



Rights and Wrongs: Should Conservatives support or oppose the ECHR?

Conservative Party Conference Fringe Event 2024

Progressive Activists



Civic Pragmatists



Disengaged Battlers



Established Liberals



Loyal Nationals



Disengaged Traditionalists



Backbone Conservatives



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

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

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

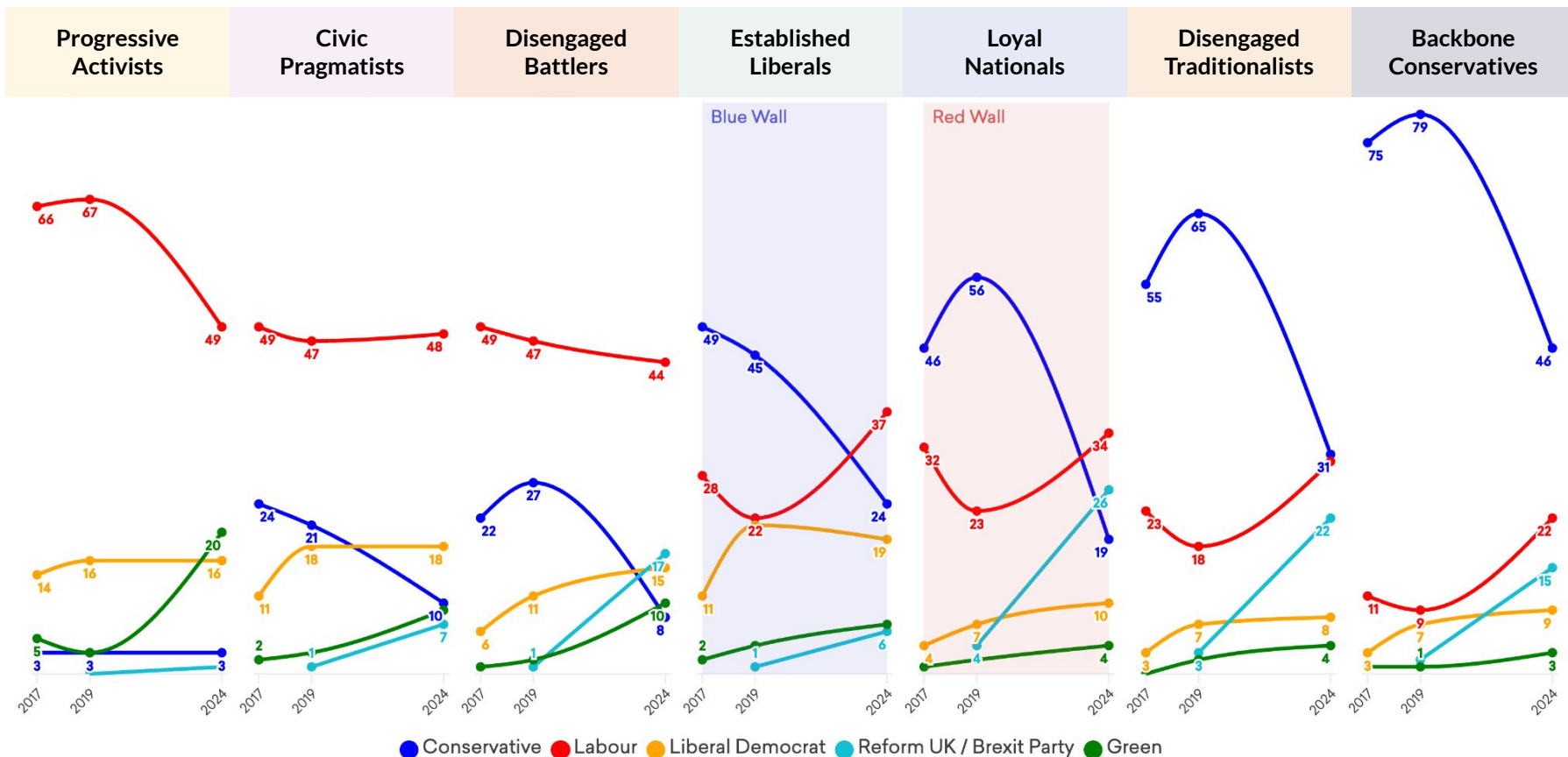
...a group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo.

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

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

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

How did the Seven Segments vote?

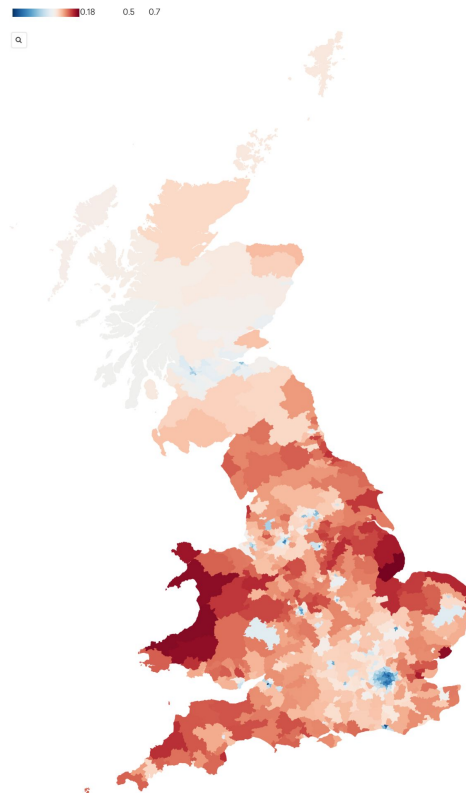
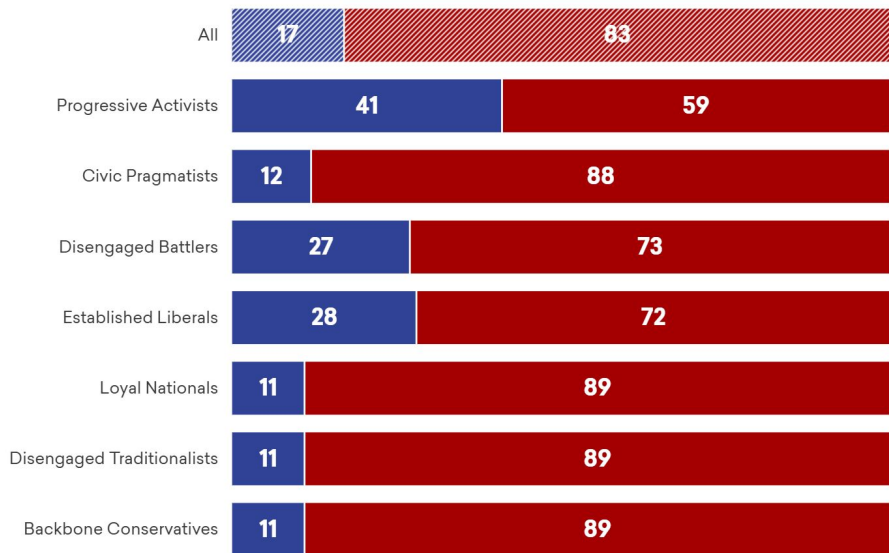


The Channel Crossings Context to the ECHR debate

Concern about channel crossings and levels of immigration are widespread

Which of the following comes closest your view?

- I am not concerned about the numbers of people who come to the UK illegally
- I am concerned about the numbers of people who come to the UK illegally

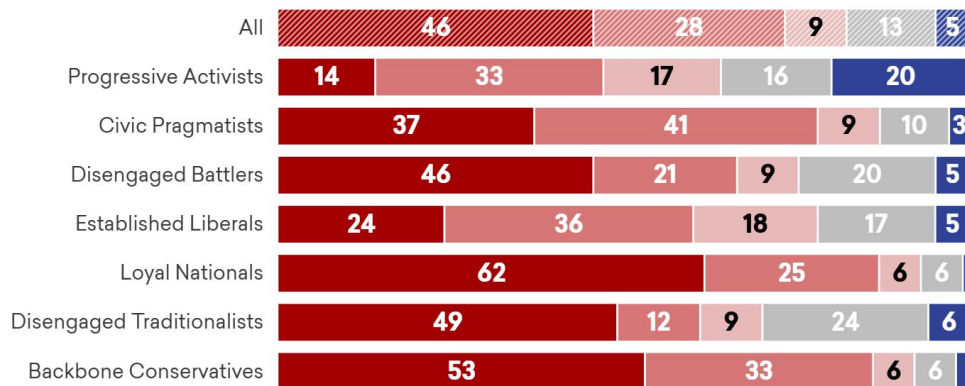


There are 455 seats where more than 50% of the constituency say they would reduce rather than increase or keep numbers the same - this reflects both high levels of immigration recently, but also high levels of scepticism.

The public want government to stop the boats

Thinking about the issue of small boats and channel crossings by asylum seekers, what do you think is a reasonable goal for this Government?

- Stopping asylum seeker channel crossings entirely
- Significantly reducing the number of channel crossings by asylum seekers
- Reducing the number of channel crossings by asylum seekers a bit
- Don't know
- I do not think the Government should aim to reduce channel crossings by asylum seekers at all



Nearly half the public (46%) want the government to stop the boats and stop asylum seekers crossing the channel entirely. A further three in ten (28%) want to see a significant reduction.

Majorities in all segments, bar the Progressive Activists, want to see either the boats stopped or significant reductions in channel crossings setting a high bar for government success or failure.

And I think as a country, as a government, we are not doing enough. We're kind of saying we are and putting all these plans in place but not actually acting upon them. I mean as a security factor, people are just pouring on beaches and just running up and going into the country and we don't know who they are, what they're doing.

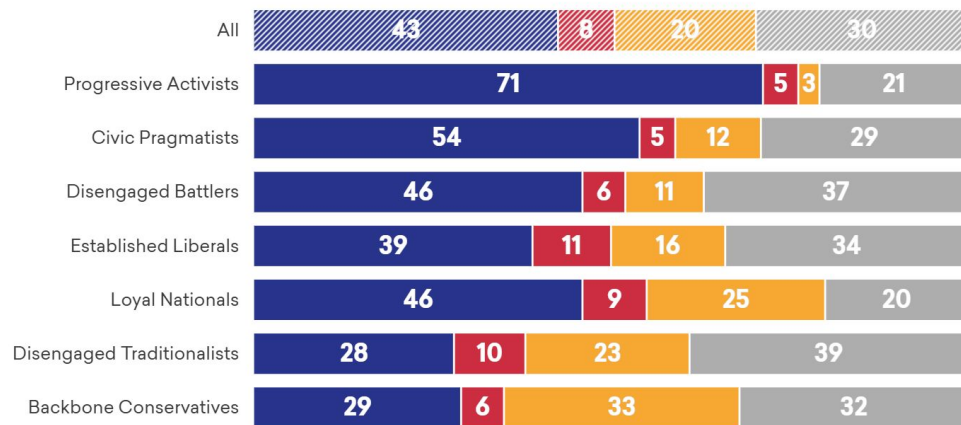
Harrison, Loughborough

However, most don't blame lawyers and judges for failure to tackle channel crossings

Most Britons blame the Conservative Government, not lawyers and judges, for the failure to tackle channel crossings

Which of the following is most responsible for the failure to tackle illegal channel crossings?

● The Conservative Government ● The Labour Opposition ● Lawyers and judges
● Don't know



In April, a plurality of the public blamed the Conservative Government, not lawyers and judges, for the failure to tackle channel crossings.

The only segment that was more likely to blame lawyers and judges was Backbone Conservatives.

Public won't necessarily buy that leaving the ECHR will help tackle channel crossings, given they blame the government, not the courts.

Only Backbone Conservatives think leaving the ECHR would have been a price worth paying for the Rwanda policy

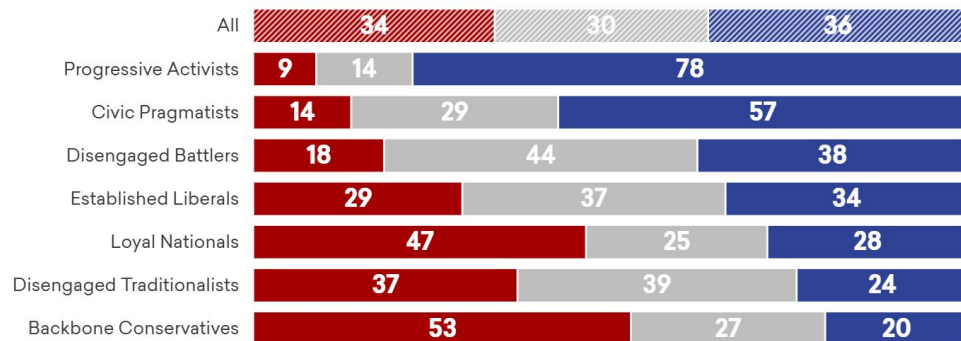
The public are split on whether leaving the ECHR would be a price worth paying for the Rwanda policy

Which of the following is most responsible for the failure to tackle illegal channel crossings?

Leaving the European Court of Human Rights would be a price worth paying if it enabled us to
■ implement the Government's plan to deport asylum seekers who cross the channel illegally to Rwanda

■ Don't know

Leaving the European Court of Human Rights would NOT be a price worth paying even if it
■ meant we could not implement the Government's plan to deport asylum seekers who cross the channel illegally to Rwanda



There are also risks in the Conservatives campaigning to leave as a means to re-enact the Rwanda plan which much of the public saw as a gimmick.

Backbone Conservatives are the only segment where a majority believe leaving the ECHR would be a price worth paying to keep the Rwanda Plan. Although Loyal Nationals and Disengaged Traditionalists fall short of a majority, they are more likely to hold this view than not.

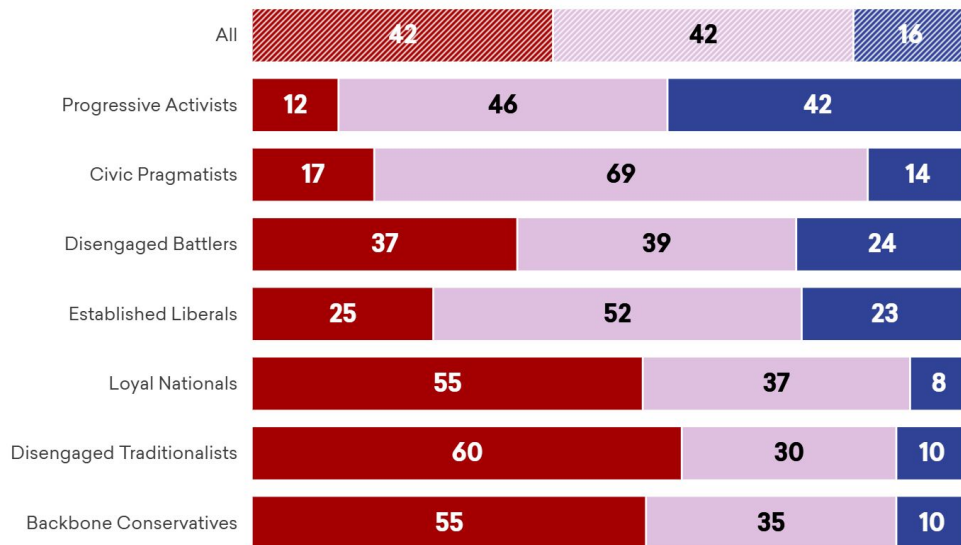
The whole point of UK voted for Brexit was because we're supposed about our sovereignty back. We're supposed to be a sovereign country, but we can't even our own laws.

Andy, Wellingborough

Balancing control and compassion are the key tests for the public

Thinking about the UK's policy on refugees and asylum seekers do you think the next Government should prioritise...

- Controlling numbers who come to the UK
- Balancing controlling numbers who come to the UK with compassion for those in need
- Compassion for those in need



The public want a policy approach on refugee and asylum that balances controlling overall numbers with compassion for those in need, but the Conservative coalition places more emphasis on control as a priority. .

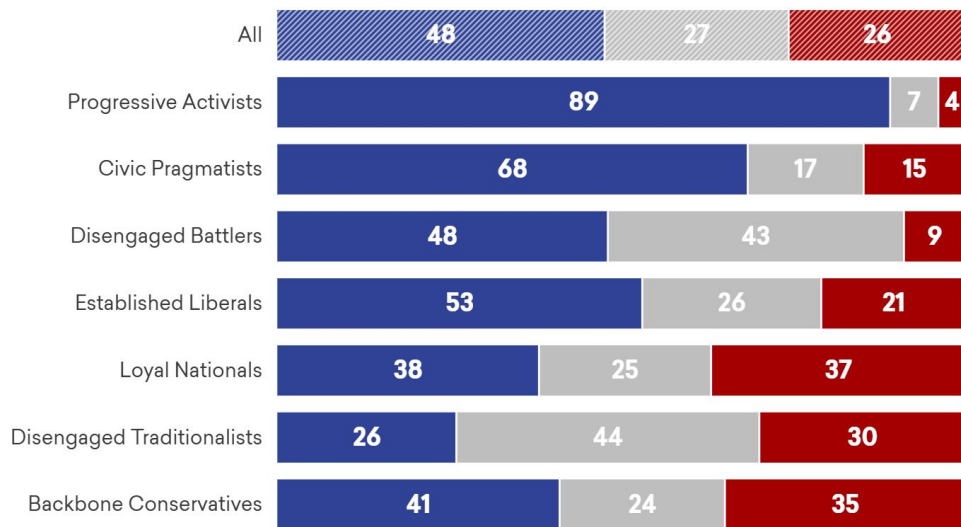
I'm not saying we should have billions of immigrants coming here or refugees, but we've got a moral right to look after people that are in danger and in need. Martin, Retired, Farnham

**What do the public think
about leaving the ECHR?**

Public want to stay in the ECHR by two to one

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Britain should remain a member of the European Convention on Human Rights
- Don't know
- Britain should leave the European Convention on Human Rights



Nearly half of the public want to remain in the ECHR. Disengaged Traditionalists are the only segment where more want to leave than stay (although many don't know).

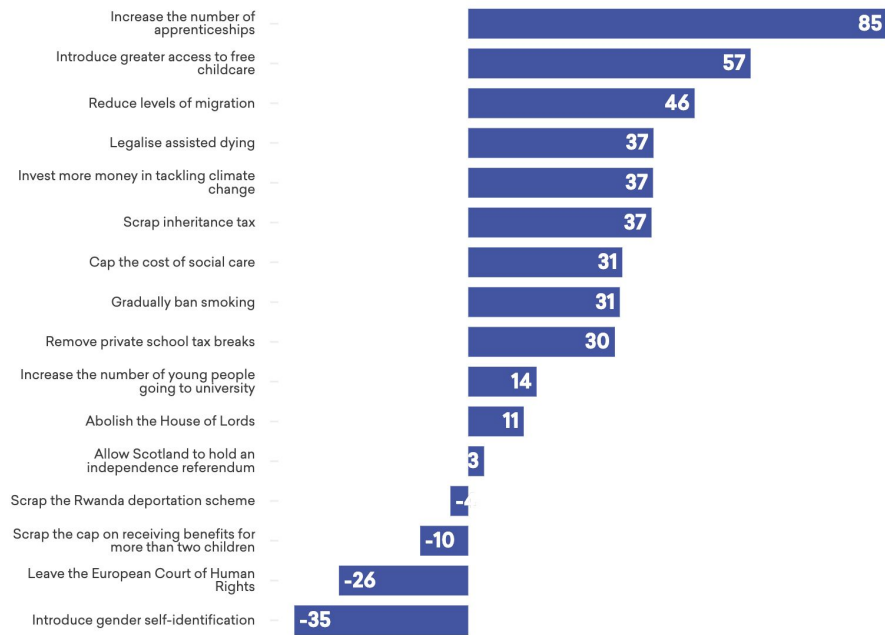
There are clear Red Wall-Blue Wall splits on the ECHR - more than half of Blue Wall Established Liberals support staying, while fewer Red Wall Loyal Nationals and even fewer Disengaged Traditionalists back staying.

Support for remaining in the ECHR is strongest among the progressive base

I guess it would have pros and cons, wouldn't it? It might give us the ability to create our own laws and that kind of thing. But then on the downside, I guess as in the case of immigrants and a, it wouldn't give them as much in terms of their own rights... I think it would be kind of a double-edged sword.

However, the ECHR is a low salience issue for many voters

Regardless of who you plan to vote for, for each of the following please indicate whether you think it is something the next Government should do or should not do...(net support = should do minus should not do)



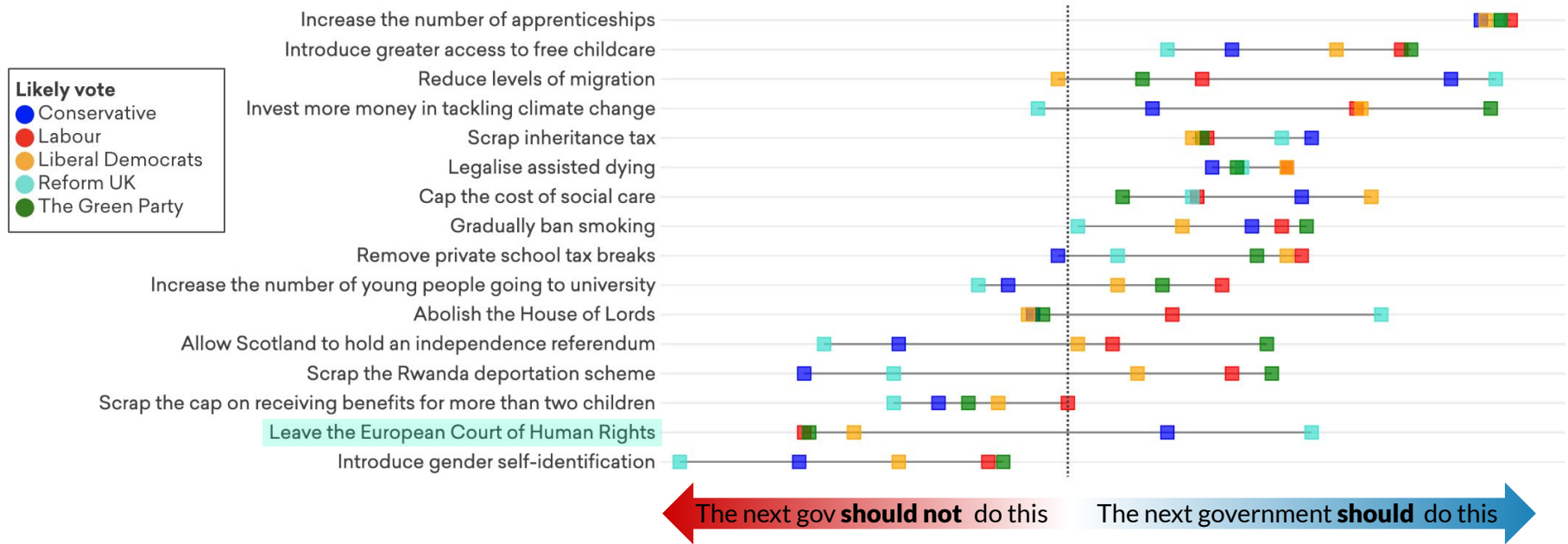
Few Britons are passionate advocates for the ECHR - despite being more likely to support remaining than leaving - but leaving the Convention and Court is also not a high salience issue for many voters.

The danger of a prolonged debate about the ECHR from the Conservatives in opposition is that it seems to voters that it is an odd priority when they are worried about their tax bill, the state of public services or their local area becoming more left behind.

I mean I think we need some rules and obviously we've signed up to them and we're part of it at the moment. So I would like us to stay as we are because I think from what I know that it's quite a thorough process anyway, so why would we want to leave that? - Barry, Sevenoaks

I've always voted conservative and the more I hear things like that make me not want to vote conservative and if they push that agenda - Julie, Guildford

The political risks of pledge to leave the ECHR

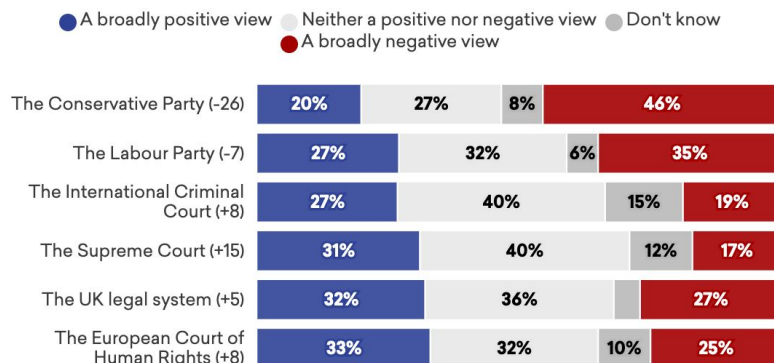


Making the ECHR an election issue would be politically risky for the Conservatives - it is one of the most divisive policy proposals we have asked about and, while it might excite Tory-Reform switchers, would seriously put off Tory-Labour switchers.

The trouble for a leave-ECHR policy in the Blue Wall...

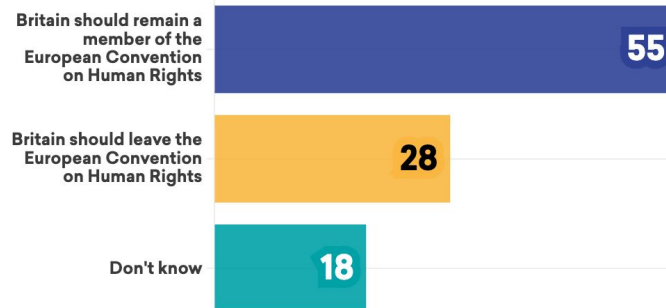
In Blue Wall seats, our legal system is popular, and the European Court of Human Rights is much more popular than the Conservative Party.

Blue Wall seats: Do you have a positive or negative view of the following institutions?



And in Blue Wall seats, only 28% support leaving the ECHR, whereas 55% want the UK to stay in.

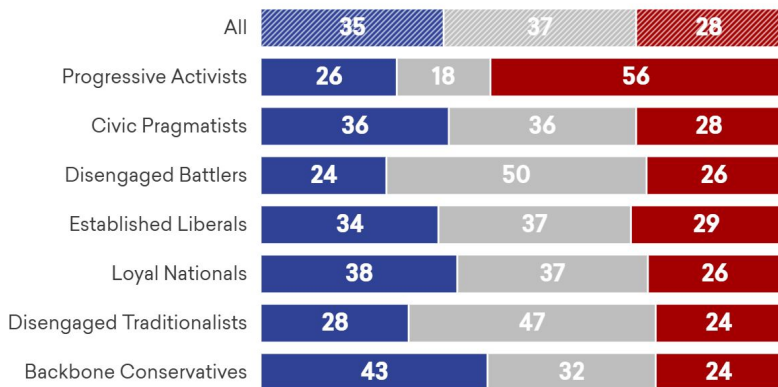
Blue Wall: Which of the following comes closest to your view?



Is reforming the ECHR a way forward?

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

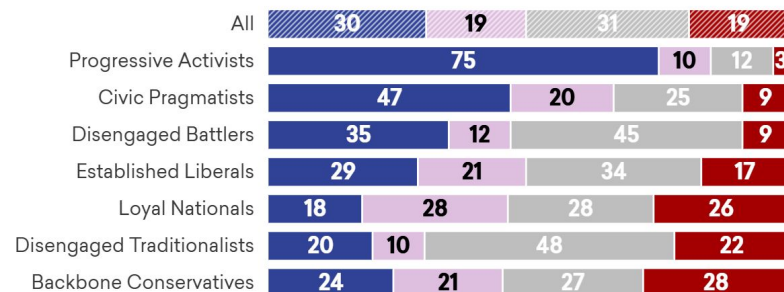
- Britain should try to reform the European Convention on Human Rights
- Don't know
- Britain should not try to reform the European Convention on Human Rights



Source: More in Common, September 2024

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Britain should remain a member of the European Convention on Human Rights regardless of whether it is reformed or not
- Britain should remain a member of the European Convention on Human Rights but only if it is reformed
- Don't know
- Britain should leave the European Convention on Human Rights regardless of whether it is reformed or not



Source: More in Common, September 2024

The public are broadly split on whether Britain should try to reform the ECHR - Backbone Conservatives would most like to see this with 2 in 5 in agreement. When asked whether Britain should remain in the ECHR irrespective of whether it is reformed, the levels of support for leaving the ECHR remain largely unchanged.

The dangers of another debate about Europe

Another danger for the Conservatives in spending the next four years talking about the ECHR is that the public have grown tired with a decade of debates about Europe and this feels like a continuation.

While Brexit has been delivered, the long and protracted debates about Brexit don't give the public confidence that the Conservatives could effectively handle a debate about the ECHR.

Another challenge is that one of the core Brexit promises was getting immigration under control, offering another referendum on Europe to a different immigration problem may be met with scepticism from the public.

*The reality is that Brexit completely polarised the party as well and they still haven't, it feels to me, they still don't know what they are. They still don't know what they stand for.
Victoria, bank manager, Wells and Mendip Hills*

*They've had a long time to sort it and they felt appallingly and after the fiasco of Brexit where we thought voting for Brexit was going to help immigration, nothing at all has happened and I think that's the downfall of this Tory government.
Martin, retired developer, Portsmouth North*



**More in
Common**