



# **Wheelbarrow politics:** Can Labour hold its electoral coalition together?

*Labour Party Conference Fringe Event 2024*



# **Introduction: Labour's electoral wheelbarrow**

# The British Seven Segments

## Progressive Activists



...a group for whom politics is an important part of their identity and who seek to correct longstanding injustices

## Civic Pragmatists



...a group that cares about others, at home or abroad. They wish for less conflict and more compromise

## Disengaged Battlers



... a group that are just getting by. They blame the system for its unfairness, but not other people

## Established Liberals



...a group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo

## Loyal Nationals



...a patriotic group, who worry that our way of life is threatened and also feel our society has become more unfair

## Disengaged Traditionalists



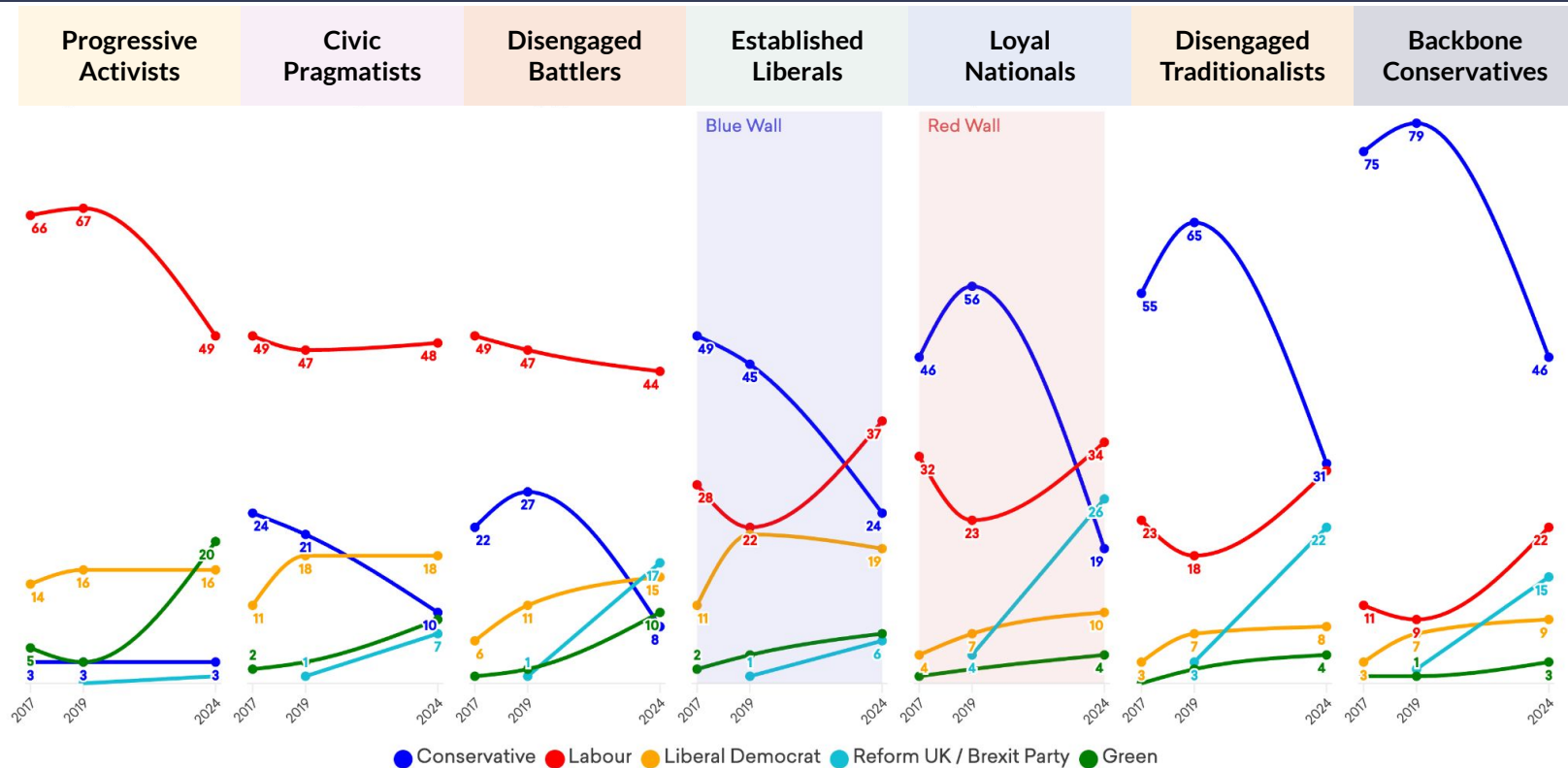
...a group that values a well-ordered society and prides in hard work. They want strong leadership that keeps people in line

## Backbone Conservatives



... a group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future outside of Europe, and who keenly follow the news

# How did the Seven Segments vote?



Labour's 2019 coalition

Labour's 2024 coalition

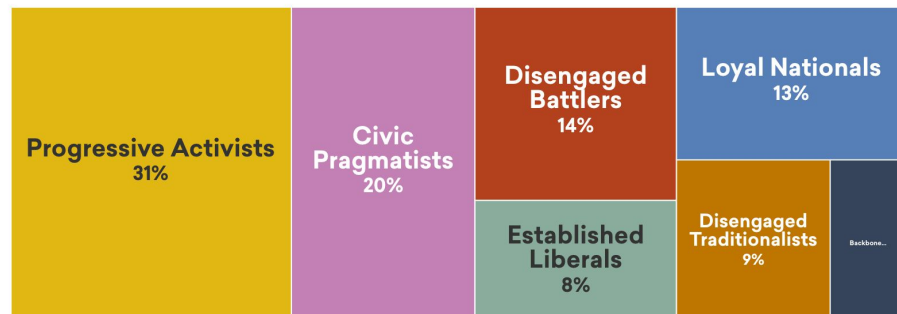
# Labour's electoral wheelbarrow

**In 2019, Labour's voters drew from a relatively uniform base** - half of their supporters stemming from the most left-leaning segments, Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists.

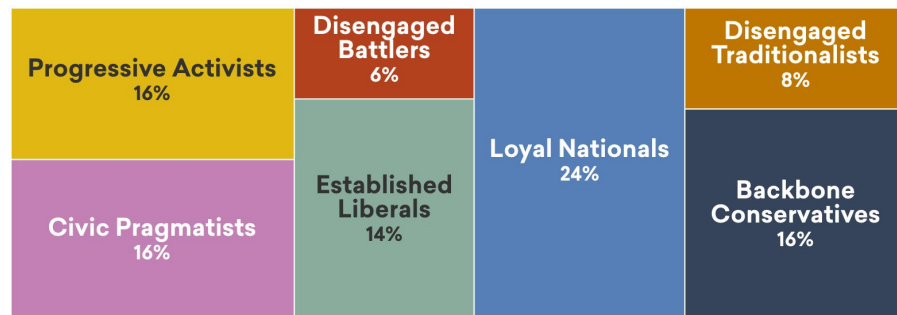
**The success of the 2024 strategy means Labour's voter coalition is much broader but potentially more unwieldy** - the two progressive segments only make up a third of Labour's new voter base, while half of their voters are from socially conservative Loyal National, Backbone Conservative, and Disengaged Traditionalist groups.

**Labour's challenge resembles that of wheeling an overloaded wheelbarrow down a narrow path - lean too much one way to appeal to just one segment and the whole lot might spill out.**

Segment of 2019 Labour Voters



Segment of 2024 Labour Voters



# What makes Labour's coalition so unique

## **Labour's most efficient coalition**

- By strategically targeting the right voters (and letting go of others), Labour won 149 more seats than they did in 2017 on 3 million fewer votes

## **Labour's most rural coalition**

- By some counts, Labour now has more rural constituencies than the Conservatives, possibly for the first time ever

**Lowest turnout** - Labour's victory was the second lowest turnout election in British history since universal suffrage. Where these non-voters go next could determine the next election

## **Labour's most unenthusiastic electorate**

- The public are increasingly convinced politicians can't meet the challenges of today, having extremely high levels of disillusionment with mainstream politicians

## **Labour's most marginal victory**

- Nationwide 115 seats were won by a margin of 5% or less, 48 more than in 2019. Some senior cabinet members now hold extremely marginal positions

# How Labour got here

**Labour's historic election result was caused by remarkable voter efficiency.** Labour shed votes in its safest seats and stacked them up in the seats they needed to win. This has left Labour with an extremely large - but highly marginal - majority.

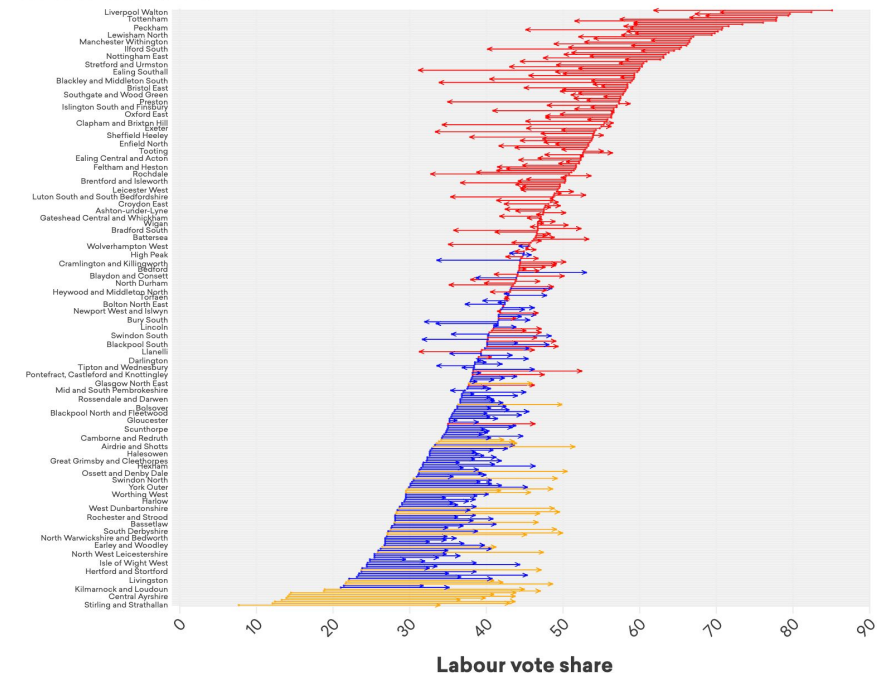
In terms of voter groups, Labour has lost some of its most progressive voters in urban city centre seats and gained its most rural coalition in the party's history.

In part this was because 2024 saw a high anti-incumbency vote.

Changes in Labour vote share since 2019

2019 winner ● SNP ● Con ● Lab

Assorted constituency names



# Labour's voters agree that the country needs change, but aren't in agreement on what that change should look like

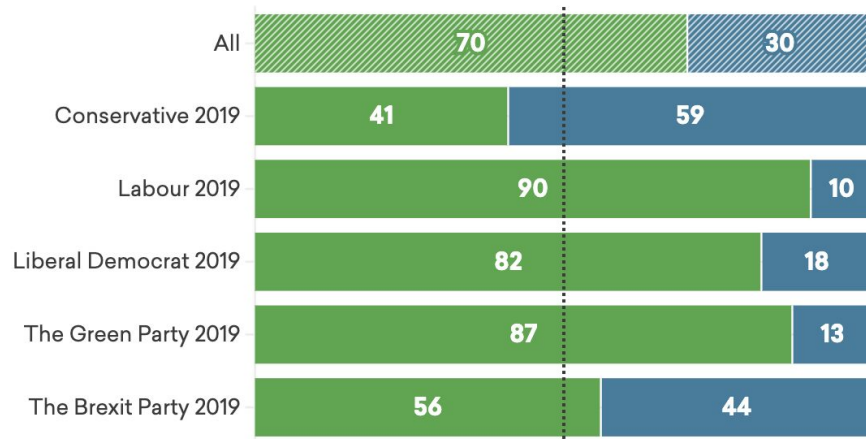
The overwhelming majority of voters wanted change at this election. A combination of broken public services, a feeling of chaos within government and the loss of trust since Partygate, meant very few were convinced by the Conservatives' argument that we needed to 'stick with the plan'.

But beyond that, there is not so much that unites Labour's coalition. While they all agree that the cost of living and NHS are top priorities, there is more disagreement on what Labour's immigration or welfare policy should be.

## Going into the General Election, the public were clear that it was time for change

Which comes closest to how you are feeling about the next general election?

● It's time for change ● We need to stick with the plan





# How can Labour keep its wheelbarrow on course?

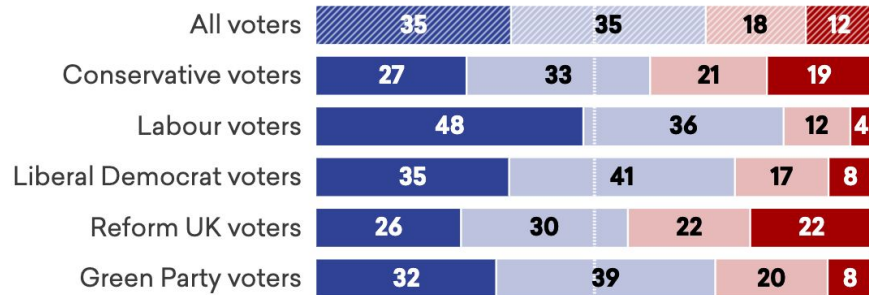
While balancing the needs of such a diverse coalition will be challenging - across the country voters think Labour has a mandate to radically change Britain and anything less will not be seen as a satisfactory response to the scale of the problems Britain faces.

Moving fast on ambitious policies will appeal to a broader range of voters than smaller incremental changes which run the risk of being an unsatisfactory response to the scale of the challenges at hand.

## Voters say the election gives Labor a mandate to radically change Britain

Which comes closest to your view?

- 1 - The election result gives Keir Starmer a mandate to radically change Britain
- 2 -
- 3 -
- 4 - The election result does not give Keir Starmer a mandate to radically change Britain



# The Conservatives are still deeply unpopular

Despite the growing pessimism from some voters about the new Labour Government the Conservatives remain far more unpopular.

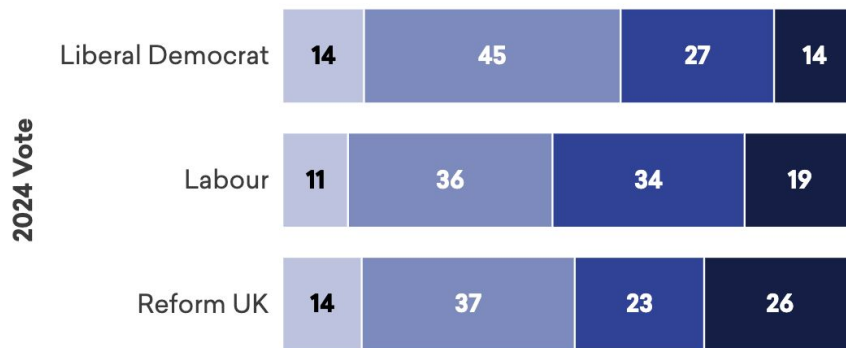
**More than half of those who switched from the Conservatives to Labour in 2024 say it will be more than ten years before they vote for the Conservatives again.** And while Labour has fallen slightly in voting intention polling, the Conservatives have not recovered at all.

However, Labour does not just face a challenge from the Conservatives over the course of this Parliament, a fragmented electorate means there are multiple fronts against which Labour must buttress itself.

## Many former Conservative voters will never vote Conservative again

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?

- Within the next four years
- Five to ten years
- More than ten years
- Never



# And Labour has plenty of popular policies

Individually, many of Labour's policies introduced or proposed so far are popular - from GB Energy to workers' rights. Labour's bigger challenge is convincing voters that the individual policies fit into a bigger whole that meets the need of the moment and can fix the country's biggest problems.

And while those individual policies have been popular, the decision to means test the winter fuel allowance has become Labour's defining policy so far.

## Strong support for Labour's workers' rights policies

Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose the following proposals.

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose  
● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose





# **The 36 per cent strategy**

Why Labour must increase its  
vote share

# Labour can't afford to stand still

The fragmented electorate means that **Labour can't afford not to increase its vote share at the next General Election.**

Under a modest scenario - where the Conservatives persuade some non-voters back to vote and some Reform voters are tempted back to the Conservatives - **the Conservatives would end up as the largest party** with 20 more seats than Labour unless Labour finds new votes from elsewhere.

It's also possible that the Conservatives recover in other ways - for example lower rates of anti-Tory tactical voting could decrease the efficiency of Labour's vote and make it easier for the Conservatives to win some seats.

A modest Conservative recovery scenario:

*If the Conservatives ...*  
**Encourage 10% of 2024 non-voters to vote for them...**  
*And*  
**Win back 50% of 2024 Reform voters...**



*Then at the next General Election*  
**Labour has 273 seats**  
**Conservatives have 293 seats**

*Assuming no other changes in votes or turnout.*

# Labour's vote share needs to be a floor not a ceiling

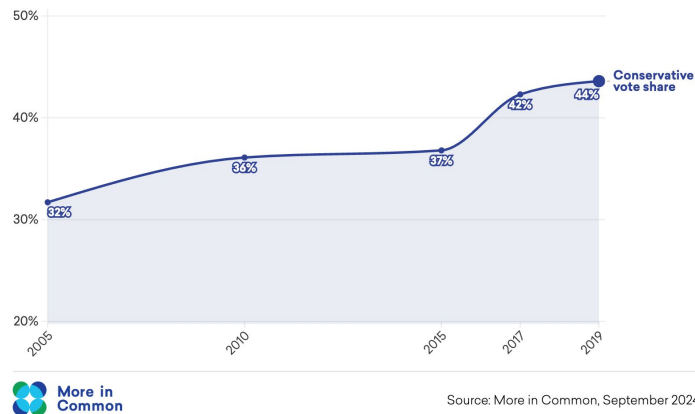
To avoid the risk of being challenged by a 'unite the right' strategy Labour needs to aim for a 36 per cent vote share which would enable it to hold at least 350 seats in parliament.

This is not unachievable - the Conservative Party increased their vote share at every election from taking office in 2010 up to and including 2019. Particularly by cannibalising UKIP, they increased their vote share by more than 5 points between 2015 and 2017, and even while challenged on the right between 2010-2015 still managed to increase their vote share.

While much depends on the efficiency of any new voters that Labour wins over, Labour needs to see its current vote share of 33 per cent as a baseline, not the high point for the next election.

Under this modest Conservative Recovery scenario, **Labour needs roughly a 36% vote share** to maintain a workable majority with 350 seats in parliament

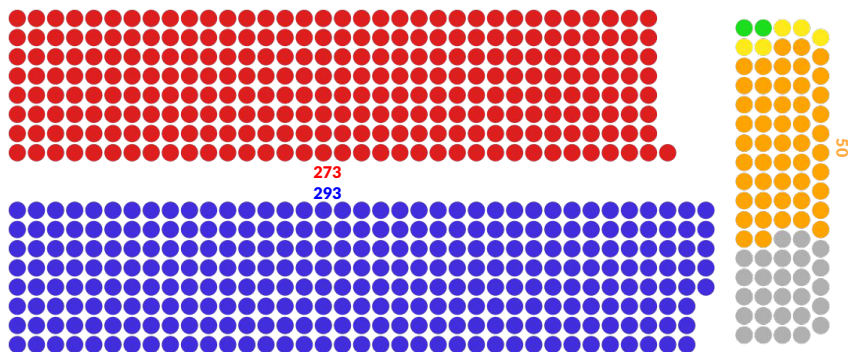
**The Conservatives increased their vote share for three elections in a row after being elected**



36% is a rough target assuming proportional swing to Labour from a mix of the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Greens and independent candidates. More efficient combinations of these parties would lower the vote share target, and more uniform swing or less efficient new voters means a higher vote share would be needed for 350 seats.

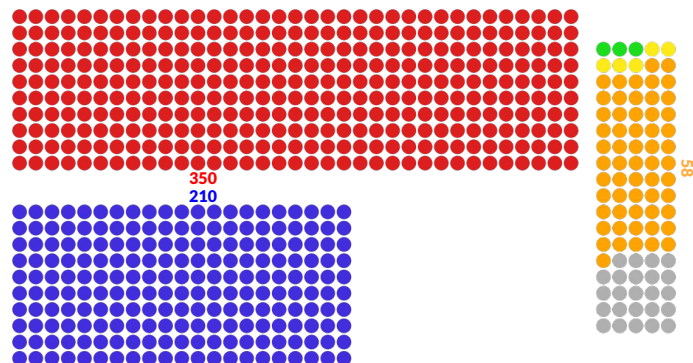
# What would this mean for parliament?

## Conservative recovery scenario



A Conservative recovery wouldn't just spell trouble for Labour. In this scenario, Reform UK loses their entire parliamentary party and the Liberal Democrats lose 22 seats. It would make the Conservatives the largest party, although coalition forming would be difficult.

## Labour on 36%



There are a number of ways that Labour could gain the extra votes required to hit 36 per cent national vote share - and some are more efficient than others (there are many scenarios where Labour hits 36 per cent without holding 350 seats). In this case, half of Labour's new votes come from the Conservatives and the other half from progressive parties of the left.

# Where might Labour gain new voters from?

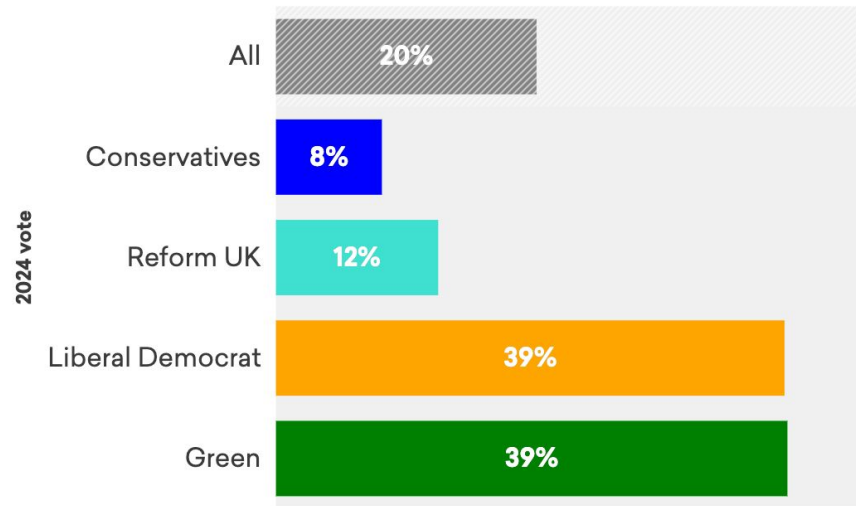
Labour's best chance at building an efficient 36 per cent coalition requires attracting voters from both the Conservatives and from progressive parties.

Only 8 per cent of Conservative voters said they also considered Labour at this election, but given the Conservatives' vote share, this is a relatively large number of potential voters located in the most important areas. Labour will also have to convince some of the 40 per cent of Liberal Democrat and Green voters who considered voting Labour too. In focus groups many Green and independent voters say they would have backed Labour if the outcome had looked closer.

One major challenge: currently voters of every party other than Labour give Keir Starmer a negative approval rating.

## 20% of Labour's non-voters considered voting Labour

"Which other parties might you consider voting for?" Proportion selecting Labour





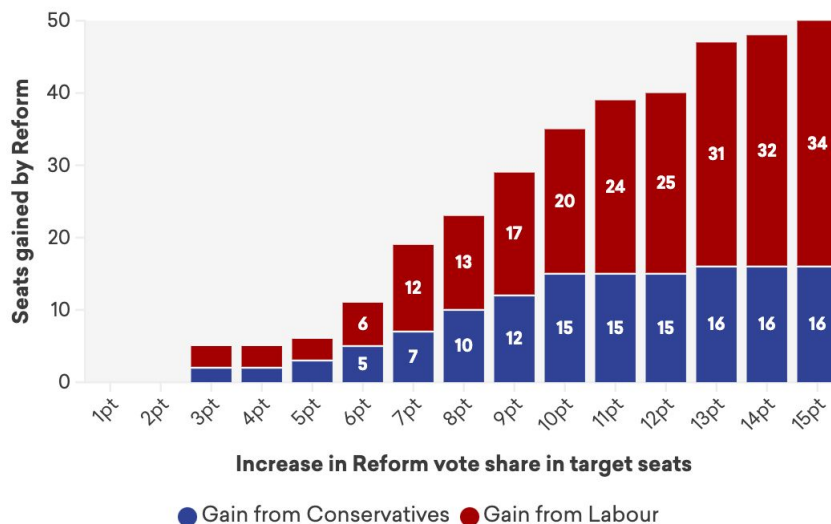
# What would a Reform rise mean for Labour?

Given the size of Labour's current majority, a further increase in Reform's vote share would be a bigger problem for the Conservatives than for Labour, but that does not mean that Labour should ignore the risk from Reform.

If Reform followed a Liberal Democrat strategy of targeting their 50 top performing seats, 34 of them are currently held by Labour and only 16 by the Conservatives - they could win all of these with a 15 point vote share increase in those seats.

Reform's national vote share would not need to rise significantly for this threat to materialise - a focus on efficiency from Reform would meaningfully challenge Labour, particularly if their new votes come from Labour rather than Conservative voters.

**If Reform targeted 50 seats, they could win a good proportion with modest gains in vote share**



# What would a Green rise mean for Labour?

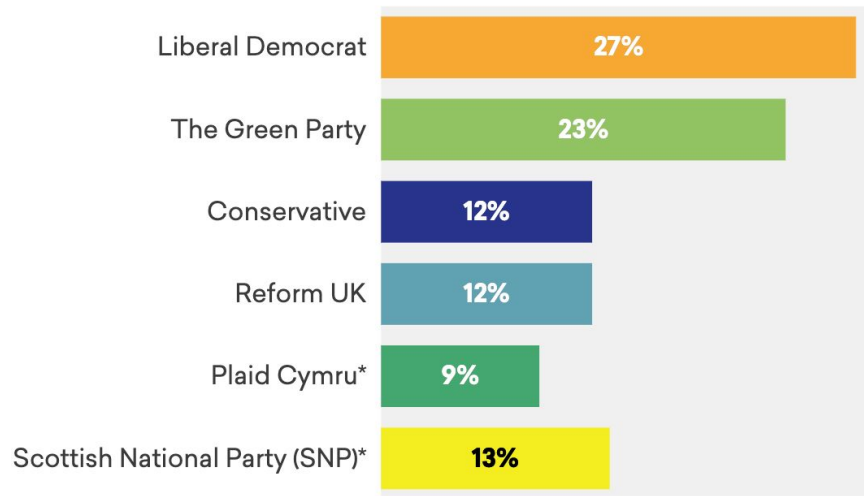
The Green Party are in second place to Labour in 35 seats, although in many of these constituencies they are a distant second place.

If the Green Party repeats its already remarkable success in Bristol Central, they would still only win nine further seats, making a small dent in the overall size of Labour's majority. However, in other seats, the Greens could split the left vote and allow the Conservatives to win those seats.

**Almost a quarter of Labour voters might consider voting for the Green Party.**

## Which other parties did Labour voters consider?

Which other parties might you consider voting for? Select all that apply.



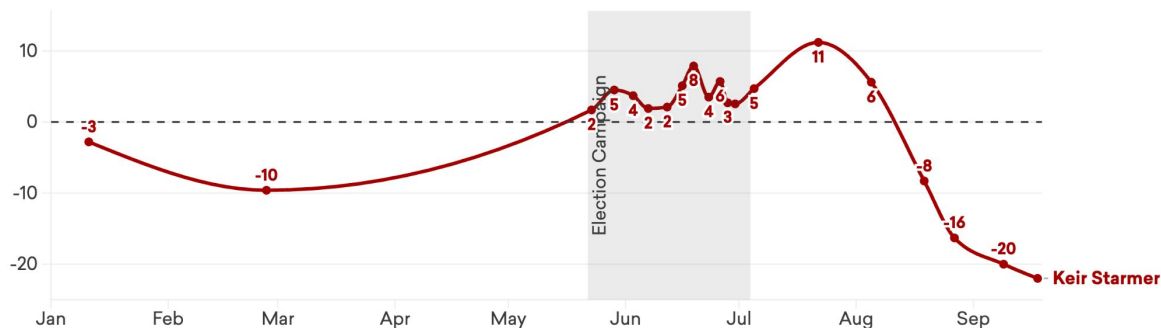


# **Labour's first 82 days in office - checking in on public perceptions of Labour**

# Britain's shortest honeymoon?

## Keir Starmer Approval Tracker

Net approval rating



Source: More in Common • Proportion who think Starmer is doing a "somewhat good" or "very good" job, minus those who think he is doing a "somewhat bad" or "very bad" job

Last fieldwork: 16-18 September. Note latest fieldwork did not include a "don't know" option.



**Keir Starmer has had the shortest 'honeymoon period' of any new Prime Minister** . Falling from a post-election approval rating high of +11, he now sits at -22. In focus groups, many people now speak about the Labour Government no differently to how they spoke of the Conservatives. Labour rapidly needs to change this narrative before it settles in.

# Britain's shortest honeymoon?

In a word, how would you describe how Keir Starmer is doing as Prime Minister?



In a word, how would you describe how Labour is doing in government?



# The public mood is more pessimistic

The public are three times more likely to think that Starmer is doing worse than they expected than to think he is doing better than expected .

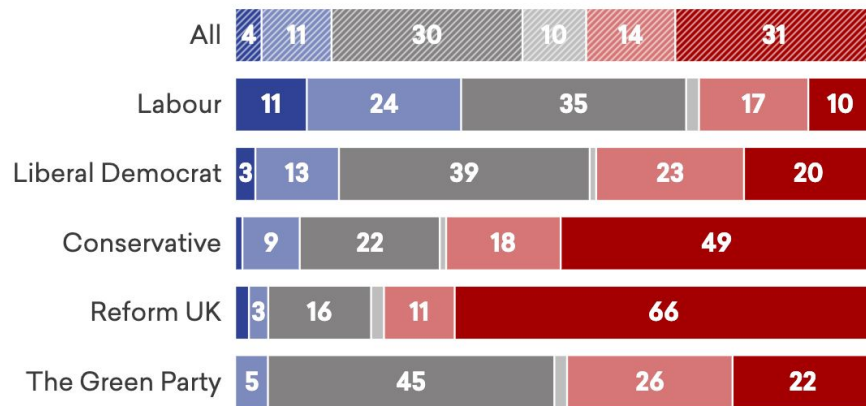
While Labour voters are more likely to say Keir Starmer is exceeding expectations, he is underperforming the expectations of 27 per cent of Labour voters and 42 per cent of voters who switched to Labour from the Conservatives this year.

In focus groups, people are sympathetic to the argument that Labour inherited a tough situation - and the riots disrupted his first month in office - but they want to see Labour moving more quickly to deliver on their promises to fix public services and ease the cost of living.

## 45 per cent of Britons say Starmer is underperforming their expectations

Since he became Prime Minister has Keir Starmer performed better, worse or about the same as you expected?

● Much better ● A bit better ● About the same ● Don't know  
● A bit worse ● Much worse



# Mixed views on the early months

*I feel a bit disappointed. Maybe I'm expecting too much too soon, but I dunno, **have I been duped?** Was I naive? I just thought that there was be this massive push of change but we've been in such rubbish times for so long and I put my faith in Labour I thought right, there's going to be a change here for me, my job, my mortgage rates, my son, his education and I haven't felt anything. **It just feels like it's getting worse** .*

*We've taken money from pensioners that is just lower than low really? Isn't it? So emotive? I'd rather him put 1% more on my tax or whatever than see my parents not being able to put the heat. It just feels so wrong.*

**Rebecca, Birmingham**

*I know they want to be seen to be tough but do things gradually, but they should do positive things first. Give the country a positive feel. Get off on the right foot. It seemed a **He's come out and he said, I'm not here to be Mr. Popular, but why not? Why not try and be popular?** really strange thing to say. I'm tough. Look at me. People have had a rough few years. How about a bit of positivity I thought, **Kevin, Birmingham***

*The fact that this (WFA) is the first thing that they've come in and done and when you are trying to get trust and build confidence in a new government party, **the whole country's in tears with regards to what they've just gone and done** .*  
**Chris, Birmingham**

***It worries me that the budget is next month** , isn't it? It's October and they're like, things are going to get a lot worse before they get better. You've dropped that massive bombshell that my pensioner parents who are both disabled don't qualify for pension credit and now not going to get their heating allowance. Been Labour voters all their lives and that's what you've done to them. **Kerry, Birmingham***



# Volatility in the public mood

## The wisdom of the crowds does not rate Labour's chances at the next election particularly highly .

Most voters don't think Labour will be re-elected at the next General Election, and don't think Keir Starmer will be Prime Minister at that point either.

Labour voters are more optimistic, but still a third of them don't think Labour will be re-elected.

In part, this reflects the recent growth in volatility among the electorate. The era of landslides that guarantee multi term Government appears to be over.

## Most Britons don't think Labour will be re-elected at the next election

Which of the following comes closest to your current view?

I think this Labour Government will be re-elected at the next General Election

40

I don't think this Labour Government will be re-elected at the next General Election

60

Keir Starmer will still be Prime minister at the time of the next General Election

48

Keir Starmer will not still be Prime Minister at the time of the next General Election

52



# Policy performance

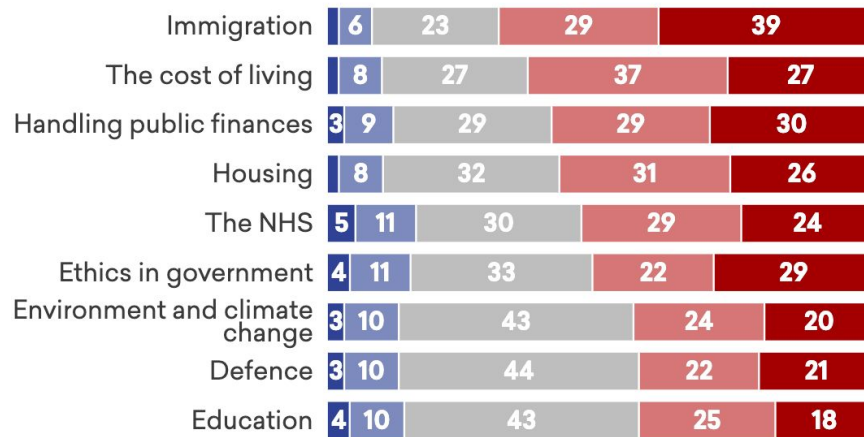
**A majority of the public think the Government is performing poorly on a range of important issues** - including immigration, the cost of living, and the NHS - the three top issues for the public as a whole on which Labour's performance will be judged.

In focus groups people do say they want to give Labour time to improve things and largely blame many of these challenges on the previous government, but the numbers are a stark reminder of the challenges that Labour faces.

## The government is performing poorly on all the most important issues

How well or badly do you think the Government is doing on each of the following areas?

● Very well ● Quite well ● OK ● Quite badly ● Very badly



# Voters' remorse?

**17 per cent of Labour voters now say they regret their vote**, far more than voters of any other party. 39 percent of Labour voters think the government is doing badly on immigration, 32 per cent think they are doing badly on the cost of living, and 28 per cent think they are doing badly on the NHS.

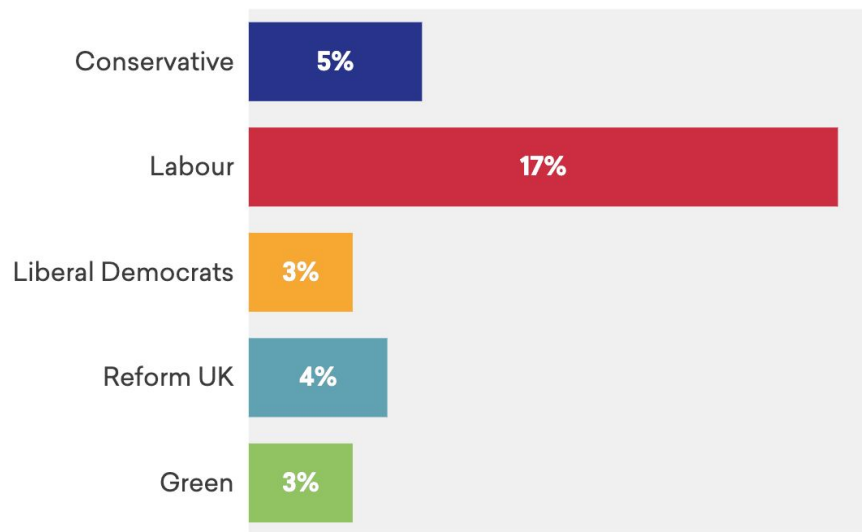
Fortunately for Labour, many of these voters do not know which other party they would vote for, although dissatisfaction with the government opens the door for the further rise of smaller parties.

*"I feel a bit disappointed. Maybe I'm expecting too much too soon, but I dunno, have I been duped? Was I naive? I just thought that there's be this massive push for change but we've been in such rubbish times for so long and I put my faith in Labour I thought right, there's going to be a change here for me, my job, my mortgage rates, my son, his education - and I haven't felt anything. It just feels like it's getting worse."*

Rebecca, Birmingham

## Almost a fifth of Labour voters regret their vote

Proportion of voters who say they regret their choice of vote



# All politicians are unpopular

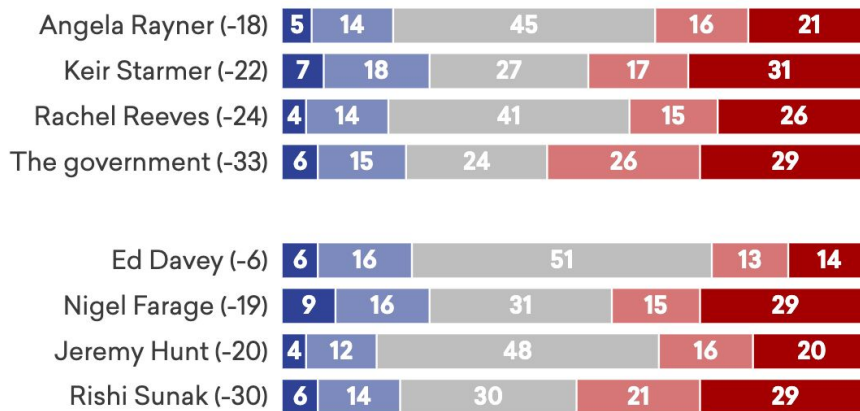
**No politicians of any party are particularly popular.** Angela Rayner is now the Labour Party's most popular major politician, albeit with a fairly poor approval rating herself. Rachel Reeves performs slightly worse than Keir Starmer.

Ed Davey is largely unknown, although people who do have an opinion are more positive about him than other leaders. Nigel Farage remains deeply polarising. Jeremy Hunt's score of -20 is a sign that it is possible for Conservatives to be more popular than Labour politicians even at the moment.

## No major politician has a positive approval rating

For each of the following, please indicate whether you think they are doing a good job or a bad job?

● Very good job ● Somewhat good job  
● Neither a good job nor a bad job ● Somewhat bad job ● Very bad job





# Meet Labour's new voter base

# Key demands from each of Labour's voter groups

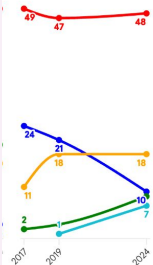
## Progressive Activists

They want Labour to be more ambitious on their progressive policies and increasingly describe the Labour Government in much the same way they talked about the last Conservative one.



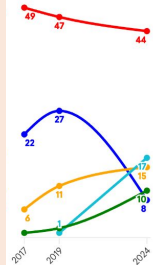
## Civic Pragmatists

The most patient with Labour on the timescale to deliver change. They'll judge the success of Labour mostly by their ability to reduce NHS waiting lists. Also the list of other parties they might switch to is smaller than other segments.



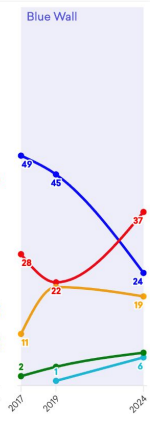
## Disengaged Battlers

Increasingly convinced that Labour and the Conservatives are no different, Labour needs to convince them to vote at all at the next General Election. Disengaged Battlers will notice improvements in their cost of living the most.



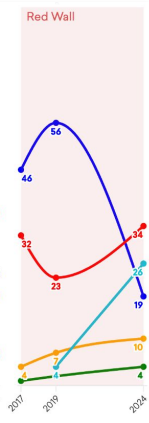
## Established Liberals

The group that swung most dramatically to Labour in 2024. Delivery and competence with the public finances will solidify Established Liberals as secure Labour voters going forwards. Increasingly the Liberal Democrats will be battling with Labour for these votes in certain seats.



## Loyal Nationals

The group that won 2019 for the Conservatives and in many ways enabled Labour's landslide this year too. They are Labour's most immigration sceptic voters and most attracted to Reform UK. Labour needs to take seriously their concerns about immigration.



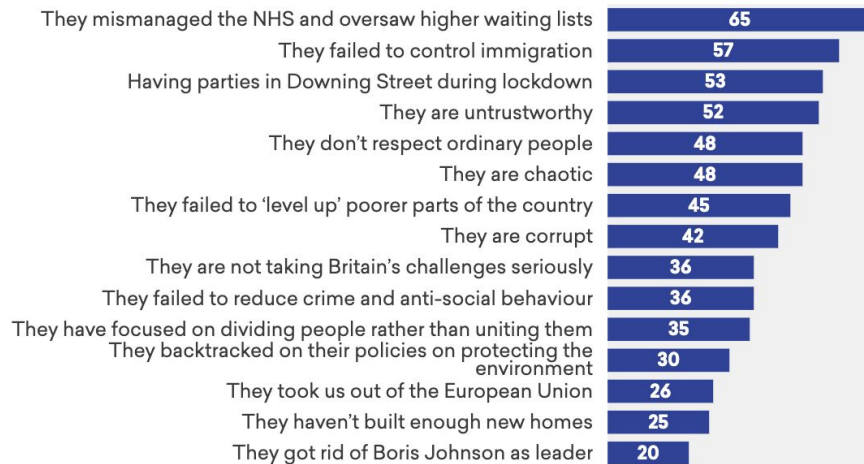
# Conservative to Labour switchers

Conservative voters mostly left the Conservative Party because they presided over long NHS waiting lists, high immigration and lockdown partying. Labour will need to deliver on the NHS, immigration and standards in office to keep them voting Labour. This group tended to be particularly drawn to the party by Keir Starmer's contrast with other leaders.

Many of these voters are unlikely to switch back to the Conservatives, but they are more tempted by Reform than any of Labour's other voters and **almost a quarter of them say that Reform was their second choice of party.**

## Why Labour's new voters left the Conservative Party

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. [Con-Lab switchers only]





# The issues

# Labour's biggest tests

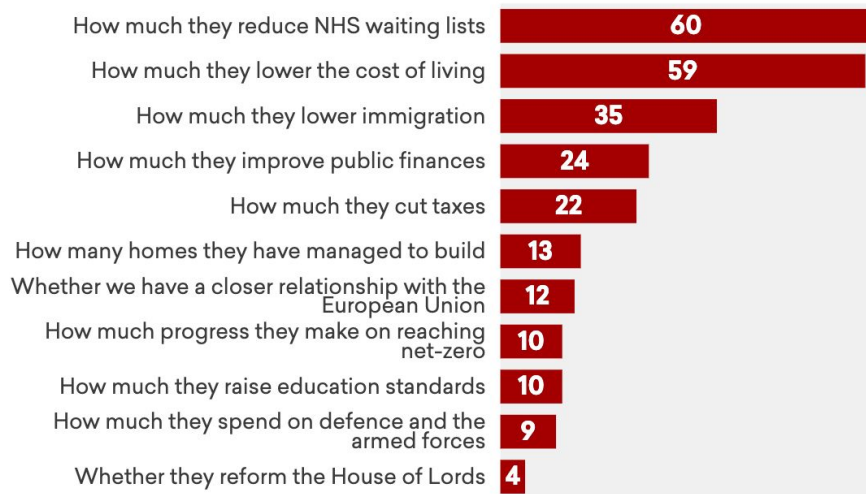
**The public have two clear tests for how they will judge the success of this Labour government: reductions in NHS waiting lists and lowering the pressure on the cost of living. Improving public finances is fourth but only selected by a quarter.**

These tests hold across all voter groups, from the most progressive to conservative ends of Labour's coalition, although there is some variation in the third/fourth priorities for different voter groups.

Progressive Activists are paying attention to progress on net zero and EU relations, Civic Pragmatists and Established Liberals are concerned about their ability to improve public finances and Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals will judge Labour for their ability to lower immigration.

## The NHS and Cost of Living are the biggest tests for Labour

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





# Cost of living

The cost of living is the most important issue to Britons and has been for the last two years. Labour won the election in part because they were more trusted on this issue. But **Labour is now only six points ahead of the Conservatives on the cost of living.**

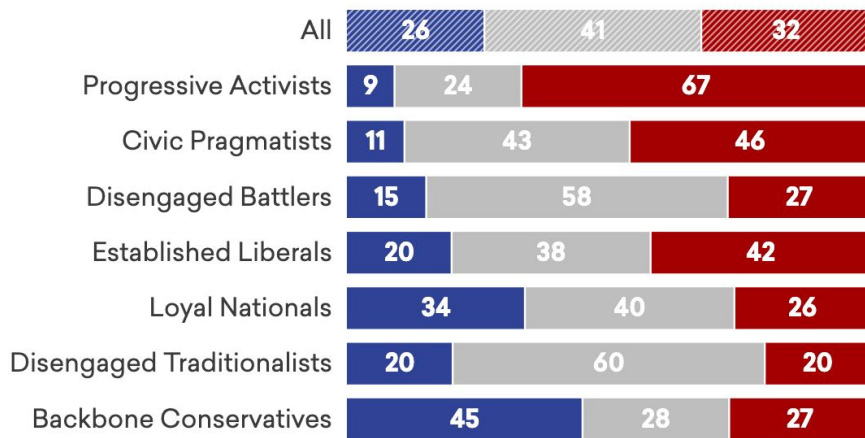
**Loyal Nationals (Red Wall voters) now trust the Conservatives more than Labour on the cost of living.** Given the electoral importance of this group, this spells potential trouble for Labour. Loyal Nationals also now say they trust the Conservatives more on crime, immigration, welfare and benefits and the asylum system.

## Labour is only narrowly more trusted than the Conservatives on the cost of living

Which of the main political parties do you trust more on the following issues?

[Cost of living]

● Conservative Party ● Don't know ● Labour Party



**Reducing NHS waiting lists is the number one way in which voters will judge Labour's success**. But the public are split on how best to get there. Progressive Activists (and to some extent Civic Pragmatists) think the government should prioritise more NHS funding, but the rest of the country thinks reform should come first.

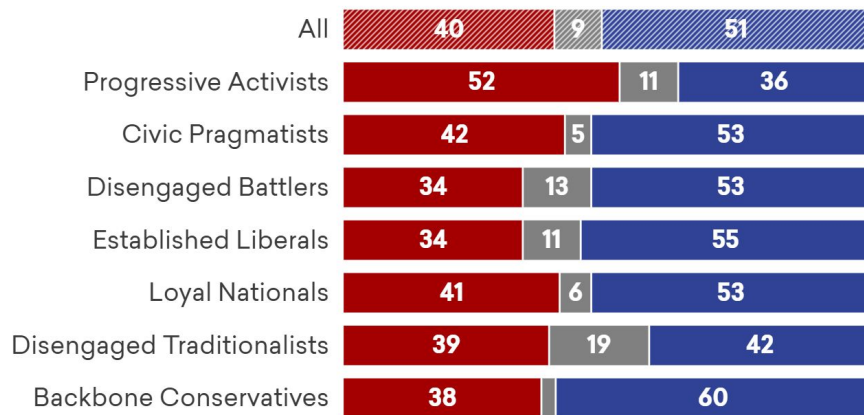
*I work in the NHS and we're just overstretched. We haven't got the capacity, people are not getting the appointments they need and deserve and **it comes down to lack of staff and staffing comes down to money**, so it's the money's not being put back into the NHS. I worry that the NHS will eventually go.* Jean, Manchester Central

*The NHS is really important. Again, **it's not going to be changed by money. It needs to be changed by a new way of running**.* Stacy, Birmingham

## The country is split on whether the NHS needs reform or more funding

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

- Provide more funding to the NHS
- Don't know
- Change the ways the NHS operates



# Immigration

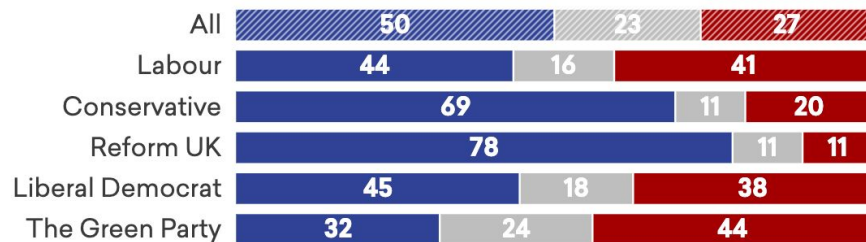
For certain groups of Labour's coalition, bringing down both legal and illegal immigration is essential. They are prepared to back a range of policy measures to get there.

The Italy-style deal with Albania that Labour have been exploring recently is popular with the general public - with 50% supporting and 27% opposing. That said, Labour's voters themselves are more split on it and are only narrowly more likely to support than oppose.

## Solid support for Albania-style asylum processing

There are suggestions that the Government is exploring adopting a scheme similar to one used in Italy where some asylum seekers who arrive in Italy are sent to Albania while their asylum claims are heard. Which comes closest to your view?

- It would be better for Britain to identify a third country where asylum seekers can be sent while their claims can be processed rather than in the UK
- Don't know
- It would be better for Britain to process all asylum seekers claims here in the UK rather than in a third country



# Climate and energy

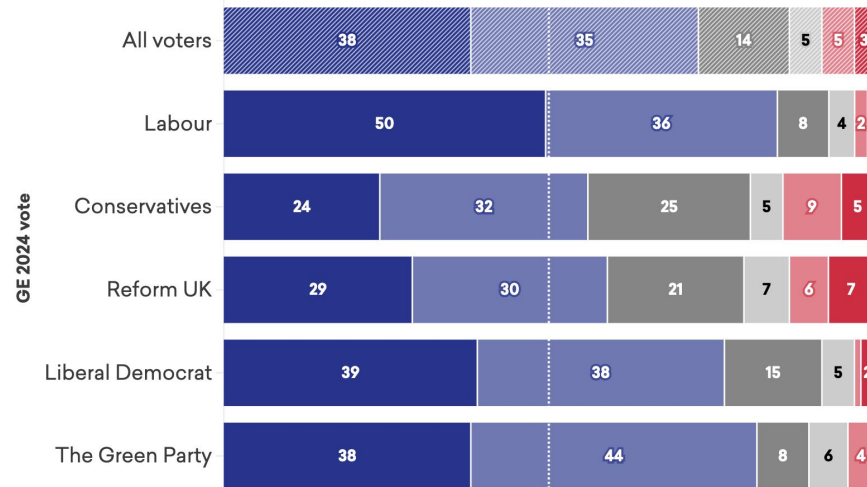
Climate is now an important hygiene test for parties after the Conservatives were seen as not making it a particular priority.

Labour's GB Energy policy was one of the most popular policies put forward by any party at this election, and is popular with voters across the political spectrum - not just because of its climate credentials but also because it's perceived ability to lower bills and increase our energy security.

Perhaps most of all, GB Energy speaks to the public's desire for agency and control after the uncertainty created by recent energy price spikes.

Do you think Labour's pledge to set up Great British Energy, a publicly-owned clean power company will be...

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



# The Gaza vote - challenges and pathways back

Labour's losses to a number of independent and Workers' Party pro-Gaza candidates in July present a number of challenges to the Party, but recent focus groups reveal potential pathways back:

## Challenges:

**Many Muslim voters are disillusioned with Labour, and feel they have not been listened to**. This is partly related to Gaza, but it goes deeper than that - most of them live in Labour safe seats and think Labour have not done enough to stand up to levels of crime or deprivation in their area, and have taken their votes for granted. **Gaza acted as a cleavage moment similar to Brexit for Red wall voters - rather than being the sole driver.**

Many Muslim voters have a lot of **trust in local independent candidates** and MPs, who they see as more relatable and visible in their communities.

Labour's **changes in government policy on Gaza have not done anything to change these voters' minds**.

*"I did see [the news about arms licences] and I just thought just because of it, **it's just trying to please some people, but the people that are looking into it know it's nonsense**. It's not going to make a difference"*  
Mohammad, Birmingham

*"I've never heard of anything that they [Labour] have done here for us in **Rochdale**"*  
Sarah, Rochdale

*"**The Labour candidates were complacent.** People had to remind MPs that we are the ones that put you in power, it's not yourselves"*  
Sahiq, Birmingham,

# The Gaza vote - challenges and pathways back

Labour's losses to a number of independent and Workers' Party pro-Gaza candidates in July present a number of challenges to the Party, but recent focus groups reveal a number of potential pathways back:

## Pathways back :

Many of these voters say they were more willing to vote for third parties this time because they knew Labour would win anyway. **In a closer election, some would go back to Labour.**

These voters have put a lot of faith in their independent candidates to deliver meaningful change for their constituencies - if they are unable to deliver on this, voters may be willing to give mainstream parties their votes once again. **Labour's best bet for winning back their lost Gaza votes is to deliver on the essentials** like crime, cost of living, and NHS.

The **salience of Gaza is already slipping**, a change in the course of the war could make it less important at the next election.

*"I always keep an eye on how close the race is. **If it was a close race I would've switched my vote over to Labour** .. I think we've had Conservatives for too long and I wouldn't have wanted them in power for longer. So if I knew it was a very close one, I would've switched my vote to Labour."*

Sahiqa, Birmingham

*"**I just wanted to make sure we didn't have the Tories** in power any more. It was anyone but the Tories"*

Alicia, Birmingham

*"George Galloway was probably only the first MP probably in my lifetime that was actually **present** in Rochdale"*  
Mohammad, Rochdale

# What does the rest of Labour's coalition think about Gaza?

It is easy to speculate about whether adopting a more pro-Palestine stance during the election would have helped Labour hold onto some of the seats it lost. But it is also important to consider the counterfactual - how would voters in the many more seats that Labour won from the Conservatives have responded?

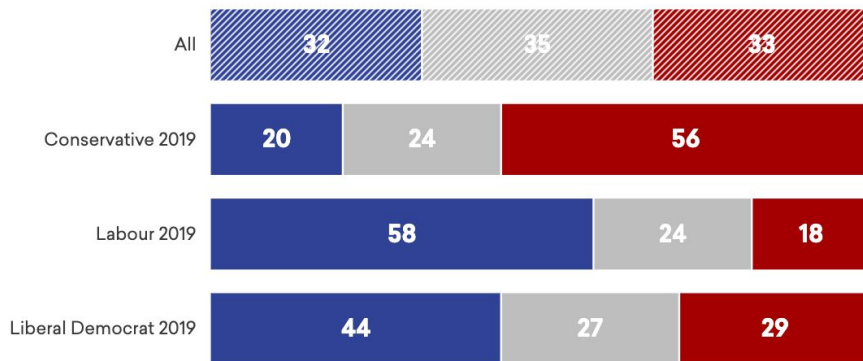
Our focus groups in Aldershot and Portsmouth showed that while these voters generally trusted Labour more than the Conservatives, national security and foreign affairs was still one of their biggest hesitations to voting Labour, as well as a sense that they had not fully changed from the Corbyn years.

*I think we go into war quicker with Labour than we would with Conservatives* Chris, Aldershot

## Britons are split on whether Starmer would be a safe pair of hands on national security

Thinking about Keir Starmer, do you think...

- Keir Starmer would be a safe pair of hands on issues of national security if he were Prime Minister
- Don't know
- Keir Starmer would not be a safe pair of hands on issues of national security if he were Prime Minister





# Handling the riots

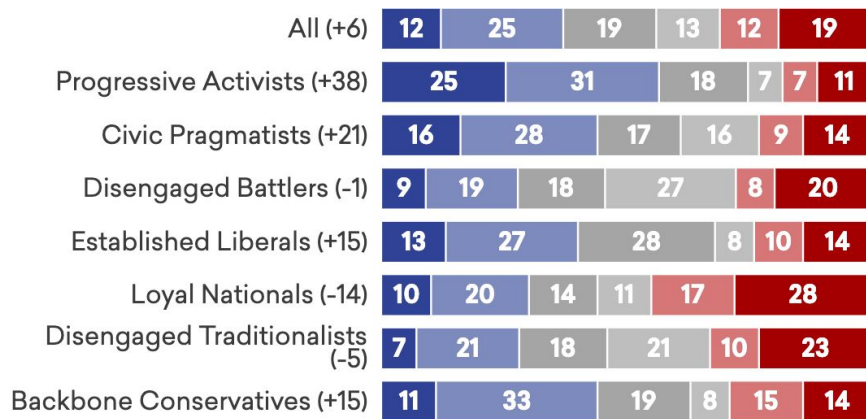
Looking back on the summer riots, the public feel positive about the Government's response and are sympathetic to the difficult position it put Labour in during their first month in office. Looking forwards however, people are aware about our full prisons and are worried about our ability to control future unrest.

*I thought it was good [how they handled the riots] because before it got out of control, **they quickly nipped it in the bud by sentencing people straight away** and I think that sort of scaremongered people and stopped it straight away.* Halima, Birmingham

## The public thinks Starmer handled the riots well

How well or badly do you think Keir Starmer has done in responding to the riots?

● Very well ● Somewhat well ● Neither well nor badly ● Don't know  
● Somewhat badly ● Very badly





# Winter Fuel Allowance

**Labour's decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Allowance has cut-through** - it is likely this is driving Labour's slipping performance against the Conservatives on handling the cost of living.

More than any other group, people think the Government are not doing enough to help pensioners, whereas they are much more likely to think the Government is doing too much to support train drivers - for many voters the decisions the Government has made here do not add up.

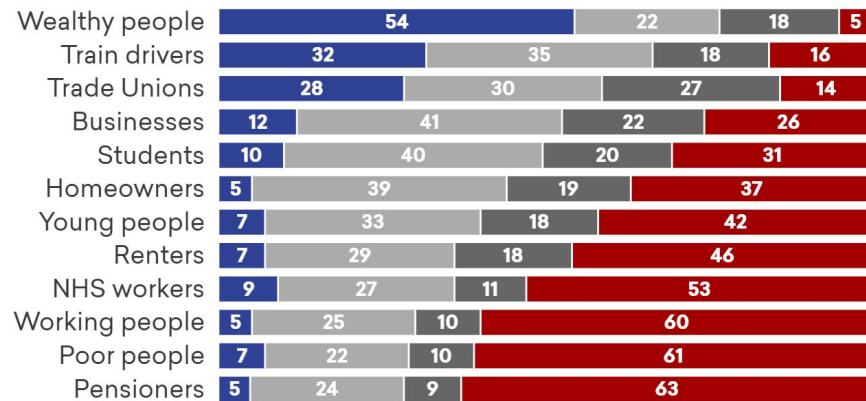
***Surely they knew what they were going to do before they won*** . And everybody should have been made aware of it because I'm sure the results would've been a hell of a lot different. The fact that this is the first thing that they've come in and done and when you are trying to get trust and build confidence in a new government.

Chris, Birmingham

## Pensioners are seen as the group most overlooked by the government

For each of the following groups, do you think the government is doing too much, not doing enough, or doing about the right amount to support them?

- Government is doing too much to support them
- Government is doing the right amount to support them
- Don't know
- Government is not doing enough to support them



# Looking ahead to the budget...

**Labour's messaging about a difficult inheritance has not given them licence to break their promises on taxes** - 56 per cent say it would not be acceptable for Labour to break their pledge not to raise tax on working people given the state of public finances, compared to 21 per cent who say it would be acceptable. The public are also resistant to the idea of increased tax just for higher earners.

In both cases, Labour voters are more likely than the general public to think that tax rises are acceptable. But most Labour voters think tax rises are unacceptable, unless they only apply to higher tax bands.

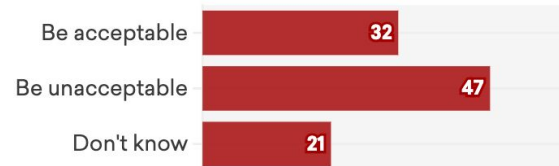
*"I'm telling you now, I'm dreading that budget . Probably the only time ever in my life when I've dreaded a budget."* Halima, Birmingham

## The public do not give Labour much leeway to put up taxes

During the election campaign Labour pledged not to increase national insurance or income tax. Which of the following comes closest to your view?



During the election campaign Labour pledged not to increase national insurance or income tax. If Labour were to break that pledge by increasing taxes on higher rate tax payers (those earning over £50,000 a year) would that...



# How long do Britons give for Labour to deliver change?

**The public realise that change will take time, but would like to start seeing a difference within a year.**

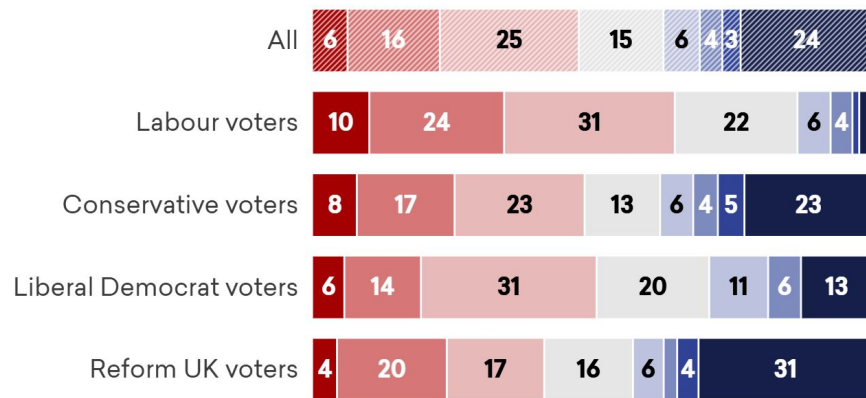
In focus groups, people acknowledge that Labour faces difficult challenges, but would also like Labour to soon stop blaming the Conservatives for their issues and put forward a more positive message.

*I was quite pleased [Starmer] didn't make all happy shiny promises, with unicorns and fluffy clouds. I knew that wasn't going to happen and people bought those Brexit ideas and Conservative absolute blatant lies and voted that way. So **I think it's a bit more real than what we've had**, But I didn't hear any hope in that and we need some hope too. Clare, Salford*

## Labour does not have much time to make a difference

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

● Immediately ● Less than 6 months ● 6 months to a year  
● 1-2 years ● 2-3 years ● 3-5 years ● 5 or more years ● Never



# Freebies

**Stories about Starmer's gifts have cut-through with the public and risk undermining Labour's key message - the promise a new kind of politics from the Conservative Party**

## **Link with the Tories**

*"It's fine for them to have these things, but you're being a massive hypocrite when all you did when the last government was in was berate them all the time ... It's frustrating that these things are now coming out that [Labour] are no better. So I do feel like they're [being] a bit of a hypocrite and they never shut up about Boris's wallpaper, did they? We never heard the end of Boris's wallpaper"*

Kerry, Birmingham

## **Relatability**


*"In the past few days, Stamer has been given gifts of a hundred thousand pounds or something like that. So these big politicians, they don't have a clue. They are on salaries of 180K or whatever it is. They do not have an idea of what the common man or the common woman lives by. They don't have a clue"*

Ayyaz, Rochdale

## **Contrast**

*"I'm fuming because as a teacher I have to declare a box of chocolates given to me by a student who I've worked with for the entire year. I'm subjected to the most boring bribery training ever and the most that I'll get is a box of chocolates or a bunch of flowers. So for him to get that, that is absolutely outrageous."*

Clare, Manchester



**The bigger picture: Can  
Labour meet the moment  
and restore trust in  
politics?**

# Trust in politics

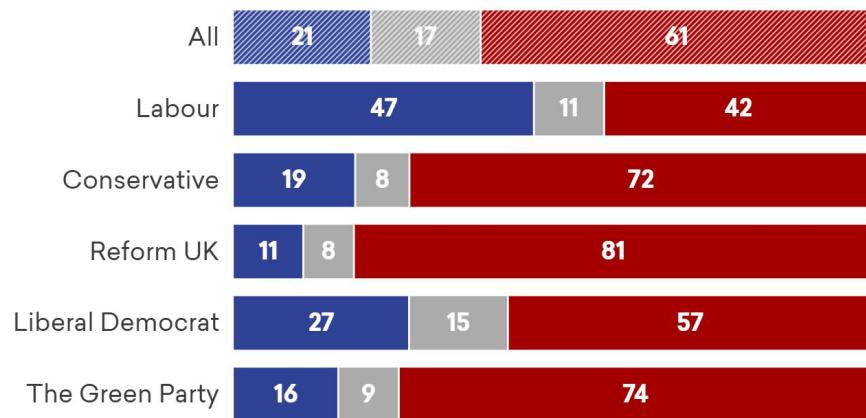
**A bigger difficulty for the new Government is to convince the public they are up to the challenges our country faces** - currently, Britons are twice as likely to think that our politicians are not up to the challenge than to say that they are.

Given that most Britons appreciate the scale of the problems facing the country, if Labour is able to meaningfully make a difference, they will be rewarded for it - but convincing a gloomy public that this is even possible might be their biggest test.

## Two thirds don't think our leaders are up to today's challenges

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Our politicians are up to facing the challenges our country faces
- Don't know
- Our politicians are not up to facing the challenges our country faces



# Change - what does Labour need to do?

Labour's manifesto heavily emphasised the party's commitment to "Change". But at the moment, almost two thirds of the country say that Labour feels no different to the previous government. In focus groups, participants who once strongly backed Labour are now losing confidence that the party will deliver on the change they were promised.

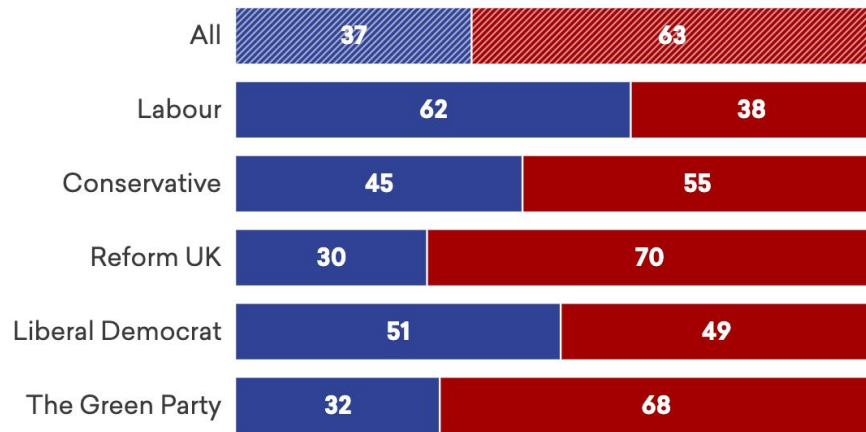
*The main parties are both Conservatives now. To me, Kier would be a great leader for the Conservatives. Mohammad", Rochdale*

*He [Starmer] is not the most principled. He just comes across as a Tory, like with a red Labour tie on. Victor, Manchester"*

## Labour is not delivering on their promise of change

Compared to our previous Conservative government, would you say that our new Labour government...

● Feels genuinely different ● Feels like more of the same



# Methodology

## Polling

More in Common polled 2,005 people, representative of GB adults between 16-18 September.

Further data was taken from our Change Pending report, published in July.

More in Common is a member of the British polling council and abides by their rules.

Further information: contact [ed@moreincommon.com](mailto:ed@moreincommon.com)

**Most focus groups for this report were conducted on Thursday 19th September, at the following locations**

Manchester Central and Rusholme (Labour 2019 and Green 2024 voters)

Rochdale (Labour 2024 and WPB 2024 voters)

Birmingham (Labour 2019 and independent 2024 voters)

Birmingham (Conservative 2019 and Labour 2024 voters)





**More in  
Common**