

Economy

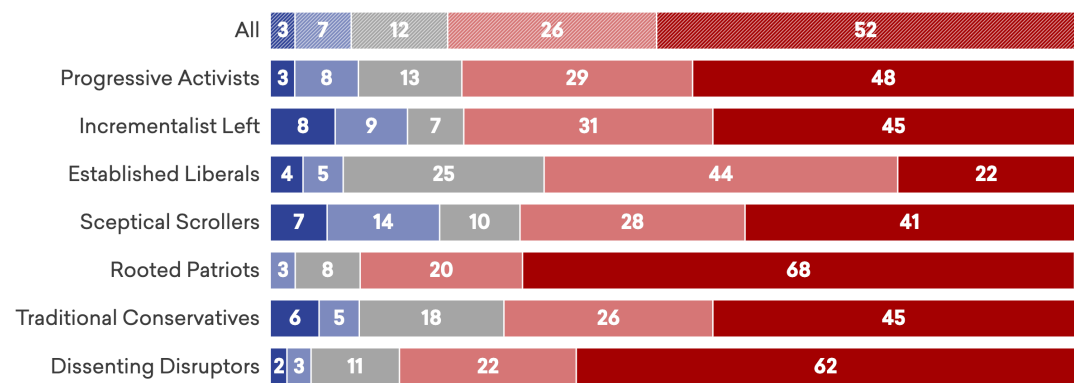
Cost of living

The segments are united in their concern about the cost-of-living crisis. This is a top priority for every group. In all but one segment, more than half say the cost of living is one of the most important issues facing the country. A majority of each segment is unsure if the crisis will end or think it could be some years until it does. Many have cut back on luxuries and socialising in response as they have had to tighten their budgets in recent years.

Figure 87 | Perceptions of when the cost of living crisis will end

While economic conditions are difficult to predict, when do you expect the cost of living crisis to end?

- Sometime this year
- Sometime next year
- Don't know
- Sometime in the next few years
- I'm not sure it will ever end



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Generally standard of living, which I guess stems a lot from housing at the core because wages aren't going up generally. Obviously there's always going to be some people who are exceptions to the rule, but for the masses wages aren't going up in proportion to how much rent and housing is going up. So everything every month is getting tighter for most people.

Lara, Progressive Activist, East Dulwich

I'm 72 now and I haven't been given any money to help me with my fuel and this winter I didn't sit in my lounge, I sat in bed with the electric blanket on and an iPad and managed to keep warm that way with great big covers on. I mean it's not good is it when you're older that you can't afford to pay for your gas and electricity?

Susan, Rooted Patriot, Bridgwater

However, some groups are more optimistic than others about an end to the crisis. Those groups who feel the most financially insecure and are most likely to see money as a source of stress are the most convinced that the cost-of-living crisis will continue indefinitely. These segments are also the most likely to have cut back on luxuries and socialising, and 'shop around' for the best deal on their groceries because many feel they can only just cover the essentials. Dissenting Disruptors are particularly likely to have had to make lifestyle changes in order to respond to the crisis - they are the most likely to have fallen behind with bills, or borrowed money from family or friends.

Meanwhile, even though the more financially comfortable segments still believe it could be at least a few years until the cost-of-living crisis subsides, these groups are less likely to have had to change their lives in response. Established Liberals, one of the most affluent groups, are the least likely to say they are cutting down on non-essentials. Almost one in five (18 per cent) Established Liberals say they have not had to take any action to counteract the cost of living in recent months and just under a quarter of Traditional Conservatives (23 per cent) say the same.

The way we're living now, it's ridiculous. I'm getting up at my age still at half past four in the morning, going to work. I've got a mortgage and stuff on my own, but I don't live now. I just survive. That's how I feel. And I think, I know it sounds awful, but people are coming in where I work and they don't work and they're better off than me. So I think this is just not life anymore. So I think we do need a change.

Vicky, Dissenting Disruptor, Runcorn

We normally use a hot tub all over summer, where we just haven't even bothered getting it out and using it. That's saved just like loads of money. But, again, we've just cut that out of our lifestyle.

Steven, Established Liberal, Reading

The cost of living is all around us. We're having to pay out more and we're not seeing any benefit. And yet all these illegal immigrants are coming in and they're getting everything: jumping a queue for houses, getting benefits, they're getting Xboxes, driving lessons, this, that and the other, and we don't get anything. But we're the ones who are paying for that.

Ray, Traditional Conservative, Great Yarmouth

Inequality and redistribution

Progressive Activists tend to be outliers on the left and are more radical than the general population in their preference for redistribution, tackling inequality and greater state regulation of businesses. They are the wariest of all of the segments of big business. While the Incrementalist Left tends to agree with Progressive Activists on these issues, they tend to be more moderate in both the intensity by which they hold those beliefs and the policy solutions they think could deal with them.

I would definitely on the whole agree about it being unequal and becoming much more unequal. I feel very lucky that I was born in London and so far have managed to stay, but most of my peer group have now had to move out of London because it's just not sustainable anymore. So it's sort of like I know that I was born with a lot of luck on my side just for the fact of being born in a thriving city, but now it's come at a cost where I'm losing friends and family who can't be here anymore.

Lara, Progressive Activist, East Dulwich

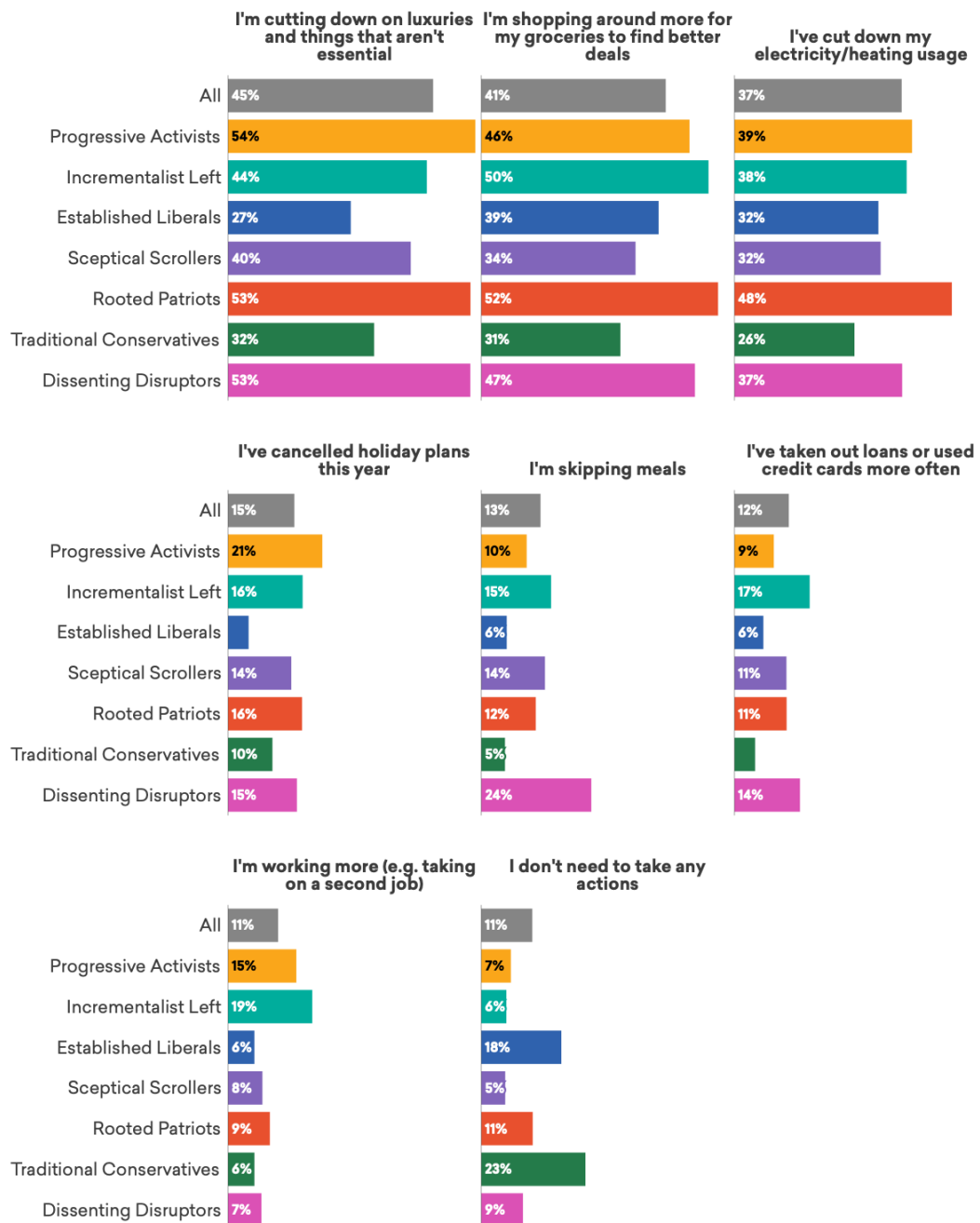
Seeing how everything is going, cost of living and just generally just getting by, you just notice that a lot of people go to the food banks, even people who are working full-time, people who are employed, it's just really getting worse...so I'm probably a bit pessimistic as well...the cost of living and the worries of that.

Julian, Incrementalist Left, Chester

Sceptical Scrollers' more moderate economic preferences may be a result of their disengagement from the traditional political axis. They generally tend to lean left-of-centre on questions of redistribution, tax and wealth, but to a much lesser extent than the Incrementalist Left or Progressive Activists.

Figure 88 | Actions on the cost of living by segment

Which, if any, of the following actions have you taken in recent months? Select any which apply.



Meanwhile, the economic views of Dissenting Disruptors and Rooted Patriots flip depending on the question at hand. While both groups tend to be relatively sceptical of business and wealth, and in favour of protections for working people, they are more split on questions of redistribution – feeling that people who work hard should be rewarded by being allowed to keep more of their money.

I think back in the day people were better supported, especially local businesses, now they're willing just to shut you down just to get in the next thing.

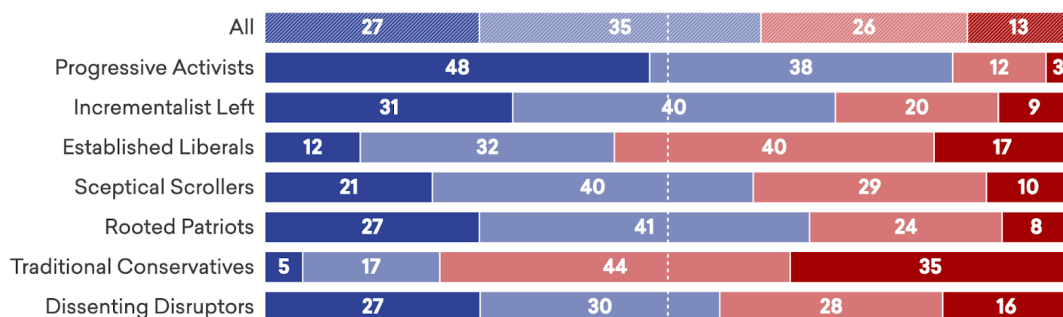
Stuart, Dissenting Disruptor, Wigan

Farthest to the right on the economy are the Traditional Conservatives. This group tends not to think it is the government's role to redistribute income, preferring a small-state approach that is generally more pro-business and pro-wealth. Established Liberals also lean right on these questions and are among the least likely to favour redistribution to take a sceptical attitude to business or management, though to a lesser degree than Traditional Conservatives.

Figure 89 | Attitudes to economic inequality by segment

Which comes closer to your view?

- 1 - We should aim to close the gap between rich and poor, even if it means the country doesn't get richer overall.
- 2
- 3
- 4 - We should aim for everyone to be better off, even if means the rich get more of the growth than the poor.



Tax and spend

At a time when the public finances are under particular strain, the public is divided on how and at what level public services should be funded.

The segments which are left leaning in their economic views are more open to increased taxes to fund public services, but Progressive Activists are the only group where higher

taxes command a clear majority of support. Yet even among Progressive Activists, few say that taxation is their preferred way of funding public services.

Support for increasing taxes to fund public services is low among those segments which tend to feel the most financially insecure. These groups are also more likely to see themselves and working people as already paying more than their fair share as is.

I just think it's really unfair, Scottish taxes anyway. Why do we have different taxes from down south? If you are kind of in the middle of the road, like earnings, you're getting penalised with your taxes, a good chunk of your wages is going to taxes.

Karen, Dissenting, Disruptor, Larkhall

Borrowing is unpopular across all segments. Instead, the most popular approach to funding public services is to cut back waste, with some expressing support for a 'DOGE'-style scheme to cut inefficiencies. This is the preferred approach of at least half of every segment, but support is particularly strong among those groups who are happier to see the system radically reformed and an instinctive preference for cutting back the size of the state.

I think the NHS isn't fit for purpose, although I have had good experiences, but that is because they've sent me to private treatment. I think it needs to be overhauled by people who know business and can run large businesses. It doesn't need to be one person like Musk who's a billion trillionaire, whatever he is. It needs to be people who are directors of normal companies who have run large corporations successfully.

Rob, Dissenting Disruptor, Dudley

Every government's piled huge amounts of money into the NHS and it's never worked. It's not about money, it's about management. The amount of money it absorbs is absolutely huge. It's mismanagement, absolute mismanagement.

Adrian, Traditional Conservative, Bisley

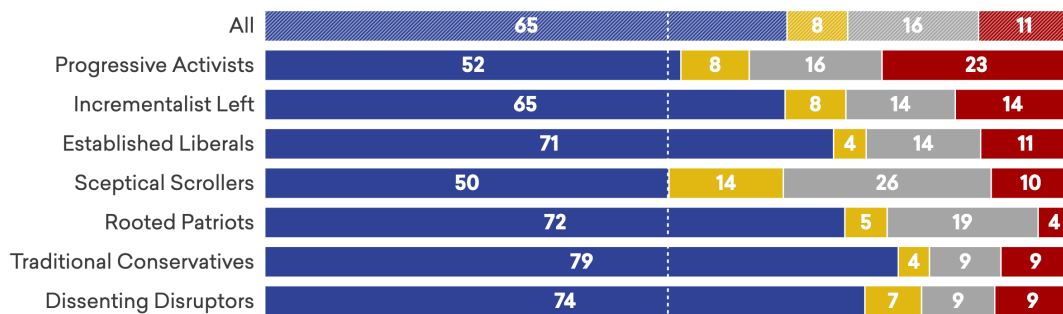
If the government are trying to squeeze all this money out of us to pay for all these immigrants or whatever they're spending the money on, it's just crippling us. It's like with us, I'm a joiner, so basically the money that I used to get taxed were a certain amount now I've seen it rise and rise and rise, but I don't see it getting spent on anything decent like the roads and are knackered.

Damien, Dissenting Disruptor, Wigan

Figure 90 | Attitudes to cutting waste by segment

How would you most like the government to raise the money to pay to improve public services?

- Cutting waste
- Increased borrowing
- Don't know
- Raising taxes



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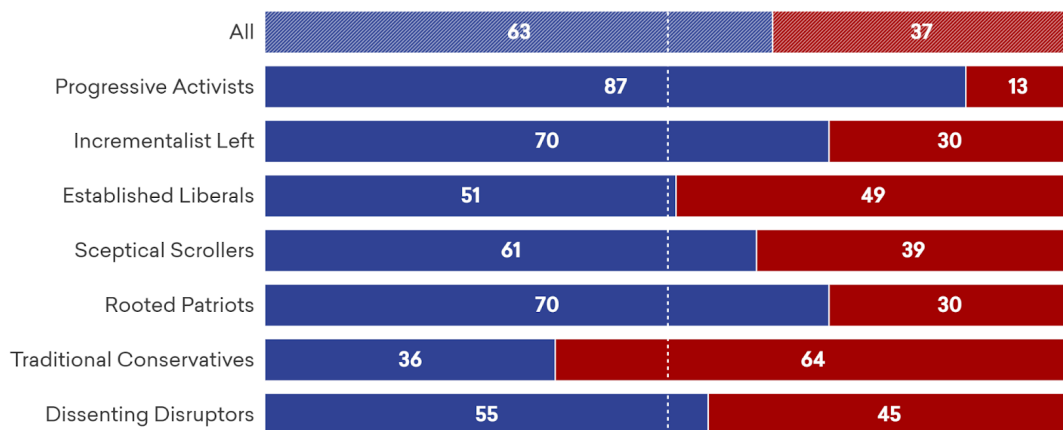
Business and regulation

Majorities in almost all segments support the government imposing rules and regulations on businesses to protect consumers from harm, with Traditional Conservatives the only exception (64 per cent against regulation to 36 per cent for it). Support for regulation is strongest among those segments who are typically most distrustful of big business. But support is also strong among more pro-business groups - such as the Incrementalist Left, while the Established Liberals are more evenly divided.

Figure 91 | Attitudes to regulation by segment

In general, which economic system do you prefer?

- Where regulations are put on businesses to prohibit them from harming consumers
- Where the government minimises regulations on businesses to make it easier to do business



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All I see is bigger businesses just getting more and more money to just making profit for the very few number of people and lots and lots of people suffering and just money going to the one or two shareholders, et cetera of the big businesses. And that's why they don't really care what prices they charge because they know we haven't really got any choice but to pay it.

Denise, Established Liberal, Beaconsfield

The cost of living from a business point of view, we find it really difficult because obviously you've got to put prices up so that we can keep people's wages in line with that, but at the same time customers haven't necessarily got the money to then spend. So you are in this kind of catch 22 situation and it has a bigger impact than you think at times. That is something that I think everybody thinks about a lot.

Becky, Incrementalist Left, Chester

The segments which most distrust business often take the same view towards the ultra-wealthy, with majorities of Dissenting Disruptors, Rooted Patriots and Progressive Activists feeling that the rich do not pay their fair share. This reflects a broader attitude among these groups—that the rich and powerful play by a different set of rules to ordinary people.

Yeah, obviously there's well-known examples, Starbucks and stuff like that where they will get away with not paying the amount of tax that they should be paying. So yeah, definitely they need to obviously make sure that these big corporations are paying the right amount of tax and they're not sort of going through loopholes and stuff to avoid paying the right amount.

Christian, Progressive Activist, Hackney

I definitely do think it's rigged because obviously the wealthier people, they don't have the struggles like say us do. When you see on telly they're all living lavish luxury lifestyles and then people like myself struggle day to day to get the bare necessities, whether the cost of everything going up, the prices of everything, it's just extortion.

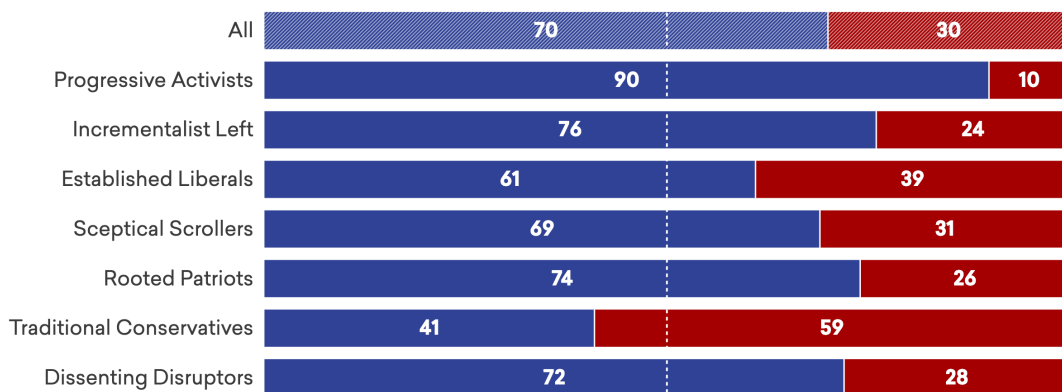
Devon, Sceptical Scroller, Manchester

Dissenting Disruptors, the Incrementalist Left, Progressive Activists and Rooted Patriots most prioritise narrowing the gap between rich and poor - even if it means people are less wealthy overall. In fact tackling inequality is a shared economic concern across most segments, with all but Traditional Conservatives favouring a smaller gap between rich and poor over maximising economic growth.

Figure 92 | Attitudes to growth versus equality

In general, which economic system do you prefer?

- Where the gaps between the rich and poor are smaller, even if people are less wealthy overall
- Where people overall are as wealthy as possible, even if the gaps between the rich and poor are bigger



Cynicism toward the wealthy extends to perceptions of who benefits most from the government's economic plans. Across the board, Britons believe government policies most favour the wealthy, while every segment feels that the current Government's

economic policies will do more harm than good for them and their families—a view held especially strongly by those who feel most disillusioned and ignored by government.

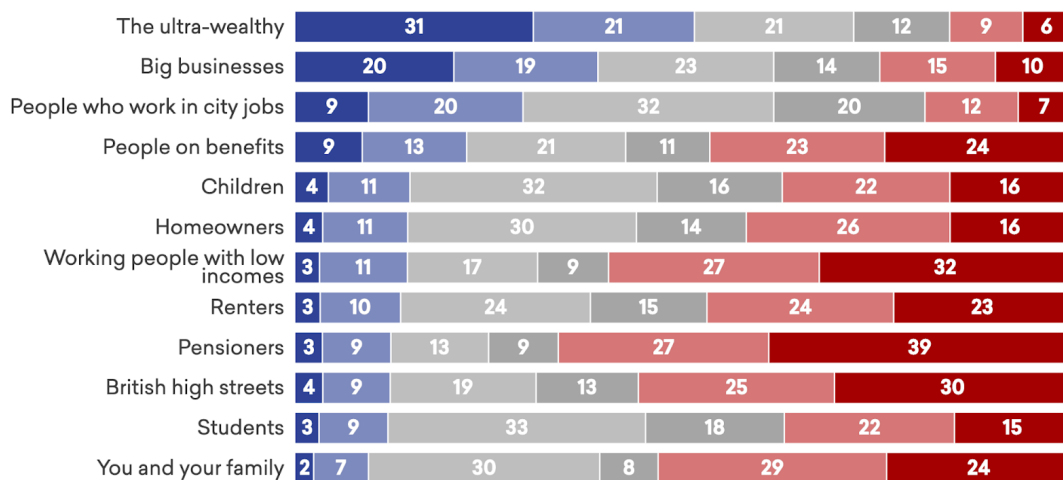
I think the gulf between rich and poor is getting wider and wider. I think that's pushing the rich to almost tighten their circle and actually look after themselves a bit more. And I think it's also going the other way by making communities work together and to help each other out because there is such a divide. We think we have to look after ourselves. I mean from the work I do, we work with a lot of different communities in different areas and one of the main things coming out of that is almost a sense of tribalism because they don't feel like they're getting support from those who are more often be that from government or anywhere else. So yeah, I think it is starting to definitely push the two parties further and further apart.

Chris, Sceptical Scroller, Leeds

Figure 93 | Winners and losers from the government's current economic plans

Would you say that the government's current economic plans benefit or harm the following?

● Benefit a lot ● Benefit a bit ● Neither harm nor benefit ● Don't know ● Harm a bit ● Harm a lot



Welfare

No segment is significantly more likely than average to be in receipt of benefits from the government such as Universal Credit or Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Just over one in five respondents (21 per cent) in our research said they received Universal Credit or Personal Independence Payment. Those groups with the highest proportion of claimants are Dissenting Disruptors, Sceptical Scrollers and Rooted Patriots.

These segments are also among the most likely to say that the Government's current economic plans harm those on benefits, possibly reflecting their personal experiences or those of people they know who rely on benefits such as PIP. Progressive Activists share these concerns, and they are the group most likely to believe that government policies harm people receiving benefits. In focus group discussions, Progressive Activists are often the most vocal in expressing concern about how policy changes – such as cuts or stricter thresholds – affect vulnerable people.

We can manage to find money for wars and defence, and I appreciate defence is important, but we're taking away from the more vulnerable in society at a time that's really hard for people.

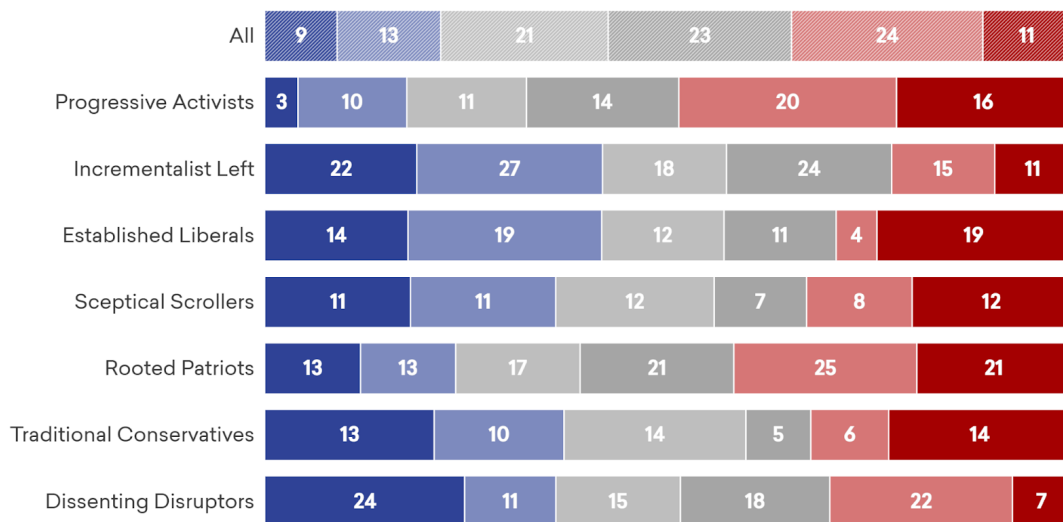
Stewart, Progressive Activist, Edinburgh

Figure 94 | Perception of people on benefits by segment

Would you say that the government's current economic plans benefit or harm the following?

People on Benefits

● Benefit a lot ● Benefit a bit ● Neither harm nor benefit ● Harm a bit ● Harm a lot ● Don't know



An important distinction between these groups, however, is that Dissenting Disruptors and Rooted Patriots are more likely than Progressive Activists to draw a clear line between those who deserve benefits and those they think do not. While Dissenting Disruptors and Rooted Patriots show sympathy toward those who need government support, they are also much more likely to voice concern about people 'playing the system'. For these groups, contribution is a key factor in determining who should be eligible for benefits and at what

level, while Progressive Activists tend to believe that government support should be provided regardless.

It's like going back 20 years ago, the majority of people would go out and earn a living and that's the way that we were brought up. Now there's so many - younger ones, older ones as well -that obviously getting the benefits and they know what they're entitled to and they're not. Half of the people that I know getting it are capable of working and I just think it's too easy to claim the benefits. That is obviously then putting a lot of strain on everyone else that's working.

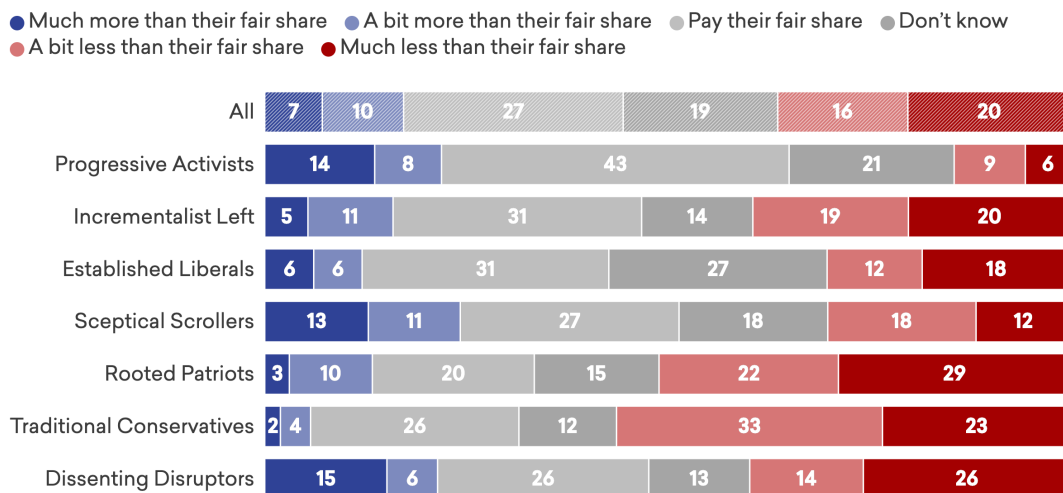
Dawn, Rooted Patriot, Bury

This is reflected in the extent to which the segments believe that people on benefits pay their fair share in taxes. Progressive Activists stand out as the only segment where a greater proportion believe benefit recipients pay more than their fair share, rather than less. Other groups—especially Rooted Patriots—are generally more sceptical. Among this group, there is a perception that as a result of people ‘playing the system’, the government fails to support those who genuinely need help.

Figure 95 | Perception of the contribution of people on benefits by segment

For each of the following groups, please indicate whether or not they pay their fair share in taxes?

People on Benefits



Traditional Conservatives and Established Liberals tend to hold more welfare-sceptic views, consistent with their broader fiscally conservative economic outlook. Established Liberals are slightly more likely to believe that the Government's current economic plans

will benefit people on welfare and both groups are the least likely to think that welfare recipients are hurt by the Government's policies overall.

Traditional Conservatives, in particular, are the most likely of all groups to believe that people on benefits do not pay their fair share of taxes. In focus groups, members of this segment often express scepticism about the legitimacy of many benefit claims, arguing that the ease of accessing welfare contributes to government waste.

Priorities have really changed from when I was younger. If you were seeking benefits, you genuinely were buying food, heating your house, it was money that you really needed. Now the wastefulness that I see in the world just sickens me... When I see toys discarded in front gardens, it just really, really infuriates me.

Kaylee, Traditional Conservative, Tetbury

Segment profiles – the economy

Progressive Activists - Strongly in favour of redistribution and taxes on wealth and deeply distrustful of the ultra-wealthy and big business.

Incrementalist Left - Lean left economically and support redistribution and regulation, less ideological or radical on economic issues than Progressive Activists.

Rooted Patriots - Deep scepticism of big business and the wealthy, generally in favour of higher spending on public services, with the proviso that this does not come from working people's pockets.

Sceptical Scrollers - Show some support for redistribution and tackling inequality, but less entrenched beliefs than other groups.

Dissenting Disruptors - In favour of taxes for the wealthy and protections for workers, but sceptical the government will redistribute income fairly.

Established Liberals - Generally, business friendly and economically conservative, but supportive of consumer protections, regulation and some action to tackle inequality.

Traditional Conservatives - Firmly on the economic right, favouring a small state, low taxes and low government waste and support for business and wealth creation.