

# Will the next Prime Minister please stand up!

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Theresa May's tenure as British Prime Minister is undoubtedly drawing to an end, yet who will replace her? Political commentators and bookmakers have their opinions, and many of the current MPs will undoubtedly be interested and already planning how to navigate the twists, turns and complexities of the Conservative leadership election process.

To secure the long-term future of the party and grassroots support, the Parliamentary Conservative Party will need to elect a leader that the public knows, can identify with and can support. Looking at the problem down that lens, which of the leading contenders have positioned themselves in a way that enables them to become the next resident of 10 Downing Street?

All marketers are familiar with the marketing funnel concept and used to talking about brands as winners, losers, rising stars and fading comets, and the same logic can be applied to the personal brands built by politicians and many of those in the public eye. If we put the leading contenders to replace Theresa May under the same microscope as brands, what can we learn about each of their chances? How well can we identify the potential contenders who are most effectively building the necessary perceptions for them to claim to those deciding the leadership that the public would want them as the nation's next leader?

We've been tracking public attitudes towards the main contenders in this way since July 2017 and three conclusions stand out:

### 1. There is no clear winner

All marketers know that the first rule is to simply be recognised – little awareness will mean little consideration and even less chance to be the brand of choice. For the Conservative contenders, the same holds true. How can you be the public's obvious number one choice if no-one

knows you? Yet, many of the leading contenders are simply struggling to cut through with the public and generate a strong level of awareness despite operating in a world of 24hr news and a continuous stream of Brexit and politics-related content. Successful brands can boast awareness of 80%, whilst true winners are so well known that their names become verbs e.g. 'googled'. Amongst the leadership contenders, Boris Johnson consistently leads the way – recording almost 80%+ awareness month on month and behind him Phillip Hammond, Jeremy Hunt and Michael Gove record 70%+ whilst Amber Rudd (69%) makes up the final place in the top-5. Despite the continuous Brexit coverage, many of those at the heart of that coverage seem to be struggling to build awareness – Andrea Leadsom and Dominic Raab both achieve less than 50% whilst Jacob Rees-Mogg can only achieve 63%. Politicians are always less likely to gain the popularity of leading brands, but for those wishing to become the next premier, a few more appearance on mainstream TV wouldn't go amiss!

### Awareness Top 5 (May 2019)

Which of the following Conservative politicians have you ever heard of?



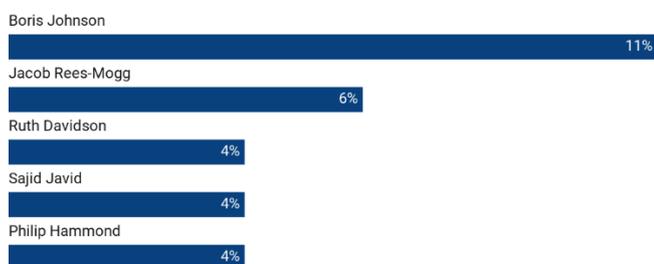
Base = GB Residents Aged 18+ (1541)

Once awareness has been established, preference becomes the goal – being the brand automatically picked from the shelf or store or website visited first. For the leadership contenders, their goal is also to become the most preferred - the person the public would openly want to be in charge. However, our results make disconcerting reading for many of the candidates.

When asked which of the politicians they would prefer, the public consistently chooses 'Don't know' (30%) followed closely by 'None of them' (25%) – hardly a ringing endorsement of anyone. Boris Johnson leads the named contenders again – achieving c.11%, almost double his nearest rival Jacob Rees-Mogg (c.6%). The obvious conclusion is that with such little preference, the contenders need to do much more if they are to generate popular support – and that the race is very open to an outsider no-one has yet seriously considered.

### Preference Top 5 (May 2019)

If Theresa May was to step-down as Prime Minister tomorrow, and was replaced by a new leader of the Conservative party without a General Election, which of the following Conservative politicians do you think would make the best UK Prime Minister, if you had to choose?



Base = GB Residents Aged 18+ (1541)

Bringing the marketing funnel elements together to combine awareness and preference provides an even more disappointing read for the majority of contenders. Only Boris Johnson can claim to have any form of popularity – c.10% of the population being aware and preferring him – whilst no other contender can even claim 5%. In fact, of the contenders we covered, only three are able to achieve more than 3%! For any consumer brand that would be seriously bad news with one clear takeout – the market is open to any newcomer willing and capable of delivering an effective campaign. For the contenders the takeout is exactly the same – none of them can actually lay claim to be May's natural successor and the next leader could come from anywhere in the party.

### 2. Sajid Javid has momentum

Though there are no standout winners at present, how this has changed over time may indicate which, if any, of the contenders capturing the

public's imagination or if any of the front runners are failing and whether any appear to be running on a doomed ticket?

Looking at shifts in awareness and preference from Summer 2017 to Spring 2019 over time it's easy to categorise the contenders into 3 main groups:

1. Emerging challengers – those growing awareness and preference over time
2. Non-converters - those whose awareness is growing, but their preference shows little sign of growing substantially as the public get to know them (less than 1 point increase)
3. Yesterday's candidates – those whose awareness and preference are weakening over time

A quick glance at the table below clearly shows how few of the contenders are well positioned – only 2 can claim to really be growing awareness and preference over time.

Emerging Challengers	Non-converters	Yesterday's Candidates
Sajid Javid	Ruth Davidson	Philip Hammond
Dominic Raab	David Davis	Boris Johnson
	Jacob Rees-Mogg	
	Priti Patel	
	Nicky Morgan	
	Andy Street	
	Amber Rudd	
	Andrea Leadsom	

This shows an interesting picture with one clear standout candidate – Sajid Javid. Since mid-2017, awareness of Javid has almost doubled – from mid 30% to mid 60%. Alongside this increase he has increased his preference share by more than any other contender – from less than 1% to just over 4%. This ability to translate awareness into preference, albeit slowly, bodes well for the current Home Secretary's long-term prospects and makes him a man with serious momentum compared to his peers.

Of the other contenders, Dominic Raab leads the way in increasing awareness – moving from a

relatively unknown 11% to a relatively respectable 46%. This increase has barely translated into preference however (marginally over 1%), suggesting that although familiarity may not breed contempt, he is certainly failing to convince the electorate. Amber Rudd and Andrea Leadsom both face the same issue – but to lesser extents. The high-profile Rees Mogg faces a different challenge having expanded awareness nearly 20 points only to find his preference almost unchanged.

The campaign has a long way to go before any of the candidates have the keys to Downing Street in their hand and much can change under the media scrutiny. However, with no outstanding candidates as yet, Sajid Javid's ability to grow strongly on both dimensions whilst no one else makes significant progress suggests the heat of a leadership campaign may actually benefit him and can only bode well for his chances if he can maintain that trend.

### 3. The Johnson juggernaut is not unstoppable

Boris Johnson has been one of the highest profile



Conservative politicians for a long time and our results show him as the man to beat in many

senses – highest awareness and highest preference every month since we began polling. On that basis and given the weakness of the field around him it appears he would be the automatic choice. Yet, as Nokia and Blockbuster demonstrated, being a market leader requires you to maintain this position over time and protect yourself from the rise of a competitor. Johnson remains strongest, but there are signs that weaknesses are emerging in his case for leadership. His awareness remains strong and unchanging – suggesting he has achieved every brands' goal of being a household name. However, he is the candidate losing the most

preference to others over time – dropping slowly but inexorably from a peak in summer 2018. Though he retains a sizeable lead over the rest of the field, this suggests that his preference is vulnerable and may be based upon awareness rather than a resonance with the public. Other candidates are taking preference from him over time so, if he is to emerge victorious, he will need to stem this trend and make a clear case why he is the person to take the country forward that goes beyond 'he's the one we've heard of'.

### In summary

The race to be the next resident of 10 Downing Street is undoubtedly open – the public aren't clear on who they'd want and no candidate can really claim to have a solid unanimous support. The winner must also navigate the Conservative Party leadership election process so there's no guarantee of success for any of those wishing to take the role even if the public would back them! Many contenders will also be holding back – awaiting May's departure before promoting themselves openly. Despite all that, one thing is clear – the lack of a leading contender shows that no one is out of the running yet and the next Prime Minister is as likely to be unknown to the majority of the public as to be a 'high-profile' politician.



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