



THE
POLICY
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College
LONDON

The “fault lines” in the UK’s culture wars

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June 2021

A photograph of a road with a crack, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter and text. The road is asphalt and has a visible crack running diagonally across it. The background shows a grassy embankment and a hazy mountain range in the distance. The text is overlaid on the image in white, with a purple background for the main title.

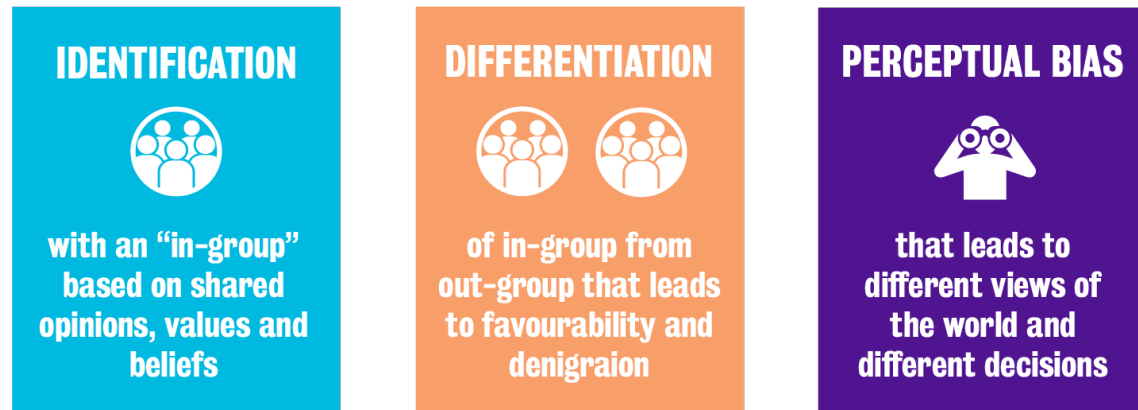
Culture wars in the UK

**“Fault lines” in the culture wars:
the issues dividing us**

The “fault lines” in detail

We explored six culture war issues in detail, using a consistent questioning approach for each by drawing on measurement approaches in the affective polarisation literature, to assess the strength of division between groups. The questions were formulated and asked in a three-stage approach:

- **Identification:** how strongly people identify with a “side” in a culture war debate.
- **Differentiation:** the social distance between one side and the other side.
- **Perceptual bias:** whether group identity affects perceptions of measurable realities.



The six issues examined are:

1. Party politics
2. Brexit
3. Covid-19
4. The British empire
5. The Black Lives Matter movement
6. Transgender rights

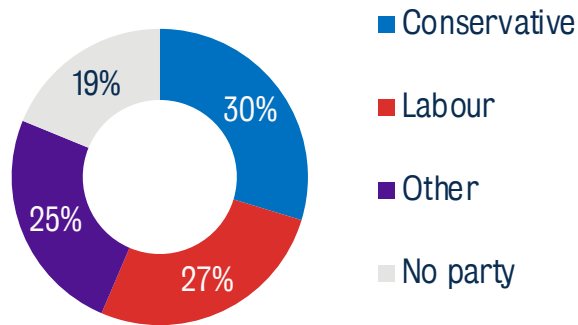
These were selected as a cross-section of the most prominent current debates, and are clearly very different sorts of issues. The question approach, particularly on identification measures, therefore varies to reflect these differences, and should be interpreted carefully.

The different sides in the UK's culture wars – and how many identify with them

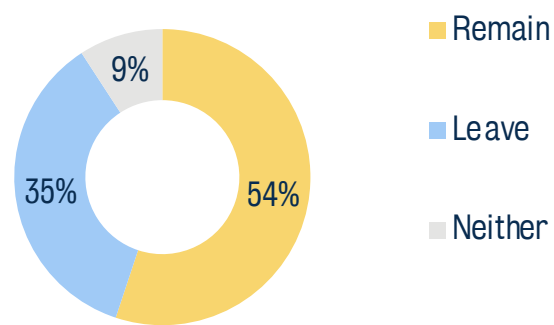
Very different proportions of the population identify with each side on various culture war issues – and many don't really take a side at all, indicating that while some of these topics may be divisive, they are not necessarily dividing the country to the extent that is sometimes suggested.

For example, only a small minority of the public make up the anti-lockdown side of the debate on Covid-19 restrictions, many people don't identify with one of the two main parties, and a large proportion of the public don't express any view on the British empire.

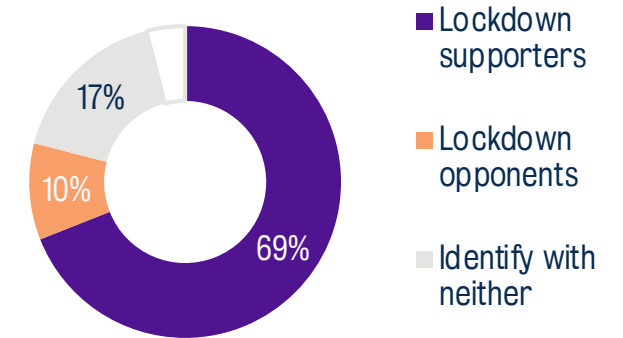
Party politics (supporters)



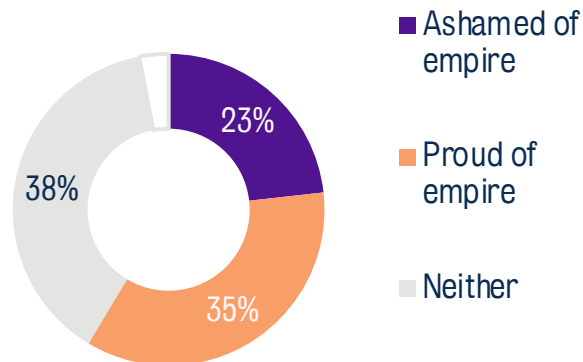
Brexit (supporters)



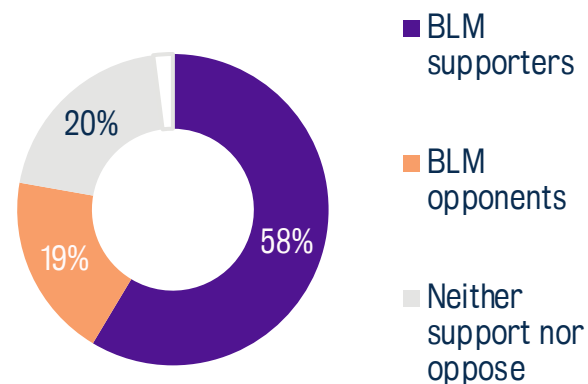
Covid-19



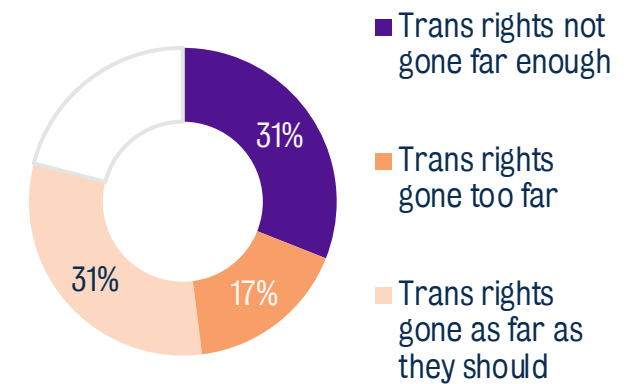
The British empire



The Black Lives Matter movement



Transgender rights



Culture wars in the UK

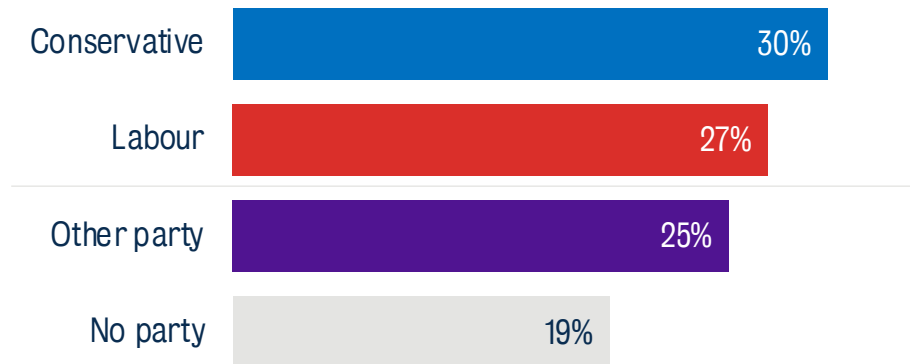
**“Fault lines” in the culture wars:
party politics**



Around three in 10 people identify as either a Conservative or Labour supporter, and one in four a supporter of another party

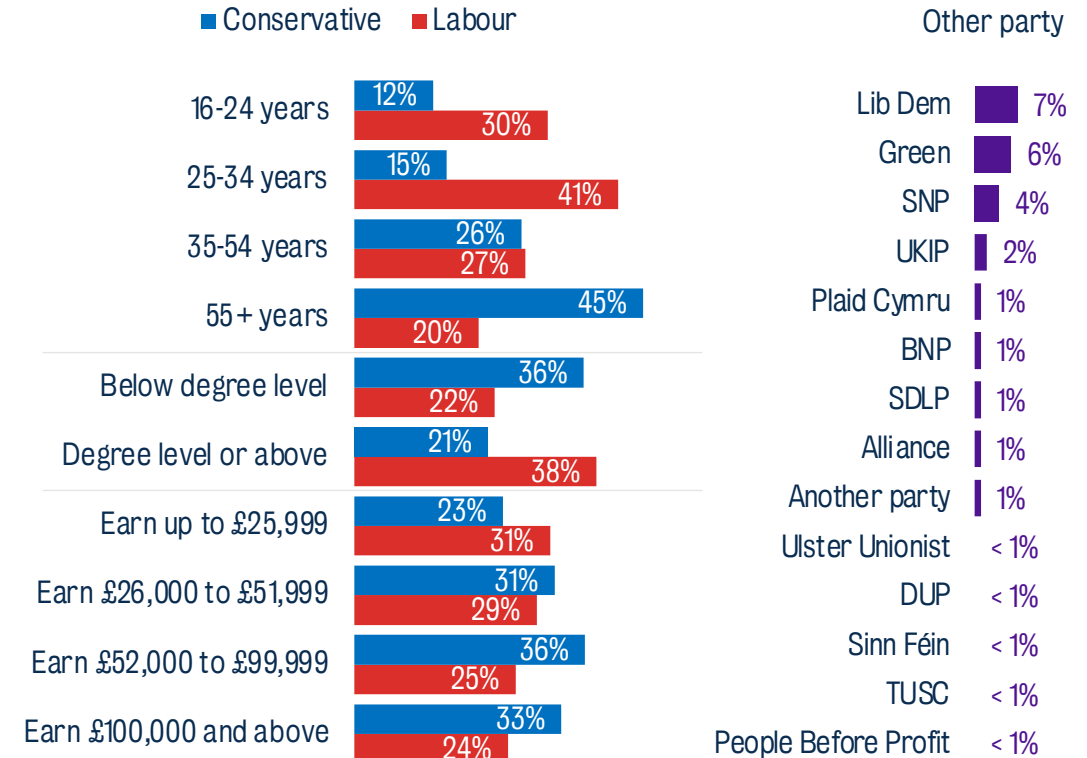
A majority of 57% say they consider themselves a supporter of one of the two main parties (30% Conservative; 27% Labour). This compares with 25% who identify as a supporter of another political party and 19% who don't see themselves as a supporters of any party.

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a supporter of any one political party?*



* Those who answered no were asked "Do you think of yourself as a little closer to one political party than to the others?" People who then chose a party are also included in chart.

Who are the supporters of the parties?



Conservative supporters tend to be older and wealthier than their Labour counterparts, while a greater proportion of Labour supporters are university-educated.

Among those who support another party, 7% of the population consider themselves Lib Dem supporters, 6% Green supporters and 4% SNP supporters.

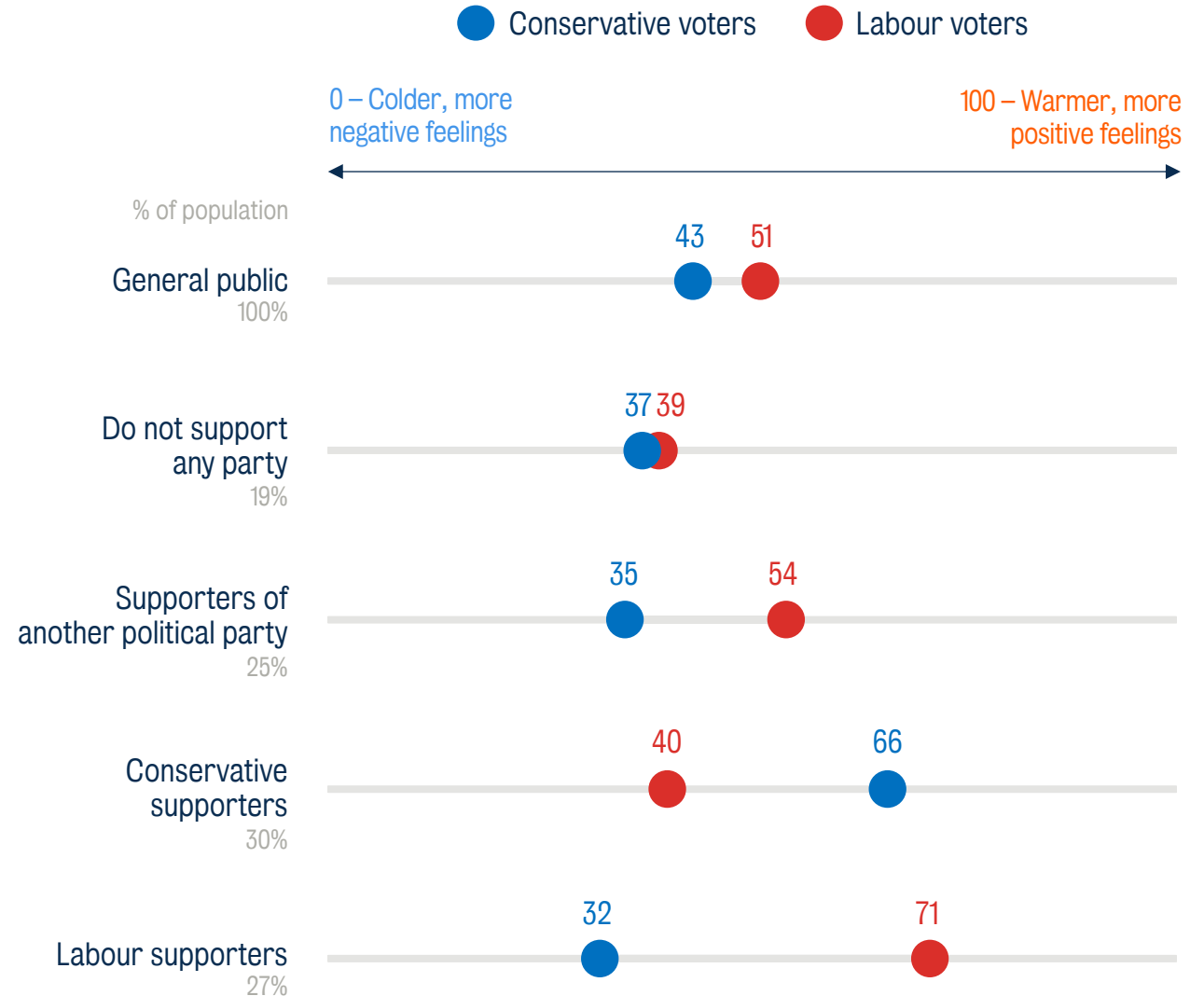
Both sides of the political divide have negative views of each other, with Labour supporters more negative about Conservatives than the reverse

When asked to score their feelings towards the other side out of 100 – with 100 the “warmest” feeling, and 0 the “coldest” – the general public say they feel more negative about Conservative voters (43) than they do about Labour voters (51). However, feelings are more polarised among those who do see themselves as belonging to one side or the other, and there is no difference among those who don't support any party.

Conservative and Labour supporters have a similarly positive view of their own sides, rating themselves at 66 and 71 out of 100 respectively. But there is a slightly bigger difference in how each side perceives the other: Conservatives give Labour voters a rating of 40, while Labour supporters give Conservatives a rating of 32, indicating relatively colder and more negative feelings.

Those who say they support another political party give Conservatives almost the same negative rating (35) – which is considerably colder than the score they give Labour voters (56).

Please rate your feelings towards Conservative and Labour voters, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



Labour supporters are more likely than Conservatives to say the other side are selfish, hypocritical and closed-minded

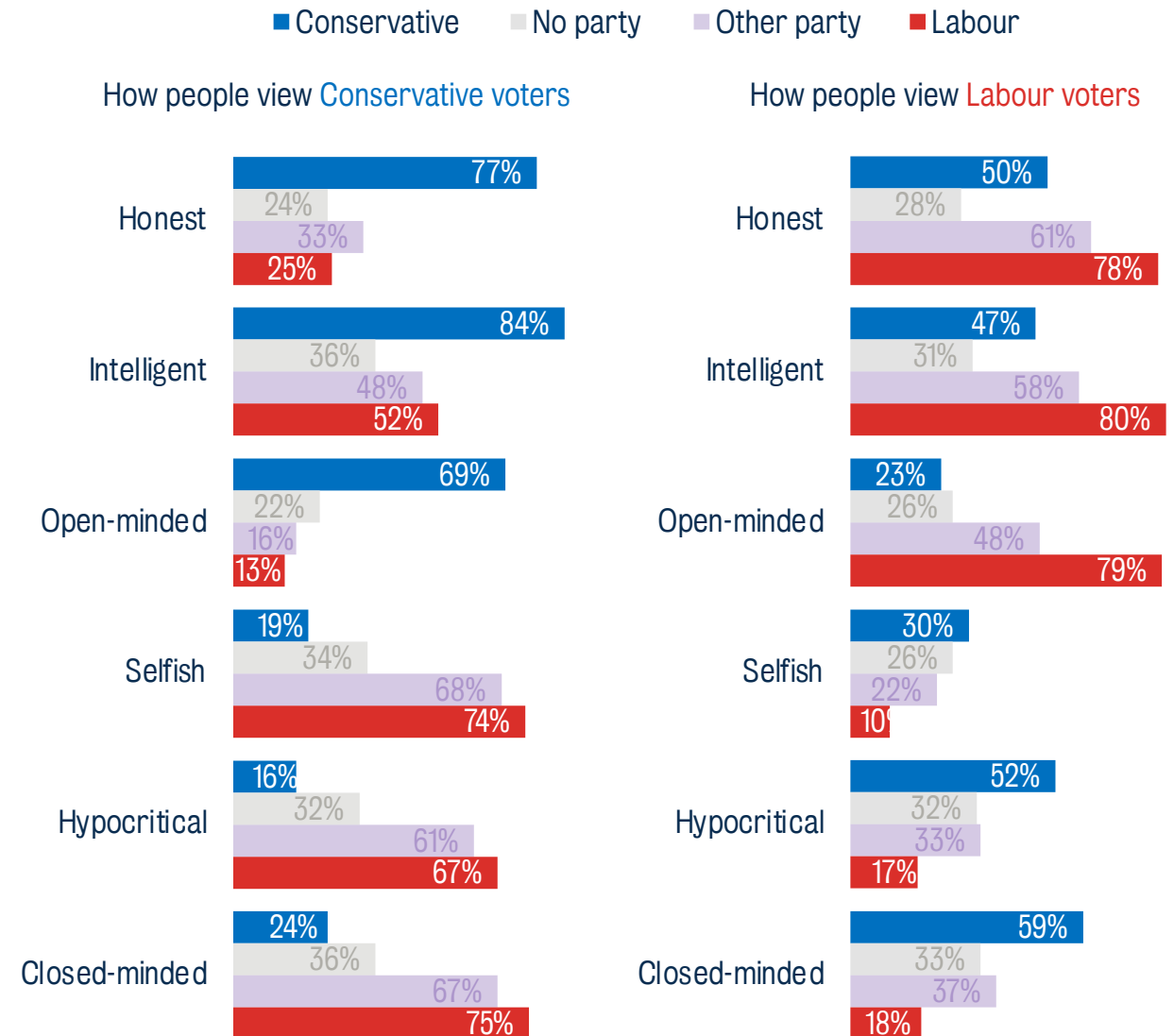
74% of Labour supporters consider Conservative voters to be selfish – more than twice the 30% of Conservatives who say the same about Labour voters.

Labour supporters are also more likely to describe Conservatives as closed-minded (75% vs 59%) and hypocritical (67% vs 52%) than the reverse, and half as likely to see them as honest (25% vs 50%)

Supporters of other parties tend to describe Labour voters more favourably than they do Conservative voters. For example, 61% of those who support another political party say Labour voters are honest, compared with 33% who say the same about Conservatives.

People who don't support any party have more similar views of the two groups, aside from on perceptions of selfishness, where Conservative voters (34%) are more likely to be seen as selfish than Labour voters (26%).

How well, if at all, do you think each of the following characteristics describe Conservative voters and Labour voters? % who say very or fairly well



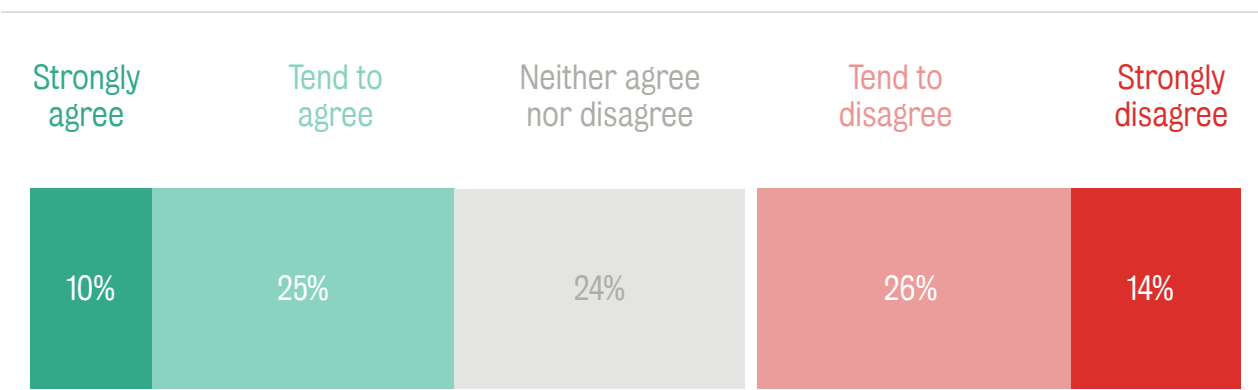
Labour supporters are much more likely than Conservatives to say it's hard to be friends with the other side

35% of Labour supporters say it would be hard to be friends with people who vote Conservative – five times the proportion of Conservative supporters (7%) who say the same about those who vote Labour.

In line with this, 65% of Conservative supporters disagree that it's hard to be friends with people who vote Labour compared with 40% of Labour supporters who say the same about Conservatives.

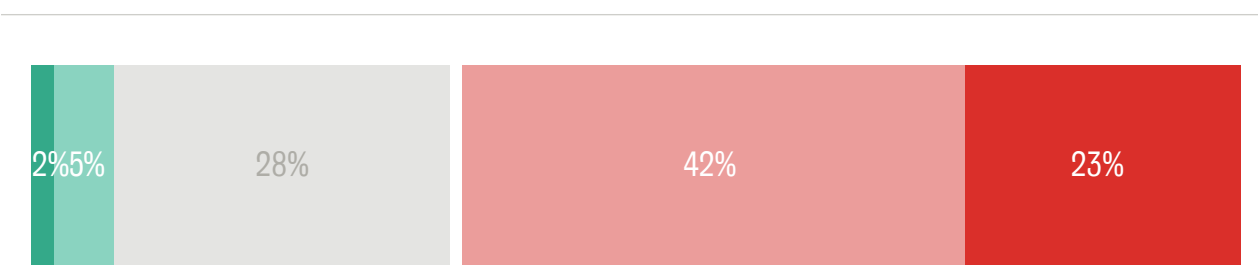
* Note some figures differ from charts due to rounding

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the **Conservative** party



* Asked to **Labour** supporters

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who vote for the **Labour** party



* Asked to **Conservative** supporters

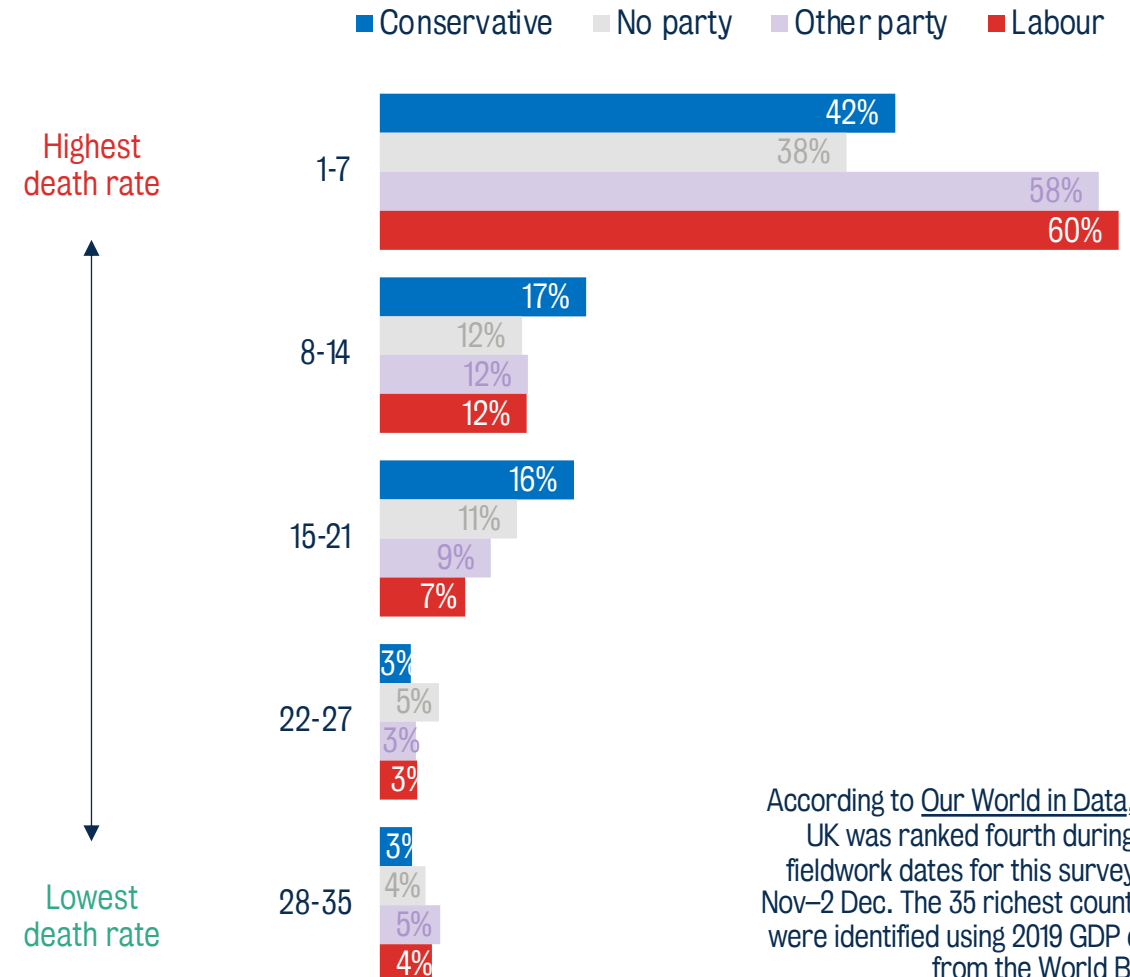
People's assessment of how the UK has fared during the Covid-19 pandemic varies according to their political allegiance

How people in the UK perceive the reality of coronavirus varies with their politics, with Labour supporters giving a more critical – and more accurate – assessment than Conservatives of how the country has fared during the crisis.

In late November / early December 2020, the UK had the fourth-highest Covid-19 death rate of the 35 richest countries in the world. Those who identify with the Labour party were much more likely than Conservatives to correctly judge that the UK had one of the top seven worst death tolls at the time (60% vs 42%).

By contrast, Conservatives were more likely (16%) than Labour supporters (7%) to place the UK somewhere in the middle of the ranking – though neither party's supporters see the UK as being among the advanced economies with the lowest proportion of deaths.

Thinking about the UK's experience of coronavirus, how do you think the UK's total death rate compares to that of other advanced economies? Specifically, where do you think the UK ranks among the 35 richest countries globally in terms of deaths directly attributed to coronavirus per million of population?



According to [Our World in Data](#), the UK was ranked fourth during the fieldwork dates for this survey: 26 Nov–2 Dec. The 35 richest countries were identified using 2019 GDP data from the [World Bank](#).



Culture wars in the UK

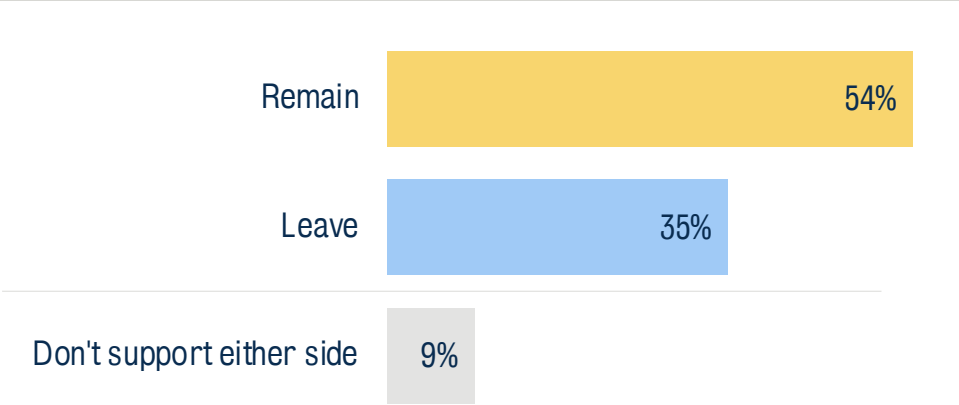
“Fault lines” in the culture wars:

Brexit

More people now identify as Remain supporters than as Leave supporters, with age and education a big dividing line between the two sides

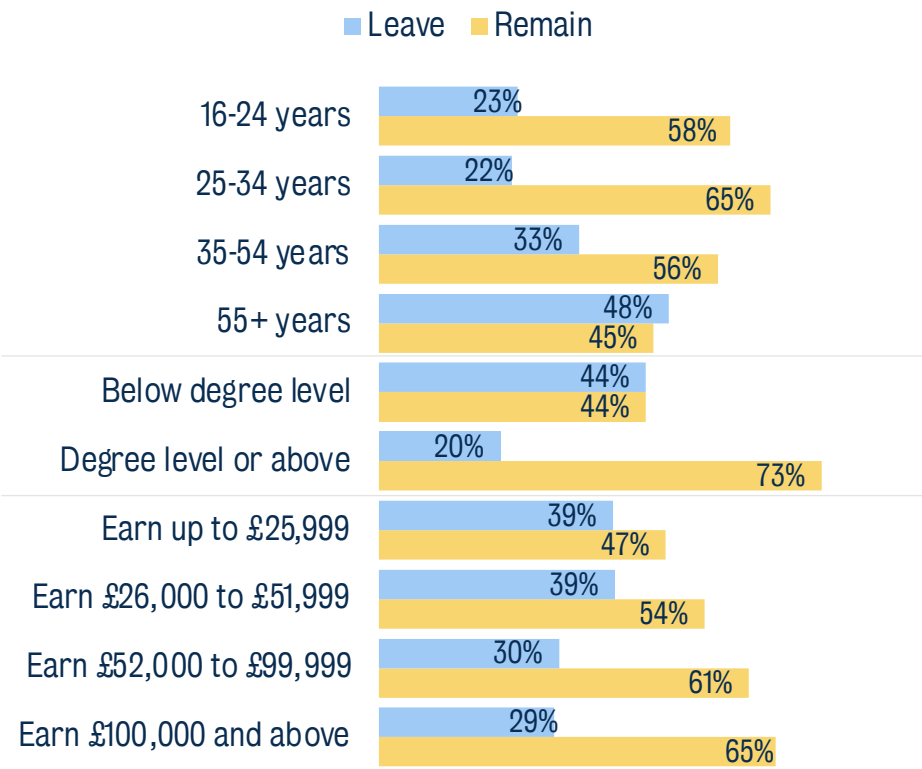
54% of the public now consider themselves a Remain supporter, compared with 32% who say they're a Leave supporter. Just 9% say they don't support either side.

Thinking about the UK's relationship with the European Union, do you think of yourself as a "Remainer", a "Leaver", or do you not think of yourself in that way?*



* Those who answered no were asked "Do you think of yourself as a little closer to one side than to the other?" People who then chose a side are also included in chart.

Who are Leave and Remain supporters?



People with university degrees are more than three times as likely to be Remainers as they are to be Leavers (73% vs 20%).

Younger people and higher earners are also much more likely to identify as Remain supporters – for example, 65% of those who earn £100,000 and above see themselves this way, compared with 29% who side with Leave.

Brexit is just as polarising as party politics, with Remainders feeling more negative about Leavers than the reverse

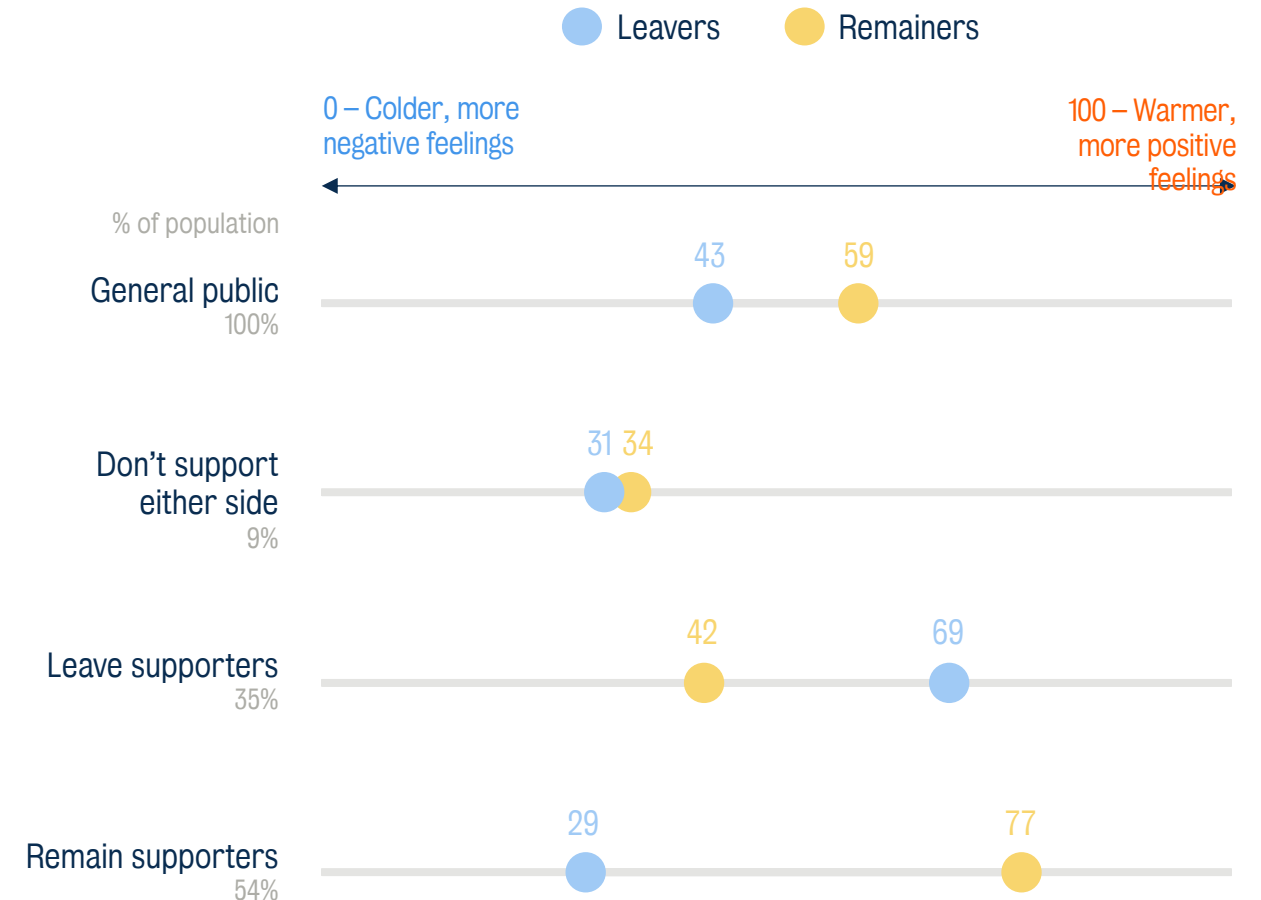
Remainers view Leavers in a more negative light than Leavers do Remainers, with the divide in perceptions similar to that between Labour and Conservative supporters.

Remainers rate their feelings towards Leavers at 29 out of 100, while Leavers give Remainers a warmer rating of 42 out of 100.

Those who don't support either side of the Brexit debate have very similar feelings towards both Leavers and Remainers. Both are viewed unfavourably, with Leavers given a score of 31, and Remainers a score of 34.

Among the general public as a whole, people have warmer feelings towards Remainers (59) than they do towards Leavers (43) – although this will partly reflect the higher numbers who now identify with Remain rather than Leave.

Please rate your feelings towards Leavers and Remainers, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



Across every characteristic asked about, Leavers are more positive about Remainners than Remainers are about Leavers

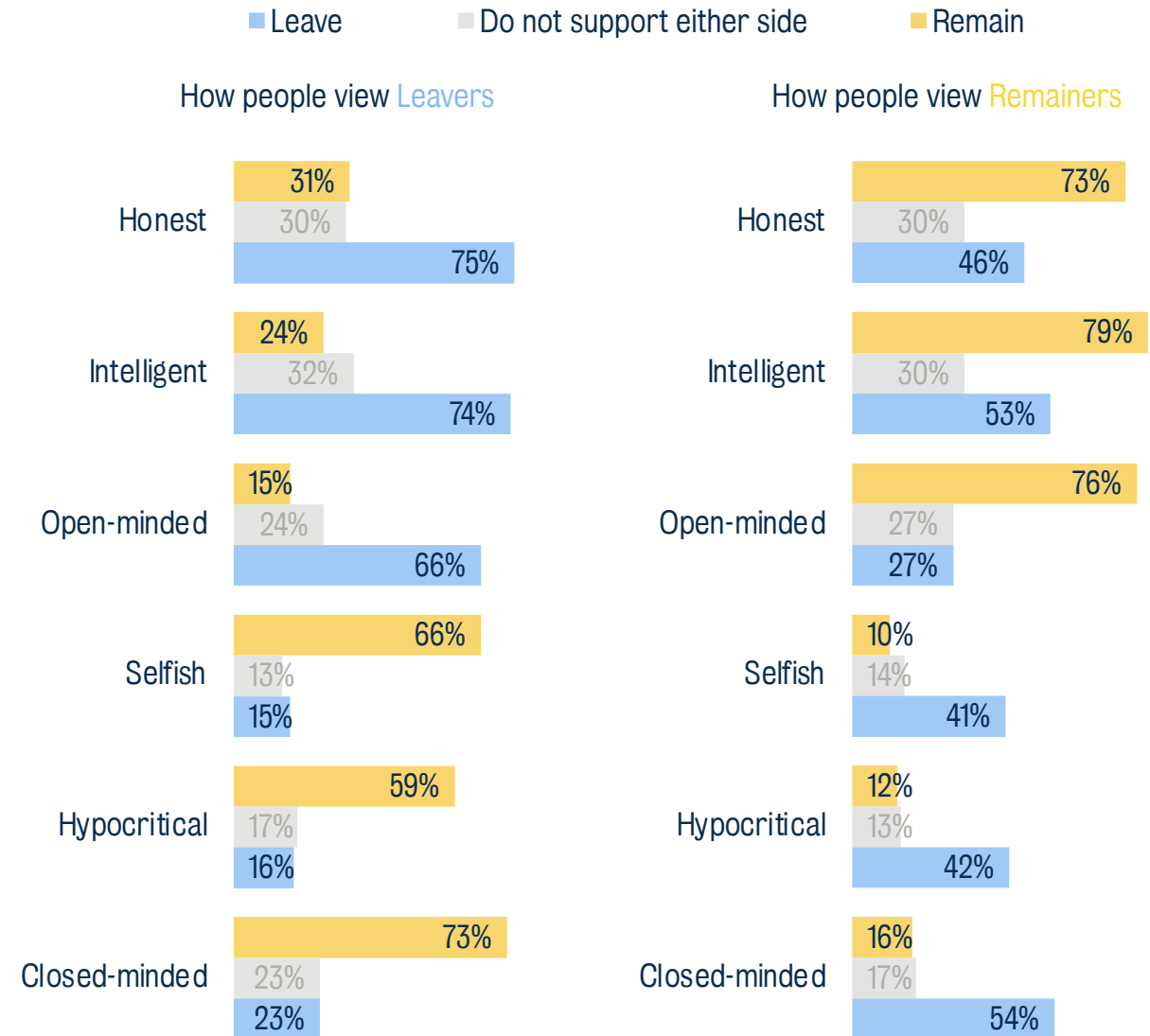
Leavers are more likely than Remainners to say that the other side is honest (46% vs 31%), intelligent (53% vs 24%) and open-minded (27% vs 15%).

Correspondingly, Leavers are also less likely than Remainners to describe the other side in pejorative terms – for example, by saying that they are selfish (41% vs 66%), hypocritical (42% vs 59%) or closed-minded (54% vs 73%).

And large majorities of Leavers and Remainners view those who share their views as honest, intelligent and open-minded, and only minorities believe the charges of selfishness, hypocrisy and closed-mindedness can be applied to their own side.

Among those who don't identify with either Leave or Remain, the two sides are viewed relatively similarly.

How well, if at all, do you think each of the following characteristics describe Leavers and Remainners? % who say very or fairly well



Leavers say they are more comfortable being friends with Remainers than the reverse

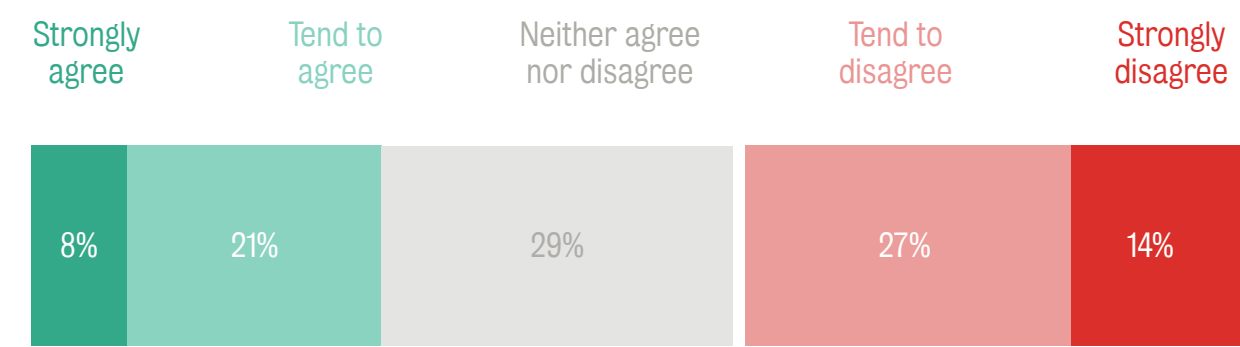
29% of Remain supporters say it's hard to be friends with people who voted Leave in the EU referendum – four times times the 7% of Leavers who say the same about Remain voters.

In line with this, 60% of Leavers do not think it's difficult to be friends with those who voted differently to them, compared with 41% of Remainers who feel this way.

Three in 10 of both groups say they neither agree nor disagree that they struggle to be friends with someone on the other side of the Brexit debate.

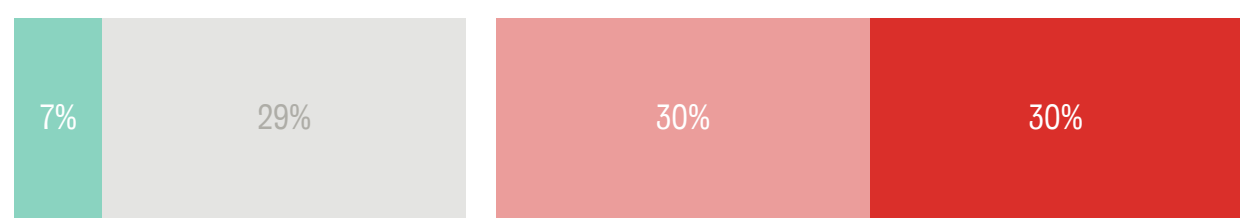
* Note some figures differ from charts due to rounding

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who voted **Leave** in the Brexit referendum*



*Asked to **Remain** supporters

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who voted **Remain** in the Brexit referendum*



*Asked to **Leave** supporters

People's position on Brexit is associated with different perceptions of European immigration

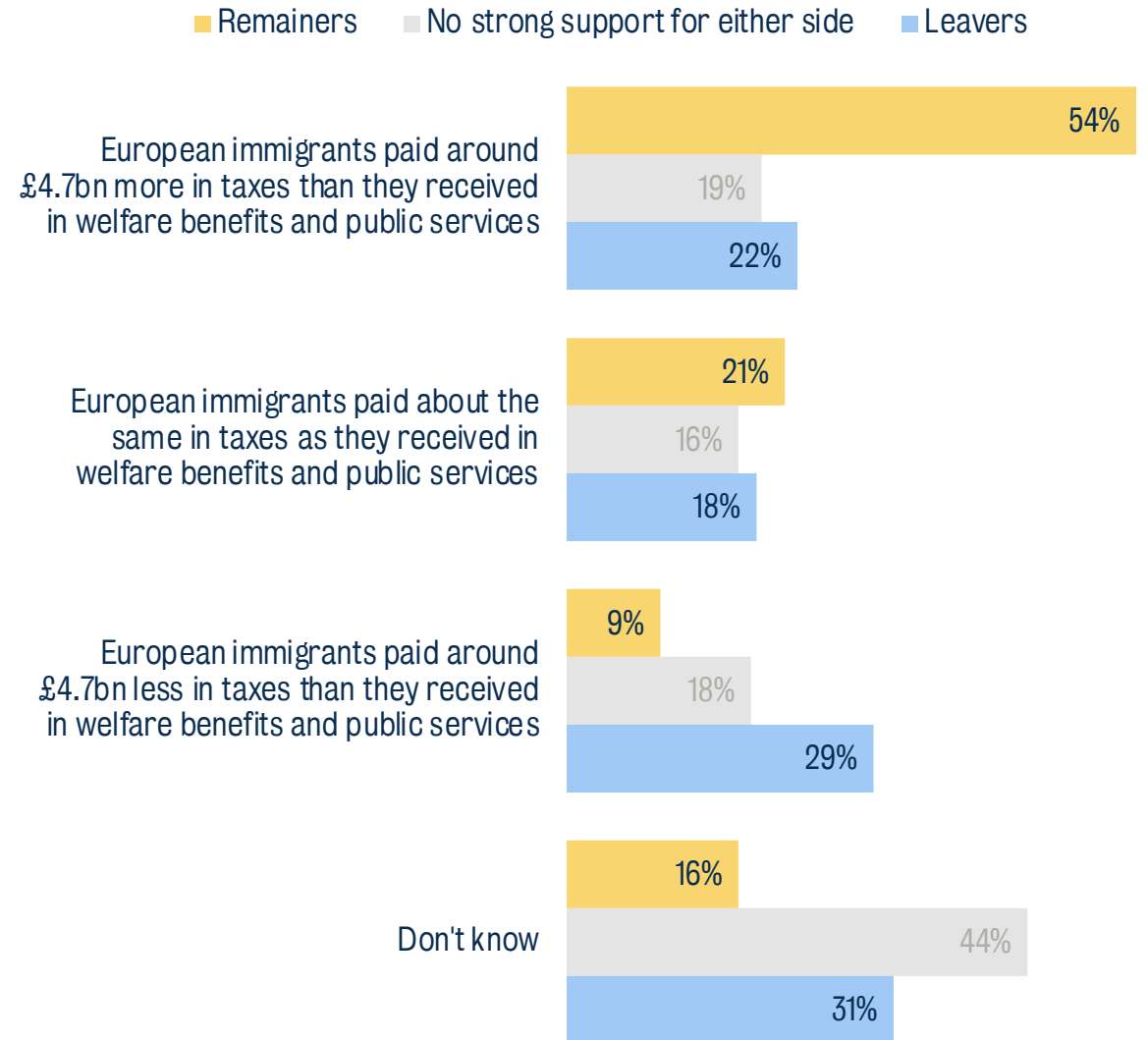
When asked a factual question about European immigration – a policy issue closely linked to Brexit – Leavers and Remainers tend to give very different responses, and these responses largely align with the view that might be expected of their side of the debate.

Over half of Remainers (54%) correctly believe that, in 2016/17, European immigrants in the UK contributed more in taxes than they received in welfare benefits and public services, compared with one in five (22%) Leavers who believe this.

Correspondingly, Leavers (29%) are three times as likely as Remainers (9%) to think that immigrants from Europe paid less in taxes than they received in benefits and services.

Those who identify with neither side of the Brexit debate are much more divided in their responses, with nearly half (44%) saying they don't know what the true situation is and the other half distributed evenly across the other response options.

Which of these do you think was true in the UK in 2016/17?



Source: [Migration Advisory Committee](#)

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a light blue surgical face mask and a brown jacket, is looking upwards in a supermarket aisle. She is holding a shopping basket. The background shows shelves stocked with various products, including bags of chips. The image has a blue tint.

Culture wars in the UK

“Fault lines” in the culture wars:

Covid-19

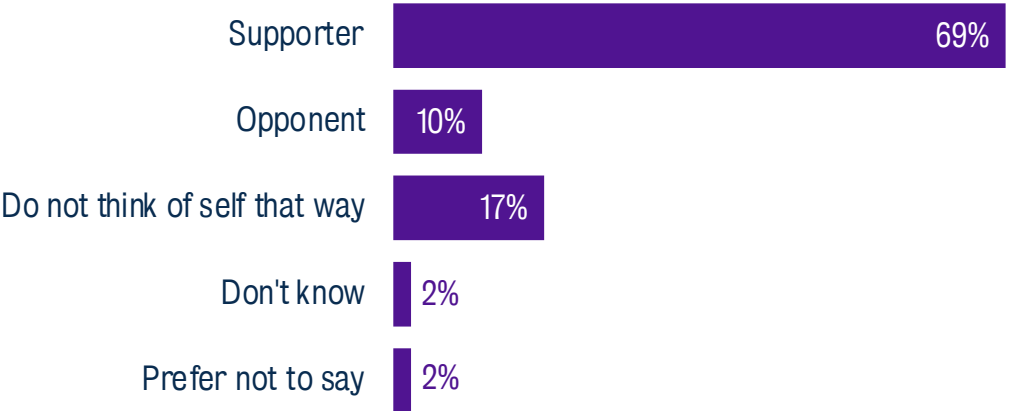
The majority of the public identify as supporters of the coronavirus restrictions – but some groups are less likely than others to see themselves this way

Seven in 10 people (69%) say they see themselves as a supporter of the Covid-19 restrictions introduced by the UK government – compared with one in 10 (10%) who identify as an opponent of the rules. 17% of people say they do not think of themselves as either a supporter or opponent.

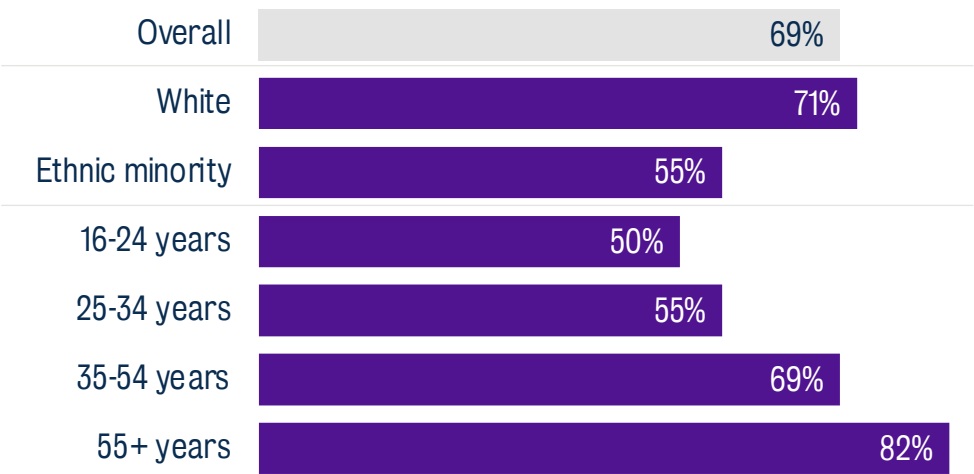
And while majorities of most groups identify as a supporter of the rules, there are big differences in how likely they are to see themselves this way. For example, those from ethnic minority groups (55%) are less likely than white people (71%) to identify as a lockdown supporter.

And 82% of people aged 55 and above consider themselves supporters of the restrictions, which declines across younger age groups, with 50% of 16- to 24-year-olds identifying with this position.

The UK government has imposed a series of restrictions on how we live, including lockdowns and wearing of masks in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Do you think of yourself as a supporter or an opponent of these restrictions, or do you not think of yourself in that way?



% who identify as a supporter of the coronavirus restrictions



Lockdown opponents are viewed unfavourably not just by lockdown supporters but also those who identify with neither side

Lockdown supporters – who comprise the majority of the population – say they have particularly cold feelings towards lockdown opponents, rating them at just 22 out of 100.

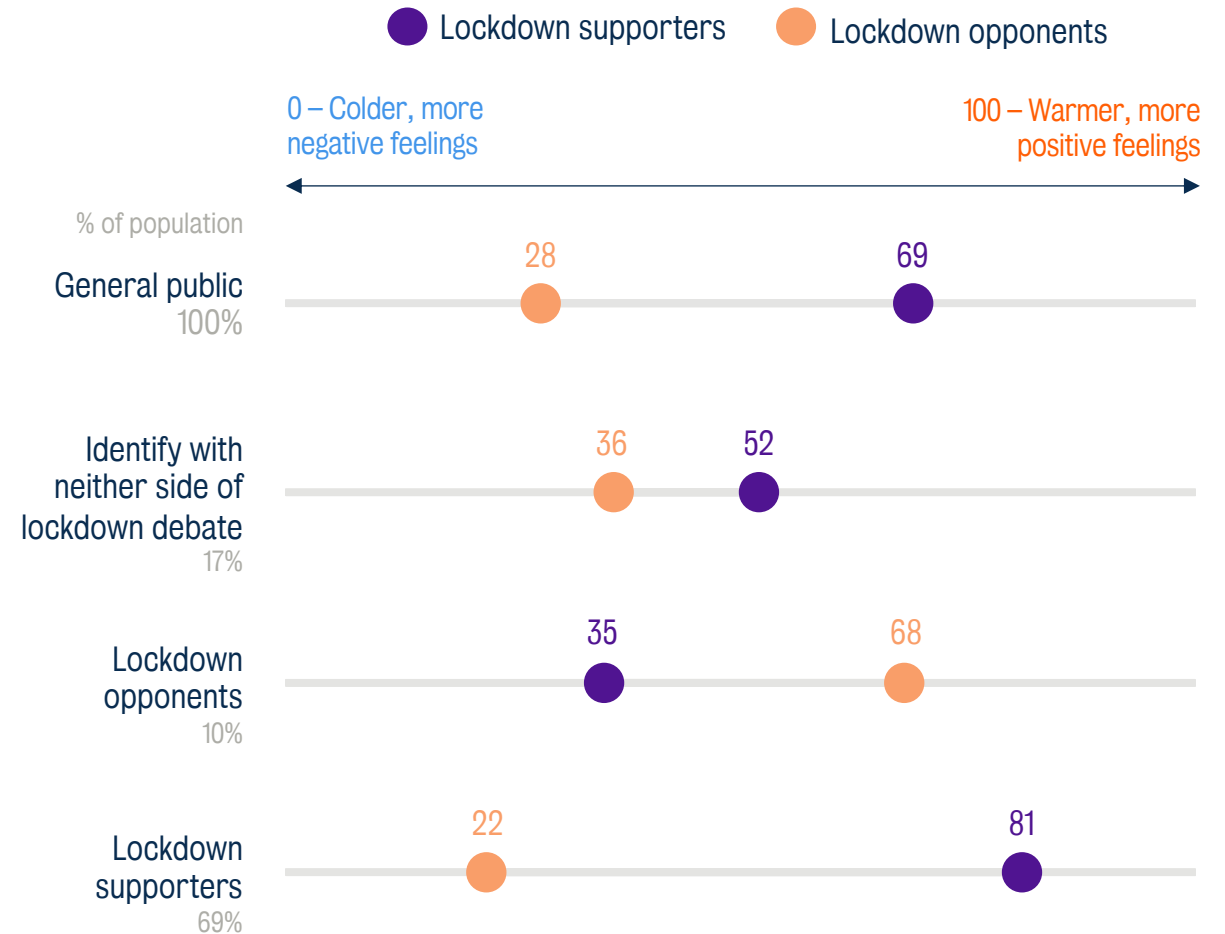
Lockdown opponents, by contrast, have a somewhat warmer – albeit still negative – view of the other side, giving them a rating of 35 out of 100.

Compared with lockdown supporters, lockdown opponents are also less positive about others like them, giving those on their side of the divide a colder rating (69 vs 81).

Reflecting the larger proportion of the population who back the lockdown rules, among the public as a whole, supporters of the restrictions (69) are viewed much more favourably than those who oppose them (28).

There is also a big divide, in the same direction, among the minority who say they identify with neither side of the lockdown debate (52 vs 36).

Please rate your feelings towards lockdown supporters and lockdown opponents, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



Lockdown supporters overwhelmingly associate lockdown opponents with negative characteristics

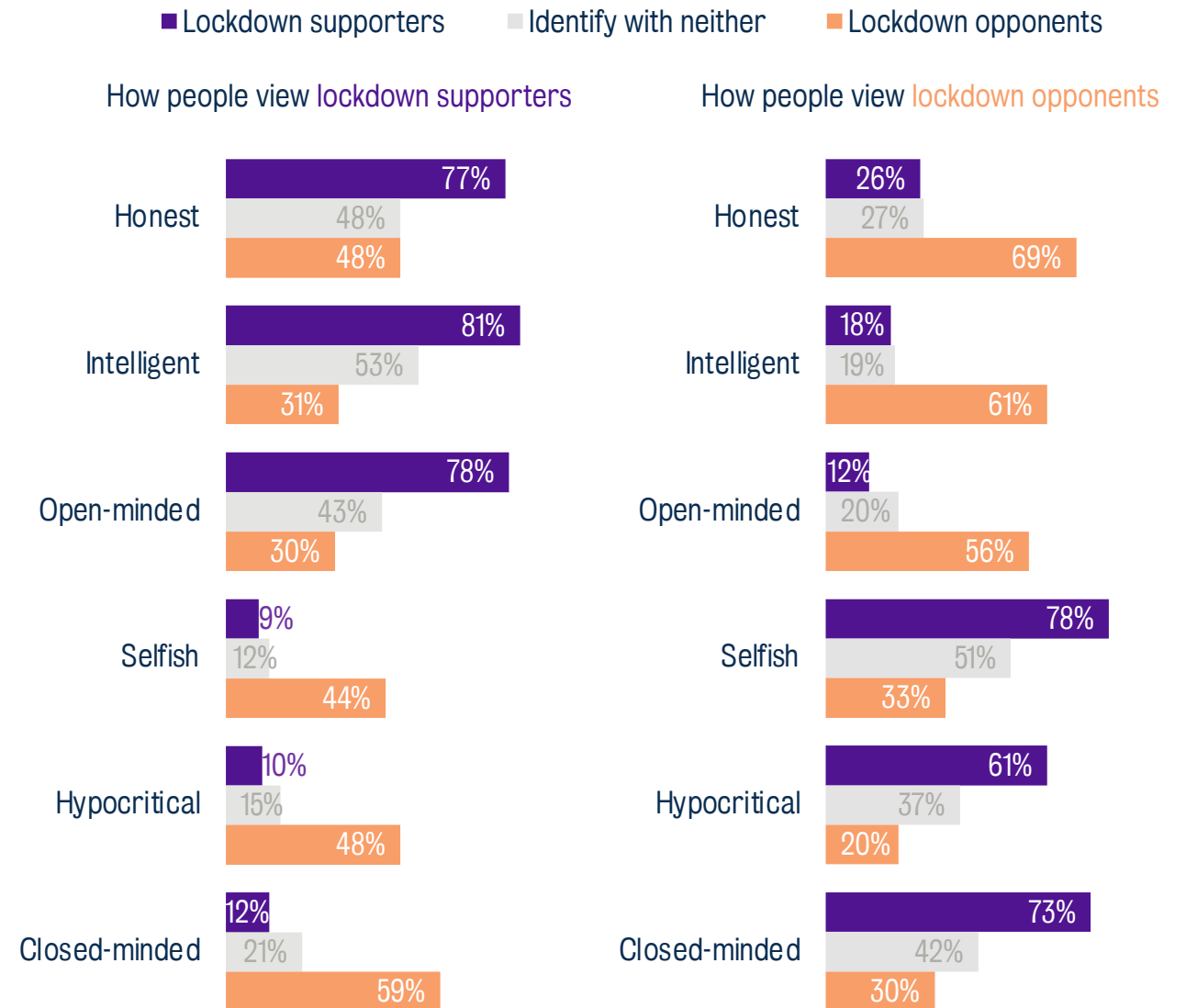
Over 70% of lockdown supporters describe lockdown opponents as selfish and closed-minded, and 61% believe they are hypocritical.

Most lockdown opponents also describe the other side in pejorative terms, although smaller proportions have such negative perceptions – with, for example, 44% saying lockdown supporters are selfish.

Those who are against the Covid-19 restrictions are also more likely than those who support them to describe the other side as honest (48% vs 26%), intelligent (31% vs 18%) and open-minded (30% vs 12%).

And people who do not identify with a side in this debate have a much more negative perception of lockdown opponents than they do of lockdown supporters. For instance, 51% of this group think those who oppose the restrictions are selfish, compared with 12% who say the same about those who are in favour of the rules.

How well, if at all, do you think each of the following characteristics describe lockdown supporters and opponents? % who say very or fairly well



A majority of lockdown supporters say they struggle to be friends with someone who opposes lockdown

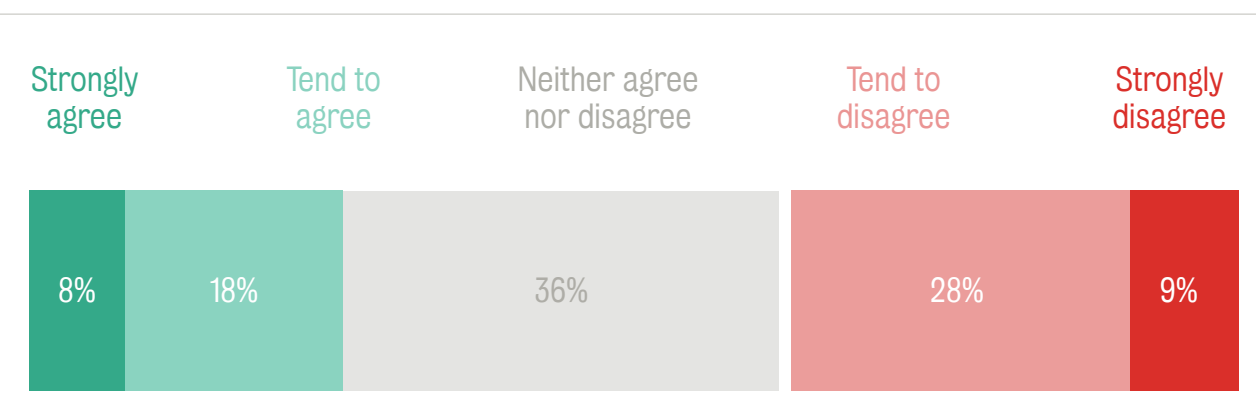
Lockdown supporters (55%) are twice as likely as lockdown opponents (27%) to say it's difficult to be friends with people on the other side of the debate.

In line with this, lockdown opponents are much more confident that someone's position on the coronavirus restrictions isn't a barrier to their being friends with them: 37% disagree that it's be hard to form such a friendship – almost three times the 13% of lockdown supporters who feel the same.

Around three in 10 people on both sides of this debate say they neither agree nor disagree that it's hard to be friends with someone with the opposing view.

* Note some figures differ from charts due to rounding

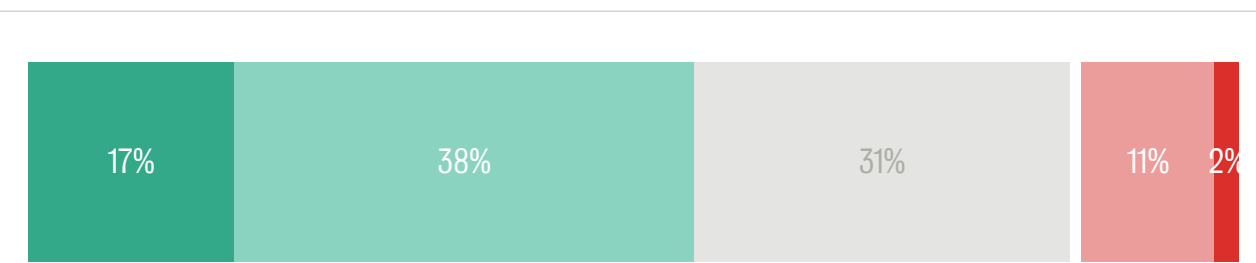
To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who **support** the government's restrictions on how we live in response to the coronavirus outbreak*



*Asked to people who are **oppose** the coronavirus restrictions

Base: 382 UK adults aged 16+ who oppose lockdown restrictions, interviewed 1-7 Apr 2021

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who **oppose** the government's restrictions on how we live in response to the coronavirus outbreak*



*Asked to people who are **support** the coronavirus restrictions

Base: 6,725 UK adults aged 16+ who support lockdown restrictions, interviewed 1-7 Apr 2021

Lockdown opponents are less likely to recognise that face masks are effective and more likely to believe conspiracies linked to the pandemic

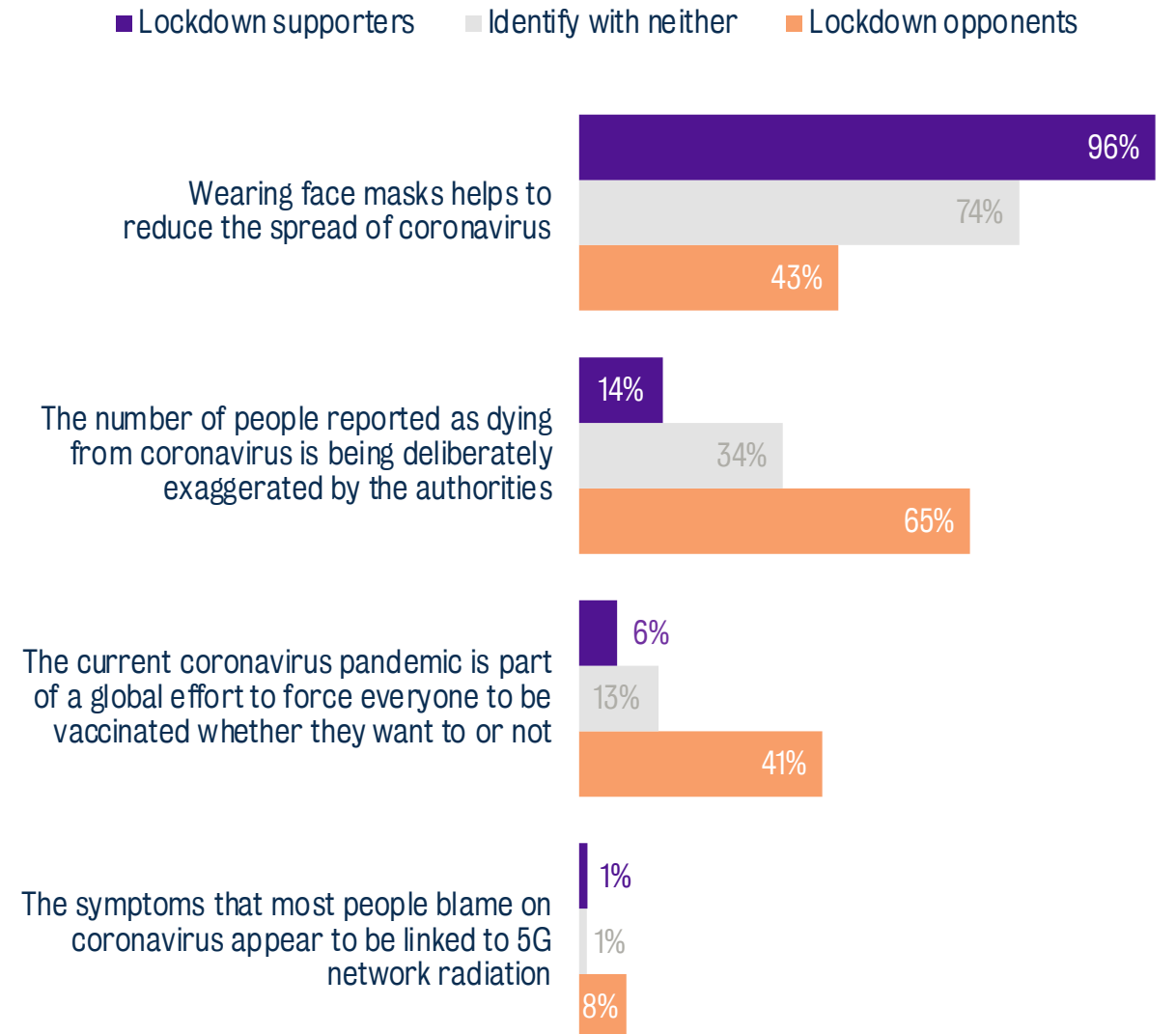
People's views on issues related to the coronavirus crisis differ according to whether they identify as a supporter or an opponent of lockdown.

For example, while 96% of lockdown supporters believe that face masks help to prevent the spread of the virus, this is true of 43% of lockdown opponents.

Meanwhile, lockdown opponents (65%) are more than four times as likely as lockdown supporters (14%) to believe that deaths from coronavirus are being exaggerated, and nearly seven times as likely to believe the pandemic is part of a global effort to forcibly vaccinate people (41% vs 6%).

Relatively few people on either side of this debate endorse the idea that coronavirus symptoms are linked to 5G radiation, although lockdown opponents are more likely than lockdown supporters to believe this (8% vs 1%).

Do you consider the following statements to be true or false? % who say true



A photograph of a city street featuring a statue of a man in a long coat and hat, standing on a pedestal. The name 'CLIVE' is visible on the base of the statue. The street is lined with grand, classical-style buildings. In the foreground, there are wide stone steps leading up to the statue. A few people are sitting on the steps. A small green and white vehicle with 'MURPHY' written on it is parked near the steps. The overall scene is in a historical or urban setting.

Culture wars in the UK

“Fault lines” in the culture wars: the British empire

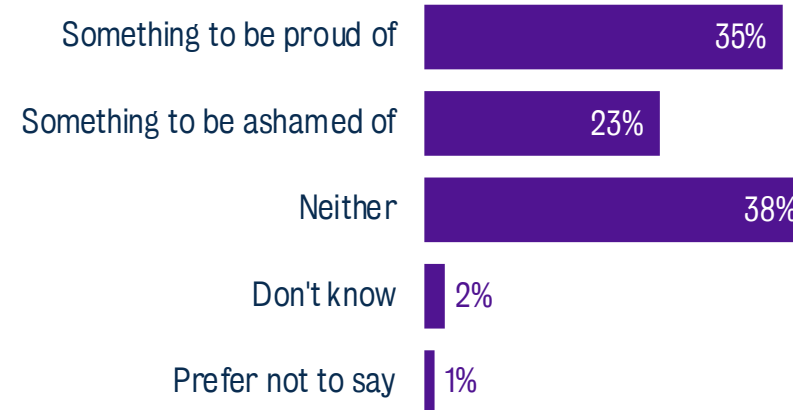
The public are relatively divided on the question of how Britain's colonial past should be viewed today

Around a third of the public (35%) think the British empire is something to be proud of, compared with roughly a quarter (23%) who think it's something to be ashamed of. But the most common answer is that people don't see this issue in such binary terms, with nearly four in 10 (38%) saying the empire is neither a source of pride nor shame.

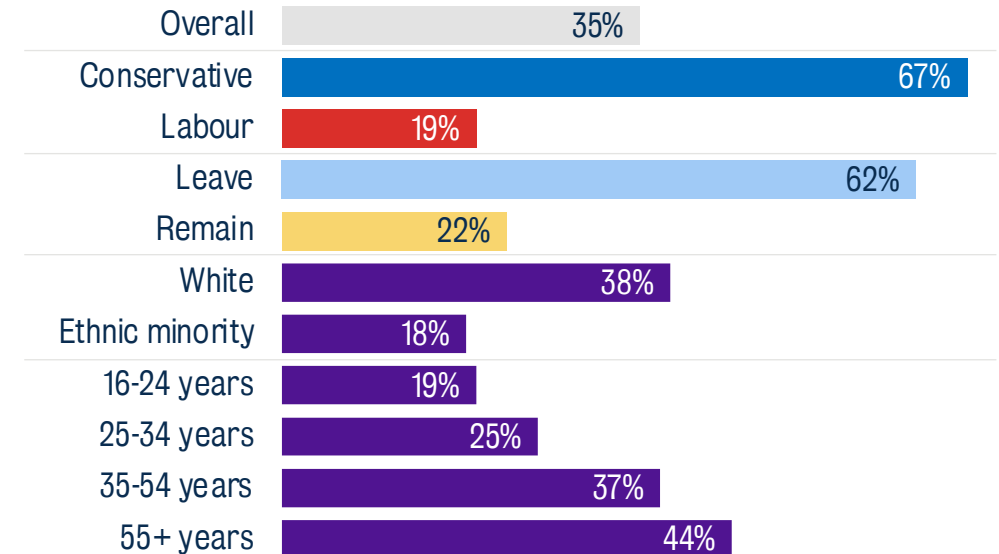
There are big variations in opinion between different groups, however. White people (38%) are twice as likely as people from ethnic minorities (18%) to be proud of the British empire, and older age groups are more likely than younger ones to hold this view.

And Conservatives (67%) and Leave supporters (62%) are around three times as likely as Labour (19%) and Remain supporters (22%) to say that the empire inspires pride.

Is the British empire more something to be proud of or ashamed of?



% who say the British empire is something to be proud of



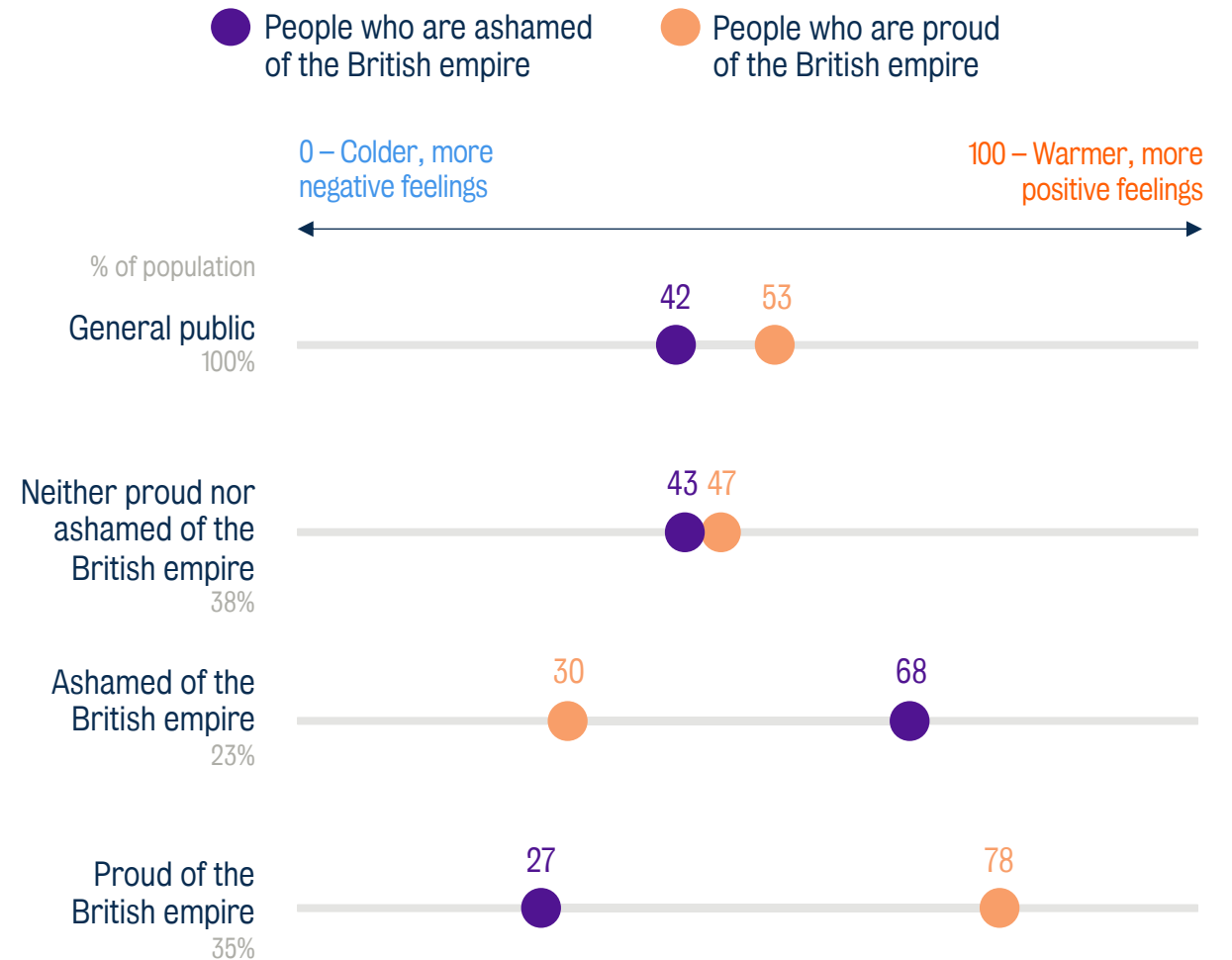
People on either side of the empire debate feel almost equally negative towards the other

People who are ashamed of the British empire give those who are proud of it a rating of 30 out of 100. And in turn, people who are proud of the empire give those who are ashamed of it almost the same negative rating, of 27.

But people who consider the empire a source of pride have warmer feelings towards their own side (78) than do people who consider it a source of shame (68).

Those who identify with neither side in this debate have virtually the same feelings towards those who take opposing views on it (43 vs 47), while the public as a whole have a more favourable perception of people who are proud of the empire (53) than they do of those who are ashamed of it (42), which is in line with the former view being more widely held among Britons.

Please rate your feelings towards people who are proud of the British empire and people who are ashamed of the British empire, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold

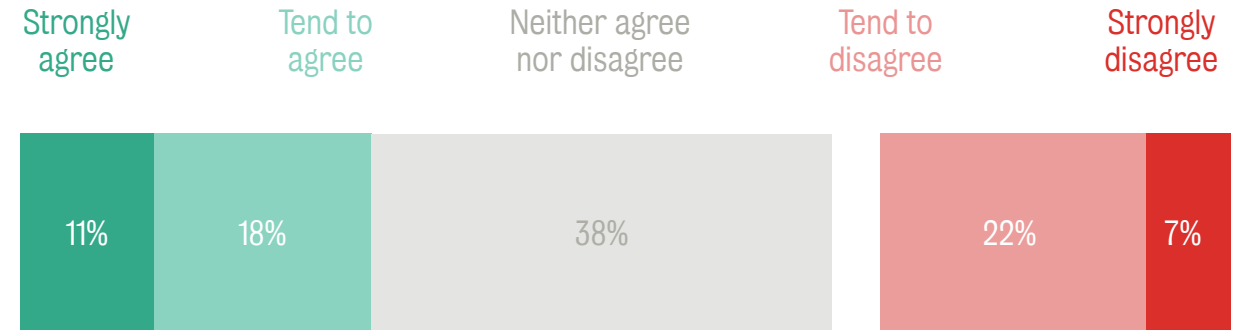


Those who say they're proud or ashamed of the British empire are about as likely as each other to say it's hard to be friends with the other side

Among people for whom the empire is a source of shame, 29% say it's hard to be friends with someone who takes the opposing view in this debate. This compares with 23% who say the same among those who are proud of Britain's colonial past.

And around four in 10 people in both groups say they neither agree nor disagree that friendships are difficult with those belonging to the other side – higher than the proportions who feel this way about friendships with those whose politics or position on Brexit differs to their own.

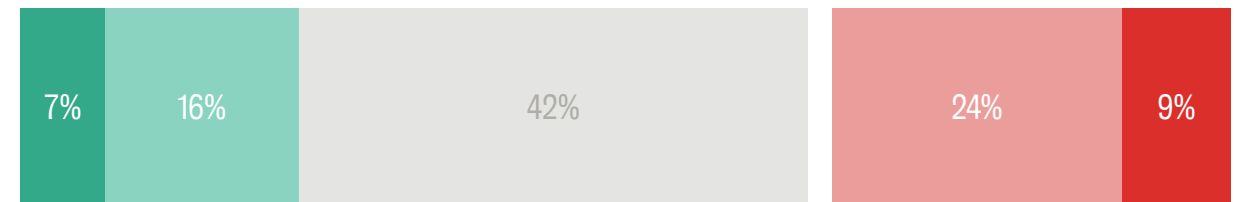
To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who say they are **proud** of the British empire*



*Asked to people who are **ashamed** of the British empire

Base: 652 UK adults aged 16+ who said they are ashamed of the British Empire, interviewed 26 Nov–2 Dec 2020

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who say they are **ashamed** of the British empire*



*Asked to people who are **proud** of the British empire

Base: 938 UK adults aged 16+ who said they are proud of the British Empire, interviewed 26 Nov–2 Dec 2020

People's beliefs about last year's BBC Proms controversy are associated with the side they take in the empire debate

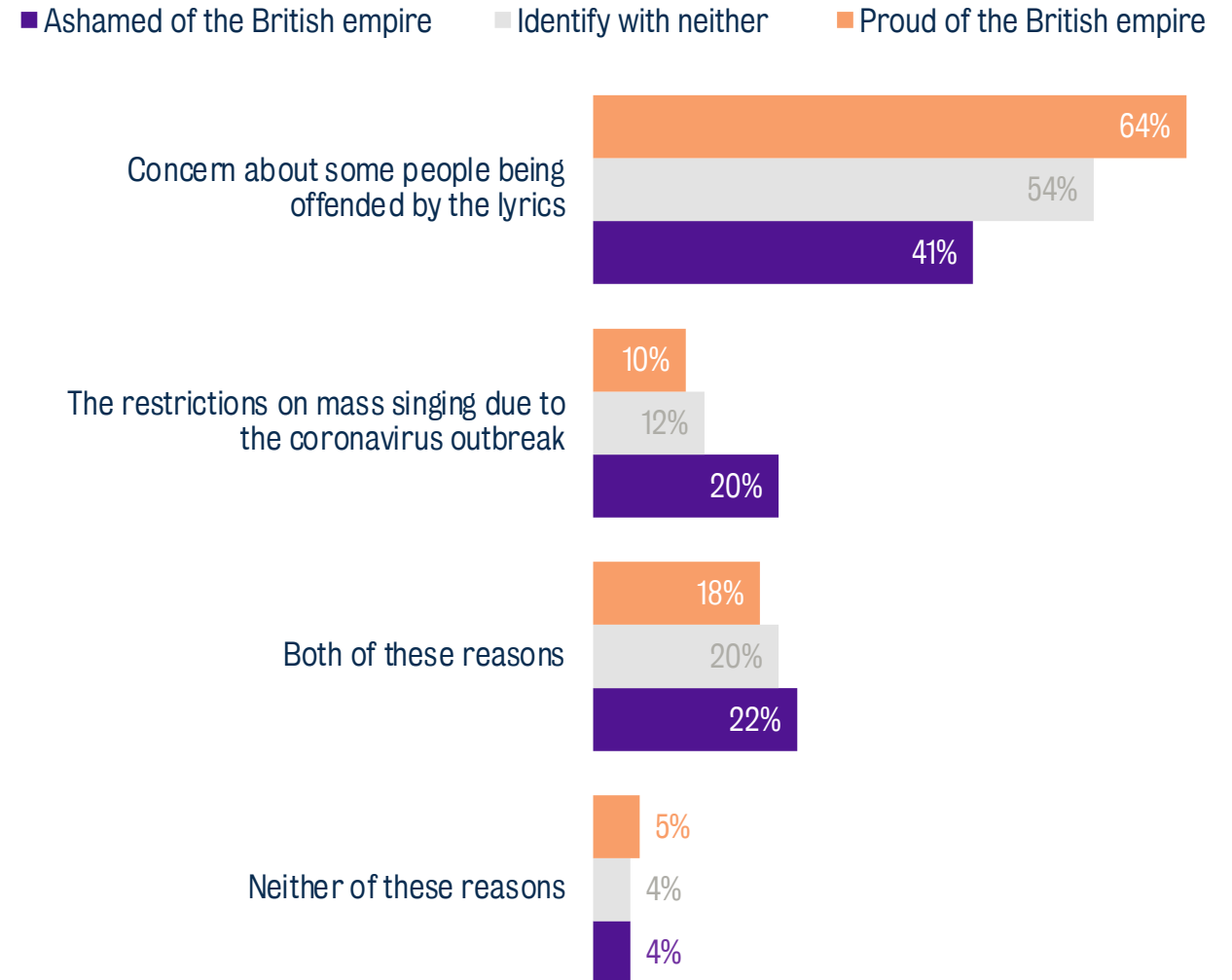
Among those who are proud of the British empire, 64% think the BBC Proms Rule Britannia! controversy was prompted by concerns about the lyrics causing offence – much higher than the 41% who think the same among those who are ashamed of the empire.

And people who see the empire as a source of shame are twice as likely as those who see it as a source of pride to think Covid-19 restrictions were in fact the key factor behind the controversy (20% vs 10%) – although far fewer people overall select this as the reason.

Around one in five people on either side of the empire debate think the BBC's decision was motivated by both concern about the lyrics causing offence and the Covid rules in place at the time. Meanwhile, among the four in 10 people who do not associate themselves with either side of the empire debate, concern about offence being caused is by far the top reason given for the controversy, with 54% holding this view.

Public perceptions may reflect a variety of explanations that have circulated for why the songs were not intended to be sung, with the BBC citing the limits on singing during the pandemic and media reports suggesting the move was motivated by concerns over the lyrics in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, which rose to prominence around the same time.

You may have seen news stories in the summer about Rule, Britannia! and Land of Hope and Glory not being sung at the Proms. In the end, they were sung, but what do you think was the reason the BBC originally decided they would not be sung?





Culture wars in the UK

“Fault lines” in the culture wars:

The Black Lives Matter movement

The majority of people in the UK support Black Lives Matter – but views vary by age and politics

Six in 10 people (58%) say they support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, with three in 10 (32%) saying they strongly support it.

Two in 10 (18%) oppose the movement, while the same proportion (20%) say they don't take a side on the issue.

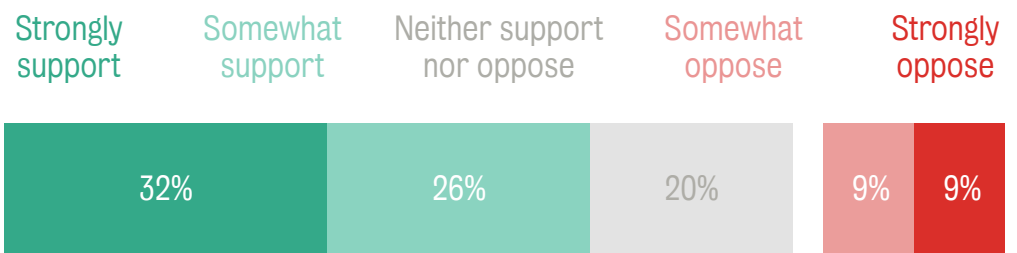
But among the majority of the public who have a favourable view of BLM, opinions vary hugely across political views and age.

Around eight in 10 Labour supporters (79%) and Remain supporters (79%) say they support the movement – compared with almost four in 10 Conservatives (37%) and about one in three Leave supporters (33%) who say the same.

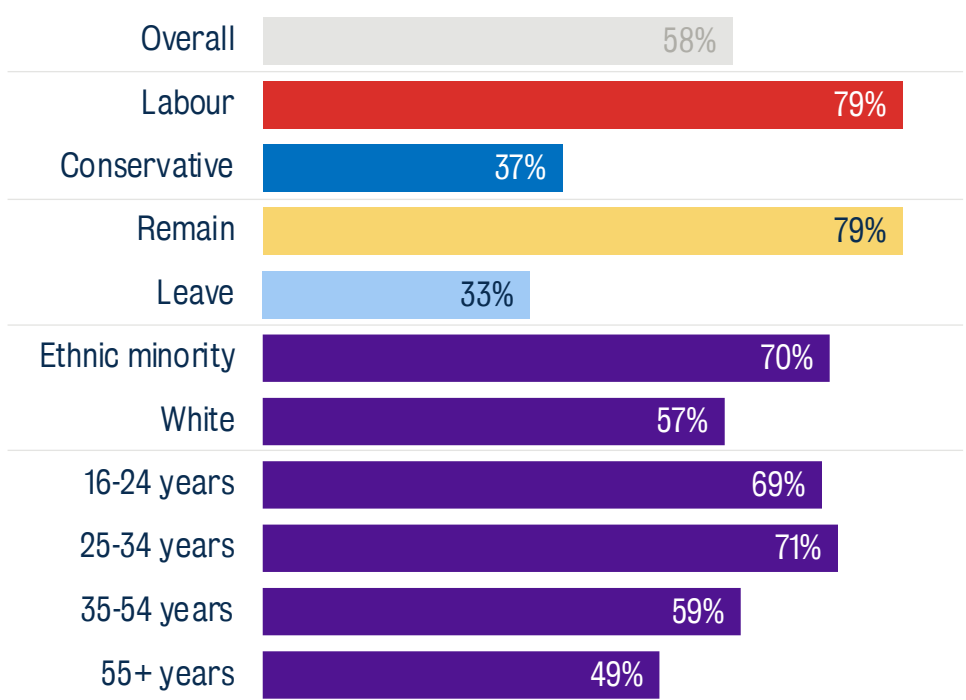
And while seven in 10 16-34 year-olds are supportive of BLM, support declines among older age groups, with half of those aged 55 and above (49%) backing the movement.

There is also a divide in views among ethnic groups, with those from an ethnic minority background (70%) more likely than white people (57%) to support BLM.

From what you've read and heard, how do you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement?



% who strongly or tend to support Black Lives Matter



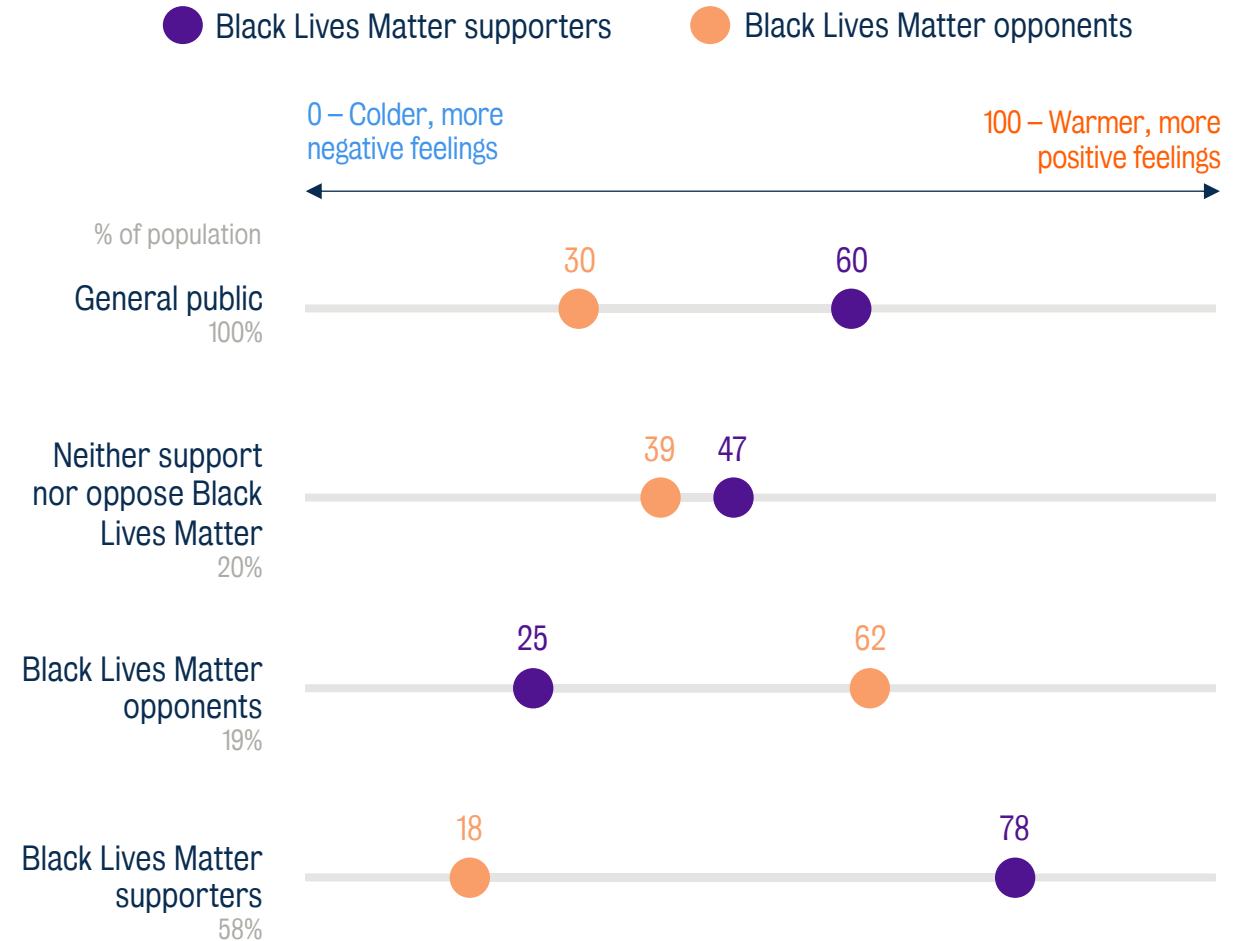
Black Lives Matter is seen as particularly divisive, with both sides in the debate having very cold feelings towards each other

Those who oppose BLM give people on their side of this issue a warm rating of 62 and a cold rating of 25 to those on the other side. But this gap in perceptions is even greater among BLM supporters, who rate their side at 78 and BLM opponents at 18 – the joint-coldest rating given to a group across all the culture war issues asked about in this study.

People who identify with neither side of the BLM debate give relatively similar ratings to both supporters (47) and opponents (39) of the movement – although they do have warmer feelings towards the former group.

The public rate their feelings towards BLM opponents at 30 out of 100, compared with 60 out of 100 for BLM supporters, indicating that their view of the former group is twice as negative as their view of the latter. This reflects the fact that there are far more people who are pro-BLM among the population overall.

Please rate your feelings towards people who support the Black Lives Matter movement and people who oppose the Black Lives Matter movement, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



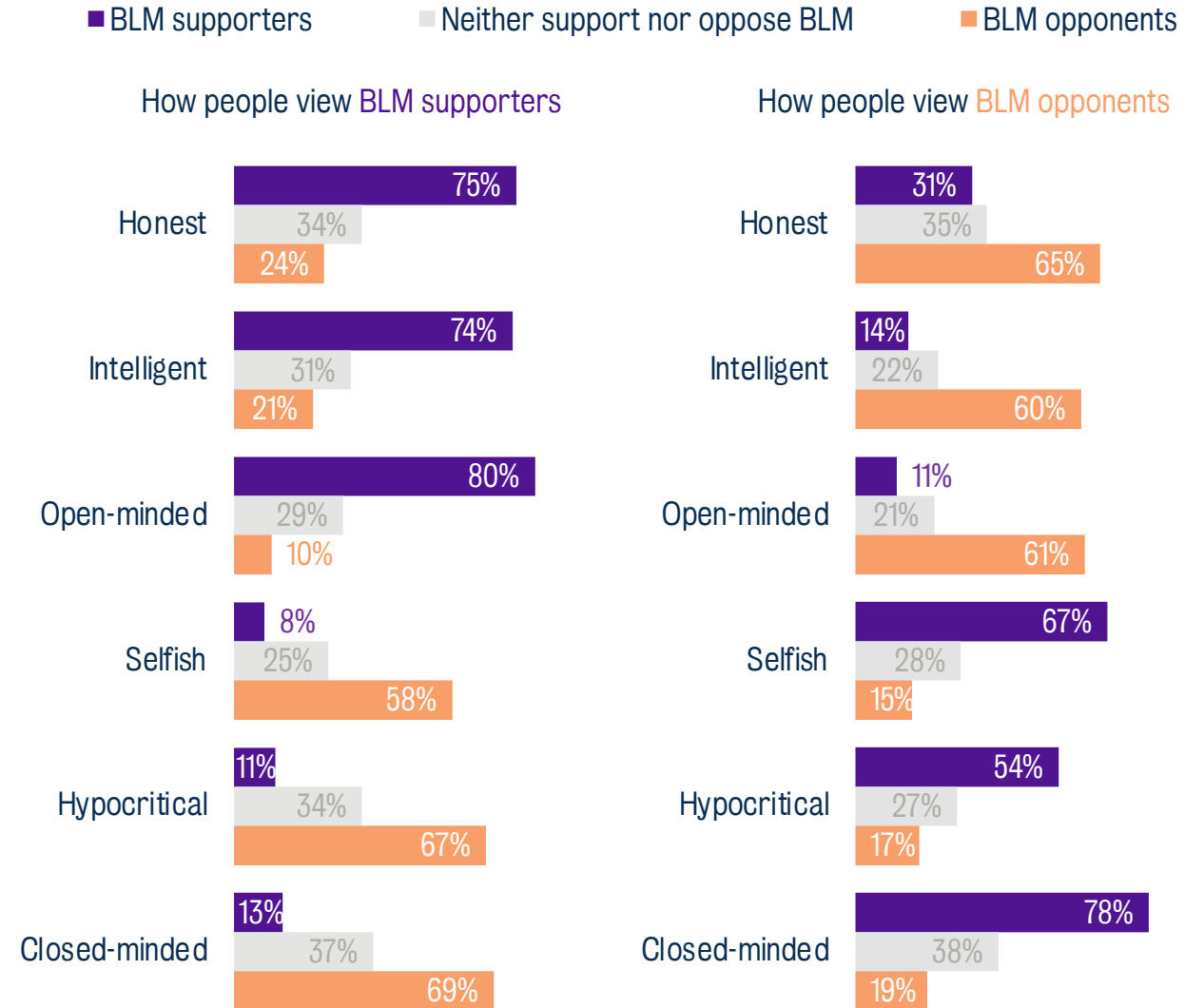
Majorities of both BLM supporters and opponents associate those on the other side with negative characteristics

BLM supporters are more likely to think BLM opponents are closed-minded (78% vs 69%) and selfish (67% vs 58%) than the reverse, while those who are against Black Lives Matter are more likely to think those who support the movement are hypocritical (67% vs 54%).

Both BLM supporters and opponents describe their own side in favourable terms – although higher proportions of the former think people on their side are honest (75% vs 65%), intelligent (74% vs 60%) and open-minded (80% vs 61%).

Those who neither support nor oppose BLM have very similar views of both sides in the debate. For example, 34% call BLM supporters honest, compared with 35% who say the same about BLM opponents.

How well, if at all, do you think each of the following characteristics describe people who support the Black Lives Matter Movement and people who oppose it? % who say very or fairly well



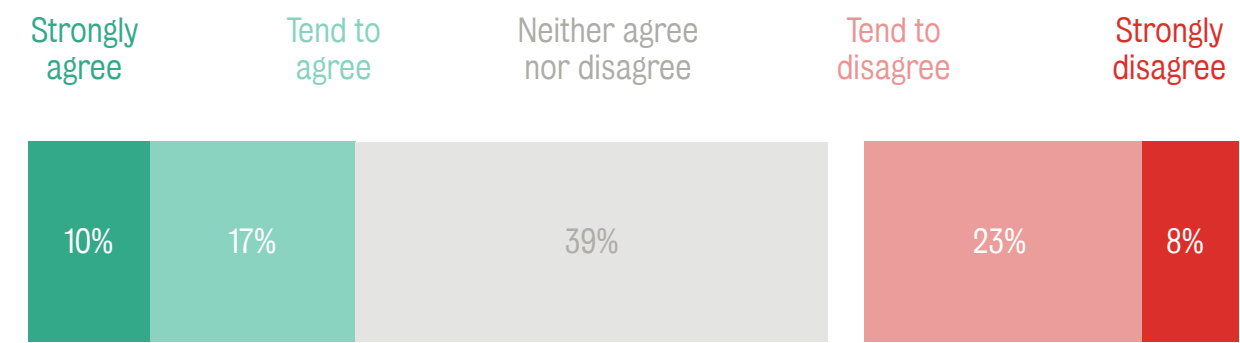
BLM supporters are twice as likely as BLM opponents to say it's difficult to be friends with someone from the other side

55% of BLM supporters say it's hard to be friends with someone who opposes BLM. This is the joint-highest proportion (tied with lockdown supporters) of any group included in this study who say they struggle to be friends with the other side.

By comparison, BLM opponents (26%) are half as likely to say they would have difficulty being friends with a BLM supporter, while four in 10 (39%) neither agree nor disagree that this would cause an issue for them – compared with three in 10 (30%) BLM supporters who say the same.

* Note some figures differ from charts due to rounding

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who **support** the Black Lives Matter movement*



*Asked to people who **oppose** the Black Lives Matter movement

Base: 1,736 UK adults aged 16+ who oppose the BLM movement, interviewed 1-7 Apr 2021

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It's hard to be friends with people who **oppose** the Black Lives Matter movement*



*Asked to people who **support** the Black Lives Matter movement

Base: 4,926 UK adults aged 16+ who support the BLM movement, interviewed 1-7 Apr 2021

People who support Black Lives Matter are much more likely to recognise the true extent of income disparities between ethnic groups

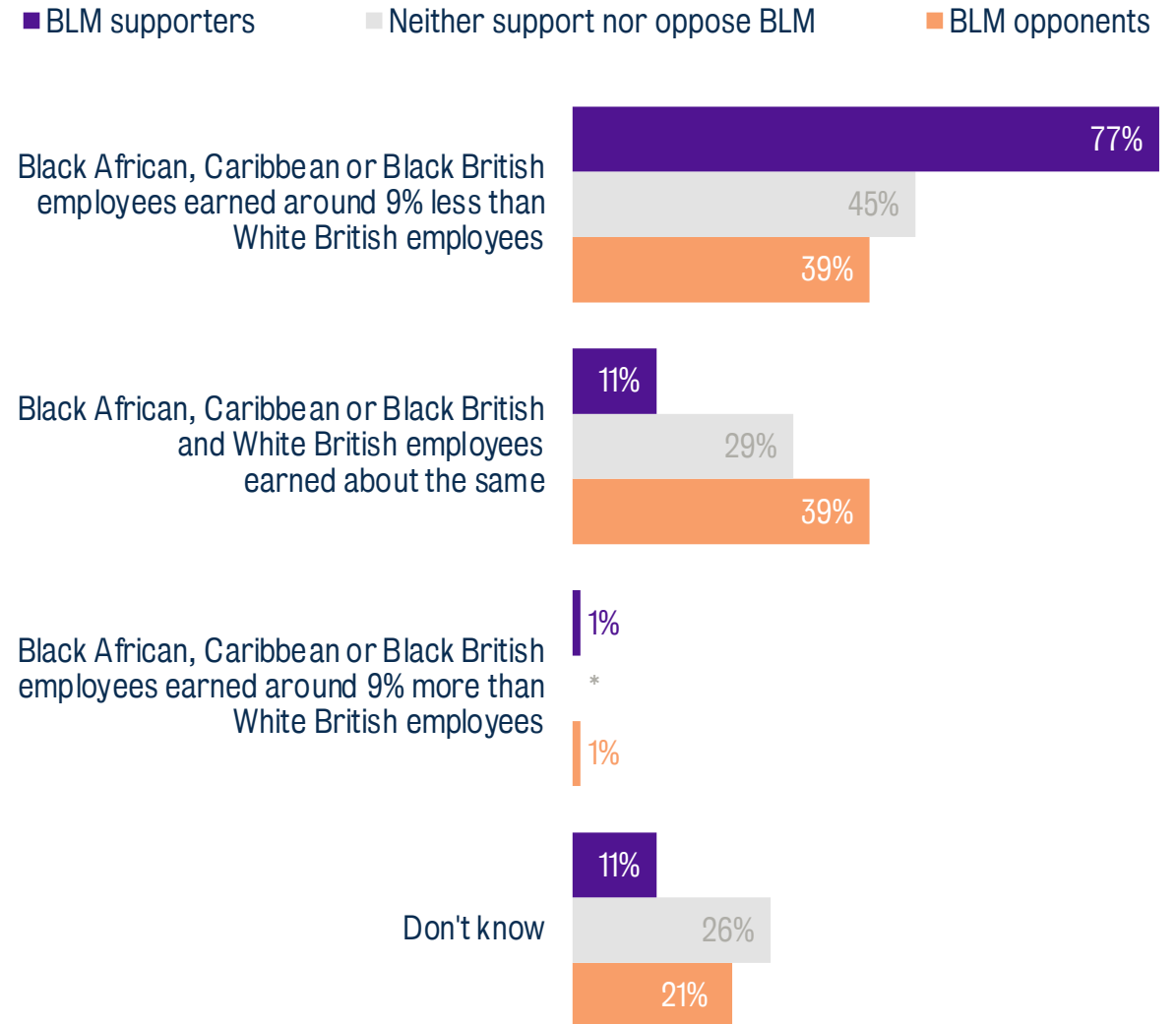
77% of BLM supporters correctly identify that Black African, Caribbean or Black British employees earned around 9% less than their White counterparts in 2018. BLM opponents are almost half as likely to think this is the case, with 39% believing it's true.

39% of BLM opponents also think there was in fact hardly any difference between what Black and White workers earned that year – more than three times the 11% of BLM supporters who hold this view.

And among the one in five people who neither support nor oppose the BLM movement, 45% think Black employees earned less than white employees, compared with 29% who think both groups had roughly the same levels of income.

Virtually no one believes that Black workers earned more than white workers in 2018.

Which of these do you think was true in Great Britain in 2018?



Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)

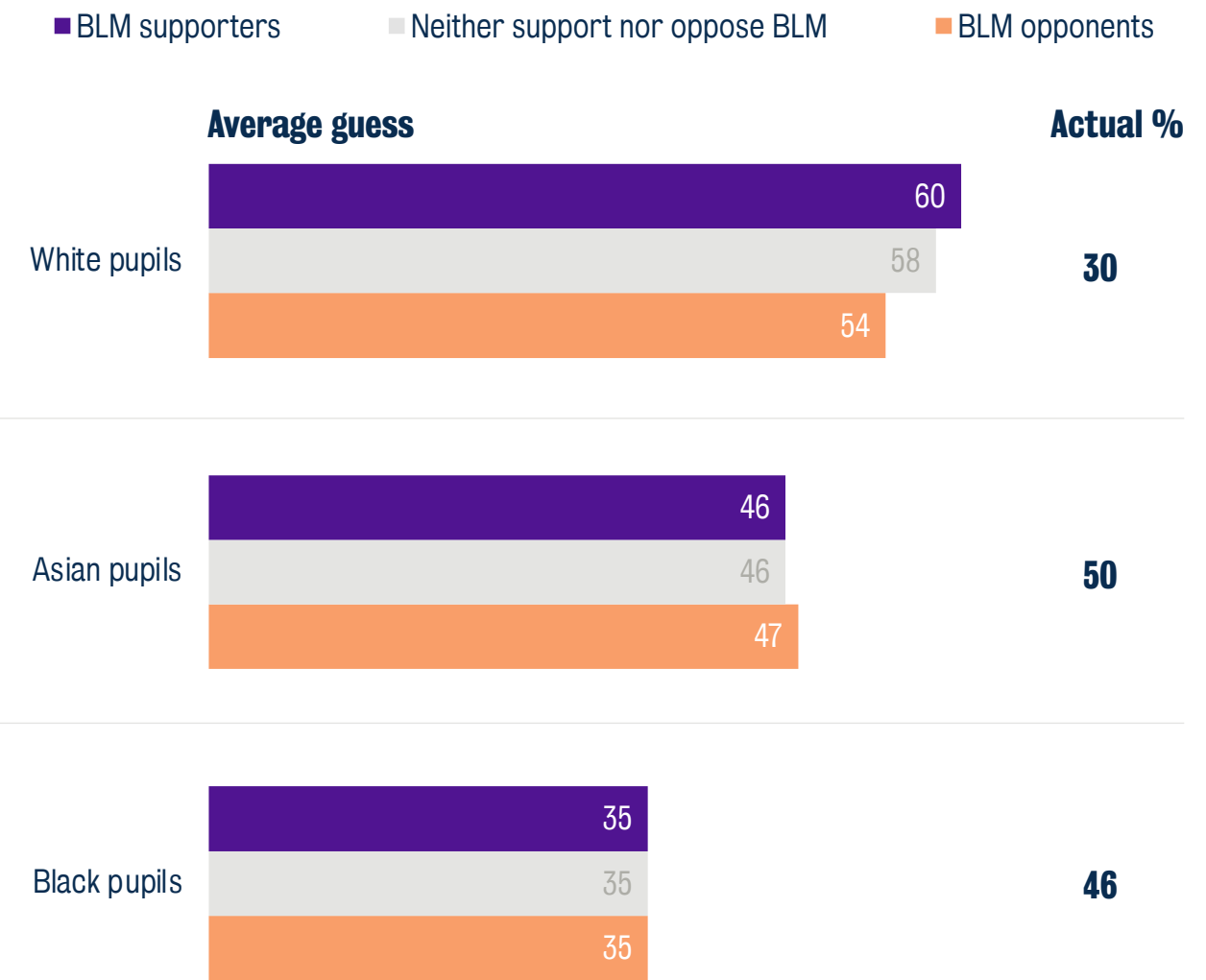
The public overestimate white state school pupils' success and underestimate that of Black pupils – and people's position on Black Lives Matter makes relatively little difference to their perceptions

The public wrongly think that, across different ethnic groups, white state school pupils have the best success rate when it comes to getting accepted on to a full-time undergraduate course at university or college. 30% of these pupils get a place on such a course – but the public's average guess is that it's 58%.

And those who support BLM are slightly more likely than those who oppose it to overestimate the acceptance rate for white state school pupils – the former guess that it's 60%, while the latter guess it's around 54%.

BLM support makes even less of a difference to people's perceptions of the success of Black state school pupils – those who support the movement guess 34% of such pupils make it on to a course like this, while those who oppose it guess 35% do so. The reality, however, is that 46% make it on to a full-time undergraduate course, meaning that the public overall – regardless of whether or not they support BLM – underestimate these Black pupils' success according to this measure.

Out of every 100 Black/white/Asian state school pupils in England aged 18, how many do you think got a place on a full-time undergraduate course at university or college in 2019?



Source: [UCAS](#)

Culture wars in the UK



**“Fault lines” in the culture wars:
transgender rights**

The public are split on whether trans rights should be expanded in the UK

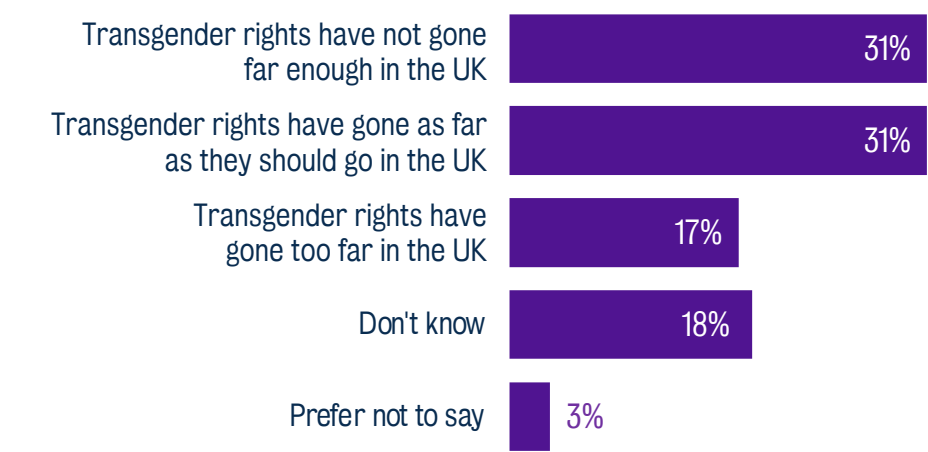
Three in 10 people (31%) think trans rights have gone as far as they should in the UK – but the same proportion think they have not gone far enough. A smaller proportion – 17% – think that trans rights have gone too far, while 18% say they don’t know.

In this study, the two “sides” of this debate are taken to be those who believe trans rights have not gone far enough and those who think they’ve gone too far. But it’s important to note that, unlike the other culture war issues discussed in this report, the “middle” group do not take a neutral position, as those who think trans rights have gone as far as they should are still expressing a view on the issue.

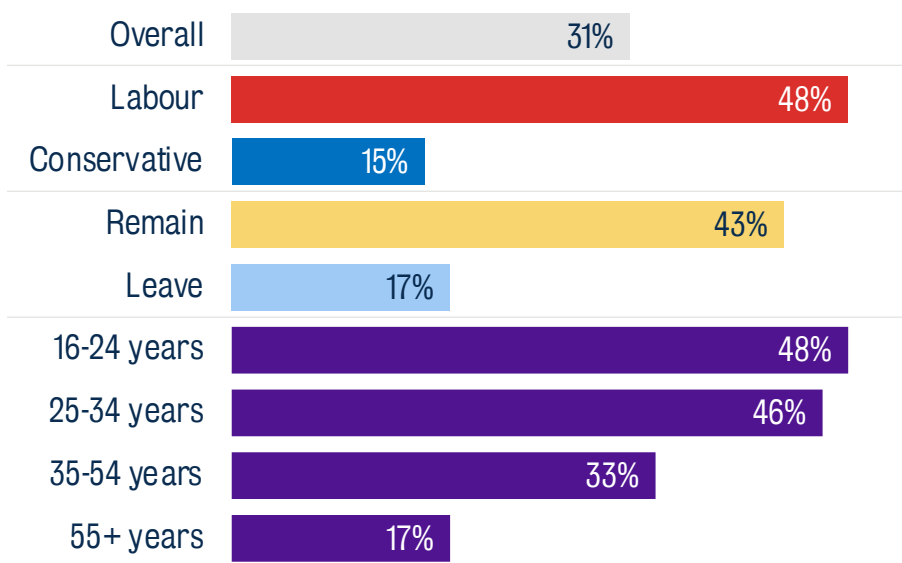
Looking in more detail at who wants to expand rights for trans people, Labour (48%) and Remain (43%) supporters are about three times as likely as Conservative (15%) and Leave supporters (17%) to think trans rights have not gone far enough.

And there are big differences in views by age, with 17% of those aged 55 and above believing trans rights should go further, compared with 47% of 16- to 34-year-olds.

Which of the following statements best matches your view?



% who say transgender rights have not gone far enough in the UK



Both sides of the trans rights debate have very negative feelings towards each other

People who think trans rights have not gone far enough give those who think they have gone too far a score of 18 out of 100 – the joint-coldest rating given to a group in this study.

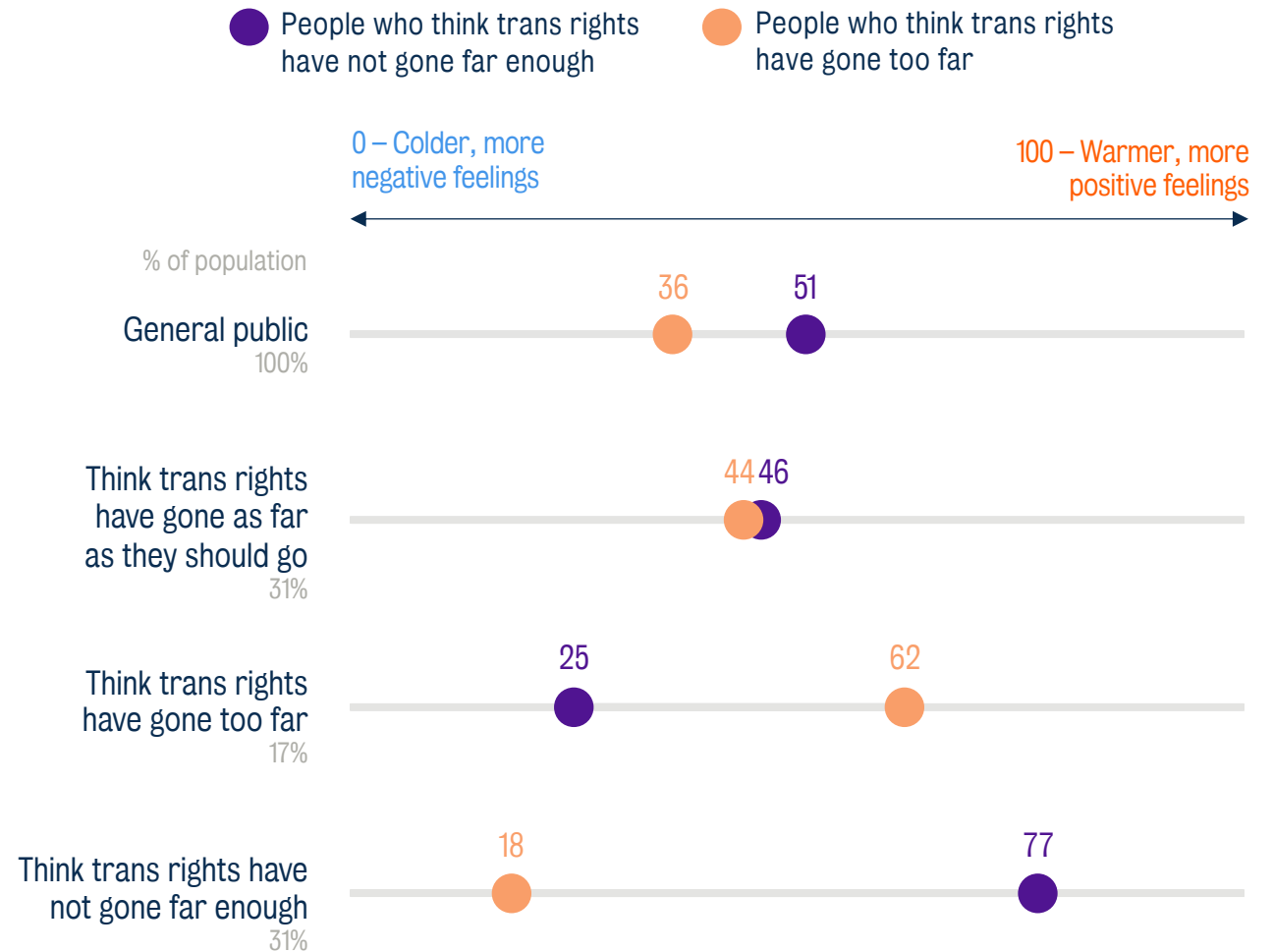
And those on the other side of this debate are not much warmer towards their opponents: people who think trans rights have gone too far give those who are in favour of expanding them a rating of 25 out of 100.

Both groups have much more positive views of their own sides, with people who believe trans rights have not gone far enough the most positive (77 vs 62).

The general public feel colder towards those who think rights for trans people have gone too far than they do towards those who are in favour of expanding trans rights (36 vs 51), in line with there being fewer people who hold the former view than the latter.

And people who take the “middle” position on this issue – that trans rights have gone as far as they should go – have virtually the same view of the other two sides in this debate, giving them a relatively neutral rating (44 vs 46).

Please rate your feelings towards people who support the expansion of transgender rights in the UK and people who oppose the expansion of transgender rights in the UK, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



Those who think trans rights have not gone far enough are more likely to have a problem being friends with those on the other side of the debate

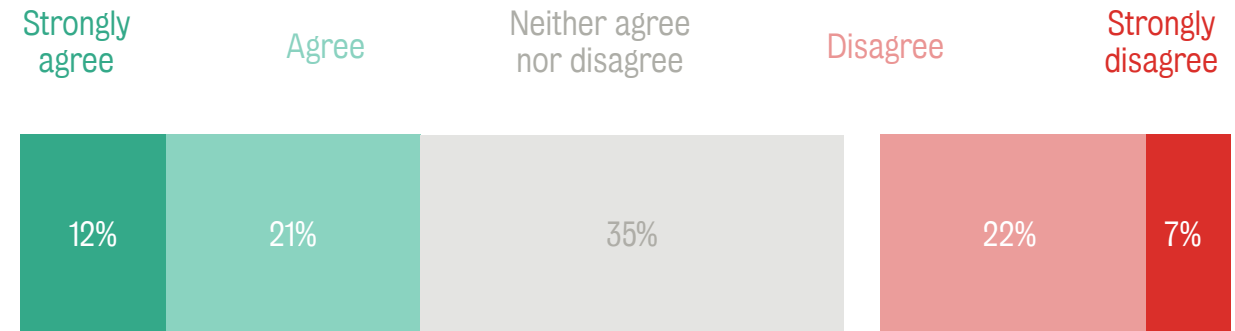
47% of those who want to expand trans rights in the UK say it would be difficult to be friends with someone who thinks trans rights have gone too far. By comparison, among this latter group, 32% feel as negative about being friends with someone on the other side of this debate.

Correspondingly, people who think trans rights have gone too far (30%) are more likely than those who want to expand such rights (18%) to say they wouldn't find it hard to form this kind of friendship.

Around a third of each group neither agree nor disagree that making friends with the other side would be difficult for them.

* Note some figures differ from charts due to rounding

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It would be hard to be friends with someone who **supports** the expansion of transgender rights in the UK*



*Asked to people who **think transgender rights have gone too far** in the UK

Base: 504 UK adults aged 16+ who think transgender rights have gone too far, interviewed 26 Nov–2 Dec 2020

To what extent do agree or disagree with the following statement: It would be hard to be friends with someone who **thinks transgender rights have gone too far** in the UK*



*Asked to people who **think transgender rights have not gone far enough** in the UK

Base: 829 UK adults aged 16+ who support the expansion of transgender rights, interviewed 26 Nov–2 Dec 2020

Perceptions of trans people's experience of crime vary a great deal according to the position people take on trans rights

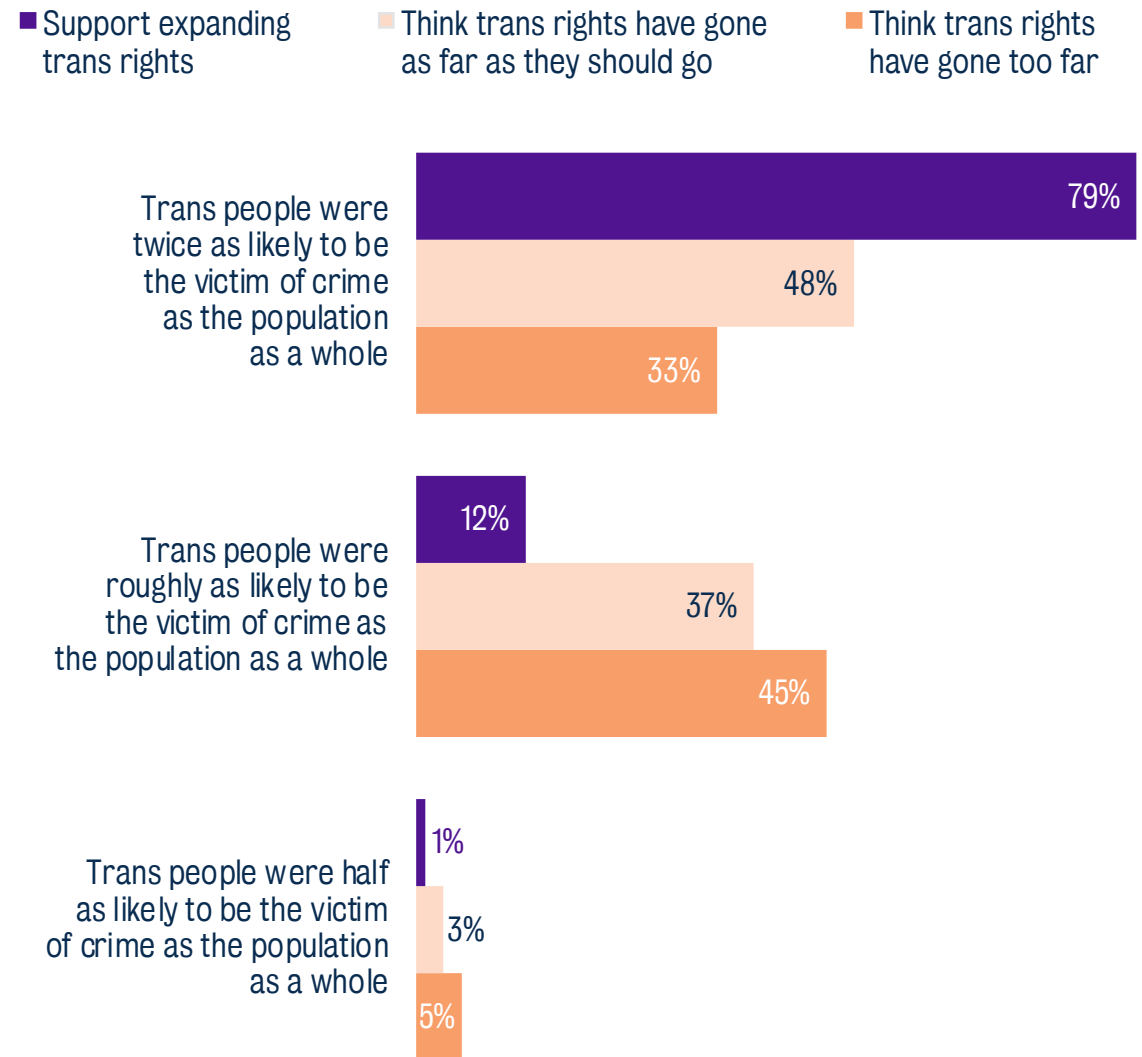
79% of those who support the expansion of trans rights correctly identify that trans people are particularly likely to be the victim of a crime. Among those who think trans rights have gone too far, a much smaller proportion – 33% – think this is the case.

By contrast, 45% of those who think trans rights have gone too far believe trans people are not more likely to be the victim of a crime – nearly four times higher than the 12% who think this is true among those who support expanding trans rights.

People who think trans rights have gone as far as they should go – the third group in this debate – are more likely to think trans people have a higher risk of being the victim of a crime (48%) than they are to think they have no greater risk (37%).

Very few people on any side of this debate are under the impression that, compared with the population overall, trans people are less likely to be the victim of a crime.

Which of these do you think was true in England and Wales in the year to March 2020?



Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)



Culture wars in the UK

**“Fault lines” in the culture wars:
overview – which are most divisive?**

Lockdown aside, on all issues asked about, the more “liberal” or left-leaning side of the debate have the most difficulty getting along with their opponents

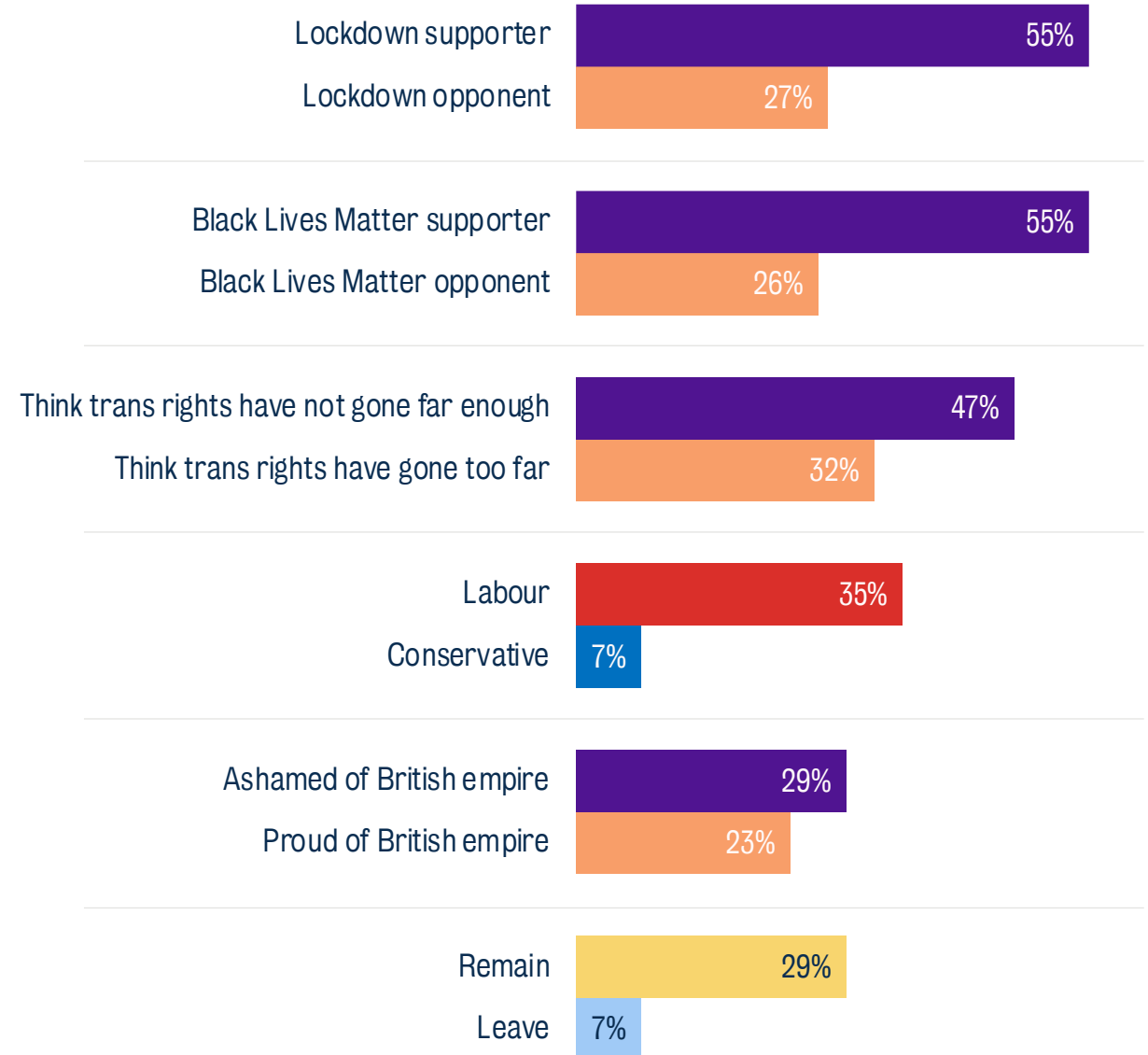
Despite the rhetoric from some around coronavirus, the division between lockdown supporters and opponents has not really embedded itself in culture war-style debates, partly because of the very low number of opponents. However, it still causes strong reactions, with a majority of lockdown supporters saying it's hard to be friends with lockdown opponents.

Beyond Covid-related division, across all five of the other culture war subjects asked about, people on the more liberal side of the debate have the most difficulty seeing past the divide.

For example, Black Lives Matter supporters (55%) are twice as likely as BLM opponents (26%) to say it's hard to be friends with someone on the other side of the debate. And Labour supporters (35%) are five times as likely as Conservative supporters (7%) to say they find it difficult to form friendships across the party-political divide.

On attitudes to the British empire, the two sides' views are much closer, although those who are ashamed of Britain's imperial history are slightly more likely to say they would find it hard to be friends with people who are proud of the empire than vice versa.

% who say it's hard to be friends with the other side in the debate on culture war issues



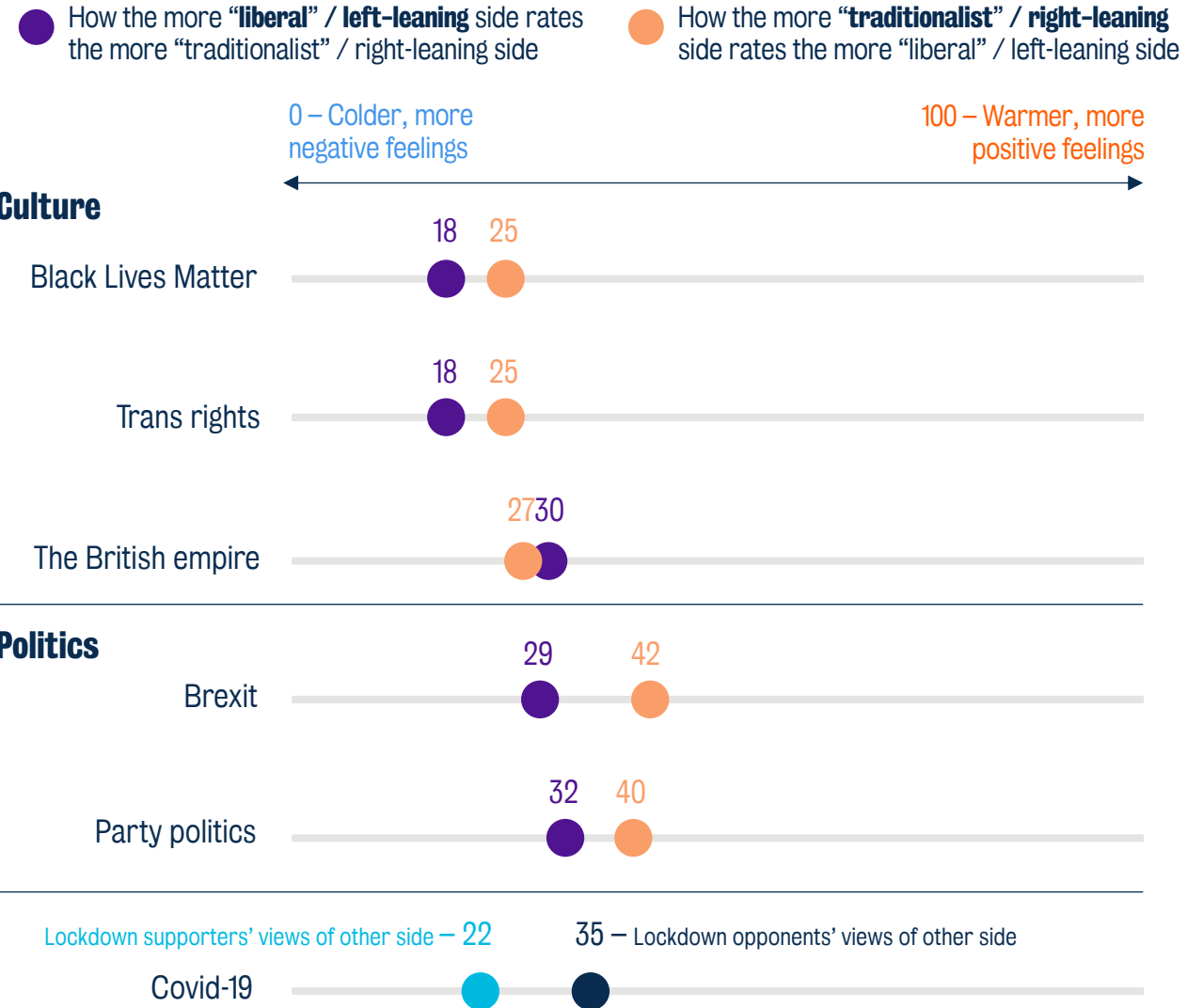
People who take a more liberal or left-leaning position on culture war and political debates tend to have the coldest feelings towards the other side

Reflecting the pattern on being friends with the other side, across most culture war issues asked about, those on the more progressive side of the debate say they feel colder towards their more traditionalist opponents than the reverse.

For example, when asked to rate their feelings towards the other side out of 100 – with 100 meaning very warm and zero meaning very cold – people who think trans rights have not gone far enough give a rating of 18 to people who think trans rights have gone too far. By comparison, the latter give the former a rating of 25.

Issues that have traditionally been seen as engendering negative feelings on both sides – such as Brexit and politics – actually inspire more warmth across their respective divides than do more recent culture war concerns, such as Black Lives Matter and coronavirus.

How different sides of culture war debates rate their feelings towards the other side out of 100, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



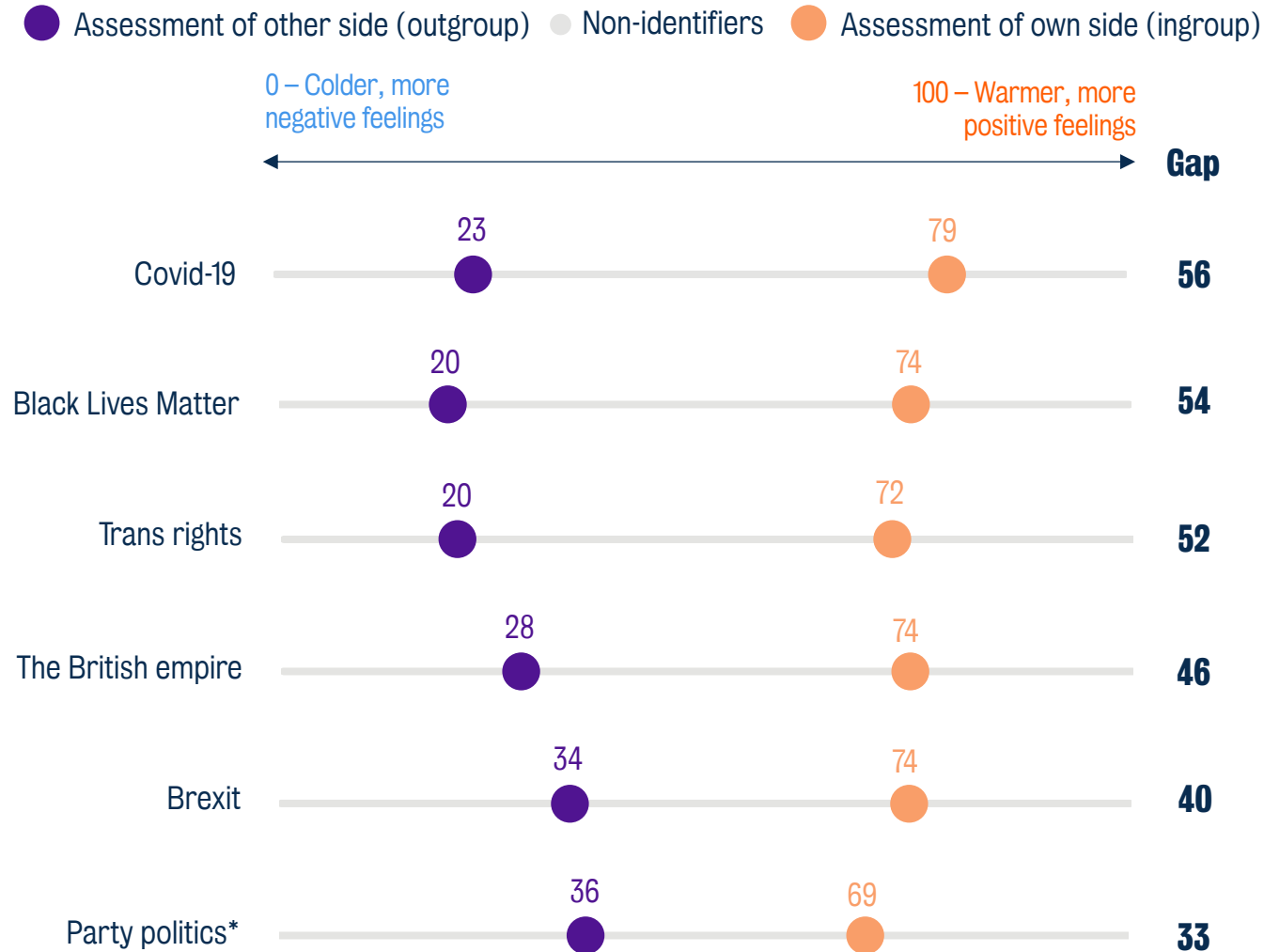
There is less of a gap between our feelings towards our own side and the other side on party politics and Brexit than other culture war issues

What makes an issue or identity divisive is as much about how close you feel to your own side as it is about how you feel about the opposing side.

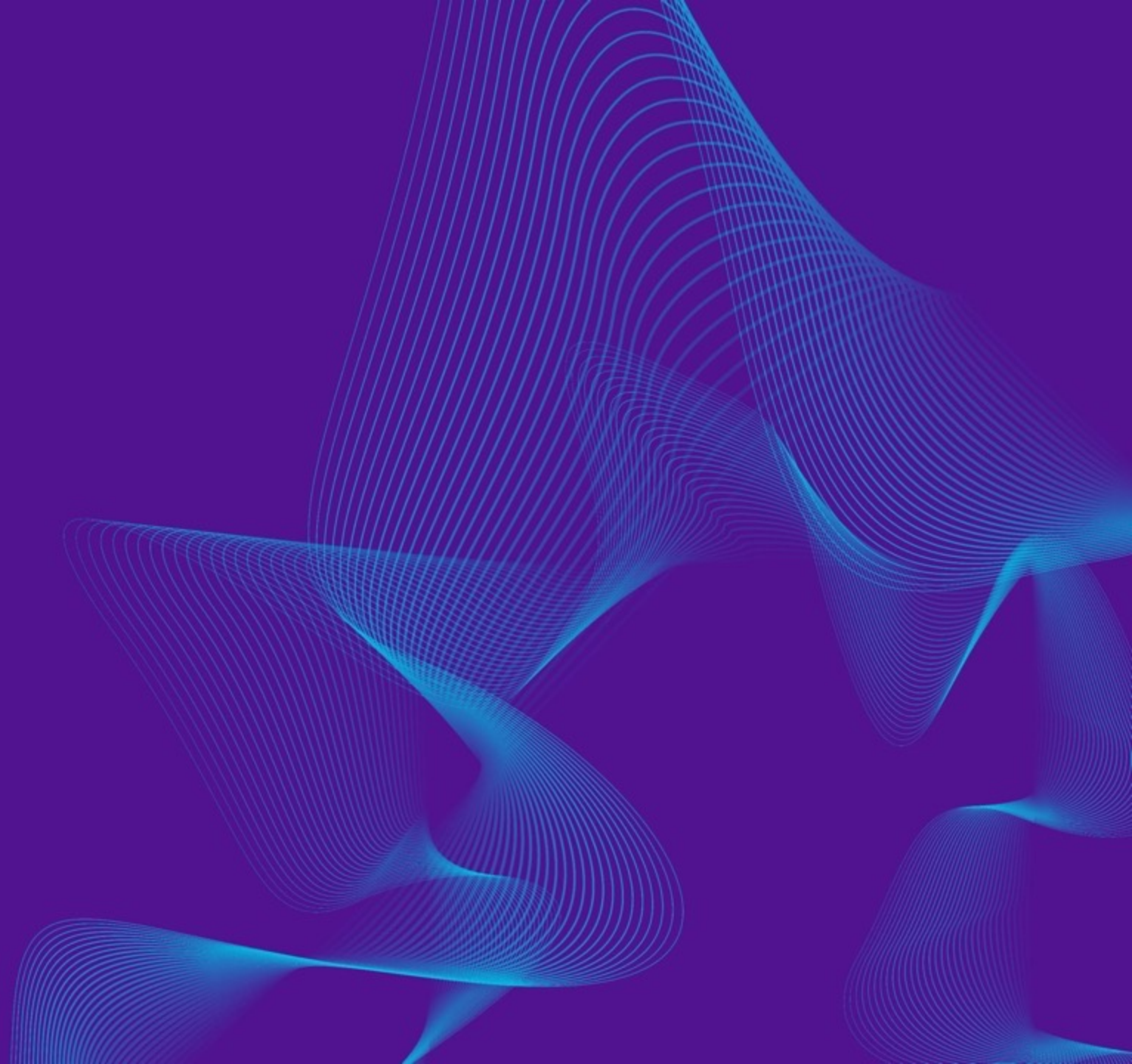
Looking at the difference between how warm people feel towards their own side and how cold they feel towards the other side, it is again Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter that are particularly divisive, with a gap of more than half the scale (56 and 55).

The gap between ingroup and outgroup ratings based on political party, on the other hand, is around a quarter smaller (33). This is driven less by people feeling a greater connection towards their own side than it is by warmer feelings towards opposing partisans – something that does not apply for culture wars issues that attracted considerable media coverage in 2020, such as BLM and trans rights.

How different sides of culture war debates rate their feelings towards the other side out of 100, with 100 meaning a very warm, favourable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavourable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold



Technical note



Technical note: survey

Ipsos MORI interviewed online a representative sample of 2,834 adults aged 16+ across the United Kingdom between 26th November and 2nd December 2020 and 8,558 adults aged 16+ across the United Kingdom between 1 and 7 April 2021. This data has been collected by Ipsos MORI's UK KnowledgePanel, an online random probability panel which provides gold standard insights into the UK population, by providing bigger sample sizes via the most rigorous research methods. Data are weighted by age, gender, region, Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile, education, ethnicity and number of adults in the household in order to reflect the profile of the UK population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

For the question on perceptions of state school pupils' attainment, Ipsos MORI interviewed a sample of 2,165 adults aged 16-75 in Great Britain using its Ipsos Digital online omnibus between 14th and 18th May 2021. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age, working status and social grade within gender, government office region and education..

About KnowledgePanel

Ipsos MORI's UK KnowledgePanel is the UK's largest online random probability panel, providing total understanding of the UK public for businesses and organisations looking for cutting edge insight at the gold standard of online research methods. It is important because it includes both online and offline participants selected at random from every address in the UK, the first of its kind, with a single interface to eliminate modal effects and produce accurate data rapidly.

UK KnowledgePanel utilises a panel of 15,000+ participants to provide a new innovative tool for all those organisations who wish to garner greater insights into the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of not just the UK population as a whole, but also into the specific communities which make up the UK's diverse population. Studies completed on UK KnowledgePanel will be fully representative of the UK population including the 4% of households who are considered 'offline'. This is made possible by recruiting offline and supplying participants with a tablet, internet access and the tech support needed to get online. As a result of this approach the panel utilises a single online data collection method, with no differential mode effects – a pioneering advancement which enhances the ability to understand our society. The UK KnowledgePanel builds on [work done](#) by Ipsos in the US on their own, which has been operating since 1999, utilising that experience and blending it with Ipsos MORI's own research and methodological expertise to produce a tool which delivers robust nationally representative data at speed. [Find out more.](#)

Subgroups

Variable	Main survey (Nov-Dec 20)	Top-up survey (Apr 21)	Variable	Main survey (Nov-Dec 20)	Top-up survey (Apr 21)
Gender			Party support		
Male	1,386	4,153	Conservative	806	
Female	1,439	4,359	Labour	669	
Age			Brexit support		
16-24	145	377	Leave	860	
25-34	322	891	Remain	1750	
35-54	973	2,896	Income level		
55+	1,394	4,394	Up to £25,999	612	1,845
Ethnicity			£26,000 to £51,999	934	2,757
White	2,644	7,990	£52,000 to £99,999	616	1,849
Ethnic minority	164	484	£100,000 and above	212	627
Country			Occupation type		
England	2,124	5,633	Modern professional	924	2,622
Scotland	443	1,889	Clerical and intermediate	397	1,251
Wales	109	255	Senior manager/admin.	415	1,274
Northern Ireland	158	781	Technical and craft	158	513
Region			Semiroutine manual/serv.	189	577
North East	107	228	Routine manual/service	103	378
North West	275	689	Middle/junior managers	223	712
Yorkshire & Humber	163	548	Traditional professional	343	1,007
East Midlands	205	506	Education level		
West Midlands	209	514	Degree level or above	1371	4,341
East of England	256	721	Below degree level	1199	3,849
South East	387	1,049			
South West	282	714			
London	240	664			



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The authors would also like to thank Alexa Dewar, Jack Summers, Sophie Townend and Constance Woollen for their work on various aspects of this study.

Supported by:



doi.org/10.18742/pub01-052