



What people think,
feel and do

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The Political Report

13th May 2021



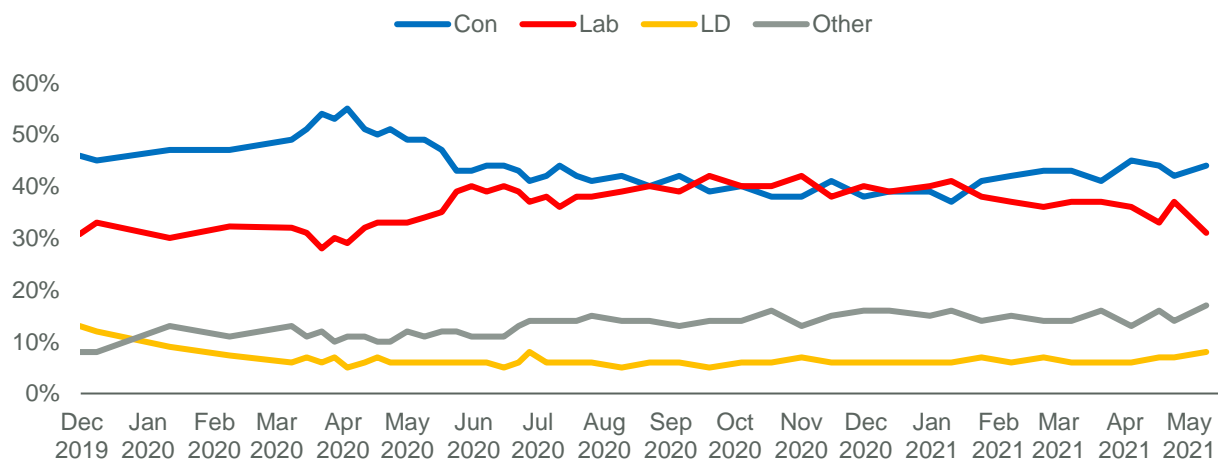
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

14th May 2021

One-minute takeaway

- The Conservative lead has risen from 5 to 13 points in a fortnight in the wake of the fallout from the local elections.
 - The Conservatives are up 2 points to 44%, while Labour has dropped 6 points to 31%.
- Boris Johnson has taken a large lead of 17 points over Keir Starmer as best prime minister (40% for Johnson vs 23% for Starmer).
- Keir Starmer's ratings have taken a huge knock, with his net approval dropping to -11%. This is mainly driven by a 30-point drop in his net ratings amongst 2019 Labour voters, with a third (34%) of 2019 Labour voters now disapproving of his performance as Labour leader.
- Only 29% now think Keir Starmer looks like a prime minister in waiting.
- Of the 67% who think Labour did badly in last week's local elections, 31% think Starmer is to blame, while 28% think others in the Labour Party are to blame.
- Third of Labour voters want Starmer to resign
- Despite this, a majority of the public (57%) think Starmer has been a better Labour leader than Jeremy Corbyn, while only 23% think Corbyn was better.
- Andy Burnham has the highest net approval rating as a potential good leader of the Labour Party now, according to UK adults: 47% think he would be a good leader now while 19% think he would be bad.
- Margaret Thatcher is the only past prime minister with a net positive perception by the public. Oddly this is true even in Labour-leaning Leave constituencies, where 39% think Thatcher did a good job while 38% think she did a bad job.
- The government's handling of the pandemic now has a net approval rating of +14%, the highest net approval rating since mid-April 2020. Now just under half (47%) approve of their handling, while 33% disapprove.

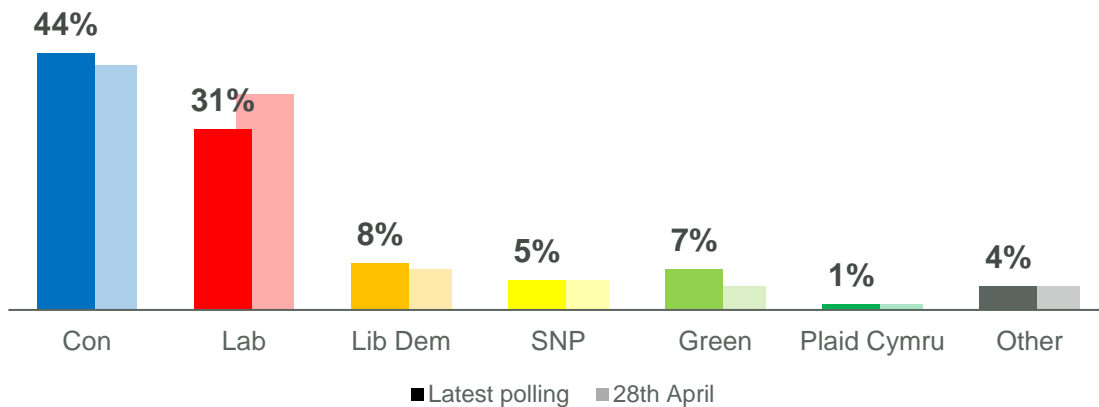
Voting intention since the 2019 general election



Headline Trackers

Conservative lead rises to 13 points

After a short-term knock down to 5 points at the end of April, the Conservative lead has risen strongly to 13 points over Labour. This is the largest Conservative lead since Keir Starmer became leader of the Labour Party.

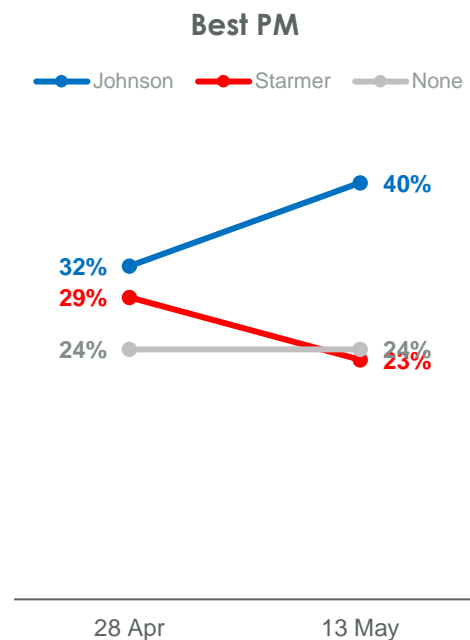


The leaders

Johnson way out on front as best prime minister

For most of this year Boris Johnson has had quite a narrow lead as best prime minister, but after the local election results and the fallout from it, the situation is very different.

Two in five (40%) now think that Boris Johnson is best as prime minister, up from only 32% a fortnight before. Similarly, the proportion who think Keir Starmer would be the best PM has dropped from 29% to only 23%, below 'none of the above' on 24%.

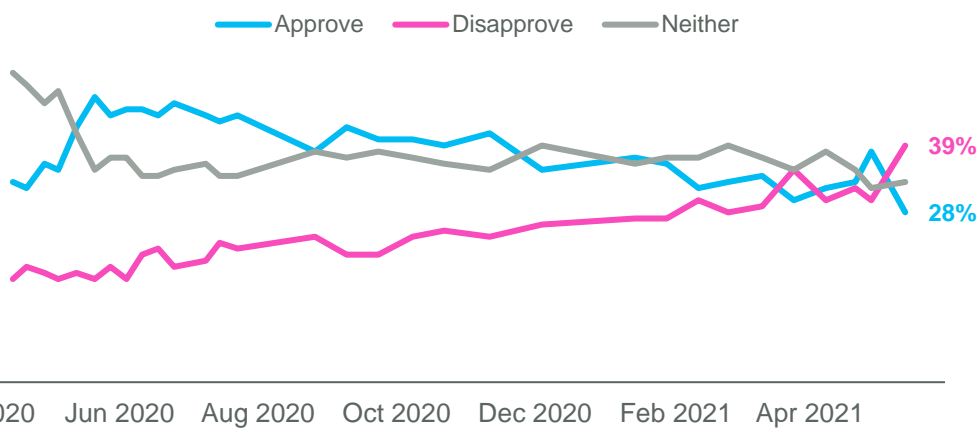


Starmer approval rating falls to lowest level so far

Only 28% of UK adults now approve of Keir Starmer, the lowest figure we have recorded for him so far, while 39% now disapprove of the way he is handling being leader of the Labour Party, up from the highest level of disapproval we had for him in late March (when 35% disapproved).

In terms of the net approval rating, at -11%, this is only the second time we have seen him in the net negative approval. The other being the same poll in late March, when he was on net approval of -5%.

Keir Starmer approval rating



This drop in rating is mainly because of a collapse in approval amongst 2019 Labour voters. Currently only 44% of 2019 Labour voters approve of his performance as Labour leader, down 15 points from 59% a fortnight ago. Disapproval is up the same amount from 19% to 34%. Hence his net approval rating amongst his own party's voters has dropped 30 points from +40% to +10%.

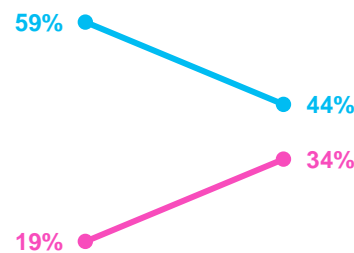
2019 Conservatives

● Approve ● Disapprove



2019 Labour voters

● Approve ● Disapprove

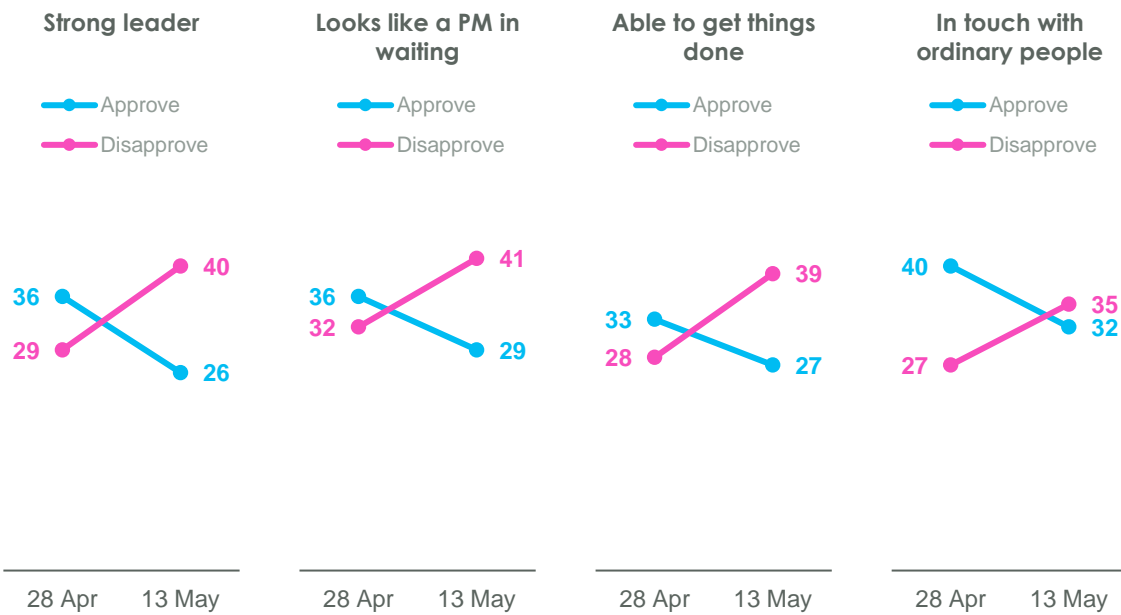


28 Apr 13 May

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Only 29% now think Keir Starmer looks like a prime minister in waiting

As long with his overall approval ratings, many of Starmer’s ratings have tumbled, particularly those around his strength and ability to act. Starmer’s net approval has dropped on being a strong leader (+7% to -14%), looking like a prime minister in waiting (+4% to -12%) and being able to get things done (+5% to -11%). Even one of his key strong suits, being seen to be in touch with ordinary people, more now disagree (35%) that this applies to him than agrees (32%).



However, on some other areas the hit has been more limited. A plurality still agree that Keir Starmer has the nation’s best interest at heart (41% agree vs 26% disagree), and a plurality still think he sticks to his principles (36% agree vs 29% disagree).

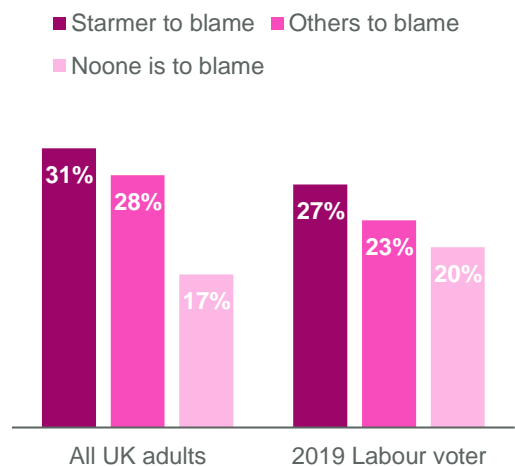
31% blame Starmer for result

Two thirds (67%) of the public think that Labour did badly in the local elections, and only 20% think they did well. This includes almost seven in ten (69%) 2019 Labour voters that think Labour performed badly in the elections.

By comparison, 72% think the Conservatives did well, while only 14% think they did badly.

31% of those who think Labour did badly blame Starmer, while 28% blame others in the Labour Party. However, 2019 Labour voters who think Labour did badly are more likely than the public as a whole to say nobody is to blame and the result was always going to be tough (20% vs 17% respectively).

Who is to blame for Labour having done badly?



Third of Labour voters want Starmer to resign

Just under half (49%) of 2019 Labour voters think Keir Starmer should remain as Labour leader, but a third (33%) think he should resign.

Those opposed to Starmer have clearly begun to stop voting for Labour, as those who are *currently* intending to vote Labour want him to stay (57% remain as leader vs 28% resign).

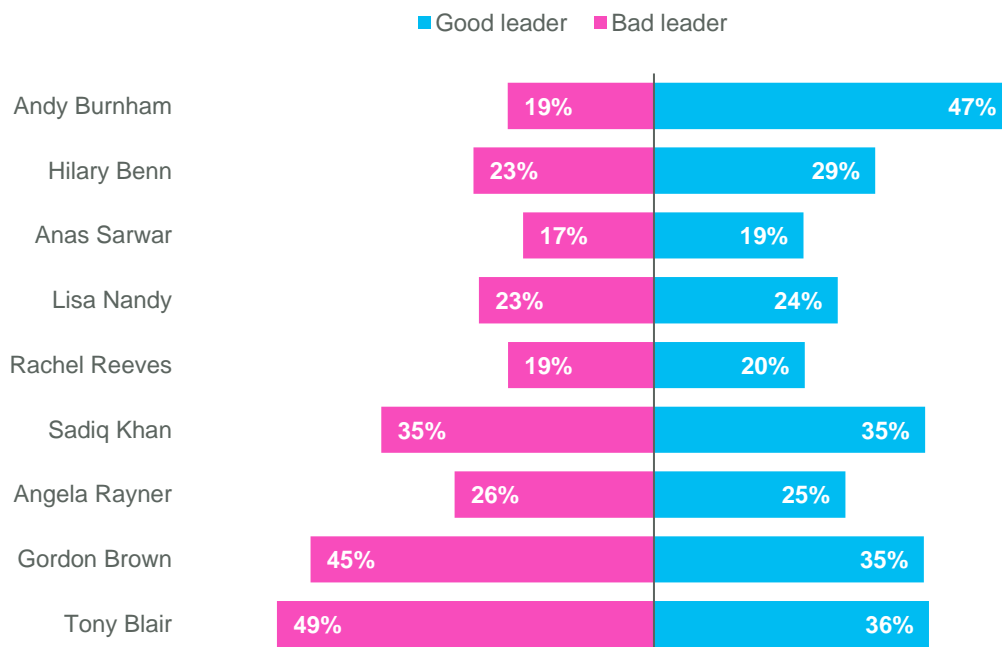
A majority of the public (57%) think Starmer has been a better Labour leader than Jeremy Corbyn, while only 23% think Corbyn was better. 2019 Labour voters are more divided, with only half (50%) believing Starmer was the better leader while 35% think Corbyn was.

Burnham apparent public favourite as alternative Labour leader

Andy Burnham has the highest net approval rating as a potential good leader of the Labour Party now, according to UK adults: 47% think he would be a good leader now while 19% think he would be bad.

Of all the names tested, Tony Blair has the worst rating, with half (49%) believing Tony Blair would be a bad leader of the Labour Party now.

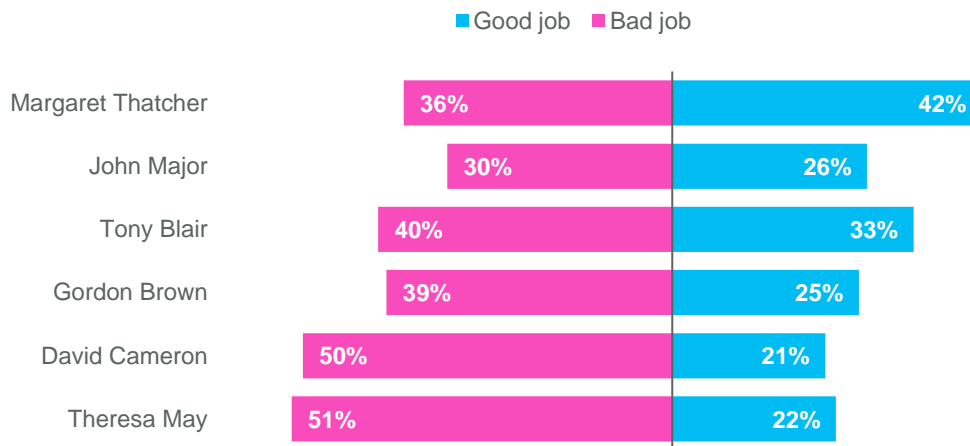
Would these be good or bad Labour leaders now?



Past leaders

Trying to find some sort of historical benchmark, we looked at how the public perceive of past prime minister and which of them did a good or bad job. Margaret Thatcher is the only prime minister with a net positive rating on this metric (42% think she did a good job vs 36% bad job).

Did these prime ministers do a good or bad job?



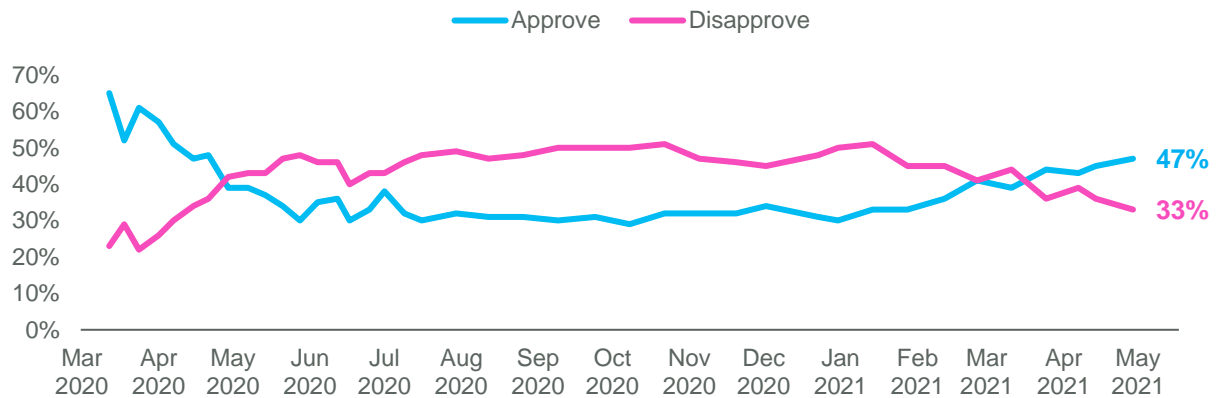
To represent the difficult findings for the Labour Party, Labour-leaning Leave seats have a narrowly net positive perception of Margaret Thatcher (39% good job vs 38% bad job), while having a net negative perception of Tony Blair (32% good job vs 37% bad job).

Coronavirus

Government maintains positive ratings

The government's handling of the pandemic now has a net approval rating of +14%, the highest net approval rating since mid-April 2020. Now just under half (47%) approve of their handling, while 33% disapprove.

Approval of the governments handling of Coronavirus



There are other very positive ratings for the government. Just over half (51%) now think the government is acting proportionally to the crisis, only 28% now think they are underreacting, while 75% now approve of the government's handling of the vaccine rollout.

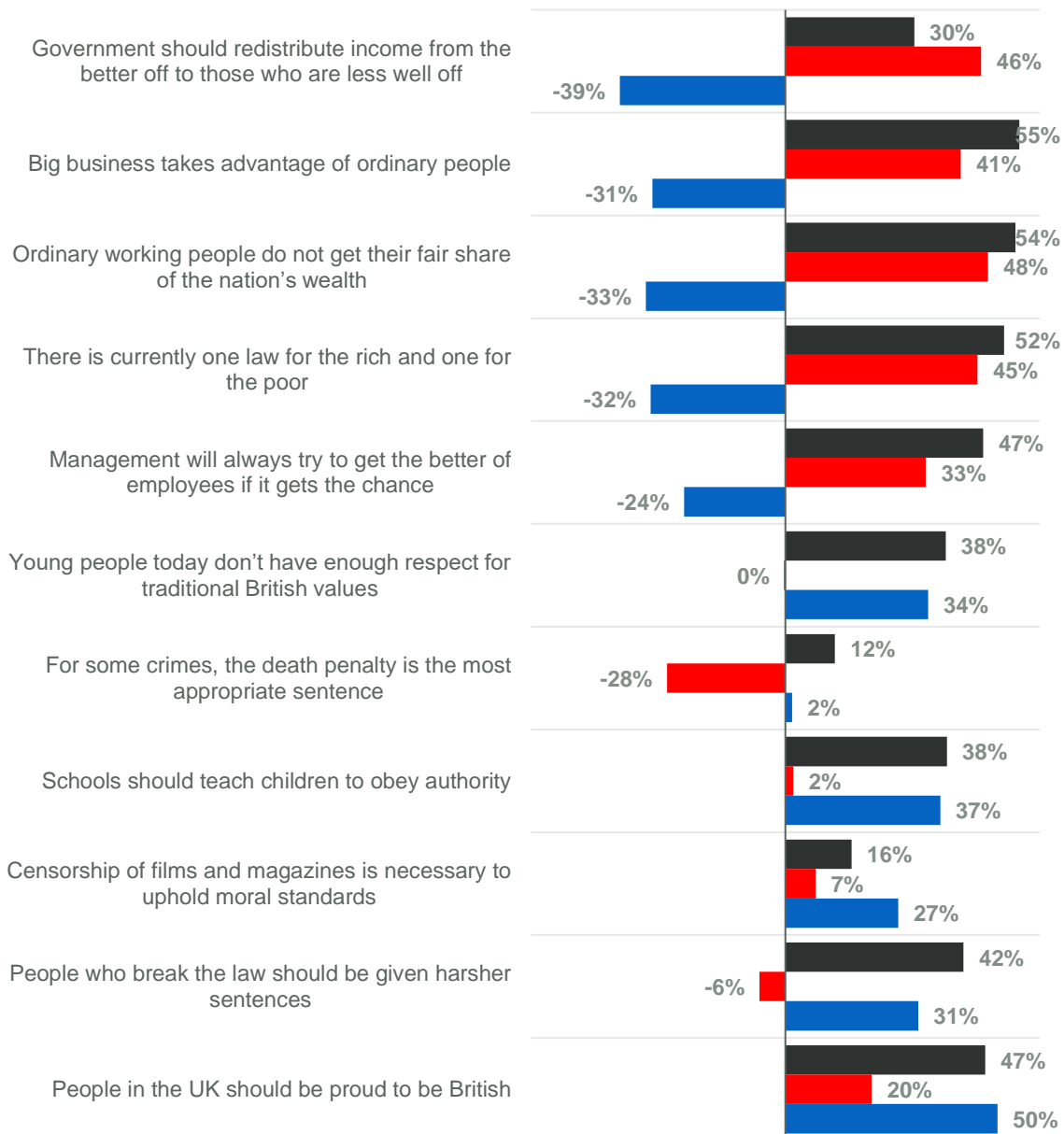
Parties vs. the public

We asked the public whether they not they agreed with a series of economic and cultural statements, and then asked them whether they thought Labour and the Conservatives agreed with the same statement.

On almost all of the economic statements, the Conservatives were seen to disagree with where most of the public were. On the cultural statements, with some differences, the Conservatives were judged to be much closer to where the public was.

Where the public stand, and view the parties as standing,

■ What UK adults agree with ■ Labour agrees ■ Conservatives agree



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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