



What people think,
feel and do

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The Political Report

15th January 2021



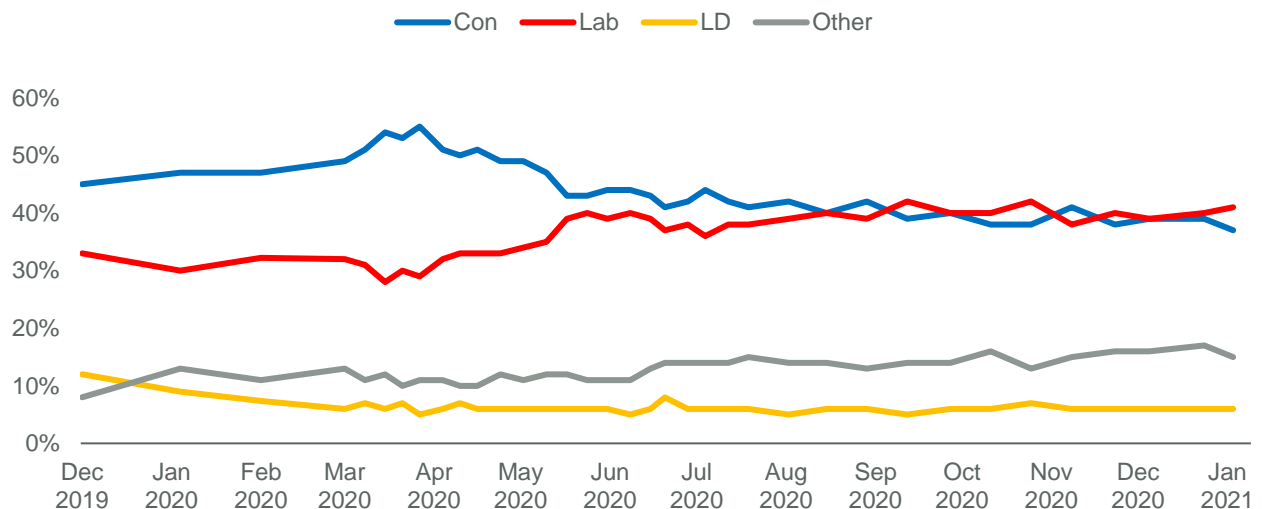
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

15th January 2020

One-minute takeaway

- Labour holds a four-point lead over the Conservatives, on 41% to their 37%. This is the joint highest lead we have recorded for Labour since the election.
- Johnson has also recorded his lowest score on our best prime minister tracker, with just 29% picking him as opposed to 32% picking Starmer. This is accompanied by Johnson's lowest net approval since the election at -14 (34% approve, 49% disapprove).
- However, bad news for Johnson hasn't translated into good news for Starmer, who has also seen his net approval rating drop from +15 last week to +10 now. Just 37% approve of the job he is doing as Labour leader, with 27% disapproving.
- Part of the reason for the drop in support for the Prime Minister is a further increase in those saying that the government are not putting enough measures in place to slow the spread of Coronavirus. The number who think they are underreacting is now 51% (+7), while the number who think they haven't reacted quickly enough is 75%, up 3 percentage points on last week and the highest we have recorded.
- The current coronavirus situation is seen as being worse (72%) than last spring, however the public also think the rules are looser (55%), and people are complying with them less (60%).
- A majority think that Takeaway coffee shops / cafes (51%) and Nurseries (61%) should now be closed. A majority also think there should be a "ban on people walking or exercising with anyone from outside their household" (53%) and that "Click and collect suspended for all but essential shops" (55%).
- The government's approval on vaccine provision and providing financial support are also down, albeit from a very high base. Net approval on the vaccine rollout is now +24, down from +36 on the 16th of December. On "the provision of financial support for workers and businesses" net approval is down from +31 to +21.

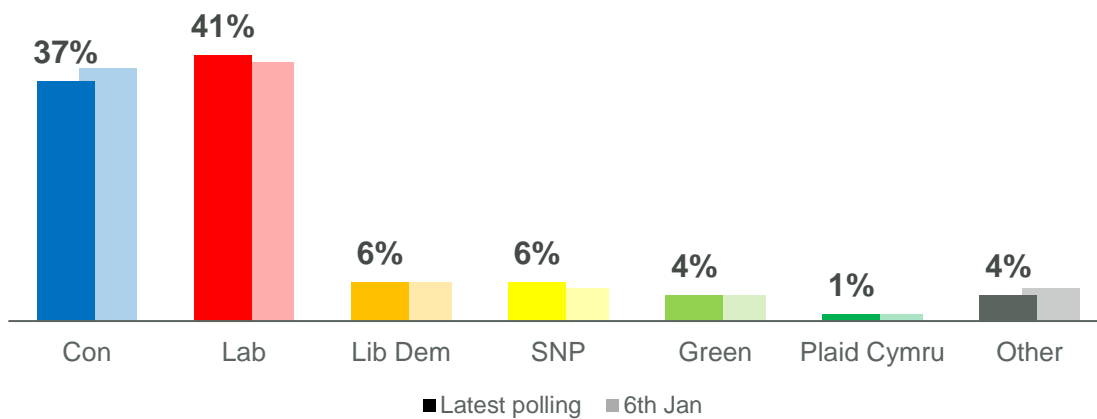
Voting intention since the 2019 general election



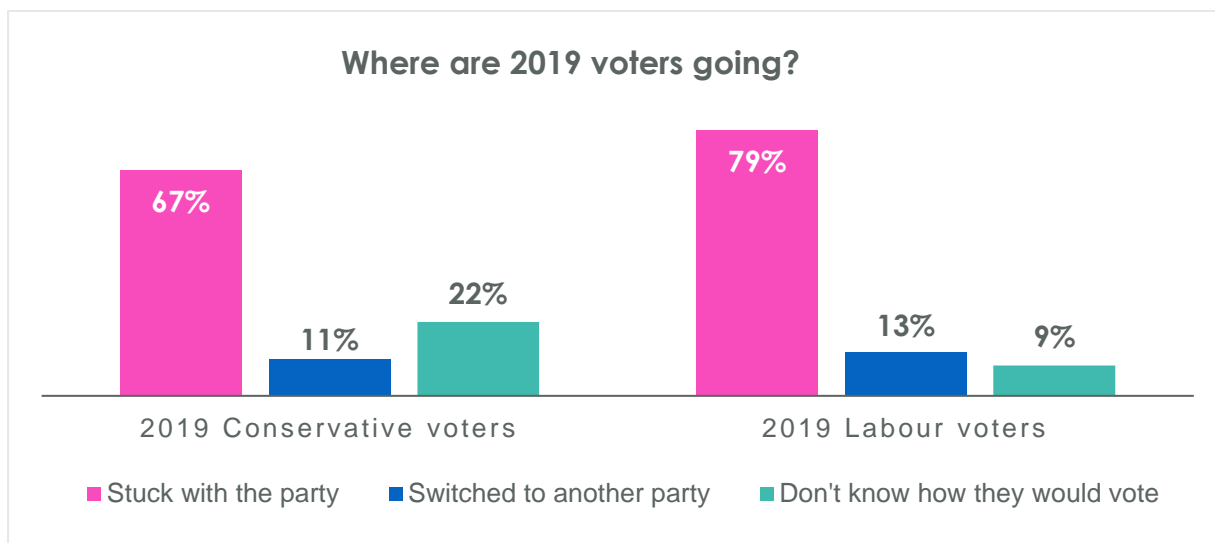
Headline Voting Intention

Labour increase their lead

Labour have increased their vote share by one point, with the Tories dropping two, turning a one point Labour lead into a four point Labour lead. This is the joint highest lead we have recorded for Labour since the election (joint with 5-6 November 2020).



One of the biggest reasons why Labour are able to open up a comfortable lead over the Conservatives is because of the high number of people who backed the Tories in 2019 but are now unsure who they would vote for. Over one in five (22%) of those who backed the party just over a year ago now say they don't know who they would vote for, compared to just 9% of those who voted Labour.

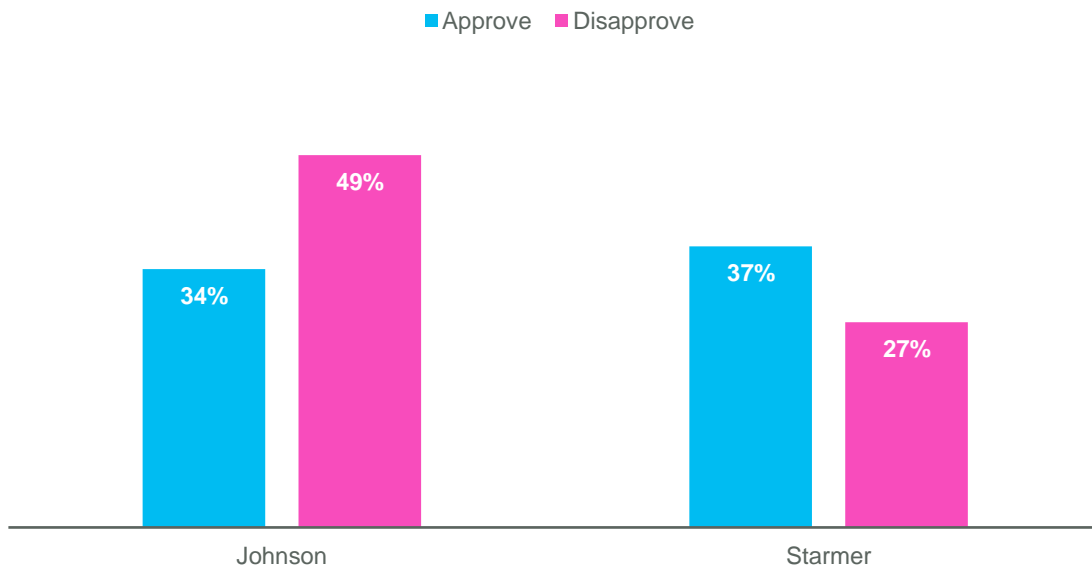


Leaders' approval

Both leaders down, with Johnson falling to a record low

Both of the party leaders have seen a drop in their approval ratings this week. The number who say they approve of the job Johnson is doing now stands at 34% (-3) while the number who approve stands at 49% (+4). This gives a net score of -15, the lowest recorded for the Prime Minister since the election.

Approval of the party leaders



Meanwhile, Starmer has also see a drop in his approval ratings. In total, 37% now approve of the job he is doing (-3), with 27% disapproving (+2). This means his net score is now +10, a drop from +15 last week, and reversing most of the increase in support we had seen for him over December.

Starmer leads on who would make the best Prime Minister

When asked who the best Prime Minister would be, just 29% select Johnson, compared to 32% who picked Starmer. Meanwhile 25% said neither and 14% said they don't know. This is also the lowest that Johnson has scored on this question since we started asking about Starmer.

Views on lockdown

The public think the government has continued to do too little too late

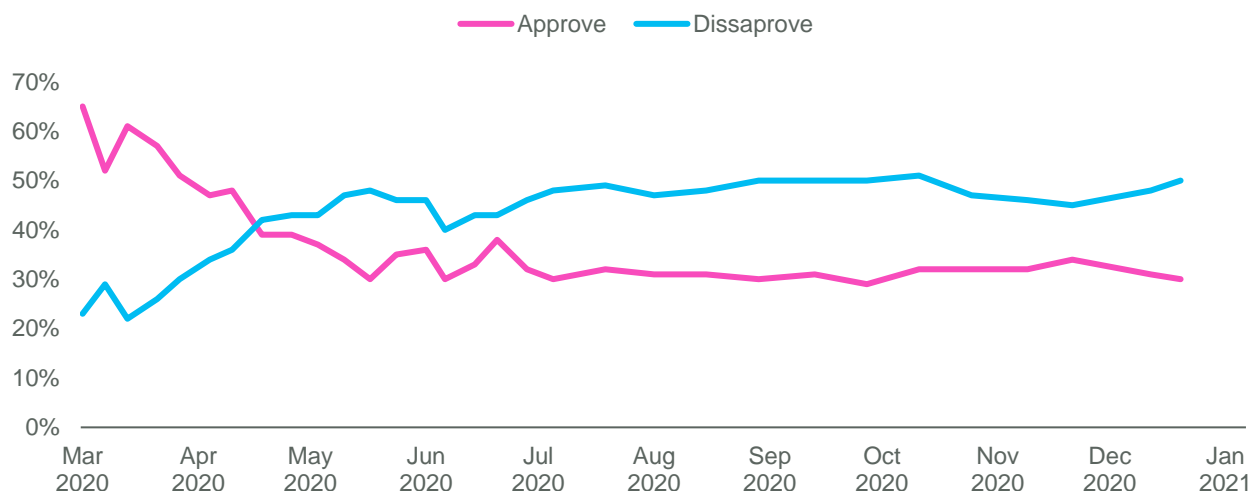
One of the consistent themes of this pandemic has been a government who are petrified about being punished by the voters by putting in place too many restrictions, and a public crying out for further restrictions because they are petrified of the spread of the virus.

The data from this week's poll is probably the most extreme example of this trend, and perhaps one of the reasons why we have seen such a drop in support for the government.

The majority of the public (51%) now think the government are underreacting, compared to just 13% who think they are overreacting, and 30% who think they have got the balance right. A full three-quarters, including 60% of those who voted Conservative in 2019, think they have acted too slowly to stop the spread. This compares to just 18% who think they have acted fast enough.

Just 30% (-1) now approve of how the government has handled Coronavirus, compared to 50% (+2) who disapprove.

Approval of the governments handling of Coronavirus



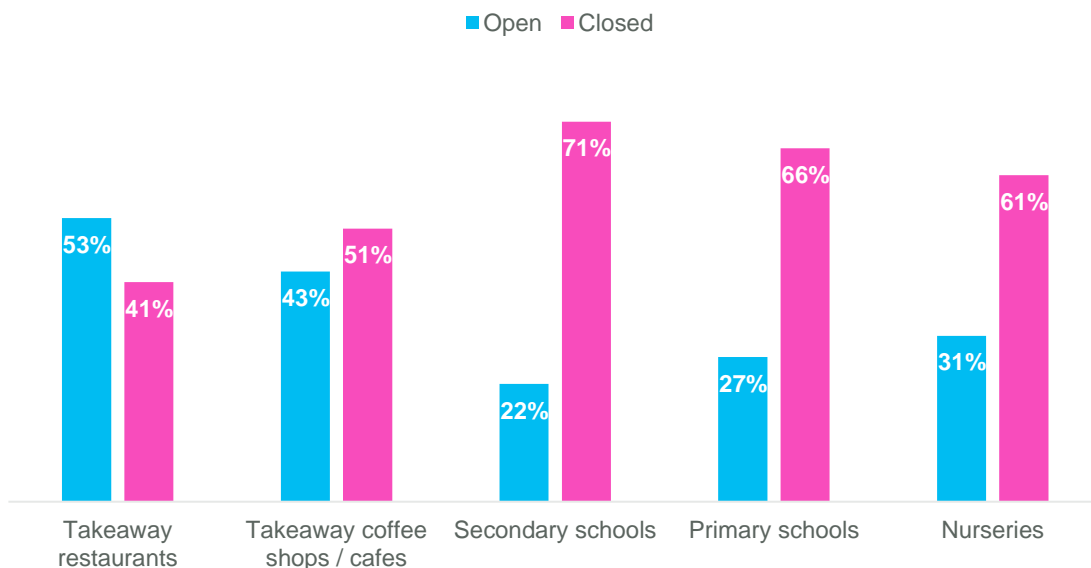
Just over half (56%) of those who voted Conservative at the last election approve of how the government has responded, compared to 26% who disapprove. Meanwhile, just 11% of 2019 Labour voters approve of how the government has responded, with 81% disapproving.

The public would support closing nurseries and takeaway coffee shops /cafes

In terms of what extra the government should be doing, we first asked people to think about what venues or institutions should still be open. There was wide support for keeping schools closed, with 71% thinking secondary schools should be shut, and 66% thinking primary schools should be shut.

However, there is also support for extending this out to nurseries, which 61% think should be closed and 31% think should remain open, When it comes to takeaways. The public would support closing takeaway coffee shops and cafes (by 51% to 43%) but not restaurants (by 53% to 41%).

Should each of the following be open?



The public would also support banning people walking or exercising with people from another household, by 53% to 41%. While support for this is higher among older people, more people support than oppose the new rule across all age groups.

By a margin of 55% to 38% the public also thinks that “click and collect” should be suspended for all but essential shopping.

The public think the situation has now become worse than it was last spring

Support for these new rules is less surprising when you consider that nearly three quarters of the public (72%) now think the situation is worse than it was back in March / April last year. This compares to just 23% who think it is either the same or better.

Despite that, the public perceive the current rules to be looser (55%) than they were back then, with just 40% thinking they are the same or stricter. Six in ten (60%) also think people are following the

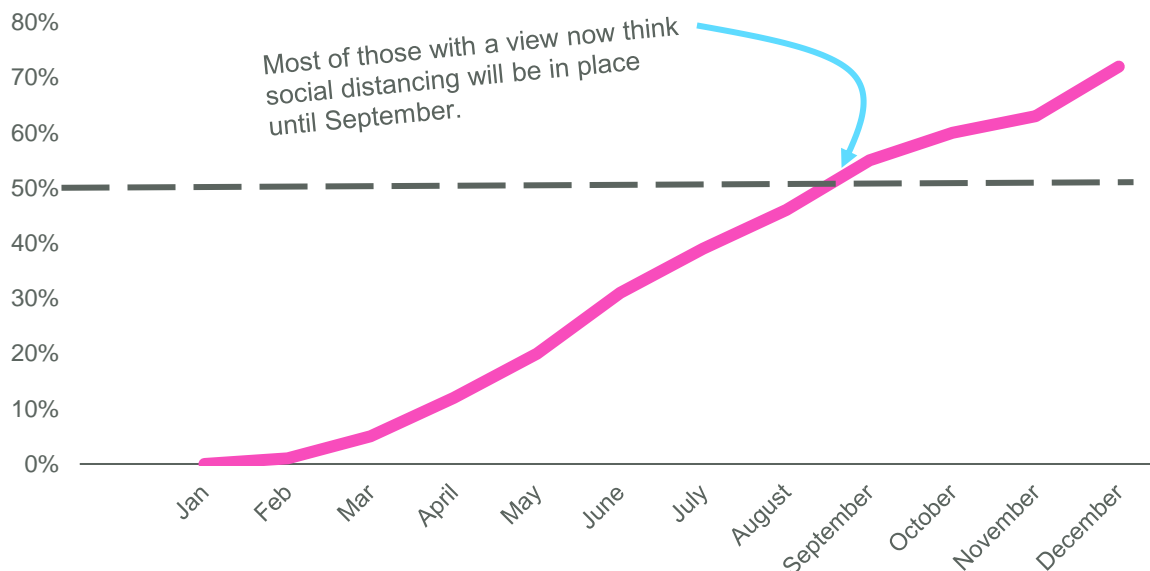
rules less now, compared to March, with just 32% thinking people are complying to restrictions the same or more now.

We are still a long way off returning to normal

The public are gearing up for a long road ahead until things can head back to normal. The median person with a view (i.e. doesn't say they don't know) thinks that social distancing will be in place until September this year.

Nearly a quarter (23%) think social distancing will still be in place at the end of 2021 and into 2022.

When do people think social distancing will be in place until?



Excludes those who say they don't know

When it comes to holidaying, just over a third (35%) expect they will be able to go abroad this year. Meanwhile, 30% say they wouldn't have gone on holiday this year anyway, and 20% think they will not be able to go because of the virus. A further 14% say they don't know if they will be able to go on holiday this year.

Of those who expect to go abroad this year, half (50%) don't think they will be able to get away before August.

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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