

STOP THE  
SQUEEZE



# THE BOTTOM LINE

How bold action on the cost  
of living will be key to the  
next election

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In British politics, the cost of living crisis is both everywhere and nowhere to be found.

It is the constant backdrop to political debates, the main mover of votes between 2019 and 2024, and the subject of a political blame-game.

But in policy terms, the crisis fades from view. The government has a target to reduce inflation, but there is little serious policy beyond that. In fact, the implicit argument is that the crisis needs to get worse (through rising interest rates and falling real incomes) to tame inflation. The Energy Price Guarantee has ended, leaving energy prices still twice their pre-crisis level. Policies such as food price caps are floated only to be dropped despite food price inflation at nearly 15%, and it seems increasingly likely that the Conservatives will focus on culture wars and tax cuts rather than the cost of living at the next election.

Meanwhile, Labour have embraced the politics of the cost of living rhetorically, talking more and more about economic security, linking a green energy agenda to lower bills, and taking every opportunity to attack the Conservatives over issues like rising mortgage payments. But in policy terms, there is little in the way of a 'retail offer' on the cost of living which would have tangible and immediate benefits for voters. Investments in home insulation and renewables are important policies that will bring down energy bills in the medium term and provide households with more economic security, but they will do little to reassure voters that the party will immediately improve their living standards.

This paper explores this cost of living paradox, based on extensive public opinion polling and segmentation analysis. We set out to discover what voters, and especially key swing voters, are hearing from the parties, how they are responding, and the kinds of messages and policies that might sway their decisions on this issue in 2024.

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# KEY FINDINGS

**The cost of living is key to the election:** Dealing with the cost of living crisis is the central issue at the next general election along with the NHS, scoring highly among all groups. 50% of voters say it is one of the top issues for them at the next election. For one crucial swing voter segment ('Stevenage Woman') the key issues are the cost of living (45%), the NHS (49%), and the economy (36%); no other issue scores above 17%. There is no route to a majority without winning the argument on the cost of living.

**But voters don't think parties share their priorities:** While the cost of living is the number two issue for all voters (50%), fewer voters think it is a priority for the Conservatives (21%) or Labour (23%). Almost half (47%) of key swing voters do not know what Labour's priorities are - much higher than those who are unaware of Conservative priorities (39%).

**Voters think Labour would do a better job on the cost of living, but they lack details.** Labour leads on the question of which party would do the best job on the cost of living, but only 15% of voters say they have a good idea of what either party would do. Only one in ten (11%) Conservative 2019 voters rate Labour higher on the cost of living, with more than three times as many (37%) not choosing either party. Only one in four of those

who prefer Labour on this issue say they have a good idea of what the party would do on the cost of living. While the Conservatives are losing voters on the cost of living, Labour could be doing much more to win them.

**Labour's economic security message works, but works better with more policy solutions.** Voters respond well to Labour's message on restoring economic security, but there is good evidence that if the party were more propositional on the cost of living, putting forward bolder solutions to the crisis, then it could gain them more support among key swing voter groups (especially the 'Stevenage Woman' demographic), without costing them support elsewhere. Adding bolder policy ideas to a Labour message resulted in a 4% swing towards Labour among two swing voter segments (including a 13% swing from 'Stevenage Woman') compared to a generic Labour cost of living message.

**Tax cuts are a red herring.** Key voters prefer policies on cheaper energy, a higher minimum wage, and lower housing costs to promises of tax cuts. Voters also overwhelmingly think that cost of living support should be funded by taxing the richest in society, although there is work to do to convince them that additional spending on this would not be inflationary.

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT

The cost of living crisis has transformed the landscape of UK politics, derailing the government's agenda, dominating political news coverage, and undermining the Conservative narrative on the economy. While predicting the battleground issues for a general election in advance is always difficult, with an election now only a year or so away the political terrain is becoming clearer. Conservative hopes that the cost of living will recede as an issue look increasingly unlikely to materialise as inflation remains stubbornly high, and living standards continue to fall. Furthermore, much of the impact of rising interest rates is yet to hit households, and many predict it will cause a recession. Meanwhile state support, which was mainly focused on energy bills, has tailed off, leaving the government with little to say about how they are tackling the crisis.

The aftermath of Liz Truss' mini-budget allowed Labour to link the cost of living crisis directly to alleged Conservative economic mismanagement, resulting in a significant poll lead which has endured to this point. Yet Labour's fortunes at the ballot box, with recent by-elections in Selby and Ainsty, and Uxbridge, paint wildly different pictures of the party's prospects heading into an election year.

The Stop the Squeeze campaign was founded in October 2022 in response to the cost of living crisis, and the dearth of adequate proposals to solve it in UK politics. We argue that solutions are available that are fair, realistic, and popular with the public. Our view is that the government

should focus on policies which tackle the underlying structural causes of the cost of living crisis, by providing cheaper, cleaner energy for all and increasing incomes, particularly for the most financially insecure. We believe that much of this support could be financed by introducing sensible and proportionate taxation of wealth, correcting a historic imbalance and major source of unfairness in the UK tax system.

Nearly a year later, the striking thing about cost of living policies in mainstream UK politics has been their absence. The Conservatives have focused on arguments about the 'tough choices' needed to bring down inflation, and made 'back to work', rather than the cost of living, the theme of the most recent Budget. Labour have been more active, attempting to pin the cost of living crisis on the Conservatives, and arguing for investments in green energy and home insulation to reduce energy bills in the long term. However, they lack a more immediate 'retail offer' in response to spiralling household bills.

## THE COST OF LIVING PARADOX

This disconnect between the importance of the cost of living to political debate, and the void in terms of policy solutions being proposed to address it, is a paradox at the heart of our current politics. To understand this paradox and its impacts better, we commissioned an in-depth study of public opinion on the cost of living. To do this we worked with YouGov, using the voter segmentation model they developed with the think tank Labour Together. There is more detail on this model below, but, in short, it allowed us to shed new light on how two key groups of swing voters, often referred to as 'Stevenage Woman' and 'Workington Man', are responding to this paradox. These are the two demographics who are likely to determine the outcome of the next general election according to Labour Together.

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# METHODOLOGY

This public opinion research was conducted using the voter segmentation model developed by Labour Together in partnership with YouGov. We are grateful to Labour Together and YouGov for their assistance.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size of the survey was 2,000 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th - 26th July 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The segmentation splits voters in England and Wales into 6 segments. Activist Left, Rural Right, English Traditionalist, Centrist Liberal, Patriotic Left and Disillusioned Suburban. More details on the composition of these different voter segments is provided in the table below.

The two most critical segments in terms of determining the outcome of the election are the Patriotic Left (commonly referred to as 'Workington Man') and the Disillusioned Suburban ('Stevenage Woman').

As the name implies, 'Workington Man' represents a set of largely older voters often living in the North of England. Winning this demographic is critical to winning in the so-called Red Wall.

'Stevenage Woman' is even more important. Not only is this the largest voter segment, but these voters are distributed across critical marginals both in the 'Red Wall' and throughout suburban Britain, including many of the seats that the Labour Party needs to win in order to form a majority. Crucially, this group has the lowest turnout, meaning encouraging this



group to vote at all is half the battle.

As Labour Together say:

*“A working majority depends on Labour’s ability to convert their current support amongst Disillusioned Suburbans into votes at an election. Representing 22 percent of the electorate, they are the largest single group of voters and they are widely distributed across the country. Our research shows that, in 430 of the 573 seats across England and Wales, Disillusioned Suburbans are the largest group. Of the 42 Red Wall seats, they are the largest group in 34. In the 71 Conservative/Labour marginals that sit outside the Red Wall, they are the largest group in 63. Even accounting for the relatively low turnout in this group, their votes carry considerable weight.”<sup>1</sup>*

For more information about the segmentation, please see Labour Together’s report, *Red Shift*<sup>2</sup>, which sets out the logic behind the segments.

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<sup>1</sup> [Red Shift](#), Labour Together, 2nd April 2022 page 21

<sup>2</sup> [Red Shift](#), Labour Together, 2nd April 2022

## WHO ARE THE SEGMENTS?

### ACTIVIST LEFT

The Activist Left are generally young and university educated; they are the most likely group to be in full-time work.

Representing 18.3% of the electorate in England and Wales, they are concentrated in safe Labour seats or in Conservative and Liberal Democrat marginals. They are the most economically left-wing and socially liberal of the segments.

### CENTRIST LIBERALS

Centrist Liberals are evenly spread across all age groups, tend to have university degrees and have the highest household income of any segment. Spread primarily across London and the South, they are more likely to live in Conservative-Lib Dem marginal seats than in Conservative-Labour battlegrounds. They make up 16.5% of the electorate in England and Wales, and are generally centre-left on economic issues and liberal on social ones.

### DISILLUSIONED SUBURBANS ('STEVENAGE WOMAN')

Representing 21.8% of the electorate in England and Wales, Disillusioned Suburbans are the largest segment and are particularly well represented in the East of England, in London's suburbs, and in the North East and West. They are young, economically insecure, worried about their finances, and unlikely to own their own homes. They are not highly politicised, but are generally socially conservative while leaning left on the economy. This demographic has been dubbed 'Stevenage Woman' by Labour Together.

**PATRIOTIC LEFT ('WORKINGTON MAN')**

The Patriotic Left form 15% of the electorate in England and Wales. They are likely to be older, and less likely to be in work or to have a university education. Most heavily represented in the West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West and Wales, they are likely to live in seats branded as part of the 'Red Wall' in the 2019 election. While on social issues they are conservative, economically they are firmly on the left. This demographic has been dubbed 'Workington Man' by Labour Together.

**ENGLISH TRADITIONALISTS**

English Traditionalists make up 17.8% of the English and Welsh electorate and are typically from the 'baby boomer' generation. They are most likely to be retired, and alongside the Patriotic Left are least likely to be university educated. They are firmly socially conservative but somewhat centrist on economic issues. They are usually consistent Conservative voters.

**RURAL RIGHT**

Representing 10.6% of the electorate in England and Wales, the Rural Right are older, likely to own their own home and primarily live in rural areas across the North East, South East, and Yorkshire and the Humber. Both economically and socially conservative, they are the Conservatives' most loyal supporters.

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# ANALYSIS

The findings are stark. The cost of living really matters to voters. Alongside the NHS, it was the runaway leader as the issue that matters the most to the electorate, with both being chosen by over half of all voters. It was well ahead of 'the economy' as a whole (35%), and completely overshadowed issues such as immigration (24%). This is especially true for the vital Disillusioned Suburban segment, sometimes referred to as 'Stevenage Woman'. Here, the cost of living, the NHS, and the economy are the only issues that gain any sort of traction - no others score over 17% for this segment.

Voters simply do not believe that the main parties are as focused on the cost of living as they want them to be. Only 21% of voters ranked the cost of living as one of the top three Conservative priorities, putting it third behind 'the economy' and immigration. The public's view of Labour's priorities matched their own, putting the cost of living as the second priority, behind the NHS. Yet the actual percentage who identified the cost of living as a top three priority for Labour was 23%, only slightly higher than the Conservative score. For Labour, the issue is less that the public thinks the party is focused on the wrong things, and more that they do not have a clear sense of what its priorities are at all. Four in ten voters are unable to say what Labour's priorities are, rising to nearly half of all the key swing voters in the Disillusioned Suburban (47%) and Patriotic Left (46%) segments.

The good news for Labour is that voters do still think it would do a better job on the cost of living, which could be due to a shift in the relative competence ratings of the two main parties. When asked which party

they trusted most to address the issue, 40% of voters said Labour, a 19% lead over the Conservatives. This lead is particularly strong among the Disillusioned Suburban segment, where it rises to 31%. But while impressive, this lead is far from solid. Even amongst those who chose Labour, three quarters of voters said they did not have a clear idea of what the party would actually do to solve the crisis, implying that Labour has yet to land the message that it has a real plan to tackle the cost of living. Overall only 15% of voters said they had a clear idea of what either party would do to address the crisis, indicating that voters have noticed the absence of proactive policies.

## THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

So voters think the cost of living is one of the most important issues for the next election - if not the most important. They think neither party cares about it as much as they do. And while they lean towards Labour on the issue, they don't have a clear idea of what either party proposes to do to address the crisis.

This creates a significant opportunity for both parties. In the Uxbridge by-election in July the Conservatives demonstrated that when they can position themselves as on the side of those affected by the cost of living crisis, they can win in marginal seats, while the Selby by-election showed that when Labour wins the cost of living argument, it can achieve swings big enough to deliver a very comfortable working majority.

This matters both because it indicates that a Conservative comeback is still possible, but also because the lack of policy solutions on offer is highly likely to lead to voter apathy and low turnout, especially among the Disillusioned Suburban segment that Labour would need to win to secure a majority at the next election.

In short, public opinion on the cost of living at the next election is not set in stone, and both parties still have the opportunity to take the initiative on the issue and form a lasting impression in voters' minds.

However, being propositional, rather than oppositional, requires making choices and policy commitments, and these could lose support as well as gain it. As an example of how this might work, we tested generic Conservative and Labour messages on the cost of living against each other. The Conservative message was based on sticking to the government's economic plan, emphasising the importance of not fuelling further inflation. The Labour message, focused around economic security and blaming the government for the crisis, won with a handsome 34% lead. We tested the same generic Conservative message against an amended Labour message which used the same framing but was more propositional on policy. This message argued for investment in clean energy, boosting social security and the minimum wage, and higher taxes on the rich. The more propositional message resulted in a slightly smaller overall lead (31%) but delivered a 4% swing to Labour overall among the two key target segments. This was made up of a 13% swing to Labour among the crucial Disillusioned Suburban segment from 35% to 48%, but a fall in support from the Patriotic Left segment. However, it did increase opposition from core Conservative voters (for example the Conservative lead among the Rural Right doubled from 12% to 24%).

While putting policies like these on the table might be unpopular with some voters, the political argument will help to reinforce the message that Labour does have a plan on the cost of living, strengthening resolve among key voters and increasing the chances of those voters actually turning out on polling day. Conversely, if the Conservatives were to make a renewed offer on the cost of living at the election, this could chip into some soft Labour support and leave the party vulnerable.

Finally, we wanted to explore two key arguments against the idea that parties should be making bigger offers on cost of living support. The first is that voters believe that such policies would only make inflation worse, and the second is that while the policies may be popular, there is no popular way to fund them.

On whether cost of living policies are seen as inflationary, we found a mixed picture, with around a third of voters believing they were, a third that they weren't, and a third having no opinion. However, when looking at the segments we see that much of the 'inflationary' view is driven by core Conservative voters, while only one in five of the Disillusioned Suburban segment feel that cost of living policies would be inflationary. So while this argument is clearly something that any party proposing cost of living policies should be aware of, it is certainly not the case that voters in general inevitably believe that any support on the cost of living will only make inflation worse. This is an argument that can be won.

On how to fund the support, the answer is very clear. Voters overwhelmingly support paying for this through higher taxes on the richest in society, with this option receiving over 50% support among every single voter segment except the Rural Right, and no other funding option receiving more than 10% among any segment. This will not be a surprise to anyone who has studied public opinion on tax recently, and holds true even among the most Conservative voter segments. Labour have already leaned into increasing taxes on the wealthiest with their policies on abolishing 'non-dom' tax status and charging VAT on private school fees, but have shied away from the kinds of tax rise (such as increases in capital gains tax) that would raise serious revenue to fund cost of living support measures. Our research suggests that if they were to embrace this approach, it would be incredibly popular.

## WHAT THE PUBLIC WANT

Saying the public wants action on the cost of living is one thing, but knowing what this support should look like is another. To understand better the kinds of policies that parties should be offering, we offered them a range of general policy areas where government could be acting. The clear winner was energy bills, which continue to be a major source of cost of living pain for many families, alongside mortgages and rents which together performed very strongly. It is notable that the option of 'reducing energy bills for everyone' performed much better than an option of support targeted at those on lower incomes, implying that support schemes that are universal are likely to be more popular. However, the popularity of raising the minimum wage, which outperformed income tax cuts, suggests that some level of focus on those with low incomes is still important to voters.

Despite the focus on the level of taxation in political debates over recent years, there is no real evidence that the public see tax cuts as the answer to the cost of living crisis. It came sixth in our list of priorities for action on the cost of living, only performing strongly among core Conservative support. Cutting taxes on goods and services (i.e. VAT) was slightly more popular overall and performed well with the important Patriotic Left segment, but badly with the Disillusioned Suburbans. Overall a party could get significantly more mileage from policies to reduce the impact of escalating energy and housing costs than from offering tax cuts.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

The shape of the next election may be becoming clearer, but the outcome is still in the balance. Labour have succeeded in pinning the cost of living crisis to the Conservatives, while occasionally proposing popular policies



like the windfall tax, or the energy price freeze, which have then been adopted by the government. This strategy has given Labour a lead on the cost of living, but this lead is not built on a clear narrative about what Labour would do differently.

As the election approaches, there is a chance that a combination of a Conservative fightback and voter apathy could reduce Labour's lead and put its chances of a working majority in peril. But there is another option. This report suggests that a party that is willing to make a bigger offer on the cost of living, focused on areas the public care about such as energy bills and housing costs, and funded by taxation of wealth, could resonate with voters who are desperate for government action that could really improve their lives. Were Labour to adopt such a platform and put more meat on the bones of their successful economic security messaging, it would increase their chances of cementing and even extending their lead, and ultimately returning to government. Likewise, if the Conservatives were to focus on this issue rather than immigration and culture wars, they might be able to make serious inroads into Labour's lead.

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# ABOUT STOP THE SQUEEZE

Stop the Squeeze is a coalition campaign which aims to build support for bolder solutions to the cost of living crisis.

We believe the UK is facing this scale of crisis because of decisions made by the politicians in the driving seat of our economy, and that those politicians have the power to make different, better policy choices now. Solutions exist that can help people through the immediate crisis and address the structural problems with our economy that have led us here.

We aim to demonstrate that these bolder, progressive solutions are necessary, feasible, credible, and popular.

The campaign is led by a core steering group of three organisations: the [Economic Change Unit](#), [Tax Justice UK](#), and the [New Economics Foundation](#). It is supported by a coalition of 50 civil society organisations, trade unions, and grassroots groups. See [here](#) for the current list of supporting organisations.

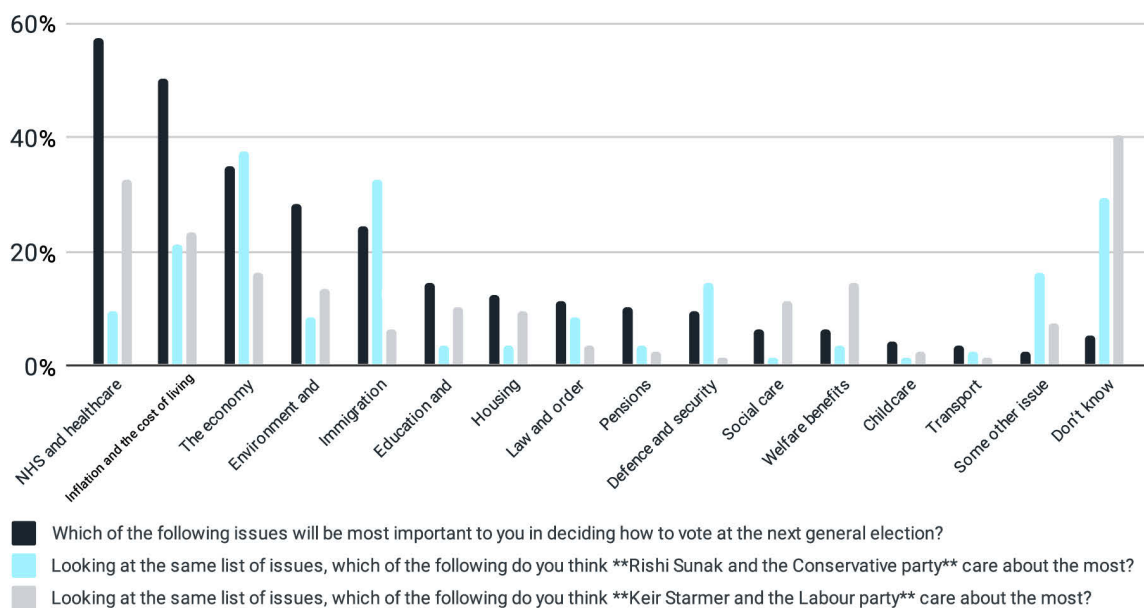
Supporter organisations have signed up to support the [campaign launch statement](#) and the demands of the campaign, they do not necessarily support every policy proposal that may be mentioned by the campaign.

This report has been produced by the Stop the Squeeze steering group. Other campaign supporters bear no responsibility for the content of this report and the arguments contained within.

# POLLING RESULTS

## 1. HOW IMPORTANT IS THE COST OF LIVING?

### Issue preferences for all voters



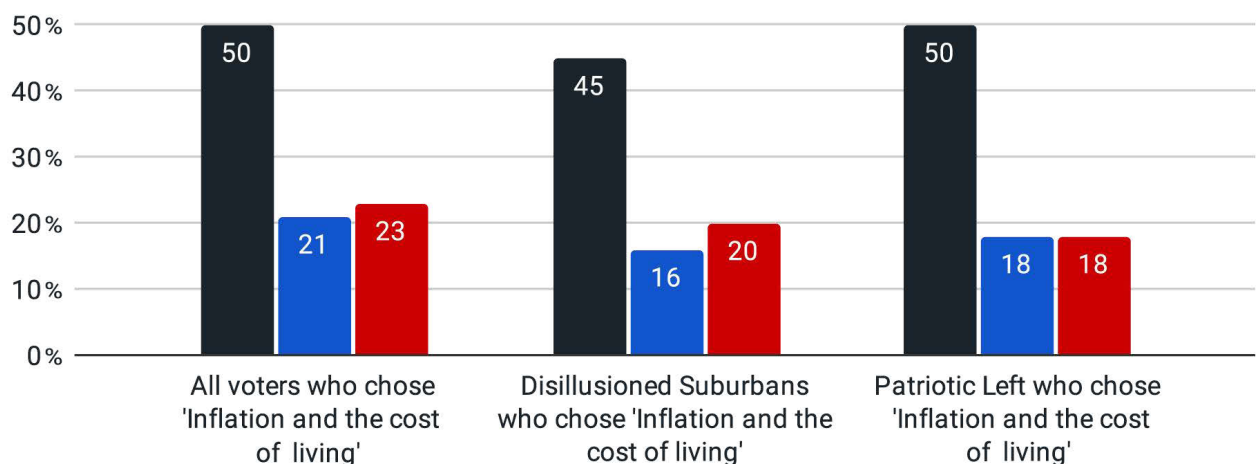
- Across all voters, the most important three issues determining how they will vote at the next General Election were 'NHS and healthcare' (57%), followed by 'Inflation and the cost of living' (50%) and then 'The economy' (35%).
- 'Inflation and the cost of living' scored highly among all voters (50%, just behind the 'NHS and healthcare' at 57%), but highest among people who voted Labour in 2019 (54%).
- 'Inflation and the cost of living' scored higher than 'The economy' for all voters (50% compared to 35%). Labour 2019 voters had the

highest preference for the former over the latter (+20%), which could reflect a difference in people's more visceral understandings of 'Inflation and the cost of living' in relation to their everyday experience, rather than more abstract understandings of 'The economy'.

- Disillusioned Suburbans and Patriotic Left voters care about the 'NHS and healthcare' (49% and 61%) and 'Inflation and the cost of living' (45% and 50%) significantly more than 'The economy' (36% and 27%). Disillusioned Suburbans have no clear priorities beyond this (all other issues stand at less than 20%). Neither do Patriotic Left voters, except for immigration, which scored highly (44%) - much higher than 'The economy' (27%).

### How do voter segments differ in their views about inflation and the cost of living, and the priorities of political parties?

- Which of the following issues will be most important to you in deciding how to vote at the next general election?
- Which of the following do you think **\*\*Rishi Sunak and the Conservative party\*\*** care about the most?
- Which of the following do you think **\*\*Keir Starmer and the Labour party\*\*** care about the most?



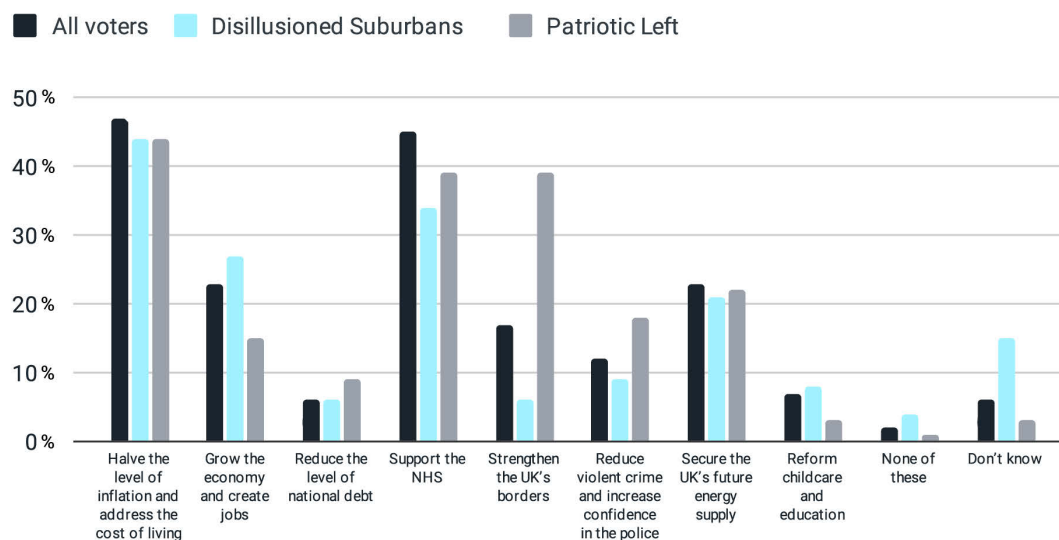
- Voters think 'Rishi Sunak and the Conservative Party' care most about 'The economy' (37%), 'Immigration' (32%) and 'Inflation and the cost of living' (21%), whereas voters think 'Keir Starmer and the Labour Party' care most about the 'NHS and healthcare' (32%),

‘Inflation and the cost of living’ (23%) and ‘The economy’ (16%).

- Neither of the two issues that people think ‘Rishi Sunak and the Conservative Party’ care most about (‘The economy’ and ‘Immigration’) are the top two issues for voters in deciding how they will vote in a general election (these are ‘NHS and healthcare’ and ‘Inflation and the cost of living’).
- Labour’s target voters of Disillusioned Suburbans are the second least likely group to think ‘Rishi Sunak and the Conservative Party’ care about ‘Inflation and the cost of living’ (16%). Only the Activist Left segment scores lower (11%).
- Overall, voters were only slightly more likely (2%) to think that ‘Keir Starmer and the Labour Party’ care most about ‘Inflation and the cost of living’ than ‘Rishi Sunak and the Conservative Party’. This was largely driven by a much higher response from the Activist Left segment (44%).
- There were marginal differences in how Labour’s target voters of Disillusioned Suburbans and the Patriotic Left viewed how much both parties care about ‘Inflation in the cost of living’ (4% lead in favour of ‘Keir Starmer and the Labour Party’ for Disillusioned Suburbans and no change for the Patriotic Left).
- A large proportion of voters ‘don’t know’ about the issues ‘Rishi Sunak and the Conservative Party’ care about (29%), and this is highest among Labour’s target segments of Disillusioned Suburbans (39%) and the Patriotic Left (40%). However an even greater proportion of voters don’t know which issues ‘Keir Starmer and the Labour Party’ care most about (40%). This was the most highly scored option for this question, and nearly half of Labour’s target voters of Disillusioned Suburbans and Patriotic Left say they

don't know which issues 'Keir Starmer and the Labour Party' care most about (47% and 46%, respectively).

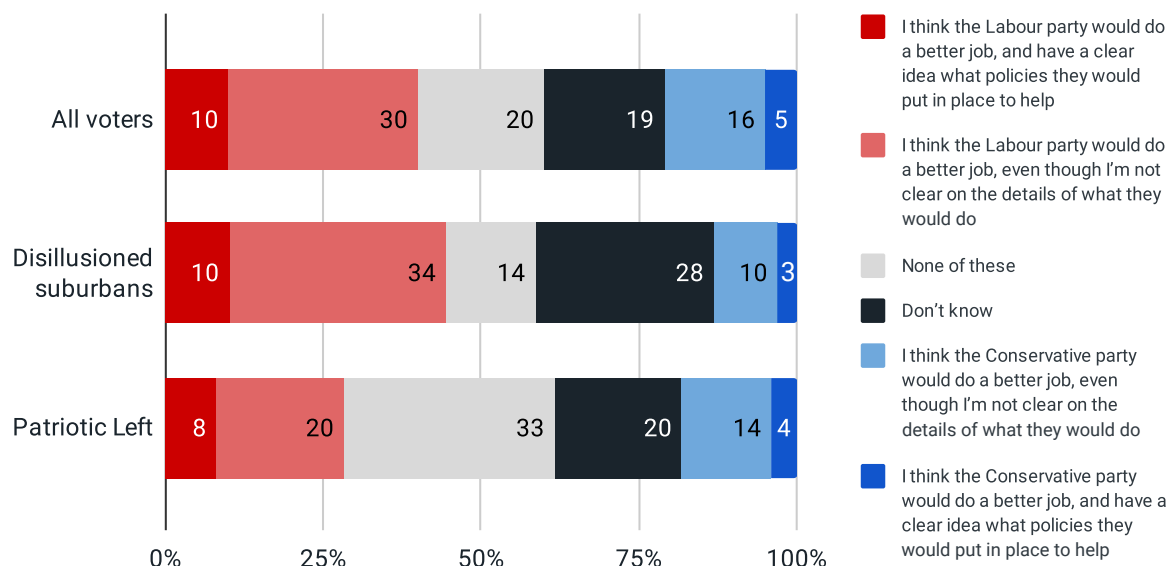
**When looking at the priorities of the major political parties, which of the following would be most appealing to you?**



- When asked which of the priorities of the major political parties (taken from Rishi Sunak's pledges and Keir Starmer's Missions) are the most appealing, 'Halve the level of inflation and address the cost of living' is the most popular option (47%), just edging out 'Support the NHS' (45%). Labour's target voter segments of Disillusioned Suburbans and the Patriotic Left preferred the former to the latter by significant margins (+10% and +5% respectively).
- 'Grow the economy and create jobs' and 'Secure the UK's future energy supply' scored joint third (23%). More voters cared about energy than reducing violent crime (-11%) or strengthening the UK's borders (-6%). 'Reduce the level of the national debt' was the least appealing priority of all voters (6%).

## 2. WHO DO VOTERS THINK CAN HELP ADDRESS THE COST OF LIVING?

### Which of the two main political parties do you think would do a better job of dealing with the rising cost of living?

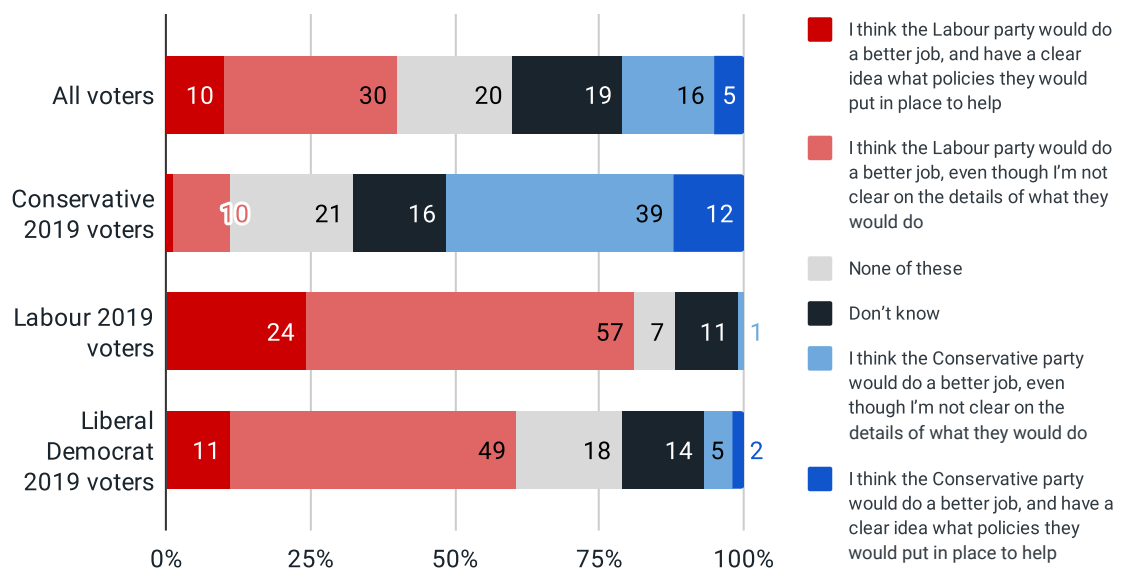


- Only 15% of all voters have a clear view on which policies either party will put in place to deal with the rising cost of living (10% for Labour and 5% for the Conservatives).
- More voters think Labour (40%) will do a better job of dealing with the rising cost of living than the Conservatives overall (21%). However, three in four voters who prefer Labour on this issue say that this is despite not having a clear idea of what the party would do. This was particularly high for Labour's target segment of Disillusioned Suburban voters (34%).
- The Conservatives are struggling to retain votes on this issue. Only just over half of Conservative 2019 voters (51%) trust the Conservatives to do the best job on the cost of living. They are not attracting any real support from 2019 Labour or Liberal Democrat voters either. However, only 11% of 2019 Conservative voters say

that Labour would do a better job on the cost of living, with far more refusing to pick either of the parties (21%).

- 60% of current Liberal Democrat voters prefer Labour on the cost of living, compared to only 7% who support the Conservatives. This suggests Labour may be able to gain tactical votes on this issue in an election.
- A significant proportion of right-leaning voters, the Rural Right and English Traditionalists, rate 'Inflation and the cost of living' as one of the most important issues in deciding how they vote at the next general election (49% and 41%, respectively), but are still 'not clear on the details of what they [the Conservative Party] will do' (29% and 36%, respectively).

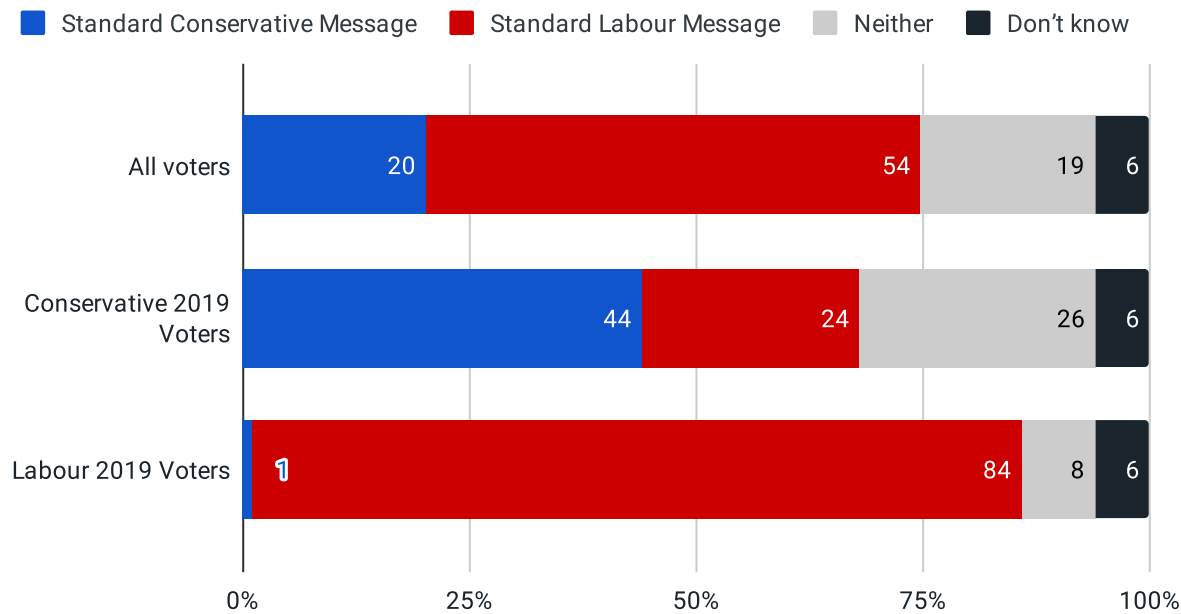
### Which of the two main political parties do you think would do a better job of dealing with the rising cost of living?



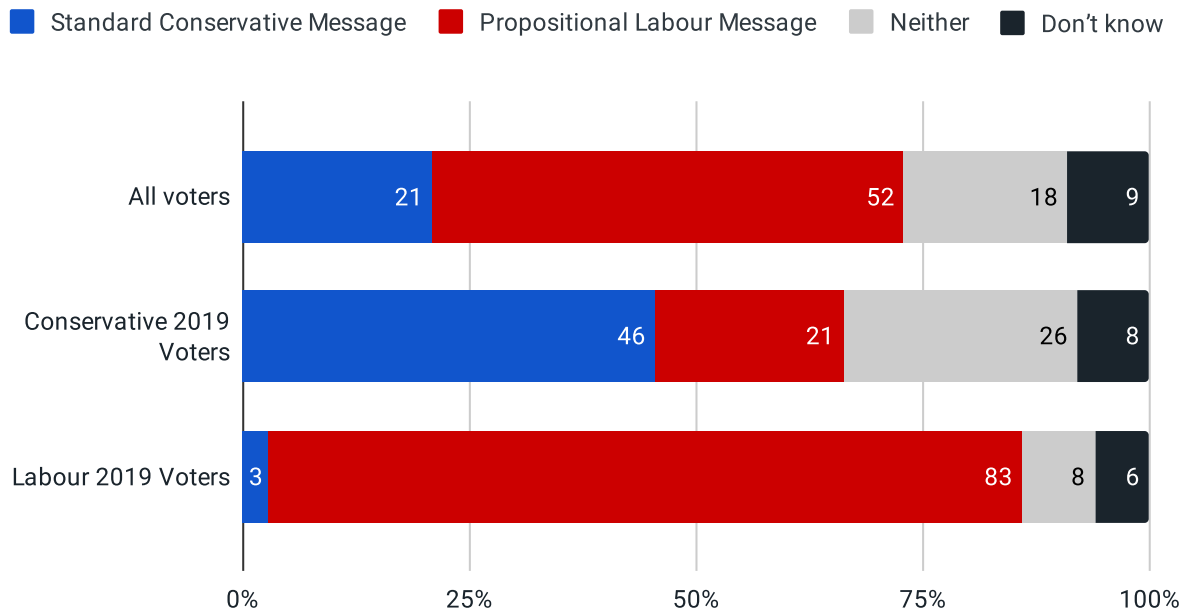


3. OPPOSITIONAL STATEMENTS

How do voters view messages on the cost of living?



How do voters view messages on the cost of living?

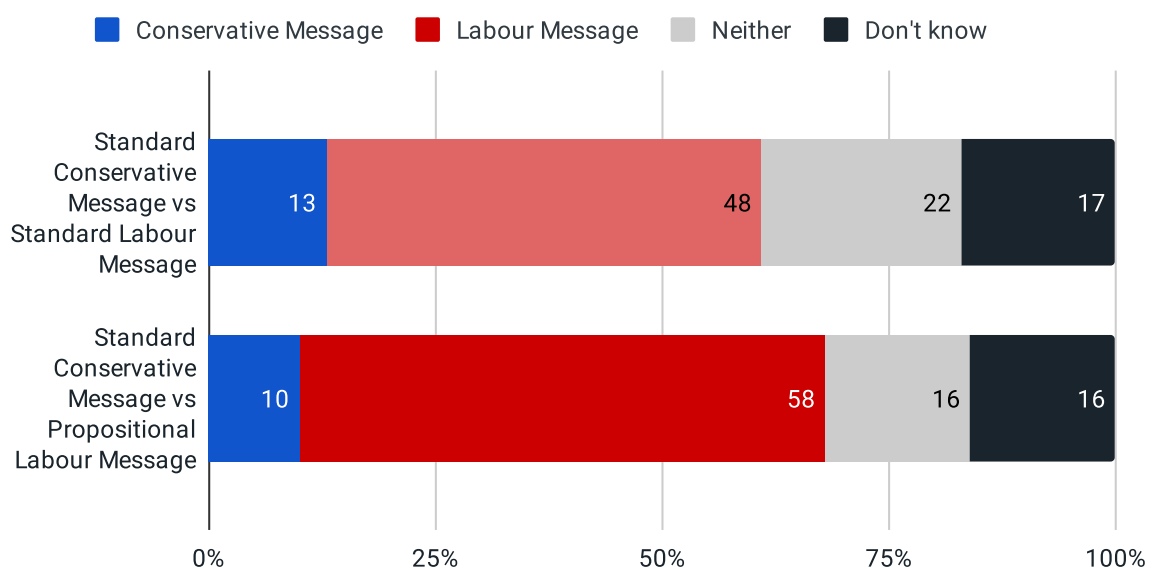


- When asked which messages voters find more convincing, voters

prefer a generic Labour message on the cost of living by a large margin (54% for all voters compared to 20%). This overall support hardly changes for the statement with bolder policy solutions Q7B (52%).

- This small swing is driven by propositional Labour message putting off right-leaning (non-target) segments, the Rural Right and English Traditionalists (-3% and -4%, respectively) and the more important Patriotic Left segment. However, this is counterbalanced by a more significant swing (+13%) in favour of the more propositional statement among the Disillusioned Suburbans, resulting in a 4% swing towards Labour among the two key target segments. This would suggest that having a clear retail offer on policies to deal with the rising cost of living, including policies that increase the minimum wage and social security payments, and raising taxes on the super rich, would help Labour win among a crucial target segment.

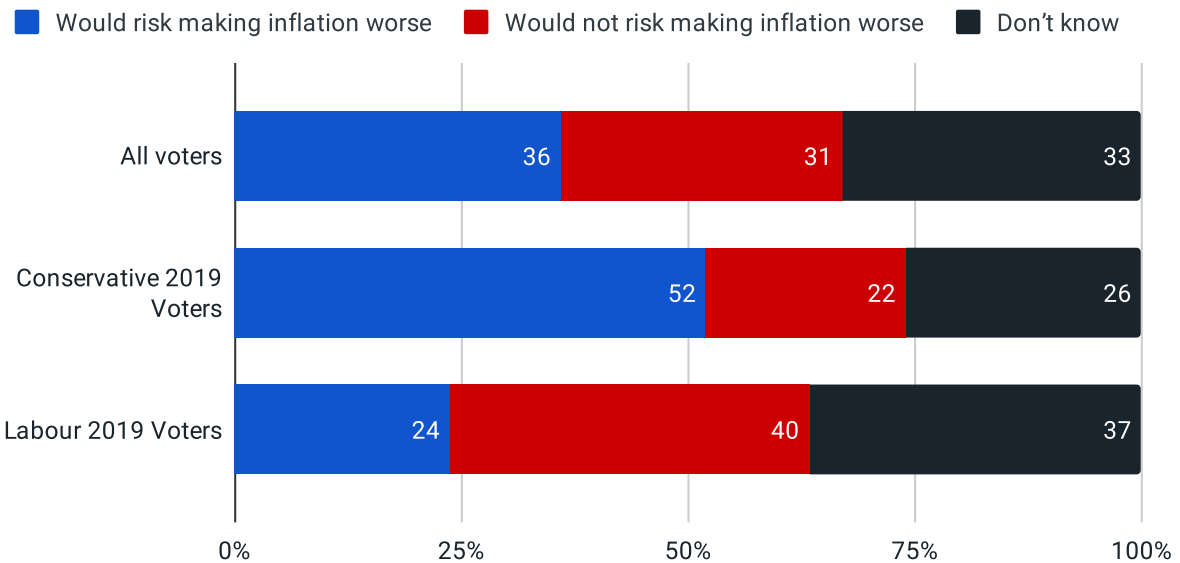
### How do 'Disillusioned suburbans' view messages on the cost of living?



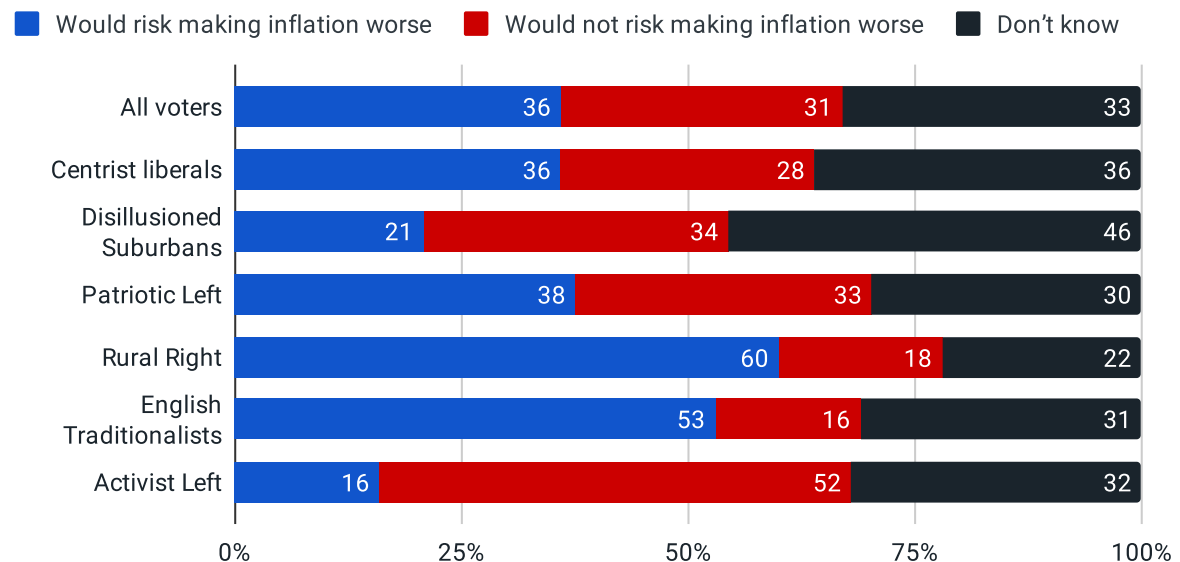
#### 4. PROVIDING MORE SUPPORT FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH THE COST OF LIVING

- Voters are divided on whether providing more support to households to help them afford the cost of living will make inflation worse. Slightly more people believe this kind of support would lead to higher inflation than disagree with the idea (36% to 31% respectively). A third of respondents still don't know (33%).
- Given that the main message of the government and important economic institutions like the Bank of England has been that offering more financial support to households to help them cope with the rising cost of living will stoke inflation, and the absence of a widely heard alternative narrative, the results suggest that there is strong latent support for an alternative narrative which may be able to gain traction if popularised. Certainly it is not a foregone conclusion that the public would reject more support as inherently inflationary. For example, only one in five voters (21%) within the Disillusioned Suburbans target voter group agree with the belief that more financial support will stoke inflation, 13 percentage points behind those who disagree. This segment also has the highest proportion of 'don't knows' (46%).

## Voters' views on whether giving more support to households will be inflationary or not



## Voters segments' views on whether giving more support to households will be inflationary or not

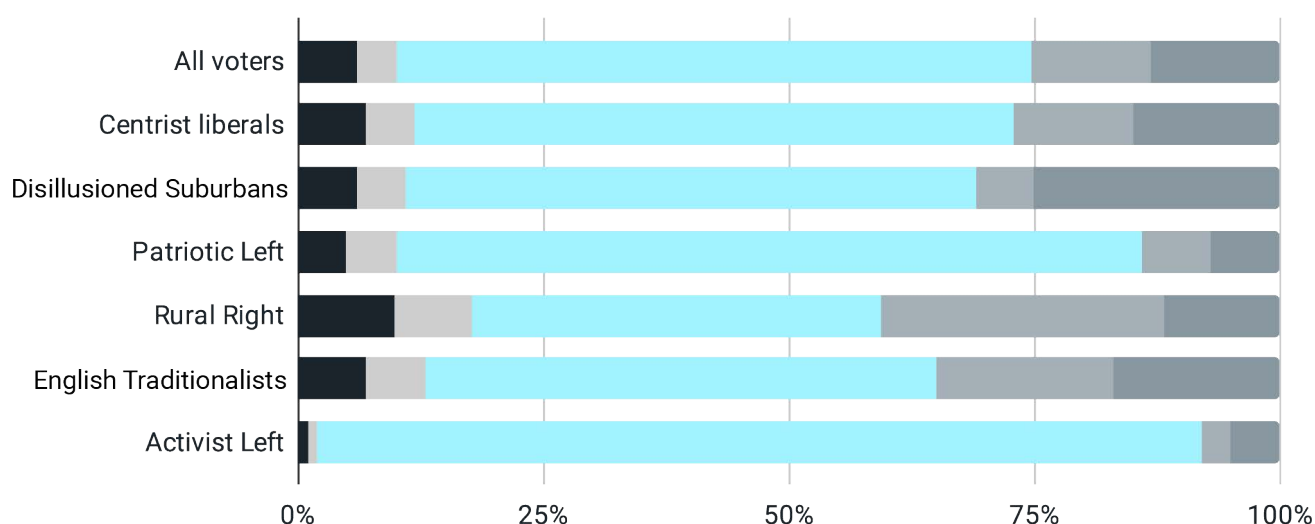


- When asked how any additional support should be funded, there is a very clear answer. Voters prefer for this to be paid for by 'increasing taxes on rich or wealthy people' by a large margin, with 64%

choosing this option compared to 4% for tax rises that affect those with average incomes, and 6% for additional borrowing. Voters in all segments preferred this option - even the right-leaning Rural Right and English traditionalists. Interestingly, Disillusioned Suburbans do not score as highly as other segments, perhaps due to the highest prevalence of 'don't knows' (25%)

## How should financial support for households be funded?

■ By the government borrowing more money, and paying it back in better times  
 ■ By increasing the taxes paid by people on average incomes  
 ■ By increasing the taxes paid by rich or wealthy people ■ Some other way ■ Don't know

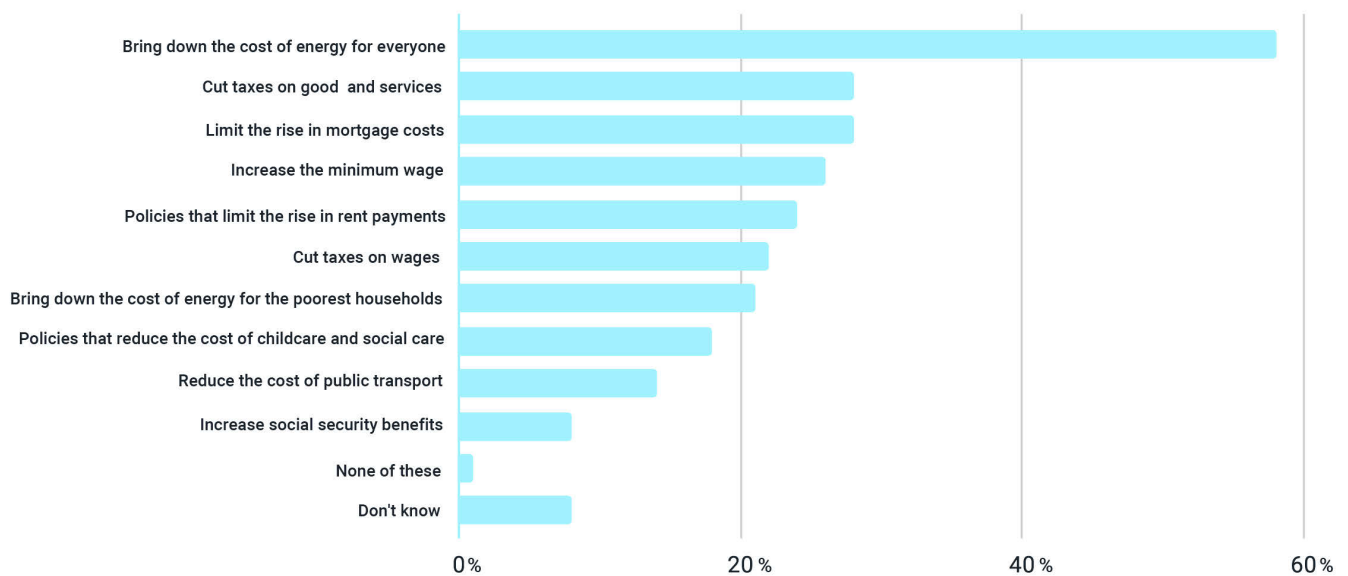


## 5. SUPPORT FOR POLICIES THAT ADDRESS THE COST OF LIVING

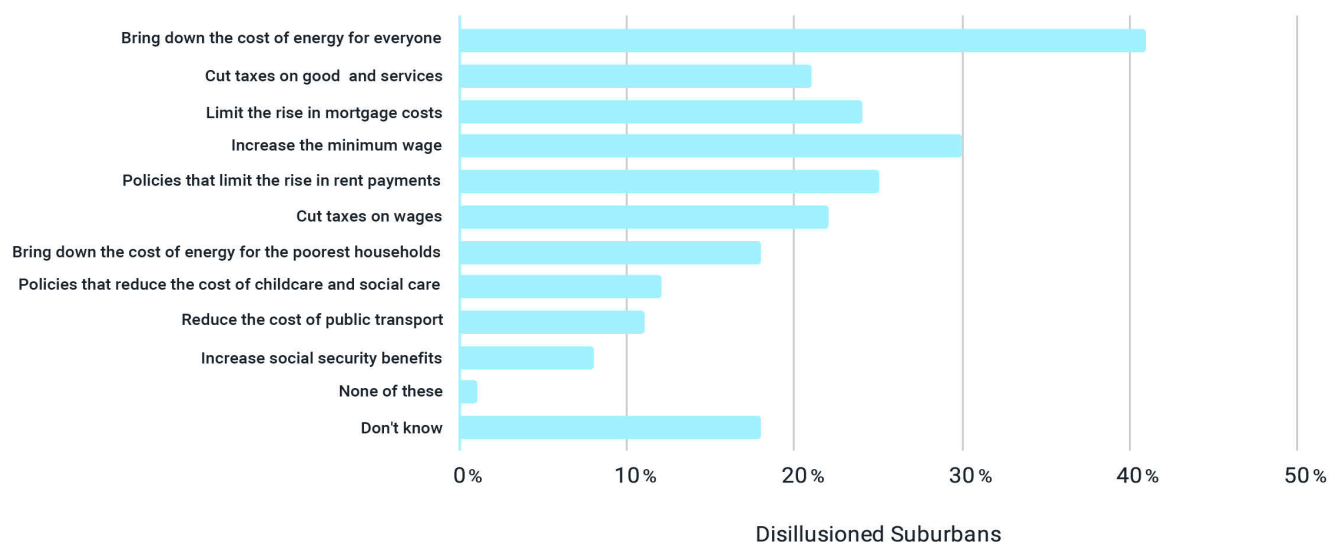
- When asked to choose priority areas for additional cost of living support, the most popular option by a large margin (58% for all voters) was 'policies that bring down the cost of energy for everyone' by a large margin, followed by 'policies that cut taxes on goods and services' (28% for all voters) and 'policies that limit the rise in mortgage costs' (28% for all voters). These were closely followed by 'policies that increase the minimum wage' (26%) and

'policies that limit the rise in rent payments' (24%). Interestingly, the option of cutting taxes on incomes performed less strongly, coming 6th overall in our list.

### Priority areas for cost of living action



## Support for cost of living policies for Disillusioned suburbans



- Voters in all segments - even those in right-leaning segments such as the Rural Right and English Traditionalists preferred 'policies that bring down the cost of energy for everyone' by a large margin. Disillusioned Suburbans scored the lowest (41%) on 'policies that bring down the cost of energy for everyone', even though this was still their highest scoring preference. This may again have been due to their high proportion of 'don't knows' (18%).
- 'Policies that bring down the cost of energy for everyone' (58%) performed much better than 'policies that bring down the cost of energy for the poorest households' (21%) for all voters, but also by a significant margin across all segments, which suggests voters prefer more universal policies to address the rising cost of living.
- 'Policies that increase the minimum wage' ranks second highest of Disillusioned Suburbans preferences (30%), and performs well across all segments. It performs better than 'policies that cut taxes

on wages' for all segments, except for right-leaning segments, such as the Rural Right and English Traditionalists (-28% and -9%, respectively).

- Other than the Activist Left, Disillusioned Suburban voters were the least likely to choose either of the tax-cutting options, and the most likely to choose raising the minimum wage.