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# Nat Con or Modernisation 2.0

## Where is the Tory voter coalition?

*Conservative Party Conference Fringe Event 2023*

# The British Seven Segments

## Progressive Activists



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

## Civic Pragmatists



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

## Disengaged Battlers



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

## Established Liberals



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

## Loyal Nationals



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

## Disengaged Traditionalists



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

## Backbone Conservatives



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

# 2019 Conservative Voter Coalition

**Established  
Liberals**



**Blue Wall  
voters**

**Loyal  
Nationals**



**Red Wall  
voters**

**Disengaged  
Traditionalists**



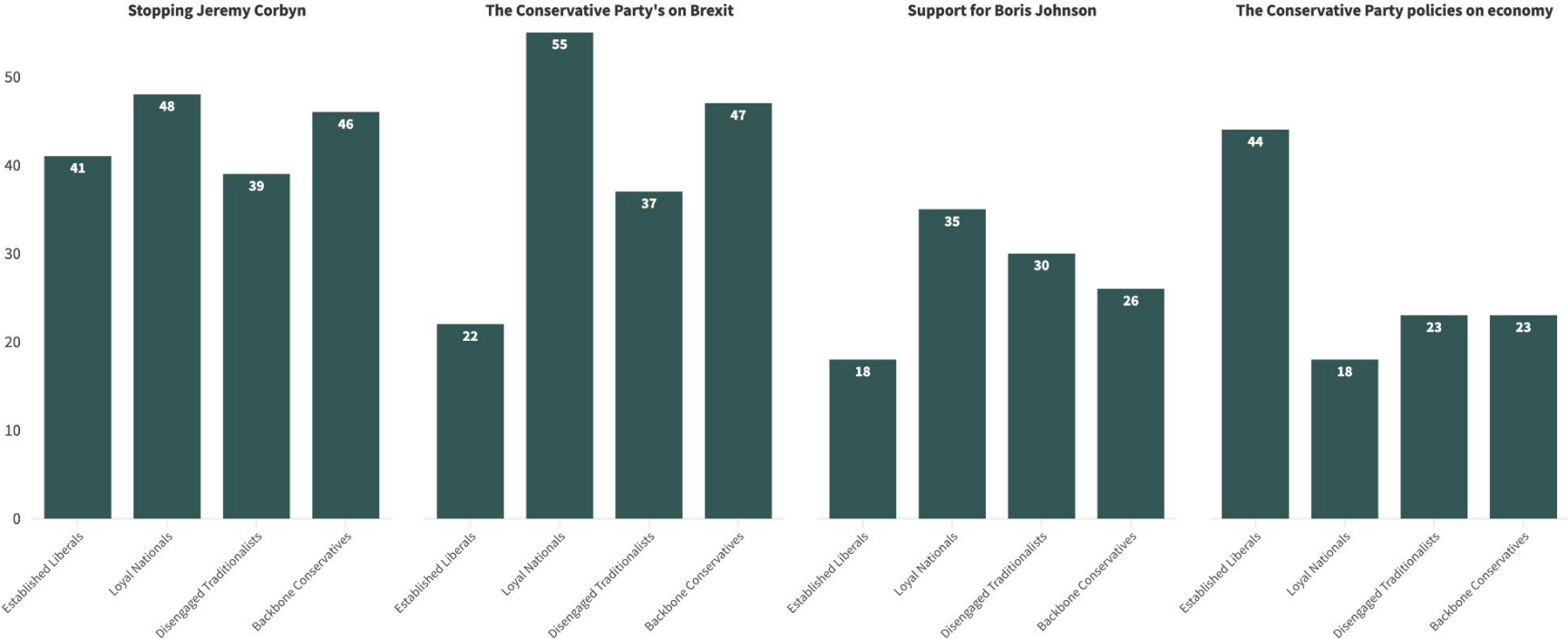
**Essex Man**

**Backbone  
Conservatives**



**Shire  
Tories**

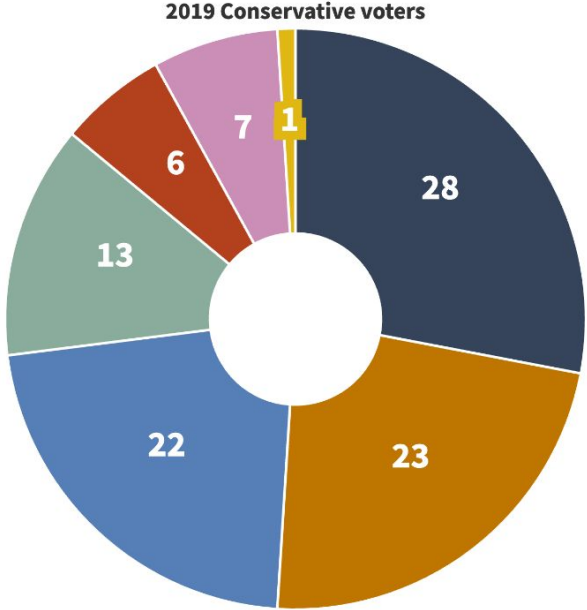
# Brexit, Corbyn, Boris and Conservative economic policies brought the 2019 coalition together - but clear differences between Red and Blue Wall voters emerged



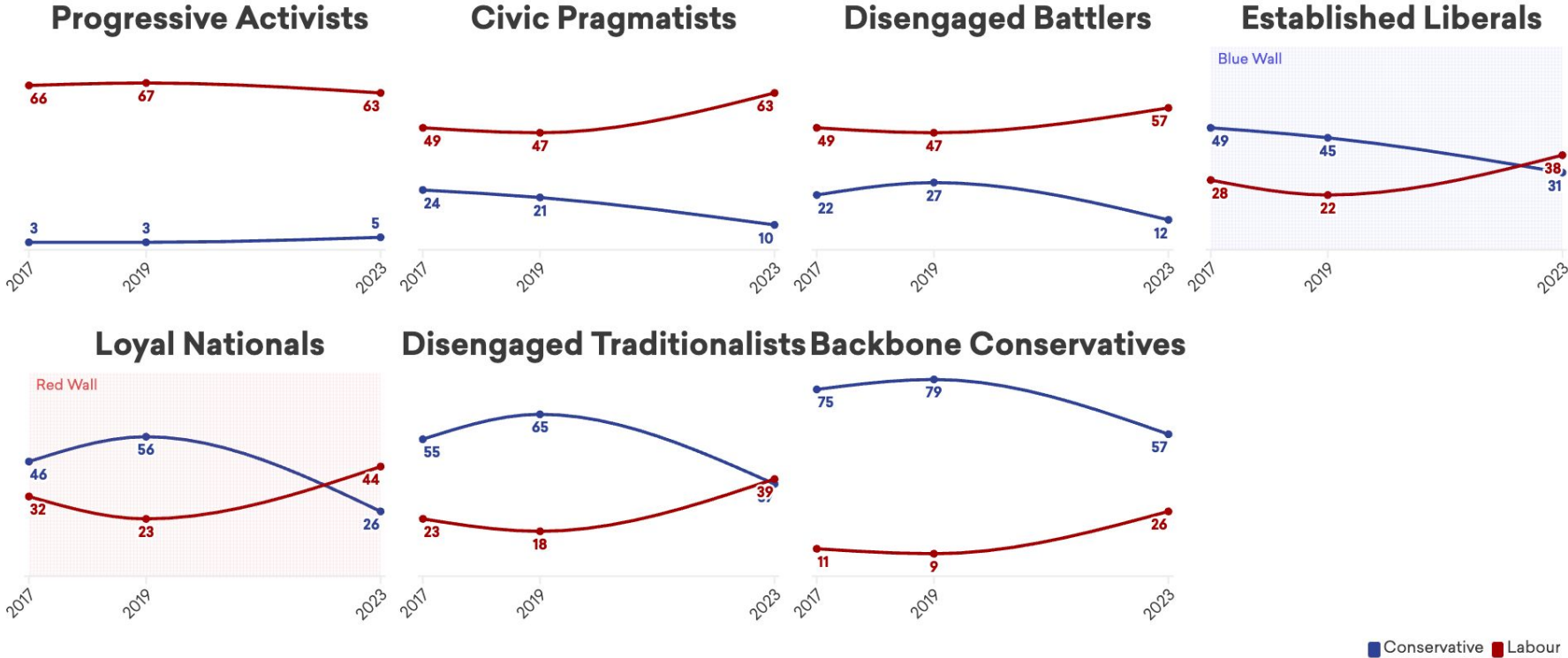
# The 2019 Conservative coalition relied much more on its base and Red wall voters (Loyal Nationals) than Blue Wall voters

**British Seven segment make up of 2019 Conservative coalition** ● Backbone Conservatives

- Disengaged Traditionalists
- Loyal Nationals
- Established Liberals
- Disengaged Battlers
- Civic Pragmatists
- Progressive Activists



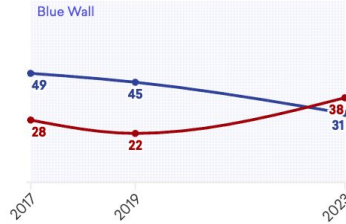
# Changing voting intention of the British Seven segments– 2017 GE to Autumn 2023



# How the Conservative coalition has moved

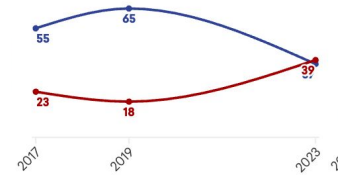
## Established Liberals

Cameronite base that drifted post Brexit (only part of the Conservative coalition to shrink between 2017-2019), but their support for the Tories has come back a bit under Sunak and fallen less sharply than the other segments. They now have higher levels of support for the Conservatives than Red Wall voters. Labour lead by 7 points, but many Established Liberals are planning on voting Liberal Democrat in places like Surrey putting Tory heartland seats at risk.



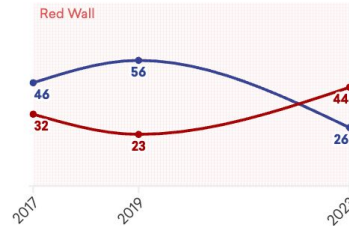
## Disengaged Traditionalists

Pattern of non voting but became a core part of the Conservative Coalition during Brexit. Drop in support for the Conservatives since 2019. Labour now have a 2 point lead with this group. Labour haven't won them over. The larger risk for the Conservatives is that these voters stay at home in the General Election.



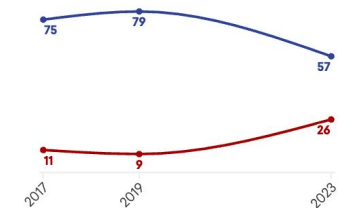
## Loyal Nationals

The key 2019 group as this socially conservative but economically statist group broke their historic link with Labour. Despite swinging dramatically to the Tories they have had the largest drop in Conservative support since 2019. Labour now exceed their 2017 position with these voters. Labour have an 18 point lead over the Conservatives with this group. This group will decide if the Tories hold the Red Wall.



## Backbone Conservatives

The only one of seven segments where the Conservatives continue to lead the pack last few months - though the proportion who have switched to 'Don't Know' and may sit on their hands 1997 style is significant. Whether Backbone Conservatives ultimately come home to the Tories would determine the scale of any defeat.



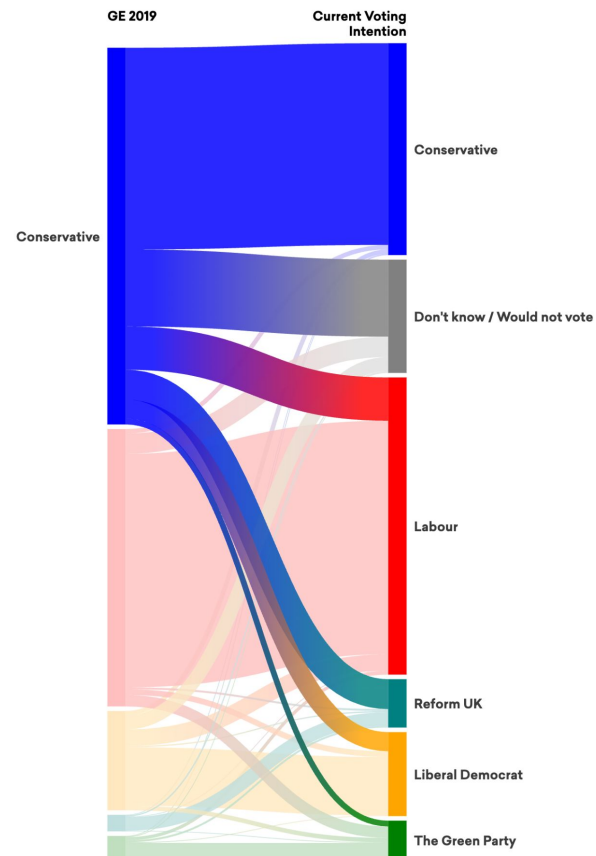
# Where have the Tory voters gone?

The Tories are currently hanging on to barely half of their 2019 vote. Only 53 per cent of Tory 2019 voters say that they would vote for the party again. Conservatives have largely lost voters in three directions.

‘Conservative switchers’ have gone to three places:

- **Don't knows:** Half (51 per cent) Conservative switchers are currently undecided who they will vote for. When forced to choose, these ‘Don't Know’ respondents are nearly twice as likely to choose the Tories over Labour. This group are more socially Conservative than the country as a whole. Whether they come home will determine whether we are in hung parliament or Labour majority territory.
- **Labour:** Three in ten (29 per cent) of Conservative switchers have swung to Labour. This is a hard group for the Conservatives to shift - but they are vital to securing another majority. Moving them will require a significant uptick in people's feelings of security and economic wellbeing.
- **Reform:** One in five (20 per cent) of Conservative switchers now say they would vote for Reform UK.

## Changing voting intentions: 2019 to September 2023





# Who are the ‘Don’t Knows’?

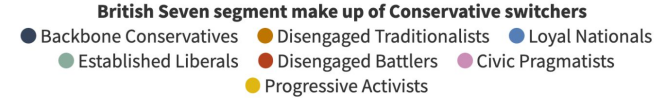
Those who have switched from Tory to ‘don’t know’ are mainly drawn from the ‘Backbone Conservative’ segment.

In contrast, Tory-Labour switchers are mostly drawn from the more centre/left leaning Civic Pragmatists. These were once a group the Tories were competitive with, but with whom the Tories have struggled since the departure of David Cameron.

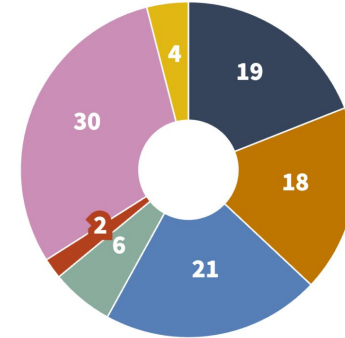
If the Tories are to close the gap with Labour they need to get these disgruntled conservatives who currently say they ‘don’t know’ to come home.

The challenge is these would-be voters are disgruntled for different reasons – some alienated by Truss, others by Rishi’s supposed betrayal of Boris, and others don’t think the government is doing it’s basic job right.

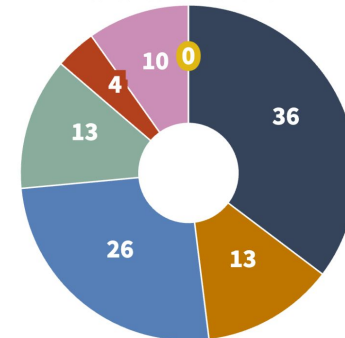
## The Conservative switchers



Conservative to Labour Switcher



Conservative to don't know



# Reform UK voters - is the polling overstating support?

Reform UK are currently polling much better than their performances in by-elections and local elections. This may be a product of overly engaged online panels.

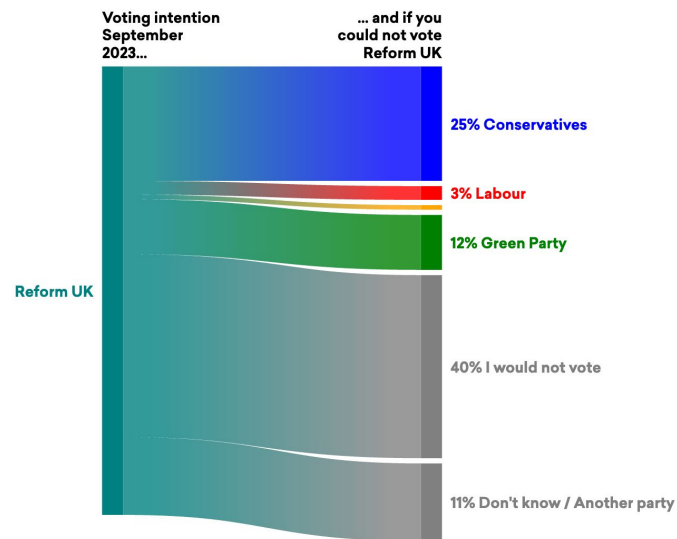
Understanding where these voters go, if not to Reform UK, will be pivotal to who gets the eventual shape of the next Parliament.

When forced to choose a party that isn't Reform UK, voters are much more likely to back the Tories. Very few Reform UK voters are attracted to the Labour Party.

These are a group of disillusioned voters making a protest vote – a good proportion are even willing to consider the Green Party, but many of them will not vote at the next election.

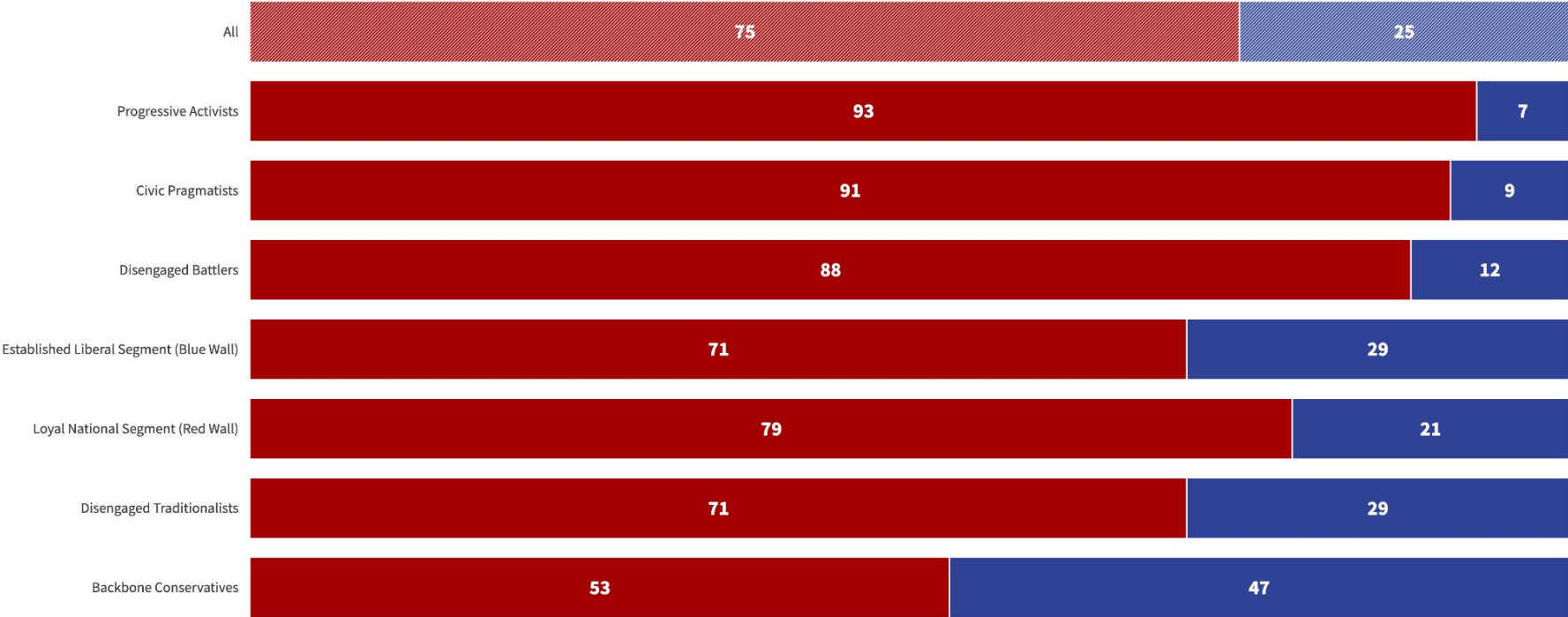
Reform to Conservative switchers would not shift the polls significantly - but could be important if the polls tighten in determining what a hung parliament looks like, potential giving the Tories a 2-3 point bounce.

## Reform UK voters are far more likely to swing to Conservative than to Labour



# Growing desire for a change of government explains Sunak's fresh start agenda – three in four think the UK needs a change of government

Which comes closest to your view? ● The UK needs a change of government ● The UK does not need a change of government



**President Rishi Campaign?**

# Rishi is more than twice as likely to have underperformed than overperformed on the public's expectations of him

Sunak entered Number 10 with the public willing to give him time to make a difference.

In focus groups people explained he had done well over furlough and had an opportunity to stabilize things after the Truss Premiership. People thought him more capable than Boris.

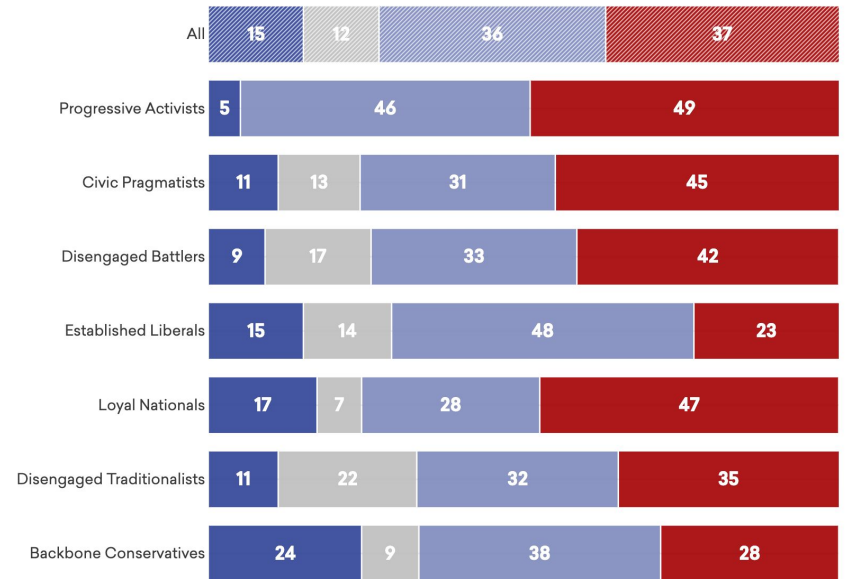
However, they worried that he was too out of touch - and a series of 'wealth gaffes' reinforced the perception he was too wealthy to lead the country through a cost of living crisis "hold your nerve" landed particularly badly.

After the first six months, people began to question whether Rishi Sunak had what it takes to turn the country around. The 'inaction man' critique is one that resonates with how the public talk about Rishi Sunak.

Sunak needs to shift this perception, but to do so in a way that builds on his strengths as a Prime Minister who delivers, not through a barrage of policy announcements, which seem rushed and incoherent.

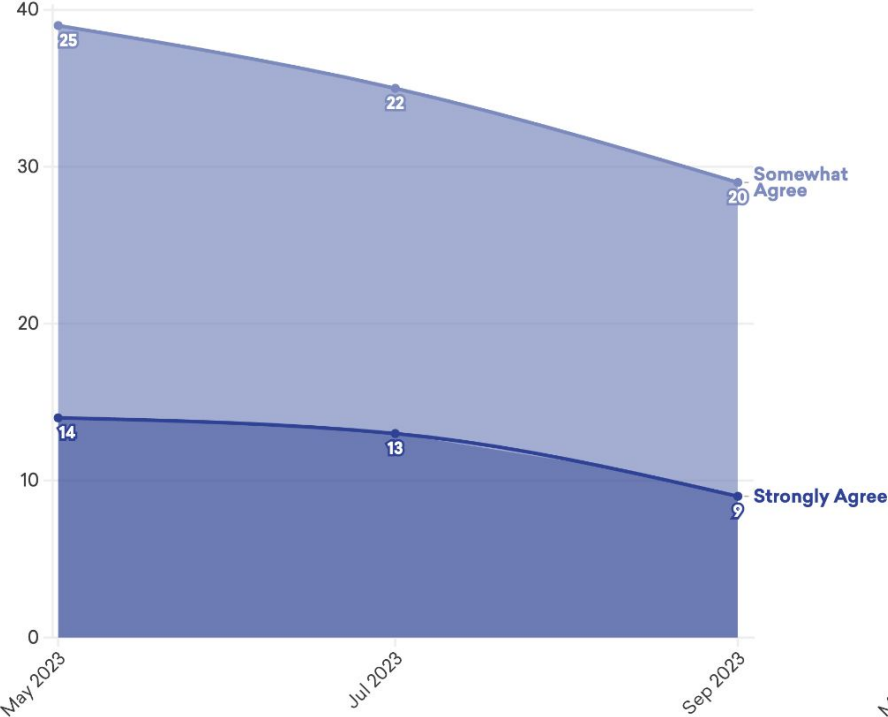
## Since he became Prime Minister has Rishi Sunak performed better, worse or about the same as you expected?

● Performed better ● Don't know ● Performed the same ● Performed worse

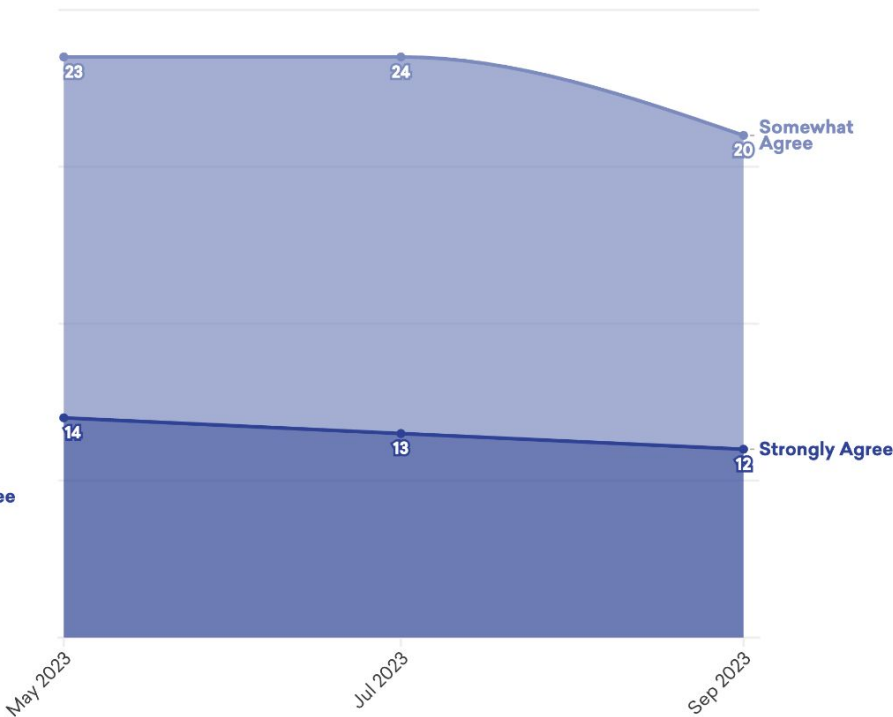


# Fewer people now think that Rishi Sunak is an asset to the Conservative Party as the shine has worn off

"Rishi Sunak is an asset to the Conservative Party"



"Keir Starmer is an asset to the Labour Party"



# Rishi versus his predecessors

**Liz Truss:** All of the Conservative voting segments think that Rishi Sunak is performing better than Liz Truss.

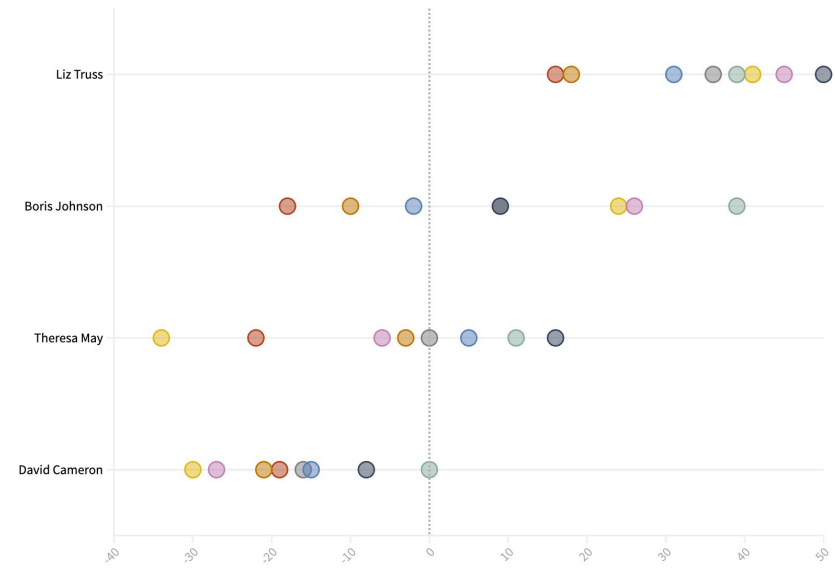
**Boris Johnson:** Established Liberals are overwhelmingly likely to think that Rishi Sunak is performing better than Boris Johnson, Backbone Conservatives think the same, albeit to a lesser degree. However, Loyal Nationals are more likely to say Boris did a better job and Disengaged Traditionalists who turned out to vote are significantly more likely to agree. This explains the Conservative's struggles in the Red Wall - Rishi Sunak does not connect with these voters in the way Boris Johnson did.

**Theresa May:** Most of the Conservative voting segments moderately agree Sunak is performing better than Theresa May.

**David Cameron:** None of the segments think that Sunak is performing better than David Cameron, although Established Liberals view him on a par with the former PM.

**Based on how well he is performing as Conservative leader, do you think that Rishi Sunak is performing better or worse than the following previous Conservative leaders?**

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



Source: More in Common (August 2023)  
Percent responding better minus percent responding worse

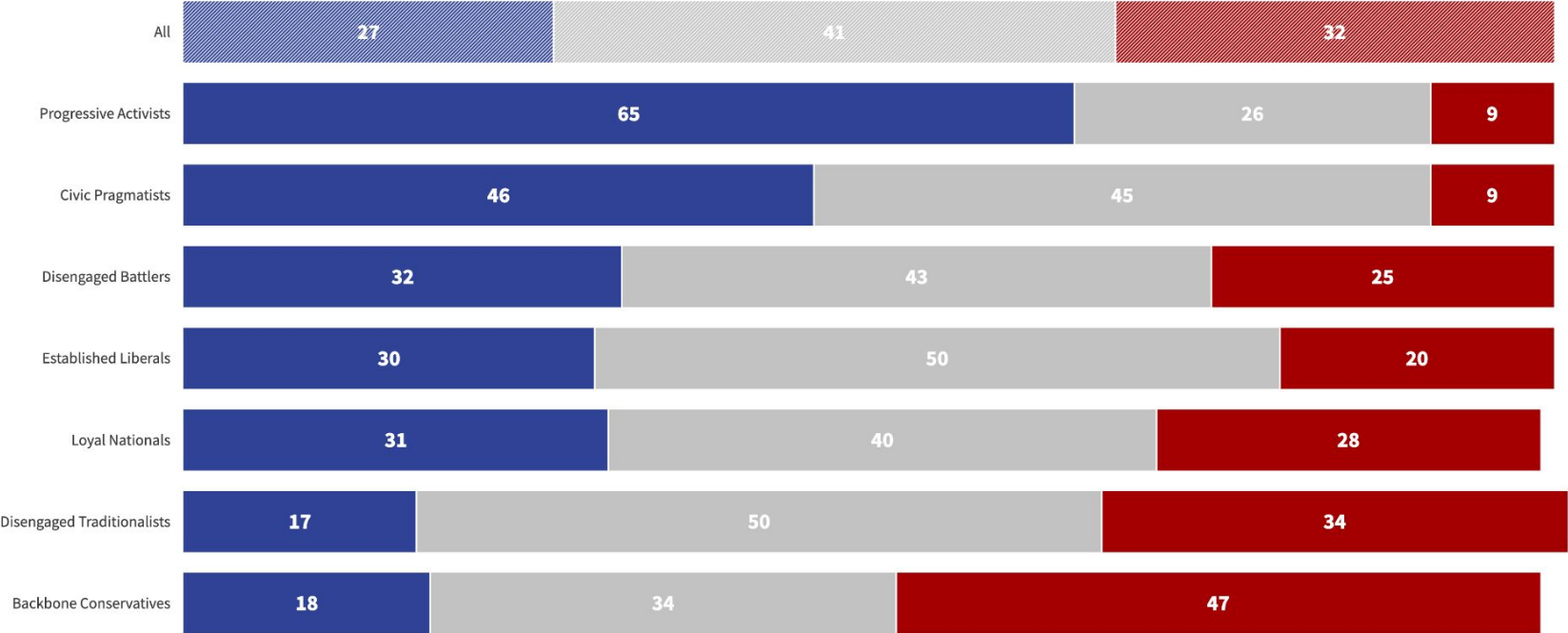
# Manifesto



# Keir Starmer is winning largely by default

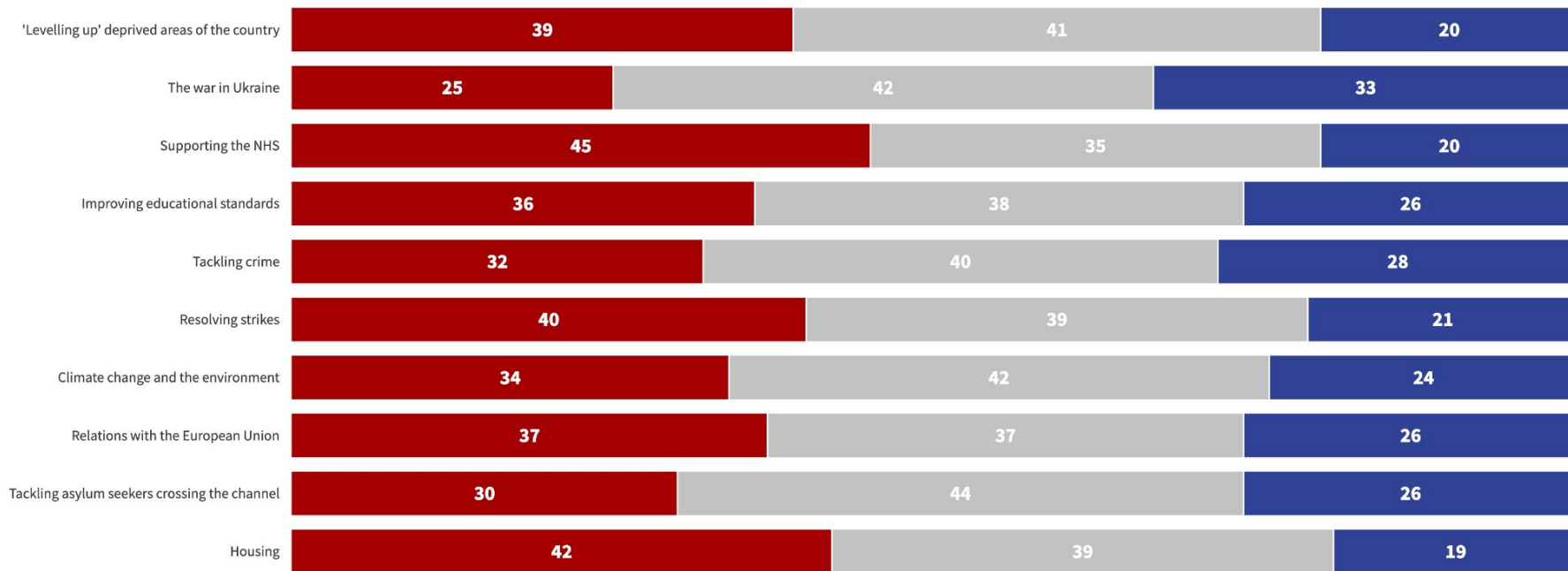
There is no real love for Keir Starmer and this should offer some hope to the Conservatives. Voters are certainly not embracing a positive Labour agenda and don't think Labour would do much better.

Over the past 13 years, the Labour Party would have done a ● Better job running the country ● No better or no worse a job running the country ● Worse job running the country



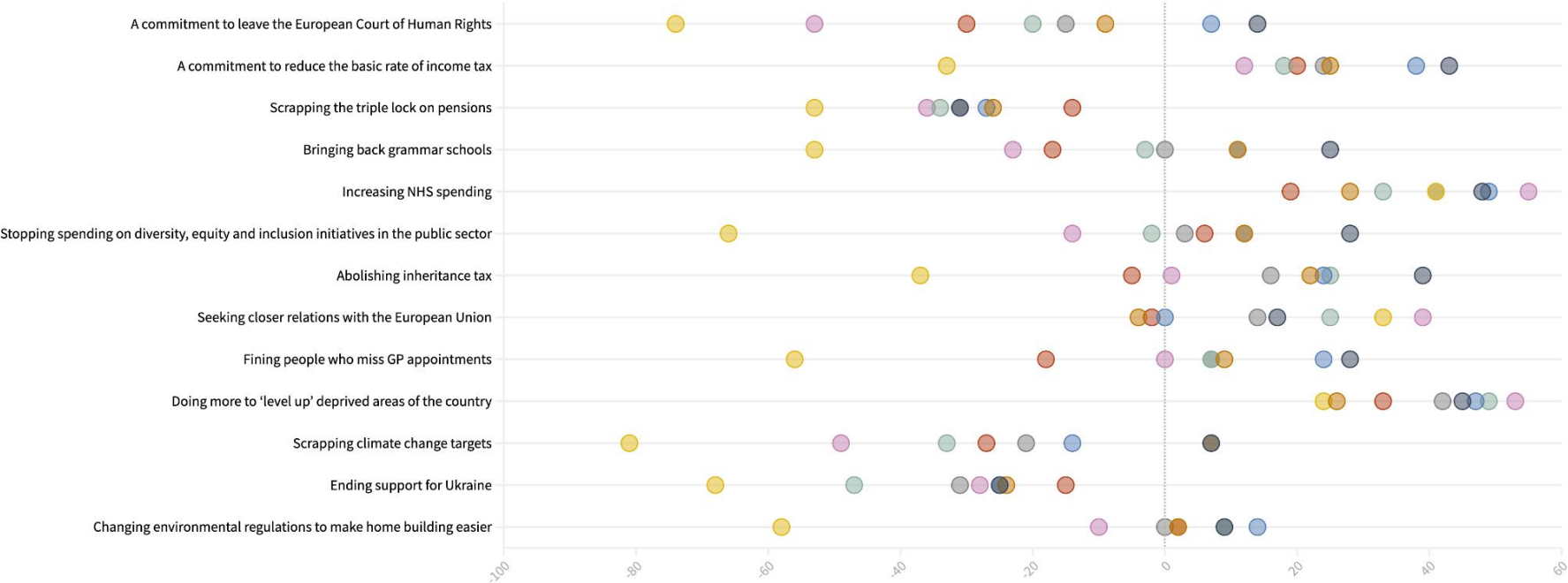
# While the Conservatives trail on all issues bar war in Ukraine, there are high numbers of don't knows and Labour don't have majority trust on any issue

Which party do you trust the most on the issue of... ● Labour ● Don't Know ● Conservatives



# The challenge of putting a manifesto together that can please the whole country

Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party? ● All ● Progressive Activists ● Civic Pragmatists ● Disengaged Battlers ● Established Liberals ● Loyal Nationals ● Disengaged Traditionalists ● Backbone Conservatives



# Manifesto pledges that can unite the Tory Coalition

**Levelling up:** Levelling up remains a silver bullet to unite the 2019 Tory coalition, the party needs to set out what it has done this term and how it will build on that. While cutting back HS2 isn't particularly unpopular in of itself, in focus groups it gives the impression of giving up on the North and people don't trust other investments will actually happen.

**Tax cuts:** The 2019 coalition want the tax burden to be lowered. Income tax cuts are more popular than inheritance tax cuts, though both are popular. A caveat is that in focus groups people are cynical that they will really benefit from tax cuts and think the money will be taken back elsewhere.

**NHS Spending:** Increasing NHS spending remains popular with all of the Conservative voting segments. In focus groups, it is clear that NHS waiting lists and the state of A&E threaten to be the Tories achilles heel.

**Triple lock and Ukraine:** Reducing support for the war in Ukraine and cutting the triple lock are the least popular policy proposals for the Tory coalition - people think we need to help beat Putin and support those who have contributed all their lives to the country.

Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?

● All ● Established Liberals ● Loyal Nationals ● Disengaged Traditionalists ● Backbone Conservatives



Source: More in Common (August 2023)  
Net responding more likely minus less likely

# Manifesto policies where the Tories face choice of embracing one side of coalition or the other

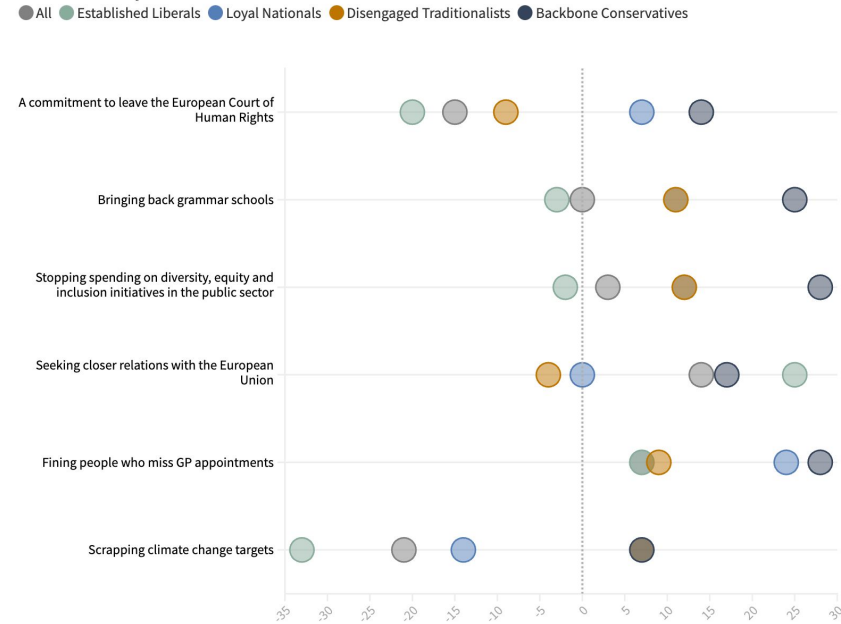
Other policies would split the Tory Coalition - particularly between Blue Wall Established Liberal voters and Red Wall Loyal Nationals. There are a series of policies that then ultimately represent a choice to embrace one side of that coalition or another.

That includes leaving the European Court of Human Rights, bringing back grammar schools, closer relations with the European Union and DEI initiatives.

Both the ECHR and relations with the EU pose risks beyond the pure policy merits - they risk triggering public exhaustion and fears that we are set to return to the Brexit wars.

Neither the Red Wall Loyal Nationals or the Blue Wall Established Liberals want to see climate targets scrapped. In focus groups, the public are clear tackling climate change remains a priority.

Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?

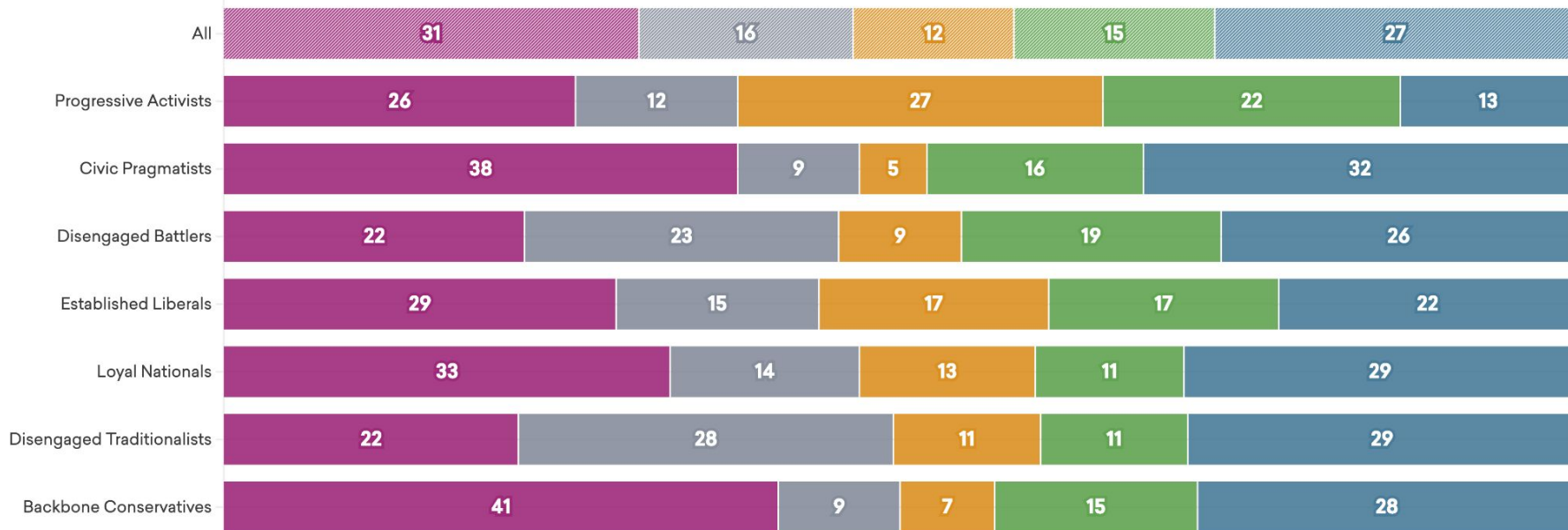


# Three in five Britons think that inheritance tax should either be abolished or tax free threshold raised

Which of the following do you most agree with? ● The tax-free threshold should be raised, so that fewer people pay inheritance tax

● Don't know ● The tax-free threshold should be lowered so that more people pay inheritance tax

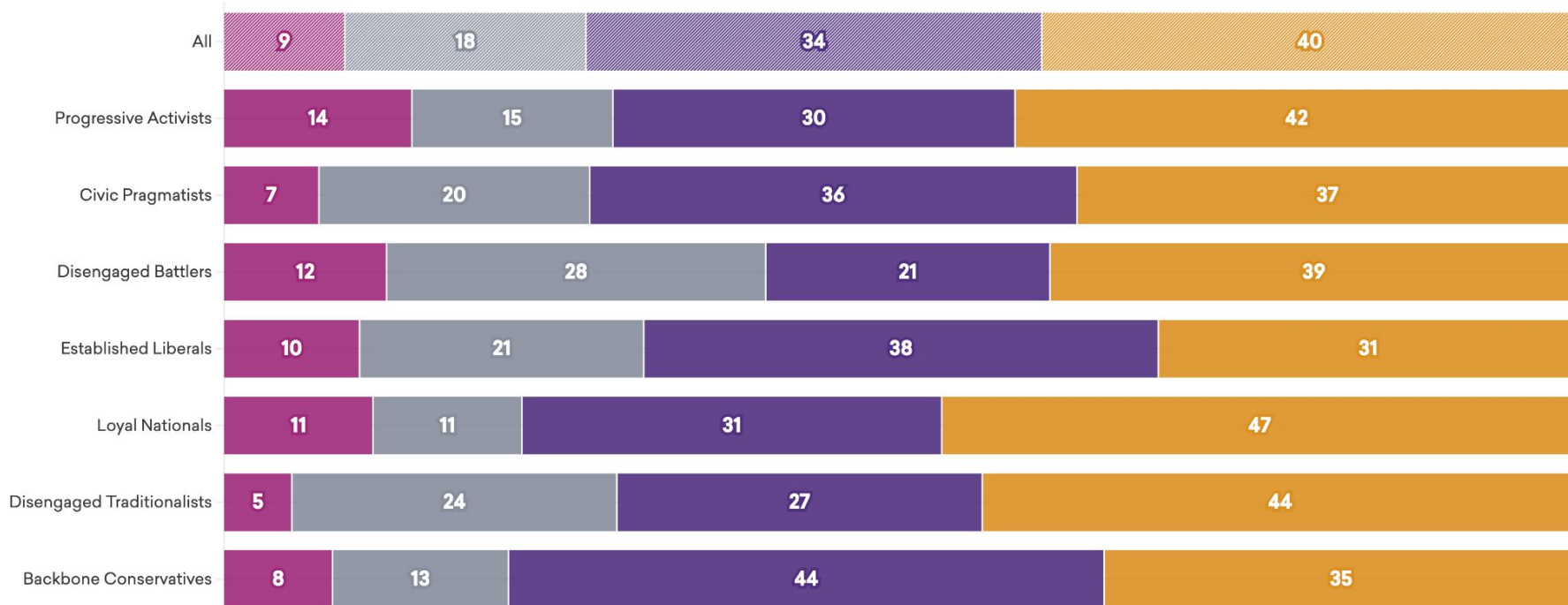
● The threshold at which inheritance tax is paid should be kept the same ● Inheritance tax should be abolished entirely



# Very few Britons think the 'Triple Lock' is too generous

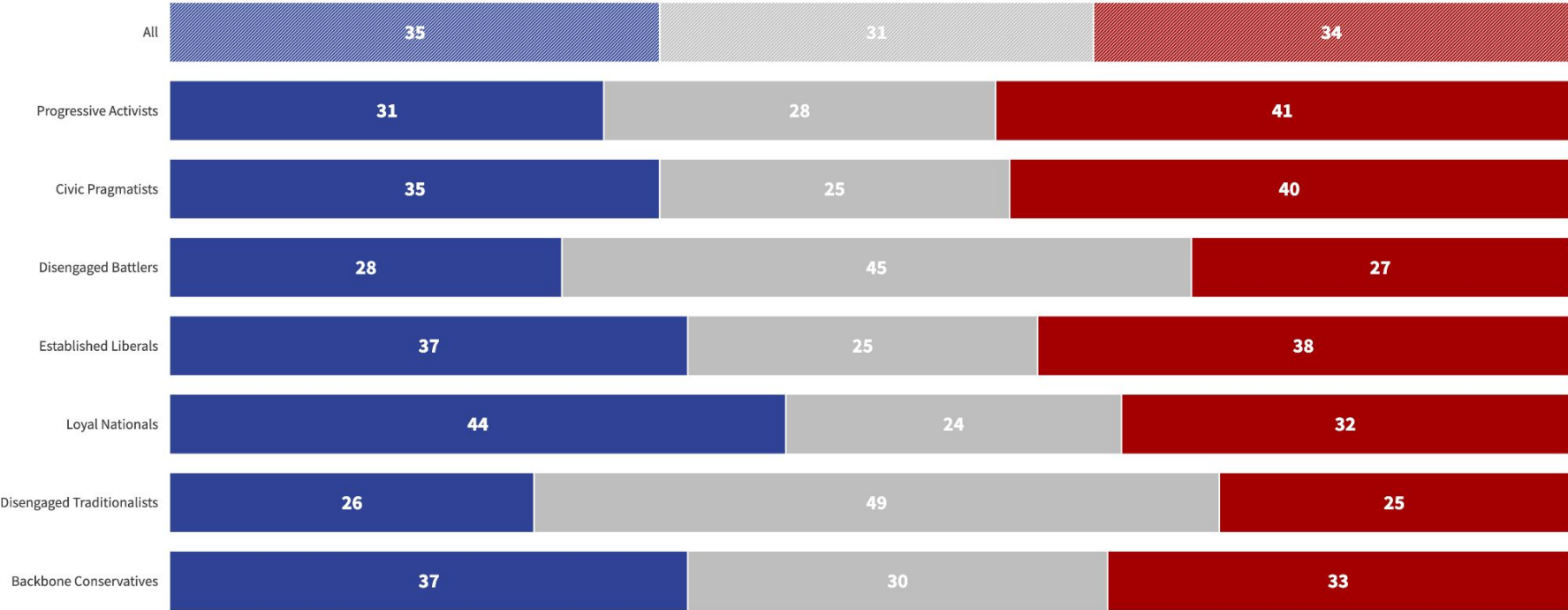
Currently there is a 'triple lock' on pensions under which the state pension rises by the highest of either: the rate of inflation, the average increase in wages across the UK or 2.5%. Do you think that the triple lock is...

● Too generous to pensioners ● At the right level for pensioners ● Not generous enough to pensioners ● Don't know



# Britons remain divided on whether HS2 ought to be cancelled between Manchester and Birmingham

● Right decision to cancel ● Don't know ● Wrong decision to cancel

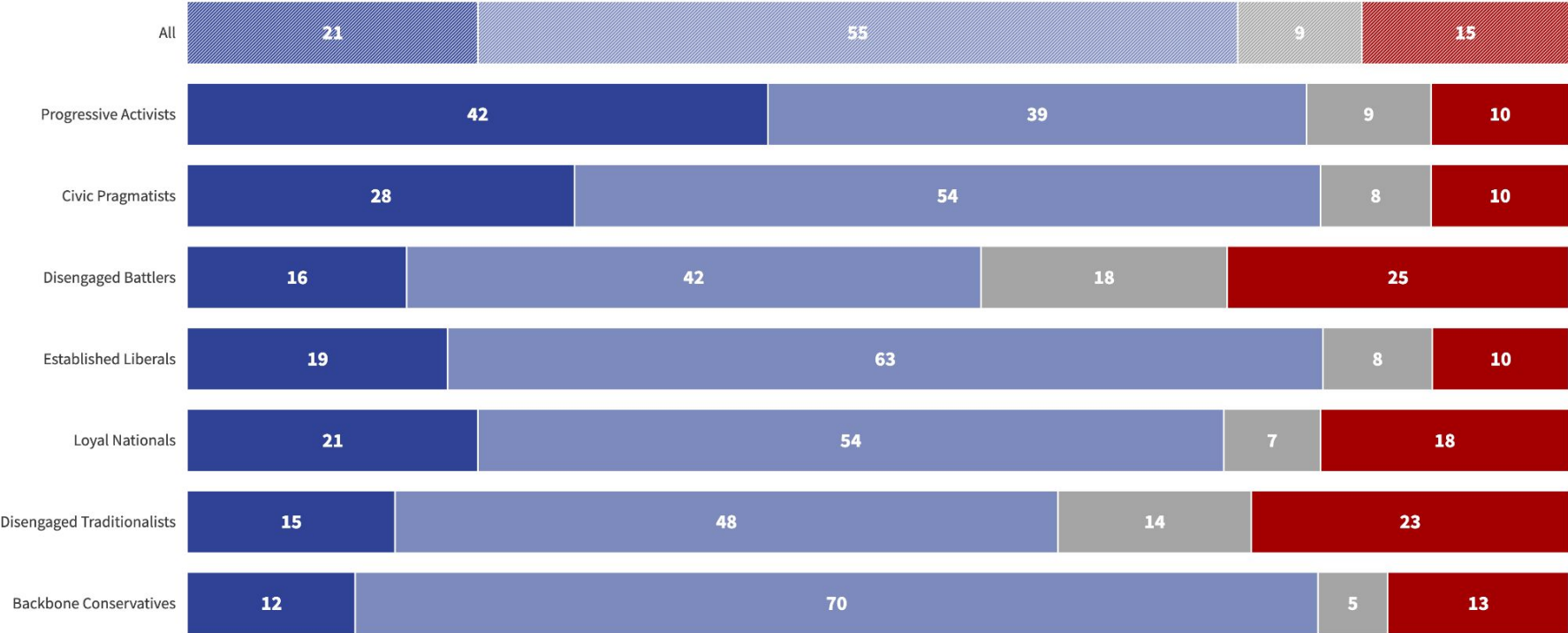


There are suggestions that the Government may cancel the section of High Speed Rail 2 that would run from Birmingham to Manchester. Do you think that this is the right decision or the wrong decision? More in Common, September 2023



# Most think British support for Ukraine is about right

Thinking about the war in Ukraine, which statement best reflects your view? ● I think the UK should do more to support Ukraine ● I think the UK is doing the right amount to support Ukraine ● Don't know ● I think the UK is doing too much to support Ukraine



**The Tories manifesto pitch  
to each of these segments**

# Established Liberals - Blue Wall Voters

**Migration balancers:** Established Liberals want to 'stop the boats', but are proud of Britain's history of welcoming refugees, the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and a fight about the ECHR would turn them off.

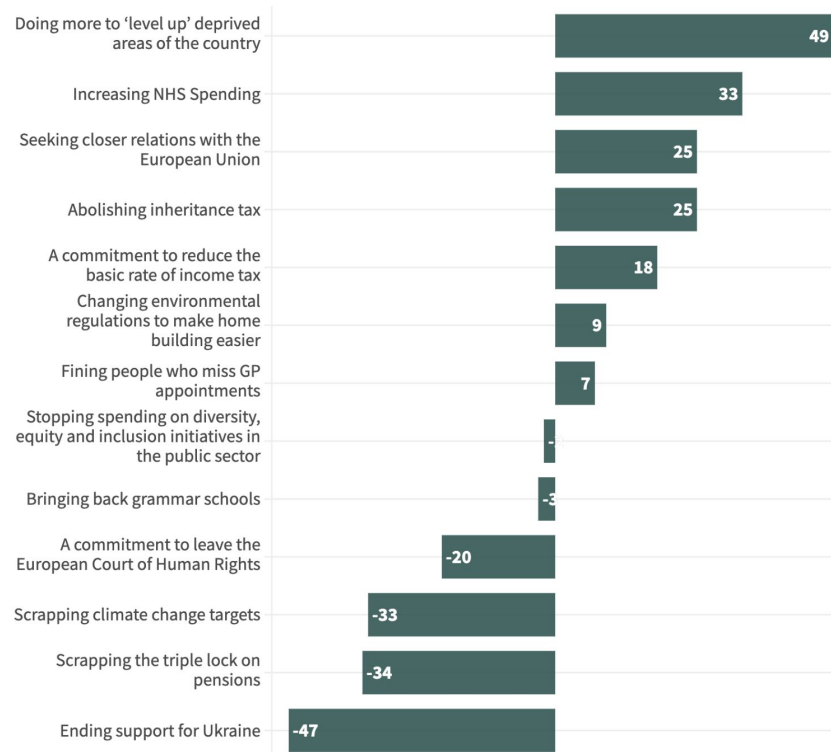
**Climate supporters:** Tackling climate change is consistently a top three issue for Established Liberals. It is much more important for this group than the small boats. Pro-motorist rhetoric risks driving this group to the Liberal Democrats.

**Culturally liberal:** This group are turned off by culture wars and proud of the social changes. Likely to see same-sex marriage and support for refugees as one of the major achievements of the 13 years of Conservative government. Very different to the other Conservative segments on this metric.

**Support for Rishi:** Established Liberals like Rishi and his presentation as being different from Boris will work well with this group who don't like cakeism. They see the PM as 'one of them' and a second David Cameron. However, this group liked Johnson's environmentalism and social liberalism and there real risks of abandoning these elements - particularly if this group start to perceive Sunak as more right wing than they initial thought he was.

There is a risk of not just switching to Labour but Liberal Democrat and Green too.

## Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?



# Loyal Nationals - Red Wall voters

**Immigration and small boats:** Channel crossings are a top three issue for this group, shaped by their high levels of threat perceptions. They see lack of immigration control as the key failure of the Conservatives for the last 13 years. However, they are sick of endless promises to crack down without delivering.

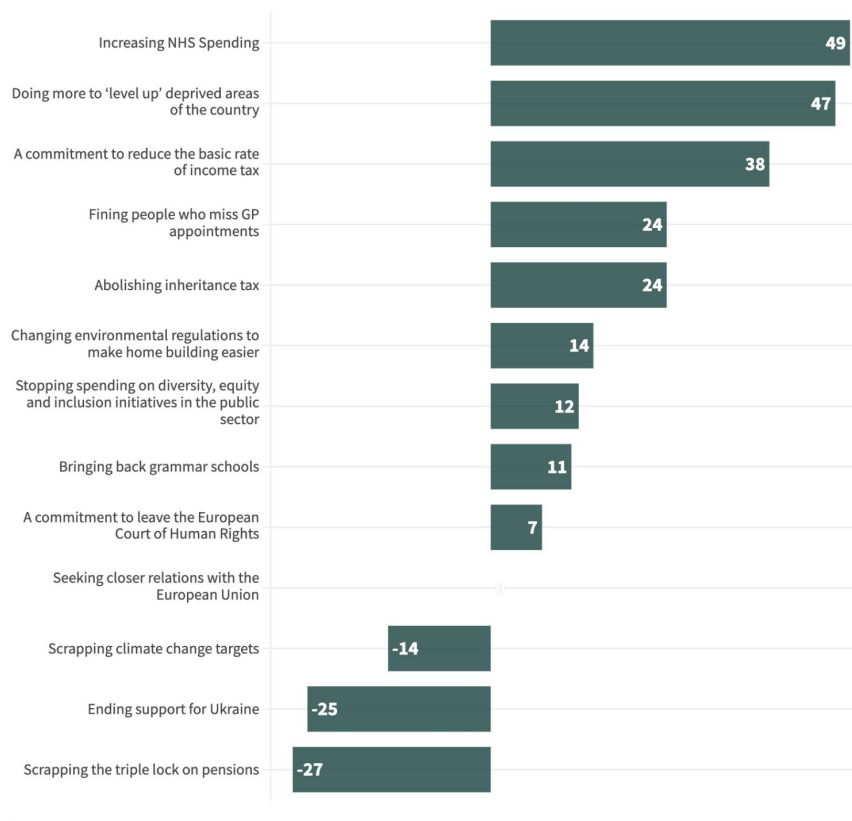
**Does Rishi get it?** One of the key challenges facing the Conservatives with Loyal Nationals is that the Prime Minister's wealth means he doesn't get it and can't understand their struggles. Boris Johnson had a unique connection with this group (at least pre-party gate).

**No support for austerity:** The most economically left leaning part of the Tory 2019 Coalition. This group are not attracted to the idea of spending cuts across public services and support a bigger state/safety net.

**Back climate action:** This group's high threat perception, fears about climate impacts and attraction to the promise of green jobs and investments makes them among the most supportive of action to tackle climate change.

**Abandoning levelling up:** Changes to HS2 and much less talk about levelling up risks alienating this group - many of whom feel their areas have been long neglected and that levelling up was the reward for their switch to the Conservatives in in 2017 and 2019.

## Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?



# Disengaged Traditionalists - Essex Man

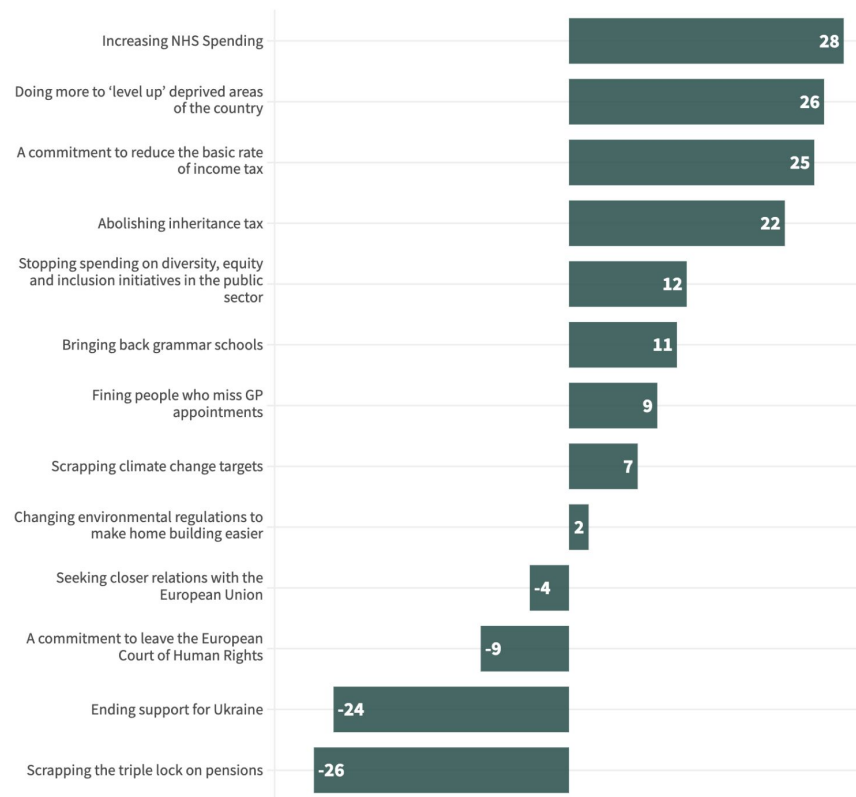
**Low engagement:** This group have the lowest voting tendency to vote of any part of the Tory voting Coalition. They turned out to vote for Brexit in 2016 and to get Brexit done in 2019.

**Feel let down:** Frustrated on lack on immigration control and lack of support for those who are self-employed.

**Individualists:** Attracted to Rishi's pull yourself up by your bootstraps, work hard and individualism pitch. Will be supportive of measures to impose new requirements on working age benefits and encourage people into work.

**Value the ability to drive:** The direct target for the 'war on motorists' value their cars as a source of personal freedom, this could be the rallying point for turnout among this group. This group dislike Government nudges or meddling in general and would rather be left alone to get on with their life.

**Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?**



# Backbone Conservatives

## - Shire Tories

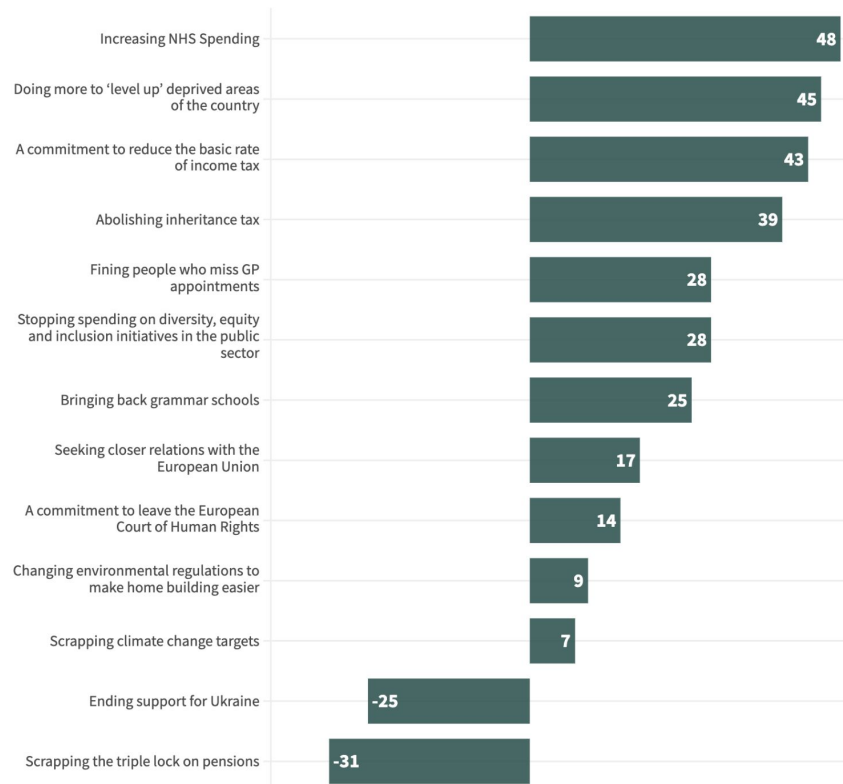
**Sitting on their hands:** Most likely to have gone from Tory 2019 to Don't know. Partisan way of looking at the world - which is why there is a good chance they'll return to the fold if the PM is seen to be delivering.

**Reform risk:** May be tempted to support Reform UK as a way of showing their frustration. Getting them back requires a combination of cultural and economic conservatism.

**Anti-development:** Difficult to balance their concern for conservation with pro-building and infrastructure policies that appeal to other groups.

**Elderly benefits:** Despite general fiscal conservatism, this group support transfers to the elderly through the triple lock and the NHS. Any sign of weakening old aged benefits risks support with this group.

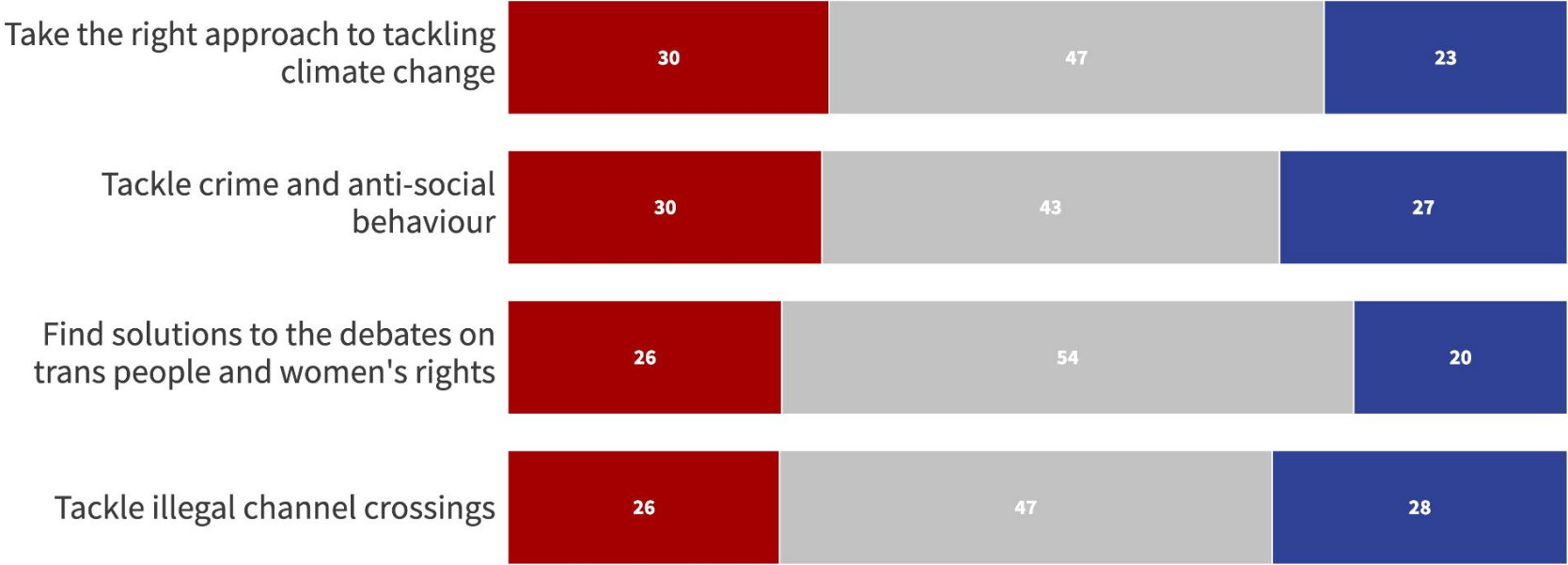
**Thinking about each of the following potential manifesto commitments, do they make you more or less likely to vote for the Conservative Party?**



**Wedges**

# On a series of wedge issues, Starmer edges Sunak (bar channel crossings), but there are large numbers of don't knows

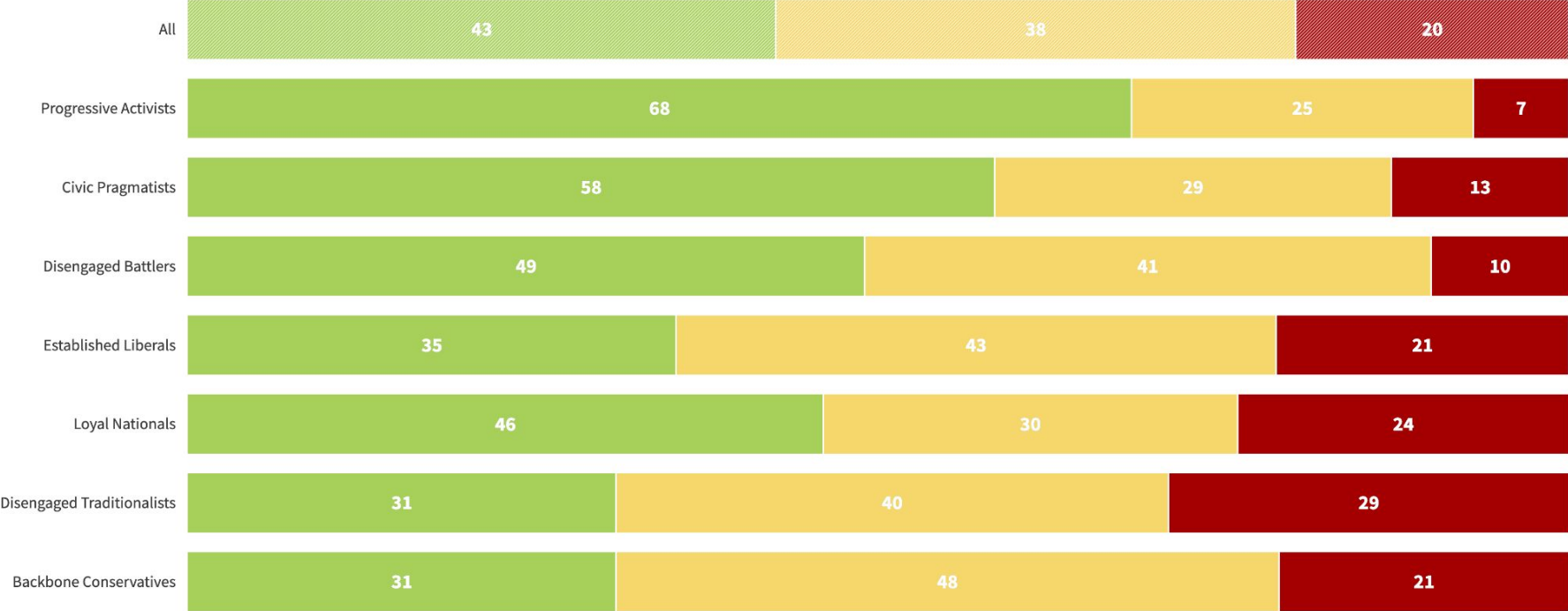
Who do you trust most to... ● Keir Starmer ● Don't Know ● Rishi Sunak





# Few Britons want the government to slow down on net zero

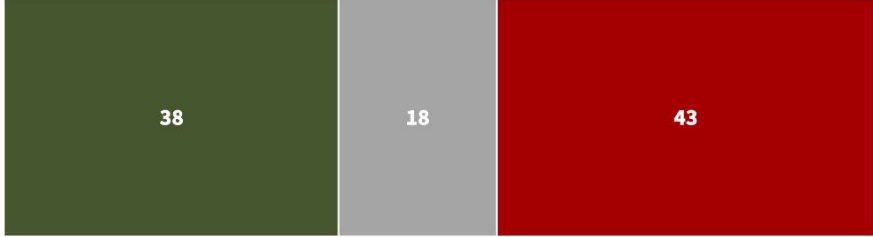
Would you like to see the government...   
 ● Move faster to reach Net Zero   
 ● Move at the same pace to reach Net Zero ● Move slower to reach Net Zero



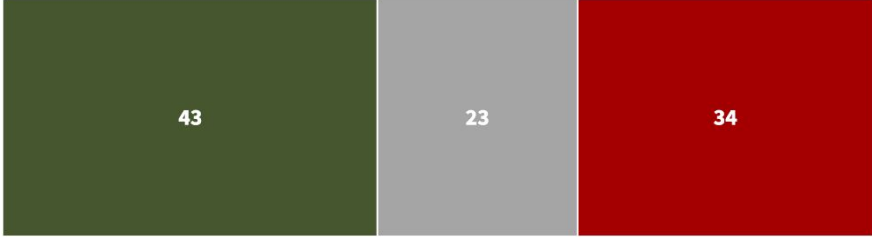
# Public split over whether the government should stick to or slow down current climate plans

Would you like to see the government... ● stick to the current plan ● Don't know ● slow down its plans

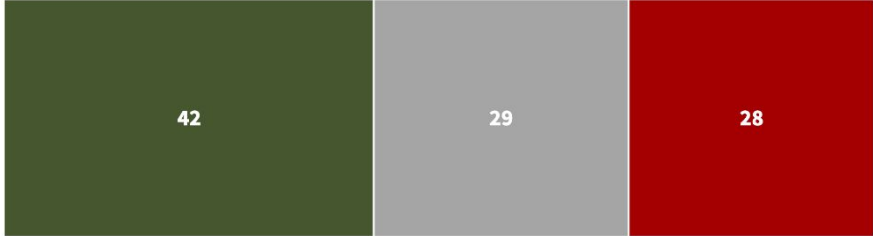
Plans to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030



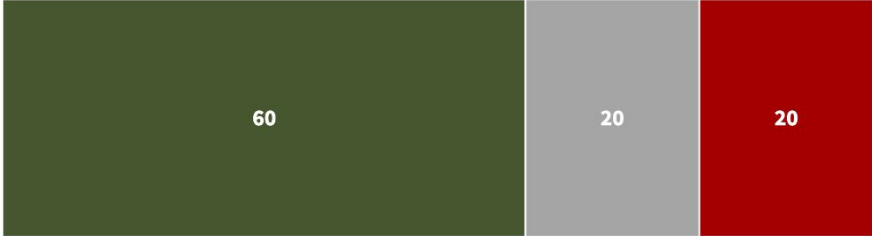
Plans to ban the installation of new gas boilers by 2035



Plans to ban the installation of new off-grid oil boilers by 2026



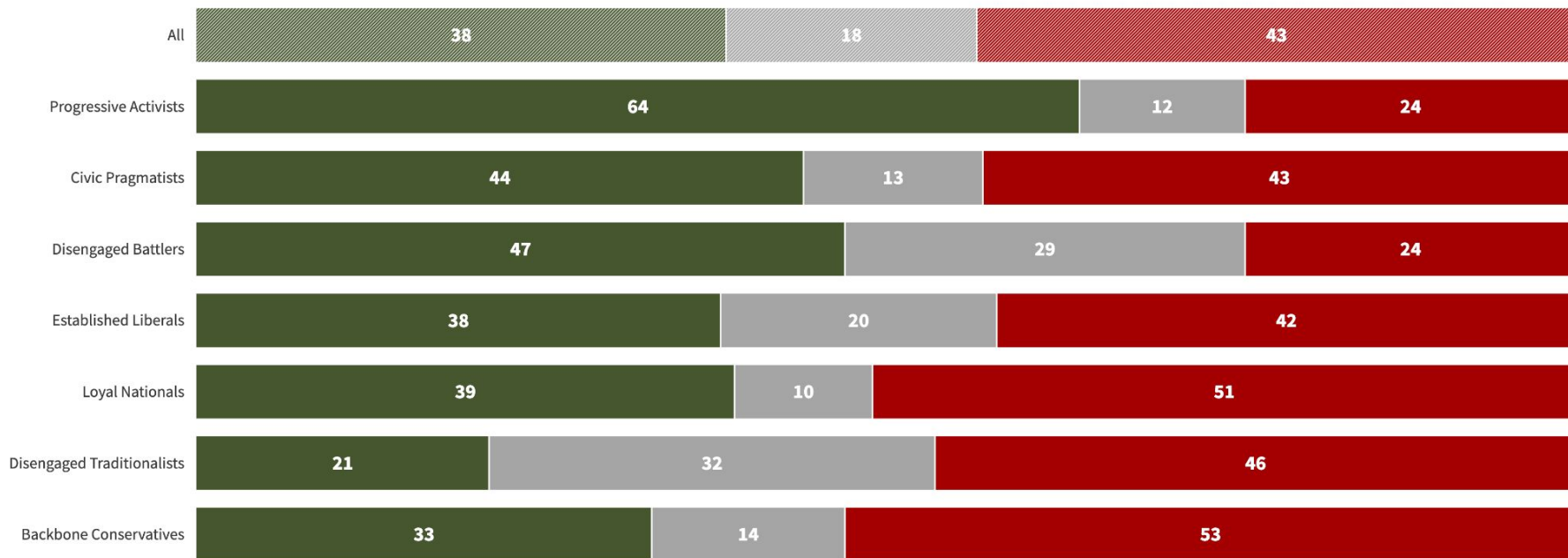
Plans to fine landlords who fail to make their homes more efficient



# Tory voters more supportive of slowing down 2030 ban on cars - but significant minority want government to stick with current plan

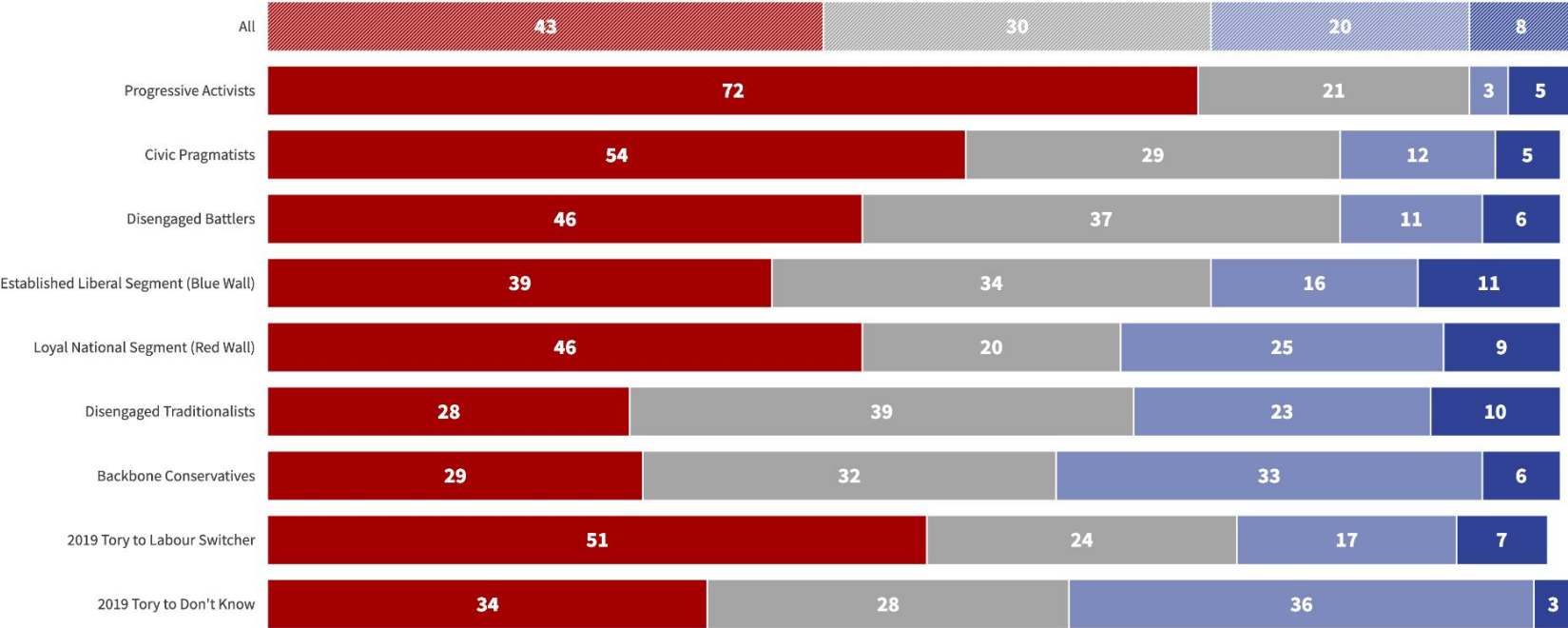
For each of the following policies that the UK currently has to reduce its climate impact, do you think the government should stick to the current plan or slow down its plans? [Plans to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030]

● stick to the current plan ● Don't know ● slow down its plans



# Public are more than twice as likely to blame the Conservative government than lawyers and judges for failing to stop the boats

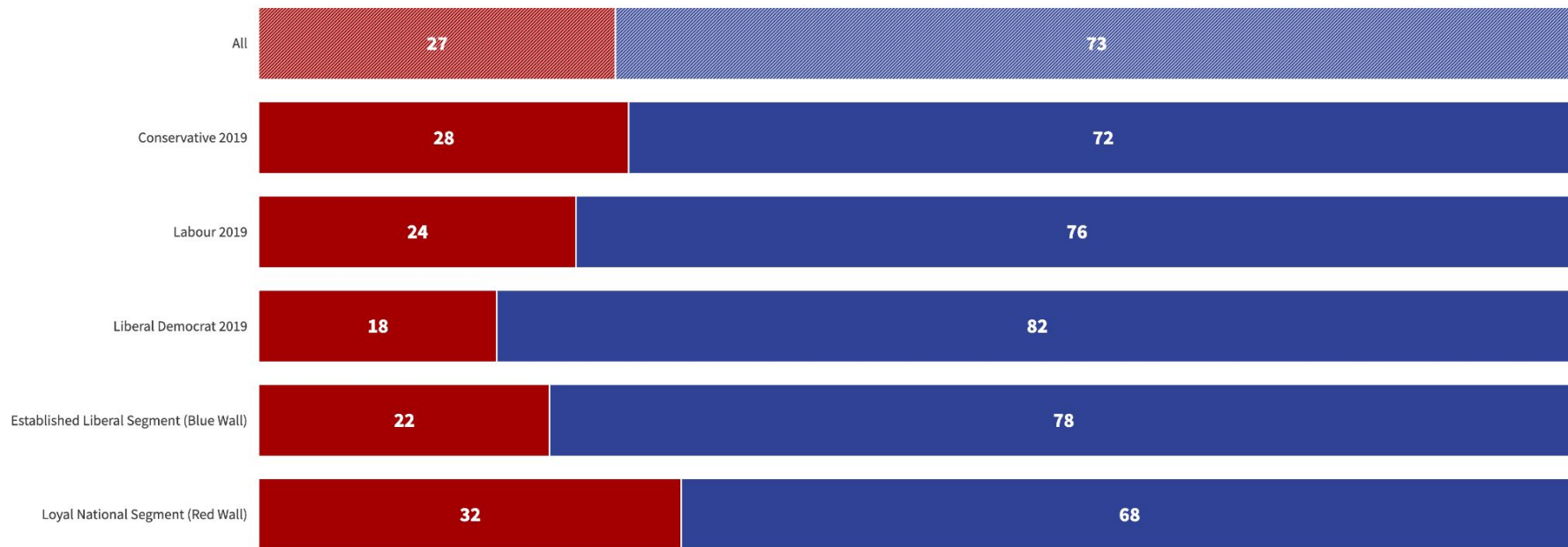
Which of the following is most responsible for the failure to tackle illegal channel crossings? ● The Conservative Government ● Don't know ● Lawyers and Judges ● Labour Opposition



# Woke and culture wars issues may be less of a vote winner than many think

## Which comes closest to your view?

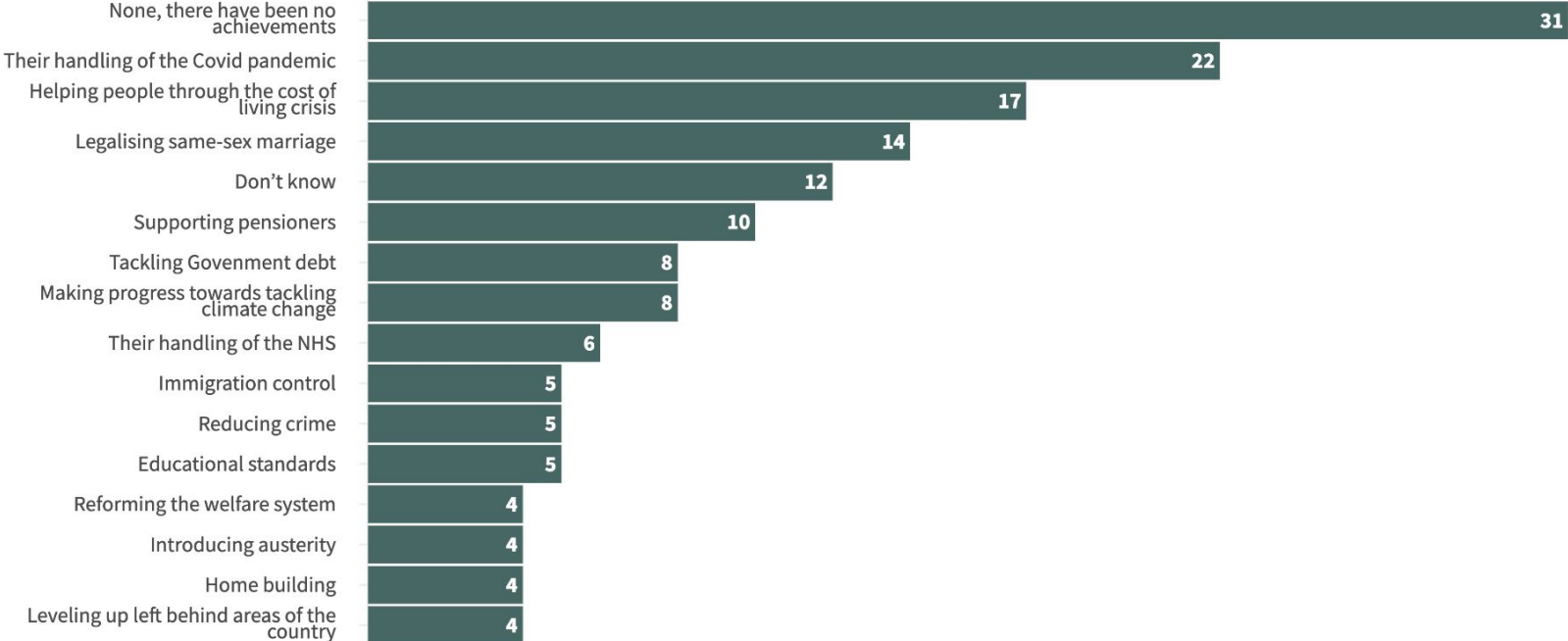
- Tackling political correctness and woke issues is one of the most important issues in the run up to the next general election
- There are many more important issues than tackling political correctness and woke issues in the run up to the next general election



# Conservative Legacy

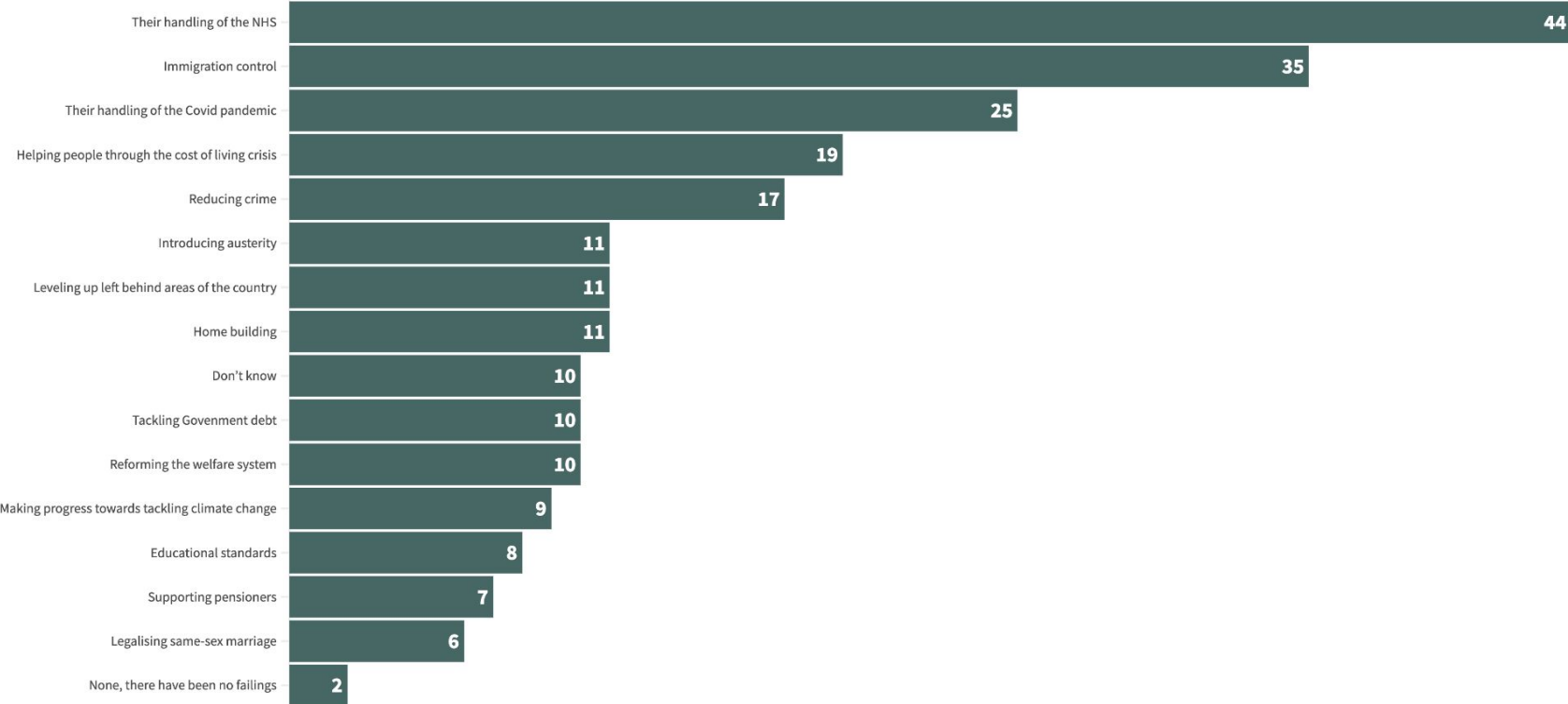
# Covid, cost of Living support and same sex marriage viewed as the main Conservative achievements over the last 13 years

Which areas of domestic policy do you think are the greatest achievements of the Conservative Party in its 13 years in office?



# NHS, Immigration Control and Covid seen as key Tory failings

Which areas of domestic policy do you think are the greatest failings of the Conservative Party in its 13 years in office?





# Domestic achievements and failings by segment

## Established Liberals

**Top Tory achievements**  
Covid, Same Sex Marriage, cost of living support

**Three biggest failings**  
NHS, Immigration control, Covid

## Loyal Nationals

**Top Tory achievements**  
Covid, cost of living support, supporting pensioners

**Three biggest failings**  
Immigration control, NHS, Covid

## Disengaged Traditionalists

**Top Tory achievements**  
Covid, Cost of living, tackling government debt

**Three biggest failings**  
Immigration control, NHS, Covid

## Backbone Conservatives

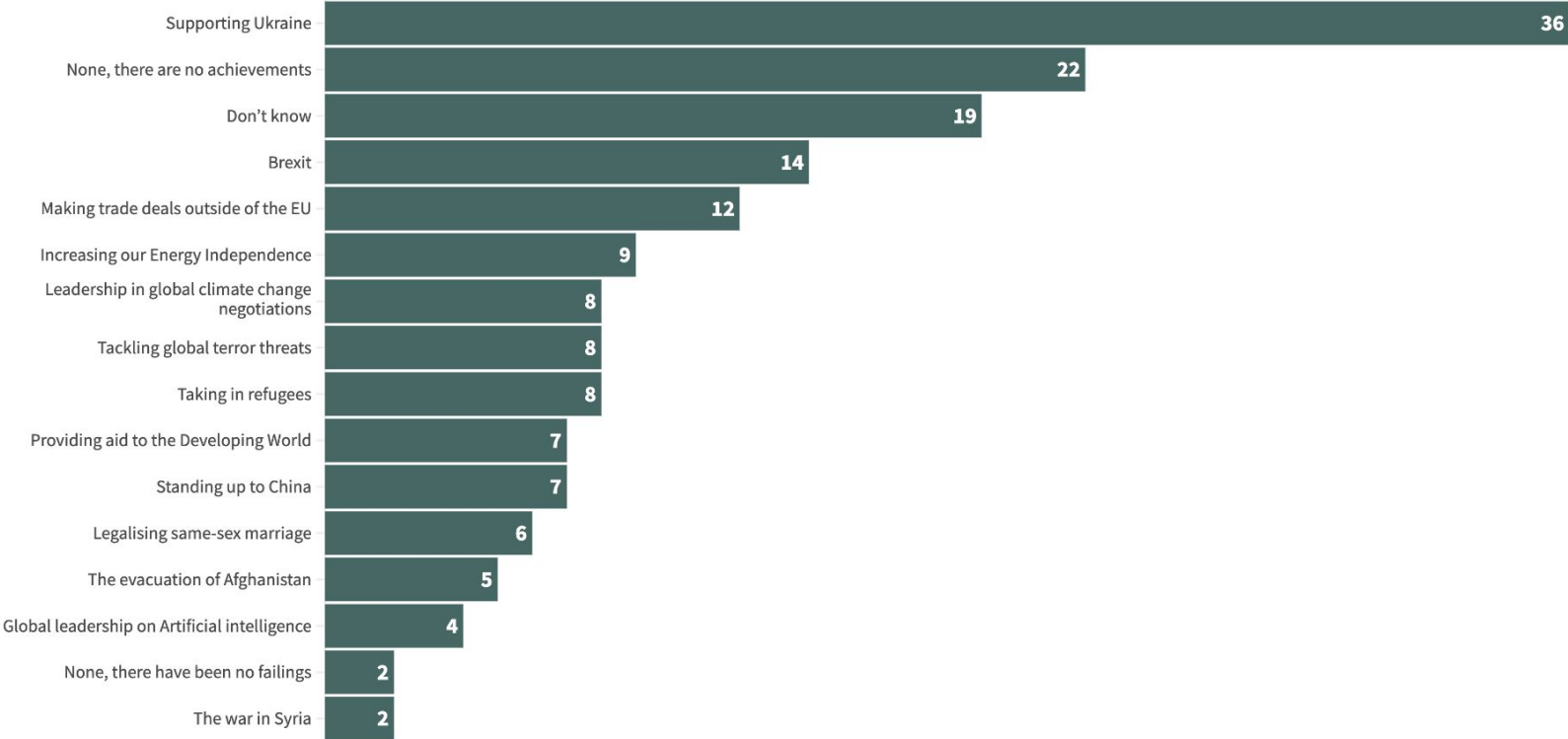
**Top Tory achievements**  
Covid, cost of living support, supporting pensioners

**Three biggest failings**  
Immigration control, NHS, Crime

*\*Don't know/no achievements removed*

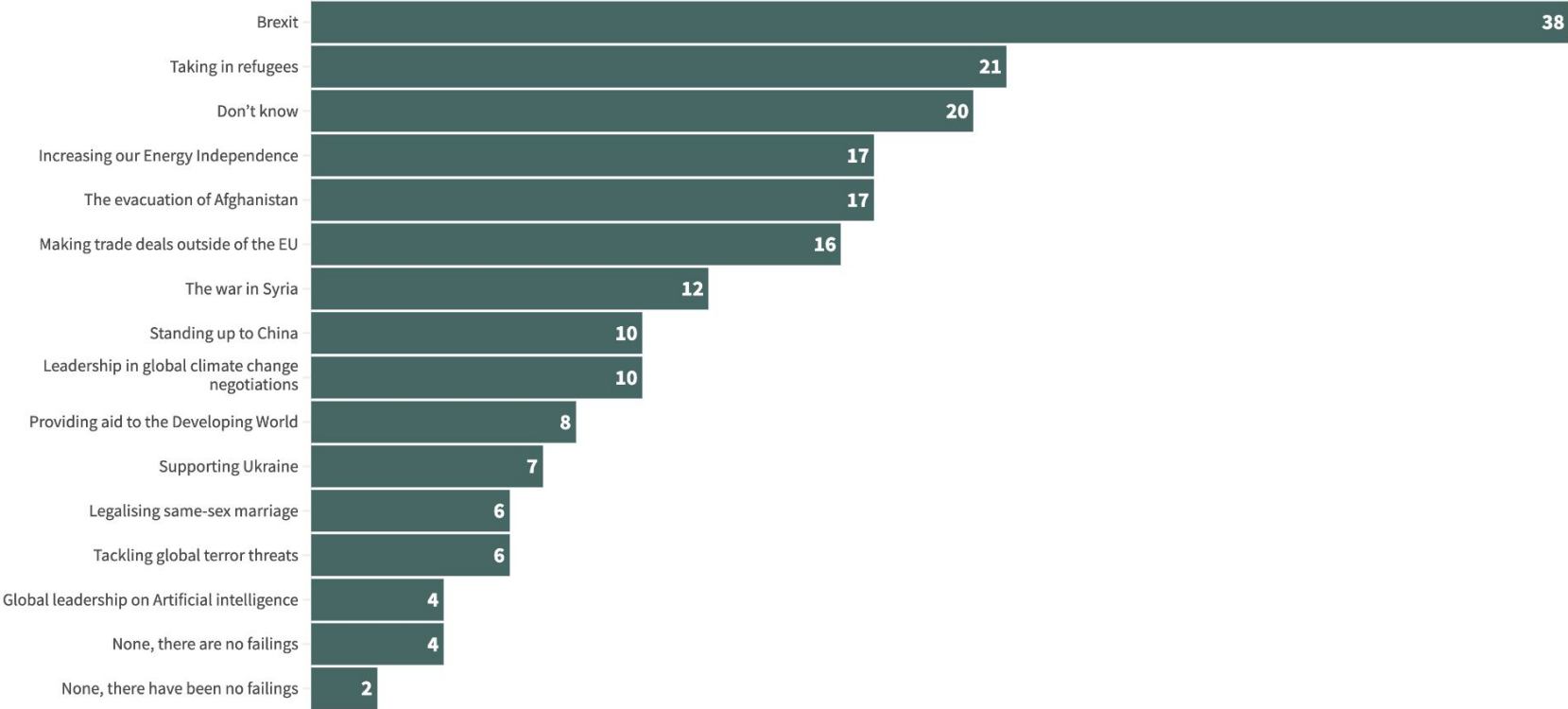
# Supporting Ukraine is the Tories key foreign policy legacy

Which areas of foreign policy do you think are the greatest achievements of the Conservative Party's 13 years in office?



# Brexit seen as key foreign policy failure

Which areas of foreign policy do you think are the greatest failings of the Conservative Party's 13 years in office?



# Foreign affairs achievements and failings by segment

## Established Liberals

**Top Tory achievements**  
Supporting Ukraine, Taking in  
Refugees, Energy Independence

**Three biggest failings**  
Brexit, Trade Deals outside EU,  
Afghan evacuation

## Loyal Nationals

**Top Tory achievements**  
Supporting Ukraine, Brexit, trade  
deals outside EU

**Three biggest failings**  
Brexit, taking in refugees, energy  
independence

## Disengaged Traditionalists

**Top Tory achievements**  
Supporting Ukraine, Brexit, trade  
deals outside EU

**Three biggest failings**  
Brexit, taking in refugees Afghan  
evacuation

## Backbone Conservatives

**Top Tory achievements**  
Supporting Ukraine, Brexit, trade  
deals outside EU

**Three biggest failings**  
Brexit, taking in refugees, energy  
independence

\*Don't know/no achievements removed



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Common**