The Liberal Democrats

How their rivals and the public see them

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Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy

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Executive summary

Carried out by the Policy Institute at King's College London, this study is based on a **nationally representative survey of 3,750 UK adults aged 18+**. Fieldwork was carried out with Opinium between 7 and 13 August 2026, with results weighted by age, gender, education, region, ethnicity, working status, political attention, 2024 general election vote, 2016 EU vote in order to reflect the profile of the UK population.

How the public and other parties feel about the Lib Dems

- **The Lib Dems are the party most liked by their political rivals.** Those who back their four main opponents rate their warmth towards Lib Dem voters at 39 out of 100 – four points higher than the equivalent rating for Labour voters, who rank second, with 35. Reform UK supporters are viewed most coldly by their rivals, with a rating of 20.*
- **The Lib Dems are seen by their opponents as the least uncaring party.** 33% of rival supporters think Lib Dem voters don't care about people like them, and 36% say the same of the party's leaders – the lowest figures of any party, with the Greens next best on both counts (voters, 43%; leaders, 42%).*
- **The Greens have a particularly favourable view of the Lib Dems.** 43% of the party's supporters say Lib Dem voters are driven mostly by concern and care for people like them – a higher proportion than the share of Lib Dem supporters themselves who say the same (36%). By contrast, nearly three in 10 (28%) Reform supporters feel Lib Dem voters are instead driven mostly by dislike of people like them – the highest of any political group who feel this way.

Tactical voting: the Lib Dems' allies and opponents at the polls

- The positivity from other parties translates into the **Lib Dems being the most popular overall choice for tactical votes** from supporters of their rivals. Labour supporters name the Lib Dems (35%) as their joint top alternative pick with the Greens (33%), while the Lib Dems are also second choice for Green and Conservative supporters.
- However, the party is seen as **virtually last resort for those who back Reform**, just 5% of whom say they'd consider voting tactically for the Lib Dems – on a par with Labour (7%) and Greens (7%).
- **Lib Dems themselves are more likely to say they'd vote tactically for Labour** (32%), ahead of the Green party (26%).

(Mis)perceptions of Lib Dem policy preferences

While the public have an accurate view of Lib Dem support on issues like rejoining the EU and giving private companies a bigger role in the NHS, they misperceive how Lib Dem supporters feel about several key policy issues:

- Just 11% of Lib Dems agree the **number of immigrants coming to Britain should be increased**, yet the public's median guess is that more than double this proportion of Lib Dem supporters – 25% – hold this view. Lib Dem supporters themselves also overestimate how much support exists for this among their own party's base, guessing that 24% agree.
- The public overestimate the share of Lib Dem supporters who think the **UK should send far fewer people to prison** than it does today, guessing 36% against a reality of 21%. Green party supporters (41%) have the most inflated view of Lib Dem supporters backing for this.
- The public guess 36% of Lib Dem supporters would agree **Britain should spend more on**

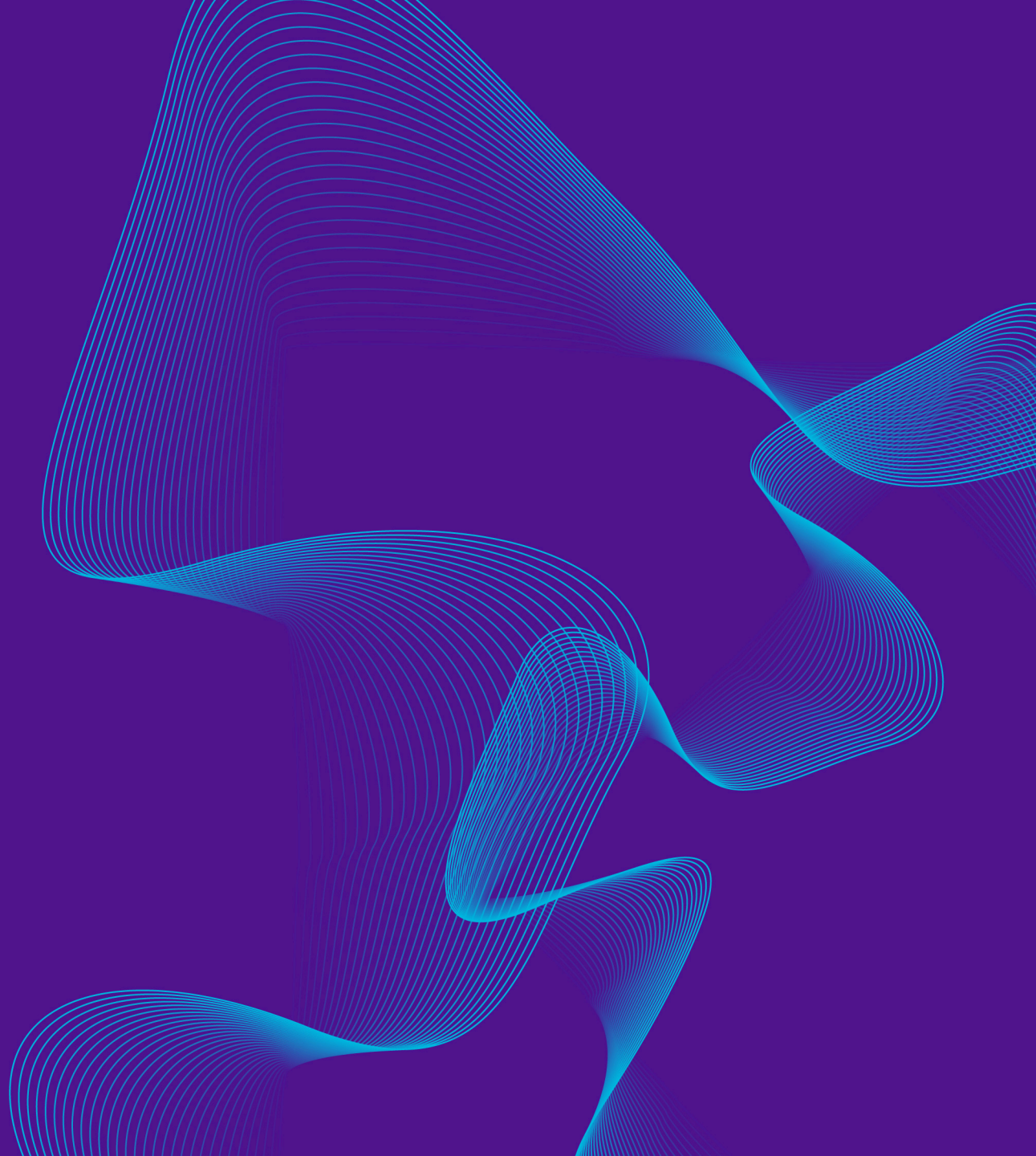
*Rival party scores are calculated by averaging the results for supporters of opposing major parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green and Reform). This gives each rival party equal weight and should not be interpreted as the views of all non-supporters combined

Executive summary

defence, even if it means less money for other public services – but in reality, 46% do. Green supporters in particular assume Lib Dem supporters are much less supportive of greater defence spending than they actually are, guessing 27% would agree.

- 11% of Lib Dem supporters agree the UK should **keep taxes on wealthy people as low as possible**, yet the public guess double this share (22%) would feel this way.

1. How the public and other parties feel about the Lib Dems



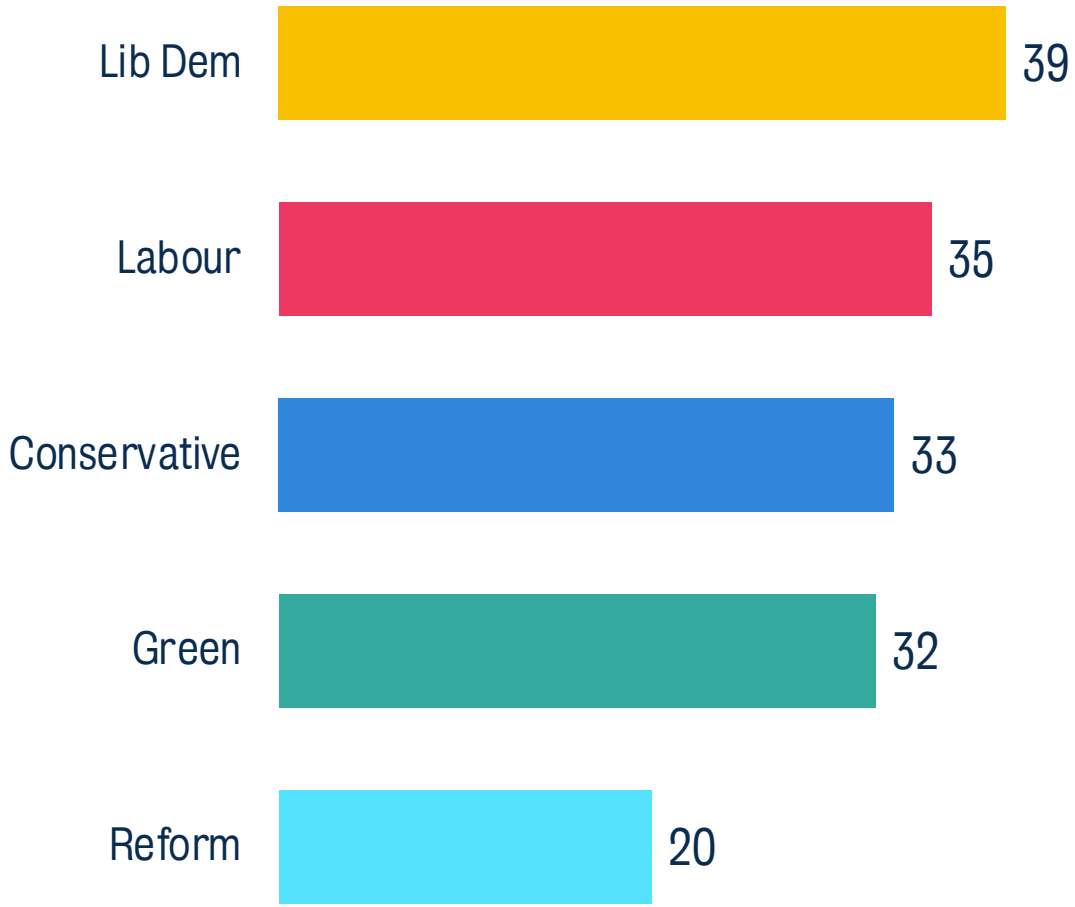
Of all parties' supporters, Lib Dems are viewed most warmly by their political rivals.

They are given an average rating of 39 out of 100 – four points higher than Labour, who rank second*

How warm or cold do you feel towards people who intend to vote for each party?

Please answer with 0 being very cold / unfavourable and 100 being very warm / favourable.

How warmly rival parties' supporters feel towards _____ supporters*

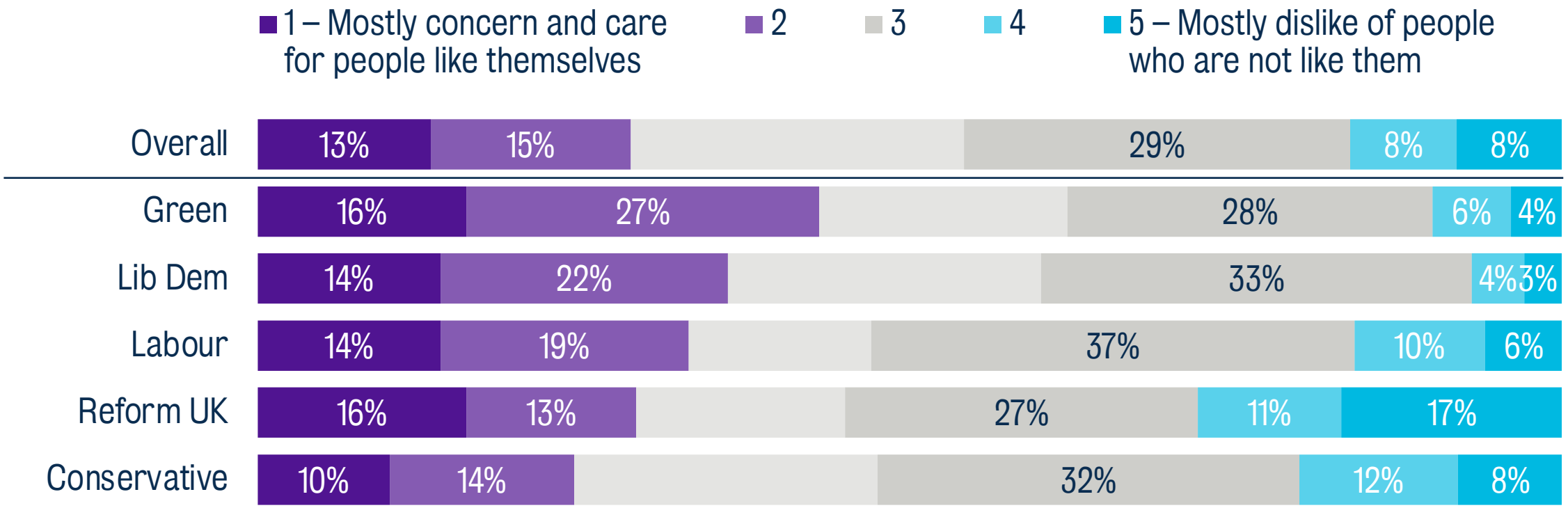


Base: 3,750 respondents aged 18+, 7-13 August 2026. *Rival party scores are calculated by averaging the results for supporters of opposing major parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green and Reform). This gives each rival party equal weight and should not be interpreted as the views of all non-supporters combined

Green party supporters (43%) are most likely to say Lib Dem voters are driven by concern and care for people like them – more likely than even Lib Dems themselves (36%)...

...meanwhile, three in 10 (28%) Reform supporters feel Lib Dems are driven mostly by dislike of people like them – the highest of any group

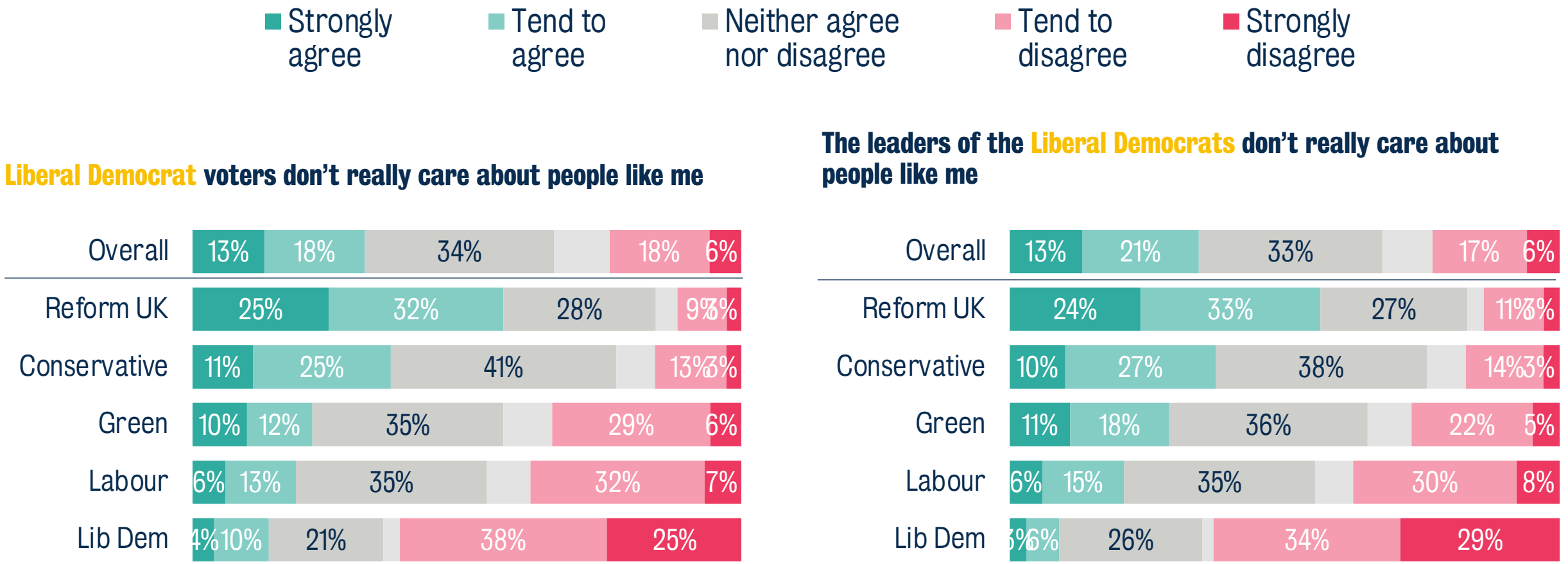
What do you think mainly motivates most **Liberal Democrat voters**? Please use the following scale, where 1 means mostly concern and care for people like themselves, and 5 means mostly dislike of people who are not like them.



Base: 1,507 respondents aged 18+ allocated to answer about the Lib Dems, 7-13 August 2026

Around a third of the public feel Lib Dem voters (31%) and the party's leaders (34%) don't really care about people like them, rising to over half among Reform supporters

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

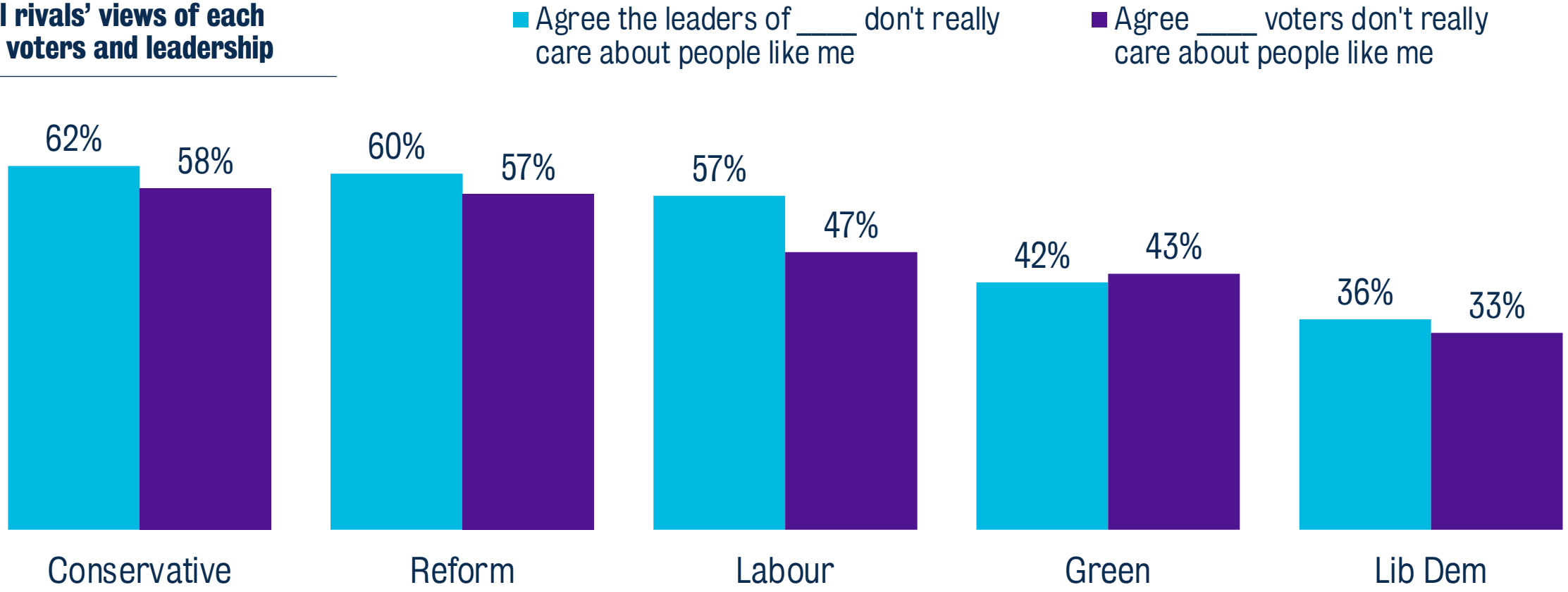


Base: 1,507 respondents aged 18+ allocated to answer about the Lib Dems, 7-13 August 2026

Even to their political rivals, the Lib Dems are seen as the least uncaring party

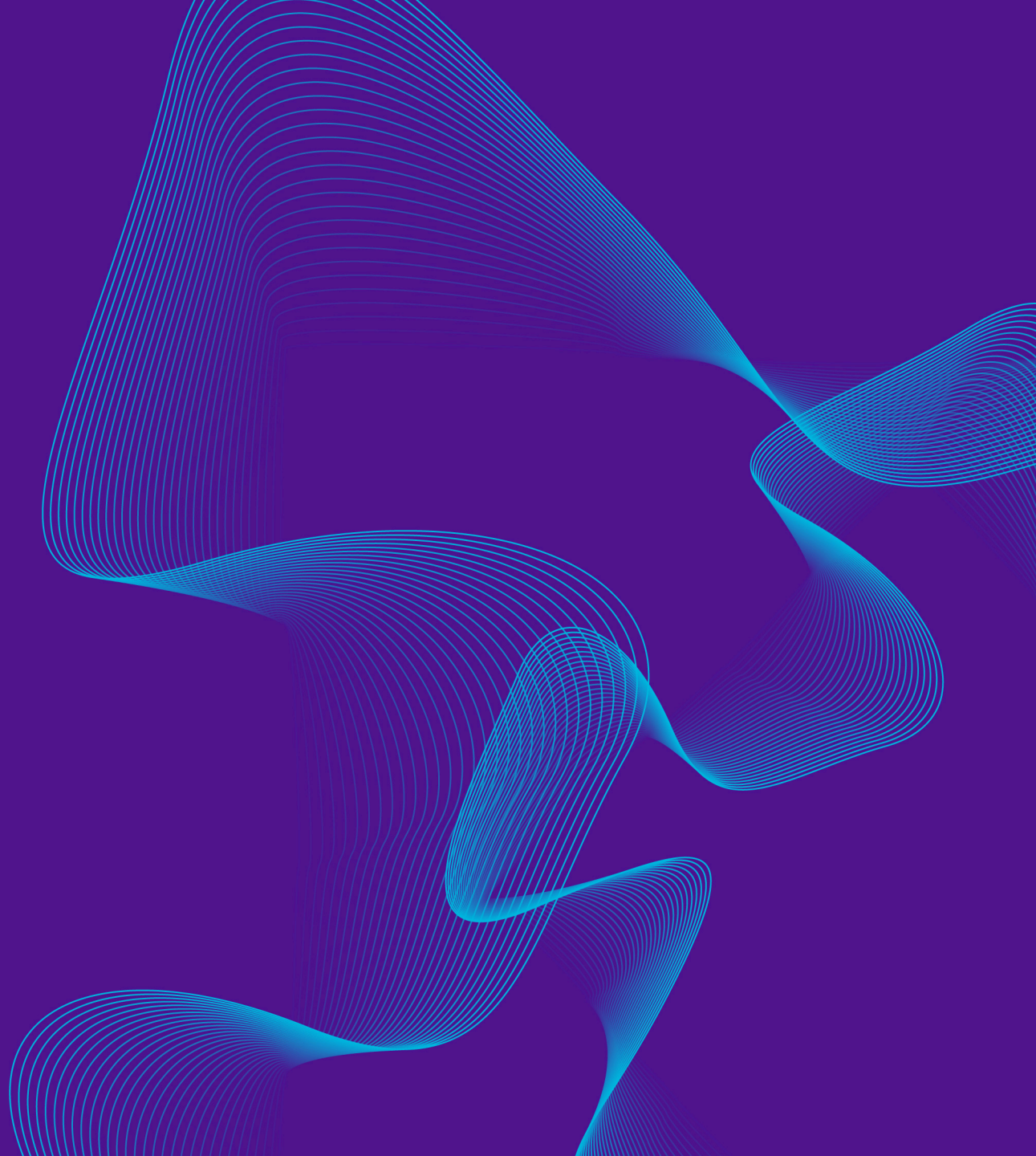
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? _____ voters don't really care about people like me / The leaders of _____ don't really care about people like me

Political rivals' views of each party's voters and leadership



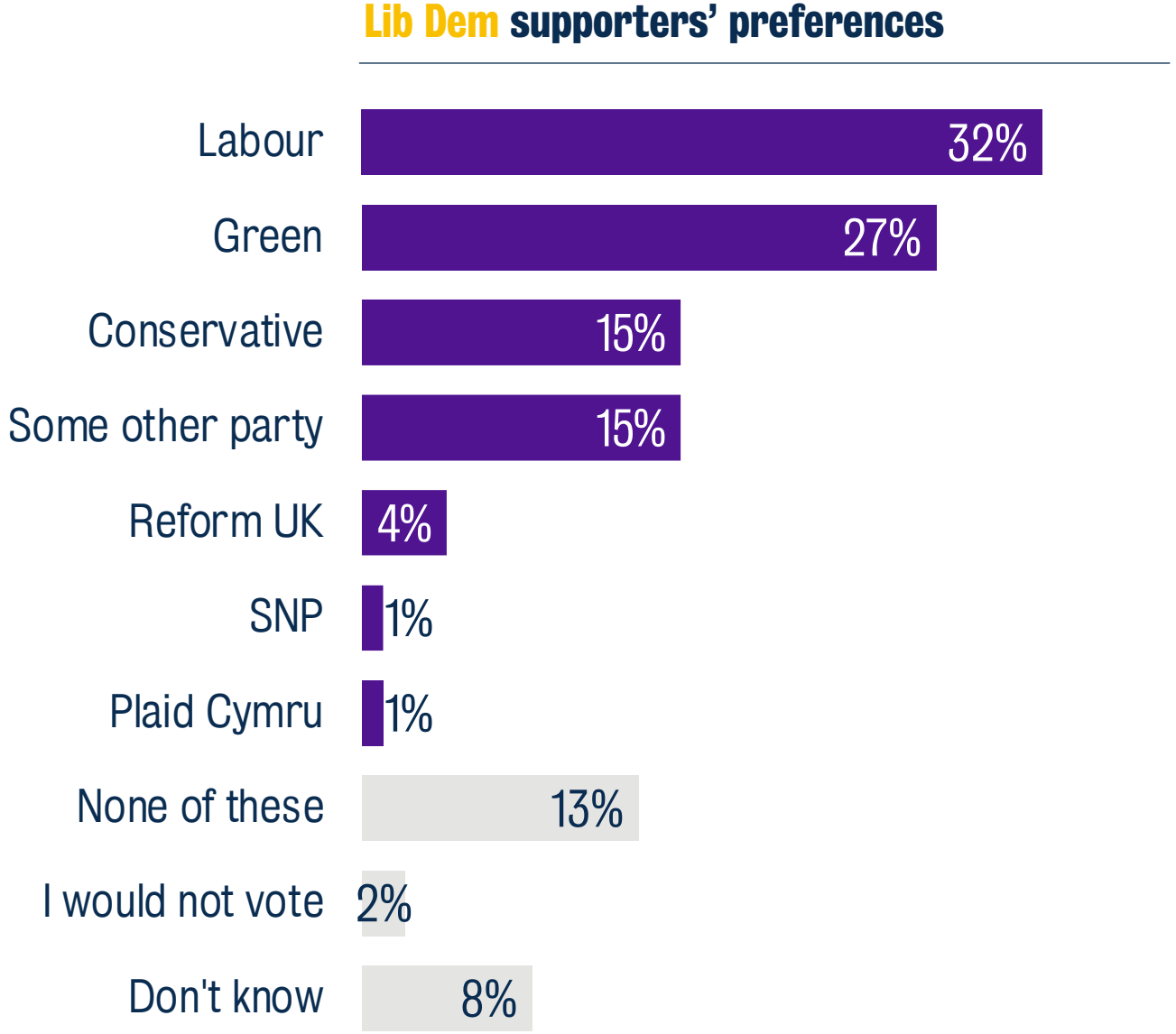
Base: 1,484–1,516 respondents aged 18+ per party (allocated to answer about each target party), 7-13 August 2026. Base: 3,750 respondents aged 18+, 7-13 August 2026. Rival party scores are calculated by averaging the results for supporters of opposing major parties (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green and Reform). This gives each rival party equal weight and should not be interpreted as the views of all non-supporters combined

2. Tactical voting: the Lib Dems' allies and opponents at the polls



Lib Dem supporters say Labour would be their top alternative choice in a tactical voting scenario, ahead of the Green party

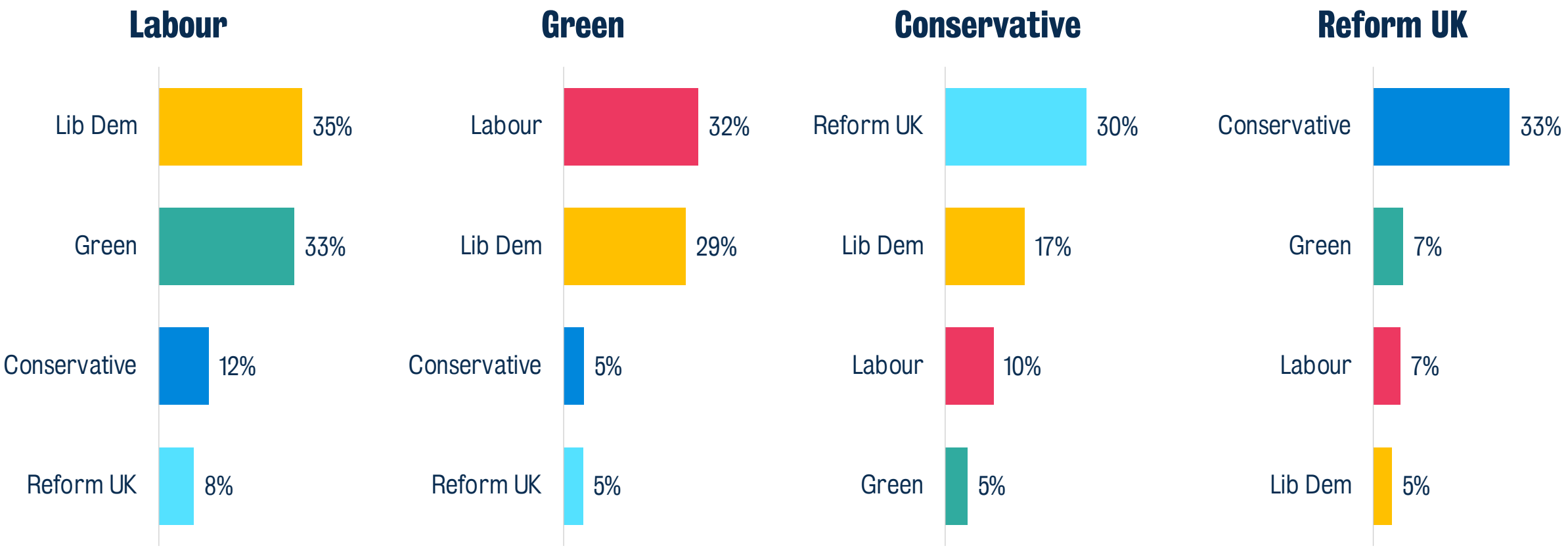
Which of the following parties, if any, would you consider voting for if they had a better chance of winning in your constituency than your preferred party?



*Only those in Scotland given option for SNP and those in Wales given option for Plaid Cymru. Base: 236 Lib Dem voters aged 18+ who gave a voting intention, 7-13 August 2026

The Lib Dems are the joint top alternative choice for Labour supporters and the second choice for Greens and Conservatives – but last resort for those who back Reform

Which of the following parties, if any, would you consider voting for if they had a better chance of winning in your constituency than your preferred party?



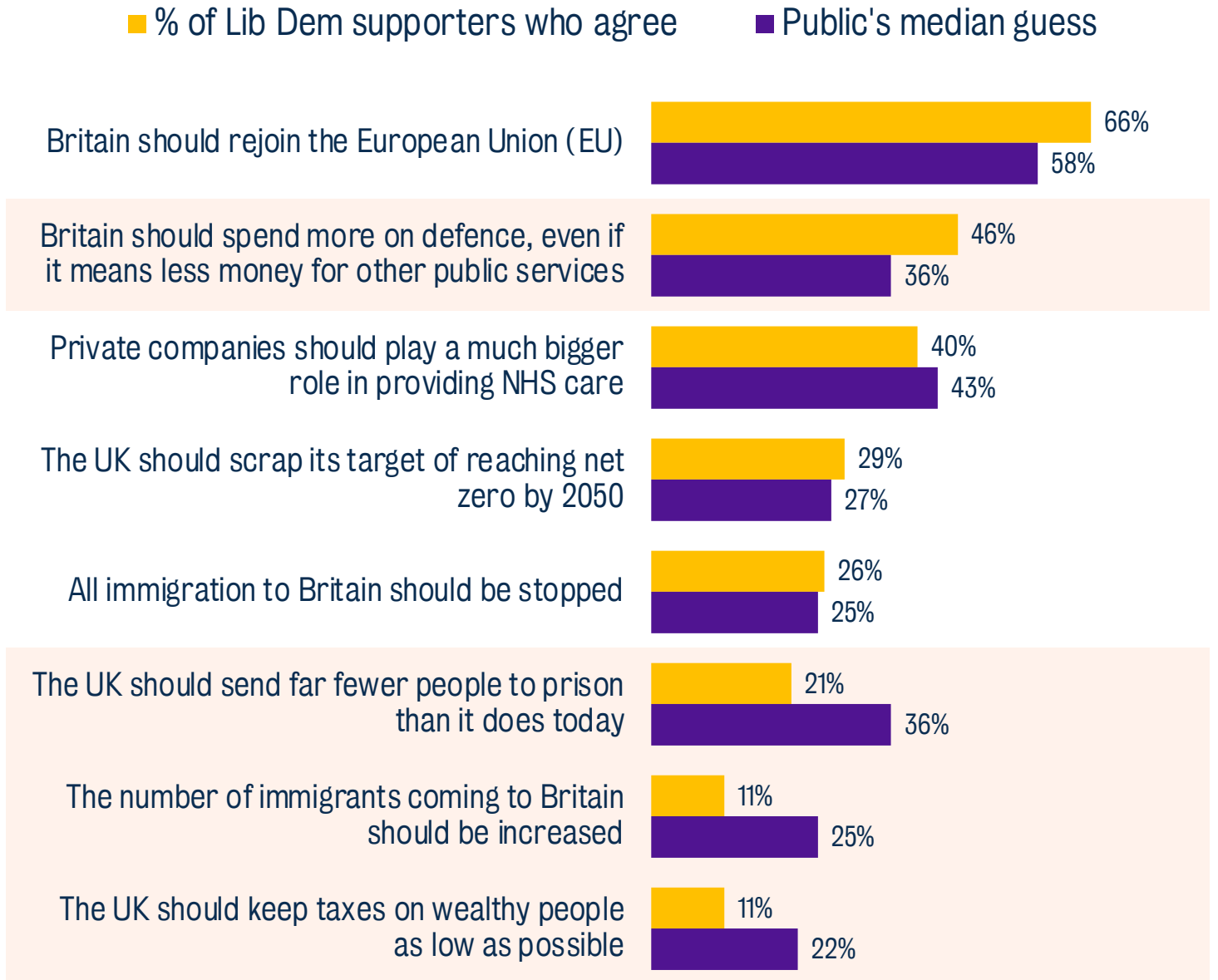
Base: Conservative 474, Labour 745, Reform UK 728, Green 340 respondents aged 18+ who gave a voting intention, 7-13 August 2026

3. Perceptions of Lib Dem policy preferences

The public misperceive how Lib Dems feel about several key policy issues.

They underestimate their support for greater defence spending, but overestimate their support for sending fewer people to prison, increasing immigration and keeping taxes low on the wealthy

For this question, please think about people who intend to vote for the **Liberal Democrats** at the next general election. Out of every 100 Reform UK voters, how many do you think would AGREE with the following?



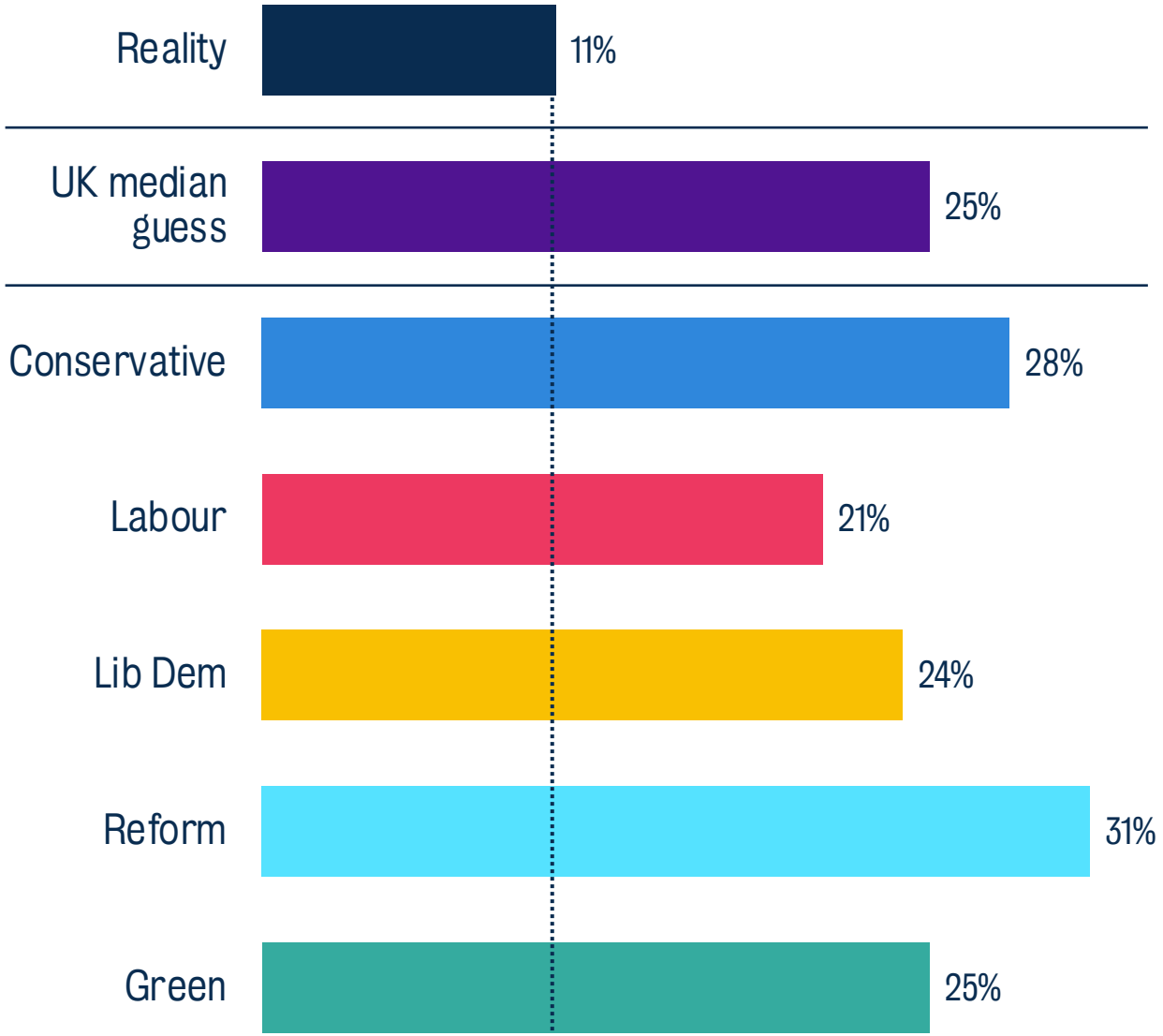
Base: Reality – 3,750 respondents aged 18+ (236 Lib Dem voters); public's guess – 1,507 respondents aged 18+ allocated to answer about the Lib Dems; 7-13 August 2026

Reform UK supporters most overestimate the extent to which Lib Dems want to see increased immigration to Britain.

But Lib Dem supporters themselves also overestimate how much support exists among their own party's base

For this question, please think about people who intend to vote for the **Liberal Democrats** at the next general election. Out of every 100 Reform UK voters, how many do you think would AGREE with the following?

The number of immigrants coming to Britain should be increased



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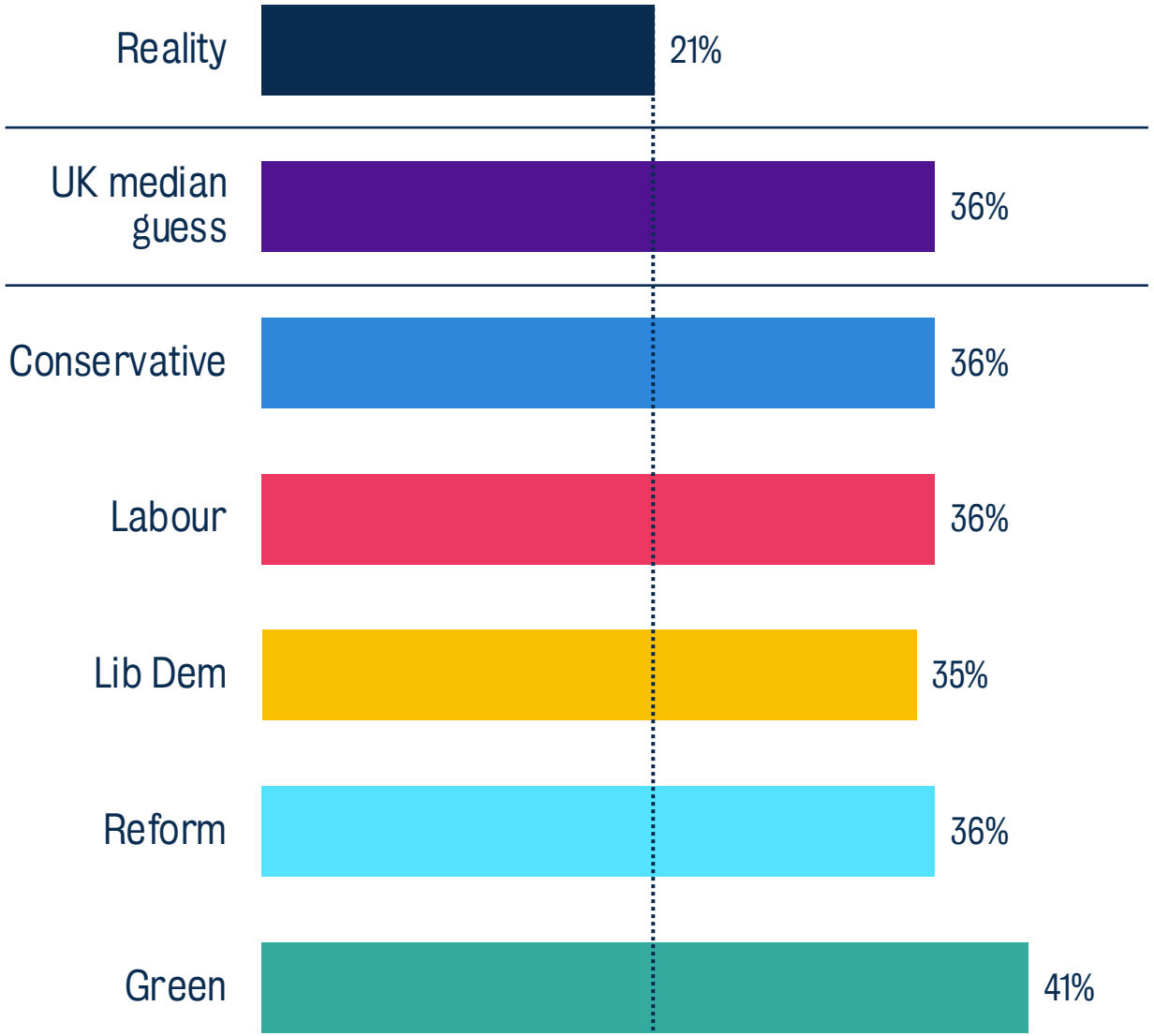
Political rivals overestimate Lib Dem support for sending fewer people to prison by 15 points or more

For this question, please think about people who intend to vote for the **Liberal Democrats** at the next general election. Out of every 100 Reform UK voters, how many do you think would AGREE with the following?

The UK should send far fewer people to prison than it does today



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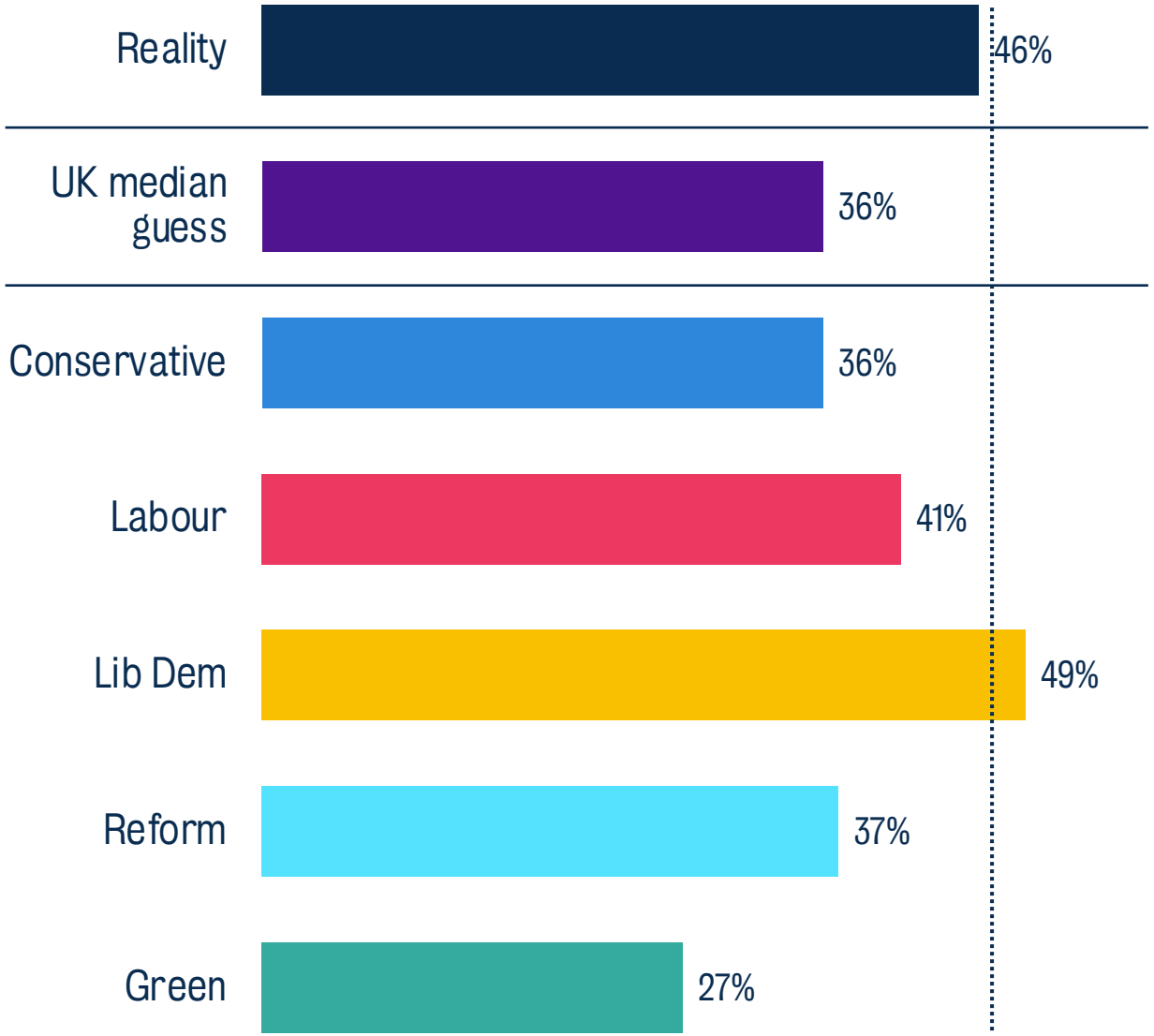
Green supporters in particular assume Lib Dems are much less supportive of greater defence spending than they actually are

For this question, please think about people who intend to vote for the **Liberal Democrats** at the next general election. Out of every 100 Reform UK voters, how many do you think would AGREE with the following?

Britain should spend more on defence, even if it means less money for other public services



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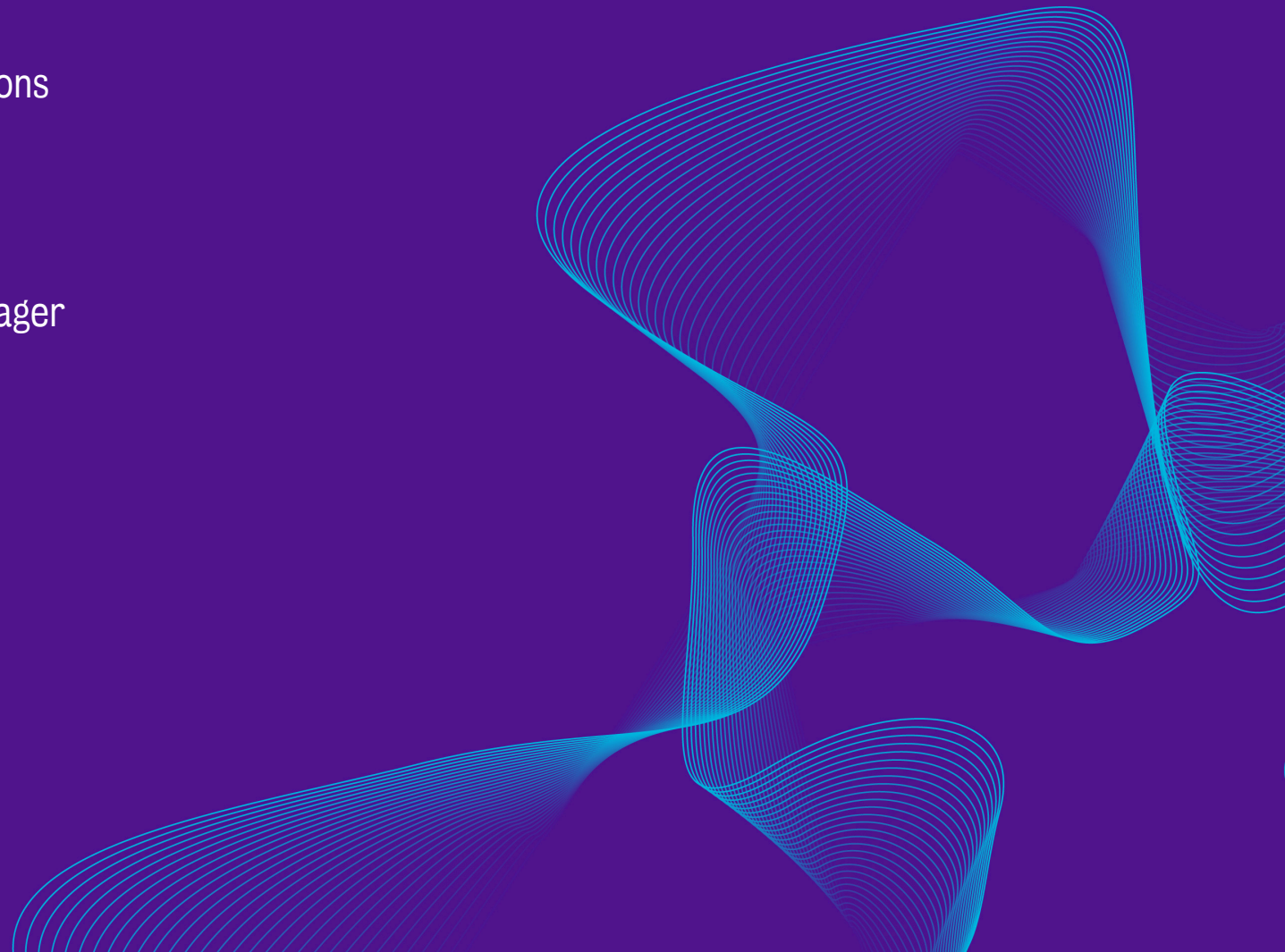

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