

Schoolzone election policies 2019 poll – initial findings



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Frequency tables and charts are available for all data in this survey:
please contact philip@schoolzone.co.uk

Executive summary

Our education policies poll received over 1200 responses overnight this week (3 Dec). We asked teachers and HE lecturers which policies they would vote for without identifying which party the policies came from. Policies were presented in groups roughly corresponding to sections below and within each section the policies were presented in random order. Respondents were told that they would see the results of voting for each policy, along with its originating party, at the end of the survey.

Most popular policies:

- Increase and protect the education budget in real terms per pupil from early years to age 19. Lib Dem - 87%
- Reverse cuts to school funding, allowing schools to employ an extra 20,000 teachers and reduce class sizes, restoring them to 2015 levels per pupil with an emergency cash injection. Lib Dem - 87%
- Invest to clear the backlog of repairs to buildings. Lib Dem - 87%
- Reduce primary class sizes to under 30. Labour – 87%
- Support real trade apprenticeships and apprentice degree courses. UKIP – 86%
- Replace league tables with a broader set of indicators including information about pupils' and teachers' wellbeing, as well as academic attainment. Lib Dem – 83%
- Close the tax loopholes enjoyed by elite private school. Labour – 82%

Most popular policies for the curriculum:

- Teach core skills, including critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity. Lib Dem – 88%
- Improve the quality of vocational education and improve careers advice and links with employers. Lib Dem – 87%
- Restore arts and music education in all state schools, to enable children to develop their creative potential. Greens – 87%
- Introduce a 'curriculum for life' to include PSHE, financial literacy, environmental awareness, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, mental health education, citizenship and age-appropriate RSE (inc LGBT+); teach about how to use social media responsibly. Lib Dem – 84%
- Financial literacy to be included in the national curriculum. Independent Group for Change – 83%
- Review the curriculum to ensure that it enriches students. Pupils will learn the science of climate and environmental emergency. Labour – 82%.

The two most popular pastoral policies were:

- Promote children's access to healthy food and tackle childhood obesity, including by updating the School Food Standards. Greens – 90%
- Tackle bullying in schools, including by promoting pastoral leadership in schools. Lib Dem – 86%.

Teachers' pay and conditions

Lib Dem's and Conservatives' offering **£30k starting salaries** are popular with just under three quarters of teachers – no great surprise there. In this reporting we take the 75% figure to be the benchmark for much of this polling: we'd expect most of the policies, being meant to improve education, would be popular with this proportion of education professionals, so in looking at the other policies, we compare them to this figure. Anything around this level of support, we refer to here as *typically* well supported.

So, the Independent Group for Change (IGC) offer of a **tax break to help those who have retrained with relocation costs** if they're moving for a new job, appealing to just 50%, might be regarded as a bit of a damp squib. For one thing, it's not clear what this is. As one teacher told us, in response to this policy: "I had to take out an extra mortgage to pay the stamp duty when my family bought a new house nearer to my new place of work. The new house and its garden were smaller than the one we sold (two counties away). I ended up suffering for the increase in house prices: sold much higher than original purchase price; hence far harder to sustain buying and living at that level elsewhere".

There was a similarly low level of interest (54%) in bringing back the **School Support Staff Negotiating Body and national pay settlements** for teachers (Labour). However there was a typical response (75%) to Labour's suggestions of a **new teacher supply service and recruiting nearly 150,000 additional early years staff**.

Lukewarm responses (c.60%) were given to funding **50 hours CPD** per teacher per year by 2025 (Lib Dem) and a **20-week funded retraining sabbatical** (IGC).

School funding

We had several comments suggesting that there is less trust in any party's ability to deliver significant funding than in regard to any other policies. We did wonder if we should ask, *who do you trust to deliver these policies?*

We received typical responses for **£7.1bn a year more for schools in England by 2022-23** (Conservative), **increasing funding by at least £4 billion per year** (Green), **£400m for further education and sixth forms** (Conservative) and **£780 million in new funding to support children with Special Educational Needs next year alone** (Conservative).

However, the Lib Dem's funding policies seemed to be the most popular, with 87% voting separately for **'increase and protect the education budget in real terms per pupil from early years to age 19'** and **'Reverse cuts to school funding, allowing schools to employ an extra 20,000 teachers and reduce class sizes, restoring them to 2015 levels per pupil with an emergency cash injection'**.

Looking at more specific funding policies, the Lib Dems are both winners and losers with 87% opting for their **'invest to clear the backlog of repairs to buildings'** but only 51% opting for **'tripling the early years pupil premium to £1,000 per year'**.

Respondents were reasonably supportive (60+%) of **'offering an arts premium to secondary schools to fund enriching activities for all pupils'** (Conservative) and **'increasing SEND funding by allocating additional cash to LAs'**. (Lib Dem).

Two parties had specific promises to reduce class sizes, but teachers seemed to think that Labour's promise of reducing **primary class sizes to under 30** was more realistic (87%) than the Green's promise of **under 20** in the long term (54%).

A relatively low response to Labour's promise to **align the base rate of per-pupil funding in post-16 education with Key Stage 4** (Labour) at 60% might be reflection of the relatively low numbers of respondents working in this phase – around 30% didn't know about each of these FE funding policies. The Conservative promise **to invest almost £2 billion to upgrade the entire FE college estate** and have 20 Institutes of Technology was popular with only 51%.

Early years and primary

Increasing the early years provision was about as popular as might be expected, with Labour's promise to **fund 30 hours' free childcare** for all two to four-year-olds and £1bn for 1,000 new early years Sure Start centres attracting 70% while Lib Dems' offer of **£14.6bn for 35 hours a week of childcare** for all two to four-year-olds, and for working parents from when their children are nine months attracted 59%.

Two parties are suggesting that **early years centres should employ graduates**: the Lib Dems' version came out as being more popular:

- In the long run, each Early Years setting should have at least one person qualified to graduate level (Lib Dem) 60%
- Transitioning to a qualified, graduate led workforce in early years (Labour) 49%

The Green's suggestion that under **sixes should have more play-based learning**, with formal education starting at age six was popular with nearly two thirds of respondents.

Policies aimed at primary all received about the same levels of support – around 65%:

- Invest in **primary school PE** teaching (Conservative)
- **Free school meals for all primary** school children, encourage breakfast clubs, and tackle the cost of school uniforms (Labour)
- Free school meals for all primary school children and for all children whose **families receive universal credit** (Lib Dem)

School accountability

None of the policies related to changes to the Ofsted regime received any real support, other than the Green's, with 60%, to **replace Ofsted with a collaborative system** of assessing and supporting schools locally.

Others were:

- **Replace Ofsted with a new HM Inspector of Schools.** Inspections should take place every three years and should consider a broader range of factors (Lib Dem) 48%
- Replace Ofsted with a **two-phase inspection system** regular 'health checks' led by local government, and a more in-depth inspection led by Her Majesty's Inspectors (Labour)
- **Increase Ofsted inspection of "outstanding" schools** (Conservative) 39%

Respondents weren't too worried about **the inspection of MATs**, with only 51% suggesting that we should require MATs to undergo external inspection (Lib Dem).

Primary: Lib Dems and Labour have both proposed **scrapping SATs**, but the Lib Dems suggestion for replacing them with moderated teacher end of KS assessment was less popular (63%) than Labour's which said that instead we should 'refocus assessment on **supporting pupil progress**' (73%).

Secondary: Given the often-reported impact of **EBacc** on arts and other subjects, we expected that the Lib Dem policy to **abolish it** would achieve more than the 46% support it did. However, their promise to '**replace league tables** with a broader set of indicators including information about pupils' and teachers' wellbeing, as well as academic attainment' was one of the popular of all 99 policies with 83% of the vote.

A related policy was to take action to **end 'off-rolling'** (Labour) which attracted just 51% of the vote.

The school system

Often seen as a political football, the provision of academies, opening of free schools, scrapping of grammars and private schools are all often mentioned in the press. The manifestos themselves offer policies which are less draconian than press coverage has led us to believe.

Grammar school policies aren't likely to be major influences on the voting at the election: 48% **oppose any future expansion** of grammar schools (Lib Dem) while 37% want to **encourage the establishment of new** grammar schools as well as technical, vocational and specialist secondary schools (UKIP) – the latter obviously includes a greater focus on **vocational** support too, which elsewhere in the survey is seen as a very positive suggestion.

Educationalists are broadly in favour of **scrapping academies** with 59% supporting the Green's idea of **returning them to LA control** and 56% voting for Labour to bring them 'back under control of **parents, teachers and local communities**'. Meanwhile only 23% support the Conservative plans **build more free schools**, with 56% against.

One of the common complaints about the effects of academisation is that LA lose control of school place allocation

and other functions, so the Lib Dems' policy to **'give LAs power for places planning**, exclusions, administering admissions including in-year admissions, and SEND functions' was reasonably popular, with 56% in favour and just 14% against.

After the success of maths hubs and training hubs (and perhaps, English hubs) the Conservatives suggested that they would invest £10 million in national **Behaviour Hubs**. This wasn't of much interest to respondents though, with just 39% in favour.

Private schools came in for a bit of a bashing, with Labour's policy to **close the tax loopholes** enjoyed by elite private schools being one of their most popular, attracting an 82% share of the vote. The Green's perhaps slightly watered-down version, to **'remove charitable status** from private schools and charge full VAT on fees' was supported by 67%.

The school curriculum

The school curriculum is often seen as a way of delivering social change policies and there are quite a few distributed among the manifestos. Here's summary of the voting, in rough order of descending popularity:

	Yes	No
Improve the quality of vocational education and improve careers advice and links with employers (Lib Dem)	87%	4%
Teach core skills, including critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity (Lib Dem)	88%	6%
Restore arts and music education in all state schools, to enable children to develop their creative potential. (Green)	87%	7%
Introduce a 'curriculum for life' to include PSHE, financial literacy, environmental awareness, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, mental health education, citizenship and age-appropriate RSE (inc LGBT+); teach about how to use social media responsibly. (Lib Dem)	84%	9%

Financial literacy to be included in the national curriculum (Independent Group for Change)	83%	8%
Review the curriculum to ensure that it enriches students. Pupils will learn the science of climate and environmental emergency (Labour)	82%	9%
Fund training to support the delivery of comprehensive, age appropriate PHSE lessons in schools covering all aspects of sex and relationships, with a focus on consent (Green)	78%	12%
Make sure all children get at least a half-day equivalent of sports in school. (Green)	74%	13%
Introduce an English Climate Emergency Education Act to support schools to teach young people about the urgency, severity and scientific basis of the climate and environmental crises. (Green)	65%	20%
Re-focus on teaching children the basics (UKIP)	59%	22%

The school curriculum

Introduce Arts Pupil Premium to fund arts education for every primary school child (Labour)	60%	24%
End the opt-out of LGBTIQA+ inclusive PHSE classes (Green)	57%	25%
Education about communal enterprise co-operatives and community interest companies would start in school. (Green)	49%	23%
Reverse the introduction of LGBT-inclusive and sex and relationship education (UKIP)	17%	73%

including by updating the School Food Standards (Green)		
Tackle bullying in schools, including by promoting pastoral leadership in schools.(Lib Dem)	86%	5%
£845 million per year for a Healthy Young Minds plan that will ensure a counsellor in every school (Labour)	75%	13%
Recruit 4,500 more health visitors and school nurses.(Labour)	72%	10%
School health workers introduced in primary and secondary schools.(Independent Group for Change)	72%	14%
Fund schools to provide free ecofriendly sanitary products to pupils.(Green)	73%	17%

There are also several policies relating to health and well-being – the Green policy **to tackle obesity and promote healthy eating was the best supported education policy** of the 99 presented. Here's the summary of voting:

	Yes	No
Promote children's access to healthy food and tackle childhood obesity,	90%	4%

Post 16

Funding and student loans

There are several policies among the manifestos about what to do about tuition fees and HE funding. Two parties promise to abolish tuition fees and both ideas were fairly well received but not emphatically supported, perhaps because of concerns about funding the policies. 65% went for Labour's promise to **abolish university tuition fees** and reintroduce maintenance grants while 55% liked Green's scrapping tuition fees **and writing off existing student debt** for those who studied under the £9k tuition fee regime. UKIP's suggestion that **only STEM subject students should have fees waived**, dependent on graduates working in the UK for five years wasn't so well received – only 42% voted for that.

Generally more popular than scrapping fees altogether was reducing the burden of the debt: 70% voted for the Conservatives suggestion that they would '**look at the interest rates on loan repayments** with a view' to doing so. Brexit Party's promise to **scrap interest on loans** altogether was most popular, with 76% support.

Both lecturers (who have more of a vested interest) and teachers support the IGC's simple promise to **encourage foreign students** to come to the UK (74%). However, the Conservative's plan for **student visas** which allow students to work here after graduation was the most popular suggestion for overseas students, garnering the support of 80% of respondents. Only 45% voted for UKIP's requirement that overseas students would **require private health insurance**.

Vocational

The popularity of policies in the vocational area are perhaps testament to the perceived need for reform, given the low numbers of respondents who actually work in FE. All these policies were supported by around 80% of respondents:

- **Support real trade apprenticeships** and apprentice degree courses (UKIP) – 86%
- Expect to train up **hundreds of thousands more highly skilled apprentices** (Conservative) – 76%

- Revive the further education sector to provide a wider choice of academic and vocational learning; **raise the funding** rate for 16–17-year-olds. (Green) – 80%

Less popular was the IGC suggestion for **tax breaks for successful employers who offer work placements** to students about to leave school - 54% were in favour.

HE admissions

A **post-qualification, contextualised admissions** system (Labour) doesn't seem particularly well supported at 57%, though 34% didn't know. This is perhaps too complex an issue to be an easy vote winner. Meanwhile the Conservatives promise **to explore ways to tackle the problem of grade inflation and low-quality courses** and improve the application and offer system received typical levels of support (70%).

The Conservatives' two other policies in HE also received typical levels of support: **work with universities to do more for the education, health and prosperity of their local areas** (77%) and to **strengthen academic freedom and free speech in universities and focus on raising standards** (72%).

A perhaps surprisingly popular policy (62%) was UKIP's suggestion that we should '**drop the target of 50% of people going to higher education**'. Only 19% argued against this policy.

Education for all

Labour's flagship education policy, the National Educational Service (somewhat analogous to the NHS) was a bit lost in this poll as it's probably too big a policy to grasp in this context. We've included it here among other lifelong learning policies, which are perhaps of less relevance than some of those above to teachers and lecturers.

	Yes	No
Reform existing careers advice, working towards an integrated information, advice and guidance system (Labour)	69%	9%
Reverse the fragmentation and privatisation of further and adult education (Labour)	69%	13%
Increase funding for adult education across England and Wales, creating a range of new adult education programmes. £1 billion (Green)	62%	17%

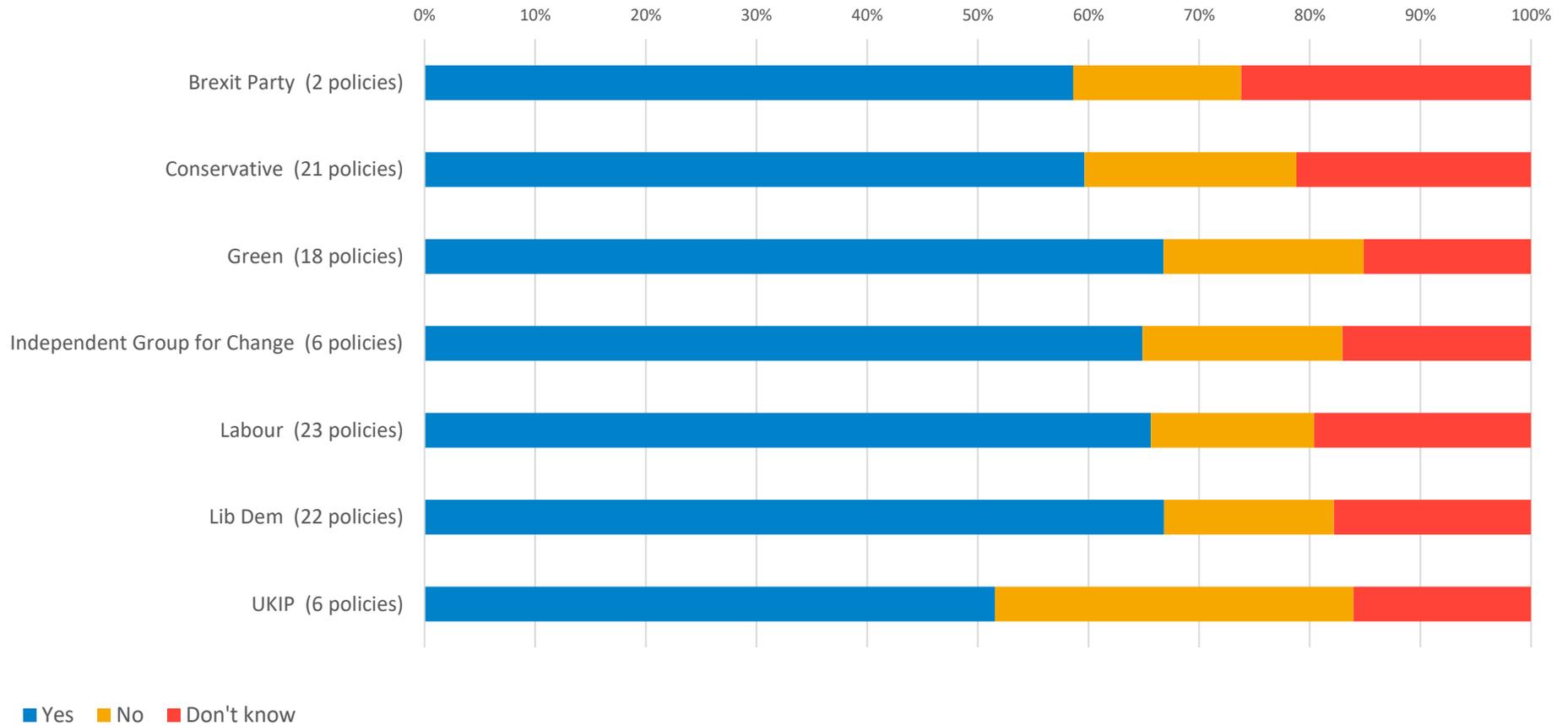
Create a fully inclusive education system, where children with special education needs are able to access their local school and are fully supported in that school (Green)	59%	22%
Create a national education service, providing all children and adults free education for life: training up to Level 3 plus six years training at Levels 4-6. Includes £3bn to help adults in England retrain (Labour)	58%	22%
Create a new National Skills Fund worth £3 billion over the next Parliament (Conservative)	40%	19%
£100m for testing a National Retraining Scheme for adults (Conservative)	43%	25%
A £10,000 grant for every adult in England to put towards education and training (Lib Dem)	40%	39%



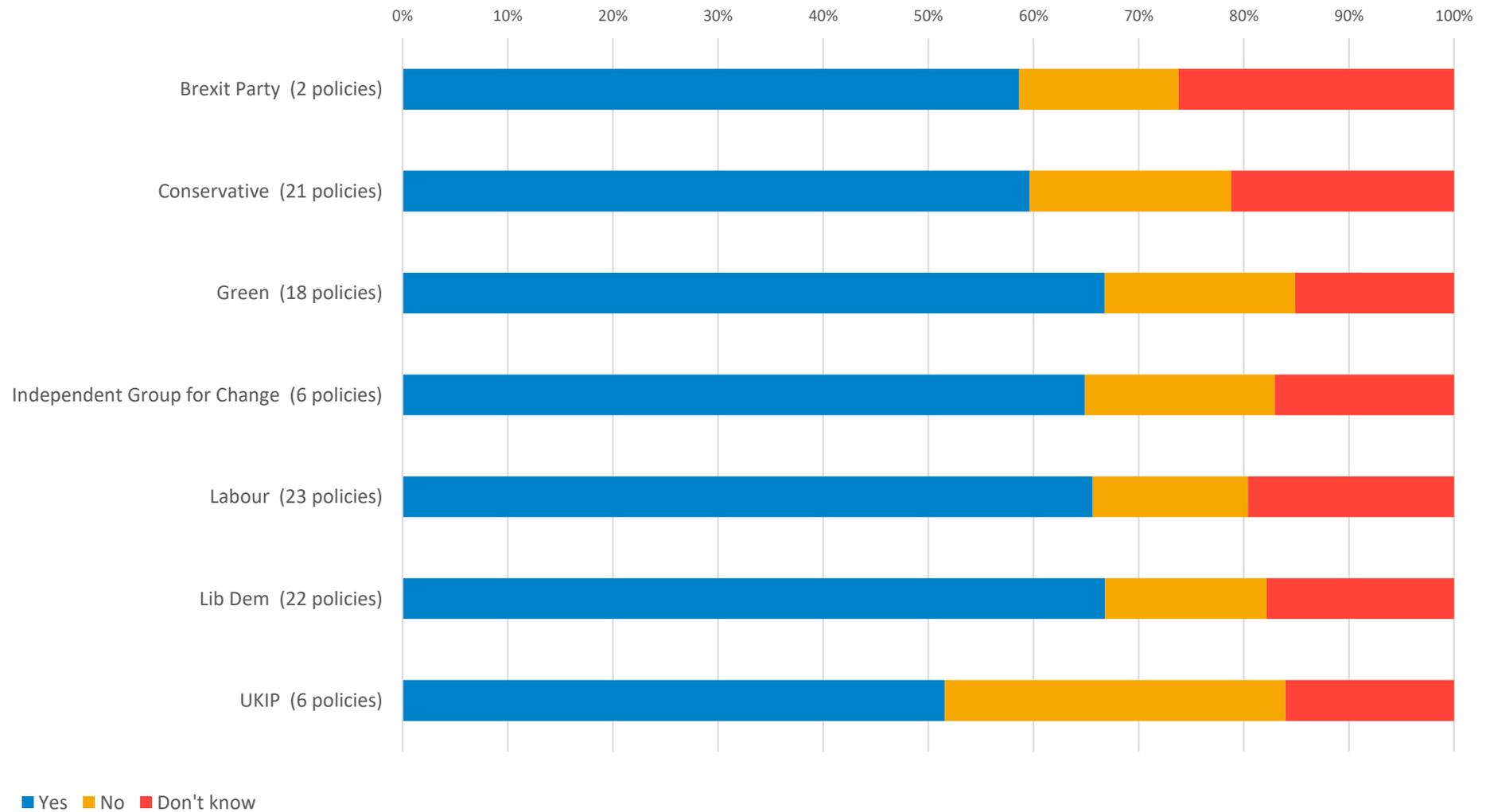
Appendix - charts

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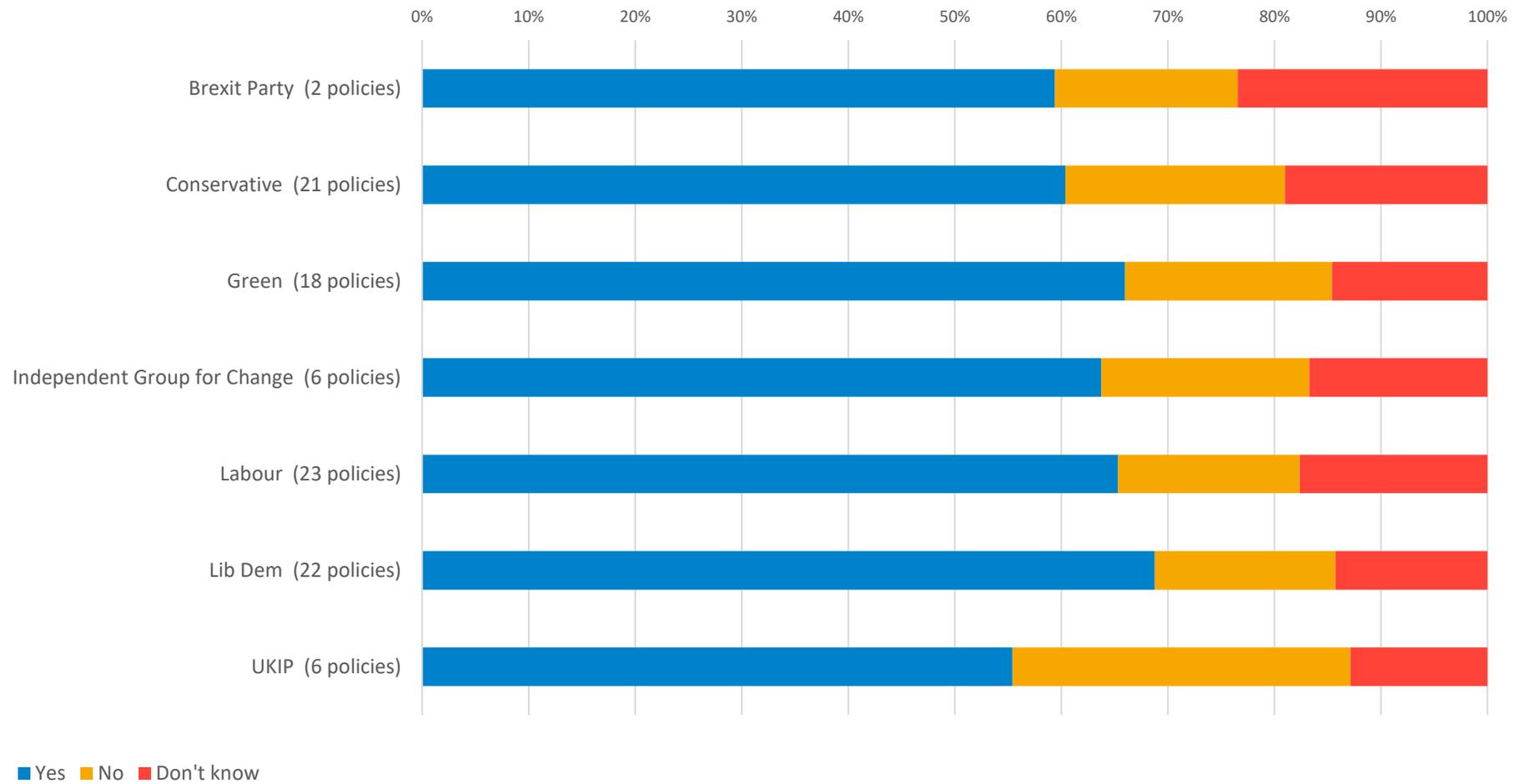
Policy popularity by party - All phases



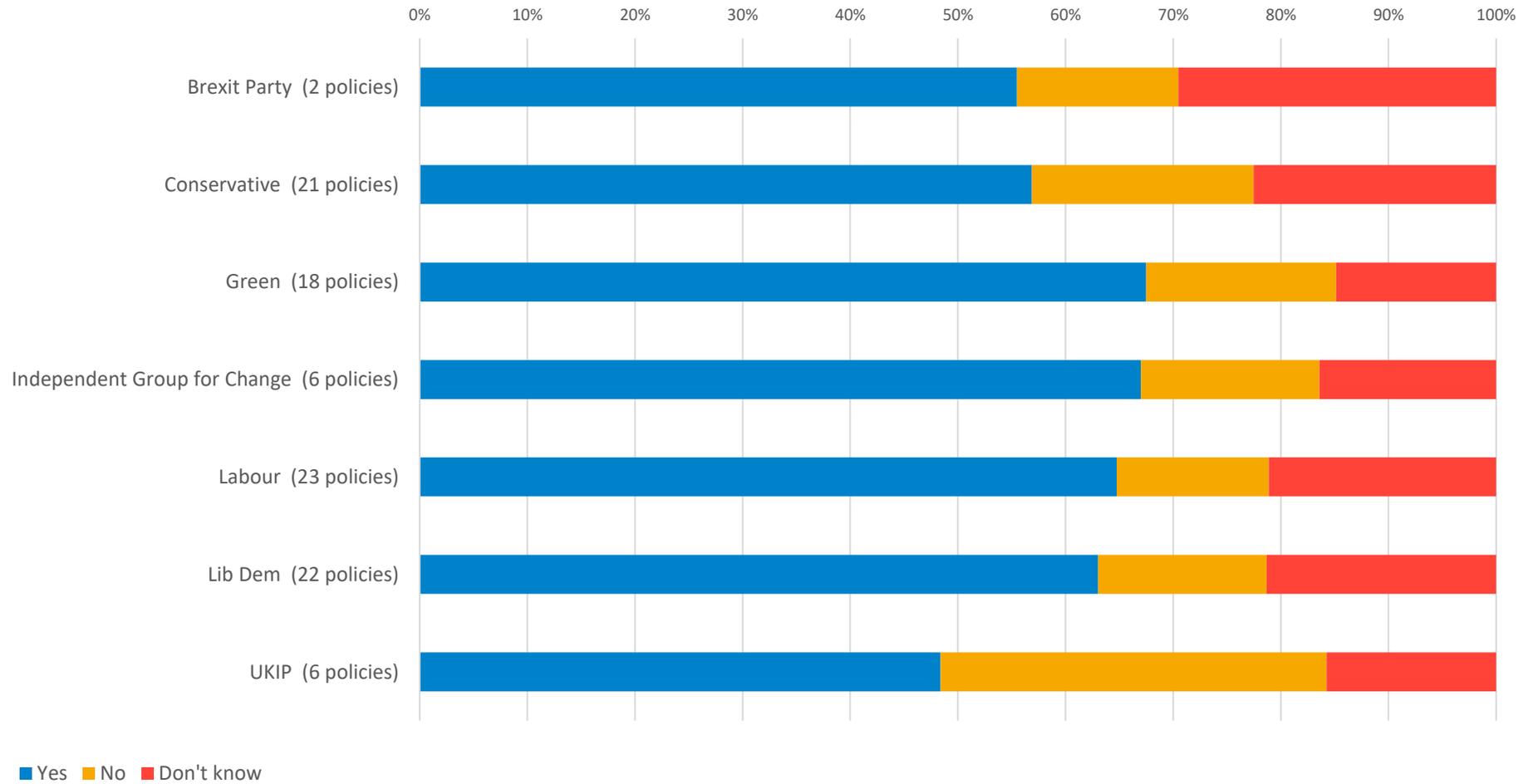
Policy popularity by party - Primary



Policy popularity by party - Secondary



Policy popularity by party - FE/HE





schoolzone

research@schoolzone.co.uk

(+44) 1242 262906

