

**BFPG**

British Foreign Policy Group

# UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy & Global Britain: 2021 Survey - Key Findings

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## **The Author**

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## **This Report**

This summary report presents the key findings of the BFPG's 2021 Survey on UK Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and Global Britain, conducted with our partners Opinium on 6-7 January 2021 (sample of 2,002 UK adults, weighted to be nationally representative).

This has been the fourth year that the BFPG has undertaken such a survey, and I am proud to report that both the survey and the demographic, geographic, political, behavioural and socio-economic lenses through which we are able to interpret the findings, continue to expand and deepen. The result is an extremely rich and sophisticated data-set, which forges new ground in a burgeoning, increasingly important area of social research.

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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

There is no doubt that the past five years have been challenging for the United Kingdom. Yet, as we begin a new era outside of the European Union, it remains the case that Britain has a positive story to tell. And, as this survey reveals, an international voice that should be bolstered by the legitimacy conferred through the consent of its people. If we seek to pinpoint the 'heart of the nation' on foreign policy, we would find it favours a relatively connected, open and ambitious international agenda, working alongside a variety of friends and partners, forging areas of special global leadership, and striking a healthy balance between our strategic interests and the projection of our values.

It is also true, however, that these areas of consensus mask significant tensions and disparities between different social, demographic and regional groups of citizens – which threaten to undermine the process of governance. Not least of all because they continue to be expressed as divisions within the major political parties themselves, with distinctive tribes struggling for dominance in defining their essential character. Despite the dramatic realignments that have taken place in British politics around the Leave-Remain divide and social and economic priorities, foreign policy continues to cut to the heart of the polarised values and world views that linger within the major political parties.

The growing interest of the British people in foreign policy necessitates Government becoming more attuned and sensitive to their preferences. This knowledge should not be seen as the primary lodestar on which to guide policy-making, but rather a gift of strategic foresight, highlighting the roadmap for engagement and persuasion. Britons accept they cannot possibly access the raft of information available to their elected representatives about international affairs, but it would be foolish to dismiss their opinions – not least of all because their views on foreign policy tell us much about their broader social and political instincts, and how these are formed.

A concerning finding of this research is the persistent nature of inequalities around knowledge and engagement in foreign affairs. One of the most striking of these is the consistent degree of uncertainty and lack of confidence expressed by women in their responses – unsurprising when one considers the visible disparities in the representation and agency of female voices in foreign policy. Economic and educational disadvantage also consistently reveal their hand in fostering a sense of detachment amongst citizens, and are highly correlated with more isolationist preferences.

Citizens' disengagement is not passive – it shapes instincts, and the developments in British political life over the past decade make patently clear how consequential this can become. In a lively and robust democracy such as ours, a diversity of perspectives is a strength, and should be welcomed. At the very least, however, it must be seen as a missed opportunity to allow disengagement, disinterest and uncertainty about our nation's foreign policy to propagate – and a moral failing for these to metastasise amongst sections of the population we know are structurally disadvantaged in other ways. Investments in sharing the story of our foreign policy around the nation, and in opening up opportunities of mobility to groups otherwise facing barriers, should be seen as an investment in the nation's future.

As Levelling Up aims to give all citizens a stake in Britain's economy, so too must Global Britain seek to afford all citizens a stake in Britain's foreign policy. With the publication of the Integrated Review and the launch of the Global Britain project, a generational opportunity presents itself: to better understand the concerns and priorities of the British people, to harness the full spectrum of our assets and expertise, and to bring the nation together around a truly inclusive foreign policy.

## Director's Note

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When wading through the extensive data presented in this document and the full report, it is important to be aware of the high degree of volatility currently being experienced in public opinion on international affairs, as a result of the fusion between domestic political identities and foreign policy. We should expect to see this dynamism evolving over the coming years; after all, geography, values and shared interests mean we will undoubtedly continue to debate our relationship with the European Union until the end of time.

There must be room for these discussions in our public sphere – absent of the tribal language of treachery and betrayal. The pathway to social healing and renewal will be difficult, but it can begin to emerge – almost imperceptibly – through small, individual acts committing ourselves to a common future. We have spent five years consumed by our domestic upheaval, and whether Leave or Remain, we must accept the urgency demanded by the global landscape for a nation such as ours to play an active, constructive leadership role in shaping what comes next.

The Global Britain project is not simply an exercise in defining our choices on the world stage, and ascribing resources to deliver them. It compels us to reassert our identity, our common purpose and shared values, and the distinct alchemy behind our national brand and soft power. After all, when we speak on the world stage, we send signals about who we believe ourselves to be – and the most persuasive messages are those delivered with utmost conviction. Global Britain is, therefore, as much a domestic project as an international one.

This process of reconstituting our modern identity has also required us to interrogate some of the less settled aspects of our past. We should not be fearful of this process, not least of all because to do so belies a lack of confidence. The fact is, Britain's history, our traditions and our culture remain a powerful totem at home and abroad, and their resilience and our adaptability provides a strong foundation on which to build a 21st Century nation.

The past five years has revealed a profound degree of fragility around the future advancement of global democracy, and we cannot afford to take anything for granted. There will be some rocky times ahead, both inside and out. We should continue to look back on our past with an unflinching eye and a generous dose of humility. We should make our foreign policy more inclusive and representative. But we must also, as Britons, agree that there is something of intrinsic, enduring value in the essence of the United Kingdom – in our character and our institutions. And that this confers not only the right to be proud, but a responsibility to defend and promote the freedoms we are fortunate to enjoy, around the world.

As Britain helps to build a safer, more prosperous and liberated world, we too secure these privileges for ourselves in the future. It is in this optimistic spirit that we publish this 2021 survey. I hope that you find it illuminating, useful, and encouraging, as we move into this new chapter of Britain's future.

**Sophia Gaston**  
**Director of the British Foreign Policy Group**

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# SUMMARY REPORT – KEY FINDINGS

## MOBILITY, KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT

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### Lived Experiences of Mobility

- Lived experiences of mobility continue to be a powerful force in shaping public attitudes towards international affairs and, in many instances, is as strong a predictive factor in terms of preferences as education or socio-economic status.
- Britons who travel regularly for leisure are more likely to be internationalist in their mind-sets, to feel safe and secure, and to hold strong foreign policy convictions. In turn, those who do not travel abroad for holidays are more likely to be isolationist in their instincts, to feel insecure, and are frequently unsure of their opinions.
- The coronavirus crisis disrupted international travel for all groups, but intensified the weight that socio-economic, age, regional and educational factors play in shaping access to global mobility. Younger, more economically secure Britons and those living in London and the South were more likely to have travelled abroad for leisure in 2020.
- When we speak, therefore, of the shaping influence of mobility and lived experiences of travel, we are referring to a phenomenon largely borne of deeply asymmetrical access to opportunities.

### National and International Identities

- The hardening of international identities we observed in the immediate aftermath of the 2019 election has softened off a little now a Brexit deal has been done; but the concept of global citizenship, patriotism and European identity remain fiercely contested and closely correlated with domestic political identities.
- Overall, 46% of Britons regard themselves as global citizens, and 40% do not; 49% see themselves as Europeans, and 43% do not; and 53% describe themselves as patriots, and 31% do not.
- Distinctly fewer Britons say they are unsure of their European identity than other international identities, largely a reflection of the tribal nature of the Leave-Remain discourse since the 2016 EU Referendum. Yet – just over a quarter (26%) of Britons who voted to leave the EU do actively identify as European.
- Patriotism speaks to the heart of the party-political and Brexit divides around identity: a remarkable distinction can be observed between patriotic identities of Labour-Remain (38%) voters and Conservative-Remain voters (70%).
- British, English, Scottish and Welsh identities carry their own unique relationship to foreign policy attitudes – largely a reflection of the demographic, socio-economic and regional profiles of these identities. For example, there is a notable difference between graduates (31%) and school leavers (43%) in use of the term ‘English’, which means English identity is now deeply rooted in the Conservative voting base.
- These national identities also interact with international identities – for example, 50% of those who identify as Scottish see themselves as global citizens, compared to 34% of those who identify as English only. And 59% of those with a Scottish identity see themselves as European, compared to 55% of those with a British identity, 44% of those who self-identify as Welsh, and just 32% of those with only an English identity.
- Age is also a powerful force in shaping identities, and can override political forces. For example, Conservative voters under 45 years are much more likely (45%) to identify as Europeans than older Conservative voters (27%). The centre of the Conservatives’ voting base today, therefore, may not remain its enduring heartlands.

### Engagement and Knowledge

- Citizens' interest in foreign affairs remains high, with 71% of Britons interested in the UK's international actions. Just 7% of Britons describe themselves as uninterested in the UK's international actions. The level of interest in international affairs has fallen somewhat since 2020, but this reflects marginal movements across many groups and may derive from the circumstances of the pandemic.
- Scottish and Northern Irish citizens, and particularly those citizens who identify strongly with those national identities, are disproportionately likely to claim they are not interested in the UK's foreign policy. The other group with distinctive levels of disinterest is Labour-Leave voters; although, it is certainly true that the overall trend is towards lower levels of engagement amongst citizens from lower socio-economic and education backgrounds.
- Self-reported levels of knowledge about international affairs continue to reflect various social inequalities. Women are 14 percentage points less likely than men to claim to be either 'fairly' or 'very' informed. The gaps between those with and without further education, and in higher and lower socio-economic groups, are equally troubling.
- Voters who switched to Conservative Party in the 2019 General election are less knowledgeable about foreign affairs (52%) than Conservative voters as a whole (64%).
- Although young Britons are more likely to travel abroad, and to be engaged in further education, their relative lack of confidence with foreign affairs suggests this engagement builds over the course of a lifetime, as citizens come to realise these issues bear consequences on their lives, and as their own stake in the nation increases.
- These distinctions will bear significant consequences for political leadership, with sections of both Labour and the Conservatives disengaged and poorly informed about the context for the UK's international engagement.

### Trust in the Government on Foreign Policy

- Trust in the UK Government to make foreign policy decisions in line with citizens' interests has fallen dramatically during the pandemic, as more generalised distrust in the Government's overall performance has bled into other policy areas.
- Overall, only 39% of Britons are trusting in the Government on foreign policy, with 49% actively mistrustful – a considerable slump in the past year.
- The Britons most trusting of the Government are older, living in the East of England and Wales, without educational qualifications, with strong patriotic identities, and no international identities. These voters also tend to be the least informed about foreign policy, and also the most instinctively isolationist – hence, decision-making is delegated to the Government, but with conditions attached.
- Although all groups have become less trusting since the pandemic, responses to this question remain heavily influenced by political affiliations. Conservative voters are dramatically more likely to be trusting than Labour voters, as are Leave voters. This emphasises the close relationship between the Government, the Brexit project and UK foreign policy, which will need to be dismantled to some extent in order to build nation-wide buy-in.
- It is also worth noting that voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 are considerably less likely (53%) than Conservative voters overall (67%) to express their trust in the Government on foreign policy.

### NATIONAL PRIDE AND INTERESTS VS. VALUES

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#### Pride

- We provided a long list of different components of the UK's foreign policy, covering areas such as defence, the armed forces, intelligence, diplomacy, foreign aid and humanitarian relief, and asked Britons to select which area is the greatest source of pride for them.
- Strikingly, no single aspect of the UK's international activities stood out, with all possible options attracting an even distribution of support. This indicates that UK foreign policy is seen as the sum of its parts, with a strong element of individual resonance at play. This phenomenon may also reflect the sense of ambiguity around the UK's foreign policy vision, at the time this survey was undertaken.
- More than a quarter of the British population argue that none of the core components of the UK's international activities are a source of pride for them. These citizens are a mixture of heavily disengaged Britons who tend to hold more isolationist attitudes, and Britons strongly affiliated with the SNP or Labour, who regard the UK's contemporary foreign policy as a reflection of a 'Tory foreign policy'.
- BAME Britons are significantly more likely (39%) than White Britons (25%) to claim that none of the components of the UK's foreign policy are a source of pride to them.
- This suggests that the perceived strong relationship between the Conservative Party, the Global Britain project, and Brexit, will continue to politicise foreign policy debate for the near future.

#### Strategic Interests vs. Democracy and Values

- 38% of Britons want the UK Government to prioritise economic and defence interests in its foreign policy, 19% of Britons would prefer democracy and human rights considerations to be prioritised, and 30% want the Government to strike an even balance between the two.
- Men are much more likely to support the prioritisation of economic and defence interests, as are citizens living in the East of England, the West Midlands and the North West, citizens with strong 'patriotic' identities, Leave voters, and Conservative voters – particularly those who switched to the Conservatives in 2019.
- Voters living in London, from higher socio-economic backgrounds, citizens with further education, Britons from BAME backgrounds, citizens with strong international identities and many of those hesitant to describe themselves as 'patriots', Labour, Lib Dem and SNP voters, and Remain voters, are the most inclined to preference a democracy and human rights-based foreign policy.
- It is important to note that both of these groupings are heavily mixed – with the economic and defence group combining, for example, both financially secure and internationalist Conservative-Remain voters, and more economically insecure Leave voters with authoritarian and isolationist instincts. And the second group, combines both wealthier and more educated White British Labour-Remain voters, with more economically insecure citizens from BAME backgrounds, closely ideologically aligned to a humanitarian foreign policy.
- These constituencies provide the framework for the current coalitions around foreign policy, as broadly expressed within both the Leave-Remain and Labour-Conservative or SNP-Conservative dichotomies.

### GLOBAL BRITAIN

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#### Global Britain

- When asked what they believe ‘Global Britain’ to mean in practice, the two most popular interpretations are of the UK as a ‘champion of free trade and globalisation’ (34%) and the UK being a diplomatic powerhouse and solving global challenges (27%).
- These figures are somewhat lower than in 2020, as Britons now spread their understanding across a greater number of responses – indicating that the Global Britain message has become more expansive as it moves closer to revealing itself in the publication of the Integrated Review.
- Importantly, the proportion of the population who are unclear about Global Britain has fallen from 28% to 20%, which suggests that opinions are being formed in real time. Nonetheless, the high levels of uncertainty amongst BAME Britons (32%) indicates they clearly feel less invested in and connected to this project than White Britons.
- More than a fifth (21%) of Britons still believe that Global Britain means the UK being a nation with strong and secure borders, focused on issues at home – including 35% of Conservative-Leave voters.
- This year, we also gave respondents the option to express that they do not support the idea of a ‘Global Britain’, and 10% of the population chose this. These Britons are most likely to identify as Scottish (22%) or Northern Irish (22%), to vote for the SNP (30%), or to be Labour-Remain voters (18%) – particularly older Labour-Remain voters.
- This suggests that Global Britain is very much seen to be a Conservative Party project and, given the precariousness of the situation regarding the Union, there is a degree of urgency around encouraging the Scottish people to feel included in the project.

#### Foreign Policy Spending

- A large plurality of Britons is keen for the Government to maintain its current spending levels on foreign policy, with 23% advocating for greater spending and around a fifth of the population advocating for a reduction.
- The Britons most likely to advocate for greater foreign policy spending are: men, younger Britons, those living in London or other urban centres, with higher levels of education and socio-economic security, more strongly held international identities, Remain voters (across all major parties), and those who identify as ‘British’.
- One of the most dramatic distinctions on this issue can be observed between those who travel abroad for leisure. Britons who travelled frequently in 2019 are much more likely to support increasing foreign policy spending (37%) than Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 (19%). In fact, a larger proportion of Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 support reducing foreign policy spending than support increasing it, one of the few groups for which this is the case. Britons living in cities are much more inclined to support increased foreign policy spending (31%), compared to those in towns (19%) and rural areas (20%).
- In short, the relationship between the privileges of education, economic security, the male gender, and the formation of an internationalist mind-set, remain strong.
- In turn, those most likely to advocate for a reduction in foreign policy are: older, those living in the East of England, rural residents, those from a lower socio-economic background and without qualifications, with a strong patriotic identity and a tendency to reject international identities.
- They are three times more likely to have voted Leave, and are highly represented in the 2019 Conservative vote – including 27% of voters who switched to the Conservative Party for the General Election.
- But in fact, they are even more concentrated amongst those Leave voters who continued to vote Labour – with 43% of Labour-Leave voters advocating cuts to the foreign policy budget. It is unclear how this segment of voters will be reconciled with their internationalist counterparts.



### The Indo-Pacific Tilt

- Public knowledge about the rationale and strategic purpose behind the Government's proposed 'tilt' in its foreign policy towards the Indo-Pacific is very low, with more than a third of Britons (37%) unsure about the arguments for or against such a rebalancing. This uncertainty rises to 49% amongst women.
- Only 8% of Britons believe the Indo-Pacific region should be the centre of the UK's foreign policy, and 15% of Britons believe 'there is no strong argument for the UK investing foreign policy resources in the Indo-Pacific, as our security and economic interests lie elsewhere'.
- Half of Britons with lower socio-economic backgrounds, 49% of women, and 44% of school leavers, are unsure about whether the UK should invest more in the Indo-Pacific region.
- After uncertainty, the most popular single answer (35%) is that the Indo-Pacific will be important to global power dynamics and economic growth, but the UK's involvement in this region should be balanced with investments elsewhere.
- Those who believe the Indo-Pacific should be the centre of the UK's foreign policy are most likely to be Conservative-Remain voters under 45 years old. Those who support a balanced approach are more likely to be educated, affluent, and to hold international identities.
- Those who do not wish the UK to invest any resources in the Indo-Pacific are spread across many social groups and geographies, but are somewhat more likely to be Remain voters. Aside from women, those most likely to be unclear about their positions are older, living in the North East or the East of England, of lower social grades, without qualifications, reject international identities and voted Leave.
- Separately, only 18% of Britons said that they supported deploying UK security and defence resources to contain China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific. It is younger men, living in urban areas, from higher socio-economic grades, with further education, and who vote for the Lib Dems, who are most likely to support this approach.

## THE UK'S GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS

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### Britain's Global Allies and Friendships

- Britons are not persuaded that the United Kingdom has a 'best friend' or primary ally in the world. While the United States (19%), the Commonwealth (15%) and the European Union (13%) are the most popular options, twice as many (37%) Britons do not identify any 'special relationships'.
- Conservative voters, Leave voters, those living in the South West, East of England, Yorkshire and the East Midlands are the most supportive towards the idea of the United States as a 'best friend'. Conservative voters, Leave voters, older Britons, those living in Wales, and ethnic minorities, are the most likely to feel a particular affinity with the Commonwealth.
- Strikingly, women (48%) are almost twice as likely than men (27%) to believe that Britain does not have a 'best friend' in the world, as are older Britons, those living in the North East (52%), ethnic minorities, those who do not describe themselves as 'patriots', Labour-Leave voters and SNP voters.
- The high degree of diversity in the demographics holding this opinion suggests that this response simultaneously captures the isolationist instincts of both British 'exceptionalists' and also anti-internationalists, as well as the uncertainty of citizens with lower levels of confidence in their foreign policy opinions (ie. women).

### Perceptions of other Nations

- The United States is already experiencing a 'Biden Bounce', with the nation's reputation rebounding considerably since the Presidential elections.
- America's standing with Britons had been damaged during Donald Trump's presidency, and had experienced a dramatic further collapse during the pandemic – falling 13 percentage points in a matter of months.

- With President Biden taking the helm, the United States has now regained its losses and also improved its reputation by four percentage points since before the pandemic, with 47% of Britons trusting America to act responsibly in the world. That said, a majority of Britons (53%) continue to be sceptical towards the United States' morality on the world stage, indicating the scale of the challenge for the new administration to demonstrate consistency in its leadership, after four profoundly damaging years.
- By contrast, Britons carry considerably more favourable opinions towards our other key allies and global partners. With 88% favourability, Canada is the nation most likely to be regarded as a responsible global actor, followed by Australia on 83%.
- Japan, which is a close security partner but not currently a part of the Five Eyes alliance, is considered a responsible global actor by 67% of Britons – up a considerable 8 percentage points since 2020, perhaps in part because of the nation's relatively successful pandemic response.
- Curiously, India – which, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi has experienced a chaotic pandemic response and a series of other domestic scandals – has also improved in the British public's opinion, up to 51% trusting from 40% in 2020.
- Russia and China continue to be distrusted by the vast majority of Britons and seen as distinctively hostile global actors. There has been very little movement over the past year, with 80% of Britons distrustful of Russia and 78% of Britons distrustful of China. However, it is true that China experienced a further deterioration of public opinion during the peak of the first wave of the pandemic (increasing to 84% distrust), which appears to have tapered off as the focus on the origins of the coronavirus has become less prominent.
- We did not survey regarding Turkey this year, but it is worth contextualising that public opinion towards Turkey in 2020 was at the same levels (only 22% trust) as our two greatest strategic rivals – even though Turkey remains a key UK economic partner, and a regional partner in NATO.
- Overall, the majority of nations have experienced gains in their favourable perceptions over the course of the past year – likely as a result of the collapse in trust towards the UK Government's own handling of the pandemic, interpreted not only as a domestic issue but as a relative performance against others – and the stabilisation of the United States since President Biden's victory in November.

### The UK's Relationship with China

- When asked about a full spectrum of possible forms of engagement with China, Britons are most supportive of the UK Government challenging China on its human rights record (40%) than any other type of engagement.
- This hard-nosed approach to China in part reflects the rising publicity given towards China's domestic and international behaviour – not least in terms of its crackdowns in Hong Kong and the growing visibility of its cruel treatment of the Uighur minority – and the UK Government's decision to challenge these actions more vocally in 2020.
- But it's also true that the Britons most inclined to argue in favour of holding China to account on human rights are those who generally favour a values-led foreign policy: they are older, more likely to be living in London, of a higher social grade, with further education, holding strong international identities and Remain voters.
- Labour (56%) and Lib Dem (60%) voters are almost twice as likely than Conservative voters (35%) to support the values-led policy in fact being pursued by the Conservative Government, and there are – unusually – no distinctions between Conservative-Leave and Remain voters on this issue.
- However, it is clear that Britons are not especially dogmatic and retain a degree of pragmatism around our strategic interests, with 38% comfortable with the Government pursuing cooperation with China on shared global challenges, such as climate change. These tend to be the same Britons who support challenging China on its human rights record.

- 30% of Britons also support the attendance of Chinese students at British universities and 27% of Britons support the UK pursuing research collaboration with China – and again, these tend to be more affluent, educated and internationalist Britons, aligned with Remain and/or voting for the Labour Party. The high degree of congruence between these preferences outlines the nature of the position on China that can be pursued politically as an ‘internationalist, values-led approach’.
- As the UK Government itself is upholding these forms of engagement, it is also interesting to note that – unlike other areas of foreign policy, the support of the Government for these positions is not acting as a repellent for Remain/Labour voters – and in fact, despite the presence of vocal advocates amongst Conservative politicians and pundits, it is Conservative voters who will need persuading of their value.
- Another key challenge for the Government is the fact that only a fifth (22%) of Britons support the UK pursuing any form of economic engagement and financial investment in the UK from China. This hostility is likely the result of the special attention afforded to the role of Huawei in building the UK’s 5G infrastructure – with just 13% of Britons supporting Chinese involvement in infrastructure in the UK.
- Men, Remain voters (both Conservative and Labour) and younger citizens are more likely to support economic engagement with China – although the dividing lines around socio-economic background and education are less pronounced, suggesting there are a multiplicity of motivations forming these responses.
- The relative lack of overall support for economic engagement may also reflect the fact that Britons regard this as a more coercive and/or transactional form of engagement, with a greater potential for security and political risk, compared to the ‘softer’ forms of higher education and cultural exchange.
- 15% of Britons do not support the UK Government having any form of engagement with China. These citizens are mainly older, living in poorer areas, from less affluent backgrounds, without qualifications, without international identities, and are almost three times as likely to be Leave voters.
- These findings demonstrate the complexity of the positions being taken towards China – with some Britons favouring openness because of their internationalist instincts, others favouring openness because they are little concerned about values and human rights. At the same time, some citizens favour disengagement with China because of their concerns about security, while others are motivated by their values.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AND UK-EU RELATIONS

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### The European Union

- Attitudes towards the European Union have improved slightly over the past year, with 62% of Britons trusting of our neighbours to act responsibly in the world – evidently, a more substantive proportion of the population than which regards themselves as European, or which wishes to be a member of the European Union.
- This suggests there is a space for more pragmatic debate around the European Union as a security and foreign policy partner.
- However, there are distinctions made between the different individual Member States in the European Union, with France regarded fractionally less favourably as a global actor than the European Union as a whole (61%), and Germany regarded considerably more favourably (72%). This is an interesting finding, because, even aside from the two nations’ geographical proximity, the UK and France are much more comparative partners in terms of defence and security capabilities.

### The UK’s Future Relationship with the European Union

- Just a quarter (24%) of Britons believe the deal that the UK Government secured with the European Union in December 2020 is the best framework for our relationship with the EU moving forward.

- When asked about the UK's future relationship with the European Union, now that a deal has been agreed, it is clear that Britons accept the need for a close relationship and the argument against No Deal has clearly been won, but also that the re-joining movement is by no means representative of the Remain movement as a whole.
- 27% of Britons wish to pursue a much closer relationship with the EU and to work towards re-joining, 22% wish to pursue a closer relationship than set out in the deal, but to remain outside, and 24% of Britons believe that the deal provides for the best relationship for the foreseeable future. Only 12% of Britons support a more distant relationship with the EU.
- These findings suggest that the proportion of Britons who support a closer relationship with the EU (49%) is considerably higher than the proportion who are satisfied with the deal or wish to create further distance – which, given the 'thinness' of the deal that has been secured, must be read as a 'No Deal' position.
- A sizeable chunk (30%) of Conservative voters want to see the UK Government moving towards greater cooperation with the European Union.
- Those who *support re-joining the EU* are not concentrated in any particular age bracket, but they are most likely to live in London or other cities, to be of a higher socio-economic and education background, from an ethnic minority community, to hold international identities, and to vote for Labour (a majority of Labour voters in 2019 back this position).
- Those who *wish to pursue a closer relationship but not re-join the EU* are evenly dispersed across almost every demographic, geographic and socio-economic group. Politically, they are most represented amongst Conservative-Remain voters and Labour-Leave voters, and capture the coming together of two otherwise deeply polarised groups.
- Those *satisfied with the UK-EU deal* are most likely to be older, to live in the North West or Wales, to not hold further education – although they may be earning a secure income, to reject international identities, and to have voted Leave. They are disproportionately represented amongst Conservative gains in 2019.
- Those who wish to create *further distance in the UK-EU relationship* are predominantly working-age men – including a quarter of younger Conservative-Leave voters, or Leave voters who voted for the Brexit Party or UKIP in 2019.

### European Union vs. the United States

- The Brexit vote has been widely discussed in Westminster debate as a realignment in the UK's global relationships, pivoting away from its European neighbourhood as a member of the European Union, towards an invigorated partnership with the United States. The enthusiastic pursuit of a UK-US trade deal under the volatile leadership of President Trump, and during the period in which the UK's negotiations with the European Union were taking place, strengthened this framework of a zero-sum game.
- Nonetheless, when the British people are asked about this dichotomy, as to which is the more important relationship to the United Kingdom, there is a clear preference – with a majority of Britons (53%) believing the UK's relationship with the European Union is the most important relationship, with only half as many (27%) believing the relationship with the United States to be more significant. In the end, it appears that the UK-EU relationship is more 'special'.
- Significantly, 30% of Leave voters agree that the European Union is the UK's most important relationship – a sizeable minority compared to the 45% of their counterparts who favour the UK's relationship with the United States.
- Britons who switched to the Conservatives in the 2019 General Election (46%) and those who hold an exclusively English identity (40%) are examples of the demographics disproportionately likely to prioritise the United States relationship compared to the national average. Britons without further education are also 10 percentage points more likely than those with qualifications to favour the US relationship.
- Britons who did not travel the past two years are 20 percentage points less likely to favour our relationship with the European Union over our relationship with the United States, than those who travelled frequently in 2019 (45% to 65%).

## IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

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### Immigration and Border Control

- British public opinion on immigration has improved over the past year, with the proportion of Britons agreeing with positive statements about immigration increasing across the board. At the same time, negative statements are becoming slightly less popular – although there is a large plurality of the population who continue to subscribe to these messages.
- Overall, immigration remains a polarising topic – yet most Britons hold quite complex views; broadly, although there is concern about the scale of immigration, and migrants' propensity to add pressure to the welfare system or create competition around jobs, there is also a widespread recognition of the positive economic and social benefit of migrants who have integrated into British life.
- Despite one of the greatest falls in population over the past year – largely due to the combination of the pandemic and Brexit – 58% of Britons continue to believe that the population is too high and just 16% of the population disagrees.
- 42% of Britons believe that migrants are a burden on the UK's welfare system, and 36% believe that migrants 'take jobs away' from other Britons. These two statements are the most polarising, and attract the most substantive opposition (around a third of Britons disagree).
- At the same time, 50% of Britons believe that overall, immigration has a positive impact on the British economy, 53% believe that migrants strengthen the UK through their hard work and talents, and 48% believe that accepting migrants from many different countries makes the UK stronger. Around a quarter of Britons actively disagree with these statements.
- The improvement in these figures compared to 2020 could in part relate to the greater visibility of migrant workers' contribution during the coronavirus pandemic. It is also true that, believing the issue of immigration to have been 'settled' by the Brexit referendum, citizens are more comfortable in recognising the contribution of those already in the UK.
- Voters that switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 are particularly likely to believe that the UK population is already too high (86%), and to believe immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (71%).
- 75% of Remain voters believe immigrants have a positive impact on the economy, compared to just 28% of Leave voters, and 76% of Remain voters believe immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, compared to just 29% of Leave voters.

### Asylum Seekers and Channel Crossings

- When asked how to address the growing crisis of irregular migration in the English Channel, a majority (57%) of Britons believe migrants crossing the Channel should be intercepted and prevented from reaching the UK, but are split on the best means of tackling the problem.
- 29% want the Royal Navy deployed to intercept and turn back the boats; 18% believe migrants should have their claims processed in offshore detention facilities; and just 10% support the construction of a wall, barriers or the deployment of deterrent mechanisms (such as wave machines) in parts of the Channel – ideas allegedly floated in Home Office meetings this past year.
- Around a fifth (22%) of Britons believe that all migrant arrivals should be accepted and processed on UK soil. Those most likely to support accepting and processing migrants in the UK are younger, more affluent, better educated, more likely to be living in London, BAME, Remain voters, Labour voters, and with strong internationalist mind-sets.
- Those who actively oppose on-shore processing are most concentrated among Conservative-Leave voters, and residents in Wales, Northern Ireland, and the North West of England.
- Those preferring the Royal Navy to turn back boats are more likely to be older, less affluent, without further education, more likely to be living in the East of England, the West Midlands, Wales or Scotland, to reject international identities, to have voted Conservative, and to have voted Leave.
- Those who support offshore processing are more evenly dispersed across demographics, but more are somewhat more likely to be older Britons, living in rural communities, and residents in the South West. This position appears to be the 'middle ground compromise' amongst British public opinion.

- Those advocating for some of the more outlandish suggestions for the Channel are a mixed bunch, also quite evenly dispersed. Interestingly, they are more likely to be of a BAME background (17%) than White British (10%), and are also more likely to have voted UKIP in 2019 (24%) and/or to live in the North of England.

## FOREIGN AID AND DEVELOPMENT

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### Foreign Aid and Development Spending

- Despite the often-fractious public debate around foreign aid, Britons are clearly sold on the value of a wide scope of development activities.
- When asked to assess whether a diverse suite of foreign aid and development activities should remain a priority for the UK, not a single spending area failed to attract a healthy majority of support from the British people. Overall, there is a clear recognition of the importance of aid and development spending, when broken down into the sum of its parts.
- The most popular activities remain those with the greatest degree of long-term support from politicians, the media and celebrities – what is now considered the ‘bread and butter’ of aid and development. These include the provision of health services and vaccinations (76%) and providing emergency support after crises like natural disasters (74%).
- The activity that attracted the weakest level of support is in fact the one framed specifically in terms of self-interest – discouraging migration to wealthier countries such as the UK, which was supported by 54% of Britons. This was followed by support for promoting economic growth in developing nations, approved by 57% of Britons.
- The central battleground on aid appears to be activities focused on promoting economic growth and prosperity in developing nations. Britons from lower socio-economic backgrounds or communities, and/or Conservative-Leave voters, are noticeably cooler on these programmes, emphasising the degree to which individual circumstances shapes values and policy preferences about how tax-payers’ funds are spent abroad.
- Britons living in London, and those who regard themselves as global citizens or ‘British’ compared to ‘English’, are much more favourable to supporting girls’ education and women’s security. It is unclear the extent to which these programmes are seen as ‘second order’ or whether more generalised attitudes to gender equality play a role in forming preferences.
- It is feasible that many Britons, asked more generally about foreign aid, would be less enthusiastic. These results emphasise the importance of building narratives around the objectives of development spending, and strengthening the visibility of ‘direct’ impacts, to help citizens to understand the positive difference being made through UK investments.
- Just 17% of Britons say that they do not support the Government’s investments in aid and development, although the same number again say they are not sure about their position.

### Cutting Foreign Aid During the Pandemic

- Our survey asked Britons to consider the grim realities of the pandemic on both UK domestic finances and also the risk of backsliding in hard-won progress in the developing world, and then to choose the best course of action for UK aid and development spending.
- Overall, 72% of Britons argue that foreign aid should either be stopped or reduced during the pandemic, and 28% believe it should be maintained or increased.
- Breaking these down, 36% believe there should be a reduction in spending until the UK economy recovers to pre-pandemic levels, and 23% believe that foreign aid should be completely stopped until the UK makes its economic recovery. 13% of Britons would like to see the Government ceasing to spend any money on foreign aid into the future.
- On the other side, 21% of Britons think that current levels of spending should be maintained, and 7% believe the Government should increase its foreign aid spending because of the crisis.

- The middle point of the nation therefore appears to be to reduce foreign aid by a relatively significant margin, until the British economy recovers to its pre-pandemic levels.
- The highest proportion of Britons who believe the Government should increase spending on foreign aid live in the North East of England. They are more likely to be more affluent, educated, BAME, to vote for left-leaning parties, and to have voted Remain. They are particularly concentrated amongst younger Labour voters.
- Those advocating the *maintenance* of the UK's spending on foreign aid are most likely to be men, younger, living in London or Scotland, more affluent and better educated, with global mind-sets, to have voted Labour, the Lib Dems or the SNP, and to have voted Remain. They represent the largest group of Labour-Remain voters (45%).
- Britons in favour of a *temporary reduction* are more likely to be women, older, living in the North West or South West, and to live in a town or rural location. This group represents the intersection of Conservative-Remain and Labour-Leave voters, who both tend to be distinct from their counterparts in their own parties in their more moderate views on foreign aid.
- Those favouring a *temporary cessation* in foreign aid tend to be more likely to be older, living in places like Wales, the West Midlands and Yorkshire, to come from less affluent backgrounds, and to have voted Leave in 2016, and Conservative in 2019.
- Britons arguing for the UK Government to *stop all foreign aid provision forever* are more likely to be from the East of England or Northern Ireland, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, to have switched to vote for the Conservatives (26%) or to have voted for the Brexit party in 2019, and to identify as English, not British.
- Overall, Leave voters (91%) are strikingly more inclined than Remain voters (54%) to support reducing or stopping aid spending.

### The Moral Argument for Aid and Development Spending

- Britons are divided as to what they believe to be the strongest arguments in favour of the UK's aid and development spending.
- A fifth (20%) of Britons argue that we hold a 'moral duty' to help the world's poorest people, 15% believe that improving local economies brings benefits to the global economy, 13% believe that foreign aid strengthens global peace and security, making Britain safer at home, 10% believe we have a responsibility as a former imperial nation to ensure the success of the developing world, and 8% of Britons think the UK's status as a world-leading donor strengthens the UK's global reputation and our international influence.
- The varied responses highlight the challenge for both Government and the aid sector to effectively speak to Britons' individual and collective motivations. A hard-nosed argument around economic interests, security or soft power will speak to some groups, while others may be repelled by the suggestion that Britain's moral duty can be surpassed.
- Those most convinced of a moral responsibility are more likely to live in the South West and Scotland, to be of a higher socio-economic grade and with further education, to see themselves as global citizens but not patriots, to have voted Remain, and for Labour or any other party aside from the Conservatives. However, younger Conservative voters are 7 percentage points more likely than older Conservatives to subscribe to a moral argument.
- BAME Britons and Conservative-Remain voters are the most likely to be persuaded by a security argument. SNP and Labour-Remain voters are the most likely to believe the UK has a particular responsibility as a former imperial nation.
- However, the clearest distinctions in terms of demographics are visible among the 17% of Britons who do not support the Government's aid and development spending altogether. These Britons are six times more likely to be over 55 years of age than under 35 years of age, are twice as likely to be of a lower socio-economic background, to not hold further education qualifications, to not hold international identities, and to be White British. They are most likely to live in the East of England or Yorkshire, and are most likely to live in towns and rural locations.
- These Britons represent 29% of the Conservative vote in 2019, as well as 33% of the Leave vote overall, and 38% of those voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019. This issue is a clear dividing line between Conservative-Leave and Conservative-Remain voters.

## PERCEIVED THREATS AND ASSESSMENTS OF SAFETY

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### Perceptions of Safety

- When asked to consider their feelings of security in light of the direction of travel of world events, around a fifth (22%) of Britons describe themselves as feeling extremely or very unsafe and just under a fifth (18%) of Britons describe themselves as extremely or very safe.
- On average, Britons rank themselves as 5.4 out of 10, with 1 being extremely unsafe and 10 being extremely safe. The strongest gravitational pull is towards the middle – suggesting a divided population, but also one that perceives a relatively secure safety net.
- The Britons most likely to feel unsafe are women, older Britons, those living in less prosperous regions such as the East of England, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and with fewer qualifications. They are more likely to have voted Leave, and hence are concentrated amongst both older Conservative-Leave voters and, particularly, older Labour-Leave voters.
- These fearful citizens are also the most likely to be disengaged from foreign policy and from Government in general, and are likely to carry a higher insecurity profile under any circumstances – even outside of a pandemic. However, they may also be the most exposed to the pandemic's harmful social and economic effects.
- This suggests that the impact of the pandemic has been to intensify disadvantage and insecurity, rather than necessarily to create a more widespread sense of security vulnerability amongst the population as a whole.
- It is also the case that citizens who identify as Scottish and Welsh and Northern Irish are considerably more fearful than those who identify as English or British, suggesting that the issues that have been raised around devolution during the pandemic are contributing to a sense of powerlessness and insecurity, or shaping perceptions in a negative manner.
- Those most likely to describe themselves as feeling safe are relatively evenly distributed across the population – suggesting a diversity of forces in play in forming their sense of security – but are most concentrated amongst younger Conservative-Remain voters, and those who hold both British and English identities.

### Assessing Security and Defensive Threats

- When presented with a wide range of security threats – including economic and democratic threats – the British people conclude they are all important, although some threats are seen as more 'critical' than others.
- The most alarming threat to the British people (84%) is the risk of cyber-attacks from other nations – curious, as this issue does not often receive a huge degree of political attention.
- This is followed by international terrorism (83%), the rise of China as a world power (79%), climate change (78%) and foreign interference in British politics and our democracy (77%).
- It is important to note that climate change is regarded as a comparable risk to what could be described as more traditional security and defensive threats. It is also the single risk to be judged the most 'critical', by 49% of Britons.
- Britons are now eleven percentage points more likely to see the rise of China as a critical threat than they were in 2020 (30% to 41%) and five percentage points more likely to view foreign interference in UK politics as a critical threat (27% to 32%).
- The second tranche of threats judged to be significant, but to a lesser degree, are the risk of a new migration crisis (71%) and a nuclear arms race (71%). Democratic backsliding in Western nations is seen as an important threat by 65% of Britons.
- At 62%, the risks posed by automation and economic change are the least compelling to Britons as a whole. This threat is also considerably less likely than others to be seen to be critical, indicating there is little salience around this subject as a short- or medium-term risk.



- Despite the consistently large numbers throwing their weight behind each type of threat, some interesting demographic distinctions can be observed. For example, those most fearful of cyber-attacks and likely to regard them as a ‘critical’ threat tend to be older, living in less prosperous parts of the nation (ie. East of England, Wales), to have voted Leave, to be White, to hold strong patriotic identities, and to have switched to the Conservatives in 2019. These voters also tend to be less engaged and informed about foreign affairs than the population as a whole.
- This same relationship applies to international terrorism, the rise of China, and the possibility of an international migration crisis. Consistently, these citizens (White, older, Leave voting, from less prosperous areas) are more likely to be attuned to the existence of threats, indicating a high degree of diffuse social and political insecurity. White Britons are consistently more likely than BAME Britons to regard terrorism or immigration as a ‘threat’.
- By contrast, the threats of foreign interference in UK politics and our democracy, climate change, democratic backsliding, and the risk of a nuclear arms race are seen as critical threats by a more mixed group of Britons – bringing together those more likely to be on the Left of politics with those carrying this more generalised higher threat perception level.
- Automation is distinctively a major concern for younger Britons, urban residents and particularly for those living in London, BAME citizens, and Remain voters.
- Younger Conservative voters and Labour-Leave voters are the most likely to see automation and economic change as a critical threat, presumably, because one group perceives themselves to be adaptable to its impacts, and the other imagines they will have left the workforce before its impacts are felt.

### **The Risk of the Break-Up of the United Kingdom**

- The potential loss of the Union in the break-up of the United Kingdom is seen as an important threat by two-thirds of Britons (66%), including 29% of Britons who regard it as a critical threat.
- The collapse of the Union is most likely to be perceived as a threat by more affluent Britons living in urban areas, particularly those in London, as well as those more likely to be sensitive to most threats, living in places such as the East of England and Wales. For example, 72% of Londoners are concerned about the break-up of the United Kingdom, compared to 58% of those living in Scotland.
- Unsurprisingly, the weakest level of concern about the future of the Union is found by those who identify as Scottish (54%), followed those who identify as only English (61%). Britons who regard themselves as British (71%), or both British and English (70%), or Welsh (71%), are the most perturbed by the prospect.
- Although both Conservative and Labour voters recognise the risk of the break-up of the United Kingdom, both Lib Dem and Labour voters are more likely to regard it as a ‘critical’ risk. This is largely because Remain voters are considerably (74%) more likely than Leave voters (60%) to be concerned about the disintegration of the Union. As such, the gaps between Conservative-Remain (80%) and Leave (61%) voters, and Labour-Remain (73%) and Leave (62%) voters, are substantial.
- Interestingly, Conservative voters under 45 years and Labour voters over 45 years are both more likely to be concerned about the break-up of the Union than older Conservatives and younger Labour voters – a unique coalition that could be brought together in the efforts to re-secure the Union’s future.

### DEFENCE AND SECURITY

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#### NATO

- Two-thirds of Britons (67%) support the UK maintaining its membership of NATO, with just 8% of Britons in favour of the UK leaving NATO.
- However, 18% say that they are unsure about whether the UK should stay or leave, and 7% say that they have never heard of NATO – meaning a total of a quarter of Britons are unclear about NATO's value and significance to the UK's foreign policy.
- Support for NATO brings together a mixed bag of foreign policy instincts, including both those with raised threat perceptions, and internationalists – who tend to be on the opposite side of other questions.
- When we look at the demographics in the round, the Britons who believe the UK should remain a member of NATO tend to be older, male, more affluent and with further education, have strong patriotic identities, to live in rural locations, and to live in the South West, Wales, the West Midlands and the East of England. This likely reflects the fact that pro-NATO Britons are heavily concentrated in a few different demographics and geographies, even though they are quite diverse as a group as a whole.
- For example, even though many of these demographics generally correlate strongly with a Leave vote, and Leave voters are around five percentage points more likely than Remain voters to support the UK's NATO membership, the group where support is most highly concentrated is amongst Remain voters who also voted for Labour in 2019.
- At the same time, age appears to be one of the most significant factors in determining views on NATO, with older Conservative and Labour voters more likely to support NATO membership than their younger party counterparts – even though age and EU Referendum voting was so highly correlated.
- Those actively advocating for the UK to leave NATO are most likely to also be men, to be of working age, and to live in Yorkshire, to be BAME, to not describe themselves as patriots, and to hold a national identity rather than a British identity. In terms of political groupings, they are most likely to be found amongst younger Conservatives and Labour-Leave voters.
- Our survey also asked Britons who had expressed their support for the UK's NATO membership, whether they would in practice support the UK upholding the Article 5 covenant, which we explained exactly as stated by NATO itself. We found that 86% of Britons consented to uphold this, of whom 45% strongly supported the need to do so.
- The proportion willing to accept this responsibility as part of our membership expressed here is significantly higher than the proportion who, in our 2020 survey, expressed their willingness to support the terms of Article 5 – without to link to NATO having been set out. This emphasises the importance of connecting the story of our membership of international organisations to rights and responsibilities as, if the benefits are able to be clearly recognised, the commitments in turn are better able to be upheld with consent.

#### Support for UK Military Intervention

- We asked Britons for their views on the deployment of the UK defence forces. Less than a fifth of Britons (18%) say that they trust the Government to take decisions on military intervention at their own discretion.
- The most popular position, shared by 39% of Britons, is that the UK defence forces should only be deployed in three scenarios: a direct attack on British soil, a direct attack on British assets abroad, or in the case of genocide or a large-scale humanitarian crisis.
- A further 15% only support military interventionism when there is a direct attack on British soil or British assets, and 10% say that they would only support deployment in the case of genocide or a large-scale humanitarian crisis.
- Just 4% of Britons oppose all forms of deployment, although 14% of the population are unsure about their preferences.
- We can conclude that the British people generally support a conditional form of interventionism, with the need to respond to direct attacks on British territory or assets and the responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance likely to be persuasive.

- For those who are hesitant or conditional in their support for UK military intervention, the most compelling argument *against* deployment is 'to avoid being drawn into conflicts' (45%), followed by the UK's poor historical track record in interventionism (35%), and the draining effects of wars on domestic finances (28%).
- Those keen to avoid being drawing into conflicts are most likely to live in Northern Ireland, the South West or London, to be older, from more affluent backgrounds, and to be BAME. Politically, they are somewhat more likely to have voted Leave overall, but seem to be evenly spread within the Conservative Party, and are heavily concentrated amongst Labour-Leave voters. This particular combination of demographics suggests a number of different constituencies being brought together by different motivations and experiences.
- By contrast, those emphasising the UK's poor track record are a more cohesive group – being male, younger, affluent, and highly concentrated amongst Remain voters and within Labour and the SNP.
- Those who believe military intervention spends money abroad that should be spent at home are most likely to be living in less prosperous parts of the country, of BAME backgrounds, and to be Leave voters who supported the Conservatives in 2019.

## FREE TRADE AND GLOBALISATION

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### Globalisation

- After providing a clear definition of globalisation, we asked Britons whether they felt it had benefited the UK as a whole, London, the rest of the UK outside of London, and themselves and their families on a personal level.
- Overall, two-thirds of Britons recognise that globalisation has benefited the United Kingdom – rising to 79% of Britons who believe it has benefited London.
- There is a 25 percentage-point difference between the proportion of Britons who believe that globalisation has benefited London (79%) and those who believe its benefits have been shared around the nation more generally (54%).
- 53% of Britons believe they have benefited from globalisation individually and within their families.
- It is clear that the notion that globalisation has conferred individual benefits, or delivered for Britain outside of London, remains deeply contested. The nation is essentially cut down the middle between those who do or do not recognise those benefits.
- Those who are most likely to believe that the UK as a whole has benefited from globalisation are younger, live in London or the West Midlands (which houses Birmingham, England's second-largest city), are more affluent, better educated, hold international identities and tend to identify as British.
- Pro-globalisation citizens are heavily concentrated amongst Conservative-Remain voters, but the influx of Leave voters into the party has transformed its voting base to now be one of the weakest groups of supporters of globalisation as a whole. Labour, Lib Dem and Greens voters are now much more favourably disposed to globalisation than Conservative voters, once the party traditionally associated with free markets.
- Labour-Leave voters and Conservative-Leave voters are more closely aligned in their negative opinions of globalisation than they are to their counterparts within their own party. Similarly, Labour and Conservative voters under 45 are more closely aligned in their support for globalisation, than they are to their older counterparts in their parties.
- The differing views about globalisation within the UK are strikingly captured in the movement between political parties at the 2019 election. 67% of voters who left the Conservatives believe globalisation has benefited Britain, compared to 51% of those who joined the Conservatives (ie. largely Red Wall voters). By contrast, 74% of voters that switched to Labour in 2019 hold favourable views on globalisation.

- Interestingly, those most inclined to believe London has benefited from globalisation include both Londoners – who have seen its benefits first-hand – and those in less affluent areas (such as Wales) and with strong Leave identities (ie. the South West). Overall, however, those who recognise the benefits in London are more likely to recognise benefits across all measures – and in turn, those who have no faith in globalisation's benefits are not simply motivated by resentment, but rather fail to see the benefits, full stop.
- Geography appears to play a significant role in shaping impressions as to whether the UK outside of London has benefited from globalisation. It will come as no surprise that two-thirds of Londoners believe this, but – with the exception of the East of England – the proportion of Britons who share this view declines incrementally the further north one travels. Those in the North of England, Yorkshire and Scotland are the least likely to feel areas outside of London have benefited from globalisation. The other consistent factors (being older, less affluent, having voted Leave) also remain influential – and they are of course also tied to geography themselves.
- Just 38% of voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 believe that areas outside of London have benefited from globalisation, compared to 61% of voters who left the Conservatives in the 2019 General Election.
- Asking Britons whether they and their families have directly benefited from globalisation intensifies the distinctions between demographics. Under-35s (62%) are especially receptive to globalisation's benefits compared to older Britons (42%), and a gap between urban-dwellers (57%) and rural residents (48%) is perceptible. The Leave-Remain gulf is stark: 66% of Remain voters believe they have personally benefited from globalisation, contrasted with just 38% of Leave voters.
- Britons who did not travel in 2019 or 2020 are significantly less likely than those who travelled frequently in 2019 to view globalisation as beneficial across all measures, and the gaps are especially pronounced when asked about globalisation's benefits on an individual and family level (42% to 68%).
- Again, the gap in the views of voters who joined the Conservatives for the 2019 General Election (35%) about the personal benefits of globalisation, and those who left the Conservatives (63%), stands at almost 30 percentage points.

### Free Trade Agreements

- Considering the risks associated with Britain negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), food standards remains the single greatest worry for Britons, followed by protecting workers' rights and environmental protections. When given the option to choose up to three areas of concern, these three issues continue to dominate – followed by agricultural standards and animal welfare.
- Nonetheless, concerns continue to be diffuse and spread across a wide range of areas. This both increases the chance of public consternation about FTAs materialising, but also makes it difficult to pinpoint a single campaigning platform on which to challenge FTAs overall.
- Labour voters tend to be more anxious about free trade than Conservative voters, which reflects how utterly embedded trade has become in the Brexit-Global Britain nexus. This is an example of where the broader realignment of Labour becoming the more internationalist party is halted by the specific link in citizens' minds between the Brexit-activating tropes.
- Just 14% of Britons say that they have no concerns when it comes to Britain negotiating FTAs. These Britons are highly concentrated amongst White British Conservative voters – particularly those who switched to the party in 2019 (ie. Red Wall), and predominantly live in places like the North East, Yorkshire and the West Midlands.
- A significant chunk of the population (17%) say they are unsure or don't know what their concerns are, which is a sizeable constituency to be persuaded both in favour or against FTAs. These citizens are overwhelmingly women, younger, living in less prosperous areas (and/or Scotland), and from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

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#### The UK's Leadership on Climate Change

- 68% of Britons support the UK taking a global leadership role on climate change, including 39% who strongly support this role. Just 5% of Britons oppose the UK leading internationally on tackling climate change.
- Although Londoners and more affluent and educated Britons are the most inclined to strongly support the UK's global leadership on climate change, it is true that residents across many of the nation's less prosperous areas are also enthusiastic. This issue is clearly going through a process of becoming a defining part of national identity – although as noted earlier in the questions on pride, it is not yet understood as a foreign policy instrument.
- Despite the image of a youthful climate action movement, it is in fact older Britons who are the most likely to 'strongly support' a global leadership role for the UK.
- The Conservative Government has made the issue of climate change a central part of its economic and foreign policy agenda, and yet its own voters (68%) remain less committed to the UK's global leadership on climate change than their counterparts in Labour (80%) and the Lib Dems (84%).
- This in part reflects the sizeable gulf between Remain (83%) and Leave voters (65%) – which also play out strikingly within the parties. A majority of Labour voters (52%) also strongly supports the UK's leadership role, compared to 36% of Conservatives.
- Conservative-Leave voters over 45 years are the political group the least likely to support the UK's global leadership on climate change, with Conservative-Remain voters and younger Conservative voters much more aligned with Labour voters.
- Although two-thirds (66%) of voters that switched to the Tories in 2019 support the UK's leadership role on climate change, they are considerably less enthusiastic than those voters who left the party, of whom 80% support the UK's leadership role – many of whom gave their votes to Labour.

#### Individual Action on Climate Change

- Britons appear to be willing to make some significant changes to their lifestyles in order to individually contribute to action against climate change. Their enthusiasm appears to be heavily shaped by those campaigns that have received the greatest degree of media and political attention.
- As such, a majority of Britons commit themselves to reducing plastic use (60%) and minimising food waste (55%), and 43% also commit to purchasing fewer clothes. Beyond these, a wide range of measures receive support from around a fifth to a quarter of the population.
- Women are dramatically more likely than men to commit to individual action to tackling climate change – with the gaps most prominent around questions of changing consumer behaviour, eating less meat and reducing energy consumption.
- As in the question about the UK's global leadership on climate change, it is in fact older Britons who are much more likely than younger Britons to agree to take personal action, with the exception of volunteering and examining policies of companies they interact with.
- Regional distinctions become important around questions of transport. For example, Londoners are enthusiastic about using public transport more often (43%) – in part reflecting values, but also the practicalities of London's extensive transport network.
- However, on the whole, Britons in cities are less likely to be willing to take individual actions on areas such as reducing food waste and reducing plastic usage than Britons living in rural areas.
- Socio-economic distinctions are relatively insignificant for the more popular measures to tackle climate change, but they begin to emerge quite prominently when Britons are asked whether they would pay more for more sustainable food, clothes and other products, or if they are willing to relinquish their car or transition to an electric vehicle.

## Summary Report – Key Findings

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- This highlights the need for the Government and campaign groups to balance their narratives around individual action, to ensure all Britons are able to feel a part of the solution – even those who may need greater financial support to make the transition.
- Troublingly for the Government, Conservative voters are almost universally the least likely to undertake any of the proposed actions to tackle climate change than voters for any major political party. And once again, voters that joined the Conservative Party in 2019 are particularly disinclined to take individual actions on climate change.
- 14% of Britons say they are unwilling to take any action to tackle climate change. These Britons tend to be younger, living in urban areas, and are disproportionately from BAME backgrounds (28%). They are twice as likely to have voted Leave in the EU Referendum.

**The full report with extensive demographic, geographic, political and identity-based findings can be downloaded for free on the BFPG’s website. The BFPG will continue to monitor these evolving trends and lead the UK’s research into public opinion on foreign policy and international affairs. Please visit our website at [www.bfpg.co.uk](http://www.bfpg.co.uk) and subscribe to our mailing list to keep up-to-date with our latest research.**

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