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10 years of Brexit

Views on the referendum and the future UK-EU relationship

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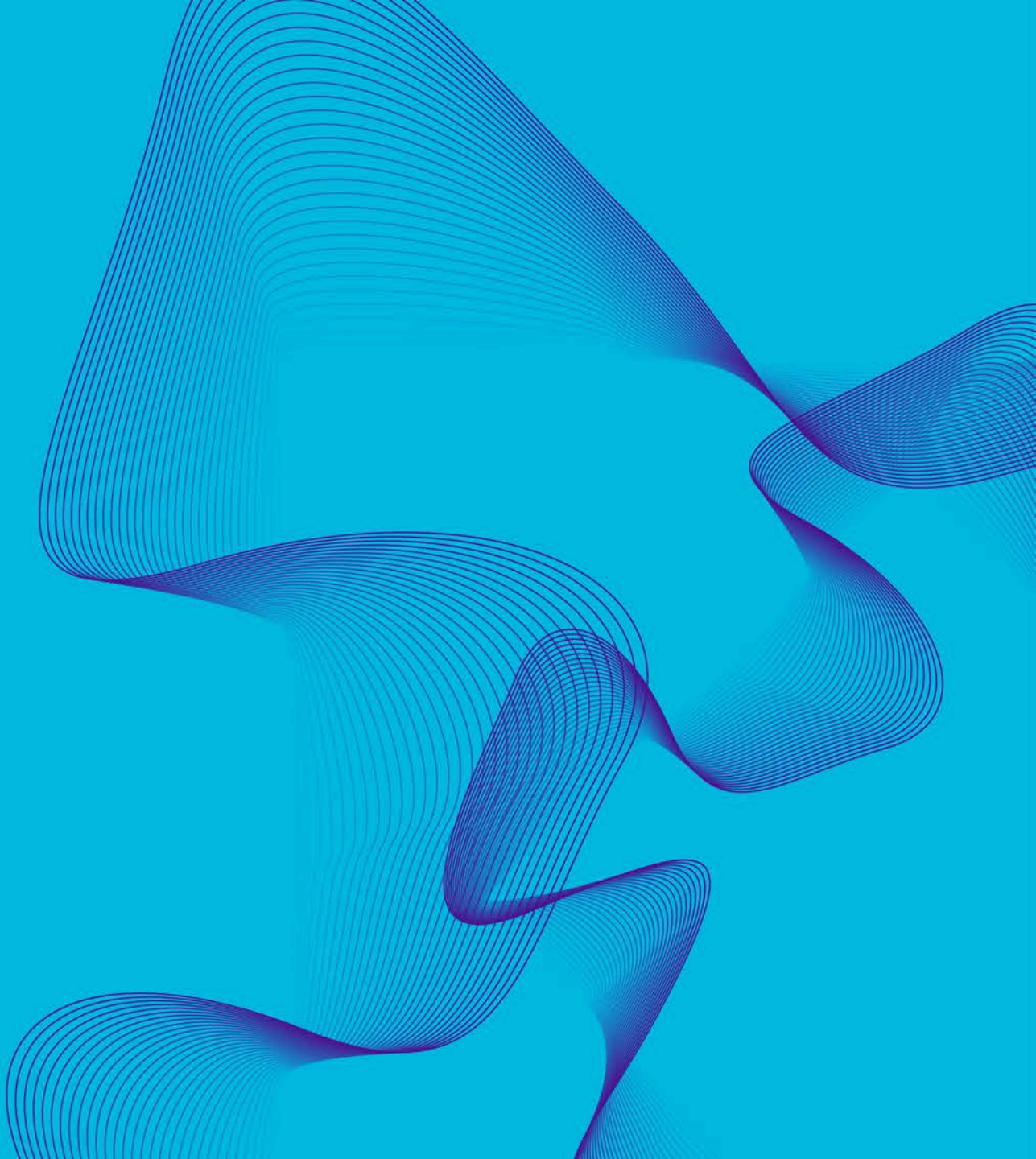
Faculty of Social Science and Public Policy

June 2026

Study details

Ipsos, in partnership with the Policy Institute at King's College London and UK in a Changing Europe, interviewed a representative sample of 2,245 adults aged 18+ across Great Britain. Interviews were conducted online between 15 and 20 May 2026. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

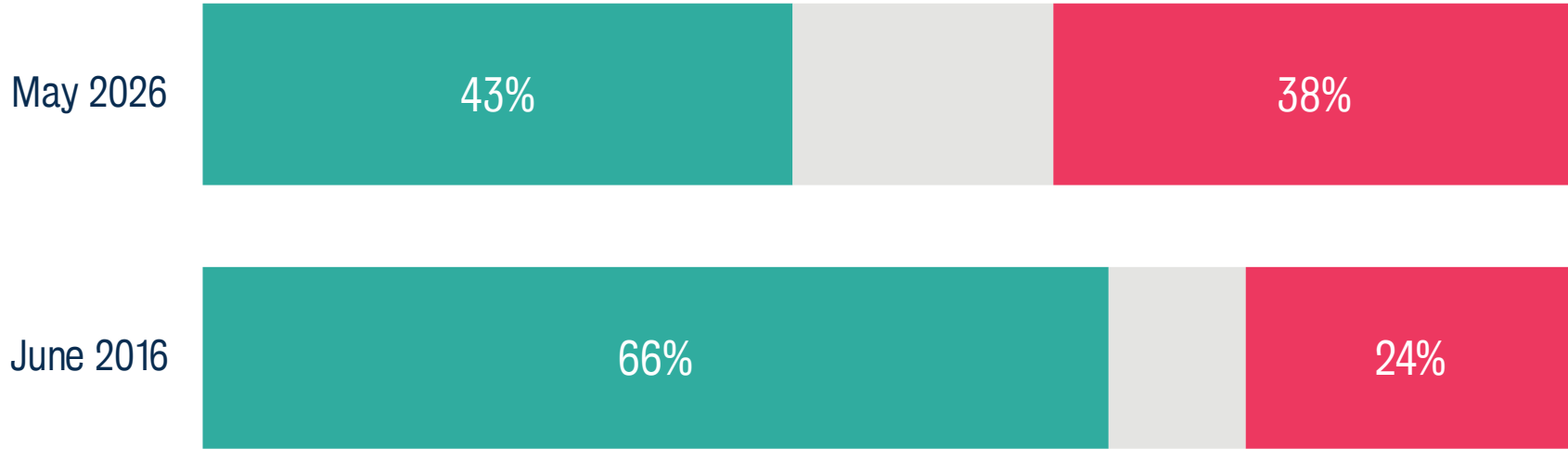
The referendum



The British public are now much less certain it was the right decision to hold the EU referendum in 2016 – but there’s still not a majority who feel it was wrong

Do you think it was right or wrong for David Cameron to hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union?*

■ Right ■ Wrong

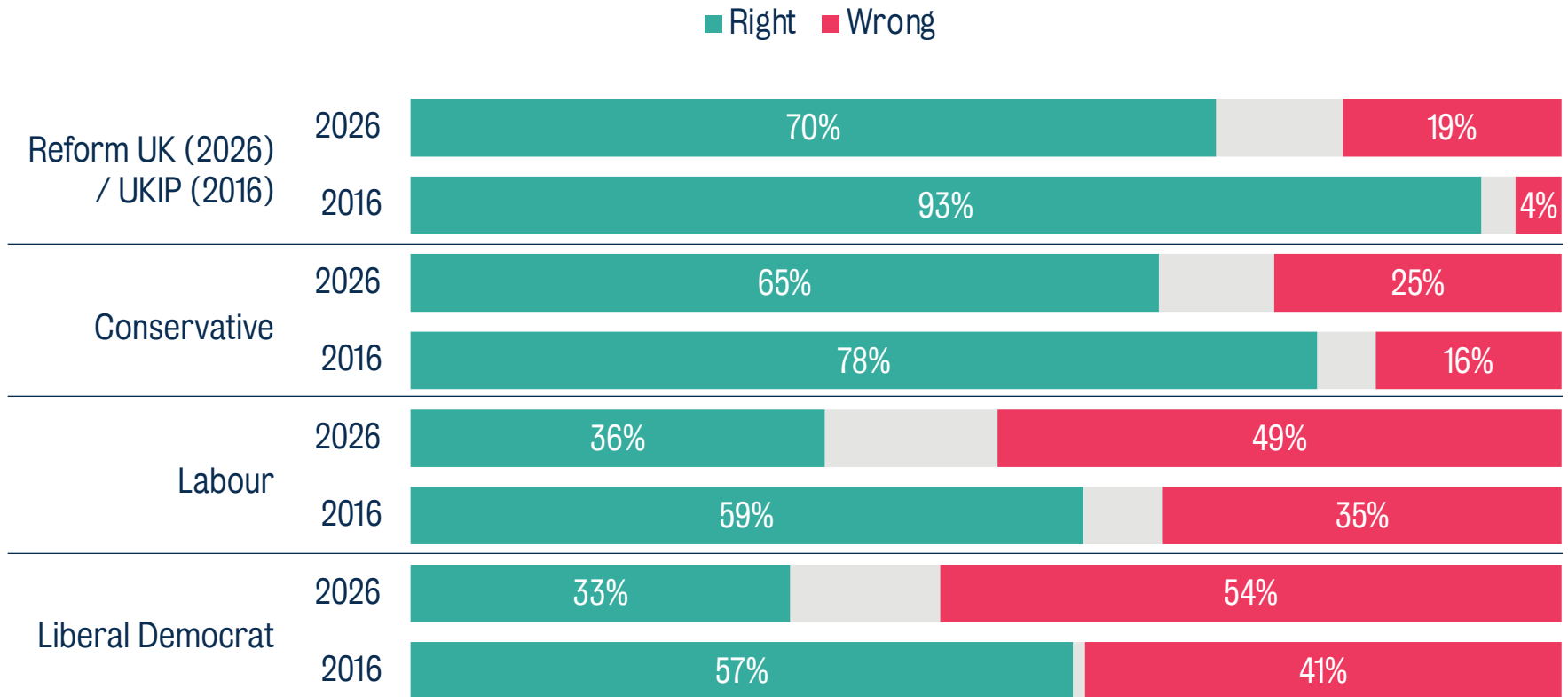


In the lead-up to the EU referendum in 2016, a majority of 66% of the public thought David Cameron was right to call the vote. 10 years on, this has fallen to 43%, while the share who say it was the wrong decision has risen from 24% to 38%, meaning the nation is now relatively divided on the issue.

*2026 respondents shown the following additional text: As you may know, in June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union after David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, promised to hold a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union”.

In the last 10 years, voters for all major parties have become more likely to say it was wrong to hold the EU referendum

Do you think it was right or wrong for David Cameron to hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union?

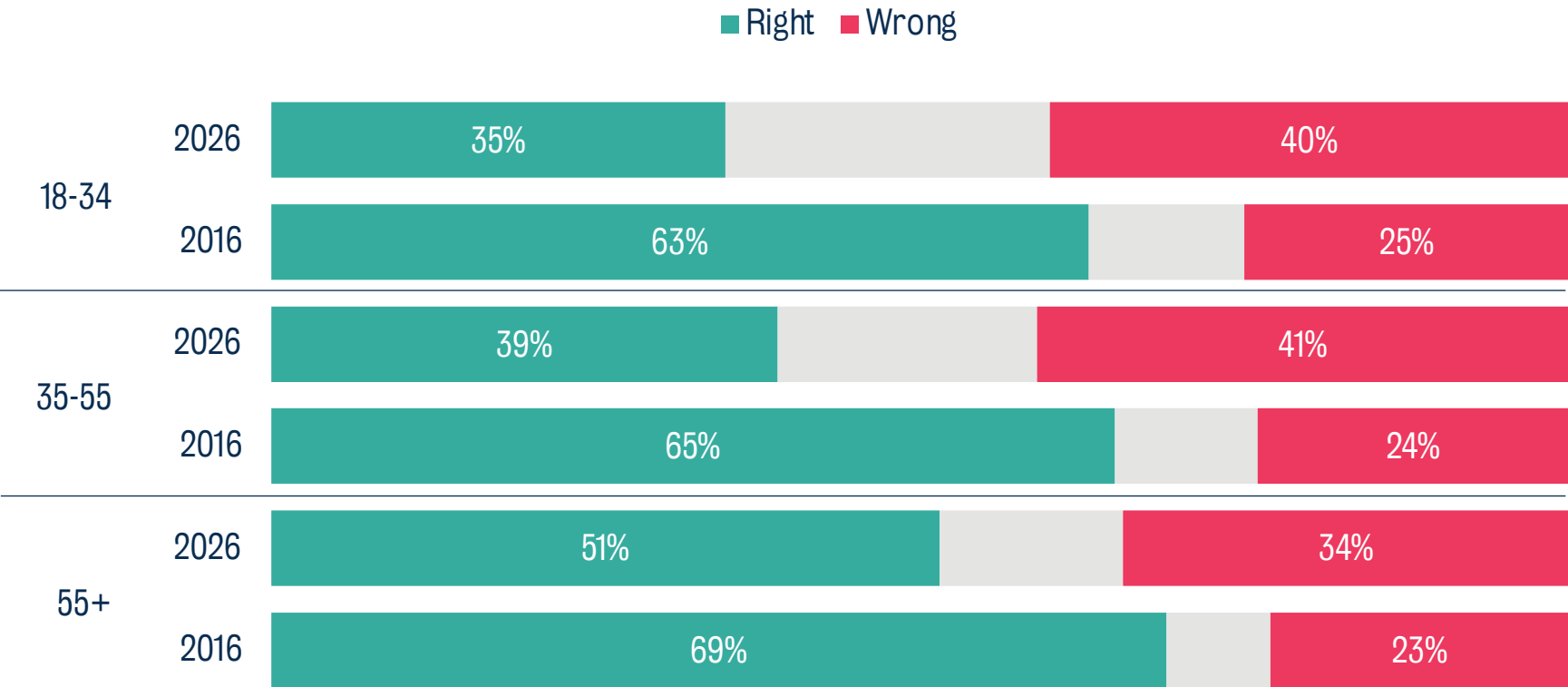


Around half of Labour (49%) and Lib Dem (54%) voters now say this was the wrong decision, as do one in five (19%) Reform UK voters. This compares with just 4% of UKIP voters who felt this way back in 2016.

Note: voter groups based on past vote 2015/2024.

Only those aged 55+ are now more likely to say David Cameron was right rather than wrong to hold the referendum

Do you think it was right or wrong for David Cameron to hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union?

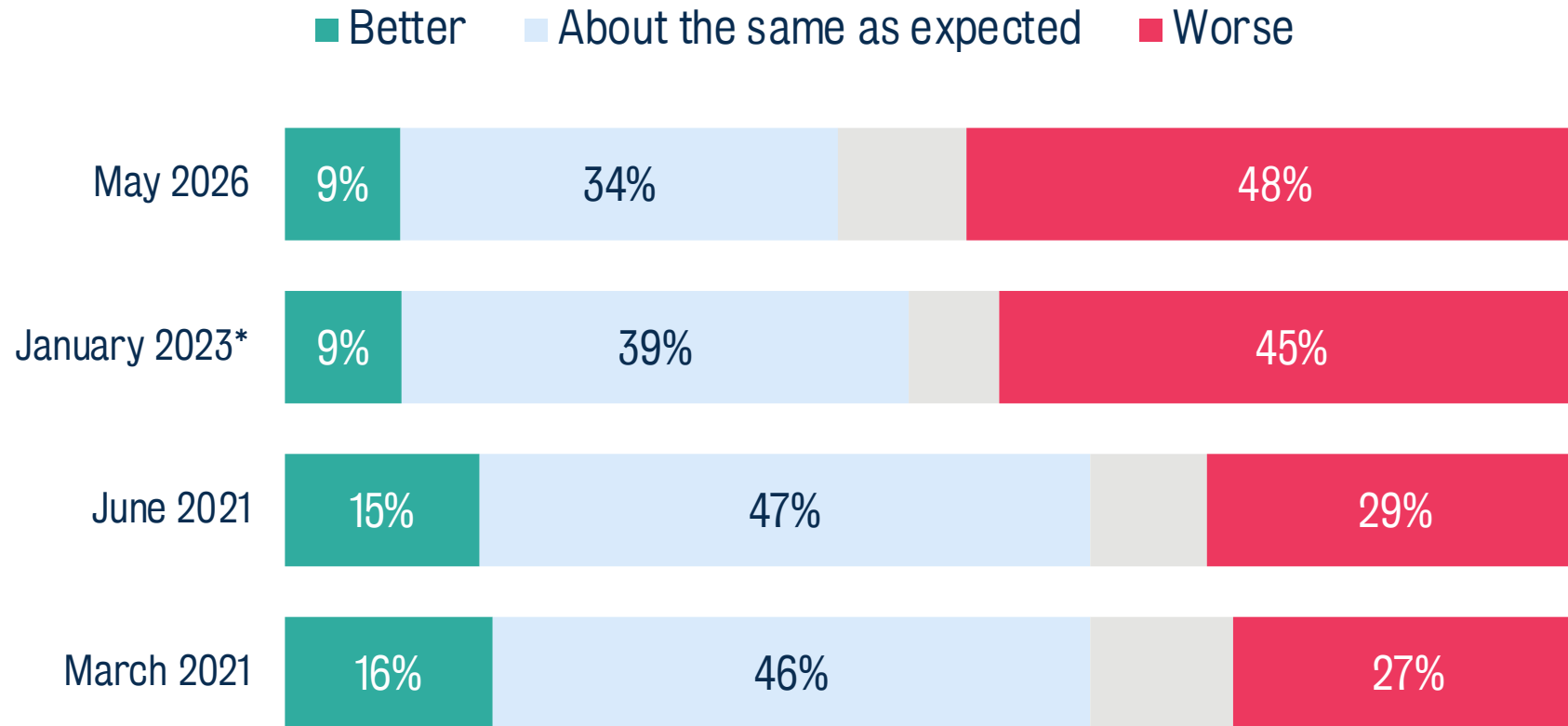


In 2016, all age groups were much more likely to approve than disapprove of the decision to hold the Brexit vote, but the balance of opinion is now more split among those aged 55 and under.

Almost half the public – still not a majority – say Brexit is going worse than they expected

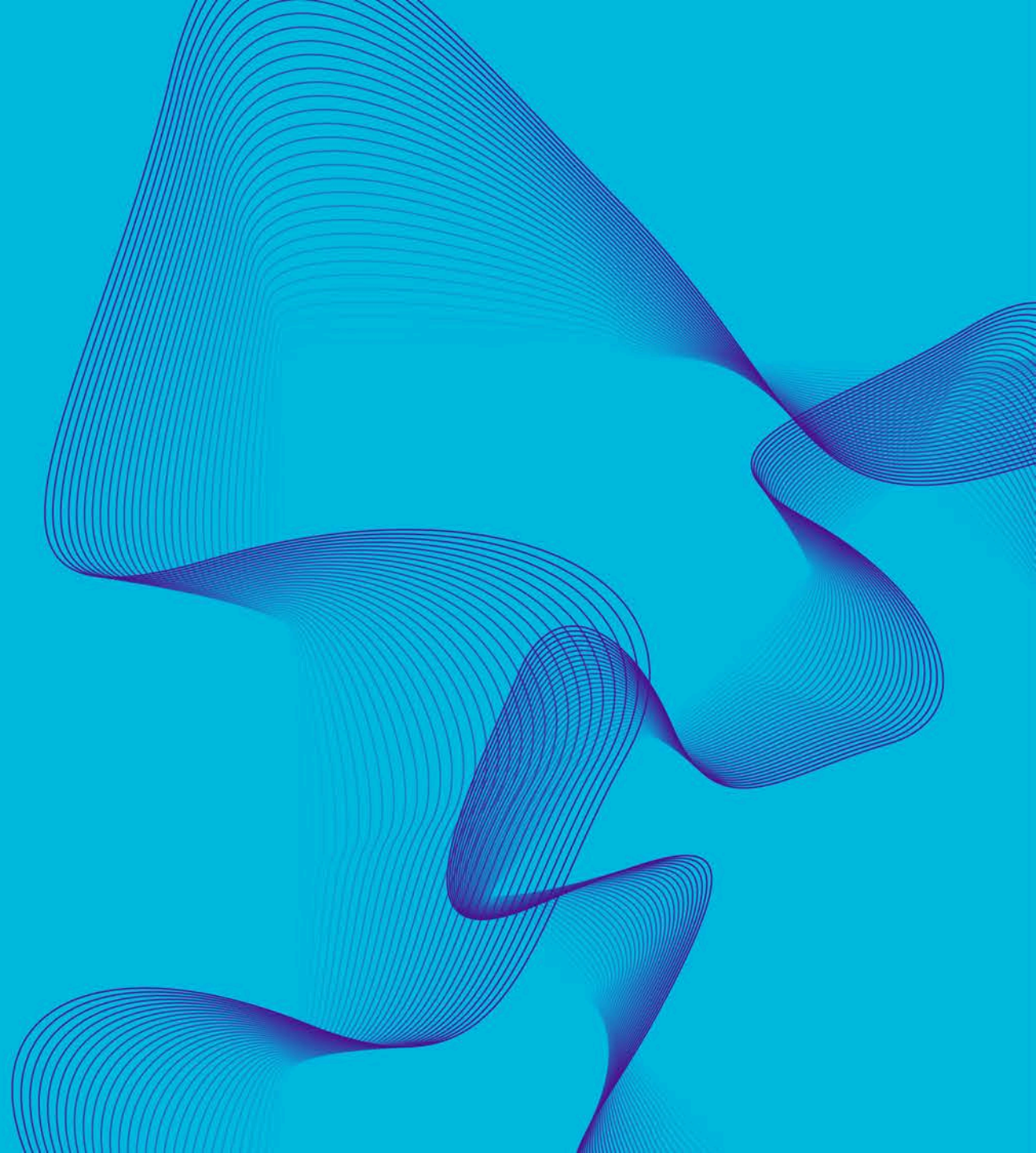
Regardless of how you voted in the EU referendum, do you believe Britain's exit from the EU is working out better or worse, or about the same as you expected? 2026 base: 2,245 GB adults aged 18+, 15-20 May.

In 2021, 28% felt Britain's exit from the EU was working out worse than they predicted. Five years later, this has risen to 48% – for the first time greater than the share of the public who feel Brexit is going about as well or better than expected (43%).



*January 2023 sample 18-75 rather than 18+ / 16+ for other waves

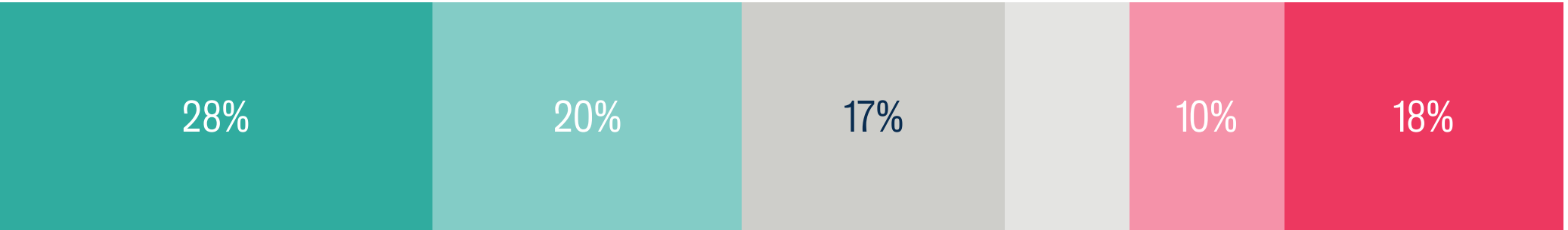
Another referendum?



There is still not majority backing for a second referendum in the next five years. Nearly half (48%) now support one, including three in 10 (28%) who *strongly* support another vote. This compares to a quarter (27%) who oppose one

To what extent, if at all, would you support or oppose a referendum on whether the UK should join the European Union taking place in the next five years?

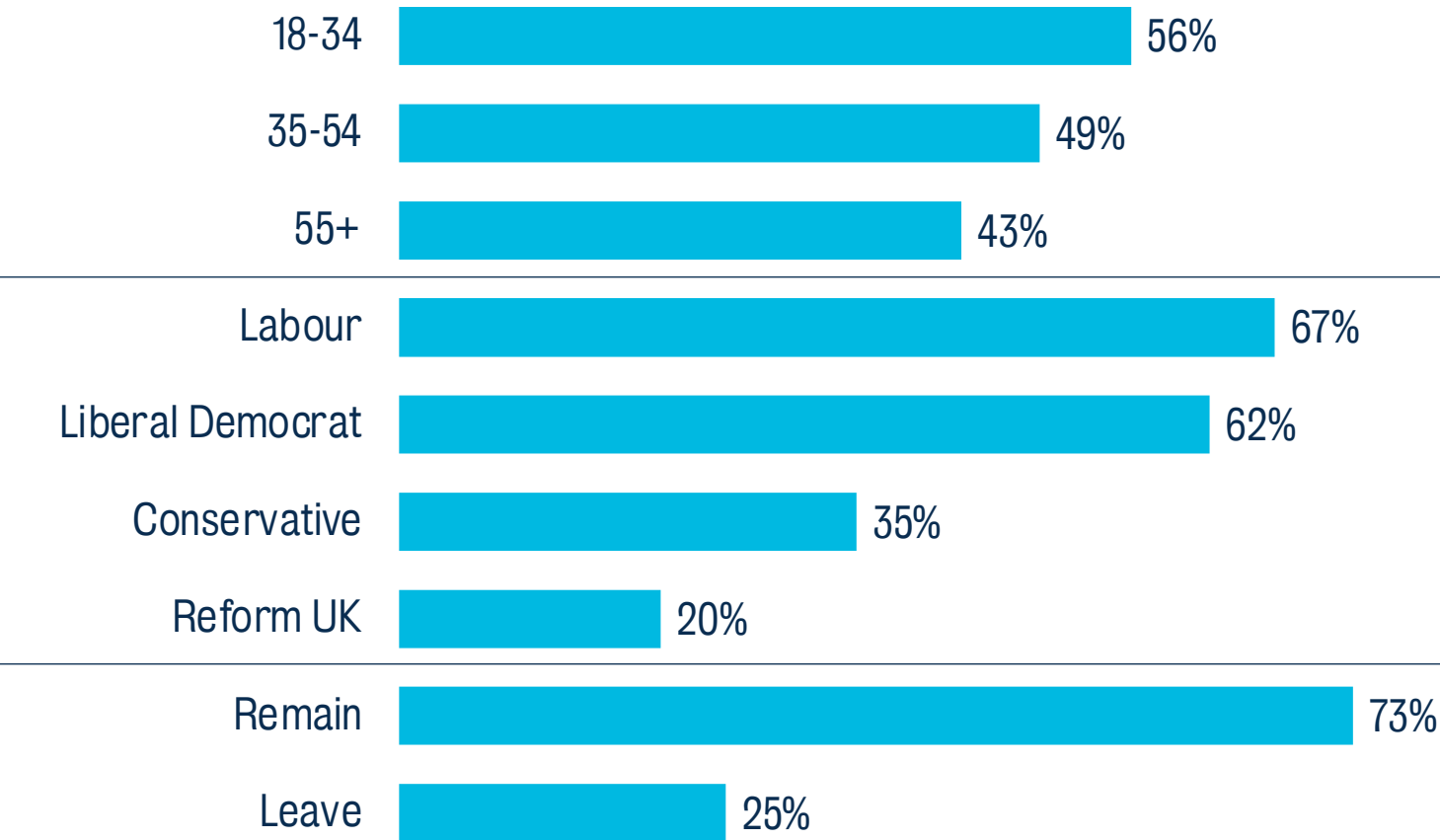
- Strongly support
- Tend to support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Tend to oppose
- Strongly oppose



*Some headline figures differ from chart due to rounding

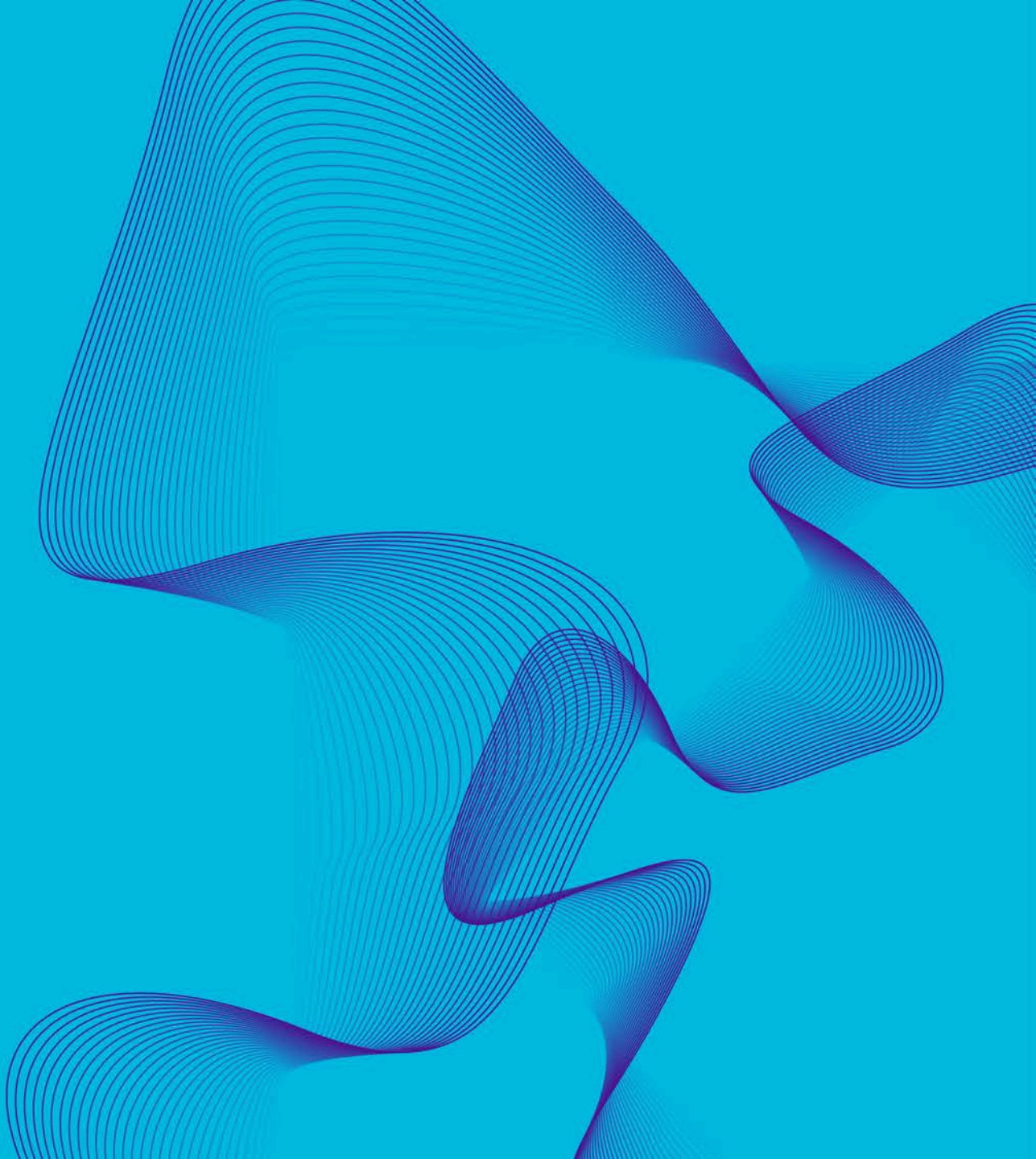
One in five Reform UK voters and one in four Leavers are in favour of another EU referendum

To what extent, if at all, would you support or oppose a referendum on whether the UK should join the European Union taking place in the next five years? (% who strongly/tend to support)



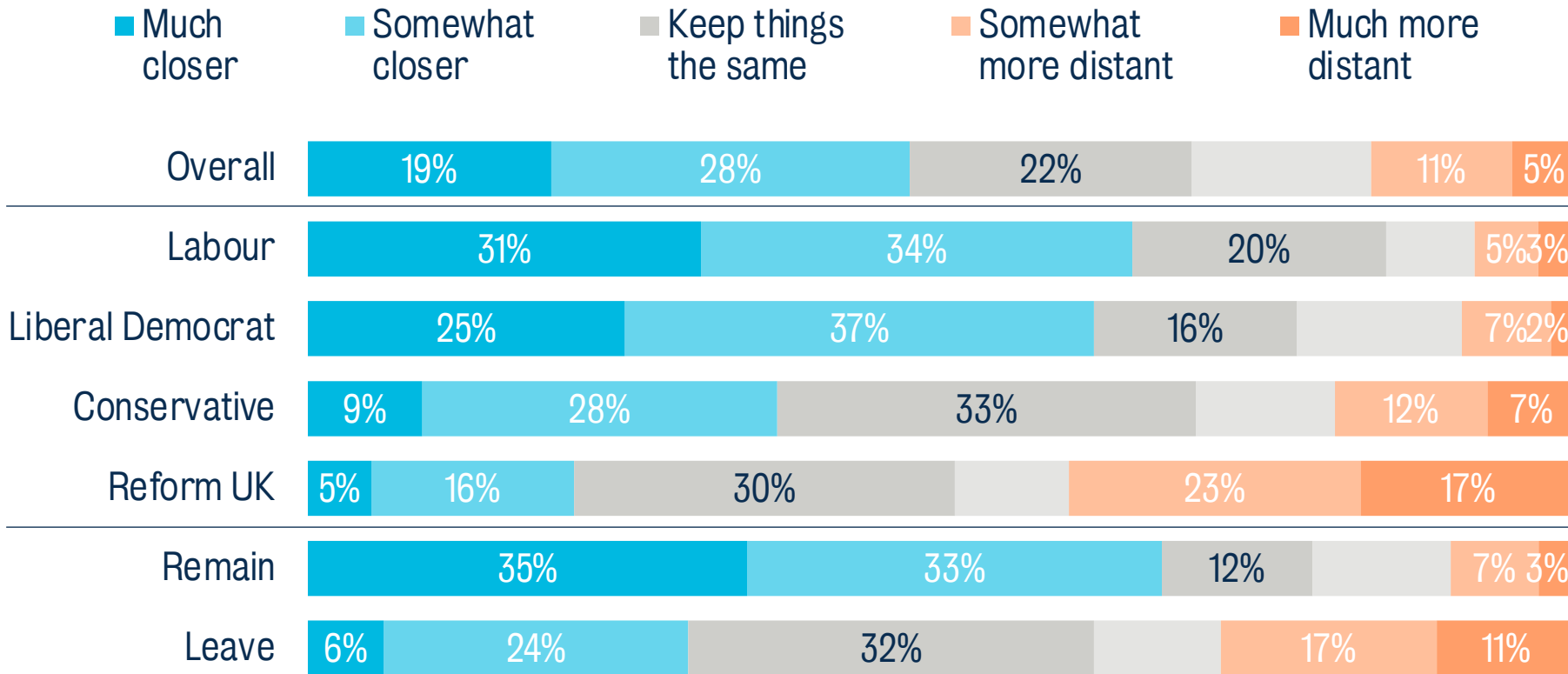
And 18-34s are the only age group with a majority who back a second referendum – though nearly half of 35-54s also back another vote.

The future relationship



Much of the public – including three in 10 Leave voters – would now like closer relations with the EU

Thinking about the UK-EU trade relationship overall, do you think the UK government should seek a closer relationship with the EU on trade, a more distant relationship or keep things the same as today? A closer relationship would aim to increase trade between the UK and the EU, but it might mean the UK agreeing to follow EU rules and standards (with little say in how those are made), and making a financial contribution to the EU.



47% say the government should seek closer relations with the EU – higher than the share who say relations should become more distant (16%) or stay the same (22%).

Labour and Lib Dem voters are most likely to prefer closer relations, although nearly two in five (37%) Conservatives and around one in five (21%) Reform UK voters would also like to strengthen the UK’s link with the EU.

Looking at preferences by Brexit affiliation, two-thirds of Remain voters want a closer relationship compared to less than a third of Leave voters.

Support for allowing EU citizens to live and work in Britain in exchange for single market access appears to have grown in the last 10 years...

2026 question: Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

2016 question: If Britain votes to leave the European Union on 23 June which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

- Britain should allow/continue to allow EU citizens to come and live and work in Britain in return for improved access/access to the EU single market
- Britain should stop EU citizens coming to live and work in Britain with its own/new immigration rules, even if that restricts Britain's access to the EU single market



*2016 wording

This was a minority position back in 2016 – but 53% of the public now agree Britain should allow immigration from the EU in return for access to the single market.

...But when framed as an issue of sovereignty rather than economics, the public still prioritise more control on immigration over a closer relationship with the EU

Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

■ It is beneficial for Britain to have a closer relationship with the EU/**remain in the EU**, even if this means the Government does not have total control over the number of people who come into Britain

■ The Government should have total control over who comes into Britain, even if this means a more limited relationship with the EU/**coming out of the EU to achieve it**



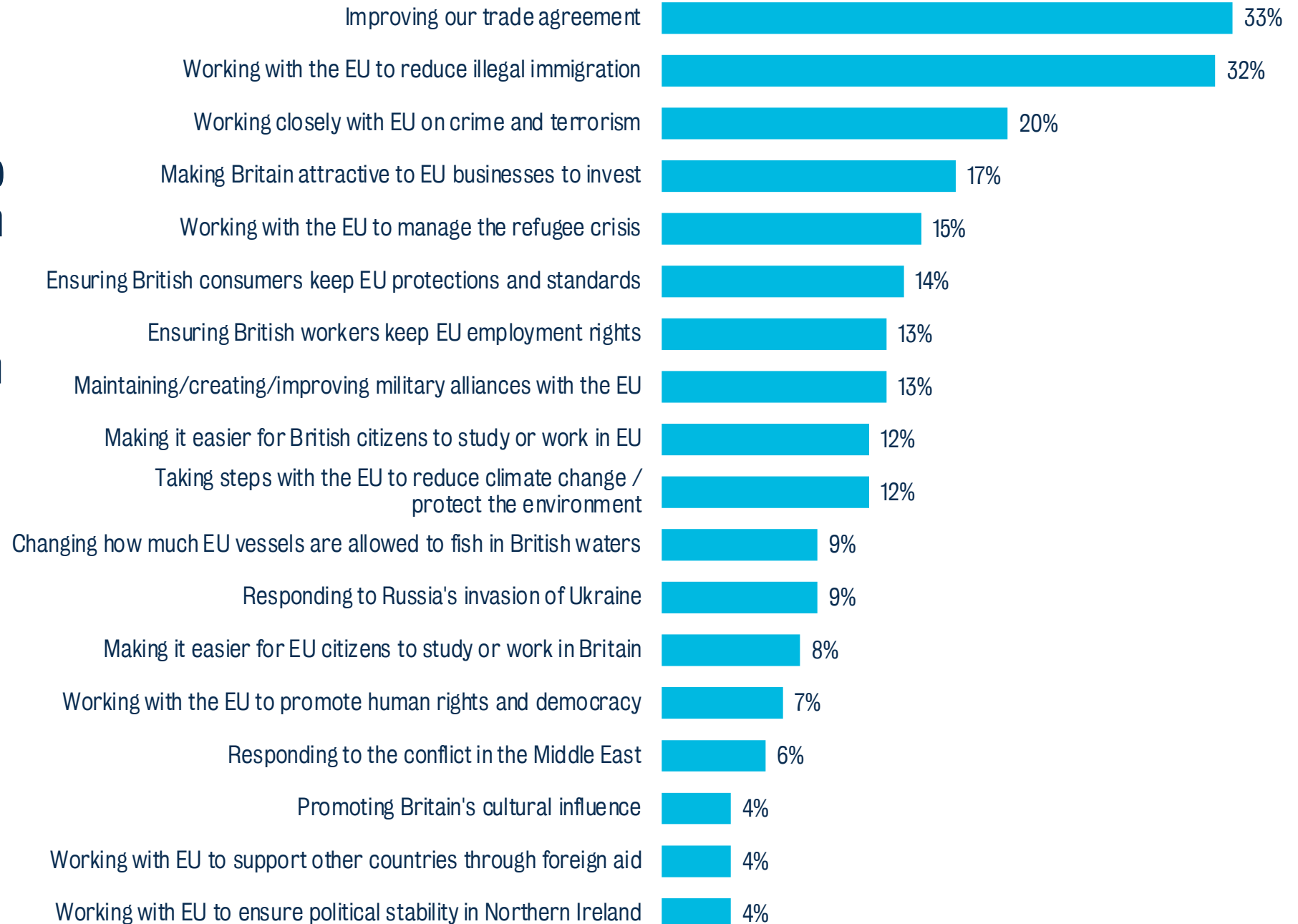
*2016 wording

The share of the public who prefer a closer relationship with the EU, even if it means less control over immigration from the bloc, has risen slightly over the last 10 years. But a majority still prefer total border control and a more limited relationship with the EU.

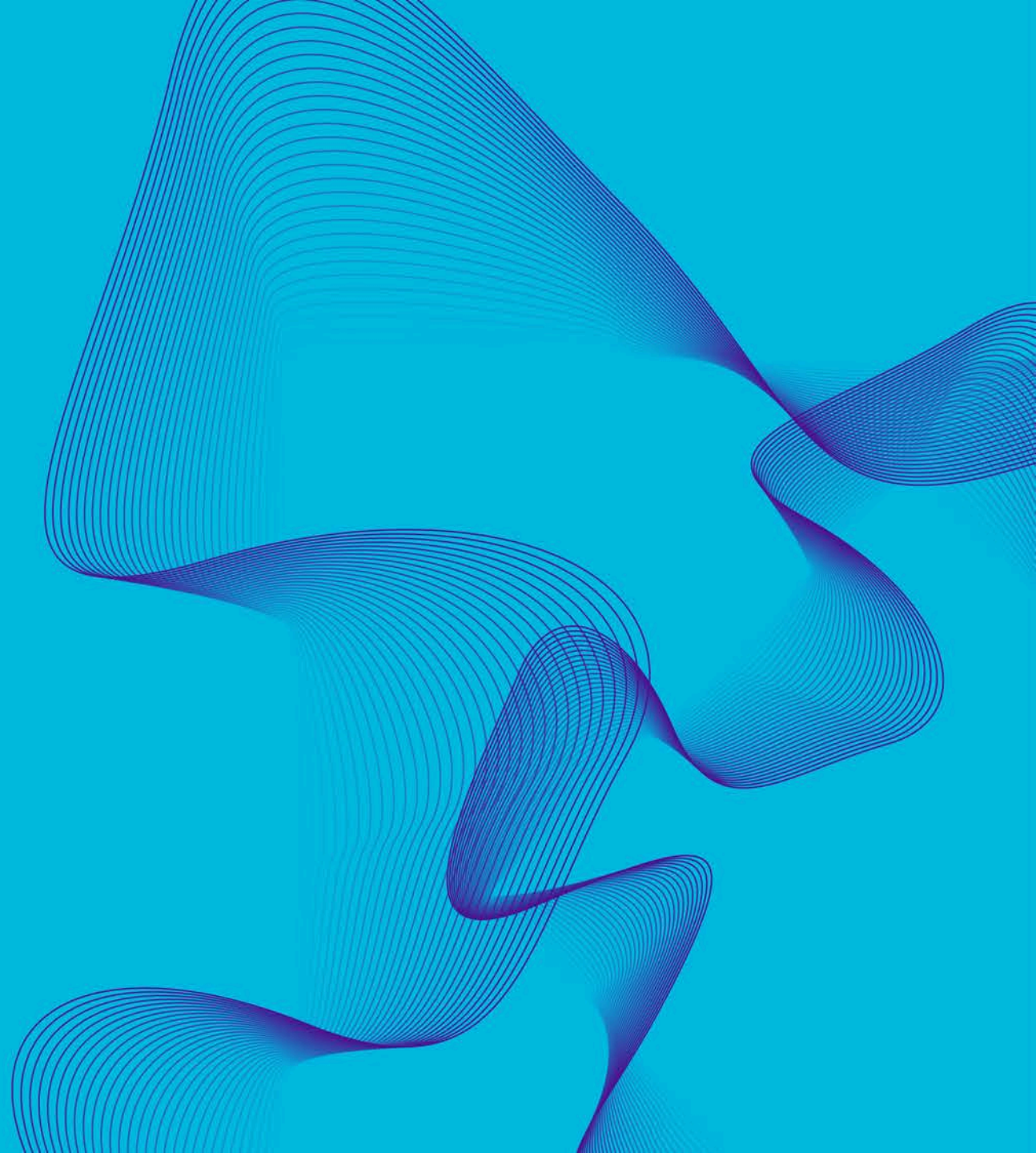
Framing immigration from the EU as a question of sovereignty therefore favours control, while an economic framing favours openness.

Trade and illegal immigration are the public's top priorities for Britain's relationship with the EU, with Remain and Leave voters split on which comes first, while few see stability in Northern Ireland, providing foreign aid or promoting the nation's cultural influence as pressing concerns

Which two or three of these, if any, do you think should be the top priorities for Britain's relationship with the European Union?

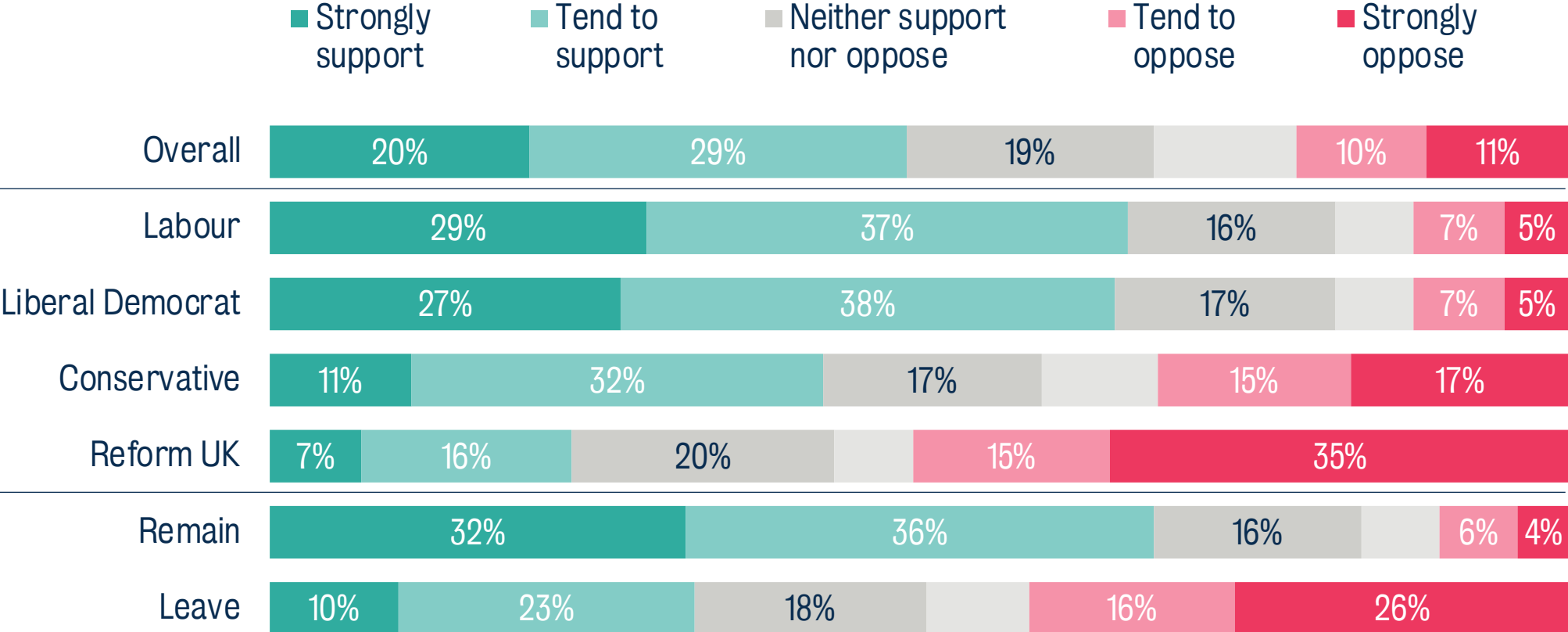


Trade offs



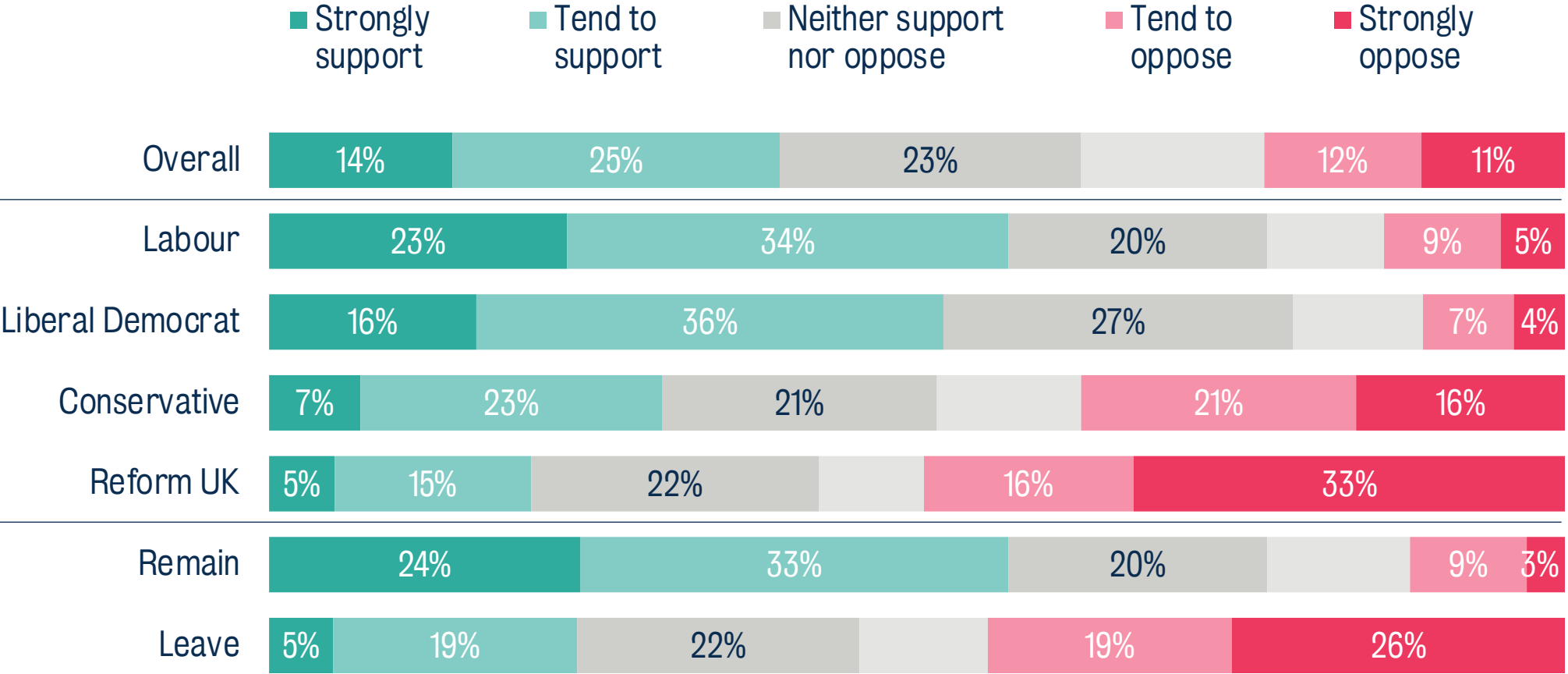
Support (49%) for a return to free movement in exchange for easier trade outweighs opposition (21%) by more than two to one, with Labour, Lib Dem and Remain voters firmly behind it

And would you support or oppose, if either, a return to the free movement of people between the UK and EU (i.e. the unrestricted right for EU and UK citizens to work, live and study in each other's countries), in exchange for making it significantly easier to trade between the EU and the UK?



Two in five (40%) support accepting EU goods rules in order to smooth trade, while around one four are against (24%), with Reform UK voters most opposed

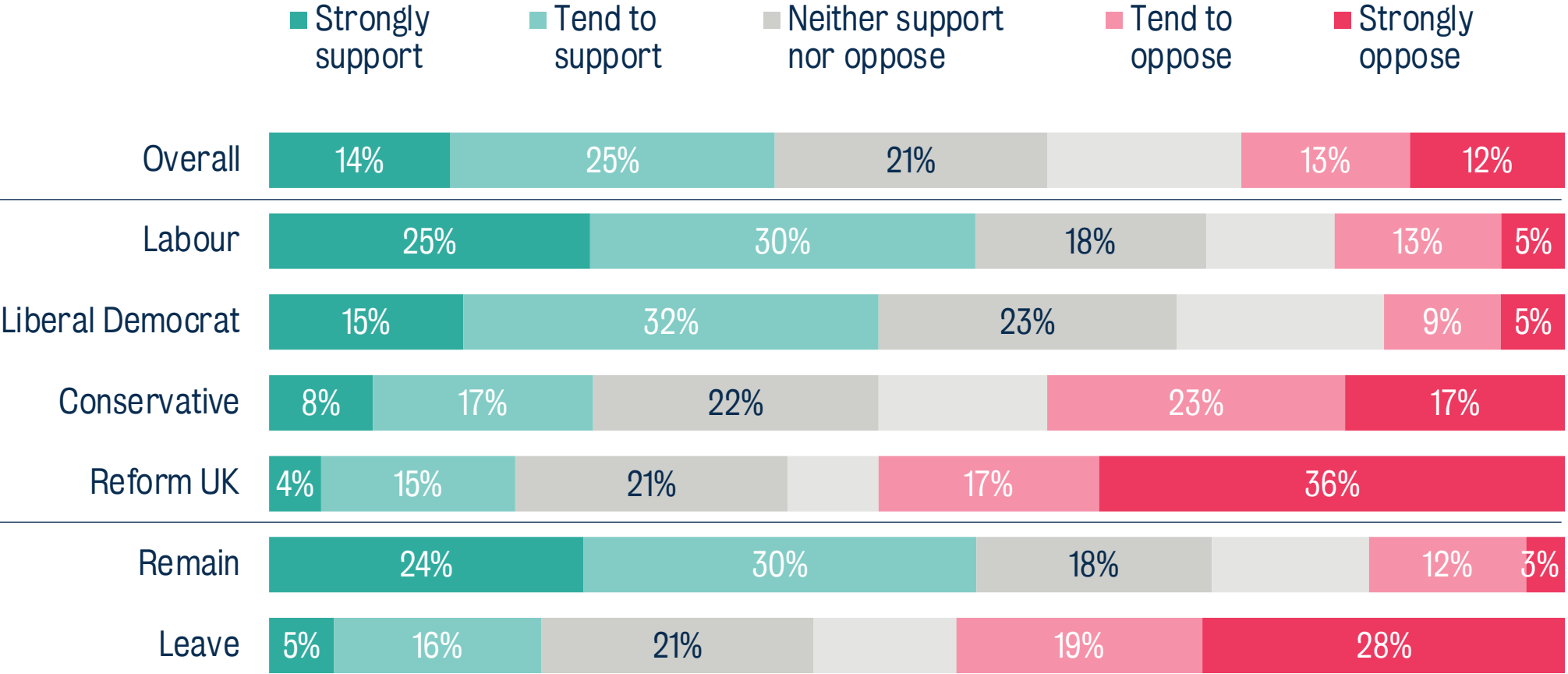
Would you support, or oppose, if either, the UK government negotiating a deal with the EU that meant Britain was subject to EU law on goods, with little say in how rules were made and a potential financial contribution to the EU, if it made trade in goods easier? This might mean the UK signing up to EU rules on consumer standards and product safety in order to make trade in consumer goods with the EU easier.



*Some headline figures differ from chart due to rounding. 2026 base:: 2,245 GB adults aged 18+, 15-20 May

The public are more likely to support (38%) than oppose (26%) signing up to EU energy rules for easier electricity trade – but a majority of Reform UK (53%) voters reject the idea

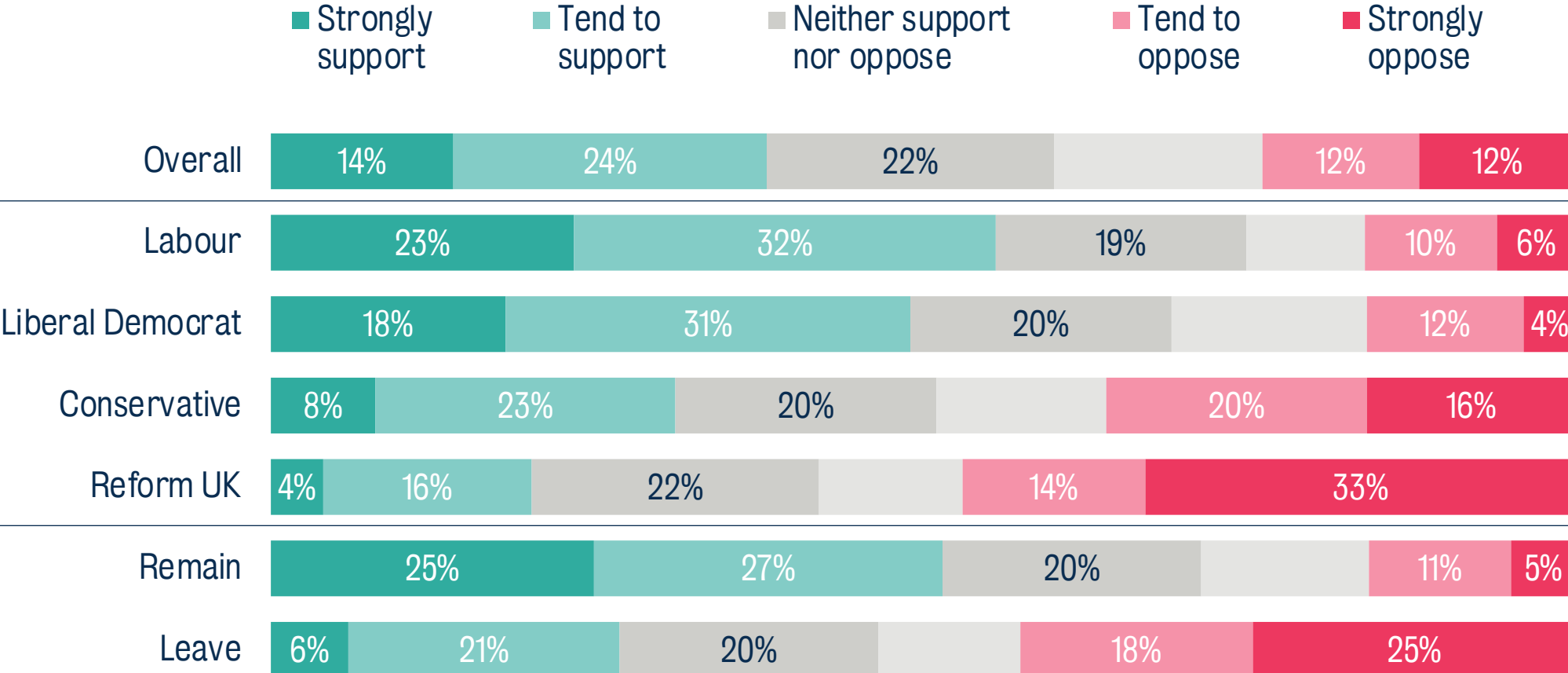
Would you support, or oppose, if either, the UK government negotiating a deal with the EU that meant Britain was subject to EU law on electricity, with little say in how rules were made and a potential financial contribution to the EU, if it made trade in electricity easier? This might mean the UK signing up to EU rules on state aid and supporting renewable energy to make access to electricity from the EU easier.



*Some headline figures differ from chart due to rounding. 2026 base:: 2,245 GB adults aged 18+, 15-20 May

There is a similar split in opinion on aligning with EU animal and plant health rules to ease trade in agricultural products, with 38% in favour compared with 24% against

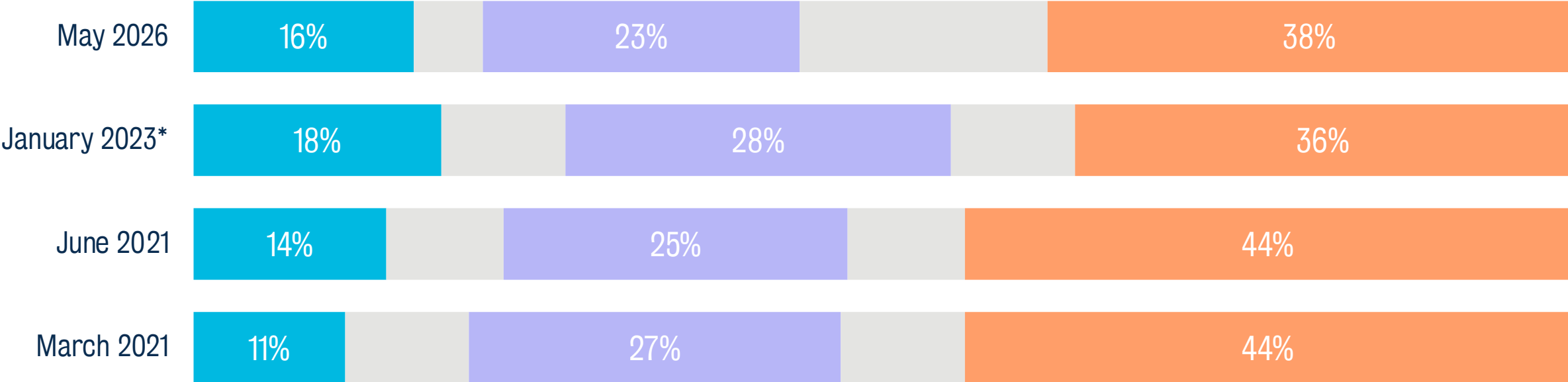
Would you support, or oppose, if either, the UK government negotiating a deal with the EU that meant Britain was subject to EU law on plant and animal health, with little say in how rules were made, if it made trade in agricultural products easier? This might mean the UK signing up to EU rules on animal welfare standards or rules on the use of pesticides to make trade in meat, dairy and fresh produce easier.



Few believe negotiations over Britain's future relationship with the EU are over

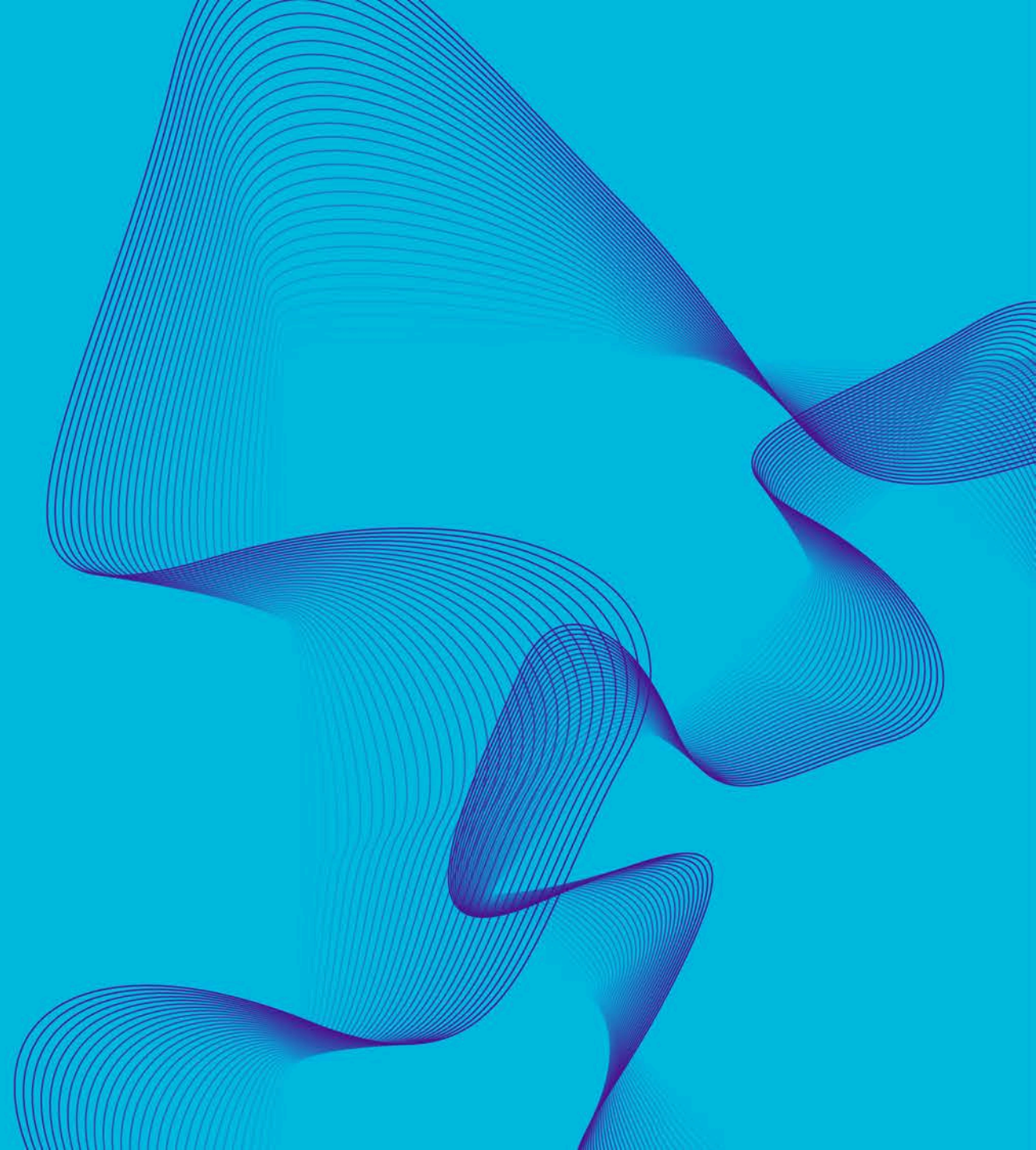
Which of the statements below, if any, is closest to your opinion about the future relationship between the UK and the EU over the next few years?

- Britain's future relationship with the EU is now mostly decided, and will hardly change over the next few years
- The broad outlines of Britain's future relationship with the EU will not change much over the next few years, but there are still some important areas left to decide
- There are still many important issues to finalise in Britain's future relationship with the EU, which will mean lots more negotiations over the next few years



*January 2023 sample 18-75 rather than 18+ / 16+ for other waves

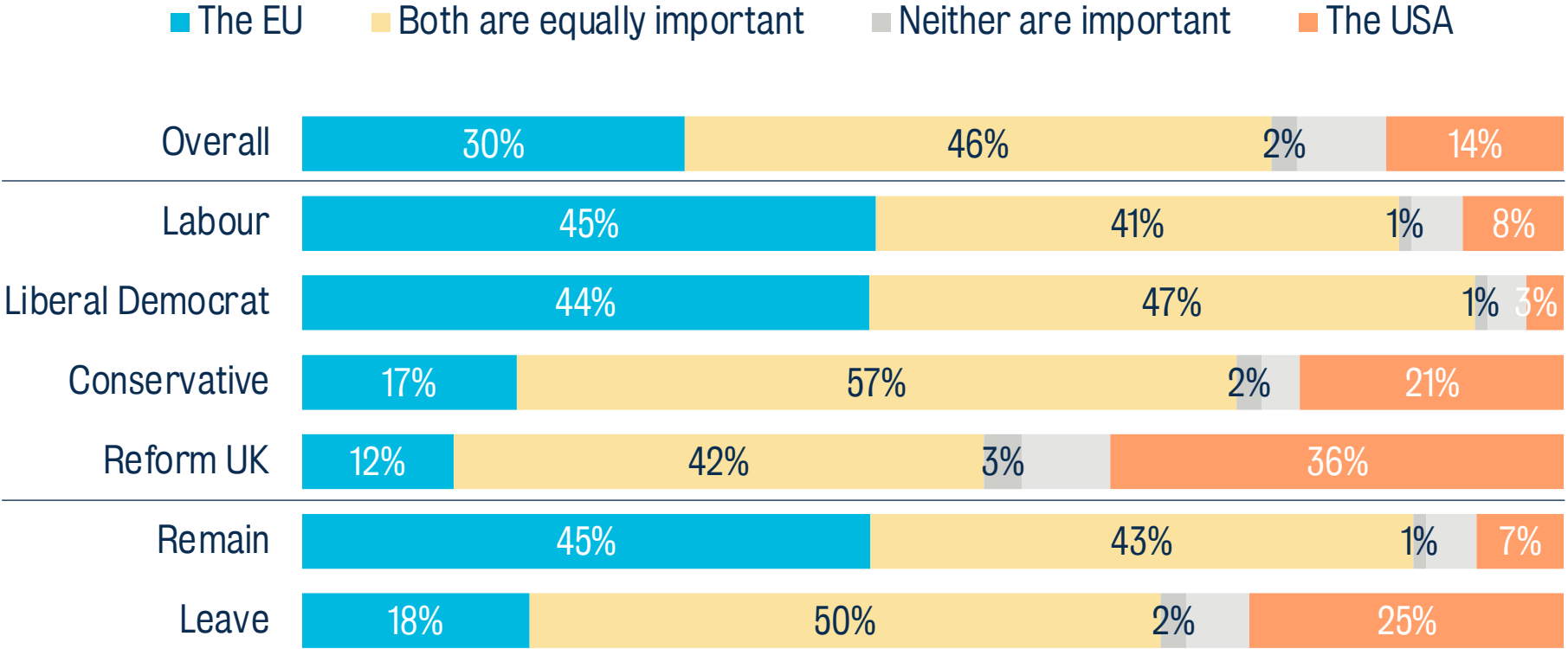
Defence and national security



People are twice as likely to say the EU, rather than the USA, is the more important security partner for the UK – though the most common response is that both are equally important...

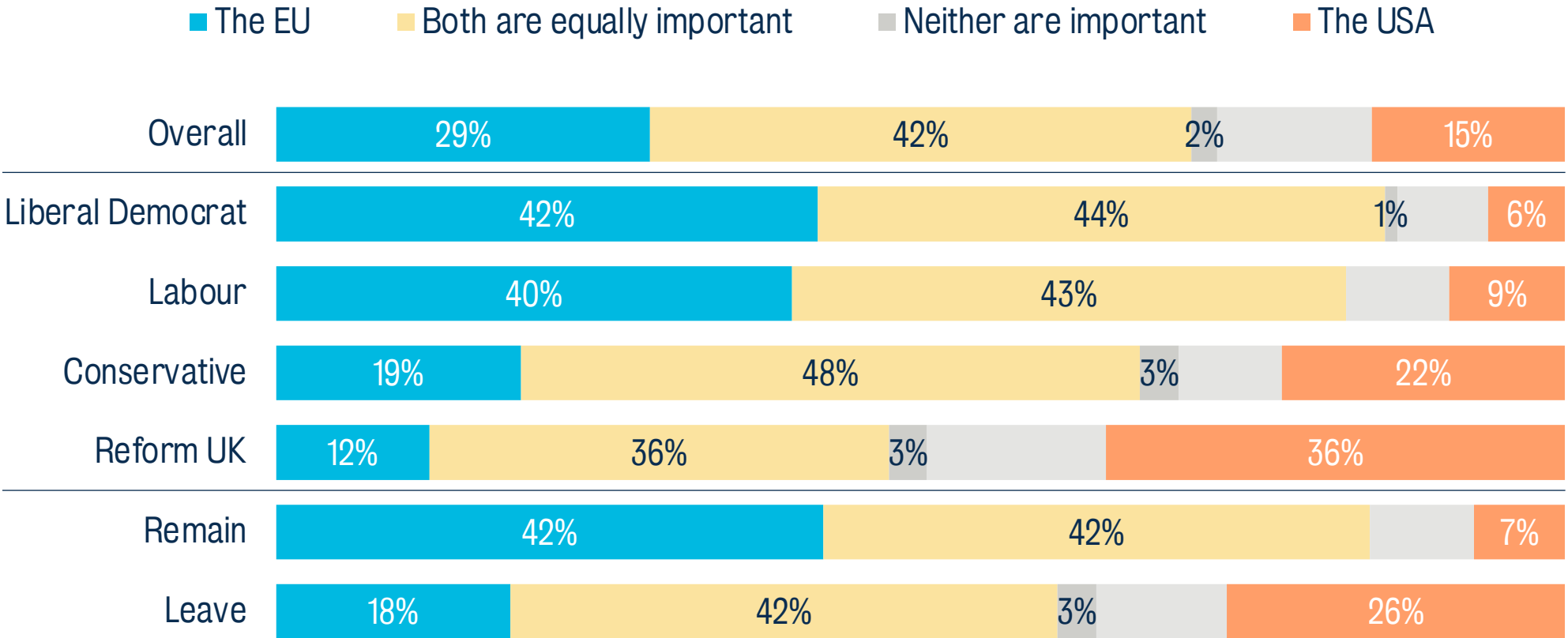
Which of the following do you think is the more important security and defence partner for the UK today?

However, Reform UK voters are three times as likely to feel the USA (36%) is the more important partner for the UK's security and defence than the EU (12%).



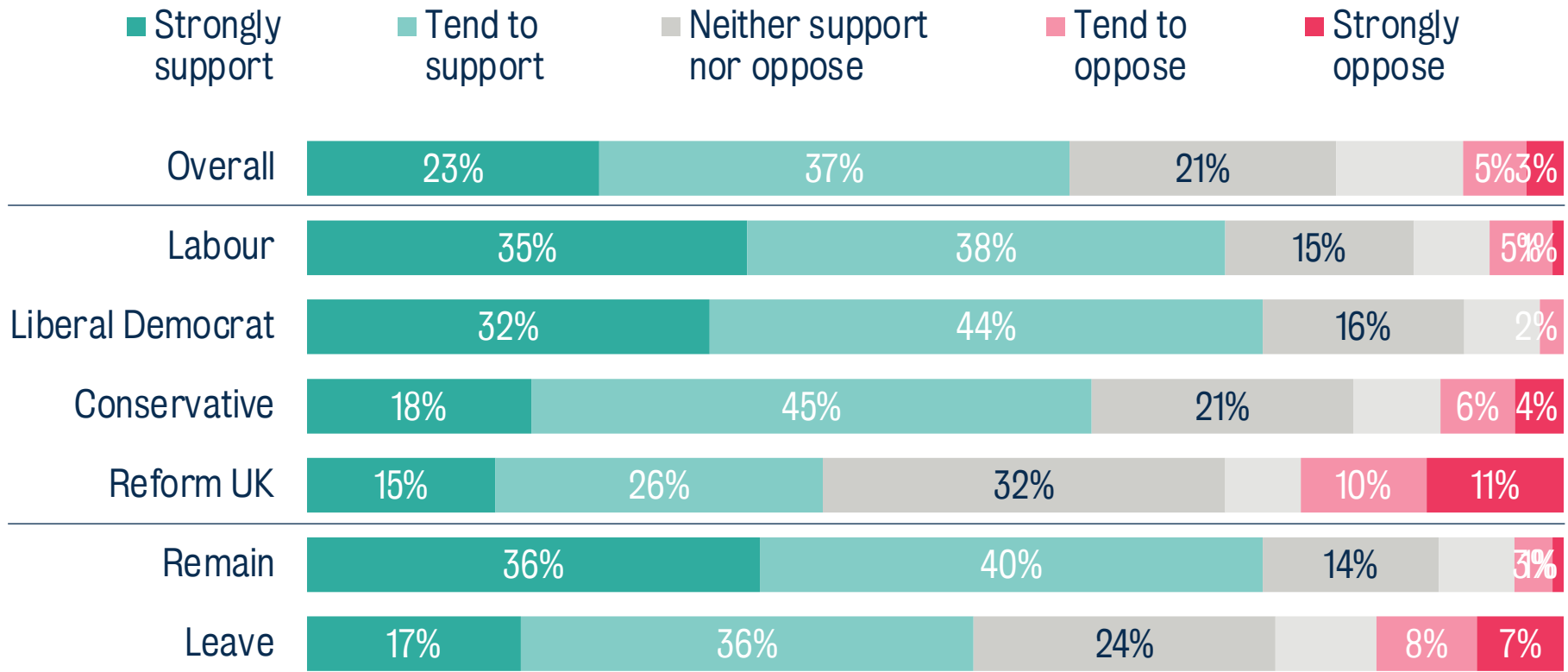
...And their views are largely unchanged when it comes to which will be more important in 20 years' time

And which of the following do you think will be the more important security and defence partner for the UK in 20 years' time?



There is significant support for a closer security and defence relationship with the EU

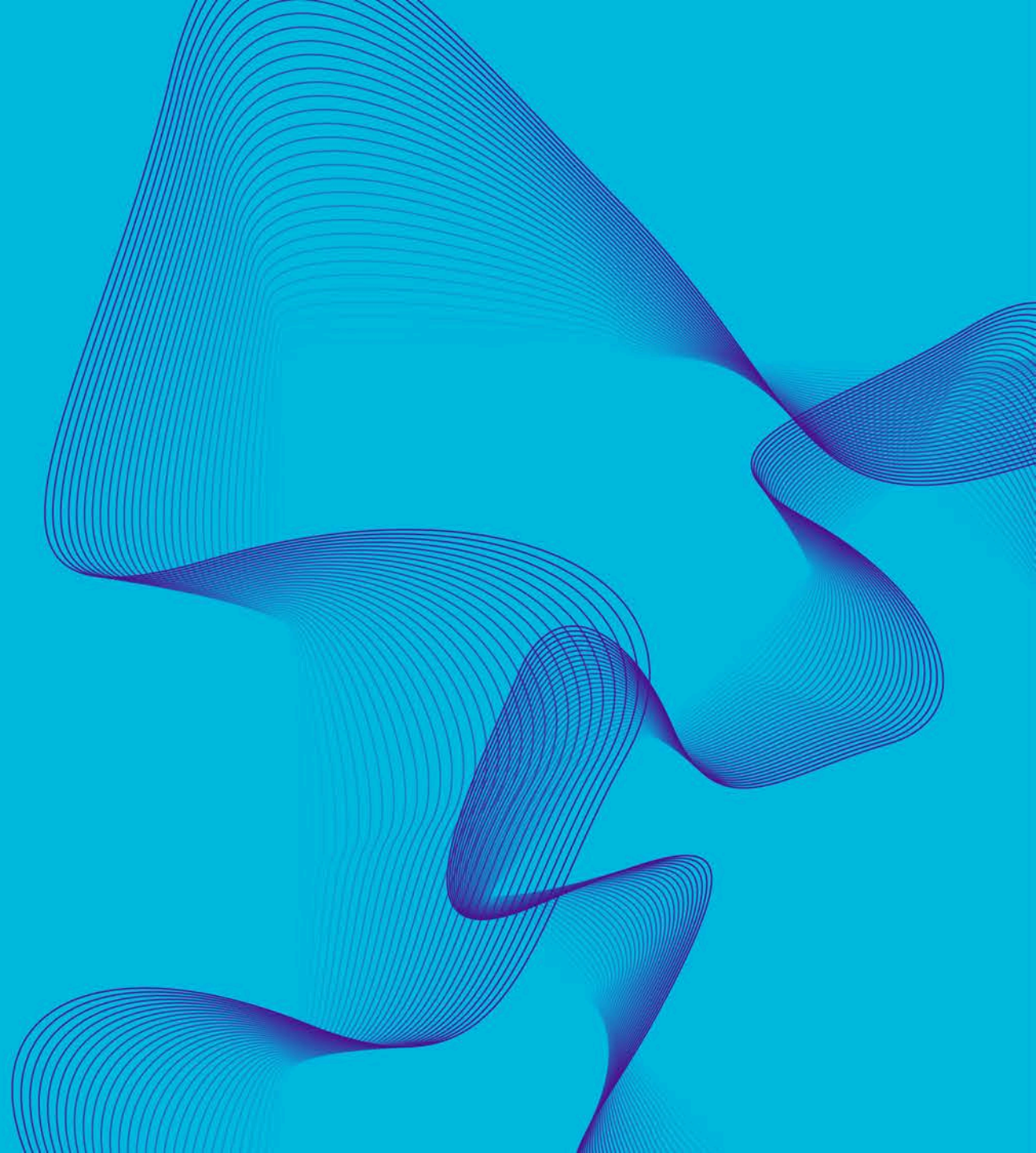
Would you support or oppose, if either, the UK government seeking a closer security and defence relationship with the EU? For example, this might involve joint military operations and increased sharing of intelligence, research and cyber security efforts between the UK and EU.



Six in 10 (60%) people support greater collaboration with the EU on security and defence, with just 8% opposed.

Reform UK (41%) voters are the only group without majority support for a closer relationship in this area, while most Conservatives (63%) and Leave (53%) voters are in favour.

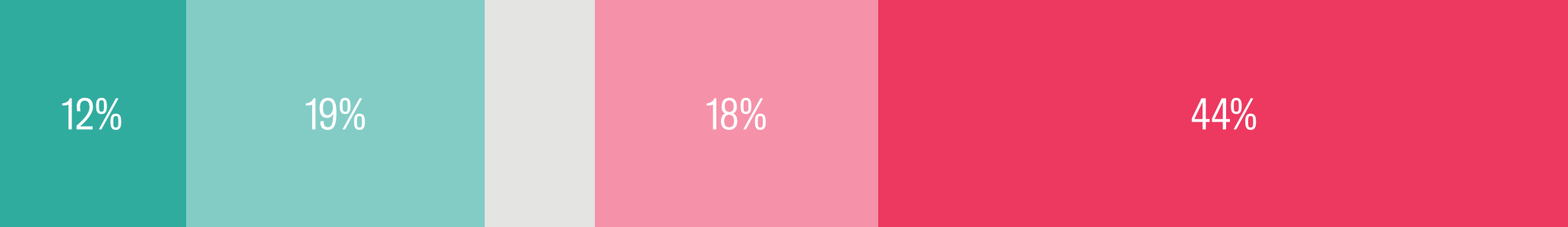
Changing UK-EU relations: vote winner or vote loser for Labour?



31% currently say they are likely to consider voting Labour at the next general election, while double this share – 62% – say they are not...

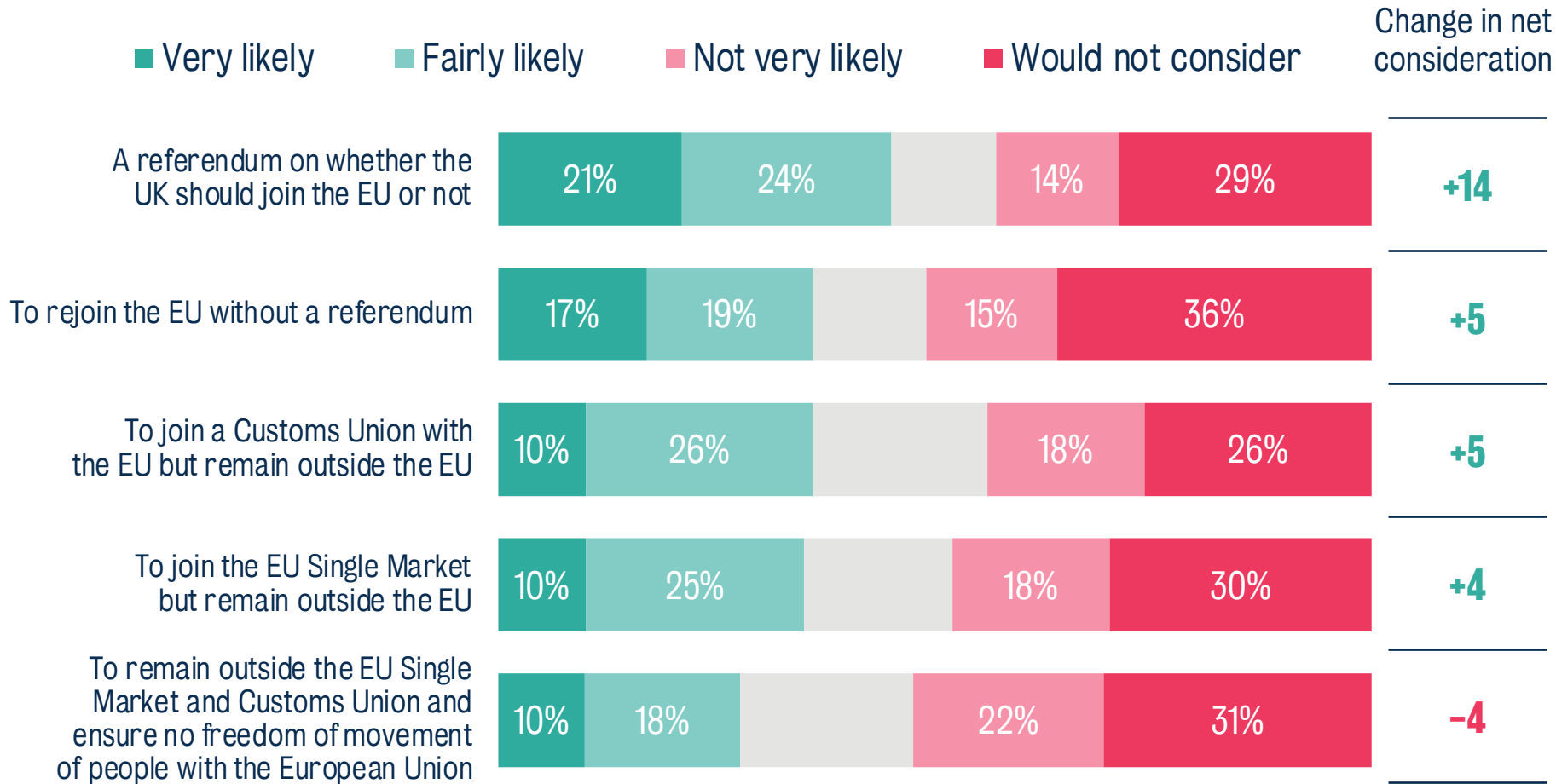
Thinking ahead to the next General Election, based on what you currently know, how likely, if at all, would you be to consider voting for each of the following parties? Labour Party

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Not very likely ■ Would not consider at all



...But were Labour to offer a second referendum in its manifesto, this shifts to a 45% to 43% split in likelihood to consider them

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election?



A second EU referendum is the most popular Brexit pledge that could encourage people to consider Labour (45%).

Among all the other options, the share of the public who say it would encourage them to consider voting for the party is outweighed by the share who say it would *not*.

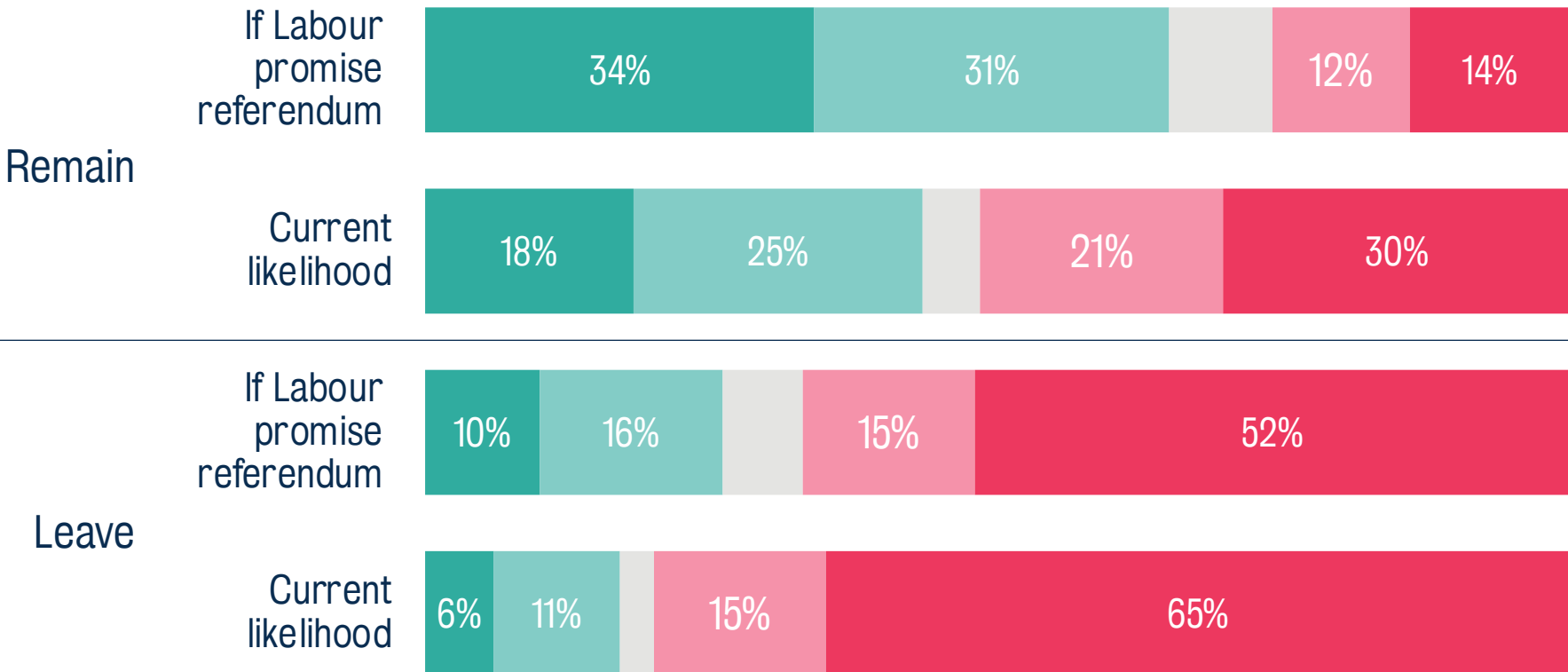
The status quo – staying firmly out of the Single Market and Customs Union, with no free movement – is the least enticing option of all, with just 27% saying it would encourage them to vote for Labour, compared with 53% who say it would *not*.

*Some figures differ from chart due to rounding.

Leavers and Remainers are both more likely to say they'd consider voting Labour if the party promised another EU referendum

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **A referendum on whether the UK should join the EU or not**

Very likely Fairly likely Not very likely Would not consider



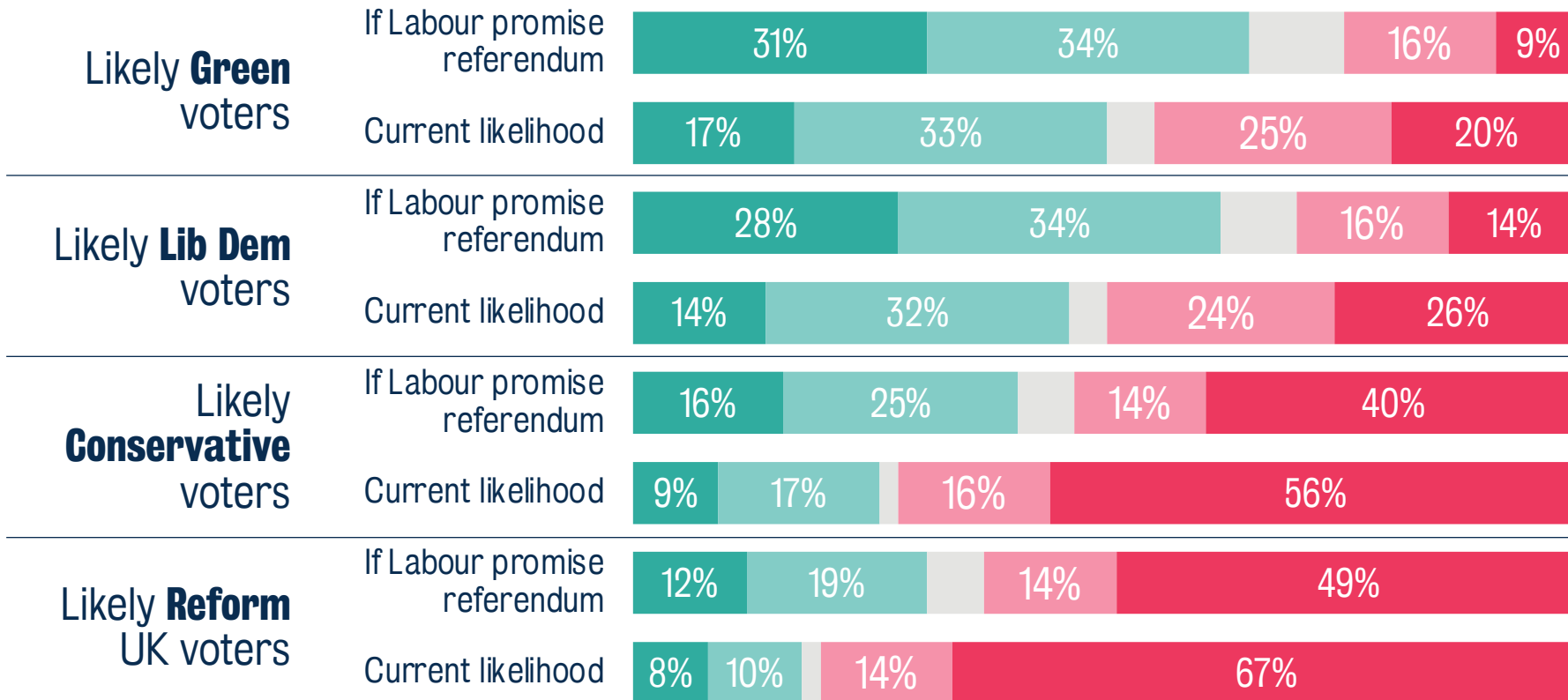
43% of Remainers currently say they're likely to consider voting Labour at the next generation – but this rises to 65% at the prospect of a second referendum.

Another referendum also boosts Labour's appeal among Leavers, with their likelihood of voting for the party rising from 17% to 26%.

A referendum pledge boosts Labour's appeal among supporters of every other party

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **A referendum on whether the UK should join the EU or not**

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Not very likely ■ Would not consider

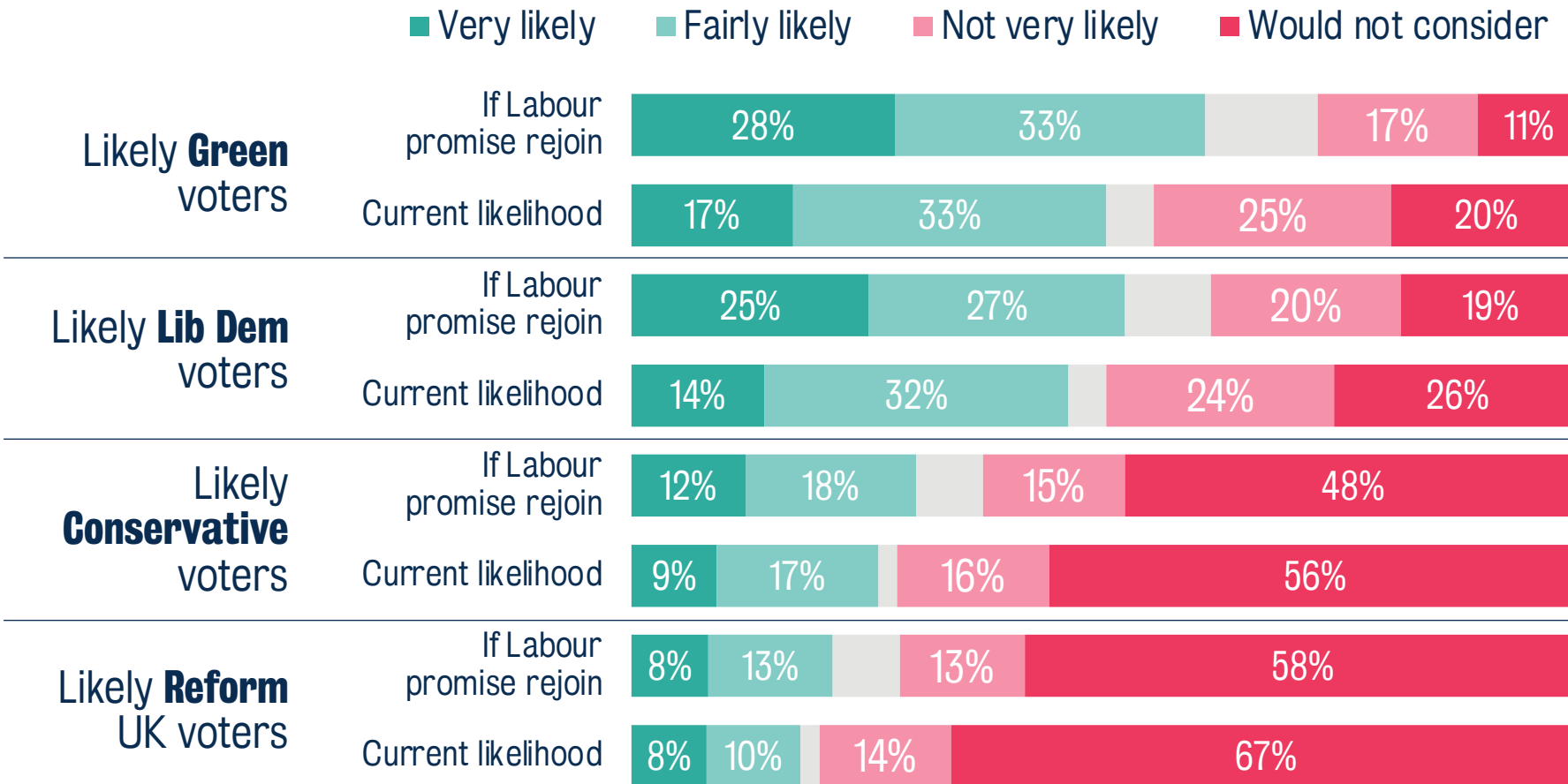


A referendum pledge raises the share who would consider Labour by a consistent 13 to 16 points among every group – from 50% to 65% among likely Green voters, 46% to 62% among likely Green voters, 46% to 62% among Lib Dems, 26% to 41% among Conservatives and 18% to 31% among Reform UK voters.

But such a pledge broadens Labour's appeal rather than transforming it, with a plurality of Conservative (40%) and Reform UK (49%) voters still saying they would not consider voting Labour at all in these circumstances.

But a promise to rejoin the EU without a referendum barely shifts Conservative and Reform UK voters

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **To rejoin the EU without a referendum**

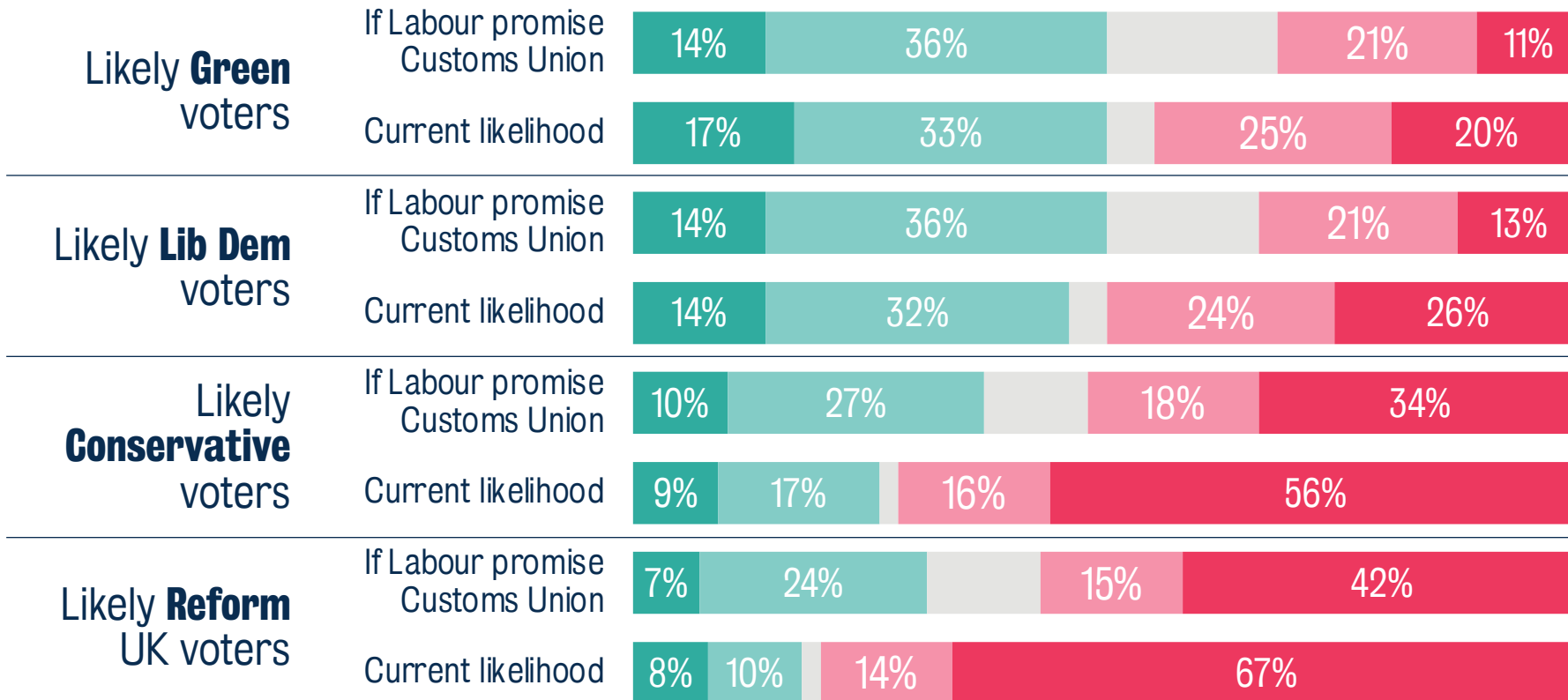


Rejoining without a referendum raises the share who would consider Labour in every group – but only slightly among those favouring parties on the right: by four points among likely Conservative voters, and by four points among Reform UK.

A Customs Union does little for Labour's base – but softens resistance on the right

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **To join a Customs Union with the EU but remain outside the EU**

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Not very likely ■ Would not consider

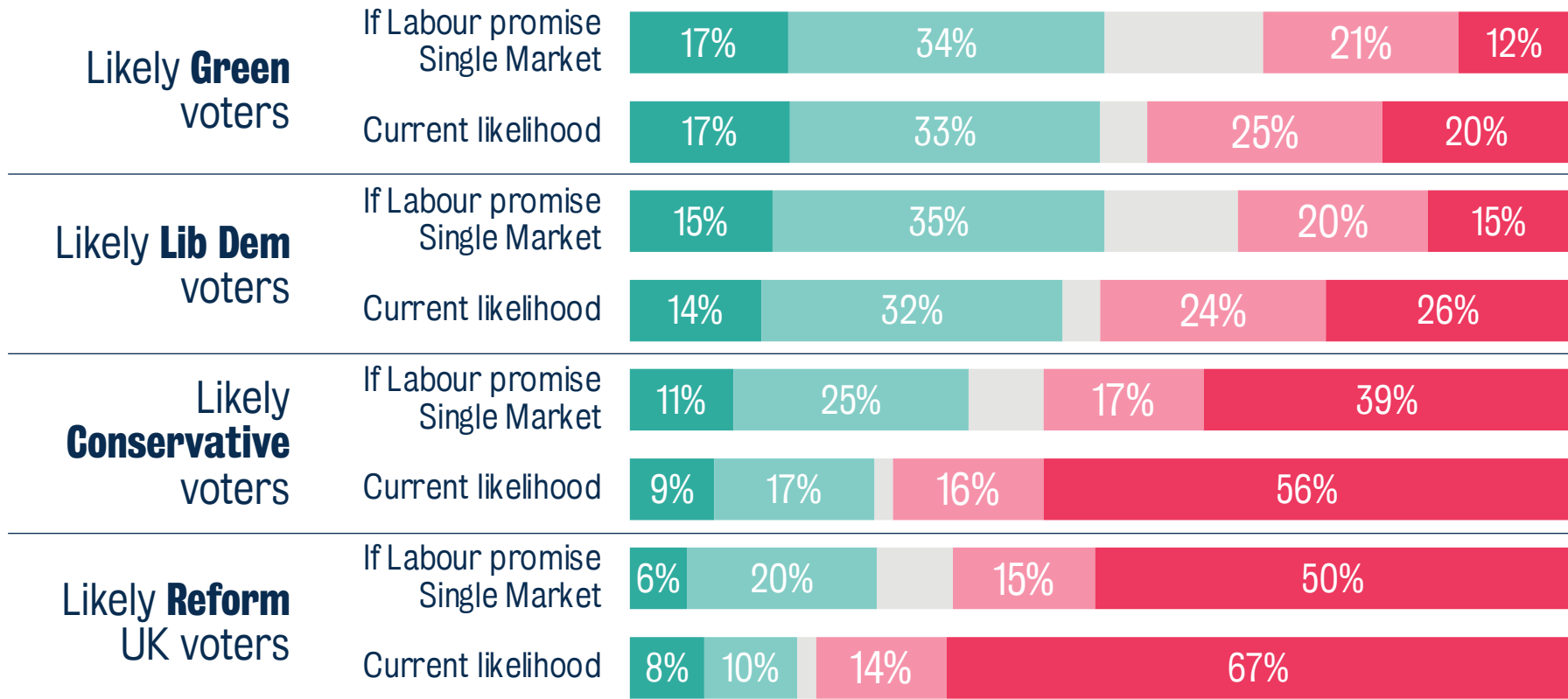


Unlike a second referendum, a Customs Union leaves Labour's more pro-EU audiences largely unmoved but makes a bigger difference on the right, lifting likely Conservatives from 26% to 37% and likely Reform UK voters from 18% to 31%, with opposition to voting Labour falling sharply among both groups.

Single Market membership follows the same pattern – modest improvements in possible support among the left, larger among the right

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **To join the EU Single Market but remain outside the EU**

Very likely Fairly likely Not very likely Would not consider

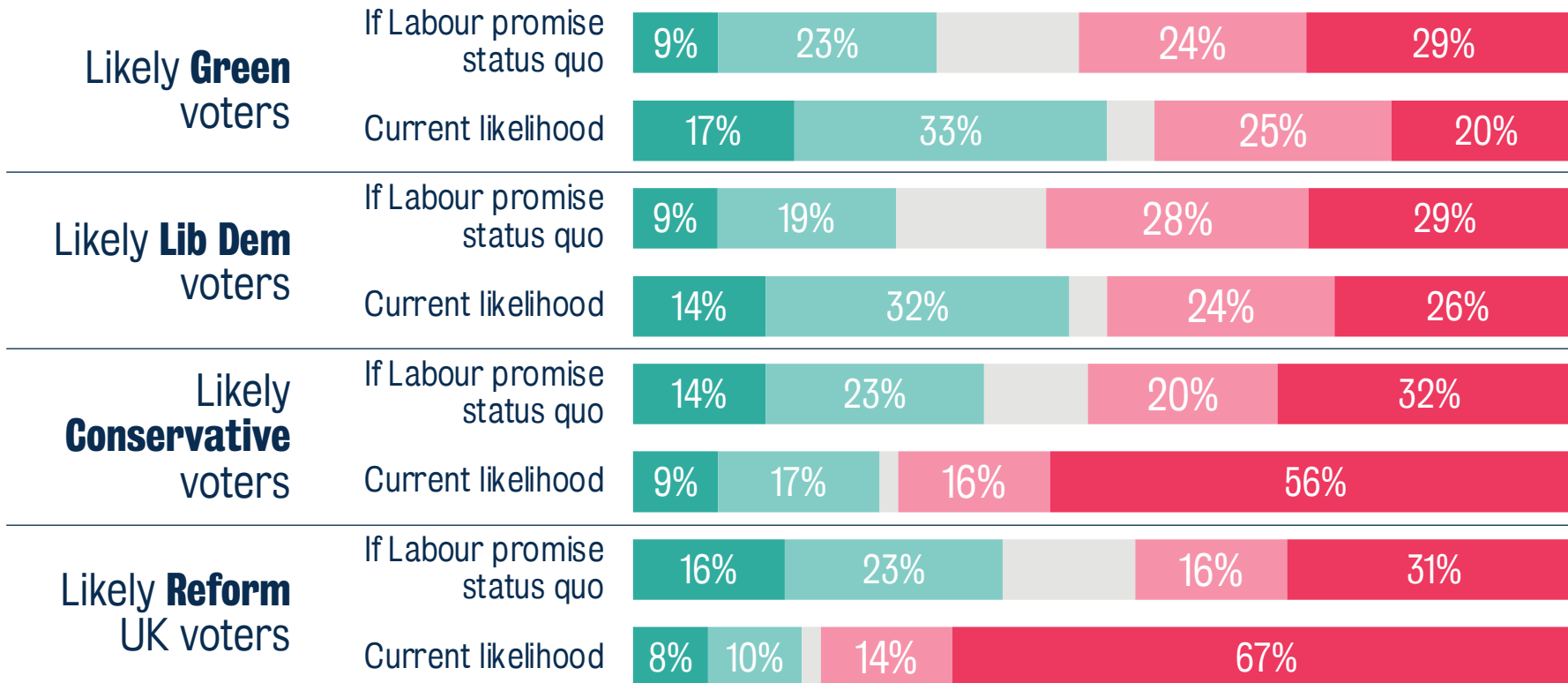


As with a Customs Union, joining the Single Market while staying outside the EU leads to potential gains among right-leaning voters – though a significant proportion on the right stay unpersuaded.

Committing to the status quo – out of the EU, with no free movement – reduces support on the left but raises it on the right

How likely would you be to consider voting for the Labour Party if they promised the following in their manifesto at the next General Election? **To remain outside the EU Single Market and Customs Union and ensure no freedom of movement of people with the European Union**

■ Very likely ■ Fairly likely ■ Not very likely ■ Would not consider



This pledge is essentially the current arrangement, yet committing Labour to it still moves voters in opposite directions: it cuts willingness to consider Labour among likely Green voters from 50% to 31% and Lib Dems from 46% to 28%, while lifting Conservatives from 26% to 36% and Reform UK voters from 18% to 39% – the single biggest gain any pledge produces among Reform voters.



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