



What people think,
feel and do

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The Political Report

14th February 2020



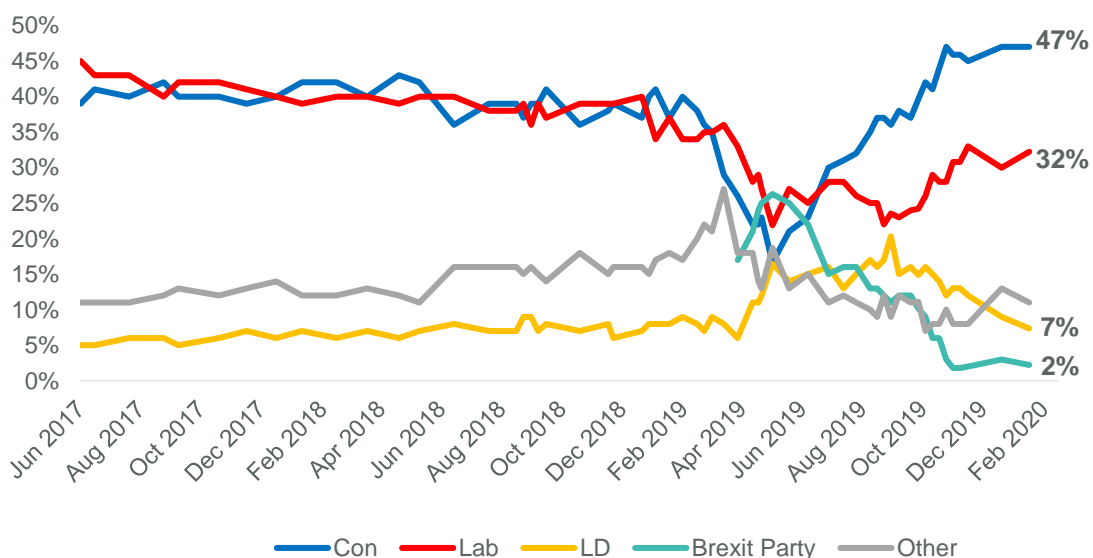
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

14th February 2020

One-minute takeaway

- The Conservative lead drops from 17 points to 15 points over the last month
- This is the result of Labour increasing two points to 32%
- 43% think Scotland should be allowed to hold another independence referendum, while 57% oppose this
- Almost half (47%) of the public think Scotland will be independent in the 50 years; only a third (34%) think Northern Ireland will join the Republic of Ireland in the same timeframe
- Public are more likely to oppose the idea of Scotland leaving the UK, and more likely to be neutral towards the idea of Northern Ireland leaving
- Long Bailey is perceived as the Corbyn continuity candidate, while Nandy and Starmer are seen to be more similar to the politics of Brown and Blair

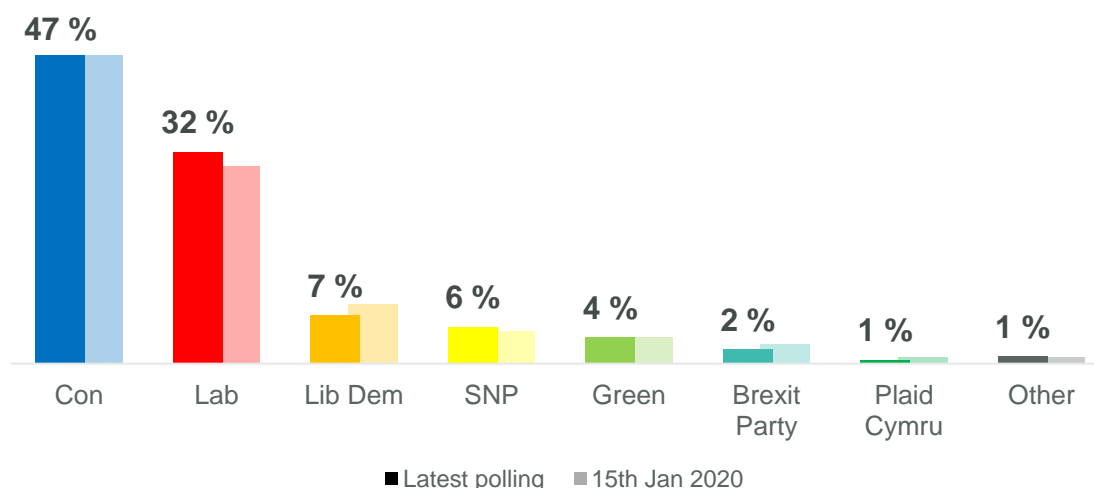
Voting intention since the 2017 general election



The state of the parties

A honeymoon period for the Conservatives

The Conservatives lead reduced from 17 points to 15 points over the last month.



This is the result of Labour increasing two points from 30% last month to 32% this month. Meanwhile, the Lib Dem vote share continues to fall, from 9% last month to its current 7%.

The Conservatives remain on 47% of the vote share.

The future of the United Kingdom

Nicola Sturgeon has called for a second Scottish independence referendum later this year in a vote at Holyrood. One of the arguments for those calling for a second referendum is that the circumstances have fundamentally changed since 2014 where one of the main arguments was that Scotland would have to leave the European Union if it became independent. Others argue that Scotland has now been ‘dragged out of the EU against its will’ given that voters in Scotland voted remain. Opponents to a second referendum argue that the 2014 vote was ‘one in a generation’ and settled the issue’ and that holding another one opens the door to a “neverendum” where the question gets repeated until Scotland eventually vote for independence.

Support for another independence referendum is fairly high amongst the UK public. While the majority (57%) think that Scotland should not hold another independence referendum, a sizable proportion think it should (43%).

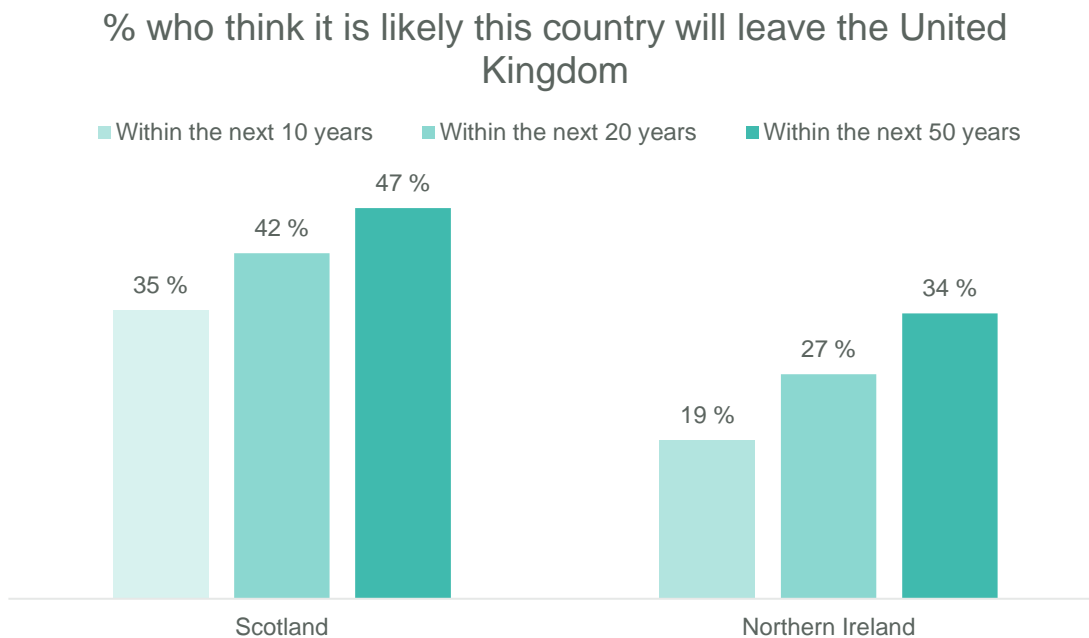
However, asked in a separate way, only 39% of the public think another referendum should not be held under any circumstance. 44% believe that if polls show a consistent majority in favour of independence then the UK government should allow another referendum on Scottish independence,

while 23% think pro-independence parties winning a majority in Scottish elections would be necessary.

Likelihood of future independence

Overall, there does appear to be a sentiment that Scotland is likely to become independent in the future. A third (35%) think it will be independent within the next 10 years, but this rises to almost half (47%) of the public thinking about the next 50 years. A further third (34%) think it might or might not.

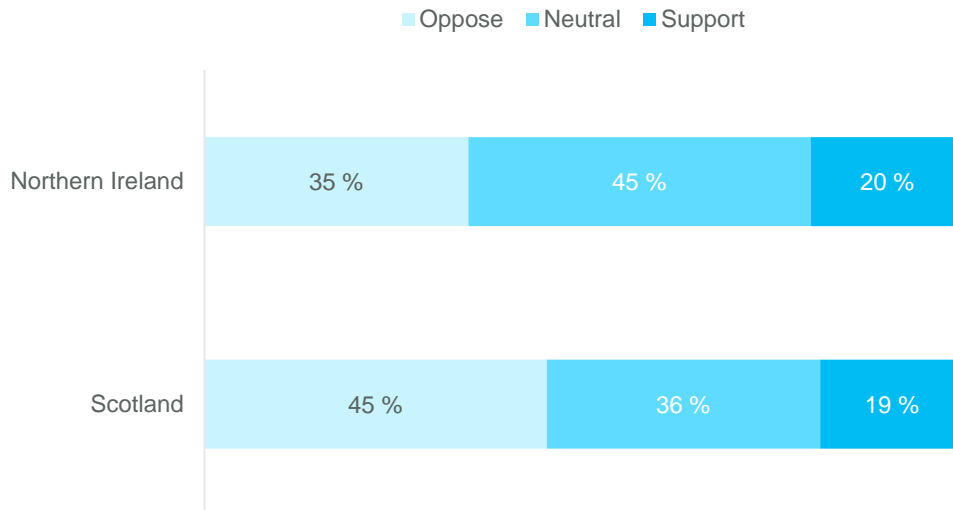
In comparison, the public are more sceptical of Northern Ireland leaving the UK and re-joining the Republic of Ireland. Only 19% think this will happen in the next 10 years, increasing to a third (34%) thinking this withing the next 50 years



Support for independence

When it comes to support for independence of these two countries, the public outside of Scotland are more likely to oppose the idea of Scotland leaving the UK, than those living outside of Northern Ireland opposing the prospect of Northern Ireland leaving the UK. In Northern Ireland's case, a sizable proportion of those living outside of Northern Ireland are neutral on the prospect of it joining the Republic of Ireland.

Views on the prospect of Northern Ireland and Scotland leaving the UK



Labour Leadership

Keir, there, and everywhere

Keir Starmer continues to lead the pack in the Labour Leadership race. When it comes to holding the Tories to account Starmer is the candidate that most believe is up to the job (20%). Just under a quarter (24%) say he would be most likely to win a general election.

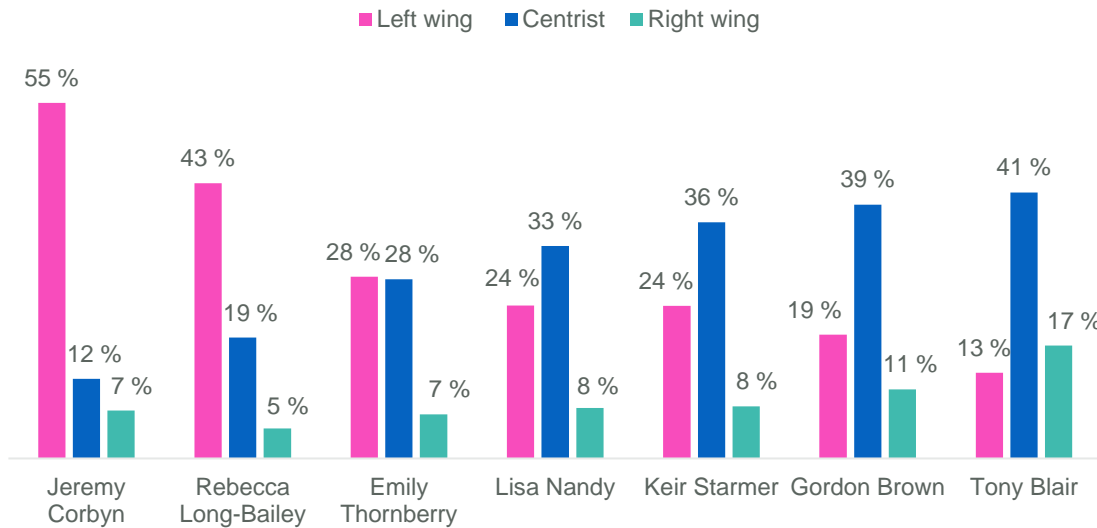
However, it's worth repeating it is still very early days. Perhaps the most interesting figure here is the 45% or so who say they don't know who would be best at holding the Conservative government to account. Getting the attention of voters over the next few months will be crucial.

Perceptions of the politics of the candidates

We asked the public to place different politicians on a 0-10 scale, with 0 being very left wing and 10 very right wing.

Long-Bailey is perceived by the public to be the Corbyn continuity candidate with 43% perceiving her to be left wing. On the other hand, Nandy and Starmer sit closer to perceptions of Brown and Blair, being more likely to be perceived as centrist (33% and 36% respectively)

Perceptions of the politics of candidates and past Labour leaders



Polling commentary

Adam Drummond, head of political polling at Opinium, commented: “Scotland’s place in the union has much more of an emotional hold on British voters than Northern Ireland’s. Despite the terms of the Brexit deal making a united Ireland significantly more feasible and the process of Scottish independence potentially significantly more difficult, more voters believe Scotland will have left the UK within the next 50 years than believe the same about Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, as all available evidence suggests that Keir Starmer has a commanding lead in the Labour leadership race, public perceptions of each candidate’s position on the left-right spectrum suggest the public see Starmer and Lisa Nandy as closer to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown while Rebecca Long-Bailey’s position as the continuity Corbyn candidate appears to be the main thing that has cut through about her.”



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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