

October 2020
Britain's Choice:
Common Ground and
Division in 2020s Britain

Chapter 3

Britain's Core Beliefs



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Chapter 3

Britain's Core Beliefs



There will always be old money, new money, there will always be the disadvantaged. I mean, the big kid will always pick on the small kid, irrespective of what rules and laws you put in place. You know, going back to tribalism and the social divide, when I worked in town, I used to work in an office in Leicester and it was in the LE5 postcode area. Regularly, I mean two or three times a week, I would come in to work, park the car, and on the white walls to our office it was painted LE4, which is the adjacent post code. And it's literally people from LE4 tagging properties in LE5. You cannot get a more insane and arbitrary tribalism than that and that's what happened. So, sure, for every group in society there will be an anti-group, whatever that looks like, and they have to exist for the sake of each other.

Gareth, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, East Midlands



The seven segments of the British population outlined in the previous chapter were identified through a model that applies recent findings from social psychology. It analyses people's core beliefs on the basis of their responses to a series of 45 questions, which seek to shed light on the hidden architecture of our minds that shapes our behaviours and attitudes in complex ways. This chapter provides a non-technical explanation of the model underpinning this segmentation (for technical specialists, further information about the model can be provided). The purpose of using this model is that, rather than understanding people only according to their demographic or attitudinal traits (such as their age, gender, ethnic background, or identification with a political party), we can also understand them according to their identity and belief systems. In turn, this population segmentation allows us to better understand many of the divisions in our society – as well as helping us to find common ground across society's fault lines.

The questions used in the segmentation model touch on six dimensions of people's belief systems that have been researched by social scientists. These six dimensions all help to explain how social and political behaviour is relatively stable across our lifetimes, thus having greater predictive power for the future. The core beliefs model includes the following dimensions:

- Moral foundations theory
- Authoritarian disposition (measured by parenting style scales)
- Fear and perception of threat
- Personal agency and responsibility
- Political values
- Identity, tribalism, and group affiliation

Group identity, the last of these six dimensions, is an important dimension of the hidden architecture of our minds. Because humans evolved in small tribes, we developed a tendency to view people through the lens of groups. The groups in which we have a sense of belonging are our 'in-groups'; the groups to which we do not belong are our 'out-groups'. As humans we are remarkably quick at thinking of other people in terms of in-groups and out-groups. When others agree with our views, we often see them as part of our in-group and trust what they say more than others. When we feel insecure or threatened in some way, we tend to draw closer to our group and separate ourselves from outsiders. The questions we ask in our research examine the role of group identity in shaping people's views and values.

Belief systems differ from person to person, but they tend to remain relatively constant across an individual's lifetime. For that reason, unlike the results of regular opinion polling, the map of Britain's seven segments presented in this report is likely to remain applicable for many years to come.

3.1 Moral foundations

The first principle of moral psychology is that intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second.¹ Research in social psychology has proposed a set of 'moral foundations' that underpin people's moral judgments. These moral foundations help us make sense of people's moral compasses and, as our research reveals, are correlated with a variety of attitudes.

Moral foundations are akin to universal 'taste receptors'. They are adaptations to long-standing threats and opportunities. Each foundation has different triggers, which, when activated, can generate intuitive reactions and perhaps

specific emotions. While we all possess the same moral foundations, as humans we are not all 'wired' in the same way and, when we encounter different issues or circumstances in life, we unknowingly prioritise these foundations differently.

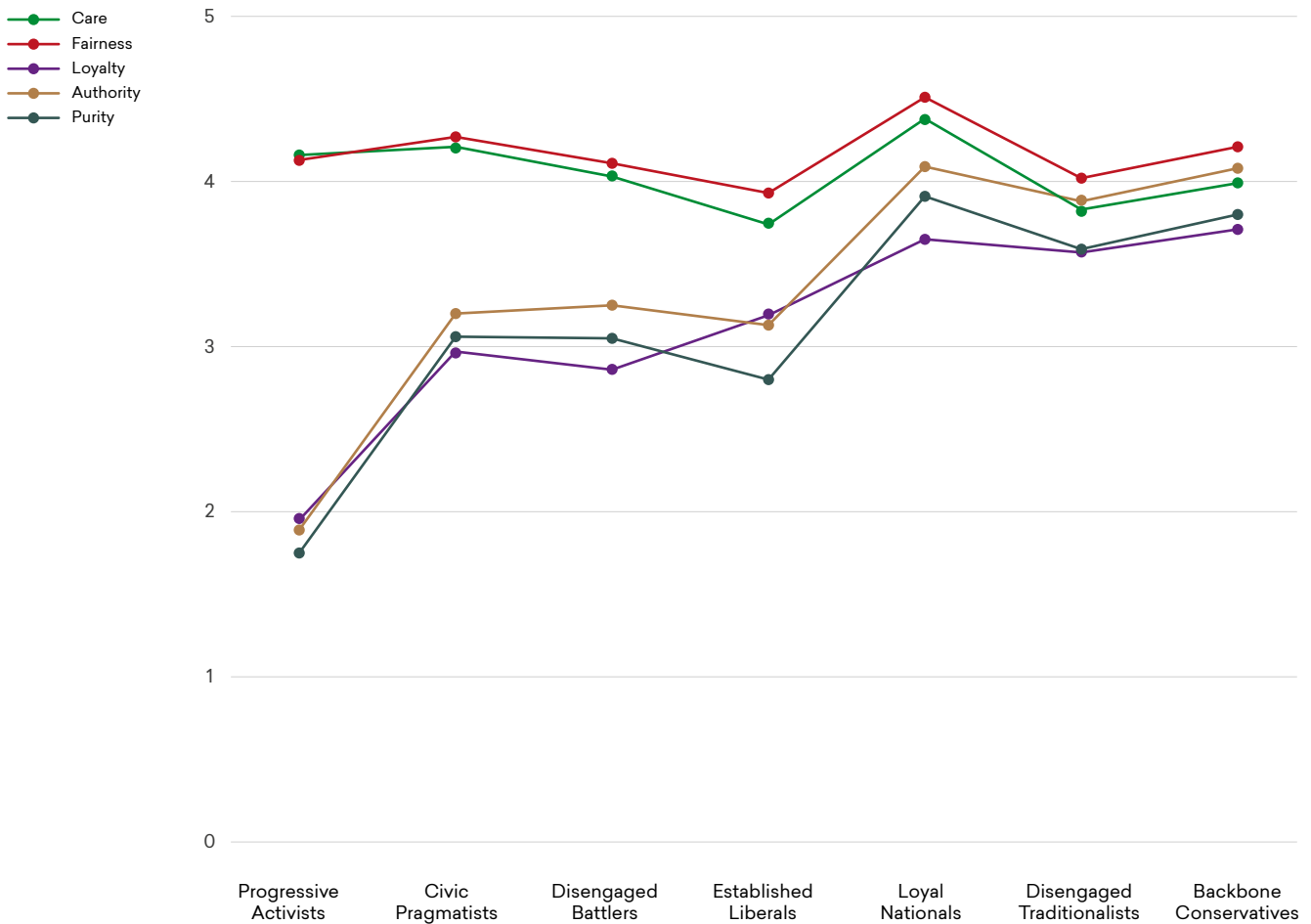
The moral foundations identified through the work of Jonathan Haidt² and others are:

- **Care/Harm:** Protecting the vulnerable and helping those in need
- **Fairness/Cheating:** Relating to proportionality, equality, reciprocity, and rendering justice according to shared rules
- **Authority/Subversion:** Submitting to tradition and legitimate authority
- **Purity/Disgust:** Abhorrence for things that evoke disgust
- **Loyalty/Betrayal:** Standing with one's group, family, or nation

Figure 3.1.

Shifts in the moral bedrock

The population segments identified in Chapter 2 differ in the strength of their attachment to specific moral foundations, as the chart below demonstrates



For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

The degree to which people prioritise each of these foundations is measured through the Moral Foundations Questionnaire. This questionnaire assesses people's reliance on each foundation separately. For instance, the extent to which a person gives priority to Care is assessed by their agreement with propositions such as 'one of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenceless animal'. Likewise, the extent to which a person gives priority to Purity is assessed by their agreement that 'people should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed'. An abridged version of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire was used in this study, in consultation with Sean T. Stevens and Jonathan Haidt.

Survey results: Britain's Moral Foundations

The seven segments show that people in Britain differ in their moral foundations. For example, Progressive Activists are deeply concerned with issues of Care and Fairness (but much less so the other foundations). They are unusual for their low concern for Loyalty, Authority, and Purity, something not found in other segments. Backbone Conservatives, on the other hand, value all of the moral foundations relatively equally. Loyal Nationals score very highly for all foundations, especially so in the case of Care and Fairness.

Moral foundations are an important part of the hidden architecture of human psychology that help to shape people's views on social and political issues, as shown by strong correlations between people's concern for each moral foundation and their agreement with different political propositions.

- Emphasis on Care reflects a need to protect the weak and vulnerable, and those with a strong Care foundation tend to support causes that involve protection. Higher prioritisation of Care is most strongly correlated with wanting to protect the natural environment and protect people from dangerous and harmful speech.
- Fairness rests on the need to ensure that people are treated equally and justly, according to shared rules. Prioritising Fairness correlates most closely with people's views on democracy and the kind of society that the United Kingdom should become. This suggests that Britons' views of society are closely related to notions of fairness, justice, and reciprocity.
- People who emphasise the moral foundation of Authority have greater respect for leadership and hierarchy, and are more likely to support policies emphasising enforcement of the law. Concern for Authority most strongly correlates with support for harsher sentences and measures to protect the community from threats.
- Since Purity is based on issues of cleanliness and disgust in both physical and spiritual matters, it tracks people's views on issues of sexual behaviour and religion. Emphasis on Purity correlates with beliefs that young people don't have enough respect for British values and that censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral values.
- Finally, the Loyalty foundation is associated with a sense of duty or obligation towards one's country and community. Accordingly, concern for Loyalty strongly tracks people's pride in British and national identities, as well as beliefs on young people's respect for British values, presumably because such respect is viewed as a desirable act of loyalty to the country.

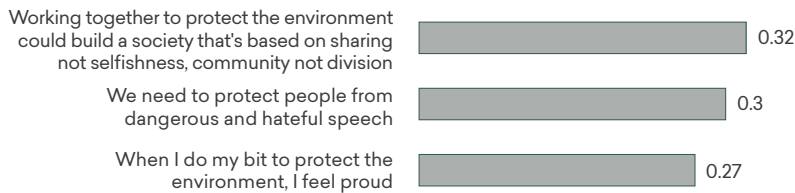
Overall, these findings underscore a key conclusion of this report: core beliefs shape Britons' different visions for the UK as a society. People's values, as reflected in measures of moral foundations, are closely associated with their views on a wide range of other issues, ranging from immigration policy and protecting the environment to appropriate sentences for those who disobey the law. Understanding people's core beliefs unlocks why they hold certain beliefs. This is important in order to overcome division in society and foster a better sense of mutual understanding in politics.

Figure 3.2.

Moral foundations and attitudes

The graphs below show variables that are strongly correlated with the moral foundation

Care



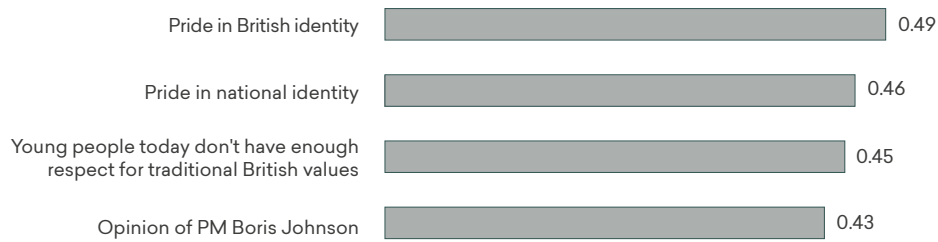
Fairness



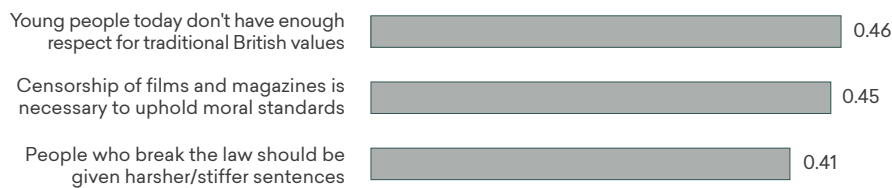
Authority



Loyalty



Purity



Issues by Moral Foundation. February 2020.
Strength of association (r) – Results are reported in absolute numbers.
Source: More in Common 2020.

3.2 Authoritarian disposition

Recent years have seen significant disruptions to established political systems across the world, with the rise of leaders and movements that attack the institutions and values of liberal democracy, reject pluralism, promote nationalism, and foster xenophobia. This disruption to the political landscape has sparked interest in explanations for why significantly larger proportions of populations are supporting populist and authoritarian styles of leadership than in the recent past.

Political psychologist Karen Stenner has offered an explanation based on what she describes as the 'authoritarian dynamic'. She explains that around one-third of the population have a natural tendency to embrace authoritarian responses when they feel under threat. The authoritarian dynamic consists of the interaction between these two factors: first, an 'authoritarian predisposition' – that is, a pre-existing and relatively stable tendency to emphasise group authority and uniformity – and second, the perception of threat (whether real or imagined) in someone's environment. When these two factors combine, people respond by embracing authoritarian responses such as expressing intolerance and supporting extremist political parties or candidates.

The authoritarian predisposition itself is a pre-existing and relatively stable tendency, favouring authority and uniformity over autonomy and diversity. Individuals with an authoritarian disposition are anxious to minimise differences within their in-group, and are reassured by expressions of oneness, sameness, and uniformity. It is closely related to definitions of 'us' and 'them', although group identifications can vary (who constitutes the us or the them). This predisposition manifests differently depending upon the environment.

An individual does not automatically support authoritarian leaders and policies, or become xenophobic, just because they have an authoritarian predisposition. According to Stenner, 'its manifest products depend upon the environment'.³ The psychological measure used in this survey explores this underlying trait and provides insights into a person's predisposition for responding to changing conditions of threats. Those responses might include political, racial, and moral intolerance. These attitudes and behaviours are the consequences of the authoritarian tendency, but are not the tendency itself. In other words, people can have an underlying authoritarian disposition but not be intolerant.

This theory raises the question of just what kinds of threats might activate the authoritarian predisposition. Karen Stenner's theory is that what activates the authoritarian predisposition are 'normative threats', which are perceived threats to a group's unity and consensus, to the oneness and sameness of the group. The past decade has witnessed a wider and deeper set of threats, including from the fallout of the financial crisis in 2008, rapid technological change, deepening spending cuts, rising inequality, demographic shifts, a diversifying population, and the health and economic fallout from Covid-19.

Authoritarianism is an underlying trait that is not connected to whether an individual is left or right-wing politically. The libertarian-authoritarian axis cuts across both of the classical 'wings' of politics. In other words, authoritarianism can occur across the political spectrum. Authoritarianism on the right and left of politics is most usually manifested in punitive attitudes toward dissenters and a desire for strong authority.⁴ Expressions of authoritarianism share a pattern of behaviour reflected by aggression towards combative, motivated, and prejudiced members of the opposite political party.⁵ Authoritarianism is associated with strong partisanship and heightened affective polarisation. According to Matthew Luttig, 'clinging strongly to a party and derogating the out-party can be an effective mechanism for obtaining one's psychological goals of cognitive order and uncertainty reduction.'⁶

Survey results: authoritarian tendencies

The most widely-used measures of authoritarian tendencies are based on the way that people respond to questions about childrearing values. Responses indicate the qualities that individuals consider most important to develop in a child, which can often reveal an individual's fundamental values. Consistent with the work of scholars such as Matthew MacWilliams, we asked respondents several questions regarding their views of how parents should raise children (see questions in the Appendix). The stricter an individual's parenting style, the greater their willingness to endorse authoritarianism.

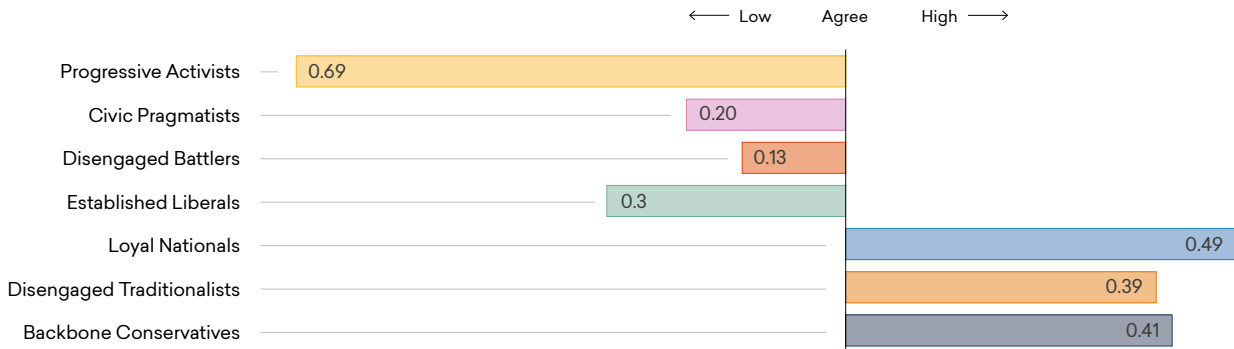
The segments reflect stark differences on authoritarianism, with Progressive Activists at the low end and Loyal Nationals at the highest, followed by the Disengaged Traditionalists and Backbone Conservatives.

Figure 3.3.

Authoritarian tendencies

This figure shows results to the authoritarian tendency index. The index ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 indicates no authoritarian tendencies and 1 indicates high authoritarian tendencies

Tendency towards authoritarianism



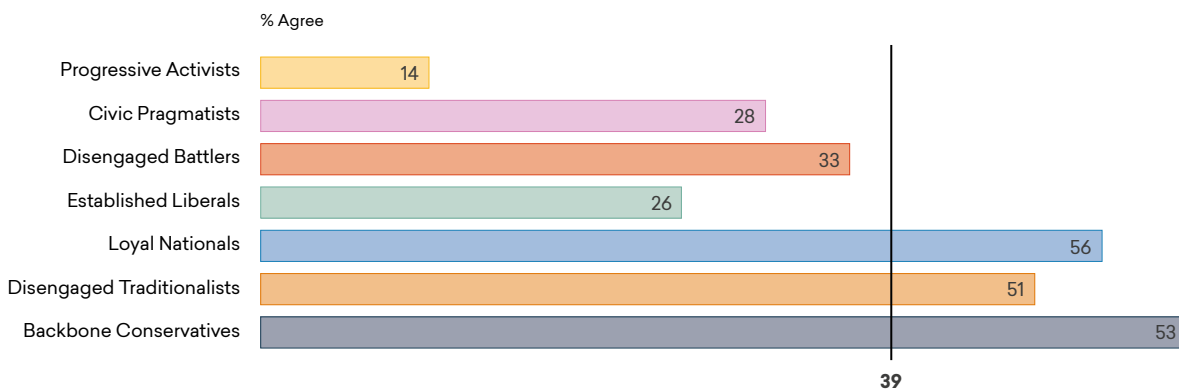
Authoritarianism score created by aggregating across parenting questions. For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.4.

Authoritarianism

Segments with higher authoritarian tendencies are more likely to prefer an authoritarian style of leadership

To fix this country, the UK needs a leader who is willing to break the rules



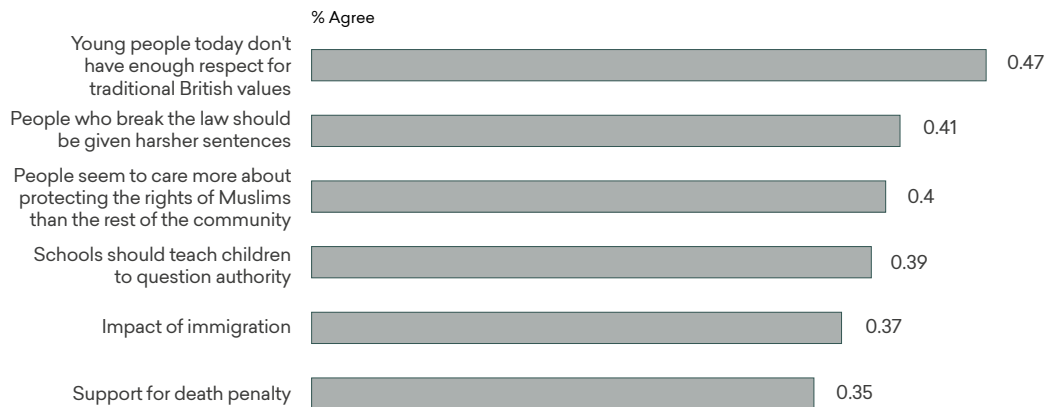
Qu. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: To fix this country, the UK needs a leader who is willing to break the rules. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.5.

Correlations with authoritarianism

The figure below shows the views which correlate most with tendencies towards authoritarianism

Which views correlate with having authoritarian tendencies?



Strength of association (r) –
Results are reported in absolute numbers.
Authoritarianism score created by aggregating across parenting questions.
For full question text see Figure 3.3 in Appendix 2.1, February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

'I believe in the rule of law. When they said rules are for breaking... You know, rules may be for breaking, but laws are not.'

George, Loyal National, 62, West Midlands

The segments reflect differences on authoritarianism across the spectrum of responses, with Progressive Activists at the lower end and Loyal Nationals at the higher end. Established Liberals also display low levels of authoritarianism, reflected in their support for diversity and multiculturalism. Disengaged Traditionalists are similar to Loyal Nationals in their authoritarian predispositions; both groups are more likely to associate with a national in-group (the Loyal Nationals especially) and espouse more negative views on immigration. Both groups also tend to emphasise law and order and are particularly concerned about crime.



Interviewer

Are there any more societal issues that you worry about?

Jake

‘I don’t worry about it personally, but I’m quite a stickler for playing by the rules and things like that. Now, crime in this country I think is a bit of a joke. I always get this word wrong, but our jury system, how it works, it’s just set up to let criminals get off. All you’ve got to do is get a good lawyer and you’re laughing. You can beat the judicial system, make people believe something. And people that are causing issues out there, stabbings, drug dealers, things like that, aren’t getting banged up for as long as they should. **Like I say, it’s not a direct issue but I’d like to live in a country of zero tolerance on crime, to be perfectly honest. That’s just how I feel.**’

Interviewer

Okay. So you feel that there’s too much of a light touch on criminals?

Jake

‘Oh yes.’

Interviewer

Is that to do with police, or is it the judicial system? Is it sentencing and punishment?

Jake

‘Well I don’t think the police have got any powers to do anything. When I was young if a policeman come down the road most kids ran away because they were scared of the police. Whereas now, all the police get is a load of backchat from lads. You can’t give someone a clip round the ear or anything like that. People should be worried. **It’s the law. If you break it then you should pay the consequences. But unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to be the strength of consequences that in my eyes there should be.**’

Jake, Disengaged Traditionalist, 47, South East

3.3 Threat perception

The third dimension of social psychology integrated into the segmentation model used for this report is people's perception of threat. Some are more inclined to feel that the world is dangerous, while others naturally feel more secure. These differences in the hidden architecture of our minds are important, because threat perception can be exploited to increase antagonism towards out-groups. These notions are related to the perception of normative threat, discussed above in section 3.2. One of the most common strategies of authoritarian populists is to exploit people's sense of insecurity by making them feel threatened by a group that feels different from them. Authoritarian populists promise to defend 'us' from 'them'.

The model used in this study examines individuals' 'perceived threats', which correspond to the degree of danger people see in the world. Some people see the world as a largely safe place with isolated pockets of violence. Others see the world as a largely dangerous place with isolated pockets of tranquillity. This underlying belief can predict a wide range of attitudes on social and political issues such as crime, public order, immigration, and terrorism. The study includes several questions that assess perceived threat, including agreement with the statement that 'most people can be trusted', the extent to which people agree 'the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place', and perceived threat in the area where one lives. These are all matters of perception, although a person's sense of threat in their local area is more grounded in their own experience than their perception of threat in the world more generally. Key findings were that:

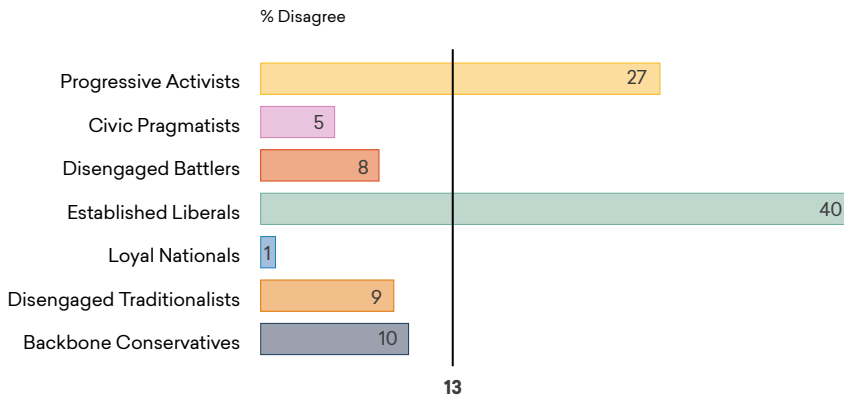
- Threat perceptions are not related to levels of optimism or pessimism about the country's future direction.
- The segments differ significantly in their perception of safety and danger. Those differences are not related to ideology, but they influence people's views on several social and political issues.
- Established Liberals and Progressive Activists feel less threat, both in the world and their communities. Established Liberals' sense of comfort and security are reflected in their responses: they have a lower perceived threat than any other segment. Loyal Nationals are situated at the other end of the spectrum, with 99 per cent believing that the world is becoming a more dangerous place.
- While Progressive Activists and Civic Pragmatists are generally fairly similar in their responses on different issues, they differ sharply on their perception of threat around the world becoming a more dangerous place: 95 per cent of Civic Pragmatists agree that it is, compared to 73 per cent of Progressive Activists.
- Overall, people feel a lower sense of threat about their local area than the world more generally. Loyal Nationals, again, are the segment most likely to say that their local area is becoming more dangerous. Progressive Activists and Established Liberals experience the lowest sense of threat in their local area.

Figure 3.6.

Survey results: perceived threat

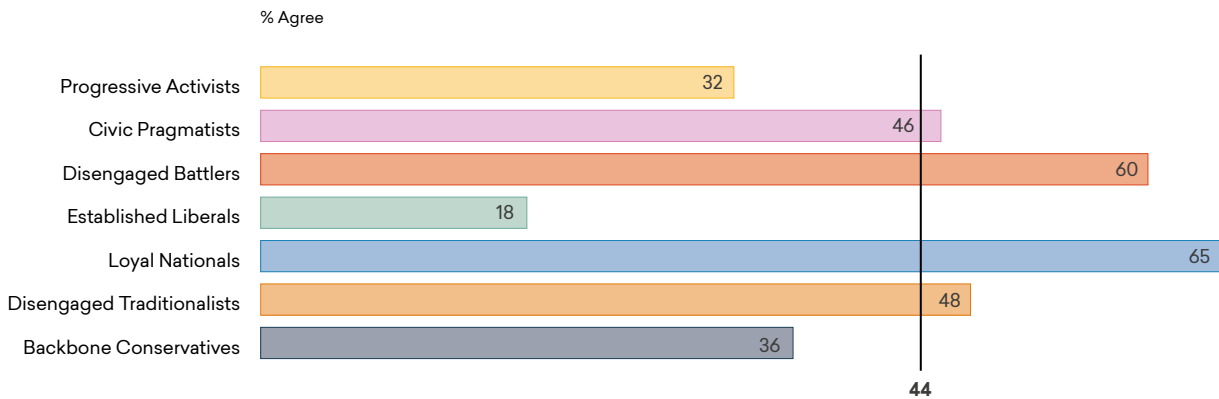
The segments differ on the safety or danger they perceive in their local area and the wider world. Established Liberals and Progressive Activists are far less likely to believe that the world is becoming a more dangerous place. Their level of threat perception is lower

Disagreement that 'the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place'



Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The world is becoming a more and more dangerous place. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

The area where I live is becoming a more and more dangerous place



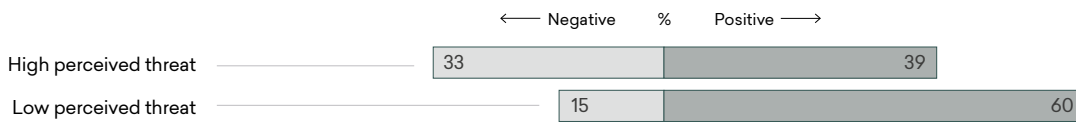
Qu. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The area where I live is becoming a more and more dangerous place. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.7.

Perceived threat and views on immigration

Those with lower perceived threat are far more likely to believe that immigration is having a positive impact on the UK

Threat perception and the impact of immigration



High perceived threat was measured according to agreement with the statement: The world is becoming a more and more dangerous place. Low perceived threat was measured according to disagreement with the statement. February 2020. Source: More in Common 2020.

3.4 Agency and responsibility

‘People always defer to somebody else. It’s the government’s problem, it’s the council’s problem, it’s the police’s problem. Actually, it’s always our problem.’

Gareth, Disengaged Traditionalist, 49, East Midlands

Britons differ in the importance they give to the role of personal agency versus social forces in shaping life outcomes. While some people emphasise independence, personal responsibility, and self-reliance, others focus more on systemic injustices and collective responsibilities. Sociologist Robert Lane highlighted the importance of these notions of agency and causality many years ago: ‘At the roots of every ideology there are premises about the nature of causation [and] the appropriate ways for explaining complex events.’⁷

When people explain the outcomes in their own lives, and those of others, they tend to attribute those outcomes either to personal responsibility or to luck and circumstance. Some people believe that individuals should get credit for their successes because they were caused by things that were within their control. Others believe that outcomes are mostly the result of external forces. These two competing worldviews have important implications for political opinions and behaviour, shaping feelings on many issues including social benefits, education, and inequality.

The segmentation model for this report uses a series of questions around the difference between individual versus circumstantial forces. Scales follow a ranking from 1 to 4, with 4 representing one of the options presented (e.g. hard work) and 1 representing the opposed alternative (e.g. luck and circumstance). This approach gives respondents the opportunity to indicate a more moderate position (2 or 3) which, while showing a preference towards one or another option, enables us to differentiate in degrees of intensity. For example, among those who identify as fairly or very right-wing, 76 per cent claim that people who work hard can find success no matter what situation

they were born into. Conversely, among those who identify as fairly or very left-wing, 73 per cent believe the opposite view: that some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success.

Overall, people in Britain emphasise personal responsibility more than broader social forces to explain the outcomes in people's lives.

- 69 per cent of Britons believe that people are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life, while 31 per cent believe that people's outcomes are largely determined by forces outside of their control.
- Similarly, 58 per cent state that people who work hard can find success, no matter the circumstances they were born into.
- In their explanation of their own situation, people emphasise personal agency even more strongly. 76 per cent claim that hard work and effort played a greater role in explaining where they are than luck and circumstance.

The segments differ significantly in their responses to these questions. Progressive Activists and Disengaged Battlers emphasise larger social forces. Progressive Activists, the highest-earning segment, are more likely than others to put their own success down to luck, whereas other segments comprising people in lower paid work will say their success is down to hard work. Eighty-one per cent of Progressive Activists and 70 per cent of Disengaged Battlers state that some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success. Imogen, a 39-year-old Progressive Activist who mentors young people, despaired of this:

'The difference in opportunity of some of the people that I mentor, who aren't any less intelligent, probably are more hardworking than my friends' children, and yet it's so much harder for them to get anywhere. I see them grow up having their dreams limited.'

Backbone Conservatives, Disengaged Traditionalists, Established Liberals, and, with slightly less intensity, Loyal Nationals, rely more on individual explanations for how people's lives turn out. Ninety-four per cent of Backbone Conservatives attribute outcomes in life to personal agency. This has an impact on how they view those who experience greater deprivation in society. Richard, a semi-retired Backbone Conservative in his late 60s, explained it in the following terms:

'There are a lot of bone-idle, fat, lazy people. That's really what they are. I grew up in London, I lived in a council house, my parents had nothing, nobody gave me anything. So, the bleeding-heart argument just really doesn't work for me.'

Disengaged Traditionalists share this emphasis on personal responsibility. In the words of Gareth from the East Midlands:

'Opportunity is pretty good. I'm always a fairly optimistic person. I believe you make your own way in life. It's very easy to abdicate responsibility for your own particular failure and say 'oh, I wasn't educated at school' or 'my parents weren't wealthy', but you know, sometimes you knuckle down and you do and it's always easy to say, well, we've got a great social safety net so I shall just adopt that rather than doing. So, yeah, there are numerous forks in the road but you can always take the one that is hard work and delivers rather than the one that's just sort of sitting back and expecting stuff to happen around you.'

Figure 3.8.

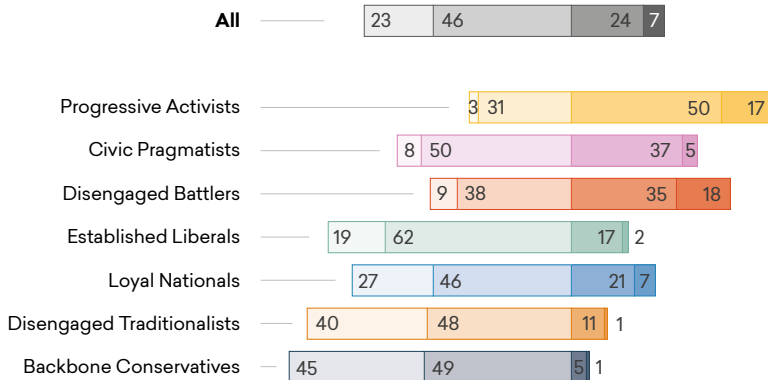
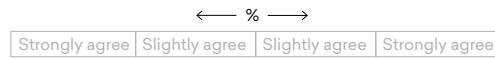
What determines outcomes in life?

Segments differ in their views on the role of personal responsibility in life outcomes

Personal responsibility versus social forces

People are largely responsible for their own outcomes in life

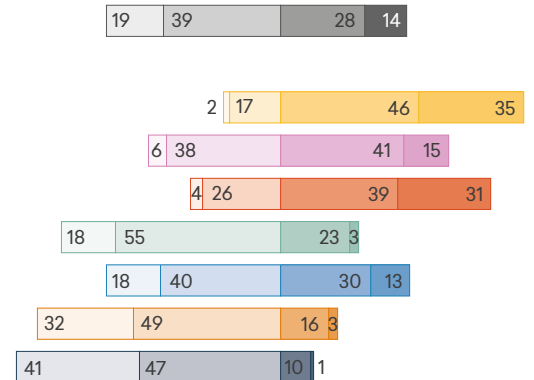
People's outcomes in life are determined largely by forces outside of their control



Can individuals transcend difficult circumstances?

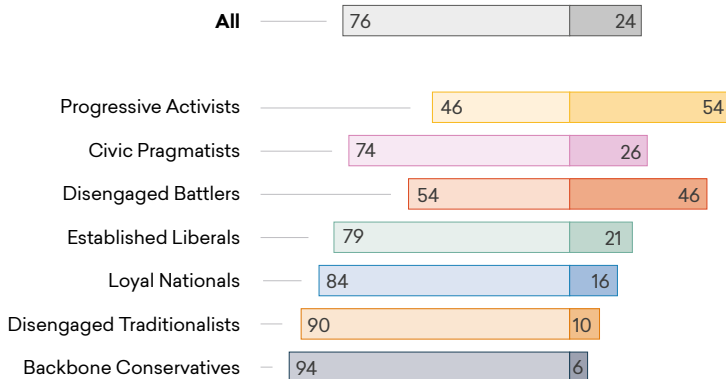
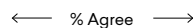
People who work hard can find success no matter what situation they were born into

Some people's situations are so challenging that no amount of work will allow them to find success



Which of the following played a greater role in getting you where you are today?

Hard work and effort Luck and circumstance



For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

3.5 Political values

Political scientists in Britain often use a group of questions to map individuals' political values. These questions, developed in the 1990s by Geoffrey Evans, Anthony Heath, and Mansur Lalljee, have been adapted and integrated into the core belief model we used to segment the British population (see Appendix for the questions). These item scales measure two core dimensions: left-right (or socialist vs laissez-faire, concerned with equality) and libertarian-authoritarian values (concerned with personal freedom).⁸

These scales show political values that tend to be stable and consistent over time and are a better measure of individuals' political beliefs than other measures, such as asking individuals to self-identify and place themselves on a scale from left to right (although we also collected this information).

On the economic left-right scale, the UK as a whole leans towards the left, favouring redistribution of wealth and believing that workers do not get a fair share of the nation's wealth. Just 4 per cent of Britons are classifiable as 'right' on this scale. Even the Backbone Conservatives are much more 'centre' (78 per cent) than 'right' (14 per cent). The views of Loyal Nationals on economic issues are further left than any segment other than Progressive Activists – something that is easily concealed when commentators describe people in this group as right-wing on the basis of their beliefs in authority and patriotism.

Further disaggregating the data into four categories (left, centre-left, centre-right, and right) reveals that the British population clusters at the centre-left and then the centre-right, rather than on the left.

Figure 3.9.

Left-right disposition

Segments differ in where they stand on the economic left-right scale, but are mostly left or centre

	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Left	88%	69%	71%	13%	74%	29%	8%	50%
Centre	12%	31%	29%	79%	26%	68%	78%	47%
Right	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	3%	14%	4%

For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

Questions on the libertarian-authoritarian scale measure agreement with statements on crime and punishment, respect for traditional values, teaching young people to obey authority, and censorship to uphold moral standards. The Loyal Nationals stand out for the strength of their views on both sets of issues. They place almost twice as far along the spectrum as the next closest group, the Disengaged Traditionalists.

In contrast, Progressive Activists and Established Liberals stand together at the opposite end of the scale to the Loyal Nationals, providing some confirmation of well-worn stereotypes about the distinctive values of the 'liberal metropolitan elites'. Overall, two-thirds of Britons belong in the centre

based on this methodology, but almost all others hold authoritarian rather than libertarian views. As occurs on the left-right scales, in disaggregating the data we observe that most who would fall in the authoritarian category do not belong at the end of the spectrum, but are closer to the centre instead.

Figure 3.10.

Libertarian-authoritarian disposition

Segments differ in where they stand on the libertarian-authoritarian scale, but are more likely to be placed in the middle of the scale, with around one-third in the authoritarian category and a very small number being libertarian

	PA	CP	DB	EL	LN	DT	BC	All
Libertarian	11%	1%	1%	12%	0%	0%	1%	3%
Centre	85%	78%	63%	84%	21%	55%	65%	62%
Authoritarian	4%	22%	37%	4%	79%	45%	34%	35%

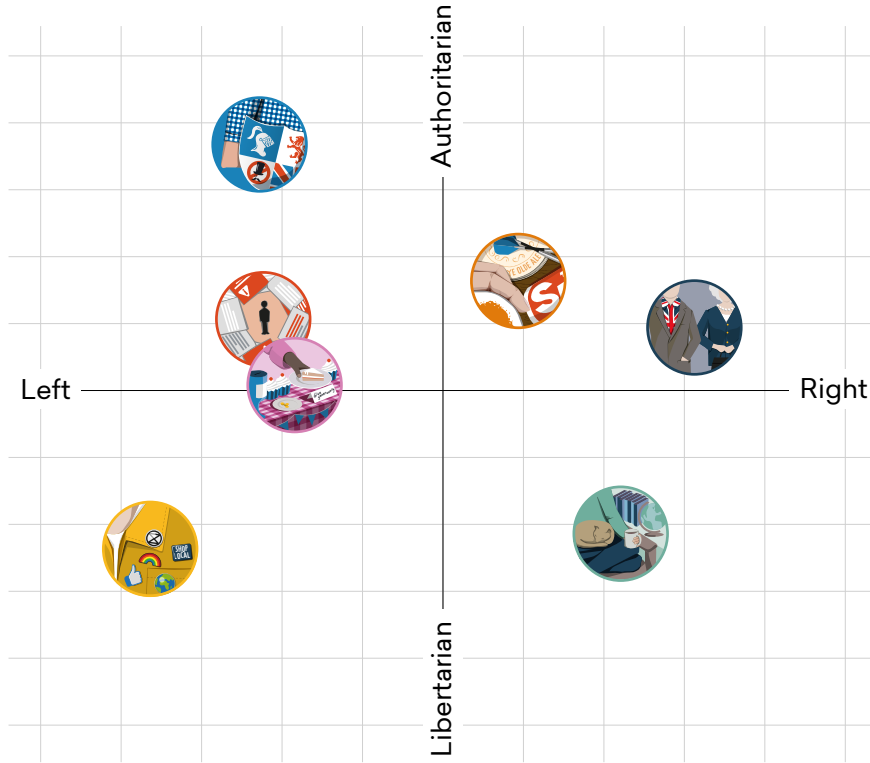
For full question text see Appendix 2.1. February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

The results of the left-right and authoritarian-libertarian scales provide an additional level of understanding to the segments' self-described ideology. For example, if we look at self-described ideology and levels of engagement, Backbone Conservatives and Loyal Nationals describe themselves in similar terms, but Loyal Nationals are considerably to the left on economic issues on the left/right economic scale (see figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11.

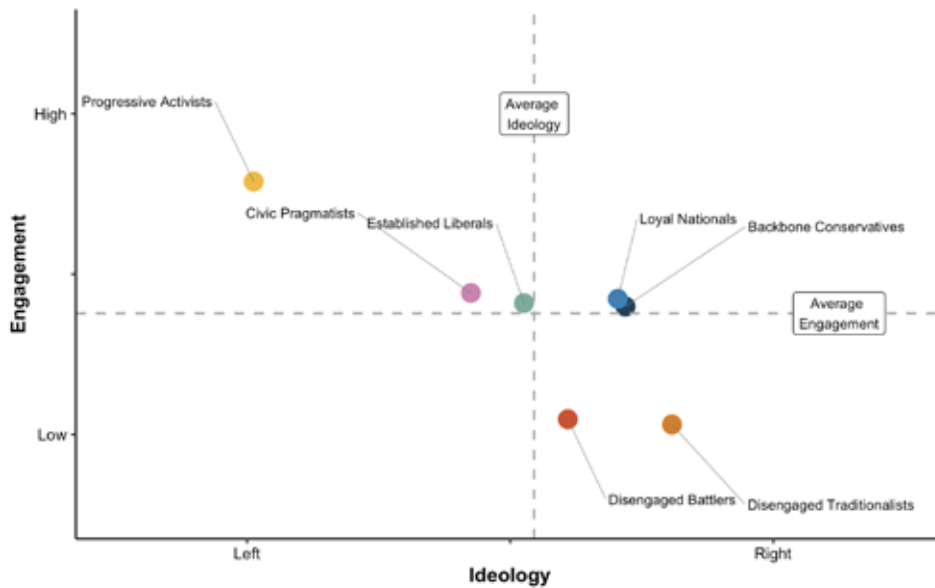
Segments' political values

The following figure shows where our segments map across the economic left-right and libertarian-authoritarian scales



Self-described ideology and civic engagement

Progressive Activists are furthest from the British average both in their self-described politics and engagement



3.6 Identity, tribalism, and group affiliation

Though individuals are often reduced to a single category of demographic identity, in reality people have multi-layered, intersecting, and often complex identities. People identify with different aspects of their identity – their gender, their sexuality, their ethnicity, their nationality, their values, their religious beliefs, their life choices, where they live – with different levels of intensity over time. Personal identity drives many of our choices and behaviours. How these variations play out, both individually and collectively, has a major impact on how societies change over time.

Individually, identities help us define our sense of self. Collectively, they help us identify with a particular group. Affiliating with a group is natural for humans, and serves many social functions, promoting a sense of belonging to a community and pro-social behaviours that allow for the survival of the group.

Yet collective identities have a dark side. Human beings crave recognition. When members of a group feel disrespected or held in contempt, this resentment can ultimately lead to conflict.⁹ These aspects of human psychology are often used by those who seek to divide and polarise. In fact, fear of destruction of a national group's identity is one of the factors that explains the rise of nationalistic populism.¹⁰ Understanding the way in which identity operates across multiple domains is thus essential to countering the forces of division and polarisation.

In order to assess Britons' relationships to the groups to which they belong, we asked two questions regarding identity:

- **Importance:** How important each group is to the person's identity
- **Pride:** How proud the person is to be a member of that group

We asked questions about how important and how proud Britons were of their gender, ethnicity, support for a political party, their vote in the 2016 EU Referendum (Leaver/Remainer), British identity, national identity (English, Welsh, and Scottish), and their class.

Survey results: general findings

The identities most strongly considered to be important among Britons, and which elicited the greatest pride, are gender and nationality (being Scottish, English, or Welsh). At least a third of people claim that these two factors are very important to their identity and that they feel very proud of it. Overall, 63 per cent say that their gender identity is important to them, while 62 per cent state that their nationality is important. Similarly, 64 per cent claim they are proud of their gender and 67 per cent state they are proud of their national identity.

In contrast, only 9 per cent claim that being a supporter of their chosen political party is very important to them, and only 32 per cent in total say it is important. In fact, partisan identity (or the party that a person regularly supports) is the least important of all forms of identity we tested: only 13 per cent say they feel very proud of it. Partisan identity is actually weaker than these numbers suggest, because they excluded the third of the population that does not identify with a political party at all.

Pride in Leave and Remain identities is felt slightly differently. Twenty-one per cent of those who voted in 2016 state that their Leave/Remain identity is very important to them (overall, 50 per cent would say that this is at least a somewhat important identity to them). Similarly, 28 per cent of Britons who have a Leave or Remain identity are very proud of it (59 per cent overall feel pride). It should also be borne in mind that 20 per cent of voters did not vote in the referendum in EU membership (Chapter 7 further examines both partisan and Brexit identities).

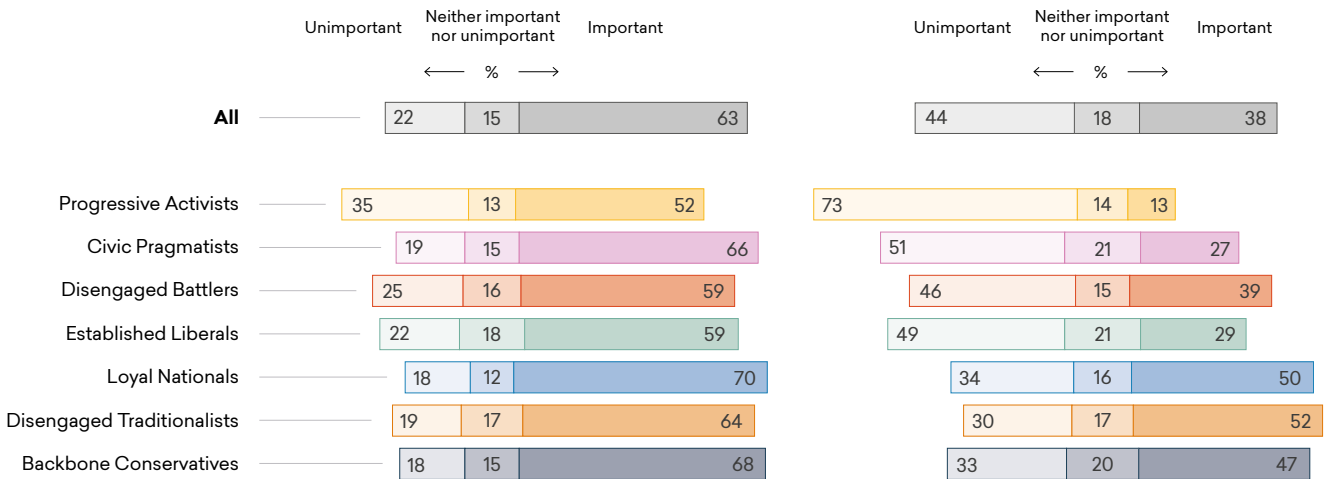
Figure 3.12.

Strength of group identities

Segments differ in the strength of their identification with different group categories

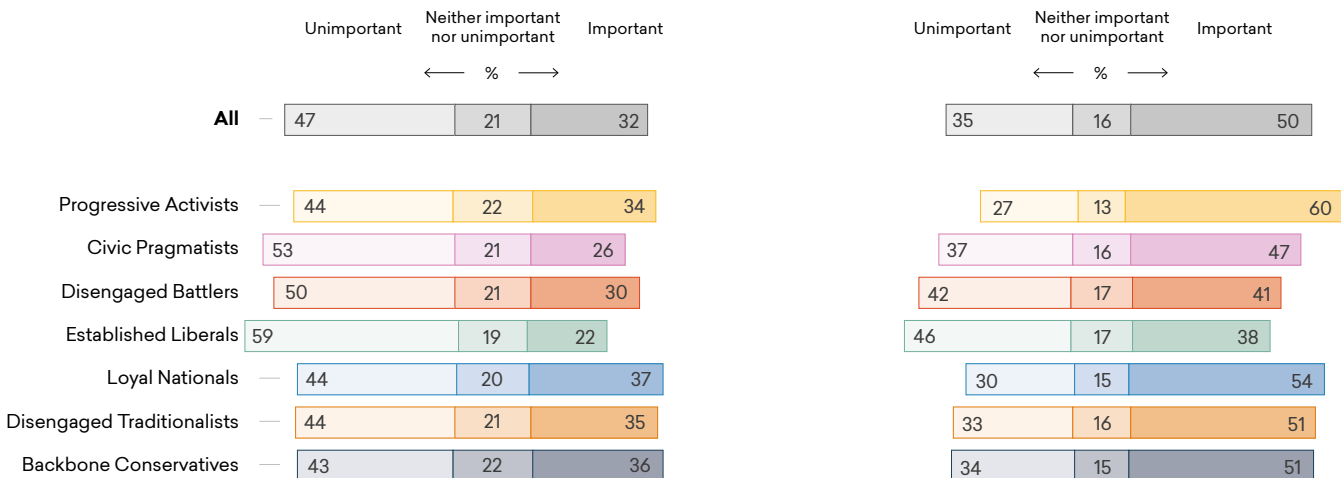
Importance of gender to identity

Importance of ethnicity to identity

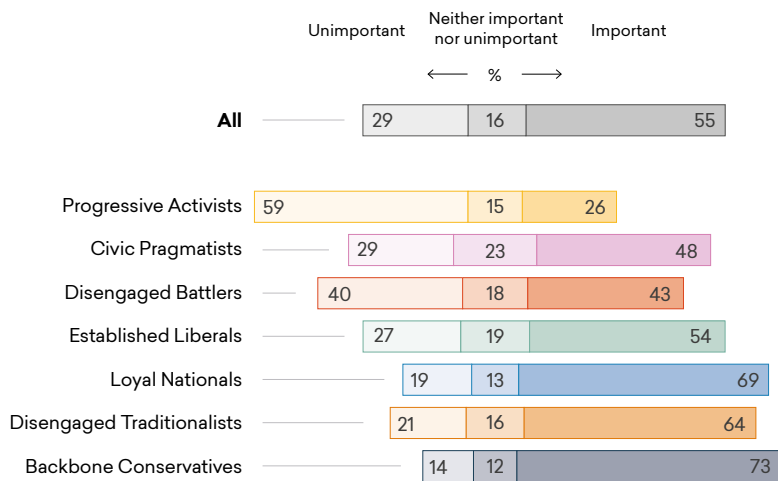


Importance of being a political party supporter to identity

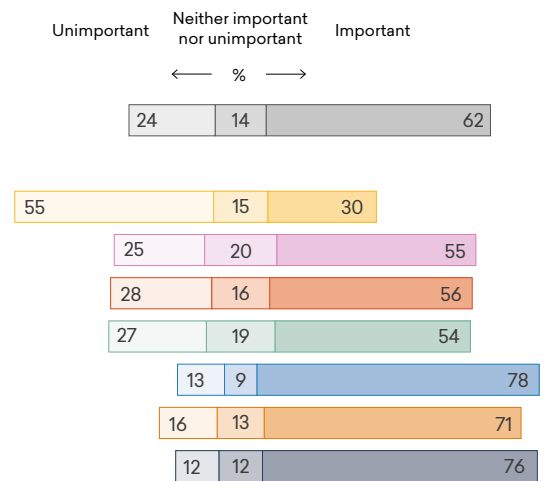
Importance of being a Remainer or Leaver to identity



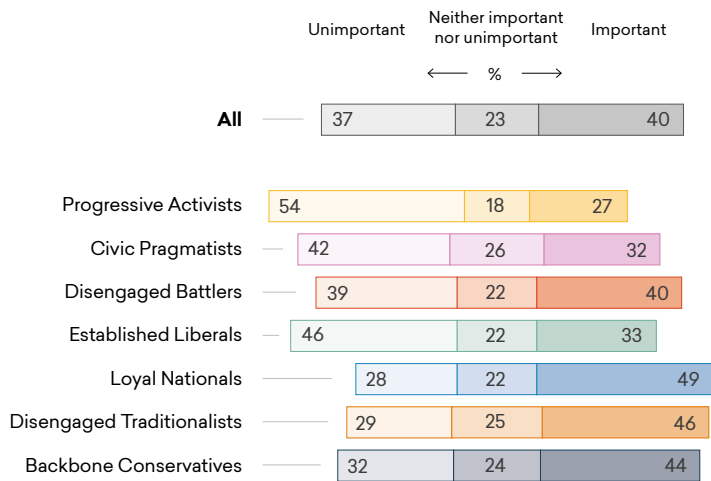
Importance of being British to identity



Importance of nationality to identity



Importance of class to identity



Qu: How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

Figure 3.13.

Gender and identity

Women are more likely to think that gender is an important aspect of their identity

How important is your gender to your identity?



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Gender? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

- 63 per cent of the population claim that their gender is an important aspect of their identity, with women far more likely to find it very important than men (37 per cent versus 22 per cent).
- 53 per cent of men say that their gender is an important aspect of their identity. 64 per cent of male Loyal Nationals and 63 per cent of Backbone Conservatives feel this way. This score is lowest among male Progressive Activists, at 26 per cent.
- 72 per cent of women say that their gender is an important aspect of their identity, with relatively small differences between the segments.

Figure 3.14.

Gender and pride

Women are more likely to be proud of their gender

How proud are you of your gender?



Qu. How proud are you to be: Your gender? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

When asked whether they feel proud of their gender, 64 per cent of Britons say they do. Once again, this belief is far stronger among women than men, with 76 per cent of women and 52 per cent of men saying that they feel proud of their gender.

When analysed through the lens of our segments, Loyal Nationals (75 per cent), Backbone Conservatives (72 per cent), and Disengaged Traditionalists (71 per cent) are most likely to say they are proud of their gender. Only 44 per cent of Progressive Activists would say so (lowest of all segments). There is a strong difference between men and women in the segment on this question. Seventy per cent of female Progressive Activists say they are proud of their gender, but only 14 per cent of men in this category say they are proud. In contrast, while 81 per cent of female Loyal Nationals say they are proud of their gender, 67 per cent of men in the segment feel the same, showing far less variation between the sexes.

Class identity

We collected information on class in two ways: by asking respondents to self-describe and by collecting social grade information. Overall, almost equal numbers of Britons report that class is important to their identity (40 per cent) as say that class is unimportant (37 per cent). Almost a quarter of Britons report that class is neither important nor unimportant to them. When asked about pride, however, 51 per cent of Britons report feeling proud of their class, while 22 per cent state that they are not proud. There are some differences in how class importance and pride is felt between those in different social grades and self-described classes, with greater pride among those who identify as working class.

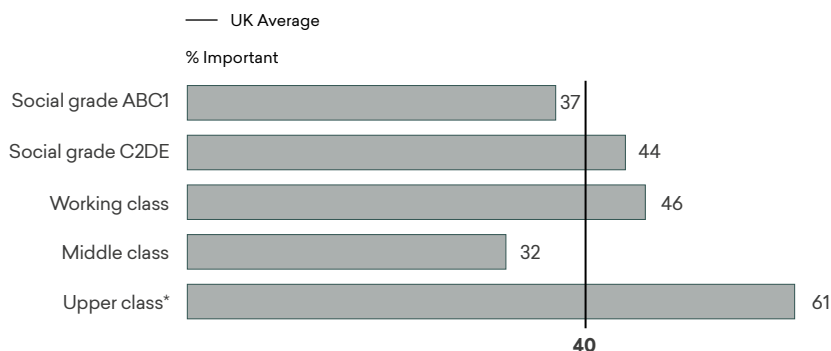
For further exploration of findings on class, see Chapter 6.

Figure 3.15.

Class and identity

Importance of class identity varies among those from different social grades and classes.

How important is your class to your identity?



*Owing to the small sample size of those who identified as upper class, data for this class is not as reliable as for other classes.
Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Class? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

Ethnicity

Britons are fairly evenly split on the extent to which they feel their ethnicity is an important part of their identity. Members of ethnic minorities are over two times more likely to rate their ethnicity as important than white Britons are.

- 43 per cent of Britons feel that their ethnicity is not an important part of their identity, while 39 per cent feel that it is. Of this group, 17 per cent of the whole population claim it is very important.
- Thirty-seven per cent of people in the BAME category used by YouGov feel their ethnicity is very important to them, more than double the 15 per cent of white people who say the same.
- Overall, 35 per cent of whites say that their ethnicity is important to them, while 46 per cent say it is not. Conversely, ethnicity is an important part of the identity of 68 per cent of BAME people, with just 16 per cent saying it is not.
- Seventy-three per cent of Progressive Activists (and 78 per cent of white Progressive Activists) say their ethnicity is not important to them, followed by 51 per cent of Civic Pragmatists who feel this way.

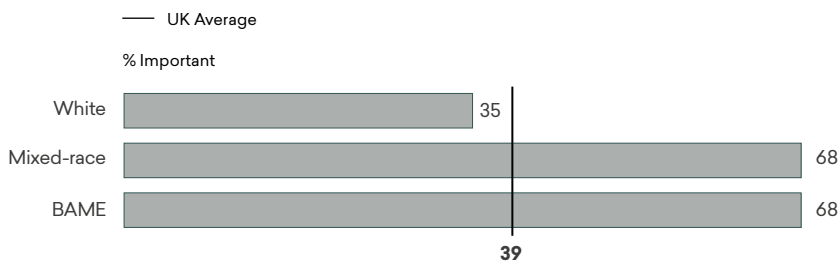
- Conversely, 52 per cent of Disengaged Traditionalists and half of Loyal Nationals say that their ethnicity is an important part of their identity. Our data show that close to half of white Loyal Nationals, Disengaged Traditionalists, and Backbone Conservatives say that being white is important to them.

Figure 3.16.

Race and identity

Race is a more important aspect of identity for BAME and mixed-race Britons

How important is your ethnicity to your identity?



Qu. How important to you are each of the following parts of your identity: Your race? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

While whites are most proud of their gender (63 per cent) and nationality (being English, Welsh, or Scottish, at 67 per cent), BAME Britons express feeling the proudest about their ethnicity (74 per cent), followed by their gender (72 per cent). Overall, BAME Britons are slightly more likely to say they are proud to be British than white Britons, but are less likely to say they are proud of being English, Scottish, or Welsh.

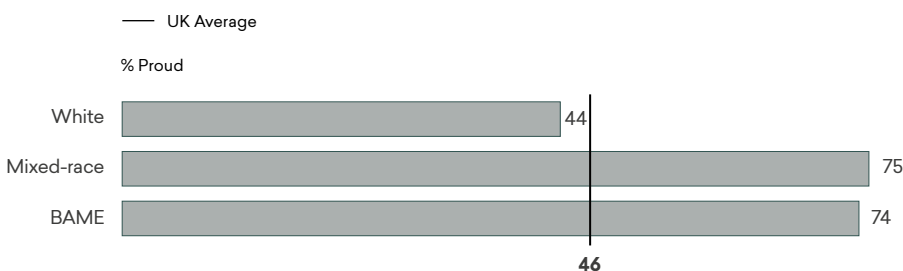
Only one in ten Progressive Activists say that they are proud of their ethnicity. This falls to just 5 per cent of white Progressive Activists, with 53 per cent for BAME and mixed race members of this segment saying they are proud of their ethnicity.¹ In contrast, six in ten Loyal Nationals say they are proud of their ethnicity, a proportion that holds steady among all members of the segment regardless of their race.

Figure 3.17.

Race and pride

BAME and mixed-race Britons are prouder of their race than white Britons

How proud are you of your ethnicity?



Qu. How proud are you to be: Your race? February 2020.
Source: More in Common 2020.

¹ Note that sample size for BAME and mixed race Progressive Activists is 79.

Key takeaways

This chapter explained the core beliefs model used to identify the seven segments of the British population. It discussed the six dimensions from social science research used in the model of core beliefs for this report. These six dimensions are not exhaustive, but represent the most significant factors identified by More in Common's research team and advisers, and which can also be deployed within the constraints of large-scale attitudinal research surveys.

Examples of the connection between core beliefs and individuals' attitudes on specific issues have been provided throughout the chapter, but the real value of the core beliefs segmentation is evidenced throughout the following chapters, using the seven segments that were identified through the analysis of participants' responses to questions covering all six dimensions.

The purpose of understanding individuals' core beliefs is to identify the 'upstream' values and worldviews that determine the flow of their 'downstream' views on the social and political issues of the day. More in Common's research has consistently found that individuals' views on current issues are strongly influenced by their core beliefs and values. If we understand those core beliefs better, we can better appreciate people's views with greater empathy. Those insights can strengthen and inform efforts to reduce conflict and find common ground in our society.

Endnotes

- 1 Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).
- 2 Haidt.
- 3 Karen Stenner, *The Authoritarian Dynamic*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 4 Joseph H. Manson, 'Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Left-Wing Authoritarianism, and Pandemic-Mitigation Authoritarianism', 167 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110251>>.
- 5 Thomas Costello and others, 'Clarifying the Structure and Nature of Left-Wing Authoritarianism', 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/3nprq>>.
- 6 Matthew D. Luttig, 'Authoritarianism and Affective Polarization: A New View on the Origins of Partisan Extremism', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 81.4 (2017), 866–95.
- 7 R.E Lane, *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does* (New York: Free Press, 1967).
- 8 Geoffrey Evans, Anthony Heath, and Mansur Lalljee, 'Measuring Left-Right and Libertarian-Authoritarian Values in the British Electorate', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47.1 (1996), 93–112.
- 9 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* by Francis Fukuyama | 4 Oct 2018 (London, UK: Profile Books, 2018).
- 10 Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy* (London, UK: Pelican, 2018).

