The Political Report

**13th November 2019**



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| From the Opinium/Observer polling series | |
| Fieldwork 13 to 14 November 2019 |
| 15th November 2019 | |

One-minute takeaway

The Conservative lead returns to 16-points as the Conservative vote hits 44%.

Despite the process already being 6 months in the making, the Conservatives continue to claim an ever larger chunk of the Leave vote, with 7 in 10 now backing the Tories

However, Boris Johnson’s persona lead has not improved, suggesting a Johnson versus Corbyn election will have only limited success

Brexit remains clearly the key issue in the election, despite a slight dip from the very beginning of the campaign.

Trust in the top economic teams have remained entirely unchanged after two weeks of campaigning, with the Conservatives maintaining a clear lead.

If the Conservatives pivot to a focus on the economy they still stand a chance of winning over Labour Leavers, as 28% trust Johnson and Javid more than Corbyn and McDonnell (32%).

Labour voters are most likely to come from a ‘strong Labour family’ who always vote the same way

The one-to-one TV debates will get the most interest, with 53% believing they are important for leaders under pressure

The state of the parties and leaders

The Conservative lead returns to 16 points

After a worrying week for the Conservatives where Labour gained 3 points in the polls, the Conservatives have now regained their 16-point lead by jumping 3 points since. Labour are down 1 point to 28%.

Similarly, the Liberal Democrats have also dropped 1 point since last week, dropping to 14%, their lowest showing since August and the early days of Johnson’s premiership.

Tories overwhelming choice amongst Leavers

This might be a familiar story by now, but the degree to which the Conservatives have been able to consolidate the Leave vote is extraordinary. Now seven in ten (69%) of all Leavers intend to vote for the Conservatives, up 13-points from 56% in mid-October and a world away from the mere 21% of Leavers who backed the party in mid-May.

There are the very early signs of some movement in favour of Labour amongst Remain voters, who are now dividing 44% for Labour and 26% for the Liberal Democrats. This 18-point lead for Labour amongst Remainers is the highest since the European Parliament elections. However, the movement is slow and at present Remain voters are still heavily divided by comparison to the speedily uniting Leave vote.

*Key: week 9 is the week of the general election.*

If we compare this to the campaign last time, we find that the Conservatives consistently have a larger lead amongst Leave voters this time than they did in the 2017 election. Although the Tories also saw a rally in the first half of the campaign amongst Leave voters, the trend over the past 3 months has been far clearer.

The Labour Remain vote is gaining in support amongst Remainers the same way it did in 2017. However, although the lead over the Liberal Democrats might look similar to the lead Labour had over the Conservatives in 2017, the Remain side is a far more crowded field this time.

Johnson still the most popular choice for PM whilst Corbyn maintains highest score since August

Boris Johnson is still the most popular choice for Prime Minister.

Currently 35% think Johnson would make the best prime minister, down 3 points from last week. As with last week, 20% think that Jeremy Corbyn would be the best prime minister, up 2 points since last week.

Although the Conservatives might have some traction in turning voters off Corbyn, there isn’t a clear lead for Boris Johnson that might suggest labelling it as a Johnson versus Corbyn election will be tremendously successful.

Only 30% are actively satisfied with Boris Johnson down 1 point from last week’s poll, while 19% are dissatisfied with him but prefer him to Jeremy Corbyn (totalling 49%).

The key is the difference between Remainers and Leavers. Just over half of Leavers (55%) are satisfied with Johnson, while only 9% prefer Corbyn to Johnson.

However, much of Boris Johnson campaign seems to have been geared at trying to raise the proportion of Remainers who at least prefer Johnson to Corbyn, even if they are currently unsatisfied in the PM’s premiership.

Polling commentary

**James Crouch, research manager at Opinium, commented:**

“For the past six months the Conservatives have consolidated their position amongst Leave voters. Especially since Boris Johnson became prime minister, week after week we have noticed more Brexit supporters falling in line behind the Conservatives. It might not be a new story, but now we are in a territory we haven’t seen before, with unprecedented numbers of Leave voters backing the Tories from all political backgrounds. That’s what gives them their 16-point lead, the third we have recorded in two months.

Ultimately the trends we have seen for weeks have continued because very little about the public’s perception of the leaders and their policies has changed. In the following weeks the leader debates and the unveiling of the manifestos might move the dial, but to what extent remains to be seen.”

How this election will be fought

Brexit remains the issue on which voters are most likely to base their vote

Brexit remains the top issue that voters are most likely to base their vote on in the general election, with 36% saying they will decided their based on this issue. This is followed by health (20%) and the economy (7%).

Although the campaign has broadened out, it remains key from the Conservatives piouint of view that Brexit remains the key driver for voters.

Ultimately, Brexit as the key driver for how people will vote has dropped slighty from 40% to 36% over the past fortnight, while the NHS has increased slightly (18% to 20%). However, it appears not have dented the Tories’ hopes so far, as they maintain their 16-point lead.

Perceptions of the Conservative stewardship of the economy similar to previous elections

Two in five (39%) trust Boris Johnson and Sajid Javid the most to handle the economy, while only a fifth (21%) trust Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell most.

We have tracked this question now for three weeks running and it is apparent that there is almost precisely no movement in how voters perceive the two main teams on the economy, despite economic issue rising more to the fore in the last week. Interestingly, while some might imagine that Jeremy Corbyn would be close to traditional Labour Leavers than Boris Johnson, this appears to not be the case.

Labour Leavers are almost evenly split on which team is trusted most on the economy (28% for Johnson & Javid vs 32% for Corbyn & McDonnell). This suggests that if the campaign were to shift more to the economy and away from Brexit the Conservatives would continue to be able to carve Leave voters away from their traditional Labour home.

This also might be good grounds to try and claim back some Conservative Remainers, as almost none (3%) trust the Labour team with the economy.

Family ties

Labour voters most likely to come from a family with a similar political background

The concept of a Labour family is pretty strong, as 15% of all 2017 Labour voters said that they always vote the same way as their family, compared to only 10% of conservative voters. This trend has got increasingly strong as now a fifth (20%) of current Labour voters say that they always vote the same way as their family.

Perhaps to indicate the break that’s happening in politics, Remainers are almost twice as likely as Leavers to say that they always vote the same way as their family (14% vs 8% respectively).

As a family background, this also is even more apparent. Three quarters (77%) current Labour voters say that their family votes the same way either all the time or most of the time, compared to only two thirds (68%) of Conservatives and half (53%) of Liberal Democrat voters.

Similarly, 41% of Labour voters who tend to vote the same as their family at least some of the time.

The divide in Britain’s families and the impact on this election is demonstrated well by the family background of voters. A quarter (27%) of Remainers who tend to vote the same way as their family come from Conservative families while the same proportion of Leavers (27%) come from a Labour family.

The debates

The one-to-one debates will get high viewing figures

The one-to-one debates are attracting the most interest from voters. Over two in five (42%) say they are likely to watch the BBC leadership debate between Johnson and Corbyn and 41% are likely to watch the ITV leadership debate between Johnson and Corbyn.

However, interest in the debates with more leaders is slightly lower. In fact, the more leaders the less interest. Just over a third (36%) are likely to watch the BBC Question Time debate between the leaders of the Conservative, Labour, SNP and Lib Dem parties, and only a third (34%) are likely to watch the BBC debate between senior party representatives from the seven major GB parties.

The debates themselves are polarising, but on balance the public think they have something useful to contribute. Over half (53%) think the TV debates are an important way of testing how leaders can cope with high pressure situations, and 52% think are an important way for politicians to talk directly to voters without the filter of journalists.

On the flip side, 41% think the debates are pointless between leaders as we do not pick the prime minister directly, but 40% also think they take up too much of the conversation in election campaigns and this crowds out other important issues.

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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