
How hero voters helped UK Labour win – and could help Harris too

Progressive Policy Institute

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PPI project on Center-Left Renewal

How did UK Labour win?

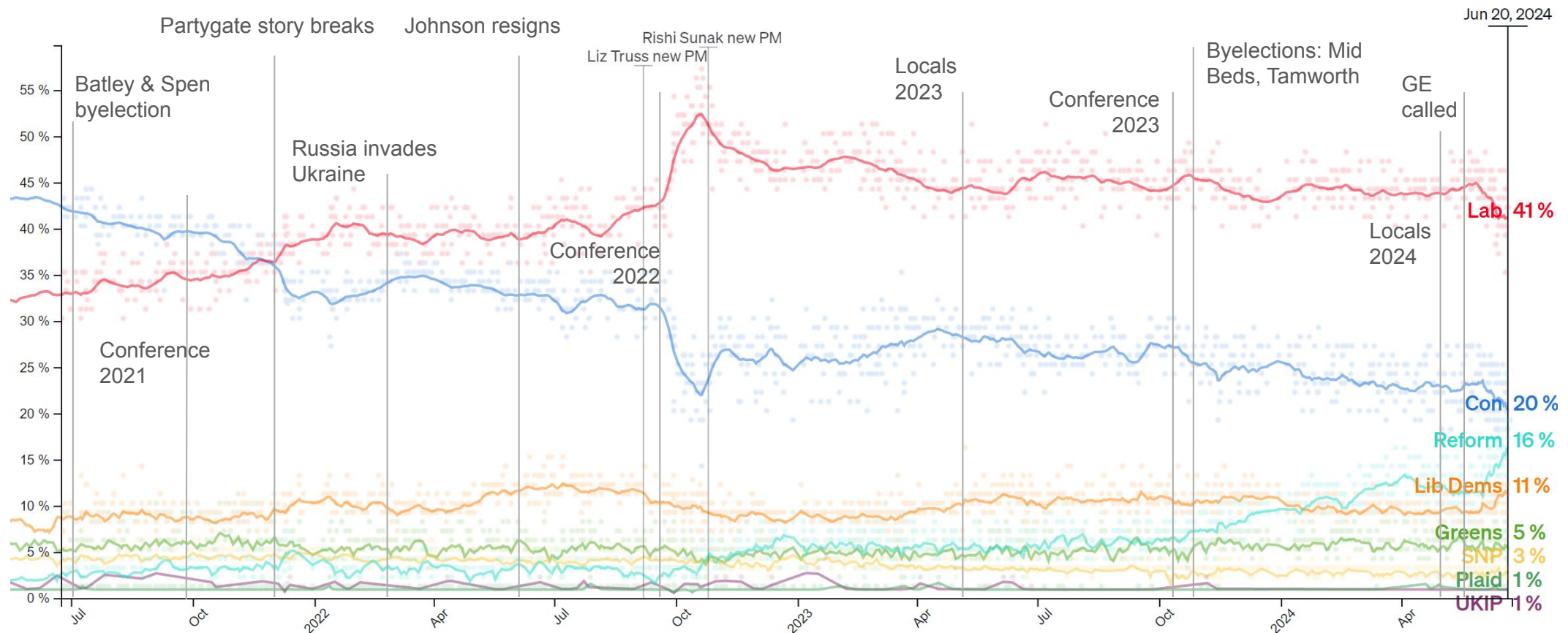
- Labour moved from the greatest defeat since the 1930s to a landslide victory
- Just three years ago, we were 12% behind – on July 4 Labour won 411 seats out of 650
- The start point was a very disciplined, sharp focus away from a disparate coalition of voters that combined core vote, progressives and ‘red wall’ voters to tightly defined **‘hero voters’**
- Labour gained a deep understanding of these voters and mainlined this through the organization
- Labour used this analysis to develop and refine our arguments, cutting through all policy and comms, creating clear dividing lines on:
 - NATIONAL MOOD
 - PARTY BRAND
 - LEADER REPUTATION
 - LABOUR’S OFFER
 - EFFECTIVE ATTACK
 - DE-RISKING

CHANGE
Vote  **Labour**



01. Hero voter focus was central to Labour's success

Three years ago Labour sat 10+ points behind in the polls



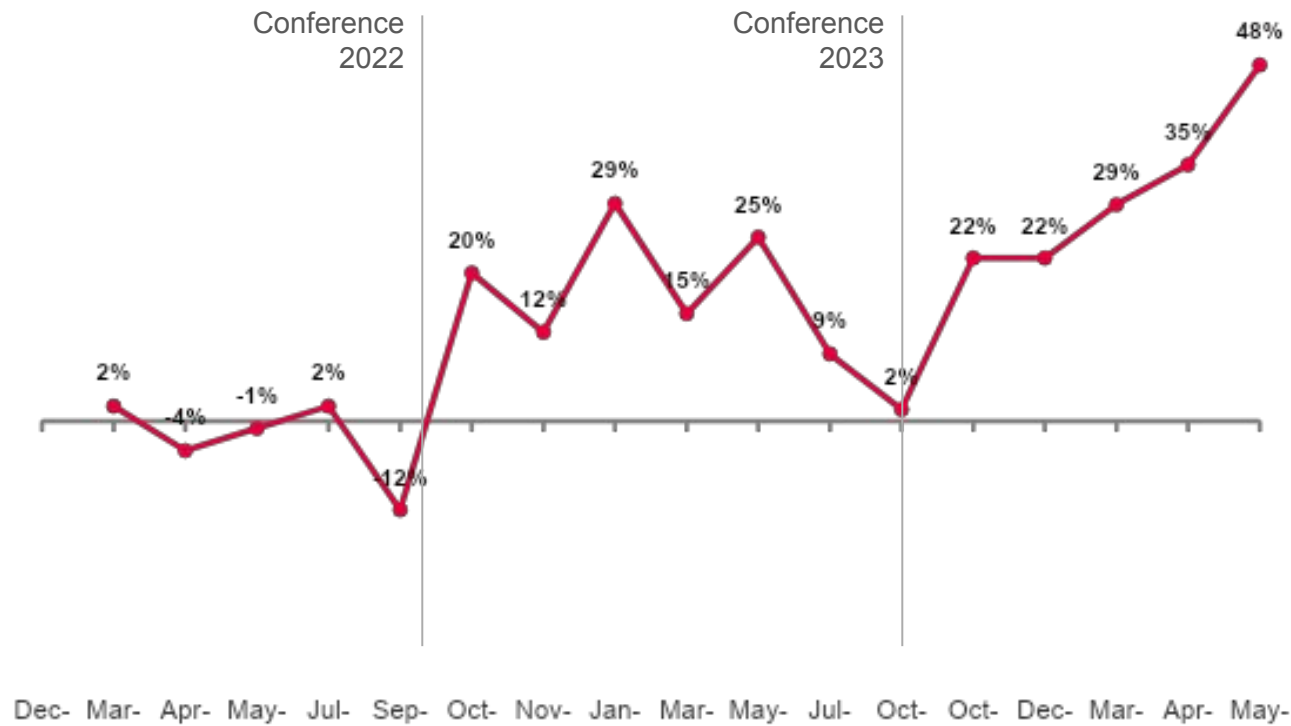
Labour's 'winning coalition' was too wide. So they focussed on the voters they really needed to win: *hero voters* – the clue was in the name

Labour identified *hero voters* – so called as they were the voters who felt Labour had abandoned them – as the most critical group to focus on:

- 2019 Tory voters, open to Labour
- Many had voted for Labour in the past before, but not recently
- Hero voters were middle-aged and older, primarily non-graduates, worried about their economic security, voted Leave
- Meant de-prioritizing other voter groups

Labour had to show hero voters the party had changed – and was back in the service of working people

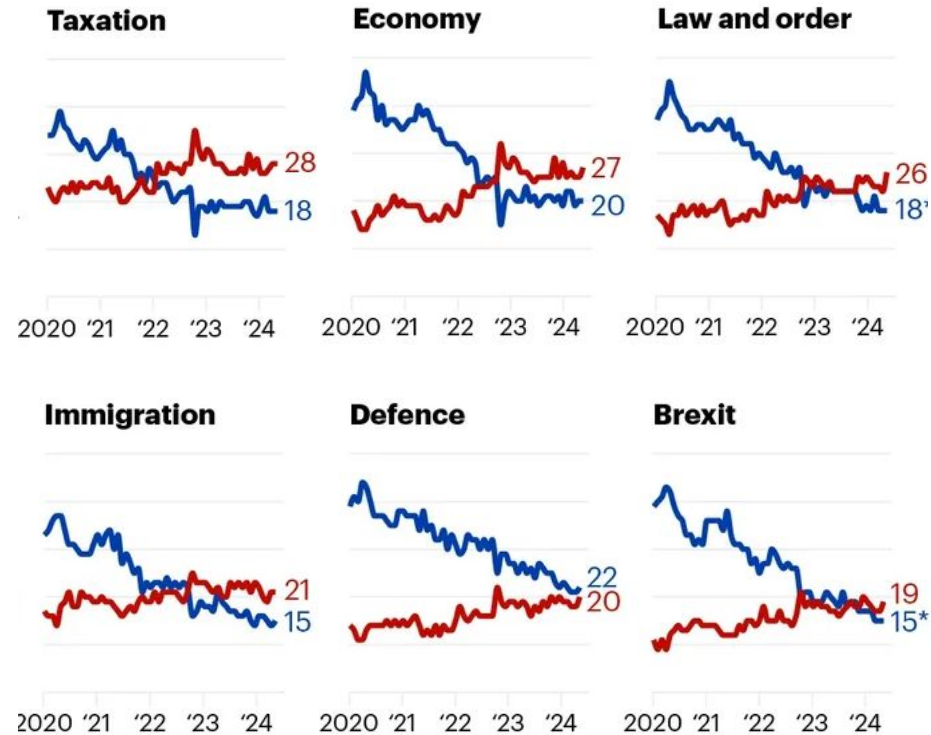
Labour's net favorability rating among hero voters



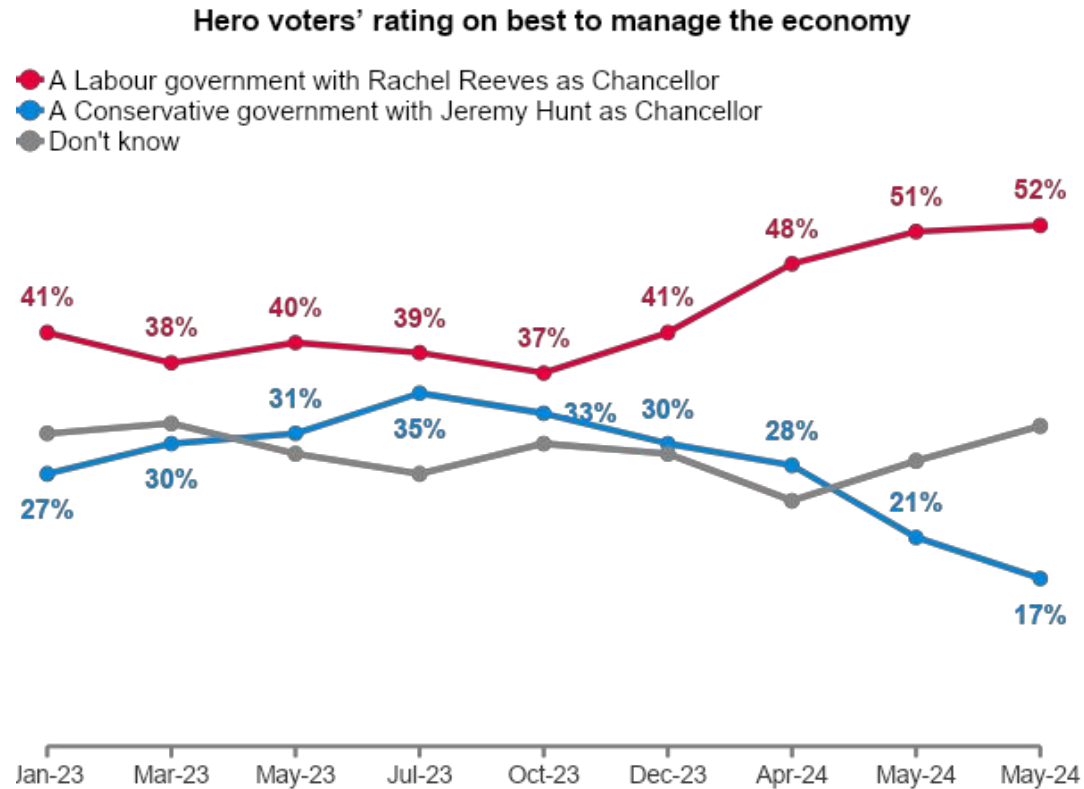
- Changing the Labour Party signalled to hero voters that it was back in their service – by the election, 64% said Keir Starmer had changed Labour.
- Labour saw the biggest increases in strength, competence and ‘on my side’.

Labour moved ahead on areas they had lagged behind on

Which party is best placed to handle...



Reassuring on the economy mattered most



- No party has ever won a UK general election without leading on the economy.
- Labour put economic responsibility at the heart of everything they did.
- Labour fought the election on the economy, promising to end the chaos and restore stability after it was crashed by Liz Truss.

Labour's long-term missions framed the party's positive plans

- Like the attack on the Democrats, Labour was attacked for not having a plan.
- Starting in early 2023, eighteen months out from the election, we launched five missions – long-term, national ambitions for Britain.
- Contrasted with the Tories' 'sticking plaster politics' focused on short-term headlines – these were well received by hero voters.

“*The parties which aren't in power tell you they'd sort everything out. But you need to see things like this to have faith they'll make it work.*

(Woman, hero voter, Amber Valley)

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...then Labour's 'first steps' plan turned this into an immediate 'retail' offer

- 'First steps' because they address immediate crises and because they're the start point of long-term change.
- Each one fully costed.
- Each one with a clear account of 'how' it would be delivered.

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It's important that we see something quickly and I like that the six steps work towards something.

(Man, hero voter, Rossendale)

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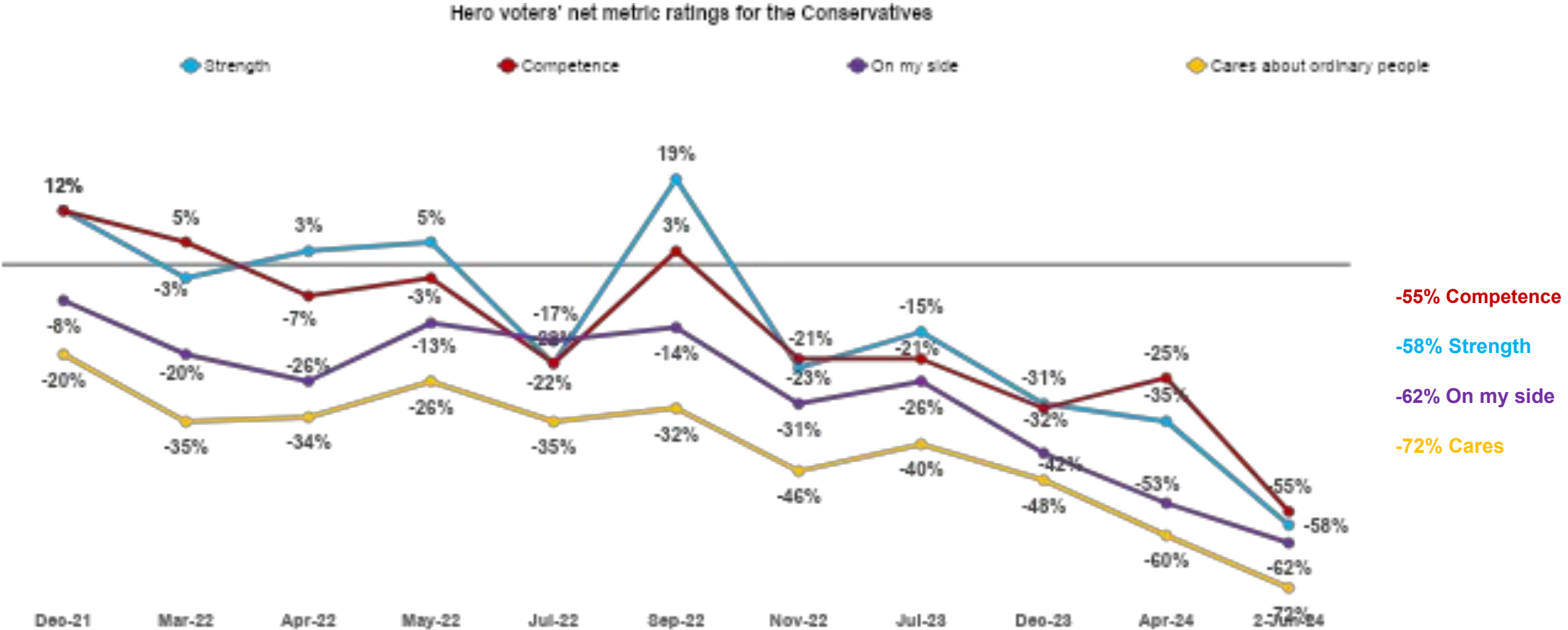
My first steps for change

1. Deliver economic stability
2. Cut NHS waiting times
3. Launch a new Border Security Command
4. Set up Great British Energy
5. Crack down on antisocial behaviour
6. Recruit 6,500 new teachers

Vote Labour

03. The Conservatives

The Conservatives' brand collapsed, with all key metrics down, especially strength



Conservative failure posed risk to voters

- Most potent proof-points were:
 - Partygate in face of voter grief
 - Truss market chaos forcing mortgages up
 - Cost of living crisis/prices up
 - NHS waiting times
- And there was a wider fear of the chaos that had led to decline that people could see around them:
 - Highest tax burden in 70 years
 - Record levels of small boat crossings
 - Sewage
 - State of Britain's roads / potholes
 - Crime and ASB left unchecked

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We seem to be just spiralling out of control. You just don't know where we're going at the moment.

(Man, hero voter, Birmingham Northfield)

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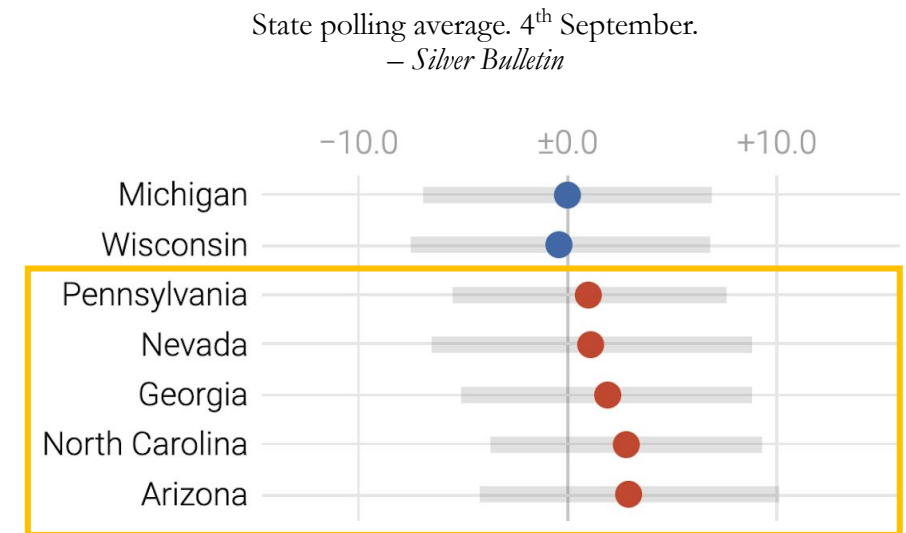
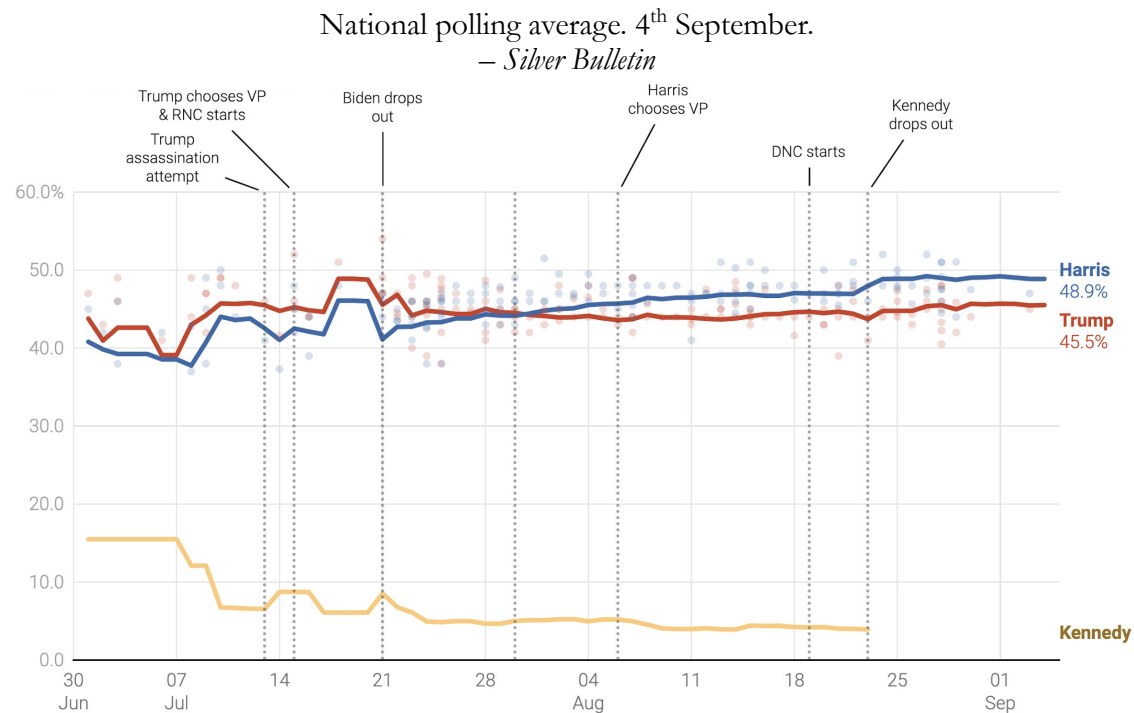
It's a mess. The government seems like it's always in chaos, just completely rudderless.

(Man, hero voter, Crawley)

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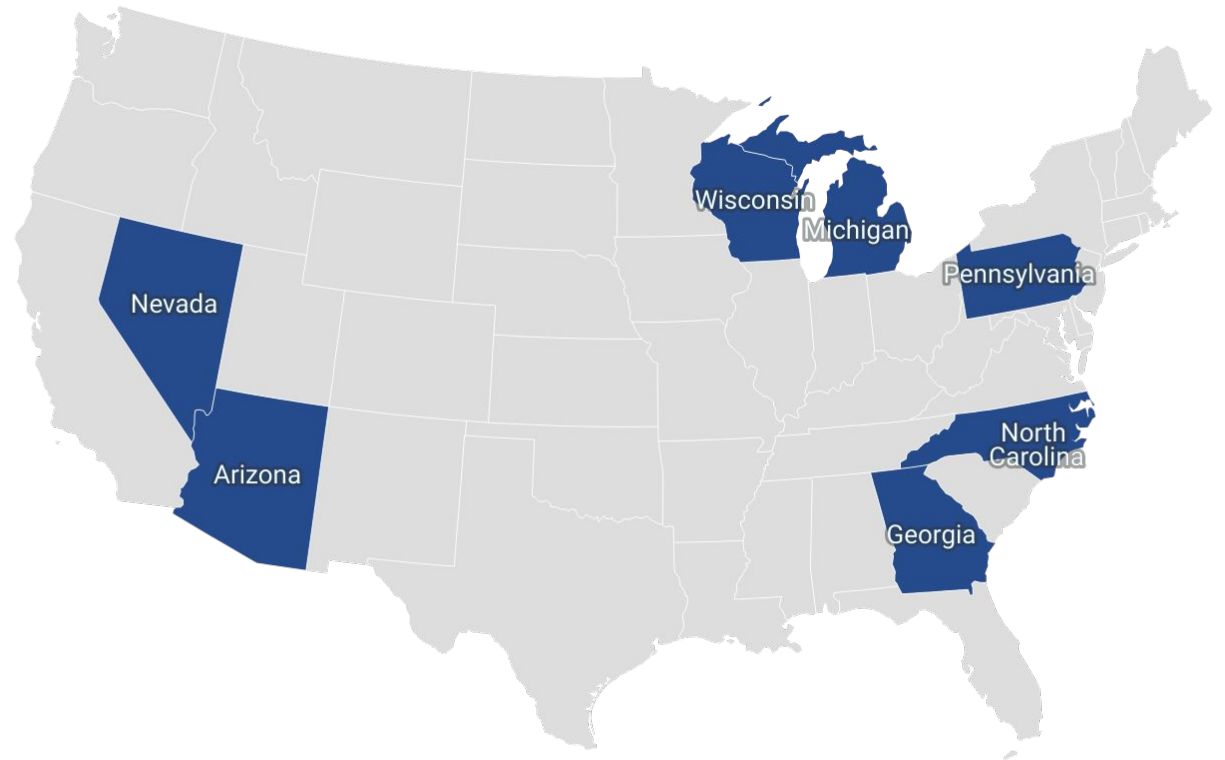
04. Parallels with the US

There are many differences between the US and the UK. But there are important parallels.



Know your 'hero voter'

- With FocalData, representative poll of 4,854 residents of seven swing states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, 6-20 August
- 4 focus groups with swing voters (PA, MI) and Trump rejectors (GA), 21-28 August



Harris' hero voters are working, non-college-educated parents

- Harris' most important voter is a non-college-educated parent, average age 42
- They work full time, see themselves as middle class and are under pressure from the rising cost of living
- They are not closely following politics, preferring to get their news from non-traditional sources like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube
- 13% - 16% of the swing states.

There is a strong sense that the American middle class is in decline

- The feeling that the middle class is in decline is widespread...
 - Forced to work multiple jobs
 - Dream of home ownership out of reach
 - Unable to cover more than the essentials
 - Limited financial security from month to month
- Tackling inflation is their top priority, followed by immigration. They want to feel greater stability.
- The change people want to see is a 'better deal' for middle-class voters.
- Harris's middle-class credentials are positive. Now she needs an offer to match.

The middle class is being eroded. Where you used to be able to work one job and buy a house, those things are out of reach for people like us now.

(Woman, hero voter, MI)

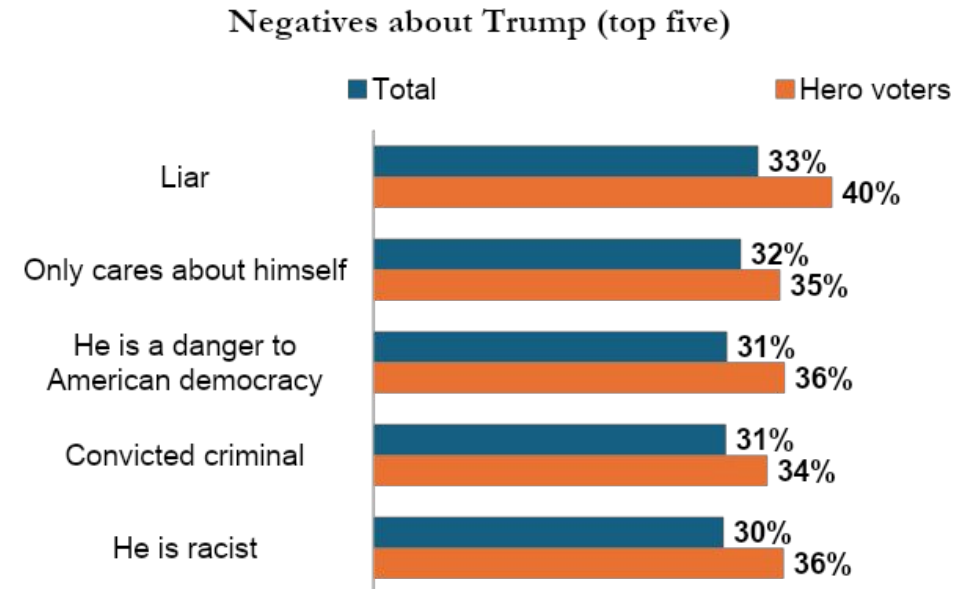
The border is broken. The situation is just a dumpster fire and has been for years now.

(Man, hero voter, PA)

There's less of a legit middle class... People are just working, working, working, and I think that's really unfair.

Trump's weaknesses are well-known. But the most potent message is showing how Trump's chaos poses risk to voters.

- Trump is seen as dishonest, egotistical, unpredictable and divisive.
- Hero voters are familiar with his failings.
- The attack needs to be consistent, disciplined and targeted to show how Trump's chaos poses risk to voters.
- Some attack messages just don't land or even backfire – for example , 'weird' which poses no risk to voters.



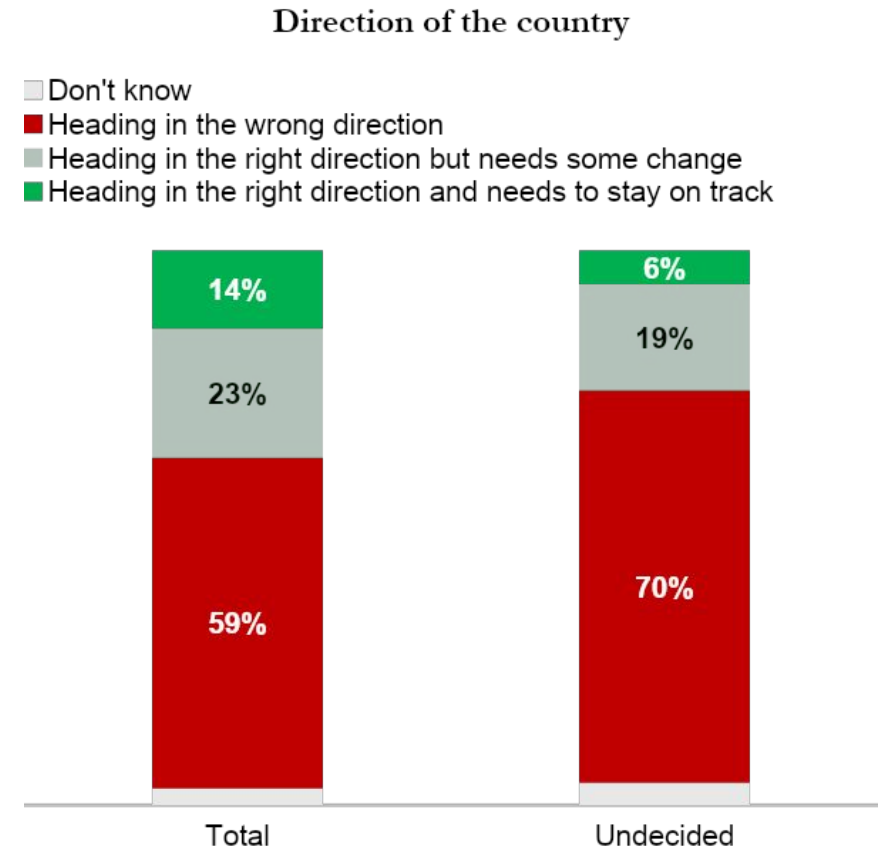
"I'm scared of what'll happen if he loses. And if he wins it'll be a revenge tour."

(Woman, GOTV voter, GA)

These voters clearly want change – a more secure and optimistic future – built out of Biden’s legacy...

- Hero voters feel the US is heading in the wrong direction and are restless for change.
 - 59% of swing state voters and 70% of undecideds think things are going in the wrong direction.
- Harris has the opportunity to be the candidate of the future.
 - Needs to show this govt’s achievement laying the foundations for delivery for working people.
 - But focus on how her agenda will mean building and improving on this.
- Hero voters’ appetite for change isn’t a desire for radical upheaval. Harris must offer stability but ensure the Govt now delivers for the beleaguered middle class.

“
*We need change AND stability.
Something to build on after
everything going crazy in recent
years.*
”
(Woman, hero voter, PA)



Harris is energetic, smart and credibly middle class. But these voters need an offer to match.

- Harris is seen to have youth, energy, intelligence and confidence.
- They see her as a breath of fresh air but want to know more.
- Her middle-class background makes her seem relatable – particularly linking her mother buying her first home to her housing plans.
- Harris needs to show what – and who – she fought for as vice president and prosecutor
- Now she needs an offer to match: one that clearly targets these ‘hero’ voters, showcasing a small number of clear, tangible policies that speak to their top priorities (cost of living and immigration) on repeat (eg grocery prices, help with home ownership, tough action on borders)

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She makes me a little bit optimistic. Her energy, the change she's brought since standing.

(Man, hero voter, PA)

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