



What people think,
feel and do

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The Political Report

26th August 2020



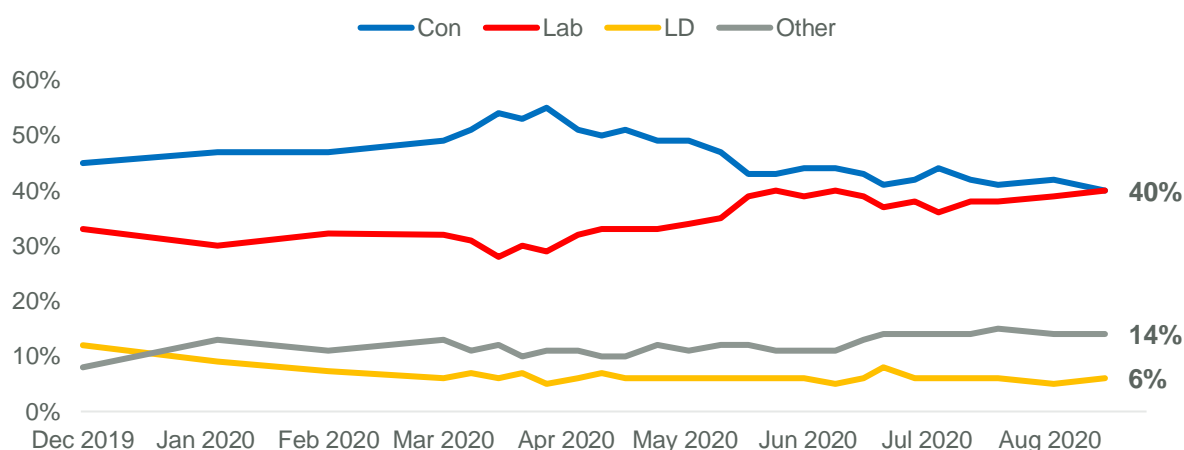
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

26th August 2020

One-minute takeaway

- Labour and Tories neck and neck at 40% each
- The government is still seen to be handling the coronavirus poorly with 47% disapproving and 31% approving.
- Johnson's net approval rating remains negative and Starmer's positive but the percentage approving of the Labour leader falls to 38%, the lowest since early May.
- The majority of parents with school-aged children think the reopening in September is safe; 63% believe it is safe to reopen primaries and 60% say the same about secondaries.
- 48% disapprove of the way Gavin Williamson is handling his job and 40% say he is most responsible for the exams debacle.
- 36% say the BBC's decision to have an instrumental performance of Land of Hope and Glory and Rule Britannia is bad, whereas 26% say it is a good decision.

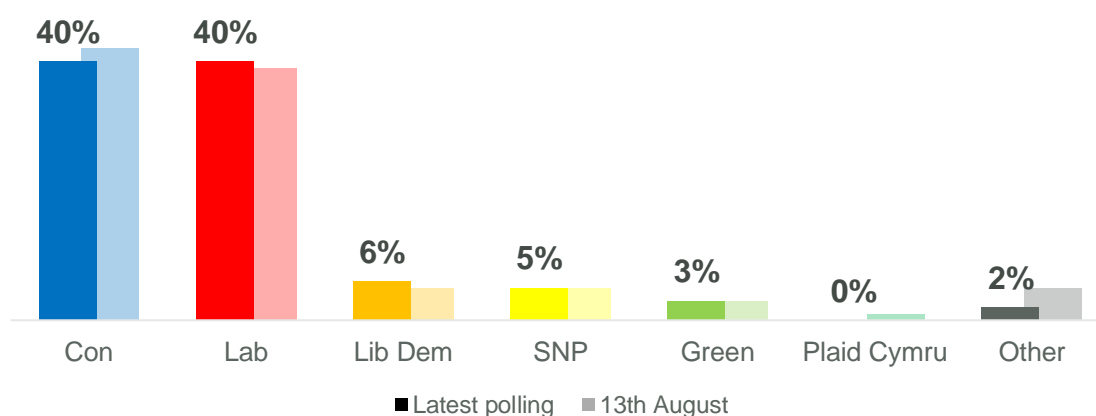
Voting intention since the 2019 general election



Headline voting intention

Labour and Tories neck and neck

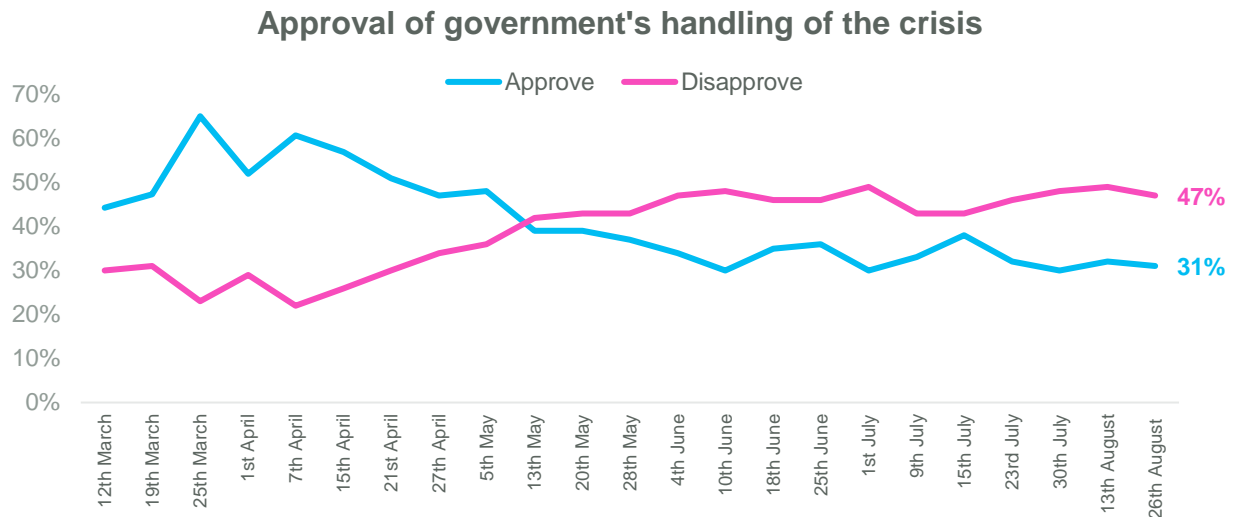
The two main parties are now neck and neck as the Tories see their vote share fall two points in the last week with Labour gaining a percentage point.



Although we've seen very close figures between the two parties for some time now this is the first time we've seen them on exactly the same vote share since both main parties were in freefall around mid 2019.

Covid-19 crisis

Net approval remains negative



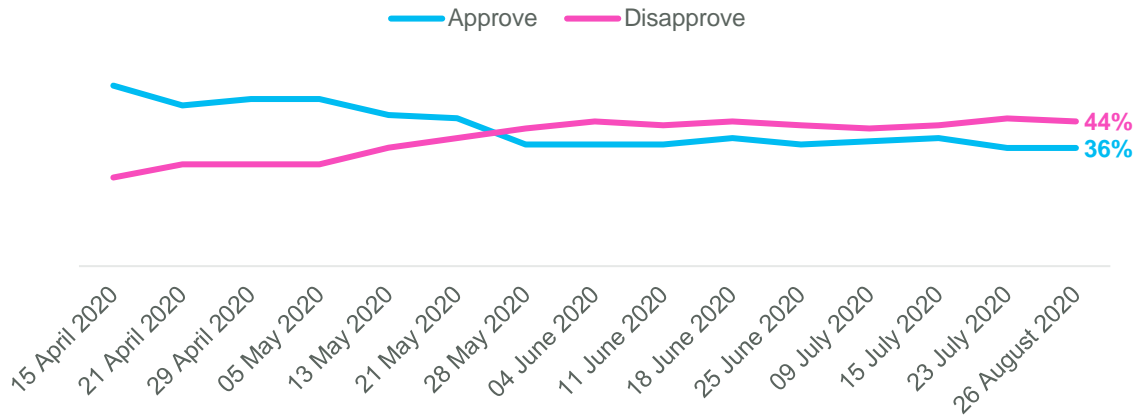
The number of people disapproving has fallen two percentage points this week but with approval also falling by a percentage point, net approval remains negative.

Leadership ratings

Johnson's net approval ratings remain in the negative

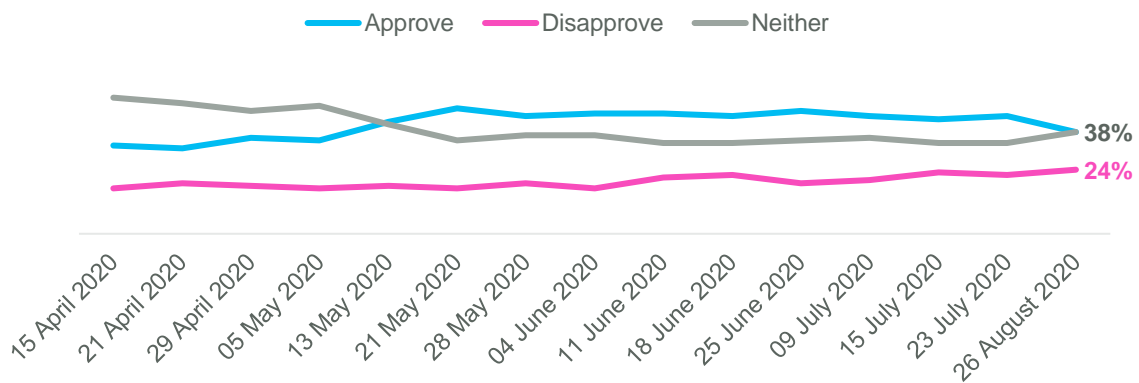
Much as approval for the government's handling of the virus, Boris Johnson's personal approval rating remains underwater with 36% approving and 44% disapproving. That said his net rating has risen ever so slightly from -9 to -8.

Boris Johnson's approval rating since leaving hospital



Although Starmer’s net approval (+14) remains much stronger than Johnson’s his approval has slipped to it’s lowest since early May at 38%. Those who neither approve nor disapprove has risen to the same figure (38%).

Keir Starmer's approval rating since becoming Labour leader



On the question of who would be the best prime minister, Johnson and Starmer remain close with 34% choosing the incumbent, 32% choosing the Labour leader and 16% answering “none of these”.

Reopening of schools

Majority of parents think it is safe to reopen schools

When asked about how safe they think it is to reopen schools in September the majority of the parents with school age children believe it is safe to do.

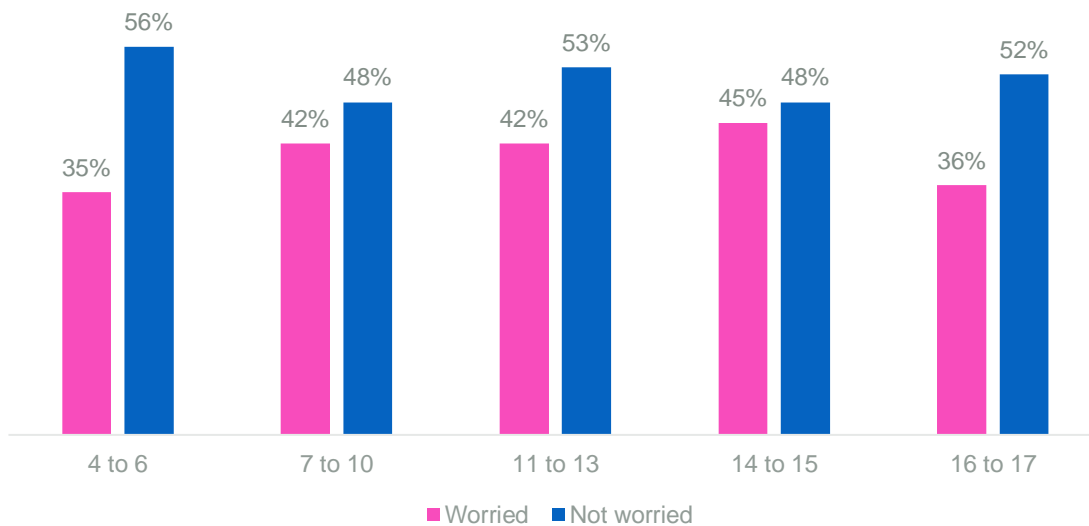
Two-thirds (63%) think it is safe to reopen primary schools in September, with 30% thinking it's unsafe. Meanwhile, 60% think it is safe to open secondary schools in September with 33% thinking it is unsafe.

Many children are worried about returning

Although most parents feel it is safe to reopen, many say that their children are worried about returning to school.

Looking, at different age groups, the most worried are those aged 14-15 where 45% of parents with children in this age group say their child is worried, compared to 48% who say they are not.

Worry among children about returning to school, according to parents



Over half, 52% of the British public support making face masks compulsory for children in school with 22% neither supporting nor opposing and 19% opposing.

Almost half disapprove of Gavin Williamson's handling of his job

Almost half, 48%, say they disapprove of the way Gavin Williamson is handling his job as Education Secretary with only 17% approving. Indeed when asked who they think is most responsible for the exam grading controversy, 40% said Gavin Williamson vs. 29% saying the regulator Ofqual and 10% blaming the teachers predicting the original grades.

On a related note, 39% disapprove of the way the government is handling the return to school, whilst 32% approve.

A song and dance about it

A major talking point this week surrounded the discussions within the BBC around whether or not to play 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'Rule Britannia' as part of the annual Proms.

The British public are very split between how strongly they feel about this topic; two in five (42%) say the topic is important to them, while a similar amount (44%) say it is not. This broadly reflects the fact that there are many people that have never watched the Last Night of the Proms (42%), and although 58% have watched it before, only 12% watch it religiously each year, and a further 19% watch it almost every year. On the other hand, over a quarter (27%) only sometimes watch it.

Half are comfortable with the singing of Land of Hope and Glory and Rule Britannia

Half of the British public (51%) say they are comfortable with the singing of both songs at the Last night of the Proms. This is compared to 14% who are uncomfortable and 23% who don't feel strongly either way. On that note, 62% think they should still be included as part of the programme, with 20% unsure and only 17% saying it should be removed.

Indeed, of the 17% who say it should be removed, 41% say it is not important to them that it is removed, whereas of those who think it should be included 78% say it is of importance to them.

Division on the merits of playing an instrumental version

On deciding to play an instrumental version this year, in response to the restrictions that Coronavirus places on singing, 26% say doing so is a good idea. This is compared to 36% who say it is a bad idea. A quarter (23%) say it is neither good nor bad.

Johnson's response more divisive than Starmer's but more popular

Both Johnson and Starmer issued statements in response to the controversy. Johnson's statement was more divisive; 53% agreed with him whilst 21% disagreed. On the other hand, 55% agreed with Starmer but only 9% disagreed with 22% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

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However, when asked to directly compare the two statements, 41% said they agreed with Johnson's more whilst 28% said the same about Starmer.

Only 39% felt that the issue warranted a statement from leading politicians vs. 43% who did not and 18% answering 'don't know'.

About Opinium

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