Britons and the Economy

Election Battleground Series

November 2023

The political challenge of tax and spend

The Autumn Statement is one of the few set piece moments the Government has left to try and change the political weather before the next General Election. With Party Conference and the King's Speech having been blown off course by internal rows, the window for any 'reset' has narrowed considerably.

However our research finds that navigating the nuances, complexity and occasional contradictions of public opinion on tax and spending will not be easy. We find the public:

- Prefer to see higher level of public spending but also to reduce the deficit
- Think the Government can always find the money for important spending if they want to
- Would rather see spending cuts than tax rises and aren't prepared to pay more personally
- Want to see increased spending on big ticket areas such as health, defence and education
- Blame the Government for high inflation but do not credit the Government for inflation falling
- Think almost 9% of public spending goes on MPs pay and benefits

Among the most popular potential Autumn Statement measures:

- Cuts to specific taxes such as council tax, inheritance tax and stamp duty
- Raising taxes on business rather than individuals and in particular increasing corporation tax
- Measures to tighten up the benefit system and do more to support and require people to find work

Key findings (1)

Inflation: The cost of living continues to be the dominant issue for the public. The public hold the Government responsible for rising inflation, but doesn't give the Government credit for bringing inflation down. More economically right leaning groups give the Government more credit.

Deficit: The public want to close the deficit - only 17 per cent say deficit reduction should not be a priority. The public are more than twice as likely to say that the deficit should be closed through spending cuts (47 per cent) than tax rises (19 per cent).

Magic money tree: High levels of pandemic and energy support spending over the last few years has made the public more likely to think the Government can find money if it needs/wants to - more than half (51 per cent) say that the last few years have shown that the Government always can find the money if it wants to, compared to just over a third (35 per cent) who say the last few years show there are limits to what Government can afford to spend. Loyal Nationals (Red Wall voters) are the second most likely to think that the Government can find the money if it needs or wants to.

Tax: Half of the public support cutting council tax (57 per cent), fuel duty (50 per cent), VAT (49 per cent) and inheritance tax (49 per cent). Broadly speaking, the public are in a tax cutting rather than tax raising mood. The only public support for increasing taxes is increases to alcohol duty or corporation tax. Taxes on business are particularly popular - when asked where increased public spending should come from, a plurality say taxes on businesses - this again includes higher than average support among the Loyal National group.

Key findings (2)

Spending: The public are evenly split (52:48) over whether the chancellor should raise or cut public spending. While more partisan segments have clear views one way or another, both main electoral swing segments (Established Liberals and Loyal Nationals) are slightly more likely than average to support raising rather than cutting public spending.
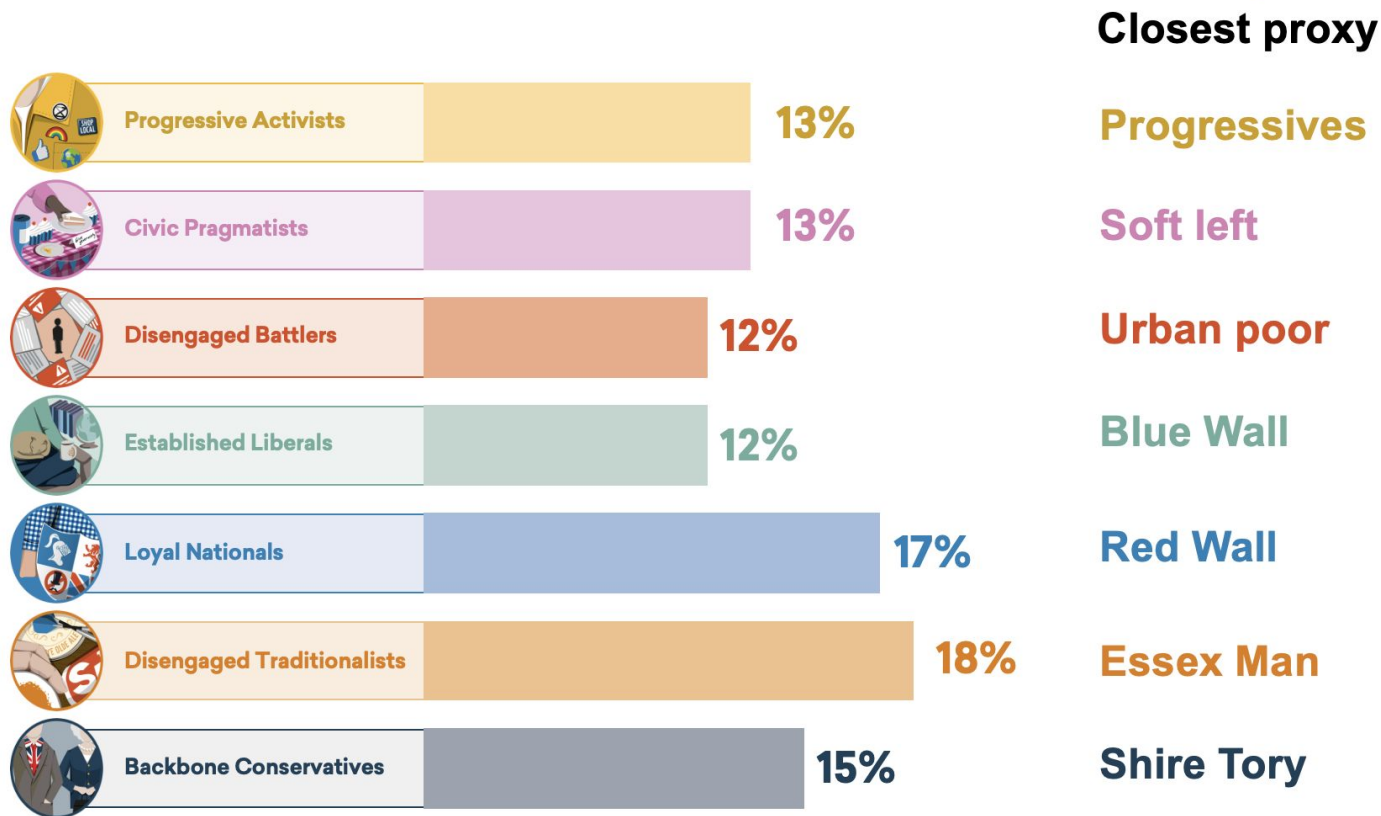
NHS spending : Two thirds of the public think that the Government should be spending more on the NHS - a view that is held most strongly among Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals. However, the public are only willing to pay on average £5 more per month in tax to pay for increased NHS spending.

Blame for waiting lists: The public are almost three times more likely to blame NHS waiting lists on poor NHS management (31 per cent) than a lack of funding for the NHS (11 per cent). Poor NHS management attracts more blame than the Government itself for record waiting lists.

Benefits: The public are evenly divided over whether benefits should be uprated by more or less the rate of inflation. The public generally is slightly more likely to want to uprate benefits by the rate of inflation (44 per cent) than less than the rate of inflation (40 per cent). While the public are divided on whether benefits are too high or too low, they are more than twice as likely to think that it is too easy than too difficult to claim benefits, and they want to see more action from the Government to force benefit claimants to look for work.

Section 1: Political context to Autumn statement

The British Seven Segments and political proxies

Closest proxy

Segment	%	Closest proxy
Progressive Activists	13%	Progressives
Civic Pragmatists	13%	Soft left
Disengaged Battlers	12%	Urban poor
Established Liberals	12%	Blue Wall
Loyal Nationals	17%	Red Wall
Disengaged Traditionalists	18%	Essex Man
Backbone Conservatives	15%	Shire Tory

4

The political battleground

The Conservatives end the year at a distinct political disadvantage. Four in ten would definitely not consider voting for the Conservative party while only 26 per cent put their likelihood of voting Conservative at higher than seven out of ten.
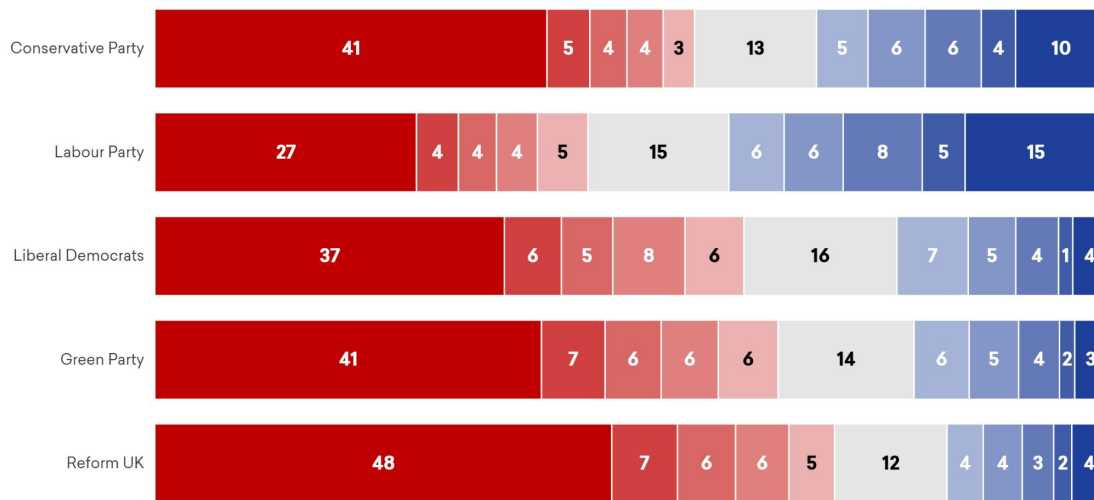
In contrast, only 27 per cent say that they would never vote for the Labour Party and 34 per cent put their chance of voting Labour at more than seven out of ten.

The swing Loyal National/Red Wall segment roughly matches these national averages, however Established Liberal/Blue Wall voters are more open to voting for both parties and the Liberal Democrats than the average.

Briton likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party

● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	41	5	4	4	3	13	5	6	6	4	10
Labour Party	27	4	4	4	5	15	6	6	8	5	15
Liberal Democrats	37	6	5	8	6	16	7	5	4	1	4
Green Party	41	7	6	6	6	14	6	5	4	2	3
Reform UK	48	7	6	6	5	12	4	4	3	2	4

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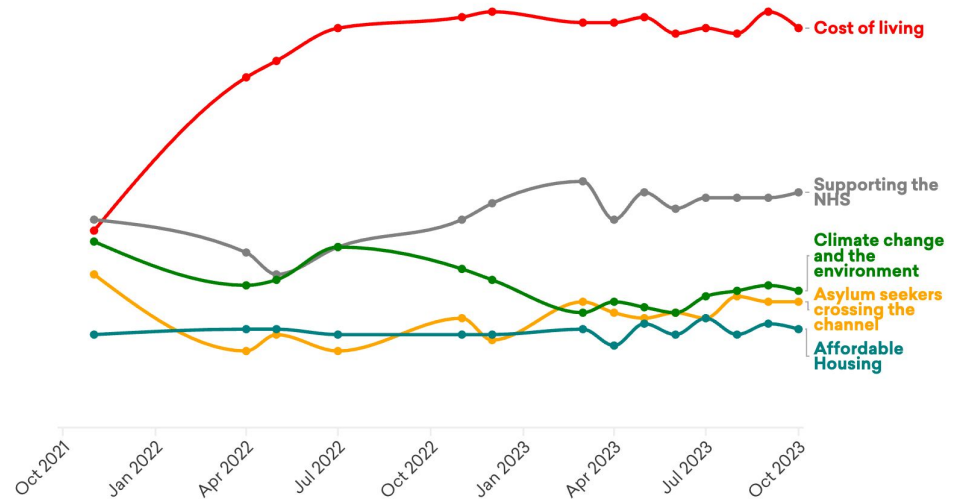# Section 1: Context to the Autumn Statement

Cost of living - consistently top issue

The cost of living crisis has dominated public consciousness over the past two years. The issue is consistently ranked as Britons' number one concern, and by a significant margin over any other issue.

What makes the cost of living crisis so potent is that it affects almost every section of the electorate. While the poorest are the most vulnerable - often having to choose between heating or eating - those who are normally comfortable are also feeling the pinch.

In focus group conversations this group tell us about having to sacrifice days out with the family, cut back on Christmas gifts for children, or being forced to put things back on the shelves because the weekly shop becomes just too expensive

Britons' top issues over time

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Cost of living

Supporting the NHS

Climate change and the environment

Asylum seekers crossing the channel

Affordable Housing

Oct 2021 · Jan 2022 · Apr 2022 · Jul 2022 · Oct 2022 · Jan 2023 · Apr 2023 · Jul 2023 · Oct 2023
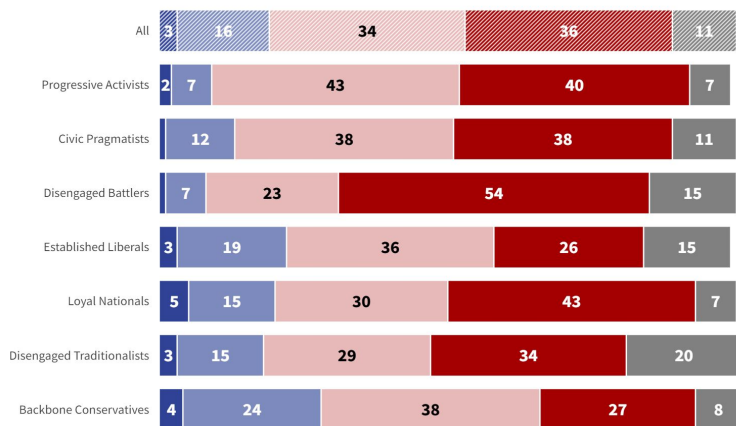
Source: More in Common, August 2023
Question: In your opinion, which are the most IMPORTANT issues facing the country today? Please select up to three

Public think cost of living crisis will last for some time and think Labour would do a better job tackling it

Most think that the cost of living crisis will not end for quite some time

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

● Sometime this year ● Sometime next year ● In the next few years ● I'm not sure if it will ever end ● Don't know

Group	Sometime this year	Sometime next year	In the next few years	I'm not sure if it will ever end	Don't know
All	3	16	34	36	11
Progressive Activists	2	7	43	40	7
Civic Pragmatists		12	38	38	11
Disengaged Battlers		7	23	54	15
Established Liberals	3	19	36	26	15
Loyal Nationals	5	15	30	43	7
Disengaged Traditionalists	3	15	29	34	20
Backbone Conservatives	4	24	38	27	8

More in Common

Source: More in Common, November 2023

Labour hold a 20 point lead over the Conservatives on tackling the cost of living

Which of the following do you trust most to tackle the rising cost of living?

● The Labour Party ● The Conservative Party

Group	The Labour Party	The Conservative Party
All	60	40
Progressive Activists	89	11
Civic Pragmatists	83	17
Disengaged Battlers	82	18
Established Liberals	49	51
Loyal Nationals	61	39
Disengaged Traditionalists	58	42
Backbone Conservatives	38	62

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Source: More in Common, November 2023

10
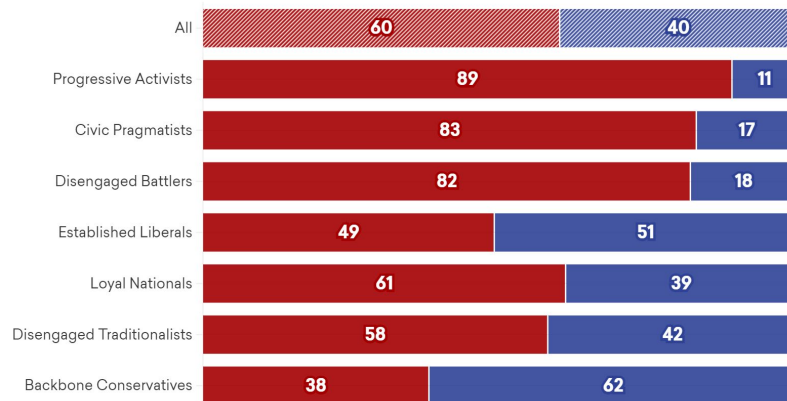
Broader test - fix Broken Britain

At the same time, the public are also clear that public services in the UK are not working in the way that they should.

Asked to describe Britain in one word the most popular option is 'broken' with the public expressing frustration about long waiting lists, unreliable public transport and absent police forces.

While the public do not think that more money is the answer to all of the public sector's problems there is no doubt that they want a focus in the Autumn Statement on getting the state working again.

How would you describe Britain in 2023 in one word?
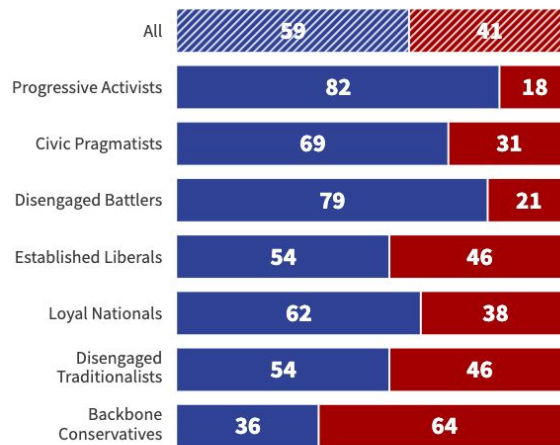
Inflation: blame and credit

Almost three in five Britons (59 per cent) blame the government for high inflation. However, less than a third of Britons (31 per cent) think that the Prime Minister should get the credit for halving inflation.

Only the one of the British Seven segments (Backbone Conservatives - reliably one of the most Conservative leaning) is more likely to say that the Prime Minister and government should be credited for reducing inflation than factors outside their control.

This suggests that in and of itself hitting the inflation target is unlikely to change the Government's fortunes. People will need to feel and see the results in their pocket.

Who is more to blame for high inflation?
- 🔵 The UK Government
- 🔴 Forces beyond the control of the UK Government

	The UK Government	Forces beyond the control
All	59	41
Progressive Activists	82	18
Civic Pragmatists	69	31
Disengaged Battlers	79	21
Established Liberals	54	46
Loyal Nationals	62	38
Disengaged Traditionalists	54	46
Backbone Conservatives	36	64

Source: More in Common, August 2023

The Prime Minister pledged to halve inflation by the end of the year. If that target is met, who do you think should get credit for that
- 🔵 The Prime Minister and government
- ⚪ Don't know
- 🔴 Factors beyond the Prime Minister and government's control

	The Prime Minister and government	Don't know	Factors beyond control
All	31	22	46
Progressive Activists	14	11	75
Civic Pragmatists	20	23	58
Disengaged Battlers	19	29	51
Established Liberals	36	25	39
Loyal Nationals	32	20	48
Disengaged Traditionalists	29	39	32
Backbone Conservatives	44	14	41

Source: More in Common, October 2023

12
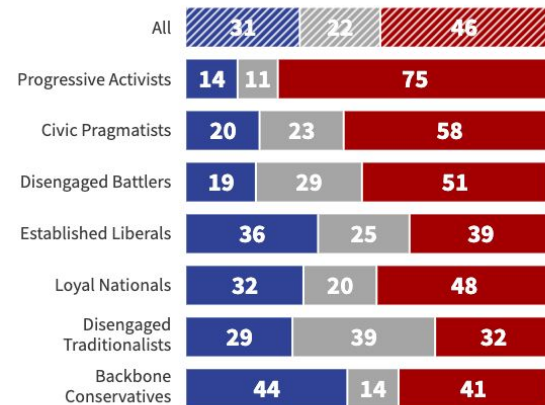
Spending more over tax cuts

While the public want to see tax cuts rather than tax rises, the public also favour spending more on public services than cutting taxes by a nine point margin. Unsurprisingly, the strongest support for spending mor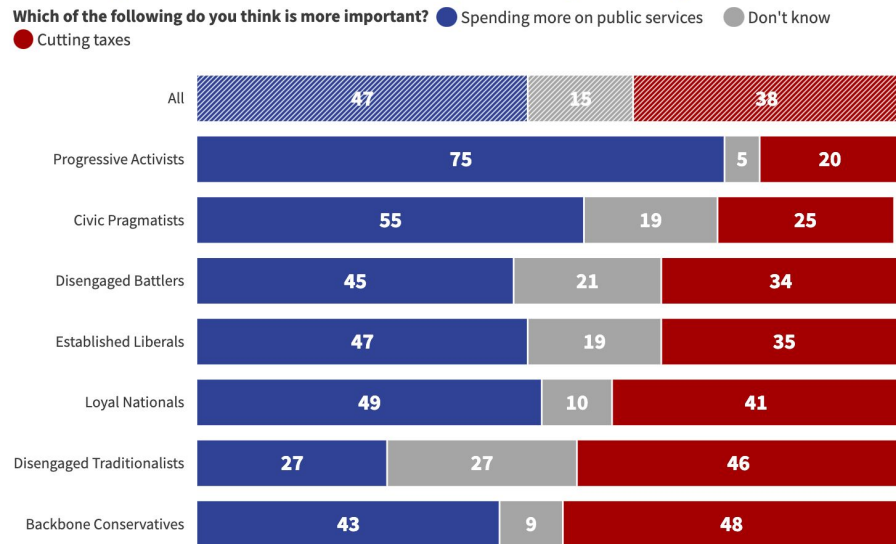e on public services comes from more left-leaning segments and the Labour base (Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists), while the strongest support for cutting taxes is from more right-leaning segments and the Conservative base (Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists).

Swing voters in the Red Wall and Blue Wall are more likely than average to prioritise increases in spending over tax cuts in focus groups. While they are an economically Conservative group, Blue Wall Established Liberals baulk at the prospect of unfunded tax cuts after the fallout from the Truss administration's tax-cutting mini-budget. Red Wall Loyal Nationals' support for increasing public spending stems from a perception that their area has been neglected for a long time and poor public services need to be better funded if they are to improve.

Which of the following do you think is more important? ● Spending more on public services ● Don't know ● Cutting taxes

	Spending more on public services	Don't know	Cutting taxes
All	47	15	38
Progressive Activists	75	5	20
Civic Pragmatists	55	19	25
Disengaged Battlers	45	21	34
Established Liberals	47	19	35
Loyal Nationals	49	10	41
Disengaged Traditionalists	27	27	46
Backbone Conservatives	43	9	48

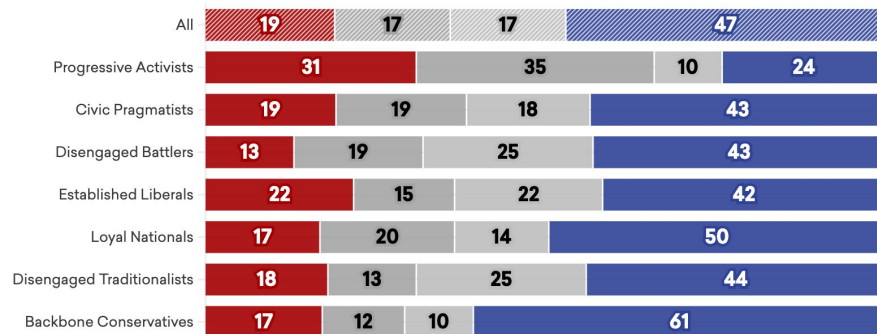More in Common

Support for reducing the deficit

Britons think that reducing the deficit should be a priority for the government - fewer than one in five Britons (17 per cent) say reducing the deficit should not be a priority. This minority is fairly evenly distributed across all of the British Seven segments, bar the Progressive Activists, who are twice as likely as average to say the government should not prioritise reducing the deficit (35 per cent versus 17 per cent average).

The public are more likely to support spending cuts (47 per cent) over tax rises (19 per cent) to close the deficit. This reflects the public's lack of appetite for any raising taxes on working people. However, the support for spending cuts contrasts with the fact that the public are more likely to support a party which increases rather than cuts spending. This contrast is particularly striking among typical Red Wall (Loyal National) voters who are the second most likely to say that the government should close the deficit through spending cuts and more likely than average to say they'd vote for a party which raises spending.

Testing two specific areas of public spending (the NHS and Defence), only 8 per cent of the public support spending less on these areas. This suggests spending cuts might be popular in the abstract, but when confronted with big ticket areas of spending the public do not favour cuts - our previous research has found that only cutting DEI spending and international aid receive significant support.

At the moment the Government is spending more money than it is bringing in, creating something known as a budget deficit. Thinking about that deficit which statement comes closest to your view?

- 🔴 The Government should mainly try and close the budget deficit through raising taxes
- ⚪ The Government should not prioritise closing the budget deficit   ⚪ Don't know
- 🔵 The Government should mainly try and close the budget deficit by spending less

	Raise taxes	Not prioritise	Don't know	Spend less
All	19	17	17	47
Progressive Activists	31	35	10	24
Civic Pragmatists	19	19	18	43
Disengaged Battlers	13	19	25	43
Established Liberals	22	15	22	42
Loyal Nationals	17	20	14	50
Disengaged Traditionalists	18	13	25	44
Backbone Conservatives	17	12	10	61

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14

The Magic Money Tree

The furlough scheme and the energy bills support scheme represented major increases in Government spending - as the government sought to support the public through the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. This has changed how the public thinks about the government's ability to find the money it needs to fund public spending.
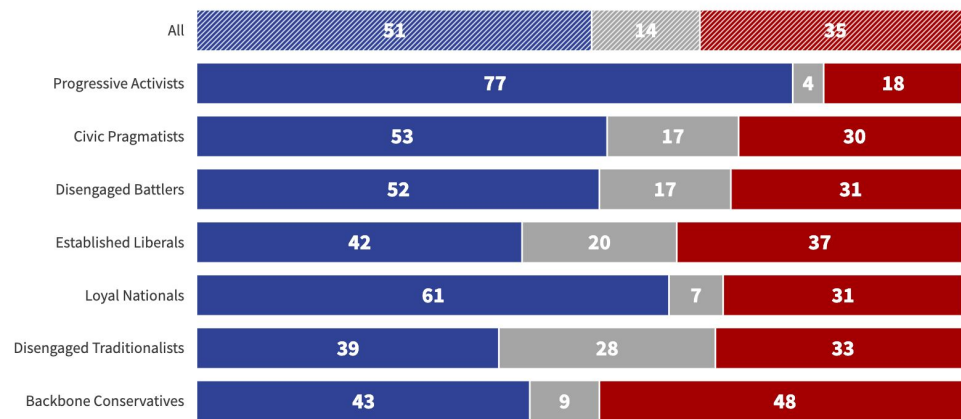
In contrast to the political and media discourse about the state of public finances, more than half the public (51 per cent) think that the last few years have shown that the government can find the money when it needs to, while just over a third (35 per cent) think the last few years have reinforced the limits of government spending.

The challenge facing both main parties is that Red Wall and Blue Wall voters take different views on the existence of a so-called government magic money tree. Three in five (61 per cent) typical Red wall voters think the government can find the money if it wants, while just over two in five Blue wall voters (42 per cent) have the same view.

Public spending in recent years has led more people to think the government can find the money if it wants to

Which of the following comes closest to your view?
- 🔵 The last few years have shown that the Government can always find the money for big public spending if it wants to
- ⚪ Don't know
- 🔴 The last few years have shown that there are limits to what the Government can afford to spend

	Blue	Grey	Red
All	51	14	35
Progressive Activists	77	4	18
Civic Pragmatists	53	17	30
Disengaged Battlers	52	17	31
Established Liberals	42	20	37
Loyal Nationals	61	7	31
Disengaged Traditionalists	39	28	33
Backbone Conservatives	43	9	48

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Source: More in Common, October 2023

15

Section 2: Britons and Tax
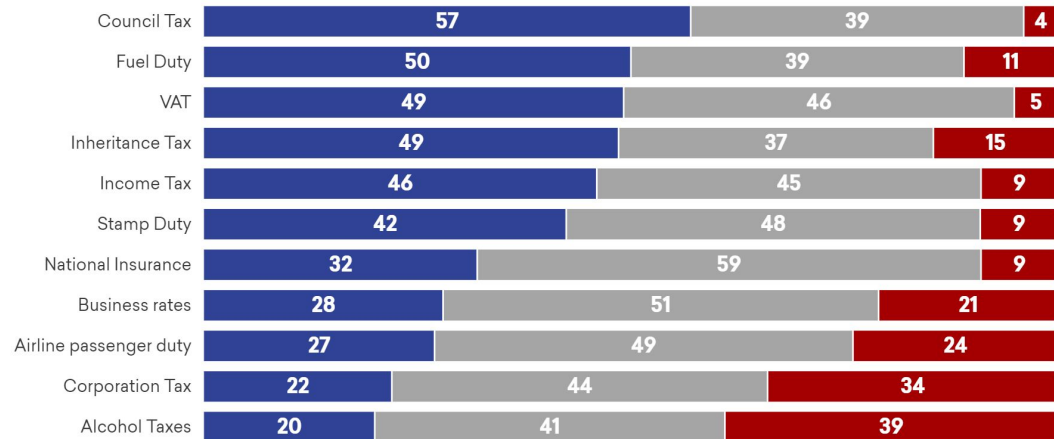
Tax cuts not tax rises

The public are in the mood for tax cuts. They are 14 times more likely to say that council tax should be cut than raised, 10 times more likely to say that VAT should be cut than raised, and five times more likely to say that fuel duty should be cut than raised.

Around half the public support cutting council tax (57 per cent), fuel duty (50 per cent), VAT (49 per cent) and inheritance tax (49 per cent). The only scope for increasing taxes is through increases to alcohol duty or increases to corporation tax.

There is no majority support to raise any taxes - though alcohol taxes and corporation tax command the most public support for raising

Thinking about each of the following taxes please tell us whether you think they should be raised, cut, or kept at the same level?

● Should be cut   ● Should be kept at the same level   ● Should be raised

Tax	Should be cut	Should be kept at the same level	Should be raised
Council Tax	57	39	4
Fuel Duty	50	39	11
VAT	49	46	5
Inheritance Tax	49	37	15
Income Tax	46	45	9
Stamp Duty	42	48	9
National Insurance	32	59	9
Business rates	28	51	21
Airline passenger duty	27	49	24
Corporation Tax	22	44	34
Alcohol Taxes	20	41	39

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Source: More in Common, October 2023

Prioritising one tax cut

When asked to prioritise one tax to cut, the public choose council tax and income tax. There are some differences between the segments in what tax cuts they would prioritise.

Red Wall Loyal Nationals are more likely than average to want to cut council tax (33 per cent versus 30 per cent) whereas Blue Wall Established Liberals are much less likely than average to want to cut council tax (23 per cent versus 30 per cent average).

Blue Wall voters are more likely than average to prioritise cuts to both inheritance tax and stamp duty. This suggests that in the forthcoming budget the Conservatives will have to choose between prioritising different groups of swing voters.

The public are most likely to prioritise cutting council tax and income tax

And thinking about each of the following taxes which would you MOST like to see cut? Select one.

Tax	Value
Council Tax	30
Income Tax	24
Inheritance Tax	16
VAT	12
National Insurance	6
Stamp Duty	4
Airline passenger duties	2
Alcohol Taxes	2
Corporation Tax	2
Business rates	2

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Source: More in Common, October 2023

18
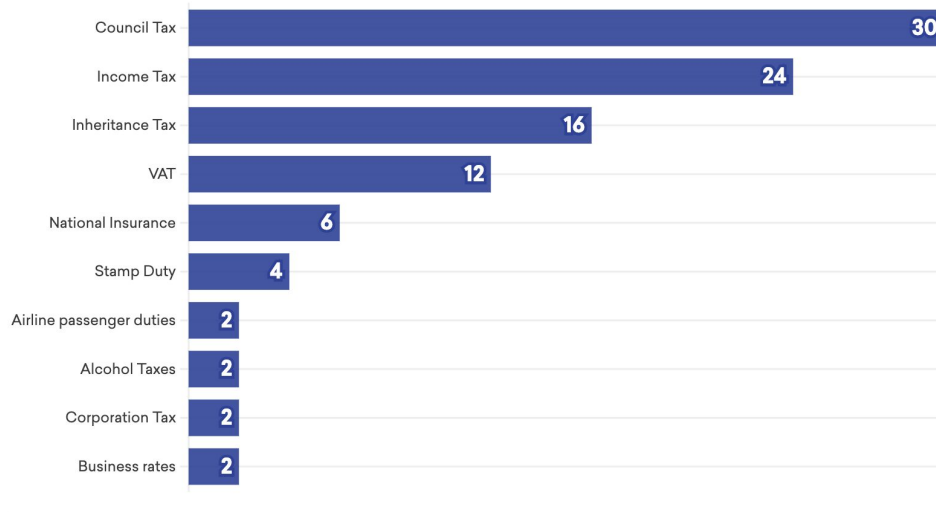
Support for cutting inheritance tax

Three in five Britons think that the inheritance tax threshold should either be raised or abolished altogether.
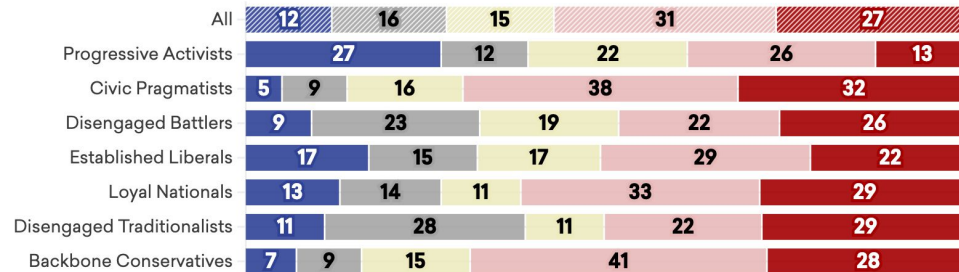
What's striking about support for reducing the burden of inheritance tax is that it commands support across a range of the British Seven segments - including the Labour supporting Civic Pragmatists, the Red Wall Loyal Nationals and the Backbone Conservatives - the core Conservative base voter.

In focus groups it is clear that people don't' like inheritance tax because they think it represents double taxation, prevents them from supporting their families and is anti-aspiration.

Three in five Britons think that inheritance tax should either be abolished or tax free threshold raised

Which of the following do you most agree with?
- 🔵 The tax-free threshold should be lowered so that more people pay inheritance tax
- ⚪ Don't know
- 🟡 The threshold at which inheritance tax is paid should be kept the same
- 🔴 The tax-free threshold should be raised, so that fewer people pay inheritance tax
- 🔴 Inheritance tax should be abolished entirely

	Lowered	Don't know	Kept same	Raised	Abolished
All	12	16	15	31	27
Progressive Activists	27	12	22	26	13
Civic Pragmatists	5	9	16	38	32
Disengaged Battlers	9	23	19	22	26
Established Liberals	17	15	17	29	22
Loyal Nationals	13	14	11	33	29
Disengaged Traditionalists	11	28	11	22	29
Backbone Conservatives	7	9	15	41	28

More in Common

Source: More in Common, September 2023 • Currently inheritance tax is charged at 40% on the assets a person leaves in their will, above a threshold of £325,000, with estates worth under this threshold paying no inheritance tax. The threshold increases to £500,000 for those leaving their home to their children or grandchildren. Which of the following do you most agree with?

19

Support for cutting inheritance tax, even when told it only affects the wealthiest 5 per cent of estates

Even when the public are told that only the wealthiest five per cent of estates pay inheritance tax, support for cutting it drops only slightly from it's base.

As a result more than 50 per cent of the public continue to support lowering the threshold even when they are told only the very wealthiest pay it.

Opposition to inheritance tax then is not driven, at least primarily, by ignorance over who the tax affects.

Net change

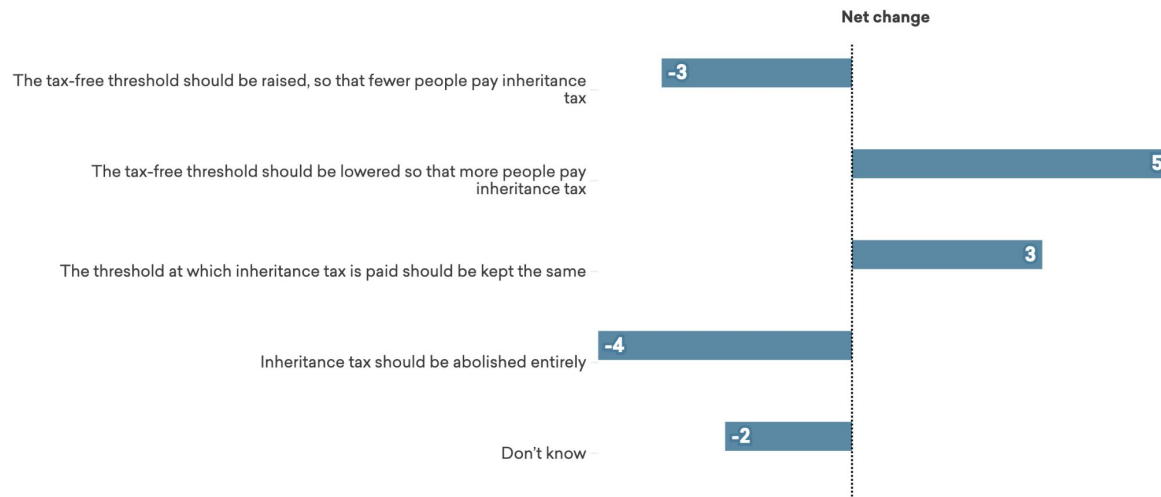|	
The tax-free threshold should be raised, so that fewer people pay inheritance tax	-3
The tax-free threshold should be lowered so that more people pay inheritance tax	5
The threshold at which inheritance tax is paid should be kept the same	3
Inheritance tax should be abolished entirely	-4
Don't know	-2

Source: More in Common, September 2023 • Currently inheritance tax is charged at 40% on the assets a person leaves in their will, above a threshold of £325,000, with estates worth under this threshold paying no inheritance tax. The threshold increases to £500,000 for those leaving their home to their children or grandchildren. Currently only the wealthiest 5% of estates pay inheritance tax Which of the following do you most agree with?
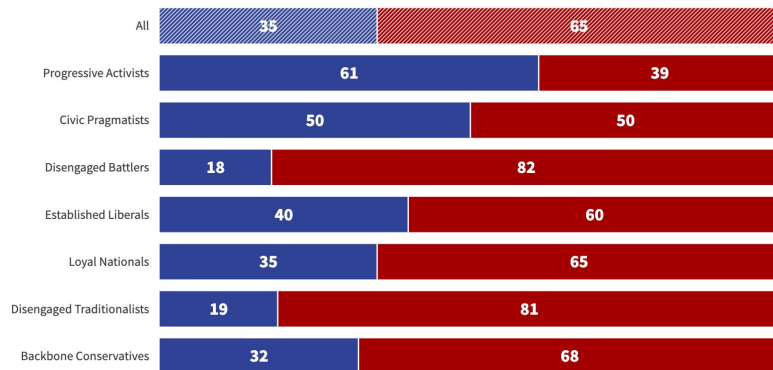
Cakeist view on public services

Perhaps the biggest challenge for politicians is that the public take a cakeist view to public services - while they are slightly more likely to think the government should spend more rather than less on public services, they are not prepared to pay more tax for increased spending on public services by a margin of 2:1 - two thirds of the public (65 per cent) are not prepared to pay more tax for increased spending on public services versus one third (35 per cent) who are prepared to pay more.

The two disengaged groups are least likely to be willing to pay more tax for increased spending on public services. This strong unwillingness to pay additional tax among these groups is shaped by their social psychology and experience with public services.

- **Disengaged Battlers,** the most financially precarious of any of the segments, worry about the impact of higher taxes, are more likely to interact with public services from the welfare state to the NHS and think the problems run deeper than higher funding.
- **Disengaged Traditionalists'** opposition to paying more taxes stems from a more individualist view of the world and their corresponding belief in a smaller state that they think should be cutting spending rather than raising it.

Most Britons aren't prepared to pay more tax to increase spending on public services

Would you be prepared to pay more tax for increased spending on public services? ● Yes ● No

	Yes	No
All	35	65
Progressive Activists	61	39
Civic Pragmatists	50	50
Disengaged Battlers	18	82
Established Liberals	40	60
Loyal Nationals	35	65
Disengaged Traditionalists	19	81
Backbone Conservatives	32	68

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023

Blue Wall **Established Liberal** voters are more likely than average to say they are prepared to pay more tax for increased spending on public services. This stems from Established Liberals' strong view that spending promises must be paid for and their relative financial security.

Section 3: Britons and Spending

Should Britain be spending more?

The public are evenly split (52:48) over whether they would be more likely to vote for a party that would raise or cut public spending.

While some more politically-minded groups have clear views one way or another, both main electoral swing segments (Established Liberals and Loyal Nationals) are more evenly divided, although are still slightly more likely than average to vote for a party promising to raise rather than cut spending.

This contrasts with their view that the deficit should be reduced through spending cuts rather than tax rises - a view that is held more strongly among Loyal Nationals, who are also more likely than average to vote for a party promising to raise public spending.

Public split on whether government should cut or raise public spending

Which of the following would you be more likely to vote for? ● A party that promised to raise public spending
● A party that promised to cut public spending

	Raise	Cut
All	52	48
Progressive Activists	84	16
Civic Pragmatists	68	32
Disengaged Battlers	59	41
Established Liberals	54	46
Loyal Nationals	55	45
Disengaged Traditionalists	41	59
Backbone Conservatives	34	66
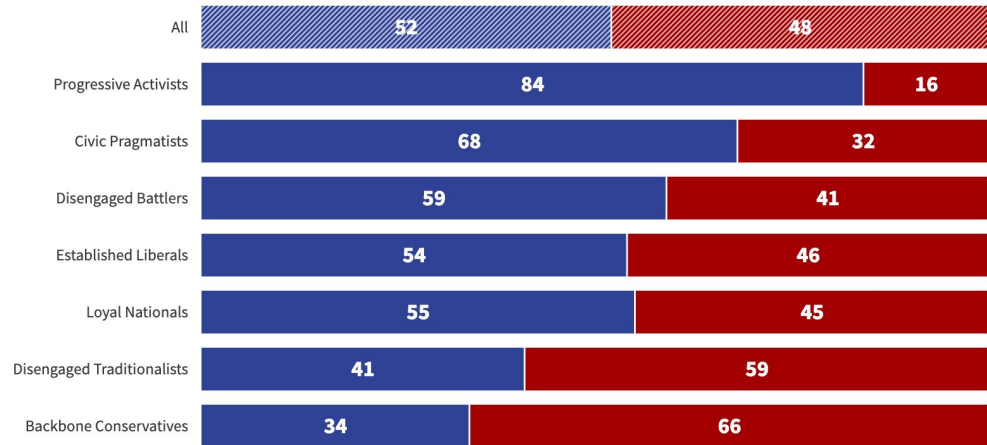
More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023

How should Britain fund increased spending?

The public are four times more likely to think that increased public spending should be funded through taxes (49 per cent) rather than greater borrowing (12 per cent). Less than a quarter (22 per cent) think that public spending should not be raised – a view that is held more strongly among right-leaning segments than left-leaning segments.

But where the public do support tax rises it is on business - they are three times more likely to prioritise taxes on businesses (39 per cent) than taxes on the public (10 per cent).

This suggests an Autumn Statement which is seen to prioritise tax breaks on businesses over the general public could prove unpopular.

Public are most likely to think that increased public spending should come from tax rises on businesses

Where should funding for increased public spending come from? ● Taxes on the public ● Taxes on businesses
● Don't know ● Public spending should not be raised ● Greater government borrowing

	Taxes on the public	Taxes on businesses	Don't know	Public spending should not be raised	Greater government borrowing
All	10	39	18	22	12
Progressive Activists	12	58	8	10	12
Civic Pragmatists	9	52	18	11	11
Disengaged Battlers	3	45	28	16	9
Established Liberals	13	32	21	20	14
Loyal Nationals	8	43	14	21	14
Disengaged Traditionalists	8	27	29	24	11
Backbone Conservatives	13	32	13	33	9

More in Common
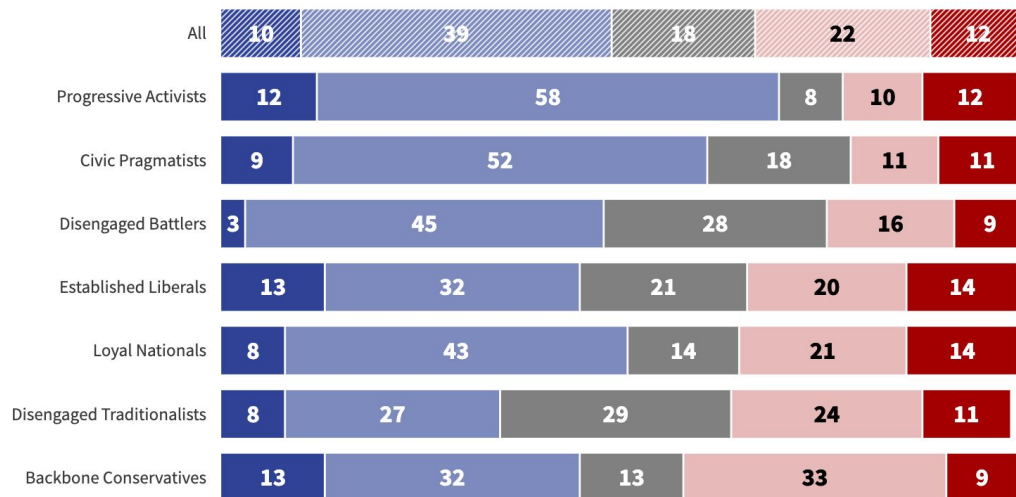
Is public spending rigged against the young?

Despite increasing spending on pensions and elderly benefits, the idea that the public think spending is rigged towards the old and against the young is not borne out in our data. A majority of the public think that government spending is distributed fairly between different generations (30 per cent) or they 'don't know' (33 per cent). Equal proportio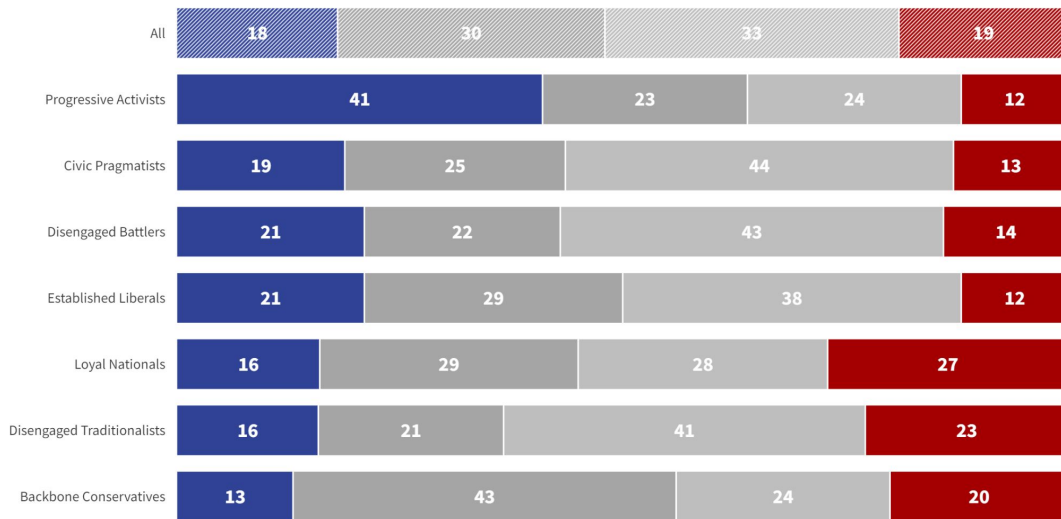ns of the public think that the economy is rigged against older generations (19 per cent) and younger generations (18 per cent) respectively. Progressive Activists and young people are more likely to say the economy is rigged towards older people, while there is much less divergence between the rest of the segments. Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives are slightly more likely than average to think government spending is directed too much towards younger generations.

Britons are split on whether government spending is directed too much to older or younger generations

Which of the following comes closest to your view? ● In the UK today too much government spending is directed at older generations
● Government spending is directed fairly between older and younger generations ● Don't know
● In the UK today too much government spending is directed at younger generations

	Too much at older	Directed fairly	Don't know	Too much at younger
All	18	30	33	19
Progressive Activists	41	23	24	12
Civic Pragmatists	19	25	44	13
Disengaged Battlers	21	22	43	14
Established Liberals	21	29	38	12
Loyal Nationals	16	29	28	27
Disengaged Traditionalists	16	21	41	23
Backbone Conservatives	13	43	24	20

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023

Perceptions of public spending vs actual spending

Understanding how much the public thinks the government is spending on different public services helps to understand how they react to moments like the Autumn Statement and their belief that more money can be saved from relatively small areas of public spending.

The public overestimates the amount Britain spends on health and social care, climate, crime/policing and overseas aid, while underestimating spending on pensions and benefits. The public significantly overestimates the proportion of the budget spend on MPs pay, believing that this accounts for almost 10 per cent of public spending.

How much does the government spend on public services?

Perception of spending vs actual spending, 2021/22

● How much do you think the government does spend?   ● Actual spending

	How much do you think the government does spend?	Actual spending
Health and social care	29	23
Education	9	11
Defence and national security	9	5
Police and crime	8	4
Pensions	7	14
Welfare benefits	8	12
Transport	5	5
Overseas aid	4	1
Tackling climate change	6	1
Debt interest	6	5
MPs Pay	9	0

More in Common
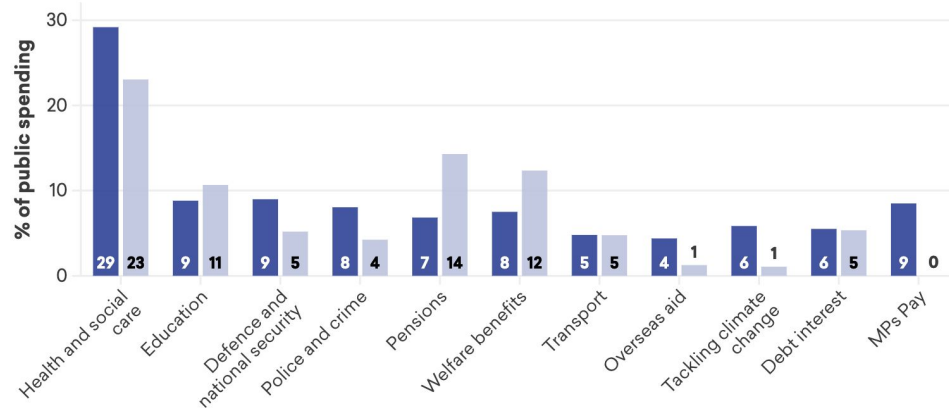
Source: IFS Tax Lab, Climate change figure comes from ccc 6th Carbon Budget, current annual figure of approx. £10 billion recommended to rise to £50 billion by end of decade

In focus: NHS spending

Strong support for increasing NHS spending

Two thirds of the public think that the government should be spending more on the NHS - a view that is held most strongly among Civic Pragmatists and Loyal Nationals.

In large part this is driven by people's experiences of the NHS, with focus group participants often complaining of being unable to get GP appointments and A&E feeling "like a war zone".

The strength of support among Loyal Nationals - the key Red Wall swing voter group at the next election - means NHS funding will continue to be a major battle ground.

Most Britons the government should be spending more on the NHS

Do you think the Government should be spending more or less on the NHS? ● More ● The same ● Don't know ● Less

	More	The same	Don't know	Less
All	67	21	5	8
Progressive Activists	76	16	3	4
Civic Pragmatists	83	11	4	2
Disengaged Battlers	67	19	7	7
Established Liberals	50	29	12	9
Loyal Nationals	78	15	1	5
Disengaged Traditionalists	54	25	9	12
Backbone Conservatives	62	25	2	11
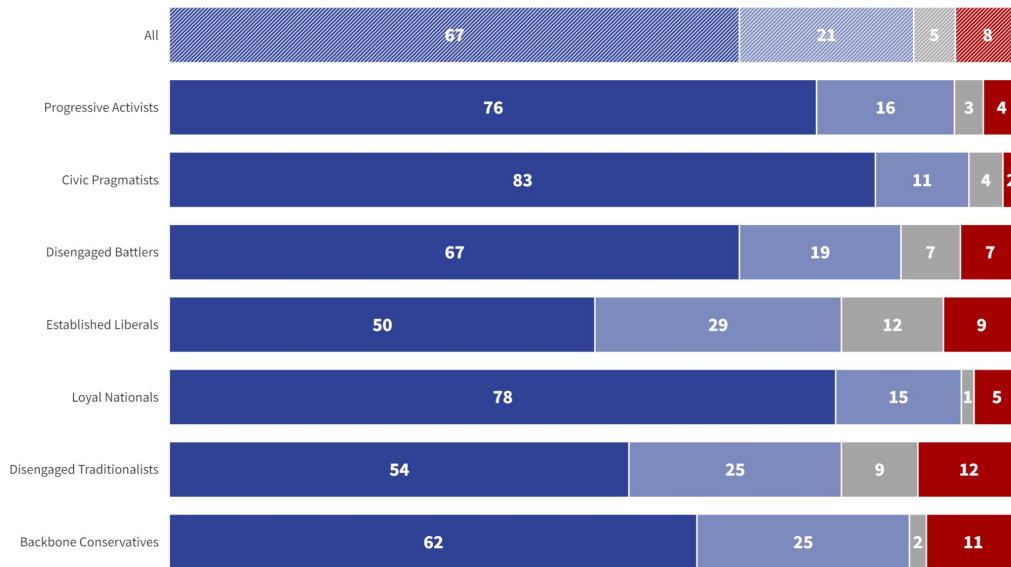
More in Common

Source: More in Common, November 2023

Unwillingness to pay much more tax for more NHS spending

Despite the fact that the public expect to see more money being spent on the NHS, they are much less willing to pay to fund this increased spending.

On average, the public would be prepared to pay £5 in tax per month to fund any increase to NHS spending.

Limited public support for increased taxation to supplement NHS spending

suggested median £ per month increase in taxes for the NHS

Category	Value
All	£5
Progressive Activists	£10
Civic Pragmatists	£5
Disengaged Battlers	
Established Liberals	£10
Loyal Nationals	£5
Disengaged Traditionalists	£1
Backbone Conservatives	£5

More in Common

Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023
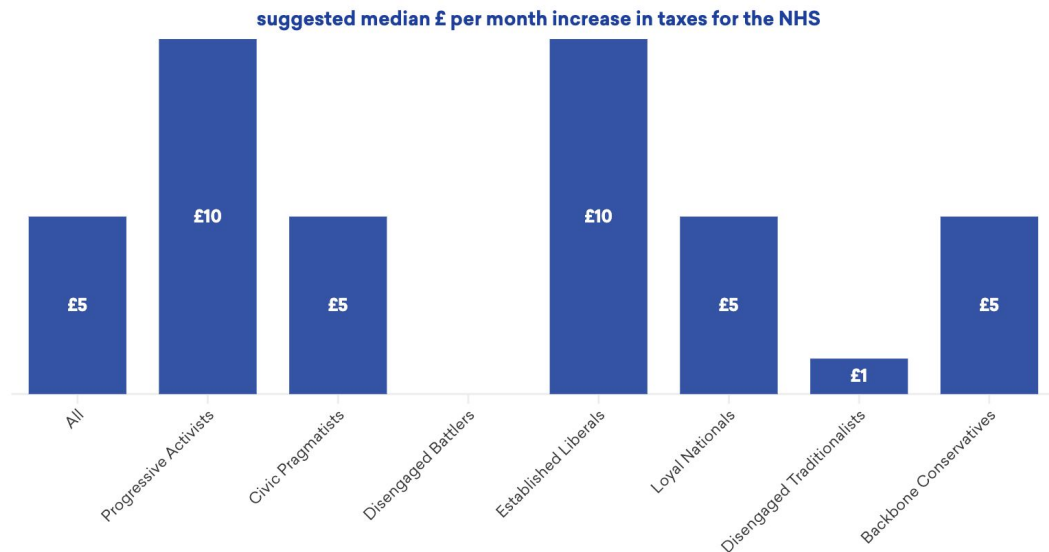
Poor management not lack of funding key reason for record waiting lists

With NHS waiting lists top of the public's concerns, we find the public are almost three times more likely to blame NHS waiting lists on poor NHS management (31 per cent) than a lack of funding for the NHS (11 per cent) - a view that is consistent across the segments.

Poor NHS management also attracts more blame than the government itself for record NHS waiting lists - both in general (31 per cent versus 23 per cent) and in five of the segment segments.

This suggests appetite for a 'reform' pitch as well as a funding one.

Poor NHS management rather than lack of funding identified as key reason for long waiting lists

Which of the following is most to blame for NHS waiting lists? Select one

Legend: ● Poor NHS management ● The Government ● The Covid pandemic ● Doctors' and Nurses' strikes ● The ageing population ● Don't know ● Lack of funding

Segment	Poor NHS management	The Government	The Covid pandemic	Doctors' and Nurses' strikes	The ageing population	Don't know	Lack of funding
All	32	23	15	9	3	6	11
Progressive Activists	22	55		3		5	13
Civic Pragmatists	28	27	18	5	4	4	13
Disengaged Battlers	27	34	12	3		10	12
Established Liberals	32	19	11	8	4	13	12
Loyal Nationals	34	23	18	9	2	2	11
Disengaged Traditionalists	28	20	14	12	3	12	12
Backbone Conservatives	37	11	21	13	5	3	9

More in Common

Source: More in Common, November 2023
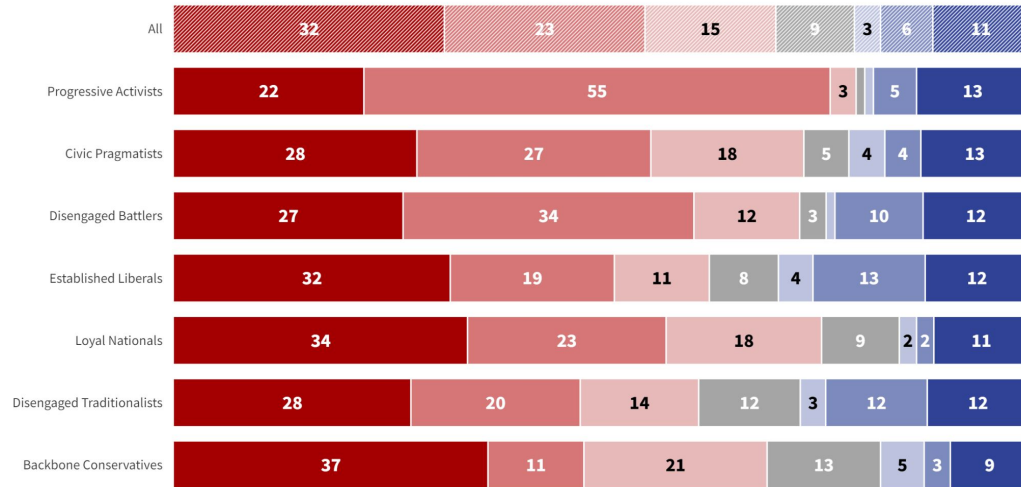
Priorities for NHS spending - investing in people

The public tend to favour investment in NHS staff (doctors and nurses) rather than buildings or technology - despite policy research indicating that the problems with the NHS are rooted in lack of capital investment and spending rather than personnel.

The focus on personnel is expressed both in terms of increasing the numbers of people working in the NHS and improving the conditions for pay within the NHS.

This support for increased pay suggests that the government might be wise to bring the junior doctors strike action to a conclusion. This also suggests that the public has a less 'bricks and mortar' approach to the NHS' future than is commonly assumed in debates over hospital building or closures.

Public want to see increased NHS spending on people rather than buildings or technology

Where do you think the government should be spending more in the NHS? Select only one

Category	Value
Increasing the number of doctors and nurses	41
Increasing the pay of doctors and nurses	18
Building more hospitals	10
Don't know	9
Investing in new technology	9
Purchasing more new equipment (such as diagnostic scanners)	8
Investing in new drugs	4

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023

31
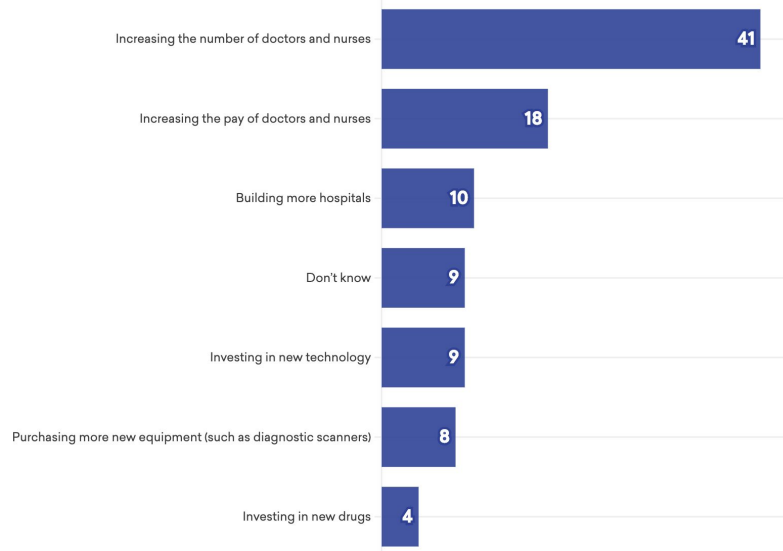
Section 4: Britons and Benefits

Should benefits be uprated by inflation or less?

The public are evenly divided over whether benefits should be uprated by more than the rate of inflation, or less in order to cut taxes for working people. The public generally is slightly more likely to want to uprate benefits by the rate of inflation (44 per cent) than less than the rate of inflation (40 per cent).

The only segment with a majority who say that benefits should be uprated by less than inflation is the Backbone Conservatives segment (57 per cent) followed by the Loyal National segments (47 per cent).

The public are fairly evenly divided over whether benefits should be raised by inflation or not - less support among right leaning segments

Which of the following comes closest to you view? ● Benefits should be increased by less than the amount of inflation to reduce taxes for working people
● Don't know ● Benefits should be increased by the same amount as inflation even if that leaves no room for tax cuts for working people

Segment	Less than inflation	Don't know	Same as inflation
All	40	16	44
Progressive Activists	23	6	71
Civic Pragmatists	28	17	55
Disengaged Battlers	27	24	49
Established Liberals	34	19	47
Loyal Nationals	47	12	41
Disengaged Traditionalists	38	28	34
Backbone Conservatives	57	10	32

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023

33
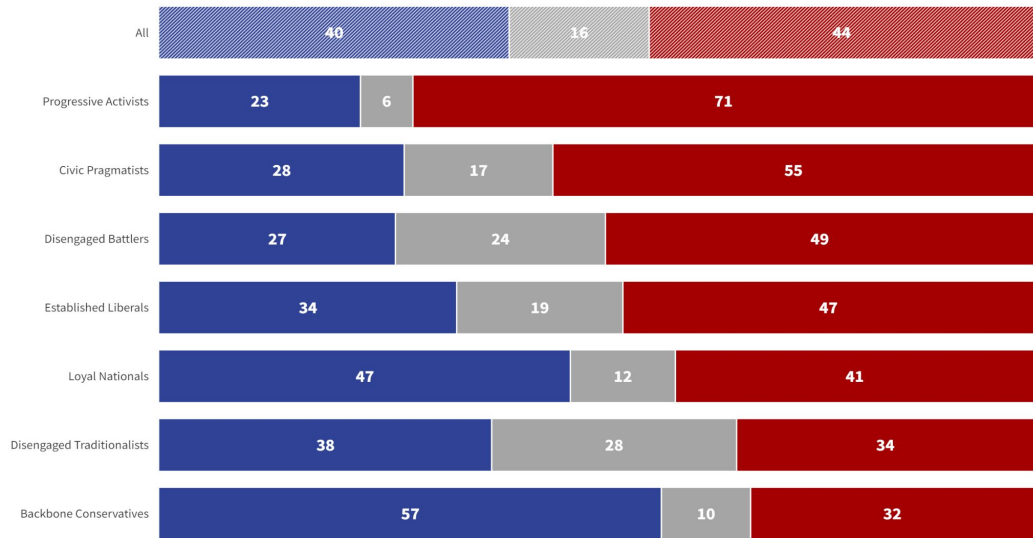
Are benefits too high or too low?

While the public are fairly evenly divided on whether benefits are too high or too low. More politically-oriented groups such as Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives have clear views that benefits are respectively too low and too high.

Red Wall Loyal Nationals are slightly more likely to believe that benefits are too low whereas Blue Wall Established Liberals are more evenly divided.

The public are fairly evenly divided over whether benefits are too high or too low

Which of the following comes closest to your view. The level of benefits (such as Universal Credit) are...
● Much too Low ● A bit too low ● About right ● Don't know ● A bit too high ● Much too high

Group	Much too Low	A bit too low	About right	Don't know	A bit too high	Much too high
All	15	19	26	16	11	13
Progressive Activists	38	38	17	5		3
Civic Pragmatists	18	26	28	19	3	6
Disengaged Battlers	29	19	20	15	6	11
Established Liberals	4	18	37	19	16	6
Loyal Nationals	17	21	24	11	10	16
Disengaged Traditionalists	12	10	24	29	8	18
Backbone Conservatives	3	12	28	15	22	20

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023
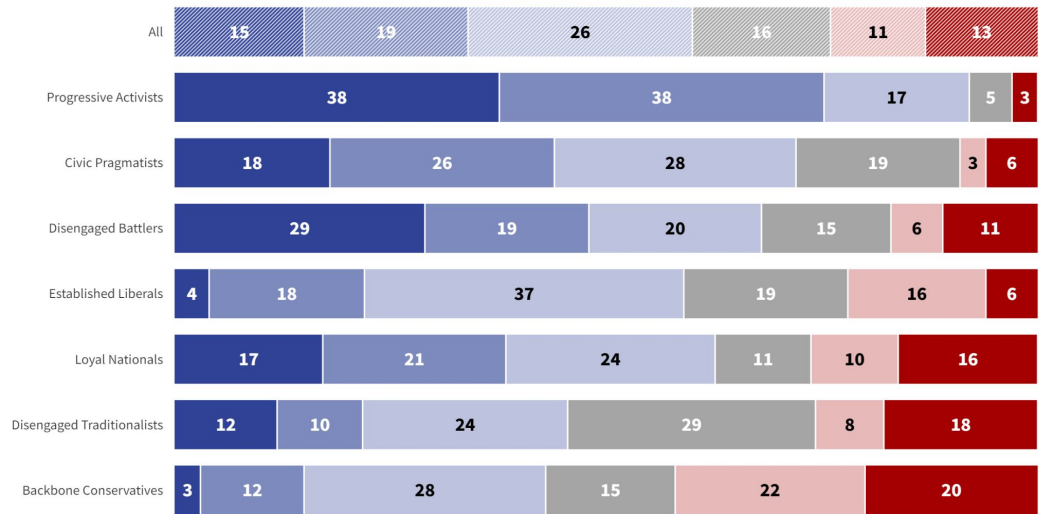
Is it too difficult or too easy to claim benefits?

While the public are split on the rates of benefits, they are more than twice as likely to think that it is too easy than too difficult to claim benefits.
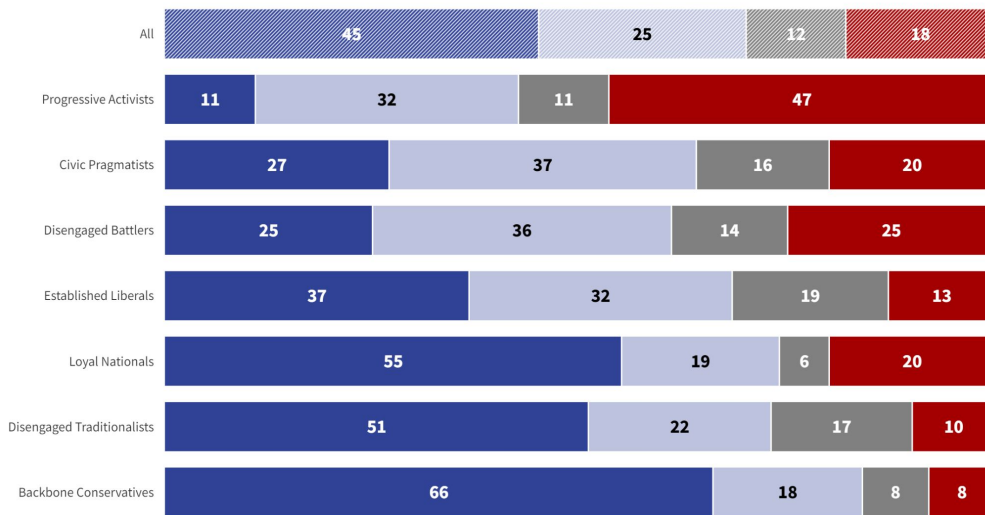
This is a view held most strongly amongst the Conservative base, and there are clear challenges in regaining the trust of those Red Wall and Blue Wall groups who differ on whether it's too easy to claim benefits in the UK. More than half of Loyal Nationals (55 per cent) think it's too easy to claim benefits, whereas only over a third of Established Liberals (37 per cent) hold the same view.

Britons are more than twice as likely to think that its too easy to claim benefits than too difficult

Which of the following comes closest to your view? ● It is too easy to claim benefits in the UK
● It is neither too hard nor too easy to claim benefits in the UK   ● Don't know   ● It is too hard to claim benefits in the UK

Group	Too easy	Neither	Don't know	Too hard
All	45	25	12	18
Progressive Activists	11	32	11	47
Civic Pragmatists	27	37	16	20
Disengaged Battlers	25	36	14	25
Established Liberals	37	32	19	13
Loyal Nationals	55	19	6	20
Disengaged Traditionalists	51	22	17	10
Backbone Conservatives	66	18	8	8

More in Common
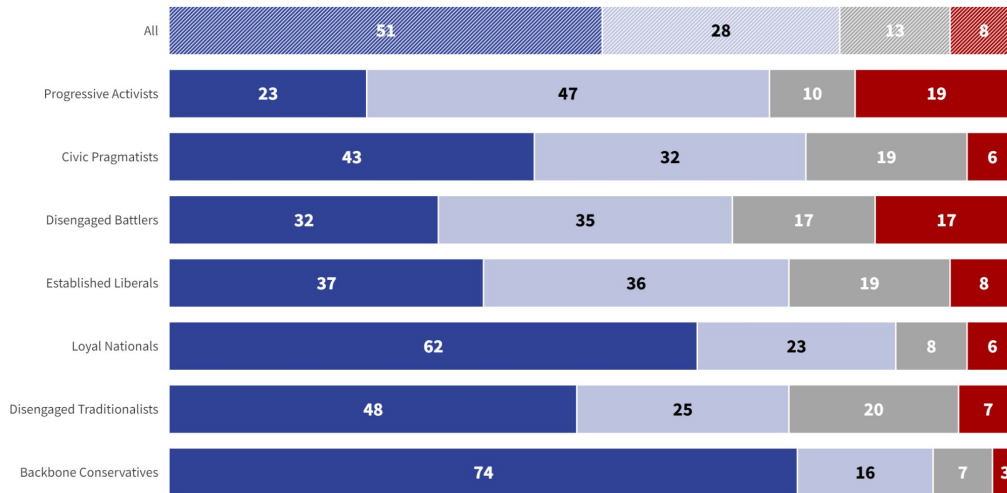
Source: More in Common, October 2023

Support for getting more benefit claimants back to work

There is also significant demand for the government to make the payment of benefits more conditional on claimants doing more to look for work opportunities. The public are six times more likely to say that the government should be doing more to force benefits claimants to look for work (51 per cent) than those who think they should be doing less (8 per cent). This policy of making benefits conditional on doing more to look for work is particularly popular among Red Wall Loyal National voters (62 per cent support) and Backbone Conservatives (74 per cent support).

The public want to see the government to do more to get benefit claimants back into work

Which of the following comes closest to your view? ● The Government should do more to force benefit claimants to look for work
● The Government already does enough to force benefit claimants to look for work ● Don't know
● The Government should do less to force benefit claimants to look for work

	More	Enough	Don't know	Less
All	51	28	13	8
Progressive Activists	23	47	10	19
Civic Pragmatists	43	32	19	6
Disengaged Battlers	32	35	17	17
Established Liberals	37	36	19	8
Loyal Nationals	62	23	8	6
Disengaged Traditionalists	48	25	20	7
Backbone Conservatives	74	16	7	3

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Source: More in Common, October 2023

Appendix

Methodology

Fieldwork dates
14th to 16th October 2023
31st October to 2nd November 2023

Interview method
Online

Sample size
2,336 Adults aged 18+
2,042 Adults aged 18+

Population effectively sampled
All voters, Great Britain (NI excluded)

Weighting method
The data is weighted on several measures - age/gender interlocked, education, ethnicity, and region - all to nationally representative proportions. In addition, it is also weighted by 2019 GE vote (of registered voters)

More in Common is a member of the BPC and abides by its rules

Progressive Activists' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party

● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election　●1　●2　●3　●4　●5　●6　●7　●8　●9

● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party											
Conservative Party	77	2	2	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	3
Labour Party	11	1	4	4	6	6	9	10	11	7	31
Liberal Democrats	28	4	4	8	10	20	11	5	3	3	4
Green Party	17	3	6	2	10	21	12	11	9	3	6
Reform UK	74	4	2	3	3	6	3	3	1	2	

Source: More in Common, October 2023

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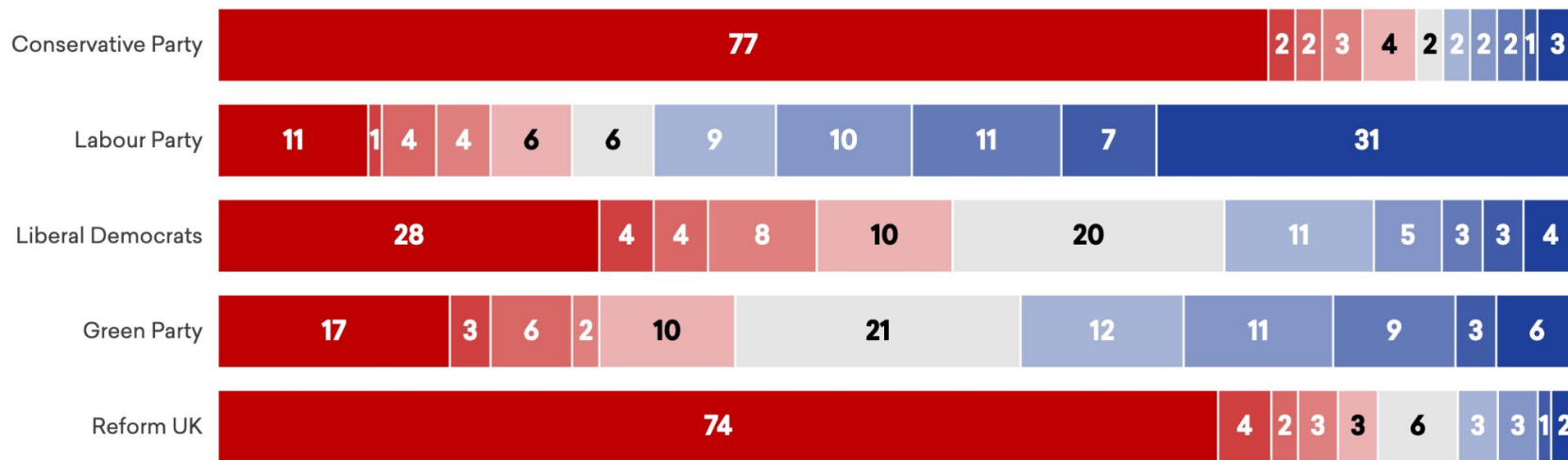
Civic Pragmatists' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party

● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election   ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4   5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party											
Conservative Party	62	4	4	3	3	13	2	3	1	1	4
Labour Party	18	4	2	2	3	20	6	6	11	10	20
Liberal Democrats	31	3	2	11	7	23	8	6	6	1	2
Green Party	35	4	8	8	6	19	6	7	4	1	2
Reform UK	64	9	4	6	3	11	1	1			

40

Disengaged Battlers' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party
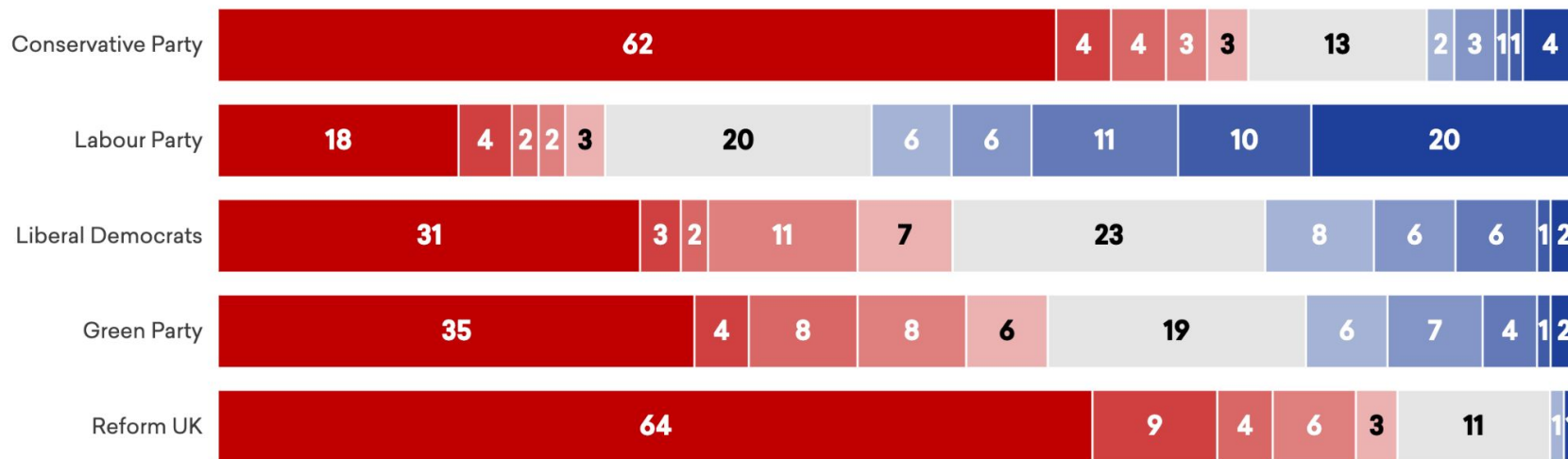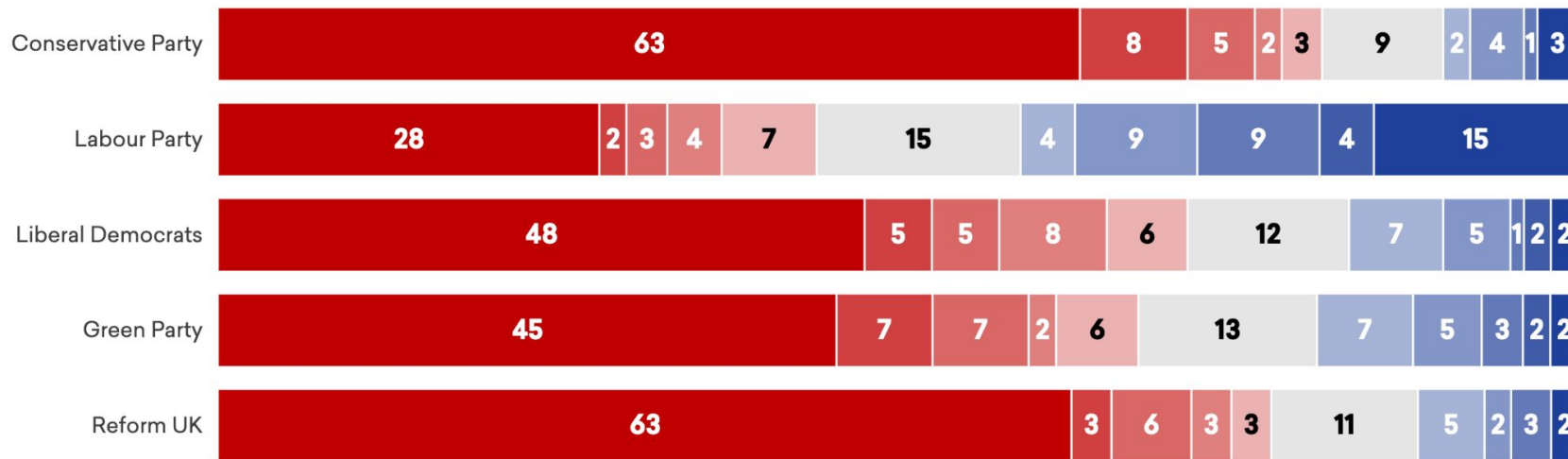
● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election   ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	63	8	5	2	3	9	2	4	1		3
Labour Party	28	2	3	4	7	15	4	9	9	4	15
Liberal Democrats	48	5	5	8	6	12	7	5	1	2	2
Green Party	45	7	7	2	6	13	7	5	3	2	2
Reform UK	63	3	6	3	3	11	5	2	3		2

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Established Liberals' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party

● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election ●1 ●2 ●3 ●4 ●5 ●6 ●7 ●8 ●9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	29	5	4	4	2	21	7	9	8	5	6
Labour Party	20	6	6	8	6	23	5	6	9	3	8
Liberal Democrats	22	5	5	10	5	22	12	9	5	3	2
Green Party	26	5	9	6	10	22	9	8	3	1	1
Reform UK	40	7	8	6	7	17	2	8	2	3	

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Loyal Nationals' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party
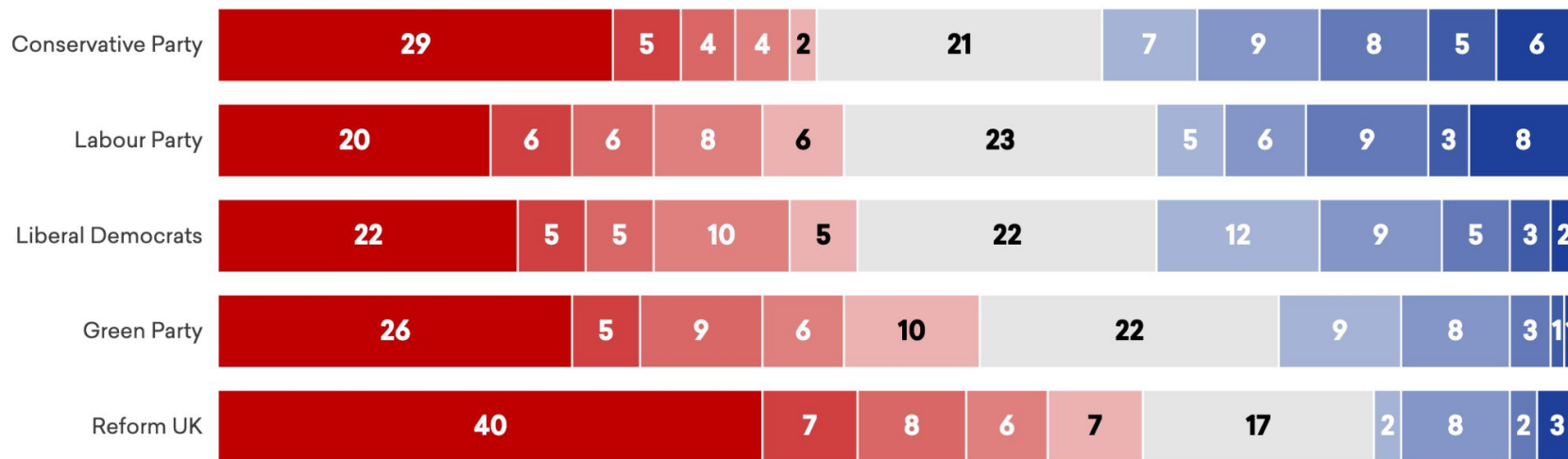
● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election   ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ○ 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	40	5	4	5	3	11	5	6	7	5	10
Labour Party	27	5	2	4	6	12	5	6	9	6	19
Liberal Democrats	39	6	4	7	7	11	6	5	5	2	7
Green Party	42	6	5	8	5	12	5	5	6	2	5
Reform UK	39	6	7	6	6	11	4	5	6	3	8

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Source: More in Common, October 2023

Disengaged Traditionalists' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party
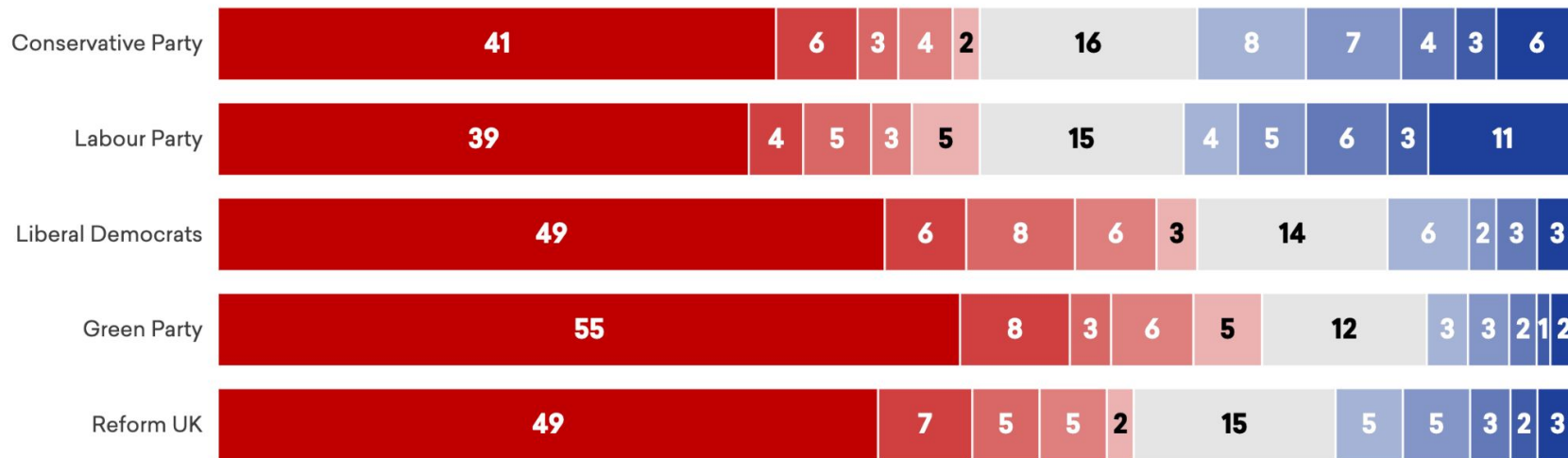
● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election   ●1 ●2 ●3 ●4 ●5 ●6 ●7 ●8 ●9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	41	6	3	4	2	16	8	7	4	3	6
Labour Party	39	4	5	3	5	15	4	5	6	3	11
Liberal Democrats	49	6	8	6	3	14	6	2	3		3
Green Party	55	8	3	6	5	12	3	3	2	1	2
Reform UK	49	7	5	5	2	15	5	5	3	2	3

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Backbone Conservatives' likelihood to vote

How likely is it that you would vote for each of the following parties at the next election? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 indicates that you definitely will not vote for the party, and 10 that you definitely will vote for the party

● 0 - Definitely will not vote for this party at the next election   ●1 ●2 ●3 ●4 ○5 ●6 ●7 ●8 ●9
● 10 - Definitely will vote for this party at the next election

Party	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Conservative Party	19	3	5	4	6	13	7	8	10	6	20
Labour Party	35	6	6	4	5	14	7	5	7	2	9
Liberal Democrats	39	8	7	6	6	16	6	4	5	1	2
Green Party	48	10	6	6	5	10	4	3	3	1	4
Reform UK	42	9	8	7	6	10	5	3	4	3	3

More in Common

Source: More in Common, October 2023