



Strengthening the sandcastle

How strong protections can help consolidate Labour's coalition

Introduction

Labour's majority is large but brittle.¹ Described by a leading pollster as a '[monumental sandcastle](#)' built on wide but shaky foundations, Labour's support rests on a disparate voter coalition that spans a broad range of values and sentiments.

This briefing shows how a new approach to regulation offers Labour one way of consolidating its mandate. We analyse how championing strong, well-enforced protections would be a unifying theme for the new government, resonating across the political spectrum and offering Labour a way to maintain and even expand its electoral coalition.

Support for regulation unites UK voters

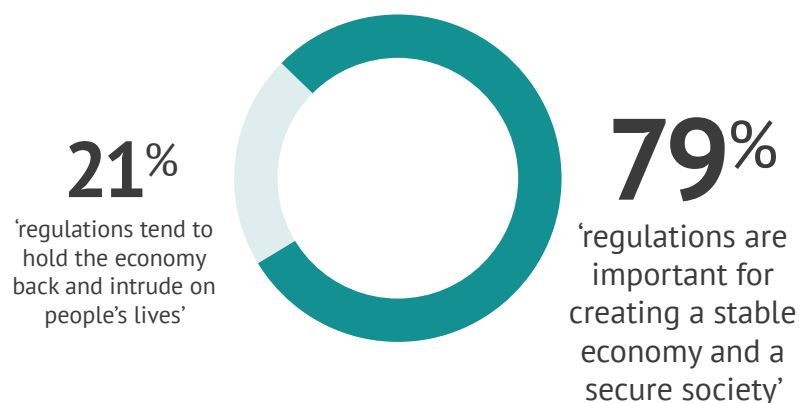
To solidify its mandate and hold its coalition together, senior Labour leaders have acknowledged the need to find the common ground. This latest polling confirms that a strong agenda on regulation offers this opportunity.

79% of respondents believe that regulations are important for creating a stable economy and secure society. Conversely, just 21% believe that regulations tend to hold the economy back and intrude on people's lives (see Graph 1²). The result is consistent with findings from dozens of polls and focus groups carried out previously by [Unchecked UK and others](#). It confirms that support for well-enforced social and environmental protections cuts across factors including age, geography and gender. Support also spans Brexit divisions, with **69% of Leave voters and 74% of Remain voters supporting protections.**

Strong protections and their enforcement is a far more unifying proposition than any continuation of a [deregulatory approach](#), which at best holds appeal for a very marginal group, and at worst could prove hugely unpopular with a majority of voters. Moreover, as we explore later in this paper, a continuation of this approach could help deepen an already serious crisis of distrust, much of it driven by the concerns about lowering standards in public life, and frustration with the government's poor record when it comes to sanctioning rule breakers.

Graph 1

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? (All UK adults.)

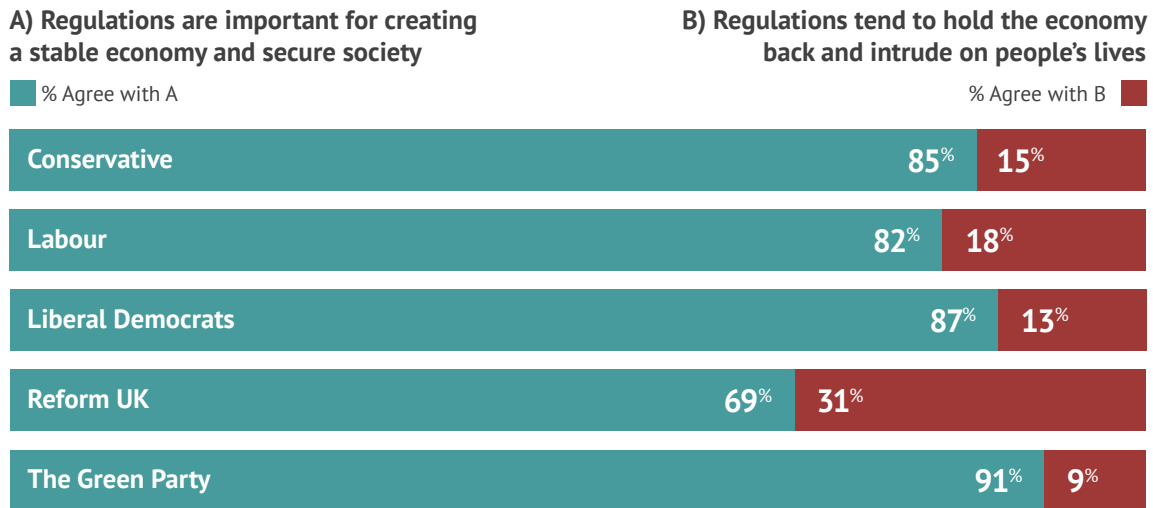


¹ Labour won with a share of the vote of 33.7%. This is lower than Tony Blair (43% in 1997) and Jeremy Corbyn in 2017 (over 40%).

² Figures included in this report exclude those who responded 'don't know'

Graph 2

Which of the following reflects your view?



Swing voters are strongly supportive of protections

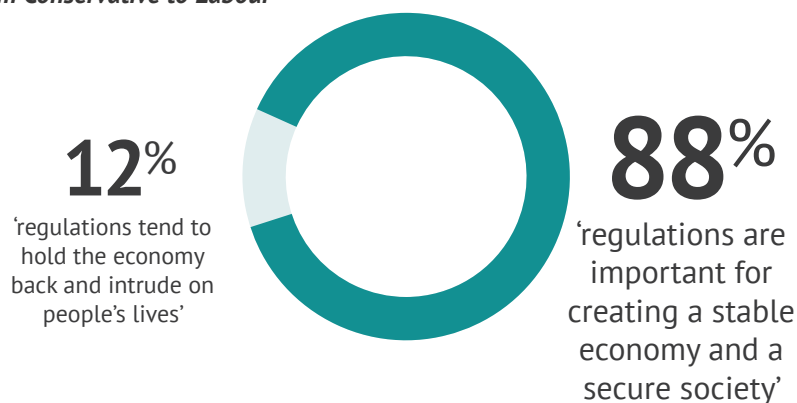
The 2024 election was one of the most volatile in modern history. In addition to the ongoing decline of traditional allegiances to the major parties, we saw the rise of an array of small parties across the political spectrum. Five Reform UK MPs are now in Parliament and the party emerged as the second-place party in 98 constituencies, 89 of which are now held by Labour. Simultaneously, four Green Party MPs were elected and the party secured second place in 40 seats, 39 of which returned Labour MPs. We also saw the election of 6 independent MPs (the highest number since 1950) with very close [challenges](#) to a number of senior political incumbents, especially in constituencies with large Muslim populations.

Our polling shows that several key swing voter groups are amongst the staunchest supporters of strong regulation. **88% of voters who switched from the Conservatives to Labour (many of them so-called 'Labour returners' or Red Wall voters), think regulations are important** (compared to 12% who think they are burdensome). This was among the highest figures among all voter groups and is also consistent with [previous Unchecked UK research](#).

69% of voters who switched from the Conservatives to Reform also shared this view. Levels of support were as high as **92% among so-called 'Whitby Women'**, a group of voters identified by More in Common as amongst the most volatile voting segments in the run up to the election.³

Graph 3

Voters who switched from Conservative to Labour



³ Identified by **More in Common** as mostly older homeowners who did not go to university and are concentrated along the east coast of England. The small towns and suburbs where they live make up seats which were quite safe for the Conservatives in 2019.

Key voter segments support strong protections

Political disenchantment is at record levels. This election saw the lowest turnout since 1985 with almost 80% of voters saying that the system of governing Britain could be improved 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal'. The trend is particularly acute in certain sectors of the UK electorate.

In this part of the briefing we set out the findings for the values segments where levels of political disengagement and distrust **tend to run deepest**: Disengaged Battlers, Loyal Nationals, and Disengaged Traditionalists. These latter two are the groups which were amongst the most supportive of Brexit and now provide the bulk of support for Reform UK. They were also instrumental in helping Labour secure its majority, although **most experts agree** that rather than a return to their historical affiliations, these voters are likely to have 'lent' Labour their vote in 2024.

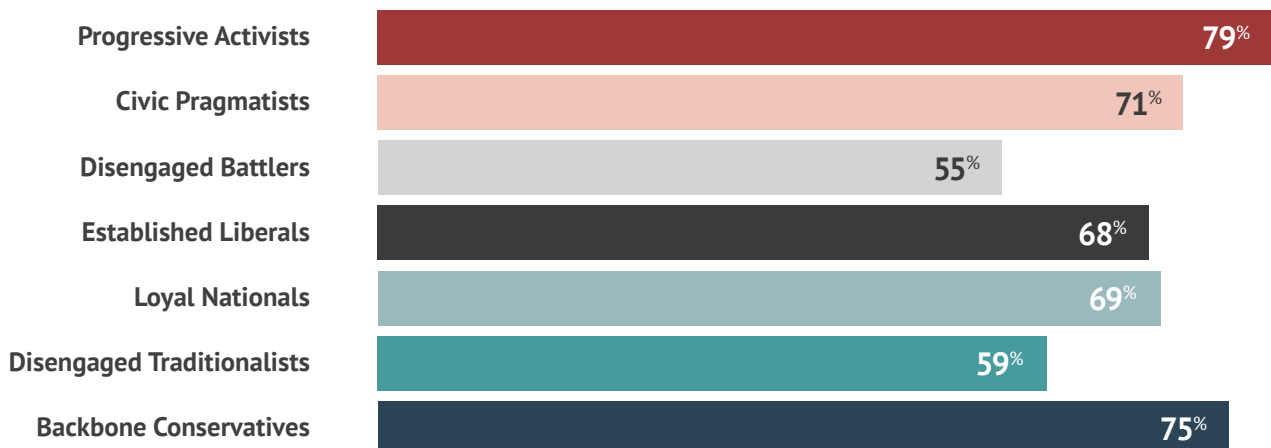
Loyal Nationals are a key values group when it comes to winning elections. They are the voters heavily clustered in marginal seats who abandoned their historic support for the Labour Party and supported the Conservatives in the 2019 election (many of whom returned to voting for Labour in 2024, or opted for Reform). Unlike the latter two groups, Loyal Nationals are engaged in their community and likely to feel strongly connected to where they live. Strongly in favour of Brexit at the referendum, their high threat-perception coupled with a more authoritarian outlook gives them a high concern for law and order but also an instinctive distrust of government. We find that **69% are supportive of strong protections**.

Disengaged Battlers are focused on the everyday struggle for survival and are most likely to be struggling financially. They have work, but often it is insecure or involves irregular hours. They tend to feel disconnected from other people, and many say they have given up on the system altogether. They are less connected to others in their local area as well, and are the only group where a majority felt that they had been alone during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although life is tough for Disengaged Battlers, they blame the system, not other people. We find that **55% are supportive of strong protections**.

Disengaged Traditionalists value a feeling of self-reliance and take pride in a hard day's work. They believe in a well-ordered society and put a strong priority on tackling crime. When they think about social and political debates, Disengaged Traditionalists often consider issues through a lens of suspicion towards others' behaviour and observance of Britain's social rules. While they do have viewpoints on issues, they tend to pay limited attention to public debates. They have views in common with the Loyal Nationals, but are less engaged in their community and less likely to feel strongly connected to where they live. They also pay much less attention to politics, both because they feel they have no time to engage with the news, but also because they feel there is no point in doing so, mainly through the lens of individuals rather than groups. We find that **59% are supportive of strong protections**.

Graph 4

Support for statement 'Regulations are important for creating a stable economy and a secure society' across More in Common values segments



⁴ Like these other groups, Backbone Conservatives tend to hold the most authoritarian views of the segments. They are core Conservative voters - older, relatively well off, and relatively well educated, Backbone Conservatives are the most likely to say they are proud to be British.

Although still strong, support for strong regulations is somewhat more muted among these two latter groups (**55% and 59%, which is considerably lower than the 75% figure for Backbone Conservatives**,⁴ voters who also supported Brexit in the referendum).

The factors behind this lower level of support are likely to be complex. However, previous [research](#) by Unchecked UK and More in Common suggests that this could be a symptom of the considerably deeper levels of disenchantment. In this earlier research, voters from these values segments spoke of a system rigged in favour of the powerful, were intensely suspicious about the relationship between government and the private sector, and were angered by what they perceived to be an entrenched climate of impunity. The 'Partygate' revelations were widely seen as a confirmation of long-held distrust in the system. The failure to meet the expectations unleashed by Brexit had fuelled the inherent scepticism and distrust of these voters.

A widespread sense that the system does not serve them often permeates into a feeling that even if regulations do exist they tend not to play a positive role in these voters' lives. This is consistent with the fact that the harm of deregulation has affected the most disadvantaged groups disproportionately (whether that's growing levels of unsanctioned wage underpayment or increased exposure to harmful products due to cuts to food and consumer protections). More than any others, it is these two groups who are likely to feel the impact of 'one rule for them, another rule for us'. These two groups were also the most likely to respond 'don't know' in the survey. This could suggest that a robust approach to regulation has the potential to win over a large proportion of the most disaffected groups in the UK electorate.

Conclusion

This latest Unchecked UK polling shows that championing strong, well-enforced protections offers Labour a path to navigate the complex post-election landscape and consolidate its brittle coalition, particularly among the voters whose support is likely to be most uncertain, including among those who may be tempted by Reform UK's message. The evidence from this poll and earlier research suggests that this message is likely to have an equally strong cut through with groups with a more socially liberal mindset, such as the Progressive Activists⁵ and Established Liberals⁶ who are also overwhelmingly supportive of protections.

By focusing on this agenda, Labour has the opportunity to transform its fragile mandate into a more durable coalition, potentially expanding its support base in future elections. At Unchecked UK, we believe this strategy not only aligns with voter preferences but also offers a positive vision for a well-regulated Britain that works for everyone.

Methodology

This research was conducted with More in Common. The study surveyed 2,040 adults across Great Britain, ensuring a representative sample of the population. The fieldwork was conducted from 21-23 June 2024. The analysis utilises More in Common's 'British Seven' segmentation model, as established in the 'Britain's Choice' report (2020). This model categorises respondents based on core beliefs and values, rather than traditional demographic factors. Results were weighted to be representative of the GB adult population. Cross-tabulations were performed to examine differences across the seven segments, as well as by Brexit vote and other relevant factors. The overall margin of error for the full sample is +/- 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Subgroup analyses may have larger margins of error.

⁵ Progressive Activists are very engaged across a wide range of issues. They are also the most likely to believe the system is rigged to serve the rich and influential, and share a disaffection/fatalism about society with Disengaged Battlers and Loyal Nationals, despite having very different demographic profiles.

⁶ Established Liberals tend to be educated, comfortable, and often quite wealthy. They feel at ease in their own skin - as well as the country they live in. They tend to trust the government, institutions, and those around them. They are almost twice as likely than any other group to feel that their voices are represented in politics.