



What people think,  
feel and do

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## The Political Report

# 23rd September 2020



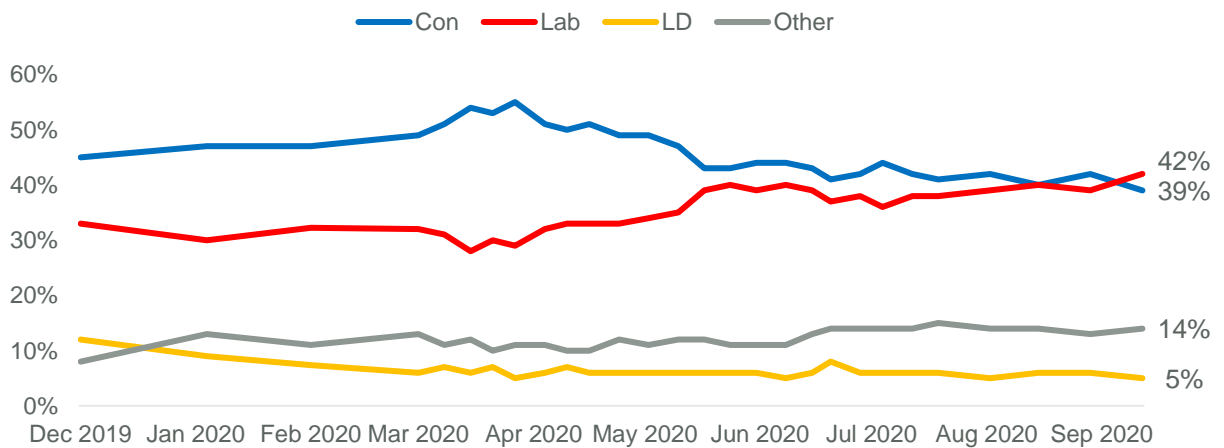
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

25th September 2020

# One-minute takeaway

- Labour moves into the lead for the first time since last July, as they take a 3-point lead (Labour on 42% vs the Conservatives on 39%).
- Keir Starmer leads on who would make best prime minister by 4 points
- Starmer has improved Labour’s position, with 55% now believing he is ready to be prime minister and 40% believing Labour is ready to form the next government.
- The government’s poor ratings on Covid-19 continue, and potentially contribute to falling behind Labour in the polls.
- Half (50%) disapprove of how they have handled the crisis, and 57% disapprove of how they have handled testing.
- However, the public do actually back the new tough policies announced although 60% think more measures will be needed to stop a second wave.
- 86% say they are strictly or generally following the rules, although a third (32%) think that most people in the UK are not obeying the rules.

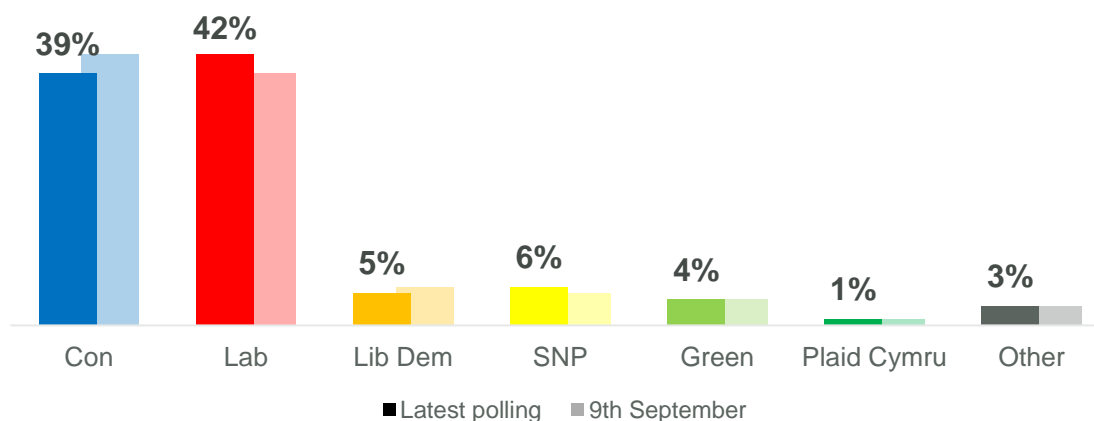
## Voting intention since the 2019 general election



## Headline voting intention

### Labour leads in the polls for the first-time during Boris Johnson's premiership

For the first time in this parliament, and for the first time since Boris Johnson became prime minister, Labour has a lead over the Conservatives. Labour is on 42%, up 3 points from a fortnight ago, while the Conservatives are on 39%, down 3 points, giving Labour a 3-point lead.



The Lib Dems have seen no appreciable bounce from the announcement of their new leader – they are on 5%, down 1 point from a fortnight ago.

### Starmer also leads on who would make the best prime minister

In addition to Labour leading in the polls, Keir Starmer also leads on who would make best prime minister by 4 points (36% for Starmer vs 32% for Johnson). Starmer is up 4 points from a fortnight ago, while Johnson is down 1 point.

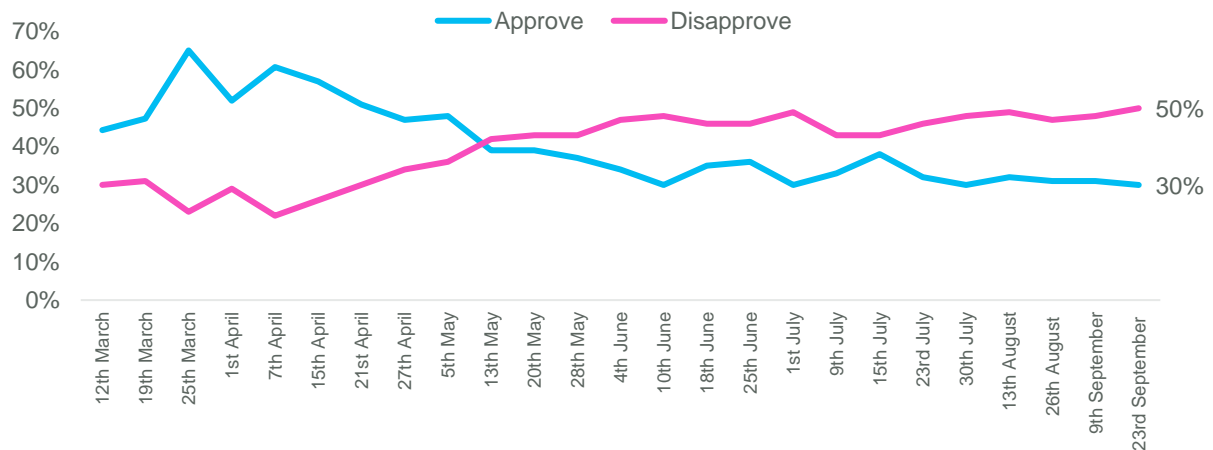
# Covid-19

## The government's poor scores on their Covid handling continue

The public's general disapproval of the government's handling of the Coronavirus crisis continues, with broadly similar numbers for since at least late July. Currently half (50%) disapprove of the government's handling of the crisis, while 30% approve – similar to a fortnight ago (48% disapproved and 31% approved two weeks ago).

On one hand the broader levels of disapproval over such a prominent issue is a serious concern for the government, but the fact that the rating are stable suggests that nothing in the past few weeks has pushed the public opinion in one way or another.

**Approval of government's handling of the crisis**



The generally negative opinions of the government's handling continue throughout a range of aspects to the Covid-19 situation. Despite the prime minister's latest announcement, 45% think the government is underreacting to the crisis, while 30% think they are acting proportionally and 20% think they are overreacting. Half (50%) no longer have confidence in the UK Government's ability to handle the Coronavirus situation as it continues to develop.

Two thirds (68%) of the public also think the government has not acted fast enough to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Furthermore, 63% think the levels of testing in the UK have been insufficient and almost three in five (57%) disapprove of the Government's handling of testing during the crisis so far.

These are all terrible numbers that contribute to the government's declining poll rating, although at least they do have one positive area: 52% approve of the Government's handling of the provision of financial support for workers and businesses during the Coronavirus crisis.

## Four in five think a new wave is likely

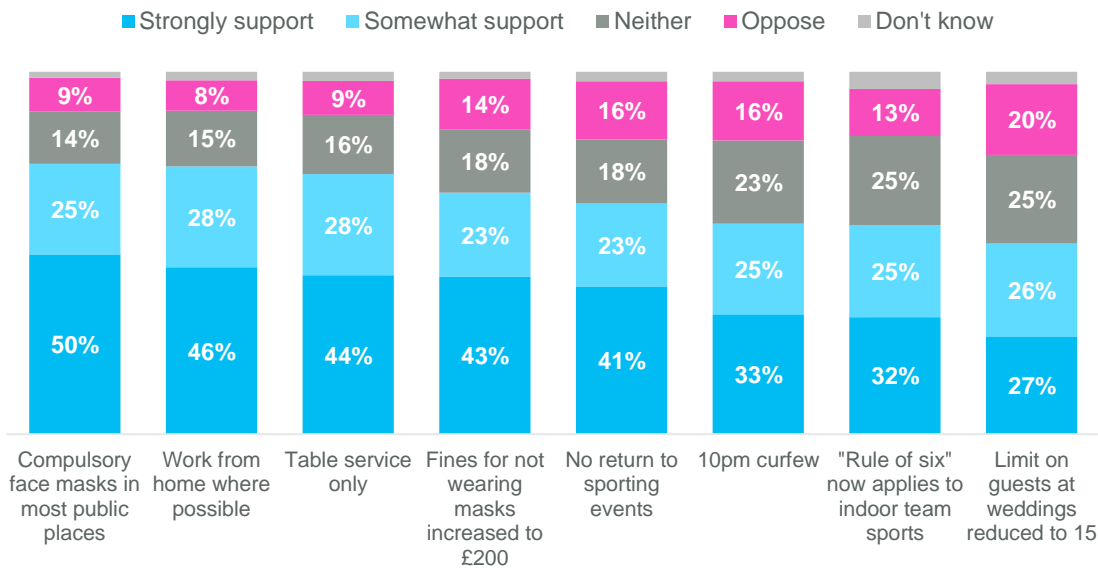
The public have expected a second lockdown for a while, although the numbers this week are particularly stark. Over four in five (82%) think it is likely that there will be second outbreak of Coronavirus is later on this year – with almost half (46%) of UK adults saying it is very likely.

## Public back tough policies and think more will be needed late on

The new measures introduced this week to combat Coronavirus get widespread support, although the strength of that support does depend on the proposal. For example, three quarters (75%) support face masks being made compulsory for bar staff and non-seated customers, shop workers and waiters – with 50% strongly supporting it. However, the limit on the numbers at a wedding gets much lower support (53% support, including only 27% strongly supporting it).

The 10pm curfew gets reasonable support (58% support, with 33% strongly supporting it), although there is a an age effect – just under half (49%) of 18-34 year olds support it, while seven in ten (71%) over 65s support it.

### Support for new Covid measures



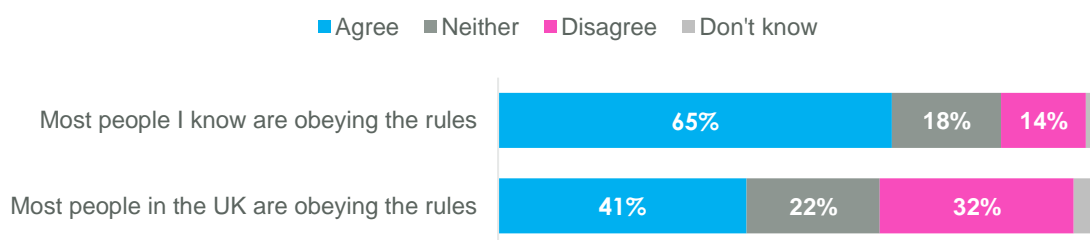
Once again, the public's support for strong measures continue. Only 16% think these measures as a whole are too strict while 37% think the measures strike the right balance. Two in five (40%) actually think these new measures are too loose.

Only 12% think these measures are unnecessary. Three quarters (75%) think the measures are necessary, although 60% also think that further measures will be needed to prevent a second wave and these current new measures are not enough to prevent a second wave.

## Most are obeying the rules, but are sceptical about what others are doing

UK adults are generally quite sceptical of whether people are obeying the rules. Two in five (41%) think the public generally are obeying the rules, although two thirds (65%) think most people they know are obeying the rules.

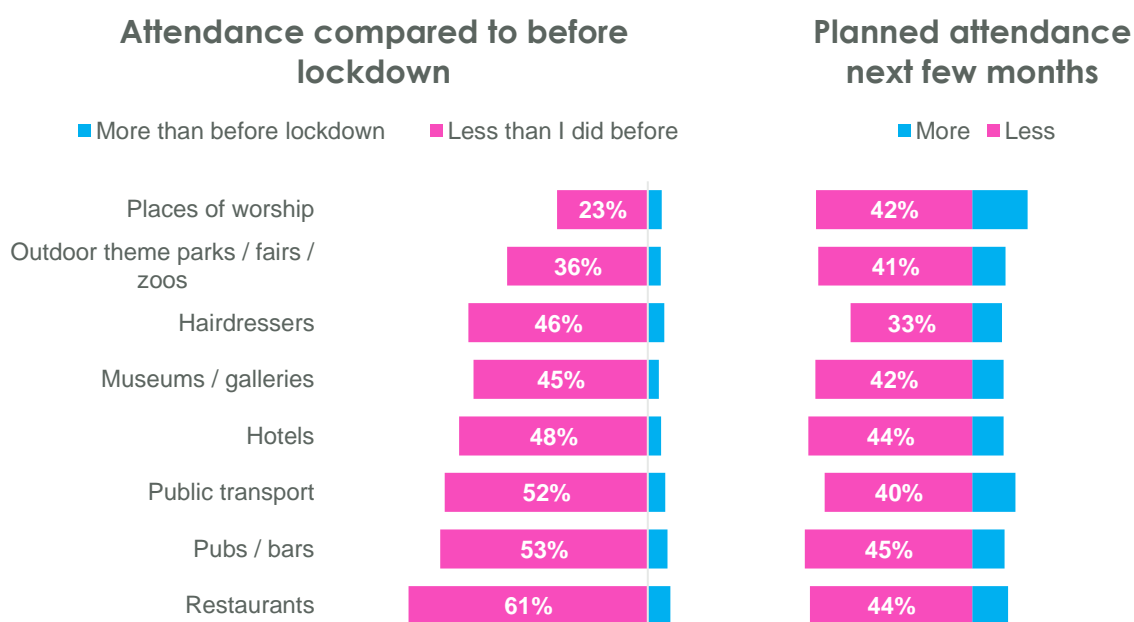
### Are we obeying the rules?



When individuals are asked about their own obeying of the rules, 86% say that they either have followed the rules strictly or generally. However, one in ten (10%) say they have had to break the rules often or they have not been following the rules. There is an age effect here; with this rising to 18% of 18-34 year olds compared to just 3% of those aged 65+.

## Economy may suffer as public stay at home

Attendance at most places is down across the board. Even taking account of Eat Out to Help Out, 61% say they are currently going to restaurants less than they were before lockdown. And now 44% say they are going to go to restaurants less than they currently are over the next few months.



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## Starmer and Labour

### Keir Starmer improves Labour's reputation

Just under half (46%) have a more positive opinion of the Labour Party since Keir Starmer became leader. This includes 45% of those in seats the Conservatives gained at the last election.

When we asked those who say they have a more positive view of Labour party why that was, common responses included the change in leadership and Starmer being a better, competent and credible leader, and labour's policies being more realistic.

Now 55% can imagine Keir Starmer being prime minister, up slightly from 52% in July. Only 28% cannot imagine him being prime minister, down slightly from 30% in July.

More strikingly, and importantly, he seems to have improved opinion of the Labour Party. Now 40% think that the party is ready to form the next government, while 42% think they are not. However, this is much improved on July, when only 36% thought Labour was ready to form the next government while 47% thought they were not.

# 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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