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GOVERNMENT RISKS LOSING CRUCIAL SWING VOTERS

Political parties should listen to the powerful over 55s

Two thirds of over 55s (66%) say they are absolutely certain to vote in the General Election compared to under two-fifths (39%) of 18-54 year olds, according to new research by Age Concern and ICM.¹ But with about 2.6 million over 55s still undecided about who to vote for, politicians are facing a fierce battle for the older vote.

The charity warns that it could be those over 55 who will decide the outcome of the General Election - not the one in four people under the age of 34 who say they are certain not to vote.

Although age does not determine how people will vote, the opinion of the over 55s unites around key areas of concern. They want the Government to focus on: ²

- Pensions - 57%
- NHS - 57%
- Economy - 33%
- Public Services - 32%
- Tax - 25%

Political parties and prospective parliamentary candidates must clearly demonstrate how they will deliver a better deal to the UK's older population if elected as the next Government. Failure to do so could cost them dearly at the ballot box.

Gordon Lishman, Director-General of Age Concern, said: "The political parties cannot afford to take the votes of the over 55s for granted. If a decisive blow is struck at the General Election, it will come from the older voters who can be relied on to turn out but are increasingly prepared to switch their vote.

"Older people want to see manifesto commitments that will make a difference to their lives. Political parties must wake up to the fact that unless they address the demands and concerns of older people, they will not keep or attract their vote.

"We want the next UK government to increase the state pension, combat ageism and build effective public services to support us all in an ageing society."

General Election votes - looking in detail:

- 69% of over 55s say they always vote in a General Election, compared to 17% of those aged 18-24, 27% of 25-34 and 44% of 35-54
- 14% of both 18-24 and 25-34 say they never vote in a General Election, compared to 7% of 35-54, 3% of 55-64 and just 2% of over 65s

- 70% of over 65s say they are certain to vote in an immediate General Election, compared to 66% of over 55s and 39% of people under 55. The under 55 age group breaks down into 47% of 35-54, 31% of 25-34 and just 17% of those aged 18-24
- 1 in 4 people (20%) under the age of 34 say they are certain not to vote (both 18-24 and 25-34), compared to 13% of 35-54 and just 7% of over 55s. The over 55 age group breaks down into 9% of 55-64 and 5% of over 65s