



More in
Common



Tuesday 6 October



16:15 to 17:15



Executive Room 7,
Secure Zone, ICC

Can the Conservatives be the tactical choice for both left and right?



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More in
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**Sir Andy
Street**
Prosper UK, and
former Mayor of the
West Midlands

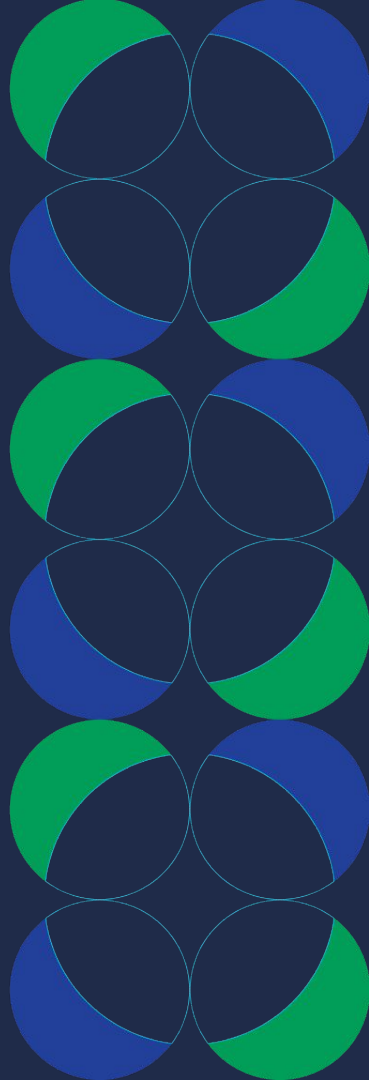


**Lord
Hayward**
Peer in the
House of Lords



Can the Conservatives be the tactical choice for both left and right?

Prosper UK, Conservative Party Conference 2026



Conservative support has stabilised, but is still vulnerable

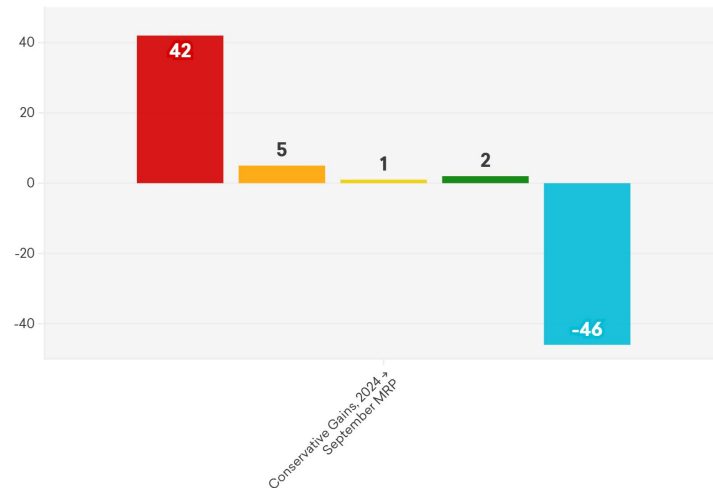
Support for the Conservative Party has risen steadily since the last conference. At its nadir in summer and autumn in 2025, Conservative support hovered between 18 and 21 per cent – it is now tied, or sometimes ahead, for second place with Reform UK in our opinion polls. Predictions of Conservative demise may have turned out to be exaggerated.

In More in Common's latest MRP, the party stands at 125 seats – up 4 from 2024. These seats include 42 flipped from Labour, many of them in wealthier areas (Buckingham, Chelsea and Fulham, City of London and Westminster). However, the Conservatives still lose 46 seats to Reform, many in heavily Leave-voting areas, including eight in Essex. Alex Burghart and Wendy Morton are projected to lose their seats to Reform, as is James Cleverly in Braintree.

Conservatives are set to gain 42 seats from Labour, but lose 46 to Reform

September MRP, compared to 2024

● Gained from Labour ● Gained from Liberal Democrats ● Gained from SNP ● Gained from Green ● Lost to Reform UK



There is a hidden divide in the Conservatives' voter pool

A key divide has emerged in the Conservative Party's potential support base. Of those who would consider voting Conservative, **45 per cent** are currently voting for Labour, the Liberal Democrats or the Green Party; **53 per cent** are voting or considering Reform UK or Restore Britain.

The Tory-Curious Left (current Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green voters) are affluent, likely to be graduates, and much more likely to live in London and other cities. Most support Net Zero; many would vote tactically against Reform. They most often cite **Partygate** and the **Conservatives' record on public services** as barriers. Most like Andy Burnham but dislike Nigel Farage. At its best, they believe the Conservative Party **provides economic stability**.

The Tory-Curious Right (currently Reform UK or Restore Britain voters) are more likely to feel financially insecure, to live in small towns and villages, and three quarters (76 per cent) voted for Brexit. They are strongly opposed to Net Zero, and are **worried about the Conservatives' record on immigration**. They like Nigel Farage, but dislike Andy Burnham. This group thinks that at its best, the Conservative Party **stands for hard work and success**.

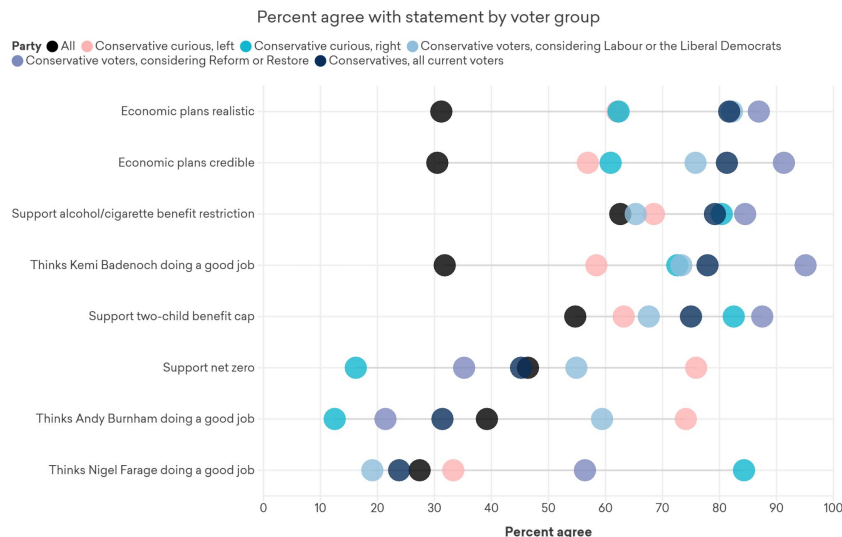
It will be challenging for the Conservative Party to please both groups. However, they do have several key things in common: both groups like Kemi Badenoch; both believe that the Conservatives have a credible economic agenda; neither group believe that the Conservatives' approach is too tough on immigration.

What unites – and divides– the Conservative base?

Conservative voters, and those weighing up voting Conservative, tend to be drawn to the party's economic plans. Majorities of those considering voting Conservative who would currently vote either for Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Reform all believe Conservative economic plans are credible and realistic. Their voter pool also has majorities thinking Kemi Badenoch is doing a good job, backing maintaining the two child benefit cap, and Conservative proposals on benefits.

The largest gaps in the potential coalition are on Net Zero and Reform. Support for Net Zero is high among the Tory-curious left (76%) but low with those considering Conservative from Restore or Reform. (16%). They split dramatically on Nigel Farage: only 33 per cent of potential Conservative voters on the left approve of him, compared to 84% of those on the right.

The Conservative voter pool is united on economics and welfare, but divided on Net Zero and Reform



Tactical voting and the Conservatives



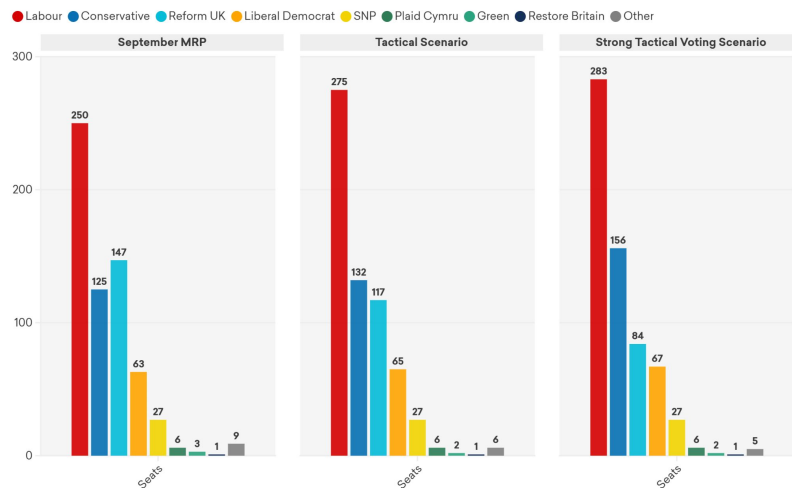
Tactical voting could be key to the Conservatives – but they need to persuade centrist voters.

Tactical voting could be key to the Conservatives' fortunes reviving. In our 'strong' tactical estimate the Conservatives could gain 40 seats from Reform, and clearly be the second party behind Labour as a result. But it requires Labour voters to vote tactically in Labour-Reform contests.

Many progressive voters, however, have misgivings about tactically voting Conservative against Reform. 30 per cent of Labour voters currently expressing a willingness to tactically vote in these contests, and 37 per cent of Liberal Democrats do – but clear majorities do not. To properly mobilise these voters, **Conservatives need to overcome these voters fears.**

Tactical voting could be key to the Conservatives retaining a role as official opposition

Seats, September MRP, Tactical and Strong Tactical Voting Scenario



Fears of Reform are motivating unprecedented tactical voting



***It's just scary how high Reform is** and that's why, because you don't know if people from Denton and Gordon, if you split the vote between Labour and the Green Party, Reform could then get in and that's why I'm toying between the other two, not knowing which one to vote for just to stop Reform getting in.*

Joe, Car Service Advisor, Gorton and Denton



I think it might be the first time I vote negatively.

So rather than voting for the candidate, I would naturally choose. I'm going to vote. I might end up voting tactically because it's going to end up being close and that sits really uncomfortably with me.

Deborah, self-employed, Makerfield



***It looks like I'm voting for a man that wears a dustbin on his head.** Because as a woman I've got to vote — coming from the East End, I was brought up that women had to earn the right to vote. So I always vote. But as nobody else is really standing against him, there's no option, really.*

Denise, cybersecurity, Clacton

Conservative voters are divided on who their main opponent is

Conservatives are notably split on who they would 'vote against'.

Left wing parties still dominate the negative voting intention among current Conservatives. When asked who they would vote against, 34 per cent say Labour, and 19 per cent the Greens. In comparison, 30 per cent name Reform.

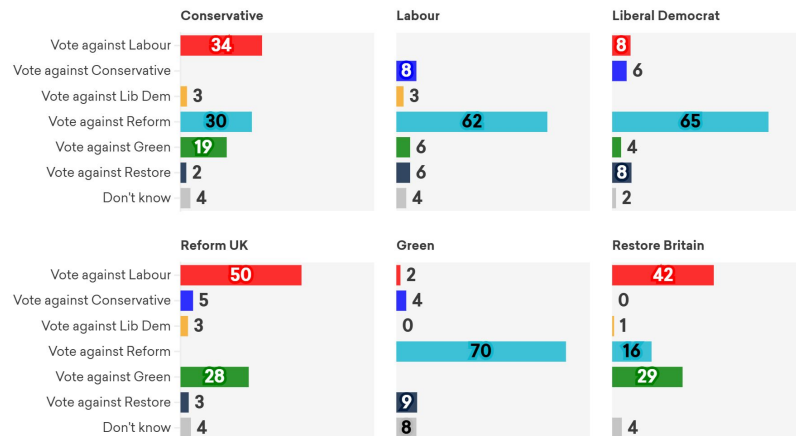
This makes the Conservative Party one of the most divided on who their main opponent is. Half of current Reform voters, meanwhile, are clear that their main opponent is Labour (50 per cent) while majorities of current Liberal Democrat, Green and Labour voters would actively vote against Reform UK.

This has both benefits and drawbacks. Many voters feel more negatively about Reform than about the Conservatives, which opens the door to progressive tactical voting for the Conservatives in seats where they are best placed to beat Reform. But it may also fragment the right of centre bloc as Conservative voters a less clear idea of which party they most want to stop.

Left-wing voters are more motivated to stop Reform, but right-wing voters are more split

If you could vote against one party in a General Election, who would you vote against?

● Vote against Labour ● Vote against Conservative ● Vote against Lib Dem
● Vote against Reform ● Vote against Green ● Vote against Restore ● Don't know



Conservatives are split about whether to tactically vote in Labour–Reform contests

In our MRP, 181 seats showed Labour and Reform as the top two parties, with 76 seats having Labour and Reform jointly clear of the Conservatives by more than 10 per cent.

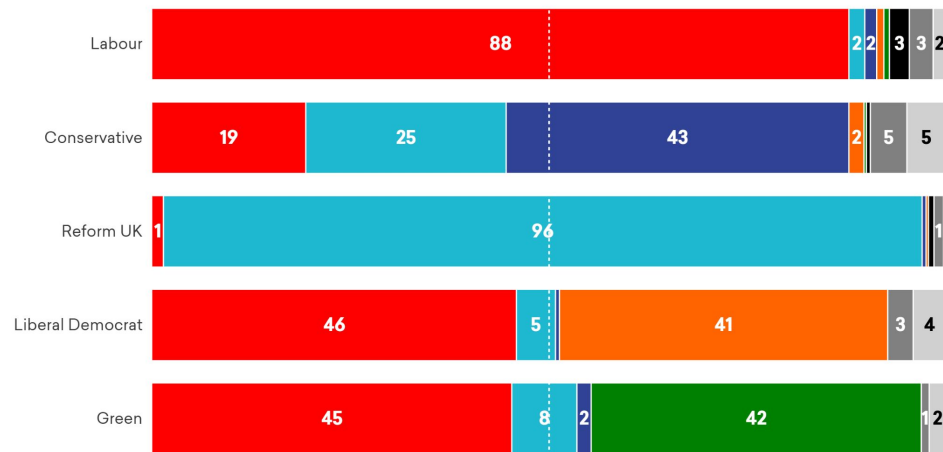
Conservative voters are split about what to do in this scenario. The largest bulk of Conservative voters – 43 per cent – would stay loyal to the party even if polls showed they would not win in their seat. But those who would not are split about whether to tactically vote Reform (25 per cent) or Labour (19 per cent) in that scenario.

Green and Liberal Democrat voters both overwhelmingly choose Labour over Reform; but Conservative voters are roughly split on which of the two parties they would prefer.

Conservatives are split on whether to tactically vote for Labour or Reform in a straight contest

Imagine that polls showed that Reform UK and the Labour Party were most likely to win in your area. Which party would you vote for?

● Labour ● Reform UK ● Conservative ● Liberal Democrat ● Green ● Restore Britain
● Don't know ● Would not vote



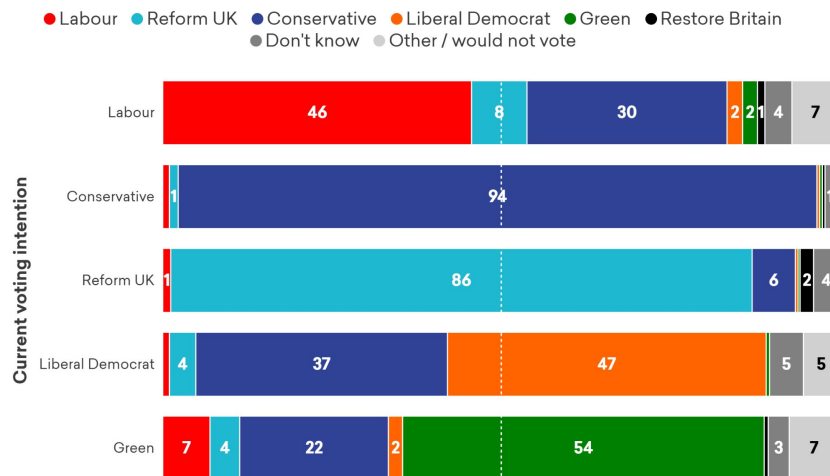
Labour and Liberal Democrat voters are divided about whether to vote Conservative to block Reform

Labour and Liberal Democrat voters generally would not tactically vote for the Conservatives even if they thought only Reform and the Conservatives would win. 46 per cent of Labour voters and 47 per cent of Liberal Democrats would stay loyal.

However, many left-leaning voters would prefer to have a Conservative MP to a Reform MP, and some would vote tactically in a straight choice. 30 per cent of Labour voters and 37 per cent of Liberal Democrats would vote tactically for the Conservatives in a Reform–Conservative contest. Just 8 per cent of Labour voters and 4 per cent of Liberal Democrats would vote for Reform.

3 in 10 Labour voters would vote tactically for the Conservatives against Reform

Imagine that polls showed that Reform UK and the Conservative Party were most likely to win in your area. Which party would you vote for?



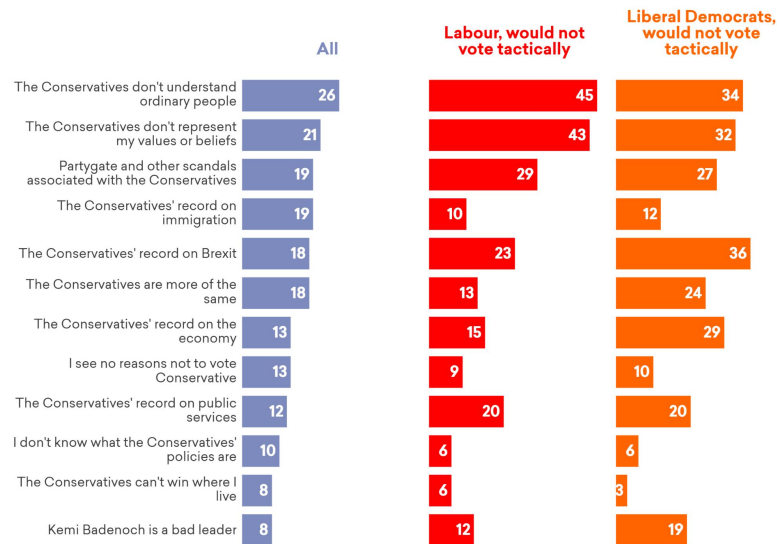
What are the barriers to tactical voting for the Conservatives?

Labour and Liberal Democrat voters currently *not* open to voting Conservative tactically against Reform have very different reasons why.

Among Labour voters, the highest concern is that “the Conservatives don’t understand ordinary people” (45 per cent) followed by the Conservatives not representing my values or beliefs (43 per cent). These concerns are high too among Liberal Democrats, but topped by the Conservative’s record on Brexit (36 per cent). The concern about The Conservative’s past record on the economy (29 per cent) is also notably higher than the average. They are also more than twice as likely to cite Kemi Badenoch personally as a barrier than the general public.

A sense Conservatives don't understand ordinary people is stopping Labour voters from tactically voting Conservative, and Brexit is blocking Liberal Democrat voters

Which of the following would you say are the main reasons stopping you from voting for the Conservative Party? (Select up to three)



Tactical voting is more coherent on the left than the right

Tactical voting is much more cohesive on the left of British politics than the right.

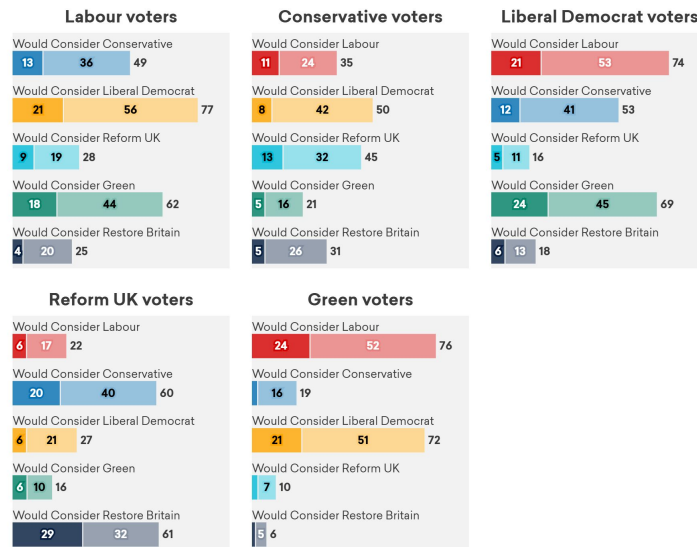
In total, 74 per cent of Liberal Democrats, and 76 per cent of Greens would, at least in some circumstances, consider voting tactically for Labour.

There is an interesting asymmetry in tactical voting on the right. 60 per cent of Reform voters would tactically vote Conservative, but only 45 per cent of Conservatives would consider voting Reform. Conservatives are slightly more likely to consider voting tactically for the Liberal Democrats (50 per cent) than for Reform (45 per cent).

Conservatives are more likely to consider voting tactically for the Liberal Democrats than for Reform UK

To what extent, if at all, would you consider voting tactically for each of the following parties if you thought your first preference party could not win in your constituency?

By current vote. Dark colour= strongly consider, light colour= consider in some circumstances



Tactical voting could help the Conservatives, but is not a silver bullet

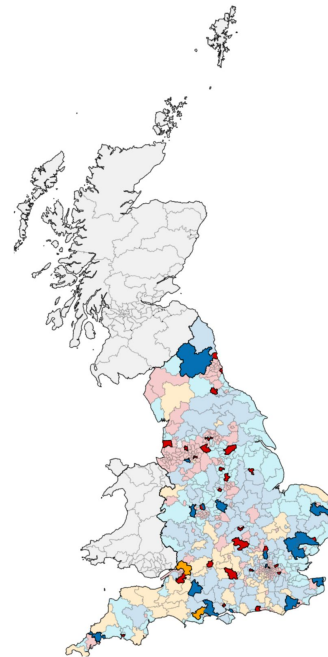
Alongside the headline projection, More in Common has estimated how tactical voting could change the result. This is based on polling on which groups of voters in England are most willing to vote tactically, and which parties they are most motivated to keep out. This scenario assumes that voters only switch in seats where their preferred party is more than ten points behind second place.

In this scenario, Labour picks up 25 seats in England, Reform loses 30 overall and the Conservatives rise from 125 to 132 seats. The Conservatives pick up 18 seats, 15 of them from Reform, but lose 11, nine to Labour, and two to the Liberal Democrats.

Some crucial seats that would change include Finchley and Golders Green, which would flip from Labour to the Conservatives, as well as South Norfolk and Welwyn Hatfield from Reform. The Conservatives would, however, lose seats such as Darlington to Labour and Thornbury and Yate to the Liberal Democrats.

Conservatives would only gain a net of seven seats with tactical voting, but would be clearly ahead of Reform

September MRP, tactical scenario



A large Conservative breakthrough only comes if 'soft' tactical voters are persuaded

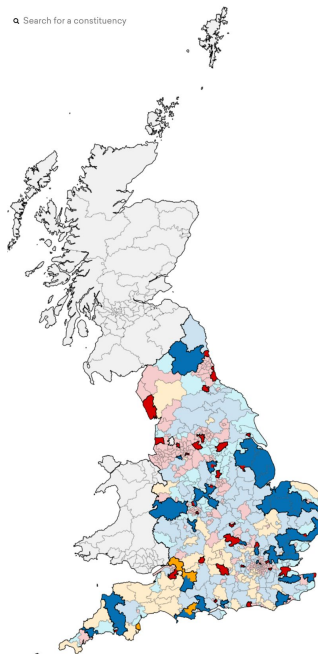
Conservatives only break through on tactical voting if more moderate, centrist leaning voters who say they would consider voting Conservative *in some circumstances* begin to switch to them.

This results in a much larger Conservative breakthrough, with the party winning 156 seats while Reform UK drop to 84. The bulk of this transfer (40 seats) is directly from Reform to the Conservatives. Seats that flip to Conservative in this model include Fareham and Waterlooville, Romford, and Boston and Skegness. Labour, however, would remain firmly ahead, winning 283 seats.

This underlines the crucial importance of persuading those weighing up whether to back the Conservatives tactically against Reform – doing so establishes the Conservatives as the clear opposition to Labour on the right.

Strong tactical voting could see the conservatives win up to 40 seats from reform

England seats modelled; Scotland and Wales held at September MRP baseline



How would pro-Conservative tactical voting work in practice?

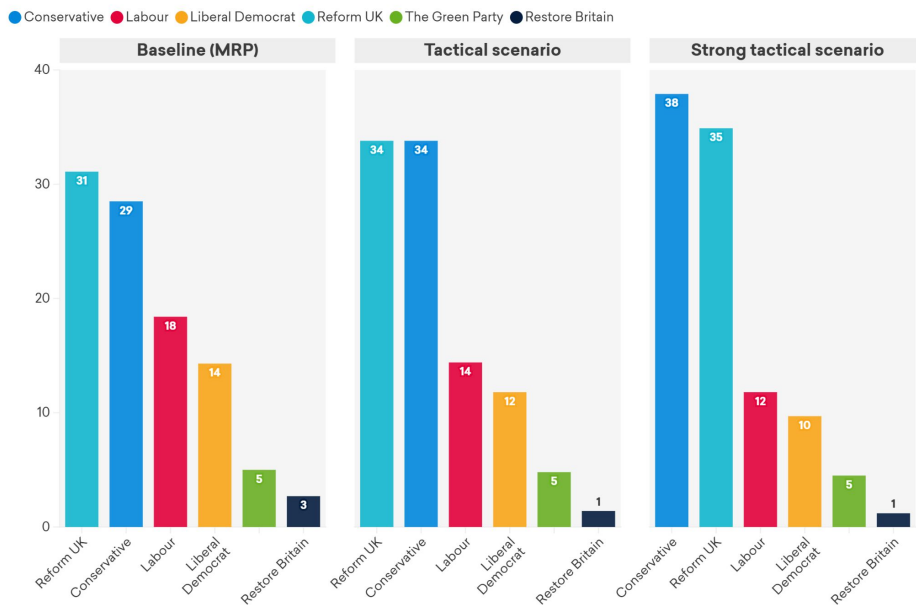
One example of a seat that would only flip with strong tactical voting, and by convincing centre-right voters to back the Conservatives, is Fareham and Waterlooville.

In this seat, our recent MRP projects a narrow Reform UK win over the Conservatives of 2 points, with other parties trailing behind.

If only those more certain to consider tactically voting move, Labour falls to 14 per cent, the Liberal Democrats to 12 per cent, and Restore is squeezed to 1 per cent, with Reform and the Conservatives tied. If a quarter of those considering voting tactically in some circumstances move, Labour is squeezed down to 12 per cent, Liberal Democrats to 10 per cent, and the Conservatives open a three point lead over Reform.

Fareham and Waterlooville: three tactical voting scenarios

Baseline MRP, normal tactical scenario and strong tactical voting scenario



**How could the
Conservatives
squeeze the
centre?**



The Conservatives could profit from persuading Liberal Democrats to back them...

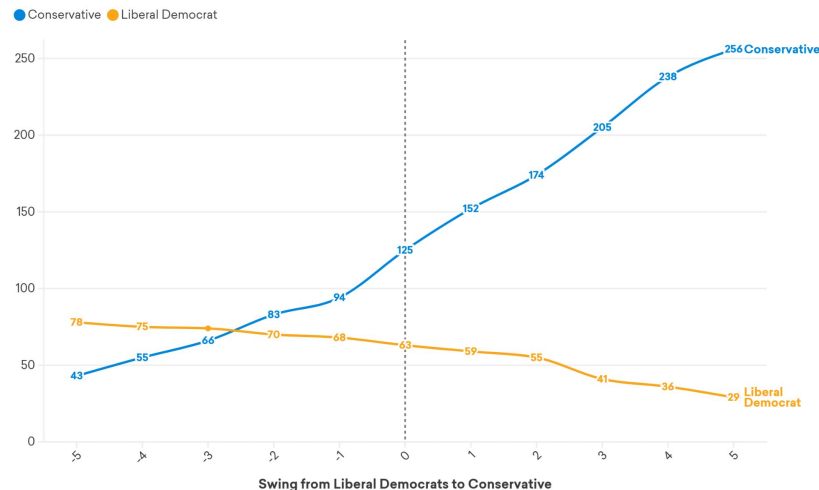
At the moment, 23 per cent of Liberal Democrats are open to considering voting Conservative.

A swing from the Liberal Democrats to Conservatives could not only help the party to win back Con-LD seats, but could win back other seats where the Liberal Democrats risk splitting the centre right vote. A 1 per cent swing from the Liberal Democrats to Conservatives takes the Conservatives to 152 seats – more than Reform – while a 3 per cent swing reduces the Liberal Democrats to 41 and pushes the Conservatives above 200.

Conversely, the Conservatives are still vulnerable to losing voters to the Liberal Democrats. Just a 2.8 per cent swing from the Conservatives to the Liberal Democrat would leave the Liberal Democrats as a larger party than the Tories.

The Conservatives could profit from squeezing persuadable Liberal Democrats

Seats under uniform swing between Conservative and Reform UK, applied to September MRP baseline



...But a swing back to Reform could damage Conservative prospects

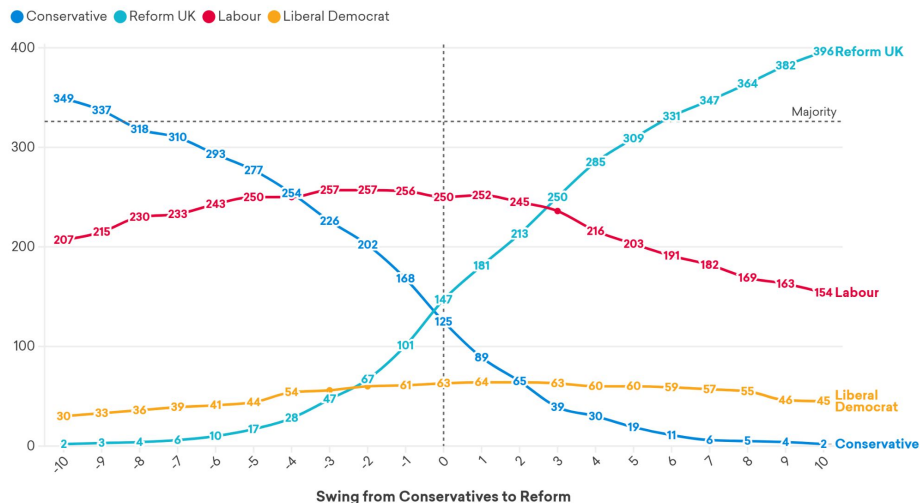
While the Conservatives are still highly vulnerable to any Reform UK revival, they also could greatly benefit from Reform voters coming back to the Conservatives.

Under 1 in 100 Reform voters need to shift to backing the Conservatives for them to remain as official Opposition. Just a 2 per cent swing away from Reform is needed for the Conservatives to win 200 seats.

Yet if Reform recovers, the Conservatives could quickly fall into serious difficulty. A swing of just 0.6 per cent to Reform UK would take the Conservatives below 100 seats, and a swing of 2.6 per cent would take them below 50.

The Battle for the Right is on a knife edge, with small swings either way radically changing the political landscape

Seats under uniform swing between Conservative and Reform UK, applied to September MRP baseline

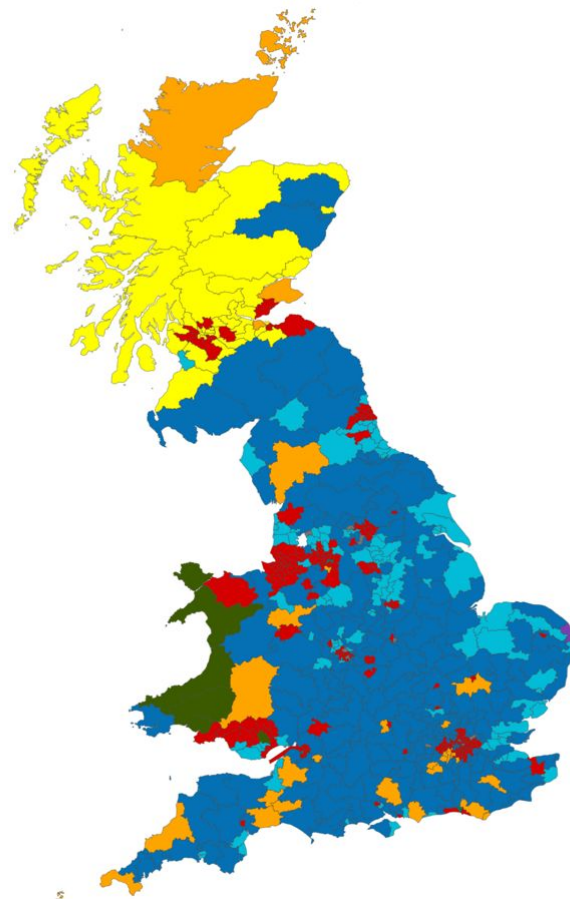


A Centrist Path to Victory?

One way the Conservatives could establish a poll lead is **by squeezing the 'Tory curious' voters currently voting Labour, Liberal Democrat or Green.**

If 50 per cent of those voters switched over to backing the Conservatives, the party would be at 27 per cent, with Reform and Labour on 24 per cent respectively. This would establish the Conservatives as the largest party with 259 seats, with Labour at 177, Reform at 110 and the Liberal Democrats at 31.

This coalition would see the Conservatives retake much of the Home Counties, South West and South East from Labour and the Liberal Democrats, as well as up to 19 seats in London, but leave them struggling in 'the Red Wall'. However, the Conservatives would still fall 67 seats short of a majority.

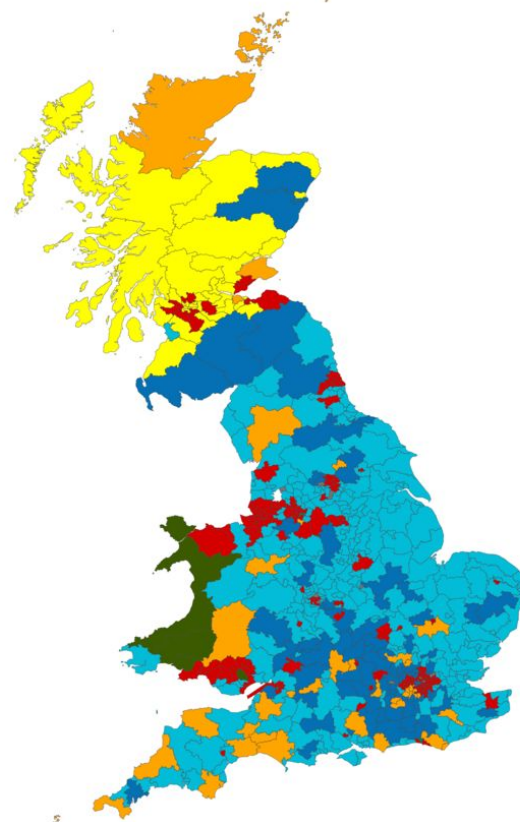


However, losing voters to Reform could spell disaster

However, losing half of the 28 per cent of Conservatives who **would consider voting Reform** could spell disaster.

If this happened, even if the Conservatives still won over those 'centrist leaning' voters, Reform would rise to 280 seats and the Conservatives would crash to 89. Labour would win 169 and the Liberal Democrats 40. It would see the Conservatives wiped out in the South West and East.

Despite this, the national popular vote under this scenario is closer than the seat result appears. This scenario sees Reform winning 27 per cent of the vote, Labour 24 per cent, and the Conservatives 23 per cent. The fact that Reform would win over three times more seats than the Conservatives – despite the gap between the two parties being just 4 points – suggests that a 'moderates only' strategy that loses Reform considerations may be electorally inefficient.



The Conservatives can win over their wavering coalition on the economy and welfare

The way to unite these two distinct segments of the Conservative voter coalition – both the Conservative curious left and right – is through the economy, where their base broadly agrees.

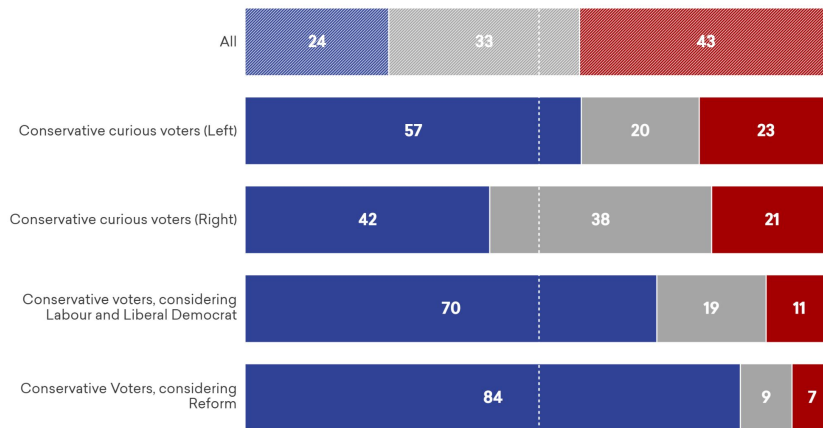
Although these voters are far apart on Net Zero and how much they prioritise immigration, they do agree that the Conservatives could make people like them better off. Conservative voters of all stripes think the Conservatives are the party of low tax (72 per cent). All groups also support Conservative welfare reforms such as stopping benefit payments from being used to buy alcohol or cigarettes (+47 to +81, net), cutting housing benefit to fund defence (+55 to +75) and reinstating the two child cap (+57 to +84).

Focusing the conversation on economy, where there is broad agreement between these different voter coalitions, and steering away from more divisive areas such as Net Zero, will help unite this coalition.

The Conservative coalition is united by an expectation that Conservative economic policy helps them

From what you've seen and read, would you say the Conservative Party's economic plans...

● Would benefit people like me ● Don't know ● Would not benefit people like me



The Conservative's reputation on economic credibility is key

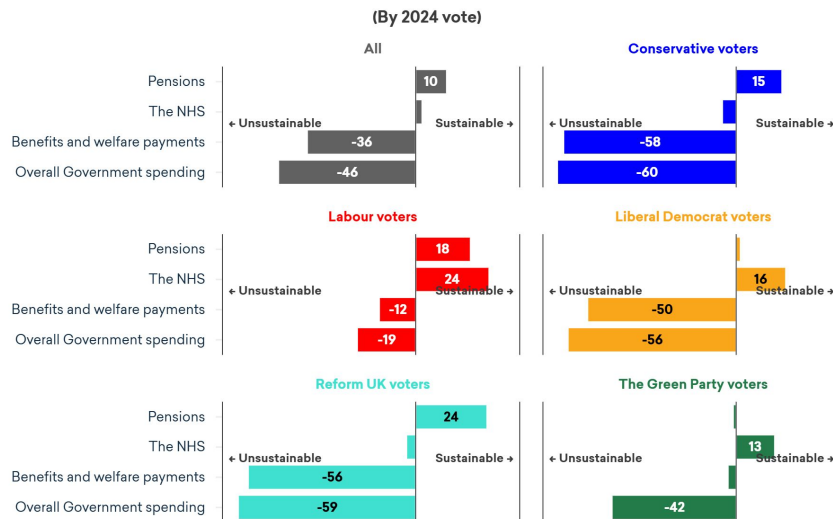
The Conservatives have begun to claw back ground on the crucial unifying question of the economy from other parties, after a year of heavily centering it in their messaging.

The Conservatives are the only party seen by the public as more realistic than unrealistic in their economic plans. The Conservatives are also more trusted on handling debt, foreign investment and lower taxation than Labour. "Creates economic stability" is also now the top factor that voters name when they are asked to name the Conservatives' biggest strength, with around 17 per cent mentioning this.

Around 60 per cent of those considering voting Conservative, while both currently voting for parties on the left and right, think the Conservative's economic plans are realistic, and around six in ten think they are credible, around double the rate among the public respectively (31 per cent and 30 per cent).

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?





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