



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

#### YouGov

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	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





## Methodological approach: example of what respondents saw

#### YouGov

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
Strenghten 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

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

ational average	Blue Wall	Red Wall
Tends to stick to their word 55%	Tends to stick to their word	Tends to stick to their word 52%
las a clear vision/plan 53%	Has a clear vision/plan 51%	Is from ordinary working-class background
from ordinary working-class background	Is calm in a crisis 51%	Behaves in a way which respects rules
icks around when things become difficult	Behaves in a way which respects rules	Has stood up to people in their own Party
as refused donations from big businesses 3%	Sticks around when things become difficult 49%	Has no outside financial interests
as no outside financial interests 1%	Has no outside financial interests 45%	Is consistent in opinions
as had jobs outside of politics 5%	Has stood up to people in their own Party 45%	Sticks around when things become difficult
ehaves in a way which respects rules 5%	Is from ordinary working-class background 44%	Has refused donations from big businesses
consistent in opinions 5%	Is consistent in opinions	Has a clear vision/plan
s calm in a crisis 15%	Is pragmatic	Has had jobs outside of politics
as stood up to people in their own Party 10%	Has refused donations from big businesses 42%	Is pragmatic
as managed a big organisation before	Has managed a big organisation before 42%	Is calm in a crisis
pragmatic 8%	Has had jobs outside of politics	Says what they think
ays what they think 6%	Says what they think	Has managed a big organisation before
energetic 4%	Has run a business before	Has run a business before
as run a business before	Is energetic 36%	Is energetic
nnoys people you tend to disagree with	Annoys people you tend to disagree with 24%	Annoys people you tend to disagree with
funny	Is funny	Is funny



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

National average Blue Wall Red Wall Is from an ordinary working class background Is from an ordinary working class background Is from an ordinary working class background Has refused donations from big businesses Is calm in a crisis Has no outside financial interests 60% 56% 55% Has no outside financial interests Behaves in a way which respects rules Behaves in a way which respects rules Tends to stick to their word Has a clear vision/plan Has refused donations from big businesses 57% 55% 52% Has had jobs outside of politics Is pragmatic Has a clear vision/plan 53% 53% 51% Has a clear vision/plan Tends to stick to their word Sticks around even when things become difficult 52% Sticks around even when things become difficult Has refused donations from big businesses Tends to stick to their word 49% Is consistent in their opinions Is consistent in their opinions Is pragmatic 49% 50% Is calm in a crisis Sticks around even when things become difficult Has had jobs outside of politics 48% 47% Behaves in a way which respects rules Has stood up to people in their own Party Is consistent in their opinions 43% Has stood up to people in their own Party Has no outside financial interests Is calm in a crisis 43% 47% Is pragmatic Has had jobs outside of politics Has stood up to people in their own Party 43% 45% Has managed a big organisation before Has managed a big organisation before Is energetic 39% Has managed a big organisation before Is energetic Has run a business before 39% 39% 37% Annoys people you tend to disagree with Has run a business before Is energetic 35% 36% 37% Annoys people you tend to disagree with Says what they think Says what they think 28% 34% 34% Annoys people you tend to disagree with Has run a business before Says what they think 25% 33% 27% Is funny Is funny Is funny 16% 18% 22%



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

Blue Wall Red Wall National average Has a clear vision/plan Tends to stick to their word Tends to stick to their word 53% 63% Tends to stick to their word Is consistent in their opinions Has a clear vision/plan 51% 55% Sticks around even when things become d Sticks around even when things become d Sticks around even when things become d Says what they think Has stood up to people in their own Party Has had jobs outside of politics 50% 49% 53% Is calm in a crisis Says what they think Is consistent in their opinions 49% 51% Behaves in a way which respects rules Has a clear vision/plan Behaves in a way which respects rules 47% Has refused donations from big businesses Has managed a big organisation before Behaves in a way which respects rules Has stood up to people in their own Party Is from an ordinary working class backgrou Has had jobs outside of politics 43% 44% Has run a business before Is pragmatic Is calm in a crisis 44% 41% 44% Has no outside financial interests Is calm in a crisis Is pragmatic 43% 41% 43% Is pragmatic Has managed a big organisation before Says what they think 42% 40% 43% Is consistent in their opinions Has managed a big organisation before Is energetic 41% 39% 42% Is from an ordinary working class backgrou Has refused donations from big businesses Has stood up to people in their own Party 41% Has no outside financial interests Has had jobs outside of politics Has run a business before Has refused donations from big businesses Has run a business before Has no outside financial interests 38% 35% 35% Is from an ordinary working class backgrou Is energetic Is energetic 32% 34% Annoys people you tend to disagree with Annoys people you tend to disagree with Annoys people you tend to disagree with 24% 22% 19% Is funny Is funny Is funny 15% 21% 19%



#### Results for Lib Dem 2024 voters only

% Red Wall % in Blue Wall % National average Behaves in a way which respects rules Is from an ordinary working-class background Is calm in a crisis Has no outside financial interests Has a clear vision/plan Tends to stick to their word Is from an ordinary working-class background Sticks around even when things become difficult Is calm in a crisis Says what they think Has no outside financial interests Is pragmatic Behaves in a way which respects rules Is from an ordinary working-class background Behaves in a way which respects rules Has managed a big organisation before Has stood up to people in their own Party Tends to stick to their word Has refused donations from big businesses Has no outside financial interests Has stood up to people in their own Party Has a clear vision/plan Has stood up to people in their own Party Is energetic Sticks around even when things become difficult Has refused donations from big businesses Has managed a big organisation before Tends to stick to their word Is energetic Has refused donations from big businesses Has a clear vision/plan Is consistent in their opinions Is consistent in their opinions Sticks around even when things become difficult Is consistent in their opinions Is pragmatic Has managed a big organisation before Is calm in a crisis Is pragmatic Annoys people you tend to disagree with Has run a business before Has run a business before Has had jobs outside of politics Has run a business before Has had jobs outside of politics Is energetic Says what they think Says what they think Has had jobs outside of politics Annoys people you tend to disagree with Annoys people you tend to disagree with Is funny Is funny Is funny 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 5 0 0 5 0 5 30 5 6 6 6 6 6

# Results: Most salient olicy ideas

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

National average Blue Wall **Red Wall** Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase taxes on the super rich Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy Increase taxes on the super rich Renationalise railways and energy Renationalise railways and energy Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers Increase taxes on the super rich Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers Abolish inheritance tax Strengthen workers' rights Cut income tax 39% Rejoin the EU Rejoin the EU Renationalise railways and energy Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy Strengthen workers' rights 34% Abolish inheritance tax Cut income tax Cut income tax More private healthcare providers in the NHS Strengthen workers' rights Abolish Net Zero 32% Abolish inheritance tax Cut public spending to reduce debt Rejoin the EU Make welfare less generous Make welfare less generous Cut public spending to reduce debt Abolish Net Zero More private healthcare providers in the NHS Withdraw from ECHR 28% Cut public spending to reduce debt Stronger trans rights Make welfare less generous Increase international aid More private healthcare providers in the NHS Withdraw from ECHR Increase international aid Abolish Net Zero Increase international aid Stronger trans rights Withdraw from ECHR Stronger trans rights 500 Tolo Folo Tolo Folo 3000 3200 "Tolo "Rolo



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

**Red Wall** National average **Blue Wall** Increase spending on the NHS and schools Cut immigration and deport more asylum seekers Cut immigration and deport more asylum seekers 52% 48% 57% Cut immigration and deport more asylum seekers Abolish inheritance tax Increase spending on the NHS and schools 47% 43% Cut income tax Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy 42% Increase taxes on the super rich Withdraw from ECHR Cut income tax 40% 41% 45% Use more private healthcare providers in the NHS Use more private healthcare providers in the NHS Cut income tax 43% Abolish Net Zero Withdraw from ECHR Increase taxes on the super rich 40% 38% 37% Renationalise railways and energy Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy Abolish Net Zero 37% Increase spending on UK owned renewable energy Renationalise railways and energy Renationalise railways and energy 35% Cut public spending to reduce debt Make the welfare system less generous Cut public spending to reduce debt 35% Withdraw from ECHR Increase taxes on the super rich Make the welfare system less generous 35% Make the welfare system less generous Cut public spending to reduce debt Abolish inheritance tax 31% 33% 35% Strengthen workers' rights Abolish inheritance tax Strengthen workers' rights 31% 31% 29% Strengthen workers' rights Abolish Net Zero Use more private healthcare providers in the NHS 27% 30% 28% Increase international aid Increase international aid Increase international aid 16% 22% 21% Rejoin the EU Rejoin the EU Stronger trans rights 15% 14% 19% Stronger trans rights Rejoin the EU Stronger trans rights 12% 13% 16% Oh 30 100 130 100 150 200 300 350 100 1500 1000 1500 1000 00/0 50/0 10/0 50/0 20/0 50/0 30/0 350/0 20/0 25/0 50/0 50/0 50/0

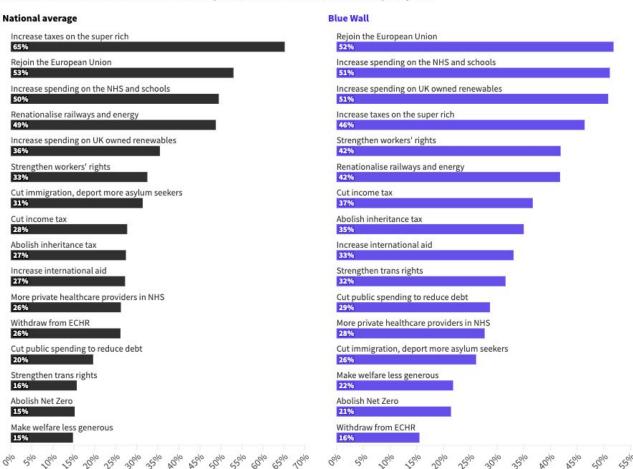


Results for Labour 2024: % of times platform was chosen when policy was in it

National average Blue Wall **Red Wall** Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase taxes on the super rich 54% 49% 59% Rejoin the European Union Increase spending on the NHS and schools Increase taxes on the super rich Renationalise railways and energy Renationalise railways and energy Rejoin the European Union Rejoin the European Union Increase taxes on the super rich Strengthen workers' rights Strengthen workers' rights Increase spending on UK owned renewables Renationalise railways and energy 45% Increase spending on UK owned renewables Strengthen workers' rights Increase spending on UK owned renewables 38% 41% 42% Abolish inheritance tax Cut income tax Stronger trans rights Make welfare less generous Increase international aid Cut income tax 33% 36% Stronger trans rights Abolish inheritance tax Abolish inheritance tax 29% 33% More private healthcare providers in the NHS Cut income tax Increase international aid 28% 31% Cut public spending to reduce government debt Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers Cut public spending to reduce government debt 27% Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers Cut public spending to reduce government debt Cut immigration, deport more asylum seekers 26% 25% More private healthcare providers in the NHS More private healthcare providers in the NHS Stronger trans rights 25% 23% Make welfare less generous Make welfare less generous Increase international aid 25% 20% Abolish Net Zero Abolish Net Zero Abolish Net Zero 18% Withdraw from ECHR Withdraw from ECHR Withdraw from ECHR 13% 15% 50 100 150 100 150 300 300 150 100 150 150



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





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
			Sticks around even things become
		Integrity	difficult