

Just one voter in 10 says Labour is doing good job

By **Glen Owen**
POLITICAL EDITOR

ONLY one in ten people now thinks that Labour is doing a good job in government as Sir Keir Starmer experiences a cliff-edge collapse in support unprecedented in the modern era.

Exclusive polling data published in today's Mail on Sunday is also likely to shake Chancellor Rachel Reeves – by revealing only 2 per cent of those surveyed think the economy is in good shape.

The research, by former Conservative deputy chairman Lord Ashcroft, concludes many 2024 Labour voters are experiencing profound 'buyer's remorse', with a third of those who switched from the Conservatives to Labour saying that they wished they had made a different choice.

Those who voted Labour last year put their chances of doing so again at the next election at an average of only 59 out of 100. Lord Ashcroft concludes that the haemorrhage in support is due to a combination of factors, 'including winter fuel allowance cuts, rising small-boat migration, tax rises, the struggling economy, broken promises and the lavish supply of free accommodation, tickets, clothes and spectacles we now know the Prime Minister and his colleagues enjoyed while decrying their opponents' cronyism'. The scale of the disenchant-

HOW THE DOUBTS ARE SETTING IN ACROSS BRITAIN

VIEW ON LABOUR

Doing good things	10%
Haven't achieved much	41%
Want them out as soon as possible	38%

HOW HAVE THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISIONS AFFECTED YOU?

Positively	5%
Negatively	43%

BEST PRIME MINISTER

Sir Keir Starmer	31%
Kemi Badenoch	11%
Nigel Farage	21%



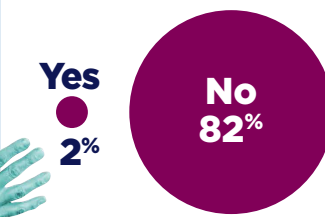
WHO IS ACTING AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION?

No effective opposition	27%
Kemi Badenoch	14%
Nigel Farage	26%

IS BRITAIN ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

Yes	19%
No	57%

IS THE BRITISH ECONOMY DOING WELL?



SHOULD 16-YEAR-OLDS BE GIVEN THE VOTE?

Yes	38%
No	54%

ment, just six months after Sir Keir won a landslide general election, is revealed when voters are asked how the Labour Government's decisions have affected them. Just 5 per cent said 'positively', while 43 per cent – including nearly a quarter of Labour supporters – said 'negatively'.

Just one in five voters are optimistic about the future. A clear majority, 57 per cent, think that

Britain is not 'on the right track', while 82 per cent do not think that the economy is in good shape.

The respondents blamed the current malaise on a mixture of Labour policies, the actions of the

last Tory Government and global forces. The Prime Minister's only comfort is the apparent lack of a strong alternative.

When asked who is acting as the most effective Opposition, the largest response – 27 per cent – is 'no one', followed by Nigel Farage's Reform UK on 26 per cent and Kemi Badenoch's Tories on 14 per cent.

The Labour leader still comes out on top of the 'best prime minister' ratings, with 31 per cent choosing him, followed by Mr Farage on 21 per cent and Ms Badenoch on 11 per cent.

His collapse in support could also be partly offset if Sir Keir proceeds with plans to give the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds, who are historically averse to backing the Tories. A majority of voters, 54 per

Use Beckham in charm offensive to score with Trump, Starmer told

By **Anna Mikhailova**
and **Caroline Graham**

SIR Keir Starmer is being urged to use celebrities like David Beckham to launch a charm offensive on Donald Trump.

Labour sources said former footballer Beckham has a better chance than politicians do of building bridges with the President because of his 'star power'.

The sources are concerned over Mr Trump's threat of punitive trade tariffs and reports his aides may put Sir Keir 'at the back of the queue' of world leaders who will be invited to Washington.

Sir Keir has been warned traditional diplomacy will not resonate with Mr Trump and he needs to use more 'creative' methods of building a relationship.

One insider said: 'Trump has no interest in Keir Starmer but likes celebrity and success. We might have more luck deploying the Beckhams as unofficial ambassadors.'

'We have success stories in sport, Hollywood, music – these are part of our soft power and we should be making the most of them and using that for British interest.'

Former Labour MP Lord Mann said a similar approach helped win the Olympics for London in 2012.

He said Mr Beckham was 'excellent' then at impressing dignitaries and should be deployed again.

'People liked meeting him', he said. 'We used other stars too but Beckham was the biggest pull, other than the Queen.'

'If you're having a dinner for Trump, you would want A-list celebrity there, the best of British.'

Leading the country? it's such a drag!

Sir Keir with drag queen Lawrence Chaney at a Burns Night celebration at No 10



LORD Mandelson attended a 'leaving do' in his honour in London last week as he brushed aside concerns that President Trump may block his appointment as US Ambassador.

A friend said he is flying to Washington this weekend after the farewell bash with business colleagues – and is confident he will take up his role this month.

But his appointment awaits Mr

Trump's sign-off. And it was reported last week that the White House may seek to block him after concerns over his 'political baggage' and links to China.

But the peer's ally dismissed that possibility, saying: 'Peter is a serious appointment' who will be a 'grown up in the room'. Chief Secretary to the Treasury Darren Jones added he is a 'world-recognised senior statesman'.

We shouldn't be shy of doing that.' A Labour source said: 'I would be surprised if this wasn't already being discussed.'

But it is understood that No 10 favours using the normal channels

and going through Britain's new ambassador Lord Mandelson.

Downing Street confirmed Sir Keir has not spoken to Mr Trump since his inauguration last Monday. Last week The Mail on Sun-

'Few have any confidence in the PM'

cent, oppose the plan. The research also found that only 28 per cent of voters think that ministers' green taxes are worth the impact on their household finances.

Respondents were also asked about rumours that the world's richest man, Elon Musk, might donate to Reform. Only one third would be happy for him to do so.

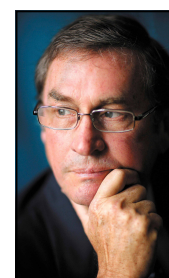
The research gives the thumbs down to Energy Secretary Ed Miliband's determination to decarbonise the electricity grid by 2030.

More than six in ten voters, including a majority of 2024 Labour voters, said they thought achieving these green goals would mean higher costs for themselves.

Lord Ashcroft writes in today's MoS that few voters 'feel that the Government has a sense of purpose, or have any confidence in the prime minister to get a grip. There is little sense that a plan exists to tackle the country's lingering crises in the economy, immigration and public services'.

A total 5,251 people were sampled between January 16 and 20.

Labour is doing good job



By **LORD ASHCROFT**

POLLSTER AND AUTHOR

WHAT do you think of it so far?' Eric Morecambe, pictured, used to cry halfway through a sketch on Morecambe & Wise. 'Rubbish!' the audience would yell back cheerfully. Finding out what the voters made of their first six months of Keir Starmer has been a bit like that, minus the laughs.

Most people have better things to do than think about politics, especially having endured a drawn-out general election campaign. But what gets through is telling.

In my research, when we ask people what stories they remember, they mention winter fuel allowance cuts, rising small-boat migration, tax rises, the struggling economy, broken promises and the lavish supply of free accommodation, tickets, clothes and spectacles we now know the Prime Minister and his colleagues enjoyed while decrying their opponents' cronyism.

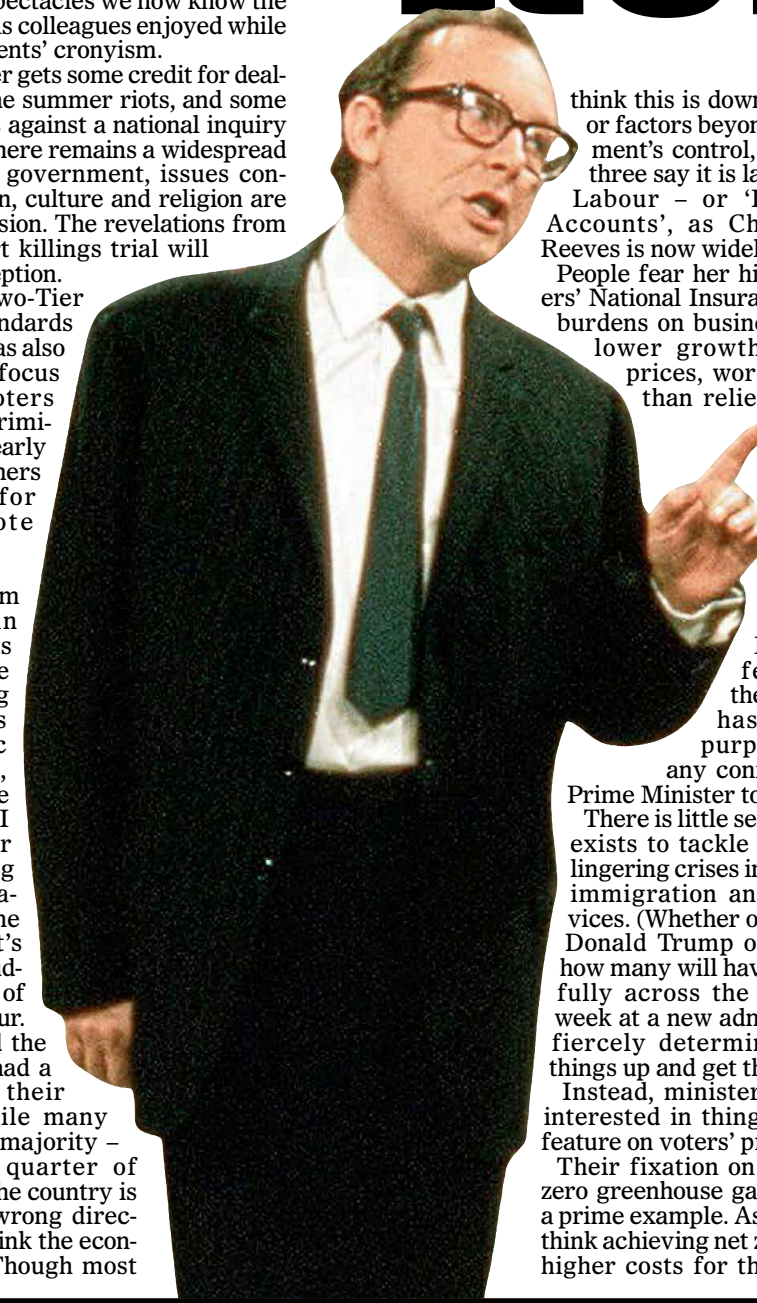
Though Keir Starmer gets some credit for dealing decisively with the summer riots, and some accept his arguments against a national inquiry on grooming gangs, there remains a widespread feeling that for this government, issues connected to immigration, culture and religion are simply not for discussion. The revelations from last week's Southport killings trial will only add to that perception.

The concept of 'Two-Tier Keir' and double standards in law enforcement has also taken hold – in my focus groups, Labour voters often talked about criminals being released early from prison while others were locked up for things they wrote on Facebook.

A PART from the train drivers and those receiving generous public sector pay awards, few think things are getting any better. I found more than four in ten voters saying they had been negatively affected by one of the Government's decisions so far, including nearly a quarter of those who voted Labour.

Only one in 20 said the party's actions had had a positive effect on their household. And while many voted for change, a majority – again including a quarter of Labour voters – say the country is still heading in the wrong direction. Just one in 50 think the economy is doing well. Though most

What do we think of Two-Tier Keir and Rachel from Accounts so far? RUBBISH!



think this is down to the Tories or factors beyond any government's control, nearly one in three say it is largely down to Labour – or 'Rachel from Accounts', as Chancellor Ms Reeves is now widely known.

People fear her hike in employers' National Insurance and other burdens on business will mean lower growth and higher prices, worsening rather than relieving the cost of living.

Majorities in all political and demographic groups are pessimistic about Britain's future. Not only that, few feel that the Government has a sense of purpose, or have any confidence in the Prime Minister to get a grip.

There is little sense that a plan exists to tackle the country's lingering crises in the economy, immigration and public services. (Whether or not they like Donald Trump or his agenda, how many will have looked wistfully across the Atlantic this week at a new administration so fiercely determined to shake things up and get things done?)

Instead, ministers seem more interested in things that barely feature on voters' priority lists.

Their fixation on reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions is a prime example. As I found, most think achieving net zero will mean higher costs for them and their

households, and only a minority think doing so is worth the cost or would significantly help to limit climate change.

Most people also oppose allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote, which the Government plans to legislate for this year.

The ostensible reason for the change is to encourage youngsters to participate in democracy, but just over a third believe that the real motive is to harvest more votes for Labour.

Despite these many complaints, Starmer's one big advantage is

'Majority feel the country is heading in the wrong direction'

the divided forces ranged against him. Very few say they have yet heard anything from new leader Kemi Badenoch and the Conservatives. At this stage, most assume they are regrouping and biding their time – and rightly so, given the way they left things.

Asked who is currently providing the most effective opposition, voters are nearly twice as likely to name Nigel Farage and Reform – with their five MPs – as the Tories.

Starmer retains a lead when we ask who would make the best prime minister – but only 31 per cent actually choose him.

Crucially for Labour, while only

a quarter of their 2024 voters say the Government is doing some good things, a further six in ten say they are still prepared to give them some time despite the lack of progress.

As many in my focus groups have argued, it would be tough to turn around a business in just six months, let alone a whole country after a series of political traumas and 14 years of another party's rule.

This – and the Tory-Reform schism – explain why Labour remains fractionally ahead when we ask people how likely they currently think they are to vote for each party next time round.

That said, our analysis shows that the number of voters prepared to give the Government any benefit of the doubt has fallen by ten points since the election.

And the average time these people are prepared to give them before deciding if they are up to the job is now 32 months, down from 40 months in the summer.

The longer time goes on with little to show for the change they craved, the more vulnerable Labour will be when the Government is really tested.

In Ernest Hemingway's debut novel *The Sun Also Rises*, first published in 1926, one of the characters asks another how he went bankrupt.

'Two ways,' he replies. 'Gradually and then suddenly.'

It's easy to see confidence in Labour following suit.

● Lord Ashcroft is an author, businessman, philanthropist and pollster. His research is available at LordAshcroftPolls.com