



What people think,
feel and do

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

The Political Report

21st May 2020



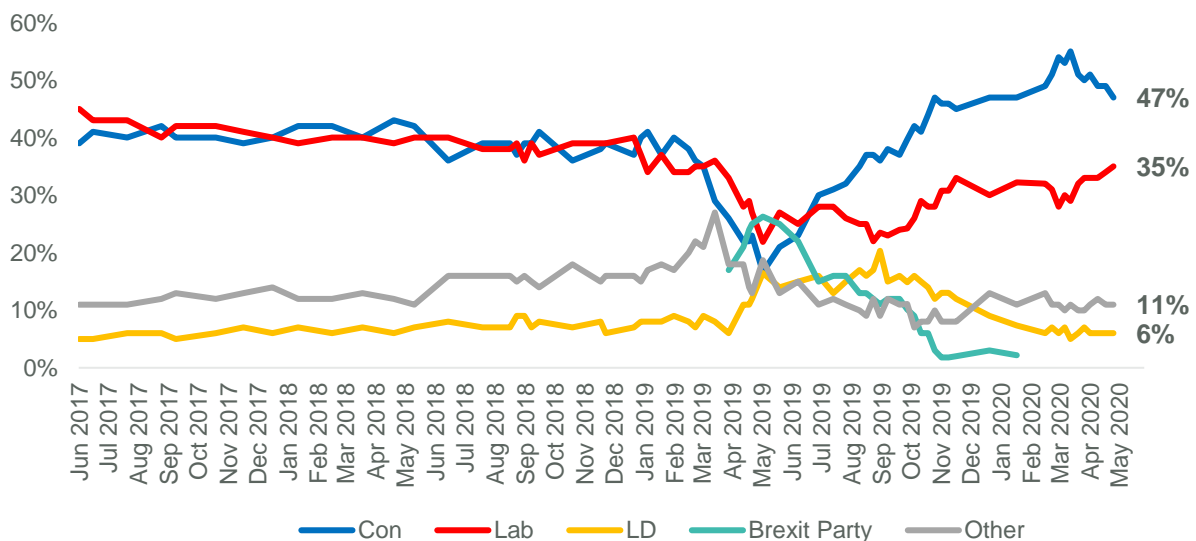
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

21st May 2020

One-minute takeaway

- Government approval on coronavirus remains broadly unchanged from last week’s 9 point plunge with confidence remaining similarly divided as well
- Starmer surges, the Labour leader’s net approval rating is now at +30% vs. +6% for Boris Johnson. The difference comes mainly from Starmer converting the undecided and from him attracting far less disapproval from Conservative voters than Johnson does from Labour voters.
- The United States remains the only country seen to have handled the coronavirus outbreak worse than the UK although views of how Sweden has handled things have become slightly more negative in light of a higher rate of infection there
- Parents are most likely to feel anxious about the prospects of schools reopening with 43% of primary school parents and 54% of secondary school parents citing this. Opinions are mixed on whether parents would feel comfortable sending their children back even if social distancing were a possibility in schools.
- Barely a third (36%) of British adults expect to be able to take a holiday abroad before June 2021. 28% are more likely to take a holiday in the UK
- Most in England think the country should have the same lockdown rules rather than regional variations in England in line with how the virus has progressed

Voting intention since the 2017 general election

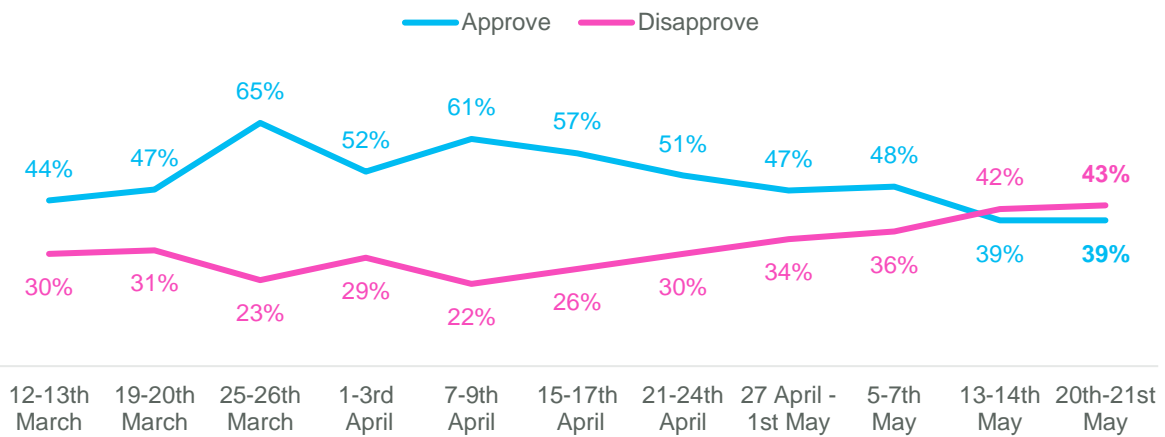


The government's crisis response

Net approval of the government's handling of the crisis remains negative

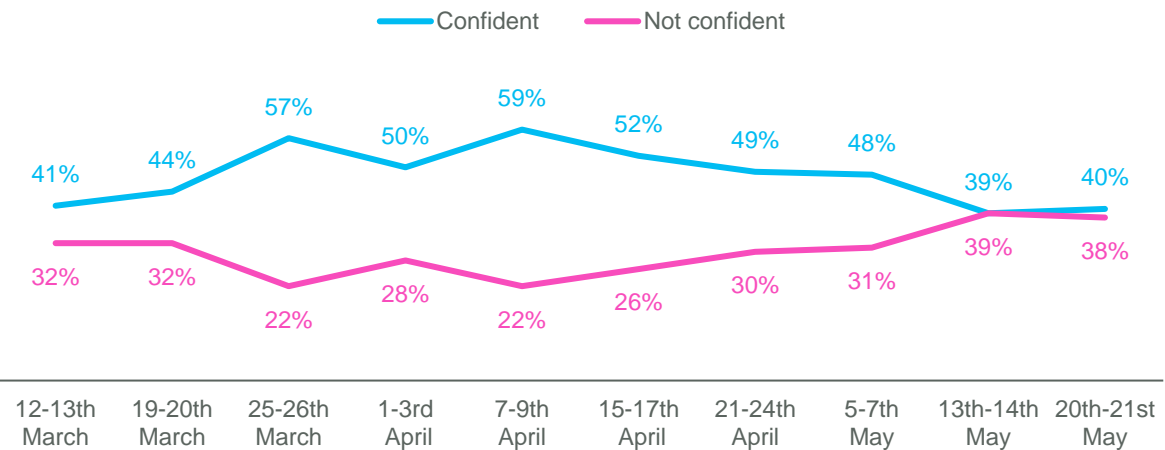
Last week saw approval of the government's handling of the situation has plummet 9 points, resulting in a net approval dropping from +11% to -3%. One week on, and approval remains static at 39%, whilst disapproval has increased 1 point to 43%.

Approval of government's handling of the crisis



Confidence in the government's ability to handle the crisis has also remained steady since it declined last week.

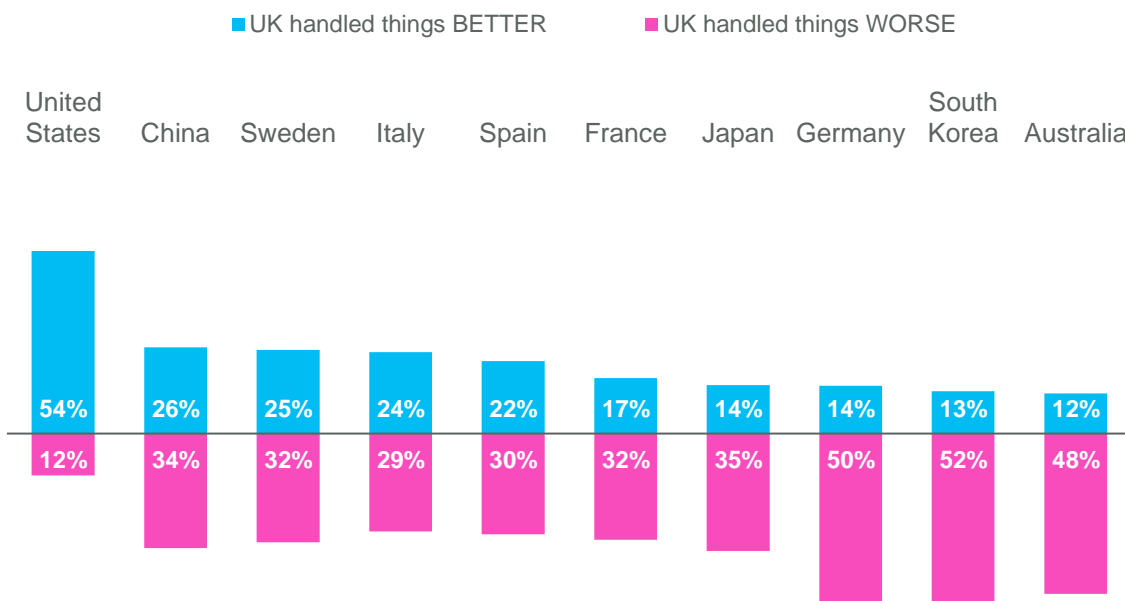
Confidence in the government's ability to handle the Coronavirus situation



International comparisons

We have been tracking how the British public think the government has handled the Coronavirus pandemic in comparison to other countries around the world. In our latest wave, we still see the UK being rated as responding worse than all other countries, with the exclusion of the US.

International comparisons in response to the Coronavirus pandemic (21st May)



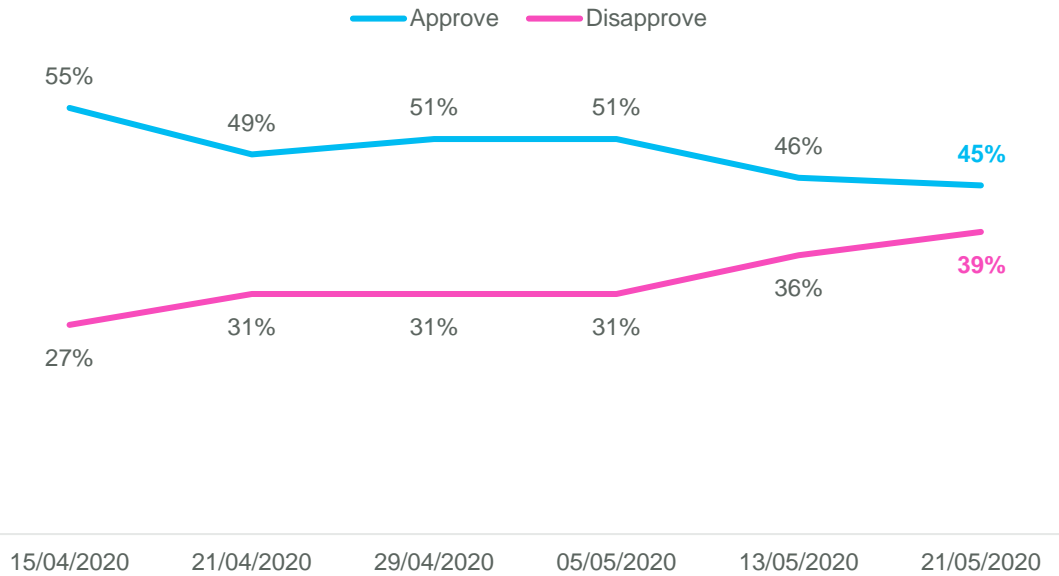
In comparison to our last wave, in many cases voters haven't changed their minds significantly about whether the UK has handled the crisis better or worse than other countries. Having said this, there is a 5 point increase in the belief that we've done better than Sweden. On the other hand, this in turn is somewhat balanced out by a 4 point increase in the belief we've performed worse than Australia and, a little closer to home, 3 point increase in believing we've done worse than France.

Starmer overtakes Johnson

Johnson's net approval rating remains positive but narrows while Keir Starmer surges past

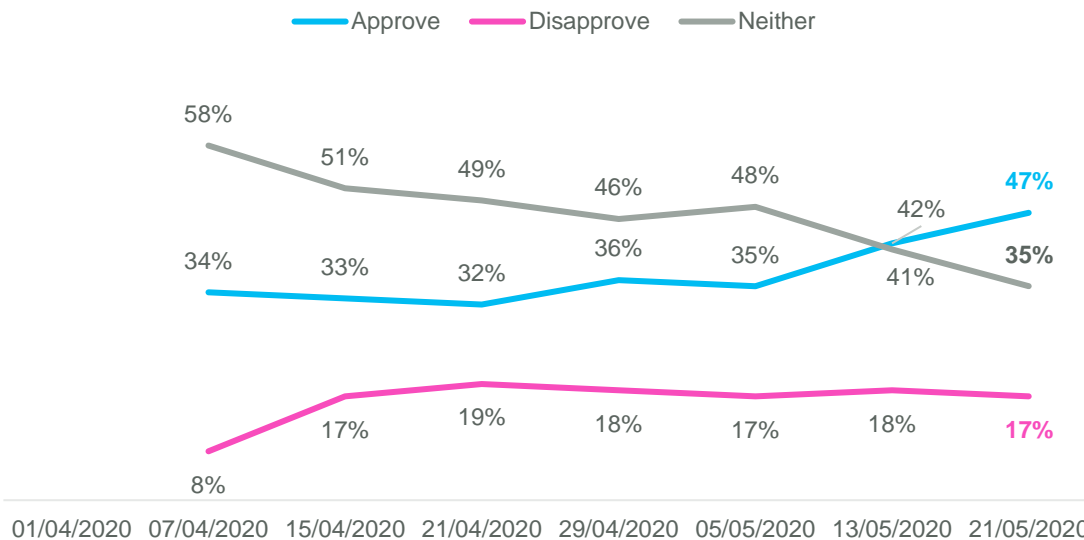
The trend of Boris Johnson's approval rating noticed last week has continued with his net approval rating (the % who approve minus the % who disapprove) shrinking from +10% to +6% compared to his post-hospital high of +28%.

Boris Johnson's approval rating since leaving hospital



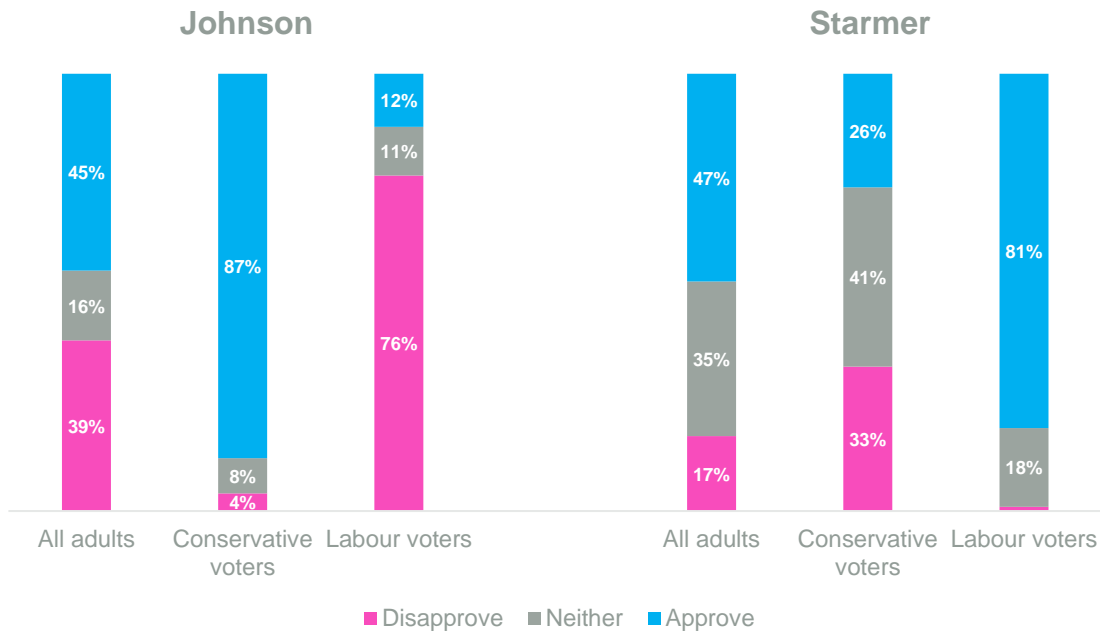
The same trend seen in Keir Starmer's approval rating last week has also continued. While the Labour leader naturally started his tenure with a majority holding their judgement, since the beginning of May, those who have been making up their minds about him have moved uniformly in the positive direction. Starmer's net rating now sits at +30%. After overtaking the prime minister on net approval last week, Starmer has now overtaken Johnson on raw approval as well.

Keir Starmer's approval rating since becoming Labour leader



Breaking down the two men's approval rating by party, we can see that Boris Johnson, as a much more well known figure, also draws a more polarised response with few Labour voters expressing admiration but few Conservatives expressing dissent. Starmer, in contrast, has the same level of

uniform approval among supporters of his party but draws far less opposition from Conservative voters.

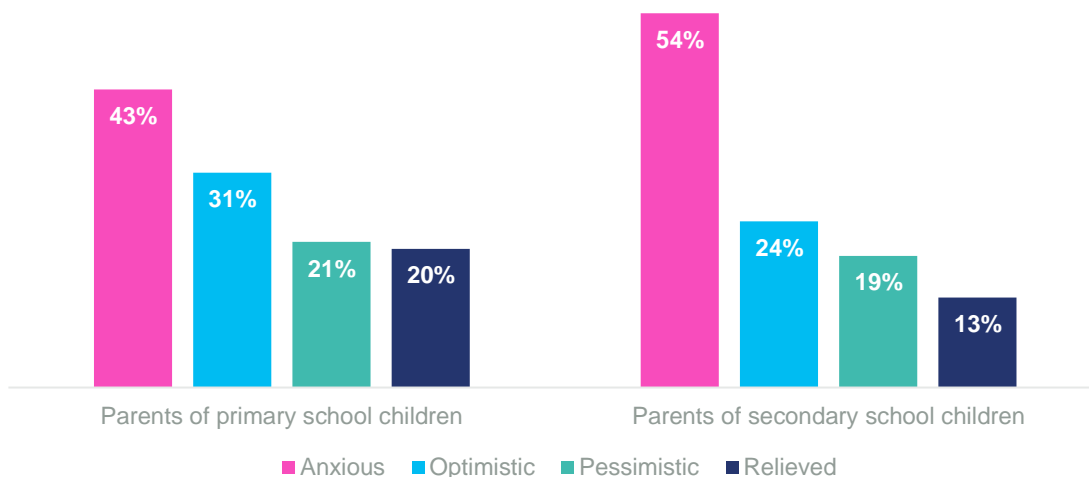


Back to school

Re-opening schools induces mixed emotions in parents

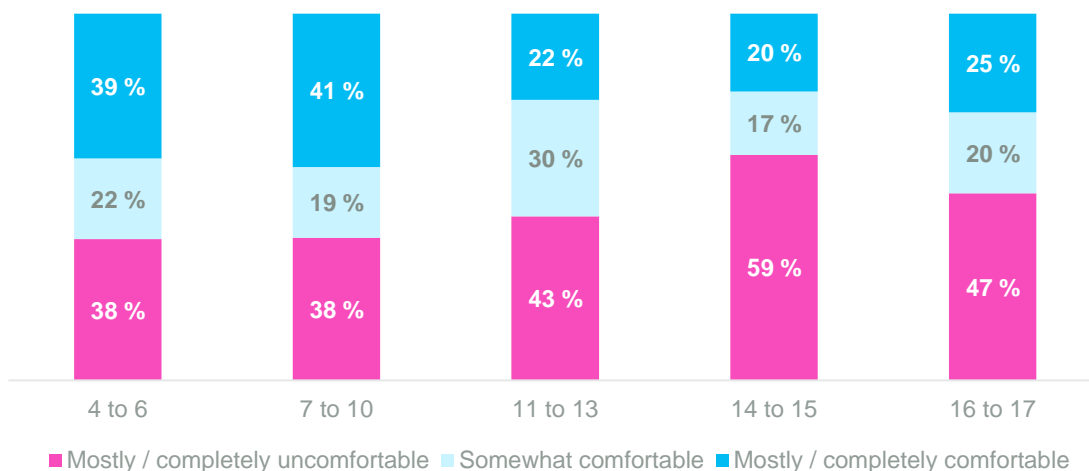
We asked parents of primary and secondary school aged children how they would feel if it were announced that their schools would re-open.

If it were announced that schools were going to re-open, how would this make you feel?



For both ages of child, the most common answer is a feeling of anxiety with very few feeling relieved. However, the gap between primary and secondary school aged children, with feelings of anxiety far higher for the latter, suggests that parents are finding older children slightly easier to look after as well as residual feelings that younger children are less likely to contract coronavirus than adults.

Would you be comfortable or uncomfortable sending your child in this age category back to school if it were announced that schools were re-opening with some social distancing measures in place?



Putting aside for a moment the practicality of whether schools can re-open while still implementing social distancing, if we add that caveat, parents' response to whether they would be comfortable sending their children back is still varied. This used a five point scale where the mid point was

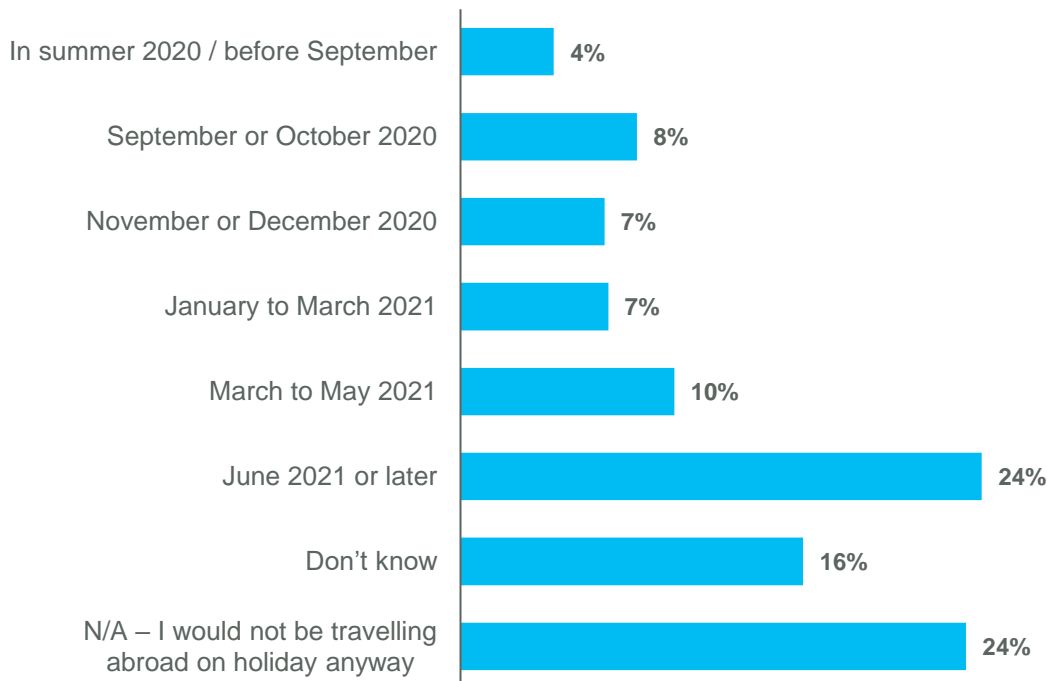
“somewhat comfortable”, We can see that parents of primary school children would be the most comfortable while those with children aged over 13 are clearly the most uncomfortable.

Holidays

In line with public reticence to lift certain elements of lockdown, many don't expect to be able to take a holiday abroad until next year

Only 19% believe that they will be able to go on holiday abroad this year, with only 7% thinking they would be able to in Q1 and 10% in Q2.

When do you next expect to be able to take a holiday abroad?



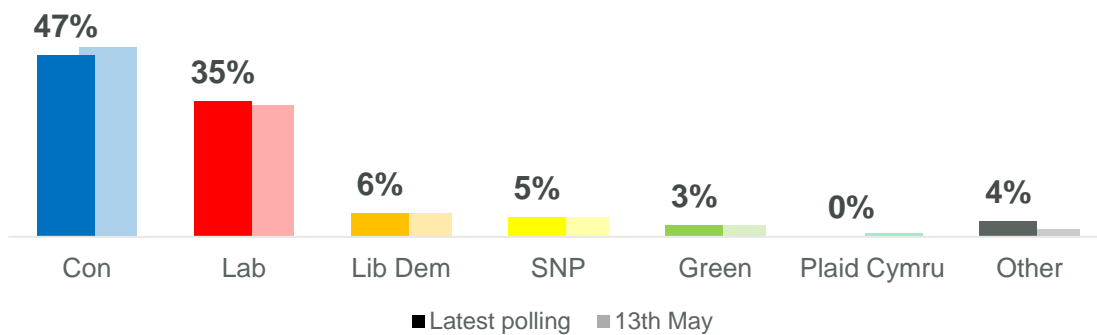
When it comes to staycations, the pandemic has split the nations views, with 28% saying they would be more likely to take a holiday elsewhere in the UK and 20% saying it has made them less likely to.

For workers, use of annual leave is earmarked for holidays in the UK (33%), extended time off at home e.g. a week or more (26%) or the occasional day off at home (23%).

Headline voting intention

Conservatives maintain strong lead in the polls

The Conservative lead over Labour has dropped from 15 points to 12 points which is the same gap between the two parties seen in the 2019 general election. This is down to Labour gaining a point while the Conservatives drop two with other parties remaining largely unchanged.



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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