

# Becoming Blue

Building Conservative support for the future



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ONWARD➤



# About Onward

Onward's mission is to develop bold and practical ideas to boost economic opportunity, build national resilience, and strengthen communities across all parts of the United Kingdom. Our vision is to address the needs of the whole country: young and old, urban and rural, for all communities across the UK – particularly places that have too often felt neglected or ignored by Westminster.

We believe in an optimistic conservatism that is truly national – one that recognises the value of markets, supported by a streamlined state that is active not absent. We are unapologetic about standing up to vested interests, putting power closer to people, and supporting the hardworking and aspirational.

We do so by developing practical policies grounded in evidence. Our team has worked at high levels across Westminster and Whitehall. We know how to produce big ideas that resonate with policymakers, the media and the wider public. We work closely with policymakers of all parties to build coalitions of support. Most importantly, we engage ordinary people across the country and work with them to make our ideas a reality.

# Thanks

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# About this poll

With our partners, JLP, we conducted a poll of 16-40 year olds to understand young people - their concerns, values, and politics.

- Sample: surveyed 5,000 people aged 16-40 across Great Britain.
- Fieldwork was conducted between 26th August 2025 and 8th September 2025.

We also held two online focus groups. The first consisted of those aged 16-28 (Gen Z) who would consider voting Conservative. The second consisted of those aged 29-40 (Millennials) who would consider voting Conservatives. All came from a mix of gender, ethnicity, education, and social grade



# Contents

Executive summary	1
Introduction	3
What is going on with young people?	6
What do young people think about politics?	14
Conclusion	31
Endnotes	34

# Executive summary



The Conservative Party's electoral challenge among younger voters has become existential. There is no realistic route to power for the Conservatives without improving their performance among the under 40s.

This report, produced by Onward in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and JL Partners, examines the attitudes of voters under 40 through polling and focus groups. Our goal is to understand how younger people see themselves and the country, and what they understand to be the political choices before them.

We find that many young people are frustrated with and even embarrassed by the UK. They feel life is harder for them than it was for their parents. Their worries and concerns are highly legible, from expensive food and energy bills to housing affordability and the need to lower immigration.

Crucially, we find that there is receptiveness to Conservative ideas and the Party itself among a significant proportion of young people. But there are three major obstacles that the Tories must surmount before they can actually win the support of these young people at the ballot box:

1. Young people struggle to differentiate the Conservatives and what they stand for from other mainstream parties.
2. Young people do not think that the Conservatives share or care about their top political priorities.
3. Even when they believe that the Conservatives have good ideas, young people do not believe that they are competent enough to implement those ideas.

These challenges need a policy response that takes younger people's concerns and priorities seriously and that is communicated clearly, in straightforward terms. Only in this way can the Conservative Party send the signal, again and again, that it does care about the issues that affect younger people's lives and that it has the will to do something about them. If the Conservative Party fails to do this, then its destiny is to become the concern of historians, and no longer of voters.

# 1. Introduction



That young people do not vote Conservative has become a Westminster truism. In 2024, the age at which voters became more likely to vote Conservative than for any other party – the ‘cross-over’ age – was 64 years old. In the 2024 General Election, only 8% of those aged 18-24 and 14.5% of those aged 25-49 voted Conservative.<sup>1</sup>

In *Becoming Blue?*, Onward, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and JL Partners use polling and focus groups to investigate the attitudes and political outlooks of voters aged under 40. From Gen Z to Millennials, our work seeks to understand the feelings of this group about the UK, their own lives, and about what the government can and should be offering to them. Uniquely, we also identify a group of voters that are already warmer towards the Conservatives and who could form the basis of a recovery for the party among younger generations.

Importantly, our results do not show that the younger people hate the Conservatives, or are tribally hostile towards them as a group. However, they do show that young people struggle to differentiate the Conservatives from other parties, query the Party’s ability to deliver on policy, and do not believe that their own priorities and the Conservatives’ are one and the same. Young people will not start voting Conservative until these issues are addressed.

And addressed they must be because the Conservatives’ ageing core vote coupled with extremely low support among younger age groups is a serious electoral problem. Nearly three in ten voters are under 40 and this group is efficiently distributed across the UK so forms a crucial part of a potential winning coalition. There is no sustainable path back to power for the Conservatives that does not include improving vote share among the under-40s.

The Conservative failure to appeal to voters below retirement age also presents a philosophical and moral challenge to the relevance of the Conservative Party project as a whole. When only the oldest judge that a political party has anything to offer them, why should younger voters ever again come together to vote that party back into power?

Yet not so long ago the Conservatives were significantly more competitive among younger age groups than they are today. In the 2019 General Election the cross-over age for Conservative Party support was 43. In the 2010 General Election it was only 35, down by a decade from the 2005 General Election. This sunny recent history alone should prompt Conservative strategists to reassess younger voters as a group whose support it is possible to win back.

Evidence shows that more and more British voters are becoming swing voters. Analysis that tracked the voting intentions of 15,000 British people from January



to June 2024 found that 30% of the total voting age population changed their voting intention in that period.<sup>2</sup> This voter ‘volatility’ offers hope to Conservatives in the wake of last year’s defeat, even as it raises major concerns for the Labour Government, who preside over an electorate that is more willing than ever to vote out a party they do not judge to be doing a good job.

Even though rebuilding their trust will not happen overnight, younger voters are open to persuasion. This report sets out the scale of the challenge, and highlights the key areas that are causing younger people to move farther away from the Tories, where change must first begin.

## 2. What is going on with young people?



## 2.1 A growing perception of intergenerational unfairness.

We find that 55% of young people believe it was easier for their parents' generation to succeed in life than it is for their own, compared to just 29% who think the opposite.

*"The baby boomers and then...their kids, but you know, they have historically seen their houses, like, double, triple, quadruple in value. Whereas us, our generation, we are buying houses that are so inflated then we haven't got the capital which they've had available-, well, a lot of them have had available. You know, they were buying houses for, like, what, 20 grand in 1960, '70, and now they're worth what, 10 times that in some aspects..."* – Millennial focus group participant

This sense of intergenerational unfairness among young people cannot be attributed to mere pessimism or resentment. It is a response to changing social and economic conditions. As set out in our paper [The Anti-Social Contract](#), successive governments have created and then entrenched a system of wealth transfers from younger to older generations - with little political appetite to reverse the flow of money that now goes towards supporting older people. This tilt towards older generations has become exacerbated as younger people face falling incomes, difficulties finding entry level jobs, unaffordable housing, and a growing share of the fiscal burden as the nation's demographics change. Given that Conservatives have long emphasised rewarding effort and progression, the sense among many young people that typical avenues to success are narrowing represents a major political challenge for the Party.

## 2.2 Many young people are frustrated with the UK.

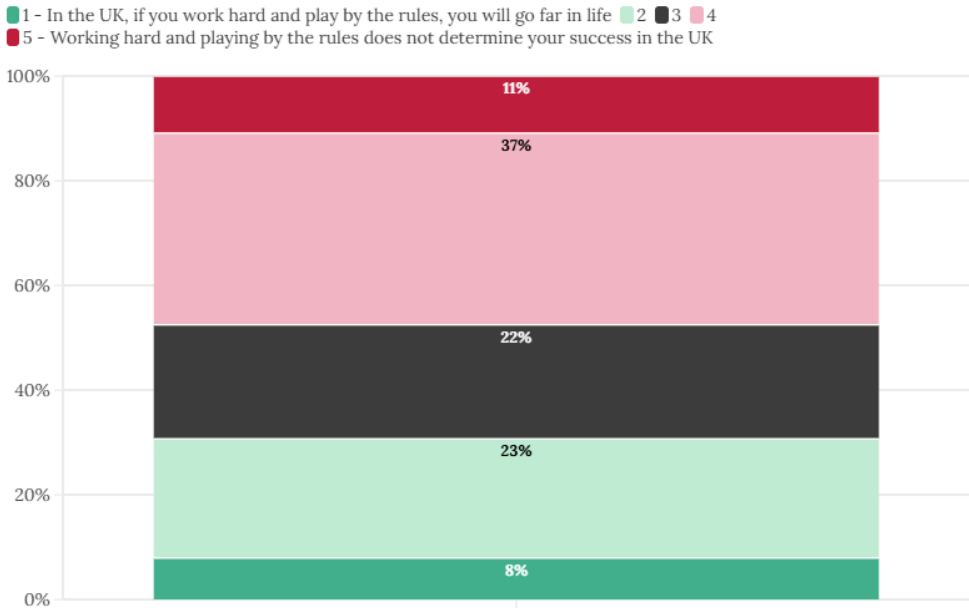
Recent news stories and studies have suggested that more and more young people are actively seeking to leave the UK for a better life in foreign countries, from the United Arab Emirates to Australia.<sup>3</sup> However, our results show that overall young people are committed to the UK: almost half (48%) of young people agree that "Britain has its problems, but I'd rather live here than anywhere else." Yet this commitment is fragile; just over three in 10 young people say "Britain is in such a bad state that I would consider moving abroad" (31%). Almost a quarter of young people are neutral on the question of whether they would consider leaving the UK or are committed to staying (23%). Taken together, these results suggest that although younger generations are attached

to the UK in principle, they are increasingly questioning what the country can offer them.

*"I've had months where I've been really well financially, and then 40% of it's been taken out of my payslip, and I just think, 'Why?' That's why I sit and think, 'This is why I want to move.' I've looked at the US, I'm considering Dubai, because I'm like, 'Why should I work my arse off and half of it gets taken away maybe before I've even seen it?' I think that's what annoys me. I think yes you can be successful, and yes of course you can play by the rules, but I think you could be more successful somewhere else or if the laws were different." – Millennial focus group participant*

*"The government take most of what you earn off you." – Generation Z focus group participant*

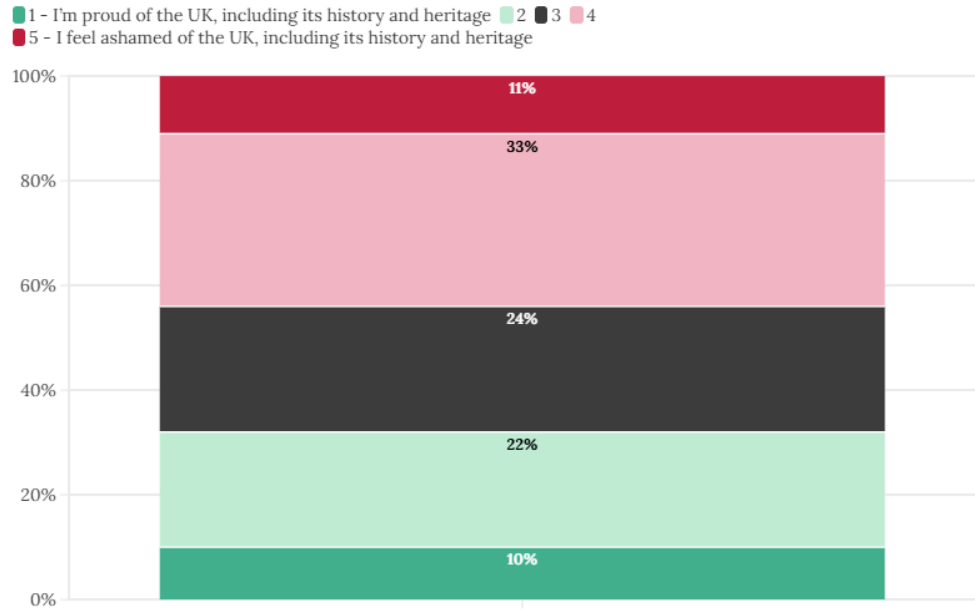
**Chart 1. Share of young people who agree with the statement “Working hard and playing by the rules does not determine your success in the UK”.**



Many young people go as far as to say they feel ashamed of the UK: 44% of young people agree with the statement “I feel ashamed of the UK, including its history and heritage”. By contrast, just shy of a third of young people instead

agree with the statement, “I’m proud of the UK, including its history and heritage” (32%). It is not clear what drives a plurality of young people to say they feel ashamed of the UK. For some young people, this sense of shame may stem from discomfort with the UK’s past as an imperial power. Others may feel ashamed of what they perceive as the UK’s diminished role on the world stage today. The question of what exactly is driving this sense of shame and how it can be exorcised will particularly trouble Conservatives and other mainstream parties, who have long used the language of national pride and emphasised the value of institutional continuity.

**Chart 2. Share of young people who agree with the statement “I feel ashamed of the UK including its history and heritage”.**

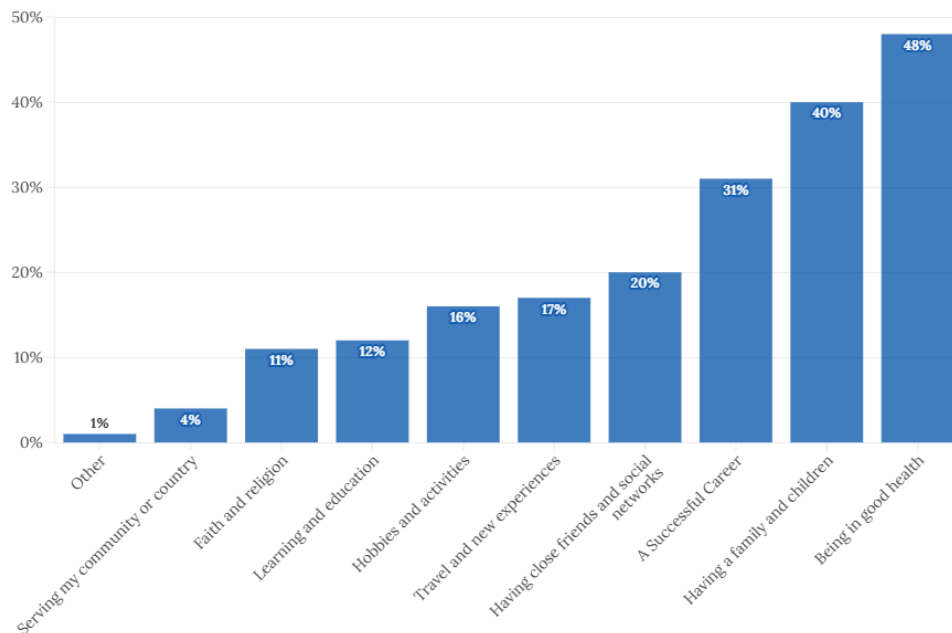


### 2.3 What matters to young people in life?

Even as it gets more difficult to achieve them, young people continue to care deeply about achieving the milestones that have signified a good life for many generations. When asked to choose the two most important things in life, young people are most likely to select being in good health, having a family and children, and a successful career. The importance of family and health actually increases with age, as the importance of career begins to decline. The aspirations of young people to start their own families are firmly established:

63% of young people say that they would like to have children, including 70% of those aged 16-25.

**Chart 3. Respondents' two most important things to them in life.**



But the ability of young people today to achieve these milestones is diminishing. Childlessness is rising - over half of women are now childless at 30 and it is likely that involuntary childlessness will rise in the coming years. Weak economic growth has also contributed to wage stagnation and job scarcity, undermining young people's ability to secure jobs and causing anaemic earnings progression.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, recent strides forward in artificial intelligence is seeing these technologies taken up in ever greater numbers by companies, potentially crowding out entry level jobs that would usually give young people their first foothold in the labour market.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.3.1 Emotional wellbeing and social media

A significant proportion of young people report feeling positive emotions like optimism and respect often. 62% of respondents say they feel optimistic very often or somewhat often, and that generally increases with age: only 12% of 16-20 year olds describe themselves as very often optimistic, rising to 32% among 31-35 year olds. However, this upward trajectory dips sharply in the late 30s, with only 18% of 36-40 year olds reporting very frequent optimism.

Feelings of respect are also widespread, with 57% of all respondents saying they feel respected somewhat often or very often.

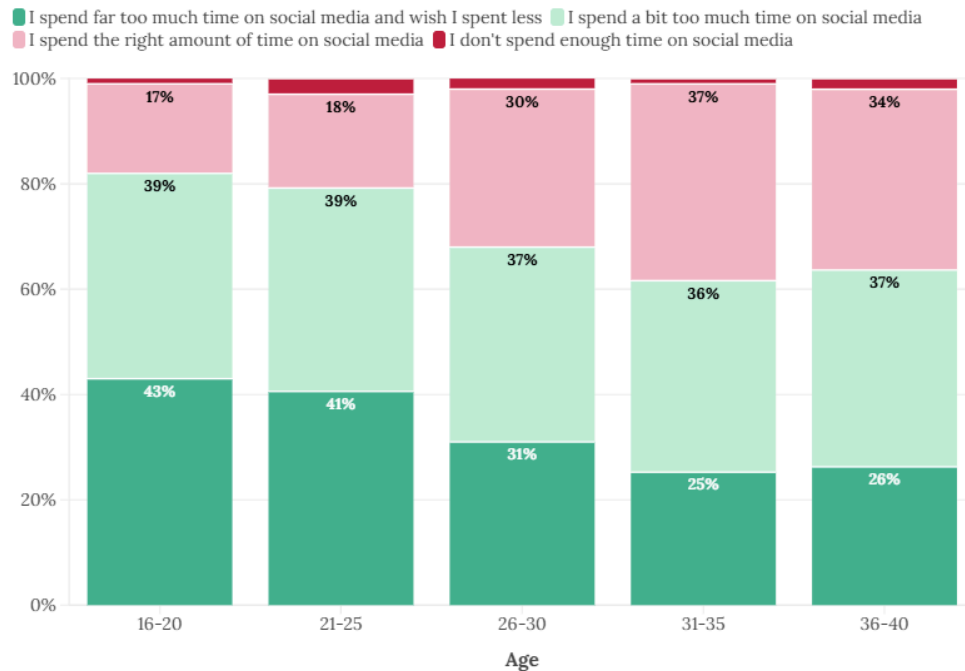
But young people also report often feeling stressed and lonely. Two-thirds of young people report feeling stressed often or very often (67%). This stress is particularly acute among the youngest age groups: 38% of 16-20 year olds and of 21-25 year olds respectively say they feel stressed very often.

42% of young people say they feel lonely often or very often. The chance of feeling lonely decreases with age, falling to just 11% of those aged 31-35 reporting feeling lonely very often. But the chance of acute loneliness does rise again as young people reach their late 30s: 16% of those aged 36-40 say they feel lonely very often.

That so many young people report stress and loneliness could be related to social media consumption. Most young people agree that they spend too much of their time using social media. Overall, 70% of respondents report spending “far too much time” or a “bit too much time” on social media, compared to 28% that believe they spend “the right amount of time on social media”.

*“I find when I am on my phone I am not actually even really looking at anything I am just scrolling for the sake of scrolling. Just because it's out of habit.” - Millennial focus group participant*

**Chart 4. Attitudes to social media use by age.**



### 2.3.2 Homeownership

Young people are abundantly clear that homeownership is a key life goal. Only 4% of respondents state they would never want to own their own home. But almost a quarter (24%) of under 40s doubt they will ever be able to own their home - jumping to 38% of those aged 36-40. Housing affordability is frequently reported as a pressing issue for each age group.

*"The thing that would surprise me most ...is the fact that I don't own a property yet." - Millennial focus group participant*

We investigated the extent to which young people are relying on the so-called 'Bank of Mum and Dad', meaning the financial support, in the form of gifts or loans that parents give to their children in an effort to help with major expenses such as getting onto the property ladder. We find that a significant minority (29%) of young people regularly or occasionally receive financial support from their parents, while an additional 13% have parents who would be willing to help with major costs including housing deposits. Access to this parental support is a



major factor in increasing the likelihood that a young person feels optimistic about being able to buy a home in the coming years.

**Chart 5. Percentage of respondents who receive financial support from parents and help with major costs.**



In a market where house price growth has significantly outpaced wage growth, young people are increasingly reliant on the very generations they perceive to have had it easier in life in order to realise their own ambitions: 36% of respondents who are able to rely or expect to be able to rely on the Bank of Mum and Dad believe they will be able to buy their own house in a few years, compared to 27% of our respondents who do not receive financial support from their parents. Homeownership has historically underpinned Conservative electoral strength and its vision of a property-owning democracy. That so many young people doubt their ability to buy a home without parental help should be of great concern to the Party.

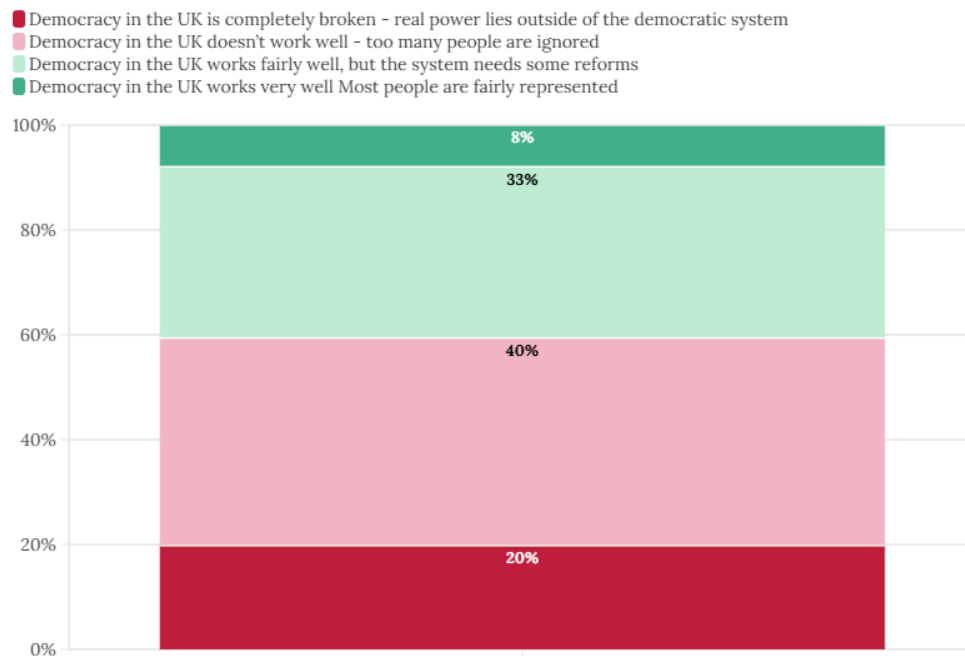
### 3. What do young people think about politics?



### 3.1 Young people do not believe British democracy is working.

In a major challenge to any political party hoping to get out the youth vote, many young people are sceptical that democracy in the UK is working as it should. A significant minority of young people also believe that the UK is essentially no longer a democracy.

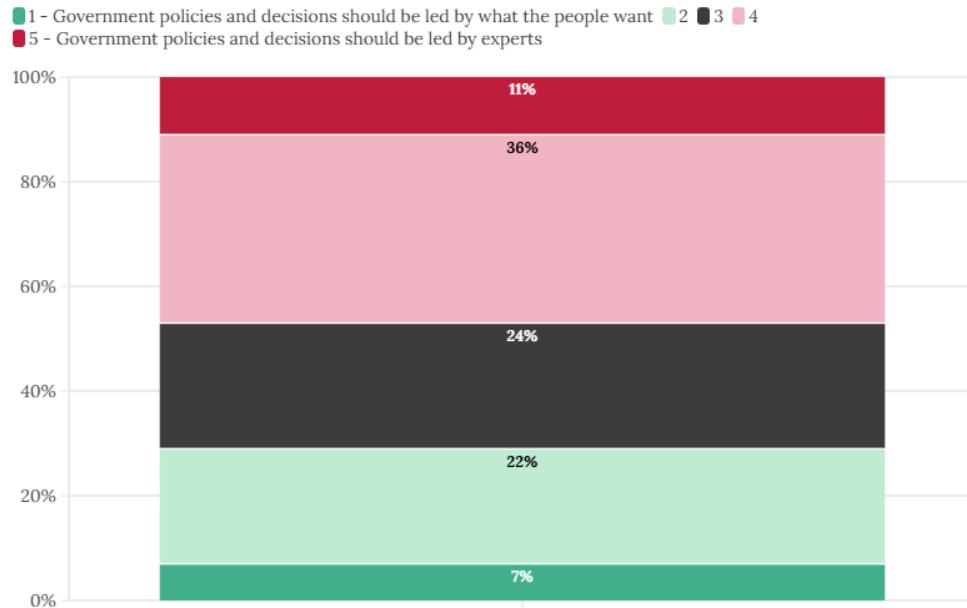
**Chart 6. Respondents' views on how well democracy works in the UK.**



40% of our respondents agree with the statement “Democracy in the UK doesn’t work well - too many people are ignored”, with a further 20% of young people who believe that “Democracy in the UK is completely broken - real power lies outside the democratic system.” Only 8% of young people agree that “Democracy in the UK works very well - most people are fairly represented”.

Young people’s broad-based dissatisfaction with how democracy is working – or not working – in the UK appears to have translated into a desire for expert government. While a significant minority (29%) of young people do say that “Government policies and decisions should be led by what the people want”, almost half of young people instead agree that “Government policies and decisions should be led by experts” (47%).

**Chart 7. Respondents' views on how government policies and decisions should be made.**

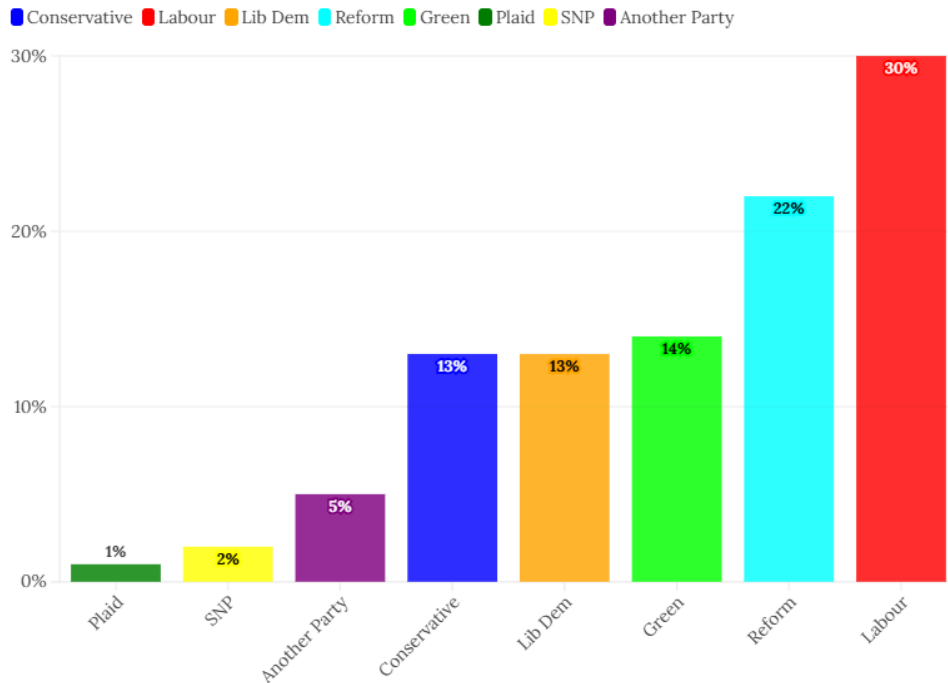


### 3.2 Voting intention and views on political leaders

Labour leads among young people who intend to vote at the next election, garnering around 30% of the vote among 16-40 year olds, followed by Reform UK on 22%. In comparison, national polling averages have Labour polling at around 20% and Reform UK at around 30%, underscoring Labour's reliance on younger voters. Reform UK is less popular among the young than the elderly, although 22% puts them comfortably ahead of the other parties.<sup>6</sup>

The Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Greens all poll around 13-14% among 16-40 year olds. This highlights the Conservatives' continuing woes in attracting young people but is not as apocalyptic as some have feared. However, the Green Party performs well amongst young people and 14% is well above their national polling averages.

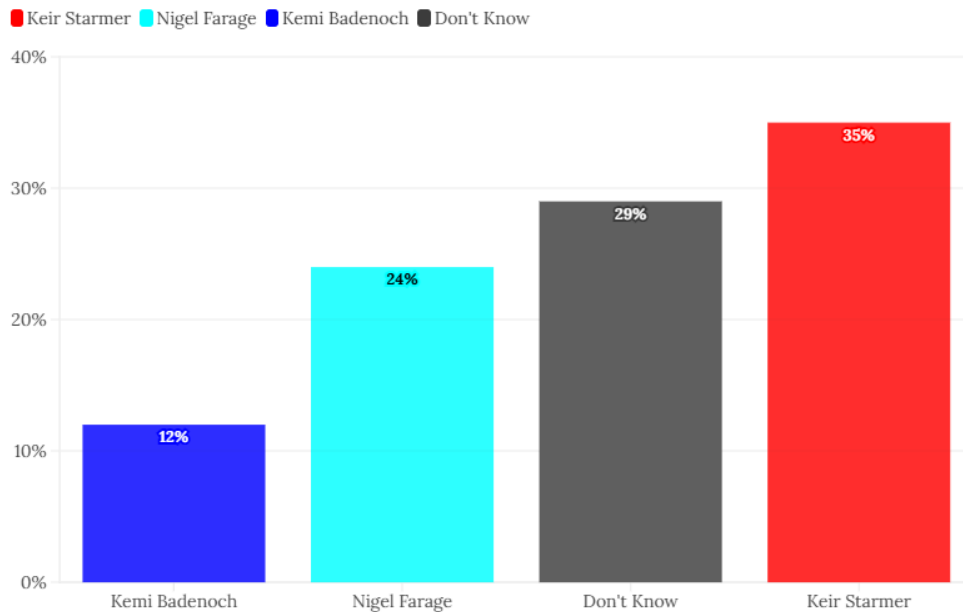
**Chart 8. Headline voting intention among 16–40 year olds.**



When asked who would make the best Prime Minister between Keir Starmer, Kemi Badenoch, and Nigel Farage, a plurality of 16–40 year olds opt for Starmer although almost a third (29%) give a don't know response. Aside from supporters within their respective parties, Starmer performs particularly well with Liberal Democrat voters (49% think he would make the best Prime Minister) while Farage does well with those who did not vote at the last election (25% think he would make the best Prime Minister). Badenoch struggles even among those intending to vote Conservative: only 39% think she would make the best Prime Minister, while 26% favour Starmer and 20% favour Farage.

Starmer also performs particularly well with graduates and wealthy voters, with 49% of graduates selecting him as best Prime Minister and 53% of those with a household income of over £80k. On the other hand, Farage's appeal to disaffected voters is clear: he leads Starmer among those who say democracy is completely broken or does not work well.

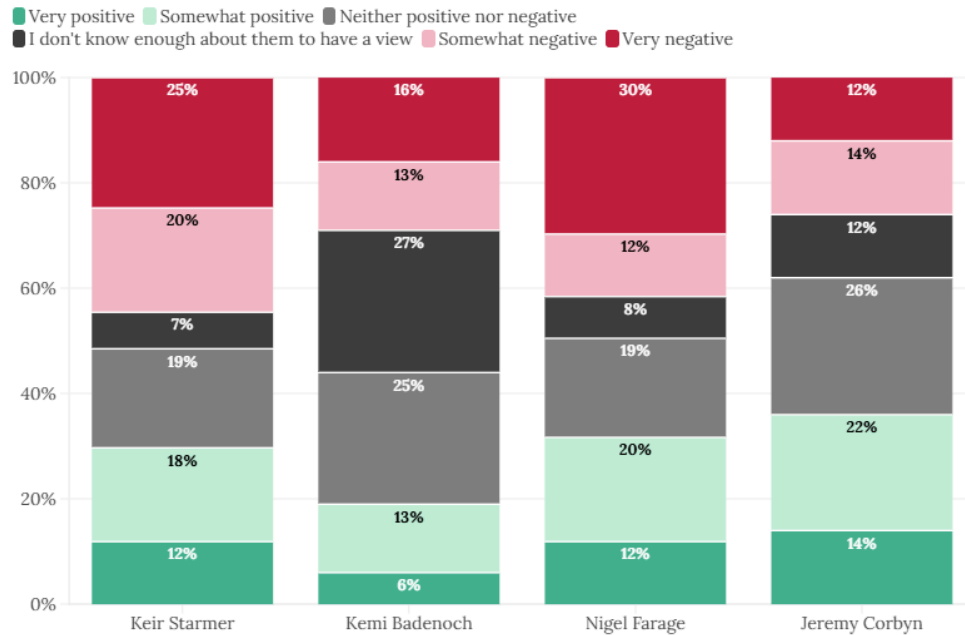
**Chart 9. Respondents' views on who would make the best Prime Minister between Kemi Badenoch, Keir Starmer, and Nigel Farage.**



Badenoch's biggest issue is name recognition among younger voters. More than a quarter of 16-40 year olds say they do not know enough about her to have a view (27%). It is not necessarily the case that young voters uniquely dislike Badenoch who, at -10%, has a net favourability rate equivalent to Farage's and higher than Starmer's (-15%). Jeremy Corbyn, meanwhile, is well liked by young people with a net favourability of +10%.

Starmer only has a net -2% approval rating among 16-40 year olds intending to vote Conservative. 39% have a very positive or somewhat positive view of him, which is higher than even those intending to vote Liberal Democrat. Similarly, Badenoch is popular among young people intending to vote Labour. Among this group she has a net +4% approval rating, with 30% having a very or somewhat positive view of her. Taken together, these results indicate that there is a significant cohort of young people whose support may swing between the Conservatives and Labour.

**Chart 10. Respondents' views on Keir Starmer, Kemi Badenoch, Nigel Farage and Jeremy Corbyn.**

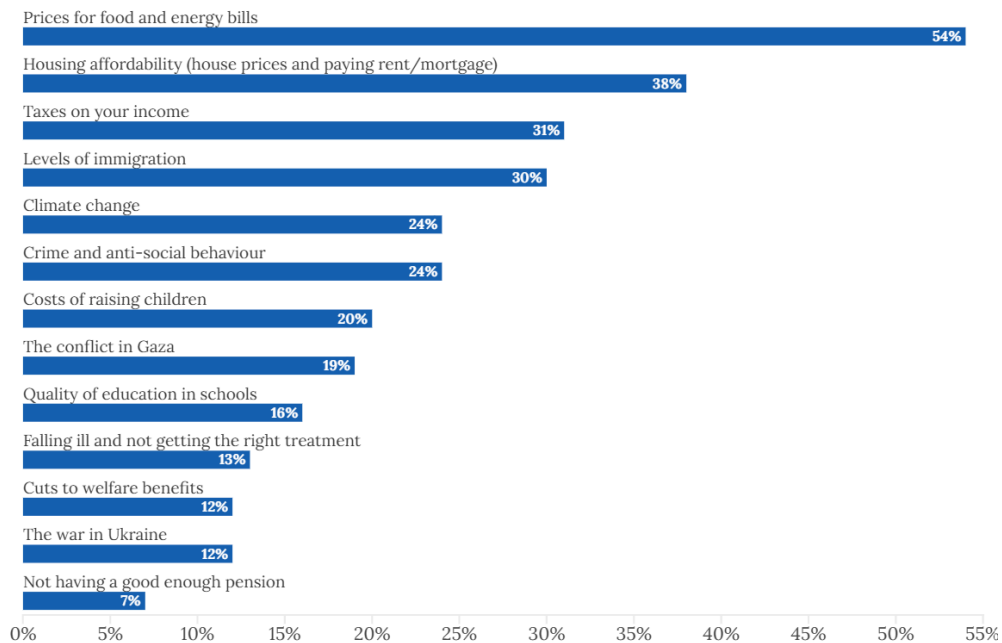


### 3.3 Political priorities

*“The obvious answer is cost of living. It's angering me how much everything-, every time I go and do a food shop, there's certain things I'm like, 'Oh, great, that's gone up by 50p.” – Millennial focus group participant*

A majority of young people agree, across all under 40 age groups we surveyed, that the rising daily living costs are one of Britain's most pressing problems, followed by housing affordability. 54% of young people agree that “Prices for food and energy bills” are in their top three issues of greatest concern and 38% say the same of “Housing affordability”. These concerns unify young people of all voting intentions.

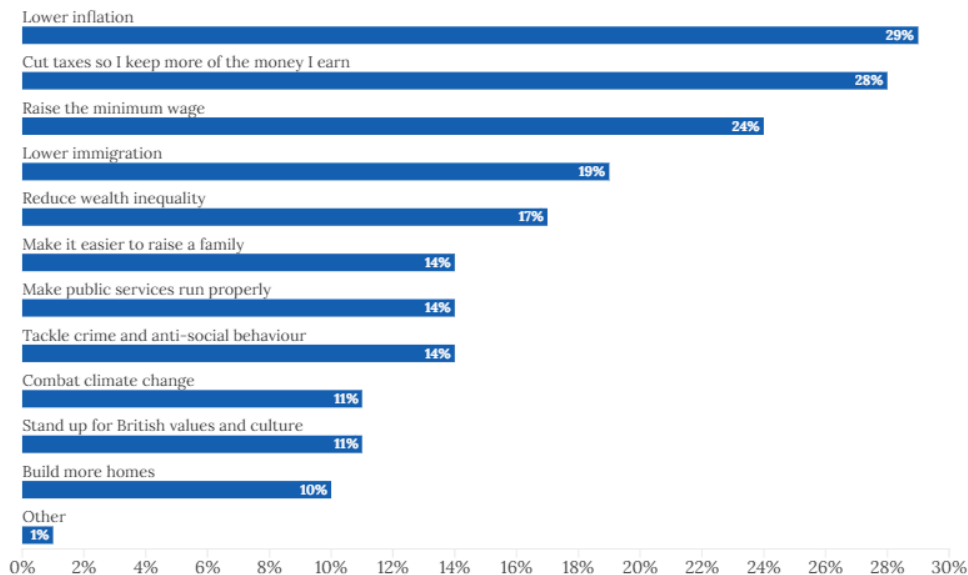
**Chart 11. Respondents' top three issues of greatest concern.**



Financial considerations are also top of young voters' minds when asked to consider what the Government can best do for them. Asked to choose two ways in which they would most want the Government to improve their lives, young people are most likely to choose "Lower inflation" (29%) and "Cut taxes so that I keep more of the money I earn" (28%). Again, young people of all political voting intentions – with the exception of those intending to vote Reform UK, 47% of whom emphasise lowering immigration as a key way in which the Government can improve their lives – agree that it is by lowering inflation and cutting taxes that their lives can be most improved.



**Chart 12. Respondents' views on what they would most want the Government to do to improve their lives, with up to two selected.**



### 3.3.1 Immigration

Though behind food and energy bills, and housing affordability, immigration also ranks as an important issue for young people. 30% of young people choose “Levels of immigration” as a top three issue of concern, while nearly one in five (19%) identify lowering immigration as one of two things they most want the Government to do to improve their lives.

Our results suggest that young peoples’ concern about immigration is economic rather than cultural. While more likely to agree rather than disagree that “Immigration has generally brought more benefits than costs” (43% versus 36%), young people reject the idea that multiculturalism has damaged the UK. Only 25% of young people agree that “Multiculturalism has undermined British culture and society”, compared with 51% who instead say that “Multiculturalism has enriched British culture and society”.

Despite their support for a multicultural Britain, young people’s concern about the economic costs of immigration is not isolated to those on the right of centre and in fact cuts across the political spectrum. With the exception of those intending to vote Green, young people of every political affiliation are more likely to say that immigration has generally brought more costs than

benefits to the UK. Pluralities of those intending to vote Conservative (48%), Labour (46%) and Liberal Democrat (41%) take this view.

*"I understand, like, giving benefits to people that can't work, maybe they've got a disability, or they're struggling with their mental health, totally get that but I think a prime example, and it's something that I've had so many controversial conversations about is we've got hotels full of immigrants from other countries, but we've got tonnes of British homeless people on the streets, with nowhere to sleep. I'm like, 'Why have we not looked after our own, before going and looking after other people's country?'" – Generation Z focus group participant*

Scepticism of immigration's benefits is highest among young people intending to vote Reform UK, 54% of whom say immigration has brought more costs than benefits to the UK. Nearly half of these young people (47%) also identify lowering immigration as an important way in which the government could improve their lives. However, even in this voter group, a great deal of the concern with immigration is focused on its economic consequences – young people intending to vote Reform UK are evenly split on the question of whether multiculturalism has enriched or undermined British culture and society (40% versus 40%).

### 3.4 The Haves and the Have-Nots

The Haves and the Have-Nots are two very distinct groups of young people that emerge from our polling. These are two groups that think differently about the world and about their own place in it, and who disagree about which party, if any, is best placed to fix the problems they face. The Haves are those who are part of higher earning households, who are more likely to be fully employed, who are more likely to say their life is going well, and who report feeling positive emotions, such as optimism or feeling respected, often. By comparison the Have-Nots are those who are in lower earning households, less likely to be fully employed, who are more likely to say their life is not going well, and who report feeling positive emotions less often, particularly respect.

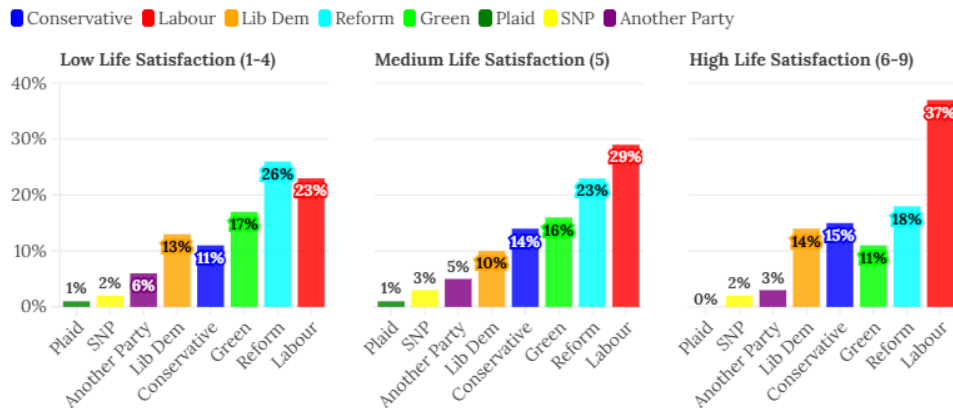
Young people in the Haves groups are significantly more likely to report planning to vote for a mainstream political party, namely the Conservative, Labour, or the Liberal Democrats, but particularly Labour. By contrast, the Have-Nots are much more likely to say they are planning to vote for the alternative parties of Green or Reform UK, or planning to not vote at all.

### Chart 13. Voting intention by life satisfaction.

Low Life Satisfaction = 1) Hopeless + 2) Suffering + 3) Struggling + 4) Coping

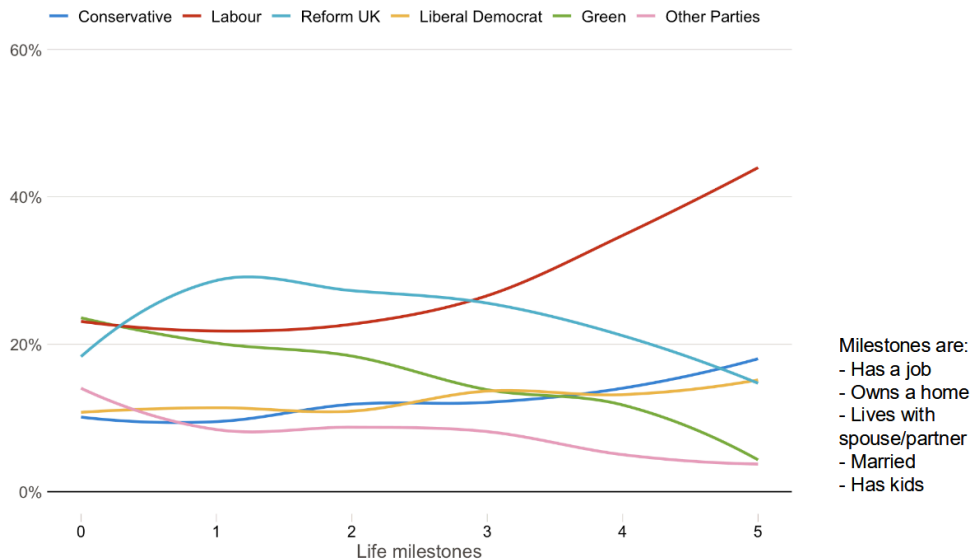
Medium Life Satisfaction = 5) Just Okay

High Life Satisfaction = 6) Doing Well + 7) Progressing + 8) Thriving + 9) Flourishing



The divergent voting intentions of the Haves and the Have-Nots can also be seen in Chart 14 below, which shows voting intention by number of life milestones achieved. The more life milestones young people have achieved, the more likely they are to be planning to vote for a mainstream political party and the less likely they are to be considering an alternative like Green or Reform UK.

**Chart 14. Voting intention by number of life milestones achieved.**



### 3.5 Attitudes towards the Conservative Party

#### 3.5.1 Young people do not hate the Conservatives.

The Conservative brand is not a toxic one among Gen Z and Millennials. A majority of those aged under 40 agree that the Conservatives either have “the right ideas to fix Britain” (19%) or “some of the right ideas” (43%). A third of young people also say that they would consider voting Conservative. These results show that young people are willing to acknowledge that the Conservative Party has something of value to offer and that they are receptive to hearing that offer and support it at the ballot box.

Indeed our polling shows that many young people hold political views that align naturally with Conservative economic values. Nearly half of young people agree that the “Government should cut taxes and redistribute less income” (48%), in comparison with a minority who instead agree that the “Government should increase taxes and redistribute more income” (28%).

Asked to choose two ways in which they most want the Government to improve their lives, young people were also second most likely to pick “Cut taxes so I keep more of the money I earn” (28%), just behind lowering inflation (29%), underlining that lowering taxes is a priority area for young people.

But there are three major barriers that the Conservative Party must overcome in order to take advantage of that receptiveness among the young. One, a perception of incompetence: even when young people who believe the Conservative Party has good ideas, they are unlikely to believe that the Party could actually deliver on those ideas. Second, there is a belief among young people that the Conservative Party simply does not share their political priorities. And third, young people struggle to distinguish the Conservative Party's offer from that of other mainstream parties.

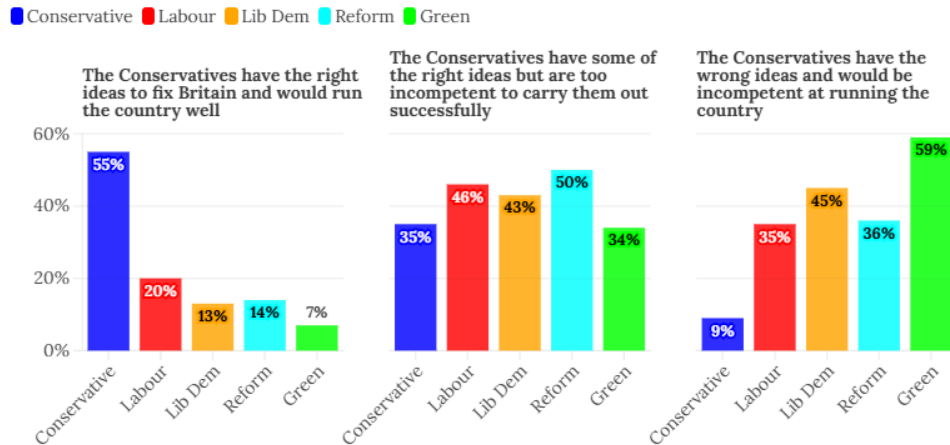
### 3.5.2 The Conservative Party must prove its competence to young people.

Alongside an openness to Conservative ideas, young people are unconvinced that a Conservative government could actually implement those ideas. Even a third of those young people intending to vote Conservative agree with the statement, "The Conservatives have some of the right ideas but are too incompetent to carry them out successfully".

*"[The Conservative Party] promise the world, and they never deliver with it, but they usually do something that aligns with the, sort of, values of what they're trying to go for."\** - Generation Z focus group participant

The perception that the Conservatives do have some of the right ideas but would not be able to deliver upon them is particularly marked among those young people intending to vote Reform UK, 50% of whom agree that the Conservatives have some of the right ideas but are incompetent.

**Chart 15. Agreement with the statement “The Conservatives have some of the right ideas but are too incompetent to carry them out successfully”, by voting intention.**

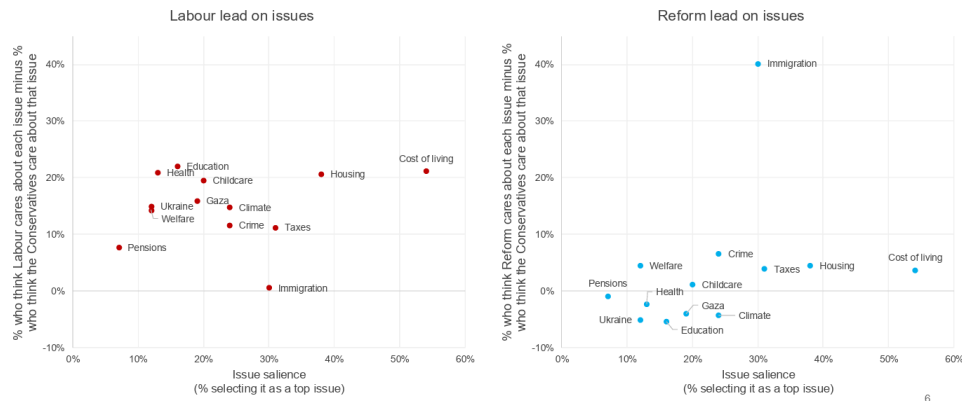


### 3.5.3 Most young people do not believe the Conservative Party is for them.

“They don’t listen to people like me” is most commonly chosen by young people as one of their top two reasons not to vote for the Conservative Party (22%). Our results indicate this sentiment stems from a belief that the Conservative Party does not share the political priorities of younger voters.

Section 4.2 above outlines the issues and concerns that young people identify as their top political priorities. The three most important issues most likely to be chosen by voters are the rising cost of living, the unaffordability of housing, and immigration: young people do not believe that Conservatives care about tackling these issues. Only tiny minorities of young people believe that the Conservatives care about bringing down the cost of food and energy (10%), housing affordability (8%), and immigration (6%). Young people are most likely to say that the Labour Party cares about tackling their top issues of prices for food and energy bills and housing affordability (21% and 15% respectively).

**Chart 16. Respondents' perceived net level of Labour and Reform UK engagement on salient issues, minus perceived Conservative engagement.**



Young people are even unlikely to believe the Conservative Party cares about tackling issues it is traditionally seen as part of the core Conservative offer. Only 6% of young people say that the Conservative Party cares about crime and anti-social behaviour.

In an important warning to Conservative politicians who believe that they are clearly telling voters that they care about the cost of living and increasing wages when they talk about economic growth, our results show that most young people do not understand national economic growth as having much bearing on their lives. A plurality (41%) young people believe that more economic growth will have “no impact” on their quality of life. By contrast, just over a third (36%) of young people agree with the statement “More economic growth will improve my quality of life”.

### 3.5.4 The Conservative Party must differentiate itself.

The second most common reason chosen by young people as one of their top two reasons not to vote for the Conservative Party is that they are “just more of the same”. Coupled with the Party’s weak cachet among the young even on issues traditionally as Conservative strengths, our results indicate that young people do not know who the Conservative Party is for or what it stands for.

*"I suppose from growing up and my opinion of Conservatives where they were more for, I guess, people being more independent, for people maybe, I don't know, who wanted to progress, become business owners, so, they would support people to, kind of, become less reliant on the state. So, very for that, kind of, entrepreneurial focused people....And Labour was always someone you associate with being more for the working class, more funding into public services and I guess more ownership over public services. I'm just thinking with like the railways and stuff, you know, like everything, sort of, should be. Like the state will provide-, we should have a standard of living that everybody should have and there shouldn't be such disparity.*

*But I think over the years it's just become so-, they're no longer at these polar opposites. It's very in the middle. So, a lot of the policies cross over or they're trying to one out do each other. So, it's very difficult when you're reading people's manifestos, which again I don't read because half of it they're not going to stand by, they're all trying to agree that they'll do the same things, and I think they've just become really merged in what they stand for." – Millennial focus group participant*

### 3.6 The young people who are warmest towards the Conservatives.

The young people who emerge in our results as most receptive to the Conservatives are most likely to be in their late twenties to early thirties. These young people are enjoying life, by and large. Our MRP<sup>7</sup> analysis shows that they are more likely to be living in the suburbs and commuting into work, they are fully employed, have long-term partners, and report feeling positive emotions like respect and optimism often. They feel they can rely on their friends and family in a bind and they value these connections highly. They are more likely than average to be religious.

At the moment, these young people are most likely to vote Labour at the next General Election. Yet they are also more likely than other young people to be considering voting Conservative, and to say that the Conservatives have the right ideas. Our results indicate that rebuilding a vote among younger people will not just mean that the Conservatives must win votes back from Reform UK, but also from young people who currently consider themselves soft Labour voters.

#### 3.6.1 Young British Indians stay warm towards the Conservatives.

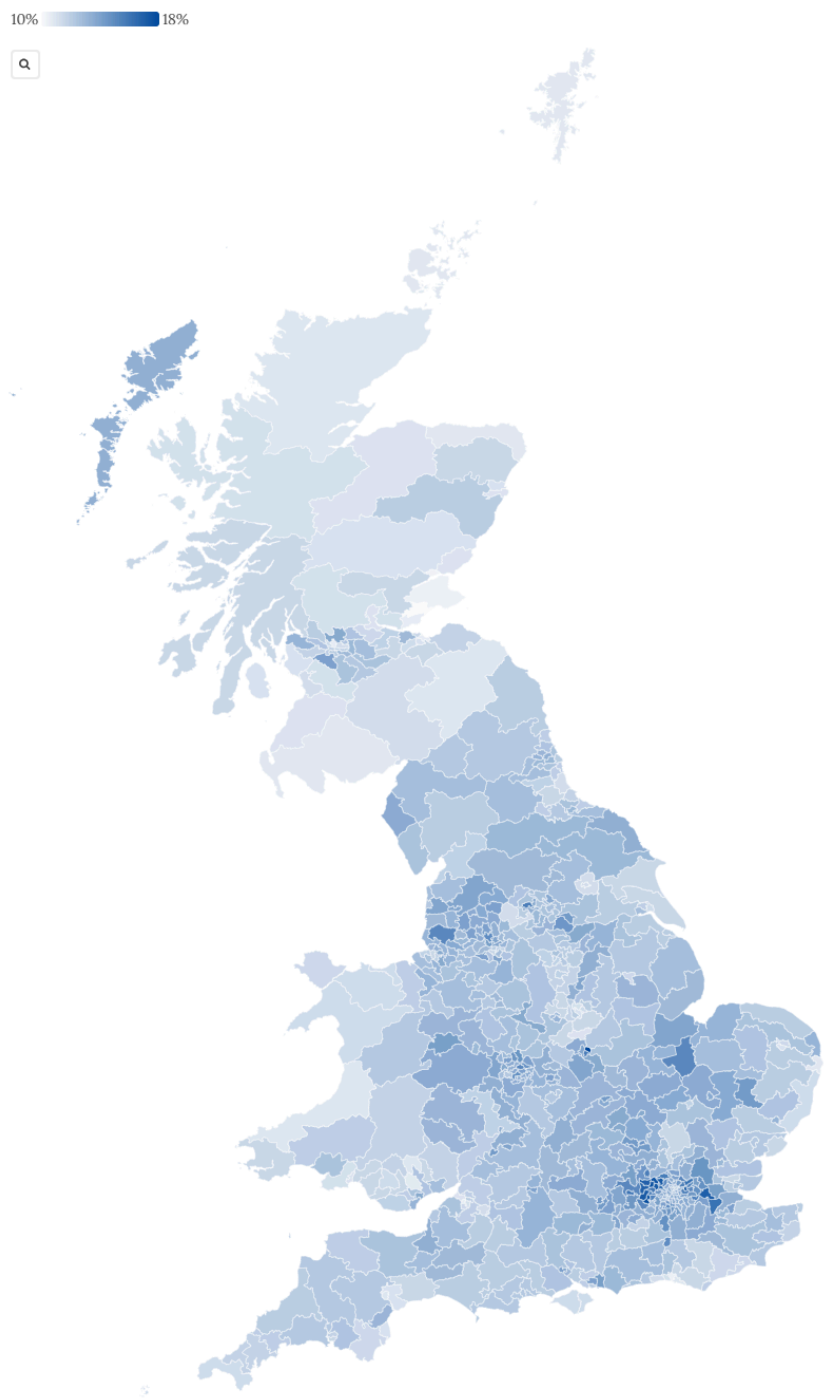


MRP analysis of our results show that young British Indians emerge within the group of Optimistic Millennials described above as one the most likely demographic groups to be considering voting Conservative, even though they are currently largely planning to vote Labour.

Most likely to be Hindu, these young people are concentrated in suburban areas, particularly those of north London in constituencies such as Harrow East, Hayes and Harlington, and Feltham and Heston. These young people are also clustered in parts of Leicester, such as Leicester East. Leicester East was the Conservative Party's only gain in 2024 and its electorate has the highest percentage of Hindus in the country; 38% of the constituency identify as Hindu.

This insight builds on previous work from Focal Data and UK in a Changing Europe which identified strong support among British Hindus for the Conservatives in the 2024 General Election.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 17. Percentage of respondents “Definitely considering” voting Conservative by constituency, as generated by MRP analysis.**



# Conclusion



In relying on a core group of elderly voters, the Conservative Party has built its house upon the sand. The passage of time alone means that this older group of voters cannot keep the Conservatives politically relevant forever and to assume that young people will organically transform into Conservative voters as they age is to play Russian roulette with the Party's future. Instead, Conservatives will need to win the trust and support of younger generations if it is to remain an electoral force in the decades ahead.

This challenge is significant but not insurmountable and there is much reason for optimism. Many younger voters are neither tribally hostile to Conservatives nor to their ideas and indeed hold Conservative values. They want to work hard, start families, and own their own homes. They believe taxes should be lower and that the Government should take away and redistribute less of their income.

Our results show that young people are ready and waiting for a fresh political offer to be made to them. There is a strong sense among young people, as emerges in both our polling and focus groups, that Britain is not working well for them. There is serious doubt that democracy is functioning well, concern that Britain is not a country where hard work offers a path to success and an increasing understanding that life is harder for young people today than it was for their parents'. There is a non-trivial number of young people who are considering leaving the UK to start a better life elsewhere. The threads that run through these concerns include generational fairness and a desire among the young to have a fighting chance of reaching the milestones that have served as markers of a good life for decades.

To meet this test and make a compelling offer to young people, the Conservatives face three challenges. The first is competence. Young people do not doubt that the Party has some of the right ideas, but they doubt its ability to deliver them should it regain power. The second is priorities: younger generations want to see a Government focused on the cost of living, on homeownership, and on family formation. The third is distinctiveness: if young people cannot easily distinguish the Conservatives from other parties, then they have little reason to give it another look.

Taken together, these challenges demand a policy offer that takes seriously the issues that are affecting young people and the challenges that are affecting their life chances. But that policy offer must also be carefully and thoughtfully communicated. Referencing abstract concepts like 'economic growth' does not signal to young voters that the Conservative Party is the party for them, even though economic growth may well be vital in delivering the outcomes they are looking for.

The choice facing the Conservative Party is clear. Either the Party improves its policy offer to young people – and establishes a way of communicating that offer to young people – or it faces a future of dwindling relevance.

# Endnotes



- <sup>1</sup> YouGov, “How Britain voted in the 2024 General Election”, <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49978-how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-general-election> (2024).
- <sup>2</sup> Ipsos, “Exploring voter volatility ahead of the July General Election”, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/exploring-voter-volatility-ahead-july-general-election> (2024).
- <sup>3</sup> Gabriella Swerling, “More than half of young people have considered leaving the UK under Labour”, *The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/07/29/over-half-young-people-considered-leaving-uk-under-labour/> (2025). “Majority of young people considering life and work outside of the UK”, *British Council*, <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about/press/majority-young-people-considering-life-and-work-outside-uk> (2024).
- <sup>4</sup> “Childbearing for women born in different years, England and Wales: 2023”, ONS (2024).
- <sup>5</sup> ““Number of new UK entry-level jobs has dived since ChatGPT launch – research”, *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jun/30/uk-entry-level-jobs-chatgpt-launch-adzuna> (2025)
- <sup>6</sup> Opinion polling for the next UK general election, *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion\\_polling\\_for\\_the\\_next\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_next_United_Kingdom_general_election)
- <sup>7</sup> MRP – Multilevel Regression and Post-stratification – combines polling data with other larger data sources (such as the Census) to allow constituency level estimation of voters’ characteristics and intentions.
- <sup>8</sup> Zain Mohyuddin, “Conservative support among Chinese and Hindu voters presents opportunity and risk for the party”, *UK in a Changing Europe*, <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/conservative-support-among-chinese-and-hindu-voters-presents-opportunity-and-risk-for-the-party/> (2024).

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