

**Progressive
CentreUK**



What are progressives for?

Survey Results

Conducted by Opinium

April 2019

Summary: Britain Beyond Brexit

As the European parliamentary campaign gets under way, new polling for Progressive Centre UK suggests that the British public is more exhausted than ever with Brexit.

With over half the country (51%) now believing Britain is heading in the wrong direction, Brexit tops the list of issues most Brits think the media spends too much time talking about (41%). The NHS, inequality, climate change and crime all feature higher than Brexit on the list of things people wished the media would focus on more.

This frustration perhaps reflects a wisdom that whatever the outcome of the upcoming elections or the ongoing Brexit negotiations the key problems facing Britain will remain unresolved.

It is time for a radical new approach to addressing the challenges our nation faces.

Following the launch of Chuka Umunna's "What are Progressives for?", Progressive Centre UK commissioned Opinium Research to conduct a large nationally representative survey (2,000 UK adults, fieldwork between April 12-16), into the challenges facing the country, and voter's reaction to the key ideas proposed in Umunna's pamphlet.

Areas surveyed included:

- running and funding public services
- capping executive pay
- reforming tuition fees
- equalising tax on earned and unearned income
- creating a national 'citizens service'

Amongst the survey's key findings:

- 44% think there should be a ring-fenced tax to support the NHS – as championed by Umunna, with almost half of Brits (48%) are persuaded that this would be an effective in improving long-term funding.
- The nation is dissatisfied with the way privatised public services such as water, gas, electricity, rail and bus services and universities are currently being run. While nationalisation remains popular, roughly a third of the public felt the 'public interest companies' proposed by Umunna would be the best way for these to be run.
- 69% of the public think senior executive pay should be capped in line with the average pay in a company, and 66% thinking that executive bonuses should be capped at a level such as 20% of annual salary.
- 65% also think that nominated workers should sit on a company board so that they are involved in executive pay decisions.
- Only a quarter (25%) of people believe the current system of tuition fees is the best

favour Umunna's proposal to only abolish fees from underprivileged backgrounds and support these students with grants to cover living costs. This number rise to 28% among those identified as holding progressive values.

- Three in ten (31%) support Umunna's idea of raising the basic tax rate on dividend income to the same level as the basic rate on regular income. When asked what should happen to the £5.9 billion this could raise, 39% think it should go to funding public services, while 38% believe it should go to paying down the national debt or reducing other taxes.
- 54% believe that a form of national citizen service, which Umunna proposes, should be created to bring young people from diverse background together – and 45% not opposed to the scheme think this should be compulsory, while 35% think it should be voluntary. Interestingly, despite the recent interest of Democratic presidential candidates like Mayor Pete Buttigieg in this idea, those who consider themselves progressives are the only group to net oppose the such a scheme being compulsory.

Is Britain heading in the wrong direction?

Brexit and a failure of the political system is behind why half think their country is going in the wrong direction.

Just over half (51%) of UK adults believe that the country is broadly going in the wrong direction, while only 20% think the country is going in the right direction.

Unsurprisingly, Brexit seems to dominate the reason why they think the country is going in the wrong direction. Two in five (41%) think Brexit is the reason why the country is going in the wrong direction, with almost half (47%) of Remainers expressing consternation at Brexit and a third (33%) of Leavers blaming the collapse of Brexit and its handling by the government.

Other complaints include a belief in the general failure of the political system and politics in general (11%), with a further 10% simply blaming the government. A rather pessimistic 8% simply stated "everything".

The media concentrates too much on Brexit

When we asked what issues and problems the media concentrates too much on, Brexit (41%) was, by a wide margin, the most common response. Interestingly, this was driven more by Leavers, with 49% saying the media concentrates too much on Brexit. This was often arguing that the media concentrates too much on presenting a negative image of leaving the EU.

Other responses include celebrity news and gossip (7%) and immigration (4%).

Fewer than one in ten (8%) current Labour voters think that the news concentrates too much on “slagging off” Labour and Jeremy Corbyn specifically.

The issues that the media should concentrate more on is much more diverse

There is no single issue that the public clearly thinks the media should concentrate more on. Just over one in ten (11%) think the media should concentrate more on health and the NHS, and the general issues around mental health and social care. This is followed by poverty and inequality (9%), climate change and environmental issues (7%) and crime and law & order (5%).

The NHS Brexit, Brexit, the Economy and Immigration

The NHS tops both the list of most important issues that are facing the country (59%) and facing individuals and their families directly (55%).

Although Brexit comes second in both lists, a large proportion think it is an important issue for the country (55%) rather than themselves (36%).

This is the same as immigration (25% important for country vs 14% important for them and their family).

However, on some other issues the difference was the other way around. For example, only 26% thought the economy was a major issue facing the country, but a third (34%) named it as an important issue for them personally.

Labour (24%) and the Conservatives (23%) were more or less neck-and-neck in terms of which party the public believes comes closest to their views on the most important issues.

Funding the NHS

Just over two in five (44%) would support a new tax where the revenue would be entirely ring-fenced for the NHS, while a fifth (19%) would not. This seems to receive generally wide support at similar levels across a range of demographics and political persuasions.

Similarly, just under half (48%) think that this new tax would be effective in improving the financial situation of the NHS in the long term, while only a quarter (25%) think it would not be effective.

A national citizens' service

There is relatively strong support for a scheme of community service for everyone in the UK that takes place when they are 16 or 17: 54% support such a scheme while 15% oppose it. When those who do not actively oppose such a scheme were asked how it should be designed, 45% thought the scheme should be compulsory, while 35% thought it should be

voluntary. Interestingly, those we have classified as having a progressive outlook are the only group to net oppose the scheme being compulsory (47% voluntary vs 41% compulsory).

A sizeable proportion would want their child to go on this scheme (58% would vs 10% would not), although slightly fewer would have liked to have participated in such a scheme themselves (53% would vs 24% would not).

Running public services

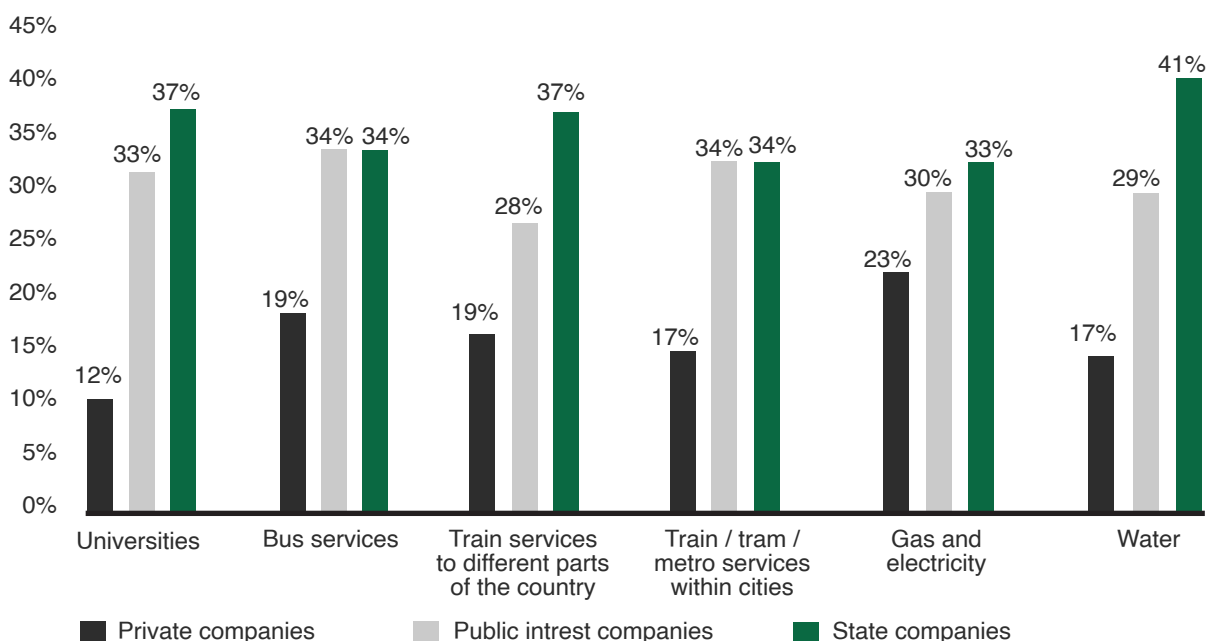
We tested twelve services to see which type of business model the public think would be most effective in delivering each. We've broken down the responses into three groups.

Core government services: for these services a large proportion of UK adults believed that these should be delivered by state-owned and run companies. These applied to **GP services** (49%), **hospitals** (53%), **schools & colleges** (52%), and **waste & rubbish collection** (46%). In all cases, a large proportion thought that state companies would be most effective than the other two options combined.

Services to be run in the public interest: there were a range of services where only a minority thought they would be most effectively run by state companies, with public interest companies being the clearest alternative. These applied to a variety of different services.

They applied to public transport systems such as bus services, long distance train travel and intra-city train and metro services. They also applied to some utilities such as gas, electricity and water. They also applied to universities, which to some extent are already run under this system.

Services where only a minority think state companies would run them best



Services best run by private companies: Airports and internet & telecoms were services where relatively few adults thought that state companies would be most effective in running them (21% and 17% respectively). In both cases, a plurality believed that these services should be run by private companies (32% and 38% respectively), although public interest companies were not an unpopular option (29% for each).

Capping executive pay

There is clear public support for some form of governmental intervention in the pay of senior executives and directors in the UK. While a quarter (24%) do not support intervention, just under half (45%) are opposed to the idea that government should not set any direct rules on how companies pay their senior executives and directors.

The most popular options tested are some form of caps. Seven in ten (69%) support senior pay being capped at a set ratio to the average pay in the company, while two thirds (66%) support senior pay being capped at a set level such as 20% of salary.

Other popular forms of intervention include an additional levy being charged on bonuses over a set amount (64% support).

There are some differences over the role that workers should play. The nomination of workers to the board so that they are involved in pay decisions is widely popular (65% support). However, the idea of 'employee councils' being able to block pay packages is slightly less popular (only 46% support).

Reforming tuition fees

Only a quarter (25%) of UK adults actively believe that the current system of tuition fees is the best way to fund universities and higher education in the UK. However, only a third (33%) believe that all tuition fees should be abolished.

A further 23% believe that tuition fees should be abolished but only for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the government paying for their places and offering them grants to cover living costs. This rises slightly to almost three in ten (28%) amongst those with a progressive outlook.

Equalising the tax on 'earned' and 'unearned' income

The public are relatively split on this, with just under a third (31%) supporting raising the basic tax rate on dividend income to the same level as the basic rate on regular, earned income. However, a quarter (24%) oppose this.

But, half (50%) of those we've categorised as having a progressive outlook (supporting at least 4 out of 5 core progressive statements) support the move.

When the public were asked what should happen to the £5.9 billion this could potentially raise, the public were almost evenly divided between using this to improve the funding of certain services (39%) or to reduce the national debt or other taxes (38%).

Of the two in five who thought it should be spent back in public services, 18% thought it should go towards funding a programme of universal free childcare and early years education for very young children. However, 21% thought it should go towards funding something else. Three fifths (61%) of this latter group named the NHS and healthcare as what this extra money should go on.

About the Research

Opinium Research surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults between 12th April and 16th April 2019.

About Opinium

Opinium helps their clients harness the power of insight to build, grow, promote and make strategic business decisions.

They are 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 the pulse of what people think, feel and do. Creative and inquisitive, they are passionate about empowering their clients to make the decisions that matter. Opinium works with organisations to define and resolve commercial issues and get to grips with the world in which their brands operate, by delivering robust insight, targeted recommendations, and addressing specific business challenges.

As a non-partisan, next generation ideas lab
Progressive Centre UK develops and shares forward looking
thinking to address the challenges of the digital age.

As a partner in the Global Progress network we work as an
international ideas exchange – connecting progressives from
across the UK with the latest ideas and experience from across
the globe.

We bring together progressive policy-makers and
policy-implementers to promote innovative responses to the
most important trends shaping our society.



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