



Engaging Conservative Party supporters about R&D

A guide for engaging with politicians and voters ahead of the Autumn 2026 party conference season.

This briefing summarises attitudes of Conservative voters and offers advice on how to better engage this group. It draws on qualitative research and a nationally representative survey of 4,173 UK adults (17-21 July 2026) from [CaSE's R&D in a Shifting Voter Landscape project](#). Full results are on CaSE's website.

Voting intentions

Some 14% of the public name the Conservatives as their first-preference vote, but when including those who rank them in their top three choices, their potential voter base reaches 28%.

To understand voter leakage, we can look at where those who voted Conservative in 2024 would now consider placing their vote (see right). Most would still put the Conservatives in their top three, but many are weighing up Reform (44%) and Restore Britain (20%).

Of current Conservatives voters, 40% say they would vote only for the Conservatives, making this the joint-most loyal voter base, tied with the Greens.

Fluidity of the Conservatives' 2024 vote

Table shows the proportion of those who voted Conservative at the 2024 General Election that would consider voting for the parties below when asked to select up to three.

Conservative	84%
Green	9%
Labour	11%
Lib Dem	19%
Reform	44%
Restore Britain	20%
Would not vote	3%

Table: Who would you consider voting for if a General Election was called tomorrow? Please select UP TO THREE parties. [Question truncated. Base: Those who voted Conservative in 2024] • Source: Icaro and Yonder Data Solutions polling for CaSE • July 2026 • Created with Datawrapper

Who they are

Older (40% aged 65+, against a UK proportion of 23%), but one in five Conservative voters is under 35. Level of formal education and socioeconomic group are both close to the national average. Considerably more likely to own their home outright (48%) and to identify as Christian (64%). Heavy consumers of TV news and traditional print.

"I definitely am for entrepreneurship rather than the state, private investment rather than the state... I think it's essential that the Government probably do more for that."
Sean (in Qualitative research)

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How they see the world

Conservative voters' views often align with the national average, but with more concern about national security, immigration and crime; fewer anxieties about personal finances or jobs; and a greater desire for a smaller state and reform of the welfare system.

When asked about their **cultural outlooks**:

- 79% say the world is at a dangerous point, in line with the UK average of 75%.
- 57% say immigration has made the country worse, higher than the UK average of 45%.
- 52% favour lower taxes and less public spending, higher than the UK average of 39%.
- 69% say economic growth should be the top priority if we want to make things better in the country, higher than the UK average of 54%.

When asked how **anxious** they were:

- Around half express high levels of anxiety about the direction the world (56%) and the country (47%) are heading in, in line with the UK average (57% and 48%, respectively).
- They are less likely to report high anxiety about their financial situation (23%; compared with the UK average of 28%), job prospects (13%; 21%) and life chances (19%; 26%).

When asked about their **personal ambitions**:

- The most selected ambitions are financial security (66%) and health and wellbeing (62%), both in line with the UK average (64% and 60%, respectively).
- They are more likely to select crime and safety (33%; compared with the UK average of 27%) and less likely to select work-life balance (23%; 31%).

When asked about **Government ambitions**:

- Around seven in ten agree with ambitions to secure the border (70%) and of national self-sufficiency (68%), both similar to the UK average (68% and 64%, respectively).
- They are more likely to agree with an overhaul of the welfare system to reward hard-working people (67%; compared with the UK average of 59%).
- They are less likely to agree with a green economy (28%) and wealth redistribution (30%) than the UK average (43% and 51%, respectively).
- 60% agree with an ambition of scientific ingenuity, in line with the UK average (59%).

When asked where they find **pockets of hope**:

- The most-selected source of hope is their family and friendships (54%; compared with the UK average of 51%).
- They are slightly more likely to select British scientific and technological innovation (44%) and British businesses and entrepreneurs (32%) as sources of hope than the UK average (37% and 22%, respectively).

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Attitudes to R&D

- Self-reported knowledge of R&D is low but higher than the UK average, with 21% saying they feel they know a lot about UK R&D, compared with the UK average of 16%.
 - There is strong support for R&D, but this is in the middle of the range across voter groups: 71% think it's important for the Government to invest in R&D, 62% think it makes a significant contribution to the economy, and 57% see it as a national strength.
 - When asked what aspects of R&D support the Government should prioritise, the most-selected answer is talent retention (44%, higher than the UK average of 38%), followed by jobs for the new generation of homegrown scientists (42%, compared with the UK average of 47%).
 - 65% choose defence and security technologies as a priority for Government investment, much higher than the UK average of 48%. In contrast, fewer (33%) select clean energy technologies, compared with the UK average of 44%.
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Messaging that will resonate

- **Frame R&D as a national strength and tool for security:** This group prioritises national self-sufficiency, personal financial security and investment in security and defence technologies, and see R&D as a source of pride and hope.
- **Bring business into the conversation:** This group agrees with an ambition of business-led recovery and takes hope from British businesses and entrepreneurs.
- **Avoid leading with wealth redistribution or green economy framings:** These are not priorities for Conservative voters and won't feel tailored to this group.
- **Use good practice principles that resonate with broad audiences:** Use messaging that makes R&D feel more human, more local and more relatable. It is also vital to avoid stereotyping voter groups and consider how to tailor messaging to different subsets of their audiences.

This briefing is part of a series covering the main vote groups. To read the full results and recommendations from the study, and briefings on other voter groups, please see the [R&D in a Shifting Voter Landscape webpage](#).

Vote intention figures are drawn from our own general population survey and are not the output of a dedicated political opinion poll. We use this question to segment our sample by political affiliation for analysis, not to estimate election outcomes. Read more in [our Methods](#).

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