

How English is my town?



**ENGLISH
LABOUR
NETWORK**

An English Labour Network briefing

The English Labour Network works to focus the Labour Party's attention on England. We want to help Labour win in every part of England. We are *'for Labour in England; and for England in Labour'*.

Millions of voters in England identify proudly as English. The largest group say they are 'English and British'. Around one in three emphasise their Englishness: 'more English than British'.¹

These voters will be influential voters in many of the key marginals that will decide the imminent election. Most important are the voters who are on the left on economic issues; they are often working class and did not go to university; they live in larger numbers outside big cities. They are certainly not the powerful people in England. By any definition they are part of the 'many' not the 'few'.

Many were once Labour voters or live in the 'traditional Labour areas' that are not so strong for Labour these days. In this briefing, we summarise new evidence about English voters and what they want from political parties. We give town-by-town estimates of the numbers of English identifying voters and the importance of 'English interests'

English voters and English interests

Labour needs to focus on a large group of voters who:

- **Believe England has significantly different interests to those of the union as a whole.** (A quarter of voters think that England's interests are "significantly" or "very" different to those of the rest of the UK and two-thirds think there are some differences)
- **Want political parties to stand up for English interests within the union.** (Two in five voters say it is "very important" that a political party stands up for the interests of England within the UK,)

¹ That's more than the number who say they are 'more British than English'

- **Would like England to be more democratic** (measured by support for, for example, English MPs making English laws, or an English parliament². Over half (55%) want English MPs only to vote on English Laws)

These views are widely shared amongst voters who live in England, including current Labour voters. Over half of Labour's 2017 voters think it is important for a political party to stand up for England. More 2017 Labour voters want English MPs to make English laws than oppose the idea.

The idea that there is a distinct set of 'English interests' is held most strongly amongst the voters who say they are 'more English than British'. That's about a third of all voters and enough to swing key seats for both the major parties. It's doubtful that we can win our small town and coastal target seats without winning more support amongst them. They are people and places that Labour should always want to represent.

Labour's problem is that very few – only 4% - of the 'more English than British' think Labour is the best party to stand up for English interests. In the last two general elections, Labour was beaten by the Conservatives amongst these voters (and in 2015 by UKIP too).

There's a lot to play for. Polling on this issue is very volatile. There were undoubtedly voters attracted to UKIP in 2015 who came back to Labour in 2017 but voted Brexit Party in the recent EU elections. No political party has really established itself as the party that stands up for England.

Just because someone says 'x is important to me' doesn't make it their top priority in the polling booth. But the question of identity – 'will this person/party stand up for the interests of people like me?' – is the most basic test that every candidate and party have to pass. Some voters will certainly be more attracted to a Labour Party with a clear English identity; others will certainly turn their backs on a Labour that rejects the English. How many exactly is hard to say, but in a marginal every vote counts. **Is the party doing so well that we can ignore this important group of voters?**

'English issues' clearly influenced the last four national votes. In 2015, English fears that a minority Labour government would be held to ransom by the resurgent SNP wiped out Labour's campaign and helped deliver David Cameron's surprise majority. Current polls suggest Labour will fall well short of an overall majority: we may soon need a better answer to the 'Scottish question' than we had four years ago. In 2016, English identifiers delivered the bulk of the Brexit vote. 'Take back control' appealed to English voters poorly represented in and by the political class

Labour makes too little effort to appeal to these voters or to English interests. In England we say we are 'Rebuilding Britain' even though we are also 'Rebuilding Wales' and 'Rebuilding Scotland'. We rarely talk about England or include the St George flag or other English branding in our literature. Our manifestos and policy documents often confuse policies that are just for England with those for the UK as a whole. When we campaign on tuition fees, or water privatisation, for example, we

² Both are much more popular than regional assemblies or devolution to local authorities

never say our policies only apply to England. Despite talk of ‘devolution’ and a ‘constitutional convention’ our party has said nothing about how England should be governed and where power should lie.

That’s why the English Labour Network has called for an English Labour Manifesto at the next election. There are many issues including higher education fees, the NHS, social care and schools and much of transport where policy is ‘England only’. An English manifesto would set out how Labour policy would shape England (and it would be our red line promise to England, one we would never negotiate away, in the event of a hung parliament).

Changing voting rights in the Commons has ramifications that go well beyond England, but Labour could at least acknowledge the desire for change by fast-tracking plans for its long-promised constitutional convention.

Some Labour activists worry that recognising English interests may alienate large number of other voters, but the polling is reassuring. Although ‘English identifying voters’ see English interests most strongly, the same interests are widely shared amongst other voters. It may not be so important to them, but so long as we talk about England and about Britain, it is unlikely to put them off.

How English is my town? Understanding the data

The table gives three measures of the ‘Englishness’ of each town.

Col 1: Shows the % of voters who are ‘more English than British’ (They say they are ‘English not British’ and ‘More English than British’. (The remaining voters will primarily be ‘Equally English and British’ with smaller numbers ‘more British than English’, ‘British not English’, ‘Don’t know’ and ‘others’)

These are the voters most likely to identify distinct English interests. What appeal does your CLP make to these voters? Can you afford to ignore them?

Col 2: shows the % of voters in each town who think it is important for a political party to stand up for English interests within the union. Typically, over two-thirds of voters share this view. While a lot of these voters won’t feel very strongly about the issue, they are certainly not going to be put off by Labour appeals to England.

Col 3: shows the % of voters who want English MPs to make English laws. This may be best seen as a measure of dissatisfaction with how English interests are represented in the union parliament, rather than endorsement of a particular constitutional change. The same voters were often attracted by ‘take back control’. This is a democratic demand for change³.

³ **Health warning:** this data and analysis has been put together from a number of different surveys, models and analyses, including MRP modelling by the Centre for Towns, based on the 2018 BBC./YouGov polling on English identity, 2019 polling by the Centre for English Identity and Politics, and earlier polling by the Future of England Survey. As such it should be seen only as a broad measure of identities and opinion in different towns across 2018 and 2019

**English voters,
English interests**

**National Identity:
More English than
British**

**It is important for
political parties to
stand up for
English interests
within the Union**

**English MPs
should make
English Laws**

Place	%	%	%
Abingdon	31	70	59
Accrington	34	71	60
Aldershot	27	66	56
Aldridge	40	74	61
Altrincham	26	67	57
Andover	36	71	60
Arnold	38	72	61
Ashford (Ashford)	33	71	60
Ashton-under-Lyne	37	72	61
Aylesbury	32	70	59
Bamber Bridge	39	74	62
Banbury	33	71	59
Barnsley	40	74	62
Barnstaple	36	73	61
Barrow-in-Furness	37	73	61
Basildon	44	74	62
Basingstoke	33	71	59
Bath	31	69	58
Batley	35	72	60
Bebington	29	67	57
Bedford	31	69	58
Bedworth	43	74	62
Beeston (Broxtowe)	37	72	60
Beverley	35	73	61
Bexhill	35	71	60
Bicester	34	71	60
Billericay	42	73	61
Billingham	38	73	61
Bilston	37	72	60
Birkenhead	35	72	60
Bishop's Stortford	32	70	59
Blackburn	28	68	57
Blackpool	39	73	61
Bletchley	35	72	60
Bloxwich	35	72	60
Blyth (Northumberland)	34	73	61
Bognor Regis	41	73	61
Bolton	35	71	59
Bootle	34	73	61
Borehamwood	36	71	60
Boston	40	72	61
Bournemouth	31	68	57
Bracknell	35	71	59
Bradford	29	68	57
Braintree	39	73	61
Brentwood	30	69	58
Bridgwater	41	74	62
Bridlington	36	73	61
Brierley Hill	34	71	60
Brighouse	35	72	60
Brighton and Hove	25	66	56
Bromsgrove	38	73	61
Burgess Hill	37	71	60
Burton upon Trent	37	72	60
Bury St Edmunds	35	72	60
Camberley	33	72	60
Cambridge	28	68	57

Cannock	42	74	62
Canterbury	27	66	56
Canvey Island	47	76	63
Carlisle	35	73	61
Carlton (Gedling)	40	73	61
Castleford	39	74	61
Chadderton	34	71	59
Chatham	39	72	60
Chelmsford	33	70	59
Cheltenham	29	68	57
Cheshunt	38	72	61
Chester	34	69	58
Chesterfield	39	73	61
Chester-le-Street	35	73	61
Chichester	31	70	58
Chippenham (Wiltshire)	37	72	60
Chorley	36	73	61
Christchurch	35	71	60
Clacton-on-Sea	43	75	62
Cleethorpes	39	74	61
Coalville	41	73	61
Colchester	32	70	58
Corby	40	73	61
Coventry	39	72	60
Crawley	35	69	58
Crewe	35	72	60
Crosby	37	71	60
Darlington	35	72	60
Darwen	32	71	59
Deal	40	74	62
Denton	33	72	60
Derby	36	71	60
Dewsbury	31	70	59
Doncaster	37	73	61
Dover	40	74	61
Dudley (Dudley)	43	74	62
Dunstable	37	72	60
Durham	33	70	59
East Grinstead	33	70	59
Eastbourne	38	71	60
Eastleigh	32	68	58
Eccles	39	73	61
Ellesmere Port	39	74	61
Esher	30	71	60
Ewell	34	71	60
Exeter	32	69	58
Exmouth	33	72	60
Fareham	40	73	61
Farnborough	33	71	60
Filton	37	73	61
Fleet	36	71	60
Folkestone	37	72	60
Fulwood	37	72	60
Gateshead	36	72	60
Gillingham	35	72	60
Glossop	39	74	61
Gloucester	37	73	61
Gosport	39	73	61
Grantham	38	73	61
Gravesend	40	73	61
Grays	34	70	59
Great Malvern	36	72	61
Great Yarmouth	40	74	62
Grimsby	39	74	62
Guildford	27	66	56
Halesowen	43	74	62

Halifax	31	70	59
Harlow	42	73	61
Harpenden	30	68	58
Harrogate	30	70	59
Hartlepool	39	74	62
Hastings	37	71	60
Hatfield	30	68	57
Havant	36	72	60
Haywards Heath	35	72	60
Hemel Hempstead	36	71	60
Hereford	37	74	61
Herne Bay	33	71	60
Heswall	39	72	61
High Wycombe	30	68	57
Hinckley	34	72	60
Hitchin	30	69	58
Hoddesdon	37	71	60
Horndean	43	74	62
Horsham	33	70	59
Hucknall	43	75	62
Huddersfield	32	70	59
Hyde (Tameside)	42	73	61
Ilkeston	36	71	60
Ipswich	34	70	59
Jarrow	39	74	61
Keighley	31	69	58
Kendal	38	72	60
Kettering	38	73	61
Kidderminster	35	72	60
King's Lynn	39	74	62
Kingston upon Hull	42	73	61
Kingswinford	39	74	62
Kirkby	34	72	60
Lancaster	32	70	58
Leatherhead	31	69	58
Leighton Buzzard	36	72	60
Letchworth Garden City	39	73	61
Leyland	36	72	61
Lichfield	35	71	60
Lincoln	34	71	59
Littlehampton	34	71	60
Long Eaton	34	72	60
Longbenton	32	71	59
Loughborough	28	66	56
Loughton	30	70	59
Lowestoft	33	72	60
Luton	31	68	57
Lytham St Anne's	36	72	60
Macclesfield	35	71	60
Maidenhead	29	68	57
Maidstone	37	72	60
Mansfield	42	74	62
Margate	39	73	61
Middlesbrough	34	70	59
Middleton (Rochdale)	39	74	62
Milton Keynes	32	69	58
Morecambe	32	72	60
Morley	33	71	59
Newark-on-Trent	39	74	61
Newbury	31	69	58
Newcastle-under-Lyme	39	73	61
Northampton	33	71	59
Northfleet	33	70	59
Northwich	36	72	60
Norwich	36	72	60
Nuneaton	38	73	61

Oldham	33	70	59
Oxford	30	66	56
Paignton	35	72	60
Peterborough	33	70	59
Plymouth	38	72	61
Poole	37	73	61
Portsmouth	34	71	59
Prescot	38	74	61
Preston	28	66	56
Pudsey	30	69	58
Ramsgate	40	73	61
Rayleigh	44	74	62
Reading	31	69	58
Redcar	39	74	62
Redditch	41	73	61
Redhill	31	70	58
Rochester	39	73	61
Romiley	39	74	62
Rotherham	39	74	62
Rowley Regis	38	74	61
Royal Leamington Spa	26	66	56
Royal Tunbridge Wells	27	67	57
Rugby	37	72	60
Runcorn	37	73	61
Sale	37	71	60
Salford	33	71	59
Salisbury	33	71	60
Scarborough	35	73	61
Scunthorpe	38	74	61
Sedgley	33	73	60
Sevenoaks	33	71	59
Shipley	31	71	60
Shoreham-by-Sea	37	72	60
Shrewsbury	35	72	60
Sittingbourne	36	71	60
Skelmersdale	37	73	61
Slough	31	67	57
Smethwick	35	71	59
Solihull	34	71	60
South Shields	38	74	61
Southampton	33	70	59
Southend-on-Sea	38	71	60
Southport	34	72	60
Spalding	42	74	62
St Albans	33	71	59
St Helens	36	73	61
St Neots	35	72	60
Stafford	29	68	57
Stevenage	40	72	60
Stockport	36	72	60
Stockton-on-Tees	38	73	61
Stoke-on-Trent	37	73	61
Stourbridge	32	70	59
Stroud	34	71	60
Sunderland	35	71	60
Sutton Coldfield	40	74	62
Sutton in Ashfield	44	75	62
Swadlincote	33	70	59
Swindon	40	72	61
Tamworth	37	72	60
Taunton	36	72	60
Telford	37	73	61
Tipton	38	73	61
Tonbridge	38	72	60
Torquay	40	73	61
Trowbridge	41	72	61

Tynemouth	36	72	60
Urmston	39	73	61
Wakefield	37	73	61
Wallasey	34	73	61
Wallsend	37	73	61
Walsall	35	71	59
Walton-on-Thames	37	71	60
Warrington	36	72	60
Warwick	28	67	57
Washington	37	73	61
Watford	31	66	56
Wath upon Dearne	43	74	62
Wednesfield	33	71	59
Wellingborough	39	73	61
Welwyn Garden City	34	70	59
West Bridgford	33	69	59
West Bromwich	39	73	61
Weston-Super-Mare	37	72	60
Weybridge	32	71	60
Weymouth	38	73	61
Whitley Bay	35	72	60
Whitstable	35	72	60
Wickford	43	74	62
Widnes	38	73	61
Wigan	40	74	61
Wilmslow	31	71	59
Winchester	30	69	58
Windsor	31	70	59
Winsford	38	73	61
Wisbech	41	74	62
Woking	35	71	60
Wokingham	30	68	58
Wolverhampton	34	70	59
Worcester	34	71	60
Worksop	40	74	62
Worthing	38	71	60
Yate	35	72	60
Yeovil	39	73	61
York	28	68	57