MOBILISING BRITAIN'S PROGRESSIVE MAJORITY

A Strategy to Change Politics to Transform Our Country

Compass

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About Compass Compass is the pressure group for a Good Society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements to help make systemic change happen. Our strategic focus is to understand, build, support, and accelerate new forms of democratic practice and collaborative action that are taking place in civil society and the economy, and to link those with state reforms and policy. The meeting point of emerging horizontal participation and vertical resource and policy we call 45 Degree Change.

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Executive Summary

This paper defines and sets out approaches to working as a 'Progressive Majority' in British politics.

We define the 'Progressive Majority' as voters who support Britain's historically 'progressive' parties: Labour, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, SNP, and Plaid Cymru. This amounts to a majority of votes in every General Election since 1979 (bar 2015). **Using polling by Survation commissioned for this paper, this amounts to 55% of adults who intend to vote for a progressive party or rate their likelihood of ever voting for one at 7 out of 10 or higher.**

We define a 'progressive tragedy' as any constituency where there are more votes cast for Labour, Lib Dem, Green, the SNP, or Plaid, but where the Right win. At the next general election, using Survation Nov 2026 MRP polling, there are projected to be **174 seats that are progressive tragedies**. Reform would win 122 of these, the Conservatives 52. In England alone, 165 of 543 seats (30%) are projected to be progressive tragedies.

On the current MRP, 204 of the 631 seats in Great Britain are within 5 points, and 102 are at a 2.5-point threshold. We define these as 'hypermarginal'.

Of the seats where Labour is projected to win, even after recovering their polling lead under Burnham, 53 are projected to be hypermarginal. Where Reform are projected to win, 89 are hypermarginal.

This paper develops categories or characters of the 543 English constituencies in order to recommend tactics for progressive parties and voters at the next general election. These are designed to help Compass members, party strategists, and all those part of the progressive majority in this country to effectively organise. This paper both recommends electoral and political/policy tactics. We both recommend how to win, and what the policy programme is to unify this project.

New polling for this paper indicates Labour is the only progressive party to lead Reform in a hypothetical head-to-head contest, by 38% to 32%. The Liberal Democrats trail Reform by 30% to 33%, while the Greens trail by 27% to 34%. **There is clear evidence that Green and Liberal Democrat voters are prepared to lend Labour their votes in that kind of two-horse race.** In the detailed party comparisons, 58% of Liberal Democrat and Green voters say they would back Labour against Reform. (Page 28)

But the flow of support is not equally strong in every direction. Only 42% of Labour voters would back the Greens against Reform, and 43% would back the Liberal Democrats. (Page 28)

Successful progressive cooperation cannot simply assume that tactical voting or vote lending will happen naturally. **Any project establishing one clear progressive challenger against Reform in a particular constituency needs to be actively and carefully built, with an understanding of where support already exists and where political trust still needs to be developed.**

Additionally, **Green and Liberal Democrat voters are substantially more willing to lend their support to Labour against Reform than Conservative voters are to lend theirs to Reform against Labour.** In a hypothetical Labour-Reform contest, **only a third of Conservative voters (33%) say they would back Reform, while 22% would**

back Labour. Reform voters are more willing to support the Conservatives: **47% say they would back the Conservatives against Labour.** The progressive bloc therefore has a potentially significant advantage in the transferability of votes. But it is an advantage that depends on political circumstances and cannot be taken for granted. (Page 30)

There is another important finding for our strategy. **Stopping Reform is not, for most voters, the overriding consideration when they cast their vote.** Among people who do not currently intend to vote Reform, 34% say that stopping Reform matters more than voting for the party they most agree with. Almost half (48%) say the opposite. Green voters are the exception: 58% put stopping Reform first. (Page 30)

This matters enormously for how progressives campaign. An electoral strategy built primarily around stopping Reform will appeal to a minority of voters. The majority want something to vote for, not simply something to vote against. **The task is therefore to make the positive case for what progressive parties can achieve together:** a politics of security, fairness, democratic renewal, sustainability, and stronger communities.

There is now no progressive party that can command and win a legitimate, effective mandate across all of the UK even if you manage to win an election. Different corners of the country now express progressive politics through different institutions and traditions. In Wales, Plaid Cymru has been cemented into the progressive landscape in ways that cannot be easily replaced by Labour; some polls now have Labour losing all their Westminster seats in Wales at the next general election. In Scotland, the SNP remains an enduring, successful party, despite significant setbacks. Across many urban centres in England, Green support has moved beyond protest into sustained electoral organisation capable of winning council seats and control. Liberal Democrats continue to dominate large parts of southern England through deeply embedded local campaigning even as they plateau nationally in the polls. There are a growing number of constituencies and demographics with a strong showing for candidates independent of political parties. In parts of the North East, North West, and large parts of London, Labour remains the dominant progressive voice and institution despite competition from their right and left.

The Progressive Majority is not the same in Melksham, Gateshead or Hackney. Our strategies should not be either. That is what we mean by progressive alliance now – a variable alliance.

If mobilised effectively, our polling finds that, even with current polling rates, **the progressive majority could gain nearly 300 more seats than the Right bloc.** And mobilised less effectively, would still lead a united right. (Page 38)

The paper then breaks down the country into four distinct areas of analysis to create different electoral strategies for. (Page 39)

- '**The Metros**' – 137 urban seats with improving relative wellbeing. These are urban communities moving upward in deprivation relative to the rest of the country, with a high graduate and younger population. Labour is the main progressive party here, with the Greens strongest in a handful of seats.

- '**The Shires**' - 135 rural seats with improving relative wellbeing. These are England's more affluent rural and semi-rural communities. Liberal Democrats are the progressive anchor here, though some are Labour seats with Conservative-to-Reform split the primary dynamic.

- '**The Towns**' - 103 urban seats with a worsening relative trajectory in wellbeing. These are urban communities experiencing relative decline in wellbeing and living standards, most of them Labour-held with Reform now the challenger.

- '**The Parishes**' - 167 rural seats with worsening relative trajectory in wellbeing. These are rural communities, often coastal and clustered in the North East and West, that are economically struggling relative to the rest of the country. They are the seats with the highest deprivation and poverty, and their primary political dynamic is Reform advancing through direct conversion from Labour voters.

The four territories ask for four different things of voters and our project to organise the progressive majority. In 'the Metros' it is discipline: 100 seats to hold, 23 cheap gains where Labour is already the challenger, and a clear line between the seats where Labour and the Greens can compete and those where they cannot. In 'the Shires', it is information on polling and target lists from parties, because polling tells us the challenger differs from seat to seat and is often currently third. In 'the Towns' it is Labour's own offer, with Green and Liberal Democrat lending worth 15 or so seats at the margin. In 'the Parishes' it is all of these at once, and it is where most of the seats up for grabs are.

From this, the paper undertakes an in-depth discussion of these areas, how they can be effectively targeted by the progressive majority both in tactics and in policy. This supports polling showing the effectiveness of different policies in encouraging cross-party vote sharing. (Page 55)

The strongest winning combination is a shared, practical plan on the cost of living, presented as a way to form a government that can deliver change. Whichever progressive party was the candidate, that pairing increases voters' support of the deal by around 14 points compared with a strategy that offers nothing and gives no reason: from 48% to 62% with a Labour candidate, 43% to 57% with a Liberal Democrat and 40% to 54% with a Green.

Director's Note

UK politics is now highly volatile. At elections, our first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system disciplines voters to back their least bad option and, because that support is now fleeting, parties can gain a numerical majority that lacks any deeper moral mandate. And so things, as we saw after big wins in 2019 and 2024, descend back to governing chaos very quickly.

With no long-term, sustainable, and deep governing mandate for change this cycle of disappointment will continue until either things get so bad that extremism makes a majoritarian breakthrough or we change the system.

This report offers a roadmap for what we know to be a latent progressive majority within Britain; not just to win a numerical majority of seats in the House of Commons, but to mobilise a majority in the country, and wider countervailing ideas and forces, so that our government has a positive mandate to change our country for good.

As the UK party system transforms from two parties to two blocs, progressives can either fight to the death within their bloc or find appropriate ways to work together to mobilise this progressive majority. Not least in the face of a very real threat to 'Unite the Right'.

Two things are happening, not just in British politics but worldwide.

Firstly, we are in a more complex society in terms of identities, views and issues. At its most basic, that is making politics more difficult. Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety tells us that any complex entity needs to be governed by an entity equally as complex as it. We've gone from a two-class, two-party system with access to two television channels, to a dispersed, fragmented, fluid politics and a 24/7 news cycle and feeds that are constantly being thrust from our pockets into our brains. But we don't just receive; we transmit. We share our own voices and views and, in the process, have become much more opinionated and much less deferential. As ever culture eats strategy for breakfast. Our political strategy is run by years-long election cycles, and our political culture is run by 10-second video clips.

Secondly, but linked, is that the old, adversarial, short-term, centralised system clings on - and in doing so inevitably disappoints and pushes people to new political homes. The old world and the new world collide at election times as people in the UK feel the coercive power of the FPTP voting system. As a result, they vote for the least bad option. This can create big majorities in the Commons like 2019 and spectacularly in 2024, but these largely negative mandates deny the basis for strong government. As soon as difficult issues appear - COVID, spiralling living costs, social security, immigration - support for the governing party melts away no matter how big its numerical majority is.

The days in which one single party can command a national consensus, like Labour did after 1945 and the Tories did after 1979, look gone.

Today, because Labour refuses to work with other progressive parties, they can only win these occasional fragile majorities by reassuring centre-right voters that, in essence, they will change nothing. Labour has to be safe to small 'C' conservative voters to win. So despite the polycrisis they have neither the moral platform nor the electoral mandate to govern effectively and are bound to fail.
The Burnham bounce has changed the emphasis, giving Labour a better hope of

leading the progressive majority - but unless Labour can establish a position closer to 40% in the polls it's unlikely to be able to both win the votes and the mandate to be both in office and in power. All the time that Labour fails in office to deliver the big change people want it opens up more space for populism; and so the doom loop continues. We might temporarily defeat Reform but not the causes of Reform. UK politics has never been more volatile. No one can predict what the polls are going to look like in two months let alone two years.

No one knows if the tactical vote discipline of progressives in recent by-elections will be replicated in a general election.

No one knows whether people will vote with their heads or their hearts.

No one knows if the leaders or parties of today will be leading at the next general election.

No one knows whether the progressive bloc can work together or if the Right bloc can either. Given this uncertainty the best option is to remain agile, open and versatile. There is no harm and everything to gain from a shared progressive vision and policies coming to the fore alongside a shared concern about the impact of national populism. The future is there to be won, but the nettle needs to be grasped.

Introduction

When the variety or complexity of the environment exceeds the capacity of a system, the environment will dominate and ultimately destroy that system. - Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety

The arrival of Andy Burnham as Labour leader and Prime Minister offers the possibility of a new direction for progressive politics - an attempt to break with 40 years of neoliberal orthodoxy and rebuild an economy and state around different priorities. But the challenge facing Burnham is bigger than changing the direction of one political party or government. He inherits a political system whose foundations are shifting beneath it. The old certainties of two-party politics have broken down. The assumptions that shaped Westminster, political parties and election campaigns throughout much of the 20th century no longer hold. Voters are moving at scale and rapidly between parties, political loyalties are weakening, and electoral outcomes are increasingly difficult to predict. What was once a relatively stable contest between two dominant political traditions has become a fragmented, volatile and increasingly unpredictable five- or six- (in Scotland and Wales) party landscape; one that is evermore digitally, financially and ecologically connected to forces well beyond our national borders.

This presents a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Burnham's new premiership. The ambition to deliver transformative economic and social change requires political stability, a substantial public mandate and the ability to build lasting coalitions that can shape and deliver a new political paradigm over decades. Yet the political environment in which that ambition must be realised is characterised by precisely the opposite: short-termism, volatility, fragmentation, weakened loyalties and increasingly fragile electoral mandates. Burnham's challenge is therefore not simply to govern differently, but to learn how to lead and win through the breakdown of the political logic and systems that have shaped British politics for the past century. This more plural, agile political landscape defined by instability and volatility at every level - democratic, economic, cultural, geopolitical, ecological and technological - demands new institutions, new political cultures and new ways of governing.

For clarification, volatility and fragmentation here are related but not identical. By volatility we mean the change of political fortunes, swings of voters and leaders over time. Fragmentation is the distribution of those votes across multiple parties. The interaction between them causes a particular problem in the UK - a fragmented system in which support is consistently moving is particularly hard to govern through FPTP because even small changes in support disproportionately and dramatically change the balance of power.

Compass has long argued that the end of two-party politics was both inevitable and desirable. The challenges of the 21st century cannot be met by a political system built around the dominance of two parties, competing for power through centralised and adversarial approaches. But the breakdown of that system also presents a profound challenge. In a volatile and fragmented political landscape, our electoral system, FPTP, increasingly distorts the relationship between votes, representation and power. Governments now secure large parliamentary majorities on relatively small shares of the vote, without the breadth of public support or legitimacy needed to deliver lasting, transformative change.

We are also seeing the rise of a politics defined more by opposition than proposition.

Discontent, grievance and dissatisfaction have become the powerful forces in mobilising voters, particularly for the populist Right. But winning support against something has always been different than building a mandate for something. Progressive politics has struggled to articulate a sufficiently compelling alternative: one that not only describes what needs to change, but brings together the people, parties and movements capable of delivering it. The danger is that, in responding to the populist Right, progressives end up chasing or imitating the politics of their opponents rather than offering both a genuinely different vision and, given that means always shape ends, a different way of achieving it.

We are no longer standing on the '*Thin Ice*' we wrote about in 2024. We are beneath it, struggling to swim and keep our heads above water, let alone secure the foundations for a transformative politics.

In *Thin Ice*, we argued that Labour's 2024 electoral coalition was loosely cobbled together and very vulnerable to fragmentation. Furthermore, it won a mandate based largely on not being the Tories instead of being for something. We identified 202 constituencies in which the combined Conservative and Reform vote outweighed that of the winning progressive candidate, exposing the fragility of Labour's parliamentary majority and the potential consequences of a divided progressive vote. Since then, the political landscape has fractured further. The rise of Burnham creates an opportunity to respond to this new normal, but it does not resolve it. Throughout his time as Mayor of Greater Manchester, the now-Prime Minister consistently modelled a place-first politics based on broad cross-party coalition-building rather than top-down tribalism or factionalism. This enabled him to champion radical economic policies like a Universal Basic Income and introducing a Housing First model to the UK; advocating for deeper devolution for all English regions; and using the partial public ownership of buses to tell a broader story about who our economy and public services work for.

Whether that approach can successfully be translated into our national politics to support the scale of change he seeks to deliver, and the country wants, depends on whether he can find to turn volatility into governing solidity. Burnham might be trying to end 40-years of neoliberalism, but in order to even begin that mammoth undertaking, he has to find a way to lead and deliver big change in this turbulent new world.

In this sense, Burnham's premiership is both an opportunity and a test. It offers the possibility of a different kind of progressive leadership, but also brings into focus the central problem this paper seeks to address: **how can any progressive government build and sustain the mandate necessary to deliver transformative change in an era of profound political volatility?**

Our argument is that it can - but not alone. A latent progressive majority exists in Britain, but not as a ready-made electoral coalition to be corralled under one banner. It is spread across different parties, political traditions, identities and priorities. Many of the people who could form part of it do not identify with the same party, and may actively resist the idea of being brought under a single political banner. The task is not to erase those differences or demand uniformity, but to recognise shared interests (as well as shared opponents) and build the relationships, political purpose and electoral strategies through which they win together and not lose apart.

This requires change on two fronts. Long-term, the voting system needs to be

changed. Proportional representation is essential to creating a democracy that reflects the diversity of political opinion in modern Britain, produces more legitimate mandates and enables a more pluralist approach to governing. Without it, all the things that require change - from effective climate policy to action on inequality - remain out of reach. One of the innate elements of FPTP is that you can only "win" under FPTP by telling a few swing voters in a few swing seats that you won't do anything radical, however necessary it is. That is why we were thrilled by Burnham's announcement of a National Commission on Electoral Reform and a manifesto commitment to a new system, and we will work with our colleagues across the movement and our members across the country to ensure that commission and commitment is honoured and implemented. However, the next general election will almost certainly be fought under FPTP, so progressives cannot afford to wait. We must develop the strategies to win the next election - that means the practical alliances, locally rooted electoral strategies and shared political programme necessary to win under the system we have alongside campaigning for the new system we need.

Secondly, we need to change how we do politics. This means building a pluralist political culture in which progressive leaders, parties, movements and voters recognise their shared interests and work together rather than competing destructively. To treat that project simply as a question of electoral arithmetic or tactical arrangements between political parties - or a vacuum into which individual and isolated tactical voting recommendations have to step - misses the opportunity of this moment. Tactical voting might deliver the outcome a candidate or party wants, but it papers over the cracks of the big changes the country wants and needs. It leaves those candidates and parties without the solid and deep positive mandate they need.

Instead, this is an opportunity to start a cultural shift away from hyperfactionalism and zero-sum competition towards a more pluralist understanding of progressive politics. That will mean all parties recognising that no single party can represent the entirety of the progressive electorate or the complexity and scale of the challenges we face, and that cooperation must extend beyond ballots into the business of governing. Crucially, it will also require a positive political proposition: a shared programme rooted in people's lives in the UK today, capable of improving living standards, rebuilding public services, making the wealthy pay their fair share, addressing climate chaos and renewing our democracy.

We begin by examining the scale and nature of political volatility, and why the interaction between fragmentation and FPTP is making effective government increasingly difficult. Chapter 2 then looks at the electoral evidence and new polling to establish the potential scale and composition of the progressive majority. From there, Chapters 3 and 4 explore the electoral arithmetic of progressive cooperation, the practical experience and strategies needed to make alliances work, and the shared political programme around which this progressive coalition could unite - to win office, to win change, and start building a good society.

The Problem: Volatility, Fragmentation and Mandates

The Problem

The 2024 General Election was the first UK election where four parties received more than 10% of the vote. Since early 2025, five parties have polled in double figures nationally, and six in Scotland and Wales. Alongside them, independent candidates have a growing parliamentary and voter base, particularly in some Muslim communities, while new (often far-right) political movements are translating online support into a new electoral base; the far-right Restore Britain secured 9% of the vote in the Greater Manchester Mayoral by-election, out-polling the Conservatives.

Labour and the Conservatives, which together and not very long ago dominated British politics, are increasingly competing with parties that draw on different political traditions, constituencies and sources of dissatisfaction. This pluralism is a reflection of more complex and less deferential political identities - accelerated by the failure of 'mainstream' politics to deliver meaningful change to people. This is not inherently a problem. Healthy democracies should allow political traditions and interests, whether they're ideological, demographic, or geographic, to organise themselves into parties capable of winning representation. Our greater political diversity could just be a reflection of a society whose identities, priorities, and demands have become more diverse and complex. This volatility could just be a headache for pollsters and pundits as they become increasingly unable to see round corners or predict the next move of their swing-o-meters. But instead, the complexity and diversity is making our politics spin out, churning through leaders, and making strong mandates - and therefore the change voters are demanding - impossible.

The problem is that as British politics has become more plural our political institutions, parties, Westminster, and FPTP system have failed to keep up. FPTP is built around the principle of single-member constituencies, in which the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of whether they secure a majority. FPTP is designed to translate competition between two parties into stable, single-party governing majorities. It cannot accommodate sustained competition between five or more parties - it simply was not designed for that. It cannot magically transform a much more diverse and fragmented electorate into a strong single-party government, even when a single party is handed such a numerical majority by the coercive power of FPTP decision-making to back the least bad option. Now, it converts our political diversity into electoral incoherence with evermore chaotic election results, slimmer margins and, crucially, weaker mandates for shorter amounts of time.

Our system is now also creating a string of incoherent results that have fundamentally been unable to provide the stability and proper governance the country needs through the times of crisis we have been facing. Labour won a majority in the most disproportionate election ever with 63% of seats in Parliament on 34% of the vote in 2024 - down nearly 3 million votes from winning 40% of the vote but 149 fewer seats in 2017, while the Tories got only 2.3pp more of the vote but 75 more seats. The Conservatives' landslide victory in 2019 came on just 1.3pp increase of the vote share from their shock disaster result two years prior. Neither of these very large majorities enabled any sense of governing coherence. And there is a significant argument to make that UKIP only returning 1 MP off 12.6% of the vote in 2015 is one of the direct reasons that Reform have a legitimate chance of winning the next general election now.

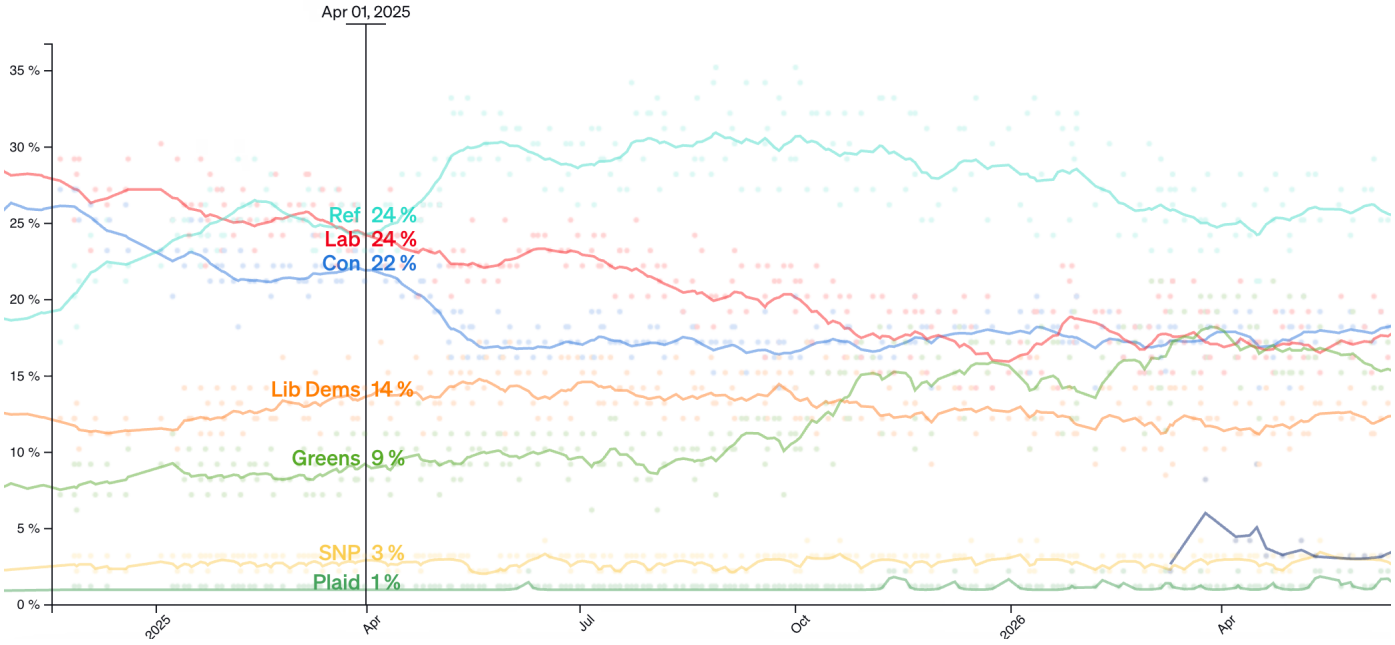
In May 2019, the European Parliament elections saw the Tories win a tiny 8.8% of the vote. Nigel Farage's Brexit Party won 30% and became the largest single national party in the European Parliament. A little over six months later, the Conservatives won a landslide built on seats captured from Labour, some of which they hadn't won in over a hundred years - such as Andy Burnham's former seat of Leigh - on a 12% swing. After this election, some commentators thought that the loss of the 'Red Wall' to the Conservatives prefigured a historic realignment of traditional working class voters away from Labour. It wasn't to be.

In 2024, Labour won back all but one of the Red Wall seats: Ashfield, where Lee Anderson retained his seat after defecting from the Conservatives to Reform. But Labour's vote share in these constituencies rose by just 3pp. Its total vote tally in the 34 Red Wall seats that it recaptured actually dropped overall. They won these seats because Labour were not the Tories, because Tory voters stayed at home and because Reform split the right bloc's vote.

In our November 2026 polling, these seats have once again changed the political fate of the country. Out of those 34 seats, Reform are projected to win 21 while Labour retain 13 - and perhaps more significantly, sees Labour's overall vote share drop by 9pp from the 2024 general election.

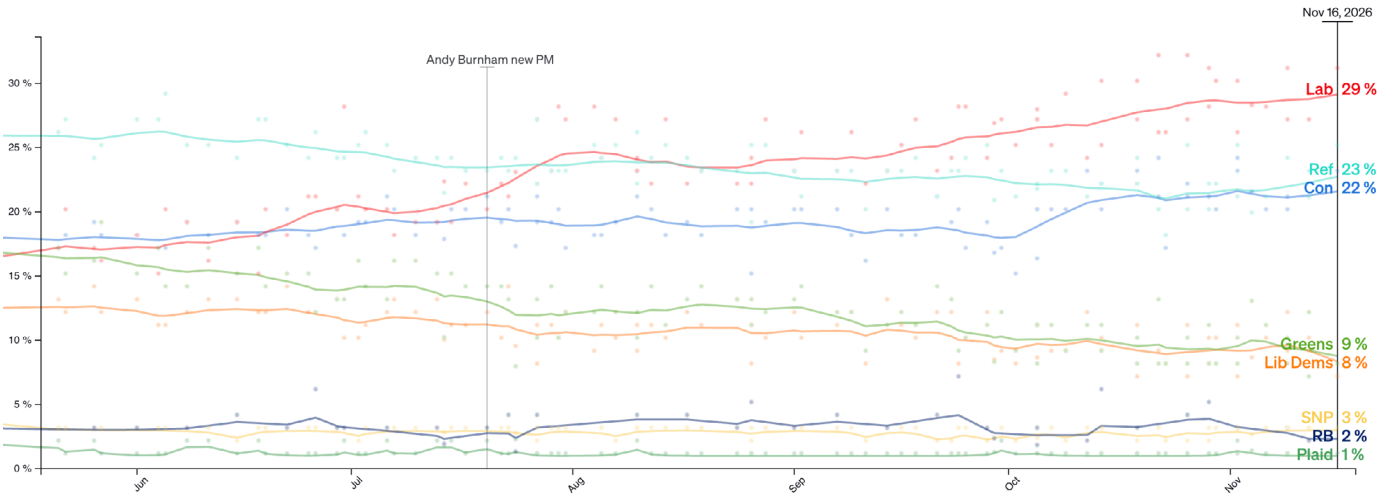
Between April 2025 and July 2026, Reform UK had been projected to be the largest party after the next election or even win majority control of Westminster in every poll (bar one) on a vote share between 21-32%.

Figure 1. Average poll results Apr 2025-Jul 2026 (POLITICO)



Then came the 'Burnham Bounce': a rise for the Labour Party in the polls with accompanying falls for the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats. Slight, but enough to make all the difference under the cliff-edge nature of FPTP. Seat projections in the time period of Reform's lead gave them as much as a 112 seat majority in Parliament - now they show that Labour, on this polling change and much the same vote share as Reform's high watermark of support, would be in line to run a minority or coalition government.

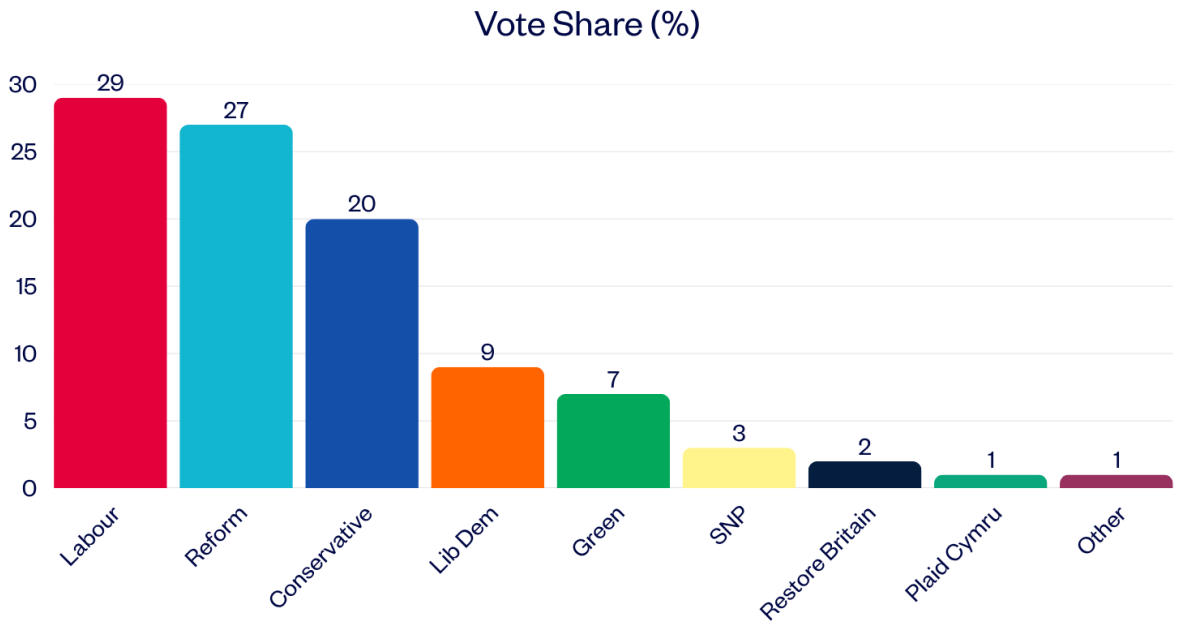
Figure 2. Current Average Polling (POLITICO)



Pausing here, the two biggest parties in Parliament, that together secured over 80% of seats at the last General Election, now only hold around 50% of the public support between them. Half of the vote is fractured across parties that have never solely run a national government.

Our polling shows a slightly more positive outlook for Labour now:

Figure 3. (Survation polling 30 Oct - 3 Nov 26)



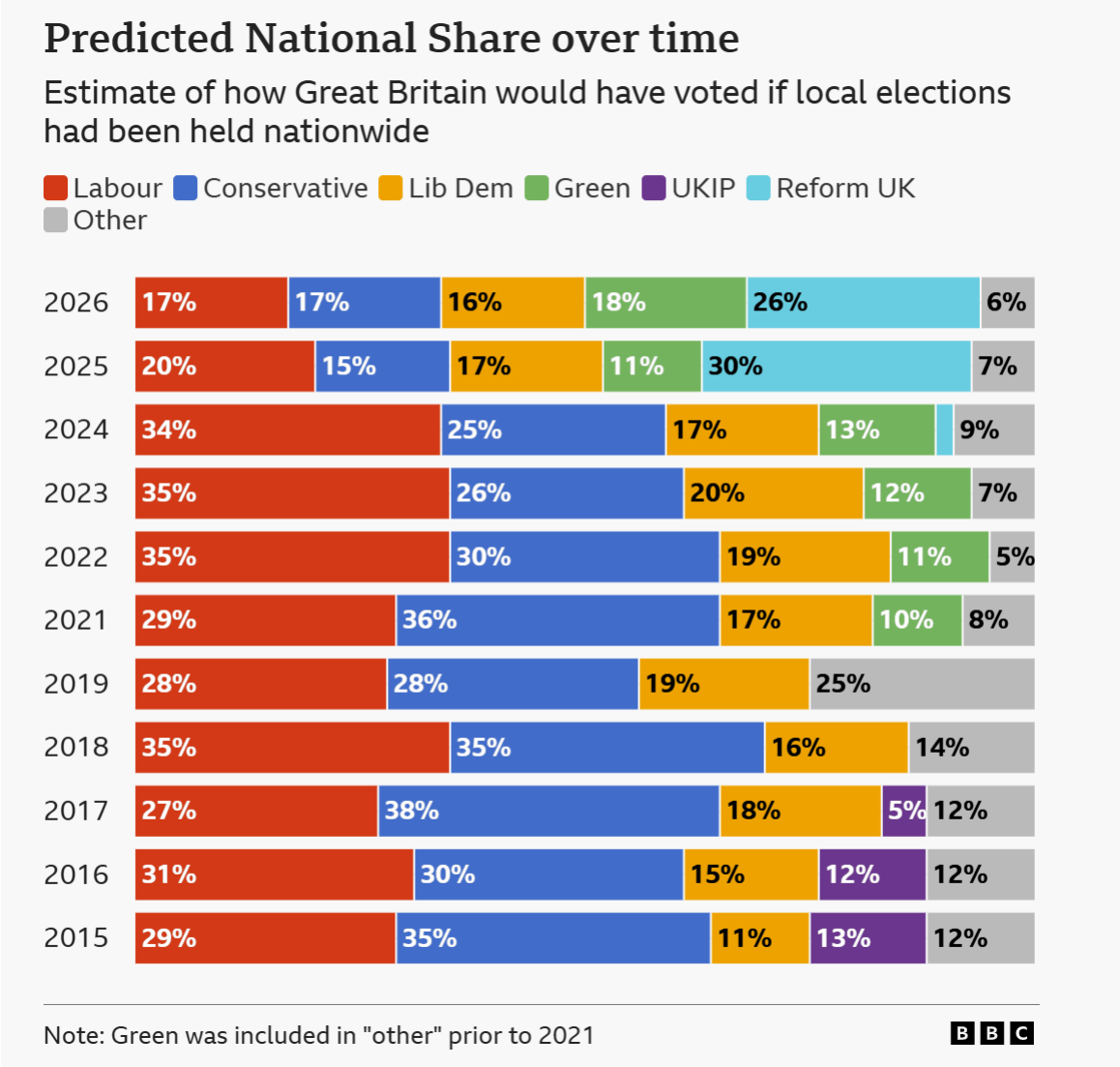
Overall, the point is the striking speed of these changes. The rise of Reform and the Greens, the emergence of Restore, the decline of the Conservatives, the fragmentation of Labour's 2024 coalition, the changing fortunes of the Liberal Democrats, new independents, the rise of nationalist parties - they all point to an electorate that is increasingly willing to reconsider its political allegiances.

Things Aren't How They Used to Be

British politics has experienced periods of significant electoral change before. The rise of Labour, the decline of the Liberals, the emergence of Thatcherism, the SDP blip, and the realignment around Brexit all transformed the political landscape. But the current period is distinctive in the speed, scale and breadth of electoral fragmentation.

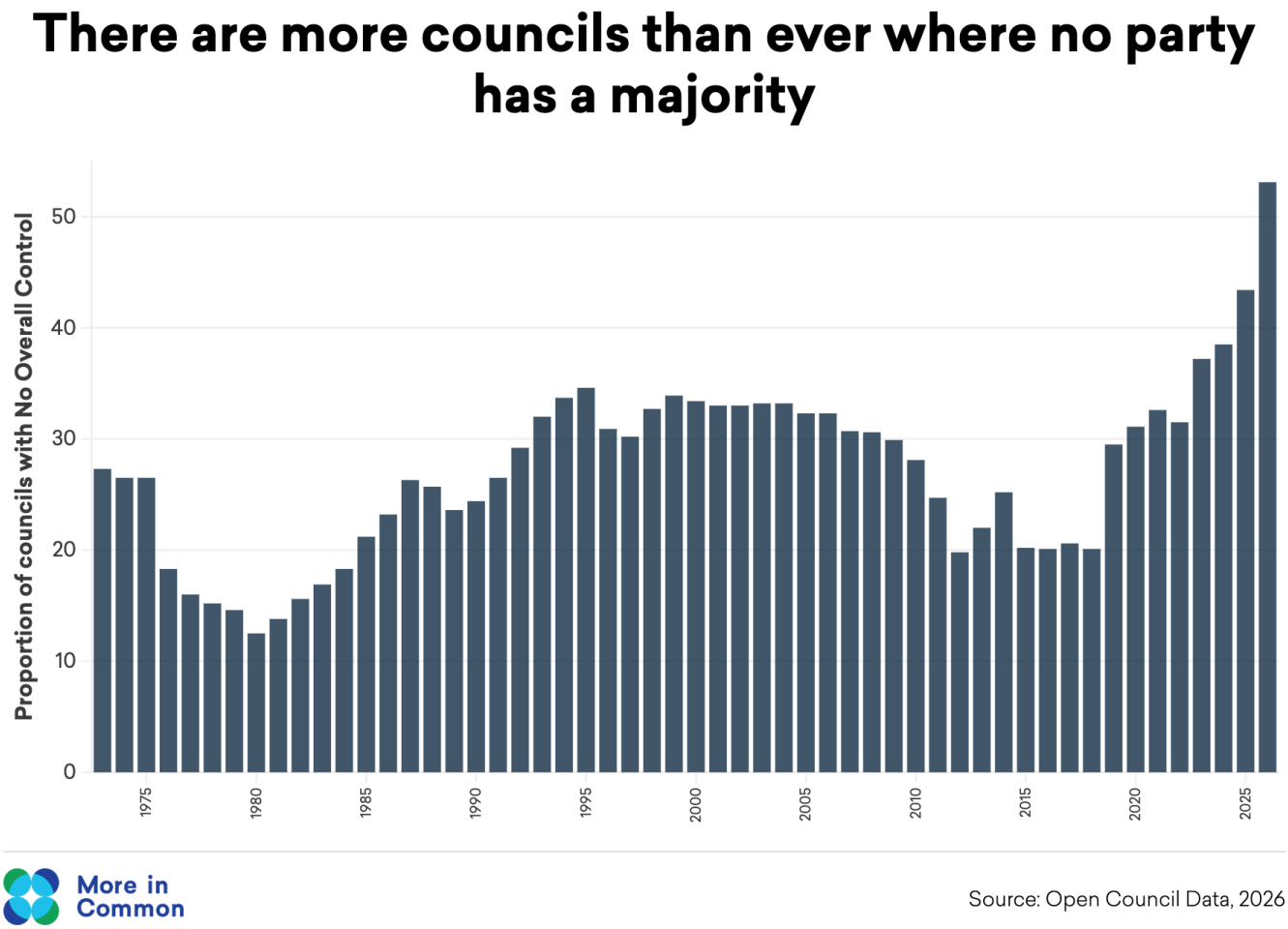
The evidence suggests that voters are not simply moving from one dominant party to another. They are dispersing across a much wider range of political options at speed, often retaining broadly similar political values while changing the party they support, bouncing back and forth as leaders and events shape the context. The 2026 Local Elections surfaced this fragmentation and the volatility. The combined national equivalent vote (NEV) share of Labour and the Conservatives, which stood at around 65% in 2022, had fallen to approximately 34% by 2026.

Figure 4. (Source: BBC News)



There are now more councils in Britain that are not governed by single-party majorities than ever before. They are now governed through coalitions, confidence-and-supply arrangements or minority administrations.

Figure 5. (Source: MoreinCommon)

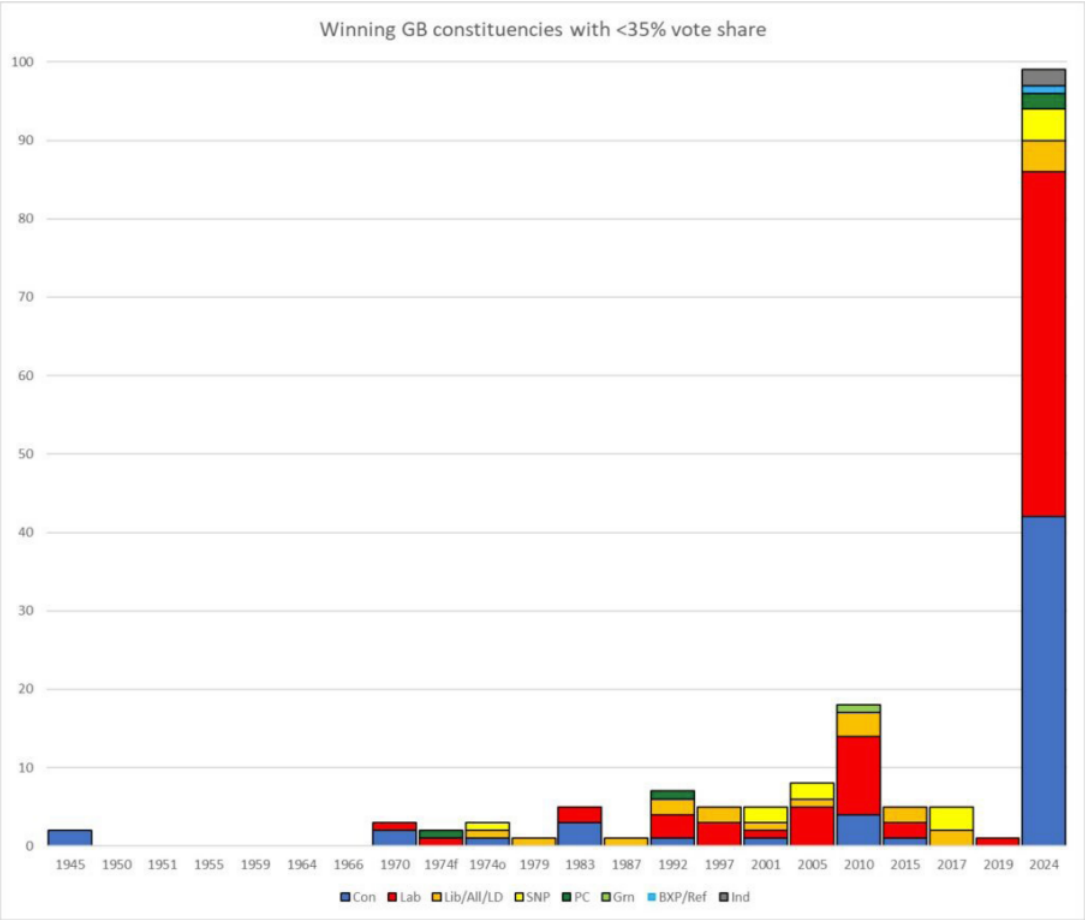


At the same time electoral competition has intensified dramatically. Candidate numbers in 2026 had increased by over 40% since these contests were last fought in 2022, with the average number of candidates per ward rising from 3.45 to almost 5. In 2021, around 65% of council seats were won with an outright majority of votes. By 2026 that figure had collapsed to just 16%.

Power is increasingly being won on barely 30% of the vote. In Manchester, Labour secured control with just 30.9% of votes, compared with 64% a decade earlier and 53.7% in 2024. Stockport Liberal Democrats increased their representation and won control despite winning a smaller share of the vote than in previous elections.

As we explored in Thin Ice, these “wobbly” mandates were common at the last General Election with a massive spike in seats won with under 35% of the vote.

Figure 6. (Source: PoliticalBetting.Com)



As political fragmentation deepens, FPTP no longer rewards broad public consent. Instead, it amplifies small changes in vote distribution into dramatically different outcomes. The greatest beneficiary of this fragmentation was Labour's 2024 election victory, where they received 63% of seats on 34% of the vote. Since then, however, the principal beneficiaries have been both Reform and the Green Party (although they draw support from almost entirely different electorates).

The 2026 Local Elections demonstrated that Reform is now competitive in every nation and region of Britain. The party swept through Labour's traditional industrial heartlands across northern England, dismantled Conservative dominance across parts of Essex and Kent, effectively shattered Labour's hold in the Welsh Valleys where the Conservatives never managed, and established itself among right-leaning Unionist voters in Scotland. They now undeniably represent the voter coalition of 'squeezed middle' voters across Great Britain. The spread of their respective vote shares won on 7th May 2026 by Labour and the Conservatives made them look increasingly like regional parties, concentrated in urban areas whereas Reform's vote share was the most geographically efficient in these results. But a series of disappointing performances in Westminster by-elections (Caerphilly, Gorton & Denton, Makerfield) shows that progressive voters will effectively combine to back the best-placed and most progressive candidate; Plaid, Green and Labour in those three by-elections respectively.

The Green Party has built an equally distinctive electoral coalition. The Greens are strongest in inner-urban, younger, graduate areas with high rates of private renting,

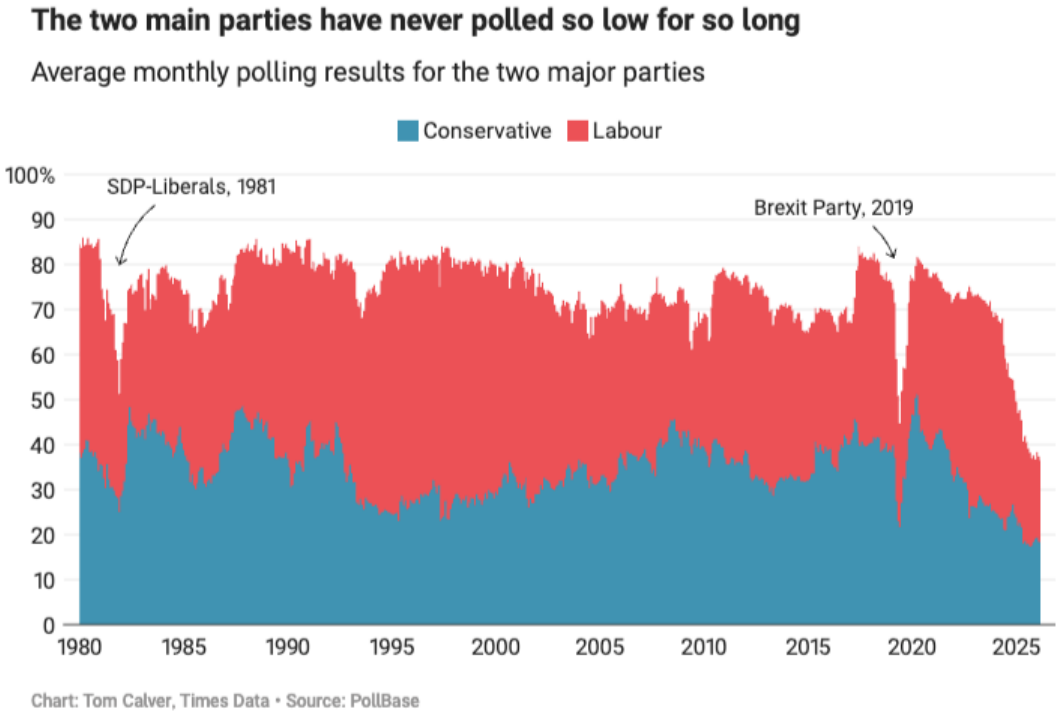
such as in Manchester, Hackney, Lewisham, Hastings, Norwich, Oxford and Sheffield. Crucially, the Green Party's biggest gains have come primarily, in local elections and in national polling, at the expense of Labour. The Greens have become the principal destination for progressive voters dissatisfied with Labour, particularly within metropolitan England. Plaid Cymru play a similar role in Wales, now leading the Senedd for the first time.

Taken together, Reform and the Greens represent opposite poles of Britain's fragmented squeezed middle: Reform drawing older, economically insecure and geographically dispersed voters; the Greens attracting younger, graduate, metropolitan voters.

There is a clear through-line between Reform and the Greens' growth in the polls and Labour's move to replace Keir Starmer as Prime Minister with Andy Burnham. At the time, Burnham was the only politician in the country with a positive approval rating and, importantly, the only Labour politician with something resembling a recognisable political project. In his time as Mayor of Greater Manchester, Burnham had come to represent something similar to what Reform and the Greens had nationally - a believer in doing things 'differently', with stronger devolution, a governance programme that intervenes to support people who are struggling, and willing to grasp the nettle of political and democratic reform. As an example of the volatility of British politics that has been discussed throughout this paper so far, this has seen Labour go from behind in the polls to 6 points ahead. This correlates with a 4 point drop for the Greens, a 2 point drop for Reform, and 1 point drop for the Lib Dems. Clearly voters are willing to move significantly and rapidly across the parties they deem acceptable when presented with an option they deem acceptable - this happened for the Greens when Zack Polanski became leader in October 2025 and has been replicated for Labour a year on. This is something we expand on with our polling in Chapter 5.

The historical comparison matters. In previous periods of political realignment, electoral change often resulted in the emergence of a new dominant political coalition, sometimes in a new party (Labour in the early 20th century) but often within one of the dominant parties (as in New Labour or Thatcherism). But today, the decline of the two historic governing parties has not produced a clear replacement.

Figure 7: Vote share won by the two main parties, on monthly opinion polls since 1980 (Source: The Times)



Ultimately this story is about the unmet demand for change and the growing power of opposition, frustration, anger and dissatisfaction as political forces. British voters have consistently voted for big change, albeit in different ways in different places, since 2016. Much of the electoral movement since 2016 can be understood as an expression of a sustained demand for a national reset - Brexit represented one expression of that demand, the 40% secured by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour in 2017 represented another, mobilising voters around a more radical economic and social programme. The Conservative victory in 2019, organised around the promise to 'Get Brexit Done' was another side of this coin, and Labour's landslide in 2024 was, in turn, largely a rejection of the Conservatives' handling of successive crises (and the effect of a split right-wing vote after those crises split the movement). The subsequent growth of Reform and the Greens are further expressions of dissatisfaction with the political status quo. Andy Burnham has been right to diagnose this as a symptom of 40 years of neoliberalism, residually worsening the economic circumstances of most voters and destroying trust in politics to provide solutions. Voters are consistently flitting between options that appear to be different to the status quo.

The multi-party fragmentation is a direct consequence of Britain's voters feeling unrepresented - 66% of people are governed by a party they didn't vote for, and 74% of votes cast in 2024 didn't make a difference to the make-up of parliament. Increasingly, the country is being governed by those a minority of people voted for.

This has created fertile ground for a politics of opposition, grievance and negativity. Populist movements have demonstrated an ability to mobilise dissatisfaction, identify political enemies and offer a clear account of what is wrong. They can bring together voters with otherwise diverse interests around a shared sense of frustration about why the existing system has failed, and sometimes who is responsible, but without a compelling explanation of what it needs replacing with.

The challenge for progressive politics is to articulate a compelling and feasible positive proposition and build a deep mandate for it. New parties or leaders alone can't solve this - we need new systems.

Even if future elections temporarily recreate a two-party contest - as happened under the slogans "Get Brexit Done" or "Get the Tories Out" - the underlying fragmentation and volatility remains. This can create huge majorities in Parliament like it has at the past two elections - but neither have been strong governments as evidenced by the churn through five Prime Ministers. Voters who came together to remove one government have not necessarily agreed on what the next government should do, leaving the country ungovernable. There is no strong or lasting mandate from voters temporarily holding their nose and governments gaining majorities on around 30% of the vote. The thin coalition breaks apart, and it breaks apart traumatically. Without a broad and durable mandate for something, governments run out of political road - building a stronger cage from every victory. The volatility will continue to re-emerge, placing growing strain on institutions built for a different era.

The way to break this doom-loop is twofold: structurally, by creating a system that can navigate volatility (the bedrock of which is proportional voting); and culturally by building a pluralist political culture in which progressive parties, movements and voters recognise their shared interests and navigate differences rather than competing destructively.

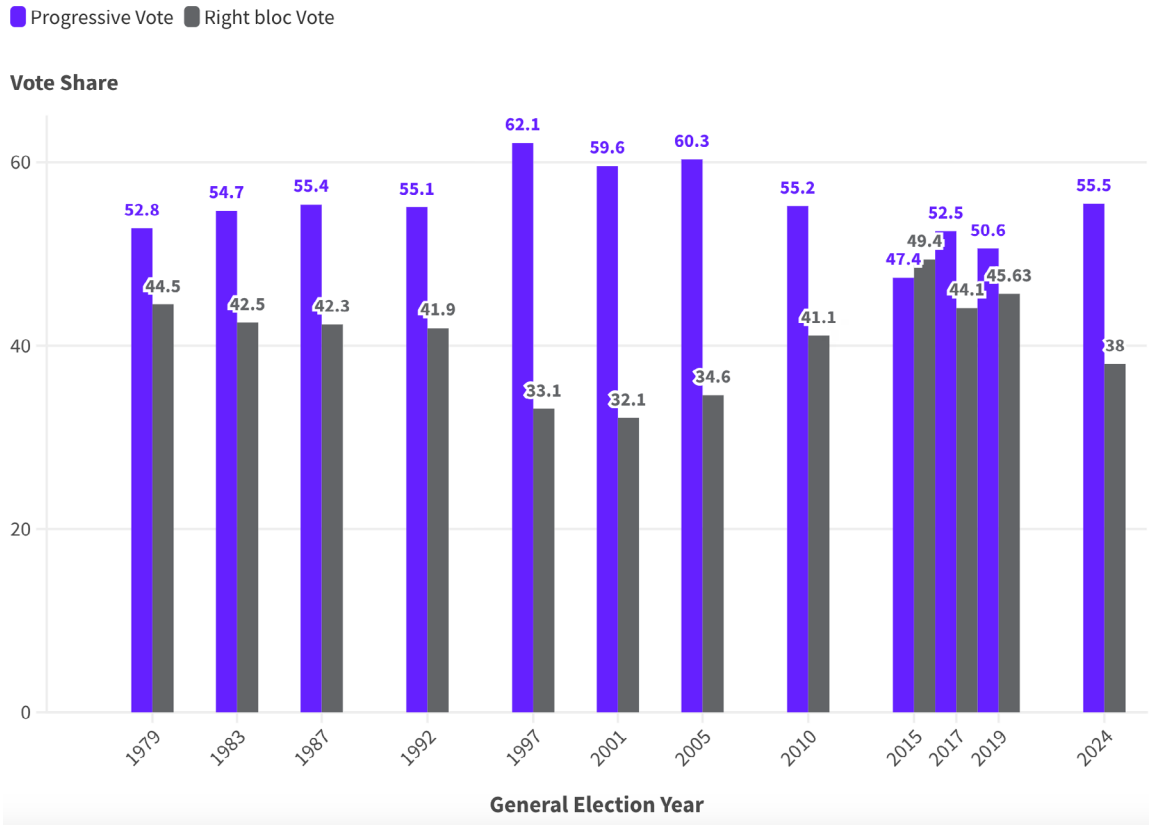
From Volatility to Viability

The first chapter established the fragmented and volatile terrain of British politics. Now, we turn to the obvious resulting question: given those conditions and the increasing reach of the populist Right, is there still a governing majority and plurality of voters available to progressives?

The answer is a qualified but optimistic, “yes”.

With the single exception of 2015, parties of the progressive bloc (Labour, Lib Dems, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru) have collectively won a majority of the popular vote at every General Election since 1979. Of those 12 elections, eight resulted in Conservative-led governments. Our analysis shows that progressives could have prevented all eight majority Conservative governments just by backing the best-placed progressive to defeat the Tories in their constituency. In six of these eight cases (excluding 2015 and 2019), progressives could have even secured a majority themselves. Despite the prolonged dominance of the Conservative Party, the average votes cast in favour of progressive parties in these 12 elections was 52%.

Figure 8. Bloc vote share, UK General Elections 1979-2024.

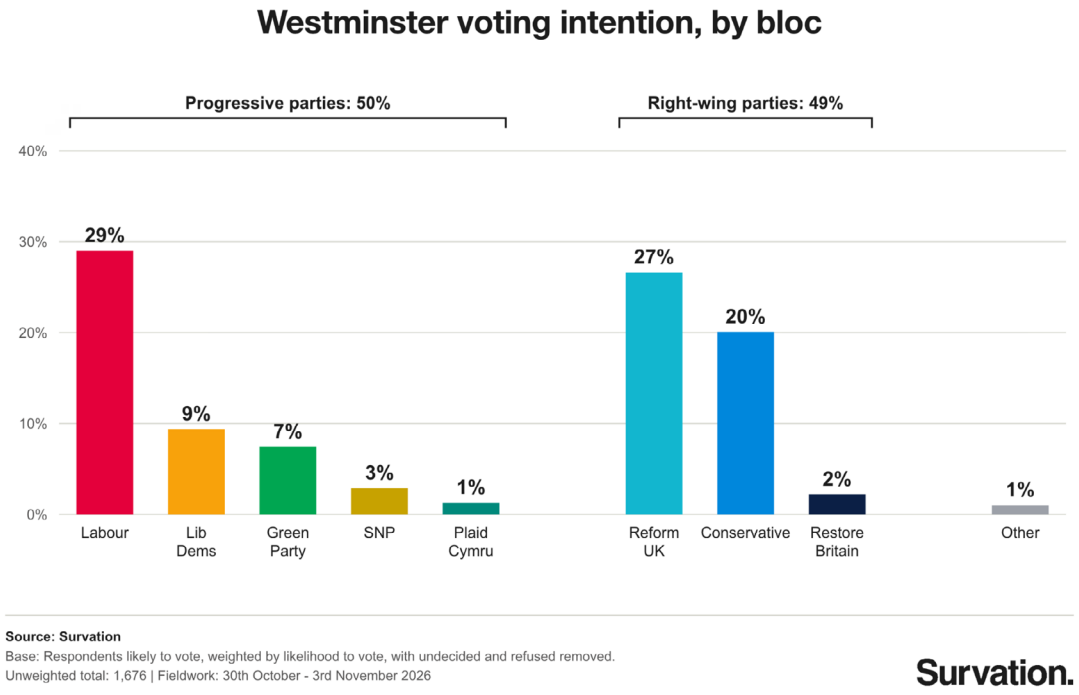


Yes, voters are complicated. No, they cannot be lumped together and racked up, taken for granted and pushed at the whim of national parties. They are complicated, often tactical rather than truthful, and motivated by a myriad of issues outside of specific candidates or manifestos. But strategically, and backed up by a common progressive programme for change, that progressive majority can be galvanised.

To infer how this would translate to a general election context, Compass commissioned Survation to poll 2,021 adults across Great Britain between 30 October and 3 November 2026.

The headline finding is that, on current voting intention, the two broad political blocs are almost level. Excluding undecided voters, Labour (29%), the Liberal Democrats (9%), the Greens (7%), the SNP (3%) and Plaid Cymru (1%) collectively take 50%. Reform UK (27%), the Conservatives (20%) and Restore Britain (2%) take 49%.

Figure 9. (Source: Survation, 30th October-3rd November 2026)

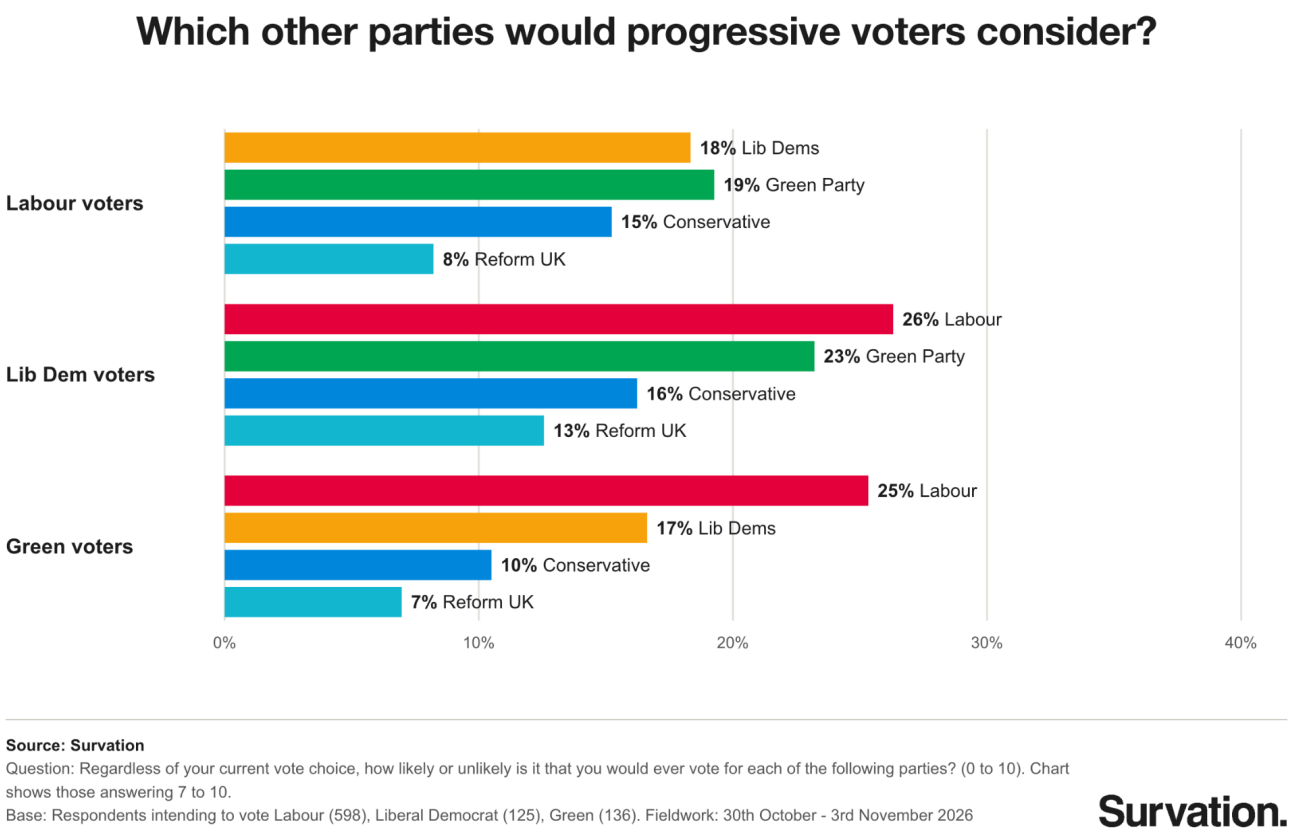


Note: The numbers in this chart are rounded - Right-wing bloc is broken down at 48.96% (rounded to 49%) whilst Progressive bloc is broken down at 50.01% (rounded to 50%). The Progressive bloc numbers in this headline chart add up to 49% due to the specific rounding down from Lib Dem (9.38%), Green (7.46%), and Plaid Cymru (1.28%) figures giving the bloc an extra overall percentage point.

But current voting intention only tells us where people are now, not where they might be persuaded to go. **Some 55% of adults either intend to vote for a progressive party or rate their likelihood of ever voting for one at 7 out of 10 or higher.** That is the reachable progressive majority - not votes in hand, but voters who are open to it.

The polling also suggests that the progressive bloc is open to this strategy - a quarter of Green voters (25%) and just over a quarter of Liberal Democrat voters (26%) rate their likelihood of voting Labour at 7 out of 10 or higher. Around 1 in 5 Labour voters say the same about the Greens (19%) and Liberal Democrats (18%). Second preferences across these voters also lean inside the bloc.

Figure 10.



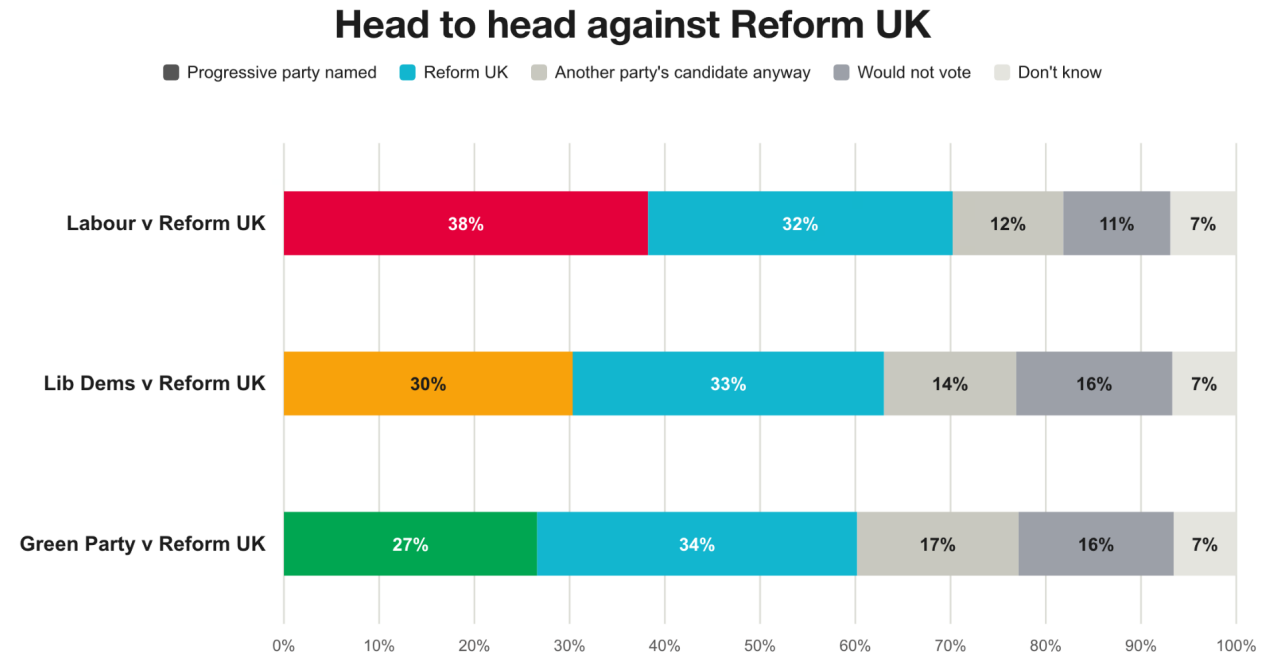
Source: Survation
Question: Regardless of your current vote choice, how likely or unlikely is it that you would ever vote for each of the following parties? (0 to 10). Chart shows those answering 7 to 10.
Base: Respondents intending to vote Labour (598), Liberal Democrat (125), Green (136). Fieldwork: 30th October - 3rd November 2026

Survation.

The sharper test is what happens when voters are asked to imagine a more restricted electoral choice. Respondents were asked to consider situations in which only two parties could realistically win in their constituency. The results reveal both the potential and the limitations of tactical progressive cooperation.

Labour is the only progressive party to lead Reform in a hypothetical straight contest, by 38% to 32%. The Liberal Democrats trail Reform by 30% to 33%, while the Greens trail by 27% to 34%. There is clear evidence that Green and Liberal Democrat voters are prepared to lend Labour their votes in that kind of two-horse race. In the detailed party comparisons, **58% of Liberal Democrat and Green voters say they would back Labour against Reform**. This is a significant strategic advantage. Labour can draw substantial support from elsewhere in the progressive bloc when the alternative is a Reform victory. But the flow of support is not equally strong in every direction. Only 42% of Labour voters would back the Greens against Reform, and 43% would back the Liberal Democrats. The figures are even more revealing when set against the proportion who would not support those parties. Around 46% of Labour voters would back a Green candidate as a tactical option against Reform, compared with 44% who would not. Among Liberal Democrat voters, 44% would back the Greens, while 47% would not.

Figure 11.



Source: Survation
Question: Imagine that at the next general election, the only two candidates with a realistic chance of winning in your constituency were from Reform UK and [party]. Which of the following would you be most likely to do?
Base: All respondents. Unweighted total: 2,021 | Fieldwork: 30th October - 3rd November 2026

Survation.

The Greens, in other words, cannot yet assume that the wider progressive bloc will automatically rally behind them as the best-placed challenger. Liberal Democrats fare somewhat better: 54% of the progressive bloc would back a Liberal Democrat against Reform, compared with 37% who would not. Labour, however, has a much stronger position, with 71% of progressive voters willing to back it against Reform and 21% unwilling to do so.

The lesson is not that one party should lead everywhere against Reform. It is that the willingness to cooperate varies considerably according to the party, the voters involved and the electoral circumstances. Successful progressive cooperation cannot simply assume that tactical voting or vote lending will happen naturally. **Any project establishing one clear progressive challenger against Reform in a particular constituency needs to be actively and carefully built, with an understanding of where support already exists and where political trust still needs to be developed**.

There are also important regional differences. In Scotland and Wales, the SNP and Plaid Cymru respectively have broad appeal among the progressive majority, with 62% and 61% identifying some willingness to vote for them. Plaid Cymru is interesting in this respect - in a hypothetical straight contest between Plaid and Reform, 51% of Conservative voters say they would be willing to back Plaid, compared with 40% who would not. Plaid Cymru are the only progressive party that more Conservative voters would be willing to vote for than not in a head-to-head between them and Reform.

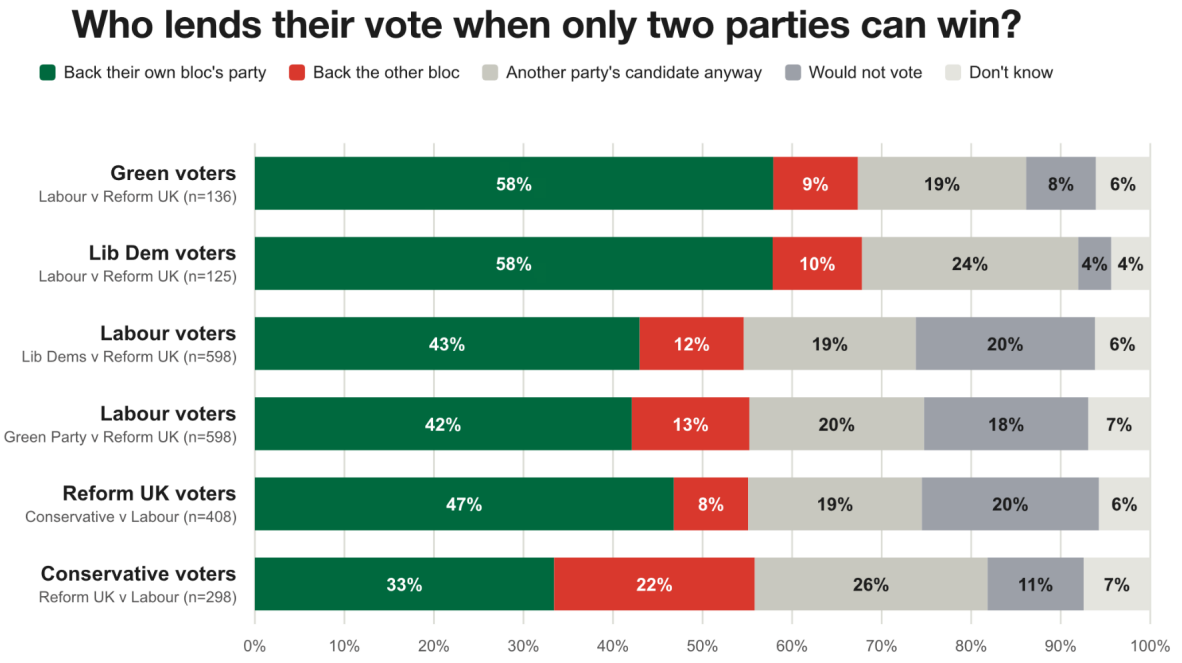
This points to a political geography that cannot be understood through a single national electoral calculation. Parties rooted in particular nations and regions with local leaders can command forms of support that are difficult to reproduce or mimic. **The progressive majority is not simply a pool of Labour voters waiting to be**

recovered. It is expressed through different political institutions and identities in different parts of the country.

The good news for progressives is that the Right's voters are no more united. **In a hypothetical Labour-Reform contest, only a third of Conservative voters (33%) say they would back Reform, while 22% would back Labour. Reform voters are more willing to support the Conservatives: 47% say they would back the Conservatives against Labour.**

This is an important distinction. **Green and Liberal Democrat voters are substantially more willing to lend their support to Labour against Reform than Conservative voters are to lend theirs to Reform against Labour**. The progressive bloc therefore has a potentially significant advantage in the transferability of votes. But it is an advantage that depends on political circumstances and cannot be taken for granted.

Figure 12.



Source: Survation
Question: Imagine that at the next general election, the only two candidates with a realistic chance of winning in your constituency were from [the two parties shown]. Which of the following would you be most likely to do?
Base: Respondents intending to vote for each party (unweighted n shown). Fieldwork: 30th October - 3rd November 2026

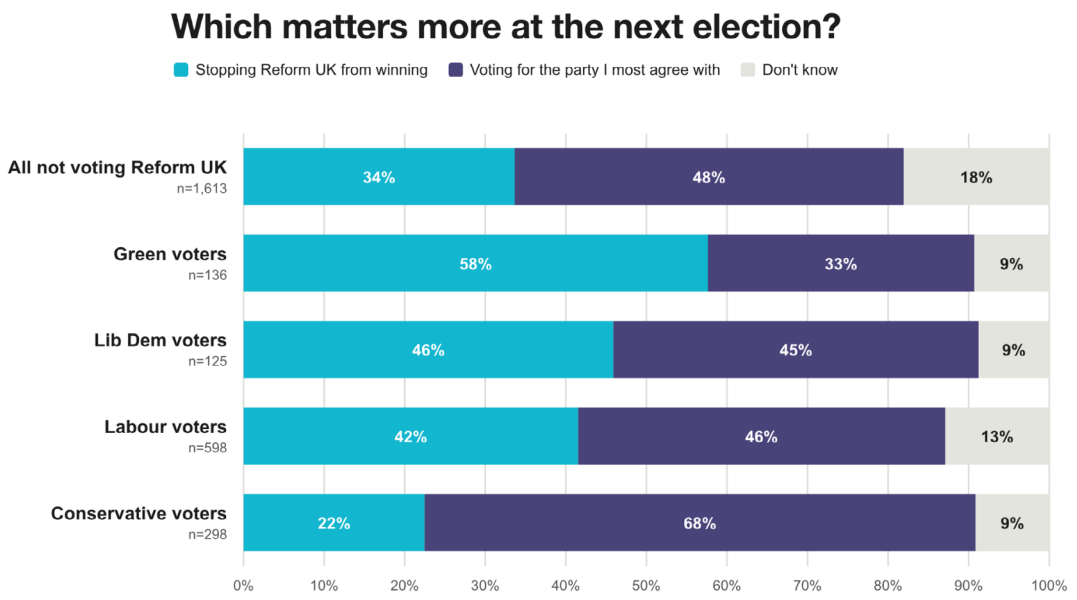
Survation.

These are responses to hypothetical questions, not actual vote transfers measured in constituencies. They cannot tell us precisely what will happen in a general election, or how voters will behave when confronted with real candidates, campaigns and local issues. **They do, however, show where the potential for cooperation exists**, where it is weaker and where political work is needed.

There is another important finding for our strategy. **Stopping Reform is not, for most voters, the overriding consideration when they cast their vote.** Among people who do not currently intend to vote Reform, 34% say that stopping Reform matters more than voting for the party they most agree with. Almost half (48%) say the opposite. Green voters stand out here: 58% put stopping Reform first. But Liberal Democrat voters also weigh the two equally (46% stopping Reform vs. 45%

supporting their party), while for Labour voters the gap is only 4pp.

Figure 13.



Source: Survation
Question: Which of the following comes closest to your view? At the next general election, stopping Reform UK from winning is more important than voting for the party I most agree with / voting for the party I most agree with is more important than stopping Reform UK.
Base: Respondents not currently intending to vote Reform UK (unweighted n shown). Fieldwork: 30th October - 3rd November 2026

Survation.

This matters enormously for how progressives campaign. An electoral strategy built primarily around stopping Reform will appeal to a minority of voters. The majority want something to vote for, not simply something to vote against. **The task is therefore to make the positive case for what progressive parties can achieve together**: a politics of security, fairness, democratic renewal, sustainability, and stronger communities.

The polling reinforces the central argument that Britain still has a potential progressive majority, but it is distributed across different parties, traditions and political identities. There is considerable willingness to cooperate, particularly when the alternative is a Reform victory, but that willingness is uneven and conditional.

It also tells us something important about the nature of the electoral challenge. Labour is currently the party most capable of attracting support from across the progressive bloc in a direct contest with Reform. **But this does not mean that Labour can, or should, be expected to command the entire progressive vote or the natural challenger to Reform everywhere.**

Nor should we assume that the political fragmentation of the Right will continue to benefit progressives. The Right has already demonstrated its capacity to consolidate disparate voter bases around a shared political programme. In 2019, Boris Johnson consolidated a voting bloc around Brexit, rallying their core base and pulling together the residual UKIP vote with sections of Labour's base feeling economic and social dissatisfaction. It was not a coincidence that the Brexit Party, at the last minute, stood aside in 317 seats and helped deliver an 80-seat majority. Now, with the far-right Restore Britain turning their online presence into electoral success, the threat of a united Right would be a fundamentally destabilising one not just for progressives

but for Britain as a whole. The pressure from crypto-billionaires and private equity funders, as well as the right-wing media, to impose the strategy of uniting the right cannot be ignored. The £72 million from two investors is likely to be just a drop in a very persuasive ocean of funding that could bring the right together.

Progressives cannot afford to assume that their opponents will remain divided while they themselves struggle to cooperate.

The 2024 election offered a particular set of circumstances: Labour's landslide was secured through unprecedented party discipline, a deal with the Lib Dems to stand but make no effort some of in their non-target seats, effective tactical voting across the progressive bloc of voters against a tired, disorganised Conservative Party after 14 years in power, and unprecedented fragmentation of the right-wing vote. None of these factors should be assumed to exist in the same way at the next election. Labour will be fighting as an incumbent, a position that is increasingly difficult to win from (particularly for social democrats). The Right, with all its new divisions, is openly strategising to use alliances - as they did highly effectively in 2017 and 2019.

Given the fragmentation and the volatility (for who knows whose fortunes will be up and down) the task for progressives at the next election is not to rally behind one single party. It is twofold: **to continue building cooperation across the progressive majority and, as far as possible, to keep the right divided.**

Crucially, effective progressive strategies in the mid-2020s cannot mean asking everyone to unite behind a single party or leader, to make personal or party sacrifices but get little back. One of the enduring habits of Westminster politicians is to treat electoral fragmentation and ruptures as a temporary disruption, awaiting the return of majority but now mythical, stable two-party politics. Much commentary and strategy still assumes that the route to a stable, progressive government is for Labour to recover sufficient support to dominate the centre-left once again. That misunderstands the nature of political change Britain has undergone and the new politics that the challenges of the 21st century demands of us and our leaders.

There is now no progressive party that can command and win a legitimate, effective mandate across all of the UK even if you manage to win an election. Different corners of the country now express progressive politics through different institutions and traditions. In Wales, Plaid Cymru has been cemented into the progressive landscape in ways that cannot be easily replaced by Labour; some polls now have Labour losing all their Westminster seats in Wales at the next general election. In Scotland, the SNP remains an enduring, successful party, despite significant setbacks. Across many urban centres in England, Green support has moved beyond protest into sustained electoral organisation capable of winning council seats and control. Liberal Democrats continue to dominate large parts of southern England through deeply embedded local campaigning even as they plateau nationally in the polls. There are a growing number of constituencies and demographics with a strong showing for candidates independent of political parties. In parts of the North East, North West, and large parts of London, Labour remains the dominant progressive voice and institution despite competition from their right and left.

And with Labour's standing as the incumbent government, FPTP incentivises them to fight all of these different battles in different parts of the country whilst trying

to maintain a unifying national message. It forces Labour vs. Greens for young graduates in inner city regions, vs. Reform in the 'Red Wall', vs. the Tories in traditional swing seats and vs. Plaid and the SNP in their nations. And, to put it mildly, there are no longer the circumstances for them to be successful in all of them.

These specific dynamics might change, but these are not temporary deviations from a Labour-centred norm. They are expressions of a more permanently plural political culture. As we saw at the 2026 Local Elections, and the lack so far of a decisive 'Burnham Bounce', we are now a country that is unlikely to rally behind a single party. As such, mobilising the progressive majority does not mean prescribing who should defeat the right everywhere. It means ensuring that the right is defeated everywhere possible by whichever progressive force is best placed to do that in that place. That means offering, supporting, and organising for a range of legitimate voting progressive options and opportunities to match the political fragmentation we are operating in.

The Progressive Majority is not the same in Melksham, Gateshead or Hackney. Our strategies should not be either. That is what we mean by progressive alliance now - a variable alliance.

To be clear, this is not a proposal to erase the political differences between these parties and places. Labour, the Greens, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, the SNP and many independent traditions disagree on significant questions of political philosophy, constitutional reform and economic strategy. The voters in Melksham, Gateshead, and Hackney would likely disagree on how we create a fair and just society. Those disagreements will remain.

But politics has never required ideological uniformity.

The challenge is to identify the areas where broad agreement already exists and create a project around them. Compass explored this argument in *Thin Ice*, and will pick up the details of this using more recent polling in Chapter 5. The point remains that the shared agenda remains consistent. Across different parties and different parts of the country there is broad support for taxing extreme wealth more fairly; bringing water back into public ownership; replacing FPTP with proportional representation; reforming the House of Lords; wholehearted commitment to tackling the climate crisis; ensuring our health and care services can perform to the best of their ability; and a broader programme to address Britain's prolonged cost of living crisis. The public is also demanding a sensible, humane, immigration policy that integrates education, industrial, and housing policy.

These are the commitments capable of galvanising voters and parties across the progressive wing, again and again in polling, and capable of forming the basis of a shared governing project - a shared way forward.

This view of multi-party politics and the way forward changes what electoral success looks like for progressives. Success cannot only be measured by vote share nationally. There is no party that has a monopoly on the progressive vote in every part of the country, and therefore no party that alone is capable of defeating Reform in every part of the country. We should not spend the next years arguing which party therefore is capable of that. The answer will vary.

In the next chapter we explore where the constituencies are where Labour will remain the only realistic progressive challenger, where the Liberal Democrats are the anchor, where Green advances are creating entirely new possibilities for progressives, where in Wales and Scotland Plaid and the SNP occupy political spaces that cannot be ignored nor replicated in England.

This will require cooperation and coordination, rather than uniformity and centralisation. As Compass has long argued for, we need a political culture that treats electoral diversity as a strategic strength, rather than an organisational failure.

The Mathematics of the Progressive Majority

At the 2024 General Election, the combined Labour, Lib Dem and Green vote alone exceeded the Right's by 4.1 million. This goes up to 5.1 million when adding in the nationalist parties of Scotland and Wales and the Social Democratic & Labour Party.

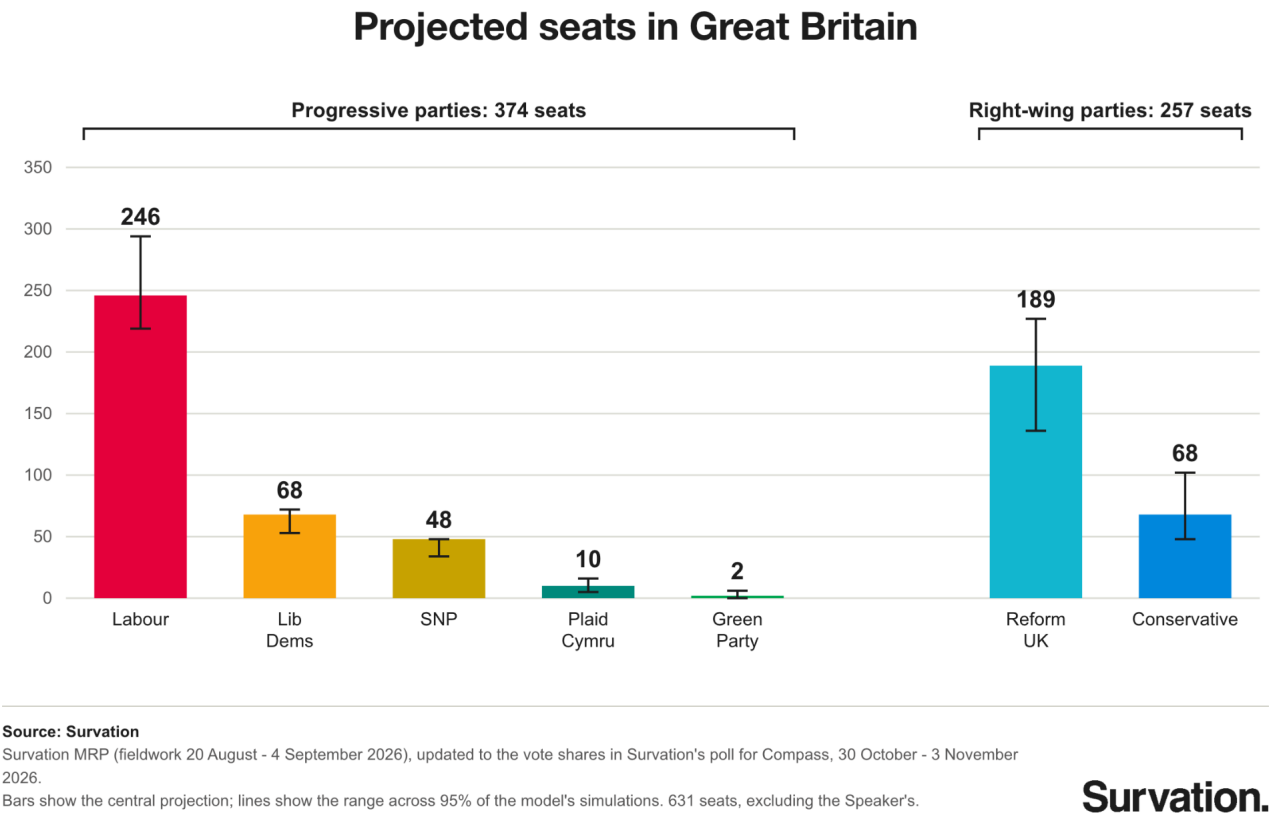
2026 has moved into uncharted waters by comparison. To see what the current vote means for seats, Survation took its most recent MRP model, which estimates the result in every constituency, and moved it to the national vote shares in our November poll. The seat numbers here are a guide to the shape of the result.

Table 1. Projected seats in Great Britain, November 2026 (Survation MRP)

Party	Projected Seats	Range
Labour	246	219-294
Reform	189	136-227
Liberal Democrats	68	53-72
Conservatives	68	48-102
SNP	48	34-48
Plaid Cymru	10	5-16
Green Party	2	0-6

Note: The range is where each party's total falls in 95% of the model's simulations.

Figure 14.



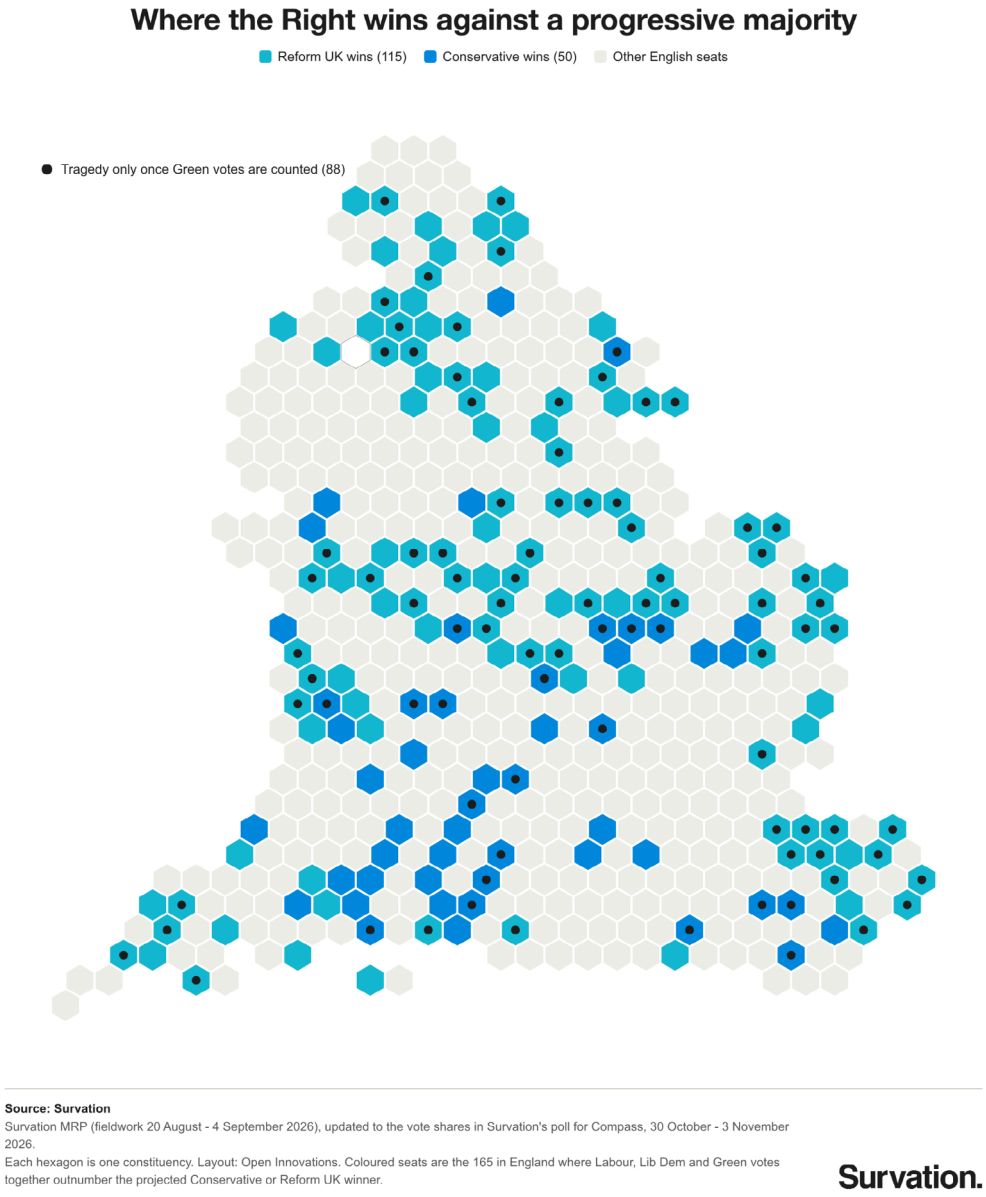
That puts the progressive parties on 374 seats (***range 336 to 413***) and the Right on 257 (***217 to 294***), with Labour the largest party but short of a majority. Labour, the

Liberal Democrats and the Greens have 316 combined seats – with the SNP & Plaid this moves to 374.

The progressive lead in seats rests on almost no lead in votes. Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens together are now around 0.3 million votes behind the Conservatives and Reform combined – the lead of more than 4 million they had in 2024 has gone. Only once the SNP and Plaid Cymru are added do progressives move ahead, by around 1 million votes.

But progressive tragedies have not gone away. In England, 165 of 543 seats (30%) are projected to be won by the Conservatives or Reform even though progressive voters together outnumber the right.

Figure 15.



Many are close: across the model's simulations the number ranges from 119 to 181. The seats are listed at the end of this report.
Whoever consolidates better wins bigger

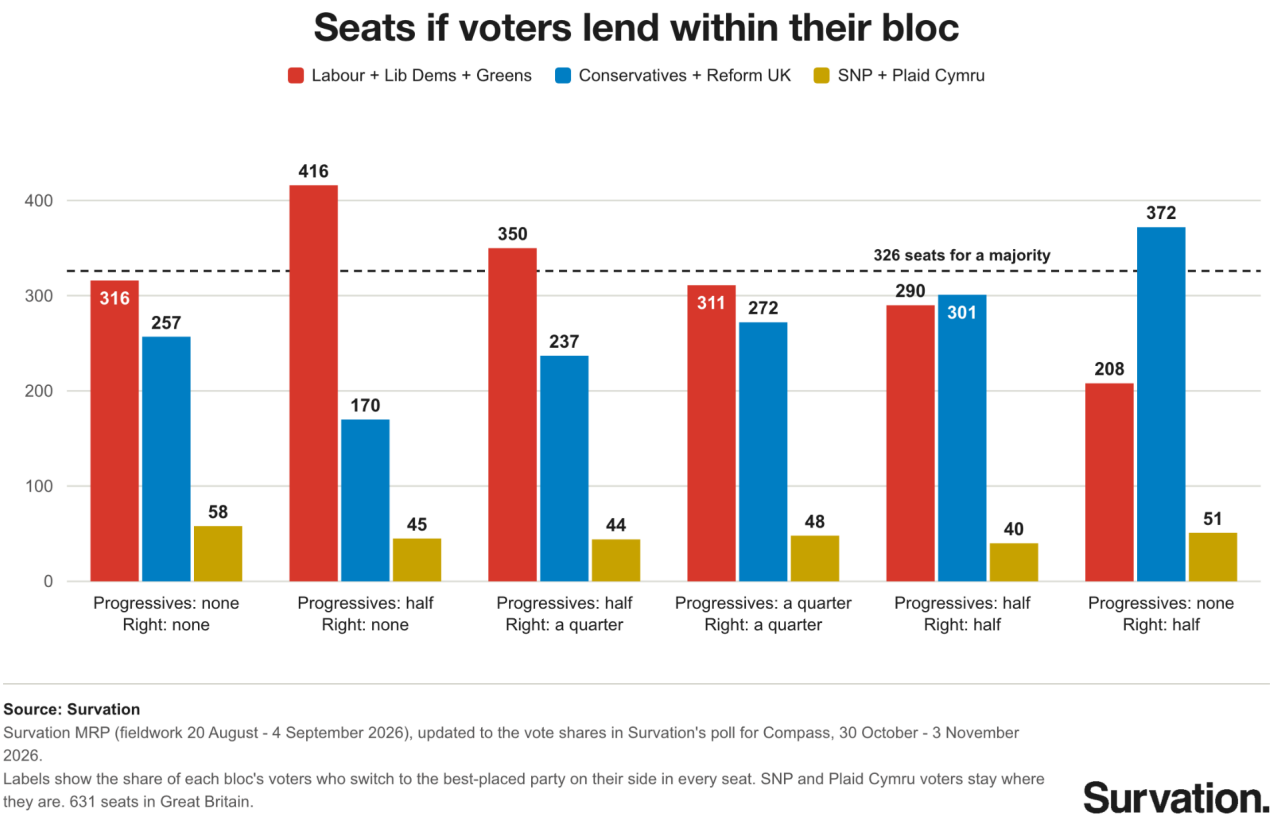
Because both blocs are split, the outcome turns on which side's voters are more

willing to lend their votes. Table 2 shows what happens if a share of each bloc's voters switch to the best-placed party to win the seat on their side: Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters to whichever of the three is strongest in the seat, and Conservative and Reform voters to the stronger of those two. SNP and Plaid Cymru voters stay where they are.

Table 2. Projected seats in Great Britain (631) under different rates of lending within each bloc

Progressive voters who lend	Right voters who lend	Lab + LD + Green	Con + Reform	SNP + Plaid	Progressive Majority
None	None	316	257	58	117
Half	None	416	170	45	291
A quarter	A quarter	350	237	44	157
Half	A quarter	311	272	48	87
Half	Half	290	301	40	29
None	Half	208	372	51	(-113)

Figure 16.



Source: Survation
Survation MRP (fieldwork 20 August - 4 September 2026), updated to the vote shares in Survation's poll for Compass, 30 October - 3 November 2026.
Labels show the share of each bloc's voters who switch to the best-placed party on their side in every seat. SNP and Plaid Cymru voters stay where they are. 631 seats in Great Britain.

Survation.

If progressive voters lend and right-wing voters don't, Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens win a clear majority between them. If the Right lends and progressives don't, the Right wins a clear majority. When both lend at the same rate then it begins to vary. At a quarter, progressives stay ahead. At a half, the Right becomes the larger

bloc (301 to 290) but is short of a majority, and the SNP and Plaid Cymru hold the balance. The only circumstance in which the Right win is where they cooperate and progressives don't.

Our polling does not give either side a settled advantage. Green and Lib Dem voters lend to Labour more readily than Conservatives lend to Reform, but Labour voters lend less readily than Reform voters do, and the table applies a single rate across every seat which does not map how real voters behave.

What it shows is how much turns on small changes in votes in small numbers of seats, the progressive majority's interbloc switching and tactical voting. In other words, this makes or breaks the path to the next progressive government.

In Scotland the model's central projection has the SNP winning 48 of 57 seats, though that is the top of its range (34 to 48). In Wales it has Labour on 16 seats, Plaid Cymru on 10 and Reform on 6, with wide ranges for all three. In head-to-head contests the SNP leads Reform by 39% to 28% in Scotland, and Plaid leads Reform by 37% to 23% in Wales. These rest on 174 Scottish and 106 Welsh respondents, so treat them as indicative.

Who Holds the Vote?

The rest of this chapter uses the Survation MRP model to break England down into four kinds of constituencies, each with a different progressive coalition and a different route to winning, to find a better understanding of the nature of the complex, versatile makeup of the electorate that the Progressive Majority will need to tap into. These four areas are:

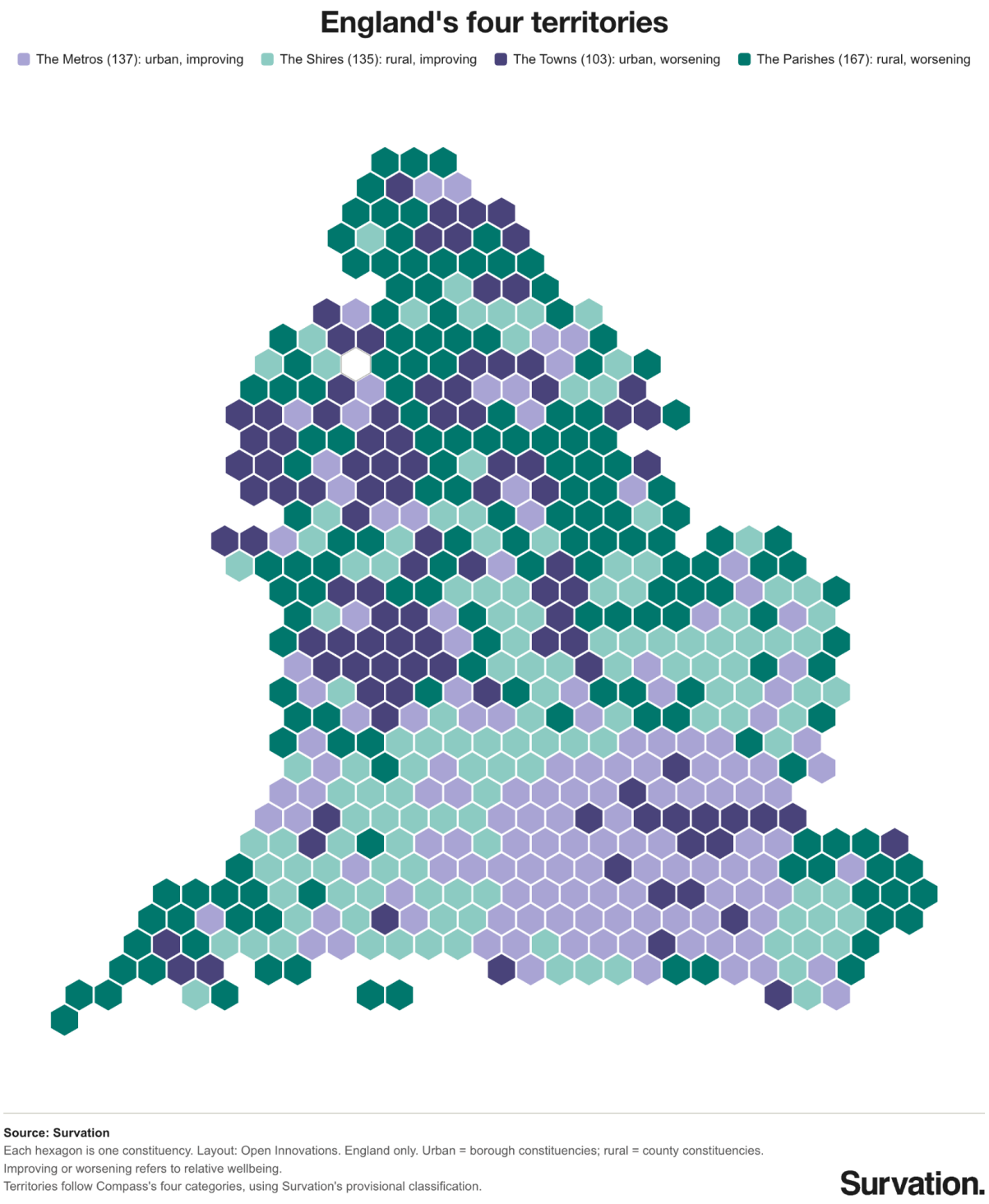
- '**The Metros**' – 137 urban seats with improving relative wellbeing. These are urban communities improving in wellbeing relative to the rest of the country, with a high graduate and younger population. Labour is the main progressive party here, with the Greens strongest in a handful of seats.

- '**The Shires**' – 135 rural seats with improving relative wellbeing. These are England's more affluent rural and semi-rural communities. Liberal Democrats are the progressive anchor here, though some are Labour seats with Conservative-to-Reform split the primary dynamic.

- '**The Towns**' – 103 urban seats with a worsening relative trajectory in wellbeing. These are urban communities experiencing relative decline in wellbeing and living standards, most of them Labour-held with Reform now the challenger.

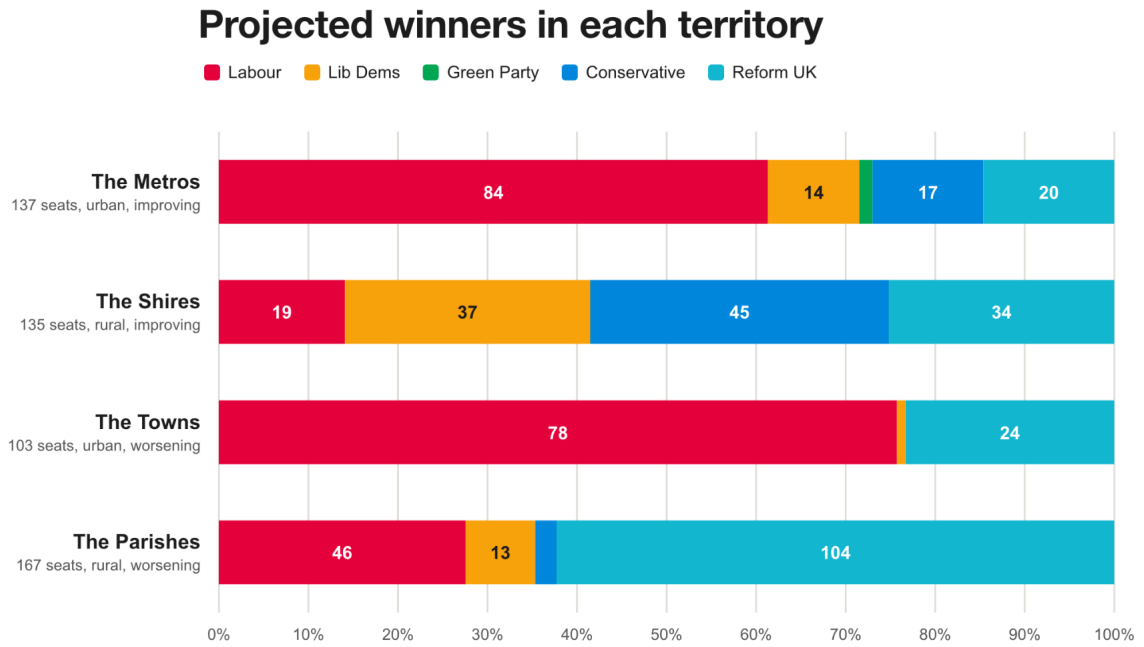
- '**The Parishes**' – 167 rural seats with worsening relative trajectory in wellbeing. These are rural communities, often coastal and clustered in the North East and West, that are economically struggling relative to the rest of the country. They are the seats with the highest deprivation and poverty, and their primary political dynamic is Reform advancing through direct conversion from Labour voters.

Figure 17.



Under current polling, here's how results for each type of seats breaks down:

Figure 18.



Source: Survation

Survation MRP (fieldwork 20 August - 4 September 2026), updated to the vote shares in Survation's poll for Compass, 30 October - 3 November 2026.

England, 542 seats. Labels are numbers of seats; bar length is the share of the territory. Territories follow Compass's four categories, using Survation's provisional classification.

Survation.

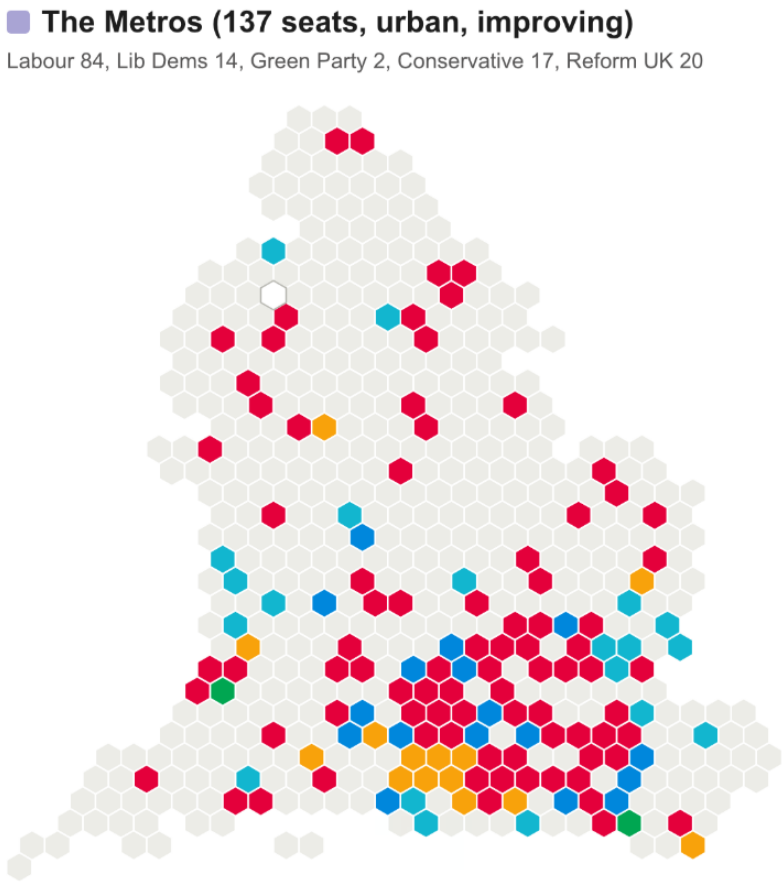
Table 3. Projected results by territory, England

Type of Seat	Total Seats	Progressive wins	Right wins	Progressive tragedies
The Metros	137	100 (Lab 84, LD 14, Grn 2)	37 (Ref 20, Con 17)	23
The Shires	135	56 (LD 37, Lab 19)	79 (Con 45, Ref 34)	58
The Towns	103	79 (Lab 78, LD 1)	24 (All Re-form)	18
The Parishes	167	59 (Lab 46, LD 13)	108 (Ref 104, Con 4)	66

The important aspect of these seats is understanding where constituencies of the progressive vote lay; what they consist of, how a united Right can exploit them, and where cross-party working should focus if the Progressive Majority is to be maximised.

The Metros

Figure 19.



These are the progressive heartlands and mostly defensive races. There are 137 seats in this category of seat, 59 of them in London. Progressives are projected to win 100: 84 Labour, 14 Liberal Democrat and 2 Green seats (Brighton Pavilion and Bristol Central). Every one of these 100 are won by the same party as in 2024, so there are no progressive gains here. Labour loses 19 of the 103 seats it won in 2024, 13 to Reform and 6 to the Conservatives. The movement in the Metros is the Right gaining on progressives or consolidating their vote.

In the 84 seats Labour is predicted to win its vote share is down 5 points on 2024 to 42%, Reform's has near-doubled from 11% to 21% and the Greens are up a point to 12%. Reform is now the runner-up in 48 seats and the Conservatives in 21. In another 14 the runner-up is the Greens, and those are the seats where Labour and the Greens can fight each other without risk to the progressive bloc, because the Right is nowhere near. The 15 Labour seats held by less than 5 points are a different matter. These are 'hypermarginal' seats, vulnerable and exposed to slight shifts in vote in any direction. Makerfield is the tightest, with Labour on 39.6% and Reform on 39.1%; Poole, and Leeds South West and Morley are close behind. The Liberal Democrats' 14 seats look safer - only Eastleigh is within 5 points - but their share is down 8 points, and Reform has gone from 10% to 19% in seats where it barely featured two years ago.

The exposure is to a united Right. In 48 of the 100 seats progressives are projected to win (41 of Labour's and 7 of the Liberal Democrats') Conservative and Reform votes together outnumber the winner. Of the 37 seats the Right wins, 20 go to Reform and 17 to the Conservatives. 23 of those 37 are progressive tragedies: 12 won by Reform and 11 by the Conservatives. These are some of the most avoidable progressive

tragedies in England. The winner averages 33% and Labour 29%, and the progressive vote exceeds the winner's by about 4,500 on average.

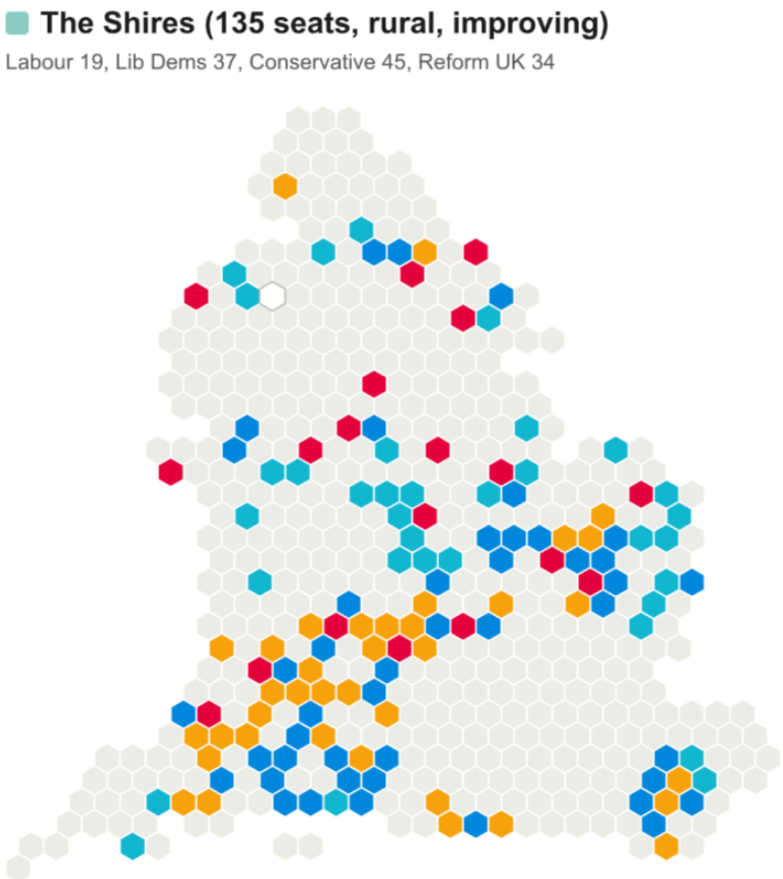
The two halves need different arguments. All 12 progressive tragedies Reform are projected to win are seats Labour won in 2024; Labour is down 9 points in them and Reform up 13. The 11 Conservative wins are split between 6 that Labour won in 2024 and 5 the Conservatives held, and in them the Conservative share has barely moved (34%) while Reform has risen 9 points to 22%. A Conservative win on a third of the vote depends on the Right staying split, and that cannot be assumed: in a straight Labour-Conservative contest 47% of Reform voters say they would vote Conservative.

On current polls, the other 14 seats in the Metros are beyond the reach of an attempt to coordinate the progressive bloc. 8 are Reform wins and 6 Conservative, more than half of them on the edge of London or in south Essex - Romford, Hornchurch and Upminster, Castle Point, Old Bexley and Sidcup, Orpington. The winner outpolls all three progressive parties together by 7 to 8 points.

For progressives, the Metros are largely about not losing. There are some seats to gain and many more could be lost, especially if there is a united right bloc. The work here is to agree where the risk of competition between Labour and the Greens does not risk a tragedy and help the Right, and to organise locally to understand what political offer and kind of candidates are needed to unite the progressive bloc and lend their votes to avoid tragedies.

The Shires

Figure 20.



The Shires are the Liberal Democrat anchor and the hardest place to make silent campaigning or lending work. These are the 135 less deprived county seats, concentrated in the South East (43) and the East of England (26). In 2024 the Conservatives won 65, the Liberal Democrats 37 and Labour 33. The current 2029 projection is Conservatives 45, Liberal Democrats 37, Reform 34 and Labour 19. In our polling, the Liberal Democrats hold everything they have. Labour loses 14 of the 33 seats it currently holds, 9 to Reform and 5 to the Conservatives. The Conservatives lose 25 seats to Reform.

In the Liberal Democrats' 37 seats their share is down 6 points to 38%, the Conservatives are down 6 to 24% and Reform has near-doubled to 21%. Four seats are held by under 5 points, Horsham by less than 1. Labour's 19 wins are thinner. Its share is down 6 points to 37%, Reform is second in 12, and Stroud, Aylesbury, and Congleton are each held by about a point.

In 2024 the Right's vote in these seats was mostly Conservative. Now it is split, and the split is what holds them for the Labour and Lib Dem incumbents. In 44 of the 56 progressive seats - 28 of the Liberal Democrats' 37 wins and 16 of Labour's 19 - Conservative and Reform votes together outnumber the winner. In a Conservative-Liberal Democrat contest 44% of Reform voters say they would vote Conservative and 11% Liberal Democrat. In other words, these seats are incredibly susceptible to any consolidation of the Conservative-Reform vote, which (if effectively united) could wipe up to 28 incumbent Lib Dems and 16 incumbent Labour MPs.

But the Right's 79 wins in the Shires are also fragile. In 46 of them the majority is under 5 points, and the winner averages a third of the vote. There are 58 progressive tragedies, 36 won by the Conservatives and 22 by Reform, but winning here would be a steeper hill to climb than the progressive tragedies in the Metros. The winner averages 32% and the best-placed progressive averages at 24%, the widest gap of the four territories. The lead progressive challengers in these progressive tragedies is Labour in 44 seats and the Liberal Democrats in 14, and in 33 of the 58 they finish third or lower, so voters cannot see at a glance who the challenger is. Half the seats need more than half of the other progressive voters to move to the progressive challenger. At the rates of vote switching in the progressive bloc in our poll 29 of the 58 could flip.

Lending has to run in both directions here and the two directions are not equal. Where Labour is the challenger the ask is of Liberal Democrat and Green voters, 58% of whom would back Labour against Reform. Where the Liberal Democrats are the challenger - 14 seats, 12 of them Conservative wins, including North Dorset, Farnham and Bordon, and East Hampshire - the ask is of Labour voters, and only 43% would back a Liberal Democrat against Reform and 34% against a Conservative. 5 of those 14 are within reach at that rate. In others - Godalming and Ash, Runnymede and Weybridge, Sevenoaks - almost every Labour and Green voter would have to move. The Greens poll on average only 6% in these 58 tragedies, but in 26 they are the kingmakers.

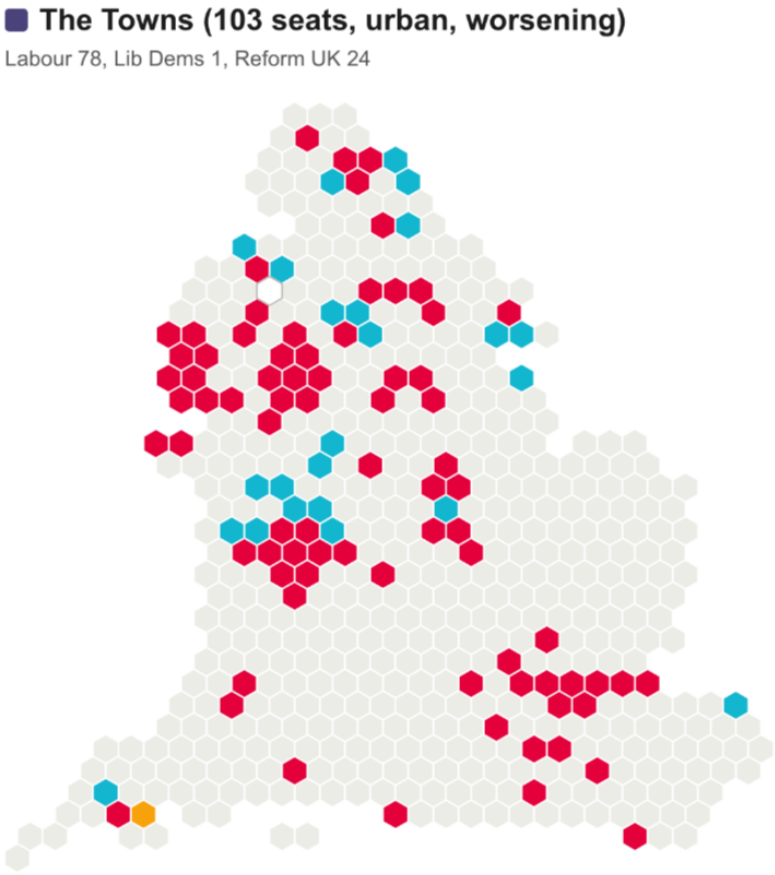
The remaining 21 seats are out of reach: 12 Reform wins, all taken from the Conservatives and mostly in Essex, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire, and 9 Conservative holds such as Tonbridge, Hertsmere and Richmond and Northallerton.

For progressives the Shires hold the second-largest number of progressive tragedies and the lowest return on a simple pact. What would help most is information: a clear and credible signal similar to the public target lists at the last election, seat by seat, of who the challenger is.

Chapter 5 returns to the question of who voters trust to give a signal like this - as it's not the parties themselves.

The Towns

Figure 21.



These are 103 urban seats, all in the more deprived two-fifths of constituencies and 76 in the most deprived fifth, mainly in the North West, the West Midlands, Yorkshire, and London. Labour won 96 of them in 2024. It is projected to win 78, losing 21 to Reform and taking back 3 of the 5 seats won by independents. The Right wins 24, all of them Reform. In these seats, the Conservatives win nothing and average 12% of the vote.

In Labour's 78 seats its share is down 5 points to 43% and Reform has near-doubled from 13% to 25%. The Greens are on 12% across these seats, their highest in the four groups and are second in 11 seats where, as in the Metros, they and Labour could be encouraged to compete. Reform is second in 64. 11 are held by Labour by under 5 points, and Oldham West, Chadderton & Royton, and Derby South by under one. **This is the territory least exposed to a pact on the Right, because there is little Conservative vote left to add.** Conservative and Reform votes together outnumber the winner in 29 of the 79 progressive seats, the lowest share of the four. Reform has

already absorbed the Right here. The threat here is therefore Reform growing without anyone's help.

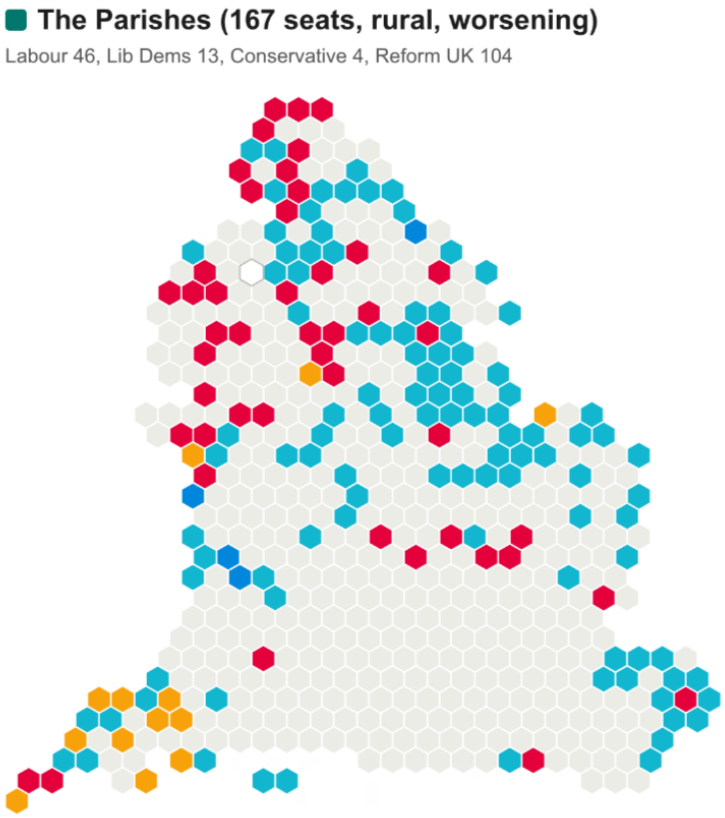
Of the 24 Reform wins, 18 are progressive tragedies and they are the easiest in England to reverse. Labour is the best-placed progressive party in all 18 and already second in 17. Reform averages 36% and Labour 33%. Half need a third or fewer of Green and Liberal Democrat voters to move, and at the 58% rate in our poll (as explained earlier) 15 of the 18 would fall. Washington and Gateshead South, and Wolverhampton South East need under 4%. Green votes are decisive in 9, among them Stoke-on-Trent Central, Dewsbury and Batley, South Shields, and Walsall and Bloxwich.

The limit is the size of the pool. Greens and Liberal Democrats together average 11% in these seats, and Labour is down 6 points in them while Reform is up 15. Lending can recover seats lost by 3 or 4 points. It cannot offset a further move from Labour to Reform. In the 6 seats beyond reach - Blackpool South, Dudley, Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes, Redcar, Stoke-on-Trent North, and Tipton and Wednesbury - Reform averages 42% and Labour has lost 11 points since 2024. There is therefore an interesting question about the possibility of winning back nonvoters, or how Labour picks off more voters from Reform while at the same time attracting Lib Dem and Greens.

So the Towns need a Labour-Green understanding to not split the vote against Reform challengers, but importantly holding the 78 Labour MPs here is a matter of what the Labour government offers these places, and that is politics rather than pacts.

The Parishes

Figure 22.



The Parishes are the biggest group of seats and Reform's main battleground. These are the 167 more deprived county seats, spread across every region outside London. Labour won 115 of them in 2024 and is projected to win 46 under our current poll. Reform wins 104 – **more than half of its projected 189 seats in Britain** – taking 70 from Labour, 29 from the Conservatives and Waveney Valley from the Greens. The Conservatives are left with 4, each held by under 3 points over Reform. One of them is North Herefordshire, taken from the Greens.

In Labour's 46 seats its share is down 6 points to 38% and Reform has gone from 18% to 30%. Reform is second in 42 of these 46 and 14 are held by under 5 points; Camborne and Redruth, Morecambe and Lunesdale, Penistone and Stocksbridge, and Doncaster Central are held by under 1. The Liberal Democrats hold all 13 of their incumbent seats, but the opponent has changed. The Conservatives are down 9 points to 19% in them and Reform up 12 to 27%, and Reform is now second in 12 of the 13. Newton Abbot is held by a point.

Almost none of this group of seats is safe from a united Right. Conservative and Reform votes together outnumber the winner in 50 of the 59 progressive seats, and in 26 they outnumber Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens put together.

Of the 108 seats the Right wins, 66 are progressive tragedies, 63 of them Reform wins. Labour is the best-placed progressive in 61, and the best-placed progressive is already second in 48. The margins are thin: the progressive vote exceeds the winner by about 3,200 on average. That is why Green votes are decisive in 42 of the 66, more than in any other territory, even though the Greens average only 7% in these seats.

The two Green seats show lending in the other direction. In Waveney Valley, Reform is on 27%, the Greens 25%, the Conservatives 24% and Labour 15%. In North Herefordshire, the Conservatives, Reform and the Greens are each on 25%, with Labour on 15%. Both would be held if under 7% of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters moved, and 42% of Labour voters say they would back a Green against Reform. Given this, there is an opportunity for deeply needed reciprocity between Labour, Lib Dem and Greens in this group, to help all climb an uphill battle.

The other 42 are out of reach on any lending. They include Clacton, Ashfield, Boston and Skegness, Hartlepool, and Mansfield, and 20 of them were Labour seats in 2024. Reform averages 39% in the 41 it wins and leads the whole progressive bloc by 6 points. Darlington shows where the line falls. It is still a tragedy on paper, but with Reform on 36% and Labour on 26% it would take four in five Green and Liberal Democrat voters to close the gap.

This is where a Labour-Green understanding matters most and where the ask falls most heavily on Green and Liberal Democrat voters. It is also where the limits show. The Parishes hold 66 of England's 165 progressive tragedies; fewer than half of the tragedies fall even if half of the other progressive voters lend their vote, and 42 seats need a different offer from progressives, not a different electoral arrangement.

What This Means For Progressives

The four territories ask for four different things of voters and our project to organise the progressive majority. In 'the Metros' it is discipline: 100 seats to hold, 23 cheap

gains where Labour is already the challenger, and a clear line between the seats where Labour and the Greens can compete and those where they cannot. In 'the Shires', it is information on polling and target lists from parties, because polling tells us the challenger differs from seat to seat and is often currently third. In 'the Towns' it is Labour's own offer, with Green and Liberal Democrat lending worth 15 or so seats at the margin. In 'the Parishes' it is all of these at once, and it is where most of the seats up for grabs are. We suggest specific approaches in the next chapter.

Two cautions apply everywhere.

The work of mobilising and uniting the progressive majority is worth it most immediately where the margins are the tightest and there is a progressive majority already – but is also crucial to grow the voters open to lending and switching votes. The progressive tragedies that we are predicted to lose using our realistic rates of switching are often only lost by a few points – these are good places to focus initially. But around 66 of the 165 progressive tragedies are out of reach on current polling of the appetite of progressive voters to switch parties. For progressives to win in the 165 seats, we need more switching between the progressive bloc than voters currently say they would give. In other words, there are some seats with a progressive majority that we are not winning given the current lack of a shared offer being put to the pool of voters in the progressive bloc, and some places we can that we are losing just because we're divided. We need a project that builds a shared programme to help unite the progressive bloc, and helps grow the pool of voters in the progressive bloc willing to lend support to another party.

Second, the Right can play the same game. Across Britain, if half of progressive voters lent their vote where it counted and the Right did nothing, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens would win 416 seats to the Right's 170. If the Right matched them, it would lead by 301 to 290.

Threading the Progressive Needle

The previous chapter covered the maths behind the progressive majority - where our voters currently are and where we could be if the Progressive Majority strategy really took hold.

The most pressing question, and also usually the biggest downfall of a project like this, is how is it actually achieved?

Most people, even those sympathetic to Compass and cross-party working, remain sceptical of the ability to actually make this happen. The realpolitik of having to organise strategically, offset by distrust between parties and people and crude tribalism, can make such an idea seem a nonstarter. The alternative criticism is that it manifests as an ultra-liberal middle-class fantasy politics in which there is no disagreement on anything. How this would actually manifest couldn't be any further from that.

As outlined in the analysis of the previous chapter, there are 12 strategies up and down the country that would need to be considered:

In 'the Metros':

- Healthy, respectful competition between Labour and Greens in those seats where the Right doesn't have a strong presence
- Labour-Green non-aggression agreements in the 11 seats where Green votes are the margin, and in the hypermarginal seats campaigning to ensure Green and Lib Dems voters consolidate behind Labour.
- Similarly, in the LD held seats, organising to consolidate the Green and Labour voters behind Lib Dems in the face of a rising Reform or united right vote.

In 'the Shires':

- Defending Lib Dem vote share against Reform's squeeze on the right
- Greens target to win strategy to funnel resources away from these areas - particularly where they are the kingmakers. The terms of this need to be widely and publicly consulted and agreed - either for PR or other target seats.
- Asking soft Conservatives to lend to the Lib Dems where Reform is the challenger

In 'the Towns':

- Healthy, respectful competition between Labour and Greens in those seats where the Right doesn't have a strong presence
- A Labour political offer that shores up support to stop voters moving toward Reform
- The Lib Dems and Greens have a limited role in the majority of these seats, through non-aggression pacts, target to win strategies that funnel resources away from these areas could prove decisive in unifying the Labour vote. The terms of this need to be widely and publicly consulted and agreed - either for PR or other target seats.

In 'the Parishes':

- defending the Lib Dem vote share in their 13 seats, particularly from losing the soft Conservative switchers who came to the Lib Dems at GE24. Maybe an anti-

Right campaign being pushed by Labour or Greens as opposed to a directly pro-party approach.
- Labour-Green non-aggression pact covering Green targets and Green incumbents.
- Green voters to consolidate behind the stronger of LD or Labour in each seat; Labour voters in LD-anchor seats to switch tactically; and soft Conservative voters whose party is declining to consider switching to the progressive candidate best placed to hold the seat against Reform.

Evidently, this is complex. This polling will have missed details that only the voters, activists, and candidates who live in these constituencies will know. A proper targeting strategy would be a holistic, case-by-case approach in which seats are identified according to what they actually need. But this is a start.

Some of these steps are much easier in the abstract than others. A good example of this is defending the Lib Dem vote share in constituencies such as Horsham or Newbury, where the defining battle is almost a straight head-to-head between them and the Conservatives; the Greens and Labour have historically put extremely limited effort in.

The need for Labour-Green non-aggression pacts would, hypothetically, seem a lot more difficult - largely due to the fact that, in some seats, there is a large overlap in the demographics of voter they are vying for. At current vote shares the Greens are projected to hold two of their four seats and gain none, which makes the case for Labour to 'let' the Greens win seats harder to make, not easier. Where the Green vote matters more is at the margin elsewhere: in 88 English seats the Right is projected to win- 42 of them in 'the Parishes' - Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters only outnumber the winner once Green votes are counted. The obvious question is how do you convince Labour it is in their interests to almost 'let' the Greens win seats and what is the point where Green members are satisfied with the amount of seats they are leading in Progressive Majority campaigning? The spectre of the Progressive Alliance work from 2017 that hangs over the Green Party when they stood aside for Labour so readily and got nothing back in return is an integral aspect of why their focus now has become so anti-Labour in its rhetoric and in its convictions.

Additional difficulty lies in the areas, such as 'the Parishes' above, where voters of a particular progressive party will be asked by this strategy to hold their nose and vote for another 'progressive' due to their dominance within the area. What would offset this is a shared offer voters can see. With Survation we ran a conjoint polling experiment, set out below, which found that a joint plan on the cost of living or the NHS makes a pact markedly more acceptable. All of this surmounts to a complex, tricky outlook, where different practices are required up and down the country to ensure maximum efficiency for the maximalist outcome. The next question may then be: is this actually possible?

New Polls, Old Tricks

Part of Compass' history has been facilitating cross-party working across the country in the past 15 years.

In the run up to the 2017 General Election, emerging from the starting point of the Richmond Park by-election in December 2016 - in which a Liberal Democrat

candidate overturned a Tory majority of over 23,000 with support from the Green Party, who stood down their candidate to give the Lib Dems a free run - Compass campaigned for a progressive alliance to overturn or lessen the Conservative majority. Thanks to Compass members from Labour, Liberal Democrats, and Greens this bloomed into the full-blown 'Progressive Alliance' campaign at the 2017 General Election. We worked 31 seats to try and reduce what was assumed to be a Conservative landslide. The outcome of this campaign was a success - the Conservatives returned a minority government instead of the predicted 100+ majority when the election was called. However, particularly for the Greens and Lib Dems who agreed to stand down for Labour candidates, this was a painful campaign. It was effective at the time, but it also offers the perfect example of what not to do next time. For any cooperation to work now, the clear benefit for and buy-in from all political parties agreeing on the trade-offs would be an essential aspect from which negotiations begin.

Compass Greens in Godalming & Ash organised within their local party to stand aside their candidate given their opponent and the trust they'd built up with the local Lib Dem progressive challenger - though this was unsuccessful as the GPEW imposed a candidate. In Yorkshire, the efficacy of single progressive candidate races decimated the Conservative supermajority in 2022 North Yorks county council elections. In 2024, we helped 35 MPs win key marginal votes based on their support for PR.

This movement and these tactics are not in any way limited to Compass members. In 2024, the South Devon Primary held eight meetings in the run up to the General Election of activists from the progressive parties, with a secret ballot at the end of each. The outcome was an agreement that Liberal Democrat Caroline Voaden would stand, and a tacit agreement to target resources elsewhere from the other progressive parties. The outcome was the end of a century of dominance by the Conservatives in the area and Voaden becoming the elected MP for South Devon. During the 2024 General Election, two incredibly complementary lists were circling for months - the Lib Dem target list and Labour's non-target list. These two lists relentlessly focused their resources effectively to never see them compete. There were only a few seats where this non-aggression pact seemed not to apply - two in England (Wimbledon, and Sheffield Hallam), one in Wales (Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe), and two in Scotland (Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire, and Mid Dunbartonshire). In most non-target seats, both parties stood the thinnest of paper candidates in the hope that voters would get the message. Constituencies were twinned, and buses of volunteers shuffled around to their nearest target, helped by messaging claiming 'only we can beat the Tories here'. In some non-battleground seats, the contracts Labour's candidates were told to sign stipulated that they were not to campaign and if they did campaign, they would be reprimanded or even deselected.

An even more recent example, and one of incredible political salience, is the 2026 Makerfield by-election. During this, Compass hosted a statement from 'Greens for Proportional Representation in Makerfield', in which the strategy of non-aggression from the Greens towards Labour was suggested. There was no explicit agreement but a wide understanding that Labour candidate Andy Burnham was, in essence, given a free run at the seat. The subsequent outcome - a seismic victory for

Burnham that allowed him to go on and become Prime Minister two months later - shows the very extremities to which the concept can be useful.

An additional illustration is that of the 2026 Clacton by-election. Because of the reasons Nigel Farage called the by-election, no established progressive party stood a candidate. Their reasons were to paint the by-election and its outcome as less legitimate than Farage intended, but by doing so they have established a precedent of not standing in every single election up and down the country as they had previously adhered to. This follows the example in the 1997 General Election, where Labour and the Liberal Democrats declined to stand a candidate in Tatton and left the field open to the anti-corruption candidate Martin Bell, who went on to defeat the sitting Tory MP Neil Hamilton.

Cross-party work on campaigns around issues is also common - almost ubiquitous in local government with examples in Westminster ranging from Green New Deal campaigning over many years supported by Greens, Labour and Lib Dems, to support for specific, reactive amendments or legislation (e.g. the upskirting Private Member's Bill that became Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 supported by Wera Hobhouse, Sadiq Khan, Maria Miller/David Gauke). We know it's possible.

It is difficult work to pull off. But there are countless examples of all kinds of tactics, by and beyond Compass, of a willingness to make it happen and the veracity of the outcome. Primarily, however, there needs to be a top-level willingness on the part of all participants - candidates, activists, normal voters - to see it as legitimate. And, to that end, finding a policy agenda that progressives would be willing to coalesce around is necessary now more than ever to show that the Progressive Majority exists not just in voter data but in voter attitudes as well.

The Programme

Beyond establishing the legitimacy of the Progressive Majority, scepticism remains over how it could be galvanised and what it would aim to do. Creating workable harmony between the amenable parts of a power-hungry Labour, a Liberal Democrat party seeking to consolidate and grow its voter base which is often more centre-right facing, an increasingly left-moving Green Party, and the centre-left nationalism of the SNP and Plaid Cymru feels, at best, difficult.

But this is a story about voters, about the interests and ambitions of the country. Parties' success is the means, not the end. Parties are the vehicles through which the progressive majority of voters organise electorally to win power. What that majority wants to do with that power has a distinct shape, even as its members split their votes.

UCL Policy Lab's May 2026 'A Polarising Britain' provides us with a good starting point of data for this.

Figure 23.

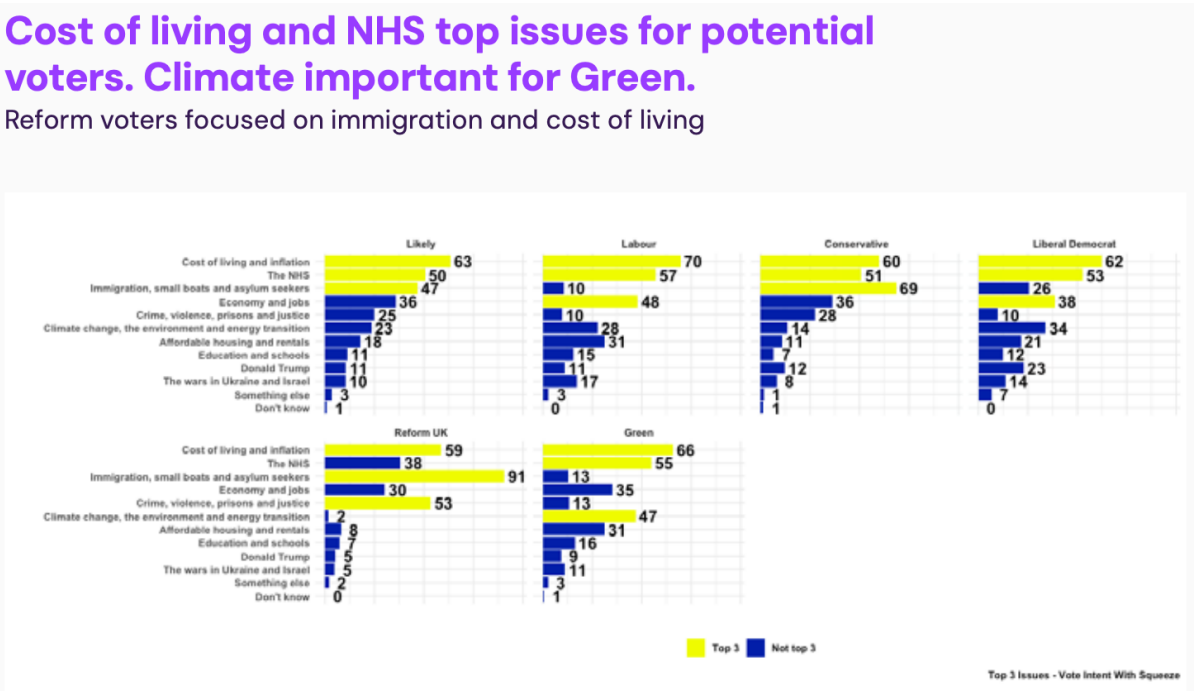
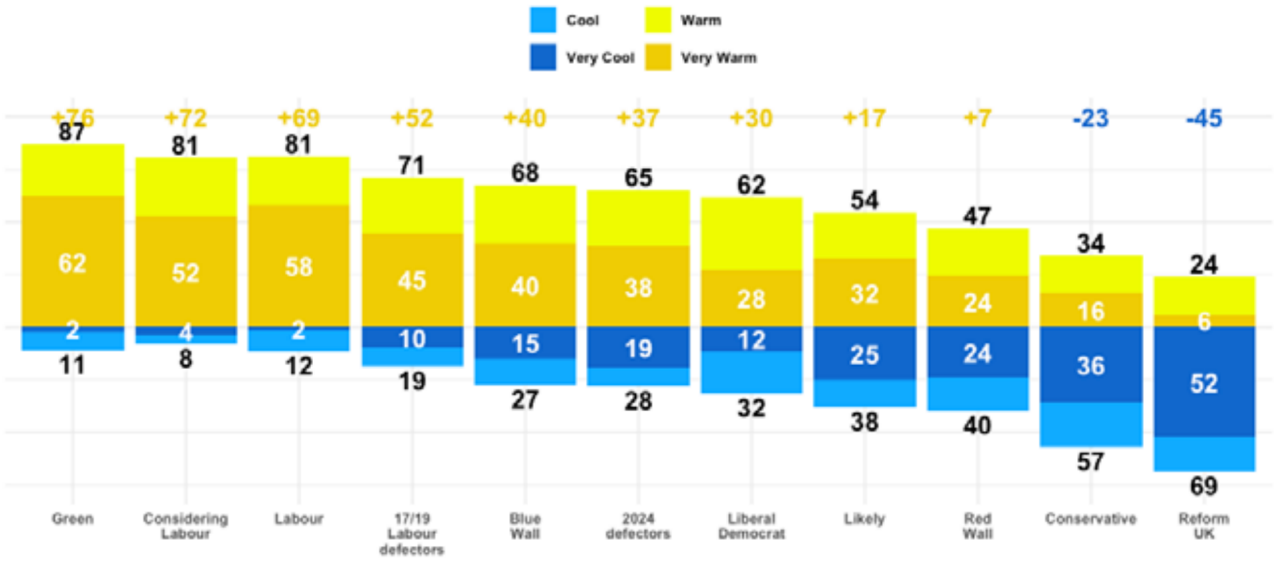


Figure 23 shows the biggest issues for Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters. For all three, the cost of living and inflation rank first, followed by the NHS. Third place differs: the economy and jobs for Labour and the Lib Dems, and climate change, the environment and energy transition for the Greens. Importantly, climate remains important to Lib Dem and Labour voters, ranking fourth and fifth respectively, while the economy and jobs ranks fourth for Green voters. Clearly, there is considerable cohesion in values.

Figure 24 shows reactions to a 'Labour message' focused on tackling the cost of living through a 1% wealth tax, an additional levy on corporate giants' transactions, uprating child benefit and tax thresholds with inflation, and reducing taxes for incomes below £30,000. Support is particularly strong among the further left of progressives.

Figure 24.



This package receives +76 approval from Green voters and +69 from Labour voters. Support is lower among Lib Dems, but remains sizable at +30. This suggests that a bridging coalition would need to focus on economic proposals while making concessions elsewhere to accommodate its more centrist elements, particularly on European integration.

Figure 25 examines support for a climate-focused message centred on accelerating renewables and praising GB Energy. It brings Lib Dem support much closer to that of Green and Labour voters, reaching +59. This reflects progressive voters' priorities and suggests that green-maximalist policies avoiding direct impacts on everyday living costs (green levies on energy bills, for example) could find favour across the coalition.

Figure 25.

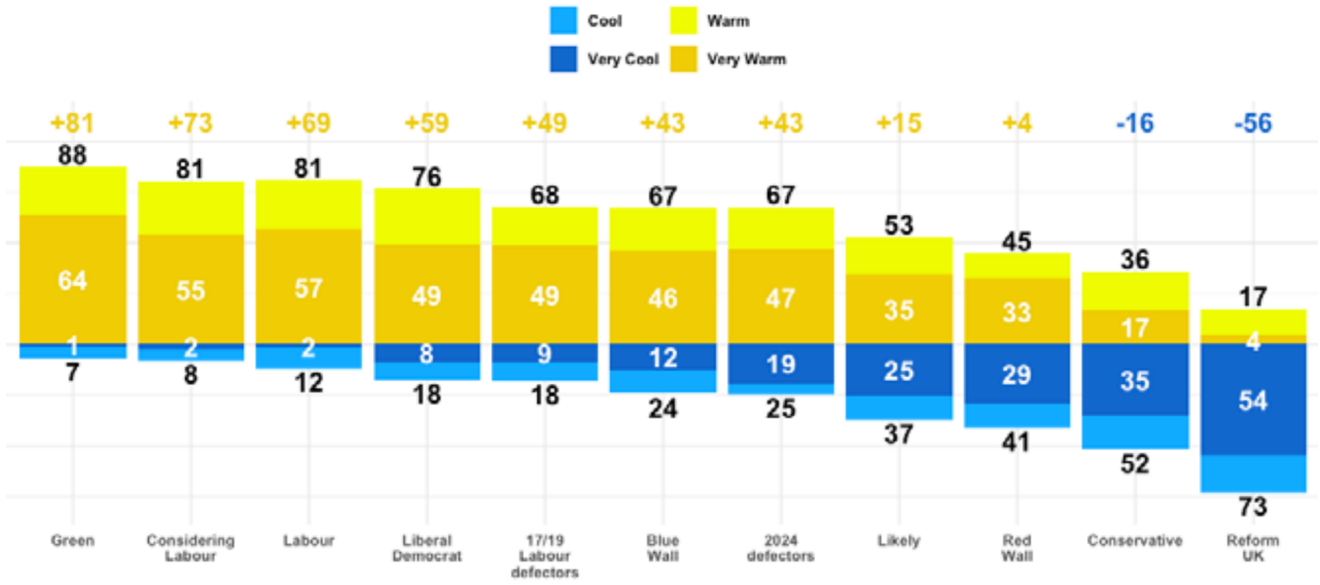
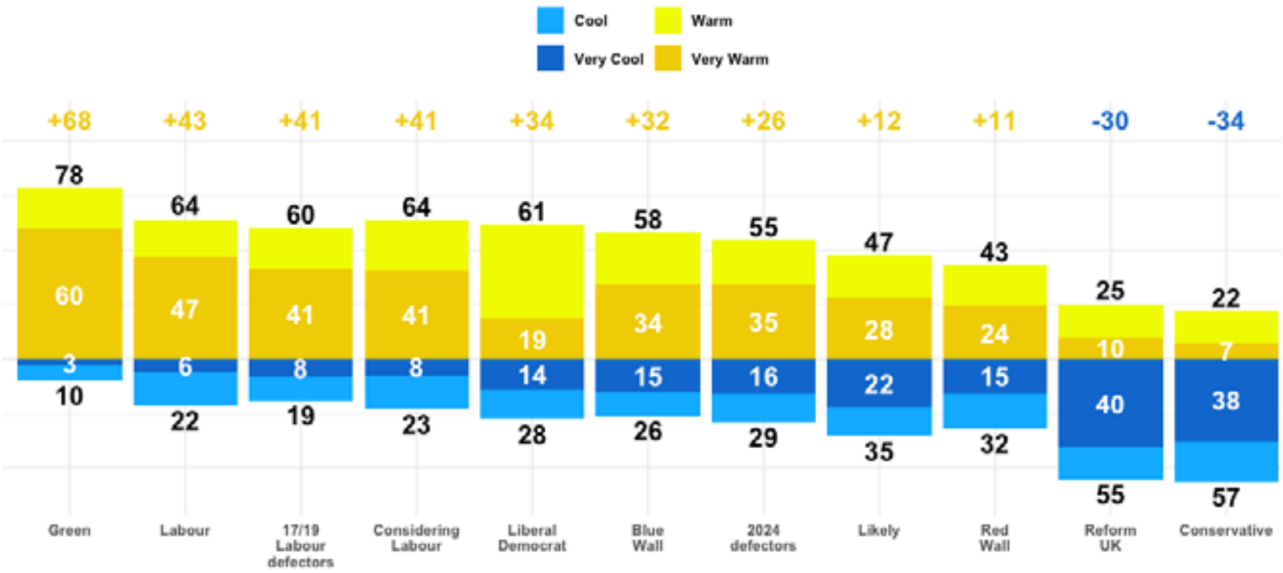


Figure 26 examines support for political reform, including proportional representation, abolishing the House of Lords, capping political donations and increasing devolution. Support is strongest among Green voters at +68, with Labour and Lib Dem voters at +43 and +34 respectively. Arguments for electoral reform already feature heavily within progressive circles and are in the initial stages of

becoming Government policy too, with a National Commission on Electoral Reform announced at the 2026 Labour Party Conference. Finding potential red lines will therefore be crucial, including whether electoral reform could be traded against other institutional changes.

Figure 26.

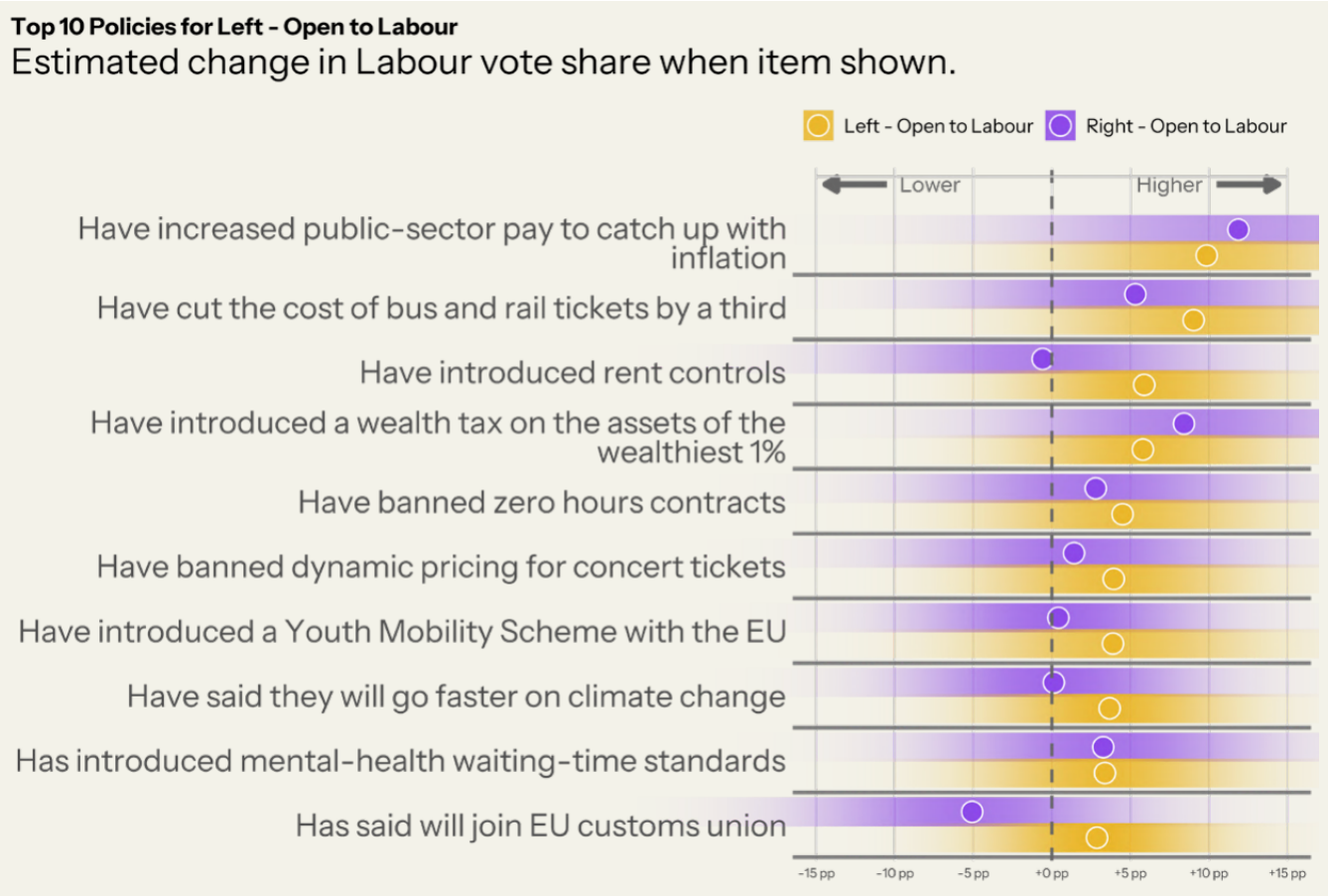


Persuasion UK's 'Revolt on the left: Getting to Know Labour's 'Progressive Defectors'' paper furthers this analysis. Examining 2024 Labour voters now intending to vote for one of the other four progressive parties, it identifies consistent overlaps in policy attitudes.

Its 'Winnable Left' group — those still open to voting Labour despite having gone elsewhere — show particular enthusiasm for economic interventions: public-sector pay matching inflation, action on public transport prices, rent controls and wealth taxes. As the report states, 'of the nearly fifty policies tested, the most powerful with this group were all economic: public sector pay, rail and bus tickets, rent controls. Despite the 'winnable lefts' social liberalism, economic populism can move them also, when clearly presented'.

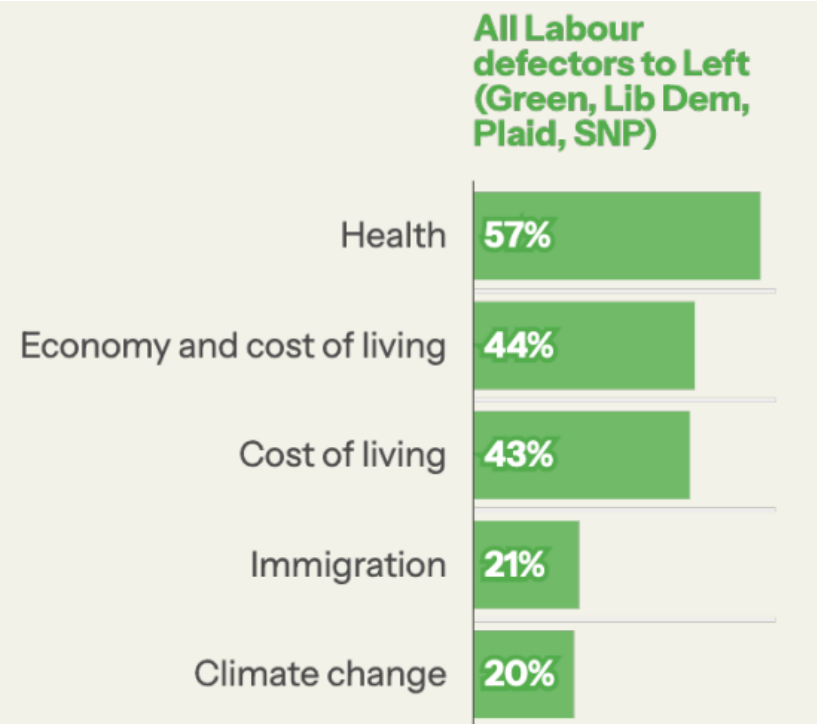
Figure 27 demonstrates the ability of individual policies to win back Labour votes from those who have since voted for another progressive party. Interestingly, these policies also appeal to some who defected from Labour to vote rightwards — an important consideration when seeking to broaden the Progressive Majority (and target some of those soft Conservatives in 'the Shires').

Figure 27.



Persuasion UK's data on voters' most important national issues reinforces this. Among 2024 Labour voters now intending to support other progressive parties, the NHS and cost of living dominate, almost double the importance of immigration and climate change, which rank fourth and fifth.

Figure 28.



Climate change ranks a distinct fourth among Labour-to-Green switchers, while immigration falls to ninth. The picture differs for Labour-to-Lib Dem switchers, who rank immigration fourth and Brexit fifth. This suggests distinct policy areas where cooperation could be built, even between party activists hesitant to stand down or divert campaign resources. A shared NHS commitment, for example, combining reduced private-sector involvement with above-inflation pay rises for essential health workers, could demonstrate what voters should expect from a progressive candidate, regardless of their party banner.

Our own polling from 30 October–3 November 2026 points in the same direction. When voters judge a progressive pact, a shared plan on the cost of living (+8 points) and the NHS (+7) matter most, followed by taxing the very wealthy (+5). A shared commitment to proportional representation makes no measurable difference to how acceptable voters find a pact. That does not make reform less important to the parties, but suggests it may be more a price of cooperation between them than a pitch to voters.

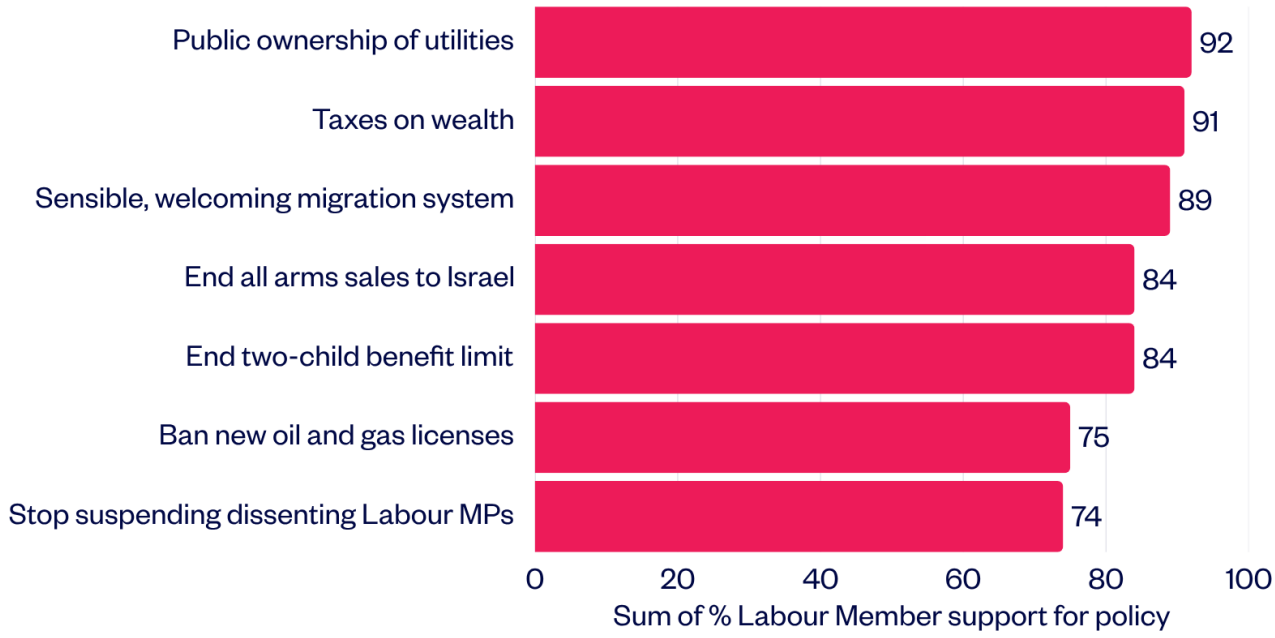
The same overlaps emerge when looking at members of the progressive parties individually. MoreinCommon's 'Lib Dem Report' finds that members' top three reasons for supporting the party are its policies on Brexit, the economy and public services.

This becomes more significant when overlapping this data with YouGov's 'Big Voter Survey' from July 2026, which finds that only 54% of the Lib Dems' 2024 voters would still vote for the party today. While 10% have switched to the Greens, 9% have moved from Labour to the Lib Dems. With the party polling at 8% at the time of writing, this highlights a crucial group of voters that Progressive Majority working should consider natural allies: those who know they sit on this side of the aisle but will move if another party makes a better offer. Understanding their policy red lines could allow Lib Dem voters interested in the Greens, or Labour voters considering the Lib Dems, to move between parties while retaining confidence in a shared political direction.

The same 'Big Voter Survey' for the Green Party finds that its growing support comes partly from 'the party's left-wing economic policy and their stance on global issues such as the Gaza conflict', cited among the top three things voters like by 22–25%. However, three reservations persist: the Greens are 'unlikely to win locally', 'lack the experience to govern', and 'offer unrealistic or unaffordable policies'. The Progressive Majority argument addresses all three of these. Cross-party organisation can identify where Greens are best placed to win; cooperation provides access to wider governing experience; and policy overlap with Labour, the Lib Dems, the SNP and Plaid Cymru challenges the perception of unrealistic proposals. This is also the first explicit mention of foreign policy as a crucial factor for why voting intent has changed, with the understandable anger over how the Government handled (and continues to handle) the genocide in Gaza.

Internal Labour polling commissioned by Compass last summer offers further insight into Labour members' policy attitudes.

Figure 29. Survation polling 5-6 August 2025 of Labour Members



Source: Survation, 5-6 August 2025

Taken together, this is years of data from thousands of people across the progressive majority. It tells us that Progressive Majority policy platform would therefore need to:

- Have a plan to tackle the cost of living
- Be strong on the NHS and social care
- Directly combat climate change
- Commit to wholesale political and democratic reform
- Pursue a progressive but pragmatic foreign policy

To this end, that policy platform could include:

On the economy & cost of living

- Immediate measures to tackle living costs, including one-time energy bill reductions and caps on transport fares
- New progressive taxation measures to offset the revenue needs of the aforementioned schemes, including a 2% tax on assets over £10m, and an additional levy on transactions for corporate giants
- Longer-term measures, including public ownership of essential utilities such as water and energy companies to bring down bills
- Rent controls combined with consistent housebuilding programmes

On the NHS and healthcare

- Leading on public-sector pay rises matching inflation
- Establishing a National Care Service, with power devolved to the local level
- A re-commitment to reducing NHS waiting list times
- Reducing private sector involvement in the NHS

Climate

- Continuing world-leading practices in developing renewable energy
- Committing to no new oil and gas drilling licences in the North Sea

- Expanding the production and exportation of renewable energy infrastructure globally

Political Reform
- Moving to a proportional representation system for the House of Commons
- Abolishing the House of Lords, capping a second chamber and abolishing the Honours system
- Capping donations to political parties & barring donors from government contracts
- Devolving additional powers to Combined Authorities, including skills and technical education.

Foreign Policy
- A re-commitment to matching NATO's established GDP-level spending by 2035
- Re-assessing British military contracts with countries proven to violate international humanitarian law
- Suspending arms contracts with Israel
- Reintegrating Britain and the European Union, with a view to inclusion in the Customs Union.

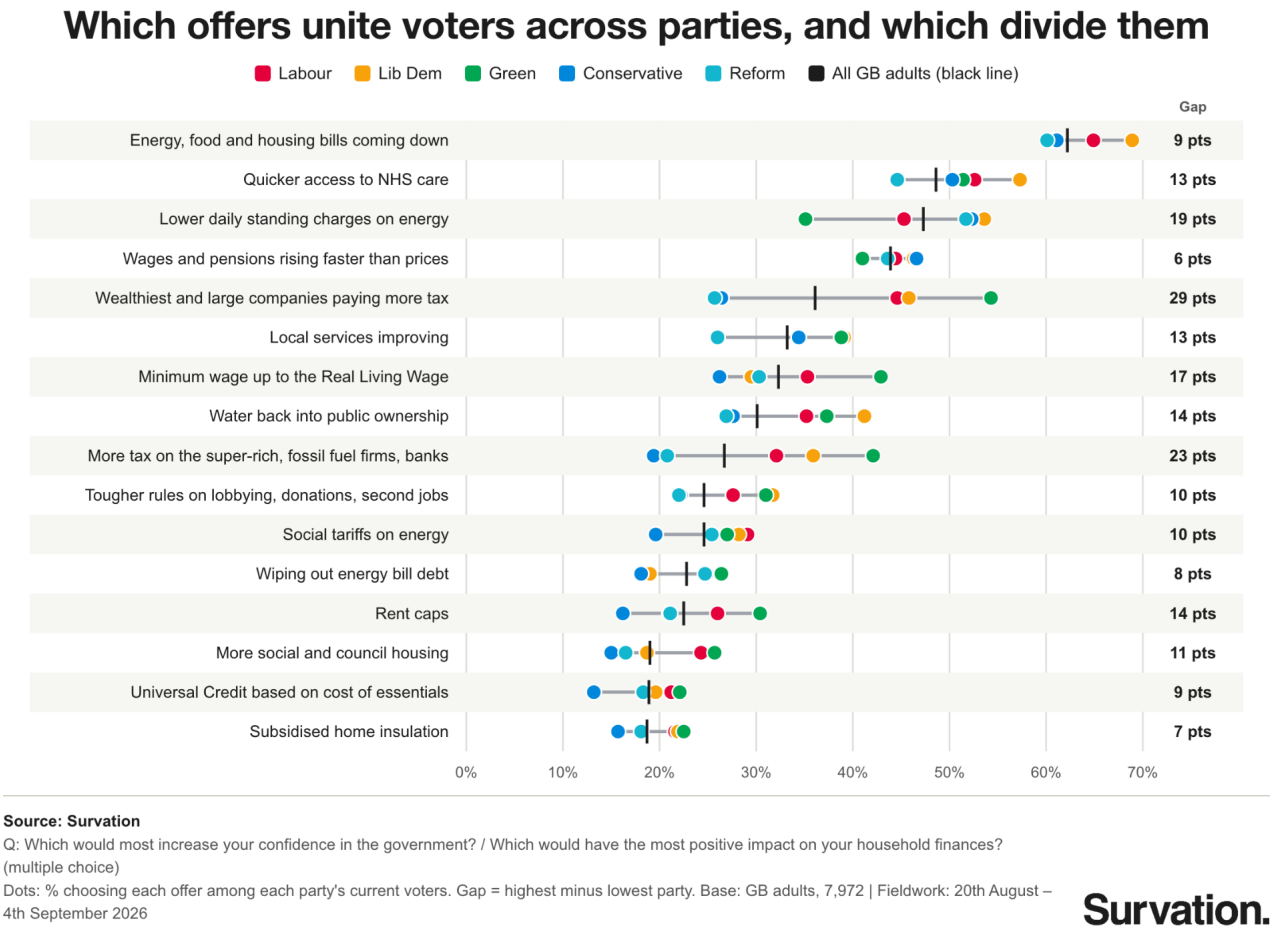
But this strategy only works if voters accept the basis of cooperation. The question then becomes the terms on which voters will go along with it.

To test this, as part of our poll, Survation ran an experiment exploring that question with 1,353 adults across Great Britain. Respondents were shown pairs of hypothetical progressive pacts and asked which they found more acceptable, and who they would vote for if each were in place in their constituency. Each pact varied at random across five features: which party stands (Labour, the Liberal Democrats or the Greens), how the deal is agreed, what the parties offer together, why the pact is being made, and how many seats it covers. Because every feature is varied independently, the experiment shows which of them actually move voters.

Taken together, the experiment points to a clear formula for progressives, even if how it is applied will differ seat by seat. The strongest winning combination is a shared, practical plan on the cost of living, presented as a way to form a government that can deliver change. Whichever progressive party was the candidate, that pairing increases voters' support of the deal by around 14 points compared with a strategy that offers nothing and gives no reason: from 48% to 62% with a Labour candidate, 43% to 57% with a Liberal Democrat and 40% to 54% with a Green.

The cost of living is also the one offer that every group of progressive supporters rates above average - Labour (53%), Liberal Democrat (55%) and Green (54%) identifiers alike - and this matches earlier Survation research for 38 Degrees. That polling of more than 8,000 voters found the cost of living to be the dominant concern in every one of the five groups that make up the progressive majority, cited by between 54% and 77% of each, and an issue on which Labour leads Reform UK among the public as a whole. It is both the concern that unites progressive voters and one where even the most sceptical parts of the coalition trust Labour more than anyone else.

Figure 30.



Source: Survation

Q: Which would most increase your confidence in the government? / Which would have the most positive impact on your household finances? (multiple choice)

Dots: % choosing each offer among each party's current voters. Gap = highest minus lowest party. Base: GB adults, 7,972 | Fieldwork: 20th August – 4th September 2026

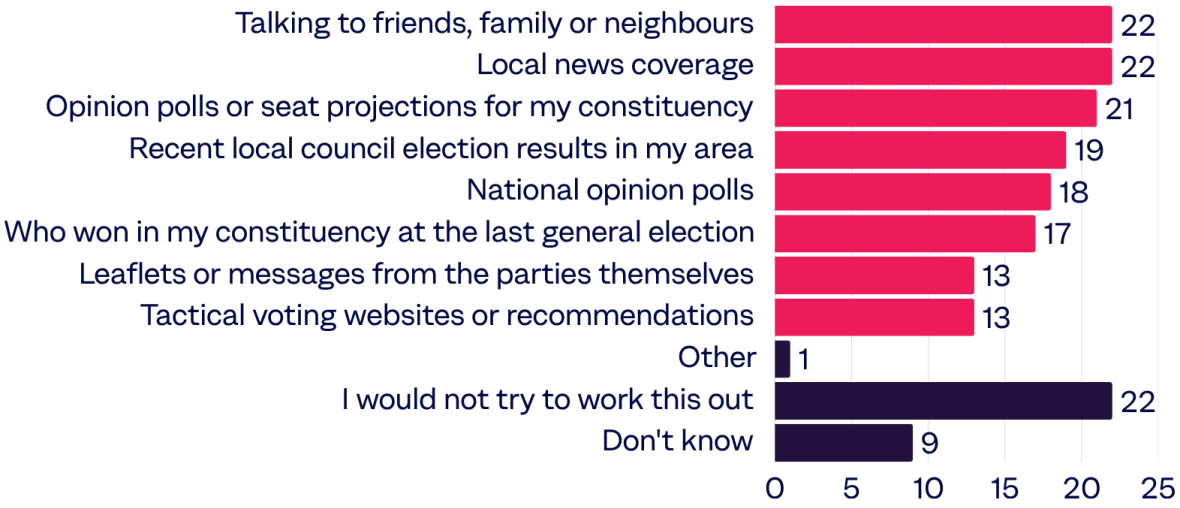
Survation.

Beyond that core, the detail of the progressive offer should of course be tuned to each seat. An NHS commitment rates highest with Labour supporters (56%) and taxing the very wealthy with Green (55%) and Liberal Democrat (53%) supporters. A "stop Reform" message lifts Labour identifiers but not Liberal Democrats, for whom a positive case for change works far better (62%).

Importantly, this message also needs the right messenger. Tactical vote websites and leaflets or messages from the parties are distinctly less effective at delivering these messages to voters than the people we know, and local news. Polls are more helpful, but with the current tenuous polling lead in so many seats, polls are limited in their efficacy and reliability (on the current MRP, 204 of the 631 GB seats are within 5 points, and 102 are at a 2.5-point threshold).

Figure 31.

Table Q17: If you were deciding whether to vote tactically at the next general election, how, if at all, would you work out which party was best placed to win in your constituency? Please select all that apply.



This is why the approach we are suggesting is one sensitive to every seat's local context, and, crucially, campaigned for people there rather than from an office in London or a website. It's our members and local groups that will make this possible - with the obvious caveat that for maximum impact, we would welcome cooperation and cover from the parties themselves.

Conclusion

We know that in all of the progressive parties some members are resistant to the idea of cross-party cooperation and refuse to even acknowledge that there is a latent progressive majority in the UK. Such tribal and cultural opposition is difficult to overcome, but increasingly, many politicians, party members, and certainly voters have left this old tribalism behind.

Progressives in Britain have spent the past 50 years falling all-too-short of being able to affect change. The Conservatives spent their successes in this time completely reshaping British society - something progressives could have done if their combined majorities manifested differently.

Doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome is the definition of insanity.

This paper is not saying that winning elections is not a crucial aim - it spends many thousands of words saying the exact opposite. But, fundamentally, it argues that the politics of hoping you can temporarily win over voters who see you as the least bad option every five years is likely to yield diminishing returns. This system will eventually result in such frustrated pressure building up that the country lurches to one extreme or another.

Now, more than ever, voters are willing to vote for what they believe in. The rise of the SNP, Plaid Cymru, Reform and the Greens from parties on the fringes to parties that win elections, win control of local and regional government, and top national polls is the key indicator of the volatility that has replaced the two-party pendulum swing.

Britain is moving from an effective two-party system to a genuine multi-party one. Our institutions need to reflect that - our voting system needs to change to ensure outcomes are not wild and disproportionate - but our culture needs to change with it too. And on the progressive side of the aisle, that means disagreeing with each other but understanding that voters are voting for us to govern together, not apart. Labour, Greens, Lib Dems, Scottish and Welsh nationalists need to remain having their own places and roles, but a fundamental truth needs to be understood: it's better to have 80% of what we want than 100% of what we don't want, especially when that is likely to be a more and more extreme version of right-wing politics.

The model is there. The majority is there. Now the work needs to be done to build a progressive future.

It is time to put country before party.

Appendix

List of projected progressive tragedies at the next election:

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
Aldershot	The Metros	Lab	Con
Ashford	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Barnsley North	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Barrow and Furness	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Bassetlaw	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Beaconsfield	The Shires	Con	Con
Beverley and Holderness	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Bexleyheath and Crayford	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Birmingham Hodge Hill and Solihull North	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Bishop Auck-land	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Blackburn	The Towns	Ind	Reform
Bolsover	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Bournemouth West	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Bracknell	The Metros	Lab	Con
Bradford South	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe	N/A	Lib Dem	Reform
Broadland and Fakenham	The Shires	Con	Reform
Bromley and Biggin Hill	The Metros	Con	Con
Bromsgrove	The Shires	Con	Reform
Burnley	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Burton and Uttoxeter	The Parishes	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Carlisle	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Central Devon	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Central Suffolk and North Ipswich	The Shires	Con	Reform
Chatham and Aylesford	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Chelsea and Fulham	The Metros	Lab	Con
Chester South and Eddisbury	The Shires	Con	Con
Christchurch	The Shires	Con	Con
Cities of London and Westminster	The Metros	Lab	Con
Corby and East Northampton-shire	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Croydon South	The Metros	Con	Con
Darlington	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Dartford	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Daventry	The Shires	Con	Reform
Derbyshire Dales	The Shires	Lab	Con
Dewsbury and Batley	The Towns	Ind	Reform
Dover and Deal	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
East Grinstead and Uckfield	The Shires	Con	Con
East Hampshire	The Shires	Con	Con
East Thanet	The Towns	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
East Wiltshire	The Shires	Con	Con
Erewash	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Exmouth and Exeter East	The Shires	Con	Reform
Fareham and Waterlooville	The Shires	Con	Reform
Farnham and Bordon	The Shires	Con	Con
Faversham and Mid Kent	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Gillingham and Rainham	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Gloucester	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Godalming and Ash	The Shires	Con	Con
Goole and Pocklington	The Shires	Con	Reform
Gravesham	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Great Yarmouth	The Parishes	Reform	Reform
Halesowen	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Halifax	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Hamble Valley	The Shires	Con	Con
Harborough, Oadby and Wigston	The Shires	Con	Con
Harlow	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Harwich and North Essex	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Hastings and Rye	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Hereford and South Herefordshire	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Hertford and Stortford	The Shires	Lab	Con
Heywood and Middleton North	The Parishes	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
Hinckley and Bosworth	The Shires	Con	Reform
Houghton and Sunderland South	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Huntingdon	The Shires	Con	Con
Hyndburn	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Isle of Wight West	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Keighley and Ilkley	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Kenilworth and Southam	The Shires	Con	Con
Kensington and Bayswater	The Metros	Lab	Con
Kettering	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Kingston upon Hull East	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Lancaster and Wyre	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Leicester East	The Towns	Con	Reform
Lichfield	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Maidstone and Malling	The Shires	Con	Reform
Mid and South Pembrokeshire	N/A	Lab	Reform
Mid Bedfordshire	The Shires	Con	Con
Mid Bucking-hamshire	The Shires	Con	Con
Mid Derbyshire	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Neath and Swansea East	N/A	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
New Forest West	The Shires	Con	Con
Newark	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Newcastle-under-Lyme	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Norman-ton and Hemsworth	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
North Bedfordshire	The Shires	Con	Con
North Cotswolds	The Shires	Con	Con
North Dorset	The Shires	Con	Con
North East Derbyshire	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
North East Hertfordshire	The Shires	Lab	Con
North Herefordshire	The Parishes	Green	Con
North Somerset	The Shires	Lab	Con
North West Cam-bridgeshire	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
North West Essex	The Shires	Con	Con
North West Hampshire	The Shires	Con	Con
North West Leicestershire	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Northampton South	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Nuneaton	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Oldham East and Saddleworth	The Parishes	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
Peterborough	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Plymouth Moor View	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Portsmouth North	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Rawmarsh and Conisbrough	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Reading West and Mid Berkshire	The Shires	Lab	Con
Redditch	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Reigate	The Shires	Con	Con
Rhondda and Ogmore	N/A	Lab	Reform
Ribble Valley	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Rochester and Strood	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Romsey and Southampton North	The Shires	Con	Con
Rossendale and Darwen	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Rugby	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Runnymede and Weybridge	The Shires	Con	Con
Salisbury	The Shires	Con	Con
Scarborough and Whitby	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Sevenoaks	The Shires	Con	Con
Sherwood Forest	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Skipton and Ripon	The Shires	Con	Con
Solihull West and Shirley	The Metros	Con	Con

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
South Derbyshire	The Shires	Lab	Reform
South Dorset	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
South East Cornwall	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
South Leicestershire	The Shires	Con	Reform
South Northampton-shire	The Shires	Con	Con
South Ribble	The Shires	Lab	Reform
South Shields	The Towns	Lab	Reform
South Shropshire	The Parishes	Con	Con
South Suffolk	The Shires	Con	Reform
South West Devon	The Shires	Con	Reform
South West Hertfordshire	The Shires	Con	Con
South West Wiltshire	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Southend East and Rochford	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Southend West and Leigh	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Southport	The Parishes	Lab	Con
Spelthorne	The Metros	Con	Reform
Spen Valley	The Metros	Lab	Reform
St Austell and Newquay	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Stafford	The Shires	Lab	Reform
Stockton North	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Stoke-on-Trent Central	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Stourbridge	The Metros	Lab	Reform

Constituency	Category	2024 Winner	Projected winner
Suffolk Coastal	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Sunderland Central	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Sussex Weald	The Shires	Con	Reform
Sutton Coldfield	The Metros	Con	Con
Tatton	The Shires	Con	Con
Telford	The Towns	Lab	Reform
The Wrekin	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Thurrock	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Torridge and Tavistock	The Parishes	Con	Reform
Uxbridge and South Ruislip	The Metros	Lab	Con
Walsall and Bloxwich	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Washington and Gates-head South	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Waveney Valley	The Parishes	Green	Reform
Wellingbor-ough and Rushden	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
West Suffolk	The Parishes	Con	Reform
West Worcester-shire	The Parishes	Con	Con
Weston-super-Mare	The Parishes	Lab	Reform
Wetherby and Easingwold	The Shires	Con	Con
Windsor	The Shires	Con	Con
Wolverhamp-ton North East	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Wolverhamp-ton South East	The Towns	Lab	Reform
Worcester	The Metros	Lab	Reform
Worthing West	The Parishes	Lab	Reform

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