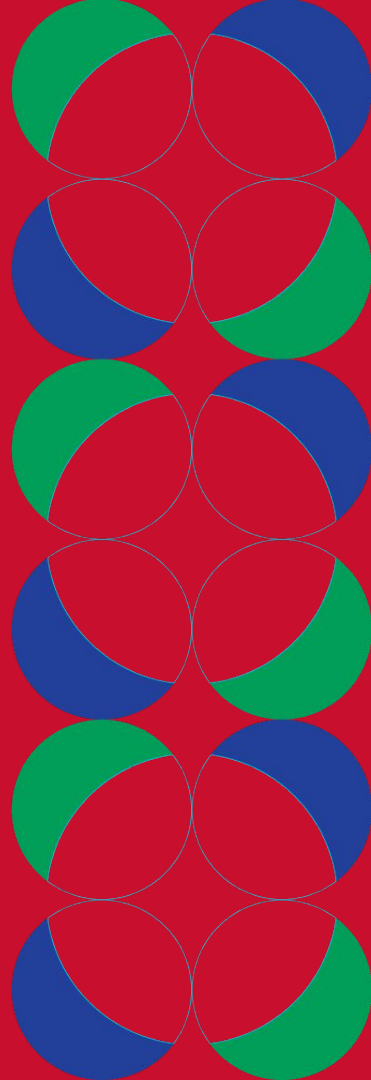




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From doom to hope?

More in Common's pre-Budget briefing, October 2026



Key findings

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 01 | Britons are less pessimistic about the economy, but few feel better off | Fewer Britons now think the UK is in a recession (52 to 40 per cent), and the share who say public services are in a bad state has fallen from 68 to 54 per cent. Yet 51 per cent say their finances have got worse this year – the same as last November – and the share who think inflation has risen has climbed from 54 to 61 per cent. |
| 02 | Expectations for the Budget are low | For another year running, Britons are pessimistic about what the Budget will bring (55 per cent pessimistic, 17 per cent optimistic). Two in three (67 per cent) expect their taxes to rise and 54 per cent expect their quality of life to get worse. Only those earning more than £100,000 are split; every other income group is pessimistic. |
| 03 | There is a cares–can gap – particularly among lower–middle earners | Burnham has convinced many Britons that he understands the cost of living pressures and is trying to fix them, but ahead of the Budget many are sceptical he will be able to deliver change. This scepticism is most deeply felt by lower–middle earners. |
| 04 | The political battleground lies in the 'squeezed middle' | Labour leads among the comfortable, and among those who are struggling, but among those in the middle, Reform UK is ahead in a close three–way race. Middle earners are as pessimistic about the Budget as lower earners. |
| 05 | Energy bills are the key test for this Budget, and Britons want to see widespread support | Bringing down energy bills is the public's top priority for this Budget, and there may be risk in a targeted approach when Britons across the income scale are struggling to pay the bills. Failure to meaningfully bring down, or prevent rises, will risk Burnham's fragile second hearing from the public. |
| 06 | Britons have shifted towards low–tax, low–spend | In September 2024, Britons wanted the government to prioritise investing in public services over cutting taxes by 54 to 30 per cent. Now 41 per cent would rather cut or scale back public services than raise taxes to fund them (32 per cent). |
| 07 | John Healey is an unknown quantity, and has yet to step out of Rachel Reeves' shadow | Half of Britons (49 per cent) say John Healey feels like more of the same compared to Rachel Reeves, 19 per cent say he feels genuinely different, and 32 per cent don't know. Reeves leaves an unpopular legacy: 50 per cent say she did a bad job as Chancellor. |

The last chance budget?

In his speech after winning the Makerfield by-election, Andy Burnham described it as the “final chance to change” the country.

Over the past two years, many Britons have lost faith in the Labour Government to improve their lives. When Labour won the election in 2024, most Britons (54 per cent) said they expected it to improve the lives of people like them. Under Keir Starmer, that halved to just 26 per cent in 2025.

Under Andy Burnham, we have seen an uptick: 44 per cent of Britons now believe that Labour will improve their lives – but still ten points below 2024 levels of optimism.

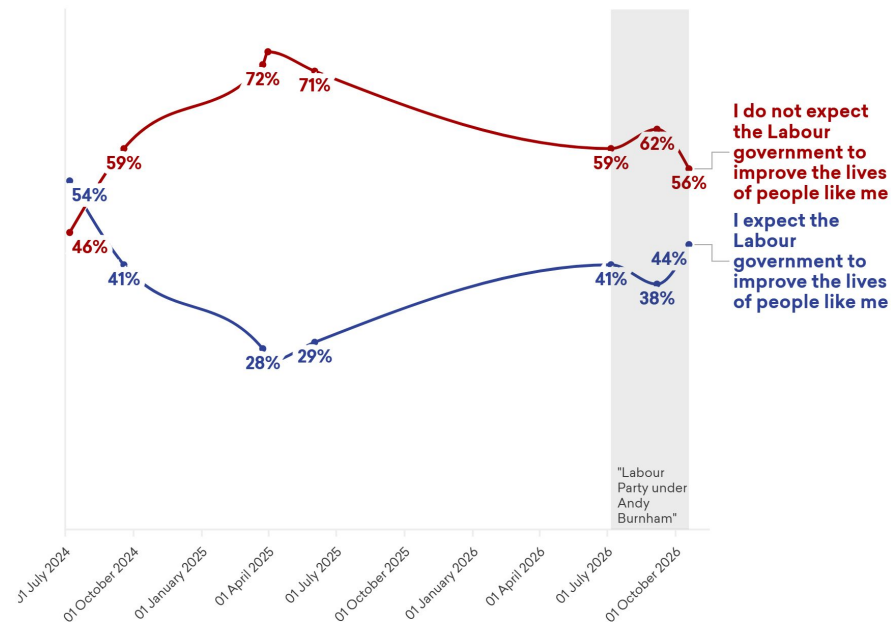
Andy Burnham has convinced many Britons that he understands the problems they are facing, and that he is trying to fix it. **The budget will be a key test of whether he can turn a politics of trying into a politics of delivery.**

I was actually shouting at the telly this morning, eating my breakfast, watching that acceptance speech or whatever you call it. And I was agreeing with everything going, “Yes, Andy, it is your last chance”. It’s your last chance saloon! Don’t waste it, mate! I was having a conversation on my own with the telly. I felt quite passionate. I felt quite goosebumpy when he was saying those things.

Lisa, Teacher, Makerfield



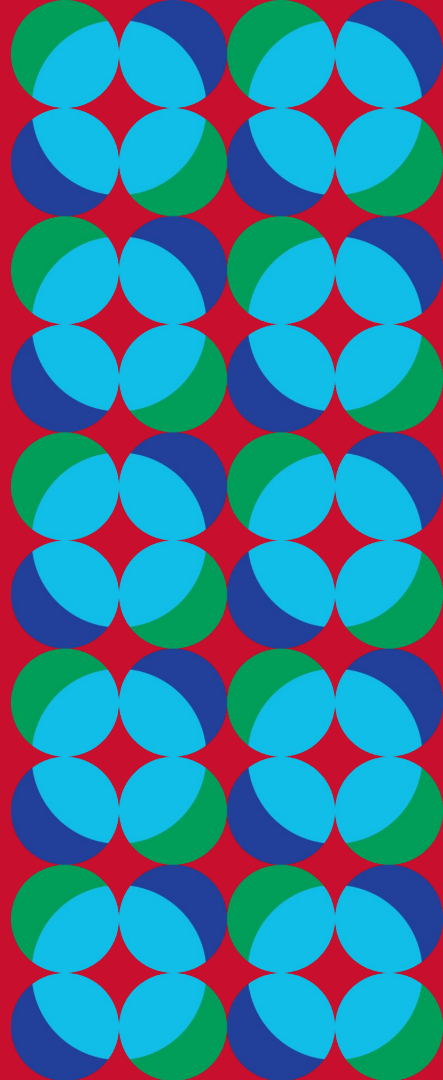
Many Britons have lost trust in Labour's ability to improve their lives





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How Britons feel about the economy



The doom loop has not broken

Bills just keep going up and up and up and up, and there's just no control on it yet. We've got these companies making absolute billions of profit every single year, and we're the ones that are really struggling.

Jess, lead buyer for a manufacturing company, Makerfield

Years ago, if your mum and dad both worked, you'd have a holiday, you'd have a car, you'd live comfortably... But now two parents working aren't even comfortable.



Bernadette, carer, Fulham

It's so sad to see, for example, Union Street, one of the most important streets in Aberdeen. It's like everything is closed. Then you go to a pub or something and then in a few months it's closed.



Carmen, care home supervisor, Aberdeen

In a word or two, how would you describe the state of the economy at the moment?



The economic mood has lifted since last year, but most Britons don't feel better off

Compared with the run-up to last year's Budget, the public mood has lifted somewhat, but Britons remain deeply pessimistic.

Fewer Britons now think the UK is in a recession (52 to 40 per cent), and the share who say public services are in a bad state has fallen from 68 to 54 per cent. Those naming supporting the NHS as a top issue has also fallen from 44 per cent at the start of 2025 to 30 per cent now.

Yet people are no less pessimistic about their own finances and the cost of living crisis. 51 per cent say their finances have got worse this year – the same as last November – and the share who think inflation has risen has climbed from 54 to 61 per cent.

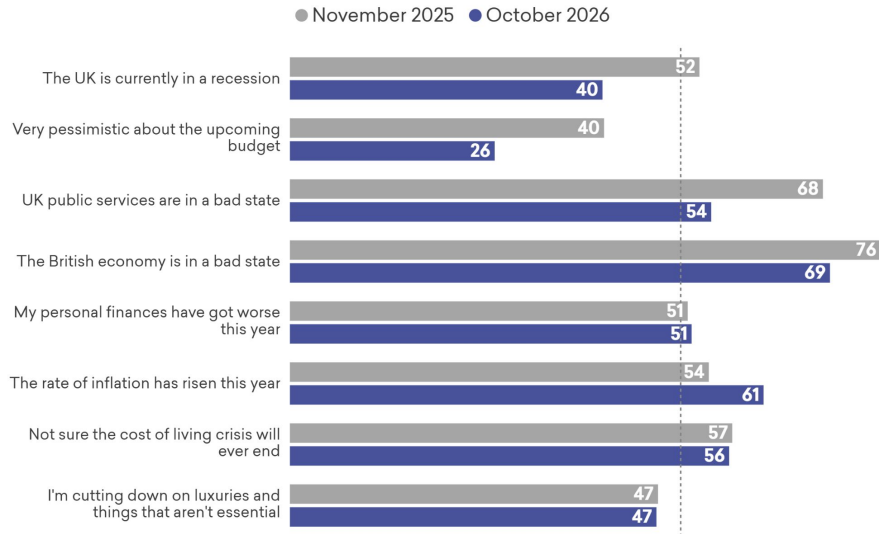


I still work like a dog. I do all the hours and yet I don't actually see myself any better off nowadays.

Claire, head of business development, Fulham

Britons are slightly more positive about the economy than last year - but few feel personally better off

% of Britons saying each, November 2025 vs October 2026



Two in five Britons still think the economy is in recession

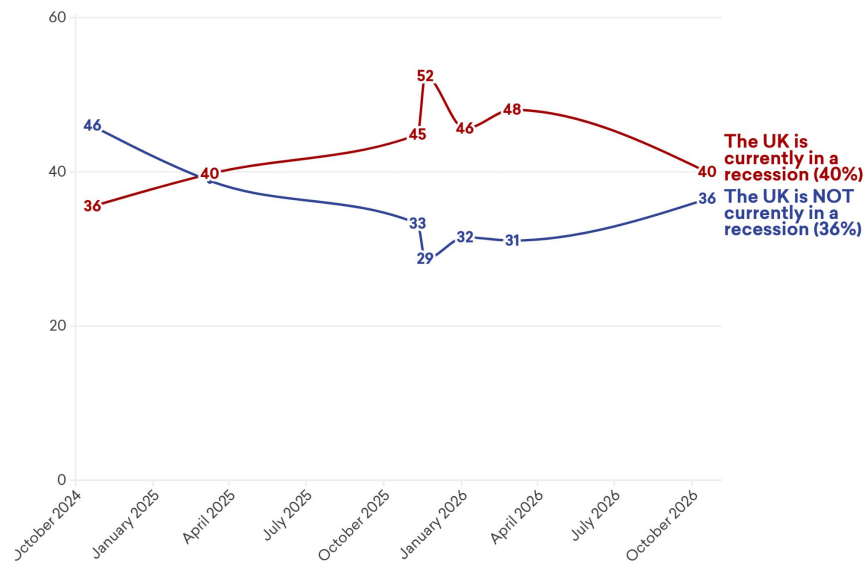
Despite headline rates of growth improving from 2025, Brits are still more likely than not to think that the UK is in a recession.

Two in five (40 per cent) think the UK is in recession, compared to 36 per cent who think it is not. This is down substantially from 52 per cent before the last budget in November 2025, but still significant for an economy that is now, nominally, growing.

A consistent sense that personal finances are getting worse drives perceptions of recession. Half (51 per cent) of those who say that their own personal finances have got worse believe that the UK is in a recession, compared to just 29 per cent of those who say their finances have not changed or have improved.

Two in five Britons still believe the UK is in a recession

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



The public are apprehensive about the budget – again

For another year running, the public are generally pessimistic about what the upcoming budget might bring, with only those earning more than £100,000 a year feeling more optimistic than pessimistic about it.

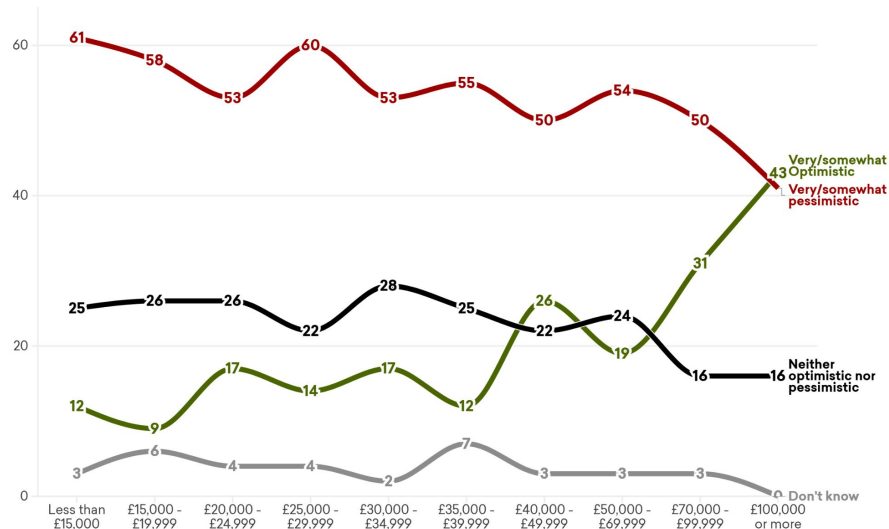
Overall, 17 per cent feel optimistic, compared to 55 per cent who feel pessimistic. Mild pessimism (29 per cent) is more common than strong pessimism (26 per cent). Over two in three (67 per cent) think their taxes will rise next year, and 54 per cent think their quality of life will get worse. Just one in five expect the economy to grow next year (21 per cent).

Despite these weak scores, this is actually substantially less gloomy an atmosphere than before 2024 (-54 pessimistic) and 2025 (-57). The largest fall has been in strong pessimism, which was 40 per cent in 2025 and 39 per cent in 2026, and has now dropped to 26 per cent.

Only those earning more than £100,000 a year are optimistic about what the budget holds

Would you say you are feeling optimistic, or pessimistic, about the upcoming budget?

By personal income



Every party's voters have different explanations as to why the economy is in a bad way

The public generally agree that the economy is in a bad way, but are polarised as to why.

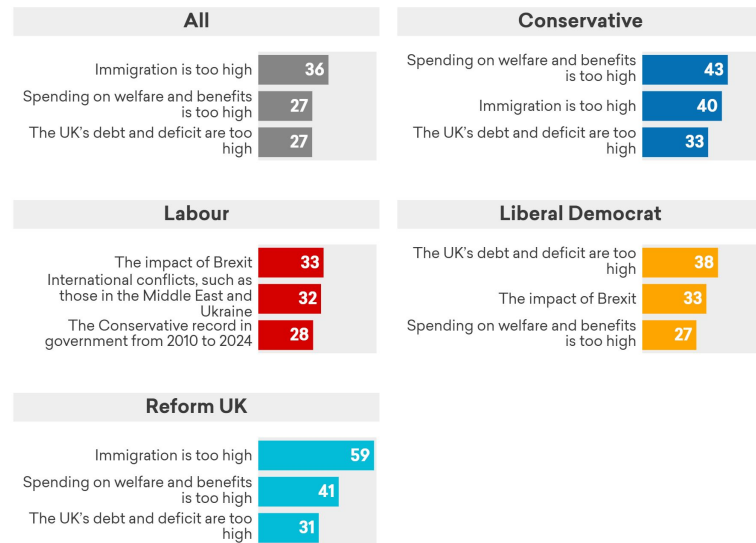
Among those who are pessimistic in general, immigration is seen as the top reason that the economy is in a bad state (36 per cent), followed by spending on welfare and benefits being too high (27 per cent) and the UK's debt and deficit.

But every party's base in the 2024 elections have different top explanations. The Conservatives are most likely to blame welfare (43 per cent), Labour blame Brexit (33 per cent), Liberal Democrats blame the UK's debt and deficit (38 per cent) and Reform UK blame immigration (59 per cent).

The public are also equally likely to blame Labour governments (13 per cent) as Conservative governments (13 per cent), although both rank low down on the list of factors as to why many think the economy is in trouble.

Every party's voters blame Britain's economic problems on something different

You said the economy was in a bad state at the moment. What do you think the main reasons are that it is? Select up to three.



Rachel Reeves' legacy is unpopular

Rachel Reeves' legacy as Chancellor is generally seen by the public as a negative one. Her net approval rating comes in at -34: better than the -52 recorded during the last budget, but still very negative. 29 per cent named her as the worst Chancellor since 2000 – ahead of Kwarteng on 16 per cent.

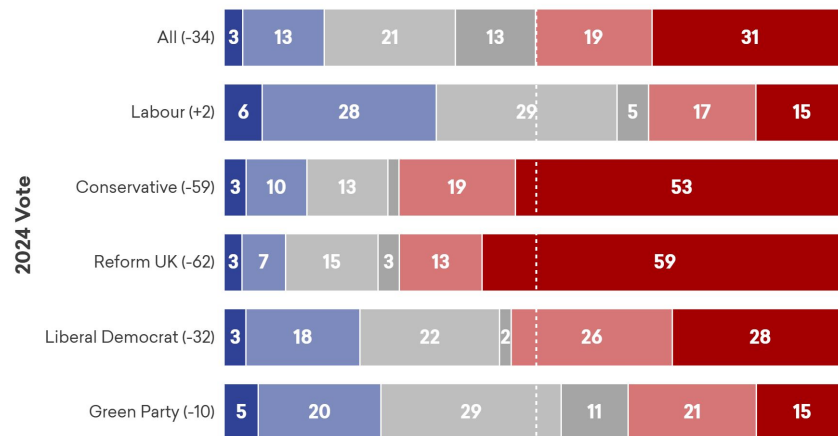
50 per cent feel she did a bad job as Chancellor, compared to 16 per cent who think she did a good job. Even 2024 Labour voters are split, with 34 per cent thinking she did a good job, and 32 per cent thinking she did a bad job. This is down, however, from the 64 per cent of the public who thought she was doing a bad job at the time of the last budget.

Healey has not yet differentiated himself from Reeves' unpopular legacy. Just 19 per cent think he feels genuinely different to Reeves, compared to 49 per cent who say like he feels like more of the same. 32 per cent don't know.

The public think Rachel Reeves did a bad job as Chancellor of the Exchequer

Thinking about Rachel Reeves' record as Chancellor from July 2024 to July 2026, would you say she did a good job, a bad job overall, or neither?

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



John Healey is an unknown quantity

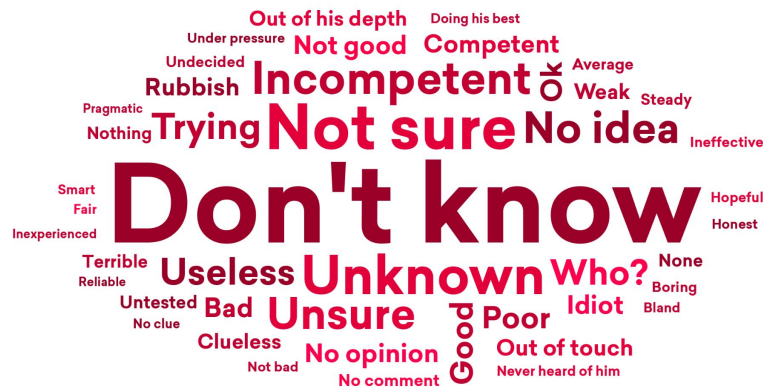
The new Chancellor goes into his first Budget as a largely blank slate.

A key test for John Healey will be distinguishing himself from Rachel Reeves – 50 per cent of Britons say she did a bad job as Chancellor, compared to only 16 per cent who feel she did a good job.

Half of Britons (49 per cent) say John Healey feels like more of the same compared to Rachel Reeves, 20 per cent say he feels genuinely different, and 32 per cent don't know.

Even among 2024 Labour voters, more say Healey feels like more of the same (43 per cent) than genuinely different (36 per cent).

In a word or two, how would you describe the Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Healey?



So the Chancellor is the previous defence minister...did he resign? So he's suddenly creating a budget after a few months in his office. He's going to be writing out a budget for us with what it would seem like little experience in that field.

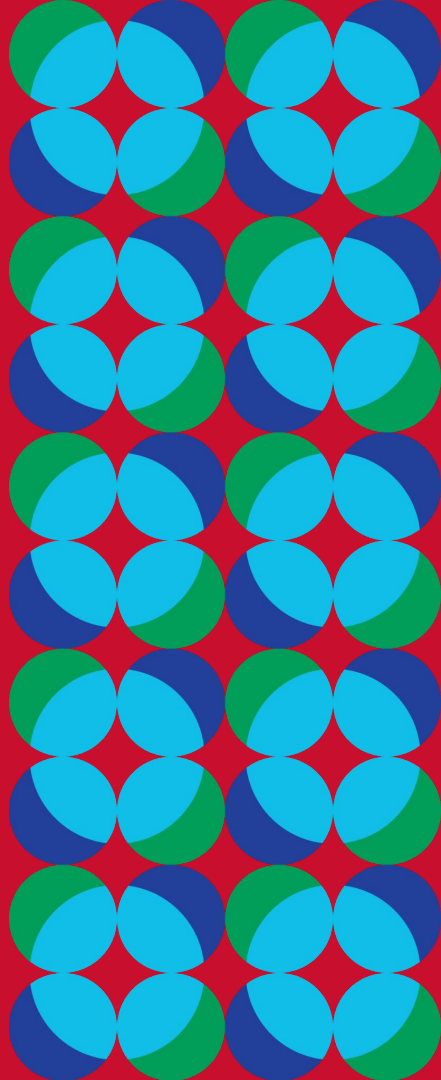
Valerie, landlord, Fulham





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The 'squeezed middle'



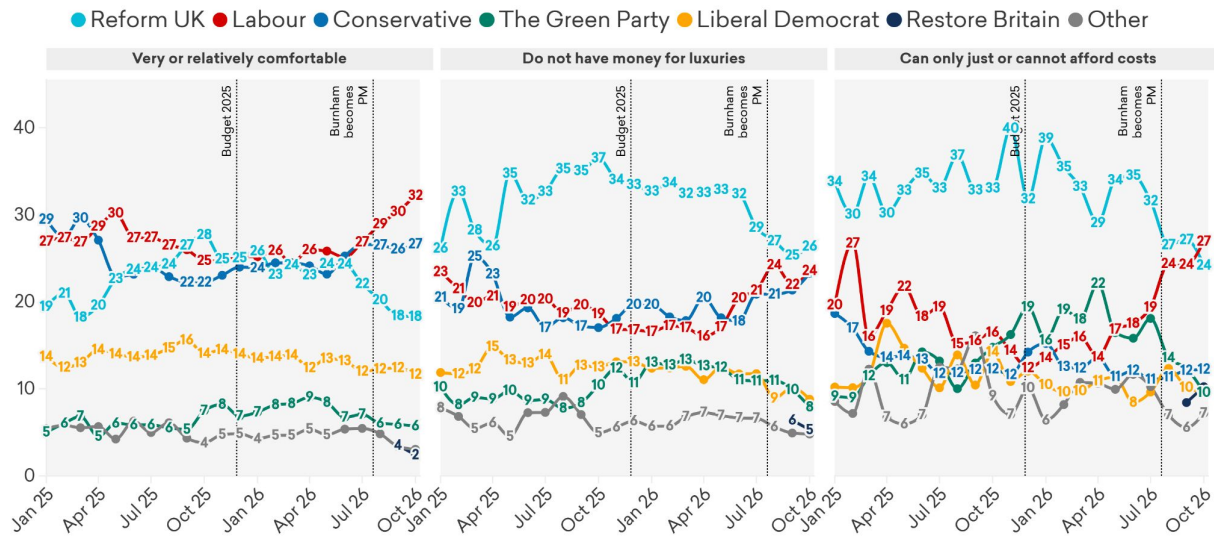
The political battleground lies in the 'squeezed middle'

At points over the past two years, Labour has led only among the most affluent Britons, while Reform UK dominated among those who were struggling or just about managing, with the Greens also surging with those struggling with the cost of living.

Now, Burnham has gained ground on both ends of the financial wellbeing scale – but remains behind with those who can afford costs, but can't cover luxuries – the 'squeezed middle'.

Labour has retaken the lead among those who are struggling and comfortable, but Reform leads among "the squeezed middle"

Voting intention by personal finances, monthly average



The 'Burnham Bounce' is not winning back as many middle-earners

Labour leads among Britons who are financially comfortable over the Conservatives (30–28), and among those who are struggling over Reform (29–24). But among those in the middle – who don't have money for luxuries but still make ends meet – Reform UK remain in the lead.

Among this middle group, there is a three way battle between Reform, Labour and the Conservatives (26–23–23).

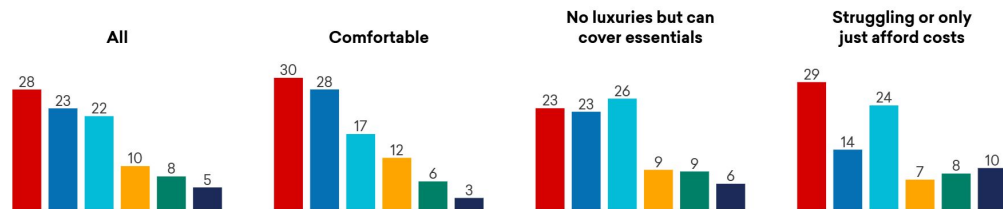
Likewise, while Labour holds a 9-point lead among those earning £70,000 or more, this narrows to just 1 point among those earning between £20,000 and £70,000, with Reform close behind among lower-middle earners and the Conservatives among higher-middle earners.

Labour lead among those who are comfortable, and those who are struggling. Reform UK lead among those in the middle

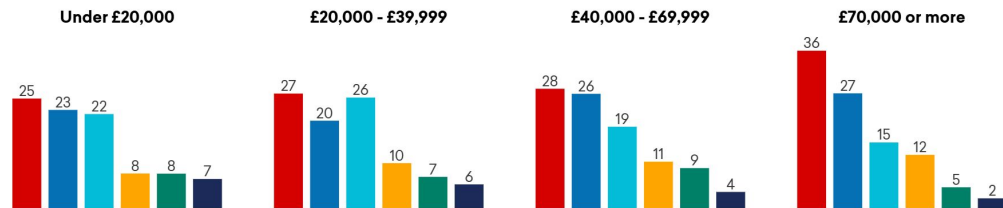
Headline voting intention by how well off people feel (top row) and by annual personal income (bottom row)

● Labour ● Conservative ● Reform UK ● Liberal Democrat ● The Green Party ● Restore Britain

Self-described financial wellbeing



Personal annual income



Britain's middle earners are disillusioned, and fear tax rises in this budget

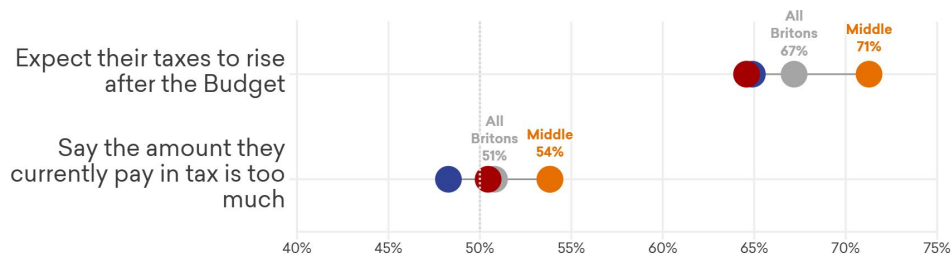
Seven in ten (71 per cent) of the squeezed middle expect their taxes to rise in the Budget, compared with 59 per cent of those who are very comfortable. More than half (54 per cent) already say they pay too much tax, and 56 per cent say their finances have got worse this year.

This is the group where Burnham's "cares-can" gap is widest. 52 per cent of this group think Burnham cares about bringing down the cost of living for people like them, but just 26 per cent are optimistic he will do it: a 26-point gap, compared with 21 points across all Britons.

The 'squeezed middle' are the most likely to expect tax rises and to say they already pay too much

% of each group, by how well off people feel

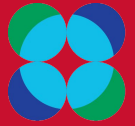
Self-described financial wellbeing: ● No luxuries but can cover essentials
● All Britons ● Comfortable ● Struggling or only just afford costs



The guy at the top is helping everybody to hide their money and we just, the idiots that are the only ones that are paying it are the middle people. People at the top don't pay it. People at the bottom don't pay it. Just the idiots in the middle we're the only ones paying tax.

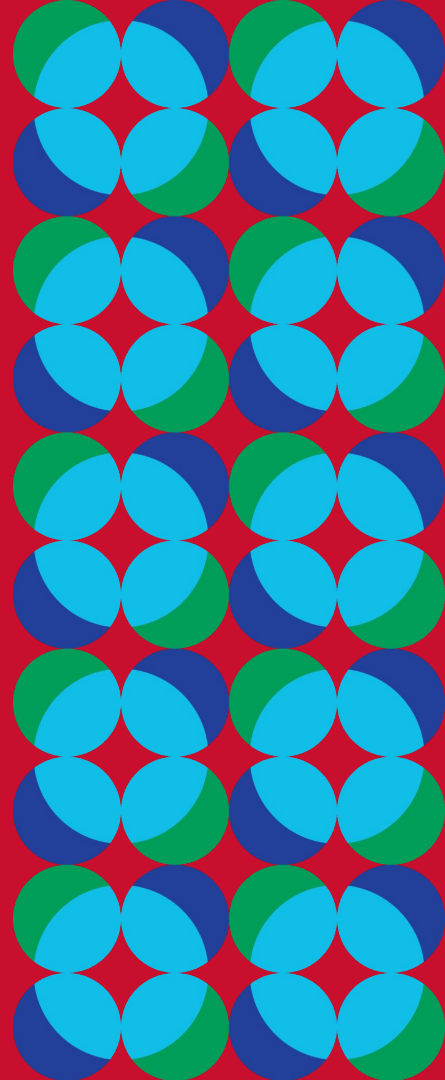
Russell, teacher, Dumfries





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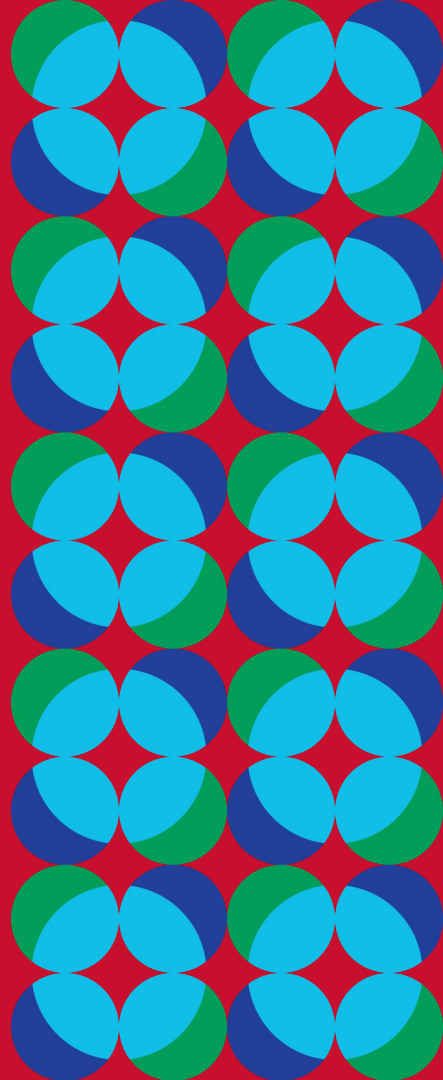
What do Britons want to see from the budget?





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Britons' priorities



Lower tax and stronger defence have moved up Britons' priority list since 2024

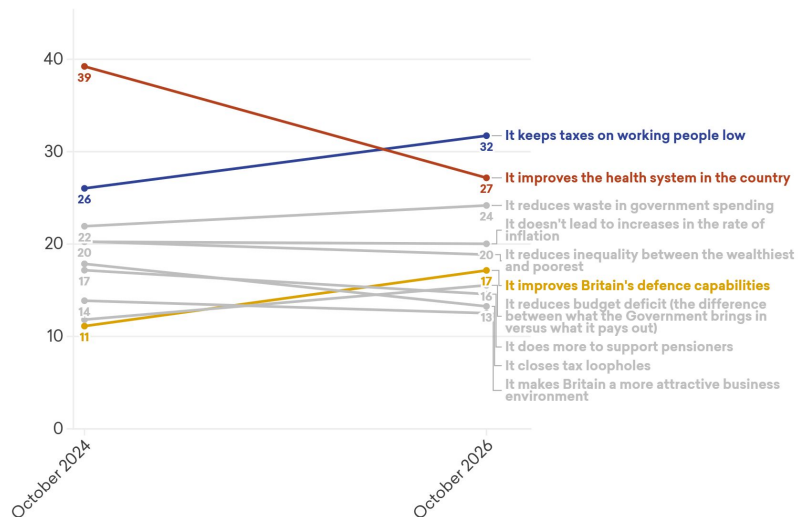
The public's priority list has changed since Rachel Reeves' first budget in October 2024, generally away from public service investment towards lower taxes and cutting waste.

Back in October 2024, the top priority for the public was improving the health system (39 per cent). That has now fallen to second at 27 per cent. The top spot is now keeping taxes on working people low, up six to 32 per cent. Conversely, closing tax loopholes has reduced from 18 per cent to 13 per cent.

Other priorities have notably changed. Defence has jumped six points from 11 to 17 per cent, although is sixth behind reducing inequality. Supporting young people and reducing the deficit have also risen by four points as priorities.

Keeping taxes low has overtaken the NHS in Britons' list of budget priorities

In your view, which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT features of a government budget? Select up to three.



Balancing Labour's coalition on the budget may be difficult

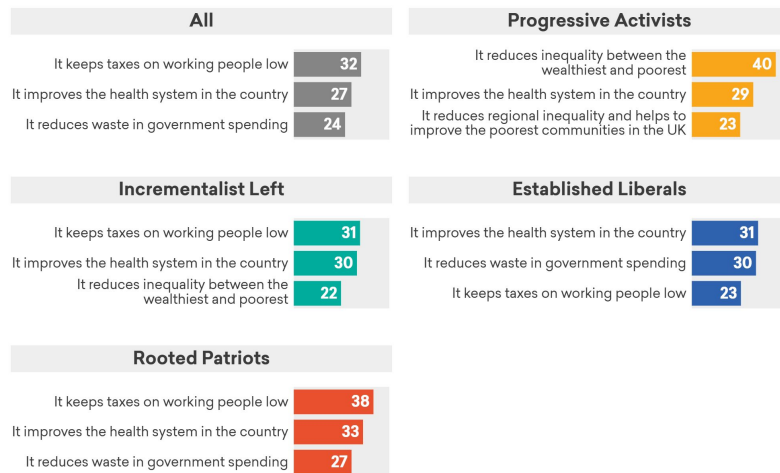
Labour is a broad coalition of the centre and the left. In 2024 its support spread across segments, deriving its victory from gains in the affluent 'blue wall', with high numbers of Established Liberals, and the 'red wall', with Rooted Patriots.

Reuniting this coalition on a budget could prove tricky. Progressive Activists, who have been tempted back to the party under Burnham want a budget that prioritises reducing inequality (40 per cent), and are not particularly interested in Defence (6 per cent). Rooted Patriots are much more likely want to prioritise Defence (22 per cent) and low taxes (38 per cent). Established Liberals, meanwhile, want improvements to the NHS (31 per cent) and cutting waste (30 per cent), but few want to see the government try and reduce wealth inequality (9 per cent).

Trying to reconcile this base with very different priorities may be difficult; pleasing Progressive Activists with a more radical budget may worry the more stability-minded sections, and vice versa.

Progressive Activists want the budget to reduce inequality; Labour's other key segments prioritise keeping tax low

In your view, which of the following are the MOST IMPORTANT features of a government budget? Select up to three.



Burnham must balance the country's desire for radical change with its fiscal risk aversion

The country – and Labour's base – is also starkly divided on whether Burnham should make a radical departure from the status quo on the economy.

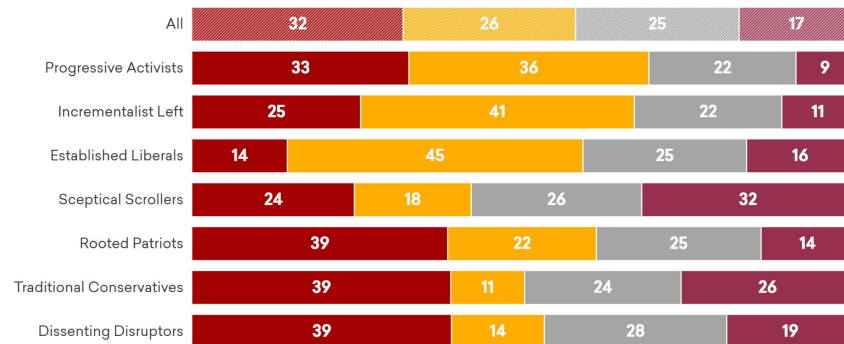
A third (32 per cent) say that Burnham has not been radical enough, 26 per cent say he has got the balance about right, and 17 per cent say that he has been too radical and is risking Britain's economy.

Here, Labour's base is also split. Rooted Patriots (39 per cent) and Progressive Activists (33 per cent) are more likely to say that Burnham should be more radical. Larger portions of the Incrementalist Left (41 per cent) and Established Liberals (45 per cent) think he has got the balance right.

More Britons think Burnham has not been radical enough on the economy than too radical

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

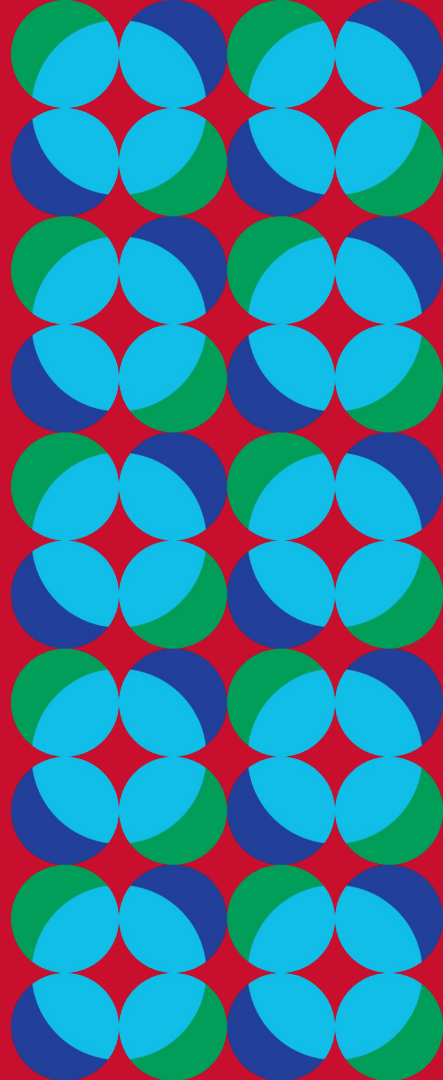
- Andy Burnham has not been radical enough in plans to deliver economic change for the country
- Andy Burnham has got the balance between economic stability and change about right at the moment
- Don't know
- Andy Burnham has been too radical in plans to deliver economic change, and is risking Britain's economic stability





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Tax and spend



There has been a thermostatic shift toward low-tax, low-spend

One of the crucial factors powering Labour's victory in 2024 was a sense public services had declined and required substantial investment. **In September 2024, when asked whether the government should prioritise investing in public services or cutting taxes, 54 per cent said investing in public services, and 30 per cent said cutting taxes.** Voters of all parties were more likely to prioritise public services over taxes.

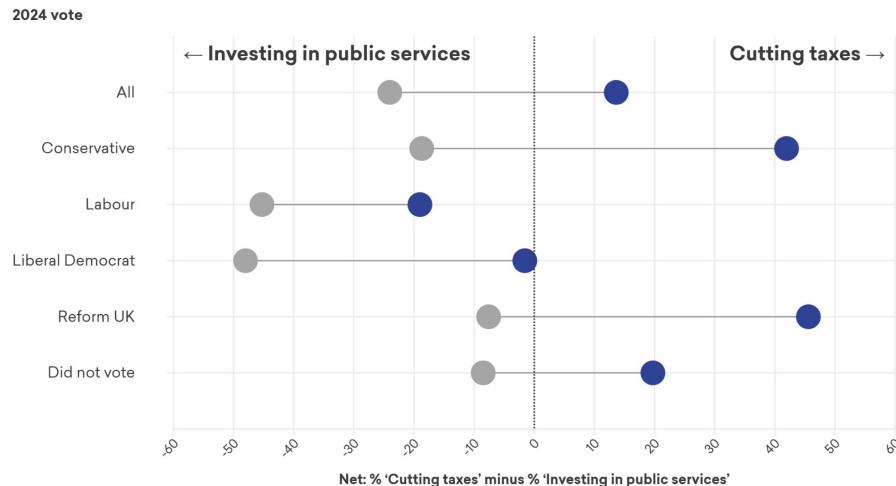
That has now flipped. 49 per cent now say the government should prioritise cutting taxes, compared with 36 per cent who would rather invest in public services. The portion of Conservative (66 per cent) and Liberal Democrat (44 per cent) 2024 voters saying the government should prioritise cutting taxes has doubled since 2024.

The 'squeezed middle' has driven this change. Those just about managing with the cost of living prioritised investments in public services in Sep 2024, 53 to 31. That has now reversed, with 53 per cent prioritising lower taxes, and 32 per cent prioritising investment in public services.

Every party's 2024 voters have swung towards prioritising tax cuts

At the current moment, what would you like the government to prioritise?

Month ● September 2024 ● October 2026



Even in a tradeoff with poorer public services, Britons are split on tax and spend

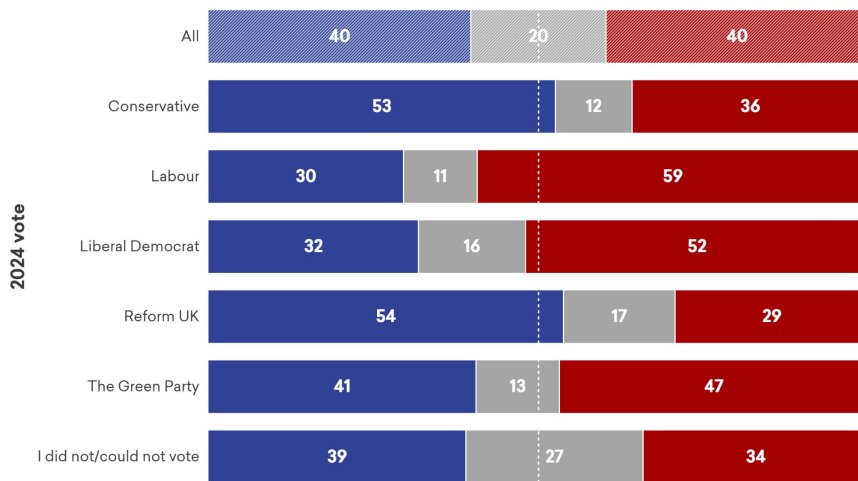
The country is split down the middle: 40 per cent would rather their tax went down even if some public services got worse, and 40 per cent would rather services got better even if their taxes went up.

The split is sharply partisan. 2024 Labour (59 per cent) and Liberal Democrat (52 per cent) voters back better services; Conservative (53 per cent) and Reform (54 per cent) voters back lower taxes. The squeezed middle leans slightly towards lower taxes (42 to 36), while the comfortable favour better services.

Britons are split evenly on prioritising tax or services

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- I'd rather my tax goes down, even if some public services get worse ● Don't know
● I'd rather my public services get better, even if my taxes go up



But Britons want to increase spending on frontline services – and find savings in Whitehall and foreign aid

Nearly two in three Britons (64 per cent) believe that overall government spending is unsustainable. But a key challenge for the government is that, while Britons want to see savings in the abstract, most want to *increase* spending in many areas of government.

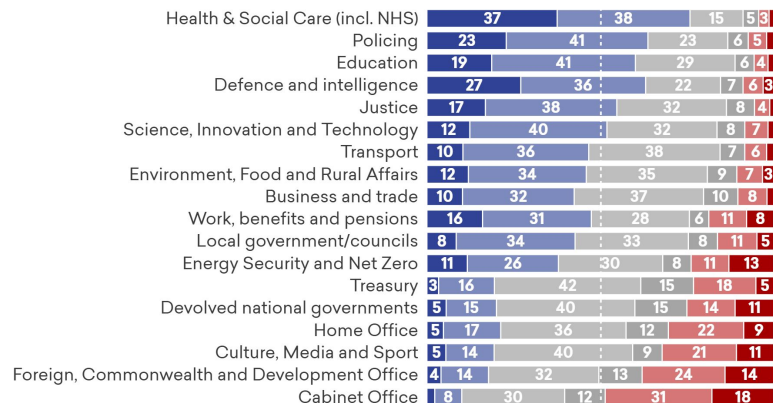
Three quarters (76 per cent) want spending on health and social care increased, and around three in five want more for policing (64 per cent), defence (63 per cent) and education (60 per cent).

The only areas tested in which many Britons do want to see spending cuts are the Cabinet Office (49 per cent), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (38 to 18), culture, media and sport (32 to 19) and the Home Office (31 to 21).

Britons want more spent on most of government – but would cut the Cabinet Office and aid

From the following departments and policy areas, where should the government increase or decrease its spending?

● Greatly increase ● Moderately increase ● Neither increase nor decrease
● Don't know ● Moderately decrease ● Greatly decrease



If the government cuts taxes, council tax and personal allowance ranks top for priorities

If the government were to cut taxes, the public want it to be the taxes that hit everyday budgets. Council tax tops the list (31 per cent), followed by raising the tax-free personal allowance (28 per cent) and fuel duty (24 per cent).

Very few prioritise cutting the higher (8 per cent) or additional (5 per cent) rates of income tax, or corporation tax on large businesses (3 per cent).

Inheritance tax is fifth at 16 per cent. Notably, it is now above VAT and National Insurance contributions for taxes the public most want to cut.



If you go back to work and then the council tax is more, you're never going to earn enough.

– Siobhan, helpline worker and carer, Fulham

Council tax and the personal allowance top the public's tax-cut wishlist

Which of the following should the government prioritise cutting, if any? Select up to three.



Britons think they pay too much tax, and the wealthy too little

Half of Britons (51 per cent) say they personally pay too much tax. A majority (54 per cent) say wealthy Britons pay too little, up ten points from 44 per cent before last year's Budget.

Middle earners are the most likely to feel overtaxed: 57 per cent of those earning £20,000 to £39,999 say they pay too much.

"If we are not seeing results, it really does piss people off... We've all had to pay tax and we always will, but we just want to see improvements on what our money's going to."

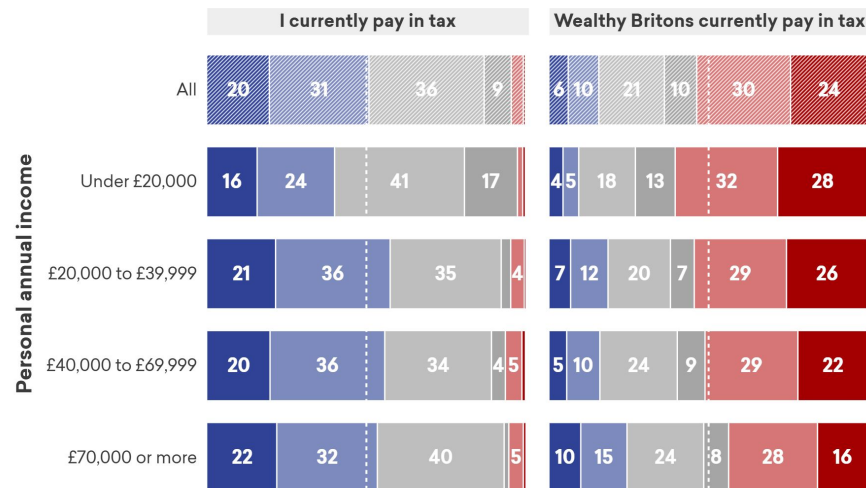


Anita, cleaning business owner, Fullham

Britons tend to say they pay too much tax, and that the wealthy don't pay enough

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Far too much
- Too much
- About the right amount
- Don't know
- Not enough
- Not nearly enough



The public want to tax vapes and banks – not working people

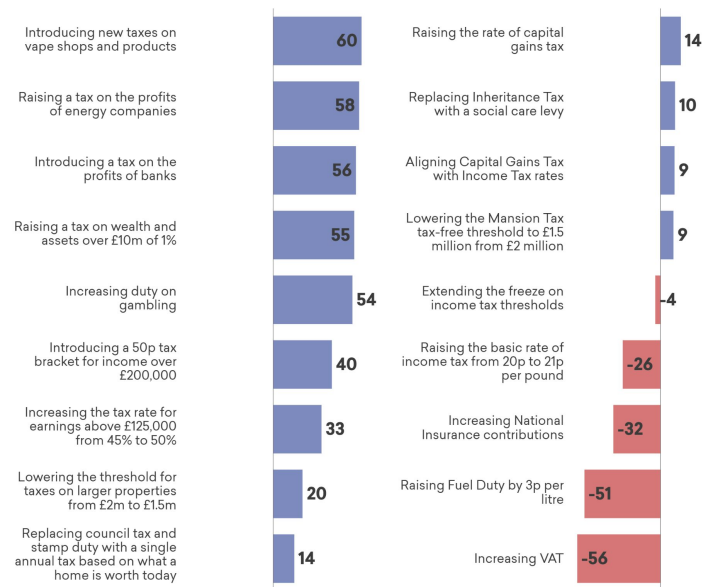
In general, measures that raise taxation on the richest are popular, but the appetite for general tax rises is low.

Taxing vape shops (+60) and energy companies (+58) are the most popular. A levy on the banks is also overwhelmingly popular (+56). A wealth tax of 1 per cent for assets above £10m is also popular (+55) – including with Conservative 2024 voters. The broad support for raising taxation on the rich provides fertile ground for a leftward attack from the measures.

Conversely, the appetite for further raising general taxation is low, unless it is traded off explicitly for social care. Support for raising the basic rate of income tax is unpopular with the public at -26, raising national insurance is at -32. Raising VAT (-56) or fuel duty (-51) is very unpopular.

Taxing vapes, banks and the very wealthy is popular – raising VAT, fuel duty or NI is not

Net support (% support minus % oppose) for proposed tax rises



Labour's brand is strong on workers' rights, but not on tax and debt

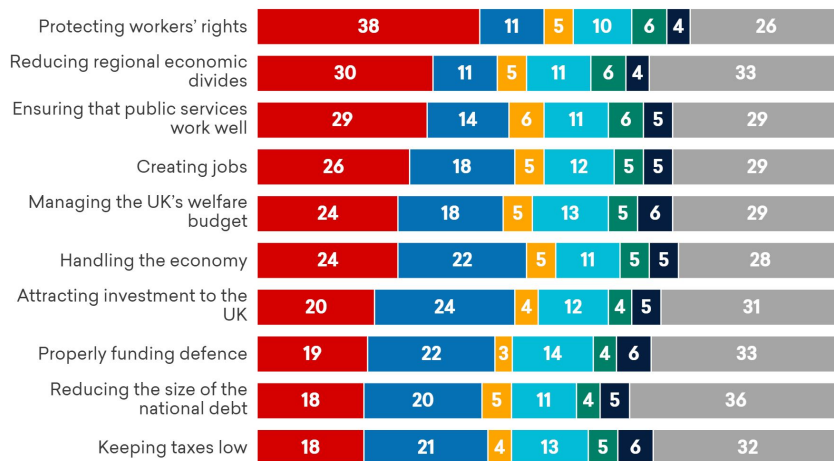
Labour leads other parties on some crucial elements of the economy. Labour enjoys a commanding lead on workers' rights, with 38 per cent naming the party they would trust the most. The party is also nearly three times as trusted as any other party on regional economic divides (30 per cent), has healthy leads on ensuring public services work well (29 per cent).

But there are some less clear cut areas: they only hold a 2-point lead over the Conservatives on handling the economy (24 to 22 per cent), and trail them when it comes to attracting investment to the UK, funding defence, reducing the size of the national debt, and keeping taxes low.

Labour is most trusted on protecting workers' rights, but less trusted on keeping taxes low

Which party do you trust more on the following?

● Labour
 ● Conservative
 ● Liberal Democrats
 ● Reform UK
 ● The Green Party
 ● Restore Britain
 ● Don't know



The Conservatives could lay a tax trap for Labour

In their recent announcements on inheritance tax, the Conservatives have created a clear economic battleground with Labour.

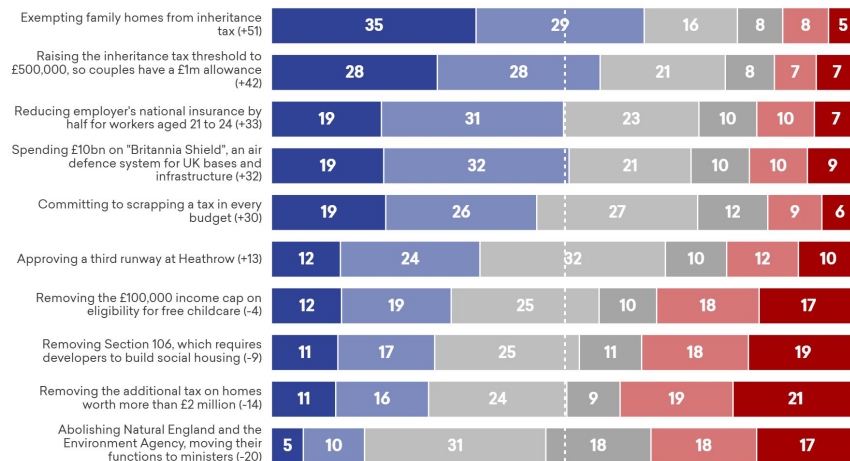
The promise to exempt family homes from inheritance tax ranked among the most popular policies announced by the Conservatives at their 2026 Party Conference – supported by nearly two-thirds of Britons (64 per cent).

Given the public's shift toward a low-tax, low-spend economic position, there may be a risk for Labour if it doesn't demonstrate a credible position on tax.

Inheritance tax reform was the Conservatives' most popular conference policy announcement

To what extent do you support or oppose the following policies, if at all?

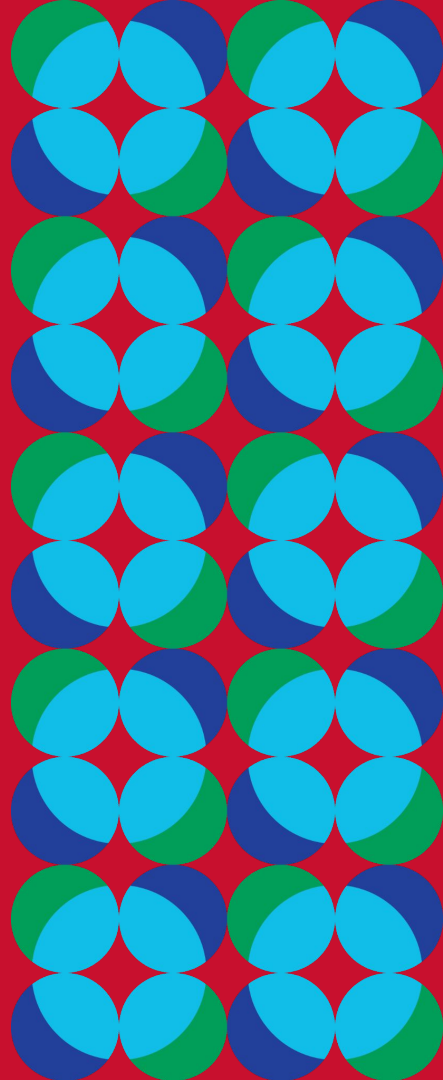
● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose ● Don't know
● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose





More in
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Reaching 3.5: tradeoffs for defence



Britons tend to oppose breaking manifesto pledges on tax to fund defence

Any attempt to raise taxes on working people to fund defence to 3 per cent of GDP would likely play badly with the public. 26 per cent support the idea, but 46 per cent oppose. It is particularly toxic with those who say they can only just afford their costs (-32), suggesting that such a move may exacerbate concerns Labour is not listening on the cost of living.

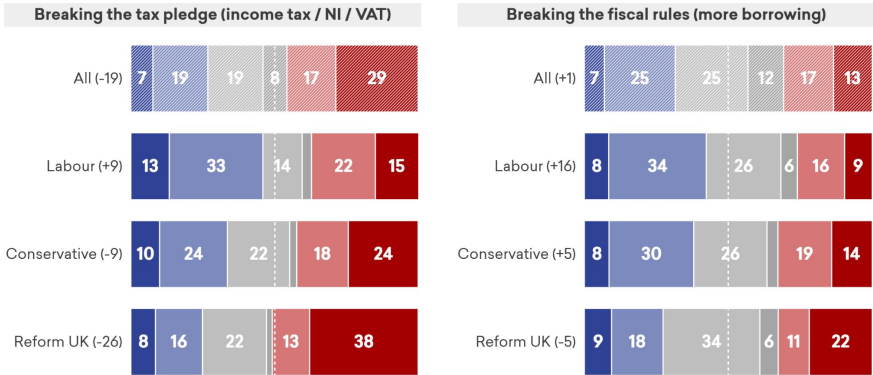
The public is more split on breaking the fiscal rules. By a margin of 32 per cent to 30 per cent, Britons marginally lean toward the view that it would be acceptable for Labour to break its fiscal rules in order to increase defence spending.

Britons are more willing to break the fiscal rules than the tax pledge to fund defence

If the government broke this commitment in order to increase defence spending, would you find this acceptable or unacceptable?

Split Sample, by 2024 vote

● Very acceptable ● Somewhat acceptable ● Neither acceptable nor unacceptable
● Don't know ● Somewhat unacceptable ● Very unacceptable



Britons lean towards cutting benefits for defence – within limits

The public generally lean towards cutting benefits to fund defence in a forced tradeoff. Conservatives and Reform are overwhelmingly in favour with over 3 in 4 of their 2024 voters backing cuts to fund defence, Liberal Democrats by around a two to one margin, and Labour's 2024 base is narrowly supportive, 55 to 45. Green 2024 voters oppose the idea, 62 to 38.

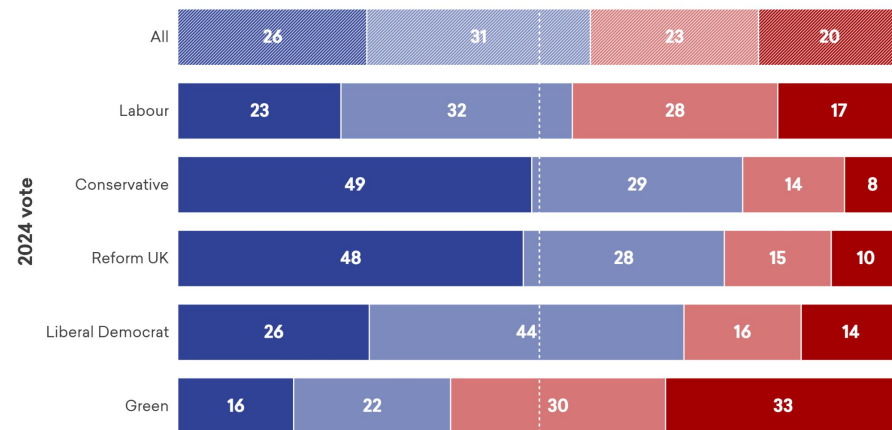
Younger Britons, and those who are struggling, do not want to see benefits cut to fund defence. 61 per cent of those who are either struggling to or cannot afford the cost of living oppose the idea, and Gen Z oppose the idea, 57 to 43.

When asked about public services versus defence spending more broadly, the public are split evenly: 51 per cent lean towards cutting public services if necessary to pay for more defence spending, while 49 per cent lean towards increasing public services spending even if it means less for defence.

Most Britons lean towards investing in defence even if it means cutting benefits

For the following pair of statements, please use the scale to indicate which comes closest to your view

1. It is worth investing more in defence, even if it means cutting benefits (such as universal credit).
 2 3 4. It is not worth cutting benefits in order to invest more in defence



Cutting environmental spending for defence could prove popular

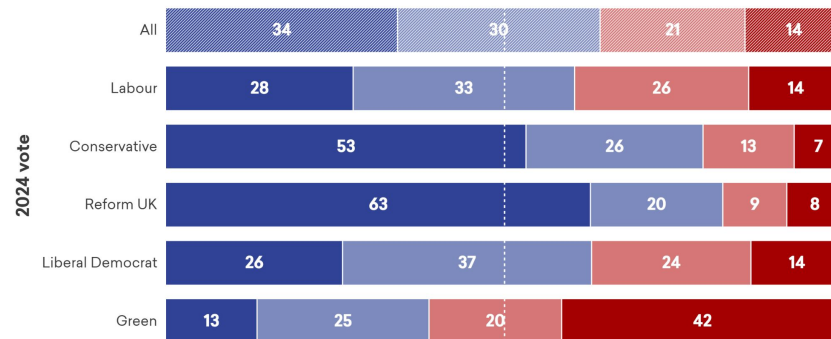
Cutting funding for climate change and renewable projects also splits Labour's base, but is more popular with the general public. 64 per cent lean towards prioritising defence over the environment, compared to 36 per cent who would prioritise renewables and climate change funding.

Those numbers are flipped among those who prioritise climate change and the environment as one of their top issues (64–36). However, that issue, for now, is relatively low in salience with the public (14 per cent). If it rises, however, cuts to renewable funding to fund defence could become more controversial.

Nearly two in three Britons lean towards defence over climate and renewables funding

For the following pair of statements, please use the scale to indicate which comes closest to your view

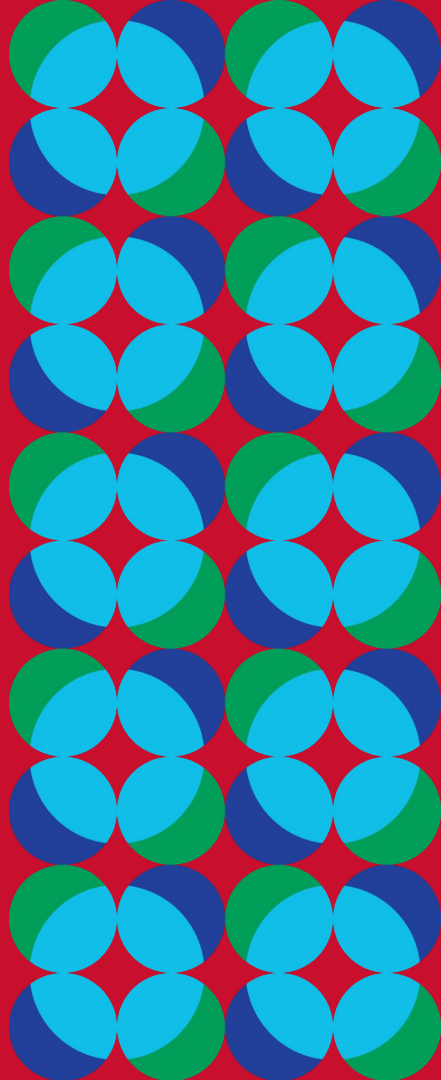
- 1. It is worth investing more in defence, even if that means cutting funding for climate change projects and renewable energy
- 2
- 3
- 4. It is worth investing more in climate change projects and renewable energy, even if that means cutting funding for defence





More in
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Climate



Most Britons back drilling at Jackdaw – as long as it's not seen as a wider move away from the energy transition

More than half of Britons (55 per cent) support issuing new drilling in the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields. Just 14 per cent oppose it.

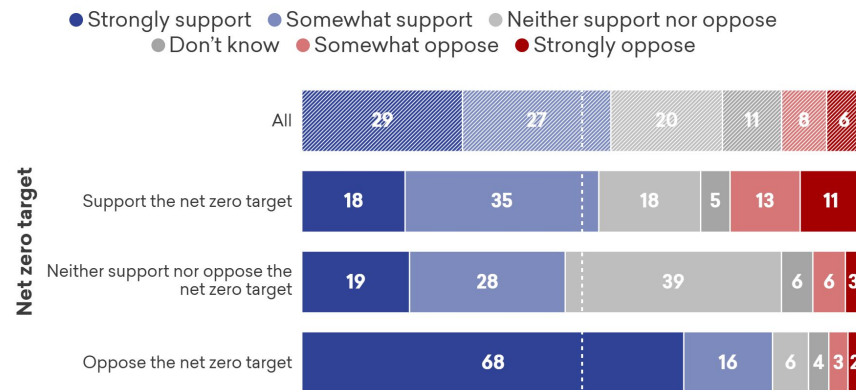
Support is strongest among Conservative (79 per cent) and Reform UK (77 per cent) voters, of whom fewer than one in ten are opposed. Around three in five Labour (59 per cent) and Liberal Democrat (59 per cent) voters also back new licences. Green voters are the only group where opposition outweighs support (41 per cent to 30 per cent).

There is very little difference between Jackdaw and Rosebank: when broken down into separate decisions, 51 per cent backed Jackdaw being approved, and 48 per cent backed Rosebank.

But support for new North Sea drilling is not a rejection of the wider net zero target. More Britons support the UK's target of reaching net zero by 2050 (44 per cent) than oppose it (22 per cent). Even among net zero supporters, a majority (53 per cent) support new drilling at Rosebank and Jackdaw.

Even supporters of the net zero target back Rosebank and Jackdaw drilling by two to one

Would you support or oppose issuing new licences for drilling in the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields?



If Jackdaw does spark a climate backlash, it will be among Labour's core progressive voters

The public as a whole – and Labour's own voters – support new drilling at Rosebank and Jackdaw. However, Progressive Activists are nearly twice as likely to support (47 per cent) than support (24 per cent) the decision.

This is significant because Progressive Activists form an important part of Labour's voter base, and **have fuelled the 'Burnham Bounce' in recent months.**

If there is a risk of a climate backlash, it could take the form of progressive voters drifting back toward the Green Party.

It's a mixed bag again, isn't it? On the one hand, we're going to get oil and it is one of the last two places in the North Sea with the oil resources. But on the other hand, you are not helping the climate change target. So again, it's just a mixed bag of so hard to decide and there isn't really a neutral ground.

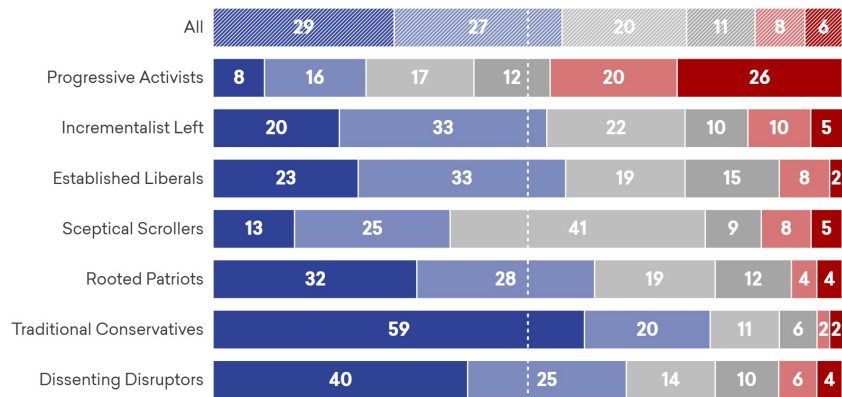


Valerie, landlord, Fulham

Every segment tends to support new drilling at Rosebank and Jackdaw - but Progressive Activists stand out in their opposition

The UK Government is considering allowing new oil and gas drilling in the North Sea at the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields. Do you support or oppose this?

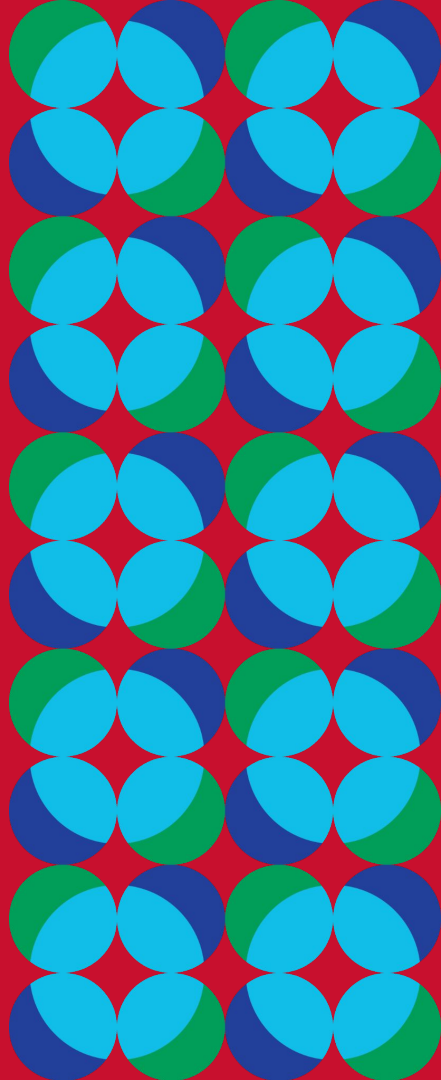
● Strongly support
● Somewhat support
● Neither support nor oppose
● Don't know
● Somewhat oppose
● Strongly oppose





More in
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Can Burnham fix the cost of living crisis?



The public remain pessimistic about the cost of living

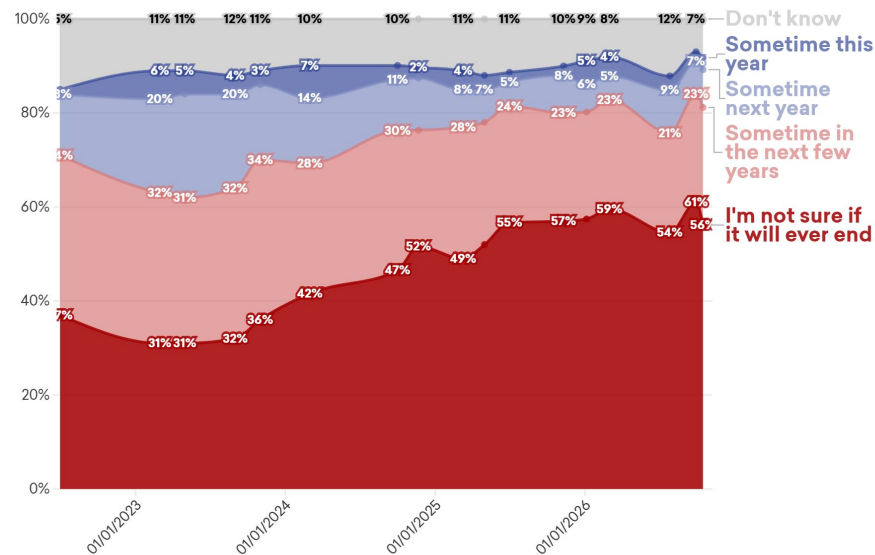
Burnham's early premiership has not shifted the pessimistic mood among the public about whether the cost of living crisis will end. **56 per cent are not sure whether the cost of living crisis will ever end – only one point down from 57 per cent at the time of the last budget.**

Those most struggling with the cost of living are the most pessimistic about the future. 68 per cent of those struggling to make ends meet, and 80 per cent of those who have to go without essentials, are not sure whether the cost of living is getting better.

51 per cent say their personal finances have got worse over the course of the last year, with just 11 per cent saying it has got better, and 34 per cent feeling it has stayed the same. Majorities of the public earning under £40,000 a year feel their financial situation has gotten worse in the past year, and only those earning over £100,000 feel their financial situation has gotten better.

More than half of Britons are unsure if the cost of living crisis will ever end

While economic conditions are difficult to predict, when do you expect the cost of living crisis to end?



The public thinks Burnham cares about cost of living – but are not sure he can do anything about it

A notable gap has opened in perceptions about whether Burnham **cares** about cost of living, and optimism about his ability to do anything about it. **This gap is largest among those who can cover their essentials, but not luxuries.**

Overall, Burnham is passing the ‘trying’ test on cost of living. The public think Burnham does care about cost of living for people like them, 50 per cent to 40 per cent, although those struggling the most with the cost of living are sceptical.

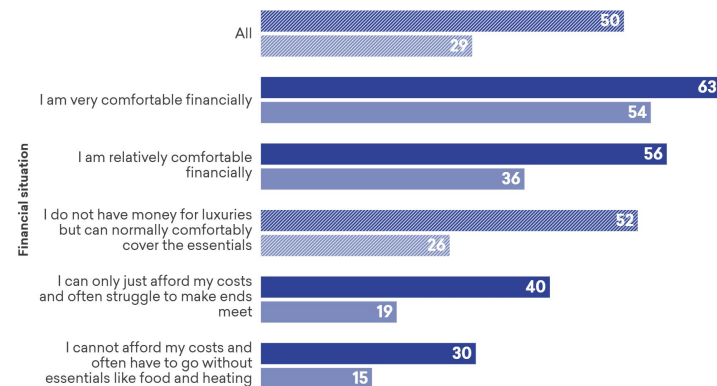
But the public are pessimistic about whether Burnham will bring down the cost of living. 29 per cent feel optimistic that he will, but 44 per cent are pessimistic.

The gap between the ‘trying’ test and the likelihood of delivery is largest for those who can afford essentials, but not luxuries. 52 per cent of this group think Burnham cares about their lost of living, but just 26 per cent are optimistic he can deliver.

Half of Britons think Burnham cares about the cost of living - but only three in ten think he will bring it down. The gap is widest among the squeezed middle

% who think Andy Burnham cares a lot or a bit about bringing down the cost of living for people like them, and % optimistic he will bring down the cost of living in the next three years

- Think Burnham cares about bringing down the cost of living
- Optimistic Burnham will bring down the cost of living



Public want action on energy bills to be the number one priority

Energy bills are the public's single top priority for bringing down the cost of living (38 per cent), ahead of food prices (25 per cent) and petrol (13 per cent).

Priorities vary by generation. A majority of Baby Boomers (55 per cent) put energy bills first, compared to just 19 per cent of Gen Z, who are as likely to prioritise food prices (24 per cent) and rent (21 per cent).

This patterns holds when asking about the budget overall – 58 per cent name energy bills as one of their top three priorities, ahead of improving public services (33 per cent) and cutting taxes (32 per cent).

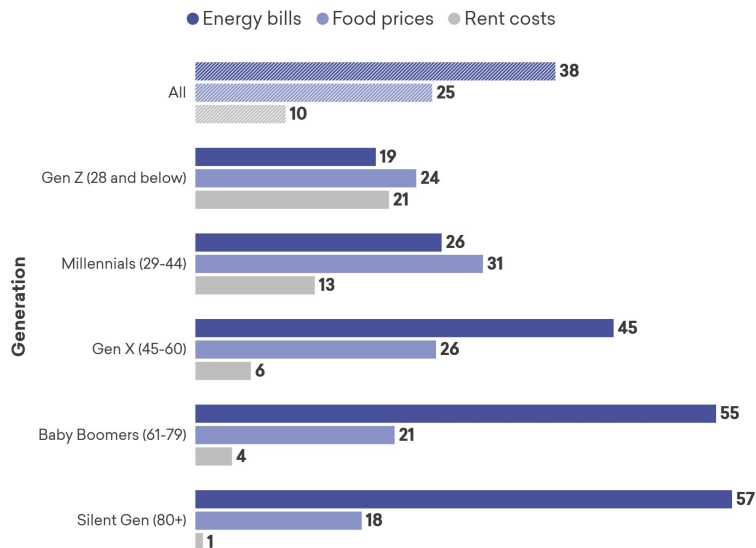


Energy bills is a massive thing, isn't it? It's going up and up and up and up and up and up.

– Mark, paramedic, Makerfield

Energy bills are the public's top cost of living priority – especially for older Britons

If the government was to choose one priority for bringing down the cost of living, what do you think it should be?



Many Britons are bracing for a tough winter

While the price cap for the January is yet to be finalised, forecasters expect it to be in excess of £2,000 per year or £170 a month for a typical household.

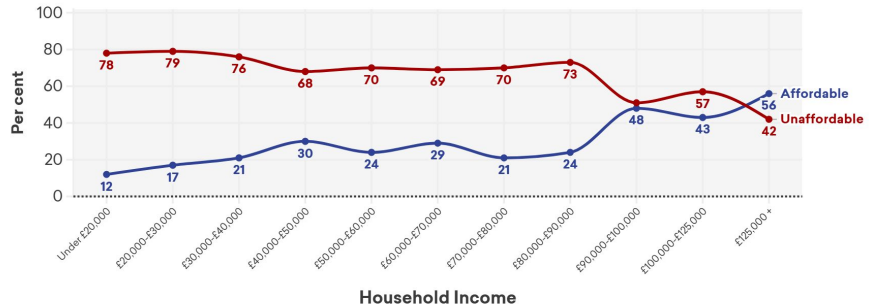
Most Britons don't think they will be able to afford these energy costs. 71 per cent say an energy price cap of this level would not be affordable with two in five (43 per cent) saying they think it would be **completely unaffordable**. Initial forecasts had predicted an even higher price cap of £2,150 which almost eight in ten Britons (78 per cent) thought would be unaffordable.

"I just don't know how it can be affordable. When you've got other people in the house, you've got to heat the house, you've got to be warm. It's the worst month of the year for that. I just feel panicked."

Louise, Hospital Worker, Rawmarsh & Conisbrough

Only households earning more than £125,000 think they can afford the January energy bill increase

Forecasts have predicted that the energy price cap could rise for the three months from January 2027 to March 2027 so that the typical household energy bill is just over £2,000 a year or just under £170 a month. Do you think this is affordable or unaffordable?



"We've got a baby so we have to have the heating on. So we're going to have to cut back somewhere else to find that money to have the heating on."

Lauren, Dog Groomer, Rawmarsh & Conisburgh

A targeted support package that misses the squeezed middle could spark backlash

Speculation ahead of the budget has suggested the Chancellor is preparing an intervention which will provide the lowest earners with targeted support for their energy bills. Yet Britons across income group describe the same pressure, and there is a clear preference for universal support – including among the lowest income Britons.

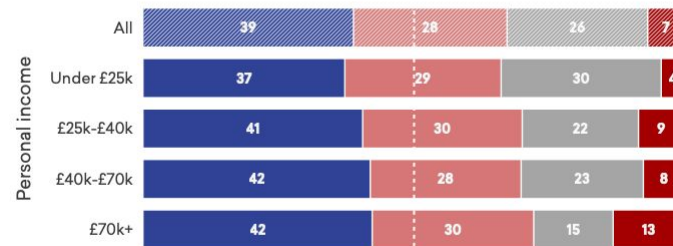
Concern about energy bills spans the whole income spectrum in Britain. As a result, by 39 per cent to 28 per cent, Britons say they would prefer the government provides universal support for energy bills, even if this means reduced support overall.

In focus groups, it is clear that many feel that while they are struggling and never benefit from government support, deepening feelings of a broken social contract.

Even lower earners prefer universal support for energy bills

The government is considering how it might support people on energy costs this winter. Do you think they should...

- Use government money (raise other taxes or cut spending on other things) to cut energy bill taxes for everyone, even if it's less per person
- Use government money (raise taxes or cut spending on other things) to support those on the lowest incomes/in receipt of benefits with their energy bills
- Don't know
- Raise most people's energy bills to support those on the lowest incomes/in receipt of benefits with their energy bills



"Anything big that gets put in place, we just seem to not... be able to benefit from it in any way because we're just slightly too much over the threshold."

Linda, Family Hub Coordinator, Yorkshire

Framing targeted support at those on benefits is less popular

Cost of living pressures are felt across income levels, and Britons prefer a universal approach over a targeted one for support.

Half of More in Common's sample were asked whether energy bill support should be focused on those earning less than £25,000 or go to everyone equally – they split 47 to 46. The other half were asked about focusing support on those on benefits – and backed universal support by 71 to 21.

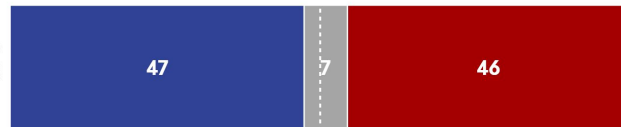
Targeting help at low-paid workers splits the public; targeting it at welfare claimants is deeply unpopular, even among 2024 Labour voters (66 per cent want support for everyone in that version). For a squeezed middle who feel they earn too much for help and too little to be comfortable, universal or work-linked relief is the safer route politically.

Targeting help at low earners splits the public – targeting it at benefit claimants is unpopular

Thinking about helping people with their energy bills, which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Support should be focused on (low earners/those on benefits) ● Don't know
- Support should go to everyone equally

Version A: 'Support should be focused on those earning less than £25,000'



Version B: 'Support should be focused on those on benefits'



Brits agree that 'growth in every postcode' is more important than the headline rate

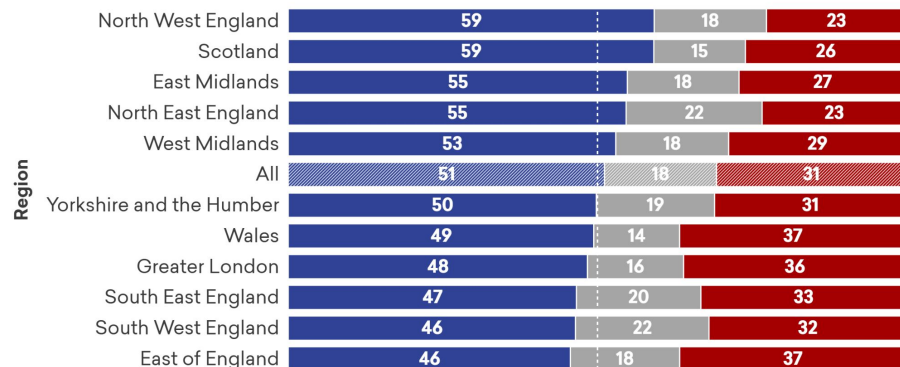
Andy Burnham's ideas on 'good growth' resonate with the public. Britons tend to want growth they can see in their own area, rather than maximising the national headline rate.

51 per cent say the government should prioritise equal economic growth across the country, compared to 31 per cent who would rather maximise overall growth even if it is spread unequally. This preference for nationally spread growth is highest in the North West.

A majority of Britons think the Government should prioritise equalising the spread of economic growth over the headline rate

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- The government should prioritise equal economic growth across the country over maximising overall economic growth
- Don't know
- The government should prioritise maximising overall economic growth, even if it is spread unequally across the country



The public want measurable returns on cost of living

The rhetorical shift away from growth 'as the number one mission' towards cost of living improvements is broadly in line with how the public wants the government to approach the economy.

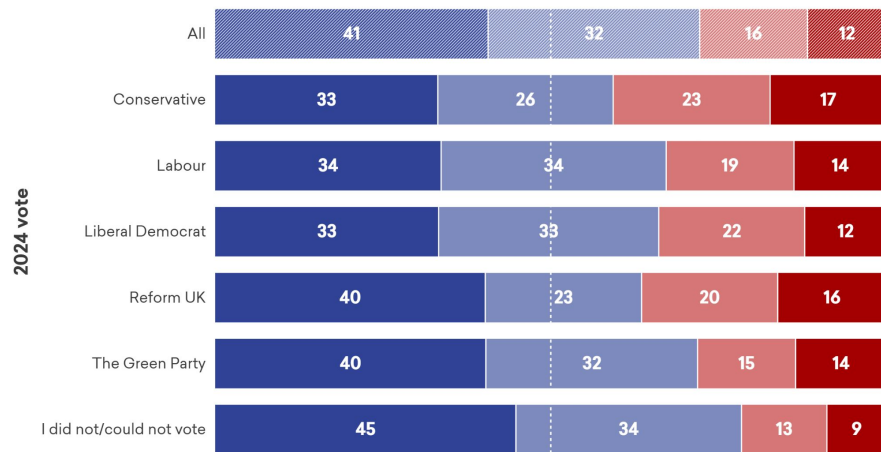
In total, 72 per cent want the government to focus mainly on solving the cost of living crisis as its first priority, with 28 per cent wanting them to focus primarily on boosting growth. This is strikingly consistent across parties.

This should not be confused for a desire for short term improvements over long term fixes. Six in ten (59 per cent) want Labour to focus mainly on solving long-term problems to fix structural issues with the country, compared with 41 per cent who prioritise short-term relief. Even among those who want the cost of living prioritised over growth, lean more towards long-term fixes than immediate relief.

Voters of every party lean towards Labour prioritising the cost of living over growth

Please place yourself on a scale to 1 to 4 based on which statement comes closest to your view.

- 1. Labour should mainly focus on solving the cost of living crisis as its first priority ● 2 ● 3 ● 4. Labour should mainly focus on boosting economic growth as its first priority



Burnham's cost of living pivot has not yet won over low and middle income voters

Burnham's cost of living pivot has not shifted a persistent atmosphere of pessimism about the cost of living, and further action in the budget will be required to fully persuade lower and middle voters.

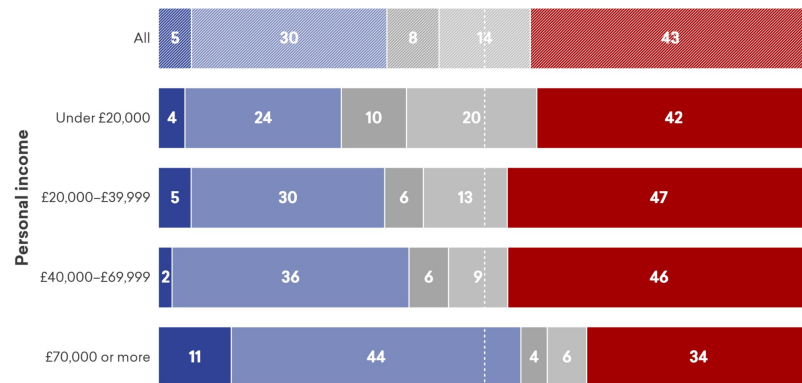
After Burnham's cost of living tour last summer, just 5 per cent thought that Burnham's policies would make a 'big difference' to their life', with 43 per cent thinking it would make no difference. Just 28 per cent of those on incomes under £20,000 said that Burnham's policy announcements would make any difference to them, compared to 55 per cent for those earning £70,000 or more.

Short term measures, while good in establishing a positive first impression on the cost of living, have not yet been sufficient in persuading many low and middle income voters that Burnham's government will materially cut their cost of living.

Higher earners are twice as likely as low earners to feel Burnham's cost of living policies

Thinking about your own life, do you think the cost of living policies that Andy Burnham has announced so far will make...

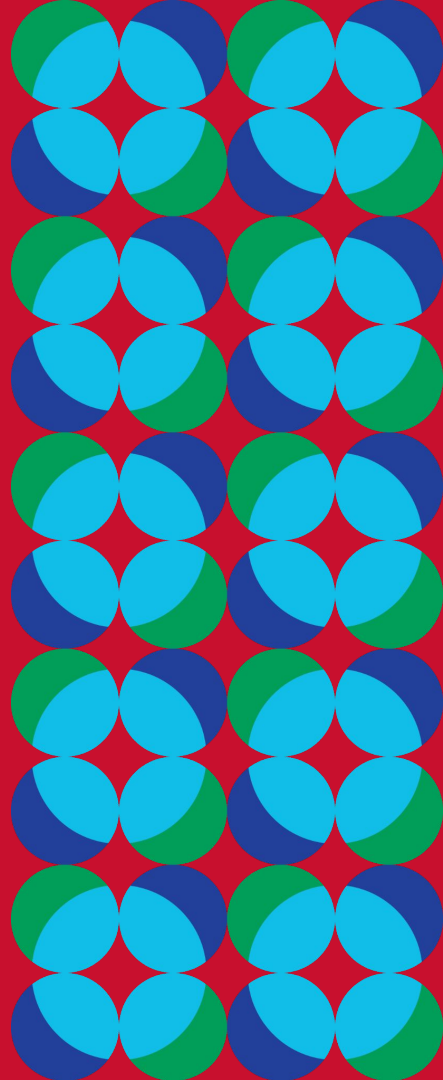
- A big difference
- Some difference
- Don't know
- I haven't heard of any policies
- No difference at all





More in
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The welfare question



Britons want an answer to welfare spending

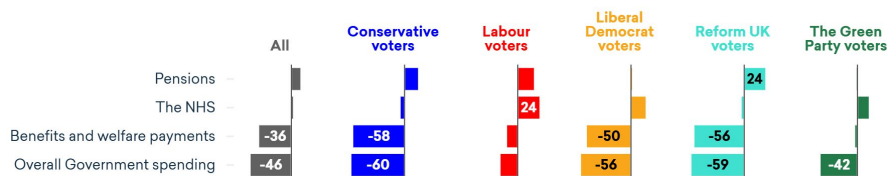
Across voter groups, there is a growing consensus that welfare spending is too high – and an appetite for greater action to get it under control.

The issue is also climbing the agenda – particularly on the right of politics. The proportion of Conservative and Reform voters selecting welfare and benefits as a top issue has nearly doubled since early 2025.

Most Britons think current welfare spending is unsustainable

Would you say that levels of Government spending on each of the following at the moment are sustainable or unsustainable?

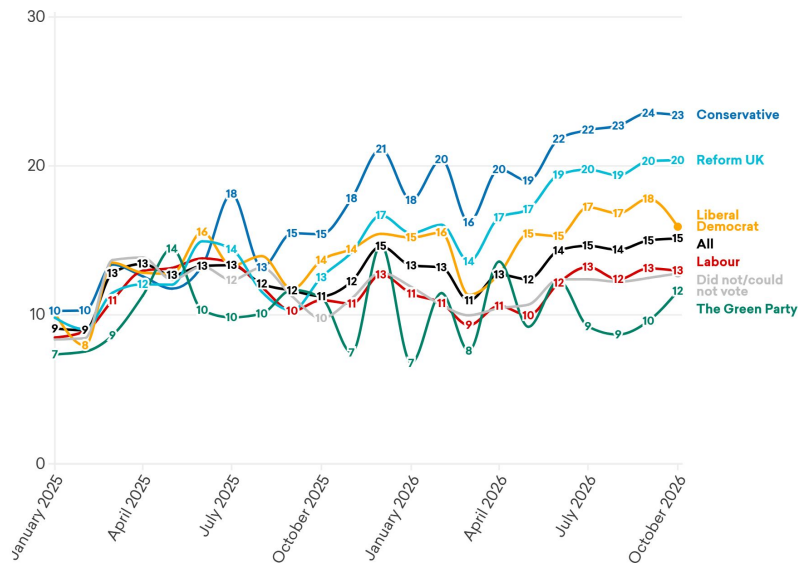
(By 2024 vote)



Welfare and benefits have risen up the agenda, particularly among Conservative and Reform voters

In your opinion, which are the most IMPORTANT issues facing the country today?
Please select up to three,

Welfare and Benefits. Monthly average, by 2024 vote



The country is generationally divided on youth unemployment

The public has two radically different understandings of youth unemployment.

Two thirds of Gen Z (67 per cent) blame a lack of jobs, compared to just 27 per cent of Baby Boomers, a majority of whom (56 per cent) say benefits are too generous.

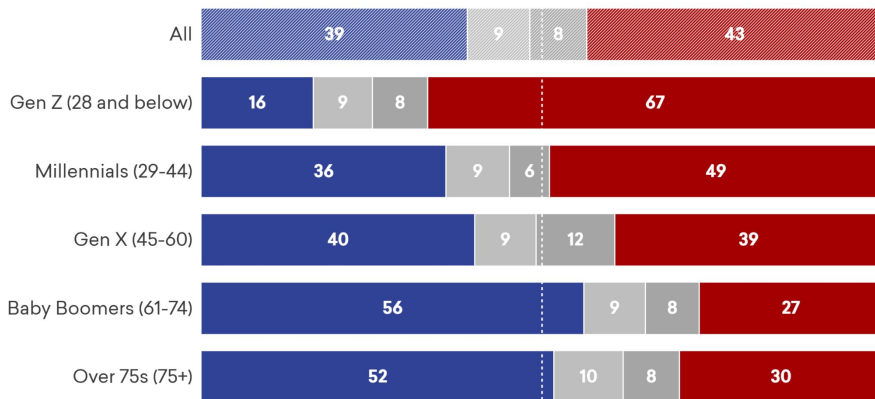
Millennials lean towards a lack of jobs (49 to 36), while Gen X are split (39 to 40).

This is also sharply split by party. Majorities of Reform UK and Conservative voters in 2024 (55 and 56 per cent) blame over generous benefits, but majorities of Labour and Green voters (55 and 66 per cent) blame a lack of jobs. Liberal Democrat voters are split roughly evenly, with 42 per cent blaming benefits and 45 per cent blaming the lack of jobs.

Generations are sharply divided on the root cause of youth unemployment

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

- Youth unemployment today is primarily because benefits are too generous, disincentivising work
- Neither of these
- Don't know
- Youth unemployment today is primarily because there are not enough jobs, even though young people want to work them



For many, the welfare debate is central to a broken social contract

In focus groups, it's clear that for many Britons, welfare is a key element of a **social contract that feels broken**. Many feel that hard work is not rewarded, and a common reprise is that wealthy Britons are looked after, those on benefits are looked after, but there is no support for working people 'in the middle'.

A lot of it gets spent on certain benefits and things that I think there ought to be a better way of judging who needs what, because I personally know people that are on benefits and go on two all-inclusive holidays a year. Well, if they can afford that, they're getting too much money in benefits.

Edna, Dance Teacher, Long Eaton

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

Chelsea, social worker, Hull

Across politics, Britons believe that people on benefits should always receive less than those in full time work

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

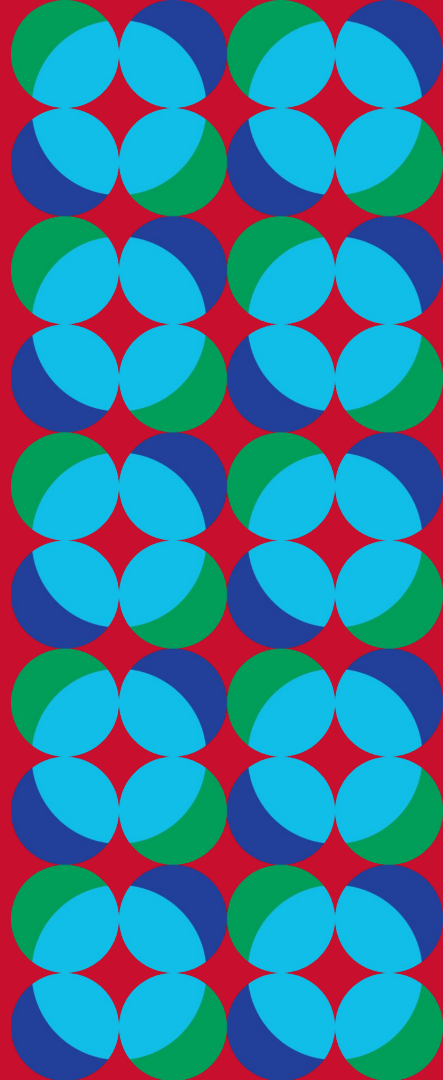
- People on benefits should always receive less than those in full time work to make sure being in work always pays
- Benefits should be as generous as necessary to enable people to live a decent life





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The triple lock and social care



The triple lock is a battle that could go either way

Three quarters (77 per cent) have heard at least a bit about Burnham's changes to the triple lock, but understanding is patchy: given a choice of options, only 21 per cent pick the most accurate description of the change.

How it is framed makes a large difference. Asked without additional framing, 36 per cent support replacing the triple lock and 24 per cent oppose.

But when respondents are shown a clip of Andy Burnham announcing the policy in his Leader's speech and linking it to social care....

Do you support or oppose the the proposal to replace the triple lock with the new proposed system?

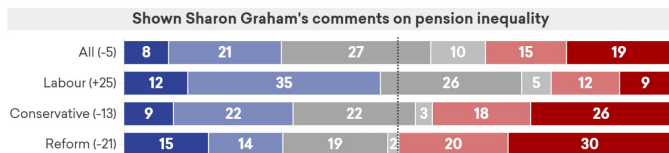
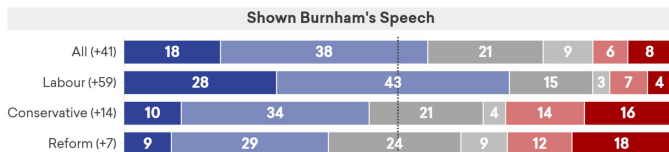
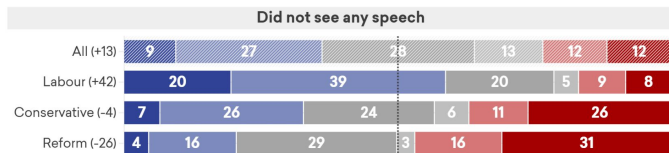
- **SPLIT A:** No clip shown. **Net support +12**
- **SPLIT B:** Shown a clip from Andy Burnham's speech on the triple lock. **Net support +41**
- **SPLIT C:** Shown a clip from Sharon Graham criticising the changes. **Net support -5**

Public opinion on the triple lock still depends greatly on which argument the public hears

Do you support or oppose the proposal to replace the triple lock with the new proposed system?

By 2024 vote. Sample split into three; one group did not see any speech, one group shown Burnham's conference speech on the triple lock, one group shown comments on pensions by Sharon Graham

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



Most Britons want to exempt state pensions from income tax

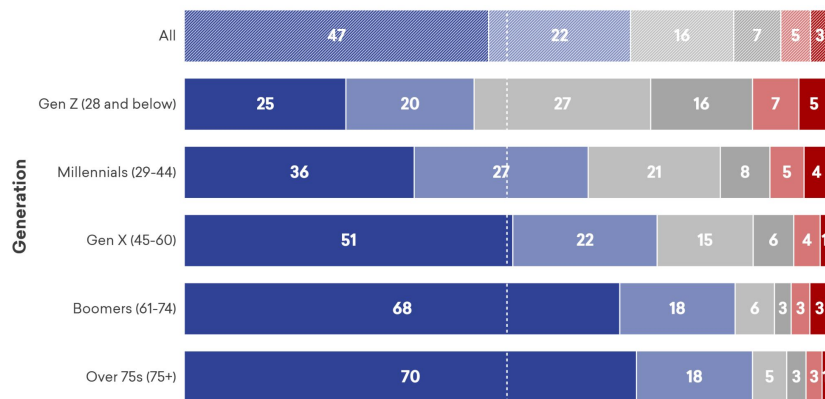
Most Britons, across age groups and parties, support exempting pensions from income tax. 69 per cent support the idea of exempting the state pension from income tax, compared to just 8 per cent who oppose. Support is strongest with the over 75s, where 88 per cent support the idea, 70 per cent strongly. Support is softer with Gen Z, where under a majority support the idea (45 per cent).

This is not necessarily linked with supporting or opposing Burnham's triple lock reforms. 68 per cent of those who backed Burnham's proposals on the Triple Lock also backed exempting the state pension from income tax.

Every generation backs exempting the state pension from income tax

Below is a list of tax measures and changes. Please indicate whether you would support or oppose them: Exempting the state pension from income tax

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



Finding a fair way to fund social care could be challenging

Finding a way the public deems fair to meet the challenges in social care could prove difficult.

Overall, the only proposal to fund social care that is seen as fair by the public is raising the amount of tax on high earners (+39).

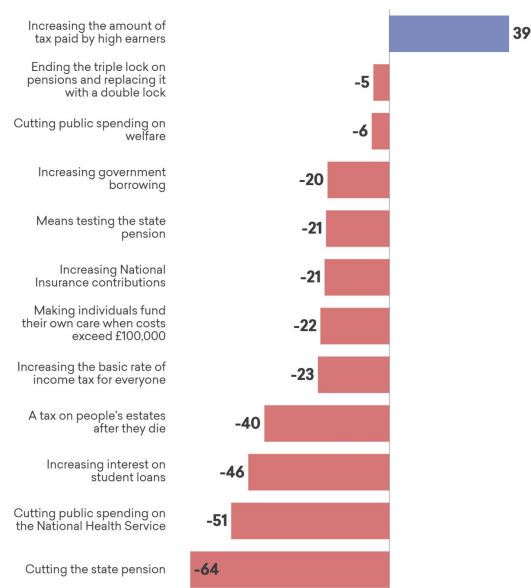
Others divide opinion. Replacing the triple lock is narrowly seen as unfair (-5), along with cutting welfare (-6). Making individuals fund their own costs over £100,000 is also generally seen as unfair (-22).

Some options are seen as very unfair by the public. Raising inheritance levies to fund social care is seen as unfair by 59 per cent of the public with a net rating of -46, and means testing the state pension is seen as very unfair at -64, with three quarters (75 per cent) saying it would be unfair.

Taxing high earners is the only way to fund social care that the public sees as fair

In your view, how fair or unfair would each of the following be as a way of paying for social care?

Net fairness (% fair minus % unfair) of each way of funding social care





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Thank you

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