

**nus**

national union of **students**

# Students and Voting



# Research background

## Objectives

- NUS UK carried out this research to understand more about voting intentions amongst students and learners

## Reading the report

- Where there are any interesting significant differences within demographic groupings, these are highlighted on the chart. All demographic grouping tables are available

## ➤ Methodology

- A total of 5200 students and learners from the UK were consulted via an online survey. The survey was promoted via the NUS Nationbuilder database
- The survey took around 10 minutes to complete and was in field in March 2024. Respondents were offered the chance of winning a share of £500 for taking part

# **Voter registration and intention to vote**

# Summary

## What's important to learners

- While all issues presented to learners were of importance, unsurprisingly, the **Cost of Living and the NHS were the two issues of relatively most importance.**
- Around **half of learners believe the UK is a welcoming place for international students**, and the **majority indicate that the free movement of students between the UK and EU is of importance.**
- Learners do **not believe that politicians value the views of young people.** They most commonly **do not know whether their local candidates represent the issues** that matter to them

# Summary

## Voting registration and intention

- **89% of learners above the age of 18 are registered to vote.** Of the small proportion who are not, over half of those intend to register before the next general election.
- This leads to **87% of those learners aged 18+ indicating that they will vote** in the next general election.
- For the small proportion **not intending to vote**, they cite the need for **better representation, clearer policies and outlines** of what is on offer, and also the need for their **own education and increased understanding** about politics.

# Summary

## Voting registration and intention

- Learners most commonly **intend to vote for Labour** in the next general election (38%). Almost a **third are undecided**.
- For those who voted in 2019, **Labour was the most common party amongst learners**.

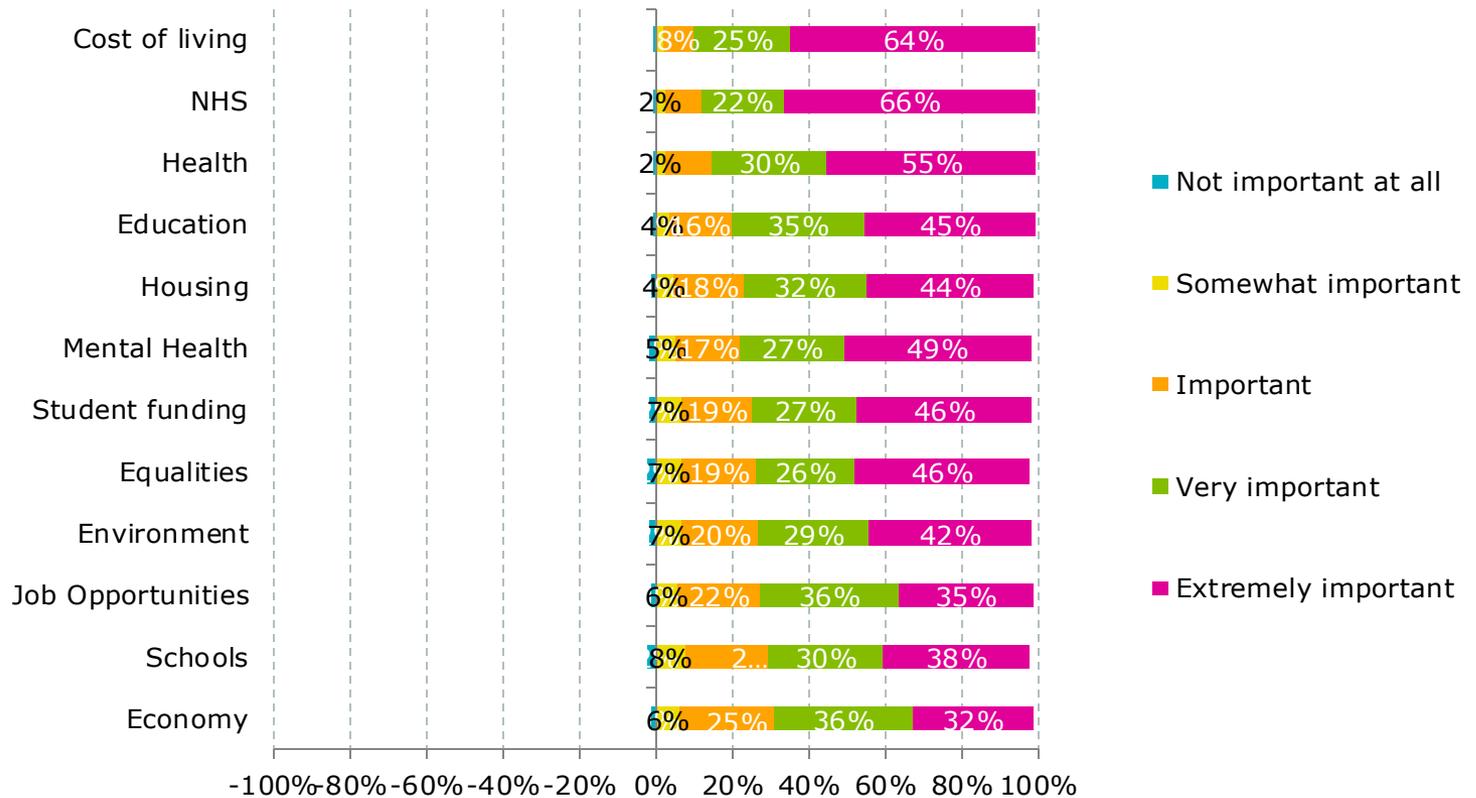
# Summary

## Voting made easy

- Almost **half believe that 16 and 17 year olds should be allowed to vote** in ALL UK elections.
- Learners indicate that this **age group are one of the most impacted by any decisions** made today; they are the **future generation** who have to live with any consequences. They are felt to be **mature** enough to make these sorts of decisions and are already considered as **adult in a number of areas**. A common comment was 'no taxation without representation'.
- **Two in five learners believe that institutions should register their students for voting.** Learners believe this would make it **much easier and more straightforward for students to vote.**

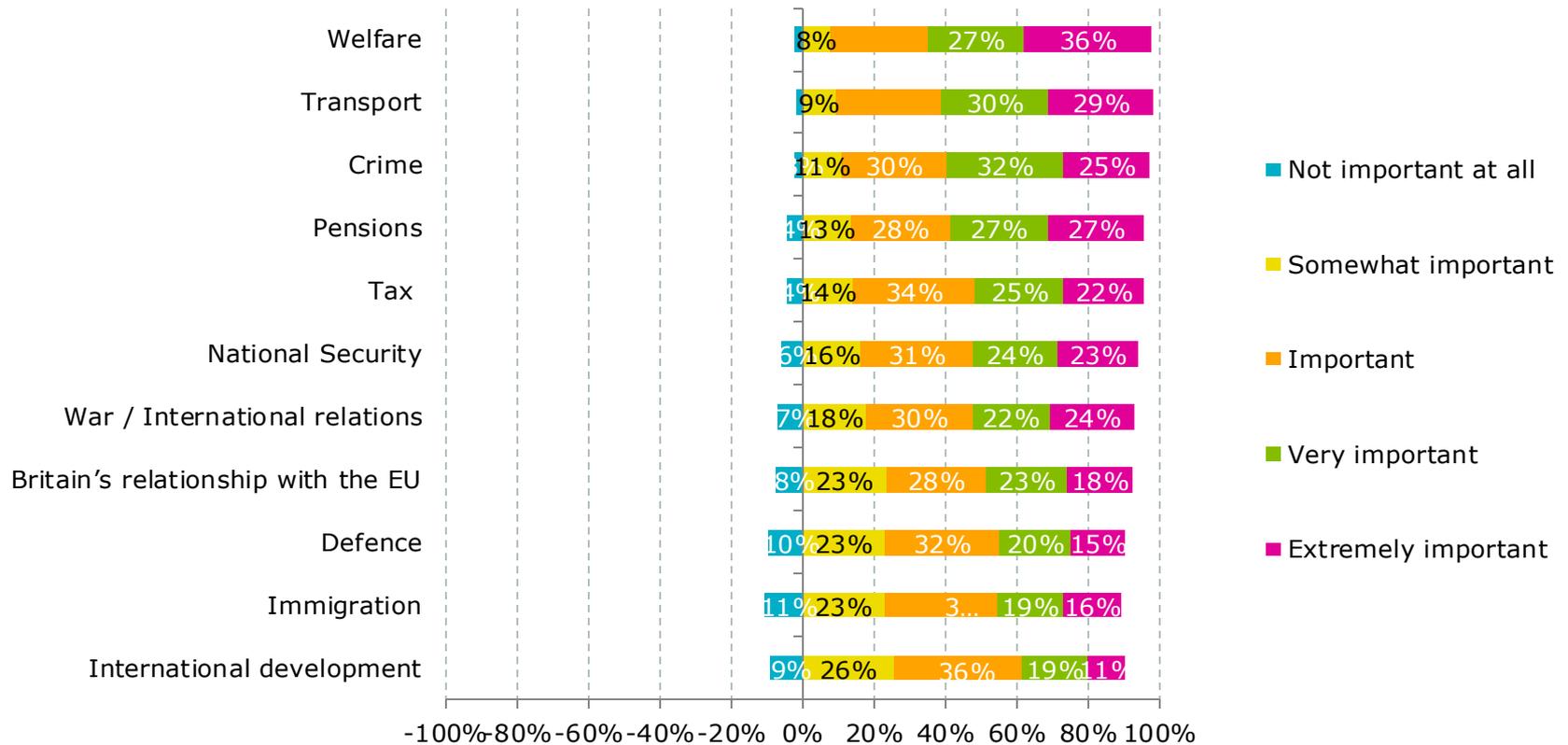
While most issues are of some important, the NHS and the cost of living are more likely to be extremely important

### Importance of issues (Most important)



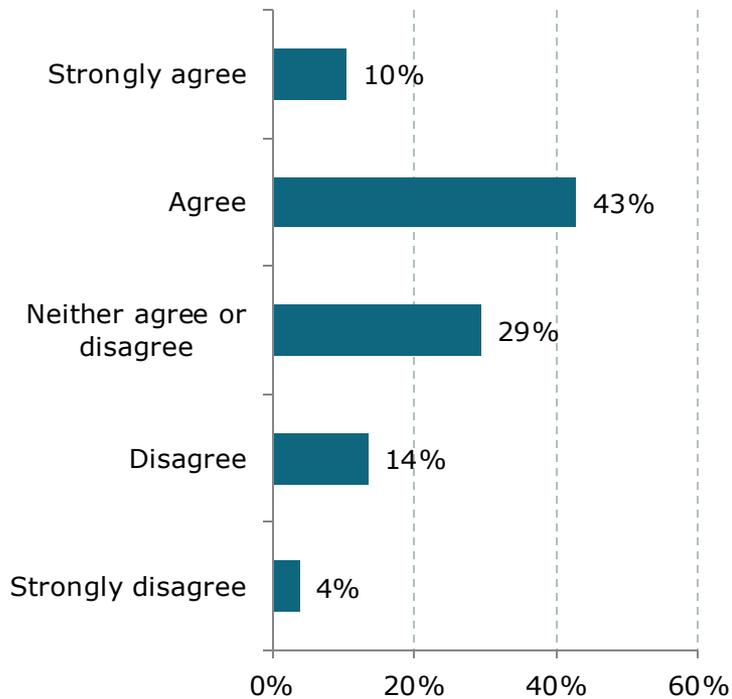
# Of least relative importance is international development and immigration

## Importance of issues (least important)

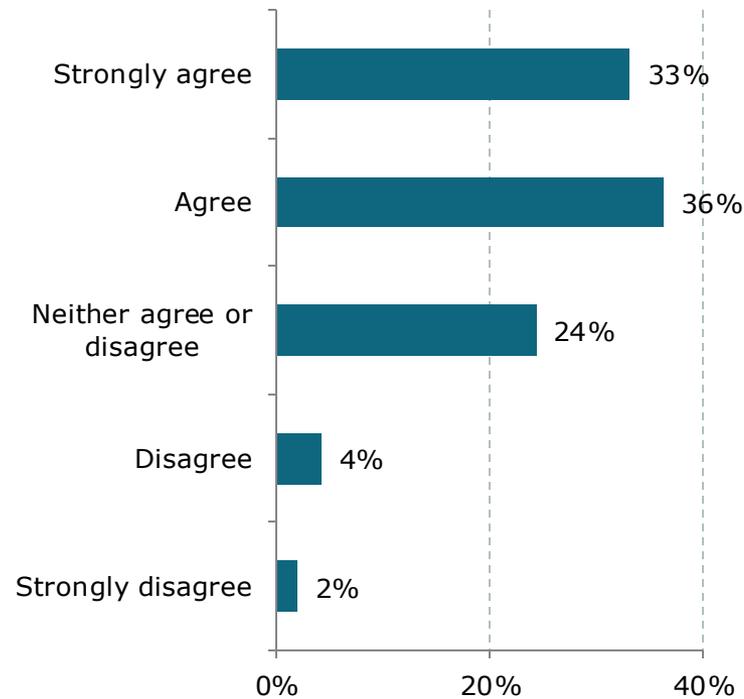


Over half of learners would agree that the UK is a welcoming place for students from outside the UK. Three in five claim that the free movement of UK and EU students is important to them

### The UK is a welcoming place for students from outside the UK



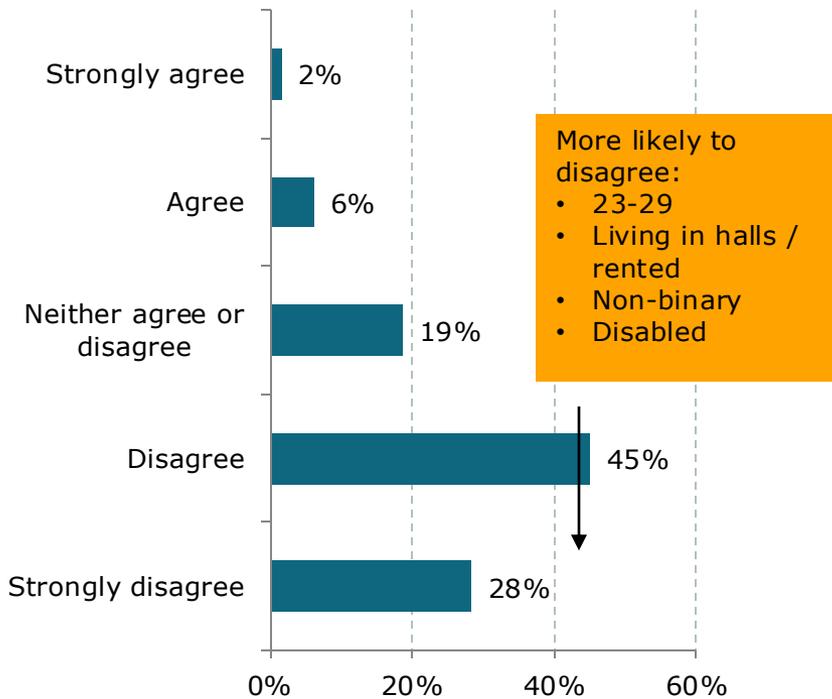
### The free movement of UK and EU students is important to me



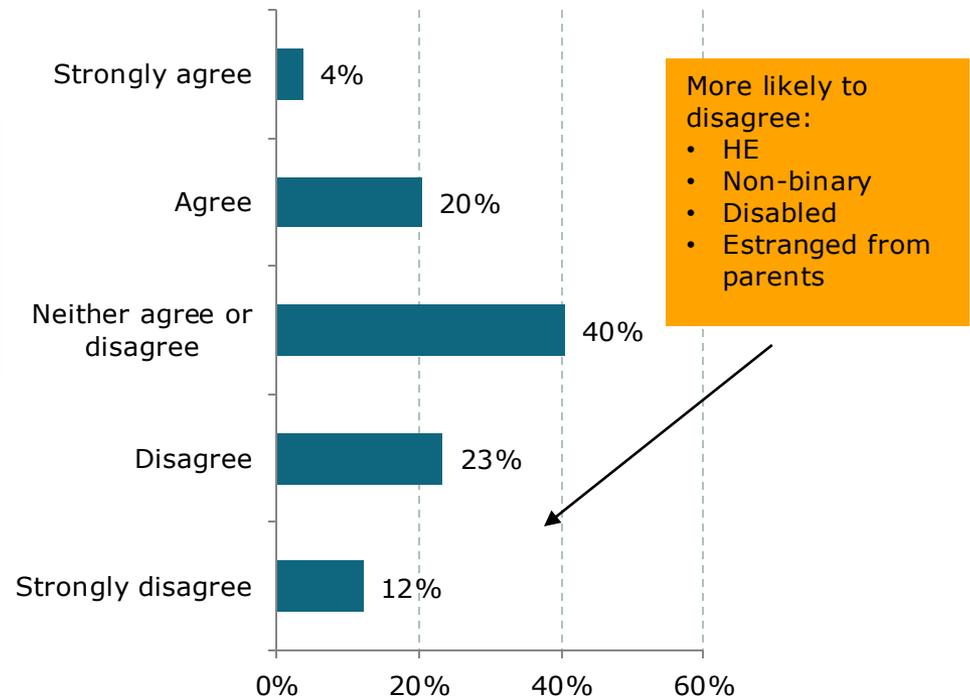
Base: 5186 / 5175 respondents. Balance: No response

Almost three quarters do not believe that politicians value the views of young people while a third do not agree that the issues that matter to them matter to the candidates standing for election. Two in five neither agree nor disagree; this could indicate that they simple don't know

### Politicians generally value the views of young people

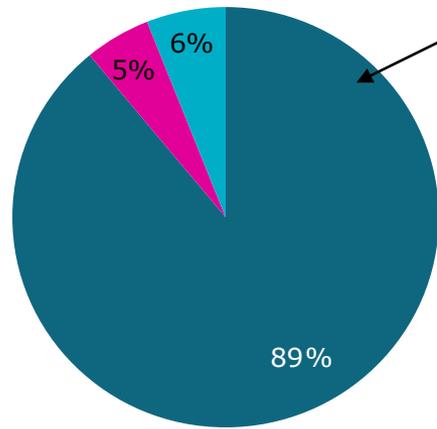


### The issues that matter to me also matter to the candidates standing for election in my constituency



89% of learners above the age of 18 are registered to vote. Of those who are not registered, over half intend to do so before the next general election

### Registered to vote (18+)

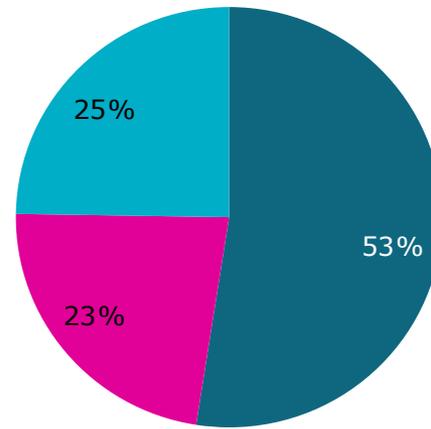


■ Yes    ■ No    ■ I don't know

More likely amongst:

- 30+
- HE student
- In 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year
- Distance learner
- Studying in Scotland or Wales
- Living in own home
- Woman
- Parent

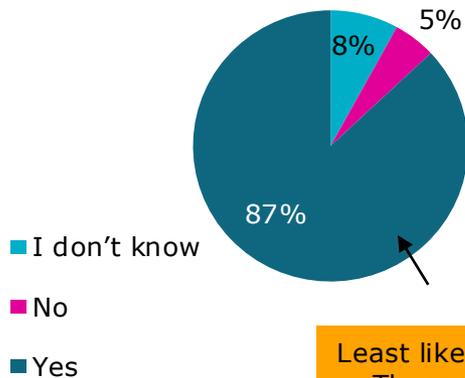
### Intention to register to vote before next general election (18+)



■ Yes    ■ No    ■ I don't know

Of those who are registered and intend to register to vote, 87% intend to vote in the next general election. Those who don't indicate untruthful politicians, a lack of representation and being unsure of who to vote for

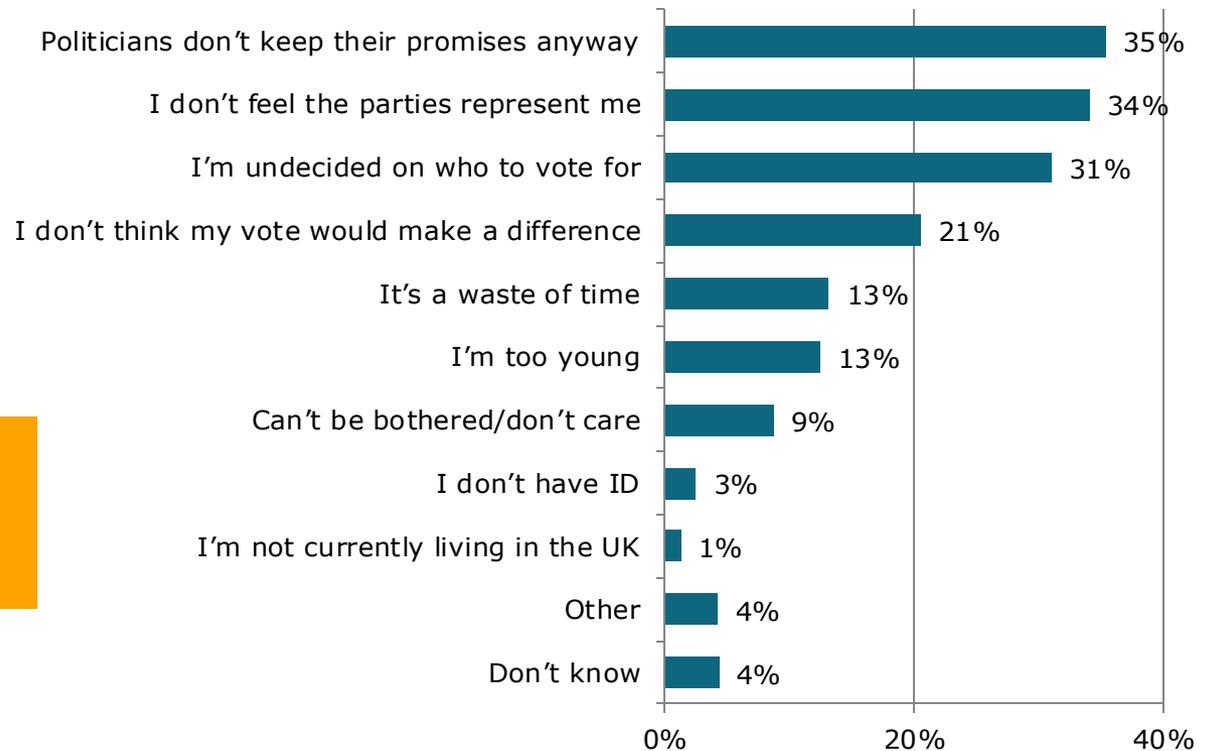
### Intention to vote in the next general election (18+)



Least likely amongst:

- Those living with parents
- From socio-economic group F

### Why not?



Those who don't plan to vote highlight the need for better representation, clearer policies and outlines of what's on offer, and also the need for their own education and understanding of politics

### Encouragement to vote

- **Better representation**
- **Clearer policies / outlines**
- **Better understanding / knowledge**
- **Trust**
- **Real outcomes**

*"If the political situation was nicer and the parties had decent people. Nowadays, they're all so sleazy."*

*"Someone younger who I feel represents me."*

*"A simple way to find out more about each party - I have a very short attention span."*

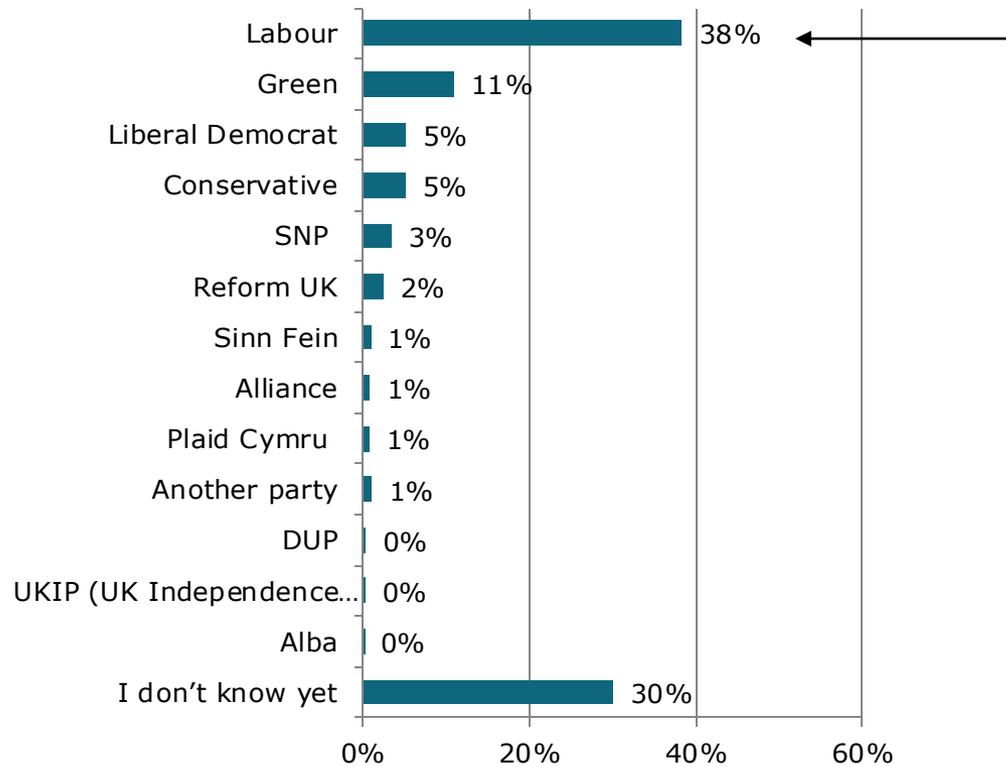
*"If i broadened my knowledge and really understood who and what I'm voting for."*

*"Politicians who actually keep their promises."*

*"Parties which can solve the real struggle of people, i.e. Cost of living."*

Almost two in five of those intending to vote say they will vote for Labour. This is particularly more likely for those studying in HE, students in England and Wales and men. Almost a third are undecided.

### Voting intention (18+)

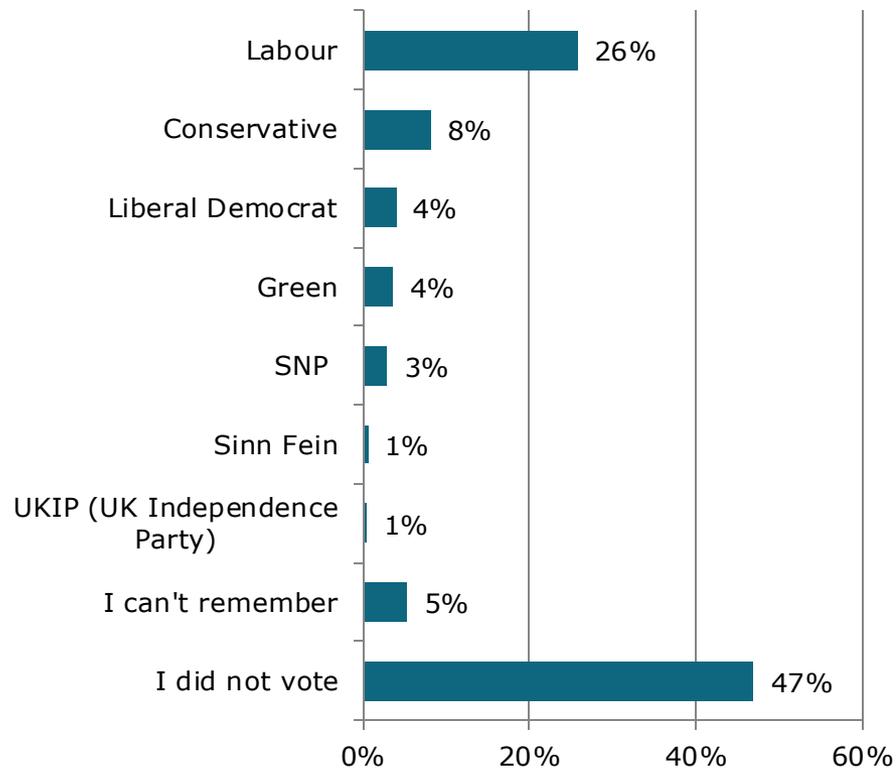


More likely amongst:

- HE
- Studying in England and Wales
- Men

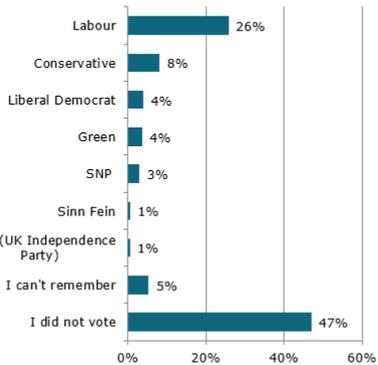
While almost half of learners didn't vote in 2019, a quarter voted for labour.

### Voting in 2019



...learners didn't vote in 2019, a quarter voted for Labour.

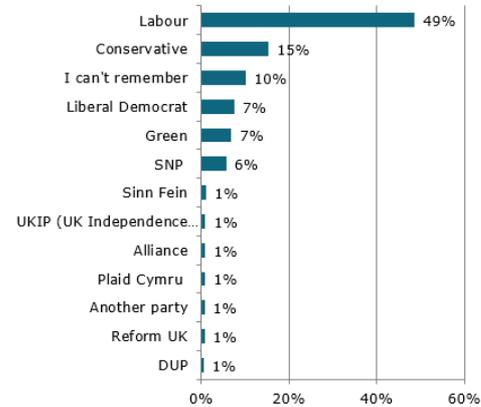
Voting in 2019



For those old enough to vote in 2019, almost half claimed to have voted for Labour

New slide

Voting in 2019

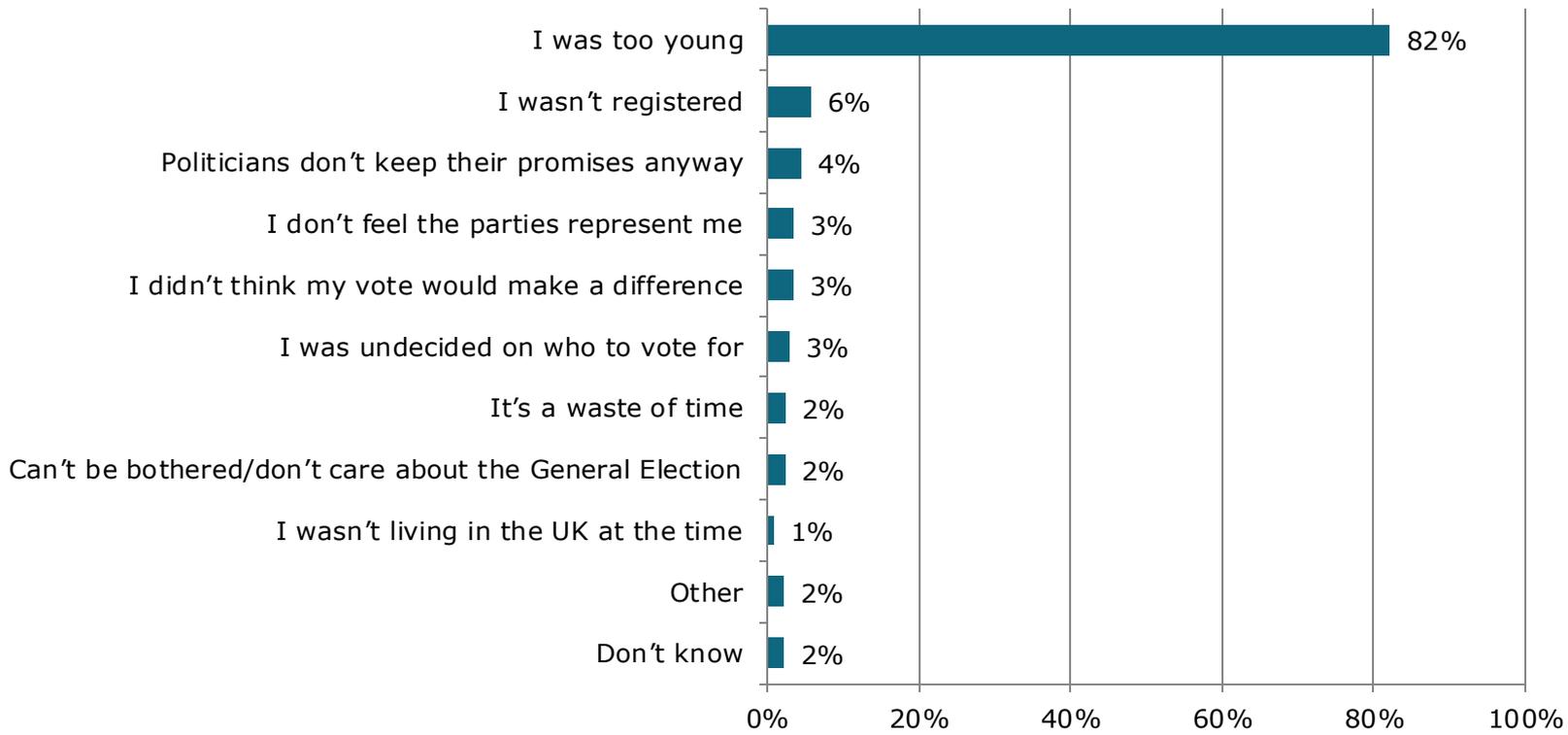


Base: 2749 respondents. Balance: Those who were too young to vote

B11. Thinking back to the most recent general election, to elect MPs to Westminster and held on Thursday 12th December, 2019, who did you vote for?

Of those who didn't vote in 2019, four in five were too young

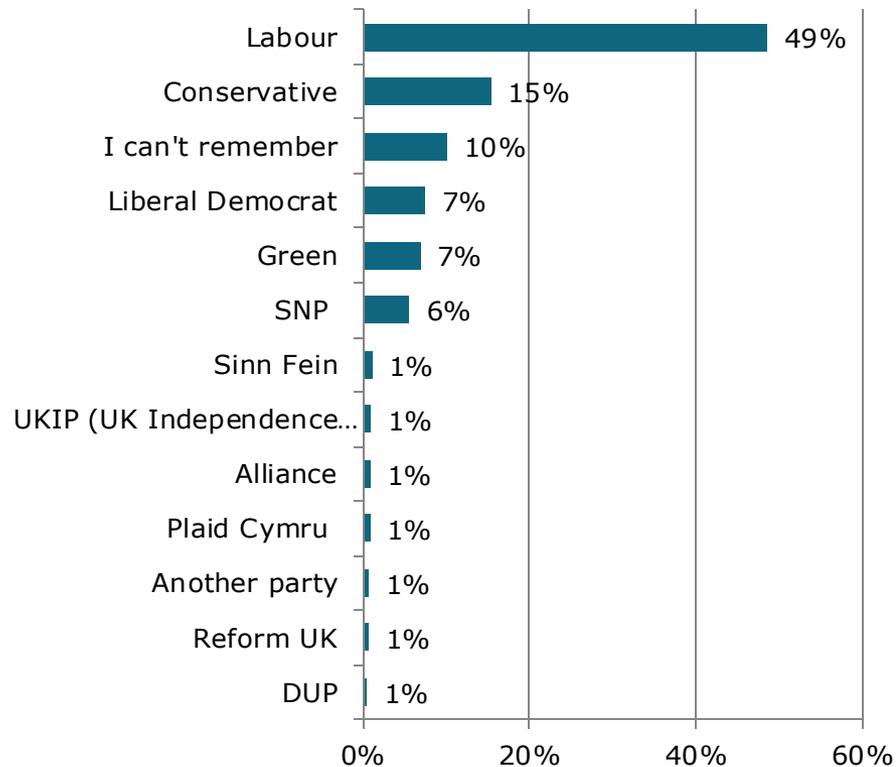
### Why not?



For those old enough to vote in 2019, almost half claimed to have voted for labour

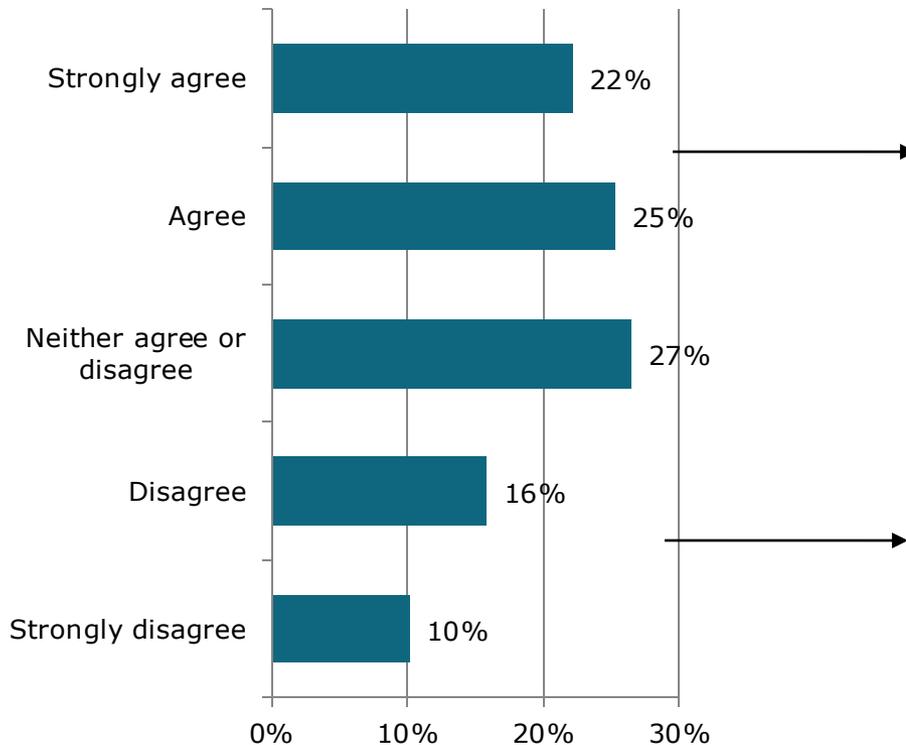
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### Voting in 2019



Almost half believe 16 and 17 year olds should be able to vote in ALL UK elections. The main reason given is that they are the future generation who will be impacted most by any decisions made now

### 16 and 17 year olds should be allowed to vote in ALL UK elections



### Why do you say that

- **Future generation / ones who will be most impacted by decisions made now**
  - **Mature enough / adult**
  - **Their voices and opinions are important**
  - **'No taxation without representation'**
  - **Engage them early in political decisions**
- 
- **Not mature enough / not adults**
  - **Don't understand enough**
  - **Lack of education / life skills**

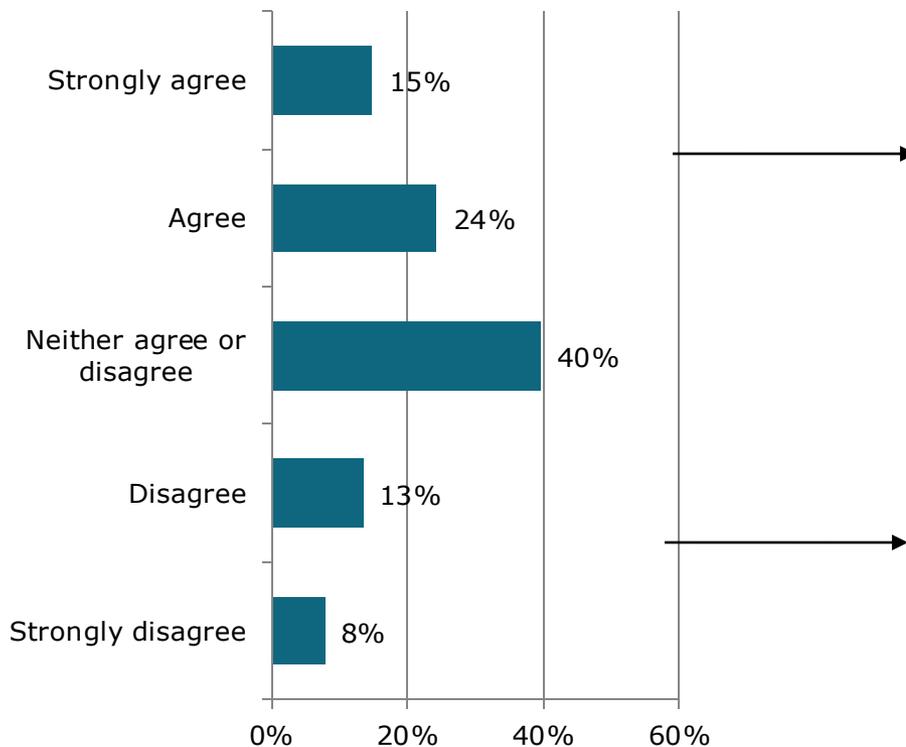
Base: 5180 respondents. Balance: No response

**B13. To what extent do you agree that 16 and 17 year olds should be allowed to vote in ALL UK elections?**

**B14. Why do you say that?**

Almost two in five believe students should be registered to vote by their institution; respondents believe it's important for young voices to be heard, it could encourage voting and makes it easier for them to do so

### Registering of students by institution



### Why do you say that

- **Important to vote / young voices should be heard**
- **Encourages students to vote**
- **Makes it easier for them to vote / might forget to register**
- **Students are the future**

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- **Should be a choice**

Base: 5185 respondents. Balance: No response

**B15. To what extent do you agree that universities and colleges should be required to register students to vote at the beginning of each academic year?**

**B16. Why do you say that?**

**Voter ID**

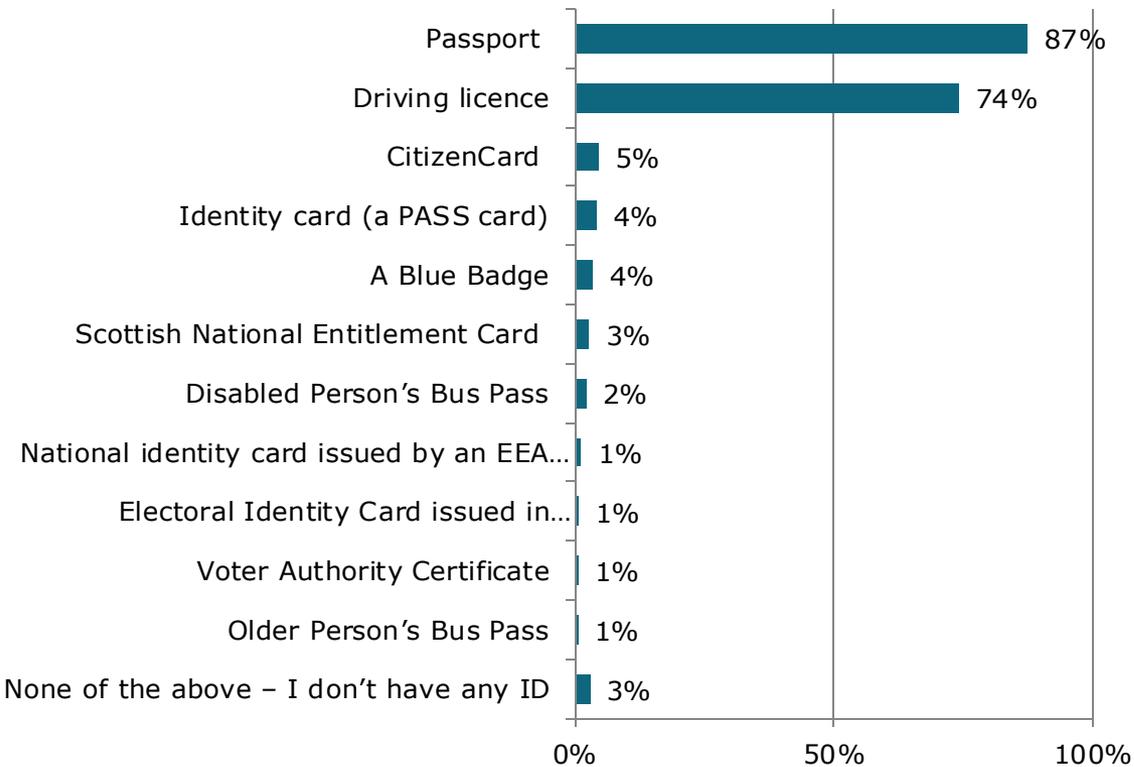
# Summary

## Voting made easy

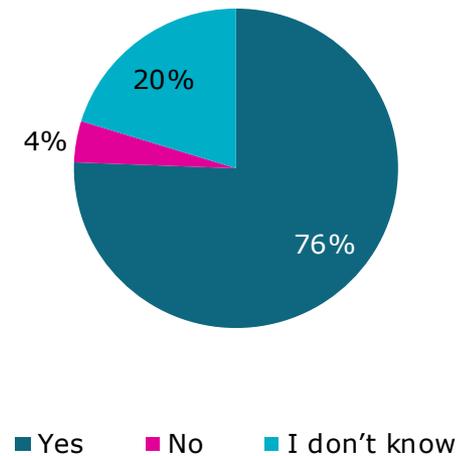
- The **vast majority of learners have either a UK passport or a UK drivers licence**. However, only **76% of learners know if they hold a form of ID** which could be used to vote.
- **Half of respondents believe that voters should show photographic ID**, with three quarters indicating that it has **no bearing on their likelihood to vote** and three in five claiming it will not impact their **ability to vote**.

Most learners have a passport. Three quarters believe their ID counts as Voter ID in the UK elections

Form of ID



Does ID count as voter ID in UK elections

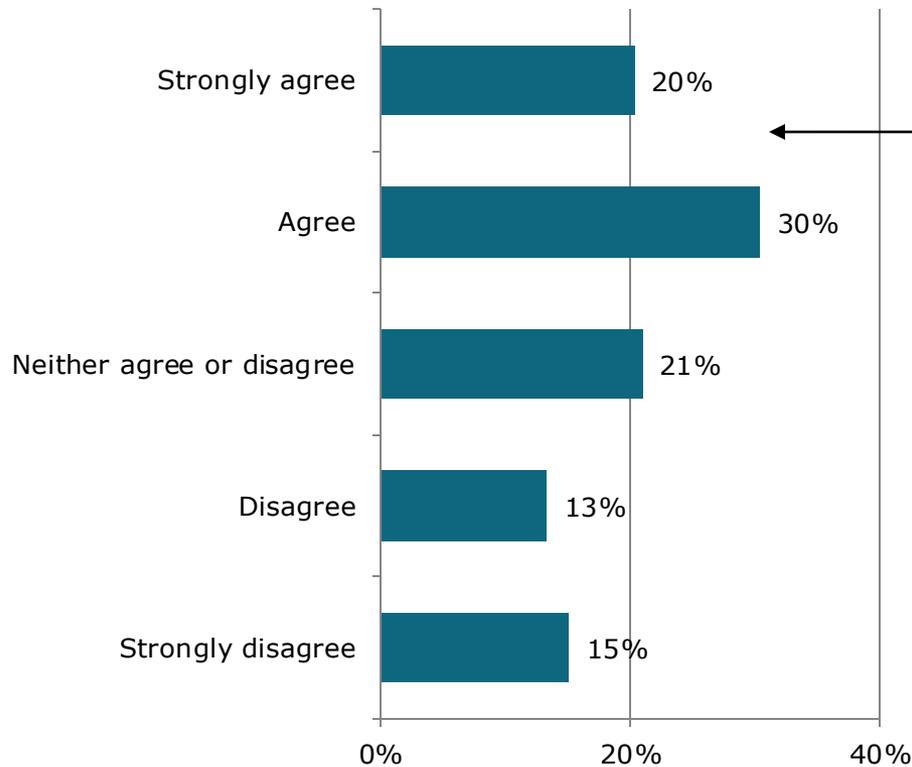


Base: 5179 respondents. Balance: No response

Base: 4996 respondents. Balance: no ID

# Half believe voters should show photographic ID

## Voters should show photographic ID

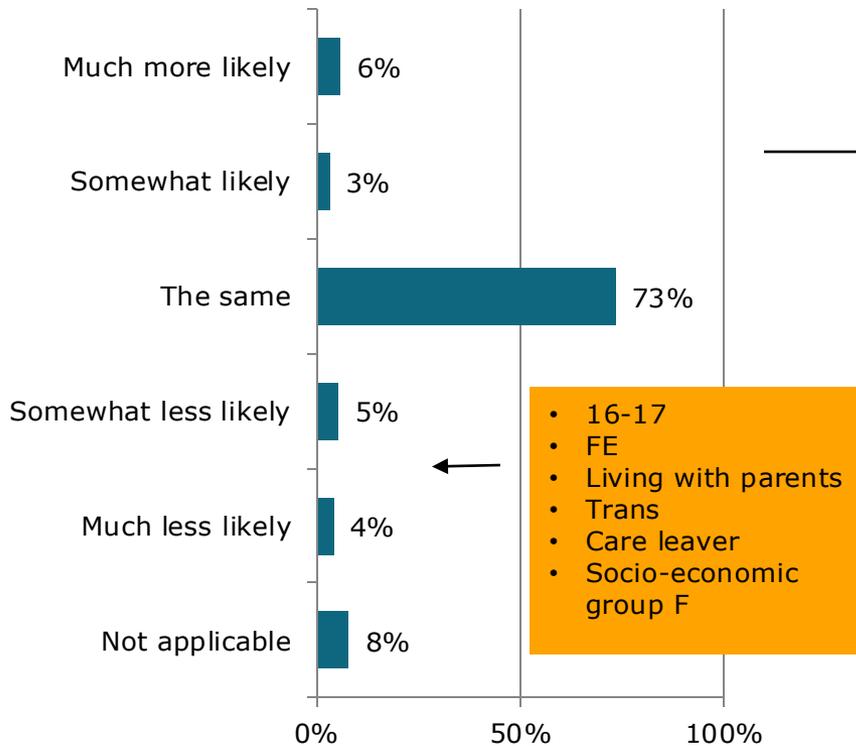


More likely to agree:

- Apprentices
- Studying in NI
- Men and women
- Not Trans
- Not disabled

Three quarters believe that showing photographic ID will not impact their likelihood to vote in the next general election.

### Impact of showing photographic ID on voting



### Why do you say that

- **Prevent fraud**
  - **Prove who you are**
  - **Keep things fair**
- 
- **Inconvenience / more effort**
  - **Don't always carry ID**
  - **Lack of trust**

Base: 3749 respondents. Balance: Not intending to register to / or vote

**C4. Does the requirement to show photographic ID make you more or less likely to vote in the next General Election?**

**C5. Why do you say that?**

Three in five do not think their ability to vote in the next general election will be impacted by having to show photographic ID.

### Impact of showing photographic ID on ability to vote

