



Queen Mary
University of London

Mile End Institute

Polling London

Londoners' Priorities ahead of the
Local Elections



mei.qmul.ac.uk

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Introduction

The latest Mile End Institute (MEI) survey of public opinion in London indicates that voters are increasingly frustrated by many aspects of life in the capital, notably the lack of affordable housing and rising anti-social behaviour. Around a fifth have made plans to leave London in the next two years, indicating that the impact of the pandemic has been significant for their quality of life. The cost of living crisis is biting hard given the sustained impact of rising food, energy and fuel prices alongside increases in National Insurance contributions and changes in Universal Credit. In this climate, Londoners are likely to resist any attempt by hard-pressed local councils to raise council tax or increase bus, tube and train fares to fund public transport.

Voters in the capital still believe that on balance their local council does a good job. However, over the next four years, leaders of London councils will have to 'achieve more for less' through efficient management of local public services. They will need to address voters' core priorities such as the expansion of affordable housing in a constrained climate where central government controls the allocation of housing capital investment. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police Service faces a significant challenge of institutional reform given declining trust among Londoners, particularly marked among women and ethnic minorities. The new Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service will have to strive hard to win back the confidence of all of London's communities.



Headline Results

Ahead of all-out London local elections in May, Londoners generally believe that their local council is performing well with 42 per cent saying they think the council is doing a ‘good job’, compared to 35 per cent who believe they are doing a ‘bad job’.

However, councillors up for election cannot assume an easy ride over the next four years, with those living in London unhappy about the prospect of council tax rises and generally pessimistic about life in the capital. 64 per cent of those polled said they felt life in London had got worse over the last four years, with only 7 per cent saying that it had got better. The perceived decline in the quality of life is related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the issues go wider.

There are ongoing concerns about lack of access to affordable housing (51 per cent) and the rise of anti-social behaviour (38 per cent), priority issues for Londoners’ in making the city more liveable. Voters also recoil from the prospect of paying more in tube, bus and train fares due to the financial crisis afflicting Transport for London (TfL). While most Londoners do not currently have plans to move out of the capital, 29 per cent of 18–24-year-olds and 21 per cent of 25–49 year olds have plans to leave within the next two years. The Government’s recently published Levelling-Up White Paper says relatively little about London, leading many to question what London’s future as a city will look like.

To tackle the issues of greatest concern to their constituents, London councils need to be able to invest in services and infrastructure in their communities. Yet after more than a decade of sustained local government funding cuts (London Councils estimate that core funding has been reduced by 63 per cent over the last ten years), councils face unprecedented challenges. Increased demand and decreased funds mean that 19 of the 33 administrations in London¹ are planning to raise council tax by the maximum level of 2.99 per cent (without having to hold a local referendum) in an election year. According to our survey, 64 per cent of those polled say that council tax rises are unjustified while only 25 per cent believe they are justified.

Politically, Labour’s dominance in the UK’s capital city and London local government appears set to continue: 34 per cent of Londoners say that they will support the party in the local elections on 5th May; 17 per cent intend to vote Conservative (compared to 23 per cent in our survey four years ago) while 8 per cent will opt for the Liberal Democrats.

However, councillors up for election cannot assume an easy ride over the next four years, with those living in London unhappy about the prospect of council tax rises and generally pessimistic about life in the capital. 64 per cent of those polled said they felt life in London had got worse over the last four years, with only 7 per cent saying that it had got better. The perceived decline in the quality of life is related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the issues go wider.

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Our polling also illuminates the scale of the challenge facing the next Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service. The Met faces an enormous task of rebuilding trust with Londoners after the resignation of former Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick. Only 44 per cent of Londoners say that they have a ‘great deal or fair amount of trust’ in the police, while 49 per cent say that they have ‘very little or no trust at all’. Although 32 per cent were unsure about his decision, 45 per cent of residents in the capital say that Sadiq Khan was right to withdraw his support for Cressida Dick, while 23 per cent disagreed with this decision. The majority of Londoners believe that the Metropolitan Police Service is both institutionally racist and sexist. An overwhelming 72 per cent of BME Londoners say that it is institutionally racist and 68 per cent of women saying that the Metropolitan Police Service is institutionally sexist.

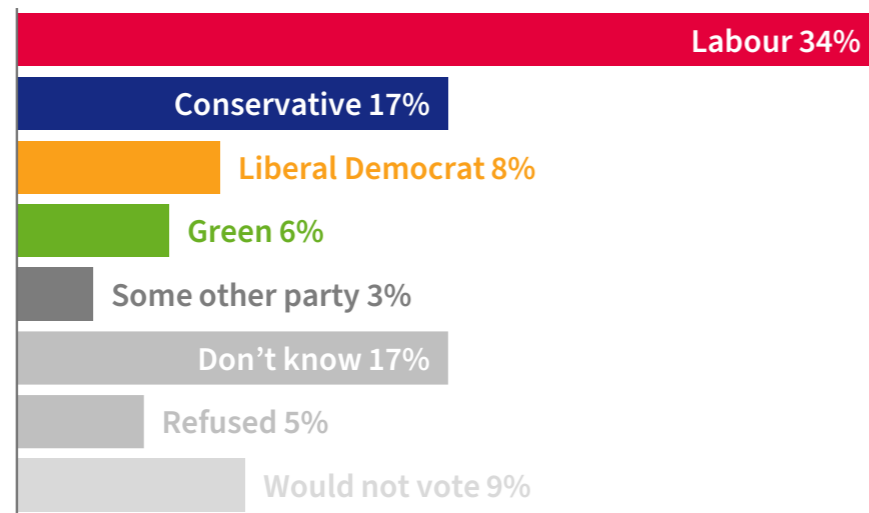
¹ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-council-tax-increase-my-borough-search-sadiq-khan-b983594.html>

Local Elections

Labour's position has strengthened marginally since the last London local elections were fought in 2018. 37 per cent of Londoners intend to vote Labour while 17 per cent will vote Conservative compared to 38 per cent/23 per cent in 2018.

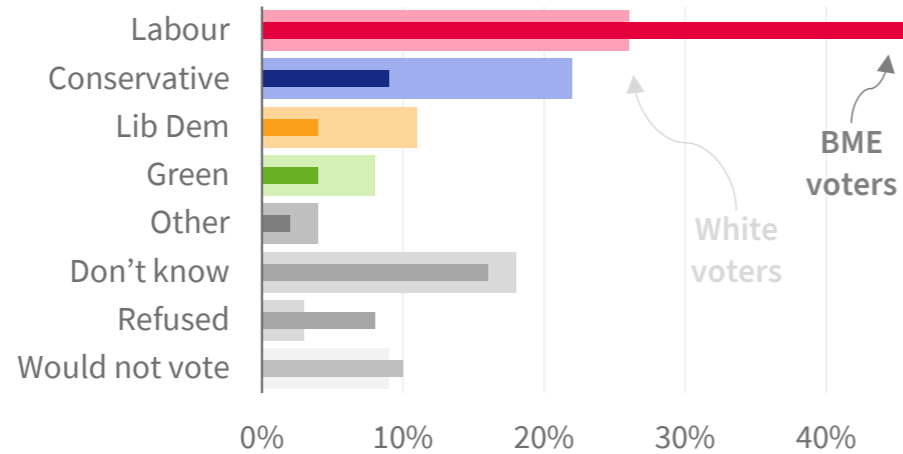
Labour continues to do well amongst BME Londoners with 46 per cent planning to vote Labour, compared with only 26 per cent for the Conservatives.

If there were **elections for your local council** tomorrow, how would you vote?



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

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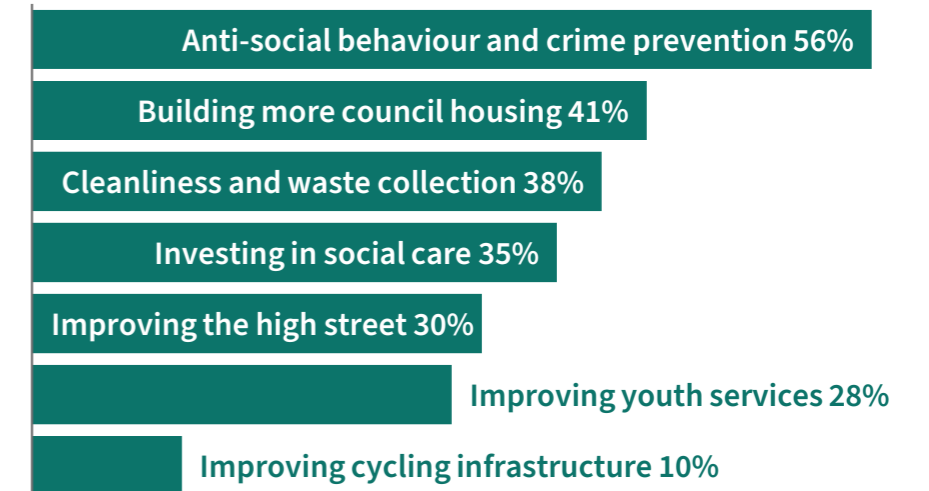


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Over the next four years, voters want their local council to prioritise tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (56 per cent), building more council houses (41 per cent), improving cleaning and waste disposal (38 per cent), investing in social care (35 per cent), and improving the fabric of their local high street (30 per cent). Issues such as improvements in cycling infrastructure (10

per cent) and improvements to youth services (28 per cent) do not yet resonate as strongly with voters in the capital. Local government leaders who want to make investment in early years and childcare a priority will need to ensure they strengthen the resonance of these issues among Londoners given the 'childcare crunch' facing families across the city.

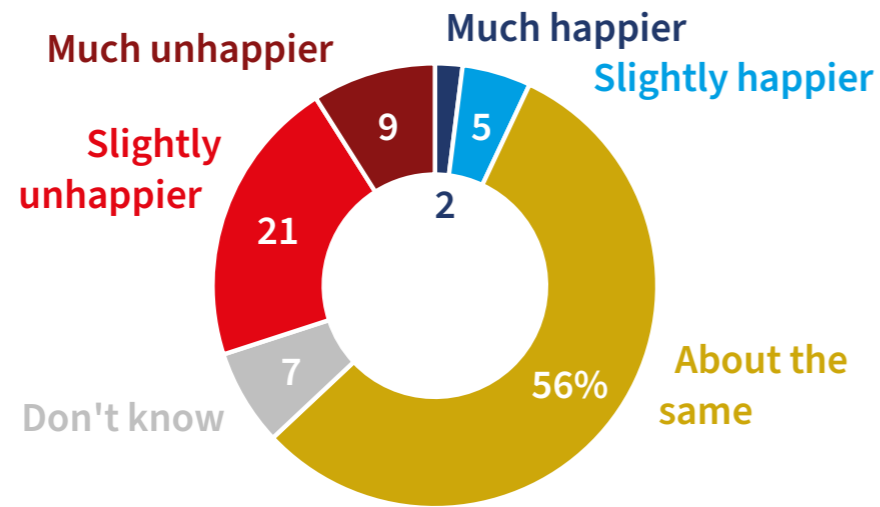
Which, if any, of the following do you think **your local council should prioritise** for the next four years? Please tick up to three.



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Londoners' Priorities

Compared to before the pandemic began, do you **feel differently about living in London?**

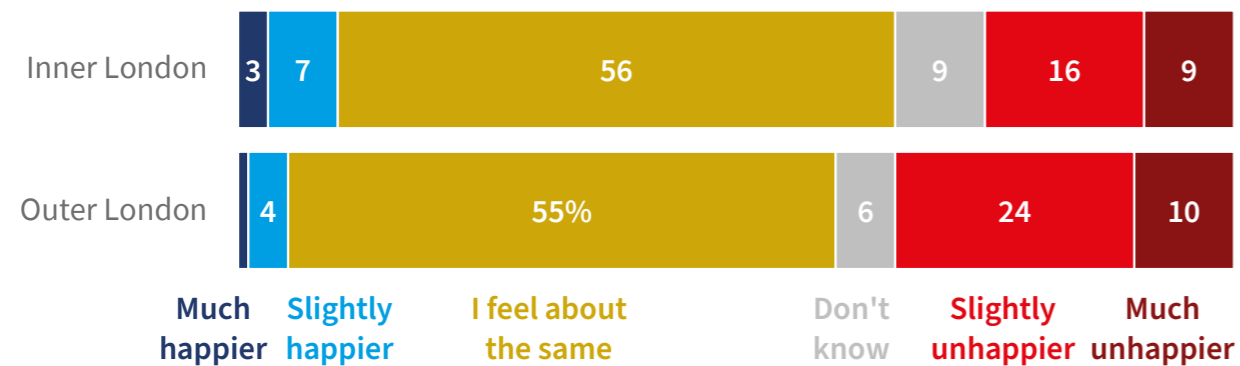


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

There is a recurring belief among nearly a third of Londoners that life has got worse over the last two years.

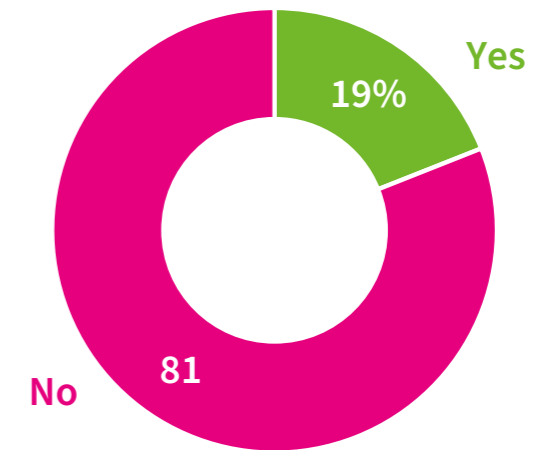
Older voters tend to be more negative. Just 7 per cent of all Londoners think that life in London has got better over the last two years compared to 30 per cent who believe it has got worse. Younger people (18-24-year-olds) were marginally more optimistic, a finding that may reflect the impact of the recent lifting of Covid restrictions. Dissatisfaction with living in London is highest among those in the middle age bracket (25-49 years old). Those living in outer London are generally less satisfied with life in London, compared to those living in the centre of the city.

Compared to before the pandemic began, do you **feel differently about living in London?**



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Have you made plans to **move out of London** in the next 2 years?

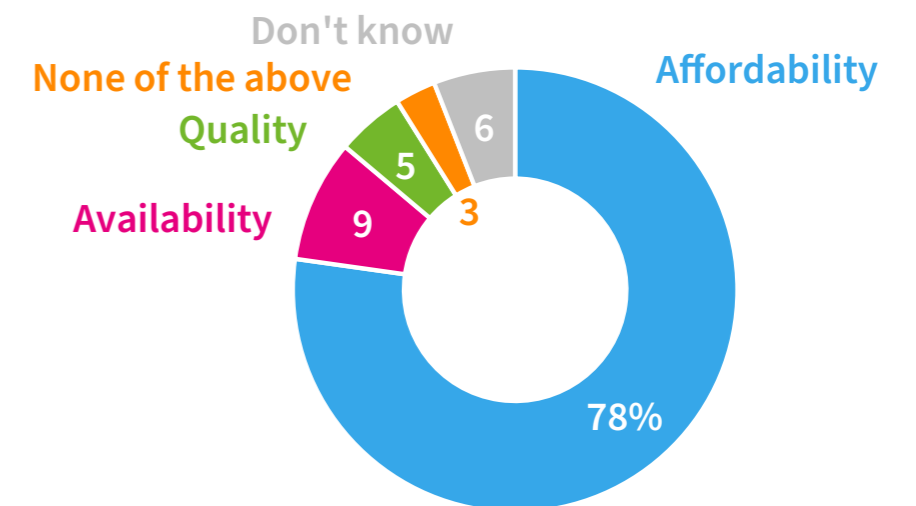


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Among all Londoners, 19 per cent have made plans to move out in the next two years compared to 81 per cent who have not.

18-24-year-olds are most likely to have made plans to leave the capital, reflecting long-standing concerns about lack of affordable housing and the cost of living. 78 per cent of voters in London think that 'affordability' is the biggest issue for housing policy, compared to 'availability' (9 per cent) and 'quality' (5 per cent).

Which, if any, of the following do you think is the **biggest issue for housing** in London?

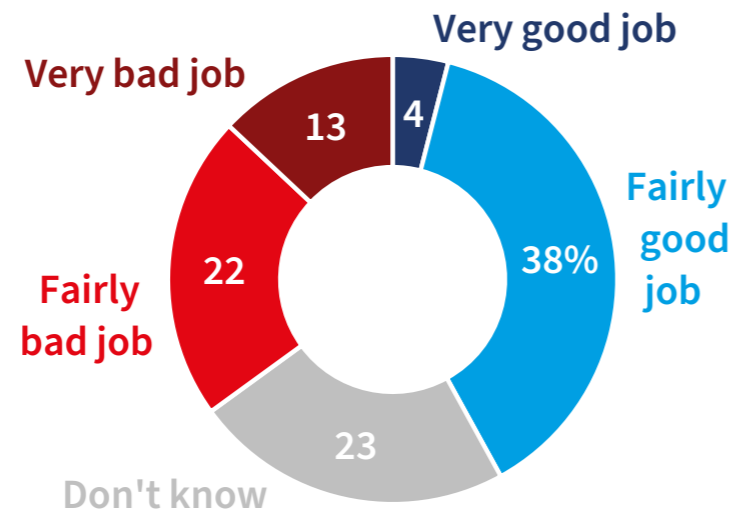


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Londoners are generally positive about the performance of their local council. 42 per cent think their council does 'a good job' (although only 4 per cent believed the council did 'a very

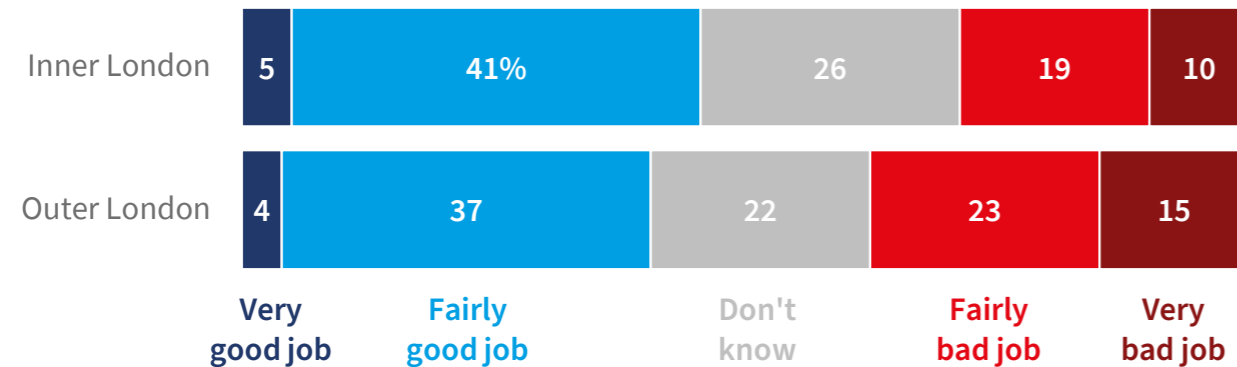
good job'). Just 13 per cent thought that their local council did 'a very bad job'. That said, voters in outer London were noticeably less positive, while older voters tended to be less enthusiastic about the performance of their local authority.

Do you think your **local council has done a good or bad job** over the last four years?



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Do you think your **local council has done a good or bad job** over the last four years?

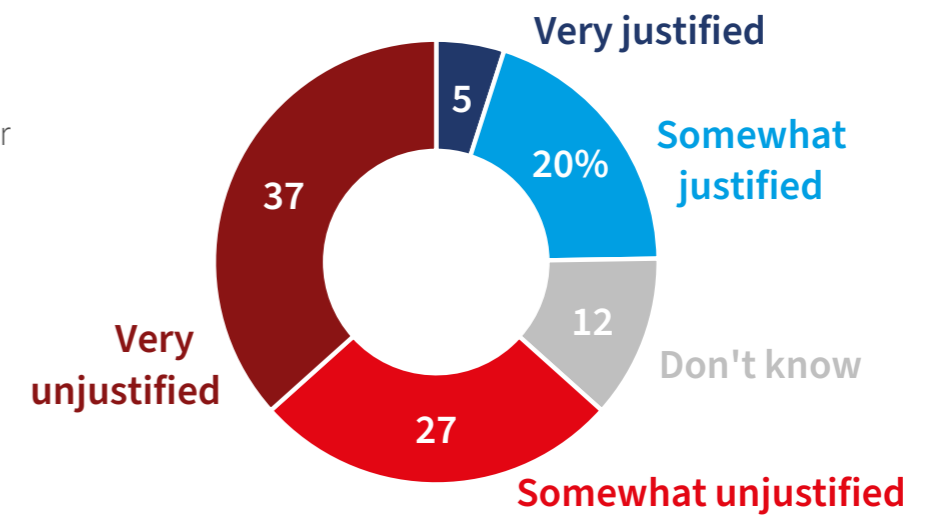


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114.

Not surprisingly, the cost of living crisis is shaping voters' views of the major policy priorities for local authorities in the next four years. Voters in London are strongly opposed to any rise in council tax, although older voters and those in social grade

ABC1 are more willing to support a rise. Overall, 64 per cent of voters think that a rise in council tax is not justified compared to 20 per cent who believe it is.

How justified or unjustified do you think it is for local councils and the Mayor of London to be **raising council tax** at this time?



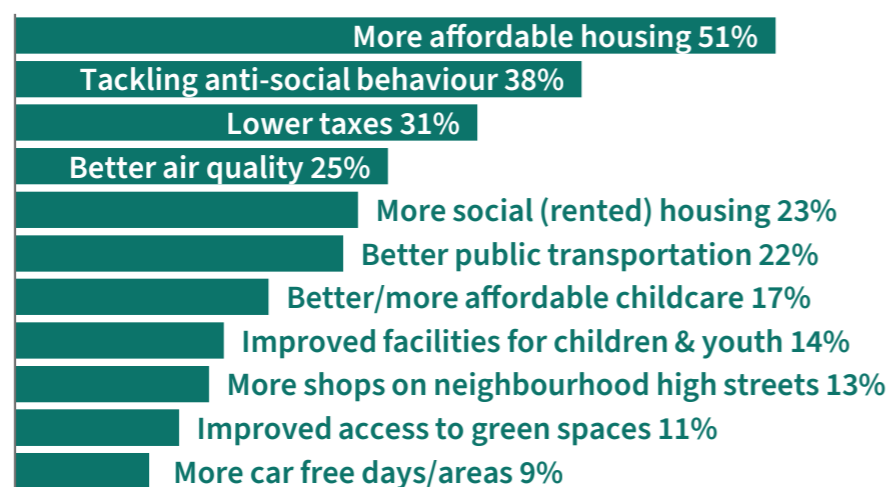
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Moreover, people are opposed to any rise in fares on public transport at a time when bus and tube usage is gradually increasing in the wake of the pandemic. 22 per cent would be willing to pay more in bus, train and tube fares to fund public transport compared to 69 per cent who would not be prepared to pay more.

On priorities to make London a more 'liveable' city, the main issues are more affordable housing (51 per cent), tackling anti-social behaviour (38 per cent), lower taxes (31 per cent), better air quality (25 per cent), more socially rented (council) housing (23 per cent), and better public transport (22 per cent). Issues such as improvements in childcare facilities (17 per cent) and services for young people (14 per cent) tend to resonate less.

Which, if any, of the following do you think would do the most to make London a more liveable city? Please tick up to three.

(‘Other’, ‘None of the above’ and ‘Don’t know’ not shown)

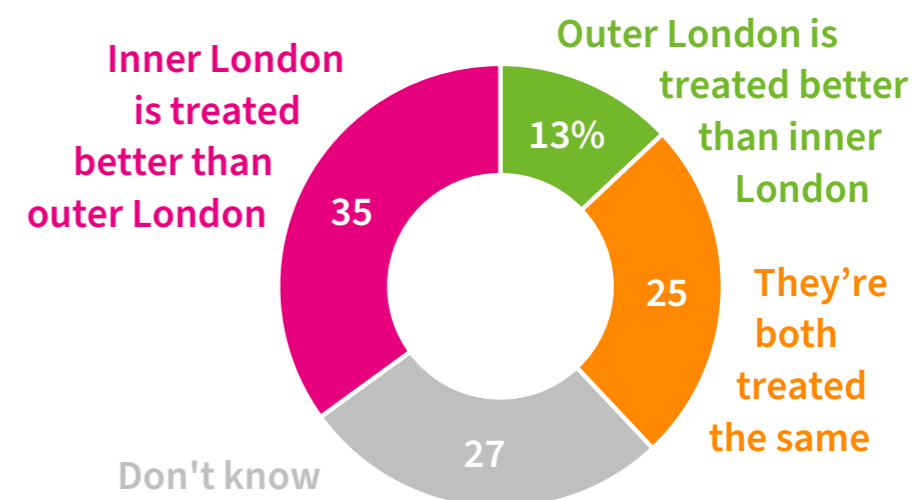


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114.

There is a strong belief that outer London is less well served by government and public services. 35 per cent believe that inner London is treated better than outer London; 13 per cent think that outer London is treated better, while 25 per cent

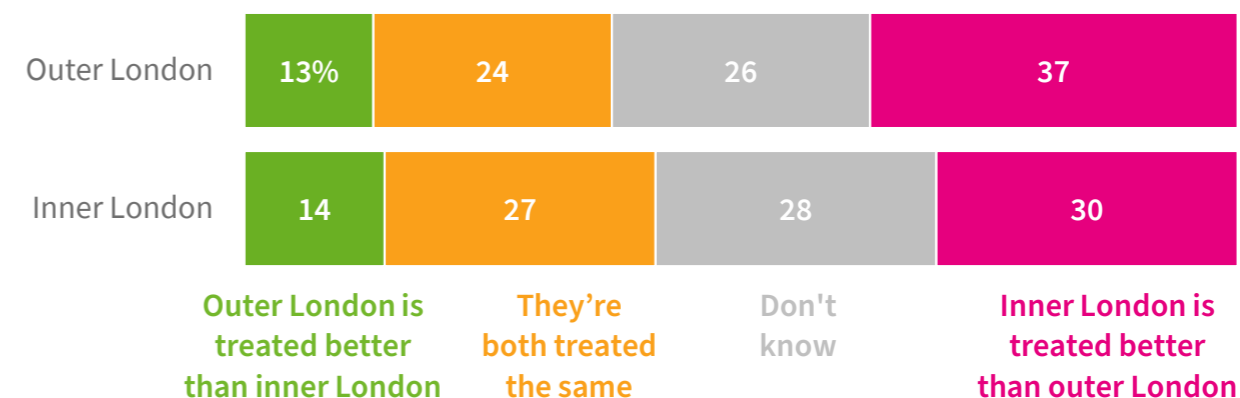
believe they are treated the same. Interestingly, more people living in inner London think it is treated better than outer London (30 per cent) compared to those who believe both are treated the same (27 per cent).

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



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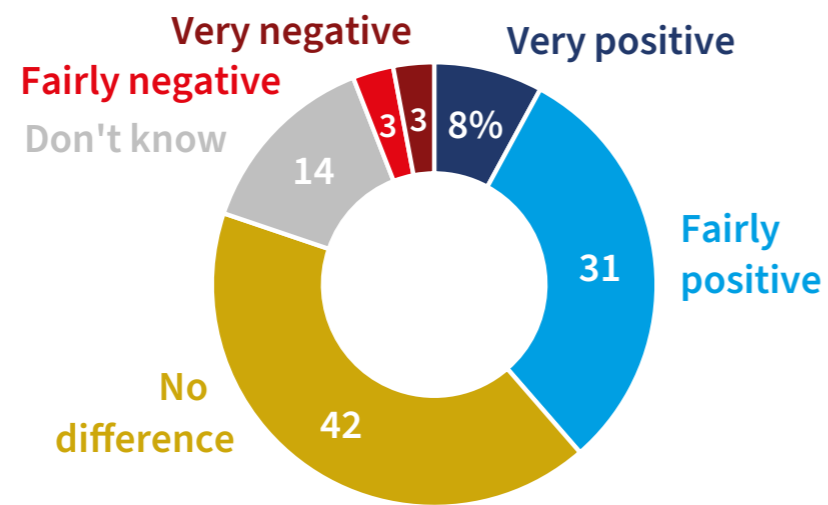


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114.

Safety and the Metropolitan Police Service

More positively, voters believe that the Olympic legacy has on the whole been positive for London. Ten years on, 39 per cent think that the 2012 Olympics had bequeathed a positive long-term legacy for the capital compared to 6 per cent who believe that the overall impact has been negative.

Do you think the 2012 London Olympics has left a positive or negative long-term legacy for London or has it not made much difference?

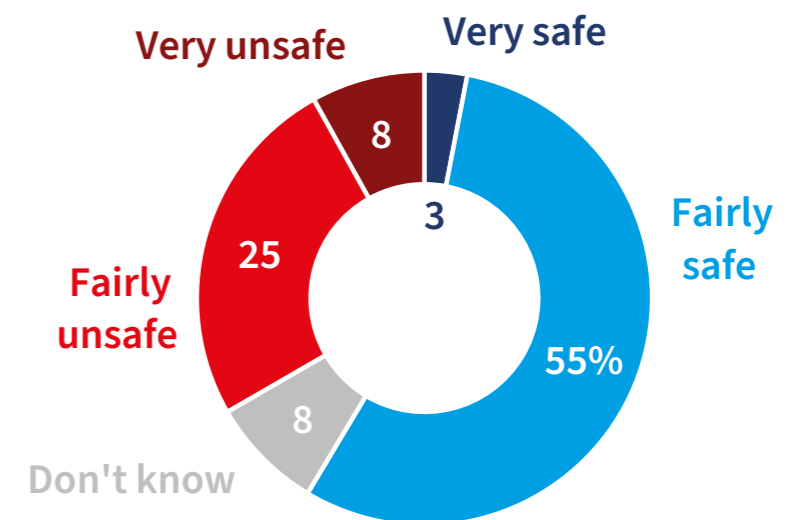


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Londoners do not generally believe that the capital is unsafe. 58 per cent reflect that London is a safe place to live compared to 33 per cent who think it is not.

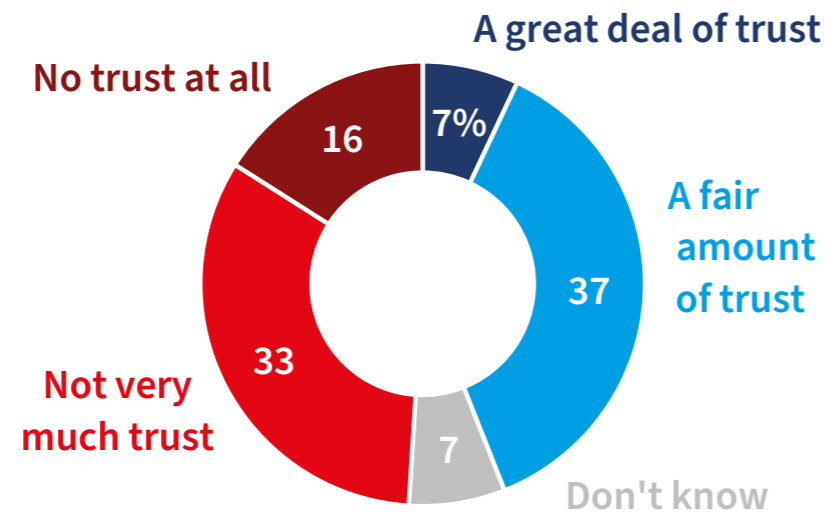
However, voters in occupational groups C2DE (clerical and manual grades) and older voters are generally more concerned about public safety.

Do you think **London** is a safe or unsafe place to live?



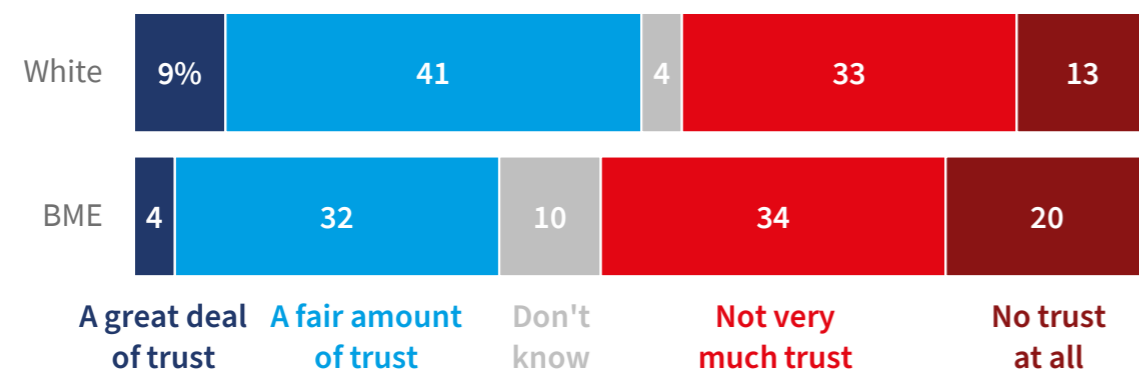
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In general, how much **trust**, if any, do you have in the **Metropolitan Police Service**?



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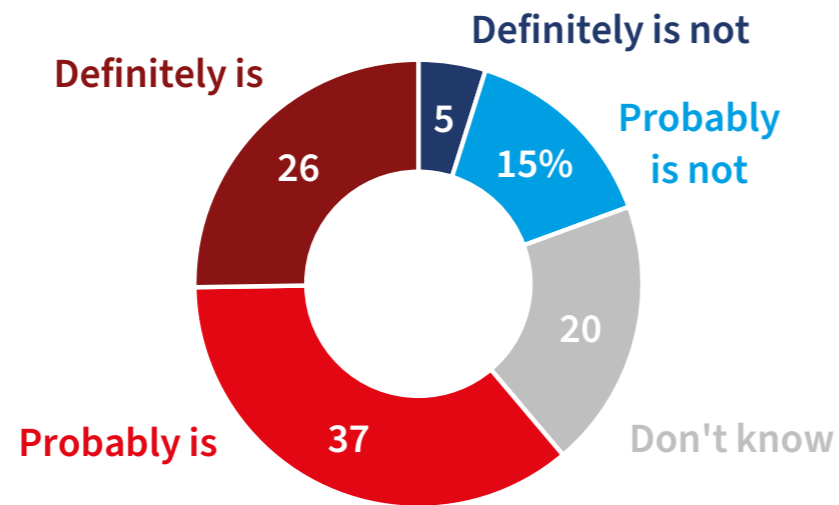
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There is a great deal of concern about the performance of the Metropolitan Police Service amongst Londoners. In short, many voters simply do not trust the Met. 49 per cent have 'not very much' or 'no trust' in the Met compared to 44 per cent who have a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount of trust' (that figure is only 36 per cent among BME voters). 62 per cent think that the Met is 'institutionally sexist' while 64 per cent believe it is 'institutionally racist'. Although it remains a contested concept, the 1999 Macpherson Report defined institutional racism as, 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because

of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people'. Institutional sexism, in turn, can be understood as, 'gender discrimination reflected in the policies and practices of organizations such as governments, corporations (workplaces), public institutions (schools, health care), and financial institutions'². The policies and practices of the Met are perceived to entrench institutional racism and institutional sexism.

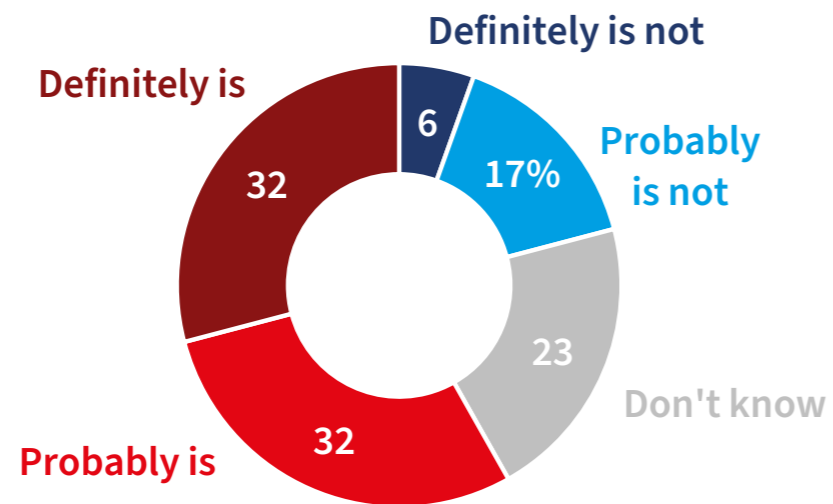
² [https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-psychology-and-gender/i10276.xml#:~:text=Institutional%20sexism%20refers%20to%20gender,care\)%2C%20and%20financial%20institutions.](https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-psychology-and-gender/i10276.xml#:~:text=Institutional%20sexism%20refers%20to%20gender,care)%2C%20and%20financial%20institutions.)

Do you think the Metropolitan Police Service is institutionally sexist?



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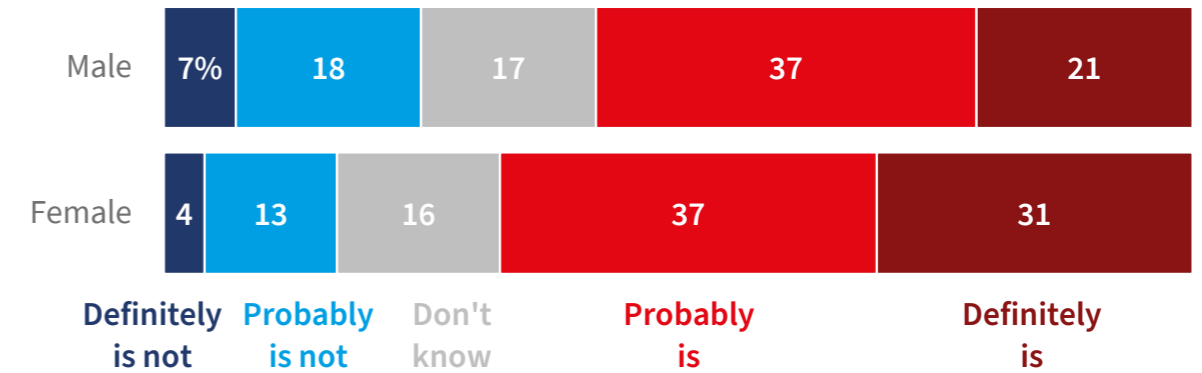


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When looking at the demographics of those surveyed, we see that the figures are starker than they first appear: 72 per cent of BME Londoners say that the Met is institutionally racist while 68 per cent of women say that it is institutionally

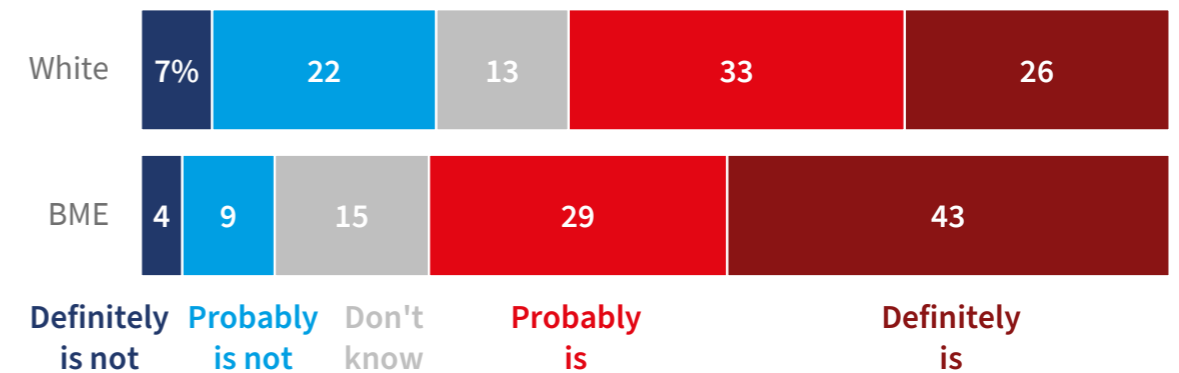
sexist, underlining the scale of the challenge facing the next Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Their most important task will be to rebuild trust within communities in order to maintain policing by consent.

Do you think the Metropolitan Police Service is institutionally sexist?



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Do you think the Metropolitan Police Service is institutionally racist?



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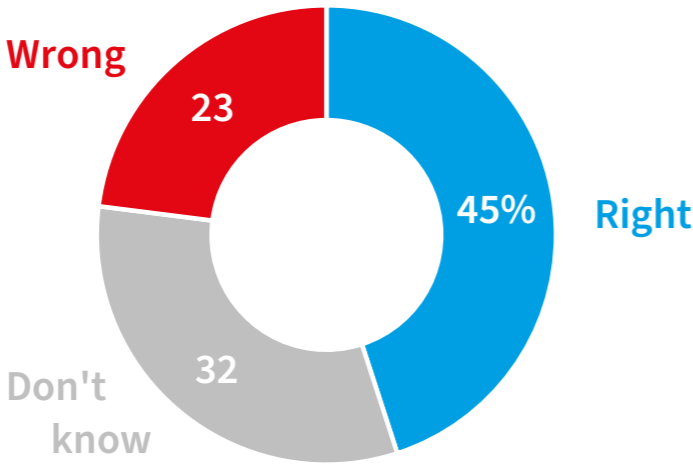
It is also important to consider that trust in the Met has been declining for some time. Data provided by the London datatore on Community Safety indicates that the decline began in 2017³. As the commentator Dave Hill points out, 'Londoners have become significantly less likely to agree that the Met listens to the concerns of local people, deals with the things that matter to their community, do a good job locally,

treat everyone fairly or can be relied on to "be there when needed". In the last case, the figure has dropped from 77 per cent in December 2014 to 59 per cent in December 2021'. There are also significant variations in levels of trust across boroughs: the Police are significantly less trusted in Lambeth than Hillingdon, for example.

³<https://www.onlondon.co.uk/confidence-in-met-police-has-been-declining-for-years/>

National Politics

Do you think **Sadiq Khan** was right or wrong to withdraw his support for Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick?



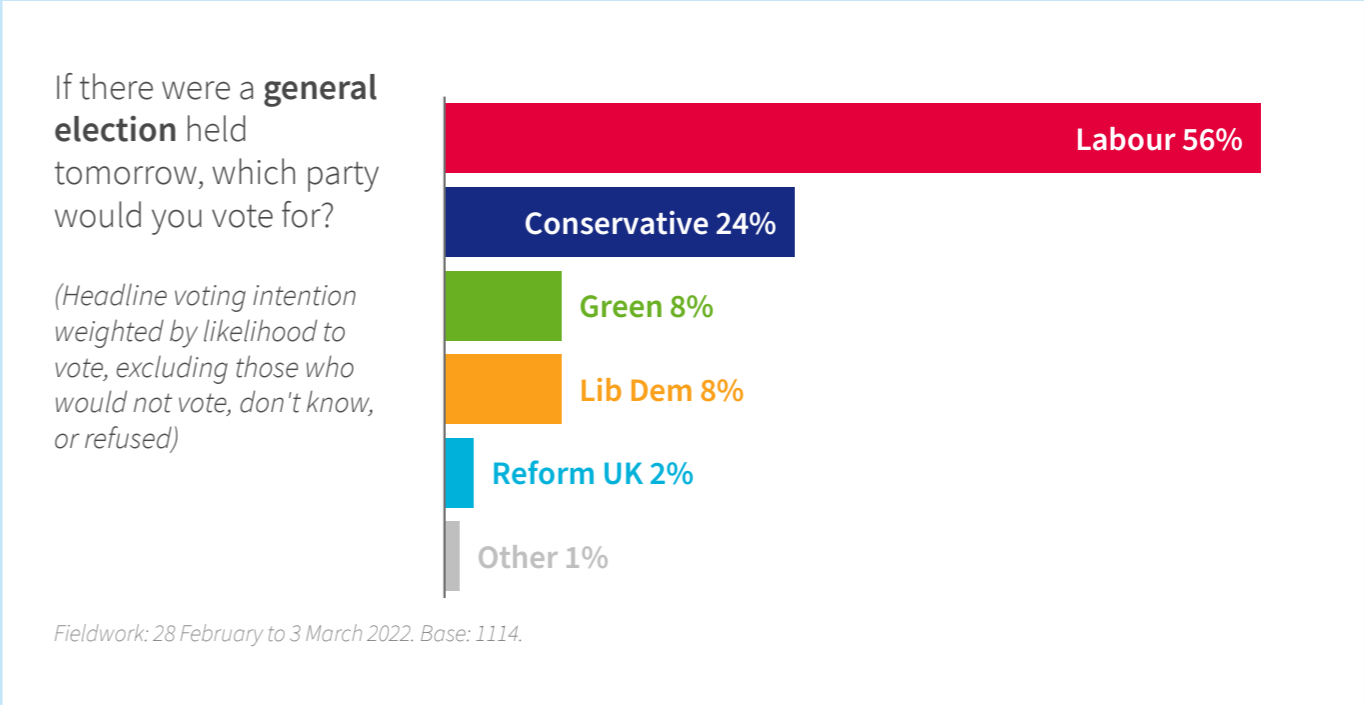
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Overall, Londoners believe that Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, was right to withdraw his support for Cressida Dick, the previous Commissioner of the Met. 45 per cent think Khan was right to withdraw support against 22 per cent who believe he was wrong, although older voters were somewhat more supportive of Dick.

Labour remains the dominant party in London.

Labour is holding on to more of its 2019 voters than the Conservatives, while nearly two-fifths of those who voted for the Liberal Democrats in 2019 would now vote Labour.

56 per cent of Londoners would vote Labour in a Westminster election, among the highest levels of support Labour has achieved in an opinion poll among Londoners in recent times.

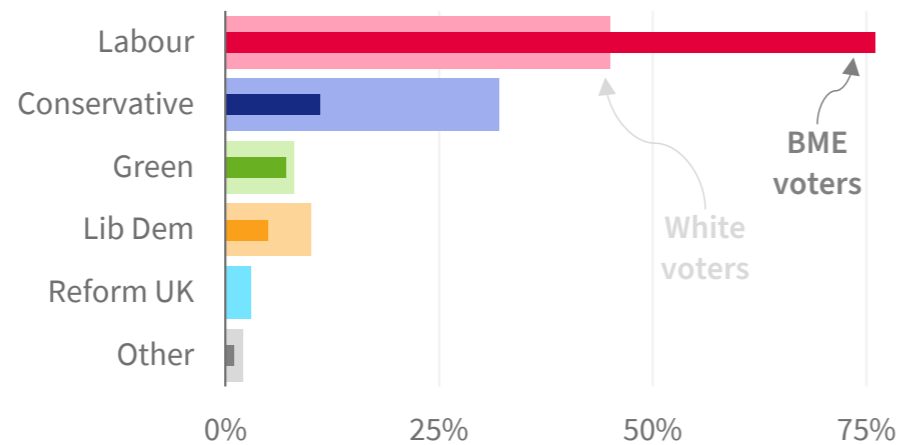


However, the Remain/Leave split continues to strongly influence which party Londoners support. Just 9 per cent of those who intend to vote Conservative supported Remain in the 2016 EU referendum. 58 per cent voted Leave. Conversely, 71 per cent of those who would support Labour in London voted Remain, compared to 27 per cent for Leave.

The age divide in voting intention also remains significant. Just 14 per cent of 18–24-year-olds in London support the Conservatives compared to 53 per cent of those over the age of 65. Meanwhile, 62 per cent of 18–24-year-olds intend to vote Labour compared to 30 per cent of over 65-year-olds (who are, on average, more likely to turn out and vote). BME voters are still significantly more likely to vote Labour than Conservative (76 to 11 per cent).

If there were a **general election** held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

(Headline voting intention weighted by likelihood to vote, excluding those who would not vote, don't know, or refused)



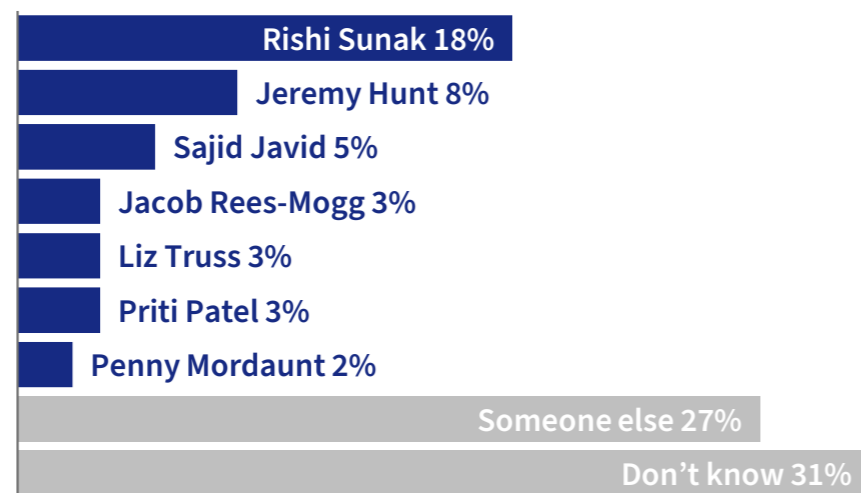
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Labour's current advantage is that it is holding on to more of its 2019 general election voters, while it is attracting significant support from former Liberal Democrat voters.

Among Londoners, Rishi Sunak, currently Chancellor of the Exchequer, is in the lead as to who should be the next Leader of the Conservative Party. If Boris Johnson stepped down,

18 per cent would prefer Sunak to take over as Conservative leader and Prime Minister compared to 8 per cent for Jeremy Hunt (the former Foreign Secretary), 5 per cent for Sajid Javid (Health Secretary), and 3 per cent each for Priti Patel (Home Secretary), Liz Truss (Foreign Secretary) and Jacob Rees-Mogg (Minister for Brexit Opportunities).

Imagine that Boris Johnson stepped down as **Conservative Leader and Prime Minister**. From the list below, who, if anyone, would you prefer to take over?

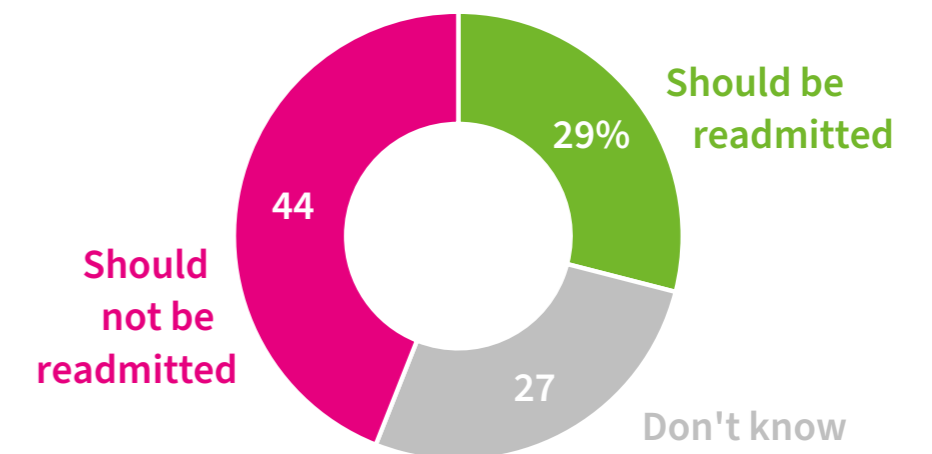


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On balance, voters in London are against the readmittance of Jeremy Corbyn to the Labour party. 44 per cent felt that Corbyn should not be readmitted compared to 29 per cent

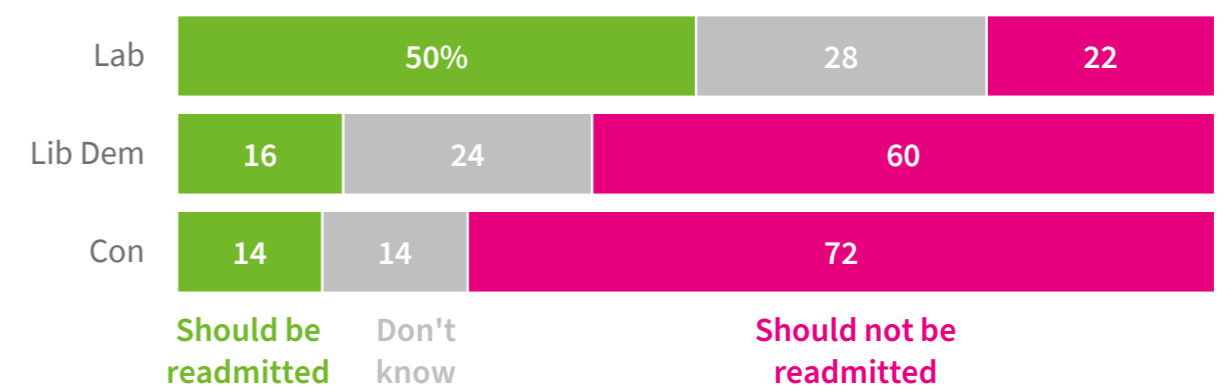
who felt he should be readmitted to the party. However, half of those who voted Labour in 2019 believe that the party's former leader should be allowed to sit as a Labour MP.

Do you think **Jeremy Corbyn** should or should not be readmitted to the Labour Party?



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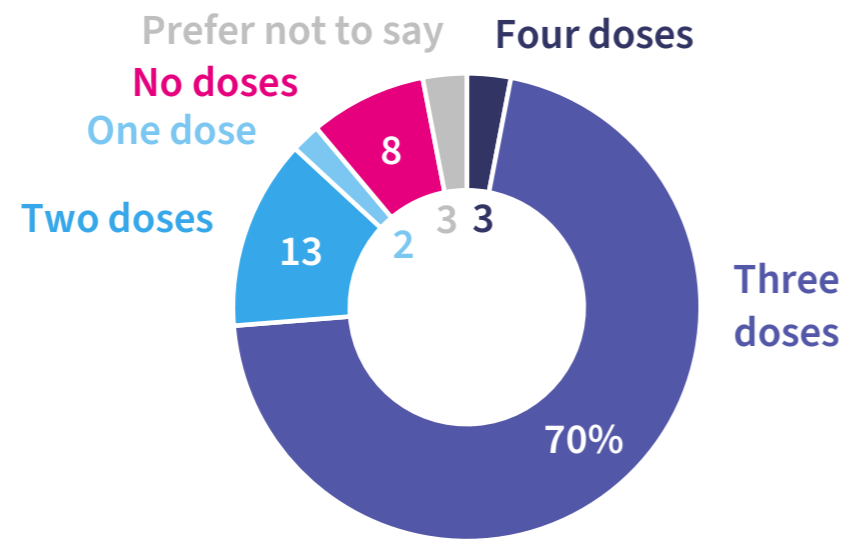
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Covid-19

In general, Londoners are willing to take Covid vaccinations when they are recommended by the government. A majority (70 per cent) have had three doses, although there is a big divide between white and BME voters, and across the age

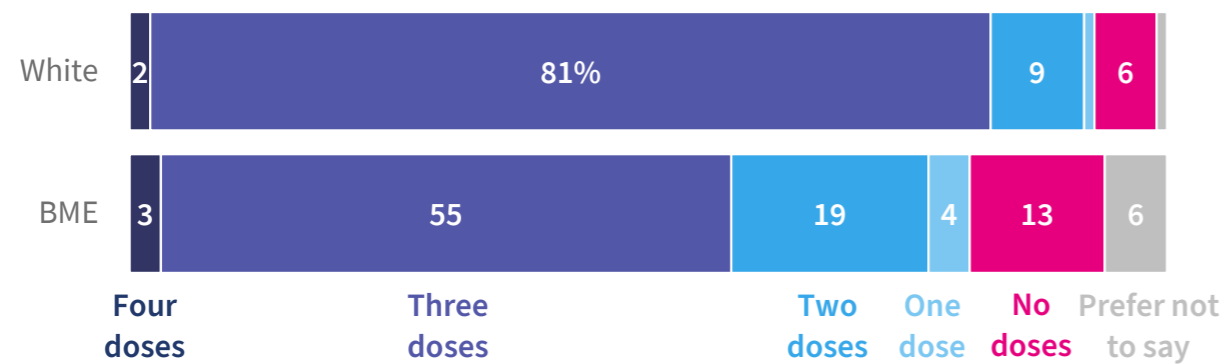
brackets. 13 per cent of all voters have had two doses while 2 per cent have had only one dose. 3 per cent have had four doses (including two booster jabs).

Have you received a **COVID-19 vaccine**?



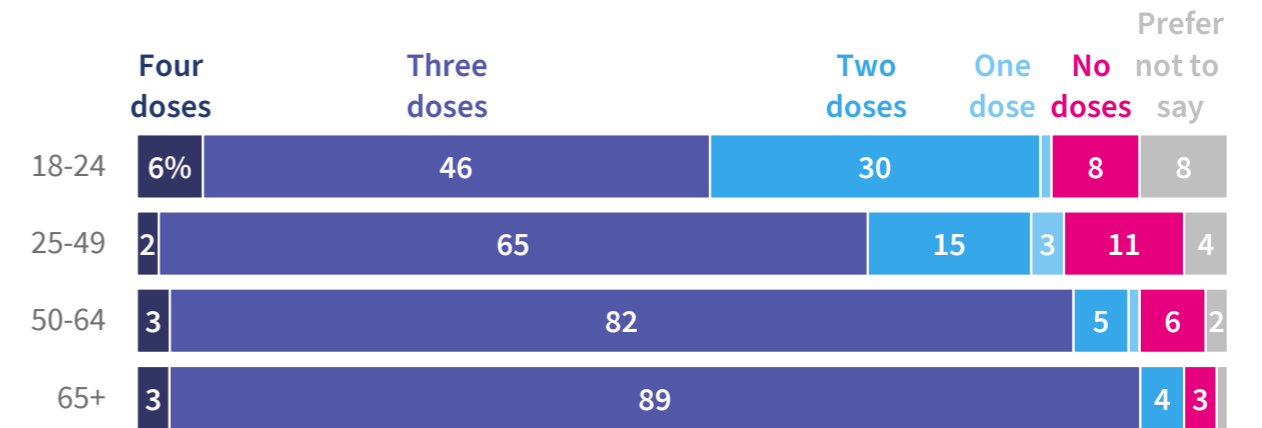
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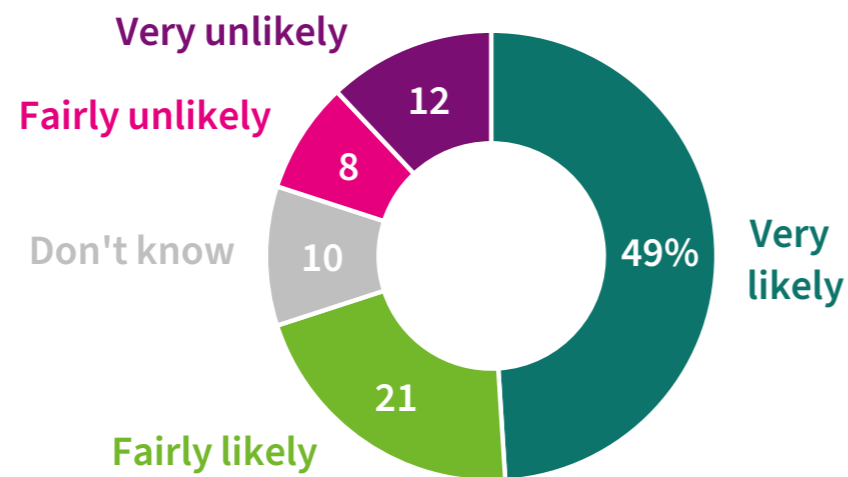


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

70 per cent of Londoners would be likely to have future Covid-19 vaccinations if they were recommended, while 20 per cent said they would be unlikely to do so. Yet only 58 per cent of BME voters would be likely to have future vaccinations (compared to 28 per cent who would not) revealing a persistent ethnic divide in vaccine take up in London.

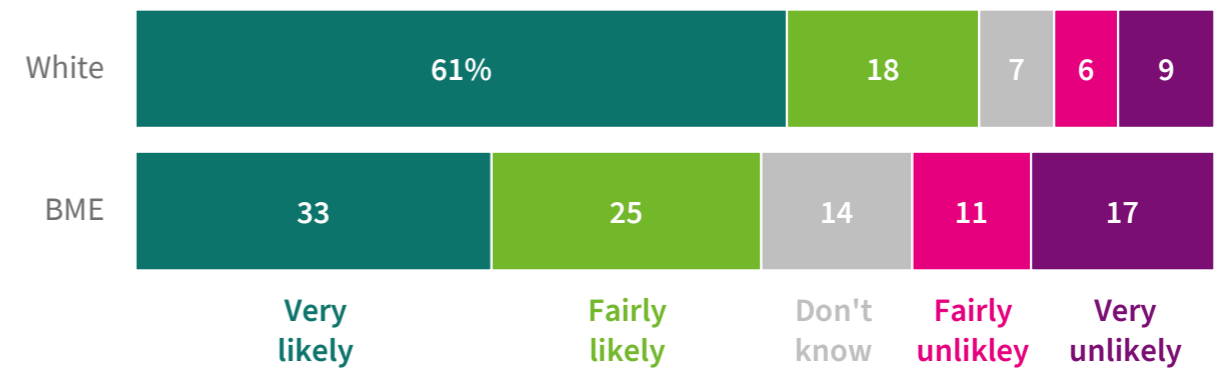
This may well indicate wider hesitancy among ethnic minority communities across the country. The relatively low potential take up of future vaccines amongst young people (only 58 per cent saying that they are likely to have further vaccinations) also shows that if further jabs are needed, work will need to be done to convince younger Londoners.

How likely or unlikely would you be **to have future COVID-19 vaccinations** if they were recommended?



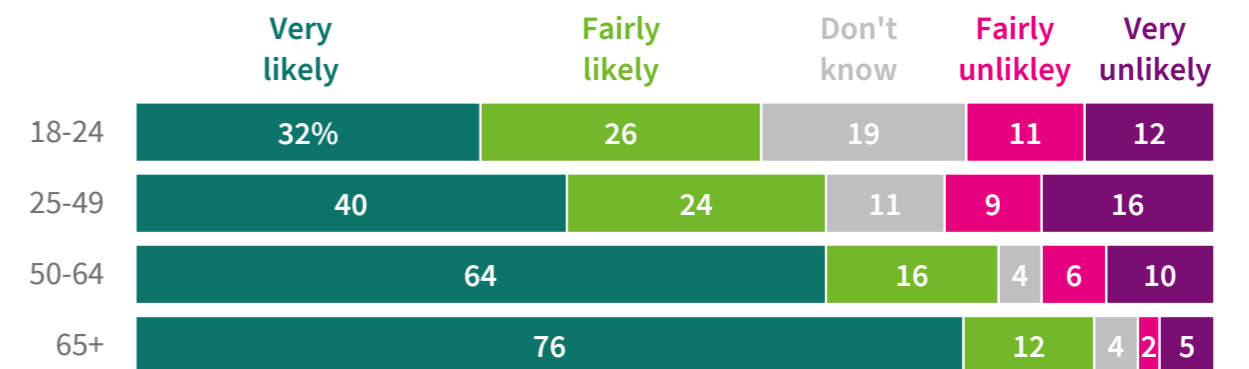
Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

How likely or unlikely would you be **to have future COVID-19 vaccinations** if they were recommended?



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

How likely or unlikely would you be **to have future COVID-19 vaccinations** if they were recommended?

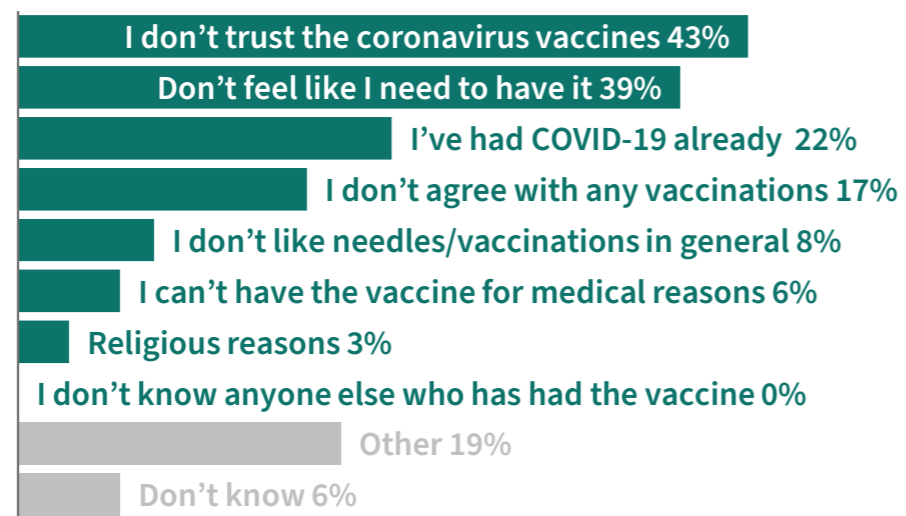


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

The biggest obstacle to people taking the vaccine is distrust of the vaccine itself rather than their religious beliefs. Of those who have not yet had a vaccine dose, 43 per cent said they did not trust the vaccine while 39 per cent did not think they

needed it. 22 per cent believed they were already immune due to having had Covid already, while 17 per cent do not agree with vaccinations. Just 3 per cent said they had not had the vaccine for religious reasons.

Which, if any, of the following is **why you have not received a COVID-19 vaccine?** Please tick all that apply.

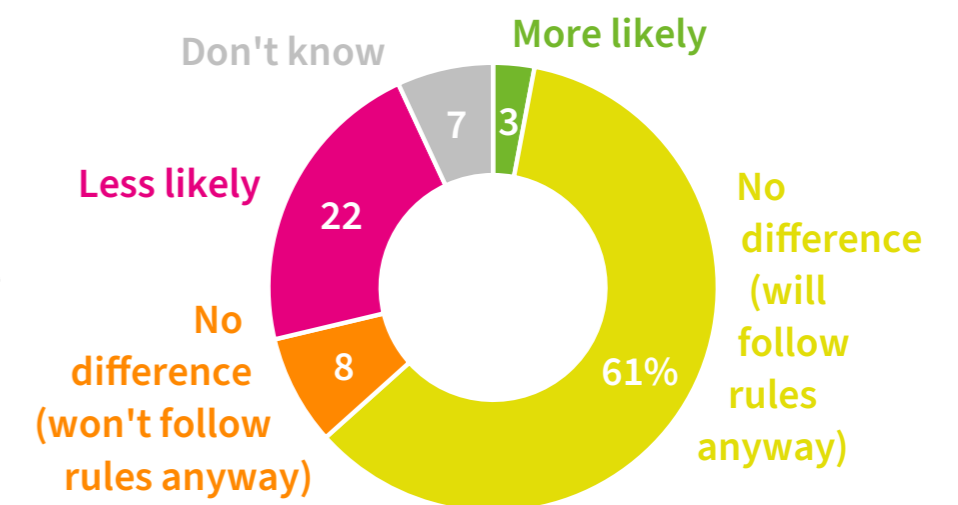


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 90 adults in London who said they had not received a COVID-19 vaccine..

The revelations about parties in 10 Downing Street during lockdown have had some impact on the willingness of people to follow government restrictions and rules on social distancing. If it is found that the Prime Minister did indeed

break the law on lockdown rules, 61 per cent said they would continue to follow the rules anyway. 22 per cent would be less likely to do so; 3 per cent say they would be more likely to follow the rules.

If the Prime Minister was found to have broken COVID-19 lockdown rules, **would you be more or less likely to follow any future lockdown rules**, or would it make no difference?

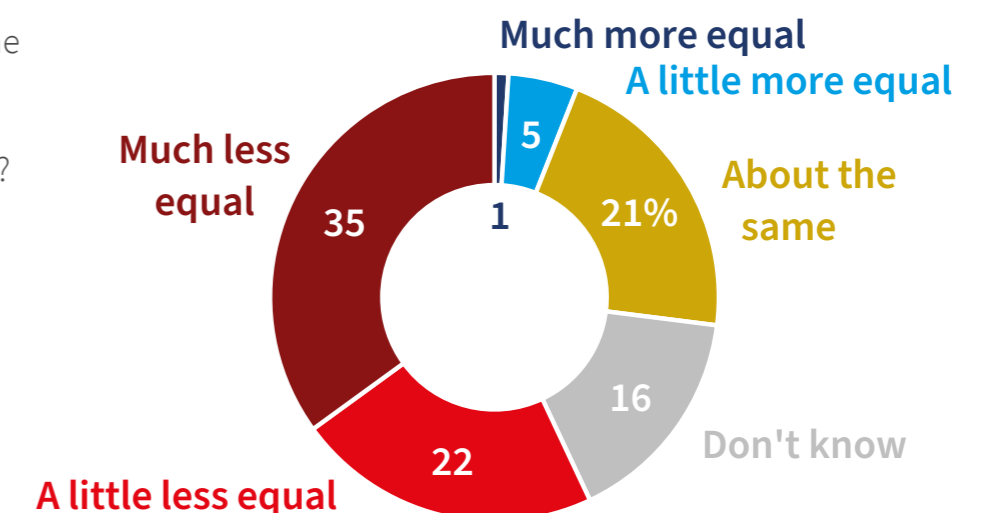


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Rising inequality in the wake of Covid is not surprisingly a major concern for Londoners. 57 per cent think that the pandemic has made society less equal (economic inequality

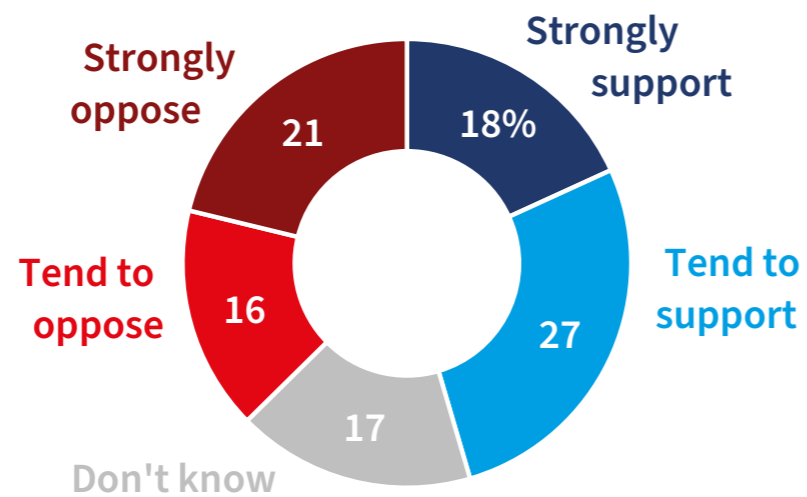
is defined as inequality in the distribution of income, wealth and assets) compared to 6 per cent who believe it has become more equal.

What effect, if any, would you say that the **pandemic** has made on **economic inequality in the UK?**



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Since the first lockdown, many London boroughs have put in place 'low traffic neighbourhoods' that restrict the use of motor vehicles by reducing through traffic on residential streets. Would you support or oppose making these 'low traffic neighbourhoods' in London permanent?

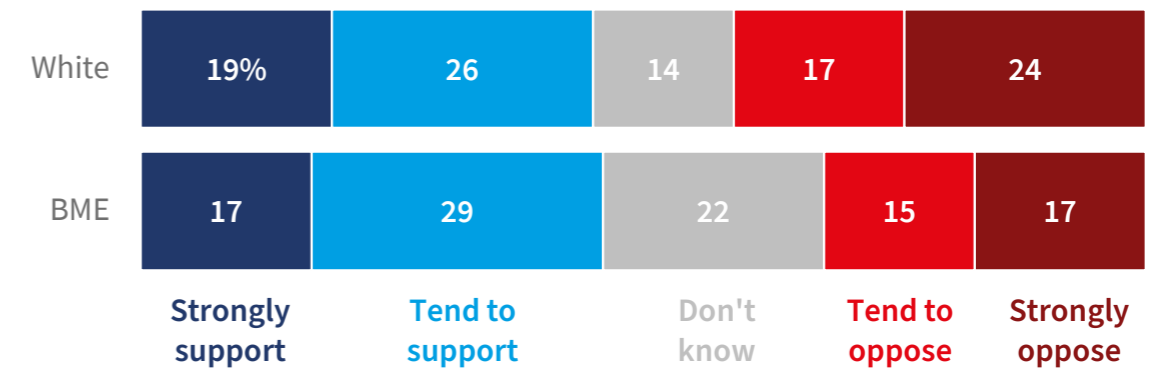


Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

On balance, Londoners favour measures taken during the pandemic to improve the quality of life for local residents, notably the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs). 45 per cent support the introduction of LTNs

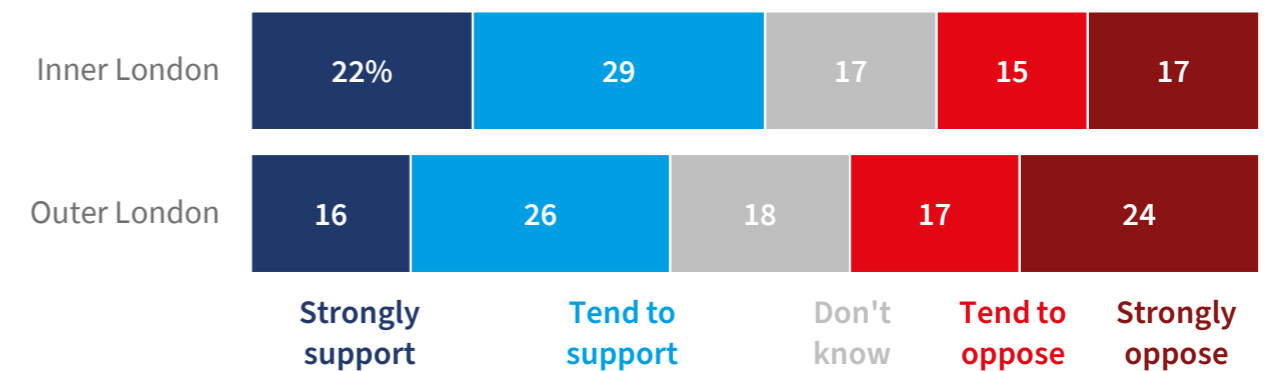
compared to 37 per cent who oppose them and there no significant differences in how white and ethnic minority Londoners view the measures. However, older voters in outer London are significantly less likely to support them.

Would you support or oppose making 'low traffic neighbourhoods' permanent?



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Would you support or oppose making 'low traffic neighbourhoods' permanent?



Fieldwork: 28 February to 3 March 2022. Base: 1114 adults in London.

Conclusion

All in all, Londoners believe that their local council does a good job, but they remain frustrated by many aspects of life in the capital, notably the lack of affordable housing and rising anti-social behaviour that blights communities.

In a climate where local councils are hard-pressed and face competing priorities from maintaining local services to improving the quality and availability of social care, voters already squeezed by the cost of living crisis are likely to resist further rises in council tax. Similarly, they are not prepared to pay more in bus, tube and train fares to support Transport for London (TfL) which has faced a financial crisis since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Londoners remained concerned about the performance of public institutions, notably the Metropolitan Police Service. Major reform of how the police operate in the capital will be needed to win back the confidence and trust of voters across the city.

Overall, despite many challenges, London has ample opportunities to revitalise itself economically and socially in the period ahead, provided that London-level government and local councils continue to make robust, evidence-based public policy decisions.

Poll Details

The polling was conducted for the Mile End Institute at Queen Mary, University of London by You Gov. Sample Size: 1114 adults in London. Fieldwork: 28th February - 3rd March 2022.

The Mile End Institute brings together politicians, policymakers, academics, and the public to discuss and debate the major challenges facing the country in a fast-moving and ever-changing world.


The Institute calls upon expertise from the School of Politics and International Relations and the School of History, based in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Queen Mary University of London and disseminates through [public and digital events](#), [webinars, podcasts](#) and the [Mile End Institute Blog](#).




Mile End Institute

Queen Mary University of London
Arts One, 2.37
Mile End Road
London E1 4NS

For general enquiries contact
Tom Chidwick
Tel: +44 (0)20 78826881
email: mei@qmul.ac.uk

 @MileEndInst

 @MileEndInst

 Mile End Institute

mei.qmul.ac.uk
