More in Common

Too anxious to work?

Why work is failing young people's mental health – and how to fix it

Introducing the Seven Segments

The British Seven Segments were developed to move beyond traditional left-right or party-based analysis by exploring the deeper psychological, cultural, and value-driven foundations that shape public opinion.
This approach helps explain why political loyalties have fractured and offers a more nuanced understanding of what drives attitudes on issues like immigration, climate, and the economy - enabling more effective engagement with the public across a fragmented political and social landscape.



More in Common

Progressive Activists



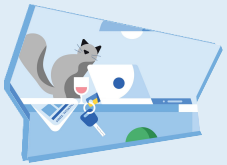
...an outspoken group that is politically engaged and globally minded, championing social justice but feeling alienated from mainstream politics

Incrementalist Left



...a group that leans left and trusts institutions, often stepping back from the news and avoiding politically fraught debates

Established Liberals



... a prosperous group that is confident in institutions, values expertise, and believes the system broadly works

Sceptical Scrollers



...a disengaged group that has lost trust in mainstream institutions and increasingly looks online for sources of truth

Rooted Patriots



...a patriotic group that feels overlooked by elites and wants leaders with common sense to protect local identity

Traditional Conservatives



... a nostalgic group that respects tradition, authority and personal responsibility, while remaining sceptical of rapid change

Dissenting Disruptors



... a frustrated group that craves radical change and backs strong leaders who promise to shake up a broken system

The NEET crisis continues

Ahead of the final report of the Milburn Review into the rising number of young people in the UK not in education, employment or training (NEETs), NEET numbers remain high.

The latest ONS data reported that 13% (981,000) of 16-24 year olds were classified as NEETs between April and June this year, down from a peak of 13.5 per cent in the period January to March but up from 9.7 per cent this time in 2021.

The interim report of the Milburn Review reported that by 2025 the UK's NEET rates, when compared to those of EU countries, were second only to Romania.

Forecasts suggest that within five years rates could rise to 16 per cent, or 1.25 million young people.

Why do Britons think the UK has a NEET crisis, and what do they think should be done?

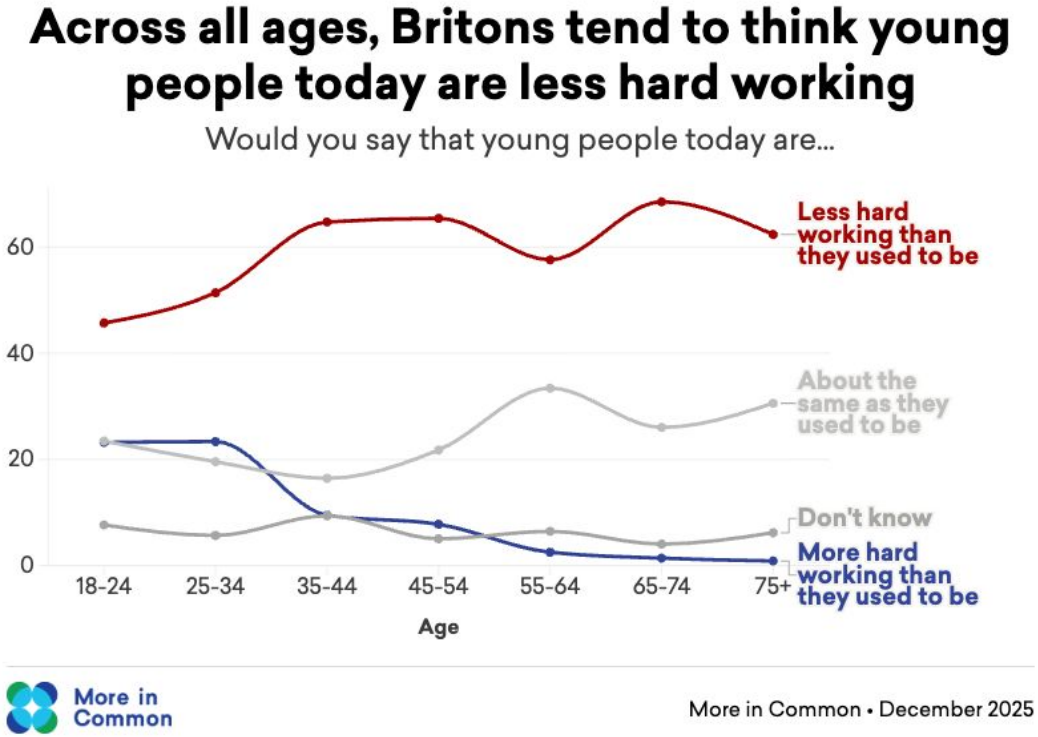
Why do Britons think young people are out of work?

Britons think young people just don't work as hard as they used to

In the wider context of youth unemployment, most (60 per cent) Britons think young people are less hardworking than they used to be - only 1 in 10 think young people work harder, while a quarter (24 per cent) think their work ethic is about the same.

This belief carries across all generations - even 18-24 year olds are twice as likely to say young people are less hardworking than previous generations than they are to say that they're either more or the same.

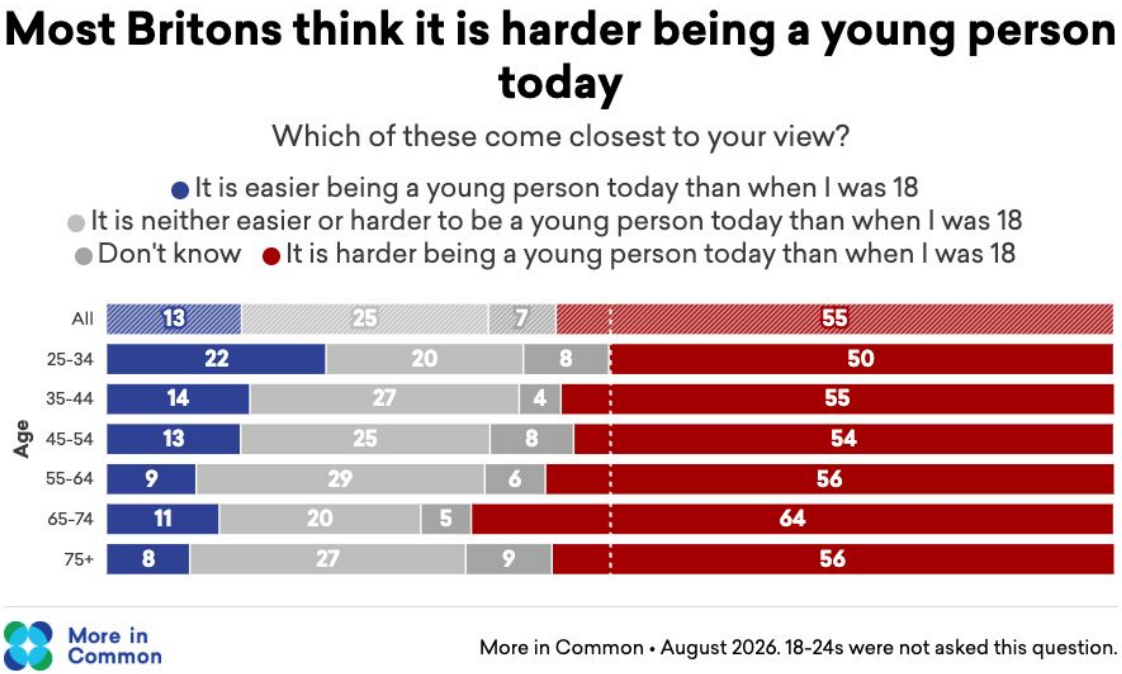
Voters across all major parties also agree on this, including a majority (52 per cent) of 2024 Labour voters.



However, Britons also think it's harder being a young person today...

Opinion is more nuanced than simply thinking young people lack work ethic – most Britons aged 25 and over (55 per cent) think that it is harder being a young person today than when they were 18. Only 13 per cent think it is easier.

The belief that life is harder for young people today is not generationally divisive – across all age groups at least half think it is harder, peaking among 65-74 year olds.

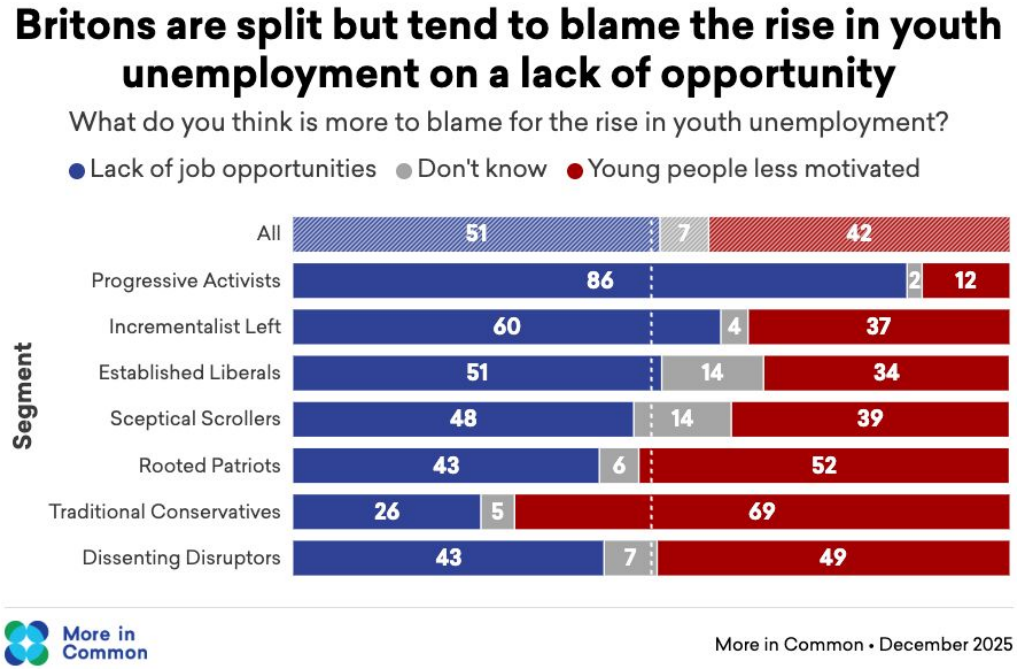


...And are hesitant to blame young people themselves

On the causes of the rise in youth unemployment, **public opinion is split. Britons tend to blame it on the jobs market rather than on young people lacking motivation:** half (51 per cent) cite a lack of job opportunities versus 4 in 10 (42 per cent) who suggest young people's lack of motivation to find work lies at the root of the problem. .

The segments are split, reflecting both age-related and left-right voting divides.

A majority of under 34s and the voters of left-wing parties blame job opportunities, rising to 86 per cent among Progressive Activists. Traditional Conservatives, as an older and more right-leaning segment, overwhelmingly blame young people's motivation.

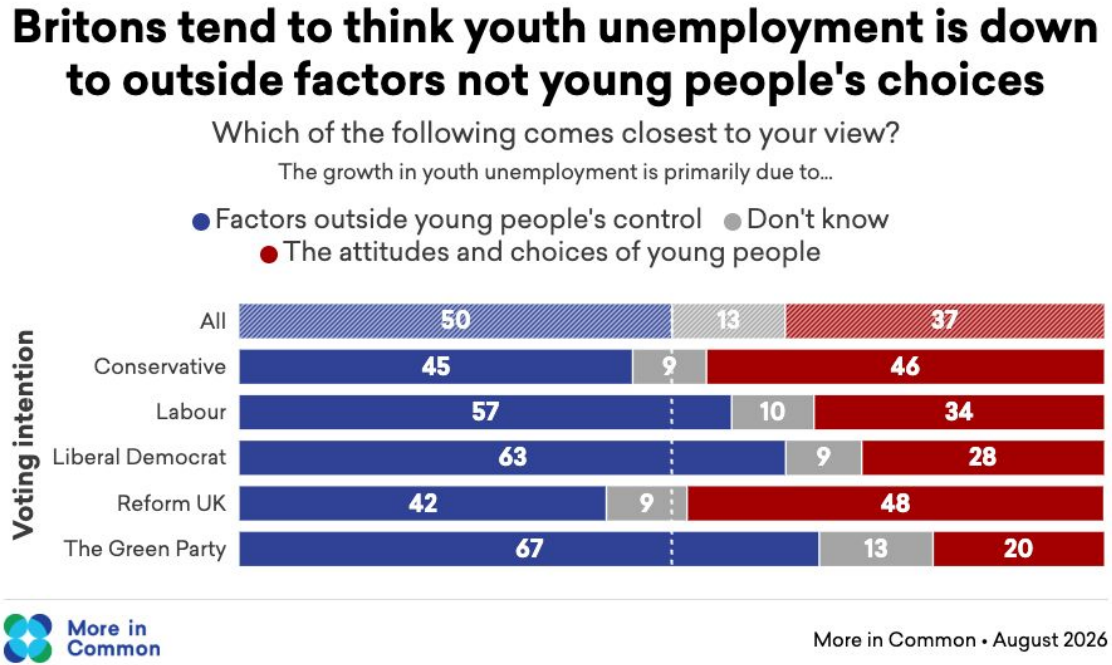


Britons also believe that young people face tough conditions

Again, when given the choice between blaming young people or external factors, the public tends to choose the latter.

Half the public blame youth unemployment on factors outside of young people's control with less than 4 in 10 (37 per cent) blaming young people's attitudes and choices.

Even right-leaning voters are split, but marginally lean towards blaming youth unemployment on young people's attitudes.



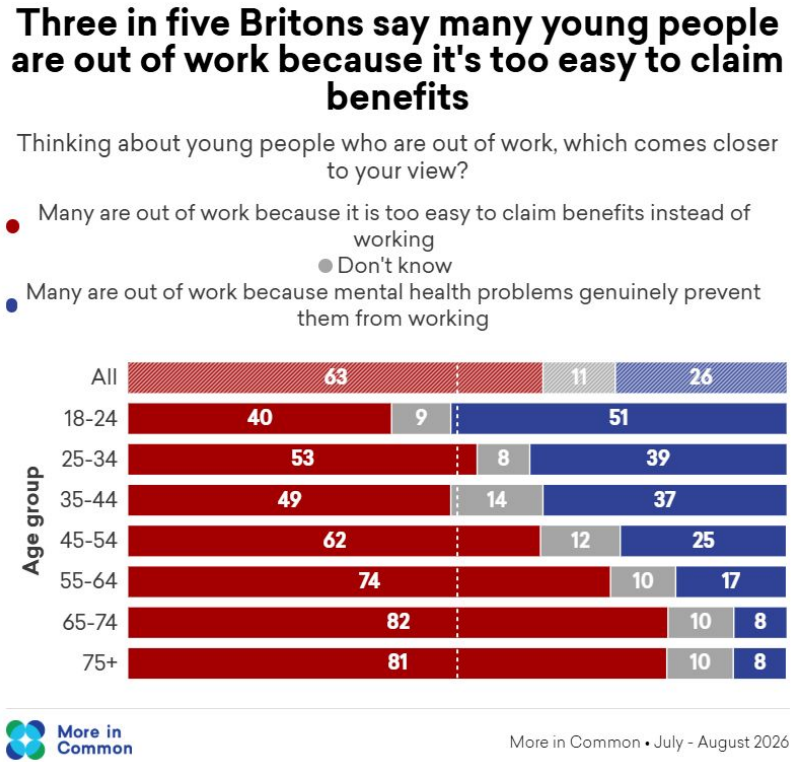
Benefits are also seen as a part of the problem

Three in five Britons think many young people are out of work because it has become too easy to claim benefits instead of working – although young people themselves disagree.

Britons are more likely to see easy access to benefits than genuine mental health problems as the cause of youth unemployment – 63 per cent to 26 per cent.

Among those aged 18–24, the narrative flips. Fifty-one per cent blame genuine mental health problems, close to double the national average, versus 40 per cent who blame benefits.

Voters across most major parties think it is because benefits are too easy to claim, including a majority of 2024 Labour (57 per cent), Conservative (81 per cent) and Reform (75 per cent) voters.



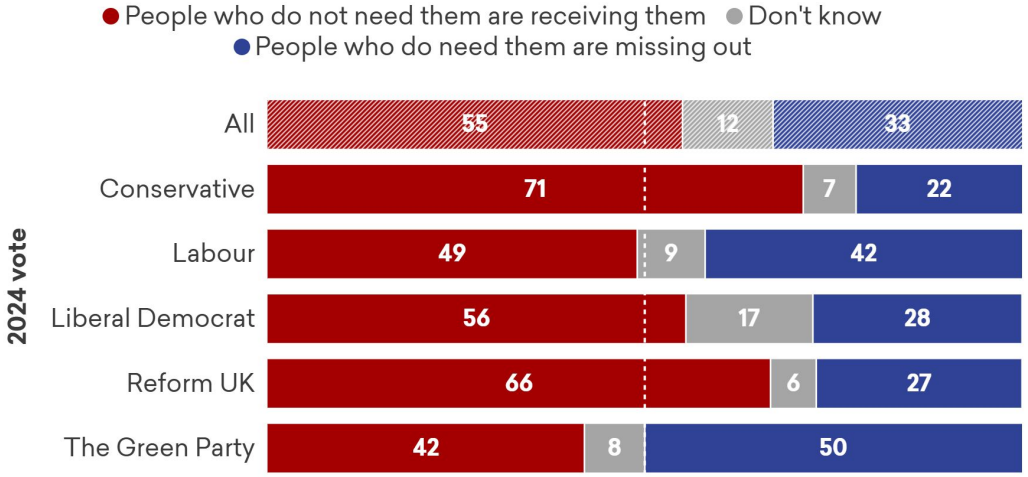
Concerns on youth unemployment sit within wider benefit concerns

A majority of Britons (55 per cent) say the bigger problem with disability benefits is that people who do not need them are receiving them as opposed to people who do need them missing out – only a third (33 per cent) think this.

Labour's base splits here with just under half (49 per cent) of their 2024 voters saying the bigger problem is those who do not need them receiving benefits but nearly as many (42 per cent) say the real problem is people in need missing out.

Most Britons say the bigger problem is that too many people are receiving PIP - although a third say people are missing out

Which of these is the bigger problem with disability benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP), at the moment?



Young people see AI as a threat to their job prospects

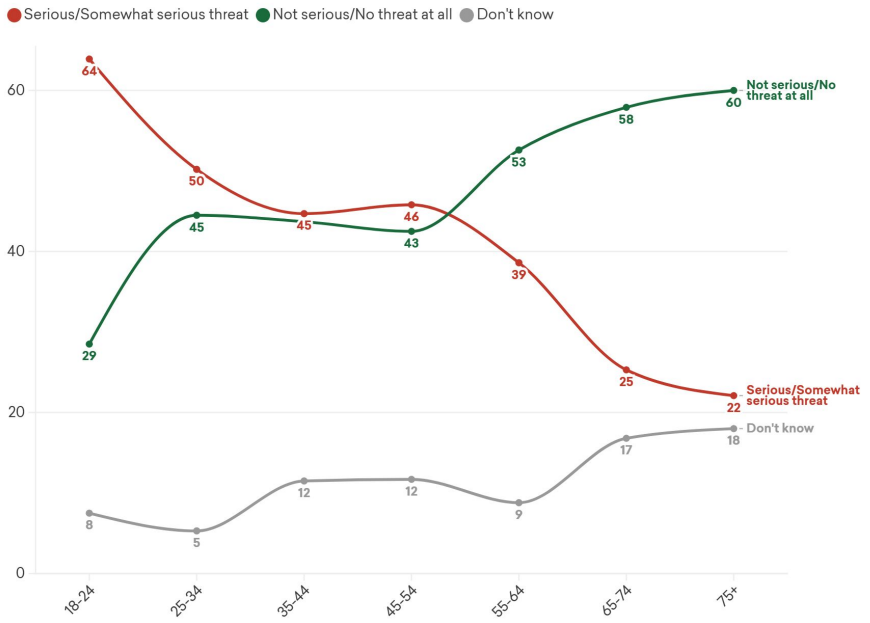
Young Britons are highly concerned about the impact of AI on their job and career: 64 per cent of those aged 18-24 view AI as a threat to their working life, with 27 per cent saying it is a very serious threat.

Nationally, only 42 per cent see AI as a threat to their jobs. This is well below threats to personal privacy (74 per cent), humanity as a whole (63 per cent), British society as a whole (61 per cent) and financial security (54 per cent).

Those aged 18-24 are far more likely to see AI as a threat to their job and career

To what extent, if at all, do you think AI poses a threat to each of the following?

Your job or career



So what should be done?

Mental health support is seen as the solution – not targeting benefits

Britons say faster treatment is the best way to get young people back into work – 40 per cent select it over strategies that target benefits, such as reducing the amount that can be claimed (30 per cent), despite concerns that benefits may be to blame for youth unemployment.

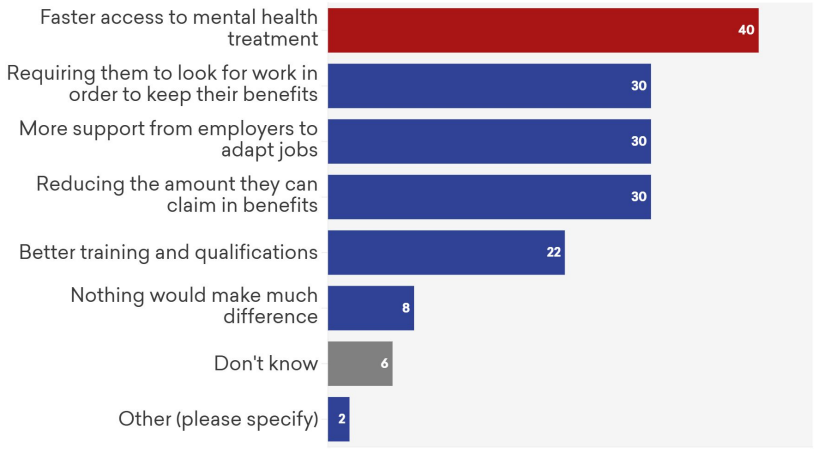
Only 22 per cent selected a third approach of improving training and qualifications.

For young people aged 18-24, better mental health treatment is the best solution - close to half cite it versus just one in five favouring measures that target benefits.

Overall, Britons are relatively optimistic about the possibility of getting young people with mental health conditions into work as only eight per cent said 'nothing would make much difference'.

The public thinks that the best way to get young people back to work is to provide faster access to mental health treatment

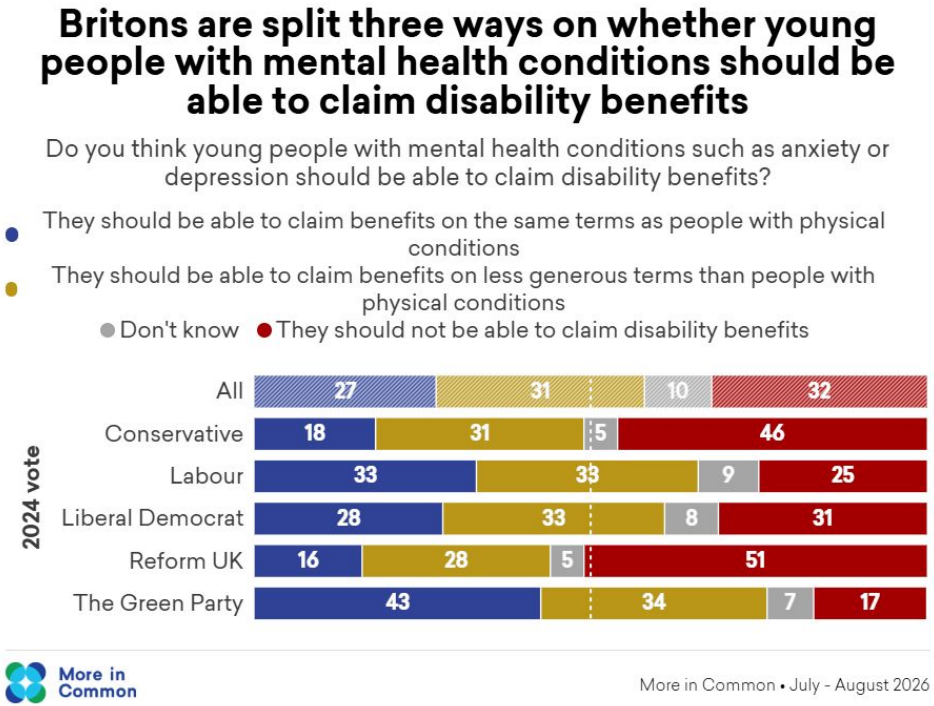
What do you think would do most to get young people with mental health conditions into work? Select up to two



Britons are unsure if the answer lies in targeting benefits

Opinion is split on whether young people with mental health conditions should be able to claim disability benefits on the same terms as people with physical conditions. Around 3 in 10 say that they should not be able to claim (32 per cent), while the same number thinks that they should but on less generous terms (31 per cent) or that they should on the same terms (27 per cent).

So, while Britons think that many young people are out of work because claiming benefits is too easy, and think that there is an overclaiming problem in terms of disability benefits, they do not clearly identify targeting benefits as the solution to youth unemployment.



Britons prefer the carrot to the stick when it comes to youth unemployment

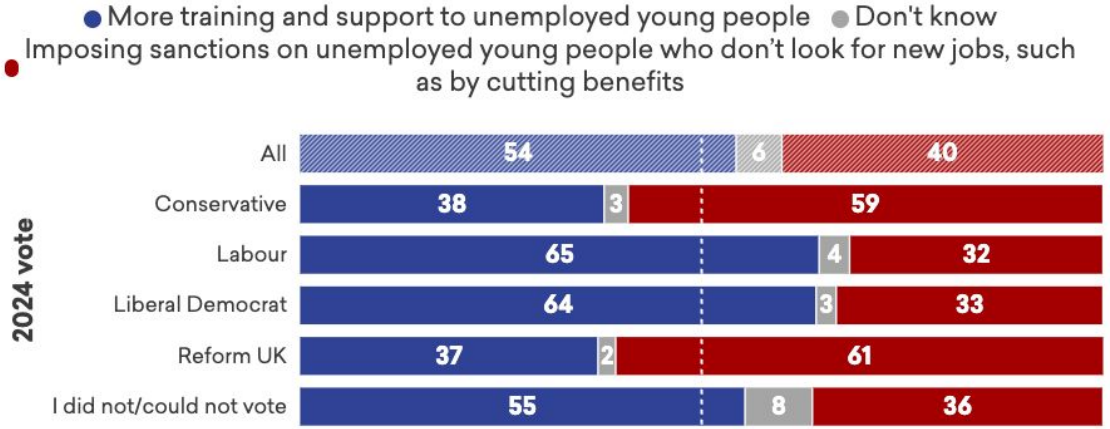
Britons think the government should support unemployed young people by providing more training rather than imposing sanctions on them.

When given the choice between providing more training and support to unemployed young people or imposing sanctions such as cutting benefits, most Britons would prefer the government to take the supportive approach - 54 per cent versus 40 per cent.

This approach appeals broadly to Labour's 2024 base with 65 per cent in support.

Britons favour more support and training over cutting benefits to get unemployed young people into work

In order to get young people into work, which do you think the Government should prioritise?



Investing in vocational education could be the answer

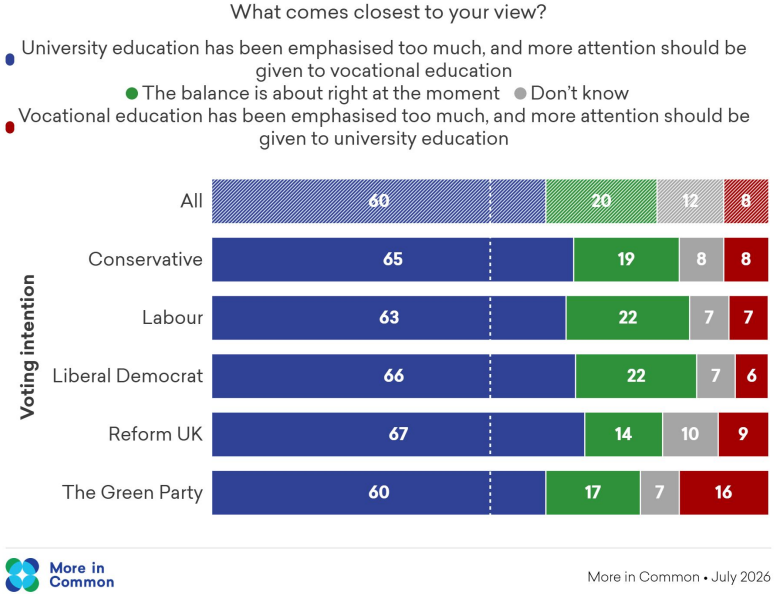
Britons are broadly supportive of Andy Burnham's focus on promoting vocational education and training.

Three in five Britons and a majority of voters across all major parties say that university education has been overemphasised and that it is time to give more attention to vocational education. Only one in five think the current balance is right.

However, most think that 14-year-olds are too young to make decisions about their future career (65 per cent). A majority also feels that young people should stick to studying academic subjects until 16 (54 per cent).

Three in five Britons say we should give more attention to vocational education

Prime Minister Andy Burnham announced that 14-year-olds will be able to get early access to technical education and work experience, promising to prioritise "the hard hat as much as the graduation cap". Supporters suggest this is important to reduce youth unemployment, but opponents suggest this is unworkable and might compromise the quality of education.



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Coming up later today...

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Solar Energy UK

The solar panel: How do we deliver the benefits of solar to homes and businesses?

Tuesday 29 September

10:45 to 11:45

Derwent Arena Room, Secure Zone, ACC



Sophie Stowers
More in Common (Chair)



Luke Tryl
More in Common



Katie White MP
Minister for Climate Transition



Martin McCluskey MP
Minister for Local Energy and Jobs



Chris Hewett
Solar Energy UK

Response to the leader's speech 2026

17:30 to 18:30 · Derwent Arena Room

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