



Persuasion UK

IP
PR

**All to play for:
attitudes to the EV
transition**

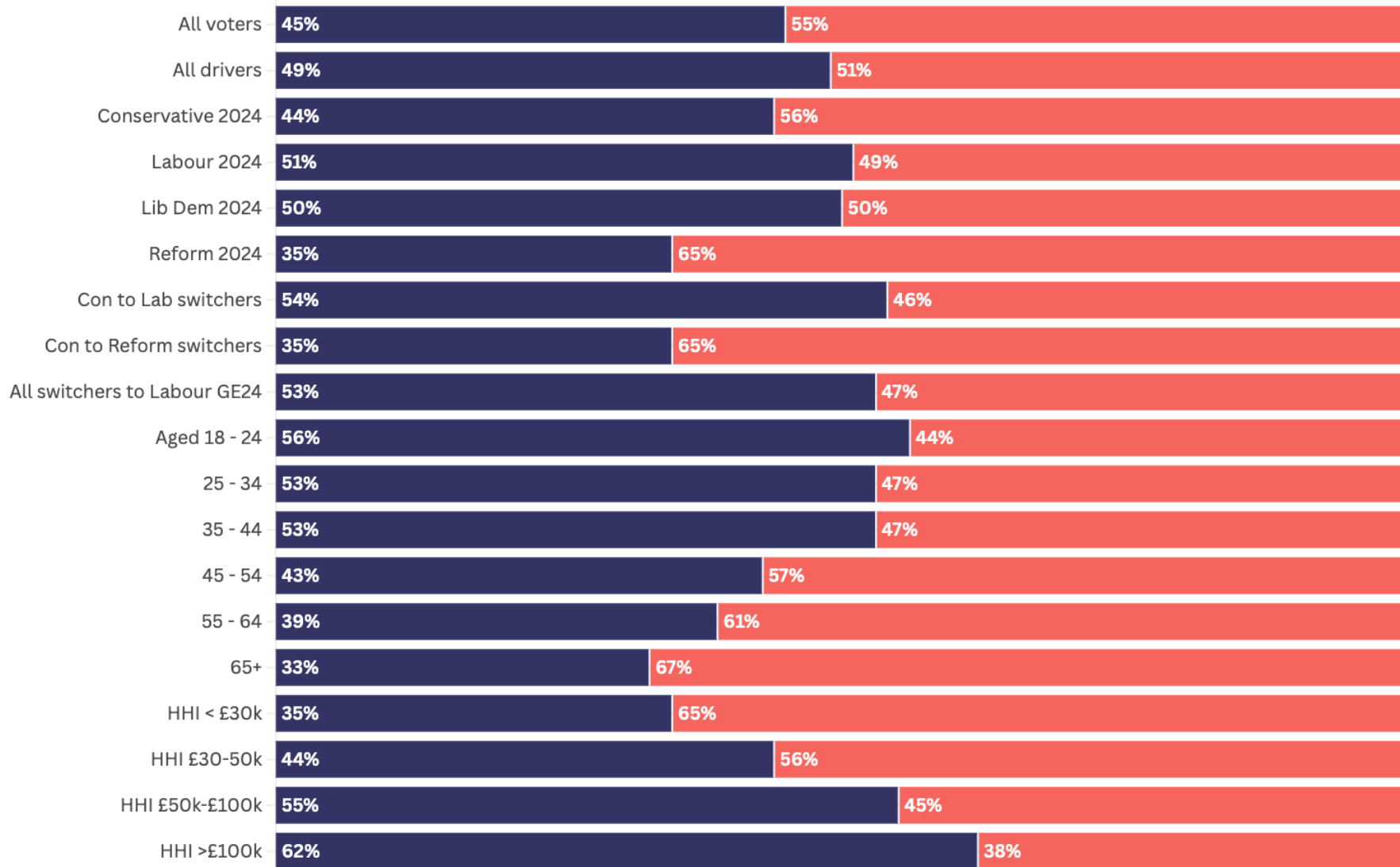
January 30th 2025

Findings in brief

- **The socialisation of Electric Vehicles in the UK is now high**
- **Informing people of this is actually one of the best ways of increasing positivity towards EVs and the 2030 target ('nudge' theory?)**

In recent years, Electric Vehicles have become highly socialised within British society. Nearly half of us have a friend or family member with an EV or else own one ourselves.

■ Owns or knows someone with an EV ■ Does not own or know anyone with an EV



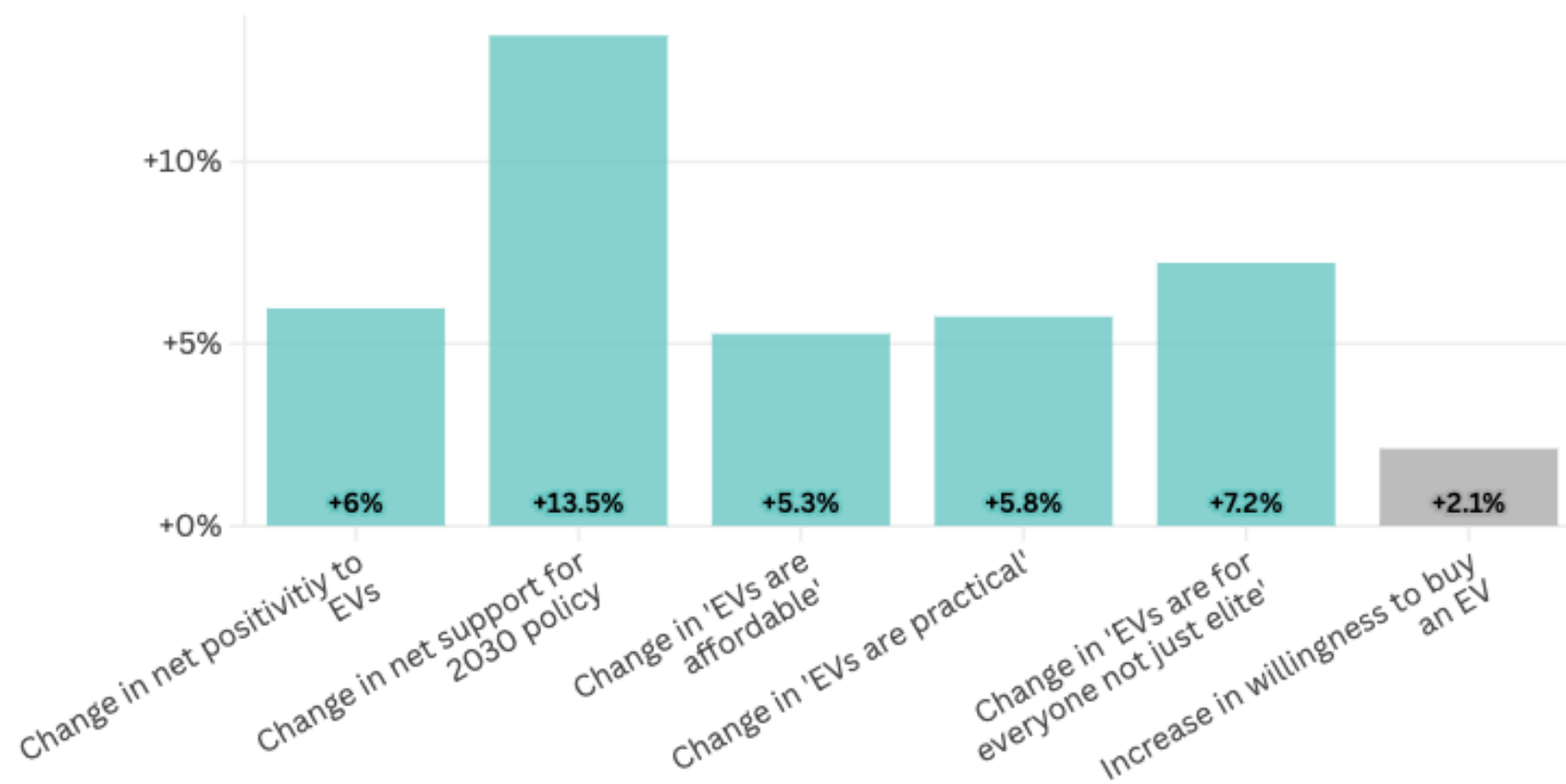
"When it comes to electric vehicles, which of these applies to you? Select all that apply" - combines "I currently drive one/I have driven one before, though I don't currently/I have friends who drive one/I have family members who drive one"

FocalData for Persuasion UK/IPPR, 4,000 UK adults, w/c 24th October 2024

Story telling around the socialisation of EVs can boost support for them in policy and consumer terms

% is change in respondent belief after exposure to a pro-EV message based on social norming (grey is statistically insignificant, green significant)

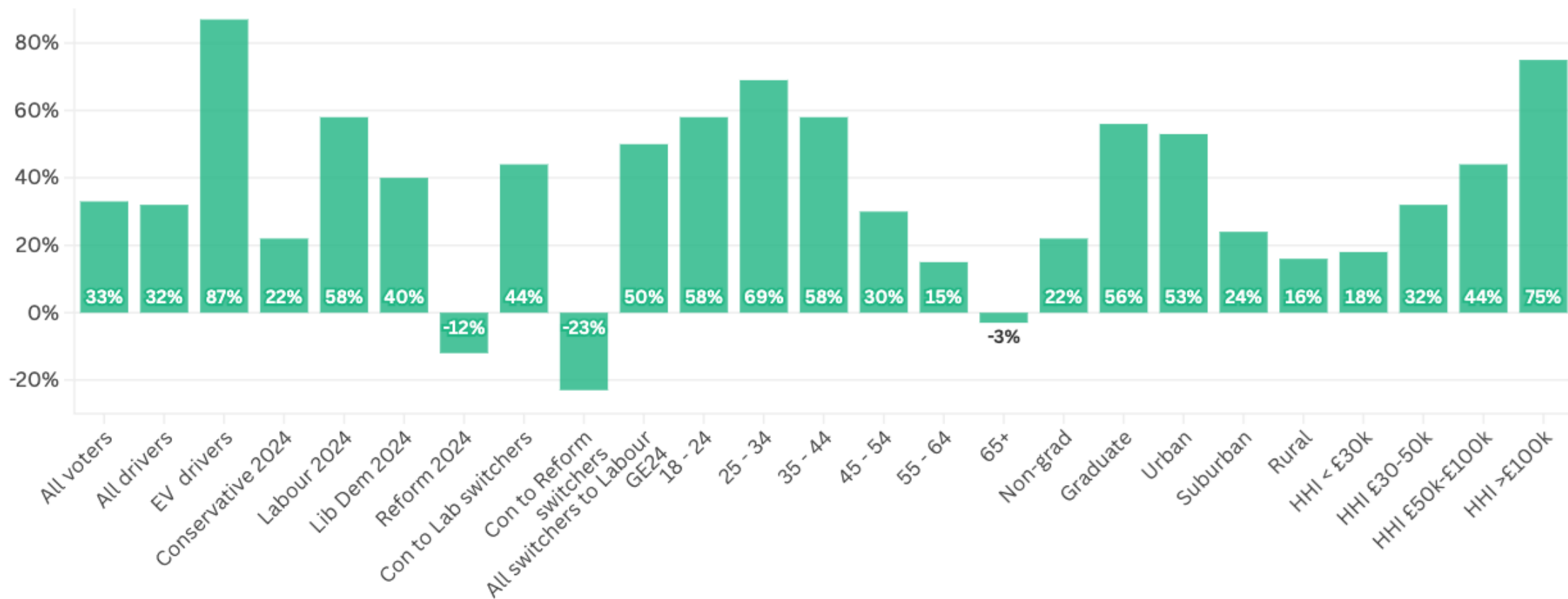
Social norming message "As the cost of electric vehicles falls, and the practicality rises, we've seen a huge uptake in their use across the UK. According to studies, 50% of Brits either owns one or has a friend or family member who does. And once people have one, they love them. They're increasing in use among everyone - taxi drivers in cities, mums doing the shopping in town, white van men doing deliveries to villages - everyone. This is the way the world is moving now, as the environmental and consumer benefits become clear. That's why it's right that the government sticks to plans to end the sale of new petrol cars in 2030 - using that time to make cleaner alternatives more open to everyone. Let's keep it going."



- **This underpins a general positivity towards EVs in the UK**
- **This includes crucial Conservative-to-Labour swing voters**
- **The only swing group with consistently anti-EV attitudes are Conservative to Reform voters**

Most voters - and drivers - are pre-disposed to be positive towards Electric Vehicles

NET positivity to EVs (all those with a positive view minus all those with a negative view)



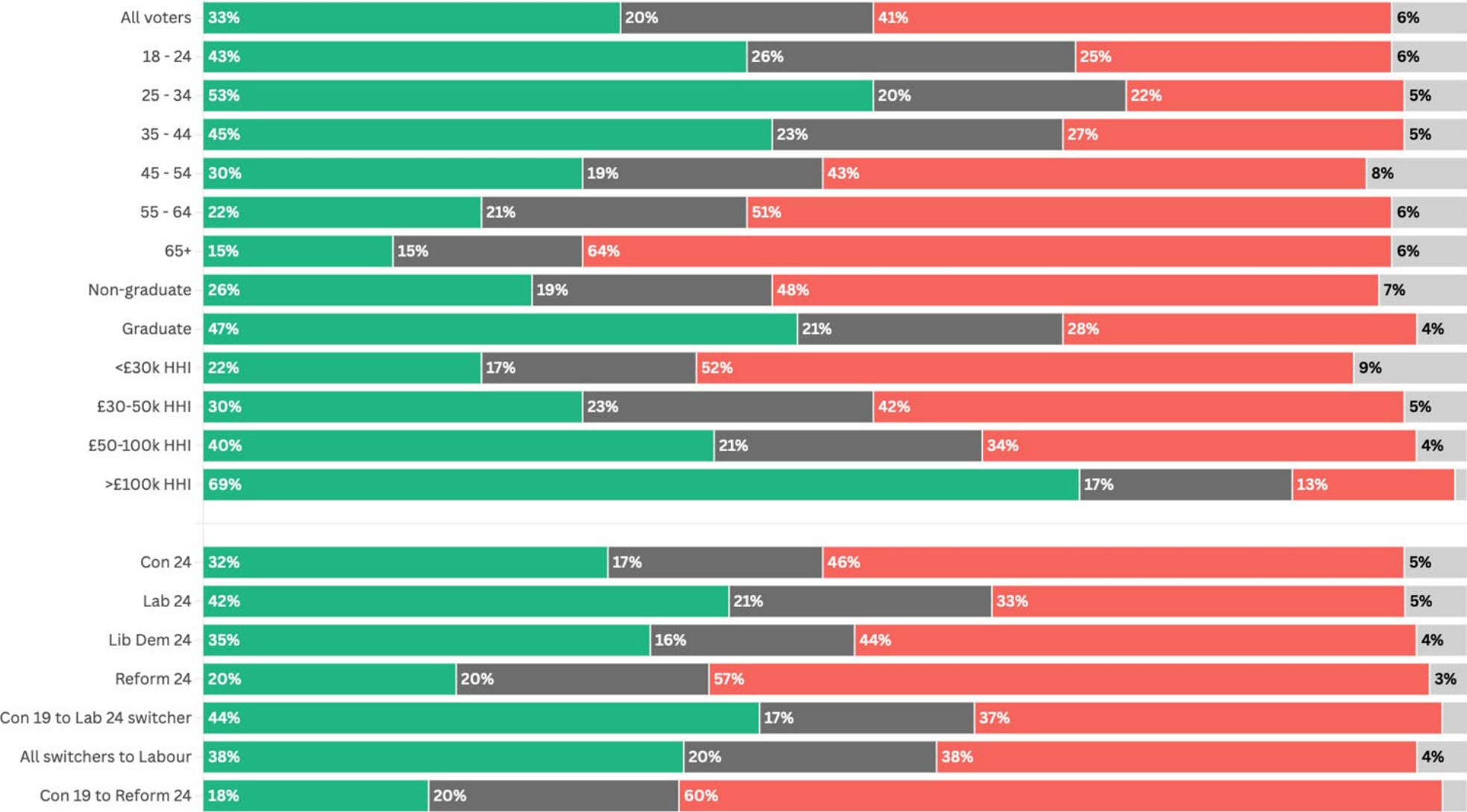
"And how positively or negatively do you feel about these things? Electric vehicles"

- **However, opinion on EVs is soft.**
- **There is uncertainty over where EVs are practical or affordable for ordinary people.**
- **Anxiety about charging and cost play into each other, such that EVs need to be considerably cheaper than a petrol car to be preferable to most people.**

Despite a positive overall impression of EVs, a plurality do not think them affordable for people like them, with results stratified by income

"How would you rate the following cars on this scale? Electric vehicles are..."

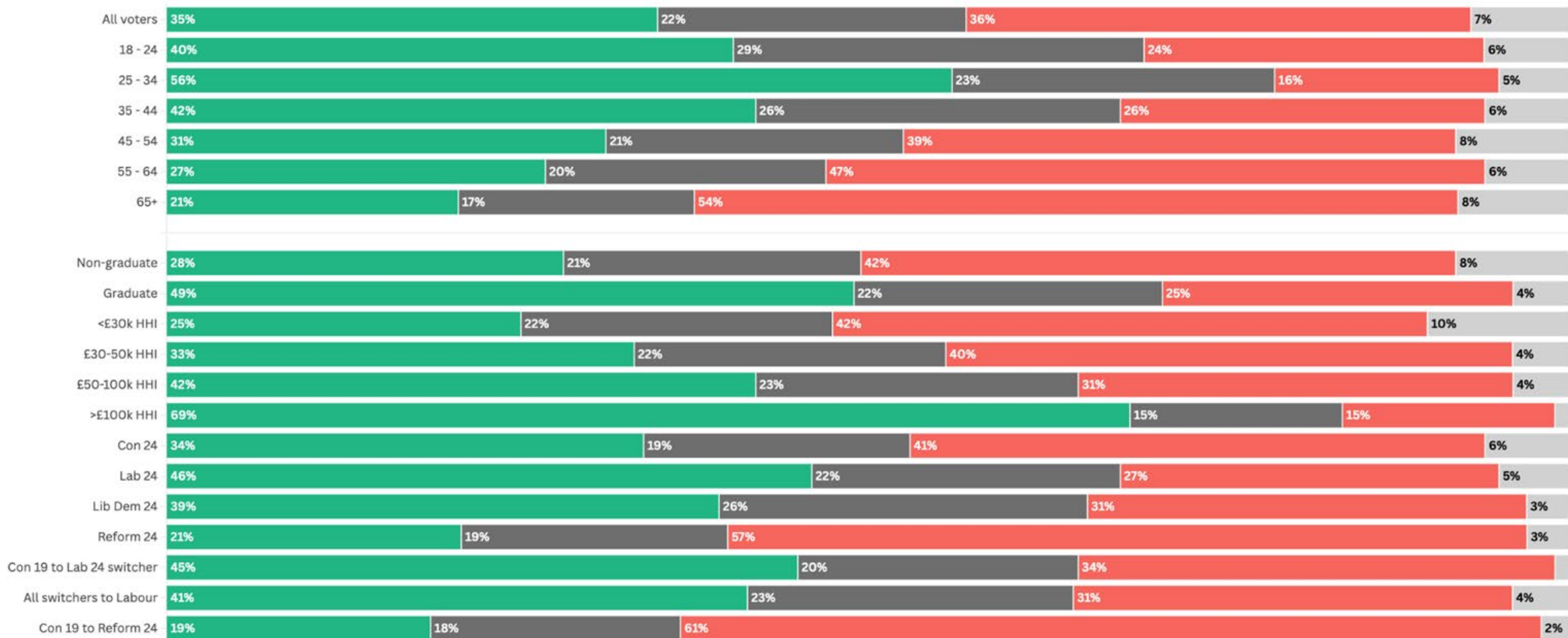
■ Affordable for people like me
 ■ Neither affordable nor unaffordable
 ■ Unaffordable for people like me
 ■ Don't know



...and voters are evenly divided on how practical EVs are for people like them

"How would you rate the following cars on this scale? Electric vehicles are..."

■ Practical for people like me
 ■ Neither impractical nor practical
 ■ Impractical for people like me
 ■ Don't know

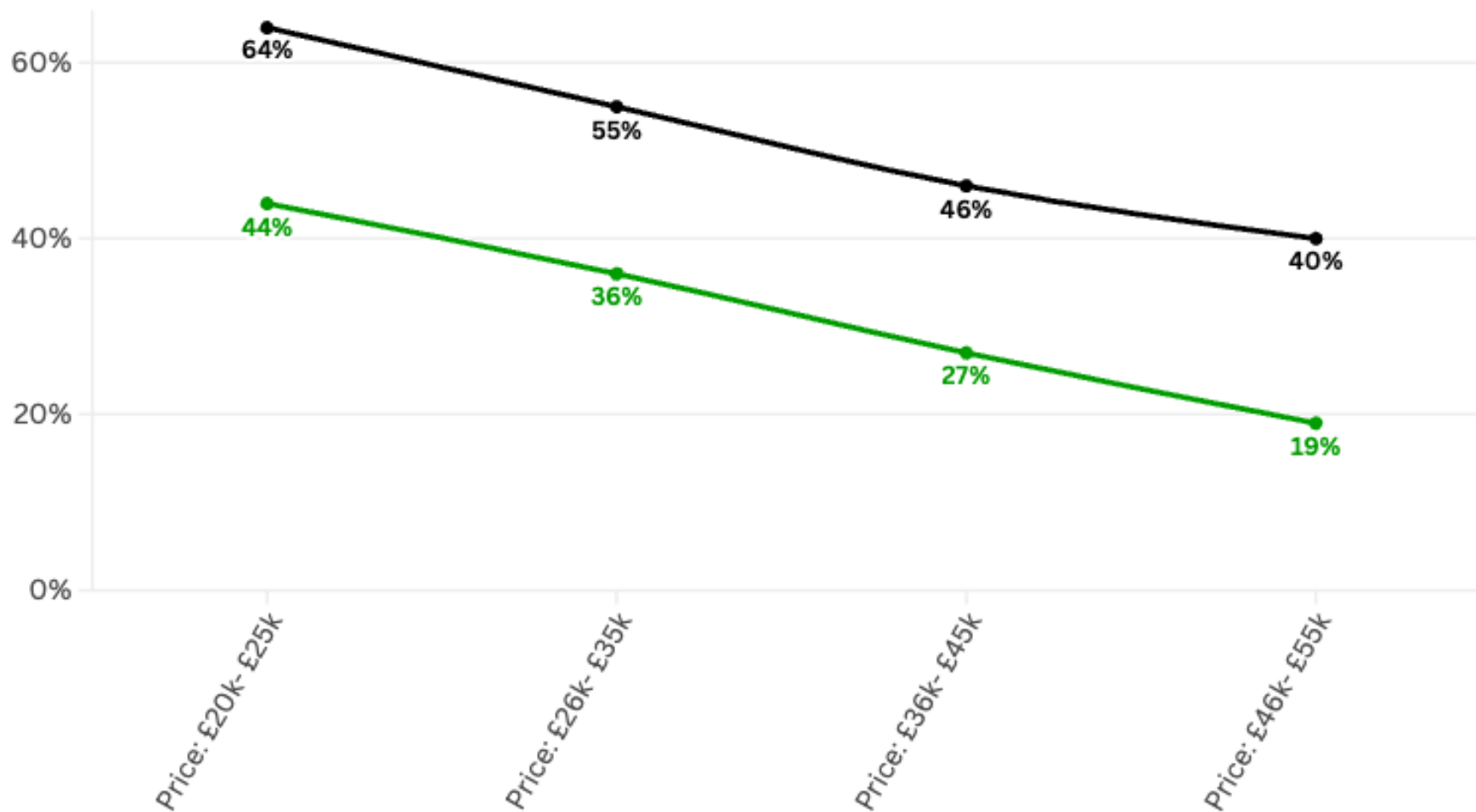


FocalData for Persuasion UK/IPPR, 4,000 UK adults, w/c 24th October 2024

All else being equal, the price of an EV currently needs to be significantly cheaper than a petrol car for it to be the preferable choice for drivers

Results from consumer conjoint experiment. Drivers were asked to choose between a hypothetical EV and hypothetical petrol car, with a range of variables (price, range, brand etc) randomised.

■ % choosing EV (all drivers) ■ % choosing petrol car (all drivers)

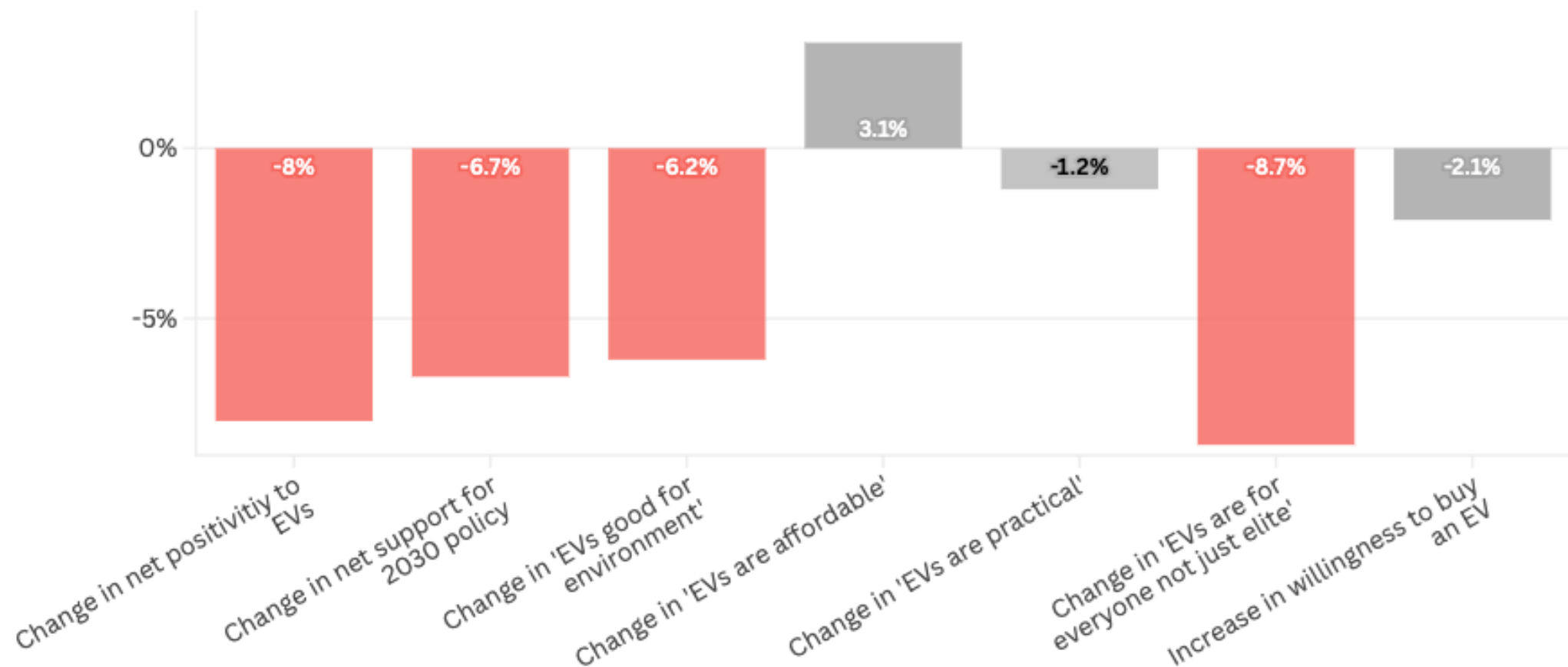


- **This also makes the EV agenda vulnerable to anti-EV messages which focus on cost and practicality.**
- **For most people, though, this is not a culture war - it's intensely practical. Culture war messaging can be overcome fairly easily. Most voters back the transition to EVs but just need reassurance.**
- **That ambivalence explains the narrow nature of support for the 2030 target.**

Pragmatic anti-EV messages based on cost and practicality can push down support for 2030 and EVs generally

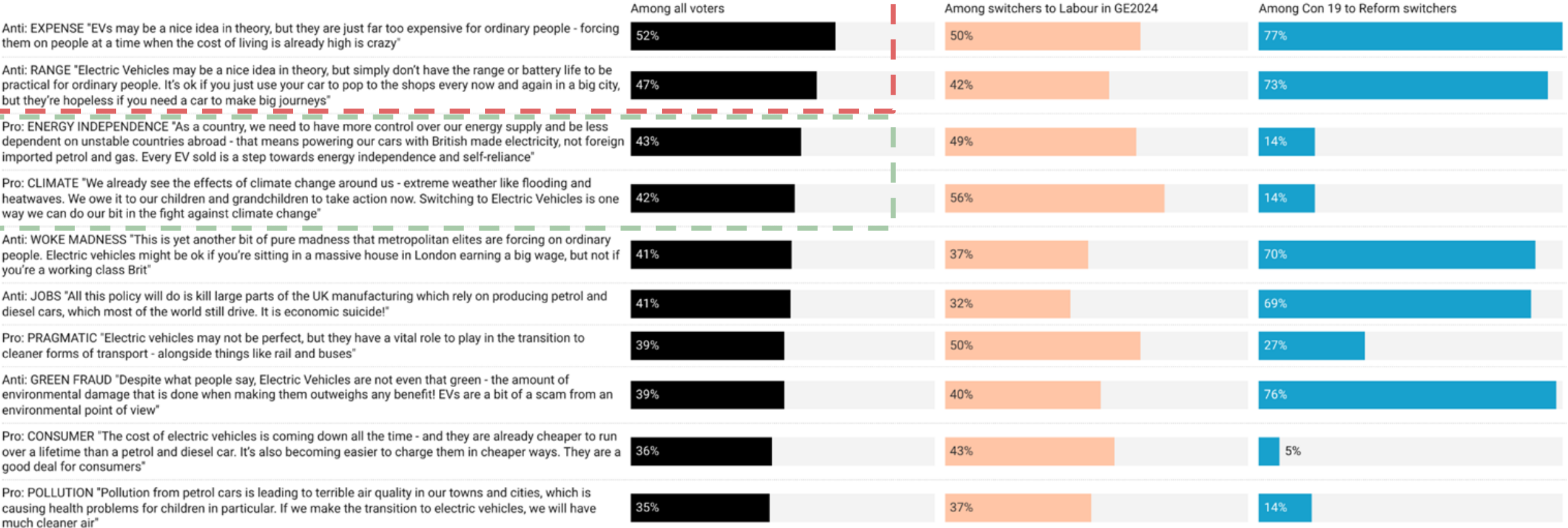
% is change in respondent belief after exposure to a anti-EV message based on cost and practicality (grey is statistically insignificant, red is significant)

"More people driving Electric Vehicles might be a nice idea in theory, but the truth is they are only a realistic option for the well-off. EVs remain far too expensive for ordinary people - petrol cars remain generally more affordable. On top of that, EVs simply don't have the battery life to be practical for most families. It's ok if you just use your car to pop to the shops every now and again in a big city, but they're hopeless if you need a car to make big journeys. That's why forcing EVs on people by default - even in 2030 - is just out of touch with reality. The government should immediately change its policy to end the sale of new petrol and diesel only cars - either push the deadline back or abolish it entirely."



The two anti arguments that the pro-EV side in this testing can't overcome concern expense and range. Every other anti argument - including culture war messaging - is beaten by energy independence and climate narratives.

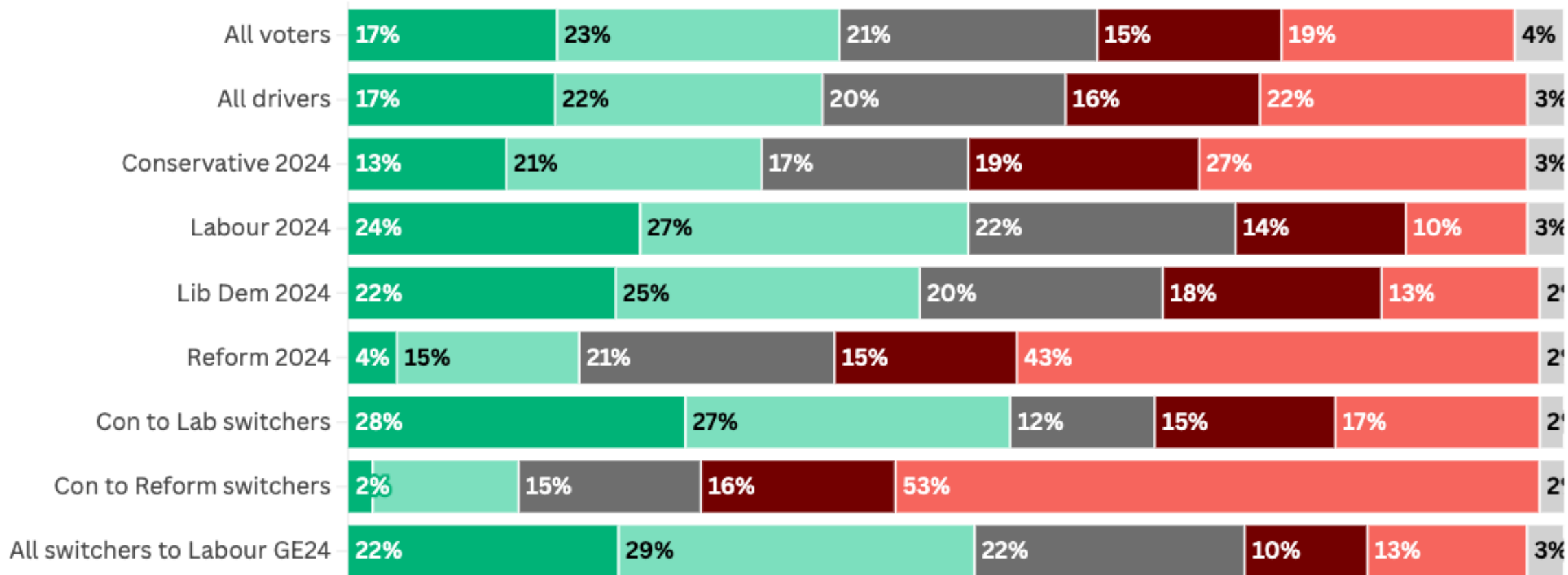
% represents number of time an argument beat an opposing argument in competitive message testing (methodology: paired statement testing. Respondents saw one possible pro and one possible anti EV argument, drawn at random, and were asked which they found most convincing)



"Below are two arguments concerning the government's policy to phase out petrol and diesel cars and increase the uptake of electric vehicles. On the left hand side is an argument FOR this policy. On the right hand side is an argument AGAINST. These arguments may be true, or may not be. Which one do you personally find most convincing?"

There is net support for the 2030 EV target but it is closely divided, mostly on age, income and political grounds

■ Strongly support
 ■ Somewhat support
 ■ Neither support nor oppose
 ■ Somewhat oppose
 ■ Strongly oppose
 ■ Don't know



"The UK government currently plans to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in 2030, in an effort to increase the production and uptake of electric vehicles. Consumers will still be able to buy second hand petrol and diesel cars, as well as hybrids and electric vehicles, but it won't be possible to buy a new petrol/diesel car. This is part of attempts to reduce the UK's 'carbon emissions' which contribute to climate change. Do you support or oppose this policy?"

→ **At the same time, exposure to certain pro-EV messages can also be highly effective in boosting support for 2030 and EVs generally. It is genuinely all to play for. The best performing are:**

- Storytelling about the growing socialisation of electric vehicles in the UK.

- First principles messages about climate and energy independence which remind people *why* this change is happening.

It is important that voters hear these kinds of messages in the coming years.

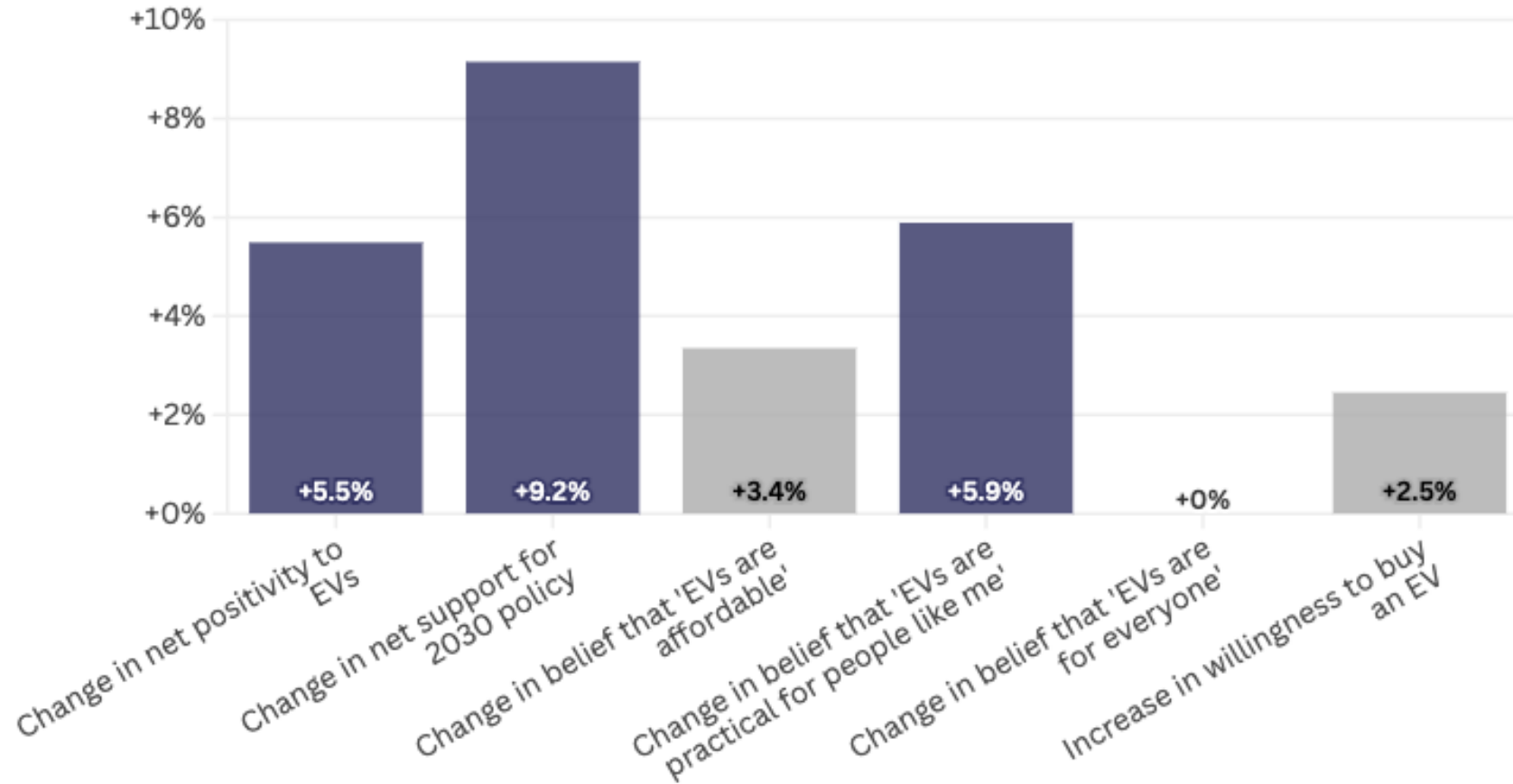
→ **At the same time, policy interventions should focus ruthlessly on making charging easier and more frictionless, as well as on continuing to lower costs.**

→ **If this happens, there is every reason to believe the vast majority of voters can be brought along with the transition to EVs.**

'Big why' messages like climate can positively remind people why we are doing the transition to EVs to begin with, and can be useful to a point...

% is change in respondent belief after exposure to a pro-EV message based on traditional climate messaging (grey is statistically insignificant, purple significant)

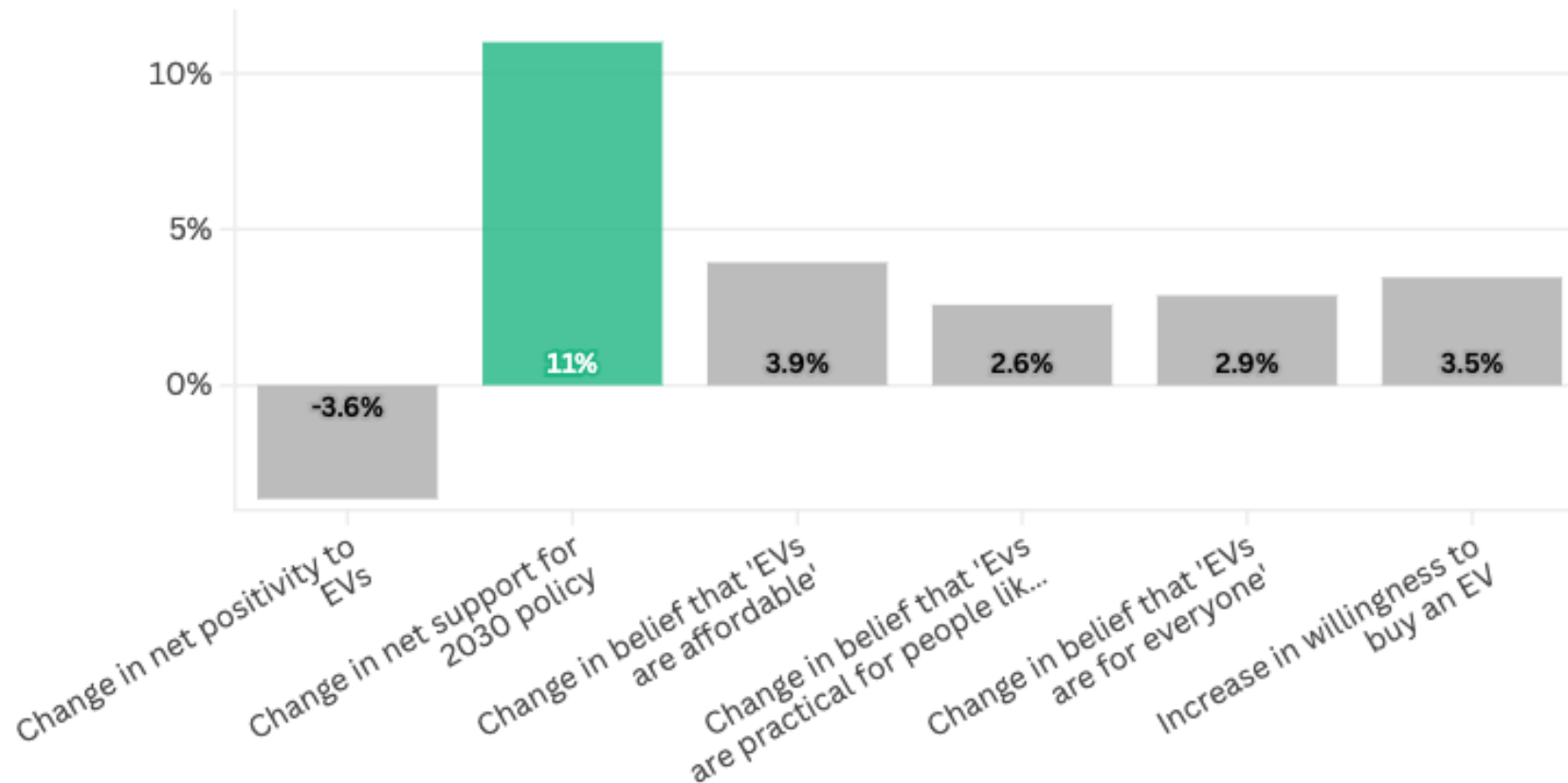
Climate message "In recent years, we've really seen the effects of climate change - from extreme heatwaves in the UK to devastating floods in Spain. Scientists are clear: if humans don't drastically reduce the pollution we're putting into the atmosphere, we risk leaving our children and grandchildren with even worse impacts. The good news is it's not too late. One simple thing we can do is change our cars - moving from polluting petrol vehicles to cleaner, modern electric ones. They may not be perfect, but EVs are much, much better for the environment over the car's lifetime. That's why it's right that the government stick to plans to end the sale of new cars powered solely by petrol and diesel in 2030 - and work hard now to make cleaner alternatives more easily available. Because later is too late. "



Energy independence messaging is also a strong way to boost support for 2030 specifically

% is change in respondent belief after exposure to a pro-EV message based on energy independence (grey is statistically insignificant, green significant)

Energy independence message "The problem is simple: Britain's energy supply is not in Britain's hands. Right now, we're dangerously dependent on importing oil and gas from unstable international markets. That means we don't control our own destiny. When there's volatility abroad - with tyrants like Putin invading other countries - energy prices shoot up here at home. We need to take back control of our energy system. One immediate step is to power our cars with British-made electricity, not foreign-imported oil and gas. Every electric car sold is a step towards energy independence and self-reliance for the UK. That's why it's right that the government stick to plans to end the sale of new cars powered solely by petrol and diesel cars in 2030 - and work hard now to make cleaner alternatives more easily available. Let's control our own destiny."



Results for all voters: social norming' and 'climate' raise the brand of EVs the most, while energy independence also clearly boosts support for the 2030 phase out

Figures are differences in 'outcome' attitudes of those in each message group compared to a control group who saw nothing. Green indicates a statistically significant persuasion effect in favour of EVs, red indicates a statistically significant persuasion effect against EVs. Minimum detectable statistically significant effect = +/- 5.3%

Change in attitude	Anti message only	Pro: Climate	Pro: Energy independence	Pro: Consumer benefit	Pro: Social norming	Pro: Pollution	Pro: Jobs/China
Change in positivity to EVs (net)	-8.0%	+5.5%	-3.7%	-6.2%	+6.0%	-0.7%	-1.6%
Change in support for 2030 phase out policy (net)	-6.7%	+9.2%	+11.0%	+2.5%	+13.5%	+7.4%	+3.7%
Change in belief that 'EVs good for environment' vs bad (net)	-6.2%	+5.9%	-4.0%	+0.4%	+8.6%	+5.4%	-0.6%
Change in belief that 'EVs are affordable' vs unaffordable (net)	+3.1%	+3.4%	+3.9%	+8.3%	+5.3%	+3.4%	+5.9%
Change in belief that 'Evs are practical for people like me' vs impractical (net)	-1.2%	+5.9%	+2.6%	+5.4%	+5.8%	-0.6%	+2.1%
Change in belief that 'EVs are for everyone' vs just the elite (net)	-8.7%	±0.0%	+2.9%	+2.4%	+7.2%	-5.4%	-5.2%
Increase in willingness to buy an EV (>5/10 willing) (just drivers in market for new car)	-2.1%	+2.5%	+3.5%	-1.2%	+2.1%	+0.4%	-2.3%

Persuasion UK/IPPR, via YouGov December 2024/January 2025. Split over two experiments, 8,900 UK adults, c. 1,100 people per condition weighted on age, gender,

Policy ideas which may boost support for 2030 target

"Which of these government actions would make you more supportive of the government's policy to phase out the sale of petrol/diesel cars and ramp up the sale of electric cars? Choose up to 3."

Increase the number of charging points

44%

Incentivise easier/cheaper home charging

40%

Provide subsidies to reduce the up-front cost

37%

Regulating to ensure smaller and more affordable models of EV are available

33%

Provide interest-free loans to reduce the up-front cost

25%

Ensure the production of EVs is more environmentally friendly

22%

Make EVs more readily available through shared car clubs, affordable car subscriptions or reduced leasing costs

17%

None of these

14%

Grow the secondhand EV market by making large organisations go faster in only buying EVs

13%

You can read the full in-depth research, including methodology, on the Persuasion UK website:

<https://persuasionuk.org/>