



What people think,  
feel and do

[www.opinium.co.uk](http://www.opinium.co.uk)  
[research@opinium.co.uk](mailto:research@opinium.co.uk)  
[@opiniumresearch](https://twitter.com/opiniumresearch)

# The Political Report

## 30 October 2019



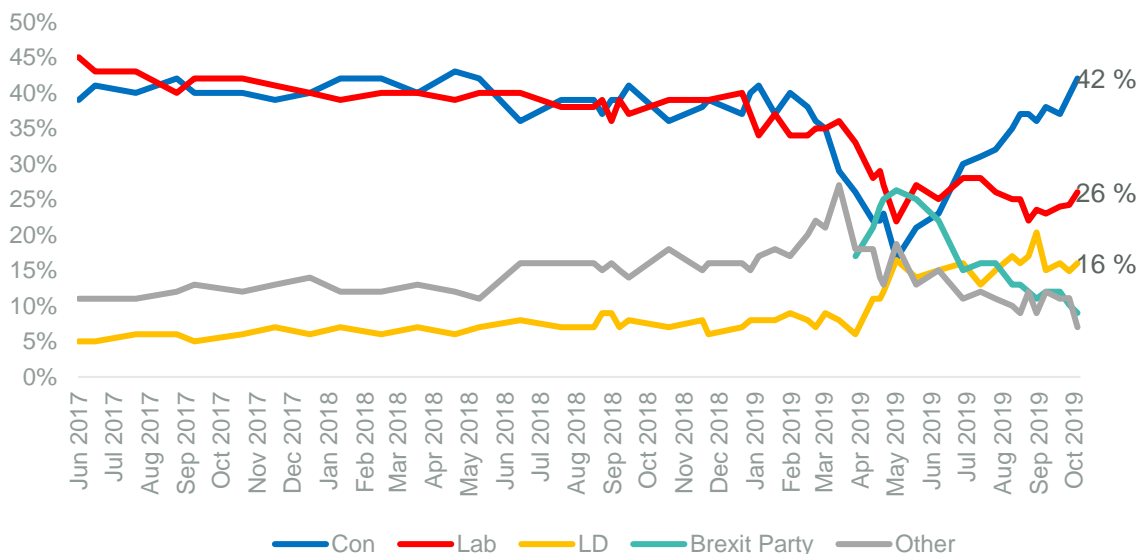
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

1<sup>st</sup> November 2019

# One-minute takeaway

- The Conservatives lead holds at 16-points, with now two thirds (66%) of Leavers planning to vote for the Conservatives
- Boris Johnson is not in a noticeably better position in terms of May, as both Johnson and Corbyn seem to be a less attractive option for voters
- However, Leave voters express a more direct preference for Johnson over Corbyn than they did for May
- Also Johnson has a clear lead on almost all leadership qualities, which Theresa May did not have
- 2019 could genuinely be a Brexit election, with twice as many saying they are most likely to base their vote on Brexit than in 2017 (40% vs 18% respectively). However, we still at the mercy of events!
- The delay so far has not dented significant damaged Johnson
- Johnson could be at risk of his deal getting picked apart, especially amongst left-wing Leave voters. Perceptions of his deal amongst Labour Leavers is getting worse (now 25% think it is a bad deal while 27% think it is a good deal).
- Johnson in similar lead on economy as May and Cameron had
- If voters were complacent about a Conservative majority last time round, this time the public expect the election to be close

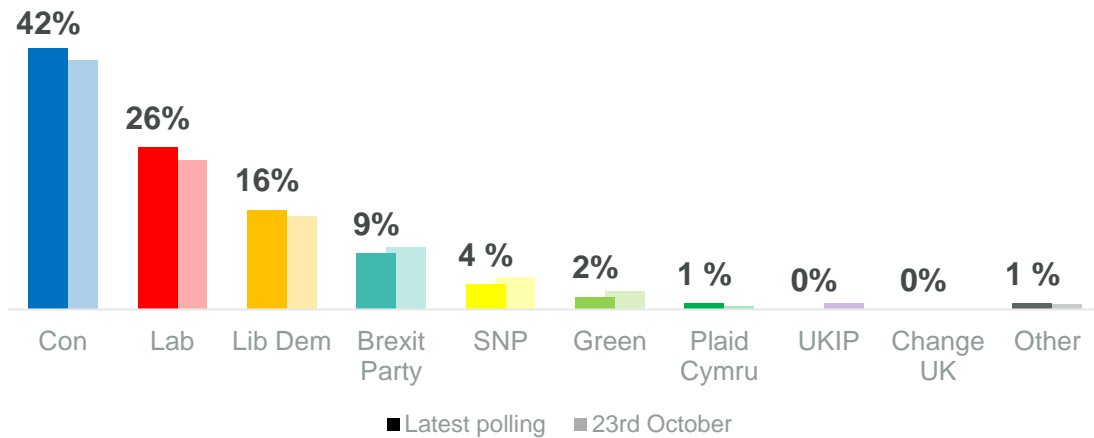
## Voting intention since the 2017 general election



# The state of the parties and leaders

## The Conservative lead holds at 16 points

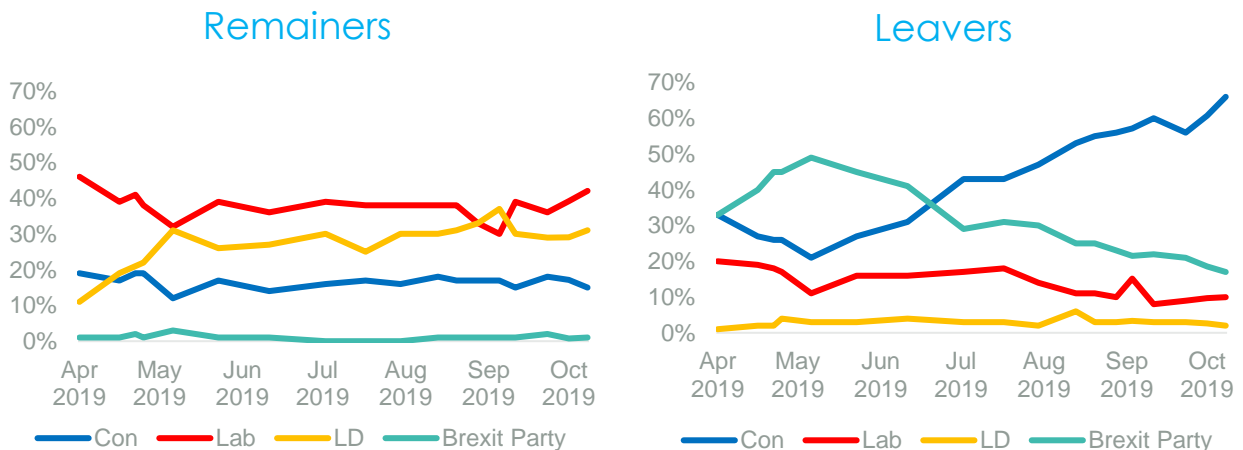
The Conservatives have held their 16-point lead, although all three major parties have seen their vote share increase as there appears to be a drift away from some of the smaller parties.



The Conservatives are up 2 points to 42%, while Labour are up 2 points to 26%. The Lib Dems are up 1 point to 16%. The Brexit Party is down 1 point to 9% although are not showing signs of collapse that UKIP faced once the 2017 general election was called.

## Leavers gifting election to Conservatives

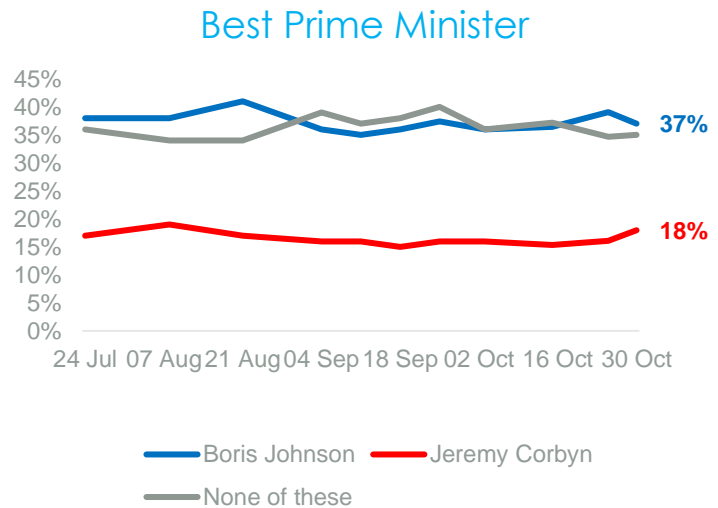
The Conservatives have continued their squeeze of the Leave vote, with two thirds (66%) planning to vote Tory, and now only 17% planning to vote for the Brexit Party. Remainers show no early signs of clearly uniting behind either the Lib Dems or Labour.



## Johnson continuing to lead as best prime minister

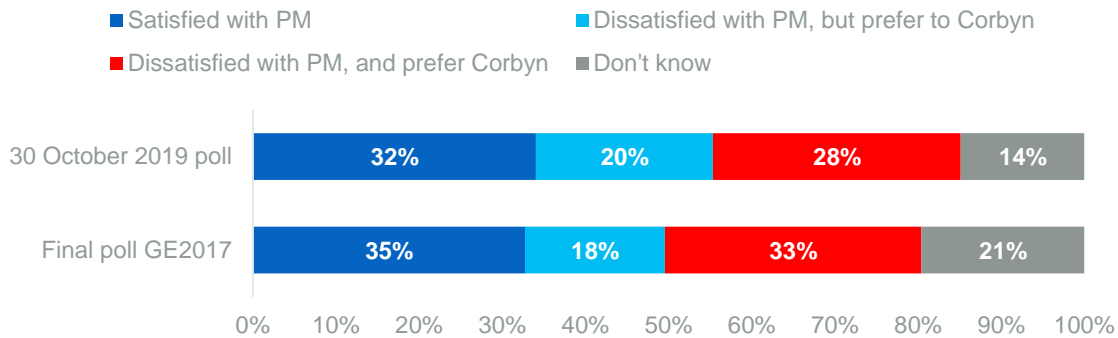
With yet another turbulent week in the Commons, Johnson continues to maintain his perception as to who would make the best Prime Minister.

Currently 37% think Boris would make the best prime minister, down 2 points from last week. 18% think that Jeremy Corbyn would be the best prime minister, up 2 points since last week and the highest score he has had since August.



In terms of the leadership position Boris Johnson is not in a noticeably better position than Theresa May shortly before polling day in the 2017 general election. Currently only 32% are actively satisfied with Boris Johnson, while 20% are dissatisfied with him but prefer him to Jeremy Corbyn (totalling 52%). By comparison, in 2017 35% were satisfied with Theresa May, while 18% were dissatisfied with her but preferred her to Jeremy Corbyn (totalling 53%).

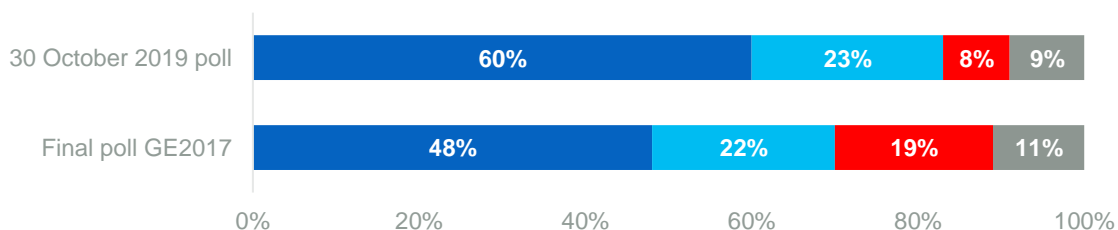
### Leader preference 2019 vs 2017



The most noticeable change is amongst Leave voters, with Boris Johnson in a much stronger position than Theresa May was, while the minority that still preferred Mr Corbyn has halved.

### Leader preference 2019 vs 2017

(Leave voters only)



---

## Polling commentary

**Adam Drummond, head of political polling at Opinium, commented:**

“This story may be familiar to those who have paid attention to polls for the last few months but the fundamentals remain unchanged with the Conservatives largely uniting the Leave vote and the Remain vote split between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Given that the bleed to the Lib Dems among Labour voters is worst among those prioritising Brexit, Labour’s campaign launch wisely focused on domestic issues.

There are signs that tribal loyalty is reasserting itself with Labour leavers becoming much more sceptical of the deal but, compared to when the last election was called, we have not yet seen the return en masse to the big two parties.”

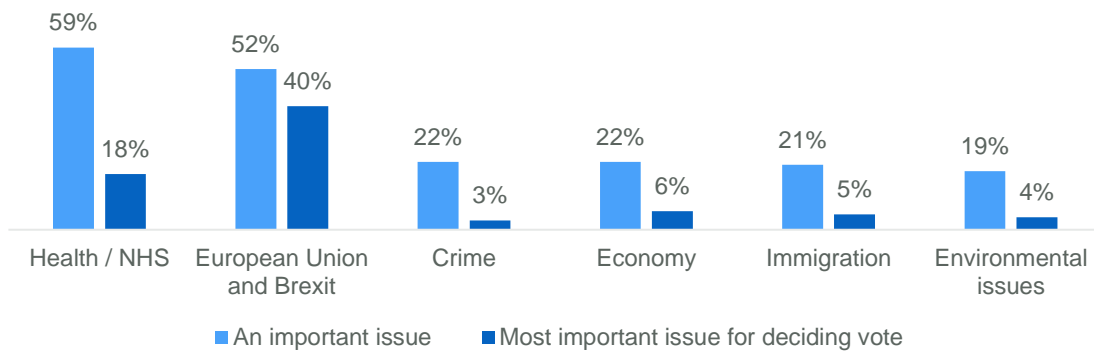
# How this election will be fought

## Johnson could have his Brexit election

The Conservatives want to make this the Brexit election, as they believe it's their best chance of winning over the range of Conservative and former Labour voters they need to secure a majority. With a whole 6 weeks to go, the early signs are that voters are preparing to vote based on Brexit.

Despite the voters saying that the NHS is a slightly more important issue than Brexit for the country (59% vs 52% respectively), when it comes to what they'll base their vote on 40% say Brexit will be the key decider compared to only 18% saying the same about health.

### Top issues facing the country

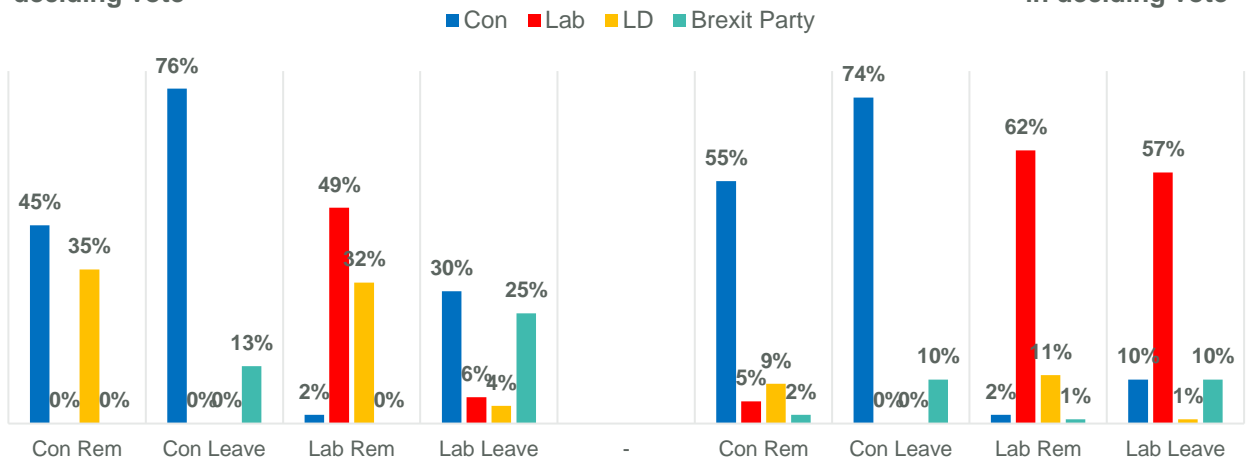


The chart below demonstrates how important it is for the Conservatives to keep Brexit top of the agenda at this election. Below we have divided up the four camps depending on whether or not Brexit is the key issue for them. If Brexit is not the main issue, the Labour coalition holds together relatively well. But if Labour voters focus on Brexit, many left-of-centre Remainers move to the Lib Dems while the Labour Leave vote fractures completely.

**Brexit key issue deciding vote**

### Voting intention by most important issue

**Other issue key in deciding vote**

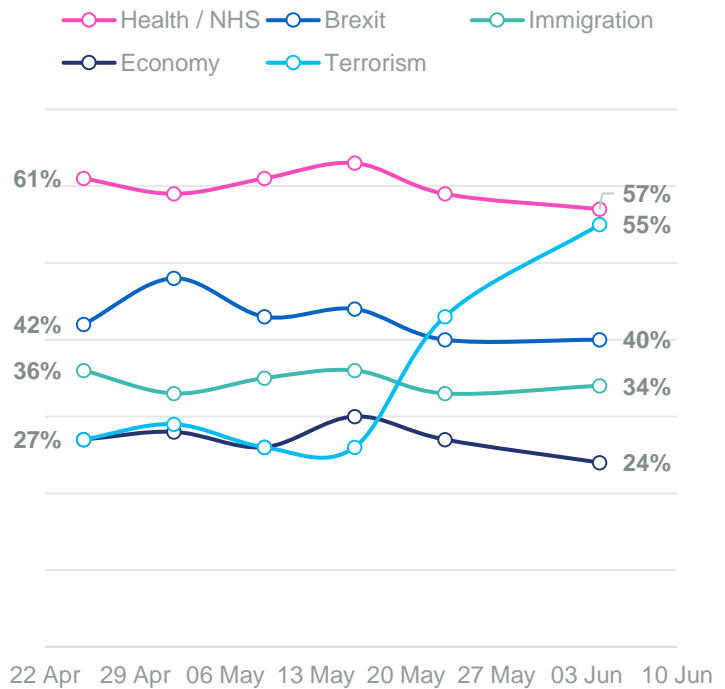


## The chance of a Brexit election is higher than 2017, but we are still at the mercy of events

The problem the Conservatives will face in keeping Brexit front and centre is that events can always collude to change the focus of the campaign. In particular, the last couple of weeks saw terrorist attacks that entirely changed the focus. Despite almost half (48%) saying that Brexit was one of the most important issues in the second week of the campaign, this fell back to 40% in our final poll.

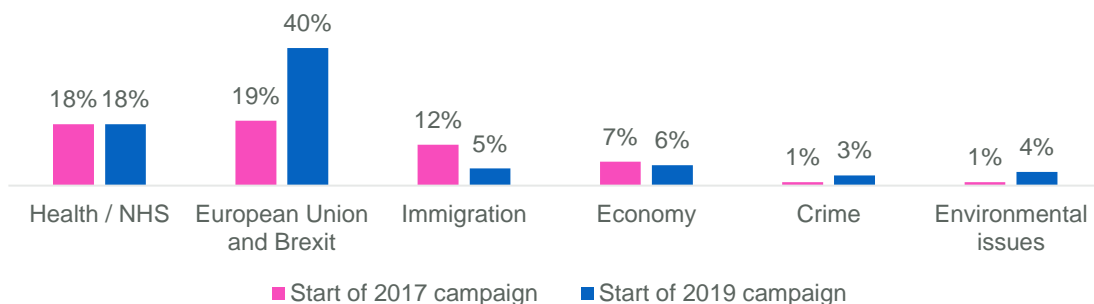
The positive news for the Conservatives, the proportion who say Brexit is an important issue is 10 points higher at the start of the 2019 campaign compared to the start of the 2017 campaign (52% vs 42% respectively). This has also broadly been sustained for a couple of months now anyway. But even if Mr Johnson is in a better position to fight an election on Brexit than Theresa May, nothing is guaranteed.

### Most important issues in GE2017



This is even more stark if you look at the same question at this stage around which issue would be the key one that is most likely to decide their vote. In 2017 only 19% said they were most likely to decide their vote primarily on Brexit, more or less the same proportion as those who were likely to base it on Labour’s preferred issue of the NHS (18%). However, in this campaign an extraordinary 40% say that are most likely to base their vote on Brexit. In short, the chance of this actually being a ‘Brexit election’ is much higher.

### Single issue that the public are most likely to base their vote on

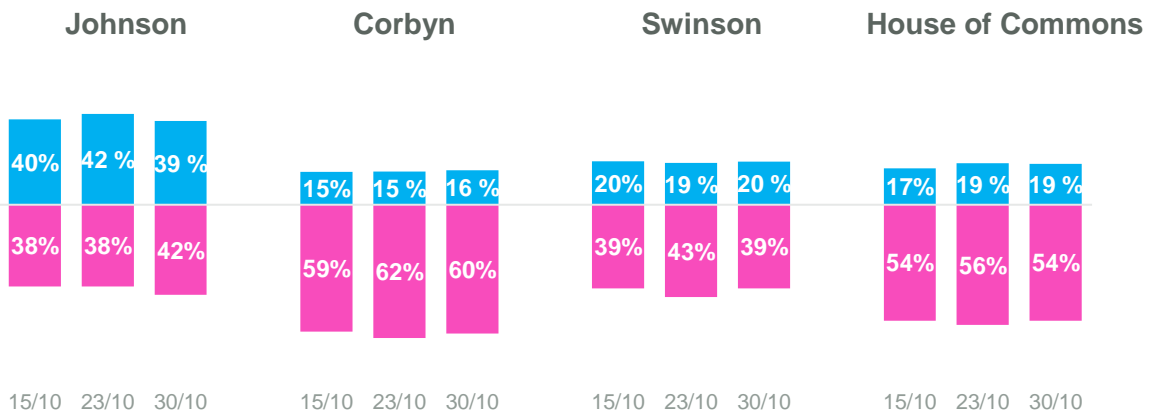


# Brexit and the 2019 general election

## Now the delay is clear, Boris remains on relatively steady Brexit ground

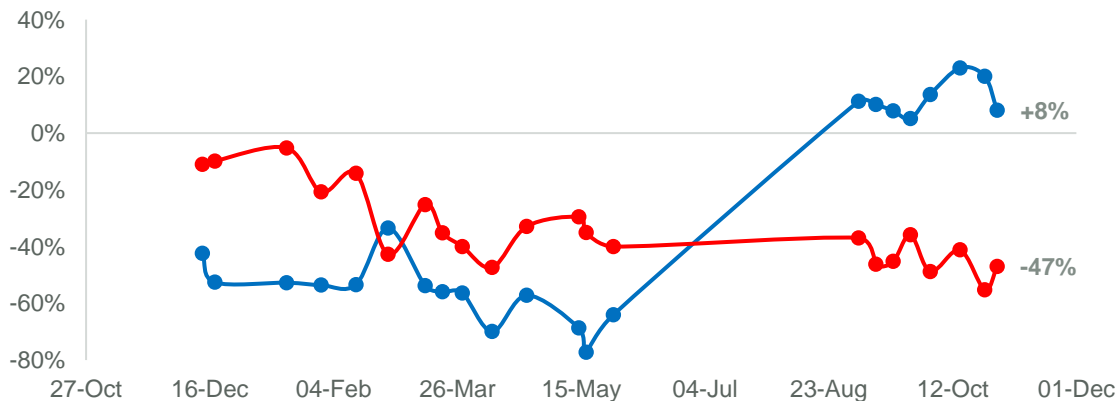
There has been speculation that a delay would seriously dent perceptions of Boris Johnson and his handling of Brexit, but appears that this is not the case. None of the leaders have seen a major shift in perception since last week or the week before, suggesting that the delay has done little to damage the prime minister or change perceptions of him relation to the other leaders.

### Approval of Brexit handling by date of poll



The particular swing group to pay attention to here are 2017 Labour voters who supported Leave in the EU Referendum. Boris needs to convince this group that he is a noticeably better option than Jeremy Corbyn and that it is important enough to switch sides. In this last week the delay has dented him more amongst this group (net approval has dropped from +20% to +8% in a week), but he remains in a noticeably better position than Theresa May was.

### NET Brexit approval of Prime Minister and Corbyn (2017 Labour voters who backed Leave)

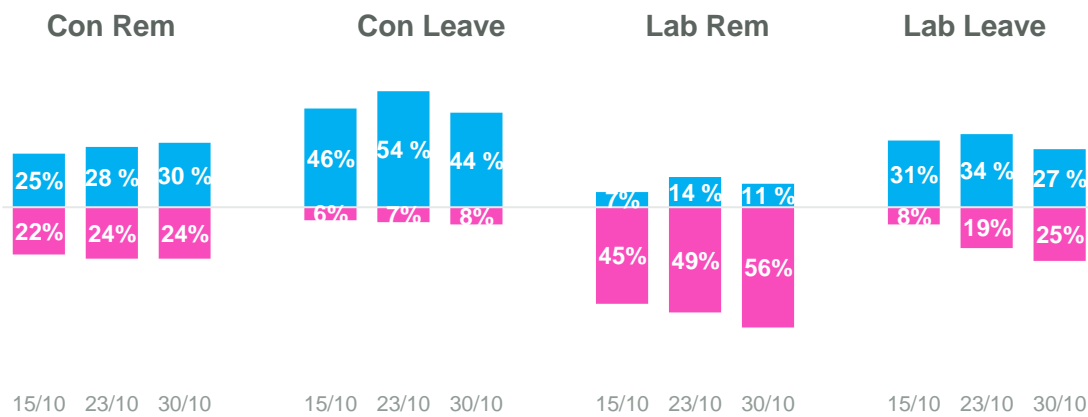




## The chances of the Brexit deal unravelling?

Even if Boris might be able to fight this election from a relatively safe standpoint on making it a Brexit election, one of the big dangers he faces is his Brexit deal unravelling over the course of the 6-week campaign. Amongst all four of our key party and Brexit groups, this week has seen the worst polling on perceptions of the deal.

Is Johnson's Brexit deal **good** or **bad**?



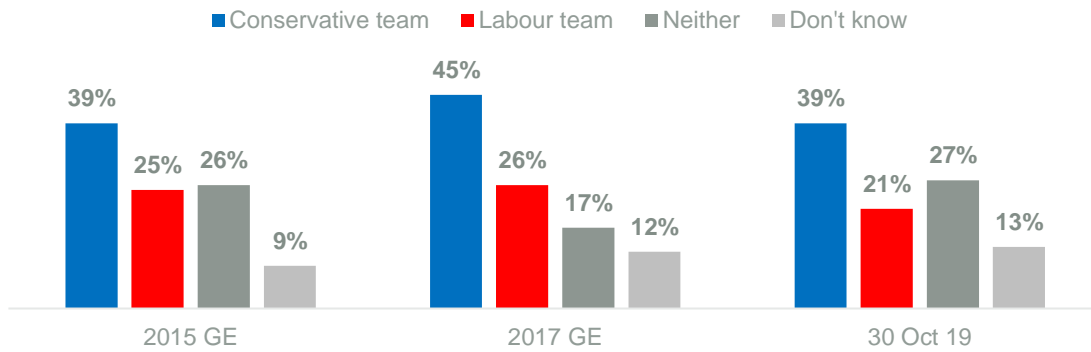
The particularly big danger is amongst Labour Leavers. A fortnight ago 31% of Labour Leavers thought it was a good deal, while only 8% thought it was a bad deal. Now the proportion who think it's good and bad are neck and neck (27% think it's good vs 25% who think it's bad). A further slip in this direction risks Boris Johnson's ability to cleave away some Labour votes in his direction.

# The other issues

## Perceptions of the Conservative stewardship of the economy similar to previous elections

Two in five (39%) trust Boris Johnson and Sajid Javid the most to handle the economy, while only a fifth (21%) trust Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell most. With an 18-point lead, this is only slightly lower than the 19-point lead that May and Hammond had in our final poll of the 2017 general election, and interestingly higher than the 14-point lead Cameron and Osborne had over Miliband and Balls in the 2015 general election.

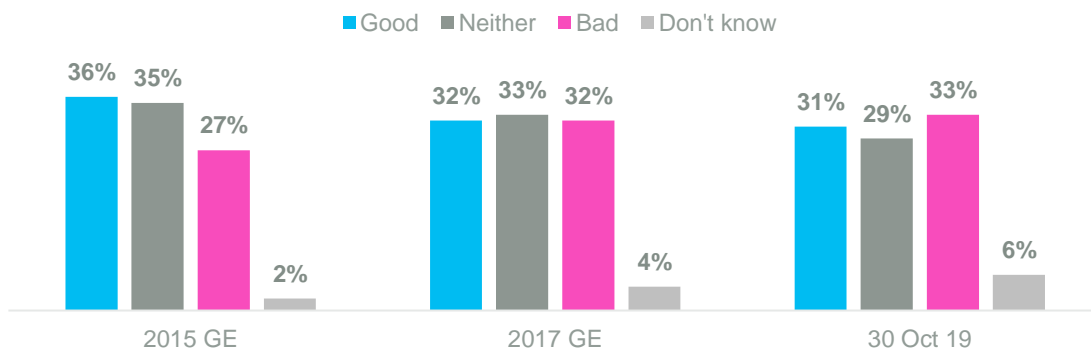
### Who do trust more to handle the economy?



However, one slight difference is the proportion who don't trust either of the two most likely economic teams to be heading the economy is higher than in previous elections. The proportion who either trust neither or don't know who they trust must is currently standing at 40%, higher than the 35% in 2015 and 29% in 2017.

In terms of the actual state of the economy, perceptions are relatively similar to 2017. Currently 31% think the economy is in a good state and 33% think it is in a bad state. However, the government went into the 2015 election with somewhat more positive perceptions of the economy.

### Views on the state of the economy



---

## Corbyn and Labour simply not seen as ready to form the next government

Only 24% can imagine Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister while only 26% think the Labour party is ready to form the next government. Three in five (59%) think Labour is not ready to form the next government, including almost two in five (38%) 2017 Labour voters.

This is noticeably worse than in our final poll of the 2017 general election, when 35% could imagine Corbyn as prime minister and 34% thought Labour was ready to form the next government.

## What voters are expecting

### Voters expecting a Tory win but on a knife-edge

With the coverage given to the recent large polls leads for the Conservatives, it might not be surprising that voters are expecting a Conservative win but a surprisingly muted one. Just over half (52%) are expecting a Conservative win, but 30% are actually expecting another minority Conservative government after December 12 while only a fifth (22%) are expecting an outright Tory win.

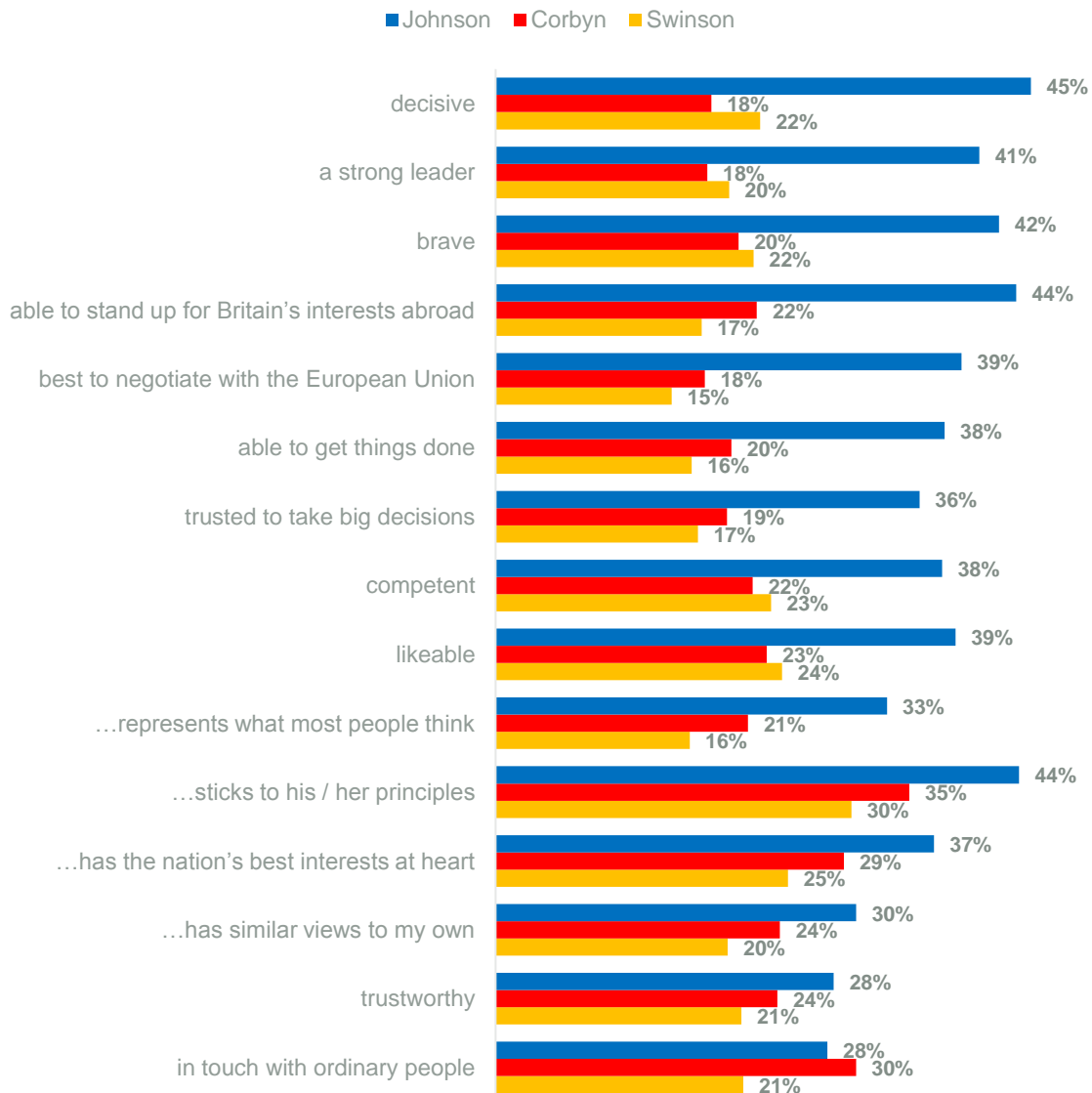
By comparison, in our final poll of the 2017 general election two thirds (68%) expecting a Conservative win, including 44% who thought there would be an outright Tory majority. In short, voters went into the 2017 election believing that no matter how they voted that they would wake up with a Conservative government. Here the expectation is that the result could be relatively tight once again and that their vote would be more likely to change the outcome.

# The leaders

## Boris Johnson performs better than Jeremy Corbyn on almost all leadership qualities

Unlike Theresa May, Boris Johnson has a clear lead on almost every leadership quality we test apart from being in touch with ordinary people. Even here, Jeremy Corbyn only has a lead of 2 points, whereas he had a lead of 19 points over Theresa May in our final poll of the 2017 general election.

### Whether each statement apply to each leader?



# 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.

[www.opinium.co.uk](http://www.opinium.co.uk) | [research@opinium.co.uk](mailto:research@opinium.co.uk) | 0207 566 3190