



**The language of priorities: what leader characteristics and policy ideas are most salient for UK voters?**

A conjoint experiment, June 2024



## Objectives

- When voters are forced to choose, which policy ideas and characteristics do they tend to prioritise?
  - To what extent are left-right issues salient vs cultural dividing lines?
  - What personality trait people looking for in a PM at the moment?
- This is useful because it highlights potential dividing lines for parties in this and future elections, as well as helping to understand voter motivations.



## Summary of results: characteristics

- At present (June 2024), the three most ‘vote moving’ characteristics a politician can have are:
  - Honesty
  - Being from a working class background
  - ‘Having a clear vision/plan’
- Looking more at specific voter groups, among Labour voters and especially ‘Red Wall’ Labour voters, *incorruptibility* is another very salient strand: having no outside financial issues, behaving in a way which respects rules; not accepting donations from big business.



## Summary of results: policy positions

- At present (June 2024), the three most ‘vote moving’ policy positions are:
  - Increased spending on the NHS and education
  - Increasing taxation on the richest
  - Renationalising railways
- We can infer from this that *if voters believe there is a difference between one party and another on these issues*, it will influence their vote choice.
- A caveat here is that many things drive people’s vote and ‘position issues’ (perceived differences on policy) is only one of them (there is also party loyalty, which party is best positioned to win in a local area, which leader is the best, etc). Nevertheless, the results speak to the salience of bread and butter economics/public services over culture wars in the 2024 election.
- There is some evidence a ‘Rejoin the EU’ party has potential to peel off Labour voters if this issue becomes salient in politics.



# Methodology



## Methodological approach

- A conjoint experiment of two parts: policy and personality.
- Respondents were first asked to choose between Party A and Party B, with each party represented by three policies randomly chosen from a long-list (see Annex A). In the analysis phase, we can see which policy idea most drove voter choice.
  - The % seen in results is the number of times Party A or B were chosen when a given policy appeared in their platform
- We repeated this experiment for personality characteristics of leaders/Prime Ministers.
  - The % seen in results is the number of times Politician A or B were chosen when a given characteristic appeared in their platform.
- By removing party brands, we can get a purer read on policy and personality priorities.
- The purpose of this approach is to force trade-offs among voters. **If they can't have a party or leader which perfectly aligns with their own views on everything, which issues do they prioritise?**
- Conducted via YouGov in June 2024.



# Methodological approach: example of what respondents saw



And imagine you had to choose between two leaders to be Prime Minister of the UK, Politician A and Politician B. Politician A and B have the below characteristics.

Politician A	Politician B
Is consistent in thier opinions	Is funny
Says what they think	Has managed a big organisation before
Is calm in a crisis	Has had jobs outside of politics

Based on these characteristics, **which of the following two politicians do you think you personally would be most likely to vote for?**

Politician A

Neither politician

Politician B

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# Methodological approach: example of what respondents saw



Imagine at an election you could only vote for Party A or Party B. Party A and Party are standing on the below policy platforms.

Party A	Party B
Strengthen workers rights	Stronger rights and protections for transgendered people
Cut public spending to reduce government debt	Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy
Increase taxes on the super rich	Withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

Based on these poilicy positions, **which of the following two parties do you think you personally would be most likely to vote for?**

Party A

Neither party

Party B







# Results:

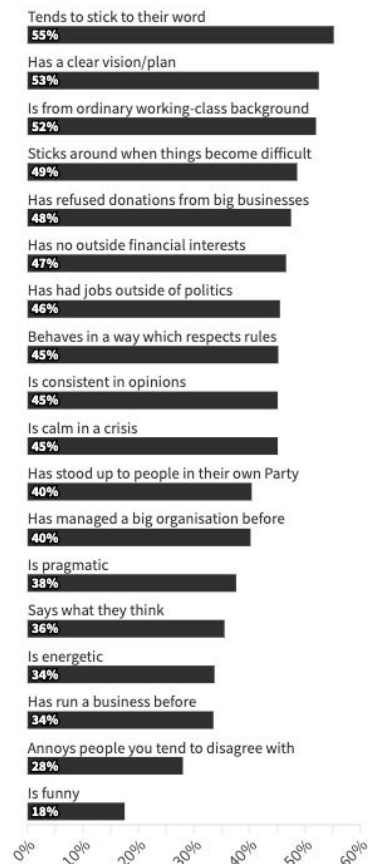
## Most salient leader characteristics

01

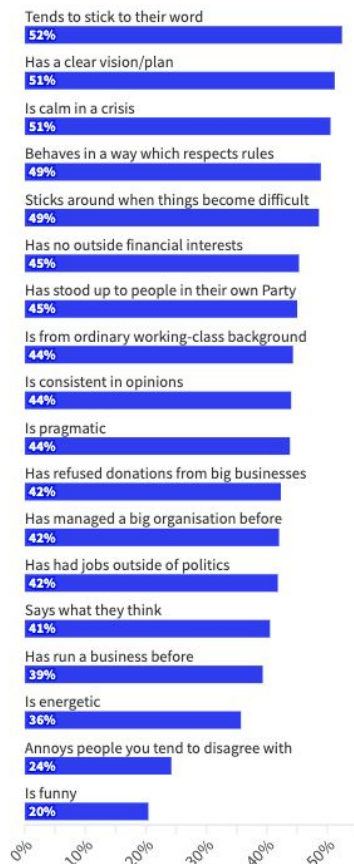


## Salient characteristics overall - % of times politician with this characteristic ended up on the winning side

### National average



### Blue Wall



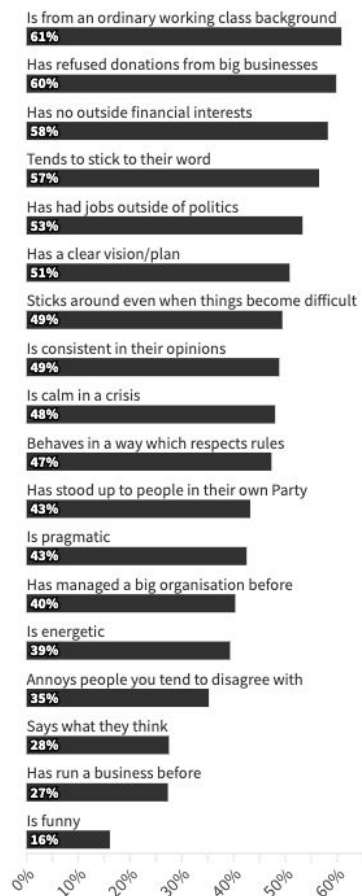
### Red Wall



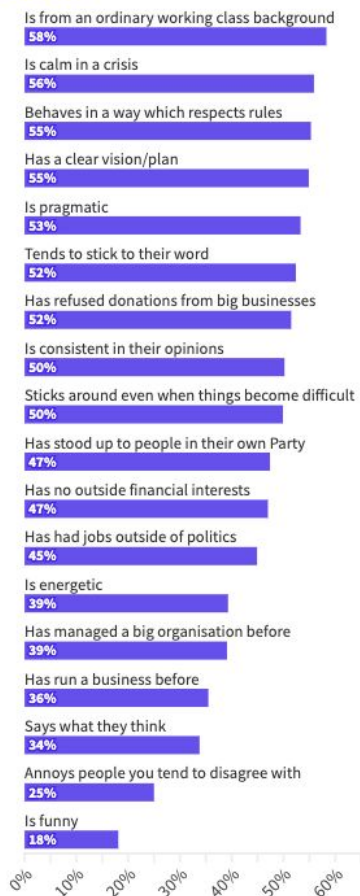


## Labour 2024 voters: most salient characteristics in a politician

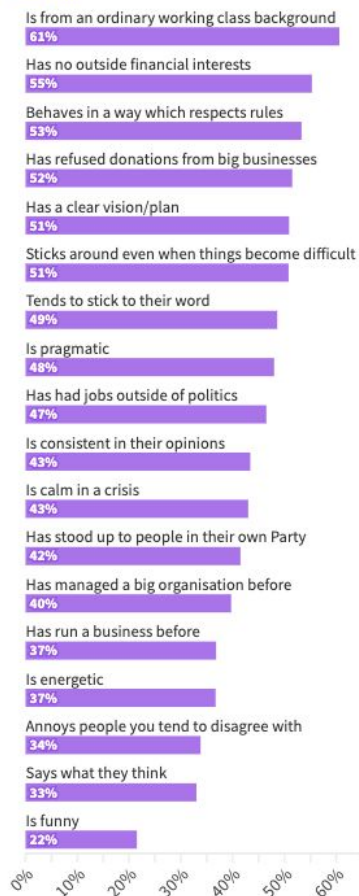
### National average



### Blue Wall



### Red Wall





## Results for Con 19 voters - % of time characteristic was in winning platform

### Blue Wall



### Red Wall



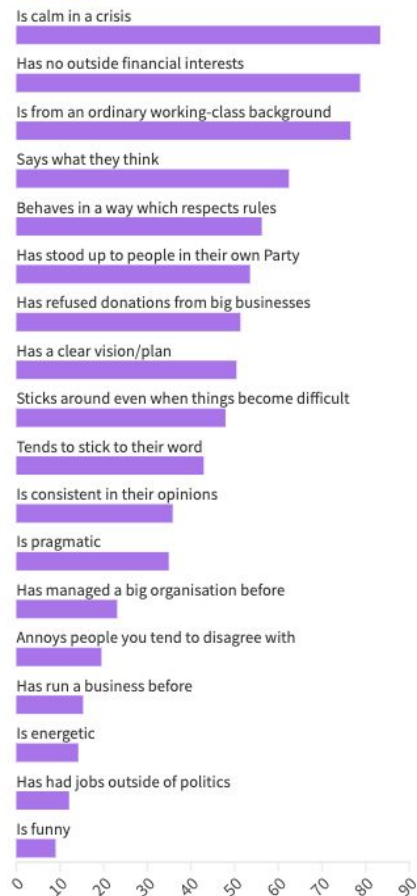
### National average





## Results for Lib Dem 2024 voters only

### % Red Wall



### % in Blue Wall



### % National average





# Results:

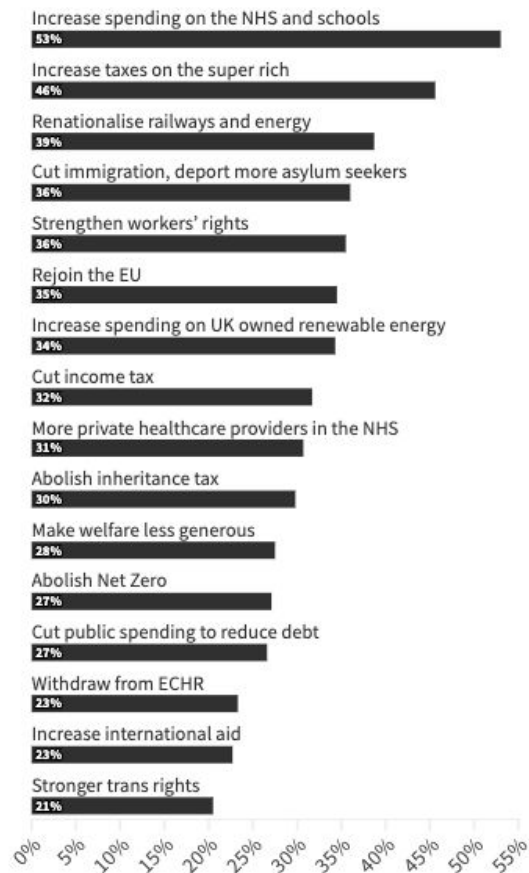
## Most salient policy ideas

02

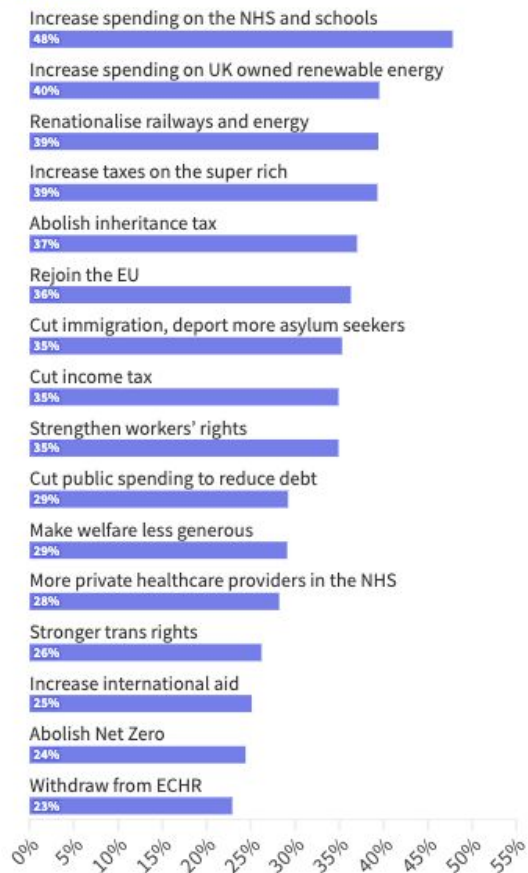


## % of times platform was chosen when this policy was in it

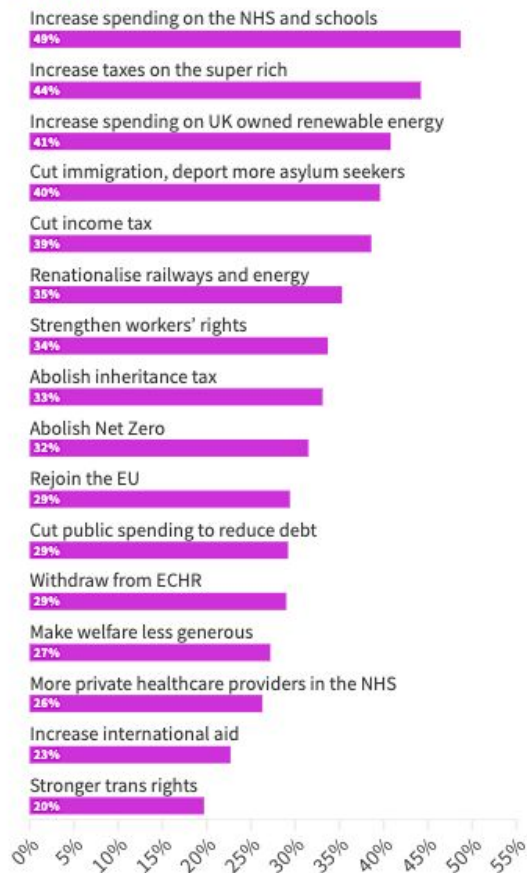
### National average



### Blue Wall



### Red Wall

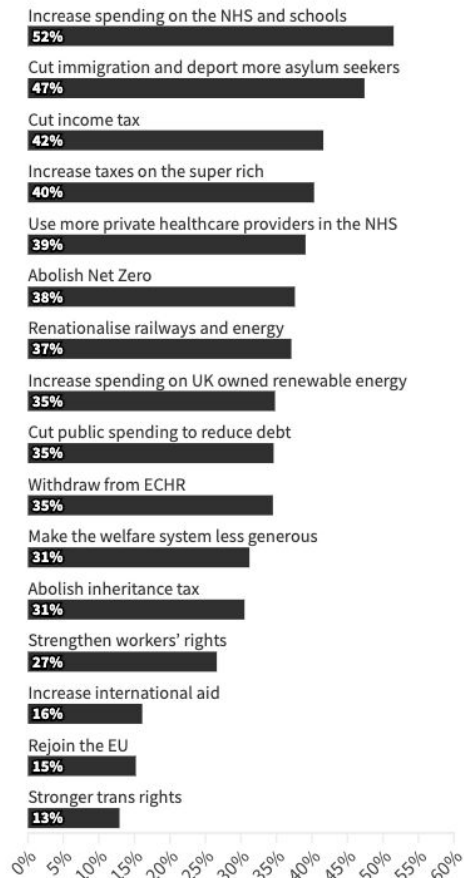




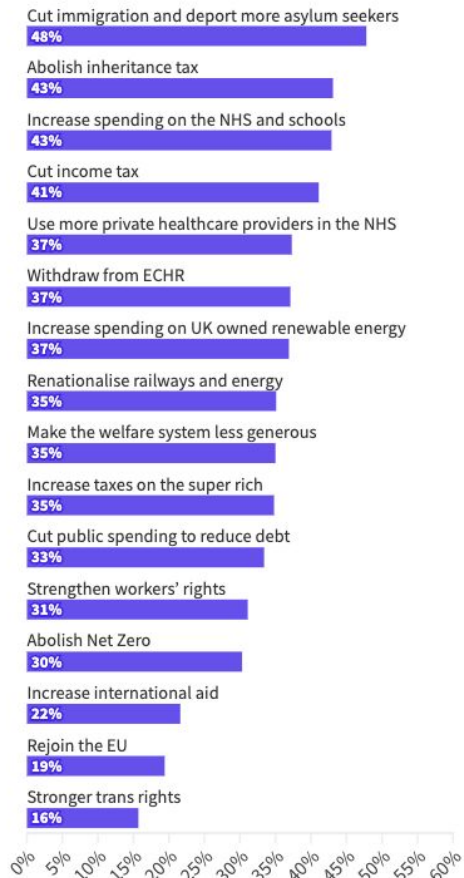


## Results for 2019 Con voters: % of times platform was chosen when policy was in it

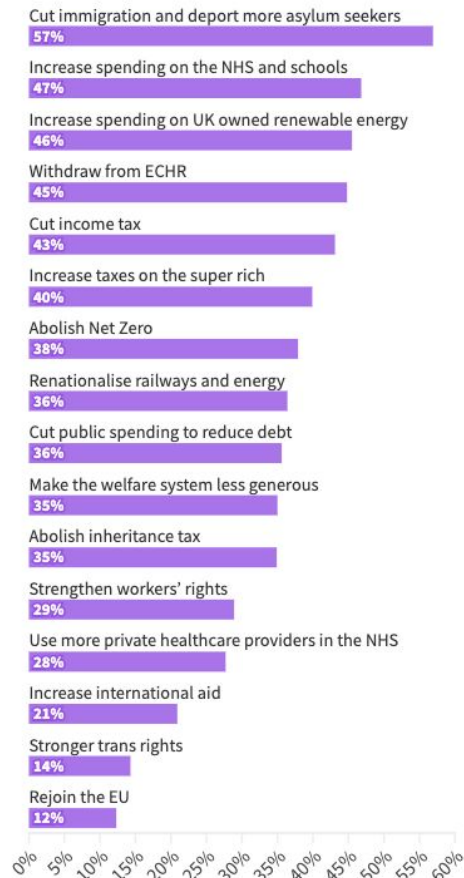
### National average



### Blue Wall



### Red Wall

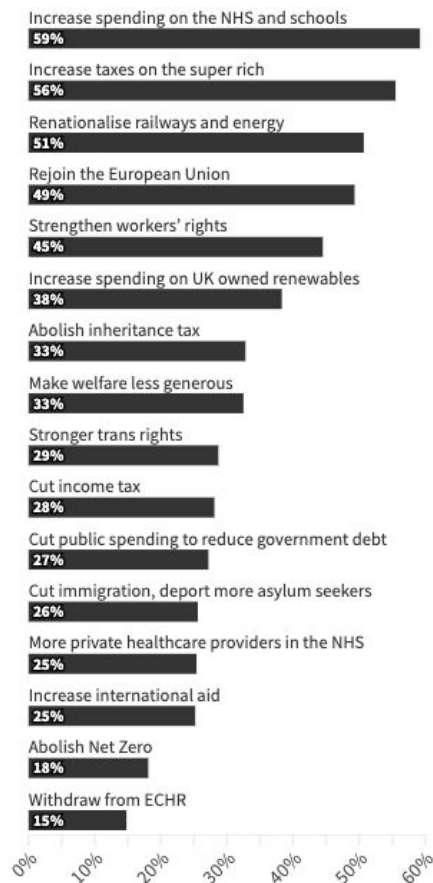




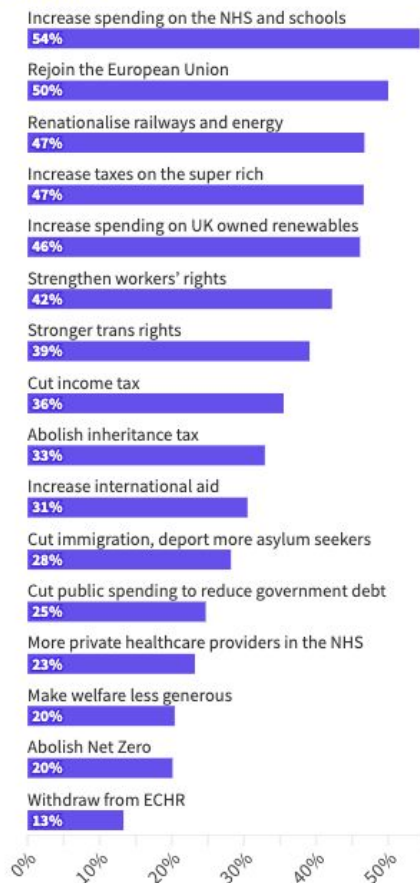


## Results for Labour 2024: % of times platform was chosen when policy was in it

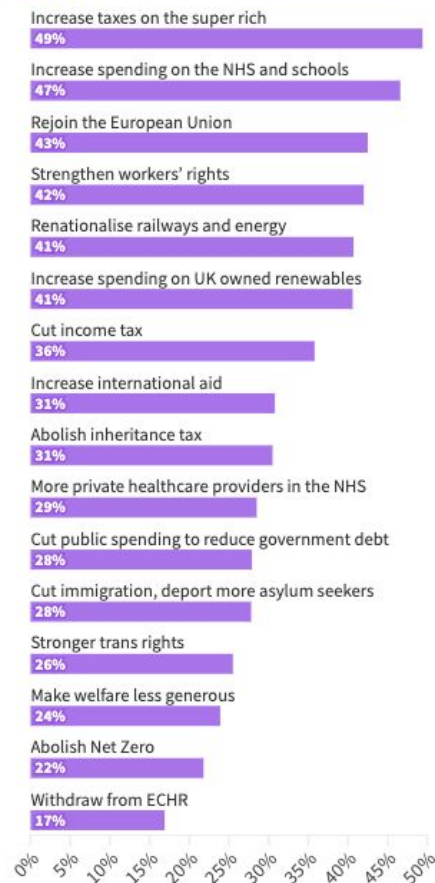
### National average



### Blue Wall



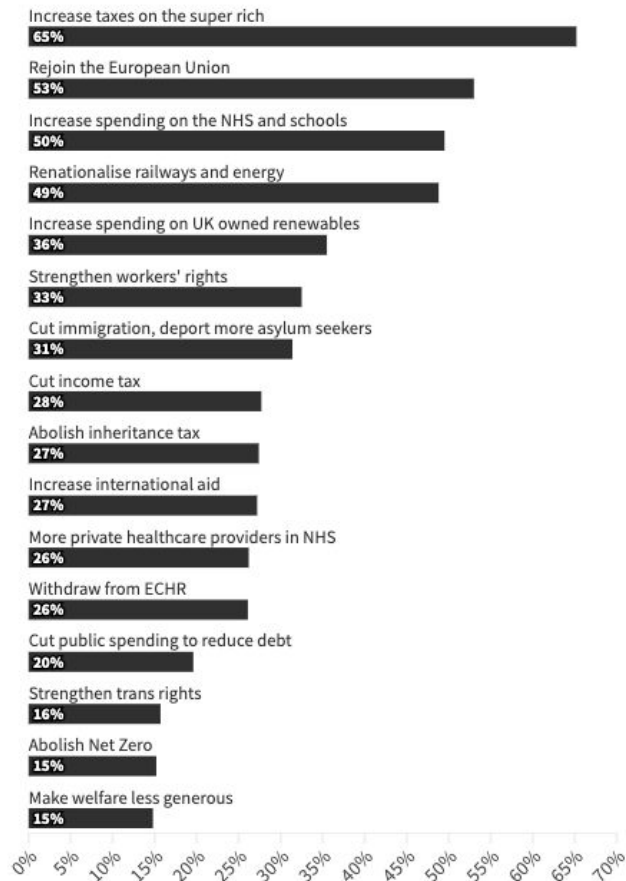
### Red Wall



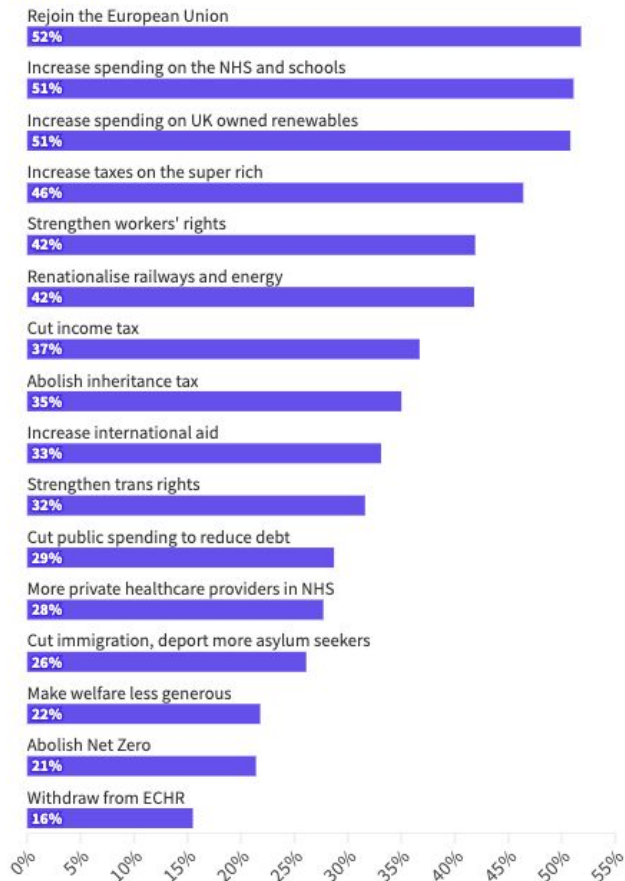


## Results for Lib Dem 2024 voters: % of time platform was chosen when it had policy in it

### National average



### Blue Wall





# Annex A: full language on policy ideas tested



Category	Right leaning	Left leaning
Left-right spectrum	Cut income tax	Increase spending on the NHS and schools
	Abolish inheritance tax	Strengthen workers rights
	Cut public spending to reduce government debt	Renationalise railways and energy
	Make the welfare system less generous	Increase taxes on the super rich
	Use more private healthcare providers in the NHS	Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy
Lib-auth	Withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)	Rejoin the European Union
		Increase international aid
	Cut immigration and deport more asylum seekers	
	Abolish Net Zero, the UK's targets for climate change action	Stronger rights and protections for transgendered people



# Annex B: full language on characteristics tested



Category	Characteristic	Category	Characteristic
Authenticity		Competence	
	From a ordinary working class background		Has a clear vision/plan
	Has had jobs outside of politics		Has managed a big organisation before
	Says what they think		Has run a business before
	Is funny		Is calm in a crisis
	Consistent in their opinions		Is pragmatic
Honesty/propriety		Strength	Has stood up to people in their own party
	Tends to stick their word		Energetic
	Behaves in a way which respects rules		
	Has refused donations from big business		
	Has no outside financial interests	Polarisation	Annoys people you tend to disagree with
		Integrity	Sticks around even things become difficult