BRAND STARMER VS. SUNAK

June 2024

What happens when you apply the principles of brand success to politics?

Brand success principles apply to political brands in much the same way as commercial brands.

We look at how brand Sunak and brand Starmer are performing against the three components of Ipsos' Brand Success Framework: Shaping **Expectations**, in **Context**, with **Empathy**.

Expectations:
What people think and know about the brand

Context:
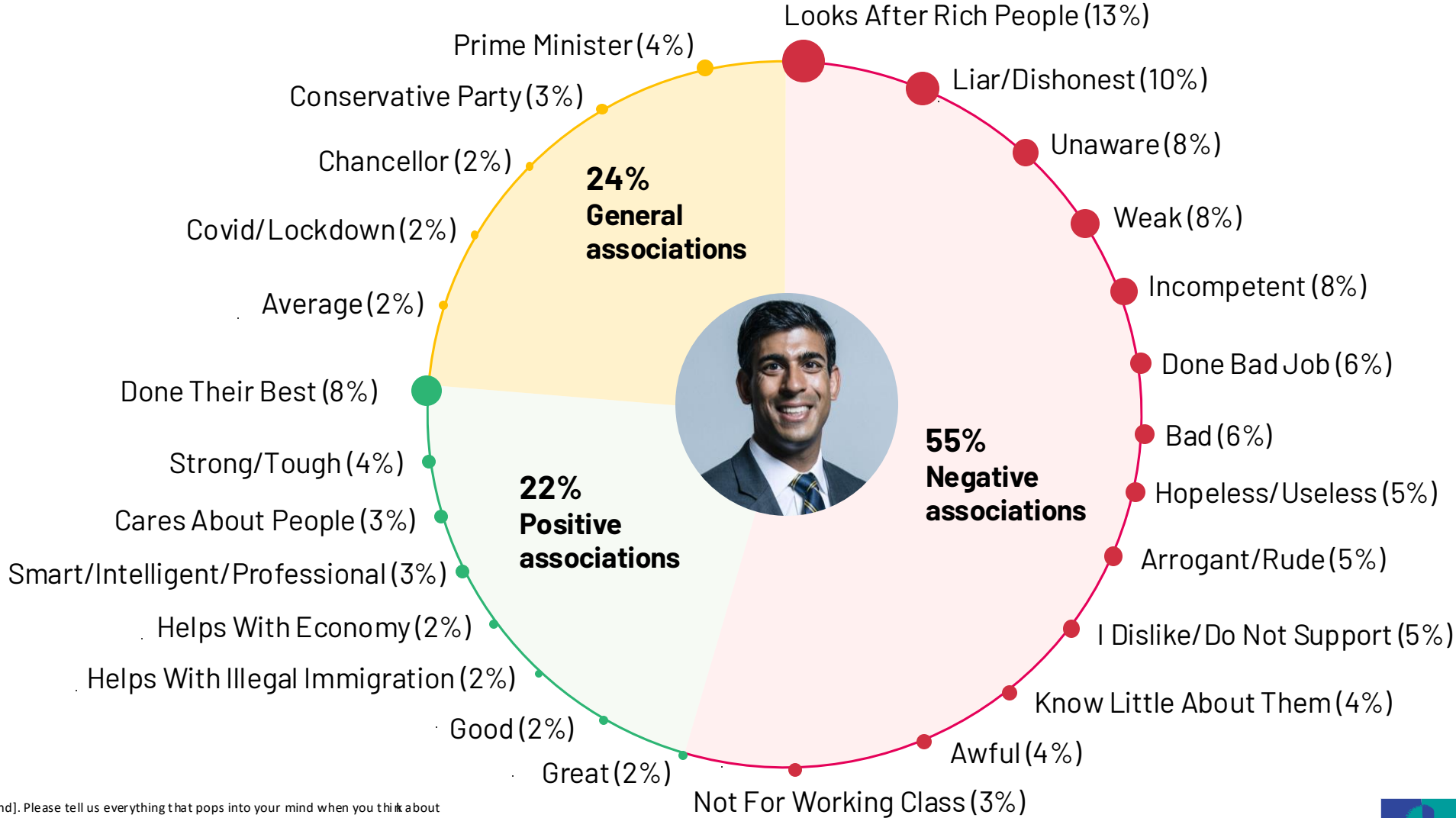What's going on in people's lives and the world around them

Empathy:
A brand's ability to understand what's important to people

Brand Sunak has more than twice as many negative associations than positive and is particularly associated with looking after the rich.

Overall, brand Sunak has more negative than positive associations:

Net positive –33%

Looks After Rich People (13%)

Prime Minister (4%)

Liar/Dishonest (10%)

Conservative Party (3%)

Unaware (8%)

Chancellor (2%)

Weak (8%)

24% General associations

Covid/Lockdown (2%)

Incompetent (8%)

Average (2%)

Done Bad Job (6%)

Done Their Best (8%)

55% Negative associations

Bad (6%)

Strong/Tough (4%)

Hopeless/Useless (5%)

Cares About People (3%)

22% Positive associations

Arrogant/Rude (5%)

Smart/Intelligent/Professional (3%)

I Dislike/Do Not Support (5%)

Helps With Economy (2%)

Know Little About Them (4%)

Helps With Illegal Immigration (2%)

Awful (4%)

Good (2%)
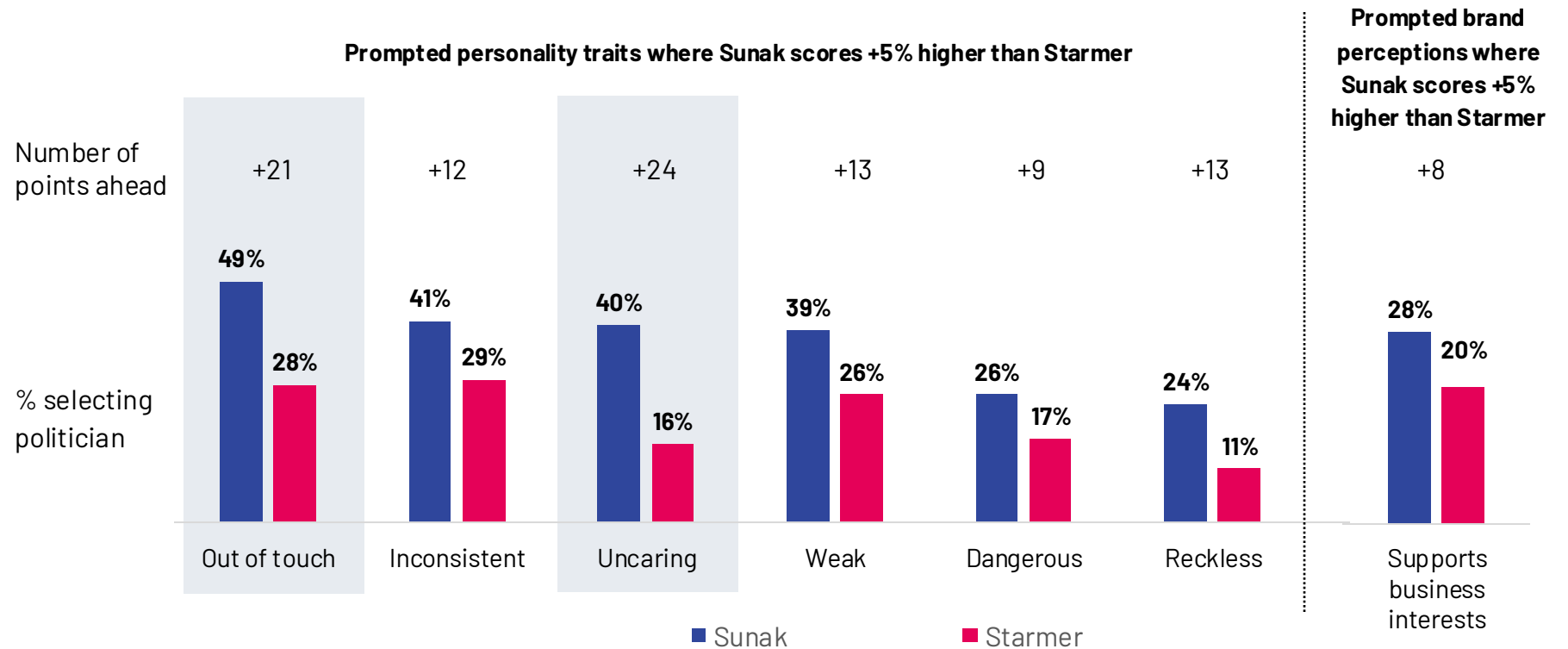
Great (2%)

Not For Working Class (3%)

Ipsos

"I've got a plan...!"

Brand Sunak:
Lacking empathy with consumers can lead to brand decline.

Brand Sunak is more likely than brand Starmer to be selected for traits that indicate a lack of empathy such as being **out of touch** and **uncaring**

Prompted personality traits where Sunak scores +5% higher than Starmer

Prompted brand perceptions where Sunak scores +5% higher than Starmer

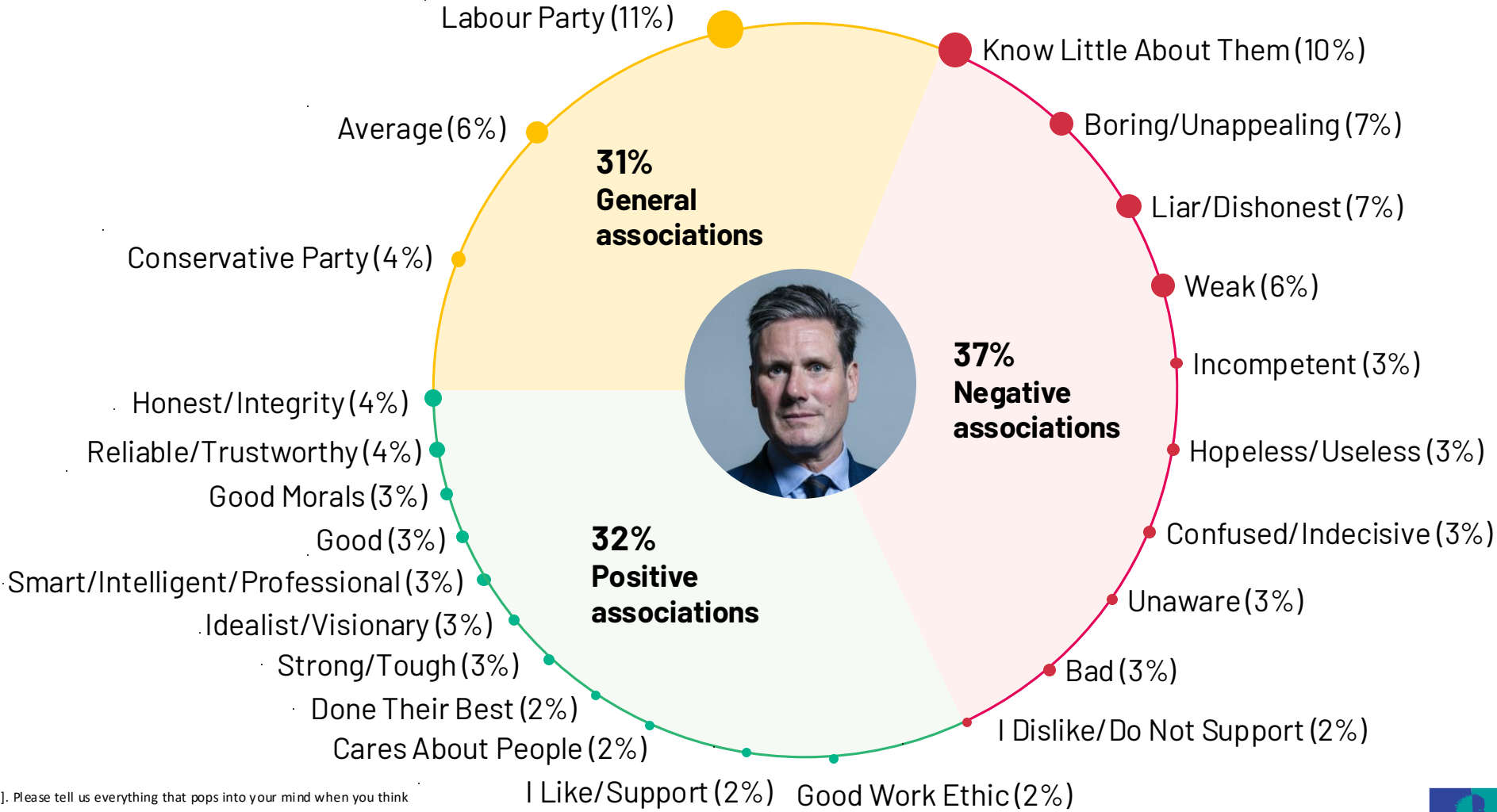|	Out of touch	Inconsistent	Uncaring	Weak	Dangerous	Reckless	Supports business interests
Number of points ahead	+21	+12	+24	+13	+9	+13	+8
Sunak	49%	41%	40%	39%	26%	24%	28%
Starmer	28%	29%	16%	26%	17%	11%	20%

% selecting politician

■ Sunak   ■ Starmer

Q. Please select the politician(s), if any, that you associate with the following words.
Q. We will go through a set of statements describing what different people expect from a politician. Please select the politician(s), if any, that fit(s) with this statement. Base (n=1016)

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Associations with brand Starmer are more balanced. Brand Starmer is differentiated from brand Sunak on being ethical, but also boring.

Overall, brand Starmer has more negative than positive associations:

Net positive –5%

31% General associations

Labour Party (11%)
Average (6%)
Conservative Party (4%)

37% Negative associations

Know Little About Them (10%)
Boring/Unappealing (7%)
Liar/Dishonest (7%)
Weak (6%)
Incompetent (3%)
Hopeless/Useless (3%)
Confused/Indecisive (3%)
Unaware (3%)
Bad (3%)
I Dislike/Do Not Support (2%)

32% Positive associations

Honest/Integrity (4%)
Reliable/Trustworthy (4%)
Good Morals (3%)
Good (3%)
Smart/Intelligent/Professional (3%)
Idealist/Visionary (3%)
Strong/Tough (3%)
Done Their Best (2%)
Cares About People (2%)
I Like/Support (2%)
Good Work Ethic (2%)

Ipsos

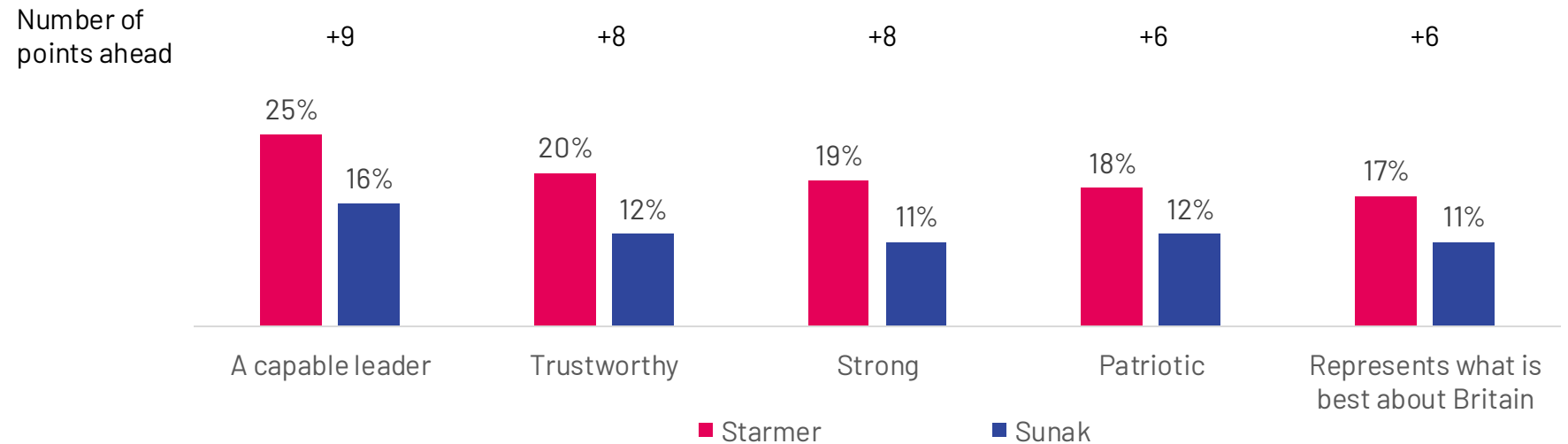> *"Stop the chaos and vote for change"*

Brand Starmer:

In brand choice, you don't have to be great - just better.

Starmer scores higher than Sunak on being a ***capable leader, trustworthy, strong, patriotic*** and ***representing what is best about Britain***.

Yet, Starmer's personality strengths are outweighed by Sunak's negatives. **Brand Starmer is benefiting from low expectations of brand Sunak.**

Prompted personality traits where Starmer scores +5% more than Sunak

Number of points ahead	+9	+8	+8	+6	+6

	A capable leader	Trustworthy	Strong	Patriotic	Represents what is best about Britain
Starmer	25%	20%	19%	18%	17%
Sunak	16%	12%	11%	12%	11%

■ Starmer   ■ Sunak

Q. Please select the politician(s), if any, that you associate with the following words. Base (n=1016)

Ipsos

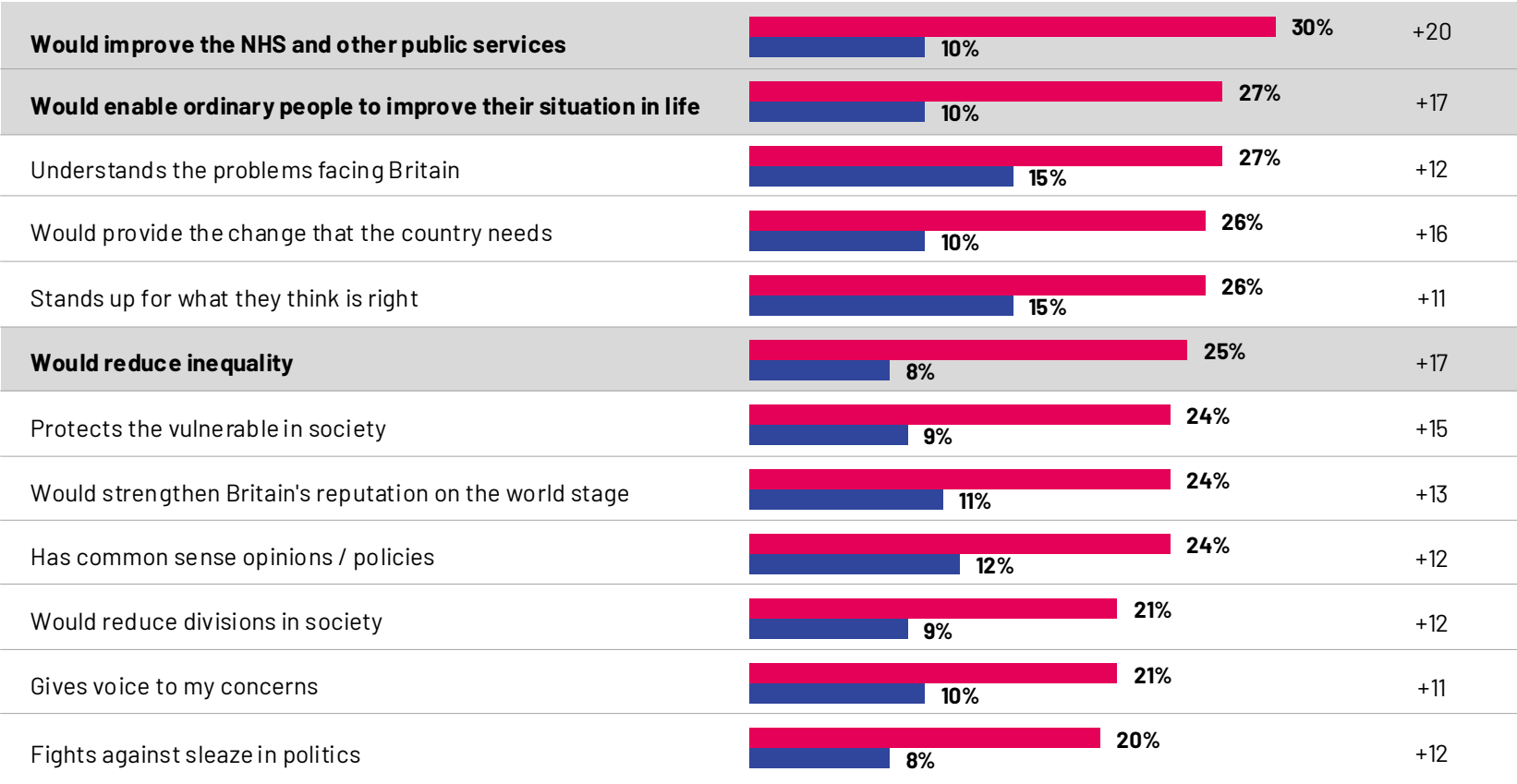# Brand Starmer: Context is key to staying relevant as a brand

Brand Starmer is better positioned against the current UK context, with greater expectations for improvements.

Prompted brand perceptions where Starmer scores +10% more than Sunak

Statement	Starmer	Sunak	Number of points ahead
Would improve the NHS and other public services	30%	10%	+20
Would enable ordinary people to improve their situation in life	27%	10%	+17
Understands the problems facing Britain	27%	15%	+12
Would provide the change that the country needs	26%	10%	+16
Stands up for what they think is right	26%	15%	+11
Would reduce inequality	25%	8%	+17
Protects the vulnerable in society	24%	9%	+15
Would strengthen Britain's reputation on the world stage	24%	11%	+13
Has common sense opinions / policies	24%	12%	+12
Would reduce divisions in society	21%	9%	+12
Gives voice to my concerns	21%	10%	+11
Fights against sleaze in politics	20%	8%	+12

■ Starmer   ■ Sunak

The greatest gaps between the two brands are on **improving public services**, **enabling ordinary people to improve their lives** and **reducing inequality**.

However, expectations are also shaped by our experience of a brand. **If Starmer wins, he will need to walk the talk.**

Q. We will go through a set of statements describing what different people expect from a politician. Please select the politician(s), if any, that fit(s) with this statement. Base (n=1016)

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Empathy is an opportunity for brand growth...

We found Empathy was the most important factor in predicting party voting intention for the 2024 UK general election.

Labour are tapping into Empathy more successfully than the Conservatives.

Party score on Empathy
(Empathy Factor consists of...Understands people like me, Shares my values, Gives voice to my concerns)
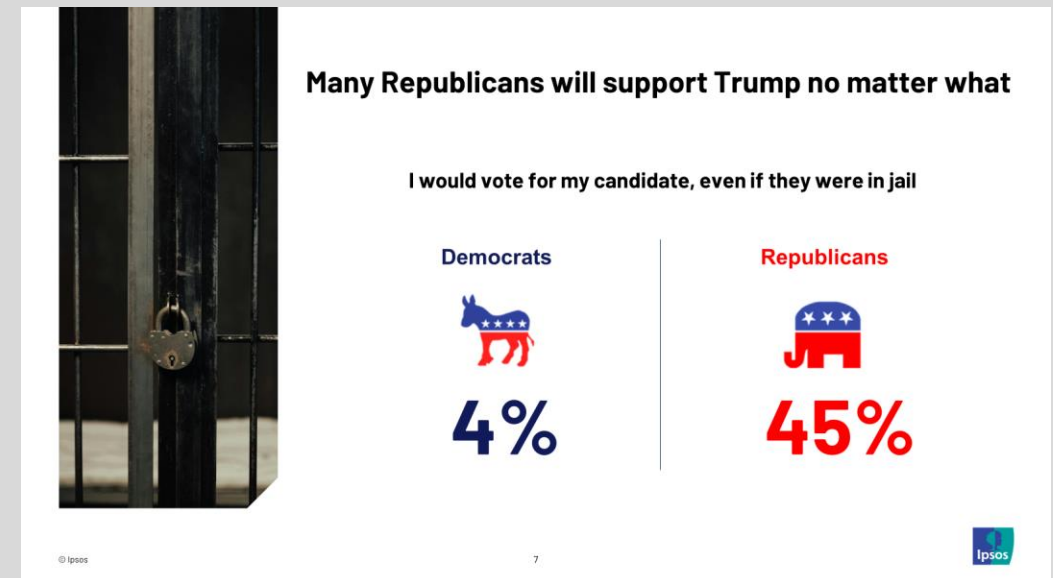
Conservative	Labour
16%	38%

Factors were statistically identified from personality traits and brand perceptions

Empathy can result in strong brand loyalty.

In the US, Trump supporters perceive high levels of empathy from Trump, e.g. *Gives voice to my concerns*

Many Republicans will support Trump no matter what

I would vote for my candidate, even if they were in jail

Democrats	Republicans
4%	45%

© Ipsos   7

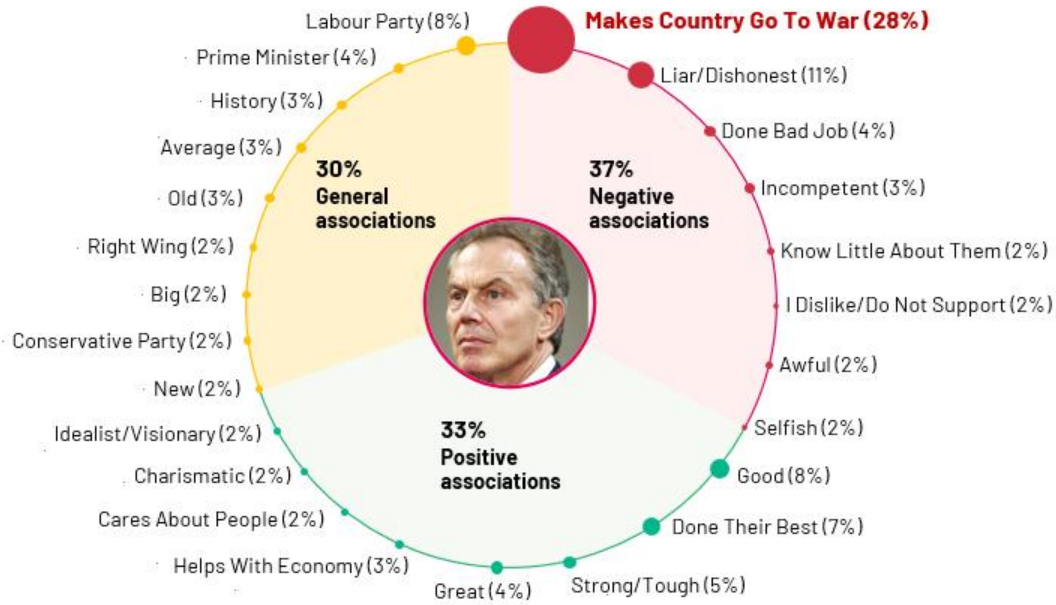Source: Ipsos, Brand Biden vs Brand Trump, April 2024

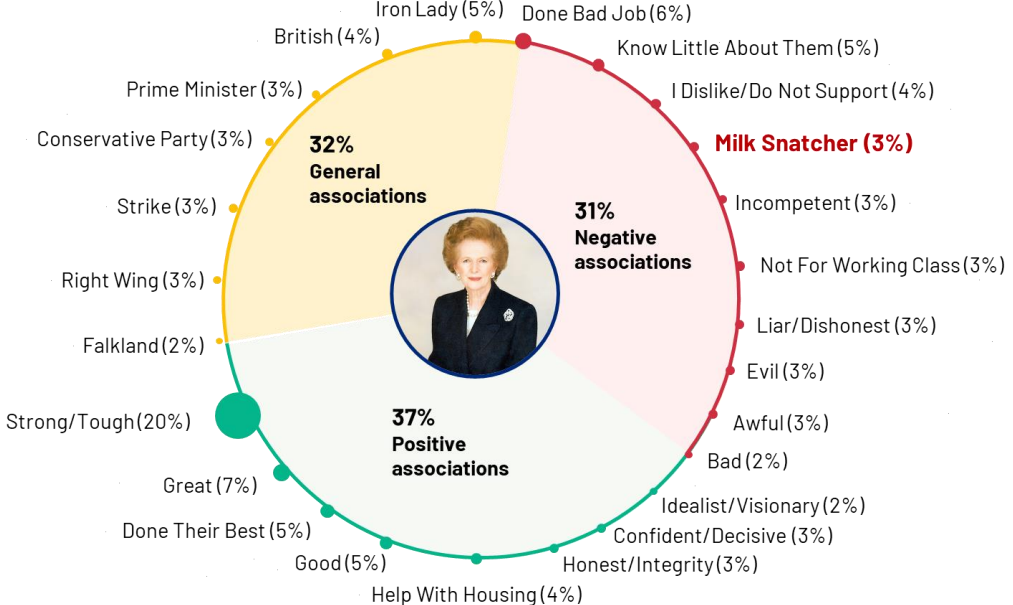# Your entire history as a brand matters, even today

Re-shaping brand expectations is entirely possible, but when evolving it is important to be coherent. People have long memories!

Tony Blair

The Iraq war was two decades ago.

Margaret Thatcher

Thatcher's department stopped the provision of milk in junior schools *8 years before* she became Prime Minister.

Brand Starmer vs. Brand Sunak

Voting intention, May 2024*

41%

20%

Starmer is outperforming Sunak in **shaping expectations** for improvements to people's lives **in the current UK context.**

Labour is perceived to be **stronger on empathy** than the Conservatives.

But expectations are also shaped by experience, so if he wins, **Starmer will need to walk the talk.**

Starmer is benefiting from low expectations of Sunak. Expectations may need to be re-shaped vs. another opponent.

The Conservative party is **weaker on empathy,** while Sunak's personal brand is seen to be **uncaring** & **out of touch** and is **poorly positioned against the current context.**

From a brand growth perspective, Ipsos' Brand Success Framework suggests that the Conservative party needs to **demonstrate empathy** among a wider section of the voting public and **re-shape expectations...**bearing in mind that people have long memories!

*Source: Ipsos Political Monitor, May 2024

BRAND MENTAL NETWORKS

With our Brand Mental Network model, we capture associations through asking open ended questions, meaning it is the respondent that drives the outputs. Respondents can speak and write as much as they like, in their own words. We then use an analytical model to quantify themes and prominent mentions as well as determining which of these are unique vs shared with other brands.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,031 adults aged 18-75 across GB.

The survey was carried out using the Ipsos online i:omnibus from 29th – 30th April 2024.

Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age and working status within gender, as well as government office region, social grade, and education.

Quotas and weights sources:

Gender x age, Region, Working status x gender, Education (graduates vs non graduates) - Office for National Statistics, annual population survey filtered 18-75, October 2022-September 2023

Social grade - RAJAR reporting period 2023 Q3

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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