

# Change Pending

The Path to the 2024  
General Election and  
Beyond



More in  
Common



Policy Lab

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## **About More in Common**

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public and helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our British Seven segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public think and why. We've published groundbreaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering polling and focus group research and are members of the British Polling Council.

## **About UCL Policy Lab**

The UCL Policy Lab brings together extraordinary expertise and everyday experience, connecting researchers and the broader community with the tools and resources required to bring about real social and policy change.



## Foreword

British politics has seen a series of dramatic moments in the last decade, each of them motivated by a strong desire of the British public to secure change.

We have witnessed the referendum in 2016 and the “Get Brexit Done” election of 2019 and now the general election of 2024.

On the surface these look like very different events, but each has been driven by a public angry at the status quo, feeling disrespected by their elected representatives and demanding change.

This time the call for change had three distinct dimensions.

There was the cratering of the Conservative vote. As this report reveals, Conservative voters from 2019 either broke for other parties or stayed at home this time in extraordinary numbers. As a result, the Party appears to have reached its floor in terms of the popular vote and is left with fewer MPs than at any time in its modern history.

There was also a Scottish dimension. The SNP took the brunt of discontent with incumbents in Scotland, allowing Labour to soar in popularity and return to Parliamentary dominance in a way that would have seemed unimaginable in the aftermath of the election of 2015.

There was also a shift for the Labour Party too. Across the country as a whole, the party was the beneficiary of the call to turn the page in British politics and a new coalition was built by an extraordinarily successful strategy of electoral targeting. But in parts of its heartland and with previously core groups of supporters, Labour actually lost ground - with independents and the Greens making powerful inroads into previously strong Labour communities.

Each of these dimensions are the result of the demand for change. And this report reveals that demand itself has both immediate and more longer-term causes.

The Conservatives lost support not because of culture war concerns, but rather because core public services – and especially the NHS – were seen to be on the verge of collapse and because everyday cost of living pressures had grown remorselessly throughout their period in office.

There is also a clear sense that politics itself – rather than just any one government – is not working for people across all of the segments we surveyed. Throughout all our work of late, we have detected a deep sense of disrespect, with people believing that promises are not fulfilled and that politicians prioritise their own interests against the interests of the country itself.

This, in turn, has fractured the electorate in ways not seen for generations. The extremes threaten to rise, as a result, and although they have not broken through in full in this election, they stand well-placed to do so in the near future.

So, what comes next?

In the immediate commentary following the election, there has been speculation that the Government cannot possibly hold on to its diverse new coalition. There have, as a result, already been calls for it to try to restore its old base of progressive activists or, instead, to abandon that base still further and seek to build an alternative. There have also been calls for the Conservatives to seek to consolidate on the right of politics by moving closer to Reform UK.

We believe that the evidence presented here suggests that both of these calls are mistakes.

The mood of the public is for change. But it is not for revolutionary change or, as yet, for change driven from the extremes.

That means that most people wish the new government fulfil the promise of concrete improvements in their everyday lives. The public are also seeking a government that rebuilds their faith in the political process itself, by being open to and respectful of their own attitudes and experiences and attentive to the values and concerns of communities far beyond Westminster.

To be successful, this needs to be a government that both delivers and connects.

Similarly, there appears to be little to support the notion that the Conservatives prosper by moving closer to Reform. The voters looking to return to the Conservatives are unlikely to be swayed by the Party becoming a Reform-Lite one.

All of this entails that what seems like an extremely complex election, with so many twists and turns and surprising results, is in fact at core a very straightforward one.

Across most of the segments of the country that we study, the public is calling for change.

People do not want to hear bombastic over-promises. They want to see real solutions and they want to be respected in the process.

The task facing both the two major parties is to see whether they can match those expectations.

**Marc Stears (Director, UCL Policy Lab)**

**Luke Tryl (Executive Director, More in Common UK)**

## Executive Summary

The 2024 UK General Election campaign ended in a landslide victory for the Labour Party, with the result delivering a three-digit parliamentary majority on the lowest vote share for a single governing party in electoral history. The outcome reflects both a successful targeting strategy by Labour and a strong desire among voters for change after 14 years of Conservative government. However, the 2024 election also pointed to a wider discontent with our political system that goes beyond one party or government. Discontent that if not addressed threatens to undermine the foundations of Britain's democratic settlement.

Based on polling and focus group research of more than 10,000 people in the week after the election and more than 60 focus groups during and after the election campaign, this report sets out the story of the 2024 election and what it means for what comes next. It does so through using the lens of More in Common's British Seven segments – a segmentation that groups the British public according to their values and worldviews.

### A Change Election

The 2024 election was undoubtedly a "change election", with over seven in ten voters saying Britain needed change rather than to stick with the plan. This vote continues a pattern started in the 2016 Brexit referendum and continued in the 2019 general election of voters demanding change with how British politics and society works. That desire for change is illustrated most starkly by the fact that on average incumbent MPs lost votes from 2019 regardless of party – including in a majority of Labour-held seats.

While around seven in ten voters believe the new Government has a mandate to change the country, the public are evenly split (54 per cent to 46 per cent) on whether the Labour government will succeed in improving the lives of people like them.

That Labour's victory came despite winning just over a third of the vote reinforces the fact that many voters wanted to remove the Conservatives from power but remained unsure about the alternative. Labour now faces the challenge of both understanding and delivering the change the country wants, to hold together and deepen their broad but likely fragile coalition.

The public's key test for the success or failure of Labour's delivery will be NHS waiting lists - more than half the public see mismanagement of the NHS as the Conservative's biggest mistake since 2019, and policies on the NHS was also the top reason given by 2024 Labour voters for supporting the Party.

In fact, 63 per cent of the public say that the NHS will be the benchmark against which measure Labour's success or failure - higher than any other delivery test. However, improving the NHS also sits alongside the public's expectation that the new Government finds solutions to the cost of living crisis which ensures people aren't simply "living to work

and working to live”, developing an immigration strategy that balances compassion and control, and making a reality of the promise of GB Energy to tackle climate change and lower bills - a proposal supported by over 70 percent of voters of all political stripes.

Delivery of tangible improvements to people's lives is crucial to meeting voters' demands for change, but it must be done in a way that demonstrates respect for ordinary people and their concerns. Voters' expectations for change go beyond delivery. An overwhelming 96 per cent of voters say that respect for ordinary people is an important quality for a politician - the highest of any attribute tested, something relayed in focus group conversation after focus group conversation.

### **Labour's Coalition**

Labour's support now spans a much broader and less ideologically cohesive coalition than in 2019. Labour won its 174 seat majority on just a third of the popular vote - by shifting from a coalition of ideology to one of pragmatism. Voters were more likely to say they backed the party at this election they saw as the most competent, rather than whose policy's they preferred.

In 2019, Labour's support ranged between 67 per cent with the most progressive segment of the population to just 9 per cent with the most conservative. Today that gap of 56 points has narrowed to just 27, with nearly a quarter of Backbone Conservatives supporting Labour. As a result, only about a third of Labour voters are from the more left leaning "Progressive Activist" or "Civic Pragmatist" segments, down from over half in 2019.

Labour's support fell around 17 points from 2019 among Progressive Activists - the most left leaning segment of the population but rose 15 points with the more Cameronite "Established Liberal" segment of the population powering their gains in the Blue Wall in the south of England. Labour's vote share was also 11 points higher than in 2019 among the more socially Conservative "Loyal National" vote group, helping them to reverse Boris Johnson's gains in the Red Wall and win back seats in the north and midlands of England.

Labour's coalition is also one of the 'head' rather than the 'heart'. Nearly a quarter of those who voted Labour (23 per cent) voted for Labour for the first time. Many votes were strategic - just under three in ten (28 per cent) of 2024 Labour voters give the top reason for their vote as stopping another party from winning. Labour's support is a coalition of valence not a coalition of ideology. Keir Starmer now faces the challenge of balancing the differing expectations and priorities of these different constituent groups.

Asked if they had voted with their heart rather than their head and eschewing any tactical considerations the electorate's support for Labour would drop by four points with the Greens up three points. Such a result would have made it far harder for Labour to command a significant majority.

Now that the Conservatives have been ejected from office the desire to remove an unpopular Government will not be enough to keep Labour's pragmatic coalition together. With a majority that is broad but precarious, fragmentation of the electorate means Labour will need to shore up voters both on its right flank who may be tempted back to the Conservatives and those on the left who are increasingly willing to vote Green or for independent candidates.

### **Conservative Decline**

The Conservative vote share collapsed to historic lows, largely due to perceptions of incompetence and chaos in government rather than ideological shifts. Conservative support is now highly concentrated in the 'Backbone Conservative' segment, with both more Cameronite Established Liberals deserting the party and more socially conservative Loyal Nationals switching back from their 2019 vote, costing the Conservatives seats in both the Blue and Red Walls.

The Conservatives should resist the temptation to simply try to outflank Reform UK on the right, as the number of Reform voters willing to return to the Conservatives will not be enough to form a majority, while aping the politics of Nigel Farage is likely to cost the Party further votes in the centre.

Less than a third (31 per cent) of those who voted for Reform UK say they might otherwise have voted Conservative. The remaining two-thirds say they would have backed other parties - including almost as many who say they would have backed some combination of Labour, the Liberal Democrats or Greens. Others would not have voted at all. Taken together this implies that in the absence of Reform standing the Conservative's would still have ended up with well under 200 seats in this election.

What's more, those who abandoned the Conservative Party for Reform UK are the most likely to say that they would never vote Conservative again of all those who voted switched from the Conservative party at this election.

If the Conservative Party is to recover it will have to start with restoring its reputation for economic competence and selecting a leader who can bring back voters who deserted the party to the left and the right. Rather than either or, voters who would back the Conservatives suggest a preference for a leader who can merge the appeal of both David Cameron and Boris Johnson.

### **Sitting it out?**

The 2024 election saw turnout fall almost to historic lows. Of those who opted out on election day, 38 per cent had voted in the 2019 election. While many non-voters said they would have voted Labour, the picture is somewhat more complicated than simply left-wing abstentionism alone.

Just four percent of non-voters stayed at home because they were sure that the party they supported was going to win. Complacency is not a sufficient reason for the significant drop in turnout. Overall, 2019 Conservative voters made up a greater proportion of 2024 non-voters than 2019 Labour voters. Their decision to abstain was active rather than passive, unable to back another party but wanting to show their disapproval for the Conservatives' record.

For 77 per cent of the 2019 Conservatives voters who abstained, this was the first time ever that they did not vote. This group exemplifies Conservatives who have lost faith in the Government they elected in 2019. The top reason 2019 Conservatives give for not voting is that they don't trust any politicians and the main barriers they cite to voting Conservative centre around perceptions of the party as out-of-touch, corrupt and incompetent. This depressed turnout exaggerated the Conservatives' defeat - if the Conservatives had been able to mobilise these 2019 Conservatives in 2024 it could have tipped the scales in their favour in 33 seats without having to win back a single voter who switched to another party.

### **The fragmentation of the party system**

The change election was also shaped by the rise of the smaller parties – the Liberal Democrats becoming the biggest third-party parliamentary force in a century, the Greens reaching record representation in Parliament, and Reform winning five seats and four million votes.

The efficiency of the smaller parties' vote distribution varied significantly. The Liberal Democrats gained a quarter of all their votes from 35 seats, while the same proportion of Reform UK's vote was spread more thinly over 97 seats, resulting in just five gains for the party that won over 4 million votes.

While the spread of Reform's vote prevented a bigger Parliamentary breakthrough in this election, the Party is now in second place in just under a hundred seats, many of those held by the Labour Party - suggesting a further frontline for possible defections from the governing party's coalition.

However, Reform also demonstrated a ceiling to their support in the 2024 election, with support for the Party falling back during the campaign with Nigel Farage's comments about Ukraine, racism among Reform activists and questions about the party's ability to govern all cited as barriers for people voting for the Party.

### **Change across the UK**

The desire for change was not limited to England. In Scotland the dramatic collapse of SNP representation (and Labour's overperformance in Scotland) represented both frustration with the scandals and missteps that have dominated Holyrood following Nicola Sturgeon's departure, but also voters placing a premium on good governance over independence.

## Change Pending

The main reason 2024 Scottish Labour voters (54 per cent) and Scottish Liberal Democrat voters (69 per cent) cite for not voting SNP is that they governed Scotland poorly.

The SNP were reduced just nine seats in Westminster because they lost support across the board – but crucial in the scale of their defeat were ‘soft independence supporters’. In the 2019 General Election, the SNP enjoyed the support of 78 per cent of people that voted ‘Yes’ in the Independence Referendum – in 2024 this has plummeted to 60 per cent.

SNP swing voters felt conflicted by a desire to bring about change in Government, with concerns that Labour MPs would be less effective than SNP MPs in bringing a distinctive Scottish voice to Westminster. Ultimately Labour allayed those concerns, but Labour MPs will have to find ways to demonstrate some autonomy from the national party if they are to avoid the charge that only the SNP can stand up for Scotland.

Looking ahead to the next set of Scottish Parliament elections the task for the SNP is to work out, if independence remains a less salient issue in Westminster politics, how to set out the positives of an SNP administration for Scotland as part of a devolved settlement.

### **Navigating fragmentation and disillusionment in politics**

The unprecedented levels of political fragmentation and high abstentionism on the July 4<sup>th</sup> election were driven by growing cynicism towards politics and a sense of futility that the political mainstream simply can’t deliver for ordinary people. Three in four (74 per cent) of the public now believe that Britain is rigged to serve the rich and influential. British voters are frustrated that their demands for change in the 2016 Brexit Referendum and 2019 ‘Get Brexit Done’ election were not fully heeded. For that reason, the core mission of the next Government must be to deliver voters expectations of change or risk facing more voters turning to populism.

The unhappiness of voters towards politicians of all parties and backgrounds was reflected in incumbent MPs losing votes across parties, even in traditionally safe Labour seats, the party lost votes as a ‘pox on all your houses’ sentiment took hold.

Navigating this fragmented electorate and the rise of populism will require political leaders to engage more authentically with a broader range of voter concerns and rebuild trust in the political process itself. That means understanding rather than dismissing the concerns of those who voted for populist parties and addressing the root causes of their discontent.

While the solution does not lie in aping populists, mainstream politicians could do more to learn from the appeal of populist leaders. In focus group conversations even many of those who would never vote for Nigel Farage cited his authenticity and straight talking as something that marked him out in the political class. Similarly, those independent candidates who stood on pro-Gaza platforms also attracted support for some because

they were seen as champions for communities that had felt neglected and taken for granted for too long.

As well as considering what there is to learn from the appeal of politicians outside of the mainstream, politicians also need to act at the other end of the equation. That means being more proactive in calling out those who cross democratic guardrails, engage in intimidation or who perpetuated freedom-restricting harassment, as well as being more proactive in taking the fight to extremism.

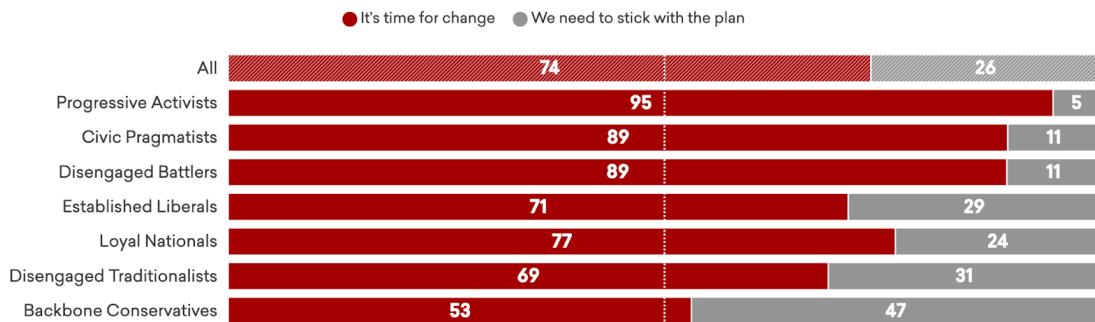
British politicians should learn from the experiences of those who have failed to quell the populist tide in Europe and elsewhere to avoid making the same mistakes here. The 2024 election represents a clear demand for change from the British public, but delivering on this mandate will require navigating low trust in politicians and institutions. The new Labour government must focus on tangible improvements to people's lives while demonstrating respect for ordinary citizens to rebuild faith in politics itself.



## Chapter 1 | The Change Election?

There can be little doubt that 2024 was a change election. Given a straight choice between “change” or “sticking with the plan” over seven in ten voters felt that Britain needed change.

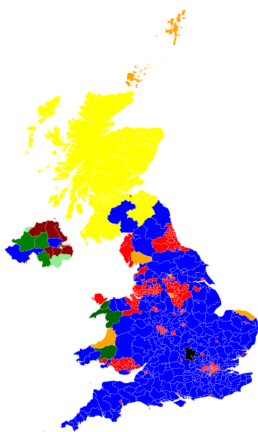
### Which of the following comes closest to how you are feeling about the next General Election?



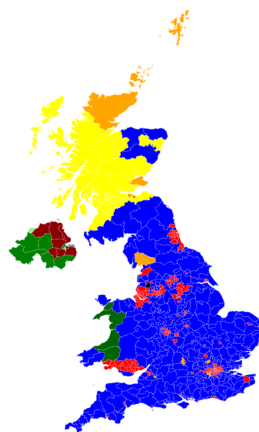
Source: More in Common, June 2024

Rather than a deviation from the electoral patterns of the 2010s, this was the third ‘vote to change the status quo’ that British voters have delivered in just under a decade - first in the Brexit vote of 2016, then at the last General Election in 2019 and now again at the 2024 election.

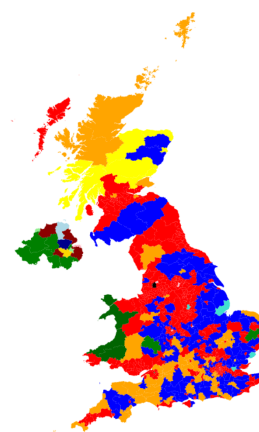
2015 General Election results



2019 General Election results



2024 General Election results



Source: More in Common, June 2024

The final result reflects a triumph of Labour targeting, gifting the party a landslide victory and a three-digit Parliamentary majority on the back of a vote share that is the lowest for a single governing party in electoral history. Voters overwhelmingly decided they wanted the Conservative Party out and deployed their vote in the most effective way of doing so.

But the fact Labour took just a third of the vote, against a Government which by any measure had lost public confidence, suggests voters remained unsure about the alternative.

Ultimately, the electorate granted Labour the majority they needed to get things done, but with many individual MPs now sitting on majorities small enough that they could be voted out with the slightest change in the public mood.

The challenge then for Labour - and indeed for the Conservative Party as it thinks about how to rebuild - is to define what change the country is looking for, what public opinion can coalesce behind, and how that change can be delivered.

Keir Starmer seems keenly alive to this challenge - having pledged in his speech on the steps of Downing Street to focus on the two thirds of the country who did not vote Labour, and to do so through a government that embodies service and respect. Making those words in that first speech a reality is, undoubtedly, the central task of this Parliament

To better understand this challenge, More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab conducted polling of more than 10,000 people in the week after polls closed and held focus groups in constituencies that reflected some of the most striking electoral trends. This builds on focus group conversations of more than 500 people and polling of tens of thousands of people during the campaign. The findings illustrate a more complex picture than last week's headline results would suggest and offer clear pointers about how to meet the public's expectations for the next five years.

## A rejection of the status quo

The outcome of the election clearly demonstrates that the public wanted a *change from something* – principally 14 years of Conservative government and the sense of chaos and incompetence that for many voters has been the hallmark of politics in recent years.

*We've had so much chaos in the last 14 years it has been awful. They just don't know what they're doing, and we've got to give someone else a chance. It's just time for a change.*

Johannes, Pensioner, Portsmouth North

*We're in big shit at the moment, unfortunately. Where I hope we'll be is somewhere better. Not even the best place, just a little better than where we are now.*

Eve, Youth Worker, Altrincham

*The Conservatives are just making poor decisions time and time and time again... I think that all (any) of us really want to see change for the good.*

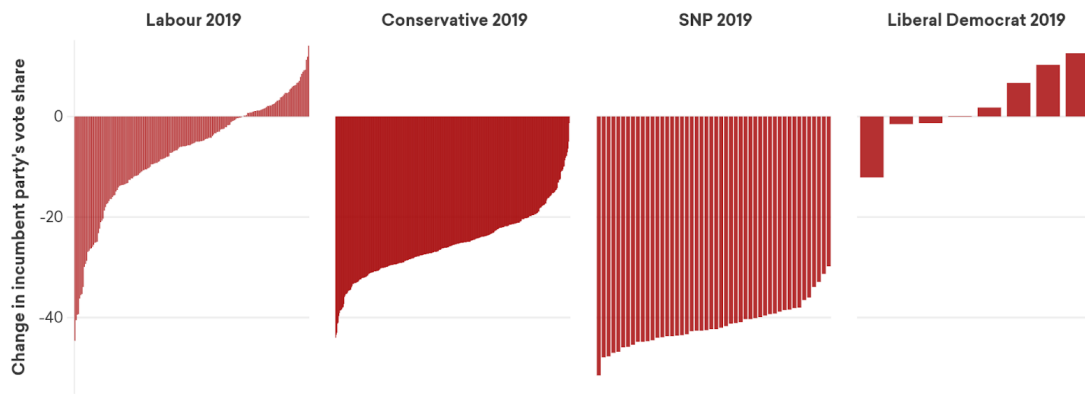
Charlotte, Nail Technician, Thanet East

*I'm quite disheartened if I'm honest. So yeah, maybe it's time for change.*

Joanne, Aldershot

However, the rejection of the status quo went beyond the Conservatives. Conversations with voters most often reflect a deep unhappiness with politicians of every stripe and background. It is unsurprising then that on average incumbent MPs lost votes, regardless of party, and a majority of sitting Conservative, Scottish National Party and Labour MPs saw their vote share fall.

### Incumbent parties lost vote share in the vast majority of UK constituencies



While the Conservative and SNP vote share fall was expected that the Labour Party lost votes across many of their seats - including some of their safest - plainly shows that the Labour Party was not immune to the undercurrents of electoral disillusionment.

In some areas, Labour's losses were driven by Keir Starmer's stance on Gaza. In other seats, Labour's progressive base was frustrated that the Party had gone too far in distancing itself from Jeremy Corbyn's platform or weren't bold enough on issues such as the environment. But the disillusionment of many former Labour voters couldn't be reduced to a single issue or ideological position. As in 2019, when voters in the Red Wall abandoned the Labour Party, many felt that all the 'usual politicians' had taken their votes for granted and hadn't been active enough in trying to turn things around in their local area.

In Leicester South, one of the most dramatic of Labour's defeats on an otherwise victorious election night, voters explained that Gaza and Labour's position on the ceasefire was the main reason they backed an independent candidate. But these voters also explained that they saw Gaza as an example of how they had been taken for granted by Labour in a very safe seat for a very long time. Voters in Rochdale said the same. Gaza was the trigger event

but in many of these safe Labour seats, voters felt they had long been taken for granted and their local community neglected.

*I think him being the incumbent for the last 13 years has probably taken votes for granted. I also think that he has, certainly with the large Muslim community, failed to adequately address our concerns.*

Inti, Care worker, Leicester South

*Communities are absolutely devastated by all the gun crime, the knife crime, the gang related stuff going on. I've got young sons, you know, and we're always concerned about what could happen to them. None of the issues locally are being addressed by so-called leaders. So, I think there'd have to be something really drastic to happen for me to put my faith back into politicians.*

Abbas, Personal Trainer, Leicester South

*One of the reasons why people are voting George Galloway is because they don't feel that their voice is being heard... he says he's going to bring back Primark. It might seem simple, but these are actually huge for the town. How can a town like Rochdale not have these bigger shops that attract people to come in? ... Rochdale was probably one of the few towns where our McDonald's closed.*

Mohammed, Businessman, Rochdale

*In the past, we've voted Labour mainly because the changes they say they'll make, but in reality, I don't see much changing... God knows Rochdale might just become a better place with independent vote because Labour hasn't really made much of a difference in past votes.*

Anees, University Student, Rochdale

## What does change mean to voters?

Taken together this suggests that while the electorate was clear that it wanted a change in government, it also wanted change from something deeper: 'the status quo'.

A quarter of those who voted Labour in this General Election did so for the first time. For one in four of Labour's 2024 coalition, the top reason for their vote was to stop another party winning. Among the group who switched from Conservative to Labour that 'blocking figure' rises to a third and, among those who switched from SNP to Labour, to a half.

Millions, then, have lent their vote to Labour in this election in order to bring about something new - but not necessarily because they endorsed or even knew what Labour's specific version of 'new' would be.

What voters want most is a politics that is more responsive to their concerns - one that takes their worries more seriously - and focuses on tangible improvements on the cost of

living, the NHS and their local community. But while voters want things to change, they have low confidence in politics and politicians' ability to deliver it.

*I've nearly killed myself working and just paying the rent. So that needs to be sorted. If you are going to work as hard as that, you need to be paid.*

Alison, Chef, Whitby

*But the problem is the harder you work, the more you get taxed. The less you work, the more you get paid. How many people do you know on benefits who are going on holiday to Tenerife twice a year? I can't afford a holiday. I'm doing 60 hours a week. I can't afford a holiday.*

Chris, Engineer, Workington

## Going beyond delivery

The post-pandemic economic backdrop has proved difficult for Governments of all stripes, worldwide to navigate. From Australia and New Zealand to Germany and the Netherlands and across Western democracies, those Governments that were elected before and during the pandemic have struggled to be re-elected.

But the Conservative Government undoubtedly bolstered those headwinds by projecting a sense of listlessness, incompetence and self-interest over delivery. If Labour can get the basics of delivery right - and crucially delivery which makes improvements to people's day to day - the electorate will give them credit. But delivery as a mantra will be insufficient to fix the fragmentation, disillusion and broad anti-politics feeling that defines the public mood.

*Whoever gets in, it's such a mess, how are they going to get us out of it?*

Liz, Retired Teacher, Whitby

*Some people can't even find a dentist and some people have to go private and pay for because they can't get into any NHS dentist. So, it's, there are loads of things that are just terrible in this country at the minute. So there has to be some sort of change.*

Joel, Estate Agent, North Herefordshire

*I think what this country has become is disgraceful. I'm no longer proud to be British. Unfortunately, everything has been reduced to the bare bones, our education system, our economy, our NHS, just what is the policing?*

Debs, Mental Health Support Worker, Aldershot

Delivery itself will not be an antidote to the pervasive feeling that it is not just public services that are broken - but our entire democratic settlement. The public believe that settlement

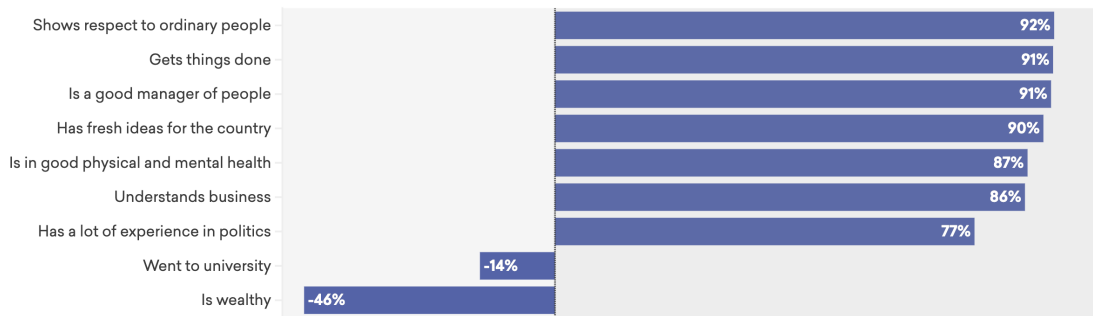
has been broken by politicians and policy makers who are in it for themselves, mired in sleaze and scandal, and who simply don't understand the struggles, worries or concerns of the public.

That starting point of disillusion with the very foundations of our politics means that the type of change required is both something deeper and simpler. It's about delivery which shows the government has respect for ordinary people the length and breadth of the country.

The Starmer Government has been keen to show that it is 'getting stuff done' and that matters to voters - in focus group conversations towards the end of the Sunak Government one of the most common complaints was that the Prime Minister had disappeared and seemed to have no plan for tackling Britain's problems. But 'getting stuff done' needs to go hand in hand with 'showing respect for ordinary people' - an attribute that people rank just as highly as delivery.

### Respect is the attribute the public most value in their leaders

On a scale of 0-5 where 5 is very important and 0 is not important at all, how important is it that a political leader... [Proportion responding important minus proportion responding unimportant]



## The politics of low expectations

A paradox emerges among voters on their expectations for the next Government. They want to feel like Britain works again, but their expectations for change are low. Many people have grown weary with politics - especially the noisy politics that have dominated since 2016. They have also become inured to being let down by broken political promises and aren't holding their breath that things will get any better.

*From what I can gather, it doesn't really matter who's in charge. No one really seems to be doing what they say they're going to do anyway. They all promise good things in their own way, but they don't actually do it. So, what's the point?*

Jess, Claims Handling Agent, Clacton

*It doesn't seem like whoever you're going to vote, there's going to be a great change and anything's going to turn out fantastic.*

Katie, Stay-at-home Mum, Portsmouth North

*I think it'll make little change whatever happens really.*

Rosie, Quantity Surveyor, Loughborough

## A legacy of broken promises

Part of the electorate's frustration stems from having already twice signalled that the 'status-quo' isn't good enough - in the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2019 General Election. After both of those events politicians promised change, and Boris Johnson's own speech on the steps of Downing Street in December 2019 captured that spirit better than any politician that had tried before. Yet that promise went unfulfilled as pledges to improve the NHS, level up the country and control immigration were not met.

Instead, the defining image of the last Government is likely to be that of the Downing Street parties during the pandemic. Partygate should not be reduced to just another scandal. It represented a seismic breach of the trust between the electorate and their Government - especially given the society-wide sacrifices that the pandemic entailed. For many people the notion of 'one rule for politicians, another for the public' will be impossible to dispel.

*I think the Conservatives, they've got no integrity. Literally they, I think it was shown during Covid really, wasn't it? With Party Gate. They were having a wonderful time while most people couldn't get to funerals.*

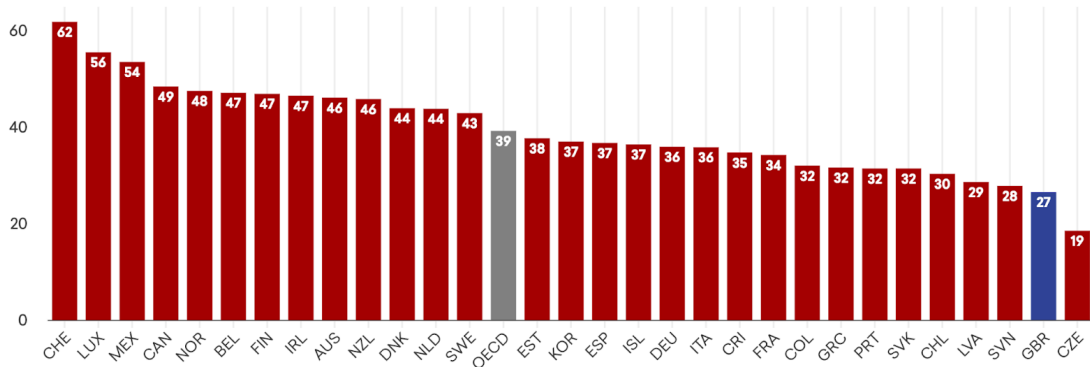
Mo, Council Support Staff, Birmingham Yardley

*Yeah, I'm just disillusioned with the whole lot. I really am. I was all for Boris five years ago and then it just sickened me Partygate, and I just thought I couldn't go to my auntie and uncle's funerals because of social distancing and yet they're all partying.*

Stephanie, Retired Business Owner, Harrogate

It is unsurprising then in that context that so many former Conservative voters turned to the 'anti-system' Reform UK or simply stayed at home. It is also unsurprising that the latest OECD survey found that public trust in Government is now the second lowest of 30 countries they surveyed.

Share of population who indicate high or moderately high trust in their national government



Source: OECD, 2024

*There's just so many promises that haven't been fulfilled over the years by the Conservatives. The NHS is falling apart, we can't get our children dentist appointments at the moment... we've just lost so much trust in them.*

Selena, Finance Assistant, Wells and the Mendip Hills

*I'm really struggling to believe anything they say. I know in the manifestos and everything they promise a lot of it doesn't come through at this time.*

Tommy, PE teacher, Aldershot

*I can't think of one policy that Rishi Sunak has promised to sort out or any problem he's promised to sort out that he's actually sorted out. He's been talking about stopping the boats now for the last couple of years. Nothing at all. Nothing has actually happened.*

Guy, Self-Employed, Wells and Mendip Hills

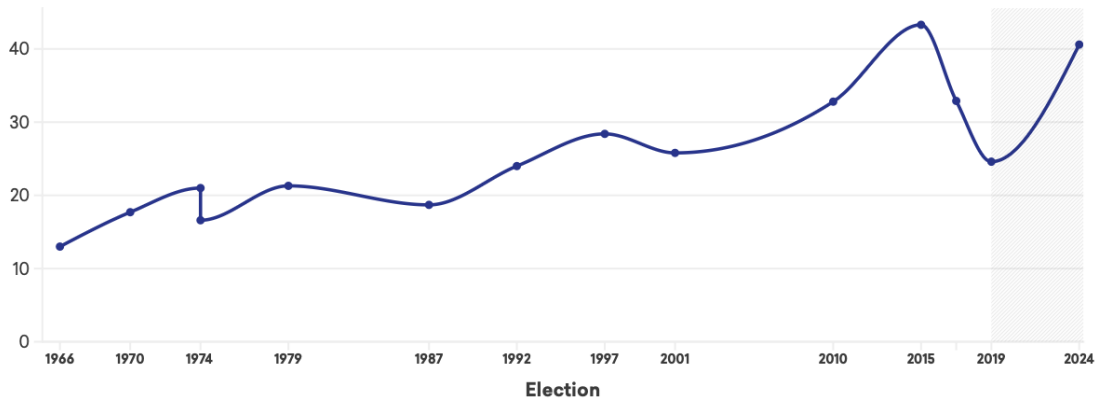
The question is whether the 2024 election will prove to be 'third time lucky' or 'three strikes and you're out' on delivering on that promise of change. The new Government certainly has the majority to do so - but it will have to contend with an electorate that is now rightly impatient (leading to greater voter volatility), and a public not yet fully convinced that Keir Starmer himself represents change.

## How voter volatility affects change

Increasing voter volatility has been a feature of recent elections and shapes politicians' ability to deliver on a mandate. The proportion of those choosing a different party at one election compared to the previous election has risen from just over one in ten voters in 1966 to four in ten voters in 2024.



### Proportion of people switching their vote

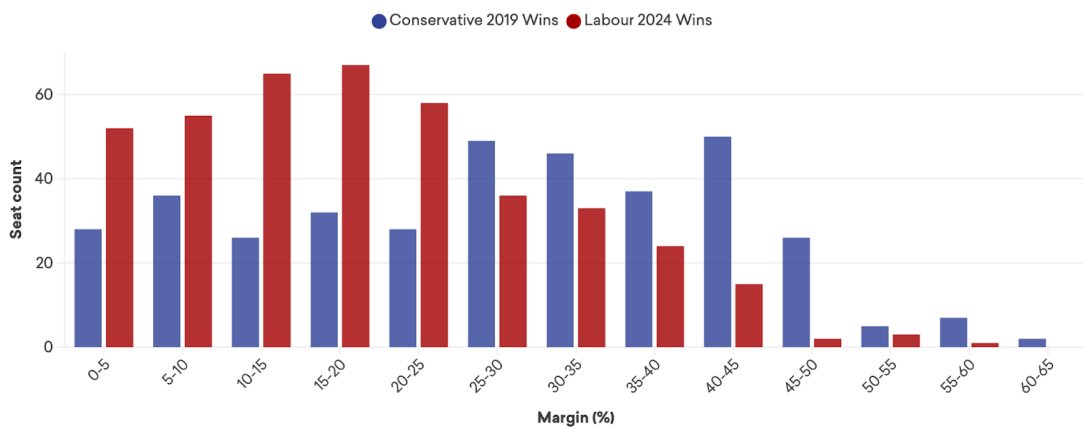


Source: BES 1966-2019, More in Common, July 2024

The level of voter volatility created an environment where Labour were able to turn their worst defeat in nearly a century in 2019 to a landslide victory in 2024. Many commentators expected Labour’s recovery to be a two Parliament mission - but the decline of traditional loyalties among voters and their willingness to vote elsewhere means that even a big majority or catastrophic defeat need only endure for a single Parliament.

That volatility helped Labour back into power after 2024, but they now find themselves on the other side of the equation with a much more precarious majority. In fact, even smaller levels of voter volatility will matter even more in this Parliament - given the increase in the number of seats with relatively small Labour majorities. In short, if volatility persists at current levels, the six point swing to the Conservatives required to deprive Labour of their majority at the next election would likely be easily surpassed.

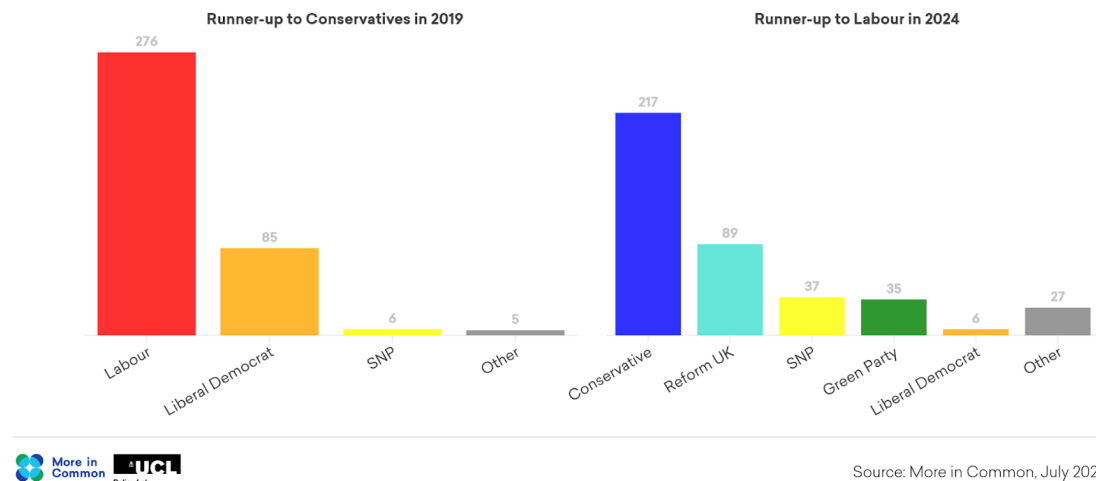
### Number of seats by margin



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Labour's challenge will not just be facing the Conservative Party - the fragmentation of the broader political landscape means there will be more parties vying to own the 'change mantra' at the next election. It also means that Labour will face challenges in multiple directions, making 'owning the centre ground' both a harder and less stable proposition than in the past.

### Labour's coalition is surrounded on all sides



One consequence of higher volatility is that the Government will have less political capital to spend on difficult decisions. If voters have less instinctive loyalty to a political party, they are more likely to express their disapproval by taking their vote elsewhere. The challenge for the Government will be in identifying which issues it is willing to spend political capital on in order to deliver its change mandate. That does not mean ignoring opinion polls or voter feedback, but instead recognising that much of the public would prefer to be treated like grown-ups, to be levelled with by politicians and to see Government leading the agenda.

*I think to concentrate on honesty, if they're going to do something, you say you're going to do something, you're going to go to Stockton for the day. You go to Stockton for the day. You don't say, I'm going to Stockton for the day and then go to Sunderland. You do what you said you're going to do. Live up to the things they're going to do.*

Steve, Lecturer, Harrogate

*Just do what you say you're going to do.*

Sean, Drone Surveyor, Harrogate

*You're left thinking 'Has anyone got any bloody backbone here?' I don't know, it is just someone's got to start making the hard decisions and sticking to their guns?*

Sharon, Chef, East Worthing and Shoreham

Counterintuitively, it may be the case that going against the grain of public opinion on certain issues is the way to navigate a more dynamic electorate. A more volatile electorate is not inevitable - voter loyalty can be engendered by winning public confidence. Central to that is delivering on the mandate for change, but to do so in a way that avoids 'lowest common denominator politics' will mean occasionally taking bold decisions that are unpopular with some people. However, if the last few years have demonstrated anything it is that doing the opposite - failing to have a proactive agenda, making unrealistic promises, or embracing 'cakeism' on difficult decisions - does not ultimately deliver electoral rewards.

No government should choose to pick fights with the electorate deliberately, but delivering the very real changes that the public want to see - ending the 8am telephone queue for GP appointments, returning order to the immigration system, and ensuring people have something to show for their hard work at the end of the month - will inevitably involve making choices that not everyone - including some of those that voted Labour at this election - will be happy with.

*I work for nothing really, to be honest. By the time I've paid everything else, the same as probably everyone here today, by the end of the month, there's nothing to show for it because it's bills, food, gas, electric, and it's not just me... My boy wants a hundred-pound trainers it's just peer pressure from schools and everything else...but it just doesn't happen.*

John, Parcelforce Night sorter, Croydon

*I don't understand how, since Covid, you cannot get a doctor's appointment and it doesn't matter who I speak to throughout the country and wherever they live, nobody can do it.*

Paul, Warehouse Manager, Milton Keynes

*Immigration is a top priority because of the impact it has on services, so schools, hospitals, your doctors, your dentists, housing ... it has such an impact on your infrastructure.*

Jill, Local Authority Worker, Doncaster

Doing so will require not just that the Government holds its nerve, but that its backbenchers are able to hold theirs, in order to give Government the space to bring about the change the country wants to see, and which is their only path to re-election.

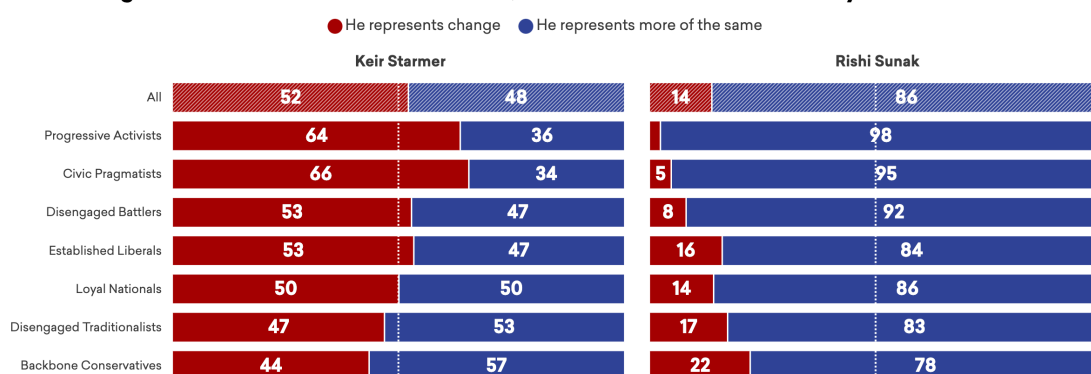
## Starmer and change

Given the wider context of voter discontent, Rishi Sunak's attempt to project his own change mantra in his speech at the 2023 party conference is understandable. However, after more than a decade of Conservative Government this simply did not feel credible.

Only 14 per cent felt that Rishi Sunak represented change while 86 per cent said he was more of the same.

For Keir Starmer, the electorate’s judgement is more mixed, with the public split on whether the Labour leader represents change. That offers an opportunity for the Labour leader to own the agenda, but shows he still has some persuasion to do.

**Thinking about [Keir Starmer/ Rishi Sunak], which comes closest to how you think about him?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

In part, the lukewarm embrace of Keir Starmer as a change candidate stems from the fact that many of the electorate saw the Labour leader as another establishment figure - typified for many by his knighthood. Keir Starmer’s insistence on talking about his upbringing may have led to eye rolls in Westminster, but barely more than a quarter of the public know that his father was a toolmaker. Yet when voters were aware of his more humble upbringing, they were more likely to entertain the possibility he could understand the struggles of ordinary Britons.

*He went to a private school, he went to Oxford, so that immediately makes me a bit suspicious. Not that education itself is a bad thing, but it's that separation from the common man. We already have that with Rishi Sunak. He has no idea what it's like to be poor.*

Nigel, Carer and Retired Prison Officer, Pembrokeshire

*I don't think anyone with 'Sir' in their title really represents socialism. That seems a little bit ironic.*

Ollie, Coastal Lifeguard, Mid Pembrokeshire

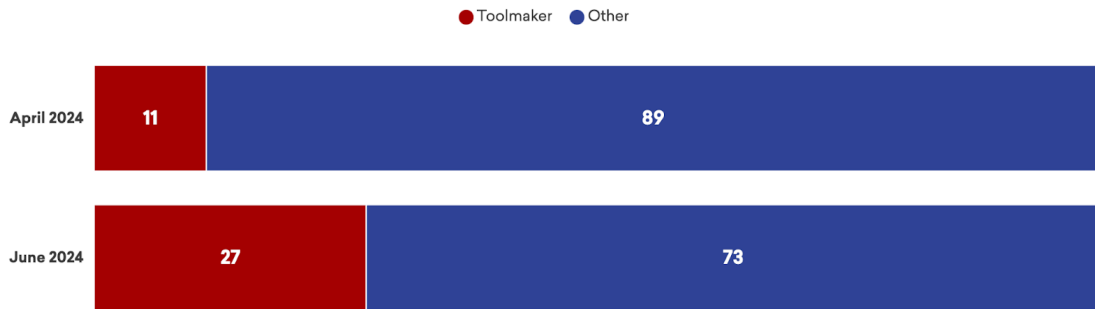
*Yeah, you do definitely have a different level of respect and appreciation for that, knowing where he's come from. In the end, like these people did, they are standing on the shoulders of the giants, and in case it is his parents. And as a parent, you do the best you can, so you kids have a better future.*

Chris, Delivery Driver, Bolton North East

*I think he comes across as very relatable and down to earth. Actually, there's quite a lot I didn't know about him. I have to say it was quite personal, with a background and everything. Quite personal, wasn't it?*

Marie, Primary School Teacher, Bolton North East

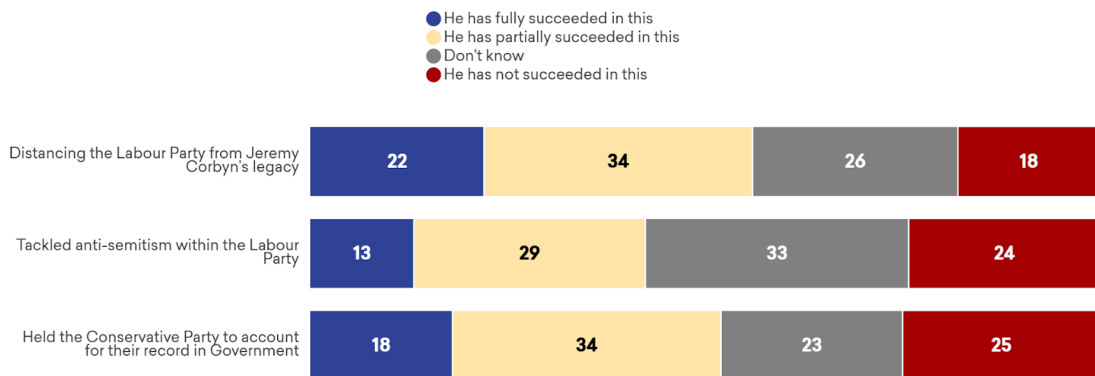
**Based on what you've heard, what did Keir Starmer's father do for a living?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Respondents were asked to choose between the following options: Doctor, Banker, Teacher, Politician, Toolmaker, Plumber, Policeman, Lawyer, Journalist, IT consultant, Don't know

However, while voters remain to be convinced that Keir Starmer represents change, they are willing to give him credit for the changes he has already brought about in the Labour Party. Over half the public think that Keir Starmer has been at least partially successful in distancing the Labour Party from Jeremy Corbyn's legacy and holding the Conservatives to account. In that way Keir Starmer has demonstrated he can bring about change and now has the opportunity to demonstrate he can make a difference for the whole country, not just the Labour Party.

**Thinking about the following, do you think that Keir Starmer has or has not achieved the following?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

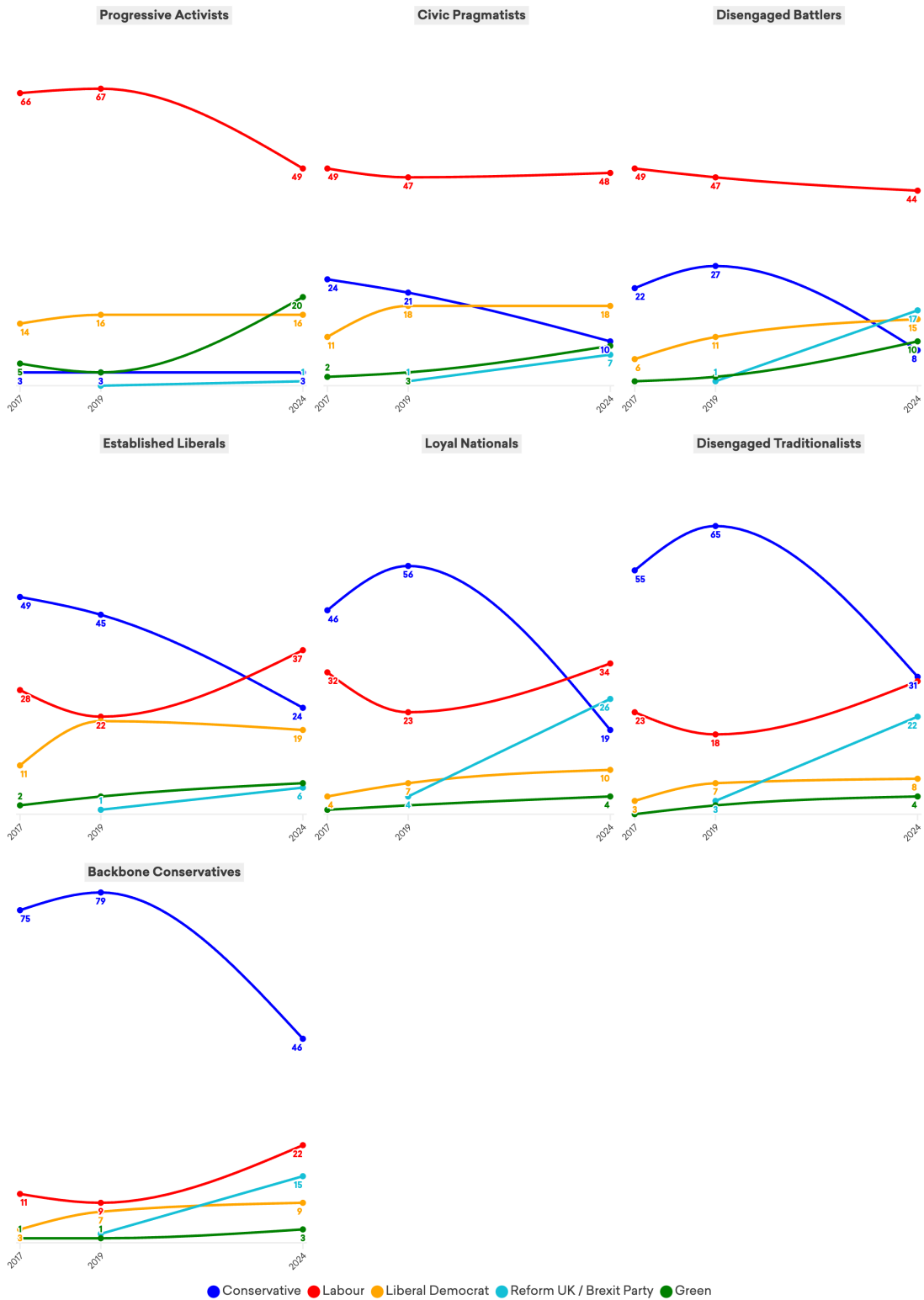
## The British Seven segments and their change election

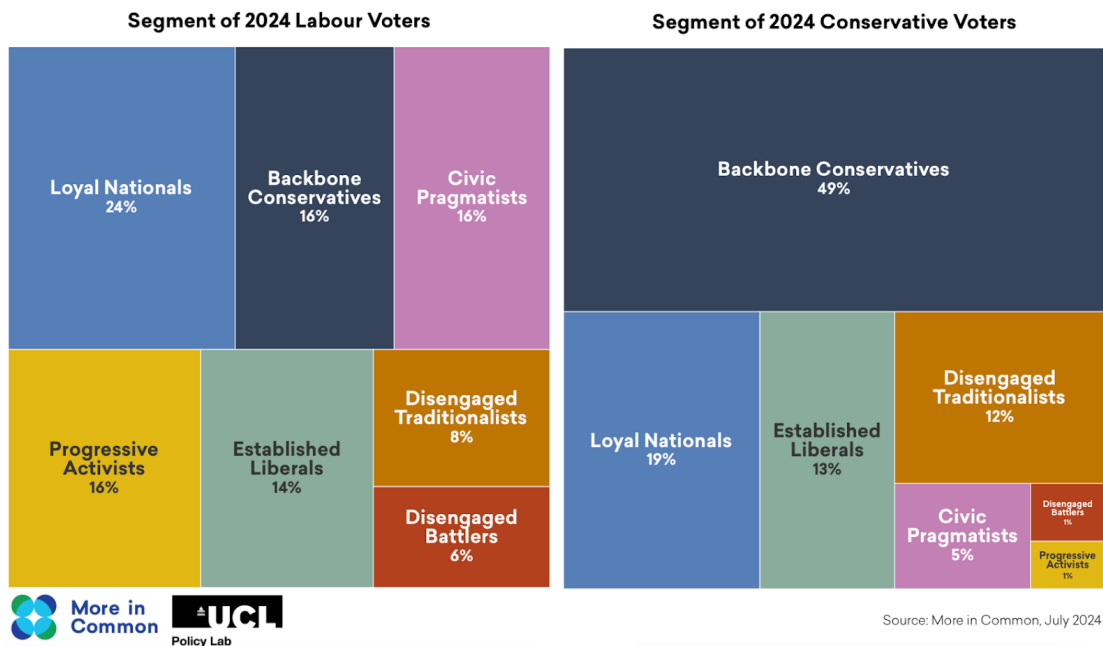
Understanding the Labour Government's mandate for change and the challenges delivering it become clearer using the lens of the British Seven segments. The new political allegiances of the seven blocs that make up the UK electorate show both how voter coalitions shifted this election - and the type of change the parties need to deliver to either hold together their coalitions or rebuild popular support.

The British Seven segments are a values-based segmentation of the British public which groups the public together according to their values, psychology and core-beliefs rather than their demographics. A summary of the segments follows:

- **Progressive Activists:** A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.
- **Civic Pragmatists:** A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, exhausted, community-minded, open to compromise, and socially liberal.
- **Disengaged Battlers:** A group that feels that they are just keeping their heads above water, and who blame the system for its unfairness. They are tolerant, insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked, and socially liberal.
- **Established Liberals:** A group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, confident, and pro-market.
- **Loyal Nationals:** A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and facing themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved, and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots.
- **Disengaged Traditionalists:** A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work, and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected.
- **Backbone Conservatives:** A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future and who follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, proud, secure, confident, and engaged with politics.

### How did the segments vote?





## How Labour’s coalition has changed

Unlike 2019, the Labour voter coalition is much less tightly ideologically bound. In 2019, Labour’s support ranged from 67 per cent among Progressive Activists to just 9 per cent among Backbone Conservatives. In 2024, their support remained strongest among the Progressive Activists and weakest among the Backbone Conservatives- but with a much narrower range of support from 49 percent to 22 per cent respectively.

Between those two extremes, the breadth of Labour’s electoral coalition is striking - with their biggest gains at this election among the four segments that made up Boris Johnson’s 2019 coalition, while remaining flat or even losing support among the three segments that voted for Jeremy Corbyn in 2019.

In sum - Labour support is now held together by pragmatism above anything else - those that voted Labour, and sometimes across very different voter groups, did so because they wanted to get the Conservatives out or because they felt Labour might do a better job of running the country. It’s a coalition bound together by valence rather than ideology.

*I think, if Labour get in, it will be because people are fed up with Conservatives rather than wanting Labour.*

Louise, Teaching Assistant, Aldershot

*Part of me thought I should perhaps vote Conservative. Part of me wanted to vote for Reform... I was completely torn over what to do, which is unlike me. I just normally don't even think about it. I just go and vote conservative. But yeah, this time there was*



*a lot of turmoil and in the end, I voted Labour...I felt it was time for a change and it was a bit of revenge for the betrayal of the Conservatives*

Oliver, Admin Manager, Cannock Chase

*I voted Labour simply because they're more for the working class. I'm a single parent and they are all about the working-class people. I've seen clips on the news and different things of what they're going to do. They're helping the NHS, they're providing more dental nurses, they're going to help the doctor surgeries not to be so clogged up, that kind of thing. So, I'm hoping that they will make better judgement than the Conservative. Like I say, they've had a good bash at it, but not really succeeded. So, I'm hoping Labour will change.*

Simon, Shop manager, Cannock Chase

*I think Labour have a good chance to show that they have the capability to do what they're promising because with the Tories anyway, they have shown that they can't*

Stephen, IT Support Worker, East Renfrewshire

Some of the shifts between specific segments are particularly striking:

- The Progressive Activists' support for Labour has dipped from two thirds backing Labour in 2019 to under half (49 per cent) in 2024. The Greens took 20 per cent of the vote among this group by challenging Labour from the left.
- Labour saw its biggest increase with Established Liberals who best reflect more Cameronite blue wall voters, winning over a third (37 per cent) of this group – up from just 22 per cent in 2019.
- Among Loyal Nationals - the group who swung from Labour to Conservative in 2017 and again in 2019 delivering Boris Johnson's victories in the Red Wall - the Labour Party has regained some support. After dipping to 23 per cent in 2019, Labour finished on top with this group of voters, albeit with only 34 per cent and a significant number voting for Reform UK instead.
- Labour's support actually fell slightly with Disengaged Battlers, the most urban, economically insecure and ethnically diverse of the seven segments - with both Reform UK and the Greens making gains. This suggests that this segment who have particularly low trust in Government and the political system have yet to be convinced that Labour can deliver on reducing the cost of living and making them feel better off.

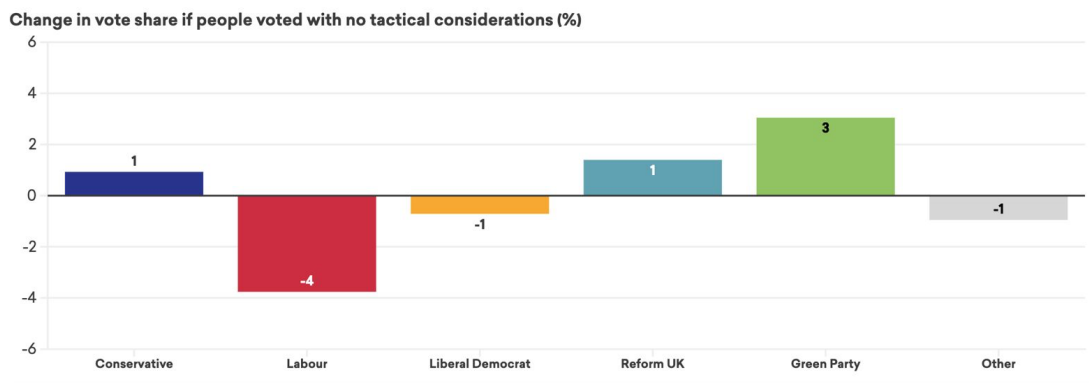
This non-ideological coalition helps to explain why Labour was able to make such significant inroads into even previously solidly Conservative seats. However, there is no doubt that it is a coalition of the 'head' rather than the 'heart'. Nearly a quarter of those who voted Labour (23 per cent) voted for Labour for the first time. Just under three in ten (28 per

cent) of 2024 Labour voters give the top reason for their vote as stopping another party from winning. Many votes for Labour were strategic.

In fact, when voters are asked how they would have voted if they had cast a ballot with their heart rather than their head the distribution of votes changes significantly. Labour's vote share would have dropped from 35 per cent to 31 per cent. The Green's vote would have risen to 10 per cent and the Liberal Democrats fallen to 12 per cent. Most strikingly, the Green vote among Progressive Activists would have risen from 20 to 33 per cent. At the same time, support for the Conservatives and Reform UK would barely have changed at all when voters voted with their heart.

Taken together, this is a further sign that voters on the left voted tactically to ensure change, and those on the right did not. That strategic split enabled those significant Labour gains. Looked at another way however, Labour's bleeding to the left could have been worse if the electorate had not been so determined to secure a change in Government

**Imagine you were voting based only on which political party you most prefer, regardless of who is likely to win in your constituency. In that case, who would you have voted for?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

## How the Conservative coalition has changed

The Conservative coalition has shrunk since 2019 - retreating from their broad-based coalition of four segments in 2019 to being highly concentrated among the most loyal Conservative voters in 2024.

Having bled support across the electorate the Conservatives are now only comfortably ahead with the Backbone Conservative segment. With the more individualistic 'Essex man' Disengaged Traditionalist segment, the Conservatives have collapsed from a 47-point lead in 2019 to leading by just one point in the 2024 election. Meanwhile, among Established Liberals - once a mainstay of the Cameron Coalition - their post Brexit decline in support accelerated, with the Conservatives finishing in second place on less than a quarter of the vote.

In addition, their new gains with Loyal Nationals in the Red Wall and beyond have been all but erased as the Party fell into third place with this segment, behind Reform UK. Among those segments that voted Labour in 2019, the Conservative decline continued which also contributed to their significant loss in seat numbers. From being in second place on vote share with the more urban and economically insecure Disengaged Battler segment in 2019 the Conservatives are now fifth - in large part a consequence of their perceived failures to help with the cost of living.

## **A change election where many voters stayed at home**

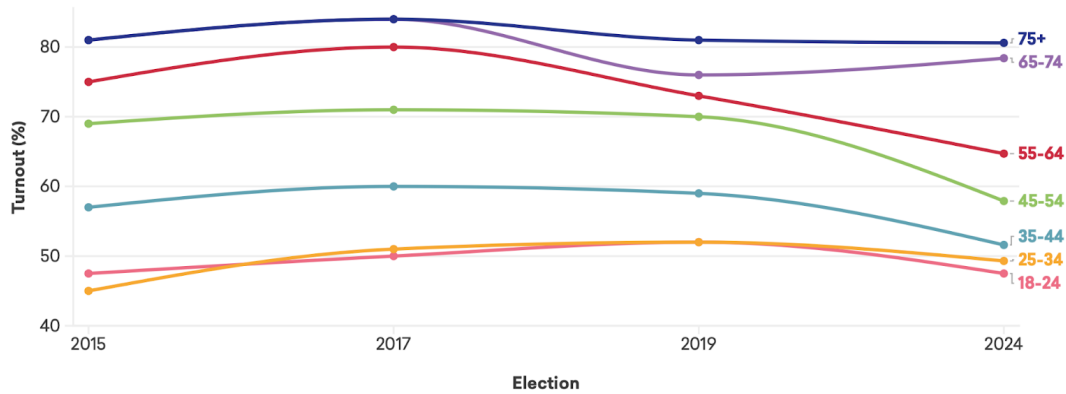
For many people, voting is not a habit. Seven in ten who didn't vote in this election say they normally don't vote, or never do - some 13.3 million registered voters. But for the rest, this election represented something different. A greater proportion of the electorate sat out this election than at any election in modern history, bar one.

Of those who opted out on election day, 38 per cent voted in the 2019 election. There has been some suggestion that those opting out were largely disillusioned progressives or those confident or complacent about the likelihood of a Labour win. While it is true that many non-voters would have voted for the Labour Party, the picture is somewhat more complicated than simply left-wing abstentionism when looking at the changes in who didn't vote and why they didn't.

Falling turnout is unlikely to be a cause of complacency alone. In fact, only four per cent of non-voters said they did so because of certainty that their preferred candidate would win regardless.

2019 Conservative voters made up a greater proportion of 2024 non-voters than 2019 Labour voters. Strikingly, rather than young people, it was people in their forties and fifties whose turnout rates dropped most steeply. Excluding the two most 'disengaged' of the Seven Segments, it was the economically secure and civically active Established Liberal segment which saw the worst turnout.

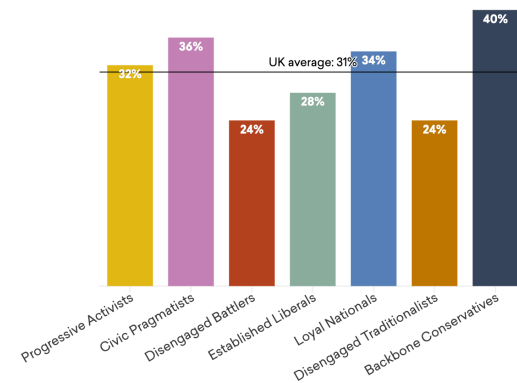
### Turnout by Age



Source: BES, More in Common, July 2024

For 77 per cent of the 2019 Conservatives voters who abstained, this was the first time ever that they did not vote. This group exemplifies Conservatives who have lost faith in the Government they elected in 2019. The top reason 2019 Conservatives give for not voting is that they don't trust any politicians and the main barriers they cite to voting Conservative centre around perceptions of the party as out-of-touch, corrupt and incompetent. A significant proportion (23 per cent) of the first-time non-voters were Backbone Conservatives who entered the election period undecided and were ultimately alienated by a lacklustre campaign, with those in focus group conversations citing Rishi Sunak leaving D-Day commemorations as the reason they ultimately decided to sit the election out.

### Proportion of non-voters for whom this was their first time not voting



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I thought D-Day was disgusting. It was his fault. He should have said, no, I'm staying. He shouldn't listen to his advisors.*

*Jenny, Retired, Clacton*

*It's going to be the last big event from the end of the war because after this there's going to be none of them left and then it's going to get forgotten. It was totally disrespectful of all those people who died and the ones who were still living. Totally.*

*Kate, Delivery Driver, Chichester*

*Quite insulting, quite embarrassing on the world stage to see the Prime Minister not standing next to the other world leaders*

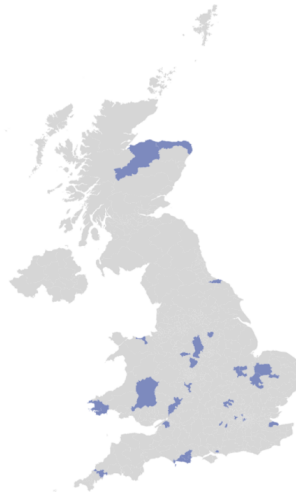
Daniel, Admin Officer, Aldershot

*I actually think it was quite disrespectful if I'm honest, and if he was advised to do that, he should have probably said no because it's quite disrespectful to the veterans, the people, the people who fought in the war, our country as a whole, it's disrespectful to everybody really.*

Kelly, Customer Service Manager, Thanet

This depressed turnout exaggerated the Conservatives' defeat - if the Conservatives had been able to mobilise the 2019 Conservatives who didn't vote in 2024 it could have tipped the scales in their favour in 33 additional seats, even without winning back any direct switchers.

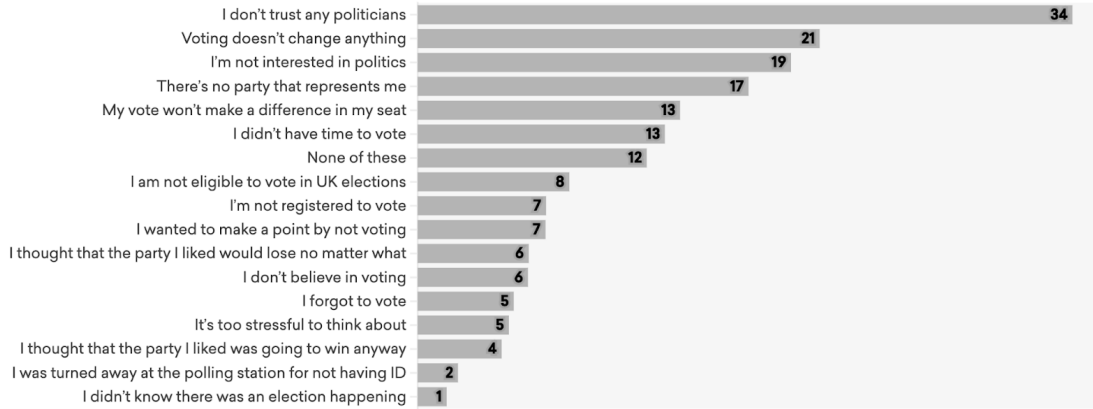
### **Seats the Conservatives could have won by mobilising 2019 voters who stayed home**



Overall, non-voters' decision to opt out was driven by low trust in politics. Compared to 2019, turnout remained lowest among Disengaged Battlers - the most economically insecure segment, with the cost of living by far the most important factor. The decision of many not to vote is both a sense that politicians have not delivered for them and a lack of trust in politicians (cited by 33 per cent).

While Conservative non-voters were more likely to opting out due to disillusion, one of the top reasons 2019 Labour voters give for not voting is the more practical 'lack of time' - while one in ten young people say they didn't vote because they find it too stressful.

**You said you did not vote in Thursday's election. Why was that? Select all that apply.**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I've been a lifelong Tory voter and I'm disillusioned with them and unfortunately, I can't vote for the other lot. So, I'm like, what do I do?*

Paul, Warehouse Manager, Milton Keynes

*I don't trust Labour whatsoever. I think they'll get us in a lot of debt, Put us back in a bad situation... I don't like Conservatives. I didn't want to vote at all.*

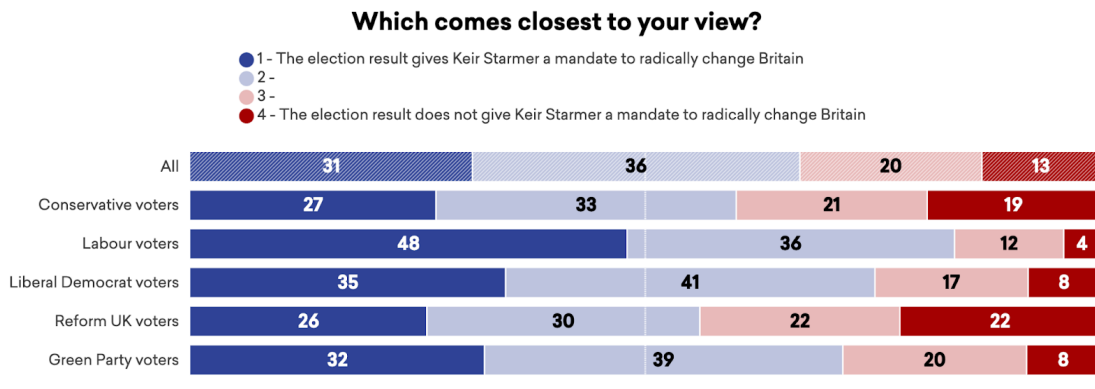
Sue, Sales Assistant, Grimsby

*20 years ago... I think there was more trust and I think the main parties: we kind of knew where they stood, they were stable. There's a massive instability now in both parties. I don't know who to vote for.*

Catherine, Retired Head Teacher, Worthing West

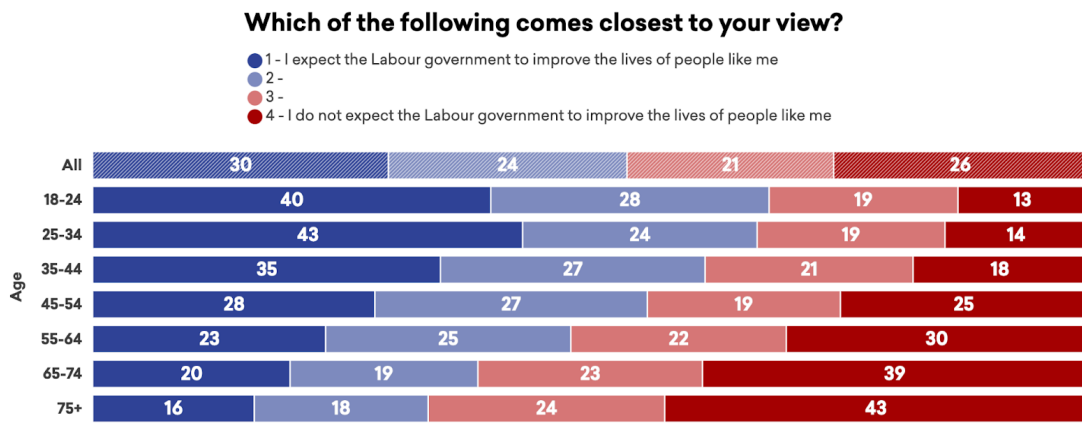
## Chapter 2 | Expectations for the new government

There is no doubt that the electorate see Labour’s victory as a mandate for Keir Starmer to deliver on their demand for change. Even among those who did not vote for Labour, more than three in five (63 per cent) view the result as a mandate for Keir Starmer to change Britain.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

The public are evenly split (54 per cent to 46 per cent) on whether the Labour government will actually improve the lives of people like them, with younger generations more optimistic than the elderly. Majorities in five out of the seven segments also believe that the government will tangibly improve their lives, but more conservative leaning segments are less confident.



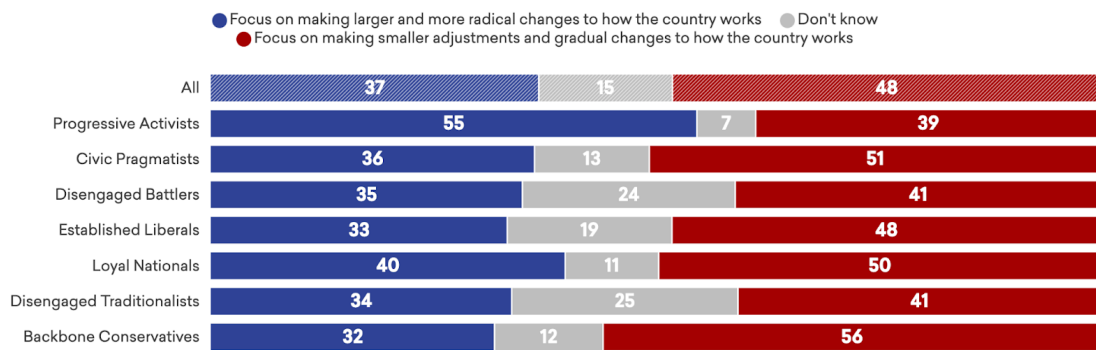
Source: More in Common, July 2024

Those who brought Labour into No 10 have high expectations for what a Labour government will deliver - 72 per cent of Labour voters expect things to improve in Britain over the next few years. While there may be a grace period from these voters to “turn the ship around” the challenge will be living up to these expectations. For other groups, expectations are lower.

*I don't think it'll get better in six months, but it might show signs that it's getting better.*  
 Jenny, Retired, Clacton

But a mandate for change is not a mandate for radicalism. A plurality of the public think Labour should focus on incremental rather than radical change - including a majority of those who did not vote for Labour. Only Progressive Activists are more likely to favour radical change. Gradual and tangible improvements are the path to building public confidence.

**Thinking about different ways the new government might approach delivering change, which comes closer to your view?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

However, those incremental changes cannot be reduced to competent delivery - the mandate for change is simultaneously simple, but also deeper than pure delivery. It needs to be a form of delivery that demonstrates to the public that the new government is willing to listen and engage with the public’s concerns and priorities, serves their interests, and respect them and their contribution to their community.

*I'm not sure the politicians have got an absolute Scooby about anyone that works hard actually. I'd welcome any of them to come and do a 12-hour shift with me. That actually turns into a 15-hour shift. I think Chaz is being generous with them lasting two nights. I think they probably last about four hours.*

Lorraine, Ambulance Worker, Croydon

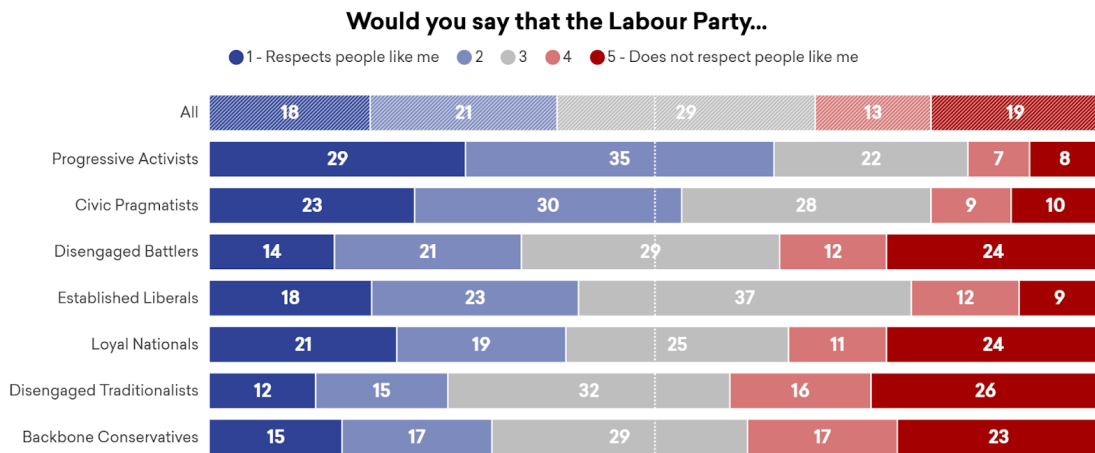
Doing that starts with putting respect for ordinary people at the core of the governing agenda. Keir Starmer’s commitment to this in his first speech in Downing Street acknowledged the importance of respect and now must be prepared to deliver on it.



*From now on, you have a government unburdened by doctrine, guided only by the determination to serve your interest, to defy, quietly, those who have written our country off. You have given us a clear mandate and we will use it to deliver change, to restore service and respect to politics, end the era of noisy performance, tread more lightly on your lives and unite our country.*

*Keir Starmer, Downing Street, 5 July 2024*

Following the 2024 election, the public seem ready to take Keir Starmer at his word. Voters are more likely to say that Labour respects people like them than does not, and Labour are far ahead of the Conservatives on this measure. But there is also much room for improvement. Only among the two most left leaning segments (Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists) do a majority of people believe the Labour Party respects them - with the most disengaged segments in particular likely to feel disrespected by the Labour Party.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I think we've had little or no respect from politicians for 12 years for the working-class people. I think the respect for the politicians is at an all time low. So anything Starmer can do to improve upon this will really help. So, I think he's a good start to his reign by talking about that. I think how he can show that is probably by just delivering on the promises and not cocking it up like they've done in the last 14 years.*

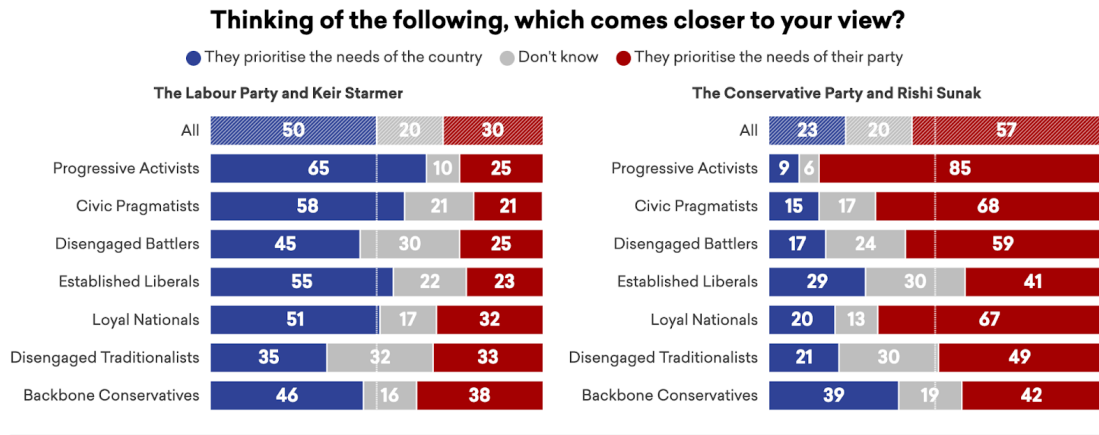
Karl, Sales Manager, Cannock Chase

*I think it's good that he's thinking about the wee man in the street and he's thinking about them, but whether he actually delivers to them, the proof will be in the pudding.*

Liz, Retired Procurement Manager, Kirkcaldy

There is also a clear expectation from the public that 'country before the party' is more than just a slogan and is matched with action in government. Labour is seen by most (50 per cent) to prioritise the needs of the country over the needs of the party - including majorities in five of the seven segments. While the infighting of recent years has meant the

Conservatives are seen as more than twice as likely to prioritise the party (57 per cent) over the country (23 per cent).



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I mean the Conservatives are just a joke and from my point of view, obviously you might love them, but I just think Boris Johnson really did us. A lot of people have a very sour taste in their mouth and won't forget what happened. He was saying one thing doing another and then the fiasco with Liz Truss to be a half people in government, the country was in free fall.*

Catherine, Retired Head Teacher, Worthing West

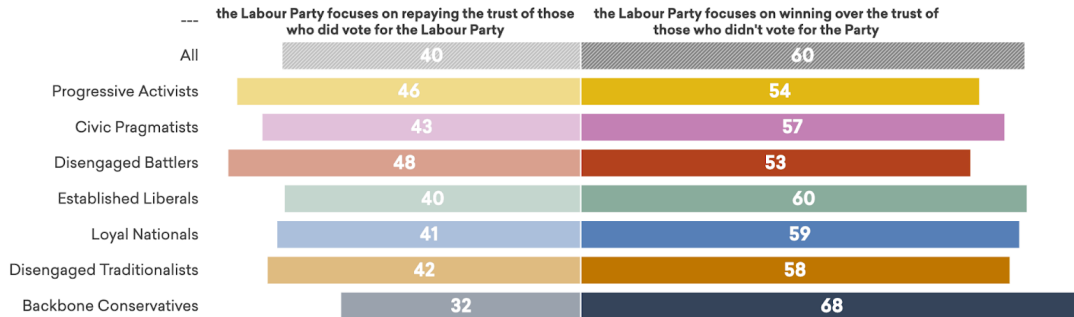
*There's just so much infighting. They're all turning on each other. None of them can trust each other. An awful lot of Rishi's supporters are jumping ship now just, yeah, it just doesn't look good for 'em.*

Stuart, Warehouse worker, Clacton

Labour's low vote share means that not just maintaining but building support across the country will be one of the first tests for Starmer's government. Every segment thinks it is more important that Labour wins the trust of those who didn't vote Labour rather than repays the trust of those who did. Even Labour 2024 voters themselves think it is more important that the Party wins the trust of those who didn't vote for them.

**For each of the following statements, please select which comes closest to your view?**

It is more important that...



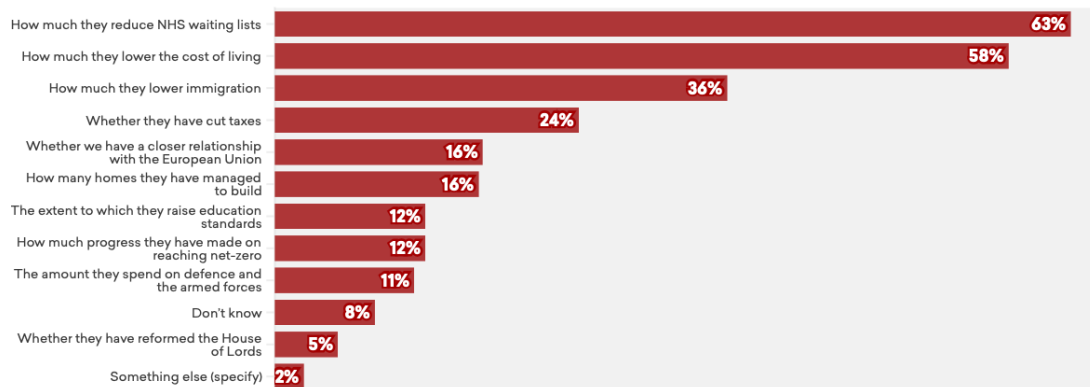
Source: More in Common, July 2024

## Judging progress on change

How does the public plan to judge the government on its delivery of change and what benchmarks will they use to evaluate progress?

First and foremost, the public will look to NHS waiting lists and the cost of living to judge Labour’s success or failure. These are top performance indicators for every segment, with the elderly tending to be more concerned than average about waiting lists and younger generations more so about the cost of living. As inflation falls and interest rates seem set for a summer cut, waiting lists are arguably the new Government’s key challenge in maintaining public support.

**Which of the following will be most important to you in judging the success of the Labour Government after 5 years? Select up to three.**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*Everyone is feeling the pinch. I used to say to my partner that I haven't felt like this since I was a student, if I'm honest, that I'm watching my electricity bills, I haven't done*

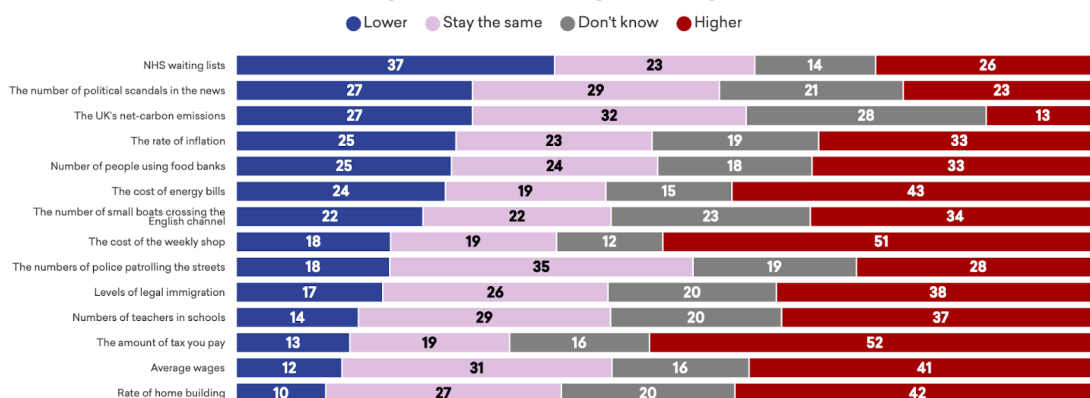
*that in years and it feels really backwards. You want to have a little bit of luxury in your older years kind of thing, without scrimping and scraping.*

Dhara, Hairdresser, North Herefordshire

Public optimism about the prospects for material improvements under the new Government are low. People are significantly more likely to believe that the cost of the weekly shop and energy bills will continue to rise rather than fall. Migration emerges as a further area where the public are prepared to be disappointed - they are more likely to think both that legal immigration and channel crossings will either rise or stay the same than reduce.

In contrast, there is greater optimism that Britain will see more home building and rises to average wages, and that Labour will hit its pledge to recruit more teachers. On NHS waiting lists, the public are more divided with 37 per cent of the public expecting to see a fall, 26 per cent further rises and 23 per cent that they stay the same.

**In 5 years' time, do you expect each of the following to be higher, lower or stay the same compared to what they currently are?**

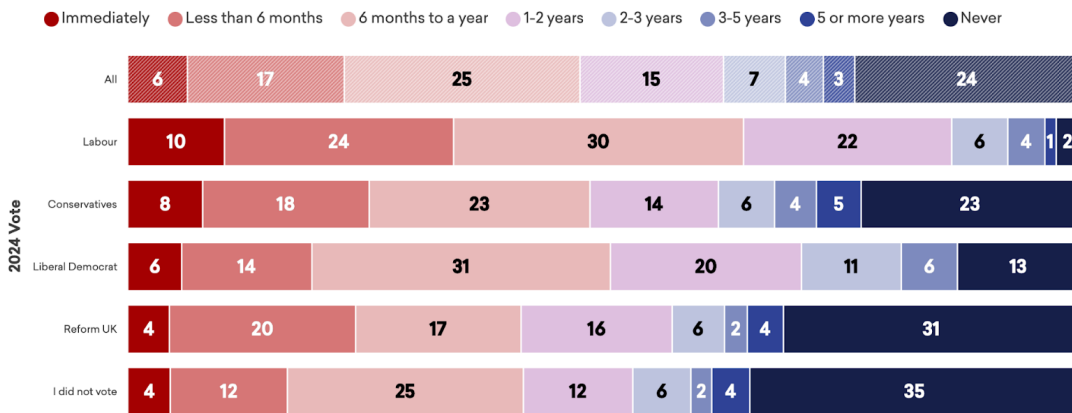


Source: More in Common, July 2024

## Impatience for change

If the public are pessimistic about the likelihood of real improvements over the next parliament, they are nonetheless still impatient to see Broken Britain fixed. Almost half (48 per cent) expect to see a difference from Labour's policies within a year, while three in ten extend Labour's probation period to a single parliamentary term. Those who voted Labour are more likely to expect to see change soon.

### After how long do you expect to start seeing a difference from Labour's policies, if at all?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

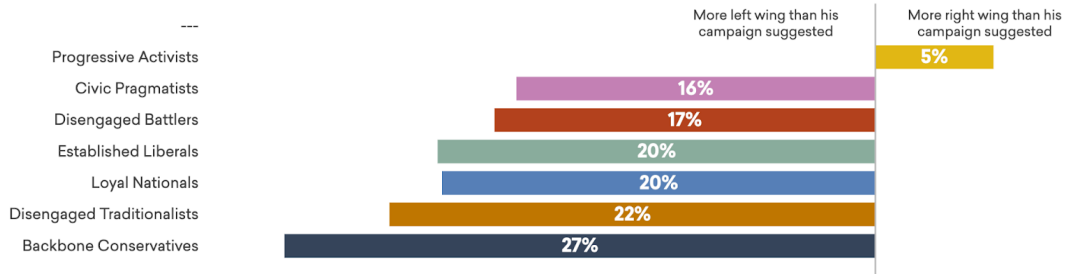
If the government fails to deliver the promised improvements, the public are most likely to say this would be down to either promising too much (30 per cent), making unrealistic promises (28 per cent) or Starmer not being up to the job (28 per cent). Among Loyal Nationals who reflect those more socially conservative swing voters, Keir Starmer not being up to the job is the top reason to think Labour might fail (36 per cent). Here Labour's voters are more forgiving - more than two in five (42 per cent) consider five years is not long enough to improve things.

## Labour's instincts

Most of the public do not expect Labour to shift either to the left or the right during their time in Government. While three in ten (27 per cent) think Starmer will be more left wing in government, a plurality expect him to govern as he appeared during the campaign.

Only among Progressive Activists, who make up the Party's left flank of support, do more suspect his centre of gravity will be further to the right than left. Put another way, the public would be surprised if Labour in Government deviated far from the platform they outlined during the campaign.

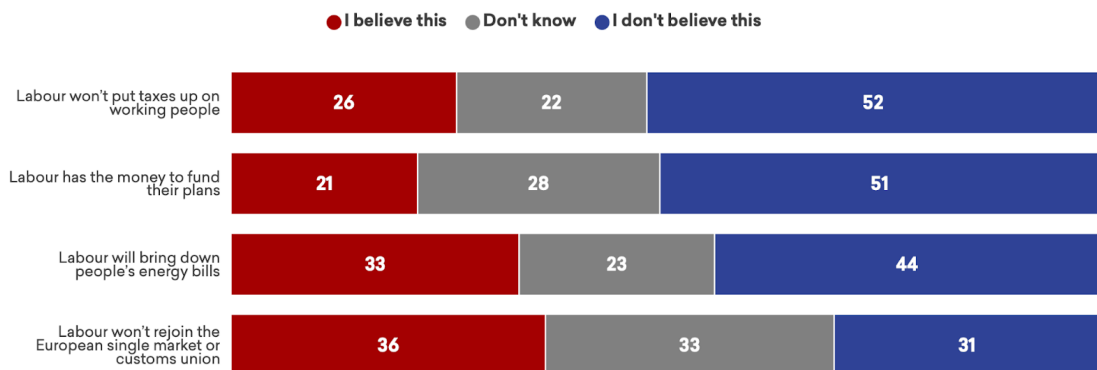
**Based on what you know about Keir Starmer's current campaign promises and your own impressions, do you think Keir Starmer will be...**



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Net scores

However, on individual policy issues, the pattern is somewhat different. Here the public are less likely to take Labour at their word on their tax plans, having the money to deliver their promises, ruling out re-joining the Single Market or Customs Union and bringing down energy bills.

**The Labour Party said the following things during the election campaign. Do you believe or not believe these promises?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

While most of Labour's 2024 voters do take the party at their word on the public finances, tax, single market membership and cutting energy bills, Labour faces a credibility challenge on all these issues. More than half of Loyal Nationals (typical Red Wall voters) do not believe that Labour will not raise taxes, have the money to pay for their plans or will cut energy bills. Interestingly, they are less likely to be sceptical about Labour's commitment to ruling out rejoining the Single Market and Customs Union.

*I think the missions will be great if they happen, wouldn't they? But again, I don't know how they're going to do it without it costing us a lot of money*

Kitty, Estate Agent, Loughborough

*Where are they going to get the money from? Because they keep telling us they're not going to put taxes up. They've got to find it from somewhere and they say things like, oh they're mega rich, they'll have to pay more. No, because they'll go and live somewhere else*

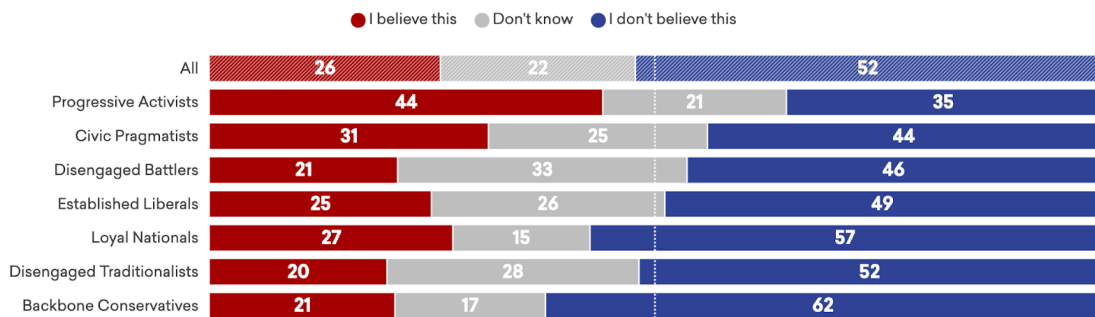
Julie, Auditor, Whitby

*They've got these ideas, and they say that they're not going to raise taxes, but I think they are. Where is the money going to come from?*

Laura, Nursery Teacher, Hitchin

**The Labour Party said the following things during the election campaign. Do you believe or not believe these promises?**

[Labour won't put taxes up on working people]



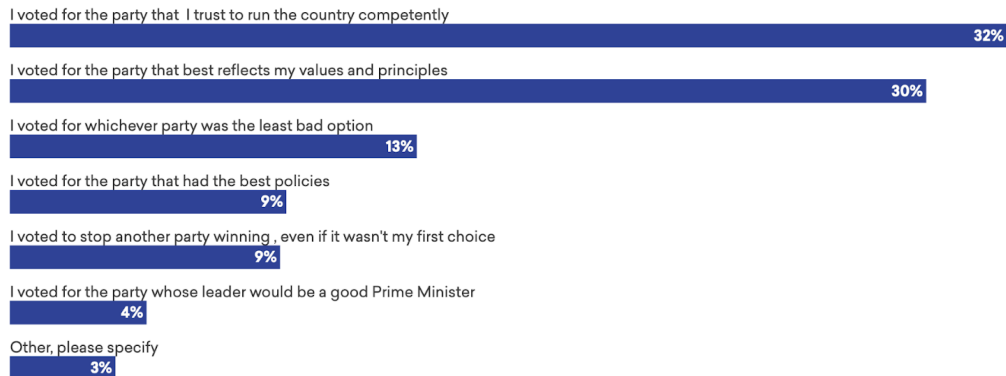
Source: More in Common, July 2024

## Policy-specific expectations

Over the past few years, More in Common has spoken with thousands of members of the public about the greatest challenges they see facing the country. The same themes emerge time again: the ever-present worry about the cost of living, along with healthcare and the NHS, migration, climate change and the environment. These are the areas on which the public will judge the success or failure of a Labour government - along with delivering on their promises to move power away from Westminster to communities across the country.

Those who voted Labour did so in the hope it would solve these problems through competent, efficient government. Across the electorate voters were three times more likely to say they voted for the party they trusted to run the country competently rather than to say they supported the party they thought had the best policies. Delivering on voters' expectations in each of these areas will be key to restoring the public's confidence that Government can and will improve the country.

## Broadly speaking, when thinking about how you voted on Thursday, what was more important in determining who you voted for?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

## Cutting the cost of living

Progress on tackling the cost of living is central to how people will come to judge many of Labour's policies and actions in government. Nothing more compounds the view that the system isn't working for ordinary people than the pervasive feeling that many people are simply 'working to live' and 'living to work', that while others get looked after those on low wages are left with nothing to show for it at the end of the month.

*I work for nothing really, to be honest. By the time I've paid everything else, the same as probably everyone here today, by the end of the month, there's nothing to show for it because it's bills, food, gas, electric, and it's not just me.... My boy wants a hundred-pound trainers it's just peer pressure from schools and everything else...but it just doesn't happen*

John, Parcelforce Night sorter, Croydon

*I work in oil and gas; I make a really good wage compared to some and even I'm struggling now to put money aside and save. So you go down to the shop, you go down to Asda now and you buy shopping for a week and its extortion.*

Gordon, Oil and Gas Worker, Aberdeen

The most popular decisions taken by the former Conservative Government were those that protected the public from the worst of the shocks to the cost of living, such as setting a cap on energy bills (54 per cent net) and the furlough scheme during the COVID pandemic (49 per cent net).



*I don't think they've (the Conservatives) done badly because I'm quite secure... during Covid I was looked after, I was furloughed, and I was shielding. So, I'm in a better place now than I was maybe 20 years ago with voting for Conservatives.*

Jill, Tea Shop Waitress, Whitby

But most did not think that those measures were enough, especially as they saw oil and gas companies making record profits while the rest of the country struggled.

*The thing that absolutely infuriates me and makes me very, very angry is when you hear about BP or Shell or whoever these other energy companies are that are making billions and billions in profit and their CEOs are getting paid millions and millions as a salary. And yet when it comes to energy, as people have said, the prices don't come down even though their prices have come down to them and they're not investing it in renewable or anything like that. I can't understand how the government allowed it to happen actually, because there's been people, families, old age pensioners that have had to sit in the freezing cold with layers and layers on because they couldn't afford it. And yet nobody seems to take any notice of that. I just think it's a disgrace.*

Adrian, Fast Food Area Manager, Clacton

That failure to deal with the cost of living saw the Conservatives lose their historical edge over Labour on economic competence. By the time of the election all segments apart from Backbone Conservatives trusted Labour more on the cost of living (Labour lead by 17 per cent among the general public) and jobs and unemployment (where Labour lead by 19 per cent). By failing to demonstrate that they could run the economy competently, the Conservatives lost the trust of the public.

*I think it's awful how many families where both parents are working full time and yet they are still having to go to food banks because the wages are just not meeting the demand of running a home. They're working hard all week and then still having to go to food banks and in 2024 in Great Britain, nobody should be experiencing that. Nobody.*

Tracey, West Midlands

*You work really hard, but I find myself worried. When's the next electrical bill going to hike up? Or just like your food shop constantly going up, just seeing your wages going out the door. There's nothing left.*

Katie, on Maternity Leave, Clacton

Labour's challenge will be in finding a way to address the cost of living that not only supports those most in need - particularly those choosing between 'heating or eating'. But also, those who are in work and yet find themselves having to cut out all the 'fun things' in life; forcing their children to put things back in the supermarket or having to monitor the amount of time their family spends in the shower. Supporting those groups who are, in the

words of Theresa May 'Just About Managing', is key to maintaining their support for a broader based social safety net that helps the poorest.

*I've got four kids. My 14-year-old daughter loves to spend 40 minutes in the shower. I don't know what the hell she does, but I'm there timing it now.*

Craig, Software Tester, Selby

*This is the most I've ever been earning in my life, but at the end of the month it's like you're living hand to mouth*

Jamie, Lorry Driver, Uxbridge

*The 'have nots' never had it anyway. But what we're seeing is the middle, the people with some disposable income now that disposable income is vanishing, or they are panicking that they have to save it for a rainy day. And I found that my family portrait side of things has struggled. I've had to pivot to other types of photography in order to make a living myself because I, I'm finding families, I'm more not, they don't have the disposable income that they used to have in the middle ground.*

Guy, Photographer, Milton Keynes

Failure to deal with concerns about the cost of living will also likely stymie progress on other areas the Government cares about. Climate action is often viewed through an economic lens, with many expressing worries about the personal costs associated with environmental policies. Frustrations about immigration stem, at least in part, from concerns about competition for housing and public services. And for many, being stuck on an NHS waiting list can mean being in significant pain, unable to work, or having to seek private alternatives.

*I just worry if everybody's got the money to be able to do the things that the government are wanting to bring in because a lot of these things are extremely expensive.*

Kathy, GP receptionist, Clacton

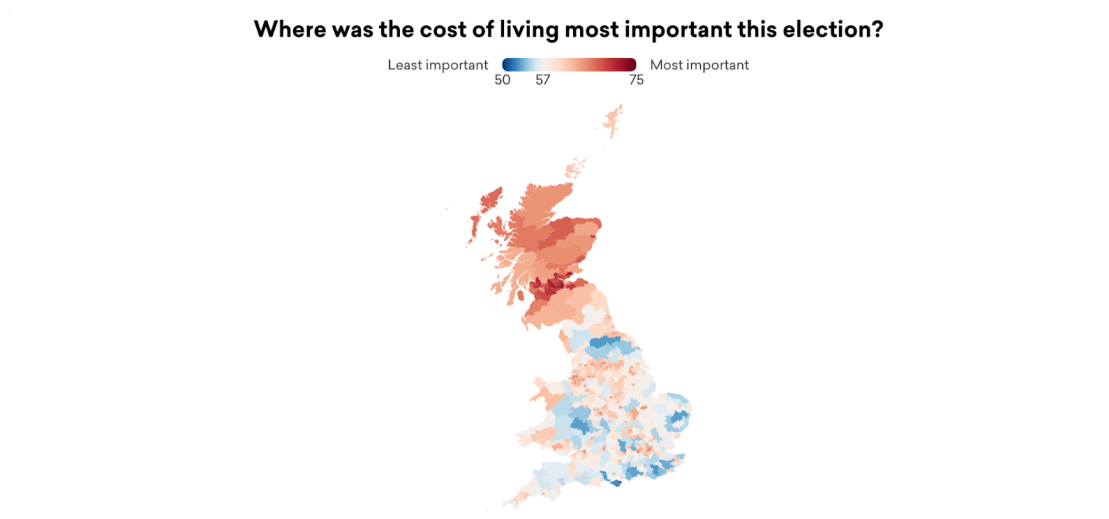
*It's a risk, I think simply because generally it increases cost and increases complexity for business because it's new, it's innovative, businesses are needing to innovate. But I guess the opportunity is to get it right.*

Paul, Logistics Operations, Tees Valley

*I just think it is absolutely ridiculous. It's not feasible, it's not doable at all. Electric cars are too expensive, there's not enough charging points. I think it's a lot of talk just to try and make themselves look good.*

Adrian, Fast Food Area Manager, Clacton

The public anticipates economic conditions will worsen over the next five years, from rising interest rates to the cost of the weekly shop, but the public will not take that as an excuse for inaction - the cost of living is the central lens through which some key voter groups will judge Labour's success, including people under the age of 55, non-voters, Disengaged Battlers, and Disengaged Traditionalists.



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Based on the proportion of people selecting the cost of living as a top issue

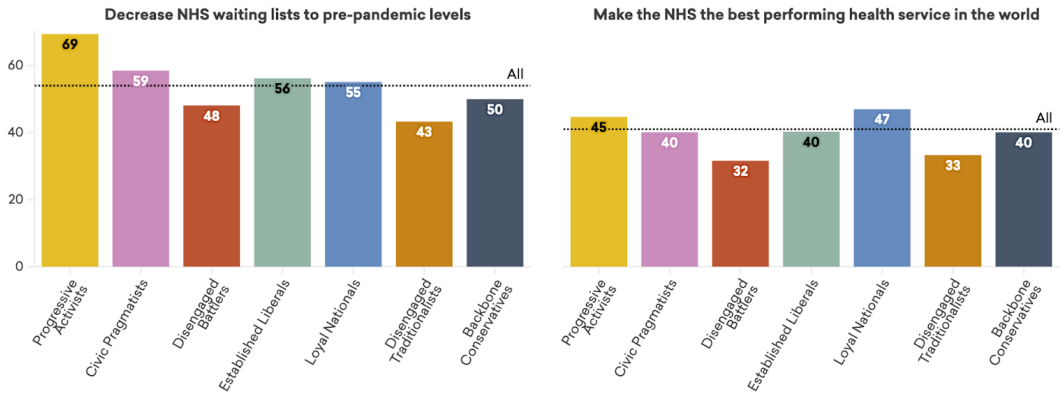
## Prescription for the NHS

The struggles of the NHS were arguably the factor above any other that determined the result of this election. The public have a deep personal connection with the NHS and are proud of it as an institution.

But now everyone has a “struggling NHS story”, be it being stuck on a waiting list, or a family member struggling to get a GP or dentist appointment. Those stories of individual disappointment have translated into a demand for change.

More than anything else, the public say that reducing NHS waiting lists will be the most important in judging the success of a Labour government after their first term. This is the key test of delivery for supporters of every party - bar those who supported Reform UK (who will judge Labour on immigration) and non-voters (who prioritise progress on the cost of living).

**Would you say that the following are realistic or unrealistic expectations to have for the next government?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I don't understand how, since Covid, you cannot get a doctor's appointment and it doesn't matter who I speak to throughout the country and wherever they live, nobody can do it.*

Paul, Warehouse Manager, Milton Keynes

*I've got heart problems, but yet I'm still waiting for an MRI scan months later. Why? Tell me that! And they make me wait. It's like, it's just all a big mess. I feel like I'm exasperated with everything at the moment.*

Sharon, Photography Company Owner, Doncaster

*We took my son up there and we were there three and a half hours the other day and you just feel sorry for the staff.*

David, Social Media Manager, Bridgend

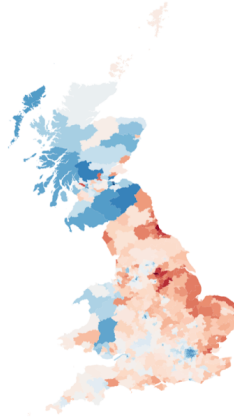
*Like the NHS and the whole doctor system, the wait time, it's just everyone ringing at eight o'clock for a free fall is just ridiculous. It doesn't work at all.*

Don, Teacher, Mid and South Pembrokeshire

While overall expectations on whether the Government will lower waiting lists are mixed, they are higher on Labour's left flank - a majority of Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists (65 per cent and 52 per cent respectively) expect waiting lists to be lower by the end of this Parliament.

### Where was immigration most important this election?

Least important 0% 23% 50% important



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Based on the proportion of voters selecting immigration in the top three issues impacting their vote

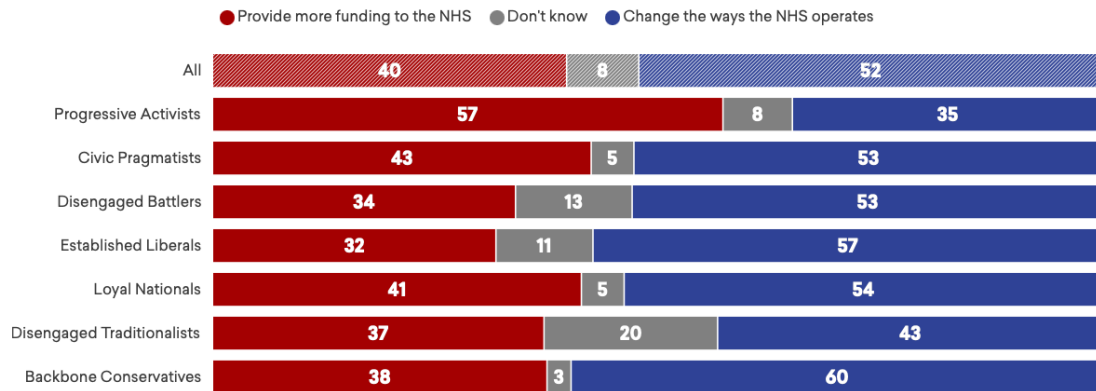
Labour enjoyed an overwhelming electoral advantage over the Conservatives on supporting the NHS - 43 per cent of the public trust Labour more compared to 14 per cent for the Conservatives. The NHS is also the only area where supporters of every party, bar the Conservatives, thought that Labour put forward better policies than the Conservatives during the campaign. Across the public as a whole, 53 per cent thought Labour put forward better policies on the NHS compared to 15 per cent who preferred the Conservatives' policies.

Failing to deliver on improving the NHS would be Labour's electoral kryptonite. Nearly half (46 per cent) of those who backed Labour at this election did so because of their policies on the NHS - the highest of any reason for supporting the party. 84 per cent of those who voted Labour say that cutting NHS waiting lists will be important for Labour to hold on to their vote. Outside of Scotland, this was the top reason for backing Labour among those who voted Conservative in 2019 (45 per cent selected).

In a sign of how important the NHS is to voters; the junior doctors' pay strike is one of the only areas where more of the public would feel more positive about Labour if the government were to U-turn on what they have suggested previously and agree to a 35 per cent pay rise. Although some say this would make no difference, more people (38 per cent) would feel more positive towards Labour if they U-turned on agreeing to a 35 per cent pay rise for junior doctors rather than more negative (24 per cent).

Improving the public's experience with the NHS represents not just a policy challenge, but a test of Labour's ability to deliver on its core promises and to meet public expectations. Success would allow Labour to credibly claim a delivery victory and one which actively makes people's lives better, while failure risks alienating even their most committed supporters.

## Which of the following do you think is most important for the government to do to improve the NHS?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

However, simply providing more money to the NHS is unlikely to be enough. Most consider it more important to change the way the NHS operates (52 per cent) than to provide more funding (40 per cent). Improving how the NHS runs, above additional funding, is the priority for every segment except the Progressive Activists. That desire to change the way public services are run applies more broadly than just to the NHS - Britons view the country as 'broken', and the public are likely to doubt the efficacy of quick or purely financial fixes which do not solve deeper problems.

*I think the NHS is one particular thing to me that they should completely overhaul. I hear people saying, 'Yeah, we need to put more money, put more money in' but that's just throwing good money after bad. In my view, it's top heavy.*

John, Retired, Clacton

*We've increased our population in the last 10 years by 4 or 5 million, but we haven't increased the services to go along with it... Maybe the NHS needs some form of restructuring.*

Pete, Retired, Doncaster

*It's worrying about the NHS system as to what it's going to be like when we're getting older. If things don't drastically change now, are they going to privatise it?*

Waye, self-employed electrician, Bridgend

## Balancing control and compassion: the migration challenge

While the public's expectations towards the NHS are clear if daunting, migration is a policy challenge which is both difficult to achieve and where public expectations are more complex. Our research shows a tension on illegal immigration between controlling borders and demonstrating compassion to those in need, and on legal migration between reducing pressures on public services due to an increasing population and preventing workforce shortages.

*There should be a degree of immigration controls in any country. But they need to be more compassionate.*

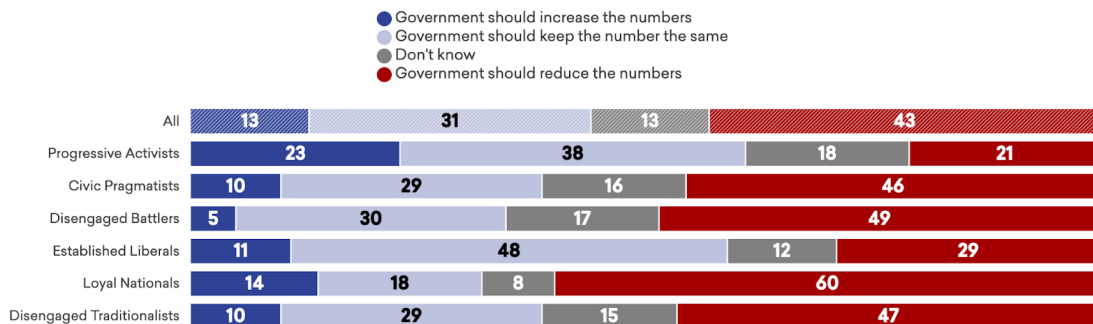
Eileen, Retired GP, Harrogate

*Immigration is a top priority because of the impact it has on services, so schools, hospitals, your doctors, your dentists, housing... it has such an impact on your infrastructure. And that's the thing [Nigel Farage] says he calls out the elephant in the room, doesn't he? Whereas politicians for many years have shied away from it.*

Jill, Local Authority Worker, Doncaster

Concern about migration is most evident among those who supported Reform UK, 64 per cent of Reform UK voters said their vote for the Party was driven by levels of immigration and 51 per cent said the same of channel crossings. This outweighed the NHS (34 per cent) and was tied with the cost of living (51 per cent). However, concern about a properly managed immigration system is not limited to Reform and extends across a wide swathe of the political spectrum; two in five of those who supported Labour at this election (43 per cent) believe the government should reduce the number of immigrants accepted into the country, along with 47 per cent of those who voted for the Liberal Democrats and 56 per cent of those who supported an independent candidate.

### Thinking about the number of immigrants the UK Government accepts into the country each year, which of the following comes closer to your view? [Labour voters only]



The public's views on legal migration are nuanced. While 51 per cent believe reducing immigration levels would lessen pressure on public services, there's also recognition of the economic advantages of migration in key sectors, and the public support increasing migration to fill worker shortages in healthcare, hospitality, and teaching. Among other types of immigration, including students, the public are more content for numbers to stay the same. Only among refugees - driven by frustration at the inability of the Government to tackle channel crossings - is there a clear preference for a reduction in numbers.

*Despite what's said about taking our jobs, there are no Brits who want to do the jobs like fruit picking!*

Sandra, Retired Medical Secretary, Harrogate

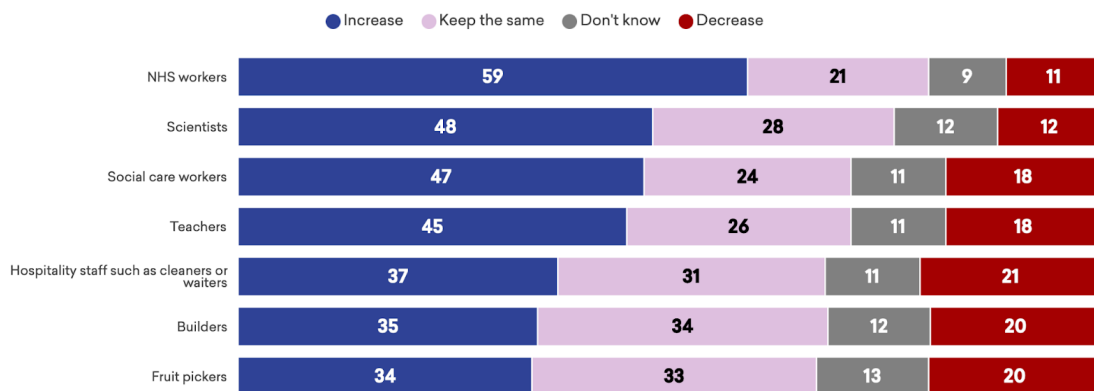
*Everything comes back to immigration for me. The NHS is busting at the seams because there's just far too many people in the country. We've gone soft and I think that's everything. Jails are too soft. Everything's just too soft.*

Jamie, Forklift Truck Driver, Workington

*I think there's arguments for and against, I mean I agree we've got no doctors... But then, if they're coming over here and working and helping the economy essentially, then I don't see why not.*

Kitty, Estate Agent, Loughborough

**For each of the following groups, please say whether you think we should increase or decrease the numbers coming to the UK.**



While a plurality of the public believes Labour intends to reduce immigration, there is scepticism about whether they can achieve this goal. Only 17 per cent of the public think that legal migration will be lower in five years, 37 per cent think it will be higher and 26 per cent think it will stay the same.



*A lot of people don't believe Labour have got any plan, any workable plan, to do anything about it.*

Pete, Retired, Doncaster

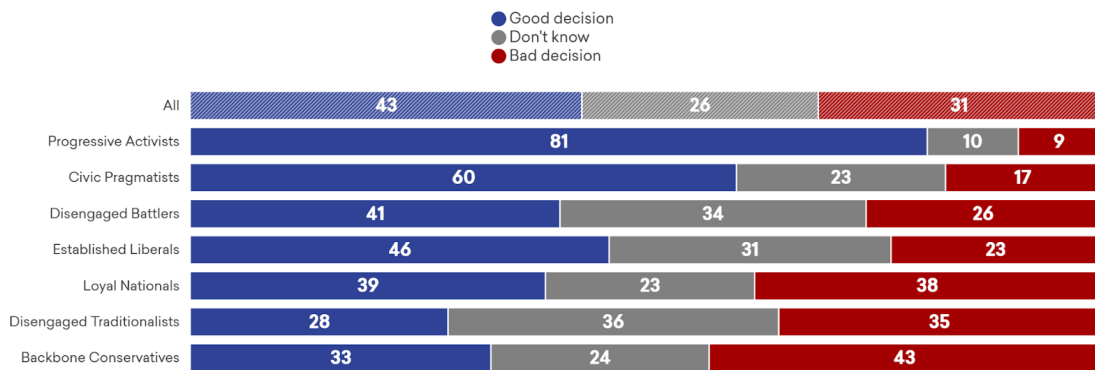
*Brexit was largely all about getting back our border controls, which the Conservative Party haven't managed to do that. Labour haven't got any real concrete plan to do it either.*

John, Retired, Clacton

Similarly, a plurality think the channel crossings in small boats will be higher in five years, compared to 22 per cent who think it will be lower and 22 per cent who think it will stay the same.

The public are more likely than not to back the government's decision to scrap the Rwanda plan - including more people thinking it was a good decision than a bad decision in five of the Seven Segments. In focus groups during the campaign and before, the public more often than not expressed puzzlement about the scheme, its cost and why Rwanda, a country which for many is associated with genocide, was chosen.

**The newly-elected Labour Government has scrapped the Conservatives' policy to resettle asylum seekers in Rwanda. Do you think scrapping the Rwanda scheme was a good decision or a bad decision?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*I've heard of the Rwanda plan. I mean there's so many issues going on with it. I sort of dunno where I'm with it at the moment... it's not working. It's backward and forwards... I got a bit bored with it. I mean I think an aeroplane took off, there was hardly no one on it. I mean it shows it's not working, the amount of money it's costing... They need to rethink their plans*

John, Post worker, Croydon

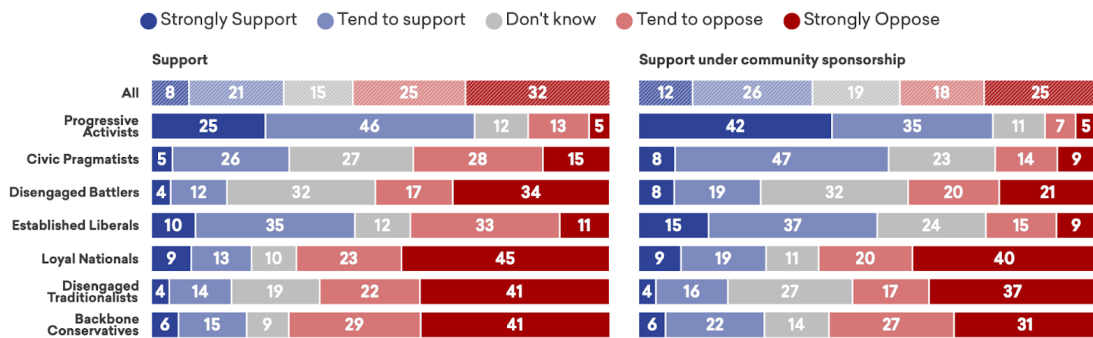
Immigration could provide Labour an opportunity to benefit from outperforming low expectations if it succeeds in cutting legal and illegal migration. But to satisfy the public

any approach from the new government needs to balance control over who is accepted into the country with compassion for those in need.

While 35 per cent say the priority for immigration should be lowering numbers, over half of the public (51 per cent) say that control over who is let in is more important. But equally as important is balancing control with compassion - 42 per cent of the public prefer a balanced approach, the same as those who favour just control. Identifying that balanced approach will be key to helping Labour to address one of the public's top concerns without alienating its core supporter base or its new voters who favour a more control-first approach on immigration.

One approach to doing that, along with making good on promises to tackle criminal gangs, would be to back community sponsorship as an approach for dealing with asylum and refugee issues in the UK. When testing approaches to asylum and refugee policy with and without community sponsorship, our research finds that the concept of community sponsorship - where volunteers sponsor refugees by doing things like helping them find a job, learn English and generally settle into their community - reduces opposition to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from 57 per cent to 43 per cent and increases support from 29 per cent to 38 per cent.

**There are different opinions on the UK's policy on refugees. [One approach is allowing refugees to settle in the UK through 'community sponsorship'. This policy allows ordinary Britons together with their churches, community groups and schools to volunteer to sponsor refugees by doing things like helping them find a job, learn English and generally settle into their community. Under these conditions,] would you support or oppose the UK accepting more refugees?**



This increase in support and reduction in opposition is reflected in focus group conversations as well. Why is community sponsorship popular? Because it places the agency for settling refugees and helping them to integrate in the hands of the communities rather than imposition by central Government.

In that way, community sponsorship provides a way to better balance competing concerns for compassion for those who the public think Britain has a duty to welcome, and a feeling the system on refugees and asylum needs to be better controlled and more orderly.

This is particularly true of the public's pride in their community stepping forward to help with the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The public saw ordinary people opening up their homes to Ukrainian refugees as part of Britain's fight against Putin's war in Ukraine. They also saw that the involvement of local people would make the process of settling in Britain more orderly, and Ukrainian refugees would be more quickly able to make a contribution to their local community here in Britain.

*The thought that we actually helped in some tiny way; we couldn't stop the invasion, but we could give this one Mum a safe haven*

Homes for Ukraine Scheme Host

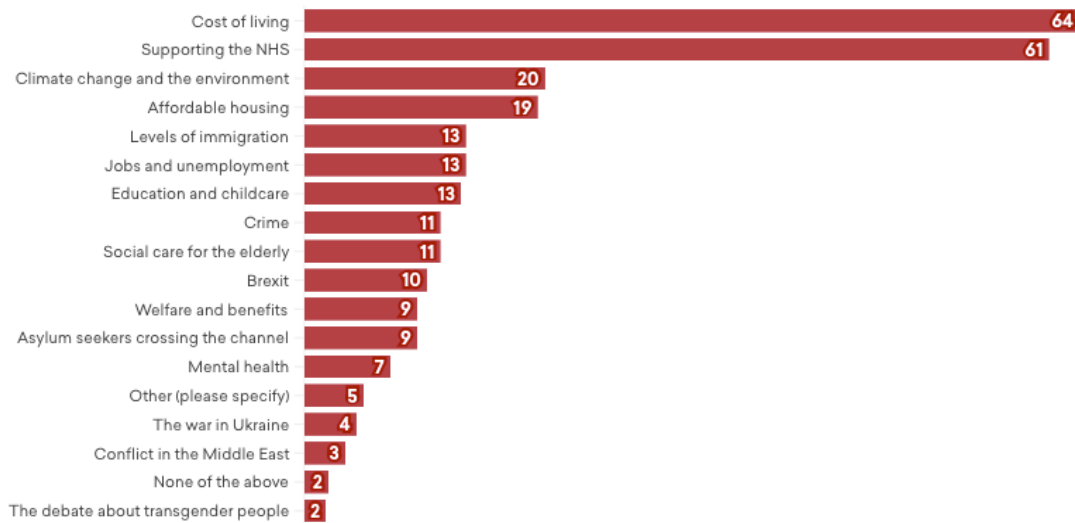
*I just think we've got to be a united front for Ukraine. I think if you show Putin absolutely any weakness whatsoever, he'll just ride rough shod over the lot of us, and I think the Ukrainians have gone through absolute hell*

Louise, Accountant's Assistant, Whitby

## A green mandate

While climate change did not feature heavily in the election discourse, it nonetheless continued to be a key issue for voters and was the third most important issue for those who voted for Labour or the Liberal Democrats.

### Thinking about the General Election, which of the following issues had the biggest impact on how you voted? Please select up to three [Labour and Liberal Democrat voters only]



Beyond that, climate change remains an issue that scarcely polarises the British electorate when compared to other countries. Four in five Britons think it's important that the government cares about tackling climate change - including nearly three quarters of 2024 Conservative voters and more than half of 2024 Reform voters.

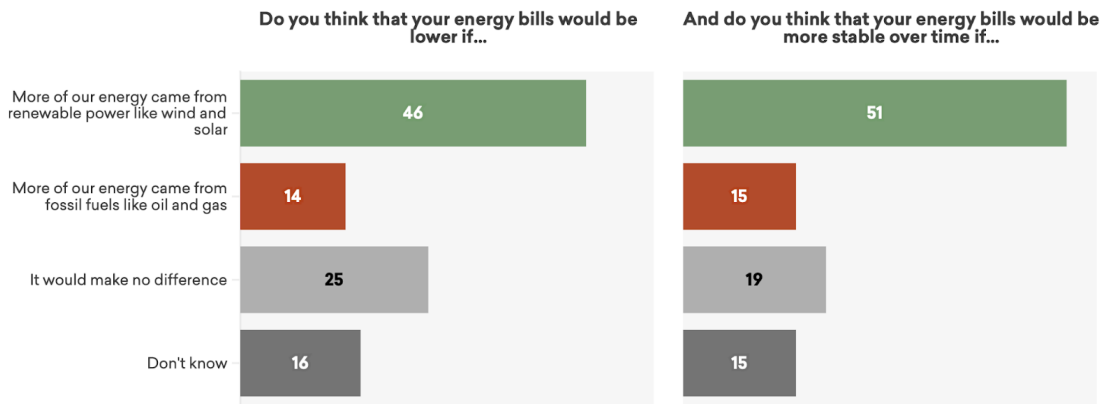
*I think every political party now has signed up to save the planet. We haven't seen good snow for a few years and the summers are getting hotter, so there's something going wrong somewhere and it's up to them to sort it out, we can help, but it's up to them to implement the changes.*

Debbie, Social Care Officer, Tees Valley

While most voters think it is important that any government is committed to tackling climate change, there is variation in the extent to which it drives votes - fewer Reform UK or Conservative supporters voted on the basis of the parties' climate policies.

In contrast, concerns about the cost of living were important to voters of all parties, and on this issue Labour's GB Energy proposals helped them to win that argument.

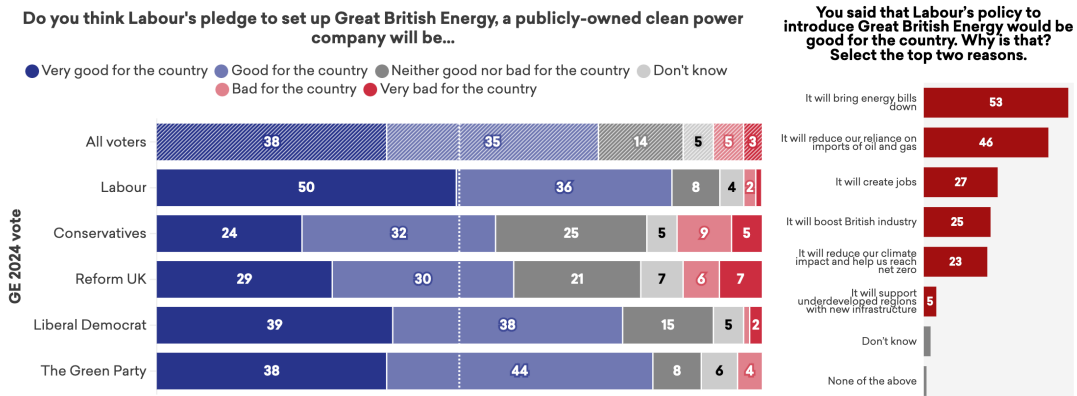
### Renewable power wins the argument on cost of living



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Labour’s policy on GB Energy had high cut-through and is popular with voters across the political spectrum. The success of the policy was not only that it met the public’s desired ambition for tackling climate change, but it was also seen to address their immediate concerns about energy bills and energy security.

Voters are three times more likely to think that more renewable power would lower their energy bills, than think that more oil and gas would lower bills.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Voters are also just as likely to prioritise making our energy grid less reliant on imports from Russia as they are tackling climate change itself.

*It sounds like a really good idea and something that would bring the control of an energy company within the public domain to benefit more people. Whether it*

*happens in reality and whether there's the political will to follow through on that is another matter.*

Shiza, Psychotherapist, Edington

*I mean I think it's a step in the right direction. You want to be independent; you don't want to be relying on other countries and all that. So, I think it's a step in the right direction. Will they deliver? Hopefully, but we'll see.*

Eunice, Pharmacist, Altrincham

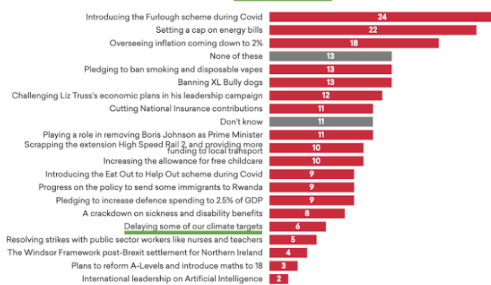
*Nationalised energy companies and other utilities would definitely be a positive thing, especially how we've heard of the ridiculous amount of profit that these companies have been making.*

Usma, Health Tech Company, Birmingham

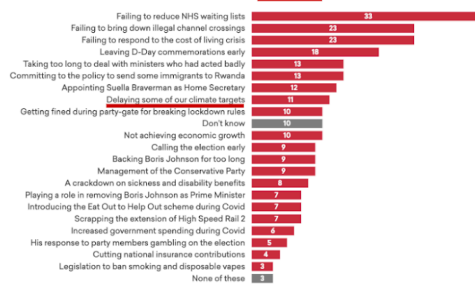
Those who voted Conservative in 2019, now believe that Labour and the Liberal Democrats show greater commitment to tackling climate change than the Conservatives do. 62 per cent of that group now think the Conservative Party cares about tackling climate change, but they are more likely (67 per cent) to say that the Labour Party does.

Part of this is driven by Sunak's climate reversals. Very few voters see the decision to push back the UK's climate targets as a major achievement of Sunak's time in Government, with people more likely to see it as a mistake. More broadly, climate has become a political hygiene issue for the public – with the Conservatives' fluctuating positions on transition reinforcing broader perceptions that the party is inconsistent on the big issues.

**Thinking back on Rishi Sunak's time in government, which of the following have been his best achievements? Select up to three.**



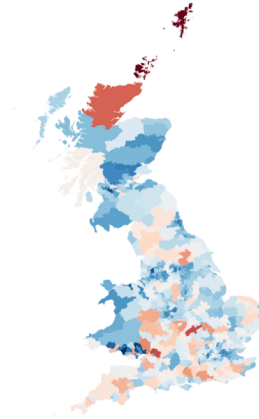
**Thinking back on Rishi Sunak's time in government, which of the following have been his best mistakes? Select up to three.**



Even though Reform UK presents a more net zero-sceptic stance publicly, this is not a primary driver of their support from their voters - only 14 per cent of Reform voters cited their pledge to scrap net zero targets as a key reason for backing the party - well behind other issues which drove Reform's support.

### Where was climate change most important this election?

Least important 6% 21% 36% Most important



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Based on proportion of people selecting "climate change and the environment" as a top issue impacting their vote

An MRP highlights the relative importance of climate change across the country. Salience tends to be highest in the South and Midlands - often in seats where the Conservatives made their most dramatic losses to the Liberal Democrats.

## Levelling-up by any other name

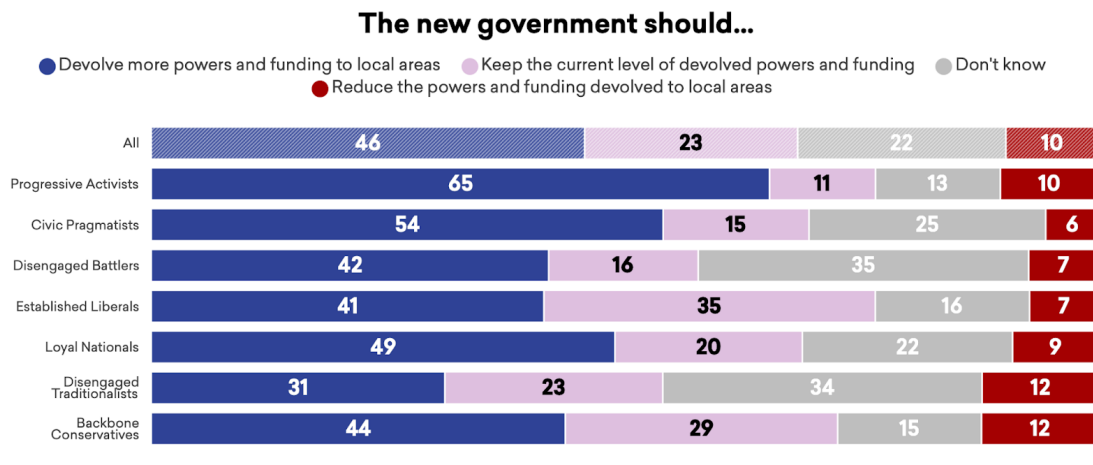
While the delivery of ‘Levelling Up’ never matched the promise of the policy, there is no doubt the intent struck a chord with many voters, and the diagnosis of left behind communities neglected by Westminster gave voice to the frustrations of many of those who voted for Brexit.

Whether called “levelling-up” as Boris Johnson did or a promise to devolve powers and improve “left behind” areas, the precise name does not matter to the public, but the appetite for local change is clear. It’s also true that the public instinctively supports the idea that those closer to their neighbourhoods, lives and communities will make better decisions for them.

*Does anybody trust any of the politicians in Westminster anymore? I'm not so sure they do. I think they've got more trust in local politicians because they know them. But national politicians I think have got a very, very poor reputation. Deservedly so.*

Steve, Retired University Lecturer, Tees Valley

Britons are more likely to say the new government should devolve more powers and funding to local areas (46 per cent) than centralise (10 per cent) or keep things the same (23 per cent). Much of the country feels tired of decisions that matter to them being made by people who don’t know what it is like to live where they live or to do what they do.



Devolving more powers and funding to local areas is popular across each of the British Seven Segments, and no segment wants to see powers and funding reduced. Trusting local leaders can also be a step towards ensuring communities feel heard, and showing Labour feels closer to the public’s values and priorities.



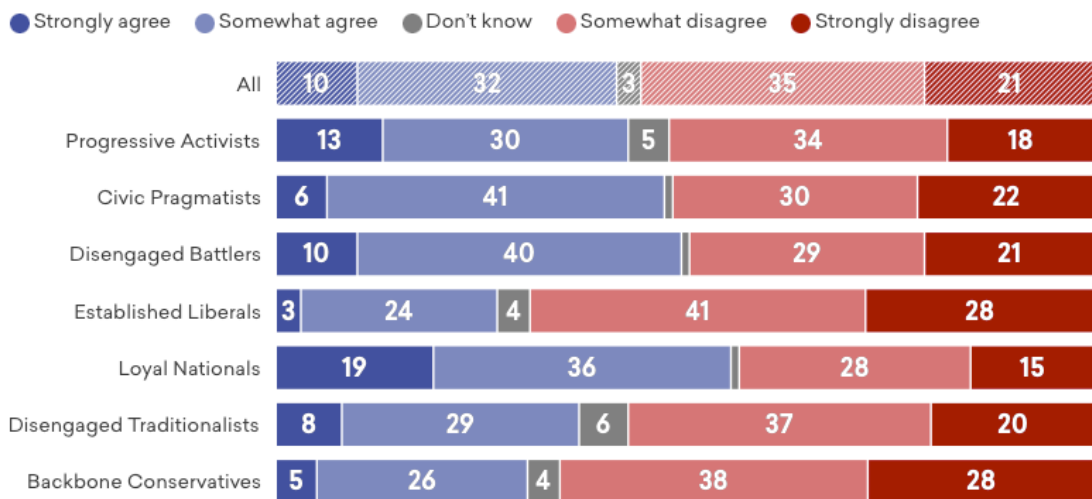


*The town has died off. So, I do think it's quite sad. The town's quite sad now.*

Kathy, GP Receptionist, Clacton

More than four in ten members of the public believe that the area they live in is neglected and that turning that around will take time. People did not expect to see immediate change overnight in the last Parliament and accepted that the pandemic delayed progress - but the slow pace of delivery of a core Government commitment undoubtedly contributed towards public frustration and ire at the Conservatives. The Labour Government will have to move quicker and faster on community regeneration, something which is so inextricably linked to people's faith in mainstream politics, and one of the best defences against populist discontent.

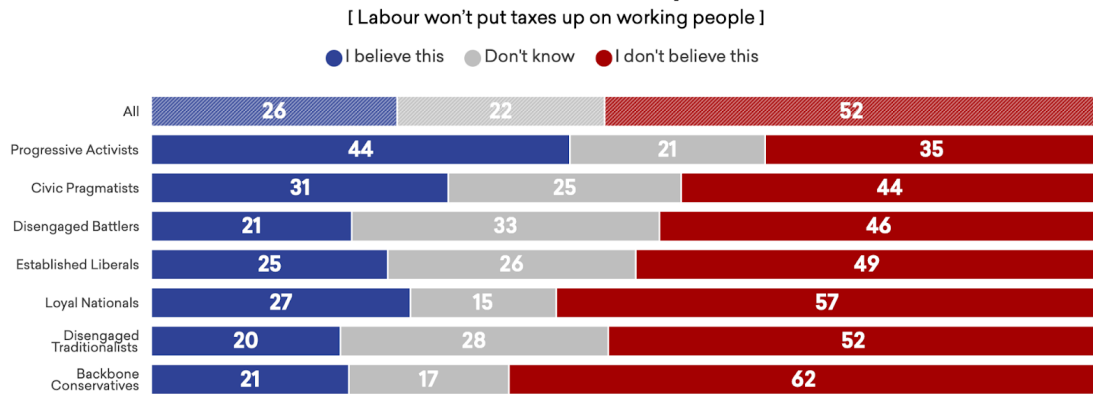
**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
The area where I live is neglected**



## Navigating potential policy changes

Beyond the extent to which they deliver what they've committed to delivering, the public will judge the Labour Party's success in government on the promises they don't keep.

### The Labour Party said the following things during the election campaign. Do you believe or not believe these promises?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

There is a clear credibility challenge facing the Labour government on its promises. Most do not believe Rachel Reeves and Keir Starmer when they say they will not raise taxes on working people - in fact a majority expect to personally pay more in tax. But that doesn't mean that people would be happy about it - most people across every segment say Labour putting up taxes on working people would make them feel more negatively about the party.

*Personally, I do. Yeah. I mean it's classic Labour policy, high taxation, high spending. And I don't think it's a case of it. It's a case of when.*

Kevin, Retired, Thanet

*This is going to be one of those times when they say something like that and everyone goes, 'Yay, let's vote Labour again.' And then they go, 'Oh, do you know when we said that? Ah, actually we're going to have to, it's a little bit, just a little bit.'*

Eve, Youth Worker, Altrincham

*They've got these ideas, and they say that they're not going to raise taxes, but I think they are. Where is the money going to come from?*

Laura, Nursery Teacher, Hitchin

That doesn't mean that the Government faces universal opposition on tax. Shifting their position on capital gains tax would appeal to Labour's base, but risks alienating the party's broader coalition. Typical 'Blue Wall' voters, represented by the Established Liberal

segment, are more likely than not to say that such a rise in capital gains tax would make them feel more negatively about the party.

*I'm kind of concerned if Labour do get in and try and raise our taxes, but I think whichever government's going to get in, they will tweak the taxes because they always seem to.*

Jane, NHS Administrator, Thanet

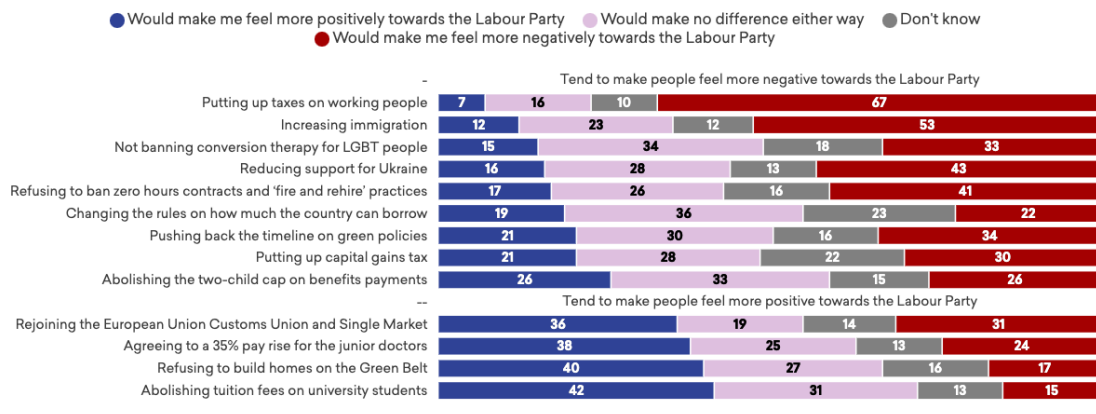
There are however areas where the public would actively prefer to see a change of course from the government - each of the segments would welcome a Labour U-turn on plans to build on more of the green belt. This suggests house building - supported in the abstract, but often opposed in practice - will be one of those areas where the Labour Party will have to decide how to balance boldness, political capital and future benefits.

*I read somewhere that they're not going to call it greenbelt anymore. They're calling it grey, grey belt. Do they think that's going to fool us? So, we're going to think it's all okay?*

Jeanette, Teaching Assistant, Godalming and Ash

There are other areas where policy U-turns might not make much difference. Changing the fiscal rules on debt falling over a five-year horizon, which Labour have pledged to keep, would not be unpopular with its coalition - most people say it would make no difference to how they feel about the party. But many Backbone Conservatives, the only segment still voting Conservative, would feel more negatively about Labour after a fiscal U-turn.

**If the Labour Party did each of the following while in Government, would this make you feel more or less positively towards them?**



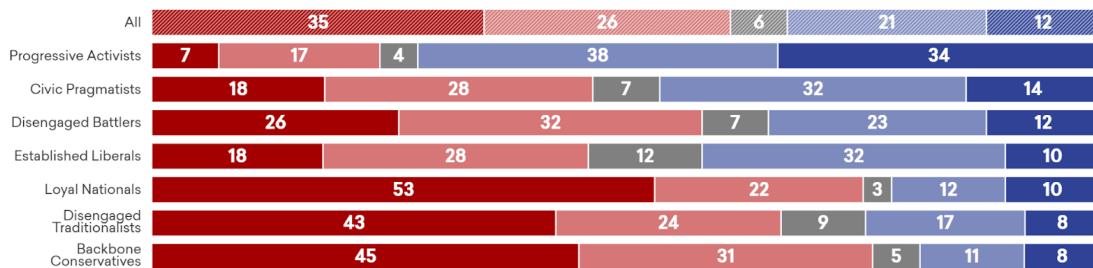
In contrast, all the seven segments - including those that are more socially Conservative would feel more negatively than positively if Labour didn't follow through on plans to ban conversion therapy for LGBT people.

Welfare and benefits are a further fault line among the Labour's new coalition. Red Wall Loyal Nationals are particularly inclined to think many people are cheating the system - and that those who work hard lose out compared to those on benefits. More striking, Labour's more urban economically insecure base are sceptical of benefit cheating too – driven by concerns they work hard while others get it more easy . But other parts of the Labour coalition take a different view, Progressive Activists believe people aren't cheating the system, while Civic Pragmatists and Established Liberals are more ambivalent as to whether those on benefits are cheating or playing by the rules.

With the two-child benefit cap already a potential fault line within the Labour Parliamentary Party, navigating policies on benefits that meet the public's expectations - for a generous safety net with similar expectations on contribution and hard work - will be key.

**Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements, where 1 means you fully agree with the first one, and 4 means you fully agree with the second.**

- 1 - People tend to cheat the benefit system and claim for things they don't really need
- 2 -
- Don't know
- 3 -
- 4 - People tend to play by the rules and only claim benefits if they are in desperate need



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*The person sitting at home shouldn't have the decision 'Should I go back to work and maybe lose 10, 20 pounds a week?' The model should always be that you're better off in work than out of work.*

Sam, Team Manager, Workington

*I'm glad that they brought out that thing that you can't claim for over two children because my next-door neighbours got eight children. I sat there the other day and did a calculation of how much money actually comes into their house...she gets about four grand a month.*

Sara, Barber, Grimsby

*(We need a means tested benefit system. I think they've been talking about that in terms of people having PIP. Not that that's a problem, but there's people out there who do milk the system, so it needs to be more rigorous.*

Shelly, Student Nurse, Pembrokeshire

## Chapter 3 | **Rebuilding the Conservatives**

### **The Conservative coalition has become extremely narrow**

In 2019, the Conservatives coalition was broad, winning four of More in Common's Seven Segments that spanned both social and economic conservatism and more left and right wing views on the economy.

This coalition has become much narrower. In 2024, the only segment to firmly stick with the party were the Backbone Conservatives, with the Conservatives tied with Labour among Disengaged Traditionalists and far behind Labour in all the other segments.

The 2019 bloc split in multiple directions. Established Liberals tend to be more affluent, socially liberal, economically libertarian, and more supportive of the status quo. They were part of the coalition that were convinced by David Cameron's brand of Conservatism and concentrated in the Blue Wall. Established Liberals swung to Labour and the Liberal Democrats in 2024. This is why Conservative heartland seats like Aldershot, Wycombe and Banbury returned a Labour MP for the first time and other former strongholds such as Chichester and Henley turned to the Liberal Democrats.

At the other end of the spectrum, Loyal Nationals also deserted the Tory Party. They are more socially conservative and economically interventionist but gradually moved towards the Conservative Party as part of a broader political realignment in the UK. Despite 56 per cent of Loyal Nationals backing the Conservatives in 2019, they have since been pushed into third place behind Reform UK in 2024. Conservatives are now languishing at just 19 per cent of the Loyal National vote. This plays out very clearly across constituencies, with Workington and Grimsby returning to Labour and Great Yarmouth switching to Reform UK.

This narrowing is also reflected in the demographic characteristics of the Conservatives' remaining voters. They are older, more financially secure, and more rural than in 2019. In other words, the party has moved away from the median voter.

### **The Conservatives' problem is valence, not values**

The Government stands or falls on its record. For many voters, looking back over the last 14 years of Conservative-led Government, they felt that record left much to be desired - a theme reflected in many focus group conversations.

*I was thinking, what have they done that's been positive in the last 14 years? I can't think of one thing that they've done and think, wow, that's a good achievement. If you look at the NHS, how bad that is, look at education, every sort of vital service is gone. So, I personally can't think of one thing that they've done in 14 years to give 'em a round of applause for.*

Mo, Business Support Worker, Birmingham

The Conservatives were not doomed to enter opposition after 14 years of Government. In fact, in discussions with voters over the past few years, the mood dramatically shifted. Britons were willing to give the Government due credit for handling the Covid pandemic, especially the vaccine rollout and the furlough scheme. Even during the escalating cost of living crisis, many were quick to come to the Government's defence and attribute blame to the war in Ukraine and the global economic downturn post-Covid. But that goodwill vanished after Partygate, the fallout from Liz Truss' mini-budget and Rishi Sunak's perceived detachment from the struggles of the wider public.

*He's in a different world from us. I don't think Mr Sunak is struggling to find money for his next energy bill*

Joe, Pensioner, Hartlepool

*He was born with a silver spoon. He doesn't know what it's like to have to work for his money or worry about where he is going to get his dinner from or his kids' dinners or anything like that. School uniforms or things like that.*

Rita, Retired, Clacton

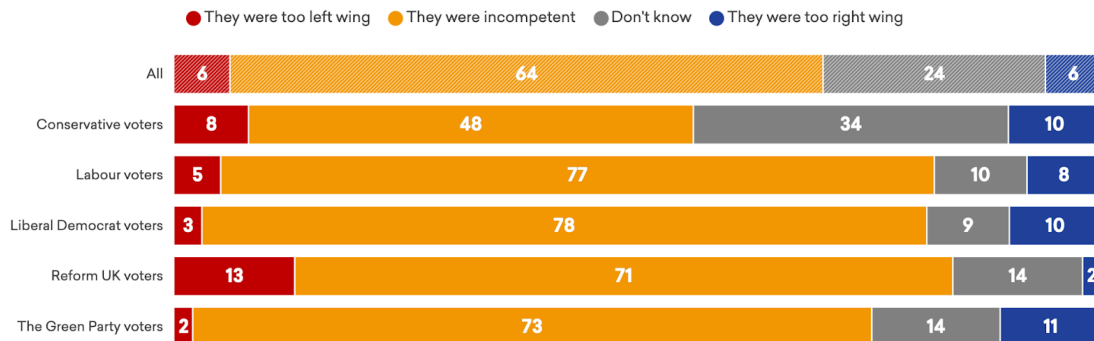
*We're all paying a lot more for things. I know some of that is influenced by Russia and other things going on in the world, but a lot of it is down to things that happened and decisions that were made by Liz Truss and we're all paying for it and there's no acknowledgement of that. And it's just the arrogance.*

Claire, Environmental Health Consultant, Wells and Mendip Hills

*What's really stayed in my mind is how much I was worrying about my pension when Liz Truss brought out that tax cut plan and that sunk the pound. Everything just destabilised a bit for me, and I felt so nervous for at least a week about decisions I was making about my money and trusting that my money I've got for the future is going to be okay. So now, I think, it's about trust and I'm not sure who to trust and that's making me swing around a bit and thinking.*

Maxine, Teacher, Hitchin

**From the following list, which do you think best explains why you think the Conservatives lost this election?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

By an incredibly wide margin, voters attribute the Conservatives' loss to incompetence rather than being too right-wing or too left-wing. Three-quarters of Conservative switchers, regardless of whether they defected to Labour, Liberal Democrat or Reform UK, cite incompetence as the key reason. During the Sunak administration in particular, the public would complain that the Government appeared to have stopped governing and Rishi Sunak had disappeared.

*I just think who, when it's everyone else who's been Prime Minister, you see them all the time. I don't think I've ever seen him. What's he doing? Where is he? I don't have a clue. He doesn't do any conferences with any, well he probably obviously does, but he must stop talking about anything important because you never really or see about him.*

Mike, Sales Manager, Workington

*I think he's a fundamentally honest person. And I've read he's a very good constituency MP. He was great as chancellor. Unfortunately, he's not a quick thinker like politicians need to be. He can't make a quick decision - that's where he seems weak. But also, he's having to battle the extremes in the Conservative party*

Sean, Drone Surveyor, Harrogate

The Autumn of 2023 stands out as a particular moment during which the Conservative's stymied the opportunity for recovery. Rishi Sunak's change pivot landed badly with the public who didn't find it convincing. On balance, the public see his net-zero U-turns as a mistake rather than a success - undermining trust in his commitment to tackling climate change. While cancelling HS2 at the Manchester Party conference simply sent out the message that the Party didn't care about the North. Along with failing to deliver on two of his most totemic pledges - stopping small votes and cutting NHS waiting lists - the Sunak administration compounded the mistakes of his predecessors.



*How can he say he's going to bring change when he's a multimillionaire?*

Mike, Sales Manager, Workington

*Why doesn't the North deserve it? How can he make these big decisions and cancel the rail when the country never elected him?*

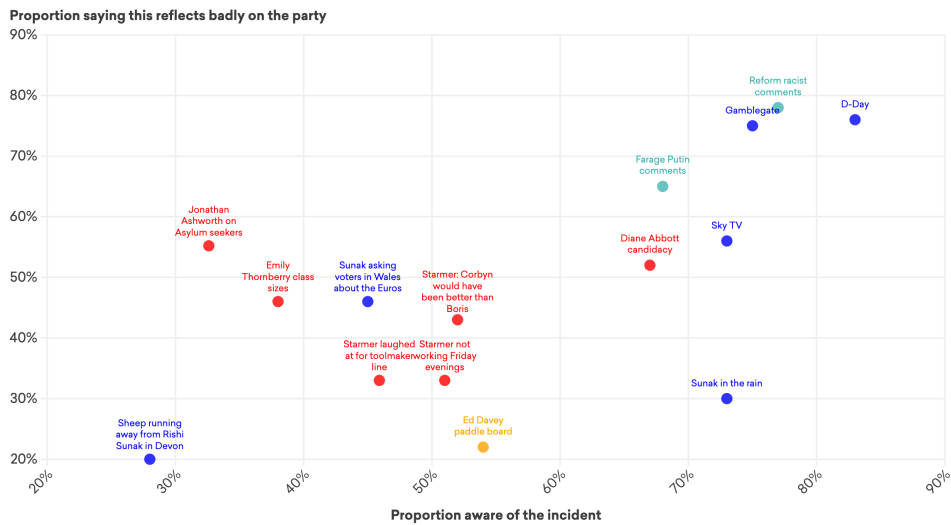
Madeline, Nurse, Workington

*Anything's better than Rishi*

Courtney, Hairdresser, Hartlepool

But disillusion was not just a function of incompetence. It was also what voters saw as behaviour which disrespected both their office and the public. From the lobbying and second jobs scandal that came to the public's attention with the resignation of Owen Paterson, to 'Partygate', Rishi Sunak's decision to leave D-Day celebrations early and finally the revelation that senior figures had placed bets on the General Election date, the Conservatives' own behaviour increasingly chipped away at voters' confidence in the party.

**Relative importance of campaign mis-steps**



Source: More in Common, More in Common, June 2024

*Why do we not like the Conservatives anymore? Partygate didn't help, but then you've got a catalogue of things, whether it be Truss and Kwarteng completely blowing up the economy last year, whether it be the man in a flat with bad men wanting five grand, whether it be him leaving the D-Day memorial service through bad advice and most recently with the betting on the election scandal. It's just little things like that make me dislike the Conservatives, not necessarily what the Conservatives do.*

Lee, Small Business Owner, Hitchin

*(On D-Day) It was disrespectful and disappointing, and I think it will affect voting because I personally wouldn't want to vote for somebody who seems to not care about our armed forces or the country as a whole as much as he should do in his position.*

Rebecca, Chichester

*I mean the Conservatives are just a joke and from my point of view I just think Boris Johnson really did us. A lot of people have a very sour taste in the mouth and won't forget what happened. He was saying one thing, doing another.*

Catherine, Retired Head Teacher, Worthing West

*I think the Downing Street parties damaged them a lot, when the Queen was sat on her own and they were all having a party.*

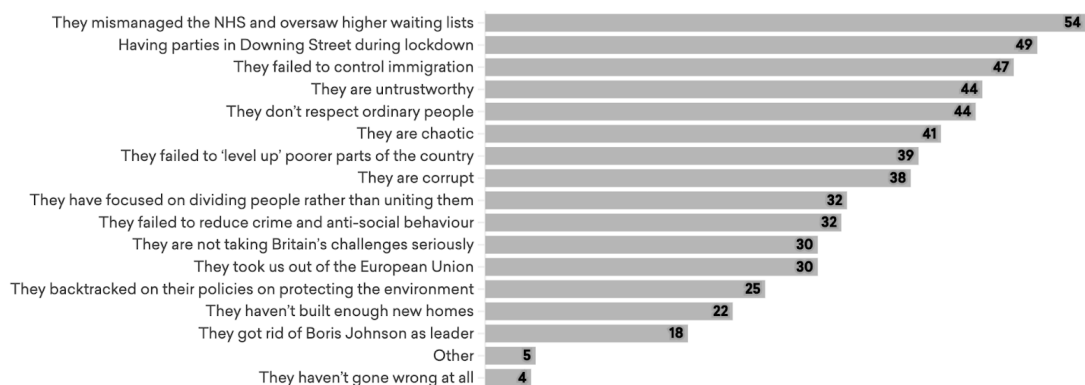
Karina, Unemployed, Whitby

*Generally, I've been a bit undecided, but one thing that has pissed me off is the amount of scandals to do with MPs. This most recent is the betting scandal. In the past it's been the expenses scandal. These people are supposed to be held to a higher standard.*

Nigel, Carer and Retired Prison Officer, Pembrokeshire

This sense of malignant malaise emerges most strongly when respondents are asked to diagnose where the Conservatives most went wrong in recent years. At the top of the list are mishandling public services, failing to deliver on key pledges to reduce immigration, followed by political scandals.

**Thinking about the Conservatives, where do you think they have made the biggest mistakes, if at all, since the election in 2019? Select all that apply.**

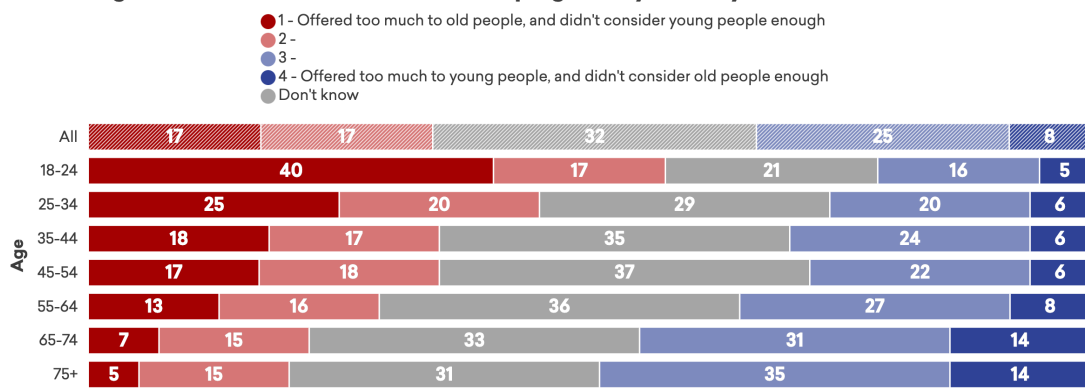


The Conservative Party's problems appear to have been compounded by the lack of offer to young people – increasingly age has become the key dividing line in British politics, with the Conservative vote collapsing among young people. Just 3 per cent of under-25-year-

old voters voted Conservative in the 2024 general election, rising slightly to 12 per cent of 25–34-year-old voters. There is little appetite for Conservatism among younger voters, as currently articulated by the party.

Young voters think the Conservatives offered too much to older people during the election campaign and did not sufficiently consider their own interests. Half (49 per cent) of under-35s say that the Conservatives offered too much to old people, while a quarter (25 per cent) think they offered too much to the young. But for over-65s, the pattern is exactly reversed with more thinking the Party offered too much to the young rather than the old. The pitch for the next Conservative leader will have to be one that makes an offer across age groups rather than an emphasis on just the old or the young.

**Thinking about their General Election campaign this year, do you think the Conservatives...**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

## Starting points for Conservative recovery

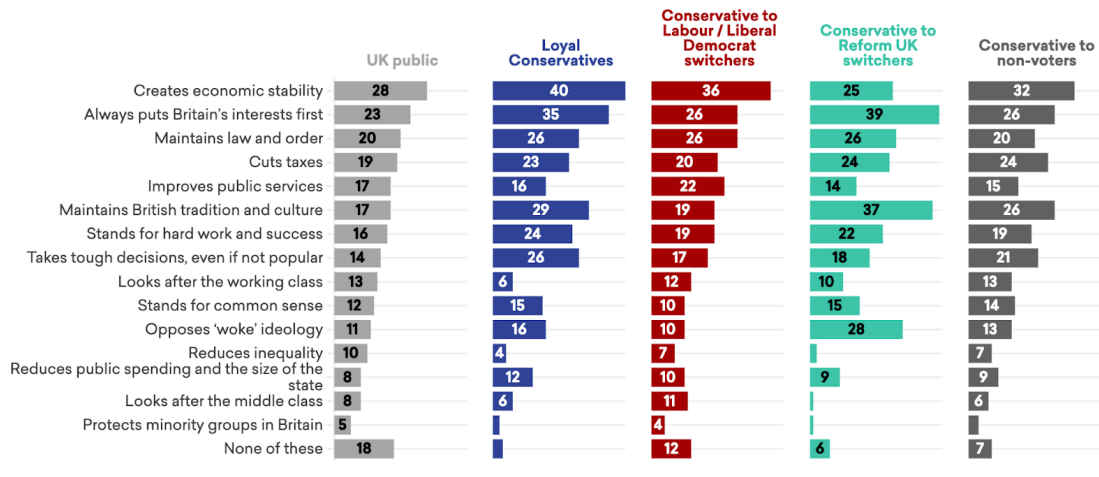
During their time in opposition, the Conservatives will have to convince the public they are talking to them, rather than themselves, to regain public trust. The party will fail to rebuild if it misdiagnoses the problem or charts a course that goes against the grain of public opinion, rather than with it.

Part of rebuilding involves the Conservative Party deciding what its purpose is going to be - who and what it will stand for. It needs to tie together groups of voters with varied interests and priorities. At the same time, it needs to set itself apart from Labour, break the cycle of despondency and the perception that there is no difference between the two main parties.

The best place to start is by asking voters what the Conservative Party *should be*, rather than what it currently is. For all segments of the Conservative 2019 coalition, the top answers are some combination of: creating economic stability, upholding law and order, putting the country's interests first, and maintaining British traditions and culture. These are some of the Conservatives' traditional strengths and failing to live up to them is what drove so many formerly loyal Tory voters into the hands of other parties - and in particular the

Liberal Democrats. The bare minimum that the future leader of the Conservative Party must achieve is to convince the public that the Conservative Party once again prioritises these values and approaches to Government.

**Setting aside how you intend to vote at this election, thinking about when the Conservative Party is at its best, what should it represent? A party that...**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

The second task for Conservatives is to distinguish themselves from Labour. Absent external shocks it is hard for an opposition Party to win back power without a distinctive offer. Voters often lament what they see as a lack of distinction between the two largest political parties - a view repeated often in focus groups as a criticism of both the Conservatives and Labour. For a robust democracy to function, the choice voters face on polling day has to feel meaningful - the outcome has to matter, and many describe their despondency at the choice the electorate faces.

*I think the problem I find now is that the lines between the parties are very much blurred together.*

Darren, Project Planner, Tynemouth

*It's just basically two different colour ties, but it's all the same now.*

Rosie, Quantity Surveyor, Loughborough

*They all went to the same schools; they're all coming off the same. They've all got very wealthy backgrounds, families, none of them really come from working class backgrounds and are struggling and know what the rest of us are like, really.*

Dawn, Dental Nurse, Portsmouth North

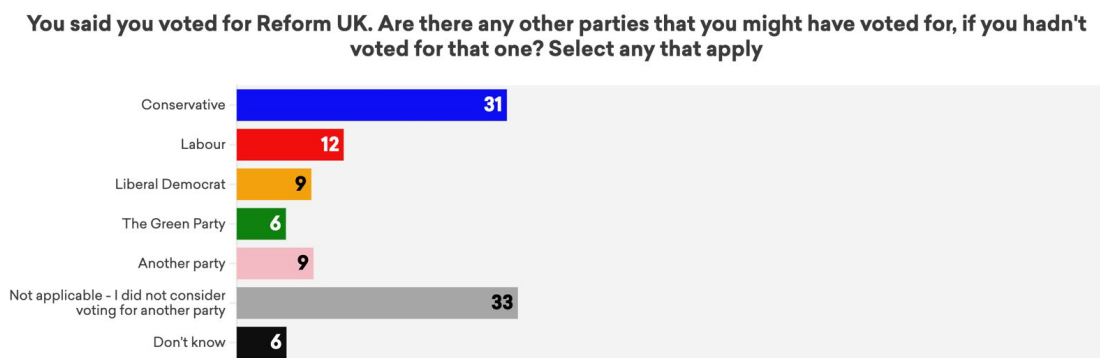
## Electoral coalition building doesn't work like Lego bricks

## Change Pending

The third task is to focus on the four directions into which the Conservative coalition fragmented, starting with the largest: Reform UK. The combined Conservative and Reform vote shares were greater than the winning Labour or Liberal Democrat share in 170 seats across the country. However, this basic arithmetic has led to a misdiagnosis of the Conservative Party's woes and a mistaken belief that the only path back to power is to 'unite the right'.

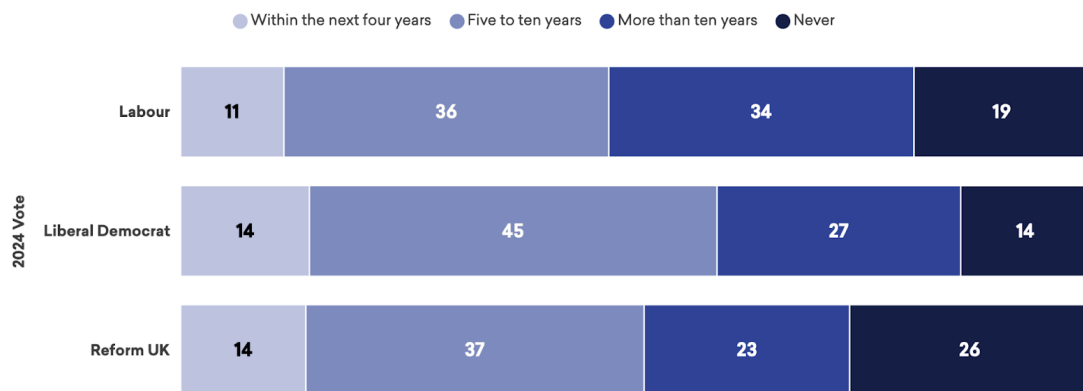
However, it is very clearly not the case that if Reform UK had stood down, their voters would all have loyally lined up behind Conservative candidates.

Less than a third (31 per cent) of those who voted for Reform UK say they might otherwise have voted Conservative. This is not far from the quarter (25 per cent) said they would have backed some combination of Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green. While a third would not have considered voting for another party.



Of all groups of Conservative switchers, Reform voters are the most likely to say they will never vote Conservative again. Reform voters have had enough, and many of them can't see themselves ever returning to the Conservative party.

**You said you voted for the Conservatives before, but did not at this election. How long do you think it will be, if ever, before you vote for the Conservatives again?**



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Don't know responses excluded.

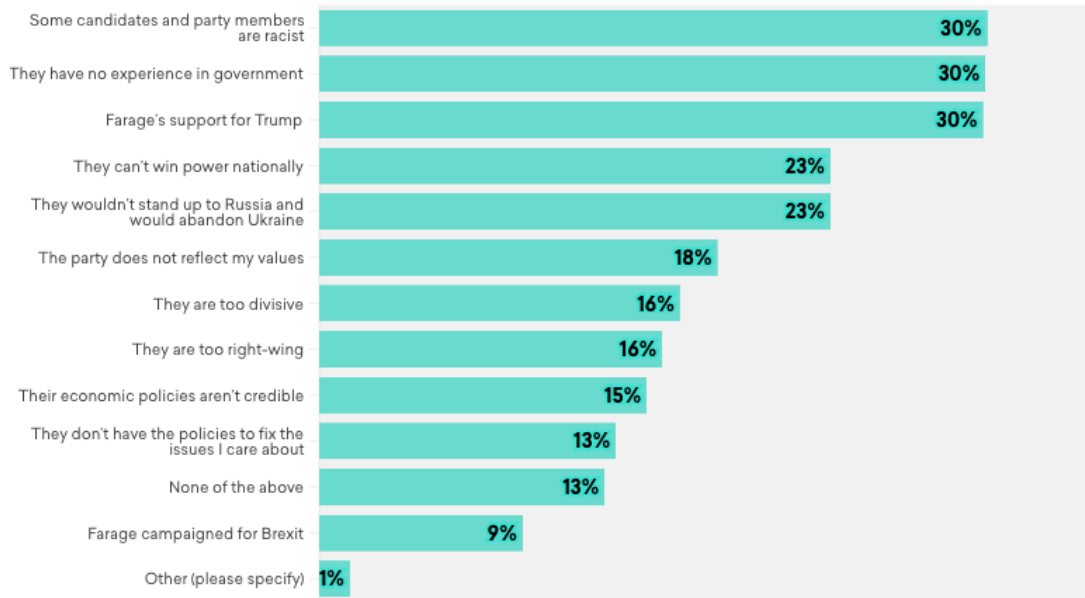
Taken together this points to a different outcome. If Reform had not stood, the Conservatives would have still been far short of a majority, winning only an additional 40 seats. If Reform's vote share had been a third lower (roughly where they were before Farage took over as leader) the Conservatives would have gained 12 additional seats.

Nearly three-quarters of Reform's 2024 voters backed the Conservatives in 2019, and there is no doubt the Conservatives do need to win a substantial proportion of them back to hope to re-enter Government. But a straight Conservative/Reform merger is the least likely way to achieve that goal.

Doing so at this election would have made very little difference to the Conservatives' overall support. Their vote share would have risen from 24 per cent to 26 per cent. Two-thirds of Reform voters say they would vote for a combined party, roughly 2.8m people. But around 2.3m Conservatives say they would not vote for such a party. The net effect is to gain just 500,000 votes nationwide.

The second problem for the Conservatives is that it would cap their recovery by blocking the path for Labour or Liberal Democrat switchers to return to the Party. Talking to voters in former Conservative heartlands, the appeal of a Farage-led Conservative Party was limited. While many liked his straight-talking frankness, most could not envisage voting for the Conservatives with Farage as leader, expressing concern about the Conservatives becoming the Reform Party, the views of people associated with Reform, Farage's stance on Ukraine and instances of racism among Reform candidates.

**In your view which of the following, if any, are the main reasons to not vote for Reform UK?  
[Conservative voters only]**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*(On Farage) "He's a loose cannon and could you imagine if he was in charge of our country what he'd be saying and doing, and I'd be really concerned."*

Jackie, Clothes Shop Owner, Whitby

*"I just think we've got to be a united front for Ukraine. I think if you show Putin absolutely any weakness whatsoever, he'll just ride roughshod over the lot of us and I think the Ukrainians have gone through absolute hell and to sort of say, well, it's their fault because we've all prodded him is a terrible thing to say."*

Louise, Account's Assistant, Whitby

Again, what this does not suggest is that the Conservatives can simply ignore Reform UK voters - winning back some of them is likely to play a role in any Conservative recovery, even if it is not the largest contributor.

Rather it means taking a more strategic approach based on a better understanding of Reform UK voters, rather than a projection. That means making a reality of the post Brexit settlement that Boris Johnson promised, outlining a plan to deliver on the promise of 'levelling up' to regenerate high streets and local economies, extending opportunity beyond higher education and taking their concerns about immigration seriously. At the same time, it also means rebuilding their status as a serious party of government rather than the incompetent and dishonest party that many Reform voters now see the Conservatives to be.

Reform UK voters will not be won back by Conservatives endlessly talking about culture-war talking points such as pride flags and rainbow lanyards. These issues do distinguish Reform voters from Labour voters, but they are not important enough to Reform voters to be able to tempt them back. Competence and failures of delivery are what pushed Reform voters away from the Conservatives and are where the Conservatives need to address if they are to rebuild trust with this group.

## Conservative to Labour switchers count double

Winning over Labour voters in Labour-held seats simultaneously reduces the incumbent's vote and adds to the Conservatives' tally, which makes them particularly valuable electorally. Recovering among this group closes the gap with Labour twice as fast as simply winning support from Reform UK.

A third of Conservative to Labour switchers can see themselves voting for the Conservatives again within the next ten years but winning them back requires an understanding of what drove them away from the Conservatives in the first place: a complete erosion of the trust that voters put in the Conservatives to manage the economy, the country and our public services competently and without scandal.

*I've always voted Conservative, and I think the last election in 2019 with Boris coming in and Brexit being done, I had such high hopes... and I just feel bitterly, bitterly disappointed in them. And all of the things that we'd been promised, controls on immigration, all the things that we'd supported them for, and they just delivered absolutely nothing.*

Oliver, Admin Manager, Cannock Chase

*I think we've had little or no respect from politicians for 12 years for the working-class people. And I think the respect for the politicians is at an all-time low. So, anything he can do to improve upon this will really help. So, I think he's a good start to his reign by talking about that. In my opinion, it's probably a good solid start. But I think how he can show that is probably by just delivering on the promises and not cocking it up like they've done in the last 12 years.*

Karl, Sales Manager, Cannock Chase

## Conservative to Liberal Democrat switchers are a small group, but have an outsized influence in seats

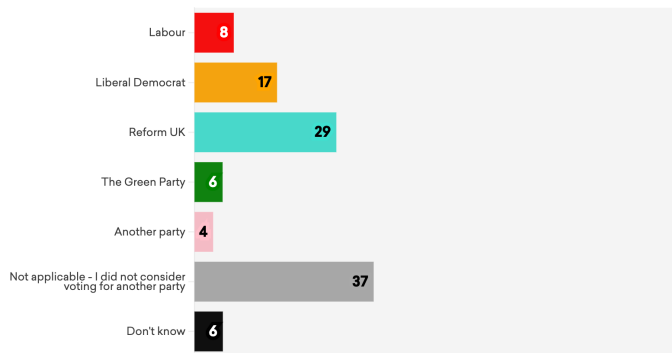
The Liberal Democrats' voters pose significant problems for the Conservatives in the short and long term, but the Party should not write them off. Just 9 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters who have previously voted for the Conservatives say that they cannot ever see them voting for the Conservatives again. This compares to 13 per cent for Labour voters who have previously voted Conservative and 17 per cent for Reform voters.



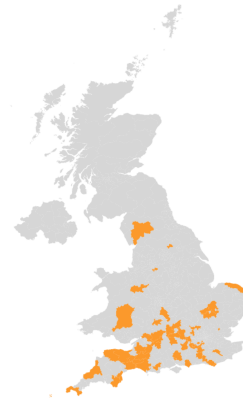
*I always vote Conservative, although this time was the first time that I was unsure who I was going to vote for, but I just felt that a vote for anyone else would be an extra vote for Labour.*

Michelle, Teaching Assistant, Godalming and Ash

**You said you voted for the Conservative Party. Are there any other parties that you might have voted for, if you hadn't voted for that one? Select any that apply**



**Liberal Democrat gains from the Conservatives**



The Conservatives should be concerned that the Liberal Democrats could inflict further damage in the future. 17 per cent of Conservative voters said they considered voting for the Liberal Democrats - more than any other party other than Reform UK. The divergence in values of Liberal Democrat voters also demonstrates a risk for the Tories incurring further losses if their pursuit of Reform voters is too concentrated on that one voter group.

From conversations with Conservative to Liberal Democrat switchers, a primary driver of defections was a sense that the Party had become 'weird' and that the Liberal Democrats were simply the 'more normal' choice. In places where people have voted Conservative for decades on the promise of sound economic management and a quieter form of politics the Liberal Democrats became the alternative when the Conservatives failed to deliver either of these things.

*I'm pretty sure I'll vote Liberal Democrat, but it's not really based on, I can't say I know what their policies are for the local area. It's more like not wanting to vote Conservative feeling like from what I see, they seem more normal and that when I looked up the local MP, he seems more in touch in terms of what he's done with his life with regular people. And so, I can't say I know what his policies are or what they're proposing for area, yeah, I will look into it, but it's more just the type of person and more like I don't want the Conservatives MP to get into our area this time.*

Natasha, Career Coach, Tunbridge Wells

Much as the SNP's dominance in Scotland has stunted Labour's electoral chances for the last decade, a failure to recover seats from the Liberal Democrats in the South and South West will make forming a governing Conservative electoral coalition more difficult.

## Win back the stay-at-homers

In 1997, the Conservative vote collapsed in part due to voters switching to a different party and in part due to many previous voters simply staying at home on polling day. That pattern was repeated in 2024. As many as 2.6m people who voted Conservative in 2019 opted to stay at home in 2024. This is nearly twice as many as the number who switched directly to Labour.

*I've been a Tory voter all my life. I just cannot bring myself to vote Tory this time around.*

Martin, Retired Developer, Portsmouth North

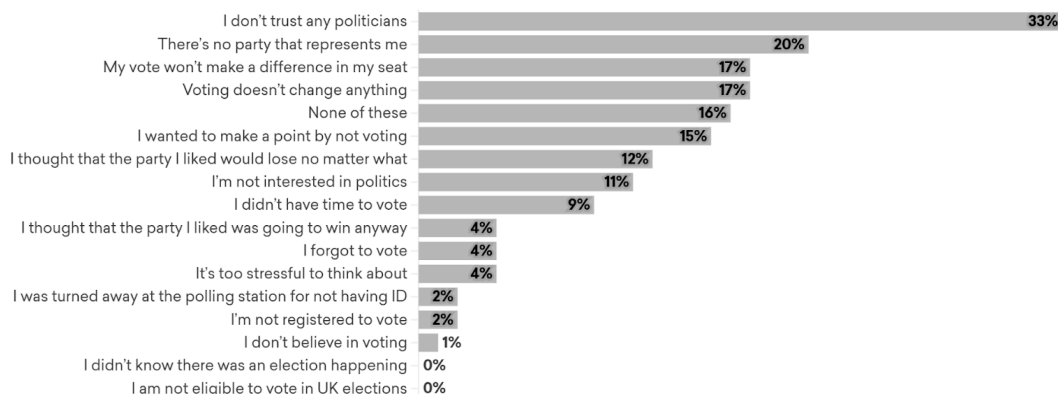
*I've always voted Conservative, I'm a Conservative member, but I don't know what I will do this time, to be honest.*

Roger, Retired Businessman, Loughborough

For these Conservatives, staying at home wasn't a passive decision but an active choice - their way of registering their disapproval and disappointment with the past four years and a disastrous campaign. For more than three in four (77 per cent) of this group, it was their first time not voting in a general election. In many focus groups with 2019 Conservative-Undecideds, it was clear they were waiting for a reason to be brought back into the Conservative fold - but the 2024 campaign ultimately failed to give them one. The top reason for 2019 Conservatives to abstain in 2024 was "I don't trust any politicians."

### You said you did not vote in Thursday's election. Why was that? Select all that apply.

Conservative 2019 voters



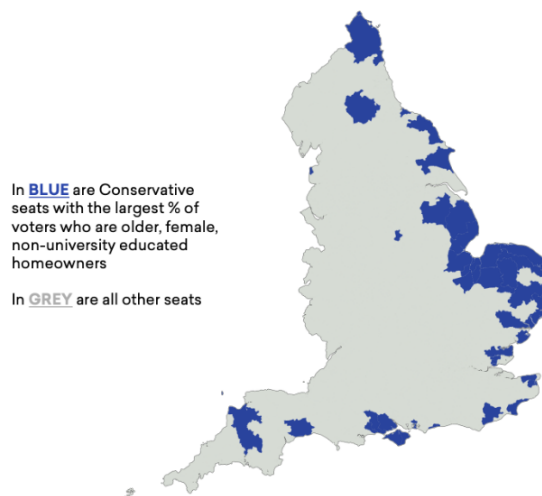
## Winning back the Whitby Women

One group of voters came to define the Conservatives prospects in this election – the Whitby Woman.

This voter group consisted of older women who own their homes and are unlikely to have a university degree - traditionally they overwhelmingly supported the Conservative party but went into the campaign undecided about who they would vote for - frustrated by Conservative scandals and missteps.

These voters are overrepresented in constituencies such as Scarborough and Whitby. While winning back 'Whitby Woman' would not have delivered anything close to outright victory, ensuring they stuck with the party was essential to stopping the Conservatives from the worst-case-scenarios of defeat. In that way, rebuilding support with Whitby Woman as a reliable Conservative voter bloc should be among the first steps to constructing a stable foundation from which the Conservatives can build their electoral base.

### English constituencies with the largest populations of Whitby Women



Ultimately, the Conservatives failed to persuade enough Whitby Women to stick with the Party, or even to turn out to vote. More than two thirds (67 per cent) of Whitby Women voted Conservative in 2019, but in 2024 they swung more clearly away from the Conservatives than the country as a whole.

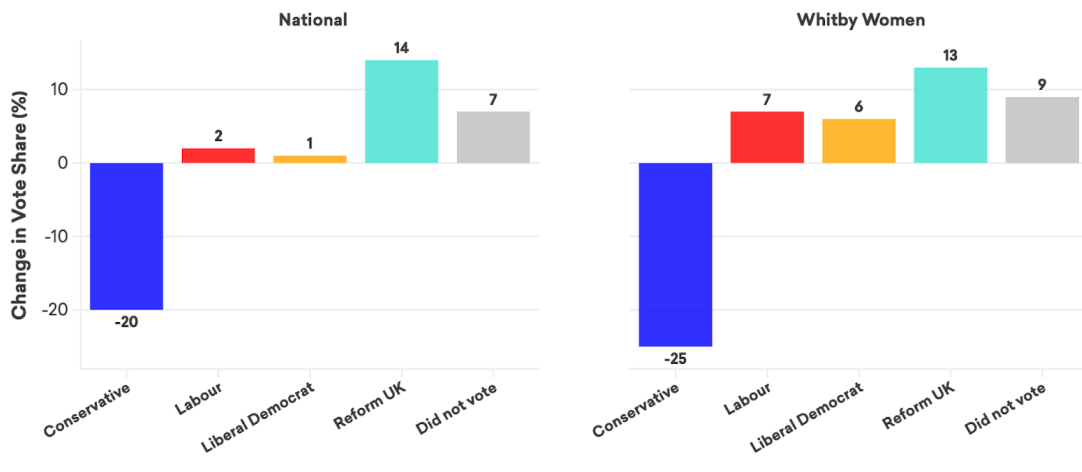
*I've almost buried my head in the sand this time. It sounds terrible and I know it's obviously our future and everything like that, but part of me has just thought I'm more confused now than what I've ever been. I'm still not sure to the point where I'm not even sure I want to vote.*

Kelly, Assistant at Optician's, Whitby Woman, Whitby

That swing was not driven by major gains from the other parties, but by increased non-participation from Whitby Women in this election. While in 2019 only 15 per cent of Whitby Women did not vote; this time a quarter of them (24 per cent) chose to stay at home, and for half of that group (49 per cent), this was the first time they had ever not voted in a General Election.

*For the last six weeks, all I have heard is each one of them saying what the other one isn't doing. It's just name calling now, and it's totally switched me off. I feel really, really sort of disheartened by it to be honest and very, very confused.*

Louise, Accounts Assistant, Whitby Woman, Whitby



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • "Whitby women" refers to all women aged 55+, who own their own home and do not have a degree

Given this, the Conservatives now hold just 21 of the 40 constituencies where Whitby Woman is most represented. The path back to a Conservative majority means winning these seats back, the party will need to find ways to convince Whitby Woman to turn out and vote for the Conservative Party again.

For the Whitby Women who did vote Conservative, their biggest reason for doing so was the Pension Triple Lock. After the Conservatives' last two budgets, Whitby Women often spoke of how they felt overlooked by tax cuts to National Insurance which only benefited those of a working age.

*I think, if you've worked all your life then you should be looked after.*

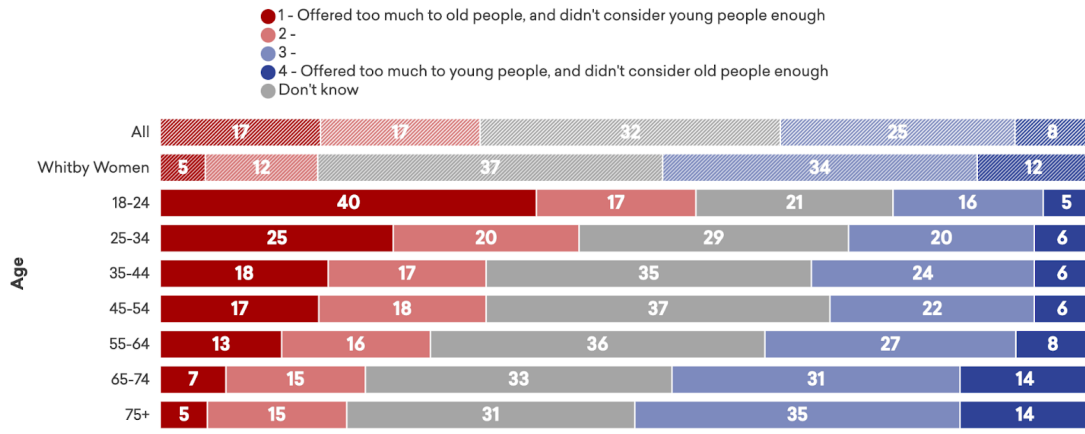
Alison, Chef, Whitby Woman, Whitby

*All these people on their pensions, they shouldn't be on the breadline. Not when they've worked all their life, I think it's ridiculous when they can't afford this and that.*

Karina, Unemployed, Whitby Woman, Whitby

The “Triple Lock Plus” manifesto proposal was popular with Whitby Women, but not so much so that it overcame their wider frustrations with the Conservative Party. Among Whitby Women, 46 per cent think that the Conservatives offered too much to young people and did not consider old people enough in their General Election campaign, compared to just 17 per cent who said the reverse.

**Thinking about their General Election campaign this year, do you think the Conservatives...**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

For Whitby Women, the biggest barriers to voting Conservative are a sense that the party is now out of touch with ordinary people, that they can't be trusted to control immigration and that they have proven themselves to be incompetent in their 14 years of government. As with other voter blocs the path to rebuilding support among Whitby Women is for the Conservatives to return to their roots of strong and sound economic management - as well as self-discipline.

*Rishi Sunak was on TV the other day and asked about poverty. We lived off beans on toast, but he didn't have Sky. To me that's not poverty, he doesn't have a clue.*  
Alison, Chef, Whitby Woman, Whitby

*You're frightened of staying with the Conservatives, but you don't want everything to get any worse.*  
Karina, Unemployed, Whitby Woman, Whitby

Being able to rely once again on a stable base of support from the Whitby Women is vital to giving the Party the leeway to set out a broader vision for the rest of the country.

## The Conservative Party, unless it is a national party, is nothing

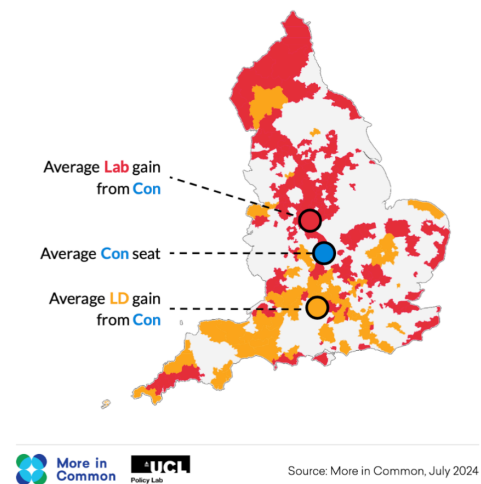
The 2024 election was simultaneously better and worse for the Conservatives than in 1997. Going into opposition, they are starting from a much lower base, with a smaller parliamentary party than ever before. But their remaining supporters are more evenly distributed across the country. They retained a foothold in Scotland and in every English region.

The geography of the party is unchanged from 2019. Plotting Conservative seats on a map, the geographical centre of gravity in England is Daventry (Northamptonshire) - the same as at the last election. Unlike in 1997, when the Conservatives retreated south, in 2024 the Conservative coalition was burnt at both ends. Labour regained many 2019 Conservative seats in the North, and at the same time the Liberal Democrats surged in the South.

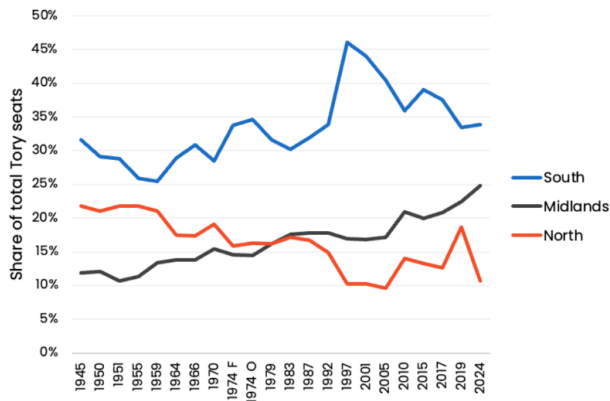
The map here shows Conservative losses to Labour and the Liberal Democrats, and the average latitude and longitude of those seats. The geographical centre of gravity of Labour's gain from Conservatives is Nuneaton, 100 miles north of the average Liberal Democrat gain in Newbury.

The Conservatives are no longer a southern party that occasionally wins seats elsewhere in the UK. Throughout the post-War period, there has been a steady increase in the share of Conservative MPs representing a seat in the Midlands.

The parties' geographic centres in 2024



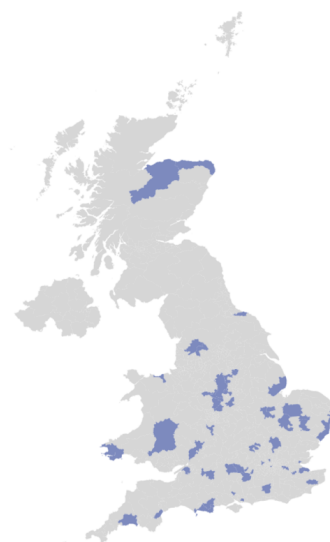
**Share of Conservative seats in different English regions**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Although the Conservatives lost many of their traditional heartlands, they managed to hold onto a range of seats that fell to Labour in 1997 and represent the changing geography of the Conservative coalition: Stockton West, Keighley and Ilkley, Newark, Brigg and Immingham and Wyre Forest. This political realignment looks set to stay - ushering in an era of new marginal seats across the country. Alongside acknowledging this change, Conservatives need to chart a course for recovery that runs through both Dorking and Darlington.

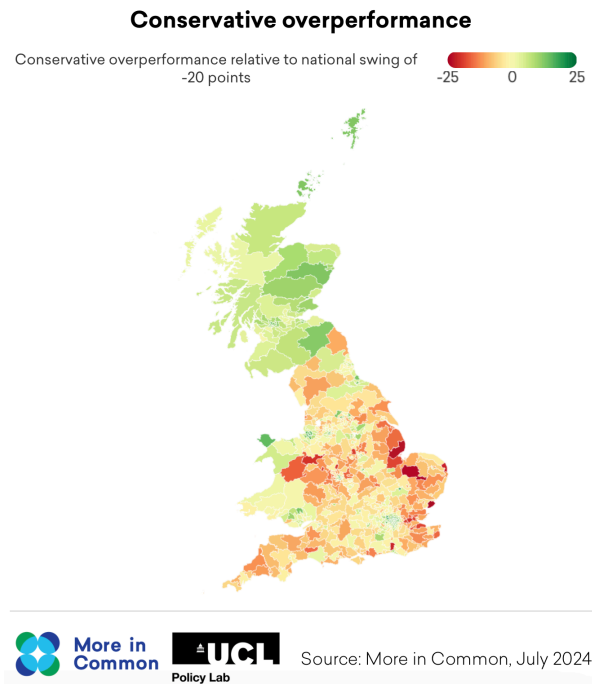
**Seats where the Conservatives are now in second place with a margin of less than 5 per cent**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

## The Conservatives' next leader

The relative overperformance of Conservatives in the Tees Valley area (with the region registering lower swing against the Conservatives than elsewhere and holding on to the Stockton West seat) shows a potential policy path for the Conservatives to rebuild their electoral coalition.

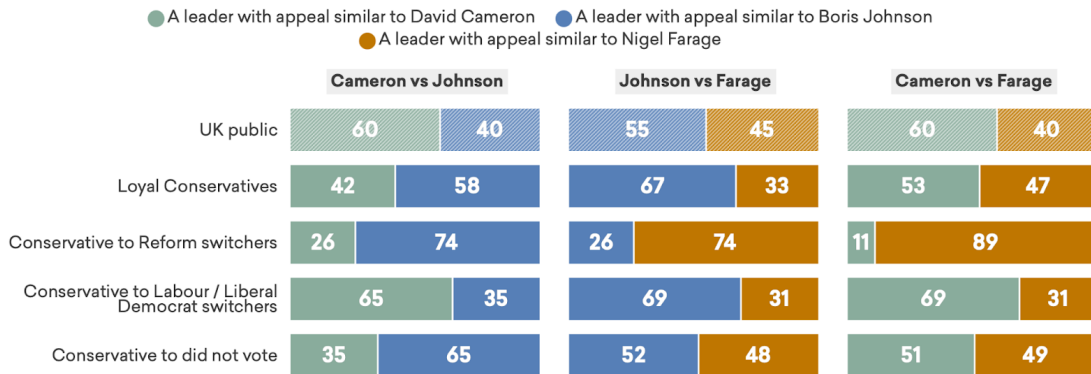


The Conservative's Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen's twin policy priorities are levelling-up and net zero - focused on delivery, regeneration and using the green transition for economic growth. Such a policy agenda provides the start of rebuilding the Conservative voter coalition which both tackles their demographic underperformance and brings back Conservatives who previously backed the party but didn't in 2024. The agenda also provides the means to reach out to younger, less affluent and more interventionist voters who backed the party in 2019 and came close to backing the party again in 2024.

Hints of what the Conservative leader should look like emerge from the historic parallels that voters give as references for what they would like to see next.



### Thinking about the future of the Conservative Party, which of the following do you think they need?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Across the UK public, a fairly clear consensus emerges. People would like a leader who is more like Boris Johnson than Nigel Farage, and further still they would like a leader who is more like David Cameron than Boris Johnson.

Looking at the various Conservative voter groups reveals the trade-offs associated with each sort of leader. A Farage-ist leader would be popular with Reform UK switchers, who would easily opt for a Farage style leader over both Cameron and Johnson. The issue is that such a leader puts off the majority of Labour / Liberal Democrat switchers, who themselves say they are more likely to vote Conservative again in the coming years.

*I think he (Farage) sees the real world where some politicians don't and he sees what affects the real world and I think he just calls it out and not everyone likes that, but I think he does mean what he says, and he justifies it every time.*

John, Project Manager, Doncaster, Conservative to Reform switcher

For the Conservative to Labour or Liberal Democrat switchers, a Cameronite leader is by far the most popular. And a Cameronite leader lands relatively well with those who both stuck with the Conservatives this year and those Conservative 2019 voters who did not vote at this General Election.

But for those stay-at-home Conservatives, and some of the loyal Conservatives, a leader with Boris Johnson's appeal could reignite their enthusiasm for Conservatism.

*I voted for Boris because I felt Boris was a good man and I think he was hung out to dry, and I think he was stabbed in the back by Rishi Sunak.*

Adam, Managing Director, North Herefordshire

*(On David Cameron) That's what we need, somebody who's speaking to everybody, wanting to please everybody and wanting to make changes that are going to benefit everybody as well. That type of leader.*

Joel, Estate Agent, North Herefordshire

*And the thing is love him or hate him. You had a character like Boris in power and I voted for him, and I voted for him partly because of what he was promising, which obviously never necessarily arrived. But I also voted for him because I like him, and I still like him even though he is a bit of an idiot and a bit crazy. But I actually as a, I'd love to sit around a dinner table and have a laugh with him and stuff like that as a dinner party guest. I think he'd be a really good giggle. I like his charisma.*

Debs, Mental Health Support Worker, Aldershot

*I think Boris was a bit ballsy. I quite like Boris.*

Jamie, Forklift Truck Driver, Workington

Once again this is not 'either or'. The right Conservative leader will draw on the best attributes of all of these leaders. They will represent the stability, authority, and modernity that people liked about Cameron. But they must also have the enthusiasm, relatability, and optimism that endeared Johnson to voters, and authenticity that marks out both Johnson and Farage.

And, at the same time, they should avoid those leaders' worst attributes. Former Conservative voters who have defected in all directions fundamentally feel that they were not respected by successive Conservative leaders - be it the coalition government who didn't do enough to stop their area falling further behind after the financial crisis, or a Johnson administration which didn't follow the rules they had set for others during the Covid pandemic.

## Chapter 4 | **Navigating the rise in populism**

A key challenge facing all political parties over the course of the next Parliament - particularly the main parties - is how to handle the rise of populism and the increasing fragmentation of the electorate, whether it is the rise of Reform UK on the populist right or the insurgency of the Greens or the independents on the populist left. Greater competition among a larger number of effective parties need not be detrimental, if it leads to a more robust and representative democracy. But that is not what has happened. Smaller parties are benefitting from historically low turnout, high cynicism, and the feeling that democracy itself is broken.

Navigating this must start by understanding, not ignoring, people's frustrations - taking their concerns seriously and seeking to address them. Currently, the public are evenly divided (54 per cent to 46 per cent) over whether the Labour government will improve the lives of people like them. Delivering on these practical expectations is key to insulating society from the rise of populist fringe politics in the UK. However, delivery must be done in a context which understands why populists are gaining a foothold in communities across Britain and what can be done to stem the flow - both on the right and the left.

Lessons can also be learned from the mistakes made by progressives in America in 2012 and France in 2017 when elections (or re-elections) failed to address underlying cynicism and faced with insurgency on both the right and left, the winning party quickly became unpopular. Simple assumptions about demography as destiny, writing off sections of the populace as 'deplorable', failing to support the twin losers of deindustrialisation and the financial crash, while being unwilling to engage with voters' legitimate concerns about issues like immigration all boosted populist parties. What were initially seen as victories for the progressive mainstream soon turned to engines of populist support.

### **Why are populists gaining appeal across Britain?**

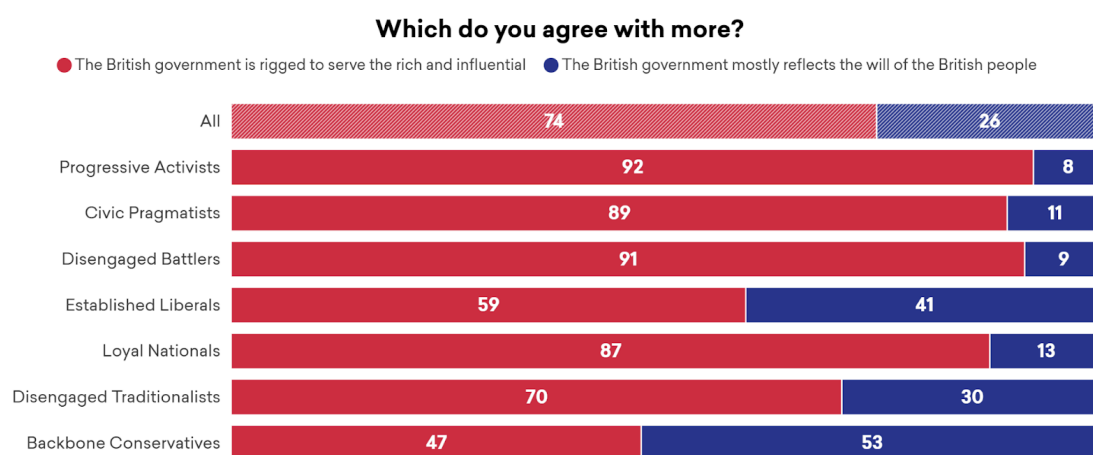
It is no surprise that populists are gaining traction in Britain. What unites almost every conversation with the British public about the state of Britain is not just their cynicism about politics, but a sense of deeper futility -and the feeling that none of the political class are up to confronting the deep issues Britain faces.

The principal driver is a feeling our political class has become unresponsive. When people vote for change, what they get is more of the same. Many Britons value their democratic rights, and want to participate, but no longer believe voting is a credible mechanism for change.

*"I kind of become quite disillusioned with it all and kind of going from quite steadfast that we should always vote.... Women fought for the vote. Well, as awful as it sounds, what's the point? It's awful that, isn't it?"*

Francis, Lifeguard, Bury

In fact, the public are three times more likely to think that the British government is rigged to serve the rich and influential (74 per cent) versus only a quarter (26 per cent) who think it reflects the will of the British people. In four of the seven segments (Labour's three core segments plus Red Wall Loyal Nationals) roughly nine in ten agree that politics serves the rich.



Source: More in Common, June 2024

These challenges are not unique to Britain and have been seen in elections across the world, whether that is countries governed from the centre-left or the centre-right. But the increasing rise of populism and political fragmentation is not inevitable - political leaders have it within their power to turn the tide on the rise of populism in the UK.

## How can political leaders better navigate the rise of populism?

While the rise of populism is a challenge shared across British politics, the two main parties face different immediate challenges in what they need to do to respond.

For Labour, this means holding together its new coalition and reaching out beyond it. Balancing the different priorities of its constituent groups is the best way of navigating insurgency on both the left and the right. To do this, the focus of the new government must be on tangible everyday improvements and changes to people's lives - whether that's on the cost of living, the NHS or on public services. This is a strategy which will address the causes, not the symptoms, of populism.

*I think we just need to plough money into education, into the health system because I think for too long, we've ridden on people's goodwill and we're pushing them to breaking point. But where we get that money from, I don't know.*

Beth, Insurance Underwriter, Altrincham

*I think the cost of living seems to be pushed under the carpet at the moment, but literally wages aren't going up that much in comparison to everything else, so that's a real problem and it's obviously making a lot of people going more into poverty. The young people can't afford to buy their homes so they're staying with their parents is like a massive knock-on effect the cost of living.*

Mo, West Midlands

*We haven't got whiteboard pens because our budget's sliced and it's just basic resources for the children that we just can't access because of things like inflation as well... our children aren't getting what they basically need to be educated.*

Alicia, Primary School Teacher, Altrincham

For the Conservatives, the challenges are different. Given the current narrowness of the Conservative coalition, the temptation to rebuild the coalition by aping Reform UK will be significant. However, as highlighted, the Lego-bricks version of coalition building does not work in reality - while international evidence suggests that when parties of the Centre-Right try and out compete the populist right, they simply boost the latter who can always out bid them. Merging with Reform, or trying to outflank them, would do little to improve the Conservatives' support in the short term and would stymie their growth in the long term.

The Conservatives' policy on immigration - given its high salience among potential Reform voters - needs careful navigation to balance potential supporters who do want a more control driven approach and others who want to see both control and compassion.

However, beyond narrow electoral strategies, there are more significant ways that both parties can do to stem the flow to the fringes of politics.

**Tackle causes, not symptoms:** Populist discontent - whether that is on the right with Reform UK voters or the left with Gaza independents - is deeper than a single issue or cause. Political leaders will be able to better navigate populist backlash and stem the rise of populism in Britain if they can tackle the causes of what drives voters to populist alternatives. For Reform UK voters, a sense that the country has lost control on immigration is the key driver for their vote, but it comes amidst a context that their communities have been left behind for years and a feeling of insecurity. For those who voted for pro-Gaza independents, the Labour Party's position on Gaza was the trigger for abandoning Labour but emerged from a broader context that Labour had taken their vote for granted.

*Yes, the Palestine issue has been one of the major factors. There's no denying that. But apart from that, there are other things... the tax implications, what's happening in the workplace environment, the retirement age and obviously the state of the NHS is just going worse and worse and to be perfectly honest, before it will be privatised just like ours in the us. So, it's a bit of everything.*

Murduza, NHS Worker, Leicester

*I think [Labour] being the incumbent for the last 13 years has probably taken votes for granted from what is an ultra-safe seat in the city.*

Inti, Care Worker, Leicester

**Focus on delivery, but not bland technocracy:** The public wants things to work again. If the Government can deliver on wages and NHS waiting lists, tangibly improving people's lives, it can go a long way in insulating against the rise of populism in the UK. In that way people's relationship with the mainstream and even democracy itself is quite transactional. However, this does not mean that the public will get excited by bland technocracy or talk about process rather than outcomes. Delivery matters insofar as waiting lists go down and people have more money to show for their hard work at the end of the month - visible change for which the Government can take credit.

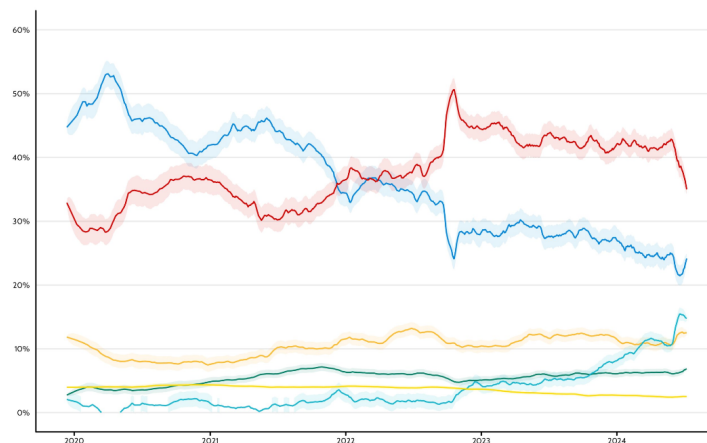
**Embrace authenticity:** Populist parties often ultimately disappoint in Government as the promises they make to the electorate are not ultimately delivered. Clearly the solution to tackling populism does not lie in aping populists. However mainstream politicians could do more to learn from the appeal of populist leaders. In focus group conversations even many of those who would never vote for Nigel Farage cited his authenticity, straight talking and apparent lack of concern for saying sometimes unpopular things as something that marked him out in the political class. The public tend to think that Nigel Farage's decision to appear on 'I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here' was a plus and helped show a different side to someone who had 'disappeared after Brexit'. Similarly, those Independents who stood on pro Gaza platforms also attracted support among some because they were seen as real champions for their communities precisely because they were rooted in those communities. It is not inevitable that mainstream politicians must appear inauthentic and both Boris Johnson and Angela Rayner are examples of politicians who win plaudits from the public for 'being themselves'. While authenticity isn't something that can be forced, the mainstream parties should find more ways to 'level with the public' and find a better balance between party discipline and allowing MPs to be themselves.

*My opinion changed on him when I watched him on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here. I think it was really great that he sat there and said I think what I want to think and I'll do what I want to do. And I think he came across really well.*

Charlotte, Nail Technician, Thanet

**Populist parties have ceilings and dividing lines:** Mainstream political parties need to be confident in the knowledge that populist parties or insurgents on the right and left have clear ceilings in British politics. Nigel Farage's comments on Ukraine and racism within the Reform UK Party stunted the growth of Reform UK's popularity and capped its support at a much lower ceiling than it might have ultimately reached in the days after those comments and in the lead up to polling day.

**Voting intention polling over the last parliament, modelled to reflect the final vote share**



Source: Jack Bailey, July 2024

Whether on Ukraine and racism or the intimidation condoned or in some cases instigated by those campaigning for independent candidates, mainstream political parties have a role to play in drawing clear dividing lines between these parties and speaking to a broader story of British values on democracy, standing by our allies, and building up strong institutions. Talking about how these things can benefit people's everyday lives and make them better is also key.

*I think he's an interesting man and he's got the real gift of the gab and I do think he has energy and that's why I think people are drawn to him. But I wouldn't trust him now. I think he's a snake in the grass myself. I can't see him being even remotely interested in the constituents of Clacton. I'm extremely worried by his friendship and passion for Trump, which I think says quite a lot about him.*

Priscilla, Retired, Thanet

For Labour it now will have to consider how and when to take on populist opponents head on. While the attraction of allowing Reform UK to cannibalise the Conservative vote was understandable from the position of short-term electoral strategy, long term the Party needs to think about how it directly engages with Reform UK, not least as the Party is now in second place in many Labour held seats.

For the Conservatives, interventions from Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak later in the campaign likely won back some wavering Conservative voters from Reform UK. The Party may reflect however whether ignoring the Party to their right for so long was a sensible strategy - not least given how many Conservative votes Reform UK ultimately won.

For both parties, a growing religious split in voting patterns between minority communities poses new challenges. That different communities should be able to vote for candidates that they believe best represent their values is healthy. What is unhealthy is if British politics fragments along sectarian lines, if global conflicts become imported into the mainstay of UK politics and if freedom restricting harassment takes hold in UK elections. Most importantly in their engagement with religious communities political parties should take steps to ensure they are listening to a wide range of perspectives rather than simply those with the loudest voices - and take active steps to ensure more moderate perspectives are not intimidated into silence.

**Avoid sneeriness or dismissiveness of concerns:** Part of the rise of populism is a reflection of a deep-seated anger and frustration with how the country is - or isn't - working. Ignoring or dismissing this is a sure-fire way to bolster it. And it places a premium on avoiding the mistakes of other mainstream parties such as Hilary Clinton calling Trump supporters a 'basket of deplorables' during her 2016 US Presidential campaign.

*I heard it on the radio the other day, something about respect for working people and respect for trying to bring some decency back into politics. Because I think for a long time, and to be honest, Labour's probably worse for this than any of the others. They almost look down on working people. They're stupid, they're uneducated. We're the intelligent people in London. We know what's best for you. We'll say this to convince you, but actually we're far more intelligent, so we'll just ignore you and do what we want. And again, the main one on that is immigration. People have been screaming about it for years, but they know better. So, we've got to accept 750,000 people in one year without houses and all the rest of the strain it brings onto the public, onto public services, et cetera. But if he's truthful and if he's honest that the proof of the pudding will be in the eating, will he listen to us? Will he listen to ordinary people? Will he make things better? So, it's good that he said it and it's in his mind. And let's see if he delivers.*

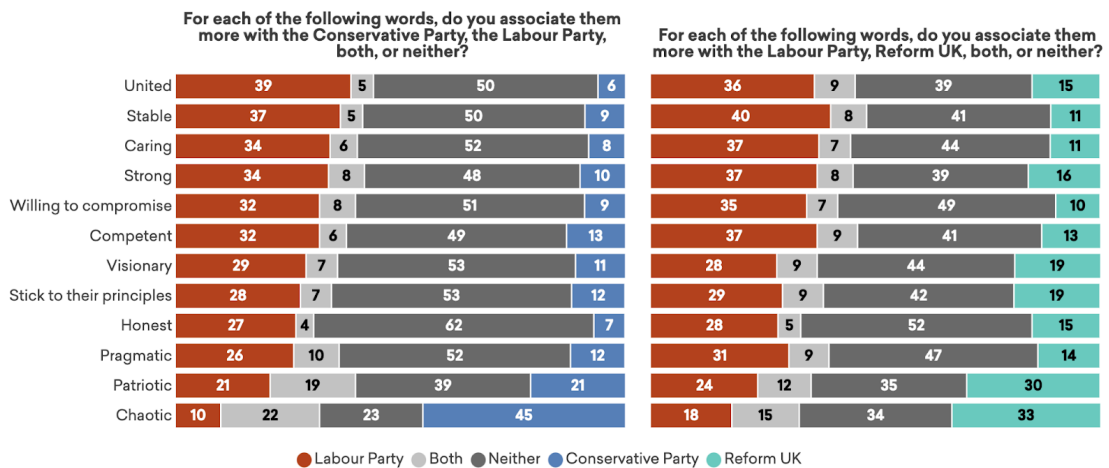
Oliver, Admin Manager, Cannock Chase

*First of all, I think Starmer didn't respect the result of the referendum. He wanted to overturn the result. So, I don't think he has any respect for people or for democracy, so I won't take any lectures from him on respect. And secondly, his deputy prime minister goes around saying things like Tory scum. Yeah, I won't take any lectures from him on respect.*

Cal, NHS Administrator, Cannock Chase



**Put patriotism at the centre:** Part of how political parties deal with populism is about not ceding patriotism to the extremes, but instead outlining a vision of patriotism that can command the broad support of the public. Previous research by More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab has shown the progress that Starmer has made in turning around the perceptions of the Labour Party in being proud to be British. Only 20 per cent of Britons thought that the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn was proud to be British - this increases to 40 per cent for the Labour Party under Keir Starmer.



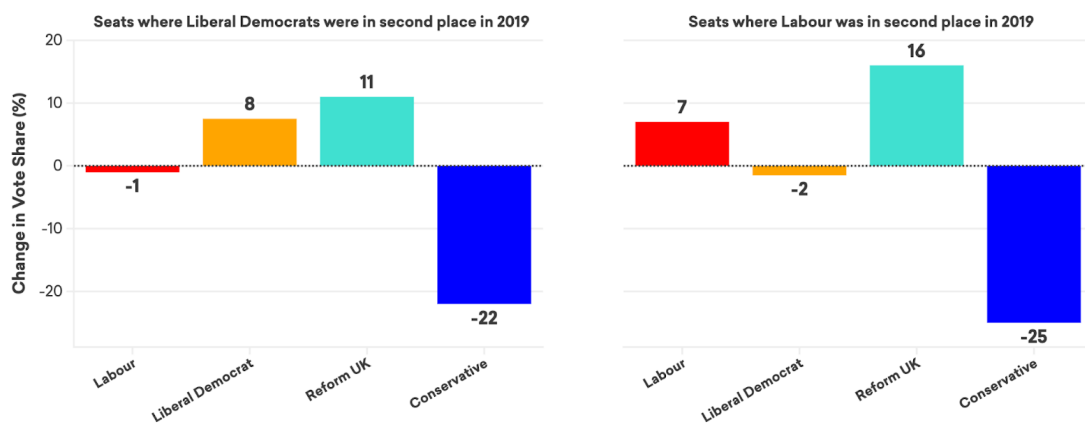
## Chapter 5 | Britain's fragmented voter coalitions

This chapter explores in more detail the specific reasons that people abandoned the two main parties, however several general reasons underpin the fragmentation of British politics:

First, high levels of dissatisfaction with the previous Government increased people's willingness to vote tactically, 12 per cent of all voters listed tactical voting as a factor influencing their decision. Voters were prepared to use their ballot in ways they might not have done to punish Conservative incumbents. This is most prominent in the extent to which the votes split differently in Conservative-Labour and Conservative-Liberal Democrat marginals.

*I think our (electoral) system is pretty naff. I think it's not a fair representation. I think a lot of people tactically vote.*

Eilish, Self-employed Groomer, Wells and Mendip Hills



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Second, people increasingly distrust both of the main parties as dissatisfaction with the status quo has increased. Entering the election campaign, 73 per cent of the public said that it's time for change but are torn (52:48) on whether Keir Starmer represents change or more of the same. The sentiment that "all politicians are as bad as each other" recurred repeatedly in conversations with the public throughout the campaign and is reflected in the election result.

*They all went to the same schools; they're all coming off the same bus. They've all got very wealthy backgrounds, families, none of them really come from working class backgrounds and trying to struggle and know the rest of us alike really.*

Dawn, Dental Nurse, Portsmouth North

*(On the two main parties) The problem is they're exactly the same as each other. That's the thing. The policies that they offer are exactly the same. I think that's why Reform UK are so appealing to me as an individual. They're different, they're not the norm and that's what we need personally.*

David, Landscaper, Workington

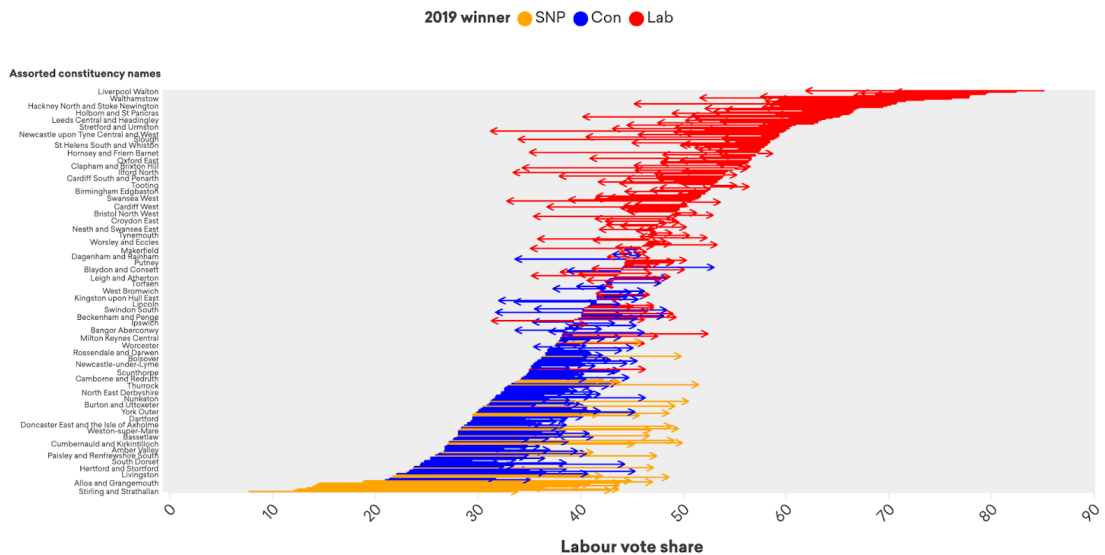
**And finally, voters in safe seats are fed up with being overlooked by parties who they feel take their votes for granted.** On the right, this led to an increased number of people voting for Reform UK, many of whom told us they think the Conservative Party has lost its way. On the left, the same dynamic drove votes towards the Greens and independents, in particular with progressive voters in urban centres and Muslim voters around the country feeling that the Labour Party does not reflect their interests and concerns.

## Labour voters

A number of paradoxes underpin Labour's new voter base. They represent the largest number of constituencies that Labour has won since 2001, but these seats are more marginal than at any point since 1945. They secured the largest majority government in 25 years, but won fewer votes than Labour managed in either 2017 or 2019 - both elections that they lost.

The cause of these historic results was an extraordinary efficiency of the Labour vote - gaining vote share in the seats they needed and shedding vote share where they could afford to.

### Changes in Labour vote share since 2019



The effect of this efficiency is that Labour has ended up representing an extremely broad coalition of voters and constituencies.

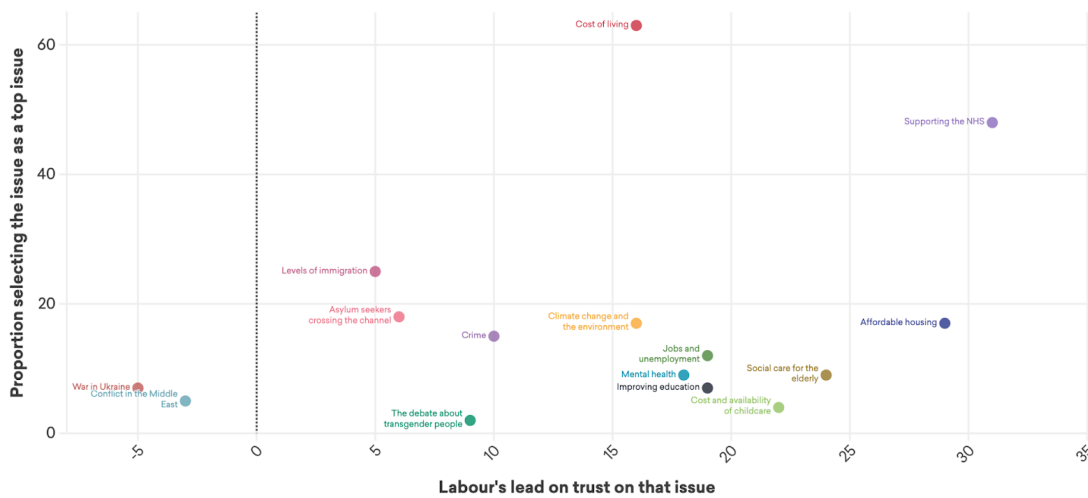
In 2019, Labour voters were a fairly united cohort. Half (51 per cent) of them were either from the Progressive Activist or Civic Pragmatist segment, two thirds of them (65 per cent) had voted to remain in the EU, and 86 per cent of them lived in urban areas.

Now the Labour voter base is much more mixed and less ideologically cohesive. Less than a third (32 per cent) are Progressive Activists or Civic Pragmatists. 57 per cent of them voted to remain in the EU, and 46 per cent live in urban areas. This coalition is drawn together by pragmatism rather than shared values - a coalition of valence not ideology. What unites the Labour vote is simply a shared feeling that they thought Labour would do a better job than

the Conservatives in Government. The defining challenge for the Labour government will be finding a way to keep this broad coalition of voters together.

Labour won this election because they were more trusted than the Conservatives on the two issues that matter most to voters: the cost of living and the NHS. Throughout the campaign, Labour consistently polled ahead of the Conservatives on both of these issues, and after the election, Labour voters gave these answers as their top two reasons for voting for Labour.

**Labour leads on the most salient issues**



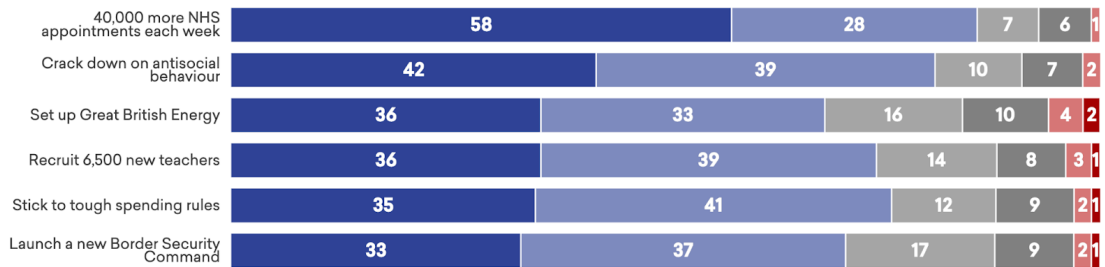
Source: More in Common, June 2024

Labour's national vote share only increased marginally since 2019, and much of their success arises from a collapse in the Conservative vote rather than a rise in support or direct switching from Conservative to Labour. That said, a fifth (18 per cent) of Labour's 2024 voters voted Conservative at the last election.

Winning the argument on the NHS and cost of living was key to the policies that Labour put forward - though, each of Labour's six pledges were popular with a wide array of voters.

**For each of the following proposals that the Labour Party has put forwards, do you think they will be...**

● Very good for the country ● Good for the country ● Neither good nor bad for the country ● Bad for the country ● Very bad for the country ● Don't know



Source: More in Common, July 2024

But more important than policy proposals was the fact that Labour was simply seen as more competent and trustworthy, whereas the Conservatives had over a decade of baggage from their years of managing public services and the economy that proved impossible to shake off.

*We've had so much chaos in the last 14 years it has been awful. They just don't know what they're doing, and we've got to give someone else a chance. It's just time for a change.*

Johannes, Retired, Portsmouth

*I think he's got a good CV. What was he? The Director of Public Prosecutions or whatever that was called? Yeah, I think he's credible.*

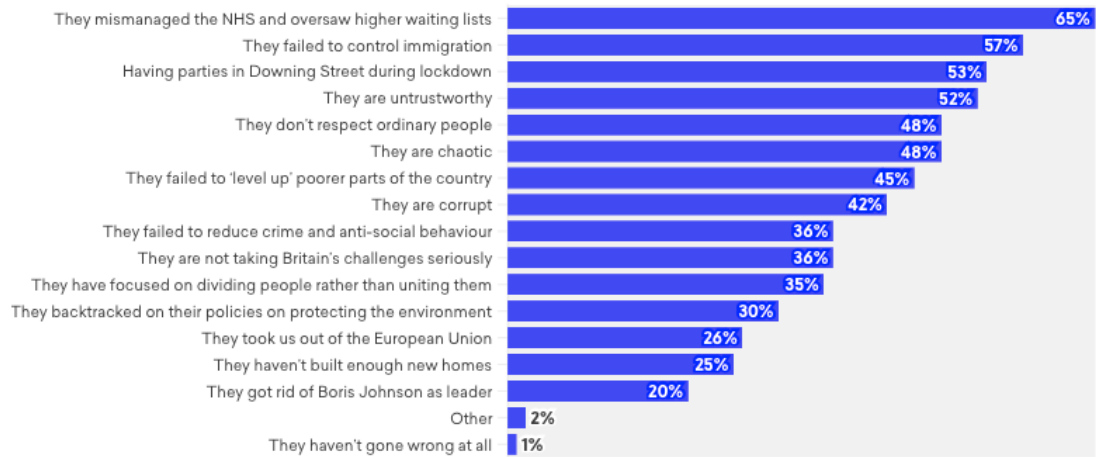
Tony, Grandfather, Romford

Nearly two thirds of 2019 Conservative to Labour voters list the Conservatives' failure to bring down NHS waiting lists among the Conservatives' biggest mistakes, more than anything else.

*I've got a father that's quite unwell and things could have been dealt with quicker than they were, which could have maybe got us a different outcome. I feel quite passionately that that is something that's sacred to this country.*

Victoria, Business Analyst, Romford

**Thinking about the Conservatives, where do you think they have made the biggest mistakes, if at all, since the election in 2019? Select all that apply. [Conservative to Labour switchers]**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*Let's just focus on one thing and do it really well because right now we're probably trying to tackle all the issues and try and resolve them, which we know doesn't really work.... Maybe the one thing we could do is focus on the NHS, sort that out, that's the biggest issue.*

Chris, Project Finance Manager, Altrincham

Labour's voters then are united in their dislike of the Conservatives. The challenge for Labour in Government is finding out what specific solutions to Britain's ills will also unite this coalition.

Labour's voters want change, but don't agree on what this change looks like. On the most basic level, they are split on whether this change should be gradual or radical - with 44 per cent saying the government should focus on large and radical change and 48 per cent believing change can come through incremental adjustments.

That slight preference for incrementalism is inseparable from the people's cynicism towards politics. Grand narratives of hope and change are unlikely to land when the public don't even trust politicians to get the basics right. For most then the starting point is in the ordinary and the everyday.

Of the six segments who voted for Labour, only Progressive Activists think the country needs radical change. Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, Established Liberals, Loyal Nationals and Disengaged Traditionalists tend to think the country needs gradual change.

Beyond disagreements about the scale of change, Labour voters' internal disagreements grow larger on the issues they prioritise. After the NHS and cost of living, Progressive

Activists and Established Liberals list climate change and the environment as their top issues. But Civic Pragmatists and Disengaged Battlers list affordable housing third, while Loyal Nationals and Disengaged Traditionalists prioritise immigration.

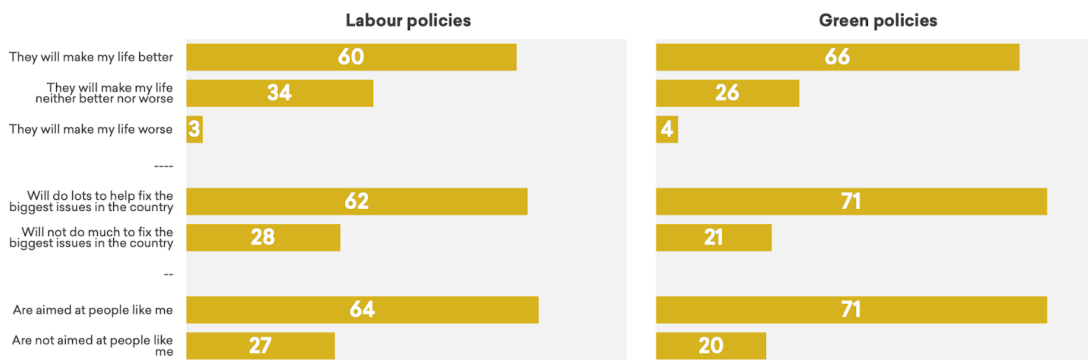
There is further disagreement on the specifics of these policy issues. For example, most Labour voters think the NHS should be a priority for the new government but are split on what they think would fix the NHS – Progressive Activists and Loyal Nationals who voted for Labour are most likely to say the NHS needs more funding, while Labour’s voters in other segments believe it is more important that the NHS is managed better.

All this makes it easy to identify the fault lines that could cause conflict in Labour’s voter base if the Government fails to build a broad enough platform.

In 2019, 67 per cent of Progressive Activists backed Labour. In 2024 their support with this group fell to under 50 per cent, with the Greens securing 20 per cent of Progressive Activist voters.

Labour’s Progressive Activist voters are already closely aligned with the Greens on many policy issues. Progressive Activists are significantly more likely to say that Green Party policies are aimed at people like them than to say the same about Labour’s policies. They are also more likely to say that Green policies represent change and will make their life better. At this General Election, 45 per cent of Labour’s Progressive Activist voters considered voting green at one point.

**Thinking about that set of policies as a whole, would you say...**  
**[Progressive Activists only]**

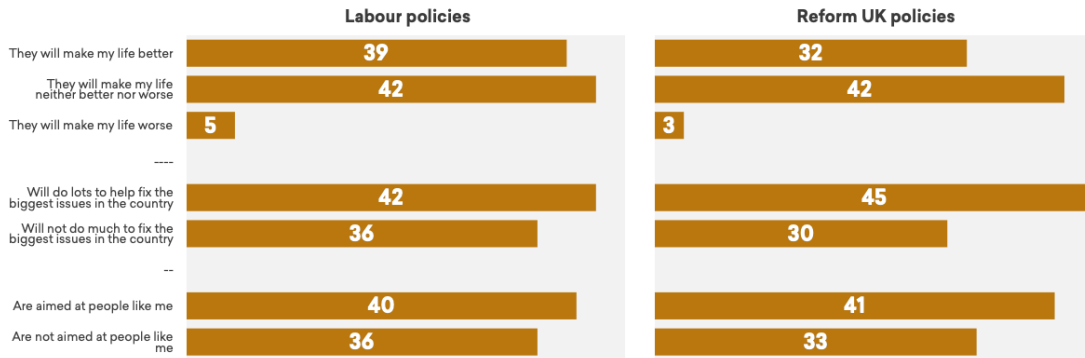


Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Respondents were shown six manifesto pledges from each party. Excludes "don't know"

On the other hand, Labour’s Disengaged Traditionalist voters could be pulled towards Reform UK. Disengaged Traditionalists are more likely to say that Reform UK policies are aimed at people like them compared to Labour policies. They are also much more likely to say that Reform’s policies will make their life better and fix the big issues facing the country.



**Thinking about that set of policies as a whole, would you say...**  
**[Disengaged Traditionalists only]**



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • Respondents were shown six manifesto pledges from each party. Excludes "don't know"

Looking forward, Labour voters are clear about what might stop them from voting Labour in the future, but the challenge for Labour is that all of its voter blocs would leave the party for different reasons.

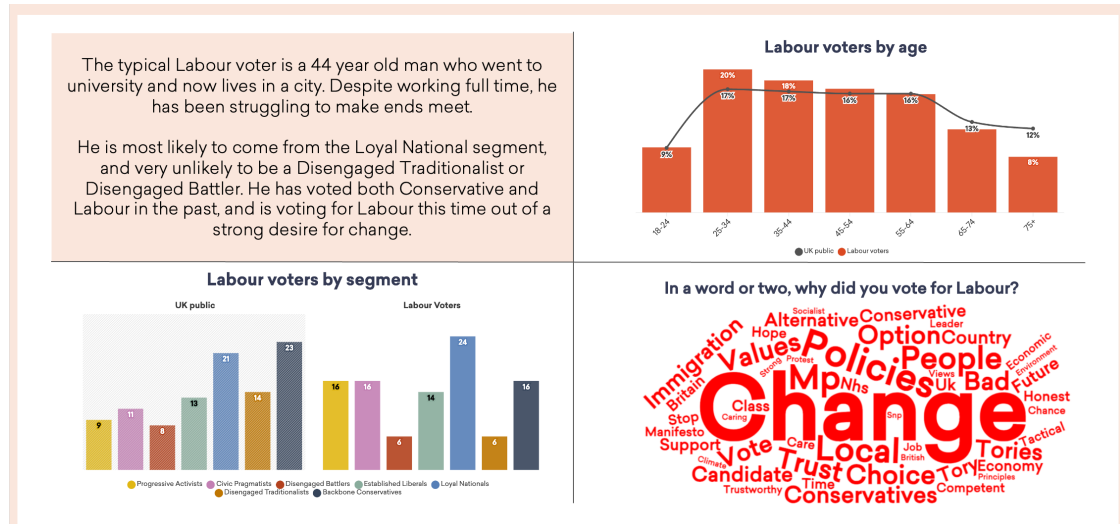
For Progressive Activists, lack of support for Palestine and going too far in distancing the Party from Jeremy Corbyn and his platform are the top likely barriers. For Established Liberals there are specific concerns about the power of Angela Rayner (explaining Conservative attacks on the Deputy Leader toward the close of the campaign). Loyal Nationals, on the other hand, often rate Angela Rayner more than Keir Starmer, praising her authenticity and groundedness - but they are more likely to desert the party over immigration.

**Labour voters' top barriers to voting Labour, by segment**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

However, there is one thread that unites Labour voters in six of the seven segments as a barrier to supporting the party, that the Government fails to deliver on its promises, once again pointing to delivery as the unifying glue of an otherwise disparate coalition.



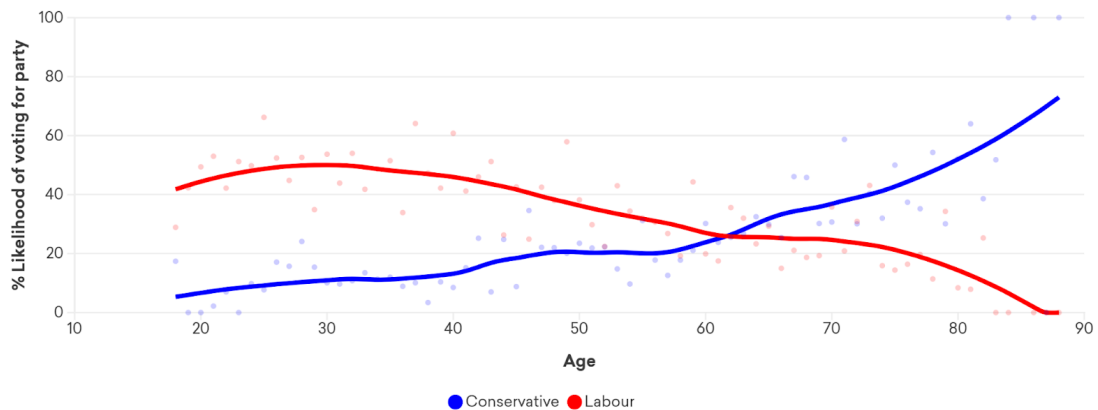
## Conservative Voters

The 2024 election saw the broad Conservative voter coalition that had developed from 2010 to 2019 stripped back to its core. The party lost both younger, more urban Conservatives that David Cameron recruited and the more Leave voting Conservatives that voted for May and Johnson won over in the Midlands and North. Left behind is the party's more uniform historical base of shire Conservatives.

Most pronounced is the age of that base. The median age of those who voted Conservative is 66. 40 percent of all Conservative voters are now aged 70 and above and 65 per cent are aged 60 and above. Although optimists will point to the historical shift of voters to the Conservatives as they age, the ageing of their remaining base presents real challenges for their ongoing viability as a major political force.

The crossover age at which someone becomes more likely to vote Conservative than Labour is 62, up from 39 in 2019. At their current life expectancy, 10 per cent of the Conservatives' current voters will likely have died by 2029, the scheduled year of the next election. The 2024 Conservative vote's steep age gradient could mean time is working against them unless they can diversify their vote.

**General Election 2024 Vote by Age**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

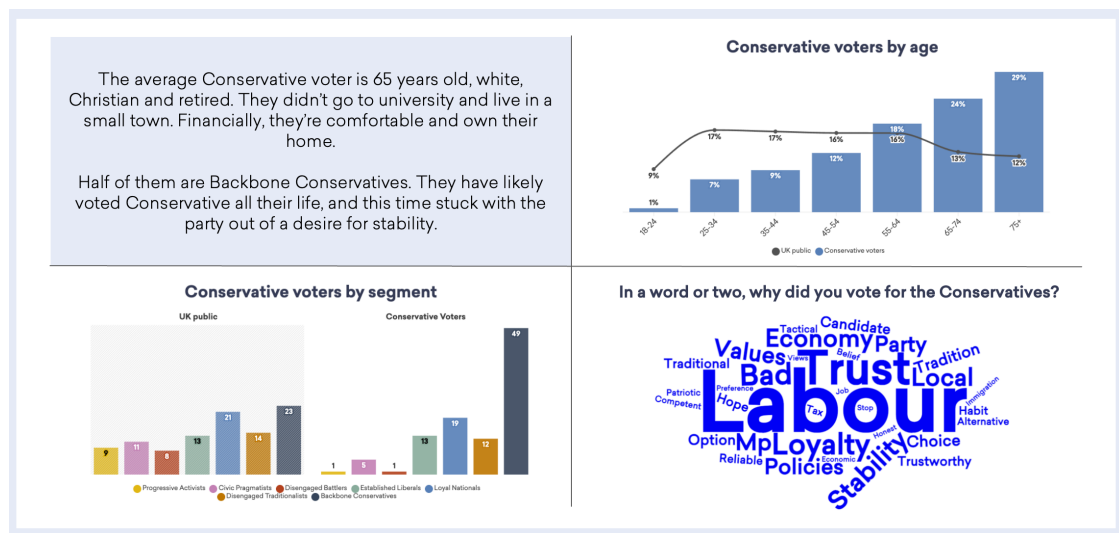
The Conservatives won comfortably among pensioners, winning 39 per cent of all pensioners in comparison to Labour's 22 per cent. Half of Conservative voters are now pensioners.

Also notable is the Conservatives' geographical retreat from urban areas and large towns back to villages. In 2019, more than a third (36 per cent) of the Conservatives' constituencies were mostly urban; now just a fifth (22 per cent) are. At the same time, the Conservatives have gone from a third (34 per cent) of their constituencies being rural, to 45 per cent today.

The shift towards the core shire voters has also created a more economically secure Conservative voter base, shielded from the economic pressures of the last two years. 59 per cent of Conservative voters say they are very or relatively comfortable financially, compared to 47 per cent of the country. Although the cost of living was still the top issue among Conservative voters, fewer Conservative voters said this was an important issue in deciding their vote than the country overall (48 per cent among Conservatives compared to 57 per cent overall).

Despite much focus on the flirtation of Conservative voters with Reform UK, the remaining Conservative voters are unsympathetic in their attitudes towards the party and Nigel Farage. Nearly half of Conservative voters have a negative opinion towards Nigel Farage and Reform UK (47 per cent and 45 per cent respectively). Racism among Reform UK candidate's, lack of experience in government, and Farage's support for Donald Trump are the top reasons Conservative supporters would not back Reform UK (each at 30 per cent), while Conservative voters are also more likely than average to cite concerns about Reform UK's lack of support for Ukraine.

The Conservative vote has shrunk ideologically. In 2019, the Conservatives won four out of Seven Segments; in this election they have only won over two - Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists. In 2019, 28 per cent of Conservative voters were Backbone Conservatives, now half (49 per cent) are. Although even among this group their vote share is down to under half from over three quarters in 2019.



Keir Starmer has promised to lead the country in the interests of all of the public, including those who didn't vote for his Labour Party. Reaching the remaining Conservative voters means allaying their key concerns on tax and immigration. Four in five (82 per cent) Conservative voters don't believe that Labour has the money to fund their plans and a similar proportion (81 per cent) don't believe their promise not to put up taxes on working people.

## Change Pending

For the Conservatives to become a strong enough force to realistically challenge the Labour Party for Government they cannot just rely on the ideas and arguments that they have used at this election. Any rebuilding needs to find a viable way of bringing together a broader and more diverse coalition.

## Reform UK voters

Reform UK's vote share of 14.3 per cent represents a historic moment for the party, and an increase on its predecessor party UKIP's share of 12.7 per cent in 2015. While the largest parties saw a fall in their absolute number of votes, Reform UK won 4,117,221, up from UKIP's comparable absolute votes total of 3,881,099 in 2015.

Reform UK voters overwhelmingly voted for Brexit in 2016 (76 per cent voted to leave the EU, 13 per cent voted to Remain), and they backed Boris Johnson in 2019 (62 per cent voted for the Conservatives). In both cases they were promised change which they feel has not been delivered. As a result, Reform voters have had enough of the mainstream parties and are now supporting Reform UK and Nigel Farage as a test to see whether alternative parties and politicians can deliver the change they want.

Going into the election, 70 per cent of Reform UK voters said it was time for change. But only 19 per cent said their preferred outcome would be a Labour majority (compared to 43 per cent nationally). Our conversations with Reform UK voters found them to be just as critical of Starmer's Labour as of Sunak's Conservatives. Reform's "two sides of the same coin" adverts resonated with the mood of many of their voters.

*From what I can gather, it doesn't really matter who's in charge. No one really seems to be doing what they say they're going to do anyway. They all promise good things in their own way, but they don't actually do it. So, what's the point?*

Jess, Claims Handling Agent, Clacton

*[Rishi Sunak] is an oligarch Prime Minister. He doesn't know how we suffer to pay bills and well, yeah, basically he doesn't know what it's like to be a normal person.*

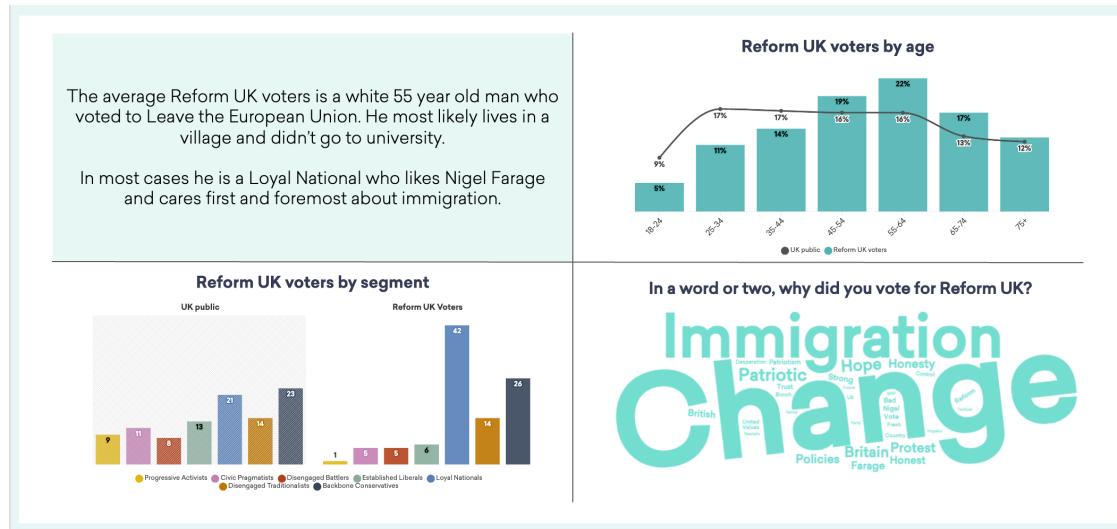
Samantha, Police Staff, Clacton

*[Sunak] was born with a silver spoon. He dunno what it's like to have to work for his money or worry about where he is going to get his dinner from or his kids' dinners or anything like that. School uniforms or things like that.*

Rita, Retired, Clacton

*[Keir Starmer] hasn't got a personality. I don't know what he offers*

Jenny, Retired, Clacton



*Reform UK haven't let anybody down yet where we've all been let down previously with the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. It's time to maybe give somebody else a go and see if they stick to their word.*

Sam, Team Manager, Workington

*I quite like the man (Farage). I think he's not afraid to say what he thinks whether or not it's popular. He can be a bit reactionary, I think. But on the other hand, I think he's got a fire in his belly, which certainly Rishi and Keir Starmer haven't.*

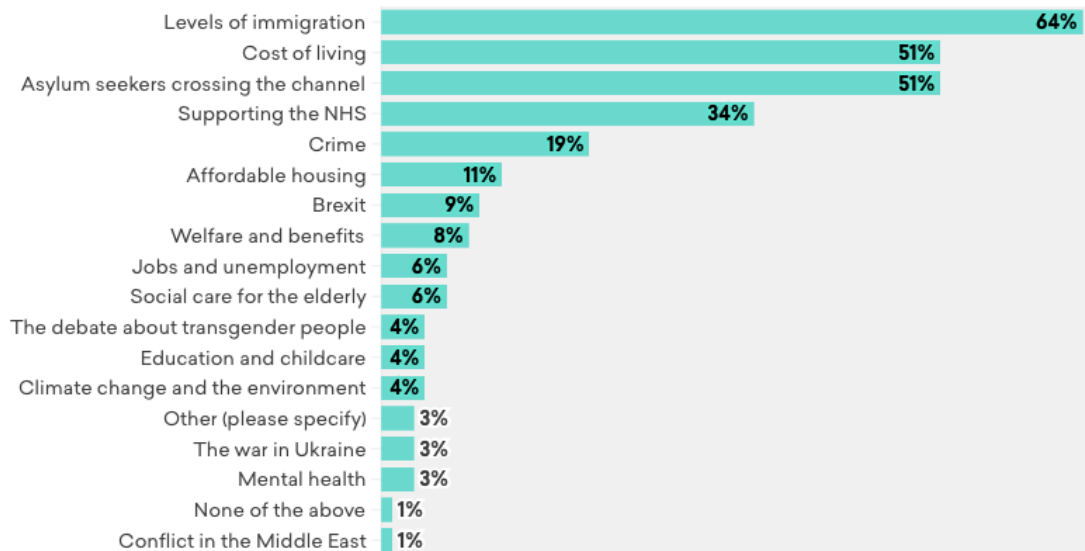
Kevin, Retired, Thanet

Reform UK voters were driven by three factors. First, and foremost their extremely high levels of concern about immigration. Second, distrust of both Starmer and Sunak, and a sense that the two mainstream parties were just as bad as each other. Third, their positive views of Nigel Farage as a politician who “says it like it is” and has potential to shake up the system.

Reform voters overwhelmingly distrust both Sunak and Starmer. Two thirds (66 per cent) say they have a negative view of Sunak, and 68 per cent say they have a negative view of Starmer. In fact, people who had a negative view of both of these leaders were more likely to vote Reform UK than any other party.

Reform UK voters care about a single issue more than any other: immigration. 64 per cent of Reform voters list immigration as a top issue for their vote, and 51 per cent list asylum seekers crossing the channel.

**Thinking about the General Election, which of the following issues had the biggest impact on how you voted? Please select up to three [Reform voters only]**



The Conservatives' failure in meeting their pledge to bring down immigration levels and stop channel crossings is key to why Reform voters splintered so dramatically from the Conservatives. Half (50 per cent) of Reform voters list the party's record on immigration as a barrier to voting Conservative, more than any other barrier tested.

Even though so many of them voted for the Conservatives in 2019, 61 per cent Reform UK voters now say they have a negative view of the party, compared to only 20 per cent who have a positive view of it.

Given their overall view of the Conservatives, it is unlikely that many Reform UK voters will be returning to them any time soon. 17 per cent of Conservative to Reform switchers say they will never vote Conservative again, and a further 15 per cent say it will take more than 10 years for them to switch back to the Conservatives.

*Brexit was largely all about getting back our border controls, which the Conservative Party haven't managed to do, Labour haven't got any real concrete plan to do it either. And so, if we come to Reform, maybe they will have a better idea and maybe they will get it under control.*

John, Retired, Clacton

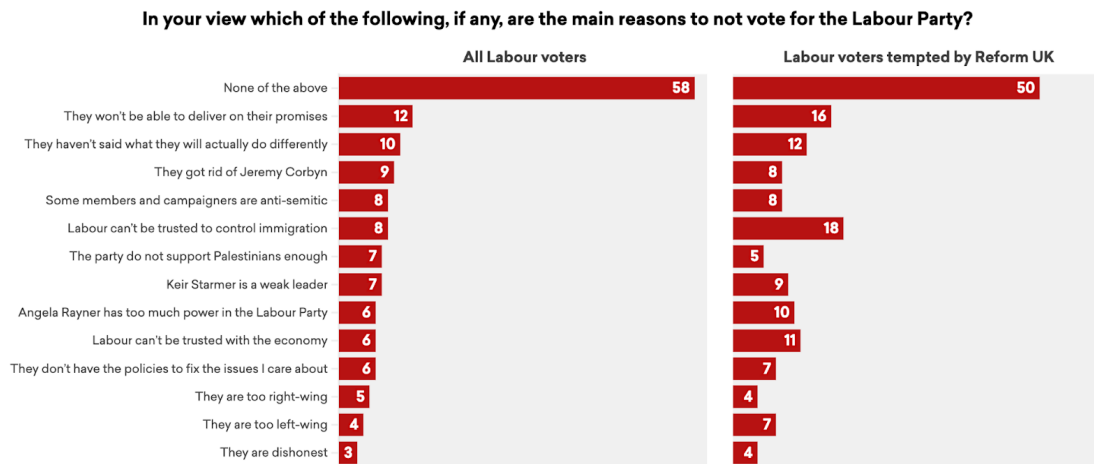
In fact, asked who they would vote for if not Reform UK, only 31 per cent list the Conservatives as a possible second choice. As such a Conservative rebuilding strategy that relies on regaining the trust of Reform UK voters alone is unlikely to be successful as a springboard back into Government.



## Change Pending

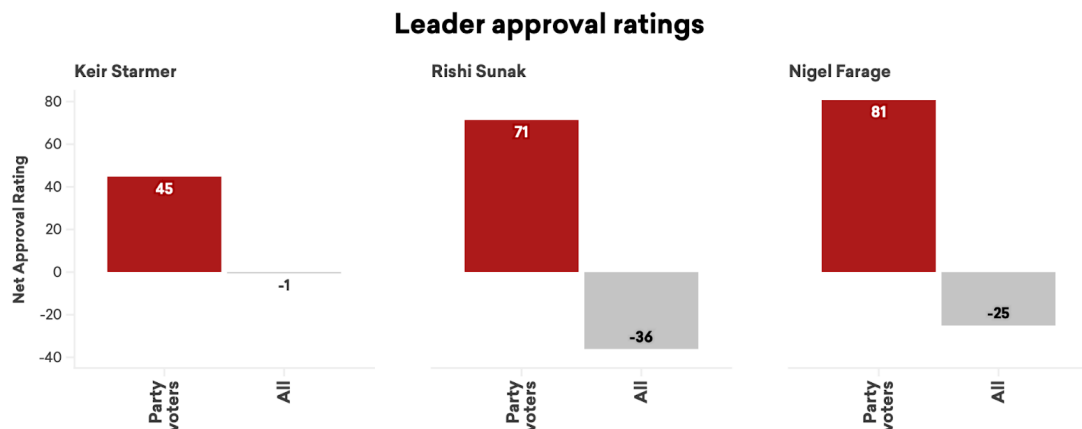
Reform UK could also pose a threat to Labour at the next election, and failure to deliver on immigration is again a likely test for whether Labour can hold onto its 89 seats where Reform UK are in second place.

A tenth (12 per cent) of Labour voters at this election said that they also considered voting for Reform UK. These Labour-Reform waverers are twice as likely to list immigration as a big issue as Labour's voter base and see Labour's stance on immigration as the biggest barrier to voting for the Labour party.



Reform voters are desperate for change but think that this new Labour government represents more of the same. Keir Starmer wanted to convince the public that he could bring about change, but failed to persuade Reform voters, in no small part because they think that Labour does not care sufficiently about properly controlling immigration.

The third reason that voters were attracted to Reform UK is because of the personal popularity of Nigel Farage. Reform UK voters give Farage a net approval rating of +81 - higher than voters of any party give to their party leader. This popularity is driven by Farage's personality, perceived honesty and plain speaking. Reform voters were the most enthusiastic backers of their own party.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

*Actually, he's (Farage) like a breath of fresh air as far as I'm concerned. He is a bright, intelligent guy. He's articulate. He talks the language of the everyday guy in the street, unlike some of the politicians.*

John, Retired, Clacton

*He says what people think and a lot of people are too scared to say it, but he just comes out and says it. That's why I like him.*

Samantha, Police Staff, Clacton

*I quite like the man. I think he's not afraid to say what he thinks whether or not it's popular. He can be a bit reactionary, I think. But on the other hand, I think he's got a fire in his belly, which certainly Rishi and Keir Starmer haven't.*

Kevin, Retired, Thanet

*To his credit, he is consistent and sticks by his word and he has done for quite a number of years, which when you look at the current politicians is different and quite refreshing. You might not agree with the drum that he keeps on beating, but he's still beating the same drum and he has been doing it for many years.*

Neil, NHS Manager, Doncaster

But Farage's popularity with his base also points to a ceiling for Reform UK overall. While Farage is immensely popular with Reform voters, he is disliked by the wider public (when excluding Reform UK voters), who give him a net approval of -42.

The criticisms of Farage from Conservative and Labour voters fall into two broad categories. Firstly, condemnation of what he says. Those who dislike what he says tend to object particularly to his views on immigration and Brexit, his relationship with Trump and lack of support for Ukraine. The second objection to Farage is rooted in disapproval of who he is, with many voters seeing him as divisive, dishonest and, in some cases, nasty.

## Change Pending

*I think he's really divisive. I don't think he could unite this country.*

Tony, retired, Romford

*I think you can't trust him as far as you can throw him, but I can see why he's quite popular in certain aspects. I wouldn't vote for him... He's not trustworthy.*

Katie, first aid trainer, Hitchin

*I do feel he's a bit of a spiv and he will just change his colours to suit whatever he feels will benefit him most at any time.*

Mary, retired, Worthing West

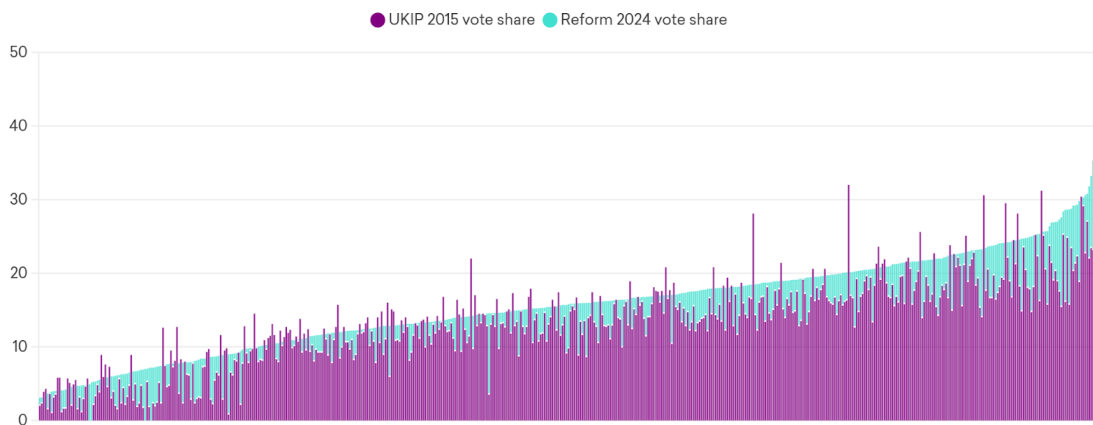
*He seems to be courting the wild and the weird Trumps and Putin and what have you.*

Monique, support worker, Romford

Reform was only able to win a relatively small number of seats relative to their high vote share due to a more even distribution of their voters compared to other smaller parties. While a quarter of the Liberal Democrats' votes came from just 35 seats, a quarter of Reform voters were found across 97 seats.

This matches a similar pattern to UKIP's performance in 2015, with Reform tending to do best in seats where UKIP traditionally performed best. However, it is breaking through in new seats across Scotland (such as the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire constituencies) and parts of England (such as Wirral West and Liverpool Walton) where UKIP never performed particularly strongly.

### Reform UK's performance compared to UKIP in 2015



## Liberal Democrat voters

Although less distinctive than some of the other parties' voter coalitions, a demographic core of Liberal Democrat voters does exist. Liberal Democrats tended to do better in seats with a higher proportion of graduates. The Liberal Democrats now also represent some of the country's most wealthy constituencies - they won zero seats in the country's most deprived quintile, and 48 seats in the country's most well-off quintile.

The Liberal Democrats' age profile is distinctly U-shaped. They secured 15 per cent of 18-24-year-old voters and 11 per cent of every subsequent age group up to 65-74-year-olds where they won 13 per cent. The age group where they secured their highest support were those aged 75 and over taking 16 per cent of their votes.

For those aged 75 and above, the party's emphasis on health and social care appears to have driven their support - the NHS was the most important issue in deciding the vote choice of nearly half (47 per cent) of Liberal Democrats over the age of 75. Boosting the party's higher support among younger voters was the strong support gained among students. The Liberal Democrats won a quarter (23 per cent) of student voters showing that a new generation may have put the party's tuition fee woes behind them, although the tuition fees reversal is still among the largest barriers for those old enough to remember it.

*The Liberal Democrats were getting somewhere but they blew it by going into coalition.*

Eileen, Retired GP, Harrogate

*Everywhere you drive there's posters and things and I do agree with their policies. However, if they're willing to do such a big U-turn over education and tuition fees, I would be worried what else they might do a U-turn on in the future that would put me off voting for them, I think.*

Rebecca, Chichester

*Student loans was when the Liberal Democrats lost their credibility.*

David, Plumber, Harrogate

*I fell out with them when they did a U-turn in the coalition and started backing the charging of student fees. That really upset me. So, I'm loathed to vote for them. People in general elections, as opposed to local elections, will only vote for the big parties because if they vote for the little one, it feels like a wasted vote.*

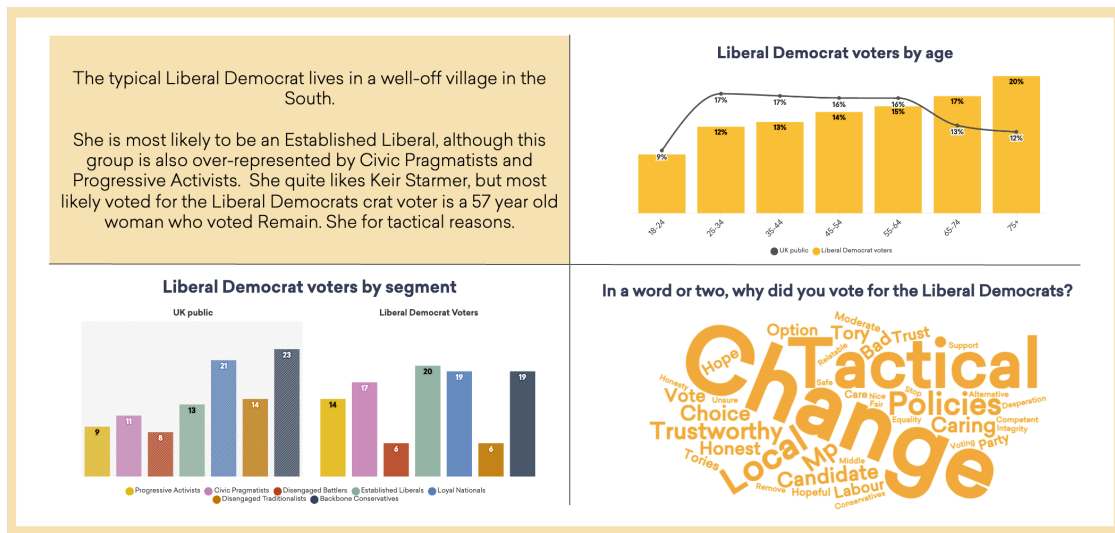
Kate, Chichester

## Change Pending

Despite the party diluting the pro-Europe position it held in 2019, its support continues to be disproportionately built on Remain voters - 58 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters voted to Remain and 27 per cent voted to Leave.

The tight concentration of Liberal Democrat voters in target seats gave the Liberal Democrats a historic number of seats at this election, on a lower vote share than Reform UK. In all, a quarter of the Liberal Democrats' votes came from just 35 seats, demonstrating the efficiency of their support and creating a new heartland across a vast swathe of southern England with many of its MPs sitting on hefty majorities.

Underpinning those majorities is the fact that tactical and anti-Conservative sentiments appear to have united the Liberal Democrat coalition much more so than support for the Liberal Democrats as a Party. Under the surface, there was significant churn in support for the Liberal Democrats. Just over half (54 per cent) of those who supported the Liberal Democrats in 2019 voted for the party again. In the party's 2024 coalition, 36 per cent of people were voting Liberal Democrat for the first time, with just 15 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters having always voted for them.



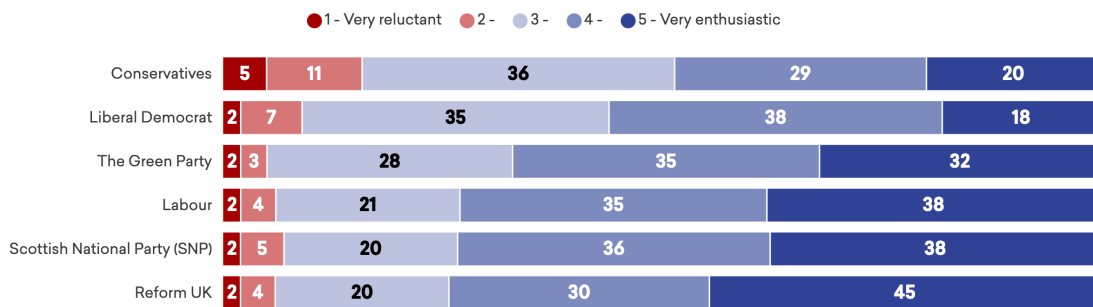
This new coalition was particularly driven by tactical motivations. 40 per cent of Liberal Democrats voters list stopping another party from winning as their top reason for voting for the party. This compares to 28 per cent of Labour voters and 9 per cent of all voters.

*I think some of the (Liberal Democrat) policies are quite promising and again, I think it's about voting tactically potentially.*

Donna, Chichester

Just 56 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters say they were enthusiastic about voting for the party. This compares to 73 per cent of Labour voters, 75 per cent of Reform voters and 67 per cent of Green voters. The only party with a less enthusiastic voter base is the Conservatives, where 48 per cent were enthusiastic.

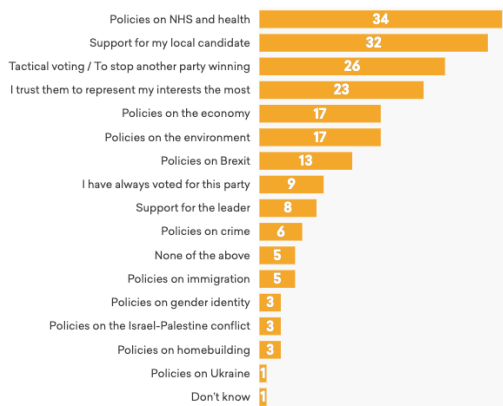
### How enthusiastic or reluctant did you feel about voting for your chosen party?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

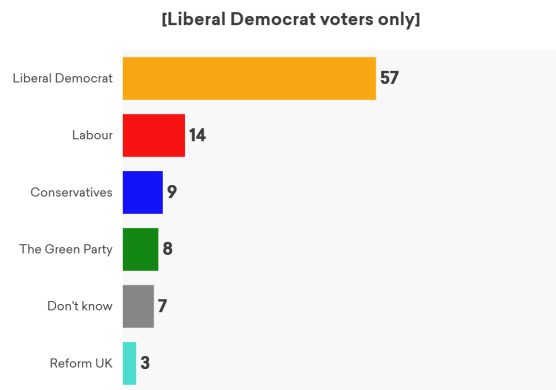
Asked who they would have voted for if any party could have won in their constituency, just 57 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters opt for their party with 14 per cent answering Labour, 9 per cent the Conservatives and 8 per cent the Green Party.

### You said you voted for the Liberal Democrats. What made you vote for that party? Select up to three reasons.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

### Imagine you were voting based only on which political party you most prefer, regardless of who is likely to win in your constituency. In that case, who would you have voted for?



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Although many may have voted for the Liberal Democrats without the party's platform in mind, Liberal Democrat voters do possess a distinct set of political priorities and values. The party's emphasis on care during the election campaign appears to have resonated with their voters as 44 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters chose the party's policies on the NHS and health as their top reason for voting Liberal Democrat. Also notable is their ranking of climate change among the list of biggest issues facing the country, with 24 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters putting it in their top three issues, second only across the parties to Green voters' 50 per cent.

Liberal Democrat voters are also distinctly more supportive of immigration than both the overall population and Labour voters. 60 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters believe that

## Change Pending

immigration has enriched British culture and society, in comparison to 54 per cent of Labour voters and 44 per cent of the overall electorate.

Although Liberal Democrat voters who have previously voted Conservative are the least likely of any Conservative switchers to completely rule out the possibility of voting Conservative again, their preferred direction for the future of the Conservative Party is distinctly more liberal. Asked whether the Conservatives need a leader with appeal more similar to David Cameron or Nigel Farage, 85 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters opt for Cameron.

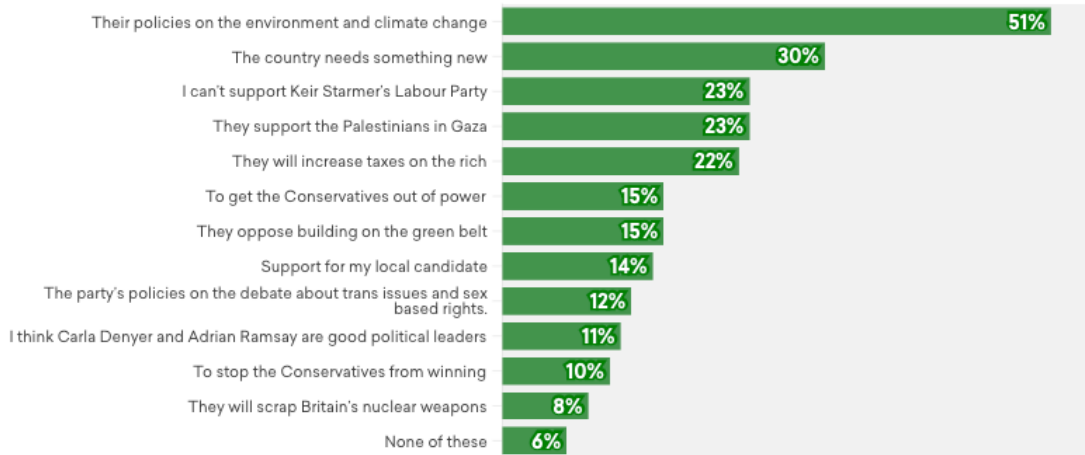
Of particular importance to Liberal Democrat voters will be the UK's progress towards net zero and whether the UK has a closer relationship with the EU, for which 19 per cent and 31 per cent of Liberal Democrat voters choose as among their top three priorities respectively.

Given the weaker ties of their voter coalition, the victorious Liberal Democrat MPs will want to solidify their bond with voters by maintaining a strong constituency presence and profile. It will also be a challenge for the party to make significant gains beyond the 72 seats it currently holds, with the Liberal Democrats in second place in just 27 other constituencies.





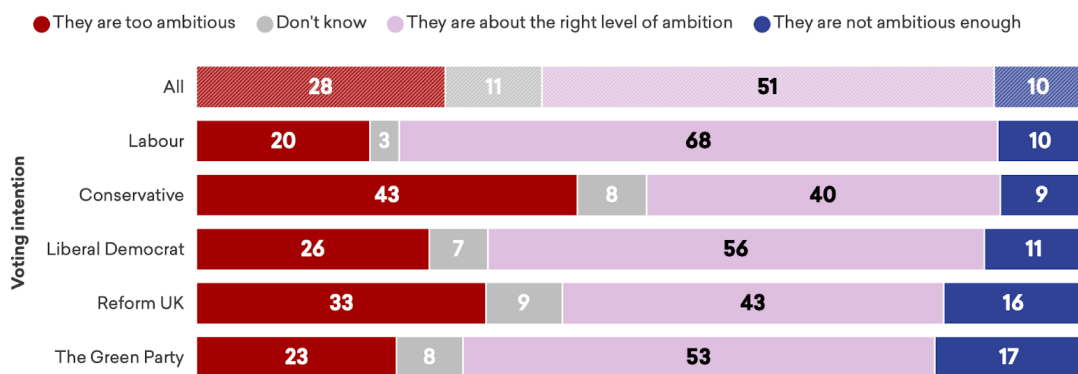
**And specifically, when thinking about why you voted the Green Party, were any of the following reasons important? Select up to three.**



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Green voters cite a number of barriers to voting for the Labour Party. Top of the list is their decision to remove Jeremy Corbyn, but this is closely followed by a lack of trust in Labour to deliver on their promises and a sense that Labour won't do anything differently. Green voters are distinct from the rest of the country in believing that Labour's manifesto was not ambitious enough, whereas all other voter groups tend to think it was too ambitious or the right level.

**Thinking about that set of policies as a whole, would you say...**  
[after seeing a list of Labour's six pledges]



Source: More in Common, June 2024

This election saw the Greens rise to second place in 35 constituencies - and the Green Party will no doubt seek these seats at the next General Election. Given their performance in inner-city areas with large student populations, Green Party strategists will be looking to replicate an electoral map which involves other cities that resemble Bristol's 'double donut'

- a green core, surrounded by a Labour suburban ring, further encircled by the Conservative countryside. With Greens in second place in the centre of Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, and East London, they could all realistically be target areas at the next election.

However, the Green Party faces significant hurdles to achieving that goal, not least the fact that Labour is comfortably ahead in almost all of those seats where the Greens are in second place.

Green Co-Leader Carla Denyer was able to win her Bristol Central seat on a historic 28-point swing from Labour to the Greens, but repeating those numbers in more than a handful of seats would be challenging in a future election. The average seat where the Green Party is in second place to Labour now has a majority of 34 percentage points.

A more pressing challenge for the Greens is how to hold their Conservative-Green wins. 16 per cent of Green voters voted Conservative in 2019, and this segment of their voter base differs wildly from wider green voters. In focus groups, Conservative-Green switchers are aware of the Green's emphasis on the environment but are less aware of their specific policies or left leaning economic agenda. For many Conservative switchers, the Green party is simply seen as the "nice" party - an electoral motivation that should not be underplayed, but which is clearly different to others' motivations for voting Green.

*I don't want to say my vote ended there by default because it was informed, but it was also because I wasn't keen on the other parties. I didn't like Labour or Liberal Democrat, so I feel like I kind of drifted that way, but I want to give a bit of credit to the Green Party as well.*

Holly, Psychologist, North Herefordshire, Conservative to Green switcher

*I think because we expected Labour to win, it was a safe vote for somebody else to give them a bit of stick in Parliament and not just let Labour run riot. And especially for greens for things such as energy and transport.*

Nick, IT Consultant, North Herefordshire, Conservative to Green switcher

*I felt that Ellie (Green candidate) was an all-round nice person. She had a lot of personal views which I could identify with broadly in terms of climate. And I'm thinking I want to leave a better world for my grandchildren that chimed with me.*

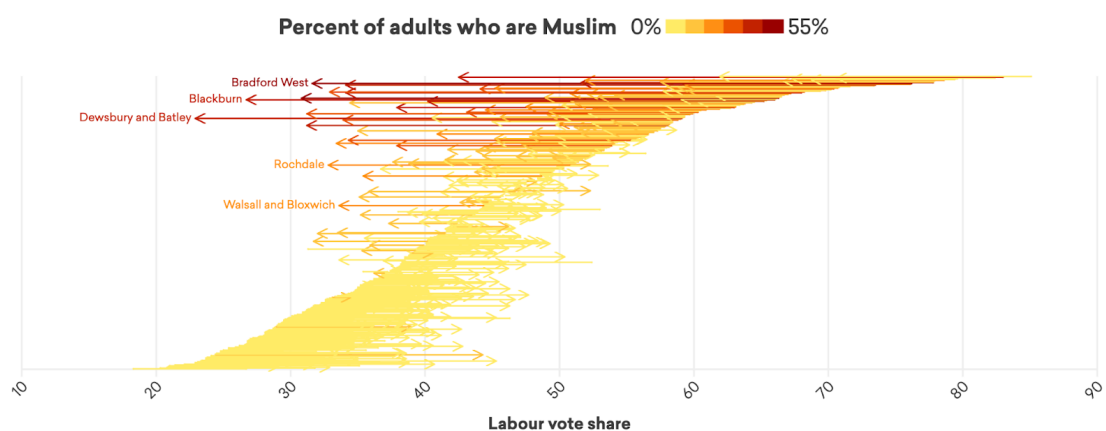
Adam, Managing Director, North Herefordshire, Conservative to Green switcher

If the Greens want to make gains in progressive city centres, they may find that they need to adopt policies which alienate the two more rural conservative seats they now represent. The Greens appear to have limited chances of gaining other similar seats, and they might soon find that their parliamentary party essentially represents two incongruent voter groups, united only by a dislike of the Conservative Party and a love of the environment.

## Gaza independents

A record number of people voted for independent candidates at this election, delivering six independent MPs. In most cases, swings to independent candidates were in Labour safe seats with large Muslim populations. These independent candidates typically ran mostly on a singular message that the Labour Party has not done enough to support Palestinians in Gaza.

### How the Labour vote changed since 2019, by constituencies' Muslim population



Source: More in Common, June 2024 • England and Wales only, seats won by Labour or independent

While not all of those who voted for Gaza independents are Muslim, many are. Those Muslims who backed independent candidates were no doubt frustrated with Labour's position on Gaza and will often go so far as to say the fact the party hasn't changed its position is symbolic of taking Muslim votes for granted and not listening to their concerns.

*I was a hardcore Labour supporter. However, since the stance that Labour has taken across various different things, it's just put me off. Especially in Leicester. We just don't think that we've been heard. Again, John Ashworth is our MP and we've not had anything especially on the issue of Palestine.*

Murduza, NHS Worker, Leicester South

*(On Starmer calling for a ceasefire before the election) "If he had said all that a couple months back, instead of saying what he did in that LBC interview, we would be a bit more sympathetic. Because it was so many months later and he took forever to walk back from the LBC interview, I think it's maybe a bit too little, too late.*

Saan, Consultant, Birmingham

*I think him (Jonathan Ashworth) being the incumbent for the last 13 years has probably taken votes for granted. I also think that he has, certainly with the large*

*Muslim community, failed to adequately address our concerns. Certainly, I was one of them who wrote asking him to write to the Government for a ceasefire.*

Inti, Care Worker, Leicester South

*I voted independent purely because of the current situation in Gaza in Palestine, but otherwise I don't follow politics anymore because there's no trust in politicians anymore.*

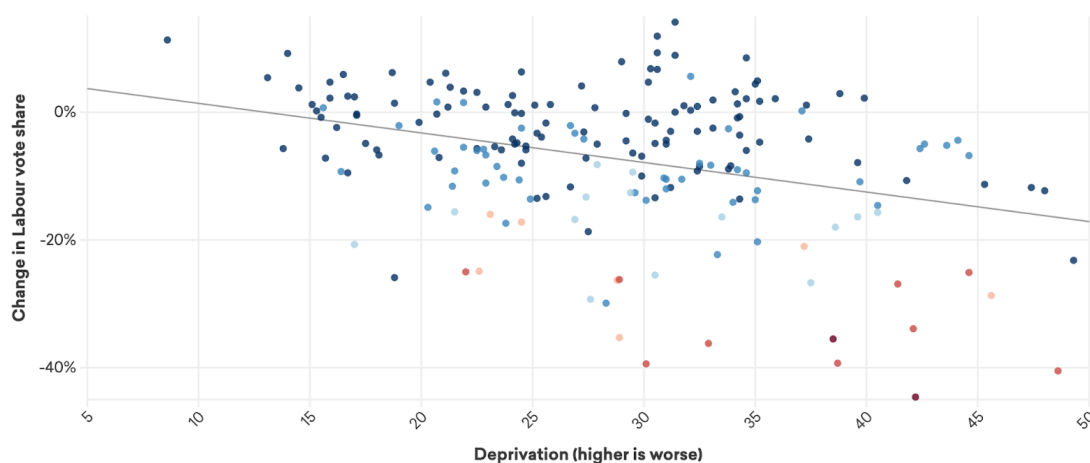
Zakiya, NHS Infection Control, Leicester South

But from focus groups conversations with Muslim voters over the course of this year, disillusionment with Labour cannot be attributed to Gaza alone - conversations quickly expand to encompass broader concerns that Labour takes Muslim votes for granted and that their communities had been neglected.

In this sense Gaza appears to have had a similar effect to the role that Brexit played in unanchoring Labour voters in the Red Wall - a trigger for wider discontent. Many of the seats that swung most dramatically to pro-Gaza independent candidates are also the most deprived constituencies in the country. These voters live in some of the most “left behind” parts of Britain, and in most of their seats all they have known is a Labour MP representing them. As Brexit was never just about the European Union, the vote for Gaza independents is about more than just Gaza, it's a signal that they have had enough of their traditional party of choice overlooking their priorities.

### More deprived areas swung the most away from Labour, but this was more pronounced in the most Muslim areas

Percent of adults who are Muslim 0.3% 53.9%



Source: More in Common, July 2024 • England and Wales only, seats won by Labour in 2019

Independent voters in these areas typically had more to say about lack of opportunities, crime and the fact no one listened to them, than they do about Gaza.

*There's no point in you tackling world peace when the area you live in is a shit hole. Excuse my French, but do you understand what I mean?*

Rafia, Pharmacy Manager, Rochdale

*You're seeing local people going into Tesco Extra and shoplifting for food and it's really heartbreaking. So, people are at desperate point, and something's got to give. People are resorting to crime, originally petty crime, which is now leading to knife crime, gun crime, gang crime. And it's really sad.*

Fatima, Community Worker, Leicester South

*There's a lot of depression, there's a lot of anxiety, there's a lot of feeling stuck in careers because the pandemic and Brexit is what led to the idea of the cost-of-living crisis that we are facing here today.*

Shiza, Psychotherapist, Birmingham

*Especially here in Birmingham, you don't feel safe walking around, you're constantly looking over your shoulder... You don't really feel safe.*

Shoha, Birmingham

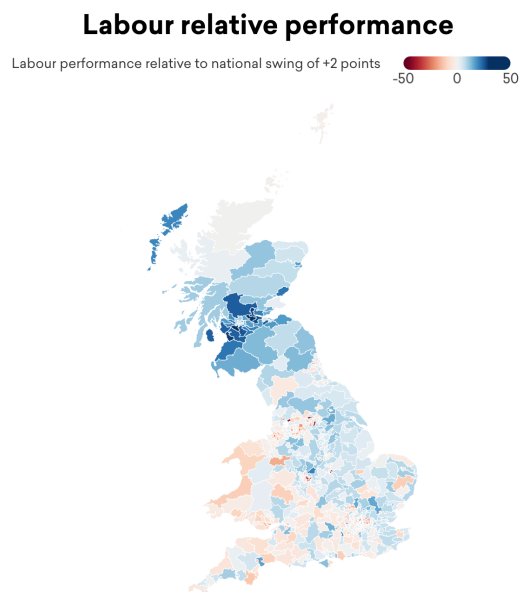
And while “Gaza independent” candidates did put Gaza at the front of their campaign, just as the Conservatives did with Brexit in 2019, their appeal was broader than the conflict in the Middle East. People voted for independent candidates who were likely to be seen as proper champions for their community who would stand up for them better than the Labour Party.

However, support for Independent candidates should not be taken as support for some of the tactics and intimidation that supporters of some of these candidates or their supporters demonstrated on the campaign trail and during election counts. Most of those who voted for ‘Gaza Independents’ would roundly condemn the intimidation of those in public life as well as acts of antisemitism and prejudice.

There is also, perhaps, an interesting lesson to be learned from Rochdale. Voters there backed George Galloway in an earlier by-election this year, but returned Labour’s Paul Waugh in the General Election - showing the single-issue candidates perhaps only get one chance to command voters’ support and need to quickly pivot to a broader set of issues than just the UK’s foreign policy.

## Scotland

Labour significantly overperformed in Scotland, increasing from a single Scottish seat to 37 within one election cycle. The 17-point increase in Labour's vote share was driven not only by a Conservative to Labour swing, mirrored in the rest of the UK, but more so by a steep decline in support for the Scottish National Party. Taken together, the result is that the number of SNP MPs in Westminster has fallen almost back to pre-2015 levels.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

A key driver was incumbency - as with the Conservatives in England, the SNP were punished by voters for, in their eyes, not doing a good enough job. Voters would cite the period in the run up to and since the departure of Nicola Sturgeon in similarly exasperated terms as voters elsewhere would talk about the Westminster Government. A perception of chaos and listlessness - and that new First Minister John Swinney was 'yesterday's man' all counted against the SNP.

*I can't seem to warm to him. Somebody at work said that John Sweeney is just Nicola's Puppet in the background.*

Tracey, Administrator, Aberdeenshire

*There's nothing there to inspire us. Ever since Nicola we've not had somebody that's inspirational at all*

Pamela, Financial Services, Edinburgh

The main reason 2024 Scottish Labour voters (54 per cent) and Scottish Liberal Democrat voters (69 per cent) cite for not voting SNP is that they governed Scotland poorly. When explaining their vote in broad terms, the top explanation from Scottish Conservative and Labour voters was that they voted for the party they trust to run the country competently.

*I voted Labour. We had Labour at our door three times in a matter of weeks, which was very, very unusual. And they said it was a big push to keep the SNP out and obviously it's succeeded.*

Diane, Retired, Kirkaldy

The Scottish Conservatives were similarly harmed by incumbency, on a UK-wide scale, and saw their vote share nearly halved. For those 2019 Scottish Conservatives who abandoned the party this time, incompetence at governing (34 per cent) and corruption (30 per cent) were key reasons.

*"I was an avid SNP voter up until Nicola Sturgeon stepped down because the day she stepped down, you knew there was some conspiracy coming out. You knew that there was something in the fire."*

Leanne, Health Care Worker, Aberdeenshire

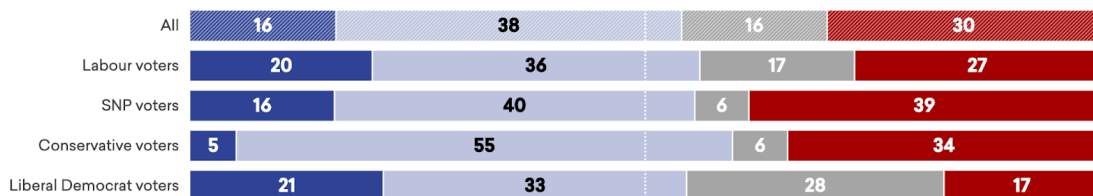
*I did (in previous elections) vote SNP because I did like some of the policies they brought in Scotland. They've done a lot of good and then she just let us down by behaviour. But that happens in every party.*

Elaine, Retired, Kirkaldy

The other crucial factor was the diminishing salience of Scottish independence. 16 per cent of Scottish voters said they voted for a party with a different view to theirs on independence. Among Scottish Labour voters, this was one in five.

### Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I voted for a party which has a different view to me about Scottish independence, because I agree with their positions on other policies.
- I voted for a party where I agreed both with their views on Scottish independence and on other policies
- Don't know
- I voted for a party because they shared my view on Scottish independence, even though I disagreed with some of their positions on other policies.



In the 2019 General Election, the SNP enjoyed the support of 78 per cent of individuals that voted “Yes’ in the Independence Referendum - in 2024 this has plummeted to 60 per cent.

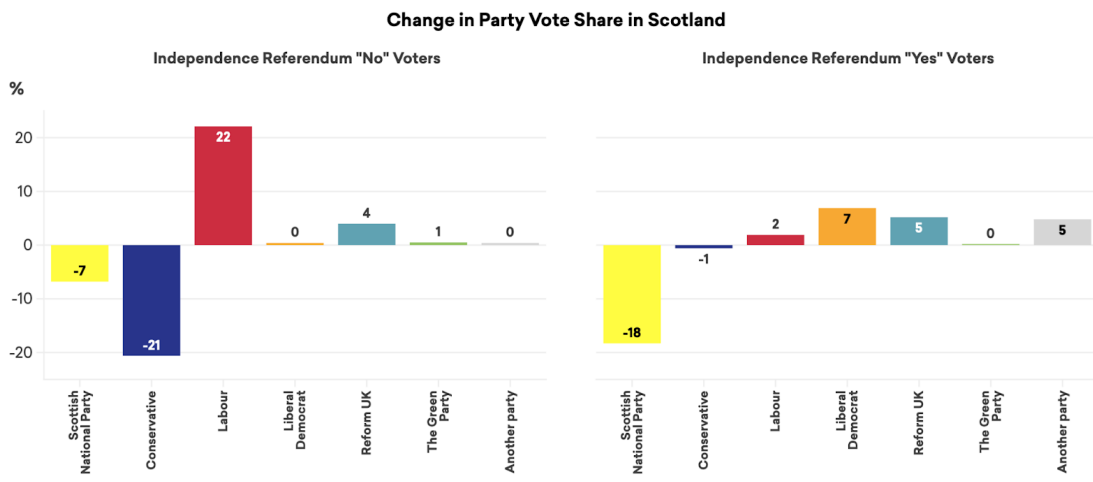
*They're a one trick pony: Independence. Let's break up the United Kingdom.*

John, Independent Mortgage Broker, Kirkaldy

*I think they just focus too much on independence and not looking at all the other things they had to do. And they just completely got obsessed with it... We originally wanted it, and everything was going that way, and everybody was working towards it and when it didn't go through, they just kept, I dunno how to say it, kept flogging the dead horse.*

Donna, Media Administrator, Kirkaldy

In this way, the SNP collapse was particularly compounded by the loss of ‘soft independence voters’. As the salience of independence fell and it became clear this was not a de facto referendum, more former SNP voters became willing to use their vote both to punish the SNP for mismanagement and, in their words, ensure Labour had a big enough majority to bring change at Westminster. Only concerns that the new Scottish contingent of MPs would not be distinctive enough to stand up for Scotland’s interests tended to give these swing voters pause for thought - ultimately however the desire for change was more decisive. For Scottish Labour MPs to hold these new voters they will have to demonstrate they are capable of showing independence from the Westminster Party when it involves putting Scotland’s interests first.



Source: More in Common, July 2024

Next time voters in Scotland go to the polls it will be not for Westminster but Holyrood elections - and polling suggests voters are willing to vote differently in these two different sets of elections. But if independence remains a less salient issue in Westminster politics, the task for the SNP will be to set out the positives of an SNP administration for Scotland as part of a devolved settlement. The concern of many voters who abandoned the Party is



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that independence took precedence above all else, the Scottish Government will have to use the next two years to prove the opposite.

# Methodology

## Quantitative research

Polling in this report was conducted by More in Common, a member of the British Polling Council.

Polls are weighted and allocated to be representative of the adult population of Great Britain.

Most of the analysis used in this report draws on polling conducted at the following dates:

- Fieldwork 7-11 July | N = 9,332

Additional fieldwork was conducted the day after the General Election:

- Fieldwork 5 July | N = 2,047

The report also draws on polling conducted throughout the General Election campaign at the following dates:

- Fieldwork 24-30 June | N = 11,304
- Fieldwork 21-23 June | N = 2,046
- Fieldwork 17-19 June | N = 2,035
- Fieldwork 14-16 June | N = 2,369
- Fieldwork 11-12 June | N = 2,037
- Fieldwork 5-7 June | N = 2,618
- Fieldwork 1-3 June | N = 2,055
- Fieldwork 27-29 May | N = 2,049
- Fieldwork 22-23 May | N = 2,008

Data tables for this research can be found at <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/>

The British Seven segmentation draws on research conducted in 2020, details of which can be found here: <https://www.britainschoice.uk/>

## Qualitative research

This report draws on focus groups conducted throughout the campaign and in the week after the General Election. In most cases these were held virtually on Zoom, but some were conducted in person.

Focus groups were conducted in the following constituencies:

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- Aberdeen South
- Aberdeenshire North and Moray East
- Aldershot
- Altrincham and Sale West
- Banbury
- Barnsley South
- Basildon and Billericay
- Bassetlaw
- Bicester and Woodstock
- Birmingham Edgbaston
- Birmingham Ladywood
- Birmingham Yardley
- Blyth and Ashington
- Bridgend
- Bristol Central
- Broadland and Fakenham
- Bury North
- Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket
- Cannock Chase
- Central Devon
- Central Suffolk and North Ipswich
- Chichester
- Clacton
- Doncaster Central
- Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme
- Doncaster North
- East Renfrewshire
- East Thanet
- East Worthing and Shoreham
- Edinburgh North and Leith
- Erewash
- Farnham and Bordon
- Godalming and Ash
- Gillingham and Rainham
- Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes
- Great Yarmouth
- Harrogate and Knaresborough
- Hartlepool
- Hitchin
- Hyndburn
- Islington North
- Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice
- Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath
- Leicester South
- Loughborough
- Maidenhead
- Mid and South Pembrokeshire
- Middlesbrough and Thornaby East
- Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland
- Milton Keynes Central
- Milton Keynes North
- North West Norfolk

- North Herefordshire
- Peterborough
- Portsmouth North
- Richmond and Northallerton
- Rochdale
- Romford
- Scarborough and Whitby
- Solihull West and Shirley
- South Norfolk
- Spelthorne
- Stockton North
- Stockton West
- Swindon North
- Tunbridge Wells
- Waveney Valley
- Wells and Mendip Hills
- Whitehaven and Workington
- Wolverhampton South East
- Worthing West



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