



What people think,  
feel and do

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# The Political Report

## 9th September 2020



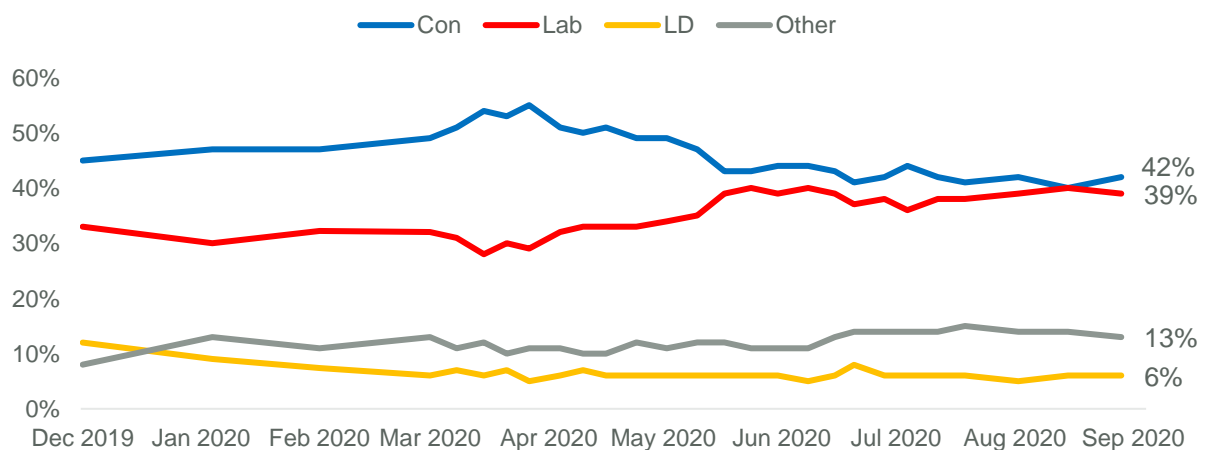
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

11th September 2020

## One-minute takeaway

- The Conservatives lead returns to three points, 42% to 39% for Labour. Boris Johnson's approval rating remains negative (net rating of -7% compared to -8% in late August) while Keir Starmer has recovered from his temporary dip, returning to +20% approval.
- "Health / NHS" remains the most important issue (59%) but "European Union and Brexit" has risen from 39% in August to 46% now, overtaking the "Economy" which is on 45%.
- The proportion saying the UK is coming out of lockdown too fast has risen from 45% to 51% while the proportion saying "at the right speed" has dropped from 31% to 24%.
- 81% expect a second outbreak of coronavirus later on this year vs. 12% saying it is unlikely. 66% support the "rule of six" restrictions coming into play on the 14<sup>th</sup> September
- 42% disapprove of the way Boris Johnson is handling Brexit and 32% approve. Keir Starmer's numbers are neutral with 28% approving and 26% disapproving with 32% neutral
- 33% say that the government's proposal to breach international law is acceptable vs. 46% saying it is unacceptable. Among Leave voters, 45% say "acceptable" and 31% "unacceptable".
- 52% believe the UK is likely to leave the transition period without a trade deal. 50% believe this would be bad for the economy but only 27% believe it would be bad for their personal financial situation

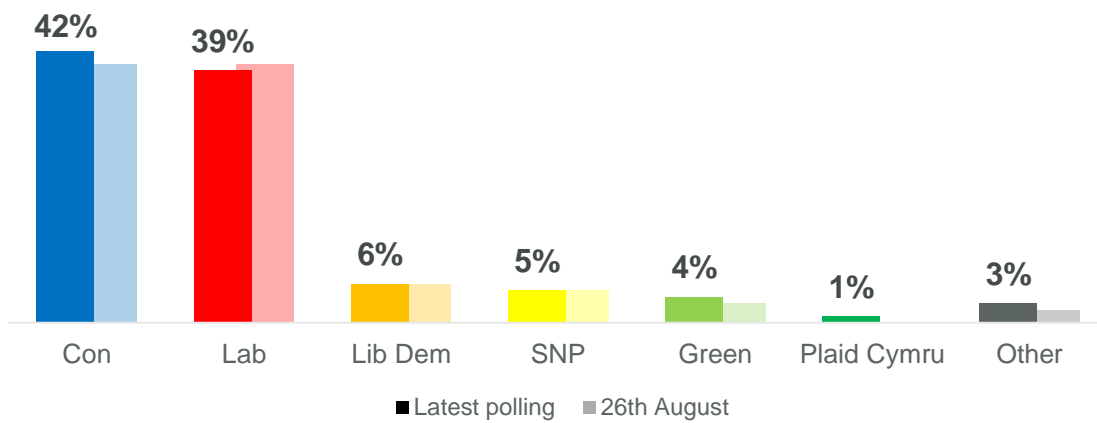
### Voting intention since the 2019 general election



# Headline voting intention

## The Tory lead returns

The Conservatives have a 3 point lead after the two parties were tied in the last poll on 40%. Given natural sample variation, this suggests that the “true” figure remains a tiny Conservative lead with poll results coming in within a confidence interval of that.

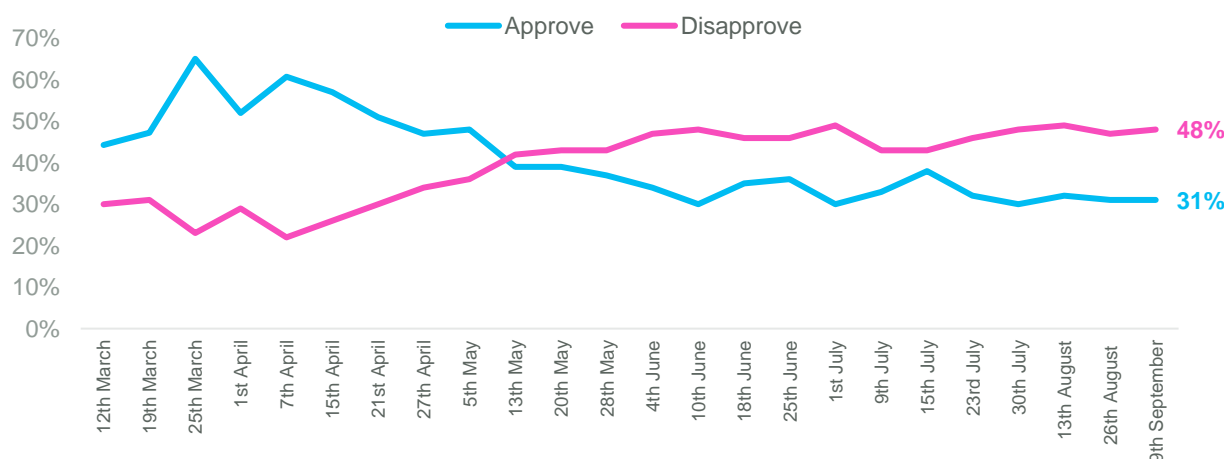


The Lib Dems remain becalmed on 6% while the Greens have risen to 4%.

# Covid-19 crisis

## Net approval remains negative and static

Approval of government's handling of the crisis



Approval/disapproval remains static with a net rating of -17%.

## Riding that second wave

As the R-rate climbs back above 1, 51% believe we are coming out of lockdown too fast, up from 45% in August. The proportion saying we are coming out at the right speed has dropped from 31% to 24% over the same period.

81% of UK adults say it is quite likely (41%) or very likely (40%) that there will be a second outbreak of coronavirus later on this year vs. just 12% saying it is unlikely. This is uniform across party supporters and only varies slightly by age group with 19% of 18-34s saying it is unlikely vs. just 6% of those aged 65+.

## The joy of six

In the latest iteration of a consistent trend throughout the coronavirus crisis of Britons supporting any and all lockdown measures, 66% say that they support the change in the law to make gatherings of more than 6 people illegal from the 14<sup>th</sup> of September.

This is highest among Conservative voters (79%) and even among Remainers and Leavers (74% and 72% respectively).

The only age group even close to being opposed are again 18-34 year olds where 49% support it, 20% oppose it and 22% are neutral.

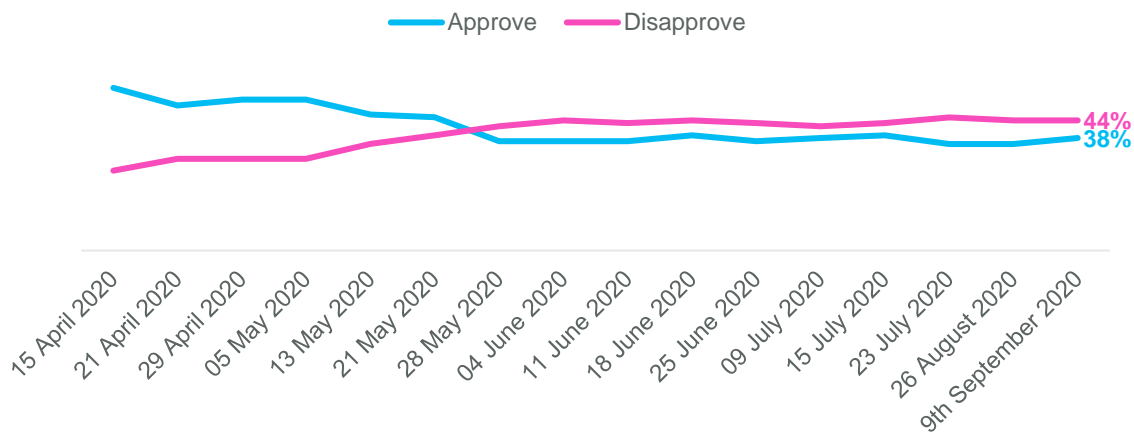
56% say the guidance on this is clear vs. 38% saying it is unclear.

# Leadership ratings

## Starmer recovers while Johnson stays still

Boris Johnson's approval rating remains statistically unchanged with a net rating of -7%, up from -8% last time. *To be tediously technical, while 38% minus 44% is -6%, the actual figures are 37.78% approve vs. 44.35% disapprove, giving us -6.57%*

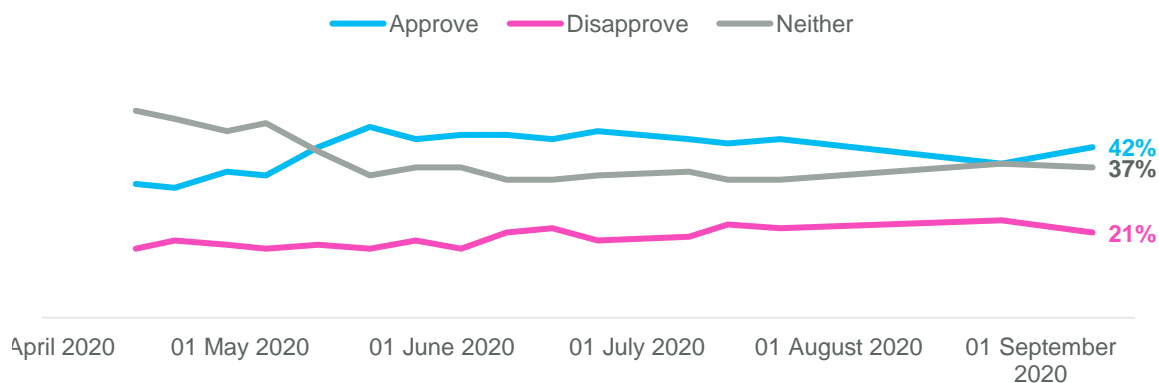
**Boris Johnson's approval rating since leaving hospital**



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 has recovered from his momentary dip in our last poll in which his approval rating dropped below 40% for the first time since April. The Labour leader's net rating is +20%.

**Keir Starmer's approval rating since becoming Labour leader**



On the question of who would be the best prime minister, Johnson and Starmer remain, again, close with 33% choosing the incumbent, 32% choosing the Labour leader and 21% answering “none of these”.

## Brexit returns

### Leave voters split on whether it's acceptable to break international law

Among all adults, 33% say that the UK reneging on commitments made in the withdrawal agreement would be acceptable while 46% say it would be unacceptable. While Leave voters are more likely to approve than disapprove, they are split with 45% saying ‘acceptable’ and 31% saying ‘unacceptable’. The exact text of what was shown to participants is below:

*The UK and EU signed a "withdrawal agreement" treaty which committed both sides to certain obligations. By doing so, these things became international law.*

*The UK government now wants to change some things in that treaty by passing a UK law that would contradict the treaty they signed.*

*This would make any divergence from the treaty legal under UK law but illegal under international law. Is this generally acceptable or unacceptable to you?*

### 44% say stay with Europe, 40% say sail away

In an update of our “preferred Brexit outcomes” question, the options have changed from “remain in the EU”, “supportive of a Brexit where the UK is closely aligned with the EU” and “supportive of a Brexit where there is a clear break from the EU” to the following options.

These were shown as a “which would you prefer” question first. We then asked those who **did not select** each option whether that would be acceptable or unacceptable to them.

OUTCOME	% SAYING THIS IS THEIR PREFERRED OUTCOME	% OF THOSE NOT PREFERRING IT WHO WOULD FIND IT ACCEPTABLE	TOTAL WHO PREFER IT OR FIND IT ACCEPTABLE
Asking to re-join the EU	27%	30%	48%
A trade deal where the UK is closely aligned with the EU	17%	51%	59%

A trade deal where the UK has a clear break from the EU	26%	39%	55%
Ending the transition period without a trade deal	15%	32%	42%
Don't know	16%	-	

Overall, leaving the transition period without a trade deal was the least acceptable option with 42% of UK adults preferring it or finding it acceptable. Only 15% chose it as their first choice. Re-joining the EU, while the most popular first preference, is only the third most popular final option as most who did not choose it find it unacceptable.

A trade deal where the UK remains closely aligned with the EU is the most popular and most acceptable option, followed by a trade deal where the UK has a clear break from the EU.

## Mixed views on what to do if there is no deal by December but a clear view of what Johnson wants

When asked what should happen if December 31<sup>st</sup> comes around and no deal has been reached, the most popular individual answer is to leave without a deal (34%), followed by cancelling Brexit and requesting to re-join the EU (27%) and extending the transition period (24%).

We then asked what people think individual leaders want to happen in this situation:

	WHAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN?	WHAT DO YOU THINK BORIS JOHNSON WANTS TO HAPPEN?	WHAT DO YOU THINK KEIR STARMER WANTS TO HAPPEN?
Leave the single market and customs union on December 31 <sup>st</sup> even if it means leaving with no trade deal	34%	60%	7%
Extend the transition period until we can negotiate a deal that is acceptable to both sides	25%	17%	39%
Cancel Brexit and request to re-join the European Union after all	27%	5%	23%





# About Opinium

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