



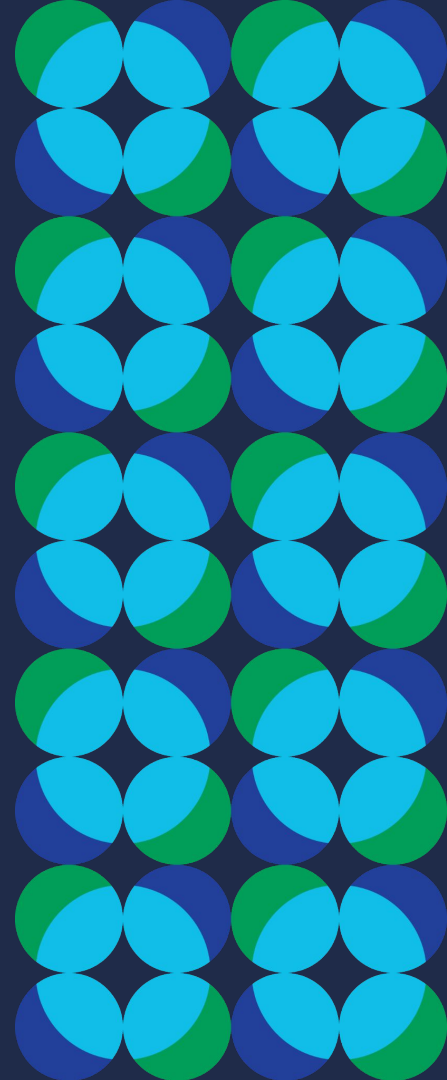
**More in  
Common**

# Turning the tide

Understanding Britain's coastal communities

**Research by More in Common for Associated British Ports**

*June 2026*



# Turning the tide: key takeaways

## People despair about the state of the country at the national and local level

The British public feel the country is broken and those in coastal communities are no different. National decline is fully felt in these areas, with the sense that things are getting worse. Many report that their local area is in a worse state now than it was ten years ago, and yet more worry that their community will be worse still in ten years' time if the country does not shift course from its current trajectory.

That said, both in focus groups and surveys, what came through is that those in coastal communities tend to feel that local decline, while severe, is not quite as bad as the decline nationally.

## These communities – especially young people within them – see a positive future for their area

Despite significant negativity around the current state of the local area, there is also a genuine strand of pride felt among coastal respondents, as well as optimism around the future of coastal communities. Many think it is possible that areas such as these will become economic powerhouses in the future, with genuine potential in the area and opportunities that have not yet been capitalised on.

Young people, in particular, feel positive about the potential of their local areas.

## The renewable transition is a part of that positivity

Those in coastal areas are clear on the importance of the sector to both their local area and the national economy. There is a strong support for clean energy investment in coastal areas.

While respondents are overwhelmingly positive on renewables, the support for clean energy investment stems from its economic and job prospects rather than a deep-seated belief in Net Zero.

A third of those in coastal areas – especially 18–34 year olds – believe that the Net Zero and clean energy transition will bring economic benefits to their area.

# Turning the tide: key takeaways

## Coastal communities feel like they don't get their fair share

There is a striking sense of unfairness among those living in coastal communities as to how much the area contributes versus how much it gets back. Coastal respondents are more likely to say that the economic benefits of work and business conducted in the area go elsewhere than to say they stay in the local area. They are also more likely to say the area contributes more to the country than it gets back, than to say the opposite.

It's important that any future investment in coastal areas actually benefits them, rather than ending up in the pockets of big businesses – a concern that came up often in focus groups.

## Brexit's impact divides ten years on, but its causes are still keenly felt

Ten years on from Britain's decision to leave the EU, coastal communities have mixed views on its impact. Most Remainers say the impact has been negative; many Leavers say there has been no impact at all.

As a result of the awareness among these communities of the local importance of trade, the barriers imposed by leaving the EU, the lack of workers, and impact on funding for local projects are keenly felt. Many in these communities feel the area would benefit from closer cooperation with the EU in areas it can benefit their communities, with young people particularly likely to expect benefits from cooperation. The hunger for change that contributed to the Brexit vote remains a decade on.

## Action is needed before young people are driven out of their communities

Despite their relative optimism as to the future of these areas, 18–34 year-olds are also far more likely to think young people want to leave their area than stay in it. The lack of job opportunities is considered the number one reason why.

Without further investment in the area, it's possible coastal communities will suffer a further exodus of their area's next generation of workers.

# A nation and community in decline



# Those in coastal communities feel worse about Britain overall than they do about their own area

Seven in ten coastal respondents feel the country is heading in the wrong direction (70 per cent), compared to just 14 per cent who think the country is heading in the right direction.

However, when thinking about their local area rather than the country as a whole, respondents are less pessimistic. More than four in ten (44 per cent) say their local area is heading in the wrong direction, while 16 per cent say it's heading in the right direction.

Local pessimism is concentrated among the financially insecure, who say their area is getting worse rather than better by ten to one (59 per cent to 6 per cent, against 37 and 24 per cent among the comfortable).

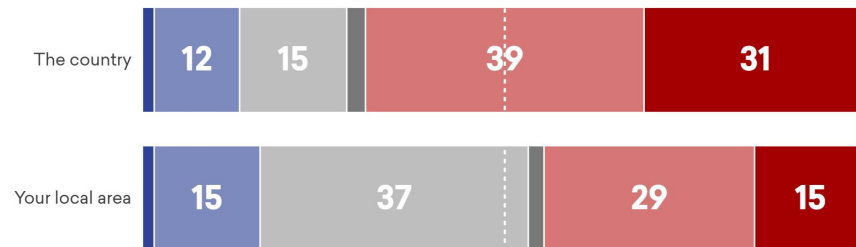
*I've always lived in Swansea and I don't experience the issues in Swansea that I see elsewhere in Britain. Everything says Britain's broken. I often say that myself. I don't think Swansea is broken, but I do think parts of the UK are massively broken.*

Len, 58, South Wales, Foster Carer

## Coastal dwellers tend to think that the country is headed in a worse direction than their local area

Generally speaking, do you think things in \_\_\_\_ are heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?

● Strongly in the right direction   
 ● Mostly in the right direction   
 ● Neither in the right nor wrong direction   
 ● Don't know   
 ● Mostly in the wrong direction   
 ● Strongly in the wrong direction



# The cost of living, NHS and declining high streets are seen as the biggest issues in coastal communities

Labour voters are the only party group to think their area is better now than ten years ago (35 per cent to 29 per cent), while all others are significantly more likely to say it is worse

The cost of living is comfortably seen to be the biggest challenge facing the local area (59 per cent), though there are also concerns around the NHS, high street, and local infrastructure.

When asked in what way the area had gotten worse in the past ten years, many first cite the decline of the local high street (44 per cent), the difficulty of getting medical appointments second (38 per cent) and a rise in anti-social behaviour third (36 per cent). When asked to describe their area, the term that came up most (nearly three times more often than anything else) was “run down”.

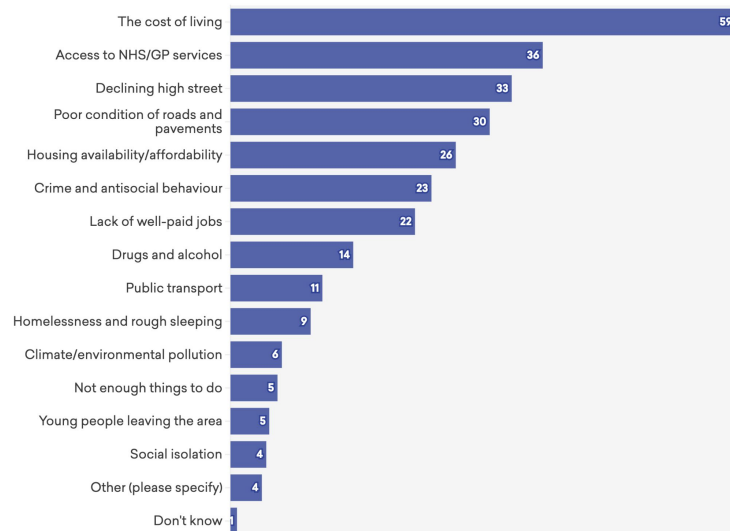


*You walk down the street and normally say hello to someone and they kind of look at you or even the local Tescos got a security guard and you're like, you shouldn't have to feel like you need a security guard in Tescos when you walk in.*

June, 53, Southampton, Private Dental Nurse

## The cost of living is seen as the biggest challenge facing coastal communities

Which of the following do you consider to be the biggest challenges facing your local area?



# Those in coastal areas feel misunderstood by Westminster...

There is a prevailing sense that coastal areas are misunderstood and ignored by those in power.

Nearly eight in ten (79 per cent) say the government in Westminster doesn't understand their area while just 2 per cent said it understands the area very well.

This points to the idea that these areas are ignored by those in power, a sentiment that locals certainly feel and express. Nearly half (46 per cent) of those surveyed say they feel like the area rarely comes up in public debate.

In focus groups, when asked whether those in power care about their area, many laughed at the ridiculousness of the idea before saying no.



*"I don't know whether you guys have heard of it, the Northern Powerhouse, right? That was supposed to be a big thing, but strangely enough, the lines and everything that they were supposed to be doing stop before they get anywhere near Hull or the Humber. Do you know what I mean? I just feel that over a number of years, and it's quite a lot of years, that the north, this area and above, has been basically forgotten because everything happens in London. And because we've become a service country mostly rather than a manufacturing country, effectively, the north has been basically tossed aside."*

**Martin, Retired, Kingston Upon Hull**

## ...contributing to a strong distrust in government

A significant number (79 per cent) of coastal respondents say they don't trust the UK government to act in the interest of the local area.

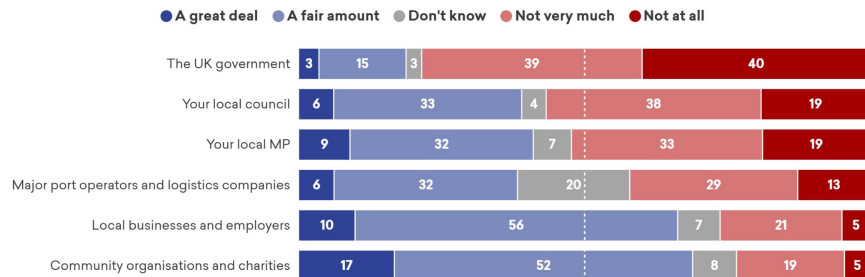
This distrust is not quite so strongly felt among younger generations – 70 per cent of 18–34 year-olds say they don't trust the government to act in their local area's interest while 28 per cent do.

Looking along party political lines, Labour supporters are the only group more likely to think the government acts in their interest than not, and even they are split (51 per cent to 49 per cent).

However, despite that strong sense of decline, there is some optimism over the future, with respondents split as to whether their area would be worse in ten years' time (35 per cent), better (25 per cent), or no different (30 per cent).

### A majority of coastal Britons don't trust their government, council or MP to act in the interests of their local area

How much do you trust each of the following to act in the interests of your local area?



**Pride and hope**

The image features a dark blue background with the text "Pride and hope" in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left. On the right side, there are two large, overlapping circles. The upper circle is outlined in a light blue color and overlaps a solid blue area. The lower circle is also outlined in a light blue color and overlaps a solid green area. The circles overlap each other in the center.

# A sense of community

**Most coastal dwellers think there is still a sense of community in their area, though a notable minority think this is dying, if not already gone.**

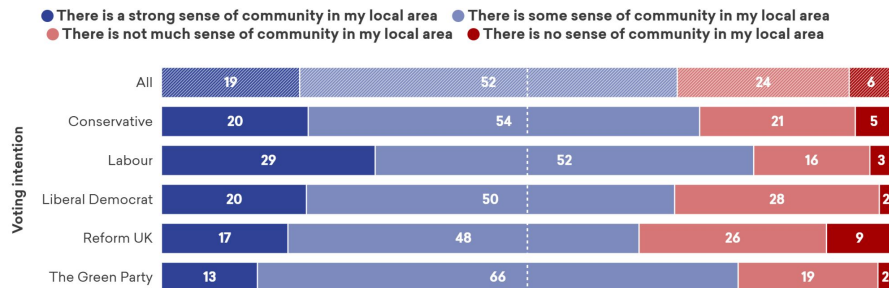
More than seven in ten (71 per cent) respondents say there is at least some sense of community in their local area, including a fifth (19 per cent) who say there is a strong sense of community.

Current Reform UK supporters are the most likely to say there is no sense of community in their area (9 per cent), but are more than six times as likely to say there is at least some (65 per cent).

Among all coastal respondents, 30 per cent say there is not much or no community in their area. This negative minority was vocal in focus groups, where a number of participants highlighted how the sense of community had disappeared during their lifetime.

## A strong majority of coastal Britons feel there is at least some sense of community in their area

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



*"I'm not worried about Dave and Sally that live next door because I just don't know them anymore. Again, going back in the day when you used to get sent around by your mum to get some butter or whatever, that comradery is just not there anymore."*

**Max, 36, Warehouse Manager, Southampton**

# Despite challenges, coastal residents are proud of their areas

Echoing their sense of community, locals remain positive about their area despite some feeling it has seen better days.

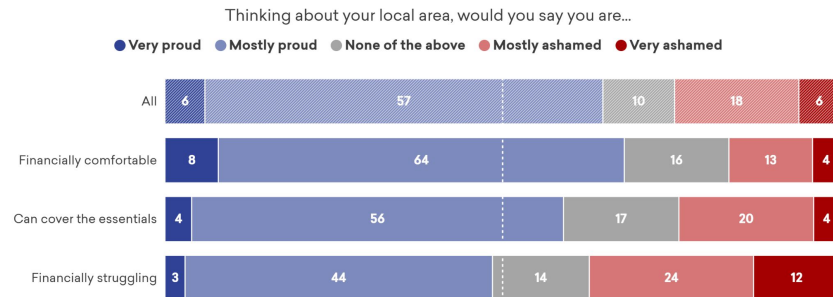
Voters of all major parties report feeling pride in their local area, with Green voters the least proud (though a majority still are, at 57 per cent) and Labour voters the most (79 per cent).

Generally, respondents are nearly five times more likely to say their area is a good place to raise a family than a bad one (38 per cent good vs 9 per cent bad).

However, there is divergence according to wealth. Those who are financially struggling are significantly more likely to say their area is a bad place to raise a family (23 per cent vs 5 per cent).

Despite the overwhelming pride people feel about their local area, 31 per cent of coastal respondents are either considering or actively trying to move away from their local area.

## Local pride is strongest among the most financially comfortable



"I like Hull. I mean, I was born in Hull, spent a number of years out in the Royal Navy for a number of years and came back to Hull after I've sort of got closer to retirement because I like the place. The people are great. Friendly, if you ask anybody who's been to Hull as a visitor, they'll always say that people are so friendly here, it's unbelievable."

**Martin, Retired, Kingston Upon Hull**

# Younger residents in coastal communities are more hopeful than their elders

Despite the prevailing sense among coastal respondents that their area is worse now than it was ten years ago, there remains a sense of optimism among the young.

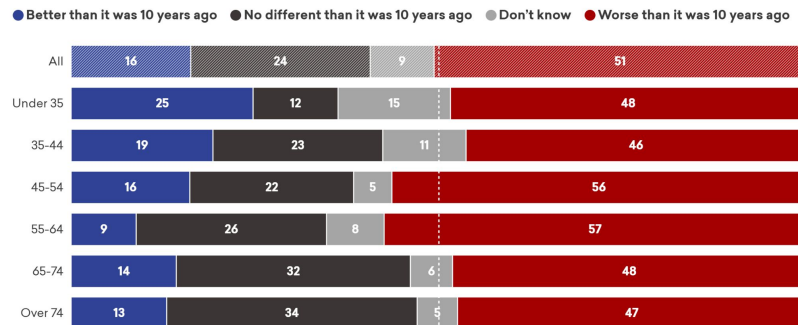
18–34 year-olds are significantly more likely than any other age bracket to say that their local area is better now than it was ten years ago (25 per cent). They're also almost twice as likely to say they expect their area to be better in ten years' time than worse (42 per cent vs 23 per cent).

Among coastal respondents over forty-five, this sentiment was practically reversed, with respondents roughly twice as likely to say the area would be worse in ten years' time than it is now.

However, it should be noted that despite that optimism, 58 per cent of 18–34 year olds in coastal communities said they were considering or actively trying to move away from their local area.

## Half of coastal Britons think their local areas are worse than they were a decade ago

Which of the following is closest to your view? I think my local area is...



*I think from my experience, I love it. I love it here... I'd want to always stay here... I feel like it's either you sort of stay or you go very far. But I love it here. I may go travelling or whatever, but I think there's always sort of a place that I have for here where it'd be very hard to sort of leave.*

**Jack, 20, South Wales, Estate Agent**

# Coastal Labour voters are the most optimistic about their area's future

Politically, it is Labour voters in coastal communities who emerge as the most optimistic. They are twice as likely as anyone else to say their area is better now than ten years ago (35 per cent), while nearly two thirds of Reform (62 per cent) and Green voters (64 per cent) say it is worse.

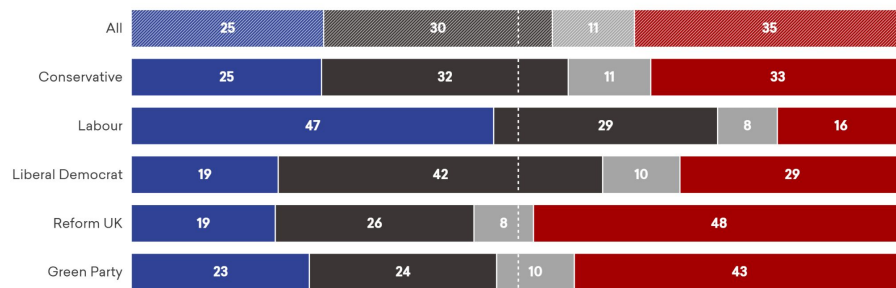
Their optimism extends to the future, with Labour voters three times more likely to expect the area to be better than worse (47 vs 16 per cent). Reform voters, meanwhile, are nearly three times more likely to expect their area to be worse in ten years (48 vs 19 per cent).

Financial insecurity and education may play a role here – current coastal Labour backers are more likely to be graduates and less likely to describe themselves as financially insecure than those who now say they would support Reform UK.

## Coastal Labour supporters are the only group more likely than not to think their area will improve in the next decade

Which of the following is closest to your view? In 10 years time, I think my local area will be...

● Better than it is now ● No different than it is now ● Don't know ● Worse than it is now



# Jobs and economics




# National anxieties around the economy extend to the local level on the coasts

Much like the rest of the country, coastal dwellers are anxious about the country's finances.

Three quarters (75 per cent) say the national economy is weak, while only 57 per cent say the same about their local economy.

The financially comfortable are five times more likely than the struggling to call their local economy strong (15 vs 3 per cent)

Coastal Labour voters are twice as likely as any others to think the local economy is strong (26 per cent), though still tend to think it's weak overall (39 per cent, against Reform's 66 per cent).

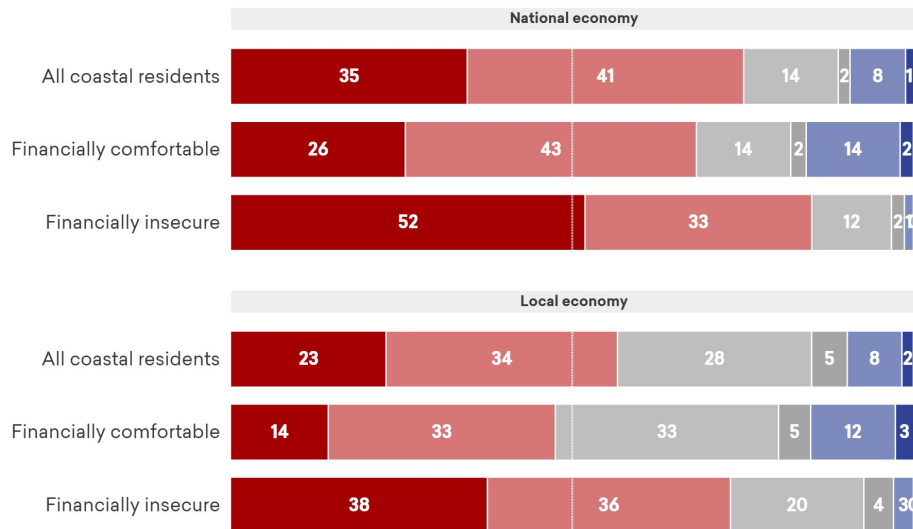
 *I would just say disappointing really. I just think growing up, I didn't think this was what the future country was going to look like. I think it's just disappointing that at the moment it doesn't feel like there's much hope in the country. It doesn't feel like a lot of people feel supported by the country or want to support the country.*

Milly, nurse, South Wales

## Most coastal Britons feel that the national and local economy is weak

How would you describe the [national/local economy] right now?

● Very weak ● Fairly weak ● Neither strong nor weak ● Don't know ● Fairly strong ● Very strong



# Coastal residents are anxious about the job market

Negative sentiment around the local economy extends to the job market. A majority (61 per cent) say local job opportunities have worsened over ten years, against just 9 per cent who say they have improved.

Respondents' personal finances factor into this greatly: 72 per cent of the financially struggling say the job market is worse than ten years ago, versus 54 per cent of those who are comfortable, and they are twice as likely to say 'much worse' (40 vs 19 per cent).

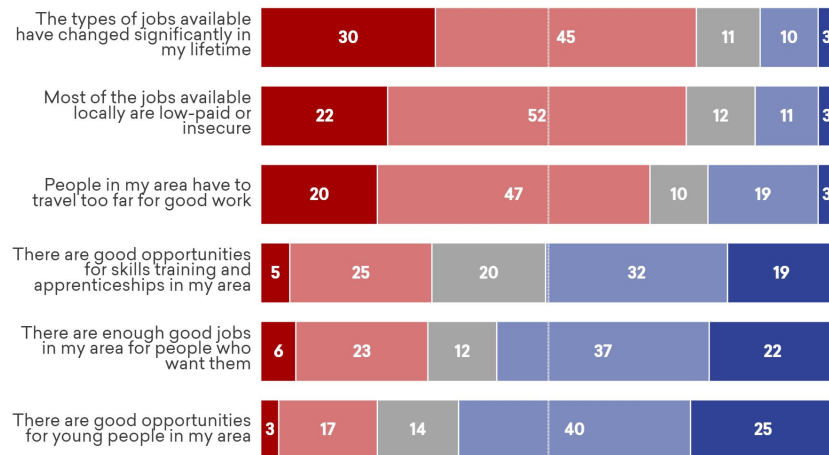
There is clear concern in coastal areas about local job prospects:

- 59 per cent say it is false that there are enough good jobs for people who want them
- 74 per cent say most local jobs are low-paid or insecure
- 65 per cent say it is false that there are good opportunities for young people – just 3 per cent say it is definitely true
- 51 per cent say it is false that there are good opportunities for training and apprenticeships
- And 75 per cent say the types of jobs available have changed significantly in their lifetime

## Few coastal Britons think that there are enough good opportunities in their local area

To what extent do you think following statements about work and opportunity are true to your area?

● Definitely true ● Somewhat true ● Don't know ● Somewhat false ● Completely false



# However, young people are more optimistic

Views on local jobs vary markedly by age, with young people surprisingly optimistic.

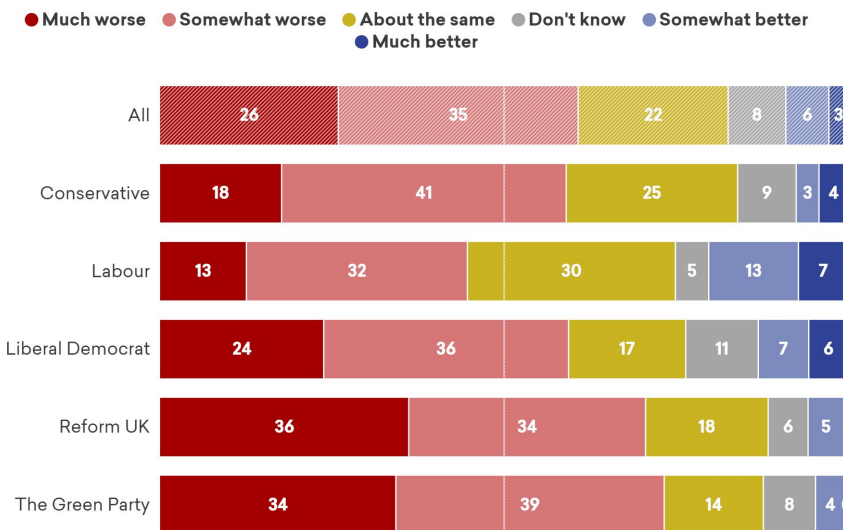
Nearly four in ten (39 per cent) of those aged 18–34 think there are enough good jobs locally – a larger number than those in other age groups (e.g. compared to 24 per cent of those aged 55+). However, more than half still think there are 'not enough' (54 per cent).

Older respondents are likeliest to say jobs are worse than ten years ago: around two-thirds of 45–74s say so.

Politically, more than seven in ten Green (73 per cent) and Reform voters (70 per cent) say jobs are worse than ten years ago, versus just 45 per cent of Labour voters. Green voters are also notably worried about people having to travel too far for good work (81 per cent). Those in coastal areas seeking alternatives to the two main parties clearly have reservations about employment opportunities in their area.

## In coastal communities, most think local job opportunities have worsened in the last 10 years

Compared to 10 years ago, do you think the job opportunities available in your local area have gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?



# Many coastal residents have a 'glass half full' view of their areas' potential

Coastal respondents see opportunities in their local area. Four in ten say the area has economic opportunities not being made the most of, against just 17 per cent who say their area is already making the most of those it has.

Young people are likeliest to see untapped opportunity – 53 per cent of 18–35s, versus around a third of the over-65s.

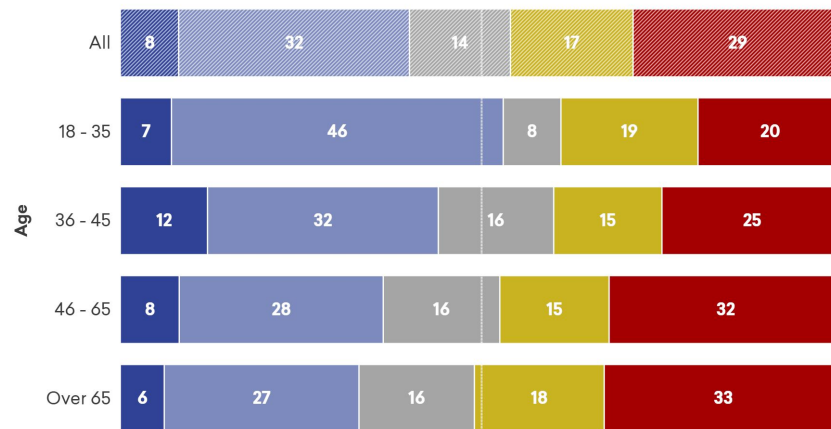
The financially comfortable see more untapped opportunity than those who are struggling (45 vs 35 per cent), though still over a third of the struggling agree.

In short, coastal residents – particularly the next generation – are not writing off their areas, but see untapped potential within them, despite the challenges they face.

## Most young people in coastal communities see untapped economic potential in their area

Thinking about your local area, which statement comes closest to your view?

- My area has a lot of economic opportunities that aren't being made the most of
- My area has some economic opportunities that aren't being made the most of
- My area is already making the most of the economic opportunities it has
- My area doesn't really have economic opportunities to make the most of
- Don't know



# Backing local business is seen as the best way to boost local jobs on the coast

Coastal residents have a clear view of what would improve local job opportunities: over half point to support for local businesses, and four in ten to better apprenticeship and training programmes.

Both priorities are also popular among those who say job opportunities have worsened over the last decade, alongside more investment from large employers (33 per cent) and more public sector jobs (29 per cent) and more public sector jobs (29 per cent) and more public sector jobs (29 per cent).

Younger coastal residents (aged 18–34) share the emphasis on supporting local small businesses (49 per cent), but a third (33 per cent) also see better transport as key. Non-graduates, meanwhile, place particular weight on apprenticeship and training programmes (44 per cent).

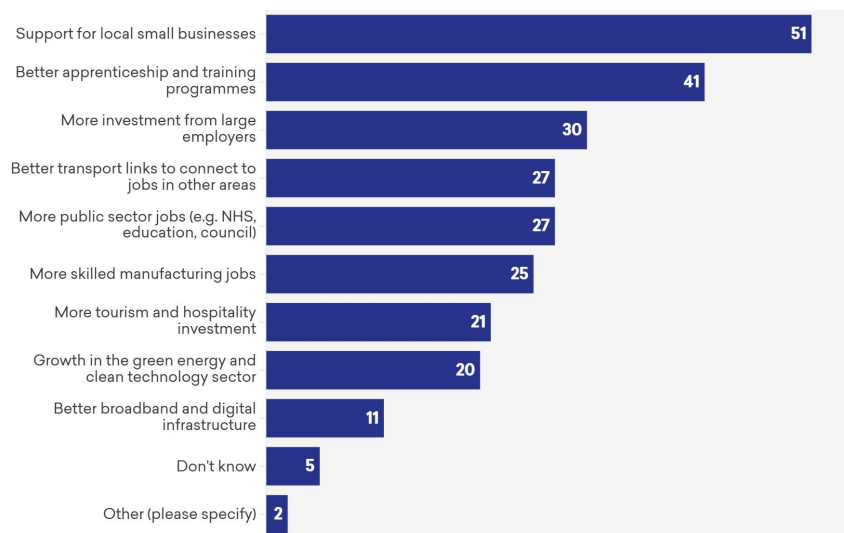


*How do you do it [attract businesses]? You do that by investing in the place, trying to pull people in, charging lower rates for businesses and stuff like that. There's all manner of different things that you can do to try and do that.*

**Martin, retired, Kingston upon Hull**

## To improve local job opportunities, people in coastal communities want support for local small businesses and better training opportunities

What would you most like to see more of in your local area to improve job opportunities?



# Should I stay or should I go?

There is a prevailing sense that at least some young people want to leave. 28 per cent in coastal communities (vs. 25 per cent nationally) say most young people want to leave their local area – felt most by the young themselves, who are nearly three times likelier to say most people their age want to leave than stay (36 vs 13 per cent).

Labour voters are most optimistic and the only group likelier to think the young want to stay than leave (23 vs 20 per cent); Greens are likeliest to say leave (39 vs 11 per cent).

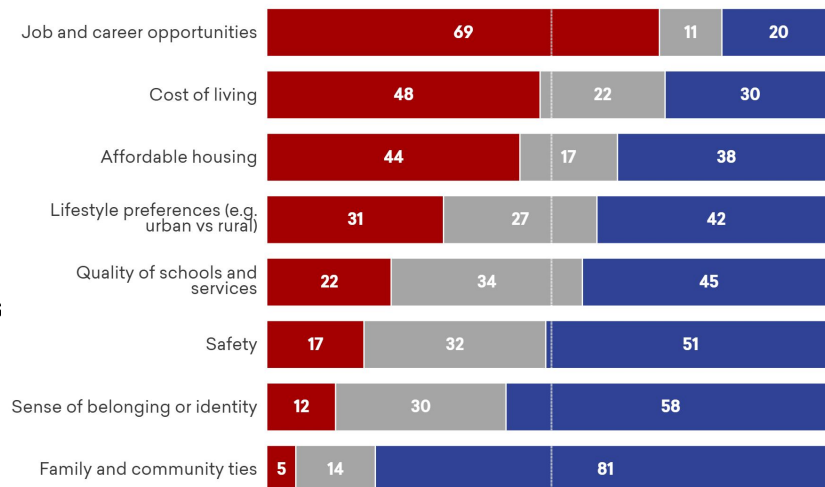
Asked what drives people away, 69 per cent of coastal respondents cite jobs and career opportunities. The financially insecure are nearly twice as likely as the comfortable to say most want to leave (44 vs 23 per cent), and more than three-quarters (76 per cent) blame jobs.

Eight in ten say that family and community ties are the most important factors encouraging young people to stay, plus a sense of belonging or identity (58 per cent). 47 per cent of 18–34s also cite affordable housing as something which encourages young people to stay.

## Seven in ten coastal Britons say that the local job market makes young people leave

What do you think influences whether young people stay or leave your area?

● Makes them leave ● Has no impact ● Makes them stay



# The contribution of coastal communities

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# Coastal areas are more likely to think they contribute at least a bit to the national economy than not at all

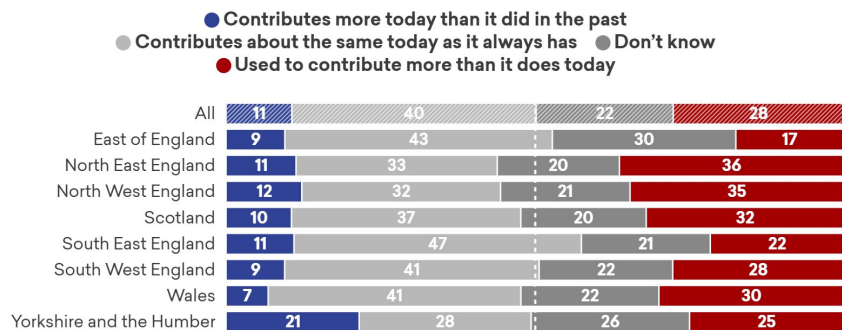
Coastal residents are divided on their area's economic value. 46 per cent think their area contributes somewhat or significantly to the national economy, while 39 per cent think it contributes barely or not at all.

Pessimism about the local area goes hand in hand with pessimism about its economic contribution. Just 38 per cent of those who think their area is heading in the wrong direction believe it contributes to the national economy, compared with 74 per cent of those who think it is heading in the right direction.

Coastal residents in the South East are more likely to say their area contributes more to the national economy (51 per cent), and the most likely to feel that contribution has held steady over time. By contrast, residents in Wales (47 per cent) and the North West (49 per cent) are the most likely to say their area contributes barely or not at all, while those in the North of England are the most likely to feel their area used to contribute more than it does today.

## Coastal communities, especially in the South and Wales, generally think they contribute the same to the national economy as they did in the past

Following on from that, which of the following comes closest to your view? "When it comes to the national economy, my local area..."



*These wind farms and that, I had a little whispering here that they're building them from Grimsby all the way up to near Norfolk, but the power is actually powering London. I don't understand that at all.*

**Nick, retired, Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes**

# Coastal communities share a sense that their areas give more to the country than they get back.

Coastal residents believe they give more than they get back, and that the value they create often leaks away. 38 per cent say their area contributes more to the country than it receives in return, while just 12 per cent say the reverse.

The same pattern holds for the economic benefits of local work and business. Only 24 per cent think these benefits stay within the local area, while 43 per cent say they flow to other parts of the UK – 21 per cent to London specifically.

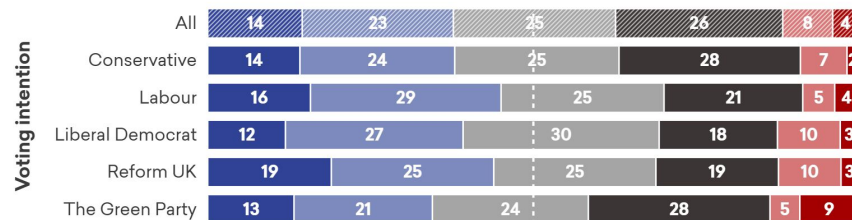
The sense that coastal areas give more than they get is particularly strong among Labour (45 per cent) and Reform (44 per cent) voters, suggesting that government action to redress this perceived imbalance would appeal across the very coalition it is keen to win over.


Reform voters in coastal areas are also the most likely of any party group to say the benefits of local business flow elsewhere (51 per cent). For this bloc of voters, keeping economic gains in the local area is clearly a key concern.

## Those in coastal communities, especially Labour and Reform-leaning voters, tend to think that their area contributes more than it receives in return

Which of the following comes closest to your view about your local area?

- My area contributes significantly more to the country than it receives in return
- My area contributes a bit more to the country than it receives in return
- My area contributes roughly the same as it receives in return
- Don't know
- My area receives a bit more from the country than it contributes
- My area receives significantly more from the country than it contributes



 [On the money Southampton brings to the economy] Well, it doesn't seem to be [good] because Southampton doesn't seem to be getting any of that money, does it? [Phil, security software engineer, Southampton](#)

# Coastal communities' contribution to the economy is appreciated by Britain as a whole

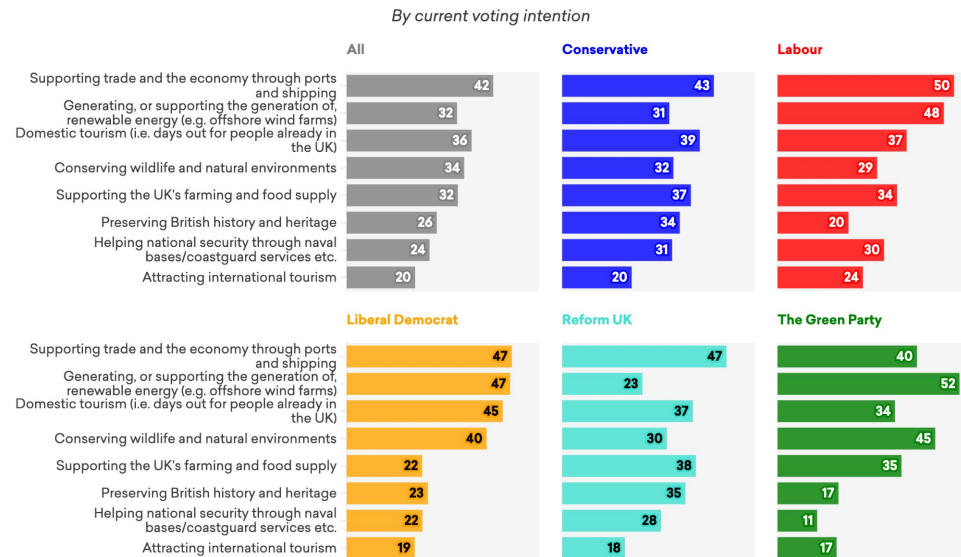
When Britons as a whole are asked about the most important contributions of coastal communities, supporting trade and the economy through ports and shipping comes top (42 per cent), followed by domestic tourism (36 per cent), followed by domestic tourism (36 per cent).

But the rest of Britain sees coastal communities as contributing far more than trade and tourism alone. Everything from wildlife conservation to renewable energy generation is named as a key contribution by more than three in ten.

There is also notable consensus across party lines. Supporters of almost every party rank ports and shipping as the top contribution, with Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green voters also highlighting renewable energy, Reform voters pointing to farming and food production, and Greens to wildlife conservation. Across the political spectrum, coastal areas are recognised as vital contributors – above all economically and on energy – which is a rare point of unity across party lines.

## There is cross-party recognition of how coastal areas support the economy via trade and shipping

Thinking about what coastal communities provide for the rest of the UK, which of the following do you think are their most important contributions?



# Energy and renewables



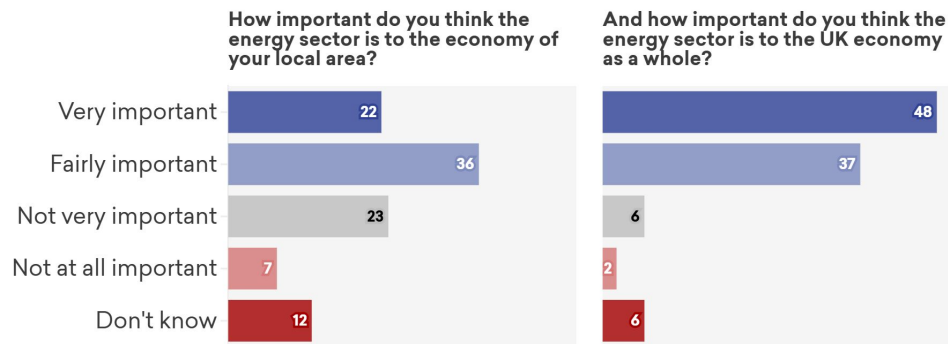
# Those in coastal areas see the energy sector as more important to the national than the local economy

There is belief in the importance of the energy sector for coastal communities. Nearly six in ten coastal residents (58 per cent) say the sector is important to their local economy, rising to 85 per cent for the UK economy as a whole, a consensus that holds across party lines.

Coastal communities also rate the sector's importance higher than the wider public (57 per cent nationally), with this view led by the East of England (75 per cent), Scotland (67 per cent) and the North East (64 per cent).

The gap between national conviction and local connection seems to largely be about visibility. While a majority of those in coastal areas have heard at least a bit about clean energy projects in their area, 35 per cent have heard nothing. Those who have heard at least a bit about them are more likely to see the energy sector as important to their local area (68 per cent) than those who have heard nothing (42 per cent). Where projects are visible, importance follows.

## Most coastal Britons believe that energy is important - particularly on a national scale



# Coastal communities are enthusiastic about renewables

Britons feel positive about renewables, and coastal communities even more so. Three-quarters of coastal residents (75 per cent) view renewables positively against just 9 per cent negatively, outstripping Britain overall (66 per cent).

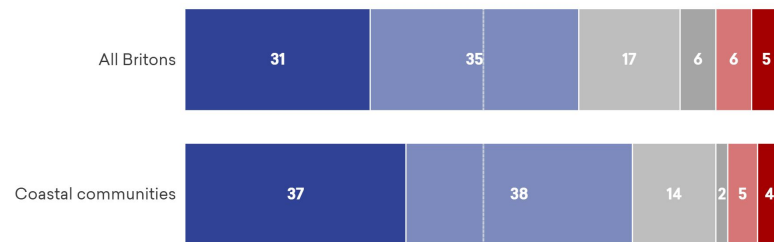
Support spans the spectrum: 92 per cent of current Labour supporters (above even the Greens on 83 per cent), 74 per cent of Conservatives, and crucially, even current Reform UK backers (who tend to be the most sceptical of renewables and the energy transition in general) are positive by more than two to one about renewables. The intensity is striking too – nearly four in ten coastal residents (37 per cent) feel very positive, rising to 43 per cent in Wales. Enthusiasm is more muted among the financially insecure (71 per cent positive, 28 per cent very) than the comfortable (79 and 43 per cent).

Nearly half of coastal residents (48 per cent) say they have become more positive about renewables in recent years. Even among coastal Reform voters, those warming to renewables (43 per cent) outnumber those souring (21 per cent) by two to one.

## Coastal Britons are particularly positive about renewables

Overall, how do you feel about renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen power?

● Very positively
 ● Fairly positively
 ● Neither positively nor negatively
 ● Don't know
 ● Fairly negatively
 ● Very negatively



*We've got to embrace it [renewables]. Just look at the news around the world every day or just look out your window. We had four heat waves here last summer. At what point are we all going to get on board and think, "Do you know what? What we're doing isn't working." Not just in terms of energy prices and how much we're all paying and how much we're going to pay in the next six months, which I don't think we even realise yet because we're so addicted to fossil fuels and oil coming from Russia or the Strait of Hormuz, but just look out your window (...)* **Paul, team leader, South Wales**

# However, coastal dwellers are more uncertain about hydrogen

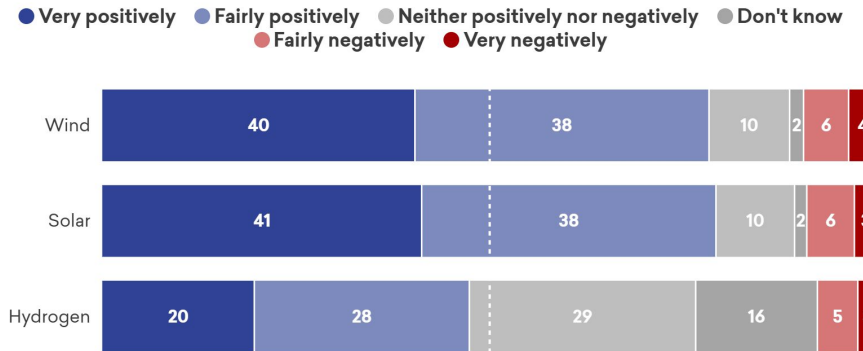
Coastal residents' warmth towards renewables extends to the established technologies in almost identical measure: majorities think of solar (79 per cent positive) and wind power (78 per cent) positively.

The reaction to hydrogen power is more muted, but not necessarily because of hostility. Fewer than half (47 per cent) feel positive about it, yet only 8 per cent feel negative. Instead, three in ten coastal residents are neutral and a sizeable 16 per cent simply don't know, by far the highest uncertainty of the three.

While wind and solar are settled, familiar technologies on the coast, hydrogen power's challenge may be awareness rather than acceptance.

## Residents of coastal communities are less certain about hydrogen power

To what extent do you feel positively or negatively about different types of renewables?




# Coastal communities are uncertain about what net zero means economically for them

Warmth towards renewables does not yet translate into belief that the net zero transition will pay off locally. Just a third of coastal residents (33 per cent) think the transition will bring economic benefits to their area, while half expect it to either make no difference (31 per cent) or be actively damaging (17 per cent).

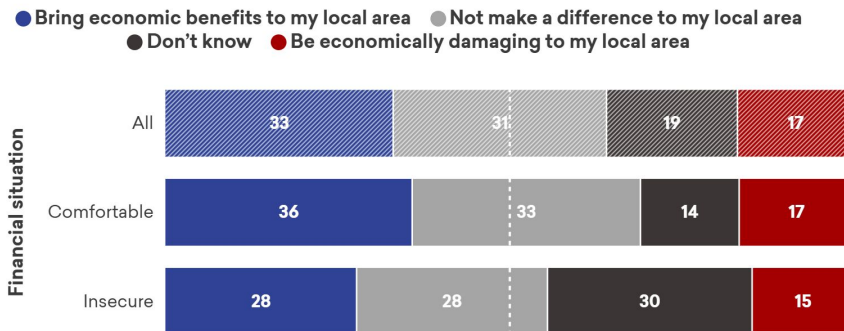
Despite their positivity toward renewables, respondents in coastal Wales are the most polarised of all regions, with 38 per cent believing it will be economically beneficial to their area, and 22 per cent thinking it will be damaging. The net zero transition and its impacts appear to be a live debate there.

The financially insecure in coastal areas also tend to be unsure about what the transition means for their area: three in ten (30 per cent) say they don't know what it will mean, double the rate of the comfortable.

 Well, it's difficult to kind of quantify, but a lot of goals are. We want to reach net zero by like 2050 and things like that. I don't actually know if that's going to be doable. I'm not that technical, but [the target] gives me hope at least. [Shelly, contracts officer, South Wales](#)

## Coastal communities tend to think that the transition to net zero will bring economic benefits to their local area, though many are not sure

Which of the following is closest to your view? The UK's to net zero and clean energy will...



# Support for clean energy is based more on economics than sustainability

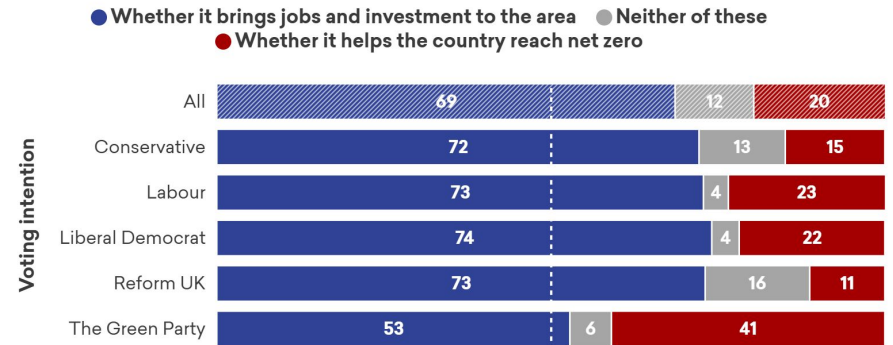
Coastal communities' support for clean energy would appear to be based on economic, not environmental, foundations. Nearly seven in ten (69 per cent) say it matters more that clean energy investment brings jobs and investment to their area than that it helps the country reach net zero (20 per cent).

That economic framing holds across every region, age group, financial bracket and voting intention – at least 60 per cent in each group – and even among Green Party supporters, a narrow majority (53 per cent) still put local economic benefit first.

Young people in coastal areas complicate the picture. 18–34s are more optimistic about the economic benefits of net zero and clean energy for their local area than those who are older, a third are anxious about costs and worry clean energy investment could raise their cost of living, against just 14 per cent of over-55s. Even so, they remain an enthusiastic group, with 30 per cent saying clean energy investment should be a top priority for their area.

## People in coastal communities are significantly more concerned with clean energy bringing jobs to their area than getting the country to net zero

If clean energy investment came to your area, which of the following is more important to you?



# Business and government are seen as the winners of the growth of clean energy in coastal area

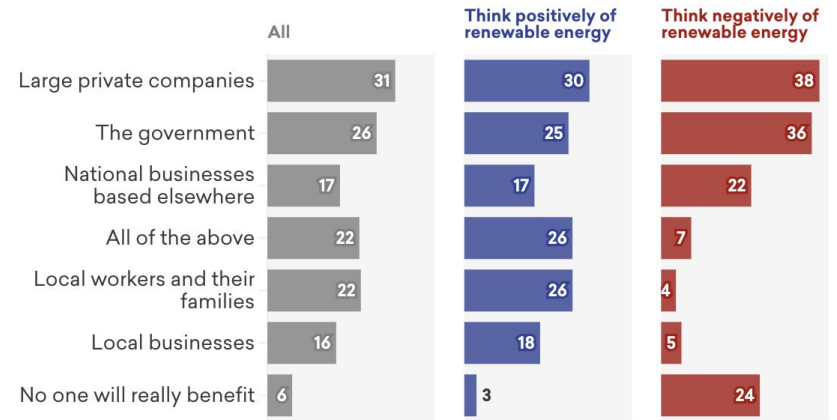
When coastal residents are asked who will benefit most from clean energy growth on their coastline, the answer is largely "someone else." Large private companies top the list (31 per cent), followed by the government (26 per cent), with local workers and their families (22 per cent) and local businesses (16 per cent) trailing behind.

Reform supporters in coastal areas are the most sceptical about who stands to gain from local clean energy investment: only 15 per cent expect local workers to benefit most, while 37 per cent point to the government and 34 per cent to big companies. This may partly reflect attitudes toward renewables themselves – coastal respondents who view renewables negatively are particularly unconvinced that local workers and their families will profit. Just 4 per cent of this group think local workers will benefit, compared with 26 per cent of those who view renewables positively, and they are also more likely to assume the government and big business will capture the gains.

This could suggest that scepticism about clean energy is not always about the technology itself but about who is seen to profit from it – making local benefits visible and tangible may be essential to building broader coastal support.

## Those who are sceptical of renewables are less likely to think locals will benefit from it

Who do you think will benefit most from the growth of the clean energy industry in coastal areas?



# Most coastal residents back local investment in clean energy infrastructure

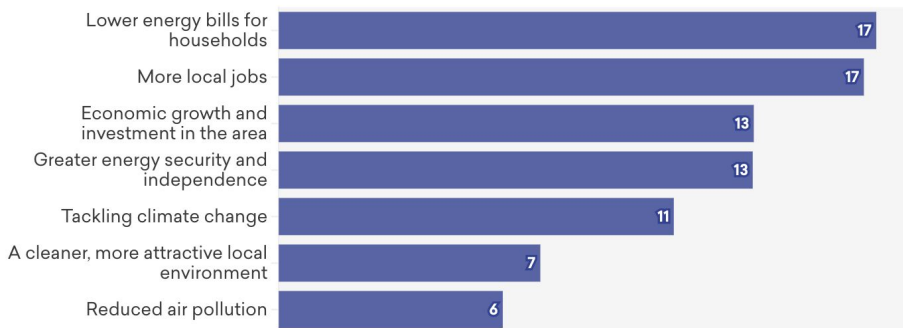
Support for clean energy infrastructure on residents' own doorstep is broad. 71 per cent of those in coastal areas would back government investment in wind farms, energy storage or carbon capture in their local area, against just 10 per cent opposed, a view that holds across regions and voter groups.

Residents expect the main benefits of such investment to be material, more than environmental. Lower energy bills and more local jobs top the list of anticipated benefits (17 per cent each), ahead of energy security and economic growth, tackling climate and a cleaner local environment (7 per cent). While only 8 per cent see no benefit at all, that rises to 19 per cent of Reform UK supporters.

While among Reform voters in coastal areas local consent for clean energy investment in their local area is, to an extent, already banked, there is a greater uncertainty about what the benefits might be – the expectation is that these will be primarily economic, and particularly focused on jobs, rather than environmental.

## The main benefits of local investment in clean energy are thought to be lower energy bills and more jobs

What do you think would be the benefits of further investment in clean energy in your area?



*I think anything new would come into any area. It's going to be good, don't it? Because it'll create more jobs, be more money. Maybe people from outside the area coming into work, staying in hotels, eating in bars and restaurants. So I think you can only be positive about that really.*

**Len, foster carer, South Wales**

# There are concerns about the environmental impact of such investment

Harm to the landscape and natural environment is seen as the main potential downside of greater local investment in green energy infrastructure by coastal residents (37 per cent, rising to 42 per cent in the South West), followed by decisions being made without local input (25 per cent) and pressure on local infrastructure (24 per cent).

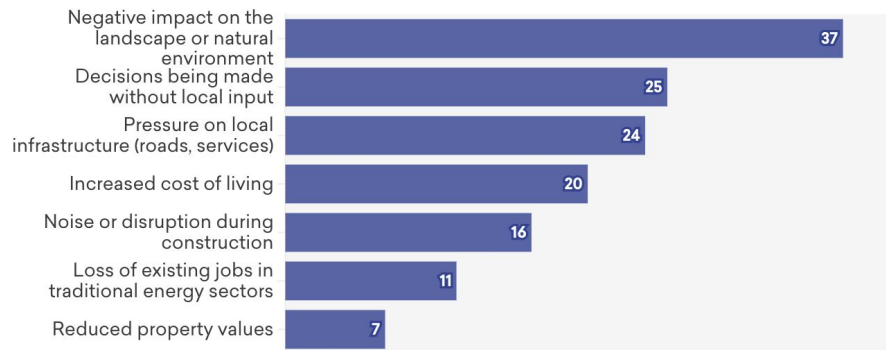
Increased cost of living follows on 20 per cent, with this concern felt particularly strongly by those in coastal areas who say they are financially insecure. This group is twice as likely to say this would be a downside of investment than those who say they are financially comfortable (27 vs 13 per cent). It is also coastal Reform voters' second biggest worry (26 per cent).

Very few coastal residents think that a downside of local clean energy infrastructure investment would be a drop in property values (7 per cent), even among homeowners themselves (6 per cent).

While more than seven in ten Welsh coastal respondents supported investment in clean energy infrastructure in their area (38 per cent strongly so – the highest of all regions) there is clearly a concern here about decisions on investment being made without local input (29 per cent, higher than anywhere else). Early consultation with the local community would likely be key to maintaining buy in here.

## For those in coastal areas, there is concern about the environmental impact of clean energy investment

What do you think would be the downsides of further investment in clean energy in your area?



# Coastal residents see clean energy investment as important, but also have other pressing priorities

While clean energy investment is broadly supported in coastal communities, some residents have other pressing priorities. While 24 per cent say such investment should be a top priority for their area, a majority (53 per cent) say it is important but that other things should come first.

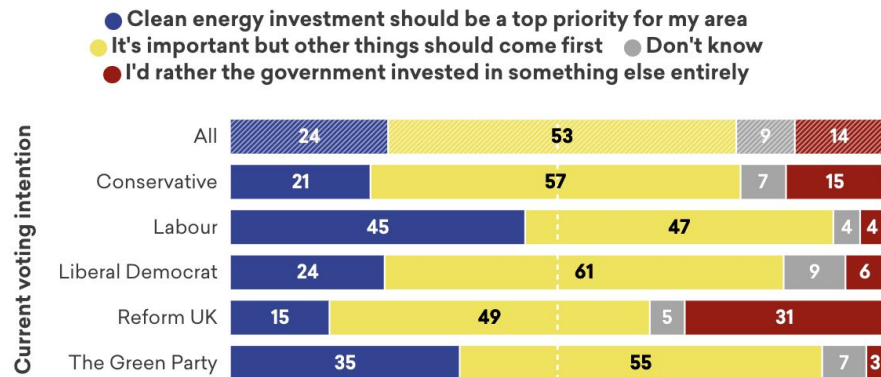
A third of coastal Welsh residents say that clean energy should be a top priority for their local area, the highest of any region.

It is Labour backers in coastal areas who are the most likely to say clean energy investment should be a top priority (45 per cent), higher even than Green supporters (35 per cent). Majorities of Green, Liberal Democrat and Conservative supporters say that such investment is important but other things should come first. While three in ten coastal Reform voters say the government should invest in other things entirely, still almost half acknowledge that clean energy investment is important.

Among those who prioritise other areas, the NHS (29 per cent), job creation (24 per cent) and high streets (15 per cent) top the list of preferred alternatives. Framing clean energy investment as a route to these outcomes may be an effective way to build support for it.

## Those in coastal areas think investment in clean energy is important, but other things should come first

Is clean energy investment a priority for your area, or would you rather the government invested in other things?



# Ports, manufacturing and industry



# Ports are still seen as a big part of coastal areas' identities

Ports remain woven into the identity of Britain's coastal communities. A majority of coastal residents (57 per cent) say ports are still a major part of their area's identity, and two-thirds (67 per cent) say their local port provides good quality jobs.

The feeling that ports are a major part of your area's identity is strongest in the North East (64 per cent) and weakest in Wales (42 per cent), though more than four in ten still hold that view.

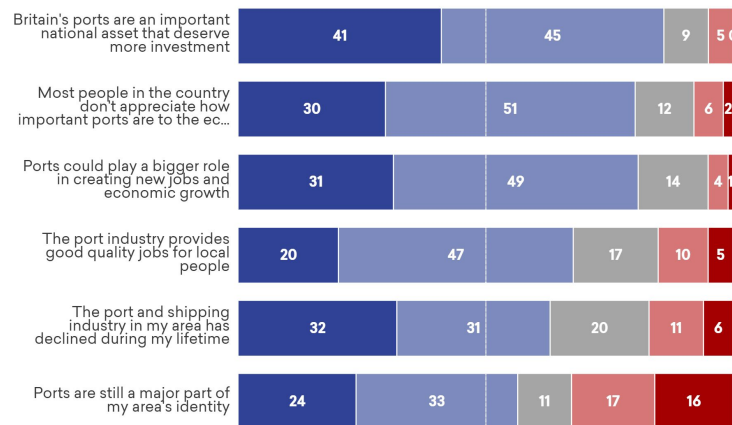
Despite six in ten feeling that the shipping industry in their area has declined during their lifetime, 80 per cent of those in coastal areas say that ports could play a bigger role in creating new jobs and growth. This includes three quarters of those aged 18–34; ports are not seen as relics of coastal Britain's past, but a part of local identity and where economic prosperity could lie.

Yet coastal Britons believe this asset is overlooked nationally. 86 per cent say Britain's ports are an important national asset that deserves more investment, while 81 per cent say most people don't appreciate how important ports are to the economy. This feeling is particularly strong among those who would now vote for Reform UK (91 per cent), though at least seven in ten of each group of party supporters agree.

## Coastal communities strongly value ports

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about trade?

● Definitely true ● Probably true ● Don't know ● Probably false ● Definitely false



*It's the estuary to Hull and Barton across the water and Grimsby (...) I would imagine it used to be a really busy place. But I think governments, as far as I see, over many years have not bothered with it (...) so now the river, it's just a river. I don't think it gets that much use, not in comparison to what it could do.*

**Martin, retired, Kingston upon Hull**

# Coastal areas believe their communities could become powerhouses once again

Coastal residents believe the powerhouse vision is realistic and they think their areas are ready for it. Six in ten (60 per cent) say it is realistic that their area could become an economic hub for manufacturing, shipping and clean energy again against 32 per cent who are doubtful, signalling a strong sense of optimism about their areas' futures.

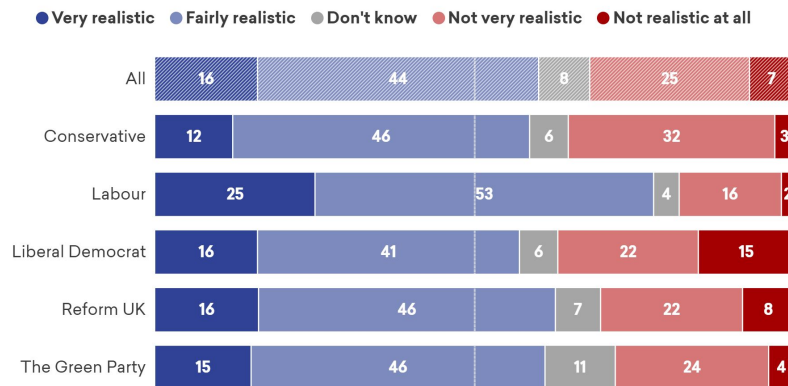
Britain as a whole is optimistic that this could be the case, with 55 per cent of Britons thinking this prospect is realistic.

Optimism is particularly high in the coastal areas of the East and North East (69 per cent each), as well as among coastal Labour supporters (78 per cent), but this belief crosses party lines: 62 per cent of Reform backers and 58 per cent of Conservatives also call it realistic.

Among those in coastal areas who currently feel that their local area is heading in the wrong direction, aspiration is more guarded – while 80 per cent of those who think their local area is heading in the right direction think the idea that coastal areas could become economic powerhouses is realistic, those who think it is heading in the wrong direction are less convinced (58 per cent), though a majority still are.

## Most coastal Britons think their community could be an economic powerhouse

Some people say that coastal areas could become economic powerhouses again – hubs for manufacturing, shipping, clean energy, and new industries. How realistic do you think this is for your area?



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Based on polling of those in coastal communities

*I would say so [could become a powerhouse again], especially with trade. Even if they opened up one or two of the old ports, there's so much sort of scope to say of what they can do, especially now. But yeah, I think obviously if they opened up some of the old ports and that again would give more jobs and things like that.* **Jack, estate agent, South Wales**

# Coastal communities say that they are open for business

Far from being defensive, coastal communities describe themselves as open for business. Asked whether their community would welcome new industries setting up locally, 63 per cent say it would be open and just 14 per cent resistant – across every region, party and financial group, respondents are more likely to say open than resistant.

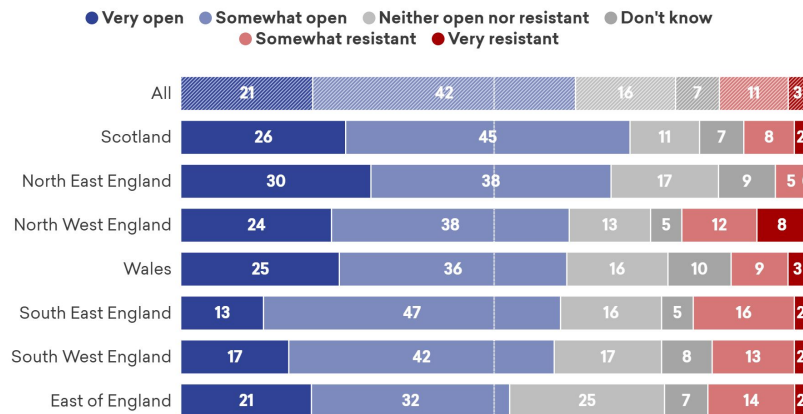
Coastal residents of Scotland (72 per cent) and the North East (69 per cent) are the most confident their area would welcome new industry of all regions.


The softest audiences are telling ones. Green voters (22 per cent resistant), those who feel financially insecure (19 per cent) and those who believe their local area is heading in the wrong direction (16 per cent) are all more likely than their counterparts to expect resistance to new industry.

In other words, the people with perhaps the most to gain from new industry – the financially squeezed and those who feel their area most needs change – are the least sure it will reach them, potentially because experience has taught them not to expect it.

## Across most coastal regions, Britons say they would be open to new industries

Do you think your local community would be open or resistant to new industries setting up in the area?



 [On their preferred kind of industry] It'd probably be IT because that's sort of growing industry, isn't it? IT and AI are the sort of future, aren't they?

Phil, security software engineer, Southampton

# Where do coastal communities see their comparative advantage?

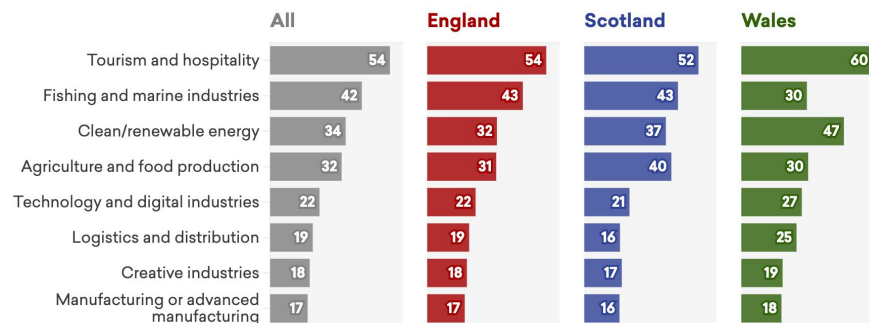
When coastal residents are asked what their area is best placed to develop compared to the rest of the UK, tourism and hospitality dominate (54 per cent), followed by fishing and marine industries (42 per cent), with clean energy third (34 per cent). The industries of a modern industrial strategy – like manufacturing (17 per cent), logistics (19 per cent) and technology (22 per cent) – fall further down the list.

Regions differ in where they think their strengths lie. The North East is the only region where tourism does not make the top two options chosen, with residents there instead pointing to clean energy (39 per cent) and fishing (37 per cent). Wales is the most likely region to say they are best placed to develop clean energy (47 per cent, against a 34 per cent average), despite Welsh coastal residents being no more positive about renewables themselves than average.

There is also a revealing mismatch between perceived strengths and investment preferences. Tourism may top the list of what coastal areas think they are best placed to develop, but just 15 per cent would make it a priority for a hypothetical £20 million of government investment. While coastal residents know the visitor economy is what they have, this is not necessarily their priority for the future.

## Welsh coastal respondents think their area is particularly well placed to develop clean energy

Which of the following do you think your area is best-placed to develop, compared to the rest of the UK?



# Those worried about their local economy back more manufacturing

If there is one point of near-total consensus in coastal Britain, it is that the country should make more and import less. Almost nine in ten coastal residents (86 per cent) want Britain to manufacture more of its own goods, and the same share (86 per cent) say more domestic manufacturing makes economic sense. For coastal residents, this is not nostalgia overriding economics.

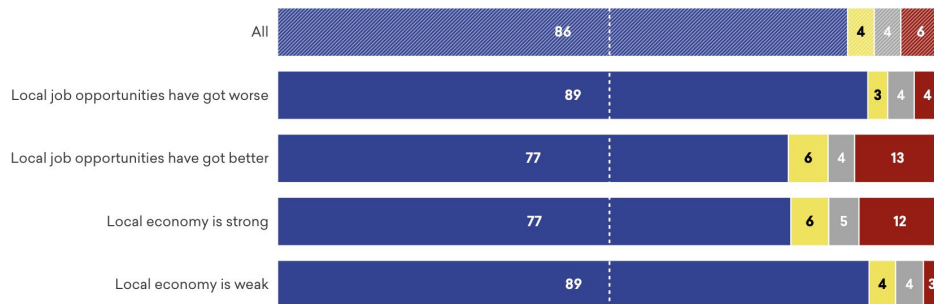
Just 4 per cent think Britain currently has the balance between manufacturing and importing right, and this consensus spans the political divide. This sense is particularly strong among older generations: more than 90 per cent of over-55s want Britain to manufacture more, compared with 70 per cent of under-35s. It is also particularly pronounced among those worried about their local economy – 89 per cent of those who describe their local economy as weak back more manufacturing, as do 89 per cent of those who think local job opportunities have worsened.

Around two-thirds of coastal residents believe areas like theirs would benefit from a manufacturing revival. Interestingly, while the North East is the region least likely to back more manufacturing in principle (77 per cent), it is among the most emphatic that its own area would gain (73 per cent) from it. Young people show the same pattern: they are less supportive of the principle than their elders, but more likely to say coastal areas like theirs would benefit (79 per cent versus 58 per cent of those aged 55+).

## A majority of coastal residents think Britain should manufacture more - but particularly those with economic concerns about their area

Which of the following is closest to your view?

- Britain should manufacture more of its own goods, and import less
- Britain is currently manufacturing and importing the right amount
- Don't know
- Britain should manufacture fewer of its own goods, and import more



It would be good if we did more from ourselves to export. Opening up the steel works and things like that is good, I'd say. And with the car manufacturing, I know we used to do more, but that's a good thing that we do in the UK still.

**Bob, data analyst, Yorkshire**

# Trade and Brexit

The background features a dark blue field with two large, overlapping circles. The upper circle is outlined in a light blue, and the lower circle is outlined in a light green. The overlapping area between the two circles is a darker shade of blue. The circles are positioned on the right side of the frame, with their left edges partially cut off by the image boundary.

# Ten years after Brexit, coastal voters have mixed views about its impact

Ten years on from Brexit, coastal communities feel its impact negatively, if they feel it at all. Nearly half of coastal residents (48 per cent) say Brexit has harmed their local area, while just 16 per cent say it has been positive.

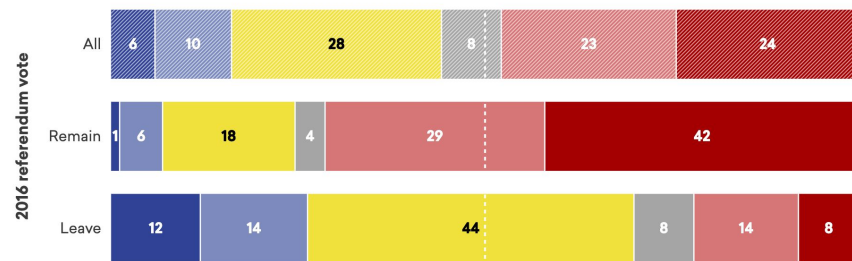
Even among coastal Leave voters, enthusiasm is muted: 44 per cent say Brexit has had no impact on their local area, and only just over a quarter see a positive one. Reform voters are the most positive group of party supporters, yet still only three in ten see a positive local impact – more (40 per cent) say it has had none at all.

Financial security shapes these views. Financially comfortable coastal residents are more likely than the insecure to say Brexit has benefited their area (18 versus 11 per cent) and less likely to see it as harmful (45 versus 53 per cent) – though even among the comfortable, negative views outweigh positive ones.

## Coastal communities are more likely to feel that Brexit has had a negative or no impact on their local community than a positive one

Do you think Britain's decision to leave the EU has had a positive or negative impact on your local area, or has it not had an impact?

Very positive Fairly positive No real impact Don't know Fairly negative Very negative



*[On changes because of Brexit] No, I can't see no change. In fact, they've given Europeans a few more years, haven't they, of fishing in our waters?*

**Nick, retired, Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes**

# Those in Welsh coastal areas feel the absence of EU funding

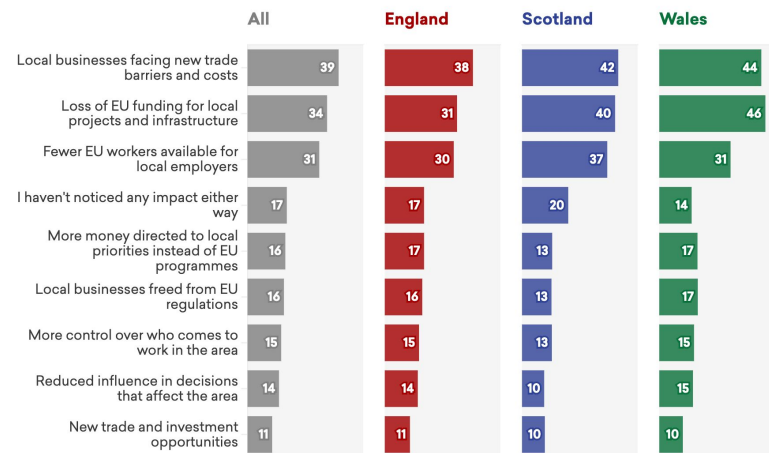
Welsh coastal areas sit mid-table among regions on Brexit's overall local impact (19 per cent positive, 52 per cent negative), but they tie with the North West for the highest "very negative" score (31 per cent).

Respondents in Wales are also the most likely to cite the loss of EU funding for local projects and infrastructure as Brexit's biggest local impact (46 per cent do so), alongside broader effects on local businesses and employers. Before Brexit, Wales was a significant recipient of EU structural funding, and coastal communities there may be acutely aware of its absence.

This may partly explain why Welsh coastal residents are so positive about closer cooperation with Europe on trade, energy and transport: 55 per cent say their local area would benefit, eight points above the coastal average.

## Coastal residents in Wales are particularly aware of the loss of EU funding

What was the biggest impact of Britain's decision to leave the EU on your local area? Please select up to 3.



*We left on a promise that we were going to benefit, the NHS would, and that never happened. (...) Unfortunately, we've got promised things. And coming back to my point right at the beginning where Alan Sugar said that they should be held accountable, they absolutely should because, [the NHS] was why most people voted to leave. And unfortunately, I think the UK's really struggled since*

**Claire, hotel manager, South Wales**

# Coastal residents are open to rebuilding ties with the EU in select areas where it can benefit their communities

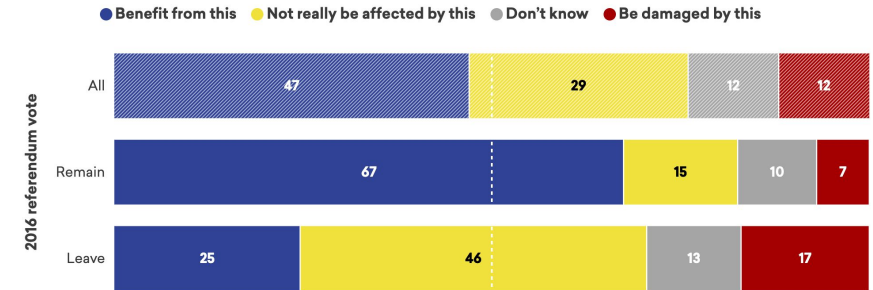
Coastal residents overall see Brexit's biggest local impacts as new trade barriers and costs for local businesses (39 per cent), the loss of EU funding for local projects and infrastructure (34 per cent), and fewer EU workers available to local employers (31 per cent).

Coastal Leave voters rank them as the largest impacts too, though a quarter also point to local businesses being 'freed' from EU regulations.

This disillusionment may feed an appetite for renewed engagement with Europe. Nearly half of coastal respondents (47 per cent) think their local area would benefit from closer practical cooperation with the EU on trade, energy and transport, while just 12 per cent think it would be damaged. Support is strongest among the young, with 55 per cent of 18–34 year olds in coastal areas seeing benefits in closer ties. Coastal Leave voters are far less convinced than Remain voters (25 versus 68 per cent), but they are not hostile: more than four in ten think their area would be largely unaffected, and just 17 per cent expect a negative impact.

## Almost half of coastal residents think their area would benefit from closer EU cooperation on trade, energy and transport

Which of the following is closest to your view? If the UK had closer practical cooperation with European countries on trade, energy and transport, my local area would...



*If I meet somebody and they have respect for me and they're nice to me, I don't have a problem with them. I don't care. If I'm doing business with somebody and they have respect for my business, I don't care if you come from England or come from somewhere else, it doesn't matter. Let's help each other.*

Julia, retired, Brigg and Immingham

**What's next  
for coastal  
communities?**



# What do coastal residents want from politicians?

Looking ahead, coastal residents are clear about the deal they want from government and their local leaders. Asked what they most want from the politicians who represent their area, coastal residents put character on a par with delivery. Honesty and trustworthiness tops the list, alongside bringing down living costs and improving local public services, followed by a long term plan rather than short term fixes.

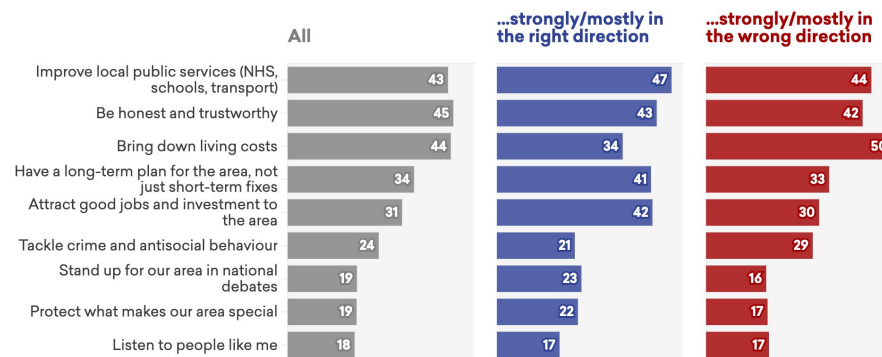
For the financially insecure, everything else is eclipsed by the cost of living (65 per cent), while for coastal Reform voters there is a strong desire to be listened to (26 per cent). Meanwhile, Wales sets the highest bar on delivery, leading every region on improving public services (55 per cent) and attracting jobs and investment (38 per cent).

For those on the coast who think their area is heading in the wrong direction currently, bringing down living costs is the top priority, followed by improving public services. However, this group also places a strong focus on crime and antisocial behaviour as an issue (29 per cent). An improvement in quality of life at a day-to-day level will be key for convincing this group that their area is moving in a better direction.

## Coastal residents want politicians to improve local services, be honest, and tackle the cost of living

What do you most want from the politicians and leaders who represent your local area?

*Split by those who think their local area is moving in the right/wrong direction*



*Just say something and do it. Just do what you say you're going to do. Just at least one of the things. And then they can tell the truth. If you can tick off everything in your manifesto after four years, you've been an alright politician because you've just done things you said.*

**Bob, Data Analyst, Yorkshire**

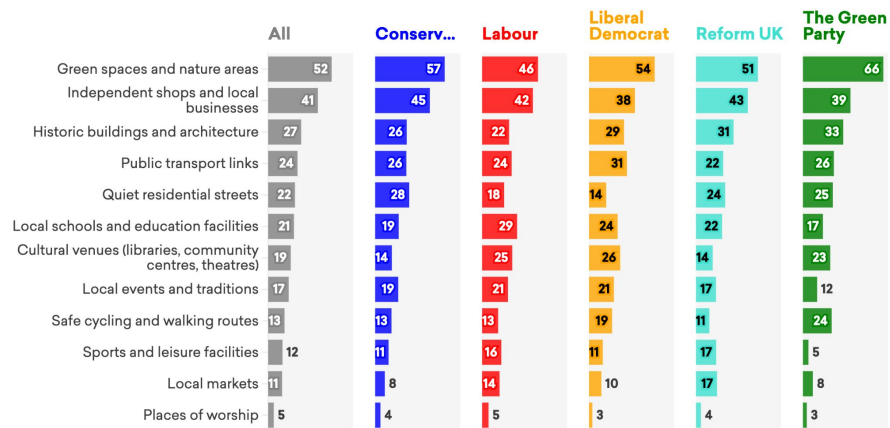
# Coastal residents value and protect their green spaces and small businesses


Asked what they would most want to protect if investment came to their area, coastal residents opt overwhelmingly for the things that define the character of where they live rather than the services they use. Green spaces and nature lead by a distance (52 per cent), followed by independent shops and local businesses (41 per cent) and historic buildings (27 per cent); schools, cultural venues and sports facilities all trail well behind.

This protectiveness is not limited only to those who would typically show a greater concern about environmental issues overall. Conservative voters (57 per cent) and Reform voters (51 per cent) are just as attached to green space as the average, and Green voters (66 per cent) only somewhat more so. In coastal communities, nature and local character are not obstacles that development must negotiate around, but elements of the local community that those in coastal areas from across the political spectrum want to protect.

## In the event of any investment, coastal residents would want to protect their green spaces and independent businesses

If your local area was to win investment/be developed, which of the following about your area would you most want to protect or not change?



 I would say stop building new properties and leave the woods, the trees, the fields, and the nature as it is.

Nick, Retired, Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes

# Coastal residents would prioritise local services for any investment

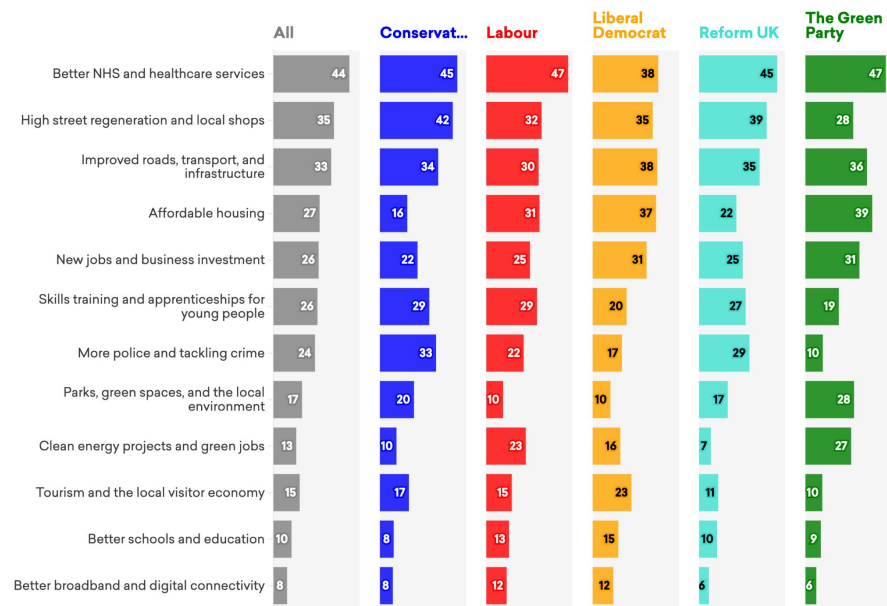
When the question flips from what to protect to where any money should go – in this case, a hypothetical £20 million of government investment in the local area – the answer is bread and butter services. Coastal residents prioritise the NHS (44 per cent), high street regeneration (35 per cent) and transport infrastructure (33 per cent), and these top priorities hold across party lines.

When this question is put to a national sample, Britons share the view that NHS services (43 per cent) and transport infrastructure (36 per cent) should be prioritised, but here, affordable housing is the second top national priority. Coastal residents are unique in the emphasis they place on high street regeneration.

Clean energy investment, by contrast, splits sharply along political lines at the coastal level: around a quarter of Labour and Green voters would make it a priority, against just 7 per cent of Reform voters. Investment focused on clean energy is more divisive across party lines – however, this may ease if linked to jobs and investment or skills, which are seen as more crucial priorities.

## Coastal residents prioritise public services and the high street for any investment

If the government had £20 million to invest in your local area over the next five years, which of the following do you think should be the top priorities?



# Britons think coastal areas should prioritise investment in healthcare, jobs and flooding protections

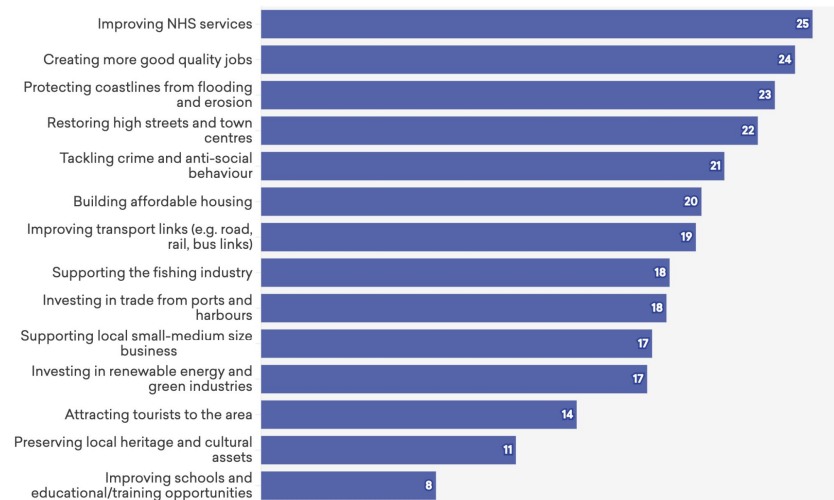
When Britons are asked about the coastal investment they think would most benefit their neighbours, they are most likely to prioritise money going into the NHS (25 per cent), creating more good quality jobs (24 per cent) and protecting coastlines from flooding and erosion (23 per cent).

Again, high street regeneration is seen as a lesser priority for investment by Britons as a whole (22 per cent) than it is by those in coastal communities themselves (35 per cent).

As at the coastal level, the prioritisation of investment in green energy and renewables is divisive across political lines. Those Britons who would vote Conservative (16 per cent) or for Reform UK (9 per cent) are less likely than those who would back Labour or the Greens to say investment in these areas at a coastal level should be a top priority (29 per cent each).

## Britons think coastal communities would be best supported by investment in the NHS, jobs, and coastal protections

If the government were to invest in coastal communities, which of the following should be of top priority?



# Welsh coastal residents are more likely to prioritise investment in clean energy than average

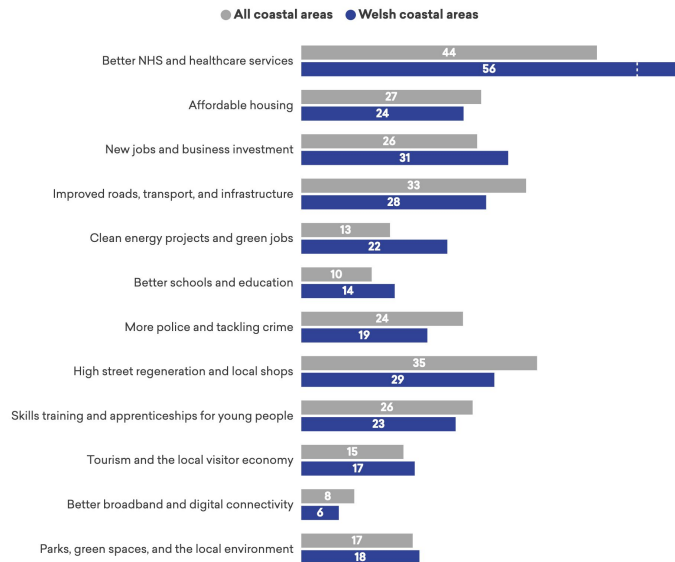
Welsh coastal residents stand out in how strongly they prioritise the protection of green spaces and nature in the event of any development or investment (62 per cent). When asked how the government should spend a hypothetical £20 million in their local area, they are also particularly likely to prioritise the NHS (56 per cent).

Meanwhile, Welsh coastal respondents are less likely than average to say they would prioritise high street regeneration or improved transport infrastructure with this investment, though both remain among their top priorities.

They are also nine points more likely than average to identify clean energy projects as a priority (22 per cent). This is despite being not that much more likely than average to see the energy sector as important to their local economy, or be positive about renewables. This suggests that their interest in clean energy may be based on what such projects could bring locally (e.g. jobs and economic benefits) or an extension of the strong environmental instinct already evident in their support for protecting green spaces and nature.

## Welsh coastal residents are more likely to prioritise investment in clean energy than average

If the government had £20 million to invest in your local area over the next five years, which of the following do you think should be the top priorities?



# Methodology

## Qualitative

Three online focus groups were conducted as part of this project, from Mid-May to early June 2026. Each group had 7–9 participants from mixed age, gender, voting intention and social grade groups. Participants were recruited from the following constituencies:

- **Group 1:** Goole and Pocklington, Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes, Brigg and Immingham and Kingston upon Hull East
- **Group 2:** Cardiff South and Penarth, Swansea West, Aberafan Maesteg and Newport East
- **Group 3:** Southampton Itchen and Southampton Test

## Quantitative

More in Common conducted two polls as part of this project. The first was a nationally representative poll of 2,211 adults in Great Britain, conducted between 29 May and 1 June 2026. Respondents were weighted according to age/sex interlocked, region, 2024 General Election vote, ethnicity, and education level.

The second was a poll of 1,554 adults living in coastal communities in Great Britain, conducted between 22 May and 7 June 2026. Coastal communities were defined as those living within postcode districts falling within the ONS 2022 coastal built-up area classification in England and Wales, and within 5km of the coastline in Scotland. Respondents were weighted according to age, sex, ethnicity, education level, and region.

More in Common is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.