



What people think,
feel and do

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The Political Report

19th November 2020



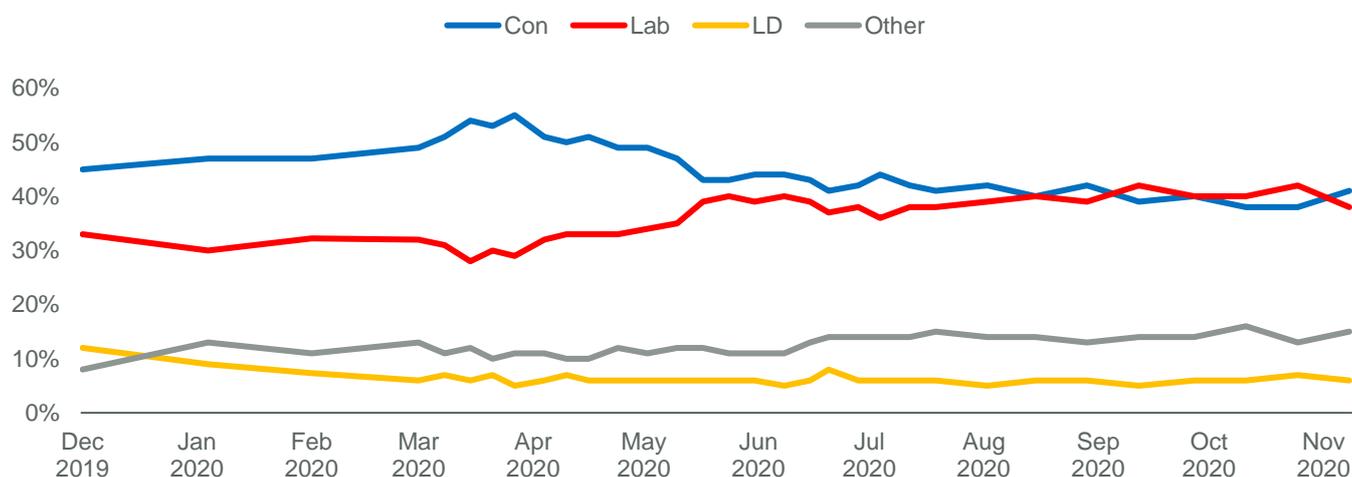
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

20th November 2020

One-minute takeaway

- The two main parties have swapped places again with Labour falling back to a 3 point deficit on 38% vs. the Conservatives rising by almost the same amount to 41%. Changes to other parties remain within 1 point
- Keir Starmer's approval rating has taken an equivalent hit, falling from 41% two weeks ago to 36% now with his net rating going from +17% to +11%. Boris Johnson's ratings remain largely static
- Indifference (28%) and delight (27%) are the most common reactions to the resignation of Dominic Cummings with 34% saying the government would have been better run if he had resigned in May vs. 10% saying it would have been run worse and 40% saying it would be about the same
- 54% of UK adults would prefer restrictions to be in place over Christmas if this means fewer restrictions were in place in January vs. 33% who are happy to make the opposite trade off
- However, 66% expect the current lockdown restrictions to end before Christmas
- There are minimal signs of a 'vaccine bounce' so far, 32% approve of the government's handling of Coronavirus, up 1 point from two weeks ago but their net rating has increased from -20% to -15% due to the percentage disapproving falling from 51% to 47%
- 66% of UK adults say they would be likely to take a vaccine if it was available and government recommended vs. 24% unlikely. Around half of adults are worried that a vaccine might not be safe (51%) or effective (47%) or might have side effects (57%)
- 45% expect the UK to leave the EU transition period without a trade deal vs. 18% who think a deal is likely. Among those expecting No Deal, 53% blame the UK government or Boris Johnson vs. 33% who blame the EU or Michel Barnier

Voting intention since the 2019 general election



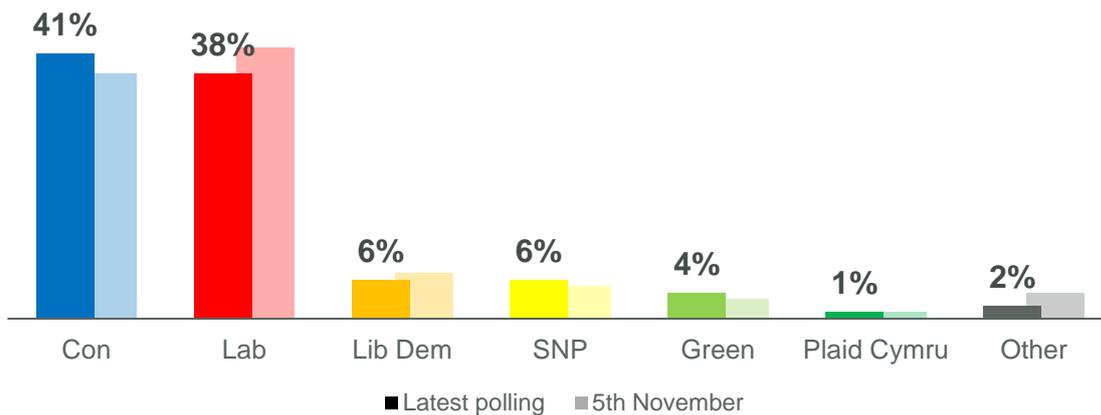
Headline voting intention

Conservatives lead by 3 points

The two main parties have switched places with the Conservatives leading by 3 points, on 41%, vs. 38% for Labour.

Labour have dropped by 4 points while the Conservatives have gained 3. This continues the pattern since August of the two parties trading first place with neither opening up a significant lead but does bring to an end a nearly two month run in which Labour was ahead of, or at parity with, the Conservatives.

The net change among minor parties is around 1% each.



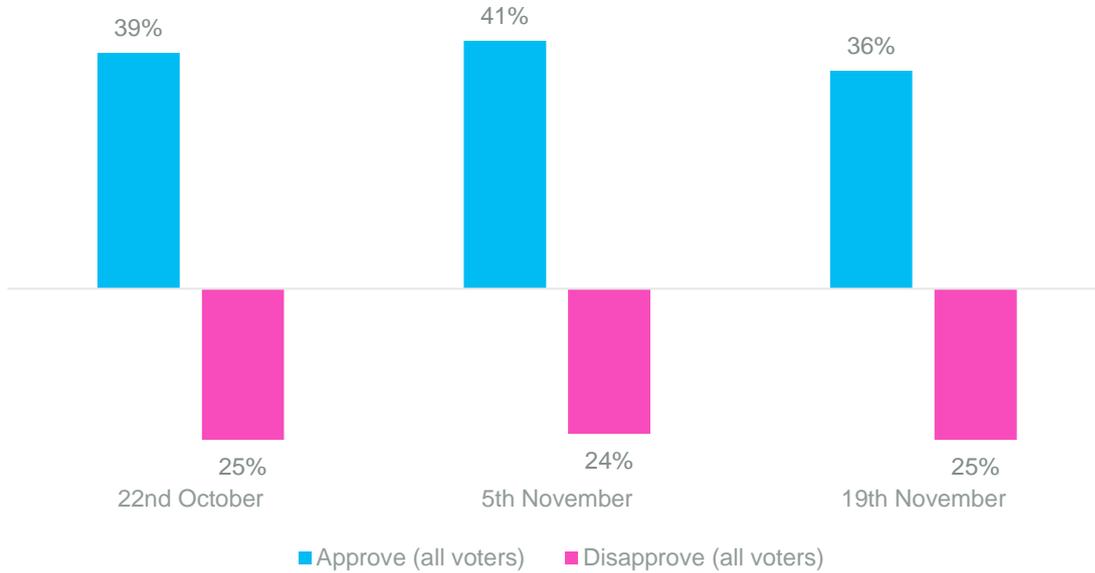
Labour pains

Starmer takes a hit from all sides

It is difficult to isolate the degree to which the ongoing saga of Jeremy Corbyn and antisemitism has impacted the ratings of the Labour party and its leader. The ECHR report and Corbyn's initial suspension came out on October 29th and in our first poll afterwards, Labour went from a 2 point lead to a 4 point lead. Now, in the wake of a Labour NEC panel reinstating Corbyn and Starmer refusing to readmit him to the Parliamentary Labour Party, Labour's vote share has dropped by four points.

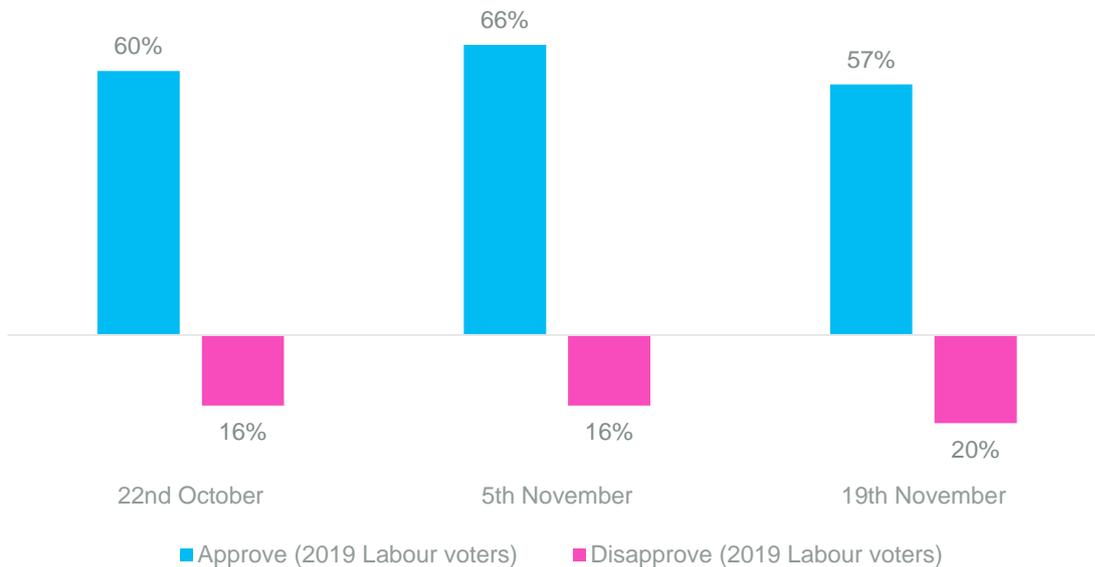
Here is how Keir Starmer's job approval has changed over that period

Keir Starmer job approval - all voters



A better measure, however, may be to look at 2019 Labour voters:

Keir Starmer job approval - 2019 Labour voters



Starmer has also surrendered his narrow lead over Boris Johnson as best prime minister. Two weeks ago he led the prime minister by 33% to 31% vs. this week's figure of 30% with Johnson remaining on 31%. Among 2019 Labour voters there is another slight drop for Starmer, 69% chose him as best prime minister two weeks ago vs. 65% now,

However, while there is the same pattern, we do not know enough about how much or little attention voters have been paying to this dispute. Is it therefore impossible to ascribe the movement in

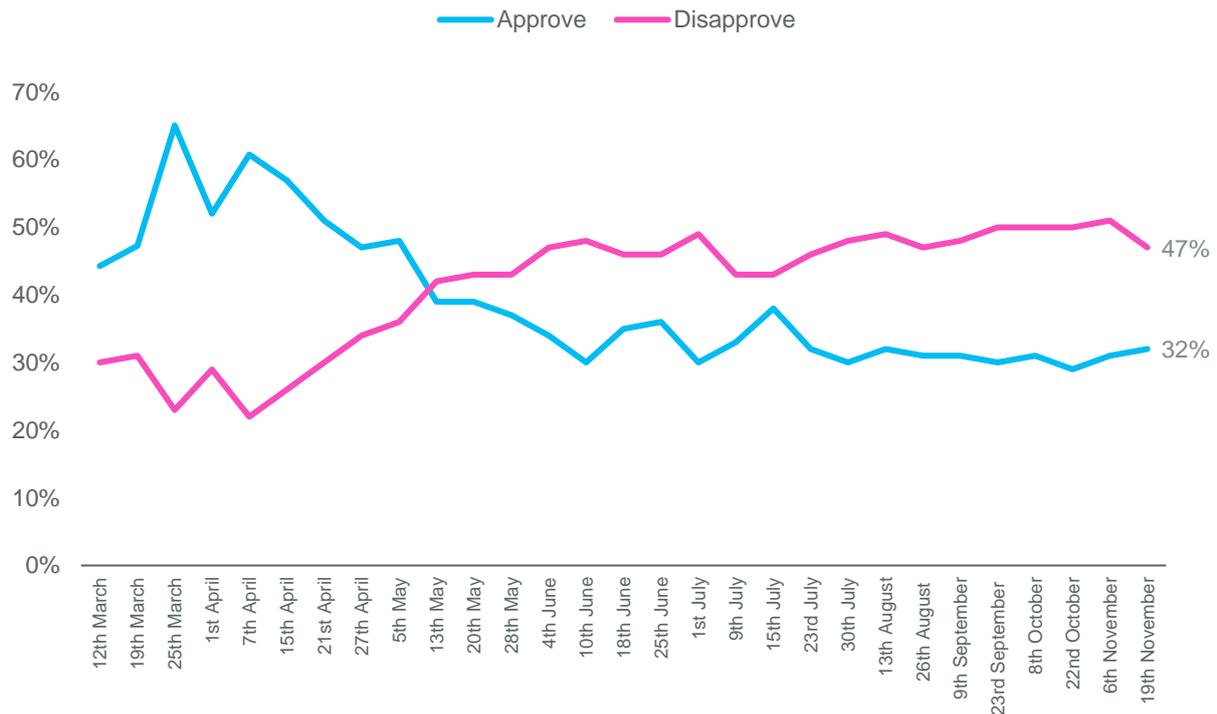
Labour's, and Starmer's, numbers to either anger about his withholding of the whip from Jeremy Corbyn or anger about the Labour NEC's readmittance of Corbyn to the party.

Covid-19

The smallest signs of a vaccine bounce?

32% approve of government handling of the Coronavirus pandemic, up 1%, but the figure disapproving is down from 51% to 47%. This is the extent of any vaccine bounce, bringing their net rating from -20% to -15%.

Approval of government's handling of the crisis

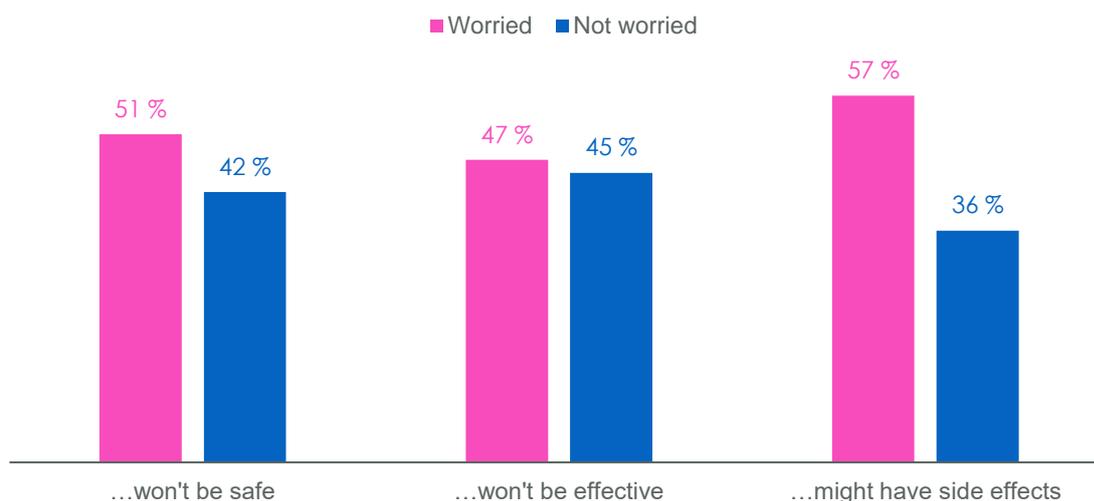


Most would take a vaccine despite concerns

Two third of adults in the UK would take a vaccine if it became available and were recommended by the government for people 'like you'. 66% said 'likely' vs. 24% 'unlikely'.

However, this question omitted whether or not the vaccine would be free. When we ask the same question but suggest that the cost would be £9.15 (approximately the cost of a prescription in England), these figures drop slightly to 58% likely and 31% unlikely.

Concerns that a vaccine...



Despite most saying they would take it if recommended to, many are more concerned about the safety and side effects than by the efficacy of any vaccine.

While there is a degree of prompting stemming from the way that this question was asked (in that the figures may be higher than if people were given open responses), the figures suggest that any public vaccination campaign must be accompanied by reassurances about safety if uptake is to be sufficient.

Don't make it mandatory but ban conspiracy theorists

While the public are split on whether coronavirus vaccinations should be mandatory (42% support, 45% oppose), there is stronger support for banning people from posting conspiracy theories about the vaccine online (64% support, 26% oppose).

Staying home for Christmas

As the government considers whether to lift lockdown rules to allow larger gatherings at Christmas, and even a return to the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, the trade-off appears to be between having a lockdown Christmas vs. a lockdown January.

When asked which they prefer, the public opt for a locked down Christmas by a margin of 54% to 33%, preferring restrictions to stay tight in exchange for looser restrictions in most of January.

This split is near identical across all party groups and demographics with older voters in particular preferring to lockdown over Christmas rather than in January.

In a blow to Chris Rea fans everywhere, the percentage of UK adults planning to 'drive home for Christmas' will be lower than usual this year.

When asked to compare their travel plans this Christmas to a typical year, an even larger than usual majority plan to stay at home this year (73%, vs. 70% who say this is the case in a typical Christmas).

- 12% will be driving by car vs. 15% normally
- Other forms of transport see a statistically insignificant change

Most expect lockdown to end before Christmas

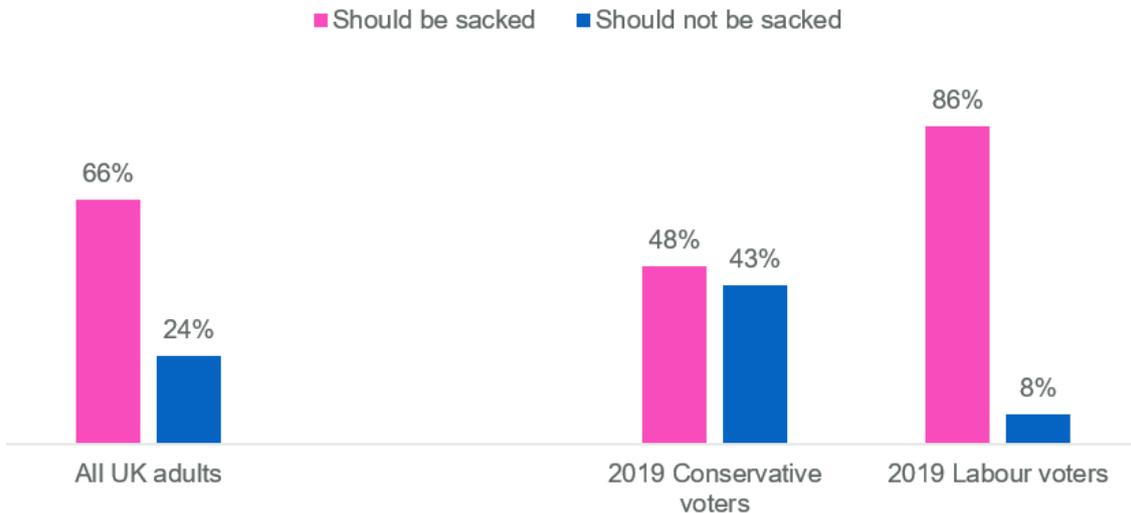
When asked when they expect the current lockdown to end, currently scheduled for 2nd December, only 25% expect that deadline to be met with 40% expecting a short extension that ends before Christmas.

12% expect it to last beyond Christmas Day.

Dominic Goings

Back in May, shortly after news of his ophthalmological trip to Barnard Castle became public, we found that 66% of UK adults thought Dominic Cummings should have been sacked vs. 24% who disagreed. Even among 2019 Conservative voters, the consensus was against the prime minister's chief advisor.

Should Dominic Cummings be sacked?



Over the past week, some commentators have argued that Boris Johnson should sack Dominic Cummings while others argue that he should not sack him. What are your thoughts? Latest data: 28th-29th May. Base: 2012 UK adults

Now, as Mr Cummings leaves Downing Street, we find that the reaction to this is generally positive with 27% saying it made them “delighted”, 25% “pleased” vs. 28% “indifferent”.

Mr Cummings’ impact on how government has been run since May is also seen as more negative than positive.

- 34% say thing would have been run better if he had resigned in May vs. 10% saying government would have been run worse and 40% no difference
- 27% expect government to be run better now that he has resigned vs. 10% expecting things to get worse and 45% expecting no difference

Even among Leave voters, expectations are that things will be better without Mr Cummings (27%) than worse (10%).

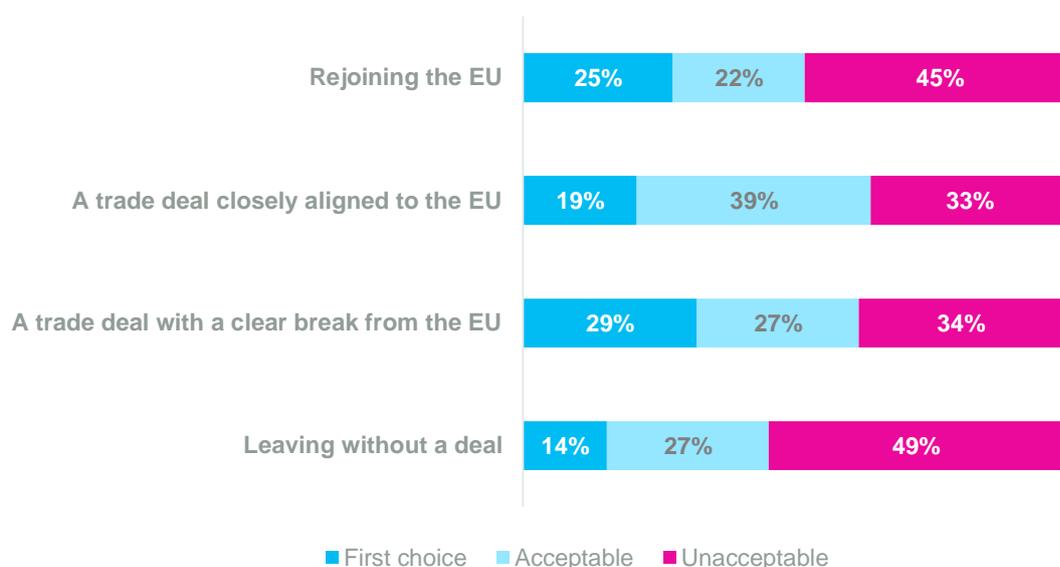
Government to blame for no-deal Brexit

Britons' most preferred Brexit status is some form of trade deal

When we lay out the four broad possible Brexit end-states, we first ask what a person's first choice is. We then show the options they didn't choose and ask whether they would find each one acceptable or unacceptable.

This shows us that most peoples' preference, aside from re-joining the EU, is for a trade deal of some kind with 'leaving with no deal' both the least popular first choice and least acceptable second choice as an end state.

What people prefer, will and won't accept, on Brexit



In the event that the UK government and the EU are unable to agree a deal by the deadline, 36% say we should leave on schedule without a deal vs. 26% who say to extent the transition period and 25% who say we should try to re-join the EU.

45% expect the UK to leave without a trade deal

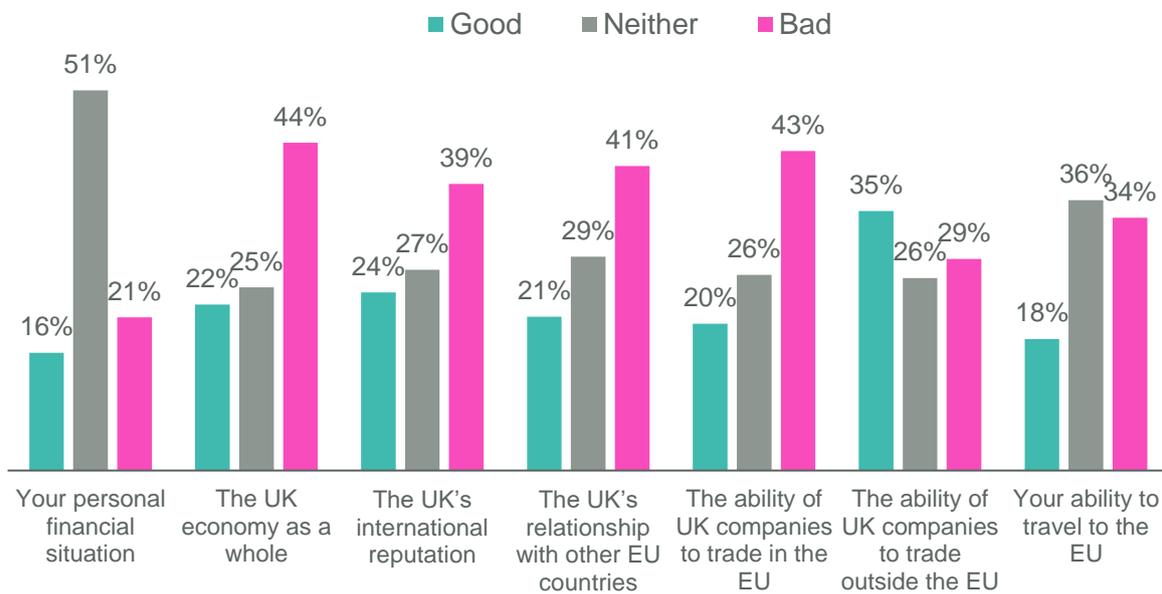
Just 18% say that this scenario is unlikely. Among those who say it is likely, blame falls squarely on the shoulders of the prime minister and the UK government:

- 26% would blame the UK government
- 27% would blame Boris Johnson
- 28% would blame the European Union
- 5% would blame Michel Barnier

Netted together, 53% of these voters would therefore blame UK government figures vs. 33% blaming the European side.

Most expect a no-deal Brexit to be negative

Would leaving without a trade deal be good or bad for...



The most interesting figure here is the disparity between the UK economy as a whole and “your personal financial situation” which mirrors how the public expect the Coronavirus crisis to affect them. The only measure by which leaving the EU without a trade deal is expected to be good is on the ability of UK companies to trade outside the EU.

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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