



More in
Common



Can a politics of respect help the Conservatives regain the public's trust?

Conservative Party Conference Fringe Event 2024

Progressive Activists



Civic Pragmatists



Disengaged Battlers



Established Liberals



Loyal Nationals



Disengaged Traditionalists



Backbone Conservatives



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

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

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

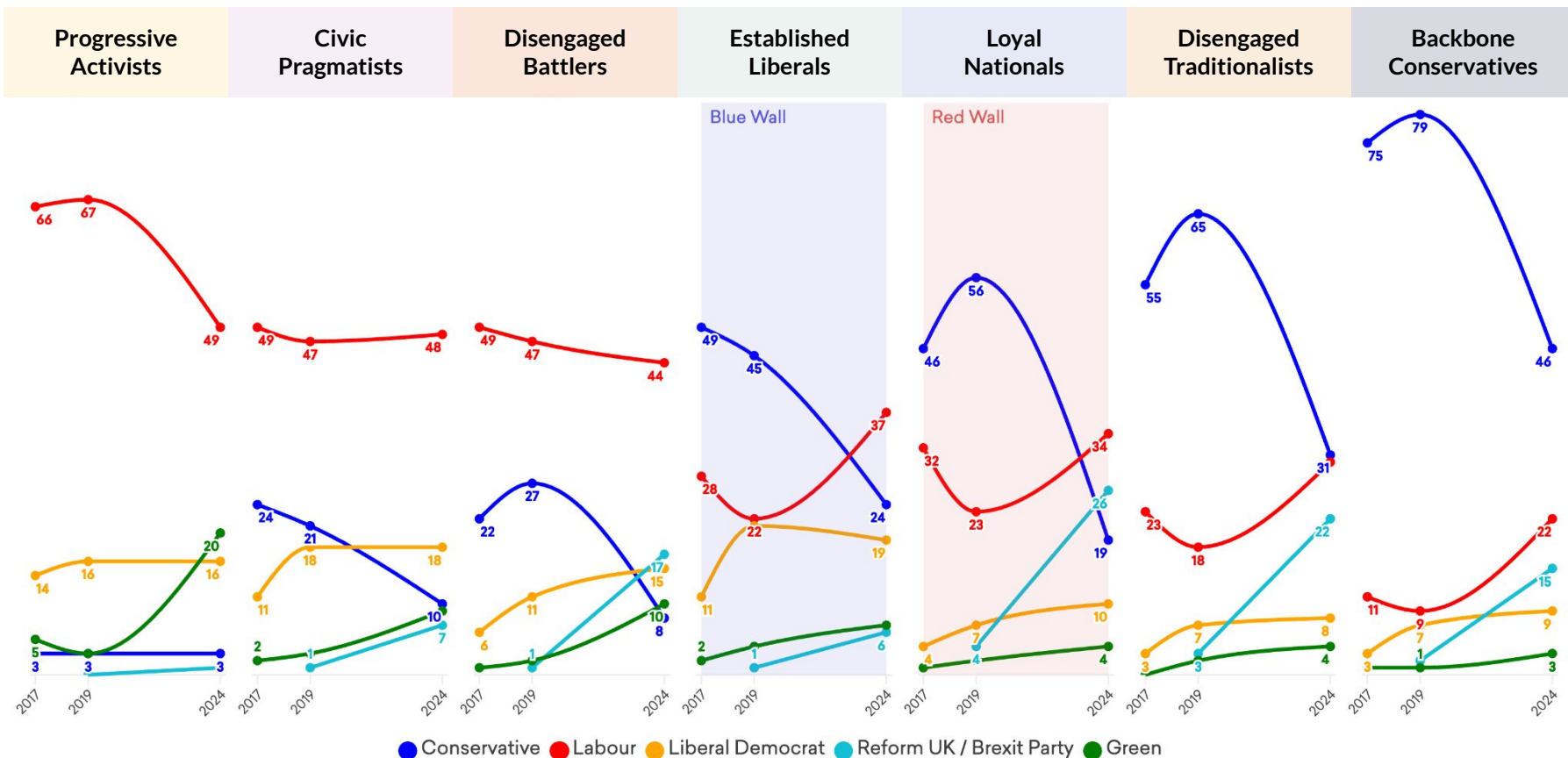
...a group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo.

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

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

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

How did the Seven Segments vote?

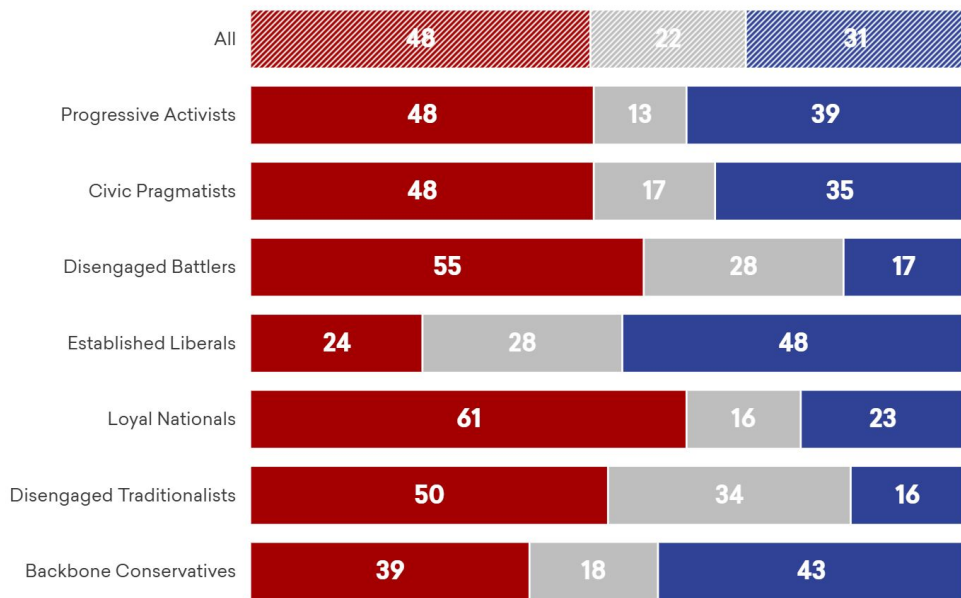


**The trust and respect
challenge facing the government**

Half the public think democracy isn't working

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

● British democracy isn't working ● Don't know ● British democracy is working



Nearly half of the public say that British democracy isn't working - this is highest among "Red Wall" Loyal Nationals and lowest among "Blue Wall" Established Liberals. In large part this is because of a sense democracy has neglected people like them and their communities.

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

Public think Britain is broken

In a word, how would you describe the UK today?



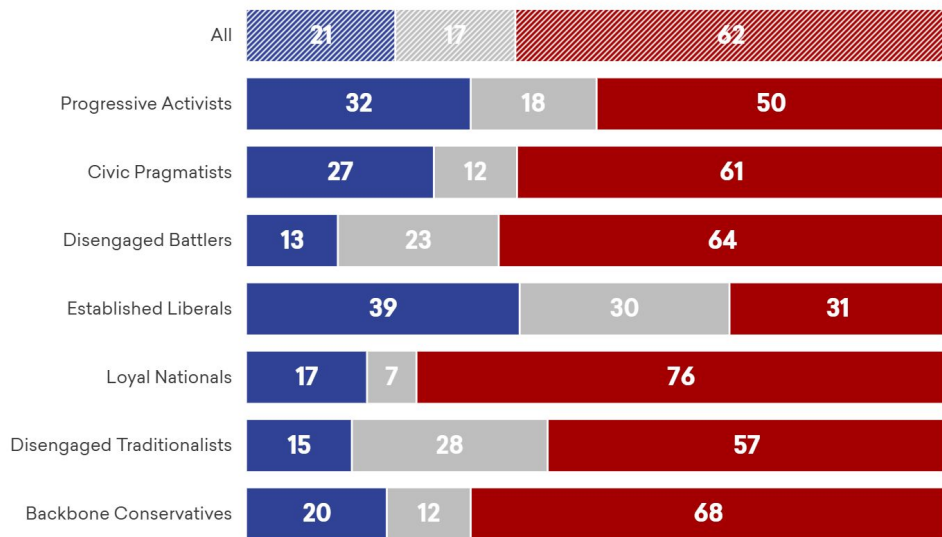
People's everyday experience is that too much of life has become a struggle and that Britain - from our public services to our high streets - feels broken. That has created a sense of national gloom that politicians haven't managed to shift and in some cases have reinforced.

I know they want to be seen to be tough but do things gradually, do positive things first. Give the country a positive feel. He's come out and he said, I'm not here to be Mr. Popular, why not? Why not try and be popular? Get off on the right foot. It seemed a 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

Most think politicians not up to the challenge

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



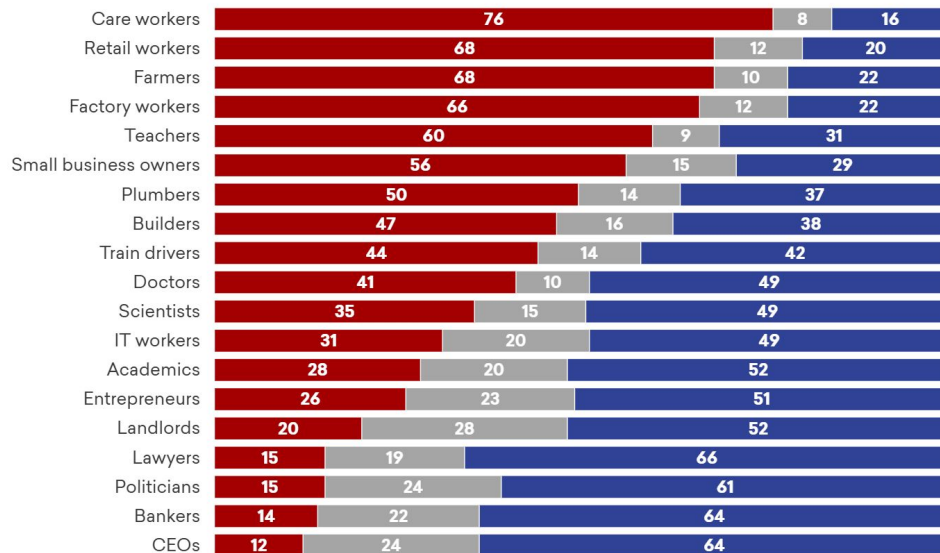
Over three in five say that our politicians are not capable of tackling the challenges our country faces - a view held across our segments. For many, this is because they think politicians simply don't get it or understand what is happening in the communities they are supposed to represent.

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

Those who keep the show on the road aren't shown respect

Thinking about the following groups of people, do you think generally they get the respect they deserve or don't get the respect they deserve?

● Don't get the respect they deserve ● Don't know ● Get the respect they deserve



Most of the public don't think that those who keep the show on the road - care workers, shop workers, farmers and factory workers - get the respect they deserve in society today.

Instead many believe that respect has become aligned with having a degree or being wealthy - rather than your contribution to society.

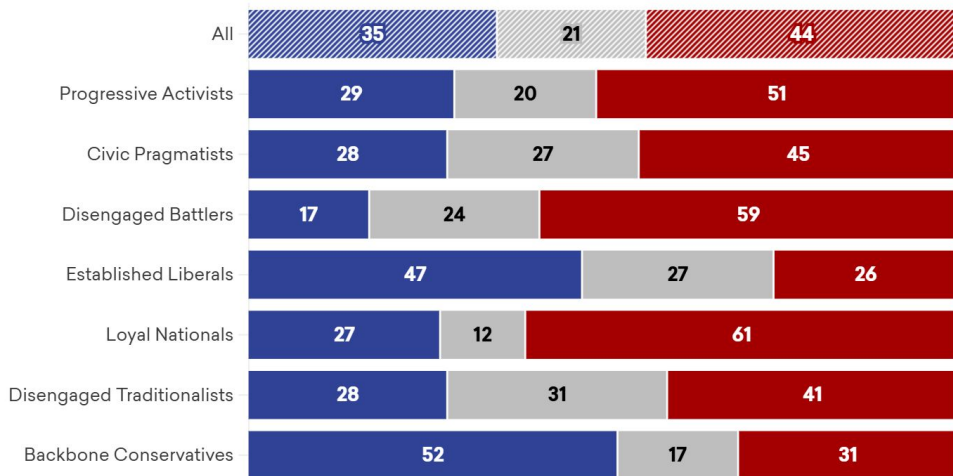
I think it's good that he's thinking about the wee man in the street and he's thinking about them, but whether he actually delivers to them, the proof will be in the pudding. Liz, Retired Procurement Manager, Kirkcaldy

Almost half the public think they don't get the respect they deserve

For each of the following groups of people in British society, do you think they generally get the respect they deserve or do not get the respect they deserve?

You personally

● Get the respect they deserve ● Don't know ● Don't get the respect they deserve



Only a third of the public think they get the respect they deserve, with a plurality saying the opposite.

There are splits across the previously Conservative voter coalition - Backbone Conservatives (Shire Tories) and Established Liberals (Blue Wall voters) are most likely to say they get the respect they deserve.

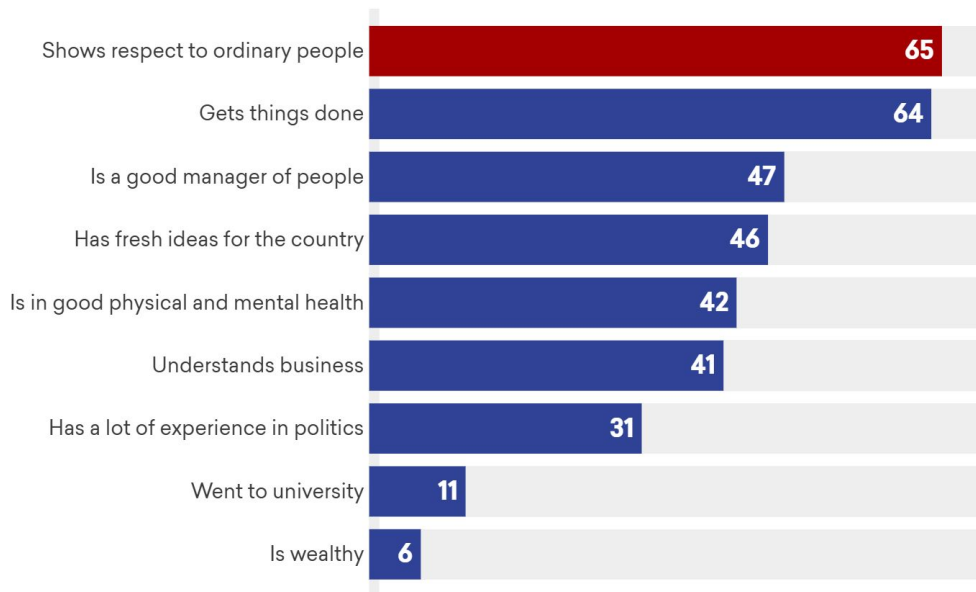
But Loyal Nationals (Red Wall voters) are most likely to say they don't, and Disengaged Traditionalists (White Van Man Tories) are more likely to say they don't know.

The respect challenge for the Conservatives

Respect matters to voters

On a scale of 0-5 where 5 is very important and 0 is not important at all.
How important is it that a political leader...

% selecting '5' very important



The most important attribute in a political leader is showing respect to ordinary people - this is rated above getting things done or having fresh ideas for the country.

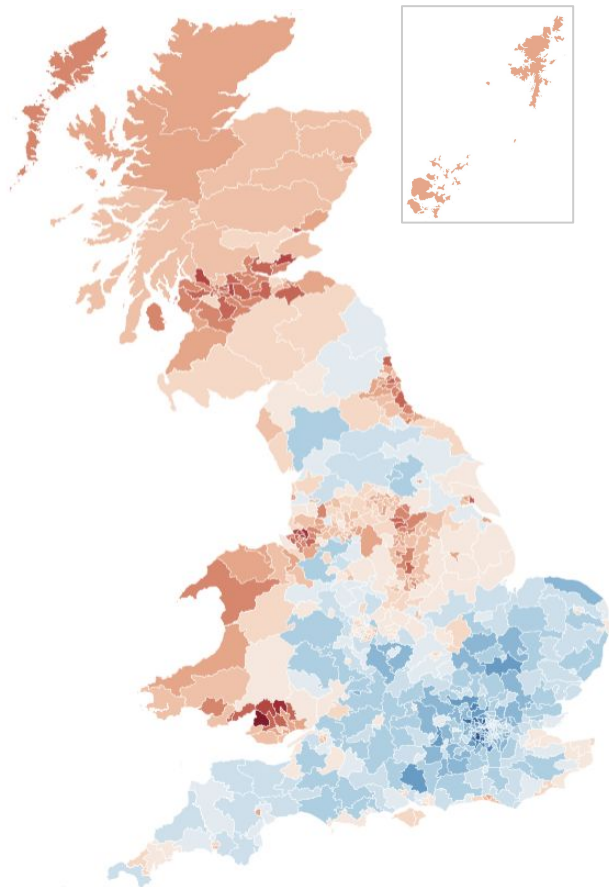
This is a view held even more strongly by 2019 Conservative voters and Leave voters.

Showing respect then is a central test for Conservative rebuilding the 2019 coalition.

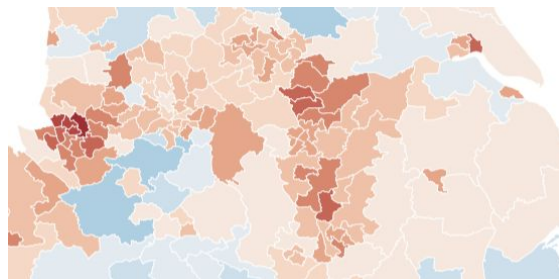
I think we've had little or no respect from politicians for 12 years for the working-class people...

Karl, Sales Manager, Cannock Chase

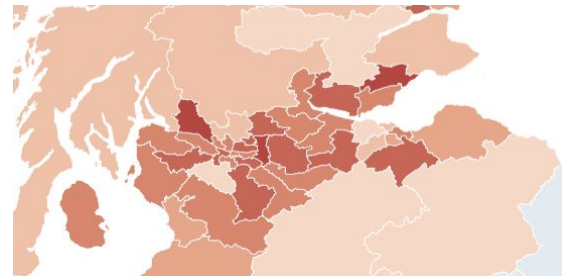
And it matters in key locations



The 'Red Wall'



Scotland's Central Belt



The politics of respect matters most in the Red Wall battleground seats that the Conservatives lost in 2024 - including seats like Blyth, Bolsover and Ashfield.

Respect also matters more to voters in Scotland's Central Belt and South Wales, but less so in the Home Counties.

The respect challenge for the Conservatives

Thinking about the Conservative Party, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

It is being led by people who respect people like me

● 0 - Strongly disagree ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10 - Strongly agree



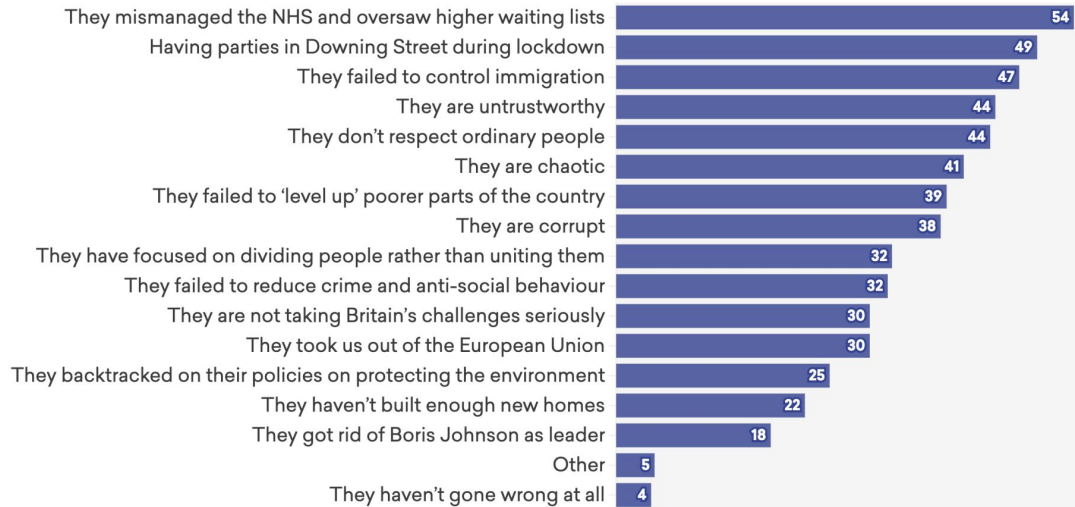
Half of the public (52%) disagree that the Conservative Party is being led by people who respect those like them - marginally more than the amount who hold the same view about the Labour party (46%).

Of groups which have previously voted Conservative, the clearest challenge facing the Conservatives is with the Red Wall Loyal Nationals.

A third of Loyal Nationals strongly disagree that the Conservative party is being led by people who respect them.

Lack of respect is seen as one of the Tories biggest mistakes

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.

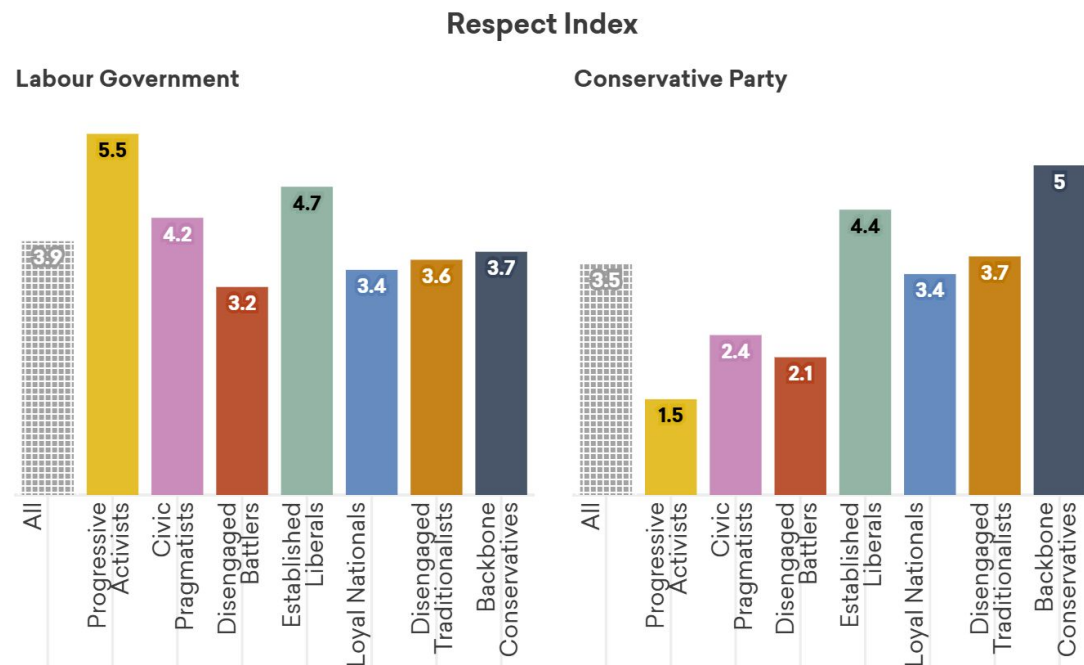


Not having respect for ordinary people is seen as one of the biggest mistakes the Tories made over the course of the last Parliament.

This is a view held more strongly among Con-Lab, Con-Reform and Con-Lib Dem switchers than Loyal Conservatives - showing the potential for a politics of respect to help rebuild the Conservative voter coalition.

In focus groups, many also see the Tory policy failures on the NHS, immigration and on Partygate through the lens of respect.

Conservative Party holding steady on respect, but behind Labour



During the election campaign More in Common and UCL Policy Lab developed the “Respect Index” which tracked how well politicians are connecting to the hopes, concerns and issues of ordinary people.

The Respect Index has **stayed steady for the Conservatives** from the election to the autumn, while people are now feel less respecting by the Labour Government compared to the campaign.

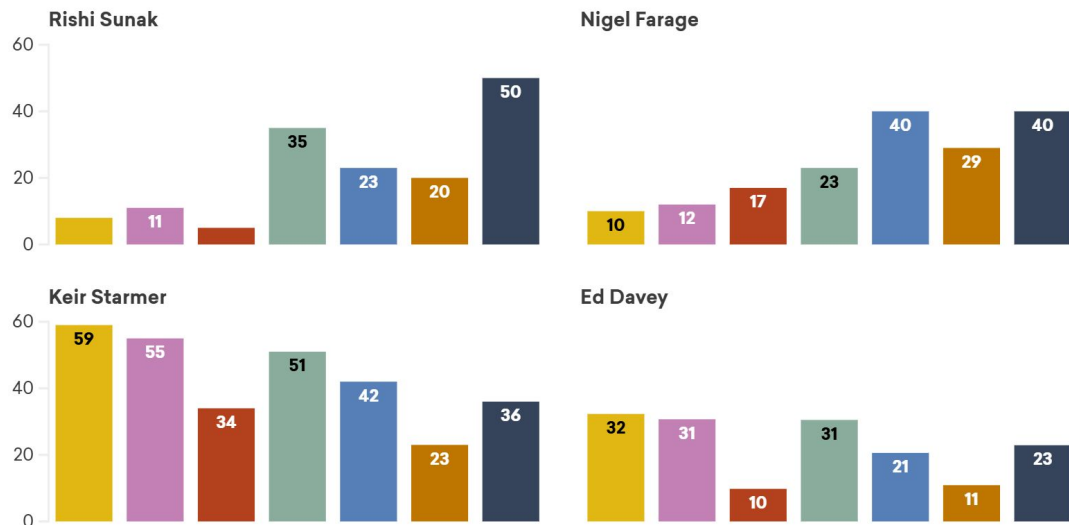
The Conservatives are neck-and-neck with the new government with Loyal National voters and ahead with it’s base voters, but lag much more behind with the government’s base.

Challenges from all sides

Thinking about each of the following politicians in Britain, which of the following comes closer to your view?

% Selecting 'Respects people like me'

Progressive Activists Civic Pragmatists Disengaged Battlers Established Liberals Loyal Nationals
Disengaged Traditionalists Backbone Conservatives



During the election campaign, all segments bar Backbone Conservatives felt more respected by Keir Starmer than by Rishi Sunak.

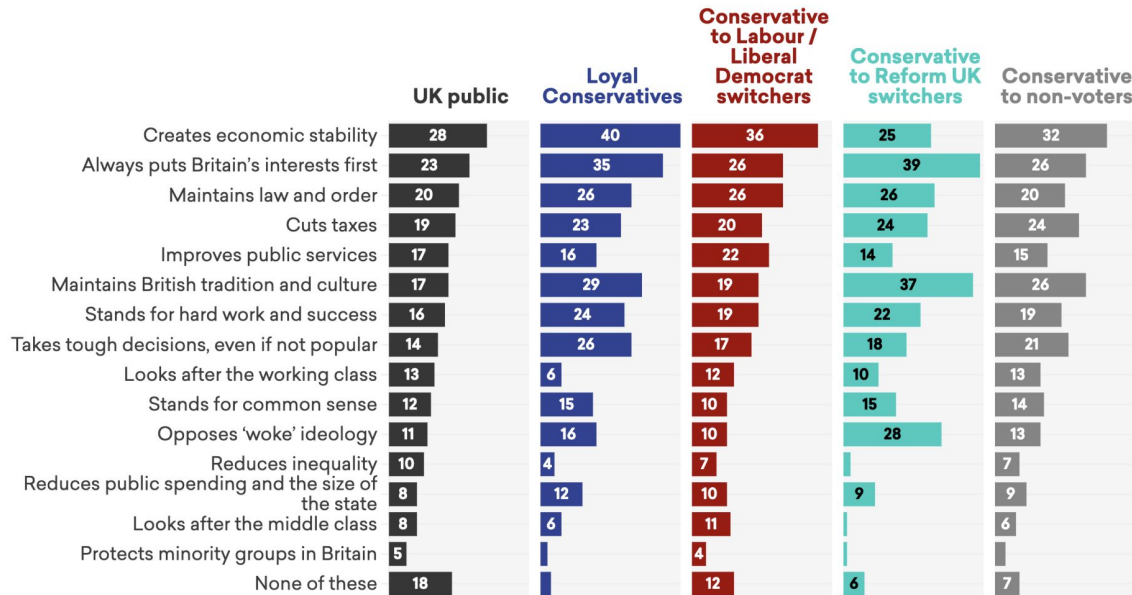
However, Nigel Farage poses a challenge for Red Wall voters who think he respects them nearly as much as Keir Starmer and far more than Rishi Sunak. Ed Davey is also nearly at the same level as Rishi Sunak among Blue Wall voters.

The new leader will face a challenge of re-earning respect from both Blue Wall and Red Wall voters.

**What can the Tories do
about the politics of respect?**

Articulate a Conservative vision for 'politics of respect'

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



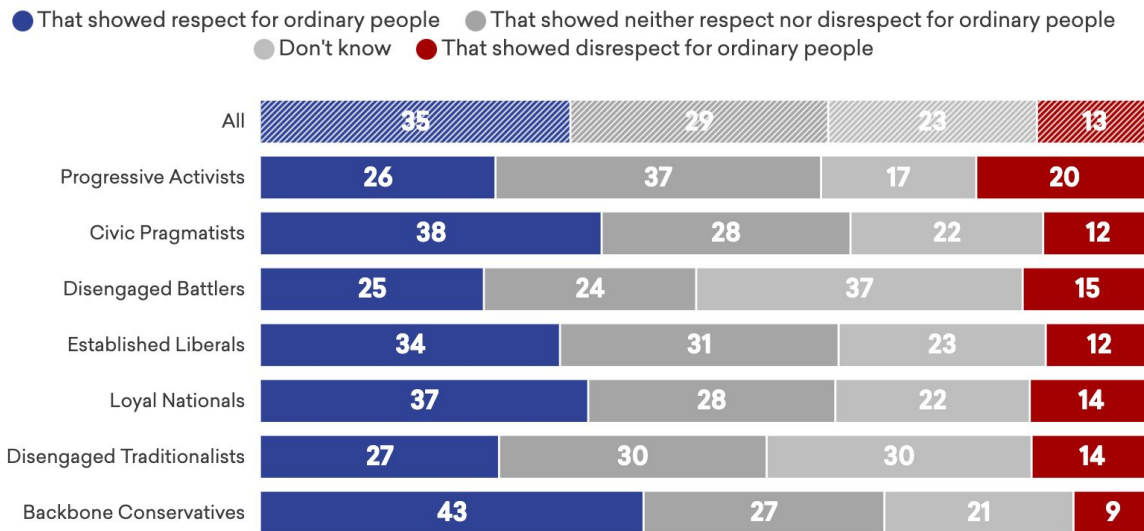
One of the challenges facing the Conservatives is articulating a vision of the politics of respect that resonates across their electoral coalition.

For Conservative and potential conservative voters, this includes maintaining British traditions, standing for hard work and maintaining law and order.

This is built on the foundation of economic stability and putting Britain's interests first.

Build on the foundations of Brexit and levelling up

Thinking about the following events over the course of the last Parliament, which of the following comes closer to your view: Introducing the 'levelling up' policy to invest in and regenerate neglected areas of the United Kingdom



Both the 2016 referendum and the 2019 election were votes by the British public to change the status quo.

The previous government's vision for levelling up and delivering on Brexit were key signs - for Conservative voters - of the government showing respect for them.

This provides a starting point for the Conservatives to rebuild over the course of this parliament - including typical Shire Tory base voters and Blue Wall and Red Wall swing voters

Build on optimism and address concerns about the local area

In a word, how would you describe your local area today?

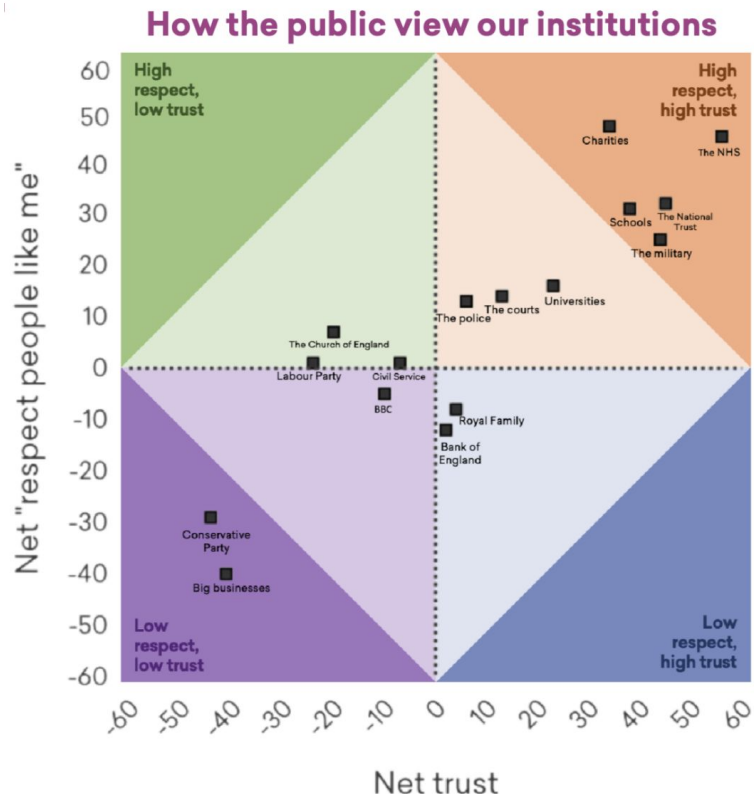


The public are more likely to say positive things about their local area than the country as a whole - tending to see the good in both their environment and community.

Notwithstanding this positivity, the most common descriptor is 'rundown', which speaks to why the levelling up agenda chimed with the public and why its failures were so keenly felt.

A local respect agenda that empowers people to deliver 'ordinary hope' is a strong antidote.

Reset relationship with institutions



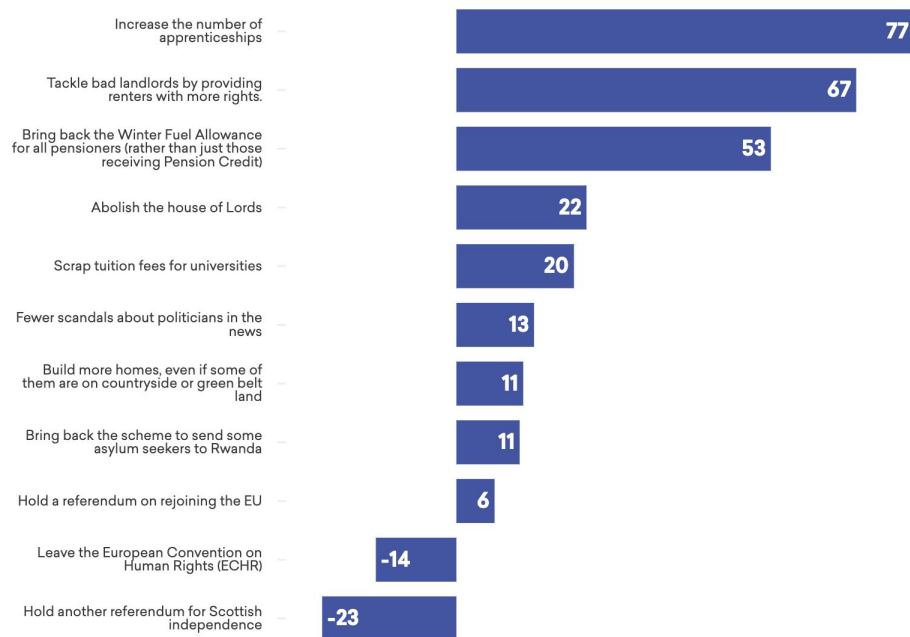
More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab's research show the challenges facing a range of national institutions on respect - including businesses, the Royal Family and the Civil Service - the crisis of trust and respect goes beyond politics.

As well as learning from high trust and high respect institutions such as the NHS and charities, the Conservatives need to work with organisations like the BBC and businesses to show the public respect in a way the public thinks they are currently failing.

The respect lens has the potential to reset the Tories relationship with national institutions.

Use respect as a frame for the opposition narrative

For each of the following policies a political party could propose, please indicate whether you would support or oppose...(Net support = support minus oppose)



Some of the policies which the Conservatives could set out in opposition are ones which tap into the importance of contribution and fairness as part of the politics of respect.

Given Starmer has used the 'respect' frame - the Tories should try and hold him to that frame.

Bringing back a non-means tested version of the winter fuel allowance commands broad support because the public feel that pensioners (particularly those not on pension credit) have contributed to society for a long period of time and are now being deprived of something that they've earned.

Contribution is a key lens to understanding the politics of respect



**More in
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