Persuasion UK

The Blue Wall: a primer

June 2024

Methodology

- Analysis of 2001, 2011 and 2021 Census data, matching these seats on new boundaries to Census data for the first time.
- A representative polling survey of 3,000 voters in 50 Blue Wall seats, alongside a comparison survey of 1,200 voters in the Red Wall and 1,000 in the rest of the country.
- Conducted via YouGov in mid-June 2024.

What is a ‘Blue Wall’ seat?

- This research uses the original definition, coined by Steve Akehurst (Persuasion UK Director) in 2021. This is:
    - Conservative held seats where the Conservative party **under-performed the national swing against either the Lib Dems or Labour** in both 2017 and 2019.
    - These seats must have been held by the Conservatives since at least 2010, although most have been held for far longer.
- Most of these seats are on the outskirts of big cities or ‘commuter towns’, largely though not exclusively in the South East of England.

Top 50 Blue Wall seats

- Click HERE for full 50 seat table.

Name (new boundaries)	Second place in 2019 (notional)	Con % lead over second (notional)	2019: Lab over/underperformance	2017: Lab over/underperformance	2019: LD over/underperformance	2017: Lib Dem over/underperformance	YouGov call - late June 2024
Altrincham and Sale West	Lab	11.00	5.10	5.10	1.30	4.00	Likely Labour
Banbury	Lab	27.00	1.60	3.30	2.90	4.00	Likely Labour
Bournemouth East	Lab	18.00	3.70	6.00	1.50	0.40	Likely Labour
Bournemouth West	Lab	21.00	2.60	4.80	1.20	-0.40	Likely Labour
Chelsea and Fulham	Lab	14.00	1.80	8.60	6.90	10.20	Likely Labour
Chingford and Woodford Green	Lab	1.00	5.10	5.10	-0.70	2.10	Lean Labour

Demographics

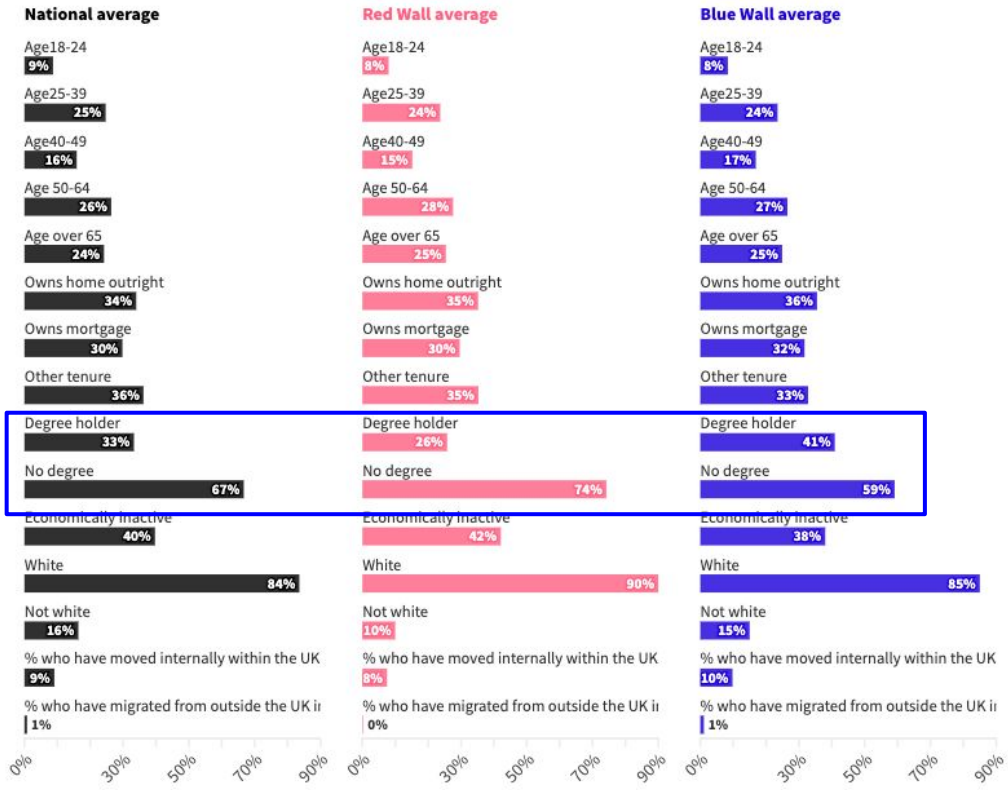
01

Findings:

- Perhaps above all, ‘Blue Wall’ constituencies are defined by having a higher number of university graduates.
- Beyond that, they also have a higher rates of mobility and non-white voters and are slightly more prosperous.

Blue Wall seats have many more graduates. Compared to Red Wall seats, they also have more non-white and economically active voters, as well as higher rates of within-UK migration.

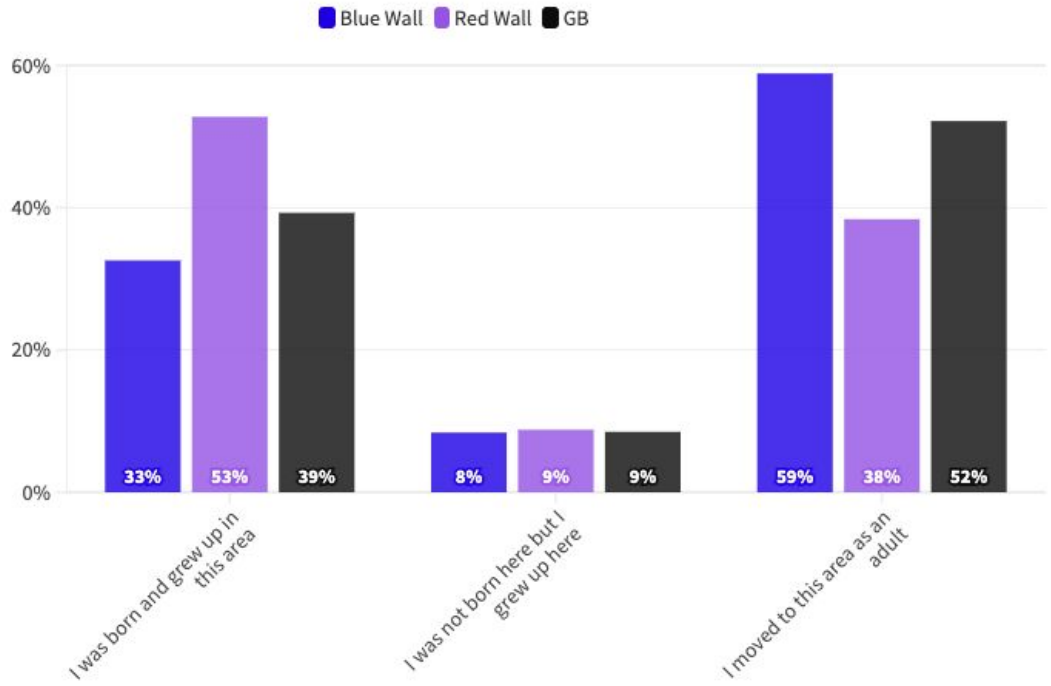
Census 2021 analysis of top 50 Blue Wall seats; Red Wall seats and national average



Source: Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024

Blue Wall voters are much more likely to have moved into the area they live in, reflecting higher levels of internal migration in these seats

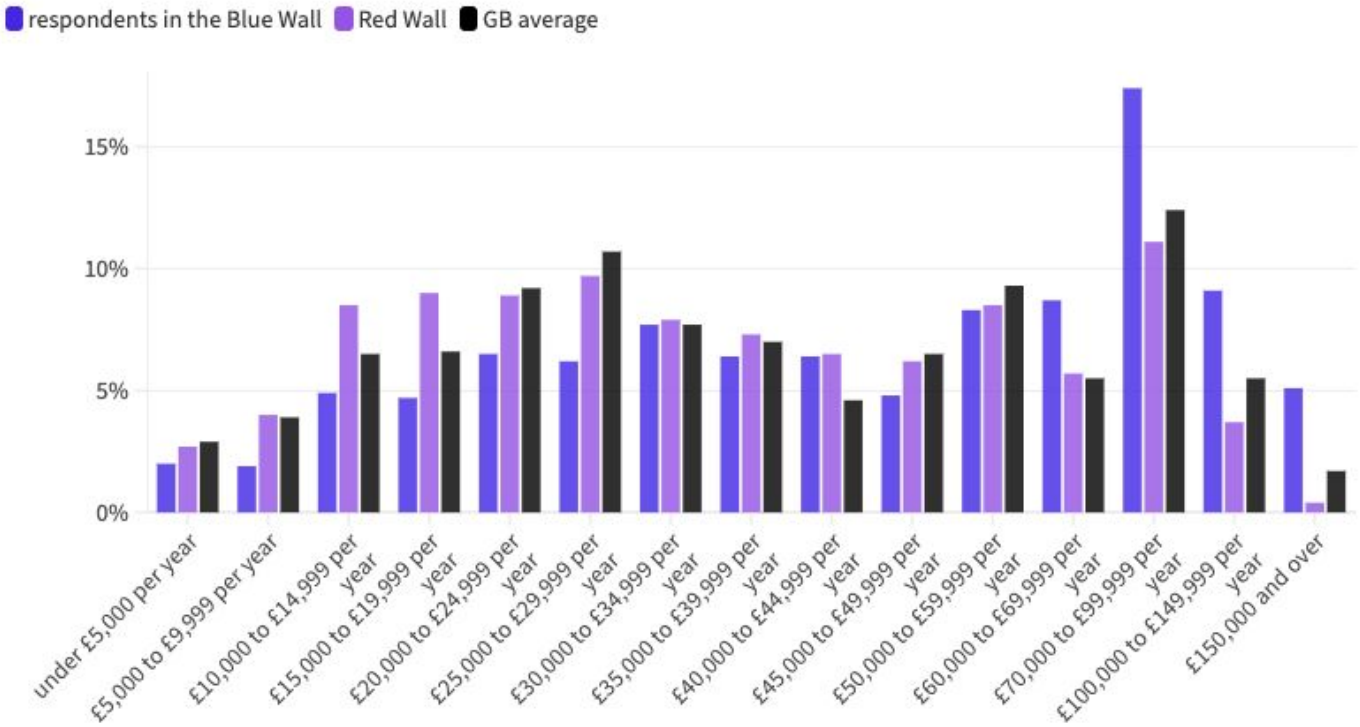
"Thinking about the area you live in, which comes closest to your experience?"



- Looking at the seats where internal UK migration (i.e people moving to these seats from other parts of the UK), we can also see many Conservative-Lib Dem seats have seen the largest increases in internal migration. This may point to people moving out of big cities to 'commuter towns' in search of more affordable house prices.

Blue Wall seats are on average more prosperous than the country at large or the Red Wall

Gross household income last year, £



Persuasion UK/YouGov survey

Political profiling

02

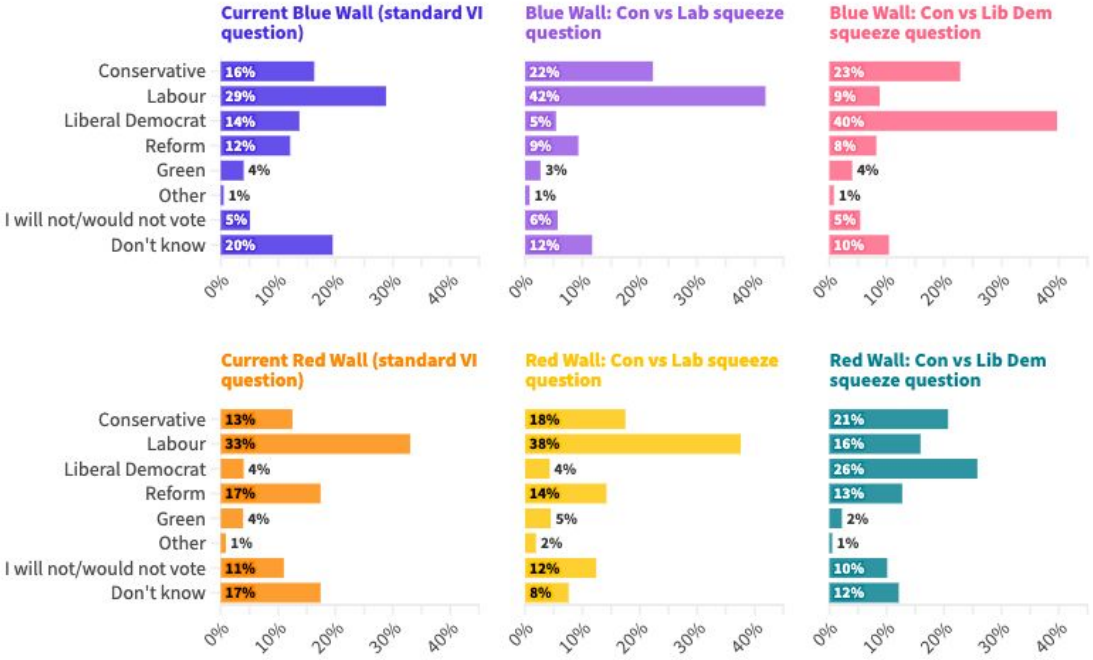
Findings:

- The potential for tactical voting in these seats compared to elsewhere could make Conservative Blue Wall losses worse even than current polling/MRPs suggest.
- Voters here have left the Conservatives for multiple reasons, but the personal behaviour of Conservative MPs/Ministers is a notable reason for Con-to-Lib Dem switchers.
- These seats are also more pro-EU, although even the Red Wall now show a narrow lead for ‘Rejoin’.
- Reform and Nigel Farage are particularly unpopular in these seats.

Voters in 'Blue Wall' seats are significantly more willing to vote tactically against the Conservatives, suggesting anti-Con swings there could be deeper than some polling suggests

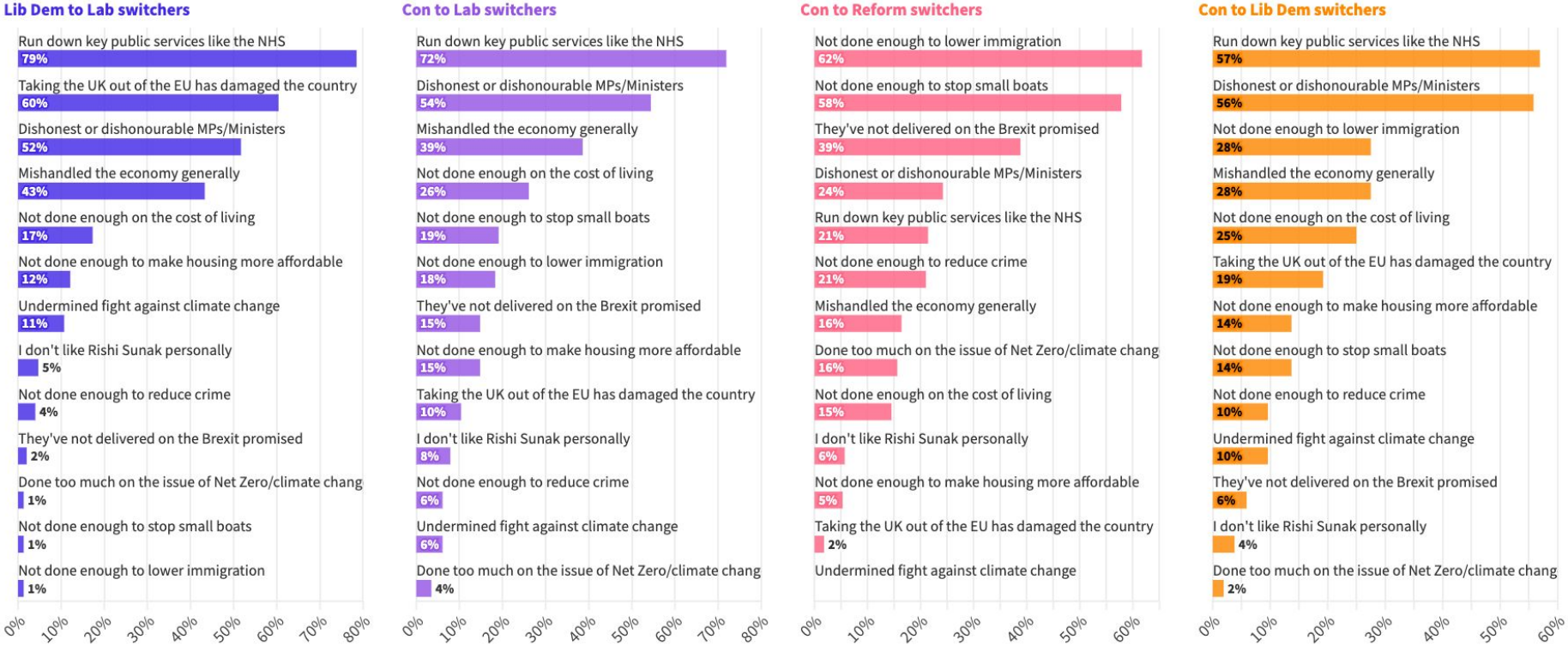
There is a 7 point swing to Labour and 19 point swing to Lib Dem when respective squeeze questions are applied with Blue Wall voters

" And if you do vote in the general election on 4th July, who will you vote for?" Con vs Lab squeeze question: "Now imagine that in your constituency, the two parties who have the best chance of winning in your area are from the Conservatives or Labour, although other parties would still be on the ballot. How would you vote in that scenario?" / Con vs LD squeeze: "Now imagine that in your constituency, the two parties who have the best chance of winning in your area are from the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats, although other parties would still be on the ballot. How would you vote in that scenario?"



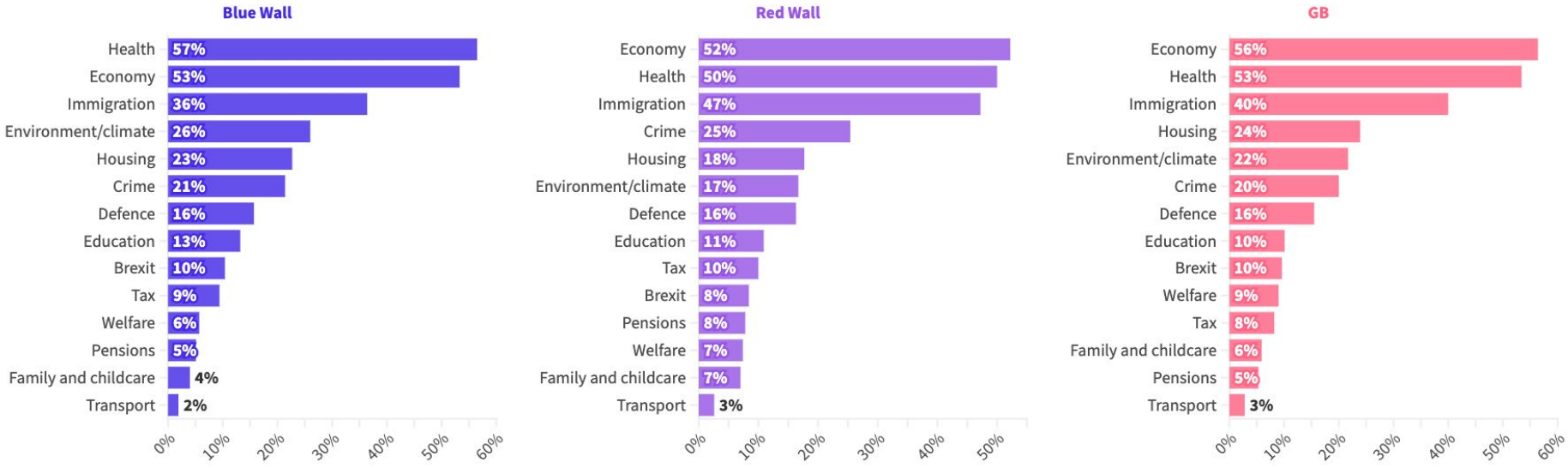
Split test - respondents only saw one squeeze question

Top reasons for not voting Conservative, by 'Blue Wall' switcher group

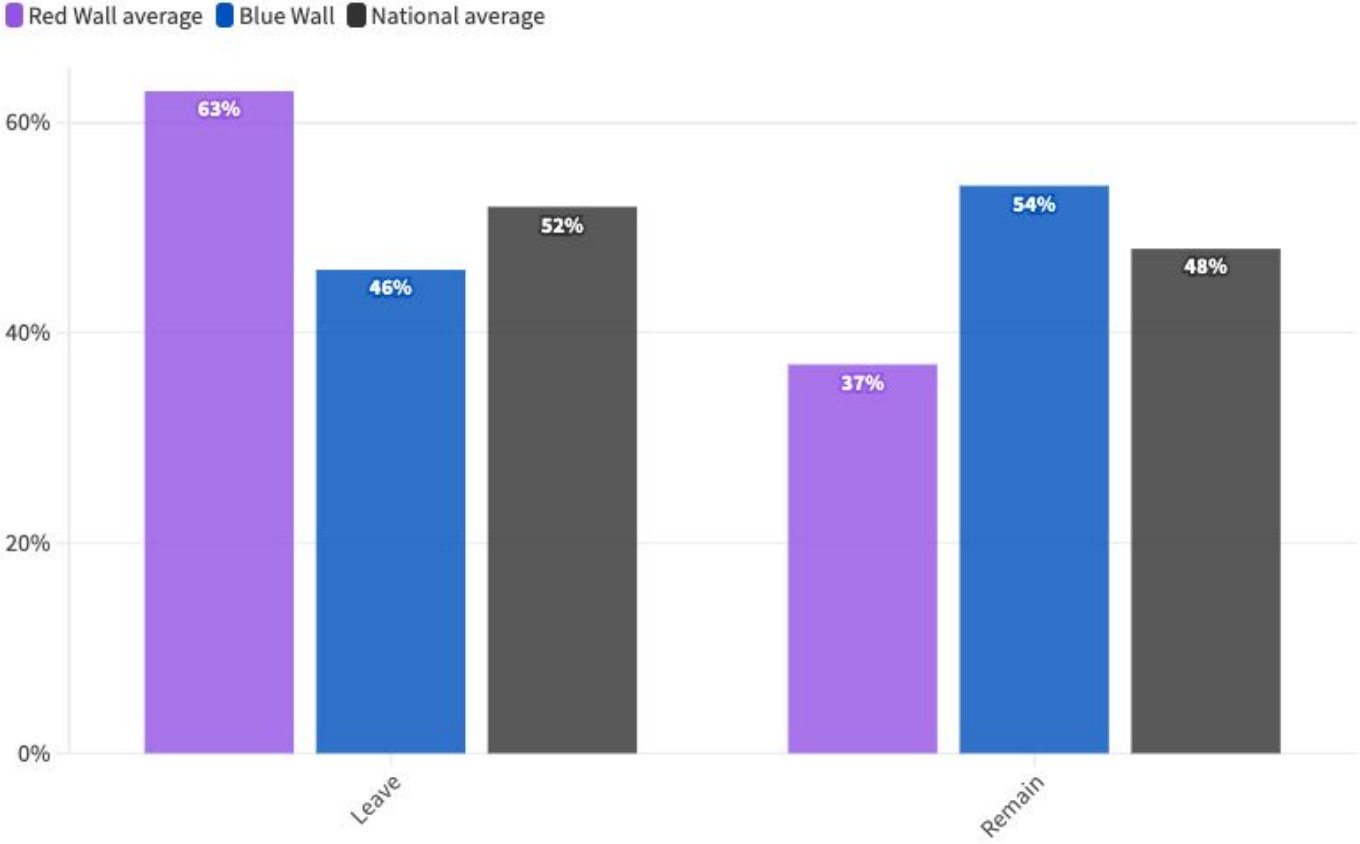


Blue Wall voters tend to be more likely to prioritise issues such as environment and housing and less immigration

"What are the top issues facing the country? Please choose up to 3"



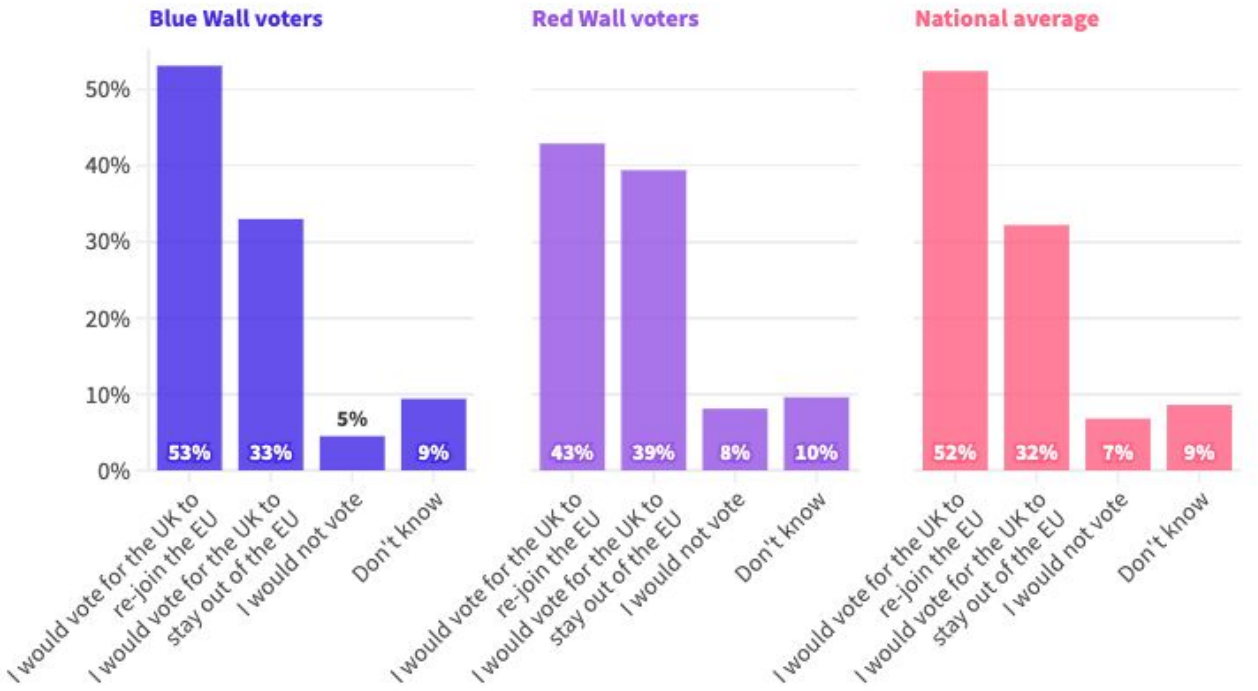
2016 European Union referendum results, by constituency type



Based on constituency estimates on new boundaries provided to Persuasion by Dylan Difford

Voters overall back Rejoin, but Blue Wall voters feel this more strongly than Red

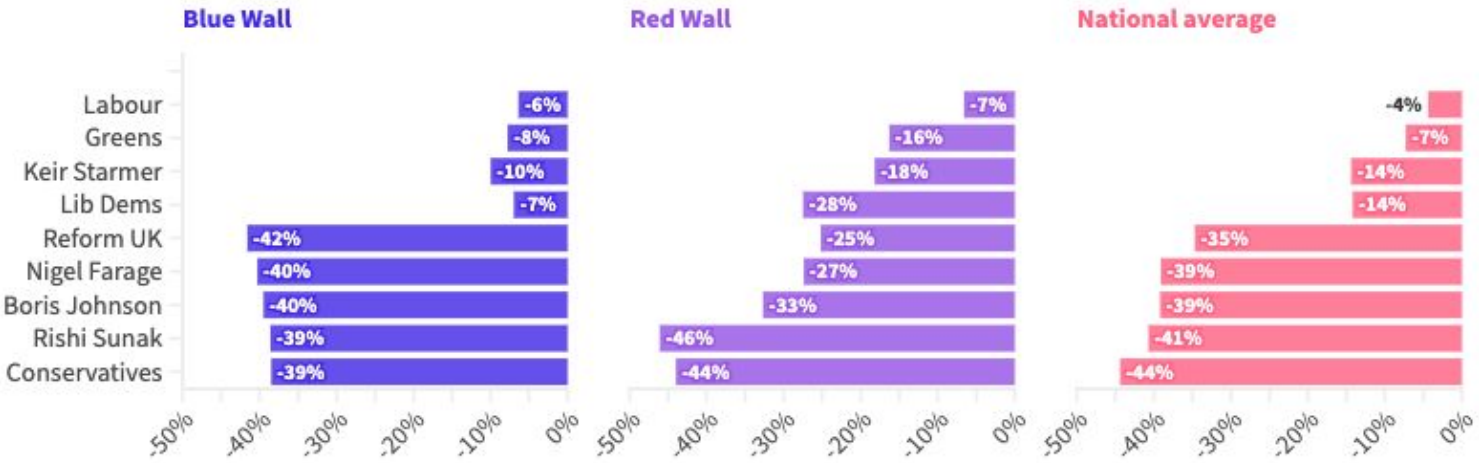
"Imagine that the UK held a referendum on whether to re-join the European Union. How would you vote in that referendum?"



Persuasion UK/YouGov survey, June 2024

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you like or dislike the following parties and politicians?

Net like score - all those saying like (6-10) minus all those saying dislike (1-4)

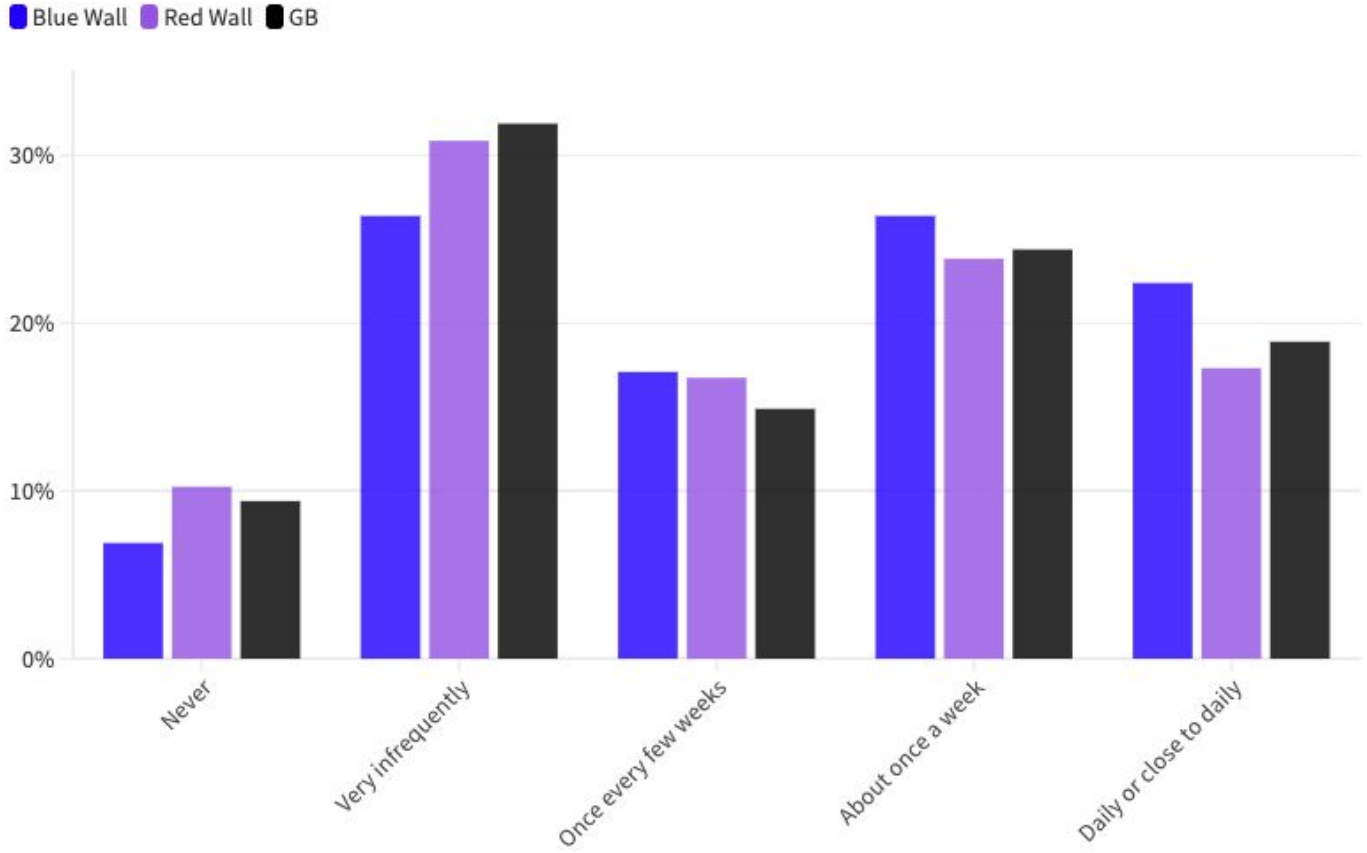


How competent or not do you think the following politicians are?

Net score: all those saying competent minus incompetent

In general, voters in Blue Wall tend to be more engaged with politics

"How often, if at all, do you talk about politics and current affairs with friends and family?"



Values profiling: Blue vs Red Walls

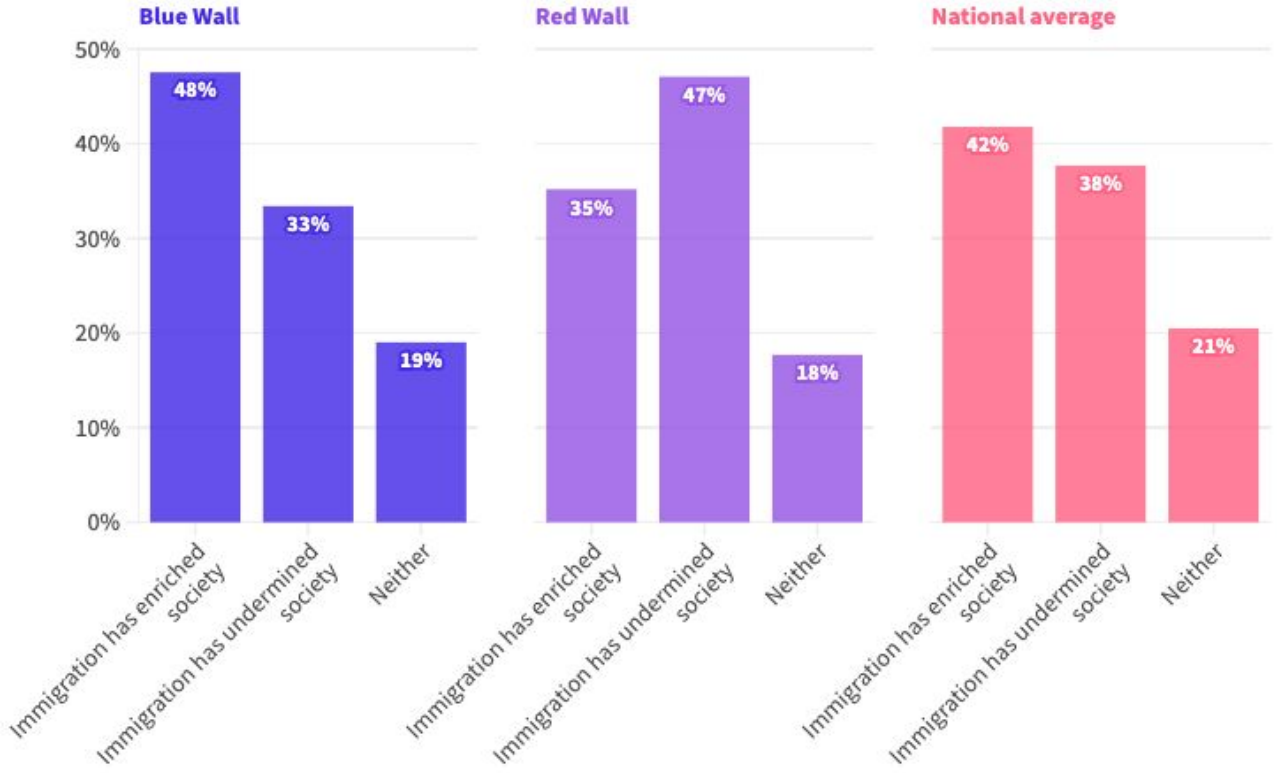
03

Findings:

- Blue Wall voters are notably more socially liberal than Red Wall voters and the country at large
- However, the two battlegrounds are a little closer together on economics - although the Blue Wall is a slightly less pro-redistribution.

Blue Wall voters are notably more pro immigration than Red Wall voters

"Which comes closest to your view?"



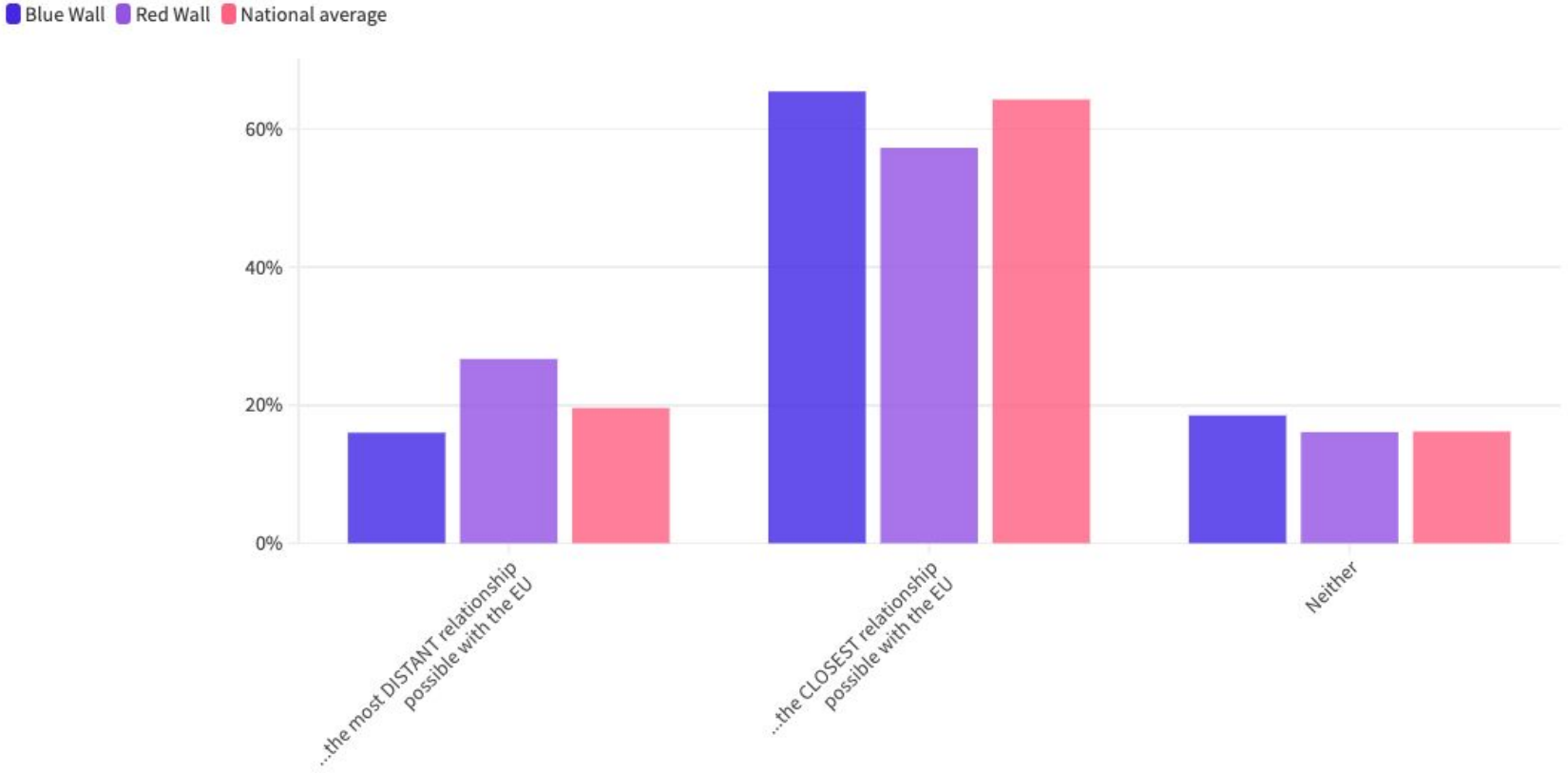
Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024

The battlegrounds are also divided on the subject of discrimination

Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024

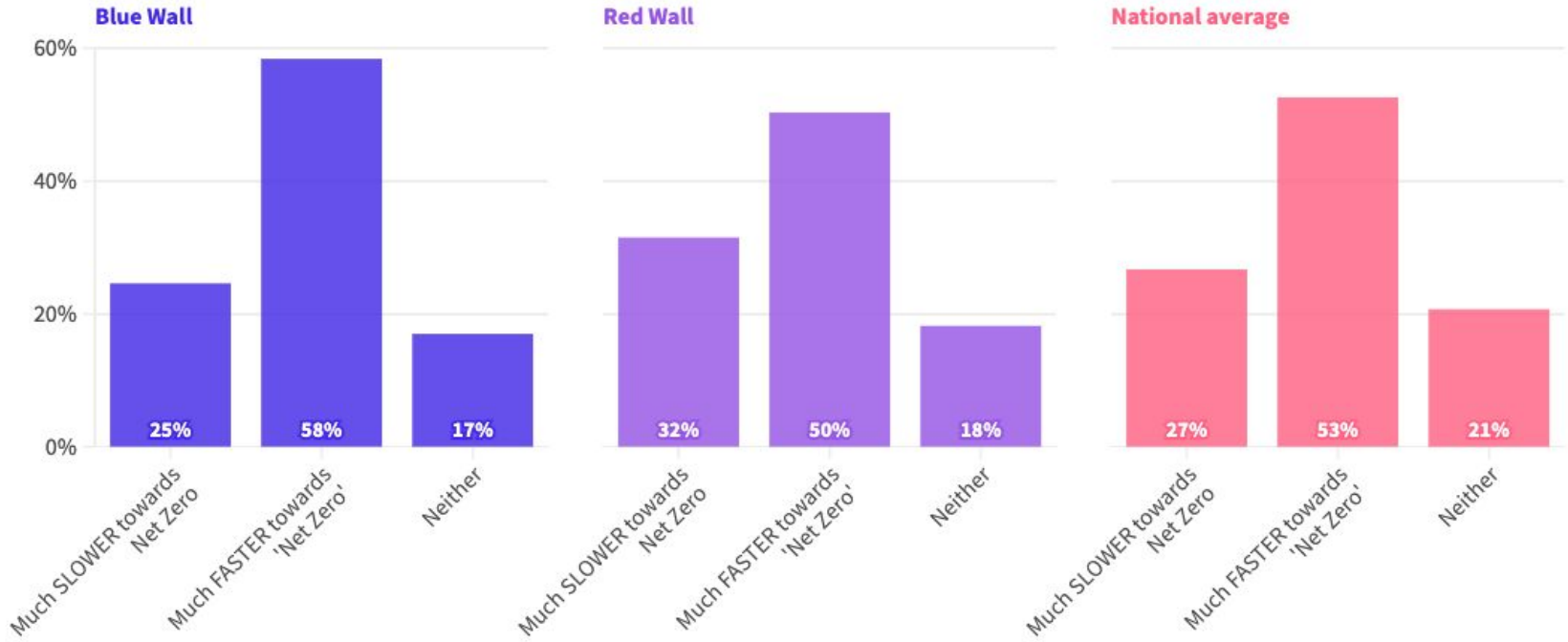
General consensus on the need for a closer relationship with the EU, although may differ on the exact nature of that relationship

"Britain should have..."



Blue Wall voters more likely to back quicker pace of action on Net Zero

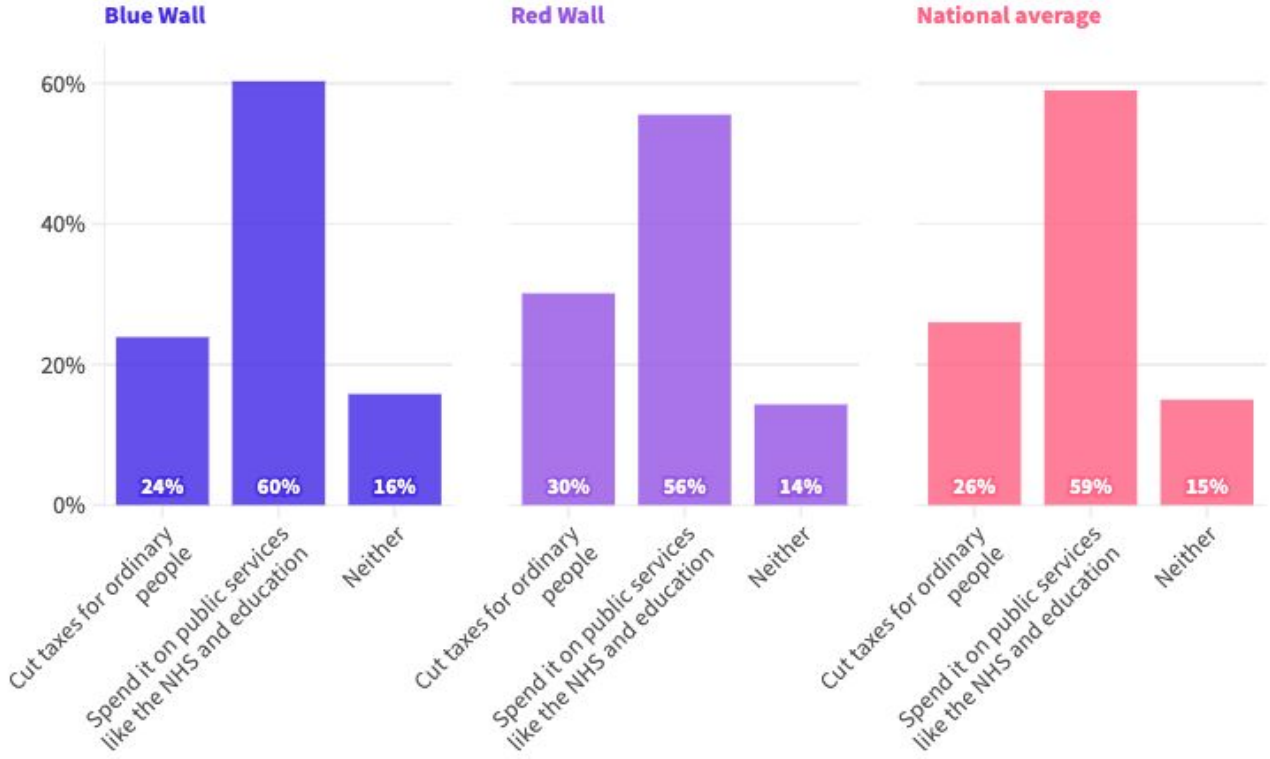
'On the subject of climate change and Net Zero, I think Britain should be going much [SLOWER/FASTER] in its efforts to reduce its 'greenhouse gas' emissions...'



"On the subject of climate change and 'Net Zero', where would you place your view...? Britain should be going much SLOWER in its efforts to reduce its 'greenhouse gas' emissions / Britain should be going much FASTER in its efforts to reduce its 'greenhouse gas' emissions Don't know"
Persuasion UK/YouGov

Voters in both battlegrounds back investing in public services over tax cuts

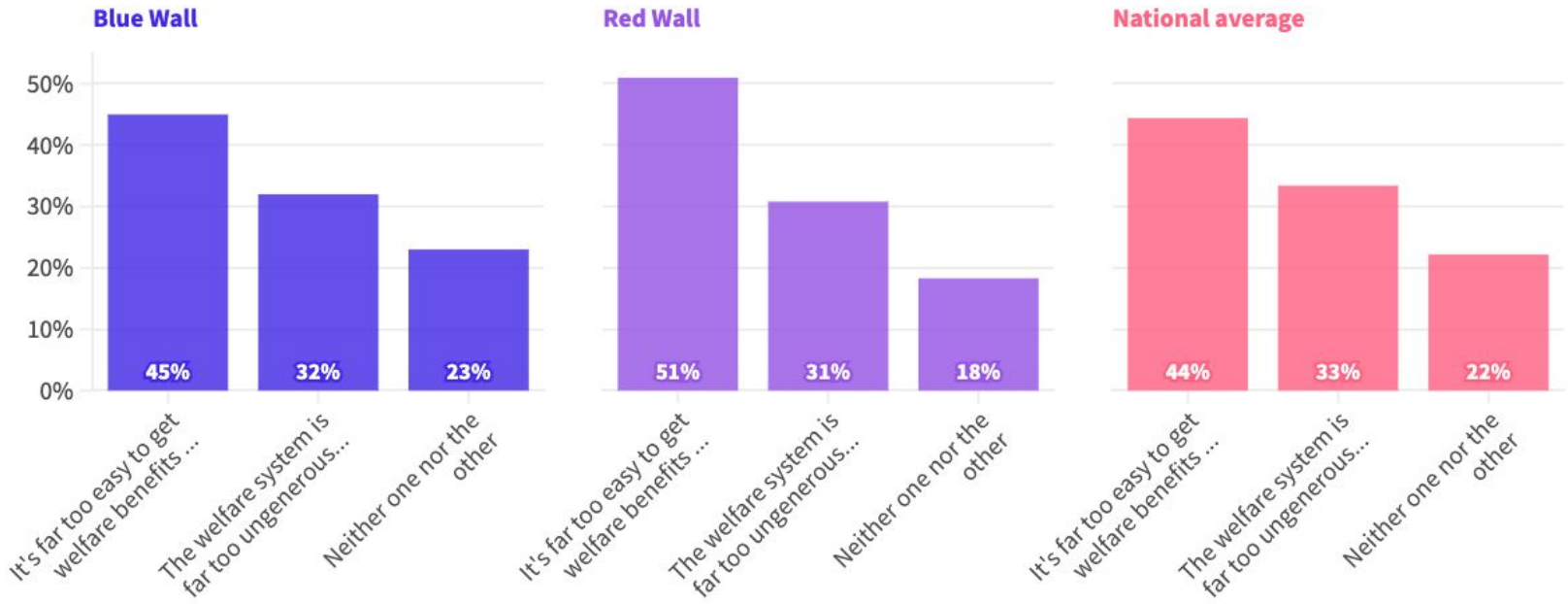
"If the government has money spare, it should..."



Persuasion UK/YouGov
Excl don't knows

Public attitudes in both battlegrounds are still relatively anti-welfare

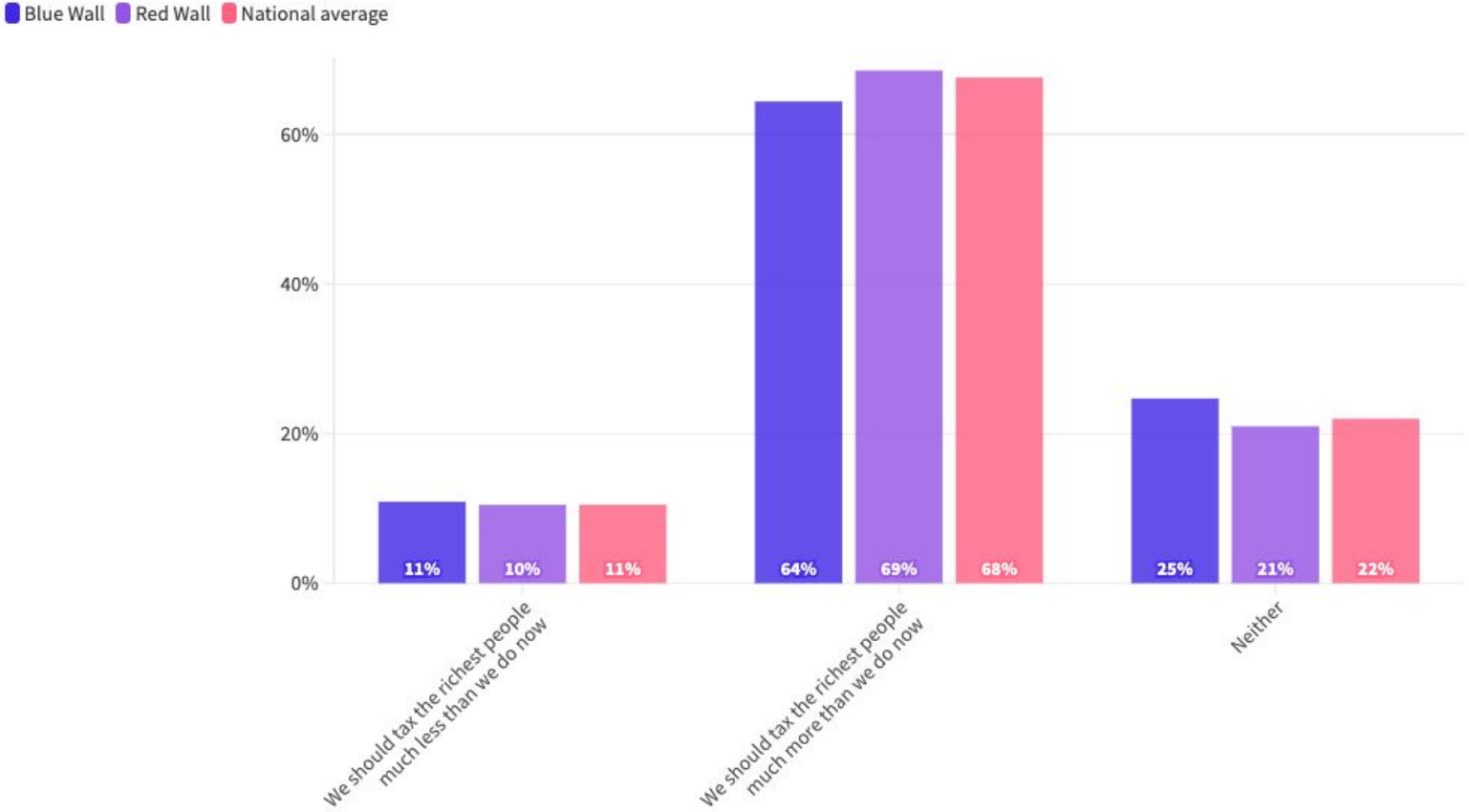
Where would you place yourself on this scale?



Options abbreviated for to fit into graph. Full response options: "It's far too easy to get welfare benefits in this country, there should be more conditions on it or it should be reduced" / "The welfare system in this country is far too ungenerous, it should be be expanded to help more people"

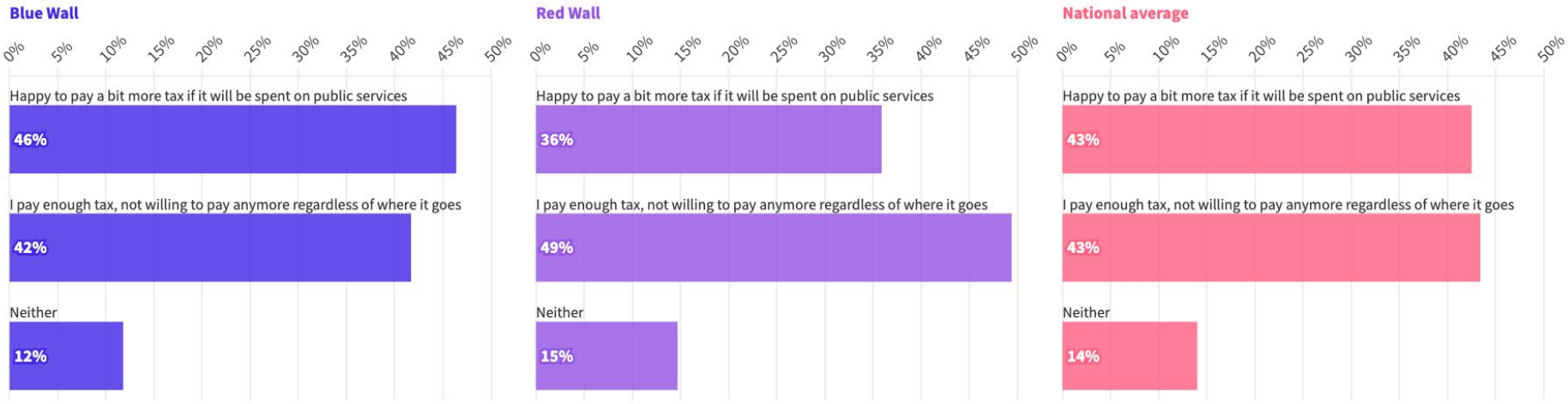
Cross battleground majorities for taxes on the richest

Which comes closest to your view?



Blue Wall voters are more open to paying more tax to invest in public services than Red Wall

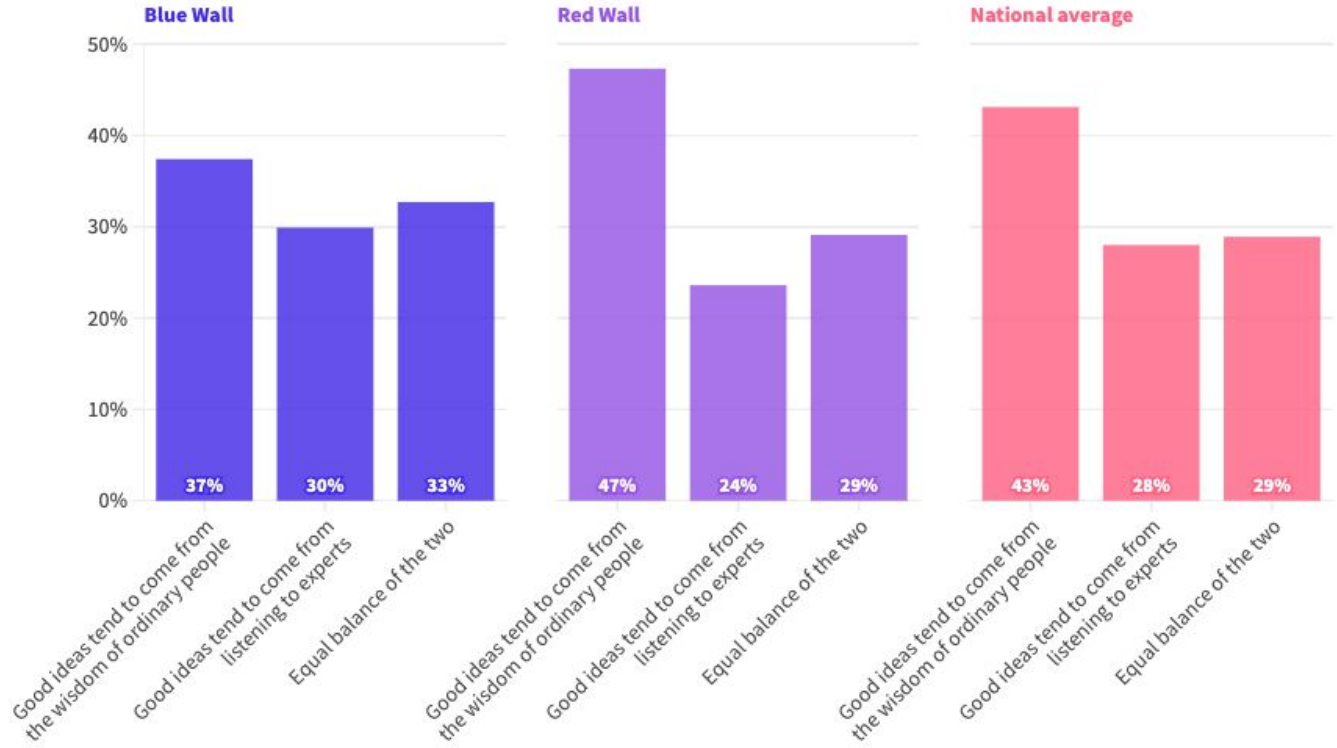
"Which of these comes closest to you view?..."I am happy to pay a bit more tax if it will be spent on public services" OR "I pay enough tax already and I am not willing to pay anymore regardless of where it goes"



Persuasion UK/YouGov

Blue Wall voters are more divided on 'wisdom of the crowd' vs 'experts' than Red Wall, reflecting generally higher trust in institutions

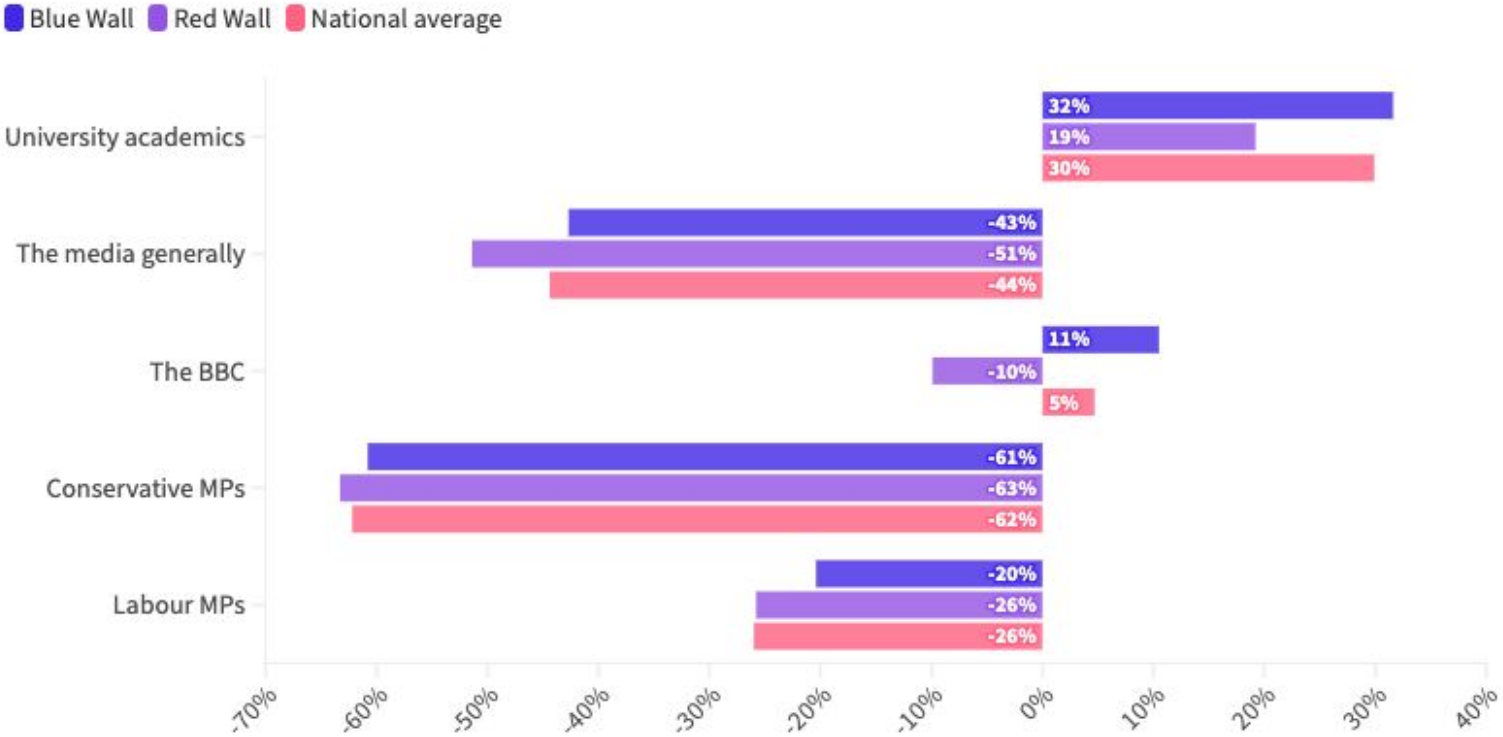
"Which of these comes closest to your view?"



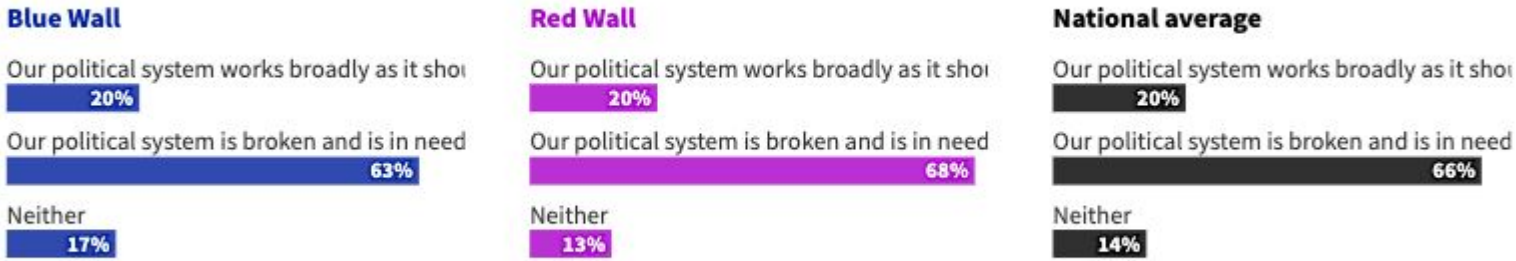
Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024

How much do you trust the following institutions or groups of people?

Net trust: all those indicating trust minus all those indicating distrust



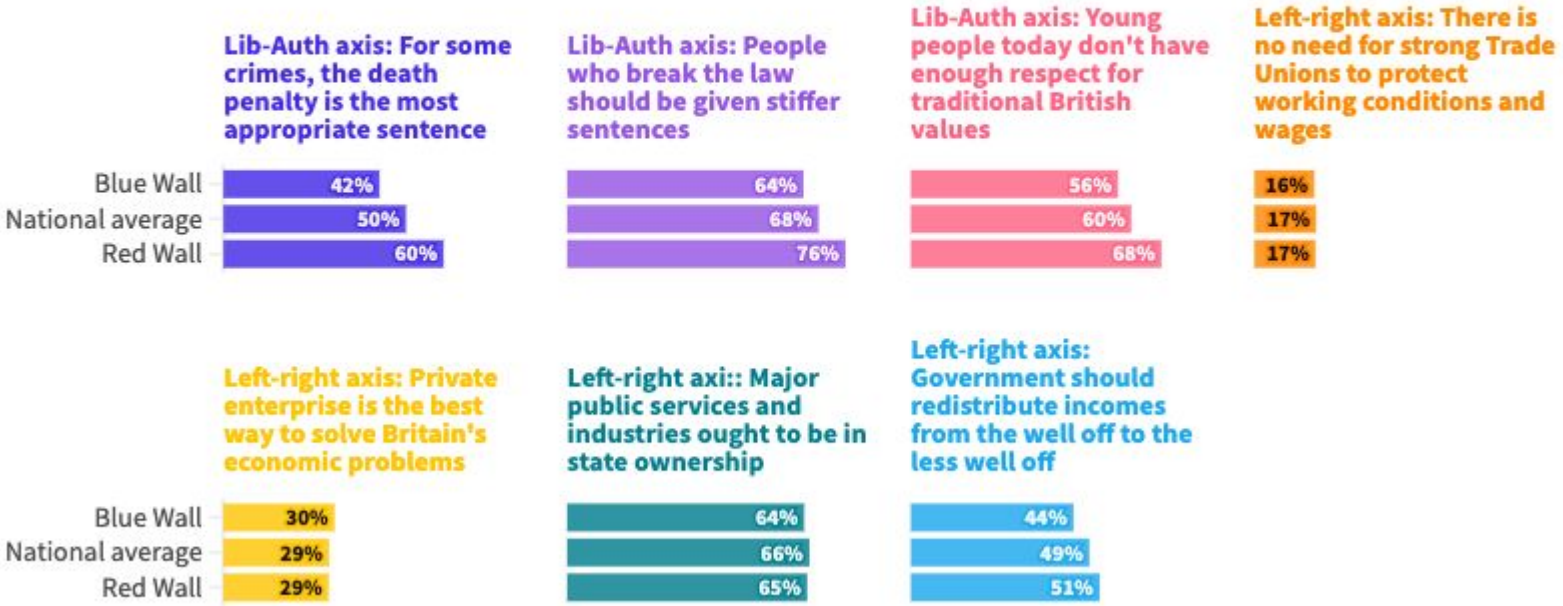
However, there is unanimity on politics being broken ...



Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024

Breakdown of battlegrounds on British Election Survey (BES) measures of liberal-authoritarian and left-right scales

% agreeing with following statement



PersuasionUK/YouGov June 2024

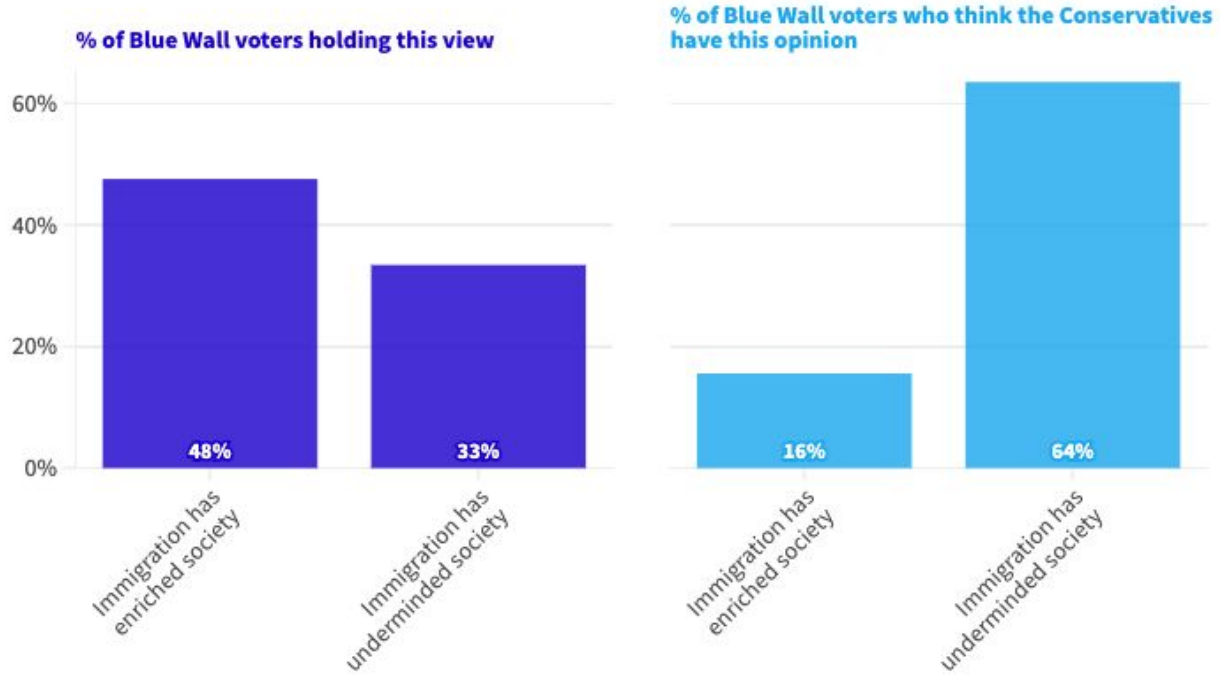
The Conservatives and the Blue Wall

04

- There is now a profound disconnect between the values of voters in these seats and how they perceive the values of the Conservative party.
- This is especially acute on social issues; that is, issues that fall on the ‘liberal-authoritarian’ axis.

On immigration, there is a large disconnect between the views of voters in Blue Wall seats and what they think the average Conservative party view is

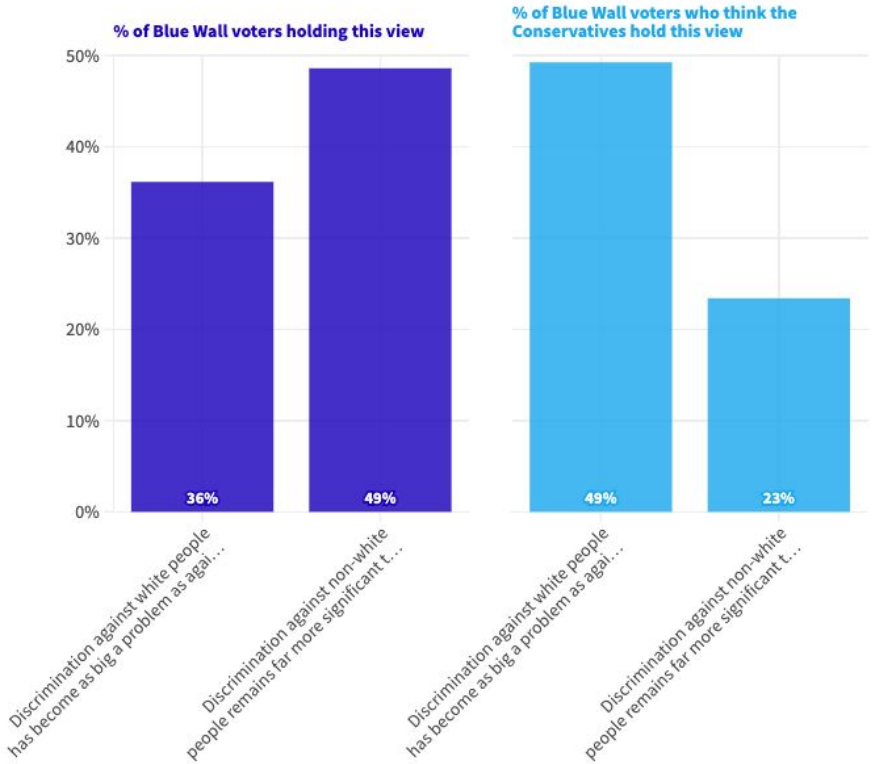
"If you had to say, where would you place your view and the view of the following parties...?"



Persuasion UK/YouGov June 2024, 3,000 Blue Wall voters.
Question was a paired statement on a 5 point scale. For ease of visualisation, points 1 and 2 and 4 and 5 been collapsed together.
Remaining % not shown is point 3 on the scale ('neither one nor the other').

The same is true on discrimination: Blue Wall voters perceive the Conservatives to be less concerned with discrimination against non-white people than they are

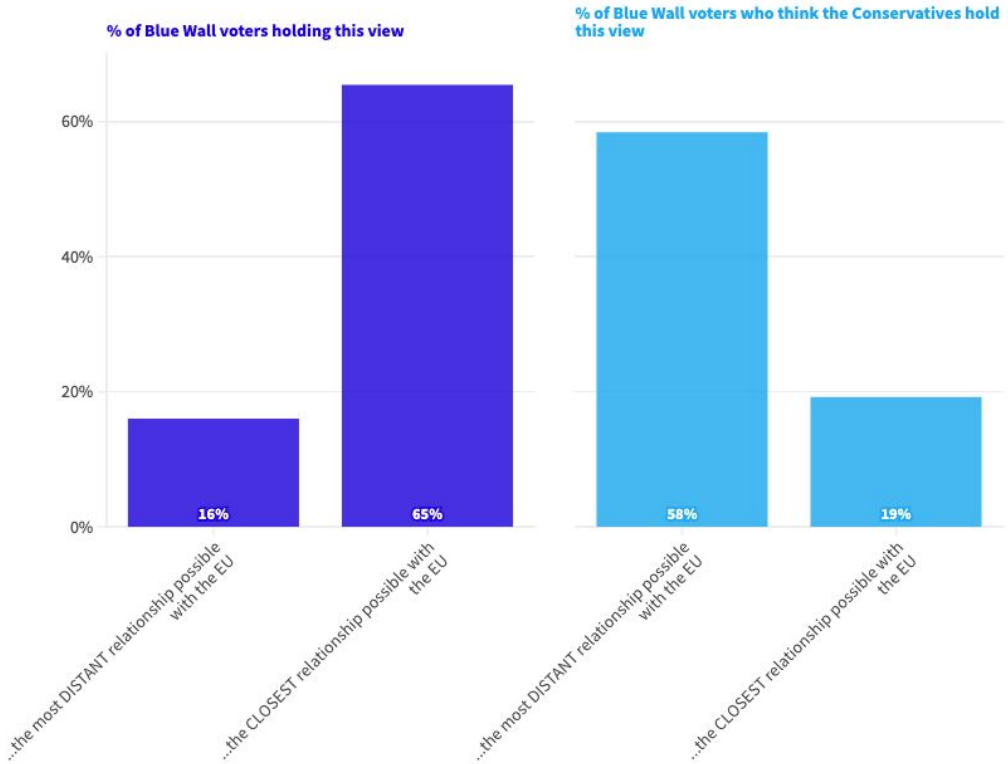
"If you had to say, where would you place your view and the view of the following parties...?"



Persuasion UK/YouGov June 2024, 3,000 Blue Wall voters.
Question was a paired statement on a 5 point scale. For ease of visualisation, points 1 and 2 and 4 and 5 been collapsed together. Remaining % not shown is point 3 on the scale ('neither one nor the other').

The views of these voters on the UK-EU relationship is also disconnected with how they perceive the Conservatives

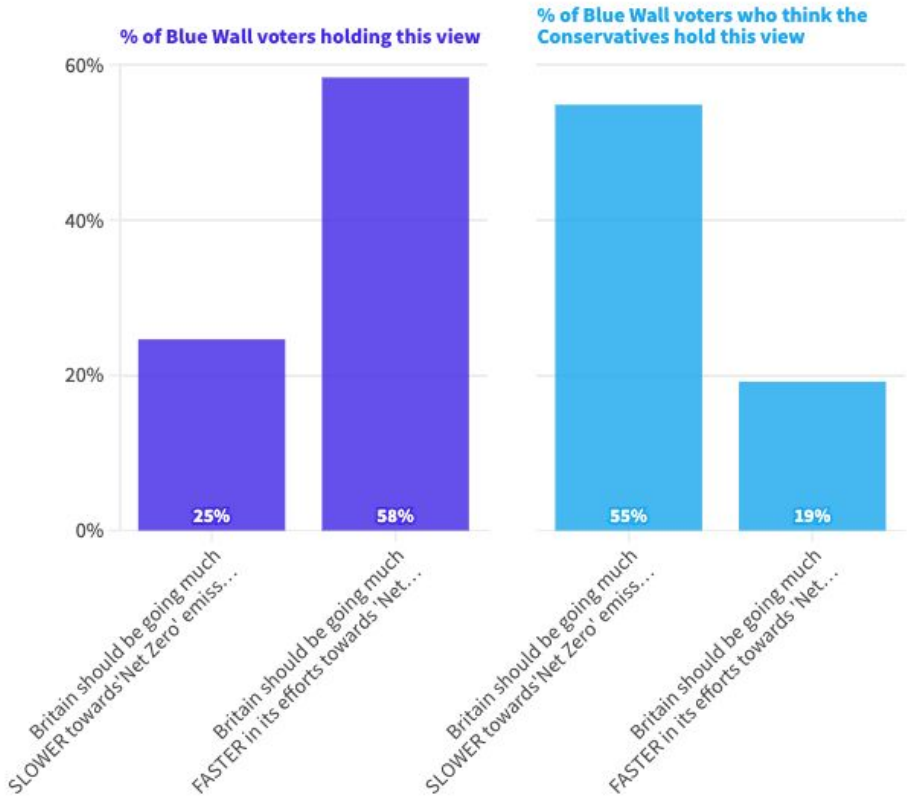
"If you had to say, where would you place your view and the view of the following parties? Britain should have..."



Persuasion UK/YouGov June 2024, 3,000 Blue Wall voters.
Question was a paired statement on a 5 point scale. For ease of visualisation, points 1 and 2 and 4 and 5 been collapsed together. Remaining % not shown is point 3 on the scale ('neither one nor the other').

Blue Wall voters supporting going faster towards Net Zero, but they now perceive the Conservatives to be the party of Net Zero delay

"On the subject of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, if you had to say, where would you place your view and the view of the following parties?"



There is significant distance between the values of Blue Wall voters and what they perceive Conservative party values to be. They place the Conservatives far to the right of them on most issues.

"Where would you place your view and the view of the following parties on this scale?"

Persuasion UK/YouGov, 3,000 Blue Wall voters, June 2024. Scores represent mean average on 5 point scale.

Source: Persuasion UK • Created with Datawrapper

Other observations

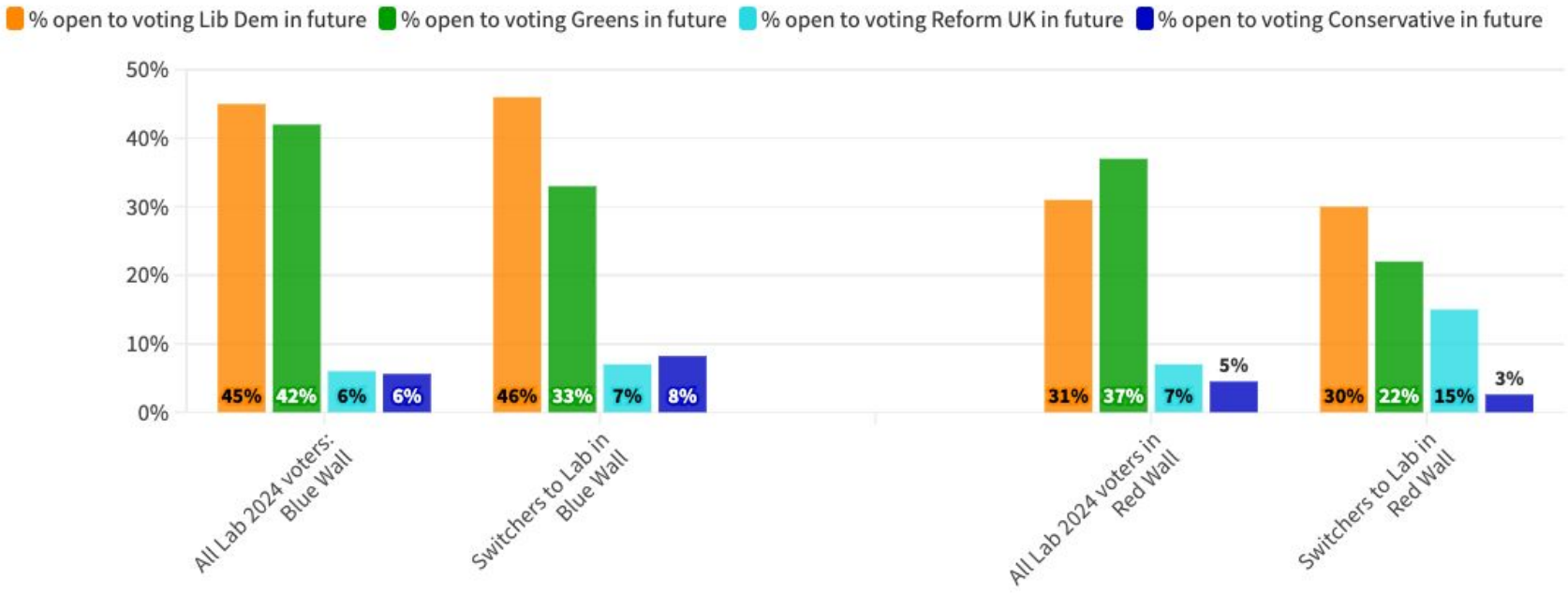
04

- Labour voters in the Blue Wall are much more amenable to switching to the Lib Dems and Greens in future elections than their counterparts in the Red Wall. Keeping the ‘progressive’ vote together in these seats will be crucial to both the Lib Dems and Labour.

- Switchers to Labour in these seats are also slightly more socially socially liberal than in other battlegrounds. ‘Bread and butter’ economic issues more clearly unite the Labour coalition.

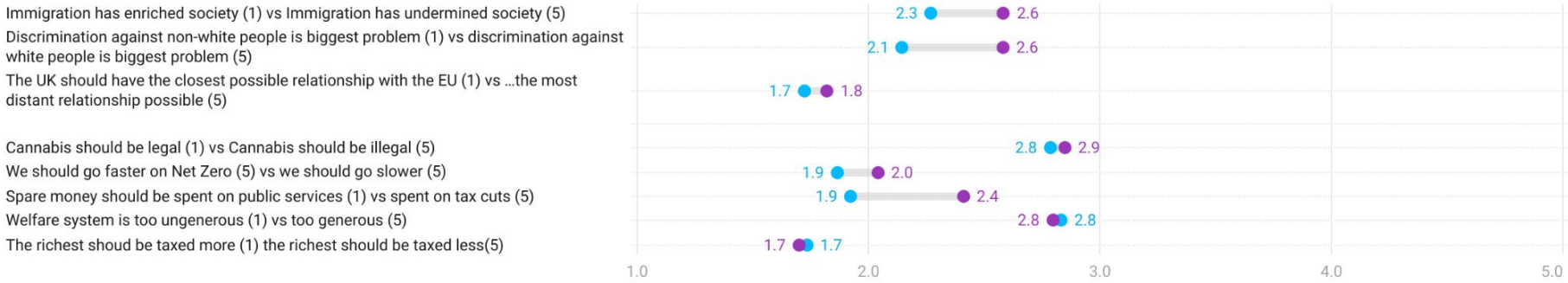
Labour voters in the Blue Wall are particularly open to voting Lib Dem or Green in future elections. Reform UK are appealing to a much smaller slice of the Labour vote.

"Thinking beyond this election, how willing might you be to vote for these parties in future general elections? (let's imagine the next general election is in 2028)"



Question was a 1-10 scale; graph shows % of target voters placing themselves as >5/10 willing for each party.
Persuasion UK/YouGov 3000 Blue Wall voters, 1200 Red Wall voters June 2024. 'Switcher' = someone who did not vote Labour in 2019 but is now indicating they will at 2024 election.

Switchers to Labour in the Red Wall tend to be slightly more socially conservative than switchers to Labour in the Blue Wall on immigration and race, but they are more united on left-right issues



Persuasion UK/YouGov, June 2024 3000 Blue Wall voters, 1200 Red Wall voters.

Thank you!

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