4 per cent, amid suggestions that it was gaining support from voters disaffected with the main parties' stances on Europe



Conservatives 39%, down 1

The Tories failed to progress amid fears that the row over the Lisbon treaty and the EU referendum had reopened old splits in the Conservative Party over Europe

Lib Dems 18%, no change

There was a 9 percentage point rise in the the number of people who thought there could be a hung Parliament, which could hand the Lib Dems the balance of power

Gold

\$1,100

- A new high as the steady decline of the dollar has prompted investors to look for new places to put their money. The flight to gold looks set to continue after G20 ministers expressed concerns over the weekend that the dollar could still be overvalued

Oil

\$79.78

- Benchmark crude for December delivery rose 3 per cent, or \$2.35, to \$79.78 a barrel yesterday after a Tropical storm hit the Gulf of Mexico. Along with other commodities, oil was also boosted by the declining dollar