



Engaging Reform UK 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 Reform UK 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 17% of the public name Reform UK as their first-preference vote; when including those who rank them in their top three choices, their potential voter base reaches 27%. Reform has the second-highest retention of its 2024 voter base of any party: 71% of its 2024 voters select Reform UK as their first preference, and 32% say they would only vote Reform.

To understand voter leakage, we can look at where those who voted Reform in 2024 would now consider placing their vote (see right). Most would still consider Reform, but there is a strong sign of movement towards Restore, and some towards to the Conservatives.

Fluidity of Reform UK's 2024 vote

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

Conservative	38%
Green	6%
Labour	7%
Lib Dem	6%
Reform	88%
Restore Britain	51%
Would not vote	2%

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 Reform UK in 2024] • Source: Icaro and Yonder Data Solutions polling for CaSE • July 2026 • Created with Datawrapper

Who they are

Reform voters skew older (53% aged 55+, but 14% are under 35). Two-thirds have no qualification beyond GCSE level, against a national average of 50% – making it the largest single differentiating feature. The group overwhelmingly defines its ethnicity as White (95%; compared with the average of 84%) and specifically White English (72%; 54%). Household income is modestly, not dramatically, below average. Geographically, they are broad-based rather than concentrated in any one region.

"I'm not against science or innovation, but I think it should be secondary until the basics are fixed. Too often we are told huge amounts of money will transform something, only for projects to run over budget, get delayed, or fail to deliver what was promised. HS2 is a good example."

Sylvia (Qualitative research)

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How they see the world

Reform voters are among the most negative about the UK and its future direction, with many distrusting the Government and saying politicians don't care about people like them. They want a smaller state, controls on immigration and a focus on domestic problems first.

When asked about their **cultural outlooks**:

- 87% say the UK is badly in need of a rescue plan and 79% agree with the idea of "Broken Britain", both notably higher than UK averages (65% and 50%, respectively).
- 87% say politicians don't care about people like them, and 83% don't trust the Government to tell the truth (compared with UK averages of 70% and 61%, respectively).
- 86% say immigration has made the country worse, compared with the UK average of 45%, while just 18% say globalisation has more upsides than downsides, compared with the UK average of 37%.
- 62% favour lower taxes and less public spending, the highest of all the sample, and compared with the UK average of 39%.

When asked how **anxious** they were:

- They are among the most likely to express high levels of anxiety about the direction of the country (69%; compared with the UK average of 48%).
- They report higher than average levels of high anxiety about the direction the world (64%) and their local area (33%) are heading in (compared with UK averages of 57% and 21%, respectively).

When asked about their **personal ambitions**:

- The most-selected ambitions are financial security (65%) and health and wellbeing (60%), both in line with the UK average (64% and 60%, respectively).
- 44% select crime and safety, which is the highest across the sample, and compared with the UK average of 27%.

When asked about **Government ambitions**:

- 86% agree with an ambition of reducing immigration (compared with the UK average of 55%), followed by focusing on fixing problems at home first (81%; 61%).
- 78% agree with national self-sufficiency, which was joint highest with Restore UK, and higher than the UK average of 64%.
- They are more likely to agree with reforms to the welfare system (75%; compared with the UK average of 59%) and a small state and lower taxes (65%; 43%).
- They are less likely to agree with an ambition of a green economy (21%; compared with the UK average of 43%), wealth redistribution (34%; 51%) and equal opportunities (35%; 50%).

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

- The most-selected source of hope is in their family and friendships (49%; compared with the UK average of 51%).
- This is followed by British scientific and technological innovation (37%) and British business and entrepreneurs (28%), compared with UK averages of 37% and 22%, respectively.
- Of all voter groups tested, they are the most likely to say they don't have any hope or optimism, with 24% feeling this way, compared with the UK average of 17%.

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Attitudes to R&D

- They have similarly low levels self-reported knowledge of R&D to the UK average, with 14% saying they feel they know a lot about UK R&D, compared with the UK average of 16%.
- Support for R&D is among the weakest across the sample, although a clear majority (65%) still think it is important for the Government to invest in R&D. Just over half say that R&D is a national strength (51%) and that it makes a significant contribution to the economy (57%).
- When asked what aspects of R&D support the Government should prioritise, the most-selected answer is domestic job prioritisation (47%, compared with the UK average of 37%). Support for global collaboration is lower than the UK average (15%; 29%) but support for attracting the best scientists from around the world is similar (24%; 25%).
- 64% choose defence and security technologies as a priority for Government investment. Although lower than most other groups (and the UK average of 44%), some 24% chose clean energy technologies. This still places it higher among Reform voters than high-tech manufacturing technologies (22%), digital technologies (21%), business and services technologies (18%) and creative and medical technologies (6%).

Messaging that will resonate

- **Frame R&D as a vital tool in the UK's recovery plan, leading with jobs and self-sufficiency:** A large majority see Britain as broken and believe it needs a rescue plan. They prioritise jobs and national self-sufficiency.
- **Appeal to national pride and show R&D as a source of hope:** This group is most likely to say they have no hope, but British science and business are among those named as sources of hope.
- **Demonstrate how R&D is helping tackle crime on a national and local level:** Security and crime are significant concerns, with many anxious about the direction of their local area.
- **Emphasise support for homegrown talent as well as global R&D:** Rather than avoiding the topic of immigration, which is vital for our sector, talk about support for homegrown as well as international talent. Although this group does not support immigration, there is some support for attracting scientists from around the world.
- **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](#).

This work was supported by Wellcome [318810/Z/24/Z]