HOW PARTIES' 2019

**VOTERS FEEL NOW** 

Lah

39

44

17

Con

25

65

10

HOW PARTIES' 2019 VOTERS FEEL NOW

Lab

18

17

15

21

14

5

42

% All

30

Lih

Dem

36

47

17

Lib Dem

34

28

18

17

20

6

15

33

With Labour dithering over key issue, poll delivers stark warning

**ELECTION 2024** 

MORE than half of voters are against revaluing council tax bands, according to a new poll by Lord Ashcroft. Labour has sown confusion over its plans for council tax -

with senior party figures giving different answers when asked whether they will overhaul the system.

Council tax banding in England has not changed since 1991, and has been criticised for not reflecting how house prices have changed around the country. But 52 per cent of voters believe revaluing council tax bands to

base them on current property prices would 'just be an excuse to charge more', according to the Ashcroft research, shared exclusively with the Mail. Only 30 per cent think a revaluation would make council tax fairer.

With two weeks until the election, Lord Ashcroft's poll also gives Labour a 25-point lead, and puts the Tories and Reform UK neckand-neck on 18 points.

Sir Keir Starmer continues to lead Rishi Sunak when voters were asked who would make the best prime minister, by 38 per cent to 17 per cent.

And 39 per cent believe the Labour leader would do a better iob at running the economy compared to 24 per cent who back the Prime Minister.

The poll, carried out from June 13 to 17, with a sample size of 5,187, also found almost half of voters who are dissatisfied with the current Tory Government have little faith in Labour.

Some 46 per cent said that Sir Keir and his party 'probably won't do a good job but they can hardly be worse than the Government

However the poll found that while Tory policies are popular, the party is not. Pledges such as the Help to

#### **Stephen Glover SEE PAGE 14**

Buy scheme, the 'triple-lock plus' on pensions and reducing legal migration had more support from voters when the party proposing it was not named

Lord Ashcroft, writing in today's Mail, said that was 'especially bad news for the Tories, since it reveals how little they can do to change their fortunes

He writes: 'As the day of reckoning approaches the Tories will be tempted to turn their fire on 'Voters will not take the

Conservatives' word about anything, let alone the qualities of their opponents, but they already have plenty of doubts about the

likely new regime. 'Only one in three expect Labour to bring more stability and com-petence in government, lower NHS waiting times or improved public services; fewer than three în ten anticipaté more jobs, opportunity and prosperity or more manageable living costs; and fewer than one in six think there will be stricter immigration controls or a tougher approach to crime.'

Among voters who backed the Tories in 2019 but say they are Deputy Political Editor unlikely to vote for the party this

By Harriet Line

time, 41 per cent say the Conservatives need a 'huge defeat so they get the message'.

But 40 per cent say that if Labour are going to win, they want there to be 'enough Conservative MPs left to form a strong Opposition and hold the new government to account'.

However, 44 per cent of voters are worried that a Labour government might spend too much and get Britain into debt and 40 per cent fear they might put up taxes. Sir Keir's plan to charge private

schools 20 per cent VAT is popular among voters, with only 27 per cent saying it will punish aspira-tional families and create extra pressure on state schools

The raid on private school fees is one of a handful of taxes Labour has said it will raise to pay for its spending plans. But the party has been in a

muddle over its plans for council tax, with different shadow ministers making different promises over recent days. Yesterday Rachel Reeves said

Labour was not 'planning to reform council tax' in an interview with Sky News, but did not completely rule it out. The Shadow Chancellor also told the BBC that she was 'not in the business of tinkering with tax rates' and said 'no when she was asked if she would re-evaluate council tax bands.

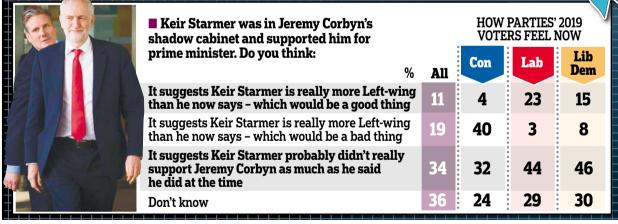
But on Tuesday. Sir Keir refused to rule out council tax band revaluation. He said he would not write the budgets for the next five vears' during a radio phone-in on LBC. but claimed 'none of our plans require a tax rise'.

Yesterday the Mail revealed that a bombshell dossier put forward by an influential group of Labour MPs – including Sir Keir – pro posed reforming council tax to make it 'fairer'. The plan by the Tribune group of Opposition MPs was one of six tax raids suggested to raise £60 billion.

A party spokesman said the submission was rejected at an early stage in the manifesto process.

government after the next election? Tick all that apply] % They might spend too much and get Britain into debt They might put my taxes up They might not control immigration

Keir Starmer being Prime Minister They might be too 'woke'



## Sir Keir in muddle over

SIR Keir Starmer and Rachel By Claire Ellicott Reeves appeared to be at odds over their definition of 'working people' vesterday as they continued to face questions about tax rises.

The Labour leader on Tuesday defined the group as those who do not have the savings to get them through a crisis at home. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt imme

diately accused him of letting slip 'Labour's true plans to raise taxes across the board'. But yesterday, Shadow Chan-

cellor Ms Reeves said the definition of working people included

### and Kumail Jaffer

both pensioners and savers. She said Sir Keir had been citing just one example

Labour's manifesto includes a pledge to 'not increase taxes on working people' but the party had not. until Sir Keir's radio interview, defined what that meant.

While the party has ruled out increasing income tax, National Insurance or VAT if it wins power, it has refused to rule out a number of other tax rises.

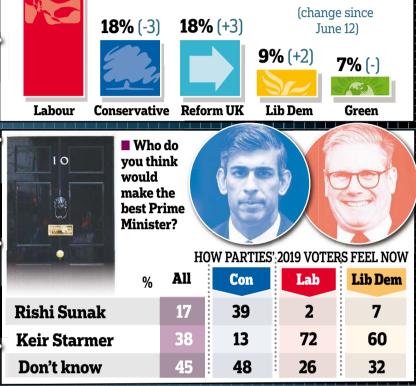
During an interview on LBC, Sir

Keir was asked what he meant by working people.

'People who earn their living, rely on our [public] services and don't really have the ability to write a cheque when they get

into trouble,' he replied. Asked if Sir Keir meant that anyone with savings was not a working person, Ms Reeves told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: 'No, working people are people who get their income from going out to work every day, and also pensioners who have worked all their lives and are now in retirement, drawing down on their pensions.' Pressed

THE STATE OF PLAY WITH JUST 43% (-) Labour



Which of the following comes closest to vour own viev

If Labour are goin I want there to be **Conservative MP** form a strong Opj and hold the new government to ac

The Conservative huge defeat so th the message

Don't know

on whether that included those Asked who was excluded from Labour's definition of working peo-

vate equity bosses to Sky News. Sir Keir later backtracked, telling reporters vesterday that working people did have savings. He insisted: 'I come within my own definition of a working person, which is earning my living. paying my taxes and knowing what it means to save money, and when you do save money, not wanting to use that money to get



19

this. Do you think..

A revaluation would make

Council tax bands are currently based

on property prices in 1991. Some people

have suggested there should be a

council tax fairer by basing it on

revaluation to base them on current

prices, other people are opposed to

#### Which of the following, if any, worries you about the idea of a Labour

Con 73 63 70 61 36 62

They might try to reverse Brexit 27 56 13 Something else 9 14 Nothing worries me about the 22 4 idea of a Labour government

REFORM

Don't touch council tax bands, say voters

### **TWO WEEKS TO GO**

Looking at those more likely than not to vote for a particular party (those whose highest likelihood of voting for one party was at least 50/100), this implies current vote shares of:

[2019 Conservative voters who say their likelihood of voting Conservative on July 4 is less than 50/100]

w?		CURRENT 2024 LIKELY VOTE		
%	All	Lab	Lib Dem	Reform UK
ng to win, e enough Ps left to position v ccount	40	25	32	39
res need a hey get	41	65	46	45
	19	10	22	16

## 'working people'

who had put money aside, she acknowledged that 'many working people do have savings'.

ple, she cited non-doms and pri-

out of a cost-of-living crisis which is of the Government's making.' Ms Reeves also faced questions about Labour's plans to raise NHS

spending by less than former Tory chancellor George Osborne had during austerity. Asked by the BBC how she could

promise change when the health budget would increase by 1.1 per cent compared with 1.4 per cent under Mr Osborne, Ms Reeves said Labour's manifesto was focusing on growth. She also refused to rule out tax rises on pensions and capital gains, as well as reforms to inheritance tax. Comment – Page 14

WOMAN in one of my focus groups vote Conservative.

This, in fact, she had no intention of doing – which tells you something about the value of the manifestos that have consumed the interest of the political class over the past week.

Very occasionally, a policy promise will capture the public's imagination or go down so badly that it torpedoes the campaign of whoever proposed it. But, most of the time, policy platforms only serve to amplify whatever people thought of the parties already.

While people often claim to read all the manifestos before making up their minds (if you think poli-ticians tell fibs, you should listen to the voters), in reality they will catch the odd snippet, which they will see through the prism of the views that they already hold. This is amply demonstrated in my latest poll, where we asked respondents what they thought of various policies – but only told half of them which manifesto they had been taken from.

In nearly every case, the poli-cies were rated more popular (or less unpopular) when people weren't told which party was behind them.

For example, support for a new Help to Buy scheme and scrapping stamp duty for first-time buyers up to £425,000 rises by 15 points when you take the Con-servative Party's name off it, and raising the income tax threshold to  $\pm 20,000$  is 23 points higher when people don't know it comes from Reform UK. The effect applies to Labour and the Lib Dems, too. In other words, people's opinions of the policies depend on the parties as much as the other way round.

HIS is especially bad news for the Tories, since it reveals how little they can do to change their fortunes. I found that the average likelihood of those who voted for the Conservatives in 2019 turning out for the party again on July 4 had fallen again since last week, to just 37 out of 100.

Only 7 per cent of Conservative 2019 voters – let alone anyone else – say they are satisfied with the current Government.

Looking at those who say they are more likely than not to vote for a particular party, we find Labour well ahead on 43 per cent and Reform UK drawing level with the

As the day of reckoning approaches, the Tories will be tempted to turn their fire on Labour and Keir Starmer

Voters will not take the

# It's not the A if she had nothing to go on but the leaflets that came through her door, and if these had no party people don't like... it's the **Tory party**



Conservatives' word about anything, let alone the qualities of their opponents, but they already have plenty of doubts

Ashcroft

about the likely new regime. Only one in three expects Labour to bring more stability and competence in government. ower NHS waiting times or improve public services.

Fewer than three in ten anticipate more jobs, opportunity and prosperity or more manage-able living costs. And fewer than one in six thinks there will be stricter immigration controls or a

tougher approach to crime. Many have worries, including runaway spending, debt and – especially – tax. Rishi Sunak's claim of a £2,000 tax hike under Labour remains the one memorable point from the first televised debate, and few believe that any tax rises will be limited to what has already been declared.

Though Starmer has widened his personal lead over Sunak, still nearly half say they don't know who would do the better job as PM. In my groups, uncertain voters say he seems wishy-washy and vague about his plans.

Some also wonder about the fact that five years ago Starmer campaigned to put Jeremy Corbyn into No 10. Opinion was

divided as to whether the Labour leader is more Left-wing than he now claims (which Labourleaning voters are much more likely to think would be a good thing) or if he didn't support Corbyn as strongly as he said he did at the time.

(Maybe it would help if he talked about his father being a toolmaker. Just a thought.)

UT these points seem unlikely to make much of a dent. I found that of those saying they

would prefer a Labour government, only 37 per cent said they thought Starmer and his party would do a good job governing Britain.

A greater number – 46 per cent said Labour probably wouldn't do a good job, but they could hardly be worse than what we have now.

The Tories' final appeal to the country is to keep Labour's majority down to reasonable oportions and avoid giving Starmer a blank cheque.

Listening to voters in competitive seats around the country, I find that this resonates with some people, but they are torn. Among 2019 Tories who say they are unlikely to vote for the party this time, four in ten want there to be enough Conservatives left in Parliament to form a strong opposition and hold the

government to account. But fractionally more agree that the Tories 'need a huge defeat so they get the message'

■ Lord Ashcroft is an international businessman author, philanthropist and pollster. His research is at LordAshcroftPolls.com. Follow him on X/Facebook