



Written by [James Murphy](#) on July 6, 2022

Boris Johnson's Woes Mount as Top Aides Resign From Government

On Tuesday, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's teetering Conservative government was dealt another blow as Health Secretary Sajid Javid resigned, followed quickly by Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak. The resignations come in the wake of Johnson admitting he made a "bad mistake" in allowing MP Chris Pincher to remain in his government after allegations of sexual misconduct surfaced against Pincher in 2019.

Pincher resigned from his position as government deputy chief whip on June 30, after allegations surfaced that he had groped two male guests at a Conservative Party gathering on June 29. Johnson removed the Conservative whip from Pincher the next day.



AP Images

It was not the first instance of Pincher being accused of sexual misconduct. In 2017, he resigned as assistant whip after he allegedly made an unwanted sexual advance toward Olympic rower and Conservative candidate Alex Story.

The June 29 incident forced Downing Street to answer questions as to just why Pincher was allowed back into a ministerial position after the 2017 incident.

"The tone you [Johnson] set as a leader, and the values you represent, reflect on your colleagues, your party, and ultimately the country," read Javid's terse resignation [letter](#).

"Conservatives at their best are seen as hard-headed decision-makers, guided by strong values. We may not have always been popular, but we have been competent in acting in the national interest," Javid continued.

"Sadly in the current circumstances, the public are concluding that we are now neither. The vote of confidence last month showed that a large number of our own colleagues agree. It was a moment for humility, grip and new direction. I regret to say, however, that it is clear to me that this situation will not change under your leadership - and you have therefore lost my confidence too."

Sunak was similarly disappointed in Johnson's actions. In his own resignation [letter](#), the former chancellor of the Exchequer expressed "fundamentally" different approaches between himself and Johnson.

"The public rightly expect government to be conducted properly, competently and seriously," Sunak wrote. "I recognise this may be my last ministerial job, but I believe these standards are worth fighting for and that is why I am resigning."



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As of this writing, dozens of ministers and parliamentary private secretaries have announced their [departure](#) from Johnson's apparently sinking ship.

Johnson is not helping his own cause, either. Initially, a Downing Street spokesperson declared that he was "not aware of the prime minister being aware" of any specific allegations against Pincher. But it came out later that Johnson had been briefed in 2019, prior to appointing Pincher.

"I think it was a mistake and I apologize for it. In hindsight it was the wrong thing to do." Johnson finally acknowledged on Tuesday.

"I apologize to everybody who has been badly affected by it. I want to make absolutely clear that there's no place in this government for anybody who is predatory or who abuses their position of power," Johnson said.

But Johnson only admitted the mistake after Simon McDonald, a crossbencher (meaning he is not affiliated with a party), wrote a public [letter](#) to Parliamentary Standards Commissioner Kathryn Stone, protesting "inaccurate claims" made by Downing Street concerning the Pincher scandal.

"In the summer of 2019, shortly after he was appointed minister of state at the Foreign Office, a group of officials complained to me about Mr Pincher's behaviour. I discussed the matter with the relevant official at the Cabinet Office," McDonald wrote.

"The original ... line [from Downing Street] is not true and the modification is still not accurate. Mr Johnson was briefed in person about the initiation and outcome of the investigation," McDonald stressed.

2022 has not been a good year for Johnson, the man who many say delivered Brexit. The prime minister was heavily involved in what the British media refer to as Partygate — a scandal that linked Johnson, his wife, and other government officials to alcohol-fueled gatherings that occurred in government buildings while the U.K.'s general population was forbidden such gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

And, of course, Johnson recently survived a [no confidence vote](#) in June, prior to the Pincher fiasco.

Although Johnson seems determined to remain in power, the question now appears to be when, not if, he will be forced out of office.



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