

Monthly attitudes overview, August 2021

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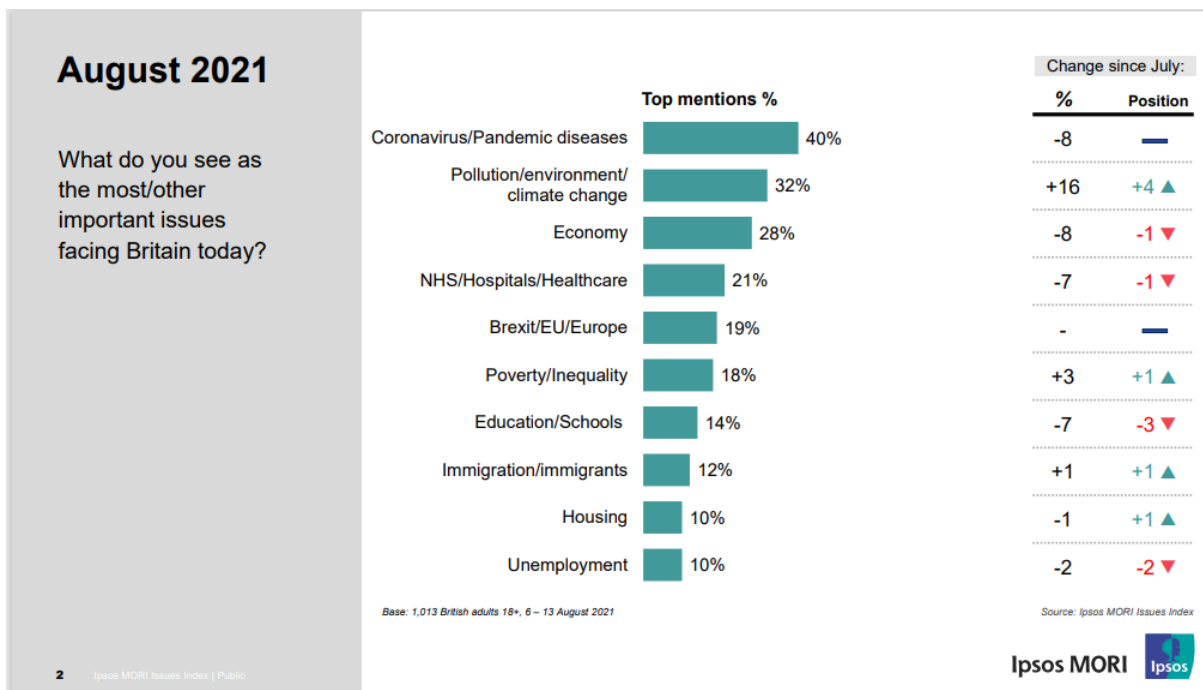
Key themes this month:

- Doubling in salience of climate and environment, with Covid a less dominant public concern.
- Mixed views of Afghanistan withdrawal; most support new commitments to refugee resettlement.
- Mixed reviews for Boris and “levelling-up”.
- New insights into the nuanced story of generational change in the UK.

Ipsos MORI Issues Index

There was more change in the August 2021 Ipsos-Mori Issues Index than for many months.

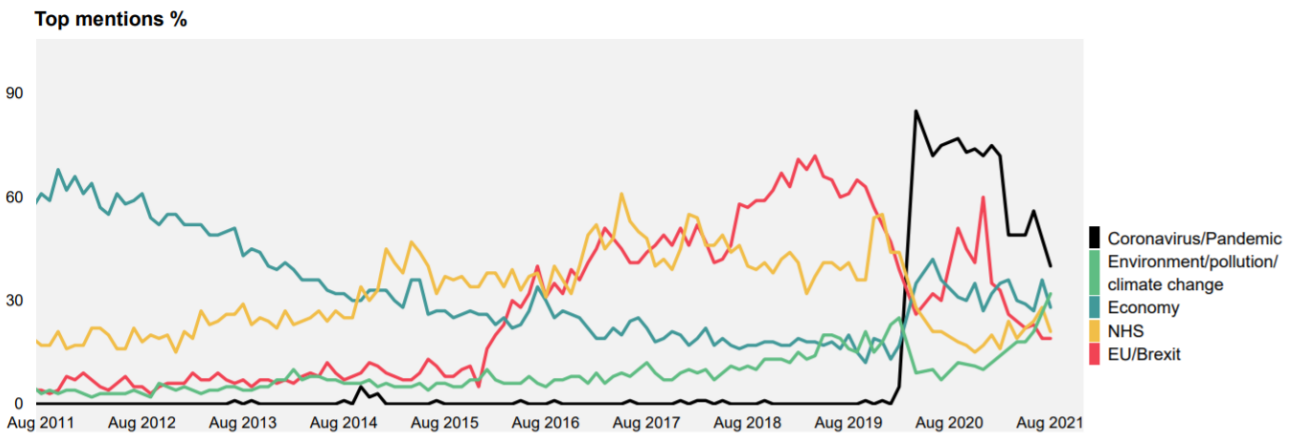
- Covid remains in top position, but is less dominant than at any previous point since the pandemic began.
- Climate change at 32% (+16) is at its highest level this century.
- Poverty and inequality (+3%) in 6th place and immigration (+1%) in 8th place were the other issues to show a modest month-on-month rise in salience.



Covid remains the top concern, but we are entering a phase in which the extent of its dominance as the top priority seems likely to fade further over time, creating more space and perhaps more volatility in which issues are more prominent.

Top five concerns: trend

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



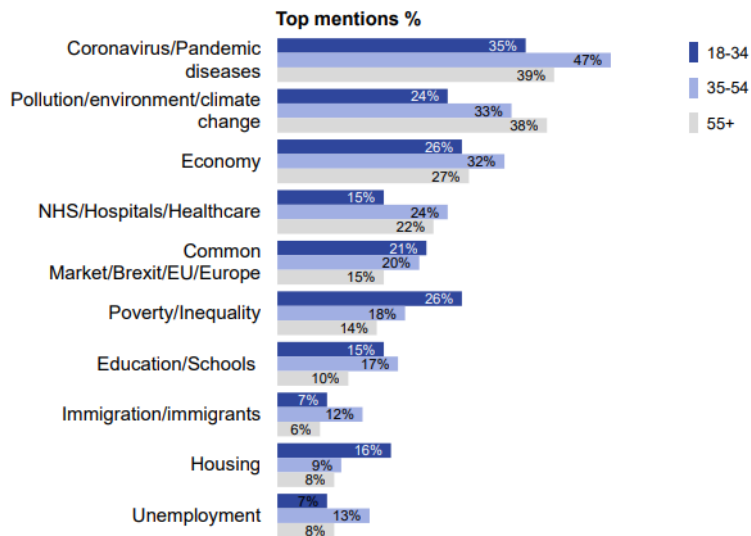
Base: representative sample of c.1,000 British adults age 18+ each month, interviewed face-to-face in home
 N.B. April 2020 data onwards is collected by telephone; previous months are face-to-face

Source: Ipsos MORI Issues Index

Poverty and inequality is the number 2 issue for 18-34 year olds, where Covid is least dominant. Housing is also a considerably higher priority among younger respondents.

Age group

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



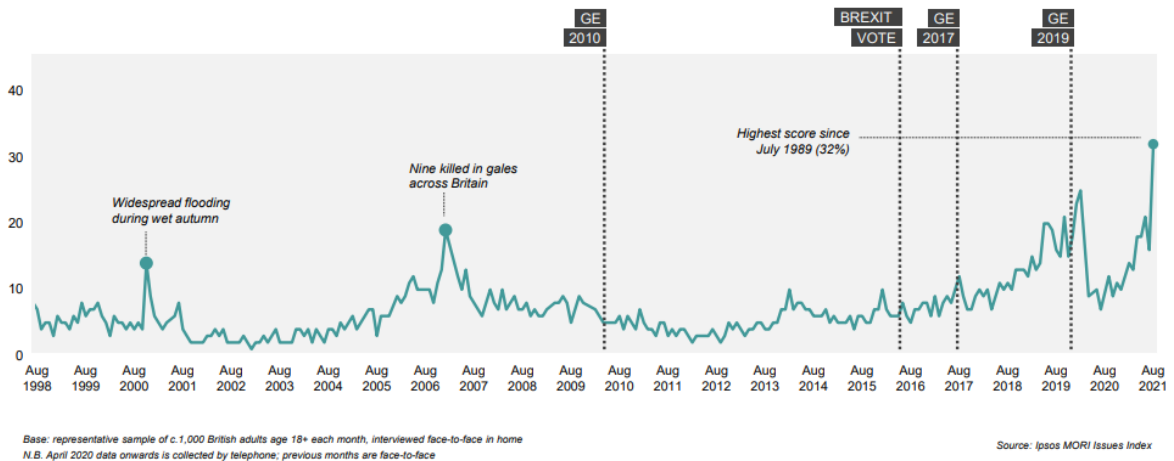
Base: 1,013 British adults 18+, 6 - 13 August 2021

Source: Ipsos MORI Issues Index

August's figures for climate change are at an unprecedented high of 32% for the first time since 1983.

Pollution / Environment / Climate change

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



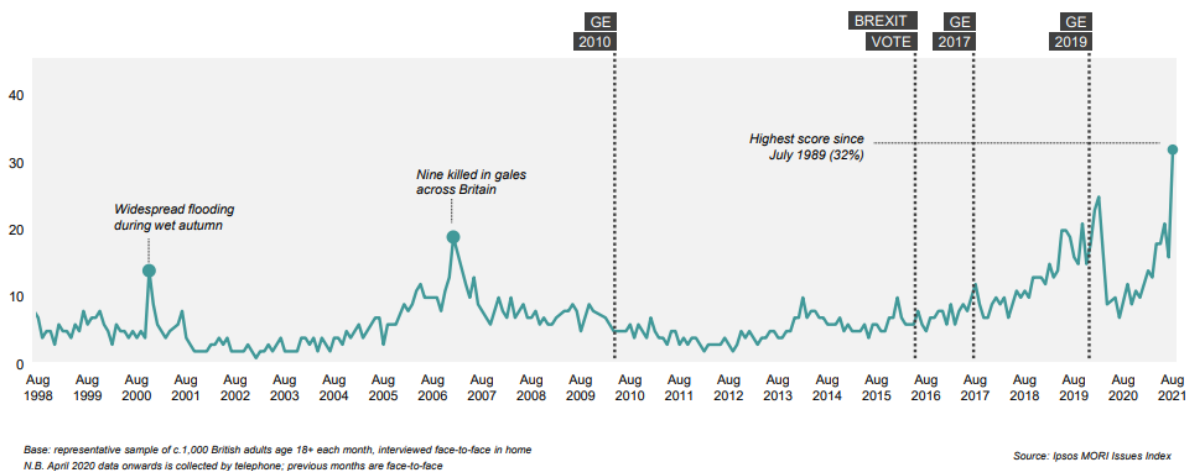
The breadth of climate salience - and a significant inter-ethnic gap

The salience of climate change (32%) is easily its highest level this century, suggesting two drivers.

- A recovery of the loss of salience during the pandemic, now going past its December 2019 peak, after climate faced a “crowding out” effect to Covid and the economy since March 2020.
- A short-term boost from the fieldwork (8th-13th August) coinciding with high profile front-page coverage of the 2021 IPCC report, alongside images of the wildfires in Greece and Italy. While this was a specific context, climate being near the top of the political and public agenda ahead of the November 2021 COP summit makes a sustained presence as a top 3 issue likely.

Pollution / Environment / Climate change

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



The good news for climate advocates is that there is broader cross-party salience than many might anticipate, with just a 3% gap between Conservative and Labour voters, while the age profile of issue salience - higher among older than younger respondents - is at odds with many prevailing narratives. This pattern of salience and concern is very different to the US picture (where there is a stark partisan polarisation) while resembling the broader social consensus in several west European countries.

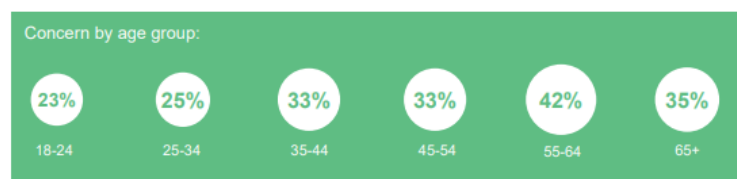
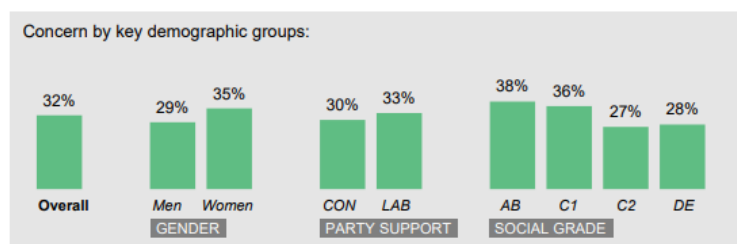
Another, perhaps counter-intuitive, finding is that the salience of climate change is lower in London (28%) than in the north of England or Scotland, while the south of England (37%) has the highest salience.

A large part of the explanation comes from the considerably lower salience of the environment and climate change with ethnic minority respondents: just 14% cited it as a priority issue (8th place) compared to 35% of white respondents (2nd place). There are also challenges in broadening salience and support among non-graduates and working-class (C2DE) citizens.

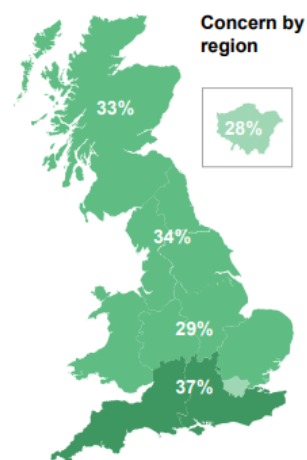
Overall, the inter-ethnic gap in salience in this survey is considerably wider than the cross-class gap, though these will also interact. Strategies to explore and address such a wide inter-ethnic gap in salience should be an important priority for climate change advocates this year.

Concern about pollution/climate change by subgroup

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



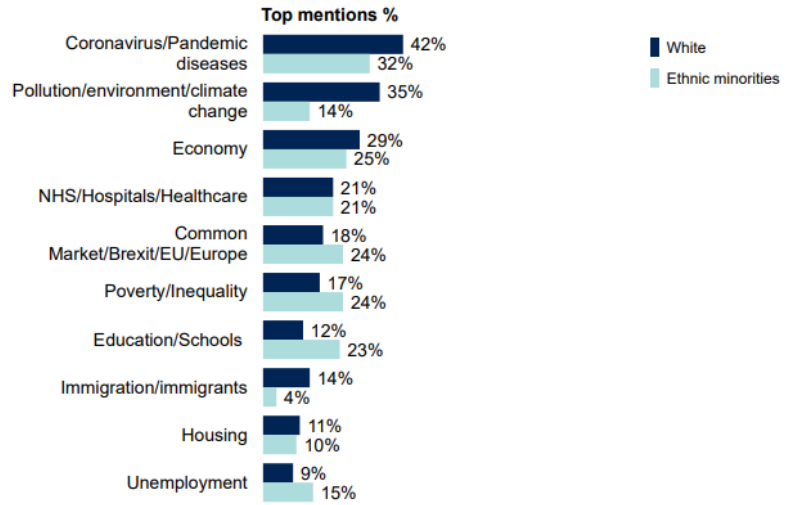
Base: 1,013 British adults 18+, 6 - 13 August 2021



Source: Ipsos MORI Issues Index

Ethnic background

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



Base: 1,013 British adults 18+, 6 - 13 August 2021

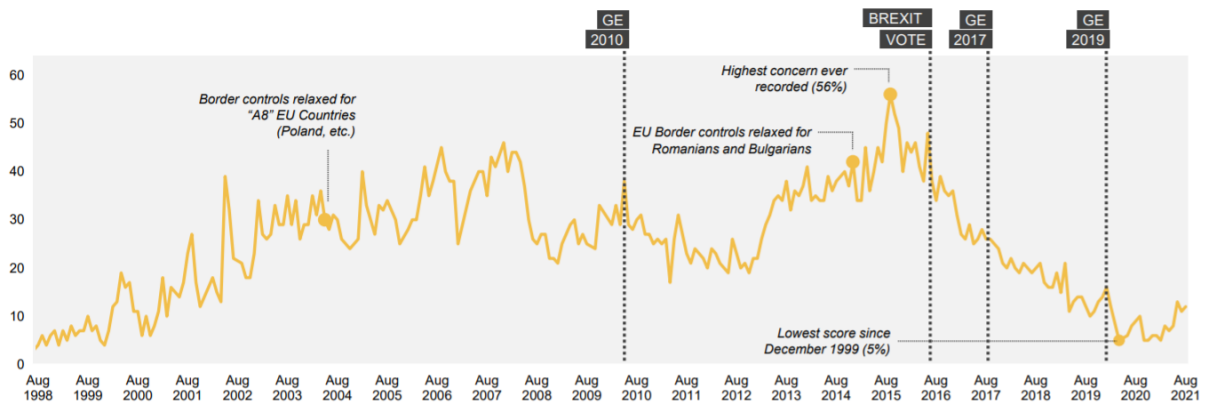
Source: Ipsos MORI Issues Index

Immigration attitudes and refugees

Despite significant media coverage of immigration, Ipsos MORI found only a modest rise in public salience, rising +1 to 12%, as the 8th public priority overall. The fieldwork coincided with high political and media salience of Channel crossings, but took place ahead of the Afghanistan crisis.

Immigration / Immigrants

What do you see as the most/other important issues facing Britain today?



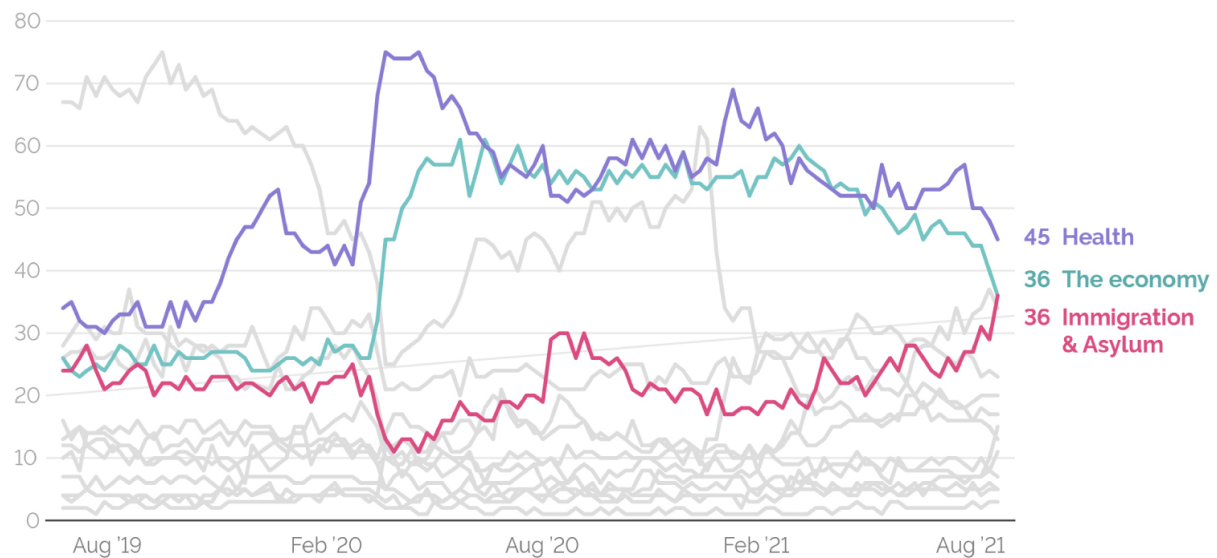
Base: representative sample of c.1,000 British adults age 18+ each month, interviewed face-to-face in home
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Source: Ipsos MORI Issues Index

But YouGov had a contrasting finding, with Immigration ranking 3rd (from a smaller prompted list of issues), ranking equal first for Conservatives. Immigration is the 5th priority of Conservative voters in the Ipsos MORI Issues Index, trailing Covid, economy, climate and NHS, on 19% among Conservatives, compared to 8% among Labour voters.

A third of people now rank immigration among the top three issues facing the UK

Which of the following do you think are the most important issues facing the country at this time? Please tick up to three. (%)



YouGov

Latest update: 23 August 2021

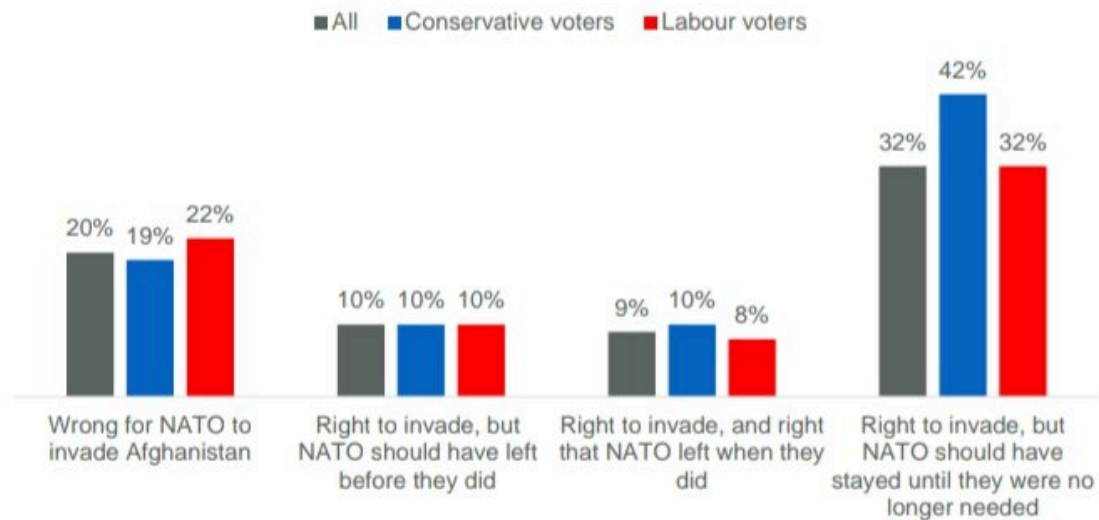
A combination of Afghanistan, the government's asylum reforms and new migration from Hong Kong could well see a further increase in the media and political profile of immigration, which can have a significant influence on public salience.

Afghanistan

The British public have generally mixed views about foreign intervention. Asked to choose from these options,

- 1 in 5 believe it was wrong to invade Afghanistan in 2001.
- 1 in 5 believe it was right to invade but should have left earlier.
- 1 in 3 believe NATO troops should have stayed longer.

Views on NATO's intervention in Afghanistan over the last 20 years

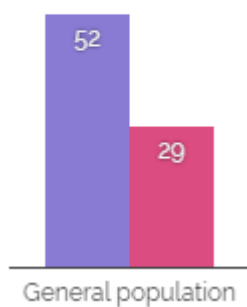


US public support for the withdrawal was considerably higher (about two-to-one) than in the UK.

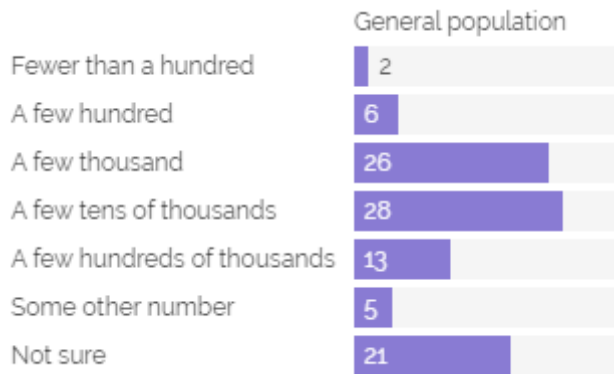
Refugees from Afghanistan

Several surveys showed that most people supported a special resettlement scheme for refugees from Afghanistan, with YouGov showing 52% support and 29% opposition.

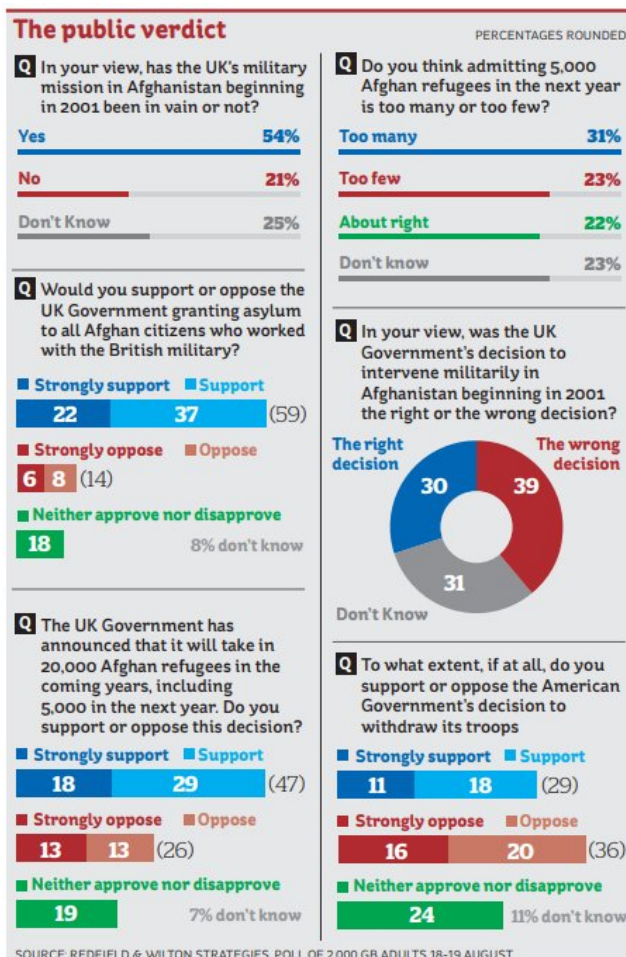
■ Support ■ Oppose



YouGov also asked respondents who supported an Afghan resettlement scheme about its scale, with about 4 in 10 supporters of a scheme wanting to make a much larger commitment than the government's proposal.

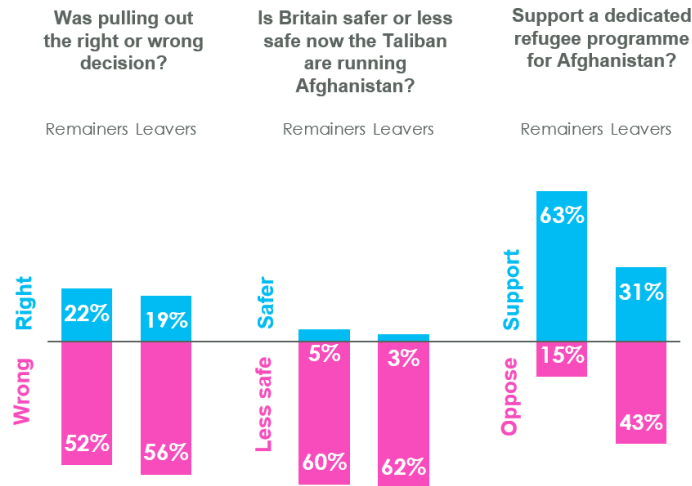


Redfield and Wilton had similar findings – with 6 in 10 supporting a programme, and support for a general resettlement programme by 47% to 26%. About a quarter supported the government’s commitment, with a quarter wanting it to be larger, a third feeling it was too large, and a significant number saying they did not know.



Views of Afghan withdrawal were even across party and referendum perspectives – but there was a difference on attitudes to refugees, with broad support from Remainers. Leave voters were not monolithic – they were split fairly evenly between 3 in 10 support, 4 in 10 opposition and a significant number of don’t knows.

There is a Brexit divide on whether to have a dedicated refugee programme for Afghans



19-20 August, 2,003 UK adults

There has been an active mobilisation of the most pro-refugee quarter of opinion into efforts to welcome Afghan refugees around the country. Broadening support for a larger commitment over time will depend on engaging with the ‘balancer’ group who support the commitment in principle, but think that the initial offer is about right. British Future’s research suggests that this group will often respond defensively to criticism of the scale of the initial commitment (while such criticism will resonate with the most supportive quarter of the public). Hearing both the reasons why people are fleeing and about public involvement in practical plans to make the welcoming effort successful are more likely to broaden the coalition of support.

Attitudes in Afghanistan

The most comprehensive guide to public attitudes in Afghanistan itself appears to be the Asia Foundation’s Afghan survey, which produced a comprehensive 2019 report, followed by a series of surveys during the Covid pandemic. They present a nuanced picture of attitudes, with strong support for democratic institutions combined with growing dissatisfaction about their performance:

- Only 1 in 10 opposed peace talks with the Taliban.
- Two-thirds believed some form of reconciliation was possible.
- Some 97% saw corruption as a serious issue.
- Broad majorities saw protecting women’s rights as important in any peace settlement.

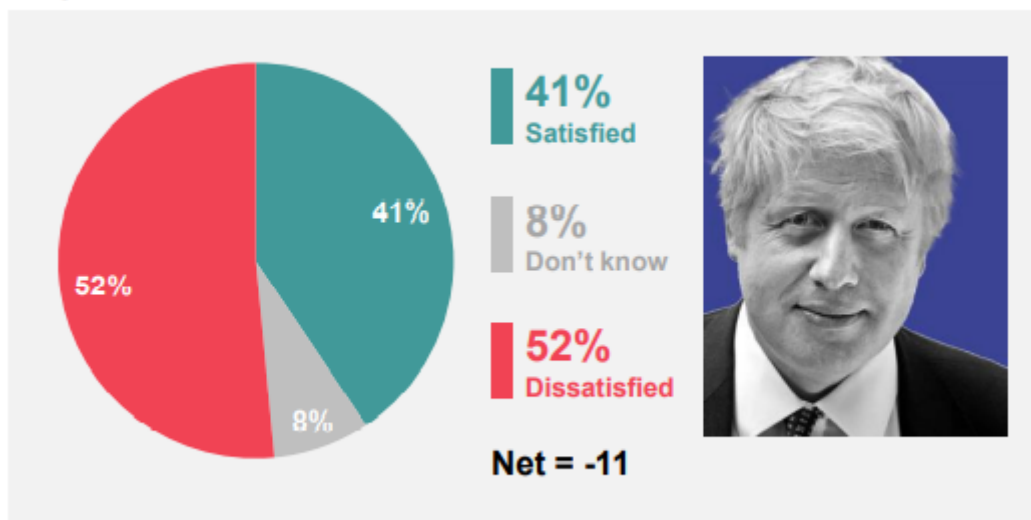
POLICY PRIORITIES FOR PEACE DEAL

	VERY IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	85	2
WOMEN'S RIGHTS	85	3
EQUALITY AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE	84	2
THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION	79	4
FREEDOM OF SPEECH	79	3
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS	79	2
THE CURRENT JUDICIAL AND COURT SYSTEM	69	7
FOREIGN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN	67	11
DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM	62	9
PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN	22	46

Mixed Reviews for Boris and “Levelling-up”

Asked how satisfied they are with the Prime Minister, 41% report satisfaction whilst 52% say they are dissatisfied with Boris Johnson.

August 2021



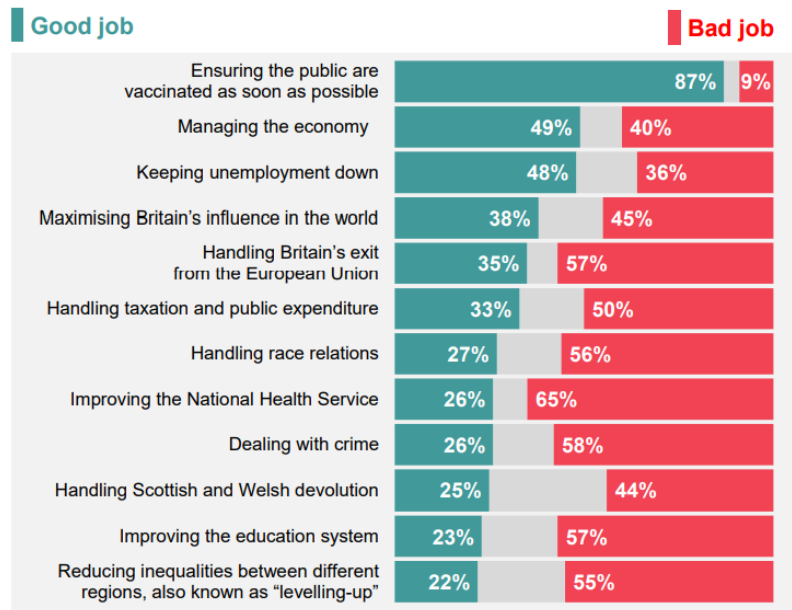
Base: 1,113 British adults 18+, 30 July – 9 August 2021

There is broadest approval of the government’s handling of the vaccination effort. Managing the economy (49%) and keeping unemployment down (48%) are the other two issues where approval runs more broadly than party support. In contrast, the public is most dissatisfied with improving the National Health Service (65%). While 35% approve of the handling of Brexit, the majority (57%) are dissatisfied, partly reflecting disapproval from different and contrasting perspectives. Only a fifth see

the government as doing well on education or on the “levelling up” agenda.

The Government's performance

Since Boris Johnson's government was re-elected in December 2019, do you think the government has done a good or bad job at...?

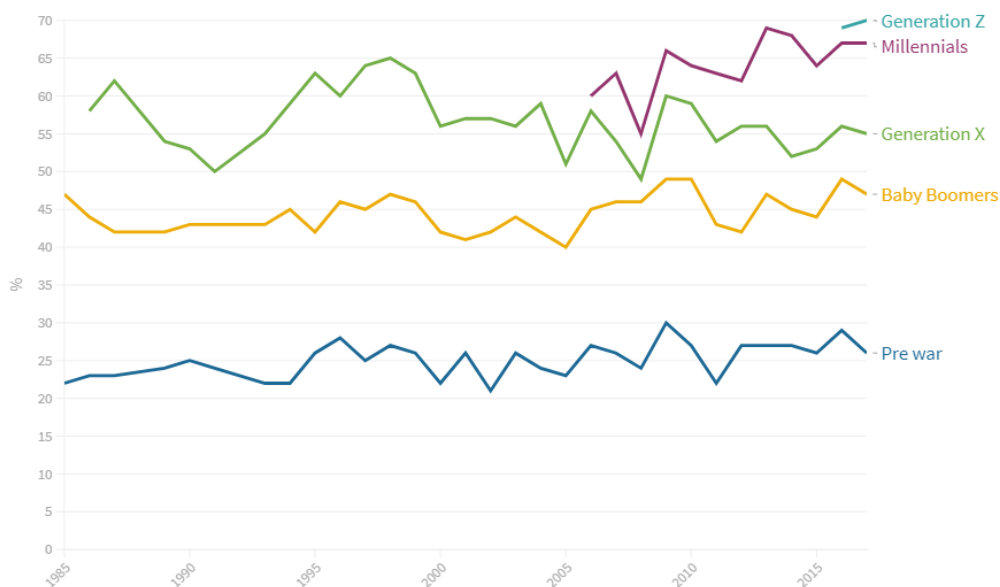


The decline of religion across generations

Professor Bobby Duffy's new book *Generations: Does When We're Born Shape Who We Are?* Published today (2 September) is accompanied by a new *Generations* website from the Policy Institute at Kings College London, which collates key evidence sources on generational change.

As of 2017, 26% of the Pre-war generation say that they have no religion, whilst 70% of Generation Z – the generation succeeding Millennials – say the same. For Baby boomers, born in the years following the Second World War, the figure is 47%. For Generation X, those succeeding Baby Boomers, it is 55%; while 67% of Millennials say they have no religion.

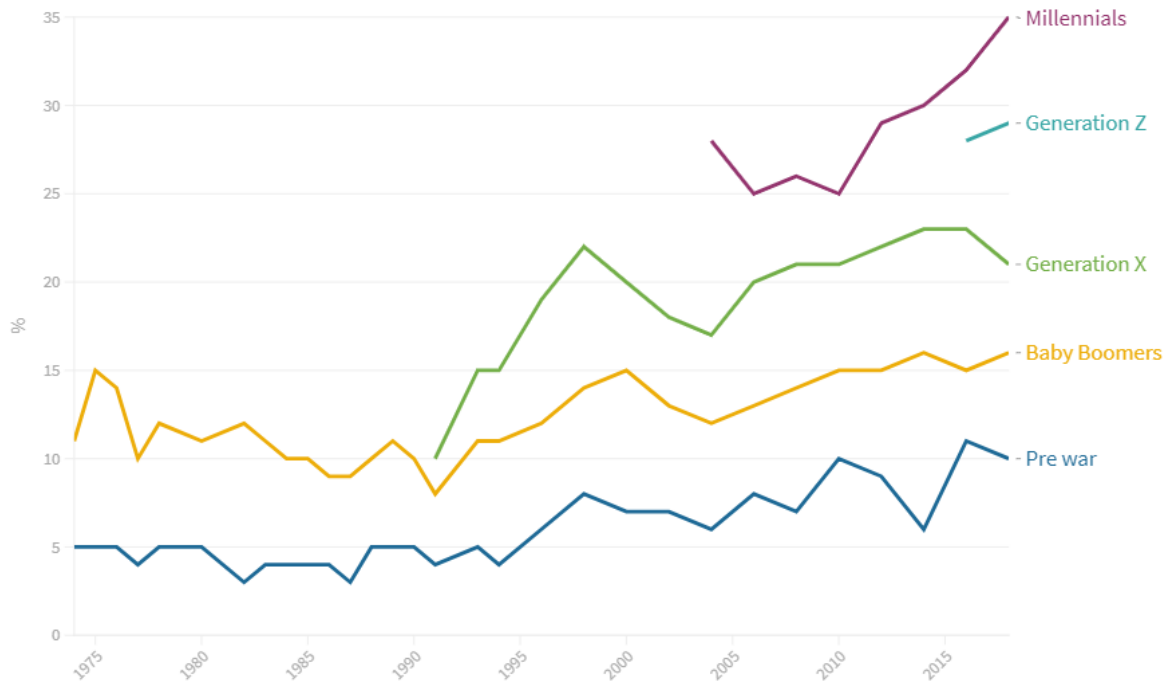
% of UK adults saying they have no religion



Source: British Social Attitudes (1985-2017)

There is a stark contrast with the persistence of religious faith in the US when asked the same question. In America some 35% of Millennials report “no religion” along with just 1 in 10 of the pre-war generation.

% of US adults saying they have no religion



Source: US General Social Survey (1974-2018)

Public attitudes sources and links:

- Ipsos MORI Issues Index:
<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/public-concern-about-climate-change-and-pollution-doubles-near-record-level>
- YouGov: Rising immigration salience
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2021/08/25/afghanistan-exodus-pushes-immigration-and-asylum-j>
- Ipsos MORI: Mixed Reviews on Government
<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/britons-give-positive-scores-governments-record-vaccines-economy-and-unemployment-critical-nhs>
- YouGov: Britons Support Afghan Resettlement
<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2021/08/19/britons-tend-support-resettlement-afghan-taliban>
- Opinium weekly survey: Afghanistan responses
<https://www.opinium.com/resource-center/uk-voting-intention-19th-august-2021/>
- Redfield and Wilton: Afghan refugees findings
<https://redfieldandwiltonstrategies.com/labour-voters-more-likely-than-conservative-voters-to-support-the-government-on-afghan-refugees/>

- Asian Foundation: Afghanistan surveys
<https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/>
- King's Policy Institute: Generations website
<https://generations-book.org/>
- Religion finding
<https://generations-book.org/religion>