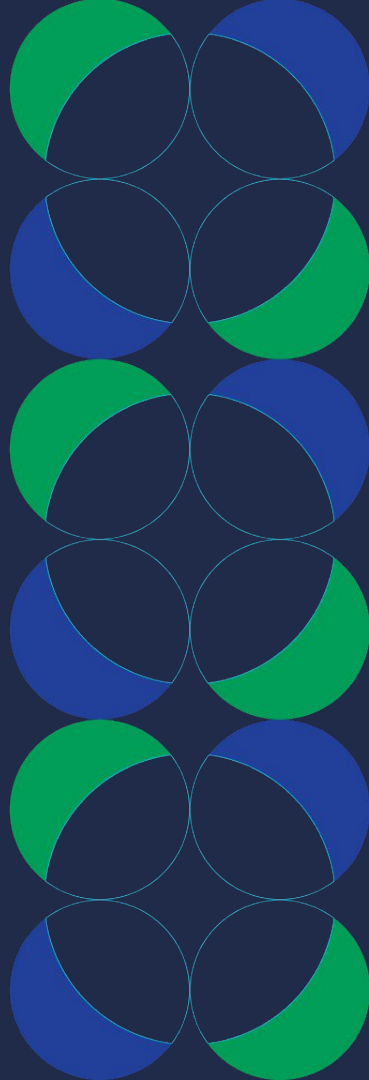




More in
Common

What Britons want from Burnham

July 2026



Burnham's popularity could unite a fragmented coalition, but he's still a relative unknown

In a hypothetical election with Burnham as leader, Labour and Reform are neck-and-neck – with Labour gains coming from left and right.

Burnham is viewed positively by Labour switchers: those who voted Labour in 2024 but now favour other parties.

However, a majority of Britons haven't formed a strong opinion of him yet.

Britons increasingly want radical change; the honeymoon period will be short

Britons' appetite for radical change has grown since 2024, and now more than two in five favour radical rather than incremental change.

This growing desire for radical change has been particularly pronounced among Labour's 2024 voters.

But expectations have fallen, and only one in five Britons think Burnham's government will improve their lives.

Britons give Burnham up to a year to make tangible changes, Labour supporters even less

Most Britons want to see progress on key issues within a year – but a plurality want to see Burnham tackle the cost of living crisis within six months.

Labour switchers give Burnham six months to bring down energy bills.

A majority of Britons also expect visible progress on other issues such as NHS waiting times within a year.

An economically interventionist agenda, righting institutional wrongs and tackling injustice – unites Labour's coalition.

There is strong public support for raising the minimum wage in line with cost of living costs, bringing utilities under greater public control and raising corporation tax.

But Britons don't support new tax rises on individuals, regardless of Labour's manifesto commitments.

Social issues such as tackling the grooming gangs and prosecuting those responsible is also highly prioritised, particularly for Labour-Right switchers.

The devolution agenda resonates, but is not the priority – and some worry it won't be 'for them'

Devolution is popular but not as a priority above the cost of living – action on the economy is the more urgent demand.

Those who feel Burnham speaks for people like them are much more supportive of devolution.

Some are concerned Burnham is only worried about Manchester – and Britons are split on schemes like 'No.10 North'. Many like decentralising power, but worry it's just to big cities.

**Where is the
Labour Party?**



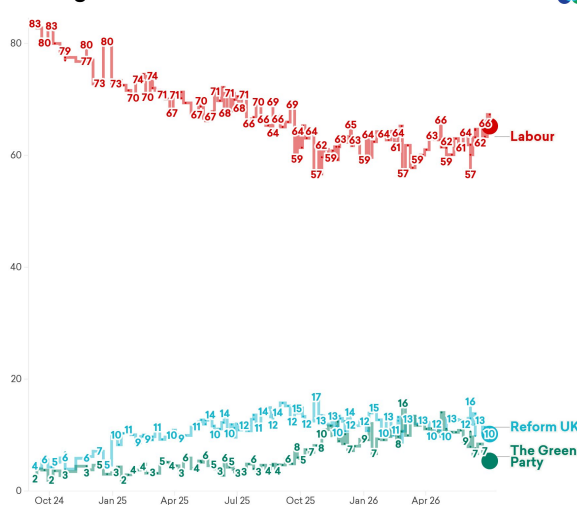
Where are Labour's voters going?

Labour is currently holding onto around three fifths of those who backed the party in 2024. Meanwhile 16 per cent have moved to parties of the right, 14 per cent to parties of the left, and around 10 per cent don't know how they would vote.

In the early days of Starmer's premiership, most of Labour's defections were going to Reform UK, but in late 2025 Labour lost an increasing proportion of voters to its progressive flank – until the defections to the Green Party were equal to those going to Reform.

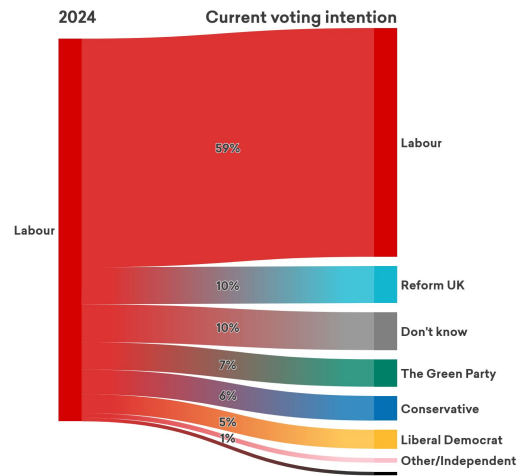
In recent weeks, the Labour Party's retention rate has improved from its trough earlier this year. In particular, Labour seems to be keeping more of its progressive voters, with fewer Labour voters turning to the Greens since Andy Burnham became more prominent as a likely leadership contender.

Voting intention of Labour 2024 voters over time



Current voting intention among 2024 Labour voters

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



Who are Labour's switchers and loyalists?

2024 Labour voters now Green

The people that Labour are losing to their left tend to be millennial graduates in urban areas who are privately renting or have a mortgage. They are majority white, but more ethnically diverse than the wider population, and over-index on being muslim or not having a religion. They are more likely to have voted Remain.

They are economically insecure and are more likely to identify the cost of living, affordable housing and education as the biggest issues facing the country. They think Keir Starmer is doing a bad job, but their opinion is broadly in line with the rest of the public, whereas they overwhelmingly dislike Badenoch and Farage.

Labour loyalists

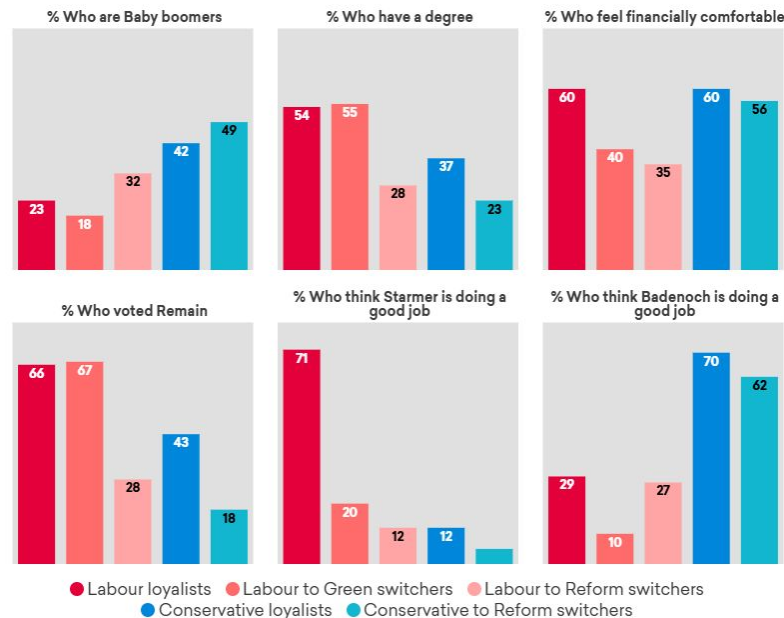
Labour now relies on a core of loyal supporters who are united by some shared traits: compared to the general public they're younger (typically under 45), live in urban areas, and are more likely to be non-white. They are particularly more likely to be from black ethnic groups than an Asian background, in part because of the party's loss of support among British Muslims. Within this core are two groups: one made up of graduates in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties, living in cities. Unlike Labour-Green switchers, they are doing okay financially. They voted Labour in 2024, energised by the promise of change after years of Conservative government, and while disappointed with the government thus far many think Labour needs more time. The second is Labour's legacy support: lifelong Labour voters whose loyalty has weakened in recent years. They're older, live on the outskirts of big cities (potentially in social housing), are struggling financially, and are more likely to rely on state services.

2024 Labour voters now Reform

Previous Labour voters who have turned to Reform are typically more likely to be male, non-degree holders who live in North West England and voted for Brexit. Their age profiles skew older with more baby boomers on average.

Like Green switchers, they also feel financially insecure, but in contrast are far more likely than the wider public to be concerned about immigration, boat crossings and crime. Nigel Farage is popular among this group and they are generally middling in their opinion of Kemi Badenoch, but strongly dislike Keir Starmer – even after having voted for him previously.

Labour switchers to both Green and Reform are less financially secure than loyalists



A Burnham Premiership: A fresh start for the government?

Andy Burnham is viewed positively across Labour's coalition

While Keir Starmer divides Labour's 2024 voter coalition, Andy Burnham unites them: his net approval rating is positive across the voters they have lost to left and right, as well as Labour's loyalists.

Starmer's net approval is -62 among voters Labour has lost to the right and -44 among those lost to the left, only turning positive among loyalists (+49). Burnham, by contrast, is net positive with all three groups — +7 with right switchers, +12 with left switchers, and +58 with loyalists.

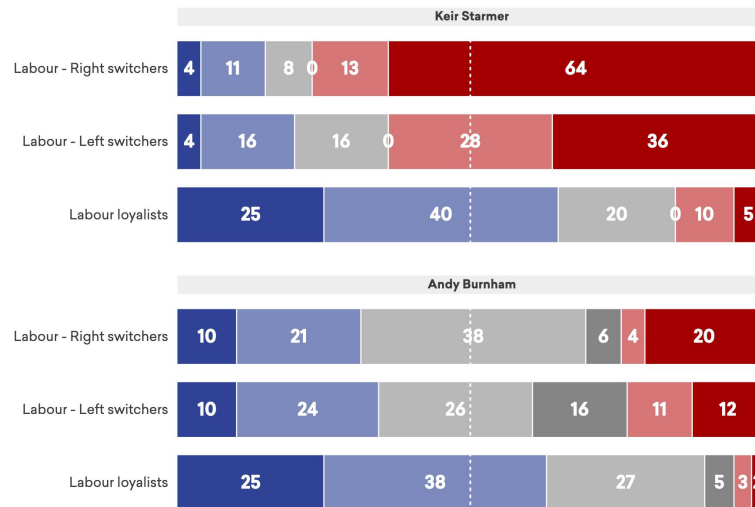
 *I live in Manchester, I've lived here for a long time and he seems to be pretty popular here(...)but I feel the same, I've got a general distrust of a lot of politicians, but he does seem to have done something quite... People on both sides of the political spectrum do seem to quite like him, which is I think sort of miraculous. I know Reform voters that like him and I know people that vote Green that also quite like him as well. And I couldn't name you a single other person that that is the case for..*

Elizabeth, Labour-left switcher, Gorton

Across Labour's 2024 coalition, Andy Burnham holds a positive net approval rating

For each of the following, please indicate whether you think they are doing a good job or a bad job?

● Very good job ● Somewhat good job ● Neither a good job nor a bad job
● Don't know ● Somewhat bad job ● Very bad job



The “Burnham Boost”?

In a hypothetical election with Burnham as leader, Labour climbs 6 points to 27 per cent, marginally ahead of Reform, who fall from 28 to 26.

Burnham’s gains come from across the political spectrum – winning 4 per cent of both Conservative and Reform voters – but his real strength comes from rebuilding Labour’s left wing coalition. 15 per cent of current Lib Dem voters and 14 per cent of Greens say they would switch, alongside a quarter of those who don’t know how they would vote in an election held tomorrow.

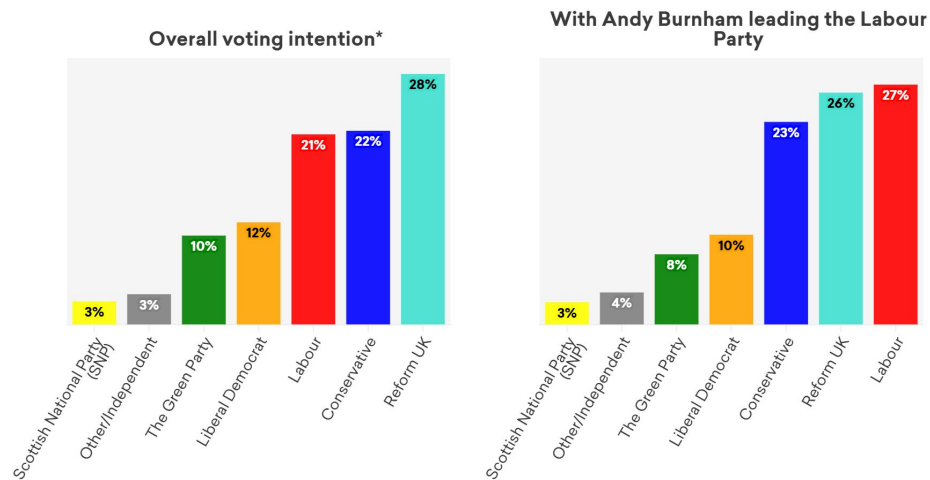


I mean, speaking for myself, right now I'm fifty-fifty. If he [Burnham] could deliver even half of what we've discussed in this room, it would be 100%.

Harold, Labour-left switcher, Gorton

In a hypothetical election with Andy Burnham as leader, Labour could beat Reform UK

Imagine Andy Burnham was the leader of the Labour Party. If a general election was called tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



“Good”, “ambitious” and “Northern – but “unknown”

When asked to describe Andy Burnham in a single word, many of the most common responses are highly optimistic: ‘good’, ‘ambitious’, ‘hopeful’. They contrast with Keir Starmer, who is described as ‘weak’, ‘useless’ and ‘dull’.

However, if there is a risk for the leadership hopeful, it comes from the word ‘unknown’. In focus groups, many voters say they like his brand of politics and are willing to give Labour a rehearing, but aren’t quite sure what a Burnham premiership will look like in practice.

In a word, how would you describe **Andy Burnham**?



In a word, how would you describe **Keir Starmer**?



For many, Burnham is an unknown quantity

Asked what they think of Andy Burnham, half of the public (50 per cent) do not have a view – including 27 per cent who say they neither approve nor disapprove, and 23 per cent who don't know.

This reflects how people describe Burnham in focus groups: a section feel tentatively optimistic, but there's a widespread sense among both supporters and sceptics that he needs to make his positions clearer.

Being so far undefined is both a challenge and opportunity: Burnham still has time to define himself, but there is a risk that remaining opaque for too long will see him face the same frustration that beleaguered Keir Starmer's premiership.



Being mayor is very different to being a prime minister. I think you are very reliant on funding directly and indirectly, you're not making those financial decisions... he might be just a least worst solution perhaps, but not sure.

Jack, Labour-left switcher, Brighton



Given the fact that he's not run on a platform, he just sprung up as a potential prime minister, he doesn't have to promise anything

Harold, Labour-left switcher, Gorton



He's not really known to a lot of people. He's not known to the country.

Dave, Labour-Right switcher, Middleton



He's in a quite unique position where he can show us what he can do... it'd be tempting to vote for him because he will have shown us that he can do it as opposed to go like, 'Well, let's go for the guys we don't know.

Julia, Labour-left switcher, Tottenham



As much as he's part of the establishment, he's got this whole public perception and the media seem to love him... I don't really know where to sit on that.

Gareth, Labour-Right switcher, Newark

Burnham versus Farage

Nigel Farage's finance row is cutting through with voters as fresh proof that politicians are "all the same". While the scandal risks damaging some voters' perceptions of Farage, some say they're not surprised, and that this matches what they have come to expect for politicians.

In this context, it is even more important for Burnham to demonstrate that he is genuinely different and set himself apart from a distrusted political class by showing integrity. For both Labour Left and Right switchers in focus groups, Burnham is part of the political establishment

Yet some in focus groups participants make flattering parallels between the two leaders: some believe Burnham has some of Farage's straight-talking charisma, and want to see him continue to be direct.



I feel like it's one of them things where all the politicians are all the same. So I don't really think... they've all done it. Yeah. So it feels like as much as he [Farage] wants changing, he's speaking for the public, he's doing something behind the back that has been exposed and yeah, that's going to cause him some problems. And yeah, it makes me lose a bit of respect to be honest.

Damon, Labour-Right switcher, Middleton



[Farage] doesn't seem to worry about who he upsets by what he says. He seems to — I'm saying it and like it, or lump it. It's my opinion and that's what I think. That's the impression I get from him... he seems to have a comeback answer for whatever they throw at him. And his attitude appears to be, 'You don't like me? Move on then. You don't have to,' sort of thing.

Alina, Labour-Right switcher, Middleton



I do like the fact that he's [Burnham] from up north. He was doing the selfies for me and his social media presence is certainly a lot more charismatic than Keir Starmer... and I suppose that's quite similar to Nigel Farage. His social media presence and things on platforms like TikTok and X — that's basically the only reason I know who they were.

Holly, Labour-Right switcher, Newark

Burnham's personal brand is strong – but it alone isn't enough

Attributing ideas to Andy Burnham, rather than Keir Starmer, does not increase or decrease public support. This is both good news and bad news for Burnham.

Respondents were split into two groups and shown the same set of policies from Andy Burnham's initial speech – one group told the ideas were Burnham's, the other told they were Starmer's. The share calling them good ideas barely moves between splits (69% vs. 68%), which is good news for Burnham given Starmer's relatively toxic brand and previous research showing his "reverse Midas touch."

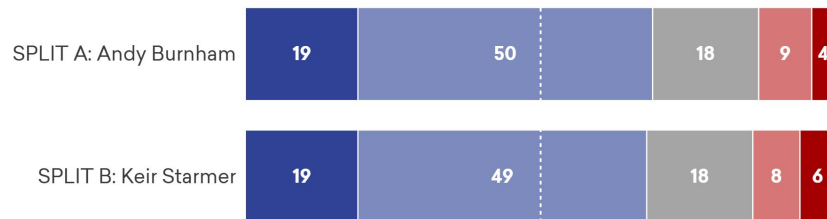
Among Labour-to-Reform switchers – who are particularly negative on Starmer – a majority still rate the ideas positively even when told they're Starmer's. But this cuts both ways for Burnham: it suggests these ideas won't get a much warmer reception simply for being his, or for representing a change of leadership.

Attributing ideas to Andy Burnham, rather than Keir Starmer, does not boost public support

In a recent speech, [Andy Burnham/Keir Starmer] said that the government should give more powers to regional and national bodies outside of Westminster, build more affordable and social housing, and bring down welfare spending by giving people greater in-work support.

Overall, would you say that these mostly sound like:

- Very good ideas
- Quite good ideas
- Don't know
- Quite bad ideas
- Very bad ideas





Low expectations, high demands:

**What Britons hope to see
from Burnham**

Many have lost faith that this government will make a difference – even under Burnham

The prospect of a Burnham premiership has made some Britons more hopeful – but far less than Starmer did at the start.

In July 2024, 54% expected the incoming Labour government to improve their lives, including 84% of 2024 Labour voters. Today, just 41% say the same of a Labour government under Burnham – and even 2024 Labour voters are split. Two years in office have tempered expectations considerably.

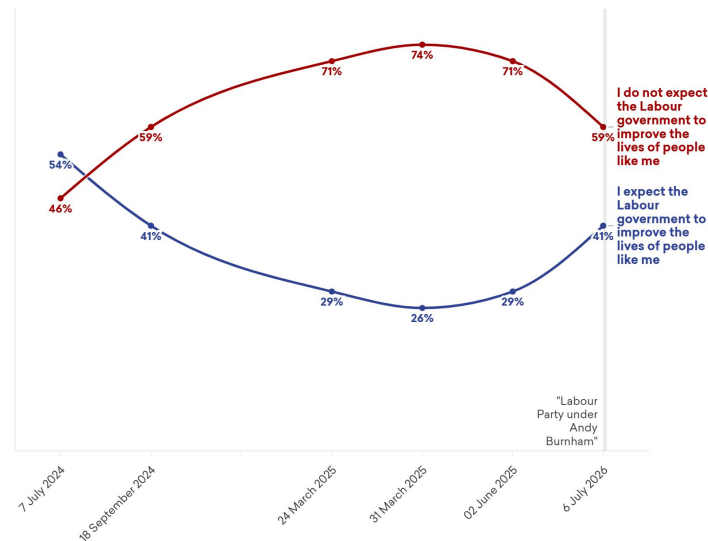
Burnham inherits not just low trust but active pessimism. "Fresh start" framing won't be enough on its own; he'll need to show credible change and draw a clear line between his government and Starmer's.



"I think I lost my optimism about 15, 20 years ago, and I don't know if I'll ever get it back. That's genuinely how I feel."

Elizabeth, Labour-left switcher, Gorton

Many Britons have lost trust in Labour's ability to improve their lives



The public's demand for radical change has grown

Since the 2024 general election, appetite for radical change has grown while tolerance for gradual change has fallen. After feeling that the government has failed to deliver for them, the public's patience may be shortening.

In July 2024, 52% of Britons favoured smaller, gradual changes versus 38% wanting more radical change. By July 2026, this has flipped: 36% now favour gradual change versus 42% wanting radical change.

The shift holds even among 2024 Labour voters, where preference for radical change has grown from 44% to 49%, and appetite for smaller changes has declined. Those who have turned away from Labour since the election are more likely to want radical change – regardless of whether they've gone to left or right.

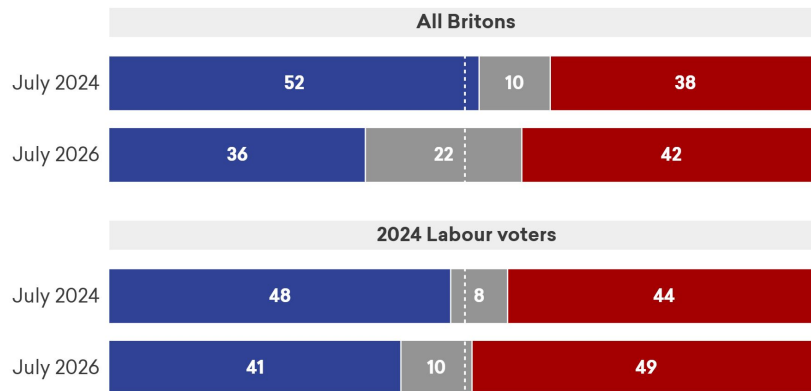
 *If it was too quick, it would make me a bit apprehensive, a bit nervous sort of thing. But as long as there's clear plans that we get to see about it and that people can scrutinise, I think it would have to be a mixture, some more fast results or fast action and some more longer term.*

Lula, Labour-left switcher, Tottenham

Since the 2024 General Election, Britons' appetite for radical change has grown

Thinking about different ways the new government might approach delivering change, which comes closer to your view?

- Focus on making smaller adjustments and gradual changes to how the country works
- Don't know
- Focus on making larger and more radical changes to how the country works



Labour voters want some of Starmer's policies reversed

Most 2024 Labour voters want to see some of the policies introduced under Keir Starmer scrapped or reversed – but their preferences vary by voting intention.

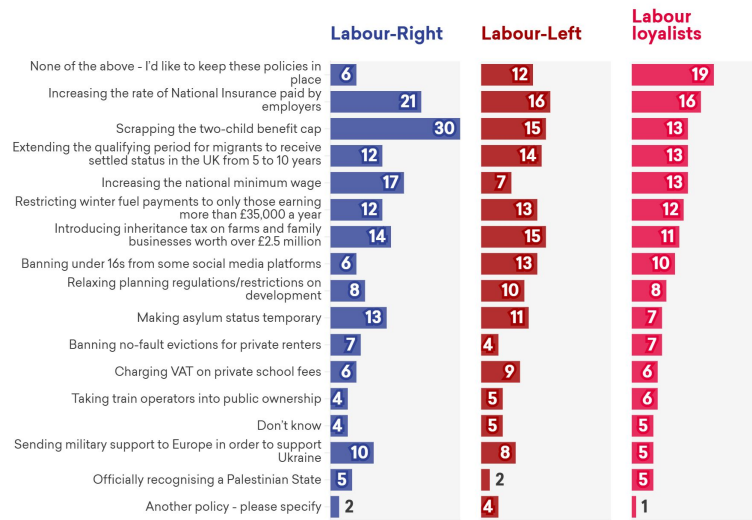
30 per cent of Labour–Right switchers want to reinstate the two-child benefit cap, twice the rate of other groups, and they're also more likely to want the minimum wage increase rolled back.

Labour-to-Left switchers prioritise scrapping employers' National Insurance increase, the lifting of the two-child benefit cap and introducing new inheritance taxes.

Only 14 per cent of those who voted Labour in 2024 say they would not reverse any of these policies. Yet the challenge for Burnham is that, while most Labour voters are dissatisfied with at least one policy area from the last two years of government, they are dissatisfied in quite different ways.

Labour's Left-leaning voters are most likely to want to scrap employers' NI; right-leaning voters would bring back the two-child benefit cap

If a new Prime Minister took office tomorrow, which of the Starmer government's policies, if any, would you most like them to reverse?



Burnham must straddle a coalition that spans across left and right

Labour's 2024 coalition spans a wide range of views: on a 0-10 scale, voters lost to the right place themselves right-of-centre (median 6), while Labour-left switchers place themselves at a 4, and Labour Loyalists a 5..

Each of these voters agree that Burnham is a 3/10 on the left-right scale,

Tellingly, Labour-left and loyalist voters both place Burnham well to the left of Starmer (median 3 vs 5). But voters lost to the right place both figures at the same spot (median 3), far from their own position of 6, seeing little difference between them.

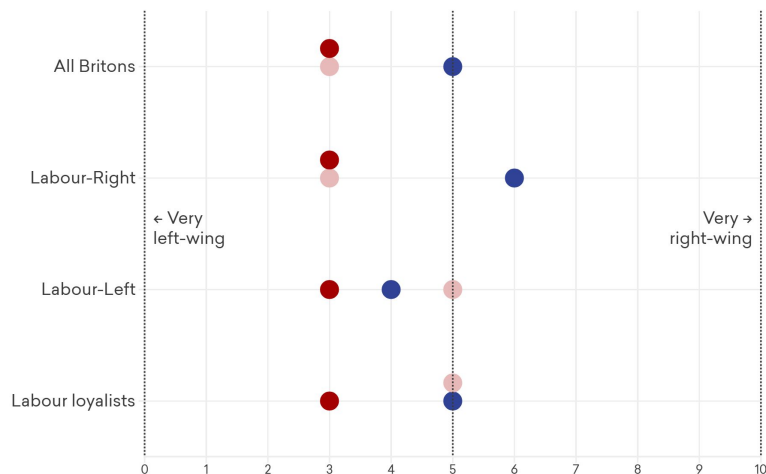
That means no single leftward or rightward shift solves this for Burnham. A strategy that holds Labour's coalition together will need to blend some left-wing positions with others that appeal to more conservative-minded voters.

The median Briton believes they are more right wing than Starmer or Burnham

Sometimes politics is described as being on a left-right scale. Where do you put your own views on that scale, where 0 is very left wing, and 10 is very right wing?

And where do you think each of the following political leaders currently are on that same scale?

● Self placement ● Where they place Keir Starmer ● Where they place Andy Burnham



Burnham still needs to convince some Britons that he cares

At a time where Britons see most politicians as disrespectful and out-of-touch, a key challenge for the next Prime Minister will be demonstrating respect for ordinary people.

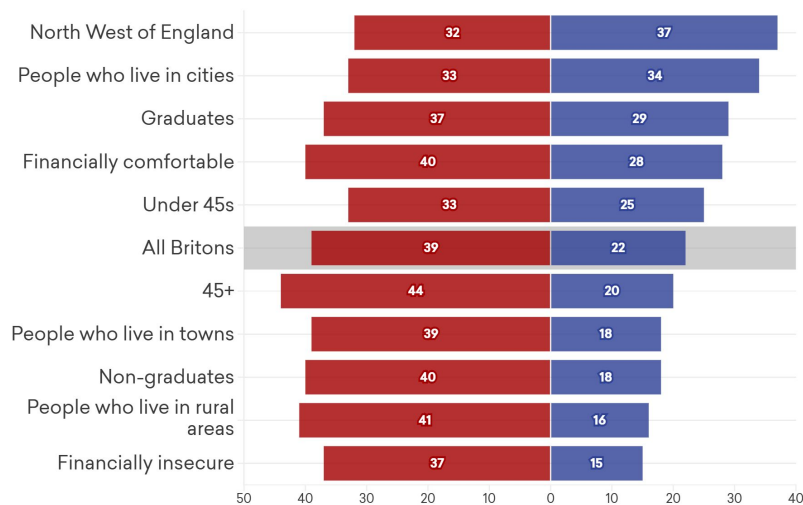
Burnham is more likely to be seen to respect people than other mainstream politicians, yet he still faces a key challenge: urban and affluent Britons, graduates, and those who live in the North West of England are by far the most likely to say that Burnham speaks for people like them.

In contrast, Britons who live outside of cities, who are struggling financially, or didn't go to university, are far less likely to feel represented by Burnham.

Affluent urbanites, graduates, and those who live in the North West of England are most likely to feel represented by Burnham

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Andy Burnham does NOT speak for people like me
- Andy Burnham speaks for people like me



Most think Burnham has represented himself accurately, but some expect Burnham to pivot left in office

Half of Britons (52 per cent) think Burnham in government would be the same as he has presented himself so far during leadership bid; but more than a third think he'd govern further to the left – 2024 Labour voters especially likely to think so (45%)

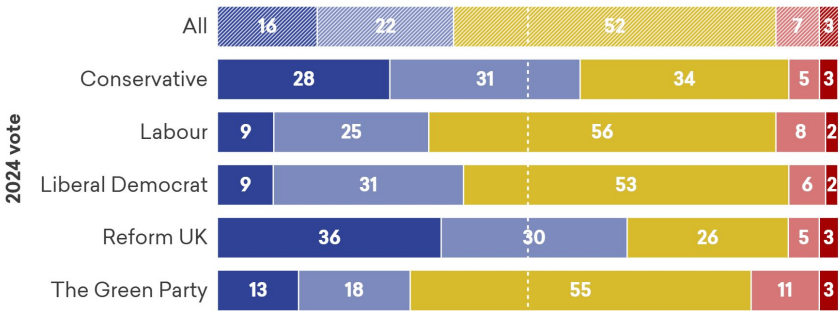
Voters overall are more likely to think Burnham will stay true to his word than they were with Starmer after July 2024 election (43% said the same of KS)

But the exception is right-leaning voters who are more sceptical – those who voted Conservative and Reform are far more likely to expect Burnham to shift left in office than they were to think the same of Starmer.

Britons tend to think Burnham will stay on the same track in government - but right-leaning voters expect him to pivot left

Based on what you know about Andy Burnham's current campaign promises and your own impressions, do you think Andy Burnham will be...

- Much more left-wing than his campaign suggested
- Somewhat more left-wing than his campaign suggested
- The same as he has presented himself in the campaign
- Somewhat more right-wing than his campaign suggested
- Much more right-wing than his campaign suggested



Burnham will need to show he will put party over country

Some Britons worry that Andy Burnham will prioritise his own party over the country as a whole.

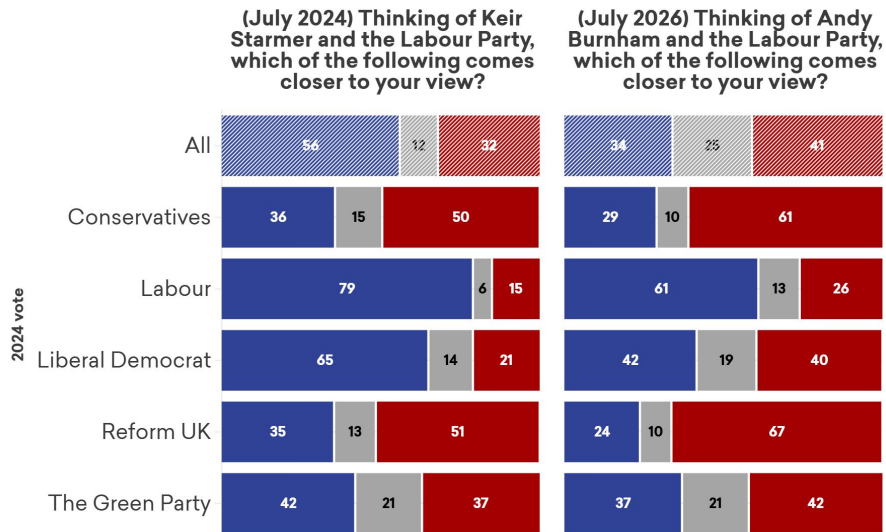
Just after the 2024 election, 54% said Starmer prioritised the country over the party; only 34% say the same of Burnham today, with 41% now thinking he and Labour prioritise party over country.

Labour switchers are split on this – left switchers are more likely to see him as prioritising the country, right switchers more likely to see him as prioritising the party.

Visible internal party conflict could reinforce this view among the right switchers he most needs to win back, so managing optics of party unity will be important.

2 in 5 Britons expect Burnham to put the needs of his party above the country

● They prioritise the needs of the country ● Don't know
● They prioritise the needs of their party



The Makerfield Test

What Makerfield voters
want to see



The “last chance” to change Britain



I was actually shouting at the telly this morning, eating my breakfast, watching that acceptance speech ... I was agreeing with everything going, ‘Yes, Andy, it is your last chance’. It’s your last chance saloon! Don’t waste it, mate!

Lisa, Teacher, Winstanley

As a non-Labour supporter, it’s given me a little bit of hope (...) As he said in his speech, he’s listening to people... that they’re giving him a chance and he knows he’s got three years. He’s got three years here and if they don’t sort it out, if he’s not true to his word, then they’re all out of a job.

Alex, Machine Manufacturer, Ashton

*I think he’s entirely right there, where he talks about **the final chance of change**. That’s definitely how I feel.*

Simon, Student, Ashton

If we don’t get our own country sorted out soon, we’re going to be in big trouble.

**Mike, Semi-Retired
Veteran Support Officer,
Ashton**

Shown a clip of Burnham’s acceptance speech, the line that resonated most with voters – including some Reform voters – was his promise to change politics, described as the “final chance to change.” Some Burnham voters said he sounded “like a Prime Minister” for the first time. Lisa from Winstanley described “shouting at the telly”, urging Andy Burnham not to waste his last chance.

He’s saying it like a prime minister coming in. The first time in years and years where I thought, yeah, this guy. Yeah. And to be fair, that’s the first time I’ve actually thought of him like that as well.

Daniel, Marketing Manager, Ashton

But voters wanted to see more substance

*I don't think that was an acceptance speech. I think that was the opening gambit of going for the leadership. I don't know if people are old enough, but you know that "things can only get better" – I was minded of that kind of sentiment. **There's not a lot of content in there. There's not a lot of policy, but he is pulling on the heartstrings at this point.***



Peter, Account Manager, Orrell.

While one Reform voter said that this line gave him “a little bit of hope”, there was a widespread sense that Burnham’s promise of change so far lacked substance. Over the summer, Makerfield residents want to see more detail on how Burnham will deliver his agenda on devolution, the cost of living, and championing places like Makerfield.

*In his speech he said everybody knows politics isn't working and we all need change and we've got to have hope. **He hasn't once said how he's going to change politics** to make everybody feel happier.*



Susan, Therapist, Ashton

Devolution can't just mean Manchester



I think that's weak and it's an excuse, just because

*he wants to be basically prime minister ... **this***

North-South divide, it's more

Manchester-focused and London-focused.

Places like Wigan sadly just get forgotten about.

Alice, Associate Architect, Hindley Green

*I think there's been more consideration for the north of the country
for the last probably 10 years or so ... but it still hasn't really been*



*delivered. You can see that with how HS2 was cancelled any
further north ... **Whether he can deliver it is a different matter,***

but his legacy will depend on it absolutely.

Alan, Warehouse Manager, Winstanley

Burnham's appeal has always rested on being seen as a champion of the North and a challenger to Westminster, and that was a key driver of his vote in Makerfield. But voters were clear that this promise will be tested on whether it reaches beyond Inner Manchester.

Some voters felt that the North-South divide, as currently framed by Burnham, is really just a divide between Manchester and London, with towns like Wigan forgotten. One voter said Burnham's "legacy will depend" on whether he can deliver a programme of devolution that is felt in places like Makerfield.

The “Makerfield Test” must start with the cost of living



I've never known a Labour government make it more difficult for the working class. And that's what he seems to have done.

Melissa, Retired, Ashton

The winter fuel allowance — that was the first time I was eligible for it and didn't get it. Retirement as well as being done by WASPI, because they ripped the pension from me without telling me. And the thing is with Labour is my granddad was a pit man, he died of pneumoconiosis, all my father's family were Labour through and through. And I am finding it so difficult to even think about Labour.

Carol, Retired Prison Service Worker, Bryn

I'm already feeling the benefits of what he's done ... having the bus fare reduced makes a massive difference. It saved me about 60 quid a month, just by him capping the bus fare – and I think everybody in whatever wage bracket you're in is feeling it.

Ella, Nurse, Highfield

Voters will judge Andy Burnham first and foremost on the cost of living: the issue driving the wider sense of “broken Britain” more than any other. Many felt the Labour government had failed to tackle this, or made things harder; even a year after the policy was partially reversed, the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Allowance came up repeatedly throughout the campaign.

While voters want to see radical change, there's also a clear appetite for smaller but more tangible interventions on the cost of living. One of Burnham's most praised policies as mayor of Greater Manchester was the bus fare cap. It emerged as evidence that politicians can still make a meaningful difference, at a time where many feel the national government is unable to do so.

**What should
Burnham's
immediate
priorities be?**



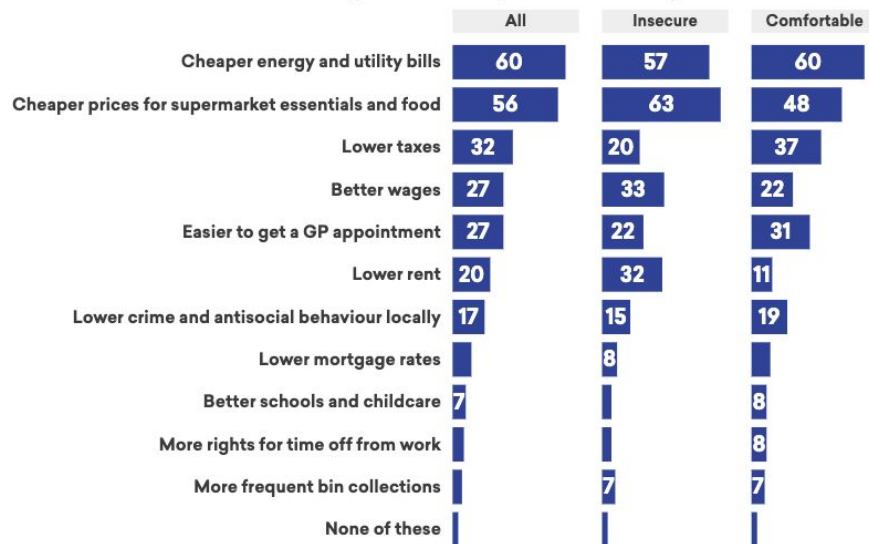
Tackling the cost of living is Britons' top priority for Burnham

When asked which policies would make their life easier right now, Britons' priorities are economic: cheaper utility bills, cheaper food, lower taxes and better wages (27%) top the list. This reflects how the cost of living remains the defining issue for many – 62 per cent cite it as the key challenge facing the country, a trend that predates the 2024 General Election.

Those struggling to cover the cost of their essentials are especially likely to name these policies as those which would make their lives easier. As noted earlier, many in this group do not currently feel Burnham speaks for them. Making tangible progress on the cost of living is key to winning their trust, as well as rebuilding Labour's 2024 coalition – many of the voters who moved away from the party [at the 2026 locals](#) were united by financial insecurity.

Tackling the cost of living is the highest priority for both financially secure and insecure Britons

Which of the following would make your life easier right now?



There is a strong appetite for Burnham to act quickly and decisively on the cost of living

In focus groups, those who have left Labour for the Greens or for Reform say that Burnham's key priority should be tackling the cost of living.

For many, this isn't just an abstract commitment – they want to see real, tangible progress, in ways that affect their lives. A concrete economic offer is key to convincing Britons that any government is delivering change that materially improves their lives.



Well, the cost of living, that should be a priority because people are suffering with the price of everything. It's just the cost of living. Everything's shrinkage and everything you buy is getting smaller and you're paying top prices for everything. I think that's a priority for most working people.

Maisie, Labour-Right switcher, Middleton



Homelessness, but also the cost of housing. People are struggling so much. And the NHS is really struggling. People struggle to get the care they need and the people who work at the NHS are burnt out, underpaid. Same thing in school. Because I work with kids and people with disabilities, that's mostly what I see. It's just people struggling every day, can't make things work. Yeah. So NHS education, housing benefits, lots of people are losing their benefits, especially disability benefits. Yeah, that's heartbreaking.

Julia, Labour-left switcher, Tottenham



Food packaging and content is getting smaller, prices are getting bigger, quality's getting poorer. And we're working ourselves to death really. I think we're working ourselves... Half the time I think I'm not even going to be able to claim my pension at this rate. And then if and when I can, what's the economy and the world going to be like? Are we going to be able to even appreciate it and enjoy any of it?

Alina, Labour-Right switcher, Manchester

And while many Britons want economic growth in theory, cost of living relief is the stronger priority in practice

On the economy, the public is genuinely divided about which approach to take. Asked directly, 44 per cent favour targeted measures to help with the cost of living even if they don't grow the economy, while 42 per cent prioritise broader economic growth. Among party supporter groups, broader economic growth is the preference for every one except current Green supporters.

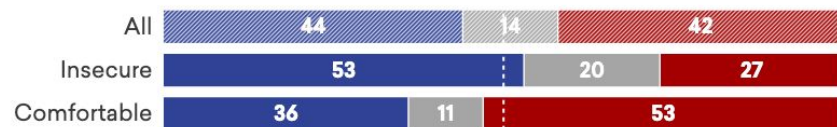
Yet a conjoint experiment tells a different story – when respondents chose between policy packages, without being explicitly told they were trading one goal against the other, **the cost of living tended to come out as the stronger preference**. This suggests that while people may say they want growth, when faced with concrete policy choices, more immediate relief tends to win.

Economically insecure respondents lean toward targeted measures – for them, the trade off is less abstract. A broad growth story might risk feeling distant and too much of a ‘slow burn’ for households under more immediate financial pressure.

Those who are less financially secure want the Government to prioritise helping with the cost of living

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- ☒ The government should focus on targeted measures that help people with the cost of living, even if they don't make a big difference to the economy overall
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ The government should focus on growing the economy, rather than lots of small measures which might help individuals with the cost of living



Devolution is relatively popular but not a priority

Support for devolution is stronger than opposition to it, but a large proportion of people feel neutral about it or are uncertain – for many, devolution is not an issue they feel strongly about either way.

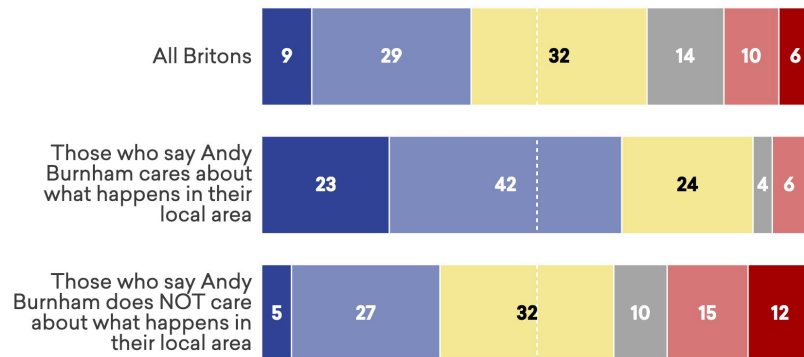
Those who think Andy Burnham cares about their area are twice as likely to back devolution (65 per cent) as those who don't (32 per cent), which could suggest that opposition is less ideological and more rooted in doubt that devolution will deliver for them personally. The key to boosting support for devolution may be making a local, personal case for it and its material benefits.

2024 Labour voters (52 per cent) are more likely than voters of other parties to support devolution, making it an issue that could pull together the party's winning coalition. However, the issue animates those who have moved to Labour's left since that election more than those who have since moved to support Reform or the Conservatives. While these voters are not opposed to devolution, they are less enthusiastic.

A plurality of Britons are indifferent to proposals to devolve power from Westminster - those who say Burnham cares about their local area tend to support

To what extent would you support or oppose moving decision making power away from the government in Westminster to regional mayors and/or devolved governments?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



Most Britons expect progress on key issues within a year

A majority of Britons expect Burnham to have made tangible progress on tackling child sexual exploitation and grooming gangs, energy bills, the cost of living, NHS waiting times, and small boats by July 2027.

Labour-right switchers are especially impatient – more than four in ten expect progress within six months on child sexual exploitation, energy bills, small boats, and NHS waiting time, and they are even more demanding than Labour-left switchers on progress on the transition to net zero, despite their generally lower levels of climate concern.

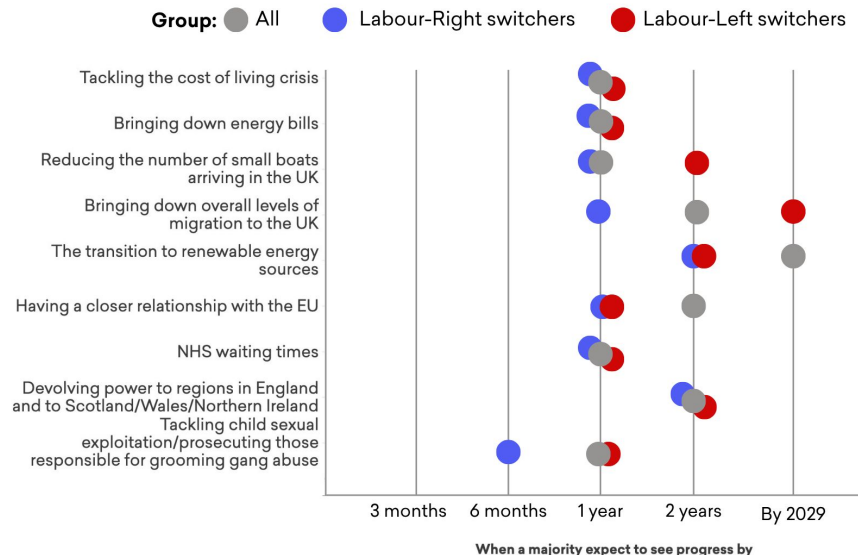
Britons are more willing to give Burnham time on devolution and the transition to renewables, perhaps reflecting that these issues feel less immediately pressing.

[On the NHS] I would've thought less than six months. I think you have to give him some time, it's not going to happen overnight. You've got to put the policies and procedures and everything into place, but you also have to reduce this wait time. How are you going to achieve that?

Holly, Labour-right switcher, Newark

Most Britons give Burnham a year or less to make progress in key policy areas

If Andy Burnham were to become Prime Minister, by when would you expect his government to have made significant progress on each of the following issues?



**What policy
platform do
Britons want
from Burnham?**



Burnham's opening policy offer lands well

Britons are more likely support every policy Burnham outlined within and around his initial speech after launching his leadership bid than they are to oppose it. The strongest net support is found for raising the income tax threshold, requiring more government contracts to go to British businesses, bringing water into public ownership, and devolution.

This trend of greater support than opposition holds across both Labour-left and Labour-right switchers. Left switchers tend to be more enthusiastic of each policy overall, but right switchers are notably more supportive than their peers on the left of directing contracts to British businesses and reversing the employer National Insurance rise.

Of the policies tested, reversing the National Insurance rise is the greatest fault line between the two groups, with Labour-Right switchers almost 30 points more supportive of it. This likely reflects their earlier desire for Burnham to take a 'tougher' stance on big business in office, though most still support a reversal.

Labour switchers to left-wing parties tend to be more supportive of devolution

To what extent do you support or oppose giving regional mayors and councils more power over things like transport, housing and local economic development?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose

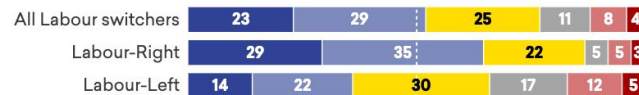


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Labour switchers to right-wing parties are more likely to support a maintenance of the current rate of National Insurance

To what extent do you support or oppose reversing the recent rise in the rate of employer National Insurance?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



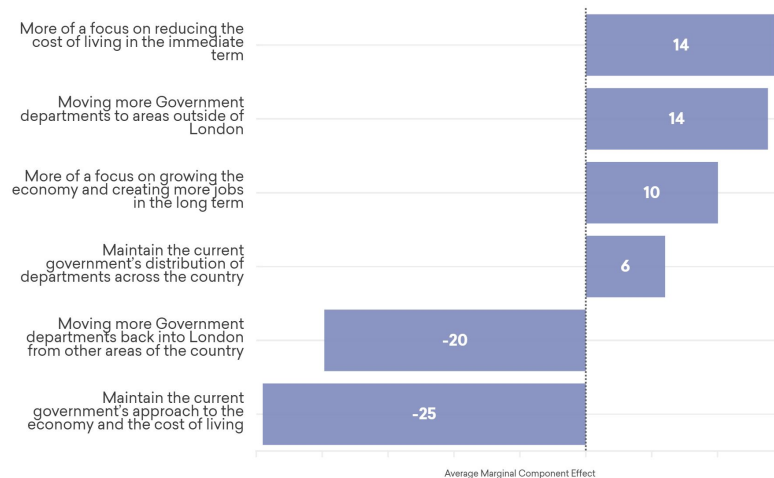
A package of measures tackling the cost of living and devolving power has considerable appeal

In an experiment, respondents were shown a series of hypothetical policy packages, incorporating policies from across various areas including the economy, legal and irregular migration, climate, and devolution. Respondents were asked to choose which policy packages they preferred.

Repeating this across multiple rounds with different combinations of policies allows us to dig into the outcomes people actually prioritise in each issue area, and effectively to look at the direction they think a new government should move in its first few months.

What came across is that Britons are pro-devolution, hostile to the current government's approach on both the economy and immigration, and willing to trade off more ambitious climate policy for gains elsewhere.

Immediate action on the cost of living, and decentralising power from London, are popular with the public



Britons skew left economically, but also want action on issues such as grooming gang prosecutions

Most of the interventionist economic policies tested had net support. The policy with the strongest overall support was continuing to raise the minimum wage in line with living costs (60 per cent net support), followed by bringing utility companies under greater public control, reducing income tax, and increasing the rate of corporation tax paid by the country's biggest companies.

Even among those who tend to be more fiscally conservative – like those who would currently vote for Reform UK and the Conservatives – majorities back bringing utilities into greater public control, increasing corporation tax, and raising the minimum wage. These majorities also hold across both left and right Labour switchers, suggesting there is a cross-coalition economic platform available to the government, which tends to skew left in practice.

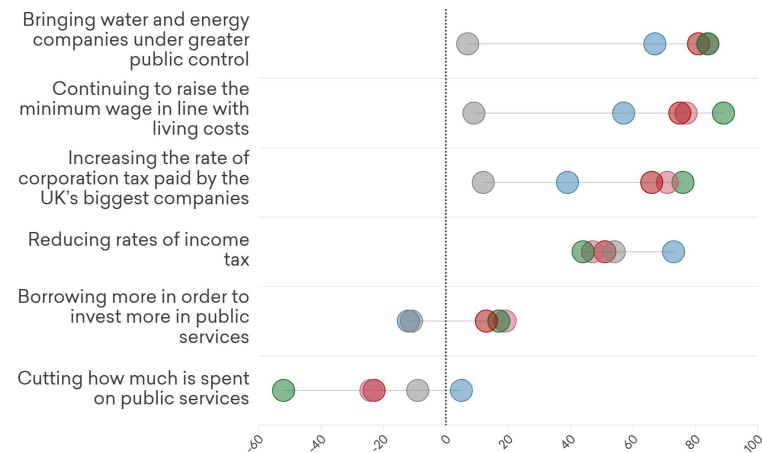
Britons also tend to want stronger action on other priorities and righting institutional wrongs. Six in ten (58 per cent) expect progress on tackling child sexual exploitation and prosecuting those responsible for grooming gangs within a year – a large proportion than those who want NHS waiting times to fall within a year. This rises to almost three quarters (72 per cent) of Labour-Reform switchers, and in focus groups many make clear how significant a factor this is in their loss of faith with the government.

Labour's 2024 coalition are united in support for an economically left-leaning agenda

To what extent would you support or oppose the government introducing the following economic policies?

(Net support)

● All 2024 Labour voters ● Labour-Left ● Labour loyalists ● Labour-Right ● All Britons



Voters – including Labour’s 2024 coalition – want immediate relief on the cost of living

When forced to choose a preferred economic approach, most people broadly reject the idea that any new government should maintain that of the current one. If they had to choose, most Britons would also prefer immediate cost of living help over a focus on longer term growth – including 2024 Conservative and Reform voters.

2024 Labour voters strongly reject the current government's economic approach, despite having voted for it little more than two years ago, and similarly favour an approach that focuses on tackling the cost of living rather than overall growth when forced to prioritise one or the other.

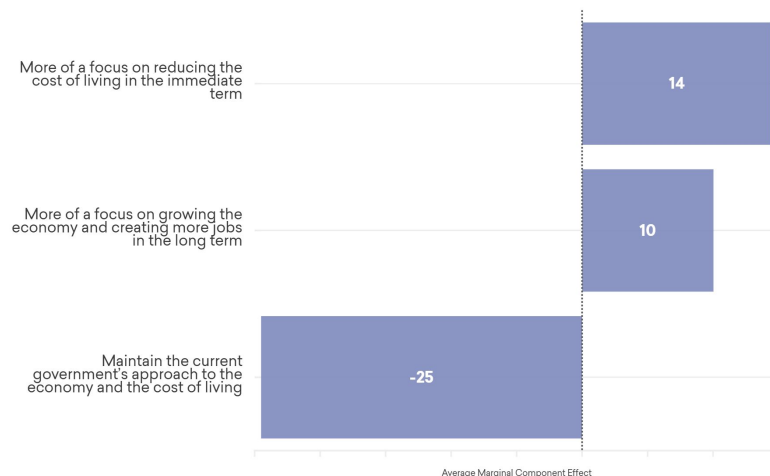
Winning back Labour’s winning 2024 coalition may hinge on tangible help with the cost of living rather than a more structural, ‘big picture’ approach to economic policy.

For me, I would say he needs to take action fast on improving the cost of living. So things like an energy price cap and rent, because I feel like there needs to be more controls with how much landlords can charge.

Ellie, Labour-left switcher, Manchester



Britons want immediate action on the cost of living; continuing with the government's current approach is highly unpopular



While Britons don't want to see tax rises, there is openness to a fresh start on fiscal policy beyond manifesto promises

The public don't want to see further tax rises: by a margin of 48 per cent to 32 per cent, Britons say that keeping tax low should be prioritised over investment in public services. However, a split sample experiment revealed that mention of Labour's manifesto tax pledges did not shift public views on tax.

What's more, Britons are marginally more likely to think Burnham should be free to set his own tax policies than to hold him to previous Labour commitments – this includes 47% of those who actually voted Labour in 2024, suggesting even the party's own 2024 coalition is open to a fresh economic offer.

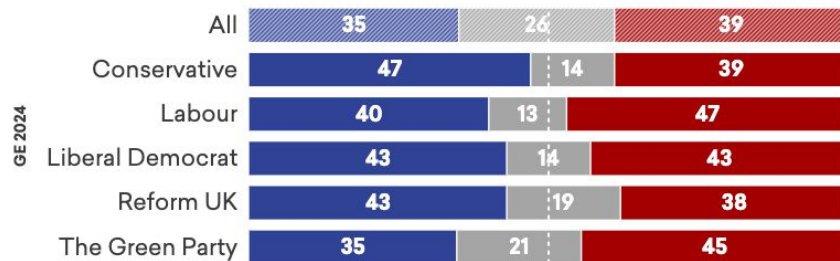
Only current Conservative and Reform voters lean toward holding Burnham to existing commitments, while both left and right Labour switchers favour giving him room to set his own. This is likely for different reasons, given right switchers' appetite for reversing the National Insurance rise and left switchers' support for measures like higher corporation tax.

This gives Burnham some licence to distance himself from Starmer-era tax decisions. However, there is a risk: In focus groups, a key concern of Labour-Right switchers was that Burnham would end up as yet another politician who couldn't be trusted. Being seen to stick to promises, even if they are Labour's rather than Burnham's, may alleviate this.

Nearly half of Labour's 2024 voters think Burnham should be offered a fresh start on fiscal policy

In their manifesto ahead of the 2024 General Election, the Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer, committed to not increasing income tax rates, national insurance, or VAT. Thinking about these commitments, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Burnham should keep to all of Labour's commitments on tax
 ● Don't know
 ● Burnham should be free to set his own policies on tax



When it comes to potential tax cuts, Britons want those on lower income to be favoured

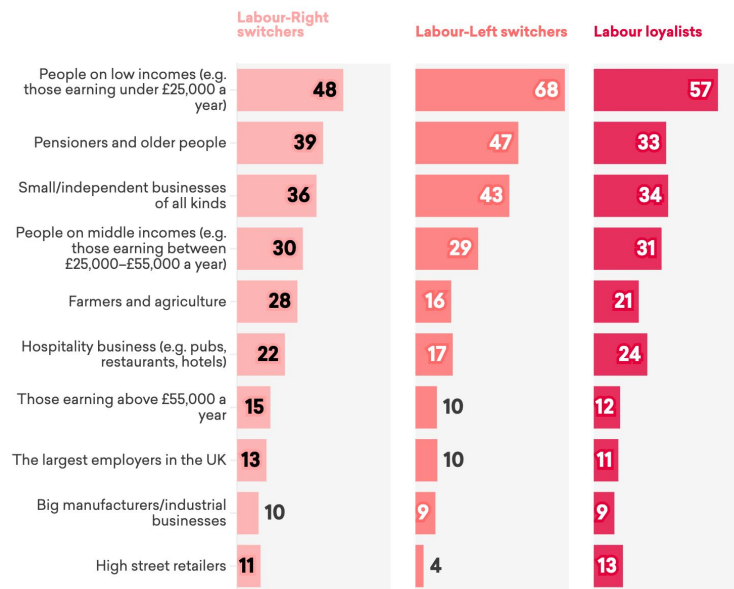
When asked where tax cuts (if they were implemented) should be directed as a priority, low income earners, pensioners and small businesses rank highest. Those who want a new PM to reverse the employer National Insurance increase are especially likely to say relief should be targeted at small businesses and hospitality.

Among prospective Labour voters, 58 per cent say low incomes should be the priority, with less emphasis on pensioners than the general public overall.

There is not much variation generally among Labour-left and right switchers in who they think should be prioritised for tax cuts, aside from right switchers placing more emphasis on farmers and high street retailers. Both groups place the most emphasis on cutting taxes for people on low incomes than the general public, though left switchers do so to a greater degree – all sides of Labour’s 2024 coalition are united in thinking this group is deserving of targeted relief.

Across Labours coalition, low earners are seen as a priority for tax cuts

If the government decided to cut taxes, which group should it focus on first?



Britons prioritise stopping the boats

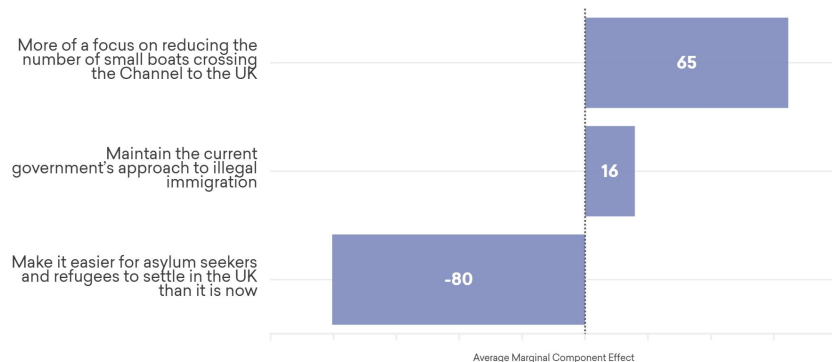
Britons – including 2024 Labour voters – broadly prefer an approach to legal migration that reduces numbers more quickly than at present over either facilitating easier entry for key sector workers, or maintaining the status quo.

2024 Labour voters are among the least negative about the idea of to making it easier for workers to come to the UK to work in essential services like the NHS, suggesting some openness to a targeted, public services-framed approach to migration among this group.

On irregular migration, the consensus is the clearest of any issue tested – stopping small boat crossings is the dominant priority across all voting groups, including 2024 Labour and Green voters, who prefer it strongly over maintaining the government's current approach. Easier settlement pathways for asylum seekers and refugees are rejected as a priority across the board.

For Labour, appealing to its 2024 coalition may rely on a firm approach to stopping the boats, while keeping space for a targeted managed migration offer, particularly around public services.

The public wants more of a focus on reducing channel crossings



[Immigration] is why they've been punished at the ballot box. They want to call the public fascist, right-wing, every name they can call them (...) they said they were going to smash the gangs, stop the boats, one thing or another... well, they've not done any of it, have they?

Ian, Labour-right switcher, Middleton

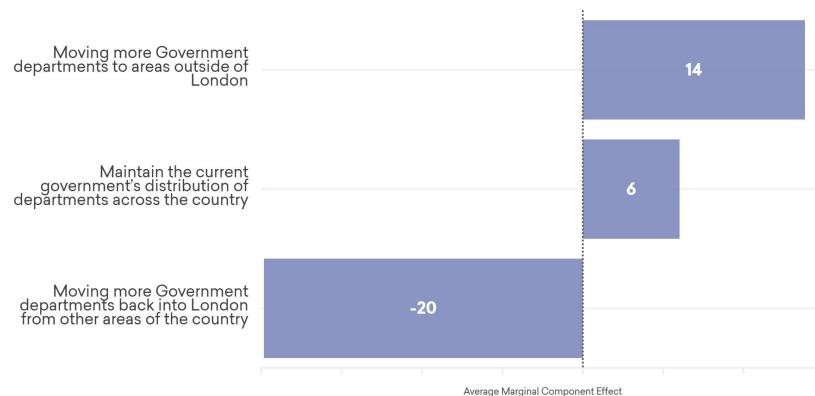
Decentralisation from Westminster goes over well with supporters of all parties, even if it's not an immediate priority

There is clear and consistent support across all voter groups for the idea of moving government departments outside London, while moving them back to London is a proposition that turns each off.

2024 Green and Liberal Democrat voters are the most enthusiastic about shifting power away from the capital, with 2024 Conservative and Reform voters the least – though both still prefer decentralisation to the status quo.

2024 Labour voters show above average support for moving departments outside London and firmly reject the reverse. It seems that decentralisation is one of the clearer areas of alignment across Labour's 2024 coalition.

Decentralising the government is popular



Source: More in Common, July 2026



Everything's always been London based and South based, and this guy from the North West – I'm quite open minded about decentralising the government and everything else. And it'd be good that the North West has a voice, rather than just getting treated like second class citizens most of the time
John, Labour-right switcher, Manchester

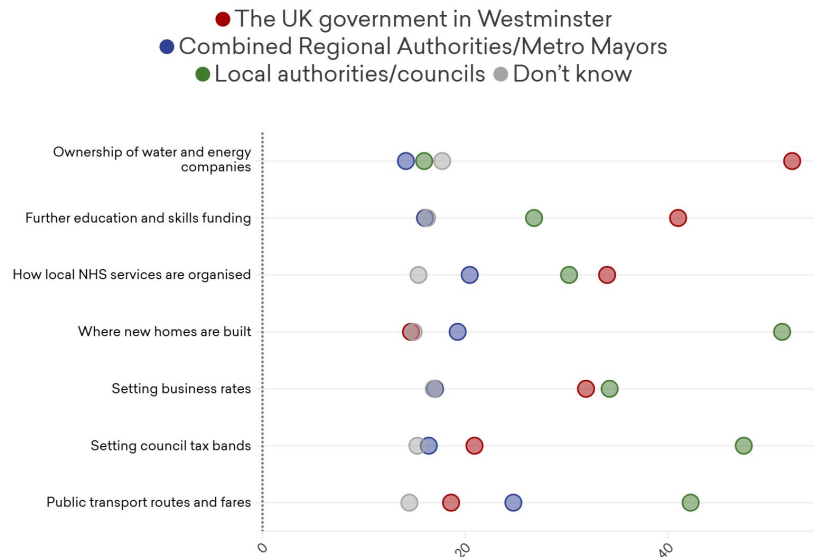
Britons are more uncertain about the role of regional government

People are split on what should be the responsibility of local and national government, in particular the role of combined authorities. In general, Britons see utility ownership and further education funding as Westminster responsibilities, whereas new homes are seen as a task for local authorities.

Where people are most open to a role for combined authorities is on public transport and NHS services, – this is driven largely by 2024 Labour voters. The coalition Labour needs to rebuild in does, then, see some role for regional government compared to other voter groups, on these issues as well as others like housing and business and council tax rates. 2024 Reform and Conservative voters are more likely than average to see anything tax related as a central government responsibility, and are more wary of devolution overall.

Britons prioritise national decision-making for utilities and local decision-making for home-building

Who do you think should make decisions in each of the following areas in England?



Number 10 North: regardless of location, the priority is delivery

Most people don't have strong views on where Andy Burnham lives if he is to become Prime Minister. 52 per cent say it doesn't matter as long as he does his job well, though among those with a preference, more favour Downing Street over commuting from Manchester.

Overall, the public is fairly evenly split on the idea of Number 10 North: 31 one per cent support it, while 28 per cent oppose the idea, with lots of variation across England. Support is highest in the North West and the North East, while those in the South East and South West are less enthusiastic.

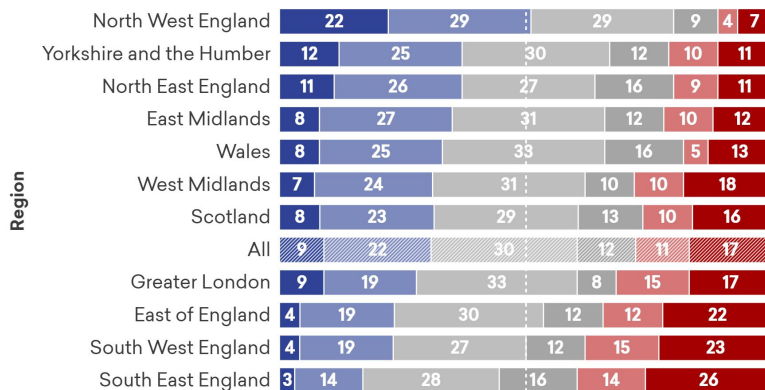
One risk is that if No. 10 North comes to be seen as a distraction from delivery on issues like the cost of living, it could make Burnham look like he's prioritising one region over the country as a whole – not least as many are already inclined to say Burnham represents mainly Manchester, the North West, or the North more generally.

Britons are split on Number 10 North - but most of those in North West England support it

Andy Burnham has proposed moving part of the Prime Minister's operation out of London and into a new unit based in Manchester, called "Number 10 North," which would be responsible for shifting more power and funding to regional mayors and councils.

To what extent do you support or oppose the idea of basing part of the Prime Minister's operation in Manchester rather than London?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose
 ● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



On climate, Labour's 2024 coalition is broadly content with the direction of travel

People's preferences for the direction of travel on climate are weaker and less polarised than on other issues. Britons slightly prefer licensing more North Sea oil drilling over taking stronger action on Net Zero, but are less polarised than on climate than on an issue like migration.

However, when looking at 2024 vote, respondents' preferences diverge more sharply. 2024 Green voters are the only group to positively favour stronger action on Net Zero, while Conservative and Reform voters strongly prefer more North Sea drilling. Labour and Liberal Democrat voters sit closer to the centre, mildly rejecting both extremes and broadly endorsing the government's current approach.

This suggests Labour's 2024 voters are not pushing for a significant shift in either direction on climate – they are, for now, broadly content with the status quo, unlike in many other areas of government policy.



Yeah, I do. I do think we should nationalise as much as we can because you saw when the Ukraine and Russia war kicked off, we were held to ransom for gas and electric because it was coming from elsewhere.

Archie, Labour-Right switcher, Manchester



Well, I think that all the energy companies, it should be nationalised and that they should subsidise ecological sources of energy again, like the heat pumps and solar panels, because they did for a while and they stopped.

Lula, Labour-left switcher, Tottenham



I'd like to see an announcement about building renewable sources, about building up our transmission network to make use of those renewable sources, building up the storage solutions.

Harold, Labour-left switcher, Gorton

Friendly to Europe, tough to Trump

When it comes to foreign policy, the public broadly favours Burnham taking a friendly approach toward the EU, but a tougher approach to Trump.

Labour switchers have different views on where Burnham should build relationships or draw lines. Left-switchers overwhelmingly want Burnham to be friendly to the EU, whereas Right-switchers are more split.

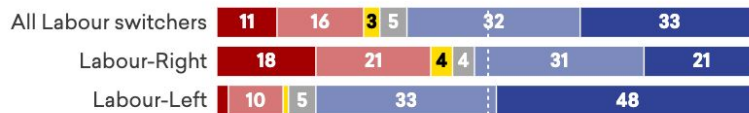
When it comes to the Trump administration, Britons tend to favour a tough approach: two in five (42 per cent) want this compared to a quarter (27 per cent) favouring a friendly approach. Labour loyalists are broadly in line with public opinion here, but Labour-Right switchers are again slightly more split here, with over a third (36 per cent) favouring a friendly approach, compared to just 8 per cent of Labour-left switchers.

A friendly approach to the EU and a tough approach to Trump enables Burnham to position himself both in line with much of the Labour 2024 coalition and the average voter.

Labour switchers to right-wing parties want Burnham to be tougher on the EU

If Andy Burnham becomes Prime Minister, should he be tough on or friendly to the EU?

● Very tough ● Fairly tough ● Should not engage with them at all
● Don't know ● Fairly friendly ● Very friendly



I think he's well-intentioned in everything, but I think he was very quick to row back on Brexit. Before this all came up, he was talking very much about closer integration with Europe. But then he's carefully and quite diplomatically skirted around the issue a bit since. I'm a bit wary, but I think it will be a positive thing hopefully.

Jack, Labour-left switcher, Brighton

Britons tend to want more cross-party cooperation, and a friendlier approach to local authorities and unions

More than a third of Britons want Burnham to take a friendly approach to opposition leaders like Badenoch and Davey, suggesting some openness to cross party cooperation. There is more appetite for a harder line on Farage, while views on Polanski are more divided – it seems that the further left or right people sit politically, the less certain the average Briton is about working closely with them.

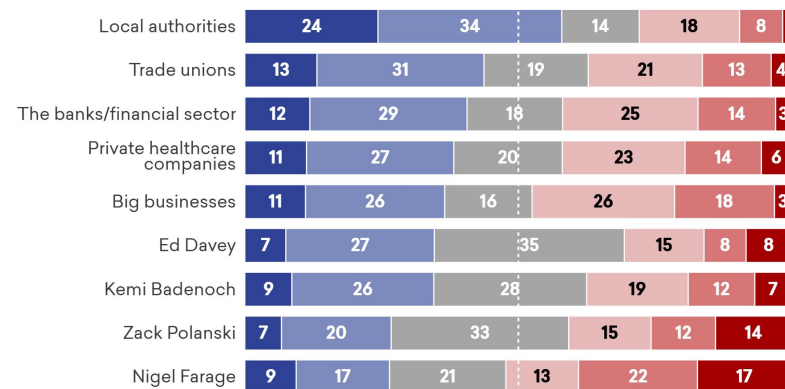
While both groups of switchers broadly favour a friendly stance toward local authorities and a tougher stance on big business, they diverge more sharply on unions, banks, other party leaders, and, to a lesser extent, private healthcare.

Any Labour leader will have to tread carefully to avoid signalling to one flank of the party that he is not 'on their side' by working more closely with certain groups or institutions. The clearest common ground seems to be taking a tougher, but not completely alienating, line on Trump and big business.

Many Britons want Burnham to be friendly with local authorities - and more than a third say he should be friendly with Badenoch and Davey

If Andy Burnham becomes Prime Minister, should he be tough on or friendly to the following?

● Very friendly ● Fairly friendly ● Don't know ● Fairly tough ● Very tough
● Should not engage with them at all



Methodology



Fieldwork dates: 3 – 6 July 2026

Sample size: 4,707