



AFTER YOU...

Why people agree about climate change but nobody wants to pay

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Lord Ashcroft Polls
X @LordAshcroft

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

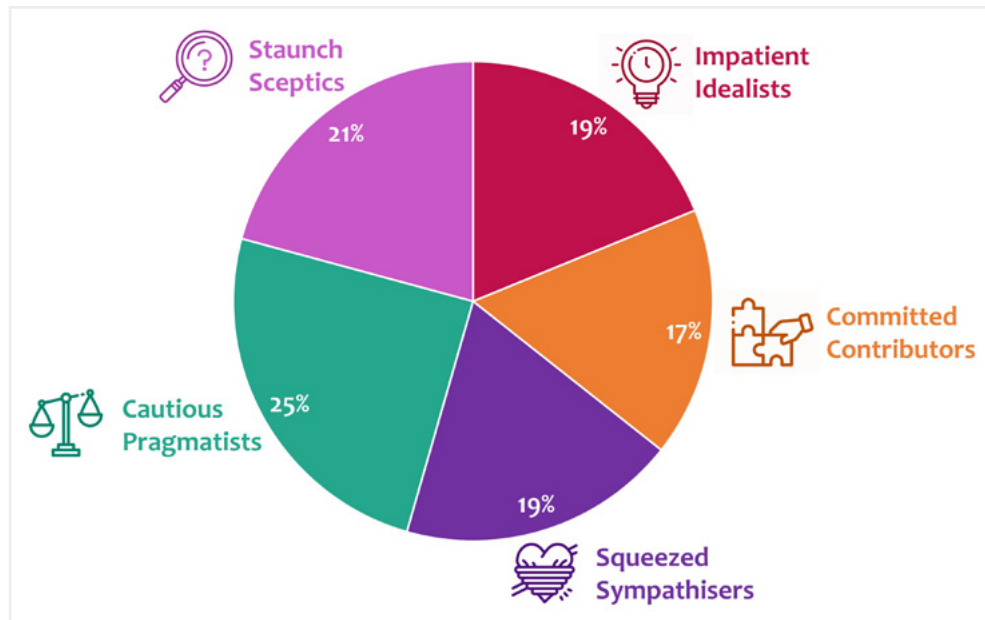
4,992 adults in Great Britain were interviewed online between 23 and 27 July 2026. Results have been weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain. Full data tables are available at LordAshcroftPolls.com

Qualitative research was conducted among 40 adults in Birmingham on 10 September 2026. Participants were divided into five groups, representing the five segments of opinion identified in the research. Participants were drawn from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, and equal numbers of men and women were included overall.



NET ZERO – THE FIVE TRIBES

Our analysis of the poll findings enables us to break the total sample – and therefore the British public – into five distinct groups or tribes, each with a particular combination of opinions or attitudes towards net zero and surrounding issues.



Impatient Idealists (II) are the youngest segment and the most likely to believe climate change is one of the most important issues facing the country, that it is caused entirely by human activity, that the threat is heavily understated and that it is already impacting daily life in the UK. They strongly support policies to mitigate climate change and achieve net zero even if this means higher costs. Impatient Idealists are the least likely to believe that net zero will mean higher energy costs, though a majority of them do so. They do not believe the costs of reaching net zero are being shared fairly across society or that business are taking meaningful action. For this group, tackling climate change is far and away the most important consideration for energy policy, ahead of energy independence and affordability. They heavily oppose drilling for oil and gas in the North Sea.

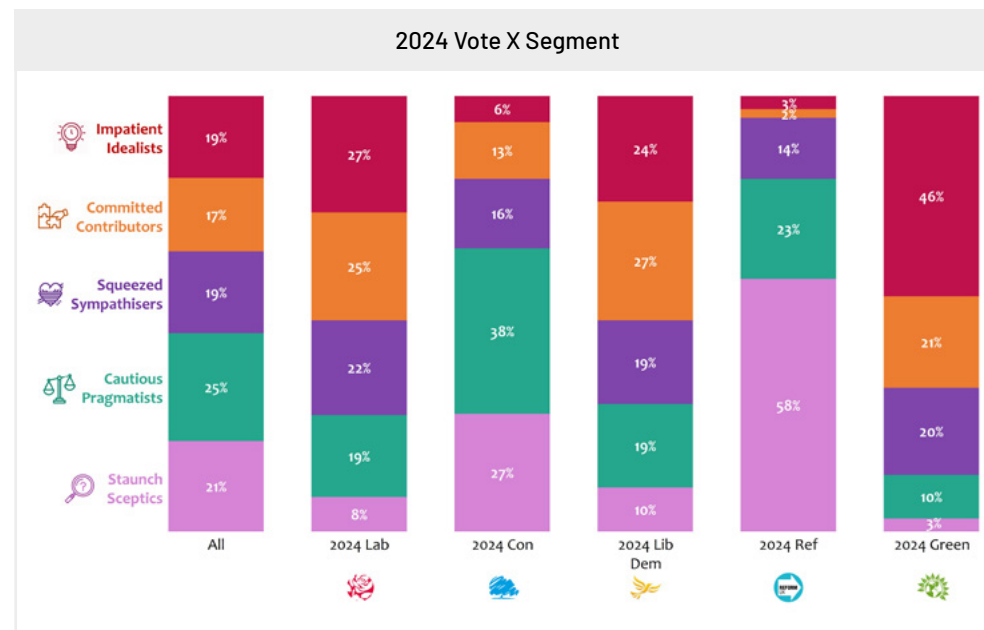
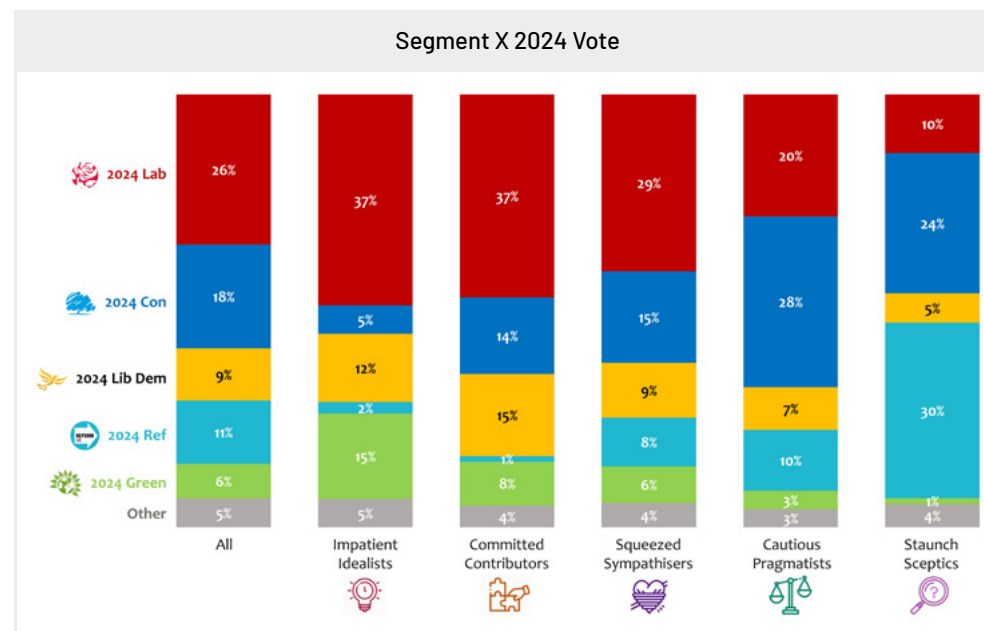
Committed Contributors (CC) are also very likely to rate climate change as an important issue; they are also the least likely to mention the cost of living or energy prices. They strongly support policies on net zero and climate mitigation, including restricting North Sea drilling. However, they are the most positive about what businesses are doing, the most likely to believe the costs of net zero are fairly distributed and the most likely to think that climate campaigners practise what they preach. Committed Contributors are the least likely to choose affordability as a priority for energy policy and are the most likely to say they are willing to pay substantially more to tackle climate change. They are the most likely to believe that climate change is caused mainly by human activity, that its threat is somewhat understated, and that it is already affecting life in the UK.

Squeezed Sympathisers (SqSy) have some level of concern about climate change but are most likely to consider housing and the cost of living as priorities. They generally support tackling climate change and believe that living sustainably will mean sacrifices or lifestyle changes – but they believe the UK is moving too fast towards net zero and that it is possible to accept that climate change is real while opposing net zero. In energy policy, they see affordability as a more important priority than climate change. They believe climate change is already affecting the UK, but less strongly than Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors. Squeezed Sympathisers agree strongly that businesses use sustainability as an excuse for higher prices and that the costs of net zero are currently falling on the wrong people. They oppose pursuing net zero if it will mean higher household costs, which they tend to believe will be the case. They are the most likely to think the costs of net zero should be borne by energy companies, and to think they will end up falling on households. The majority of Squeezed Sympathisers say they are not prepared to pay extra to tackle climate change.

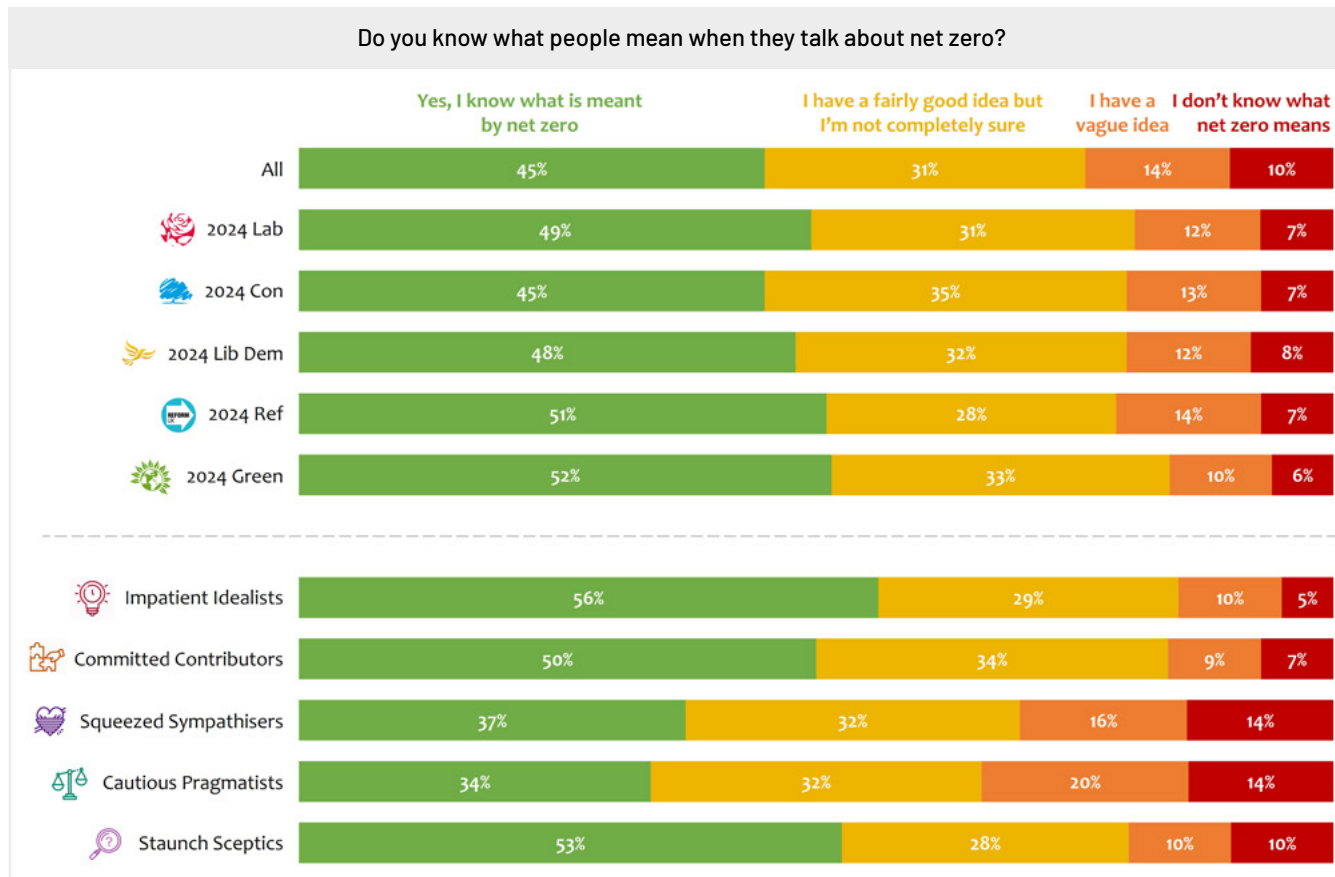
Cautious Pragmatists (CP) are the least likely to name climate change among their top three concerns, and the most likely to prioritise the economy and defence. They show little support for making sacrifices to live more sustainably and most think the UK is moving too fast towards net zero. They are the most likely to prioritise security of supply and energy independence in energy policy, to believe that tackling climate change will cause prices to rise, and to think that all countries should tackle climate change regardless of wealth. They tend to think that climate change has little impact on their daily lives, and are the most likely to say the UK is not yet experiencing serious effects but will do so in their lifetime. Cautious Pragmatists show clear support for North Sea drilling. Like Squeezed Sympathisers, they oppose pursuing net zero if it will mean higher household costs, which they believe is likely. Unlike them, Cautious Pragmatists are willing to pay a little extra on energy bills, but only up to £5 month.

Staunch Sceptics (StSc) are the most likely to include immigration, crime, welfare and energy prices in their most important issues, with climate change barely figuring. They strongly and consistently oppose net zero policies and most prioritise living standards over sustainability. They are the most likely to rate affordability and energy independence as key considerations in energy policy, with climate change having very little weight. Staunch Sceptics are the most likely to believe climate change is either natural or not really happening (though only a minority of them think this), and that the threat is heavily exaggerated. They think climate change has little impact on daily life and that serious effects will not be felt for a long time, if at all. They overwhelmingly support North Sea drilling and strongly oppose net zero if it will mean higher household costs, which they almost unanimously believe it will. They are the least willing to pay more for energy in order to tackle climate change.

Throughout the report, quotes from the qualitative research are followed by the initials of the participant's segment.



WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT MEANS



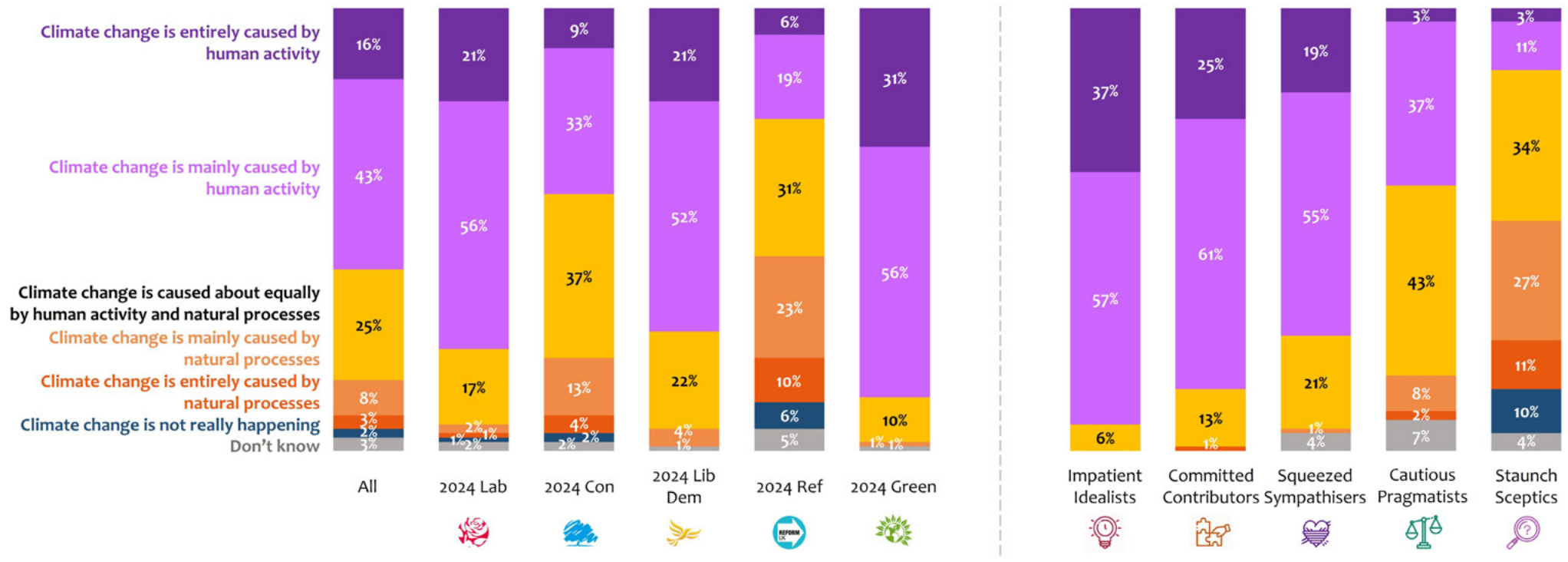
Just over three quarters of respondents said they knew **what was meant by net zero** (45%) or that they had a fairly good idea but were not completely sure (31%). Only one in ten overall said they didn't know what net zero meant. Among our segments, the most pro-net zero (Impatient Idealists) and the most sceptical (Staunch Sceptics) were the most familiar with the term.



In our focus groups, participants in all segments had a fair idea of what net zero meant but were much less clear about the policies in place to help achieve it. Many talked about net zero in terms of environmental action in the round, rather than carbon emissions specifically. Others associated net zero with higher prices, or questioned the value of the UK achieving net zero in isolation and importing energy and other products from overseas.

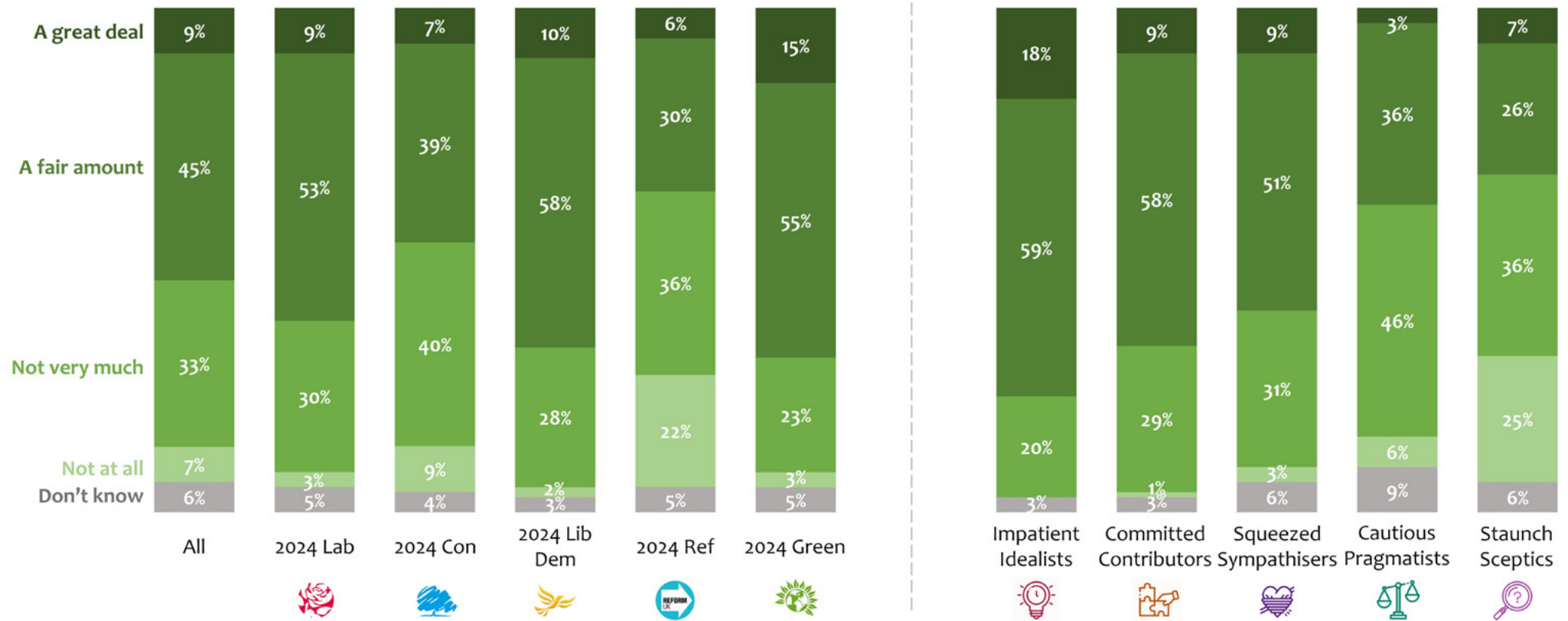
- “ I think net zero is good overall. But I want to see what the targets are. What are the policies? It might be that they’re out there, I just haven’t read them.” [CC]
- “ Net zero is a buzzword, like the ozone layer. What happened to that? We don’t hear about the ozone layer anymore.” [CC]
- “ With net zero I think of when companies use different oils for vehicles, people using electric vehicles. Countries being more sustainable and businesses cutting waste, things like that. Each company doing their own thing to bring it down.” [SqSy]
- “ It means ‘more expensive’.” [CP]
- “ It’s an excuse to raise prices.” [StSc]
- “ Pointless. We measure the CO2 emissions in this country, but we don’t take into account the increase in other countries to achieve our net zero. We’re going to achieve it by getting everyone into electric vehicles that we’re importing have been manufactured by a process that isn’t net zero. And what impact is it going to have when you’ve got other countries doing what they’re still doing? It just seems to make our life harder.” [StSc]

Thinking about the causes of climate change, which of the following best describes your view?



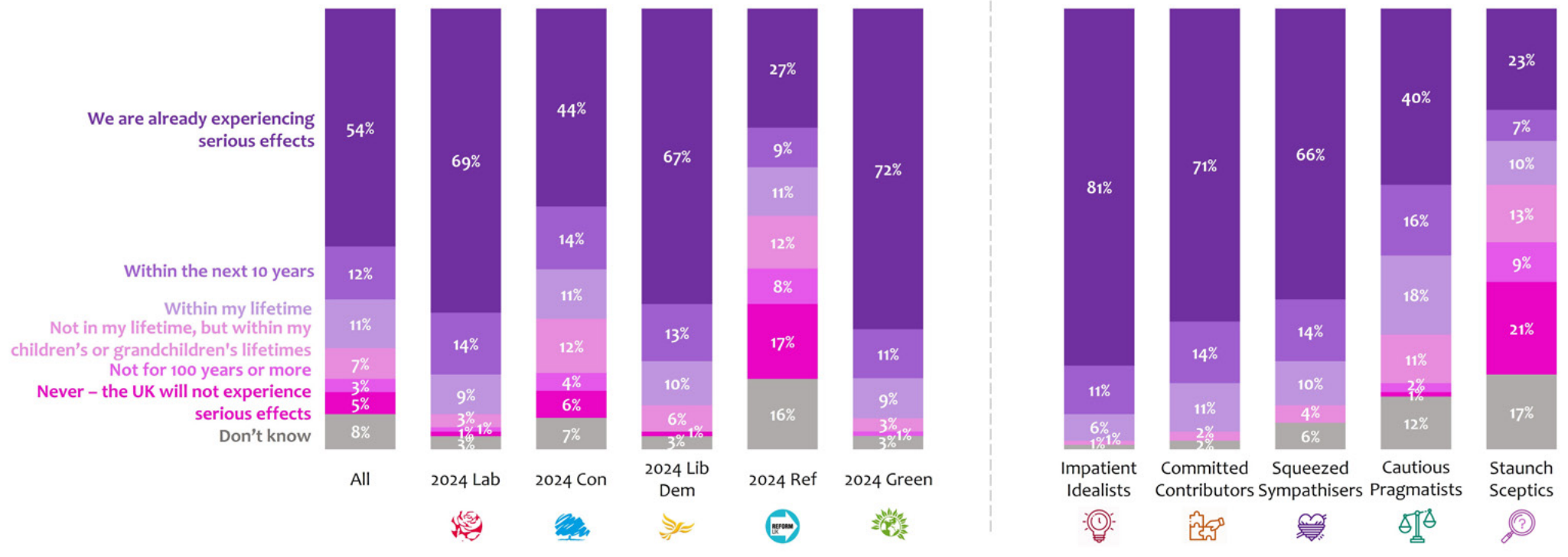
Just over half of all respondents said they thought climate change was entirely (16%) or mainly (43%) **caused by human activity**. Only just over 1 in 10 overall said climate change was caused entirely by natural processes or was not happening at all. More than 9 in 10 Impatient Idealists thought human activity was the sole or main cause, compared to 14% of Staunch Sceptics – though only 1 in 10 of the most sceptical group said they thought climate change was not happening at all.

How much, if at all, do you feel climate change is already affecting your own day-to-day life?



A majority of all voters said they thought climate change was **affecting day-to-day** life either a great deal (9%) or a fair amount (45%). A quarter of Staunch Sceptics said it was not affecting daily life at all, but more than one third thought it was having a great deal or a fair amount of impact.

When, if ever, do you think the UK will start to experience serious effects from climate change, such as major flooding, extreme heat or water shortages?

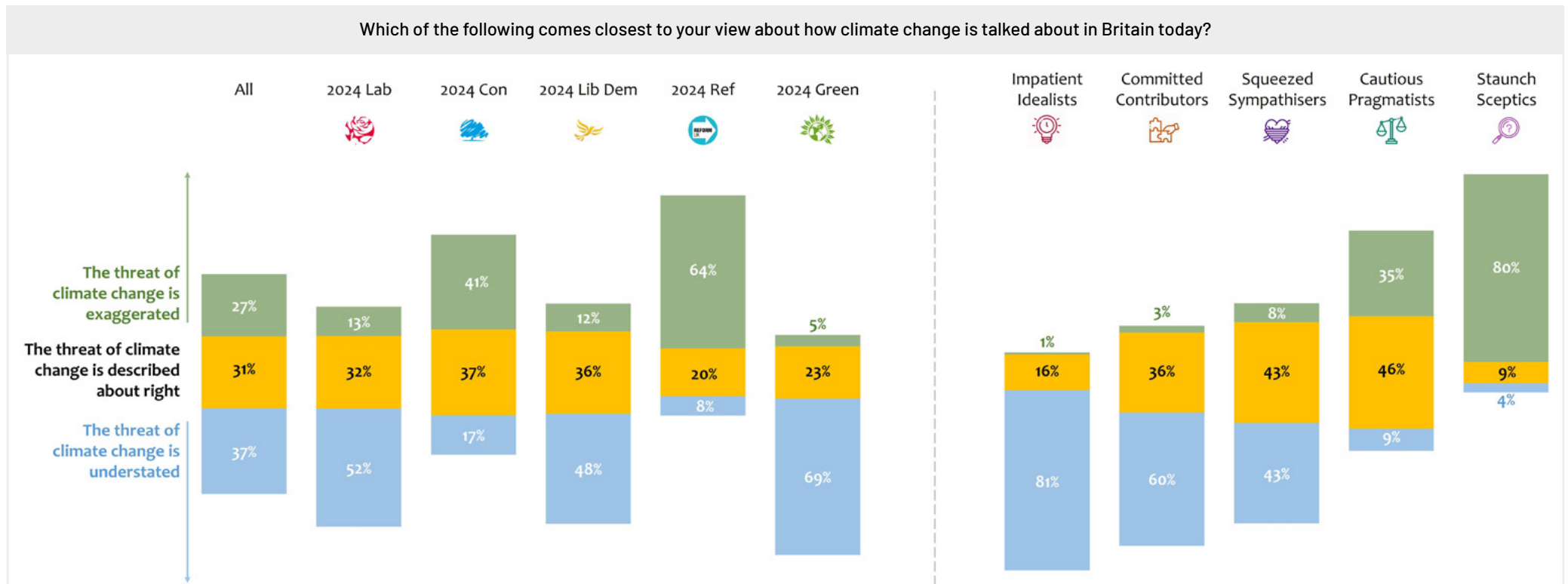


A majority said they thought the UK was **already experiencing serious effects** from climate change, including more than four fifths of Impatient Idealists. Only 1 in 20 thought the UK would never experience serious effects, rising to more than 1 in 5 Staunch Sceptics – though this group was slightly more likely to say that serious effects were already happening than that they would never happen.

In all segments, focus group participants tended to agree that the effects of climate change were already visible – though some thought that links between the hot summer of 2026 and catastrophic climate change were overblown.

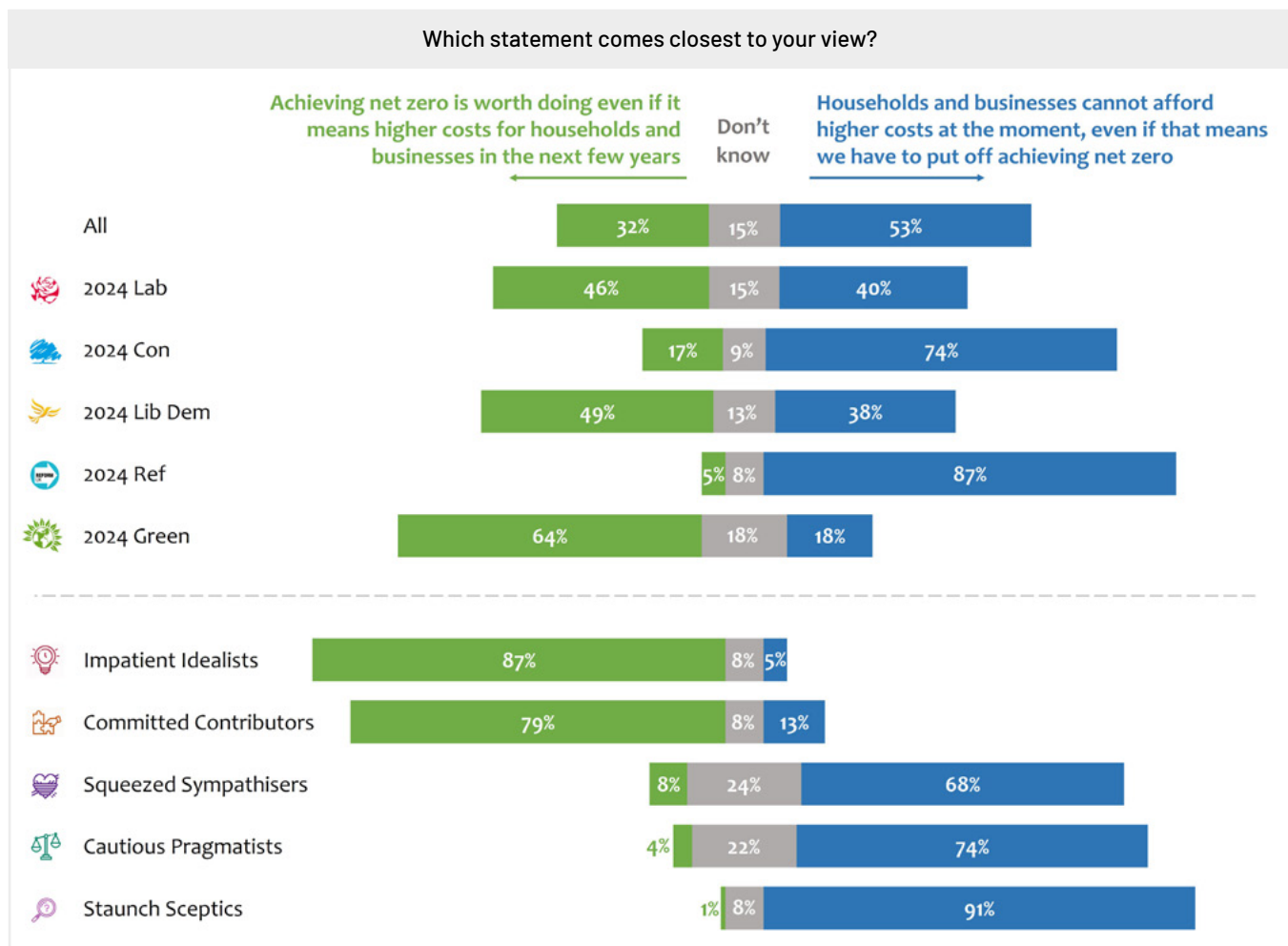
- “ We’ve had it this year and it’s just going to get hotter and hotter as the climate goes on. So we need to do something. The politicians talk about it but they don’t do anything.” [11]
- “ Look at what happened in Nepal.” [11]
- “ We’re kind of at a turning point where it will almost be too late to rectify if we don’t do something now.” [SqSy]
- “ We’ve had these drastic, sudden heatwaves and I’m starting to notice it all over the world with things like wildfires and things. I feel it’s kind of what they said was going to happen in years to come.” [CC]
- “ I’m not a denier, but the hysteria is a bit over the top. I saw a weather report from 1976 online, and every day in the news it was ‘another glorious day, aren’t we lucky?’ Now it’s ‘we’re all going to die, don’t leave your house’. I’m not saying there isn’t something behind it, but it’s just mass hysteria when you look at it like that. It’s just a hot summer.” [SqSy]





The population as a whole was fairly evenly divided between thinking the **threat of climate change is exaggerated, understated or described about right** in Britain today. Four fifths of Impatient Idealists said they thought the threat was understated, while the same proportion of Staunch Sceptics thought it was exaggerated. Those who voted for Reform UK in 2024 were the only political group among whom a majority thought the threat of climate change was overstated.

“ Everything in the world at the moment has to be one extreme or the other. Why can't you say, 'I'm not completely in denial, but I don't trust everything'? Like, do I think recycling has an impact? Of course it does. But am I dubious about some of the issues with electric cars? Yes, I am. Why can't you sit in the middle and say I believe we need to do something, but I don't want to bankrupt myself. I think we need to make steps in that direction. The government should do most of them and we will do our bit in the background.” [SqSy]



A majority (53%) agreed that **households and businesses cannot afford higher costs at the moment, even if that means we have to put off net zero** – compared to just under one third (32%) who agreed that net zero was worth doing even if it brings higher costs. Labour and Lib Dem voters leaned towards achieving net zero even if it means higher costs, though by fairly small margins, while large majorities of Conservative and Reform voters preferred putting off net zero to keep costs down.

Our focus groups discussed the financial trade-offs involved in achieving net zero and achieving a transition to green energy. Some argued that costs would only rise the longer action was delayed, and some said they were willing to contribute in principle but felt unable to do so in practice. Many wondered how much was currently spent on achieving net zero, and how it was being spent. They also wondered why, with companies making large profits from already large bills, any further contribution should be required of them as customers.

“If we don’t do it now, we’ll have to do it soon. And it might be only a fraction of what we’ll have to pay. It’s going to get more expensive. There’ll be more floods, more cost, more money in the long run.” [SjSy]

“It’s not so much that if my electric went up, I’d be like, ‘oh my God, that’s outrageous’. It’s just that everything else is so expensive, there’s no room for any bills to be going up. I would happily be a bit greener but there’s no room for anything.” [SjSy]

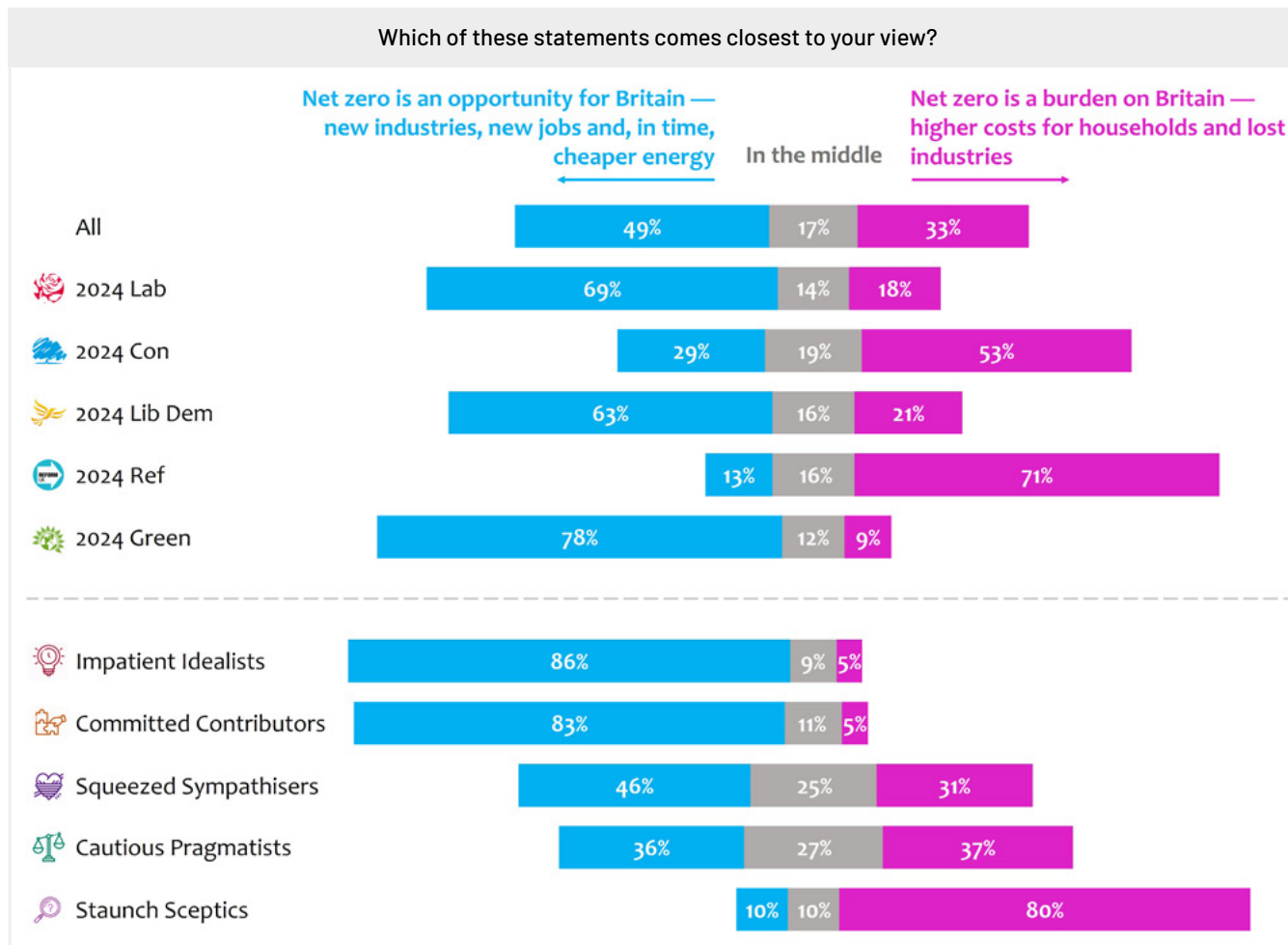
“I don’t know why it always costs us money for these things to happen. Like water companies – they make billions but our bills have to go up to put in those better systems or for defences. Why do we have to pay for that?” [SjSy]

“It should be about making it easier and less costly. There’s never any reward. You’re being penalised all the way.” [SjSy]

“There’s a hierarchy and unfortunately the average Joe is at the very bottom. They don’t care how much it impacts on anybody. I feel like we’re going backwards. I don’t want to be walking around my house with a candle.” [StSc]

“I’d want to know why they need more when my bill’s so high anyway.” [StSc]

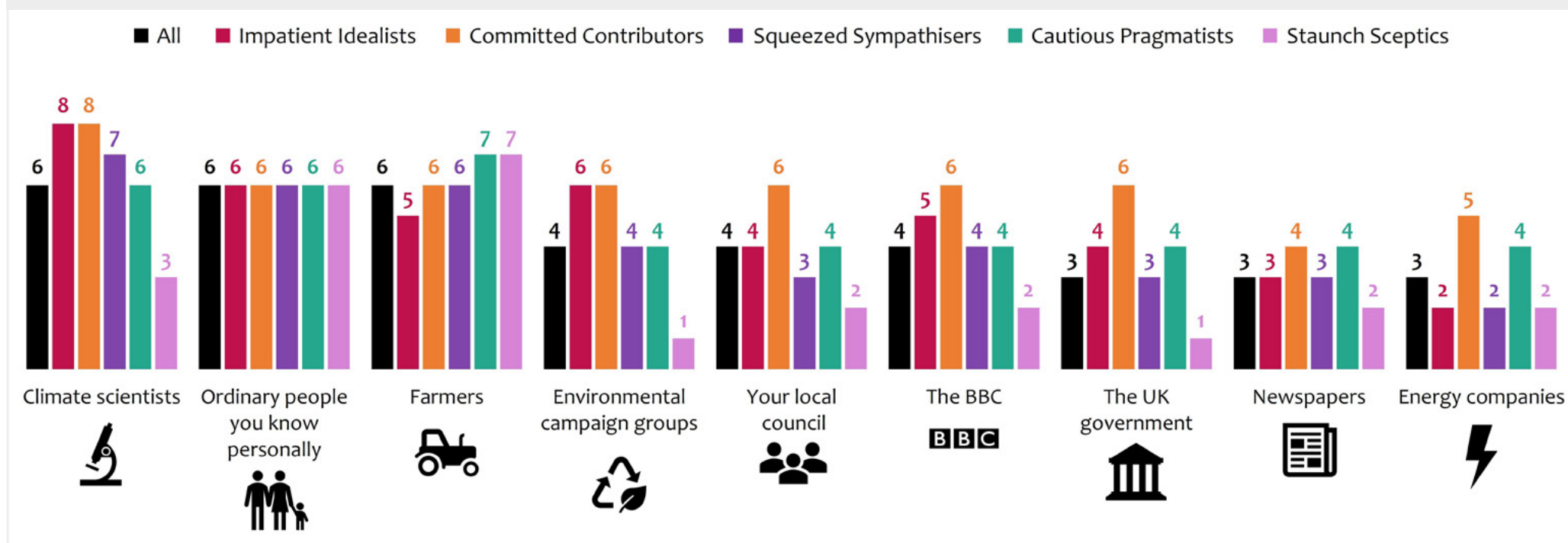
“It would be interesting to see what we’re spending on net zero at the moment. I want to see what they’re spending it on. Could it be put into something more beneficial?” [StSc]



Voters as a whole saw net zero as an **opportunity for Britain rather than a burden** by a 16-point margin – though a majority of Conservative and Reform voters took the opposite view, as did four fifths of Staunch Sceptics.

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 means 'do not trust at all' and 10 means 'trust completely', how much do you trust each of the following to tell the truth about climate change?

[Showing mean scores]



When we asked how much they **trusted various sources to tell the truth about climate change**, the three highest rated overall were climate scientists, farmers and ordinary people they knew. However, while ordinary people were rated the same by all segments and there was some variation on farmers, trust in climate scientists ranged from 8/10 among Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors to only 3/10 among Staunch Sceptics.

Our focus group discussions revealed a good deal of distrust towards all sides in the debate on climate change and net zero, both from the climate-conscious and sceptical ends of the spectrum. People were not disposed to trust politicians, whether in central government or local councils, but also had specific reservations on this issue. Many noted that climate policies often seemed to involve higher taxes, or pointed out that previous environmental policies – such as lower taxes on diesel or electric cars – had been reversed, to the cost of people who had acted as the government wished at the time. Several also felt that governments had a record of crying wolf – whether over the “millennium bug”, covid, or the recent mobile phone alert on wildfires.

“If my council told me it was Thursday, I’d check my diary.” [II]

“We probably lost trust in what was said to us over covid. Boris told us how bad it was and then had a party in the next room.” [II]

“The Green party is now less about the environment and more about anti-capitalism. The whole climate change net zero thing has been hijacked.” [II]

“The government encouraged us to get diesel cars going back years, with free road tax and cheap fuel, and now they’re penalising you. Now they’re pushing electric cars, but are they going to soar in price when people have got on board with them?” [CC]

“When they had the world climate meeting in Brazil, they had to cut down the forest to build a road to get to it. And Ed Miliband took something like 200 people with him. It just makes me think, the people who are telling me what to do are not practising what they preach, so why should I?” [CP]

“You don’t know how much is actually based on the impact of what we’re doing and making positive changes, and how much is an excuse to get more money out of us for some other ridiculous thing they’re doing?” [SqSy]

“A few years back wasn’t Ed Miliband saying that everyone’s bills were going to come down £300 because of the green energy we were doing. Instead they’ve gone up.” [StSc]

“In one of the recent budgets they switched from electric cars paying zero tax to taxing how many miles you drive.” [CP]

“That phone alert! What a lot of crap that was. It was ridiculous. There was panic. My daughter came running downstairs, ‘Mum! Mum!’ It should be used in a national emergency, not telling us not to have barbecues.” [StSc]

“Things like the warning on everyone’s mobile phone. It’s catastrophising, exaggerating it, making it scary. Is that really necessary? It kind of puts mistrust into people.” [SqSy]

“We’ve been there in 2000 with the Y2K thing. Then covid when the panic set in.” [II]

People were also wary, though not usually cynical, about communications from energy companies and other businesses. However, they often felt that firms had mixed motives at best when promoting environmentally friendly products and practices. This also applied to farmers to a degree.

- “ They make an absolute fortune.” [II]
- “ I think it’s too easy to blame the energy companies. They’re the ones who take the money, but we don’t know what they’re dealing with as far as the government is concerned, the regulations and everything else. Of course the government is going to pass the buck.” [II]
- “ I’m a bit more trusting of Octopus because they always make sure you’re on the best rate and give you the cheaper tariffs.” [StSc]
- “ There are financial incentives in certain situations. If they’re wanting to sell more electric cars, for example, they’re going to push the idea that it needs to be done for the environment.” [SqSy]
- “ I think farmers are becoming more responsible with things like rewilding and doing things so they don’t have to use so many insecticides. They’re thinking smarter rather than just the cheapest option.” [CC]
- “ Farmers are driven by money, mostly. There are good ones, obviously, but as a whole I’d say they were driven by money.” [CC]

Climate scientists also came in for a degree of scepticism, with several saying they would want to know how independent they were and how research was funded.

- “ I’d trust them if I knew who was funding them. It’s like Aptamil telling me it’s the closest thing to breast milk when they’re funding the research.” [SqSy]
- “ In the ‘70s they said the new Ice Age was coming. The scientists are full of it.” [CP]
- “ You’ll often find that someone has been funded to do a specific task. ‘We want you to prove that climate is a problem’. ‘OK, we’ll go and do that’.” [StSc]
- “ The people that interpret the data are the ones I wouldn’t trust. Climate scientists will do experiments and propose a theory, but it’s the people who then spin it and say ‘the data tells us this’.” [StSc]

Our participants – again including those for whom environmental issues were important – were also sceptical about environmental groups and protesters.

- “ Greenpeace were fantastic, but would we trust people like Just Stop Oil who sit in the middle of the road? I don’t think they’re just about the environment, I think they’ve got different agendas.” [II]
- “ Environmental groups have got an agenda. It’s not necessarily balanced on what the facts are. You’re just going to get the worst-case scenario.” [SqSy]

PRIORITIES

Which of the following do you think are the most important issues facing the country?

[Showing top 6 issues]



Asked to choose the **three most important issues facing Britain**, the voters as a whole were most likely to name the cost of living, immigration and the NHS. Climate change and the environment was in fourth place, chosen by just under a quarter (24%) of the population. Climate change was the top issue for Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors, sixth for Squeezed Sympathisers, twelfth for Staunch Sceptics and fifteenth for Cautious Pragmatists. It was a top-three issue for just over one third (35%) of 2024 Labour voters, one in ten Conservatives and 3% of Reform voters. It was also chosen by 40% of 18-24s – more than twice the proportion among those aged 65 or over (19%).

When it comes to decisions about Britain's energy policies, which of these things should matter most?

[Showing % who rank this as their top priority]

All

	Energy independence	30%
	Affordability	26%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	25%
	Security of supply	19%

2024 Lab

	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	33%
	Energy independence	27%
	Affordability	23%
	Security of supply	18%

2024 Con

	Energy independence	40%
	Affordability	26%
	Security of supply	23%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	11%

2024 Lib Dem

	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	35%
	Energy independence	26%
	Affordability	20%
	Security of supply	19%

2024 Ref

	Energy independence	44%
	Affordability	33%
	Security of supply	18%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	5%

2024 Green

	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	48%
	Energy independence	25%
	Affordability	16%
	Security of supply	12%

Impatient Idealists

	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	53%
	Energy independence	21%
	Security of supply	14%
	Affordability	12%

Committed Contributors

	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	45%
	Energy independence	23%
	Security of supply	18%
	Affordability	14%

Squeezed Sympathisers

	Affordability	36%
	Energy independence	27%
	Security of supply	19%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	18%

Cautious Pragmatists

	Energy independence	38%
	Affordability	30%
	Security of supply	21%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	11%

Staunch Sceptics

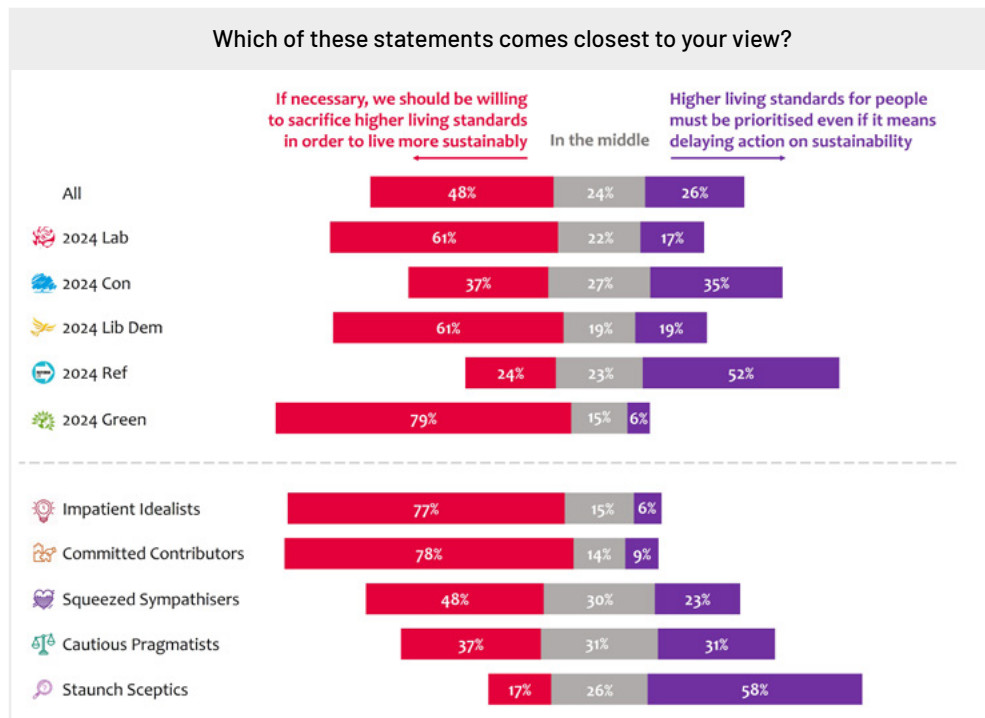
	Energy independence	40%
	Affordability	37%
	Security of supply	19%
	Tackling climate change and protecting the environment	4%

For the general population, the most important **priority for energy policy** was energy independence (not relying on overseas suppliers), followed by affordability. Tackling climate change and protecting the environment was in third place, ahead of security of supply (keeping the lights on). Tackling climate change was top of the list for Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters, as well as Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors; it was bottom of the list for Conservative and Reform voters and for Squeezed Sympathisers (for whom affordability took precedence), Cautious Pragmatists and Staunch Sceptics (who prioritised energy independence).

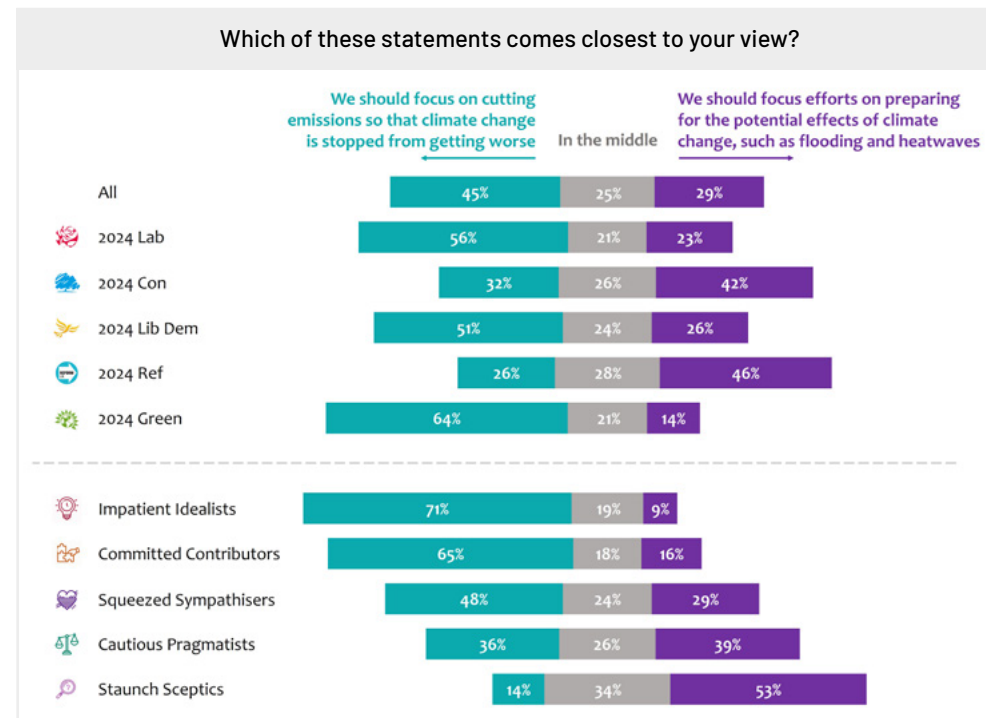


In our focus groups, even many who believed there was a need to do more on the climate said that other things had to take precedence in their own lives.

- “ I would love to be better, if prices are going to go up the priority for me would be the here and now. The cost of living is still the forefront because I’m trying to make money stretch further and further.” [II]
- “ Affordability. It’s ridiculous that in 2026, people are choosing whether to eat or put their heating on. It’s diabolical.” [SqSy]
- “ I think what the government should do is take back the gas and electric. It should be government owned, or at least UK-owned.” [StSc]
- “ I’d be aiming for a country that was self-sufficient with the lowest energy bills possible for people. Use our oil and coal, whatever we’ve got available to us to be self-sufficient as cheaply as possible.” [StSc]

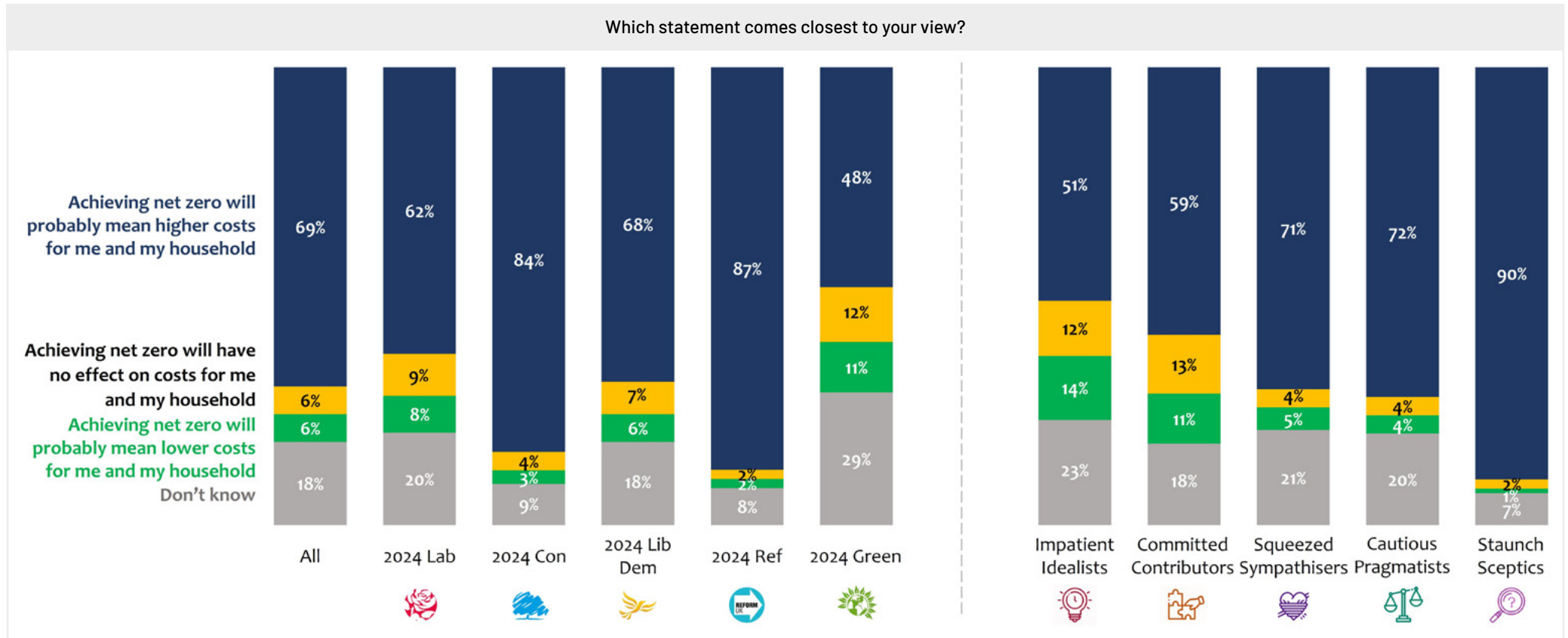


Voters as a whole were nearly twice as likely to say that we should be willing to **sacrifice higher living standards in order to live more sustainably** (48%) than the reverse (26%). Conservative voters and Cautious Pragmatists were fairly evenly divided, and majorities of Reform voters and Staunch Sceptics prioritised higher living standards for people even if it means delaying action on sustainability.



Voters overall were more likely to prioritise **cutting emissions to mitigate climate change** (45%) than preparing for its potential effects (29%). The opposite was true for Conservatives, Reform voters, Cautious Pragmatists and Staunch Sceptics.

GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND POLICY



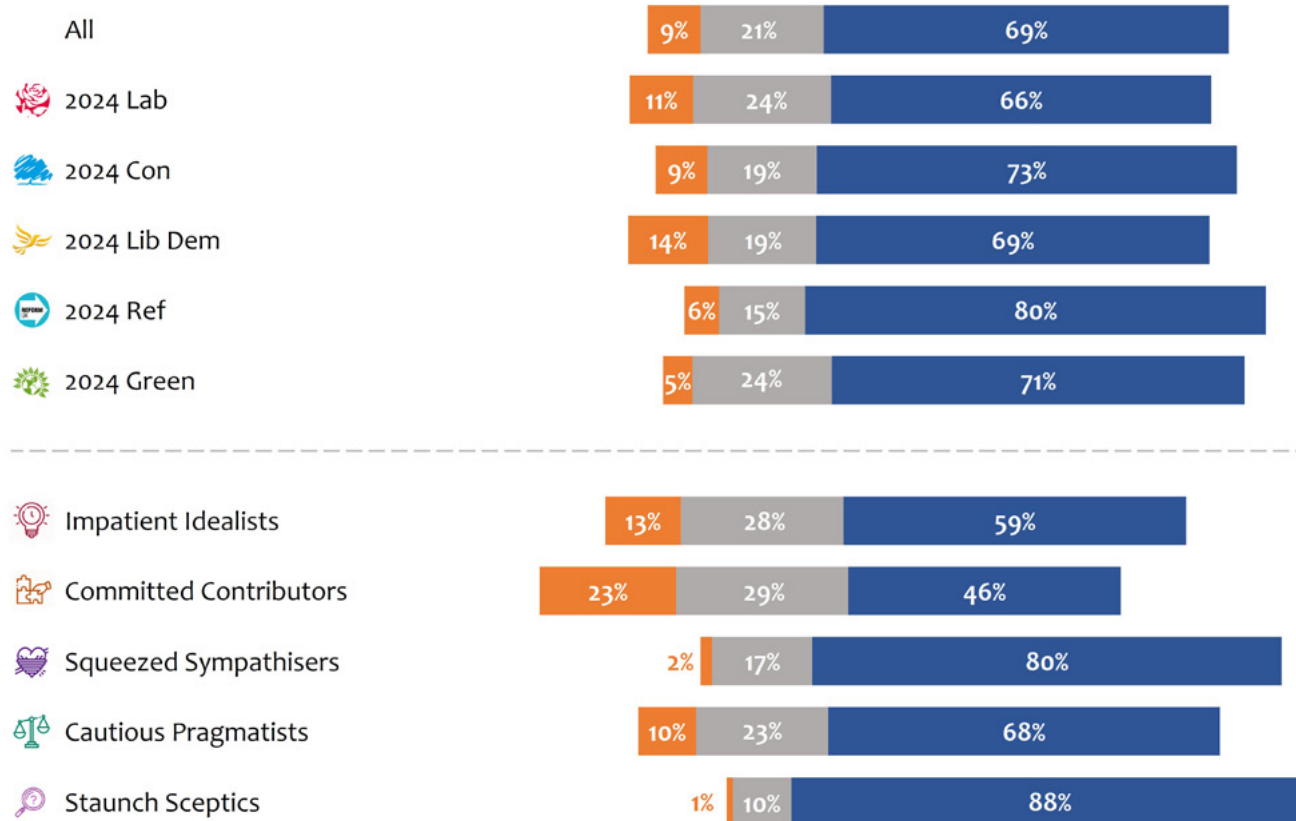
Nearly 7 in 10 of the population – including majorities of all segments and most voter groups – said they thought **achieving net zero would probably mean higher costs for their household**. Green voters were also much more likely than not to think net zero would mean higher household costs.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

The costs of net zero are being
shared fairly across society

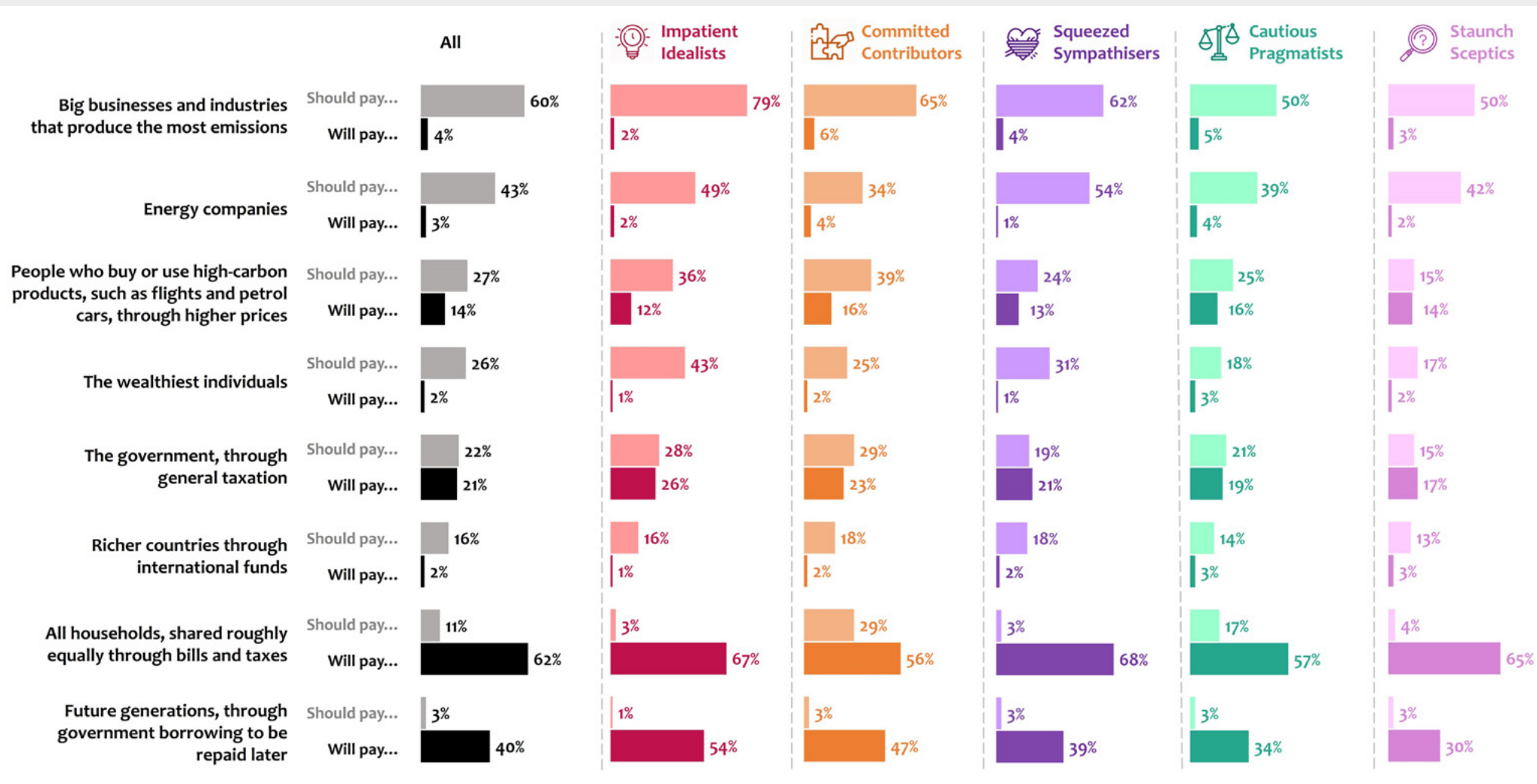
In the middle

The costs of net zero fall hardest
on the wrong people



A large majority of the population and all parties' supporters agreed that the **costs of net zero fall hardest on the wrong people**. Committed Contributors were the most likely to think the costs were being shared fairly across society, though fewer than a quarter (23%) thought this was the case.

Reaching net zero could involve action such as replacing boilers, upgrading the electricity grid and changing how we travel.
Who do you think should bear the largest share of these costs? And regardless of who you think should pay, who do you think will end up bearing the largest share of these costs in practice?



Majorities in all segments thought big business and industries that produce the most emissions should **bear the biggest share of the costs of net zero**, and that all households would end up doing so through bills and taxes. Energy companies were the second most likely to be nominated for paying costs, and future generations the second most likely actual payer.

In our focus groups, many from different segments echoed the sentiment that costs were falling disproportionately on ordinary people, rather than those who could afford to pay more or who were the most responsible for environmental damage. Some argued, however, that it would always be individuals who ended up paying, whether as customers or taxpayers, whenever new costs were imposed.

“ They can make it cheaper for rich people, while the poorer people still have to buy petrol and diesel and use energy from the grid because they don’t have solar panels. My sister’s far better off than me, she’s got an electric car and doesn’t have to buy any petrol, and pays about £2.50 a week to charge the car. So it’s cheaper for her.” [II]

“ I don’t think we individually need to pay for it. The government can pay for it themselves. Look how many people they paid off with furlough money.” [II]

“ It should be proportionate to who’s caused the most damage over the longest time. I on my own haven’t done it. It’s the big companies and industries.” [II]

“ The flight companies themselves are earning a hell of a lot of profit that could cover that expense. So why couldn’t it come from them? It’s not stopping the flights.” [II]

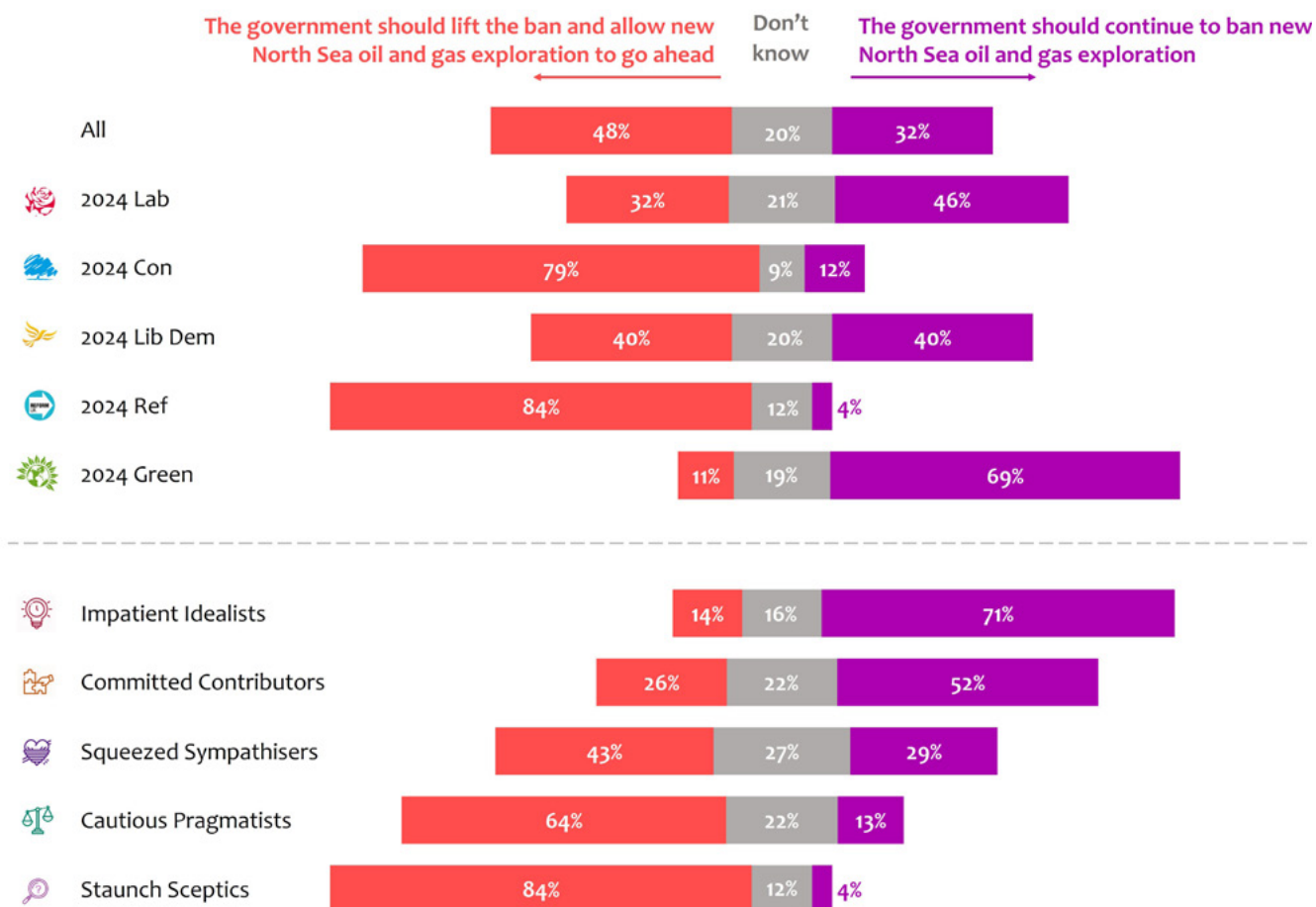
“ It’s like the recycling. They’ve made profits from all these products, and it’s left to us to sort out the mess.” [CC]

“ I’d pay zero extra, because the taxman has taken mega money off me in my working life.” [CC]

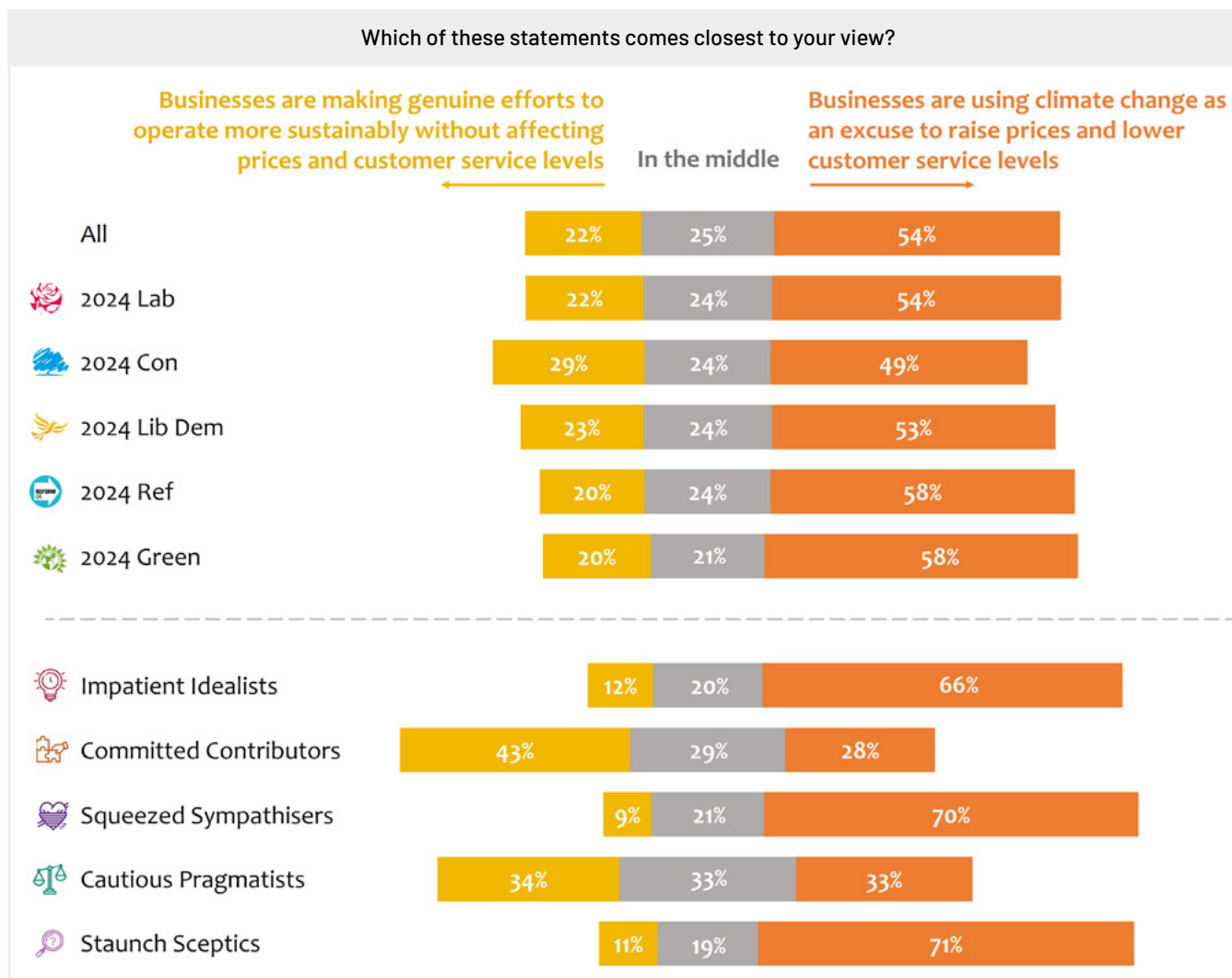
“ We have to see it to believe it because we’re paying so much and we haven’t seen any positive change yet. If the government were less talk and more action, you would get more people willing to put into these things.” [CC]

“ Whether it goes through a company or is direct to the consumer, you’re still going to end up paying for the company’s extra costs to meet net zero. They’re always going to push the cost onto the consumer. There’s only one person that’s going to pay. It’s the person at the end of the line, and that’s us.” [StSc]

As you may know, Keir Starmer's government banned new licences for exploring and drilling North Sea oil and gas. Do you think:

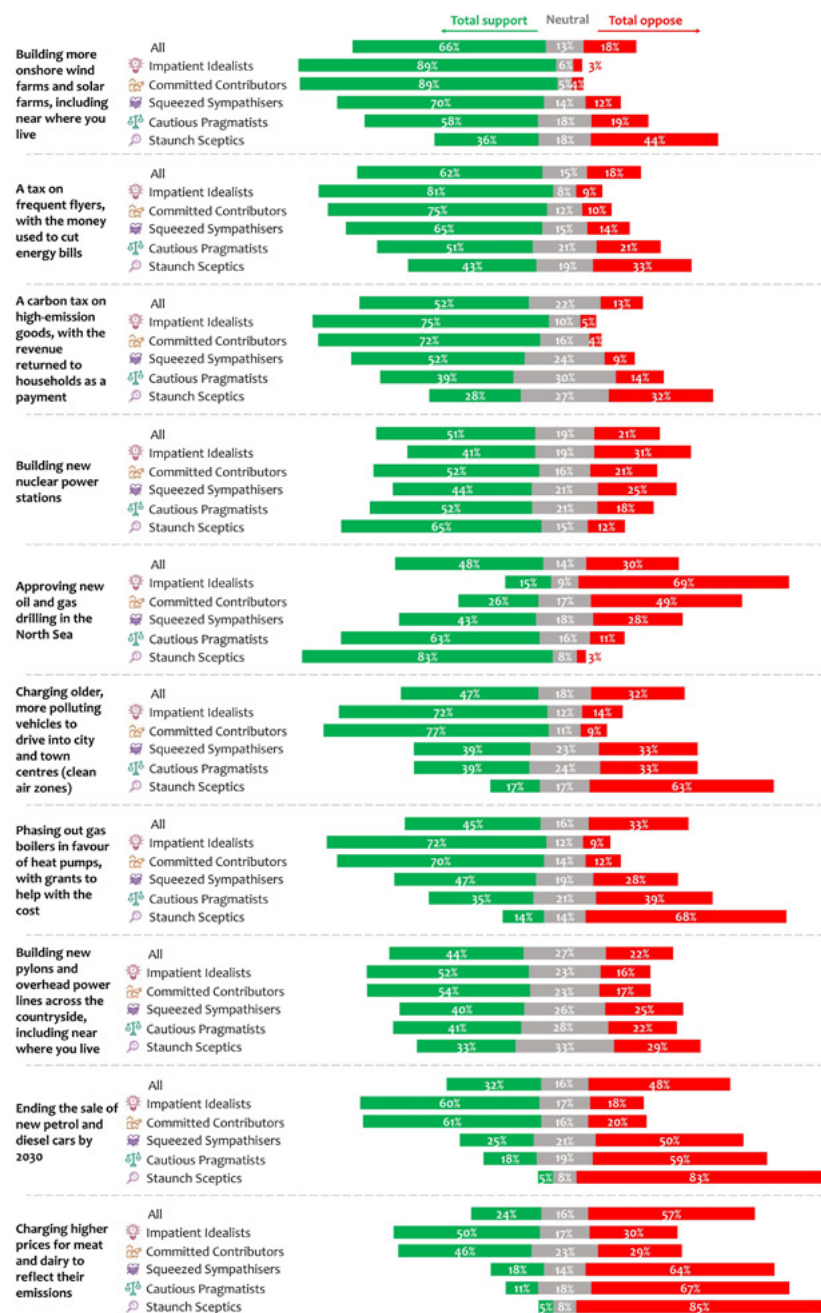


The population as a whole favoured allowing **new North Sea oil and gas exploration** by a 16-point margin. Large majorities of Conservatives, Reform voters, Cautious Pragmatists and Staunch Sceptics took this view, and Squeezed Sympathisers did so by a 14-point margin. Lib Dem voters were evenly divided. Labour voters tended to favour continuing the ban, as well as a majority of Green voters, Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors.



A majority overall said they thought **businesses used climate change as an excuse to raise prices** and reduce customer service. All voter groups and three of the five segments tended to take this view; Committed Contributors were more likely to think businesses were making genuine efforts to operate more sustainably, and Cautious Pragmatists were almost evenly divided.

To what extent would you support or oppose each of the following policies?



Presented with a range of **policy ideas**, majorities overall supported the idea of more wind and solar farms, a tax on frequent flyers, a carbon tax on high-emission goods with revenue returned to households, and building new nuclear power stations. People were more likely than not to support new North Sea oil and gas drilling, clean air zones, phasing out gas boilers with grants for heat pumps, and new pylons and power lines. They opposed ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, and charging higher prices for meat and dairy products. Impatient Idealists supported all ideas except new North Sea drilling.

Our focus group participants tended to have three kinds of reservations about climate and net zero policies: that they often seemed to involve paying higher prices or more tax; that they could not see an overall plan or any clear outcomes; and that they often involved bossing people around.

“ Act now and show us something concrete.” [II]

“ I hate anything where you feel like you’ve already paid for something. You’ve paid for your car, you’ve paid for the insurance, you’ve paid your road tax, and now you’ve got to pay something else.” [CC]

“ All the solutions cost me. They’re another way of taxing me. I want them to stop wasting money.” [CC]

“ It’s any excuse to put a tax on something. Be environmentally friendly but don’t charge us extra for the privilege of it.” [CP]

“ If feels like most of the policies are put in place to try and raise some finances.” [StSc]

“ I would say yes to a lot of those things if there was a firm plan in place and I knew what it looked like. There’s a need for more transparency, then we would understand. It feels like we do want net zero, but we just want to see what it looks like.” [CC]

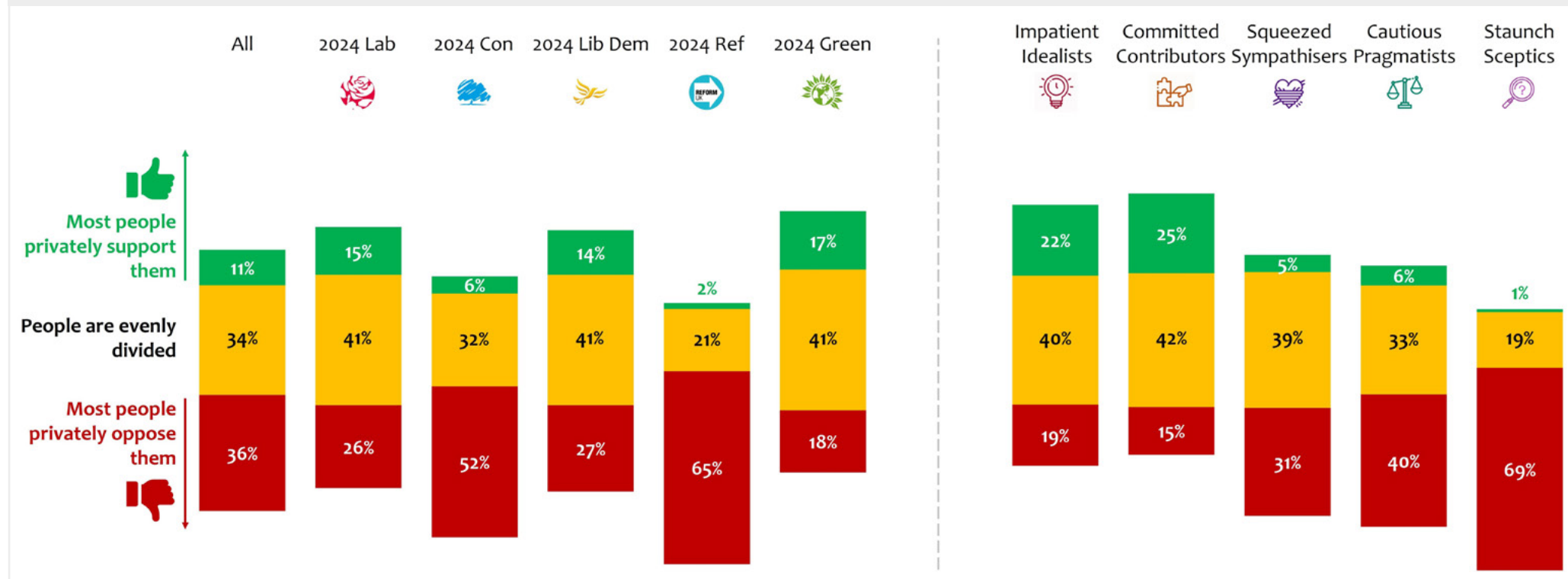
“ People complain about how bad parking is in Birmingham, but that isn’t an accident, it’s a conscious decision by the council to cut down the amount of car parks. Same with the access into the city, and cycle lanes. Well, you can’t just do that overnight, you need a slow change and not force things upon people, because you then get that resistance and push back, which is what we’re getting.” [SqSy]

“ It’s like the speed camera situation. Where does the money go? They’re slowing people down, but is it a financial thing rather than for the environment? It’s that trust thing because nobody’s seeing the results.” [SqSy]

“ I’d rather there were incentives. I’m fed up with the government going ‘you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that’.” [CP]

“ It’s policing your household, isn’t it?” [StSc]

Regardless of your own view, what do you think most people in Britain privately think about the government's net zero policies?



Overall, people were more than three times as likely to think **most people privately oppose** the government's net zero policies (36%) than that they privately support them (11%). Around one third thought people were evenly divided on the issue.

Many in our focus groups agreed that there was often a disparity between what people thought privately and what they were prepared to say in public, especially among people they did not know very well.

“ I think some people are scared to say they're not bothered about it. I don't know if it's a shame thing between different generations.” [11]

“ I think people feel themselves to be a little bit ignorant.

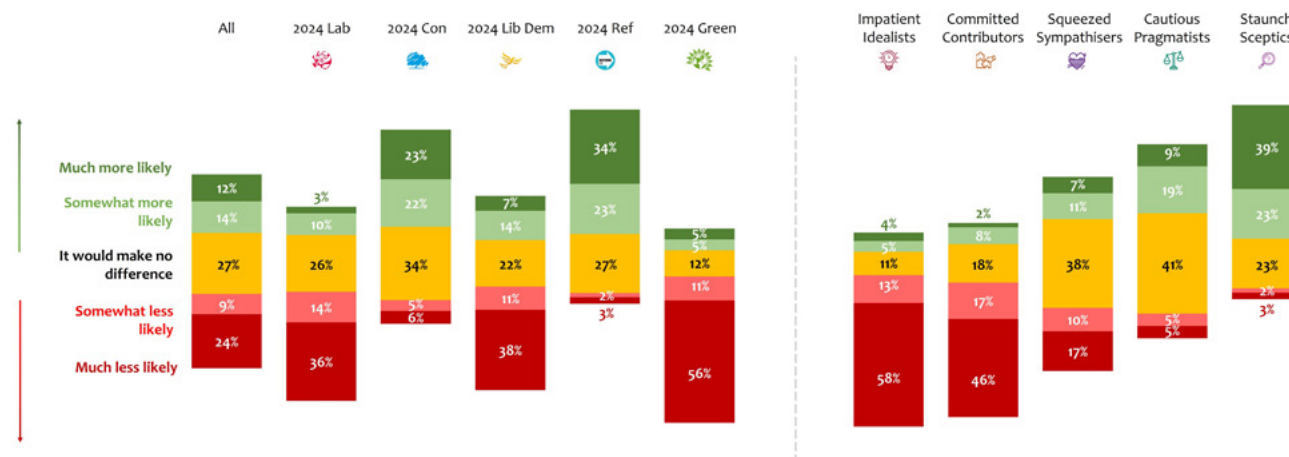
It's not that they're trying to say they're bothered or they're not bothered. I think people just don't think about it.” [11]

“ People are scared to voice their opinion. They'll sit and nod. Friends of mine that I've had conversations with are completely different from what I've seen of them in group settings.” [StSc]

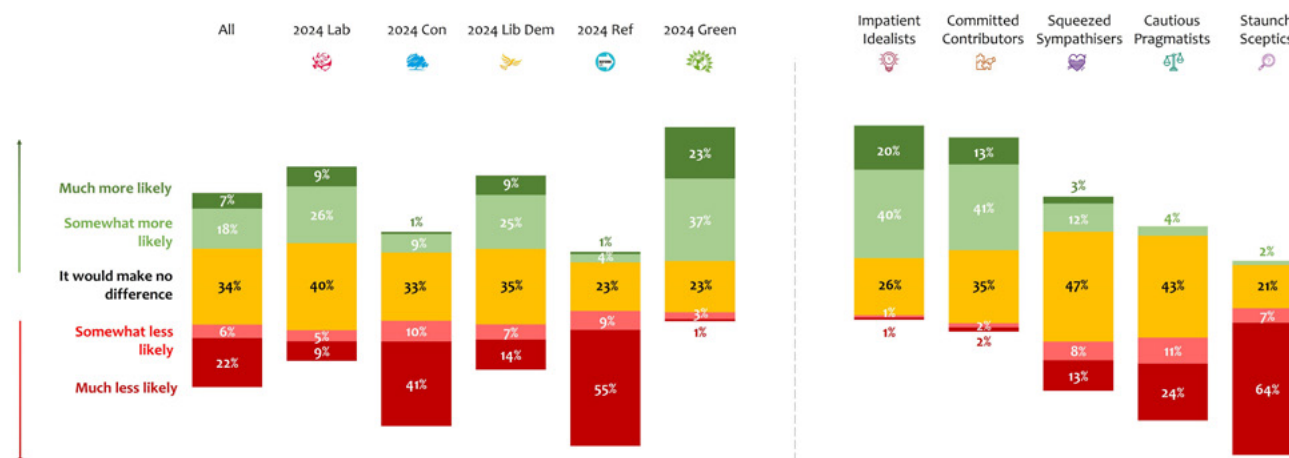
“ There's no being able to have a sensible debate with someone and disagreeing and at the end of it going, OK. Now if you don't agree with someone, that's it.” [StSc]

Would the following statements make you more likely or less likely to vote for a party, or would it make no difference?

Suppose a party promised to slow down or scrap the UK's net zero targets



Suppose a party promised to speed up the UK's net zero targets



Similar numbers said they would be **more likely to vote for a party** that promised to slow down or scrap net zero targets (26%) and that they would be more likely to vote for party that promised to speed them up (25%). However, they were more likely to say that scrapping net zero would make them less likely to vote for a party (33%) than that speeding up net zero would make them less likely to support a party (28%). Just under half (45%) of 2024 Conservative voters said promising to slow or scrap net zero would make them more likely to vote for a party, with 11% saying it would make them less likely; around one third (34%) said it would make no difference. Six in ten Impatient Idealists said they would be more likely to vote for a party that promised to accelerate net zero; 62% of Staunch Sceptics said they would be more likely to vote for a party that slowed or scrapped it.

PERSONAL ACTION

Which, if any, of the following have you done, are you planning to do, or would you be willing to do, in order to help tackle climate change?



Majorities said they had reduced waste or recycled more (80%), cut down on single-used plastics (59%), used the washing machine or tumble dryer less often and turned down the heating in winter (50%).

A majority (56%) also said they were not willing or able to pay more for gas or electricity in order to help tackle climate change. Just under half said they were not willing to switch to a more vegetarian or vegan diet (49%) or pay more to go on holiday (41%).

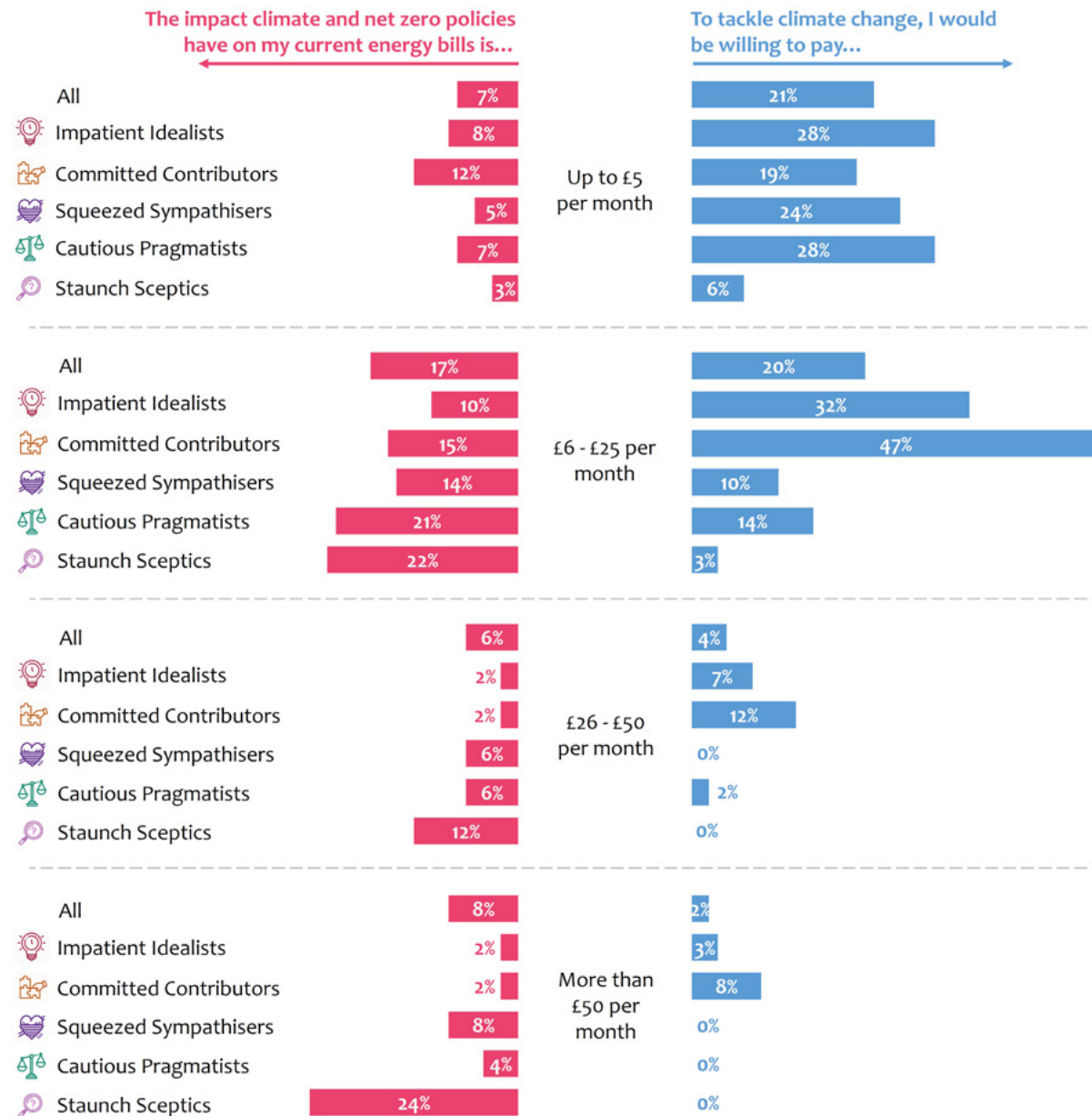
In our focus groups, people often said that good intentions on trying to live more sustainably were constrained by finances. Many also said their efforts felt insignificant compared to the global forces at work.

- “ Sometimes it’s more expensive to be environmentally friendly, to buy organic stuff or an electric car. Because of the cost of living, sometimes you’ve got to prioritise getting the cheaper version instead of thinking about the environment.” [CP]
- “ I looked at solar panels but it’s very expensive. I did look at these plug-in ones you can get but you’d sit in your garden and they’d look really ugly.” [II]
- “ You feel like you’re putting in the effort but not really achieving anything. Like when they’re shipping all the plastic to China to be sorted. With the cost of the transport and the effect on the environment of doing that, couldn’t that be done here?” [CC]
- “ There’s little old me putting my food in the recycling bin. Is it going to change what China’s doing? I don’t know if there’s enough promoting how I, as an individual in this society, can help positively impact climate change.” [CP]

- “ Charging points for electric cars at supermarkets used to be all free, but now you have to pay for it. How long will it be before the price goes up and you’re a sitting duck?” [CC]
- “ There’s no way I’m spending twenty grand on a heat pump when I can spend four grand on a new boiler. I’m just not going to do it.” [SS]
- “ We gave up eating red meat for a year and a half. And that was down to reducing our carbon footprint. But then I was really hungover and I had a double cheeseburger and that was that.” [SS]
- “ With electric cars, the benefit to the environment is just a benefit that comes with it. I think if you put most people on the spot, the primary reason is the cost saving for them.” [CP]

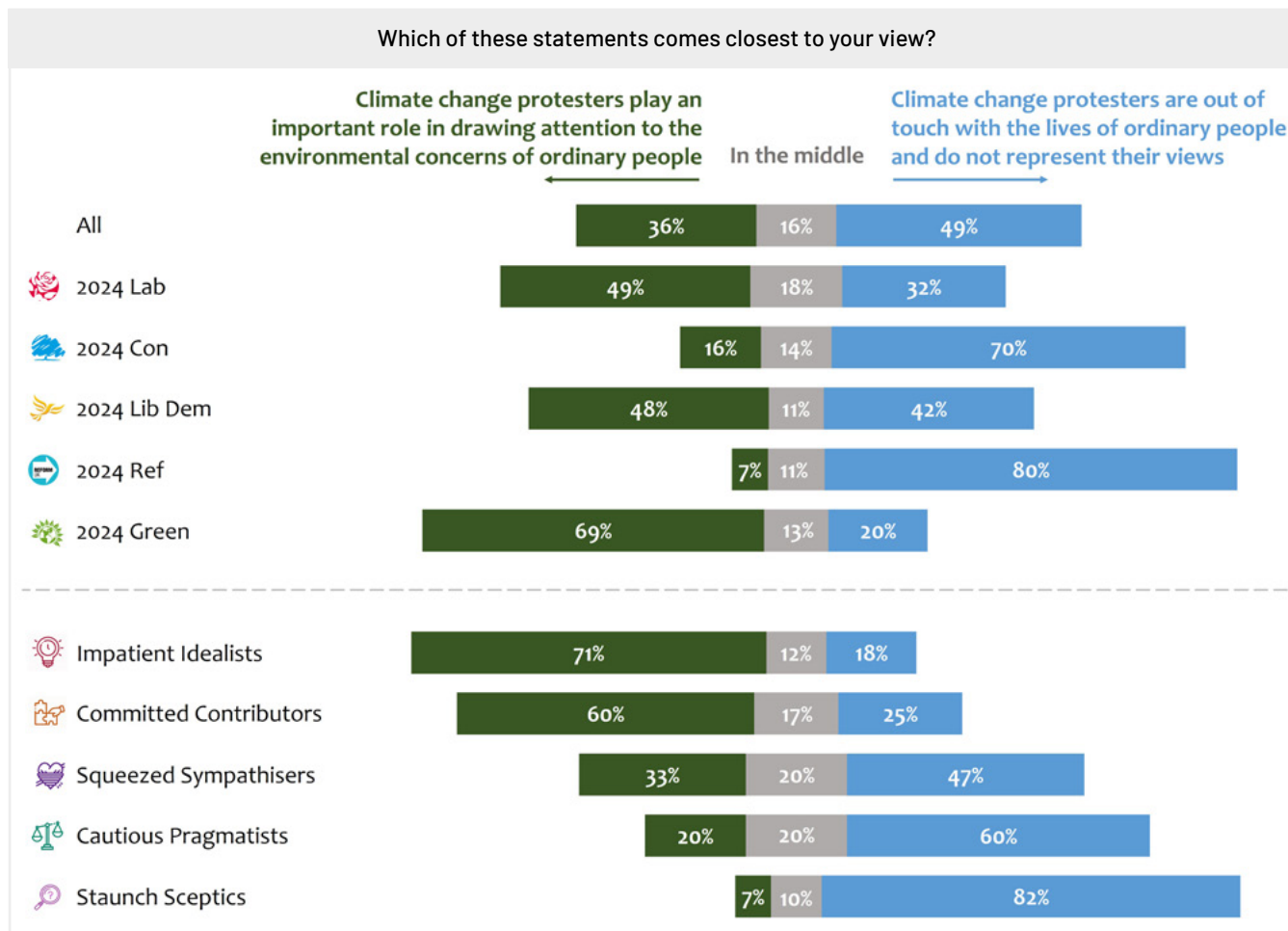
Would you personally be willing to pay more, through your household energy bills and taxes combined, to help the UK tackle climate change? If so, roughly how much per month?

And how much difference, if any, do you think climate and net zero policies currently make to your household's monthly energy bill?

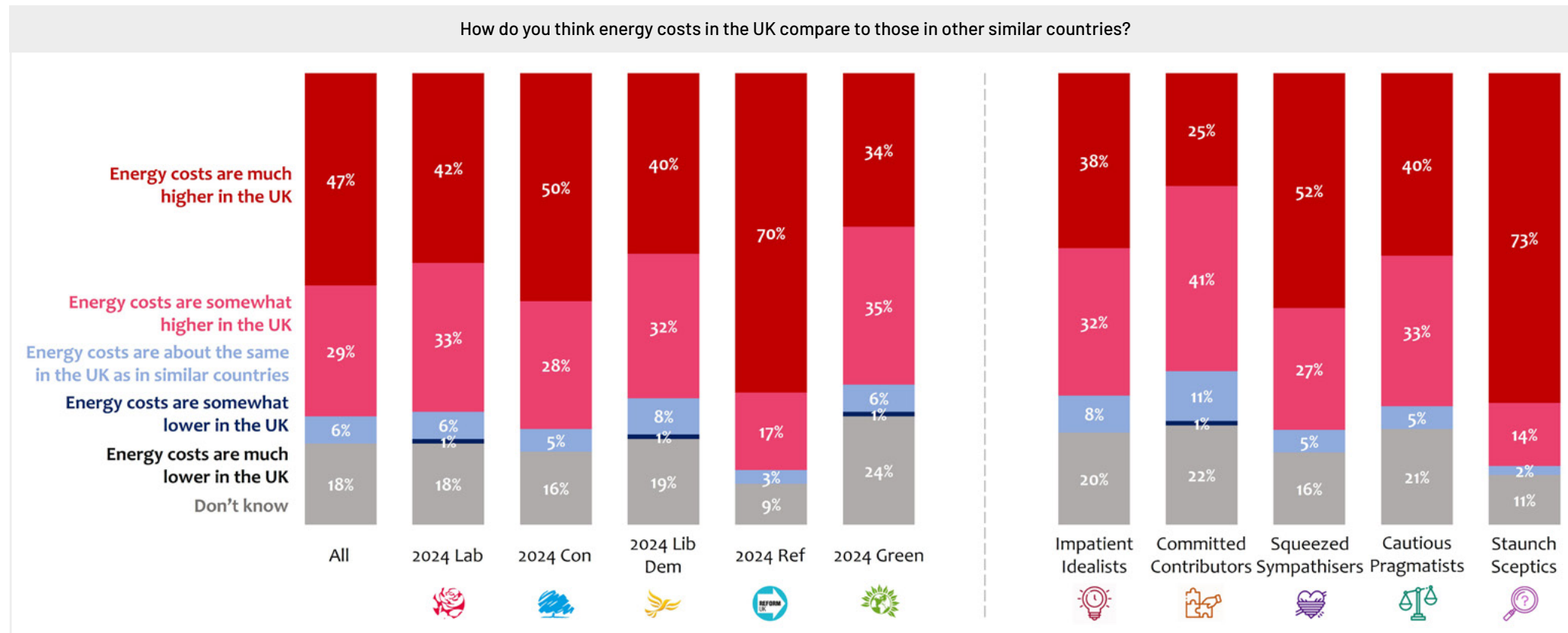


More than four in ten (41%) said they were **unwilling to pay anything more** through bills and taxes to help tackle climate change – including a large majority of Staunch Sceptics (87%) but also a majority of Squeezed Sympathisers (54%). Just over one fifth (21%) said they would be willing to pay up to £5 a month extra on their household's energy bill to help tackle climate change, and a further 20% said they would be prepared to pay between £5 and £25 extra.

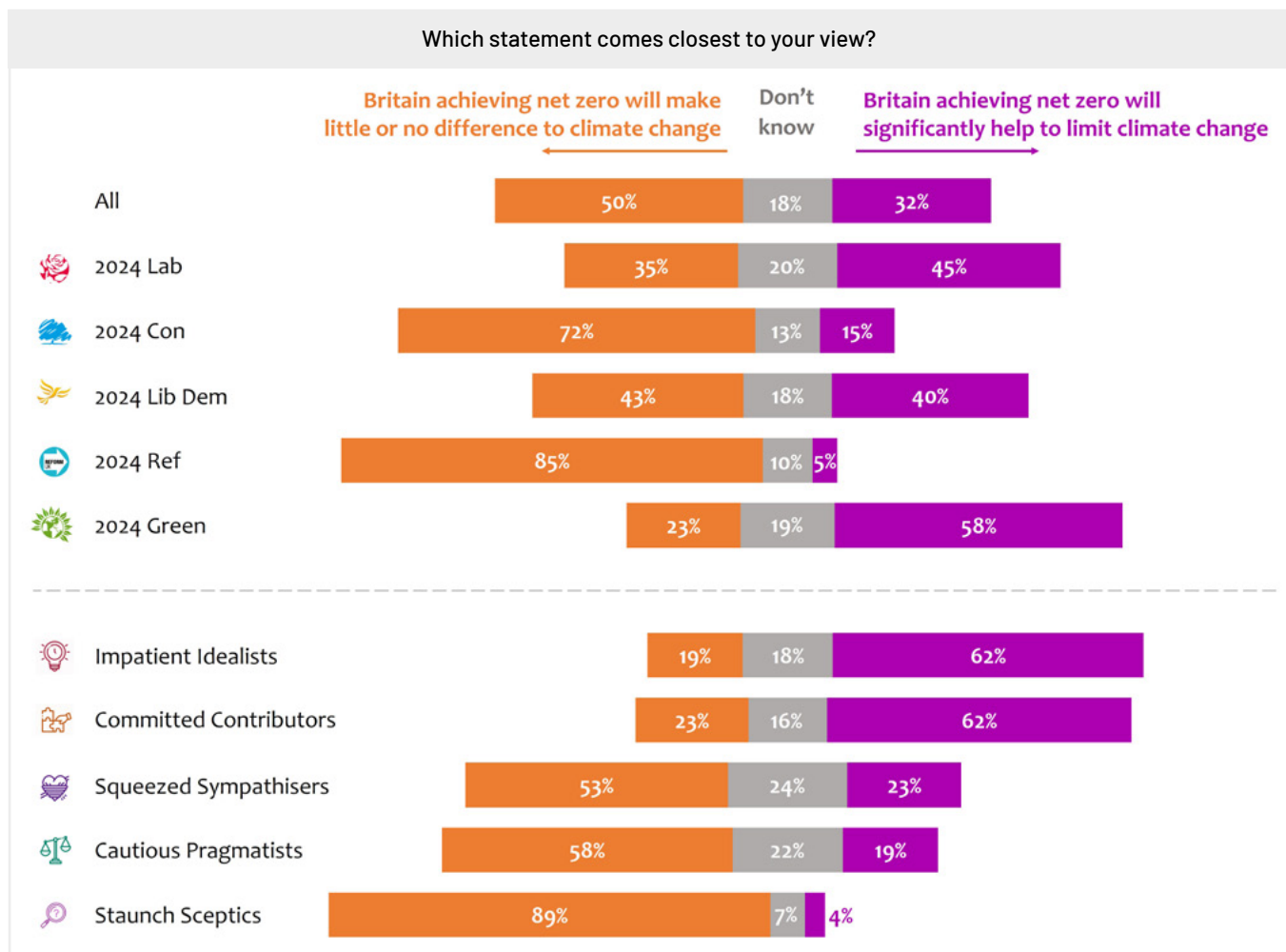
When we asked how much people thought climate and net zero policies currently added to their energy bill, the most common answer (46%) was “don't know”. Just under a quarter estimated up to £25 a month; 13% said they thought such policies made no difference to their bill.



People were much more likely to think **climate change protesters** were out of touch with the lives of ordinary people and did not represent their views (49%) than that they play an important role in highlighting the environmental concerns of ordinary people (36%). Labour and Green voters, as well as Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors, were more likely to think the latter.



Large majorities of all voter groups and net zero segments said they thought **energy costs were higher in the UK** than in other similar countries; 47% overall thought costs were much higher. Seven in ten Impatient Idealists and almost as many 2024 Green voters said they thought the UK had higher energy costs than comparable countries.

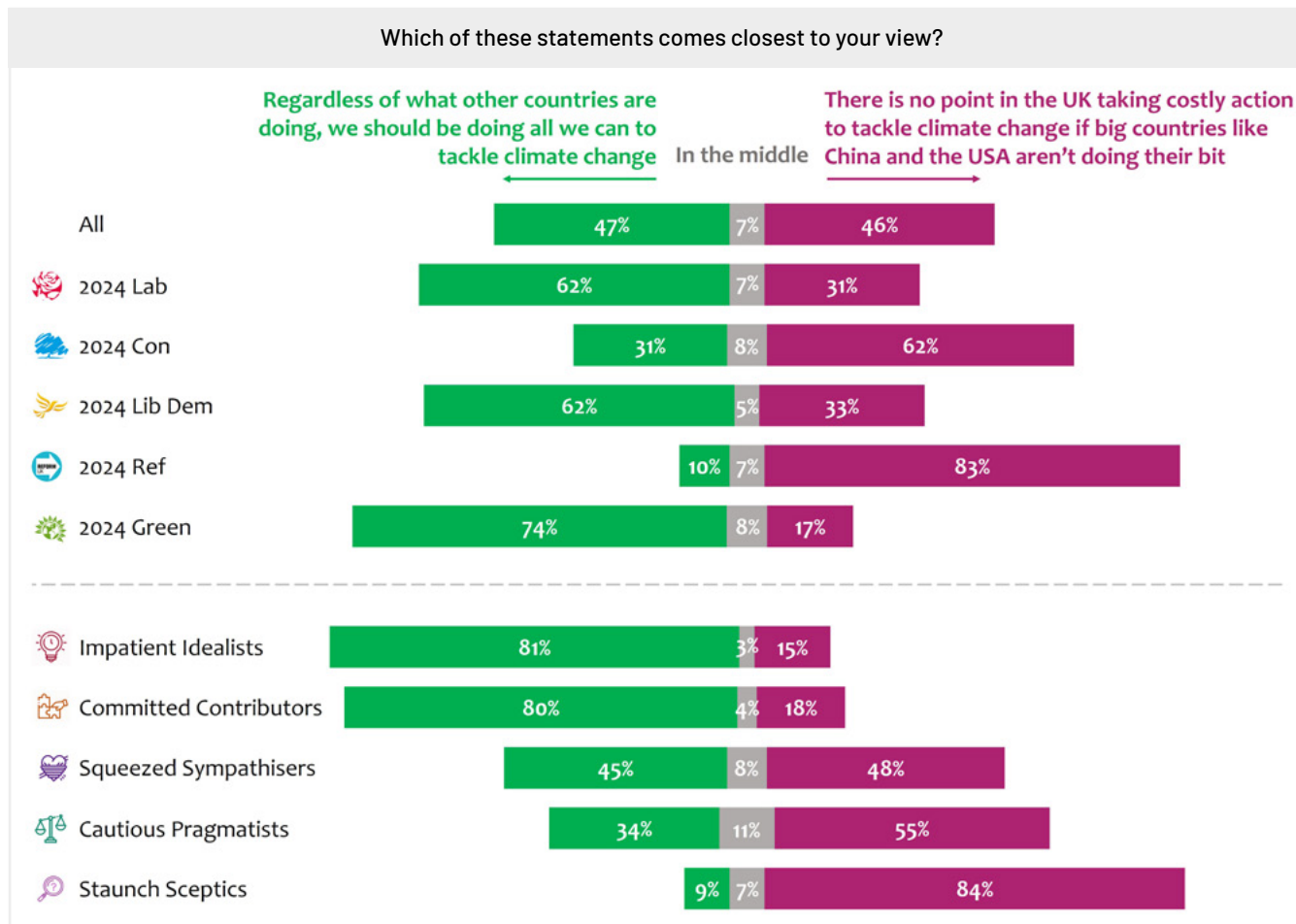


Half of all voters said they thought **Britain achieving net zero would make little or no difference to climate change**, compared to just under one third (32%) who said it would significantly help to do limit climate change. Majorities of 2024 Green voters, Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors thought achieving net zero in Britain would help, but fewer than half of Labour and Lib Dem voters agreed. Majorities of 2024 Conservative and Reform voters, as well as Squeezed Sympathisers, Cautious Pragmatists and Staunch Sceptics said Britain would make little or no difference.

Focus group participants in all segments argued that Britain achieving net zero would make little difference to global emissions, and that a more aggressive target than other countries risked damaging the UK economy while making no difference to the climate.

- “ The knock-on effects of that would be like in our steel industry. We’ve lost our steel. And who’s picked up? India and other places. I mean, you can’t really call us an industrial nation anymore.” [II]
- “ The Chinese, the Indians, the Americans are causing more pollution than we can ever hope to stop. We’re 1 per cent. What’s that going to help?” [CP]
- “ It’s a very expensive folly, because whatever we do, we’ll have no impact on the global climate.” [StSc]
- “ I do believe the climate is changing. But when the government’s policy is to import oil from God knows where when we’re sitting on oil and gas of our own, it’s just rubbish.” [CP]
- “ It seems ludicrous to give one of the smallest countries that produces the least a more aggressive target. If China or the US have got a 2050 target, then OK. But it’s pointless us having 2050 if everyone else is doing 2100.” [StSc]





Voters overall were evenly divided between thinking Britain should do all it can to **tackle climate change regardless of what other countries are doing** (47%) and that there is no point taking costly action on the issue if bigger countries are not doing their bit (46%). Majorities of 2024 Labour, Lib Dem and Green voters, together with four fifths of Impatient Idealists and Committed Contributors, thought Britain should do all it could regardless of other countries; majorities of 2024 Conservatives and Reform voters, together with most Cautious Pragmatists and Staunch Sceptics, took the opposite view.



Some in the more climate-conscious segments argued that the UK should help take the lead in tackling climate change, and had a responsibility to do more than poorer countries. Others argued that we were not in a position to assume greater international burdens, or that other countries were not likely to follow Britain's example.

- “ We should all be doing our part, not expecting somebody to stand up and do the same amount of us when it's an impossibility. That just wouldn't be fair.” [II]
- “ The hypocrisy of saying our poorer people shouldn't have to suffer, but poorer people in other countries should.” [II]
- “ I accept that it might not make much of a difference, but at least we're doing our part and we're being kind of leaders and champions in that.” [SqSy]
- “ We have issues in our own country that we need to sort out before we start bunging money everywhere else.” [CC]
- “ I don't know who you're leading. People aren't going to follow, are they?” [CP]

ABOUT LORD ASHCROFT

LORD ASHCROFT KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. He is a former treasurer and deputy chairman of the UK Conservative Party. He is also honorary chairman and a former treasurer of the International Democracy Union. He is founder and chairman of the board of trustees of Crimestoppers, vice-patron of the Intelligence Corps Museum, chairman of the trustees of Ashcroft Technology Academy, a senior fellow of the International Strategic Studies Association, former chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University and a former trustee of Imperial War Museums.

His political books include:

- Smell the Coffee: A Wake-Up Call for the Conservative Party
- Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron
- Hopes and Fears: Trump, Clinton, the Voters and the Future
- Well, You Did Ask: Why the UK Voted to Leave the EU
- The Lost Majority: The 2017 Election, the Conservative Party, the Voters and the Future
- Jacob's Ladder: The Unauthorised Biography of Jacob Rees-Mogg
- Diagnosis of Defeat: Labour's Turn to Smell the Coffee
- Going for Broke: The Rise of Rishi Sunak
- Reunited Nation? American Politics Beyond the 2020 Election
- Red Knight: The Unauthorised Biography of Sir Keir Starmer
- First Lady: Intrigue at the Court of Carrie and Boris Johnson

- All To Play For: The Advance of Rishi Sunak
- Red Queen? The Unauthorised Biography of Angela Rayner
- Red Flag: The Uneasy Advance of Sir Keir Starmer
- The Farage Factor: Reform UK and the Remaking of British Politics

His other books include:

- Victoria Cross Heroes, Volumes I and II
- Special Forces Heroes
- George Cross Heroes
- Special Ops Heroes
- Heroes of the Skies
- White Flag? An Examination of the UK's Defence Capability
- Unfair Game: An Exposé of South Africa's Captive-Bred Lion Industry
- Life Support: The State of the NHS in an Age of Pandemics
- In the Shadows: The Extraordinary Men and Women of the Intelligence Corps

