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# Britain's Choice: Common Ground and Division in 2020s Britain



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# **Britain's Choice**

## **Common Ground and Division in 2020s Britain**

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**More in  
Common**

## **ABOUT MORE IN COMMON**

The report was conducted by More in Common, an initiative set up in 2017 to build societies and communities that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarisation and social division. We work in partnership with a wide range of civil society groups, as well as philanthropy, business, faith, education, media, and government to connect people across the lines of division. More in Common's teams in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United States work together and share a commitment to advancing our mission. For more information please visit [www.moreincommon.com](http://www.moreincommon.com).

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# How to read this report

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This report has 12 chapters that are organised in four large sections:

## Part I

1. Context and Methodology
2. Britain's Kaleidoscope
3. Britain's Core Beliefs

## Part II

4. Our Changing Political Landscape
5. Polarisation and Division
6. Fault Lines
7. Shared Identity

## Part III

8. The Haves and Have-nots
9. Race and Immigration
10. Countryside, Environment, and Climate

## Part IV

11. Community Beyond Covid-19
12. Conclusion

This is a detailed report that covers a wide range of issues; many readers will want to focus on specific areas relevant to their interests and expertise. There are a number of ways to approach the report, according to your interests and needs:

- The **executive summary** provides the narrative arc of the whole report and the key findings of this study.
- For **practitioners and individuals** who aim to gain a deeper understanding of a particular issue area (such as inequality, race, or the environment) and how to engage specific audience segments, we recommend reading chapter 2 ('Britain's Kaleidoscope') and the relevant thematic chapters in part III.
- For **academics and individuals** interested in political issues such as polarisation or layered identities, we recommend reading part II.
- For those interested in **social psychology** and the psychological and sociological underpinnings of Britain's seven segments, we recommend reading 'Britain's Core Beliefs' and 'Shared Identity'.
- For **media** interested in finding additional data points and graphs, we recommend reviewing either the list of graphs or the data tables at the back of the report.
- **Key statistics** are included in the cover page of each chapter.

# Executive Summary

---

**This report offers insights into British society at a time of historic change and turmoil. The product of a large-scale national study conducted over 18 months, it concludes that while the Brexit years left the country feeling polarised, further division is not inevitable. By shifting our focus from Brexit to the kindness of others and the heroism of ordinary people, Covid-19 has helped open our eyes to a different future. Britain now faces a choice. One path leads to the deepening polarisation that is being experienced in other countries, where ‘us-versus-them’ dynamics shape national debates, causing distrust and even hate between people on either side of the divide. The other path leads to a more cohesive society where we build on common ground and focus on the issues that we agree are more important than anything else.**

1

More in Common has worked with data scientists at YouGov and social psychology academics to build a model that maps the British population not according to their party, age, income or other demographic factor, but according to their values and core beliefs. Analysing a representative sample of more than 10,000 people, and conducting focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews with more than 200, we have identified **seven groups**.



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

## 2

Among the segments, two are oriented towards politics (Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives); two are oriented towards a stable, healthy society rather than engaging in politics (Civic Pragmatists and Established Liberals.), two are characterised by disengagement – distrusting institutions, feeling more lonely and participating less (Disengaged Battlers and Disengaged Traditionalists) and one feels more patriotic, more threatened and thinks more in terms of us-versus-them (Loyal Nationals).

Our experience has found that because the segmentation is based on psychology and core beliefs, which do not change much from one year to the next, the segmentation is likely to remain relevant for years to come. What becomes important is to understand how specific segments respond to changing circumstances, rather than how the segmentation itself changes in response to changing circumstances. This is especially true in the current environment where the United Kingdom has been experiencing far-reaching changes, and further changes are likely in the coming years as the UK moves through the Covid-19 recession, repositions itself in Europe and the world, and faces the internal demands for a referendum on Scottish independence.

### 3

The Britain we find in this study is not divided into two opposing camps. Britons come together in different formations depending on the issue at hand – much like the pieces of coloured glass in a kaleidoscope which cluster in different patterns as the instrument rotates. This is a strength that may inoculate the UK against one of the most dangerous dimensions of polarisation, which experts describe as ‘conflict extension’ – when members of a group converge across a range of issues. Because the segments come together in different formations depending on the issue at hand, Britain is less likely to become divided as a society into two opposing camps.

- On issues of immigration and race, Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives come together, while Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Established Liberals form another coalition.
- On issues that involve social trust and institutions, we may see Established Liberals, Civic Pragmatists and Backbone Conservatives coming together on the one hand, while on the other hand Disengaged Battlers, Disengaged Traditionalists and Progressive Activists often align similarly because of their distrust of institutions.
- On issues of inequality and economic policy, Progressive Activists, Loyal Nationals, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and to a lesser extent, Disengaged Traditionalists, are united.
- There is widespread agreement on climate issues, led by a strong coalition of Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Loyal Nationals.

Throughout the report, we highlight examples of how this model of seven segments helps explain aspects of our society and politics. For example:

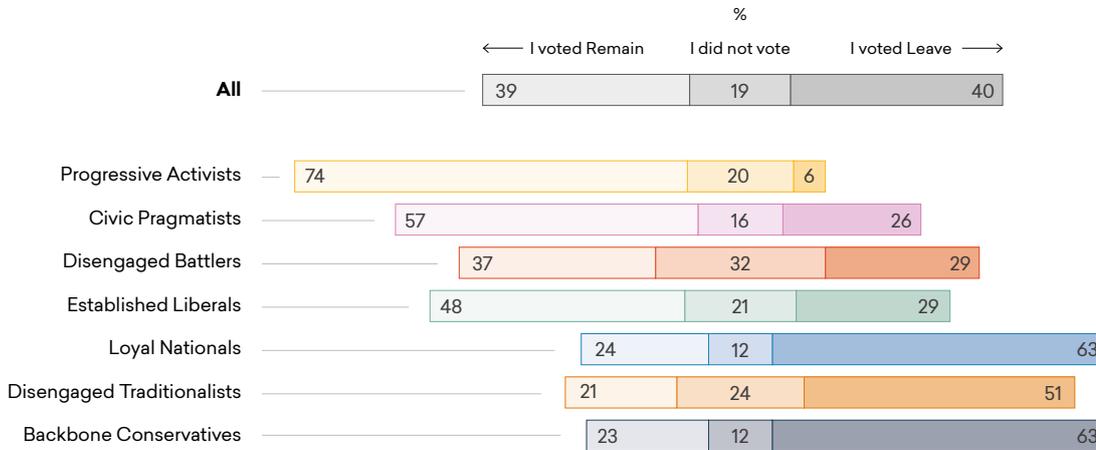
- **The way Britons voted on Brexit:** Brexit is an example of an issue where the seven groups show a range of views that is richer than seen only through the lens of partisanship. Progressive Activists are the strongest remain-supporting group on the left, Backbone Conservatives as the strongest leave-supporting group on the right – but many groups have mixed views.
- **The commanding role of Progressive Activists on social media:** Progressive Activists have strong views and take stances that sometimes put them at odds with the rest of society. They are culturally influential, and are six times more likely to post about politics on twitter and other social media platforms than any other group.
- **The different ways groups cluster on accepting inequality:** On the issue of whether we should be willing to accept that inequality is inevitable in a productive society, or whether we should always strive to reduce it, Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists are outliers as the only groups without majority support for always focusing on reducing inequality.
- **The different ways groups cluster on immigration:** Views about immigration are more complex than a simple yes-or-no, left-vs-right spectrum. Far more than any other segment, Loyal Nationals worry that we care more about immigrants than British citizens. On the other hand, Established Liberals reflect their more comfortable, internationalist outlook; Civic Pragmatists view this through a compassionate lens; and Progressive Activists through a strong ideological commitment to immigration.
- **Why Disengaged groups are distinctive:** Disengaged Battlers and Disengaged Traditionalists respond differently from other segments because of their low social trust and disconnection from others. While things have improved since Covid-19, they have the weakest sense of being part of a caring community, and this influences how they engage with society.
- **Insecurity and perception of threat are major drivers of attitudes:** Threat perception has a powerful influence on people’s psychology, and a key to understanding Established Liberals is how little they share the sense of threat felt by others in their society. Equally, a key to understanding Loyal Nationals is how acutely they feel threats. This helps shape distinctive views on issues including immigration, human rights, crime and welfare.

Figure 0.1.

## 2016 EU referendum vote

How segments voted in the 2016 referendum on EU membership

### 2016 Referendum Vote

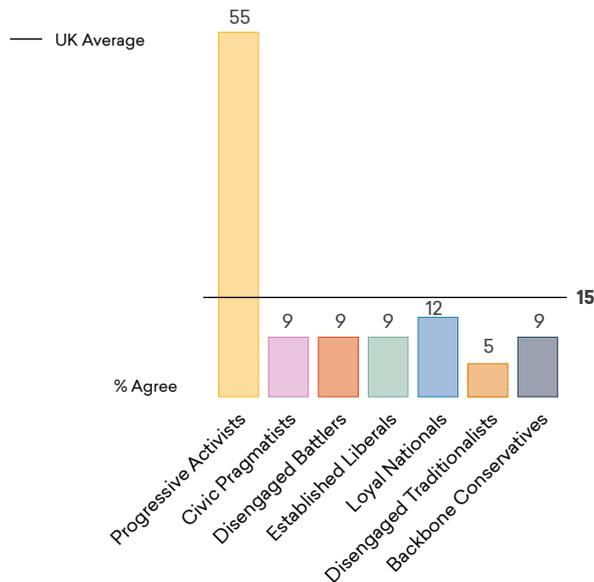


Qu. In the Referendum in 2016 on whether Britain should remain in or leave the European Union, which way did you vote, or did you not vote? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.2.

## Sharing political content online

Progressive Activists are a dominant voice on social media

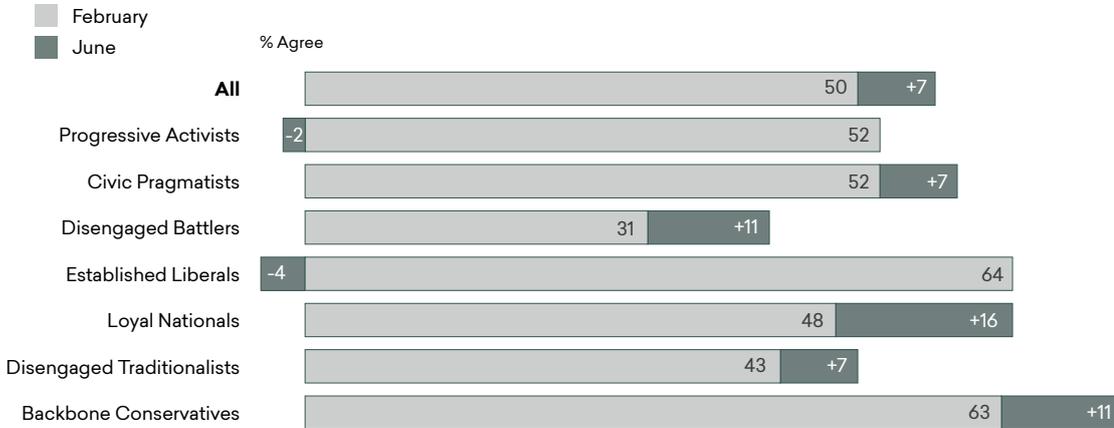


Qu. Here is a list of activities that some people get a chance to participate in and others don't. Which of the following have you taken part in in the past year? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.3.

## Covid-19 and community

Since Covid-19, a sense of community has increased among most of the segments



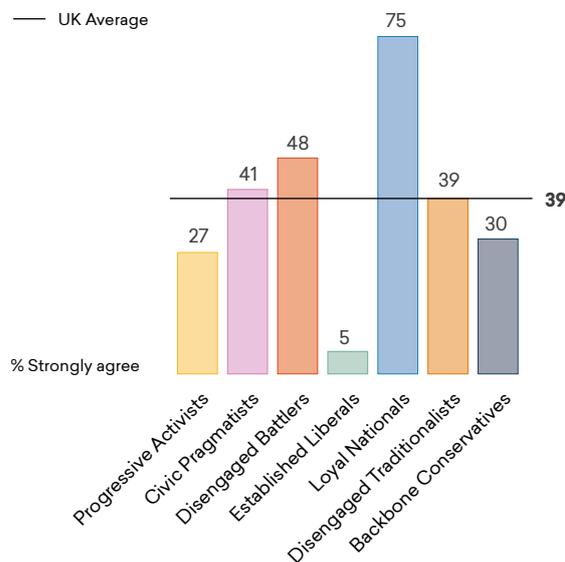
Qu. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I am part of a community - people that understand, care for and help each other. February and June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.4.

## Perceived threat

The segments differ on the safety or danger they perceive in their local area and the wider world. Established Liberals and Progressive Activists are far less likely to believe that the world is becoming a more dangerous place. Their level of threat perception is lower

### The world is becoming a more dangerous place



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The world is becoming a more and more dangerous place?  
February 2020  
Source: More in Common 2020.

# 5

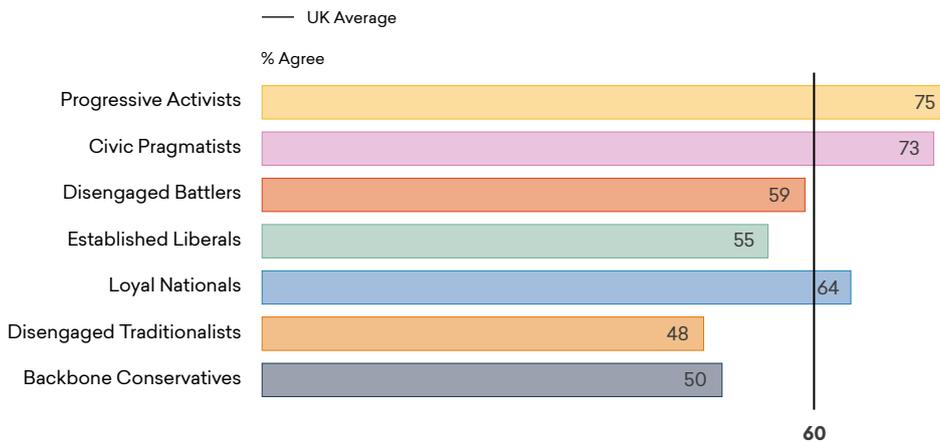
Britons believe the country is more divided than united and mostly **blame political parties and social media for division**. However, there are differences between the groups on who else they blame. Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists blame inequality and the class system, while Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives see immigration as a leading cause of division.

Figure 0.5.

## Feelings about division

Three in five Britons report feeling exhausted by the division they see in politics

### I feel exhausted by the division in politics



Qu: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about politics in the UK today: I feel exhausted by the division in politics. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

# 6

**While Brexit divisions have largely fallen silent, they could still be reawakened.** As of autumn 2020, Leave and Remain identities are still important for half of the British population - almost twice as many people for whom political party identity is important. For those whose sense of personal identity is strongly related to a political party or their position on Brexit, their 'us-versus-them' feelings (affective polarisation) to the other side are still strong and have not disappeared since the pandemic broke out.

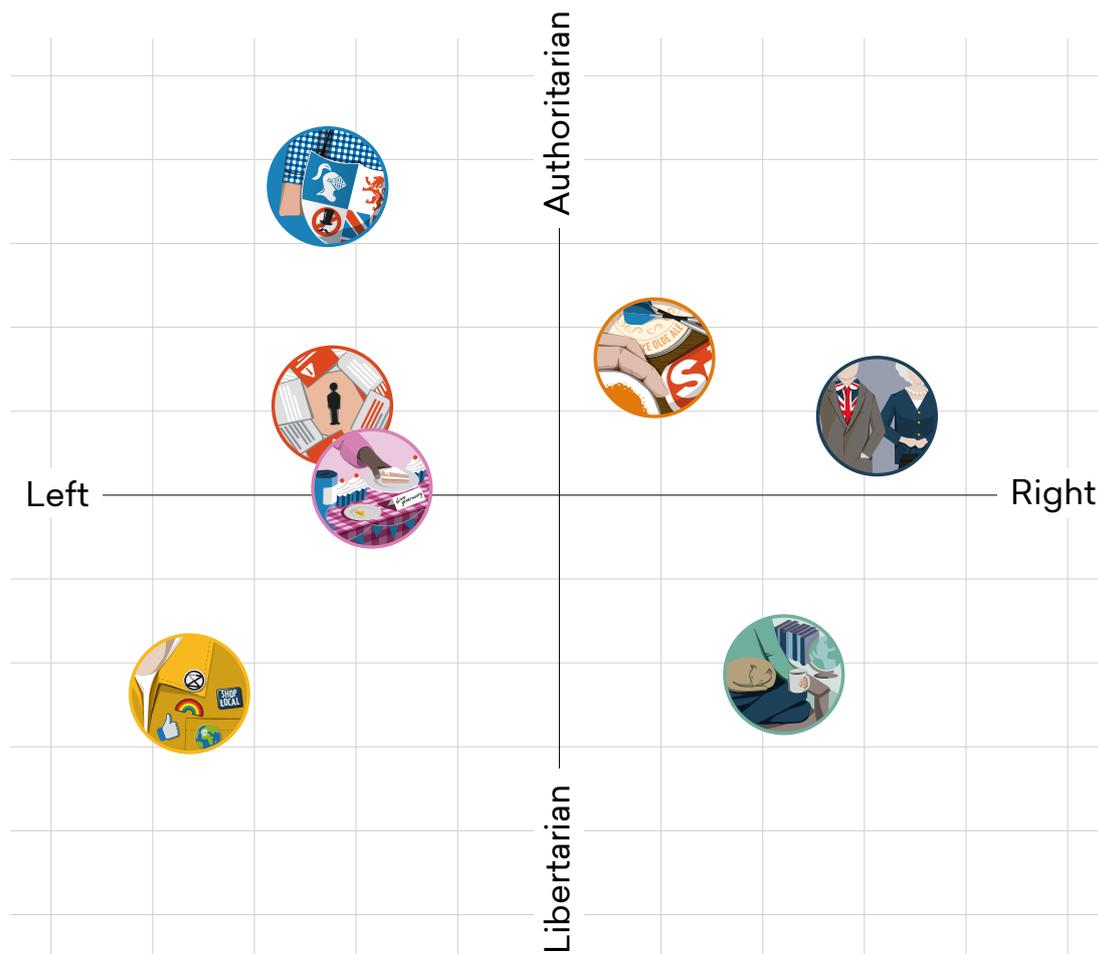
# 7

When asked where they line up between left and right, only 22 per cent of Britons describe themselves as left or right, while **53 per cent of Britons position themselves in the centre** (either as centre, centre-left or centre-right). At the same time, **only 30 per cent believe that left and right labels are still useful in describing people's beliefs:**

- Only those who are more ideological, Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives, say that left / right labels are useful.
- Groups such as the Loyal Nationals hold views usually identified with the left on inequality, and views seen as right wing on immigration, but because of this confusion they are more likely than any group to describe themselves as being in the centre.

## Figure 0.6. Segments' political values

The following figure shows where our segments map across the economic left-right and libertarian-authoritarian scales



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1.4 and 2.1.5. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

8

**When we look across what we often imagine as our fault lines – class, age, region and left/right values – we find far more common ground than division.** For voting patterns, views on economic issues or on social issues, the correlations between class, social grade or region and people's views are weak. Between the nations and the regions, people differ on questions concerning the nations and regions (such as Scottish independence or the north/south divide) – but on other issues are largely similar. Age correlates to differences in people's views on some issues, but not others - but even when it is a significant factor, there is little evidence that these differences are generating intergenerational conflict.

9

Britons' sense of identity involves **complementary layers of British and national identity and sometimes also regional or local identities.** From England to Wales and Scotland, the proportion of people who see their British identity or national identity as important ranges from around 60 to 80 per cent. National identities are especially meaningful for people in Scotland and Wales, where British identity has less resonance. Around one in every two Black and ethnic minority people in England feel that English identity is not truly inclusive, a concern shared by around one-third of English people.

10

**The Covid-19 pandemic, despite its awful consequences, also provided the glimpse of a kinder society.**

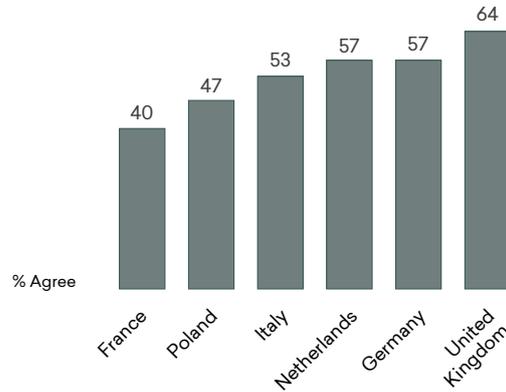
- Even before Covid, three in four people felt that Britons are generally kind, but Covid allowed people to see kindness in action.
- As a result, 58 per cent say that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that most people in our country care about each other – a higher number than in any similar country in our recent 7 country study.
- People feel that despite the difficulties of recent times, our solidarity has strengthened – compared to before Covid, twice as many people now believe that as a society we look after each other (rising from 24 to 46 per cent).
- Two in three people say it is important to live in an area with a strong sense of community and after months of grassroots local community connections being made, **63 per cent now feel they have the ability to change things around them** – an increase of 16 percentage points since February.
- Overall, two in three people now feel that we should seize the opportunity to make important changes in our society. But similar numbers doubt that change will happen, a 'hope gap' that reflects their low levels of trust in politicians and groups perceived as elites.

Figure 0.7.

## Care for each other

Covid-19 has convinced two in three Britons that we care for each other, more than in any other country surveyed by More in Common

**The Covid-19 pandemic has shown me that most people in our country care about each other**



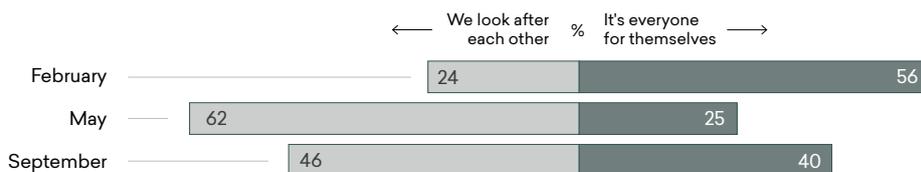
Qu: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Covid-19 pandemic has shown me that most people in our country care about each other. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.8.

## Our society: Caring or just in it for ourselves?

Twice as many now feel that we look after each other

**Are we a society that cares for each other or not?**



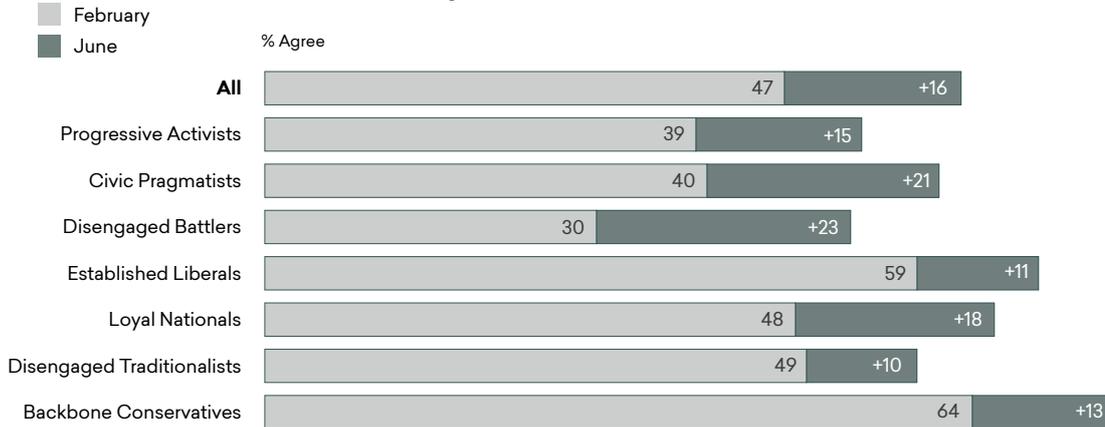
Qu: When thinking about life in the UK in 2020, which do you agree with more?  
Data from February, May, and September 2020.  
Source: More in Common and Britain Talks Climate 2020.

Figure 0.9.

## Covid-19 and personal agency

Since the pandemic, all segments have seen an increased sense of personal agency within their local communities and feel that their decisions can impact wider society

### People in our area are able to find ways to improve things around here when they want to



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: People in our area are able to find ways to improve things around here when they want to. February and June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

### Citizens' influence on society



Qu. Which of the statements do you agree with more? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.10.

## Opportunity for change

Brits are more likely to want to seize the opportunity for change



Qu. Which of the following statement do you agree with more: We should seize the opportunity of Covid-19 to make important changes to our country. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 11

We find common ground in Britain on many issues, with large majorities which:

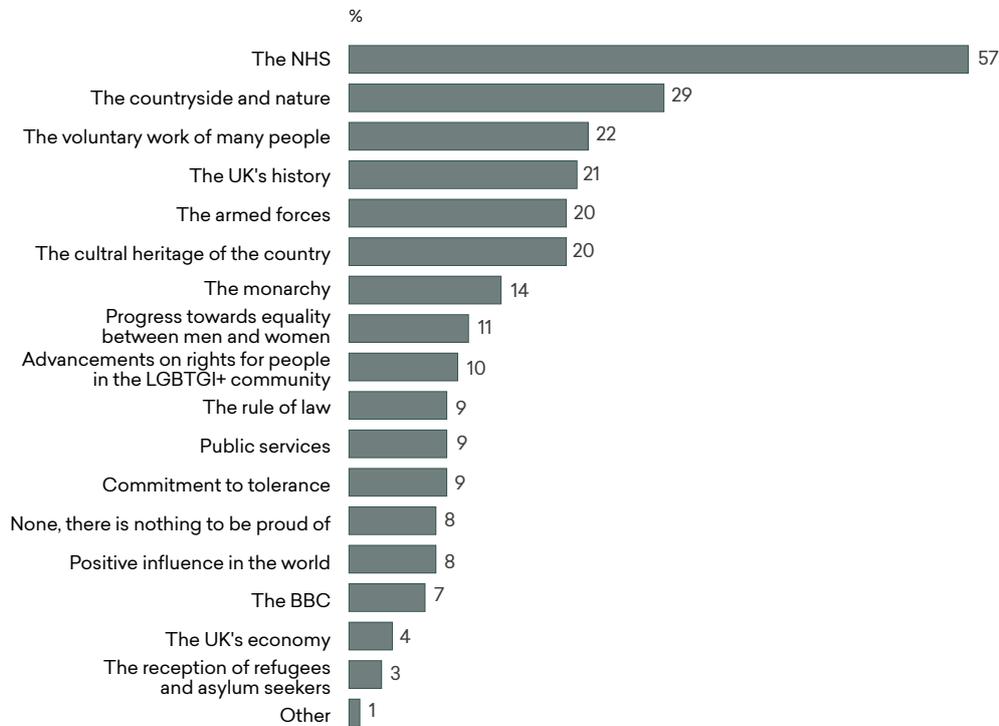
- share a sense of national pride in many similar things – such as the NHS, our countryside, and our volunteer tradition
- feel proud of Britain's progress on gender equality and becoming a more tolerant and diverse nation
- are committed to gender equality and racial equity
- believe that as a society we need to focus on responsibilities as much as rights
- believe in closing the unfair gap between the haves and have-nots, and making sure that the hard work of key workers and others is better rewarded
- want Britain to protect our countryside and lead on climate change
- believe we should strike a balance on difficult issues such as immigration
- feel decision making is too centralised in London
- want political leaders to compromise rather than just sticking to their positions and fighting.

Figure 0.11.

## Pride in the UK

Britons share a strong sense of pride in the NHS, along with the countryside and the tradition of voluntary work in the country

### What are you most proud of in the UK today?



Qu. What are you proud of in the UK today? Select up to 3. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.12.

## The ideal United Kingdom

Most Britons wish for a country that is hard-working, environmentally-friendly, and compassionate

	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Hard-working	17%	39%	29%	46%	53%	51%	62%	<b>43%</b>
Environmentally-friendly	70%	57%	35%	46%	36%	25%	36%	<b>42%</b>
Compassionate	63%	53%	40%	39%	37%	18%	29%	<b>39%</b>
Honest	26%	33%	37%	33%	48%	39%	44%	<b>38%</b>
Tolerant	57%	47%	30%	46%	23%	19%	25%	<b>34%</b>
Fair	47%	40%	38%	34%	32%	23%	28%	<b>34%</b>
Educated	35%	32%	31%	35%	26%	26%	30%	<b>30%</b>
United	15%	27%	23%	21%	29%	22%	26%	<b>23%</b>
Polite	6%	13%	20%	15%	24%	24%	22%	<b>18%</b>
Patriotic	1%	5%	9%	5%	23%	21%	25%	<b>14%</b>
Independent	3%	7%	11%	9%	16%	18%	18%	<b>12%</b>
Creative	23%	13%	15%	15%	5%	8%	7%	<b>12%</b>
Global	21%	11%	8%	16%	5%	6%	7%	<b>10%</b>
Traditional	0%	2%	9%	3%	15%	15%	15%	<b>9%</b>
Orderly	1%	4%	6%	4%	6%	8%	9%	<b>6%</b>
Funny	7%	5%	5%	5%	3%	7%	3%	<b>5%</b>
Don't know	0%	2%	7%	3%	2%	8%	1%	<b>3%</b>
None of these	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	2%	0%	<b>1%</b>

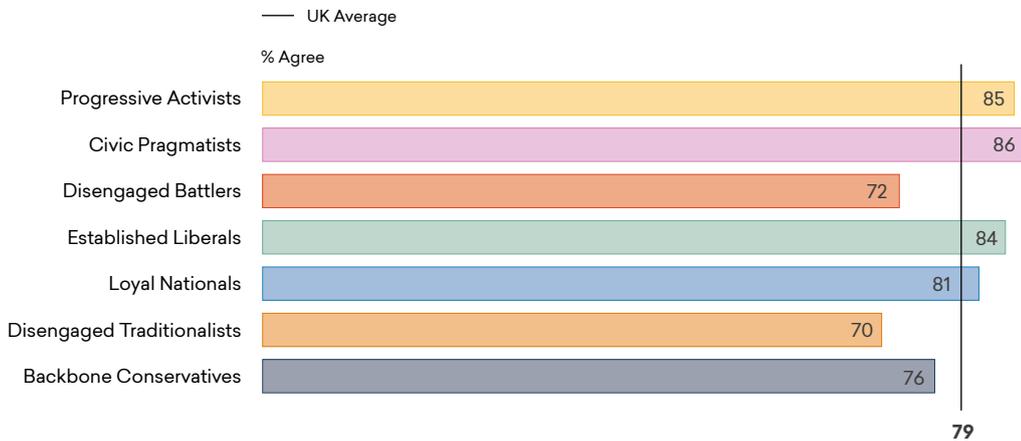
Qu. Thinking towards the future, imagine your ideal UK society. What should we be like? Please select up to four qualities. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.13.

## Advancements in gender equality

More than 70 per cent in all Britain's groups is proud of the advancements in equality between men and women

### I am proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women



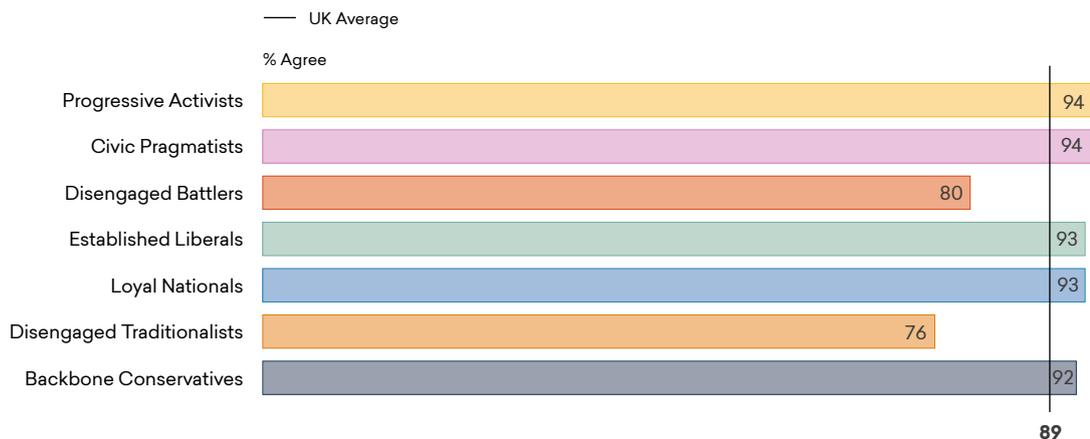
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.14.

## Rights and responsibilities

Britons coincide that we need to be a society of citizens that focus both on rights and responsibilities

### As citizens, we focus on our responsibilities as much as on our rights



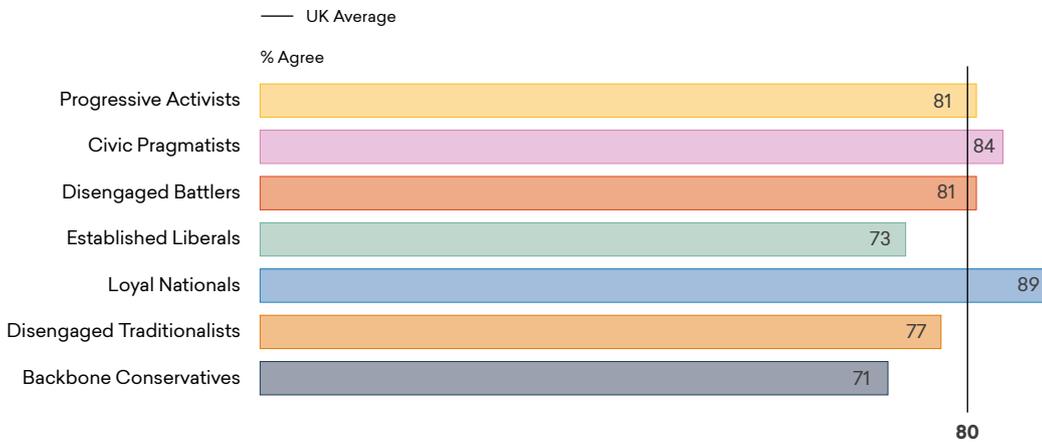
Qu. How important is it to you that the UK become a society where...As citizens, we focus on our responsibilities as much as our rights. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.15.

## Centralisation

Common ground exists in feeling that that too much is decided in London

### Too much in our country is decided in London



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Too much in our country is decided in London. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 12

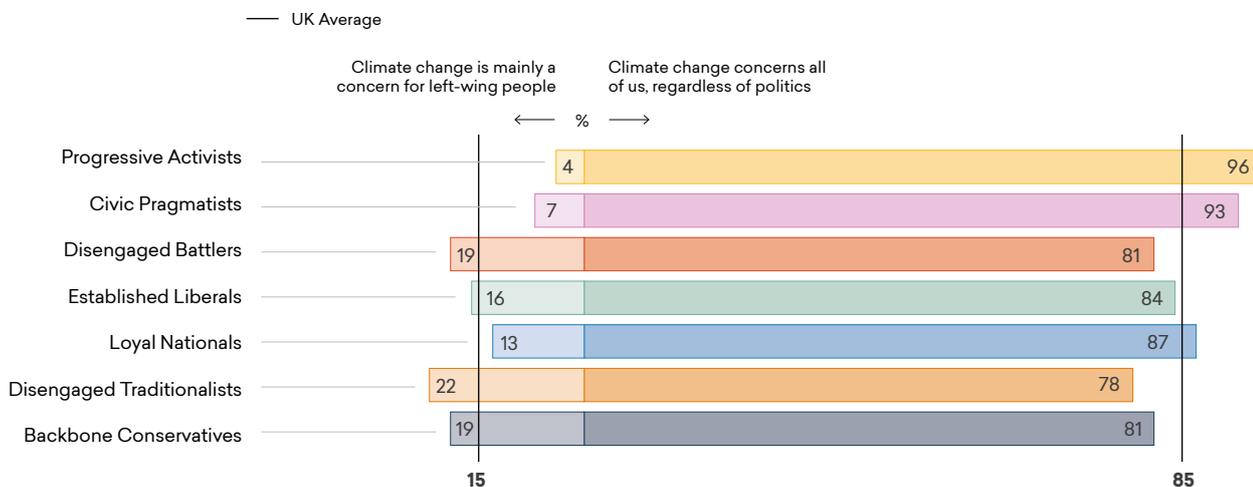
There is remarkable **common ground on the need for more action to protect the environment** and address climate change, although people discuss these issues in different ways across the seven groups. **Covid-19 has re-connected people with nature** through the experience of commuting less and spending more time exploring their local habitat. Eighty-three per cent say that they **feel more confident that we can make a difference** to lessen our impact on the environment after watching the drop in pollution during lockdown.

Figure 0.16.

## Climate change concerns everyone

Britons agree that, regardless of background, climate change is an important issue for everyone

### Climate change concerns all of us



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1.17. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

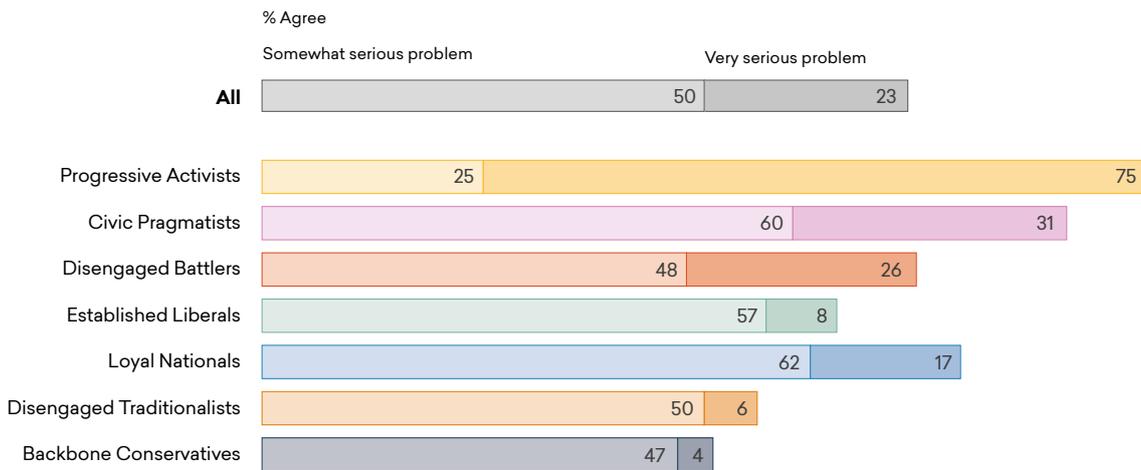
# 13

A majority of all population segments of society and 73 per cent of the population overall believe **inequality in the UK is a serious problem**. An **even higher majority are concerned that we focus too much on money and status**. Over 90 per cent of Britons support the principle that businesses receiving government support have a responsibility to society, such as paying fair wages, onshoring jobs, reducing carbon emissions, paying their taxes in full and not using offshore tax havens to avoid paying tax.

Figure 0.17.

## Inequality in the UK

In all segments, a majority agrees that inequality is a serious problem



Qu. To what extent is inequality a problem in the UK today? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

# 14

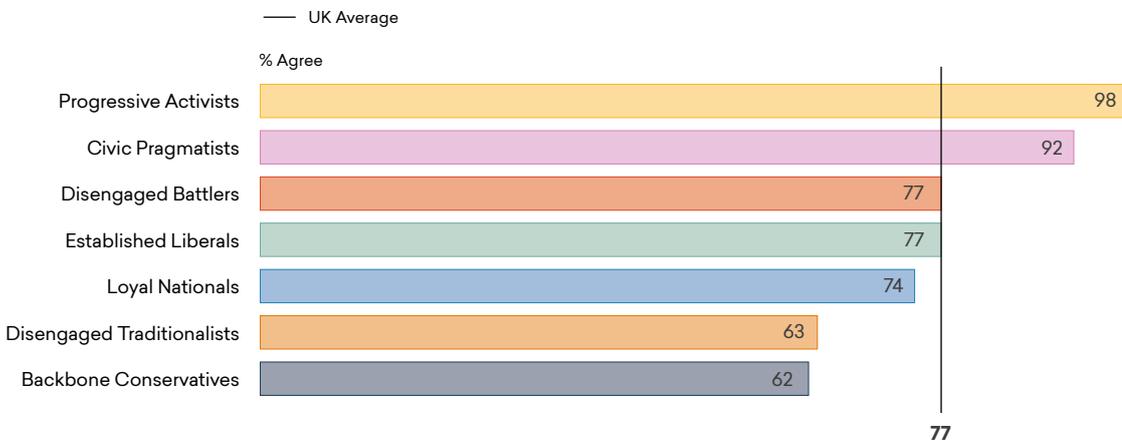
On issues of race and immigration, Britons are balancers – they acknowledge that **racism is a serious problem in the country** and 60 per cent recognise that white people continue to have advantages over people from ethnic minorities, but similar numbers do not believe that we should get stuck in debates about the wrongs of the past. Most Britons seek to find a balance between cultural diversity and openness on the one hand, while preserving our traditions and culture.

Figure 0.18.

## Seriousness of racism

All segments acknowledge the serious problem of racism but vary on strength of agreement

### How serious is racism today?



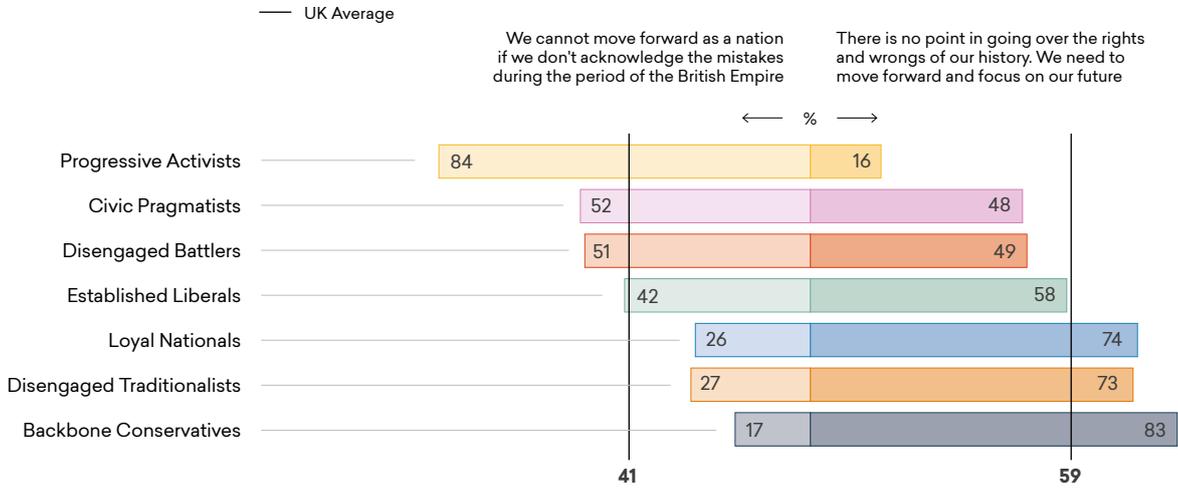
Qu. In your opinion, how serious are the following problems in the UK today: Racism. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 0.19.

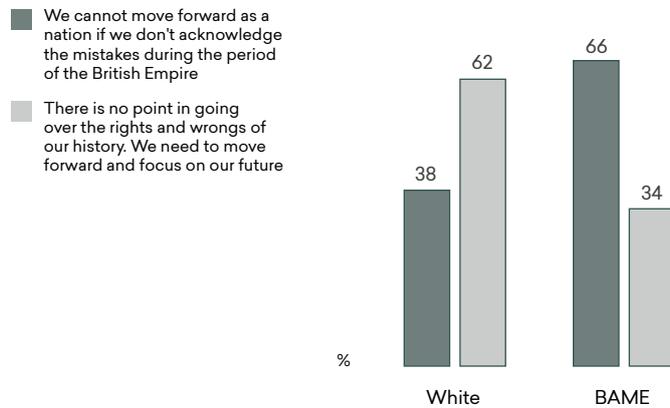
## Dealing with the past

A majority believes we should focus on the future, not the past

### How should we deal with our country's history?



### How should we deal with our country's history?



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1.16 February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

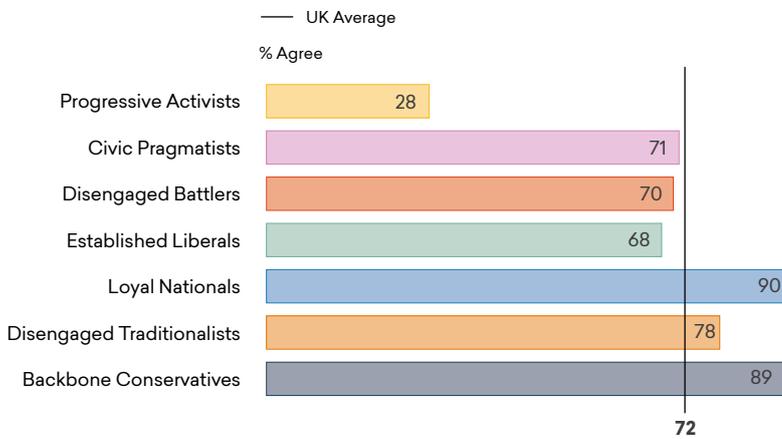
The **'false binaries' of culture wars** do not resonate with the reality of the attitudes of most of the British public. For example, 73 per cent of Britons are worried about hate speech and at the same time 72 per cent believe that political correctness is a problem.

Figure 0.20.

## Political correctness

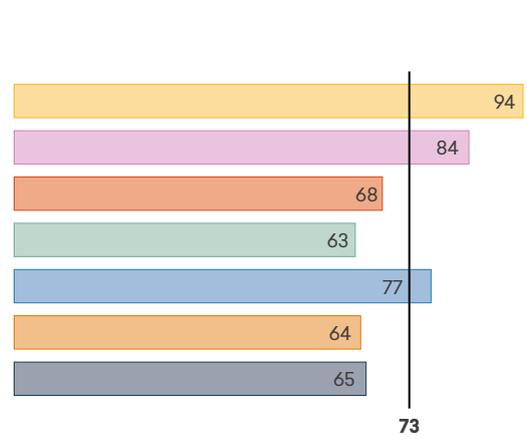
Most Britons are convinced that both hate speech and political correctness are problematic

### Political correctness is a problem in our country



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: Political correctness is a problem in our country. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

### Hate speech is a problem in our country



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: Hate speech is a problem in our country. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

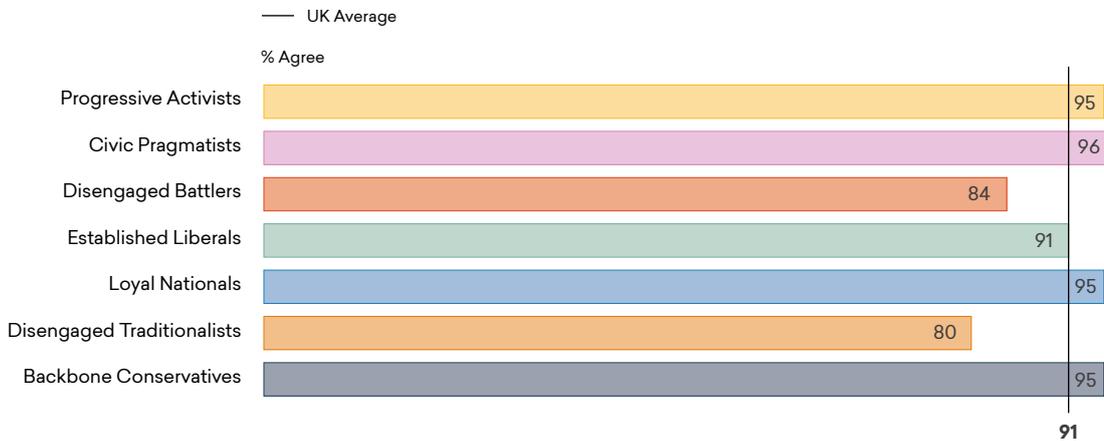
There are **powerful forces that will continue to drive us apart** – such as divisive social media, people’s loss of trust in the system, disinformation and a political ecosystem that rewards conflict. Countering those forces is not easy. But 91 per cent of us believe that just because we disagree, we should not give up on each other. Becoming a more cohesive society starts with having more respect for each other. Britain’s choice for the 2020s is whether we allow those forces of division to drive us further down the path of polarisation, or whether we focus on our shared values and common ground and build a more cohesive and united country.

Figure 0.21.

## Learning to disagree

Britons believe it is important that we can disagree and still come together

### We are able to disagree without giving up on each other



Qu. How important is it to you that the UK become a society where...We are able to disagree without giving up on each other. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

# Part I

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- 1 Context and Methodology**
- 2 Britain's Kaleidoscope**
- 3 Britain's Core Beliefs**

# Foreword

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This report is about the state of British society in the early 2020s, and the prospects for the country coming together or being torn further apart. We are in a time when one in two people say they cannot recall any time when the country has felt so divided.

Britain has gone through profound disruption in recent years. People feel exhausted with politics and disappointed in their leaders after the past five years brought them three Prime Ministers, two snap elections, a stumbling response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and interminable arguments and indecipherable processes around leaving European Union. As the long-term economic costs of the pandemic become clearer, and debates about public health strategies become more fractious, the story of a country trapped in a cycle of conflict and division risks taking hold.

## **Our research uncovers a different story about Britain**

People are not as deeply divided as is often assumed. Like much about Britain, it is a story of nuance. There are fault lines, but wherever we probe them – such as differences of class, age, race, politics, regions, and between the nations of the United Kingdom – we also find a story of connection and commonality alongside difference. While specific issues sometimes divide us, groups in society cluster in different ways from one issue to the next. Brexit has been deeply contentious and the Leave/Remain fault line is still with us, but it is far from being a cleavage that divides society into two antagonistic camps – at least, not yet.

The image that we feel best describes our findings about British society is that of a kaleidoscope, a 19th century Scottish invention popular with children through many generations. As we hold the kaleidoscope to the light and revolve the cylinder from one turn to the next, we see the coloured fragments of glass reassemble and cluster together in different formations. The beauty of the kaleidoscope is the way that with each turn, the light diffuses those colours in ways that are different and often brilliant.

Britain's untold story is just how much common ground there is between us. Whether it is what makes us proud about the UK, our ideals for the future, or even the way we think about many of our country's most pressing concerns, as Jo Cox said in her first parliamentary speech, we have more in common than divides us. When we differ, we also have a capacity to muddle through and find compromises and solutions that might be imperfect, but keep us moving forward.

This report is titled *Britain's Choice* because we need to focus on the fact that cohesion or division is a choice that we make as a society. There are powerful forces driving people apart in societies all across the world, fuelled by entrenched issues of injustice, the tribalism of social media, disinformation, our loss of trust in institutions and the way that conflict is rewarded in media and politics. These forces of division can also become self-reinforcing.

We can make the choice not to let those forces overwhelm us, but it will require deliberate efforts. More in Common hopes that this report can help inform and inspire this urgent work.

# Context

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The United Kingdom entered the new decade of the 2020s feeling deeply divided. For four years, the country had seemed at war with itself. Few could decipher the technicalities of leaving the European Union, but most people shared a sense of frustration and fatigue with diplomatic negotiations and parliamentary debates which had dragged on like a grey wintry season without end. The decisive general election result in the final weeks of 2019 had brought some resolution on departing the EU. But it also left the country fractured. Only one in ten people said that they did not feel exhausted by the division in politics. By a margin of almost five to one, Britons worried that the nation's political divisions would lead to increased hatred in society. While a few were elated by success or shattered by defeat, many more just wanted to reunite and move on, but were unsure to where and how.

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted all aspects of life in Britain in 2020, confining many of us to our homes and creating a shared sense of experience otherwise unknown, except in times of war or natural disaster. It brought tragedy, anxiety, and fatigue. But in disrupting people's lives and curtailing travel and commuting, it also re-connected people to their local community and focused their attention on the contributions and needs of others in our society. Regular public expressions of appreciation for health workers marked a moment where people came together to celebrate the good in their community. Our research found changing experiences throughout 2020 as communities moved through different phases of this long, shared crisis.

This report does not tell the story of a country now united around a singular new sense of purpose, or suddenly restored faith and confidence in government and institutions. In fact, Britons score many of their institutions poorly for their response, contributing to a further decline in trust. Many of the sources of tension around the pandemic follow deeper fault lines, such as those between a centralised government in London and devolved authorities in Scotland and Wales, and between the north and south of England. But alongside debates around public health measures and the handling of the crisis, the pandemic also provided Britons with a glimpse of a Britain that they see less often. This is a Britain where the uplifting values of service and solidarity are celebrated, and where ordinary people in local communities are the national inspiration.

The story that this report tells is that there is more common ground among people in Britain than is generally understood, and there is no reason for the differences between people to cause irreparable divisions. On this point, our work confirms other social research recently conducted in the UK.<sup>1</sup> The story that the report tells starts with the lives of ordinary people, seeking to better understand their aspirations, fears, values, beliefs, and sense of identity. To reflect their stories, we have quoted directly from participants in our research throughout the report. Instead of focusing on their views around one specific issue, we seek to understand the connections between individuals' beliefs across a wide range of issues. Using our model of people's core beliefs, we probe the connections between individuals' beliefs across a wide range of issues – not only in the realm of politics, but also in our social attitudes and trust towards each other. Understanding those connections is essential if we are to avoid a return to the divisions that have characterised recent years.

A key contribution of this report is to try to make connections across a wide range of areas of attitudes, beliefs, and values that are too often understood in isolation from each other, and to link those to people's deeper values and their orientation towards society. The challenge with this approach is that our treatment of complex issues often feels inadequate, even in a report as long as this. We ask forbearance from readers who might be disappointed

with the brevity with which complex and important issues such as Scottish independence, northern identity, the perspectives of Black and ethnic minority British people, debates around free speech, and many other issues are addressed. We hope to contribute more in the future on many of these issues.

More in Common's research is grounded in social psychology and in understanding people's core beliefs. We use this term to describe the underlying system of beliefs, values, and identities that shape a person's experience of the world. Previous research in social psychology, behavioural economics, and neuroscience suggests that social and political behaviour is strongly impacted by people's core beliefs. We have found this to be true in our work across our other three priority countries of the United States, France, and Germany, where we have published similarly extensive studies.

The ultimate aim of this research is to identify the most effective interventions that can be applied on the ground to counter division and help build a more united and cohesive society, able to address its most pressing challenges. This report is therefore the springboard for future projects and collaborations that we hope can make a meaningful contribution towards these ends.

# Methodology

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This report builds on literature that emphasises the importance of values in predicting political behaviour.<sup>2</sup> These studies have proved a valuable aid to social researchers, governments, and community organisations in recent years.<sup>3</sup> The goal of this study is to combine the insights of social psychology with the explanatory power of cluster analysis, undertaken with a very large national sample.

To ensure that this research was informed by the extensive work already published on related issues in the United Kingdom, the project began with a literature review and a series of in-depth interviews and consultations with individuals from different backgrounds: from academia, research organisations, civil society, business, agriculture, arts and culture, and community organisations.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was deployed through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. More in Common's internal research team worked with the global research firm YouGov, members of the European Climate Foundation's UK staff, and Climate Outreach on the survey design and fieldwork. The data generated through the initial quantitative survey was then analysed to identify distinctive clusters (or segments) within the British population, based on their core beliefs. A more detailed outline of the research methodology is set out below.

## Phase 1: Consultation

This study was informed by an initial phase of in-depth interviews and consultations with academics, civil society, business leaders, community organisers, and other key institutions during the second half of 2019. These conversations helped identify the gaps in existing research findings, additional issues to explore in the research, gaps in our own knowledge, and what insights would be most useful for individuals and organisations who are working to strengthen democratic culture and social cohesion in the United Kingdom. We thank the more than 50 experts whose thoughts, insights, and ideas were incorporated into questions asked in our national survey and helped to shape the project.

## Phase 2: Original Research

### Quantitative polling

Four waves of quantitative research were carried out over the course of 2020 for this project. Surveys were conducted online (CAWI) by YouGov among representative samples of the adult population in Great Britain by gender, race, age, education, and geographic region. The initial survey's sample size of 10,385 was the largest of the four surveys, and all subsequent surveys were conducted among recontacted subsets of this initial group.

The first survey was conducted from 14th February to 9th March 2020 among a representative sample of 10,385 adults in Britain. For a full list of sample sizes and margins of error, please see the Appendix. The research instrument covered demographics, partisanship, ideology, moral values, group identity, political attitudes, and political and media consumption behaviours. Each respondent completed a section on one of four thematic issue areas: climate,

immigration and race, regions and inequality, and climate change and economic issues. The cluster analysis (described below) of the results of this survey was then conducted.

The second survey was conducted between 1st and 15th May among 2,010 adults in Great Britain shortly after the first weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown period, which allowed us to take stock of how the pandemic was influencing public attitudes (Britain Talks Climate, May 2020).

The third survey, conducted between 19th June and 28th June among 2,282 adults in Great Britain, provided more detailed insights into people's experience of the three months since the pandemic lockdown, as well as their views of society and concerns about the future.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth survey, conducted between 18th and 24th September among 2,060 adults in Great Britain, gave us an updated picture of attitudes in the country after six months' worth of restrictive measures (Britain Talks Climate, September 2020).

## **In-depth interviews and focus groups**

We conducted several rounds of qualitative research between April and August 2020, resulting in a total of 15 online focus groups and 35 one-on-one in-depth interviews.

The initial round included hour-long one-on-one in-depth interviews and seven focus groups with individuals distributed across the seven segments identified through the data analysis discussed below. We then carried out two additional focus groups with each of the Disengaged segments in order to gain a better understanding of these two less familiar groups. These participants were recruited from the initial quantitative study conducted by YouGov.

We conducted further focus group discussions with participants of Black and ethnic minority backgrounds with a broadly representative distribution of respondents from each of the seven population segments. In addition to this, we also partnered with Averroes, a British Muslim policy think tank, and Reclaim, a youth leadership and social change organisation for additional focus groups.

All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Quotes used throughout the report are taken from the qualitative work conducted for this project. In quoting individual participants from one-on-one and group conversations, we have changed names in order to protect the confidentiality of participants.

## **Phase 3: Feedback**

From March through to September 2020, our research team conducted a series of briefings and consultations with individuals and organisations with expertise on issues related to the project. This included experts from academia, think tanks, civil society, government departments, and media organisations. These meetings were an opportunity for our team to gain further insight on new research projects being undertaken by others, to share our initial findings, to have those initial findings interrogated, and ultimately to review and refine the project's outcomes.

## Note on Northern Ireland

The goal of More in Common's project was to be representative of all ethnic, geographic, and cultural communities of the United Kingdom to the greatest extent possible. In particular, we sought to include Northern Ireland, which is often left out of UK-wide studies. Towards this goal, members of our research team visited Belfast and Derry/Londonderry in September 2019. Meetings were held with local civic leaders and community organisers, who generously shared their experiences and opinions and conducted tours of their cities.

The initial national survey conducted in February 2020 included a representative sample from all four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. However, upon receipt of the survey data, we found highly unusual and self-evidently implausible distributions of responses among the Northern Ireland sample, which was collected through a separate research vendor. After extensive discussions with our fieldwork and research partners, we concluded that the Northern Ireland data did not meet the threshold for reliable data quality, did not provide a representative or accurate picture of the country, and could not be included in the study.

We examined a range of options to recollect survey data in Northern Ireland, but were unable to identify a practical solution that met our data quality standards. While we have drawn from the insights from our expert interviews in Northern Ireland, we concluded that our best solution was to focus the report on findings from Great Britain. As we feel that a study of the UK should as a matter of principle include Northern Ireland, we endeavoured to make sure it would be included. We regret this gap in the research findings, and hope for an opportunity to explore these issues in Northern Ireland in the future.

## Survey content

The core beliefs model that More in Common used for the purposes of this study draws on insights from social psychology and More in Common's original research by using questions covering the following areas:

- **Group identity:** The extent to which people identify with different groups based on nationality, gender, political party, ethnicity, and other factors.
- **Group favoritism:** Views on who is favoured and who is mistreated in British society.
- **Threat perception:** The extent to which people see the world as a dangerous place.
- **Parenting styles and authoritarian disposition:** Research suggests that basic philosophies regarding people's approach to parenting may have important predictive power in explaining their attitudes towards authoritarian public policies and authority more generally.
- **Moral Foundations:** The extent to which people endorse certain moral values or 'foundations', including fairness, care, purity, authority, and loyalty.
- **Personal agency:** The extent to which people view personal success as the product of individual factors (i.e. hard work and discipline) versus societal factors (i.e. luck and circumstance).

## Cluster analysis

To identify the segments of the British population described in this report, the data science team at YouGov undertook a cluster analysis exercise in partnership with More in Common's research team. Cluster analysis allows us to identify patterns in people's responses that are not captured by doing the more standard demographic and political analysis afforded by polling. In looking for these patterns in response to the questions we focused on respondents' core beliefs and group identity, to group those with a similar psychological disposition together. Cluster analyses do not establish causal relationships, but rather identify meaningful associations and commonalities. The seven segments in this study were created through a k-means solution process based on variables related to the core beliefs listed above. No standard demographic or party identification questions were used to create the segments (for more information on these identifiers, please see the Appendix).

This type of analysis has several key advantages:

- 1. Focus on core beliefs:** Instead of grouping people according to demographic characteristics, ideological labels, or party identification, we are seeking to go 'upstream' from issue-based attitudes to the underlying values and worldviews that drive those attitudes. The core belief methodology seeks to understand people according to their most basic psychological differences.
- 2. Improved explanatory insight.** Population segments based on cluster analysis can find patterns that are highly illuminating and are not captured by standard demographic and political analysis from conventional polling and research methodologies. This does not imply causal relationships, but rather identifies meaningful associations and commonalities.
- 3. Predictive power.** More in Common has undertaken national segmentation studies based on people's core beliefs in the United States, France, and Germany in the past two years. We have repeatedly found that it provides fresh insights into how people think, and can in fact be more predictive of people's views on a range of social and political issues than conventional variables such as party identification or demographics. For example, knowing the segment to which someone belongs more accurately predicts their views on immigration or inequality than their party identity, race, or gender. Put simply, understanding which segment an individual belongs to provides a better insight into their political views than traditional demographic categories. More importantly, it reveals the diversity of core beliefs within those traditional groupings.
- 4. Reducing biases introduced by respondent self-reporting.** Polling can often rely on people's self-definitions, which can be unreliable since people often hold widely differing interpretations of ideological labels. By identifying people's ideology from their responses to questions about their core beliefs rather than through self-reporting, we develop a more accurate picture of where they are located in the landscape of public opinion.
- 5. Targeted communication.** Communication is more effective when it does not just address individual issues, but instead resonates with an individual's core beliefs. By identifying population segments on the basis of their core beliefs, we can communicate more effectively with people in each segment.

# Chapter 2

## Britain's Kaleidoscope

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The research undertaken for this report identifies seven segments of the British population, distinguished by differences in their underlying beliefs or attitudes. This is a different approach to conventional public opinion polls that divide people according to demographic categories such as age, gender, income, region, race or ethnicity, income, or that group people according to the political party they support. These categories are useful, but important insights can be missed when we only look at people through the lens of these categories. In a social media age when people are increasingly tribal – that is, they stick to like-minded groups – we need new ways to understand public attitudes.

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This report shows one new way of doing this, based on asking 45 questions about people's core beliefs, sense of group belonging, and political behaviours. This approach allowed us to detect groups based on commonalities in aspects of their psychology, beliefs, and behaviour. When we look at how these groups, or segments, think about many of the most divisive issues of recent years, we can understand better some of the reasons for the divisions in Britain – and begin thinking about how we bring people back together.

Overall, the segmentation analysis identified seven distinct segments in the British population. Each is characterised by certain general traits and tendencies, as revealed in responses to a set of survey questions.

- **Progressive Activists:** politically-engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, environmentally-friendly.
- **Civic Pragmatists:** charitable, concerned, exhausted, community-minded, open to compromise, socially liberal.
- **Disengaged Battlers:** tolerant, surviving, insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked, socially liberal.
- **Established Liberals:** comfortable, privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, confident, pro-market.
- **Loyal Nationals:** proud, patriotic, tribal, threatened, aggrieved, worried about inequality.
- **Disengaged Traditionalists:** self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, disconnected.
- **Backbone Conservatives:** nostalgic, patriotic, proud, secure, confident, engaged.

The main characteristics for each population segment are explained below. The profile for each segment includes references to:

**Priorities and visions for a better UK:** This section highlights the priorities and visions for a better country that are distinctive to each segment. To provide the best insight into each segment, we have highlighted what is most distinctive. For example, while almost every group identifies healthcare as a priority, we have not included it because this does not tell us what is distinctive about each segment.

**What differentiates each segment:** This section draws from across the full survey, identifying key characteristics distinctive to that segment on a wide range of issues, including their feelings about the current state of the country, concerns in their daily lives, sense of national identity, views of social and political issues, and attitudes about the future.

**Core beliefs:** Drawing on the framework of social psychology that is explained in Chapter 3, this section highlights what is distinctive in the core beliefs of each segment.

**Demographic differences:** This section highlights where the demographics of a segment differed in a significant way from population averages – for example, some segments have a higher proportion of younger or older people, or more women than men.

**Media consumption:** across the entire British population, the BBC is the source of information that is used by the largest number of people. However, there are also important differences in the other sources of information people use. Media consumption behaviour is strongly linked to the core beliefs and psychology of individuals, and thus there are common patterns of readership or viewership among the segments.

**For more detail,** the Appendix contains the complete demographic information of all segments. This also includes more in-depth political party identity information.

Each segment also includes the profile of an individual who took part in an interview, with names changed to preserve their anonymity. Of course, the characteristics of those real-life individuals do not match all of the typical characteristics of the segments, as there is always variation within each segment and people are above all human, rather than being perfect models of data averages.

# Progressive Activists



Highly-educated, urban, and most likely to be in work, Progressive Activists think globally and are motivated to fight against inequality and injustice.

‘It’s not really a meritocracy we live in. The people who have privilege to begin with are far more likely to end up in their dream career.’

*Sally, 29, South East England*



## Priorities

**Environment and climate change**

**Economy**

**Inequality**

## Core beliefs

▼ **Lowest** score on **loyalty**

▼ **Lowest** score for **authority**

▼ **Lowest** score on **purity**

## Key words

**politically-engaged**

**critical**

**opinionated**

**frustrated**

**cosmopolitan**

**environmentally-friendly**

## Vision for a better UK

**Environmentally friendly**

**Compassionate**

**Tolerant**

## Preferred media sources

**The Guardian**

**Channel 4**

**Twitter**

**podcasts**

**BBC Radio 4**

**local newspapers**

# Overview

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Progressive Activists' sense of personal identity is connected to their strong political and social beliefs. They read online newspapers and blogs more than any other segment, but are much less likely to watch television news than others. They are especially vocal in debates on social media and are comfortable making their voices heard. On many issues, they hold stronger views than any other group.

Progressive Activists are more likely to identify with a political party than any other segment. Members of the group are most likely to support the Labour Party, but this segment also has the highest proportion that identifies with the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, and the Scottish National Party (SNP). Progressive Activists opposed Brexit more strongly than any other group, with 74 per cent voting to remain in the EU.

Progressive Activists are motivated by the pursuit of social justice. They are highly committed to gender and racial equality, embrace diversity, and strongly believe in the benefits of immigration. Progressive Activists favour government policies that intervene in markets to achieve better outcomes for society. Fully 99 per cent of them believe that inequality is a serious problem in the UK, compared to 73 per cent of the whole population.

While an above-average number of younger people and students are in this segment, it is worth noting that almost half of Progressive Activists are aged over 40. Where Progressive Activists are most under-represented is among over 65s, with around half as many in this age group as the average across the other segments. Progressive Activists believe there is an intergenerational conflict in the UK, with large numbers saying they believe that older generations are being selfish with their political choices.

There are more Progressive Activists earning a household income of above £50,000 than in any other group. This reflects their both their high education levels and the fact that more Progressive Activists are of working age, and in full-time or part-time work, than any other segment. Compared to the wider population, they are much more likely to live in London or Scotland. They are also far more likely to live in university towns and the major core cities.

Progressive Activists do not have a strong attachment to their British identity. They are critical of Britain's responsibility for historic injustices and the legacy of the British Empire. They think that a person's outcomes in life are determined more by the social structures in which they grow up than by their individual efforts. As a highly engaged group, they actively take part in politics to achieve their aims of a more liberal, open society.

Key concerns for this group are the impacts of climate change, austerity, and racism. They believe that the policy changes necessitated by climate change can create new jobs and benefit society. They also feel confident in their capacity to navigate technological change, although more than any segment, they feel that they spend too much time on their smartphones and other devices.

## What differentiates Progressive Activists?

- Most pessimistic about the direction the country is heading in, with only 2 per cent saying it is going in the right direction (v 29 per cent average)
- Strongly believe that the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential (95 per cent v 67 per cent average)
- Very engaged with the news. When asked about their media usage over the past 24 hours, 83 per cent report using social media, 54 per cent say they read a newspaper online or in print, and 17 per cent say they read a blog – in all cases more than any other segment
- 55 per cent post political content on social media – more than four times as much as any other segment
- Least confident that once we are through the worst of the Covid-19 crisis we will address the problems in society (68 per cent v 46 per cent average). Only 29 per cent feel confident that we will create a fairer society
- Most likely to think that people they agree with politically need to stick to their beliefs and fight (35 per cent v 22 per cent average)
- Least proud of being British of any segment (22 per cent v national average of 59 per cent) and most likely to say their national identity is not important to them (55 per cent v 24 per cent average)
- Strongly believe that white people have advantages over ethnic minorities (93 per cent v 60 per cent average)
- Strongly believe that immigration has had a positive impact on the UK (85 per cent v 43 per cent average)
- More likely to be ‘extremely worried’ about climate change than any other group (72 per cent v 34 per cent average)
- Tech-savvy, although 68 per cent say they spend too much time on their smartphone or other devices, compared to a national average of 54 per cent

## Core beliefs

- Lowest score on authoritarianism
- The strongest moral foundations for Progressive Activists are care and fairness. In contrast, they score the lowest of all segments on purity, loyalty, and authority
- Second lowest perception of threat
- Most likely to attribute outcomes in life to circumstances beyond an individual’s own control
- Attach the lowest importance to their gender as part of their identity

# Sally

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Sally lives in Brighton, where she rents an apartment with a friend. She moved there after graduating university, attracted by the city's liberal reputation and diversity. Sally feels quite a strong connection to her new home, enjoying that there are many people who share her interests and outlook on life. She works in higher education and in her free time is involved in several community groups that campaign on local and environmental issues.

Graduating from university after the financial crisis of 2008, Sally experienced first-hand the difficulties of finding a fulfilling and well-paying job. It felt as though employers were looking for way too much experience and qualifications in return for a salary that is not enough to both cover living costs and enable a young person to save for the deposit on a house. She felt that she needed more than a bachelor's degree to get a good job, so when she was offered a scholarship to study for her master's she gladly took the opportunity.

Sally tries to keep informed about what is happening in politics and is particularly worried about climate change and austerity cuts to public services. She has read about how public spending cuts have affected poor communities more than others, and thinks we should be doing more to address inequality, both in the UK and internationally. A self-described socialist, she thinks that people born into wealthy families continue to have unfair advantages in our society, saying that 'it's not really a meritocracy we live in. People who have privilege to begin with are far more likely to end up in their chosen dream career.'

Activism is something that comes naturally to Sally. She is particularly committed to protecting the environment, and while she worries about pollution and endangered wildlife, she is also optimistic that humanity can solve these problems. Sally has more faith in people working together than relying on politicians. She says that she does not think that any of the politicians leading the country are trustworthy, feeling that politicians are privileged and out of touch.

While she says she values the openness and creativity of the UK, Sally says she does not feel particularly connected to the idea of English or British identity. Why should she be proud of a country that still refuses to apologise for having conquered and enslaved so much of the world during the age of empire? In fact, Sally says she feels closer to the idea of being European and was totally 'exasperated' by Brexit. Sally feels that the tone of political debate is too aggressive, and that the country feels divided and polarised. She thinks much of the blame for this lies with the Conservative government, and feels that they spread fake news while damaging Britain's international reputation. Even though it sometimes feels like the challenge is overwhelming, Sally is inspired by the idea that a fairer, greener, better world is possible.

# Civic Pragmatists



Inclusive and tolerant, Civic Pragmatists seek to find areas of compromise and common ground with others.

‘We’re lucky to have a lot of the things that we have got. I think there’s a lot we take for granted, although there is a lot of inequality in society.’

*Bea, 52, North West England*



## Priorities

**Environment and climate change**

**Economy**

**Terrorism**

## Core beliefs

▼ **Low** score on **authoritarianism**

▲ **High** score on **care**

▲ **High** score on **fairness**

## Key words

**charitable**

**concerned**

**exhausted**

**community-minded**

**open to compromise**

**socially liberal**

## Vision for a better UK

**Environmentally friendly**

**Compassionate**

**Tolerant**

## Preferred media sources

**BBC**

**ITV**

**Channel 5**

**BBC Radio 4**

# Overview

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Civic Pragmatists are well-informed about issues and often have clear opinions, but their social and political beliefs are generally not central to their sense of personal identity. Civic Pragmatists do not tend to see themselves as activists. While they have a lot of common ground with Progressive Activists, they hold their views less intensely and on some issues are more similar to other population segments. They value compromise with others, believe in working towards consensus, and support civic values and community. Civic Pragmatists are more likely to feel exhausted by the division in British politics than the wider population.

The psychology and worldview of Civic Pragmatists is distinguished by the strength of their commitment to the welfare of others. Almost all Civic Pragmatists regularly donate money to charity, compared to only one half of the wider population. They have an overriding belief in the value of democracy and champion an inclusive attitude towards British identity. They think Britain should have remained in the European Union. Almost half of the people in this segment identify themselves as supporters of the Labour Party, but more than one in five are Conservatives, and significant numbers also support the Liberal Democrats, Greens, and SNP.

Certain demographic characteristics stand out among Civic Pragmatists. They are the segment most evenly distributed by age across the population, with an almost exact match in every age cohort. Women in this segment outnumber men by a margin of almost two to one. They are slightly more likely to live in the West Midlands, North West England, and Scotland than the wider population. They also have the third highest educational attainment as a segment (after Progressive Activists and Established Liberals).

## What differentiates Civic Pragmatists?

- 
- Most likely to believe that we are too focused on money and status as a society (91 per cent agree v 81 per cent average)
  - Slightly above average media consumption of all forms of information except blogs – when asked about what media they had consumed in the past day, 71 per cent report using social media, 57 per cent watching television news, 41 per cent reading an online or print newspaper, and 35 per cent listening to news or talk radio
  - Second most likely to feel exhausted by the division in British politics, just after Progressive Activists (73 per cent v 60 per cent average)
  - Strongly agree that living in a country that is governed democratically is important to them (93 per cent v 84 per cent average)
  - Strongly believe that the people they agree with politically need to be willing to listen to others and compromise (60 per cent v 50 per cent average)
  - Less likely to think that British identity is disappearing nowadays (44 per cent agree v 58 per cent average)
  - More likely to believe that immigration has had a positive impact on the UK (59 per cent v 43 per cent average)
  - Believe that white people have advantages over ethnic minorities (76 per cent agree v national average of 60 per cent)
  - Strongly believe that we are already feeling the effects of climate change (74 per cent v 59 per cent average)

- Much more likely (69 per cent v 49 per cent average) to strongly agree that issues like the pandemic or climate change are global in nature, and that countries are stronger working together to resolve such crises
- Most likely to be female (63 per cent v 51 per cent average)

## Core beliefs

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- Low score on authoritarianism
- The strongest moral foundations for Civic Pragmatists are care and fairness. In contrast, they score below average on purity, loyalty, and authority
- Higher perception of threat than average
- Strongly believe that men still have advantages over women in our society (72 per cent v 53 per cent average)

## Jessica

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Jessica is a retiree living in Bristol. She owns her own house and tries to keep active, although it is getting harder as she gets older and her mobility declines. To keep busy, she volunteers to help elderly people with day-to-day activities. When not doing that, she enjoys taking walks in the country and along the coast. She feels that the English countryside is one of best things about the country, saying that 'the almost bucolic vision of England does exist in some places'. Jessica also loves British humour, sarcasm, and wit. She describes herself as 'British first, English second' because she feels an attachment to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Having been vegan for decades, Jessica has a keen interest in the environment. After thinking about it for many years, her conclusion is that 'everything humans do to make their lives more convenient is detrimental to the environment'. Even so, she is not judgmental about how other people live their lives. She does not think that we can solve the climate crisis by ourselves, because 'individuals are probably doing as much as they possibly can while living a life'. Jessica believes governments and the media need to put greater pressure on industry to reduce pollution, stop producing plastics, and develop sustainable alternatives. She is worried that environmental protection is too often undermined by economic considerations. She sees the issue of fracking for gas as an example of this, where ultimately 'money talks, and in the end, whoever's got the most money gets what they want'.

Jessica is very concerned about the current state of our country and often wonders if there is something fundamentally wrong with western societies. She feels that many people are struggling with their mental health as a result of our always-on, work-driven, consumerist culture. Being globally minded, Jessica thinks about how the things we buy affect the environment and other people. She says we only get cheap food, clothes, and technology in our country because we exploit the labour and resources of developing countries. She believes our lifestyles should not depend on the exploitation of other people, 'because too many people suffer as a result of it'.

According to Jessica, another big issue nowadays is that everybody is 'in their own little bubble, surrounded by people who think the same way'. Instead of talking with others who disagree, it just seems like most public debate has devolved into shouting matches, where the one who shouts loudest wins. She hopes we can find ways to talk more to people we disagree with and reach a fair compromise on issues, reminiscing fondly on her days as a polytechnic student where there were blistering arguments on political issues yet people remained friends. Jessica thinks that the pandemic has created a unique opportunity for people to re-evaluate their priorities and change attitudes towards the most vulnerable people in our society. She would also like to see more commitment to ensuring that key workers who have got the UK through the pandemic are paid a fair wage.

While she describes herself as a 'bit of a socialist', Jessica has mixed feelings towards the advancements in women's rights won by campaigners in her lifetime. When she was growing up, most women did not work. Instead, women in the home knew each other and were the backbone of their communities. Nowadays everybody is so busy working that they barely know their neighbours, and she feels that we have lost our sense of community. Jessica feels that life was also better for children before both parents were forced to work to survive. She has observed from her friends who are also growing older that many younger families are now so busy with work that they have little time to visit their ageing relatives.

# Disengaged Battlers



Distrustful and disconnected from their communities, for Disengaged Battlers life can be a daily struggle – but they blame the system rather than other people.

‘I don’t generally feel very, very lucky. I’ve had a lot of financial issues and struggles, but obviously I’m grateful for what I have got.’

*Kelly, 39, North West England*



## Priorities

**Inequality**  
**Immigration and refugees**  
**Pensions**

## Core beliefs

- ▼ **Low** score on **loyalty**
- ▼ **Low** score on **authoritarianism**
- ▼ **Slightly lower** score on **authority** than average

## Key words

**tolerant**  
**surviving**  
**insecure**  
**disillusioned**  
**disconnected**  
**overlooked**  
**socially liberal**

## Vision for a better UK

**Fair**  
**Compassionate**  
**Honest**

## Preferred media sources

**Daily Mirror**  
**The Metro**  
**commercial radio**  
**(large numbers say they have no interest in news)**

# Overview

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More than any other segment, Disengaged Battlers are focused on the day-to-day struggle for survival. They resemble the group described in recent years as the urban ‘precarariat’: people who are working but financially insecure. As a result, they are more disengaged from social and political issues. They are the lowest consumers of almost every type of information, with television news and social media being their most important sources of information. Many have given up on the system and do not feel that they have any capacity to make things better.

Disengaged Battlers report very high financial insecurity, lower incomes, and a powerful sense of ‘just about managing’. Along with the Disengaged Traditionalists, they have the highest proportion (54 per cent) in the lower C2DE social grades, covering those in working class occupations as well as those who are out of work. They are more likely to live in London or Scotland than the wider population. Both Disengaged segments are more likely to live in post-industrial towns than average, but Disengaged Battlers are also far more likely to be found in the core cities.

The segment’s focus on survival is associated with feeling disconnected, not only from national issues but also from their local communities. They are often facing life’s highs and lows without anyone to support them, and many say that they feel lonely all or most of the time. They are the only group where more than half say that they felt mostly alone during the coronavirus lockdown in 2020. Without a well-functioning support network, Disengaged Battlers are more likely to feel disempowered, disillusioned, and hold negative attitudes towards the system.

While they have more liberal and tolerant social views, Disengaged Battlers pay less attention to politics and social issues than others. Although they are less likely to vote than any other segment, a majority are still voters. Around half support Labour, but many vote for the Conservatives and SNP; a smaller proportion votes for the Liberal Democrats and Greens. They are more likely than any other segment to feel no sense of attachment to any political party, but many still feel that they do not want to waste their vote, even if they are dissatisfied with the alternatives. Almost one in three question how important it is to live in a democracy and did not vote in either the 2019 General Election or the 2016 EU referendum. The group was more likely to vote to Remain in the EU, but only by a proportion of 37 per cent for Remain versus 29 per cent for Leave.

While they are pessimistic and less connected to their community, Disengaged Battlers generally do not blame other groups such as immigrants or other minorities for difficulties in their lives. They hold positive attitudes towards immigrants and are more likely than average to think that immigration has had a positive effect on the UK. Similarly, they embrace values of diversity, and are less likely than the wider population to say that the values of Muslims are so different that they will not be able to integrate into British society.

## What differentiates Disengaged Battlers?

- 
- Disengaged Battlers have the highest feelings of disengagement and unhappiness across a range of measures. They are most likely to say they feel lonely (23 per cent v 13 per cent average) and anxious (35 per cent v 22 per cent average) most of the time
  - They are much less likely to be hopeful that once we're through the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic we will create a fairer society (30 per cent v 44 per cent average)
  - 29 per cent did not vote in the last election, the highest of any segment (the average across the population is 17 per cent). Those that did vote tended to support Labour, although a quarter voted for the Conservatives
  - More likely to think that politicians do not care about people like them (90 per cent v 83 per cent average)
  - They are almost twice as likely to have to often borrow money from their friends (20 per cent v 12 per cent average)
  - Least likely to say it is 'very important' that the UK remains united as a country (25 per cent v 34 per cent average)
  - Least likely to have volunteered in their local community in the past year (3 per cent v 17 per cent average)
  - 25 per cent feel that being British is not at all important to them (v 35 per cent average)
  - Less likely to agree that there is pressure to speak a certain way about subjects like immigration (31 per cent disagree v 23 per cent average)
  - More likely to believe that white people have advantages over ethnic minorities (64 per cent agree v 60 per cent average)
  - Most ethnically diverse population segment, with only 77 per cent being ethnically White British (v 84 per cent average)
  - They are concerned about environmental issues, but their concern is below the population average and they are less likely to trust climate scientists (44 per cent v 56 per cent average) or friends and family when discussing climate change (7 per cent v 16 per cent average)

## Core beliefs

- 
- Slightly lower score on authoritarianism than average
  - Highest moral foundations for Disengaged Battlers are care and fairness. In contrast, they score lower on purity, loyalty, and authority
  - High sense of insecurity about their local area
  - Second highest belief that some people's circumstances are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success

# Sujita

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Sujita is in her early 60s and lives in a town in Surrey. At the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak she was made redundant from her job as a secretary, and does not see that there is any chance of getting a job soon. She has a daughter who has profound disabilities and lives in a residential home. Times are tough for her right now, but Sujita says she tries to stay positive and is 'hoping for better times'.

Asked how she feels about Britain today, Sujita says 'disappointed'. This is not the country to which she emigrated 42 years ago. When she arrived in the UK in the late 1970s, there was still a real sense of community. Neighbours would come over for tea and everybody in the area knew each other. Nowadays most people don't even know their neighbours. She feels that people keep their distance from each other and have become more selfish. Nevertheless, she has found her own sense of community in recent years, through being part of a community of carers in her area who support each other and share information and experiences. Although the coronavirus has made her life a lot harder, she also feels that it has revived community spirit in England. She began to do the shopping for her 90-year-old neighbour, and she also received notes under her door from people offering to help if she needed anything. She hopes that this renewed community spirit might be here to stay.

Sujita feels that the government has done a bad job managing Covid-19, with confusing messages from different people in the government and rules that did not make sense. She wishes they could provide clear guidance with 'no more misinformation and floundering'. She also worries about the Brexit process being as chaotic as Covid-19. She does not think the government prepared the country for Brexit. She especially worries about its impacts for staffing care homes and the NHS. Her daughter relies on the support of carers, many of whom come from Eastern Europe and have excellent skills. She is concerned about how the system will cope if they are forced to leave Britain or others like them stop coming, and she has already noticed people leaving the UK.

Living in Surrey, Sujita feels lucky to have so much countryside nearby, and finds English landscapes completely charming. Although she grew up in Sri Lanka, Sujita says she now feels more British than Sri Lankan. Her cultural background is Tamil and her religion is Hindu, 'but my country and the country I'm loyal to is Britain'. She notes that she even supports the English team in cricket matches. If someone like her lives here, pays their tax, and feels rooted here, 'why can't we all be British?' She finds it frustrating when people describe themselves as Welsh, or English, or English but from the north, and thinks we would be more united if we just all said that we are British. Sujita is proud of Britain's reputation for tolerance. Although she has heard other people's experience of racism in some parts of the country, she is not aware of having ever experienced racism in the UK. She thinks that 'we need to think of a better way of getting everybody together.'

One of the lessons from Covid-19 for Sujita is that 'it has shown us less cars, less planes, less transport is better for air quality and better for the environment'. While this could never last, she hopes that there are some lessons for taking better care of the environment. Sujita worries that recent announcements about allowing more housing to be built will eat into the green belt and is just another example of the government rewarding its donors but not protecting the environment.

# Established Liberals



Established Liberals are prosperous and educated. They hold a socially progressive outlook, are pro-market in their economic views, and are globally-minded.

‘We are a very equal society and we are incredibly supportive of each other. I don’t think that is as true in other countries. I haven’t got any first-hand experience of being a different nationality, but I do think we have this amazing British spirit.’

*Michael, 39, South West England*



## Priorities

**Economy**

**Divisions in society**

**Housing**

## Core beliefs

▼ **Lowest** score on **care**

▼ **Low** score on **purity**

▼ **Low** score on **authoritarianism**

## Key words

**comfortable**

**privileged**

**cosmopolitan**

**trusting**

**confident**

**pro-market**

## Vision for a better UK

**Tolerant**

**Environmentally friendly**

**Educated**

## Preferred media sources

**BBC**

**The Times**

**Daily Telegraph**

**BBC Radio 4**

**podcasts**

# Overview

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Educated, wealthy, and comfortable, Established Liberals feel at ease in their own skin – as well as the country they live in. Members of this group have a high trust in government, institutions, and those around them. They are almost twice as likely as any other group to feel that their voices are represented in politics. They are also more likely than any segment to believe that citizens, through their collective efforts, can change society. They hold moderate, centrist views and are particularly receptive towards compromising with others.

Often working in stable white-collar jobs, Established Liberals are particularly concentrated in London, the South East, South West, and East of England, favouring coastal areas a little more than the wider population (17 per cent versus 13 per cent on average). They are least likely of any population segment to say that the area they live in has been neglected and are also least likely to feel unsafe in their local area.

Established Liberals tend to hold socially liberal views and believe in open markets and less government regulation and intervention. Their views on economic issues differ from other socially liberal groups. They are more likely to believe that people are responsible for their own outcomes in life by working hard, that young people feel entitled to an easy life, and to feel that the public spending cuts of the 2010s were necessary. Just over half identify politically as Conservatives, with their values aligning with the ‘One Nation’ Conservative tradition. Around one third of people in this segment identify with either Labour or the Liberal Democrats.

Established Liberals have an internationalist outlook, believing that the UK should have remained in the European Union and feeling prouder of Britain’s positive influence in the world than any other segment. On issues such as immigration, they are closer to Progressive Activists than any segment, and are the only other segment where a majority believes that British identity is being strengthened through diversity. On other issues, however, their attitudes can be closest to the Backbone Conservatives, such as on the existence of public schools. In some ways the Established Liberals are a bridge between progressive and conservative groups, because on specific issues their values can clearly align with one or the other (while at other times they might be closer to the population average).

Established Liberals have higher social trust and positive views of society, perhaps reflecting their own sense of security. During the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, they were more likely than any other segment to believe that most people were following the rules and doing their bit to fight the virus. Although they feel represented and have high levels of trust in institutions and other people, Established Liberals still recognise that Britain has serious problems, including a high level of inequality. This perhaps reflects the fact that they are above average for all forms of media consumption except social media.

## What differentiates Established Liberals?

- 
- Strongest sense of security of any segment, with 40 per cent disagreeing that the world is becoming a more dangerous place (v 13 per cent average)
  - Feel safe in their local area, with 82 per cent of the group disagreeing that their area is becoming more dangerous (v 56 per cent average)
  - More likely to have volunteered in their local community in the past year than any other segment (31 per cent v 17 per cent average)
  - Less anxious about the impact of technological change and automation than any other segment (27 per cent v 38 per cent average)
  - More likely to feel that they have a say in politics than any other segment (43 per cent v 24 per cent average)
  - Most likely to believe that the differences between people in the UK are not so big that we cannot come together (80 per cent, compared to an average of 61 per cent)
  - Most likely to think that people who agree with them politically need to be more willing to compromise (62 per cent v 50 per cent average)
  - Less likely to say they feel ‘very proud’ of being British (20 per cent v 27 per cent average)
  - Established Liberals feel comfortable talking about their views on race and racism; they are least likely to strongly disagree when asked if they feel comfortable expressing their views (4 per cent v 10 per cent average)
  - More likely to think that immigration has had a positive impact on their area (60 per cent v 43 per cent average)
  - Most likely to think that ordinary people are responsible for causing the most damage to the environment (41 per cent v 30 per cent average)
  - Less likely to feel their area has been neglected than any other segment – 58 per cent disagree that their area has been neglected for a long time, compared to 41 per cent of the wider population

## Core beliefs

- 
- Second lowest score on authoritarianism
  - Established Liberals have a low score for the value of purity
  - Members of this segment generally score close to average for loyalty and authority
  - Lowest sense of insecurity about their local area
  - Attach the lowest importance to supporting a political party

# Michael

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Michael is an architect in a design studio. He is in early middle age, married, lives in Bath, and commutes by car to work in Bristol. He is proud of what he has achieved and feels content with his lot in life. He has a sense of fulfilment in having established a strong foundation for his family – a good home with plenty of space in the garden for his children to play, and the financial means to enjoy regular holidays abroad. When he thinks about his local area, Michael feels it is a good place to live. He does not see as many social issues as there are in other places. Even when travelling abroad he feels safe, trusting that the majority of people will reciprocate his live-and-let-live attitude.

Michael is conscious of the difficulties in modern politics but feels more or less satisfied with how the UK is run. He thinks it is good that a wide range of views are represented in political debates, and although some of his friends and family say they are unhappy with the government, he feels that politicians are driven to benefit society and are trying hard in difficult circumstances. When he thinks about life in the UK, Michael says it is great to live here, particularly when it comes to finding work, skills training, and education. However, he has some concerns that with Britain now out of the European Union, it may be more difficult to work abroad. This frustrates him, because he thinks everybody should have the right to travel freely and work in other countries. He is also worried by the rise in racism he has seen since the Brexit referendum, particularly online, and the way that people like himself who voted to Remain in the EU are depicted in the media.

While Michael says that he is comfortable, he feels some level of dissatisfaction with the state of the country, sometimes asking himself ‘what is going on?’ This is particularly the case when he thinks about the pandemic, with confused messaging and poor management of different aspects of the crisis. Yet he does not think that blame for this lies entirely with the government, also noting that some people did not follow the rules as much as others. Michael is also interested in the issue of the environment. He believes our modern lifestyle is damaging the environment and that ‘we choose too much, mass produce things we don’t need.’ He feels that ordinary people can make the biggest difference by changing their habits, and perhaps returning to the reuse and repair culture of older generations. To that end, he tries to live sustainably where he can. He has begun growing vegetables in his garden and hopes to grow more food for his family in the future.

All in all, Michael believes that we should think less in terms of political parties or ideologies and recognise that we are all human beings: ‘everyone’s a parent, a brother, a sister, a daughter, a son – if you realise that, then really we are the same.’ In fact, people are generally honest, and we can mostly trust others. While he is happy to live in the UK, he does not feel especially attached to being British, seeing it being more about where he was born than anything else. Having travelled, he has seen that every country has something unique to offer, and thinks that instead of border walls we should be building bridges between different nations.

# Loyal Nationals



Loyal Nationals perceive the world to be a dangerous place. They think the UK needs a strong leader who is prepared to break the rules in order to defeat the threats our society faces.

‘The likes of myself don't matter anymore. I don't fit in. It seems we are giving in more and more to people that are outside of this country or don't want to integrate.’

*George, 62, West Midlands*



## Priorities

Immigration  
Ageing population  
Preserving cultural heritage

## Core beliefs

- ▲ Highest score on authoritarianism
- ▲ Highest score on authority
- ▲ Highest score on care

## Key words

proud  
patriotic  
tribal  
threatened  
aggrieved  
worried about inequality

## Vision for a better UK

Hard-working  
Honest  
Patriotic

## Preferred media sources

Daily Mail  
ITV  
The Sun  
Facebook  
local newspapers

# Overview

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Loyal Nationals value the sense of security and belonging that comes from being part of a nation with a strong identity and shared values. They feel proud of their country and patriotic about its history and past achievements. They also feel anxious about threats to Britain, in the face of which they believe we need to come together and pursue our national self-interest.

Just as belonging to a group – in particular to their nation – is important to Loyal Nationals, so too they imagine that other people will be similar to them, and have a strong attachment to the groups to which they belong. For that reason, they are more anxious about Britain's increasing diversity. They feel that having different group loyalties (for example, someone having a different background in terms of race, culture, or religion) will undermine their loyalty to Britain, and that having large numbers of people with different group loyalties will undermine the country's sense of cohesion.

This tendency to see other people through the lens of their group attachments contributes to feelings of being besieged or under threat from outsiders. Loyal Nationals have a sense of loss and anxiety about the future, even after Britain's departure from the EU, which most Loyal Nationals supported.

Loyal Nationals carry a deep strain of frustration at having their views and values excluded by decision-makers in London. They have the lowest levels of educational attainment of any segment, and they feel disrespected by educated elites. They are particularly concentrated in Yorkshire, North East England, and Wales, and often feel that the needs of their local community have been neglected for a long time. Members of the group are more likely to live in post-war new towns and in medium-sized towns than average, being correspondingly less likely to live in core cities. Only Disengaged Battlers have lower feelings of living in a community that cares for each other than Loyal Nationals do. Members of this segment also report low levels of trust in others, feeling that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people.

On many issues relating to national identity, Loyal Nationals hold stronger views than any other group. They are more likely than any other segment to have supported Brexit so that Britain could gain control of immigration policy. They believe that immigration leads to a more divided nation, and see diversity as a threat to national identity. Far more than any other group, they say that they sometimes feel like a stranger in their own country. Three-quarters of Loyal Nationals worry about becoming a minority in the UK. Psychologically, the group is marked by feelings of suspicion and frustration, and they feel that others' interests are often put ahead of theirs. Loyal Nationals believe that it is a dog-eat-dog world we live in, and that Britain is often naïve in its dealing with other countries. Many Loyal Nationals think that the country needs a strong leader who is prepared to break the rules to fix what is wrong.

Politically, Loyal Nationals are slightly more likely to participate in elections than British people on average. However, they can often find it hard to follow politics. Between 2017 and 2019, their vote for the Conservatives shot up from 46 per cent to 56 per cent, and their vote for Labour fell by a similar amount. Many are the 'Red Wall' voters that delivered Boris Johnson's landslide Conservative victory in 2019. However, on economic issues Loyal Nationals favour interventionist, big-government policies, aligning more with the three segments most likely to support Labour. For example, they are the second most likely (after Progressive Activists) to strongly agree that government financial support during the Covid-19 pandemic should not be given to companies that are based offshore in tax havens.

# What differentiates Loyal Nationals?

- 
- Most likely to say their nationality is important to them (78 v 62 per cent average)
  - 62 per cent sometimes feel like a stranger in their own country – compared to an average of 43 per cent, and far more than any other segment
  - More anxious about technological change and automation than any other segment (48 per cent v 38 per cent average)
  - More likely than any other segment to identify as working class (65 per cent v 50 per cent average)
  - More likely than any other segment to say that their class identity is important to them (49 per cent v 40 per cent average)
  - Most likely to say that Covid-19 has made them reassess their priorities in life (41 per cent v 31 per cent average)
  - Strongest sense of insecurity of any segment, with almost all agreeing that the world is becoming a more dangerous place (and twice as many strongly agreeing than the national average)
  - Most likely to think the UK needs a strong leader willing to break the rules (72 per cent v 59 per cent average)
  - Most likely to say that the UK government should continue to play a bigger role in our lives after the coronavirus pandemic is over (43 per cent v 34 per cent average)
  - Highest agreement that we should have stronger rules to protect the environment, as long as they apply equally to everyone (63 per cent v 48 per cent average)
  - Most likely to strongly feel there is a pressure to speak a certain way about immigration (52 per cent v 28 per cent average)
  - Strongest anti-immigration views of any segment. Loyal Nationals are least likely to say that immigration has had a positive impact (19 per cent v 43 per cent average)
  - Most likely to think Islamist terrorism is a serious problem (95 per cent v 83 per cent average), but also think that anti-Semitism (68 per cent v 61 per cent average) is a problem

## Core beliefs

- 
- Second highest score on the value of loyalty (after Backbone Conservatives)
  - Highest scores on authoritarianism and authority
  - Highest score on the value of care for any segment
  - Strongest pride in their nationality, ethnicity, class, and gender
  - Highest sense sense of insecurity about the world

# George

---

George has recently retired after a career in the NHS due to ill health. In his younger years, he served as a soldier in the British Army. He lives in Coventry – in his own words, ‘in the West Midlands, unfortunately.’ He does not like the area that he lives in, as he feels that it has been in decline during recent years. He also often feels alone because he does not know anybody in his area and his nearest family lives up North. His favourite places to visit in the UK are the Yorkshire Moors and Dales, because you can go there to relax in the countryside by yourself and leave the world behind.

Even though it’s politically incorrect to say it, George believes that the UK has been letting in too many immigrants who do not want to integrate. He thinks the local sense of community has been undermined by the number of immigrants who have moved into Coventry. In particular, he thinks there is a problem with Muslims – not only carrying out terror attacks, but also becoming dominant in the places they live and wanting to implement Sharia law. On this point, he is quick to add that he has Sikh and Hindu friends who agree with him that Muslims do not integrate into British society as easily as others.

When asked to sum up life in the UK today, he answers ‘it’s sh\*t... the likes of myself don’t count anymore.’ The 2016 referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union made George engage more with political and social issues: ‘to me, that referendum was important. It’s the first time in my life I ever thought my vote counted for something.’ Up until 2019, George had voted Labour all his life. He switched his vote because of the party’s support for a second EU referendum, which he calls a betrayal. He is very critical of Sir Keir Starmer, the new Labour leader, as the person behind that policy. George blames the EU for the decline of British heavy industry and the collapse of the UK’s fishing industry.

George believes we need to more strictly enforce our laws: ‘rules may be for breaking, but laws are not.’ He is proud to be English and is angry that other people make him feel he should be ashamed for being a straight white man. He has had a difficult life and rejects the idea that he is privileged. Instead, he thinks it is those who take from our benefits system without paying in who are the truly privileged ones. He is proud of the NHS but thinks it should only be available to British citizens who have paid their National Insurance contributions. Over the past few years, he has been having treatment on the NHS for several health conditions. He is thankful the health service exists.

George says the media is dividing people in Britain and feels he is insulted for his beliefs, saying ‘I’m supposedly a bigot, I’m a misogynist... I’m just sick of labels.’ He is frustrated by the pro-EU ‘crackpots’ and ‘champagne socialists’ who disagree with him, and who are constantly ‘virtue-signalling’ to others on issues of immigration and diversity. Looking to the future, George has a warning for politicians. He says that the anger behind the referendum is coming back and that the elites of all parties need to start listening to ordinary people.

# Disengaged Traditionalists



Disengaged Traditionalists see the value of self-reliance and a strong work ethic. They are pessimistic about the places they live in, but are optimistic about the UK's future.

'I'm a great believer of don't help someone else until you've helped yourself.'

*Jake, 47, South East England*



## Priorities

**Economy**

**Crime**

**Taxes**

## Core beliefs

▲ **High** score for **loyalty**

▲ **High** score on **authoritarianism**

▼ **Low** score on **fairness**

## Key words

**self-reliant**

**ordered**

**patriotic**

**tough-minded**

**suspicious**

**disconnected**

## Vision for a better UK

**Hard-working**

**Polite**

**Patriotic**

## Preferred media sources

**The Sun**

**Daily Express**

**(large numbers say they have no interest in news)**

# Overview

---

Disengaged Traditionalists believe in a well-ordered society and put a strong priority on issues of crime and justice. They tend to be very mindful of others' behaviour. When they think about social and political debates, they often consider issues through a lens of suspicion towards others' behaviour and observance of British social rules. They often have viewpoints on issues, but tend to pay limited attention to current debates and are second only to Disengaged Battlers in not identifying with any particular political party. Large numbers of this group did not vote in the 2019 election, but those who did vote favoured the Conservatives to Labour by a ratio of almost four to one.

Disengaged Traditionalists value a feeling of self-reliance and take pride in a hard day's work. The emphasis that they place on personal responsibility translates into feeling less concerned about inequality than most others, with only half saying that they are concerned about it, compared to nearly three-quarters of the wider population. They are also least likely to believe that modern Britain places too much emphasis on money and status (although a large majority still agree with this concern). Disengaged Traditionalists have the coldest feelings towards those on benefits of any population segment. They are strongly opposed to what they perceive to be a culture of hand-outs in Britain.

Disengaged Traditionalists feel a strong sense of pride in Britain's history and armed forces, but they are below average on measures of social trust and feeling that they are part of a community. While they have many similarities with the Loyal Nationals, they tend to see society through the lens of individuals rather than groups. Disengaged Traditionalists are in line with the average for the rest of the country in believing that they have a say in politics. However, they are more likely to harbour racist views, with one-third believing that some races or ethnic groups are born less intelligent than others.

On demographic measures, Disengaged Traditionalists are likely to live in an urban area, be in full-time work, and be employed in a manual occupation. They tend to have lower education levels and lower earnings than the general population. Of all segments, Disengaged Traditionalists comprise the highest percentage of men, with an above-average concentration in the English Midlands. Alongside the Disengaged Battlers, they are more likely to live in post-industrial towns than average. Members of this segment have the most negative attitudes towards metropolitan elites living in London and the South East.

# What differentiates Disengaged Traditionalists?

- 
- 59 per cent men (v 49 per cent average)
  - Coldest attitudes of any group towards people who are on benefits (average of 33 v 42 national average, where 0 is cold and 100 is warm)
  - At 70 per cent, least likely to think that we are too focused on money and status as a society (v 81 per cent average)
  - Much less likely to say that we should always strive to tackle inequality in our society (44 per cent v 65 per cent average)
  - More likely to think that British identity is disappearing nowadays (76 per cent v 58 per cent average)
  - Less likely to think that immigration has had a positive impact on the UK (22 per cent v 43 per cent average)
  - More suspicious of Muslims – they are the least likely to agree that most Muslims do not support terrorism (80 per cent v 90 per cent average)
  - Less likely to feel that we should act on climate change (12 per cent v 6 per cent average) and more likely to feel that climate change is mainly a concern for rich, white, middle class (24 per cent v 15 per cent average)
  - More likely to strongly feel that these days people are too sensitive about things to do with race (48 per cent v 33 per cent average)
  - Most likely to hold racist attitudes such as ‘some races are born less intelligent than others’ (35 per cent v 17 per cent on average)

## Core beliefs

- 
- High score on authoritarianism
  - Highest sense of insecurity about their local area
  - Highest pride in their ethnicity
  - Second highest score for believing they owe their position to hard work and effort rather than luck and circumstance

## Jake

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Jake is a 47-year old software tester living in Maidstone. His role means that he often works long hours, but he does not think this is something to complain about. Hard work is part of life if you want to get ahead, and Jake believes people should always try to stand on their own two feet and make their own success in life instead of relying on others. Jake takes pride in keeping himself in shape and has a routine of going to the gym every day, usually before he arrives at work.

After his divorce, Jake was short of money and moved back to living with his parents but found that difficult in his 40s, so he now lives alone. Things have not been easy with his ex-wife, which made it harder for him to see his children who live in North East England with their mother. His long regular drives up and down the country and long commutes have made him more frustrated about the state of the roads, which seem to be constantly under repair and struggling to cope since so many people have moved into the area in recent years.

Jake has lived in the North as well as the South East, and he prefers northern people because they are more friendly and relaxed. He thinks his local area is becoming a worse place to live and is becoming hard to recognise compared to what it was like when he was growing up. Not only is it more unsafe but it is not as well maintained. He thinks that immigration is to blame for this decline, because it has made the community feel divided, with areas that no longer feel English. He wonders whether we should start calling immigrants in those areas the 'ethnic majorities' rather than 'ethnic minorities'. Jake feels it is a double standard that it is frowned upon for English people to be proud of their ethnicity, when other groups are encouraged to be proud of their backgrounds and identities. But Jake is also critical of people with racist attitudes towards others, which makes society more divided.

One aspect of living in his area that Jake enjoys is the opportunity to visit the countryside and go for walks. He thinks more should be done to protect the English countryside. He gets frustrated when he sees plastic rubbish when he's walking through the countryside, and he also worries about the amount of plastics in the ocean. However, while he feels that climate change is happening – 'when I was younger the seasons were more like seasons' - he does not think we need to worry about it, as the planet has always gone through change. While humans might be speeding some of those changes up, Jake says he finds all the reporting about the environment boring.

Jake is proud of being English and thinks that English people are friendly and outgoing towards others, but he worries that others often take advantage of us as a result. He thinks it is good that the UK has a benefits system, but that sometimes there are people who abuse the system and 'they should get banged up, to be honest'. He wonders why we are more interested in looking after others than looking after ourselves – 'we seem to send – if the figures are right – loads of money abroad to loads of other countries and we've got issues in our own country that need that money to help and get sorted out. And I'm a great believer of don't help someone else until you've helped yourself and you're all okay.' On the other hand, Jake is also critical of English people's lack of respect for other countries around the world when they travel overseas: 'certainly in my early years I have done the whole Ibiza, Majorca, Spain type-thing, and you see that some people go abroad and just don't care. They just treat it as if it's their own country, or their own home'.

Jake thinks it is a good thing that Britain can now make its own laws, having left the European Union. He is hopeful that this will make Britain a more united country. But he thinks that people don't respect the law enough nowadays. The justice system has become 'a bit of a joke' because too many people can break the law and get away with a slap on the wrists – in fact the system is basically 'set up to let criminals get off'. He would like to see much stricter punishments for crime and a policy of making an example of the worst offenders to send a message to the rest of society.

# Backbone Conservatives

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Nostalgic, patriotic, and confident, Backbone Conservatives look to the UK's future after Brexit with optimism. They are proud of Britain's history, traditions, and armed forces.

'I'm proud of the fact I'm British. I would always hang my British flags out if I could.'

*Michelle, 78, Yorkshire and the Humber*



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## Priorities

**Brexit**  
**Defence and security**  
**Pensions**

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## Core beliefs

▲ **High** score on **authoritarianism**  
▲ **High** score on **purity**  
▲ **High** score on **authority**

---

## Key words

**nostalgic**  
**patriotic**  
**proud**  
**secure**  
**confident**  
**engaged**

---

## Vision for a better UK

**Hard-working**  
**Honest**  
**Patriotic**

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## Preferred media sources

**BBC**  
**ITV**  
**Sky News**  
**Daily Mail**  
**Daily Telegraph**  
**Daily Express**

## Overview

---

In many ways, Backbone Conservatives live up to the image of the comfortable and paternalistic Home Counties Tory of times gone by. Proud to be British and confident of their place in the world, members of this group are particularly concentrated in rural areas in the East Midlands, South East, and South West of England. Data shows that they are far more likely to live in villages and small towns than average, and are least likely of any segment to live in core cities. With this strong connection to where they live, Backbone Conservatives feel that they have a voice in their community. They are most likely to believe that if they wished to do so, they could find ways to improve the area in which they live.

This segment is both older and wealthier than the general population. Characterised by an overwhelming support for the Conservative Party and strongly favouring leaving the EU, the worldview of a Backbone Conservative is shaped by tradition and nostalgia. They are the proudest of Britain's history, cultural heritage, and monarchy of any group. They are also the segment with the lowest Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population. They are the only group where a majority think that the country is going in the right direction.

On some issues, Backbone Conservatives are out of step with the wider public. For instance, they are least likely to believe that racism is a serious problem and have the most negative views on the impact of immigration. Backbone Conservatives are least likely to think that inequality is a serious problem. They are also largely supportive of public spending cuts, sceptical of the need for radical action on the climate, and doubt the existence of a North-South divide in the UK.

Backbone Conservatives follow the news actively, with a preference for traditional news sources (they are below average only on social media engagement and reading blogs). Two-thirds tune in to television news every day, almost half read a print or online newspaper, and more than one-third tune in to radio news – in each case, they are very high on media engagement compared to other segments. They are least likely to say that they spend too much time on their smartphone or other devices, and most likely to feel that the negatives of social media outweigh the benefits.

## What differentiates Backbone Conservatives?

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- Most optimistic segment – only segment with a majority thinking that the country is going in the right direction (55 per cent v 29 per cent average)
- Most likely to say that the pandemic has revealed the best of human nature, namely our capacity to be caring and compassionate (66 per cent v 55 per cent average)
- The only segment where a majority think that there is no North-South divide, feeling instead that people in the regions are able to make their voices heard equally (55 per cent v 35 per cent average)
- Have the most pride in being British of any segment (78 per cent v 59 per cent) and high proportion saying that their national identity is important to them (76 per cent v 62 per cent average)

- Traditional and nostalgic – have a stronger sense of pride than any other segment in the country’s history (32 per cent v 21 per cent average), cultural heritage (26 per cent v 20 per cent average), and the monarchy (28 per cent v 14 per cent average)
- Most likely to identify as English (80 per cent v 72 per cent average) and to be ethnically White British (93 per cent v 84 per cent)
- Most likely to think that most immigrants do not make efforts to integrate into British society (56 per cent v 38 per cent average)
- Least likely to consider racism a serious problem (62 per cent v 77 per cent average)
- Most likely to believe that cuts to public spending were necessary (75 per cent v 50 per cent average)
- Highest score for agreeing that when the Covid-19 crisis is over, we should immediately stop borrowing and focus on repaying the national debt (41 per cent v 29 per cent average)
- Most likely to say that responding to climate change requires gradual change (47 per cent v 32 per cent average)

## Core beliefs

- 
- High score on authoritarianism
  - Joint highest score on value of authority
  - Most likely to believe women are at an advantage over men in our society

## Michelle

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Michelle is in her late 70s but still leads an active life, splitting her time between her home in Harrogate and a second home in Portugal. Her husband served in the Royal Navy, a job which meant that they were stationed in different parts of the world as their family was growing up. Since those days they have enjoyed their retirement years together, having time to do the things that they most enjoy. She is outgoing, enjoys parties, and feels that life is busy with daily activities such as her art classes, even though she finds it hard to account for how quickly time passes. She loves the fact that her family once described her as ‘the oldest granny on the fairground roundabout’. The highlight of her day during the Covid-19 pandemic was joining Gareth Malone’s Great British Home Chorus every afternoon, which brought thousands of people across Britain together to sing their favourite tunes and connect with each other.

Although Michelle spends much of her time abroad in her second home, she has a deep sense of pride in being British and thinks Britain is a special country, with exceptional achievements, heritage, and culture: ‘I’m proud of the fact I’m British. I would always hang my British flags out if I could.’ She finds it deeply moving to watch traditional British ceremonies on TV, such as Trooping the Colour or the Remembrance service at the Cenotaph, which honour the Queen and the memory of the many members of Britain’s armed forces who have sacrificed themselves for our country. She feels tired of hearing that we need to be sorry about the British Empire. For her, the imperial days are in the past, and there was both good and bad in the history of the empire.

Michelle sometimes feels embarrassed by the behaviour of other British people abroad – ‘when you see all these hen parties and men going on golfing trips on the planes, some of them are so rude and badly behaved. It makes you think then, I feel, very ashamed to be British.’ She worries that young people today are too entitled to an easy life and do not respect their elders. She is also concerned about drug taking and crime in her part of England, but takes comfort from the fact that there is good security and surveillance in the complex where she lives.

Michelle feels connected to her community, especially as a governor of a girls’ school and as a member of a golf club near her second home in Portugal. Many of her friends have now passed away, and she misses them but feels fortunate to still have her own health. Although nowadays Michelle spends much of her time abroad in the company of other expats, she still worries about Britain becoming a more divided country as a result of immigration. She thinks that society has become more divided because of the scale of immigration into Britain in recent years. More needs to be done to ensure that immigrants integrate into British society and speak English. She sometimes fears that a day will come when traditional British people like her will become a minority back home.

Michelle thinks it is naïve to trust others too much, and even says that she does not trust her own husband fully, because ‘men have a habit of suddenly coming out with secrets because they think it’s interesting!’ She does not trust what she hears from the media – she blames them for criticising the government too much and making people get worked up about leaving the EU. She also doubts that climate change is anything more than a natural fluctuation in the environment.

Michelle is excited about Britain’s global ambitions, believing that Britain can now return to the world stage and play the prominent leadership role it deserves. Although she is unsure about whether leaving the European Union was the right thing to do, she now wishes that society would unite behind the government. A loyal member of the Conservative Party, she thinks Boris Johnson is doing a great job in difficult circumstances. According to Michelle, the UK needs a strong ruler: ‘if you have a leader who is absolutely strict, you might not like them, but it’s much better than being soft with everybody.’ She does not think that the government should be compromising with opposition parties in Parliament.

# Test how well you understand the segments!

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To help check how well you have understood the segments, test yourself on the following 25 questions:

1. Which segment is the most optimistic about Britain's future?
2. In which segment are you most likely to find someone earning more than £50,000 per year?
3. Which segment is the most trusting of other people?
4. Which group says it is most exhausted by division in politics?
5. Which segment most strongly believes that UK needs a leader who is prepared to break the rules?
6. Who are most likely to feel lonely and anxious?
7. Who are most likely to feel happy?
8. Which segment feels most strongly that the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place?
9. Which segment is most likely to agree that men and women each have different roles to play in society?
10. Which segment has the greatest pride in the UK's history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers?
11. Which segment is proudest of the UK's economy?
12. Which segment has the highest proportion of women?
13. In which segment do the largest number of people feel like a stranger in their own country?
14. In which segment are people most likely to feel that the differences between people in the UK are too big for us to work together any more?
15. In which segment are people most likely to feel that our society focuses too much on money and status?
16. Which segment has the highest proportion of people who are White British?
17. In which segment do the most people identify as working class?
18. Which segment has the highest proportion of people in full-time work?
19. Which segment has the highest proportion of people in part-time work?
20. Which segment feels the most pride in being British?
21. Which segment feels the most pride in being English?
22. Which segment is most likely to want their ideal UK to be environmentally friendly?
23. Which segment is the most likely to say that their gender an important part of their identity?
24. Which segment is least likely to feel that their views on Brexit are important to their personal identity?
25. Which segment is the least likely to have a religious affiliation?

## **Check your answers!**

1. Backbone Conservatives
2. Progressive Activists
3. Established Liberals
4. Progressive Activists
5. Loyal Nationals
6. Disengaged Battlers
7. Backbone Conservatives
8. Loyal Nationals
9. Disengaged Traditionalists
10. Established Liberals
11. Disengaged Traditionalists
12. Civic Pragmatists
13. Loyal Nationals
14. Disengaged Battlers
15. Civic Pragmatists
16. Backbone Conservatives
17. Loyal Nationals
18. Progressive Activists
19. Civic Pragmatists
20. Backbone Conservatives
21. Loyal Nationals
22. Progressive Activists
23. Loyal Nationals
24. Established Liberals
25. Progressive Activists

# Chapter 3

## Britain's Core Beliefs

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There will always be old money, new money, there will always be the disadvantaged. I mean, the big kid will always pick on the small kid, irrespective of what rules and laws you put in place. You know, going back to tribalism and the social divide, when I worked in town, I used to work in an office in Leicester and it was in the LE5 postcode area. Regularly, I mean two or three times a week, I would come in to work, park the car, and on the white walls to our office it was painted LE4, which is the adjacent post code. And it's literally people from LE4 tagging properties in LE5. You cannot get a more insane and arbitrary tribalism than that and that's what happened. So, sure, for every group in society there will be an anti-group, whatever that looks like, and they have to exist for the sake of each other.

*Gareth, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, East Midlands*

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The seven segments of the British population outlined in the previous chapter were identified through a model that applies recent findings from social psychology. It analyses people's core beliefs on the basis of their responses to a series of 45 questions, which seek to shed light on the hidden architecture of our minds that shapes our behaviours and attitudes in complex ways. This chapter provides a non-technical explanation of the model underpinning this segmentation (for technical specialists, further information about the model can be provided). The purpose of using this model is that, rather than understanding people only according to their demographic or attitudinal traits (such as their age, gender, ethnic background, or identification with a political party), we can also understand them according to their identity and belief systems. In turn, this population segmentation allows us to better understand many of the divisions in our society – as well as helping us to find common ground across society's fault lines.

The questions used in the segmentation model touch on six dimensions of people's belief systems that have been researched by social scientists. These six dimensions all help to explain how social and political behaviour is relatively stable across our lifetimes, thus having greater predictive power for the future. The core beliefs model includes the following dimensions:

- Moral foundations theory
- Authoritarian disposition (measured by parenting style scales)
- Fear and perception of threat
- Personal agency and responsibility
- Political values
- Identity, tribalism, and group affiliation

Group identity, the last of these six dimensions, is an important dimension of the hidden architecture of our minds. Because humans evolved in small tribes, we developed a tendency to view people through the lens of groups. The groups in which we have a sense of belonging are our 'in-groups'; the groups to which we do not belong are our 'out-groups'. As humans we are remarkably quick at thinking of other people in terms of in-groups and out-groups. When others agree with our views, we often see them as part of our in-group and trust what they say more than others. When we feel insecure or threatened in some way, we tend to draw closer to our group and separate ourselves from outsiders. The questions we ask in our research examine the role of group identity in shaping people's views and values.

Belief systems differ from person to person, but they tend to remain relatively constant across an individual's lifetime. For that reason, unlike the results of regular opinion polling, the map of Britain's seven segments presented in this report is likely to remain applicable for many years to come.

## 3.1 Moral foundations

The first principle of moral psychology is that intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second.<sup>5</sup> Research in social psychology has proposed a set of 'moral foundations' that underpin people's moral judgments. These moral foundations help us make sense of people's moral compasses and, as our research reveals, are correlated with a variety of attitudes.

Moral foundations are akin to universal 'taste receptors'. They are adaptations to long-standing threats and opportunities. Each foundation has different triggers, which, when activated, can generate intuitive reactions and perhaps

specific emotions. While we all possess the same moral foundations, as humans we are not all 'wired' in the same way and, when we encounter different issues or circumstances in life, we unknowingly prioritise these foundations differently.

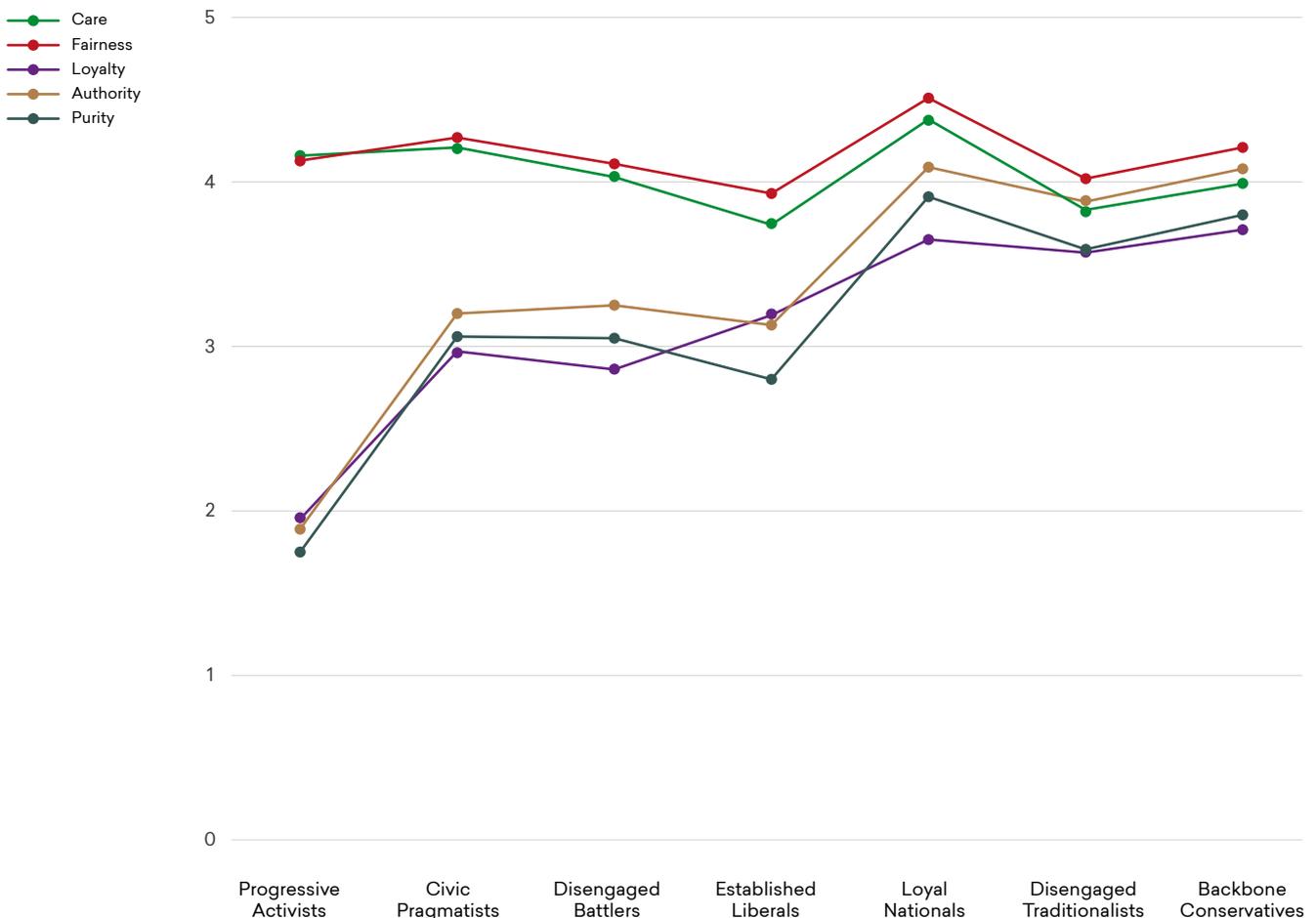
The moral foundations identified through the work of Jonathan Haidt<sup>6</sup> and others are:

- **Care/Harm:** Protecting the vulnerable and helping those in need
- **Fairness/Cheating:** Relating to proportionality, equality, reciprocity, and rendering justice according to shared rules
- **Authority/Subversion:** Submitting to tradition and legitimate authority
- **Purity/Disgust:** Abhorrence for things that evoke disgust
- **Loyalty/Betrayal:** Standing with one's group, family, or nation

Figure 3.1.

## Shifts in the moral bedrock

The population segments identified in Chapter 2 differ in the strength of their attachment to specific moral foundations, as the chart below demonstrates



For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The degree to which people prioritise each of these foundations is measured through the Moral Foundations Questionnaire. This questionnaire assesses people's reliance on each foundation separately. For instance, the extent to which a person gives priority to Care is assessed by their agreement with propositions such as 'one of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenceless animal'. Likewise, the extent to which a person gives priority to Purity is assessed by their agreement that 'people should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed'. An abridged version of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire was used in this study, in consultation with Sean T. Stevens and Jonathan Haidt.

## Survey results: Britain's Moral Foundations

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The seven segments show that people in Britain differ in their moral foundations. For example, Progressive Activists are deeply concerned with issues of Care and Fairness (but much less so the other foundations). They are unusual for their low concern for Loyalty, Authority, and Purity, something not found in other segments. Backbone Conservatives, on the other hand, value all of the moral foundations relatively equally. Loyal Nationals score very highly for all foundations, especially so in the case of Care and Fairness.

Moral foundations are an important part of the hidden architecture of human psychology that help to shape people's views on social and political issues, as shown by strong correlations between people's concern for each moral foundation and their agreement with different political propositions.

- Emphasis on Care reflects a need to protect the weak and vulnerable, and those with a strong Care foundation tend to support causes that involve protection. Higher prioritisation of Care is most strongly correlated with wanting to protect the natural environment and protect people from dangerous and harmful speech.
- Fairness rests on the need to ensure that people are treated equally and justly, according to shared rules. Prioritising Fairness correlates most closely with people's views on democracy and the kind of society that the United Kingdom should become. This suggests that Britons' views of society are closely related to notions of fairness, justice, and reciprocity.
- People who emphasise the moral foundation of Authority have greater respect for leadership and hierarchy, and are more likely to support policies emphasising enforcement of the law. Concern for Authority most strongly correlates with support for harsher sentences and measures to protect the community from threats.
- Since Purity is based on issues of cleanliness and disgust in both physical and spiritual matters, it tracks people's views on issues of sexual behaviour and religion. Emphasis on Purity correlates with beliefs that young people don't have enough respect for British values and that censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral values.
- Finally, the Loyalty foundation is associated with a sense of duty or obligation towards one's country and community. Accordingly, concern for Loyalty strongly tracks people's pride in British and national identities, as well as beliefs on young people's respect for British values, presumably because such respect is viewed as a desirable act of loyalty to the country.

Overall, these findings underscore a key conclusion of this report: core beliefs shape Britons' different visions for the UK as a society. People's values, as reflected in measures of moral foundations, are closely associated with their views on a wide range of other issues, ranging from immigration policy and protecting the environment to appropriate sentences for those who disobey the law. Understanding people's core beliefs unlocks why they hold certain beliefs. This is important in order to overcome division in society and foster a better sense of mutual understanding in politics.

Figure 3.2.

## Moral foundations and attitudes

The graphs below show variables that are strongly correlated with the moral foundation

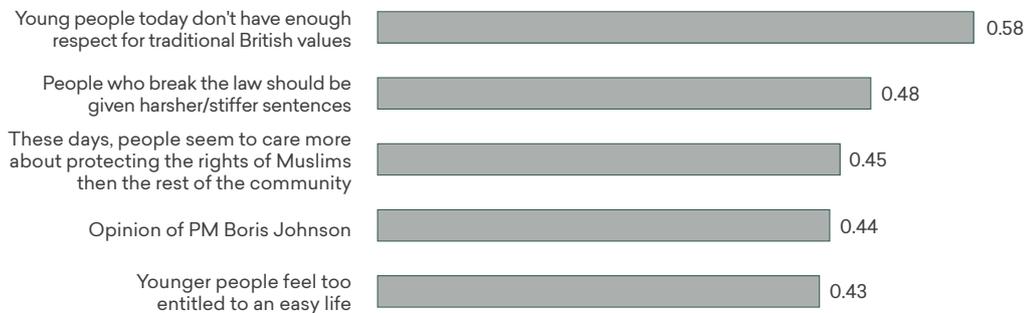
### Care



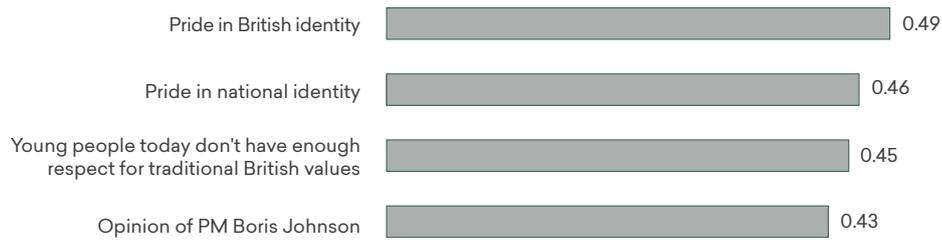
### Fairness



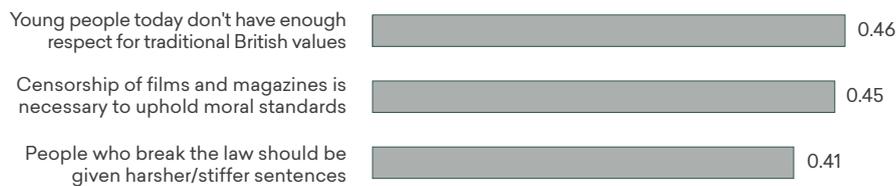
### Authority



## Loyalty



## Purity



Issues by Moral Foundation. February 2020.  
Strength of association (r) – Results are reported in absolute numbers.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 3.2 Authoritarian disposition

Recent years have seen significant disruptions to established political systems across the world, with the rise of leaders and movements that attack the institutions and values of liberal democracy, reject pluralism, promote nationalism, and foster xenophobia. This disruption to the political landscape has sparked interest in explanations for why significantly larger proportions of populations are supporting populist and authoritarian styles of leadership than in the recent past.

Political psychologist Karen Stenner has offered an explanation based on what she describes as the 'authoritarian dynamic'. She explains that around one-third of the population have a natural tendency to embrace authoritarian responses when they feel under threat. The authoritarian dynamic consists of the interaction between these two factors: first, an 'authoritarian predisposition' – that is, a pre-existing and relatively stable tendency to emphasise group authority and uniformity – and second, the perception of threat (whether real or imagined) in someone's environment. When these two factors combine, people respond by embracing authoritarian responses such as expressing intolerance and supporting extremist political parties or candidates.

The authoritarian predisposition itself is a pre-existing and relatively stable tendency, favouring authority and uniformity over autonomy and diversity. Individuals with an authoritarian disposition are anxious to minimise differences within their in-group, and are reassured by expressions of oneness, sameness, and uniformity. It is closely related to definitions of 'us' and 'them', although group identifications can vary (who constitutes the us or the them). This predisposition manifests differently depending upon the environment.

An individual does not automatically support authoritarian leaders and policies, or become xenophobic, just because they have an authoritarian predisposition. According to Stenner, ‘its manifest products depend upon the environment’.<sup>7</sup> The psychological measure used in this survey explores this underlying trait and provides insights into a person’s predisposition for responding to changing conditions of threats. Those responses might include political, racial, and moral intolerance. These attitudes and behaviours are the consequences of the authoritarian tendency, but are not the tendency itself. In other words, people can have an underlying authoritarian disposition but not be intolerant.

This theory raises the question of just what kinds of threats might activate the authoritarian predisposition. Karen Stenner’s theory is that what activates the authoritarian predisposition are ‘normative threats’, which are perceived threats to a group’s unity and consensus, to the oneness and sameness of the group. The past decade has witnessed a wider and deeper set of threats, including from the fallout of the financial crisis in 2008, rapid technological change, deepening spending cuts, rising inequality, demographic shifts, a diversifying population, and the health and economic fallout from Covid-19.

Authoritarianism is an underlying trait that is not connected to whether an individual is left or right-wing politically. The libertarian-authoritarian axis cuts across both of the classical ‘wings’ of politics. In other words, authoritarianism can occur across the political spectrum. Authoritarianism on the right and left of politics is most usually manifested in punitive attitudes toward dissenters and a desire for strong authority.<sup>8</sup> Expressions of authoritarianism share a pattern of behaviour reflected by aggression towards combative, motivated, and prejudiced members of the opposite political party.<sup>9</sup> Authoritarianism is associated with strong partisanship and heightened affective polarisation. According to Matthew Luttig, ‘clinging strongly to a party and derogating the out-party can be an effective mechanism for obtaining one’s psychological goals of cognitive order and uncertainty reduction.’<sup>10</sup>

## Survey results: authoritarian tendencies

---

The most widely-used measures of authoritarian tendencies are based on the way that people respond to questions about childrearing values. Responses indicate the qualities that individuals consider most important to develop in a child, which can often reveal an individual’s fundamental values. Consistent with the work of scholars such as Matthew MacWilliams, we asked respondents several questions regarding their views of how parents should raise children (see questions in the Appendix). The stricter an individual’s parenting style, the greater their willingness to endorse authoritarianism.

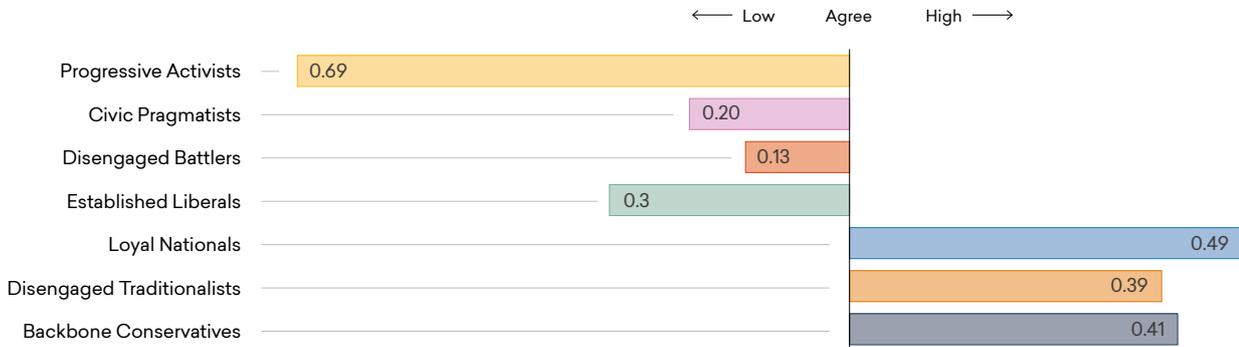
The segments reflect stark differences on authoritarianism, with Progressive Activists at the low end and Loyal Nationals at the highest, followed by the Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives.

Figure 3.3.

## Authoritarian tendencies

This figure shows results to the authoritarian tendency index. The index ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 indicates no authoritarian tendencies and 1 indicates high authoritarian tendencies

### Tendency towards authoritarianism



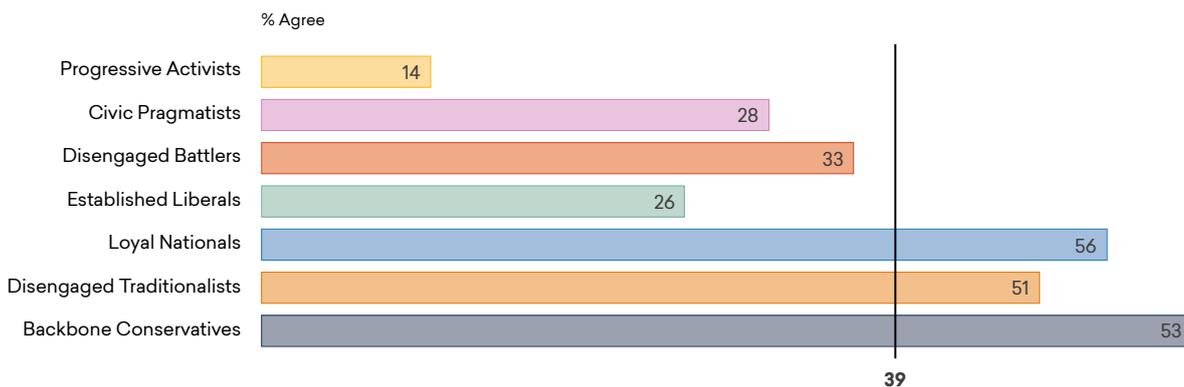
Authoritarianism score created by aggregating across parenting questions. For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.4.

## Authoritarianism

Segments with higher authoritarian tendencies are more likely to prefer an authoritarian style of leadership

### To fix this country, the UK needs a leader who is willing to break the rules



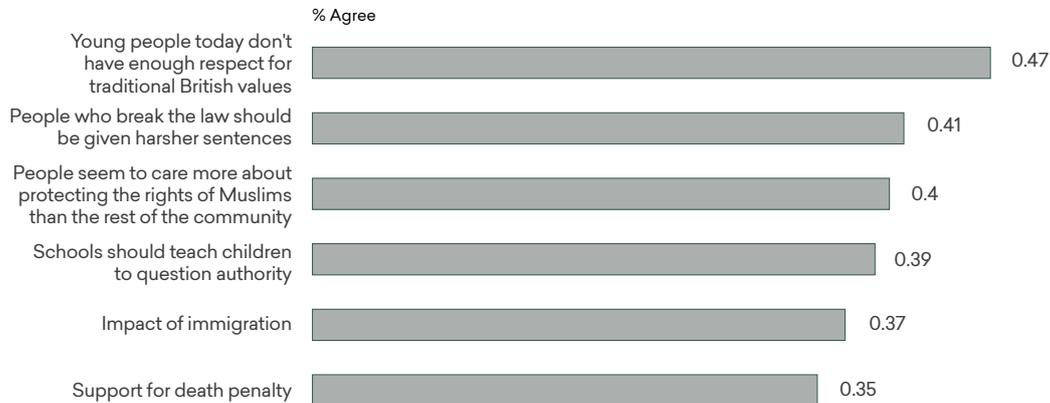
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: To fix this country, the UK needs a leader who is willing to break the rules. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.5.

## Correlations with authoritarianism

The figure below shows the views which correlate most with tendencies towards authoritarianism

### Which views correlate with having authoritarian tendencies?



Strength of association (r) – Results are reported in absolute numbers.  
Authoritarianism score created by aggregating across parenting questions.  
For full question text see Figure 3.3 in Appendix 2.1, February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

**'I believe in the rule of law. When they said rules are for breaking... You know, rules may be for breaking, but laws are not.'**

*George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands*

The segments reflect differences on authoritarianism across the spectrum of responses, with Progressive Activists at the lower end and Loyal Nationals at the higher end. Established Liberals also display low levels of authoritarianism, reflected in their support for diversity and multiculturalism. Disengaged Traditionalists are similar to Loyal Nationals in their authoritarian predispositions; both groups are more likely to associate with a national in-group (the Loyal Nationals especially) and espouse more negative views on immigration. Both groups also tend to emphasise law and order and are particularly concerned about crime.



*Interviewer*

*Are there any more societal issues that you worry about?*

---

*Jake*

'I don't worry about it personally, but I'm quite a stickler for playing by the rules and things like that. Now, crime in this country I think is a bit of a joke. I always get this word wrong, but our jury system, how it works, it's just set up to let criminals get off. All you've got to do is get a good lawyer and you're laughing. You can beat the judicial system, make people believe something. And people that are causing issues out there, stabbings, drug dealers, things like that, aren't getting banged up for as long as they should. **Like I say, it's not a direct issue but I'd like to live in a country of zero tolerance on crime, to be perfectly honest. That's just how I feel.'**

---

*Interviewer*

*Okay. So you feel that there's too much of a light touch on criminals?*

---

*Jake*

'Oh yes.'

---

*Interviewer*

*Is that to do with police, or is it the judicial system? Is it sentencing and punishment?*

---

*Jake*

'Well I don't think the police have got any powers to do anything. When I was young if a policeman come down the road most kids ran away because they were scared of the police. Whereas now, all the police get is a load of backchat from lads. You can't give someone a clip round the ear or anything like that. People should be worried. **It's the law. If you break it then you should pay the consequences. But unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be the strength of consequences that in my eyes there should be.'**

*Jake, Disengaged Traditionalist, 47, South East*

---

## 3.3 Threat perception

The third dimension of social psychology integrated into the segmentation model used for this report is people's perception of threat. Some are more inclined to feel that the world is dangerous, while others naturally feel more secure. These differences in the hidden architecture of our minds are important, because threat perception can be exploited to increase antagonism towards out-groups. These notions are related to the perception of normative threat, discussed above in section 3.2. One of the most common strategies of authoritarian populists is to exploit people's sense of insecurity by making them feel threatened by a group that feels different from them. Authoritarian populists promise to defend 'us' from 'them'.

The model used in this study examines individuals' 'perceived threats', which correspond to the degree of danger people see in the world. Some people see the world as a largely safe place with isolated pockets of violence. Others see the world as a largely dangerous place with isolated pockets of tranquillity. This underlying belief can predict a wide range of attitudes on social and political issues such as crime, public order, immigration, and terrorism. The study includes several questions that assess perceived threat, including agreement with the statement that 'most people can be trusted', the extent to which people agree 'the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place', and perceived threat in the area where one lives. These are all matters of perception, although a person's sense of threat in their local area is more grounded in their own experience than their perception of threat in the world more generally. Key findings were that:

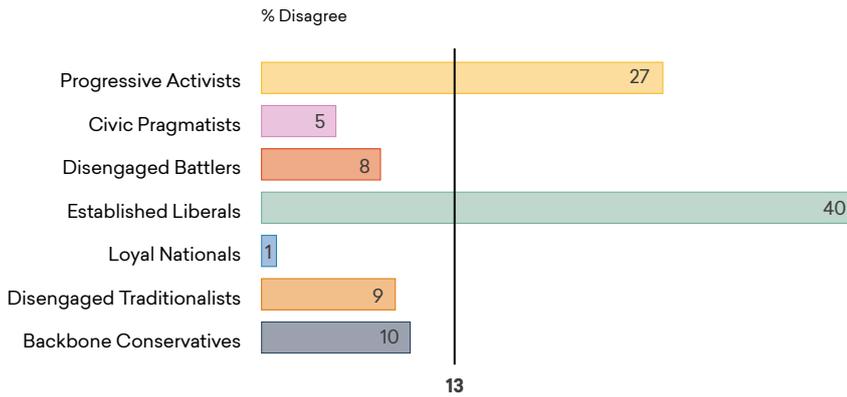
- Threat perceptions are not related to levels of optimism or pessimism about the country's future direction.
- The segments differ significantly in their perception of safety and danger. Those differences are not related to ideology, but they influence people's views on several social and political issues.
- Established Liberals and Progressive Activists feel less threat, both in the world and their communities. Established Liberals' sense of comfort and security are reflected in their responses: they have a lower perceived threat than any other segment. Loyal Nationals are situated at the other end of the spectrum, with 99 per cent believing that the world is becoming a more dangerous place.
- While Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists are generally fairly similar in their responses on different issues, they differ sharply on their perception of threat around the world becoming a more dangerous place: 95 per cent of Civic Pragmatists agree that it is, compared to 73 per cent of Progressive Activists.
- Overall, people feel a lower sense of threat about their local area than the world more generally. Loyal Nationals, again, are the segment most likely to say that their local area is becoming more dangerous. Progressive Activists and Established Liberals experience the lowest sense of threat in their local area.

Figure 3.6.

## Survey results: perceived threat

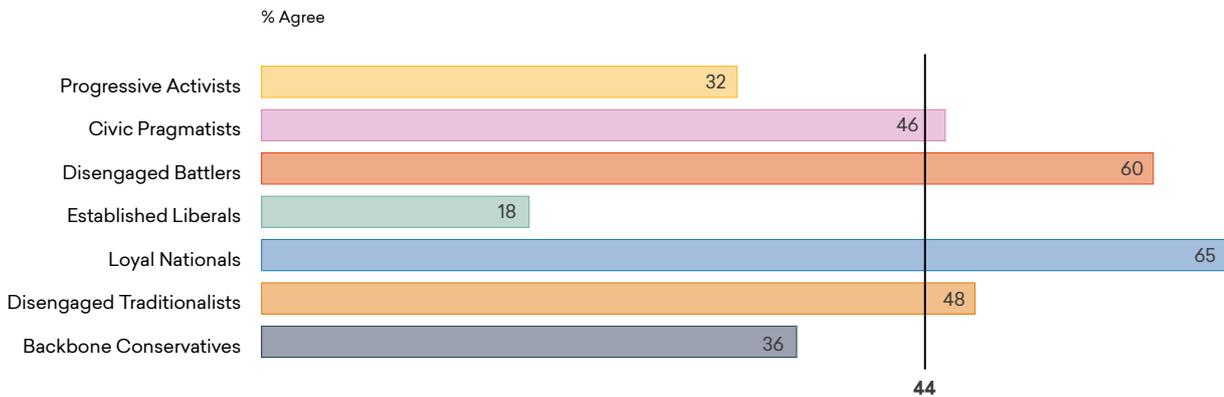
The segments differ on the safety or danger they perceive in their local area and the wider world. Established Liberals and Progressive Activists are far less likely to believe that the world is becoming a more dangerous place. Their level of threat perception is lower

### Disagreement that 'the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place'



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The world is becoming a more and more dangerous place. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

### The area where I live is becoming a more and more dangerous place



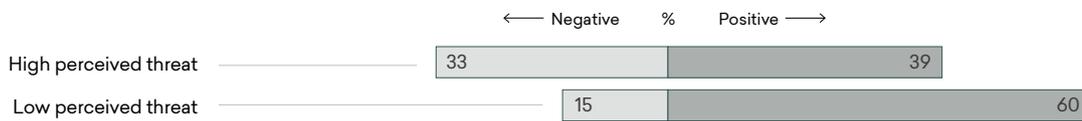
Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The area where I live is becoming a more and more dangerous place. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.7.

## Perceived threat and views on immigration

Those with lower perceived threat are far more likely to believe that immigration is having a positive impact on the UK

### Threat perception and the impact of immigration



High perceived threat was measured according to agreement with the statement: The world is becoming a more and more dangerous place. Low perceived threat was measured according to disagreement with the statement. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

## 3.4 Agency and responsibility

**‘People always defer to somebody else. It’s the government’s problem, it’s the council’s problem, it’s the police’s problem. Actually, it’s always our problem.’**

*Gareth, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, East Midlands*

Britons differ in the importance they give to the role of personal agency versus social forces in shaping life outcomes. While some people emphasise independence, personal responsibility, and self-reliance, others focus more on systemic injustices and collective responsibilities. Sociologist Robert Lane highlighted the importance of these notions of agency and causality many years ago: ‘At the roots of every ideology there are premises about the nature of causation [and] the appropriate ways for explaining complex events’.<sup>11</sup>

When people explain the outcomes in their own lives, and those of others, they tend to attribute those outcomes either to personal responsibility or to luck and circumstance. Some people believe that individuals should get credit for their successes because they were caused by things that were within their control. Others believe that outcomes are mostly the result of external forces. These two competing worldviews have important implications for political opinions and behaviour, shaping feelings on many issues including social benefits, education, and inequality.

The segmentation model for this report uses a series of questions around the difference between individual versus circumstantial forces. Scales follow a ranking from 1 to 4, with 4 representing one of the options presented (e.g. hard work) and 1 representing the opposed alternative (e.g. luck and circumstance). This approach gives respondents the opportunity to indicate a more moderate position (2 or 3) which, while showing a preference towards one or another option, enables us to differentiate in degrees of intensity. For example, among those who identify as fairly or very right-wing, 76 per cent claim that people who work hard can find success no matter what situation

they were born into. Conversely, among those who identify as fairly or very left-wing, 73 per cent believe the opposite view: that some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success.

Overall, people in Britain emphasise personal responsibility more than broader social forces to explain the outcomes in people's lives.

- 69 per cent of Britons believe that people are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life, while 31 per cent believe that people's outcomes are largely determined by forces outside of their control.
- Similarly, 58 per cent state that people who work hard can find success, no matter the circumstances they were born into.
- In their explanation of their own situation, people emphasise personal agency even more strongly. 76 per cent claim that hard work and effort played a greater role in explaining where they are than luck and circumstance.

The segments differ significantly in their responses to these questions. Progressive Activists and Disengaged Battlers emphasise larger social forces. Progressive Activists, the highest-earning segment, are more likely than others to put their own success down to luck, whereas other segments comprising people in lower paid work will say their success is down to hard work. Eighty-one per cent of Progressive Activists and 70 per cent of Disengaged Battlers state that some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success. Imogen, a 39-year-old Progressive Activist who mentors young people, despaired of this:

**'The difference in opportunity of some of the people that I mentor, who aren't any less intelligent, probably are more hardworking than my friends' children, and yet it's so much harder for them to get anywhere. I see them grow up having their dreams limited.'**

Backbone Conservatives, Disengaged Traditionalists, Established Liberals, and, with slightly less intensity, Loyal Nationals, rely more on individual explanations for how people's lives turn out. Ninety-four per cent of Backbone Conservatives attribute outcomes in life to personal agency. This has an impact on how they view those who experience greater deprivation in society. Richard, a semi-retired Backbone Conservative in his late 60s, explained it in the following terms:

**'There are a lot of bone-idle, fat, lazy people. That's really what they are. I grew up in London, I lived in a council house, my parents had nothing, nobody gave me anything. So, the bleeding-heart argument just really doesn't work for me.'**

Disengaged Traditionalists share this emphasis on personal responsibility. In the words of Gareth from the East Midlands:

**‘Opportunity is pretty good. I’m always a fairly optimistic person. I believe you make your own way in life. It’s very easy to abdicate responsibility for your own particular failure and say ‘oh, I wasn’t educated at school’ or ‘my parents weren’t wealthy’, but you know, sometimes you knuckle down and you do and it’s always easy to say, well, we’ve got a great social safety net so I shall just adopt that rather than doing. So, yeah, there are numerous forks in the road but you can always take the one that is hard work and delivers rather than the one that’s just sort of sitting back and expecting stuff to happen around you.’**

Figure 3.8.

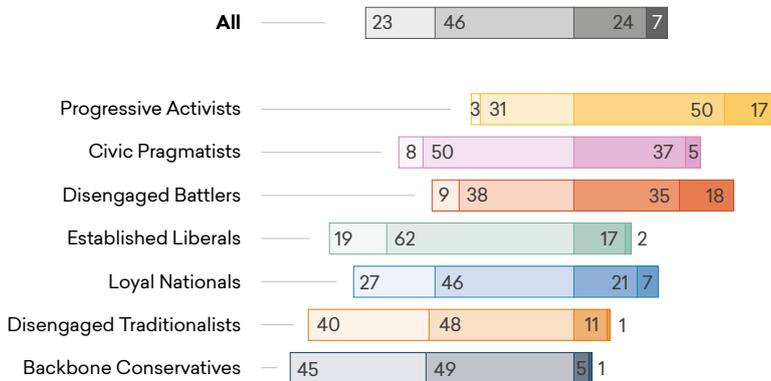
## What determines outcomes in life?

Segments differ in their views on the role of personal responsibility in life outcomes

### Personal responsibility versus social forces

People are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life

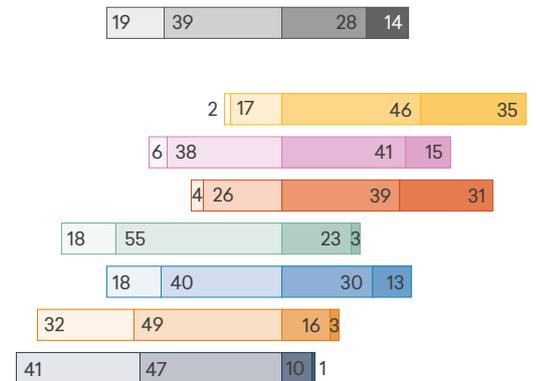
People's outcomes in life are determined largely by forces outside of their control



### Can individuals transcend difficult circumstances?

People who work hard can find success no matter what situation they were born into

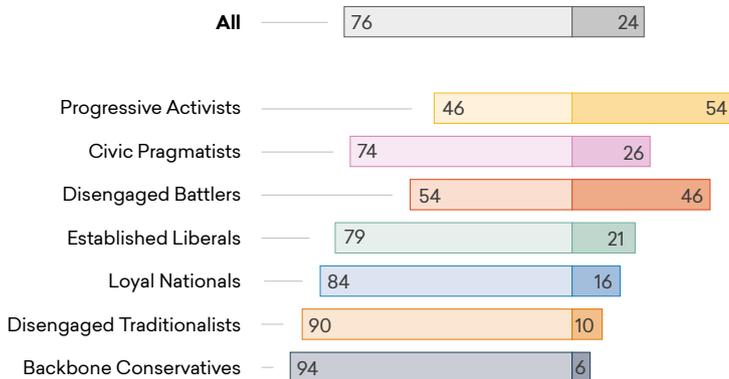
Some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success



### Which of the following played a greater role in getting you where you are today?

Hard work and effort      Luck and circumstance

← % Agree →



For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 3.5 Political values

Political scientists in Britain often use a group of questions to map individuals' political values. These questions, developed in the 1990s by Geoffrey Evans, Anthony Heath, and Mansur Lalljee, have been adapted and integrated into the core belief model we used to segment the British population (see Appendix for the questions). These item scales measure two core dimensions: left-right (or socialist vs laissez-faire, concerned with equality) and libertarian-authoritarian values (concerned with personal freedom).<sup>12</sup>

These scales show political values that tend to be stable and consistent over time and are a better measure of individuals' political beliefs than other measures, such as asking individuals to self-identify and place themselves on a scale from left to right (although we also collected this information).

On the economic left-right scale, the UK as a whole leans towards the left, favouring redistribution of wealth and believing that workers do not get a fair share of the nation's wealth. Just 4 per cent of Britons are classifiable as 'right' on this scale. Even the Backbone Conservatives are much more 'centre' (78 per cent) than 'right' (14 per cent). The views of Loyal Nationals on economic issues are further left than any segment other than Progressive Activists – something that is easily concealed when commentators describe people in this group as right-wing on the basis of their beliefs in authority and patriotism.

Further disaggregating the data into four categories (left, centre-left, centre-right, and right) reveals that the British population clusters at the centre-left and then the centre-right, rather than on the left.

Figure 3.9.

### Left-right disposition

Segments differ in where they stand on the economic left-right scale, but are mostly left or centre

	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Left	88%	69%	71%	13%	74%	29%	8%	50%
Centre	12%	31%	29%	79%	26%	68%	78%	47%
Right	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	3%	14%	4%

For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Questions on the libertarian-authoritarian scale measure agreement with statements on crime and punishment, respect for traditional values, teaching young people to obey authority, and censorship to uphold moral standards. The Loyal Nationals stand out for the strength of their views on both sets of issues. They place almost twice as far along the spectrum as the next closest group, the Disengaged Traditionalists.

In contrast, Progressive Activists and Established Liberals stand together at the opposite end of the scale to the Loyal Nationals, providing some confirmation of well-worn stereotypes about the distinctive values of the 'liberal metropolitan elites'. Overall, two-thirds of Britons belong in the centre

based on this methodology, but almost all others hold authoritarian rather than libertarian views. As occurs on the left-right scales, in disaggregating the data we observe that most who would fall in the authoritarian category do not belong at the end of the spectrum, but are closer to the centre instead.

Figure 3.10.

## Libertarian-authoritarian disposition

Segments differ in where they stand on the libertarian-authoritarian scale, but are more likely to be placed in the middle of the scale, with around one-third in the authoritarian category and a very small number being libertarian

	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Libertarian	11%	1%	1%	12%	0%	0%	1%	3%
Centre	85%	78%	63%	84%	21%	55%	65%	62%
Authoritarian	4%	22%	37%	4%	79%	45%	34%	35%

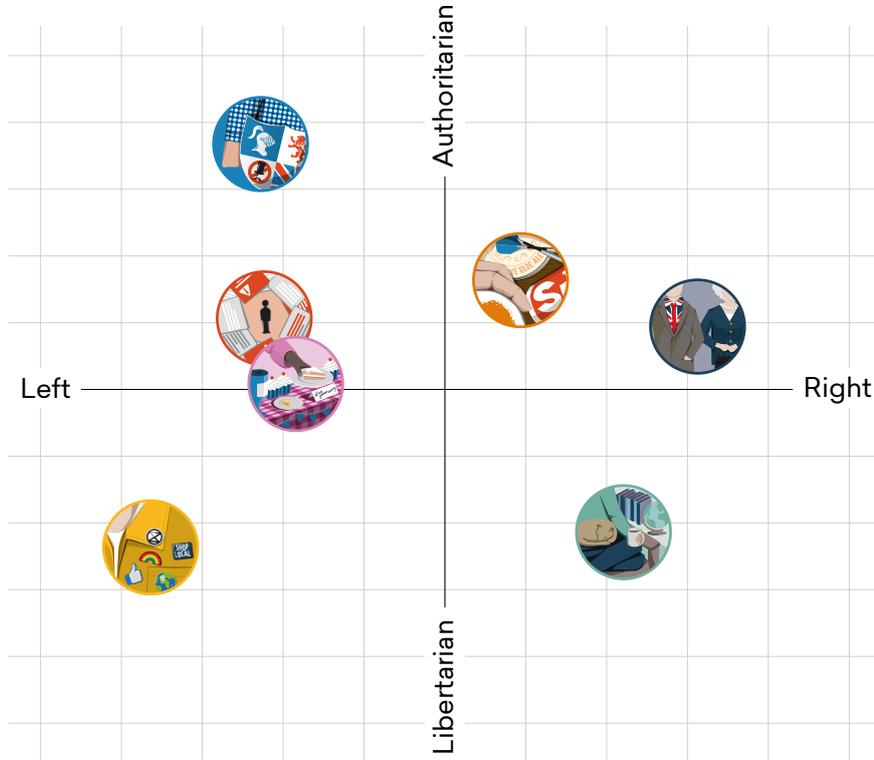
For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The results of the left-right and authoritarian-libertarian scales provide an additional level of understanding to the segments' self-described ideology. For example, if we look at self-described ideology and levels of engagement, Backbone Conservatives and Loyal Nationals describe themselves in similar terms, but Loyal Nationals are considerably to the left on economic issues on the left/right economic scale (see figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11.

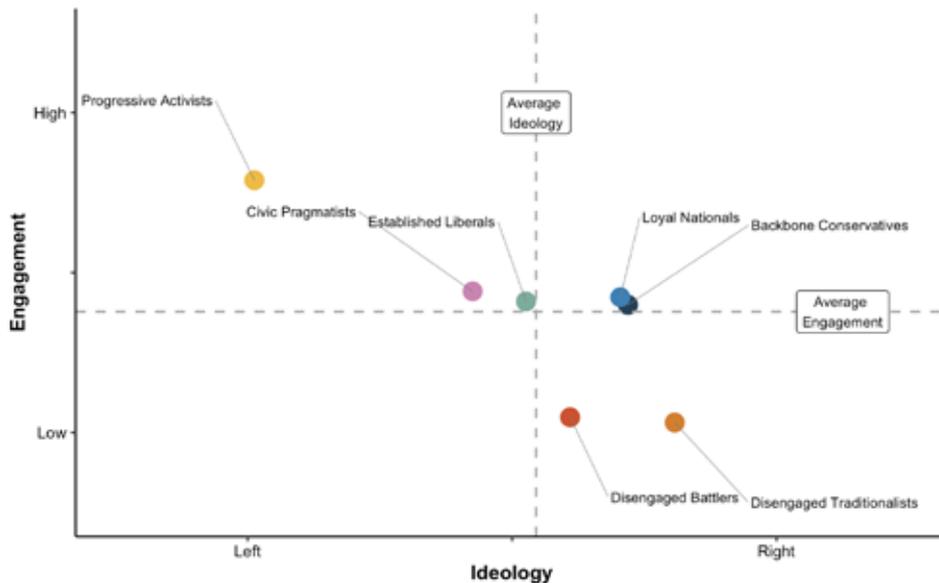
## Segments' political values

The following figure shows where our segments map across the economic left-right and libertarian-authoritarian scales



## Self-described ideology and civic engagement

Progressive Activists are furthest from the British average both in their self-described politics and engagement



## 3.6 Identity, tribalism, and group affiliation

Though individuals are often reduced to a single category of demographic identity, in reality people have multi-layered, intersecting, and often complex identities. People identify with different aspects of their identity – their gender, their sexuality, their ethnicity, their nationality, their values, their religious beliefs, their life choices, where they live – with different levels of intensity over time. Personal identity drives many of our choices and behaviours. How these variations play out, both individually and collectively, has a major impact on how societies change over time.

Individually, identities help us define our sense of self. Collectively, they help us identify with a particular group. Affiliating with a group is natural for humans, and serves many social functions, promoting a sense of belonging to a community and pro-social behaviours that allow for the survival of the group.

Yet collective identities have a dark side. Human beings crave recognition. When members of a group feel disrespected or held in contempt, this resentment can ultimately lead to conflict.<sup>13</sup> These aspects of human psychology are often used by those who seek to divide and polarise. In fact, fear of destruction of a national group's identity is one of the factors that explains the rise of nationalistic populism.<sup>14</sup> Understanding the way in which identity operates across multiple domains is thus essential to countering the forces of division and polarisation.

In order to assess Britons' relationships to the groups to which they belong, we asked two questions regarding identity:

- **Importance:** How important each group is to the person's identity
- **Pride:** How proud the person is to be a member of that group

We asked questions about how important and how proud Britons were of their gender, ethnicity, support for a political party, their vote in the 2016 EU Referendum (Leaver/Remainer), British identity, national identity (English, Welsh, and Scottish), and their class.

## Survey results: general findings

The identities most strongly considered to be important among Britons, and which elicited the greatest pride, are gender and nationality (being Scottish, English, or Welsh). At least a third of people claim that these two factors are very important to their identity and that they feel very proud of it. Overall, 63 per cent say that their gender identity is important to them, while 62 per cent state that their nationality is important. Similarly, 64 per cent claim they are proud of their gender and 67 per cent state they are proud of their national identity.

In contrast, only 9 per cent claim that being a supporter of their chosen political party is very important to them, and only 32 per cent in total say it is important. In fact, partisan identity (or the party that a person regularly supports) is the least important of all forms of identity we tested: only 13 per cent say they feel very proud of it. Partisan identity is actually weaker than these numbers suggest, because they excluded the third of the population that does not identify with a political party at all.

Pride in Leave and Remain identities is felt slightly differently. Twenty-one per cent of those who voted in 2016 state that their Leave/Remain identity is very important to them (overall, 50 per cent would say that this is at least a somewhat important identity to them). Similarly, 28 per cent of Britons who have a Leave or Remain identity are very proud of it (59 per cent overall feel pride). It should also be borne in mind that 20 per cent of voters did not vote in the referendum in EU membership (Chapter 7 further examines both partisan and Brexit identities).

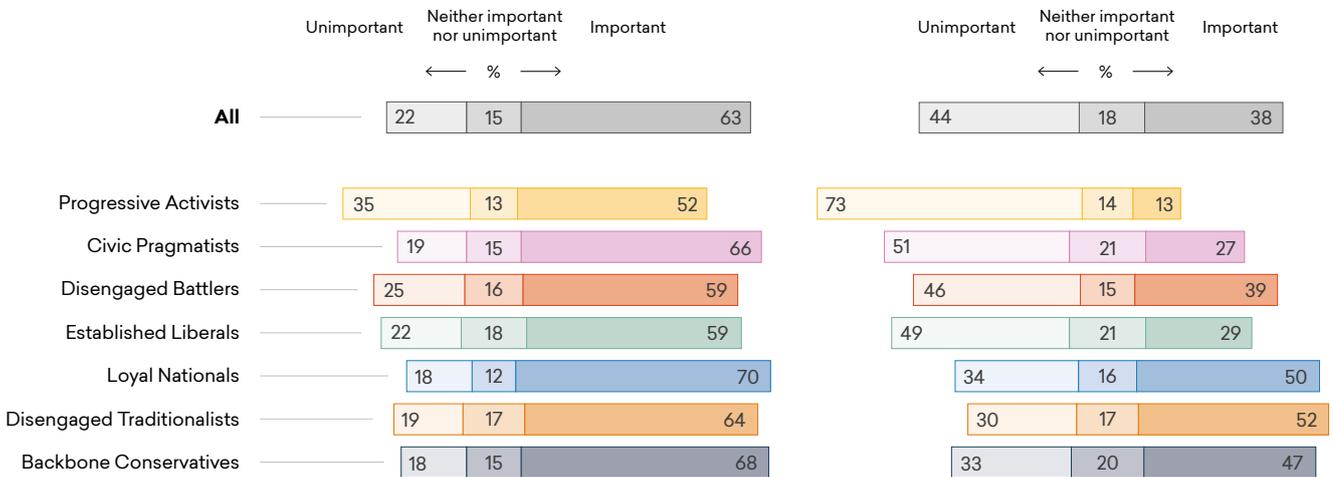
Figure 3.12.

## Strength of group identities

Segments differ in the strength of their identification with different group categories

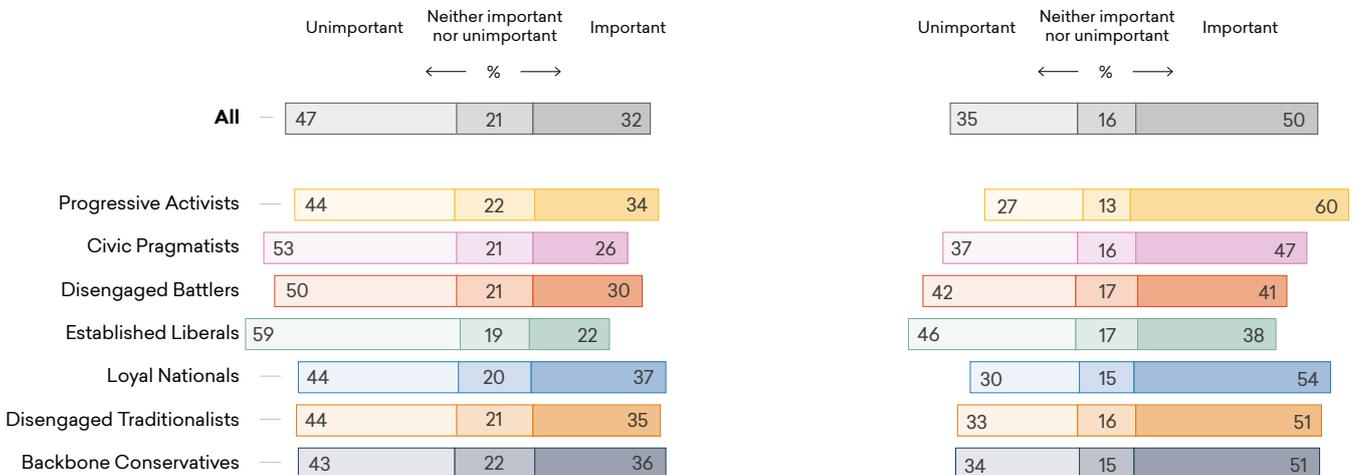
### Importance of gender to identity

### Importance of ethnicity to identity

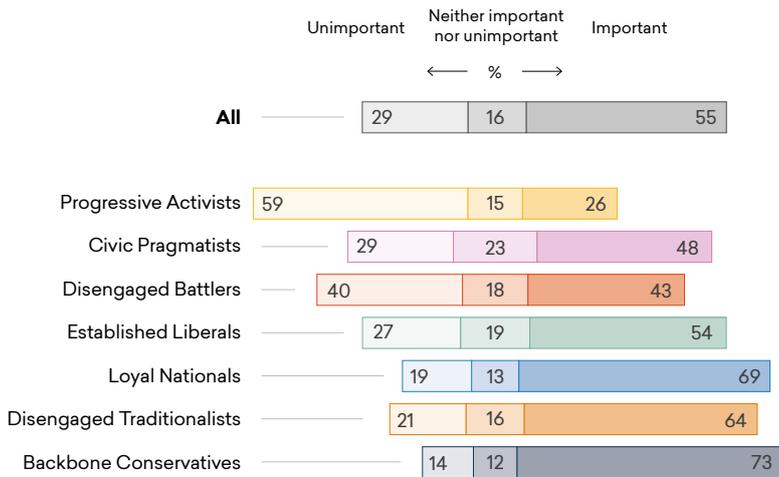


### Importance of being a political party supporter to identity

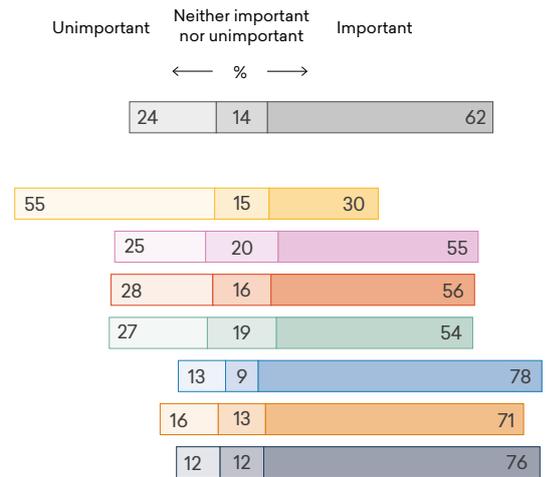
### Importance of being a Remainer or Leaver to identity



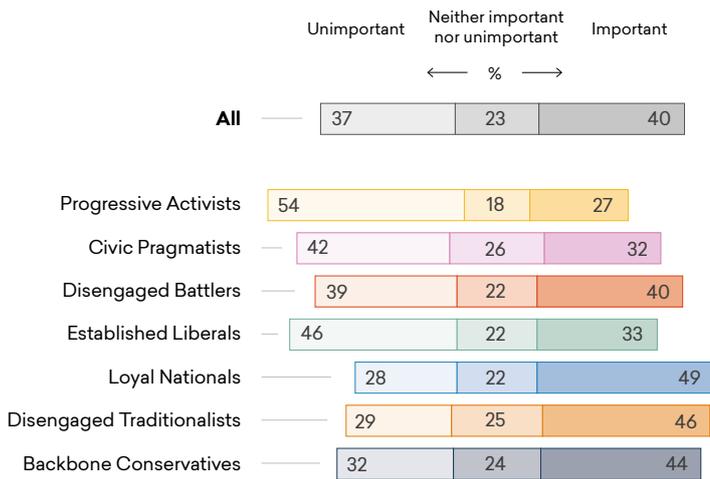
### Importance of being British to identity



### Importance of nationality to identity



### Importance of class to identity



Qu: How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.13.

## Gender and identity

Women are more likely to think that gender is an important aspect of their identity

### How important is your gender to your identity?



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Gender? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

- 63 per cent of the population claim that their gender is an important aspect of their identity, with women far more likely to find it very important than men (37 per cent versus 22 per cent).
- 53 per cent of men say that their gender is an important aspect of their identity. 64 per cent of male Loyal Nationals and 63 per cent of Backbone Conservatives feel this way. This score is lowest among male Progressive Activists, at 26 per cent.
- 72 per cent of women say that their gender is an important aspect of their identity, with relatively small differences between the segments.

Figure 3.14.

## Gender and pride

Women are more likely to be proud of their gender

### How proud are you of your gender?



Qu. How proud are you to be: Your gender? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

When asked whether they feel proud of their gender, 64 per cent of Britons say they do. Once again, this belief is far stronger among women than men, with 76 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men saying that they feel proud of their gender.

When analysed through the lens of our segments, Loyal Nationals (75 per cent), Backbone Conservatives (72 per cent), and Disengaged Traditionalists (71 per cent) are most likely to say they are proud of their gender. Only 44 per cent of Progressive Activists would say so (lowest of all segments). There is a strong difference between men and women in the segment on this question. Seventy per cent of female Progressive Activists say they are proud of their gender, but only 14 per cent of men in this category say they are proud. In contrast, while 81 per cent of female Loyal Nationals say they are proud of their gender, 67 per cent of men in the segment feel the same, showing far less variation between the sexes.

# Class identity

We collected information on class in two ways: by asking respondents to self-describe and by collecting social grade information. Overall, almost equal numbers of Britons report that class is important to their identity (40 per cent) as say that class is unimportant (37 per cent). Almost a quarter of Britons report that class is neither important nor unimportant to them. When asked about pride, however, 51 per cent of Britons report feeling proud of their class, while 22 per cent state that they are not proud. There are some differences in how class importance and pride is felt between those in different social grades and self-described classes, with greater pride among those who identify as working class.

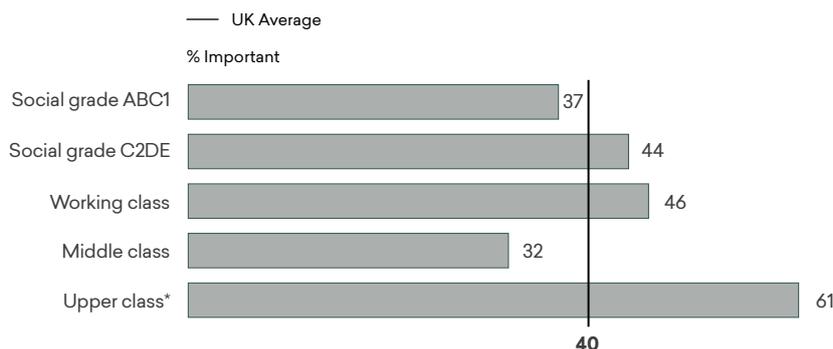
For further exploration of findings on class, see Chapter 6.

Figure 3.15.

## Class and identity

Importance of class identity varies among those from different social grades and classes.

### How important is your class to your identity?



\*Owing to the small sample size of those who identified as upper class, data for this class is not as reliable as for other classes. Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Class? February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

# Ethnicity

Britons are fairly evenly split on the extent to which they feel their ethnicity is an important part of their identity. Members of ethnic minorities are over two times more likely to rate their ethnicity as important than white Britons are.

- 43 per cent of Britons feel that their ethnicity is not an important part of their identity, while 39 per cent feel that it is. Of this group, 17 per cent of the whole population claim it is very important.
- Thirty-seven per cent of people in the BAME category used by YouGov feel their ethnicity is very important to them, more than double the 15 per cent of white people who say the same.
- Overall, 35 per cent of whites say that their ethnicity is important to them, while 46 per cent say it is not. Conversely, ethnicity is an important part of the identity of 68 per cent of BAME people, with just 16 per cent saying it is not.
- Seventy-three per cent of Progressive Activists (and 78 per cent of white Progressive Activists) say their ethnicity is not important to them, followed by 51 per cent of Civic Pragmatists who feel this way.

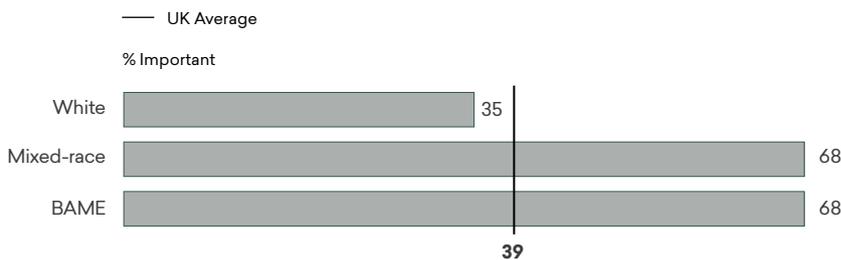
- Conversely, 52 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists and half of Loyal Nationals say that their ethnicity is an important part of their identity. Our data show that close to half of white Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives say that being white is important to them.

Figure 3.16.

## Race and identity

Race is a more important aspect of identity for BAME and mixed-race Britons

### How important is your ethnicity to your identity?



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Your race? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

While whites are most proud of their gender (63 per cent) and nationality (being English, Welsh, or Scottish, at 67 per cent), BAME Britons express feeling the proudest about their ethnicity (74 per cent), followed by their gender (72 per cent). Overall, BAME Britons are slightly more likely to say they are proud to be British than white Britons, but are less likely to say they are proud of being English, Scottish, or Welsh.

Only one in ten Progressive Activists say that they are proud of their ethnicity. This falls to just 5 per cent of white Progressive Activists, with 53 per cent for BAME and mixed race members of this segment saying they are proud of their ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, six in ten Loyal Nationals say they are proud of their ethnicity, a proportion that holds steady among all members of the segment regardless of their race.

Figure 3.17.

## Race and pride

BAME and mixed-race Britons are prouder of their race than white Britons

### How proud are you of your ethnicity?



Qu. How proud are you to be: Your race? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Note that sample size for BAME and mixed race Progressive Activists is 79.

## Key takeaways

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This chapter explained the core beliefs model used to identify the seven segments of the British population. It discussed the six dimensions from social science research used in the model of core beliefs for this report. These six dimensions are not exhaustive, but represent the most significant factors identified by More in Common's research team and advisers, and which can also be deployed within the constraints of large-scale attitudinal research surveys.

Examples of the connection between core beliefs and individuals' attitudes on specific issues have been provided throughout the chapter, but the real value of the core beliefs segmentation is evidenced throughout the following chapters, using the seven segments that were identified through the analysis of participants' responses to questions covering all six dimensions.

The purpose of understanding individuals' core beliefs is to identify the 'upstream' values and worldviews that determine the flow of their 'downstream' views on the social and political issues of the day. More in Common's research has consistently found that individuals' views on current issues are strongly influenced by their core beliefs and values. If we understand those core beliefs better, we can better appreciate people's views with greater empathy. Those insights can strengthen and inform efforts to reduce conflict and find common ground in our society.

# Part II

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**4 Our Changing Political Landscape**

**5 Polarisation and Division**

**6 Fault Lines**

**7 Shared Identity**

# Chapter 4

## Our Changing Political Landscape

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**83 per cent** of Britons think that ‘politicians don’t care what people like me think’

**84 per cent** of Britons agree that living in a country that is governed democratically is important to them

But by a margin of **55 to 45 per cent**, most Britons feel dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in the United Kingdom today

**Just 1 in 3** Britons who see themselves as a supporter of a specific party describe themselves as strong supporters

**Only 32 per cent** say that being a supporter of a political party is an important part of their identity

**50 per cent** say their Brexit identity is an important part of who they are

# Introduction

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This chapter seeks to understand the changing landscape of British democracy in the early 2020s – our mixed feelings about democracy, the extent to which we identify with political parties, the Leaver/Remainer division of recent years, and whether we are becoming more defined by negative feelings towards those with different views. These are each key elements in understanding the extent of polarisation and division as the United Kingdom moves into a new era, reshaped by Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, and a deep recession.

The Brexit years left Britons feeling increasingly anxious about the country's deepening divisions. In the next chapter, we focus in greater detail on what has underpinned these perceptions of division, and the prospects for those divisions being healed or becoming more entrenched. It is politics, more than anything else, that Britons blame for the growing divisions of recent years. For that reason, we focus on the landscape of British politics in this chapter.

The mood of British society and politics changed with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Only weeks after the 2019 General Election had brought at least some degree of resolution to an extended period of political conflict around Brexit, the national focus shifted towards a collective effort in the face of a public health emergency. The sharp divisions that had played out during the long Brexit years paled against the backdrop of Covid-19. Although the feeling of social solidarity was strongest in the first weeks of lockdown, there has been a sustained change in perceptions of our society, with the proportion saying that we live in a society where people care for each other (rather than one where everyone looks out for themselves) almost doubling. But risks remain that some of the fault lines that widened during the Brexit years might be reopened, a concern reflected in our conversations across Britain.

This chapter assesses some of the larger and longer-term dynamics behind the changes in how politics has played out in recent years: the deepening dissatisfaction with the system of British democracy, new fractures within parties, and more frequent expressions of antagonism towards the political 'other'. It examines evidence for how enduring the Remainer versus Leaver division may be in the future. The chapter draws on the distinctive experiences and reflections of Britain's seven population segments, along with both conventional and innovative ways of analysing people's core beliefs, to better understand this changing landscape.

The United Kingdom is experiencing something different from simplistic narratives of rising polarisation or declining trust in parties and democracy. Unlike in the United States, there are few issues on which Britons divide into clearly-defined and opposing camps. Trust in political leaders is low, but not much lower than it has been for decades; after all, an enduring element in British attitudes towards politicians is a healthy scepticism. What is changing is more complex.

## 4.1 Division, distrust, and disenchantment

Democracies are based on the contest of competing ideas. Conflict between opposing views is reflected even in the physical layout of Westminster's parliamentary chambers, long an inspiration and a physical embodiment of democracy to the world. Disagreement is not a dysfunction of democratic culture – it is at the heart of a healthy democratic culture.

Yet there is something different about the divisiveness that Britain has experienced in recent years. Some 50 per cent of Britons told us in early 2020 that Britain was ‘the most divided that we have been’. Only 7 per cent felt that we have been through more divided times before. Those perceptions were shaped by years of division and disruption, which saw two successive parliamentary terms each lasting only two years, as well as the elevation of Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson, two party leaders widely perceived as polarising even within their own parties. These political changes have in part reflected changes in society, but they have also re-shaped society in their own image.

What has changed is that we no longer just mistrust politicians, but we have begun to perceive our society as deeply divided. The research undertaken for this study has echoed past findings that levels of trust in politicians are low, but the trend towards widespread distrust is a well-established feature of British society.<sup>15</sup> Those who support the current government report higher levels of trust, but baseline levels of trust and optimism are low across all of society.

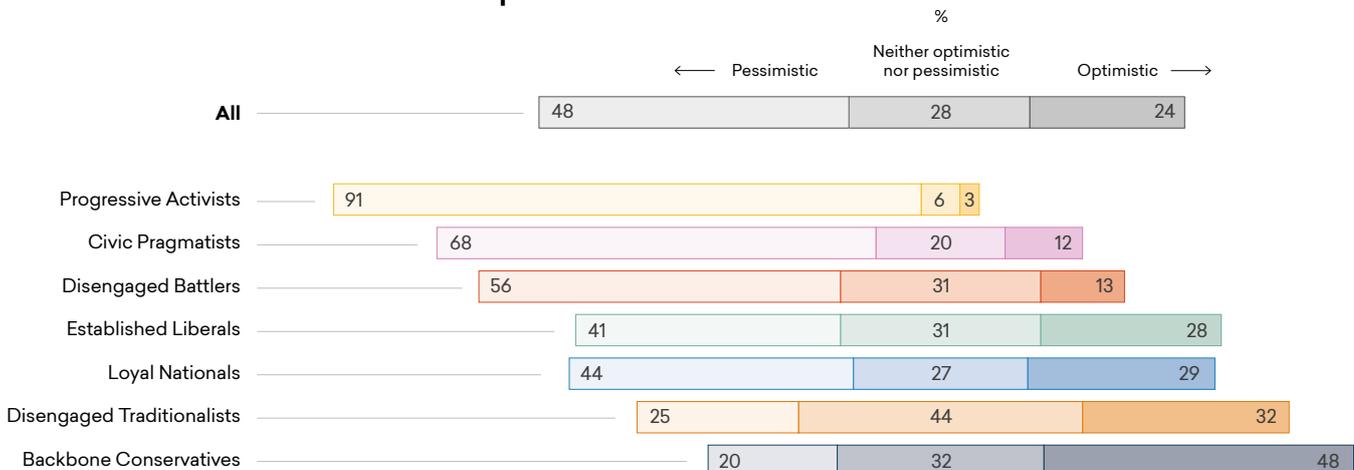
Individual perceptions of the state of democracy and politics are similarly influenced by the success or failure of parties or specific agendas with which individuals identify. Nearly half of Britons (48 per cent) felt pessimistic about the state of politics in early 2020, compared to just 24 per cent who were optimistic. While perceptions are more negative among groups least likely to have voted for the government, even among those who voted Conservative in the 2019 General Election slightly less than half felt optimistic; indeed, this was even true of the Backbone Conservatives segment. Within that segment, only those who identify as strong Conservative Party supporters were strongly optimistic (73 per cent compared to an average of 48 per cent for all Backbone Conservatives), reflecting the larger insight from this study: that the small proportion of the population with a very strong political identity is often rather different to the rest of the population

Figure 4.1.

## Feelings towards politics in the UK

Most segments feel more pessimistic than optimistic about the state of politics in the UK

### Attitudes towards politics in the UK



Qu. How would you describe your attitude towards politics today in the UK? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Partisanship similarly influences the perceptions of politics in Scotland. The most optimistic views of Scottish politics are held by Progressive Activists, and the most negative by Backbone Conservatives. In Scotland, the majority of Progressive Activists support the Scottish National Party, currently in government. Those supporting the party in power tend to have a more optimistic view of politics as a whole.

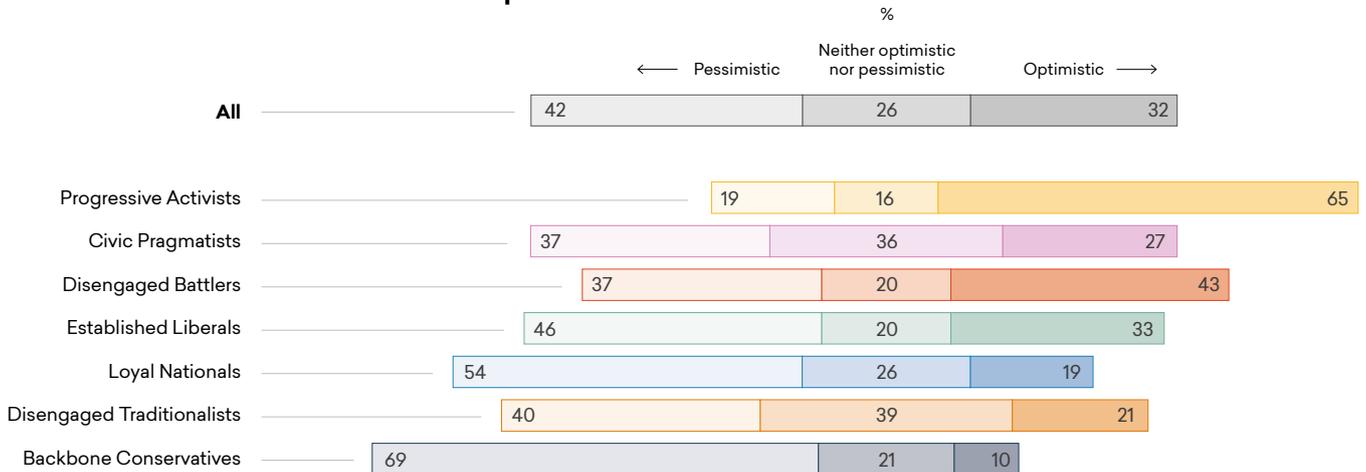
Among the Scottish public, pessimistic views outnumber optimism about the state of politics, but more narrowly than for the UK overall (42 to 32 per cent).

Figure 4.2.

## Feelings towards politics in Scotland

The margin of pessimism to optimism in Scotland is narrower than in the rest of the UK

### Attitudes towards politics in Scotland



Qu. (Scottish respondents only) How would you describe your attitude towards politics today in Scotland? February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

While committed partisans interpret the current state of politics through the lens of their political identities, more significant is the finding that, before Covid-19, negative sentiment outnumbered positive sentiment by two to one. Another indicator of dissatisfaction with politics is the overwhelming majority who do not feel represented in today's politics. Some 83 per cent of Britons feel partially or strongly that 'politicians don't care what people like me think'. This sentiment transcends partisan differences, and it was rising even before the onset of Covid-19 in every segment. Although this sentiment is especially strong among the Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals, a majority of all groups share this view – even among Established Liberals, the segment least likely to feel uncared for by politicians.

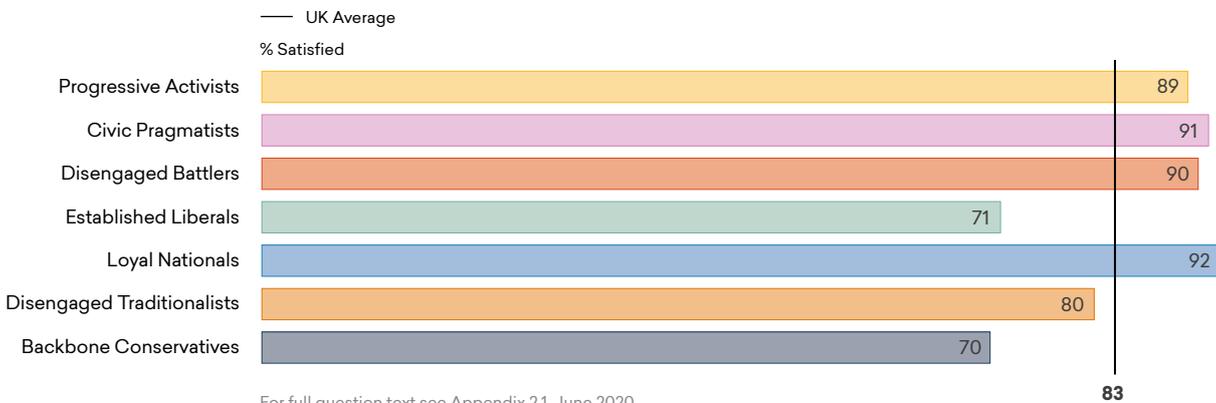
**83%** of Britons feel partially or strongly that 'politicians don't care what people like me think'

Figure 4.3.

## Politicians' care

A majority in all segments feel unrepresented in today's politics

### Politicians don't care



**55%** feel dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in the United Kingdom today

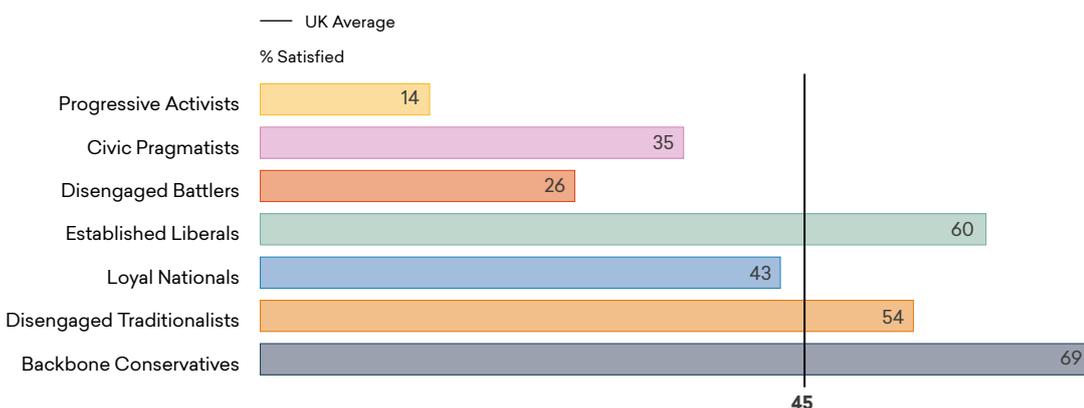
These frustrations are reflected in the finding that most Britons – by a margin of 55 to 45 per cent – feel dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in the United Kingdom today. This is comparable to More in Common's findings on dissatisfaction with democracy in the US (45 per cent), Germany (52 per cent), and France (56 per cent). As with other questions about perceptions of the state of politics and society, partisan identities play an important role in differing perceptions, with especially large majorities of Progressive Activists feeling dissatisfied. In contrast their partisan opposites, the Backbone Conservatives, feel most satisfied. One surprising finding is that the Disengaged Traditionalists are above average in their satisfaction and are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy is working than dissatisfied – an unusual result for a disengaged segment of the population, perhaps reflecting that changes since the Brexit vote in 2016 have made people in this segment feel more heard and respected.

Figure 4.4.

## Satisfaction with democracy

Most segments are not very satisfied with the way democracy is working in the country

### Satisfaction with democracy





## In their own words:



'I don't really trust politicians, only because a lot of the type of politicians you nowadays have are career politicians. I don't genuinely believe they're there to make a difference or to improve the lives of ordinary people. They're there to make a name for themselves, to be known, to have their names in history. And a lot of the time, a lot of them, I don't actually believe they have values. I can't tell what their values are. So it's very hard for me to connect with them.'

*Omar, Progressive Activist, 35, London*

'I think too many politicians are in it for themselves...'  
'Yes. They're in it for their career rather than the cause.'

*Lucy, 40, Scotland and Beth, 32, London*  
*Progressive Activists Focus Group*

'It does seem that the higher up people are in political parties and political systems, the less I feel that I can trust them.'

*Ahmed, Progressive Activist, 27, South East*



'I think we have to be sceptical... I don't think [politicians] would actively try to hurt us, but I think they'd usually put monetary value before the population.'

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist, 37, North West*



'I think for the past few years, the past tens of years, we've been hearing more and more the mantra of, 'they're all the same'. And I think to a certain extent this is true... They promise you the world until they get into power. Because that's the object of the exercise.'

*William, Disengaged Battler, 76, North West*



'I think they have an ulterior motive in a very difficult job. I think their job is to do the best they can with the local area, but they obviously can't please everyone, but they try and say things that can be relatable to everyone. So I think that's part of their job.'

*Michael, Established Liberal, 39, South West*



'I trust scientists more than I do politicians. I just think politicians are, putting it nicely, arseholes.'

*Megan, Loyal National, 56, South West*



'I'm very sceptical of politicians because they tend to tell you what they want to just get voted in as that party and then it always seems to be broken promises and it never seems to be, oh I'll help you with that and then it kind of falls through, oh I haven't been able to sort it out.'

*Olivia, Disengaged Traditionalist, 38, West Midlands*



'I think they do their best. It seems that they can talk a good job, say what they're going to do, but when it comes to doing it, it's another matter. It's not perhaps they don't want to, it's just they promise more than they can fulfil.'

*Patrick, Backbone Conservative, 76, North West*

## 4.2 Shared commitment to democracy

**‘There are moments when I wonder if we actually understand what democracy really is because there are moments when I feel we don’t really have it. But our system is certainly a lot better than the dictatorial system.’**

*Jessica, Civic Pragmatist, 60, South West*

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Despite their deep disenchantment with politics, British people remain committed to democracy as a system of government. Belief in the idea of democracy is common ground among Britons. More than four in five of us say that living a country that is governed democratically is important, with 56 per cent strongly agreeing. Agreement is strongest among the more socially liberal segments (Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Established Liberals). But even Disengaged Traditionalists, the group with one of the lowest levels of commitment to democracy, are far more likely to agree than disagree. Commitment to democracy is even more powerful as a uniting identity for English people, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Over **4 in 5** Britons agree that living in a country that is governed democratically is important to them

Some aspects of British attitudes towards democracy are not obvious. Belief in the importance of living in a country governed democratically is highest among more liberal population segments and also among older people. The age group least committed to the abstract idea of democracy as a form of governance is those aged 18-24 (at 69 per cent),<sup>16</sup> who tend to be more committed to liberal principles than the rest of the population but are distrustful of institutions. In general, young people are slightly more dissatisfied with how democracy is working in the UK today, as More in Common has also found in other western democracies.<sup>17</sup>

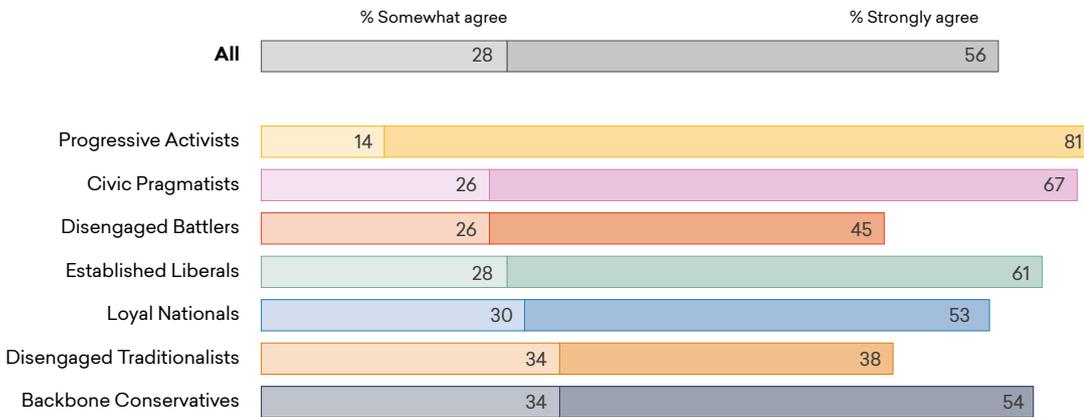
The lowest confidence about the importance of living in a democracy is found among the two Disengaged segments, especially among younger age groups within those segments. Among Disengaged Traditionalists, 72 per cent overall believe that living in a democracy is important, but only 61 per cent of younger Traditionalists (those under 45) share this view. Among the Disengaged Battlers, 71 per cent overall believe that living in a democracy is important, with slightly lower agreement among younger Battlers (66 per cent). These findings point to the value of understanding the two Disengaged groups, rather than looking only at groups on the left and the right, to understand the dynamics of British democracy in the 2020s.

Figure 4.5.

## Importance of living in a democracy

Despite being the least satisfied with the way democracy works, Progressive Activists are the most likely to say that living in a democratically governed country is important to them

### Living in a country which is governed democratically is important to me



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Living in a country that is governed democratically is important to me. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

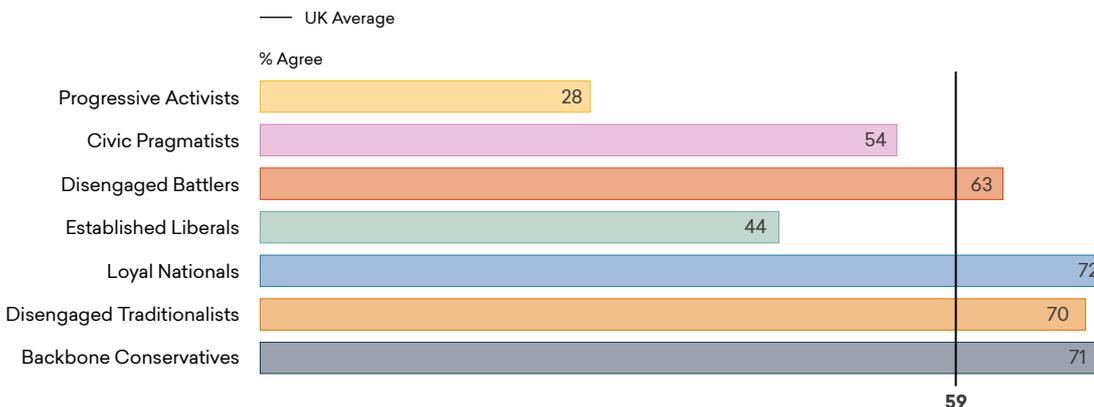
Democracy has many different meanings to people, and its populist, majoritarian form can be antithetic to liberal democratic values, as scholar Yascha Mounk has persuasively argued.<sup>18</sup> One test of how far support of democracy reflects a commitment to the rule of law or to a more populist 'strong man' style of government is to assess the extent to which people believe that the country needs a strong leader, who is willing to break the rules to fix things. Population segments with stronger authoritarian leanings are more likely to express support for this sentiment.

Figure 4.6.

## Tendency towards authoritarian leadership

Desire for a more authoritative style of leadership has increased since the pandemic hit, even among groups with the most liberal instincts

### The UK needs a strong leader who is willing to break the rules



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: To put the UK in order, we need a strong leader who is willing to break the rules. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

In Britain, some 59 per cent of the population indicate support for a ‘strong man’ style of leadership, with more than 70 per cent support among the Backbone Conservatives, Loyal Nationals, and Disengaged Traditionalists (for comparison, after almost four years of President Trump in the United States, in 2020 some 44 per cent said America needed this style of leadership). Commanding leadership – with less democratic process, fewer compromises, and a willingness to ignore norms – has a particular appeal in times of heightened anxiety, promising a more ordered society.

The need for enforcement of rules was one of the most salient public conversations during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even while the public debate focused on arguments against restrictions on individual freedoms, public concerns remained weighted more strongly towards the need for stronger enforcement of public health rules. People felt more action should be taken against irresponsible members of the public who could be contributing to the spread of Covid-19 through their refusal to comply with public health advice on face masks, social distancing, and other actions.

**‘I think the government aren’t strong enough and they kept advising people. They kept advising people to do this, to do that. No, don’t advise people. You’ve got to tell people what to do, because the advice didn’t work.’**

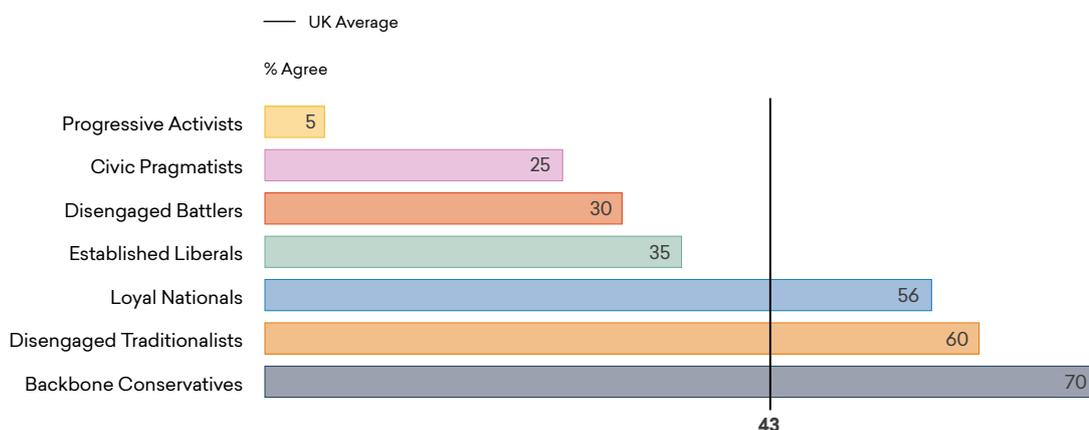
*Nigel, Disengaged Traditionalist, 45, London*

Figure 4.7.

## Should government have more power to make decisions?

There are clear differences of opinion on whether the government should be able to make decisions with more or fewer constraints once it has been voted in, with Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives each at one extreme of this issue

**Once a government has been voted in, they should have much more power to make decisions with less constraints**



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Once a government has been voted in, they should have much more power to make decisions with less constraints. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 4.3 Weakening party identification

**‘When I was younger, I’d vote for Labour and obviously over the years, as I’ve got older, I’m, oh no, it’s the Conservatives and now I’m like, oh God, they’re all just as bad as each other.’**

*Olivia, Disengaged Traditionalist, 38, West Midlands*

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A common feature of more divided societies is that groups of people come to identify themselves more strongly with political parties, and against others who support alternative parties. Yet despite the growing perception of division within the UK, British voters have become increasingly detached from political parties over several decades (reflecting trends in Europe but not the US). While almost half of Britons reported a very strong attachment to a political party in the mid-1960s, research in 2015 found that only 15 per cent reported feeling this way.<sup>19</sup> The findings in this report confirm that for most people (68 per cent), while they see themselves as a supporter of a party, this is not an important part of their identity.

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**1 in 3** Britons who see themselves as a supporter of a specific party describe themselves as strong supporters

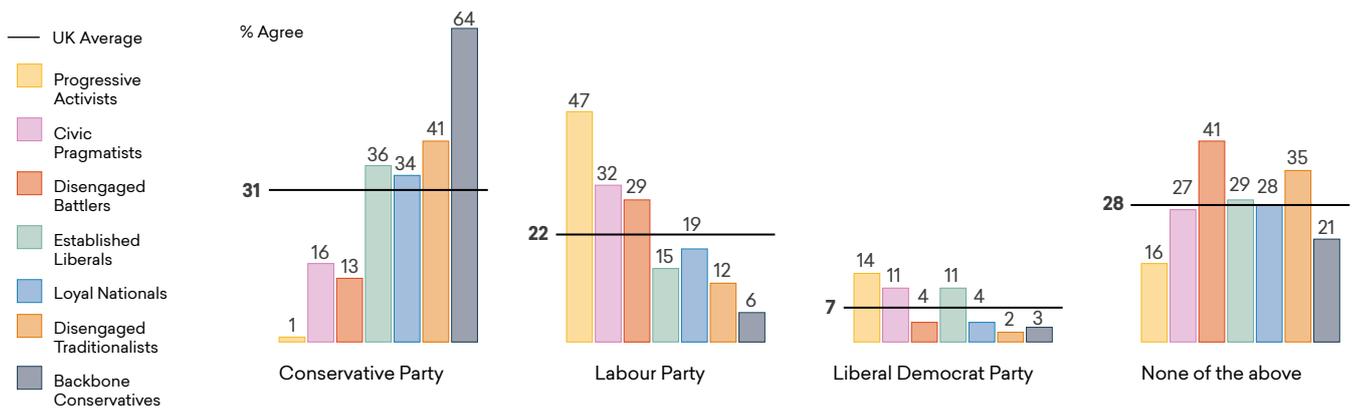
In our focus group conversations, few people cited their political identity as being central to who they are, especially unprompted. Just one in three Britons who see themselves as a supporter of a specific party describe themselves as strong supporters. Indeed, ‘none of the above’ is more popular than all but the governing Conservative Party. Even for the Conservatives, only one segment showed a majority support. The Disengaged segments again stand out on the question of party identity. They are the two groups most likely to support ‘none of the above’. But even those segments most aligned with particular parties do not generally consider their support for the party to be ‘strong’. For both Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives – the two groups with the strongest political identities – around half say that their support for a party is ‘not very strong’.

Figure 4.8.

## Identification with a political party

The Disengaged segments are least likely to identify with a political party, whilst the most ideological segments (Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives) are the most likely to have a partisan identity.

### Identification with a political party



Qu. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a [...] supporter. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Britain presents a sharp contrast to the binary polarisation in the United States, where partisan identities are deeply entrenched. Compared to Americans, political party attachment plays a much weaker role in British people's sense of identity.

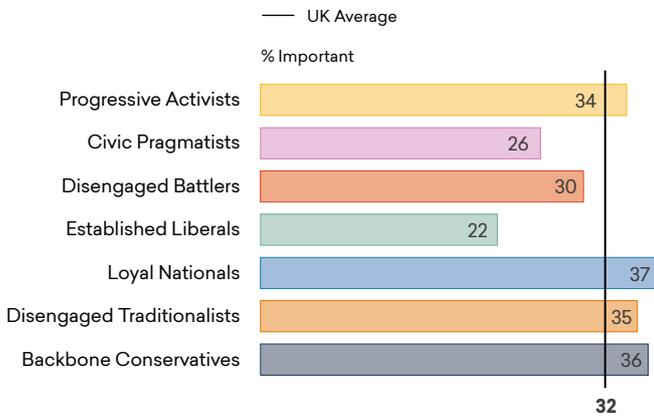
- Among those who identify with a political party, only 32 per cent say that being a supporter of a political party is an important part of their identity, compared to 67 per cent of Americans (and only 9 per cent say it is very important, compared to 31 per cent of Americans).
- Another measure of the importance of political parties to people's sense of personal identity is whether people say that they have a sense of pride in their party. Only 43 per cent in Britain say so (compared to almost twice this number in the US, in research for a report being published by More in Common in late 2020).<sup>20</sup>

Figure 4.9.

## Importance of party identity

Importance of party identification is relatively low for most segments

### Importance of party identity



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Being a [...] supporter? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The weakness of party attachment in Britain is reflected in both the low levels of attachment and the relatively small variation between segments in the importance they attach to their party identity and their personal sense of pride in that identity. Perhaps this reflects the fact that today's political parties reflect the political fault lines of a different age, and do not map to the differences in people's core beliefs today. Even for Backbone Conservatives and Progressive Activists, who have the strongest party attachments, they are only slightly above average levels. The weakest levels of party identity are among Established Liberals and Civic Pragmatists.

## 4.4 Brexit identity: disappearing or dormant?

**'I was a Remainer but as time went on, I just wanted it to stop. It was the issue of every day and I was getting up to here with the whole thing. I just wanted it over. And now we've got something new and it seems to be forgotten. Are they still working at it? Is it still going on? What is happening?'**

*William, Disengaged Battler, 76, North West*

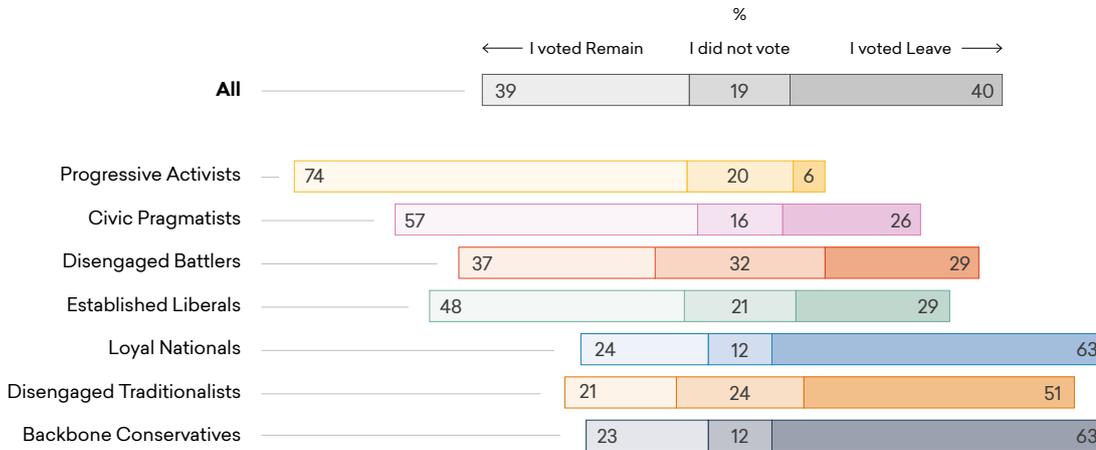
In comparison to the weak sense of party attachment felt by most people, a striking finding of research conducted during the Brexit years was that Britons had begun identifying more strongly with being a Remainer or Leaver than with the party they vote for.<sup>21</sup> This raises the question of whether the Leave/Remain cleavage is an enduring fracture in British politics, and whether some kind of division around analogous values and identity could become more important than left/right divisions. Such a cleavage would shape future debates and could even potentially re-sort the composition of Britain's political parties.

Figure 4.10.

## 2016 EU referendum vote

How segments voted in the 2016 referendum on EU membership

### 2016 Referendum Vote



Qu. In the Referendum in 2016 on whether Britain should remain in or leave the European Union, which way did you vote, or did you not vote? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

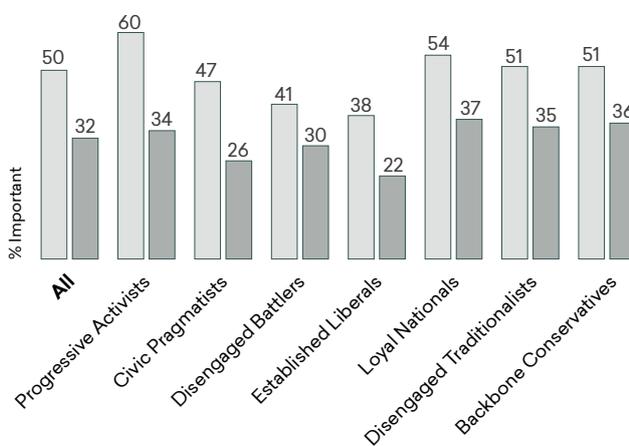
Figure 4.11.

## Brexit identity versus party identity

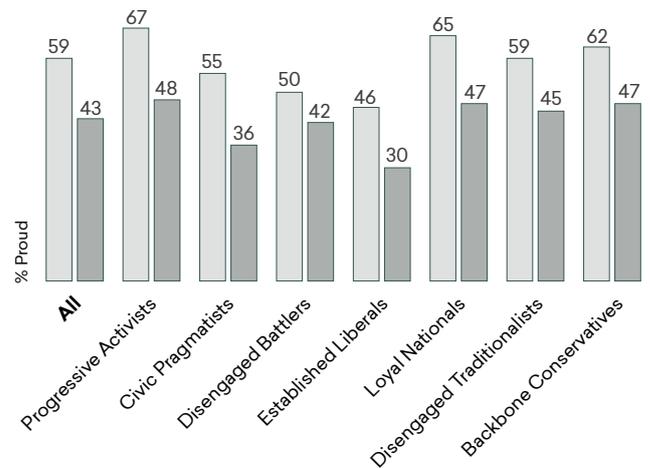
Underscoring just how much Brexit became an issue of identity, Britons attach much more importance and pride to being a Leaver or Remainer than to their party affiliation

Remainer/Leaver  
Party identity

### Importance of Brexit identity versus party identity



### Pride in Brexit identity versus party identity



For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Analysis shows the greater strength of Brexit-related identity among Remainers rather than Leavers. Progressive activists overwhelmingly identify themselves this way. They are not only most proud of their Brexit identity, but also most likely to attach importance to it (and far more than to their party attachment). The other two segments that mainly supported the Remain cause, Established Liberals and Disengaged Battlers, are the least likely to attach importance or pride to their Brexit identity – highlighting the difference among Remainers between Progressive Activists and other segments. Among Leavers, Backbone Conservative, Loyal Nationals, and Disengaged Traditionalists all attach less importance and less pride to their Brexit identity than Progressive Activists.

Progressive Activists are similarly unusually strong in their views on the Brexit debate, with 86 per cent saying they strongly supported remaining. This contrasts to just 54 per cent of Backbone Conservatives who strongly supported leaving. This may reflect the way in which defeat in a political debate can entrench a group's attachment to a cause, but it is not mirrored among the other Remain-supporting segments (Established Liberals, Civic Pragmatists, and Disengaged Battlers).

There is no question that the Brexit debate is unusual in the extent to which it engaged British people's identities, disrupted established patterns of party support (especially in the 2019 General Election), and affected how British people understand their political identities. It is especially striking that the two Disengaged segments attached greater significance to their Brexit identities than some other segments (in particular, the Established Liberals, who on most measures show significantly higher levels of engagement). The Leave campaign was especially effectively at engaging people who had otherwise been detached from politics, tapping into their sense of frustration with the system and their feelings of not being represented by the political establishment.

The question for the future is the extent to which this identity-based division will endure, and whether cultural debates, for example, can be used by partisans to reinforce group identities between these opposing sides. The evidence from this study suggests it is not inevitable that the Leaver/Remainer division should become entrenched once the issue of Britain's relationship with the European Union becomes more normalised in a post-Brexit environment. In reality, there is much common ground between Leavers and Remainers, whether it comes to their frustrations with life today or aspirations for the future, and even on questions about politics itself:

- Beyond politics, Leavers and Remainers have many common sources of pride, as Chapter 11 discusses. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, both ranked the NHS as their greatest source of pride in Britain (63 per cent of Remainers and 52 per cent of Leavers).
- Some 87 per cent of Remainers and 88 per cent of Leavers agree that 'living in a country that is governed democratically is important to me'.
- Some 83 per cent of Remainers and 80 per cent of Leavers agree that 'politicians don't care about people like me'.
- Over three-quarters of Remainers believe 'the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential', and a majority (57 per cent) of Leavers believe the same.
- A majority of Leavers (54 per cent) and Remainers (68 per cent) say they feel exhausted by division in politics.
- Large majorities of both Leavers and Remainers say the media makes the country feel more divided than it really is.

The shifting importance of Brexit identities since 2019 reflects the changing salience of the Brexit debate since the 2019 General Election. Brexit-related debates receded from public attention in the months after the pandemic, although differences among political actors resurfaced around government plans to legislate to breach commitments in the EU withdrawal agreement. As those debates took place again in September 2020, 55 per cent of Britons said their identity as a Remainer or Leaver still had importance to their identity.

If debates around Brexit are reopened – around Britain’s trading relationship with the European Union, for example – those divisions in the community might return, but our conversations across Britain in 2020 found little appetite for a resumption of hostilities among the vast majority of Remainers and Leavers. A greater risk might be a reawakening of some of the differences in underlying values between Remainers and Leavers, for instance around some other future conflict of culture and identity. This risk is explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

In conversations throughout 2020 for this study, many people said they worried about divisions returning in the future – half the population told us in September that Covid-19 has made them concerned about political division getting worse, while only a small minority were not concerned about this. In qualitative interviews for this report, many participants reflected with sadness on their experience of divisions during the Brexit years, with the intensity of those public debates affecting relationships with friends, family members, and others in their community. Both Remainers and Leavers felt that Brexit drove a wedge through society, and that they experienced others’ resentment, anger, or disgust for their views:

*Peter*

**‘I think we were a more united society. I think there's always been differences, but I think the referendum was the really big one that just broke it open. There's always been political differences, but I think the really big one has been the Brexit one because people feel so passionately about it.’**

*Interviewer:*

*Do you feel passionately about it as well?*

*Peter*

**‘Yeah, a little bit. I try not to let it come into my day-to-day life. I do have my own strong opinions on it. More because like I said before the possibility of it affecting my daughter’s medication. I think that's why I feel so strongly about it. But I try not to... Especially now it’s technically over, I try not to let it come into relationships with other people because I've seen what it can do. I've seen how it can bring formally strong friendships down.’**

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist, 37, North West*

**‘It made me feel like I was just being very quickly judged and that everyone just assumed what I believed because of the way I voted. There's lots of reasons why I voted that way and I can see why people would vote remain. Didn't feel annoyed about people that did that [laughs], but then I just remember if I mentioned how I voted that people would get quite angry at me, or would almost feel quite violent towards me.’**

*Rose, Established Liberal, 28, South West*

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For many in the study, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that the divisions of Brexit could be overlooked, as people came together to support one another in a time of crisis:

**‘I think this is a big opportunity to put everything behind us. I'm against Brexit a hundred percent but I think it's time to just look beyond that and pull forward now. This current situation really has pulled us further away from what Brexit would look like, this is more like well we've really got to deal with bigger issues like putting the economy back together once this is all over... I think it's high time we unite to be even stronger than ever.’**

*Ray, Loyal National, 44, London*

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**‘It has seemed that people have forgotten that whole debate and that whole opposition to each other. I think Covid has taken everyone's minds off it and I think that in many ways has helped to heal some of the divisions, certainly some of the resentment I felt towards other people. I think I had started to feel definitely that I was a Remainer, some people I knew were Leavers and, yeah, it really made it difficult for me to associate with them anymore and things like that. Now I feel like certainly a lot of my feelings on the matter have been resolved because just being reminded that people don't need to identify purely as that, that people can work together despite it.’**

*Declan, Established Liberal, 27, West Midlands*

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Past divisions could be awoken from their dormancy, but most want to move on from the division and dysfunction of the Brexit years. However, while people want the country to move on from those divisions, they are not sure that it will. Confidence weakened during the course of the pandemic.<sup>ii</sup> Early on, more people agreed than disagreed that ‘Covid-19 has shown us that no matter how divisive the debate around Brexit was, as a society we can pull together’.

However, our data from September 2020 (Figure 4.12) shows that Britons now doubt we can pull together. Among the segments, only a slight majority of Backbone Conservatives continue to believe this is possible.

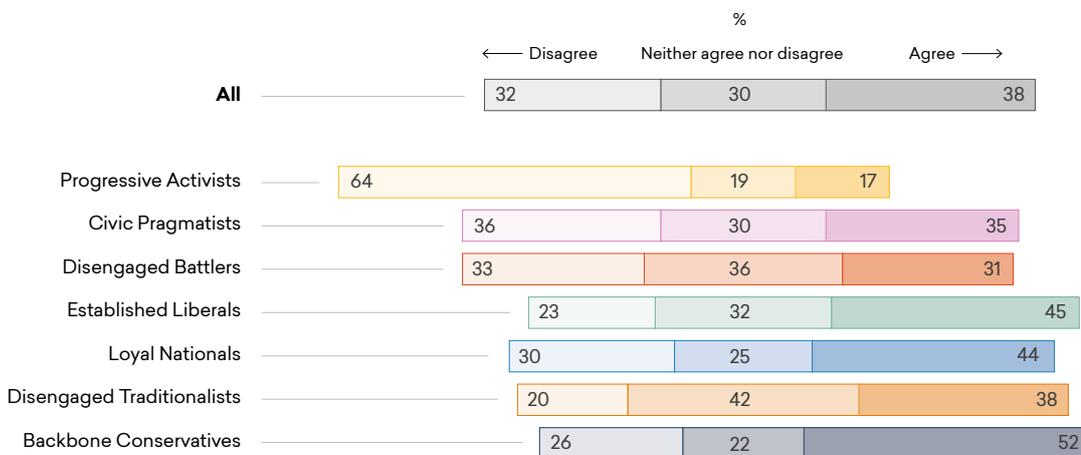
This finding perhaps reflects uncertainty about whether political leaders and influential media voices genuinely want those divisions to heal, and also demonstrates how the mention of Brexit prompts a sense of pessimism among Britons that we can genuinely overcome the division it has caused.

Figure 4.12.

## Covid-19, Brexit, and pulling together as a society

Britons are less sure that we can move on from the divisiveness of the Brexit years as it starts to return to the forefront of people’s minds

### Covid-19 has shown us that no matter how divisive the debate around Brexit was, as a society we can pull together



Qu. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Covid-19 has shown us that no matter how divisive the debate around Brexit was, as a society we can pull together. September 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The Brexit divide has left scar tissue, but it is far from insurmountable. The common ground to be found across the Leave/Remain divide, and the strength of people’s desire to move on from the conflict, mean that the UK is not doomed to a repeated and intensifying cycle of division along those same fault lines. But if political leaders intentionally frame future debates in ‘us-versus-them’ ways around national identity in order to re-ignite those conflicts, Leave/Remain divisions could evolve into a more enduring fracture in British politics and society (for further analysis into affective polarisation – on ‘us-versus-them’ dynamics – between partisans and Leavers/Remainers see Chapter 5).

ii The percentage of agreement/disagreement in September 2020 was 38-32 per cent, and in June 2020 66-25 per cent.

## 4.5 Key takeaways

We entered the 2020s with Britons perceiving the country as deeply divided after the Brexit years. Feelings of sadness, disappointment, and frustration towards politicians lingered, alongside weakened attachment to political parties, whom people hold partly responsible for years of seemingly futile conflict. It was unsurprising that the successful campaign in the 2019 General Election was the one with the clearest commitment to end the division of the Brexit years, even if it was short on the details of how that might take place.

Despite its painful and tragic consequences, the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for people across Britain to come together in the face of a common threat, and this sense of reuniting provided a clean break for many after the conflict of the Brexit years. Although the social solidarity that was mobilised in the wake of the first lockdown wore down over time, across all segments there is a strong hope that we do not return to the divisions of recent times – alongside anxiety that this could happen.

It is not inevitable that the divisions of the Brexit years should again open up. Britain is less polarised than is often assumed. We remain committed to democracy and to its necessary compromises. We are not fractured along the fault lines of deep partisan identities or issues, and do not harbour deep hostility towards each other based on the parties we support.

But beneath people's identities as Leavers and Remainers, there are real fault lines and differences in core beliefs, discussed in the next chapter. The nature of these differences helps explain why those identities have not entirely faded. Re-establishing trust and reconnecting people across the lines of past divisions is vital if the 'us-versus-them' divisions of recent years are to heal. As this report shows, there is much common ground on which to do this work.

# Chapter 5

## Polarisation and Division

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**50 per cent** of Britons feel that this is the most divided Britain has ever been

**74 per cent** think that the media often makes the country feel more divided than it really is

**3 in 5** Britons say they feel exhausted by division in politics

**71 per cent** agree that ‘for the future of our country, it is especially important that we stick together despite different views’

# Introduction

In the years following the Brexit referendum, the story of a nation divided between two opposing camps took hold as conventional wisdom in Britain. The 52-to-48 per cent division in the June 2016 referendum was seen as the culmination of a profound cleavage in society – between a younger, more educated, diverse, and cosmopolitan Britain and an older, more traditional, provincial, white, and patriotic Britain. The fact that the outcome of the Brexit referendum so surprised the former group only underscored how disconnected



**I don't feel part of a society that's so divided I couldn't have a constructive conversation with someone at a very personal level.**

*Philip, Backbone Conservative, 28, South East*



people have become. Others contested this view, arguing that the drawn-out Brexit debate was less extraordinary: merely the latest chapter in the long history of Britain's complex relationship with its European neighbours.

Like other western democracies, Britain has seen the forces of division grow stronger in recent years. A large majority feel that the country has become more divided, and half of the country believes those divisions have never been so bad.

To varying degrees, there is evidence

for those sentiments. We have grown less trusting and understanding of each other and of our institutions. Our public debates have coarsened and, played out through the 24-hour digital news cycle, have become more combustible. It is so much easier now for minor squabbles to ignite major conflicts, fuelled by bellicose voices that have mastered the medium of viral social media platforms.

We are in a time when differences are magnified by a deep distrust of 'the system', widening inequality, the dynamics of social media, and a greater awareness of racial injustice. Different experiences, values, and beliefs that drive political behaviour are easier to exploit in times of uncertainty and insecurity. Disparate forces have become increasingly active and effective in exploiting such differences – incendiary media commentators, extremist groups, foreign powers, and self-serving politicians who see division as their route to power. There is every reason to expect that the intensity of these forces will continue to grow in future years.

But this study challenges the narrative of a Britain polarised and divided into two opposing camps. For most people, the lines that we often see as dividing us – the party we support, our political ideology, even our views on Brexit – are not central to our sense of personal identity. We tire of the divisive voices that overstate our differences. Most of us value our more widely shared identities, whether national – as British, English, Scottish, and Welsh – demographic, or based on other interests or passions.

Most of us see the changes of recent decades in generally positive terms, and feel proud of how Britain has become a more open, modern, and diverse society. Times have become more fractious, but on the whole we do not believe that the differences between Britons are too big for us to work together anymore. And the divisions that opened up during the Brexit years feel less relevant after we have seen how many people from all backgrounds came together to help those most in need during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The aim of this chapter is to better understand public perceptions of Britain's divisions. The chapter first examines perceptions of division. It then explores whether the UK is a polarised country or not. We find that, while there is some 'us-versus-them' division (or 'affective polarisation') between those who more

strongly associate with their Brexit identity, this is only felt by half of the population. Few of us strongly identify with a political party or dislike others just because they belong to an opposing party.

Polarisation becomes more dangerous when a division over one issue creates static identities and affective polarisation becomes entrenched. Social scientists describe this phenomenon as conflict extension: when members of the group converge across a range of issues. Fortunately, in the UK we do not yet observe conflict extension, but rather a kaleidoscopic effect. Society, as examined through the lens of the segments, is not divided into two opposing camps. Instead we come together in different formations depending on the issue at hand – much like the pieces of coloured glass in a kaleidoscope which combine in different patterns as the instrument is rotated.

This chapter provides insights into a key conclusion of this report, namely that **it is not inevitable that we continue down the path to a more divided society.** We can choose to address the fault lines in our society. We can strengthen and reinvigorate the institutions that bring us together. We can build on our common ground, rather than diminishing it. We can work to contain the forces of division, instead of unleashing them. The voices that shape our social and political debates can let those debates play out in ways that deepen our faith in democracy, rather than undermine it. This work starts with better understanding how we see our divisions today.

## 5.1 Perceptions of division

**‘I think we were a more united society. I think there’s always been differences, but I think the referendum was the really big one that just broke it open.’**

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist. 37, North West*

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A large majority of British people describe the country as divided, although there is evidence of an improvement since the Brexit years (when as many as 85 per cent described it that way).<sup>22</sup> Asked just before the outbreak of Covid-19, we found that:

- 66 per cent felt that the United Kingdom is divided – 45 per cent saying it was somewhat divided and 22 per cent saying it was very divided
- Only 13 per cent described the country as united (almost all of whom said it was somewhat united)
- 21 per cent said the country was neither united nor divided

The pandemic has had mixed effects on people’s perceptions. As Chapter 11 highlights, people often say it has shown us at our best and our worst. At this stage there is no clear public verdict. When asked whether their perceptions of the UK have changed (if at all) since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Britons respond as follows:

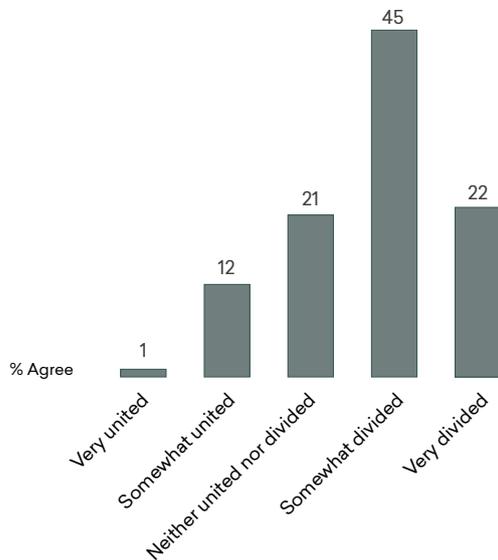
- 32 per cent feel that we are more divided than before
- 26 per cent believe that we are more united than before
- 42 per cent claim that we are neither more united than divided

Figure 5.1.

## Perceptions of division

Most Britons feel that the country is generally divided, although only a fifth feel this strongly

### Are we united or divided?



Qu. How united or divided does the UK feel to you these days? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

If we were to draw out the three key insights from this research on division, the first would be that **the country sees itself as more divided than united – across all segments.**

The second key insight is that **perceptions of unity and division are influenced by partisan factors.** Those whose political side is in power are more likely to view the country as united, and those whose side is weaker and out of power see it as divided. There are nevertheless significant numbers of Conservative supporters who see the country as divided, and significant numbers of Labour supporters who see the country as united.

- Supporters of opposition parties are more likely to view the country as divided – a view shared by 77 per cent of Labour supporters, 87 per cent of Liberal Democrat supporters, and 89 per cent of Scottish Nationalist Party supporters.
- In contrast, 51 per cent of Conservative Party supporters see the UK as divided.
- Just 49 per cent of strong Leavers see the UK as divided, compared to 86 per cent of strong Remainers. There is far less difference between ‘somewhat’ Leavers and ‘somewhat’ Remainers (among whom 57 and 68 per cent respectively see the country as divided).
- Those who are disengaged politically are less inclined to see the country as divided, with 55 per cent of those who did not vote in the 2019 election saying the country is divided, compared to 65 per cent nationally.

The third key insight from the research is that the **population segments provide some clearer insights into public perceptions than the lens of Brexit or party identities**, since perceptions of unity and division are influenced by people’s social psychology.

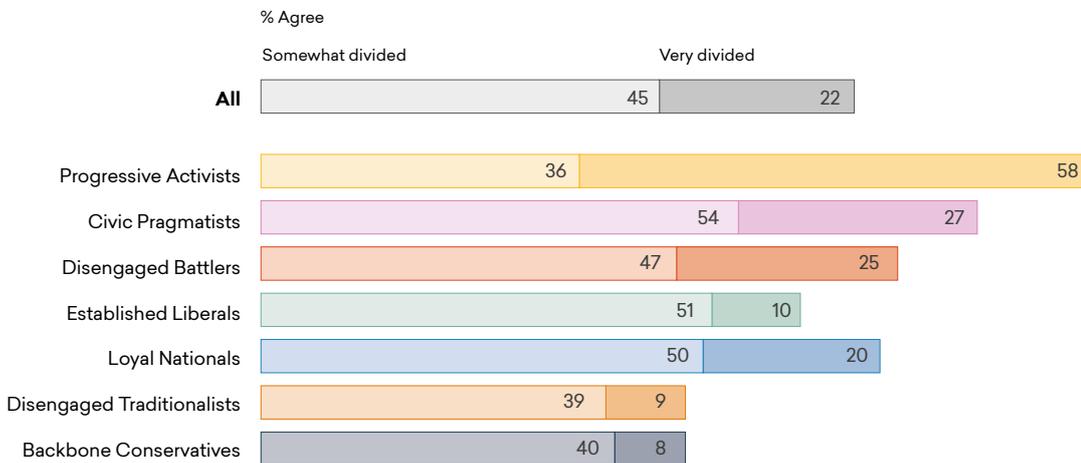
- While being on the ‘winning’ or ‘losing’ side influences people’s perceptions of unity and division, underlying psychological influences can also play a role. Despite having the highest Leave vote in the 2016 referendum of any segment (at 63 per cent, equal to Backbone Conservatives), Loyal Nationals are still more likely to perceive the country as divided than the national average. Some 70 per cent of them say this is the case. Loyal Nationals are most sensitive about divisions in their society, and this is a key characteristic of those with the highest tendency towards authoritarian values.
- Progressive Activists are outliers in that almost all see the country as divided (94 per cent), and they are the only segment for whom a majority (58 per cent) see the country as being very divided.
- The other segment whose identity is strongly tied to their ideological beliefs, Backbone Conservatives, are not outliers in the same way as Progressive Activists are. Some 48 per cent of Backbone Conservatives see the country as divided (the same proportion as among Disengaged Traditionalists).<sup>23</sup>

Figure 5.2.

## Segments’ perceptions of division

All segments view the country as divided, but to different degrees

### How divided does the UK feel?



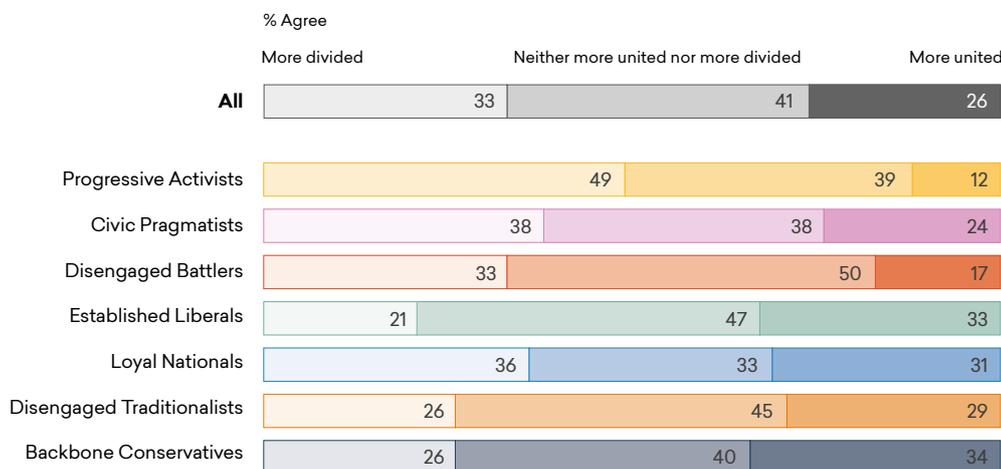
Qu. How united or divided does the UK feel to you these days? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 5.3.

## Change in perceptions of division during Covid-19

The strongest perceptions of growing divisions are among Progressive Activists

### Have perceptions of division changed during Covid-19?



Qu. Since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, how have your perceptions of the UK changed, if at all? Is it...? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 5.2 Are we more divided than ever before?

Just under half of Britons say that our society is more divided than at any other point in their lifetimes, compared to a quarter who say that we have been through times like this before. To better understand how people define and relate to this sense of division, we dived deeper through asking a series of questions comparing current situations to the past.

The period of deep division in living memory that is most often cited is the Thatcher era, which was marked by an extended period of political conflict, social unrest, and the realignment of the major political parties. The divisions of that era tended to follow the fault lines of capital and labour. Voting patterns reflected a persistent North-South and class divide<sup>24</sup> between Labour-supporting working class voters in the North of England, Scotland, and Wales, and Conservative-supporting middle class voters in the South of England.

**50%** of Britons feel that this is the most divided Britain has ever been

Yet today, 50 per cent of Britons feel that this is the most divided Britain has ever been, while 26 per cent say we have been this divided before and 7 per cent say we have been through more divided times.

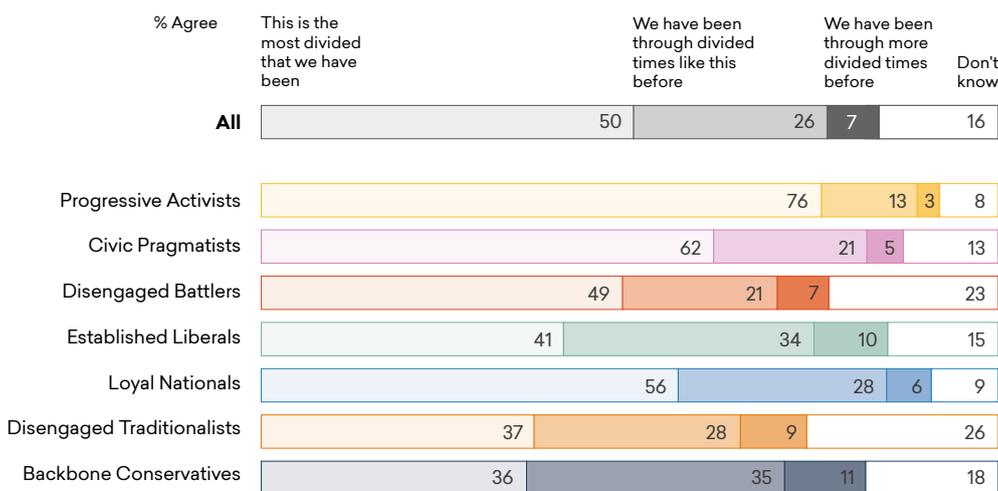
- Progressive Activists perceive the level of division more negatively than other segments.
- Other than for the oldest age group (the Silent Generation, aged between 75 and 100), for whom 13 per cent feel we have been through more divided times, there is little difference in perceptions between people based on age.
- Perhaps understandably given their youth, Gen Z (18 to 24-year-olds) are less likely than average to say that we have been through divided times like this before.
- There are mild effects for Brexit identities and partisan identities. Remainers are more likely than Leavers to say that this is the most divided we have been (62 v 42 per cent).
- 63 per cent of supporters of the Labour Party, 66 per cent of Liberal Democrats, and 68 per cent of Green party supporters believe that this is the most divided we have been, as opposed to 39 per cent of Conservative supporters.

Fresh memories are often the strongest, but there are some distinct elements to the current conflict that were less true in the 1980s. Trust in government is at an all-time low,<sup>25</sup> and faith in the capacity of our democratic system to resolve our differences was eroded by the long-lasting political deadlock between 2016 and 2019. The divisions in the 1980s were between stable identities (involving trade unions, business, a Conservative government, and Labour opposition) and played out through established institutions, whereas the current divisions are more destabilising, causing divisions within political parties, social classes, and regions.

**Figure 5.4. Perceptions of division compared to the past**

Most Britons think this is the most divided that we have ever been

**Are we more divided than ever before?**



Qu. Which do you agree with more? In my lifetime... February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 5.3 Who do we blame for our divisions?

**‘Currently the nature of politics is dragging people apart... It looks like the more divisive politicians are, the more they remain in power. I'm not sure what quick fix there is.’**

*Farooq, Progressive Activist, 28, East of England*

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Most Britons feel a sense of exhaustion with the divisions of recent years and remain worried that those divisions might return. Asked who is to blame for division, there is common ground: political parties and social media are the main culprits. Almost half of society blames political parties for driving us apart. Every population segment ranks political parties in its top three factors, and it is only the Backbone Conservatives and Loyal Nationals who do not put them first.

The second most cited force of division is social media, the forum in which political debates now play out from one hour to the next. Every population segment ranks social media as one of the three causes of our deepest divisions other than Progressive Activists, who themselves are far more active in engaging in political debates on social media than any other group. On the other hand, Backbone Conservatives are more likely to hold social media responsible than any other group. Age plays a significant role in these perceptions, with twice as many people in the 75+ age group attributing divisions to social media than those in the 18-25 age group (58 v 27 per cent citing it as one of the three most important sources of division).

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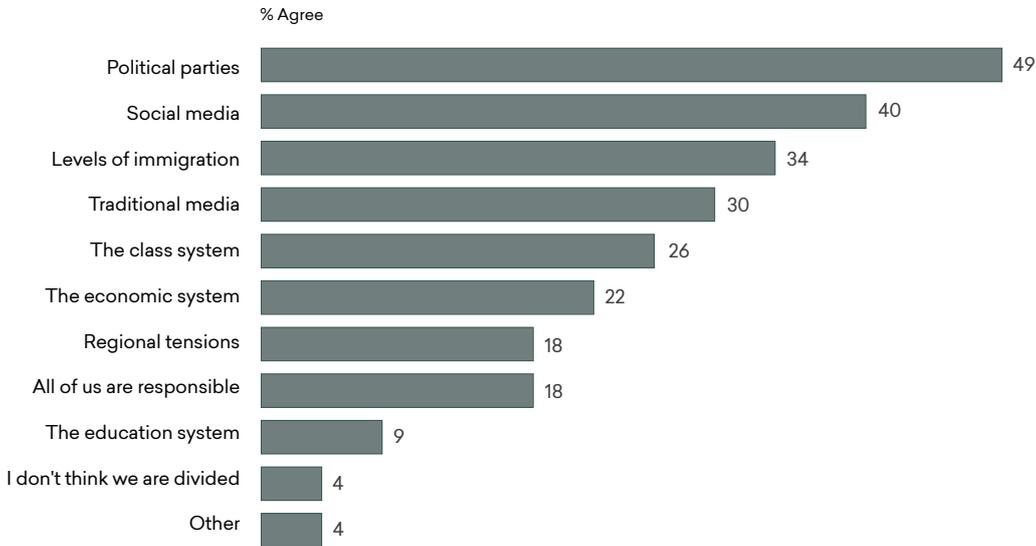
**74%** think that the media often makes the country feel more divided than it really is

Many also attribute blame to the traditional media, such as the tabloid press, which is the fourth most cited source of division. Some 74 per cent think that the media often makes the country feel more divided than it really is. While the distinction between traditional and social media is somewhat blurred, the higher blame attributed to social media reflects concerns that social media platforms are geared towards driving up division and elevating extreme voices.

Figure 5.5.

## Causes of division

Britons blame political parties as the primary cause of division



Qu. Which do you think are the causes of the deepest divisions in the UK, if any? Select up to 3. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

**'Division is how media companies make their money, how corporations make their money. I think it's intentional. The government maybe finds it easier to keep control if we're all arguing against each other.'**

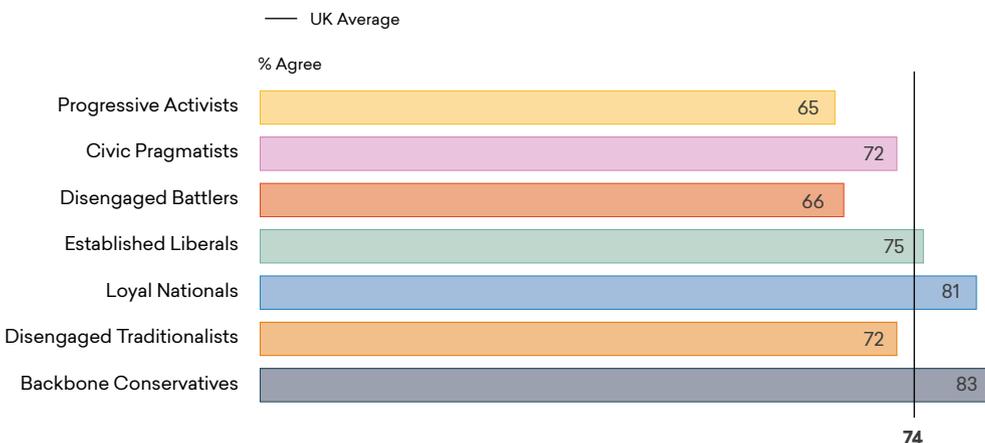
*Nick, Progressive Activist, 34, London*

Figure 5.6.

## Media and division

In all segments, a majority believes that the media exacerbates divisions

**The media makes our country feel more divided than it really is**



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about politics in the UK today? I think the media often makes our country feel more divided than it really is. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

While there is common ground on the role of parties, social media, and traditional media in driving us apart, there are differences between clusters of segments on whether some other factors divide us.

Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives see immigration as a leading cause of division. Both segments value the moral foundations of loyalty and authority highly, and worry that immigrants do not share the same commitment to the country and its rules. Perceptions about the relationship between immigration and social cohesion are further discussed in Chapter 9.

Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists attribute division to systemic factors such as economic inequality and the class system. The class system was named by 26 per cent of people, and the economic system by 22 per cent. In focus group conversations, people frequently cited the gap between the haves and have-nots as something that divides us. Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists, the two groups with the highest number of Labour Party supporters, cited the economic system as a cause of division most frequently (40 per cent and 32 per cent respectively).

Loyal Nationals stand out in this analysis for blaming both immigration and inequality (class differences and the economic system) for division. Loyal Nationals identify immigration as the primary cause of division in the country (51 per cent), just above the blame they attribute to political parties (50 per cent), but an above-average of 31 per cent of people in this segment also blame the class system.



## In their own words:



'Divisions primarily all come back to inequality... where in the UK people are born, the education that they have access to, and their background, that then goes on to influence the rest of their lives.'

*Sally, Progressive Activist, 29, South East*



'I think the main topic obviously is the government and Brexit, I think it's almost 50/50 on both subjects and people feel so strongly on either side of it... I've seen quite a few people fall out about it and friendships have ended because of the complete differences. The sides to take are very different from each other and I think at the moment since the EU referendum in 2016 it has created a huge divide in the country, which has shaped our next few general elections that we had as well.'

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist, 37, North West*



'Age definitely I think is a thing at the moment... A lot of the current issues tend to end up being like old people on one side, young people on another, on average.'

*Bradley, Established Liberal, 24, South East*



'We are divided. I mean, there's major culprits like the mainstream media. They're the ones keeping us divided.'

*George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands*

'Well, you can talk about the economic separations first of all, I mean even on my road you have council houses, you have private accommodation, you have people who don't work, you have people who work, so there's all the income differences.'

*Molly, Loyal National, 62, London*

'I think politics is a huge division at the minute with Brexit and especially in Scotland with independence as well. I think that Scotland in some ways, you feel like you're in a completely different country. And then we were kind of for Brexit but against Brexit. And then that brought in a question of race as well which I think made Brexit more of a racial thing and that further divided things. And it started off as politics but it's kind of made its way down into lots of different things.'

*Elizabeth, Loyal National, 39, Scotland*



‘The rich seem to be getting richer. I wouldn’t say the poor are getting poorer because if you’re poor, I don’t think you can get any poorer until... you’ve got nothing.’

*Jake, Disengaged Traditionalist, 47, South East*

‘I do think there is a lot of division in regards to politics because there always will be. People, they’ll go more towards one party and they won’t look at another. I do think it’s a problem to some extent because they don’t seem to compare different parties and just see what they’re offering at that time. Just the same as when you go shopping you don’t necessarily stay at one place. You might go and shop around and find a different deal, and I think that people need to remember that.’

*Louise, Disengaged Traditionalist, 26, North West*

‘The press and the media will immediately go back in making a big song and dance about Brexit, whether you’re for or against it. You don’t know what false news is and what’s real. At the moment, I don’t trust the media for what they’re reporting.’

*Freddie, Disengaged Traditionalist, 67, South West*



‘I’ve noticed since the last General Election and the last few years there’s been quite a division between the left and the right. And it’s gone away from the middle ground a lot. There’s nothing really covering the middle ground at the moment. A lot of people are either staunch left or staunch right which does divide quite severely.’

*Paul, Backbone Conservative, 38, South East*

‘There is such a huge divide in British society, I think, sadly. And I think the fact that we allow so many immigrants in, or did, doesn’t help the society. They won’t speak English. They stay amongst themselves and don’t try, which I find quite amazing. Because wherever you go in the world, I think if you live in a place in the world you need to try and speak their language so you can interact with them. But you see they don’t. They keep themselves very much to themselves. I don’t think that helps society in the UK.’

*Michelle, Backbone Conservative, 78, Yorkshire and the Humber*

## 5.4 'Us-versus-them' polarisation

As humans, we have a need to belong. We associate with groups to fulfil that need. People have a natural tendency to see the groups to which they belong, or with whom they identify, in positive terms, while they see opposing groups in negative terms – an 'us-versus-them' phenomenon that social scientists call 'affective polarisation'. Strong animosity between supporters of different groups, whether they are based on political affiliation, opinions, or other characteristics, can turn differences on issues into divisions between people. Sorting of citizens into static identity groups serves to make citizens less tolerant towards others, in turn making social conflict more likely.

Affective polarisation undermines the health of democracies, because it undermines the trust and cooperation required to resolve differences. Over time it can lead to 'stacked identities', where a person's identification with a group results in them conforming to the group's beliefs and fighting the beliefs of the opposing group.<sup>26</sup> This phenomenon can occur along the lines of political party identities, or other groupings such as Leavers and Remainers. While the issue has been studied extensively in the United States, it has not been as thoroughly researched in the UK (though with notable exceptions).<sup>27</sup>

To analyse the extent of these in-group versus out-group dynamics, individuals in different groups were asked about their feelings concerning themselves and the 'other'. The study examined the importance of partisan and Leave/Remain identities, as well as the feelings that each group has about their in-group and the 'other', or out-group, through a tool known as the 'feelings thermometer'.<sup>28</sup>

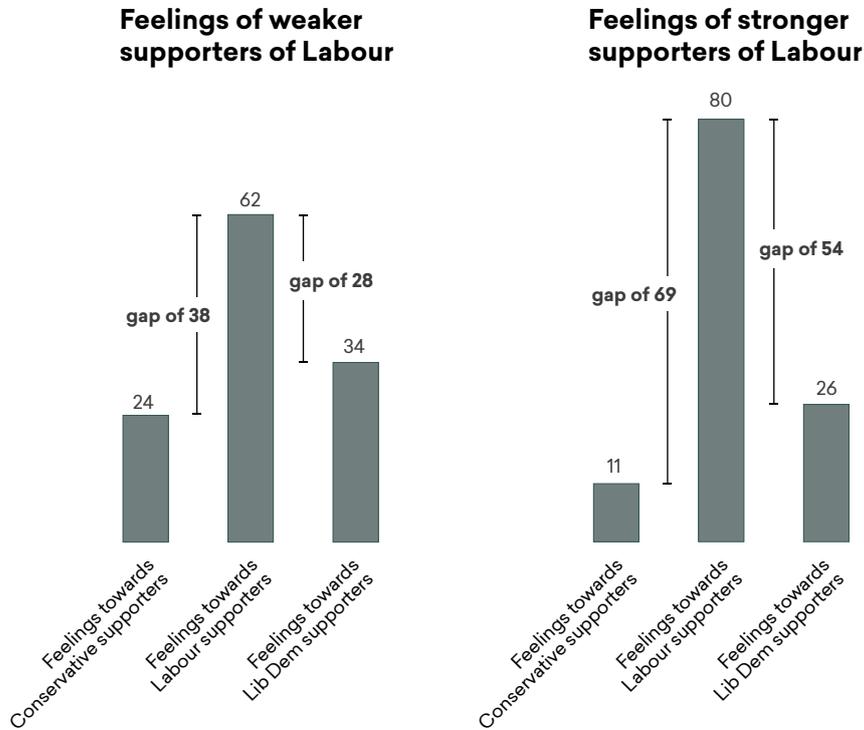
**For those whose sense of personal identity is strongly related to a political party or their position on Brexit, 'us-versus-them' dynamics play out strongly.** Compared to others, they are much warmer in their feelings toward their in-group and much colder towards the out-group. This is true for partisans of all main parties as well as for Leavers and Remainers. However, the strength of partisan affiliation and Leave/Remain identities is not equal.

- The identification that people have with being a Leaver or Remainer has become a stronger attachment for many people than any political party. Half of those who identify as either Leaver or Remainer say that this is an important identity for them. Only 32 per cent of the population says that being a supporter of their party is important to them.
- 21 per cent of Britons claim that their Leave/Remain identity is *very* important to them, more than double the number whose party identity is very important (9 per cent).
- There is no significant difference between the two sides of the Brexit division on its importance to their identities. Nineteen per cent of Remainers claim their Brexit identity is a very important identity to them (49 per cent overall important), while 22 per cent of Leavers claim it is a very important identity (50 per cent overall important).

Figure 5.7.

## Effect of partisanship on feelings towards members of other parties

Stronger partisan identities lead to greater feelings of tribalism



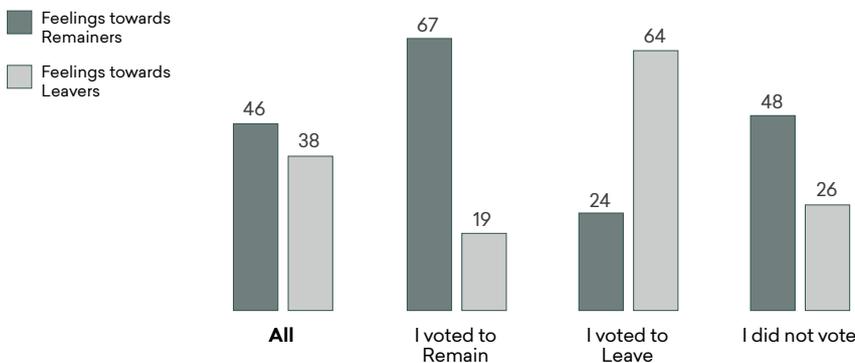
Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 5.8.

## Feelings towards Leavers and Remainers

Affective polarisation between Leavers and Remainers is quite stark, but Britons generally feel warmer towards Remainers than Leavers

### Feelings thermometer Remainers/ Leavers



Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

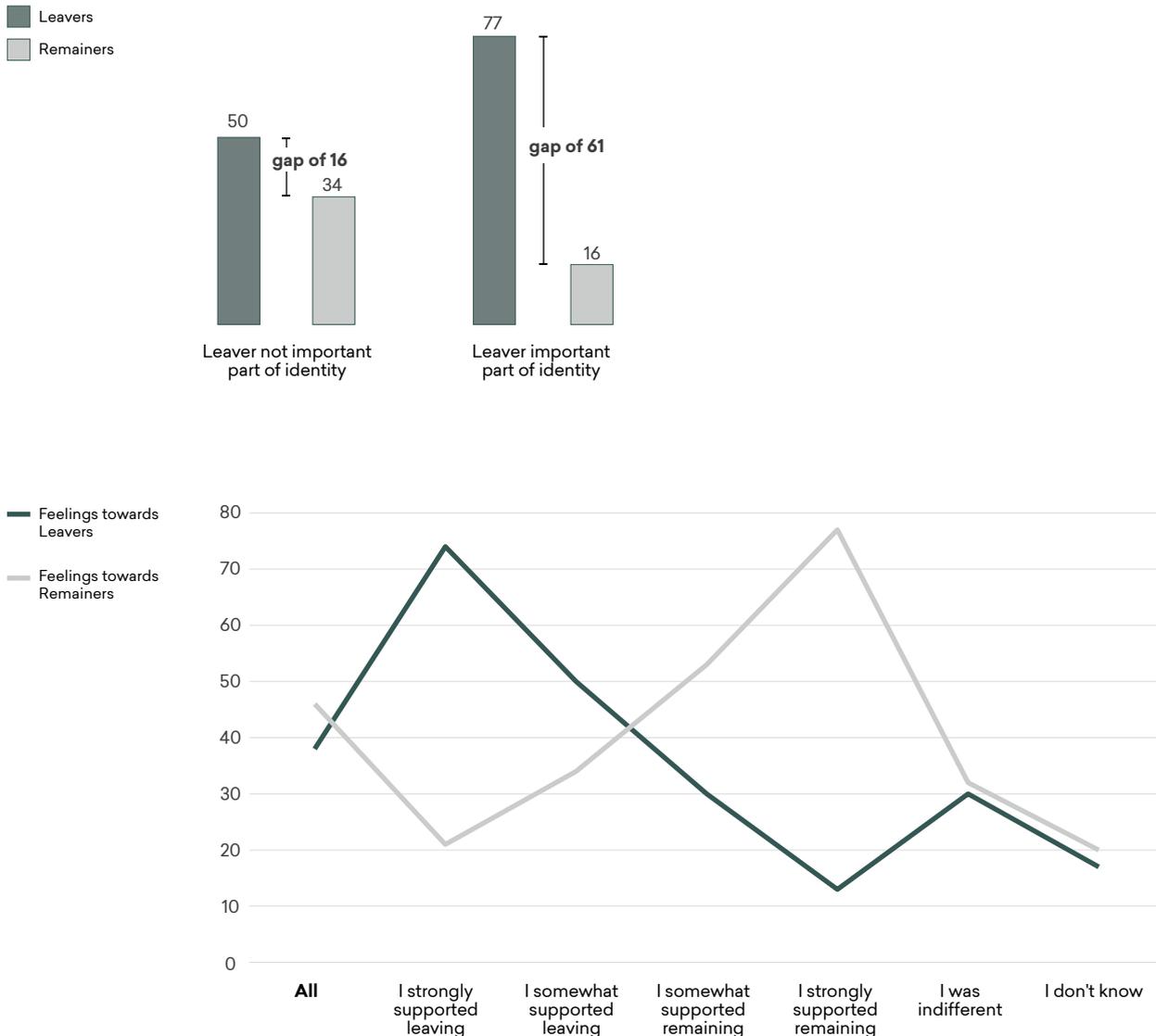
The Brexit years led to a strong ‘us-versus-them’ dynamic between Leavers and Remainers, with both viewing like-minded referendum voters more positively and viewing opponents more negatively. Among the three in ten who did not vote in the EU referendum, feelings are almost twice as warm towards Remainers as Leavers. As such, there is an eight-point gap in the warmth towards Remainers versus Leavers in the whole population. Reasons for this may be frustration with how Brexit has been handled or discomfort with the triumphalist approach of Leavers that has not sought compromise with Remainers. Our data shows that Britons favour compromise rather than conflict in politics by a ratio of more than two to one.

Figure 5.9.

## The ‘us-versus-them’ dynamic of Brexit identities

Affective polarisation is stronger for those with stronger Brexit identities

### Feelings towards Leavers and Remainers from Leavers



Attitudes towards Leavers and Remainers (via feelings thermometer) by Brexit attitude. For full question text see Appendix 2.1. Data from February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

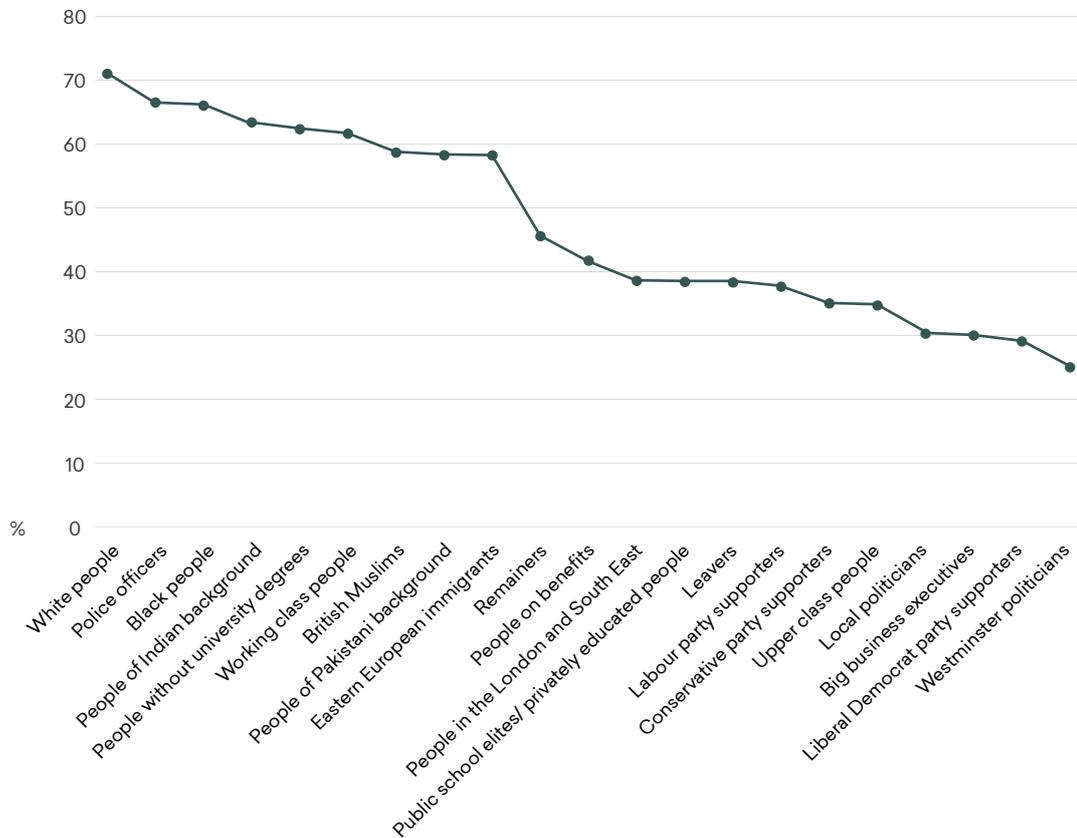
Beyond the divisions in society around Brexit, people have the least warmth towards groups perceived as powerful elites (business executives, upper class people, and public-school educated elites) and political actors (with Westminster politicians eliciting the coldest feelings). These findings reflect wider frustrations with a system that for many has lost its legitimacy. One encouraging finding is that we record only very small variations in the perceptions Britons have of others based on their race.

Figure 5.10.

## Feelings towards different groups in society

Groups associated with elitism are seen the most negatively

### Feelings towards different groups in society



Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 5.5 — Is the Brexit division enduring? Covid-19, partisanship, and Brexit identities

The Brexit division dominated social and political debates for four years until the 2019 General Election and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Stances on leaving or remaining in the EU reflected individual attitudes on not only European integration, but also immigration, the welfare state, and interpretations of what sovereignty means.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, as explored in Chapter 4, there is common ground between Leavers and Remainers on their exhaustion with division, the importance of democracy, and what makes them proud to be British. There are also shared concerns around the failings of Britain's economic system, media, and politicians.

As of September 2020, just over half of Britons say being a Remainer or Leaver is an important part of their identity; for the other half of society, it is not important. The fault line carved through society by Brexit is deep, but not all-encompassing. Even though 'us-versus-them' dynamics between Leavers and Remainers exist, people within each group do not have a static identity that coheres across a range of issues. **This kaleidoscopic effect is a strength of British society. Depending on the issue at hand, bridges exist between people who disagree in other respects.** The onset of Covid-19 made many of those divisions feel less relevant, with a strong focus on community action and showing gratitude to key workers on the front lines of fighting the pandemic and looking after others.

It is too early to know whether the pandemic will result in a lasting erosion of these divisions, or whether they will reassert themselves around Britain's post-Brexit relationship with Europe and/or other issues that map similarly to the Brexit identities. A further wave of research for this report was conducted in September 2020, shortly after internal divisions in the government had emerged over plans to breach the EU Withdrawal Agreement, and the spectre of the Brexit debate being reignited was real. This wave of research suggested that Leave/Remain identities remain salient and feelings towards the out-group have not become warmer, with barely any difference between early March and September in this regard.

The danger of the recurrence of the Leave/Remain division, or its transformation into other 'culture war' divisions, is that the division reflects much more than different views about membership of the European Union. The division between educated, cosmopolitan, urban citizens and more traditionally-minded people outside of major cities manifests itself across the world in different societies. It came to the fore with the Brexit debate in Britain, but it shows itself in other ways too. One measure of the way that the Leave/Remain division maps onto unrelated issues is the difference in pride regarding the government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis (53 per cent among Leavers, double the 26 per cent recorded among Remainers) and its impact on trust in the government (60 per cent of Remainers say that they now trust the government less, compared to 30 per cent of Leavers).

On the other hand, both Remainers and Leavers agree that we should use Covid-19 as an opportunity to make significant changes to Britain (71 and 59 per cent respectively).

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3<sup>in</sup>5

Britons say they feel exhausted by division in politics

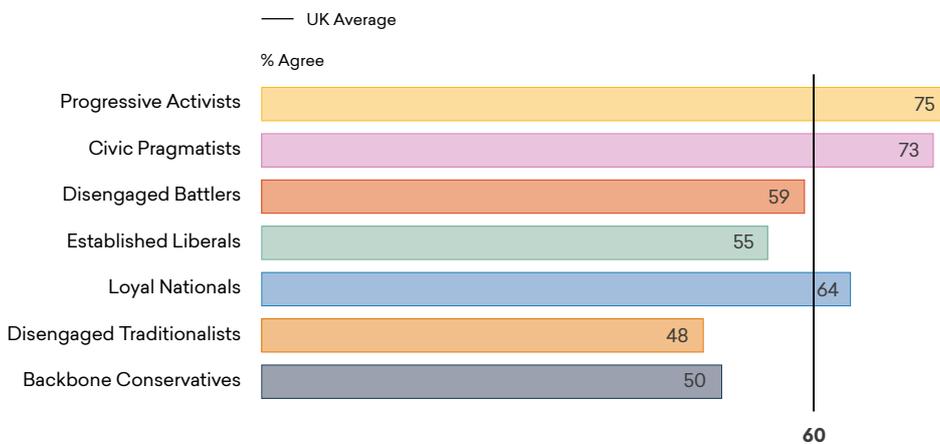
There is a clear public appetite to move beyond the Brexit division, especially among the three in five Britons who say they feel exhausted by division in politics. This is a majority that exists in all segments, except the Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives. Indeed, 63 per cent of people even say that they worry that our political divisions could lead to an increase in hatred and violence.

Figure 5.11.

## Feelings about division

Three in five Britons report feeling exhausted by the division they see in politics

### I feel exhausted by the division in politics



Qu: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about politics in the UK today: I feel exhausted by the division in politics. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Britons want society to come back together after several fractious years. The surge in social solidarity in the initial lockdown period showed us the potential that we hold as a country. By June 2020 – almost half a year after Brexit formally happened, and several months into the pandemic – most Leavers and Remainers felt confident that society can come back together again. Seventy per cent of those who voted to Remain and 65 per cent of those who voted to Leave agree that ‘the differences between Britons are not so big that we cannot come together’. Most Britons want to leave the division of the Brexit years behind them and get back to rebuilding a society that has been through a sustained period of turmoil. But they are not sure that the same is true of politicians, the media, and warring tribes of social media warriors online.

## 5.6 Issue polarisation: Britain's neglected common ground

While 'us-versus-them' polarisation focuses on group identities, issue polarisation occurs when there are differences in attitudes or values in one or more issues that disperse people towards the extremes, when two poles are formed with little middle ground, or when opinions across a range of issues cohere around a particular identity.

Issue polarisation is relatively low in the UK, as recent studies such as the Political Division Index from Demos<sup>30</sup> and 'Divided Britain?' from King's College London have found.<sup>31</sup> Compared to the United States, Britain has substantial common ground on issues relating to gender and sexuality, healthcare, and racial prejudice. Even on the controversial issue of immigration, research has shown a trend towards convergence and increasing levels of support.

The British public shows a surprising level of agreement on many issues, with relatively few people crowded at opposite extremes. These include issues that were once more polarising than they are today, including equality for women, the need for action on the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the threat of climate change, and concern about extremism and hate speech. For example:

- A majority in each segment believes that climate change is real and caused by human action, with 70 per cent of the public agreeing (a further 20 per cent believe that climate change is happening but is part of a natural cycle, rather than human action).
- 73 per cent of Britons believe that cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK.
- 93 per cent of Britons say that a person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent. In no segment is there lower than 87 per cent agreement with this sentiment.

In some instances, our common ground transcends debates that can often seem polarised. For example, a majority of people are conscious of racism and 73 per cent of people think that there is a problem with hate speech in Britain. At the same time, 72 per cent believe that political correctness is a problem, and many are concerned that people are overly sensitive and judgmental towards others, especially around issues of language. For many people, these are not opposite views – they reject extremism and prejudice, but also see dangers in another extreme where some individuals set themselves up in judgment of others' language and motivations.

Similarly, opinions across a range of issues do not cohere around two large opposing groups. Instead, different segments cluster together in various formations on different issues. For example:

- Civic Pragmatists, Established Liberals, and Backbone Conservatives cluster together as higher-trust groups with a civic optimism about how society can come together and about the good intentions of others.
- On issues relating to immigration and refugees, we might find that Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Established Liberals might form a cluster on one side of an argument, while Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives form the other.
- On tackling inequality, Progressive Activists, Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Battlers, and Civic Pragmatists form a cluster, though without strong opposition. From issue to issue, the segments cluster together in distinctive ways.

There are certainly issues on which Britons do not agree. This is obvious when it comes to membership of the European Union, Scotland remaining in the Union, specific immigration policies, or aspects of the anti-racist agenda (Britons agree that racism is a problem, but not on all measures to address it, especially when debates revolve around symbols rather than policy).

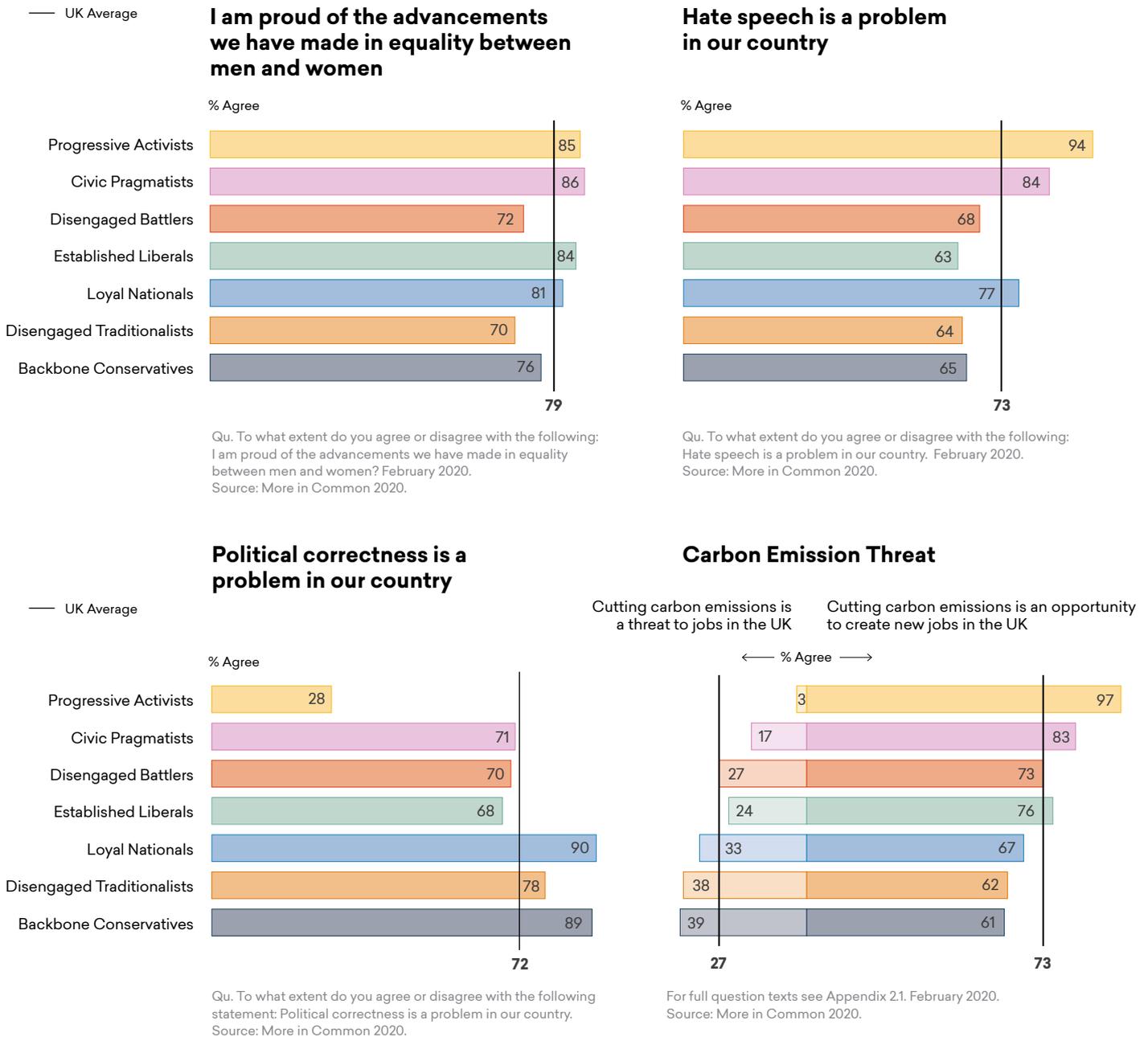
These issues can be managed in ways that elevate differences and deepen divisions, or they can be approached more constructively with a focus on common ground. Large majorities would far prefer that we focus on cooperation and compromise rather than polarisation and gridlock – indeed, 71 per cent agree that, ‘for the future of our country, it is especially important that we stick together despite different views’. As Elizabeth, a Loyal National from Dundee said:

**‘If we don’t [compromise] then we’re just standing still, aren’t we? If I don’t let other people’s opinions into my head then I’m only dealing with what I’m thinking and we’re never going to move forward that way. Progress is stopped by people who don’t ask questions.’**

Figure 5.12.

## What Britons have in common

Britons are united on a range of issues



## 5.7 Key takeaways

A key theme in this chapter has been the remarkable resilience of UK society despite a deeply divisive period. Especially when compared to the United States, partisan division in the UK is nowhere near as strong as it is across the Atlantic. While there is some affective polarisation, for instance between those who strongly feel their Leave and Remain identity, issue polarisation is weak. The differences in Britain are less like two entrenched sides opposed against the other, and more like what a child might see in a kaleidoscope. In holding the kaleidoscope to the light, and revolving the cylinder from one turn to the next,

the coloured fragments of glass reassemble and cluster themselves in different formations. The same is true of how different population groups cluster in different ways from one issue to the next.

There are two segments that stand out as being ideologically strong and more engaged than the others. First are the left-wing Progressive Activists, who are very interested in and tend to closely follow politics and current affairs. In contrast, the right-wing Backbone Conservatives, who in many ways are the right-wing counterpart to this segment, are notably less interested in politics and do not tend to have diametrically opposite views. This means that it is not accurate to talk about 'wing' groups in the UK as there are in the US, where there are two extremely hostile segments on opposing ends of the ideological spectrum, which mirror each other in their disagreement.

Divisions in Britain can to some extent be seen as a top-down or structural problem. The majority of people blame those in charge for divisions, with the heaviest blame being apportioned to political parties. Large numbers are also critical of how the media represents division and inaccurately covers stories. There is a deep distrust of politicians and a general suspicion that many politicians inflame divisions in order to further their own careers, rather than a concern for the greater good or doing what is 'right'. There is also a general disinterest in politics among the more ideologically fluid segments, with large numbers saying they find it hard to understand what is happening in Parliament. However, more closed or pro-authority segments blame immigration for the divisions in society. There is a palpable sense of victimhood in some places, with a feeling that immigration is something that is 'done' to an area without locals' voices being heard.

Although sidelined by the pandemic, Brexit has not been forgotten and those recently formed identities remain strong for half of the population. However, the strength of Brexit identities remains to a certain extent dormant. These identities could be triggered by future issues arising around Britain's relationship with Europe, they could evolve into wider 'culture wars' along similar dividing lines, or they could gradually diminish with time.

The margin of victory in the EU referendum was very close indeed, and there has clearly been some damage caused by the rise of affective polarisation among the minorities of strongly committed Leavers and Remainers. Even to the limited extent our data finds it exists, this trend is concerning. Visceral dislike of others is not healthy for any society. In such a close-run referendum, the ideal political solution would be to find a compromise that takes into account the heterogeneous reasons people voted to Leave, but also does not make those who voted Remain feel that their hopes and fears are frozen out of decisions that will quite literally change Britain. Indeed, by a substantial majority British people prefer compromise in politics.

By a ratio of more than two to one, Britons say that we need to be willing to listen to those we disagree with and show a willingness to compromise. Going forward, politicians should build on the many areas of consensus in public opinion highlighted here, and also take steps to meet the widespread public appetite for compromise across political divides. It would also be wise for the greater good of the health of British democracy to seek to mitigate against 'us-versus-them' divisions along Brexit lines, rather than seeking to stoke these up. Such approaches are crucial in order to address the public's worries and create a positive, shared vision for the future that has a place for everyone in our society.

# Chapter 6

## Fault Lines

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**30 per cent** feel that the labels of left and right in politics are still valid and help them when they vote

**53 per cent** describe themselves as being in the centre of the political scale

**71 per cent** of Britons think that young people feel too entitled to an easy life, whereas only 33 per cent think that older generations don't realise that they had it easier

**80 per cent** of people think that too much in our country is decided in London

**Half of Britons** feel that the area where they live has been neglected for a long time

# Introduction

The United Kingdom is a land of differences, from the origins of the people of its four nations and the distinctive local histories of its regions, to the landscapes, industries, and identities of modern Britain. This diversity makes the tapestry of the modern UK more distinctive and more resilient. But differences can also create tensions, and can become dangerous social divisions. This has happened at many points in British history. Separate from the historic conflicts over territory that shaped today's United Kingdom, our social fabric has been torn by deep internal divisions, including periods of violent conflict over religion and power. Divisions between haves and have-nots have also erupted into violence on many occasions, as far back as the 1381 Peasants' Revolt.

This chapter looks at three fault lines in modern Britain, each of which have the potential to be sources of division and even polarisation: the ideological fault line between left and right; the intergenerational fault line between older and younger people (which is connected to the increasingly important fault line of university education), and the regional fault lines within and between the nations of the United Kingdom. While crucial, these three fault lines are not an exhaustive list of the sources of difference in Britain today. Other key areas of difference in identities and viewpoints are explored in other chapters, including sections on class and more in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9.

A key assertion of this chapter is that differences among people may constitute fault lines – potential sources of social fracturing – but that these are not the same as divisions. Differences do not necessarily create an identity that becomes all-encompassing to the extent that opinions across a range of issues coalesce around that identity, and that conflict is extended from one issue to another. When groups define themselves in opposition to another group, they can be drawn into the negative cycle of 'us-versus-them' divisiveness which the UK witnessed during the Brexit years.

One of the most powerful defences against difference becoming transformed into deeper divisions is creating opportunities for people to recognise the many cross-cutting identities that connect them to people on the 'other side' of an issue or identity disagreement. Those cross-cutting connections may come from many aspects of people's lives and ties with each other: family, faith, local community, language, school, sports, rituals and traditions, hobbies or leisure activities, and even being fans of a celebrity. The diversity of these cross-cutting identities strengthens our tapestry and creates resilience against forces that might otherwise more easily pull us apart.

## 6.1 The left/right fault line

Relying on a left/right spectrum to understand how people in Britain think about politics is like seeing a tapestry as only a black and white image. It misses much that is distinctive about people's beliefs and values today. For one, it erases the importance of the libertarian-authoritarian axis that cuts across both wings of the classical political spectrum. It also cannot capture levels of trust and suspicion, or engagement and disengagement.

Political differences have been defined in terms of the left and right for generations, as an essential short-hand to compare individuals, parties, and countries. Despite these terms still being the standard reference point for media conversations about politics, the findings in this section suggest that these terms themselves have lost much of their relevance to most voters – with the one

exception of the two groups whose identity is partly defined by their politics, and who see themselves as left or right. The lens of the segments helps explain why the left/right fault line has become less useful in understanding our differences and potential divisions today.

In the wide-ranging conversations with focus groups and individuals for this project, we were struck by how little the framing of left and right came up in discussing national issues with most of the segments, with the exception of Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives.

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**30%** feel that the labels of left and right in politics are still valid and help them when they vote

- Only 30 per cent feel that the labels of left and right in politics are still valid and help them when they vote. By contrast, More in Common’s research has found that twice as many people in Germany (60 per cent) still consider those labels relevant.<sup>32</sup>
- 41 per cent say that the labels of left and right in politics feel irrelevant to them today.
- The two population segments most likely to think that left and right terms are relevant are the two groups with the strongest left-wing and right-wing identities, Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives.
- Progressive Activists are the only group for whom a majority (53 per cent) feels that those labels are relevant. They are the most left-wing segment, based on their self-evaluation.
- The labels are considered relevant by 36 per cent of Backbone Conservatives, who are the most right-wing segment, again based on their self-evaluation.

Many people do not follow politics closely and do not have a strong left or right identity. Only one in five people describe themselves as either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ left- or right-wing:

- 15 per cent describe themselves either as ‘fairly left-wing’ or ‘very left-wing’.
- 8 per cent describe themselves either as ‘fairly right-wing’ or ‘very right-wing’.
- 53 per cent describe themselves as ‘centre’, ‘slightly left of centre’, or ‘slightly right of centre’ (23 per cent describe themselves only as ‘centre’).

The fact that **only 23 per cent of British people have a clear left or right identity** demonstrates that these are not identities around which the country has become polarised. This does not make left and right unimportant, since these established identities cut across a wide range of economic, social, and cultural issues and are meaningful for many who engage most strongly in political issues. For example, those who describe themselves as left-wing are likely to see political parties, the class system, traditional media, and the economic system as the leading causes of division in the UK. In contrast, those who describe themselves as right-wing blame levels of immigration, social media, political parties, and traditional media for divisions. However, what might be true for a group of less than one in four people may not be true for the population more generally.

While asking people to describe themselves in terms of left and right has its limitations,<sup>33</sup> responses to a standard set of questions used by British social scientists, and developed by Evans, Heath, and Lalljee, finds that many people hold a combination of views associated with *both* the left and right (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5). This may be one reason why most people describe themselves as being on or close to the centre in politics. Across different issues, segments can shift between what are generally regarded as left and right positions, usually reflecting the difference between left and right views on economic issues versus social or identity issues.

The segment that transitions most starkly between strong left and right positions is the Loyal Nationals, who are also more likely than any other segment to describe themselves only as belonging to the centre. Loyal Nationals typically have a mix of views. On inequality, the loss of working class jobs, and support for government intervention they often align with the most consistently left-wing segment, Progressive Activists (and with Civic Pragmatists and Disengaged Battlers). On the other hand, they hold the strongest anti-immigration views of any segment (56 per cent say the impact of immigration on the UK is negative, compared to an average of 30 per cent) and strongly supported Brexit, both policy stances associated with the right and held by Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists. Little wonder that they do not fit into consistently left or right categories:

- Only 5 per cent describe themselves as ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ left-wing, and 10 per cent as ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ right-wing
- 30 per cent say that they do not know – although this is not as high as the two Disengaged groups, it is unusually high for a group as engaged and opinionated as the Loyal Nationals.

The finding that left and right does not represent a strong fault line that captures key dynamics in our society is reflected in three other findings highlighted by the segments:

- The left/right spectrum does not capture the dimensions of disengagement, loss of trust in the system, and detachment from community. This characteristic unites the Disengaged Battlers and Disengaged Traditionalists who otherwise often differ on policy issues. This translates into being most alike in certain behavioural patterns, such as being least likely to vote or most likely to say they will refuse a Covid-19 vaccine even if it is safe and effective. They are also alike in perceptions, such as being the only two segments that are less likely than average to agree that people in their local area are generally kind.
- The Established Liberals reflect the difference between what is understood as being conservatism and liberalism. They are in several respects conservative in their disposition, and have high levels of trust in the system, a strong sense of personal security, and less desire for change. But their core beliefs are socially liberal – for example, their positive attitudes towards immigration. On issues of how children should be raised, Established Liberals share the approaches of Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists in strongly favouring self-reliance over obedience, curiosity over good manners, and independence over respect for elders. The latter values are all strongly preferred by Backbone Conservatives, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Loyal Nationals. Their socially liberal values, associated with the left, are firmly established, but on issues relating to the economy and the wider social system, their views are associated with the right (in the 2019 General Election, twice as many Established Liberals voted Conservative as voted Labour).

- The binary left/right scale does not capture a distinct finding that the Progressive Activists are often further away from the average for the population than any other segment. They hold very strong feelings on many issues, including support for immigration, opposition to Brexit, and pessimism about the future. They are also more likely to live in a ‘bubble’ of like-minded people than other segments, reflected in the fact that almost all of their friends have the same level of education as they have (degree-level), and hold the same political views they do (68 per cent compared to 44 per cent on average).

The left/right spectrum is still relevant in describing the tribal identities and views of highly-engaged partisans. But we do not find that it is often spoken about outside of those partisan groups, and nor does it capture the dynamics of the most highly-charged issues. Analysing the population by segment, we find that most people are in population segments with characteristics that in some significant ways detach them from reliable left or right groups. For Loyal Nationals and Established Liberals this is true on economic versus identity issues (where they have opposite positions), and for the Disengaged Battlers and Disengaged Traditionalists this is true on measures of trust and participation. Little wonder that, outside of the tribal Progressive Activist and Backbone Conservative segments, fewer than one in three people agree that ‘the labels of left and right in politics are still valid and help me when I vote’.

## 6.2 Intergenerational fault lines

**‘Although before Covid there was almost full employment, you still got the feeling that a lot of people, a lot of youngsters, didn’t feel there was any hope for them. I could aspire to owning a house in my twenties. If you were still at home at twenty-one in my era, you were a loser. And now people are staying at home into their thirties because they can’t afford to move out.’**

*Jessica, 60, Civic Pragmatist, South West*

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Age is frequently discussed as one of the most crucial dividing lines in the United Kingdom. Age differences in the vote on the Brexit referendum and recent elections have been well documented, and a surprisingly linear relationship can be found on aspects of other issues, such as race and immigration. Our research also finds that age is a good predictor across a range of topics, and past comparative work has found that differences associated with age are greater in the UK than most other western nations. Those differences may also be compounded in the future by the impact of the diverging health and economic experiences of young and old during the Covid-19 pandemic, the subject of recent research by the think tank British Future.<sup>34</sup>

Yet the evidence points to an important distinction between differences in attitudes and divisions between people. Those differences do not necessarily create generational divisions or conflict. Even on issues such as Brexit, where age differences were decisive – even leading to charges that older generations had stolen young people’s futures – focus group conversations did not find either Leavers or Remainers seeing the result of the referendum through the lens of intergenerational conflict. While further research into affective polarisation between generations is needed, this study does not find any evidence that ‘us-versus-them’ dynamics between old and young people are taking hold.

A surprising finding of the qualitative work is that the idea of an intergenerational divide seems to be far more alive amongst pundits, academics, and media commentators than in the minds of ordinary Britons. One reason for why differences between people across age groups have not taken hold is that most people discuss these dynamics in the realm of the personal: differences are mediated by family and friendship bonds. Generalisations about ‘the young’ and ‘the old’ also fail to capture the wide range of views within each group. Views are more often influenced by underlying values and core beliefs rather than the year of someone’s birth, as will be further explored in this chapter.

## Age-based differences on issues

In the United Kingdom, the differences in the views of younger and older people are more pronounced on issues of identity and diversity, reflecting the social changes that have taken place during the lives of older generations and the way those changes can be perceived as a threat to things that they value. These differences are significant, but as with the examples below they mostly do not exceed 30 per cent - a much smaller span of difference in opinion than is found between segments that are opposed to one another.

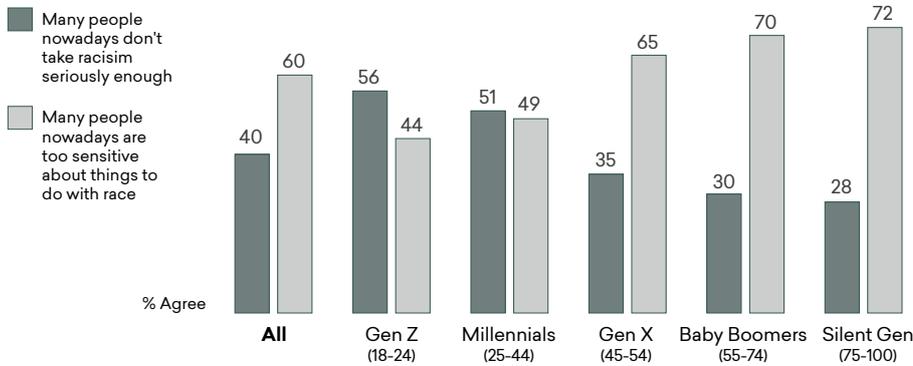
- Younger generations are more likely to think that people do not take racism seriously enough, whereas older generations are more likely to think that people are too sensitive about things to do with race. Figure 6.1 shows a difference in opinions of 30 per cent between the youngest and oldest age groups.
- Younger and older generations disagree on how to treat or confront British history. While seven in ten older Britons see little point in going over the rights and wrongs of British history, six in ten of the young think we cannot move forward as a nation if we do not acknowledge the historic mistakes we have made.
- Younger generations are not as certain about the kindness of others in the UK (e.g. 56 per cent of Generation Z and 66 per cent of Millennials agree that most in the UK are kind, in contrast to 82 and 89 per cent of Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation respectively).

Figure 6.1.

## Seriousness of racism

Older and younger generations are split on how issues of racism are treated nowadays

### Seriousness of racism



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## How do young and old people view each other?

**'I think there is a generational divide, but I'm not sure it's one that causes a lot of bad blood, if you know what I mean. It doesn't cause a lot of aggression.'**

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist, 37, North West*

Popular narratives about how young and old people view each other are somewhat reflected in generational differences over generational questions, but with caveats.

**71%** of people perceive that young people feel too entitled to an easy life

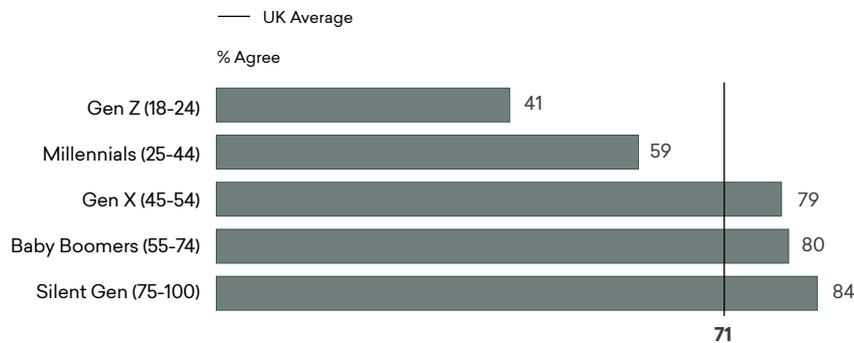
- While these views are more strongly held among over 45s, there is no strong opposition to this statement, even among those in the 18-24 age bracket. We find that young British people are rather critical of themselves.
- Younger generations are much more likely to believe that older people are being selfish with the political choices they are making, but less than 60 per cent of Gen Zs and Millennials share that view. Views are spread relatively evenly across generational cohorts.
- Almost three times as many people in the younger two cohorts than those above 55 feel that older people do not realise they have had it easier in their lives.

Figure 6.2.

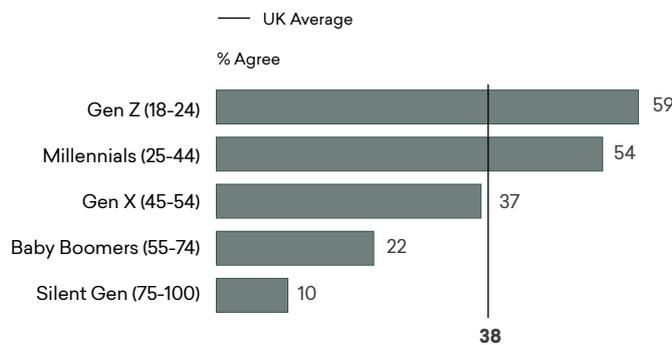
## Intergenerational differences

Older and younger generations hold differing views of each other

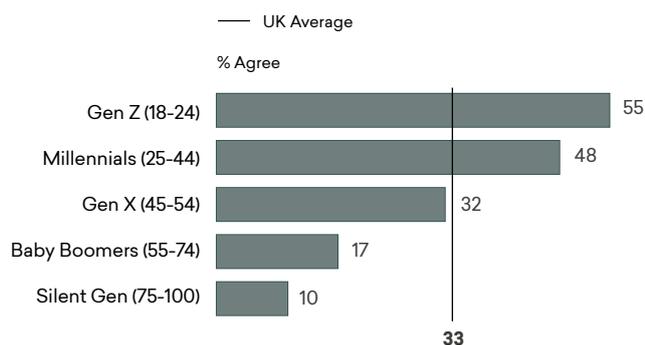
### Younger people feel too entitled to an easy life



### Older generations are being selfish with the political choices they are making



### Older generations don't realise that they had it easier



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Despite real political differences, qualitative research finds that while people make general criticisms of other groups in society (including the young and the old), when asked whether generational divides exist, most people say no. More often than not, they said no: they pointed to differences of opinion rather than unbridgeable divides or impossible relationships. **An 'us-versus-them' narrative between generations does not seem to have taken hold.**

**‘Do you know, I’ve never really thought of that. If you were going to have a division, I would say age is probably the least division you’d have. A lot of my friends span from, I don’t know, seventeen years old up to seventy – especially when I go to the local pub. I’ll have all sorts of conversations with all sorts of different people.’**

*Jake, Disengaged Traditionalist, 47, South East*

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**‘My parents have different views from me and occasionally they’ll say things that are pretty questionable and I have to call them out on. But it’s almost as if they can’t keep up with what’s politically correct. I think it’s because of their age rather than it being any kind of malicious personality issues.’**

*Alex, Disengaged Battler, 42, Wales*

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## **Comparing the influence of age versus core beliefs**

The differences between the seven segments are significantly greater than the differences between age groups on a range of issues. In fact, even on some generational issues, such as whether young people feel too entitled to an easy life, the differences between segments are greater. There is a 71 percentage point gap between Progressive Activists (24 per cent agreement) and Loyal Nationals (95 per cent) on this question, almost twice as large as the gap between the younger and older age groups.

One issue that demonstrates the divergence in opinion by age group in comparison to segments is the question of people taking offence too quickly, an issue that is often seen through a generational lens because of the activism of student groups on university campuses (the ‘cancel culture’ debate). Agreement that ‘people are too easily offended nowadays’ ranges from 56 per cent among the 18-24 year cohort up to 88 per cent among over 75s. Educational achievement is sometimes referenced as a key fault line (partly explaining the age effect, given the much higher rates of university attendance among younger generations), but in this instance the difference in agreement between those with no formal qualification (87 per cent) and those with a postgraduate degree (69 per cent) is not as great as between age groups.

Differences are much greater among the seven segments, with agreement ranging from 47 per cent among Progressive Activists to 94 per cent among Loyal Nationals who hold similar views regardless of age (as do Backbone Conservatives). On this matter, age only has a slight effect among the other segments, with differences of around ten percentage points. The greatest difference is found among Disengaged Traditionalists: older members of this group agree with this statement at a level of 90 per cent, compared to 74 per cent among younger members.

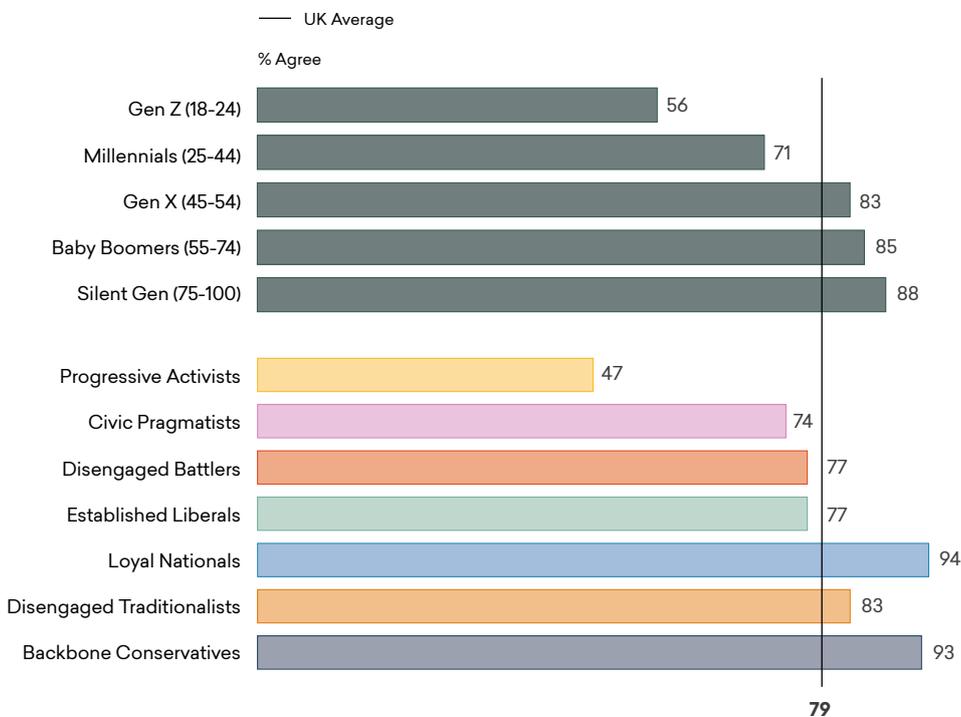
While there are differences of opinion between the different age groups, the seven segments are more cohesive in their core beliefs, and this results in members of the segments sharing similar attitudes regardless of age. **Underlying values and psychology shape individuals' views more than their age.**

Figure 6.3.

## Intergenerational differences versus differences by segments

The segments show greater differences in opinions to questions that are often seen through a generational lens

### People are too easily offended nowadays



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: People are too easily offended nowadays. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

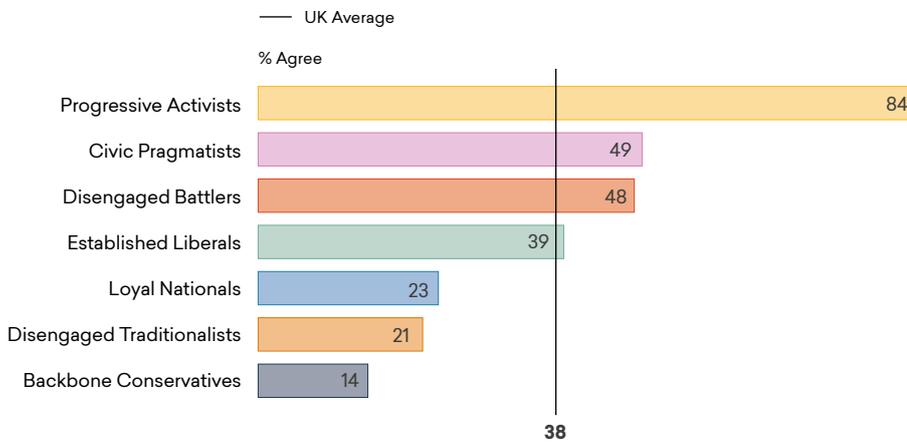
As Figure 6.4. shows, in some instances there is greater divergence between the seven segments than between different age groups, even on generational issues. Progressive Activists differ from other segments in the strength with which they feel that older generations are being selfish with their political choices. This is mirrored by the strength of opposite opinion among Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives. The segments can also provide insights that transcend generational differences – such as Jamie, a 76-year old Progressive Activist from the East Midlands, who said that older generations ‘got in Parliament and pulled the ladder up after them’.

Figure 6.4.

## Intergenerational differences and political choices

Progressive Activists stand out in their conviction

### Older generations are being selfish with the political choices they are making



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Older generations are being selfish with the political choices they are making. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

While this analysis only touches lightly on some key insights, it suggests that even though there are differences of opinion, there is little outright hostility between the generations. Differences in views often relate to loosely held, low salience beliefs that have probably existed since the beginning of time: even Aristotle and Socrates wrote about the old thinking that the young are lazy and the young thinking that the old are selfish. **The age fault line is one of differing opinions, rather than a division that is splitting society apart.**

## 6.3 Regional fault lines

**‘Listen to the average Joe on the street. The choices that they’re making down in London are affecting people nationally and globally as well and they don’t seem to care. They seem to be all about them, all about their party and all about what’s best for them. It would be nice to be heard a little bit more in the North West and probably in Scotland and everywhere else as well. It would be nice to be heard and have a bit more of an impact.’**

*Daniel, Civic Pragmatist, 34, North West*

A consistent thread through Britain’s long history is regional difference, with many distinct identities, geographies, and ways of life crowded into a relatively small collection of islands. This section touches on the UK’s regional fault lines, with a focus on their role in bringing people together or driving them apart in the years ahead, and to what extent ‘us-versus-them’ dynamics are at play.

There are several dimensions to the fault lines across regions in the United Kingdom, most obviously North versus South, and tensions between England, Scotland, and Welsh or discussions about centralisation. This section touches only lightly upon them, with a focus on the differences and commonalities between England, Scotland, and Wales and between north and south, recognising that analysing those fault lines is a study of its own.

The dataset for the issues in this study can be broken down into analysis by nations (England, Scotland, and Wales) or other regional subdivisions (e.g. North East England), but that is beyond the scope of the current report. However, we hope to examine those issues further in future partnerships and can share findings with interested partners and organisations.

## England, Scotland, and Wales

In analysing the views of people across the various regional fault lines of Britain, we find broadly similar patterns in views and beliefs across those fault lines, but disagreements over the relationship between those on opposite sides of the 'divide'. A key insight from the data on regional differences is that a very strong majority view that too much decision making is centralised in London – a view so widely held, that even a majority of Londoners agree with this sentiment.

Across a wide range of issues that are not specifically related to regional relationships, people in England, Wales and Scotland mostly have similar experiences and hold very similar views on different issues. For example:

- Asked about how things compare now to three years ago, the responses of people in England, Scotland and Wales are either the same or within 2 percentage points of each other.
- Asked about the most important issues facing the United Kingdom today, people from all three nations gave remarkably similar answers, with Scotland making poverty and inequality a slightly higher priority, Wales making jobs and the economy a higher priority, and England emphasising crime and housing more highly.
- Asked about their views on immigration, people in Scotland tend to be around 10 points more positive in their views of issues such as integration.

The key takeaway from the survey is that while there are differences of opinion between people in the three countries, they are relatively small. These differences are mostly explained by the different composition of the Scottish, English, and Welsh populations. In Scotland, Progressive Activists comprise 17 per cent of the population, compared to 13 per cent in England and 14 per cent in Wales. Scotland also has a higher proportion of Civic Pragmatists and a lower proportion of Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists (see the Appendix for the full data tables).

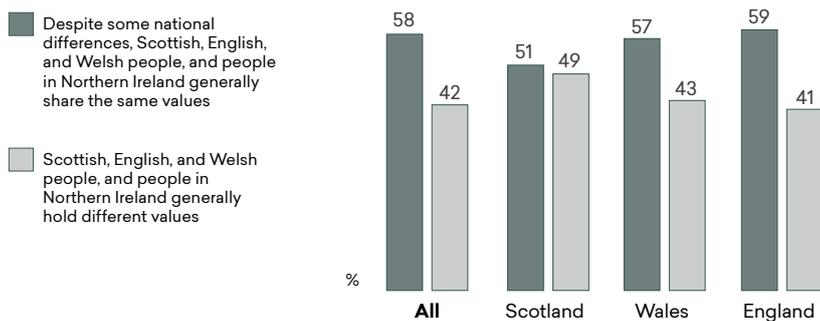
A majority of people across England, Scotland, and Wales agree that the values of people in the three nations are similar, with an overall margin of 58 to 42 per cent. However, views are almost evenly divided in Scotland (see Figure 7.5). Looked at through the lens of the seven segments, there are two clusters. Although a majority in all segments agree that the three nations share values, particularly high agreement is found in a cluster comprising Civic Pragmatists, Established Liberals, and Backbone Conservatives – a group that demonstrates a kind of civic optimism on this and other issues. The four other segments – the Progressive Activists and Loyal Nationals, with their strong left-wing economic views but diverging views on patriotism and migration, as well as the two Disengaged segments, demonstrate a kind of civic pessimism, and are less confident of the similarity of values across the nations. The variation between the Civic Pragmatists and the Disengaged Traditionalists is almost 20 percentage points.

Figure 6.5.

## Do we share similar values across the nations of the United Kingdom?

More people think that we share values across the UK than think each nation holds its own values – with Scottish people most divided on this question

### Do we share similar values across the nations of the United Kingdom?



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

We find the greatest differences between people in different nations on issues directly touching on the relationship between the nations. For example, on the question of a second Scottish referendum on independence (which was taken before the more recent increase recorded later in 2020), there was a 13 per cent gap between Scottish and English people (46 per cent v 33 per cent). Scots even support a referendum on Welsh independence more than Welsh people themselves (38 per cent compared to 28 per cent of Welsh respondents). While the 13 per cent difference between Scottish and English respondents on Scottish independence is significant, it does not point to a deep division between people themselves. Although affective polarisation between the nations was not investigated in the survey, qualitative research suggested that the frustrations of those who support independence in Scotland are focused on Westminster politicians and on London, but are not personalised to the English generally.

### Centralisation and feelings towards the capital

Although regional differences are often thought of as a fault line within the United Kingdom, the striking finding from the survey is the **common ground across all regions that that too much is decided in London**. Four in five Britons, and large majorities in every region including London, think that the country is too centralised. This feeling is strongest in the North of England, with almost total agreement: 92 per cent say the country is too centralised, and 59 per cent feel this strongly. This feeling is even stronger than in Scotland (with 83 per cent agreement and 51 per cent strongly). Taking a different lens of towns rather than regions, we find that frustration is even higher in post-industrial towns across the UK – representative of ‘left behind’ communities that have been a focus of debate since the Brexit referendum vote. In post-industrial towns, 64 per cent strongly agree that too much is decided in London, compared to an average of 39 per cent of the population nationally.<sup>35</sup>

Frustration with the centralisation of decision-making in London goes beyond a criticism of administrative structures to a view that Londoners themselves are the problem. Across Britain, 80 per cent say that people in London live in

a bubble and are not aware of what life is like in the rest of the country, with similarly very high numbers in the North of England (89 per cent) and in Scotland (84 per cent). But even Londoners share this view, with 58 per cent in agreement, reflecting that while this is a fault line, the vast majority of the country is on the same side. Londoners seem to be on the same side of that fault line as the rest of the country – recognising the need for changes that shift decision making power to the local level.

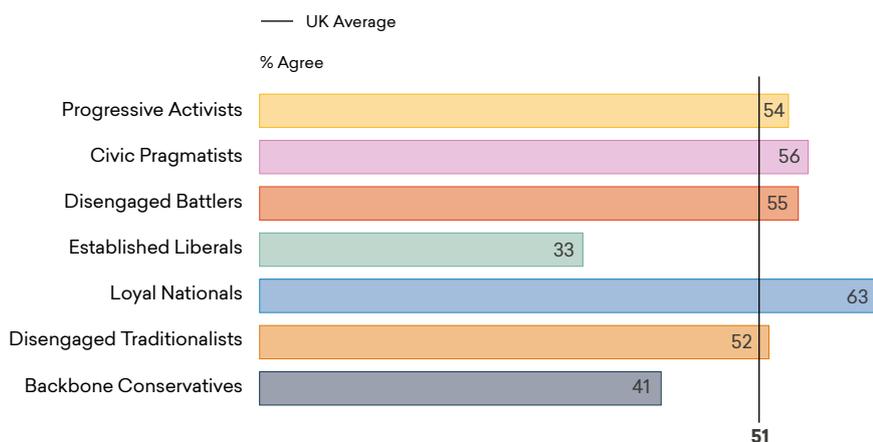
The rest of the country looks at people living in London and the South East with less warmth than they have for others. On average, warmth towards people in London and the South East ranks 39 on the temperature index. The coldest feelings come from Scots (32) and the warmest are from Londoners themselves, even though at 46 on this scale, they appear to have some self-doubt. This is one issue where Backbone Conservatives cluster alongside Progressive Activists, Established Liberals, and Civic Pragmatists, against another cluster with much cooler views of Londoners and the South East: Disengaged Battlers, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Loyal Nationals.

Figure 6.6.

## Regional neglect

Sense of regional abandonment is highest among Loyal Nationals

### The area where I live has been neglected for a long time



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The area where I live has been neglected for a long time. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## Regional neglect

A slightly different measure of regional fault lines is people's sense of regional neglect. One in two people in Britain feel that **the area where they live has been neglected** for a long time.

- On this issue, the differences in the experience of people are large, with three in ten Londoners agreeing compared to seven in ten in North of England.
- People in Wales are more likely than other nations to say that their area has been neglected (59 per cent).
- Perception of neglect is even stronger in post-industrial towns, with three-quarters of Britons in such places sharing this view.

- Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals, who are more concentrated in the South East and in London, are the only two segments who do not feel this sense of neglect.
- Large majorities of Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals perceive their area to have been overlooked for a considerable period of time. To some extent, Loyal Nationals may simply perceive of immigration into a community as a sign of neglect, because while Progressive Activists welcome immigration as a sign of increased cultural diversity and dynamism, Loyal Nationals see it as a threat to their identity and worry about becoming a minority.
- Smaller differences in perceptions of local neglect exist between Leavers (54 per cent) and Remainers (48 per cent).

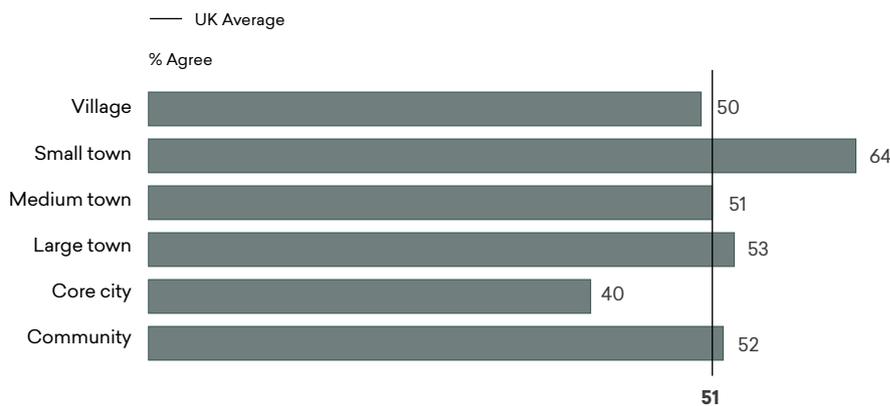
Analysis of findings through the lens of Britain’s towns, using the Centre for Towns’ typology, shows that rather than a single regional fault line such as North and South, there are multiple overlaying factors that contribute to attitudinal geographic differences. A sustained effort to ‘level up’ the inequalities in the UK needs to apply this place-based lens as well as a regional analysis. Sometimes the greatest differences might exist between a post-industrial town located not too far from a more prosperous urban centre. More analysis of the Britain’s Choice dataset could be done to explore this place-based dimension of the findings. Two examples of what a regional analysis through the lens of towns finds is that the highest level of agency (ability to change things in the local area) is found among people in villages; and that people in coastal towns are the only group that attribute blame for the country’s divisions on political parties first (compared to large city residents, who more often blame the country’s divisions on the UK being a very unequal society).

Figure 6.7.

## Neglect of ‘where I’m from’

People who live in small towns feel their area has been much more neglected than people who live in large cities

### The area where I live has been neglected for a long time



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The area where I live has been neglected for a long time? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 6.4 Key takeaways

This chapter notes that differences between people do not necessarily constitute social divisions. But divisions are created when a person's association with a group (whether a political party, a nation, or some other aspect of their identity) becomes all-encompassing, causing them to conform to what they perceive to be the group's beliefs and act with hostility towards those who disagree, who are seen as being in the out-group.

This degree of polarisation is not the case with any of the three fault lines discussed in this chapter, perhaps with the one exception of Scotland and the galvanising of Scottish identity around the growing independence movement (which has not been studied for this project).

Only one in five Britons has a clear left or right identity. Some 53 per cent associated themselves with the centre of political beliefs, either as centre-left, centre-right or centre.

Although real differences exist between different age cohorts, these differences are greatest on issues relating to the age gap. While there are differences of opinion, there is little outright hostility between the generations. The age fault line is one of differing opinions, rather than a social division.

Similarly, while there are significant differences between people across different regions, much of this is captured in the segment analysis. The greatest differences between regions also tend to be in connection with regional issues, while on many other issues there is much common ground, starting with the need to shift decision making power to people's communities and out of London. Even Londoners believe London is too influential on the nation.

Each of these are significant fault lines that are not going away and could widen in the future (especially around the push for independence in Scotland). Nevertheless, the common ground across these fault lines is strong and often underestimated. Focusing on that common ground, rather than on the fault lines, can help to build a more cohesive society.

# Chapter 7

## Shared Identity

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**59 per cent** say they are proud of being British

**42 per cent** of Scots feel proud of their British identity, but 79 per cent feel proud of their Scottish identity

**22 per cent** of Progressive Activists feel proud of their British identity

**62 per cent** of Britons say their national identity is important to them (being English/ Scottish Welsh)

The **#1** source of shared pride in Britain is for the National Health Service

**79 per cent** say that they are proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women

*Interviewer*

*What about your national identity? Do you see yourself as British or English?*

*Louise*

**‘Oh. Well, I’m technically both.’**

*Interviewer*

*Which one's first? Which one has precedence?*

*Louise*

**‘Well I’d probably say I’m British first and then I narrow it down to I’m English, because it’s what I am.’**

*Interviewer*

*Do you have more of an emotional attachment to one of them, for example?*

*Louise*

**‘Well I think saying that you're British, you're part of something bigger. You're part of four countries joining together really. And then to say you're English it's more dividing yourself even further down. Which, yes, I am English. I'm also British.’**

*Interviewer*

*Anything else then, in terms of your identity and background that you would bring up if you were down the pub, meeting people for the first time?*

*Louise*

**‘Well I'm Northern [laughs]. Everyone brings that up. I'm a northerner.’**

## Introduction

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Among the more profound changes western democracies are experiencing in the 21st century is the shifting of their dividing lines to become more shaped by identity than by ideology. Identity conflict between groups, or what Francis Fukuyama has described as the ‘struggle for recognition’,<sup>36</sup> plays out in many ways. Through the rise of populist nationalism, it has subverted the established order of many democracies, shifting the focus away from older left/right policy debates towards issues that divide societies into in-groups and out-groups. It is seen in the tribalism of social media, where complex issues quickly degenerate into tests of loyalty and of where someone stands in a binary ‘us-versus-them’ world. It is also reflected in debates on cultural values around free speech and ‘cancel culture’.

Social psychology teaches us how strongly we as humans are group oriented. We hunger for the sense of belonging, identity, and recognition that comes from being part of a group. In times when we feel insecure or threatened, and when

other forms of community and belonging have weakened, this need for a group can become more important, because it provides us with a greater sense of security. The social psychology that drives these dynamics is summarised in a paper published by More in Common in 2018.<sup>37</sup>

These group identities can become a source of division when an in-group is defined by an out-group, such as an established population versus immigrants, nationalists versus internationalists, or the Leavers versus Remainers division of recent years. Polarisation occurs when group identities are defined in opposition to an 'other', and where people's sense of belonging is built around the exclusion of that 'other'.

This chapter provides insights into the different in-group and out-group identities that matter most to people in Britain. These insights help us to better understand where there are differences and divisions between the group identities that are meaningful to us, but also where there is common ground that is often neglected or unseen. In a time of increasing social fragmentation, one of the most powerful forces to strengthen cohesion within societies is a shared sense of identity – one which transcends differences and divisions. This chapter also looks at the sources of shared pride and identity in Britain that are common ground across society.

Questions of national identity and loyalties have played a major role in some of Britain's most divisive debates in recent years, including Brexit, Scottish independence, and immigration. The goal of this chapter is not to address these specific issues in detail, but to provide useful insights into the importance of different forms of identity for people in Britain, with a view to understanding which elements tend to divide the different segments of the population and which elements tend to unite them. Finally, although this chapter presents findings related to Scottish and British identity, it does not seek to address in detail the relationship between those identities. The dynamics of Scottish identity and the aspiration for independence felt by many people requires a more focused and detailed examination.

## 7.1 Layered identity

One of Britain's unique strengths is that most people's sense of identity has several layers that might include both British and dimensions of English, Welsh, Scottish, or Irish identity, sometimes layered also with strong local identities such as Geordie, Glaswegian, Londoner, Cornish, Mancunian, or Scouser. Many people also have a migrant background that gives them another layer of identity. These layers reflect the unusual structure of the United Kingdom, composed of four nations with distinctive national identities that have persisted through centuries and grown more important in recent years, especially with the rise of Scottish nationalism. Among the many reasons for the persistence of these identities, one is that several international sporting contests – including football, rugby, and cricket – are contested by national teams rather than UK teams, a significant factor given the enormous popularity of the FIFA World Cup in particular.

In understanding the layered identities of people in Britain, another important factor is the dominant role of England within the United Kingdom. England constitutes close to 85 per cent of both the economy and population of the UK. This has historically led to an entanglement between English and British identities, weakening Englishness as a distinctive identity separate from Britishness. Our conversations with people in England often found that many people do not have a clear sense of what distinguishes their British and English

identities. England's historic dominance of British institutions has in more recent decades energised independence movements to assert a more visible Scottish and Welsh identity, leading to devolution and the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd alongside the re-establishment of political institutions in Northern Ireland with the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the Good Friday.

The constitutional structure of the United Kingdom has contributed to this layered sense of identity as well as the character of the people in those four nations. As a result, across society British identity does not sit above all other identities and group attachments. Instead, British identity is just one layer of identity – thicker for some, thinner for others. For some, there is more density in a different layer of national identity such as Scottish, Welsh, English, or Irish.

For many, the most important layers of their identity come from other places that feel closer to their daily lives such as attachments to family and friends; their home city, town, or county; cultural background; support for a football team or other sports club; worshipping in a particular church, mosque, temple, or other religious building; activism and beliefs; education; trade or profession; and leisure pursuits. British identity can therefore sometimes appear as a muddle – reflecting the diverse ways in which people across the country think about the different layers of their identity.<sup>iii</sup> The focus group conversations conducted for this study found that most English people do not have clear-cut or fixed ideas of what English and British identities are and what they attribute to each of them, sometimes mixing the connotations for each interchangeably. While in public discourse certain characteristics may be associated with British and English identities, awareness of those distinctions among the English population is low.

A final aspect of the British layering of identity that emerged from focus group conversations is that many people think of national identity in practical ways. For example, national identity can become more important to people when they are travelling overseas, because they need to navigate their interactions with people as a British citizen. Participants often referenced their British identity in connection with travel or the nationality listed on their passport. Similarly, people become more aware of the national and regional layers of their identity when travelling to another part of Britain, where they might be conscious of different accents, or when they have seen reports of the different impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on other parts of the country.

## 7.2 Measures of importance and pride

To understand people's sense of British and national identity, we asked about its importance and to what extent it gives them pride. Participants answered questions covering both British and specifically, English, Scottish, and Welsh identity (the exclusion of data for Northern Ireland is explained in the Methodology chapter).<sup>iv</sup> In order to compare the importance of national identity against other forms of group-based identity, people were also asked about the importance of their gender, class, ethnicity, political party, and Leaver/Remainer identity.

<sup>iii</sup> For clarity, this chapter generally refers to 'British identity' to refer to people's attachment to the idea of being a citizen of the United Kingdom, and when referring to a specific 'national identity' it refers to their attachment to one of the four constituent nations which make up the UK.

<sup>iv</sup> While data quality issues required us to exclude findings from Northern Ireland from this report, it is important to recognise the unique context of Northern Ireland, which has suffered violence and sectarian divisions over the past century. Identity debates on the British mainland play out in very distinctive ways around the fault lines of sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. An expert interviewee in Northern Ireland noted that the Brexit debates had forced people to revisit identity politics, which many hoped to put behind them. While it is uncommon to identify as both British and Irish in Northern Ireland, a growing proportion (21 per cent in the 2011 census) identify as Northern Irish as a standalone identity.

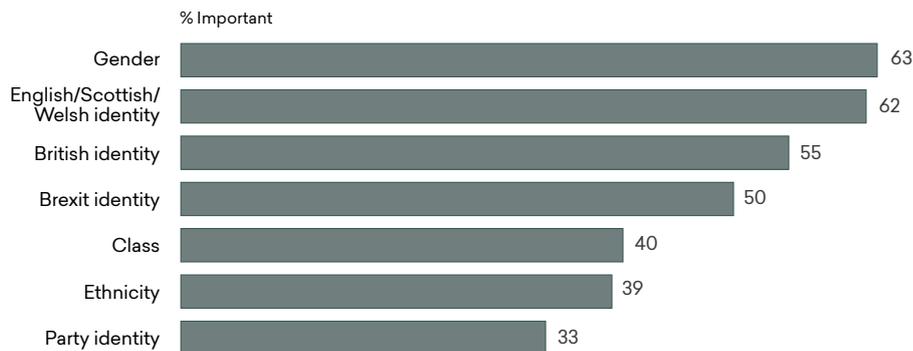
Across a range of questions, between three and four out of five people describe their national identity or their British identity as important or as a source of pride. It is more important to people's sense of identity than all other sources of group identity except gender. Another key finding is that national identity (English, Scottish, or Welsh) is more important than British identity to people in Scotland and Wales, but of similar importance to people in England.

- Around 60 per cent of people in England say that both British identity and English identity is important to them.
- In contrast, national identity resonates with twice as many Scots as does British identity (75 per cent for Scottish identity versus 39 per cent for British identity).
- The difference between the importance of national identity and British identity is not as great in Wales – the gap is around half the size of the gap in Scotland (70 per cent for Welsh identity versus 54 per cent for British identity).
- Scottish and Welsh participants are comparable to Americans, among whom 77 per cent in More in Common's research say that their national identity is important to their identity<sup>38</sup>. In other words, people in England consider national identity to be important to who they are, but less so than people in most other nations do.

**Figure 7.1. Important aspects of identity**

Gender and national identity are considered to be the most important aspects of their identity for many Britons

**The importance of different aspects of identity**



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity? February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Another lens through which to understand the layers of British and national identity is to ask about the association of positive emotions with group identity. These findings on pride in identity.

- In England, 64 per cent are proud of their English identity, compared to 61 per cent for their British identity.
- In Scotland, 79 per cent are proud of their Scottish identity, while only 42 per cent are proud of their British identity.

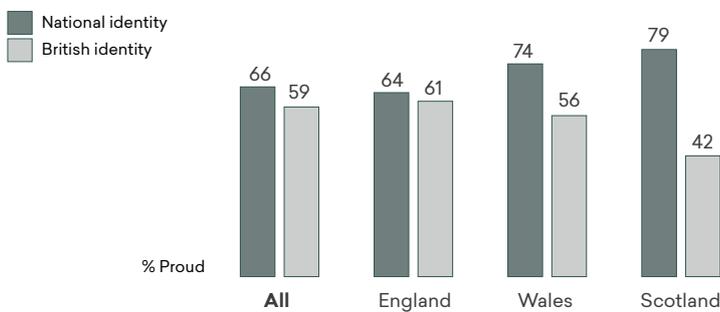
- In Wales the gap is 74 per cent to 56 per cent.
- This compares with 78 per cent of Americans feeling proud of their American identity.
- The difference between Americans and English people mentioned above is shown in the data More in Common has gathered. 56 per cent of Americans rank their level of pride in their national identity at the highest possible level, while in England just 35 per cent do (and in Britain overall, just 27 per cent do).

Figure 7.2.

## Pride in national and British identity

National identity has more resonance than British identity, especially for Scottish and Welsh people

### Pride in national versus British identity



Qu. How proud are you to be... February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

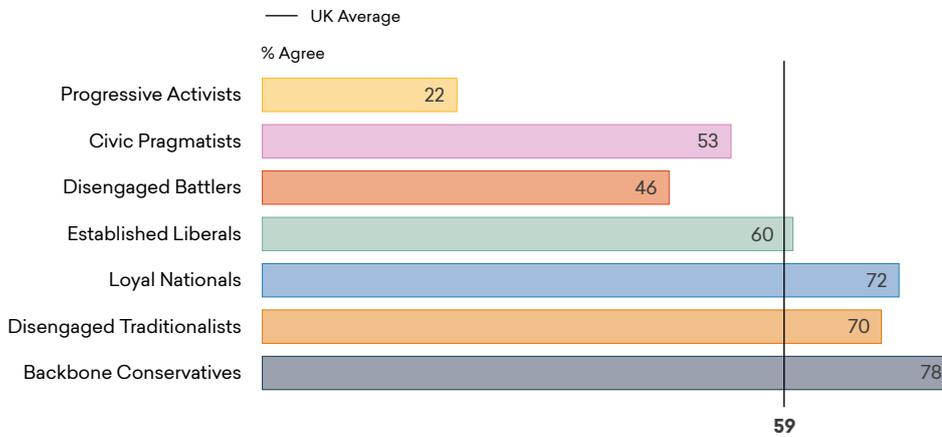
The psychological underpinnings of national identity are reflected in an analysis of these findings through the lens of people's core beliefs and the mapping of the social psychology of Britain's seven segments. The two core beliefs most strongly associated with a higher degree of pride in British identity are the moral foundations of loyalty and authority. The three groups that score highest on commitment to loyalty and authority (Disengaged Traditionalists, Loyal Nationals, and Backbone Conservatives) are also the same three segments with the highest levels of pride in British identity. The gap between Backbone Conservatives and the group with the least national pride, Progressive Activists, is almost 60 percentage points.

Figure 7.3.

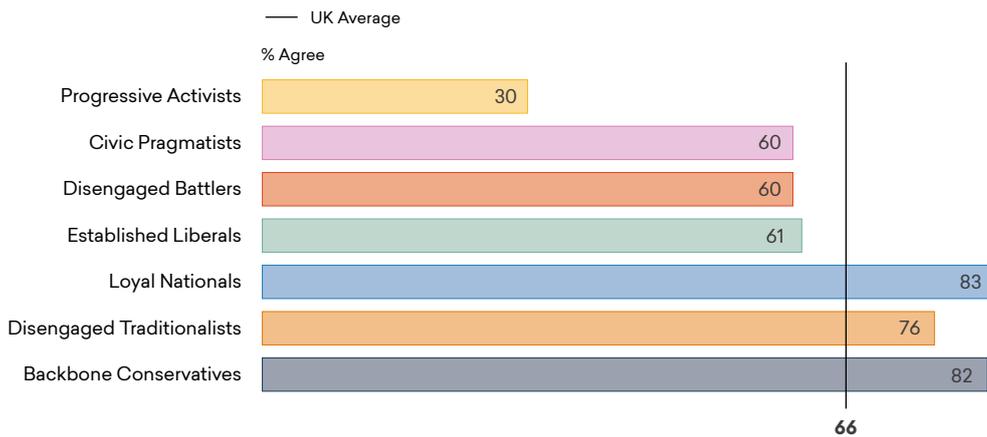
## National pride

Progressive Activists stand out as having the least pride in their national identity

### Pride in national versus British identity



### Pride in being English/ Welsh/ Scottish



Qu. How proud are you to be... February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 7.3 highlights the extent to which Progressive Activists stand out on both the importance they give their national identity and their sense of pride in it.

- Only one in five Progressive Activists feel proud of their British identity – compared to three times as many in the general population and four times as many Backbone Conservatives.
- On measures of intensity this difference is even more pronounced. Just 5 per cent of Progressive Activists say that British identity is a ‘very important’ aspect of their identity, compared to 23 per cent of the overall population (and among Backbone Conservatives and Loyal Nationals, 35 and 37 per cent respectively).
- Looked at from the opposite end of the spectrum in which people say that they are *not* proud to be British (rather than just being apathetic or having moderate feelings of pride), on average 23 per cent of people say that they are not proud to be British. This view is held by 59 per cent of Progressive Activists.

The differences identified among the population segments are significantly larger than for demographic factors such as race, age, or where someone lives:

- There is a slightly higher level of pride in British identity among non-white than white British people, although this difference is within the margin of error (on the measure of feeling very proud, a difference of 28 to 27 per cent). Likewise, fewer non-white British people say that they are not proud of their British identity (18 per cent compared to 23 per cent for white British).
- Younger people are not as proud of their British identity, but the differences are modest – for example, 19 per cent of Gen Z 18-24 year-olds say that they feel very proud of being British, compared to the national average of 27 per cent.
- The Centre for Towns’ mapping of different types of towns across the country shows that there are larger variations between differences types of towns than between regions of the UK. While 27 per cent of people overall say they are very proud of being British, the number is lower in commuter belt and university towns (20 and 22 per cent respectively) and highest in coastal and post-industrial ones (33 and 34 per cent respectively).<sup>39</sup> The variation is not as well captured at a regional level, where differences range only from 26 per cent in London to 30 per cent in the North West.

More significant differences exist between how Progressive Activists in England feel about their national identity compared to members of the same segment in Scotland and Wales

- Scottish and Welsh identities resonate with the progressive values and psychology of Progressive Activists in ways that English identity does not.
- Compared to an average of 64 per cent for all of England, just 21 per cent of Progressive Activists are proud of their English identity (while 24 per cent are proud of their British identity).
- In contrast, 81 per cent of Progressive Activists in Scotland are proud of their Scottish identity (while just 12 per cent are proud of their British identity).
- Pride in Scottish and Welsh national identity is relatively even across the seven segments.
- The differences in the strength of pride in English versus British identity among the segments is relatively small. Among the three segments with the strongest sense of pride in being British, around 10-15 per cent expressed stronger pride in English rather than British identity.

Analysis by partisan identity also finds that:

- With the unsurprising exception of the SNP, the large majority of supporters of the major parties express pride in British identity – although its expression among Conservatives is especially strong (with 41 per cent describing themselves as ‘very proud’).
- Some 49 per cent of Labour supporters and 48 per cent of Liberal Democrats rate their pride in British identity between 3 and 5 out of 7 (moderate scores compared to strong pro- or anti-identities).
- Among Labour supporters, just 12 per cent say that they are not at all proud and 20 per cent say that they are very proud of their British identity. Among Liberal Democrats, the numbers are 12 and 17 per cent respectively.

Another measure of emotional connection to British identity is how people feel when they see the Union Jack flying. Figure 7.3 shows that three in four people in all segments except Progressive Activists say that the flag makes them feel either very good or somewhat good. Backbone Conservatives are the most

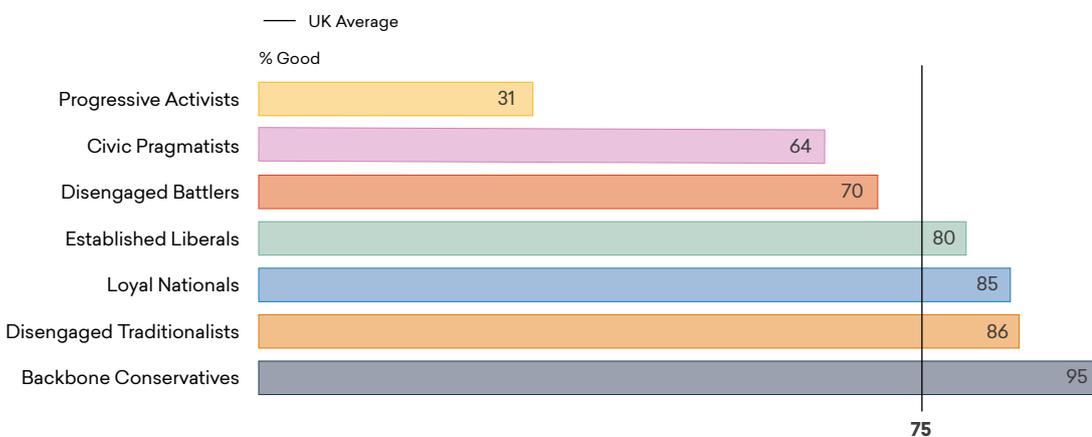
emphatic (95 per cent) in feeling good, and Progressive Activists feel least so (30 per cent), with less than half as many feeling proud as any other group. Likewise, three times as many Leavers and Remainders say that they feel ‘very good’ when they see the flag flying (48 versus 14 per cent).

Figure 7.4.

## Feelings towards the Union Jack

Britons generally feel more positive than negative towards the flag – although more progressive segments report feeling more negative towards it.

### When you see the British flag flying, how does it make you feel?



Qu. When you see the British flag flying, how does it make you feel? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 7.3

### Do British and English identities feel inclusive or exclusive in England?

In diverse modern societies, national identity can be a force for inclusion or exclusion. An inclusive national identity provides a way of understanding the story of a country or people that gives everyone in it a sense of belonging and equal citizenship, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. However, national identity is often defined in narrow ways that exclude people without a particular ancestry, skin colour, religion, or belief, or create a hierarchy of citizenship or privilege. Exclusion can divide communities into an ‘us’ against ‘them’ and can be played out in destructive ways through efforts to draw lines in the sand between the in-group and the out-group.

To the extent that they distinguish British and English identity, people are more likely to see British identity as more inclusive than English because it is not connected to a single ethnic group. British identity is also connected to the history of the British Empire, and post-war immigration was directly connected to British citizens from parts of the former empire coming to settle in Britain. Some view English identity negatively, thinking of racist white nationalist groups such as the English Defence League, football hooligans behaving violently in other countries, and flying the St George’s Flag.

To understand these perceptions in more detail, we asked English survey participants about different dimensions of English identity. British Future's research has shown that English identity has become increasingly inclusive over time, but this is a generational shift in understanding, which remains a work in progress (across both majority and minority groups). Our responses are consistent with those findings:

- Overall, 29 per cent agree with the proposition that 'English pride represents racist beliefs', with 8 per cent believing this strongly.
- These views are held strongly by Progressive Activists, with 71 per cent in agreement including 28 per cent who strongly agree.
- Other segments do not have the same concerns as Progressive Activists. Even among Civic Pragmatists, whose views are most often closest to those of Progressive Activists, 69 per cent feel that 'English pride is unfairly characterised as racist', reflecting a view that overall is held by 71 per cent of the population.
- Most people do not associate English identity with exclusionary notions. For example, on whether being white is important to being English, only 24 per cent of people overall agreed, including 37 per cent of Loyal Nationals and Disengaged Traditionalists and 33 per cent of Backbone Conservatives.
- The one exception is being born in England, which 51 per cent of people regard as being important to being English.
- When the importance of ancestry is tested further, we find that only 29 per cent of the population believes that having two parents born in England is important to being English, and in no segment does a majority hold this view.

There is a difference in the perspectives of white and non-white English people. English people from non-white backgrounds are more conscious of the way that English identity can be associated with racism, with almost half associating English pride with racism (49 per cent compared to 28 per cent for white English). In focus group conversations, black and ethnic minority participants are more likely to distinguish between English and British identity, seeing the latter as more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds, and feeling reluctant to describe themselves as English. Several felt that no matter what they said, they would not be seen as English in the eyes of others.

Conversations with people from ethnic minority backgrounds often brought up stronger expressions of pride, belonging, and attachment to Britain than among the white population. Most described being British as part of their identity. While only limited research was conducted specifically with younger people from ethnic minority backgrounds, this feeling seemed weaker for them, with many speaking of feeling a sense of 'otherness' in the country where they are growing up. However, this is not unique to British people from minority backgrounds – a weaker sense of attachment to national identity is found among younger people more generally (for example, 50 per cent of Gen Z and Millennials are proud of their British identity, versus 67 per cent of Boomers and 79 per cent of those in the Silent Generation).

Participants were also asked about positive associations between English identity and democracy. While this is an area where More in Common hopes to do more work in the future, one early finding is that a shared belief in democracy seems to resonate with people as being foundational to English identity. Some 78 per cent feel that believing in democracy is important for being English and 46 per cent of the population rate it as very important, while just 8 per cent believe it is not at all important. The only group where there is any significant level of disagreement with this is among Disengaged Battlers, for whom 25 per cent say it is not important, reflecting the fact that they value living in a democracy less than any other segment.



## In their own words: Black and ethnic minority views on British and national identity



'I've never actually considered myself to be English. I think I always felt that was a bit distinct. Being English has never to me felt very inclusive. It always looked like to me, white people essentially, I've never seen it anything other than that.'

*Omar, Progressive Activist, 35, London*



'I think ["British"] tends to hold a slightly higher value than just saying English... British does have that greater sense of empowerment if you like.'

*Kia, Civic Pragmatist, 37, London*



'I think with English, to call yourself English, there's a level of almost, I guess, imposter syndrome in using that word... I think what became kind of ingrained into me [growing up] was, English is something to do with race. And if I'm not white, then I'm not English. And I seem to still have that kind of feeling today. Which is I would not call myself English, but I would definitely call myself British.'

*Anwar, Established Liberal, 29, South East*



'I just don't see myself as being English. Maybe it's the whole United Kingdom. We're meant to be united even though I know we're different, but I just see myself as being British. And that's what it says on my passport.'

*Viola, Loyal National, 41, East of England*



'To me, when everybody asks me that question, I'm always confused, because I've never grown up with the same values as somebody else. If a person sat next to me at the dinner table, when I'm at school, for their Sunday dinner, they might have a Sunday roast, but for my Sunday dinner, it'll probably be rice and peas and chicken, or something like that. It's always different, so I've never really thought what it means to be British, because I'm mixed. I have mixed things inside of me. There's not one.'

*Renee, Disengaged Battler, 18, Yorkshire and the Humber*



‘The words I use to describe myself are black, female, Muslim. I don't know why, but I just feel like I've never actually been like, "Yes, I'm British". I've never actually worn that on my chest. And I think it's just this mentality that we've grown up with. That was just kind of like, I just feel like the government has never really worked for us. And I think, not to say that everything is all doom and gloom, it's not, but I just feel like I've never actually felt a close attachment to the UK. And I don't know whether that's always feeling like the other, or always feeling like outside of the whole, kind of inner circle of people that live in this country: people that are white.’

*Iman, Established Liberal, 21, London*

## 7.4 Foundations for a shared sense of identity

Another way of understanding the extent of shared identity among people in Britain is to look at the shared achievements, values, institutions, and symbols that unite people. While some of these dimensions of identity are valued more narrowly within specific regions or groups, there are several sources of shared identity that transcend the dividing lines of nation, region, political values, and other fault lines in our society.

Figure 7.5.

### 19 in 20 Britons agree Covid-19 has taught us the importance of the NHS



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of the NHS and public services. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

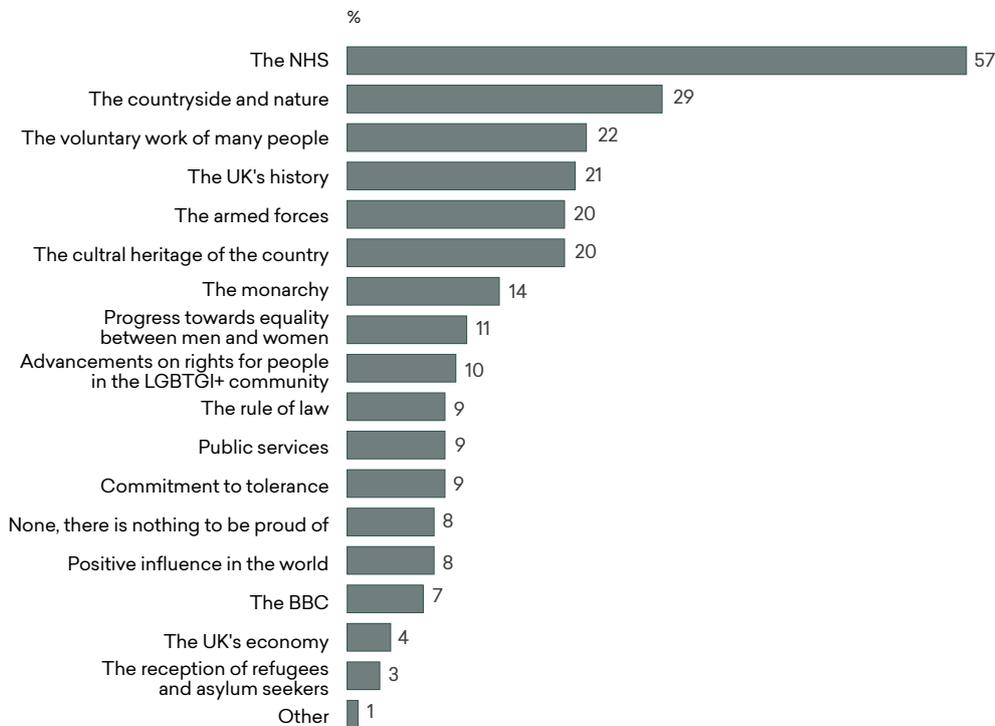
By far the strongest source of shared pride in Britain is the National Health Service. Asked to identify three things of which they are most proud in the UK today, a majority of people mentioned the NHS. The health service's iconic status long pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic (as the Opening Ceremony for the London 2012 Olympics showed) but the pandemic has further reinforced its importance. The NHS is also a unifying national institution – More than half the population mentioned it as one the things of which they are most proud, and it came first for every single segment. These findings confirm other research on the significance of the NHS, such as a 2018 finding that 87 per cent of Britons feel proud of it.<sup>40</sup>

Figure 7.6.

## Pride in the UK

Britons share a strong sense of pride in the NHS, along with the countryside and the tradition of voluntary work in the country

### What are you most proud of in the UK today?



Qu. What are you proud of in the UK today? Select up to 3. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The next most cited sources of pride are the countryside and nature and the large amount of voluntary work undertaken across the country. There is agreement across the sectors on these sources of pride, showing that they can act as unifying themes of a shared identity and future.

Several other aspects of what makes people proud of the UK resonate more with some segments of the population but not others. While 20 per cent are proud of the British Army, and the same proportion are proud of the UK's history, the support for both is weighted towards Backbone Conservatives (at 28 and 32 per cent respectively) and away from Progressive Activists, who see British history in much more negative terms (just 2 per cent mention the army and 3 per cent UK history as sources of pride). Conversely, other sources of pride – such as advances in LGBT+ rights and commitment to tolerance – are heavily weighted towards Progressive Activists and away from Backbone Conservatives.

**'I'd like to say that I'm proud of our history or something like that because all history is cool [laughs], but then I think our history is also full of colonialism, war, death and oppression as well. So it's hard to be attached to anything without saying 'yeah**

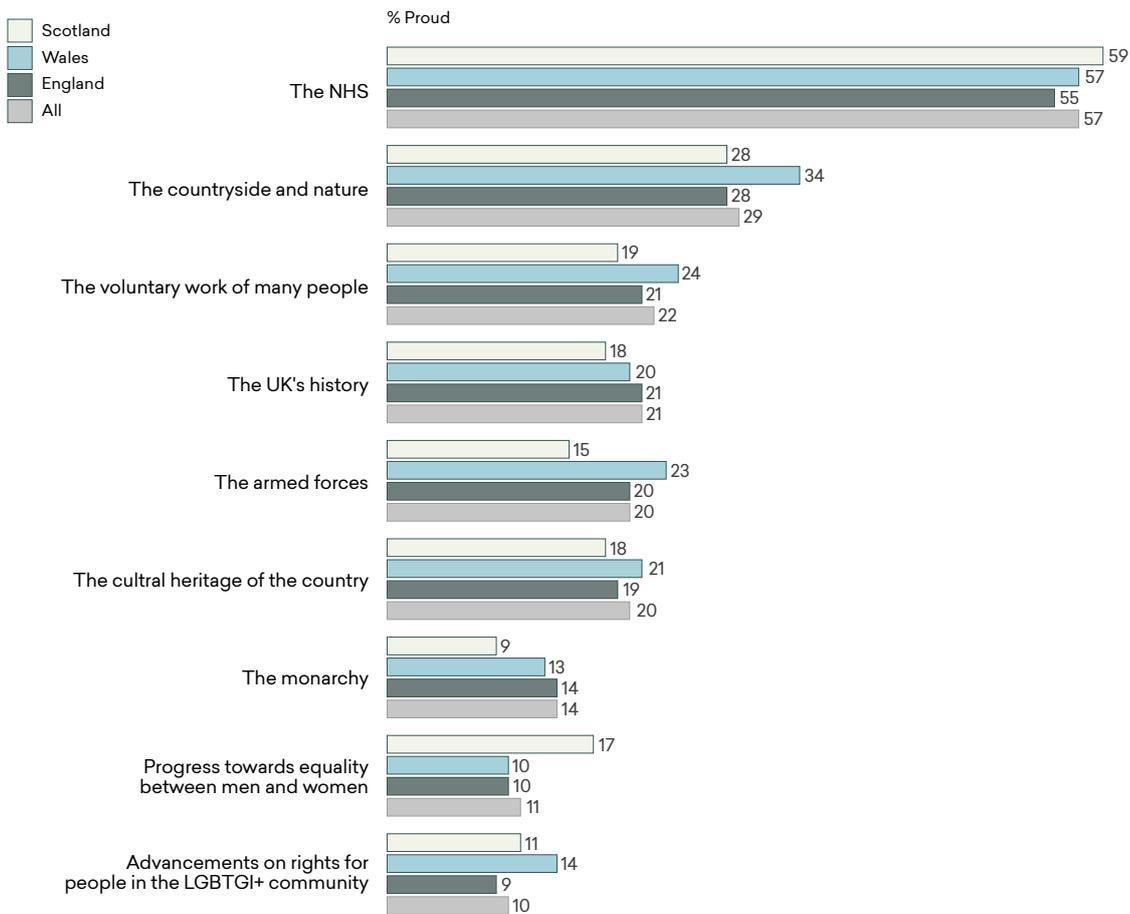
**but’, and I think it’s that ‘yeah but’ that holds me back from feeling British, feeling English and identifying with that in a positive way.’**

*Nick, Progressive Activist, 34, London*

Figure 7.7.

## Pride in the UK by Nation

People in all three nations are united in their shared sense of pride in the NHS



Qu. What are you most proud of in the UK today? Select up to 3. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

One of the more striking findings relating to our sources of pride is how much common ground exists between people from England, Scotland, and Wales. The NHS is valued similarly across all three nations. Similar numbers of people across the three nations share common ground in valuing the countryside and nature and voluntary work. There is also a shared sense of pride in many of the cultural dimensions of the United Kingdom, although with slightly lower levels of pride in UK history, the armed forces, and the monarchy among people in Scotland.

Another source of pride that is widely shared is a sense of social progress in becoming a more modern and diverse nation. While these achievements are not as prominent as the more conspicuous symbols of shared pride, they rank within the top ten sources of pride across all three nations. Further, when asked specifically about whether people feel proud of these achievements, an overwhelming majority says yes:

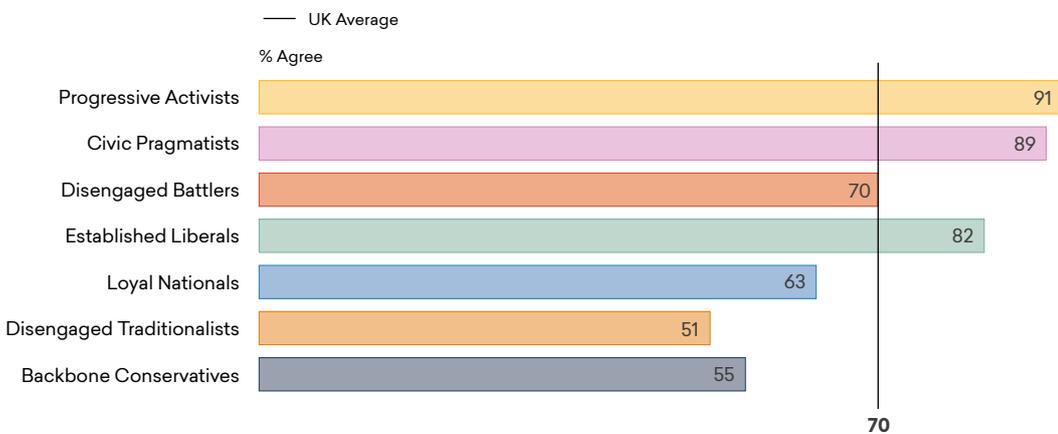
**79%** say that they are proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women, with majority agreement in all segments (though it is lower among the two Disengaged groups and the Backbone Conservatives)

- 70 per cent feel proud of progress in embracing ethnic, religious, and sexual diversity, ranging from 51 per cent among Disengaged Traditionalists to 91 per cent of Progressive Activists.

Figure 7.8.

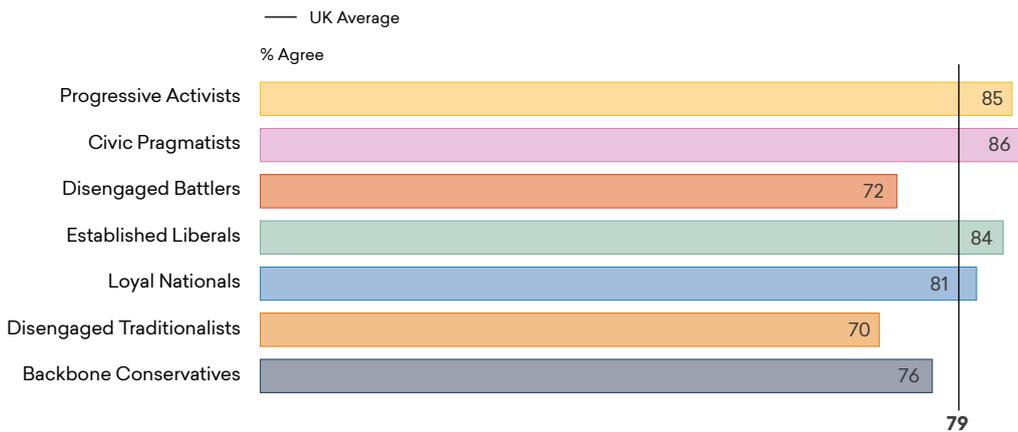
## Pride in diversity

**I am proud that we are more embracing of people of diverse religions, races, and sexual orientations than before**



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: I am proud that we are more embracing of people of diverse religions, races, and sexual orientations than before. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## I am proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women.



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: I am proud of the advancements we have made in equality between men and women. February 2020.

Source: More in Common 2020.

Other aspects of life in Britain that people cite as making them feel proud include:

- Aspects of our democracy, such as freedom of speech and the active participation of citizens in achieving change
- Education, with some of the world's leading universities
- The arts
- The British sense of humour
- Premiership football
- Communities that work together and resolve injustices in British society
- The UK's international impact, such as aid given to poorer countries
- British scientific prowess and technology
- The Northern Irish peace process

# Attachment to local and regional identity

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## In their own words

A striking aspect of conversations about people's sense of their own identities for this study is how often people refer to their sense of regional or local identity, even while they might struggle to piece together the significance of British or national identity. More in Common is working in other countries on the unifying power of local identities and we hope to build up this work in the UK in the future.

**'So, my response was going to be that I've always considered myself first and foremost to be a Londoner. And then if I was pressed and been asked, so what are you? If I was abroad and people said, where are you from? So Britain, like British, I'm British, I'm happy to sort of describe myself as British.'**

*Omar, Progressive Activist, 35, London*

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**'There's something about claiming you're English, it's all St George's flag and topless to the waist, drinking lager somewhere, that there's negative connotations to it and so British is something else. I mean, I feel a bit more European, than anything else to be honest. My Yorkshire identity is quite strong and I just don't think I would describe myself as "I'm an Englishman", because it's a bit, an Englishman's home is his castle, St George's flag... and maybe narrow-mindedness of being English and "English is best" and that kind of thing.'**

*Sam, Civic Pragmatist, 48, Yorkshire and the Humber*

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*Moderator*

*What parts of identity are most important for you?*

*Megan*

**'Where I'm from.'**

*Moderator*

*Why is that?*

*Megan*

**'I think it's because of how we were just brought up. Like I said, we were all united. I can go back to my old area and still know everybody and everybody would stop and chat in the street.'**

*Megan, Loyal National, 56, South West*

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**'I'm always very proud if I travel abroad on holidays. I'm very proud of my roots. I'm very proud of being from the North West and always have been.'**

*Kate, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, North West*

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## 7.5 Key takeaways

National identity is important to many people in Britain, as the Brexit years demonstrated. But it resonates in ways that are different to countries that have a more unitary sense of national identity, such as the United States and France. Identity has more layers in the British context, with different segments of the population and regions of the country valuing those layers in different ways. This layered sense of identity reflects the United Kingdom's unique mix of cultural, historical, and constitutional factors. British identity often layers upon other forms of identity – English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, but also upon other dimensions of people's backgrounds more connected to family, community, and relationships. In deeply divided societies, people are often faced with an 'either/or' choice in their identity. People in Britain, on the other hand, mostly have a broader set of 'both/and' choices available to them as they define themselves in relation to society.

The layering of identity among British people is a strength, so long as those identity layers do not become binary choices with an 'us' that is hostile towards 'them'. The layering of identities in Britain can and does make the national tapestry stronger and more resilient to the stresses that tear at the social fabric. It is more difficult to see another person as part of a 'them' in an 'us-versus-them' division when you share an identity or allegiance that feels important to both of you. For that reason, there is value in strengthening those identities that connect people across the lines of division in Britain. The support for the universal health service as a totem of the post-war welfare state is one such example where policies could build upon this shared sense of pride. Likewise, appreciation of our natural environment and desire to protect it for the future could also unify Britons.

Britons of ethnic minority background often perceive Britishness as more open to them than English identity, with several participants describing Englishness as a race rather than an identity. Given that English identity is important to millions of people who do not intend to exclude those with more recent migration histories, these findings highlight the need to strengthen the inclusive dimensions of English identity. English national identity is too important and powerful as a source of belonging and attachment to be abandoned to the proponents of a narrow and divisive 'us-versus-them' version of identity that excludes rather than includes. Allowing this to happen could risk these identities being polarised between 'globalist' Britishness and 'nativist' Englishness, undermining the potential for these identities to bring people together. The success of Scottish and Welsh people in finding ways to build a collective identity that connects all segments of society in those nations together, including the most progressive groups, shows that it is possible for English identity also to be developed in this more inclusive way.

The research for this study has only touched lightly on the complex interactions of these and other layers of identity and perhaps raises as many questions as it answers. But it cautions against the false binaries of many identity debates and it shows that across Britain, people value different dimensions of their shared

identity. Strengthening the layers of identity in British society that connect people across the lines of division can help avoid the trap of people being seen only through a narrow polarised identity (such a Leaver or Remainer). Societies become more resilient to division when more people engage across the lines of division and value more those things that they have in common – shared history, values, interests, activities, aspirations, as well as commitments to our local communities and sources of pride. Finding this common ground and strengthening the different layers of our identities that connect us to each other can help build a more cohesive Britain.

# Part III

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**8 The Haves and Have-nots**

**9 Race and Immigration**

**10 Countryside, Environment, and Climate**

# Chapter 8

## The Haves and Have-nots

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**73 per cent** of Britons believe inequality is a serious problem in the UK today

**2 in 3** people believe that ‘in the UK, the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential’

**Only 13 per cent** believe that ordinary working people get a fair share of the nation’s wealth

**Almost 3 in 4** Britons believe that there is one law for the rich and one for the poor

**58 per cent** of people say that the pandemic made them more aware of the living conditions of other people in the country

**Over 90 per cent** of Britons support the idea that if businesses receive government support, they should have a responsibility to society. This includes paying their taxes in full and not using offshore tax havens to avoid paying tax, paying fair wages, onshoring jobs, and reducing carbon emissions

# Introduction

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Social class has historically been regarded as the greatest fault line in British society, which was memorably described by George Orwell as ‘the most class-ridden country under the sun’. It was through the lens of English class divisions that theories of alternative economic systems were developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. It was likewise about those class divisions that great English novelists of that era wrote, and class remains an issue of sustained interest to this day.<sup>41</sup>



**It's always the other people at the top, the people that have money, the people that can afford things. But what about the people at the bottom? How do they thrive? How do they get help? The poor people on the street? It just frustrates me that [the government] don't want to help anybody except for people that benefit them or people that give money to them. They just don't look after us at the bottom.**

*Renee, Disengaged Battler, 18, Yorkshire and the Humber*



In 2020s Britain, the nature and significance of social class has changed. Much of the conversation about social class has been replaced by a conversation about inequality, or more commonly in the language of participants in our research, the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. Three in four people in Britain today agree that Britain has a serious problem with inequality. Yet a person’s experience of inequality – or more precisely, their income, class, or social grade – is today a weak predictor of their values or attitudes on many of the most prominent national debates. This does not mean that class is no longer relevant, but rather that many debates do not play out simply along the lines of class, and many people do not have a strong sense of belonging or attachment to their social class. In other words, for many, social class does not dominate their identity. People might have similar social backgrounds but a very different sense of their in-group

and out-group. A person’s experience of privilege or disadvantage is deeply formative in their lives, but it interacts with many other factors in shaping their identity and sense of belonging.

This chapter explores whether, in 2020s Britain, it is time to think of inequality differently. Instead of seeing class and inequality as causes of division in British society, perhaps the work of creating a fairer society is something that can bring us together. Concern about inequality is shared remarkably widely across British society – it was a Conservative Prime Minister who, in the opening address of her premiership in 2016, contributed the phrase ‘burning injustices’ to Britain’s political lexicon. While the seven segments emphasise different aspects of the problem of inequality, there is a consensus on the need to address inequality that transcends political divisions and reflects majority views. While there are differences on what measures are needed to reduce inequality, those do not reflect a polarisation between binary alternatives.

Just as there may be an opportunity to bring society together around tackling Britain’s burning injustices, there are equally risks if those injustices are ignored. Among Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals in particular, we find frustration, distrust, and a sense of resignation about how entrenched those injustices are, as well as how hard it is to change them. If those frustrations are not addressed in coming years, democracy may be profoundly discredited and disrupted in the future.

## 8.1 The diminished role of social class in shaping identity

Today, 89 per cent of people in Britain self-identify as belonging to a social class (50 per cent working class, 39 per cent middle class). But for most, their sense of class identity is a less clearly defined part of their identity than it was for past generations. The decline of skilled occupations in manufacturing and mining has no doubt contributed to the erosion of working class identity. It is estimated that only 14 per cent of people belong to the traditional working class as defined by such occupations, in contrast to a much larger group defined by multifaceted measures of economic, cultural, and social capital.<sup>42</sup>

**12%** of Britons say that their class is a very important aspect of who they are (40 per cent consider it important)

Only 12 per cent of Britons say that their class is a very important aspect of who they are (40 per cent consider it important). Of course, for some people a strong working class identity remains important. Sixty-one per cent of working class people say they have a sense of pride in their class identity (though only 26 per cent describe it as strong); by comparison, 39 per cent in the middle class feel proud of their identity.

The class system still has relevance to how people think about inequality, but its role is less explicitly recognised than in the past. When asked about the causes of the divisions in the UK today, the class system is ranked fifth, after political parties, social media, immigration, and traditional media. Only 26 per cent of people cite the class system as a cause of division. In the conversations we held with people across Britain, we found that people often describe their social class with a shrug of the shoulders, suggesting it did not carry much personal significance for them. Those conversations consistently revealed strong views about the injustices of British society, but the language that people use about inequality is as often about the differences between haves and have-nots (if not more) as it is about social class explicitly. When people talk about these differences, they often focus not just on economic differences between haves and have-nots, but the disconnection between people from these two categories:

**‘I think there are definitely the haves and the have nots and I think that's quite disturbing in the twenty first century that there is such a difference between people with money and people without money. Do you know what I mean?’**

*Lily, Civic Pragmatist, 47, North East*

**‘I think there’s a lot of people that are very privileged and don’t appreciate the other side or the working class. For instance, the Grenfell fire, down the road, all those houses that are worth millions and people like that... the social difference in class...seems to be huge.’**

*Kelly, Disengaged Battler, 39, North West*

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As the profile of the seven segments shows, people of the same class or social grade are distributed across all segments and hold a diversity of views. Knowing a person’s class tells us little about how they might think about many of the most pressing issues in Britain today. Voting, as a moment when attitudes and beliefs turn into behaviour, illustrates this point. The 2019 General Election, where the culmination of a long-term erosion of support finally led to parts of Labour’s ‘Red Wall’ in the North and Midlands collapsing, showed only weak relationships between voting behaviour and social class. Indeed, this study finds that (self-identified) class is associated with only minor differences in voting patterns for the largest parties:<sup>43</sup>

- Working class and middle class voters account for almost nine in ten votes nationally (50 per cent of voters identify as working class, 39 per cent as middle class).
- Between working class and middle class voters, there was no difference in the Conservative vote (both were 44 per cent).<sup>44</sup>
- In Scotland the SNP achieved exactly the same level of support among working class and middle class voters (46 per cent).
- Contrary to media narratives of Labour’s support base having shifted towards metropolitan elites, Labour’s vote share was actually 6 percentage points stronger among working class than middle class voters (35 per cent compared to 29 per cent).
- Class plays a larger role for the Liberal Democrats’ base (receiving 17 per cent support among middle class voters, compared to just 7 per cent among working class voters).
- While noting the sample size is very small, the 1 per cent of the population in our data identifying as upper class overwhelmingly voted Conservative (58 per cent to Labour’s 27 per cent).

A similar analysis applying the commonly used NRS social grades to 2019 voting patterns also finds little evidence that social grade is predictive of voting behaviour:

- There was higher support for the Conservatives than Labour in every social grade.
- The largest margin of Conservative over Labour votes was found in the third lowest social grade (C2, with a margin of 49 to 29 per cent).
- The top social grade A, which comprises 4 per cent of the population, recorded a large gap of 19 per cent in favour of Conservatives (45 per cent) over Labour (26 per cent).
- However, the smallest margin between the two parties was found in the second highest social grade (B).
- In Scotland, support for the SNP also cuts across all social classes, with lower support at both ends of the social grade scale (38 per cent among grade A and 39 per cent among grade E), and highest support in the middle (50 per cent among grade C1).

On ‘culture war’ issues, social grade similarly correlates less powerfully with opinions than the core beliefs segmentation. A study of political correctness in the United Kingdom published by Sophia Gaston in 2019 tested responses to seven polarising ‘culture war’ statements, and found only weak correlations between socio-economic grade and people’s views on those issues. More significant differences were observed by age and region.<sup>45</sup>

For this study, people were asked whether they agree or disagree with the proposition that ‘political correctness is a problem in our country’. Overall, 73 per cent of Britons agreed and 20 per cent disagreed, and the variation among the social grades was very small, ranging from a low of 68 per cent (social grade B) to a high of 74 per cent (C2). In contrast, it ranged widely among the segments, from 28 per cent (Progressive Activists) to 90 per cent (Loyal Nationals). These findings underscore how much more people’s core beliefs predict their views on cultural debates than social class or other demographics.

## 8.2 ——— Uniting around the goal of a fairer society

**‘An awful lot of low paid workers are literally running this country for us as we speak. The likes of delivery drivers, supermarket workers, care workers, all on minimum wage that everybody takes for granted and they’re literally putting themselves in the firing line daily while a lot of us, I would say 99 per cent of my friends, are sitting at home with the luxury of 80 per cent wages on furlough. All they have to do is stay at home, it’s not a hard job and they’re all losing their minds. And I’m thinking, to be fair, you could be out doing a 12-hour shift in a supermarket, you know, literally running the gauntlet every day, but they are kind of unaware of that. And they take it for granted that they’re going to be there doing that...**

**I think that people who are like on minimum wage are definitely treated as second class citizens compared to those that are on a better wage, usually by people that are on the better wage.’**

*Lily, Civic Pragmatist, 47, North East*

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The problem of the gap between the haves and have-nots in British society is widely recognised. While views on class differences might once have been a cause of division among people in Britain, today there is a remarkable level of agreement that British society has a serious problem with inequality – a view shared by almost three in four people.

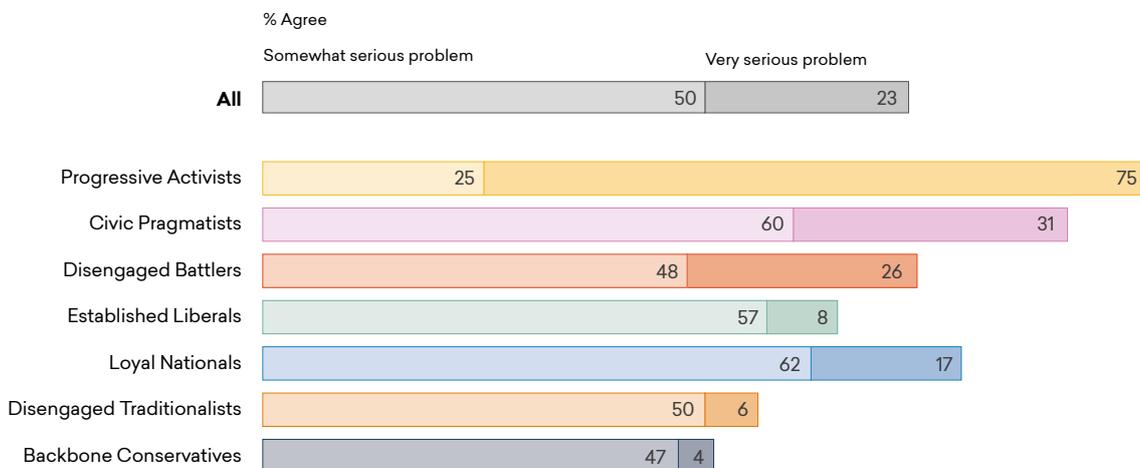
**3 in 4** agree that British society has a serious problem with inequality

Although concern about inequality is stronger among segments that are more likely to support left-wing parties, it is shared by a majority of people in every population segment. Agreement ranges from half of Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists, to all of Progressive Activists (of whom 75 per cent regard it as very serious).

Figure 8.1.

## Inequality in the UK

In all segments, a majority agrees that inequality is a serious problem



Qu. To what extent is inequality a problem in the UK today? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Concern about the unfairness of British society is deep-rooted. Two in three people believe that ‘in the UK, the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential’, compared to one in three who say that ‘in the UK, the system works for the majority of people’ (67 to 33 per cent agreement). Only among two segments does a majority disagree: Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals, who tend to be most supportive of the status quo. Even then, only 22 per cent of Backbone Conservatives strongly agree with the proposition that the system works for the majority of people.

**2 in 3** of people believe that ‘in the UK, the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential’

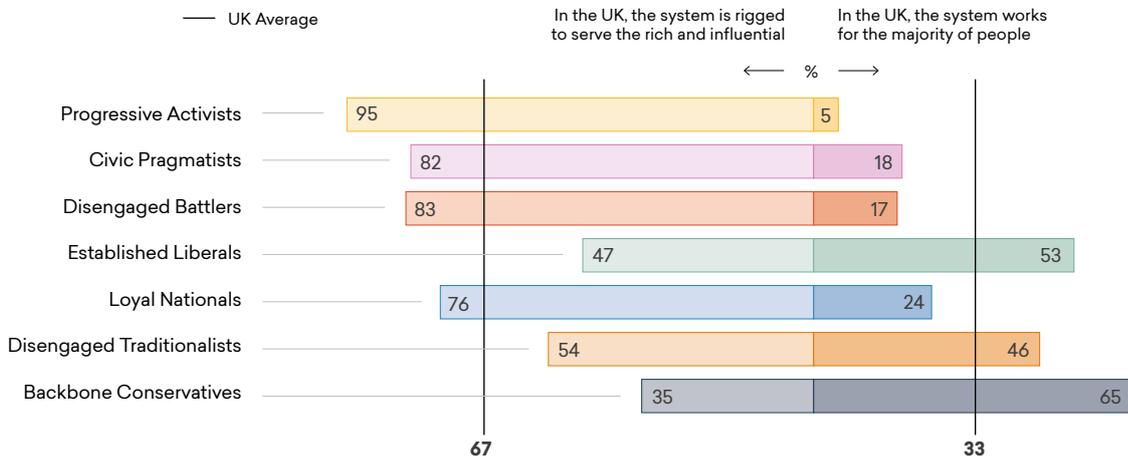
Likewise, in every population segment more people agree than disagree that the UK’s economic growth has not benefitted most people they know, with more than 70 per cent of Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Loyal Nationals holding this view.

Figure 8.2.

## Frustration at the system

Only Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals believe the system works for most people

### Is the system rigged or does it work?



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1, February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

**13%** believe that ordinary working people get a fair share of the nation's wealth

Across British society, there is common ground that the economy is not working fairly or giving enough opportunities for people who work hard or need help. Only 13 per cent believe that ordinary working people get a fair share of the nation's wealth. Backbone Conservatives are more likely than others to agree, but even among this segment only a third have such confidence. Along with Established Liberals and Disengaged Traditionalists (the other segments more supportive of the status quo), Backbone Conservatives are more likely to be neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that wealth is distributed evenly among the working population.

**3 in 4** believe that there is one law for the rich and one for the poor

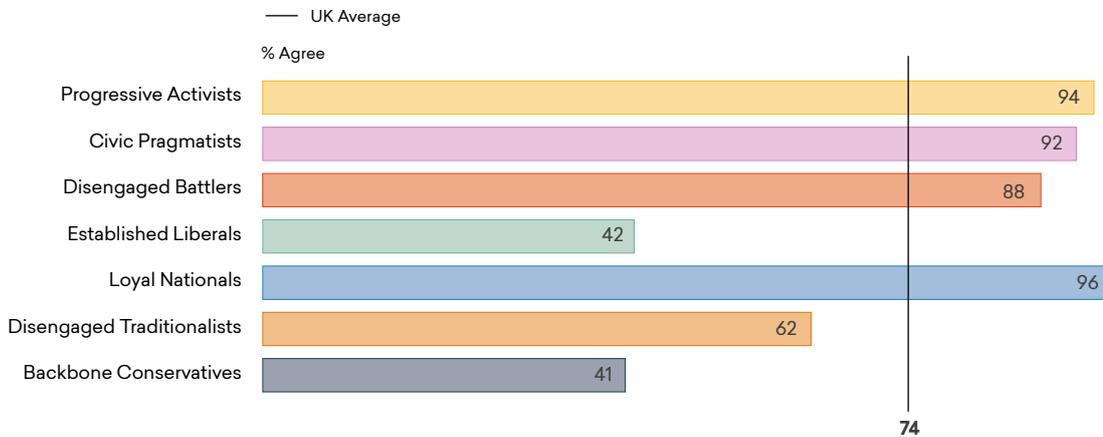
On the other hand, in each of the other four segments – Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Loyal Nationals – more than 80 per cent disagree. Figure 8.3 shows that almost three in four Britons believe that there is one law for the rich and one for the poor. Among four of the seven segments, nine out of ten people agree. Loyal Nationals feel this sense of injustice most acutely, with 96 per cent in agreement.

Figure 8.3.

## Inequality between rich and poor

Most Britons feel there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor.

### There is one law for the rich and one for the poor



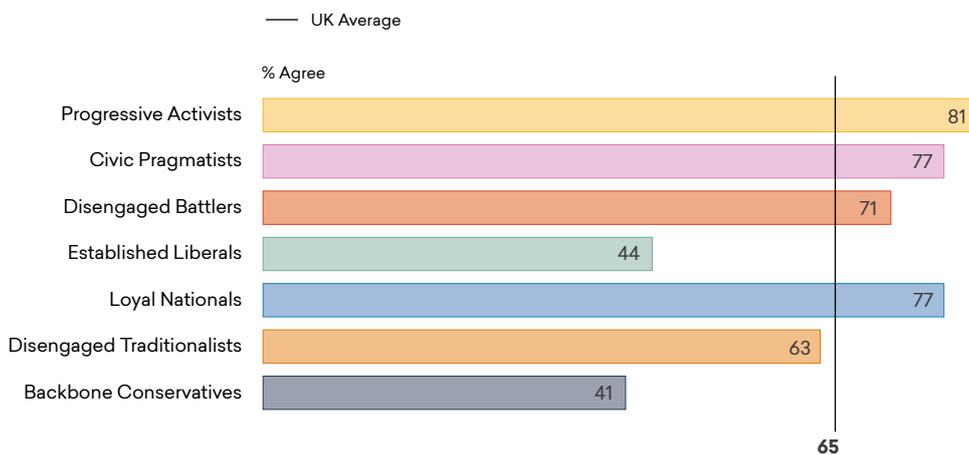
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? There is one law for the rich and one for the poor. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 8.4.

## Inequality and distribution of wealth

Two-thirds believe the benefits of economic growth have not been fairly distributed.

### The UK's economic growth hasn't benefitted most people I know



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The UK's economic growth hasn't benefitted most people I know. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

**58%** of people say that the pandemic has made them more aware of the living conditions of other people in the country

The salience of inequality in the UK has increased as a result of Covid-19. Some 58 per cent of people say that the pandemic has made them more aware of the living conditions of other people in the country. In particular, people became more aware of the critical role played by key workers in healthcare, social care, retail, delivery, and public transport, as well as other jobs. Many of these jobs are low-paid and involve irregular hours, as well as a heightened exposure to risk of infection. Almost nine in ten people praise frontline medical staff and other key workers for the role they are playing during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some also express concern about whether British society fails to care for its more vulnerable members, such as people with disabilities and the aged, that have been exposed by the pandemic:

**‘There’s an awful lot of people noticing the big division between the haves and the have nots... You’ve got the people who have all they could ever need and all the family close by that they could ever need. And then you’ve got the disabled people, the people with chronic conditions who can’t get out and who rely on social services. And unfortunately those services are not able to be done for one reason or another because of coronavirus. And it was just kind of like: “Well, everybody else is getting on with it so you’ve got to find a way”. And it felt like, hmmm, that’s painful and sobering.’**

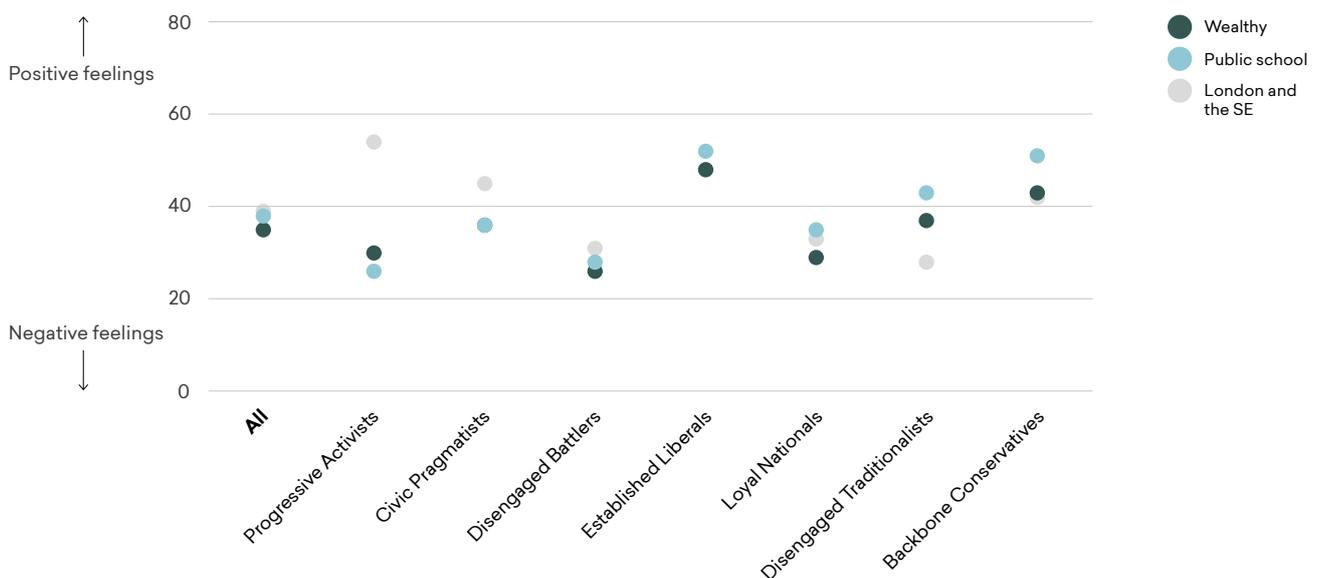
*Jodie, Disengaged Traditionalist, 39, South East*

Figure 8.5.

## Feelings thermometer towards ‘the haves’

Privileged groups attract colder feelings from most Britons

### Warmth towards ‘the haves’



Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020.

Source: More in Common 2020.

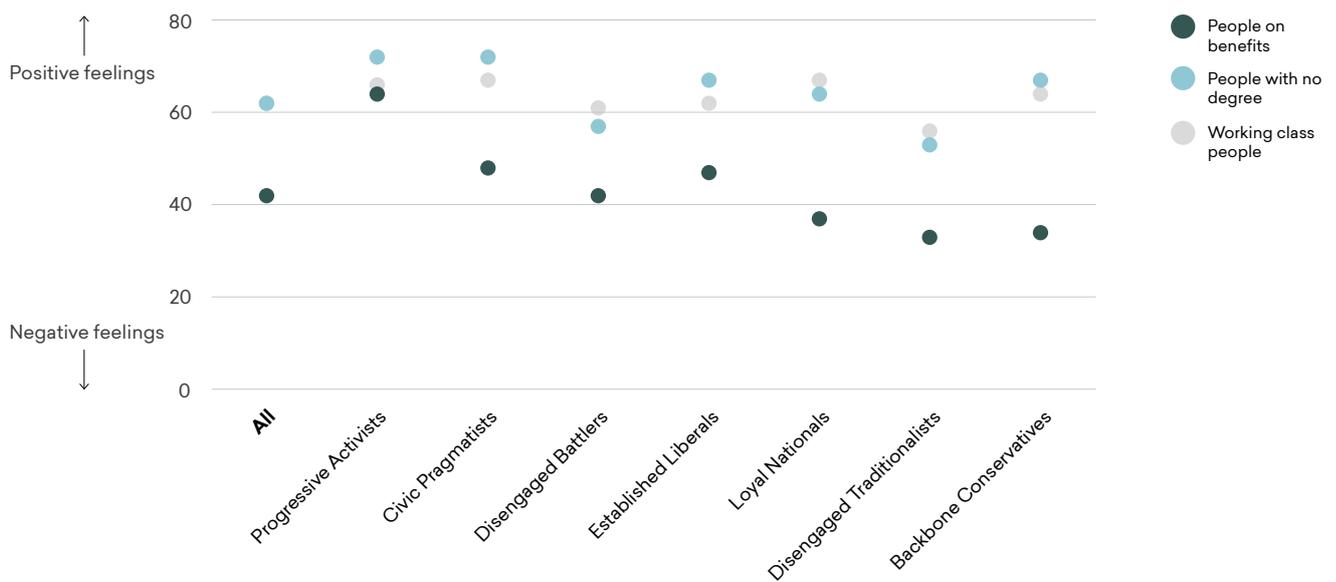
Another indicator of the depth of concern about inequality is found in the strength of anti-elite sentiment in Britain, reflected in feelings thermometers for the haves and the have-nots. Feelings thermometers allow respondents to provide a value from 0 to 100 to describe how 'cold' or 'warm' they feel towards a specific group (0 refers to cold feelings, while 100 refers to warm feelings).

- No segment of the British population holds warm feelings towards the wealthy. Established Liberals feel the warmest with an average of 48, while Disengaged Battlers are coldest (average of 26).
- Measuring the warmth of feelings towards each of the privileged groups according to social grade shows a narrower range of feelings than the segments – for example, sentiment towards wealthy people by social grade ranges from warmer feelings among grade A (39) down to the coldest feelings from grade E (28).
- Feelings towards public school graduates are fairly cold, with average warmth reaching only 38.
- All segments have cold attitudes towards politicians, with an average warmth of 25 for those at Westminster, and 30 for local politicians.
- All segments but Progressive Activists have cold attitudes towards those who live in London and South East England, areas where wealth and power are concentrated (an average of 39). Progressive Activists are more likely to live in London, although Progressive Activists outside of London also feel warmer towards people who live in the capital.

**Figure 8.6. Feelings thermometer towards 'the have-nots'**

There are warmer feelings towards less privileged groups

**Warmth towards the 'have-nots'**



Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

There are generally warmer feelings for the have-not groups in society.

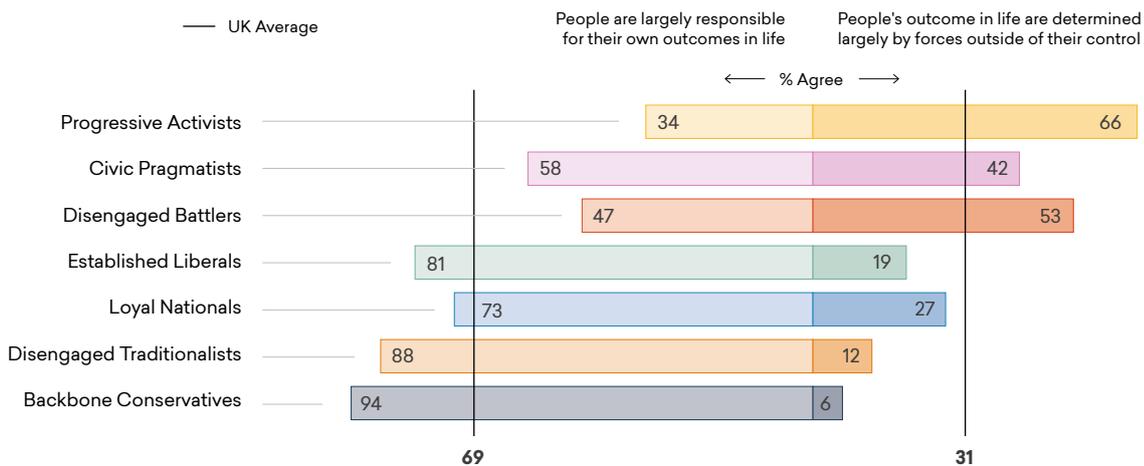
- There are warm feelings towards the working class, with an average warmth of 62 across the population. The coldest feelings towards the working class are held by Disengaged Traditionalists, with a warmth of 56, even though there is an above-average proportion of working class people within this segment.
- Those on benefits are not as well regarded as working class people or those without degrees (an average of 42). Progressive Activists are the only segments with warm feelings for those on benefits (above 50).
- The coldest feelings are held by Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives. Disengaged Traditionalists value hard work and self-reliance, and are sensitive to perceptions that others within society are not following the rules. Despite having an above average proportion of people in the lowest social grade (E), Disengaged Traditionalists have the most negative perceptions of those on benefits.
- Differences in people's attitudes to have-nots become more visible by looking at the segments rather than by looking at the views of people in different social grades – for example, sentiment towards benefit recipients by social grade only varies from 39 (grade D) to 45 (grade E).
- The two Disengaged segments have generally colder feelings towards both the haves and have-nots, but their feelings towards have-nots are warmer than their feelings towards haves.

Figure 8.7.

## Inequality and personal responsibility

The segments view what determines people's outcomes from different perspectives

### How are people's outcomes determined?



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

While there is common ground on the idea that the UK has a serious problem with inequality, most people also believe that personal responsibility plays a larger role than systemic factors in shaping the lives of individuals. These issues have been researched and debated for well over a century, going back to Charles Booth's studies in London and Seebohm Rowntree's in York in the late 19th century.<sup>46</sup> Given the choice between two contrasting views, 69 per cent believe that people are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life, compared to 31 per cent who say that people's outcomes in life are largely determined by forces beyond their control. Only among Progressive Activists and Disengaged Battlers do a majority believe that external forces determine a person's life outcomes more than their own actions (for more on causal attribution see Chapter 3).

Personal responsibility is especially important to the value system of Established Liberals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives. In conversations, people in these segments are especially likely to cite experiences of knowing other people who blamed circumstances rather than taking responsibility for their own lives, something which they see as a character flaw.

**'I think it depends where you sit in society. I think it is very much attitudinal. However, you look at a lot of those who rely on benefits and social housing and their argument will be that it's very much still down to class. Whereas as we all know, you get out of life what you put into it. And if you don't put anything in, you're not going to get anything out. Unfortunately, until people change their attitude about it, they're not going to change themselves.'**

**Being a police officer, the majority of people that we end up dealing with are those on benefits or in social housing. And it's almost an attitude of, "I want it, I'm having it" as opposed to, "I want that. I'm going to work to get it". And it's become far too easy a life choice for people to just say, "someone else can pay for me to do that. And if I'm not going to be able to afford to buy a house around here, I'll have a kid and then I'll get given a house". And that's almost a life choice at sixteen, seventeen for a lot of people nowadays. They realise that rather than putting any effort in and trying to achieve something, they look around at their peers and their parents and just go, "they've got it all. They've got a massive telly; they've got a house. Therefore, I'll just do that because it's easier".'**

*Paul, Backbone Conservative, 38, South East*

What is striking is how much common ground there is between those who emphasise systemic inequality and those who emphasise personal responsibility. Most believe that the economy does not afford enough opportunity for those who work hard and want to get ahead. Indeed, part of the reason for public frustration with Britain's economic system is the perception that many of the people working in some of the toughest and most unattractive jobs are the most inadequately paid. Among younger people, this frustration is particularly acute in connection with the cost of housing and getting a mortgage:

**'I think housing is a big concern. Something that I see shared around Facebook right now a lot is a meme that talks about how people are paying more in rent than they would in their mortgage, if only they were given the opportunity to actually be accepted for a mortgage... it's difficult to get any opportunity to prove your reliability and responsibility, because the pricing is just not fair to people who are asking for very little. Just even a one bed flat for a couple instance, is incredibly expensive for many of my friends who work in London but live at home or live in flat shares... you feel like you're paying off somebody's second or third property and it feels like the cards are stacked against us.'**

*Ellen, Established Liberal, 27, London*

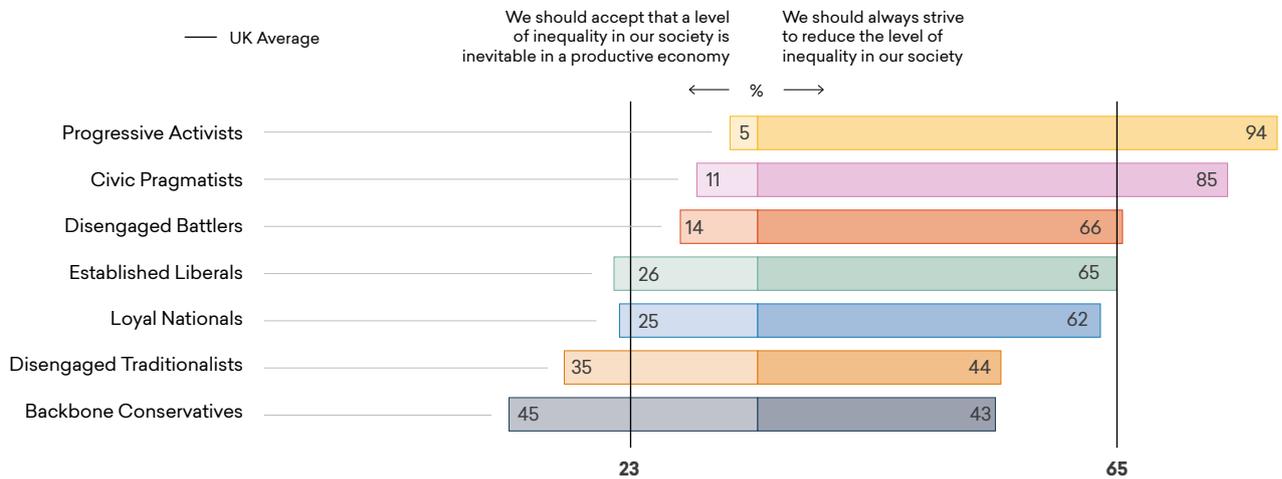
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Figure 8.8.

## Preference for reducing inequality rather than accepting it

Most feel that we should always keep striving to reduce inequality

### Inevitability of inequality



Qu. Which do you agree with more? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

By a margin of almost three to one, people in Britain think we should always aim to reduce inequality further, rather than accepting its inevitability. Only among Backbone Conservatives does a majority believe that we should accept inequality as inevitable and not strive to reduce it. While public debates are often played out through the lens of the opposing views of Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives on issues, most British people hold more nuanced views that integrate a belief in personal responsibility alongside the need to do more to reduce inequality.

# Loyal Nationals and Inequality

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Eighty per cent of Loyal Nationals believe there is a serious problem with inequality, compared to a population average of 73 per cent. Despite generally aligning with Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists on questions of national identity, immigration and social values, on inequality the Loyal Nationals align with Disengaged Battlers, Civic Pragmatists, and Progressive Activists. Personal experience may influence their strong views on inequality and fairness, as there are more people from the C2/D/E social grades in the Loyal Nationals segment than any other (52 per cent of Loyal Nationals, compared to 42 per cent of the overall population).

**‘I think the huge gap between the haves and the have nots... trying to live on a budget is becoming much harder. The cost of living is getting higher. So that worries me. Especially, I suppose, how the economy recovers after things like the coronavirus. But in general, I think, how do you continue to make ends meet, when the cost of your bills is increasing but you’re not necessarily earning more money to cover that?’**

*Elizabeth, Loyal National, 39, Scotland*

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A defining characteristic of Loyal Nationals is that, perhaps more than any other segment, they see the world through the lens of in-groups and out-groups. They are especially sensitive to being excluded or left behind by groups that they perceive as powerful or influential, such as the wealthy, people in London, and cultural elites. Loyal Nationals have the highest moral foundations scores for both Care and Loyalty. They care strongly about the problem of inequality, while also feeling a sense of victimhood (that is, belonging to a group that has been badly treated). This is evident in the fact that on many issues they hold the strongest feelings of exclusion (or being an out-group) and think of issues through the lens of competing groups:

- In comparison to an average of 74 per cent, 96 per cent of Loyal Nationals believe that there is one rule for the rich and another rule for the poor in Britain.
- Compared to an average of 51 per cent, 63 per cent of Loyal Nationals believe that the areas they live in (more likely to be in the North of England and Wales) have been neglected, with almost twice as many believing this strongly.
- As noted above, Loyal Nationals hold the coldest feelings towards the wealthy as a group.
- 88 per cent of Loyal Nationals think people in London live in a bubble and are not aware of what it is like to live in the rest of the country.
- 77 per cent of Loyal Nationals say that economic growth has not benefitted most people they know (only just below Progressive Activists on 81 per cent).
- An overwhelming 79 per cent of Loyal Nationals believe that we care more about immigrants’ rights than about British citizens today (compared to 43 per cent of the population overall), an issue explored further in Chapter 9.

Although they share the concerns about inequality found among Disengaged Battlers, Civic Pragmatists, and Progressive Activists, Loyal Nationals can differ in their views about policy solutions. For example, they are more supportive of public spending cuts than average, with 61 per cent in favour versus 50 per cent of the total population. This might reflect their belief that governments prioritise groups that exclude them, such as migrants, or spend too much money on international aid.

Loyal Nationals' feelings of being neglected or excluded translates into a strong 'anti-system' sentiment and distrust of those who are seen as elites. They perceive those who are rich or in positions of leadership as lacking in loyalty towards people like them. Alongside Disengaged Battlers, they are also most distrustful of employers, perceiving them as wanting to exploit their employees. Their sense of distrust and betrayal often shapes how Loyal Nationals respond to problems.

**'I think the government are doing this on purpose: choosing different environments to make better than others. Round my way, you can go down the road and there'll only be three shops open out of the fifteen. They're all boarded up. You go to Cambridge, not one shop's messy. There's no rubbish anywhere. It seems like they're picking and choosing places to make horrible, really...I go from Essex to Cambridge and it's completely different. It's like, why do they let us live in an area like this with rubbish everywhere and then let people somewhere else have nice places to live?'**

*Emily, Loyal National, 33, London*

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## 8.3 Finding common ground to reduce inequality

In post-Covid Britain, the objective of reducing inequality and building a fairer society has the potential to bring people together from across social and political divides. There is, for example, strong majority support (71 per cent in research cited in 2018) for increasing the minimum wage.<sup>47</sup> Even policies that are framed in traditional terms of redistribution from the rich to the poor ('Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off') are supported by more than twice as many people as who oppose them (51 per cent agree, 22 per cent disagree, and 27 per cent neither agree nor disagree).

There is a significant opportunity to bring society together around initiatives that aim to address Britain's burning injustices. Many challenges lie ahead in re-building the economy for a world whose work practices have potentially been permanently changed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but those changes might also provide an opportunity to tackle longstanding issues such as regional inequalities, decarbonising the economy, and improving the security of work and income. The solutions to entrenched inequality require implementation over time periods that will extend across the terms of government and leaders. This is difficult in a policy-making environment that is stuck in short-term cycles, and where politicisation and polarisation are more often rewarded than cross-party efforts to reach compromise.

In this context, such policies have a much greater chance of gaining public support if they are developed with an understanding of the core beliefs of different population segments, both in their design and communication. For example:

- Policies intended to address inequality need to combine tackling systemic factors with genuinely creating opportunity and rewarding work and responsibility – an approach that can hold together support across all segments.
- Whereas Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists favour an approach to equality that prioritises equal access to universal education, more conservative segments support the idea of selective education that allows those with greater potential for academic ability to thrive and transcend humble beginnings. Policies on this issue should be driven by empirical evidence and demonstrate a commitment to tackling the problem of inequality, rather than favouring the beliefs of supporters of whichever party is currently in government.
- Measures to tackle inequality need to be developed with a sensitivity to the low levels of trust and confidence in government, particularly among the Disengaged segments, which perhaps points to the importance of place and localisation.
- Measures to address inequality perceived as providing entitlements without reciprocal obligations have much less resonance across segments, although some still attract more support than criticism. For example, 50 per cent of Britons are in favour of a Universal Basic Income with 32 per cent against, although support is stronger among progressive segments.

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Policy measures based on the principle of reciprocity have potential for support across all population segments.

**90%** of Britons support the idea that if a government is providing support to a business or industry as part of economic support and recovery measures, it should make demands of them in return. These include paying their taxes in full and not using offshore tax havens to avoid paying tax, paying fair wages, onshoring jobs, and reducing carbon emissions.

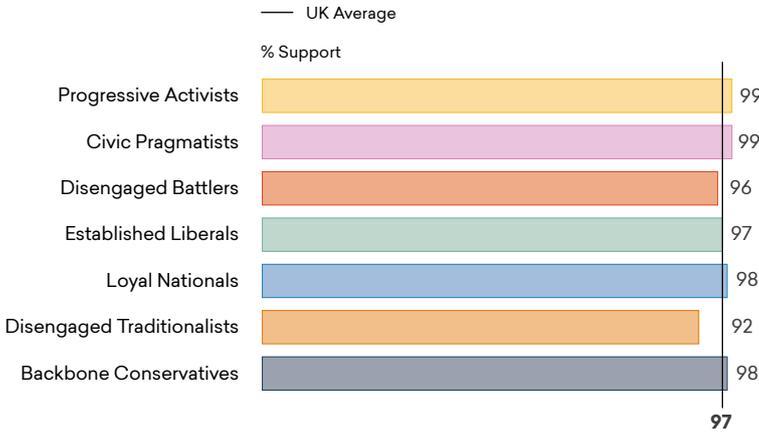
Caps on executive pay were also strongly supported across most segments (with slightly lower support from Established Liberals, the group to which many of those executives would likely belong). These policies integrate values and priorities that resonate across segments. They reflect progressive notions of fairness in making powerful interests more accountable to society. They also reflect the give-and-take value of reciprocity which, in terms of the moral foundations framework, is important to how many people think about fairness. In addition, they reflect the value of loyalty (around offshore tax havens and local manufacturing) that is especially important to Loyal Nationals.

Figure 8.9.

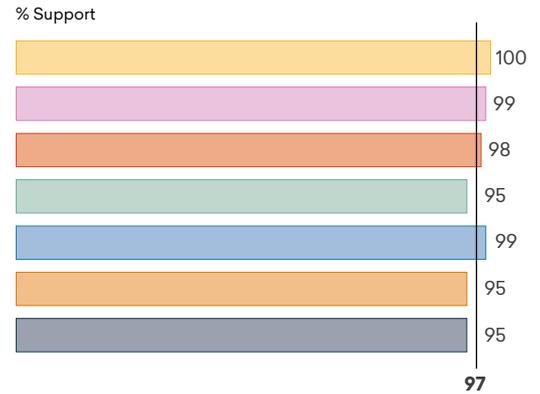
# Business responsibility to society

Consensus on the reciprocal obligations of businesses

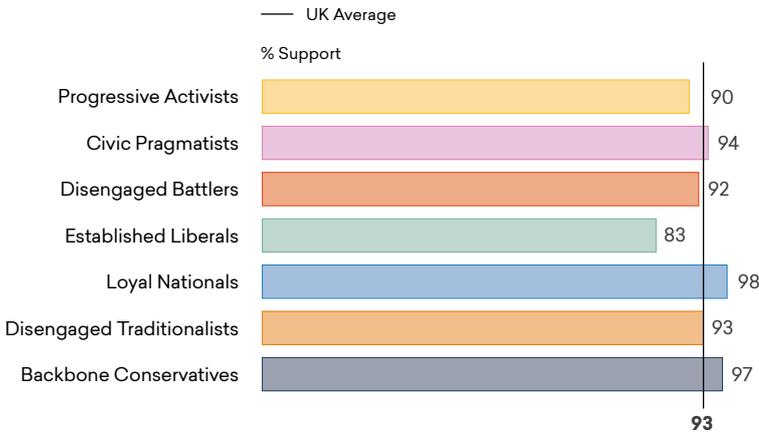
## Stop using overseas tax havens and pay proper taxes in the UK



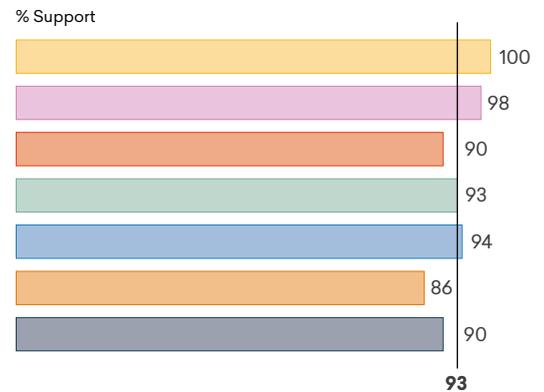
## Guarantee fair wages for all their workers



## Commit to shifting jobs back from overseas to the UK

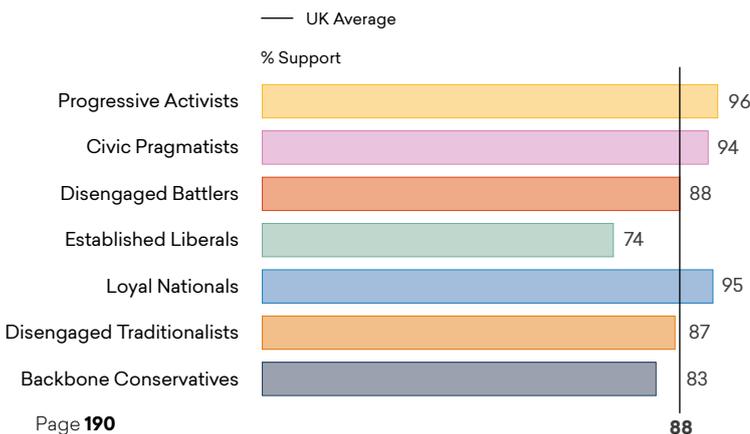


## Make commitments to reduce their carbon emissions and protect the environment



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## Put a ceiling on pay for senior executives



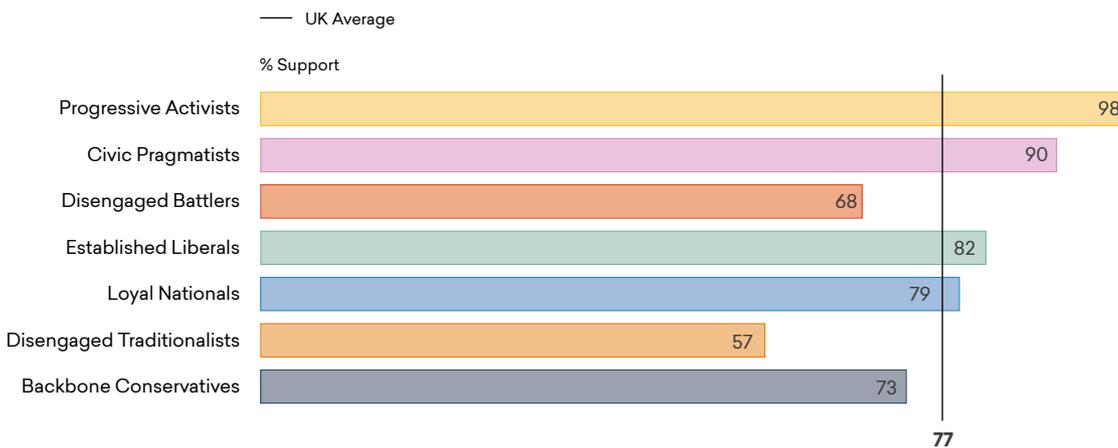
As Chapter 10 discusses in more detail, there is substantial common ground across the segments for measures that protect the environment, many of which could also play a role in creating opportunity and overcoming inequality. Support for a major green infrastructure and jobs policy, for example, extends to three in four people. Such policies will have greater support if they harness people’s sense of connection to the countryside, pride in British engineering, and job creation opportunities for younger people in local communities. All of these are higher priorities for Backbone Conservatives, Disengaged Traditionalists, Disengaged Battlers, and Loyal Nationals, who may not share the same confidence about the case for action on climate change than is found among Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Established Liberals.

Figure 8.10.

## Support for a Green New Deal

Three in four people in Britain would support developing a Green New Deal to make the economy more environmentally friendly

### Developing a “Green New Deal” that makes large-scale government investments to make our economy more environmentally friendly



Qu. There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposal: Developing a “Green New Deal” that makes large-scale government investments to make our economy more environmentally friendly. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 8.4 The role of education

**'I'm from a generation who's graduated twice in the middle of a recession and was always raised to think that education will get you where you need to go. And then you get your education and you come out of the other side of it and you find that actually what businesses and employers are looking for now is education plus five years of experience plus three languages plus your own boat or whatever else it is, you know? And for very little return when you think about the cost of living versus that salary that you get from said job. So I feel a little bit disillusioned I suppose.'**

*Sally, Progressive Activist, 29, South East*

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This section touches on some key findings relating to education, which has historically been seen as a driver of class differences, and an instrument for economic opportunity and social mobility. Britain's debate about educational inequities is generations old but it continues today, with elite public schools continuing to play a surprisingly dominant role in producing the nation's future political leaders,<sup>48</sup> suggesting that the vast expansion of higher education has not overcome structural advantages for those born into privilege. A different but related debate is the role that university education plays in widening cultural differences. University graduates differ from non-graduates in being more open to change, more liberal, and less patriotic in their values. They are also less centred on place, patriotism and traditional values, and take less pride in physical work.

Of all demographic factors, education levels correlate with the population segments perhaps more than any other:

- Disengaged Battlers are the only segment that is evenly spread across different education levels.
- 56 per cent of Progressive Activists are tertiary graduates, almost double the population average of 29 per cent (almost identical to the Progressive Activist segment that More in Common has identified in the US, of whom 59 per cent are graduates) – a significant finding, since whether it is a matter of correlation or causation, tertiary education levels map strongly to certain aspects of core beliefs.
- Non-graduates are substantially over-represented among Loyal Nationals and Disengaged Traditionalists, with around twice as many non-graduates belonging to those segments.
- Established Liberals and Civic Pragmatists are significantly above the population average in their proportion of graduates, while Backbone Conservatives are significantly below.

Analysing public attitudes through the lens of people's education levels finds strong correlations between education and views on many topics, although there are larger differences among the seven segments than there are between graduates and non-graduates, or between lower and higher education profiles. One of the surprising findings from More in Common's work on these issues

in the United States was that higher levels of education are associated with increased misperceptions around the views of other Americans.<sup>49</sup> This is an issue that More in Common may also explore in the UK in a future study, but it was not within the confines of this initial project.

Education plays important but complex roles in both reflecting and shaping the fault lines in British society. Public attitudes reflect these nuances. A clear majority of 61 per cent of Britons believe that the education system reinforces and worsens inequality in the country. Progressive Activists believe this very strongly, but it is only among the Backbone Conservatives that a majority does not believe that the education system as a whole worsens inequality (with Established Liberals being relatively equally split).

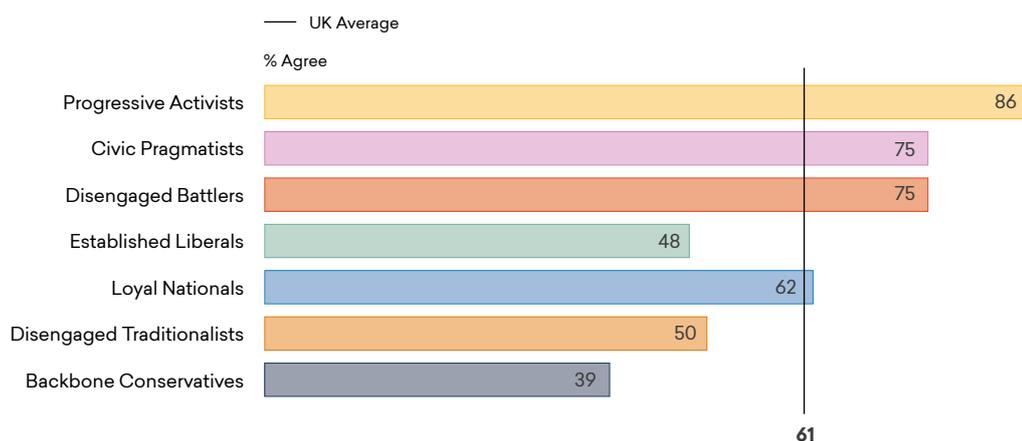
At the same time, 65 per cent say that the education system works for people like them, reflecting the fact that many have positive personal experiences within the system (with almost the same levels of satisfaction whether or not someone is a graduate). In addition, a clear majority believes that more grammar schools should be created, rather than believing that selective education makes the system more unfair. On this issue, public opinion is closer to the Backbone Conservatives than the Progressive Activists, of whom just 29 per cent support grammar schools, compared to 59 per cent of the public overall, perhaps reflecting a perception that grammar schools give better opportunities to lower income students who work hard. Even though education plays a role in society's divisions, public attitudes towards education are nuanced and do not align consistently with either strong progressive or strong conservative views.

Figure 8.11.

## Inequality and the education system

Many believe the system is adding to inequality

### The education system in this country makes our society less equal



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The education system in this country makes our society less equal. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

## 8.5 Key takeaways

An overwhelming majority of British people think that the economic system is rigged to favour the rich and powerful, and that ordinary working people do not get a fair share of the nation's wealth. But while most of us agree that Britain has a serious problem with inequality, this does not mean that we look at the world through a traditional lens of social class. More commonly, people see a nation unfairly divided into haves and have-nots, and a system that is not fairly rewarding many of the hardest working people who are doing the most essential jobs.

Social class today is less clearly defined than in the past, and expresses itself in a less explicit way than in previous generations. Individuals may have experienced financial struggle in their lives, but interpret it in different ways – some (such as Disengaged Traditionalists) reflect on inequality through the lens of the importance of hard work and self-reliance. Others (such as Disengaged Battlers) are more likely to reflect on the wider issues of systemic injustice. To understand how people think about inequality (and other issues), core beliefs may be more important than someone's social grade or other demographic characteristic

The task of addressing these injustices has the potential to bring people from across the different segments of British society together. Measures that do not only focus on redistribution but also reward hard work can speak to the values of different parts of the population. This chapter has shown that there is a surprisingly large amount of common ground between different parts of society on some of the measures that might be taken to overcome inequality.

Just as there is an opportunity to bring people together around efforts to tackle inequality, there are dangers if widely-held frustrations are not addressed. If progress is not achieved on Britain's burning injustices, confidence in the system could decline further and disruptive forces could grow even stronger, creating a more profoundly divided society and posing a serious threat to democratic norms in the decade ahead. Focused and sustained efforts to tackle inequality, transcending the limitations of short-term and polarising dynamics of party politics, are urgently needed to create a fairer society, build resilience against division, and restore faith in Britain's democracy.

# Chapter 9

## Race and Immigration

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**93 per cent** believe that any person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent

**3 in 4** acknowledge that the UK has serious problems with racism

**60 per cent** recognise that white people continue to have advantages over people from ethnic minorities

**54 per cent** worry that ethnic, racial, or religious minorities will suffer more than others due to Covid-19

**62 per cent** believe that immigrants make efforts to integrate into British society

**63 per cent** feel comfortable expressing their views on race and racism

**77 per cent** feel pressured to speak a certain way on subjects to do with immigration and immigrants

**62 per cent** believe that Muslims are often unfairly treated with suspicion due to prejudice

# Introduction

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Divisive public debates around immigration, race, and national identity have been prominent in Britain during the past decade, as in many other countries. Immigration was a major factor in the 2016 referendum on Brexit, with the 2017 British Social Attitudes survey concluding that the most powerful explanatory factor for the result was attitudes towards immigration.<sup>50</sup> Leave campaigners argued that departure from the single market and the European Union would give the UK control over immigration policies and especially the rights of foreigners to work in the country. The decline in concern about immigration in the UK since 2016 provides further evidence of the importance of this issue to the Brexit vote.

This chapter provides insights into debates on race, immigration, and British identity through the lens of the seven segments. These debates have the potential to create deeper social fractures if characterised in the ‘us-versus-them’ terms which occurred during the Brexit debate. However, polarisation into opposing camps is not inevitable, since most people hold mixed views about immigration. The public debate about immigration is also an opportunity to project an inclusive story of identity that speaks to those mixed views and to people’s core beliefs. More in Common’s work on immigration and national identity issues in the United States has demonstrated the potential for ‘balanced’ messages to resonate across population segments and transcend debates that are often falsely framed as either/or choices.<sup>51</sup>

The findings reported in this chapter support the conclusions of recent studies, such as those from the British Future think tank, that most Britons are ‘balancers’ on questions of immigration and integration. Most people have some concerns about integration (for example, relating to the pressures that migration can place upon under-funded public services and community infrastructure), while recognising its benefits to the economy and culture and also rejecting racist or discriminatory policies.<sup>52</sup>

Across a wider range of national identity issues – including Britain’s legacy of empire, integration of migrants, and the place of British Muslims – people seek to find a balance between cultural diversity and openness on the one hand, and the preservation of traditions and the homogeneity of the national in-group on the other. Although there are strident voices in tabloid and online newspapers and on social media, most people are not concentrated at either end of the spectrum on these issues. Within the population segments, Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Established Liberals tend to place a higher value upon openness while Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives place a higher value on the unity and homogeneity of the in-group.

## 9.1 Attitudes towards national identity and race

The **diversity of modern Britain is a cause of pride** for the overwhelming majority of British people, with 70 per cent saying that they feel 'proud that we are more embracing of people of diverse religions, races, and sexual orientations than before'. These findings reflect a high level of acceptance of Britain's increasing diversity, with 13 per cent of the population being non-white in the last census.<sup>53</sup> Based on the voting patterns of the 2019 General Election, pride in Britain's diversity among supporters of the major political parties was as follows:

- 59 per cent of Conservative voters
- 83 per cent of Labour voters
- Over 80 per cent of Liberal Democrat, SNP, and Green voters
- 54 per cent of Brexit Party voters
- Only 7 per cent of the population strongly disagreed with this sentiment

**93%** agree that any person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent

The baseline proposition behind an inclusive understanding of British identity is that any person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent. This proposition has almost universal acceptance, with 93 per cent agreeing of these 63 per cent agree strongly. Just 2 per cent strongly disagree. Majorities of supporters for every political party strongly agree. Among the segments, the lowest level of agreement was still 87 per cent (among Disengaged Traditionalists).

**3 in 4** acknowledge that problems of racism are serious in the UK

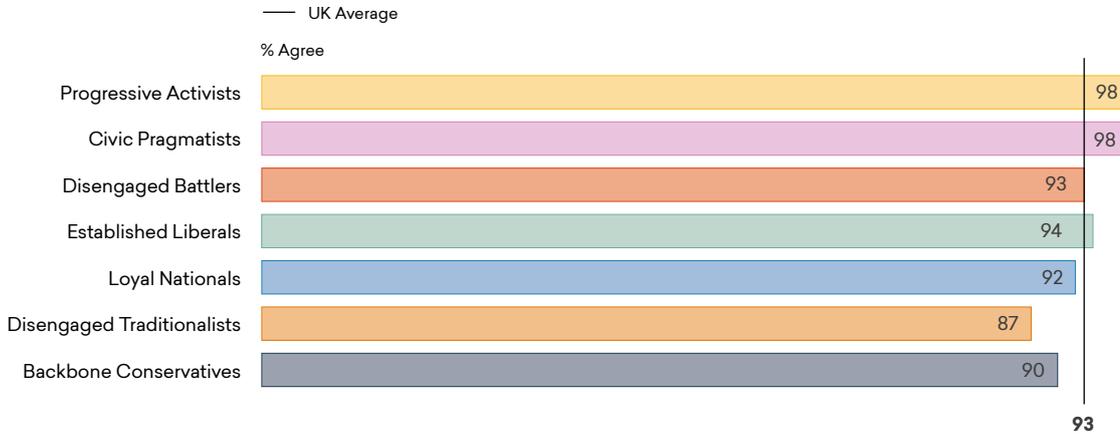
Three in four Britons acknowledge that problems of racism are serious in the UK, with significant agreement among every segment and exceptionally high agreement among Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists, reflecting the extent to which anti-racism values are for many people in these segments part of their personal identity. Anti-Semitism is also seen as a serious problem by 61 per cent of Britons. Noticeably, attitudes towards anti-Semitism are most mixed among Progressive Activists. They are in line with the population average in saying that anti-Semitism is a serious problem, but are also the most likely segment to say that anti-Semitism is not a serious problem in the UK (with 32 per cent holding this view compared to 26 per cent of the wider population).

Figure 9.1.

## Britishness and race

Almost unanimous agreement that being British is not a matter of race

### In the UK, a person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent



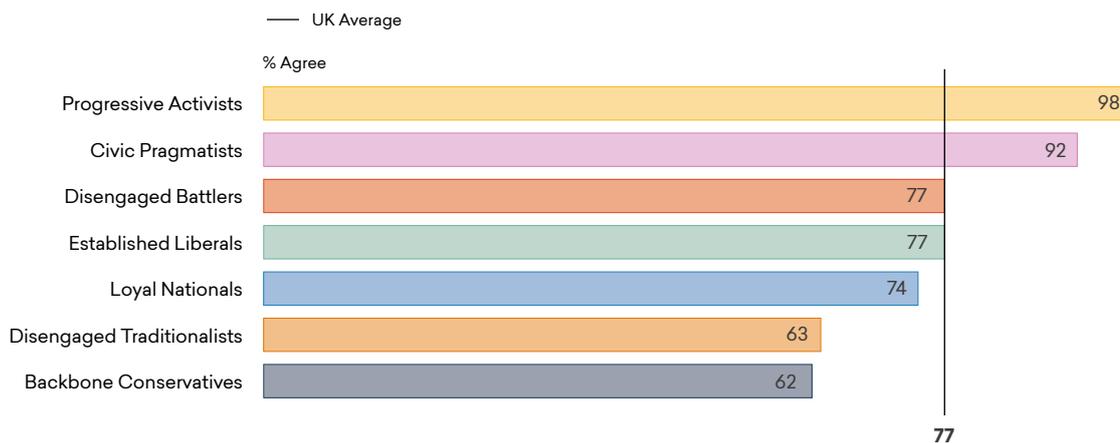
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In the UK, a person can be British regardless of their colour, ethnic background, or accent. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 9.2.

## Seriousness of racism

All segments acknowledge the serious problem of racism but vary on strength of agreement

### How serious is racism today?



Qu. In your opinion, how serious are the following problems in the UK today: Racism. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

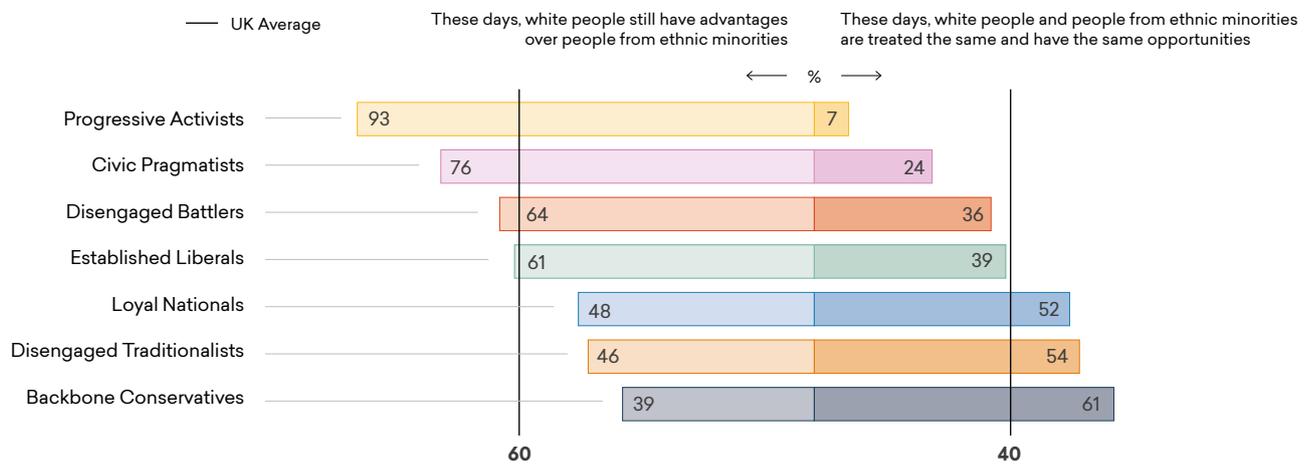
**60%** recognise that white people continue to have advantages over people from ethnic minorities

In the same vein, most Britons also recognise that white people continue to have advantages over people from ethnic minorities. Sixty per cent feel this is the case, but this number conceals big differences among the segments that are replicated across an array of questions relating to race and immigration. Ninety-three per cent of Progressive Activists and three-quarters of Civic Pragmatists are convinced of the existence of white privilege in the UK. A majority of Backbone Conservatives, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Loyal Nationals are more likely to feel that 'white people and people from ethnic majorities are treated the same and have the same opportunities', although substantial minorities disagree.

**Figure 9.3. White privilege**

Most Britons recognise the existence of white privilege

**White privilege**



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

In qualitative interviews, the notion of white privilege came out most strongly when talking to Loyal Nationals. This reflects their heightened sensitivity to in-group and out-group dynamics, and their feelings of being part of a threatened group. Accusations of privilege are especially jarring to them, because they feel besieged and often say that they live in areas that have been neglected for a long time. Many Loyal Nationals feel strongly that they have never experienced any advantages in life, so the idea that they are privileged seems alien to them.

*Interviewer*

*So, do you feel that white people in the UK are marginalised? Do you think they're treated unfairly?*

*George*

**'Not necessarily unfairly, but the way things are portrayed you know? I mean according to some people they're still living in the slave trade era, you**

**know if you're white you're racist, if you're a white male you're racist. No, we're not. I mean I'm not a privileged white male. I've never been privileged in my life.'**

*George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands*

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When asked about treatment of immigrants, Loyal Nationals are almost twice as likely to feel that society cares more about immigrants than British citizens (79 per cent v 43 per cent average).

*Emily*

**'People always say white males are privileged but I don't believe that.'**

*David*

**'There we go again.'**

*Oliver*

**'The ethnic minority.'**

*David*

**'Yes. Racism again, isn't it? There it goes. White privilege. White and privileged. You get black people that are privileged. You get Asians, Indians.'**

*Ammar*

**'Correct, yes. Totally agree.'**

*Emily*

**'I think it's just down to money.'**

*Loyal Nationals Focus Group Conversation*

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Public debates around national identity and race occur in response to external events, rather than in the abstract. We identified two such moments during the course of 2020: the Covid-19 pandemic and the response in the UK to the widespread protests in the United States that were sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. These were opportunities to both gauge overall public attitudes and to better understand the different responses among the seven segments.

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**54%**

of the British population is worried that ethnic, racial, or religious minorities will suffer more than others from the Covid-19 crisis

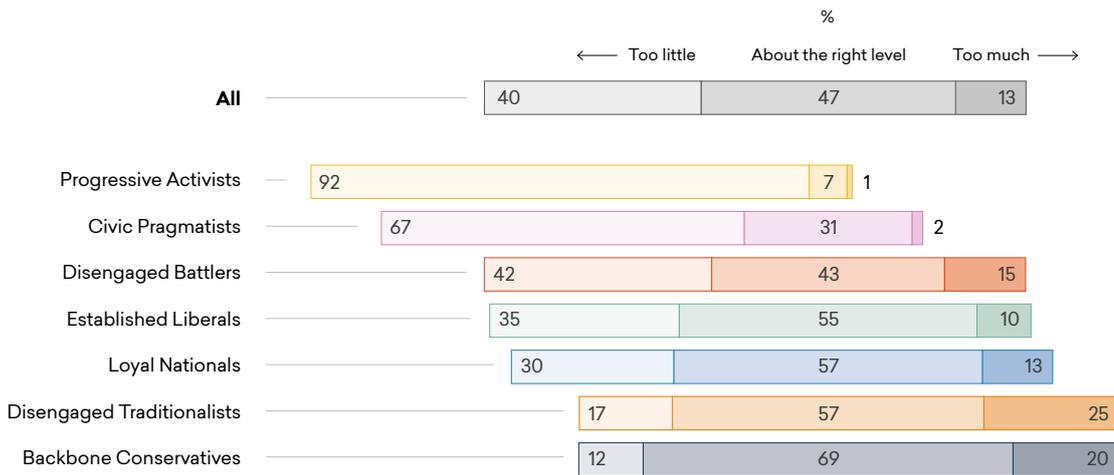
In connection with the impact of Covid-19 on Britain, numerous media reports highlighted the way in which minority communities felt a disproportionate impact from the pandemic. On this issue, the results demonstrate that people in Britain are ‘balancers’. Fifty-four per cent of the British population is worried that ethnic, racial, or religious minorities will suffer more than others from the Covid-19 crisis. Around half of the population feel that government support for ethnic minorities has been ‘about the right level’. However, three times as many say it has been too little than say it has been too much (40 v 13 per cent). There is a much greater distribution of opinion among segments on these issues, but views generally do not simply polarise between two opposing sides. Even among the most opposed group, Disengaged Traditionalists, only one in four feels that too much is being done to help ethnic minorities.

Figure 9.4.

## Covid-19 and ethnic minorities

Segments vary in how much they think government has cared for ethnic minorities during the pandemic

### Government care for ethnic minorities during the Covid-19 pandemic



Qu. Please indicate how much the UK government seems to care about the following groups in its response to the Covid-19 situation... The government cares about this group: Ethnic or racial minorities. June 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

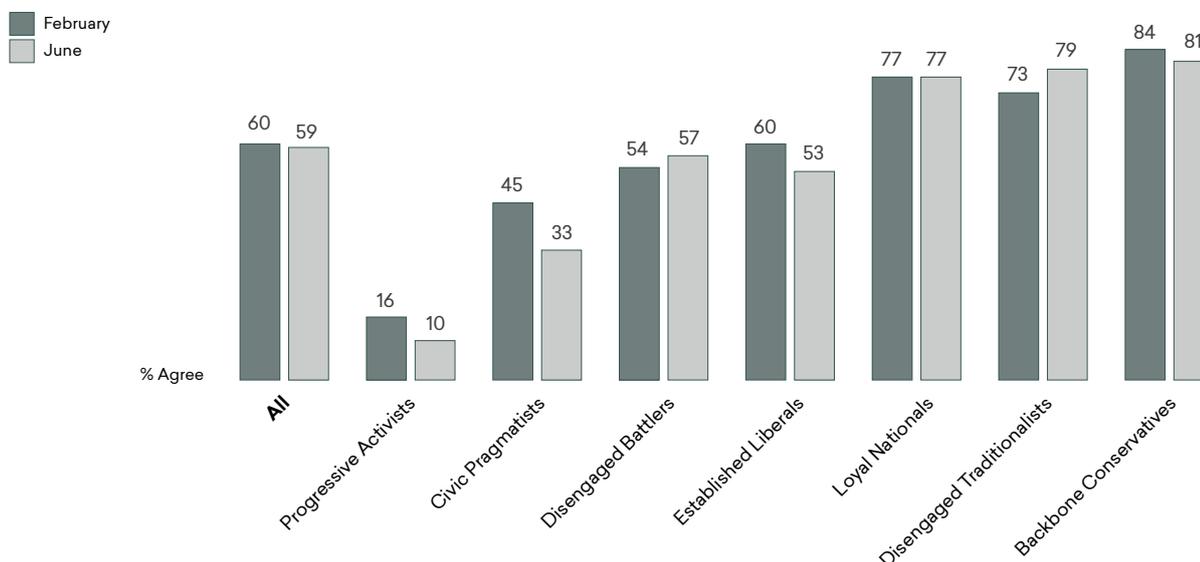
The racial justice protests and civil unrest unleashed in the United States in May 2020 rippled across the world in the weeks that followed, making issues of racial justice more prominent in the UK. We re-fielded a question asked earlier in the year to see whether the racial reckoning in the United States had affected public attitudes in Britain – in this instance, on the question of whether most people do not take issues of racism seriously enough, or whether there is too much sensitivity about things to do with race. Asked in March 2020, opinions were split 60-40 towards the view that we are too sensitive about things to do with race. When the same question was asked in June 2020, after the protests and the toppling in Bristol of the statue of slave trader Edward Colston, the overall outcome was almost unchanged (at 59 to 41 per cent). However, within the segments, a small polarising effect took place: a higher proportion of Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Established Liberals felt racism is not being taken seriously enough, while a higher proportion of Disengaged Traditionalists and Disengaged Battlers felt that we are too sensitive about race.

Figure 9.5.

## Dealing with issues of race

Segments have differing views around how we deal with racism

### Many people nowadays are too sensitive about things to do with race



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February and June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

In focus groups in March 2020, when asked a series of questions to identify the biggest dividing lines in society and if there were any groups that faced particular disadvantages, few raised issues of race. Once prompted, many recognised that people from minority backgrounds are over-represented among economically disadvantaged groups, but the issue was not prominent in people's minds.

In focus groups in July 2020 it was clear that the protests had prompted many people to think more about British society and the experiences of black and ethnic minority Britons. One of the most commonly expressed sentiments shared by participants of all backgrounds is that the UK has changed from the era where racism and prejudice were overt and widespread, and is now a more open and inclusive society. Several felt that Britain's progress should be better recognised before people started criticising. Many acknowledged Britain's need to learn from the mistakes of the past, but also balanced this sentiment with feeling that it is important for the country not be stuck in the past and to focus on the future.

In conversations conducted specifically with ethnic minority British participants, the reality of racism in parts of society was more widely recognised, although participants tended to think of racial differences as just one layer of people's identities, alongside other factors such as regions, accents, income, education, gender, and Brexit identities. The picture that emerged from these conversations was that black and ethnic minority British people feel pride and a sense of belonging in being British, while many also retain other layers of identity reflecting their cultural heritage. People feel that racism still exists in our society, but, as one participant remarked, prejudices have 'moved from being outrightly spoken to being underneath'. Several felt that education is part of the answer, and that racism should be addressed in schools. All groups felt the government should be focusing on dealing with the current health and financial crisis as its priority.



## In their own words:



'I'm all for justice in every walk of life, but what our ancestors did, we can do nothing about and how much have we got to keep saying sorry for something we had no control over? There shouldn't be any racial hatred or social injustice in this country now and we need to tackle that. But we need to tackle it together.'

*Gavin, Disengaged Traditionalist, 67, West Midlands*



'I think it's political correctness gone mad a little bit, to be honest. I think we've tipped the scale too far the other way. I think it's right to highlight the issue because I think there is an issue and I think it's quite deep seated in this country, and I think not from the mass population but there is a minority that do have issues with race and immigration and it always comes out when you start talking about politics. But I think we have gone too far the other way. And I think Black Lives Matter, I understand it and I get it, but everybody matters. I think the country has made massive strides forward with this issue over the last twenty, thirty, forty years. It really has... [Racial history] does seem to have got itself into the curriculum a bit more. I think race and history in particular is being taught in a way that is probably better than it was, from what I can see. But I think there's still a lot to do in terms of how we bring generations up. It's what they're taught and what they know that generally forms opinion.'

*Max, Disengaged Battler, 43, East of England*

'I think that's one thing that has been sensationalised a little bit by the media. I think in the UK it's not really something that's as big a problem as it is in other countries. That's just how I see it, but we don't really have that in York. I don't know if other cities do. I think also, you can't learn from your mistakes if we're not allowed to talk about the mistakes and if we're just going to forget them. If we pull down statues and things, then that history is gone. A friend of mine said the other day, it would be nice is if they just changed the plaque and put, "this person had slaves" and we can all just learn from that and learn from our mistakes.'

*Natasha, Disengaged Battler, 31, Yorkshire and the Humber*



'Kids in school need to be taught the history. They need to know what has happened. They need to know how Britain became an empire. How Britain became a country. How the United Kingdom became a kingdom. They need to know about the wars. They need to know those who fought with the British people because some people are ignorant. That's the truth. They don't really know. They think probably Britain became a nation on its own, that it just became powerful. They need to know people from India, people from Africa fought in the Second World War for Britain... Then they will understand that they need to probably appreciate each other. Because some people still have this belief that some people are superior over others and it has to be so, but when you really understand more of the Commonwealth and what happened then I think part of the problem is solved.'

*Kwame, Disengaged Traditionalist, 40, London*



'I think a lot of the people that came out for the riots for Black Lives Matter, where no-one was socially distancing, were there to pick a fight or for the drama as opposed to actually believing in it.'

*Kelly, Disengaged Battler, 39, North West*



'What's gone is gone. We can't change it. I think a lot of people are using the race card and the slave card as a way of trying to get something over the rest of us. We can't change what's happened, and history is there to hopefully remind you of where people have done things in the past, so you learn from history so you don't repeat it again.'

*John, Disengaged Traditionalist, 61, East of England*



'I think action is needed. We've spoken about diversity enough; we've had protests enough. It's actually action. When my daughter does not see anybody that looks like her in the government, in the judiciary, in any aspect of the police or anywhere that there is any kind of authority, what can we give our children as a highlight that this is possible for you? The action is required to get these people in the right places, to be role models, to be there to make the change in the first place. They have to break the barriers to get there. And unfortunately, it's not talking that's needed anymore.'

*Farida, Civic Pragmatist, 47, Scotland*



‘On the topic of Black Lives Matter, I think I’m a little bit sceptical. I feel like it could be a little bit tokenistic because on my social media at least, there are a lot of people posting black squares, a lot of people posting empty hashtags, like hashtag activism, and I didn’t see a lot of action. So, I was a little bit sad that people thought that posting a black square was all they needed to do, when I think there’s a lot more that they need to do.’

*Gio, Disengaged Battler, 41, South East*



‘It’s only been since George Floyd’s death that I’ve had to really think about what racism is. For me, I think I’ve learnt that racism means that you’ve got a sense of superiority combined with power... My son is twenty-three and he said to me – and I was shocked because I didn’t know because up until then I did not believe in positive discrimination – he said his sixty-year-old boss admitted to him that if he saw somebody looking a bit foreign on the application forms, he’d throw them in the bin. To me, that really hurt me because I just thought, okay, my son happened to get in because his name is [English sounding] but if he had a different name, his application form would not have even been considered. That really hurts me.’

*Maya, Loyal National, 57, London*

‘I think deep down we can all be racist. I am Indian and I am Muslim and I admit that a lot of times I feel like I have some sort of racist feeling inside me. It might not be towards the race in particular but maybe towards that one person. So, I do believe that racism is a given. It’s what we do with that, that I think makes a difference. If inside of us we have some sort of feeling but that makes no difference in the way we treat someone else, then so be it. We can all feel the way we feel. It’s our right. But we shouldn’t be affecting people’s lives that way.’

*Priyanka, Loyal National, 47, North West*



‘I think racism has always existed and will continue to exist. I think world events recently have just brought it to the fore, but it’s always been there, and I don’t think it’s going away. But it’s good that we’re talking about it.’

*Li, Disengaged Traditionalist, 41, East of England*

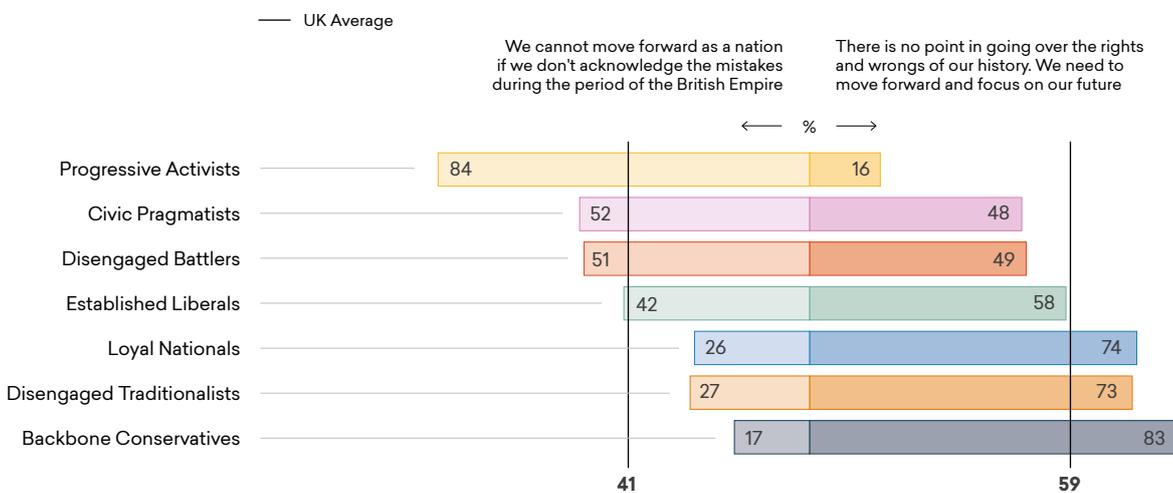
One dimension of debates on British identity and race is how the country wrestles with its imperial history, and whether specific issues need to be acknowledged and addressed in order for the country to move forward. The comments from focus group participants reflect mixed views on whether Britain needs some kind of reckoning with its past. BAME participants, many of whom have personal histories bound up with the legacy of empire, more often feel that Britain needs to tell itself a more complete story, even if most still see British history in broadly positive terms.

Figure 9.6.

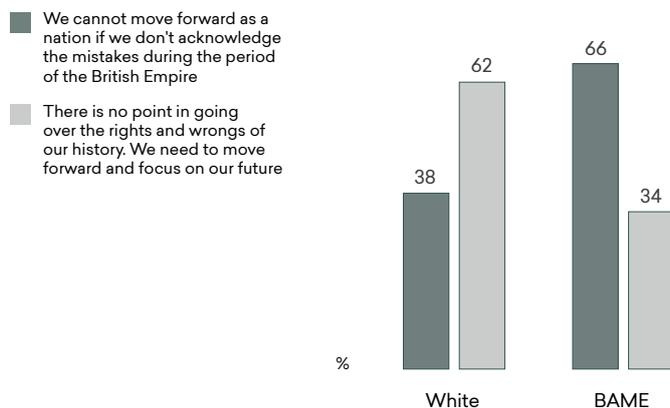
## Dealing with the past

A majority believes we should focus on the future, not the past

### How should we deal with our country's history?



### How should we deal with our country's history?



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Our focus groups demonstrated how nuanced conversations about Britain's past can play out in practice. In a particularly interesting discussion with an ethnically mixed group of Disengaged Traditionalists, participants voiced a range of different and varied grievances with the way the recent debate on race and Britain's past

had been confronted. The tension tended to be with how we move forward, rather than whether injustice continues to exist (there was a general level of recognition that injustices have indeed existed, and some discrimination remains). Indeed, participants were receptive when minority voices in the group voiced their opinion that history needed to be taught properly, despite strong reactions that there was nothing we could do to change that history and that we could not be held responsible for past actions. While it is true that 59 per cent of Britons feel that we should focus on our future rather than go over the rights and wrongs of our history, our research shows that this does not equate into a desire to ignore history. In fact, there is willingness to learn and incorporate that into part of moving on.

## **Race, immigration, and public discourse**

Through More in Common's work on issues of immigration, race, and public perceptions across several countries, one concern frequently voiced is that it is difficult to discuss these issues without being judged by others. People fear being judged or seen as prejudiced. Believing that others view themselves as superior to you, or you inferior to them, leads to psychologically powerful feelings of resentment or betrayal.

This study has found a significant difference between how people in Britain feel when talking about racism, and how they feel when talking about immigration – possibly reflecting the fact that there is much greater disagreement on the latter.

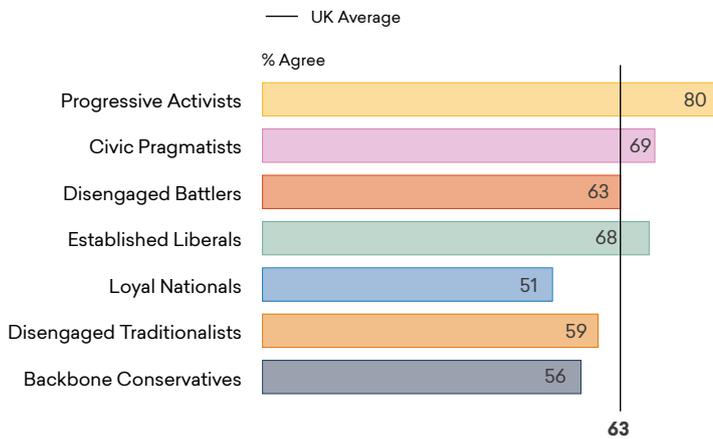
- 63 per cent of British people feel comfortable expressing their views on race and racism, while some 37 per cent of British people feel uncomfortable expressing them. Most people in all segments say they feel comfortable expressing their views, with the greatest confidence being felt by Progressive Activists, whose views on racial justice are an important part of their identity. In contrast, the most discomfort is felt by Loyal Nationals, who are more likely to feel that they are less protected by the government than ethnic minorities are.
- In contrast, 77 per cent of Britons feel pressure to speak a certain way about subjects like immigration and immigrants, with high levels of agreement across segments, even among Progressive Activists who are often outliers on these issues. Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives report feeling this pressure most acutely, although in our experience of interviews and focus group conversations, they often brought up their opinions on these issues without any prompting. The tension for people in these groups seems to be between speaking about topics that are most important to them, and hiding what they fear to be unpopular opinions.

Figure 9.7.

## Expressing views about race and immigration

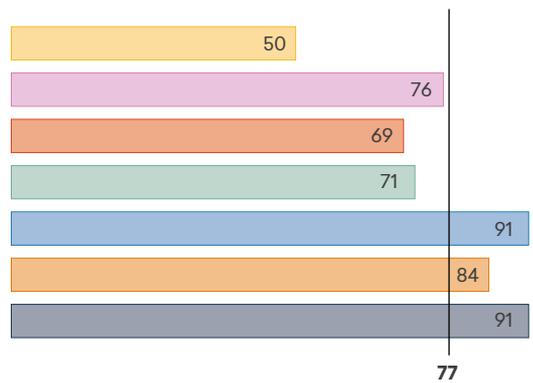
A majority of all segments generally feel comfortable expressing views about race and racism, but most feel there is pressure when it comes to speaking about subjects such as immigration

### I feel comfortable expressing my views about race and racism



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel comfortable expressing my views about race and racism. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

### There is pressure to speak a certain way about subjects like immigration and immigrants



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: There is pressure to speak a certain way about subjects like immigration and immigrants. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.



### Moderation of Loyal Nationals focus group

#### How do you feel about life in the UK today?

#### Megan

'I'm originally from Plymouth which isn't too far from me, where I am now. But I tend to get on with anyone and everyone but we have found that over the years, obviously, there's more mixing – not like London where Anne is; there's a lot of multi-race there – ours has really been over the last ten years that we've started to get multi-racial people in. And the little place that I came from in Plymouth was very negative about that. Obviously, I'm not. I'm a very open person but it's a shame because I was brought up in a place where we all worked together. I mean, you could go out and leave your front door unlocked.'

---

*David*

‘The thing to say about London, looking at multiculturalism, how many Londoners live in London? Not many Londoners actually live in London... Where I live here, it’s mainly Polish. But you get the Romanians fighting with the Polish. It’s nothing to do with us English at all.’

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*Emily*

‘A lot of people are bringing their own wars here.’

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*David*

‘Yes, you’re right. They’re bringing their wars here.’

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*Loyal Nationals Focus Group*

‘Well, everyone’s using the card. It’s like throwing the racist card. Everybody. You look at somebody wrong and it’s, you know, is it my colour? Is it this? Is it that? I think people walk around on eggshells. Everything, everybody these days is a hate crime. Like, you can’t tell a joke. It’s a joke, it’s a bit of banter. But no, you can’t do that anymore. I have to really think hard about what I’m going to say.’

*David, Loyal National, 48, West Midlands*

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‘You can try with some of the champagne socialists and middle class left wingers, yeah, but it doesn't get anywhere, you get shut down or de-platformed, or they try to belittle you and things like that. If people are willing to have a proper discussion then fine, you know? I mean I'm not saying I'm right all the time, I'm not right most of the time but I'm willing to listen, but it has to work both ways you know?’

*George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands.*

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*Moderator*

*To what extent do you think we’re united or divided as a society?*

‘There is such a huge divide in British society, I think, sadly. And I think the fact that we allow so many immigrants in, or did, doesn’t help the society.’

*Michelle, Backbone Conservative, 78, Yorkshire and the Humber*

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## 9.2 Perceptions of immigration and division

While there is a substantial consensus on many issues relating to race in Britain, there is less consensus on immigration. In overall terms, the UK has experienced a sustained trend towards more positive public perceptions of the impact of immigration. However, concerns about immigration played a decisive role influencing the vote to leave the European Union in 2016. While the issue of immigration has diminished in salience in recent years, public opinion reflects the characterisation of Britain as a nation of ‘balancers’ that has already been referenced.

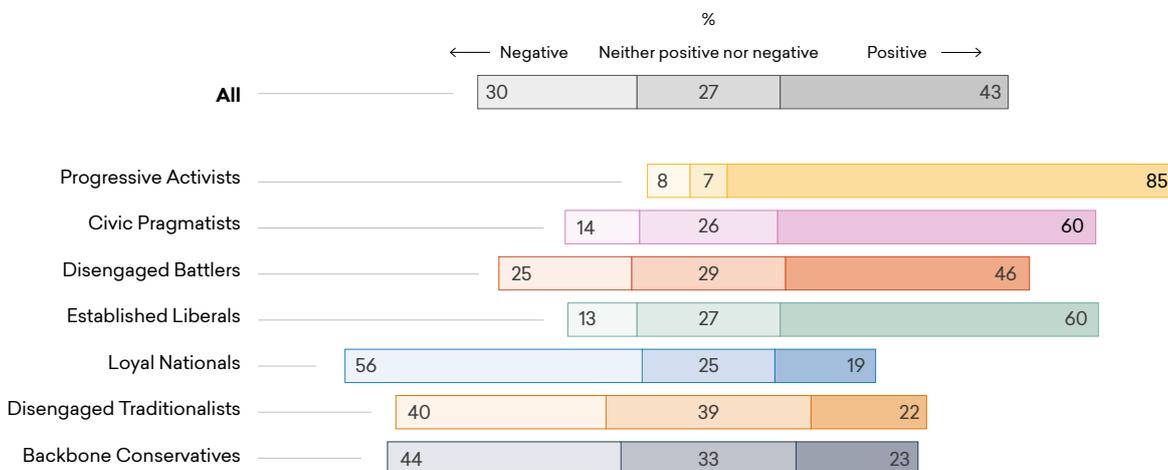
Asked in general terms about the impact of immigration, 43 per cent say that it has been positive, 27 per cent negative, and 30 per cent neither. There are significant divergences among the segments.

- The socially liberal Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Established Liberals view immigration positively. Progressive Activists are far more emphatic than any other group in their pro-immigration sentiment, with almost three times as many ‘very positive’ than even Civic Pragmatists.
- There is cluster of segments that holds more negative sentiments about immigration and which represents one half of the overall population: Disengaged Traditionalists, Loyal Nationals, and Backbone Conservatives.
- Even so, only Loyal Nationals have a majority that thinks the impact of immigration has been negative. This shows that even among the immigration-sceptic segments, opinion is mostly not stridently anti-immigration, but instead reflects mixed views.

### Figure 9.8. Immigration impact

Segments vary on how positively or negatively they see immigration

#### Impact of Immigration



Qu. Would you say immigration currently has a positive or negative impact on the UK? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

One of the central concerns about immigration raised by the immigration-sceptic groups is that it contributes to division in society. When asked about the causes of division in the UK, 51 per cent of Loyal Nationals and Backbone Conservatives cited immigration, as did 42 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists. The core beliefs of these three segments are well above average on the moral foundations that measure loyalty to the country and respect for authority. They worry that immigrants have different loyalties to the locally-born population, and respect different traditions. These three groups also perceive threat more strongly than other groups. This is especially true for the Loyal Nationals, who feel most threatened and deprioritised when compared to immigrants. When these values are activated, even when individuals also value care and protection, they are more likely to think in terms of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’, and prioritise the national in-group over immigrants who are identified as the out-group.

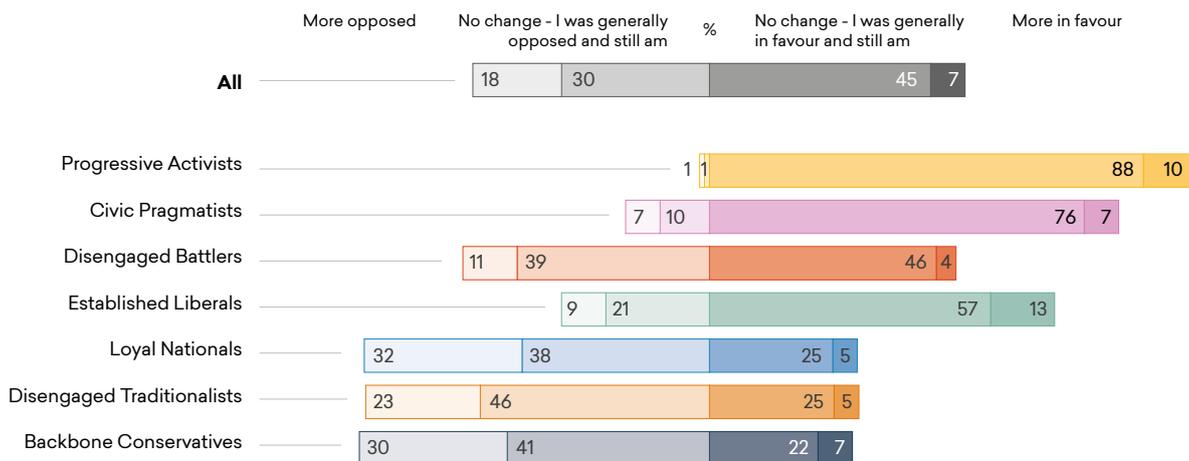
There has not been a change in attitudes towards immigrants during the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, while the pandemic has resulted in stricter border controls in many countries in order to control the spread of the virus, in the UK its effect on both border controls and public attitudes has been much less than seen elsewhere. Of the seven major western countries surveyed by More in Common in mid-2020, the UK experienced the smallest shift in sentiment against immigration, with 75 per cent saying their views had not changed since the start of the pandemic. This confirms other research showing that attitudes towards immigration mostly remained relatively stable in 2020, demonstrated in work by the Policy Institute at King’s College London and the think-tank British Future.<sup>54</sup>

Figure 9.9.

## Immigration and Covid-19

Attitudes towards immigration do not seem to have changed since the pandemic began

### How views have changed about accepting migrants into the UK since the Covid-19 pandemic began



Qu. Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, how have your views changed about accepting migrants into the UK, if at all?  
June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Six in ten people in the UK believe that immigrants typically make an effort to integrate into UK society.

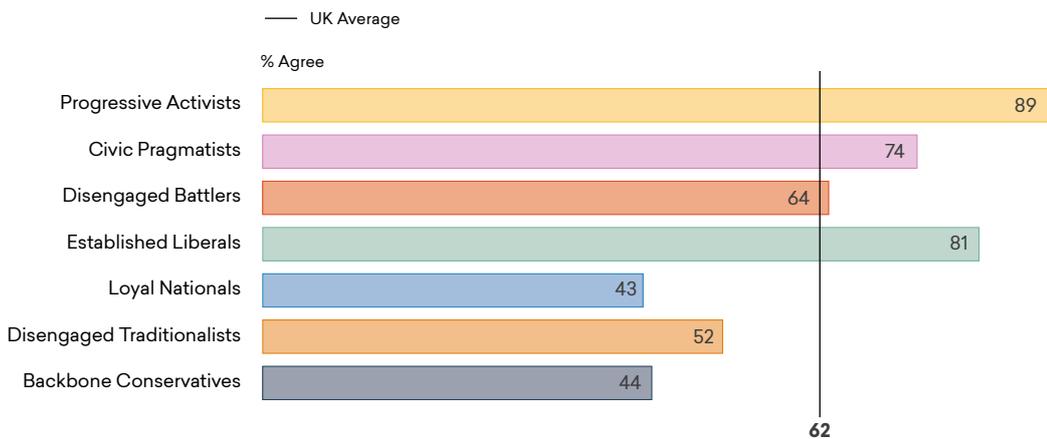
- Progressive Activists and Established Liberals, groups that are more outward looking and comfortable with multiculturalism and diversity, are very confident that immigrants want to become a part of British society (at 89 and 81 per cent respectively).
- Large majorities of Civic Pragmatists and Disengaged Battlers agree with this notion.
- There is greater doubt among the three more sceptical groups, with 57 per cent of Loyal Nationals and 56 per cent of Backbone Conservatives believing that immigrants do not make an effort to integrate. However, it is significant that even among the segments that are most sceptical of immigration, a sizeable minority believe that immigrants do make efforts to integrate.

Figure 9.10.

## Immigrants and integration

Segments vary on how much they think immigrants make efforts to integrate into society

### Most immigrants make efforts to integrate into British society



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Most immigrants make efforts to integrate into British society. February 2020.

Source: More in Common 2020.

These apprehensions often reflect concerns that minority communities become insular, and that immigrants do not seem to want to integrate with others in their local communities.

*Interviewer*

*Do you think there are people who come to this country and integrate, or not? Could they do more?*

*Molly*

**'I think they could do more, definitely. I don't think they integrate fully, I think they tend to stick to their own people really. They like to stick to their own people from back home or their own friends. I don't think they integrate very well.'**

*Molly, Loyal National, 62, London*

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Many in these three groups believe that being a good person involves patriotism, contributing to your local community, respecting British traditions, and fitting in with others. Because they feel that many immigrants do not share a commitment to their local community (outside of their ethnic group) or to British traditions, they are worried about the effect of immigration. Because these beliefs are core to who they are, members of these segments are very unlikely to change their beliefs. Nevertheless, their perceptions of immigrants may change when their experiences show them how hard many immigrants try to integrate.

In the absence of such experiences, people in these three segments are vulnerable to thinking in terms of 'us-versus-them'. More than three-quarters of people in each of these groups believe that, in our society, we care more about the rights and interests of immigrants than of our own citizens. A lower proportion – less than half – believe that we care too much about immigrants (although this still means that more members of each segment say that we care about the right amount). This contrasts with Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists, who have the opposite belief, that immigrants are portrayed unfairly in the media and are poorly treated.

*Interviewer*

*So, are you saying there are groups of people that or categories of people that face more obstacles than other in the UK?*

*Maria*

**'Definitely. Definitely. One hundred percent. Immigrants for example, like, it makes me so cross the way that immigrants have been treated in this country. They've come here to help us. They're not scroungers like what they keep saying but that's what the tabloid press wants to churn out, to scapegoat. It's infuriating.'**

*Maria, Progressive Activist, 25, East of England*

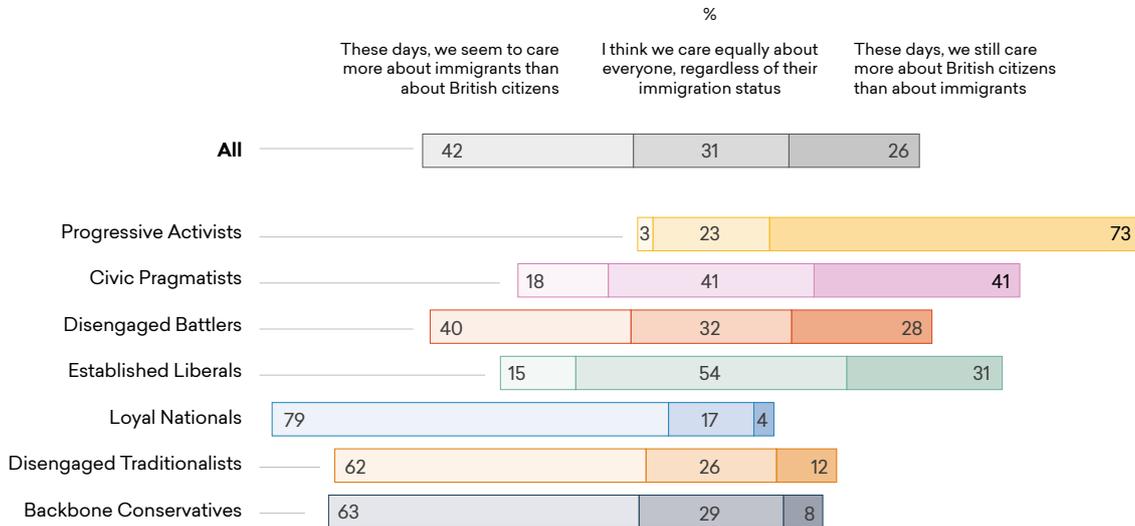
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Figure 9.11.

## Feelings of victimhood towards immigrants

Segments vary in how much they think we as a country care for immigrants compared to British citizens

### Care for immigrants



Qu. Which do you agree with more? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Just under half the population says that we care more about the rights and interests of immigrants than about British people. This is a view that is especially pronounced among Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, Backbones Conservatives (and to a lesser extent Disengaged Battlers) who share a greater priority on respect for authority in their psychology.

## 9.3 Core beliefs and attitudes towards immigration

More in Common's work on immigration and national identity in the United States revealed how attitudes to immigration correlate with core beliefs. People with differing underlying psychologies subconsciously approach topics related to immigration from a different vantage point. In the US, we found that attitudes about immigration are closely associated with the authority moral foundation.<sup>55</sup>

In the UK, we observe similar results, as attitudes towards immigration correlate closely with feelings about British identity, the extent to which people value the moral foundation of authority, underlying authoritarian tendencies, and levels of threat perception.

For a person who relies more on the authority foundation, events or news related to immigration tend to act as a trigger to that foundation, thus activating this person's sense of respect for authority and the perception that it might be under threat. Authoritarianism relates to the cognitive need for oneness and sameness, also tied to the likelihood that an individual struggles to cope with change. Those with stronger authoritarian tendencies, who in the UK belong to the Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives segments, are more inclined to view immigration negatively, as they likely connect (even if subconsciously) immigration to a threat to the in-group.

Those with a higher level of threat perception are far more likely to believe that immigration is having a negative impact on the UK. This psychological architecture manifests in fears of becoming a minority.

*Interviewer*

*Maybe we could just start with any reflections on how you see the world around you, the community around you. Has either changed for the better or for the worse?*

*George*

**‘Well in a lot of respects it's changed for the worse, because we seem to be controlled by a minor religion, or it's supposed to be a minor religion in this country but we seem to be bending over backwards for it. And you can't mention it because you're classed as phobic.’**

*George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands*

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Despite the fact that census statistics identify five out of six people in the UK as white British, just under half of the white British participants in the study (47 per cent) are worried about becoming a minority in the UK. This includes absolute majorities of the Loyal Nationals (73 per cent), Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives. This contrasts with the Progressive Activists, who are not at all concerned about becoming a minority. Disengaged Battlers, who tend to be more positive on immigration than the other Disengaged segment, are more evenly divided.

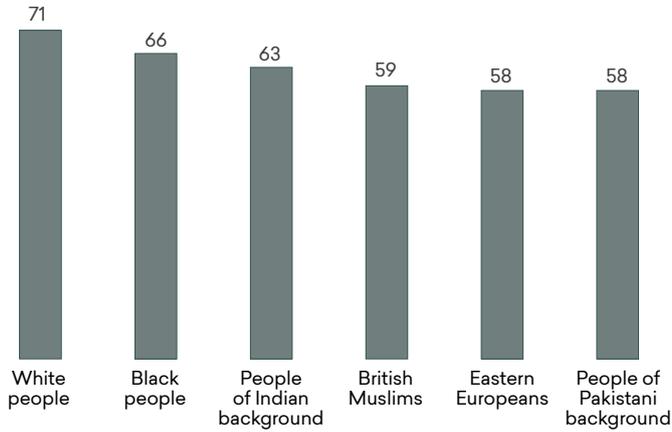
Differences in attitudes towards a variety of issues related to immigration, however, are not projected onto feelings towards different groups within the population. The temperature test of Britons' attitudes to groups of different ethnicities, or with migration backgrounds, reveals warm feelings of 58 or above (on a scale of 1-100) towards all of them. While imperfect, feelings thermometers are a useful tool to measure sentiments through a proxy question. These are much warmer than the feelings towards politicians, the wealthy, or to groups perceived as elites (see Chapter 8). The warmth that Britons feel toward black and white people is very similar (although Progressive Activists feel coldest towards white people and Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives show the biggest gap in feelings of warmth towards black people relative to whites). The feelings thermometer also reveals that some Britons have greater worries about Muslims, attitudes that will be analysed in the section below.

Figure 9.12.

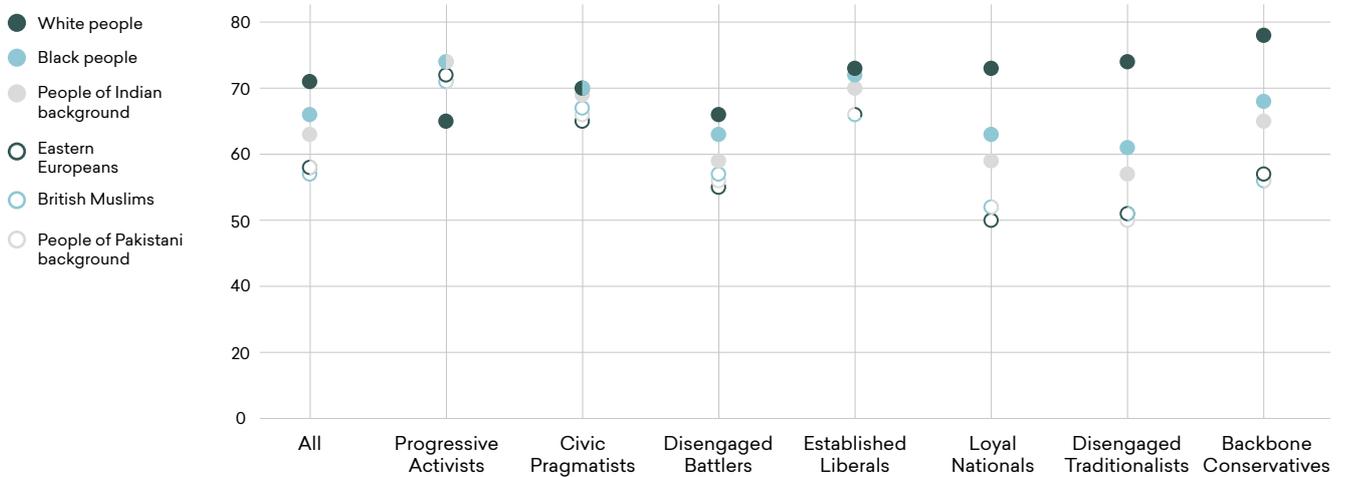
## Feelings thermometer towards different ethnic groups

Attitudes towards immigration do not seem to affect feelings towards minority groups. Majorities in all segments feel warm towards these groups

### Feelings towards different groups



### Feelings towards different groups by segment



Qu. How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative, and 100 means very positive. February 2020.

Source: More in Common 2020.

## Attitudes towards Muslims and Islam

The segments which are more sceptical about immigration are also more likely than other groups to worry that British Muslims do not integrate into British society, because they perceive their values to be different to those of the rest of the population. This view is held by half of the British population. These views are not driven by security concerns (90 per cent of Britons believe that most Muslims in the UK do not support terrorism) but rather by cultural anxieties.

Disinformation plays an important part in people's perceptions of groups such as British Muslims who feel unfamiliar to them. For example, Research by Hope Not Hate in 2019 found that 35 per cent of Britons believe that there are 'no-go zones' in the UK with sharia law which non-Muslims cannot enter. Many also believe in the so-called 'Great Replacement' conspiracy theory that immigration into the UK is part of a secret plan to make Britain a Muslim-majority country.<sup>56</sup> These anxieties are reflected in the fact that more than 70 per cent of Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives feel that Muslims are more protected than the rest of society.

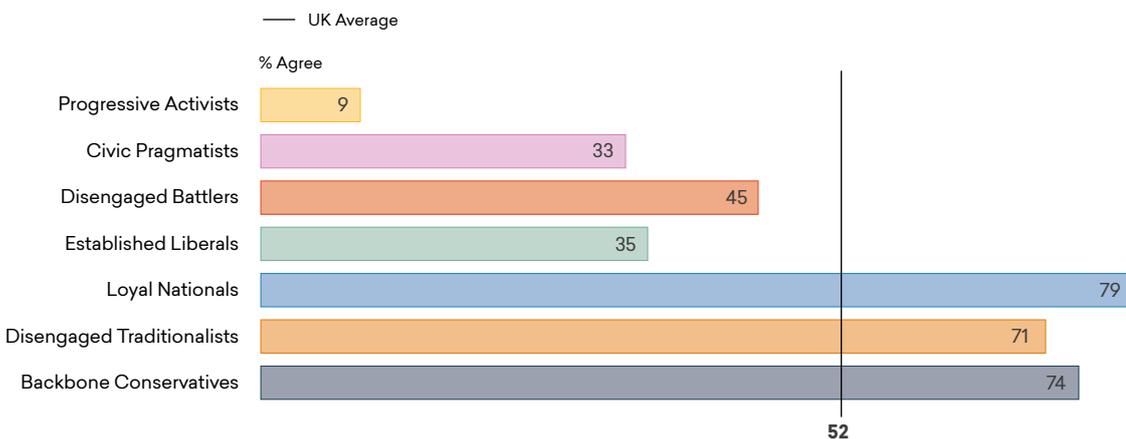
At the same time, Britons acknowledge that Muslims are often unfairly treated with suspicion due to prejudice. Sixty-two per cent share this view, while only 17 per cent say that this is not the case.

Figure 9.13.

### Protection of the rights of Muslims

'The segments most sceptical about immigration are more likely to believe that Muslims are given special rights

#### These days, people seem to care more about protecting the rights of Muslims than the rest of the community



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: These days, people seem to care more about protecting the rights of Muslims than the rest of the community. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Our conversations with British Muslims reflected very different perspectives that contrasted with the views of sceptics – of people who felt proud of their British identity but sometimes found it hard to fit in and feel accepted. Many reflected on feeling unwanted, and grappled with how to reconcile their love and appreciation for the UK, with experiences of hostility. They also reflected on the confusion of not feeling like they belonged in any other place (and literally not knowing any other country) but not always feeling fully accepted in their own society.



## British Muslims: in their own words



‘When you have that sort of, what I consider to be a lethal cocktail of the media and society demonising a particular group because of actions that are happening elsewhere around the world. And just ascribing that to individuals that live in the UK. That can make – even though you may feel like a belongingness, and it's the only thing that you know, living in London, born in London, went to school in London – it can make you feel threatened. It can also make you feel alienated within the only country you know. You can't go back home. You can't go anywhere else. Because you don't even know anything about it. You don't even have a home there. You don't even know anyone over there. But the people that you considered to be your sort of fellow citizens are the ones that are sort of demonising you and making you feel unwelcomed in your own country, that you consider to be your own country.’

*Omar, Progressive Activist, 35, London*

‘Yes, I think it is for me being a black Muslim and I'm female, it can be quite hard sometimes as well. Obviously, that's not the government's fault, but there could be more tools to educate people.’

*Zahra, 18, Progressive Activist, London*



‘I think living in the UK is a privilege. If you compare to all the places in the world where you could have been born, or you could be right now.’

*Rashida, Civic Pragmatist, 39, London*

‘British society in general? I love it. I've lived not just in London, but in other parts of England as well, like Manchester. And everywhere I go, I guess, the British society stays with me. And that's what's kept my good manners intact and things like that. So, when I think of British society, that's what I value from it. But apart from that, I just feel like I fit into British society more than any other society I've been around.’

*Hasan, Civic Pragmatist, 42, London*



‘When you think of Sadiq Khan being the Mayor of London... If a Muslim, working class background, Pakistani or Indian – I’m not sure – man can get to the Mayor of London, then of course I feel valued. I’m the same background. If they value him to be the mayor, then I feel valued too. I’d say I’ve always felt a level of belonging to British society given that I was born and raised here and I was schooled here. So, there’s no other place I could really identify with in a major way. However, in even saying that, I think there’s a recognition, almost an awkwardness, of whether it’s completely British or not. And I think no matter how much one wants to feel completely British, there is a level of almost it’s not going to be 100% British, coming from my background that is.’

*Anwar, Established Liberal, 29, South East*



‘I’ve been in this country for so many years. I kind of thought that I knew where my place was in this society. But Brexit, initially kind of changed everything. You know, friends of mine that I went to university with 20 years ago, some of them have actually left and they were kind of, not brown-skinned people. I’m talking about Italian and Spanish friends who no longer felt welcome. And I thought if they’re feeling like this, because they don’t visibly look any different. What about me now, as a brown person?’

*Yasmeen, Loyal National, 50, London*

## Key takeaways

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The demographic composition and cultural makeup of British society has changed significantly in recent generations. This has taken place alongside other far-reaching changes in work, technology, communications, and in social values, creating a sense of uncertainty and instability for many. These changes have made issues of identity and belonging more prominent in recent years, in the United Kingdom as in other societies. This context of change and anxiety makes Britain more vulnerable to narratives of division, which create a false sense of 'us-versus-them' within our society.

As Britain navigates difficult challenges in the 2020s, we will face continuing threats from efforts to fracture our society around issues of race, immigration, and identity. More is needed to develop our resilience to those threats, but we can build on some strong foundations. Public opinion in the United Kingdom remains strongly committed to inclusion, with an almost universal acceptance that anyone can be British, regardless of their skin colour, ethnicity, or accent. Alongside a shared sense of pride in Britain's rich and diverse history, most people also recognise that history is complicated. Indeed, part of our sense of pride in the United Kingdom today is the way that the country has changed, becoming a more diverse nation that no longer tolerates racism and discrimination as in the past.

Britain is a nation of 'balancers' on the issues of race and immigration. Four in five Britons agree that serious problems of racism still exist, and three in five feel that white people still have advantages over ethnic minorities. At the same time, three in five also worry about our society becoming too sensitive about things to do with race, just as a similar number worry about the country becoming stuck in debates about the past when we need to focus on the future.

Even within the seven population segments revealed in this report, we find within those segments a tendency to balance rather than go to extremes. Four segments (Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Established Liberals) are consistently more likely to believe that racism is a problem and that ethnic minorities are marginalised in the UK. They are more sympathetic to the concerns of ethnic minorities and more likely to feel that we need to make amends for the British Empire. Among Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives, a majority see these debates as divisive and want to move on from them. People in these segments are more sceptical of the benefits of immigration and often hold more negative perceptions of Muslims, whom they perceive as an out-group.

While some groups emphasise the importance of patriotism and tradition, and others openness and diversity, the differences between segments are less stark than we have found in many other national contexts. Even among the segments which consistently hold the strongest views on immigration issues, conversations with people in these segments often reveal nuance, openness, and the need to find a balance between opposing arguments. Nevertheless, extra care needs to be taken when managing issues on which public attitudes are more evenly divided and there is a clearer division in views among the seven segments – for example, on the concerns of about the 'traditional' white population becoming a minority, and on perceptions of whether society cares more about protecting Muslims' rights than those of others.

To avoid future debates on national identity, race, and immigration becoming divisive, we need to avoid the situation where nativists assume that support for immigration is also support for displacing traditional white British cultures and communities, and cosmopolitans frame opposition to immigration as racist or white supremacist. Public debates on these issues can be less divisive and more productive if they avoid 'us-versus-them' narratives, and instead engage the values, concerns, and motivations of different segments, rather than others' characterisations of them. More in Common plans to do more work in this area, building on the insights discussed in this chapter.

It is not inevitable that Britain will become more deeply divided on these issues. The large majority of people do not see issues of immigration in starkly polarised terms. Nor do policies around immigration and racial equity fit into simple binaries. Immigration policy always involves balancing complex factors that include different types of immigration intake, criteria for those programmes, opportunities for transition between categories such as temporary and permanent, obligations on applicants, and policies relating to integration. The balanced perspective of most people is that immigration is a positive for Britain, but that immigration programmes need to be managed competently and fairly, and also that more should be done to ensure the integration of new arrivals into British society and manage the impacts upon public services. This is true even among those who feel that policies have been out of balance in recent years.

# Chapter 10

## Countryside, Environment and Climate

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**86 per cent** are worried about climate change

**84 per cent** agree 'we need to celebrate and respect the beauty of the countryside'

**83 per cent** agree the drop in carbon emissions during the Covid-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment

Almost **2 in 3** people feel proud when taking action to protect the environment

**72 per cent** agree that working to protect the environment can help build a less divided and selfish society

**84 per cent** agree that ending our throw-away culture is one of the most important ways to protect the environment

**4 in 5** would accept stricter rules to protect Britain's environment

**49 per cent** say that it is hard to know what to do to help the environment

# Introduction

Across the British Isles, from the stark beauty of the Highlands of Scotland down through rolling hills, mountains, woodlands, and lakes to the signpost for Land's End on England's south-western tip, countryside and nature are deeply embedded in the identity and pride of British people. Preserving this natural heritage is universally seen as important, transcending the fault lines of region,



**I think it's everyone. Everyone has an important part to play. So in regards to regulations being put in place, in regards to what rules you should or shouldn't follow. Everyone has a part and everyone has an important part. There is no one who should or shouldn't be playing that part in trying to help.**

*Louise, Disengaged Traditionalist, 26, North West*



politics, class, and identity. For many people, Covid-19 has been a defining experience that has reconnected them to their natural environment, as lives slowed down, pollution levels subsided, and people reflected on how human activity influences the natural environment.

This chapter examines how Britain is more united than is often understood in concern about environmental issues and the need for more action. There is real opportunity for the environment and action on climate change to be a unifying force in British society. Equally, there is a risk that environmental protection could become a more divisive issue that is drawn into broader conflicts around identity and culture.

The chapter touches on just a few of our many findings relating to the environment and climate, which are explored in more detail in the *Britain Talks Climate* project, launched in November 2020 by Climate Outreach and the European Climate Foundation.<sup>57</sup>

## 10.1 Common ground

**‘There was such a tangible difference made from there being no cars on the streets. Just the birds, the fauna, the flora. That has never worried me before, but now, the difference is that I think we can make a difference. Whereas before I thought it was theoretical, now I know it’s a reality.’**

*Maya, Loyal National, 57, London*

Across Britain, the countryside and nature are the second most cited source of pride. All but one of the segments include the countryside and nature as one of their top three sources of pride (the one exception being the Disengaged Traditionalists, who place the NHS, UK history, and the armed forces slightly ahead of the countryside). This passion for Britain's natural environment and heritage is reflected in many aspects of British culture and national life, including the popularity of membership organisations such as the National Trust, with over five million members, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, with over a million members. Nature and the countryside also play an important role in local and national identities.

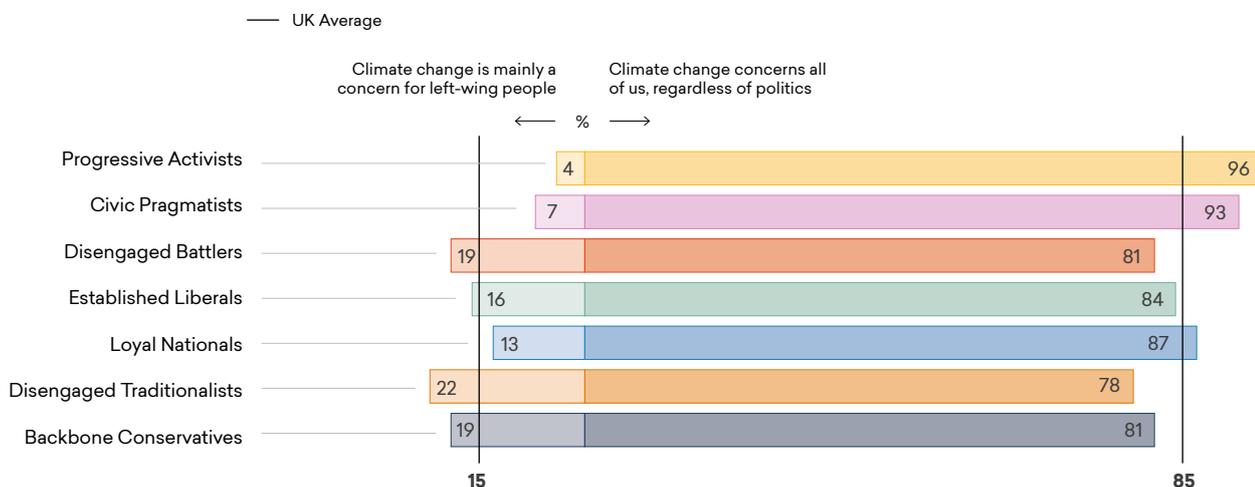
Environmental protection is not only a source of shared pride and identity, but it is also a shared priority for the 2020s. As Figure 10.1 shows, Britons are united in their belief that climate change matters for everyone regardless of their background, rather than being an elite concern. The Covid-19 lockdowns also caused a slowing down of the pace of life for many people, and made them think more about the importance of the natural environment.

Figure 10.1.

### Climate change concerns everyone

Britons agree that, regardless of background, climate change is an important issue for everyone

#### Climate change concerns all of us



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The shared experiences of working from home, traveling less, and spending time in their garden or local area have all strengthened people’s connection to the natural environment. Most importantly, these experiences have renewed a sense of agency that is fundamental to taking action. The result is perhaps counter-intuitive: at the same time as people are grappling with a pandemic and severe economic disruption, they have also become more concerned about the environment. Figure 10.2 shows that an overwhelming 83 per cent of people agree that the drop in carbon emissions seen during the Covid-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to. There were dramatic reductions in air pollution, the return of birdsong in many places, and even scenes of resurgent wildlife, such as a moment during the lockdown where a group of goats took control of the streets of the town of Llandudno in North Wales, which was widely shared on social media.

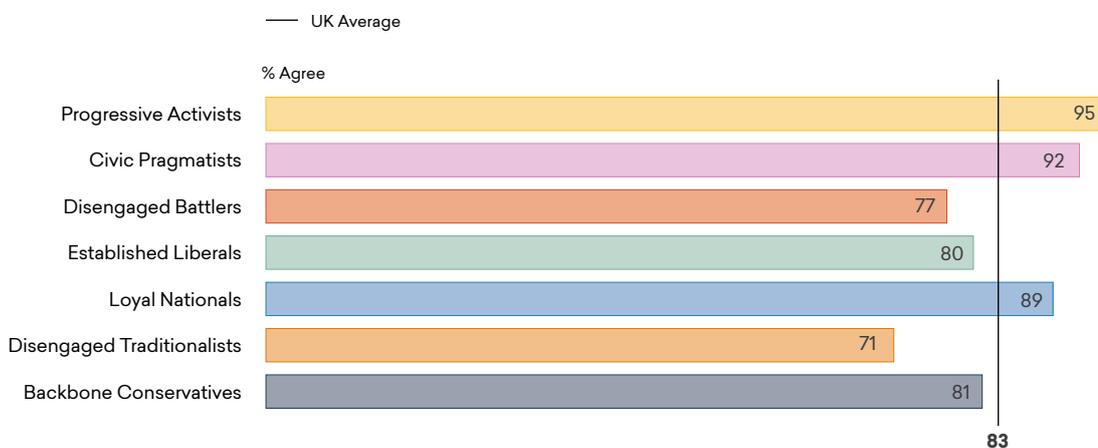
**83%** of people agree that the drop in carbon emissions seen during the Covid-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to

During the pandemic, people have become more aware of both how much human activity impacts our environment, and how a change in human activity can improve the state of the environment. This stronger public confidence in our ability to take action together is important in reducing the feelings of powerlessness that people often have in the face of the threat that climate change poses to the environment.

**Figure 10.2. Climate and Covid-19**

The pandemic has made us more confident that we can reduce our impact on the environment

**The drop in carbon emissions that was seen during the Covid-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to**



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The drop in carbon emissions that was seen during the Covid-19 lockdown shows that we can reduce our impact on the environment if we really want to. June 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

**‘We’ve seen so many more people who were enjoying the countryside who probably weren’t before. And if as a society, just one person can continue to do that who wasn’t doing it before, like yourself, then we’re making a difference, aren’t we? Because it’s not just going to be you. There is going to be other people who are going to do it.’**

*Miles, Loyal National, 38, East of England*

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This sense of the importance of nature and the countryside forms the basis of a strong shared commitment to our natural heritage. It also helps explain why, more than anything else, being environmentally friendly is a quality that people feel we as a society should focus on. For example, some 84 per cent agree that ‘we need to celebrate and respect the beauty of the countryside’, with 59 per cent agreeing strongly.

Concerns about environmental issues are wide-ranging – covering such issues as climate change, environmental pollution, plastic waste, the loss of biodiversity, farming and local food supply, pollutants in the water supply, and the restoration of natural habitats for flora and fauna. While there are differences in emphasis among population segments, these issues are not a flashpoint for disagreement in the way that they are in the United States.

As will be further explored in this chapter, other shared common ground on environmental issues includes:

- The belief that climate change is real
- The desire for government to lead in the fight against climate change
- Confidence that action on climate change is an opportunity to create jobs in Britain
- A desire shared by a clear majority for the UK to provide international leadership in tackling climate change
- The belief that large businesses should make the most changes to address climate change (sizeable minorities worry about responsibility for action being forced onto individuals who are already overburdened with just getting by)
- Widespread agreement that ending our throw-away culture is one of the most important ways to protect the environment
- Trust in climate scientists, who are seen as the most reliable sources of information on the environment. The rejection of climate science is seen only in a minority

## 10.2 Britons' values and the environment

Protecting the environment resonates across society because of its capacity to connect with a diverse range of values and everyday concerns that are important to different segments. The strongest views on the need for more action to protect the environment are held by Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Loyal Nationals. These segments hold different core beliefs that manifest in different values – Progressive Activists are driven by universalist values and human solidarity, Loyal Nationalists by the protection of tradition and symbols of the nation – yet they agree on the need to protect our natural habitat.

Concerns are shared by Disengaged Battlers, Established Liberals, Backbone Conservatives, and Disengaged Traditionalists, although their motivations can differ (for example, Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists are especially concerned about the rural way of life and farmers' livelihoods). This does not mean that all segments embrace environmentalism equally – they vary in the intensity of their concern, and several are alienated by the more disruptive forms of climate activism championed by Extinction Rebellion. But there is common ground on pride in the environment, pride in taking action to protect it, belief in the reality of climate change, wanting the government to do more, and supporting initiatives such as investments in sustainable infrastructure and emerging green industries.

One of the reasons why acting to protect the environment has the potential to bring people together is that, for most people, being more environmentally conscious is already a part of their lives and their identity. Most have already made changes in their lives to adopt more environmentally conscious ways of living, from changing their consumption habits and reducing their use of fossil fuels through to recycling and supporting environmental organisations.

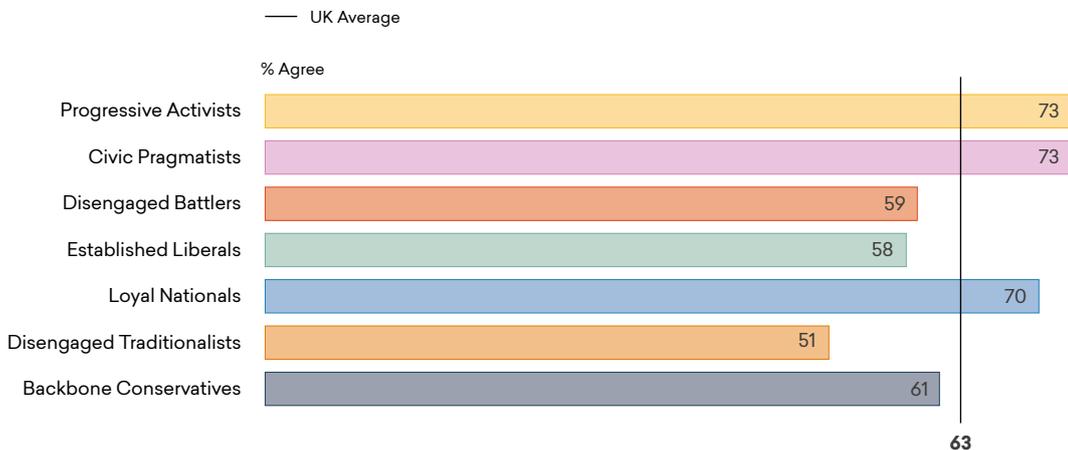
**Protecting the environment is a source of pride for almost two in three people**, as Figure 10.3 shows, with majorities feeling this way in every segment. This holds true for an outright majority of both Remain and Leave voters, of every age group except the over 75s (of whom 47 per cent feel proud), and supporters of every political party except the Brexit Party (at 49 per cent, with disagreement from just 9 per cent of Brexit Party voters).

Taking action to protect the environment is a cross-cutting issue that can empower individuals with a sense of agency, potentially improving the overall health of democracy, particularly among the Disengaged groups. This is especially significant because **there are few similar issues of public concern where individuals feel that they personally can make a difference** – what is true of the environment is not, for example, true of issues such as immigration, unemployment, violent crime, housing, or transport policy.

## Pride and the environment

A majority of all segments say they feel proud when they do their bit for the environment

### When I do my bit to protect the environment, I feel proud



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: When I do my bit to protect the environment, I feel proud.  
February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Alongside this pride in practical action is a concern about climate change:

- 86 per cent of Britons say that they are worried about climate change, while just 3 per cent do not believe that climate change is real.
- However, 20 per cent attribute climate change to the Earth's natural cycle, rather than as the result of human activities.
- A majority of every segment believes that climate change is happening as a result of human activity, although there are sceptics in some segments – for example, only 50 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists agree that climate change is the result of human activity (in contrast to 94 per cent of Progressive Activists).
- A majority (59 per cent) believe that the UK is already feeling the effects of climate change, a belief strongest among Progressive Activists (83 per cent) but weakest among Disengaged Traditionalists (36 per cent).

The section below looks at the specific values and concerns for each of the segments. These influence the way that they think about protecting the environment and preserving Britain's countryside and nature.

**Progressive Activists** are more motivated about environmental concerns than others, feeling its importance and urgency. Environmental activism is an important part of their personal identity.

- While 77 per cent of the population support a Green New Deal, virtually all Progressive Activists support this idea. Almost all believe that new jobs can be created in the process of reducing carbon emissions.
- Progressive Activists are most likely to say that the government is not doing enough to tackle climate change (96 per cent versus 60 per cent on average).
- Four in five say that they talk about the climate often to others, double the number in the general population.

- Progressive Activists are less concerned than any other segment about protecting current farming practices, with 74 per cent saying it is important to cut carbon emissions quickly, even if it means changing UK farming practices and rural landscapes (compared to 32 per cent on average).

Progressive Activists say that thinking about climate change makes them feel angry, anxious, and scared. The greatest benefits they see from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and helping the poorest around the world. As is further explored in the *Britain Talks Climate* project from Climate Outreach based on the data in this chapter,<sup>58</sup> for Progressive Activists climate change is a lens through which they see many other social and political issues.

While they may be less vocal about their views, **Civic Pragmatists** share many of the concerns of Progressive Activists, and derive a strong sense of pride from practical action to protect the environment.

- They also see potential economic benefits from taking action on climate change (almost all are in favour of a Green New Deal).
- Most Civic Pragmatists think that the government is not doing enough to protect the environment.
- Large numbers are in favour of the UK working alongside other countries to tackle crises, such as Covid-19 and climate change.

The feelings that Civic Pragmatists most associate with climate change are helplessness, anxiety, and sadness. They are worried about climate change and try to follow a low-carbon lifestyle, but lack the confidence to engage more politically on climate change. The greatest benefits they see from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and preserving the beauty of our countryside.

**Loyal Nationals** share concerns about the environment and climate change and also believe that we need urgent, radical action.

- Three in five Loyal Nationals report feeling very or extremely worried about climate change. Across a range of environmental issues, from plastic pollution and deforestation to air pollution and food waste, they show consistently high levels of concern.
- Their strong psychological orientation to loyalty and love of country is expressed in wanting to protect the UK's environment for future generations, and their environmental views are marked by a frustration with elites and concern for fairness in where the burdens of adjustment are borne.
- Loyal Nationals are worried about how climate change will affect them personally. They are the most likely to say they worry it will mean they won't be able to eat as much meat and dairy (33 per cent), drive a petrol or diesel car (40 per cent), or be able to live in the same place (23 per cent).
- Loyal Nationals have the highest concern about British farmers' livelihoods of any group, at 44 per cent compared to an average of 34 per cent.
- Around one in three Loyal Nationals say that, instead of cutting emissions, we should focus on protecting people in the UK from extreme weather (joint highest with the Backbone Conservatives).
- Loyal Nationals are more likely than any segment (at 17 per cent) to say that 'preserving God's creation' is an important reason for action on environmental issues.

There is a surprising amount of common ground between the patriotic Loyal Nationals and the internationalist Progressive Activists on the need to protect the environment. Both are more likely to support additional taxes on frequent flyers, fines for companies that use excessive plastic packaging, and setting food waste targets for supermarkets. Loyal Nationals also share the Progressive Activists' desire for government intervention and measures to ensure that businesses change their practices. Where they differ is that Loyal Nationals tend to think that there is little point in the UK trying to tackle climate change alone if other countries keep on polluting, as they do not want other countries taking advantage of Britain's goodwill.

Loyal Nationals associate climate change with feelings of sadness, helplessness, and anxiety. The greatest benefits they see from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and preserving the beauty of the countryside.

The views of **Established Liberals** on environmental issues are broadly in line with population averages. While Established Liberals support action to combat climate change, they are less likely to see it as an urgent problem than other socially liberal groups.

- Established Liberals are more sceptical of government intervention than others. They are the second most likely to say that the government should only play a bigger role in our lives while the Covid-19 pandemic is ongoing.
- While they split almost evenly on whether action should be radical or gradual, Established Liberals are unlikely to support increased taxation as the price of taking action.

Established Liberals most associate climate change with feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and sadness. The greatest benefits they see from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and preserving the beauty of our countryside. They prefer more of the focus for action on the environment being on a personal level.

**Disengaged Battlers** and **Disengaged Traditionalists** are more concerned about environmental issues than might be assumed – even though they typically have lower concerns than other groups. They are more likely than other segments to say that they do not know how we should respond to climate change. While only 5 per cent of both segments are sceptical that climate change is happening (with a further 12 per cent of Battlers and 14 per cent of Traditionalists being unsure), they are less supportive of the changes that are required to tackle climate change. The Disengaged segments are far more likely than average to say that they are too busy focusing on day-to-day survival to consider climate change.

- In general, Disengaged Battlers are more likely to support environmental measures.
- Disengaged Traditionalists have the least concern about a wide range of environment issues (for example, on climate change 72 per cent are worried and 28 per cent are not). A significant minority within the segment believes that climate change can be attributed to the planet's natural cycles, rather than being the result of human activity.
- While Disengaged Battlers associate climate change with feelings of anxiety, sadness, and helplessness, Disengaged Traditionalists are more likely than any group to have no feelings at all about it (although this is only true for one in four).
- Both segments feel that the greatest benefits from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and preserving the beauty of our countryside.
- Disengaged Battlers feel that green policies can create long-lasting jobs, although they are not confident they will benefit from those jobs.

- Disengaged Traditionalists who have a stronger commitment to environmental action often take pride in Britain's history of industrial innovation and engineering, and mention examples such as wind energy. Real-world examples help the Disengaged groups make connections between environmental protection and the creation of jobs and business opportunities in their communities.
- Disengaged Traditionalists are more likely to say that climate change is mainly a concern for left-wing people, but even then, only 22 per cent hold that view (versus 15 per cent on average). This highlights that, even in the most sceptical group, there is a recognition of the importance of environmental issues.

**Backbone Conservatives** identify being environmentally friendly as a top priority for their ideal version of the UK, although they prioritise different issues to more progressive groups. They are much less likely to trust many of the most outspoken activist voices on environmental issues. Given their strong personal identification with the Conservative Party and support for the government, they are also more likely to support the government's environmental policies than any other segment, and to say they believe that the government is doing the right amount on climate change already.

- While there are more climate sceptics among Backbone Conservatives than any other segment, a clear majority (57 per cent) believes that climate change is real and caused by human action.
- Backbone Conservatives are above average for many personal actions to protect the environment, such as recycling, buying local foods, reducing food waste, and taking steps to reduce their electricity use.
- Being environmentally friendly is in their top three characteristics of an ideal UK.
- Where they differ is that they are more likely to feel that responding to climate change requires slow, gradual change rather than urgent, radical change (by a margin of 47 to 37 per cent).
- A clearly majority of 60 per cent of Backbone Conservatives see job creation opportunities in cutting emissions, even though there are more people concerned that cutting carbon emissions may be a threat to British jobs in this segment than any other. Only one in ten say there are no benefits in taking action on climate change.
- Most Backbone Conservatives say that, if forced to choose, they would prioritise protecting current UK farming practices over taking action to cut carbon emissions.
- The feelings most evoked by climate change for Backbone Conservatives are helplessness, sadness, and anxiety.
- Backbone Conservatives are above average in wanting to change Britain's throw-away culture as a method of protecting the environment.
- Like the Disengaged groups, the greatest benefits they see from action on climate change are protecting future generations, creating a healthier society, and preserving the beauty of our countryside.

The environmental issues on which Backbone Conservatives are most likely to engage are supporting local farmers and suppliers, protecting British farming, and keeping the rural way of life alive in the countryside. Backbone Conservatives are especially supportive of protecting the environment by changing our throw-away culture, being only slightly behind Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists on this measure.



## In their own words



‘People talked about there being a refugee crisis in 2015. That’s nothing in comparison to what is going to happen in the next ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years as areas get more prone to drought, to flooding.’

*Callum, Progressive Activist, 34, East of England*



‘I think you can see, if you look over the last twenty years, I think you can tell yourself. So I’m not worried it’s something that’s going to affect my lifetime, but I do worry about my children and their children. I do think it’s something we need to take seriously and start little changes now.’

*Peter, Civic Pragmatist, 37, North West*



‘I think it’s a risk to the world but it’s not a huge risk to me personally, in my privileged position in the UK, so the biggest impact will be felt by people in Third World countries. I, maybe incorrectly, don’t believe it’s going to really change my life in the next ten to twenty years or longer and that means I don’t prioritise it as much as other things, which I think are going to have a really direct impact on my life now.’

*Tanya, Established Liberal, 27, London*



‘I think I’m worried, and again I’m looking at all of these animals that are becoming extinct. I was reading something this morning about the amount of plastic that’s at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea and how it’s all accumulating and you think, that’s going to affect marine life, it’s going to affect fish, it’s going to affect people’s diet. So yeah, it’s very worrying. It is very worrying. You wonder what it’s going to be like. I think back to when I was young and how much it has changed, and now in another thirty odd years, how bad will it get?’

*Oliver, Loyal National, 38, Scotland*



‘The reality is, to buy things without plastic on is something that’s really reserved for middle class people. Because if you go to the supermarket, everything’s wrapped in plastic that you can’t recycle. And it’s lovely to have this idea that we’re going out with our cotton eco tote bags and picking up our fresh veg that’s laid out still with the mud on it, but that’s something that really is only applicable to people with the money to buy those kinds of products. For everybody else, especially at the moment when we’re buying a lot of frozen food, everything is wrapped in non-recyclable plastic. And if you can’t afford to change that then you’re forced to damage the environment and keep using plastic. I don’t see how it can ever change unless it’s changed on some higher level.’

*Alex, Disengaged Battler, 42, Wales*



‘It’s always “the coldest one since that” or “the hottest one since that”. You’ve got to be realistic with it. Climate change is happening. You only have to look at history to see how the world has changed as a result of the changing climate throughout the years. Islands have been disappearing for a long, long time and the world is naturally changing. Us recycling a bit more and not using plastic straws, whilst it will do a little bit, it’s not nearly going to do enough to change the world in general. That comes from your major oil companies and governments. So, me deciding to have a steak for dinner doesn’t really make all the difference.’

*Paul, Backbone Conservative, 38, South East*



‘I’ll admit I don’t understand enough about carbon footprint. People saying that they can pay to offset their carbon footprint, that just sounds illogical to me. But I’ve always been a person who is big on recycling. I can’t stand waste. I will sooner slice the end off the bread and use it before I would just throw it away because it’s got a little bit of a bad spot. The idea of wasting anything is just not cool with me.’

*Jodie, Disengaged Traditionalist, 39, South East*

## 10.3 Can protecting the environment bring us together?

**‘It can’t be just one section of society that does something and the rest doesn’t do anything... [Change] has to come from all parts because obviously, it’s like a puzzle. There will be decisions that have to be made by governments but there’s also little efforts that people have to be making and also that lots of companies have to do to fit everything together. Because if it’s only something that is coming from the individuals, we’re only going to get so far. So, everything has to be put together.’**

*Anne, Loyal National, 56, London*

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Both quantitative and qualitative results from this study suggest that British people have far more common ground than differences on environmental protection. This section examines findings around the opportunity for environmental protection to help bring people together, demonstrating the extent to which concern for the environment aligns with different values, shared concerns about the future, and a more immediate sense that now is the right time for change. The section after this (section 10.4) looks at the flip side of the environment as a force for unity: whether environmental issues could be used to cause division within society.

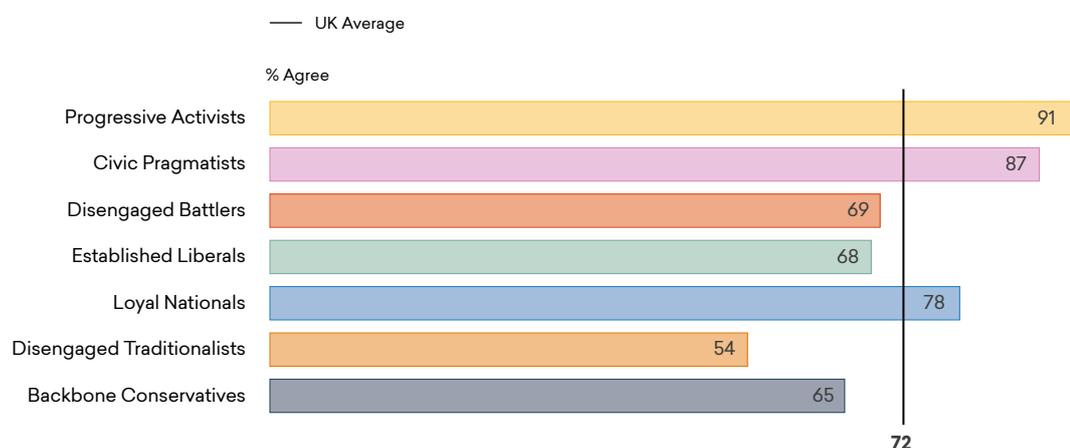
Agreement that protecting the environment is something that can help bring communities together is widely shared across the population. Environmental concerns are connected with deeper values and aspirations that relate to how we live our lives and the kind of society we want to become. As Figure 10.4 shows, **72 per cent agree that working to protect the environment can help build a society based more on sharing rather than selfishness, and on community rather than division.** Two-thirds or more of every segment other than Disengaged Traditionalists agree with this proposition. In our conversations, people made connections between environmental responsibility and a wide range of other concerns, including becoming a less materialistic society, taking responsibility for their children’s future, and making the UK more of an international leader.

Figure 10.4.

## The environment as a unifying force

All segments of society believe that protecting the environment can bring us together

### Working together to protect the environment could build a society that's based on sharing not selfishness, community not division



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Working together to protect the environment could build a society that's based on sharing not selfishness, community not division. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

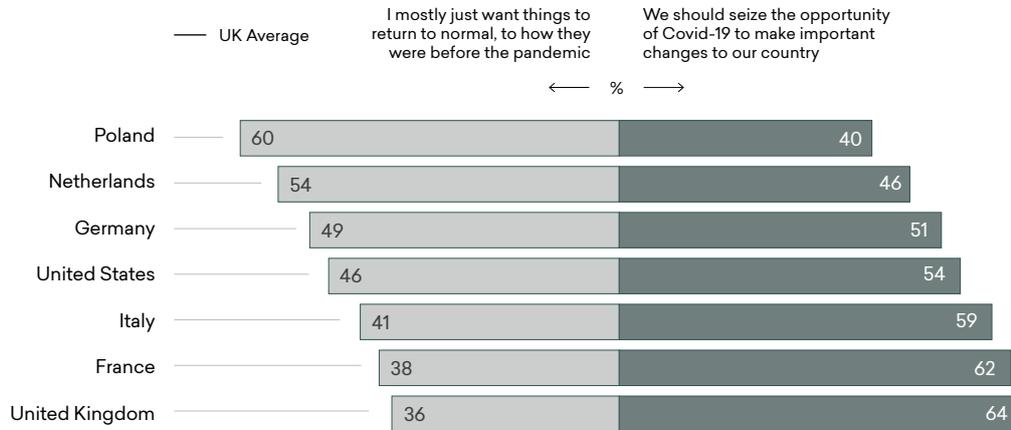
One of the reasons why environmental protection is unusual is that it speaks deeply to both progressive and conservative values. This helps to explain why, as a priority for Britain, it ranks only behind improving the NHS and reducing unemployment. For progressives, it is associated with ecological consciousness, global justice (given the disproportionate impact of climate change on the poor), and economic inequality (given the contribution of corporations and especially the fossil fuel industry to climate change). For conservatives, it is associated with the preservation of natural heritage, the importance of farming communities and the traditional way of life, and a sense of intergenerational responsibility. The qualitative research undertaken for this study demonstrated that this sense of intergenerational responsibility resonates with more sceptical population segments, particularly older people who are aware of the significant changes in the environment over the course of their lifetimes.

Another key reason for the environment's potential to bring people together is that it is also connected to a more immediate desire for change after a very disruptive period caused by Covid-19 and the Brexit divisions. As Figure 10.5 shows, More in Common's study of public attitudes across seven countries released in September 2020 found a stronger mood in favour of 'making important changes to our country' in Britain than any other country surveyed. As Figure 10.2 showed, one of the important changes in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic is the extent to which our relationship with nature is improving.

Figure 10.5.

## Back to normal or time for change?

After difficult and divisive years, Britons are looking for change



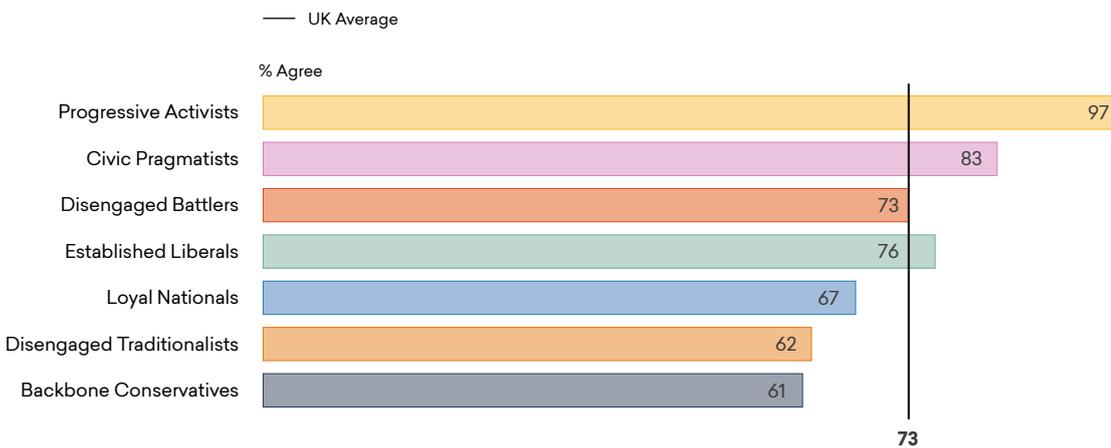
For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 10.6.

## Climate action and job creation

In all segments, people see cutting carbon emissions as having the potential to create jobs

### Cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK



For full question texts see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Although the emotions that people associate with climate change are mostly negative, there is strong positive support for taking action on climate and the environment through government policy decisions as well as individual decisions:

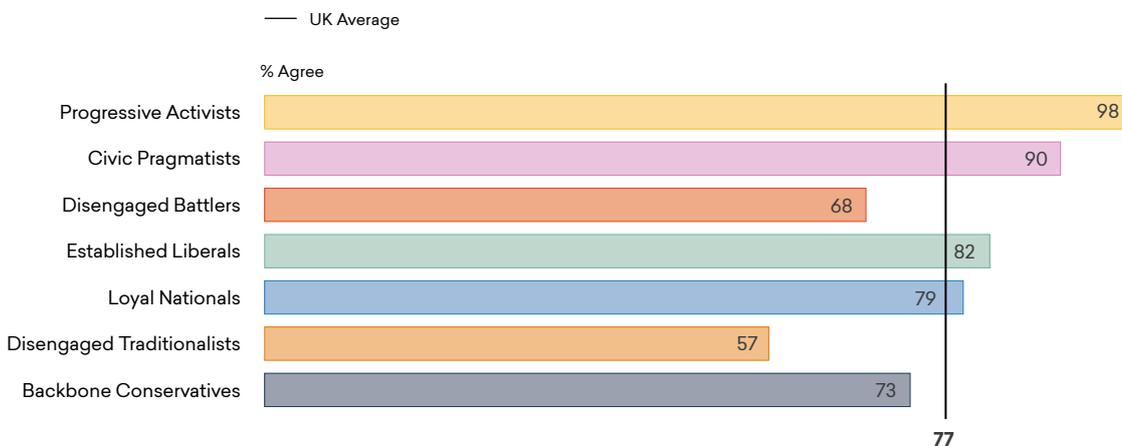
- 73 per cent of Britons think that cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK rather than a threat to jobs, with high levels of agreement in all segments.
- 62 per cent want the UK to be a global leader on climate change issues.
- Majorities of every segment support a ‘Green New Deal’ (defined as large government investments to make the economy more environmentally friendly). This language does not have the same association with the political left as in the United States, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson adopting language of a New Deal, a Green Deal, and a new green industrial revolution.<sup>59</sup>
- Although the Green New Deal has less support from Disengaged segments, especially Disengaged Traditionalists, a solid majority is still in favour.
- A staggering 93 per cent of Britons agree that government support to businesses should be conditional on those businesses making commitments to reduce their carbon emissions and protect the environment.
- Only 16 per cent of people worry that it will cost too much to tackle climate change and think that we should be giving priority to other things instead.

Figure 10.7.

## Green New Deal

Support for a Green New Deal transcends political divisions

### Developing a “Green New Deal” that makes large-scale government investments to make our economy more environmentally friendly



Qu. There is currently debate about different political measures. Would you support or oppose the following proposal? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

**Another way in which action on the environment has appeal across society is that it promises to address different problems and excesses in modern lifestyles.** An issue frequently raised in focus group conversations about the environment is the excessive amount of plastic in packaging and day-to-day purchases, something which worries 91 per cent of people, including 68 per cent who describe themselves as very or extremely worried by it.

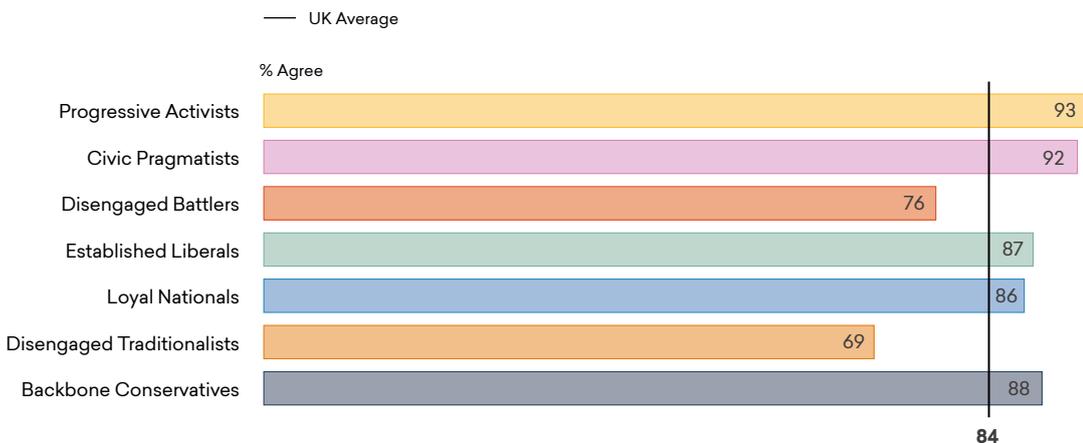
Britons share a high level of awareness of plastic pollution, and especially its effects on oceans, even among the Disengaged groups. They are even more supportive of ending throw-away culture as a means to protect the environment and support measures such as fining brands that use excessive or difficult to recycle plastic packaging. Eighty-five per cent think we should set targets for supermarkets to reduce food waste. Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists are more supportive of these ideas than the average, but there is significant support even among Disengaged Traditionalists (who are also the most consistently sceptical segment regarding climate change).

Figure 10.8.

## Throw-away culture

There is widespread support among segments to end our throw-away culture

### Ending our throw-away culture is one of the most important ways to protect the environment



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Ending our throw-away culture is one of the most important ways to protect the environment. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

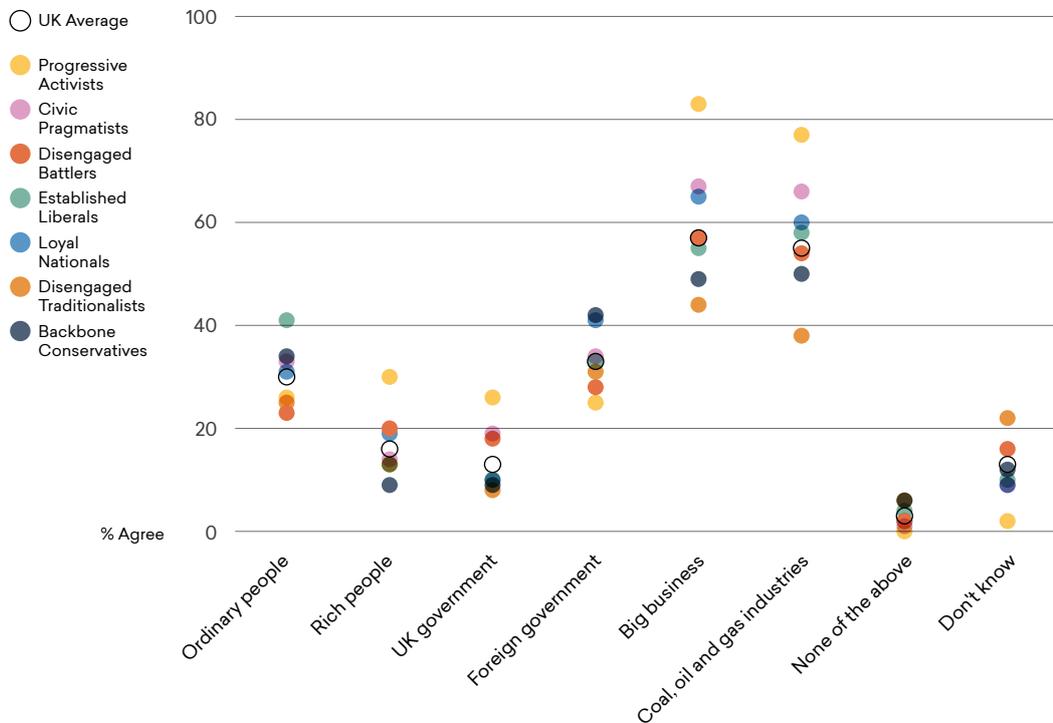
A surprising finding is that three-quarters of Britons agree that the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged them to think more about the environmental consequences of their consumption, such as buying more seasonal products. The three segments that most strongly agree are an unusual combination: Progressive Activists, Loyal Nationals, and Backbone Conservatives, highlighting the way in which the environment resonates in unexpected ways across the segments.

While there are differences of emphasis that reflect differences in their values, Figure 10.9 shows that on responsibility for environmental harm, the segments have a difference in emphasis, but not a fundamental difference in worldview. Britons attribute blame for causing damage to the environment chiefly to big businesses and the fossil fuel industry. Both Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives are outliers in being influenced by specific political narratives: Progressive Activists are far more likely to blame rich people, while Backbone Conservatives are far more likely to blame foreign governments.

Figure 10.9.

## Who is to blame for environmental damage?

Britons blame big business and fossil fuel industries more than ordinary people and the government



Qu. Who do you think is most responsible for causing damage to the environment? Please pick up to three. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Britons are also united in believing that, to address climate change and protect the environment, leadership must come from the government. Differences of emphasis are reflected here – with stronger views among socially liberal groups that more needs to be done – but there is agreement that the government needs to take charge in tackling climate change.

While there are differences of viewpoint about the pace of change required to protect the environment, public opinion is strongly in favour of more and faster action: asked to choose between the two options, 52 per cent say radical change is needed, versus 32 per cent who opt for slower, more gradual change. Only 6 per cent believe that we shouldn't change anything to respond to climate change. Majorities of the Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, and Disengaged Battlers say that urgent, radical change is required, while pluralities (although not outright majorities) of the four other segments think that slow, gradual change would be better.

**'Radical. I think we've done the gradual thing and it's not made any change, particularly. I think the gradualness that we're doing isn't catching up with the speed that the environment is changing. So, I think we need something radical to actually catch up and get ahead of it as well. Not that I know what that is.'**

*Daniel, Civic Pragmatist, 34, North West*



## In their own words



'Only governments can make those big decisions about climate change. The big decision that the British government could take would be to replace all our fossil-fuel burning stations and replace them with a nuclear programme. And those are things that I can't do. None of these are things that we can do...'

*Richard, Backbone Conservative, 69, East of England*



'I think it would be better if it came from the top down. I think big businesses should change. Me, I really just feel like a small person in a really big planet. So, I don't really feel like I can make that much of a difference although I do know that it takes one person to make a change or whatever...'

*Elizabeth, Loyal National, 39, Scotland*



'I think governments would be a good start. Governments are the people that are running the country. They decide the laws and the way people have to live. So that's I think where the main driver has to come from.'

*Jake, Disengaged Traditionalist, 47, South East*



'You can see with the Coronavirus how they have developed strategies, they need to do the same with climate change. They need to get the panel together and see what they can do. Then it's not just our country. You need all of the countries, you know, you need everybody to do it. It's no good one country doing it and then the other countries not doing it. So you need to be all together, united.'

*Sophie, Loyal National, 32, North East*



'I think definitely every individual is responsible for taking their own action and if individuals don't take responsibility then we'll never get anywhere. But, there is also a responsibility within the government to make sure that the public have the information and the resources that they need to be able to take their individual action, so we've all got a big part to play.'

*Amber, Civic Pragmatist, 22, West Midlands*



‘We’ve always expected politicians and states to act on this and to enforce things from the top down. But actually, what we’re seeing more and more is companies and organisations and collectives just doing it themselves... That seems like it’s got a lot more traction and ability to act more quickly than the government can... it’s everyone’s responsibility to be aware of what they can do. If you happen to be somebody who can control the way your company spends its money or how it travels and to give incentives, for example, like Cycle to Work or subsidising people who come by public transport, that kind of thing, as a company or organisation you can actually have a big impact on your local area.’

*Sally, Progressive Activist, 29, South East*

## 10.4 Risks: Could the environment become a force that divides us?

**'I think [Extinction Rebellion] maybe have a point about some things. But they go about things in the completely wrong way and just annoy the general public. If they could get the general public on side and give them the evidence to try and get things done. I mean if you've got people trying to get to work and there's people stopping your train, you're just hacking off everyone on that train but it's not going to get everyone on your side.'**

*Oliver, Loyal National, 38, Scotland*

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In countries such as the United States, debates about the environment and climate have been drawn into wider conflicts around identity and values. These debates can flare up quickly, inflamed by opinion commentators, social media, and online disinformation. This section examines the risks of these divisive dynamics playing out in the United Kingdom around climate and environmental issues, notwithstanding the common ground among Britons and the potential for action on the environment to unify people from across different segments of the population.

The risk of environmental issues becoming a force for division arises from the fact that many aspects of people's daily lives have environmental consequences – such as the industries on which communities rely for jobs and livelihoods, diesel and petrol cars, air travel, the consumption of meat and dairy, and leisure activities. In some instances, people's sense of identity or community are strongly attached to those activities (for example, historically the identity of many working class communities in Britain was shaped around coal mining). Criticism of those activities, or efforts to encourage people to change behaviour, can be perceived or portrayed as an attack on the identity of people involved in those activities. In turn, this can provoke resentment and social division. The *gilets jaunes* (Yellow Jackets) movement that emerged in France in 2018 is one example of this dynamic, when a government proposal to increase the tax on diesel fuel became the lightning rod for a much larger movement to emerge across the regions of France, galvanising millions of people who resented 'out-of-touch elites' in Paris (who mostly do not drive) making their lives more difficult.

The unifying potential for environmental protection could be undermined if it is drawn into the broader forces of division and 'us-versus-them' polarisation, where people feel forced to choose between two starkly opposed alternatives. Environmental issues could be drawn into existing divisions in society. The possibility for environmental issues to become a future flashpoint between Leaver and Remainer identities is reflected in the finding that while 68 per cent of those who voted to Remain say that they trust climate scientists, only 46 per cent of Leavers agree. Similarly, university graduates are more likely to support the tactics of environmental activists than non-graduates (27 per cent v 18 per cent).

Environmental debates have the potential to become more emotionally charged, and therefore potentially more divisive, because environmental actions often have a moral dimension. Groups may be divided into good or bad according to their actions, and they can pass moral judgments on each other and create a sense of shame (for polluting, failing to recycle, or continuing environmentally harmful activities). This could lead to environmental debates becoming more connected to differences in identity (not just opinions), where groups' sense of victimhood at other groups' perceived privileges are activated.

The fact that environmental issues have such strong resonance with progressive and liberal values can lead to those voices defining environmental policies solely within the confines of their identity. However, because their values and sense of identity are often very different from other segments of society, this can be alienating to those who also have values that connect strongly to environmental protection, but from different standpoints. While research shows that protecting the environment actually has much wider appeal, there are also associated risks:

- Environmental protection is mostly *not* currently seen as a partisan issue in Britain, even if there is greater intensity and higher levels of support among Progressive Activists especially. Asked whether climate change is mainly a concern for left-wing people, relatively few people agree – with the highest proportions among the segments being 22 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists and 19 per cent of Backbone Conservatives.
- Nevertheless, the intensity of Progressive Activists' belief in environmental priorities, and their very loud voices on social media, makes it possible for them to dominate advocacy around climate and the environment. If that happens, the dynamics of affective polarisation could lead conservatives with strong political identities to oppose environmental protection, merely to oppose progressives who support it. Negative partisanship is often a stronger motivator than positive partisan loyalties. This creates incentives for political actors to oppose policies that are closely tied to their opponents' identities.
- Activist organisations may choose to polarise a debate or an issue as a means of mobilising highly engaged supporters into action, but this can create a dynamic of activists versus the wider community. While 67 per cent of the population agrees with the aims of environmental activists, only 25 per cent of the population believe that their tactics are helping the cause. Some 60 per cent of Progressive Activists support the aims of environmental activists and think they are helping the cause, yet just 7 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists and 10 per cent of Backbone Conservatives do.
- There are perceptions of double standards from celebrities and environmental campaigners, with 52 per cent of the population agreeing that 'environmental campaigners are mostly hypocrites who fly on holiday while lecturing the rest of us about how to live'. Only 16 per cent of Progressive Activists agree with this premise.

To prevent these risks, environment challenges and policies need to be framed in ways that speak to the values and identities of each of the segments, and to the shared values of all.

Another significant risk to sustaining broad and unifying support for environmental protection is the **perception of unfairness in who bears the costs of change**. There are many dimensions to improving environmental protection, some of which involve costs and changes to day-to-day habits. For those changes to enjoy widespread acceptance, they need to appear fair – that is, they must not impose burdens on particular groups in society in ways that

people feel are unfair or disproportionate. Moral foundations theory highlights the importance for people with stronger conservative values that fairness involves proportionality and no cheating. To avoid perceptions of unfairness, the costs of adjustment should not be disproportionately on people who have little capacity to bear those costs, such as people on lower incomes and those who are forced to travel longer distances for work.

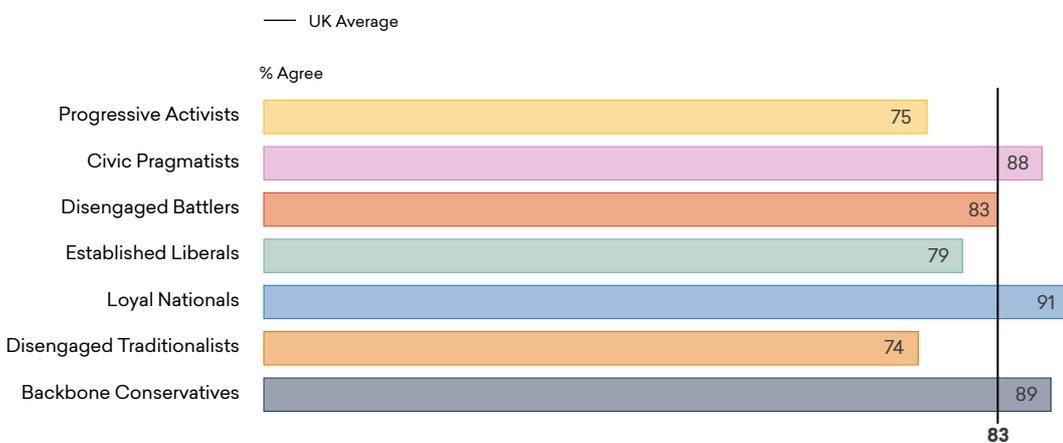
The importance of fairness in environmental measures is reflected in the strong support among Backbone Conservatives and Loyal Nationals shown in Figure 10.10 for stricter environmental rules applying to everyone. Overall, eight in ten Britons say they would accept stricter rules if they applied equally to all. Fairness appears to be a more salient concern than the fact that environmental protection measures may have costs, although it is notable that around two in five Backbone Conservatives and Disengaged Traditionalists express concerns about green policies affecting how individuals travel. This was reflected in focus group conversations, such as with concerns about electric vehicles only being affordable to the haves, while governments impose heavier taxes on the have-nots who can only afford diesel or petrol cars.

Figure 10.10.

## Rules for protecting the environment

Provided that rules apply equally to everyone, the segments agree on stricter regulation to protect the environment

### Stricter rules to protect the environment are only fine if the same rules apply to everyone



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Stricter rules to protect the environment are only fine if the same rules apply to everyone. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The potential for environmental debates to become divisive is increased by the wider problem of the **growth of disinformation and conspiracy theories**.<sup>60</sup> Information about the environment is being communicated in an environment of declining faith in institutions and established media. This highlights the need to elevate expert voices that resonate with the wider public and that carry scientific authority and credibility. This is especially critical as disinformation efforts grow more intense, and their effects become more ubiquitous on social media. Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists have greater trust in a range of sources of information on the climate and report a high level of awareness. Some of the most important sources of information about the environment are not well trusted, particularly among the Disengaged segments, Loyal Nationals, and Backbone Conservatives.

The danger of the environment being drawn into wider societal conflicts is in addition to a more general threat to its capacity to bring people together: the risk that people lose confidence in their own agency and in the UK's **ability to have a genuinely positive impact** on the environment. The scale of the threat of climate change and the need for collective action by nations all across the world can be debilitating, because of the difficulty of seeing the connection between small actions and their impact.

- Preoccupation with financial survival makes it harder for people to engage with longer-term environmental concerns, with almost one in three saying that they are so busy focusing on day-to-day survival that climate change does not cross their minds.
- The complexity of environmental science is a problem – just under half of the population says that it is hard to know what to do to help the environment.
- Pessimism about our society's capacity to change can undermine confidence – 54 per cent worry that we are too set in our ways to stop climate change.
- Four in ten Britons also agree that there is no point in trying to do anything about climate change because big businesses and other countries will keep on polluting.
- A majority of Progressive Activists, Civic Pragmatists, Disengaged Battlers, and Loyal Nationals believe that those in power do nothing to protect the environment because they want to maintain the system as it is now, a belief shared by half of the total population.
- This feeling of powerlessness in the face of a challenge is most pronounced among the two Disengaged segments and Loyal Nationals.

## 10.5 Key takeaways

Most people in the United Kingdom share a strong sense of connection to the countryside and believe we need to better protect the environment. A vision for stronger environmental protection and a greener future resonates strongly with people's sense of identity and values, reflecting its potential to bring communities together. It also accords with people's desire for change after the divisive Brexit years and the very difficult experience of Covid-19, as well as its economic fallout. Environmental protection speaks to widely-held sentiments about the kind of society people want to live in, and to the way that people want to live – being more in harmony with nature and more connected to their local community.

Understanding the way that environmental issues connect to people's core beliefs and how they are expressed in different ways is important if we are to realise the potential for action on the environment that can unify society. Environmental protection can resonate widely with the population because it can speak to differing values systems – whether it is global justice or preserving our heritage – in support of the same policy aims. Its dimensions also range from practical household action and local community initiatives through to Britain's place on the world stage.

Environmental issues have a sense of priority and urgency because of both the 'back-to-nature' experience that many people had during the pandemic and the need to rebuild economies to recover from the Covid-19 recession. The pandemic has renewed Britons' sense of agency in the face of the climate

change challenge. A majority of people feel that taking action on the climate is an opportunity to create new jobs in Britain after the pandemic. A large majority of the public is also in favour of a Green New Deal, with its focus on new infrastructure and a structural transformation of the country's economy.

However, there is also a risk that the environment and climate change could be drawn into conflicts based on culture and identity. Some of the differences between segments on environmental protection reflect broader fault lines in society around fairness, activism, the role of experts, and Britain's acceptance of international rules. Disinformation around climate change is likely to continue increasing, and there is potential for divisive debates about who bears the costs of the changes we need to make in our own lives. Navigating society's existing fault lines and sustaining a unifying commitment to the protection of the environment requires an understanding of the dimensions of identity and core beliefs that can be activated around environmental protection. Such an understanding enables us to anticipate both the opportunities to unite and the risks of division that need to be mitigated against.

The chapter touches on just a few of our many findings relating to the environment and climate, which are explored in more detail in the *Britain Talks Climate* project, launched in November 2020 by Climate Outreach and the European Climate Foundation.<sup>61</sup>

# Part IV

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**11 Community Beyond Covid-19**

**12 Conclusion**

# Chapter 11

## Community Beyond Covid-19

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**55 per cent** of people in Britain feel that our concern for each other has improved as a result of Covid-19

**58 per cent** of people reported an increased awareness of the living conditions of others

**78 per cent** of Britons feel that the pandemic has reminded us of our common humanity

**3 in 4** Britons believe that we live in a kind society

**63 per cent** feel they have the ability to change things around them – an increase of 15 percentage points since February

**2x** as many now say we are a society that looks after each other compared to before Covid-19

# Introduction

The disruption to the lives of British people caused by the coronavirus pandemic is comparable only to the experience of war or a large-scale natural disaster. Its effects will be enduring and its memory carried through generations. Among its most striking effects is the way that it has brought questions about the strength of local community and the way we look after each other as a society to the front of people's minds.



**Prior to this, I had thought people were really becoming more selfish. I don't know but, just in general, people seemed to be out for themselves and not thinking of others and criticising others, being unkind. I'm talking about online, and things that you read in papers – not being welcoming to people who made their lives here from other places, things like that. I think this Covid thing has maybe turned us... I know it's a terrible thing to happen but at least it seems to have been turning the tide a little bit and people are being a bit more thoughtful.**

*Bea, Civic Pragmatist, 52, North East*



The Covid-19 pandemic presented a profound challenge to our society, as well as to Britain's health system and economy – in many ways, it was a test of national character. Could a country that has felt so divided in recent years come together in the face of a common threat, or would frustrations with the demands placed on each of us, from the trivial to the profound, leave society more splintered? Would we retreat into isolation from each other and to some form of tribalism, or would we reach out to help each other and especially those most in need?

As this chapter highlights, those questions are still being answered. Covid-19 showed two sides of British society, allowing us to glimpse two visions of Britain's future. There are reasons for hope: dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the crisis has not undermined a sense of community spirit. After years of frustration with politics and divisions, it seems as if people have begun to look past the failings of governments and systems, and glimpse something larger about becoming a better society.

This chapter highlights perceptions of community life in Britain. Because the first wave of research took place at the beginning of 2020, it provides insights into the impact of the pandemic on issues such as trust, community, and belonging before and after the onset of the coronavirus. In analysing this data, the chapter seeks to reconcile the competing stories that were told as the pandemic silenced streets, filled hospitals, and confined families to their homes – the stories of both heroes and hoarders. It looks at how different segments of the population experience belonging and connection in their local communities, how they see their own capacity to contribute to the community, and how Covid-19 has affected the ways that all of us see our local area. Finally, given the special role played by social media networks in connecting people to each other during the pandemic, it looks at our perception of how social media is affecting our lives and communities, along with whether it is a force for strengthening social bonds or deepening social divisions.

## 11.1 Heroes or hoarders? Two images of Britain

**‘The human response [to Covid-19] has been quite overwhelming. That real sense of community, that I think we had lost up until now... I just desperately hope that there’s elements of that we can hold on to.’**

*Kate, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, North West*

In the weeks following the onset of Covid-19, Britain felt a surge in social solidarity as people were reminded that, at our best, we come together and support each other.<sup>62</sup> In focus group conversations, people spoke enthusiastically about mutual aid initiatives in their local communities – both people in segments with a strong sense of community engagement, and others from the Disengaged groups with the lowest feelings of being connected to others. Many wondered if society was changing before their eyes. Could the spirit of looking out for each other that people felt in their estate, street, or town lead to enduring connections with other people, in turn creating less isolated communities?

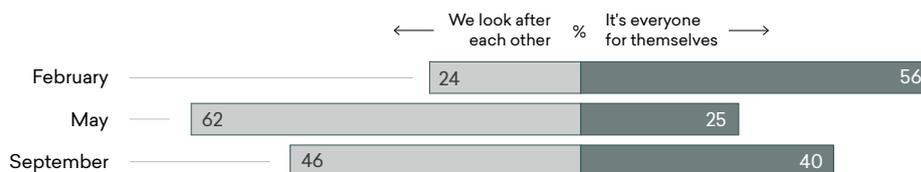
People felt a deep sense of gratitude for those who were working on the frontlines of the NHS and essential services. Almost everyone in the country felt that the pandemic had demonstrated the importance of the NHS and public services, and the deep sense of pride in the NHS as a national institution was demonstrated by the weekly ‘clap for carers’ at 8pm on Thursday evenings across the nation. Key workers put themselves at risk to protect us. From transport workers to doctors and nurses, many had become ill or even lost their lives because of exposure to the virus in their frontline work. More than half of us had been actively involved in thanking them for their life-saving work, almost twice the average among comparable countries.<sup>63</sup> In addition to recognising the heroism of the NHS and essential workers, millions of people went out of their way to go shopping for at-risk neighbours, donate money, volunteer their time to help those most in need, and support local businesses.

Figure 11.1.

### Social solidarity

Twice as many now feel that we look after each other

**Are we a society that cares for each other or not?**



Qu. When thinking about life in the UK in 2020, which do you agree with more?  
Data from February, May, and September 2020.  
Source: More in Common and Britain Talks Climate 2020.

After years of the divisive Brexit debate, many felt surprised by the positive experiences they had in their local communities. There was a remarkably rapid shift in perceptions of Britain as a more caring society. As Figure 11.1 shows, in February, Britons believed by a ratio of more than two to one that in our society 'it's everyone for themselves', rather than being a society where 'we look after each other'. However, by May these attitudes had flipped, with more than twice as many seeing British society as one where we look after each other and not just ourselves.

Shortly afterwards, a political story broke into the headlines that captured public attention and for months afterwards became a point of heated conversation in the focus groups we were conducting. The Prime Minister's most senior aide, Dominic Cummings, was reported to have broken the government's own rules during the lockdown. His role as architect of the Leave campaign for the Brexit referendum in 2016 ensured that many Remain campaign supporters were angered by the story, but these frustrations transcended the fault lines of the Brexit years. The story reawakened feelings already shared by two-thirds of people before the pandemic, that the system in the UK is rigged to serve the interests of the rich and influential rather than the interests of the majority (a view held by a majority of every segment except Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals). This story seemed to shift the public mood, making people more questioning of public health guidance. The more negative tone of public conversation after this incident seemed to follow a commonly-observed pattern of community responses to natural disasters outlined in a widely-shared US government document, where the public mood shifts from a 'honeymoon' phase, which is centred on the stories of heroes, to a period of disillusionment, where frustrations with responses to the disaster come to the surface.<sup>64</sup>

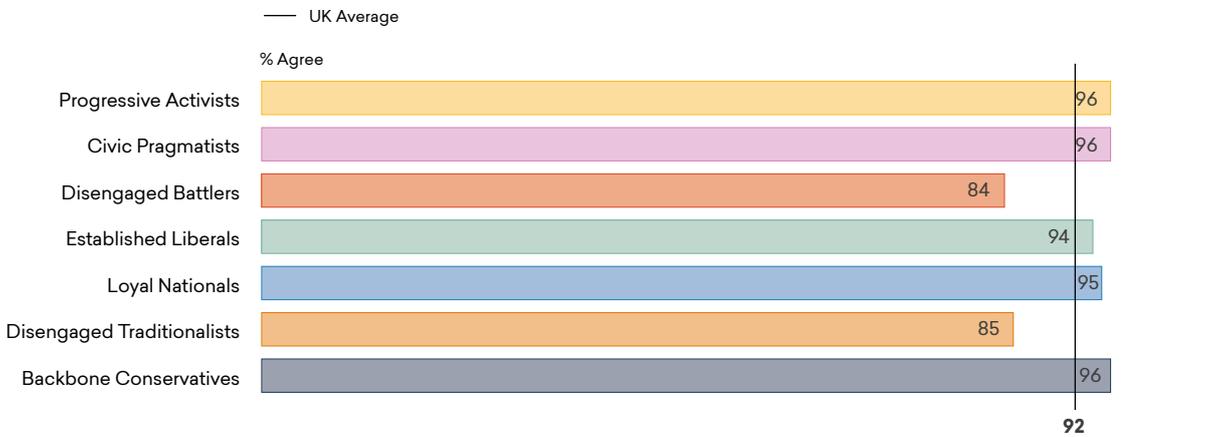
The incident with Dominic Cummings brought to the surface wider conversations about the strength of pro-social versus anti-social behaviour in the community – in essence, whether in a time of crisis we are truly 'all in it together'. In the initial weeks of the pandemic, this centred on the selfishness of hoarding. The lockdown in March had seen supermarkets struggling with shortages of basic goods as worried people stocked up, fearing a lack of future supplies. Over time, conversations about anti-social behaviour shifted to the extent to which people were following the public health guidance, which was evolving from rules around the lockdown to social distancing, wearing masks, and restrictions on socialising.

Figure 11.2.

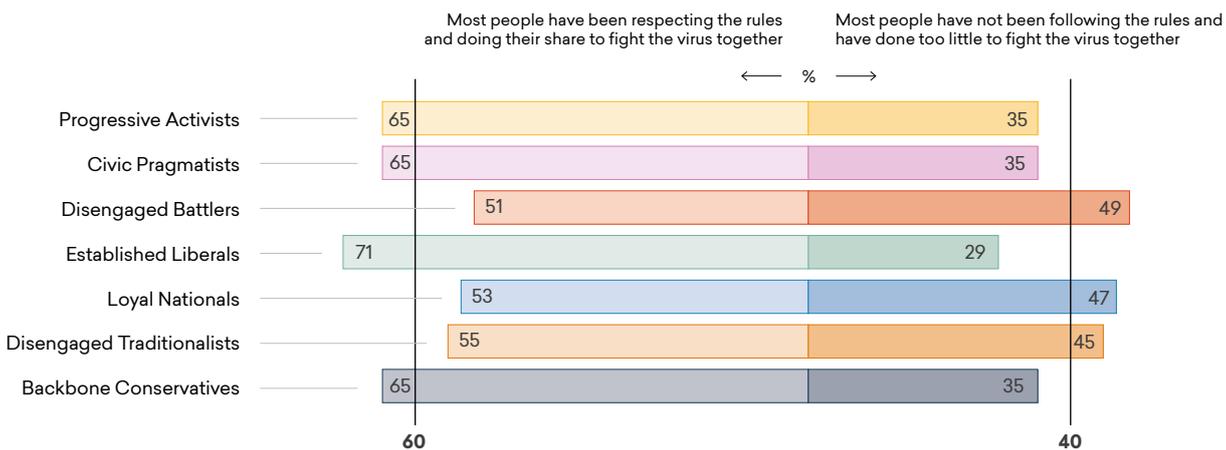
## Who follows the Covid-19 rules?

While nearly all Britons say they followed the health guidelines for the pandemic, many distrust that others have done the same

### I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules



Qu. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules. June 2020.



Qu. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I feel that it is my duty as a citizen to follow social distancing and other rules. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The effect of these public debates is reflected in the surprisingly low public confidence in others' behaviour around Covid-19. As the first stage of lockdown measures was easing in the UK, comparative data suggested that people in the UK were more accepting of Covid-19 guidelines than in other major western democracies. At the same time, 84 per cent felt that the restrictions were 'completely reasonable and proportional', compared to 65 per cent in the United States and 74 per cent in France.<sup>65</sup>

No country reported a higher number of people claiming to follow Covid-19 restrictions than Britain, with 94 per cent saying that at least until then they had followed the rules very closely or somewhat closely.<sup>66</sup> Yet while 60 per cent believed that most people were respecting the rules and doing their bit to fight the virus, 40 per cent felt that most were not following the rules and did too little to fight the virus together. While self-reported behaviour is not completely reliable, the results suggest that people in Britain may have a tendency to exaggerate the negatives in other peoples' behaviour, or misconstrue the irresponsible behaviour of a few as reflecting the attitudes of the many. Focus group conversations suggest that as perceptions that others are not following took hold, it eroded people's support for the rules and their own willingness to comply.

The experience of Covid-19 confirms that there is truth in both images of Britain: the pro-social and the anti-social. In our anxiety and insecurity we hoard; in our better moments we share. We clap for the carers, but when it suits us, we sometimes bend or break rules. But there's reason to believe that we are more neighbourly and community-minded than we give ourselves credit. Images of misbehaviour might be blown out of proportion, but most people want to do what is right.

The enduring shift in perceptions of British society from the pandemic provides reason for hope. It is true that the 'honeymoon' period of society coming together in an intense moment of crisis has been replaced by a period that is more complex and fractious. However, our research in September 2020 showed that, **compared to before the pandemic, almost twice as many people feel that we are a society that looks after each other, rather than being one where it is everyone for themselves.** More people now hold this positive view, by a margin of 46 to 40 per cent. This is a significant change in perception about the character of British society, and it has come about through positive shifts in every segment of society, including the segments most often concerned with anti-social behaviour.

## 11.2 How Britain compares: Care and trust

**'We're very good at pulling together, that British spirit I suppose.'**

*Daniel, Civic Pragmatist, 34, North West*

This section examines evidence comparing Britain's experience to that of other countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. That evidence suggests that Britain is a more kind, caring, and community-oriented nation than it often gives itself credit.

**55%** of people in Britain feel that our concern for each other has improved as a result of Covid-19

- Some 55 per cent of people in Britain feel that our concern for each other has improved as a result of Covid-19, substantially more than any other country. Loyal Nationals were the most likely to agree (66 per cent), and Progressive Activists least likely (40 per cent), but only a very small proportion in any of the segments felt that our concern for each other has worsened (Fig 11.3).
- More people in Britain than in any other country surveyed say that the pandemic has shown them that most people in our country care about each other – some 64 per cent (Fig 11.4).<sup>v</sup>
- More people in Britain reported feeling worried about the impact of Covid-19 on ethnic, racial, or religious minorities than in any other country (54 per cent). This reflected public health data findings that people in minority groups were experiencing more serious effects from Covid-19 (Fig 11.5).

<sup>v</sup> The seven countries surveyed were the UK, USA, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and the Netherlands: *The New Normal? (More in Common, 2020)* <<https://www.moreincommon.com/newnormal/>>.

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## 58% of people reported an increased awareness of the living conditions of others

- People became more aware of the circumstances of other people, such as the insecurity of others' work, the limited options of working from home for many, cramped living conditions, and parents' challenges in looking after children while working. Some 58 per cent of people reported an increased awareness of the living conditions of others. Civic Pragmatists had the highest increase in awareness (70 per cent), reflecting the fact that empathy and compassion are dominant characteristics of people in this segment, while the lowest increase was among Disengaged Traditionalists (48 per cent) (Fig 11.6).

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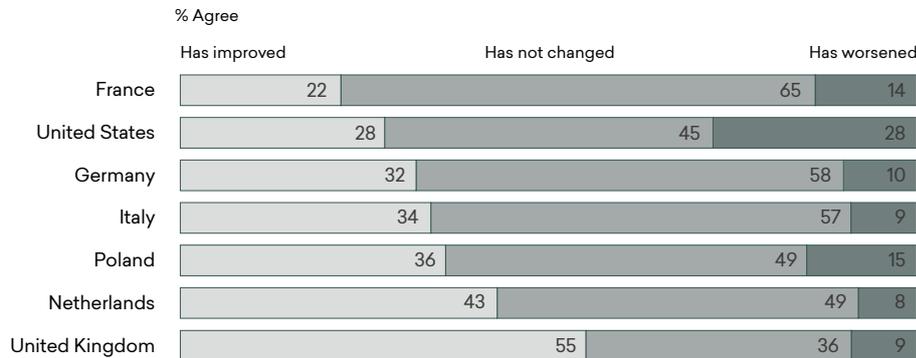
Among all segments, large majorities feel that the pandemic has reminded us of our common humanity. While the differences between the seven countries in the survey were small, Britain was equal highest, at 78 per cent agreement.

- While the impact of the pandemic was uneven, the serious illness of the Prime Minister underscored its potential to reach anyone, and the fact that the only way to protect the health of us all is to care for every part of the community. Among all segments, large majorities feel that the pandemic has reminded us of our common humanity. While the differences between the seven countries in the survey were small, Britain was equal highest, at 78 per cent agreement (Figure 11.7).
- Although a higher proportion in every country felt that their society had become more divided than united since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Britain had the highest proportion saying it had become more united (26 per cent), while 33 per cent feel that society had become more divided.
- On a range of questions about strategies for economic recovery from Covid-19, people in Britain consistently indicate a greater willingness than those in other countries to make individual sacrifices for the common good. This includes being far more willing to pay higher income taxes to finance economic recovery (46 per cent, compared to an average of 27 per cent among other countries surveyed), being more willing to accept restrictions on freedom of movement to protect others' health (73 per cent), paying higher prices for locally made products to save British jobs (65 per cent), and paying higher taxes on petrol or car ownership to help protect the environment (44 per cent).

Figure 11.3.

## How Covid-19 has changed our concern for each other

More than any other country, Britain feels that we have become more caring

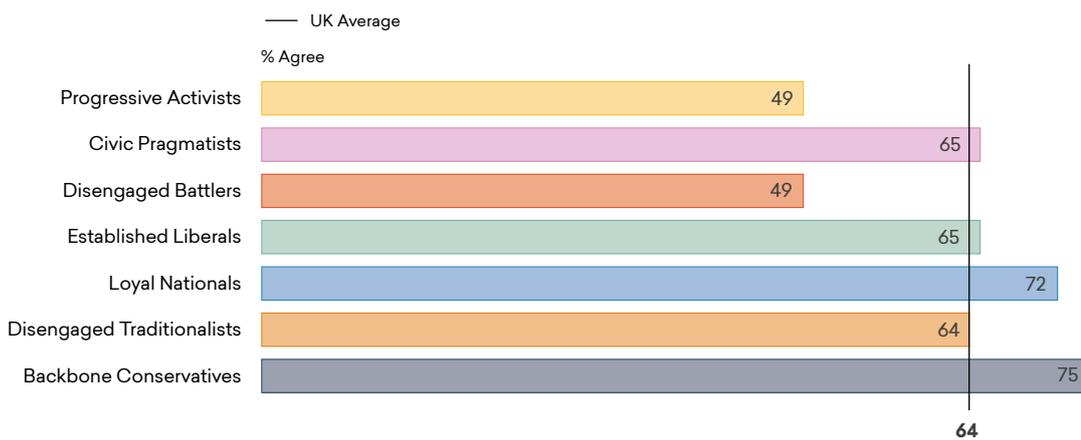


Qu. Since this pandemic began, how have the following things changed in the UK, if at all: People's concern for each other's wellbeing. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 11.4.

## Care for each other

Covid-19 has convinced two in three people that we care for each other

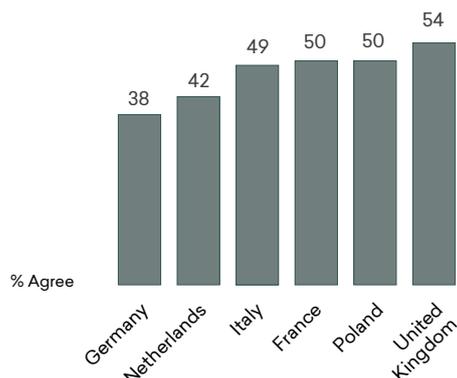


Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Covid-19 pandemic has shown me that most people in the UK care about each other. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 11.5.

## Impacts on minority groups

More than any other country, Britons are concerned about the impact of the pandemic on minorities

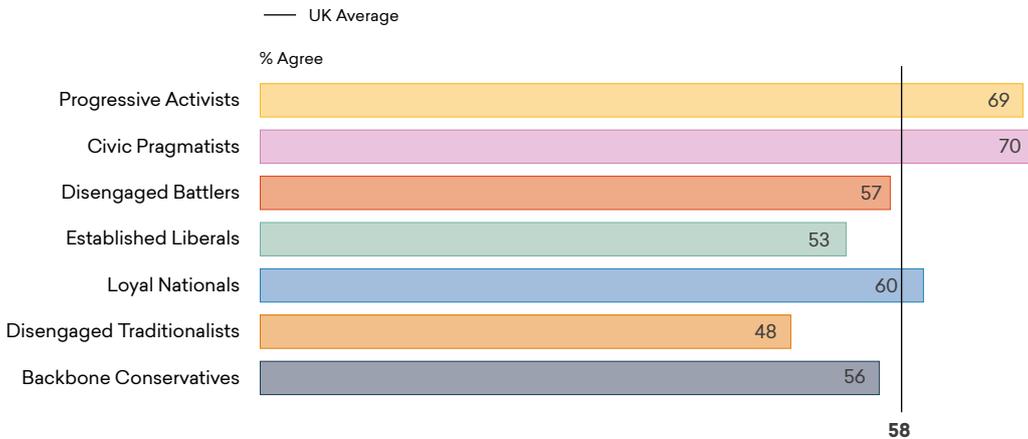


Qu. To what extent are you currently worried or not worried that: Ethnic, racial or religious minorities will suffer more than others from this crisis? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 11.6.

## More aware of others' living conditions

Covid-19 has strengthened empathy

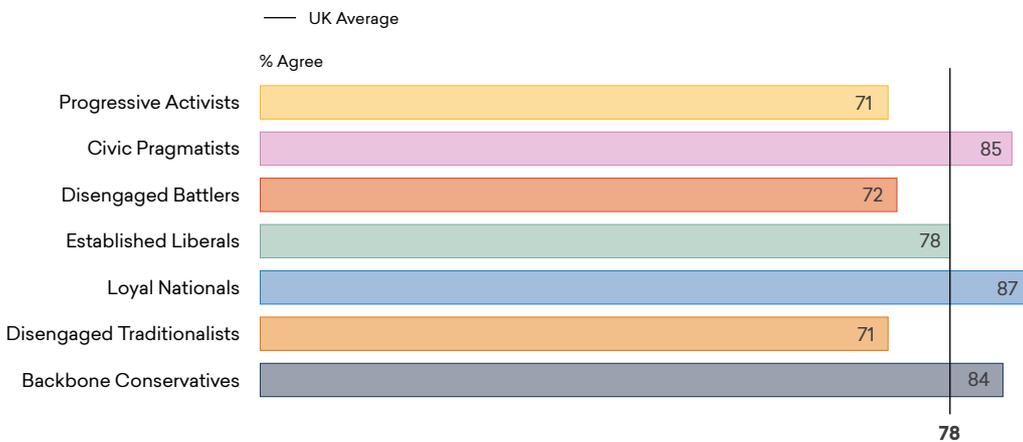


Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The Covid-19 pandemic has made me more aware of the living conditions of other people in this country. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 11.7.

## Our common humanity

The pandemic has reminded us of the fundamental humanity of others



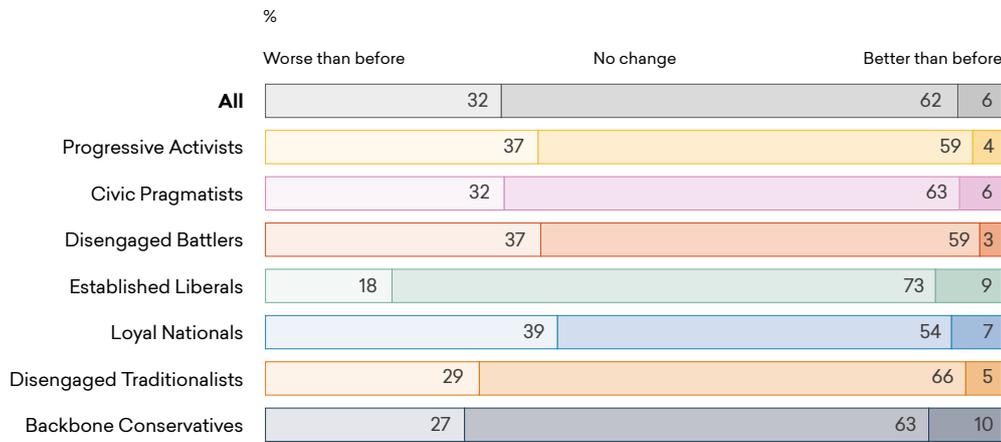
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The Covid-19 crisis has reminded us that no matter where we are from, as humans we are fundamentally the same. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Across Europe, despite the increase in empathy and understanding of others' living conditions, in overall terms more people report a loss of social trust than an increase as a result of Covid-19. The UK experienced an erosion of social trust, but it held up better than average across the countries we surveyed. Some 32 per cent of Britons felt their trust in others was worse than before, compared to 6 per cent saying it was better. The highest loss of trust was reported among Loyal Nationals (39 per cent), Disengaged Battlers, and Progressive Activists (both at 37 per cent).

Figure 11.8.

## The erosion of social trust

The perception that others broke lockdown rules has weakened social trust



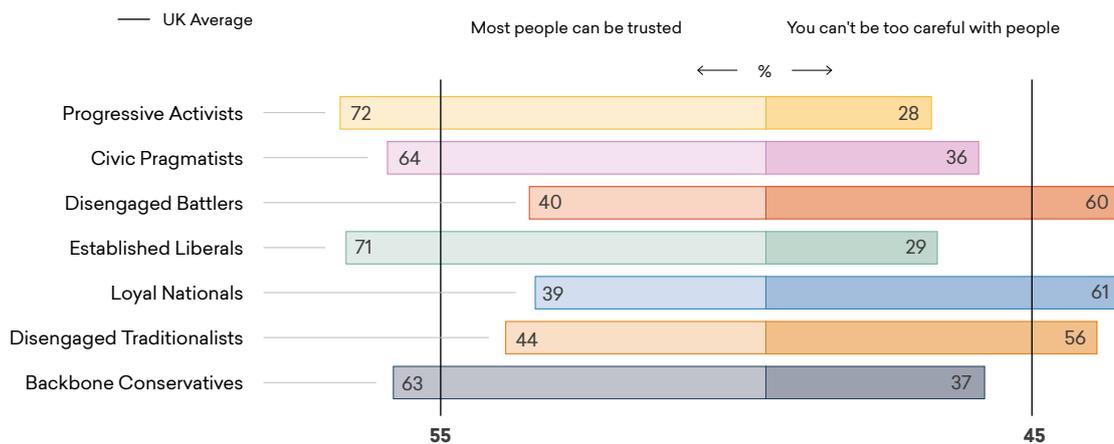
Qu. To what extent are the following aspects of your life different due to the Covid-19 pandemic: Your trust in others. June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

The highest levels of suspicion are found among Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Battlers, and Disengaged Traditionalists (61, 60, and 56 per cent respectively), in sharp contrast to Established Liberals, of whom only 29 per cent believe that you cannot be too careful in your dealings with others.

Figure 11.9.

## Trust in others

A slight majority thinks you cannot be too careful with others, with substantial variation among the segments



Qu. Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

# The Disengaged segments during Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the unique way in which people in the two Disengaged population segments perceive moments of shared crisis and community spirit. Both groups shared in the common experience of Covid-19, but generally had the lowest levels of solidarity, gratitude, and trust. They are around three times as likely to reject the idea that they had a duty to follow social distancing rules, and almost three times as likely as the rest of the population to say they will not take a vaccine for Covid-19, even if a safe and effective vaccine is developed.

Although they share a disengagement that is a running theme in this report, these two segments view society from very different standpoints.

- Disengaged Battlers feel more precarious, fearing the financial effects of the pandemic more than any other group, with almost half saying that they are anxious about losing their job. They also feel more disconnected from their local communities and others, adding to that sense of vulnerability. They are more likely to view the impacts of an event like Covid-19 in society-wide terms, conscious of the gaps between the haves and have-nots in society, and are more critical of the government's conduct.
- Disengaged Traditionalists are more economically secure, with many saying in interviews that the pandemic has made little material impact upon their finances. They are more likely to view the impacts of an event like Covid-19 through the lens of individuals and their behaviour, and place a lot of emphasis for the need for rules and enforcement.

These two segments both tend to be less positive about the impacts of Covid-19, and more suspicious of the actions of government, other people, or both. For example, almost half of both groups feel that most people had not followed the public health guidelines to control the pandemic. In focus group conversations, both groups criticised the anti-social behaviour of other parts of society, singling younger people out for criticism for not following the guidelines. In the Disengaged Battlers' focus group, there was agreement with one participant's criticism that young people think they won't be affected by the disease: 'When you are young, you don't think you're going to get ill.'

Both segments also expressed frustration that public health rules were not being applied fairly and consistently, but in slightly different ways:

- Disengaged Battlers talked about how it seemed to be one rule for the ordinary people and another rule for the elite – not only wealthy people going to their second homes, but members of the government breaking lockdown rules. In conversations with both segments, the Dominic Cummings incident of May 2020 prompted considerable discussion, with one Disengaged Battler asking 'how can you ever believe whatever they say again when they've done things like that? How can you have trust?'
- Disengaged Traditionalists talked about others' behaviour and the need for tougher measures to enforce the rules, rather than what one described as 'this wishy-washy approach of, yeah, you can follow the rules if you want to follow the rules, but you don't have to. It's up to you. It should be precise: "you have to follow the rule".' They likewise expressed concern about people taking advantage of the government's furlough wage subsidy scheme because they are lazy and have a poor work ethic. They feel that the pandemic has brought our society closer together, but as one participant said with a twist, 'in the 60s and 70s you didn't need a pandemic to do it. People would naturally care about their next-door neighbours'.

## 11.3 Local community

**‘I think certainly where I am again, I think we’re actually being friendlier with each other. Although we’re staying socially distant, two metres away from everybody, I think we’re saying, “how are you doing? Are you okay?” with people that you maybe would have walked past in the street before. So, I think it’s helped in a strange way. I would like to hope that once things go back to some kind of normality, that continues and you do continue to speak to your neighbours and you do ask how people are. It would be nice if we got that from this.’**

*Jim, Loyal National, 38, Scotland*

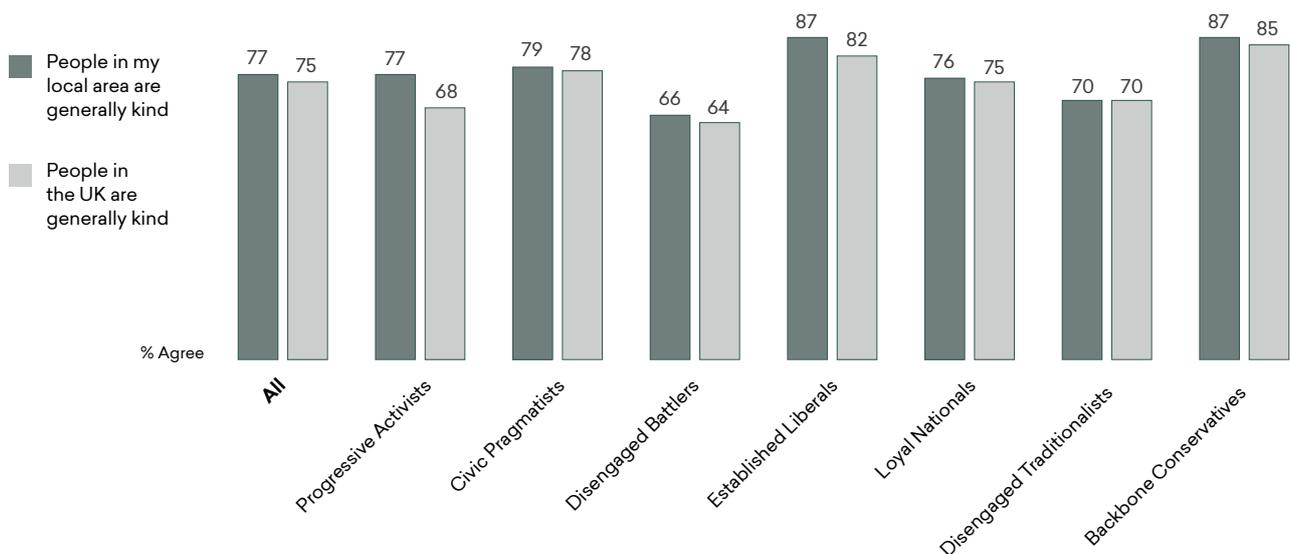
While Covid-19 presented Britain with two different images of itself, in their local areas most people say they encounter the positive image of a caring community. This section examines perceptions of local community, people’s sense of belonging to that community, and the extent to which people feel that they can make a difference within it.

Figure 11.10.

### Perceptions of local community

Overwhelmingly, people believe they are surrounded by kind people

#### Kindness in the UK



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Three-quarters of Britons believe that we live in a kind society, on both the local and national levels, with slightly more positive views about the kindness of people in their local community. The Disengaged segments are lowest in their perception of kindness around them, although around two-thirds of both segments agree. The highest level of agreement is among Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals, with over 80 per cent agreement for both local and national levels of society.

However, this consensus on the kindness of others does not necessarily translate into feeling part of a community. People can form communities over vast distances, and come together around any number of common interests or identities. But Covid-19 reinforced the way in which local community is uniquely important in a time of crisis, especially for those most in need.

The importance of community is widely recognised, and a majority (57 per cent) of people in Britain say that they feel as though they are part of a community of people who understand, care for, and look after each other. On this issue, the Disengaged Battlers are by far the least likely to feel connected to those around them, with fewer than one in three in agreement. This might reflect a number of factors, including economic insecurity, being younger, and having fewer family and social connections in their area.

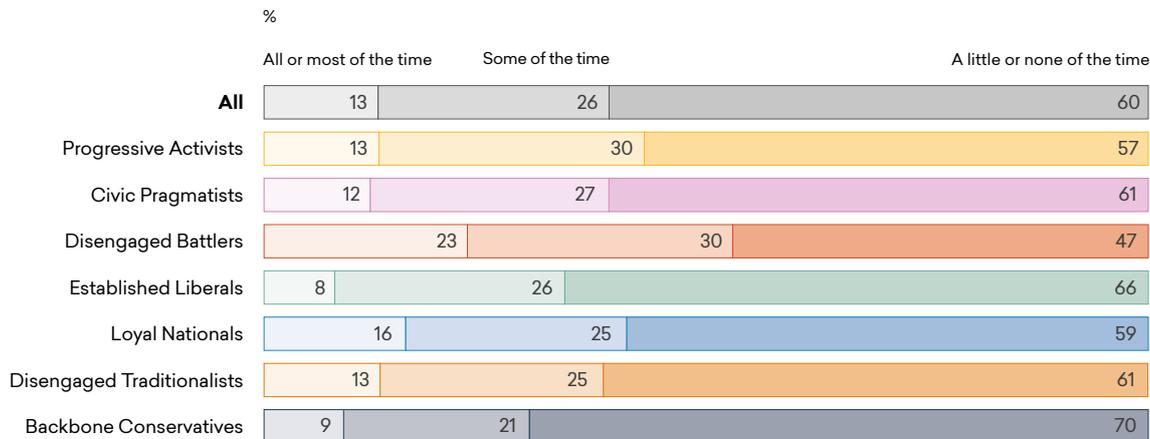
Another measure of people's connection to community is their experience of loneliness, an issue that has been more prominent in British life since the report of the Jo Cox Loneliness Commission prompted the UK Government to establish a Minister for Loneliness in 2018.<sup>67</sup> The incidence of loneliness varies significantly between different population segments.

- Overall, one in seven people feel lonely all or most of the time, and two in five people feel lonely some of the time.
- Among the segments, Disengaged Battlers are more likely to report loneliness, with 53 per cent in this segment saying that they feel lonely some, most, or all of the time, and 23 per cent feeling lonely all or most of the time.
- Loyal Nationals are the only other segment where more members than average usually feel lonely. However, they do not report higher than average feelings of anxiety.
- Although the problem of loneliness is often linked to the circumstances of elderly people (with Age UK research identifying 1.4 million chronically lonely elderly people in the country),<sup>68</sup> our data found more young people than elderly saying that they feel they are facing life's challenges alone (35 per cent versus 25 per cent).
- While Disengaged Battlers are far more likely to frequently feel anxious, they are closely followed by Progressive Activists, Loyal Nationals, and Civic Pragmatists, who are all above average for feeling anxiety.
- Throughout the pandemic, Disengaged Battlers were more likely to say that they have felt mainly on their own, while Established Liberals and Backbone Conservatives were far more likely to say that they feel the support and care of others.

Figure 11.11.

## Loneliness

One in seven people often feel lonely most of the time

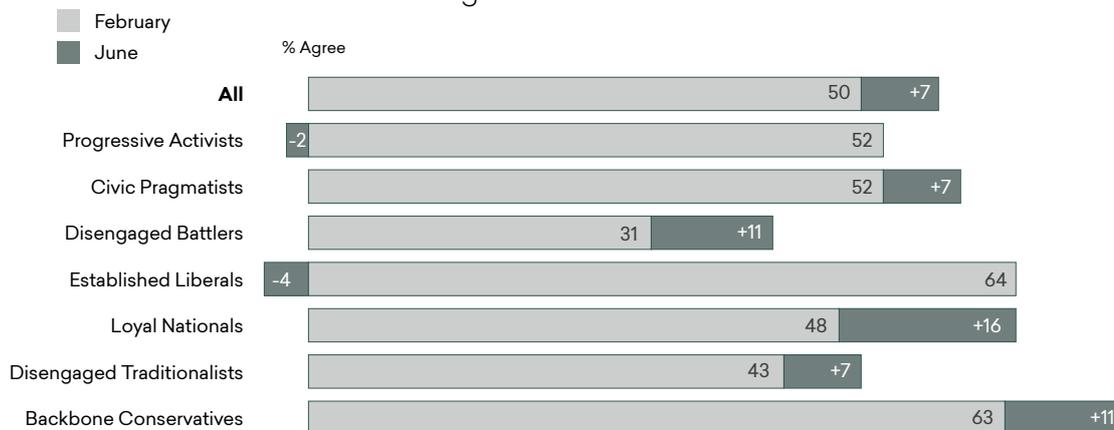


Qu. In general, how often do you feel: Lonely? February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 11.12.

## Covid-19 and community

Since Covid-19, a sense of community has increased among most of the segments



Qu. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I am part of a community - people that understand, care for, and help each other. February and June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

One of the positive effects of Covid-19 shown in Figure 11.12 is that the pandemic has seen significantly more people across Britain now feeling that they are part of a community where ‘people understand, care for, and help each other’. This question was asked in February and again in June 2020. A larger number of people still feel that it is important to be part of a caring community, but the gap between those who feel it is important (67 per cent) and those who feel that they are part of such a community has almost halved since the onset of the pandemic.

Among the segments, the pandemic had the most positive effects on the connectedness of Loyal Nationals, Backbone Conservatives, and Disengaged Battlers. The only group that reported a small weakening of feeling part of a community was the Progressive Activists.

Another positive impact of Covid-19 is reflected in the fact that 53 per cent say that the pandemic has revealed the best of human nature, with just 28 per cent saying it has revealed the worst. In five of the seven segments, a majority feel that the Covid-19 response has revealed our capacity to be caring and compassionate. Even among the two segments with the least agreement, Progressive Activists and Disengaged Battlers, 40 and 45 per cent respectively agreed.

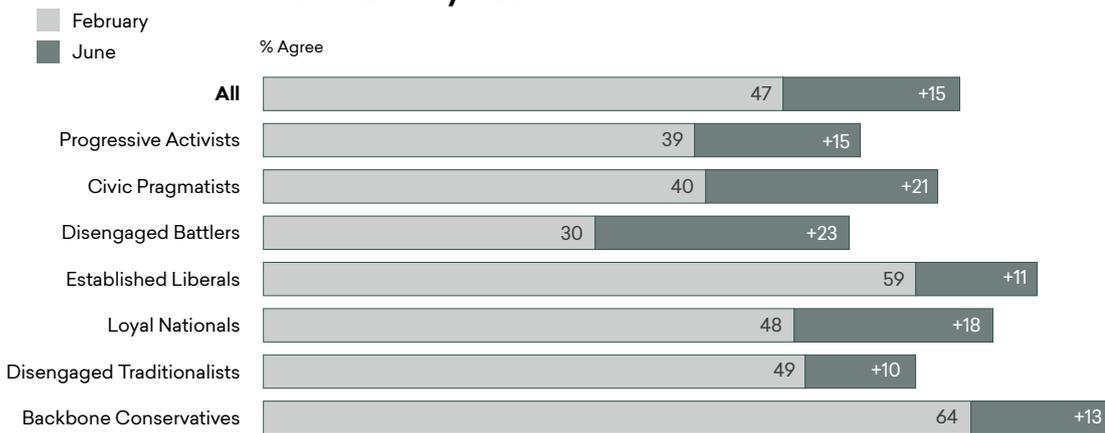
Slight majorities in all segments except Disengaged Battlers also say that they felt the support and care of others during the Covid-19 crisis. Sixty per cent of Britons on average felt this way, with Established Liberals feeling it most of all (72 per cent) and Disengaged Battlers the least (47 per cent).

Figure 11.13.

## Covid-19 and personal agency

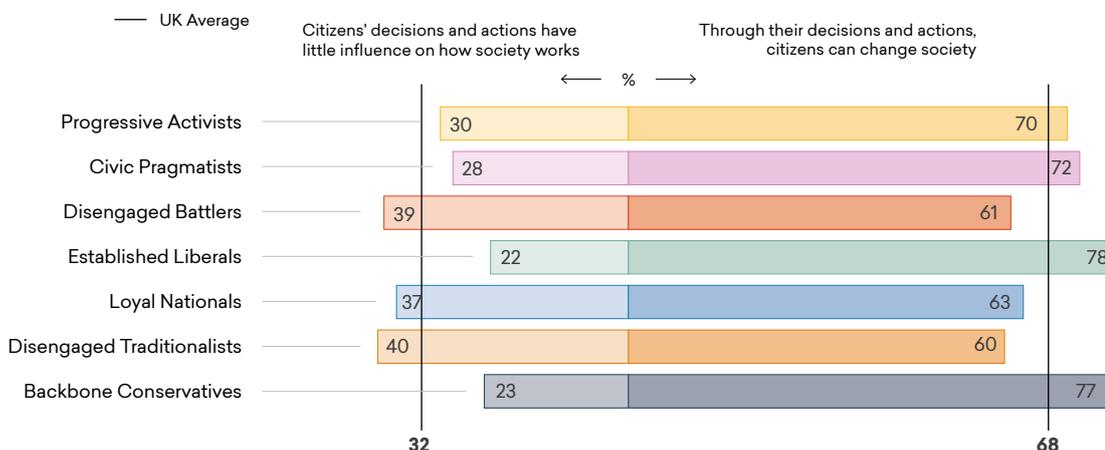
Since the pandemic, all segments have seen an increased sense of personal agency within their local communities and feel that their decisions can impact wider society

### People in our area are able to find ways to improve things around here when they want to



Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: People in our area are able to find ways to improve things around here when they want to. February and June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

### Citizens' influence on society



Qu. Which of the statements do you agree with more? June 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

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47% of people felt that they had the ability to change things around them

After the onset of the pandemic, this grew to 63%

A further positive effect of Covid-19 is the striking increase in people's sense of agency within their local community. In March, only 47 per cent of people felt that they had the ability to change things around them. After the onset of the pandemic, this grew to 63 per cent, or almost two-thirds of the population. The increase of 16 percentage points was most dramatic among the two Disengaged segments.

Overall, two-thirds of Britons feel that through their actions, citizens can change society. This view is held strongly across all segments, with Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals being most confident of this. Both of these segments report feeling very secure in their local area and do not perceive many threats, which might contribute to their confidence. In contrast, the Disengaged segments, along with Loyal Nationals, have less confidence that citizens can change things. These three segments are also above average in feeling that the area they live in has been neglected for a long time, undermining that sense of agency in their local community.

These characteristics of the two Disengaged segments and the Loyal Nationals have a great deal in common with 'left behind groups' that have received significant attention in recent years. New research by Local Trust found that 42 per cent of people in 'left behind' communities feel as though their area gets less resources than others, with only 4 per cent feeling they receive greater resources than elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Particular complaints were a lack of basic community infrastructure, such as places to meet, leisure and sports facilities, cultural facilities, and parks. Such factors may also apply to the three segments reporting these feelings of local neglect. Given that Loyal Nationals are concentrated in the North East, Yorkshire, and in Wales - all post-industrial regions that have been disproportionately affected by public spending cuts - these concerns are most likely well founded. This may also be the case among Disengaged Traditionalists, who are overrepresented in the English Midlands, a place shaped by the decline of heavy industry and issues such as intergenerational unemployment in some areas.



## In their own words – feelings around community and Covid-19



'I think what we're starting to see is really cool. I think people really are showing that they do care about each other. I've seen lots of mutual aid initiatives and stuff being set up in my area. There is the clapping for the NHS thing which I was surprised happens here... People put their messages on the WhatsApp group to say I'm self-isolating I need someone to do my shopping for me and people will just do it. It's really cool and I'm hoping that this kind of community spirit is going to continue after lockdown and that people are going to continue to look after each other.'

*Nick, Progressive Activist, 34, London*



'I think I feel a bit mixed really. We've had all the panic buying, I guess, and everybody really panicking and doing things for themselves. But then we've also got the NHS and healthcare workers that everyone is rallying behind. So, I think it's mixed and probably depends a little bit on area as well, I suppose.'

*Fran, Disengaged Battler, 30, Wales*



'I think I've learnt that a greater proportion of people are basically less selfish than I thought, those people are just from reading in papers and whatever, surveys saying only a tiny amount of people want lockdown to end for example. No one likes it but I think that those people are basically saying we don't like it but we accept it's a necessary evil that we've got to endure at the moment. I think that's quite an admirable quality in people to be able to see things like that. I've been pleased that I think that it's only a very small minority who've been trying to take advantage of things.'

*Declan, Established Liberal, 27, West Midlands*



'I think this crisis is pulling people together. I think it's actually changed them in a positive way. People are more community spirited. Like I moved back here, from abroad, eighteen months ago and, up to then, other than my immediate neighbours, I've hardly met anyone but, in the past month, I've become acquainted with various people who have volunteered to do my shopping for me. I actually speak to shop keepers and stuff like that. Yeah, people communicate more, as a community, more than they used to, I think.'

*Tony, Backbone Conservative, 62, Yorkshire and the Humber*

## 11.4 Social media

Covid highlighted the critical role social media plays in our lives and communities (Fig. 11.14). Has it contributed to a greater sense of connection? Or has it contributed to our isolation into likeminded bubbles, disgusted with each other, while also adding to the loneliness and social exclusion of the disengaged? This is a dilemma facing our society, and western societies more broadly.

Just as the Covid-19 pandemic has made people re-evaluate their connection to their local community, it has also underscored the role that social media can play in connecting people to each other. Across the UK, in the weeks after the lockdown was announced on March 23, neighbourhoods connected through Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms to get in touch, organise volunteering efforts, and establish a way to check in on each other in the uncertain period ahead.

*Moderator*

*Would you say you have learned anything about British society as a result of the current crisis?*

**'I think sticking together [and] keeping in contact. Obviously I talk on my laptop to family [and] on the phone. I've seen on social media, people are keeping each other aware. People have been communicating more I think. It is harder, especially [being on] technology more, but then on the plus side it's helped people communicate, with webcam as well.'**

*Greg, Disengaged Battler, 19, South West*

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While this reflected the positive potential of social media as a connector, it also plays a role as a disruptor in society more generally. As Chapter 5 noted, when asked about the factors that cause division in the UK, social media is the second-most cited cause. The internet provides a platform in which conflict and extremism can be normalised. Even before the pandemic broke out, just under three-quarters of people felt that social media over-represents the most extreme voices, and with the exception of the Disengaged segments (who are more unsure), in every segment at least six times as many hold this concern than do not.

**'I think the internet has a lot to answer, social media has a lot to answer... There are so many people giving opinions that aren't necessarily valued or valuable. And they can remain anonymous. So, I think we've lost a genuine opportunity to make relationships and see each other face to face rather than calling it from afar.'**

*William, Disengaged Battler, 76, North West*

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- The pervasive role of devices in our lives is reflected in the finding that 54 per cent of Britons feel that they spend too much time on their smartphone or other devices. Notably, two-thirds of Progressive Activists feel this more than any other population segment.
- Britain is evenly split (42 to 43 per cent) on whether the benefits of social media outweigh the negatives, although Progressive Activists are rather more likely to agree that there are more benefits than other segments, at 54 to 35 per cent.
- Asked whether social media has made differences of opinion with friends or family more difficult, some 43 per cent of the population agrees.
- One-third feel that social media has a significant negative impact on them.

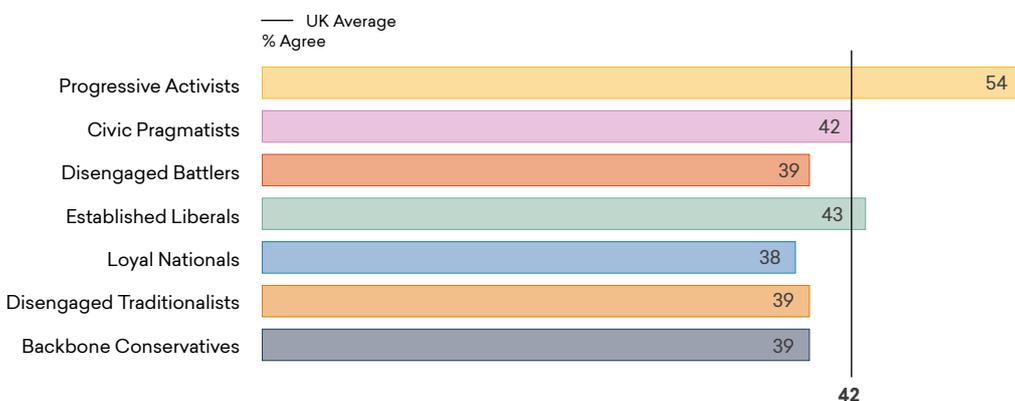
**57%** agree that 'one of the best things about the Internet is that it allows ordinary people to speak their mind on the news of the day'

- On the other hand, people also see the advantages of social media in opening up conversation. Fifty-seven per cent, and majorities in every segment, agree that 'one of the best things about the Internet is that it allows ordinary people to speak their mind on the news of the day'.
- Some 59 per cent feel that social media has led them to question everything that they see online and in the media, with Progressive Activists agreeing most emphatically (70 per cent).
- One consequence of this is that there is a consensus around the need for the government to better regulate social media companies, with 76 per cent in agreement. The strongest agreement is seen among Loyal Nationals (85 per cent), Civic Pragmatists (82 per cent), and Backbone Conservatives (81 per cent).

**Figure 11.14. Social media**

Segments vary in their attitudes towards social media and how much they trust it

**The benefits of social media outweigh the negatives**



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The benefits of social media outweigh the negatives. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

## 11.5 Key takeaways

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way that people across Britain think about each other and their local community. The years of divisiveness over Brexit had left us feeling pessimistic about the society we were becoming. Covid-19 made us question some of those assumptions, as we saw so much community spirit, voluntary help, and heroic sacrifice around us.

Since the Brexit years, people have been watching two stories about Britain play out. One involves people coming together, and doing their bit to help each other in big and small ways. The other involves people looking out only for themselves and showing little respect for the needs of others. Both are true stories, but the evidence shows that the first of those stories is far more common. Cross-country comparisons also show that, on many comparative measures, the community response has been stronger in Britain than elsewhere - a reason for pride.

While the pandemic has had negative as well as positive effects on social trust, as a society we have a high level of confidence in the kindness of others. As a result of the pandemic we have become more concerned for each other and more aware of others' living conditions.

For tens of millions of people in the UK, loneliness and disconnection are part of their daily life experience. While many people have felt alone in facing the pandemic, millions have felt more connected to their local communities than than before, and their sense of community power has strengthened. Positive experiences of community have not been limited to better-off areas or segments of the population. **Some of the largest changes in feeling able to improve our local community have occurred among population segments that are least connected to others**, and more likely to feel that they face the world alone from day to day.

Another positive dimension of this stronger experience of connection is the role played by technology. As the focus of our lives has shifted from offline to online, there have been concerns that technology has made us more disconnected from our local communities. But through Facebook, Whatsapp, and other means, technology has played a role in connecting us at a local level. Overwhelmingly, people see social media as a driver of division and disinformation, but the pandemic pointed to how it could play a more positive role.

# Conclusion

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**We hope this study of British society in the 2020s points the way towards better understanding ourselves, the reasons for our differences, and the way forward in building common ground.**

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Too often our differences are overstated and common ground underestimated, as this report has shown. But the fact that division is not inevitable does not assure us that Britain will not continue down a path of polarisation throughout the 2020s. There are powerful forces pushing us down that path in Britain as in other countries: disinformation, the ways that social media exploits our psychological vulnerabilities, the elevation of the most strident voices in forums such as Twitter, and the profit-making models of partisan media. Those forces are strengthened by public frustration with elites and with our political system, society's failure to resolve entrenched injustices, feelings of disrespect and grievance among population groups, and by leaders and influencers who see division as a means to advance their own goals. It is not easy to resist these forces of division.

One example of the day-by-day threats that lie ahead are the so-called 'culture wars' debates exported from the United States to the United Kingdom and other countries. Politicians, opinion-makers, and social media activists can be quick to pick up on symbolic issues that inflame the differences between groups in society, create false choices between opposing extremes, and then polarise groups around those false binaries. Politicians and media influencers face constant temptations to ignite such conflicts, and the tribal outrage machine of social media ensures engagement around them no matter how trivial the issues. Over time, such conflicts can spawn extremism on opposing sides, while alienating and frustrating the rest of the population, which finds such conflict exhausting and irrelevant to their lives. We need to be smarter in calling out these efforts to divide us for what they are.

Resisting such efforts to divide starts with better understanding each other. We hope that the story of Britain's seven segments told in this study contributes to that end. It reflects the rich tapestry of British society. One of the privileges of undertaking a project such as this is the opportunity to speak to a far more diverse range of Britons than is normally encountered in one person's family, work, or community. Listening to others and hearing about the experiences and beliefs that shape them have reminded us how valuable and enriching those stories are. We need to find new ways for people in Britain to hear them. So often the 'backstory' of someone else's life is critical to build empathy and understanding for who they are now, and why they believe what they do. But the pace of our public debates today – or perhaps more accurately, their shallowness – means that we so often encounter others' views without the wider context of their lives and experiences.

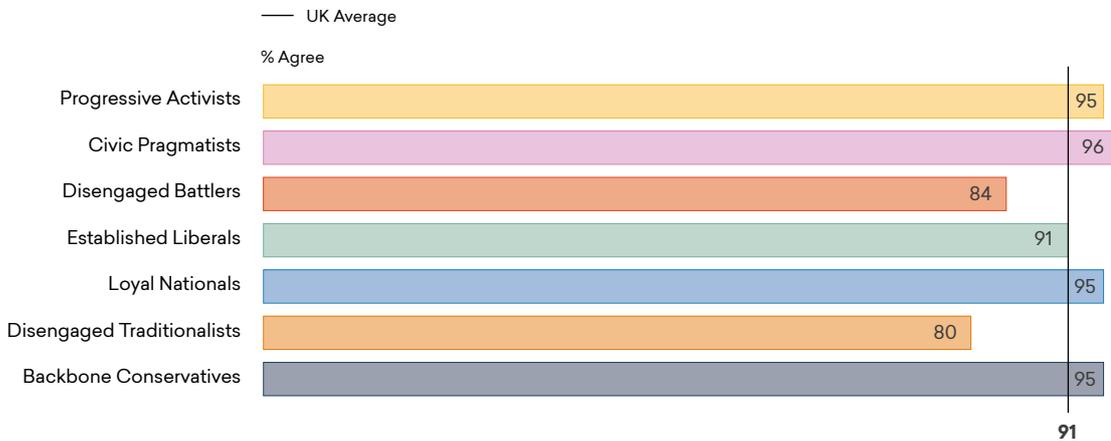
Amidst the suffering and disruption of Covid-19, Britain has been provided with a glimpse of the kind of society that we could become in the 2020s, if we can find better ways to navigate our differences and prevent them turning into deeper divisions. Our research has found that even those who had felt profoundly pessimistic about society, have been surprised and deeply affected by what we could become. It is easy for us to believe the worst about others, especially those different from ourselves. Finding ways to re-build our confidence in each other is vital in building our resilience against efforts to divide us. That way, we can disagree without giving up on each other – as nine in ten Britons agree we should be able to do.

Figure 12.1.

## Learning to disagree

Britons believe it is important that we can disagree and still come together

### We are able to disagree without giving up on each other



Qu. How important is it to you that the UK become a society where...We are able to disagree without giving up on each other. February 2020.  
Source: More in Common 2020.

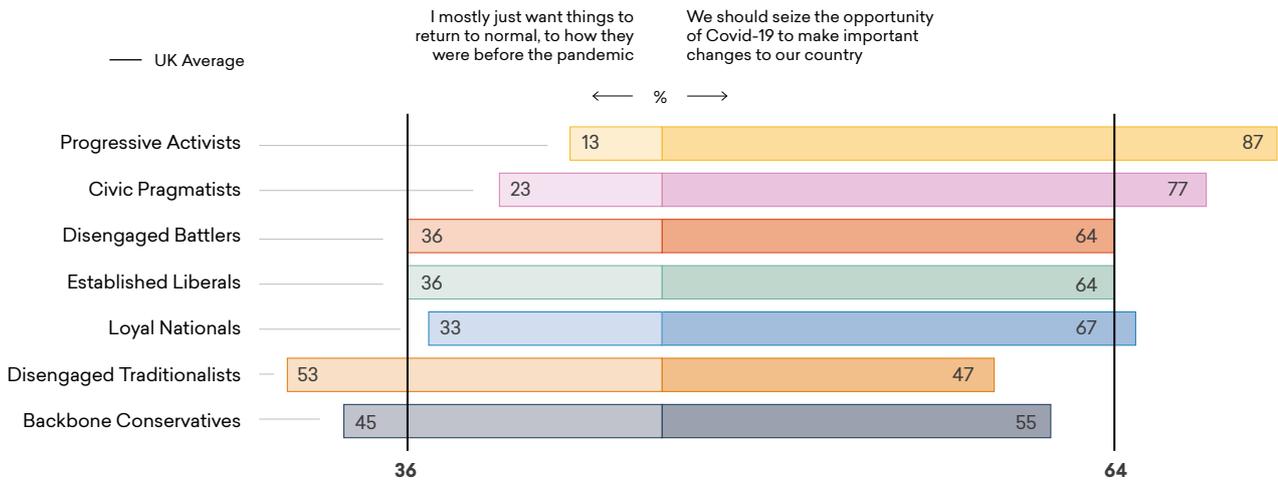
This report is not a comprehensive analysis of the issues it has touched upon, but we hope it provides new insights into the divisions and the common ground in the United Kingdom today. The dataset prepared for this study is unusually large, and because its focus is not on current issues but underlying values, we anticipate the analysis of the seven groups remaining relevant for several years. More in Common will be releasing more detailed findings from this dataset in the months to come, and we look forward to working with partner organisations to further test the insights that arise from this study.

This study is about a choice that Britain faces – a choice about the path ahead in the 2020s. One path leads to the deepening polarisation that is being experienced in other countries, where ‘us-versus-them’ dynamics shape our national debates, causing distrust and even hate between people on either side of the divide. The other path leads to a more cohesive society where we build on our common ground, and focus our energies on fixing the burning injustices that are so widely recognised and agreed upon.

The Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened our belief that this is a moment for change. There is a rare opportunity to bring people in Britain together around new agendas for the 2020s in which we fix what we know is broken in our society, while also preserving those things that we most highly value. We cannot find another major western democracy where the appetite for change is stronger than it is in the UK. Britain has remarkable potential. Now is a moment for leaders at every level of society and for local communities to step up. We hope More in Common can be one small part of a much larger story of a nation coming together.

Figure 12.2.

## Appetite for change



Qu. Which of the following statement do you agree with more: We should seize the opportunity of Covid-19 to make important changes to our country. June 2020.

Source: More in Common 2020.

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# Appendix 1 – Full demographic breakdown of segments

## 1.1.1. Gender, age, race

Gender	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Male	47%	37%	54%	51%	43%	59%	48%	<b>49%</b>
Female	53%	63%	46%	49%	57%	41%	52%	<b>51%</b>

Age	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Gen Z (18-24)	17%	9%	16%	13%	2%	11%	5%	<b>11%</b>
Millennials (25-44)	41%	32%	39%	30%	22%	32%	22%	<b>31%</b>
Gen X (45-54)	12%	18%	22%	18%	19%	20%	16%	<b>18%</b>
Baby Boomers (55-74)	27%	35%	20%	33%	50%	33%	45%	<b>34%</b>
Silent Gen (75-100)	3%	5%	3%	6%	8%	4%	13%	<b>6%</b>

Ethnicity	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
White	90%	88%	85%	90%	93%	87%	96%	<b>89%</b>
Mixed Race	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	<b>1%</b>
Asian	4%	5%	6%	6%	3%	7%	2%	<b>5%</b>
Black	1%	4%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	<b>3%</b>
Any other ethnicity/ Prefer not to say	4%	2%	5%	1%	1%	2%	0%	<b>2%</b>

## 1.1.2. Region, Geography

Region	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
North East	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	4%	4%	<b>4%</b>
North West	11%	12%	11%	9%	11%	12%	9%	<b>11%</b>
Yorkshire and the Humber	7%	9%	9%	8%	10%	10%	10%	<b>9%</b>
East Midlands	6%	7%	8%	6%	7%	9%	9%	<b>8%</b>
West Midlands	6%	10%	10%	6%	9%	10%	10%	<b>9%</b>
East of England	7%	7%	7%	9%	7%	7%	8%	<b>7%</b>
London	19%	10%	16%	13%	8%	12%	6%	<b>12%</b>
South East	14%	15%	13%	18%	17%	14%	21%	<b>16%</b>
South West	9%	12%	7%	14%	11%	10%	13%	<b>11%</b>
Wales	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	3%	3%	<b>4%</b>
Scotland	13%	11%	11%	9%	10%	9%	7%	<b>10%</b>

Country	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
England	84%	85%	85%	87%	86%	88%	89%	<b>86%</b>
Wales	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	3%	3%	<b>4%</b>
Scotland	13%	11%	11%	9%	10%	9%	7%	<b>10%</b>

Geography	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Urban	82%	78%	83%	75%	78%	82%	74%	<b>79%</b>
Town and Fringe	9%	11%	8%	10%	11%	9%	11%	<b>10%</b>
Rural	10%	11%	9%	14%	11%	9%	15%	<b>11%</b>
Uncoded	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>

### 1.1.3. Educational attainment<sup>vi</sup>

Education levels	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
High Education Levels	56%	36%	27%	42%	16%	18%	21%	<b>29%</b>
Medium Education Levels	31%	43%	33%	38%	36%	34%	41%	<b>36%</b>
Low Education Levels	11%	18%	29%	17%	44%	41%	34%	<b>29%</b>
Don't know/ Prefer not to say	2%	2%	10%	3%	4%	8%	3%	<b>6%</b>

### 1.1.4. Social Grade

Social Grade	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
A	15%	11%	8%	17%	8%	10%	15%	<b>11%</b>
B	24%	17%	10%	21%	13%	12%	16%	<b>16%</b>
C1	32%	34%	28%	31%	27%	29%	31%	<b>30%</b>
C2	13%	22%	21%	16%	27%	24%	21%	<b>21%</b>
D	8%	8%	13%	7%	12%	13%	7%	<b>10%</b>
E	8%	9%	20%	8%	13%	13%	9%	<b>12%</b>

### 1.1.5. Self-described Social Class

Class	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Upper class	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Middle class	52%	38%	23%	54%	25%	34%	49%	<b>39%</b>
Working class	37%	52%	59%	34%	65%	54%	44%	<b>50%</b>
None of these	11%	11%	18%	11%	9%	11%	7%	<b>11%</b>

<sup>vi</sup> High education levels: University or CNAA first degree (e.g. BA, B.Sc, B.Ed), University or CNAA higher degree (e.g. M.Sc, Ph.D); Medium education levels: Recognised trade apprenticeship completed, City and Guilds certificate 0 advanced, ONC, GCE A level or Higher certificate, Scottish Higher Certificate, Nursing qualification (e.g. SEN, SRN, SCM, RGN), Teaching qualification (not degree), University diploma, Other technical, professional or higher qualification; Low education levels: No formal qualifications, Youth training certificate/ skillseekers, Clerical and commercial, City and Guilds certificate, CSE grades 2-5, CSE grade 1, GCE O level, GCSE, School certificate, Scottish Ordinary/ Lower Certificate

## 1.1.6. Annual Household Income

Income	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Under £10,000	6%	4%	11%	5%	7%	7%	4%	<b>7%</b>
£10,000 - £19,999	10%	14%	15%	12%	18%	15%	13%	<b>14%</b>
£20,000 - £29,999	14%	17%	14%	13%	18%	13%	15%	<b>15%</b>
£30,000 - £39,999	11%	12%	9%	11%	12%	12%	12%	<b>11%</b>
£40,000 - £49,999	10%	9%	7%	12%	8%	8%	10%	<b>9%</b>
£50,000 - £59,000	6%	6%	5%	7%	4%	4%	7%	<b>5%</b>
£60,000 - £69,999	7%	5%	3%	4%	2%	3%	5%	<b>4%</b>
£70,000 - £99,999	7%	5%	4%	9%	3%	3%	5%	<b>5%</b>
£100,000 - £149,999	5%	2%	1%	4%	1%	1%	2%	<b>2%</b>
£150,000 and over	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%	<b>1%</b>
Don't know/ Prefer not to answer	23%	24%	32%	22%	26%	32%	26%	<b>27%</b>

## 1.1.7. Religious Identity

Income	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Christianity	18%	37%	25%	37%	50%	38%	55%	<b>37%</b>
Judaism	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>
Hinduism	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	<b>1%</b>
Islam	1%	3%	5%	1%	2%	3%	1%	<b>2%</b>
Sikhism	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	<b>1%</b>
Buddhism	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Other/ Prefer not to say	6%	5%	7%	4%	5%	8%	5%	<b>7%</b>
I do not belong to any religion	72%	52%	60%	54%	42%	48%	38%	<b>51%</b>

## 1.1.8. Self-party identification

Income	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Conservative Party	1%	16%	13%	36%	34%	41%	64%	<b>30%</b>
Labour Party	47%	32%	29%	15%	19%	12%	6%	<b>22%</b>
Liberal Democrat	14%	11%	4%	11%	4%	2%	3%	<b>7%</b>
Green Party	12%	6%	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%	<b>4%</b>
UKIP	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	<b>1%</b>
Brexit Party	0%	1%	2%	1%	7%	4%	3%	<b>3%</b>
Scottish National Party	7%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%	1%	<b>4%</b>
Sinn Fein	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Democratic Unionist Party	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Plaid Cymru	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Independent	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	<b>1%</b>
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	<b>1%</b>
None of the above	16%	27%	41%	29%	28%	35%	21%	<b>29%</b>

## Appendix 1.2 – Segment spread across demographics

Generations	Gen Z (18-24)	Millennials (25-44)	Gen X (45-54)	Baby Boomers (55-74)	Silent Gen (75-100)	All
Progressive Activists	23%	18%	9%	10%	6%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	12%	14%	14%	13%	12%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	19%	15%	14%	7%	5%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	15%	12%	12%	11%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	3%	12%	18%	24%	21%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	20%	19%	20%	17%	14%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	7%	11%	13%	19%	31%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	827	2968	1789	3826	695	<b>10105</b>

Gender	Male	Female	All
Progressive Activists	13%	14%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	10%	16%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	13%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	12%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	15%	19%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	22%	14%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	14%	15%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	4400	5705	<b>10105</b>

Ethnicity	White	Mixed Race	Asian	Black	Any other ethnicity/ Prefer not to say	All
Progressive Activists	13%	21%	10%	7%	26%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	13%	19%	14%	21%	14%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	11%	17%	15%	13%	29%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	12%	15%	15%	11%	3%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	17%	12%	12%	14%	10%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	18%	12%	27%	24%	15%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	16%	4%	6%	9%	3%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	9513	150	229	91	33	<b>10016</b>

Region	North East	North West	Yorkshire and the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	All
Progressive Activists	12%	14%	11%	11%	9%	13%	22%	12%	11%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	13%	15%	13%	12%	15%	13%	11%	13%	14%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	13%	12%	11%	12%	13%	11%	17%	9%	7%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	10%	10%	10%	10%	8%	14%	13%	13%	15%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	21%	17%	19%	16%	18%	16%	11%	17%	17%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	17%	20%	20%	22%	21%	18%	18%	16%	17%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	14%	12%	16%	17%	16%	16%	8%	19%	18%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	386	1077	939	759	860	780	930	1750	1201	<b>10105</b>

Country	England	Wales	Scotland	All
Progressive Activists	13%	14%	17%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	13%	12%	15%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	11%	13%	13%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	12%	11%	11%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	17%	21%	17%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	19%	16%	16%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	15%	13%	11%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	8682	631	792	<b>10105</b>

ONS urban	Urban	Town and Fringe	Rural	Uncoded	All
Progressive Activists	14%	12%	12%	22%	<b>13%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	13%	14%	13%	50%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	12%	10%	10%	0%	<b>12%</b>
Established Liberals	11%	12%	15%	28%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	17%	19%	16%	0%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	19%	17%	15%	0%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	14%	16%	20%	0%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	7801	1075	1223	6	<b>10105</b>

Support	Conservative Party	Labour Party	Liberal Democrat	Green Party	UKIP	Brexit Party	Scottish National Party	None of the above	All
Progressive Activists	0%	29%	29%	44%	1%	1%	27%	8%	<b>14%</b>
Civic Pragmatists	7%	20%	22%	22%	3%	4%	17%	13%	<b>13%</b>
Disengaged Battlers	5%	15%	7%	9%	6%	7%	17%	17%	<b>11%</b>
Established Liberals	14%	8%	19%	10%	3%	5%	9%	12%	<b>12%</b>
Loyal Nationals	19%	15%	10%	7%	40%	43%	13%	17%	<b>17%</b>
Disengaged Traditionalists	24%	10%	6%	4%	38%	25%	13%	22%	<b>18%</b>
Backbone Conservatives	31%	4%	7%	4%	9%	15%	4%	11%	<b>15%</b>
Unweighted N	3140	2278	711	422	74	277	278	2525	<b>9923</b>

## Appendix 1.3 - Variables used for cluster analysis

The following categories of questions were used to construct the cluster analysis that yielded our 7 segments.

Core Beliefs (24 measures):  Moral Foundations Theory [10] Parenting style and authoritarianism [4] Victimhood [5] Agency and responsibility [3] Threat perception [2]	Index of political ideology (10 measures):  Left-right economic battery [5] Libertarian-authoritarian battery [5]  Democratic participation (1 measure)
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## Appendix 1.4 - Sample sizes and Margins of Error (95% Confidence Interval)

### 1.3.1. February 2020 data set

	Core beliefs and Demographics (Avg N)	Margin of error	Issue Specifics (Avg N)	Margin of error	Attitudinal Specifics (Avg N)	Margin of error
<b>All</b>	<b>10,385</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2597</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5193</b>	<b>1%</b>
PA	1,515	3%	379	5%	758	4%
CP	1,464	3%	366	5%	732	4%
DB	1,052	3%	263	6%	526	4%
EL	1,225	3%	307	6%	613	4%
LN	1,714	2%	429	5%	857	3%
DT	1,585	2%	397	5%	793	3%
BC	72%	52%	60%	54%	42%	48%

### 1.3.2. Subsequent data sets

	May 2020	Margin of error	June 2020	Margin of error	September 2020	Margin of error
<b>All</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2,282</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2,060</b>	<b>1%</b>
PA	259	6%	308	6%	288	5%
CP	293	6%	322	5%	302	6%
DB	207	7%	252	6%	207	7%
EL	236	6%	253	6%	214	7%
LN	302	6%	354	5%	364	5%
DT	322	5%	355	5%	375	5%
BC	318	6%	357	5%	310	6%

## Appendix 2.1 - Full question texts

### 2.1.1. Figure 3.1.

#### Shifts in the moral bedrock

Index score of items drawn from Moral Foundations Theory

**Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement or disagreement:**

- Strongly agree
- Moderately agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Moderately disagree
- Strongly disagree

[CARE]

- Compassion for those who are suffering is the most important virtue in a person.
- One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenceless animal.

[FAIRNESS]

- When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.
- Justice is the most important requirement for a society.

[AUTHORITY]

- Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.
- Men and women each have different roles to play in society.

[LOYALTY]

- I am proud of my country's history.
- People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.

[PURITY]

- People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.
- I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural.

### 2.1.2. Figure 3.3.

#### Authoritarian tendencies

**For the following pair of traits, which one you think is more important for a child to have using the scale below, where 1 means it is much more important for them to have the first trait, and 4 means it is much more important for them to have the second:**

- 1. Independence
- 2
- 3
- 4. Respect for elders

**For the following pair of traits, which one you think is more important for a child to have using the scale below, where 1 means it is much more important for them to have the first trait, and 4 means it is much more important for them to have the second:**

- 1. Obedience
- 2
- 3
- 4. Self-reliance

**For the following pair of traits, which one you think is more important for a child to have using the scale below, where 1 means it is much more important for them to have the first trait, and 4 means it is much more important for them to have the second:**

- 1. Well-behaved
- 2
- 3
- 4. Creative

**For the following pair of traits, which one you think is more important for a child to have using the scale below, where 1 means it is much more important for them to have the first trait, and 4 means it is much more important for them to have the second:**

- 1. Curiosity
- 2
- 3
- 4. Good manners

### **2.1.3. Figure 3.8. What determines outcomes in life?**

**Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 4. People are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. People's outcomes in life are determined largely by forces outside of their control.

**How much control do you feel most people have over the way their life turns out?**

- 1. Some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success.
- 2
- 3
- 4. People who work hard can find success no matter what situation they were born into.

**Which of the following played a greater role in getting you where you are today?**

- 1. Luck and circumstance.
- 2
- 3
- 4. Hard work and effort.

### **2.1.4 Figure 3.9. Left-right disposition on the economic scale**

**Index score of items drawn from battery measuring political ideology**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[Left-right scale]

- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off.
- Big business generally treats ordinary people well.
- Ordinary working people get their fair share of the nation's wealth.
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.
- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.

## 2.1.5. Figure 3.10. Libertarian-authoritarian disposition on the scale

Index score of items drawn from battery measuring political ideology

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

[Libertarian-authoritarian scale]

- Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values.
- Even for serious crimes, the death penalty is not the right sentence.
- Schools should teach children to question authority.
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.
- People who break the law should be given harsher/ stiffer sentences.

## 2.1.6. Figure 4.3. Self-efficacy

Which of the statements do you agree with more?

Left statement: Most politicians are interested in what people like me think.

Right statement: Most politicians don't care what people like me think.

- Fully agree with statement to the left.
- Agree more with statement to the left.
- Agree more with statement to the right.
- Fully agree with statement to the right.

## 2.1.7. Figure 4.11. Brexit identity versus party identity

[Importance]:

How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity:

- Being a [xxx] supporter
- Being a Remainer/ Leaver

[Pride]:

How proud are you to be:

- A [xxx] supporter
- A Remainer/ Leaver
- 7 – very important
- 6
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 – not at all important

## 2.1.8. Figure 5.10. The 'us-versus-them' dynamic of Brexit identities

Feelings Thermometer: How positively or negatively do you feel about each of the following, where 0 means very negative and 100 means very positive.

Attitude towards Brexit: How did you feel about the UK's recent exit from the European Union, referred to as Brexit?

### **2.1.9. Figure 5.13. What Britons have in common**

**[Carbon emission threat]: Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 4. Cutting carbon emissions is a threat to jobs in the UK
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. Cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK

### **2.1.10. Figure 6.1. Seriousness of racism**

**Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 4. Many people nowadays don't take racism seriously enough.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. Many people nowadays are too sensitive about things to do with race.

### **2.1.11. Figure 7.2. Pride in national and British identity**

**How proud are you to be:**

- Your nationality [from options of English/ Scottish or Welsh]
- British
  - 7 – very important
  - 6
  - 5
  - 4
  - 3
  - 2
  - 1 – not at all important

### **2.1.12. Figure 8.2. Frustration at the system**

**Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 4. In the UK, the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. In the UK, the system works for the majority of people.

### **2.1.13. Figure 8.7. Inequality and personal responsibility**

**Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 4. People are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. People's outcomes in life are determined largely by forces outside of their control

### 2.1.14. Figure 8.9. Support for policy measures aimed at businesses

The government is currently working on measures to help the economy and support businesses. What do you think: To what extent would you support or oppose requiring companies to fulfil the following criteria if they are to receive government aid?

- Strongly support
  - Somewhat support
  - Somewhat oppose
  - Strongly oppose
1. Stop using overseas tax havens and pay the proper taxes in the UK
  2. Guarantee fair wages for all their workers
  3. Commit to shifting jobs back from overseas to the UK
  4. Make commitments to reduce their carbon emissions and protect the environment
  5. Put a ceiling on pay for senior executives

### 2.1.15. Figure 9.3. White privilege

Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:

- 4. These days, white people still have advantages over people from ethnic minorities.
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. These days, white people and people from ethnic minorities are treated the same and have the same opportunities.

### 2.1.16. Figure 9.5. Dealing with issues of race

Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:

- 4. Many people nowadays don't take racism seriously enough
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. Many people nowadays are too sensitive about things to do with race

### 2.1.17. Figure 9.6. Dealing with the past

Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:

- 4. We cannot move forward as a nation if we don't acknowledge the mistakes during the period of the British Empire
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. There is no point in going over the rights and wrongs of our history. We need to move forward and focus on our future

### 2.1.18. Figure 10.1. Climate change concerns everyone

Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:

- 4. Climate change is mainly a concern for rich, white, middle class people
- 3.
- 2.
- 1. Climate change concerns all of us, regardless of income or background

### **2.1.19. Figure 10.5. Back to normal or time for change?**

**Which of the following statements do you agree with more? Where 1 means you fully agree with the statement to the left, and 6 means you fully agree with the statement to the right.**

- 1. I mostly just want things to return to normal, to how they were before the pandemic
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6. We should seize the opportunity of COVID-19 to make important changes to our country

### **2.1.20. Figure 10.6. Climate action and job creation**

**Please say how well the following statements reflect your views using the scale below, where 4 means you agree completely with the first statement, and 1 means you agree completely with the second statement:**

- 1. Cutting carbon emissions is an opportunity to create new jobs in the UK
- 2
- 3
- 4. Cutting carbon emissions is a threat to jobs in the UK

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