BFPG British Foreign Policy Group

UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Affairs

Annual Survey – 2021

Sophia Gaston and Evie Aspinall

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The Authors

Sophia Gaston is the Director of the British Foreign Policy Group, and a social and political researcher specialising in public opinion. Her research particularly explores threats to governance in advanced liberal democracies, including – populism, nationalism, cultural insecurity, nostalgia and the rise of anti-establishment movements. Through the British Foreign Policy Group, she works to highlight the domestic social and political origins of the destabilising forces in the international world order. Sophia is a Research Fellow in the Institute for Global Affairs at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and an Academic Fellow at the European Policy Centre in Brussels.

sophia.gaston@bfpg.co.uk

Evie Aspinall is a Researcher at the British Foreign Policy Group. Having graduated from the University of Cambridge with a degree in Political Science, she went on to become President of Cambridge University Students' Union. She has recently completed her Master's in International Development from King's College London where she wrote her Master's thesis on the use of gender quotas in sub-Saharan Africa. Her primary research interests are foreign aid, higher education and gender equality.

evie.aspinall@bfpg.co.uk

The 2021 Survey

This report presents the findings of the BFPG's 2021 Survey on UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Britain, conducted with the BFPG's research partners Opinium on 6-7 January 2021 (sample of 2,002 UK adults, weighted to be nationally representative).

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Author's Note

There is no doubt that the past five years have been challenging for the United Kingdom. Yet, as we begin a new era outside of the European Union, it remains the case that Britain has a positive story to tell. And, as this survey reveals, an international voice that should be bolstered by the legitimacy conferred through the consent of its people. If we seek to pinpoint the 'heart of the nation' on foreign policy, we would find it favours a relatively connected, open and ambitious international agenda, working alongside a variety of friends and partners, forging areas of special global leadership, and striking a healthy balance between our strategic interests and the projection of our values.

It is also true, however, that these areas of consensus mask significant tensions and disparities between different social, demographic and regional groups of citizens – which threaten to undermine the process of governance. Not least of all because they continue to be expressed as divisions within the major political parties themselves, with distinctive tribes struggling for dominance in defining their essential character. Despite the dramatic realignments that have taken place in British politics around the Leave-Remain divide and social and economic priorities, foreign policy continues to cut to the heart of the polarised values and world views that linger within the major political parties.

The growing interest of the British people in foreign policy necessitates Government becoming more attuned and sensitive to their preferences. This knowledge should not be seen as the primary lodestar on which to guide policy-making, but rather a gift of strategic foresight, highlighting the roadmap for engagement and persuasion. Britons accept that they cannot possibly access the raft of information available to their elected representatives about international affairs, but it would be foolish to dismiss their opinions – not least of all because their views on foreign policy tell us much about their broader social and political instincts, and how these are formed.

A concerning finding of this research is the persistent nature of inequalities around knowledge and engagement in foreign affairs. One of the most striking of these is the consistent degree of uncertainty and lack of confidence expressed by women in their responses – unsurprising when one considers the visible disparities in the representation and agency of female voices in foreign policy. Economic and educational disadvantage also consistently reveal their hand in fostering a sense of detachment amongst citizens, and are highly correlated with more isolationist preferences.

Citizens' disengagement is not passive – it shapes instincts, and the developments in British political life over the past decade make patently clear how consequential this can become. In a lively and robust democracy such as ours, a diversity of perspectives is a strength, and should be welcomed. At the very least, however, it must be seen as a missed opportunity to allow disengagement, disinterest and uncertainty about our nation's foreign policy to propagate – and a moral failing for these to metastasise amongst sections of the population we know are structurally disadvantaged in other ways. Investments in sharing the story of our foreign policy around the nation, and in opening up opportunities of mobility to groups otherwise facing barriers, should be seen as an investment in the nation's future.

As Levelling Up aims to give all citizens a stake in Britain's economy, so too must Global Britain seek to afford all citizens a stake in Britain's foreign policy. With the publication of the Integrated Review and the launch of the Global Britain project, a generational opportunity presents itself: to better understand the concerns and priorities of the British people, to harness the full spectrum of our assets and expertise, and to bring the nation together around a truly inclusive foreign policy.

Author's Note

When wading through the extensive data presented in this report, it is important to be aware of the high degree of volatility currently being experienced in public opinion on international affairs, as a result of the fusion between domestic political identities and foreign policy. We should expect to see this dynamism evolving over the coming years; after all, geography, values and shared interests mean we will undoubtedly continue to debate our relationship with the European Union until the end of time.

There must be room for these discussions in our public sphere – absent of the tribal language of treachery and betrayal. The pathway to social healing and renewal will be difficult, but it can begin to emerge – almost imperceptibly – through small, individual acts committing ourselves to a common future. We have spent five years consumed by our domestic upheaval, and whether Leave or Remain, we must accept the urgency demanded by the global landscape for a nation such as ours to play an active, constructive leadership role in shaping what comes next.

The Global Britain project is not simply an exercise in defining our choices on the world stage, and ascribing resources to deliver them. It compels us to reassert our identity, our common purpose and shared values, and the distinct alchemy behind our national brand and soft power. After all, when we speak on the world stage, we send signals about who we believe ourselves to be – and the most persuasive messages are those delivered with utmost conviction. Global Britain is, therefore, as much a domestic project as an international one.

This process of reconstituting our modern identity has also required us to interrogate some of the less settled aspects of our past. We should not be fearful of this process, not least of all because to do so belies a lack of confidence. The fact is, Britain's history, our traditions and our culture remain a powerful totem at home and abroad, and their resilience and our adaptability provide a strong foundation on which to build a 21st Century nation.

The past five years has revealed a profound degree of fragility around the future advancement of global democracy, and we cannot afford to take anything for granted. There will be some rocky times ahead, both inside and out. We should continue to look back on our past with an unflinching eye and a generous dose of humility. We should make our foreign policy more inclusive and representative. But we must also, as Britons, agree that there is something of intrinsic, enduring value in the essence of the United Kingdom – in our character and our institutions. And that this confers not only the right to be proud, but a responsibility to defend and promote the freedoms we are fortunate to enjoy, around the world.

As Britain helps to build a safer, more prosperous and liberated world, we too secure these privileges for ourselves in the future. It is in this optimistic spirit that we publish this 2021 survey. I hope that you find it illuminating, useful, and encouraging, as we move into this new chapter of Britain's story.

Sophia Gaston
Director of the British Foreign Policy Group

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Report Snapshot

International Identities and Political Realignment

Foreign policy attitudes are heavily shaped by lived experiences of mobility, and tremendous structural inequalities continue to shape knowledge and engagement.

- Lived experiences of mobility and international identities are now often as significant a predictive factor in terms of citizens' world views as education and income. The greater the access to travel and opportunities abroad, the more open citizens are to an internationalist foreign policy and an open and connected Britain.
- Huge structural inequalities remain in engagement, knowledge and understanding of UK foreign policy, with women, less affluent and less educated Britons, and those living in less prosperous regions, considerably more disconnected.

The 'great re-alignment' that has taken place in UK politics has transformed the nature of the parties' identities on foreign policy.

- Examining public opinion on foreign policy highlights the complex political realignment taking place within the UK's political system, and strikingly captures the changing nature of the coalitions within its two main political parties.
- These coalitions extend well beyond policy preferences to encompass distinct national and international identities, perceptions of our allies, threat profiles, and security registers. Although a majority of Britons identify as 'patriots', this question lays bare the size of the chasms forming between the new tribes.
- The UK Government is promoting an internationalist foreign policy agenda, yet the Conservative Party is no longer the party of internationalism, due to the arrival of such a sizeable cohort of 'Red Wall' voters. This has shifted the central point of the Conservatives' voting base – a process that may intensify further if the Labour Party's leadership continues to promote a more moderate position than at the 2019 election.
- The one caveat to this is that when strong links are established between aspects of the UK's foreign policy and the Global Britain project, Brexit and the Johnson Government, we see Labour, Green or Lib Dem voters tending to reverse their internationalist instincts and to assume the opposing position. The danger is that the perception of Global Britain as being constructed in the 'Brexit world view' impedes support for its principles, amongst many of the Britons most naturally inclined to support them.
- The falls in trust in Government for its domestic handling of the coronavirus pandemic in the latter months of 2020 were echoed in a collapse in trust in the Government to act in the nation's interest on foreign policy.

Globalisation and Global Threats

The pandemic has largely intensified disadvantage and insecurity, rather than making the population more generally fearful as a whole. That said, Britons remain alert to a wide range of potential threats.

- Considering the direction of travel of global events, on average, Britons rank themselves as 5.4 out of 10, with 1 being extremely unsafe and 10 being extremely safe. The strongest gravitational pull is towards the middle – suggesting a divided population, but also the existence of a relatively secure safety net.
- A fifth of Britons describe themselves as feeling extremely or very unsafe. These Britons are most likely to be women and/or comparatively disadvantaged and insecure in various ways, and more vulnerable to the pandemic's harmful social and economic effects.
- In terms of global risks, the most alarming threat to the British people is the risk of cyber-attacks from other nations, followed by international terrorism, the rise of China as a world power, climate change and foreign interference in Britain's democracy. Large majorities of Britons regard these as important risks.

- The potential loss of the Union in the break-up of the United Kingdom is seen as an important threat by two-thirds of Britons. Those most concerned about this are more affluent and educated, living in urban areas, with strong British identities. The risk brings together an unusual coalition of younger Conservative voters and older Labour voters.
- The risks posed by automation and economic change are seen as the least threatening to Britons, compared to other international risks. This should be taken in the context of the findings (below) on globalisation.

Britons remain much more supportive of globalisation than many of their Western counterparts, and recognise its benefits to the UK as a whole – although its benefits at a community and individual level are seen to be highly asymmetrical.

- Two-thirds of Britons recognise globalisation has benefited the United Kingdom – rising to 79% who believe it has benefited London. But the notion that globalisation has conferred individual benefits, or delivered for Britain outside of London, remains deeply contested.
- The UK's political realignment around Brexit means the Conservative Party is no longer the party of globalisation – because pro- and anti-globalisation sentiment is so highly correlated to the Remain-Leave divide. Labour, Lib Dem and even Green voters are now much more likely to be favourable towards globalisation than the traditional party of free markets.
- In terms of recognising the personal benefits of globalisation, the gap in the views of voters who joined the Conservatives for the 2019 General Election, and those who left the party, stands at almost 30 percentage points.
- The further one lives from London geographically, the less likely they are to believe that areas outside of London have benefited from globalisation.

Immigration remains a polarising topic, but there are clear distinctions made between the desire for tough border control and the celebration of migrants' contribution to British society.

- British public opinion on immigration has improved over the past year, however it remains a divisive topic. Broadly, there is concern about the scale of immigration, and migrants' propensity to add pressure to the welfare system or create competition around jobs. But there is also a widespread recognition of the positive economic and social benefit of migrants, who have integrated into British life.
- The gaps between Leave and Remain voters on immigration are some of the most profound anywhere in the survey, with huge majorities of Leave voters not only wanting tougher border controls, but also not recognising a positive economic and social contribution from migrants in the UK. Voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 are especially inclined to believe the population is too high and migrants are a burden on the welfare system.
- A majority of Britons believe that migrants and asylum-seekers crossing the Channel should be prevented from reaching UK territory, but are split on the best means of tackling the problem.

Global Britan and Climate Change

Britons are invested in the UK's international affairs and favour an active and ambitious Global Britain agenda, which balances values and interests.

- Britons see foreign policy as the sum of its parts, and do not identify any single area as a source of particular pride. It is rather seen as a framework of security, influence and power that wraps around the nation, and stands on its shoulders.
- Levels of pride in the UK's foreign policy and standing in the world are heavily shaped by political identities, but also levels of knowledge and engagement.
- Most Britons want to see a Global Britain vision that balances strategic and defence interests alongside a values and democracy agenda.
- When it comes to foreign policy spending, the largest group of Britons wishes to maintain our current levels. Remain voters across all parties are the most likely to support increases in funding, and Leave voters are the most likely to favour reductions.

- Lived experiences of mobility is a significant factor in shaping views about foreign policy spending, with those who travel abroad much more likely to be open to spending more.
- When asked what they believe 'Global Britain' to mean in practice, the two most popular interpretations are of the UK as a 'champion of free trade and globalisation' and the UK being a 'diplomatic powerhouse and solving global challenges'.
- More than a third of Leave voters, however, want the Global Britain project to engender a 'strong and secure nation, focused on issues at home'.

Britons are on board with the UK's climate change leadership, but the willingness and capacity to make individual changes towards climate action are shaped by citizens' socio-economic status and their access to vital green infrastructure, such as public transport.

- 68% of Britons support the UK taking a global leadership role on climate change, including 39% who strongly support this role. Just 5% of Britons oppose the UK leading internationally on tackling climate change.
- Britons appear to be willing to make some significant changes to their lifestyles to contribute to climate action. Enthusiasm is greatest towards campaigns that have received the greatest degree of media and political attention (ie. reducing plastic, food waste, purchasing fewer clothes).
- Socio-economic distinctions weigh heavily when citizens are asked about paying more for more sustainable products, transitioning away from cars to public transport, and shifting to electric vehicles.
- Troublingly for the Government, Conservative voters appear to be both less supportive than other voters towards the UK's leadership role on climate change, and almost universally the least willing cohort of voters to take individual action on climate change.

The UK's Global Relationships

Britons value the UK's global relationships, but don't play favourites.

- Britons are not persuaded that the United Kingdom has a 'best friend' or primary ally.
- The United States is experiencing a 'Biden Bounce', with the nation's reputation rebounding considerably with President Biden taking the helm. Regardless, Britons carry much more favourable opinions towards our other key allies, such as Canada, Australia, and Japan.
- Russia and China continue to be distrusted by the vast majority of Britons and are seen as distinctly hostile global actors.

There is a clear desire for a close relationship with the European Union – even closer than the Brexit deal provides.

- Attitudes towards the EU have improved slightly over the past year, suggesting there is a space for more pragmatic debate around the EU as a security and foreign policy partner. More than a quarter of Leave voters identify as European.
- A majority of Britons think the UK's relationship with the European Union is more important than the UK's relationship with the United States. To the British people, it seems, it is the UK-EU relationship that is most 'special'.
- Just a quarter of Britons believe the deal the UK Government secured with the EU in December 2020 is the best framework for our relationship with the EU moving forward.
- More Britons – including around a third of Conservative voters – would prefer the Government to pursue an even closer relationship with the EU than the deal provides, than would prefer it to be made more distant. Re-joining, however, remains a minority position.

Britons favour a pragmatic, but values-led relationship with China, and are lukewarm in their support for a new tilt to the Indo-Pacific.

- Britons want UK-China engagement to be values-led, but governed by a degree of pragmatism. There is an appetite for cooperation on climate change, research and higher education – although a balanced approach is mainly supported by non-Conservative voters.

- Only a fifth of Britons support the UK pursuing any form of economic engagement with China. And just 13% would sanction any involvement of China in the UK's infrastructure.
- Concerns about the risk posed by China's rise have increased 11 percentage points in the past year during the pandemic.
- Public knowledge about the rationale and strategic purpose behind the Government's proposed 'tilt' in its foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific is very low – particularly amongst women and disadvantaged groups – and there is no appetite for this region to become the central focus of the UK's foreign policy.
- Broadly, the public recognises the economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific, but want to see any investments balanced elsewhere.
- Only 18% of Britons support deploying UK security and defence resources to contain China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific.

Security, Trade and Foreign Aid

Multilateralism still conjures a high degree of support, with a clear appreciation of the security benefits derived from NATO. Support for military interventionism, however, is highly conditional.

- Two-thirds of Britons support the UK maintaining its membership of NATO, with just 8% of Britons in favour of the UK leaving NATO. However, a total of a quarter of Britons are unclear about NATO's value, its role in the UK's foreign policy, or even its existence.
- The vast majority of Britons who support the UK's NATO membership say they would also agree to upholding the Article 5 covenant – substantially more than when we set out the same scenario without describing its link to NATO. This shows the importance of connecting the story of our membership of international organisations to our rights and responsibilities.
- Less than a fifth of Britons say that they trust the Government to take decisions on military intervention at their own discretion.
- The largest proportion of Britons believe the UK defence forces should only be deployed in three scenarios: a direct attack on British soil, a direct attack on British assets abroad, or in the case of genocide or a large-scale humanitarian crisis.
- For those who are hesitant or conditional in their support for UK military intervention, the most compelling argument against deployment is 'to avoid being drawn into conflicts', followed by the UK's poor historical track record in interventionism, and the draining effects of military action on domestic finances.

Trade policy continues to be an area of emerging interest to Britons, and the lack of knowledge about this policy area could prove both a weakness and an advantage to free trade proponents.

- Considering the risks associated with Britain negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), just 14% of Britons say that they have no concerns. Food standards remains the single greatest worry for Britons, followed by protecting workers' rights and environmental protections.
- A significant chunk of the population says they are unsure or don't know what their concerns are – a sizeable constituency to be persuaded in either direction.

There is no question that most Britons support the UK providing foreign aid and development, but a large majority believe it should be paused or reduced while the UK economy recovers.

- Despite the often-fractious public debate around foreign aid, Britons are clearly sold on the value of a wide scope of development activities. Just 17% of Britons say that they do not support the Government's investments in aid and development.
- Support is weakest for programmes that promote economic growth in developing nations, with Britons from lower socio-economic backgrounds or living in less prosperous regions the driving force behind this scepticism. This appears to be the point at which a zero-sum viewpoint about money being spent abroad and at home is activated.

1. Report Snapshot

- It is important to note that the motivations behind Britons' support for foreign aid vary wildly, which makes it difficult to construct a narrative to appeal to the country as a whole.
- When briefed about both the pandemic's impact on UK domestic finances and the risks its poses to setting back progress in the developing world, 72% of Britons argue that foreign aid should either be stopped or reduced during the pandemic, and 28% believe it should be maintained or increased.

2.

Mobility, Identity and Belonging

Since 2019, the BFPG has been exploring the relationship between citizens' instincts, lived experiences, and lifestyles in the formation of public opinion regarding international affairs. One of the most important factors we have identified in shaping attitudes is an individual's daily and lifetime experiences with physical mobility – moving within the United Kingdom, and travelling outside of the United Kingdom. Our previous surveys have demonstrated that international travel for leisure, in particular, appears to be strongly correlated with more 'open' and internationalist mind-sets; not least of all, because of the important relationship between socio-economic conditions and opportunities of mobility.

Lifetime Mobility and Rootedness

The BFPG's annual survey includes questions on Britons' lived experiences of mobility, starting with those focused on capturing movement around the United Kingdom throughout their lives. Our previous annual surveys have found that a lack of mobility throughout an individual's lifetime can be correlated with a tendency to be more isolationist with regards to foreign policy, to be more concerned about immigration and border control, and to be more focused on domestic issues than international affairs. There are obviously distinctions to be made around the nature of their fixed residence – for example, these effects are less pronounced for those who have remained in the capital, London – but on the whole, mobility within the United Kingdom reveals something about a person's educational and economic opportunities, the scope of their ambitions, and their degree of flexibility and adaptability.

In 2021, we can see that 32% of Britons continue to live in the same city, town or village in which they were born, with 31% living within two hours' drive, and 29% of Britons living more than two hours' drive away from their place of birth. As mobility is a life-long experience, it is unsurprising that young people appear to be less geographically mobile, with 41% of Britons under 35 living in the city, town or village they were born in, compared to 25% of Britons aged 55 and over. We can presume that the younger generations will make up this shortfall over the coming years. It is notable, however, that the younger population is significantly more culturally diverse than the older population, with 14% of under-35s reporting that they were born outside of the UK, compared to just 4% of Britons aged 55 and over.

BAME Britons are significantly more likely to have been born outside of the UK (39%), and appear to have been less mobile throughout their lives, likely because migrants often settle in communities where others linked to their place of birth or cultural background already live, and also because many migrants in the modern age are working in jobs that are fixed to certain places. London is, home to the largest proportion of Britons born overseas, and hence, experiences of lifetime mobility are correlated with international identities. Britons who identify as global citizens are more likely to have been born outside of the UK, and are less likely to live within two hours of where they were born – as are Britons who identify as European.

Emigration to other parts of the UK is highest in the East of England, where just 18% of residents were born in the region, followed by the South West (19%) and the South East (22%). However, the scale of movement varies tremendously. While many Britons living in the East of England – one of the most mixed areas of Britain in terms of prosperity – are likely to have moved throughout their lives, the distances are relatively short, with 43% living within two hours of where they were born. By contrast, 50% of Britons living in the South West – which includes dynamic university city Bristol and the seaside playground of Cornwall – were born more than two hours away, capturing both younger and older mobility patterns.

The sense of rootedness appears to be strongest in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside, where only a fifth of its population were born more than two hours away. Despite the image of London as a 'magnet' for talent around the nation, the proportion of the population born more than two hours' drive away in the UK in London is also low (21%) – suggesting most of its non-native population were either born overseas or within the South of England. These statistics tell us something about how vastly different economic opportunities, migration and community structures can produce similar results in terms of mobility patterns.

Britons living in cities are more likely to reside where they were born, with 41% remaining in situ, compared to 18% in rural areas. This highlights the role of work as a driving force behind migration patterns, with those born and raised in cities much more likely to have a more diverse range of opportunities and employment pathways on their doorstep. National identity also appears closely correlated with lifetime mobility, with citizens who identify as both British and English (43%) considerably more likely than those who identify as British-only (34%) or English-only (30%) to continue to live in the same place as where they are born. Furthermore, 43% of those who identify as Scottish live more than two hours from where they were born, compared to 35% of those who identify as Northern Irish, and 28% of those who identify as Welsh.

Turning to the political dimensions of mobility, voters who supported Labour in the 2019 General Election are 10 percentage points less likely to have been geographically mobile throughout their lives than Conservative voters, with 37% of Labour voters living where they were born, compared to 27% of Conservative voters. We can observe similar distinctions in the patterns between the voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019, compared to those who switched to Labour. This in large part reflects the urban effect, as – following the political realignment of Brexit – Labour's voting base (and the Remain voting base) is now considerably higher amongst urban residents, who we know are less likely to move because of the options available to them, and are also more likely to have been born overseas.

It is also true that Labour voters who supported Leave in the 2016 Referendum and continued to stay within the party are the most rooted to their communities, with Labour-voting Leave voters sixteen percentage points more likely to live where they were born than Conservative-voting Leave voters. Dramatic distinctions can also be observed through the prism of newspaper readership – which captures something significant about the nature of the framing of political and social realities being accessed by different demographic groups. Readers of The Sun (51%) and the Daily Mirror (48%) are the most likely to live in the same city, town or village in which they were born – twice as likely, indeed, as Guardian readers (27%). Financial Times readers are the most likely to have not been born in the UK (14%).

Travel, Holidays and Lived Experiences of Mobility

Given the dramatic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the capacity or motivation for citizens to travel, in 2021, we asked respondents to not only chart their travel in the past 12 months, but also to cast their minds back to 2019. This provides a fascinating snapshot of not only the shifts in travel patterns that took place in the extraordinary first year of the pandemic, but also the role that demographic, socio-economic and regional distinctions play in shaping opportunities and decision-making on a more generalised basis.

Travel Abroad for Leisure	2020	2019
On five or more occasions	3 %	7 %
On three or four occasions	6 %	17 %
On one or two occasions	21 %	36 %
Never	67 %	39 %

2. Mobility, Identity and Belonging

Overall, in 2020, just 30% of Britons travelled abroad for leisure, a sharp decline from the 63% who did so in 2019. Of Britons who engaged in foreign leisure travel in 2020, the largest proportion travelled on only one or two occasions (21%), while only 6% travelled for leisure on three or four occasions, and 3% on five or more occasions. The constraints around travel in 2020 appear to have deepened the distinctions in mobility patterns visible in previous surveys – with movement concentrated amongst the younger, urban, more economically secure population.

Under 35-year-olds are the most likely to have travelled for leisure in 2020 (44%), and the likelihood of travel falls considerably as we move through age groups, with 40% of 35-44-year-olds travelling in 2020, in stark contrast to the 20% of Britons 55-and-over who did so. Britons in higher (ABC1) socio-economic groups are more likely to have travelled abroad for leisure in 2020 (35%, to 21% of C2DE), as are Britons with graduate degrees (33%, to 28% of school leavers), and Britons living in cities (36%, compared to 26% in rural areas). BAME Britons (33%) are also marginally more likely to have travelled abroad for leisure in 2020 than White Britons (28%) – unsurprising given the higher likelihood of family reunion drivers behind their mobility.

These characteristics in turn foster dramatic relationships between the political tribes also defined by these traits – for example, 43% of Conservative-Remain voters travelled in 2020, compared to just 18% of Conservative-Leave voters. And 43% of Conservative voters under 45 years travelled in 2020, compared to just 20% of older Conservative voters. These gaps were similar in 2019.

There are significant variations in levels of foreign leisure travel across the four nations in 2020, with residents in Wales (20%), Northern Ireland (21%) and Scotland (23%) less likely to engage in foreign leisure travel than many of the regions of England, particularly London (41%) and the North West (40%). However, there is also a notable variation within England, as residents in the North East (18%) the East of England (22%) and the South West (24%) are less likely to have travelled abroad in 2020 than other English citizens. Again, these geographical trends are relatively similar to the patterns we observed in 2019.

Readers of the Daily Mail (29%) are the least likely to have travelled abroad in 2020, followed by readers of The Sun (33%) and The Guardian (33%). In contrast, the majority of Financial Times readers (54%) travelled abroad in 2020, the only paper with a majority of readers who travelled abroad despite the pandemic. Financial Times readers also travelled the most frequently, with 13% travelling abroad five or more times during 2020. This follows the broad trend in travel patterns in 2019, in which Financial Times readers were both the most likely to head abroad at least once (80%) and the most likely to fly more than five times in the year (17%). However, the disparity between the proportion of Financial Times readers flying, relative to the next highest proportion of newspaper readers, is just two percentage points in 2019 flight patterns, compared to twelve percentage points in 2020 – highlighting how the travel patterns of Financial Times readers are particularly anomalous in 2020.

Britons who identify as global citizens are more likely to have travelled abroad in 2019 (72%) than Britons who do not identify as global citizens (56%), as are Britons who identify as European (71%) compared to those who do not (55%). Levels of foreign leisure travel vary significantly across national identities, and citizens who define themselves as Scottish are the least likely to have travelled in both 2019 and 2020. Citizens who identify as both British and English are more likely to have travelled abroad in 2020 (42%), than those who identify as English-only (31%) or British-only (28%), although there was little variation in 2019.

Having asked respondents to consider their travel behaviour in 2019, and comparing with the contemporaneous reflections on respondents to our 2020 annual survey about their travel in 2019, we can see that there is a relatively high degree of correlation between the two – with respondents slightly more likely to recall travel than a lack of mobility: 35% claim to not

have travelled at all in 2019, compared to 39% in the survey undertaken in 2020. On average, travel fell by around 30% for most groups between 2019 and 2020, with older age groups somewhat more likely to have changed their behaviour, but significant falls visible across all groups.

Those who did travel in 2020 were more likely to have travelled regardless of the pandemic; which appears to have simply erected greater barriers for those who do not instinctively seek travel or are unable to access travel opportunities. That said, the importance of age as a factor driving 2020 travel means that the socio-economic disparities reduced somewhat last year, largely due to wealthier and more educated older Britons withdrawing from the travel market.

It is likely that the curtailed freedoms of 2020 will extend well into 2021, and it remains unclear as to whether – particularly with the emphasis in the climate action agenda on travel as a source of emissions – international mobility patterns will correct back to 2019 levels in the medium term. This volatility in the travel sector also raises the question as to whether, given the shaping effect on public opinion we now understand to be associated with access to mobility opportunities, these years of constrained travel will leave a lasting impact on citizens' attitudes and choices into the future.

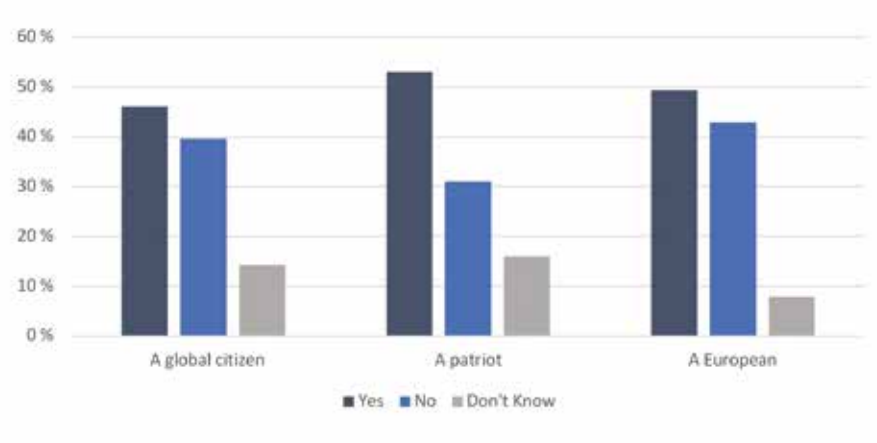
International Identities

One of the most striking findings from the 2020 survey was the degree to which international identities were hardening in the UK, as the questions of identity thrown up by the 2016 EU Referendum began to become more rooted in the nation's political tribes. In our 2020 survey, we saw that the greatest movement on these questions was being led by those rejecting uncertainty – moving from a 'don't know' position – and subsequently actively rejecting international identities – ie. expressing that they do not regard themselves as global citizens or European. These developments were rather troubling, because they suggested a process of polarisation that can be difficult to overcome.

In the 2021 survey, we can see a softening on the inclination to reject national identities, which perhaps reflects some of the heat coming out of the often-toxic Brexit debate. Indeed, we can see a slight increase in the proportion of Britons identifying themselves as European (49%), as well as a larger relative lift in the proportion of those identifying as global citizens (46%). We can also see a resettling of the uncertain responses, with some citizens moving

Do you consider yourself to be any of the following...?

BFPG



International Identities		2021	2020	2019
Global Citizen	**Yes**	46%	40%	44%
	No	40%	46%	34%
	Don't Know	14%	14%	22%
Patriot	**Yes**	53%	54%	56%
	No	31%	33%	27%
	Don't Know	16%	14%	17%
European	**Yes**	49%	47%	49%
	No	43%	46%	41%
	Don't Know	8%	7%	10%

back into a place of ambiguity – likely as a result of the 'battle' beginning to feel less existential, and also quite possibly reflecting the lack of clarity around the UK's new global position.

Global Citizenship

The proportion of Britons who define themselves as 'global citizens' has risen over the past year from 42% to 46%, and the proportion of Britons who actively reject the term has fallen from 46% to 40%. The strengthening of positive identification may reflect the diffusion of the emotive Brexit debate – although few Leave voters overall appear to have assumed this identity, they have become less actively hostile towards it. Alternatively, the increasing number of Remain voters identifying as global citizens may capture a sense of urgency to declare their commitment to internationalism now that Brexit has been finalised. It may also capture the unusual degree of attention afforded to international news in the pandemic, and/or a yearning to regain the freedoms of international mobility.

Young Britons remain the most likely to consider themselves to be global citizens, with 57% of under-35s identifying as global citizens, compared to 38% of Britons aged 55 years and over. Indeed, Britons aged 55 and over are more likely to reject the label than accept it (47% to 38%). Young Britons have been through the most dramatic transformation in their opinions, with a 10-percentage point increase in the proportion identifying as global citizens in the space of one year.

Londoners are the most likely to define themselves as global citizens (59%), in contrast to the rest of the South East, where just 38% identify with the term. Low identification with global citizenship is also found among residents in the North East (40%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (40%). A large proportion of residents in the West Midlands (53%) are inclined to see themselves as global citizens – likely reflecting the cosmopolitan influence of Birmingham, England's second-largest city. Levels of identification with the term are also high among Britons whose identify as Northern Irish (54%), relative to those who identify as Scottish (50%) and those who identify as Welsh (46%). Citizens who identify only as English (34%) are less likely than those who identify as both British and English (47%), or British-only (49%), to describe themselves as global citizens.

Identification with the term 'global citizen' is heavily tied to socio-economic status and education levels. Britons in the ABC1 social category (53%) are more likely to describe themselves as global citizens than Britons in lower social categories (31%), as are graduates (56%) relative to school leavers (39%). Men (49%) are also more likely to describe themselves as global citizens than women (43%), although this distinction is largely due to the greater number of women who are unsure whether they view themselves in this way (17%, compared to 11% of men), rather than a larger number of women rejecting the term.

Do you consider yourself to be a global citizen?

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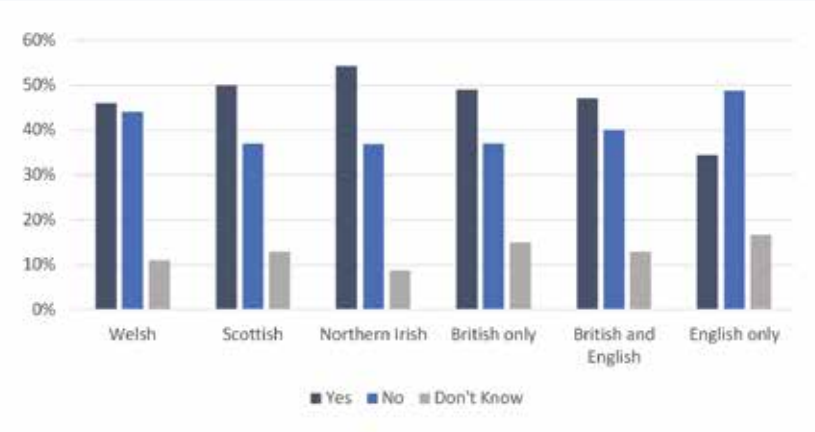


Lived experiences of mobility also shape international identities. Britons who travelled frequently in 2019, for example, are 25 percentage points more likely to view themselves as global citizens than those who did not travel in 2019 and 2020 (60% to 35%). Similarly, and likely reflective of the diversity of the UK's cities, Britons in cities are more likely (53%) to define themselves as global citizens than Britons in rural areas (43%) or Britons in towns (42%). BAME Britons are more likely to identify with the term 'global citizen' (58%) than White Britons (43%). White British Conservative voters are particularly unlikely to view themselves as global citizens, with just 29% describing themselves as such, although the majority of White British Labour voters do view themselves as global citizens (56%).

Liberal Democrat voters are the most likely to view themselves as global citizens (62%) – more than twice the proportion of Conservative voters (30%). Notably, voters that switched to the Conservatives in the 2019 General Election are particularly unlikely to define themselves as global citizens (22%), while Britons that left the Conservative voters are twice as likely to do so (46%). Remain voters (65%) are strikingly more likely to see themselves as global citizens than Leave voters (26%), and therefore Labour-Remain voters are particularly inclined to identify as such (69%), compared to just 23% of Conservative-Leave voters. It should be noted, however, that Labour-Leave voters have experienced some of the largest leaps towards self-identification as a global citizen over the past year, up 12 percentage points to 35% and breaking clearly away from Conservative-Leave voters. This may reflect the fact that, with Brexit settled, and a new internationalist leadership team in place for Labour, the party's Leave voters are responding to cues that define their membership and belonging in juxtaposition against the Conservative Party.

It is important to emphasise that Britons who identify as 'European' are more than three times as likely to identify as global citizens than Britons who do not identify as European (71% to 22%), highlighting the interconnectedness of these identities as part of a more generalised 'world view'.

It is also the case that the powerful shaping effect of age in self-identification as a global citizen can depress the influence of party affiliations. For example, identification with the term 'global citizen' is relatively high among Conservative voters under 45 years of age (47%), as the proportion of Conservative voters identifying with the term is brought down primarily by the strikingly scarce proportion of Conservative voters aged over 45 who identify with it (26%). No distinctions are observable between age groups within the Labour Party, but there is clearly fertile ground for the Conservative voters to secure the support of their younger voters through appealing to an internationalist mind-set.

Turning to newspaper readership, and readers of the Financial Times are the most likely (69%) to define themselves as global citizens, followed by readers of The Guardian (67%) and The Times (64%). Readers of both The Sun and the Daily Mail are the most likely to actively reject the term 'global citizen' (46%), although it is also the case that a sizeable 42% of the readers at each paper do positively view themselves as global citizens. Britons who do not read newspapers are, by far, the least likely to identify as a global citizen (38%).

Patriotism

Britons are more likely to define themselves as a patriot (53%) than other more internationalist identities. However, a significant proportion of Britons do actively reject the term (31%). A patriotic identity is notably more popular among men (60%) than women (46%) and significantly more popular among White Britons (56%) than BAME Britons (29%). Patriotism is also heavily shaped by age, with striking distinctions between the generations. Over-55s are significantly more likely to see themselves as patriots (66%), relative to both 35-54-year-olds (46%) and under-35s (43%).

These differences around identity pertaining to the younger generations, and those with non-White cultural and ethnic backgrounds, raises interesting questions about the construction of patriotism and the trajectory of this aspect of citizenship and nation-building into the future – namely, because these two factors are heavily entwined due to the disproportionate diversity of the UK's youth. It is unclear as to whether the 'shaping effect' of moving through different life stages, and global events in the future which may compel patriotic sentiment, will intervene to temper this relationship.

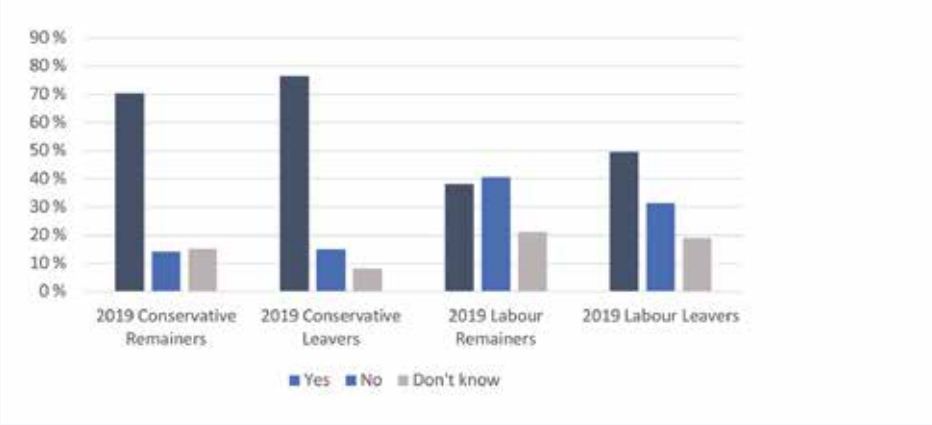
Patriotic identities are particularly popular among residents in the West Midlands (66%), the East of England (65%) and Wales (58%). Meanwhile, although almost half of Londoners are inclined to identify as patriots (48%), more of London's residents (39%) actively reject the identity than in any other region. Other hotspots denying a patriotic identity include the South East (36%), North East (34%), South West (34%) and Northern Ireland (34%). Turning to national identity, citizens who identify as Northern Irish are less likely to identify as patriots (37%) than those who identify as Welsh (52%) or Scottish (56%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (63%) are more likely to define themselves as patriots than those who identify as English-only (57%) or British-only (54%).

There are no clear distinctions in identification with the term patriot based on social grade or qualification level – this is a term that finds appeal across large swathes of the nation and straddles all communities. However, the distinctions based on political affinity are significant. At 75%, Conservative voters are twice as likely to identify as patriots than Labour voters (38%), and it is particularly rare for Labour voters aged under 45 to define themselves as patriots (29%).

We can clearly observe the "Corbyn effect" on voter movement patterns at the 2019 General Election; although the new Labour leadership under Keir Starmer is making concerted efforts to reassert the importance of belonging and patriotism, many of its former loyalists left the party under his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn, who promoted a more critical gaze towards the United Kingdom's role in the world. Hence, only 28% of voters who switched to the Labour Party in 2019 define themselves as patriots, and yet 70% of the voters that switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 identify as such.

Identification with the term patriot is higher among Leave (68%) than Remain voters (50%) – underscoring the significance of the sovereignty argument in the EU Referendum campaign and ensuing debate around the Brexit negotiations. A crucial, remarkable distinction can be observed between patriotic identities of Labour-Remain (38%) voters and Conservative-Remain voters (70%). This distinction cannot be accounted for by the high concentration of BAME

Do you consider yourself to be a patriot?



Britons amongst the Labour-Remain coalition, as only 41% of White British Labour voters identify as patriots. It is unclear as to whether the gap between Labour and Conservative-Remain voters to some extent reflects the movement of any Labour-Remain voters to the Conservative voters; although one can assume that there is a likelihood that this chasm could close to some degree under a non-Corbyn ticket at the next General Election.

The majority of readers across all newspapers define themselves as patriots, with the exception of Guardian readers (39%). Readers of the Daily Mail (64%,) the Daily Express (63%) and The Times (63%) are the most likely to describe themselves as patriots. Only 54% of Sun readers described themselves as patriots, a lower percentage than any newspaper other than The Guardian.

European Identity

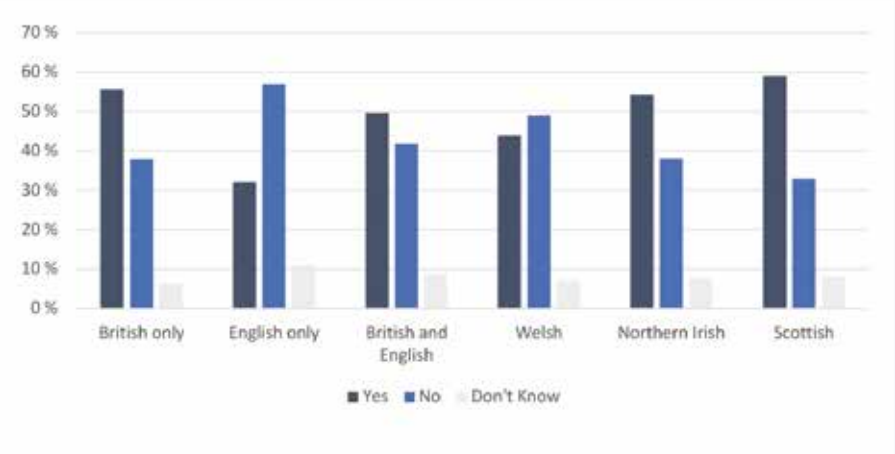
European identity remains a deeply polarising concept, with 49% of Britons identifying as European, while 43% reject the term. As in the EU Referendum itself, the socio-economic element to this dichotomy is clear: Britons in the ABC1 social category are 21 percentage points (56%) more likely to identify as European as those in the C2DE category (35%). These gulfs carry through into education, although somewhat less dramatically, with graduates significantly more likely to define themselves as European (59%) than school leavers (42%). Although smaller than the socio-economic and mobility gaps, the generational gap in opinions on European identity are also clear. 55% of under-35-year-olds subscribe to a European identity, compared to 44% of over-55s.

Lived experiences with mobility are a powerful shaping instrument around European identity. Britons who travelled frequently in 2019 (ie. on five on more occasions) are 26 percentage points more likely (66%) than those who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (40%) to identify as European. BAME Britons (37%) are less likely to identify as European than White Britons (47%), although it is expected that this may be because they are more likely to hold other international identities along with the UK national identity of choice.

On national identity, 59% of those who identify as Scottish would describe themselves as European, compared to 54% of those who identify as Northern Irish, and 44% of those who identify as Welsh. Citizens who identify as English-only (32%) are particularly unlikely to identify as European, relative to those who identify as British-only (56%), or both British and English (50%).

Do you consider yourself to be European?

BFPG

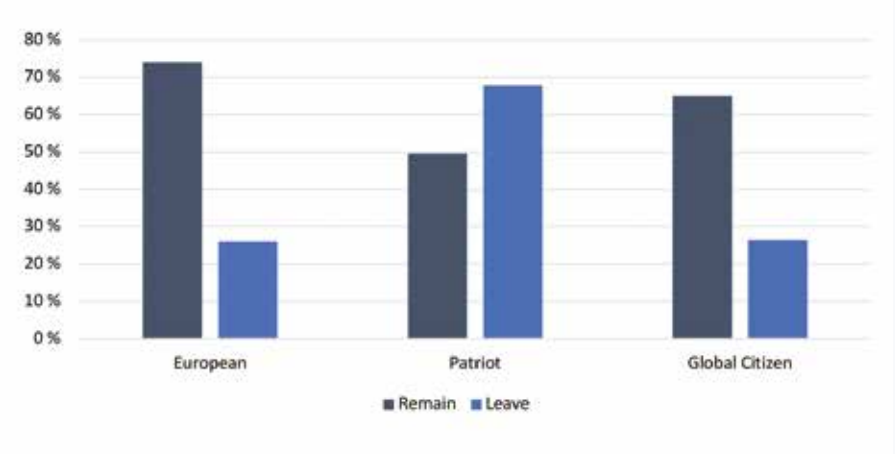


Notably, Britons in rural areas (44%) are substantially less likely than Britons living in cities (56%) to identify as European – and this may reflect the youthful profile of cities and their higher levels of further education. Hence, the regional divides in European identity are distinct. 65% of Londoners and 58% of Britons in the West Midlands (ie. Birmingham) define themselves as European, standing in stark contrast to the 38% of residents in the North East who subscribe to a European identity. Other areas of the North, including the North West (41%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (40%), alongside the East of England (43%) and Wales (42%), also have low a proportion of residents who subscribe to a European identity.

The UK's political realignment in the aftermath of the EU Referendum means European identity is closely correlated with citizens' political affiliation. 74% of Liberal Democrat voters identify as European, compared to 66% of Labour voters, and just 32% of Conservative voters. There are, however, quite significant disparities on European identity within the Conservative voting base as a whole. For example, Conservative voters under 45 years are much more likely (45%) to identify as Europeans than older Conservative voters (27%) – suggesting there is a future for the Conservative Party in which occupying a more favourable tone to Europe could play a role. This is likely to come into contention with the fact that the voters who switched to the party at the 2019 General Election are especially unlikely to identify as European (23%).

I consider myself to be a...

BFPG



Unsurprisingly, Remain voters (74%) are more likely to view themselves as European than Leave voters, although just over a quarter (26%) of Britons who voted to leave the EU do actively identify as European. Despite their tendency to be somewhat more isolationist than Leave voters on the whole, Labour-Leave voters are more likely (38%) to identify as European than Conservative-Leave (23%) voters, which suggests a compound identity effect is in play. This also aligns with the findings of the questions later in the survey around the UK's future relationship with the European Union.

Personal perceptions of European identity vary significantly across newspaper readerships, although the majority of readers across all newspapers, with the exception of the Daily Mail (45%) and The Sun (50%), define themselves as European. Readers of The Guardian (75%), The Times (71%) and the Financial Times (71%) are the most likely to define themselves as European. As exemplified in the case of identification with the term 'global citizen', identification as European is lowest among Britons who do not read a newspaper (39%).

National Identity

Given the increasing evidence within our previous surveys towards a strong link between citizens' international identities and attitudes on foreign policy, as well as the correlations between different demographics, socio-economic and geographic characteristics and these identities, it felt logical to extend this line of inquiry into the national identities held within the United Kingdom. This question of national identity has in turn proved a valuable lens through which to interpret and analyse responses to other questions in our large data-set. We chose to employ the construction of identity as presented within the UK Census, and in short, the findings suggest that national identities are inseparable from international identities and the construction of citizens' 'world views'.

Overall, 55% of Britons would define their national identity as British, 38% would define themselves as English, 6% Welsh, 6% Scottish and 2% Northern Irish. Given the disproportionate size of the English population, when looking at the role that these identities play in the formation of other attitudes, we were able to separate between those Britons for who the British or English identity is singularly held, and those who self-identify as both English and British.

Self-identification as 'British' is higher among women (58%) than men (52%), and women are therefore less likely to adopt terms relating to any of the four nations. For example, 42% of men identify as English, compared to 34% of women. Interestingly, under-35s are the most likely to identify as English (45%), compared to 33% of over-55s, and they are also the most likely to identify with an alternative national identity than the options given (12%) – which aligns with the fact that under-35s are more than three times more likely than over-55s to have been born outside of the UK.

National identity varies relatively little on socio-economic lines as a whole. However, there is a notable difference between graduates (31%) and school leavers (43%) in use of the term 'English', which seems distinctly related to class identities. BAME Britons are also significantly less likely to use the term 'English' (26%) compared to White Britons (41%), in part because they gravitate towards the apparently more inclusive 'British', and also because more than a quarter identify primarily with a non-British national identity (26%).

The regional differences in national identity are revealing. Devolved national identities are most popular in Wales, with 62% of Welsh residents identifying as Welsh, compared to 52% of Scotland's residents who identify as Scottish, and 41% of Britons living in Northern Ireland who identify as Northern Irish. Of the devolved nations, the term 'British' is significantly more popular in Northern Ireland (57%) than in Scotland (40%) and Wales (36%), which have the lowest levels of identification with the British national identity of any

of the regions. Unsurprisingly, identification as English was significantly rarer in the devolved nations, however 12% of residents of Wales, 7% of residents of Scotland and 6% of residents of Northern Ireland identify as English nonetheless.

Within England, identification as English is strongest among residents in the North West (52%), the East Midlands (47%), the East of England (46%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (46%). It is weakest among residents of London (34%). The British label is most popular among residents in the South West (64%) and the East Midlands (63%), and least popular in the South East (52%). London stands out for the large proportion of its residents, in relative terms, who choose another label by which to describe their national identity (18%). This is likely reflective of both the cultural and ethnic diversity of London, and its strong international links.

Looking at the political dimensions of national identity, the majority of Labour (67%), Liberal Democrat (66%) and Conservative voters (57%) identify as British, in contrast to just 13% of SNP voters. Unsurprisingly, an overwhelming majority of SNP voters identify as Scottish (85%), while Conservative voters are the most likely to identify as English, at 46%, compared to 29% of Labour voters. The voters who switched to the Conservative party in 2019, of whom many were previous Labour voters, are more likely than average to identify as English (49%).

Similarly, while the majority of both Leave (53%) and Remain (65%) voters identify as British, a large plurality of Leave voters identify as English (46%) – compared to just 25% of Remain voters. There is, it appears, some very particular alchemy between English identity and the Leave movement, now embodied by the Conservative Party, with a lack of socio-economic prosperity and educational opportunity, and also of course the individual tendency to self-identify as patriotic and to reject other international identities. Self-identification as British, meanwhile, provokes internal divisions within parties along European Referendum voting lines. Conservative-Remain voters are more likely to view themselves as British (73%) than Conservative-Leave voters (52%), half of whom identify as English (49%). Labour-Remain voters (70%) are more likely to identify as British than Labour-Leave voters (57%), 41% of whom identify as English.

Similarly, the majority of readers of all papers define their national identity as British, with Daily Telegraph readers the most likely to do so (65%), followed by readers of The Times (64%). Curiously, Financial Times readers join Daily Express and Daily Mirror readers as the most likely to describe themselves as 'English' (all 48%), in contrast to 28% of Guardian readers – amongst whom English identity is especially weak. In terms of other national identities, 8% of Times readers identify as Scottish, and Daily Express readers are the most likely to identify as Welsh (10%). A significant 15% of Guardian readers answered 'other' – indicating a globally diverse readership within the UK.

3.

Knowledge, Pride and Engagement with Foreign Affairs

Interest in the UK's International Activities

In 2021, 71% of Britons report being interested in the UK's international activities, with 30% of Britons being 'very' interested. Only 7% of the population claim to be actively uninterested in foreign affairs. Although enthusiasm remains high, it is true that levels of interest have fallen six percentage points since 2020 (77% to 71%) – perhaps the result of information fatigue brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the perception of an overwhelming degree of dynamism in geopolitics at the moment, or the exhaustion of the protracted Brexit negotiations. It is also the case that the pandemic has focused minds at a community and national level. The BFPG will continue to monitor this metric as it has been experiencing a high degree of flux over the past four years.

Interest in the UK's Foreign Affairs	2021	2020	2019	2017
Very interested	30 %	31 %	20%	20%
Fairly interested	41 %	46 %	44%	38%
Neither interested nor uninterested	21 %	18 %	22%	24%
Fairly uninterested	5 %	3 %	9%	12%
Very uninterested	2 %	2 %	5%	6%
INTERESTED	**71 %**	**77 %**	**65%**	**58%**
UNINTERESTED	**7 %**	**5 %**	**14%**	**18%**

Socio-economic and educational factors play a clear and role in the formation of interest in the UK's international affairs. Britons who hold a university degree are significantly more likely to be interested in the UK's international affairs (78%) than school leavers (66%), and Britons in the ABC1 social grade (75%) are more likely than their C2DE (64%) counterparts to be interested. Britons who travelled frequently in 2019 (80%) – a reflection of youth, internationalist mind-sets, and economic security – are also more likely to be interested in the UK's international affairs than Britons that did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (69%).

The relationship between socio-economic status and the construction of interest and engagement in foreign affairs is not entirely clear, and could do with some further research investment. We can hypothesise, however, that both the forces of opportunity and necessity play a role. For example, access to tools and resources and experiences that cultivate interest – foreign language lessons, trips abroad, international news and magazines – all require certain means. Equally, a life lived under the spectre of economic insecurity and hardship, juggling responsibilities in a subsistence and survival lifestyle, restricts an individual's space for creativity and curiosity, and focuses their existence at a community, regional and national level – rather than the more abstract – and often conceptual – international sphere.

Gender and age are also important in shaping interest in the nation's international affairs. Men are more likely to be 'very' interested in what the UK does internationally (35%) than women (25%). Britons aged 55 years and over are also more likely (81%) to declare any level of interest in the UK's international affairs compared to under-35s (60%), who are twice as likely to be ambivalent (31%) than older Britons (14%). It is interesting to note that younger Britons are indeed more likely to travel abroad, so the disparity between the age groups here probably reflects a phenomenon whereby international affairs engagement builds over the course of a lifetime, as citizens come to realise these issues bear consequences on their lives, and as their own stake in the nation – ie. as expressed through their patriotism – increases.

There are notable regional differences in levels of interest in the UK's international affairs. At 81%, residents in Wales and the South West are the most inclined to express an interest in the UK's foreign policy, and Welsh residents are also the most likely to be 'very' interested in the UK's international affairs (41%). Given its socio-economic profile and broader tendency towards internationalism, London reports a surprisingly low proportion of residents who are interested in the UK's international affairs, at 69%.

This may reflect the city's cultural diversity – BAME Britons are somewhat less interested in the UK's foreign policy than White Britons – and its lower levels of patriotic identity; after all, Londoners may be interested in global issues they deem to be important, but disinterested in the UK Government's own international choices. Residents in Scotland and Northern Ireland report the highest levels of active disinterest in UK foreign policy, at 12% and 11% respectively. More broadly, Britons living in cities are more likely to be neither interested or interested in the UK's international affairs (26%) than Britons in towns (21%) or rural areas (17%).

Levels of interest in the UK's international affairs vary relatively little across parties. SNP voters are the most interested (84%), followed by Conservative voters (83%), Liberal Democrat voters (81%) and Labour voters (79%). Voters that switched to the Conservative Party at the General Election in 2019 are somewhat less interested in foreign policy than Conservative voters as a whole (77%). Remain voters (86%) show a higher level of interest than Leave voters (76%), and these distinctions are particularly pronounced in the Labour Party, with Labour-Remain voters twenty-two percentage points more likely (88%) than Labour-Leave voters (66%) to be interested in international affairs. This chimes with a broader trend of Labour-Leave voters being one of the least internationalist social groups across the population as a whole. Guardian readers are the most likely newspaper readers to be interested in what the UK does internationally (90%), and readers of The Sun are the least likely (70%) to be interested.

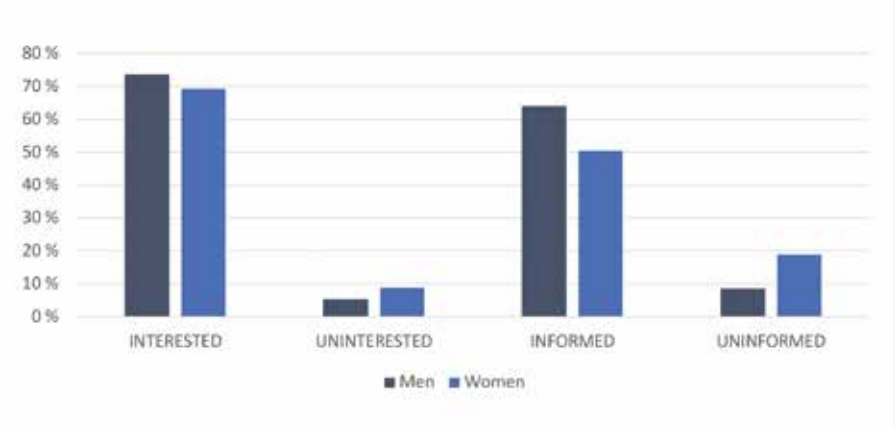
Unsurprisingly, Britons who define themselves as 'global citizens' (82%) are more interested in UK foreign affairs than Britons who do not (64%). Similarly, Britons who self-identify as patriots are more interested in global affairs (81%) than those who do not identify as patriots (61%), and Britons who identify as European (82%) are also more interested than Britons who do not identify as European (63%). It is interesting to see these international identities coming together, as this question touches on the singular uniting point for these otherwise often-polarised identities – indicating that engagement transgresses the boundaries of the substance of these world views.

Turning to national identity, citizens who identify as Northern Irish have low levels of interest in the UK's international affairs (51%), relative to those who identify as Welsh (63%) or Scottish (68%). Citizens who identify as British-only are more likely to be interested in the UK's international affairs (78%), than those who identify as both British and English (69%) or English-only (67%).

Self-Reported Knowledge on Foreign Affairs

The clear gulf between Britons' interest and knowledge in foreign policy continues, with just 57% of Britons feeling informed about the UK's international activities and ambitions, and 12% of Britons feeling 'very' informed about the UK's foreign affairs. As we have found in previous surveys, there are a number of demographic groups particularly vulnerable to poor levels of confidence – namely, women, younger Britons, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For example, a particularly significant gap exists between the proportion of women who are interested in the UK's international affairs (69%), and the proportion of women who feel informed on the UK's international affairs (50%). Overall, men are 14 percentage points more likely (64%) than women (50%) to report that they are knowledgeable about foreign affairs, and 10 percentage points more likely to feel 'very' informed about the UK's foreign affairs (7% to 17%).

How interested and informed are you about UK foreign affairs?



The generational gap of knowledge indicates that Britons accumulate their understanding of foreign policy over the course of their lifetimes, rather than being shaped by their education. Hence, under-35s (52%) are less likely to feel informed about the UK's foreign affairs than Britons aged 55 and over (63%). The socio-economic divides in knowledge are also sharp, and Britons in the ABC1 social grade are more likely to feel informed about the UK's international affairs (63%) than Britons in the C2DE social grade (46%). Similarly, Britons holding graduate degrees (67%) are more likely to feel informed than school leavers (50%).

Disparities in levels of knowledge are also pronounced in relation to lived experiences of mobility. Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are 15 percentage points less likely than those who travelled frequently in 2019 to feel informed about the UK's international affairs (53% to 68%). Regionally, residents in the West Midlands (69%), Wales (65%) and London (64%) are the most likely to claim they are informed on international affairs, and residents in Northern Ireland (47%) and the North West (46%) are the least likely to do so.

No dramatic distinctions can be observed between the parties. Labour voters under 45 years of age are less likely to feel informed (58%) than their older counterparts in Labour (68%). Voters who switched to Conservative Party in the 2019 General election are less likely to report that they are informed about foreign affairs (52%) than Conservative voters as a whole (64%). Leave voters (59%) are less likely to feel informed than Remain voters (67%), a pattern which manifests in the two major parties. Conservative-Remain voters (72%) are 10 percentage points more likely to feel more informed than Conservative-Leave voters (62%), and Labour-Remain voters (71%) are 12 percentage points more likely to feel informed than Labour-Leave voters (59%).

Looking to newspaper readership, and readers of The Times and the Financial Times are the most likely to self-report as feeling informed about UK foreign affairs (both 83%), with Financial Times readers particularly likely to feel 'very informed' (30%). Readers of the Daily Mail are the most likely to report themselves as being uninformed (14%), followed by readers of The Sun (12%).

Mirroring levels of interest, knowledge of foreign affairs is considerably higher among Britons who identify as global citizens (72%) than those who do not (49%). The same distinctions are observed between those who do (69%) and do not (48%) identify as European and those who do (66%) and do not (49%) identify as patriots. Clearly, the tendency to hold international identities both reflects and shapes interest and knowledge in foreign affairs.

Similarly, as with levels of interest, citizens who identify as Northern Irish are less likely to feel informed about the UK's international affairs (47%), than those who identify as Welsh (52%) or Scottish (54%). Citizens who identify as British-only are more likely to be interested in the UK's international affairs (60%), than those who identify as both British and English (56%), or English-only (52%).

Knowledge about UK Foreign Affairs	2021	2020	2019	2017
Very informed	12 %	11 %	6 %	5%
Fairly informed	45 %	48 %	37 %	33%
Neither informed nor uninformed	29 %	29 %	34 %	36%
Fairly uninformed	11 %	10 %	16 %	19%
Very uninformed	3 %	3 %	7 %	7%
INFORMED	**57 %**	**58 %**	**43 %**	**38%**
UNINFORMED	**14 %**	**12 %**	**23 %**	**26%**

Pride in the UK's Foreign Policy

Our survey asked Britons to identify which aspect of UK foreign policy was the greatest source of pride for them as a citizen. To do so, we provided a long list of different components of the UK's foreign policy, covering areas such as defence, the armed forces, intelligence, diplomacy, foreign aid, and humanitarian relief. Strikingly, no single aspect of the UK's international activities stood out, with all possible options attracting an even distribution of support. This indicates that UK foreign policy is seen as the sum of its parts, with a strong element of individual resonance at play. This phenomenon may also reflect the sense of ambiguity around the UK's foreign policy vision, at the time this survey was undertaken.

Worryingly, more than a quarter of the British population argue that none of the core components of the UK's international activities are a source of pride for them. These citizens are a mixture of heavily disengaged Britons who tend to hold more isolationist attitudes, and Britons strongly affiliated with Labour, who regard the UK's contemporary foreign policy as a reflection of a 'Tory foreign policy'. This suggests that the perceived strong relationship between the Conservative Party, the Global Britain project, and Brexit, will continue to politicise foreign policy debate for the near future.

Although the differences in preferences are so marginal, it is worth considering these in the context of the question framing, which asks Britons to choose one single stand-out source of pride. In doing so, we can see that our armed forces, our national security and intelligence services and our work to promote democracy and human rights globally are the most popular options. There is around half as much support for standing up to autocratic regimes and our diplomacy and soft power, while the UK's Global Britain space programme attracts the smallest degree of support.

Women (30%) are more likely than men (22%) to not feel connected to any of the options presented to them, but otherwise the gender variations are negligible. The socio-economic disparities are also relatively insignificant, although pride in the UK's aid and development spending is stronger among Britons in the ABC1 social grade than among those in the C2DE social grade, and higher among graduates than school leavers. It is somewhat more interesting to look at the responses through the lens of age. We can observe that over-55s are more likely (12%) to take pride in the military than under-35s (4%), while under-35s (10%) take greater pride in our aid and development work than over-55s (5%). Younger Britons are also more likely to claim that none of these areas are a source of pride to them than older Britons.

3. Knowledge, Pride and Engagement with Foreign Affairs

Ethnicity reveals itself to be one of the most striking distinctions between demographics – largely driven by the fact that BAME Britons are significantly more likely (39%) than White Britons (25%) to claim that none of the components of the UK's foreign policy are a source of pride to them. White Britons are in turn three times more likely than BAME Britons to see the armed forces as their greatest source of pride. These disparities are concerning, as they indicate something broader about the perceived lack of inclusivity underpinning the UK's foreign policy. Many BAME Britons clearly do not feel that invested in the UK's international activities, and it can be deduced that this likely extends beyond the policies themselves to the perceived absence of diverse voices in the policy development process or in implementing the UK's diplomatic and security objectives.

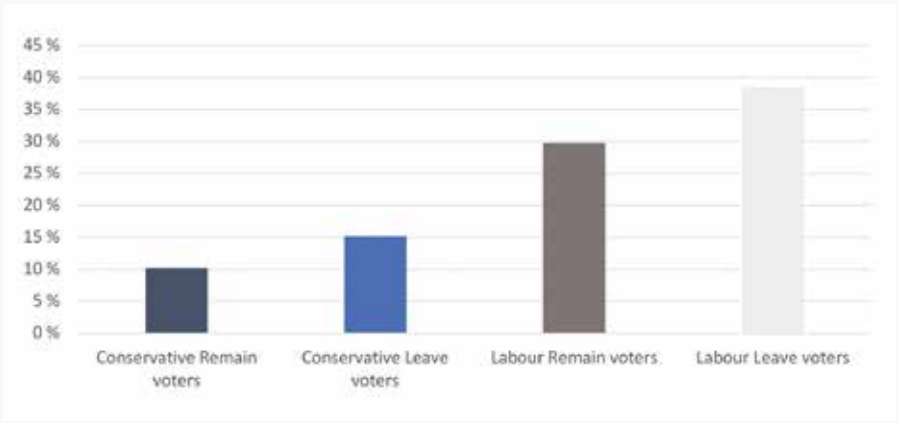
Britons who identify as patriots (12%) are more likely than Britons that do not identify as patriots (6%) to view the military as their greatest sources of pride. Significantly, Britons that do not identify as patriots are three times as likely (40%) as those who do (14%) to say they are not proud of any of the foreign policy components presented. Citizens who identify as Welsh are more likely to express pride in the UK's foreign policy, with a third (32%) of citizens who identify as Scottish and 39% of those who identify as Northern Irish unwilling to express pride in any of the international activities.

Looking to regional variations in sources of pride, we can see that Britons living in cities (12%) are more likely to take pride in our leadership on global challenges than those living in rural areas (4%). Pride in our armed forces is strongest among residents in the East of England (17%) and pride in our military and intelligence services is strongest in the North West (15%) and the East Midlands (15%). Londoners have the least pride in our armed forces (3%), but the highest in our leadership on global issues (12%) and our aid donations (12%). Pride in our partnerships with other liberal actors is strongest in Northern Ireland (14%) and lowest in the North East (3%). Wales has the strongest sense of pride in both our membership of the Commonwealth and our membership of multilateral organisations (both 14%). Residents in the North East of England are the most likely to report an absence of pride (34%) and residents in Wales the least (18%).

It is striking to note that the largest plurality of SNP (43%), Labour (32%) and Liberal Democrat voters (22%) do not report viewing any of the foreign policy components provided as a source of pride for them as a British citizen. This compares to just 14% of Conservative voters. The largest proportion of Conservative voters see the military as their greatest source of pride (16%), while the largest proportion of Labour (11%) and Liberal Democrat voters (10%) take pride in the UK's promotion of democracy and human rights around the world. Voters which switched to the Conservatives in 2019 are particularly likely to view the military (17%), our intelligence services (14%) and standing up to autocratic regimes (10%) as their greatest source of pride.

Leave voters draw more pride from our military (15%) compared Remain voters (7%), as well as our national intelligence services (12%, to 7% of Remain voters). However, there are significant variations to be observed when Referendum and party- political voting are considered together. For example, Conservative-Leave voters take greatest pride in our military (17%) and Conservative-Remain voters take greatest pride in our promotion of human rights and democracy (19%). In turn, Labour-Remain voters take greatest pride in the UK's foreign aid donations (12%), which elicits a less than 3% support in the other groups, and Labour-Leave voters biggest source of greatest pride is our intelligence services (11%). Conservative voters over 45 years of age (19%) are more likely to take pride in our military services than Conservative voters under 45 (9%).

"None of the UK's foreign policy activities are a source of pride for me"



In relation to newspaper readership, we can see that readers of The Sun are the most likely to take pride in the UK's armed forces (17%), compared to 3% of Guardian readers and 5% of The Times' readers. Daily Express readers (12%) are the most likely to be proud of the UK's national security and intelligence services, compared to 6% of Guardian readers and 7% of Times readers. Financial Times readers are the readership the most likely to view the UK's status as a global aid donor (16%), its history of standing up to autocratic regimes (11%) and membership of the Commonwealth (10%) as a primary source of pride. Readers of the Daily Express and Guardian (11% each) are the most likely to be proud of the UK's activities promoting democracy and human rights abroad, with 5% of Sun readers and 6% of Financial Times readers the least likely to do so.

Foreign Policy Spending, Trust and Priorities

Foreign Policy Spending

Overall, 23% of Britons believe that the UK should spend more of its GDP on foreign policy, and 19% think it should spend less. 40% think the UK should spend about the same. It is clear that, even among Britons who think UK expenditure on foreign policy should be increased or decreased, the majority seek only small changes, with just 6% wanting the UK to increase expenditure 'much more' and 8% wanting the UK to spend 'substantially less'. However, the proportion of Britons who believe the UK should spend less on foreign policy has increased five percentage points over the past year since our 2020 survey (14% to 19%), likely due to the perceived need to tackle issues at home precipitated by the coronavirus pandemic.

As a consistent theme throughout this survey, women are significantly more likely than men to be unsure about their responses on this question, and are therefore less likely to support both increases and decreases in international spending. BAME Britons are also more likely to be unsure on whether the UK should spend more on its foreign policy than their White British counterparts.

Socio-economic factors also weigh heavily on public opinion towards international spending. Britons in the ABC1 social grade (27%) are more likely to support increasing foreign policy spending than Britons in the C2DE social grade (17%). Similar disparities are apparent between education level, with graduates (30%) more likely to support increased foreign policy spending than school leavers (18%). Under-35s are more supportive of increasing the UK's foreign policy spending (28%) than over-55s (19%), and are less likely to support reductions in spending (11% to 25%).

One of the most dramatic distinctions on this issue can be observed between those who travel abroad for leisure. Britons who travelled frequently in 2019 are much more likely to support increasing foreign policy spending (37%) than Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (19%). In fact, a larger proportion of Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 support reducing foreign policy spending (22%) than support increasing it (19%), one of the few groups for which this is the case.

Do you believe the UK should spend more or less on foreign policy?

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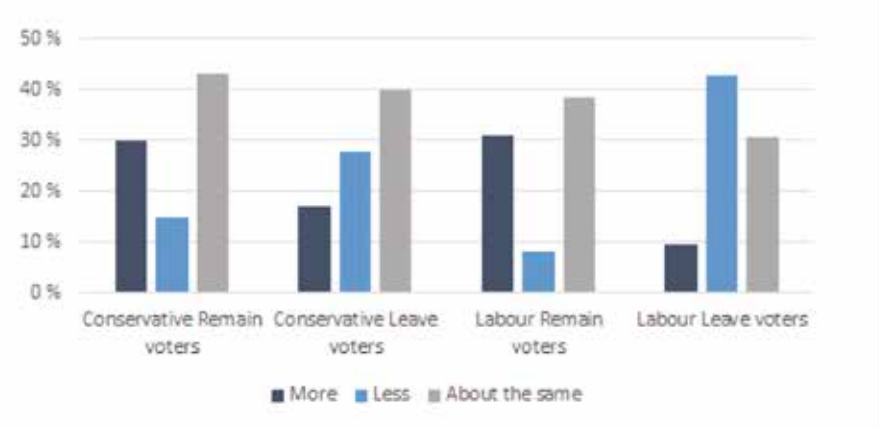

Do you believe the UK should spend more or less on our foreign policy?

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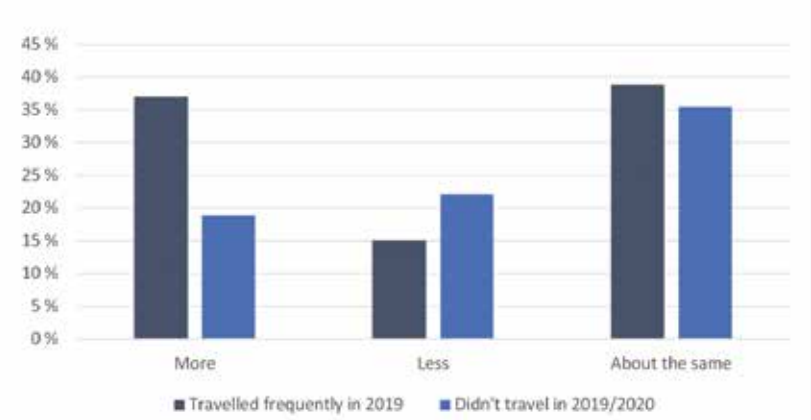

Turning to the regions, and residents in London (34%) and the West Midlands (28%) are the most supportive of increasing foreign policy spending. This trend is borne out in the broader tendency – one of the most substantive distinctions by these groups in our entire survey – with Britons living in cities being much more inclined to support increased foreign policy spending (31%), than Britons living in towns (19%) and rural areas (20%). Residents in the East of England (25%) are the most supportive of reducing foreign policy spending, followed by those living in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales, and Northern Ireland (all 22%). Residents in the North West (46%) and Wales (45%) are the most likely to favour the status quo.

There is relatively little variation across the parties in support for increasing international spending. However, Conservative voters are the most likely to support reducing foreign spending (25%), compared to 18% of SNP voters, 17% of Labour voters and 14% of Liberal Democrat voters. Voters that switched to the Conservative party in 2019 are somewhat more supportive of reducing foreign policy spending (27%) than Conservative voters as a whole. The Leave-Remain axis, however, is more powerful in capturing views on foreign spending with Labour-Remain voters (31%) and Conservative-Remain voters (30%) more likely to support increasing international spending than Conservative-Leave voters (17%) and Labour-Leave voters (9%).

Do you believe the UK should spend more or less on our foreign policy?

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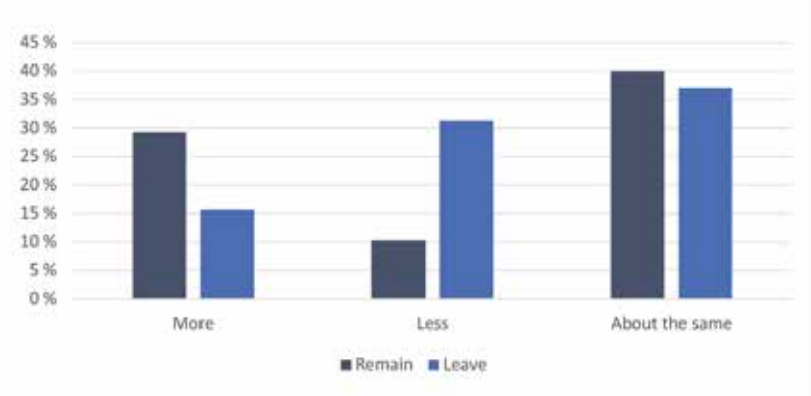
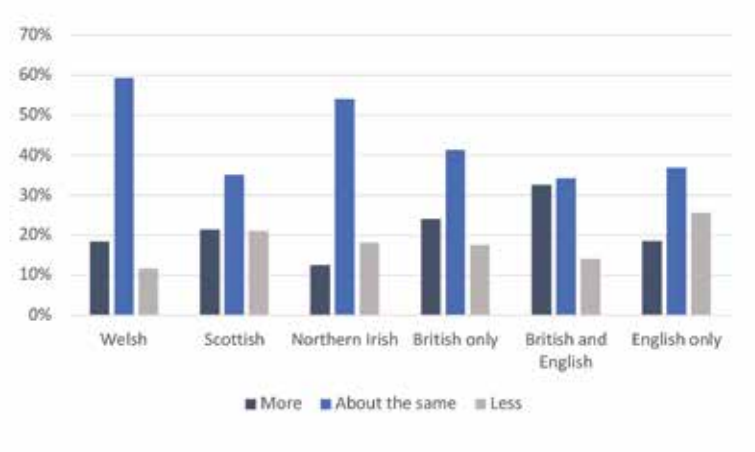


Do you believe the UK should spend more or less on our foreign policy?



As we see elsewhere in the survey, Labour-Leave voters (43%) are the most likely to support reducing international spending, compared to just 8% of Labour-Remain voters and 28% of Conservative-Leave voters (28%). However, the combination of age and party affiliation also generates interesting distinctions within the Conservative party, more so than within the Labour Party – with 36% of Conservative voters aged under 45 years supporting increased international expenditure, compared to 16% of Conservative voters aged over 45 years.

International identities also correlate closely with preferences on foreign policy spending. Britons who define themselves as global citizens are almost twice as likely as Britons who do not define as global citizens to support international spending (33% to 17%). Similarly, Britons who identify as European are more supportive of increasing international spending (31%) than those who do not define themselves as such (17%). Looking at national identities, citizens who identify as Scottish are more likely to support both increasing foreign policy spending (21%) and reducing foreign policy spending (21%), compared to those who identify as Welsh (18% and 12%) or Northern Irish (13% and 18%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (33%) are significantly more likely than citizens who identify as British-only (24%) or English-only (18%) to think the UK should spend more on its foreign policy programmes.

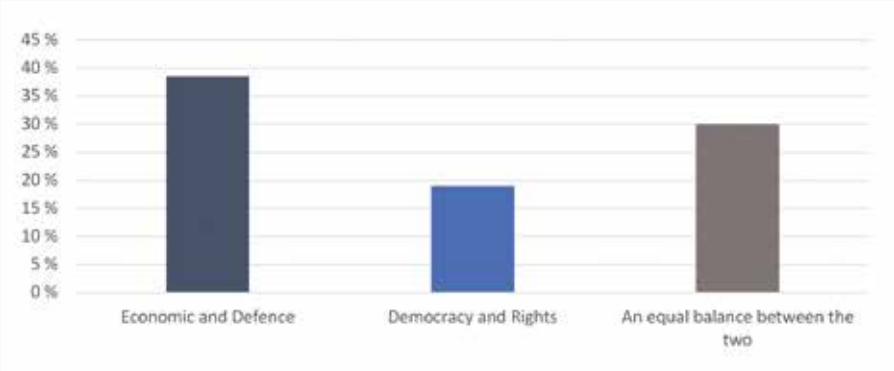
Readers of the Financial Times – who we know are more likely to self-report as knowledgeable and interested in foreign affairs – are the most supportive of the UK increasing international spending (39%), while Telegraph readers are the most likely to be in favour of a significant increase in spending (15%). Readers of the Daily Express are the most supportive of reducing international spending (23%), however Daily Mail's readers are the only readership in which a greater number favours reducing international spending over increases.

Balancing Strategic Interests and Values

Overall, 38% of Britons would prefer that Britain's international activities emphasise economic and strategic defence interests, 19% would prefer them to emphasise democracy and human rights, and 30% would like to see an equal balance the two. This represents a slight shift in priorities and awareness compared to 2020. Levels of uncertainty on how to respond to this question have fallen (17% to 13%), and support for a strategic and defence-driven foreign policy has increased slightly (35% to 38%). However, support for a values-led foreign policy has increased by a somewhat larger margin (14% to 19%), suggesting that the UK Governments' emphasis on a 'values-based' foreign policy agenda is gaining some traction.

Should the UK's foreign policy be driven by strategic defence and economic interests, or by human rights and values?

BFPG



There are notable distinctions, however, in the strength of feeling behind these two approaches. 18% of Britons claim to want our international activities to be 'much more' driven by economic and strategic interests, compared to 9% of Britons who want them to be 'much more' driven by values. This chasm is particularly strong between men and women, with 24% of men wanting Britain's foreign policy to be 'much more' driven by strategic interests, compared to 13% of women. Women, once again, are more uncertain of their position on this question, with 17% responding 'don't know', compared to 8% of men. However, women are still distinctly less receptive to a strategically driven agenda (31%) than men (46%).

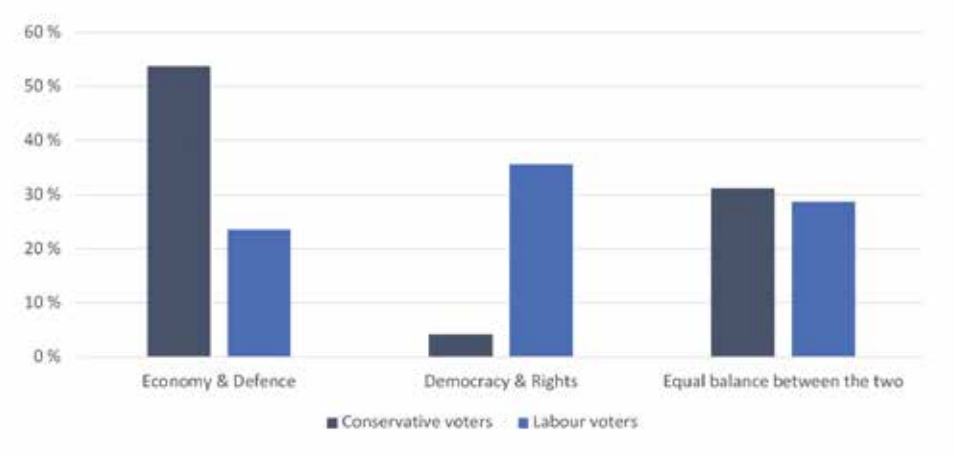
Although there is little variation between age groups in opinions on whether, overall, foreign policy should be driven by strategic interests or values-led, older Britons tend to hold their views more emphatically. A larger proportion of over-55s believe it should be 'much more' driven by economic and defence interests than believe it should be slightly more so (24% to 16%). In contrast, a greater proportion of under-35s believe foreign policy should by driven 'slightly more' by strategic priorities, rather than 'much more' (27% to 14%). Again, it appears that these opinions take shape and harden over the course of an individual's lifetime.

On a socio-economic level, Britons in the ABC1 social grade are more likely to support a foreign policy driven by democracy and human rights (21%) than Britons in the C2DE social grade (14%). This difference in preferences is magnified further at the educational level, with Britons with further education, 11 percentage points more likely to support a values-led foreign policy than school leavers (25% to 14%). This question also captures the shaping effects of lived experiences of mobility beyond cultivating awareness and engagement with foreign policy. For example, Britons who managed to holiday abroad in 2020 are 26 percentage points more likely (55%) than Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (29%) to think UK foreign policy should be driven by economic and defence interests.

BAME Britons (28%) are more likely to support a values-led foreign policy than White British individuals (17%) – perhaps in part because they may have personal connections to nations that would benefit from development and humanitarian assistance, and/or feel vulnerable to exploitation or conflict as a result of the pursuance of 'strategic interests'. However, the disproportionately lower levels of support for a values-led policy among White Britons are primarily driven by White British Conservative voters. White British Conservative voters strongly favour a defence and strategic interests-led foreign policy (54%) over a values-led foreign policy (just 4%), in contrast to White British Labour voters, who, on balance, support a values-led foreign policy (34%).

Considering regional distinctions, Britons in the West Midlands are the most supportive of a strategically driven foreign policy (51%), followed by the East of England (48%), Wales (47%), and the North West (46%). The strongest support for a values-led foreign policy is

Should the UK's foreign policy be driven by strategic defence and economic interests, or by human rights and values?



found among residents in London (27%) and the South West (24%). This question also elicits large disparities in public opinion across the political parties. Conservative voters are, by far, the most likely to support an economic and defence-driven foreign policy (54%), followed by Liberal Democrat voters, who are equally likely to support an economic and defence strategy (30%) as a democracy and rights-driven approach (30%). By contrast, Labour voters (36%) and SNP voters (37%) are both more likely to support a values-driven foreign policy. As such, we can observe that voters who switched to the Conservatives in the 2019 General Election heavily favour a foreign policy governed by strategic and defensive interests (51%) over a values-led foreign policy (4%).

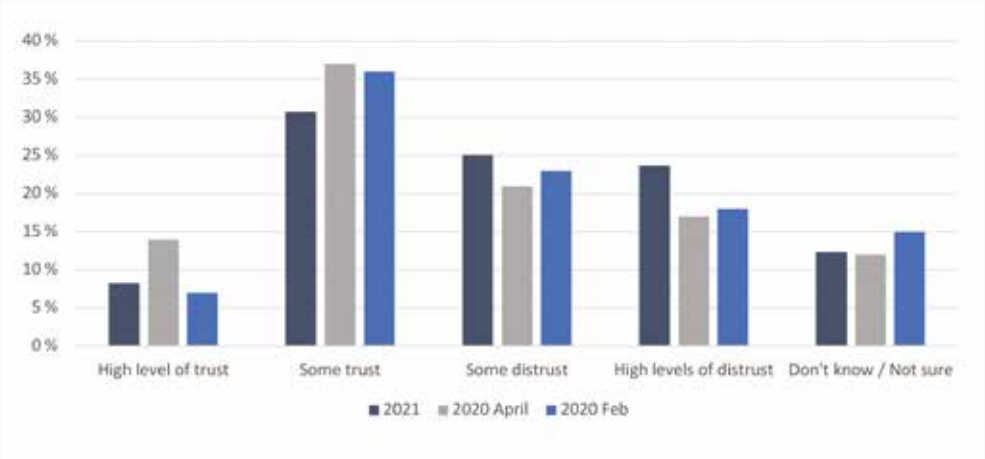
Looking to the relationship with international identities, Britons who describe themselves as patriots (51%) are more likely than Britons who do not identify as such to support an economic and defence-driven foreign policy (28%). In contrast, Britons who identify as Europeans or global citizens are eighteen percentage points more likely to support a values-led foreign policy than those who do not (both 28% to 10%). Support for an economic and defence driven foreign policy is stronger among those who identify as Welsh (46%), relative to those who identify as Northern Irish (42%) or Scottish (31%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (51%) or English-only (48%) are significantly more likely than those who identify as British-only (35%) to favour an economic and defence-driven foreign policy.

Looking to newspaper readership, and Guardian readers are the only newspaper readership to favour a values-led over a strategy-led foreign policy (45% to 24%). In contrast, just 12% of Daily Mail and The Sun readers favour a values-led foreign policy. Meanwhile, readers of the Daily Express are most likely (55%) to believe that economic and strategic defence interests should be the priority, followed by readers of The Telegraph (53%). Financial Times readers are the most likely to favour an equal balance, with 32% of respondents favouring that option.

Trust in Government on Foreign Policy

After the optimistic buoyancy of the period immediately following the most recent General Election when our last annual survey took place, we can in 2021 observe a clear collapse in trust in the UK Government in terms of their willingness to act in the British public's interest when it comes to foreign policy decisions. This trend correlates strongly with the broader falls we have seen in trust in the UK Government during the coronavirus pandemic, and once again emphasises how closely these trust measures are linked – despite the majority of the discontent levelled at the Government with regards to its handling of the pandemic pertaining to domestic issues. Measures of trust are clearly extremely vulnerable to fluctuation during such a volatile

Trust in the UK Government to take Foreign Policy Decisions in the British Public's Interest



period, and just has there has been a clear pandemic effect in either direction, the next phase of the response – particularly the vaccination programme – may cast a more favourable spectre across these figures in the coming months.

Overall, in 2021, a higher proportion of Britons say that they distrust the UK Government (49%) to take decisions in the UK public's interest when it comes to foreign policy than say that they are trusting (39%). Furthermore, feelings of distrust towards the UK Government in this area are held more strongly than feelings of trust, with 8% showing high levels of trust, compared to 24% of Britons who have high levels of distrust in the UK Government's foreign policy decision-making. This marks a significant fall from January and February 2020, when levels of trust stood at 49% and levels of distrust at 18%.

We also ran BFPG surveys in April and May 2020 to test the impact of the pandemic on levels of trust, and at that time, Britons had indeed become somewhat more trusting of the Government on foreign policy – reflecting the wider increases in trust conferred by the pandemic response. As of today, Government has lost the gains that were made in the first wave of the pandemic, and trust has also been significantly depressed from 'normal' levels outside of the pandemic.

Although there had been ambitions that the pandemic could serve as a means of national unity and renewal following the acrimonious Brexit debate, it is clear that political affiliations are now playing a significant role in the formation of attitudes on trust. As such, Conservative voters have significantly higher levels of trust in the current UK Government on foreign policy than Britons who voted for other parties. However, the sheer size of the gulf in trust levels is troublingly stark – given that foreign policy is supposed to be enacted in the domain of national security, national values and national interests.

For example, Conservative voters are 52 percentage points more likely to trust the UK Government on these issues than SNP voters (67% to 15%) and 50 percentage points more likely than Labour voters (67% to 17%) to trust the Government. Furthermore, the majority of SNP voters (56%) and the largest plurality of Labour voters (42%) have 'high levels of distrust' in the UK Government on foreign policy, emphasising the severity of partisan polarisation in the UK.

Moreover, regardless of the concerns about the potential precariousness of the 'Red Wall' voters, those Britons who switched to the Conservative party in 2019 are more likely to have retained their trust in the Government (53%). That being said, around a third of these voters report that they do not trust the Government on these issues (33%) – yet, we can assume

that, due to their socio-economic profiles, many of these voters are likely to be instinctively mistrustful and disengaged from Government. In effect, the Government have – for now – retained the trust of their new voters, but this portion of the Conservative voters' voting base is unpredictable and sensitive in its nature, due to the high incidence of low trust and cynical citizens within the cohort.

Trust in the UK Government on foreign policy is higher amongst Leave Voters (52%) than Remain voters (32%), although party affinity clearly plays a more distinct role, as there is relatively little difference in trust in the UK government between Labour-Remain and Labour-Leave voters or between Conservative-Leave and Remain voters. Readers of the Daily Mail are the most likely to trust the Government to take decisions in the public's interest (52%) and readers of the Daily Express are the most likely to have high levels of trust in the government (16%). Conversely, only 24% of Guardian readers trust the Government on foreign policy, with 46% of Guardian readers holding high levels of distrust. Telegraph readers are the most polarised, with 48% trusting of the Government and 47% distrustful.

There is little variation in trust in the UK Government's foreign policy decision-making based on gender, social grade, ethnicity and urban/rural splits. Graduates are six percentage points more likely to distrust the government than school leavers (52% to 46%) – likely as a result of the concentration of graduates now in the political parties on the Left. This phenomenon is also probably in play in shaping the somewhat larger distinctions around age: with 45% of over-55s trusting the Government to act in Britons' interests, compared to 36% of 35-54-year-olds and 34% of 18-34-year-olds. Regionally, levels of trust appear to capture both political partisanship and established levels of distrust towards political leaders more generally; thus, levels of trust are highest among residents in the West Midlands (55%), Wales (54%) and the East of England (51%). Levels of distrust are highest among those in the South West (59%), Scotland (56%) and the North East (56%).

Looking to the intersection between trust and international identities, Britons who describe themselves as patriots are over twice as likely to trust the Government's foreign policy decisions than Britons who do not (54% to 23%) – mainly as a result of the considerable political differences in patriotic identities. Similarly, Britons who do not identify as European (48%) are also significantly more likely to trust the UK Government than Britons who do define themselves as European (34%). Trust levels are also high, in relative terms, among Britons who identify as both British and English (49%), compared to 42% of those who identify as British-only and 41% of those who identify as English-only. Citizens who identify as Welsh (35%) are twice as likely to trust the UK government's foreign policy as those who identify as Northern Irish (18%), and are also significantly more trusting than those who identify as Scottish (22%).

Trust in the Government to take Foreign Policy Decisions in the British Public's Interest

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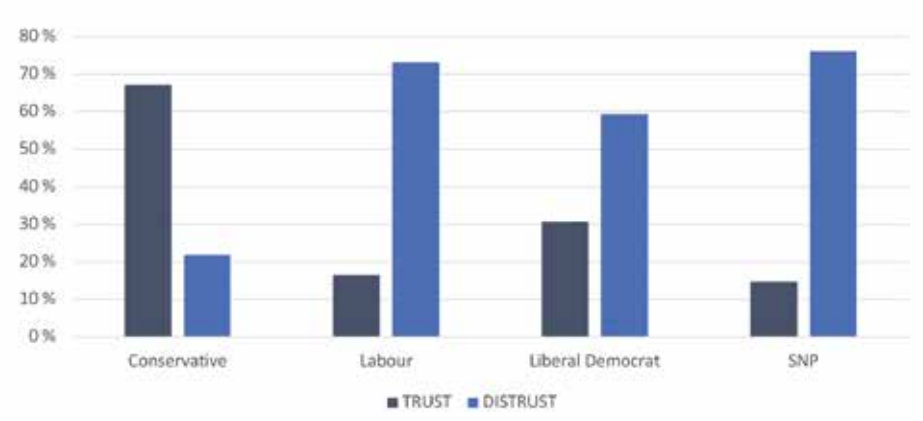

The Meaning of Global Britain

Our survey asked Britons to identify what the phrase 'a truly Global Britain' means to them. When asked what they believe 'Global Britain' to mean in practice, the two most popular interpretations are of the UK as a 'champion of free trade and globalisation' (34%) and the UK being a diplomatic powerhouse and solving global challenges (27%). These figures are somewhat lower than in 2020, as Britons now spread their understanding across a greater number of responses – indicating that the Global Britain message has become more expansive as it moves closer to revealing itself in the publication of the Integrated Review.

The least popular answers are that it means the UK is 'a nation open to migrants from around the world' (12%) and that it is 'a leading aid donor, helping to alleviate global poverty' (11%). More than a fifth (21%) of Britons still believe that Global Britain means the UK being a nation with strong and secure borders, focused on issues at home. Importantly, the proportion of the population who are unclear about Global Britain has fallen from 28% to 20%, which suggests that opinions are being formed in real time.

This year, we also gave respondents the option to express that they do not support the idea of a 'Global Britain', and 10% of the population chose this. These Britons are most likely to identify as Scottish (22%) or Northern Irish (22%), to vote for the SNP (30%), or to be Labour-Remain voters (18%) – particularly older Labour-Remain voters. This suggests that Global Britain is very much seen to be a Conservative Party project and, given the precariousness of the situation regarding the Union, there is a degree of urgency around encouraging the Scottish people to feel included in the project.

What does 'Global Britain' mean?

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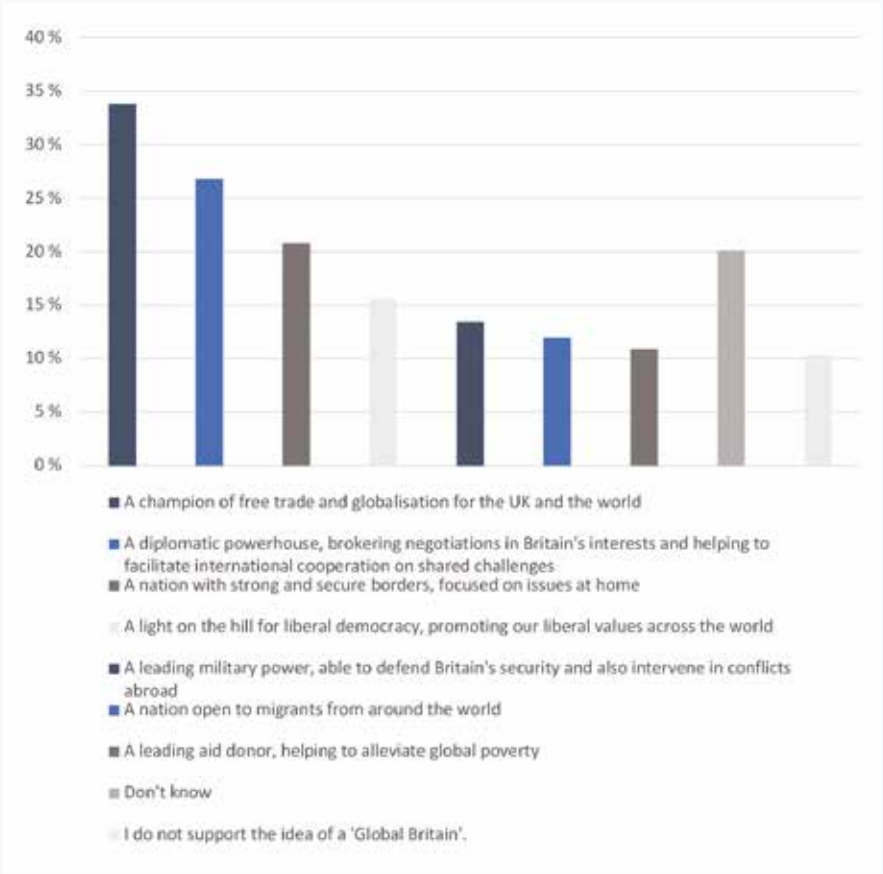


The gender differences in understanding of the phrase 'a truly Global Britain' are negligible, with two exceptions – men (16%) are more likely than women (11%) to believe it means the UK should be 'a leading military power, able to defend Britain's security and also intervene in conflicts abroad', while women (25%) are significantly more likely than men (15%) to be unsure of what the term 'a truly Global Britain' means. The age-based dimensions of understandings of the phrase are, however, more consistently significant. Over-55s are more likely (45%) to view Global Britain as promoting the notion of the UK as a champion of free trade and globalisation than under-35s (26%). Over-55s (26%) are also more likely than under-35s (15%) to view Global Britain as facilitating 'a nation with strong and secure borders'. In turn, under-35s are more than twice as receptive than over-55s to the concept of Global Britain as representing a nation open to migrants and the world and to Britain acting as a leading aid donor.

What does 'Global Britain' mean?	2021	2020
A champion of free trade and globalisation for the UK and the world	34 %	39 %
A diplomatic powerhouse, brokering negotiations in Britain's interests and helping to facilitate international cooperation on shared challenges	27 %	32 %
A nation with strong and secure borders, focused on issues at home	21 %	26 %
A light on the hill for liberal democracy, promoting our liberal values across the world	16 %	14 %
A leading military power, able to defend Britain's security and also intervene in conflicts abroad	13 %	15 %
A nation open to migrants from around the world	12 %	9 %
A leading aid donor, helping to alleviate global poverty	11 %	10 %
Don't know	20 %	28 %

Social grade plays a more significant role than education level in shaping understanding of the phrase 'Global Britain' – likely as a result of the relationship between social grade and political partisanship. Britons in the ABC1 social grade are more likely (18%) than those in the C2DE social grade (10%) to view Global Britain as meaning the UK becomes a 'light on the hill for liberal democracy'. Britons in the C2DE social grade (24%) are more likely than those in the ABC1 social grade (18%) to be unsure of their position. Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are also particularly likely to be unsure of their position (25%), relative to those who continued to travel during the pandemic (13%). Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (13%) are also more likely to oppose the Global Britain project (7%).

Similar patterns can be observed based on ethnicity, with White Britons (36%) twice as likely to view Global Britain as meaning the UK becomes a champion of free trade as BAME Britons (18%). White Britons (20%) are also less likely to be unsure of their position than BAME Britons (32%), who clearly feel less invested in and connected to this project. White British Conservative voters are particularly supportive of the concept of 'Global Britain' as Britain acting as a champion of free trade (48%).

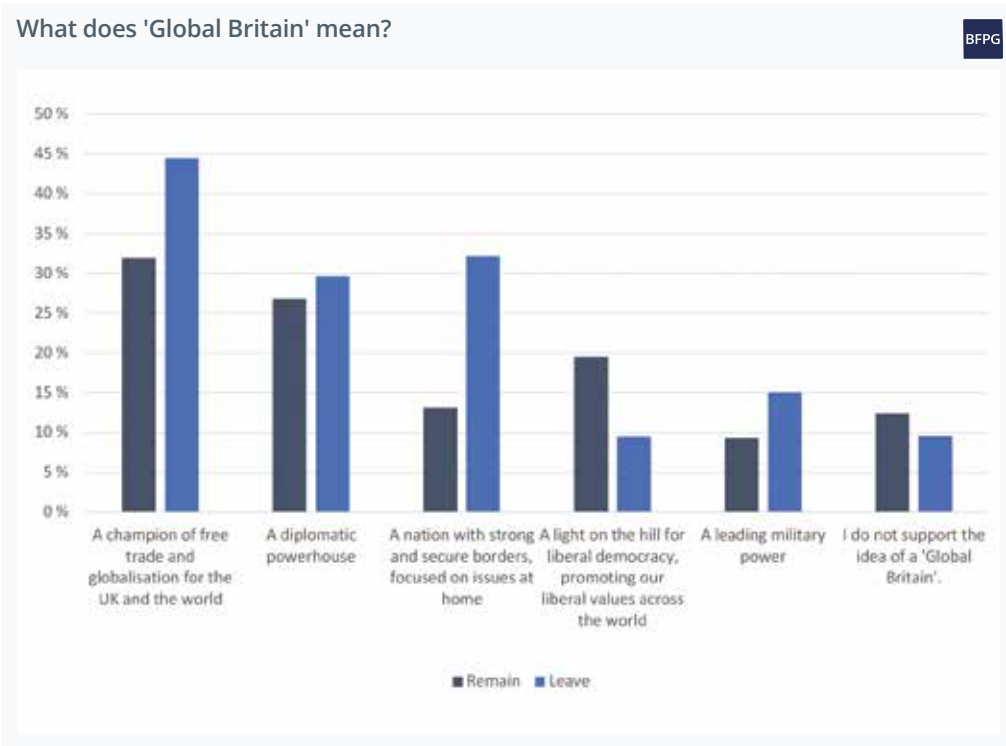
Looking to geographic distinctions, Britons living in cities (16%) are twice as likely as those in towns (8%) and rural areas (8%) to associate Global Britain with the UK being a leading international aid donor. Support for Britain as a 'champion of free trade' is strongest in the East Midlands (50%) and Wales (48%), and weakest in Scotland (26%) and the North East (27%). Residents in Scotland are the least likely to view Global Britain as meaning the UK standing as a leading military power (4%), in contrast to 19% who believe this in the North East and the East of England. Significant disparities also exist in support for the UK as a diplomatic powerhouse, which is considerably better supported in the South West (34%) and the East Midlands (33%) than in the West Midlands (19%).

4. Foreign Policy Spending, Trust and Priorities

Given its significance to the Conservative-led Brexit project, it is unsurprising that Conservative voters are the most familiar with the concept of 'Global Britain', with only 14% of Conservative voters unsure of what Global Britain means to them, compared to 25% of SNP and Labour voters. There is clearly a need to invest resources in extending this project out into the country as a whole, and ensure its messages are seen to be nationally inclusive and outside of the realm of party politics. Conservative voters are also the most supportive of definitions of Global Britain as a champion of free trade (48%), a diplomatic powerhouse (33%), a nation with strong borders (32%) and a leading military power (16%). Support for Global Britain as a 'light on the hill' for democracy (25%) and being a nation open to migrants is strongest among Liberal Democrat voters (19%).

Leave voters are more likely than Remain voters to view Global Britain as a champion of free trade (44% to 32%), a nation with strong borders, focused at home (32% to 13%) and a leading military power (15% to 9%). In contrast, Remain voters are more likely than Leave voters to view Global Britain as a 'light on the hill' for democracy (20% to 10%), a nation open to migrants (16% to 5%) and a leading aid donor (16% to 4%). Conservative-Remain and Conservative-Leave voters are relatively aligned in their conceptions of 'Global Britain', with the exception of the isolationist definition, which Conservative-Leave voters are much more likely (35%) to subscribe to than Conservative-Remain voters (26%). Labour-Leave voters (27%) are also nearly three times more like than Labour-Remain voters (10%) to believe that Global Britain means a strong and secure nation, focused on issues at home. They are also more favourable to the notion of Global Britain as a free-trading endeavour (36%) than their Labour-Remain counterparts (23%), who are likely to be dissuaded by their broader concerns around free trade negotiations.

Britons who identify as patriots are more supportive of all definitions of Global Britain than Britons who do not identify as patriots – particularly the presentation of the Global Britain project as enabling the UK to become a champion of free trade (42% to 26%) – and with the exception of the idea of Britain being open to migrants. Citizens who identify as Northern Irish are significantly more likely to view Global Britain as a 'light on the hill for democracy' (27%),



than those who identify as Welsh (17%) or Scottish (14%). Furthermore, citizens who identify as Welsh are significantly less likely to oppose the Global Britain project (4%), than those who identify as Scottish (22%) and those who identify as Northern Irish (22%). Strikingly, 27% of those who identify as English-only view Global Britain as meaning a nation with strong borders, focused on issues at home, compared to just 19% of those who identify as British-only.

5.

The UK's Global Relationships

The UK's Best Friend and Partner

It is quite clear that Britons do not believe that the United Kingdom holds a particularly 'special' relationship with any single nation, and rather survey the global landscape with more head than heart. When asked which country they regarded as the UK's 'best friend', 19% of Britons choose the United States, 15% the Commonwealth, 13% the European Union and 7% chose Australia. Less than 3% chose Ireland (3%), France (2%), Germany (2%) or Japan (1%). By far, the highest proportion of Britons (37%) believe that the UK does not have a 'best friend' – suggesting a kind of hard-nosed pragmatism that may be distinct amongst our peers. The introduction in our 2021 survey of the option that the UK does not have a best friend has meant that support for every country option has declined since 2020, however, the sharpest declines can be in seen in identification of the United States (29% to 19%), the Commonwealth (24% to 15%) and Ireland (8% to 3%) as the UK's best friend.

The degree to which women (48%) are significantly more likely than men (27%) to believe that the UK does not have a 'best friend' is striking. Middle-aged and older Britons are also more likely to believe that the UK does not have a best friend, with 43% of 45-54-year-olds and 43% of 55-64-year-olds believing that the UK does not have a 'best friend'. Friendship with the United States and the Commonwealth are the most divisive on age lines. 35-44-year-olds (23%) are eight percentage points more likely than over-65s (15%) to see the United States as the UK's 'best friend', while over-65s (20%) are nine percentage points more likely to choose the Commonwealth as their 'best friend', than 35-44-year-olds (11%). Under-35s (16%) are seven percentage points more likely than over-65s to regard the European Union as their 'best friend' (10%).

The primary distinction on a socio-economic level is that graduates are more likely to see the European Union as the UK's best friend (17%), compared to 10% of school leavers – as are Britons in the ABC1 social grade (15%), compared to 9% of those in the C2DE social grade. BAME Britons (5%) are less likely than White Britons (13%) to view the European Union as the UK's best friend. Instead, BAME Britons (21%) are more likely than White Britons (15%) to view the Commonwealth as the UK's best friend. One particularly interesting finding is that Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (44%) are 25 percentage points more likely than those who continued to travel in the pandemic (29%) to believe the UK does not have a 'best friend'– emphasising there is a degree of connection between restricted experiences of mobility and the security perceived within the concept of the UK having a particularly enduring relationship with another partner.

Which of the following nations or group of nations is the UK's best friend?

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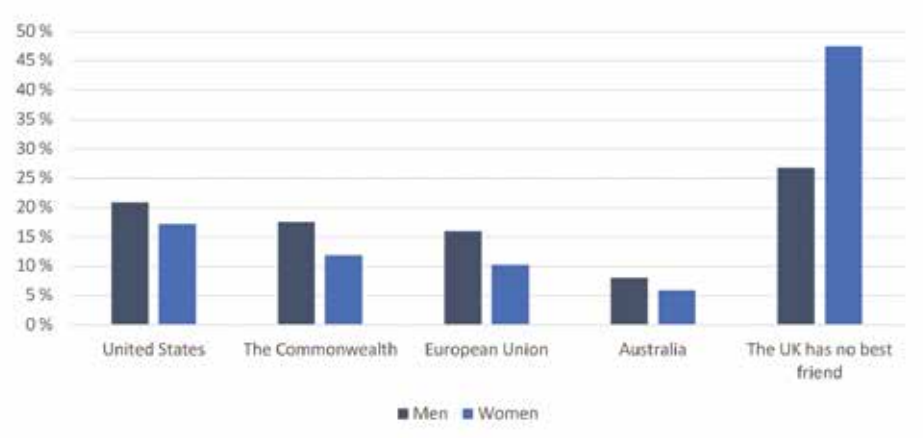

5. The UK's Global Relationships

Residents in London are the least likely to regard the United States as the UK's 'best friend' (14%), and the most likely to choose the European Union (20%). Support for the European Union as the UK's best friend is particularly low among residents in Northern Ireland (3%), although it should be noted that only 9% of Northern Ireland residents regard Ireland as the UK's best friend (9%). Britons living in the North East (6%) are the least receptive to the Commonwealth being the UK's best friend, and are the most likely to state that the UK does not have a best friend (52%). This question about Scottish nationalism and the UK's membership of the Commonwealth has not been explored in any great detail since the 2014 Referendum on Scottish Independence, and appears to be fertile ground for further research.

Conservative voters are the most likely to view the United States (25%) or the Commonwealth (21%) as the UK's closest ally. Meanwhile, Liberal Democrat voters are the most ardent supporters of our relationship with the European Union (27%), in contrast to low levels of support among Conservative voters (5%). SNP voters are the most likely to believe that the UK does not have a best friend (60%), compared to 43% of Labour voters and 34% of Conservative voters.

Remain voters continue to prioritise the European Union as our most important alliance (24%). Referendum voting therefore remains a salient determinant on the perceived importance of our relationship with the EU and continues to internally divide political parties. Labour-Remain voters (28%) are more likely than Labour-Leave voters (4%) to view the European Union as the UK's most important ally, as are Conservative-Remain voters (14%), relative to Conservative-Leave voters (2%) – although the disparity amongst Conservative voters is half the size of that among Labour voters. Britons who identify as European (22%) are also more likely to view the European Union as the UK's best friend than Britons who do not identify as European (4%) and Britons who do not identify as global citizens (5%). More broadly, Leave voters are more likely than Remain voters to think the United States (23% to 14%), the Commonwealth (19% to 10%) and Australia are our closest allies (12% to 3%) – which reflects some of the public debate around the UK's new partnerships in the aftermath of Brexit.

In terms of national identity, citizens who identify as Scottish (48%) or Northern Irish (43%) are twice as likely as those who identify as Welsh to believe Britain does not have a best friend (22%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (15%) are more likely to view the European Union as the UK's best friend than those who identify as British-only (12%) or English-only (9%).

Which of the following nations or group of nations is the UK's best friend?

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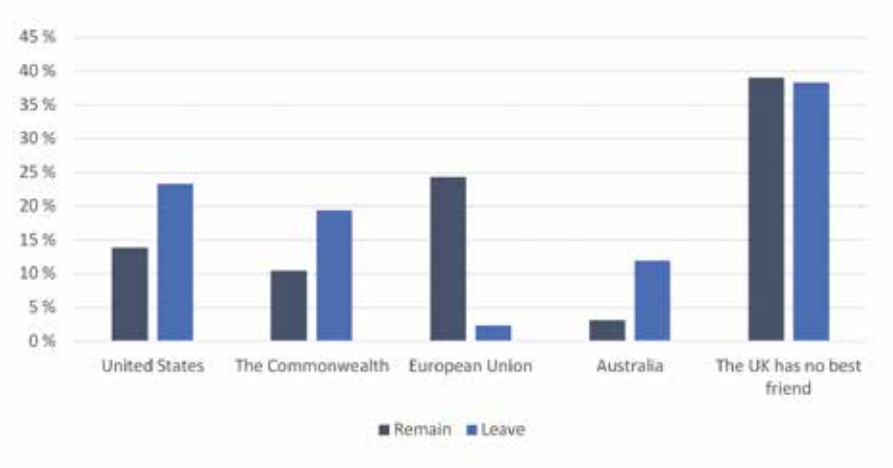


Readers of the Daily Mail are the most likely to choose the United States as the UK's best friend (22%), while readers of The Guardian are the least likely (10%). A quarter (26%) of Guardian readers view the EU as the UK's best friend – the highest percentage to do so. In contrast, only 10% of the Sun and Daily Mail readers agree that the EU is the UK's 'best friend.' Guardian readers are also the most likely to say that 'the UK does not have a best friend' (40%), and are twice as likely as Financial Times readers to do so (20%).

Trust in Nations to Act Responsibly in the World

This is the third time that we have explored the question of trust in other nations to act responsibly in the world, and we can see that this framing around morality and the world order is able to capture something important about how citizens are responding to the high degree of geopolitical dynamism taking place. It is also likely that views of other nations are being shaped by perceptions of countries' performances in the coronavirus pandemic. Hence, we can observe that Britons trust Five Eyes partners Canada (88%) and Australia (83%) with the greatest degree of confidence. Moreover, aspiring Five Eyes partner Japan is undergoing a significant boost in its reputation amongst Britons, up to 67% from 59% in 2020 – although men (74%) are considerably more trusting of Japan than women (59%).

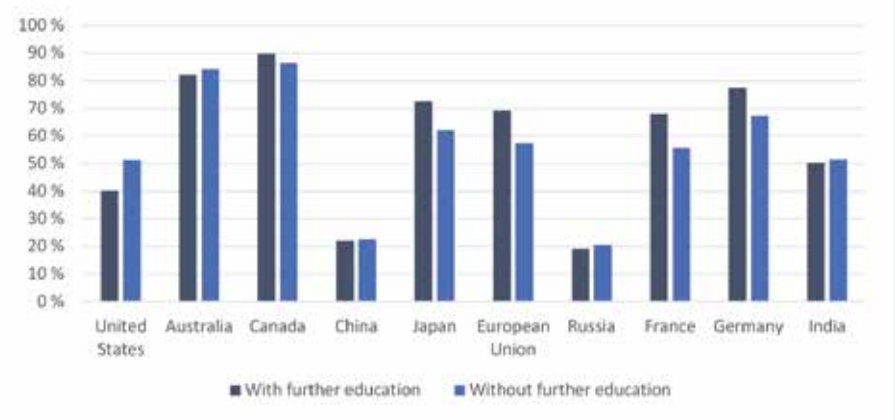
Trust in Nations to Act Responsibly in the World	2021	2020 April	2020 Feb
United States	47 %	28 %	43 %
Canada	88%	N/A	89%
China	22%	17%	21%
Japan	67%	63%	59%
European Union	62%	60%	60%
India	51%	41%	40%

The United States, whose reputation had suffered under Donald Trump's leadership and had fallen dramatically further during the peak of the pandemic in 2020, is experiencing a 'Biden bounce', although it remains less enthusiastically embraced than other Five Eyes allies. In February 2020, 43% of Britons trusted the United States, compared to 57% who did not. However, by April 2020 levels of trust had plummeted, with just 28% of Britons trusting the United States to act responsibly in the world. Today, 47% of the population trust America to act responsibly in the world, although the scale of the challenge for President Biden to convince Britons that we should regard the United States on a similarly favourable level to our other allies remains significant. It is reasonable to assume that there will continue to be quite a dynamic degree of flux in these figures as Biden's Presidency moves into a state of maturity, and the dust settles on the 2020 elections.

In Europe, Germany is held in the highest regard (72%), with France seen slightly less favourably than the European Union as a whole – despite, or indeed, because of the fact, that France and the United Kingdom are direct neighbours and indeed share a more substantial security relationship. Undoubtedly, Germany's relatively positive performance during the pandemic – especially prior to January – and the general goodwill towards Angela Merkel, contributes to this positive standing. The European Union is of course more favourably regarded by Remain voters (84%), but it is worth noting that 37% of Leave voters trust the EU to act responsibly in the world, and this percentage has remained relatively static throughout the Brexit negotiations.

The highest levels of distrust towards other nations are reserved for both Russia (80%) and China (78%). Public opinion towards China has settled from a peak of 83% at the height of the first wave of the pandemic, which we can presume is in part a result of the significant degree

Trust in Nations to Act Responsibly in the World



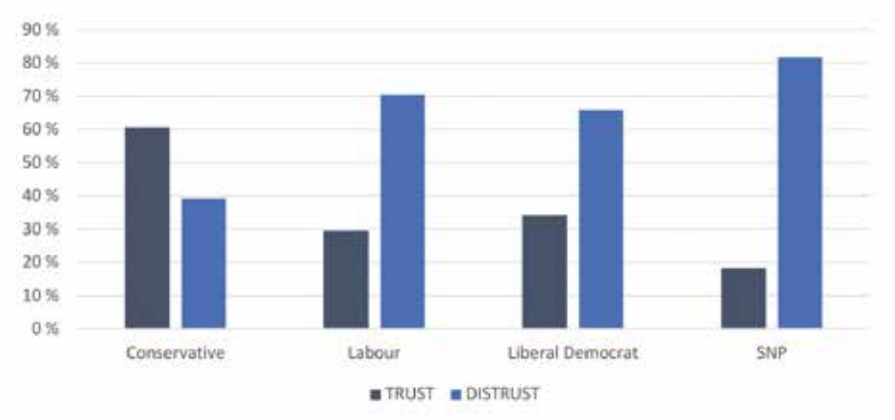
of attention afforded to China's role and behaviour in the origins of the pandemic. However, this episode has done damage to public opinion, as more Britons (42%) remain 'highly' distrustful of China than they were a year ago. Britons are most polarised in their levels of trust of India (51% trust, to 49% distrust), although these opinions are not strongly held – only 7% have a 'high level' of trust and 9% have a 'high level' of distrust.

Looking at the demographic break-down for a selection of nations, we can see that:

United States:

- Men (53%) are much more likely to trust the United States to act responsibly in the world than women (41%). Women are also more likely to hold a 'high level' of distrust (22% to 16%).
- Under-35s are the most likely to trust the United States (55%) and 55-64-year-olds are the least likely (39%).
- Graduates (60%) are more distrusting of the United States than school leavers (49%).
- BAME Britons (62%) are more likely to distrust the United States than White Britons (52%). Trust in the United States among White Britons is driven by White British Conservative voters, who are almost twice as likely to trust the United States than White British Labour voters (60% to 31%).
- Britons with the highest level of trust for the United States reside in the West Midlands (58%), the North West (56%) and Northern Ireland (55%). Residents in Scotland are the most sceptical of the United States (68%), followed by the North East of England (61%).

Trust in the United States to Act Responsibly in the World



- Conservative voters are the most trusting of the United States (61%) and SNP voters are the least (18%). However, voters that switched to the Conservative party in 2019 (51%) are considerably less trusting of the United States than Conservative voters as a whole.
- Leave voters (53%) are more likely to trust the United States than Remain voters (37%).
- Britons who self-identify as patriots (56%) are more likely to trust the United States than Britons who do not (36%).
- Guardian/Observer readers are the least likely to trust the United States (31%) and The Sun (56%) and Daily Express (56%) readers are the most.
- Citizens who define themselves as Scottish (32%) are less likely to trust the United States than those who identify as Northern Irish (38%) or Welsh (44%).
- Citizens who identify as British-only (45%) are less likely to trust the United States than those who identify as British and English or English-only (both 57%).

China

- Under-35s (42%) are significantly more likely to trust China than over-55s (10%), and 54% of over-55s have a 'high level' of distrust towards China.
- Women (19%) are less likely to trust China than men (25%).
- Britons from lower socio-economic backgrounds (C2DE) are more distrustful of China (83% to 75% of ABC1), but there are no discernible differences based on education level.
- BAME Britons (43%) are twice as likely to trust China than White Britons (21%).
- Britons who continued to travel during the pandemic are three times as likely to trust China as those who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (42% to 15%).
- The highest levels of trust in China can be seen among residents in London (31%) and the North West (30%). The lowest levels are found among Britons in the South West (11%) and Scotland (13%). Britons living in towns and rural areas are also less likely to trust China (both 18%), compared to Britons living in cities (30%).
- Trust in China is higher among Labour voters (20%), than Conservative (13%) and SNP voters (10%). Only 9% of voters that left Labour in 2019 are trusting of China.
- Remain voters (21%) are more trusting of China than Leave voters (10%). Conservative-Remain voters (30%) are much more trusting of China than Conservative-Leave voters (7%), however there is no substantive difference amongst Labour voters.
- Britons who do not view themselves as global citizens (81%) are more likely to distrust China than Britons who do (73%).
- In an unusual pairing, Daily Mail (83%) and Guardian readers (78%) are the most likely to distrust China, and Financial Times readers are the least likely to do so (62%).
- Citizens who identify as Northern Irish (29%) are almost twice as likely as those who identify as Scottish to trust China (16%), and 8 percentage points more likely to trust China than those who identify as Welsh (21%).

Trust in China to Act Responsibly in the World

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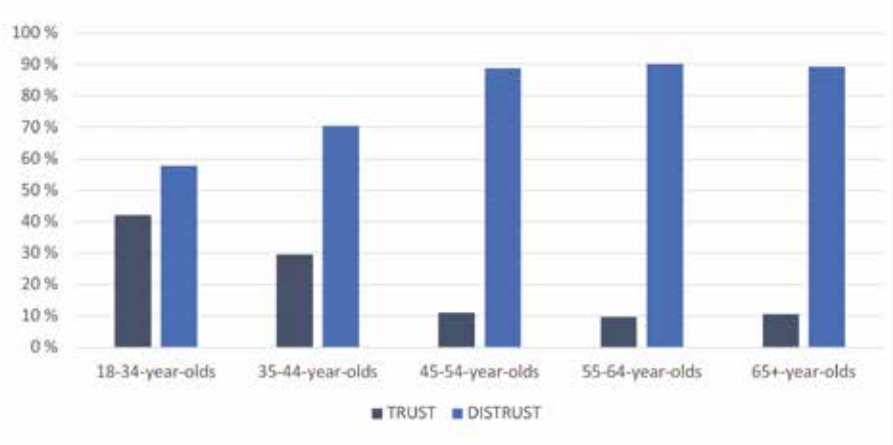

- Citizens who identify as both British and English (34%) are almost twice as likely as those who identify as British-only to trust China (18%), and 7 percentage points more likely to trust China than those who identify as English-only (27%).

European Union

- Under-35s are significantly more likely to trust the European Union (73%) than 35-54-year-olds (61%) or over-55s (57%). They are also more likely to have 'very high' levels of trust in the European Union.
- Levels of trust in the European Union are highest in London (74%) and Scotland (67%) and lowest in the East of England (53%) and Northern Ireland (53%).
- Britons in lower socio-economic grades (C2DE) are more distrustful of the European Union (48%) than Britons in higher grades (33% of ABC1), as are school leavers (43%) relative to graduates (31%).
- Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are 20 percentage points less likely to trust the European Union than those who continued to travel in the pandemic (52% to 72%).
- Britons living in cities are more likely to trust the European Union (68%) than Britons living in towns (60%) and rural areas (59%).
- Conservative voters are the least trusting of the European Union (46%), relative to SNP (75%), Labour (78%) and Liberal Democrat voters (82%). 40% of Britons who switched to Conservative in 2019 are trusting of the European Union. However, Conservative voters aged under 45s years are much more likely (60%) to trust the EU than their older counterparts in the party (41%).
- Remain voters (84%)are over twice as likely as Leave voters (37%) to trust the European Union and Britons who identify as European are almost twice as likely to trust the European Union as Britons who do not (80% to 43%).
- Guardian/Observer readers are the most likely to trust the European Union (83%) and readers of The Sun and the Daily Mail are the least (both 54%).
- Trust in the European Union is higher among those who identify as Scottish (72%) or Welsh (70%) than those who identify as Northern Irish (64%).
- Citizens who identify as English-only (52%) are less likely to trust the European Union than those who identify as British-only (63%) or both British and English (64%).

Trust in the European Union to Act Responsibly in the World

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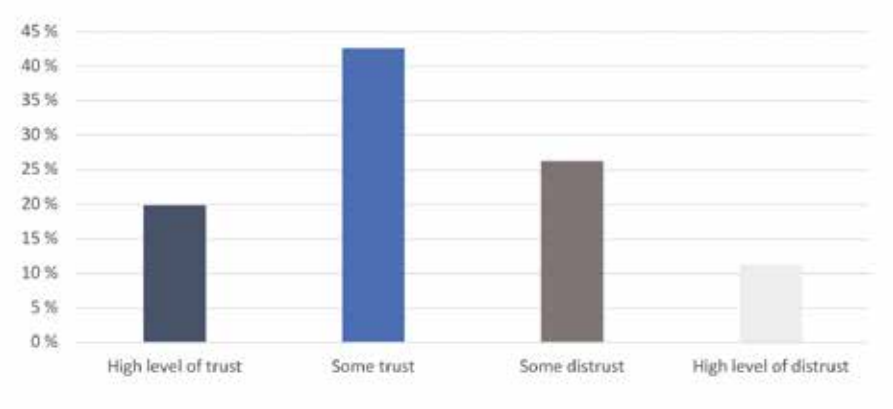

6.

The Future of UK-EU Relations

The UK's Future Relationship with the European Union

When asked about the UK's future relationship with the European Union, now that a Brexit deal has been agreed, it is clear that Britons accept the need for a close relationship and the argument against No Deal has been clearly won, but also that the re-joining movement is by no means representative of the Remain movement as a whole. Overall, just a quarter (24%) of Britons believe the deal that the UK Government secured with the European Union in December 2020 is the best framework for our relationship with the EU moving forward. 27% of Britons wish to pursue a much closer relationship with the EU and to work towards re-joining, 22% wish to pursue a closer relationship than set out in the deal, but to remain outside, and 24% of Britons believe that the deal provides for the best relationship for the foreseeable future. Only 12% of Britons support a more distant relationship with the EU.

These findings suggest that the proportion of Britons who support a closer relationship with the EU (49%) is considerably higher than the proportion who are satisfied with the deal or wish to create further distance – which, given the clean break signalled by the deal that has been secured, should probably be read as a 'No Deal' position, or relatively close to one.

Looking at the composite demographics behind each position:

- Those who *support re-joining the EU* are not concentrated in any particular age bracket, but they are most likely to live in London or other cities, to be of a higher socio-economic and education background, from an ethnic minority community, to hold international identities, and to vote for Labour (a majority of Labour voters in 2019 back this position).
- Those who *wish to pursue a closer relationship but not re-join the EU* are evenly dispersed across almost every demographic, geographic and socio-economic group. Politically, they are most represented amongst Conservative-Remain voters and Labour-Leave voters, and capture the coming together of two otherwise deeply polarised groups.

Which statement best captures your view about the UK's future relationship with the European Union?

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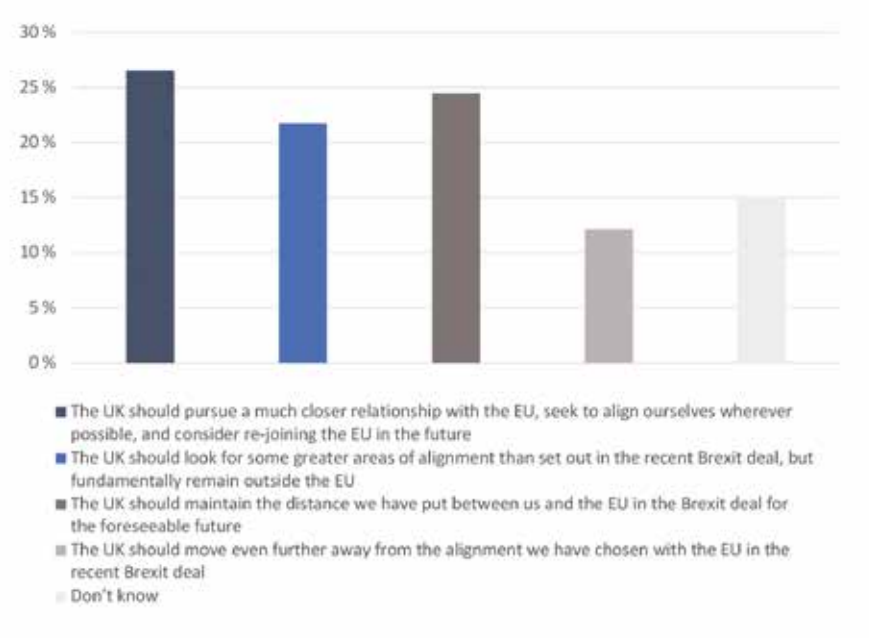

- Those *satisfied with the UK-EU deal* are most likely to be older, to live in the North West or Wales, to not hold further education – although they may be earning a secure income, to reject international identities, and to have voted Leave. They are disproportionately represented amongst Conservative gains in 2019.
- Those who wish to create *further distance in the UK-EU relationship* are predominantly working-age men – including a quarter of younger Conservative-Leave voters, or Leave voters who voted for the Brexit Party or UKIP in 2019.

Considering the responses to this question as a whole, the gender differences in views about the UK's post-Brexit trade deal are relatively small, although women (9%) are less likely than men (16%) to support moving further away from the EU. Age-based differences in views on the UK's future relationship with the EU are also marginal, with the exception of the fact that over-55s are more likely (30%) to favour maintaining the current level of distance with the EU than under-35s (20%), and that over-55s are the most likely to be certain on their position, with only 10% being unsure, compared to 19% of under-35s. BAME Britons (26%) are also less likely to be certain of their position than White Britons (15%). BAME Britons are also more inclined (36%) to support a much closer relationship with the EU than White Britons (23%). However, White British Labour voters (51%) are distinctly supportive of a very close relationship with the EU, including the opportunity of re-joining, relative to White British Conservative voters (6%).

Delving into the socio-economic dimensions of public opinion on this issue, the starkest difference lies in support for a much closer relationship with the EU, including the possibility of re-joining. This finds 36% support amongst graduates and 32% support among Britons in the ABC1 social grade, in contrast to 19% among school leavers and 16% among the C2DE social grade. There is also a noticeable difference in the strength of opinions, with Britons in the C2DE grade (20%) more likely to be unsure of their position than those in the ABC1 social category (13%), as are school leavers (18%) relative to graduates (12%). Lived experiences of mobility also significantly shape views on the relative importance of these relationships, with Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (45%) 20 percentage points less likely to favour our relationship with the European Union over our relationship with the United States, than those who travelled frequently in 2019 (65%).

Londoners are the most likely to favour a much closer relationship with the EU, including the possibility of re-joining (41%), and residents in Northern Ireland are the least likely to (13%). Support for greater alignment with the EU, while remaining outside of the Union, is strongest In Northern Ireland (26%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (26%), while the North West is most supportive of retaining current levels of distance (38%). Northern Ireland residents are the most supportive of moving further away from the EU (23%), significantly more so than the East Midlands (8%).

Unsurprisingly, Britons who identify as European are significantly more minded (45%) than those who do not (8%), to favour a very close relationship with the EU, including the possibility of re-joining. Global citizens are also more likely to favour a very close relationship with the European Union (39%), compared to those who do not define themselves as such (14%). The distinctions on national identity around this question are also considerable. Those who identify as English-only are much less likely (13%) to prefer pursuing a much closer relationship with the EU than those who identify as British-only (29%), and considerably happier to stick with the status quo of the deal that has been secured (35% to 20%). In turn, 40% of those who identify as Scottish favour a much closer relationship with the European Union, compared to 29% of those who identify as Northern Irish and 28% of those who identify as Welsh.

As such, SNP voters are the most likely to favour a significantly closer relationship with the EU, including the possibility of re-joining (60%). This position, however, is also supported by the majority of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters (both 52%) – underscoring the political difficulties for the Leader of the Opposition to both represent the party's voting base and leaving themselves open to the possibility of securing new voters.

The scale of the challenge is evident in the fact that just 6% of Conservative voters wish to pursue a significantly closer relationship and consider re-joining the EU. The largest plurality of Conservative voters favour maintaining the level of distance from the EU secured in the Brexit deal (41%), although it should be noted that 24% of Conservative voters wish to pursue a closer relationship than the deal provides for – meaning 30% of Conservative voters in total want to see their Government moving towards greater cooperation. Voters that switched to Conservative voters in 2019 tend to be slightly more inclined (19%) than Conservative voters on the whole to support the UK moving even further away from the EU, but the distinctions are relatively marginal and their views appear to speak to the centre of the party's position.

The majority of Remain voters favour moving closer to the EU (52%). Leave voters, however, are more divided on the best approach to take. 40% of Leave voters favour maintaining the current level of engagement with the EU, as set out by the Brexit deal, while 22% favour a closer relationship, and 19% favour moving further away. Combining Referendum and political party affiliations further exacerbates disparities between Leave and Remain voters in both parties, as set out in the table below. We can observe, for example, that almost a fifth of Conservative-Remain and Labour-Leave voters favour pursuing a much closer relationship and re-joining the EU. The largest proportion of Conservative-Remain and Labour-Leave voters want a closer relationship without re-joining, and that a fifth of Conservative-Leave voters, also support this approach.

Overall, a clear majority of Labour-Remain voters, a majority of Conservative-Remain voters and a plurality of Labour-Leave voters favour greater alignment with the European Union. The big supporters of the Brexit deal are clearly Conservative-Leave voters, and a fifth-to-a-quarter of Conservative-Remain and Labour-Leave voters can also live with the circumstances of the deal. A fifth of Conservative-Leave voters would prefer to move even further away from the EU – ie. 'a no-deal Brexit' – although this is an outlier position in the population as a whole. The relatively high degree of uncertainty on this question from Conservative-Remain voters and Labour-Leave voters, both of whom must be experiencing a kind of crisis of confidence, suggests a degree of volatility of this issue moving forward.

Which statement best captures your view about the UK's future relationship with the European Union?

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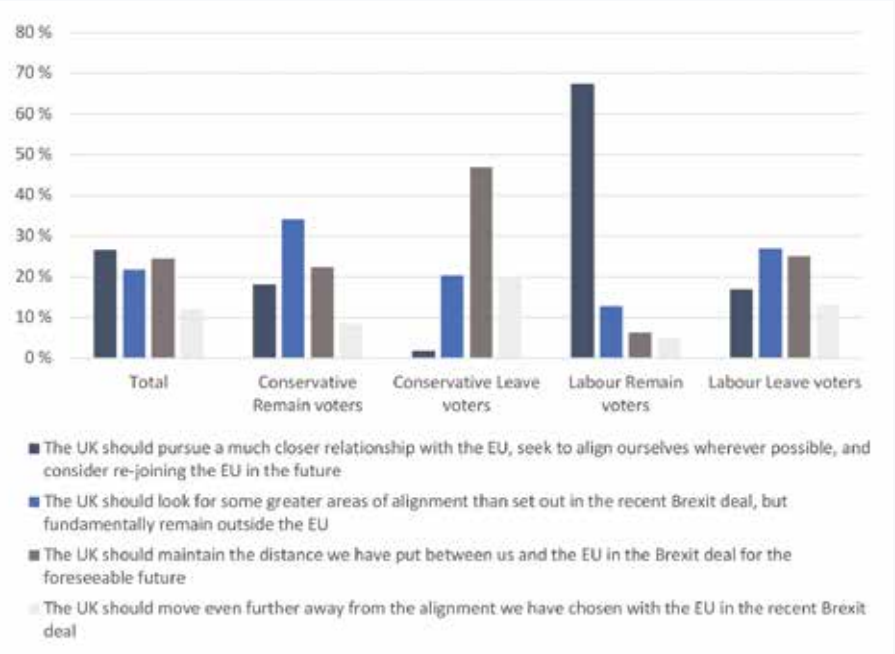

Considering how views on the UK's future relationship with the EU align with newspaper readership, we can see that The Guardian's readers are, by far, the most in favour of possibly re-joining the EU and maintaining a closer relationship in the meantime (59%). Financial Times readers are the second most likely to do so (37%), and Daily Express and Daily Mail readers (19%) are the least likely. Interestingly, 24% of Daily Mail readers believe that we should more closely align with the EU - but remain outside - the highest percentage, although its readership is also the most inclined (33%) to be satisfied with the Brexit deal. Daily Express readers are the most likely to want to move even further away from current levels of alignment (26%).

The United States vs. the European Union

Since the decision to leave the European Union in the EU Referendum of 2016, much of the discussion about the UK's future has been couched in a debate around the significance of its global relationships. Leaving the EU is positioned as an act of rebalancing the UK's partnerships in a more 'truly global' manner, reinvigorating old ties and forging new alliances. No relationship has received greater scrutiny than that of the United States, which – just a matter of months after the Brexit vote – found itself under the leadership of the bombastic Donald Trump, a deeply unpopular President amongst America's friends and allies. The UK's negotiations with the EU have henceforth played out against the framing of a choice between pulling away from the European Union and becoming closer to the United States or maintaining proximity to the EU at the expense of forging a closer partnership with the United States. This was ultimately rather starkly presented in the efforts to pursue a UK-US trade deal simultaneously with the Brexit negotiations, although such an agreement was unable to be struck before Donald Trump's departure.

The significance of this dichotomous framing has been heightened by the notion that Britain's polarised Leave and Remain tribes subscribe to this zero-sum view of the world. However, when we directly asked Britons whether they perceive the UK's relationship with the European Union and the United States as more important, we found a surprising degree of national consensus. A majority of Britons (53%) regard the UK's relationship with the European Union as more important than our relationship with the United States (27%).

Although there is no significant difference between the proportion of men and women who believe the European Union is the more important relationship to the UK, men are more likely to think the UK's relationship to the United States is more important (33%, compared to 22% of women), although this partly reflects the uncertainty women feel about this. There

Is the UK's relationship with the European Union or the United States more important?

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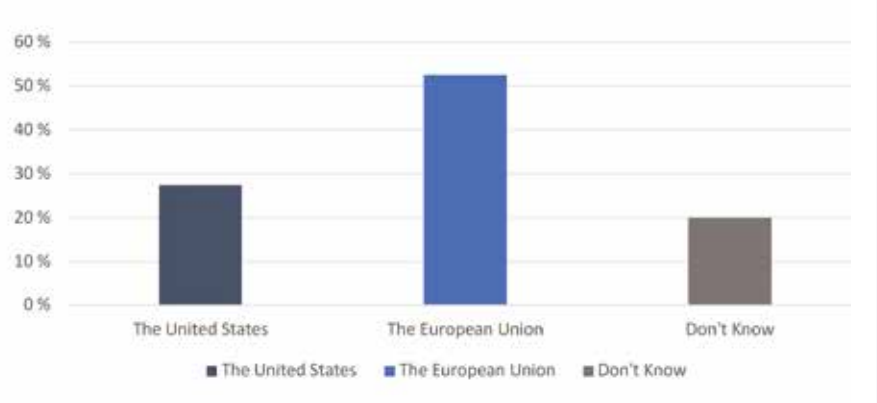

is minimal variation in the relative valuation of the relationships across age groups, although 55-64-year-olds appear to be somewhat more inclined to view the United States as the more important relationship.

However, the variation among other demographics is more meaningful. School leavers are more likely than graduates to view the United States as the most important relationship (32% to 22%) and less likely to view the European Union as the most important (46% to 62%). Similarly, Britons in the C2DE social category (43%) are less likely to think the relationship with the European Union is more important than Britons in the ABC1 social grade (57%). Britons living in cities (59%) are more likely to think the UK's relationship with the European Union is the most important relationship, compared to 51% of Britons in towns and 48% of Britons in rural areas. Moreover, White Britons (30%) are significantly more likely than BAME Britons to view the United States as more important to the UK (11%), and BAME Britons are significantly more likely to favour the European Union (73%) than White Britons (49%).

Regionally, support for the importance of the United States over the European Union is highest in Northern Ireland (40%) and the East Midlands (36%), in contrast to the North East (16%) and Scotland (18%) which record the lowest numbers. Support for the importance of the European Union over the United States is highest in London (69%) and Scotland (63%), and lowest in Northern Ireland (36%) and the North West (40%). Levels of understanding of the importance of the UK's relationships with either partner also vary regionally, with just 10% of residents unsure of their position in London, compared to 27% in Wales.

These demographic and geographic distinctions are at least in large part representative of the considerable differences in opinion on this issue between political parties. Despite the overall consensus on a national level, this question does still play into the cleavages between Leave and Remain voters, which of course became grafted onto the sorting that took place within the 2019 General Election. Hence, demographics disproportionately associated with the most ardent expressions of Leave or Remain support continue to reflect these politicised attitudes, with the softer end of the Leave vote – including Labour-Leave voters, who are sceptical of the European Union but also fearful of the consequences of a free trade agreement with the United States – overcoming the divide and pegging the total figures towards the centre.

Remain voters (77%) are more likely than Leave voters to prioritise our relationship with the European Union (30%) – a divide that permeates through the major parties. The majority of Liberal Democrat (81%), SNP (76%) and Labour voters (71%) view the UK's relationship with the European Union as more important than our relationship with the United States. In contrast, just 36% of Conservative voters prioritise our relationship with the European Union,

Is the UK's relationship with the European Union or the United States more important?

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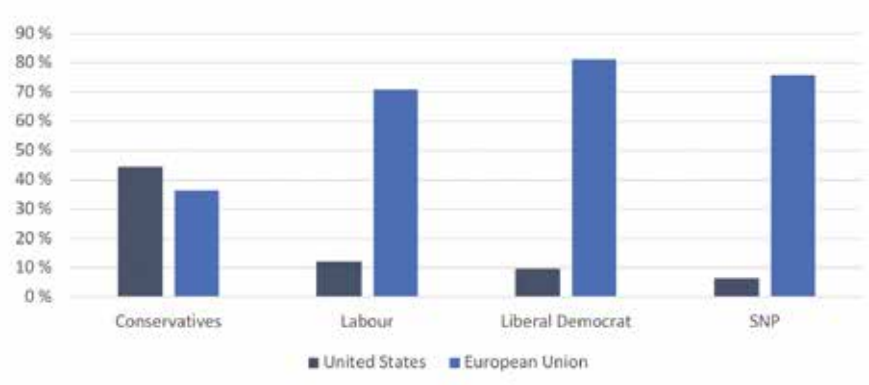

and the largest plurality instead favour our relationship with the United States (44%). Voters that switched to the Conservative Party in the 2019 General Election are particularly likely to prioritise the UK's relationship with the United States (46%).

Britons who define themselves as European are twice as likely as Britons who do not identify as European to prioritise our relationship with the European Union over the United States (70% to 35%). To a slightly lesser, but still significant, extent, Britons who define themselves as global citizens (66%) are also more likely to prioritise our relationship with the European Union than Britons that do not identify as global citizens (40%). On national identity, citizens who identify as Scottish are more likely to favour our relationship with the European Union (67%) than those who identify as Welsh or Northern Irish (both 52%). Support for our relationship with the European Union, over our relationship with the United States, is also higher among those who identify as British-only (56%) than those who identify as both British and English (42%) or English-only (41%).

Reflecting the national consensus, all newspaper readerships are more likely to recognise the primary significance of the UK's relationship with the EU than to favour our relationship with the United States. However, levels of support for the EU relationship vary dramatically, in predictable ways. Readers of The Guardian and the Financial Times are the most emphatic in recognising the pre-eminence of the UK-EU relationship, with 79% and 66% respectively supporting our relationship with the EU over the United States. Readers of the Daily Express are the least supportive, with just 44% favouring the EU over the United States. However, readers for newspapers expressing weaker support for the EU are also considerably more likely to be unsure about their responses.

7.

UK-China Relations and the Indo-Pacific

UK Engagement with China

Over the past 18 months, the UK has undergone a dramatic transformation in its relations with China – in part spurred by an increasing awareness of security vulnerabilities, but also due to increasing alarm regarding China's human rights record domestically and its behaviour as a global actor. As noted above, this hardening of political attitudes towards China – only a matter of years since a new 'golden era' of relations was heralded – has been matched by a shift in the hostility of public opinion towards China. The UK Government now seeks to define and articulate the parameters of its 'reset' with China, and is considering how best to strike the right balance between security and openness, recognising the benefits of not only economic engagement but also diplomatic and geopolitical cooperation around shared challenges, such as climate change.

Our survey asked Britons for their opinions regarding the nature and scope of the UK's future relationship with China. We find that support for all types of engagement between the UK Government and China is low, and 15% of Britons do not support any form of engagement with China whatsoever. It is also the case that the balanced approach the Government appears keen to pursue, in holding China accountable on human rights while continuing to maintain engagement on areas of mutual benefit – such as climate change, higher education and research – is primarily supported by Labour, not Conservative voters. And that Leave voters are three times as likely (26%) than Remain voters (9%) to believe that the UK should not pursue any form of relationship with China.

Which of the following types of engagement do you support the UK having with China in the future?

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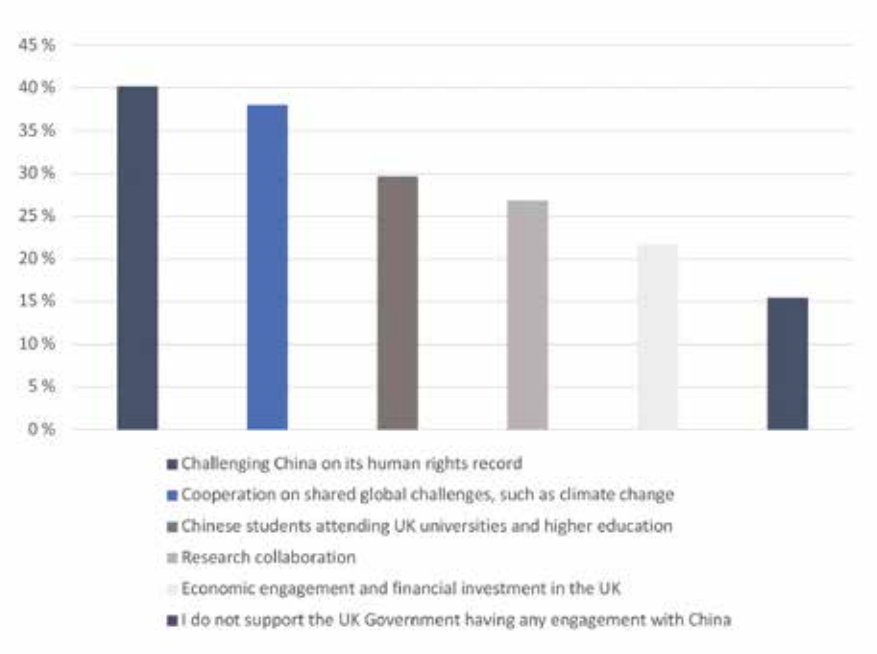

Overall, 40% of Britons believe the UK should challenge China on its human rights record, 38% believe the UK should cooperate with China on shared global challenges such as climate change, 30% of Britons believe there is productive scope for engagement on higher education and 27% on research collaboration. There is considerable overlap amongst the Britons supporting these positions – both to challenge on human rights, but also to maintain cooperation on a limited number of areas in which mutual benefit is perceived. They lean towards being older, living in more prosperous places, are from higher socio-economic backgrounds, are more likely to have further education, and significantly, they are more likely to have voted for Remain and to favour political parties other than the Conservative Party. In short, the messages being promoted by the Conservative Government on China engagement are primarily supported by those who do not vote for the Conservative Party. They are also the Britons more likely to favour both a values-driven foreign policy and to recognise and support internationalism.

Turning to the areas of weakest support, the most striking of these is the antipathy towards economic engagement with China – with just a fifth (22%) of Britons supporting the UK pursuing economic relations with the global superpower. This finding highlights the scale of the challenge for the Government, having made Britons aware of the risks of China to national security and its egregious human rights record, to then convince them to support a hard-nosed economic relationship. It is worth noting that this figure is considerably weaker than the proportion of Britons who say that they favour an economic and defence-led foreign policy prioritising strategic interests. A clue to one of the driving influences towards this can be found in the extremely faint degree of support (13%) for China having a role in building the UK's infrastructure. Public awareness of the potential risks associated with China's involvement in the UK's telecommunications and energy networks is clear, and it is likely that this apprehension towards investment has filtered into views on economic engagement as a whole.

Women are more likely than men to believe that the UK Government should not pursue any form of engagement with China (18% to 13%), and to be unsure what the UK's relationship to China should be (21% to 11%). And although older Britons are more supportive of engaging with China on shared global challenges, they are also more likely to oppose the UK pursuing any kind of relations with China compared to younger Britons. Other groups which disproportionately oppose engagement with China include Britons

Which of the following types of engagement do you support the UK having with China in the future?

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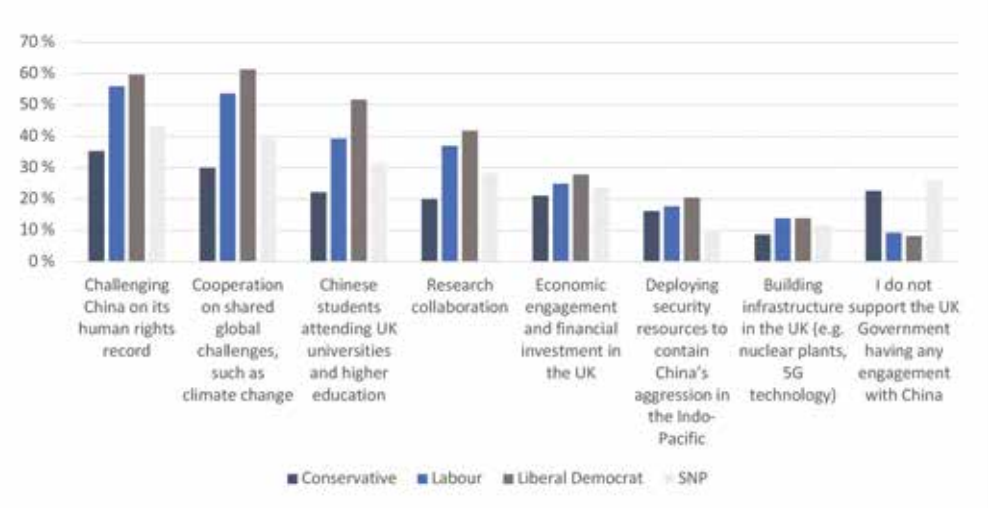

without further education, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, those living in towns and rural communities, and White Britons, who are nearly four times as likely to favour cutting all ties than BAME Britons.

Residents in the South West, London and Wales most clearly support a humanitarian angle to engagement with China – they are the three regions in which support for challenging China's human rights record is highest and the three regions with the strongest support for cooperating with China on shared global challenges. Wales also has a clear educational priority in its engagement with China, as the region with the second highest proportion of residents supporting Chinese students attending UK universities (35%) and the highest proportion supporting research collaboration (34%). Support for China helping to build infrastructure in the UK is highest in the West Midlands (25%). No particular region stands out in its support for economic engagement and financial investment from China, which is relatively even across the nation, although residents in Wales are the least likely to support this (17%).

Remain voters (53%) are more receptive than Leave voters (30%) towards the notion of engaging with China on global challenges, research (36% to 21%) and pursuing economic ties (26% to 19%). Nonetheless, the majority of Remain voters also want to see the UK challenge China on its human rights record (53%), compared to just 36% of Leave voters. Within the major parties, although Labour voters are generally more supportive of all forms of engagement, the gulf between Leave and Remain voters is larger than those within the Conservative Party, where enthusiasm is weaker overall. Conservative-Remain voters (30%) and Conservative-Leave voters (19%) are most divided in their views around UK-China economic engagement, enabling China to build the UK's infrastructure (16% to 7%) and allowing Chinese students to attend UK universities (29% to 20%). Yet, Labour-Remain voters and Labour-Leave voters are altogether more polarised, particularly over working with China on global challenges (63% to 40%), Chinese students attending UK universities (43% to 27%) and challenging China on human rights (61% to 48%).

Britons who identify as global citizens are more likely to support all forms of engagement with China, compared to Britons who do not identify as global citizens. Global citizens are 19 percentage points more likely to support working with China on global challenges (49% to 30%) and on research collaboration (37% to 18%). Similar trends can be identified among Britons who do and do not identify as European, with Britons who identify as European significantly more supportive of all forms of engagement with China.

Citizens who identify as Scottish (28%) are twice as likely as those who identify as Welsh (14%) to support economic engagement with China, however citizens who identify as Welsh are more likely to support cooperation with China on shared global challenges (50%) than those who identify as Scottish (41%) or Northern Irish (34%). Citizens who identify as English-only are more likely to oppose all engagement with China (21%) than those who identify as British-only (14%) or both British and English (13%).

Readers of The Guardian are the most likely to support engagement with China on global challenges (67%) and research (42%), and to support Chinese students attending UK universities (51%). However, Guardian readers are also the most supportive of challenging China on its human rights record (65%), more than twice as much as readers of The Sun (31%). Conversely, only 27% of readers of The Sun think the UK should cooperate with China on shared global challenges, and only 26% of Daily Mail readers think the UK should let Chinese students study at UK universities. Readers of The Sun are the most likely to reject any engagement with China (23%), compared to just 5% of Financial Times readers.

The Indo-Pacific Tilt

The UK Government has made clear its intentions to 'tilt' its foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific as part of the rebalancing taking place within the Global Britain project. Unlike their counterparts in the United States and Australia, however – two nations geographically on the frontline of the Asia-Pacific region and henceforth with elevated security and economic interests – Britons are not yet educated about or persuaded of the purpose and value of this 'tilt'. It is certainly the case that the largest plurality of Britons is unsure of their views (37%), so could be brought on side through Government rhetoric or global events, but it is also true that this lack of salience reflects a deeper instinct that questions the UK's direct stake in the Indo-Pacific region.

Of Britons who do have an opinion on the concept of an Indo-Pacific tilt, the largest proportion of citizens believe that the UK's involvement in the Indo-Pacific should be balanced with investments elsewhere (35%). A further 15% believe that the UK should not focus on the Indo-Pacific, as our security and economic interests lie elsewhere. Just 8% think the UK should make the Indo-Pacific the centre of its foreign polic

Given the broad levels of uncertainty, it is not surprising that Britons with constrained access to socio-economic and mobility opportunities feel the most uninformed about the value of an Indo-Pacific emphasis in the UK's foreign policy. For example, Britons who do not travel abroad for leisure are considerably more likely to be unsure of their preferences on this issue than those who have continued to do so during the pandemic. Half of Britons with lower socio-economic profiles, 44% of school leavers and 49% of women are unsure about their opinions. Henceforth, men and more prosperous Britons are driving the support behind the concept of a tilt – whether exclusively or balanced against other interests. Younger Britons are also more enthusiastic about the concept of a dramatic pivot than their older counterparts.

Regionally, residents in the North West are the most supportive of putting the Indo-Pacific at the centre of UK foreign policy (15%), while residents in Wales are the most supportive of balancing interests in the Indo-Pacific with interests elsewhere (46%). Britons in the West

What do you think about the notion of an 'Indo-Pacific tilt' in the UK's foreign policy?

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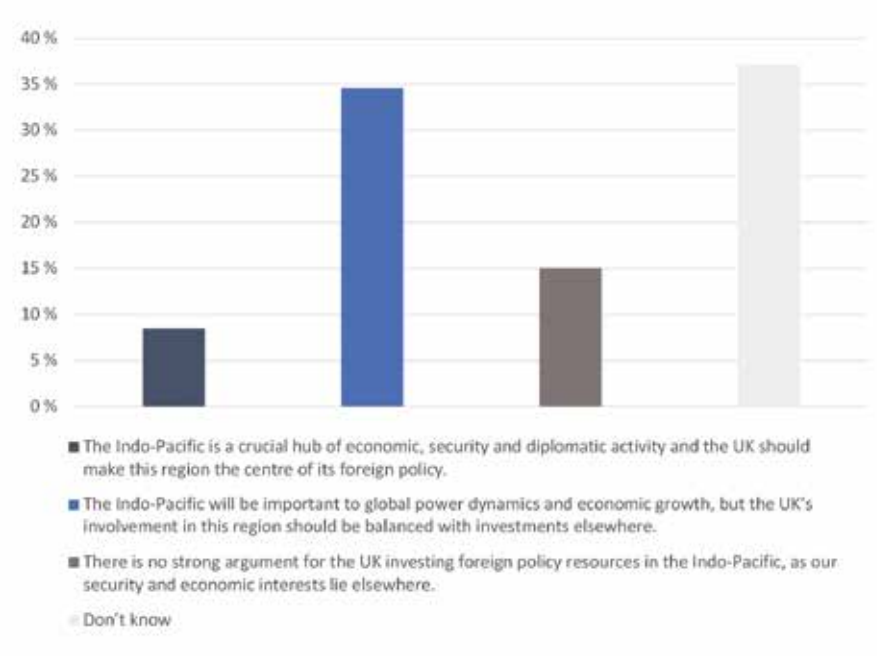

Midlands are the most likely to believe that there is no strong argument for focusing on the Indo-Pacific (23%). Significantly, 50% of people in the North East are unsure about their opinions. Despite their distinctive attitudes on a range of foreign policy questions, Londoners are not particularly inclined in either direction on this subject, although they are some of the least likely to be unsure of their opinions.

Considering the political dimensions of public opinion on an Indo-Pacific tilt, the most significant story is again one of uncertainty – largely due to the demographic disparities discussed above, inherent within the different parties. No particular passion for the Indo-Pacific is evident within any party, although Liberal Democrat voters are distinctly likely to hold conviction in their beliefs on this issue. No specific differences stick out in the views of Conservative and Labour voters, although the distinctions between Leave and Remain voters are almost entirely driven by the greater tendency of Leave voters (44%) – particularly Labour-Leave voters (47%) to be unsure in their opinions compared to Remain voters (32%).

On national identity, support for placing the Indo-Pacific at the centre of UK foreign policy is twice as high among those who identify as both British and English (16%) compared to those who identify as English-only (9%) or British-only (7%). It is also higher among those who identify as Northern Irish (15%), than among those who identify as Welsh (9%) or Scottish (7%). Citizens who identify as Scottish (42%) are twice as likely to be uncertain about the Indo-Pacific tilt than those who identify as Northern Irish (19%), and 13 percentage points more likely to be uncertain than those who identify as Welsh (29%).

Telegraph readers are the most likely (15%) to believe that the Indo-Pacific should be the centre of the UK's foreign policy strategy, with Daily Mail readers (7%) the least likely. The Times and Daily Express readers are the most likely to support balancing activity in the Indo-Pacific with activity elsewhere (48%) and The Sun readers are the least likely to, at 34%. A quarter of The Times readers and a fifth of The Mirror readers believe that the UK's security and economic interests primarily lie elsewhere, with only 14% of Daily Express and Daily Mail readers agreeing.

What do you think about the notion of an 'Indo-Pacific tilt' in the UK's foreign policy?

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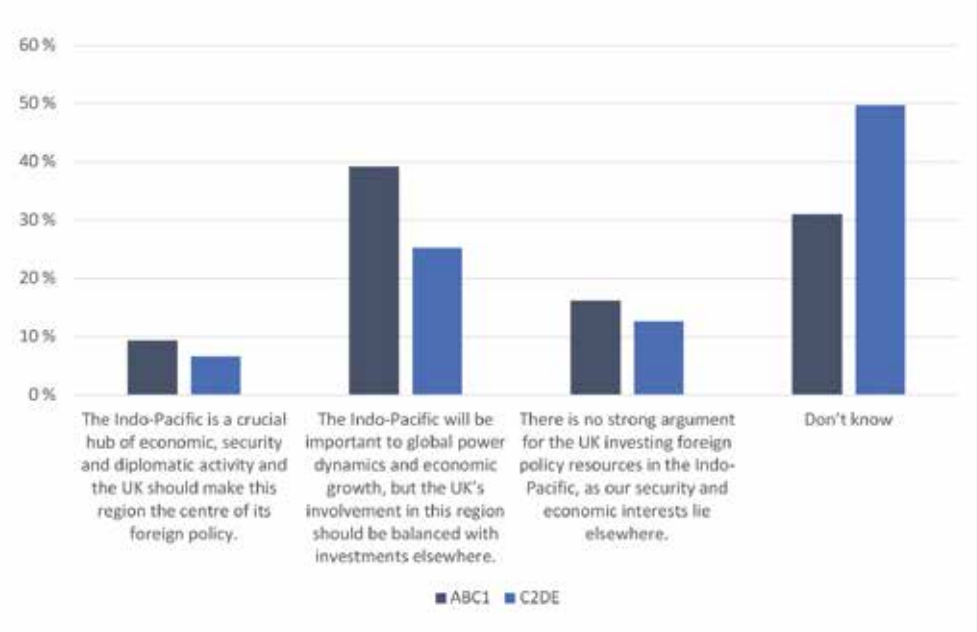

7. UK-China Relations and the Indo-Pacific

Our survey also asked Britons as to whether they support the deployment of security resources to contain China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific, and just 18% of Britons would be comfortable with this. Men are twice as likely (24%) to be in favour of an increased military presence in the Indo-Pacific region than women (12%), and those living in cities (23%) are also more likely to favour a military presence compared to those living in towns and rural areas (15%). Readers of the Financial Times (36%), followed by the Daily Telegraph (33%) are the most likely to be in favour of deploying security resources to curb China's aggression the Indo-Pacific region.

8.

Immigration and Asylum-seekers

Attitudes towards Immigration

There has been much speculation around the effects that both the coronavirus pandemic and the UK's departure from the European Union might bear on Britons' attitudes towards immigration – an issue which, five years ago, appeared to cast an all-encompassing spectre across the nation's politics. Our survey in 2021 finds that public opinion on immigration continues to experience a high degree of dynamism.

Broadly, Britons have become considerably more inclined to recognise the benefits that immigration brings to the British economy and British society – likely as a result of the greater visibility during the pandemic of the contribution of migrants in essential services and healthcare. It is also true that the liberating influence of the issue of immigration management having been 'settled' by Brexit, which allows otherwise concerned and insecure citizens to look more favourably towards migrants already settled into their communities, has played a role in engendering these improvements in public opinion. That said, Britons as a whole remain concerned about border control – which they generally separate from the question of existing migrants' contributions – and there is a very significant section of the population which ultimately believes that the costs of immigration outweigh their benefits. As such, this continues to be a deeply polarising and potentially combustible issue requiring careful political management.

Attitudes to Immigration 2020-21	2021		2020	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The UK's population is already too high	58%	16%	60%	13%
Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the UK economy	50%	24%	43%	26%
Immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents	53%	21%	48%	23%
Accepting immigration from many different countries makes the UK stronger	48%	26%	41%	27%
Immigrants are a burden on our social welfare system	42%	33%	44%	29%
Immigrants take jobs away from other Britons	36%	38%	37%	34%

Overall, 58% of Britons believe that the UK's population is too high – including 30% who strongly agree with this statement, 42% of Britons also beliee that immigrants are a burden on the UK's welfare system, and 36% think that migrants 'steal jobs' from other Britons. At the same time, a majority of Britons agree that immigrants strengthen Britain with their hard work and talents, half of the population believes that overall, immigration has a positive impact on the UK economy, and 48% believe that accepting migrants from a wide range of nations makes Britain stronger. Public opinion on these issues, however, is heavily contested on both sides – with the exception of the belief that the population is too high, only disputed by 16% of Britons.

When we consider the evolution of public opinion during the pandemic, we can see that the majority of the movement has been in the more favourable direction towards immigration, with the proportion of Britons believing that immigration has a positive impact on the economy and that accepting migrants from many different countries makes Britain stronger

both up seven percentage points in the past year, and the proportion who think immigrants strengthen the country through their hard work and talents increased five percentage points. This trend is significant and could signal a pathway for some of the heat to come out of the public debate on immigration over the coming years. However, it is too early to tell whether this will definitely come to pass, and indeed, the depth of feeling around the pace of population growth suggests that the social and cultural insecurities presented by immigration continue to remain potent – at least for now.

Looking at the demographic break-downs of public opinion regarding immigration, we can observe that under-35s, graduates, Britons in the ABC1 social category, BAME Britons, and Britons living in London are significantly more supportive of immigration, and more likely to recognise its social and economic benefits. In contrast, Britons aged 55-64, residents of Wales and the East of England, school leavers, and Britons in the C2DE category, are significantly less supportive of immigration across all six statements.

For example, Britons from lower socio-economic backgrounds (48%) and school leavers (42%) are significantly more likely to believe that immigrants take jobs from other Britons, compared to more economically secure Britons (29%) and graduates (27%). Moreover, Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are 18 percentage points less likely than those travelled frequently in 2019 to think immigration has had a positive impact on the UK economy (42% to 60%) and that immigrants strengthen the country through their hard work and talents (45% to 63%). Attitudes towards immigration therefore remain deeply connected to both individual and geographic socio-economic circumstance, and heavily shaped by lived experiences of both mobility and educational opportunity. It is interesting to note that gender is not a significant determinant of opinions on immigration.

Considering the influence of cultural and ethnic backgrounds on perspectives about immigration, we can see that BAME Britons are the most likely to think accepting immigrants makes the UK stronger (66%) – significantly more so than White Britons (45%). They are also more likely to see immigrants delivering economic benefits to the UK, with 60% believing immigration has a positive impact on the UK economy, compared to 49% of White Britons. Furthermore, 50% of BAME Britons disagree with the suggestion that immigrants take jobs from other Britons, compared to 35% of White British. Britons living in cities (59%), of whom a disproportionate percentage are BAME, are more supportive of the idea that immigrants strengthen the country through their hard work and talents than Britons living in towns (47%).

Immigration has had a Positive Impact on the UK Economy

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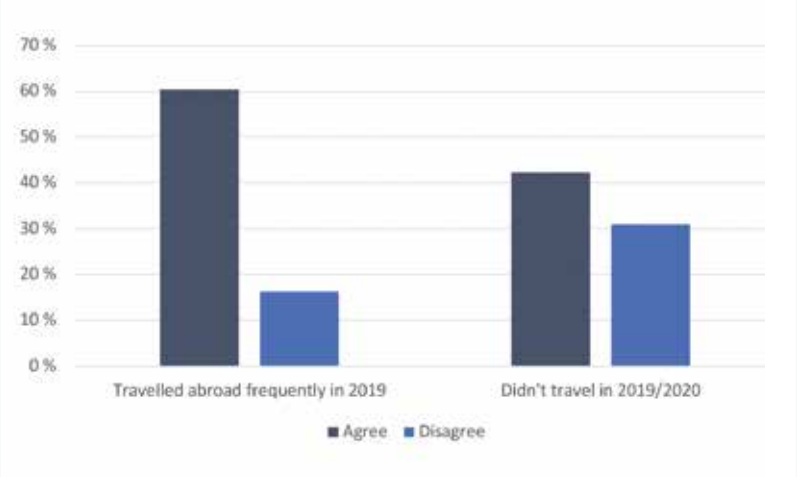

8. Immigration and Asylum-seekers

Geographic distinctions on immigration are significant. Londoners are the most positive towards immigration, and are particularly likely to identify a positive economic contribution to the UK derived from immigration (69%). Fascinatingly, it is their neighbours in the South East of England who are the least likely to do so (45%). Residents in Northern Ireland (41%), Scotland (45%), and Wales (45%) are among the most sceptical of the impact of immigration on the economy. Britons in Northern Ireland and Wales are also some of the least likely to disagree that immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (28% and 26% respectively) and among the most likely to disagree that a diversity of immigrants makes the UK stronger (36% and 31% respectively).

Britons who identify as European are more likely than Britons that do not to perceive social and economic benefits from immigration. They are also less likely to think the UK is already overpopulated (48% to 73%), or that immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (28% to 61%). Britons who identify as British-only are more likely to perceive immigration as positive than those who identify as English-only or British and English. For example, those who identify as British-only (58%) are 21 percentage points more likely than those who identify as English-only (37%), and 15 percentage points more likely than those who identify as both British and English (43%), to believe immigration has a positive impact on the UK economy. 42% of those who identify as Welsh believe immigrants are a burden on the social welfare system, compared to 33% of those who identify as Scottish and 25% of those who identify as Northern Irish.

Turning to politics, Labour, Liberal Democrat and SNP voters are broadly aligned on immigration, with the majority in each believing immigration is positive for the UK economy, that immigrants strengthen the country through hard work and talents, and that accepting migrants from many different countries makes the UK stronger. In contrast, the vast majority of Conservative voters believe the UK population is already too high (81%) and that immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (64%). Indeed, Voters that switched to Conservative in 2019 are particularly likely to believe that the UK population is already too high (86%), and to believe immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (71%).

There are significant disparities in views between Remain and Leave voters. The most significant of these disparities surrounds the question as to whether immigrants have a positive impact on the economy – an argument supported by 75% of Remain voters, compared to just 28% of Leave voters – and whether immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, supported by 76% of Remain voters, to 29% of Leave voters. Given the prominent link between political identities and attitudes towards immigration, it is of no surprise that newspaper readerships are especially polarised on this subject. Readers of The Guardian are consistently the most likely to perceive positive effects of immigration, while readers of The Sun, the Daily Mail and the Express are the most likely to perceive negative effects of immigration across all measures.

Immigration has had a Positive Impact on the UK Economy

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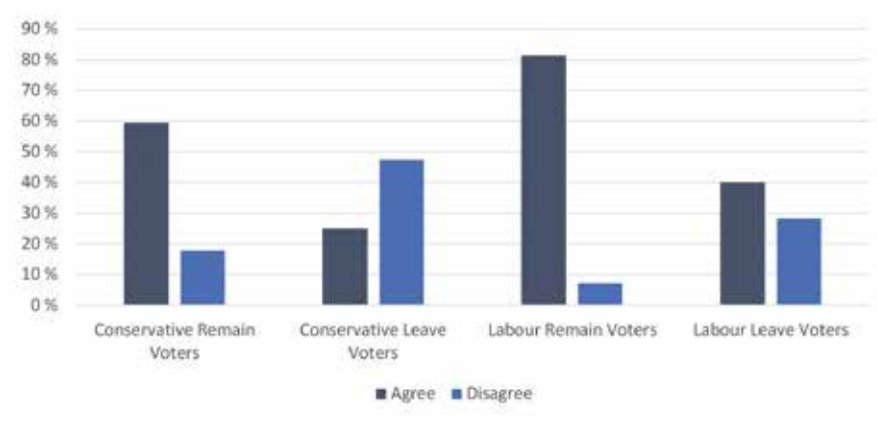

Managing the Channel Asylum and Migrant Crisis

Over the past few years, the United Kingdom has been experiencing a rise in the flow of irregular migration seeking to cross the English Channel – including both migrants and asylum-seekers. The numbers have been steadily increasing, and rose sharply in 2020 to 8,400 – more than four times the 1,844 arrivals recorded in 2019. Although the issue has not reached a saturation point of prominence in British politics, there is a sense that it has the potential to become a volatile issue with political consequences, as it has done in many other Western nations over the past decade.

When asked how to address the growing crisis of irregular migration in the English Channel, a majority (57%) of Britons believe migrants crossing the Channel should be intercepted and prevented from reaching the UK, but are split on the best means of tackling the problem. 29% want the Royal Navy deployed to intercept and turn back the boats; 18% believe migrants should have their claims processed in offshore detention facilities; and just 10% support the construction of a wall, barriers or the deployment of deterrent mechanisms (such as wave machines) in parts of the Channel – ideas allegedly floated in Home Office meetings this past year. Around a fifth (22%) of Britons believe that all migrant arrivals should be accepted and processed on UK soil.

Those most likely to support accepting and processing migrants in the UK are younger, more affluent, better educated, more likely to be living in London, BAME, Remain voters, Labour voters, and with strong internationalist mind-sets. By contrast, those who actively oppose on-shore processing are most concentrated among Conservative-Leave voters, and residents in Wales, Northern Ireland, and the North West of England. Those preferring the Royal Navy to turn back boats are more likely to be older, less affluent, without further education, more likely to be living in the East of England, the West Midlands, Wales or Scotland, to reject international identities, to have voted Conservative, and to have voted Leave.

How, in your opinion, should the UK Government best respond to the escalating number of migrants and asylum-seekers seeking to cross the English Channel?

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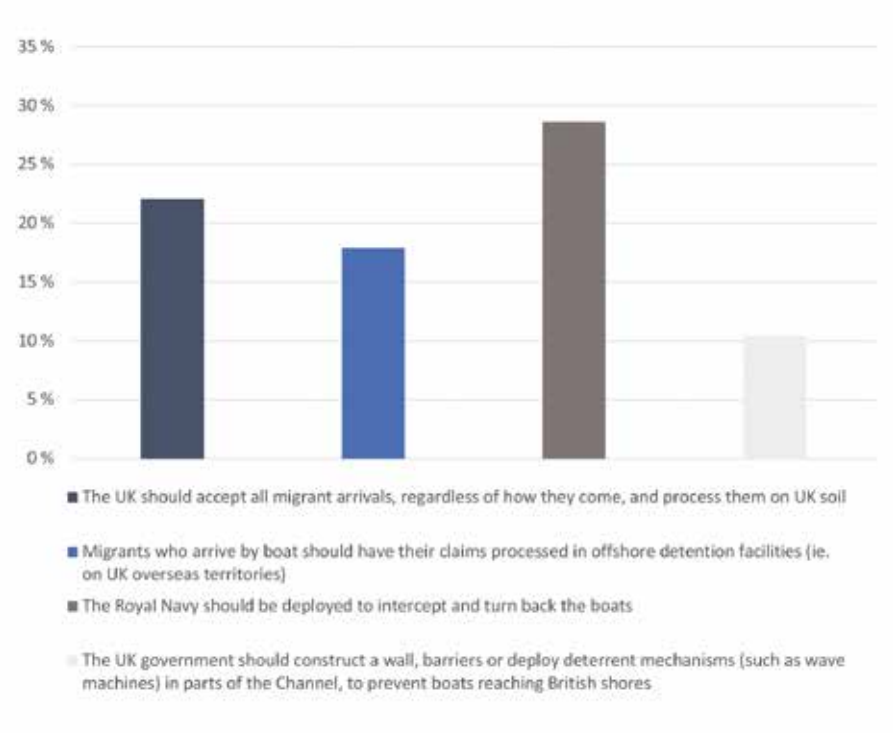

Those who support offshore processing are more evenly dispersed across demographics, but more are somewhat more likely to be older Britons, living in rural communities, and residents in the South West. This position appears to be the 'middle ground compromise' amongst British public opinion. Finally, those advocating for some of the more outlandish suggestions for the Channel are a mixed bunch, also quite evenly dispersed. Interestingly, they are more likely to be of a BAME background (17%) than White British (10%), and are also more likely to have voted UKIP in 2019 (24%) and/or to live in the North of England. Britons who identify as global citizens are the most likely to support accepting all migrants (36%), while intercepting boats is most popular among Britons who do not identify as European (44%), and Britons who do not identify as global citizens (41%).

Looking specifically through the lens of the political parties, we can see that the largest plurality of Conservative voters think the Royal Navy should be deployed to intercept boats (49%), while Labour voters tend to favour accepting all migrant arrivals (40%) – an idea which is supported by just 7% of Conservative voters. Voters that switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (51%) are the most likely to support deploying the navy.

As in the broader questions on immigration, Leave and Remain identities are significant predictive instruments in anticipating public opinion on managing the Channel migrant situation. The largest plurality of Leave voters favours the navy intercepting boats (50%), compared to just 16% of Remain voters, while the largest proportion of Remain voters favour allowing all migrants to be processed and settled in the UK (37%), compared to just 7% of Leave voters. As a result, there are considerable disparities between the views of Conservative-Leave voters and Labour-Remain voters, including a 46-percentage-point gap in support for intercepting boats, and 45 percentage point variation in support for accepting all migrants.

Citizens who identify as Northern Irish are more receptive to suggestions of accepting all migrants (29%), than those who identify as Scottish (26%) or Welsh (21%). Citizens who identify as Welsh are twice as likely as those who identify as Scottish to favour processing claims in offshore detention facilities (33% to 17%). Building deterrence mechanisms is particularly popular, in relative terms, among those who identify as English-only (15%), compared to 12% of those who identify as both British and English (12%), and 8% of those who identify as British-only.

On newspaper readership, 47% of Guardian readers believe that all migrants should be accepted and processed onshore, regardless of how they arrive, with Daily Mail readers (11%) least likely to support this option. The largest proportion of both The Times (31%) and Financial Times readers (33%) also believe that all migrants should be accepted and processed onshore, regardless of how they arrive. Daily Express readers (28%) are the most likely to believe that migrants should be processed in offshore detention facilities rather than onshore, with Guardian readers (17%) and Mirror readers (18%) the least likely to agree. At 17%, an unusual combination of both The Sun and Financial Times readers are jointly the most inclined to agree that the UK should build obstacles in the Channel to prevent the crossing of migrant boats.

9.

Free Trade and Globalisation

Concerns about Free Trade Agreements

As the UK embarks on its Global Britain agenda following its departure from the European Union, the task of rebalancing our trading relationships through striking a suite of ambitious free trade agreements is at the forefront of the Government's priorities. As our previous surveys, and our specific publication in 2020 on the evolving social dynamics of the public debate around free trade, have noted, this policy area is both very nascent for citizens, and experiencing a high degree of volatility as a result of its centrality to the Brexit debate. Our 2021 survey confirms that trade continues to stand as an exceptional issue in the broader trend towards parties on the Left of politics becoming more internationalist, and the Conservative Party voting base becoming more anti-globalist. The driver of this increasingly enduring trend is the very strong association held by citizens towards the UK's trade policy and the Johnson Government, the Global Britain agenda, and the Brexit project as a whole.

Our survey asked Britons what aspects of free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations they are most concerned about, as the UK regains full control of its trading policy. This year, we included the most popular options from the most recent surveys, to better understand the depth and breadth of feeling around these issues and the evolving demographic correlations. Once again, we find that concerns continue to be diffuse and spread across a wide range of areas. This both increases the chance of public consternation about FTAs materialising, but also makes it difficult for those keen to have their voices heard in the public debate around trade to pinpoint a single campaigning platform on which to challenge FTAs overall.

Just 14% of Britons say that they have no concerns when it comes to Britain negotiating FTAs. These Britons are highly concentrated amongst White British Conservative voters – particularly those who switched to the party in 2019 (ie. Red Wall), are older, and predominantly live in places like the North East, Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Notably, a significant chunk of the population (17%) say they are unsure or don't know what their concerns are, which is a sizeable constituency to be persuaded both in favour or against FTAs. These citizens are overwhelmingly women, younger in age, living in less prosperous areas (and/or Scotland), and from lower socio-economic backgrounds – indicating that trade remains an 'abstract' foreign policy issue, with public opinion playing into broader gaps of education and confidence plaguing international affairs as a whole.

Of the 69% of Britons who do hold concerns about free trade agreements, food standards (17%) remains the single greatest worry, followed by protecting workers' rights (12%) and environmental protections (10%). When given the option to choose up to three areas of concern, these three issues continue to dominate – followed by agricultural standards and animal welfare.

Delving into the demographic distinctions at play in public opinion on trade policy, we can see that, aside from the distinctions evident in an individual's likelihood to hold or not hold concerns about trade policy, or to be unsure, amongst those who do have anxieties to express, there are no clear trends in terms of issue preferences between the generations. Broadly, over-65s tend to be somewhat more concerned about food and beverage standards, and under-35s are most likely to be concerned about workers' rights and environmental protections – but these distinctions are relatively marginal. Similarly, while women are twice as likely to be unsure of their opinions on this issue compared to men (23% to 12%), and BAME Britons are twice as likely to be unsure of their opinions compared to White Britons (30% to 17%), neither gender nor ethnicity appears to shape the nature of concerns to any considerable extent.

What's more, the most substantive differences between socio-economic groups is simply held within the expression of the absence of any concerns, which Britons from the C2DE category (19%) are more likely to claim than their ABC1 counterparts (12%) – an interesting phenomenon given the extensive research that has taken place into the backlash against globalisation and free trade amongst 'left behind' segments of the population. Again, this is likely to be heavily shaped in the UK by the salve of these citizens' chosen political representatives being in power, and the implicit trust this confers. But it is certainly notable that those who are most likely to be vulnerable to the potentially asymmetrical benefits of trade negotiations – on workers' rights, food prices, food standards, and the crowding out of domestic producers – appear to be the most sanguine, and those less vulnerable because of their occupations and economic security the most aggrieved.

When given the opportunity to choose up to three concerns about free trade negotiations, however, we can observe some more meaningful distinctions between demographics. Under-35s, for example, are the most likely to cite environmental protections as a concern (32%), meanwhile, we can see that over-55s are significantly more concerned about agricultural standards (32%) than their younger counterparts (19% of under-35s). Turning to ethnicity, we can also see that White Britons are twice as concerned about standards of food and beverages (36%) than BAME Britons (18%), and are less concerned about worker's rights (25% to 35%) and environmental protections (23% to 40%). The disparities at the education level also become clearer in this question, with graduates more likely to be concerned about environmental protections (30%) than school leavers (22%), and less likely to be concerned about standards of food and beverages (29% to 38%).

As a result of the strong association in citizens' minds between the UK's developing trade policy and the Brexit vote, both Labour and Remain voters tend to be more anxious about free trade negotiations than Conservative voters. Indeed, the largest plurality of Conservative voters have no concerns about free trade negotiations (26%). Voters that switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 are slightly less likely to not have any concerns (24%) than Conservative voters as a whole, but this is accounted for by their greater likelihood to not be sure about their opinions on free trade. By contrast, Liberal Democrat voters are the most concerned about standards of food and beverages (26%), SNP voters show the highest concern about the standards of health services (16%), and Labour voters are most worried about the future of workers' rights (19%).

Remain voters are twice as likely to be concerned about workers' rights, three times as likely to be concerned about environmental protections, and three times less likely to say that they do not have any concerns at all. However, Labour voters are more divided than Conservative voters along EU Referendum voting lines in relation to free trade concerns, with Labour-Remain voters more attentive than Labour-Leave voters to standards of food and beverages (25% to 15%), workers' rights (21% to 14%) and environmental protections (16% to 5%). Labour-Leave voters show a higher level of concern than Labour-Remain voters about crowding out of domestic manufacturers (11% to 2%), and are more likely to have no concerns (14% to 4%).

When able to select their three greatest concerns, voters for parties on the Left continue to express more widespread levels of anxiety about free trade negotiations, as do Remain voters – meaning there can be a compound effect in the disparities of concerns when both political and Referendum groupings are examined. For example, 31% of Labour-Remain voters are concerned about environmental degradation, compared to 17% of both Labour-Leave and Conservative-Leave voters. In this respect, Referendum voting behaviour – which pegs closely within Labour to affluence and education – is a more powerful predictive factor than party affiliation.

Some regional distinctions can be observed around certain issues, but the scale of the disparities is not particularly great, as concerns are spread widely. One such example is environmental protections, which is the primary concern for 18% of Londoners, compared

to just 5% of Welsh residents. International identities, however, are a generally more significant predictive factor, with those who identify as European three times as likely as those who do not identify as European to be concerned about protecting workers' rights (18% to 6%) and twice as likely to be concerned about environmental protections (13% to 6%). In turn, Britons who do not identify as European are more likely to have no concerns about free trade negotiations (23% to 7%) and to be unsure of their position (20% to 11%).

Again, when given the opportunity to choose more than one concern, regional distinctions become more pronounced. Residents in the devolved nations show relatively little concern about agricultural standards – Wales (13%), Scotland (20%) and Northern Ireland (20%) – in contrast to high levels of concern in London (32%) and the South West (31%). Residents in Northern Ireland are particularly concerned about standards of food and beverages (46%), while residents in Scotland are the most concerned about environmental protections (31%). Despite the image of animal welfare as a 'higher order' concern, concerns about animal welfare are highest in the East Midlands (36%) – a region with a mixed socio-economic profile. Concerns about standards of health services are highest in the East of England (28%).

Citizens who identify as Northern Irish (15%) are more likely than those who identify as Welsh (14%) or Scottish (8%) to cite crowding out of domestic producers as their primary concern, while concern about standards of food and beverages is higher among those who identify as Welsh (18%) than those who identify as Scottish (12%) or Northern Irish (11%). Citizens who identify as English-only (21%) are more likely than those who identify as both British and English (16%) and those who identify as British-only (12%) to have no concerns about free trade negotiations.

When given the opportunity to choose more than one concern, these concerns shift slightly, with those who identify as Northern Irish (41%) more likely to cite standards of food and beverages as a concern than those who identify as Welsh (34%) or Scottish (33%). Citizens who identify as Northern Irish also show a disproportionately high level of concern with standards of health services (27%), relative to those who identify as Scottish (19%) and those who identify as Welsh (12%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (35%) are twice as likely as those who identify as English-only (17%), and 9 percentage points more likely than those who identify as British-only (26%), to express concerns about worker's rights.

Turning to newspaper readership, we can see that readers of The Times are twice as likely as Express readers to cite standards of food and beverages as their primary concern (27% to 13%). Guardian readers show the highest level of concern in workers' rights, at 20% to 10% of Daily Mail readers, and environmental degradation, at 21%, to 5% of Daily Mail and Express readers. Daily Express readers are twice as concerned (15%) about standards of health services (ie. impacts for the NHS), compared to 8% of The Times readers. Only 9% of Guardian readers identified standards of health services as their greatest concern. Readers of the Express and the Financial Times (13%) are the most concerned about the potential crowding out of domestic producers, due to new free trade agreements. 17% of readers of both The Sun and the Daily Mail claim that they have no concerns regarding free trade agreements, while only 5% of Guardian readers and 6% of Mirror readers say the same.

When given the chance to identify a further two concerns, Financial Times readers show the highest levels of concern about standards of food and beverages (40%) and agricultural standards (40%), while Guardian readers remain the most concerned about workers' rights (38%). Readers of The Times are the most concerned about environmental degradation (35%). Tabloid readers, particularly those readers of newspapers that lean to the Right, remain somewhat or distinctly less concerned overall, largely due to the confidence bestowed by their political identities.

Globalisation and its Benefits

Despite the upheaval and political turmoil wrought over the past decade in its name, the story about public opinion globalisation in this country is, on balance, a positive one. Overall, the majority of Britons (66%) in 2021 believe that globalisation has had a positive impact on the UK as a whole. However, clear distinctions are made between the positive influence of globalisation on London (79%) and the rest of the United Kingdom (54%). Moreover, there is clearly a cadre of the population which recognises its overall benefits, but feels that these have not directly touched their lives – with 53% of Britons agreeing globalisation has been a positive influence for themselves and their families. For a point of comparison, the most recent Chicago Council and Lowy Institute annual surveys find that 65% of Americans believe the United States has benefited from globalisation, and 70% of Australians also agree.

Looking at the demographic breakdown of British responses, we can see that the gender differences in perceived benefits of globalisation are insignificant. However, support for globalisation is especially strong amongst the younger generations, and the distinctions in perceptions between the young and the old are striking. Compared to over-55s, under-35s are the most likely to see globalisation as beneficial to the UK as a whole (73% to 59%), outside of London (65% to 44%) and to themselves and their families (62% to 42%). And although the gap between the percentage of under-35s who agree that globalisation has benefited London and those outside of London stands at 10 percentage points (75% to 65%), this gap rises to a staggering 25 percentage points amongst 55-64-year-olds (83% to 48%).

Socio-economic circumstances play a clear role in shaping public opinion on globalisation. Britons in lower socio-economic grades (C2DE) and school leavers are less likely than Britons in higher socio-economic grades and graduates to believe globalisation has been beneficial across all areas. The starkest of these disparities are in relation to the personal benefits of globalisation, which stands at 18 percentage points on both the measures of socio-economic status and education. Similarly, Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are significantly less likely than those who travelled frequently in 2019 to view globalisation as beneficial across all measures, and the gaps are especially pronounced when asked about globalisation's benefits on an individual and family level (34% to 58%).

BAME Britons are significantly more likely to perceive benefits of globalisation, particularly on a personal level, at 68%, compared to 50% of White Britons. It is also the case Britons living in cities are more likely to perceive globalisation as having spread its benefits outside of London (59%), compared to their rural counterparts (47%), and to regard globalisation as having personally benefitted them and their families (57% to 48%), suggesting a degree of common experience and perspective uniting a cosmopolitan urban lifestyle. Unsurprisingly, Londoners

Do you believe [...] has benefitted from globalisation...?

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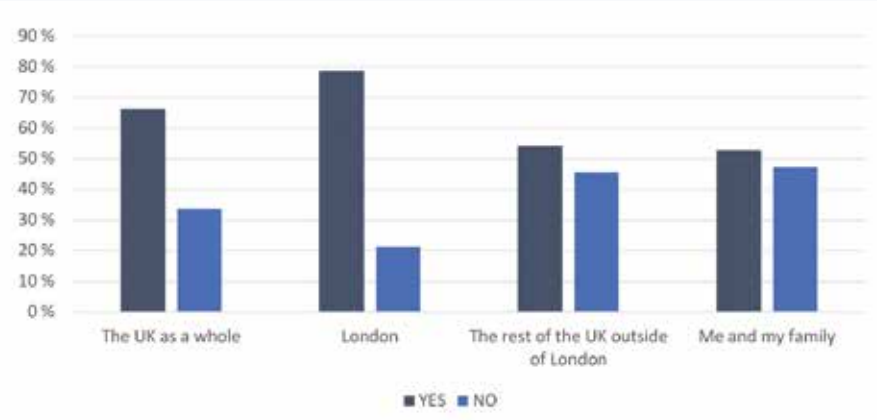

Do you believe the rest of the UK, outside of London, has benefitted from globalisation?

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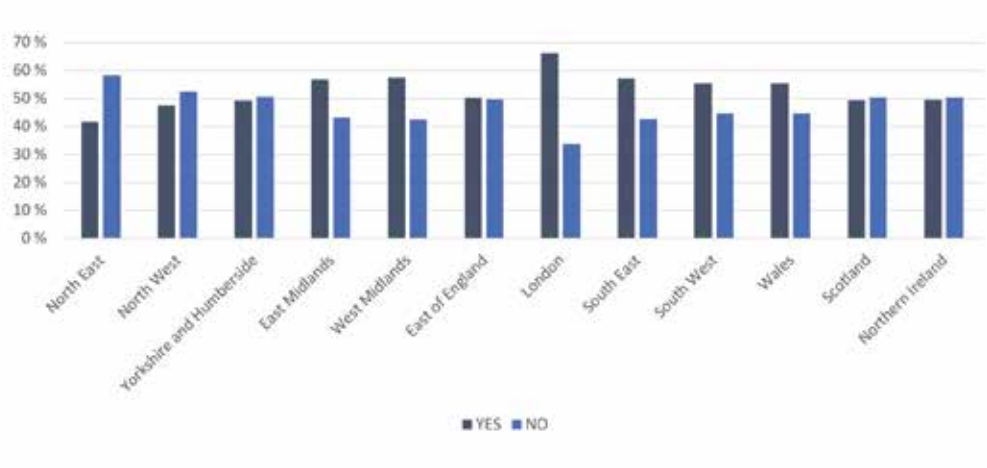

are the most likely region to believe globalisation has benefitted their own city (86%), but they are also the most likely to be convinced that it has delivered benefits to the UK as a whole (80%).

Londoners' support (80%) on the question of the overall benefits of globalisation stand in stark contrast to their counterparts in the devolved nations, with residents of Northern Ireland (59%), Scotland (58%) and Wales (58%) among the least likely to believe globalisation has benefited the UK as a whole. Residents in the North East of England (42%), the North West (48%) and Yorkshire (49%) are the least likely to recognise benefits outside of London, and at 44%, residents in Northern Ireland, the North West and the East of England, are the least likely to identify personal benefits from globalisation.

Britons who identify as global citizens are more likely than Britons who do not identify as such, to perceive benefits from globalisation across all metrics – and these are particularly pronounced in relation to globalisation's effects outside London. For example, 66% of those who self-identify as global citizens believe globalisation has had a positive impact outside London, compared to 44% of Britons who do not identify as global citizens. Similar disparities can also be found between Britons who identify as European and Britons who do not.

77% of citizens who identify as Welsh, and 74% of citizens who identify as Northern Irish view globalisation as beneficial to the UK as a whole, compared to 60% of those who i dentify as Scottish. Citizens who identify as British-only (55%) or both British and English (54%) are more likely than those who identify as English-only (46%) to perceive personal benefits to immigration.

Examining the political dimensions of perceptions of globalisation, the most striking finding is that the Conservative Party is no longer the party of globalisation and internationalism. Although Conservative-Remain voters continue to recognise the benefits of globalisation, the injection of such a large proportion of Leave voters concerned about globalisation appears to have tipped the balance quite significantly in the party. As such, it is now the parties on the Left of politics that feel most comfortable with the forces of globalisations.

Specifically, Liberal Democrat voters are the most inclined to view globalisation in a favourable light – particularly in relation to the perceived impact on themselves and their family, which, at 73%, is considerably higher than the proportion Conservative voters who feel the same (47%). Labour voters too are more positive about the impact of globalisation

than Conservative voters across all measures, and also stand at 10 percentage points more likely (57%) to feel that globalisation has had a positive impact on them and their families. Voters that switched to the Conservative Party at the General Election in 2019 consistently express low levels of support for globalisation, with just 35% of these voters believing it has personally benefited themselves and their families.

Remain voters are revealed to be dramatically more supportive of globalisation than Leave voters, and the disparity is, again, largest in relation so personal impact. 66% of Remain voters believe globalisation has had a positive personal impact individually and for their families, compared to just 38% of Leave voters. As such, Labour-Leave voters and Conservative-Leave voters are more closely aligned on questions of globalisation than they are to their counterparts within their own party. Moreover, age is proven to be a more salient determinant of views on globalisation than party affiliation, hence Labour and Conservative voters under 45 are more closely aligned and more supportive of globalisation, than Labour and Conservative voters over 45 years of age.

Considering the relationship between views on globalisation and newspaper readership patterns, we can see that Financial Times readers are the most likely to perceive positive effects from globalisation, alongside readers of The Times and The Guardian readers. Readers of The Sun and the Daily Mail are the most polarised as to whether globalisation has delivered any personal benefit to them and, overall, Daily Mail, Daily Express and The Sun readers are consistently the least likely to view globalisation as beneficial.

Do you believe you and your family have benefitted from globalisation?

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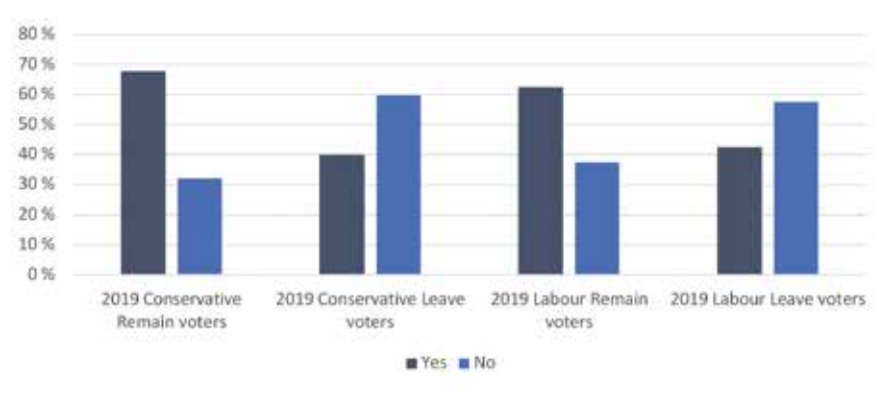

Foreign Aid and Development Spending

Foreign Aid Investment Priorities

Despite the often-fractious public debate around foreign aid, Britons are clearly sold on the value of a wide scope of development activities. When asked to assess whether a diverse suite of foreign aid and development activities should remain a priority for the UK, not a single spending area failed to attract a healthy majority of support from the British people. Overall, there is a clear recognition of the importance of aid and development spending, when broken down into the sum of its parts.

The most popular activities remain those with the greatest degree of long-term support from politicians, the media and celebrities – what is now considered the 'bread and butter' of aid and development. These include the provision of health services and vaccinations (76%), providing emergency support after crises like natural disasters (74%), and delivering infrastructure for essential public services (72%). Alleviating poverty (68%), reducing corruption (68%) and fighting environmental degradation (66%) also receive comfortable levels of support, as does the most self-interested possibility of creating new investment opportunities for the UK (67%).

Promoting economic growth in developing nations is distinctly less popular, with 57% of Britons supporting development spending to this goal, perhaps because it so directly elicits a transactional question about whether this might come at the expense of the UK's own economic growth. Nonetheless, it is another policy objective specifically focused in terms of self-interest that attracts the weakest level of support – namely, discouraging migration to wealthier countries such as the UK, which was supported by 54% of Britons. Just 17% of Britons say that they do not support the Government's investments in aid and development, although the same number again say they are not sure about their position.

Which of the following issues should be a priority in the UK's aid and development spending?

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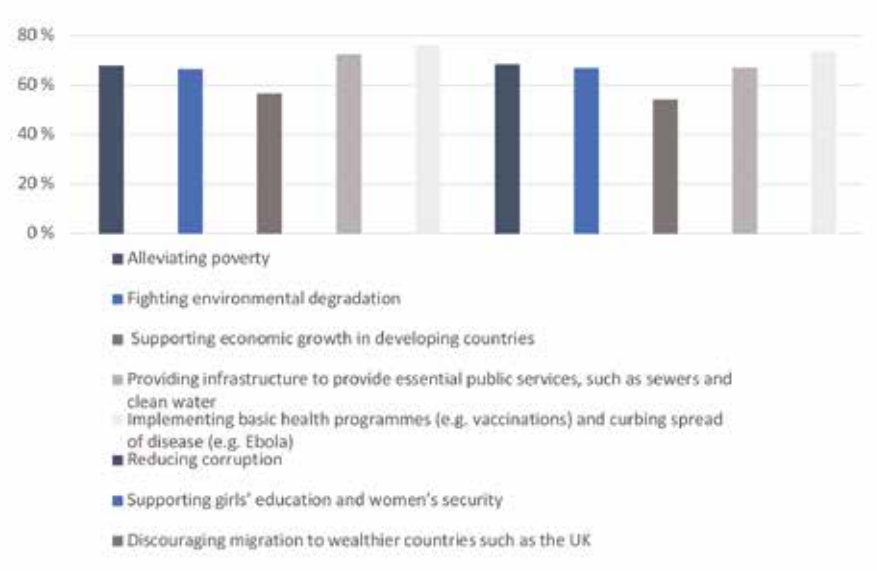

Encouragingly for the Government, which has pursued an agenda supporting girls' education and is now a leading donor in this area, 67% of Britons agree that girls' education and women's security is an important area of investment. It should be noted that, in our survey last year, which encouraged Britons to choose aid and development priorities from a list, rather than individually assess each funding area, women's safety and girls' education attracted just a fraction of the same degree of support and was one of the least popular investment areas. It can be concluded that the perpetuation of a zero-sum framework around aid and development – emphasising the co-dependent choices around priorities – is not conducive to cultivating public support for less prominent and well-understood issues, which need visibility and consistency of political support to become truly valued by the British people.

Certainly, it is feasible that many Britons asked more generally about foreign aid may be less enthusiastic about the UK's overall investments, which – even after the reduction in our national commitment against GNI to 0.5% from 0.7% - remain some of the most generous in the world. These results emphasise the importance of building narratives around the objectives of development spending, and strengthening the visibility of 'direct' impacts, to help citizens to understand the positive difference being made through UK investments.
Turning to the demographic distinctions on aid and development priorities, we can observe that, on the whole, gender does not appear to weigh heavily on public opinion on these issues – although the small disparities tend to see women more supportive of initiatives focused on achieving long-term social objectives, including women's security, while men are somewhat more likely to support self-interested aid and development investments. Despite the image of the 'woke' younger generations as the driving force behind a values-led foreign policy, it is in fact older Britons who are significantly more supportive of aid spending.

As such, over-55s are more supportive than under-35s in all areas, except on the question of using aid to support economic growth in developing countries. The most significant age-related distinctions arise around the question of support for using aid investment to provide infrastructure for public services (22 percentage points), reducing corruption (15 percentage points) and providing emergency support in a crisis (15 percentage points). At the same time, linked to their higher levels of concern about immigration, older Britons are also more likely than younger Britons to support the UK's aid investment being directed to discourage migration, by a margin of 18 percentage points.

There are also very distinct socio-economic dimensions shaping preferences around aid spending. Both Britons in the ABC1 social grade and graduates are, to varying degrees, more likely to support all aid spending priorities than Britons in the C2DE social grade and school leavers. Troublingly, the distinction between graduates (76%) and school leavers (60%) in support for girls' education and women's security is particularly large – although it is important to remember we are noting variations in the scope of two majority positions. Turning to ethnicity, White Britons are more likely than BAME Britons to support aid spending to reduce corruption (69% to 59%) and to implement basic health programmes (77% to 68%), and dramatically more inclined (57%) than BAME Britons (30%) to support aid investment being used to discourage migration to wealthier countries such as Britain. In turn, BAME Britons are somewhat more likely to support aid spending to encourage economic growth, at 60%, compared to 55% of White Britons.

Some interesting differences can be observed on two questions about the role of the UK in supporting improvements in other nations' economic positions, between Britons living in cities and those living in towns. Britons living in cities (62%) are more likely to support aid spending designed to encourage economic growth in developing countries than those living in towns (53%), and are more inclined to support investments to alleviate poverty (71%) than those living in towns (65%). In turn, Britons living in towns are more likely to support aid spending which they believe would benefit the UK directly, including creating investment opportunities for the UK (70%, compared to 63% in cities) and discouraging migration to countries such as the UK (57%, to 51% in cities). These findings make clear that there is a degree to which the prosperity of an individual's own community shapes values and policy preferences about how tax-payers' funds are spent abroad.

Looking across the UK's constituent nations and regions, some notable distinctions are evident. For example, we see that support for spending to alleviate poverty is highest in Scotland (74%) and London (74%), and lowest in the East of England (60%). Residents in Wales are the most likely to support using aid spending to fight environmental degradation (74%), while Britons in the South East are the least inclined to do so (59%). Britons living in the East Midlands are the most sceptical of using aid to reduce corruption (62%), while Britons in Scotland (78%) and the South West (75%) are the most supportive.

Support for using aid spending to discourage migration to wealthier countries is highest in Yorkshire and Humberside (61%) and lowest in the North East (47%) and London (47%). Building on the urban and town divide noted above, we can see that regional disparities in support for using aid to stimulate economic growth in developing countries are particularly stark, with 70% of Londoners supportive of such investment, compared to just 47% of Britons in the East Midlands. Londoners are also, by far, the most supportive of UK aid and development spending being used to facilitate girls' education and protecting women's safety (77%).

Turning to the political dimensions of aid spending preferences, Liberal Democrat voters consistently reveal themselves to be the most supportive of aid investments across all areas. SNP voters are the most likely to support using aid to alleviate poverty (85%, to 65% of Conservative voters) and to reduce corruption (85%, to 69% of Conservative voters). Conservative voters are the least supportive of almost all aid spending, particularly spending designed primarily to support developing countries without self-interest. On areas perceived to deliver direct 'benefits' to the UK, including facilitating investment opportunities for the UK and discouraging migration to wealthier nations, such as the UK, they are some of the most ardent supporters.

Similarly, Leave voters are substantially more supportive of aid spending being used to discourage migration to countries such as the UK (68%) than Remain voters (47%), and indeed Referendum voting behaviour appears an even more powerful factor in public opinion than political party affiliation. Hence, across a broad range of measures, Labour-Leave and Conservative-Leave voters are more closely aligned to one another than their counterparts in their own parties, and Remain voters across the board are more enthusiastic about investments without self-interest. Conservative-Leave voters are quite distinct, however, in their depressed support (39%) for promoting economic growth in developing nations, which stands well below Labour-Leave voters (51%) and streets behind Conservative-Remain (72%) and Labour-Remain voters (81%).

Voters that switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (37%) are less likely than broader Conservative voters (47%) to support aid spending to stimulate economic growth in developing countries. Voters that switched to the Conservatives are also less likely to support aid spending on implementing basic health programmes (72%), compared to Conservative voters more broadly (77%), and voters that left the Conservatives in 2019 (84%).

The gaps in public opinion between younger and older voters within political parties are substantial, but they are most pronounced in the Labour Party, with older Labour voters generally more enthusiastic about all forms of investment. The question of supporting economic growth in developing countries sparks the biggest divide between Britons who do (75%) and don't (42%) self-identify as global citizens and between Britons who do (74%) and don't (41%) identify as European. Interestingly, questions of support for girls' education elicits another prominent divide of around 25 percentage points between those who subscribe to international identities and those who reject them.

Girls' education also elicits prominent divides among national identities. Citizens who identify as British-only (73%) are significantly more likely to support aid spending on girls' education than those who identify as both British and English (63%) and English-only (58%). Citizens who identify as British-only are also particularly supportive of using aid to alleviate poverty (74%),

relative to those who identify as both British and English (65%) and those who identify English-only (57%). Citizens who identify as Northern Irish (48%) and Welsh (53%) are significantly less likely to support aid spending to reduce corruption than those who identify as Scottish (74%).

Readers of The Guardian are the most likely to support aid spending, and the most likely to 'highly' support aid spending across all areas, with the exception of aid spending for self-interested reasons, such as to create new investment opportunities for the UK and to discourage migration to wealthier countries. Conversely, readers of The Sun are the least likely to support aid spending across all areas, with the exception of the self-interested aid spending, which is the only form of aid spending they enthusiastically support. As in the case of political distinctions, the largest disparities in public support for aid spending emerge in relation to the question of supporting economic growth in developing countries. This is supported by 80% of Guardian and 70% of Financial Times readers, compared to 56% of Sun and 59% of Express readers.

Rationale for Supporting the UK's Foreign Aid Spending

Our survey asked Britons to outline what they believe is the strongest argument in favour of the UK's aid and development spending, and we find that the population is deeply divided on this matter –with no clear point of consensus around the rationale for our investment. A fifth (20%) of Britons argue that we hold a 'moral duty' to help the world's poorest people, 15% believe that improving local economies brings benefits to the global economy, 13% believe that foreign aid strengthens global peace and security, making Britain safer at home, 10% believe we have a responsibility as a former imperial nation to ensure the success of the developing world, and 8% of Britons think the UK's status as a world-leading donor strengthens the UK's global reputation and our international influence.

The varied responses highlight the challenge for both Government and the aid sector to effectively speak to Britons' individual and collective motivations. A hard-nosed argument around economic interests, security or soft power will speak to some groups, while others may be repelled by the suggestion that Britain's moral duty can be surpassed.

There are few significant gender disparities about the strongest argument in support of aid, although, again, women (21%) are more likely to be unsure of their positions than men (13%). High levels of uncertainty are also recorded by under-35s (20%). The younger generations are also the most likely to believe we have a moral duty as a leading global power (23%), that aid makes us safer at home (15%) and that we have a duty as an imperial nation (13%). They are also the least likely to reject all UK aid and development spending (5%), compared to a substantial 27% of over-55s.

Looking at the socio-economic distinctions, school leavers (21%) are more likely than graduates (11%) to reject all aid spending, but also more likely (21%) than graduates (12%) to be unsure of their position. These trends are also present among different social grades as well, with Britons in the C2DE social grade (25%) more likely than those in the ABC1 social grade to oppose all aid spending (13%), and to be unsure of their views (21% to 15%). One of the most ardent groups against aid and development spending can be found amongst Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (31%), compared to those who travelled frequently in 2019 (18%). And Britons who view themselves as global citizens (29%) are twice as likely to think we have a moral duty as a leading global power, compared to Britons that do not identify as a global citizen (13%).

Looking to ethnicity dimensions, BAME Britons think the importance of aid spending for global security is the most compelling argument (22%), although a higher proportion of BAME Britons (29%) are unsure of their opinions than White Britons (17%). In turn, White Britons (19%), particularly White British Conservative voters (30%), are more likely than BAME Britons (7%) to oppose all aid spending. Citizens who identify as English-only (25%) are twice as likely

as those who identify as both British and English (12%) to oppose the UK's investment in aid and development, and 10 percentage points more likely than those who identify as British-only (15%). Citizens who identify as Welsh (15%) are significantly more likely to think aid spending strengthens our international reputation and influence than those who identify as English (7%) and those who identify as Scottish (4%).

Turning to the regions, we can see that Britons living in towns (19%) and rural areas (19%) are more likely to reject all aid spending than those in cities (13%). Residents in South West are the most inclined to believe the UK has a moral duty as a leading global power (29%), while residents in the East of England are the least minded to believe this (14%). The argument that aid and development investment benefits British businesses is most strongly supported in the West Midlands (23%), while Wales is the biggest believer that such spending makes us safer at home (16%). Meanwhile, residents in the East of England are the most likely to reject all aid spending (24%) and the most likely to be unsure of the best argument in its favour (24%). This common trend across so many demographics suggests that opposition to aid is closely linked to a lack of understanding and engagement with the purpose and mission of development expenditure.

On a political level, the largest proportion of Liberal Democrats (27%), SNP (27%) and Labour voters (26%) view aid and development spending as a necessary element of the UK's moral responsibility as a leading global power, while the largest proportion of Conservative voters do not support aid spending at all (29%). This sentiment is driven by Conservative voters over 45 years of age, who are nearly three times as likely to oppose aid spending (34%) than their younger counterparts (12%) in the Conservative Party. Voters that switched to the Conservative party in 2019 are also particularly minded to oppose all aid spending (38%). Among the main political parties, SNP voters are the next most likely to oppose aid spending (19%).

The distinctions around EU Referendum voting choices are also considerable. Leave voters are more than five times as likely (33%) to oppose all aid spending than Remain voters (6%), precipitating a prominent divide between Conservative-Leave voters (35%) and Conservative-Remain voters (10%) and Labour-Leave (22%) and Labour-Remain voters (5%). The rationale for supporting aid varies notably between these groups. Conservative-Remain voters are the most supportive of the concept of aid as an investment in global security (18%), and Conservative-Leave voters are the least (10%) to do so. Labour-Remain voters (32%) are the most likely to view is as a moral duty as a leading power, and Conservative-Leavers are the least (15%).

In your opinion, what is the single strongest argument for continuing to fund our development programmes abroad?

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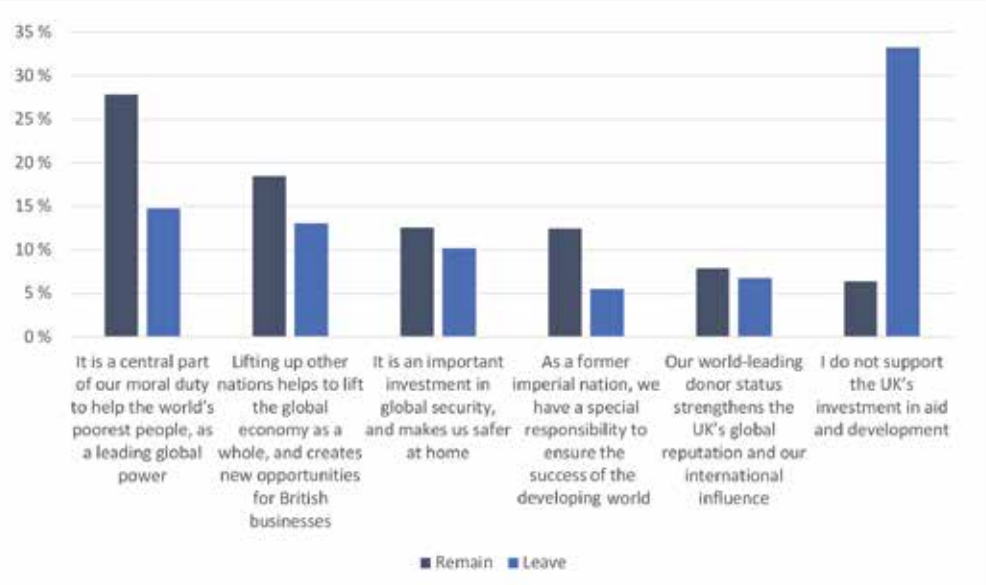

Turning to newspaper readership, and readers of The Guardian and The Times are the most likely to support aid on the grounds that it is our moral duty as a leading global power (36%), with Daily Mail and Express readers the least likely to subscribe to this (20%). Financial Times readers (22%) are twice as likely as Sun readers (11%) to believe aid helps develop the global economy, and Financial Times readers (18%) are significantly more likely than Guardian readers (11%) to believe aid and development spending is important because it makes us safer at home. Financial Times readers, alongside Telegraph readers (15%), are also the most likely to believe that, due to the UK's imperial past, we have a moral responsibility to help developing countries, in contrast to 5% of Daily Mail readers. Notably, 23% of Daily Mail and 20% of Daily Mirror readers do not support aid at all, compared to 6% of Guardian readers.

The UK's Aid Spending During the Pandemic

Our survey asked Britons to consider the grim realities of the pandemic on both the UK's domestic finances, and also the risk of backsliding in hard-won progress in the developing world, and then to choose the best course of action for UK aid and development spending. When presented with this information, overall, 72% of Britons argue that foreign aid should either be stopped or reduced during the pandemic, and 28% believe it should be maintained or increased.

Breaking these down, 36% believe there should be a reduction in spending until the UK economy recovers to pre-pandemic levels, and 23% believe that foreign aid should be completely stopped until the UK makes its economic recovery. 13% of Britons would like to see the Government ceasing to spend any money on foreign aid into the future. On the other side, 21% of Britons think that current levels of spending should be maintained, and 7% believe the Government should increase its foreign aid spending because of the crisis. The middle point of the nation therefore appears to be to reduce foreign aid by a relatively significant margin, until the British economy recovers to its pre-pandemic levels.

UK Foreign Aid and Development Spending during the Pandemic

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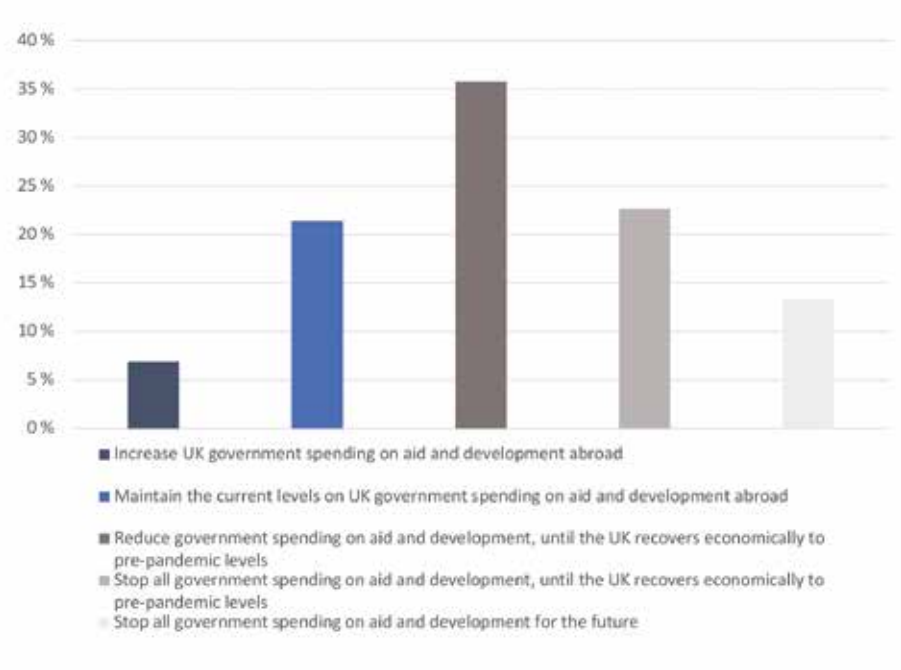

10. Foreign Aid and Development Spending

Women (76%) are more likely than men (67%) to believe foreign aid and development spending should be stopped or reduced during the pandemic, as are older Britons (78%) more likely to believe this than younger Britons (62%). Significant disparities in support for aid spending are also identifiable on a socio-economic level. Britons in the C2DE social category are much more likely (82%) to support reducing or stopping aid spending than Britons in higher social grades to (67%), as are school leavers (80%) relative to graduates (61%). Similarly, White Britons (74%) are more likely to support reducing or stopping aid than BAME Britons (61%), who are the most likely demographic of all to support increasing aid spending during the pandemic (15%). Finally, Britons living in towns are also more likely to support reducing or stopping aid spending (76%) than those living in cities (66%), as are Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (76%), compared to Britons 67% of Britons who travelled frequently in 2019.

Looking towards the regions, residents in East of England (82%) and Northern Ireland (79%) are the most likely to support stopping or reducing aid spending, while residents London (59%), Scotland (67%) and the East Midlands (67%) are the least. Those living in the East of England are the most emphatic in their desire to cut aid spending, with 48% believing it should be stopped temporarily (28%) or permanently for the future (20%). London is distinct in its support for aid spending, and is the only region in which a plurality of residents favours maintaining current levels of aid spending (32%).

Conservative voters are, by far, the most likely to believe the UK should stop or reduce aid spending, either temporarily or permanently (90%) – particularly Conservative voters over 45 (92%, and voters who switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 (93%). While still a majority position, levels of support for reducing or ceasing aid spending are significantly lower among Liberal Democrats (60%), Labour (55%) and SNP voters (52%), and both SNP (14%) and Labour voters (12%) are the most supportive of increasing aid spending – although these segments are obviously very small.

Leave voters (91%) are strikingly more inclined than Remain voters (54%) to support reducing or stopping aid spending, and more than a fifth (22%) of Leave voters also support stopping UK aid spending altogether for the future, compared to just 5% of Remain voters. The largest plurality of Labour-Remain voters (45%) support maintaining current levels of spending, while the largest plurality of Conservative-Remain voters (45%) and Labour-Leave voters (45%) support reducing government spending on aid until the UK recovers economically.

UK Foreign Aid and Development Spending During the Pandemic

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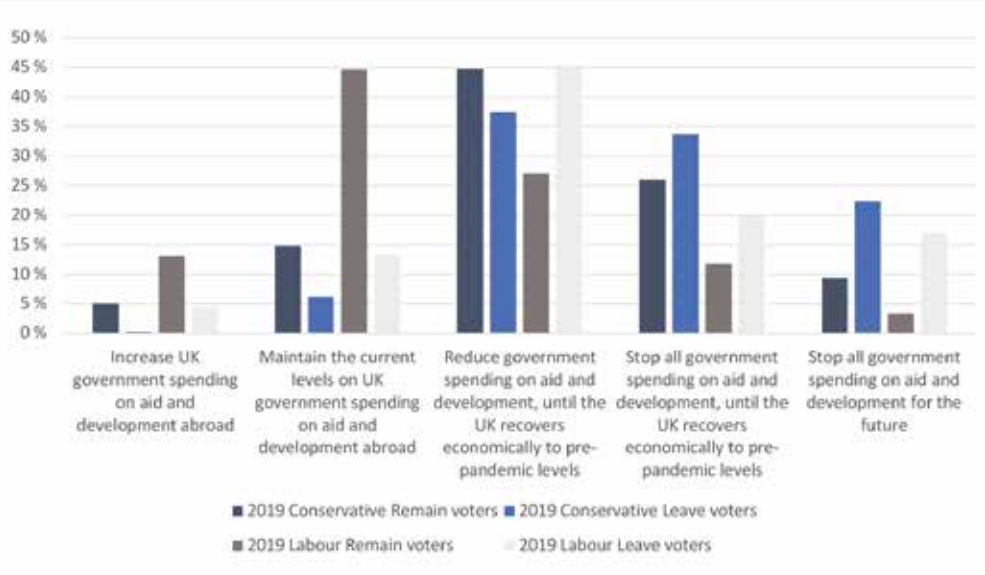

10. Foreign Aid and Development Spending

Britons who do not identify as European (86%) or as global citizens (85%) are more likely to believe the UK should stop or reduce aid spending either during the pandemic or permanently, than Britons who identify as global citizens (60%) or Europeans (60%). Support for stopping or reducing aid spending is higher among those who identify as Welsh (72%) than among those who identify as Scottish (65%) and those who identify as Northern Irish (52%). 19% of those who identify as English-only support stopping all aid and development spending for the future, compared to 13% of those who identify as both British and English, and 12% of those who identify as British-only.

On newspaper readership, readers of the Financial Times are the most likely to be in favour of increasing spending on aid and development abroad, with 16% agreeing that the UK government should do so. Conversely, only 3% of Daily Mail readers agree. Readers of The Guardian (44%) are the most likely to believe aid spending should be maintained, and the least likely to believe it should be stopped or reduced (43%). In contrast, support for stopping or reducing aid spending is highest among readers of the Mail (81%), The Sun (79%) and the Mirror (77%). Mirror readers (22%) and Express readers (16%) are the most likely to believe that aid spending should be stopped entirely, even after the pandemic.

Looking specifically at the demographic distinctions between the five different choices at stake:

- The highest proportion of Britons who believe the Government should i*ncrease spending* on foreign aid live in the North East of England. They are more likely to be more affluent, educated, BAME, to vote for left-leaning parties, and to have voted Remain. They are particularly concentrated amongst younger Labour voters.
- Those advocating the *maintenance* of the UK's spending on foreign aid are most likely to be men, younger, living in London or Scotland, more affluent and better educated, with global mind-sets, to have voted Labour, the Lib Dems or the SNP, and to have voted Remain. They represent the largest group of Labour-Remain voters (45%).
- Britons in favour of a *temporary reduction* are more likely to be women, older, living in the North West or South West, and to live in a town or rural location. This group represents the intersection of Conservative-Remain and Labour-Leave voters, who both tend to be distinct from their counterparts in their own parties in their more moderate views on foreign aid.
- Those favouring a *temporary cessation* in foreign aid tend to be more likely to be older, living in places like Wales, the West Midlands and Yorkshire, to come from less affluent backgrounds, and to have voted Leave in 2016, and Conservative in 2019.
- Britons arguing for the UK Government to *stop all foreign aid provision forever* are more likely to be from the East of England or Northern Ireland, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, to have switched to vote for the Conservatives (26%) or to have voted for the Brexit party in 2019, and to identify as English, not British.

National Security and Threat Perceptions

Perceptions of Safety

Our survey asked Britons, in the context of current world events, how safe they feel on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being extremely safe, and 1 being extremely unsafe. On average, Britons scored their current feelings of safety at 5.4, showing that the majority of Britons currently feel marginally more safe than unsafe. The strongest gravitational pull is towards the middle – suggesting a divided population, but also one that perceives a relatively secure safety net. However, a larger proportion of Britons (22%) reported feeling unsafe (scores of 1-3), compared to the proportion who feel safe (18%) (scores of 8-10).

The Britons most likely to feel unsafe are women, older Britons, those living in less prosperous regions such as the East of England, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and with fewer qualifications. On average, women are more likely (26%) than men (18%) to self-report as feeling unsafe. Over-55s (27%) are also more likely to report feeling unsafe than under-35s (14%), as are Britons in the C2DE social grade (30%), relative to those in the ABC1 social grade (19%). White Britons (22%) are also more likely to feel actively unsafe than BAME Britons (15%). Britons living in the East of England are the most likely to feel actively unsafe (29%) and to feel extremely unsafe (11%). In contrast, only 18% of people in the South East of England feel actively unsafe, and in Wales, 30% of people feel actively safe. Citizens who identify as both British and English (27%) are more likely to feel safe than citizens who identify as British-only (17%) or English-only (17%).

Citizens self-reporting as feeling unsafe are more likely to have voted Leave, and hence are concentrated amongst both older Conservative-Leave voters and, particularly, older Labour-Leave voters. Leave voters (28%) are more likely than Remain voters to feel actively unsafe (22%), with Labour-Leave voters particularly likely to feel unsafe (33%). Age is a more significant determinant of perceived level of threat, and Labour voters over 45 (30%) and Conservative voters over 45 (28%) are more likely to feel unsafe than Britons under 45 who voted Labour (18%) or Conservative (15%) in 2019.

These fearful citizens are also the most likely to be disengaged from foreign policy and from Government in general, and are likely to carry a higher insecurity profile under any circumstances – even outside of a pandemic. However, they may also be the most exposed to the pandemic's

Thinking about the direction of travel in terms of world events, how safe or unsafe do you feel today?

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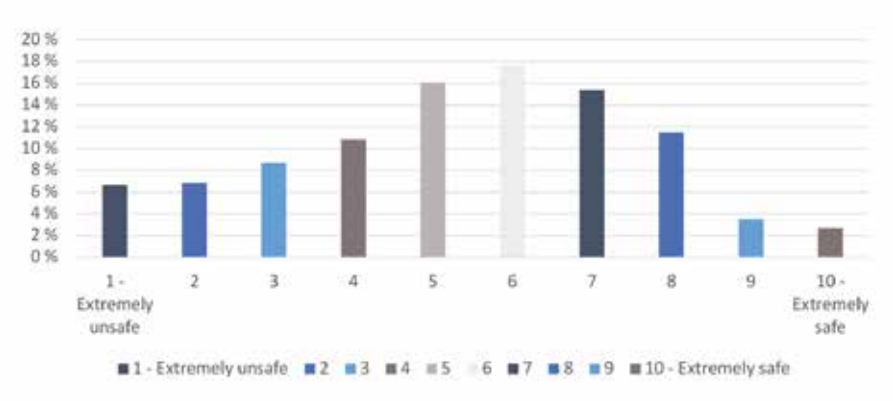

harmful social and economic effects. This suggests that the impact of the pandemic has been to intensify disadvantage and insecurity, rather than necessarily to create a more widespread sense of security vulnerability amongst the population as a whole.

It is also the case that citizens who identify as Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish are considerably more fearful than those who identify as English or British, suggesting that the issues that have been raised around devolution during the pandemic are contributing to a sense of powerlessness and insecurity, or shaping perceptions in a negative manner. Northern Ireland is notable for having both the lowest proportion of people feeling unsafe (18%) and the lowest proportion of people feeling safe (12%). Britons who attach their national identity to the devolved nations, and define themselves as either Northern Irish (32%), Welsh (31%) or Scottish (30%), are more likely to feel unsafe than Britons who identify as British and English (17%) or British-only (21%).

Those most likely to describe themselves as feeling safe are relatively evenly distributed across the population – suggesting a diversity of forces in play in forming their sense of security – but are most concentrated amongst younger Conservative-Remain voters (23%), younger Conservative voters (28%), and those who hold both British and English identities (27%). On newspaper readership, readers of the Daily Mirror are the most likely to feel actively unsafe (29%), and the most likely to score '1', denoting feelings of extreme lack of safety (10%). Telegraph readers are the least likely to feel unsafe (18%) and the most likely to feel safe (27%). As such, Telegraph readers report the highest average score (5.9).

Threats to the United Kingdom

When presented with a wide range of security threats – including economic and democratic threats – the British people conclude they are all important, although some threats are seen as more 'critical' than others. The most alarming threat to the British people (84%) is the risk of cyber-attacks from other nations – a curious finding, as this issue does not often receive a huge degree of political attention, although it could be reinforced by the wide-ranging concerns about potential foreign interference in British politics and our democracy (77%). Other leading threats are international terrorism (83%), the rise of China as a world power (79%) and climate change (78%). It is important to note that climate change is regarded as a comparable risk to what could be described as more traditional security and defensive threats. It is also the single risk to be judged the most 'critical', by 49% of Britons.

% of Britons who see these issues and events as 'important' or 'critical' potential threats to the security of the UK in the next decade

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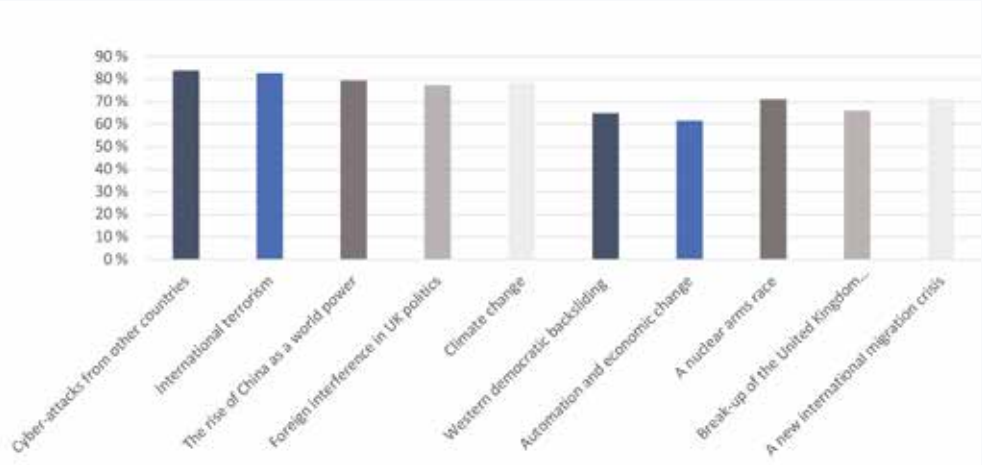
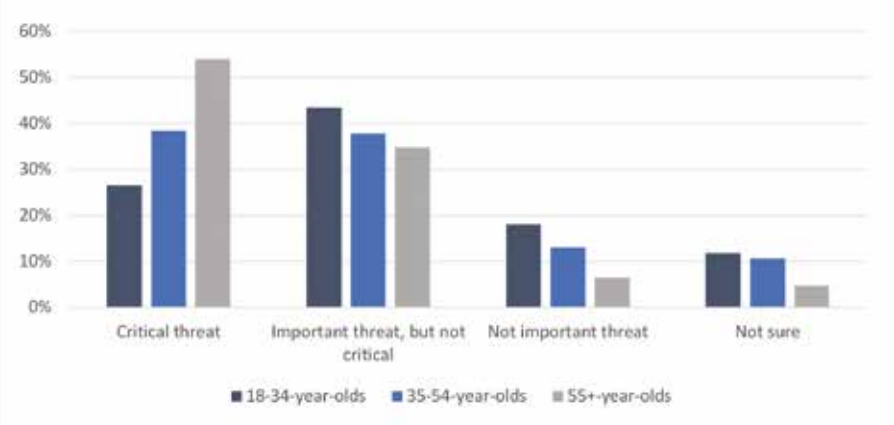


% of Britons who see the rise of China as a threat



If we zero in on the percentage of Britons who regard these threats as 'critical', we can observe that Britons are now eleven percentage points more likely to see the rise of China as a critical threat than they were in 2020 (30% to 41%), as a result of the increasing awareness of the risk China poses to the West across a host of areas, and five percentage points more likely to view foreign interference in UK politics as a critical threat (27% to 32%) – perhaps capturing the publication of the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia this past year, and/or the increasing awareness of efforts being made by both Russia and China to capitalise on political dysfunction in the West. In contrast, Britons are now seven percentage points less likely to see international terrorism as a critical threat (51% to 44%) – almost certainly the result of the pandemic, which we found in our annual survey re-run in April and May 2020 to have specifically displaced terrorism as an area of profound insecurity for the British people.

The second tranche of threats judged to be significant, but to a lesser degree, include the risk of a new migration crisis (71%) and a nuclear arms race (71%). Democratic backsliding in Western nations is seen as an important threat by 65% of Britons. At 62%, the risks posed by automation and economic change are the least compelling to Britons as a whole. This threat is also considerably less likely than others to be seen to be critical, indicating there is little salience around this subject as a short- or medium-term risk.

Despite the consistently large numbers throwing their weight behind each type of threat, some interesting demographic distinctions can be observed. For example, those most fearful of cyber-attacks and likely to regard them as a 'critical' threat tend to be older, living in less prosperous parts of the nation (ie. East of England, Wales), to have voted Leave, to be White, to hold strong patriotic identities, and to have switched to the Conservatives in 2019. These voters also tend to be less engaged and informed about foreign affairs than the population as a whole.

This same relationship applies to international terrorism, the rise of China, and the possibility of an international migration crisis. Consistently, these citizens (White, older, Leave-voting, from less prosperous areas) are more likely to be attuned to the existence of threats, indicating a high degree of diffuse social and political insecurity. By contrast, the threats of foreign interference in UK politics and our democracy, climate change, democratic backsliding, and the risk of a nuclear arms race are seen as critical threats by a more mixed group of Britons – bringing together those more likely to be on the Left of politics with those carrying this more generalised higher threat perception level.

Automation is distinctively a major concern for younger Britons, urban residents and particularly for those living in London, BAME Britons, and Remain voters. Younger Conservative voters and Labour-Leave voters are the most likely to see automation and economic change as a critical threat, presumably, because one group perceives themselves to be adaptable to its impacts, and the other imagines they will have left the workforce before its impacts are felt.

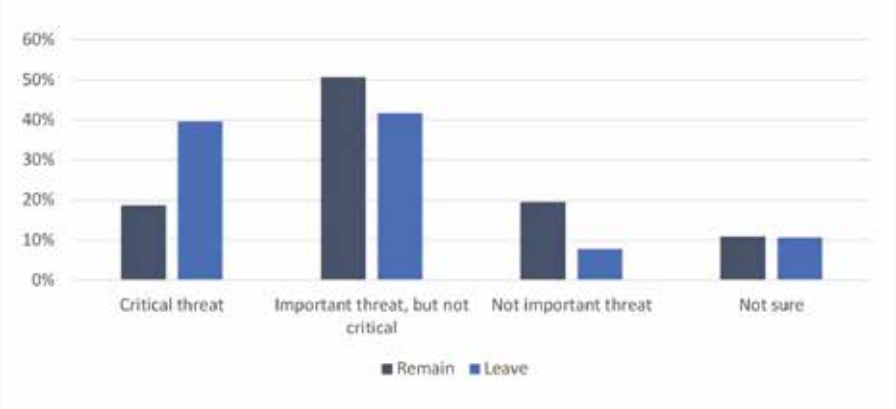
Looking towards demographic distinctions around the full suite of risks, we can see that men (81%) are more likely than women (74%) to view foreign interference in UK politics and democracy as a threat. Men (70%) are also more likely than women (60%) to be concerned about Western democratic backsliding. Over-55s (93%) are significantly more likely than under-35s (72%) to view cyber-attacks as an important or critical threat. Over-55s (80%) are also significantly more likely than under-35s (60%) to view a new international migration crisis as a threat. Graduates are more likely (70%) than school leavers (61%) to view democratic backsliding as a threat. Graduates are also more inclined (88%) than school leavers (81%) to view cyber-attacks as an important threat. These trends can also be seen between ABC1 and the C2DE social grade, but on a less pronounced level.

White Britons show a higher level of concern than BAME Britons across all issues. The starkest of these disparities is in the proportion of White Britons (84%) who view international terrorism as an important threat, compared to 66% of BAME Britons, and the difference between the proportion of White Britons (73%) who view a new international migration crisis as an important threat, relative to the proportion of BAME Britons (55%). In turn, Britons who identify as patriots are the most likely to view cyber-attacks (90%), international terrorism (90%), the rise of China (86%), a nuclear arms race (77%) and a new migration crisis (81%) as threats.

Considering national identity and geographic distinctions, citizens who identify as Scottish (88%) are more likely than those who identify as Welsh (81%) and Northern Irish (73%) to be concerned about cyber-attacks. Citizens who identify as British-only (81%) are more likely to view climate change as a threat than those who identify as English-only (75%) or both British and English (73%). Britons living in rural areas (74%) are somewhat more likely to view migration as a threat than those living in cities (69%), and Britons living in cities (70%) are more likely to be concerned about the break-up of the United Kingdom, compared to those in both towns and rural areas (64%). Residents of Wales are more concerned than the rest of the UK across a range of geopolitical threats - including, but not limited to, cyber-attacks, the rise of China, climate change and foreign interference in UK politics. Residents in the North East are consistently among the least concerned.

Conservative voters show the highest level of concern about the rise of China as a world power (87%) and the risks posed by a new migration crisis (80%). Voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 are particularly attuned to the potential threat of a new migration crisis (82%). However, they are less concerned than voters of other parties about climate change (77%) and democratic backsliding (61%), which preoccupy Labour and Liberal Democrat voters more profoundly. There is a considerable degree of congruence between Conservative Party attitudes and Leave attitudes on these issues. Hence, Leave voters are more concerned about the rise of China as a global power (87%) than Remain voters (79%), as are they more concerned about the prospect of a new international migration crisis (81%) than Remain voters (69%). In turn, Remain voters are more concerned (89%) than Leave voters (76%) about climate change, and the risks posed by democratic backsliding in the West (73% to 60%).

% of Britons who see a global migration crisis as a critical threat in the next ten years



Comparing these findings to the latest available findings (2020) from the Chicago Council in America and the Lowy Institute in Australia, we can see that Britons continue to carry a significantly reduced threat perception profile than their Five Eyes and Anglosphere counterparts. Specifically, looking at public opinion assessing threats as 'critical' rather than just 'important':

- Britons are less likely to be concerned than Americans and Australians about international terrorism. 44% of Britons view international terrorism as a critical threat, compared to 46% of Australians and 55% of Americans.
- Britons are less likely to be concerned than Americans and Australians about the threat of foreign interference in democracy. 32% of Britons see foreign interference in democracy and elections as a critical threat, compared to 42% of Australians and 54% of Americans.
- Britons are less likely than Americans to be concerned about the rise of China. 41% of Britons believe the rise of China as a world power is a critical threat, compared with 55% of Americans.
- Interestingly, Britons are less likely than their Australian and American counterparts to view climate change as a critical threat – likely as a result of the comparatively dramatic recent periods in both nations battling historically damaging bushfires. While a similar proportion of Britons (49%) and Americans (50%) see climate change as a critical threat, the figure rises to 59% amongst Australians.

The Risk of the Break-Up of the United Kingdom

The potential loss of the Union in the break-up of the United Kingdom is seen as an important threat by two-thirds of Britons (66%), including 29% of Britons who regard it as a critical threat. The collapse of the Union is most likely to be perceived as a threat by more affluent Britons living in urban areas, particularly those in London, as well as those more likely to be sensitive to most threats, living in places such as the East of England and Wales. For example, 72% of Londoners are concerned about the break-up of the United Kingdom, compared to 58% of those living in Scotland.

Unsurprisingly, the weakest level of concern about the future of the Union is found by those who identify as Scottish (54%). Citizens who identify as British-only (70%) or both British and English (70%) show a higher level of concern than those who identify as English only (61%). Although both Conservative and Labour voters recognise the risk of the break-up of the United Kingdom, both Lib Dem and Labour voters are more likely to regard it as a 'critical' risk. This is largely because Remain voters are considerably (74%) more likely than Leave voters (60%) to be concerned about the disintegration of the Union.

Do you see the break-up of the Union as a critical threat in the next ten years?

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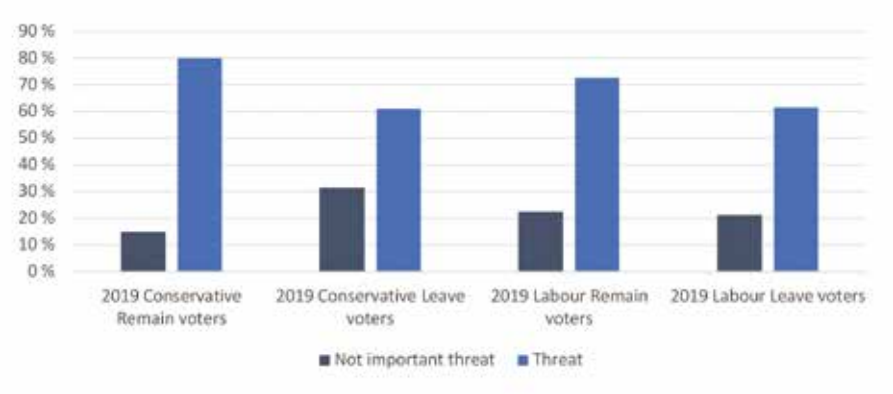

As such, the gaps between Conservative-Remain (80%) and Leave (61%) voters, and Labour-Remain (73%) and Leave (62%) voters, are substantial. Interestingly, Conservative voters under 45 years and Labour voters over 45 years are both more likely to be concerned about the break-up of the Union than older Conservatives and younger Labour voters – a unique coalition that could be brought together in the efforts to re-secure the Union's future.

12.

The UK's Armed Forces and Defensive Capabilities

The UK's Membership of NATO

Overall, the vast majority of Britons (67%) believe that the UK should stay in NATO, compared to just 8% who think the UK should leave. 18% are unsure of whether the UK should retain membership of NATO and 7% have never heard of the organisation. This means a total of a quarter of Britons are unclear about NATO's value and significance to the UK's foreign policy. Moreover, support for membership of NATO varies significantly between different demographic groups, and brings together a mixed bag of foreign policy instincts, including both those with raised threat perceptions, and internationalists – who tend to be on the opposite side of other questions.

Age is a particularly profound factor, with 81% of over-55s supporting the UK's membership of NATO, compared to 53% of under-35s. However, the lack of active support for membership of NATO from under-35s is primarily driven by uncertainty, with 23% not sure whether the UK should be a member of NATO and 15% of under-35s having never heard of the organisation, compared to just a fraction (2%) of over-55s. Men are also more likely than women to both actively support membership of NATO (72% to 62%) and to actively oppose membership of NATO (11% to 6%). As with age dimensions, disparities in levels of support of NATO are therefore driven primarily by differences in levels of understanding of NATO. Understanding of NATO is also particularly low among BAME Britons, with 30% unsure of whether the UK should retain membership of NATO and 18% never having heard of it – capturing almost half of the UK's BAME population.

There are also notable socio-economic disparities in support for NATO, with graduates (72%) more supportive than school leavers (63%) and Britons in the ABC1 social grade (69%) more supportive than those in the C2DE social group (61%), although the differences in active opposition to NATO are negligible and these distinctions can, in large part, once again be explained by disparities in education about NATO's purpose and function. Likely as a result of their more youthful and diverse populations, and the correlations between these demographic factors and reduced support for NATO, we can see that Britons living in cities are more likely to be opposed to the UK's membership of NATO (11%) than those in rural areas (just 6%) – although these figures are very small in the scheme of things.

Should the UK stay in or leave NATO?

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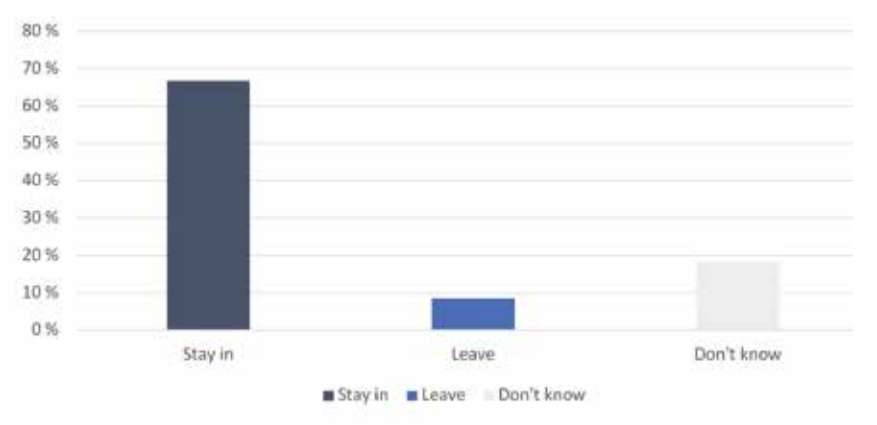

Do you think the UK should stay in or leave NATO?

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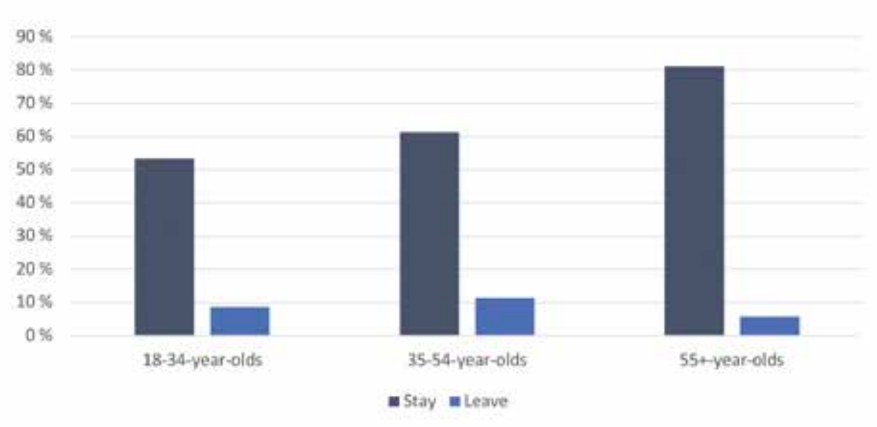

Regionally, the strongest support for membership of NATO can be found among residents in the South West of England (83%), which shows significantly higher levels of support than the next most supportive areas, being Wales (72%), Northern Ireland (72%) and the East Midlands (72%). By contrast, residents in the North West hold the weakest levels of support for the UK's membership of NATO (52%), although this is largely driven by lack of knowledge, as 40% of residents there are either unsure of their responses or have not heard of NATO. Active opposition to membership, however, is therefore strongest in Yorkshire and Humberside (15%).

Liberal Democrat voters are the most supportive of the UK's membership of NATO (86%), followed by Conservative voters (77%) and then Labour voters (73%). Voters that joined the Conservative party in 2019, however, are somewhat less enthusiastic (74%) than Conservative voters as a whole. SNP voters are the least supportive of NATO membership (68%). Support for membership of NATO divides both Conservative and Labour voters along age lines, with Conservative voters aged over 45 (81%) more supportive of the UK's NATO membership than Conservative voters aged under 45 (64%). In turn, Remain voters (78%) are more supportive of NATO membership than Leave voters (73%). These distinctions divide Labour voters more so Conservative voters, with 82% of Labour-Remain voters supporting membership of NATO, compared to 61% of Labour-Leave voters – with only a two-percentage-point difference between Conservative-Leave and Remain voters.

Britons who identify as patriots (76%) are more supportive of NATO than Britons who do not (56%), as are Britons who identify as European (76%), relative to Britons who do not (62%). Citizens who identify as Northern Irish are less supportive of NATO membership (51%) than those who identify as Welsh (59%) and those who identify as Scottish (65%). Citizens who identify as both British and English (57%) are less likely than those who identify as British-only (70%) or English-only (66%) to support NATO membership.

On newspaper readership, Guardian readers are the most likely to be in favour of the UK staying in NATO (80%). Capturing the unusual intersections forged by this question, we can see that both readers of the Telegraph and the Daily Mirror are the most likely to be in favour of leaving NATO.

Upholding the Article 5 Covenant

Our survey also asked Britons who had expressed their support for the UK's NATO membership, whether they would in practice support the UK upholding the Article 5 covenant, which we explained exactly as stated by NATO itself. We found that 86% of Britons consented to uphold this, of whom 45% strongly supported the need to do so. The proportion willing to accept this responsibility as part of our membership expressed here is significantly higher than the proportion who, in our 2020 survey, expressed their willingness to support the terms of Article 5 – without the link to NATO having been set out. This emphasises the importance of connecting the story of our membership of international organisations to rights and responsibilities as, if the benefits are able to be clearly recognised, the commitments in turn are better able to be upheld with consent.

Although support for compliance with Article 5 is high across all demographics, men (90%) are more likely to support compliance than women (82%), as are over-55s (90%) relative to under-35s (80%). The most interesting variation across both these demographic categories is the strength of support, with men significantly more likely to 'strongly' support providing troops if a NATO ally is attacked (54%) than women (35%), and over-55s significantly more likely to do the same (49%) compared to under-35s (33%). Similarly, White Britons (87%) are also more likely to support compliance with Article 5 than BAME Britons (76%), who are less enthusiastic about any form of military intervention. Distinctions around socio-economic factors are negligible.

Support for providing assistance if a NATO ally is attacked is strongest among residents in Northern Ireland (96%) and the East Midlands (96%), and lowest in the North East (75%). Furthermore, despite low levels of support for NATO membership, citizens who identify as Northern Irish (94%) are more supportive of adhering to Article 5 than those who identify as Welsh (83%) and those who identify as Scottish (83%). Citizens who identify as British-only are also more likely to support adhering to Article 5 (88%), than those who identify as English-only (85%) or both British and English (82%).

Looking to the political parties, SNP voters are the least supportive of fulfilling Article 5 (80%), followed by Labour voters (85%). Conservative voters (90%) and Liberal Democrat voters (89%) are the most supportive. Voters that switched to the Conservatives in 2019 are as supportive as other Conservative voters (90%) – reinforced in the fact that Labour-Leave voters are significantly more likely to support adhering to Article 5 (95%) than Labour-Remain voters (83%). Curiously, given the disproportionately high degree of support for NATO membership amongst older Britons, Conservative voters under 45 years of age (93%) are more supportive of upholding the Article 5 covenant than Britons over 45 (88%) – although this likely captures older Britons' relative anxieties about military intervention.

The UK's Armed Forces and Scenarios for Military Intervention

Our 2021 survey set out some of the security-focused and humanitarian activities undertaken by the UK's defence forces, and then asked Britons for their views on the deployment of these forces, and the circumstances in which they would support military interventionism. Less than a fifth of Britons (18%) say that they trust the Government to take decisions on military intervention at their own discretion. The most popular position, shared by 39% of Britons, is that the UK defence forces should only be deployed in three scenarios: a direct attack on British soil, a direct attack on British assets abroad, or in the case of genocide or a large-scale humanitarian crisis. A further 15% only support military interventionism when there is a direct attack on British soil or British assets, and 10% say that they would only support deployment in the case of genocide or a large-scale humanitarian crisis.

Which of the statements below best describes your thoughts towards British military action abroad?

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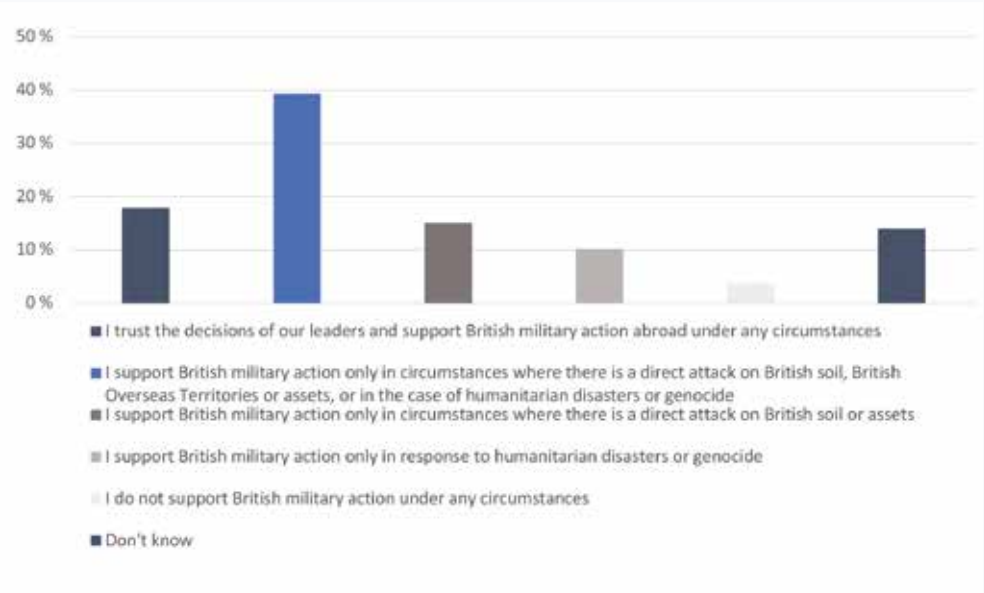

When presented with both the conflict-driven and humanitarian aspects of their work, the proportion of the population completely opposed to the deployment of the armed forces is incredibly small. Just 4% of Britons oppose all forms of deployment, although 14% of the population are unsure about their preferences. We can conclude that the British people generally support a conditional form of interventionism, with the need to respond to direct attacks on British territory or assets and the responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance likely to be persuasive.

Men (22%) are more likely than women (14%) to support British military action abroad under any circumstances, while women are more likely to be unsure of when they would support military action (18%) compared to men (10%). Age presents a somewhat more complicated picture. Older Britons (88%) are the most likely to support military action in at least some circumstances, but the working-age population (ie. 35-54-year-olds) are the most likely to support military action in all circumstances (21%). Levels of uncertainty are higher among under-35s (19%), who are much more likely to be unsure of their position than over-55s (8%).

Levels of uncertainty are also particularly high among BAME Britons (23%), and BAME Britons are also significantly less inclined (66%) than White Britons (84%) to support military action in at least some circumstances, and more likely to never support military action (11%) than White Britons (3%). On a socio-economic level, Britons from the ABC1 social grade (85%) are more minded to support British military action in at least some circumstances than Britons from the C2DE social grade (77%). In turn, graduates are more likely to support military action to address humanitarian crises than school leavers, who are more likely (17%) than graduates (12%) to support military action only when there is an attack on British soil or assets.

Regionally, the levels of overall support for military action abroad vary from 86% (Wales, West Midlands and East of England) to 78% (Yorkshire and Humberside). Residents of Scotland are the least likely to support military action, regardless of the circumstances (10%), while those living in Wales (26%) and the East of England (24%) are the most inclined to support military action amongst all circumstances. Britons living in cities (14%) are also less likely to support military action regardless of circumstances, relative to those living in towns (20%).

Which of the statements below best describes your thoughts towards British military action abroad?

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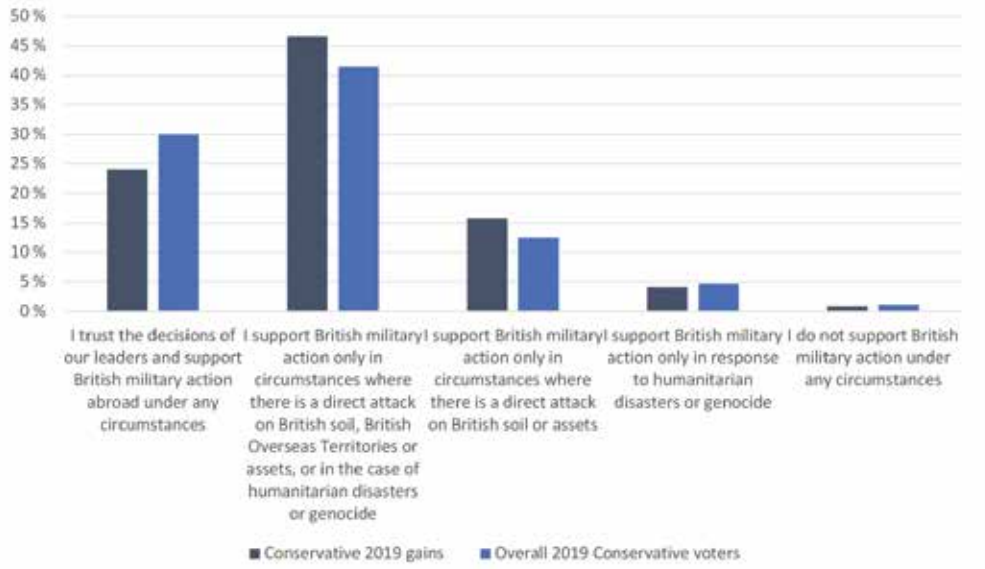

Conservative voters are the most likely to support military action in at least some circumstances (89%), followed by Liberal Democrat voters (87%). Labour voters (81%) and SNP voters (78%) are less likely to support military interventionism. The largest plurality across all parties would support British military action only when there is a direct attack on British soil/assets or in the case of humanitarian disasters. However, a large plurality of Conservative voters would support military action regardless of circumstances (30%) – perhaps related to this group's currently high levels of trust in the UK Government on foreign policy more broadly. However, voters that switched to the Conservative party in 2019 are less likely than Conservative voters as a whole to support military action regardless of the circumstances (24%).

Interestingly, there are no distinct variations in opinions on military action between Remain and Leave voters overall, although Labour-Leave voters (17%) are the most likely not to support military action under any circumstances, while Labour-Remain voters are the least (9%). Labour voters aged under 45 are also more likely to oppose all military action (19%, to 9% of Labour voters over 45). Again, this question appears to capture something specific about the Leave-Remain and age-based tribes in the Labour Party, as representing the extreme positions of the electorate and therefore being more difficult to reconcile than the positions within the Conservative Party.

Britons who identify as patriots (23%) are particularly likely to support British military action, regardless of the circumstances, relative to those who do not identify as patriots (11%). In turn, Britons who do not identify as patriots (17%) are more likely than patriots (7%) to support military action only in response to humanitarian disasters. This makes clear that a primary driver of reticence towards military interventionism lies in the sphere of conflict. National identities also intersect prominently on this question with international identities. More than a fifth (22%) of those who identify only as English would only support British military action when there is an attack on British soil or assets, compared to 17% of those who identify as both British and English and 10% of those who identify as British-only. In turn, Britons who identify as Welsh are more likely to support military action in at least some circumstances (91%), than those who identify as Scottish (85%) or Northern Irish (78%).

Turning to newspaper readership, and we can see the dynamics at play between political inclinations, national identities and geographical prosperity in the fact that 24% of Daily Mirror readers support British military action regardless of circumstances, compared to 13% of The Guardian's readers. In turn, 18% of Telegraph readers support military action abroad only in the case of a direct attack on British soil – ie. not in the case of humanitarian crises – compared to 13% of Financial Times readers and 10% of The Guardian readers. This is explained by the fact that The Guardian's readers are more than twice as likely (20%) to support British military action only in response to genocide or humanitarian disasters, compared to the next most likely, readers of The Times (8%).

Rationale for Conditional or Withheld Support for Military Interventionism

Among the large group of Britons – a clear majority – who do not believe that the UK should always, without question, take an active role in world affairs, the most popular rationale for their caution is that they do not want the UK to be drawn into conflicts (45%) – implying that these conflicts are not our own – followed by a belief that the track record of UK involvement abroad is bad (35%). The popularity of these responses emphasises the long tail of the Iraq War, which continues to cast a spectre across Britons' enthusiasm for the deployment of the armed forces, specifically the reticence pertaining to conflicts and disputes that feel ambiguous and/or not directly related to the UK's interests. Other concerns raised around UK military intervention were that the UK should not tell other countries what to do (28%), that the funds compelled by such actions could otherwise be spent at home (28%), and that damage could be inflicted on the UK's international reputation (16%).

Men (18%) are more likely than women (13%) to reject an active role in world affairs because they are concerned that the UK's track history of involvement is bad and over concerns about the impact on the UK's international reputation (39% to 31%) . Graduates (39%) are also more likely than school leavers to cite concerns about the UK's track record (32%), as are Britons from the ABC1 social grade (39%) relative to Britons from the C2DE social grade (26%). Concerns over the UK's track record are also more common among residents in cities (38%) than in towns (31%). This suggests there is a socio-economic element to the tendency

For those who do not always think the UK should take an active part in world affairs - what is driving your hesitation?

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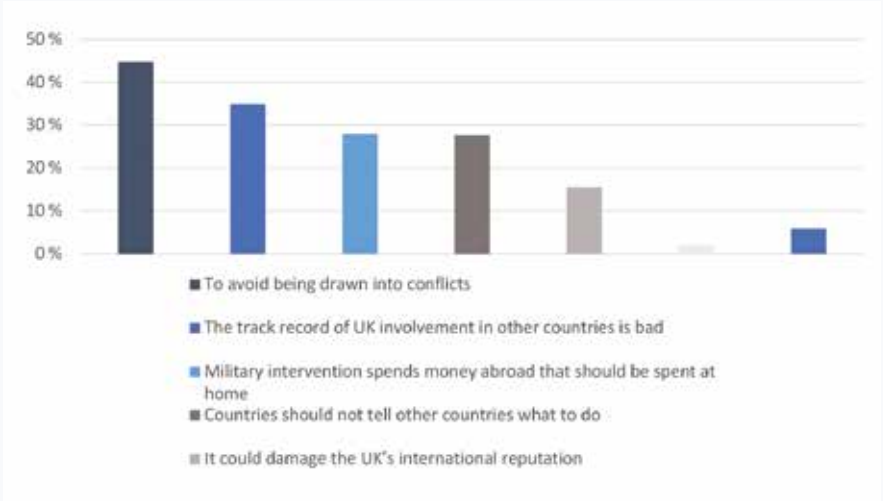

to emphasise the weight of history. Britons from the ABC1 social grade (47%) are also more likely than Britons from C2DE backgrounds (41%) to be concerned about being drawn into conflicts. And just 14% of citizens who identify as English are concerned about the impact of interventions on the UK's reputation, compared to 25% of citizens who identify as both British and English. Britons who identify as English-only are also less likely than those who identify as British-only to be concerned about the UK being drawn into conflicts.

There are significant disparities to be observed between age groups around their reasoning for believing the UK should not always take an active part in world affairs. The largest plurality of under-35s are averse to involvement based on the UK's track record (47%), while the most commonly cited reason for over-55s (49%) is to avoid being drawn into conflicts. These distinctions indicate that older Britons are more concerned about the escalating costs – in all senses – of warfare, while younger Britons are motivated by more abstract principles. Under-35s (22%) are also less likely than over-55s to be concerned that the UK should not tell other countries what to do (31%). However, under-35s (20%) are more likely to be concerned about the impact on the UK's reputation than over-55s (14%).

The disparities based on ethnicity around questions of military interventionism remain significant, and present some fascinating findings. BAME Britons are more likely to express reticence regarding the prospect of UK military interventionism on the whole, and their motivations for doing so also appear to be distinct. For example, BAME Britons (42%) are more likely than White Britons (28%) to cite concerns that military spending abroad could be spent at home. BAME Britons (60%) are also more likely than White Britons (45%) to cite concerns about being drawn into conflicts. This emphasises that the 'principled opposition' to UK military interventionism is in fact not overwhelmingly driven by BAME Britons who may hold direct family links to areas of potential conflict, but by younger, more affluent, White Britons.

Residents in the South West are the most concerned that involvement in world affairs may cause the UK to be led into conflicts (52%), and residents in Wales (36%) and the North East (36%) are the least. Concerns that military intervention spends money abroad that could be spent at home are highest among residents in the East Midlands (36%) and lowest in the West Midlands (22%). Residents in the East Midlands (47%), Wales (45%) and London (44%) are more than twice as likely to believe that the UK's track record involvement abroad means it should not always take an active part in world affairs, than Britons in Yorkshire and Humberside (19%).

Looking at political variations in the rationale citizens express towards their concern about the UK's actions on the world stage, we can see that SNP voters are the most concerned about the UK's track record in world affairs (59%) and Conservative voters are the least concerned (17%). By contrast, Conservative voters are the most likely to think money could be better spent in the UK instead (37%) and that the UK should not tell other countries what to do (32%). Voters who switched to the Conservatives at the 2019 General Election are particularly likely to be concerned about money being spent abroad at the expense of spending at home (41%).

Despite these areas of diversity of opinion, it is true that 'being drawn into conflicts' is the primary concern of both Remain and Leave voters. However, a large plurality of Remain voters (43%) are concerned about the UK's track record internationally, while the largest proportion of Leave voters are concerned that money could be spent in the UK instead (36%). Labour-Leave voters (58%) are particularly concerned about being drawn into conflicts (58%) relative to Labour-Remain voters (43%). The age disparities in views on this issue are more distinct among Conservative voters than Labour voters. The biggest disparity is over whether spending could be better spent in the UK, which 39% of Conservative voters over 45 identify as a concern, compared to 26% of Conservative voters under 45.

Britons who identify as European (45%) are more likely than Britons who do not (24%) to be concerned about the UK's track record of interventions, while Britons who do not identify as European (35%) are more concerned than Britons that do (23%) about spending money that

could be spent in the UK. Britons who identify as both British and English are the most likely national identity group to be concerned about spending money that could be spent in the UK (30%), to believe that the UK should not tell other countries what to do (33%), and be concerned interventions may damage the UK's reputation (25%).

Turning to newspaper readership, we can see that Daily Mail readers are the most likely to think that the UK should not always take an active part in world affairs in order to avoid conflicts overseas (52%). Readers of The Guardian (59%) and the Financial Times (50%) are the most likely to believe that the UK shouldn't take an active role in world affairs because the UK has a bad track record of involvement in conflicts. Readers of the Daily Mail (24%) are the least likely to be concerned by the UK's track record. Rather, 34% of Daily Mail readers believe that the UK shouldn't be involved in world affairs as the money spent doing so would be better spent on domestic issues. Finally, 25% of readers of the Daily Express and 24% of readers of the Daily Mirror believe that the UK should not tell other countries what to do, and so should not get involved in world affairs.

13.

Climate Change

The UK's International Leadership on Climate Change

The UK Government has made tackling climate change a central pillar of its global leadership strategy, and will be hosting the Cop26 Summit in 2021. Our survey asked Britons whether or not they support the UK taking on this leadership role, particularly in light of the fact that it will mean the British people also needing to lead from the front in terms of climate action. Overall, we find an overwhelming degree of support for the UK's ambitions, with 68% of Britons supporting the UK taking a global leadership role on climate change, including 39% who strongly support this role. Just 5% of Britons oppose the UK leading internationally on tackling climate change.

The gender differences in support for tackling climate change are negligible, but age differences are slightly more significant. Despite the image of a youthful climate action movement, it is in fact older Britons who are the most likely to 'strongly support' a global leadership role for the UK (44%), compared to 35% of under-35s. Moreover, although Londoners and more affluent and educated Britons are the most inclined to strongly support the UK's global leadership on climate change, it is true that residents across many of the nation's less prosperous areas are also enthusiastic. This issue is clearly going through a process of becoming a defining part of national identity – although as noted earlier in the questions on pride, it is not yet understood as a foreign policy instrument.

Britons in the ABC1 social grade (72%) are more likely to support leading on climate change than those in lower social grades (60%). Similar, but more substantive, trends can be identified based on education levels, with graduates (74%) more likely to support climate leadership than school leavers (63%). Graduates (48%) are also significantly more likely than school leavers (32%) to strongly support the UK's leading role. Interestingly, while White Britons (69%) are, overall, more likely than BAME Britons (63%) to support taking a leading role on climate change, BAME Britons (45%) are more likely than White Britons (38%) to 'strongly' support this. Also of note, and likely to reflect the distinctions in age on this issue, Britons living in cities are also less supportive of taking an active role on climate change (65%), relative to Britons in rural areas (69%) and towns (70%).

Residents of Wales (78%) and the South West (71%) are the most likely to support the UK leading on climate action, in contrast to Northern Ireland, where this prospect receives support from just 58% of the population. Londoners are most emphatic in their support for the UK taking a leading role on climate change, with 49% strongly supporting this strategy,

Do you support the UK taking a leading international role in tackling climate change?

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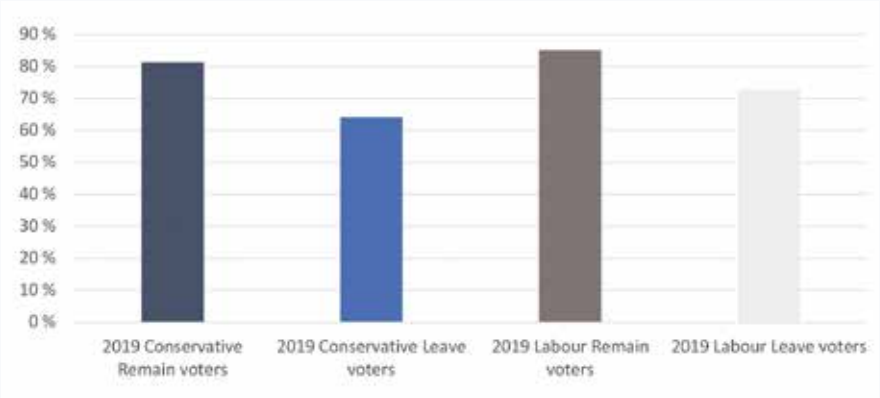

compared to 30% in Northern Ireland. Residents in Northern Ireland are also the most likely to actively oppose taking a leading role on climate change (13%). The outsized level of support for the UK's global leadership on climate action in London compared to other UK cities, emphasises the complex dynamics in play between socio-economic status, ethnicity, education and international outlook.

In line with regional variations, citizens who identify as Northern Irish are less likely to support the UK taking a leading role on climate change (53%), than those who identify as English (65%) and those who identify as Welsh (65%). As ever, the British identity appears most closely correlated with an international outlook. 71% of those who identify as British-only support taking a leading role on climate change, compared to 66% of those who identify as English-only and 62% of those who identify as both British and English.

Liberal Democrat voters (84%) are the most supportive voters towards the UK taking a leading role on climate change, followed by Labour voters (80%), SNP voters (70%) and Conservative voters (68%) – despite the UK's climate leadership having been heavily promoted by Conservative Governments over the past decade and this policy being a central plank of the current Government's strategy. And particularly concerning for the Conservative Party is the fact that the voters who switched to support the party in the 2019 General Election are less likely (66%) than Conservative voters overall to support the UK's leadership in this area.

This reflects the considerable differences captured in EU Referendum voting patterns. Remain voters (83%) are more supportive than Leave voters of UK leadership on climate change (65%) and Labour-Remain voters (85%) and Conservative-Remain voters (81%) are more closely aligned on this issue than they are to Labour-Leave voters (73%) and Conservative-Leave voters (64%). A sweeping education campaign, to help render this issue more inclusive and to ensure all Britons recognise a stake in our leadership and our success, will be urgently needed.

Britons who identify as global citizens (80%) are more likely than Britons who do not (58%) to support taking a lead role on climate change, as are Britons who identify as Europeans (79%) relative to Britons who do not (56%). In terms of national identity, Britons who identify as Northern Irish are the least likely to support taking a leading role on climate change (53%) and Britons who identify as 'British-only' are the most (71%). Among newspaper readers, Guardian readers are the most supportive of UK leadership on climate change (88%) and Sun readers are the least (63%). However, Britons who do not read newspapers are less likely to support UK leadership on this issue (60%) than any of the newspaper readerships.

Individual Actions on Climate Change

In addition to their support for the UK's global leadership on environmental action, Britons appear to be willing to make some significant changes to their lifestyles in order to individually contribute to action against climate change. Their enthusiasm appears to be heavily shaped by those campaigns that have received the greatest degree of media and political attention.

As such, a majority of Britons commit themselves to reducing plastic use (60%) and minimising food waste (55%), and 43% also commit to purchasing fewer clothes. Beyond these, a wide range of measures receive support from around a fifth to a quarter of the population – including using more public transport (25%), paying more for sustainable products (23%), giving up their car or transitioning to an electric vehicle (20%). Britons are least willing to spend more time examining climate policies of the companies they use (17%) and to donate to conservation charities (15%).

14% of Britons would not commit to any of the proposed actions to individually contribute to tackling climate change. These Britons tend to be younger, living in urban areas, are twice as likely to have voted Leave in the EU Referendum, and are disproportionately from BAME backgrounds.

13. Climate Change

Women are dramatically more likely than men to commit to individual action to tackling climate change – with the gaps most prominent around questions of changing consumer behaviour, eating less meat and reducing energy consumption. For example, women (51%) are 17 percentage points more likely than men (34%) to be willing to buy fewer clothes and women (66%) are 12 percentage points more likely than men (54%) to be willing to reduce their plastic usage. It is unclear how to interpret these disparities, but it is worth noting that, on almost every other question in our survey, women are consistently less certain or forthright in their opinions, but there appears to be a degree of issues resonance on the subject of climate change that transcends hesitancy and a lack of confidence on international affairs more generally. There is some speculation that women's disproportionate responsibilities in terms of caring roles, and their greater degree of empathy and consciousness towards both social harm and social well-being, elicits a tendency to be concerned about future-focused risks that could bear costs on communities. However, this is an area that could benefit from some further investigation.

As in the question about the UK's global leadership on climate change, it is in fact older Britons who are much more likely than younger Britons to agree to take personal action. Over-55s (10%) are less likely than under-35s (18%) to state that they would not commit to any of the actions, and are also more willing to commit to the majority of actions listed, than their younger counterparts. In particular, over-55s (75%) are 30 percentage points more likely than under-35s (45%) to be willing to reduce their use of plastic. Over-55s (69%) are also 30 percentage points more likely than under-35s (39%) to be willing to reduce their food waste. The exceptions are volunteering – which may require a youthful degree of energy – and committing to examining the policies of companies they interact with – which may appear complicated and technical.

Socio-economic distinctions are relatively insignificant for the more popular measures to tackle climate change, but they begin to emerge quite prominently when Britons are asked whether they would pay more for more sustainable food, clothes and other products, or if they are willing to relinquish their car or transition to an electric vehicle. Britons in the C2DE

What actions would you be personally willing to undertake to help the UK meet its targets and ambitions on tackling climate change?

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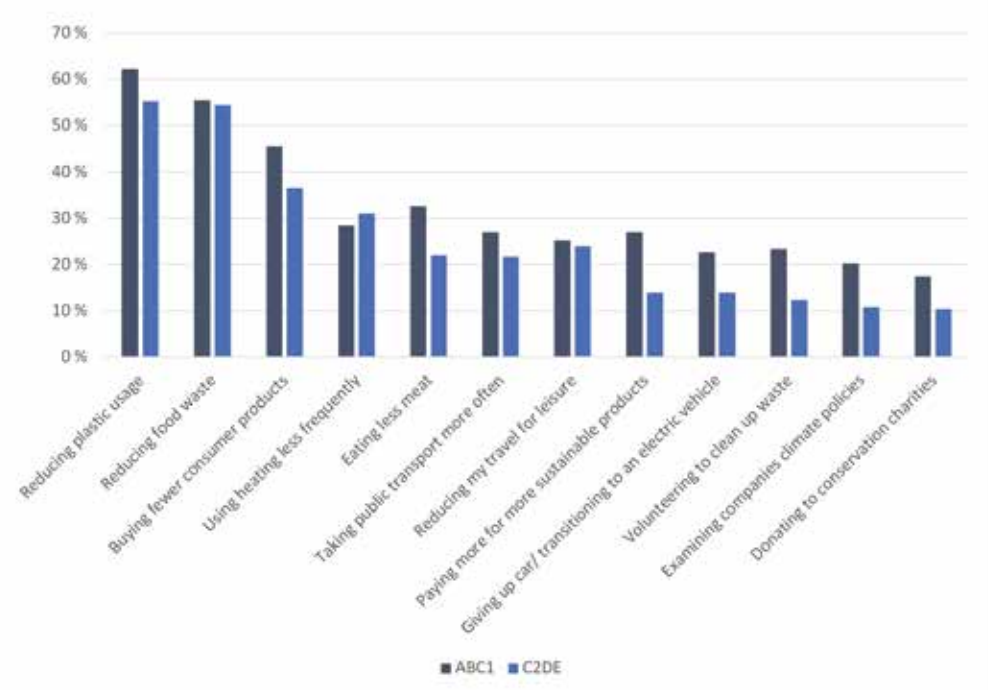

social grade (18%) are more likely to be unwilling to undertake any of the actions proposed than those in the ABC1 social grade (12%). They are particularly unwilling, or perhaps unable, to commit to actions that incur a financial cost. Britons in the C2DE social category (14%) are 13 percentage points less likely than those in the ABC1 social grade (27%) to pay more for sustainable products.

Similar disparities can be identified based on education level, and school leavers (18%) are 11 percentage points less likely to be willing to pay more for sustainable food than graduates (29%). This highlights the need for the Government and campaign groups to balance their narratives around individual action, to ensure all Britons are able to feel a part of the solution – even those who may need greater financial support to make the transition to a 'greener' lifestyle.

Regional distinctions become important around questions of transport. For example, Londoners are enthusiastic about using public transport more often (43%) – in part reflecting values, but also the practicalities of London's extensive transport network. More broadly, residents of Wales are the most willing to take action in a range of ways, including reducing their use of plastics (75%), reducing food waste (71%) and buying fewer consumer products (56%), although they are the least willing to give up their cars or move to electric vehicles (11%). Support for eating less meat is strongest in the South West (35%) and Scotland (34%). Residents of the West Midlands are the most likely to be unwilling to undertake any of the actions (18%) and are the least willing to donate to conservation charities (8%). However, they are the most likely to be willing to give up their car or transition to an electric vehicle (24%).

Support for buying more sustainable products is strongest among residents in London (28%), followed by Yorkshire and Humberside (27%) and Scotland (26%). Residents in Northern Ireland are the least willing to buy fewer consumer goods (21%), use the heating in the house less frequently (23%), pay more for sustainable products (12%), volunteer to clean up waste (8%) and to spend time examining climate policies of the companies they use (6%). Support for reducing travel for leisure is strongest among residents in the South East (31%), followed by Wales (30%) and Northern Ireland (30%). Londoners are the most willing to spend time examining climate policies of companies they use (23%), followed by the South East (20%) and the South West (20%).

Britons in cities are less likely to be willing to reduce food waste (47%) than Britons in towns (59%) and Britons in rural areas (60%). They are also less likely to be willing to reduce their use of plastic (56%), than those in towns (60%) and rural areas (65%). Turning to ethnicity, BAME Britons are twice as likely (28%) to be unwilling to commit to any of the individual climate actions than White Britons (13%). They are less willing (48%) to reduce food waste than White Britons (57%) and less likely (21%) than White Britons (30%) to be willing to use the heating less frequently. However, BAME Britons (34%) are more willing than White Britons (24%) to use public transport more often. These responses should be viewed in the context of the aforementioned shaping effects of socio-economic and regional factors, although there may be other influences at play.

Britons who identify as global citizens and Britons who identify as European are more willing to engage in every proposed action to tackle climate change than Britons who do not view themselves as global citizens and/or Europeans. Britons who identify as Scottish are more willing than those who identify as Welsh or Northern Irish to undertake the majority of the actions suggested, and citizens who identify as British-only are more likely to undertake the majority of actions proposed than those who identify as both British and English or English-only.

With few exceptions, Conservative voters are the least likely to undertake any of the proposed actions to tackle climate change than voters for any political party. And once again, voters that joined the Conservative Party in 2019 are particularly disinclined to take

individual actions on climate change. Liberal Democrats and SNP voters are the most willing to take the appropriate action on climate change. Remain voters are more willing than Leave voters to undertake all the actions proposed, and Remain voters (34%) are 19 percentage points more likely than Leave voters (15%) to be willing to pay more for sustainable products.

Interestingly, the disparities in the actions Conservative-Remain voters and Conservative-Leave voters are willing to take are relatively small. The exception to this is giving up their car which Conservative-Remain voters (24%) are twice as likely as Conservative-Leave voters (12%) to be willing to do. The issue of transport appears to be one of the most pertinent in terms of capturing distinctions in both socio-economic security and 'world views'. However, the distinctions between Labour-Remain and Labour-Leave voters are more consistently pronounced. Labour-Remain voters are significantly more likely than Labour-Leave voters to be willing to take actions around climate change, for example, Labour-Remain voters (37%) are 16 percentage points more likely than Labour-Leave voters (19%) to be willing to pay more for sustainable products. It is Labour voters aged over 45 years who are particularly enthusiastic about climate action.

With the exception of volunteering to clean up waste, The Guardian's readers are the readership most willing to undertake all actions proposed. Readers of the Financial Times are the most willing to volunteer to clean up waste (31%), followed by Telegraph (28%), Daily Mirror (28%) and Guardian readers (28%). With the exceptions of reducing plastic usage and reducing food waste, The Sun readers are the least likely to commit to each of the actions. They are also the most likely to answer that they would do 'none of the above' (17%). Daily Express readers are the least likely to be willing to reduce plastic usage (55%), compared to 75% of Guardian readers. Daily Express readers (32%) are also the least likely to be willing to reduce food waste, and Guardian readers (63%) are the most inclined to do so.

Thank you for reading this report.

The BFPG will continue to monitor these evolving trends and lead the UK's research into public opinion on foreign policy and international affairs. Please visit our website at www.bfpg.co.uk and subscribe to our mailing list to keep up-to-date with our latest research.

The British Foreign Policy Group is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to advancing the UK's global influence, at a crucial time in the nation's modern history. To achieve this, we produce dynamic events and high-quality research, and facilitate networks amongst stakeholders with a vested interest in Britain's international engagement.

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