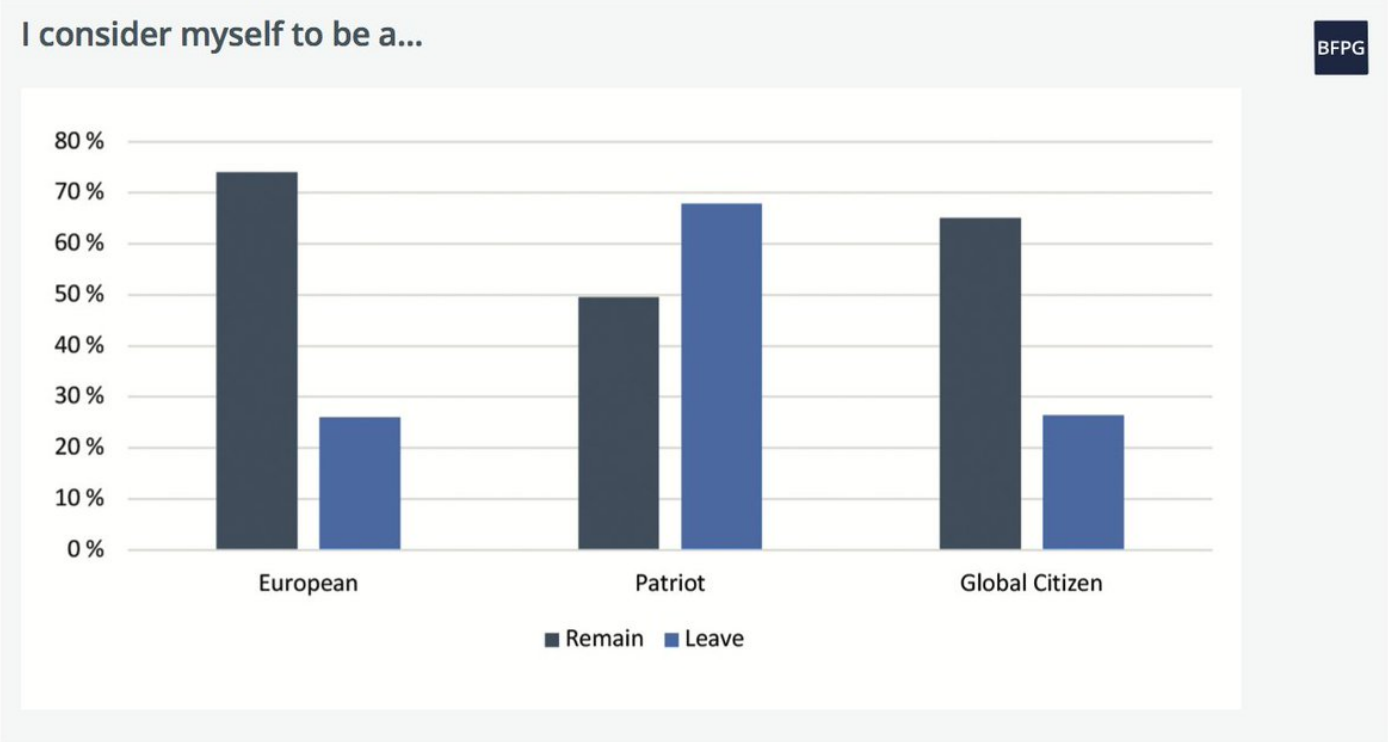
Twitter Thread by Sophia Gaston

Sophia Gaston
@sophgaston

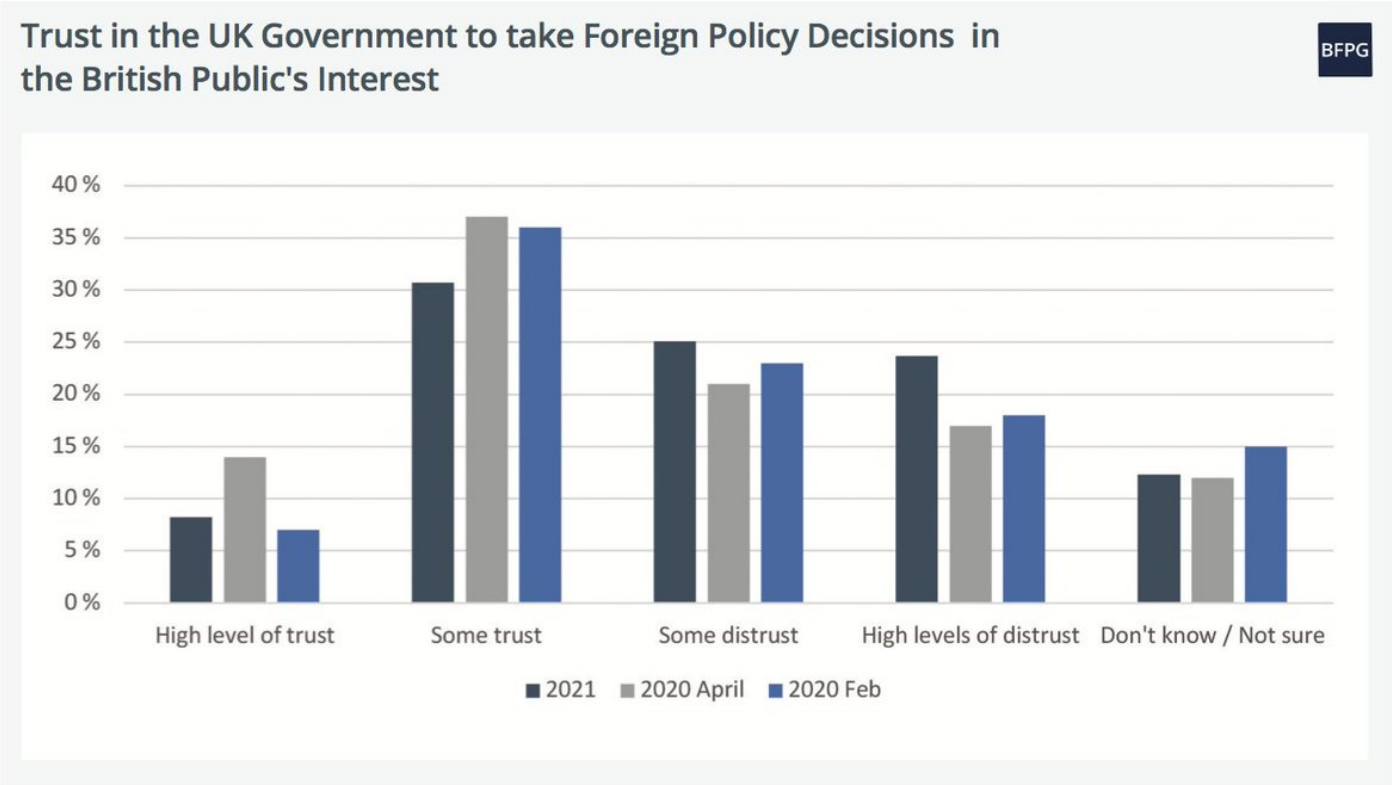
Delighted to publish @thebfpg's 2021 public opinion report – the most comprehensive survey undertaken on UK views on foreign policy. It's also a study that reveals so much about the UK's social fabric & political landscape.

Some highlights... (thread)

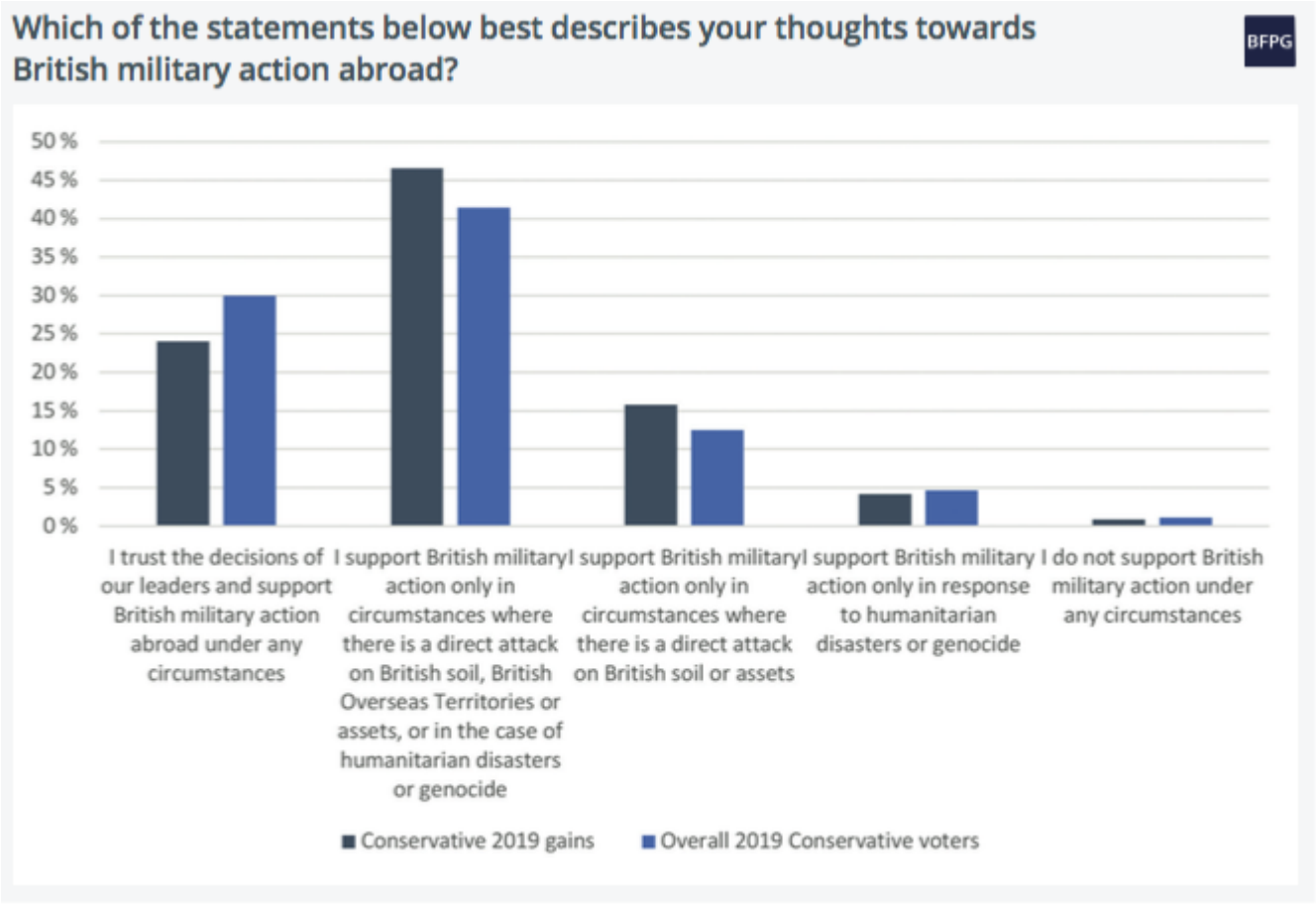
1. International identities such as global citizenship, patriotism, being 'European' are fiercely contested & closely correlated with domestic political identities. They also cleave onto 'national' identities like self-identifying as English or British.



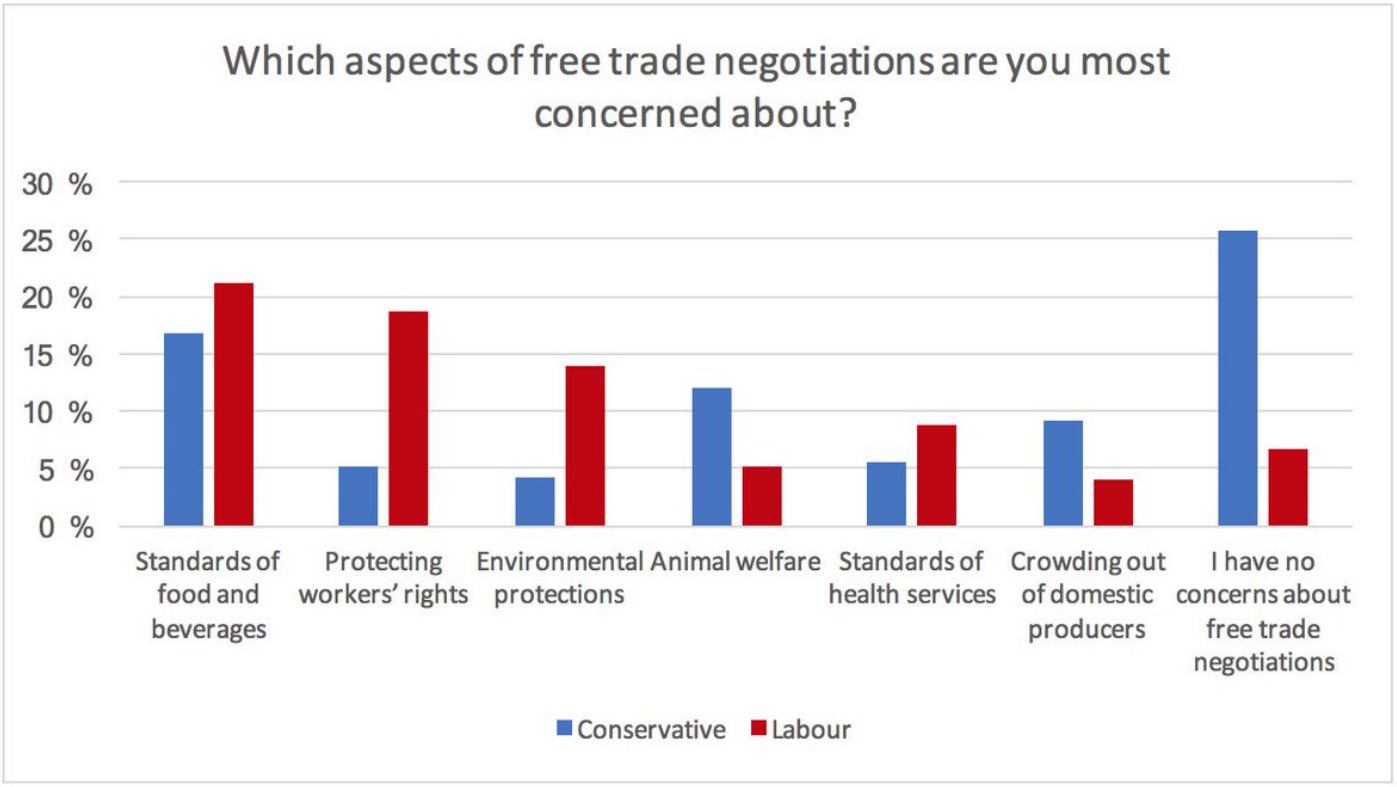
2. Trust in the UK Government to make foreign policy decisions in line with citizens' interests has fallen in the past year, as the ups and downs of the pandemic inject much dynamism into public opinion.



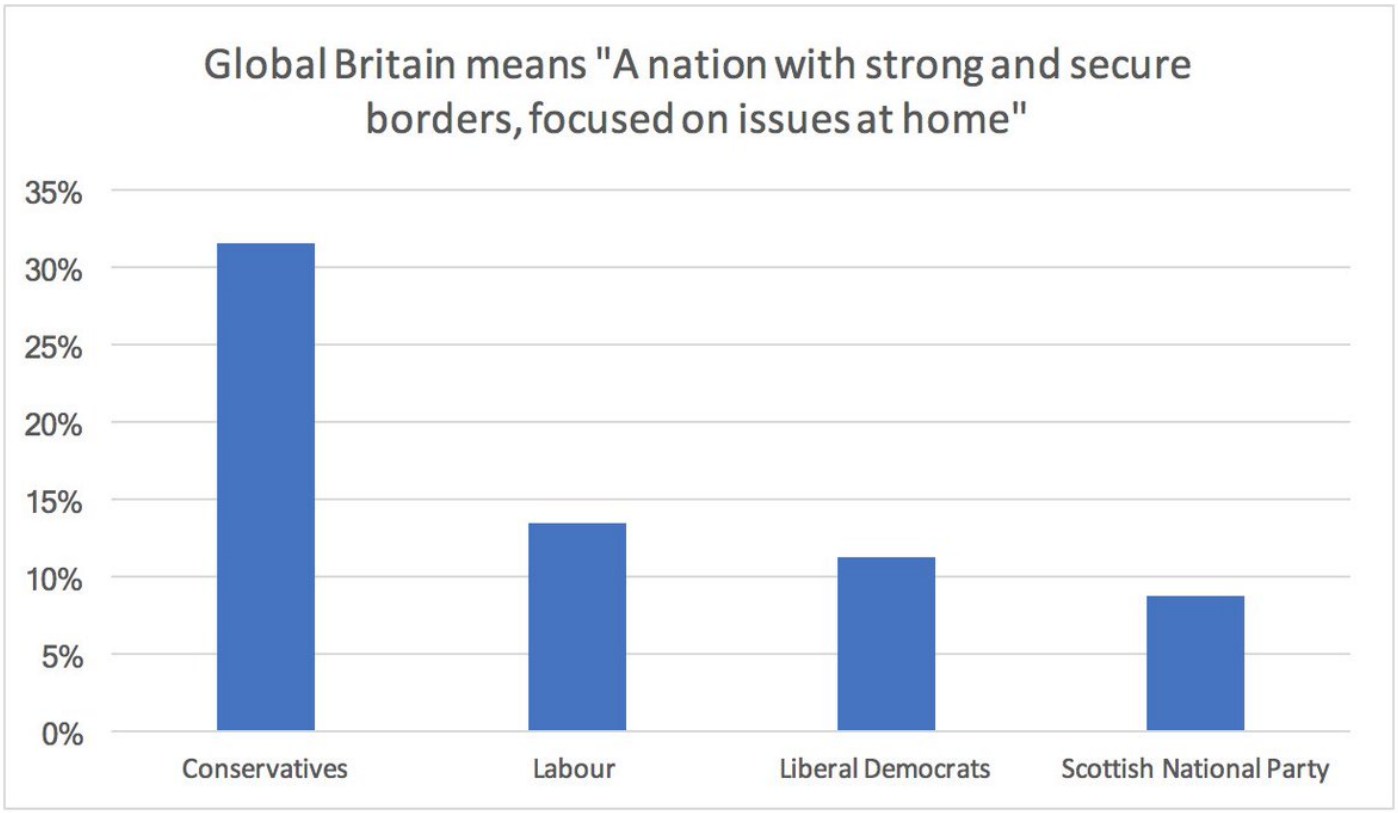
3. The raft of new voters secured by the Conservative Party since the Referendum are shifting its centre of gravity towards favouring a more isolationist, security-conscious foreign policy - not always aligned with the approach the Government is pursuing with Global Britain.



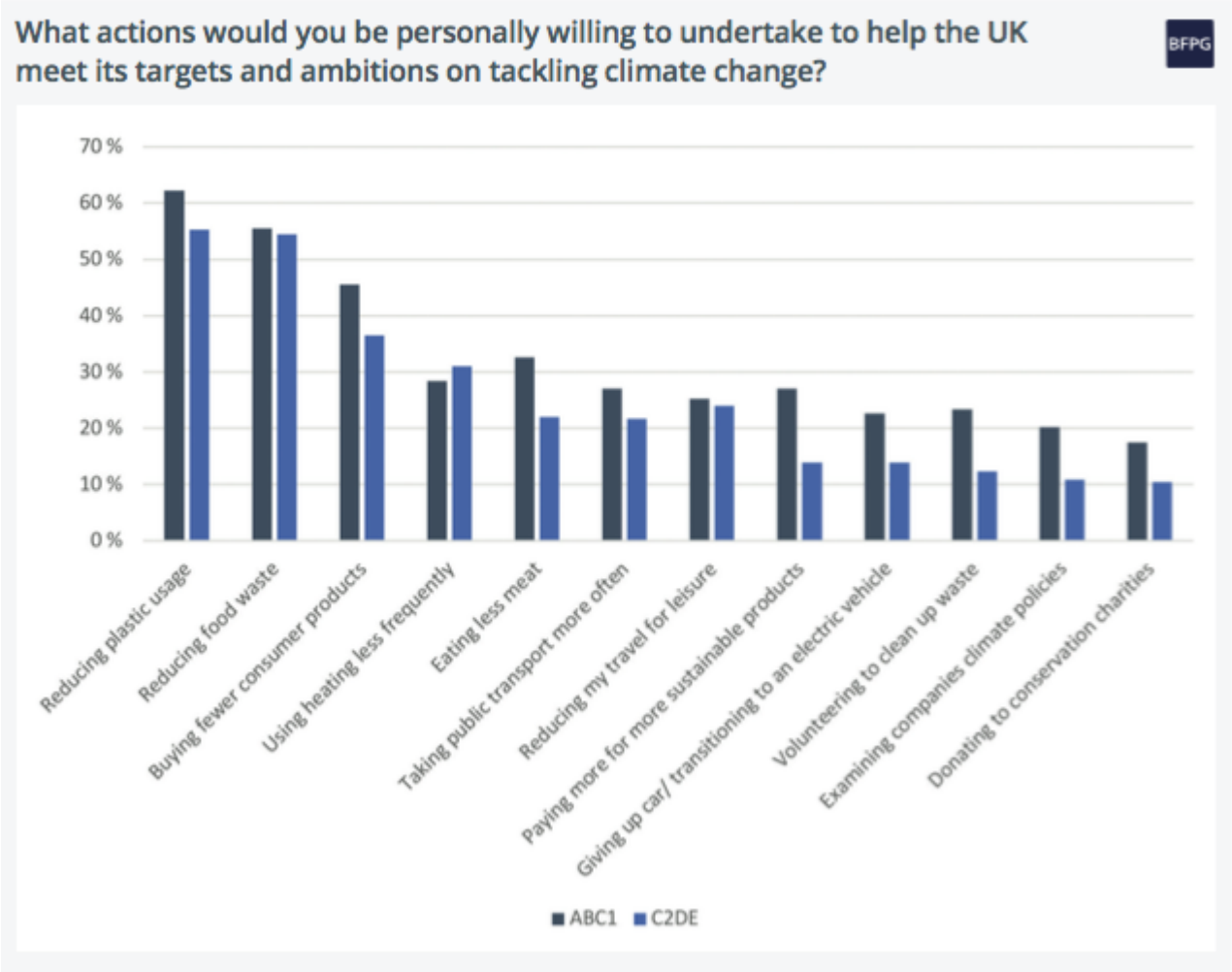
4. While more internationalist overall, Labour's coalition remains extremely divided on foreign policy issues, and its voters are anxious about the impacts of trade – largely seen as a component of the Global Britain project, which they do not feel they have a stake in.



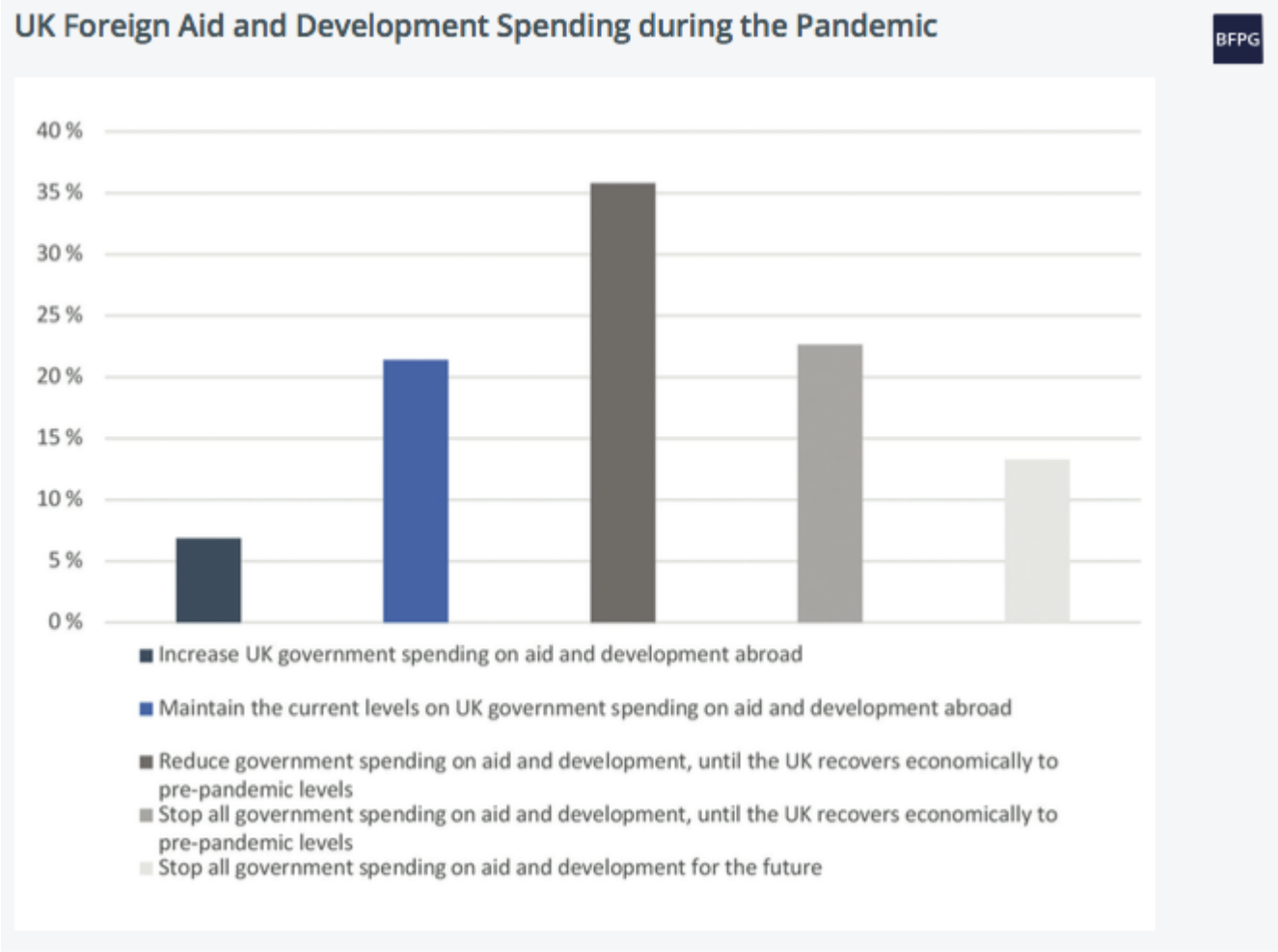
5. Education and engagement is sorely needed. Many citizens remain uncertain about the nature & mission of the Global Britain project. And 21% of Brits (including 32% of Conservative voters) believe it means "A nation with strong and secure borders, focused on issues at home".



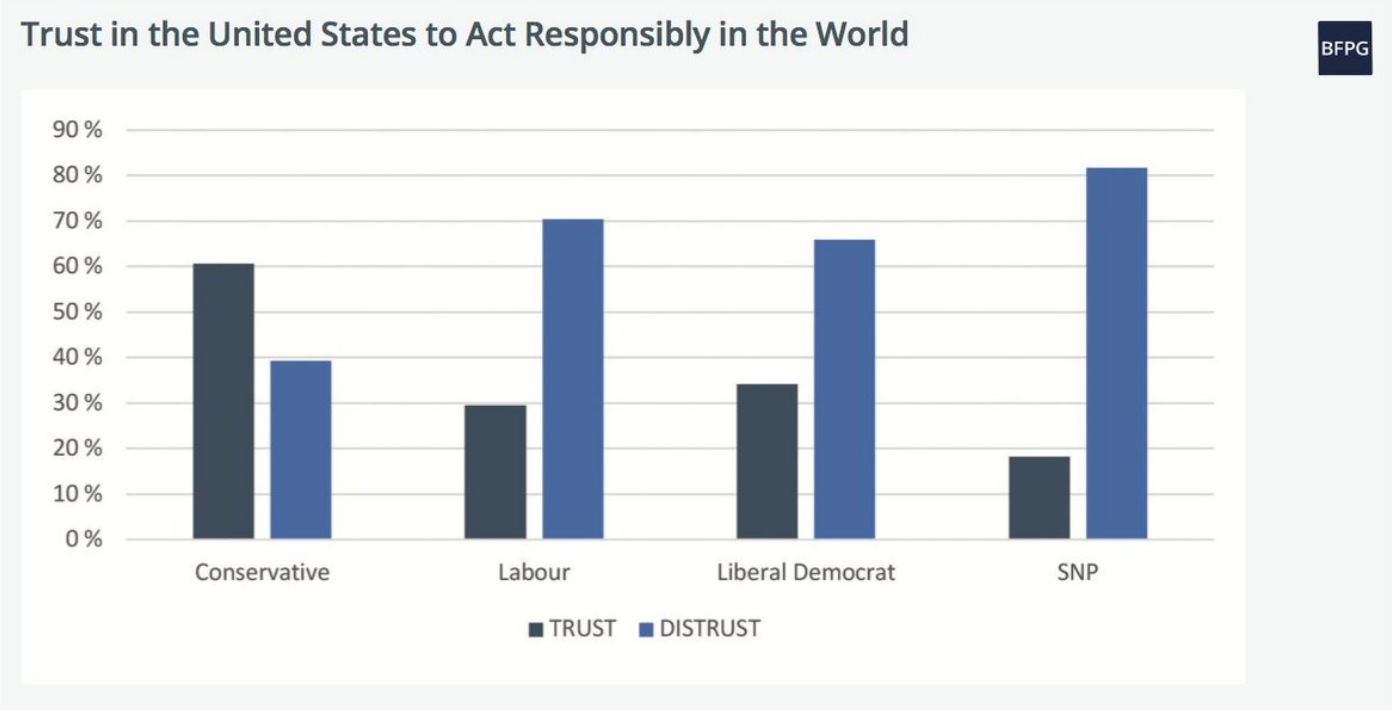
6. There is widespread support for leadership on climate change to be a foundational pillar of the UK's international agenda. However, willingness and capacity to undertake individual actions varies issue by issue, and between ages, gender & social groups. Here, by social grade.



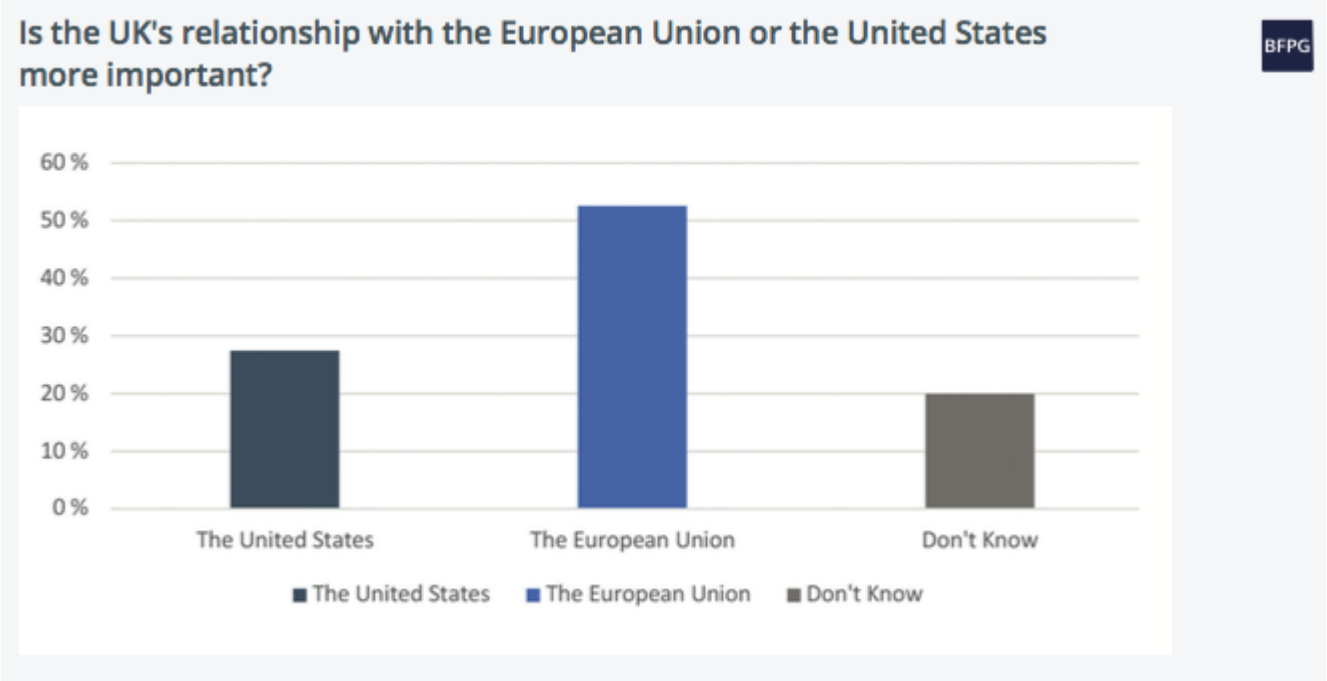
7. Brits are much more supportive of the UK's international aid and development programmes than is often reported. BUT - most Brits (72%) think foreign aid spending should be stopped or reduced during the pandemic until UK finances can recover.



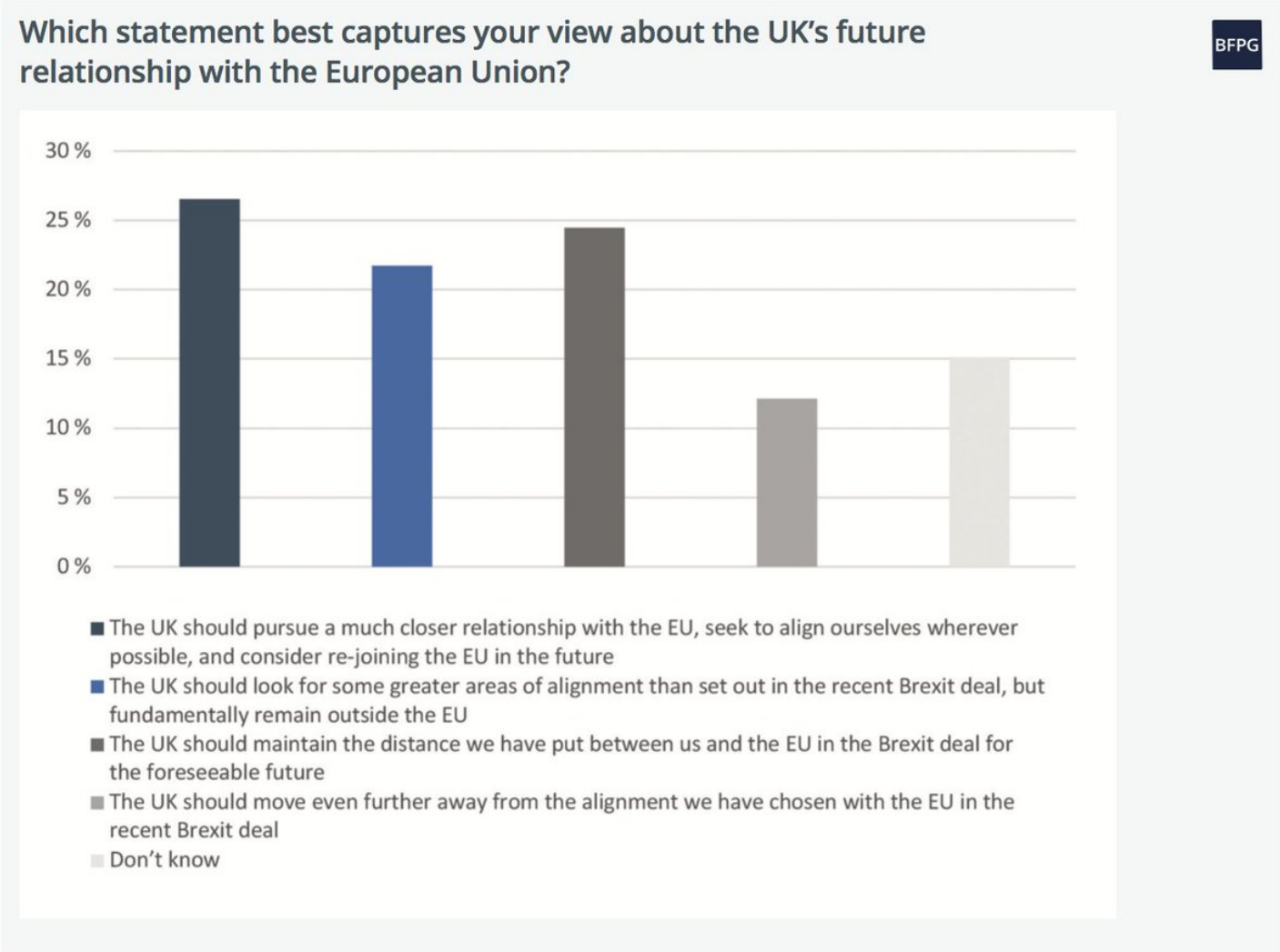
8. Brits are warming to Biden's America, with public opinion bouncing back after historical lows under Trump. But the United States remains less trusted - and more politicised - than other key security partners, such as Canada, Australia, Germany and Japan.



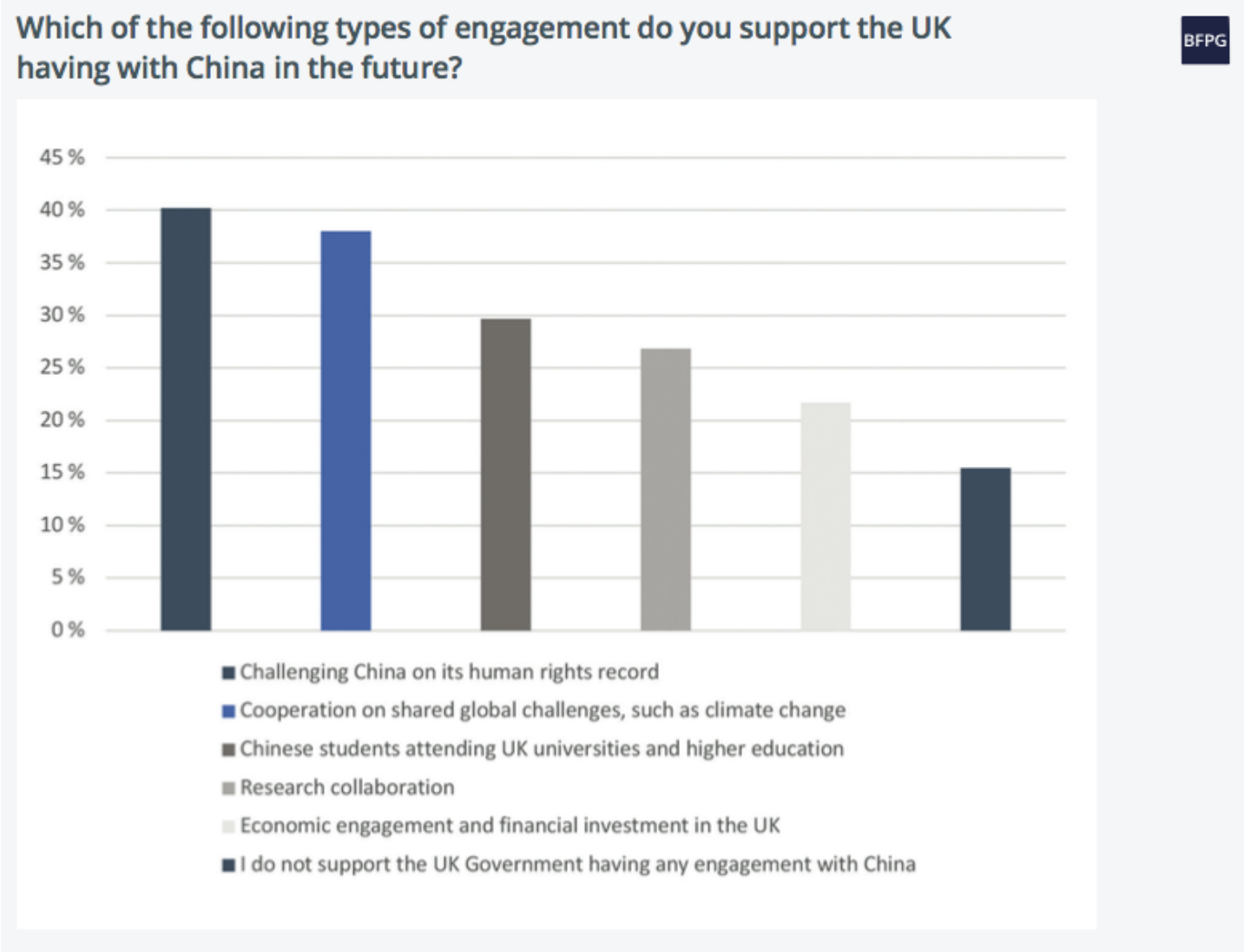
9. Despite the fractiousness of Brexit, the British people believe the real ‘special relationship’ is held between the UK and the European Union. Twice as many Brits (a majority, 53%) regard the EU as the UK’s most important partnership, compared to the United States (27%).



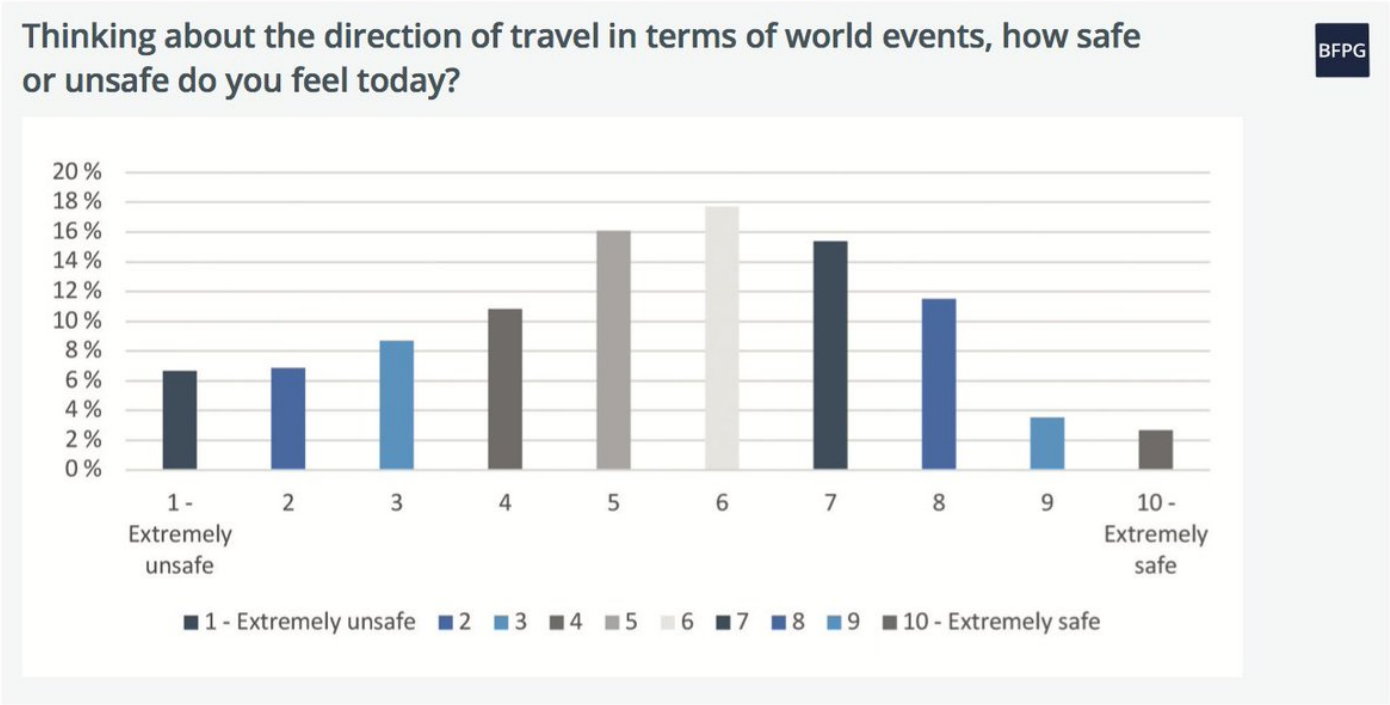
10. More Brits would prefer a closer UK-EU relationship than the Brexit deal provides (49%), than the proportion who back the deal (24%) or favour a looser relationship (12%). This shows the space for a more pragmatic public debate about UK-EU cooperation in the future.



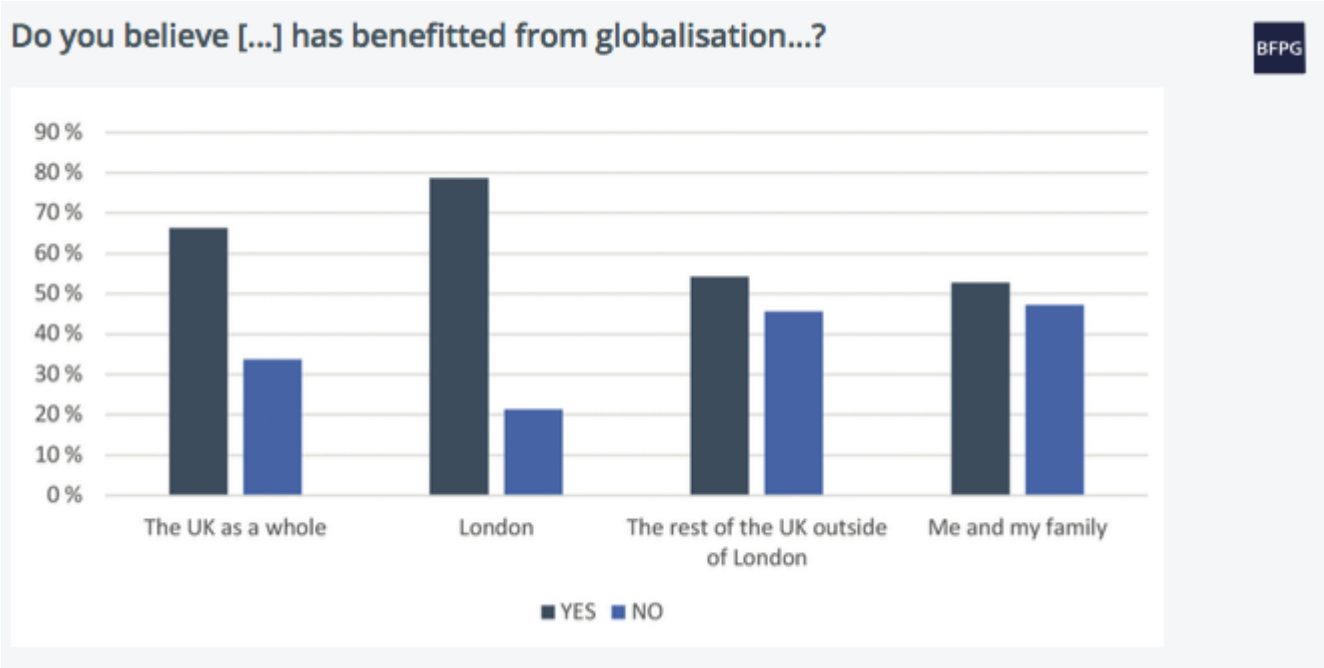
11. Concern about China is hardening in the UK. The most popular form of engagement with China is in fact challenging the CCP on its human rights record, and only a fifth of Britons now supporting any form of UK-China economic relationship.



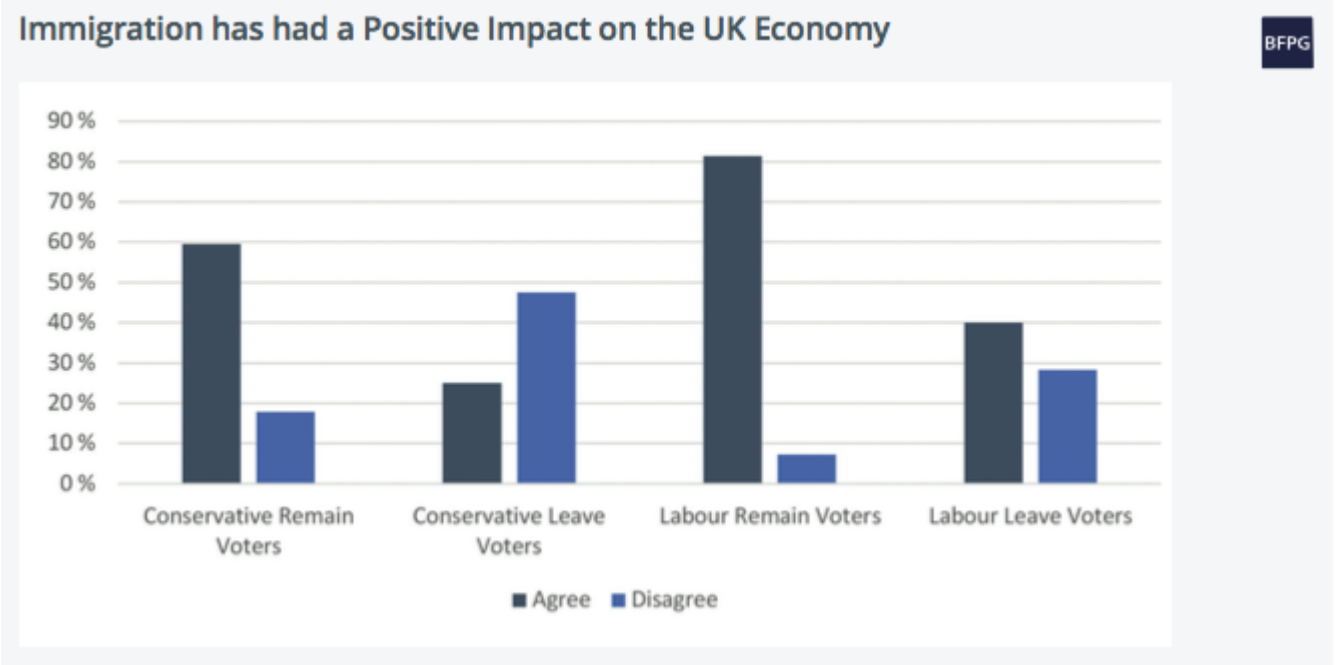
12. Looking at individual perceptions of safety, the pandemic appears to have intensified pre-existing disadvantage and insecurity among certain groups, rather than creating a more widespread sense of vulnerability amongst the population as a whole.



13. Brits do recognise that globalisation has positively benefited the UK – especially London. Questions of whether its spoils have been shared around the nation or reached individual communities, however, are more contested and cut to the heart of social polarisation.



14. Public opinion on immigration is softening a little, but remains deeply polarised. Brits think the UK's population is too high & are anxious about pressure on the welfare system and job competition. But they also recognise migrants' positive economic and social contributions.



15. Full report here: https://t.co/qzRveHmICO

Survey conducted with our wonderful long-standing partners at @OpiniumResearch. We will be continuing the BFPG-Opinium partnership pioneering social research into this crucial area of public policy and politics into the future.