

# Why the Conservatives Lost

There were many reasons given by people who had voted Conservative in 2019 as to why they switched their votes or abstained. I will attempt here to distill the main things that went wrong that lost the government support.

## The long and strict covid lockdown

Many people disliked the lockdown and thought it wrong. Government failing to apply all of the rules to itself angered many more. Young people missed out badly on school and social activity. Some self employed and small businesses were badly damaged. Ideas proposed by some Conservative MPs to reduce the duration and exempt more people from the lockdown were rejected. The Opposition parties urged more severe and longer lockdowns, but government owns the policy as it implemented it.

## The sharp rise in inflation

The government allowed the Bank of England to print excessive amounts of money in 2021, a recovery year. The first £300 bn in lockdown year made sense to offset some of the economic damage lockdown did. The Bank made this mistake in line with the Fed and European Central Bank. The Chinese, Japanese and Swiss Central Banks did not announce more money printing and bond buying and kept their inflations around 2%.. The Opposition supported this Bank policy but were very critical of the resulting inflation. The government had to own the results of bad Central Banking. The Bank of England could not even forecast the inflation let alone control it as they should.

## The rise in taxes

The high costs of support to people and public services during covid led to big increases in public spending. OBR/Treasury rules kicked in and forced tax rises. Labour supports the failure to raise Income Tax thresholds, one of the main ways of raising tax. Conservative voters felt badly let down as they expected the government to offer lower taxes, not higher. They became critical of excess spending which included the costs of lower productivity, Bank of England losses, waste and excess in NHS covid procurement, big cost overruns on HS 2 etc

## The large numbers of migrants

The 2019 Manifesto promised lower migration. Conservatives assumed there would be fewer new arrivals from the EU with the ending of free movement, as there were. They did not expect a very large increase in non EU migration instead. In January 2024 the government was persuaded to tighten the eligibility rules substantially to cut numbers significantly. The election came too soon for people to see the impact this is now having to control numbers, and too soon to allow the government to toughen rules further if numbers are still too high.

## Too many changes in government

Three different Prime Ministers and many changes of Ministers made it difficult for government to sustain a strategy or for Ministers to be in full command of their briefs and their departments. This added to public frustrations.