

Opinium / Observer

VI 24th July 2019



Key findings

26 July 2019

Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	VI 24 07 19
POLL	VI 24th July 2019
POLLING SERIES	Opinium / Observer
EMAIL	political@opinium.co.uk
SAMPLE	2,006 UK adults aged 18+
FIELDWORK DATES	24 to 26 July 2019

One-minute takeaway

Headline stats

- In Johnson's first week as Prime Minister, the Conservatives are back in the lead with 30% of the vote
- Leave voters continue to move back to the Conservatives while Remain voters appear to be further diluting between three different parties

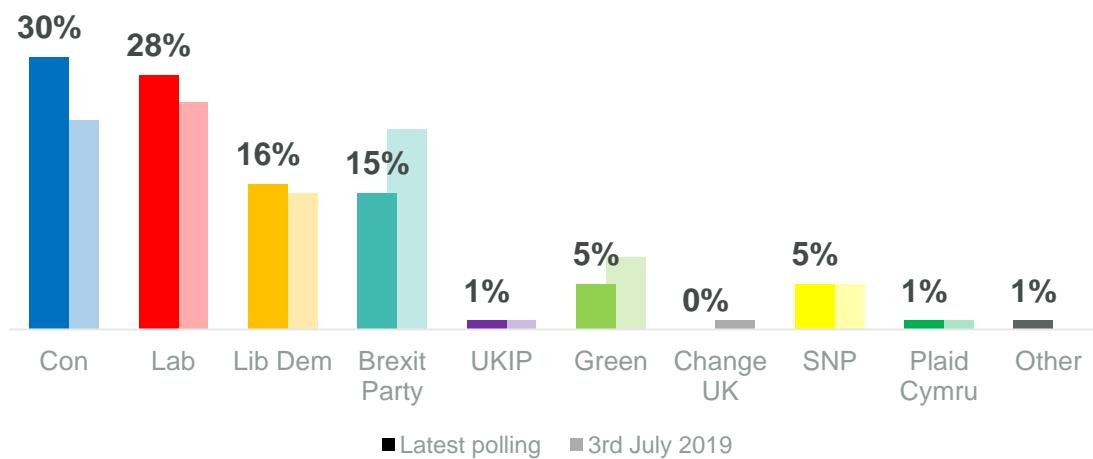
Views on Johnson

- Johnson has a 21-point lead in who would make best prime minister between him and Corbyn. The last time May had that big a lead over Corbyn was before the 2017 election
- Johnson is perceived to have stronger leadership credentials on a range of characteristics than Corbyn
- Almost half of Brexit Party voters are more likely to vote for the Tories with Johnson as leader
- However, half of the public think Johnson will divide the nation

The state of the parties and leaders

Conservatives regain lead in the polls

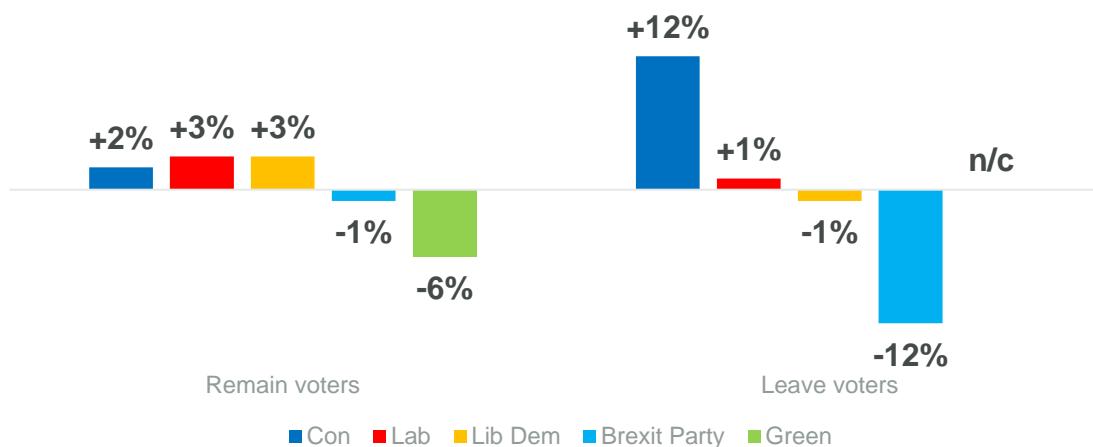
The Conservatives are benefiting from the effects of a new leader in the polls this week. They have gained 7 points since two weeks ago, to now take a 2 point lead over Labour (previously -2 lead).



This surge in support appears to come at the expense of the Brexit Party who have dropped 7 points. Despite now being in 2nd place, Labour are up 3 points since a fortnight ago to 28%, while the Greens are down 3 points to 5%

Leave voters continuing to turn back towards Tories

A fortnight ago the Conservatives had a 5% swing in vote amongst Leavers from the Brexit Party back to the Tories. They continue to cement this pattern, with a 12% swing over the last two weeks.



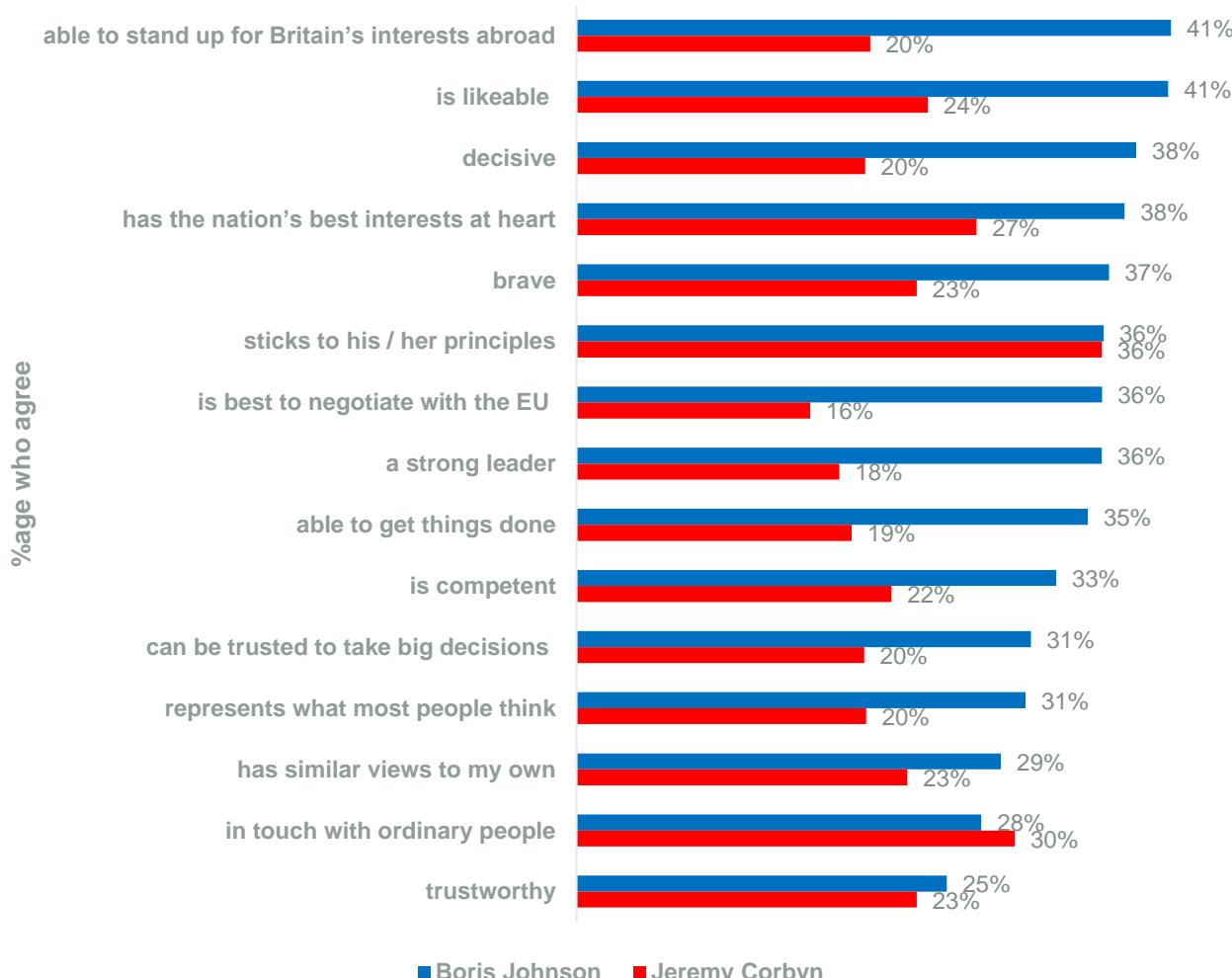
The Greens meanwhile have receded over the last two weeks, with a drop-in support amongst Remainers benefitting Labour, the Lib Dems and the Conservatives.

Boris Johnson viewed as the better Prime Minister

In his first week in the job, Boris Johnson is leading over Jeremy Corbyn on who would make the best prime minister by 21 points (Johnson at 38% vs Corbyn at 17%). The last time his predecessor had this big a lead over Corbyn on this metric was before the 2017 election.

In line with the above, Johnson is generally perceived to have stronger leadership credentials than Corbyn over a range of characteristics; the only lead Corbyn holds over Johnson is in being seen to be more in touch with ordinary people (30% vs 28% respectively). Johnson is mostly seen as a likable (41%), decisive (38%) person, who is able to stand up for Britain's interests abroad (41%) and has the nation's best interests at heart (38%).

Leadership characteristics of the main party leaders



Polling commentary

Adam Drummond, head of political polling at Opinium commented:

"It's all feeling very "early-2017" with our first poll of Boris Johnson's premiership showing that the Tories' plan to unite the Leave vote against divided opposition is working. Among Leave voters, the Tories are up by 12 points while the Brexit Party are down by exactly the same amount. In our two-way "who would be the best prime minister" question, Boris Johnson has a bigger lead over Jeremy Corbyn than Theresa May managed since before the last general election. The Conservative share of the vote is also the highest since before Britain's departure from the EU was delayed back in March.

In 2017 the Tory strategy failed in part because of a poor campaign by Theresa May but also because non-Tories united behind Labour to prevent a Tory landslide. This time both party leaders are much more well-known than their equivalents were in 2017 so the chances of a late surge are more remote. Labour also have to contend with the fact that, unlike 2017, opposing Brexit has revived the Liberal Democrats meaning their efforts to appeal to both Leavers and Remainers will become more complicated."

The impact of a new leader

Almost half of Brexit Party voters are more likely to vote for the Tories with Johnson as leader

A quarter (25%) of the public say they are more likely to vote for the Conservative Party now that Boris Johnson has been elected as leader, while one in five (19%) say they are now less likely to do so.

In even more positive news for the Conservatives, Johnson's election as leader has increased the likelihood of Brexit Party voters switching to voting for the Tories in the next general election than they were before. Almost half (47%) of Brexit Party voters say they would now be more likely to vote for the Conservatives.

Two fifths of the public feel optimistic about Johnson as Prime Minister

As the nation's new Prime Minister, two fifths (41%) of the public feel optimistic about Johnson, although almost half (47%) feel pessimistic about him. The feeling of optimism is even clearer amongst Conservative and Brexit Party voters at 80% and 76% respectively. Amongst Leavers, this optimism is slightly lower at 61%.

Half of the public think Johnson will divide the country

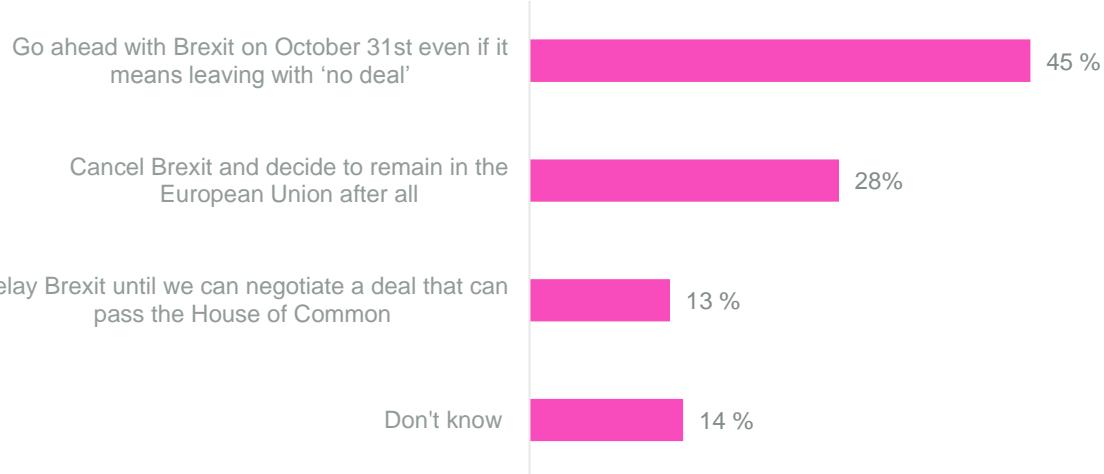
However, Johnson is perceived to be a divisive figure; half (50%) of the public think he will divide the country while a smaller number (31%) think he will unite the UK. Unsurprisingly, he is perceived to be of a more unitary figure among Conservative voters (65% think he will unite vs 17% thinking he will divide). However, this gap narrows when looking at Leavers; 47% of Leavers think Johnson will unite the country while 31% think he will divide the nation.

Europe and Brexit

The public think an election should be called if there is a push for a further Brexit extension

Johnson has said that he wants to change the Withdrawal Agreement made between May's government and the European Union. If he is unable to make these changes, the public (45%) think that the UK should go ahead with Brexit on October 31st even if it means leaving with 'no deal'. However, a similar proportion think that either Brexit should be delayed or cancelled altogether (41%)

If Boris Johnson is unable to make changes to the Withdrawal Agreement that enables it to pass the House of Commons before October 31st, which of the following should he do?



Nevertheless, half (53%) believe with Johnson as Prime Minister the UK is now likely to leave the EU by 31st October.

In the event of Johnson being unable to negotiate significant changes to the Withdrawal Agreement, and the Commons voting to force the government to ask for a further extension to the Brexit deadline, 57% of the public think he should call an election. Leavers are also more likely to think that he should call an election in this scenario, with 47% in favour versus 32% who are opposed. Unsurprisingly, Conservative voters are less keen on this idea, with an even split in those thinking he should call an election (40%) compared to those saying he should not (41%).

Policy

Special relationship stands strong

The ‘special relationship’ with the US is still considered to be important, with 42% of the public believing Johnson’s government should focus on maintaining close ties with Trump’s administration. There is however a sizable proportion (35%) who think the opposite, and want the UK to distance itself from Trump’s administration and look towards other allies.

- Voter of left-leaning parties are more likely to want Johnson’s government to distance itself from Trump’s administration. 63% of Lib Dem voters back this policy as do 46% of Labour voters.

The nation wants the end of austerity

Turning to domestic policy, it appears clear that the nation wants austerity to end.

Half (51%) of the public, and half (51%) of Conservative voters think Johnson’s government should increase spending on public services even if it means increasing government borrowing or taxes. Only 17% think his government should lower taxes and government borrowing even if it means reducing spending on public services, rising to 24% of Conservative voters.

About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think, feel and do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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