



What people think,
feel and do

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

The Political Report

8th October 2020



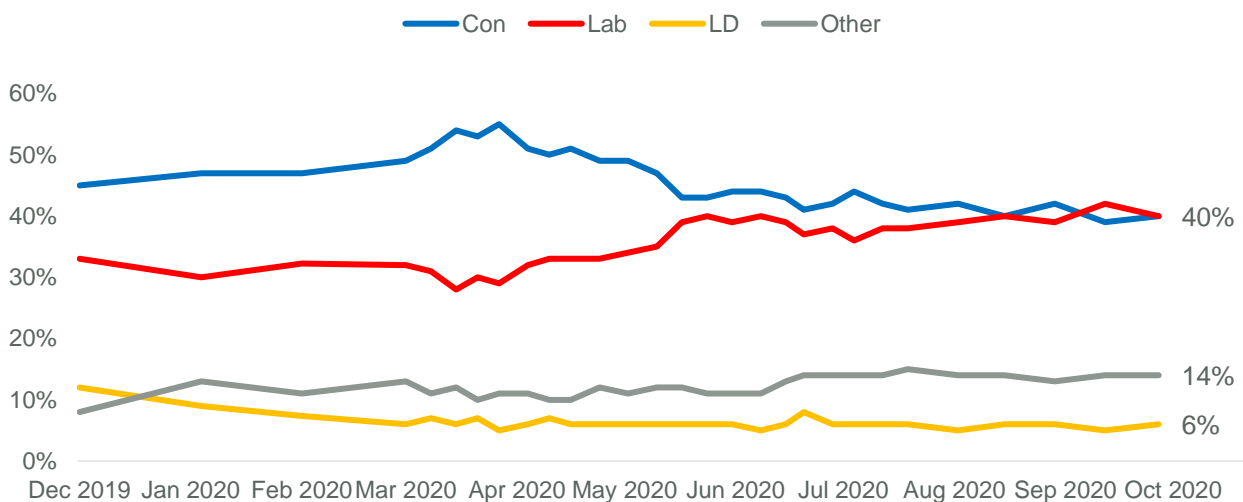
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

9th October 2020

One-minute takeaway

- Labour and the Conservatives are neck and neck in voting intention (both on 40%)
- Public are split on who would make best Prime Minister with Keir Starmer leading by 1 point
- Rishi Sunak is the only senior Minister with positive net approval ratings for his handling of his role in the government’s Coronavirus response
- The Chancellor is perceived by many as having acted competently, taken the right decisions and shown he is capable of dealing with the crisis
- In contrast, other ministers and the Prime Minister are mostly perceived as having acted incompetently, made the wrong decisions, and being out of their depth
- The public continue to want restrictive measures; 53% lean towards the belief that these are necessary to keep us safe, while 24% lean more towards the belief that these measures are damaging and we need to learn to live with Coronavirus

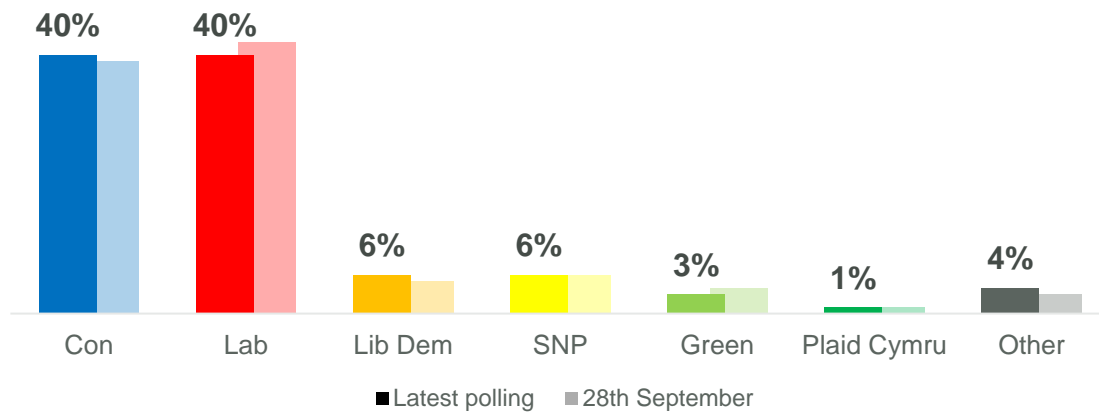
Voting intention since the 2019 general election



Headline voting intention

Labour and the Conservatives are neck and neck in voting intention

In our latest poll, the Conservatives and Labour are neck and neck in voting intention (both 40%). Labour are down 2 points from a fortnight ago, while the Conservatives are up 1 point.



The public are split on who would make best prime minister

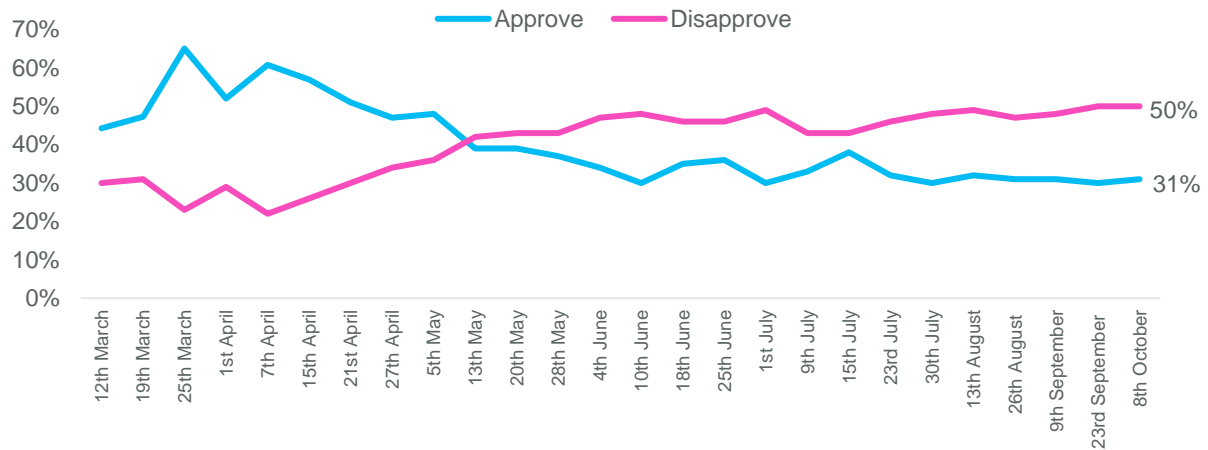
The public are split on who would make best Prime Minister. Keir Starmer leads by 1 point, down from 4 points a fortnight ago. 33% think the Labour leader would make the best Prime Minister (down from 36% a fortnight ago), compared to 32% who think Boris Johnson would.

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 this since July. Currently half (50%) disapprove of the government's handling of the crisis, while 31% approve – similar to a fortnight ago (50% disapproved and 30% approved two weeks ago).

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. Just under half (46%) think the government is underreacting to the crisis, while 28% 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, consistent with a fortnight ago.

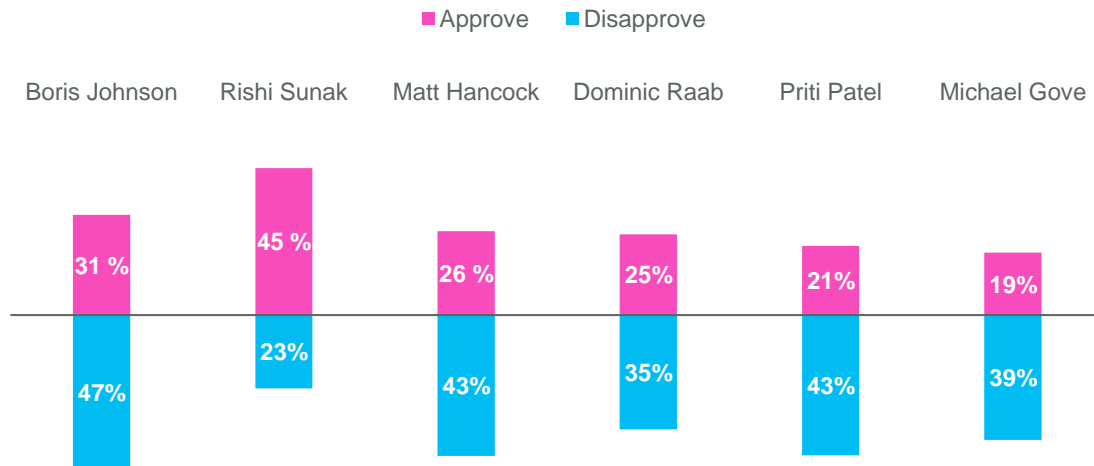
Two thirds (68%) of the public also think the government has not acted fast enough to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

While the broad level of disapproval across these questions is a serious concern for the government, the fact that the ratings have been stable in recent weeks suggests that nothing in the past few weeks has pushed the public opinion in one way or another.

Rishi Sunak is the only senior Minister to have a positive perception among the public over his Covid response

The consistent pattern of the Covid period has been that the government’s economic responses have been seen as far more successful than more medical responses such as management of test and trace or PPE for NHS workers. That has fed into public perceptions of key members of the cabinet with Rishi Sunak being the only cabinet minister with a net positive rating

Thinking about how each of the following people have handled their role in the government’s coronavirus response, would you say you approve or disapprove of the job they’ve done so far?



The Chancellor has a net positive approval score (+23%). On the other hand, only 31% approve of the way the Prime Minister has handled his role during the crisis, compared to 47% disapproving (net -16% approval rating). Similarly, the Health Secretary has a net approval score of -17%, with 26% approving of his handling of his role and 43% disapproving. However, the Home Secretary has the worst net approval score (-22%), with 21% approving and 43% disapproving of the way she has done her job. Michael Gove has the second worst net approval rating (-19%), with 19% approving of his handling of his role and 39% disapproving.

When we asked respondents further about the perceptions they had of these politicians in the way they handled their role in the government's coronavirus response, the same patterns emerged. Sunak was the only Minister who's top three perceptions were positive, compared to all the other Ministers having negative perceptions. While the others were generally perceived to have been out of their depth, taken the wrong decisions during the crisis and acted incompetently, Sunak was perceived to have acted competently, taken the right decisions and shown that he was capable of dealing with the crisis.

Top three statements selected about the handling of their role in the government's coronavirus response:

POLITICIAN	TOP PERCEPTION	2 ND MOST SELECTED	3 RD MOST SELECTED
Boris Johnson	Shown out of their depth (42%)	Taken wrong decisions (39%)	Acted incompetently (39%)
Rishi Sunak	Acted competently (37%)	Taken right decisions (31%)	Shown capable of dealing with the crisis (29%)
Matt Hancock	Shown out of their depth (37%)	Acted incompetently (32%)	Taken wrong decisions (28%)
Dominic Raab	Shown out of their depth (20%)	Acted incompetently (19%)	Taken wrong decisions, acted competently (both 16%)
Priti Patel	Shown out of their depth (27%)	Acted incompetently (26%)	Taken wrong decisions (24%)
Michael Gove	Acted incompetently (24%)	Shown out of their depth (22%)	Taken wrong decisions (19%)

Public continue to back tough policies

The public continue to back stricter Coronavirus measures and err on the side of caution. Half (53%) of the public lean towards the view that coronavirus threatens a large number of lives and we need strong measures in place to keep us safe. On the other hand, a quarter (24%) lean more towards the belief that the measures in place are too damaging and we need to learn to live with Coronavirus for the time being.

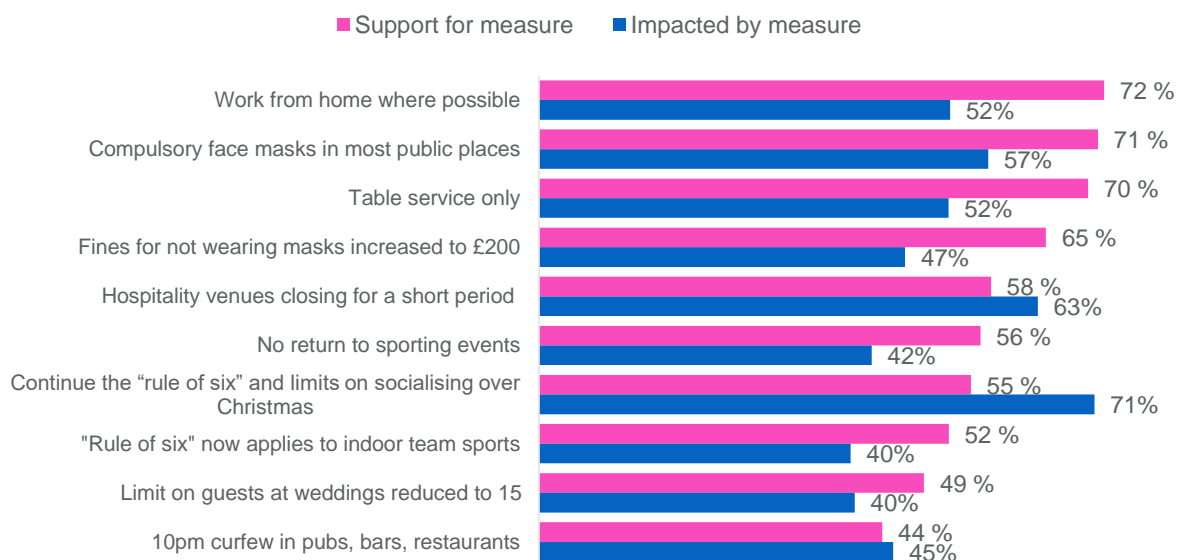
- There is a slight difference in responses of age groups. 29% of those aged 35-44 and 28% of those aged 45-54 lean more towards the belief that the measures in place are too damaging and we need to learn to live with Coronavirus for the time being compared to 19% of those aged 65+

Seven in ten (72%) support the notion that people should work from home wherever possible, 71% agree that face masks should be compulsory for bar staff and non-seated customers, shop workers and waiters and 70% agree with the introduction of table service only in bars, restaurants and pubs.

There has however been a drop in the number of people who support the 10pm closure of pubs, bars and restaurants. A fortnight ago, 58% supported the measure while 16% opposed. This week, 44% supported this measure while 27% oppose, suggesting that some may be finding the measure to not be efficient in practice at preventing the spread of Coronavirus.

Two measures the government may need to consider carefully are closing hospitality venues for a short period of time and limiting socialising over Christmas. While there is majority support for these measures (58% and 55% respectively), the level of support is lower than some of the other measures, and these are also the two measures that people are most likely to feel would have a personal impact on their daily lives (63% and 71% respectively). Support for these two measures may therefore be more susceptible to change.

Support for new Covid measures vs personal impact of the measures



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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