



What people think,  
feel and do

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# The Political Report

## 27th May 2021



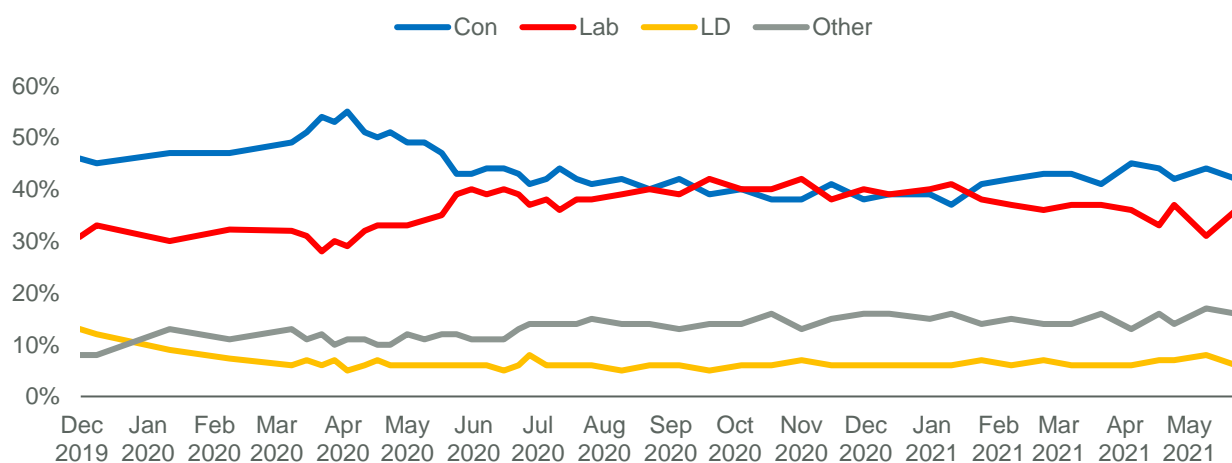
From the Opinium/Observer polling series

27th May 2021

## One-minute takeaway

- The Conservative lead has fallen to 6 points from 13 in the week after Super Thursday at the beginning of May. The Conservatives are on 42% (-2) while Labour are on 36% (+5)
- Boris Johnson’s approval rating has fallen from +6 to -6, while Keir Starmer’s has held steady at -9.
- The number of people who approve of the government’s handling of Coronavirus has dropped with 40% now approving (-7) and 40% now disapproving (+7).
- Despite only 20% trusting Cummings to tell the truth, compared to 71% who don’t trust him, people do generally believe a lot of the claims Cumming’s made -e.g.
  - At the start of the pandemic the Prime Minister regarded Coronavirus as a scare story and described it as “the new Swine Flu” – 60% true / 24% untrue
  - That the government was following a strategy of “herd immunity” at the start of the pandemic- 66% true / 20% untrue
  - That the Health Secretary lied about older people being tested before they were moved from hospitals to care homes. – 49% true /28% untrue
  - That Boris Johnson was so distracted by his personal life in March 2020 that he was unable to concentrate on the decisions that need to be taken about Covid – 52% true / 34% untrue
  - That Boris Johnson went on holiday in February 2020 without paying attention to the potential crisis that was approaching – 56% true / 26% untrue
- 44% think Hancock should resign as health secretary, compared to 30% who think he should keep his job.
- Just 14% think Cummings should have had a senior job in government, compared to 61% who think he shouldn’t have.
- And yet, 71% of the public still approve of the government’s handling of the supply and provision of the vaccine, compared to just 9% who disapprove.
- With the rise of the new Indian variant, 43% of people now support the postponing of the June 21st lockdown easing. This compares to 34% who think it should go ahead as planned, and 10% who think it should be bought forward.

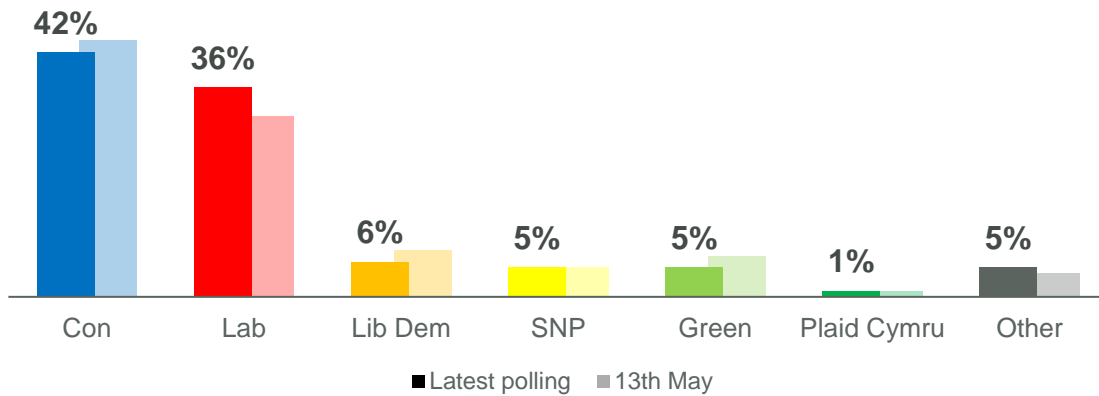
### Voting intention since the 2019 general election



# Headline Trackers

## Conservative lead drops to 6 points

The Conservative lead has halved from 13 points to 6 points. The Conservatives are on 42%, down 2 point from a fortnight ago, while Labour are on 36%, up 5 points.



# The leaders

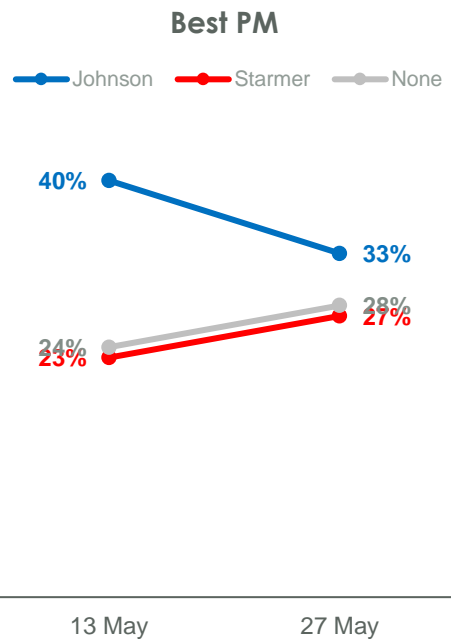
## Johnson lead as best prime minister drops

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

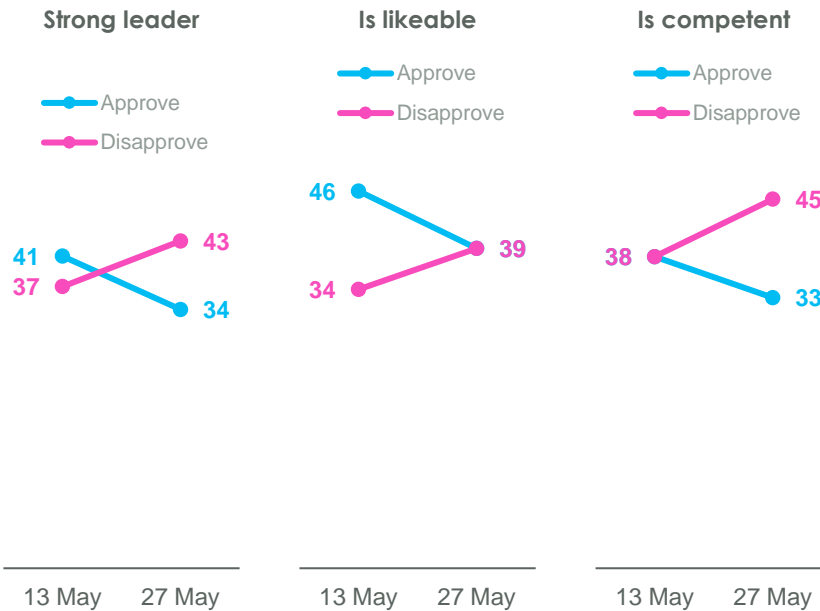
However, the impact of Cumming's comments over the past week seems to have impacted perceptions of the prime minister.

One in three (33%) think that Boris Johnson is best as prime minister, down from 40% a fortnight before. Similarly, the proportion who think Keir Starmer would be the best PM has increased from 23% to 27%, although still below 'none of the above' on 28%.

In similar vein, Johnson's approval ratings have also fallen from +6% to -6% while Starmer's has held steady at -9%.



Along with his approval ratings, some of Johnson’s ratings have also tumbled compared to two weeks ago. Johnson’s approval has dropped on being strong (41% down to 34%), being likeable (46% down to 39%) and being competent (38% down to 33%).



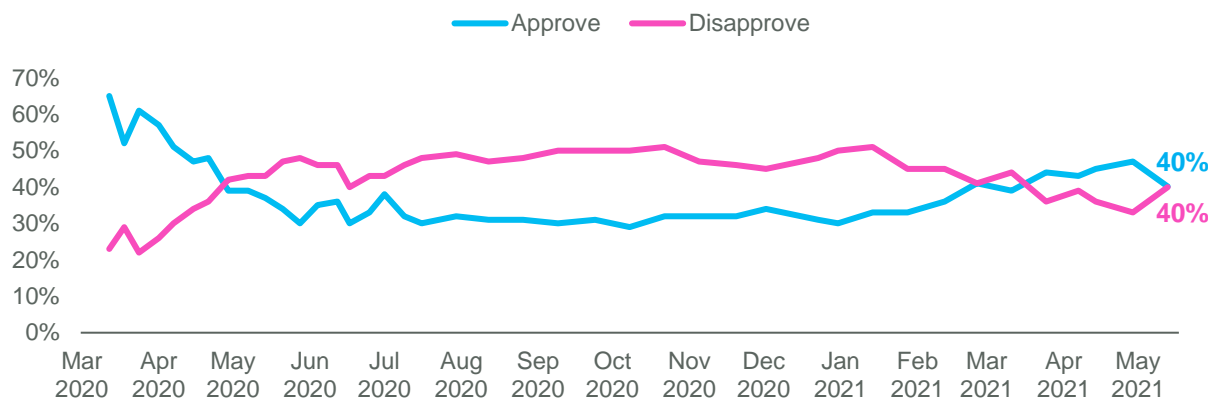
But Keir Starmer, meanwhile, has also seen a drop in the number who think he is decisive (27% down from 36%), is in touch with ordinary people (28% down from 32%) and has similar views to my own (28% down from 32%).

## Coronavirus

### Approval of government handling of Coronavirus has dropped

The government’s handling of the pandemic now has a net approval rating of 0%, a drop of 14 points. The number of people who approve of the government’s handling of Coronavirus has dropped with 40% now approving (down from 47% a fortnight ago) and 40% disapproving (up from 33%).

## Approval of the governments handling of Coronavirus



More specifically, 41% disapprove of the Prime Ministers handling, compared to 38% who approve. 42% disapprove of Matt Hancock’s handling, compared to 31% who approve.

Two thirds (66%) of the public think the government acted too slowly in responding to Coronavirus, compared to just 28% who think they acted fast enough. More specifically, 69% think they didn’t act quickly enough with lockdown 1 in March, 62% with lockdown 2 in Autumn, and 67% with the new restrictions around Christmas.

And yet, 71% of the public still approve of the government’s handling of the supply and provision of the vaccine, compared to just 9% who disapprove.

## Public divided on if lifting of restrictions should be postponed beyond 21<sup>st</sup> June

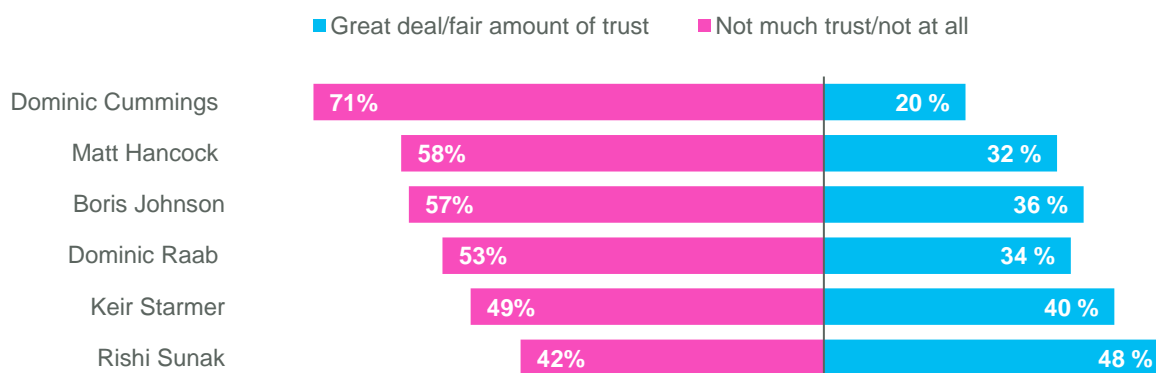
With the rise of the new Indian variant, 43% of people now support the postponing of the June 21st lockdown easing. This compares to 34% who think it should go ahead as planned, and 10% who think it should be bought forward.

## Cumming’s driving down support for Johnson

Most of the public believe many of Cummings claims despite not trusting him

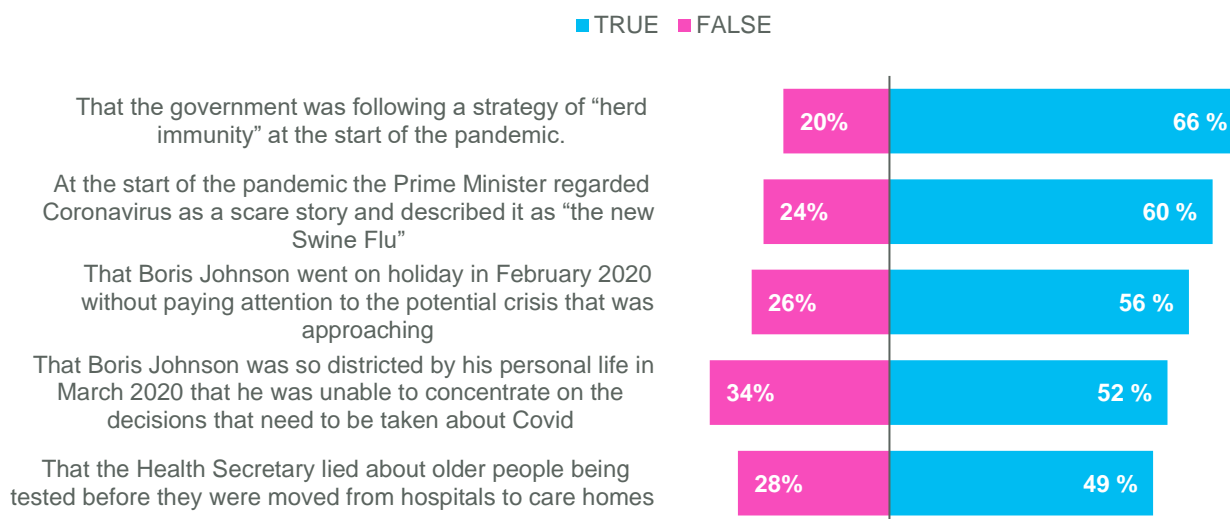
Despite only 20% generally trusting Dominic Cummings to tell the truth, compared to 71% who don't trust him, people do believe a lot of the specific claims he made in his appearance in front of a select committee this week.

### How much do you trust the following to tell the truth?



Two thirds (66%) of the public believe the accusation that the government was following a strategy of herd immunity at the beginning of the pandemic, including half (50%) of Conservative voters. Meanwhile, 60% of the public believe Johnson regarded Coronavirus as a scare story and described it as "the new Swine Flu". This compares to less than half that number (24%) who don't believe it.

### Do you think these accusations are true or false?



Half (49%) also believe the accusation that the Health Secretary lied about older people being tested before they were moved from hospital to care homes, although Conservative voters are much less likely to believe this, with just 20% thinking it is true.

There have been questions over whether Matt Hancock should stay in his role, with Cummings's saying he should have been sacked for "at least 15 to 20 things – including lying to everybody on

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multiple occasions". A plurality (44%) think he should resign, while 30% think he should remain as Health Secretary. However, Conservative voters do back the Health Secretary, with three fifths (58%) thinking he should remain while 22% think he should resign.

However, the claim that Cummings made that the public most strongly agree with is that he should never have had a senior job in government. Just 14% think he should have, compared to 61% who think he shouldn't have.

# 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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