

# What's Changed?

Public opinion a year after the General Election

**More in Common and UCL Policy Lab**

July 2025



**More in  
Common**



**Policy Lab**

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## **About More in Common**

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public and helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our British Seven segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public think and why. We've published groundbreaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering polling and focus group research and are members of the British Polling Council.

## **About UCL Policy Lab**

The UCL Policy Lab brings together extraordinary expertise and everyday experience, connecting researchers and the broader community with the tools and resources required to bring about real social and policy change.

# Foreword

**By Marc Stears**

Exhausted from a long campaign but buoyed by an extraordinary victory, Keir Starmer stood on the steps of Downing Street just over one year ago to deliver his victory speech. “Your government,” the new prime minister said, “should treat every single person in this country with respect.”

This message of respect resonated strongly in the year leading up to the campaign, coming as close as anything to providing a central argument to Labour’s case for government. And, according to our research, it seemed to work.

As our research at the time showed, voters felt that “respecting ordinary people” was the most important attribute that any politician could have, more important than having ideas for the future, managing effectively or having real experience. And they thought Starmer was the leader who displayed that respect most.

A year later, the picture looks quite different. Across three waves of polling, we asked the public to evaluate the government one year on. On respect, the judgement has not been good: more than six in ten now believe that the Prime Minister and his party lack respect for people like them.

This view has had crucial political consequences. Of those who voted for Labour in the general election, only 60 per cent say they would vote for the party in an election held tomorrow.

And as this report shows, this decline in Labour’s vote share is not because some other political party is suddenly swooping in for their supporters: Labour’s voters are defecting in every direction, some would not vote, and a tenth say they simply don’t know how they would vote if an election were held tomorrow. And Labour’s losses have been most dramatic among their first-time voters.

This report contends that these political failures are directly related to the declining sense of respect. The top reason voters give for turning away from Labour are the broken promises and U-turns made by Labour in government, followed by the party’s failure to reduce the cost of living and changes to the winter fuel payment.

The idea of “respect” being key to the public’s sense of whether a government is on their side or not has been growing for many years now, both in academia and in politics itself. Since at least the 2007/8 financial crisis, there has been a sense that large swathes of the public feel neglected, overlooked and even disdained by those who govern them.

But respect is not just an abstract idea. People appear to judge whether they are respected by those who govern them or not primarily on the basis of whether the government stands up for them against powerful vested interests.

Our earlier research demonstrated that there is a widespread sense among the British public that certain groups have had it too easy for too long. This is either because they have been able to intimidate the government, or because government ministers and advisers have themselves been recruited from among these groups.

In our new report, therefore, we see that the new government's most popular act was their willingness to raise the minimum wage by £1,400 in April, against the objections of some in business who suggested that such a move was too burdensome on them.

Changes to the winter fuel allowance and proposed changes to the disability benefits system, on the other hand, registered poorly. They suggest that the interests of ordinary and vulnerable people count for too little in decision-making.

These judgements currently shape the mood of the country, and probably top the list of issues that the government now needs to address. There is still time for the government to rebuild its appeal, of course. Indeed, our respondents who said they would vote for Labour said they would do so because the party needs more time to fix the problems they inherited.

But as it seeks to do so, voters will want to know who this government stands for. Whose interests does it put first? What kind of people does it respect?

Much of the electorate thought they knew the answer to these questions one year ago. Now they're not so sure.

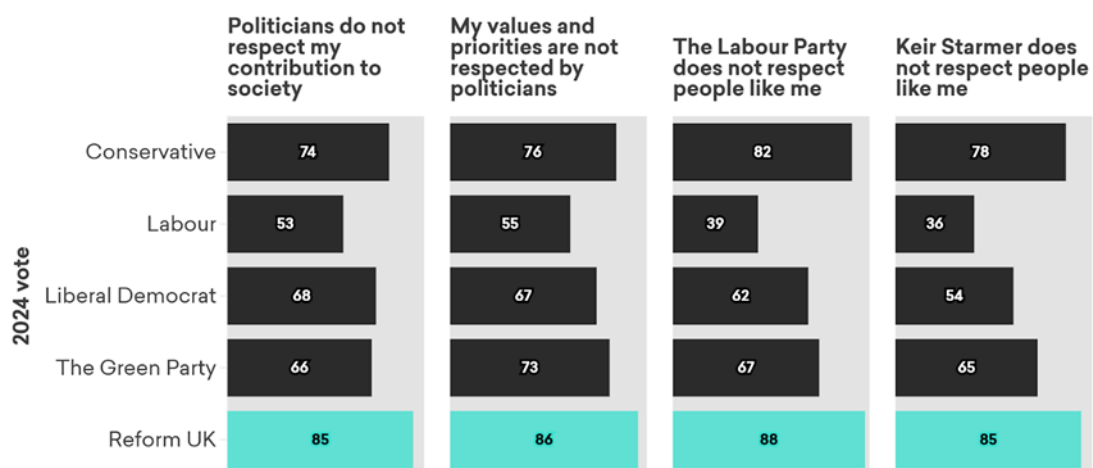


Second, key spending decisions have undermined support for the government's wider agenda. The decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Allowance has overshadowed almost every other policy in Labour's first year. Combined with changes to disability-related benefits and unpopular tax decisions, it has created a sense that the government is targeting the vulnerable. Voters don't see these decisions in isolation; they see them as part of a bigger picture about the government's values and priorities. For many, it's not just about how money is spent, but which groups the government respects, and which it does not.

This feeds a sense that Labour has lost touch with the people who elected it. Keir Starmer made 'respect for ordinary people' a central theme of his campaign, yet the proportion of Britons who believe he lacks respect for them has doubled since last June. More broadly, Britons feel disrespected by politicians of every party, and this has driven the electoral fragmentation that defined Labour's first year.

### Reform voters are most likely to feel disrespected by politicians

Proportion who agree with each statement



Source: More in Common, June 2025

### What's next?

Despite serious setbacks, Labour still has a path to recovery, if it can win back voters it has lost on both flanks.

Just 60 per cent of 2024 Labour voters say they would back the party again, but many remain open to returning. Among those who have switched to the Greens, Liberal Democrats or other progressive parties, a quarter say they would consider voting Labour again within the next four years. For this group, the party's climbdown on disability benefits was a step in the right direction, but they want to see clearer action on poverty, public services and the climate. Two-thirds of Green and Liberal Democrat voters say they would back Labour tactically in a close race with Reform.

Labour faces a tougher challenge with voters who have switched to Reform. Re-engaging this group is going to be difficult. But Reform voters are not a homogenous block: just 6

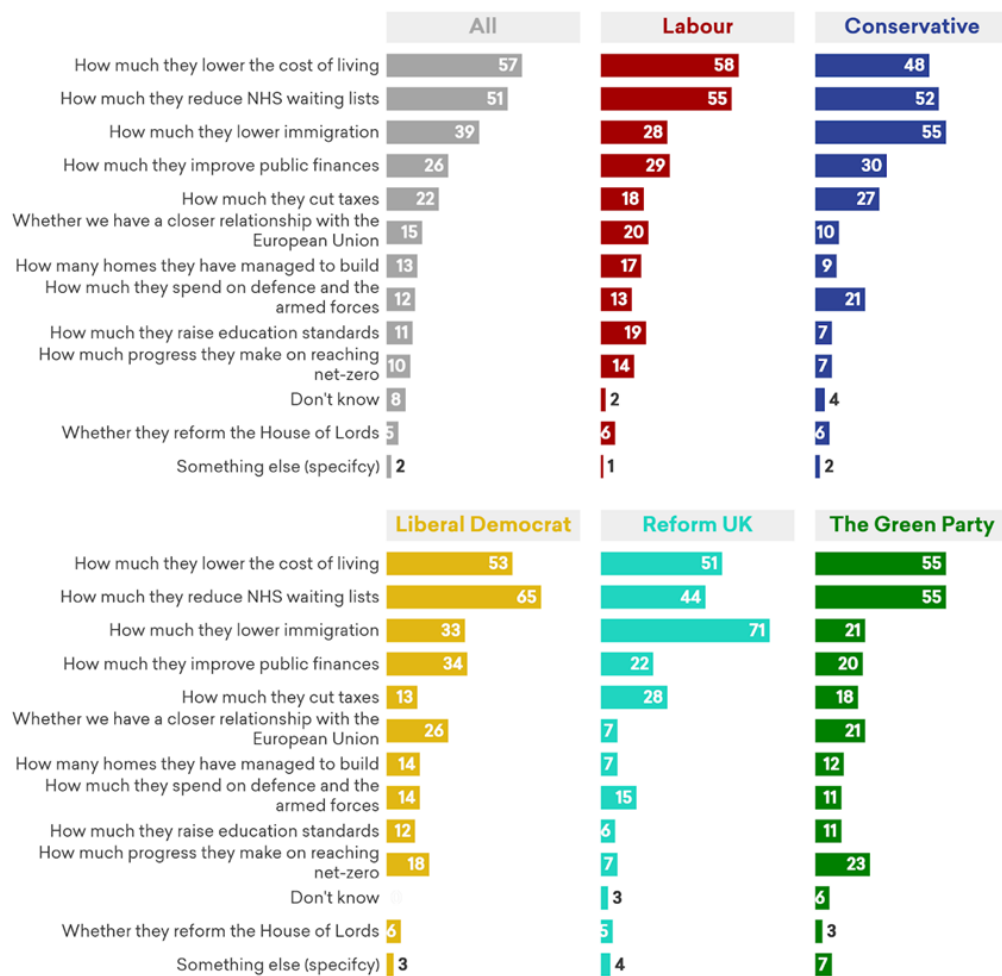
per cent of those who backed Reform in 2024 say they would consider voting Labour today, but among Labour–Reform switchers, that figure rises to 27 per cent. These new Reform supporters are in many ways less ideological than Reform’s core base, and more driven by frustration: most say they feel let down by the political system and are willing to “roll the dice” for something different. They want to see competence, especially on immigration and the cost of living, and will look again at Labour if that is delivered.

Despite their differences, Labour’s lost voters - left and right - are united by what they want to see next. Cutting NHS waiting lists and easing the cost of living are the two top priorities for every voter group. Ambitious policies on public services, climate and national defence are one way the Government can appeal to a broad section of the public.

But beyond any one policy, showing - through their words and actions as a Government - that they do respect ordinary people will be essential for the Labour Party if they hope to stay in office long enough to deliver the change they promised.

**The NHS, the cost of living, and immigration are the public's top three priorities for Labour**

Which of the following do you think will be most important for judging whether the Labour government has improved your everyday life in five years' time? (Select up to three)



# Chapter One: What's changed?

In the week after Sir Keir Starmer's landslide victory in the General Election last year, More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab released *Change Pending*, the largest mixed-methods analysis of how British public opinion shaped the election result, and what voters wanted to happen next. In that study, three themes emerged:

**The demand for change:** The 2024 Election was another dramatic call for change from a public deeply unhappy with the status quo: this followed the public's demands for change in the 2016 Brexit Referendum and the 'Get Brexit Done' 2019 General election. The majority of Britons said that the election result gave Labour a mandate to radically change Britain.

**A broad but shallow coalition:** Labour's 2024 election gains extended far beyond their traditional base, but did not run deeply, they commanded a broad but shallow coalition of voters disillusioned with the status quo. Our analysis showed that it was probably mistaken to think the Government should now seek to pick one part of that coalition or another and instead should focus on deepening support across the public.

**Tangible change and a politics of respect:** The mandate the government had to deliver was twofold. First, delivering concrete improvements in the public's everyday lives. And, second, a type of Government that paid more attention to the experiences, concerns and values of communities far beyond Westminster, treated them as equal partners and ensured they feel respected in the political process.

The call for change was clear, but the question was whether this time the new government would be able to match the public's expectations. Only one in ten Britons (9 per cent) say that they fully trusted Labour when they were elected, while a further 18 per cent say they mostly trusted Labour, but were sceptical. Yet the public were almost unanimous in their demand for change: three quarters said that things needed to change, and two-thirds said that Starmer had a mandate to radically transform Britain. A year on, few Britons feel that they have seen the differences they hoped for in the early period of a Labour government. Asked what has changed since the 2024 General Election, the most common answer was 'nothing'.

**In a word or two, what would you say has been Labour's biggest achievement in government?**

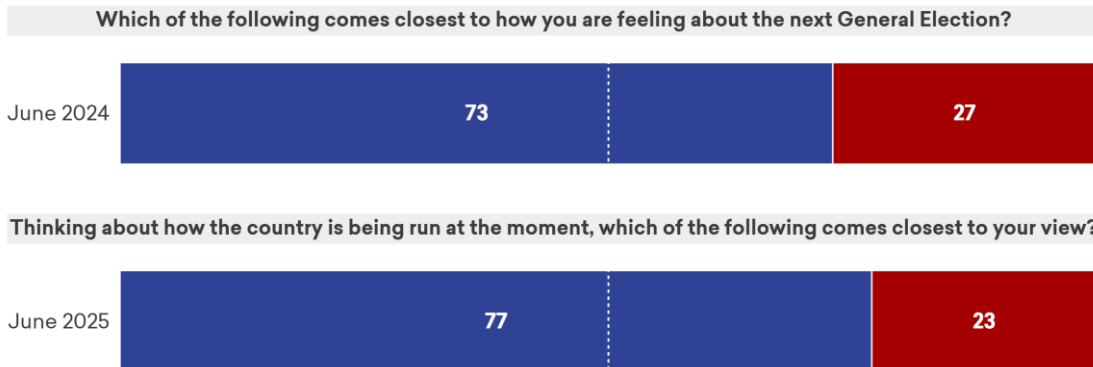


June 2025

What's more, a year after delivering the Labour government with their decisive mandate for change, Britons now more likely to believe that it's time for change than they were immediately before last year's general election. Following just one year of a Labour government, the public is as anxious for change as they were after 14 years of Conservative rule.

**Britons still think it's time for change**

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



More in Common • June 2024, June 2025

Britons' desire for change was what drove the country to conclusively reject the Conservatives in the last election. Rishi Sunak's promise to "stick with the plan" was

unappealing because people didn't think there was a positive plan to stick with. That Britons' desire for change has deepened during Labour's first year shows that public frustration now extends far beyond any one party or system. It is not solely an indictment of Labour's first year, but reflects a deeper and wider belief that key parts of the system are broken, that politicians of every party appear incapable of fixing it and, perhaps most importantly, that our institutions don't respect the people they are supposed to serve.

This failure to deliver hasn't happened in a vacuum. The fragmentation and disillusionment we explored in the aftermath of the election has continued - evidenced by the rise of Reform, resurgence of the SNP and nascent discussions about new parties on the left of politics. Whereas disillusioned voters traditionally had few places to go beyond the Conservative and Labour party,, recent elections have shown that the British public are now increasingly happy to trying out any number of smaller parties in a desperate bid to secure change. An election tomorrow - not that there is likely to be one - would likely shape a political landscape of the sort never seen before in British political history.

## The government's report card

Asked to grade Labour's first year using an A\* to F scale, the median Briton gives Labour's overall performance an E. This median conceals an even deeper level of pessimism held by many: the most popular grading, selected by a third of Britons, was F.

While Labour voters are more favourable, the median voter who backed Labour in 2024 still only gives the government a C.

*I would go for a c-plus and say he needs to concentrate more on doing what he promised that he would do, and not come up with surprises like he did with knocking the winter fuel and things like that.*

**Beryl, retired, Aldershot, Labour to undecided**

Asked to grade various aspects of the government's Labour's first year separately - from managing the economy to tackling crime and overseeing the NHS, Britons' grades average on Es and Ds across every metric, with the exception of controlling immigration, on which they receive an F.

Although Labour voters are more favourable in their grading of the government, they still only give the government a C on every metric except 'standing up for Britain on the world stage', on which they give them a B.

### Report card: The government's first year

Policy Area	The Public	2024 Labour Voters
Running the country competently	D	C
Managing the economy	E	C
Tackling the cost of living crisis	E	C
Overseeing the NHS	D	C
Controlling immigration	F	C
Tackling crime	E	C
Bringing fresh ideas	E	C
Behaving ethically	D	C
Standing up for Britain on the world stage	D	B
Putting together a good team	E	C
Showing respect for ordinary people	E	C

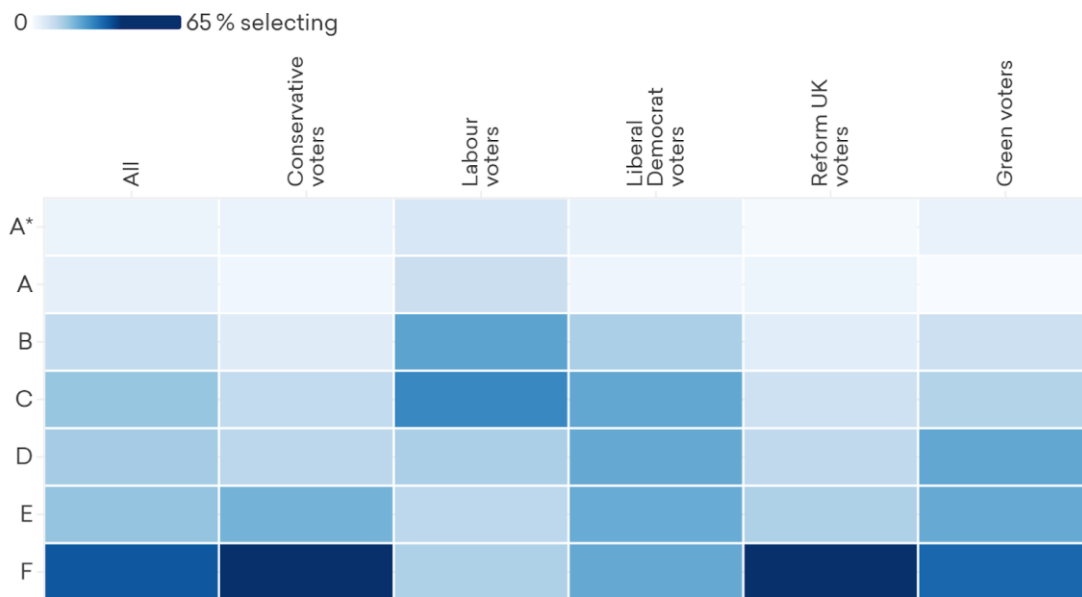
Conservative and Reform voters are most critical in their assessment of the government, both giving Labour's performance an F. But while half (50 per cent) of Conservative voters chose an F grade, this rises to 61 per cent among those who voted for Reform. There is more variation among those who voted for the Green Party or the Liberal Democrats, though they still have a poor verdict on the government so far, with Liberal Democrats giving the government a D, and Green voters giving them an E.

*I've gone for a D, I feel that they have made some changes, like as I said, we were left in a really sticky situation for me. It's not enough for me. They haven't prioritised what I feel my priorities were.*

**Jessica, childcare manager, Heywood, Labour to Reform switcher**

### Grading Labour's first year, by 2024 vote

Please indicate overall how well or badly you think the new Labour Government has performed since entering office on a school grade scale of A\* to F where A\* means they performed exceptionally well and F means they have performed exceptionally badly.



In focus group discussions one year on from the General Election, participants also routinely graded the government around a grade D. However, there was a shared hope in the groups that the government would use the coming years to knuckle down and improve - much like a poor performance on a mock exam, they hope it will spur Labour to do better.

*They're not millions of miles away, but they just need to knuckle down, be consistent, do what they say, say what they're going to do...if they knuckle down and crack on with it, they could reach the goal. It would be a lot of hard work...but I think if they knuckle down, stop getting distracted by minuscule and trivial things, get on with a job, cause you'll be fine*

Jack, labourer, Heywood and Middleton, Labour-Reform Switcher

*I'm rooting for them. I want them to do well and I want them to be able to put in these changes and implement them and I can see it there and I can see the things that they're doing, but I would like to see a bit more impact*

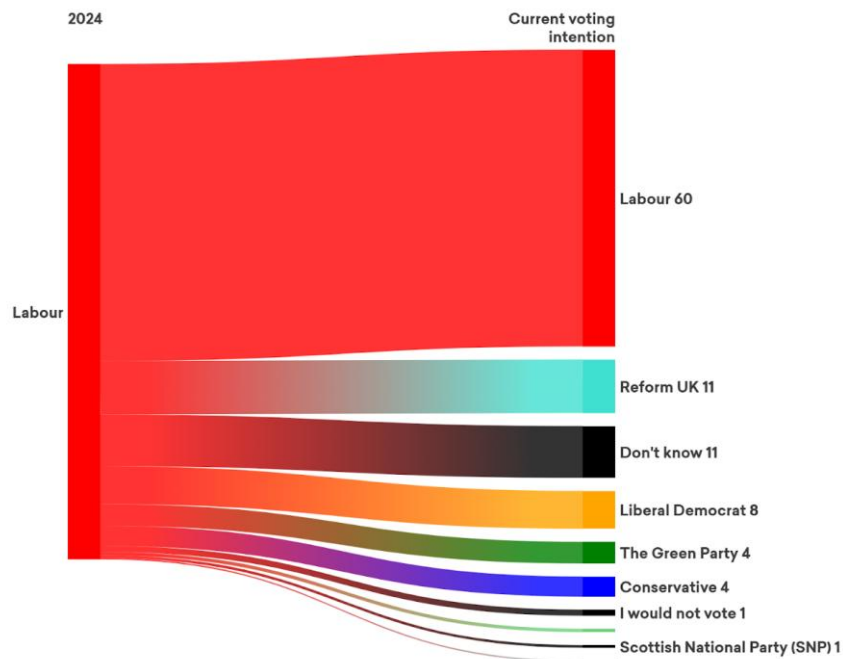
Jamie, careers consultant, Middleton, Labour-Reform Switcher

## Labour's fraying coalition

A year from the General Election, just three in five of those who voted Labour last year say they would do so again. Much like the fragmentation of Boris Johnson's 2019 Conservative voter coalition, Labour have lost votes across the spectrum to parties of the left and right and, those who now would not vote at all.

### Current voting intention among 2024 Labour voters

And, if a general election was called tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

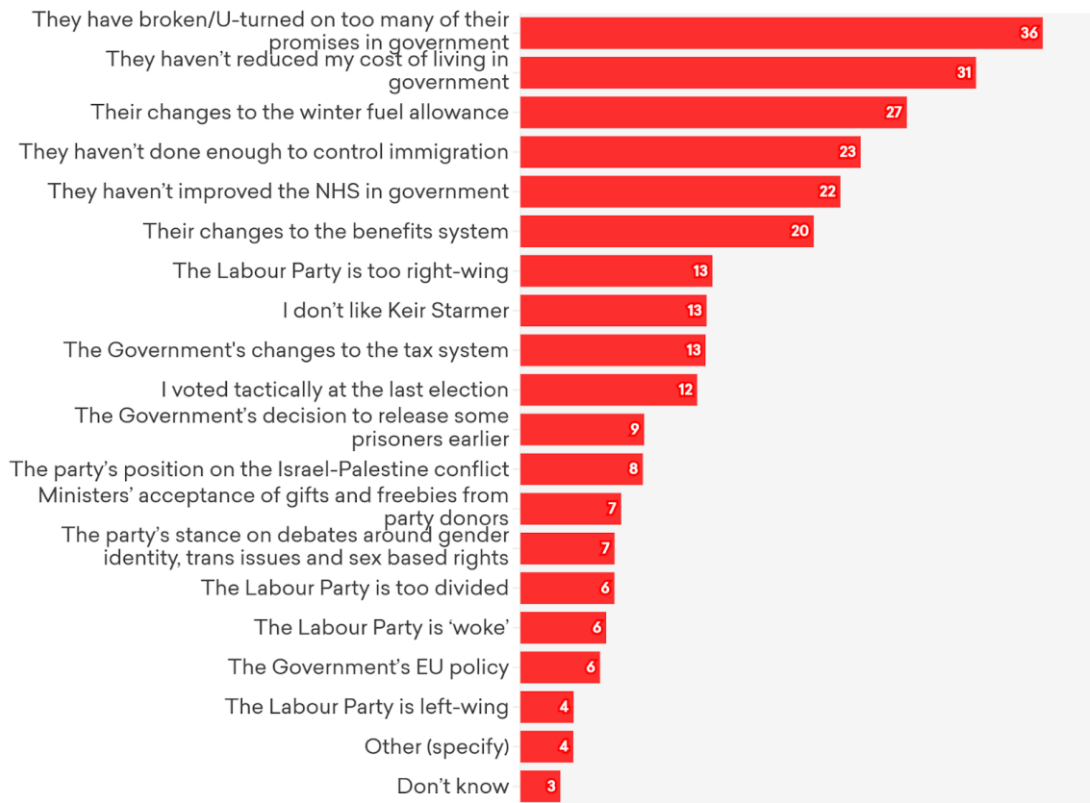


Source: More in Common June 2025

The main reason voters give for turning away from Labour - regardless of who they would vote for instead - is broken promises and U-turns on previous commitments. Beyond that, there are some differences between the different switchers.

### Why have people turned away from the Labour Party?

You said that you voted for Labour in the General Election last year, but would not do so if a General Election was held today. Why is that? Select your top three reasons.



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The 11 per cent who have switched from Labour to Reform are more likely to say they have switched because the government has failed to get immigration under control. The 12 percent who have switched to the Liberal Democrats or Greens Party cite failure to reduce the cost of living and a perception that Labour is too right-wing. Changes to the benefits system also stand out as policies that have led Labour's progressive flank to rethink their allegiance.

*I just think my overall opinion on them still is not that great. There's been a lot of the backtracking that we spoke about. I'm not a fan of his opinions on certain things like trans issues and things like that... The only positive I can think of is scrapping the Rwanda scheme and that went through, stuck with that. So yeah, very happy with that outcome*

**Amy, social worker, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Green switcher,**

Labour won the 2024 General Election on borrowed votes, and now those voters are leaving the party. Only three in five (59 per cent) of Labour's 2024 voters had also voted for

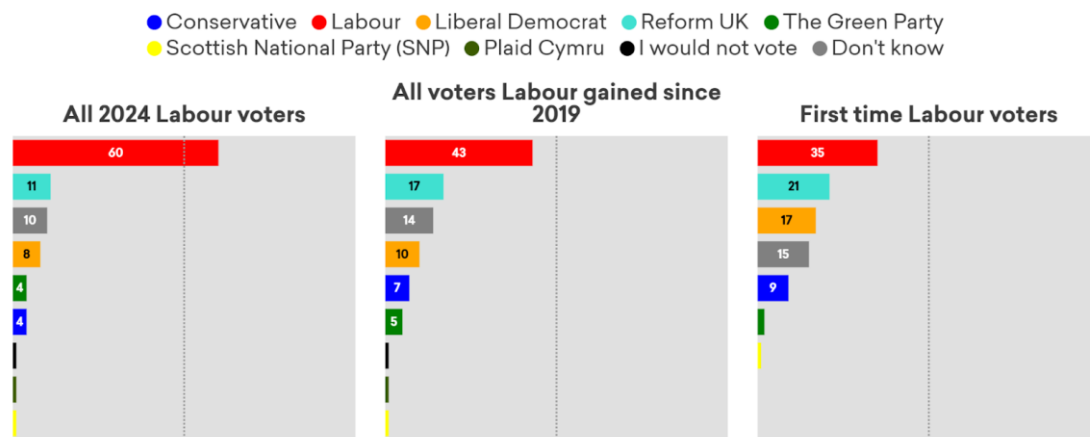
the party in 2019, while a fifth came from the Conservatives, and the rest came from Liberal Democrats, Greens and erstwhile non-voters.

Since 2024, this broad electoral coalition has narrowed significantly as it heads into its second year. Labour are losing voters both to Reform on its right flank and the Greens and Liberal Democrats on its left flank. Labour’s graduate gap has increased further with more losses among non-graduates than graduates.

Labour has now lost most of the voters it gained between 2019 and 2024: barely four in ten (43 per cent) say they would vote for the party in an election held tomorrow. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of those who voted for Labour in 2024 said it was their first time voting for the party. Of those voting for Labour for the first time (those who did not vote for Labour in any election since at least 2010), the party’s losses are even heavier: barely a third (35 per cent) of first time Labour voters still support the party.

**Labour has lost most of their new voters**

Current voting intention among 2024 Labour voters



More in Common • June 2025  
 'First time Labour voters' = those who voted Labour in 2024, but not in any General Election from 2010 - 2019

New voters are also particularly negative in their assessment of the government’s record to date: 58 per cent say that the government has performed worse than they expected, and 56 per cent say that they have been less competent.

Across a range of measures, a strong majority of Labour’s first-time voters believe that they have failed to achieve their goals in government, from cutting the cost of living to reducing energy bills, and reducing immigration. Nearly two-thirds of first time Labour voters feel the government has failed to keep their promises, compared to less than half of all 2024 Labour voters.

In focus groups, these new Labour voters express a sense of deep disappointment, a feeling that they apprehensively placed their trust in the government and have been let down.

*I mean I'd say it is better than the conservatives, but I think that's more of a reflection how bad the previous conservative government was rather than how good the current labour government's doing.*

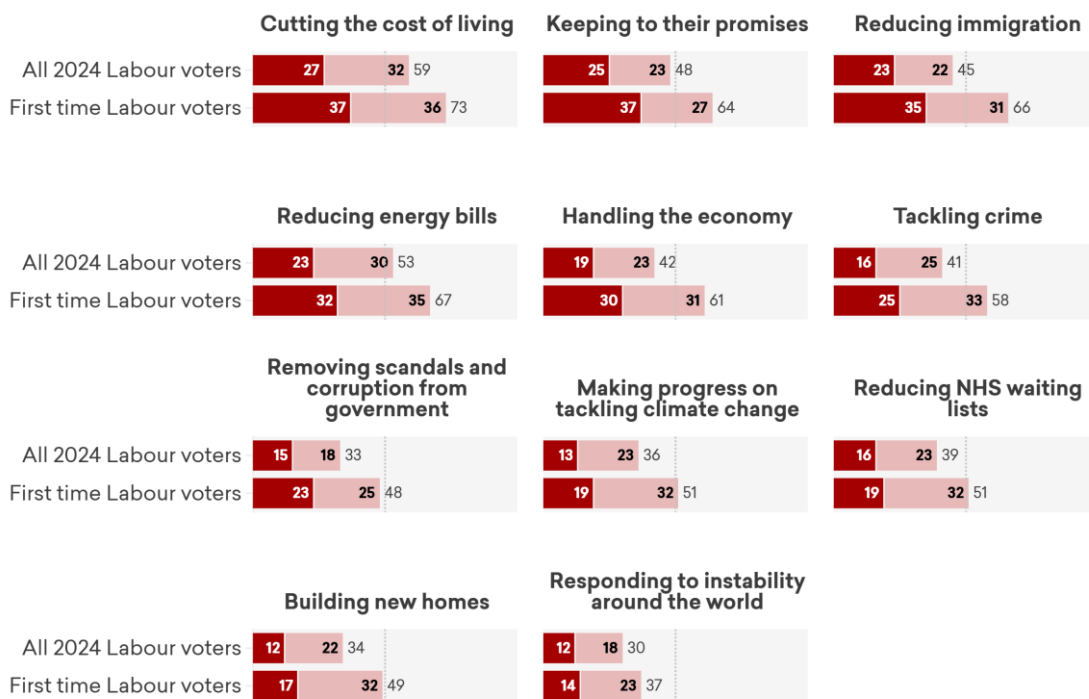
**Phil**, housing officer, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Reform switcher

**First time Labour voters\* are highly negative in their assessment of Labour's first year**

And on each of the following issues would you say that the Labour Government has performed well or badly?

\*Those who voted for another party in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019 General Elections

● Very badly ● Quite badly



Source: More in Common • June 2025

But Labour are also suffering losses among more loyal voters: among Labour's core voters - those who voted the party in every General Election in the last 15 years - one in five say they would not vote Labour if an election was held tomorrow, with the largest proportion of defectors going to the Liberal Democrats. Notably, the main reasons given by these core voters as to why they have turned away from the party are changes to the benefits system (36 per cent), followed by changes to the winter fuel allowance (24 per cent).

*"I've always voted Labour, but this time I felt like I was voting Labour to try and stop Reform getting in rather than really wanting a win."*

**Joe**, financial analyst, Runcorn, Labour loyalist

## Why are people disappointed?

Looking at the voters Labour have lost over the past year, three common drivers of discontent emerge:

- **A failure to live up to expectations**
- **Governing too similarly to the Conservatives**
- **Increasing impatience for change.**

These three drivers explain how the electoral dynamics have changed over the past year. A further analysis of 'what went wrong' is discussed in chapter two.

### Failure to live up to expectations

Put simply, most Britons feel that Labour has failed to live up to their expectations. Three in five people (59 per cent) say that Labour's performance in government has been worse than they expected, with almost two in five (38 per cent) describing it as "much worse". Just 12 per cent say Labour has performed better than they anticipated, while around three in ten (29 per cent) think things have turned out about as expected.

Nearly half of Labour's own voters express disappointment: 46 per cent of those who voted Labour in 2024 say the party's performance has fallen short of expectations, compared to only 26 per cent who say it has exceeded them.

Reform UK voters are the most likely to feel let down. Three quarters (75 per cent) say Labour has been worse than they expected, including 61 per cent who say it's been "much worse".

Most people think Labour has been less competent than they hoped. A majority (55 per cent) say the party has been more incompetent than expected, while just 9 per cent believe it has been more competent. Around a quarter (27 per cent) say Labour's competence has been about what they expected.

Age appears to shape how Labour voters view the government's first year. Younger Labour voters tend to see things more positively, while older voters are more critical. Among Labour voters under the age of 35, two in five (40 per cent) say Labour has performed better than they expected, and just over a third (34 per cent) say worse. But among those aged 55 and over, nearly six in ten (57 per cent) say Labour has underperformed, with just 15 per cent saying the opposite.

***We're heading towards extreme poverty, and you'll get people that are extremely rich, and all the middle classes in the middle will get knocked out - just hitting the likes of the older people with a few quid.***

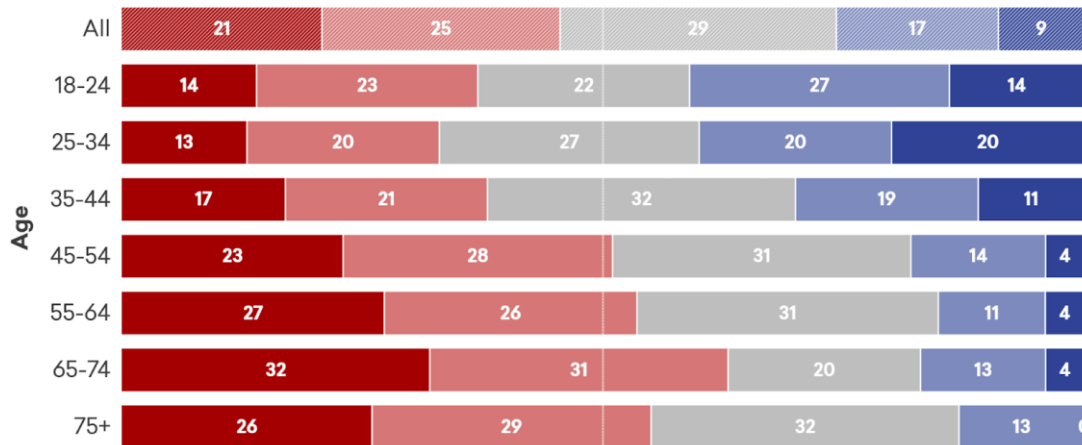
**Angela, retired, Worthing, Labour to undecided**

### Older Labour voters are particularly disillusioned with the government's first year

The Labour government has now been in power for a year. In that time, have they performed better or worse than you expected?

(Labour voters only)

● Much worse than I expected ● Slightly worse than I expected ● About the same as I expected  
 ● Slightly better than I expected ● Much better than I expected



Source: More in Common • June 2025

### Too similar to the Conservatives

There is also a sense among some that Labour has continued to govern from the right. While the public is divided on whether the party has been more left or right-wing than anticipated, they lean slightly towards saying it has been more right-wing (22 per cent) than left-wing (13 per cent). That view is more widespread among Labour's lost voters: among those who have switched away from Labour since the election, 40 per cent say the party has been more right-wing than expected, compared to 30 per cent who say 'about the same' and 19 per cent who say 'more left-wing'.

*Tories, conservatives, labour, just they're too moderate. There's no difference between either. Again, without putting a lot of thought into it, I couldn't name anything that the conservators have introduced that made a difference in my life and I certainly can't do it for labour. So yeah, make a difference in my life.*

**Matt, unemployed, Runcorn and Helsby, Labour to Reform switcher**

*They just feel like they're conservatives dressed up as labour to me at the minute it's not been that much change at all. Just a continuation of before.*

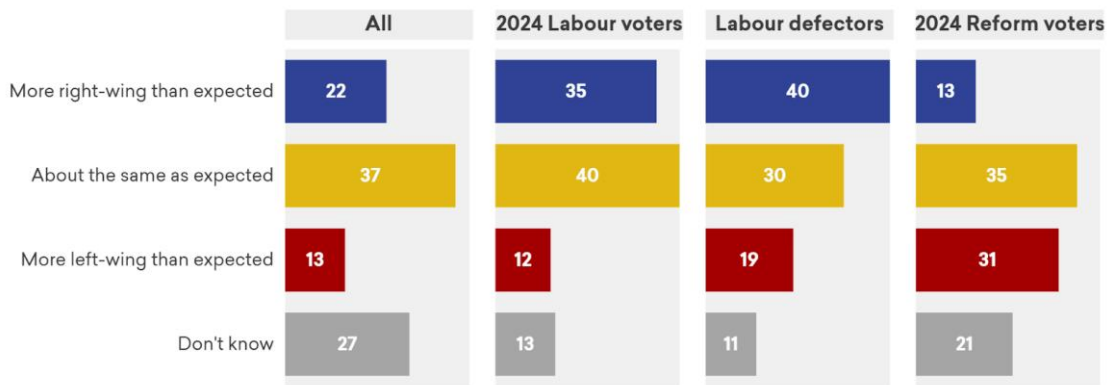
**Phil, Office Manager, Heywood and Middleton, Labour-Reform**

Even among current Labour voters, more than a third (35 per cent) say the party has been more right-wing than they expected – though a larger proportion (40 per cent) say they've governed as expected. Reform voters are the most likely to say Labour has been more left-wing than expected, with nearly a third (31 per cent) taking that view.

**Reform voters see Labour as more left-wing than expected; Labour voters see it as more right-wing**

Since entering government, would you say the Labour Party has been...

- More right-wing than expected
- About the same as expected
- More left-wing than expected
- Don't know



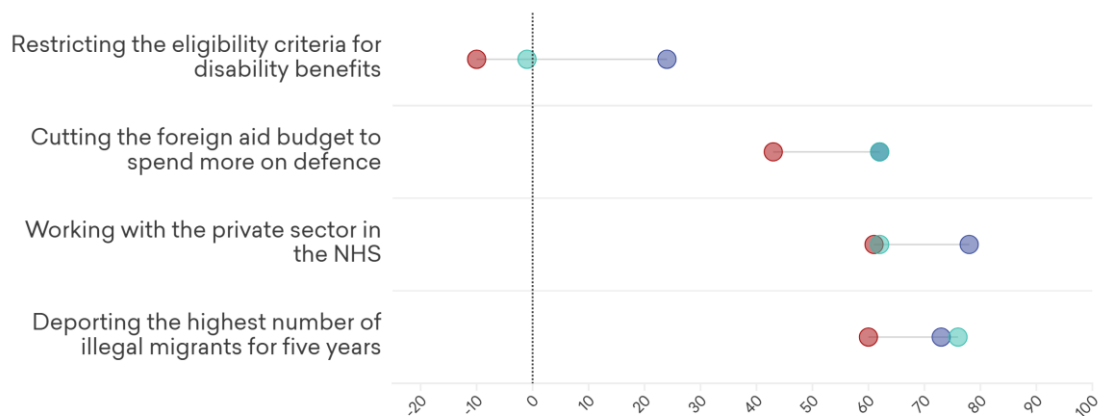
Source: More in Common • June 2025

In fact, many of the government's most well-known policies since entering office have been more popular among voters on the right of politics than Labour voters themselves: 2024 Conservative voters are the only voter group who were more likely to support than oppose the government's proposed changes to Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

**Many of Labour's policies have appealed more to Conservative voters than Labour voters**

Net support for each policy, by 2024 vote

- Labour supporters
- Conservative supporters
- Reform UK supporters



Source: More in Common • January - June 2025

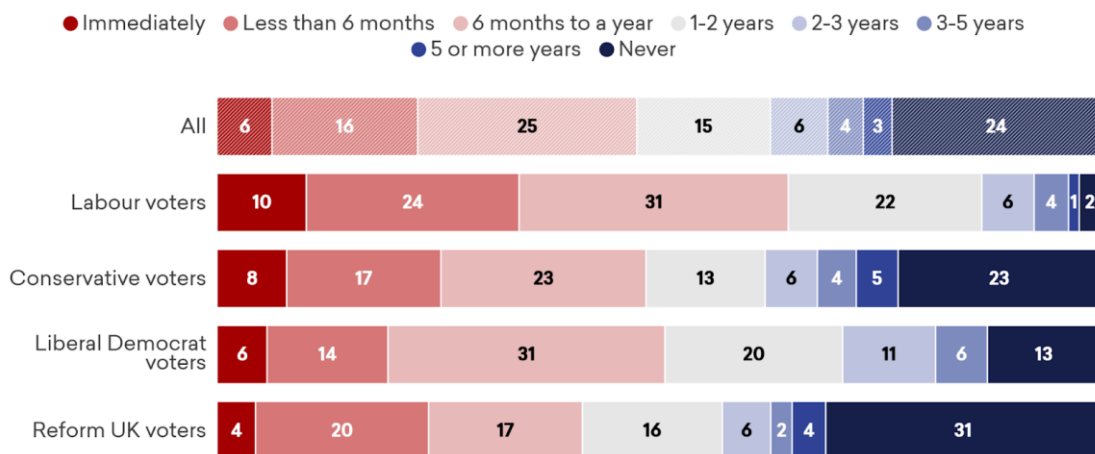
## Impatience for change

In July 2024, immediately after the General Election, half of all Britons - 48 per cent - said they expected to see change within the government's first year, with Labour voters the most optimistic about a quick impact. Among those who voted Labour in 2024, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) believed the party would begin to make a difference within its first year in office.

That gave Labour little time to deliver. Seven in ten Britons – and almost nine in ten Labour voters (87 per cent) – said they expected to see meaningful change within two years of the party taking power.

### Most expected to see change within Labour's first year

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

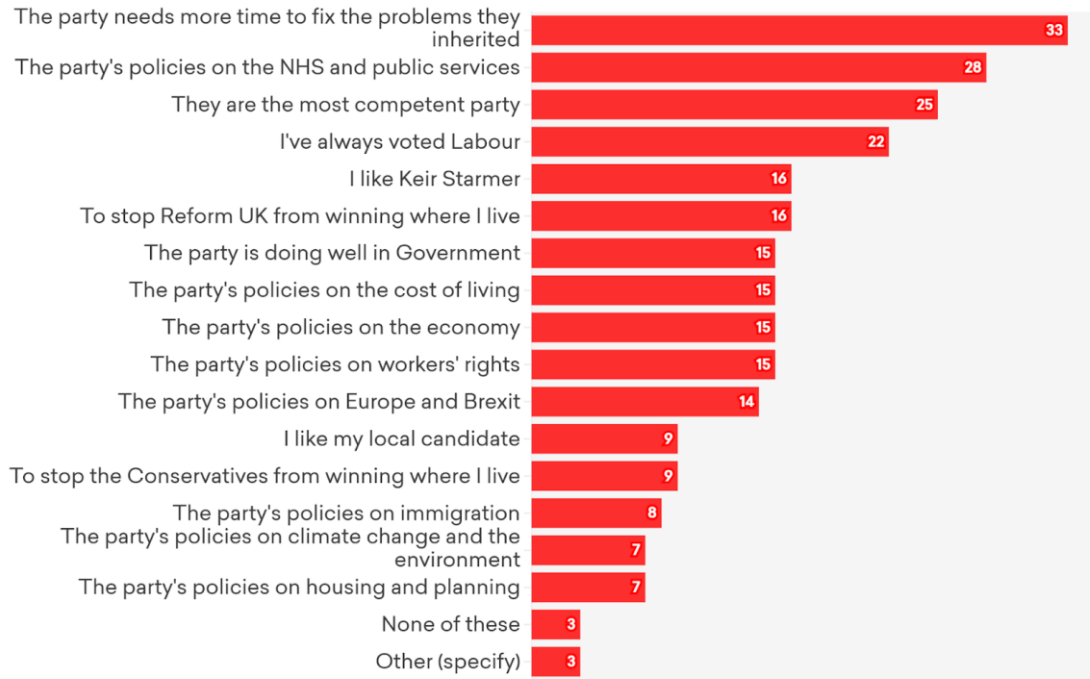


Source: More in Common, July 2024

The glue holding together Labour's remaining support base is the belief that Labour needs more time. Asked why they would vote Labour, the main reason their supporters give is that the Government need more time to fix the problems they inherited: 33 per cent of Labour supporters select this as a reason, compared to only 15 per cent who say that the party is already doing well in government.

**Labour supporters are most likely to say they would vote for the party because they need more time**

You said that you would vote for Labour if a General Election was held today. Why is that? Select your top three reasons.



More in Common • June 2025

In focus groups, this emerges as a dividing line in Labour's 2024 voter coalition: while many are disappointed by the pace of progress made by the party, others think that it's too early to judge Labour - and that they need more time before writing off the government.

*I don't think they've been given enough time to actually implement anything or put out any of the fires that they have to put out. I think it would be a 10 year plus process to kind of heal the long-term damage that's been caused over time.*

**Piers, programmer, Worcester, Labour loyalist**

*You can't expect them to change things in nine months. The country didn't get into this state in nine months. It takes time to bring it back out of it and you've got to give them a chance to turn things around. I'm not saying they're going to be perfect, but we've had 14 years of one government, surely we've got to give them a bit more than nine months before we completely write them off.*

**Kate, retired radiographer, Runcorn, Labour loyalist**

*I think they need a bit of time. They've just come into the government, what it's been 13 years of Tory leadership. They have done a few bits. I know they've introduced some stuff around school, breakfast clubs and so ... They've built a good relationship with America as much bumlicking he's done, but he's built that relationship with the key person that's controlling most decisions in the world. So I think he's done some good stuff, but again, I think he could have got some quick wins that he's missed out on*

Sean, project manager, Heywood and Middleton, Labour-Reform Switcher

## Electoral fragmentation: More in Common's latest MRP

While few Britons feel that the country has changed over the past year, the electoral landscape has been dramatically reshaped.

More in Common's new MRP projects Reform UK would be in touching distance of a majority if the General Election were today. Based on polling of over 10,000 Britons, the model estimates that, Reform UK would be the largest party with 290 MPs - more than twice as many as any other party.

Reform have been able to capitalise on building momentum from throughout the year: In April we projected Reform could win 180 seats, they have continued to gain strength in the last few months with a further 110 constituencies that could elect a Reform MP.

Most of Reform's gains come from Labour-held seats. They have advanced in seats Labour gains - taking 136 of the seats that Labour gained from the Conservatives in 2024. Reform is also managing to grow support in Conservative areas - winning 59 seats that the Tories held in 2024.

### A clear frontrunner emerges

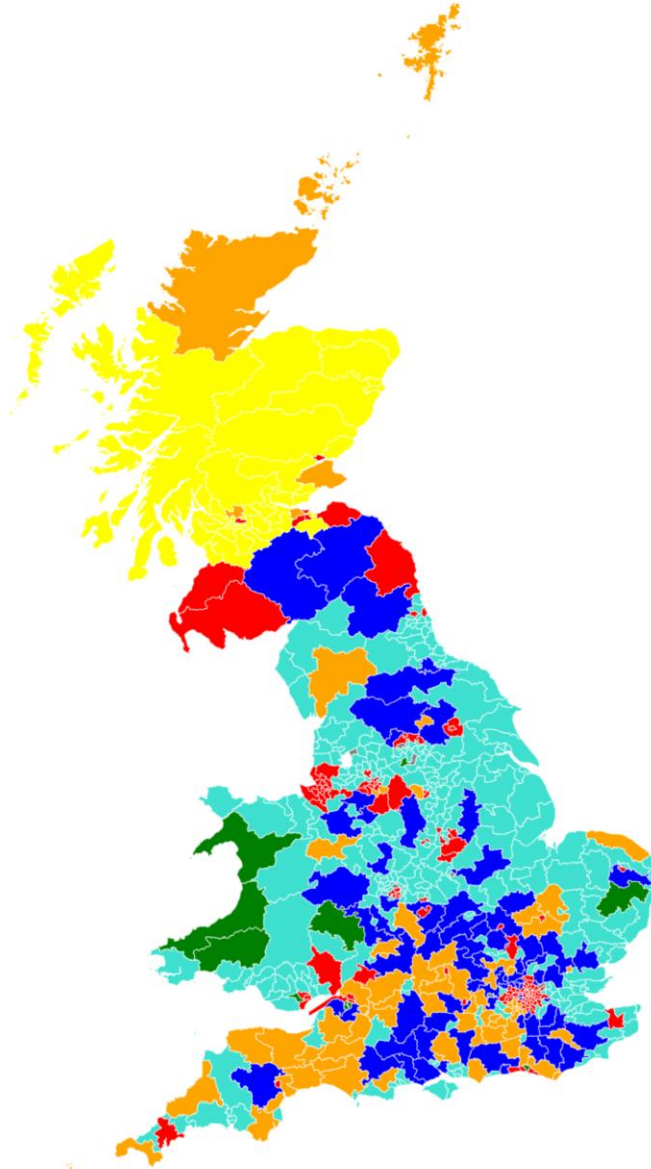
In April we projected a more fragmented parliament - with Reform, Labour and the Conservatives vying to be the largest party each with between 165 and 180 seats. In today's projection Reform emerges as the clear frontrunner. In the last More in Common MRP model, Reform were gaining seats with an average margin of 9 per cent. In the current projection they have widened this gap - their gains now have them ahead by an average margin of 14 per cent.

If this projected result were the outcome of an election, it would mean a hung parliament with Reform 36 seats short of a majority (their projection is only 16 seats away from David Cameron's Conservative party in 2010).

Yet the vote share of the main parties remains historically low. Labour won the General Election on an efficiently-distributed 34 per cent of the vote - 6 points more than Reform's vote share based on this projection. To win the next election - Reform will either need to expand their vote share by wooing new voters, or make the distribution of their vote more efficient by finding votes in unlikely places.

Labour's main losses are to Reform - 223 seats directly flip from Labour to Reform, including many long-standing Labour constituencies in the North of England and in Wales. Under this projection, you could walk from Workington to Hartlepool, and then all the way down the East of England to Clacton without leaving a Reform seat.

● Reform UK ● SNP ● Labour ● Conservative ● Liberal Democrat ● Independent ● Green ● Plaid Cymru



## Chapter two: What's gone wrong?

What policy and political decisions have led to those three drivers of public discontent? More in Common and UCL Policy Lab research has identified a series of moments and policy frames that placed the Government on the wrong side of public opinion and have contributed to early disappointment.

### Misreading the public mood

As is now widely acknowledged, the Prime Minister's Rose Garden speech last August misread the public mood. While in its early days, the government attempted to project a tone of sober stewardship and tough choices, they failed to recognise that the public was already exhausted. After 16 years of austerity and hard choices since the financial crash they public wanted to know what a better, more hopeful future looked like, one where they could “living, not just surviving.” Instead, many Britons felt like the Government was embarking on another five years of more of the same. The government's attempt to make a virtue out of ‘not being popular’ fell flat focus groups. .

*He's come out and he said, I'm not here to be Mr. Popular, why not? Why not try and be popular? Get off on the right foot. It seemed a really strange thing to say. I'm tough. Look at me. People have had a rough few years. How about a bit of positivity I thought.*

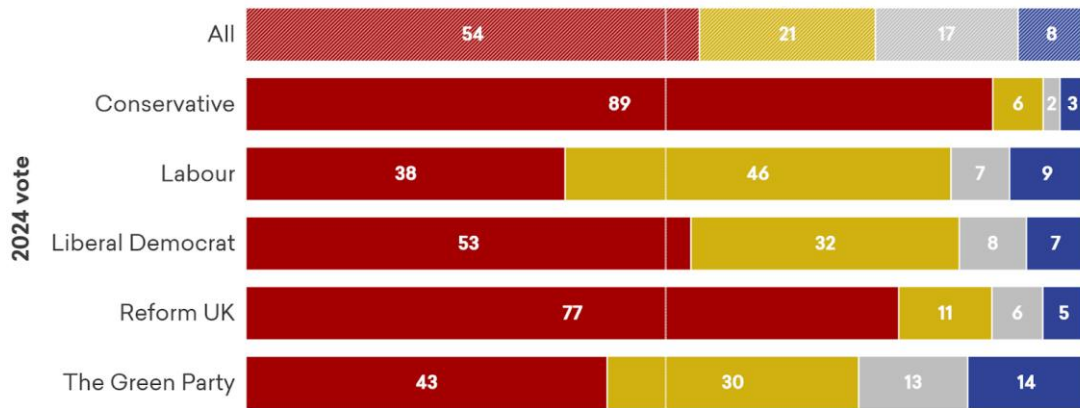
**Kevin, machine operator, Birmingham**

Beyond the gloomy tone, the public also express frustration at an over focus on the fiscal ‘black hole’ Labour regularly suggested drove their decision making. In truth most of the public needed no convincing that the Conservatives had left behind a mess - that was why they had voted them out - but instead wanted to hear from Labour, ‘so what are you going to do to fix it?’ rather than a focus on the past. Faced with an unpopular Conservative government and a government seeming to do more of the same, the appeal of third parties - Reform UK, Greens and the Liberal Democrats - has grown.

### The majority of the public thinks that Labour is focusing too much on blaming the last government

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- The Labour Government is focusing too much on blaming the Conservatives for their failures in government
- The Labour Government is getting the balance right between holding the Conservative government to account for their failures in government and developing its own solutions
- Don't know
- The Labour Government isn't focusing enough on holding the Conservatives to account for their failures in government



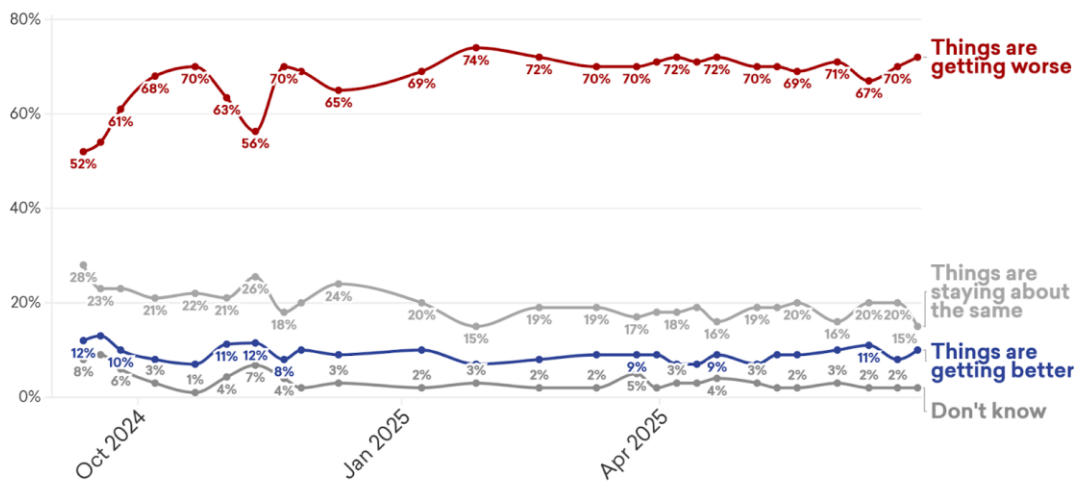
Source: More in Common • June 2025

### A persistent and enduring pessimism

Seven in ten Britons now say the country is getting worse, while just eight per cent think it is getting better. A further fifth believe things are staying about the same. This deep sense

#### Most think things are getting worse

Thinking about the UK today, would you say...



Source: More in Common • Last fieldwork 27 - 30 June 2025

of pessimism has risen since the election by around 20 points. At no point in 2025 has the proportion of people saying the country is getting worse dropped below two-thirds.

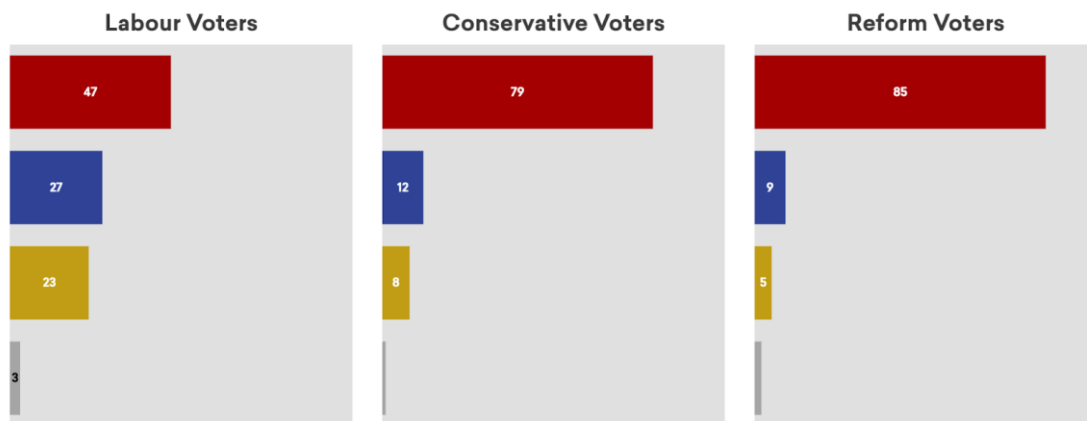
Much of this shift is among Labour's own supporters. In September 2024, just 27 per cent of Labour voters said the country was getting worse, while more than a third (36 per cent) said it was improving. Now, almost half (48 per cent) say things are getting worse, and only one in five (21 per cent) say things are getting better.

Reform voters are the most pessimistic of all. Four in five (81 per cent) say the country is getting worse, rising to 86 per cent among those who switched to the party since the General Election. Conservative voters are not far behind, with 77 per cent saying the same.

### Eighty five per cent of Reform voters think things are getting worse

Current voting intention among 2024 Labour voters

● Things are getting worse ● Things are staying about the same ● Things are getting better ● Don't know



More in Common • June 2025

*They're going to end up pushing people into poverty at a time where more people are hitting poverty and food banks are overrun, schools are starting to run food banks, which is ridiculous in itself because so many families need them.*

Jessica, childcare manager, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Reform switcher

*You turn the news on, there's never anything good. And so I listen more than watch the television because when you watch the news, it's in your face and it's depressing.*

Beryl, retired, Labour-Undecided, Aldershot

This sense of pessimism is not limited to views of the current government; it bleeds into perceptions of the future of the country. Three in four Britons (74 per cent) lean toward the

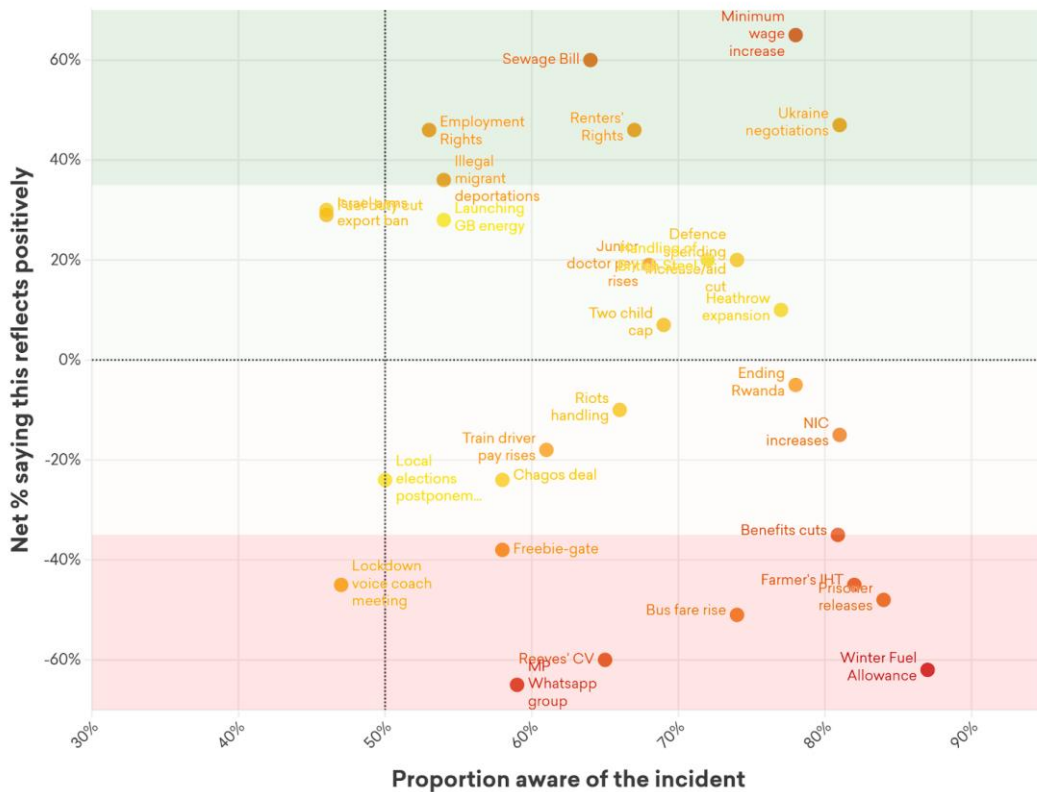
view that Britain's best years are behind us - a sentiment that is most strongly felt by older Britons, those who are struggling financially, and those with less formal education.

## Winter Fuel Allowance: Labour's Original Sin

Almost no focus group discussion on Labour's performance passes without a mention of the Winter Fuel Allowance. For many the decision to change rules on pensioners eligibility for the winter fuel allowance is what amounted to the government's original sin. In More in Common's policy tracker - which explores cut through and favourability of decisions by the government and events in government - the winter fuel allowance changes are not only the most well-known of any of the Government's policies (almost nine in ten Britons have heard of it), but it also among the policy which the public are most likely to say reflects negatively on the government.

### The government's successes and failures

Lighter colours indicate greater ambivalence (more people expressing neither a negative nor positive view of the event)



Source: More in Common, More in Common, November 2024, March 2025, April 2025 • Net % saying this reflects positively = % saying incident either reflects very or somewhat positively - % saying it either reflects very or somewhat negatively

In focus group conversations younger Britons explain they worried about the impact of the cut on their parents or grandparents. It is also clear from conversations with the public that the decision made many people more zero-sum in how they thought about Government spending - unable to understand how there was enough money for asylum hotels or foreign aid at a time pensioners were losing their fuel allowance. On top of that, many saw the change as penalising people who had worked all of their lives and contributed to the system. That the Winter Fuel Allowance was announced into a vacuum before the Budget meant it came to be seen as the defining policy of the government's first months.

***It was almost like, well, I can't explain how I feel because it was such a shock to be told in that brusque manner we are getting rid of it. And it was almost like... 'we are not bothered what you think or what you feel'***

**Marilyn, retired, Aldershot, Labour to undecided**

***I think of the older people who don't work but have worked their whole lives ,retired and they're now struggling. Like others have mentioned this is where our priorities are, they're not where you think they are.***

**Jessica, childcare manager, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Reform switcher**

***They started so badly by not reading the room correctly. In this axing the winter fuel... I work in project management, I cannot believe that they've come up with such a stupid, very complicated, I can't even think of the word. Yeah, it's heavy. Very heavy handed how they're doing it.***

**Lynn, project manager, Aldershot, Labour loyalist**

***My granddad doesn't receive any pension credits or anything like that. He is got a decent pension. He was a police officer for many years. He worked really hard so because of that his winter fuel allowance was taken off him and yeah, fair enough. He probably didn't need the payment but at the same time he didn't need the payment because he'd worked so hard....he shouldn't be penalised because he worked hard.***

**Amy, primary school teacher, Labour-Reform convert, Runcorn**

Following the government's U-turn on the eligibility for the winter fuel allowance, the salience of the issue on the winter fuel allowance has decreased. However, the perception that the government targeted vulnerable groups, with something that wasn't in its manifesto will leave a trust deficit that will take time to repair.



Minister's response to this situation was one of the finest moments of his premiership to date.

*I dunno if I'm that optimistic at the moment, but I think Keir Starmer is coming across well with this whole Ukraine thing, kind of being diplomatic in all that. What with the particularly non diplomatic people that he's dealing with.*

**Stuart, recruitment executive, Finchley, Labour to Liberal Democrat switcher**

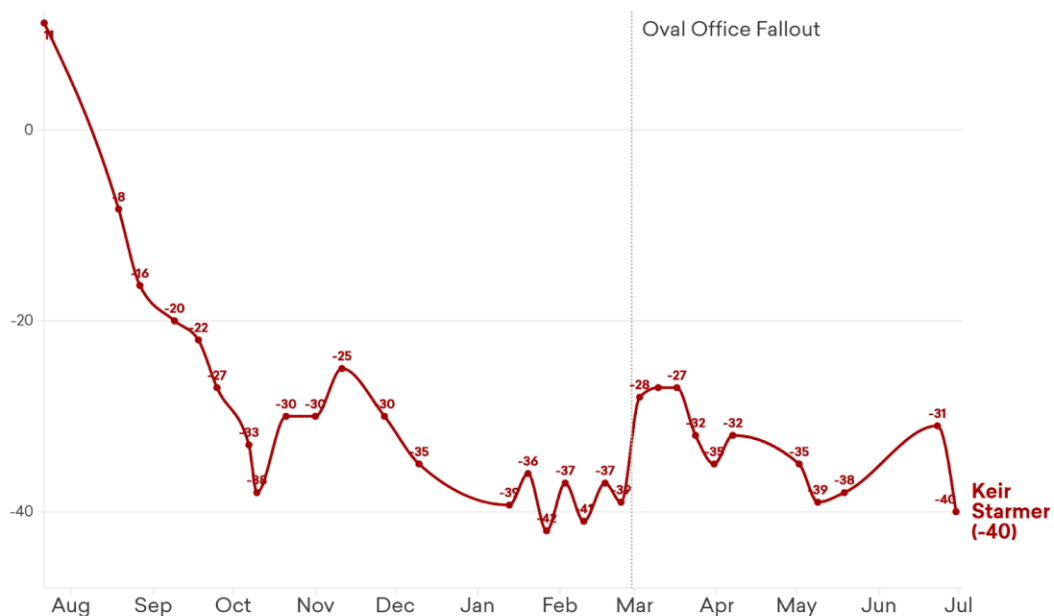
*I think he got in on an easy wicket because people were fed up with the way things had gone a few years before. And I think now he's in, sometimes he looks like a rabbit stuck in the headlights because a lot has hit him when you think of the two wars and the things that he's having to deal with as well. But he looks very uneasy sometimes as if he's not really sure he knows what he's doing*

**Marilyn, retired, Aldershot, Labour to undecided**

*I think he's done really well in a short space of time considering. Can you imagine dealing with Trump? Can you imagine dealing with Trump who's pretty much a child? And the thing is, I think somebody mentioned we have to be strong and stand up for what you believe. I think sometimes the government are in a position where they can't for the results, so they get the win. So I think he's done a lot of*

### Keir Starmer's net approval rating spiked after the Oval Office Fallout

Net approval rating



Source: More in Common • Proportion who think each person is doing a "somewhat good" or "very good" job, minus those who think they are doing a "somewhat bad" or "very bad" job  
Last fieldwork: 27 - 30 June 2025

*arse licking with America, but he's had to."*

**Sean, project manager, Heywood, Labour to Reform switcher**

Britons broadly approve of Starmer's approach to the US President: in March, 48 per cent of Britons thought he was doing a good job at acting as a 'bridge' between the US and Europe during tumultuous negotiations over Ukraine, compared to only 16 per cent who disapproved of his performance.

Many Britons see the US President as a source of instability and even global peril: 66 per cent think his return to the White House has been bad for the world, and 59 per cent think it's been bad for the UK. In this context, many find the Prime Minister's sober tone reassuring.

Despite approval of Keir Starmer's diplomatic balancing, there is some appetite for him to demonstrate a greater level of toughness in transatlantic relations. Some Britons worry about him appearing weak next to Donald Trump. And while many think that he strikes the right balance, more than a third of Britons (36 per cent) think the Prime Minister is too friendly to the US President.

**The British public is split on whether Keir Starmer is being too friendly or too hostile to President Trump**

For these leaders, would you say they are too friendly or too hostile to Donald Trump, or getting the balance about right?

● Far too friendly ● Too friendly ● Getting the balance about right ● Don't know ● Too hostile ● Far too hostile



Source: More in Common, April 2025

However despite some praise for Keir Starmer's performance on the world stage, there is a growing unease that it may be distracting from domestic politics: in focus groups, some feel that the Prime Minister is spending too much time abroad - more concerned about performing for newspapers and social media while neglecting communities within the UK.

*It just seems to me like over the past couple of weeks he is in America or he is flown somewhere else. He is going to all these different places, but there's a lot he should*

*be doing here. I get that that's necessary, but I just think he's spending too much time in other countries when there's bigger problems at home .*

**Jade, full-time mum, Heywood and Middleton, Labour Loyalist**

*There are things that need addressing in the here and now and I think it kind of comes across the wrong way at times that his image is more important and on these relationships with people like Donald Trump, which is obviously difficult person to navigate and very unpredictable. So you do want to have that relationship there, but it does feel like it's all media and that not enough time making the decisions affect.*

**Amy, social worker, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Reform Switcher**

## **Everyday exhaustion undermining faith in the social contract**

While many of the mistakes the public believe the Government have made relate to major policy and fiscal decisions, part of the broader reason why confidence in the government has dropped so dramatically is the sense of everyday exhaustion in Britain today.

In conversation after conversation, the public tell us about the everyday frictions and tensions that make daily life more difficult. The 8am phone queue to get a GP appointment, potholes making trips to work and the shop more challenging and expensive, anti-social behaviour making parks and green spaces 'no-go areas', the list goes on. The clearest example of life becoming more difficult is the fact that inflation has made the weekly shop an enduring stress for many people.

Their disillusionment with politics stems from a sense that politicians simply do not get it or understand how tough life is for ordinary people and what they hear them talk about on the news feels both remote and irrelevant to their lives.

*They don't live in the real world . They just don't care. They don't understand how people have to live.*

**Colin, retired, North Yorkshire, Labour to undecided**

Most young people now think that buying a home is unachievable, and those approaching retirement age now assume they'll have to keep working far longer than they expected - rites of passage that were once taken for granted, many now consider to be out of reach.

This sense of pessimism is often most palpable among Britons over the age of 50: those who had expected to be more secure by this stage in life and yet still find themselves renting their home, and working unstable or insecure jobs. For many, this has fundamentally

undermined their trust in the system: bringing into question the idea that hard work and contribution is rewarded or respected.

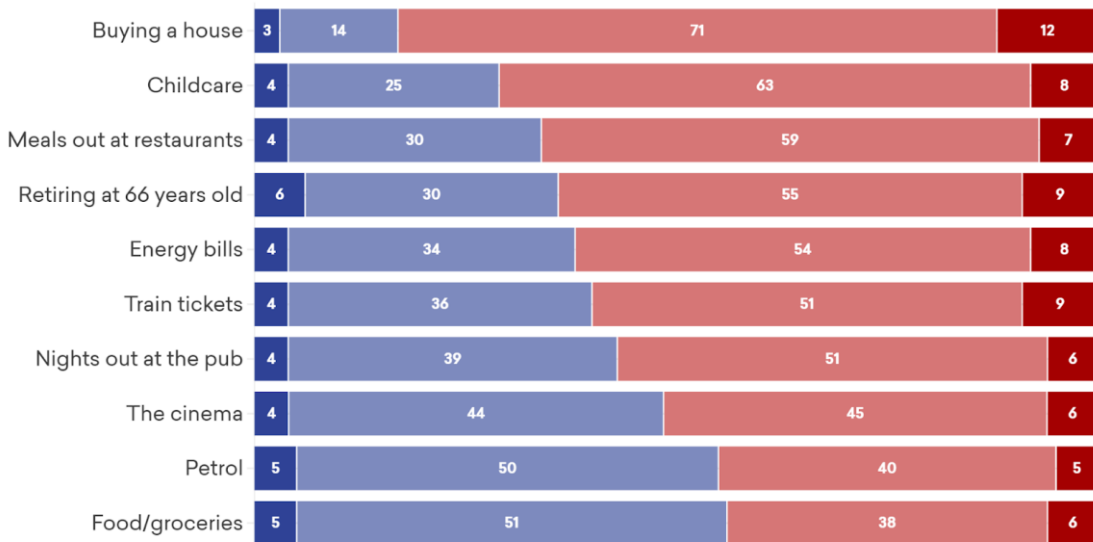
*The way we're living now, it's ridiculous. I'm getting up at my age still at half past four in the morning, going to work. I've got a mortgage and stuff on my own, but I don't live now. I just survive. That's how I feel. And I think, I know it sounds awful, but people are coming in where I work and they don't work and they're better off than me. So I think this is just not life anymore. So I think we do need a change.*

**Vicky, Supermarket Assistant, Runcorn, Labour to Reform switcher**

**Most Britons now seem home ownership, childcare, and meals out as unaffordable**

For each of the following, please indicate to what extent you think they are currently affordable in the UK:

- Affordable for everybody
- Affordable for most people
- Unaffordable for most people
- Unaffordable for everybody



Source: More in Common June 2025

The sense that life in Britain has become broken and unaffordable isn't just tied to major life milestones. More often, it is the accumulation of small, everyday costs that now feel out of reach. In focus groups, people often describe the feeling of 'working to live and living to work'. With so much of their income going towards essentials, many Britons report that there's nothing left at the end of the month for 'the fun stuff', like a meal out with friends or a trip to the cinema.

These small things may seem trivial on their own, but together they create a powerful sense of scarcity – one that is clearly driving a loss of faith in the system.

In focus groups, this sense of personal struggle feeds directly into political disillusionment. The cost of living crisis has reinforced the belief that hard work no longer guarantees a decent life. Reform's vote share is significantly higher, and Labour's lower, among those

who say they can no longer afford the occasional takeaway, a trip to the cinema, or a yearly holiday.

*Even the pictures to go there, you need the mortgage for that now,*

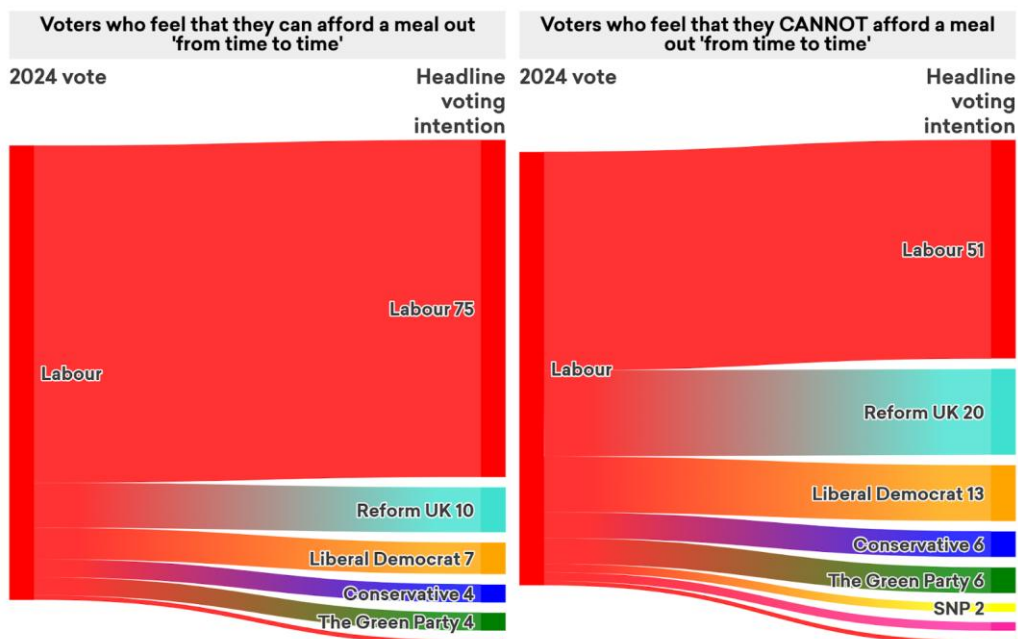
**Dave, builder, Helsby, Labour to Reform switcher**

*I think it affects the fun things that you want to do because your money's all going on your bills, and all the boring stuff like food and gas and 'lecky and petrol that come to the end of it and go, well what have we got money to do for ourselves now? Where can we go? What can we do without spending a fortune?*

**Amy, primary school teacher, Runcorn, Labour to Reform switcher**

**Labour voters who feel they can't afford to eat out are more likely to have abandoned the party**

Comparing the current voting intention of 2024 Labour voters, based on whether they feel they can afford a meal out 'from time to time'



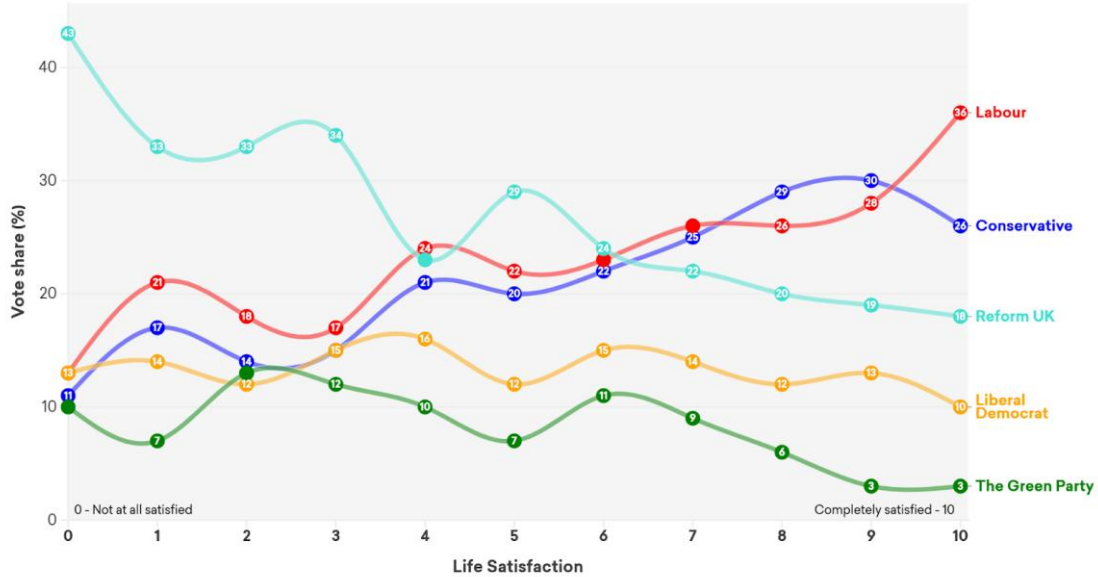
Source: More in Common June 2025

It follows from this that support for Reform UK is tied to low life satisfaction, while support for Labour is highest among those who are most content. Forty-one per cent of Reform voters and 44 per cent of Green voters expect to have a less comfortable life than their parents, compared to just 29 per cent of the general public.

## Reform UK leads among those most dissatisfied with their lives

### Headline voting intention by life satisfaction

How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?



Source: More in Common, April 2025

## Choosing the wrong groups to fill the ‘black hole’

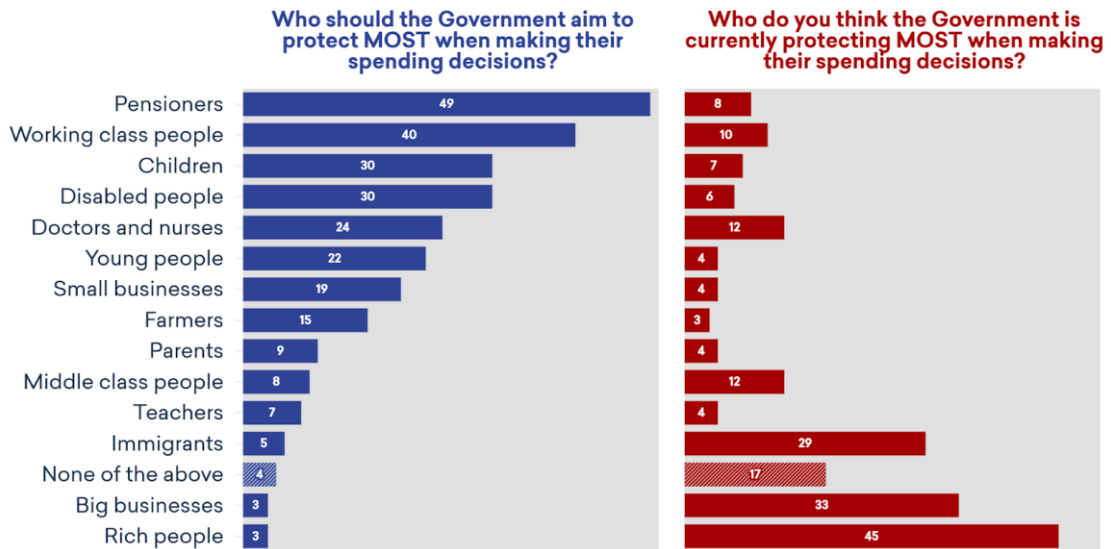
The public are not naive about the economic challenges facing the country and a majority of Britons believe that both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are willing to make unpopular decisions to get Britain back on track. However, the negative reaction to the winter fuel allowance is part of a broader concern - that the government is filling the country’s economic black hole on the backs of the wrong people. From pensioners and the winter fuel allowance, the disabled and changes to PIPs, farmers inheritance tax and small business with the Employers NICS rise - the public think the government are making the most vulnerable or least able to bear the wrong burden to pay for the ‘black hole’.

Asked to rank which groups the Government should aim to protect in their spending decisions, Britons choose pensioners (49 per cent) and working class people (40 per cent). Yet only 8 per cent think the Government are actually protecting pensioners, and just 10 per cent think they are protecting the working class.

In fact, the public’s list of groups they feel should be protected by the Government is inverse to the groups they feel are being protected: they are most likely to say that the Government is protecting rich people (45 per cent) and big business (33 per cent) - the two groups the public are least likely to say they should be protecting.

**People think the government is protecting the wrong groups in their spending decisions**

(Select up to three)



More in Common • June 2025  
Excluding "other" (1% and 4%)

*I don't feel like they respect us at all. I think from what Jamie was just saying, taking money off people with benefits and making life harder for them, but still letting the Energy Giants have huge bonuses every year. It just seems like they're at the wrong end of what it is because a hundred pounds saved from a person who's working class compared to the couple of grand that essentially those people wouldn't necessarily miss. Whereas a hundred pound the minute is like a week's food show up or whatever.*

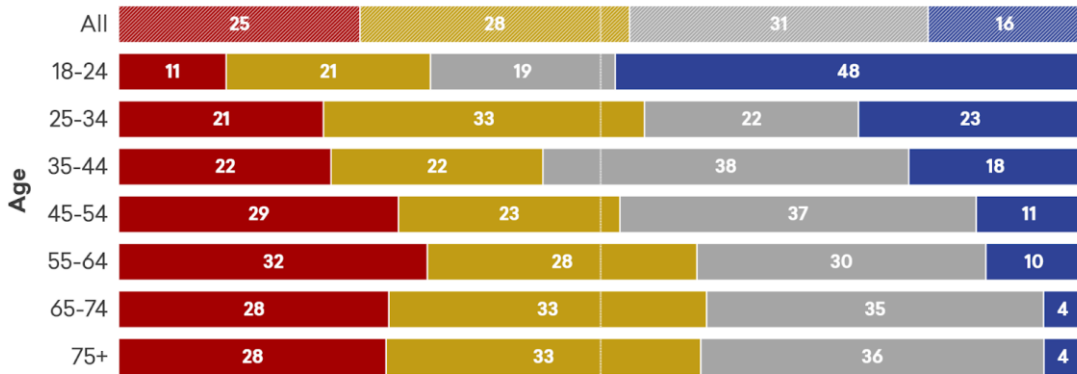
**Tim, teacher, Middleton, Labour to Reform Switcher**

Asked whether the Government is spending too much on old people or young people, the public are a little more likely to say too much money is spent on young people (25 per cent) than older people (16 per cent). Although many (28 per cent) think the government gets the balance right and a significant minority say they don't know.

**Those under the age of 18 tend to think the government spends too much on older people, but other age groups are split**

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- The government spends too much money on things for younger people
- The government gets the balance right between spending on old and young people
- Don't know
- The government spends too much money on things for older people



Source: More in Common • June 2025

But despite debates around intergenerational fairness that pitch young people and old people against each other (particularly with debates on the Winter Fuel Allowance), it's clear that few Britons see this as a contest between the two. Most point to struggles of young and old people as evidence that the system isn't working for anyone

Asked about spending on young and older people, a plurality across most age groups say that not enough is spent on both: 46 per cent say not enough is spent on young people and 57 per cent not enough on older people.

*Wherever you look around, there's no hope. The youngsters are suffering, they're working and they can't even afford their rent without living off the bank of mom and dad. Nowadays, you're retired but you're worrying about your adult children that can't afford to pay their way no matter how hard they're working. It's all a mess.*

Angela, retired, Worthing, Labour to Conservative switcher

### Britons think the government should focus more on the concerns of both older and younger people

Would you say the government focuses too much or not enough on the concerns of [older/younger] people in Britain?

● Far too much ● Too much ● About the right amount ● Not enough ● Not nearly enough



Source: More in Common • June 2025

The perception of unfairness - and that the government is targeting the vulnerable - was a key reason why proposed changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) were so unpopular: by a margin of 52 per cent to 29 per cent, Britons believe that the majority of people who claim disability-related benefits genuinely need the support that they receive.

Notably, while views of welfare are usually politically polarised, there was more of a consensus around PIP: while Labour's own voters were the most strongly in support of a U-turn on the decision to limit eligibility for the benefits, every voter group was significantly more likely to support than oppose the PIP reforms. In focus groups, PIP often emerges alongside the Winter Fuel Allowance as evidence of a government that is 'targeting the vulnerable'. The impact of the debate around PIP and subsequent rebellions is that the public say they do not trust the Government when it comes to protecting the disabled.

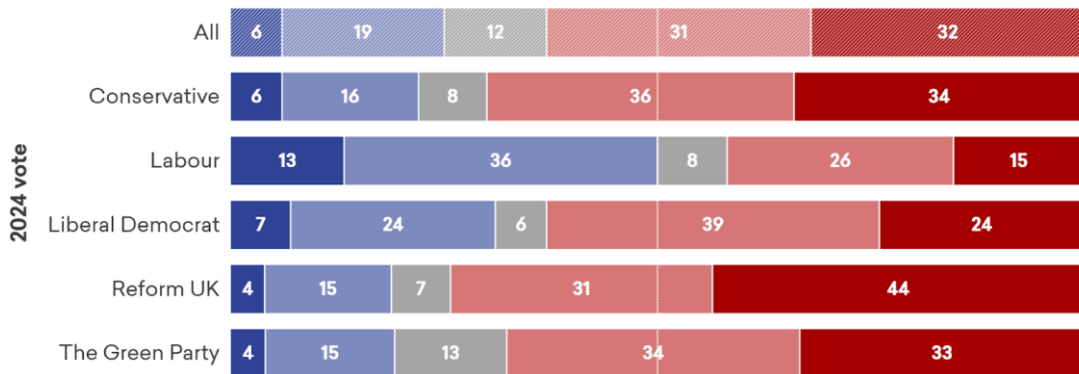
*It's the same kind of thing as the Conservatives, like penalising people who are old, penalising people who are disabled. I'm disabled myself - they're penalising the most vulnerable in society.*

**Rachel, full-time mum, Runcorn, Labour to Reform switcher**

### Few trust the government to be fair on disability benefits

To what extent do you trust the Government to make fair decisions about who qualifies for disability benefits?

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not very much ● Not at all



Source: More in Common • June 2025

### A failure to deliver on the respect agenda

The Prime Minister made respect for the contribution of ordinary people a key part of his preparation for government and early narrative in government. In the last few years, More in Common and the UCL Policy Lab research has found a clear demand across the country for an approach to politics and civic life that shows greater respect for the contribution of ordinary people. In his most recent Labour Party conference speech, the Prime Minister promised to put respect and service “into the bones” of Britain’s institutions.

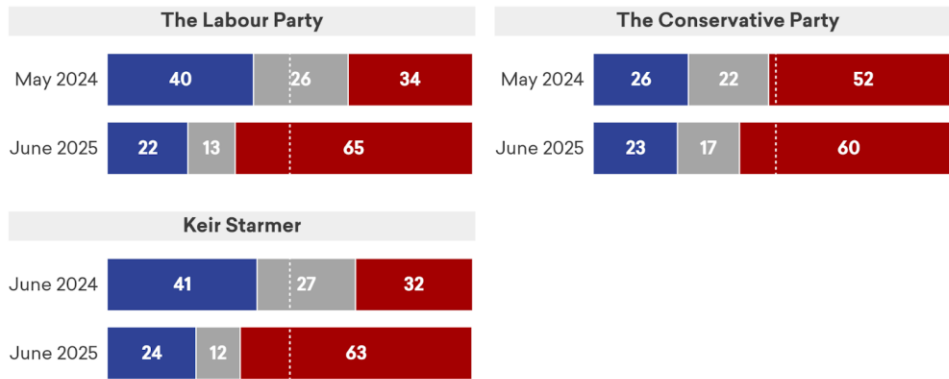
During the General Election campaign, the Labour Party had some success in meeting the public appetite for a new politics of respect: in June 2024, by a margin of 40 per cent to 34 per cent, Britons were more likely to say that the Labour Party respected people like them, than to say that they did not. In contrast, Britons were twice as likely to say that the Conservatives did not respect them (52 per cent) than to say that they did (26 per cent).

Since the election, this sense of respect has collapsed: the proportion of Britons who feel that the Labour Party disrespects them has nearly doubled, from just over a third to 65 per cent. Asked about Keir Starmer personally, 63 per cent say he lacks respect for them, an increase of 31 percentage points since June 2024.

### Britons no longer think Keir Starmer or his party respect them

Thinking about the following people and organisations in Britain today, do you think they respect people like you?

- Respects people like me
- Don't know
- Does not respect people like me

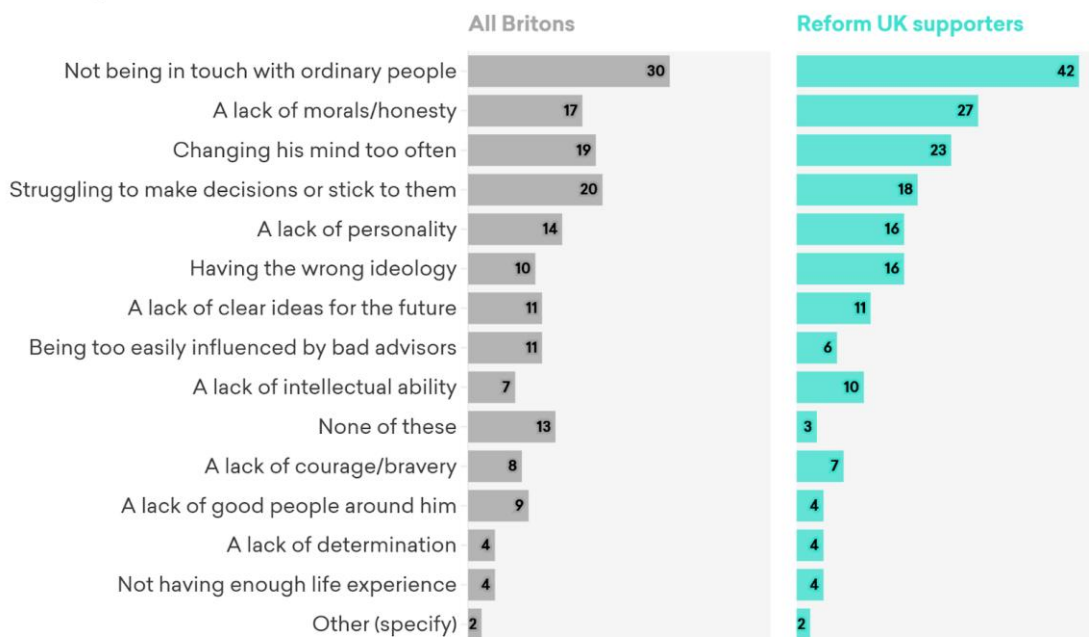


More in Common • May and June 2024, June 2025

The politics of respect is a key lens through which the public relate to their political leaders. When asked what holds the Prime Minister back, the top response is 'not being in touch with ordinary people', selected by 30 per cent of Britons and 42 per cent of Reform's current supporters. It's clear that a perceived lack of respect is one of the factors that has most alienated people from this government.

### The public thinks being out of touch is Keir Starmer's greatest weakness

When you think about Keir Starmer, which of the following do you think holds him back the most? Select up to two.



More in Common • June 2025

What's more, this sense of disrespect is not evenly distributed. Those with fewer years of formal education are far more likely to say that the Labour Government lacks respect for them. Those with a university degree are more than twice as likely (36 per cent) to feel respected by Labour than those without a degree (16 per cent).

Older Britons also feel a sense that the Labour Party doesn't respect people like them: more than three quarters of those above the age of 65 believe that the party doesn't respect them, compared to less than half of those under the age of 30.

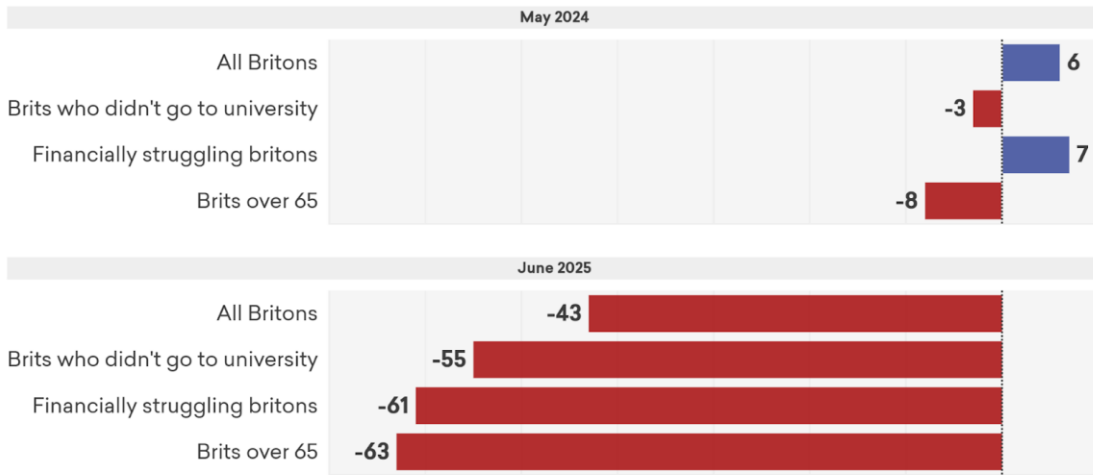
*I think that personally to the government, people in places like Heywood and Middleton and Rochdale, we are just, we'll tell you what we think you want to hear, so you vote for us and then they don't follow through. I don't think Starmer, the government, Labour, I don't think they understand working class people and I think there needs to be a big drive for them to actually understand the people that are voting for them and understand our needs properly.*

*Jade, full-time mum, Heywood and Middleton, Labour Loyalist*

**Britons who are older, financially struggling, or didn't go to university are more likely to feel that Labour has lost respect for them**

Thinking about the [the Labour Party], do you think they respect people like you?

**Net respect** (proportion who think the Labour Party respects them, minus the proportion who think that the Labour Party does not support them)



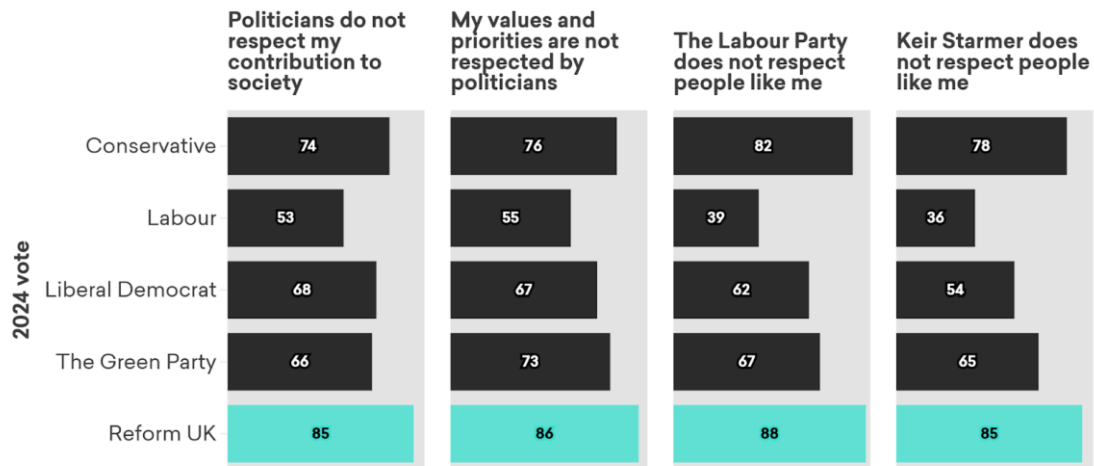
Source: More in Common • June 2025

But this perceived lack of respect is crucially not limited to the Labour government. Since the general election, the number of Britons who feel that politicians in general lack respect for them has grown. The proportion who believe politicians do not respect their contribution to society has risen by 12 points, and the proportion who think that their values and priorities are disrespected by politicians has risen by 13 points.

It's clear that this lack of respect is a driving force behind people's turn away from the political mainstream and desire to find something new: Reform supporters are the most likely voter groups to feel that their values, priorities and contributions to society are not respected by politicians.

### Reform voters are most likely to feel disrespected by politicians

Proportion who agree with each statement



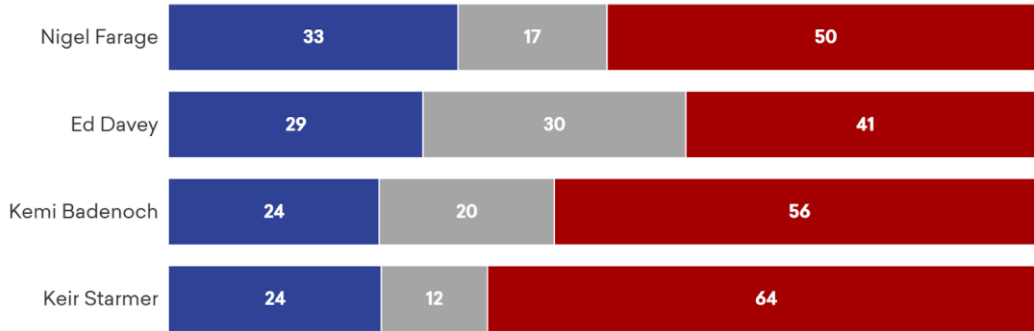
Source: More in Common, June 2025

In fact, in the context of a broader crisis of trust in politicians, respect is one issue where Reform UK performs better than others: a third of Britons say they think Nigel Farage respects people like them, compared to only a quarter (24 per cent) who say the same about Keir Starmer or Kemi Badenoch. Similarly, less than half of Britons (48 per cent) say Reform UK lacks respect for them, compared to strong majorities who feel that way about the two main parties.

**Few Britons feel that any party leaders respect them, but they are most likely to think that Nigel Farage does**

The Labour government has now been in power for a year. In that time, have they performed better or worse than you expected

● Respects people like me ● Don't know ● Doesn't respect people like me



Source: More in Common • June 2025

**What's the point of a Labour government?**

Closely aligned with the idea of respect, is the question of who the Labour Party are for: three in five Britons believe that Labour was once the party of the working class, but is not anymore. Part of the explanation why the public have soured on Labour is that the public are not seeing them do the things that they expect a Labour Government to do.

**Three in five say Labour is no longer the party of the working class**

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



Source: More in Common • June 2025

Much ink has been spilled over the lack of a clear story or narrative from the government about what it is for - indeed, the Prime Minister admitted in interviews to coincide with the

one year anniversary of the election that the government lacked a central story about what the change the government was trying to achieve across the country.

But the public are clear on what they think that story should be - helping the working class, tackling poverty and improving public services are what the public think Labour looks like at its best.

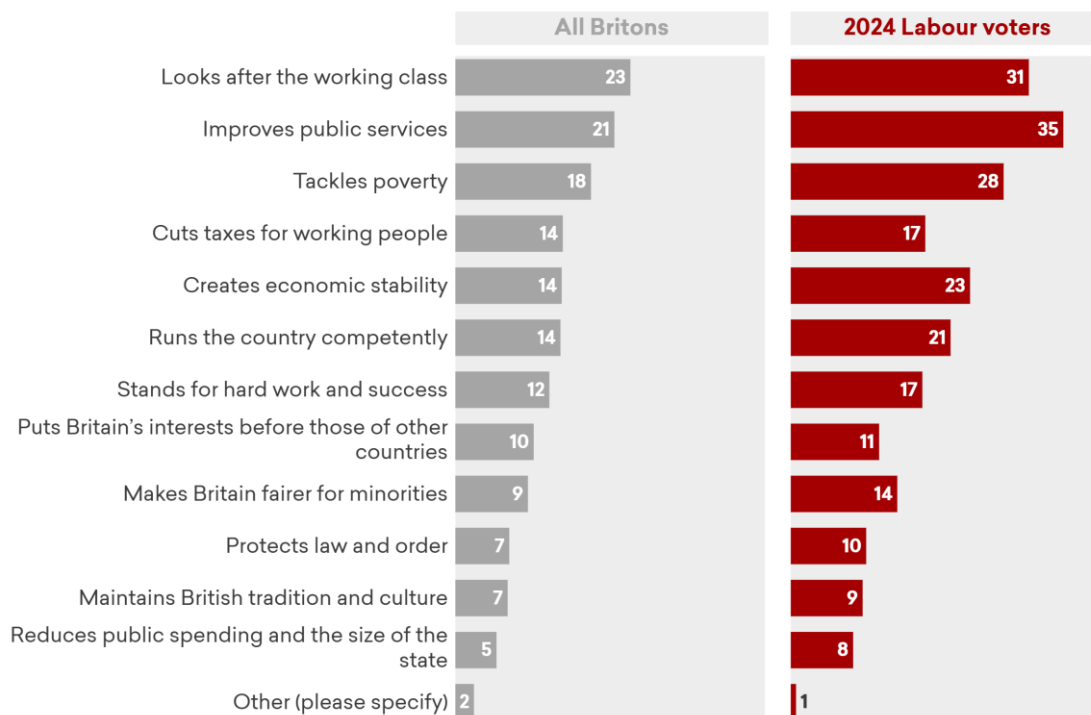
In focus group conversations, Labour voters share their frustration with a party they feel has lost contact with the everyday lives of Britons. Loyal long-term Labour voters are often among the most critical, feeling that this government does not 'feel like a Labour government'.

*I didn't particularly want to vote Labour this time, but I knew how close it was going to be, that it was probably going to be a swing vote. So I did use to be a Labour party member, but I've lost all faith in them.*

*Susie, admin clerk, Runcorn, Labour loyalist*

**Labour at its best...** looks after the working class, improves public services and tackles poverty

When the Labour Party is at its best, what does it do?



## Chapter three: What's next?

A year is a long time in politics.

If the past few years have taught us anything it's that three or four years out from the next General Election the political weather will change again and likely dramatically.

When asked whether it is possible that Labour wins the next general election - just over a third of the public (35 per cent) think it is - however the public are more than five times more likely to say that it is impossible that they'll win than certain that they'll win.

Turning the Government's prospects around requires both a clear focus on both delivery and respect to win back the voters the government has lost in the past year.

### **The who - A Labour defectors strategy**

The first part of turning the government's fortunes around is acknowledging that voters have defected to both the right and the left of the party and a recovery will not involve picking or prioritising one side or another, but rather adopting policies that focus on people's every day concerns and rebuild a broad coalition around fixing the NHS, improving local high streets, controlling migration, tackling climate change and addressing the cost of living.

#### **Progressive defectors**

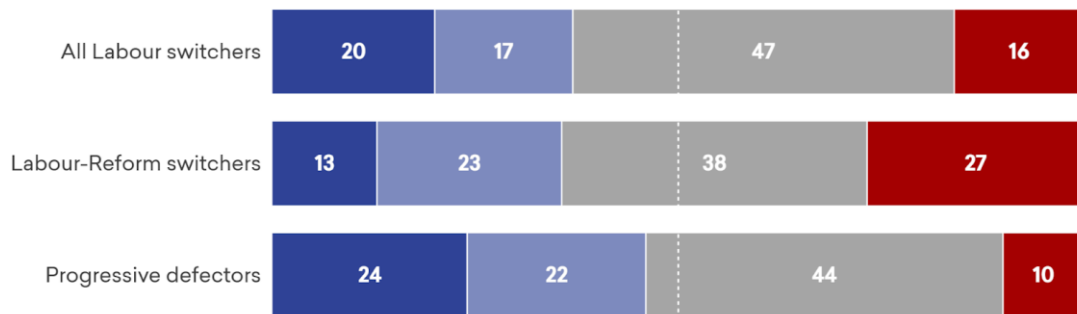
Labour has lost thirteen per cent of its 2024 voters to parties on the left of politics - including the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party, as well as the SNP and Plaid Cymru in Scotland and Wales.

Of all those who have abandoned the party in the past year, those who have defected to the Left are the most likely to consider returning. Of those who voted Labour in 2024, (24 per cent) say that they would consider coming back to Labour within the next four years, compared to only 13 per cent of Labour to Reform switchers. Similarly more than a quarter of Labour to Reform switchers say it will take more than a decade before they consider voting Labour again, compared to only 10 per cent of their progressive defectors. In this context, it seems as though it will be easier in the first instance to re-engage Labour's defectors on the Left.

### A quarter of Labour's progressive defectors would consider returning to the party during this Parliament

You said you voted for Labour at the General Election, but would not vote for them if an election were held tomorrow. How long do you think it will be, if ever, before you consider voting Labour again?

● Within the next four years ● Five to ten years ● Don't know ● More than ten years



More in Common • June 2025  
 ('Progressive defectors' refers to 2024 Labour voters who currently support the Green Party, Liberal Democrats, SNP or Plaid Cymru)

What's more, many of these defectors would consider tactically voting for Labour to keep Reform out. Two thirds of both Liberal Democrat (65 per cent) and Green voters (65 per cent) say they would 'probably' or 'definitely' vote Labour if their constituency was a close race between Labour and Reform UK.

*I didn't particularly want to vote Labour this time, but I knew how close it was going to be, that it was probably going to be a swing vote. So I did used to be a Labour party member, but I've lost all faith in them.*

Susie, admin clerk, Runcorn, Labour loyalist

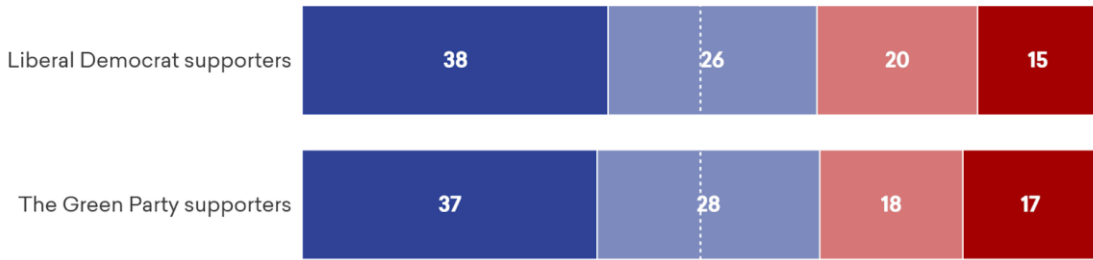
*I would take a country under labour, however bad it may be, over the car crash that would be Reform. So I don't care how good their economic propositions are, it's just not worth it to me.*

Florence, admin officer, Northampton

### Most Green and Liberal Democrat voters would consider voting Labour to keep out Reform

You said you would vote for the Green Party in a General Election. If in your constituency, it was likely to be a very close race between Labour and Reform UK, would you consider voting for Labour to stop Reform UK from winning?

- I would definitely vote Labour to stop Reform UK
- I would probably vote Labour to stop Reform UK
- I would probably not vote Labour to stop Reform UK
- I would definitely not vote Labour to stop Reform UK



More in Common • June 2025

Asked what the government should focus on over the next four years, the main priorities of Labour’s progressive defectors are cutting NHS waiting lists (selected by 49 per cent) and tackling poverty (37 per cent). For this group, the government’s climbdown on disability-related benefits is likely to be a step in the right direction, but it will take more than reversals to appeal to these voters.

Twenty-eight per cent of this group say that Labour should prioritise tackling climate change.

What’s more it is clear from focus group conversations with Labour voters that building a narrative around the green transition is a potential glue that can unite much of their 2024 coalition. Pitching the pivot towards clean energy both as a solution to tackling climate change, but also providing greater energy security and opportunities for economic development and employment opportunities, provides one of the best opportunities to glue together different parts of the Labour coalition - enthusing the left and reassuring the right.

Across Labour’s losses to parties of the left and Reform UK - interventionist economic stances, tackling energy bills and improving public service delivery are likely to deliver dividends.

### Labour to Reform switchers

It will be difficult for the government to maintain a parliamentary majority without some form of recovery with defectors to the right - particularly Reform UK. However, the government is likely to need a clearer strategy on which defectors are winnable and those which are not. Crudely speaking, these are split into those who originally voted Reform in the 2024 General Election and those who’ve switched to Reform since then.

For the first group, their approval of Farage is strong and they are excited about the prospect of him becoming Prime Minister. It is unlikely that these voters are likely to back Labour over the course of this Parliament and to the next election.

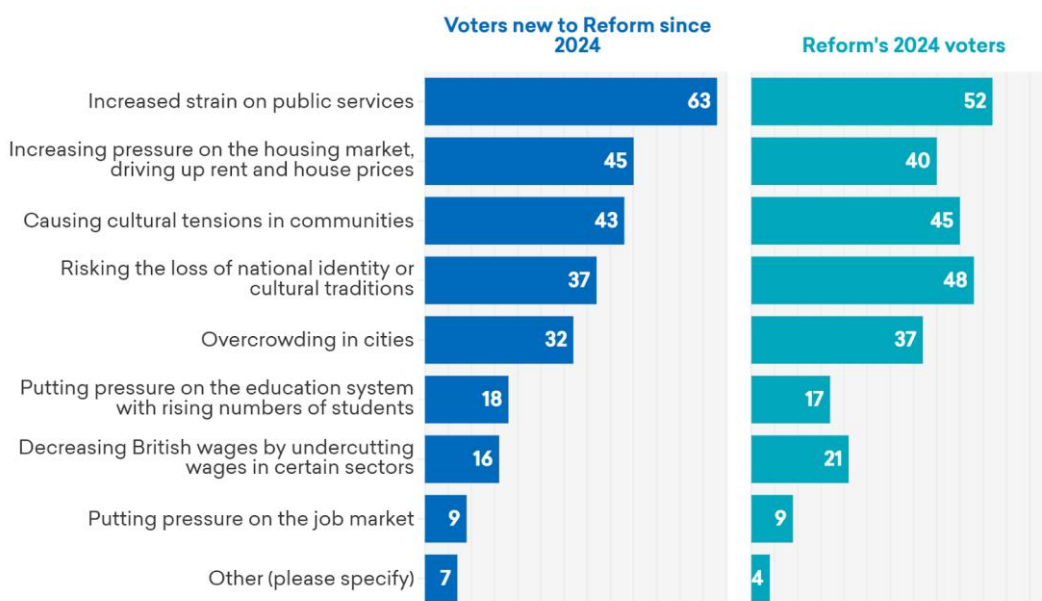
This also has clear policy implications. For example, immigration is a concern that unites the Labour coalition. Even the more progressive parts of Labour's coalition recognise the need for greater control of their borders. However any policy approach that looks like the creation of 'fortress Britain', which doesn't provide some safe route for those most genuinely in need, and help to attract the brightest and best to Britain, is both likely to alienate Labour's left flank, without making meaningful gains with those Reform voters who don't trust Labour on immigration.

While all Reform voters care about immigration, there are some differences in why Reform's new supporters and their 2024 base worry about immigration. Across the board, Reform voters are worried about the strain placed on public services by immigration, however the new Reform voters are more concerned about economic impacts such as pressure on the housing market, whereas Reform's 2024 supporters are more concerned about social impacts such as cultural tensions in communities and the loss of national identity.

This suggests that as much as overall numbers and reducing channel crossings will matter for Labour, it will be just as important to consider how to mitigate some of the negative impacts of immigration the Prime Minister talked about earlier this year, while also championing the benefits of a controlled migration policy that meets the country's needs.

### Reform voters' top concerns about immigration

Which of the following would you say are the main disadvantages of immigration to the UK? Select up to three.



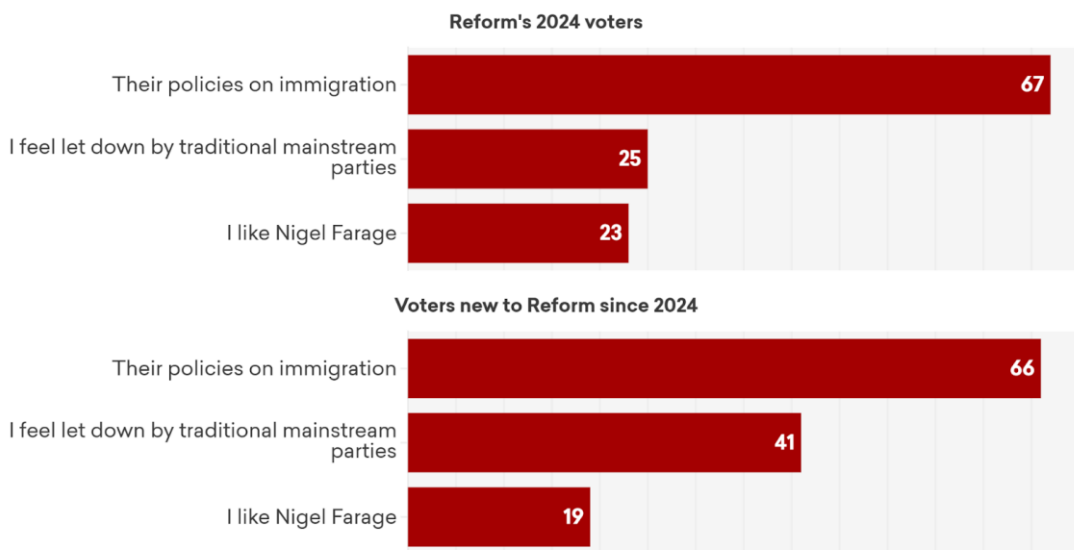
The differences between Reform’s new supporters and their 2024 voters are also visible in other reasons for voting for the party. Reform’s new voters are almost twice as likely to say they are voting for Reform because they feel let down by other parties. These voters are voting for Reform because they think the failings of the status quo are so strong they think it is time to ‘roll the dice’, even if Reform are unproven or risky.

Understanding this difference is important: Labour has little hope of winning over Reform’s core voters: only 6 per cent of those who voted Reform in the 2024 General Election say they would consider voting Labour in an election held today. However, among Labour to Reform switchers, 27 per cent would consider returning to Labour.

Winning back the ‘reachable’ Reform supporters will be challenging for Labour: they will need to overcome their deep sense of disillusionment with mainstream politics, and demonstrate real competence on migration. But mistaking Reform’s newer converts motivated by disillusionment for their more ideologically motivated base risks making building a unifying coalition harder.

**For Reform's new voters, disillusionment with other parties is a bigger driver of support**

In your view which of the following, if any, are the main reasons to vote for Reform UK?



Source: More in Common, May 2025 • Showing top three reasons only

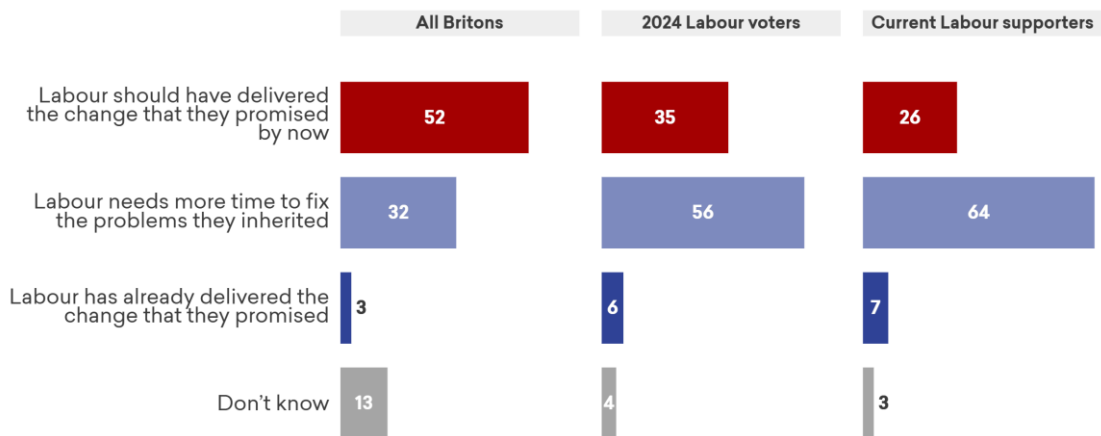
**Labour loyalists**

In addition to a defector strategy, the government needs an approach to its Labour Loyalists to keep them in the tent. Despite an obvious and necessary focus on its defectors, there are clear risks in the government taking its remaining voters for granted: half of current Labour supporters say they would consider voting for at least one other party on the left, while three in ten would consider voting for either Reform UK or the Conservatives.

As we explain in chapter one, the defining feature of Labour's remaining supporters is their belief that the government needs more time to deliver. Sixty four per cent of current Labour supporters believe that Labour needs more time to fix the problems they inherited, and only 7 per cent believe they have already delivered the change that they promised. Yet this patience is not unlimited - even among those most loyal Labour supporters. A significant majority of Labour's current supporters (78 per cent) say they expect Labour to have changed the country for the better within the next five years; 63 per cent expect them to have done so within two years.

**More than half of Britons say that Labour should have delivered the change they promised by now**

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



Source: More in Common • June 2025

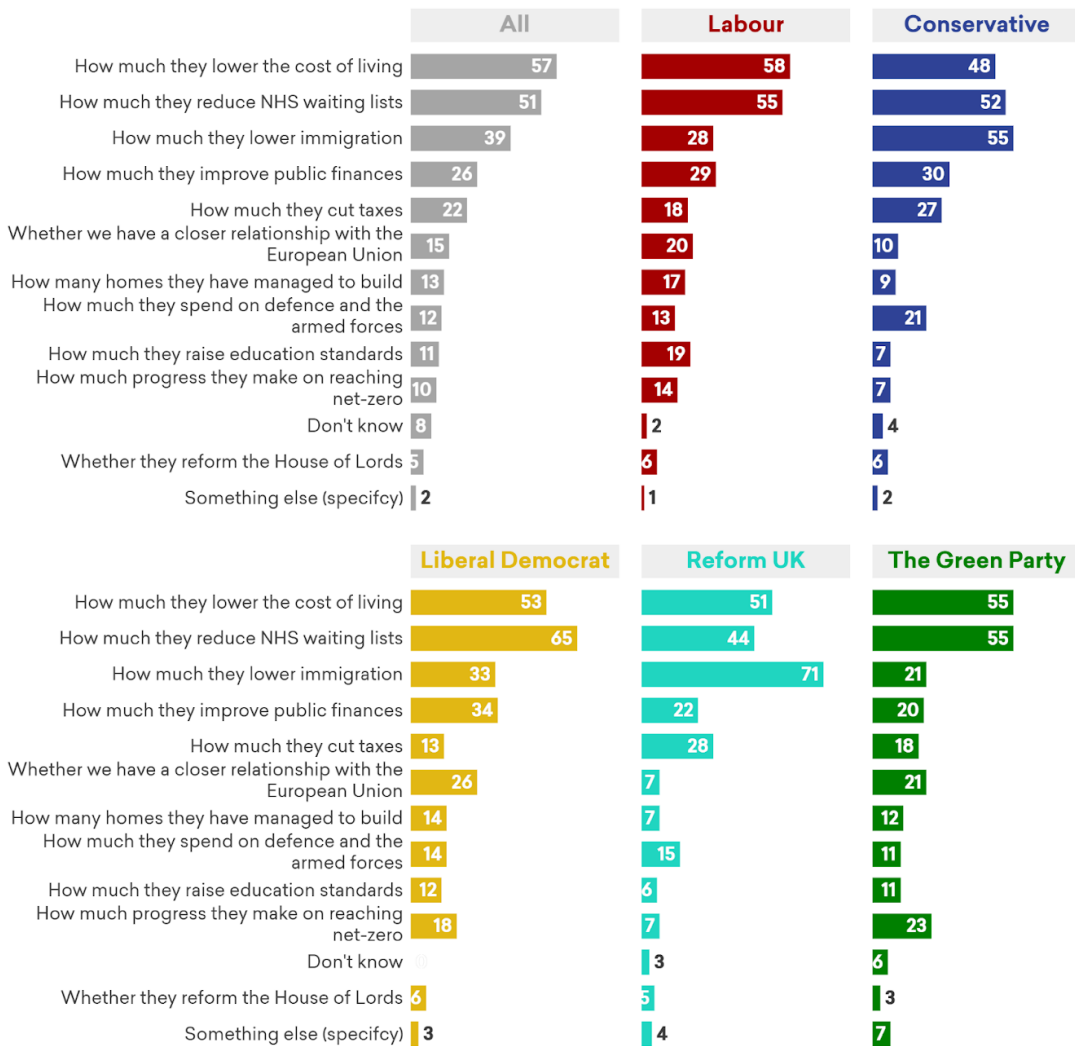
Continuing to demonstrate ambition on fixing the NHS, delivering protections such as workers and renters rights, and addressing what this group see as our biggest challenges - from tackling climate change to alleviating poverty - will be key to maintaining the support of Labour Loyalists.

## The how - what Britons want to see in the next four years

The main lesson that can be drawn from looking at Labour’s distinct voting blocs is that the surest route to making a success of their time in Government is delivering an agenda that appeals to voters across the country. While each voter group has different priorities, there are three core issues on which voters across politics will judge Labour: the cost of living, the NHS and immigration. Chief among these are the cost of living and the NHS, which are in the top three tests of the Labour government for every voter group.

### The NHS, the cost of living, and immigration are the public's top three priorities for Labour

Which of the following do you think will be most important for judging whether the Labour government has improved your everyday life in five years' time? (Select up to three)





## Refocus on the cost of living

The cost of living is the overriding concern of the public, and the lens through which Britons view many other policy areas, from energy to welfare, to migration. In focus group conversations, it becomes clear that Britons' financial struggles have played a role in cultivating an increasingly zero-sum attitude toward politics. If the government hopes to convince Britons that they are making meaningful progress on their other targets, tackling the cost of living crisis and making people feel better off is essential.

*(of channel crossings) If they're getting persecuted, how are they coming over in better clothes than I have?*

*Rob, welder, Hull, Labour to Reform switcher*

*I think the world is effed up, and I feel sorry for the kids growing up in it. You get more from Universal Credit than you do on minimum wage.*

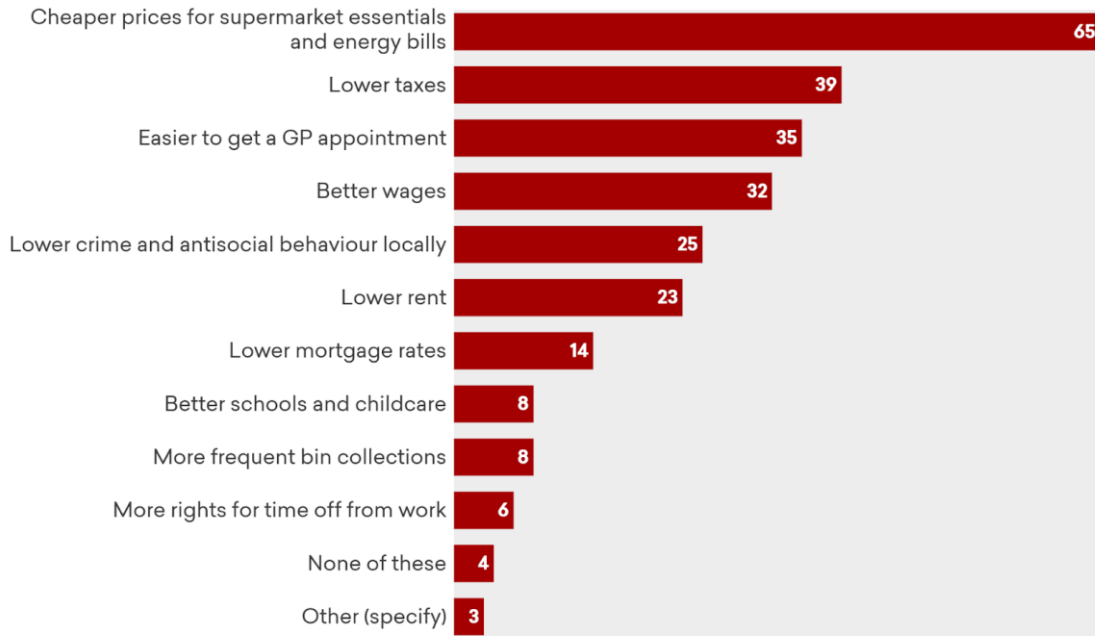
*Chelsea, social worker, Hull, Reform voter*

In order to deliver on Britons' expectations on the cost of living, the public will need to see a tangible difference in energy bills and supermarket prices. While rising wages are important (the minimum wage increase is seen as Labour's biggest achievement in government to date), it is unlikely to be felt by Britons unless it is matched by more stable bills and food costs. Two-thirds of Britons (65 per cent) select cheaper energy bills and supermarket essentials as one of the things that would most make their life easier, compared to 32 per cent who selected higher wages.

While, 31 per cent of Britons believe that average wages have increased in the past year, 78 per cent have noticed an increase in the cost of their weekly shop; meanwhile 64 per cent have noticed an increase in energy bills and 62 per cent have noticed an increase in the amount of tax they pay. Despite the increase in average wages, the public do not yet feel better off. Psychologically, higher wages will not be a substitute for progress on inflation.

### What would make Britons' lives easier?

Which of the following would make your life easier right now? Select up to three.



Source: More in Common • June 2025

### The immigration competence test

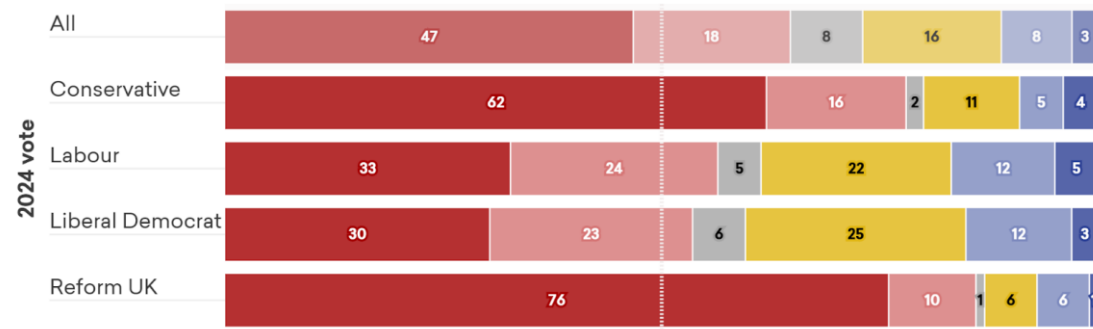
Immigration is a core priority to Britons, consistently ranking as the second or third most important issue for the public. And while greater control on migration is unlikely to be the issue that brings back those on Labour's left flank, it does matter to winning over the wider public.

Across politics, there is a consensus that net migration should come down: three in five Britons say the government should reduce the number of immigrants entering the country, and every voter group - including 2024 Labour voters - is more likely to say that the government should reduce than increase the numbers.

### Nearly two thirds of Britons want to see immigration reduced

Thinking about the number of immigrants the UK Government accepts into the country each year, which of the following comes closer to your view?

- Government should significantly reduce the numbers
- Government should slightly reduce the numbers
- Don't know
- Government should keep the number the same
- Government should slightly increase the numbers
- Government should significantly increase the numbers



Source: More in Common • May 2025

But while reducing net migration is a priority for Britons, it is channel crossings that concerns the public the most. By a margin of 74 per cent to 14 per cent, Britons believe that stopping small boats should be a higher priority than reducing net legal migration.

For many, repeated images of people arriving on UK shores reinforce the perception that Britain lacks control over its borders, that people can bypass the system, and that the rules aren't being enforced.

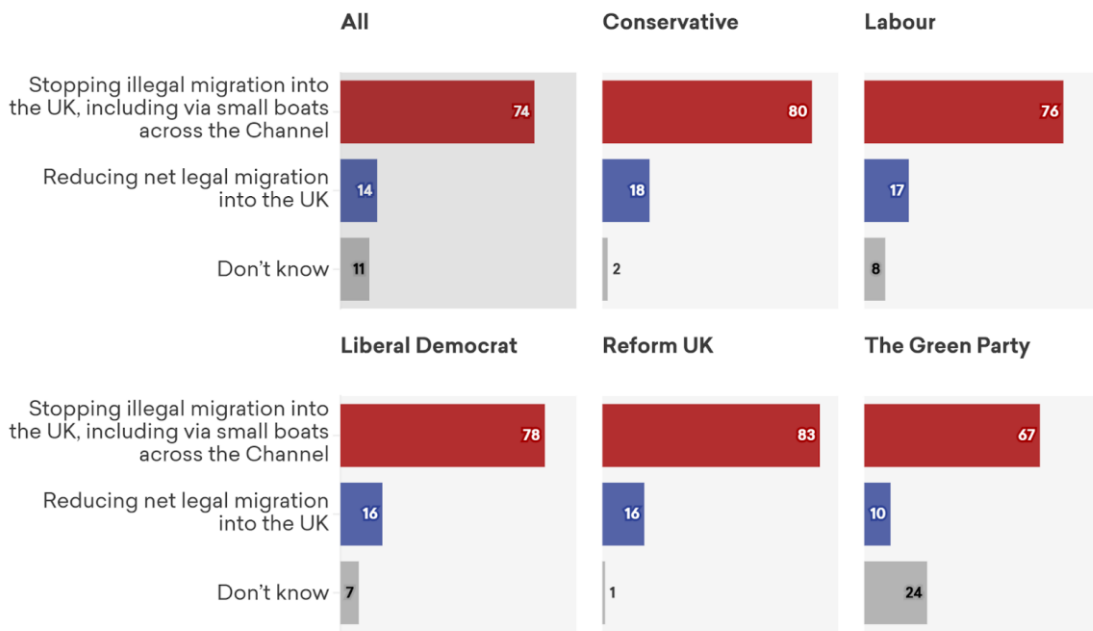
For many, the continuing use of asylum hotels in many communities across the country is a key indicator of a broken immigration system. In focus group after focus group, participants share concerns not only about the cost of the asylum hotel bill, but the disappointment at the closure of local hotels which used to be places for weddings or weekend treats. The money spent on asylum hotels has also become a benchmark - much like the Winter Fuel Allowance eligibility changes - through which the public judge many other spending decisions.

*It's really hard to take when you see how much other people are struggling and where people are having things cut and there's a hell of a lot of people in this country that are really, really struggling and to have it feels wrong to have people come in and jump the queue.*

**Paul, teacher, Peterborough**

**Across politics, Britons think that stopping the boats is more important than reducing net migration**

Which do you think should be the higher priority for the UK government?



Source: More in Common • May 2025

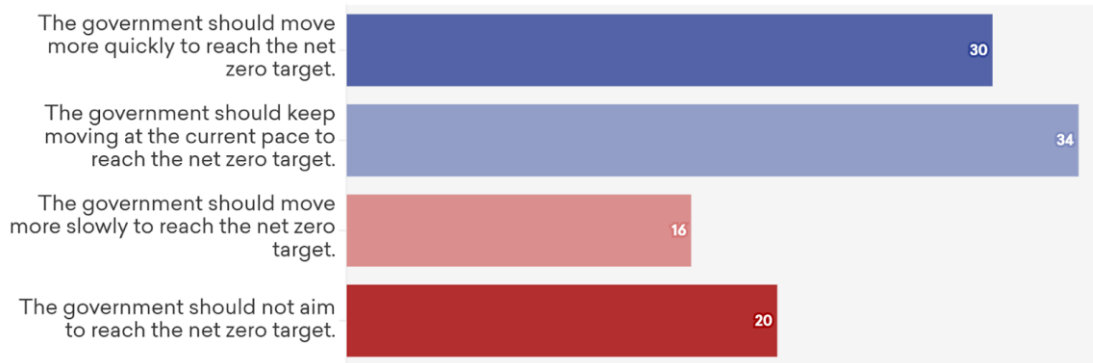
**Recommitting to a fair energy transition**

Labour’s success or failure will also depend on tangible progress on the energy transition. In their 2024 General Election campaign, the Labour Party successfully tied renewable energy policies to core issues such as energy security and the cost of living. The challenge lies in showing progress on transition - but also convincing the public it will be fair and benefit them..

The public have high expectations from the government when it comes to tackling the climate crisis: nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) think the government should keep its current pace or move more quickly to net zero.

### Britons more likely to say the government should go faster rather than slower to reach Net Zero

Thinking about the government's target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, which comes closest to your view?



Source: More in Common, June 2025

However, the past year has seen greater polarisation on climate change and net-zero, and support for the government's energy policies. While the Government should not interpret this as dwindling support among likely Labour voters, greater polarisation poses challenges for how the Government navigates its policies and messaging around transition.

The biggest challenge lies in convincing the public, who have become used to bearing the brunt of the cost of previous transitions - whether deindustrialisation or increasing globalisation - that the energy transition will be fair to them. 43 per cent think the home heating transition will be unfair to them, and three in ten think transition on public transport will be unfair to them; on both measures, economically insecure Britons are far more likely to think these transitions will be unfair to them. What's more, few Britons feel that climate policies have made tangible improvements to their lives - even if they still do think they will in the future. Telling a better story of the progress already made is also important - barely a quarter of Britons think the UK has made meaningful progress in reducing its emissions, when the reality is emissions have fallen by around 50 per cent since 1990.

In order to appeal to Labour's base - as well as Liberal Democrat and Green voters (among whom climate change ranks as a top issue), as well as cement broader support for the energy transition, the government will need to show how climate policies are fair, proportional and place the biggest burden on those who can most bear such burdens. An effective example is the government's tax on private jets, which seven in ten Britons (69 per cent) supported.

**/mean when I was hoping that they would be going in attacking, well not attacking but going after all these big companies, all the big firms going for windfall taxes on the energy companies. I know they did a little bit with regards to the non-dom**

status, but I was expecting them to do a lot more with regards to going after the big fish and looking after the normal working people. They said they were going to do that and then they come in, the first thing they do is take the heat and allowance off pensioners and stuff like that. So yeah, so initially they're not doing great.

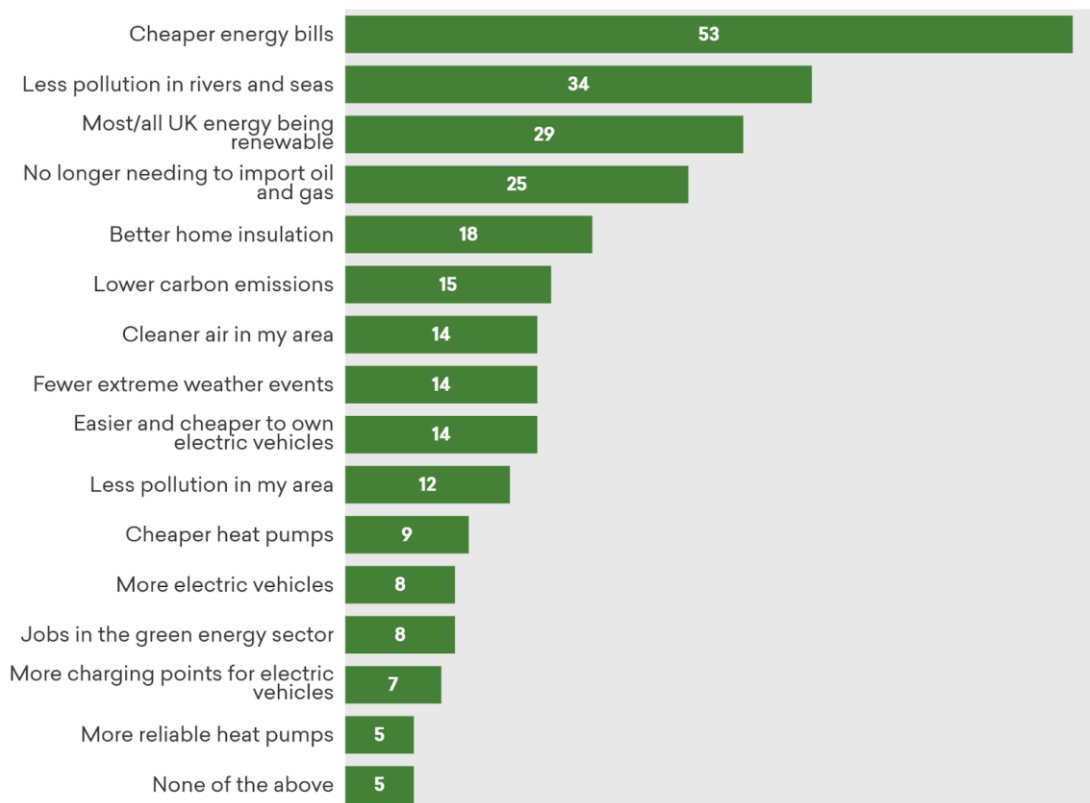
*Phil, housing officer, Heywood and Middleton, Labour to Reform switcher*

Asked what they would most like to see from the government's climate and energy policy, 'cheaper energy bills' wins by a landslide, selected by 53 per cent, compared to 15 per cent who would most like to see reduced carbon emissions.

Committing to a fair climate transition that also addresses energy security and offers economic opportunity can provide a powerful glue and macro narrative to unite Labour's coalition.

### What do Britons most want to see from climate policies?

Thinking about the government's climate and energy policy, which of the following results would you most like to see? Select up to three.



## Tackling everyday frictions

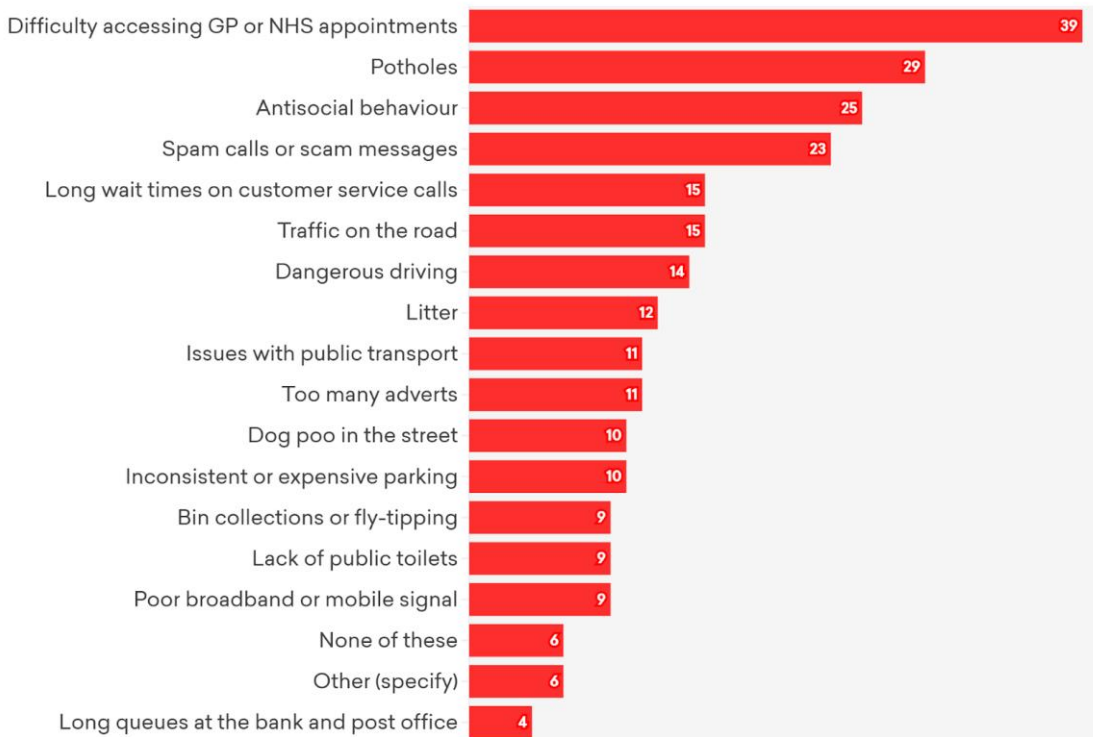
Beyond these large-scale policy challenges facing the government, Labour’s success will depend on finding solutions to the small tensions and frictions that affect Britons’ day-to-day lives.

The public’s belief that Britain is broken stems from personal experiences of expensive public services on their knees: spending a fortune on train tickets, waiting in an 8am queue to get a GP appointment, or being stuck on never-ending waiting lists. Asked about the biggest frustration in their daily life, the top answer is ‘difficulty accessing GP or NHS appointments’, followed by ‘potholes’.

One way Labour can demonstrate delivery is by targeting a handful of symbolic pain points – such as overhauling the 8am GP booking system or launching rapid response pothole repair teams. Addressing these issues will not only improve people’s lives, but can signal that the government is listening to ordinary people. Crucially, Labour would need to communicate these micro-deliveries alongside its larger missions.

### Difficulty accessing NHS appointments tops the list of Britons' frustrations

In your daily life, which of the following are your biggest frustrations? Select up to three.



## Conclusion

Alongside the end of Keir Starmer's first year in government, the first weekend of July marks another, overshadowed anniversary: on July 5 1945, Labour won their first General Election. When asked about Labour's biggest achievements over the past eighty years, the public places the NHS at the top, followed by the introduction of the minimum wage and the creation of the modern welfare state.

But alongside these achievements, there are signs of a growing malaise. Four in five Britons believe Labour was once the party of the working class, but three in five now say it no longer is. This sense of malaise is not limited to Labour. Few now feel respected by any of the main parties. This perceived lack of respect is fuelling the appeal of populist politicians who promise to put the working class first, and a growing number of Britons are ready to give up on the system altogether.

If our elected officials want to maintain public trust, and earn back public confidence, demonstrating respect must be the start. Paying lip service will not be enough; politicians must be prepared to radically rethink the relationship between people and the state, empowering local communities and focusing on the things that make a real difference to people's everyday lives.

It's not that the Government haven't made any progress in meeting that test in: from workers' and renters' rights and the minimum wage increase, to cracking down on water polluters and funding GB energy through a windfall tax, many of the government's policies are popular and align with the public's demand for respect. Yet they risk being overshadowed by spending decisions that are considered to be unfair.

The public don't view spending decisions in isolation; they see them as part of a wider story about the government's priorities and aims. For Britons, it's not just a matter of where the money goes, but which groups the government respects, and which groups they do not. In focus groups, people point to cuts that affect pensioners, disabled people, farmers, and contrast them with what they view as excessive spending on asylum hotels, or leniency towards tax-evading corporations and billionaires.

Additionally, if the government is asking the public to make sacrifices, it must meet them half way by showing competence and delivery. Over the next year of this Government Britons will need to see tangible progress on the areas that matter most to them: the cost of living, the NHS and immigration.

Alongside those major policy challenges the Government should address the smaller details of life in Britain that make it feel broken. It is through potholes, the long wait for a GP, the shoplifting or phonesnatching that people most often experience the sense of a country not working as it should.

Showing respect for ordinary people will be essential for the Labour Party if they hope to stay in office long enough to deliver the change they promised.