

The state of the political landscape – where we started, where we are, where we may end up

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Where we were...

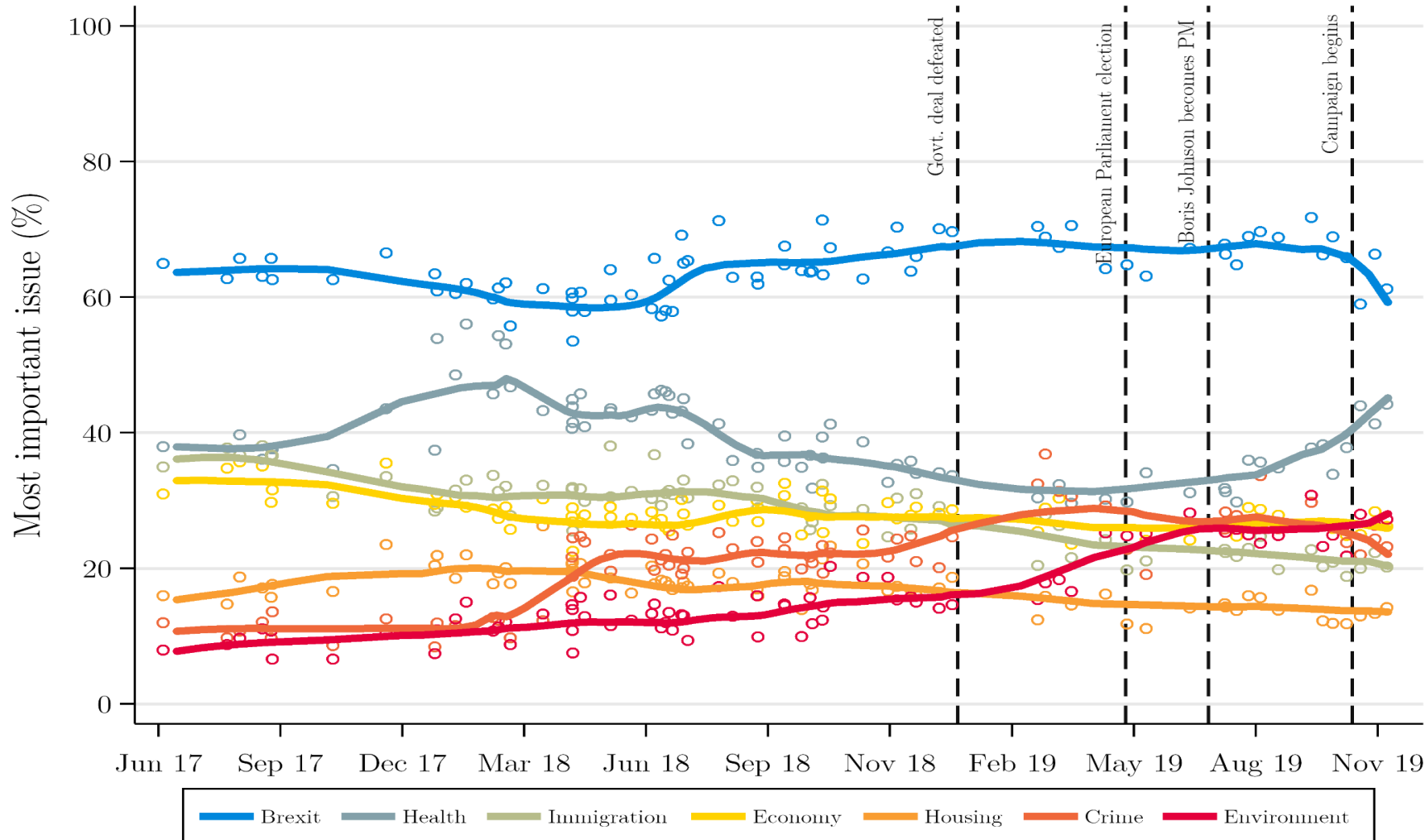


2019 in figures

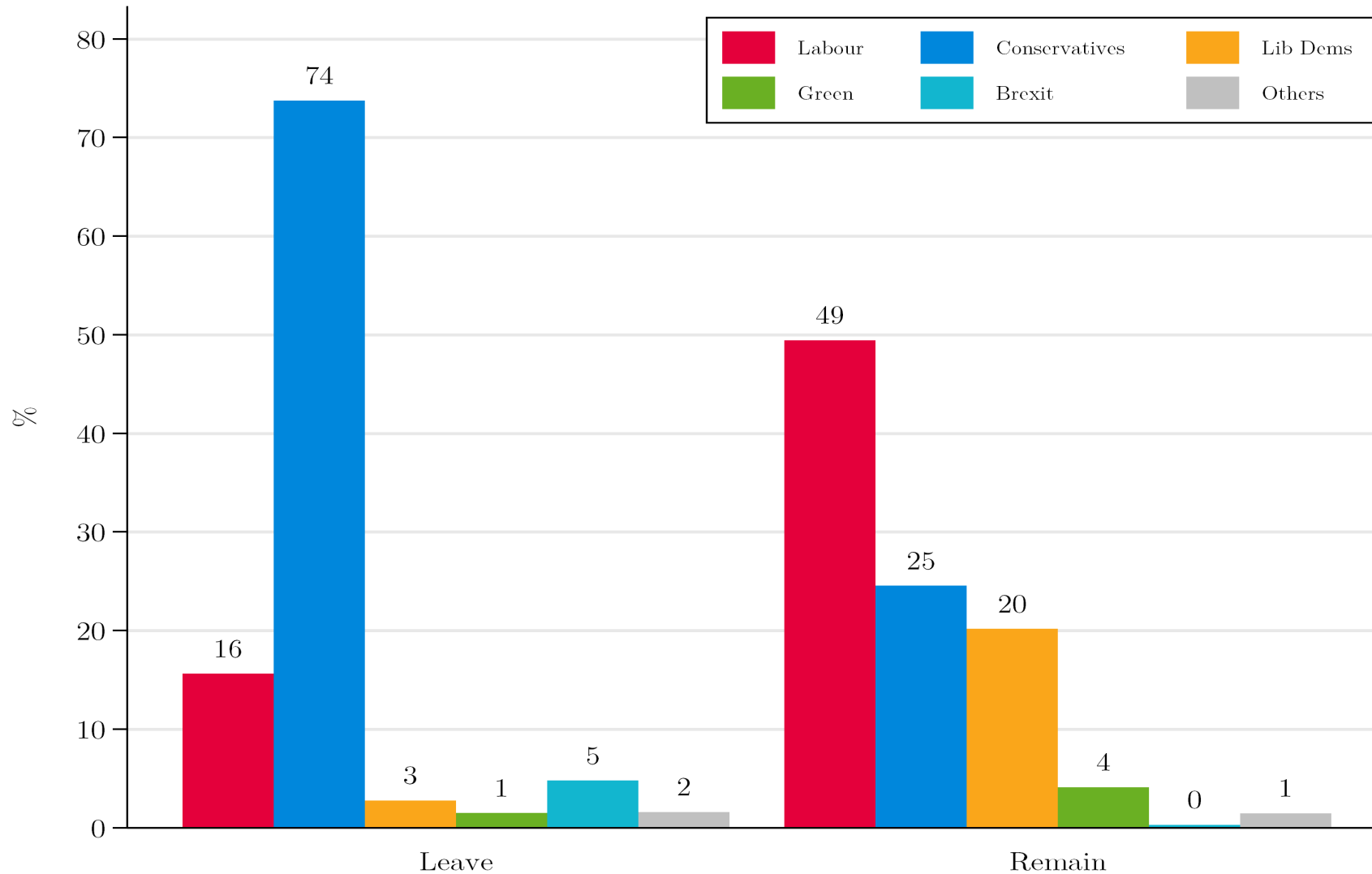
Party	Votes (change)	Seats (change)	Seat share (change)
Conservatives	43.6% (+1.2)	365 (+48)	56.2% (+7.4)
Labour	32.1% (-7.9)	202 (-60)	31.1% (-9.2)
Scottish National Party	3.9% (+0.8)	48 (+13)	7.4% (+2.0)
Liberal Democrats	11.6% (+4.2)	11 (-1)	1.7% (-0.2)
Greens	2.6% (+1.1)	1 (n.c.)	0.2% (n.c.)
Plaid Cymru	0.5% (n.c.)	4 (n.c.)	0.6% (n.c.)
Brexit Party	2.0% (+2.0)	0	0%

18 seats were also won by Northern Irish parties, but Northern Ireland is not covered in most British polling so won't be discussed further here

1. A Brexit election: Brexit dominated the last Parliament from start to finish...



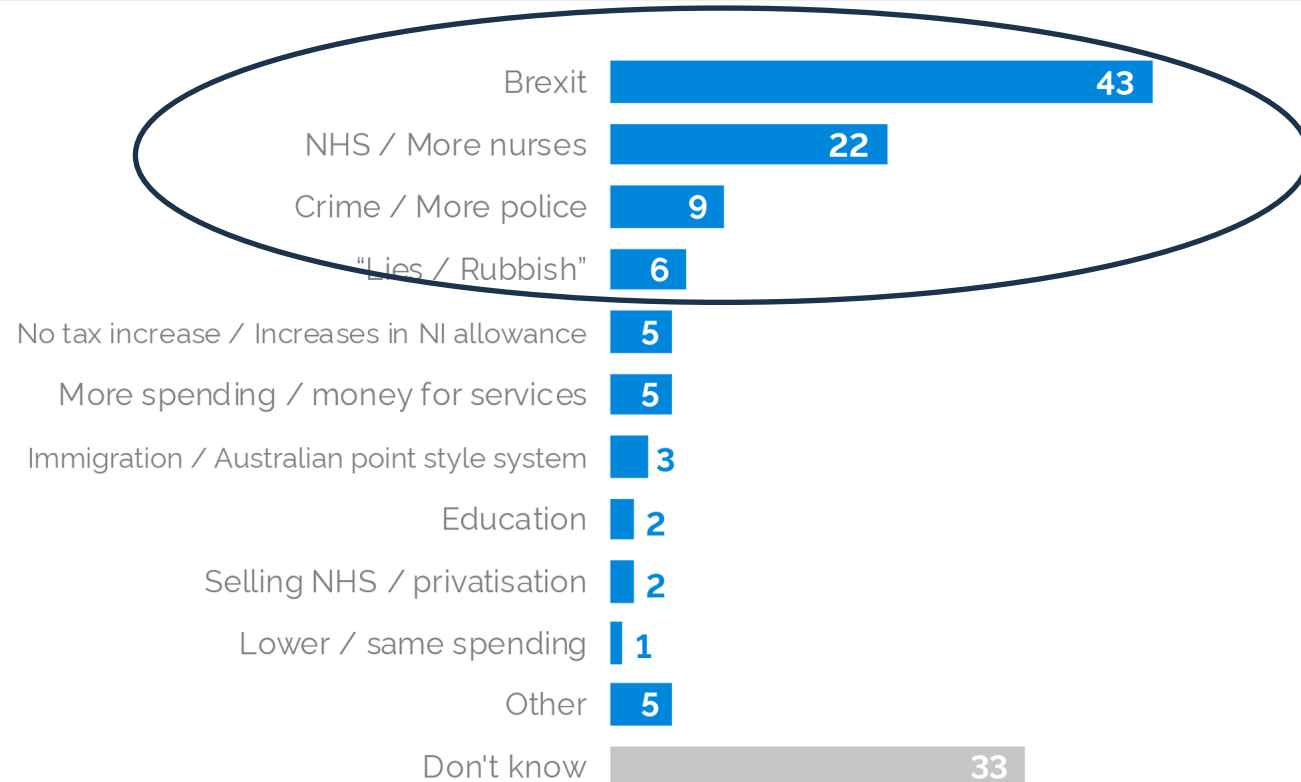
...and “Get Brexit Done” proved to be a winning message with Leave voters...



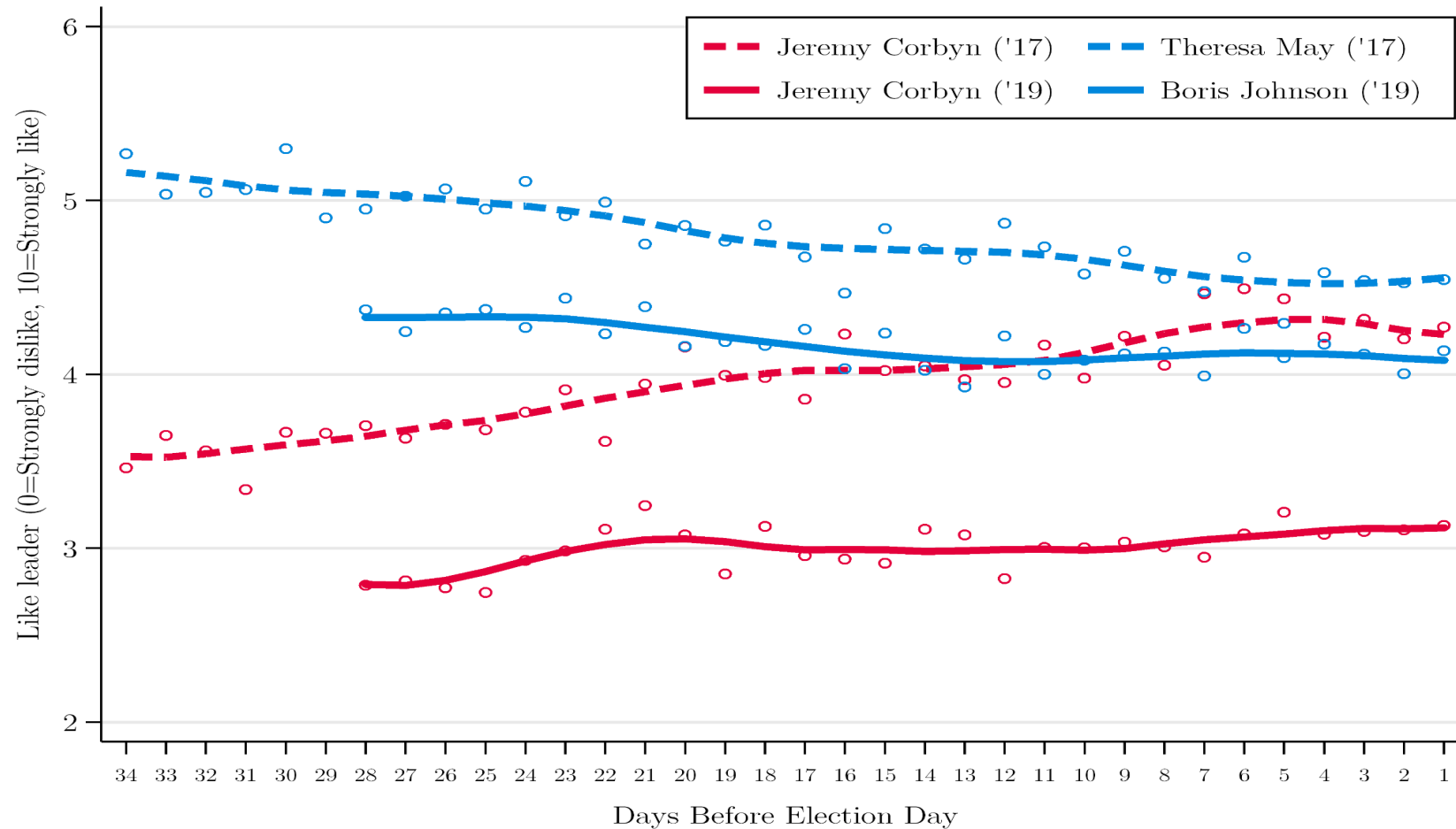
...but not just a Brexit election: Johnson's manifesto promised more spending than any Conservative manifesto since Macmillan. Voters noticed!

What has the public noticed from the Conservative manifesto?

From what you've seen or heard, what were the MAIN policies that the Conservative Party put forward in their manifesto? %
Respondents answered in their own words, which we have categorised below

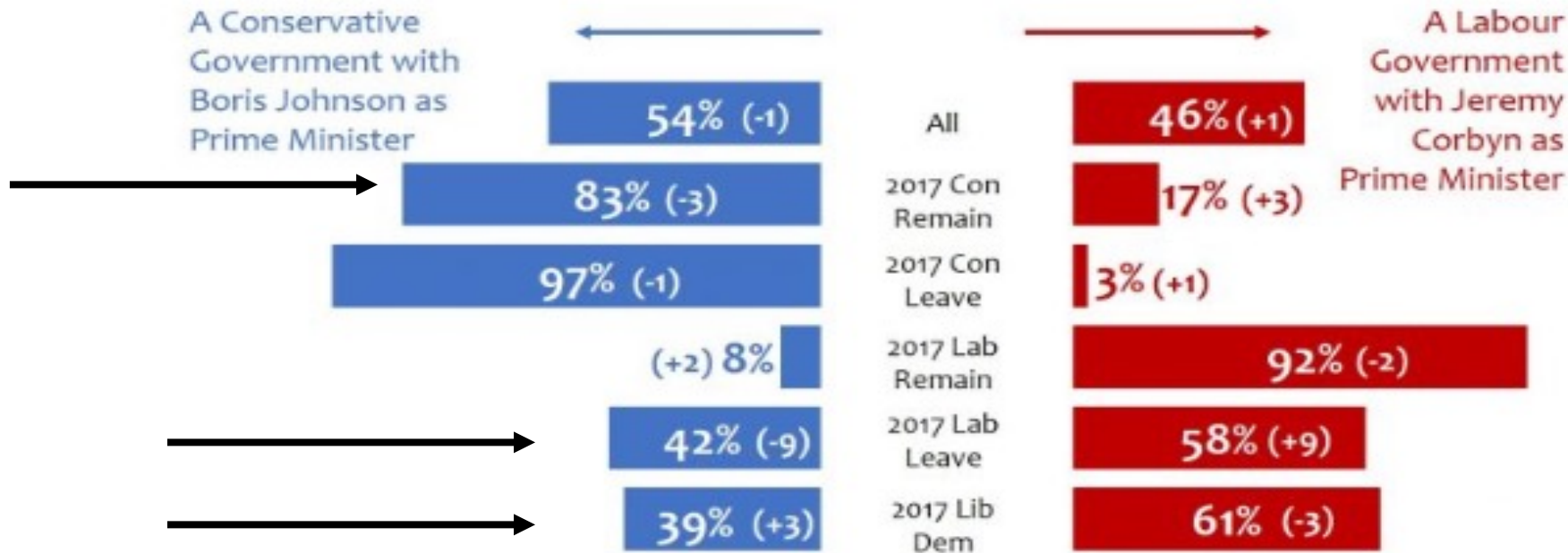


Johnson was never popular – he was weaker than May throughout the 2019 campaign. But Corbyn had collapsed.



Corbyn's unpopularity was decisive with two groups: Labour Leavers, and Con/LD Remainers

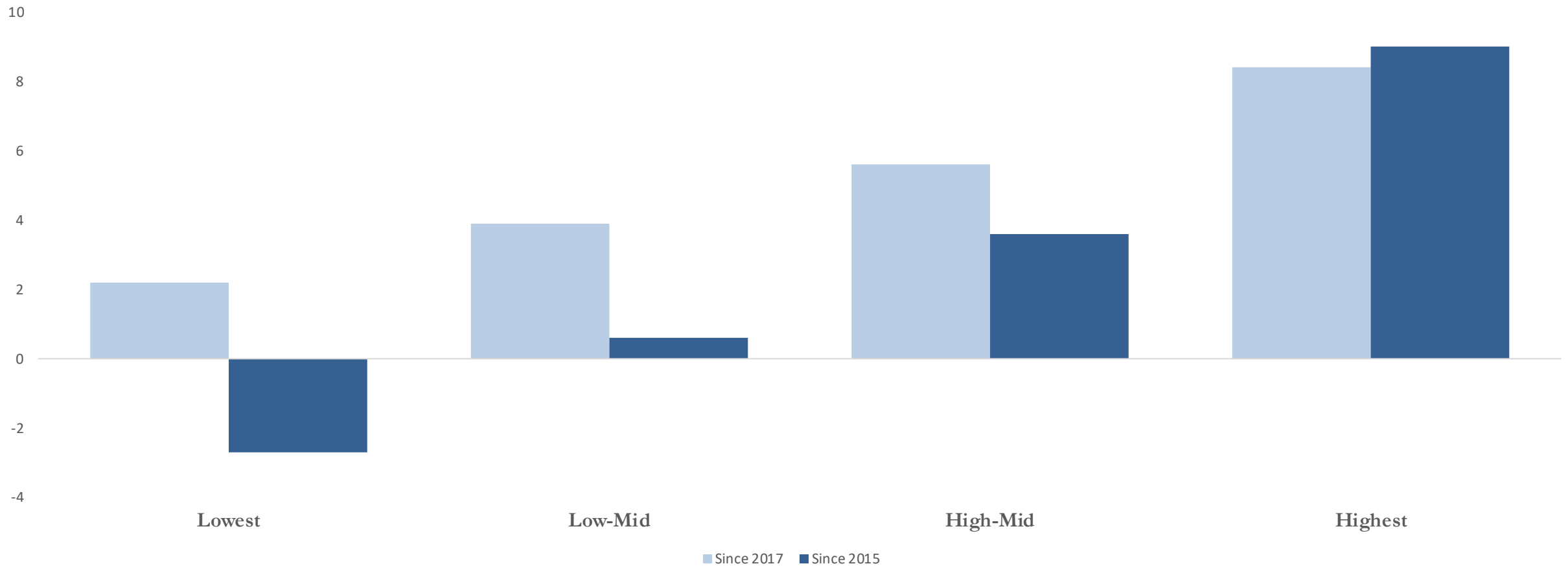
If you HAD to choose, which of the following would you prefer?



Lord Ashcroft Polls
@LordAshcroft

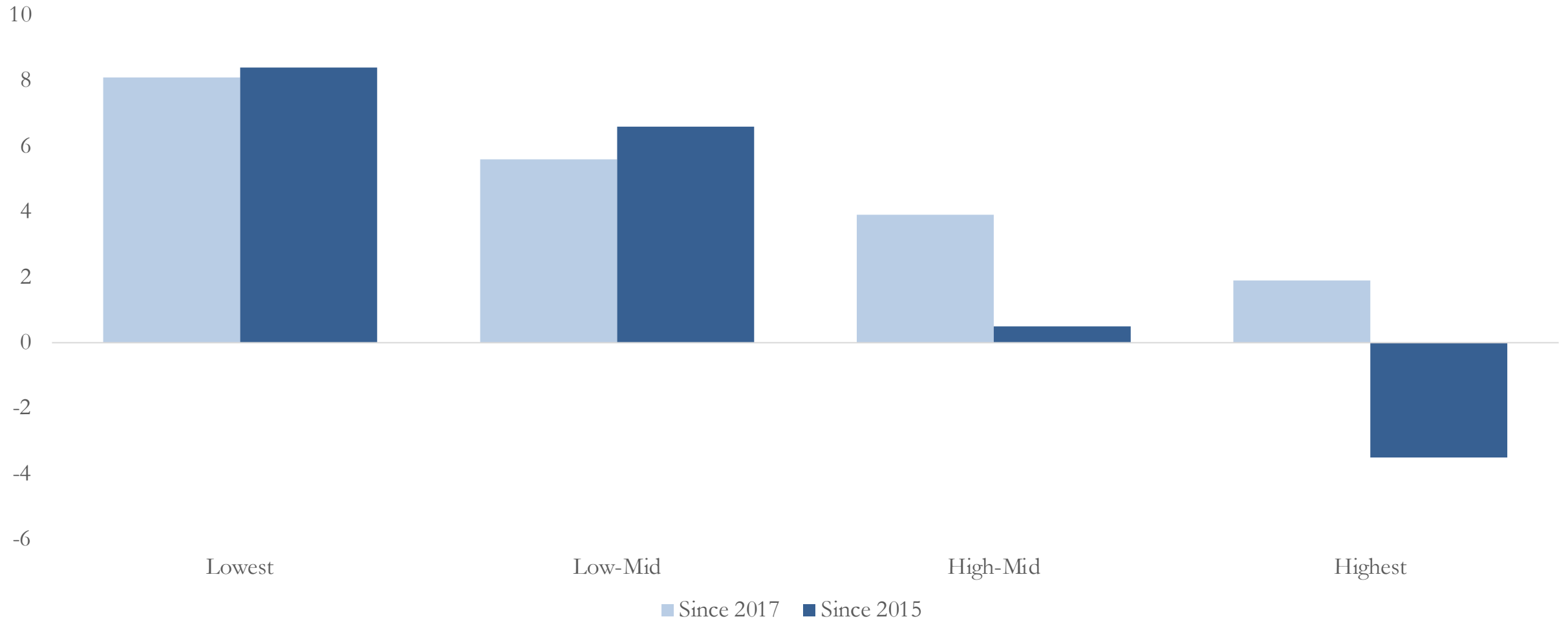
3. The Conservatives have closed the class divide in voting in the two elections since Brexit...

Swing to the Conservatives since 2017 (light bars) and 2015 (dark bars) by share of voters in constituency doing unskilled manual work



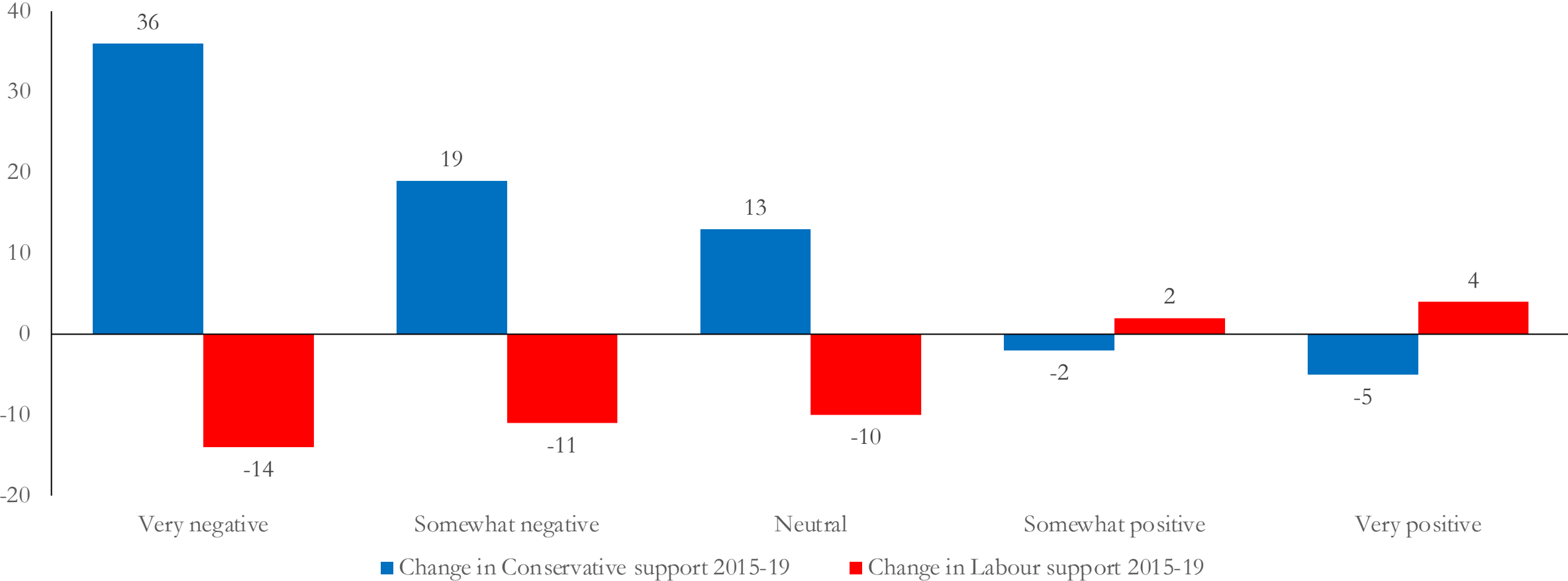
...while opening up a new education divide

Swing to Conservatives since 2017 (light bars) and 2015 (dark bars) by share of graduates in the constituency



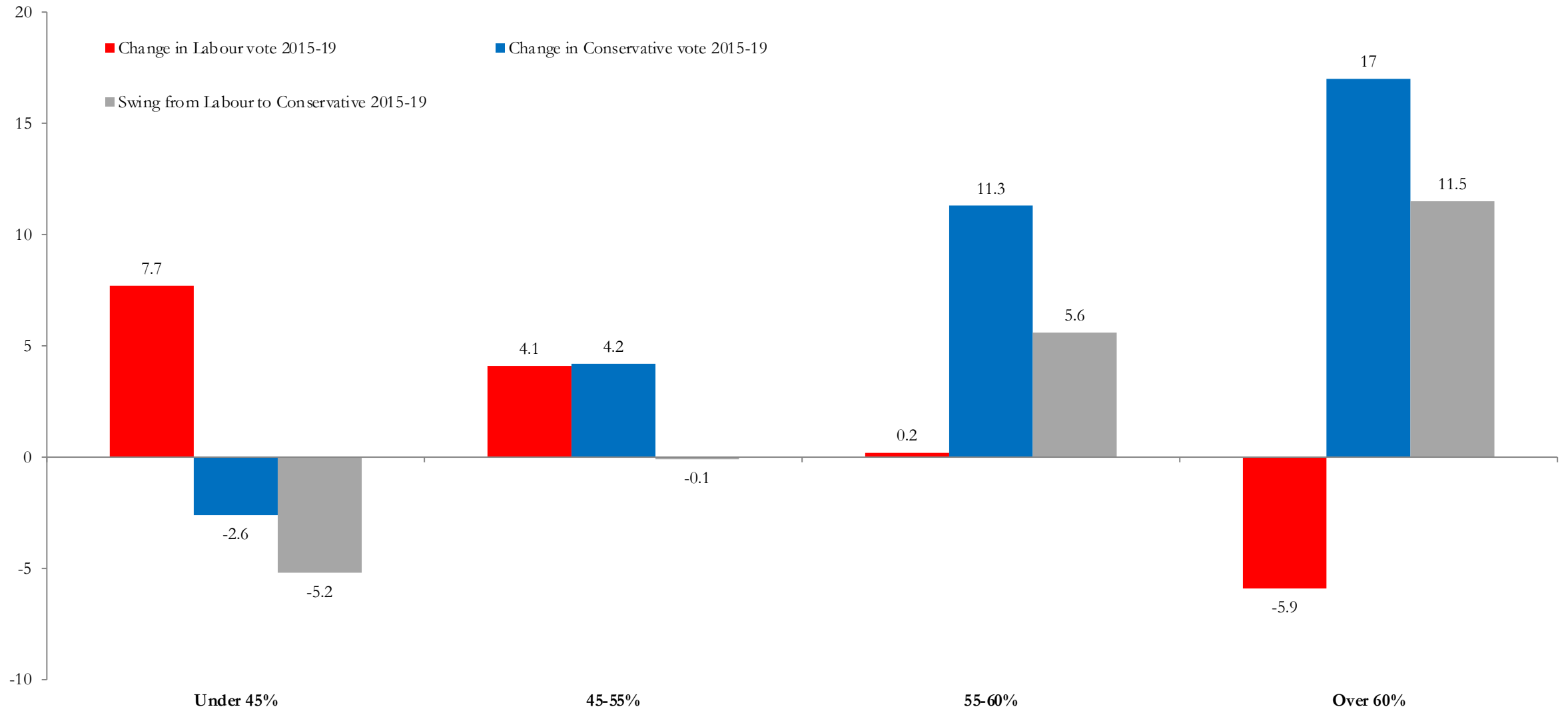
Conservative gains from 2015-19 were concentrated among “identity conservatives” –more nationalist, more sceptical about immigration, more negative about diversity and social change

Change in Conservative and Labour support 2015-19 by views of immigration



Source: Sobolewska and Ford (2020) “Brexitland”

4. Geography: Conservative advance since 2015 was concentrated in Leave voting areas (and Leave leaning groups)

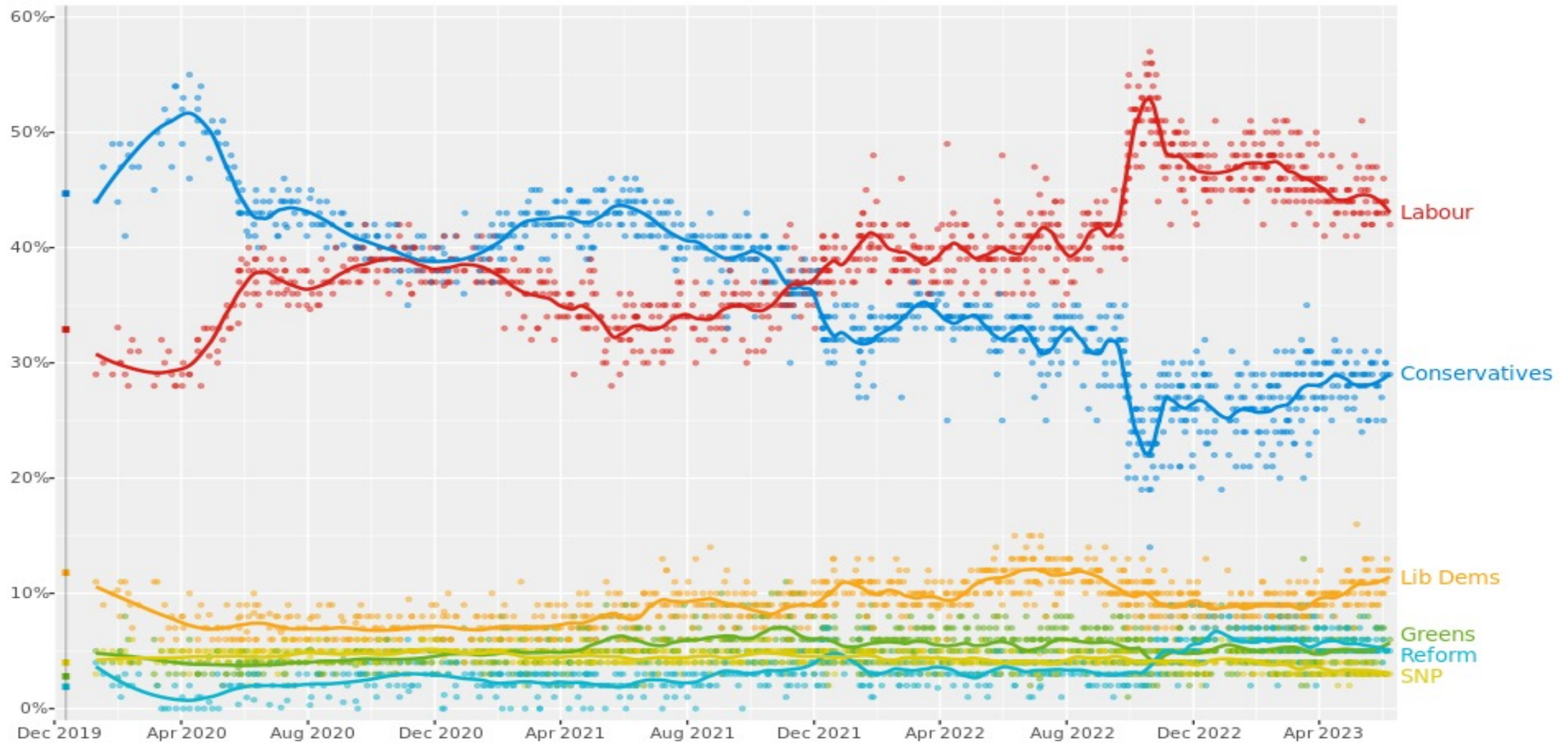


Leave leaning groups were more evenly spread, so the Conservatives have a substantial advantage from the electoral system

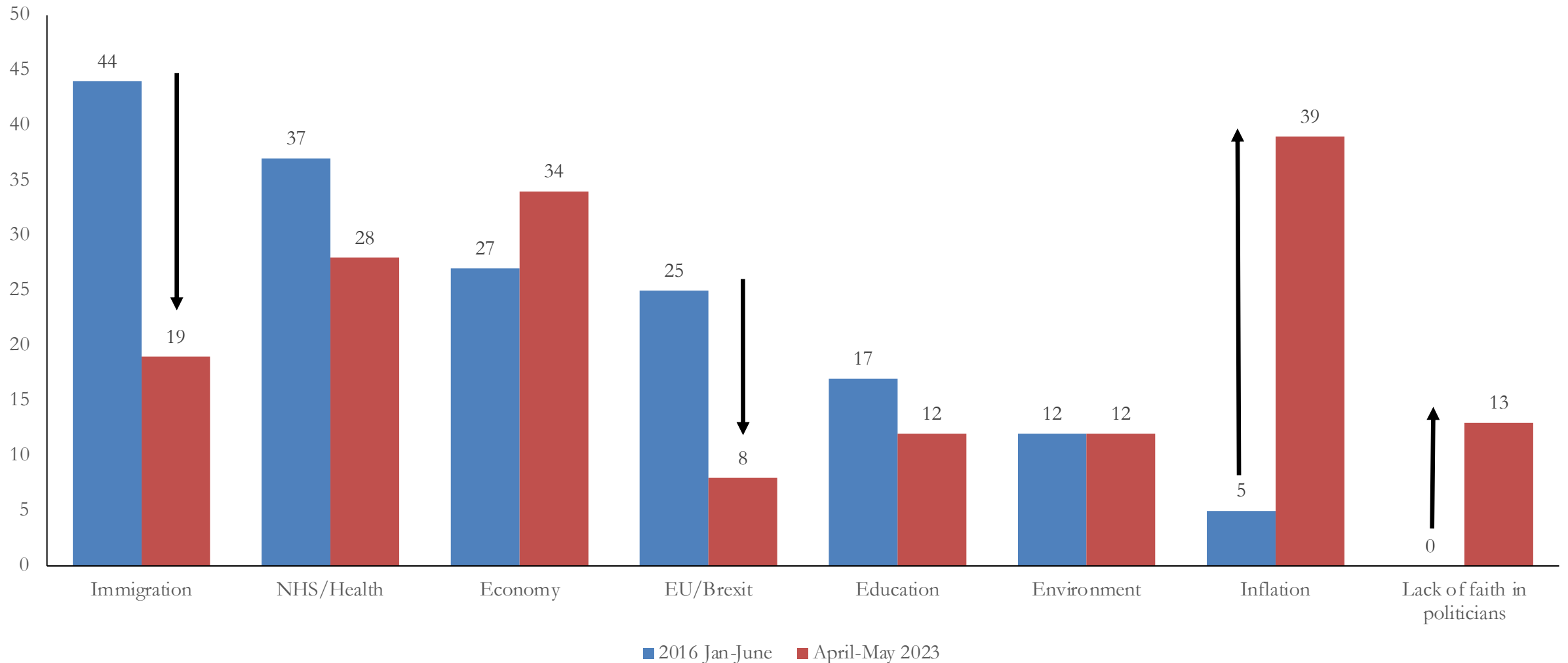
Swing to Con from 2019	% vote (GB)			Seats (UK)			
	Con	Lab	Con lead	Con	Lab	Others	Majority
0.0	44.7	33.0	11.7	365	203	82	Con 80
-3.5	41.2	36.5	4.7	325	238	88	None
-5.85	38.85	38.85	0.0	290	267	93	None
-7.0	37.7	40.0	-2.3	278	280	92	None
-11.7	33.0	44.7	-11.7	232	324	94	None
-12.0	32.7	45.0	-12.3	229	326	95	Lab 2
-15.5	29.2	48.5	-19.3	194	366	90	Lab 82

Source: Curtice, Fisher and English (2021) “The Geography of a Brexit Election”, in Ford et al (2021) “The British General Election of 2019”

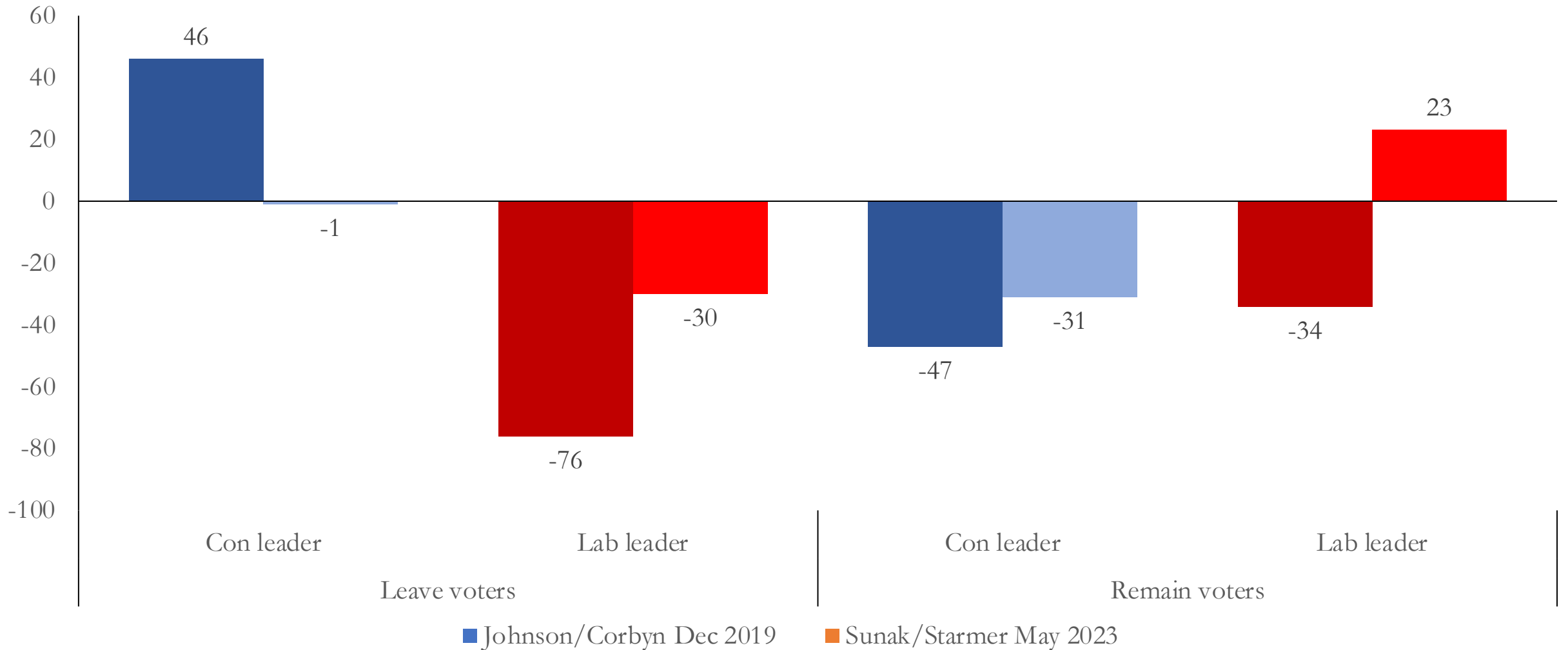
All change?



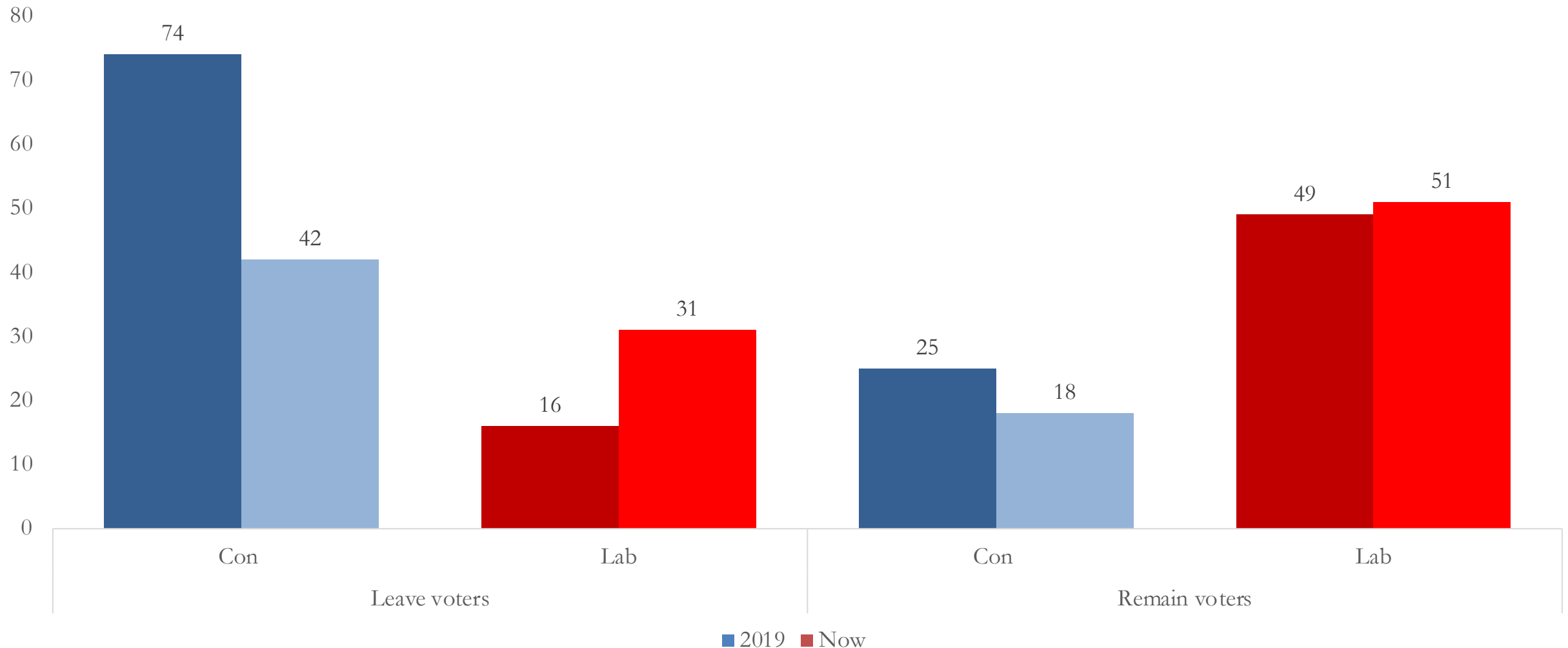
All change? Issue agenda now dramatically different to last two elections (and EU ref)



All change? Starmer more popular with Leave and Remain voters now than Corbyn was in 2019 Sunak a little more popular with Remainers than Johnson, but much less popular with Leave voters



All change? A new leader, a new agenda and disappointment with Brexit are driving a Labour poll rebound concentrated among Leave voters

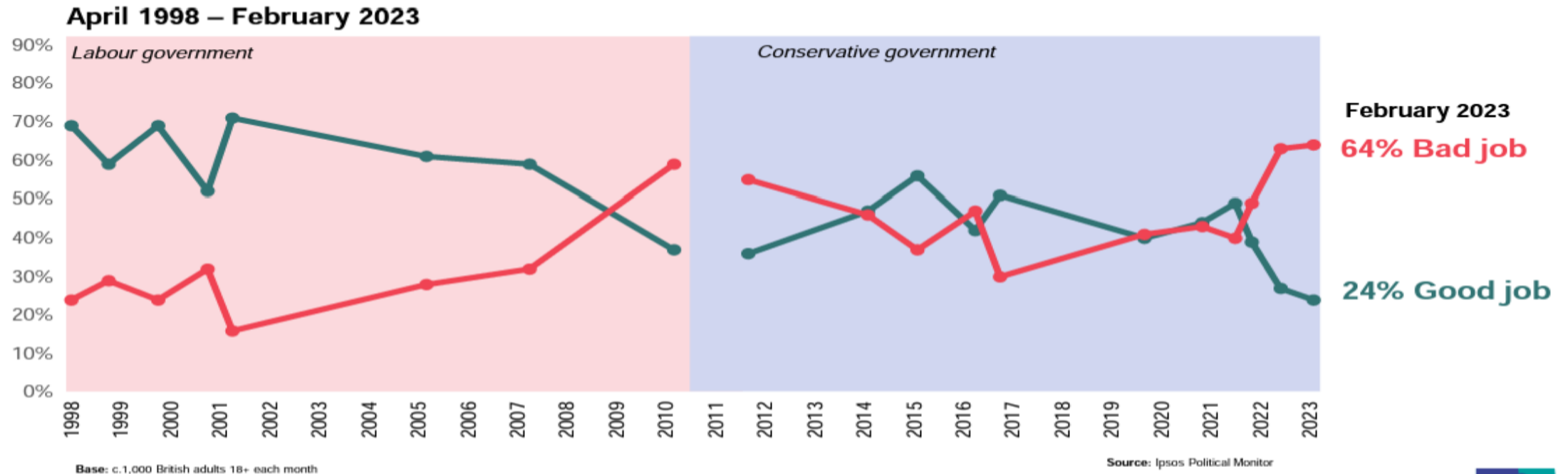


Source: BES (2019); 7 pollster average (now) Swing to Labour: 23.5 points (Leave voters); 4.5 points (Remain voters)

All change? The Conservatives' reputation for competence – particularly economic competence – has taken a battering in the last few years

The Government's handling of managing the economy

Since Rishi Sunak's government was formed in October 2022 do you think the government has done a good or bad job at...? Managing the economy



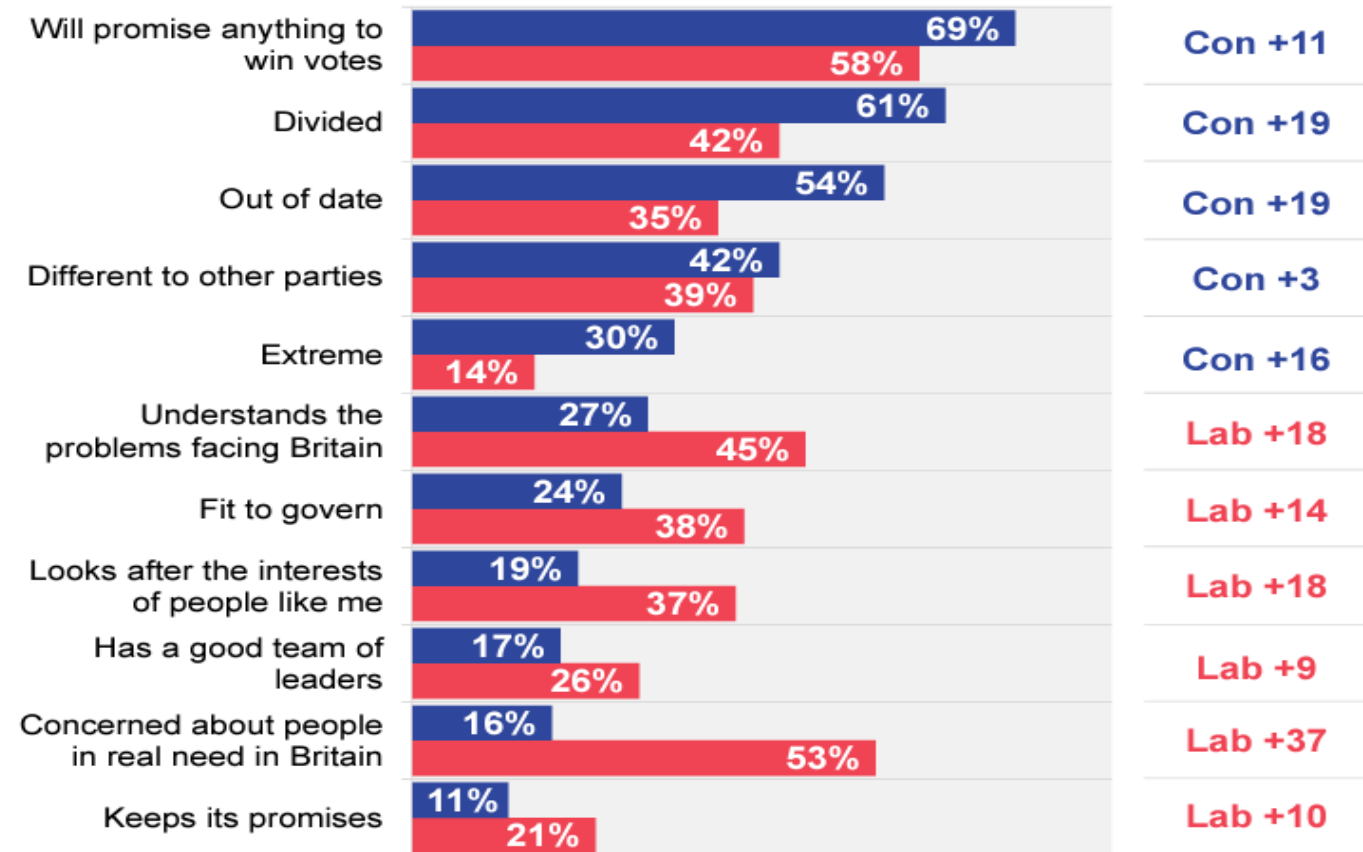
All change? Conservatives now lag Labour on every positive characteristic, lead on every negative characteristic

Party image: Conservatives vs Labour

I am now going to read out some things both favourable and unfavourable that have been said about various political parties. Which of these if any do you think apply to...?

■ The Conservative party

■ The Labour party



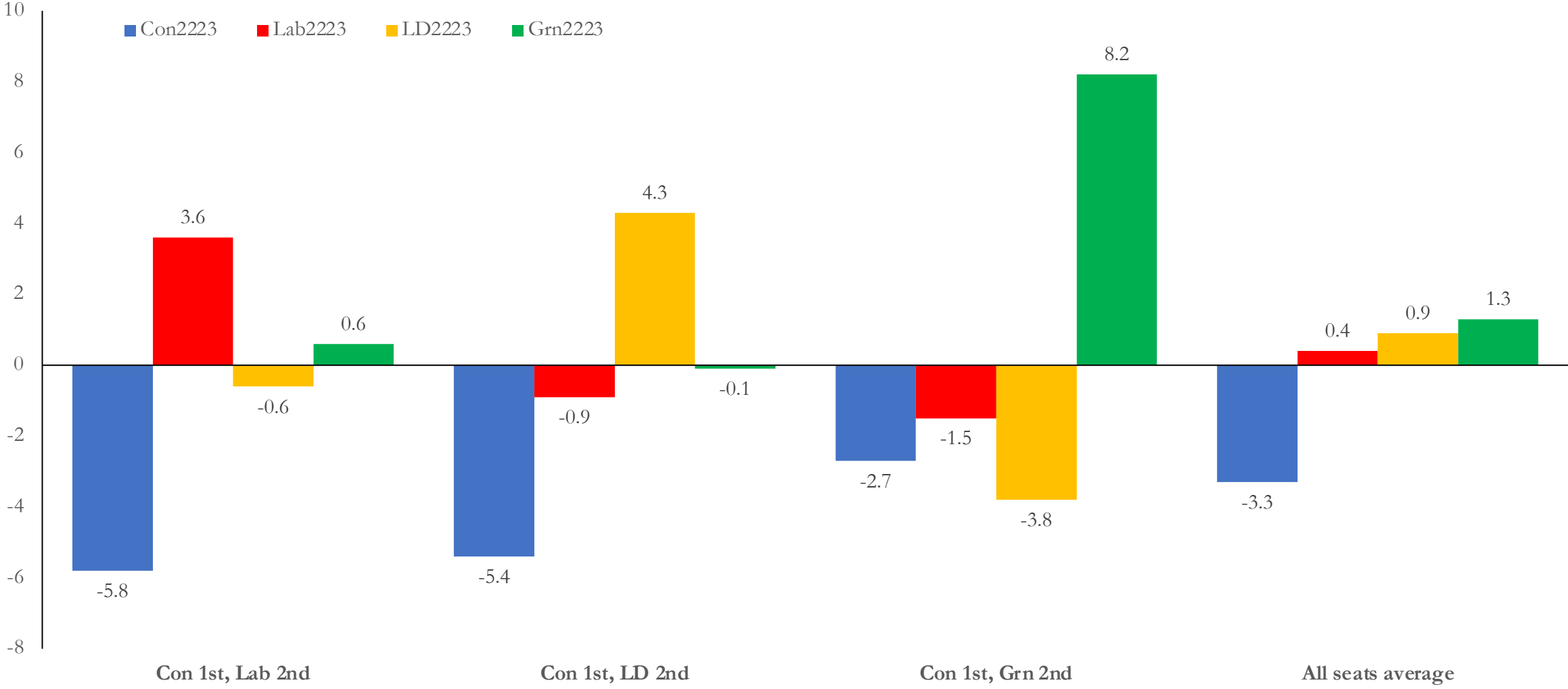
Base: 1,004 British adults 18+, 22 – 29 March 2023



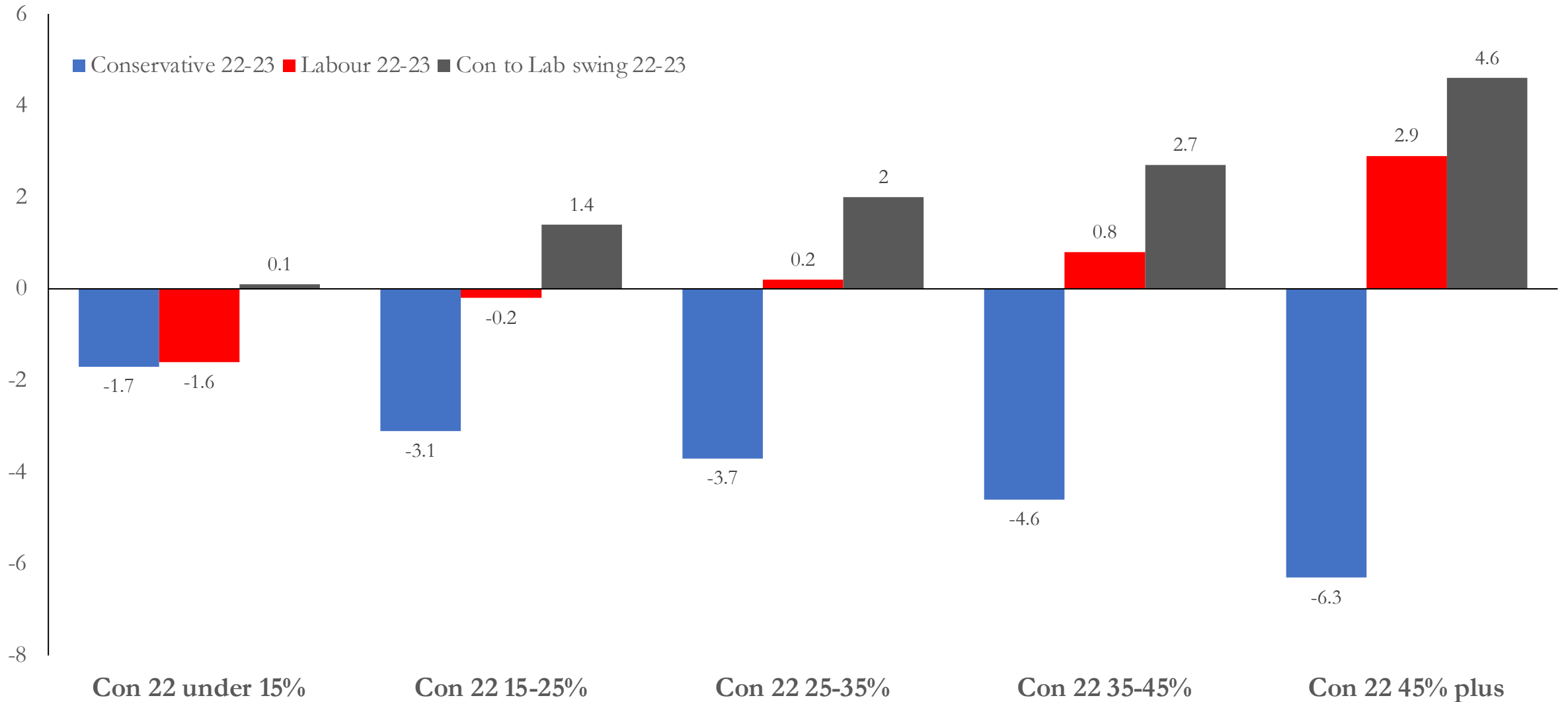
Where are we going next? Four thoughts on the coming election

- 1. Labour has made impressive progress but still faces a daunting task
 - To win a Labour majority in 2024, Keir Starmer most likely needs a bigger swing than Tony Blair managed when winning a landslide in 1997
- 2. It is not too late for the Conservatives to narrow the gap
 - History suggests Conservatives often bounce back from midterm blues (especially when they change leader)
- 3. Scotland and South East England are wildcards
 - The SNP's troubles put many extra seats in play for Labour...
 - ...while tactical voting could deliver a lot more LD gains from Cons than current polling suggests
- 4. ReformUK/Nigel Farage are also wildcards
 - New challenger could split vote, putting more Con seats in jeopardy...
 - Return of Farage would dramatically magnify the pain

A sign of things to come? (1) Tactical voting in the 2023 local elections



A sign of things to come? (2) Proportional swing against the Conservatives in the 2023 local elections



ROBERT FORD
TIM BALE

WILL JENNINGS
PAULA SURRIDGE

GET
BREXIT
DONE

The BRITISH GENERAL
ELECTION of 2019



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'Sobolewska and Ford have written the new political bible of our times.'
Gary Gibbon, *Channel 4 News*