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# The Respect Agenda

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**More in  
Common**



**Policy Lab**

## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
A Crisis of Confidence	13
A Respect Reset	18
<b>Section 1 - Britons and Respect</b>	<b>21</b>
Who Gets Respect?	21
Politicians and Political Parties on Respect	25
The Party Leaders	29
<b>Section 2: The Respect Election</b>	<b>33</b>
Four expectations of politicians	33
Contribution	33
Empathy	34
Authenticity	36
Honesty	37
The Policies of Respect	39
<b>Respect and the Culture Wars</b>	<b>43</b>
In focus: Progressive Activists and the Flag	45
The National Trust	49
<b>Section 3: Communities and Respect</b>	<b>54</b>
Avoiding Big Society 2.0	56
Three Tests for Community Agency and the Politics of Respect	57
Empowering Local Groups and Institutions	57
Empowering Local People	58
Uses the Places Where People Mix	59
<b>Section 4: Institutions and Respect</b>	<b>62</b>
The Four Quadrants of Institutional Trust and Respect	62
How Can Specific Institutions Engage in the Respect Agenda?	66
Trust and respect for the NHS	67
Trust and respect in the police	68

Trust and Respect in the BBC	70
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Annex A: British Seven Segments</b>	<b>75</b>

*The photography used throughout this report is by Jørn Tomter and was taken as part of the UCL Policy Lab Citizen Portraits project.*

## Foreword

We live in profoundly unhopeful times. Most people in Britain have spent the last few years worrying what will come next: spiralling energy bills; falling real wages; searing heat or shivering cold; war in Ukraine; painful fallings-out over Brexit; chaos in Westminster. And there is little optimism that change is around the corner either. Most people believe that the problems that confront us are baked in. They are unlikely to be put right by any simple turnaround in the economic or political cycle.

Striking though they are on their own, these denials of hope also stand atop an even more fundamental crisis. As millions of people struggle with the fundamentals of life, they also feel that those who are elected to help sort those problems out cannot or, even worse, will not do so, because they do not treat them with the respect that they deserve. Nurses and doctors, teachers and tech workers, carers and those who run small businesses, feel as if they are not taken seriously by those who get to make the decisions that shape their lives. They – or we – feel as if our voices are simply not heard, our experiences ignored, or suffering overlooked. Even when our issues are considered, those in authority too often determine policy for us, not with us; and then seem surprised when they miss the mark.

Although crisis is often an overused word, this is a crisis. And this one matters – not just for this news cycle, or even this election cycle. Think of the victims of the Windrush scandal desperately trying to get officials to understand what they were going through as paperwork excuses deported elderly people to countries that they had not lived in since they were a child and the residents of Grenfell Tower trying to get the authorities to take their concerns seriously for years before the building was engulfed in flames.

This crisis also speaks to the threats which hold us together as a country – or do not. Those threads are frayed. If something does not change for the better soon, they may well come apart entirely. Certainly, it will be impossible to change the country for the better if we do not tackle this.

The UCL Policy Lab, working in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on a project called “Ordinary Hope”, and More in Common have been focused on these questions over the past year. That work has led us to believe we can only make progress if we know more about what the people of the country are feeling, what they are looking for and what public policy interventions they will believe could help to make things better.

That is what this report seeks to do. It is a vital first step in building a society where people feel as if they are treated as they should be by those in positions of authority and where we all come together, across our differences, to turn our fortunes around.



## Executive Summary

Most Britons are pessimistic about the future of our country and most say that nothing in Britain works anymore. There is deep dissatisfaction with the way our democracy functions– the British public see that it neither delivers effective governance nor reflects ordinary people’s interests. Britons want to see a radical change in the relationship the political class has with the public they serve.

Tackling this deep-seated malaise will involve more than just money. The public see underfunding of public services as just one of many reasons why the country doesn’t work as well as it should – and think that a failure to listen to ordinary people is part of the problem as well. Rebuilding hope, restoring faith in politics and convincing people that institutions of the state are working for the common good will require a new approach.

### **The public value respect more than any other attribute in their leaders**

That new approach is at once simpler and more difficult than spending more on public services. What the public most want from politicians, public servants and decision makers is to feel respected.

Instead of people being respected for what they contribute, Britons think respect has become synonymous with having a degree and having wealth. They want that to change and for greater recognition from those in power of the vital role that those in blue-collar jobs and key workers perform in keeping our country and their community going.

The public believe ‘showing respect for ordinary people’ is the most important attribute a political leader should have. Showing respect trumps political experience, understanding of business, the desire for fresh ideas, and even the ability to get things done for important political attributes. Britons feel that unless those in power properly respect the people they serve, they cannot be expected to deliver on the public’s priorities.

The voters who will be key to the next election result place an even higher premium on respect. Loyal Nationals and Conservative switchers (those who voted Conservative in 2019 and would now vote Labour or don’t know who they will vote for) score respect more highly than average as an attribute they think is important in a political leader. This means there is the potential for a significant electoral prize for the political party that chooses to embrace an agenda of respect.

### **Politicians have an opportunity to own an agenda of respect**

Feeling respected by a politician is not simply a proxy for whether people like or dislike that politician. Nor is respect the same as trust in politicians. Instead, being respected involves being seen, heard and acknowledged by those in positions of power. The good news is that being able to demonstrate that politicians and political parties respect ordinary people

is both more achievable in the short-term than tackling distrust, and itself a potential first step to addressing that deeper issue of public distrust.

Neither political party currently excels on the question of whether they respect ordinary people but there are differences between them:

- The Conservative Party has a net score of minus 39 per cent on the question of whether the party respects people like them.
- The Labour Party net-respect rating sits at just one per cent – though this is significantly higher than the trust scores for the party and 40 points higher than the Conservative respect score.

Given the importance the public place on being respected, these low scores are something both parties need to address - to either own a 'respect agenda', or at very least mitigate their weaknesses heading into the next General Election. If the Conservatives are to get a second hearing from the electorate, their focus has to be on mitigating the perception that they do not respect ordinary people. The Labour Party, on the other hand, has a chance to positively own a respect agenda that is popular with and matters for the public.

The public are less positive about the extent to which individual political leaders respect people like them. While most people don't feel actively looked down on or disparaged by political leaders, they don't feel respected or taken seriously by them either. Only 19 per cent of the public think that Keir Starmer respects people like them, even fewer - 13 per cent say the same about Rishi Sunak. The public are also more likely to think that Rishi Sunak looks down on people like them (48 per cent) than those who think the same about Keir Starmer (37 per cent). That perception of disrespect is something both leaders will look to address if they are to win over a sceptical electorate and build a mandate to govern.

### **The Respect Agenda**

The desire for respect is not simply an amorphous or abstract hope. The public has tangible expectations for what agenda of respect should involve.

### **Leaders can demonstrate respect by recognising contribution, demonstrating empathy and behaving honestly and authentically**

Being seen to demonstrate respect to the public involves four key elements:

- **Contribution** - The public want to see respect being offered on the basis of an individual's contribution to society rather than their social status or education level. That means showing more respect to those who work hard, play by the rules and contribute to their community and a greater recognition that success comes in different forms.



- **Empathy** - Leaders who can empathise with the experiences of ordinary people are more likely to be able to show respect to ordinary people too. In focus groups, Britons bemoan the decline in politicians who come from ordinary backgrounds and say they would feel more respected by politicians who understand their everyday struggles.
- **Authenticity** - For Britons 'being yourself' is a sign of respect. The leaders that the public identify as respecting ordinary people are those who show their true self when in public and don't try to pretend to be something they are not.
- **Honesty** - The public do not want to be patronised by politicians who assume the public are incapable of understanding the country faces tough choices. Instead, Britons want politicians who level with the public, and are honest about the challenges Britain faces.

### **A respect manifesto would be rooted in the day-to-day concerns of ordinary people**

Demonstrating respect goes beyond the values and experiences of politicians, it forms the basis for a series of policies that people most want to see politicians introduce.

What connects all these policies is that they are grounded in everyday ordinary concerns about family and community life. The public are not asking for grand political abstract visions, but instead see respect as linked to a series of tangible improvements to their everyday.

The most popular options when asked to select from a list of potential policy announcements that would demonstrate respect are: making it easier to get a GP appointment (49 per cent), followed by increasing the minimum wage (39 per cent), abolishing the BBC licence fee (36 per cent), increasing public sector pay for nurses, teachers and carers (35 per cent), building more affordable homes (35 per cent) and cracking down on criminals (32 per cent).

### **Respect could be a silver bullet to diffuse the culture wars**

While the salience of so-called culture war topics is often overplayed - the public agree for instance, by 73 per cent to 27 per cent "that there are many more important issues to address than "woke issues" and "political correctness". There is no doubt that for some disrespect is a product not just of economics but also culture. More socially conservative groups in particular believe that politicians will always consider the values of the liberal graduate class to be superior to any other. That leads to politicians failing to understand the importance of values like loyalty, tradition, patriotism and community in more non-metropolitan environments.

An agenda of respect could be a silver bullet that politicians and other institutional leaders, who feel trapped by cultural conflicts, can use to diffuse issues and deny conflict entrepreneurs the sense of disrespect they feed on. By consciously recognising and taking



seriously the views of those from more culturally conservative backgrounds and taking an approach to social issues that involves a conversation of equals, politicians can go a long way towards demonstrating respect.

### **Respect means recognising that local communities know best how to improve their neighbourhoods and empowering them to do so**

Respect isn't just about acknowledgement but agency too. People are more likely to feel respected when they are able to share their ideas about how things might get better and to play their part in mending 'Broken Britain' from the bottom up.

Central to demonstrating respect is the extent to which traditional decision makers are willing to give up some power and trust local people and community groups to make decisions about, and own the future of, their local area.

More than seven in ten Britons feel that local and national governments do not give residents and community groups the freedom to bring about improvements to their local area. Unleashing community agency then must be central to a public respect agenda. To do that, a new politics of respect needs to do three things: it needs to support local groups and institutions to collaborate with traditional decision makers to bring about change, to engage and empower the people and organisations who are pillars of communities and to build up local spaces where the public mix and meet together.

### **Institutions can show respect people by delivering for, listening to and involving the public**

The crisis of trust in and lack of respect from politicians is not limited to the political arena. Many of Britain's key national institutions face challenges of low or mediocre levels of public trust and many also feel that these institutions do not respect them. Quadrant analysis of the British public's trust and respect for institutions helps to understand how the public view our national and local institutions.

Six clusters emerge from high-trust-high-respect institutions to low-trust-low-respect institutions. Different strategies are needed for each to retain or regain public confidence.

- **High Trust-High Respect** institutions such as the National Trust and the NHS – the focus should be avoiding complacency, doing more of the same and helping other organisations to do so.
- **Medium-high trust/respect** institutions such as Universities and the Police – to secure their public standing these organisations need to do better jobs at showing they value those who look and think differently to themselves.
- **Medium respect/low trust** such as the Civil Service and the Labour Party need to focus on the material improvements they can make to people's lives and communities across the countries.

- **Low respect/high trust** such as the Royal Family and the Bank of England need to find ways to demonstrate they can relate to the challenges faced by ordinary people up and down the country. Part of that means a more accessible monarchy.
- **Medium-low respect/medium-low** trust such as the BBC should focus on practical steps to rebuild trust rather than constantly trying to respond to elite debates about ideological bias.
- **Low respect/low trust** such as big businesses need to win public confidence back. That requires businesses upholding their side of the social contract - not only adopting global corporate responsibility campaigns but also getting the basics right - treating their employees well and their customers fairly.

The overarching lesson for how institutions can show they respect the public is to do the job they're meant to do, genuinely listen, and engage with people's concerns and eliminate a 'computer says no' mentality. In this way, rebuilding trust and respect involves practical and visible steps rather than responding to highly elite cultural or ideological debates. An approach of both show and tell is needed to regain public confidence.

This report uses More in Common's British Seven segments. Those segments are:

- **Progressive Activists:** A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.
- **Civic Pragmatists:** A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, exhausted, community-minded, open to compromise, and socially liberal.
- **Disengaged Battlers:** A group that feels that they are just keeping their heads above water, and who blame the system for its unfairness. They are tolerant, insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked, and socially liberal.
- **Established Liberals:** A group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, confident, and pro-market.
- **Loyal Nationals:** A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and facing themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved, and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots.
- **Disengaged Traditionalists:** A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work, and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected.
- **Backbone Conservatives:** A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future and who follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, proud, secure, confident, and engaged with politics.

More detail about the British Seven segments is found in Annex A.





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# Introduction

## A Crisis of Confidence

Public confidence in our country is low. Well under half of Britons say that they are optimistic about the future of Britain and most say that nothing works anymore. That sense of gloom extends across all segments of the population. Only the two most economically secure segments - Established Liberals and Backbone Conservatives – are more optimistic than pessimistic that things will get better anytime soon.

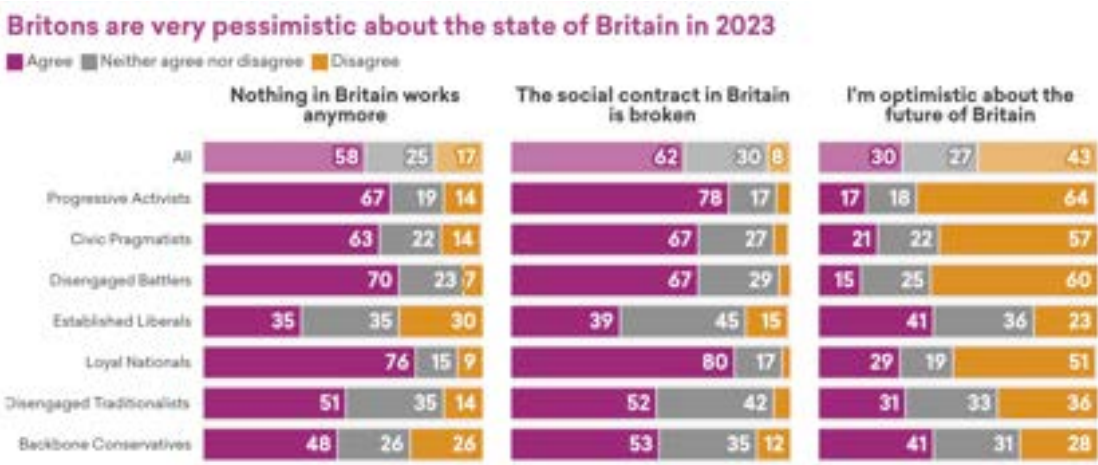
*I can't say that I'm optimistic about anything, to be honest with you. I've lost faith that I've not got anything I'm optimistic about. I'm just, I don't have any optimism. Sorry.*

**Emma, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

*Just listen to the people who are in poverty, like the real people, not the people at the top. Listen to the real people, the single parents, the people who are on benefits, the people who can't afford to feed their children. People who are working two jobs, the families who are bringing in two wages but still living in poverty. Just listen to your people, hear their cry, hear what they're trying to say, what they're trying to tell you.*

**Jay, Disengaged Traditionalist, Mid Bedfordshire**

**Figure 1**



Source: More in Common and The New Britain Project, 2023

At the heart of this malaise is a deep dissatisfaction with the way our democracy is working - delivering neither the effective governance Britain needs nor reflecting ordinary people's interests. Nearly two thirds of the public think that our political system is rigged in favour of the rich and influential, and 77 per cent say that democracy in the United Kingdom is in need of improvement.

*I feel it's almost like when you build a house, you have to have your foundations stable before you can build upon it. And our foundations or the government's foundations are not stable and therefore every time they try to lay a few bricks on top, it just crumbles.*

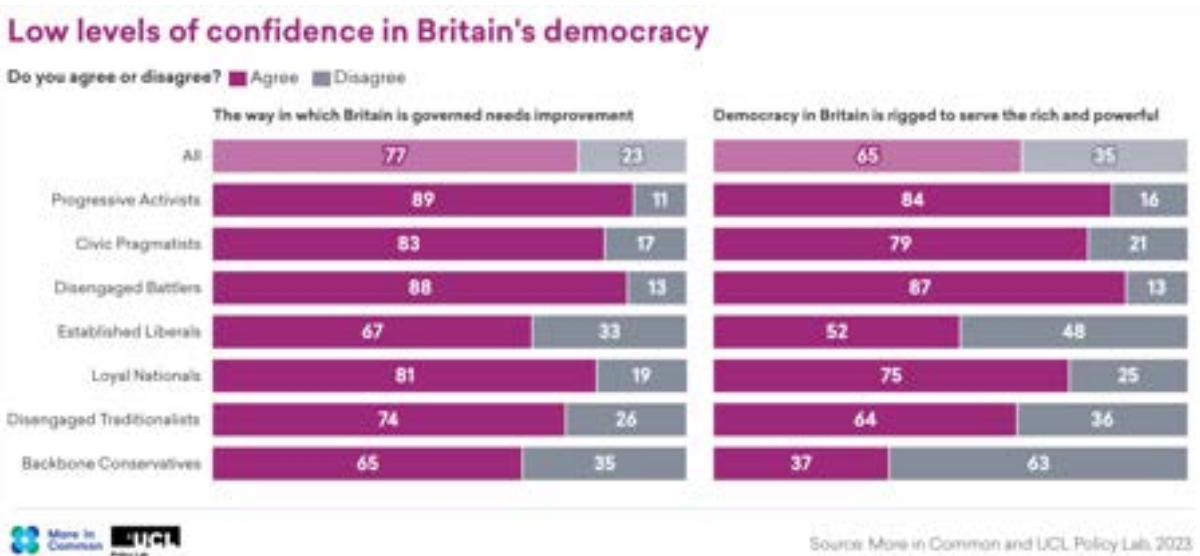
**Angela, Established Liberal, Surrey**

In focus groups the public describe politicians as out of touch, self-interested and unresponsive to the concerns of the public that they are supposed to represent. It is true that some degree of low regard towards politics is normal (and even healthy), but the level of current dissatisfaction goes beyond the usual cynicism. Instead, after years of turmoil, high profile incidents of 'one rule for politicians and one for the public' and the painful cost of living crisis, Britons are increasingly demanding that the relationship between the political class and the public undergoes radical change.

*I feel we have politicians through what happened with Covid, the respect has gone out the window. You've got people like Hancock, you had Boris, and I just feel respect for politicians has gone because some of the things they were telling us to do or not do, they were having parties and all different things. I just think my respect for politicians is finished.*

**Cliff, Loyal National, Dudley**

**Figure 2**



But it would be wrong to assume the malaise is limited to politicians. Conversations with the public often and quickly turn to their frustration that basic elements of the state just don't seem to function reliably anymore. In focus groups people discuss the endless waits to see a doctor, the unreliability of bus and train services, run-down, vandalised local parks left unrepaired for months and council services that should be designed to help but answer with "computer says no".

*I mean I've not been well myself, I've been full of a cough and cold and I haven't phoned the doctor for an appointment because they'll always say it's viral. I have a friend who works in a doctor's surgery and she actually said to me that on Tuesday when they went back to work after the bank holiday, they had 2,172 calls to the surgery. A lot of them were abandoned because they obviously haven't got the staff to answer that amount of calls. So I think as well as it being frustrating for people trying to get through to a doctor, it must be very frustrating for the staff as well when they can't answer the calls.*

**Linda, Loyal National, Bolton North East**

*My GP surgery has been dire - absolutely terrible. You can't get an appointment for love nor money. The telephone appointments skirt through what you need. They need to see you and they don't.*

**Diane, Established Liberal, Wycombe**

*The local police forces and councils, they can't make the place safe. The councils can't keep the glass off the floor in playgrounds now.*

**Tracey, Loyal National, Sheffield**

*If you look at play parks, there are teenagers and broken glasses in the little ones' play parks, where you can't take a little eight-month-old child on the swing. That's not right. So yeah, I would support something if we could make changes like that*

**Andrea, Loyal National, Northumberland**

*The coastline is the only bus that goes through Leeds to Tadcaster to York. So if you can't get on the coastline, you are basically beached, if you can't drive. Bear in mind that's a 20 minute drive and it's the only bus so it's the only option you've got. And then the government scheme recently has put it as a £2 single for everybody. So that's the only thing that I've actually noticed that is amazing. Because it's so expensive and people in Tad have no other option unless you've got a bus pass.*

**Charlotte, Established Liberal, Tadcaster**

It is tempting to assume that the solution to these problems is simply more money for public services. But even if that were the sole answer, it is clear that whoever wins the election isn't going to be able to spend their way out of the problems of 'Broken Britain'. With the legacy of pandemic costs, energy support packages and a public currently

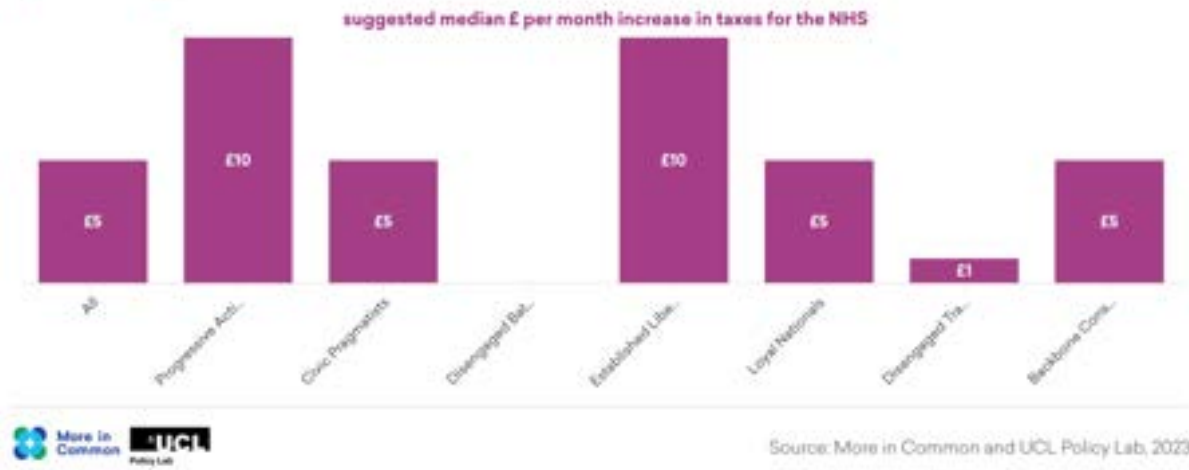


unwilling to countenance much higher taxation for public services, there is limited appetite for increased spending.

Even on NHS spending, by far the clearest public priority for extra investment, the median member of the public suggests that they would only be willing to pay just £5 more a month in extra taxation towards the health service, and no segment offering to pay above £10, certainly not enough to bring about the sea-change that Britons want to see in NHS services.

**Figure 3**

### Limited public support for increased taxation to supplement NHS spending

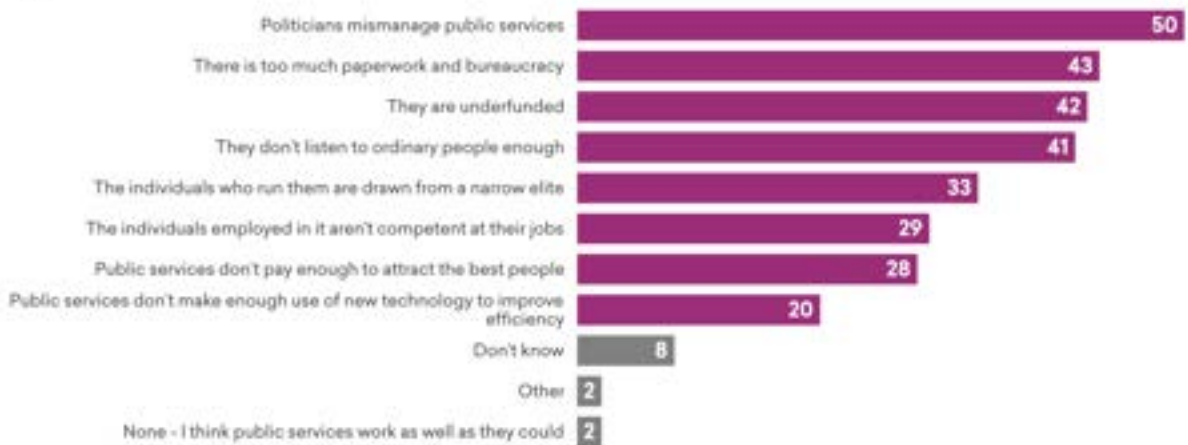


But, in truth, the public see underfunding as just one of many reasons why public services don't work as well as they should, also blaming political mismanagement, the growth of bureaucracy and an unwillingness to listen to ordinary people.

**Figure 4**

**Britons blame political mismanagement for public services failure**

Which of the following reasons explains why public services in the UK don't work as well as they could? Select all that apply.



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

Only among Progressive Activists, the most left leaning of the British Seven Segments, do a clear majority blame public service failure on underfunding. Instead, among the swing Loyal Nationals - the Red Wall group who switched from Labour to Conservative at the last election and who will again determine who gets the keys to Downing Street - 56 per cent blame underperformance of public services on a failure to listen to ordinary people.

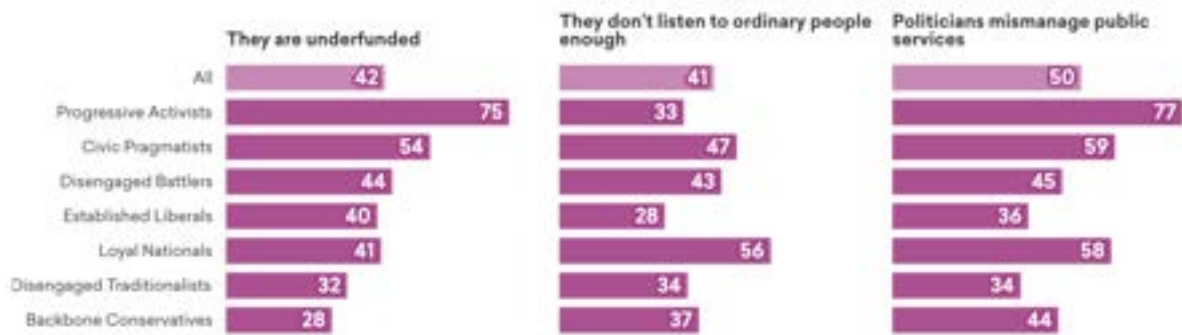
*I personally don't think throwing money at it is the answer. If it was your own business. I don't think you'd run it like it is, but I think it's a wonderful thing the NHS is. I think it was something that was great in the forties, fifties when it was starting out. I think it has to pivot somewhat. I think it has to change a little bit.*

**Fiona, Loyal National, Birmingham Northfields**

**Figure 5**

**Progressive Activists blame public services' failure on underfunding, while Loyal Nationals think that they don't listen to ordinary people enough**

Which of the following reasons explains why public services in the UK don't work as well as they could? Select all that apply.



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

So, while funding allocations will always be part of the debate on how to improve services, and will no doubt dominate the General Election campaign and subsequent spending review, tackling the malaise, restoring faith in politics and convincing people that institutions of the state are working for the common good requires something different.

## A Respect Reset

That something different is at once, simpler and more difficult than spending more - what the public most want from politicians, public servants and decision makers is a return to respect.

Asked about the importance of a series of attributes in political leadership, it is a leader who 'shows respect for ordinary people' that emerges on top. In fact, the premium placed on respect not only trumps political experience, understanding of businesses, and the desire for fresh ideas, but even the ability to get things done.

*I can't change anything and nobody [in this focus group] can really change anything. But can all change the way that we act and the way that we respect people, of course we can.*

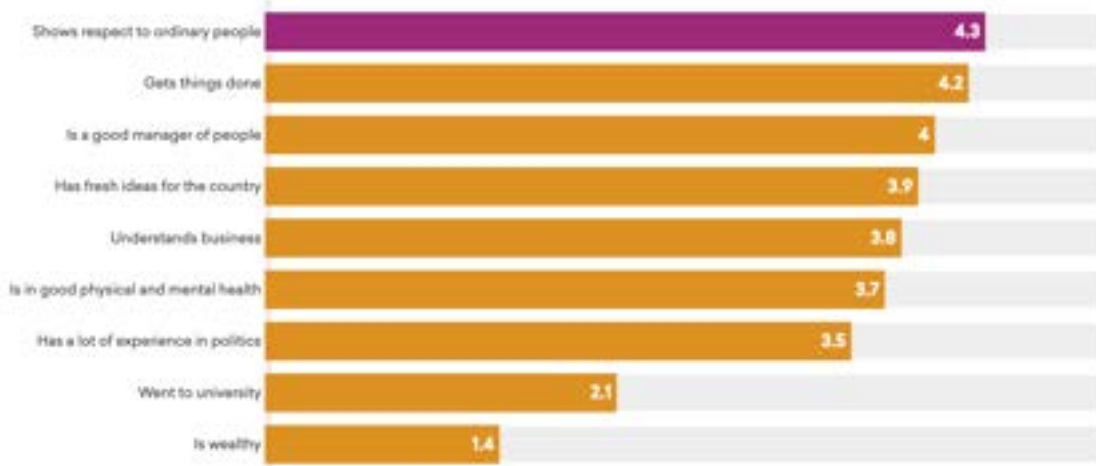
**Craig, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

In focus groups, Britons expand on the importance of respect, explaining that unless those in power properly respect the people they serve, they cannot be expected to properly deliver on the public's priorities. Yet, despite its importance, the public also say that the idea that our political class respects ordinary people is increasingly difficult to believe.

**Figure 6**

**Above all other attributes, the public value politicians who show respect to ordinary people**

On a scale of 0-5 where 5 is very important and 0 is not important at all. How important is it that a political leader...



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

**Figure 7**

**... and respect for ordinary people is valued most by key members of Labour's electoral coalition**

On a scale of 0-5 where 5 is very important and 0 is not important at all. How important is it that a political leader shows respect for ordinary people



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

## The Respect Agenda

Looking ahead to the next General Election, the voters who will be key to the election result place an even higher premium on respect. Loyal Nationals score respect more highly than average as an attribute they think is important in a political leader. The same is also true of swing voters: those who voted Conservative in 2019 and who now intend to vote Labour and those who voted Conservative in 2019 and who now don't know who they will vote for. Each group rates the importance of politicians 'respecting ordinary people' at 4.5 and 4.6 out of five respectively.

Given these are the key voters that both parties need to court in the run up to next year's election, there is a valuable electoral prize for the Party that can best own an agenda of respect.

But what does that agenda look like?

Section 1 - Britons and Respect

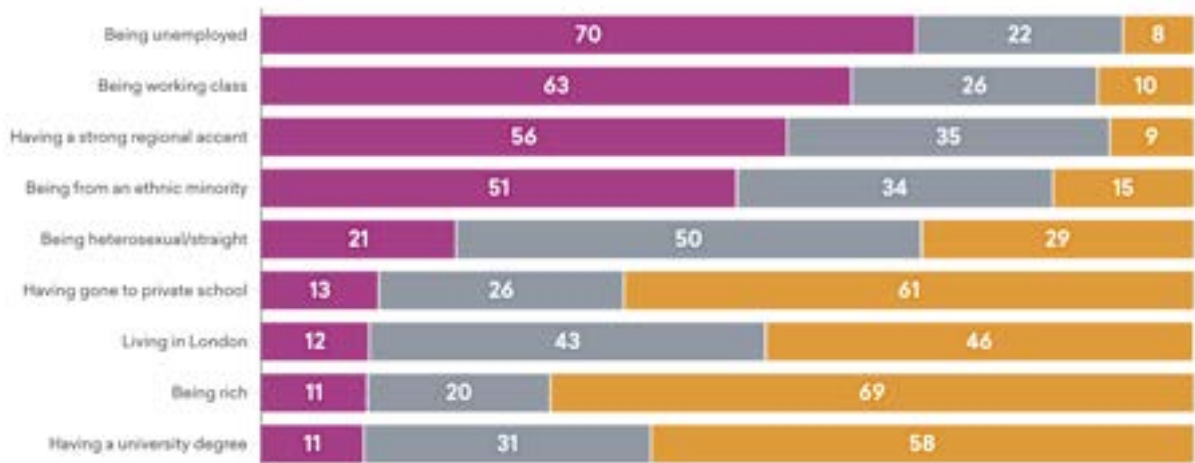
## Who Gets Respect?

A conversation about respect starts with who the public thinks gets respect and who in our society doesn't get the respect they deserve.

**Figure 8**

### The public think that those in power treat working class people less seriously than rich people

For each of the following attributes please say whether you think it means it is likely that people in positions of power or authority take you **more seriously**, **less seriously** or makes no difference:



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

There is no surprise that in the era of mass higher education, de-industrialisation and the shift in employment patterns, Britons think that respect has become aligned with having a degree and having wealth.

*I just feel like we're electing these people from the likes of Cambridge and Oxford and St. Andrews and the likes, and I'm not being funny, but not the likes in me. And I think most people in this call would never ever get the opportunity to even see Oxford or Cambridge, let alone attend it. So they're just so un-relatable that they don't see there's a problem. They don't know what that problem's like. They've never suffered, they've never looked at the bank balance and went, oh my God, I've got a tenner to do me to the end of the month*

**Craig, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

*Obviously the Conservatives have more power, not just because they're in government, but because they all come from Eton and Cambridge and Oxford. So they have connections..*

**Stephen, Loyal National, Glasgow**

Asked about personal characteristics, the public believe that those who are taken more seriously by people in power are those who are rich (69 per cent), went to private school (61 per cent) and those who have a degree (58 per cent). In contrast the public think that those who are unemployed (70 per cent), working class (63 per cent) and have a strong regional accent (56 per cent) or are from an ethnic minority (51 per cent) are likely to be taken less seriously.

Many Britons find this imbalance frustrating. This is not because the public are anti-aspiration or opposed to higher education, far from it - most people aspire to make more money for themselves and for their families and want to ensure their children have access to the best educational opportunities - but they resent a situation where respect has become synonymous with the size of your bank balance or the number of letters after your name.

They find the misallocation of respect particularly galling because it ignores the fact that there are very many people in non-graduate or lower paid jobs, without whom the country would simply stop functioning. Yet that contribution is too often being taken for granted.

According to the public, those who work as teachers, farmers, care workers, retail workers and factory workers aren't getting the respect that they deserve - in contrast to lawyers, academics, doctors and CEOs who do get that respect.

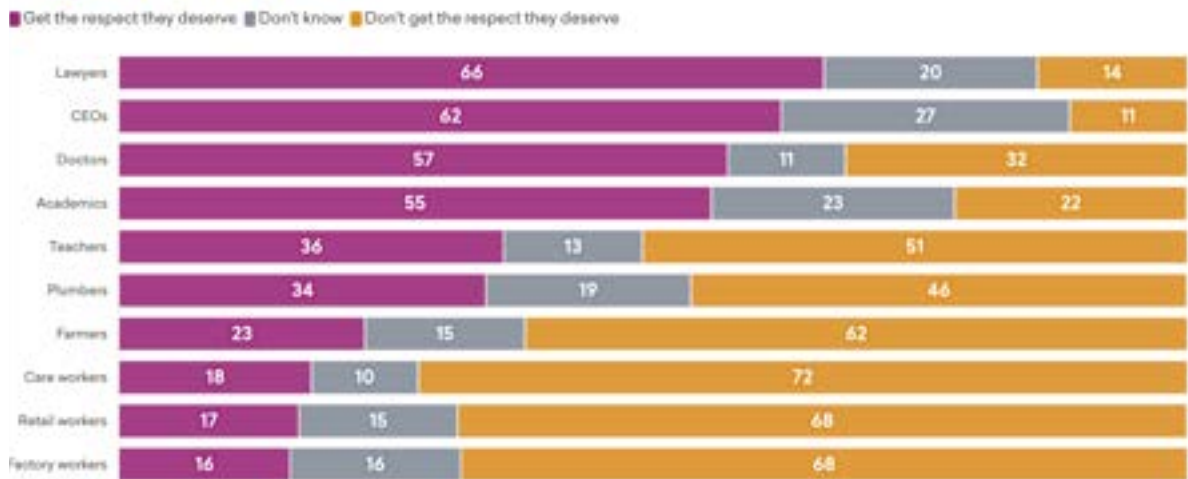
The public knows the value of blue-collar workers and how important they are because they come into contact with them day in, day out in our schools, supermarkets and care homes. They know that the people who work in these jobs often have roles which are both physically and mentally demanding, but at the same time require a constant supply of empathy, kindness and conscientiousness. And they know that the financial reward for these jobs is far lower than those in graduate professions. Yet they don't believe that the respect they have for these roles is matched by others - and in particular those in positions of power.



**Figure 9**

**The public think that blue-collar workers don't get the respect they deserve**

Thinking about people employed in the following roles, do you think generally they get the respect they deserve or don't get the respect they deserve?



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

*We don't pay them enough respect. They're forgotten. The men that go underground and clean out our sewer systems on a daily basis, who thinks of them on a daily basis? The ones that climb up on the electrical lines and the phone lines for us to contact our family or even have this conversation, who remembers them? And one slip on a cable that's his life on the line. They don't get enough respect for what they actually do for us. The ones that maintain and carry out the repairs on our whole infrastructure in the UK, I don't think we give them enough respect for what they do.*

**Wassim, Loyal National, Dudley**

For many people, the experience of Covid-19 further highlighted the imbalance in respect. During this period people saw plainly there are a whole group of jobs such as refuse collectors, shop assistants, builders that can't stop even when a major pandemic hits the country. People in these roles were required to continue travelling into work in person - often putting their own health at risk - in order to make sure that the vital functions of the country kept going.

In contrast, white collar graduate jobs, whether furloughed or switched to working from home, were, in many people's eyes, revealed to be less fundamental to the running of the country.

That appreciation for the difficult but vital role of key workers helps to explain why so many members of the public took to their doorsteps every Thursday to clap for carers - recognising the contribution that the NHS was making to fighting the pandemic. Many now

express regret that the same display of gratitude wasn't extended to other key workers. But the public don't feel this level of contribution from key workers has been embraced by our political class.

*During Covid we saw just how essential certain jobs were and it wasn't the ones we thought everyone goes on about, oh we a job stacking shelves in Asda. Well I'm sorry, during the lockdown you needed those shops open, we needed people stacking those shelves. So turns out people were cracking jokes. But essential has got a different meaning now, doesn't it?*

**Amy, Loyal National, Workington**

*If anything Covid has shown us that the big fancy jobs that we thought that we were always pushing our children towards and we were always pushed towards doing didn't really matter, but when it came to Covid it was lorry drivers, the carers, the nurses, all these kind of people, the lower paid people were the people that were the key people. I feel like it was all right to come to the doorsteps and clap for people, but the reality was that we didn't really have a choice whether we worked or not and we didn't get well paid for it.*

**Laura, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

*The nurses were the ones on the frontline. And I mean during Covid I was a frontline carer so I was going into homes with people who had just come out of hospital and it's the doctors and the nurses that are on the front lines that I've done everything. And again, Boris and Patty Gate, he was sat eating birthday cake with all his mates and the nurses were on the front line and the politicians earning mega wages and nurses and doctors and hospital staff, NHS staff are the ones that are suffering. We all stood and clapped them on the front line when they were saving lives. But we should be getting behind them now so they can get a better wage.*

**Cordelia, Loyal National, Leigh**

Nor are feelings of lack of respect limited to those in particular professions. Over 51 per cent think that those from ethnic minority backgrounds are likely to be treated less seriously by those in positions of power compared to just 15 percent who say they are treated more seriously. From the egregious treatment of those involved in the Windrush scandal, to the fact that nearly 25 years on from the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, the Metropolitan Police have once again been found to be institutionally racist, it is no wonder that many members of minority communities feel so disrespected by institutions of the state.

*I think for me the brutality, some of the things that you've heard in the news recently, I've heard some think that is quite close to one of my friends that really puts me off [trusting the police]. I've got younger brothers and to hear how they are treated very unjustly as well, that makes me really quite not trusting of [the police] but again, it's not everyone and I think that's really important. There are going to be corrupt police, there are going to be police that have their views and prejudices and racist because they are human beings but that*

*sometimes does taint when you're saying what do we think about the police maybe sometimes there's a lot of them that are that, but there will be, there'll be amount that are trustworthy, are doing the right thing in their job.*

**Shireen, Loyal National, Erewash**

Until politicians are able to demonstrate that they do respect ordinary people, regardless of their wealth, profession, background or race, the public are unlikely to have much faith they can get Britain back on the right track.

Is there an opportunity for politicians to shift the dial on the question of respect?

## Politicians and Political Parties on Respect

The crisis of trust in our politicians and political parties is well documented. The question of whether the public trust or distrust the two main parties reveals a severe trust deficit for both Labour and the Conservatives.

Overall, on a net trust-distrust scale, the Conservative Party scores minus 50 and the Labour Party minus 29. More striking is the extent to which the low levels of trust span right across the population. Even Backbone Conservatives have net-negative trust in the Conservative Party, while the Labour Party only enjoys a positive level of trust with one segment of the population (and barely at that) the Civic Pragmatists.

*I did vote for the Conservatives last time, but I don't think I'd be voting again. But who do you vote for? I don't want to waste my vote. But who do you vote for in that case? For they are all the time. They promise you things and we'll do this and we'll do that, but they won't.*

**Joanne, Loyal National, Erewash**

*I think we are all sceptical of the government, again, as we've all pointed out that there is no trust really in politicians and it's been proved time and time again. I guess the only way I would personally be convinced is by actually seeing them build new schools, by the roads being done, more evidence-based, that level of accountability is what you can actually see. So we can see more hospitals, there's evidence that they're investing in the NHS and that waiting lists are going down, and people are able to access those services. But again, whether we ever get there or not is up for debate.*

**Tom, Disengaged Traditionalist, Wakefield**

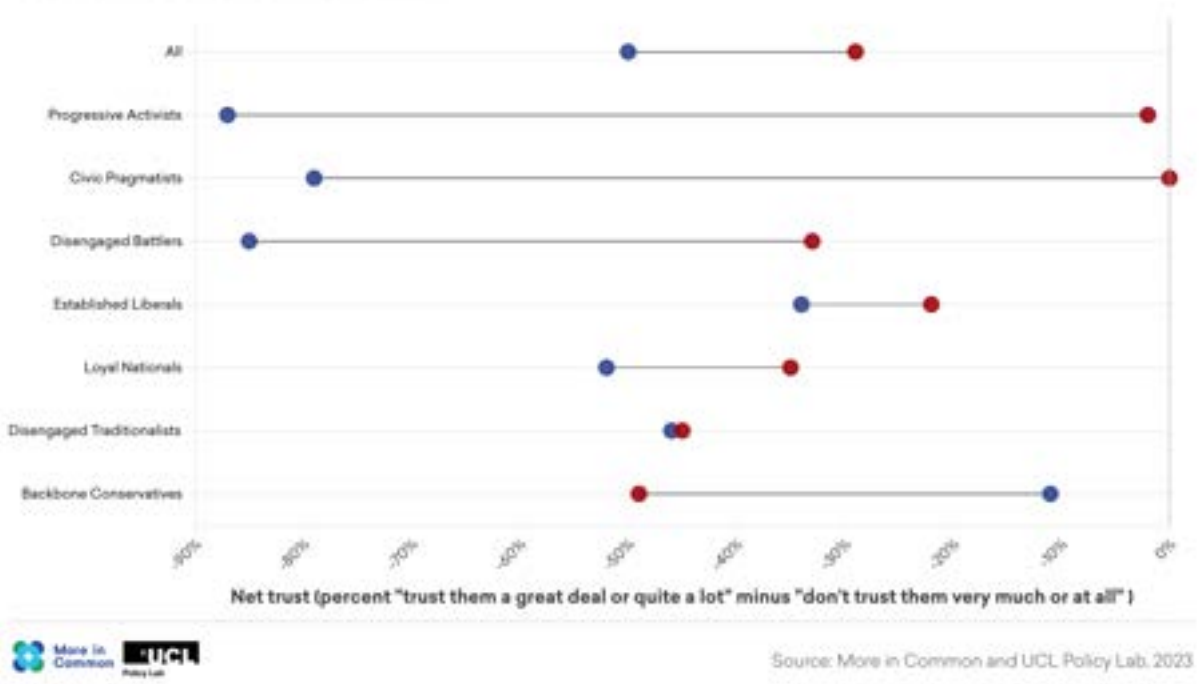
Partisan motivation then is not enough to explain low levels of trust in the political parties. Instead, it reflects the fact that the public do not think that politicians have their best interests at heart and are not competent enough to solve the problems that the country faces.

Both parties will struggle to regain the public's trust in the short-term – absent sustained tangible improvements in everyday life. Given the ongoing cost of living crisis and struggles of public services, it is hard to see how the needle can be shifted on the issue of trust before the General Election.

**Figure 10**

### Britons' trust in political parties remains low

Net trust in the **Conservatives** and **Labour**



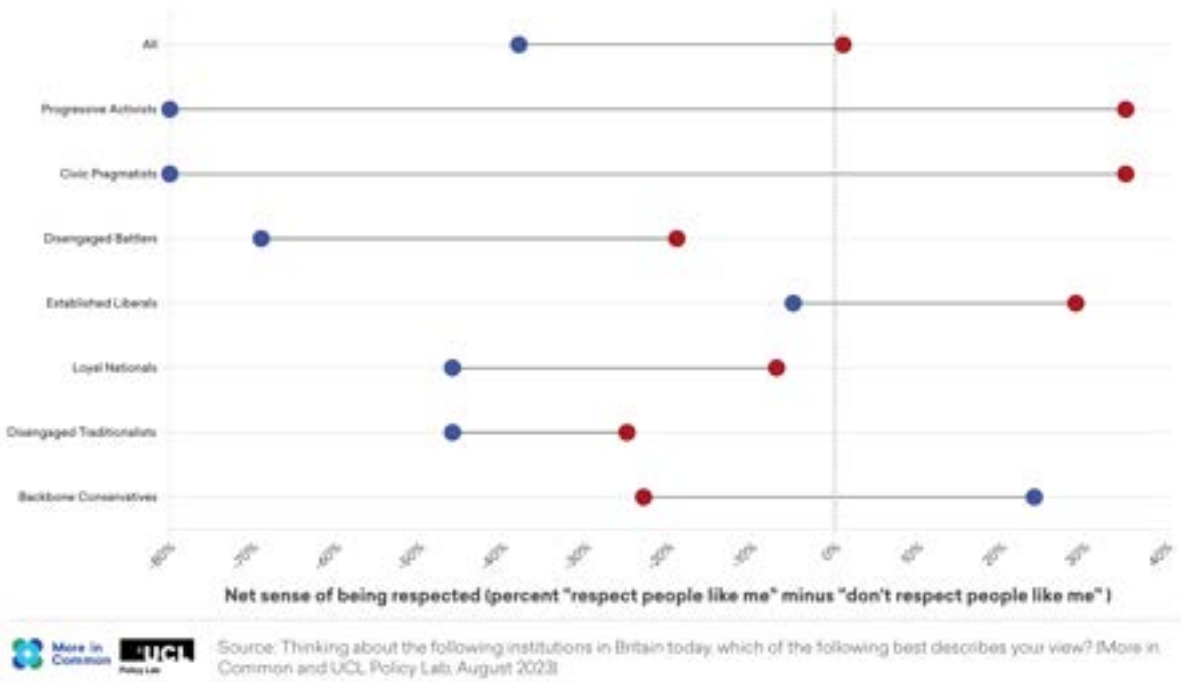
It might be assumed that the question of whether a political party is trustworthy and whether that party 'respects people like me' is indistinguishable in the public mind. This is not the case - building a greater sense that politicians and political parties respect ordinary people is both more achievable in the short-term and itself a potential first step to addressing that deeper issue of public distrust.

While it is true that neither party scores highly on the question of respect for ordinary people, the perception challenges are far less insurmountable than around trust (particularly for the Labour Party). What's more there is a real opportunity for both parties to either own a 'respect agenda', or at very least mitigate their weaknesses heading into the next General Election.

**Figure 11**

**Britons don't believe that political parties respect them very much**

The public feel that neither the **Conservatives** nor **Labour** respect 'people like them'



Overall, on the question of whether the party respects people like them, the Conservative Party has a net score of minus 38 per cent. Only Backbone Conservatives are likely to agree on balance that the Conservative Party respects people like them (although Established Liberals only narrowly disagree). It should worry the Conservatives that Loyal Nationals give the party a net-respect score of minus 46 per cent. Considering the importance of respect to the public and this swing group in particular, there is a clear imperative for the Conservatives to use their last year in Government before the election to convince the public and in particular those Loyal National voters that they really do respect people like them.

The Labour Party is in a different position. While its net-respect rating sits at just 1 per cent - it is nonetheless positive and significantly higher than the trust scores for the party. In fact, three of the seven segments give Labour a very positive score on the question of whether the Party "respects people like me". Even among Loyal Nationals, who tend to be highly cynical about politicians, the net-respect score for the Labour Party is only minus 7 per cent - 38 points higher than the Conservatives and well within a range that, with a respect agenda properly embraced, could tilt positive before the election.

If the Conservatives' focus has to be on mitigating their disadvantage in the perception of their lack of respect for ordinary people, the Labour Party has a chance to positively own an agenda that matters to the public.

Both parties face challenges with the two more disengaged segments. These segments are the least likely to think the parties respect people like them. Disengaged Battlers – the most economically precarious of the segments – feel disrespected because of their experiences with a system that all too often lets them down. From benefits to employment rights, to cost of living support, Disengaged Battlers will only start to feel respected when they feel political parties do more to address the issues facing people like them. Disengaged Traditionalists, on the other hand, are more likely to consider that elite politicians will never respect people like them and used moments such as the Brexit referendum to express their frustration with the political class. Convincing Disengaged Traditionalists on the issue of respect will require convincing them that their cultural values and worldview are taken just as seriously as those from a more socially liberal persuasion.

*I don't think they did themselves any favours by what I consider to be their weak dealing of the Dominic Cummings affair, when they allowed him to do what he did without any sanction. For me, that was just a massive no-no, and that should have been dealt with and dealt with properly, because that was just... one rule for us, and one rule for them and it really got my back up, that did, personally speaking.*

**Andrew, Disengaged Traditionalist, Derby**

*I don't think [my MP] is interested beyond the elections, I know that he is in league with certain groups that a lot of us wouldn't agree with, like the local fox hunt and stuff because the local hunt master is a former police chief superintendent, her husband is a former judge, so you know, they are in the pockets of them and not reflecting the will of the wider community which is to try and shut down the local hunts.*

**Maggy, Disengaged Traditionalist, Dronfield**

*I'm in a bit of a lucky position at the minute, where I can afford my bills, but if I was working at my old minimum wage job, I'd really be struggling. I've noticed it impacting my family more than myself, because my parents were full-time carers for my autistic siblings. They were living on Universal Credit, and my mum's having to borrow money off me and such, just to pay for food and fuel and whatnot. It really hit them quite hard.*

**Josie, Disengaged Battler, West Brom**

## The Party Leaders

The public are less positive about individual politicians and the extent to which they respect people like them. While most people don't feel actively looked down on or disparaged by political leaders, they don't feel respected or taken seriously by them either.

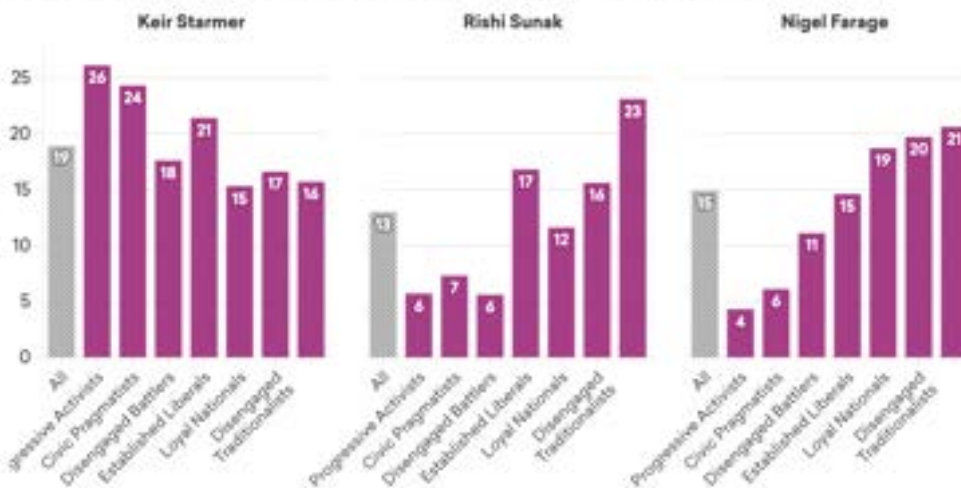
Overall, the public do not think that Keir Starmer respects people like them (only 19 per cent say that he does), while 37 per cent say that Keir Starmer looks down on people like them.

Voters are even less likely to think that Rishi Sunak respects people like them (only 13 per cent say he does), and even more likely (48 per cent) to say that the Prime Minister looks down on people like them.

**Figure 12**

### Politicians score low on measures of respect

Do you think each of the following politicians respect people like you?



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

The reasons that people think that Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak do not respect people like them differ between the two leaders. Both need to do different things to dispel the notion that they do not respect ordinary working people or to positively own an agenda of respect.

In focus groups Britons explain they do not think the Prime Minister respects them in part because of recent decisions by the Government - in particular that the Conservatives did not do enough to help those most in need during the cost of living crisis. But Rishi Sunak also faces a personal challenge on the issue of respect. Britons explain that his personal wealth, revelations about his wife's tax affairs, and the fact that he's now had a year as Prime Minister to show respect and has, in their eyes, failed to do so, has left them feeling he



doesn't respect people like them. For the Prime Minister to convince the public he respects people like them will require tangible evidence that his Government is making a difference to improving people's lives - there is no doubt his five pledges matter a lot in this regard. But Rishi Sunak also needs to do more to demonstrate that he genuinely understands the lives and world views of people very different from himself.

*Yeah, I just think Rishi Sunak's just out of touch. He's in his ivory tower making these decisions. I think a lot of them, like Kelly said, they're the same. They are very affluent people who make decisions and they don't understand what really is going on on the ground and they don't listen. I think they do things to play each other off. They're probably all friends and it's highly annoying. I just don't think they're running the country very well at all.*

**Coretta, Established Liberal, Somerton and Frome**

*I think comes across as a bit arrogant. I don't think he understands the struggles that people are going through. I mean I believe he's quite wealthy and seems like he don't understand that a lot of people are struggling. That's what my understanding, that's how I feel when I see him on TV and things.*

**Adam, Disengaged Traditionalist, Mid-Bedfordshire**

For Keir Starmer, the respect challenge is different. People's belief that the Labour leader does not respect people like them tends to be driven either by antipathy to politicians in general or by a view that they haven't yet seen him do anything to demonstrate respect. A common complaint is that the Leader of the Opposition only complains rather than offering a positive vision for the future. There is also a lingering suspicion that 'like his predecessors' Keir Starmer does not respect the world view of working class people on issues like immigration or Brexit. Addressing these concerns and showing that he respects ordinary people will require the Labour Leader to own a proactive policy agenda focused on people's concerns and for him to do more to dispel the notion that the Labour Party only exists to represent a socially liberal graduate class.

*I dunno if I'm particularly keen on Keir Starmer, I just think he's better than what we've currently got. I'm not sure I trust him. He comes across a bit smarmy for my liking, but I don't fully feel like I could invest trust in him - certainly not yet. But at the same time, I think he is a bit more grounded and a bit more real than Rishi Sunak. So yeah, I think it's a lesser of two evils.*

**Nick, Loyal National, Somerton and Frome**

*I quite like Keir Starmer. I think he's quite prim and proper. He's got his head screwed on. He's not originally a politician, so he's not like always wanted to be Prime Minister, He's come from a different background and now thinks you know what, I could change the country.*

**Harry, Loyal National, Dudley**

Nigel Farage is often cited as a politician with everyman appeal. This is not entirely borne out in public opinion. On the question of 'respecting people like me' he ranks in between Sunak and Starmer. However, the former Brexit Party Leader is, of the three, the one who people are least likely to say would 'take them for granted'. He is also the politician that attracts the highest 'respect score' with the swing Loyal National segment – suggesting that if one of the mainstream parties does not own the respect agenda, a populist leader (possibly even a resurgent Nigel Farage) could capture this important element of the public mood. That in turn would make it harder for the Conservatives to hold their new Red Wall voters or for Labour to win them back.



## Section 2: The Respect Election

Given the premium the public place on respect across politics and public services there will be an electoral prize for the political party that is best able to own a respect agenda in the run up to the next General Election. What would such an agenda look like?

### Four expectations of politicians

Respect may seem to be an amorphous term, but the public have clear expectations of what they want to see when they talk about those in positions of power and influence demonstrating respect for ordinary people. Those expectations can be summarised under four key frames: contribution, empathy, authenticity and honesty.

*Britain is very much a class-based society and if you end up in one of these top jobs, it's assumed you get an automatic respect. But I think you need to earn that respect. You need to show that respect. You just don't get it*

**Craig, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

#### Contribution

More than anything else, the public want to see respect being offered on the basis of an individual's contribution to society rather than their social status or education level. That means more respect for those who work hard, play by the rules and contribute to their community and greater recognition that success comes in different forms.

As part of that, the public want politicians to have the same epiphany as they had during the pandemic, when it became obvious which jobs were essential to keeping the country going during times of crisis. They want to see respect for the contribution of manual and blue collar workers and for that to involve more than just token gestures, such as clapping, but instead tangible measures that make their lives easier and better.

At the same time, throughout the cost of living crisis there has been a pervasive feeling, particularly among more working class segments, that while those who are very rich have been well looked after and those who don't work are supported on benefits, those who are in work, but struggling to make ends meet, haven't received the support they deserve. As a result they explain their life has, in many cases, felt like it has been reduced to 'working to live and living to work'. That lack of support for people, many of whom have paid taxes and contributed to the system their entire lives, is for many the most profound display of disrespect.

To address this the public want to see state benefits and services which better respect and support the contribution that ordinary working people make, particularly during times of hardship.



## Empathy

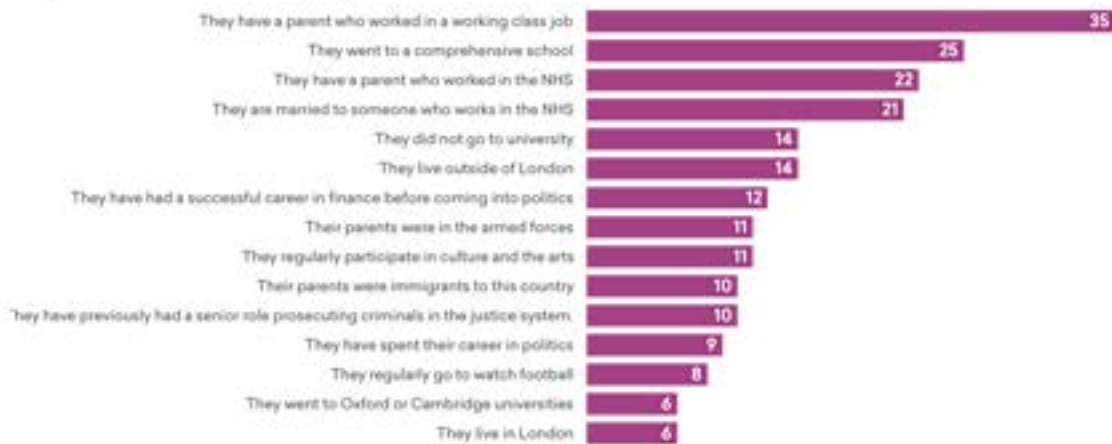
Britons draw a direct line between empathy and respect. They believe that leaders who can empathise with the experiences of ordinary people are more likely to respect them too. In focus groups, people bemoan the decline in politicians who come from ordinary backgrounds. The public would feel more respected by politicians who understand their everyday struggles, have experienced being working class themselves or at the very least come from a working class or public sector background.

The link between respect and relatability is also borne out in polling. Asked what attributes in a politician would show that they respect people like you, the top answers were 'have a parent who worked in a working class job' (35 per cent), went to a comprehensive school (25 per cent) and have a parent, or a spouse who worked in the NHS (22 per cent) and (21 per cent).

**Figure 13**

### What attributes of leaders make the public most likely to feel respected?

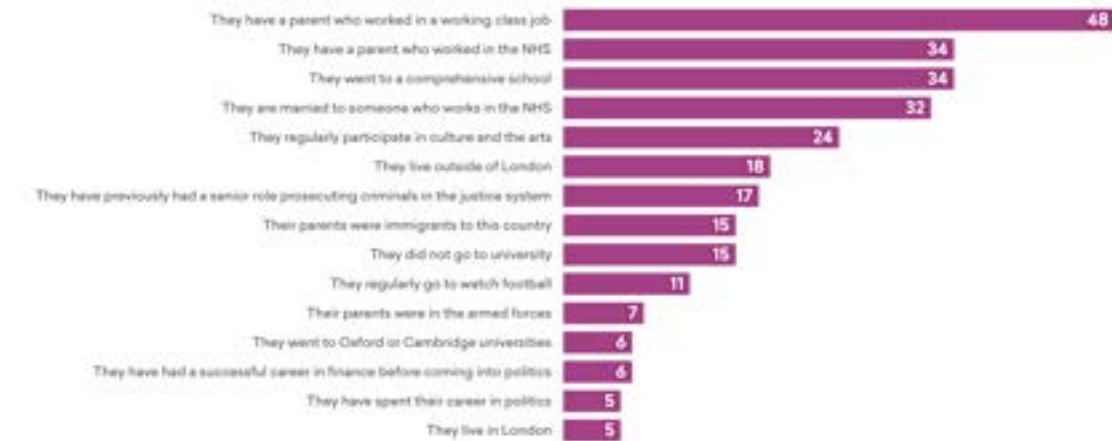
If you learnt any of the following about a political party leader, which if any would make you think that they respect people like you? Please select all that apply.



**Figure 14**

**What attributes of leaders make Progressive Activists most likely to feel respected?**

If you learnt any of the following about a political party leader, which if any would make you think that they respect people like you? Please select all that apply.



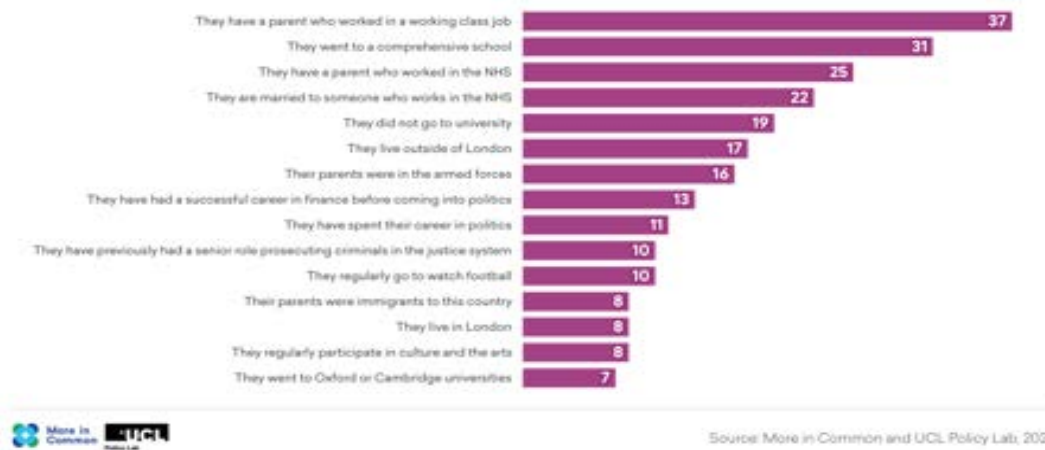
Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

That desire for politicians who have experience of the NHS or herald from a working class background is one that is shared across segments who often hold very different world views. For both socially liberal Progressive Activists and more socially conservative Loyal Nationals, a parent in a working class job, attending a comprehensive school and having a parent who worked in the NHS are the top three attributes that would make a political leader think that they respected people like them. The difference between the segments only expresses itself lower down, with participation in culture and the arts being the fifth most important attribute for Progressive Activists in demonstrating respect but the second lowest for Loyal Nationals.

**Figure 15**

**What attributes of leaders make Loyal Nationals most likely to feel respected?**

If you learnt any of the following about a political party leader, which if any would make you think that they respect people like you? Please select all that apply.



The link the public makes between lack of empathy and lack of respect is driven not just by economics but culture too. The public think it fairly obvious that a politician who does not understand or respect their struggles won't put in place the economic policies that will most help people like them. But more socially conservative groups also think a lack of empathy and respect for working people means politicians will always consider the values of the liberal graduate class to be superior to any other, and fail to understand the premium on values like loyalty, tradition, patriotism and community in more non-metropolitan environments.

Political parties should look to address issues of empathy and relatability by diversifying the pipeline of talent and encouraging more people from working class and non graduate backgrounds to enter politics. At the same time, graduate overrepresentation in politics will, most likely, always be a feature of our politics. Those politicians who don't come from working class backgrounds need to do more to immerse themselves in the communities they hope to represent in order to better understand the experiences, struggles and world views of people from backgrounds different to them.

**Authenticity**

For Britons 'being yourself' is a sign of respect. The leaders that the public identify as respecting ordinary people are those that show their true self when in public. That is why politicians such as Mhari Black, Angela Rayner and Andy Burnham are so regularly cited in focus groups as examples of politicians who respect ordinary people. That link between authenticity and respect also helps to explain the popularity of Boris Johnson among Loyal National voters in 2019 - even though these voters were aware that Johnson came from a very different background to them, they thought he presented his authentic self and didn't try to be someone he is not. On the flip side the importance of authenticity helps to explain

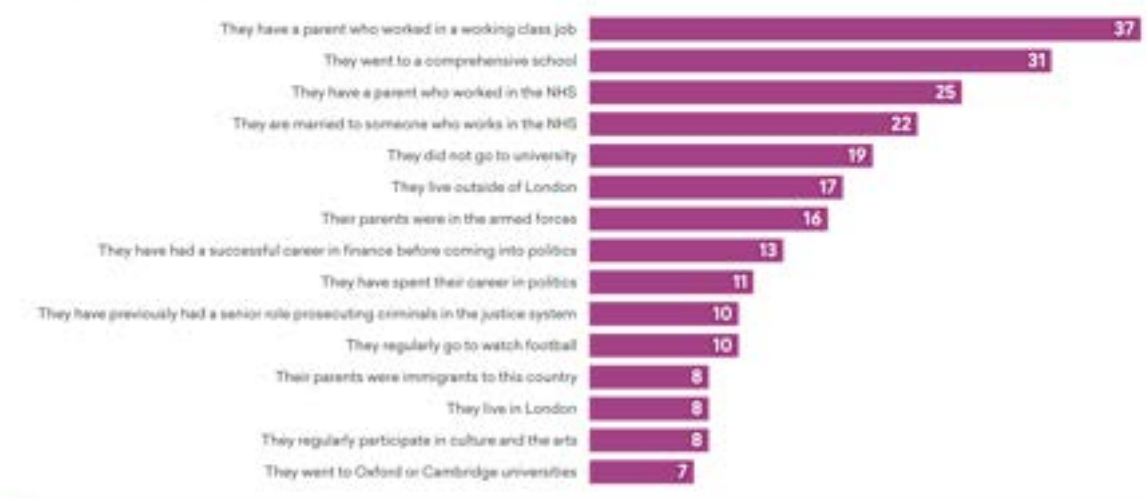


the dramatic drop in Johnson’s approval among this group following the Partygate revelations which signalled that the then Prime Minister was not in fact as authentic as he had portrayed himself. The public do not want politicians to be simply unguarded or irresponsible - but rather they want politicians to act more like ordinary people rather than trying to be someone else.

**Figure 16**

### What attributes of leaders make Loyal Nationals most likely to feel respected?

If you learnt any of the following about a political party leader, which if any would make you think that they respect people like you? Please select all that apply.



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

*I quite like Angela Rayner. She comes across as being quite down-to-earth person of the people, I guess. I just think she comes across as being a really, really nice, genuine person.*

**Natascha, Loyal National, Swindon**

### Honesty

Alongside authenticity sits honesty. The public do not want to be patronised by politicians who assume the public are incapable of understanding the country faces tough choices. Instead, Britons want politicians who level with the public and are honest about the challenges Britain faces rather than making endless promises or pledges they do not intend to fulfil. They want to be levelled with and reassured there is a plan for the future of the country and to be told what it will take and the choices that need to be made in order to get there.

*I think they should just be honest and be straightforward with the public and say it's going to get hard before it gets easier for the whole of society.*

**Wassim, Loyal National, Dudley**

*If you're going to say that you're going to do something, then do. If you say you're going to reduce NHS waiting lists for people to have operations, then do it and show it. Because it doesn't seem like they are. If you're going to promise the world to do something, don't say you're going to do it if you can't put it in place. They're saying it to please people. They're saying it because you want the votes. And they think that that's their job done.*

**Sammy, Disengaged Traditionalist, Mid-Bedfordshire**

## The Policies of Respect

*If politicians respected professions that were basically frontline workers during COVID, then they would make changes. I don't just mean financial changes because, and I'm an NHS worker, so I feel I can comment on this. There's only so much we can get off the government financially in terms of getting pay increases and things like that, but I mean actual changes to stop stress at work because there's not enough staff. There's actual changes that could be made to the infrastructure of companies so that they would run properly. We're not seeing those changes from politicians.*

**Emma, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

The desire for respect goes beyond the values and life experiences of individual politicians, it forms the basis for the policies that people most want to see politicians implement. These policies align closely with the public's general concerns about the state of the country.

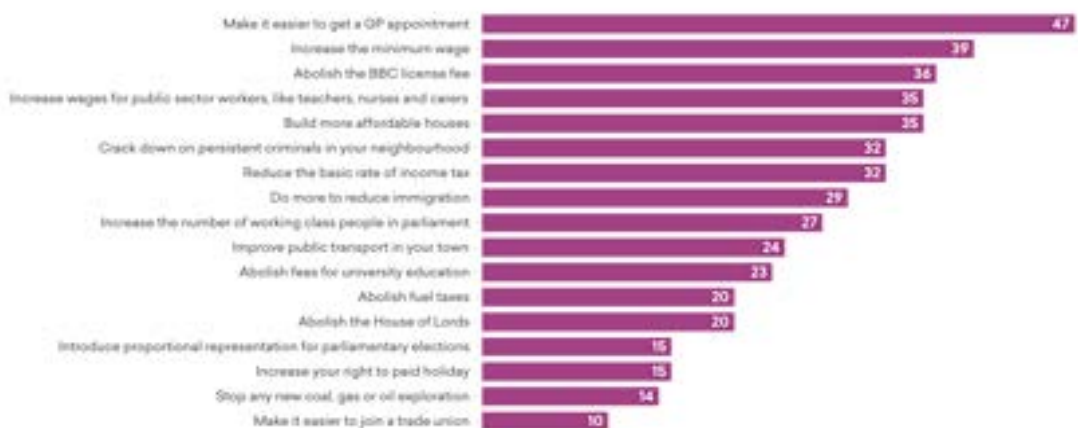
When asked to select from a list of potential policies that would demonstrate respect, the most popular options were: making it easier to get a GP appointment (47 per cent); followed by increasing the minimum wage (39 per cent); abolishing the BBC licence fee (36 per cent); increasing public sector pay for nurses, teachers and carers (35 per cent), building more affordable homes (35 per cent) and cracking down on criminals (32 per cent).

What connects all of these policies is that they are grounded in everyday ordinary concerns about family and community life. The public are not asking for grand abstract visions, but instead see respect as linked to a series of tangible improvements to their everyday.

**Figure 17**

### Which policies would make the public most likely to feel respected?

Thinking about the following policies that a political leader might announce, which if any of them would make you think that the political leader respected people like you? Select all that apply.



The policies the public select also align with the notion of ‘respect for contribution’ – they ensure that those who work hard and put into the system are in turn looked after well by it, rewarded properly, and able to get help from the NHS when they need it.

That the abolition of the BBC licence fee is the third most popular option – above even affordable housing, tackling crime or cutting income tax – may be seen as a reaction against the broadcaster or its political viewpoints. But from focus group discussions it is clear that, in the context of the cost of living crisis, standing charges that people can only opt out of with difficulty (and if removed would immediately put money back into their pockets) have become very unpopular. The public hold the same views on other similar charges – such as the Ultra Low Emissions Zone charge extension to Outer London (as expressed most dramatically in the Uxbridge by-election), but also standing charge taxes such as council tax – which is the tax the public are most likely to say is too high.

*If you want to do it, fair enough, but give it some time. Not when the whole country is basically on their hands and knees crying out for help where some people can't afford to eat people. And that person has his car to get to work, to just to survive. And now he's got to change it. It it's just wrong*

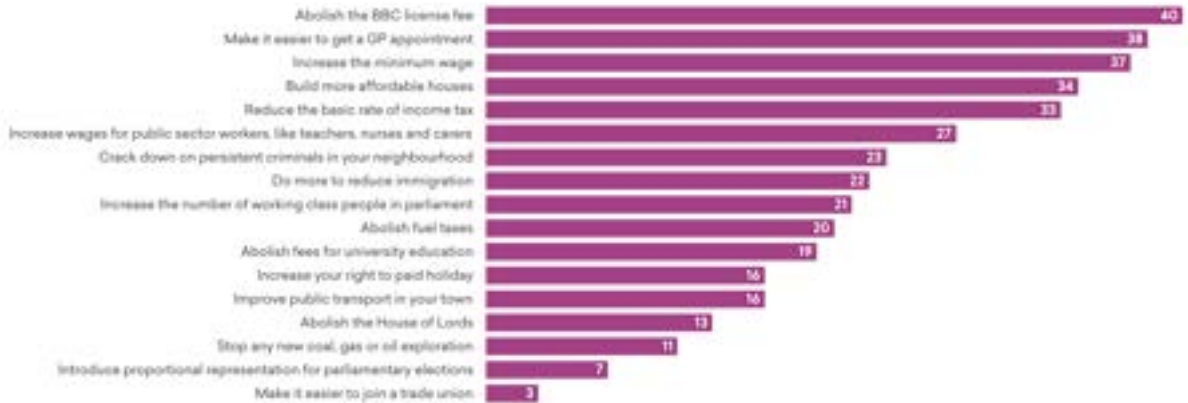
**Jamie, Loyal National, Uxbridge**

This also explains why support for abolishing the licence fee reaches 50 per cent with socially Conservative Loyal National segments whose high levels of threat perception often makes them feel more economically precarious. And it is also the top policy that more socially liberal, but particularly economically disadvantaged, Disengaged Battlers say would most convince them a politician respected people like them.

Figure 18

### Which policies would make Disengaged Battlers most likely to feel respected?

Thinking about the following policies that a political leader might announce, which if any of them would make you think that the political leader respected people like you? Select all that apply.



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

Figure 19

### Which policies would make Loyal Nationals most likely to feel respected?

Thinking about the following policies that a political leader might announce, which if any of them would make you think that the political leader respected people like you? Select all that apply.



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

For Loyal Nationals, policies that would signal respect to them include: abolishing the licence fee (50 per cent); making it easier to get a GP appointment (56 per cent); cracking down on crime (47 per cent) and reducing immigration (47 per cent). For this group both what they view as too much immigration and the failure to tackle crime feed into the perception that those in power do not respect them - that decision makers fail to recognise the pressures that immigration places on their community or the damage that crime and anti-social behaviour have on neighbourhood pride.

*We've done the same weekly shop over the last 10 years, and I think over the last three years it's gone up about 50 quid. And I can't understand how people can afford to buy the groceries once a week. There must be a lot of people out there going hungry because at this moment in time, it's the biggest crisis ever. The cost of living. People can't afford to put food in their children's bellies and stuff like that. So I'd like to see that sorted really.*

**Cliff, Loyal National, Dudley**

Across all segments, constitutional reform and the introduction of new workers rights score the lowest. That is not to necessarily say that these policies would not be supported or welcomed, but rather they do not align immediately with what the public think would demonstrate respect.

But there are potential changes to how politics works that would demonstrate respect for the public. In particular in focus groups, alongside public service reform, the public explain that an easy way for politicians to prove respect is showing that they aren't in the job for the money and are instead fully focused on their role as Members of Parliament. Some participants suggested that a new Labour Government should introduce a pay freeze for all MPs and Ministers until the cost of living crisis ended. Others argued that if politicians wanted to show that they took the role seriously they should ban second jobs.

## Respect and the Culture Wars

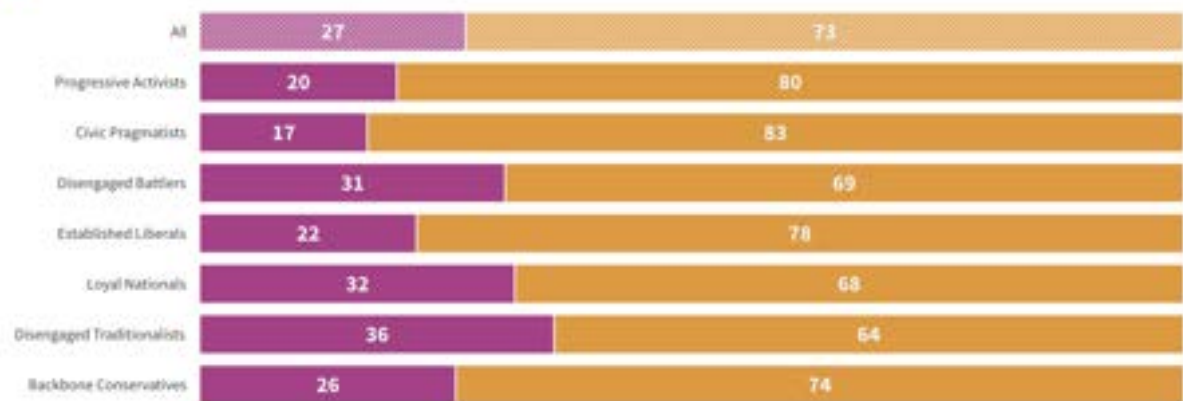
With cultural issues dominating political and media debate, where does the politics of respect sit in the so called 'war on woke' and how will this play out in the next election?

The salience of so called culture war topics is often overplayed. The public agree for instance, by 73 percent to 27 per cent, "that there are many more important issues to address than woke issues and political correctness."

**Figure 20**

### Most Britons agree that there are more important issues than so called 'culture war' topics

- Tackling political correctness and woke issues is one of the most important issues in the run up to the next general election
- There are many more important issues than tackling political correctness and woke issues in the run up to the next general election



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

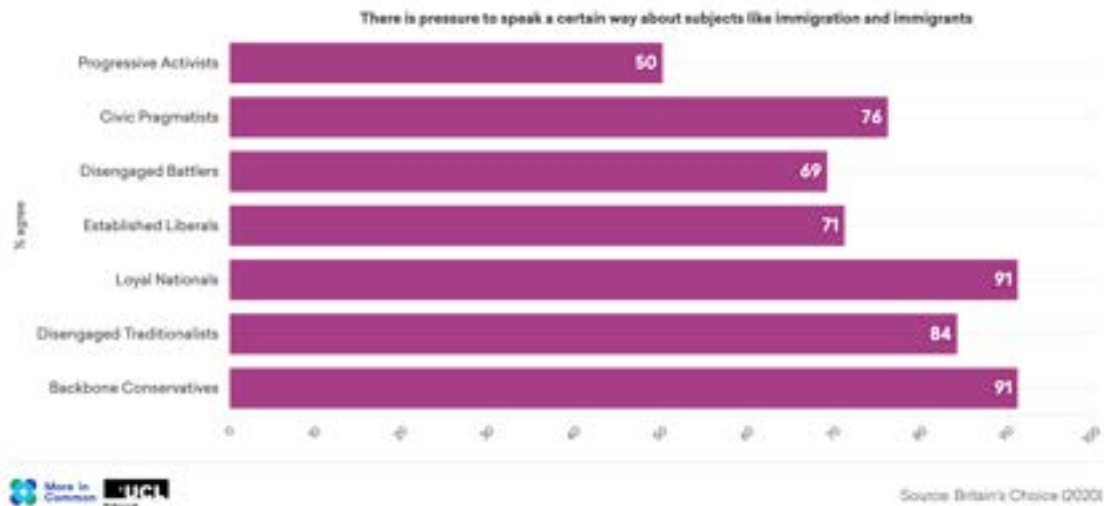
But that does not mean that cultural issues and debates don't matter to the public, nor that they do not align with the public's notion of respect. As already discussed, there is undoubtedly a perception among certain segments that only certain world views - and in particular the world views of the wealthier graduate class - are worthy of respect, with values like loyalty, tradition, patriotism and community in more non-metropolitan environments considered less worthy.

This perception that only certain world views get respect manifests itself in different ways. On issues like migration Britons - even those who are more socially liberal - explain that they can feel pressured to speak a certain way for fear of judgement.



**Figure 21**

**Most of the public feel pressured to speak a certain way about immigration**



It can also express itself in situations such as workplace diversity training, where some Britons question why the focus is always on other people rather than people like them who also struggle. And it can even stem from the sense that some people's basic expressions of patriotism such as flying the Union Jack are viewed with derision by a more metropolitan elite.

*I'll be honest with you. I'm not very patriotic. So I don't know what to say on this question. Even about my local area or England really. There's a thing about being arepresentative of your country for whatever reason, whether it be sports or something like that. But I mean, I don't feel like I'm super proud to be British, you know what I mean? But I don't think I would feel that about anything because I'm not really into, I'm not super patriotic, so yeah*

**Brandon, Progressive Activist, Bristol**

## In focus: Progressive Activists and the Flag

The Labour Party faces a particular challenge on the issue of respect and social issues. The vast majority of Labour Party members are drawn from the Progressive Activist segment. That is understandable - being both the most politically engaged of the groups and highly motivated to tackle inequality and injustice. However Progressive Activists are outliers on cultural issues. Progressive Activists are the only group who say they feel bad when they see the Union Jack flying or who do not believe that political correctness is a problem. This can manifest as a lack of respect, particularly when Progressive Activists find it hard to understand or empathise with the world views of others. The challenge then for the Labour Party and other organisations committed to social justice is how to both channel the energy and passion of Progressive Activists but also to encourage them to reflect on the starting points of others with different views and values to them.

Figure 22

### Labour members comes from a small segment of the public

The vast majority (67 per cent) of Labour members come from the Progressive Activists segment, who make up only 13 per cent of the total population.

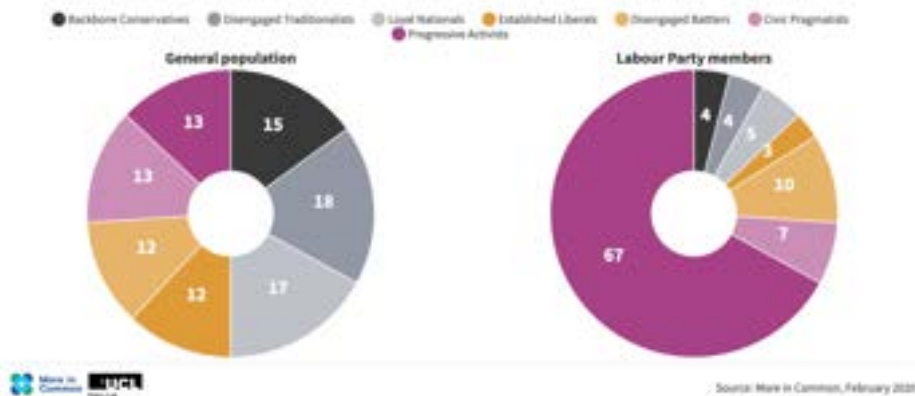
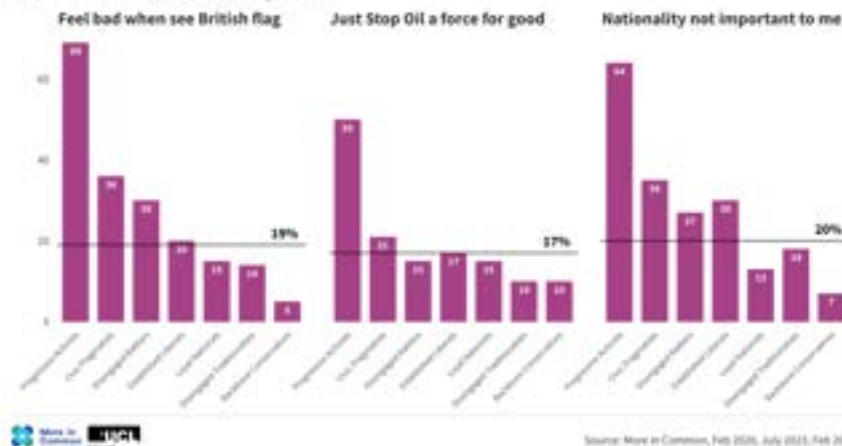


Figure 23

### The gap between Progressive Activists and the public

Progressive Activists (where most Labour members come from) are the most likely to share political content on social media but have very different views from the rest of the public, across a range of issues.



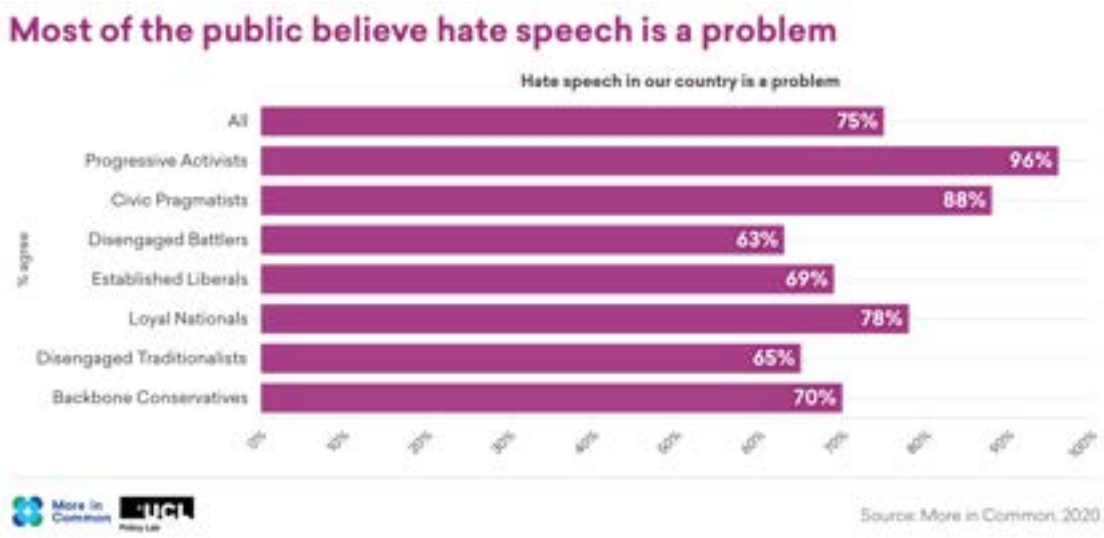
There is also no doubt that for many people the vote to leave the European Union represented an opportunity to express their frustration at the perceived lack of respect that the political elite had for ordinary people. In a similar vein, the overwhelming victory enjoyed by Boris Johnson in 2019 can be considered just as much the result of people's frustration that the outcome of that referendum wasn't being respected, as positive support for the Conservative's agenda.

*I think that it was a case of just voting for Conservative the last time round, because it was Brexit, and I think he was the only one who was actually going to just get it done and dusted. It had dragged on for god knows how long, and he finally got it sorted.*

**Joanne, Loyal National, Blyth**

But that is not to say when the public talk about respect they are hankering for some form of atavism or social conservatism. Ask the public what they are most proud of and advances in women's equality and greater diversity emerge among the top answers, while in focus groups the public often talk about their relief and pride that gay people are now able to lead their lives more freely and easily. What's more Britons have very little tolerance for attitudes or opinions that are clearly driven by bigotry and prejudice.

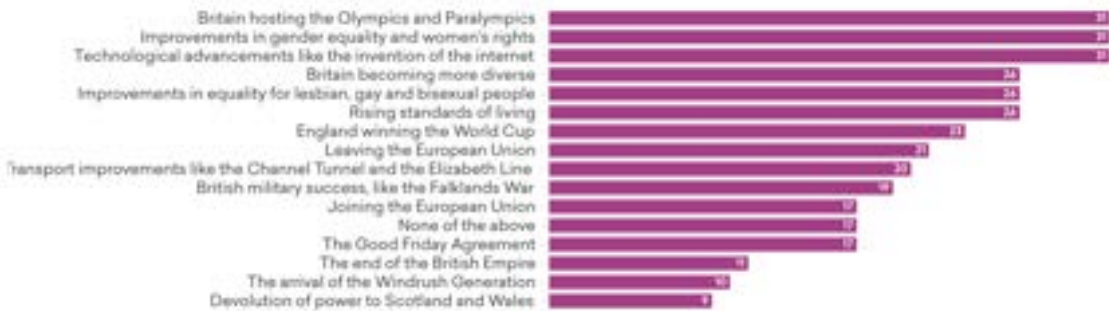
**Figure 24**



**Figure 25**

## Britain's progress on women's rights, diversity and LGBT equality are key points of pride

The Platinum Jubilee commemorates 70 years since the Queen took to the throne. Thinking of the things that have happened since then, which of the following, if any, make you proud?



Source: More in Common, May 2022

Nor do the public equate respect with always getting their way in cultural debates. Instead, the public simply wants to know that their point of view will be listened to, taken seriously and considered valid. It means that when politicians or campaigners want to make the case for social change they do more to explain their reasoning, take people on a journey and explain how they might mitigate any ill effects - rather than being seen to label those who have questions or concerns as bigots.

It also means taking a tough line on those who disrespect ordinary working people. Whether that is those who commit vandalism and anti-social behaviour that blights local communities or protestors whose tactics involve stopping ordinary working people from getting to their jobs, taking their children to school, or getting to medical appointments. The actions of groups such as Just Stop Oil are very often perceived as a clear sign of disrespect.

Figure 26

How would you describe Just Stop Oil in one word?



An agenda of respect could be the silver bullet politicians, who feel trapped by the culture wars, need to diffuse these issues and to deny conflict entrepreneurs the sense of disrespect and grievance they feed on. By consciously recognising and taking seriously the views and concerns of people from more culturally conservative backgrounds and discussing social issues on the basis of conversation of equals, rather than a diktat from those with more metropolitan values, politicians can go a long way towards demonstrating respect thrm.

## The National Trust

The National Trust shows how an organisation can have such a conversation about progress at the same time as reconciling different points of view without being disrespectful.

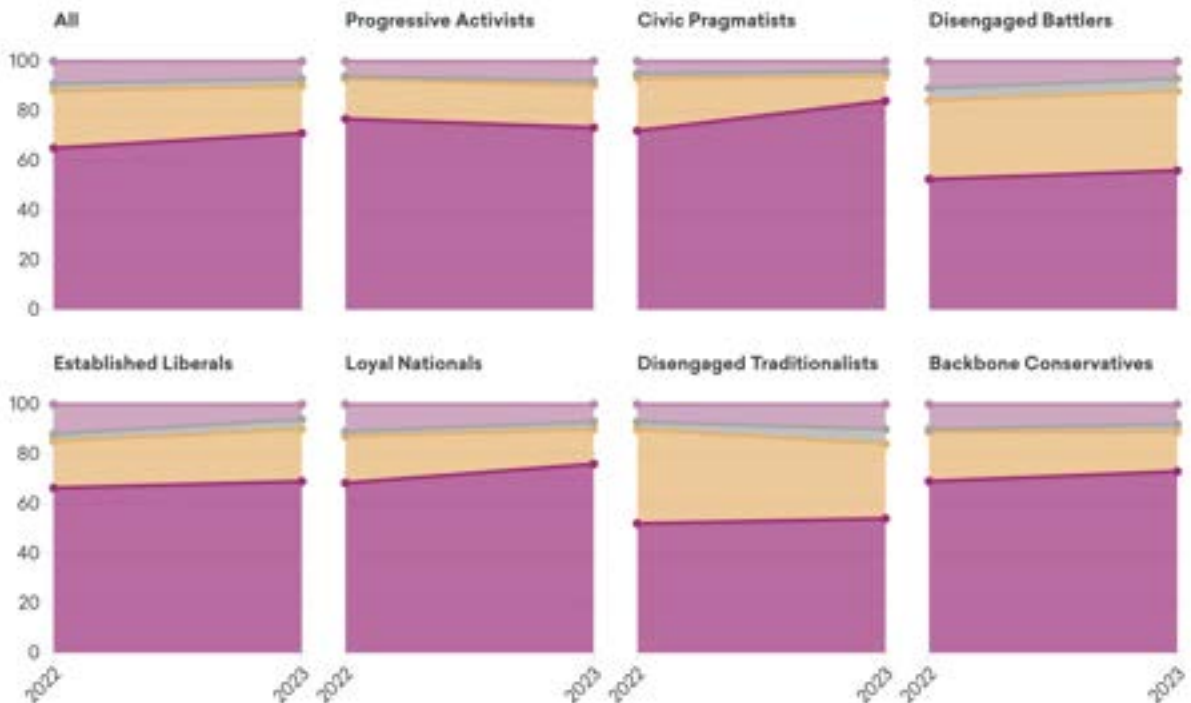
While the annual AGM has become a flashpoint for discussions about the public's trust in the National Trust, the suggestions of an organisation losing its way isn't borne out in how the public think about the heritage body.

Instead, the public's belief that the National Trust is a force for good in the UK has increased (from an already high base) by seven per cent between August 2022 and July 2023. There are majorities in all of the British Seven segments who say the National Trust is a force for good, and this view has strengthened among all segments apart from the Progressive Activists over the past year. Meanwhile, more Conservative voters think the National Trust is a force for good than Labour voters.

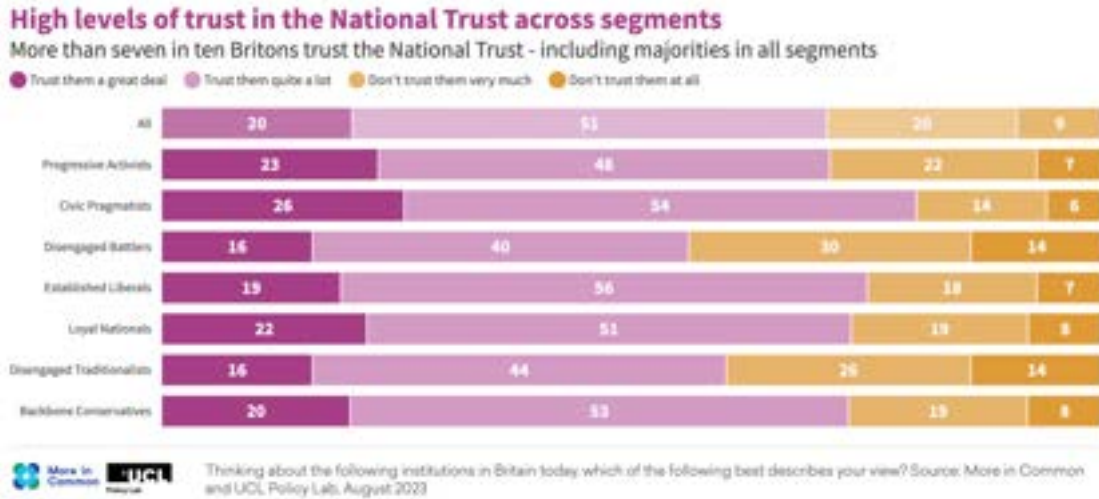
**Figure 27**

### More Britons now believe that the National Trust is a force for good

Force for good Don't know I have never heard of this group Force for bad

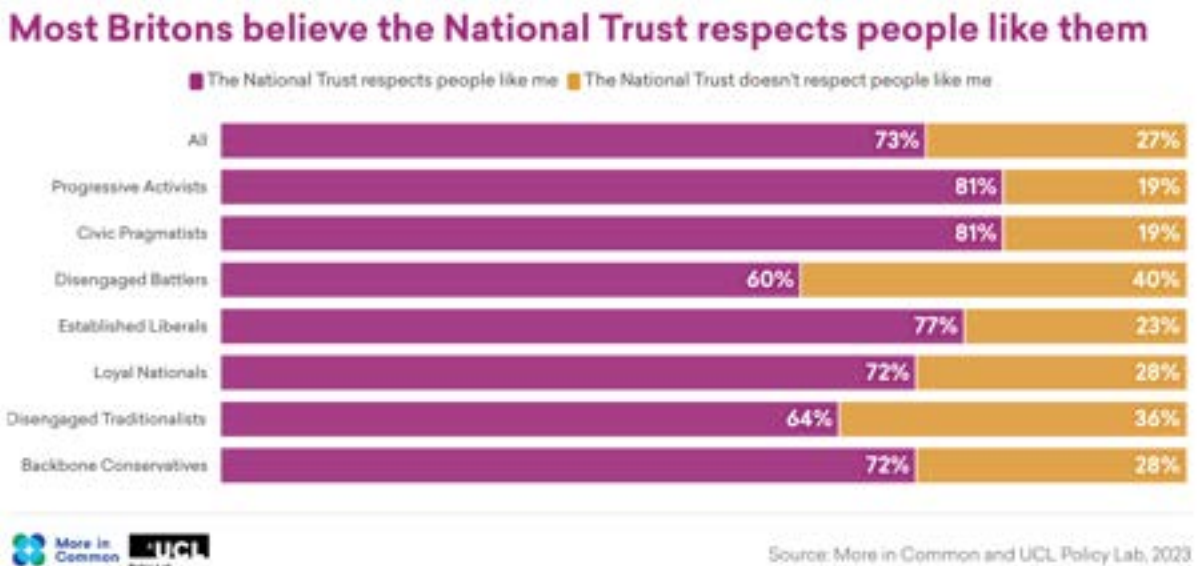


**Figure 28**



Trust in the organisation is also high. 71 per cent of the public say they either have a great deal or quite a lot of trust in the National Trust - the second highest of all national institutions tested - just behind the NHS and ahead of the military. This level of trust extends across all segments and is matched by the number of people who say the National Trust respects people like them with a net score of plus 32 across the public.

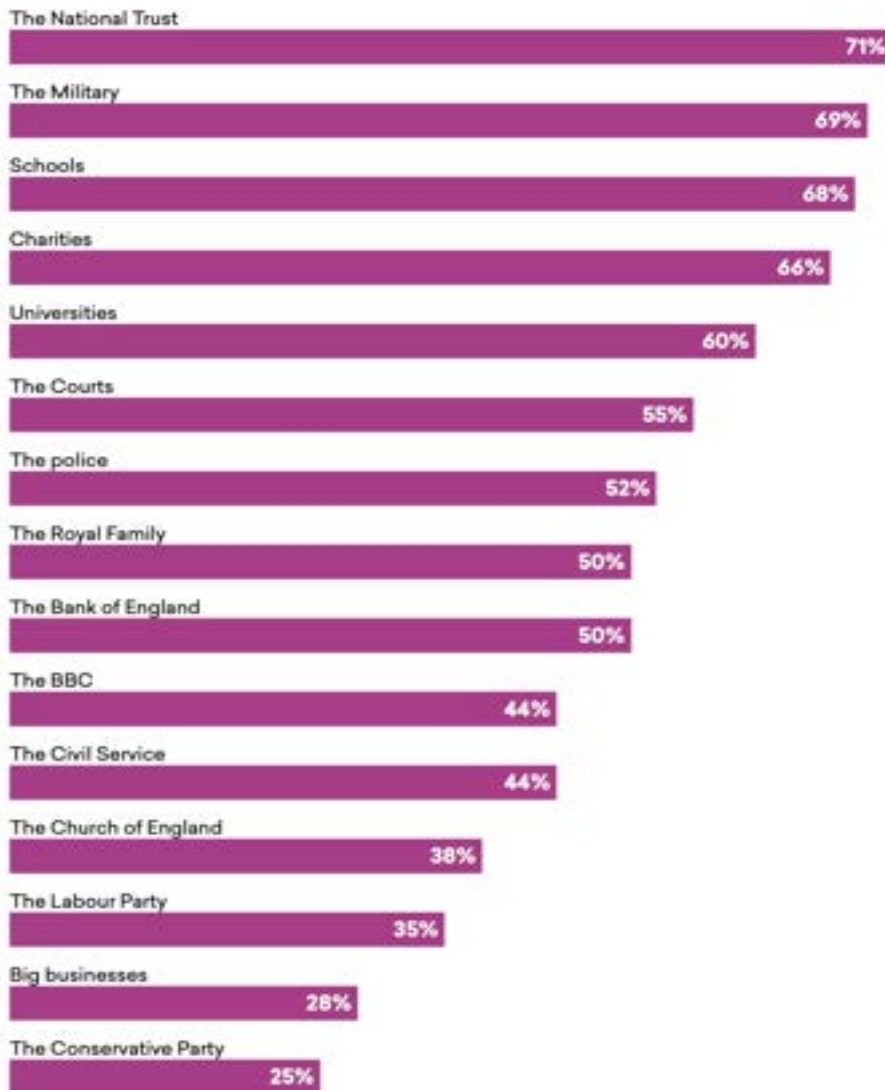
**Figure 29**





**Figure 30**

### High levels of trust in National Trust compared to other institutions



Thinking about the following institutions in Britain today, which of the following best describes your view? % Trust. Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, August 2023

The National Trust has been able to maintain and build such high levels of trust and convey its respect for ordinary people in large part just by doing its core heritage job well - providing enjoyable and educational days out for families. But there is also no doubt that, contrary to the views of some commentators, the National Trust commands high trust and a strong sense of respect for ordinary people because of how it has navigated debates about its history.

By introducing a policy of retaining works or assets with contested or controversial history (rather than removing them or tearing them down), but also providing interpretation and context around those assets “retain and explain,” the Trust has been able to demonstrate that it respects people enough to be able to make up their own mind when presented with the full set of facts and a view of history that is warts and all. More institutions would do better to learn from the Trust’s example of how to engage in contentious debates, with strong views on different sides, in a way that is both respectful of those views but also of the intelligence of their visitors.

*I think it's important. At the end of the day, you need to learn about it. So history doesn't repeat itself again, you can't just erase all the bad things and keep all the good things because when children grow up and they go read about it, they're going to have such a skewed version of what actually happened. I mean even I now don't really know the full history of the colonialism and what went on because you're not taught in school, you're not taught that we were racist and all those kind of things. So I think yeah, you need to see the bad things because otherwise you don't know. You look stupid because you haven't got a clue what actually went on.*

**Dominique, Loyal National, Erewash**

*Yeah, I think it's really important too. It's history, isn't it? So people visiting, I think it's important to have that knowledge. If again, the lady just said that you're not taught at school, you're not, if you don't do your own research. A lot of our children and older generation, they don't know. They don't know any of this. So I think it is important to teach people and educate people on what happened. So if it's still there and someone's going to visit, then let them read about it. I don't think we should be taking (statues) down. People are racist and people continue to be racist in institutions in everyday life. Taking a statue down with someone that made money from being racist isn't going to change. It doesn't change anything. It doesn't change anything. So there might be people, a younger generation that don't know that. And to teach them I think is a positive thing rather than just taking it down. Racism still exists anyway, I don't think taking it down is right.*

**Shireen, Loyal National, Erewash**

*Yeah, people generally forget about things if they don't put anything up about it. People need to know about things and know about what's happened and where it's come from and stuff. If you take everything down then no one's going to know about anything. What really happened in the past?*

**Daniel, Loyal National, Blackpool**



## Section 3: Communities and Respect

While Britons think there are many things that politicians can do to show they respect ordinary people, one of biggest opportunities to show respect may actually lie in what politicians are willing to do less of. A key part of demonstrating respect lies in the extent to which traditional decision makers are more willing to trust local people and community groups to take decisions about their local area and own the future.

In part, this is because the public think that mending 'Broken Britain' starts from the bottom up. In focus groups the public express much greater optimism for their local area than they do for the country as a whole. If faith in politics is low, faith in the ability and ideas of local people is not. The public believe that local communities (both individual residents and community groups) have what it takes to make their local areas better places to live in. And they want people who experience their community day to day, not remote politicians or bureaucrats, to be in the driving seat of their community's future.

In this way empowering local communities in a new politics of respect can be a chance for Britain to step out of the spiral of hopelessness that permeates the public's views about Britain. If politicians are serious about an agenda of respect it must go hand in hand with giving communities the power they both want and need to make things better.

*There have been a few things lately they've made me feel quite good about our local people and that sort of thing. There's a big drive in my town at the minute to collect for a local charity called the Alice charity which helps young families in need and that sort of thing. And everyone's got something out on their doorstep to be collected to go to a food bank and that sort of thing. And I just thought, some things are just so good, when the community all comes together.*

**Sammi, Loyal National, Stoke**

However there is widespread frustration at how local and national governments currently hold communities back from making positive changes to their area. This translates into a feeling that neither local or national government respects ordinary people enough to give them a real say – that should change.

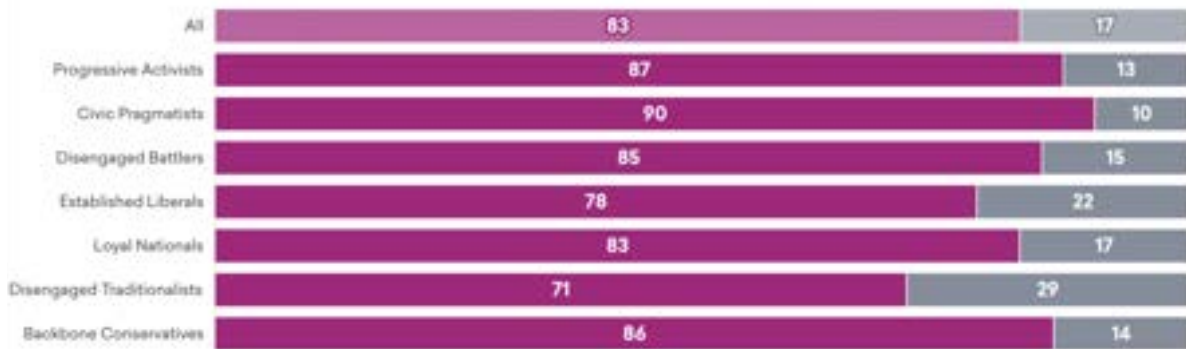


**Figure 31**

**The public think that locals have ideas to improve their communities**

Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

- Local residents and community groups have ideas and skills that could improve the local community
- Local residents and community groups do NOT have ideas and skills that could improve the local community



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

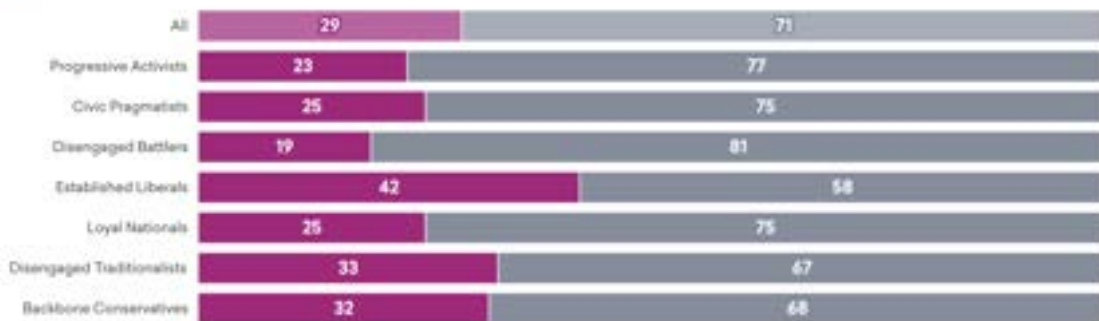
Overall more than seven in ten feel that local and national governments do not give residents and community groups the freedom to bring about improvements to their local area.

**Figure 32**

**Few think that the Government gives residents the freedom to bring about local improvements**

Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

- Local and national government gives residents and community groups the freedom to bring about improvements to our area
- Local and national government do NOT give residents and community groups the freedom to bring about improvements to our area



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

Swing voters (Established Liberals/Blue Wall and Loyal Nationals/Red Wall) are equally as likely to believe that community groups and local residents have what it takes to make their community a better place to live, but Red Wall voters are much more likely than Blue Wall

voters (75 per cent v 58 per cent) to think that local and national government do not give community groups and residents the freedom to make improvements to their local area. In large part, this reflects the fact that Established Liberals - being one of the most secure, wealthy and educated of the segments - have more of a say, are more listened to and are the most likely to have local leadership roles.

In contrast, Loyal Nationals are more likely to feel looked down on by decision makers and to think their views not considered as valid as other people's. They are also the group most likely to say that their local area has declined in the past 20 years and to support the levelling up agenda. It is no surprise then that Loyal Nationals are also most likely to think that the Government should get out of the way of community groups and let them deliver change in their communities.

There are then very real political advantages among both the wider public and this swing voter group to empower communities to take a seat at local decision making tables. For many, Britain feels broken because politics feels far away. A new approach to politics will best land with the public if it feels close to them and their communities. What's more, there is also a very clear link here into the levelling-up agenda, with focus group discussions revealing that community decline, specifically run-down high streets and local parks, was the ultimate signifier of lack of respect.

### **Avoiding Big Society 2.0**

It would be easy to misunderstand the strong public support for community power as a demand for a return to a Cameronite 'Big Society' vision where the state steps totally away and the community sector steps up to fill the gaps. However, the public's views on community power and agency should not be read as code for rolling back the state - indeed part of the failure of the Big Society agenda was that it was viewed as a cover for austerity. Instead empowering community and unlocking local agency means taking an additive approach, recognising where politicians, professionals and volunteers can each best play a role.

Part of that is making sure that local government creates proper mechanisms for the public both to have their say about what needs to change and to have a role in bringing about that change.

Most think local councils should be responsible for taking a direct role in deterring crime, supporting those struggling financially, improving local high streets and running libraries and museums. However, they overwhelmingly back local community groups to know what people from their local area want, understand the change their community needs and bring about that change as well. This is particularly true when it comes to the future of local parks and green spaces, one of the areas where people are more likely to say that community groups should have more responsibility over their running.



Figure 33

## The public back local community groups over their local council to understand and bring about change in their local area



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

## Three Tests for Community Agency and the Politics of Respect

Unleashing community agency must be central to a public respect agenda. To do that, a new politics of respect needs to do three things: empower local groups and institutions, root itself in the pillars of communities and build up local spaces where the public mix and meet together.

### Empowering Local Groups and Institutions

To reach its full potential, and convince the public that this is a new and fresh approach to politics, the politics of respect needs to recognise which institutions and groups the public think help rather than hinder progress in their local communities.

In the public's mind, local businesses, volunteer groups, charities, local media and church groups all play an important role in making improvements to their local area, but they take a largely negative view of national government and national media and are neutral on the question whether their council helps or hinders improvements in their area. Creating more

opportunities for businesses and civil society groups to take ownership of the local community has the potential to both demonstrate community respect and reassure them that the local council is genuinely committed to improving their community.

**Figure 34**



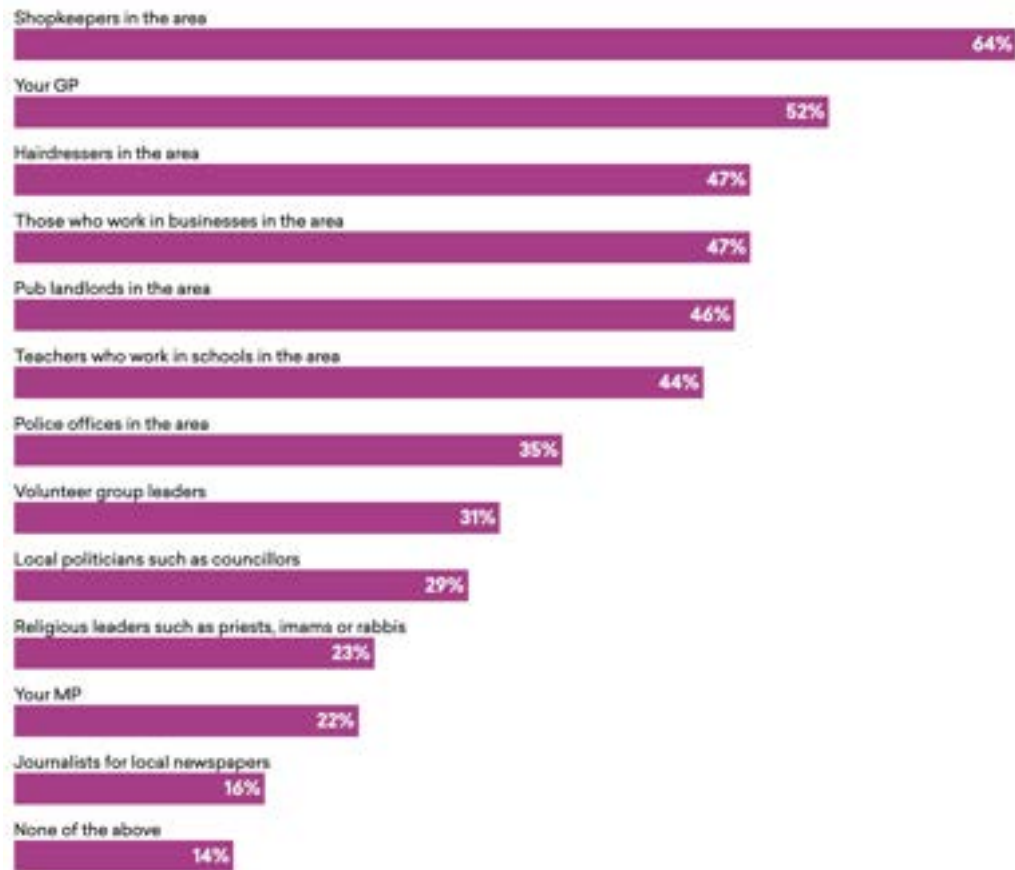
### Empowering Local People

A local respect agenda also requires politicians to better understand and engage those characters who the public see as central to their communities. Involving those groups and individuals who the public view as part of their neighbourhood supports a politics of respect in two ways. Firstly, their involvement in any new approaches to community empowerment can act as an important signifier that politicians respect people like them – especially when shopkeepers, hairdressers or pub landlords (the people that the public engage on a regular basis) are front and centre of local activities and decision making. Secondly, involvement of the people rooted in, and trusted by, their communities helps to overcome scepticism that politicians and those in charge of decision making are far removed from their lives. In particular, GPs and those who work in local businesses hit the sweet spot of both being trusted in their professional capacities to do difficult jobs (and so can make difficult decisions on behalf of their communities), but have the advantage over civil servants and MPs in that they are rooted in the local area.

**Figure 35**

### Shopkeepers most likely to be seen as part of the community

Which of the following do you see as part of your community? Select all that apply.



Source: More in Common for UCL Policy Lab, August 2023

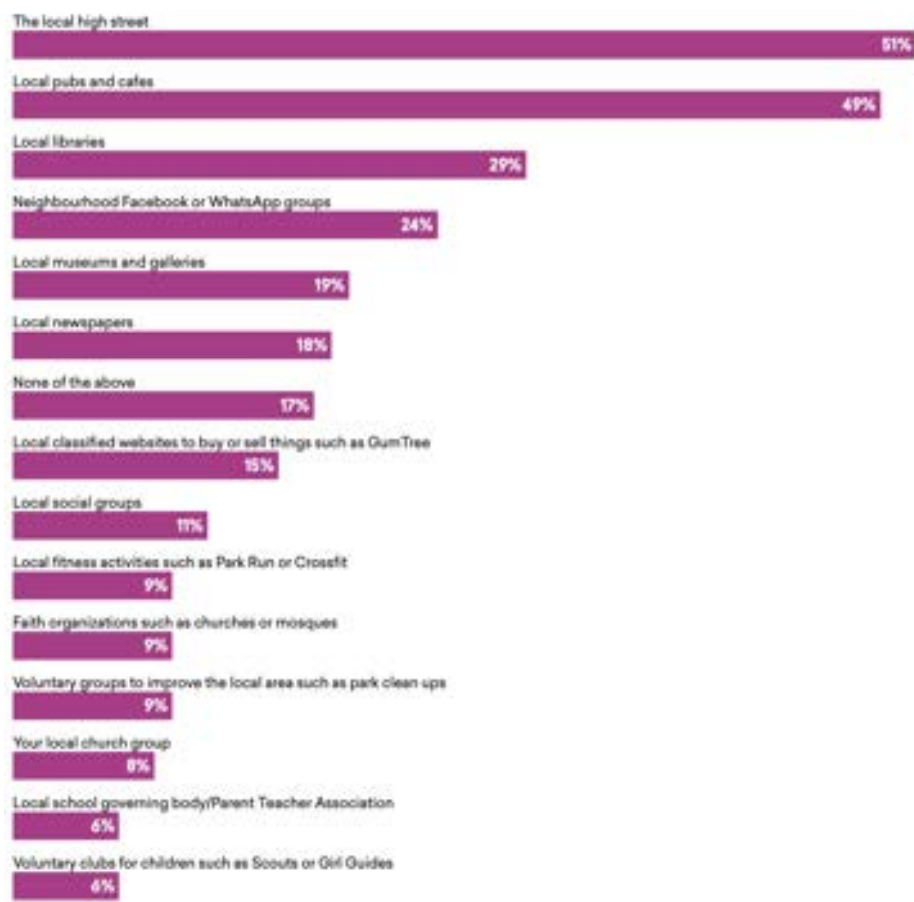
### Uses the Places Where People Mix

Community spaces are both an important opportunity and test for the new politics of respect. There are a series of places in communities across the country that people both use and care about: high streets, pubs, cafes, libraries. The polling shows that people from across the British Seven segments – from Progressive Activists to Backbone Conservatives – use these spaces on a regular basis. If a new politics of respect is to land with the public, it needs to be able to be applied and talked about in these everyday spaces. Decision makers need to make themselves more available in these spaces, but also work out how to make more of them. It is an enduring feature of British society and democracy that people from different backgrounds come together in the same places across the country – a new politics of respect can make the most of that potential.

**Figure 36**

**High streets, pubs, cafes, libraries and neighbourhood Facebook/WhatsApp groups are the places people engage most with locally**

Which of the following organisations do you or your family use, buy from or take part in locally? Please select all that apply.



Source: More in Common for UCL, Policy Lab, August 2020

Nor should engaging in the places where people mix be limited to physical spaces. While it is undoubtedly true that the use of some traditional neighbourhood mixing grounds has declined in recent years, new virtual communities have sprung up. In fact, nearly a quarter of the public now describe taking part in local WhatsApp/Facebook groups and in focus groups. The public talk about the experience of the pandemic leading to much greater engagement in digital groups helping to share information and support other members of their neighbourhoods.

The discussion about ‘taking back control’ should now move away from debates at Westminster and instead to community empowerment and respect for how local people want to run their area.





## Section 4: Institutions and Respect

The crisis of trust in and lack of respect from politicians is not limited to the political arena. Many of Britain’s major national institutions face similar challenges of low or mediocre levels of public trust and many people also feel that these institutions do not respect them. Exploring the relationship and differences between trust in and feeling respected by institutions and how this differs across the different segments helps to better illuminate how trust and respect can be built and increased by institutions.

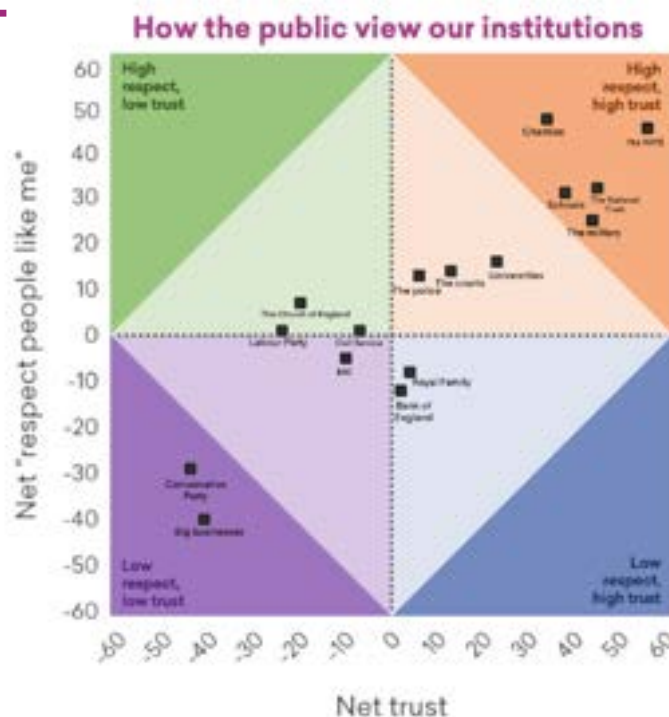
### Examining the Relationship Between Trust and Respect

As with political parties and politicians, trusting an institution and being respected by an institution are not the same thing. Much of the research on institutional trust focuses on the dynamics of trust in institutions and explains a familiar story about enduring low trust across a range of different bodies. Approaching faith in institutions instead by asking the question of whether people feel respected by those institution - may offer a complementary angle to trust for shifting public opinion and provide a more immediate ground for institutions themselves to work on improving - particularly when levels of ‘trust’ are harder to build and are shaped by more macro-societal trends that are out of the hands of individual institutions.

### The Four Quadrants of Institutional Trust and Respect

Quadrant analysis of the British public’s trust and respect for institutions provides an useful perspective for understanding how the public view our national and local institutions.

Figure 37





Six clusters of institutions emerge from this analysis:

**High trust/high respect institution:** The National Trust, the NHS, the military, charities and schools are institutions which the public both feel respected by and which they have high levels of trust in. In focus group discussions, the public explain that all of these organisations serve the public, have a clear job to do and have a clear track record of doing that job well. They are also the organisations that people feel are more likely to listen to them and involve them. For all of these institutions the priority should be protecting their status as high trust and high respect institutions. Other institutions should seek to learn from these groups' success as well how they came to be respected and trusted.

**Medium-high respect/medium-high trust:** The second cluster of institutions are the police, courts and universities. On levels of trust and respect, these institutions are middle of the pack. They have net positive levels of both trust and respect for ordinary people. The key challenges for these institutions is to avoid complacency and relentlessly focus on how to further build trust and demonstrate respect. For the courts and universities, in particular, it means more work to show that they are open to people from different backgrounds and those with different points of view.

**Medium respect/low trust:** The third cluster of institutions are the Civil Service, Church of England and the Labour Party. These institutions are ones which the public feel respected by but are not yet trusted by the public. The key challenge for these institutions is to double-down on respect and focus on the material improvements they can make to people's lives across the country (for the Civil Service and the Labour Party) and for the Church of England the positive role they have in communities across the country. If they continue to build on showing respect through practical interventions, increased trust is likely to follow.

**Low respect/high trust:** The fourth cluster of institutions are the Royal Family and the Bank of England. Both of these institutions have net positive trust scores reflecting the fact that they are institutions which are well regarded by the public (and people throughout the world), however the British public do not feel respected by these institutions. The challenge for both institutions is demonstrating relatability and finding ways to communicate - in clearly very different institutional contexts - that they understand the challenges faced by ordinary people up and down the country.

**Medium-low respect/medium-low trust:** The fifth cluster on the trust/respect quadrant is the BBC. The specific challenges facing the BBC and how the BBC might be able to address this position of both low trust and low respect are outlined below.

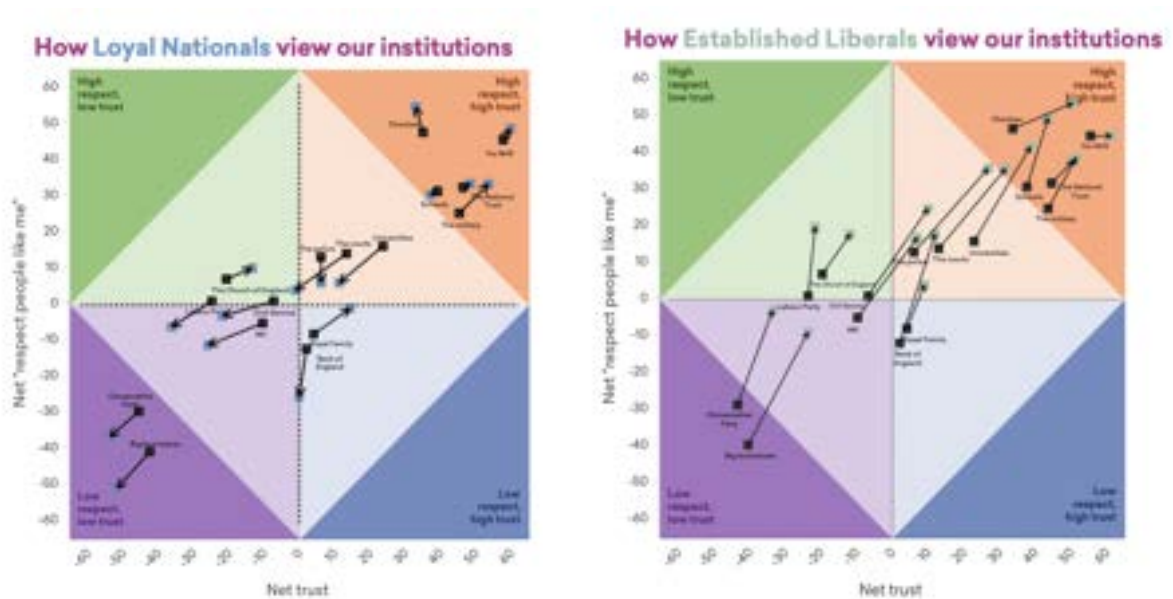
**Low respect/low trust:** The starkest challenges faced by any institutions in trust and respect terms are the Conservative Party and 'big business.' The challenges facing the Conservative Party and the need to focus on respect for ordinary people as the basis for rebuilding trust are discussed above. For big businesses, focus group discussions reveal

the public think - particularly since the financial crisis - they have not upheld their side of the social contract and rather than demonstrating respect for ordinary people they have instead very often taken positions that feel motivated by greed or exploitation. If big business is to win back public confidence it needs to do more to uphold its side of the bargain - that means not only adopting global corporate social responsibility campaigns - but getting the basics right, treating their employees well and their customers with respect and fairness.

## Trust/respect quadrants by segment

Feelings of trust in and respect from national institutions are not distributed evenly across the different segments of the public. In particular there are differences in how national institutions might approach the trust/respect challenge with Loyal National (Red Wall) groups and Established Liberal (Blue Wall) groups.

**Figure 38**



Established Liberals are more likely to feel respected and trusted by a wide range of institutions. Established Liberals have higher than average levels of trust in and of feeling respected by all the national and local institutions tested. This partly reflects that they are the most secure group, the most likely to think people in power listen to their needs, and also reflects the fact that many institutions are led and run by people from this segment.

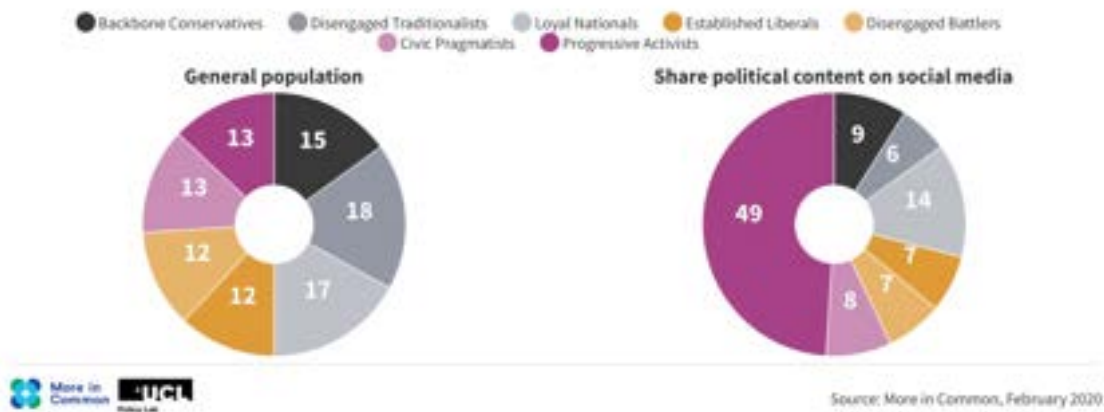
Loyal Nationals, on the other hand, are more likely to have low trust in and feel less respected by many of the institutions tested. The only institutions Loyal Nationals are likely to feel more respected by and have higher trust in than average are the National Trust,

charities, the Church of England and the Royal Family. These are institutions which pride themselves on values of loyalty and service – reflecting the values of the Loyal National segment. Given the Loyal Nationals strong group identity lens, institutions which they have the lowest trust in and feel less respected by are those institutions which do not reflect their values or worldview. Just as with politicians, more work is needed from institutions to consider how they better dispel the perception that they only value certain worldviews or the opinions of those from a liberal graduate class.

**Figure 39**

**Social media is dominated by Progressive Activists**

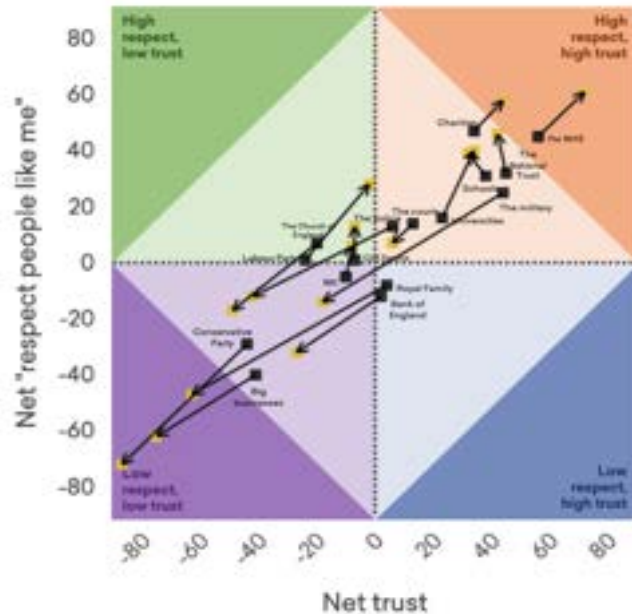
Almost half (49%) of those who share political content on social media are Progressive Activists, despite making up only 13% of the population



Progressive Activists are outliers in terms of the institutions they trust and feel respected by. Progressive Activists’ trust in institutions reflects their politics - they are more likely than average to trust in and feel respected by the Labour Party, and much less likely than average to have trust in and feel respected by the Conservative Party. Institutions which Progressive Activists are much more likely to populate (like Universities) are much more likely to command their trust and they also feel more respected by these institutions. They are also outliers on trust/respect dynamics - for example, they are much less likely than average to have trust in/feel respected by the military which commands broad support across other segments. Given the outsized role that Progressive Activists play in cultural debates, and their dominance on social media, there is a danger of institutions overcorrecting on questions of trust and respect towards the priorities of louder Progressive Activist voices. Institutions should instead focus on increasing trust and perceptions of respect with the average member of the public who tends to approach these issues very differently to Progressive Activists.

Figure 40

How Progressive Activists view our institutions



## How Can Specific Institutions Engage in the Respect Agenda?

The public don't approach questions of trust and respect in the abstract, but through a series of practical tests. This section explores the unique drivers and challenges of trust and respect for three institutions who have both high trust/high respect (the NHS), medium trust/respect (the Police) and low trust/respect (the BBC).

The overarching lesson for institutions that emerges from both the polling and focus group research is: do the job you're meant to do and if you say you're going to do something, do it.

*If you're going to say that you're going to do something, then do. If you say you're going to reduce NHS waiting lists for people to have operations, then do it and show it. Because it doesn't seem like they are. If you're going to promise the world to do something, don't say you're going to do it if you can't put it in place. They're saying it to please people. They're saying it because you want the votes. And they think that that's their job done.*

**Sammy, Disengaged Traditionalist, Mid-Bedfordshire**

### Trust and respect for the NHS

Given that the NHS is a high-trust and high respect institution, it is not surprising that when asked about a public or national institution which acts in their interests, the public have one clear and overwhelming answer: the NHS.

**Figure 41**

**What is one public or national institution that you really trust to act in your best interest?**



Two thirds of the public (including majorities in all the segments) agree that they or their family could rely on the NHS when they need it. The public are also more than twice as likely to agree than disagree (51 per cent versus 20 per cent) that the NHS provides better quality care than other institutions around the world.

However, the NHS also faces perception challenges. A quarter of the public (26 per cent) say that their interactions with the NHS in the last year have decreased their trust in the institution, almost equal with the proportion (25 per cent) who say their interaction with the NHS has increased their trust.

From focus group discussions it becomes apparent that dissatisfaction with the NHS is mostly borne out of frustration with long waiting times and difficulty accessing services. In part they attribute this to a lack of funding for the NHS but they also think, like all institutions, the NHS needs reform.

On questions of NHS reform, the public are more likely to embrace radicalism over incrementalism on questions. Almost half the public think the NHS needs radical improvements (49 per cent) while two in five think it needs gradual improvements over time.

There are stark splits in views about NHS reform among Blue Wall (Established Liberals) and Red Wall (Loyal National) segments. Loyal Nationals are almost twice as likely (63 per cent) than Established Liberals (35 per cent) to think the NHS needs radical improvements and changes. This means that a party aiming to pitch itself to Red Wall voters should think

about how it will convince them that it has a plan to both bolster and reform the NHS to better meet their expectations.

The public say that all of - making it easier to get GP appointments, training more doctors and nurses and paying doctors and nurses would increase their trust in the NHS. Those top priorities are shared (albeit with different rankings) among six of the seven segments. Making it easier to get GP appointments and rethinking the GP model that few think is working is a way to win back trust for five of the seven segments - all bar Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists.

### Trust and respect in the police

The police are a medium trust-medium respect institution. This is reflected in the fact that the public are evenly split (47 per cent to 48 per cent) on whether or not they trust the police to keep them and their family safe. Meanwhile a majority (54 per cent) don't trust the police to tackle crime locally. That fewer than half of the public trust the police to keep them safe or tackle crime locally - arguably their core job - is not just bad for the police, but also threatens social cohesion as people feel the need to withdraw from 'unsafe' public spaces and to put up ever higher fences.

*I don't know if you've experienced a burglary but you just get a crime reference number and that's it. They don't care. But why would they? It's just paid off from insurance. They don't care about the emotional impact and the damage that causes, just the reference.*

**Glen, Disengaged Traditionalist, Guildford**

Addressing that lack of confidence requires understanding the different starting points on policing across the British Seven Segments. More in Common's previous work on attitudes to crime and policing finds that these different starting points shape their trust in the police.

- More secure and optimistic segments such as Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals are much more likely to trust the police to keep them and their family safe.
- Progressive Activists have joint-lowest trust in the police. This is driven by their more political views, tendency to compare the US and the UK and a view that the police are institutionally corrupt and racist. Disengaged Battlers' views are more likely to be shaped by their first hand experiences of discrimination or negligence at the hands of the police than their politics.
- Loyal Nationals' low confidence in the police is shaped by their high threat perception and a sense that the police have given up on tackling crimes like anti-social behaviour - in previous work by More in Common, on every type of crime tested, they were more likely to say that crime was a problem in their area.

Experience of crime also shapes trust in the police to do their job. Those who've had a direct experience of crime in the past year are much more likely to say that they do not trust the police to tackle crime locally (65 per cent versus 54 per cent average).



**Figure 42**

**Less than half of Britons trust the police to keep them safe or to tackle crime in their local area**

Do you trust the police to...



Source: More in Common and UCL Policy Lab, 2023

Unlike the NHS, where the public favour radicalism over incrementalism, the public are more split on the right approach to reform and rebuilding trust in the police. Progressive Activists and Loyal Nationals are much more likely to favour radical changes (Loyal Nationals 60 per cent, PAs 50 per cent) while Established Liberals, Civic Pragmatists and Backbone Conservatives are more likely to opt for gradual improvements over time. Only a tiny minority of the public (3 per cent) think the police do not need to change and a similarly tiny majority (4 per cent) think the police should be scrapped. There is no mandate for a defund the police approach in the UK.

Instead, a series of policy changes could drive up trust in the police. Police visibility is a shared priority across the public. Public visibility through more police on the beat and hiring more officers is the approach which commands the most support among the public in terms of increasing trust, and it is the top priority for six of seven segments. Beyond that, there is also strong support across segments to focus on other bread and butter policing investments such as more local police stations or higher charging rates for criminals.

Specific factors also affect the policy priorities of individual groups. More politically engaged segments' priorities are much more linked to live debates. Progressive Activists are particularly concerned with increasing the representativeness of the police and there is no doubt that the Metropolitan Police in particular have a long way to go to show they demonstrate respect to minority communities. Backbone Conservatives on the other hand are more engaged in the debate about whether the police spend too much time or resource on diversity initiatives. Those who've had a direct experience of crime in the past year are more likely to support having dedicated police officers for their street and raising police salaries.

## Trust and Respect in the BBC

There is a trust-respect paradox in Britons' relationship with the BBC. While feelings of trust in and respected by the BBC are comparatively lower than other institutions, the public use and rely on the BBC regularly. Seven in ten Britons often watch or listen to BBC TV or radio - including majorities in six out of the British seven segments. Majorities in five of the seven segments (bar the two disengaged segments) say that BBC content is entertaining, useful and interesting.

However, while the public use and rely on the BBC, they struggle to trust it. Only two in five Britons trust the BBC to tell the truth - including majorities in only three of the seven segments. The same proportion trust the BBC to focus on the things that matter (41 per cent), and just over a third trust the BBC to behave impartially (35 per cent). Delving below the surface in this way exposes an unsatisfactory picture of trust in the BBC.

*I used to trust the BBC, but I'm afraid of over the last four, five years, I feel that they're not bipartisan anymore. They seem to be leaning towards one way or the other. And their coverage is not worldwide really. I find that news that happens in parts of the world, that the UK perhaps is not immediately connected to, filters through even on the BBC a lot later than it really should. That's again my personal feeling. They don't capture it so quickly. But I still watch BBC*

**Rajani, Civic Pragmatist, St. Alban's**

*I would tend to trust the BBC for weather, for news. Do I trust them implicitly? Not at all, but I think... I don't think they're unbiased, but I think they try to be unbiased. They're trying to give the whole picture.*

**Michael, Loyal National, Wakefield**

That said, there are several measures (some within and some outside the BBC's control) that could increase the public's trust in the broadcasters ability to deliver. Reducing the pay of presenters, ensuring independence from government and reforming the licence fee command public support. Only the more political segments - Progressive Activists and Backbone Conservatives - say tackling right wing and left wing bias is a priority for winning back their trust - something that does not feature strongly for other segments. The public are also likely to say in focus group discussions that they want to see more content from the BBC that is tailored to their local area and which portrays their communities in a more positive light.

*Where I live, we're not really well represented until something bad goes on. I feel like bad news sells better than good news...also nine times out of ten a street that looks like mine is on a murder drama or something along those lines in the North West, and they never have a good day there.*

**Rob, Disengaged Battler, Burnley**

*Where I live, we're not really well represented until something bad goes on. I feel like bad news sells better than good news. You only really see things on maybe the news or in local press of bad things that have happened. You don't really highlight all the good things that go on in our communities, all the fundraising efforts, all the good things that people do for other people's mental health, so obviously that's on an uptick certainly in my local area. But you just seem to get all the negative sides of things, it's not really a lot of positive, there's definitely got to be a balance but I think it's important that they find that, but I don't believe that we're well represented when it comes to media.*

**Michelle, Disengaged Battler, Glasgow**

The challenges then facing the BBC are about the role a public broadcaster can play in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain rather than a specific liberal or conservative bias. The lesson - which is also applicable to other institutions - is that they should reflect on the practical and visible steps they can take to rebuild trust, rather than becoming enmeshed in responding to highly elite cultural or ideological debates which consume airtime but don't animate the public. An approach of both show and tell is needed.

**Figure 43**

**Less than half of Britons trust the BBC to tell the truth, behave impartially, or focus on the things that matter**



## Conclusion

Tackling the crisis of confidence in Britain has to start with a reset of the relationship between our politicians, our national institutions and the public.

At the heart of that reset the public want a new approach to respect - one where the respect which people are afforded is not tied to their social status, wealth or academic resume - but instead is based on people's contribution to keeping our country going and helping our communities to thrive.

For politicians of both major parties and beyond there is a real opportunity to put respect at the forefront of next year's election campaign and an electoral prize for the party that can best convince the public that if they form the next Government ordinary people will be seen, heard and acknowledged.

Demonstrating respect does not require some appeal to lofty, abstract ideals. But rather engaging in the practical concerns that affect people's everyday lives. People want to know that politicians can empathise with their experience, they want their contribution to be met with the assurance they'll be supported through tough times and they want to be levelled with, not patronised, about the challenges the country faces.

An agenda of respect could also be the solution to diffusing increasingly acrimonious and noisy cultural debates. The vast majority of the British public are fair minded and eager to do their bit to build a society which is compassionate and tolerant. But many, particularly those from more socially conservative backgrounds worry that values like loyalty, tradition and patriotism aren't respected by metropolitan decision makers. Addressing this doesn't require pandering to those who peddle bigotry or who seek to deliberately cause offence. Instead a sure fire way to show respect to those with different views is to give people the space to air their concerns about societal change and to look to ways to address them is

For our national institutions the lessons are clear, the public will feel respected when they see them doing their core job well, upholding their end of the societal contract, genuinely engaging the public in their work and working to reflect the country they serve in their own decision making and workforces.

Finally, and this may be the most difficult challenge of the respect agenda for those used to making decisions - showing respect means giving power back to local people and communities. It is undeniably true that those closest to the ground often know best what their communities need and how to tackle local problems. That does not mean abdicating responsibility, but instead embracing the power of collaboration - finding ways to get governments, public sector bodies, private businesses, volunteer groups, academics, campaigners and the public together to share their ideas and expertise and to chart a better course for the future of their communities.

Meeting the public's expectations on respect will not be easy. It requires those in positions of power and influence to change how they think, act and respond to the people they serve. But it is also the best way to restore the public's faith that those involved in public service have their best interests at heart and know how to fix 'Broken Britain.' If politicians can seize the opportunity then rather than the next five years being dominated by the sense of crisis, decline and exhaustion that have dominated the previous five, we may finally turn the page and recapture the optimism, social solidarity and hopefulness our country so desperately needs.



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talent, or necessarily  
any kind of talent...

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## Annex A: British Seven Segments

In pursuit of a more evidence-based understanding of how we find common ground on polarising issues, More in Common launched the Britain's Choice project in 2020. This project centres its analysis of issues on the values, identity and worldview of Britons, captured in seven population segments through a methodology designed in partnership with data scientists, social psychologists and other experts. It integrates insights from six dimensions of social psychology that shape the way that people see the world and orient themselves towards society. This mapping has been carried out using multiple waves of quantitative and qualitative research, building on the approach used by More in Common in other major western democracies. The six areas of social psychology are:

- **Group identity and tribalism:** the extent to which people identify with different groups based on nationality, gender, political party, ethnicity, and other factors
- **Group favouritism:** views on who is favoured and who is mistreated in society
- **Threat perception:** the extent to which people see the world as a dangerous place
- **Parenting styles:** research suggests that basic philosophies regarding people's approach to parenting can have predictive power in explaining their attitudes towards public policies and authority more generally
- **Moral Foundations:** the extent to which people endorse certain moral values or 'foundations', including fairness, care, purity, authority, and loyalty
- **Personal agency:** the extent to which people view personal success as the product of individual factors (i.e. hard work and discipline) versus societal factors (i.e. luck and circumstance)

The 'British Seven' segments are often more useful in understanding people's views across a wide range of issues than standard ways of categorising people, such as their voting history, partisan identity or demographic characteristics such as age, income, social grade, race or gender. Understanding the specific 'wiring' of each of these groups 'upstream' allows us to better understand and predict how they will respond to different sets of issues 'downstream'.

## Progressive Activists

A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.

Progressive Activists are often outliers on values – unlike other groups, they primarily see the world through the moral foundations of care and fairness and have much lower reliance on the moral foundations of purity, loyalty and authority. Compared to other groups, Progressive Activists feel less threatened in the world and in their community. They consider that outcomes in life to be more defined by social forces and less by personal responsibility. Although they are a higher-earning segment, many of them consider this to be down to good luck than individual effort. They have the lowest authoritarian tendencies of any group.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Progressive Activists



## Civic Pragmatists

A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, community-minded, open to compromise and socially liberal. Civic Pragmatists have a similar values foundation to the Progressive Activist group in prioritising care and fairness, but they channel their energies into community and voluntary work, rather than political activism. They are also set apart from Progressive Activists (and some of the other segments) by their higher-than-average levels of threat perception.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Civic Pragmatists

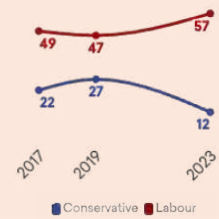


## Disengaged Battlers

A group that feels that they are just about keeping their heads above water and who believe their struggles are the result of an unfair, rigged system. They are insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked but also tolerant and socially liberal. They are a low-trust group with a tendency to ignore civic messaging (they are joint most likely to have not been vaccinated for Covid-19). Their overarching sense that the system is broken drives their disengagement from their communities and the broader democratic system with which they see ‘no point’ in engaging.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Disengaged Battlers



## Established Liberals

A group that has done well with an optimistic outlook that sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, among the more privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, liberal, confident and pro-market. They have low authoritarian tendencies and the lowest threat perception of any segment – which is reflected in their broad support for diversity, multi-culturalism, and sense that their local community is neither dangerous nor neglected.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Established Liberals



## Loyal Nationals

A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots. They feel the ‘care’ and ‘fairness’ moral foundations more strongly than other groups. Their key orientation is that of group identity – belonging to a group (and particularly their nation) is important to Loyal Nationals. This strong in-group identity shapes their equally strong feelings of threat from outsiders. This in turn can drive their support for more authoritarian, populist leadership.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Loyal Nationals



## Disengaged Traditionalists

A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected. They place a strong emphasis on personal responsibility, are mindful of others' behaviour and rely much more on individual rather than systemic explanations for how people's lives turn out. When they think about social and political debates, they often consider issues through a lens of suspicion towards others. They value the observance of social rules, order, and a British way of doing things, but don't play an active role in their communities – they are the least likely to eat out, visit museums or go to local libraries. They often have views on issues but tend to pay limited attention to current debates. Disengaged Traditionalists are similar to Loyal Nationals in their more authoritarian predisposition.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Disengaged Traditionalists



## Backbone Conservatives

A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain's future outside of Europe, and who keenly follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, stalwart, proud, secure, confident, and relatively engaged with politics. They want clear rules and strong leaders and rely heavily on individual explanations for how life turns out, with this shaping how they respond to questions about deprivation and discrimination in society.



Changing voting intention 2017-2023  
Backbone Conservatives





**Policy Lab**