More in Common

Drivers of populism in 2026

Progressive Activists

...an outspoken group that is politically engaged and globally minded, championing social justice but feeling alienated from mainstream politics

Incrementalist Left

...a group that leans left and trusts institutions, often stepping back from the news and avoiding politically fraught debates

Established Liberals

... a prosperous group that is confident in institutions, values expertise, and believes the system broadly works

Sceptical Scrollers

...a disengaged group that has lost trust in mainstream institutions and increasingly looks online for sources of truth

Rooted Patriots

...a patriotic group that feels overlooked by elites and wants leaders with common sense to protect local identity

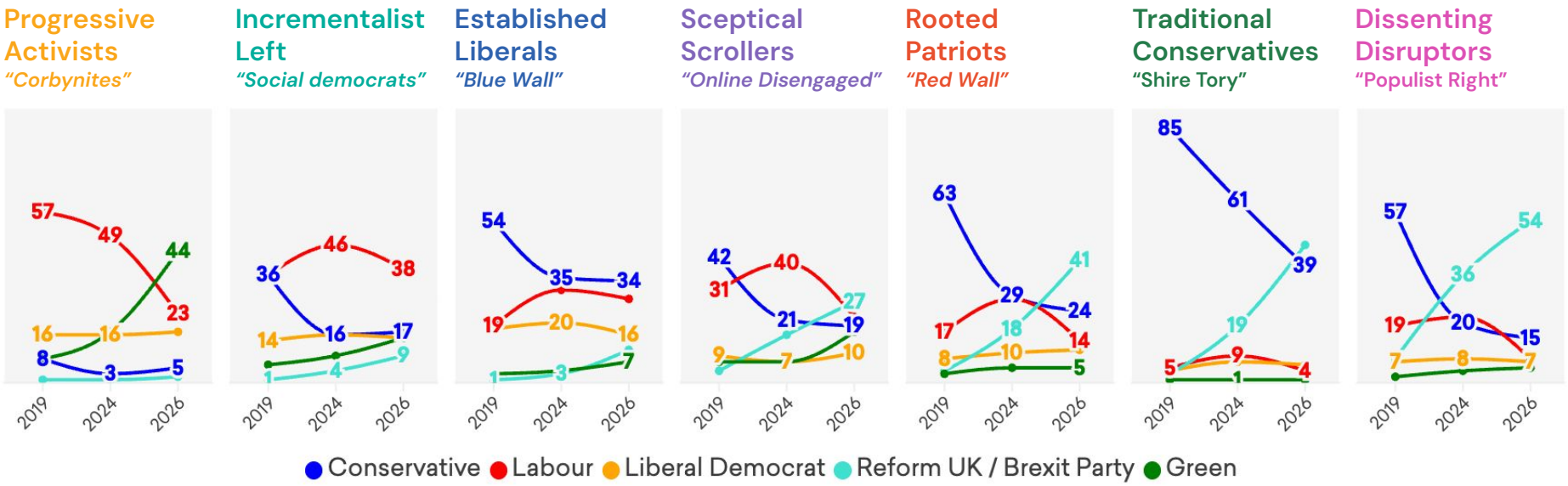
Traditional Conservatives

... a nostalgic group that respects tradition, authority and personal responsibility, while remaining sceptical of rapid change

Dissenting Disruptors

... a frustrated group that craves radical change and backs strong leaders who promise to shake up a broken system

How would the seven segments vote?



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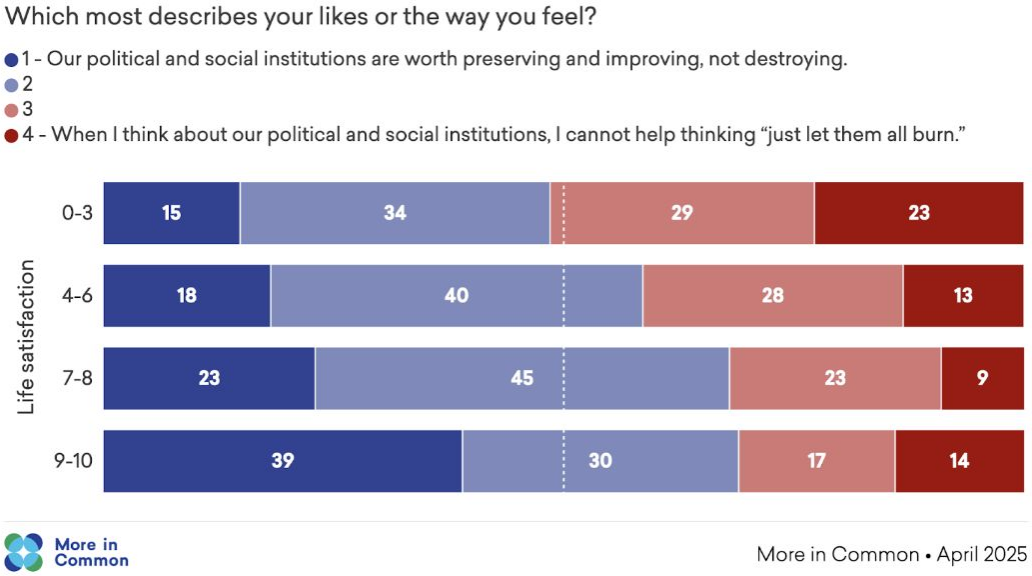
2019 and 2024 is recalled General Election vote

Many Britons want to see our institutions burn

Britons are divided between those who believe the country's political turmoil and malaise is best addressed by **improvement and reform**, and those who favour a more **radical reset** of the system.

Almost two in five feel that we should 'burn it all down' rather than improve existing institutions.

People who are less satisfied with their life are more likely to want more radical action.



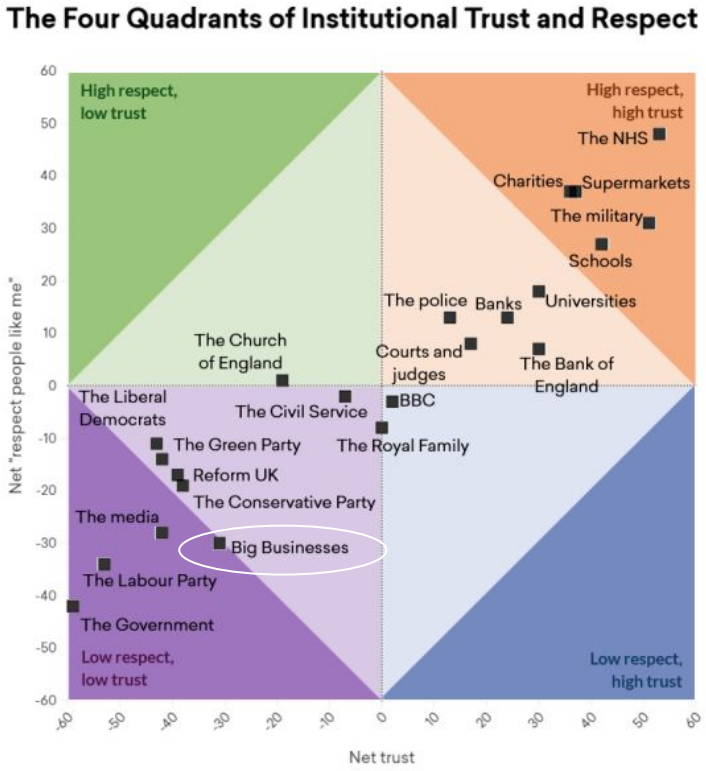
Bring back Guy Fawkes. I'll help him.
Hannah, retired, Derbyshire

A crisis of trust in Britain's institutions

87% have either not very much trust in politicians or none at all. The political class- from councillors to MPs- is seen as self-serving and out of touch.

Fewer than 1 in 5 would trust any of the main party leaders to watch their bag for them.

This lack of trust is intrinsically linked to a feeling of disrespect, with the most distrusting feeling major institutions- from the NHS to the judiciary- do not respect people 'like them'.

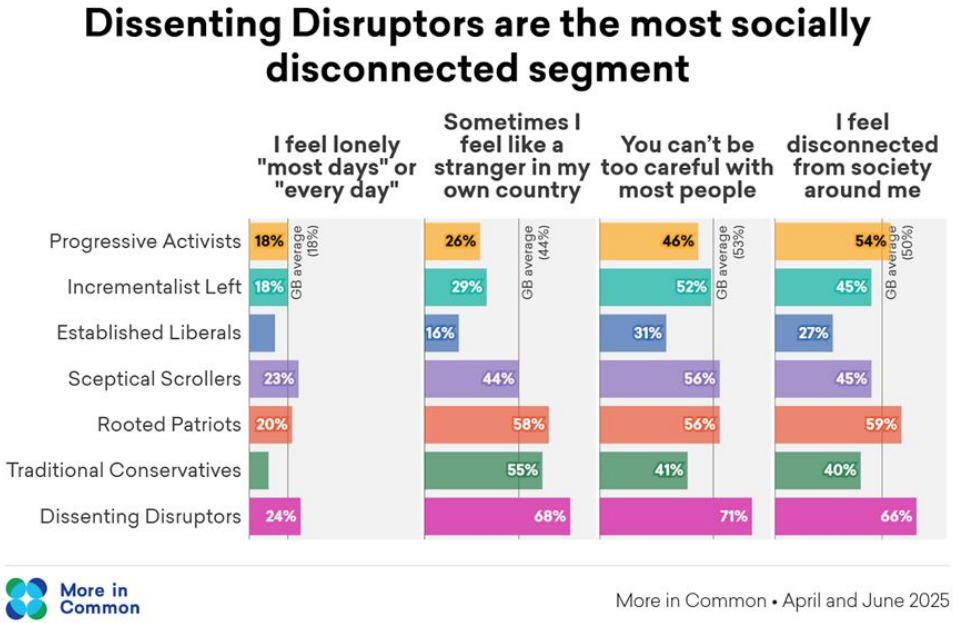


Social disconnection as a driver of populism

Those who feel disconnected from British society are far more likely to back radical solutions to replace our institutions – particularly populist right Dissenting Disruptors..

Dissenting Disruptors are the most socially disconnected of the Seven Segments. Beyond their family ties, two**-thirds (66 per cent) say that they feel disconnected from wider society**, compared to half (51 per cent) of the general public. A quarter (24 per cent) say they feel lonely most days or every day.

Dissenting Disruptors also find it **harder to trust** those around them, with 71 per cent saying that "you can't be too careful with most people", compared to 53 per cent of the general public.



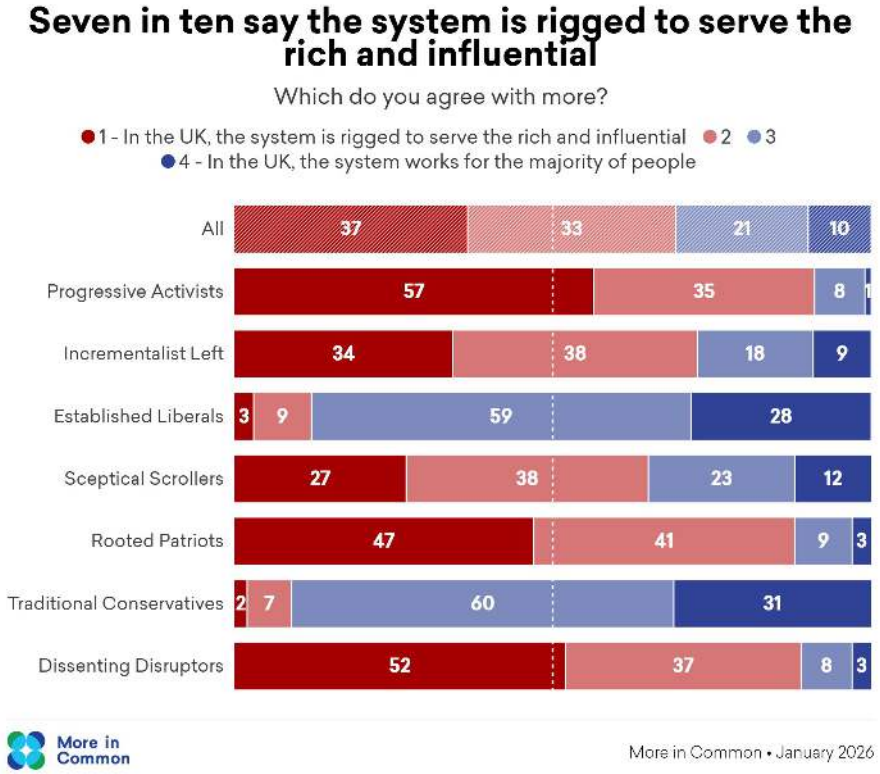
Many feel that the system is rigged

Seven in ten Britons say the British system is rigged to serve the rich and influential – something that united Progressive Activists with Dissenting Disruptors and Rooted Patriots.

For many, a sense that the social contract is rigged, and that work doesn't pay, has eroded their faith in Britain's social and political institutions.

I don't necessarily think that it's going to be better. I mean the cost of living has gone up. I do think probably some better quality of life, but then we've got everything going on right now in the world, climate change, all that stuff. So I think there's a lot of hardships that way. So I don't know. I don't know. If I'm honest, I don't think it is better or good, I don't think it heading in a good direction at the moment.

Carolyn, Sceptical Scroller, Sheffield



A broken social contract fuelling anti-incumbency

A thread running across focus groups with voters across the political spectrum who are rejecting the status quo **is a sense that the social contract in Britain is broken.**

Younger graduates moving to the Green Party describe following the rules, but still struggling to get on the housing ladder or to pay off their student debt.

Meanwhile voters moving to Reform UK describe a sense that "you're a mug for playing by the rules" - that the welfare state disincentives work, asylum seekers get looked after and a cost-of-living crisis makes hard work pointless.

> What am I working for? I've got no money to do a holiday, I've got no money to go on a night out or for a nice meal.
>
> **Laura, Rutherglen**

> It just doesn't pay to work anymore. I've voted Labour all my life and I'm frustrated. They don't seem to be putting any effort into helping the working person. It's like we're not getting anything back.
>
> **Dave, Sefton**

> I won't ever vote Labour again. I don't feel like they represent people that work. They represent people that don't want to work and want to take advantage of the system.
>
> **Jody, Newport**

> *Being a young person that has done everything right, get good grades, go do a good degree. We still can't afford to buy a house. Still having to live like a student in a flat share (...) Every January like clockwork, I start looking at how can I leave the UK? How can I leave the NHS? I don't care anymore. I don't want to be here.*
>
> **Shaikho, Tottenham**

Financial insecurity fuels populism….

Financial insecurity drives support for non-mainstream parties.

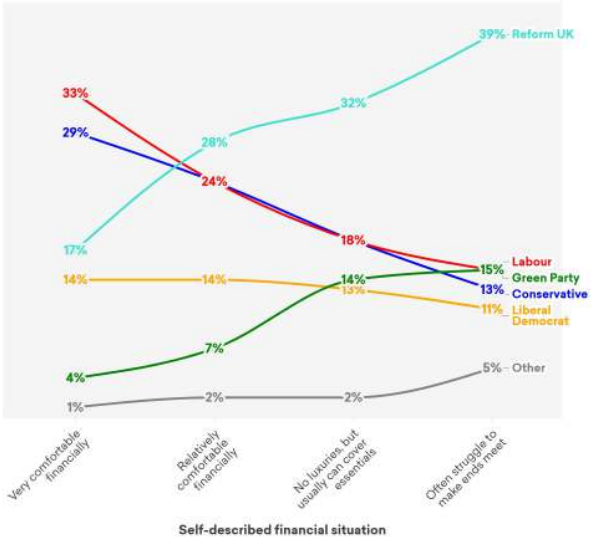
A key similarity between Reform and the Green Party is that both parties thrive among Britons who are struggling to make ends meet.

Among Britons who describe themselves as ‘very financially comfortable’, Labour leads with 33 per cent of the vote, while the Conservatives follow in second place with 29 per cent. Yet among those who struggle to make ends meet, the combined vote share of the two main parties collapses, from 52 per cent to 28 per cent, while Reform UK and the Green Party both more than double their vote share.

If the electorate were restricted to those struggling financially, Reform would lead with 39 per cent of the vote, followed by Labour and the Green Party tied on 15 per cent.

Reform and the Green Party perform better among financially insecure Britons

How well off would you say you feel?



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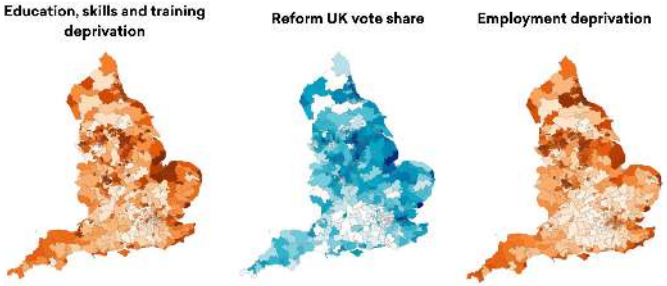
...But in different ways

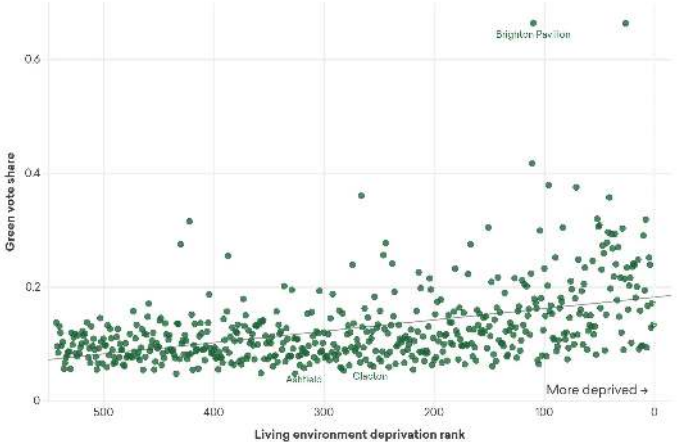
While financial hardship is a key driver of populism, Reform and Green support is rooted in two very different types of deprivation.

Where Reform performs well: post industrial towns with weak employment and low educational opportunities.

Where the Green Party performs well: urban seats with low incomes and poor housing.

Reform UK performs best in post-industrial towns with high employment or education deprivation



The Green Party performs better in seats with high living environment deprivation

Green MRP vote share by living environment deprivation rank