Anyone But Them:

The Role of Negative Partisanship in Climate Policy Support in the UK

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Abstract

Understanding individual decision-making is essential for advancing climate and environmental action. While positive partisanship has traditionally been an important predictor of political attitudes and policy support, declining party identification in the UK and elsewhere highlights the need to consider alternative forms of political identity. One such concept is negative partisanship (NP), through which individuals define themselves based on the opposition to a political out-group.

Despite growing interest in negative partisanship, important questions remain about its conceptualisation, measurement and consequences. Existing research has been predominantly quantitative, often drawing on the US two-party context, and applying theoretical frameworks originally developed to explain positive group identification. This thesis therefore examines whether existing approaches adequately capture negative partisanship and investigates its consequences for climate policy support in the UK.

The thesis addresses two research questions: (1) To what extent do current theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship? and (2) What are the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support? A mixed-methods 'hourglass' design combines quantitative analysis of British Election Study data (n = 30,949), a case study in Mid Suffolk comprising surveys (n = 119) and semi-structured interviews (n = 10), and a survey experiment in the UK (n = 800).

The thesis makes three key contributions. First, it advances the conceptualisation of negative partisanship by demonstrating that it can function and is experienced as a meaningful political identity, associated with low political trust. Second, it extends research on negative partisanship to the UK's multi-party context, providing insight into how negative political identities operate beyond the US two-party system and, additionally, in more rural countryside settings. Third, it demonstrates that negative partisanship is significantly associated with lower climate policy support, including among individuals expressing strong climate change beliefs and environmental concern.

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AI Statement

The following Artificial Intelligence tools were used for the following purposes in this thesis, in compliance with university guidelines:

Spelling and grammar checks – Grammarly (Free version) and ChatGPT (Free version)

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I acknowledge using AI as an assistant tool in my thesis. All ideas, interpretations, and contributions are my own and were not generated by AI. The tools were only used to assist with the speed and thoroughness of the research reviewed and presented.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing societies today and requires urgent political action. The scientific community has established that the climate change currently being experienced is predominantly driven by human activity, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) providing extensive evidence of the scale and urgency of the problem (IPCC, 2023). Addressing climate change therefore requires governments and societies to translate scientific evidence and policy ambitions into effective and sustained action (IPCC, 2023).

However, the scale of current government responses does not adequately reflect the urgency and magnitude of the problem (Babacan, 2025). Addressing climate change requires more than incremental policy change and calls for systemic transformation, including a systematic and just transition, reduced short-term thinking, and greater policy stability in climate action (Babacan, 2025). Achieving such changes is not only a question of identifying effective policies, but also one of implementing and maintaining policies within societies where public opinion can shape their success or failure.

1.1 The Importance of Public Support

Public support is an important consideration in the development and implementation of climate policy. It matters not only for compliance with the Paris Agreement (Paris Agreement [Treaty No. XXVII.7.d], 2015), but also for democratic processes. Research has demonstrated that public opinion has a substantial impact on policy, with the relationship becoming stronger the more salient the issue is for the public (Burstein, 2003). Moreover, understanding public attitudes on climate action before the policy is finalised and implemented helps anticipate public responses in later policy cycle stages, which can aid the design and implementation of more effective strategies (Drews & van den Bergh, 2016). However, the relationship between public opinion and policy is also complex. Research suggests that, while politicians increasingly see climate change as a mainstream political issue and feel they have a stronger mandate from their constituents to act, they also remain concerned about potential public backlash against climate policies (Westlake & Willis, 2023). In particular, these concerns relate to backlash from climate action being perceived as unfair to certain groups and the risk of exacerbating political polarisation, often fuelled by media responses (Westlake & Willis, 2023). Thus, although public opinion can encourage politicians to pursue climate action, it can also constrain their willingness to implement particular policies. This dual role of public opinion highlights the importance of understanding the factors that shape citizens'

political preferences towards specific climate issues and policy interventions. Exploring these preferences is essential not only for anticipating public reactions to proposed policies but also for assessing their potential political acceptability and feasibility.

Moreover, when looking at public opinion on climate, a puzzle emerges. Survey research repeatedly indicates that a majority of people express concern about climate change and support government action to address it, including support for Net Zero (Climate Barometer, 2026; DESNZ, 2026). Yet public concern does not always appear to translate straightforwardly into political behaviour or support for parties advocating for stronger climate action. Citizens may express concern about climate change while voting for parties that do not prioritise climate action, or that even seek to modify or dismantle existing climate policies, as seen in Reform UK's success over the last few years (YouGov, n.d.). This apparent tension raises questions about the factors that shape political decision-making beyond individuals' views about climate change.

Related to that, even when individuals broadly support action on climate change, they may differ in the extent to which they support particular policies. Policymakers may therefore seek to adopt policies that are publicly acceptable, rather than policies that are necessarily the most effective or efficient responses to climate change. Understanding what shapes support for particular climate policies is consequently important (Wicki et al., 2020). Research has shown that the framing of climate policies can influence public support, with positive and health frames generally being more supported (Dasandi et al., 2022). However, policy support may depend not only on what a policy proposes or how it is framed, but also on which political parties support and promote it, and how the public feels towards them.

1.2 Political Identity and Climate Policy Support

Identifying with a specific political party has long been linked to voting choices, policy preferences and political behaviour more broadly (Dalton, 2015; Kenny, 2019). This connection to, and identification with, a political party is commonly referred to as positive partisanship. Positive partisanship provides individuals with a political in-group with which they identify and can influence how they interpret political information, evaluate political actors and make political decisions.

Political preferences relating to climate change and environmental policy are also associated with political identities and ideological positions. Research indicates that Europeans who position themselves on the political right are more likely to reject climate policies, whereas those on the political left are more likely to support them (S. D. Fisher et

al., 2022). Similarly, Mayer and Smith (2023) find that individuals with strong identification with the US Democratic Party, which is generally associated with the political left, are more likely to support climate policies than those identifying with the US Republican Party, associated with the political right.

These findings demonstrate the relevance of positive political identities for understanding climate-policy preferences. However, focusing primarily on positive identification may provide an incomplete picture of political decision-making, as in certain contexts, positive partisanship might not be as influential in decision-making as previously suggested. For example, in Europe, there has been a steady decline in positive partisanship (Garzia et al., 2022; Kayser & Wlezien, 2011). This decline of traditional party loyalties has been especially observable in weak identifiers, i.e. those who held weaker forms of positive partisanship (Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018). This raises an important question: how do individuals make political decisions when they do not identify with any political party, or when their political identity is instead defined by their opposition to one.

The decline or weakening of positive partisan attachments has therefore highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding of partisanship and non-partisanship and their consequences (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018). One potentially important component of this more nuanced understanding is negative partisanship.

1.3 Negative Partisanship as a Political Identity

Negative partisanship refers broadly to negative political attitudes directed towards a political party. Although negative attitudes, or negative affect, towards political parties have long been recognised in research on political behaviour, recent work has increasingly considered whether negative partisanship should be understood not simply as an affective response towards a party, but as a form of negative political identity (Bankert, 2024; Russo & Areal, 2025).

This distinction is important. Much existing research has conceptualised and measured negative partisanship through negative affect towards political parties (Garry, 2007; A. P. Mayer & Smith, 2023). Negative affect captures an individual's negative emotional or evaluative response towards a party (Wagner, 2021), for example, through like-dislike or feeling thermometer questions (Ridge, 2023). Conceptualising negative partisanship as an identity, however, concerns the extent to which opposition to a party becomes incorporated into an individual's political self-concept (Bankert, 2021a; Russo & Areal, 2025). An individual may therefore not simply dislike a party, but define themselves, at least in part, through their opposition to that party. Consequently, negative partisanship as

an identity has the potential to encapsulate a dimension of political identity that is not currently captured by positive partisanship, and that cannot be measured through negative affect alone.

In response to this, several measures have been developed to capture negative partisanship as an identity. These include Likert-scale items such as "When I talk about this party, I say 'they' instead of 'we'" and "I would describe myself as an anti-[out-party]" (Areal, 2022, 2024; Bankert, 2021a; Mayer & Russo, 2023), grounded in existing measures and theories of positive partisanship. Such measures seek to include dimensions associated with social identity, including group categorisation and self-definition, beyond affective responses.

However, conceptualising negative partisanship as an identity also raises important theoretical questions. While existing theories of political identity include a component of out-group rejection (Mason, 2018; Mauerer & Puy, 2025), theories like Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory have primarily developed around processes of in-group identification, a fundamental need to belong, and the importance of a positive in-group image as a basis for negative out-group views (Brewer, 1991; Verkuyten, 2021). With that, these theories provide a useful foundation for understanding how political groups become meaningful to individuals. In contrast, negative partisanship raises the question of whether an identity can be formed, maintained and experienced solely through opposition to an out-group in the absence of strong identification with an alternative in-group. In other words, can being ‘against’ a political party become a central component of an individual's political identity, and if so, does this identity function in the same way as a positive political identity?

In reference to this, little is actually known about how individuals develop, experience and express negative partisanship (Russo & Areal, 2025). Specifically, existing research has focused on how negative partisanship can be measured as an identity, but less on how individuals themselves understand and experience this identity. Additionally, it remains important to understand how negative partisanship may be related to, or exist independent of, any other political identities, including positive partisanship. Understanding this in more detail is not only important for the conceptualisation, measurement, and theory behind negative partisanship, but also for the understanding of its consequences. If negative partisanship constitutes a meaningful political identity, it may influence political decision-making in ways that are different from positive partisanship. Individuals may use negative partisan identities to decide how not to act, rather than how to act. Indeed, existing research links negative partisanship to voting

choices and climate policy support, though the studies define and measure negative partisanship differently (Bankert, 2021a; A. P. Mayer & Smith, 2023).

The connection between negative partisanship and policy support may be particularly important for climate and environmental policy, where political parties can be strongly associated with particular policy positions, e.g., the UK Reform Party makes their rejection of Net Zero and related policies very clear (Carter, 2018; de Quay & Sethi, 2026), while the Green Party (England and Wales) has a strong association with climate and environmental policies (Carter, 2018). This also relates to the puzzle introduced in Section 1.1, where public concern and support for climate change does not translate into support for parties that champion climate action.

However, despite the increasing interest in negative partisanship, relatively little research has examined the questions around negative partisanship in the context of climate and environmental policy, particularly outside the United States. Consequently, there is a need to examine both the nature of negative partisanship as a political identity and its consequences for political behaviour and climate-policy support.

1.4 Thesis Aims and Methods

This thesis draws upon research on negative partisanship from political science and political psychology and combines it with research on climate-policy support from environmental psychology. Specifically, this thesis aims to (1) explore to what extent current theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship and (2) how negative partisanship as a negative identity relates to voting choices and climate and environmental policy support[1].

To do so, this thesis applies a mixed-methods approach, drawing upon evidence from the British Election Study (BES) (Fieldhouse et al., 2022), survey and interview responses from a case study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, UK, and a 2 × 2 survey experiment examining the effects of policy framing and negative partisanship on climate-policy support in the UK.

The thesis is guided by the Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, which provide a theoretical framework for examining how political identities are formed, maintained and expressed. Applying these theories allows this thesis to evaluate

[1] These aims translate to the two fundamental research questions of the thesis, which will be laid out in much more detail in Chapter 2, including their corresponding sub-questions.

measures developed based on the same theories in more detail and explore whether and how opposition to a political out-group can constitute a stand-alone political identity.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is structured as a monograph.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical perspectives underpinning the thesis, focusing on political identity, positive and negative partisanship, and the connection of these concepts to political behaviour and climate-policy support. Gaps in the literature are highlighted, and research questions are posed.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach adopted in this thesis, discussing the rationale for the methods chosen and how each study was set up, conducted, and analysed. This includes the methods section for each study, to clearly outline how the methods complement each other.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the empirical chapters, which discuss the results of the three studies conducted. Namely, a study analysing British Election Study data, a case study conducted in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, England, and a survey experiment conducted with participants in the UK recruited via Prolific. Each chapter includes a short methods summary at the beginning.

Chapter 7 brings together the findings from the empirical studies and discusses their theoretical and empirical implications for understanding negative partisanship, political identity and climate-policy support.

Chapter 8 concludes by drawing the empirical, methodological and practical contributions of this thesis, while acknowledging the limitations and making recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Understanding when and why individuals may or may not support climate policies is imperative to progress climate and environmental action. Partisanship seems to play a significant role; however, it is declining in many countries (Garzia et al., 2022; Kayser & Wlezien, 2011), especially amongst weaker identifiers (Bankert et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018). As the introduction chapter has highlighted, existing work points to the need for a deeper understanding of individuals' decision-making in this context.

This chapter reviews the current state of the literature around partisanship and how it links to climate policy support, specifically in the UK. The chapter is structured as follows.

Section 2.2 reviews three different theoretical perspectives of partisanship and their critiques: a sociological perspective, which explains partisanship based on pre-existing social groups and cleavages; a rational actor perspective focused on individuals critically evaluating parties to make an informed decision about which to join; and a social identity perspective focused on psychological belonging to a specific group and the deriving norms and potential biases. After outlining these, I introduce the currently most prominent approach to partisanship, viewing it as a multidimensional concept including aspects of all these perspectives. I then describe the two key theories, Social Identity Approach (SIA) and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), which are used in the literature to explore current perspectives on partisanship.

In Section 2.3, the issues around applying SIA and ODT to negative partisanship are outlined, including issues based on the theories being centred around the notion of an individual having a political in-group, whether that is necessary for negative partisanship, and the from that deriving theoretical uncertainty. The section then highlights the research gaps around exploring the experience and expression of negative partisanship. These include issues with the current measurements used for negative partisanship. This section highlights that there is currently no universal measure of negative partisanship, and some measures do not have a theoretical foundation. Those that are based on SIA and ODT are still in development, and there is a potential need for refinement based on the paucity of theoretical clarity.

Section 2.4 dives into the topic of partisanship and climate change, reviewing literature investigating how partisanship may influence an individual's climate policy support. Here, I highlight a general lack of research on negative partisanship and climate policy support

generally. As most research on this has been conducted in a US two-party context, I argue that more research is needed in different political contexts, such as the UK, to better understand how negative partisanship may act as a barrier or opportunity for climate policy support.

Section 2.5 provides further context for why the UK was selected as a research context, outlining how partisanship and party politics have played a significant role in shaping the current status of climate policy in the country, and how the country's approach has changed from party competition on climate to party politics. This highlights the importance of exploring partisanship, and specifically negative partisanship, in this context.

Section 2.6 concludes this chapter.

2.2 The Development of Partisanship Literature and Theory

Partisanship, or party identification, is commonly understood to refer to an individual's psychological attachment to a specific political party (Dalton, 2015). Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualises partisanship as multidimensional, drawing on Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory to capture its complexity. However, this multidimensional understanding builds upon a number of historically influential theoretical perspectives.

This section, therefore, presents and reviews key theoretical perspectives on partisanship, examining how foundational perspectives over time have shaped current conceptualisations, and identifying remaining gaps in the literature. Specifically, it outlines established perspectives on what is now understood as positive partisanship and discusses how Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory help us understand the concept.

2.2.1 Sociological Perspectives on Partisanship

In a European context, early perspectives on partisanship developed to understand why voter alignment with parties seemed to remain stable over decades (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). According to these perspectives developed in the 1960s, long-lasting connections to a specific party are formed based on already existing societal groups (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Richardson, 1991), rather than through the creation of a new partisan group. Social Cleavages Theory specifically was developed to reflect on the deep-rooted societal divisions which were salient in politics, and from which political parties seem to have emerged (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). Following this theory, the development of partisanship

emerges from the fundamental conflicts arising from societal transformations, which divide society into groups (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Such conflicts arose from the Industrial Revolution between workers and employers, urban and rural populations and focused on disagreements about social class, differing religions, and ethnicity (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). European party systems developed as a result of these cleavages, which explains established hostilities between certain parties (Richardson, 1991). Richardson (1991) finds that parties based on these traditional cleavages seem to generate more stable partisan ties compared to those based on issues less entrenched in society.

Research applying Social Cleavages Theory also acknowledges that partisanship is constituted by long-term attachments to parties; these attachments are composed of affective and ideational components (Richardson, 1991), which later theoretical perspectives explore in more detail (see sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

Social Cleavages Theory remains relevant in contemporary societies, with literature indicating that partisanship aligns with cleavages on more current issues, such as education or the new left versus the far right (Bornschier et al., 2021; Hooghe & Marks, 2022). Understanding social cleavages is particularly important in a UK context, where working class interests have been mostly associated with the Labour Party, while those of the middle class have been mostly associated with the Conservative Party (Richardson, 1991). This party divide along the class lines also offers an explanation for the long-standing hostility between Labour and the Conservatives (Richardson, 1991), which is still present today (de Jong, 2024; Huddy et al., 2018). Therefore, this theory remains relevant in the context of partisanship, to understand how the partisanship groups were originally formed, what role social identities based on cleavages still play today, and how these identities may interact with partisan identities. However, Social Cleavage Theory has also received criticism.

Using social cleavages to explain partisanship is often criticised as too simplistic; the idea that existing groups predetermine partisanship is critiqued for providing a too rigid view of political systems, not allowing room for the complexity witnessed in current political conflicts (Westinen, 2015). Specifically, this perspective disregards party agency in constituting conflicts, which are not always simply expressions of existing cleavages in society (Leon & Desai, 2009). Moreover, research conducted in four European democracies (Britain, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands) finds that the predictive power of identities based on social cleavages is declining, and that individual attitudes towards party leaders increasingly influence individual party attachment (Garzia, 2013). This suggests that social cleavages are no longer able to adequately explain partisanship, and

something else seems to play a role. Section 2.5 discusses partisanship in the UK specifically in more detail.

2.2.2 Theories Emerging in the US

Simultaneously with research on partisanship in Europe, a parallel body of work emerged in the United States, which did not conceptualise partisanship as directly rooted in social cleavages within society. This work is rooted in Campbell et al.'s (1960) work, defining partisanship as a set of beliefs and feelings, which result in a sense of psychological attachment to a political party (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). However, this early conceptualisation by Campbell et al. (1960) of partisanship has also been criticised as overly simplistic. Weisberg (1980) discusses how this conceptualisation does not account for independent voters who do not hold an attachment to a specific party, that it assumes individuals can only identify with a single party, that it does not encompass attitudes towards those parties the individual dislikes, and that it does not explore wider identifications with the party system[2]. The two key theories which have emerged based on this work are outlined and reviewed in the sections below.

2.2.2.1 Instrumental Partisanship – Voters as Rational Actors

One of the perspectives on partisanship developed in the US context, which focuses on party leader and party evaluations, is the instrumental perspective on partisanship. This perspective on partisanship posits that decision-making is based on 'rational choice' and is focused on maximising utility (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). Individuals carefully weigh costs and benefits and evaluate party performances to decide who to support and vote for (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). This form of partisanship, referred to as instrumental partisanship, therefore, centres around the individual, rather than the group. This perspective emphasises that individuals have agency and choose who they may want to support, rather than basing partisanship on belonging to a pre-existing social group, as theorised in Social Cleavages Theory.

A prominent model which applies a rational choice paradigm to political decision-making is the Receive-Accept-Sample Model (Zaller, 1992). In his 1992 work 'The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion', Zaller explains that individuals choose a party based on rationally comparing their views to those of the party, and then connect with the one that most closely aligns. However, this model also acknowledges that individual opinions may be

[2] Important to consider is that this critique was raised regarding the US two-party system which is where Campbell et al.'s work was situated.

influenced by party cues. While Zaller argues that individuals critically evaluate them, other perspectives, including work on affective polarisation[3], disagree and argue that individuals may take on cues if they come from within their own group. This is discussed further in section 2.2.3 on expressive partisanship.

Following the instrumental partisanship perspective, individuals would abandon their party attachment once they negatively evaluate a party leader or party performance (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). This perspective almost portrays individuals as the 'ideal citizens' (Huddy & Bankert, 2017), who have the resources and knowledge to navigate the political environment, evaluate complex information, and make informed decisions on who to vote for or support. However, much evidence exists contesting this perspective.

Research finds that the public is often unaware when parties change their position on an issue (Adams et al., 2011), and when they do, perceptions of the party only change very slightly (Fernandez-Vazquez, 2014). Moreover, viewing individuals as unbiased, rational decision-makers cannot account for the stability of partisan attachment commonly observed (Huddy & Bankert, 2017), and evidence suggests that individuals do, in fact, not always act rationally (Westen et al., 2006). Westen et al. (2006) find that individuals employ motivated reasoning when presented with negative information about their own candidate. In their US-based study, Westen et al. (2006) present committed Republicans and Democrats with (fictional) contradictory and exculpatory statements from candidates from both parties. Individuals were more likely to minimise the level of contradiction in the statement of their own party's candidate, and were more likely to accept the exculpatory statement of their own candidate. This highlights that individuals automatically seem to process information from their own party more favourably than that from the other party, indicating that they may not be rationally evaluating the information presented to them, but rather emotionally.

Additionally, Dias & Lelkes (2022) researched mechanisms driving polarisation in politics. They find that the driving factor behind affective polarisation is not policy disagreements but rather political identities. In other words, policy disagreements contribute to affective polarisation largely insofar as they signal partisan identity. In doing so, they emphasise that partisanship reflects an emotional attachment to a party, rather than a 'running tally

[3] Affective polarisation refers to individuals displaying strong positive feelings towards their own political in-group and strong negative feelings towards their political out-group, which can foster emotional animosity (Lelkes, 2021).

of rational considerations' (Dias & Lelkes, 2022, p.775), as assumed by rational actor models.

As outlined here, the instrumental perspective on partisanship overlooks a 'less rationally determined' dimension which reflects group belonging and its associated psychological components. However, it can be argued that this perspective may still offer valuable insights into the initial formation of party identification, suggesting that individuals align with parties they perceive as representing their interests. The 'less rationally determined' dimensions of partisanship, including psychological attachment, are explored further in the following section.

2.2.2.2 Expressive Partisanship – Finding Identity through Group Membership

Expressive approaches to partisanship conceptualise individuals as embedded within a group, emphasising the development of group loyalty (Bankert et al., 2017; Clifford, 2017), whereas, as explained above, instrumental partisanship is based on the notion of individuals as independent actors who select parties based on alignment with their interests and may switch affiliation when that alignment changes. Similar to instrumental partisanship, an expressive perspective of partisanship was developed in an American context. This perspective, too, had its foundation in the discussions of partisanship in Campbell et al.'s (1960) seminal study on voting in the US published in 'The American Voter' (Campbell et al., 1960). Focusing specifically on the psychological attachment of Campbell et al.'s (1960) definition, the expressive perspective explains the observed longer-term stability of party support via the concept of party identification (Garry, 2007). Campbell et al. (1960) define party identification as the 'affective orientation' (i.e. expressive identity) towards a party, and that this orientation can be both positive and negative[4]. Moreover, they describe this connection as psychological rather than behavioural, meaning that voting for a party does not equate to partisan identification (Garry, 2007).

According to this expressive perspective, individuals are regarded as motivated reasoners (Westen et al., 2006), who are motivated to defend their party to maintain its positive standing, instead of advancing the party's political agenda, as instrumental partisanship suggests (Huddy et al., 2018). This is in contrast with the instrumental perspective, which does not account for this type of biased reasoning. The evidence presented in section

[4] Negative affective orientations of partisanship are discussed further in section 2.4.

2.2.2, which contests the instrumental perspective on partisanship, speaks for this expressive perspective. This includes the findings that partisans are often unaware when a party's platform changes, are motivated to disagree with political information that challenges their previous beliefs and convictions, and employ motivated reasoning, highlighting that information is processed emotionally, rather than rationally (Adams et al., 2011; Lebo & Cassino, 2007; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Westen et al., 2006).

2.2.3 Expanding Partisan Identities: Multidimensional Partisanship

The sections above illustrate how perspectives on partisanship have emerged from diverse political contexts and realities, including Europe and the US. As previously distinct approaches have become increasingly interconnected, scholarly understanding has grown more integrated across these contexts, allowing insights to be shared and refined (Bankert, 2021b). Moving past disciplinary silos and embracing psychological insights in political science has especially contributed to this (Bankert, 2021b). Contemporary perspectives on partisanship thus recognise the complexity and multidimensionality of political identities. These developments and ensuing research gaps are discussed in the following section.

Multidimensional partisanship largely builds on the idea that partisanship is a social identity, as outlined by Campbell et al. (1960). However, it is now understood that this partisan identity is a lot more nuanced than originally described by Campbell et al (Arzheimer & Schoen, 2016; Campbell et al., 1960). The literature no longer focuses on partisanship solely as a form of in-group attachment, but understands that both positive and negative attitudes towards parties play an important role. This is expanded upon in the next section.

It is important to note here that Weisberg's (1980) critique of Campbell et al.'s (1960) notion of partisanship solely as a form of in-group attachment is reflected in the currently widely researched concept of affective polarisation, which picks up on this multidimensionality.

Affective Polarisation (AP) refers to the phenomenon where individuals display strong positive feelings towards their own political in-group, and strong negative feelings towards their political out-group, fostering emotional animosity between partisan groups (Lelkes, 2021). Interest in AP has emerged to explore the attitudes individuals hold towards multiple parties at the same time.

Research finds that AP can shape individual attitudes via party cues and, through that, can expand the scope of partisan influence to issues usually not politicised (Otero-Felipe et al., 2024). AP can be witnessed globally, including in non-anglophone and non-Western European countries (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2025; Zeib & Tariq, 2025). Research from Turkey finds that AP can threaten trust and increase social distance, feelings of moral superiority, and intolerance (Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2025). The negative assumptions stemming from this may lead to fewer positive interactions across party lines, which could lower exposure to other opinions, openness to dialogue across, and, with that, may threaten democratic processes dependent on cross-party collaboration.

While the work presented in this thesis focuses on identity and partisanship specifically, rather than affect, it is important to acknowledge AP as a related concept, especially in a multi-party context like the UK. Much of its criticism is also applicable to the partisanship literature.

Interestingly, some of the critiques aimed at AP are also applicable to the partisanship literature. Wagner (2024) recommends focusing more on measuring partisan hostility, or negative affect (dislike), in the AP context, which remains less explored. This is similar to the criticisms posed by Weisberg (1980) on partisanship, as discussed in sections 2.2.2.2 and 2.2.3. In support of this Röllicke (2023), argues that positive in-group and negative out-group evaluations can be related, but can also exist and act independently, offering further support to the notion that negative affect needs to be explored further independently.

Moreover, Wagner (2024) outlines 4 key challenges that research on AP is currently facing: (1) developing better measures, (2) developing more sophisticated theories, (3) providing clear accounts of affective polarisation's importance, and (4) finding ways to successfully reduce negative party affect. These are very much applicable to the political identity context as well, as more clearly outlined in section 2.3, discussing the literature gaps around negative partisanship.

While AP remains an active area of research, some evidence suggests that this affective polarisation is driven by political identities. Dias & Lelkes (2022) find that policy preferences influence AP by signalling partisan identity. Identities may therefore constitute a root cause of AP and warrant further investigation. This involves not only examining positive attachments, or positive partisanship, but also considering the potential identity dimensions of negative affect, as highlighted in critiques by Weisberg (1980) and Wagner (2024). The latter will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3, which explores negative partisanship.

The next section reviews current theories of partisanship and how they can help explain multidimensional partisanship. Further details on methods to measure partisanship are reviewed and discussed in section 2.4.

2.2.5 Multidimensional Partisanship: Two Key Theories

This section discusses Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. While SIA focuses on the underlying processes which define a social identity, ODT focuses on the underlying motivation behind individuals seeking a group membership (Leonardelli et al., 2010). These theories help understand the multiple dimensions that make up a partisan identity, for self-definition, to attitudes towards parties one belongs, and does not belong to, to emotional components of that identity.

These theories were originally developed within a psychological framework, aimed at understanding broader social identities and group behaviour, and were only later applied to political contexts. As a result, they align closely with the expressive perspective on partisanship, which similarly emphasises identity and group attachment, while standing in contrast to instrumental approaches. Although these theories offer a different perspective from social cleavages theory, they do not oppose the importance of conflicts between social groups; rather, they extend it by examining how political identities interact with other social identities and by exploring why individuals seek group membership in the first place. In this sense, they build upon the more simplified inter-group conflict mechanisms outlined in social cleavages theory, advancing these insights by incorporating a deeper understanding of psychological processes and identity formation.

2.2.5.1 Social Identity Approach

Social Identity Approach combines two theories on group identity and behaviour (Brown, 2020), Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and Self-categorisation Theory (SCT) (Turner, 1999). According to SIT, individuals define themselves based on their group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This group membership can give individuals a feeling of belonging, purpose, and self-worth. Individuals continuously evaluate the groups they belong to (called their in-groups) and compare them to the groups they do not belong to (called their out-groups) (Trepte & Loy, 2017). The desire to preserve a favourable in-group image nurtures in-group favouritism, stereotyping and prejudice towards out-group members. The elements of social categorisation, in-group and out-group evaluation and comparison, and the emotive factors attached to group membership are what constitute an individual's social identity (Trepte & Loy, 2017). SIT very much focuses on the motivational and intergroup dimensions of group identification.

SCT, on the other hand, focuses on the cognitive dimensions of group identification and acts as an extension to SIT (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Following the same, core principles, SCT suggest that identity salience plays an important role and decides when an individual views themselves based on their personal or social identity (Trepte & Loy, 2017). Personal identity is independent of social identity, which is very much influenced by the social group the individual feels they belong to. Whichever identity is salient at a point in time, although both can be salient simultaneously, drives the individual's behaviour and responses in the given situation (Trepte & Loy, 2017).

Group membership also provides cognitive shortcuts around what to think and how to behave. For example, groups have a form of 'prototype', i.e. someone who is seen to be a typical group member. The behaviours and opinions of those prototypes can then influence how other members of the group think or behave (Hogg, 2001). A salient group identity can also lead to deindividuation, in which one perceives oneself only as a member of the group rather than as an individual (Vilanova et al., 2017). This can lead to behaviours an individual might not necessarily engage in otherwise (Vilanova et al., 2017).

As SIT and SCT are often combined and referred to as the Social Identity Approach (SIA), based on SCT being an extension of SIT, these theories will be referred to under the SIA umbrella in this thesis. The three key psychological processes associated with SIA, categorisation, identification and comparison, very clearly portray the individual as a not completely rational actor, which contrasts with those theories following a rational actor model as described in section 2.2.2 on instrumental partisanship. Contextualising the idea of a partisan identity following SIA, it has been suggested that partisanship could help individuals understand which policies their party supports, and therefore which policies they should support (Dalton, 2015).

2.2.5.2 Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

The second theory, which can help understand why individuals seek group membership, is Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) (Brewer, 1991). According to this theory, humans have two fundamental needs: a need for inclusion and a need for differentiation (Leonardelli et al., 2010). Therefore, individuals seek a group membership that can fulfil both needs (Badea et al., 2010). To do so, the group should be neither too inclusive nor too exclusive, to balance the fulfilment of both needs simultaneously (Badea et al., 2010; Leonardelli et al., 2010). ODT describes the fulfilment of these needs as essential for maintaining a positive self-concept and social identity (Leonardelli et al., 2010). In the party context specifically, research finds that minority parties specifically make for the

optimal groups (Abrams, 1994). Abrams (1994) found that in the UK context, identification with minority parties was linked to stronger party commitment, perceived similarities between party and self, less conformity to parental political views, and more frequent discussions on politics with friends. However, research conducted in Belgium could not replicate the effects of minority parties found by Abrams (1994) (Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). This raises the question of whether these effects might be unique to a UK, two-party-favouring context, where individuals might perceive Conservatives and Labour as the old elite, and Reform and Green as new, minority parties, making individuals look at them more favourably. Exploring these parties further is certainly interesting, considering the lack of research focus on them, and their recent gain in popularity, as shown in recent voting polls (YouGov, 2026).

ODT was developed to address limitations of SIA and other social identity theories' explanations of why individuals seek and maintain social identities (Leonardelli et al., 2010). While both share a common foundation emphasising the desire to maintain a positive in-group image in contrast to relevant out-groups, often leading to out-group derogation, ODT extends this framework by highlighting the tension between individuals' need for inclusion and their need for differentiation. Together, these perspectives have contributed significantly to the study of partisan identity (Areal, 2024; Bankert, 2022b; Mayer & Russo, 2023), offering a more nuanced understanding of why individuals identify with political groups and how such identifications are sustained. In the political identity context, they have been used to explain both the formation of partisan attachments and the emergence of affective dynamics (Areal, 2024a), such as in-group favouritism and out-group hostility, thereby deepening existing accounts of partisanship rooted in expressive and social cleavage approaches.

2.2.5.3 Integrating SIA and ODT to Apply Them to Partisanship Research

SIA and ODT are easily applied to positive partisanship, providing a clear understanding of the concept and making it easy to derive clear measurements. Specifically, following SIA and ODT, a partisan identity, or positive partisanship, can be explained in the following way:

Individuals develop a partisan identity through (1) categorisation, (2) identification, and (3) comparison. (1) Categorisation refers to individuals clearly perceiving set groups, or categories, in which they might perceive themselves to belong. This leads to the formation of a distinct in-group, which they favour. This distinct in-group can fulfil a fundamental need for individuals according to ODT, the need for inclusion. This in-group, from which

individuals form their group identity, is not dependent on other identities. It can exist on its own or interact with other identities held by the individual, depending on context and salience. (2) Identification refers to the identity individuals gain from being members of an in-group. This brings with it a self-definition as a group member, which is associated with positive feelings of belonging, purpose, and self-worth. (3) Another central aspect of the development of a partisan identity is that of comparison. Comparing oneself and one's group with distinct out-groups, which are mostly looked at negatively, fulfils another central need according to ODT, the need for distinction.

This identification as a group member has consequences on individuals' decision-making by providing cognitive shortcuts. Groups come with a set of norms, rules and typical group members, also called prototypes. Especially in moments of cognitive load, these rules provide cues for individuals on what behaviours are appropriate and what opinions the group holds collectively. Individuals may then align their behaviours and opinions with their perception of what the group deems appropriate. In the party context, this can specifically guide what sort of policies one might perceive as appropriate to support, depending on what the wider party supports. In the context of climate policy, this could mean that individuals who identify with parties championing climate policy might look upon these types of policies favourably, especially when they come from their own party. Those identifying with parties who oppose the implementation of climate policies might automatically hold a negative view of climate policies, especially if they are provided by an out-group.

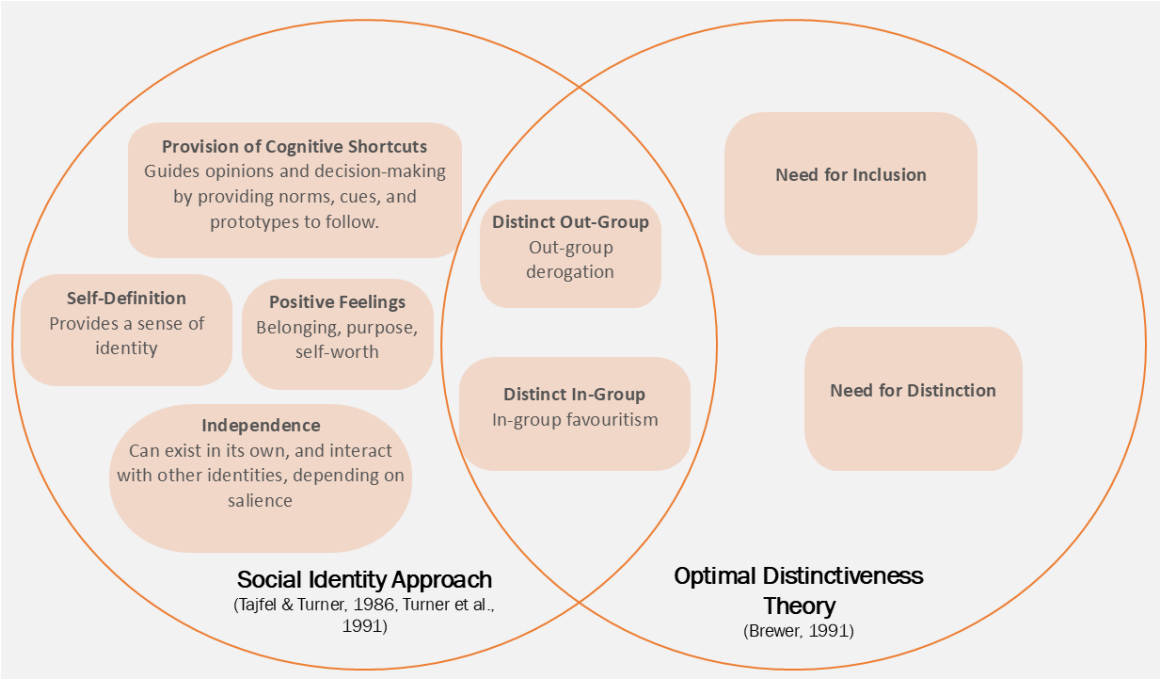

Figure 2.1 Theoretical components of Social Identity Approach and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory, which are explored in this thesis. Each circle includes the key components of the corresponding theory. The area where the circles overlap contains key components of both theories.

As ODT was developed to complement theories like SIA, combining the two into a single theoretical framework is easy. However, some difficulties can emerge. While the ODT offers a rationale for why individuals may want to be part of a group, which SIA does not focus on in detail, ODT shifts the focus to the individual and their motivation, while SIA clearly defines individuals as part of a group and explains their decision-making as influenced by the group, rather than being mostly intrinsic. That means, SIA may explain identification with a group based on what group identity is salient in the context, while ODT may explain it through the ability to fulfil both the need for inclusion and distinction.

Nonetheless, the combination of the two can help us understand partisanship in a more holistic way, starting with the motivation to develop partisanship, how partisanship influences the individual's thoughts and behaviours, and why the individual wants to uphold that partisanship. These theories clearly focus on how social identity, or partisanship, can help individuals understand who they are, and how that, in turn, makes them perceive the world and act in a certain way. Many different measures were developed based on these theories to capture positive partisanship, which include items such as 'How well does the term [Democrat/Republican] describe you?' (Huddy et al., 2015) or 'When I talk about this party, I say 'we' instead of 'them'' (Bankert, 2021a).

However, these perspectives are limited in that they do not fully account for individuals whose partisanship is defined not by who they are, but by who they are not. In other words,

they overlook forms of identification rooted in opposition rather than attachment. The next section therefore reviews more recent theoretical developments that address these dynamics, particularly the concept of negative partisanship.

2.3 Negative Partisanship – A Different Side of Political Identity

The sections above have reviewed the development towards a multidimensional understanding of partisanship and outlined two prominent theoretical approaches used to explain partisan identification and behaviour: the Social Identity Approach (SIA) and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT). Taken together, these theories provide a more nuanced understanding of how partisan identities can shape electoral behaviour and political decision-making. However, as discussed throughout the preceding sections, this literature has predominantly focused on the positive side of partisanship: how individuals identify with, derive meaning from, and act in accordance with a political in-group.

This emphasis leaves an important aspect of partisan identity comparatively underexplored. As highlighted by Weisberg's (1980) critique of Campbell et al.'s (1960) approach, an emphasis on partisan identification can provide limited insight into individuals who do not identify strongly with a particular party or who describe themselves as independent. Such individuals may lack a positive partisan identity while nevertheless holding strong negative attitudes towards a political out-group. These negative evaluations may themselves shape political opinions, electoral behaviour and policy attitudes. Understanding this group better is especially important in the context of positive partisanship declining in many countries (Garzia et al., 2022).

These limitations have contributed to the emergence of a growing body of research examining negative partisanship, or the possibility that political identities and behaviour may be shaped not only by who individuals support, but also by the parties or groups they oppose. The broader focus on AP likewise highlights that negative affect and related concepts can make a valuable contribution to understanding political behaviour, complementing the extensive scholarship on positive affect and identity. This underscores the importance of investigating negative partisanship, particularly since some scholars suggest that “the notion of negative partisanship is likely to be particularly useful in the context of a deeply divided society” (Garry, 2007, p. 349). However, a review of the literature reveals several key challenges: (1) the lack of an agreed-upon definition, (2) the application of theories developed for different contexts, (3) the absence of an agreed-upon measure, (4) limited understanding of its consequences, and (5) a heavy reliance on

evidence from US-based studies. These issues are explored in this section, which reveal research gaps, some of which form the basis of this thesis.

2.3.1 There is No Agreed-Upon Definition of Negative Partisanship

Currently, negative partisanship does not have a clear-cut definition in the literature. While the research community can agree on defining positive partisanship as a psychological identification with a political in-group (Dalton, 2015), a similar definition is not so easily applied to negative partisanship, and different approaches have emerged.

Some refer to negative partisanship as one's disconnect with a political out-group as a consequence of party affiliation (Mayer & Smith, 2023). Following this approach, individuals are affiliated with a specific party. From that affiliation stems positive partisanship, or the psychological attachment to the in-group, and negative partisanship, a disconnect with an out-group, based on a perceived threat to the in-group.

Others describe negative partisanship as a negative identity, caused by voters' aversion towards the worldview and values of a political party (Bankert, 2024; Russo & Areal, 2025). Following this definition, individuals do not need to be affiliated with any party, but negative partisanship is rather fuelled by the strong negative view of the out-group party. This thesis adopts this definition of negative partisanship and explores what a negative partisan identity might look like. The next sections will outline this in more detail.

These differing definitions highlight a central question concerning negative partisanship that warrants further investigation. Can negative partisanship exist independently of party affiliation or positive partisanship? This would contrast Mayer and Smith's (2023) definition, which views negative partisanship as anchored in an alternative positive party affiliation. As Bankert (2024) highlights, further research is needed to establish how negative partisanship operates among independent voters, particularly those who express strong opposition towards a political party without identifying positively with another.

2.3.2 Theories Used to Explain Negative Partisanship are Not Fit for Purpose

The theories most commonly used to explain negative partisanship are the same as those outlined in the broader partisanship literature, namely SIA and ODT. However, these frameworks do not fully align with existing definitions of negative partisanship. While they conceptualise partisanship as a form of identity, consistent with understandings of positive partisanship, they offer limited insight into what a negative identity may look like in practice.

Section 2.2.5 demonstrated how SIA and ODT can be effectively applied to positive partisanship, including the development of measures derived from their theoretical assumptions. Yet, extending these frameworks to negative partisanship is less straightforward. Both SIA and ODT centre on identification with a political in-group, whereas negative partisanship appears to be oriented around the rejection of a particular out-group. Conceptualising negative partisanship as an identity would therefore imply an identity rooted in non-membership, raising important questions about the applicability of these theories. The following paragraph explores these inconsistencies in greater detail.

Applying SIA and ODT to negative partisanship, as currently done, for example, by (Bankert, 2024; Russo & Areal, 2025), some questions remain about how these theories actually fit negative partisanship as a negative identity. To apply SIA and ODT to negative partisanship, the concept, too, would have to develop through (1) categorisation, (2) identification, and (3) comparison. However, this is problematic as outlined here:

1) Unlike positive partisanship, negative partisanship would not provide a distinct in-group, meaning this identity would not fulfil the need for inclusion. Negative partisanship would still be an independent identity, unlike theorised in some research on negative partisanship and climate policy which views it as part of party affiliation (A. P. Mayer & Smith, 2023).
2) Looking at identification, negative partisanship would provide a self-definition, one that provides a sense of identity. Instead of a group member, individuals would identify as anti-outgroup. As positive feelings are provided by being part of the in-group, negative partisanship should be driven by negative feelings and out-group derogation.
3) Comparison would be a more central aspect of negative partisanship, as individuals would be unable to assimilate with an in-group. This identity would provide a distinct out-group, which individuals look upon negatively, and the need for distinction would still be fulfilled. The consequences of this form of identity would remain. However, instead of focusing on what type of norms, rules, and prototypes apply to the in-group, cognitive shortcuts would be based on rejecting norms, rules, and prototypes of the out-group. Therefore, someone holding negative partisanship towards a party pushing for climate policy may be more likely to reject climate policies based on the fact that they are being supported by the out-group.

For these reasons, SIA and ODT are less readily applicable to negative partisanship than to positive partisanship. If negative partisanship does not provide an in-group, this raises

questions about how it satisfies the fundamental need for inclusion emphasised by these theories. Applying SIA and ODT would require the assumption that negative partisanship can exist independently of other identities, but whether this is the case remains unclear. As discussed in Section 2.3.1, some scholars conceptualise negative partisanship as embedded within broader party affiliation rather than as a distinct, independent identity (Mayer & Smith, 2023). This lack of an agreed-upon definition further complicates attempts to account for negative partisanship using identity-based theories.

2.3.3 There is No Agreed-Upon Measure of Negative Partisanship

Given the conceptual confusion around negative partisanship and the lack of an agreed theoretical approach, it is not surprising that Bankert (2024) states, 'there is no unified measure of negative partisanship' (Bankert, 2024). Negative partisanship is commonly measured through feeling thermometer scales (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016), questions around negative voting ('Is there any party you would never vote for?') (Medeiros & Noël, 2014), or a mixture of both (Caruana et al., 2015). However, measuring it as such does not align with the theories generally applied to partisanship.

To measure negative partisanship based on Social Cleavages Theory, questions around class, rural-urban, or religion would have to be utilised (Garzia, 2013). However, this is not common practice for measuring positive partisanship, clearly highlighting that the literature has moved away from using this theoretical approach for partisanship generally.

To measure negative partisanship following the instrumental perspective, negative partisanship should be measured based on the attitudes towards a party and its leader's issue stance and performance. Looking at positive partisanship literature, this has been done using political orientation scales, such as left-right scales, feeling thermometer questions towards the party leader, and evaluations of the economic situation of the country (Garzia, 2013). To use these questions to capture negative partisanship, scores on the political orientation and economic questions opposing those of the party, and low party leader evaluations would have to be chosen. However, as discussed in section 2.2.2.1, evidence suggests that this theoretical perspective of partisanship is not adequate at explaining party ties and members of the public do not always pay close attention to political issues and party stances (Huddy et al., 2018). Therefore, utilising these measures would also not adequately capture negative partisanship.

Feeling thermometer questions can only assess affect, not identity, and their validity is often questioned, as respondents tend to make finer distinctions for the positive evaluations compared to the negative evaluations (Winter & Berinsky, 1999). Furthermore,

Bankert (Bankert, 2021a) raises the concern that this means negative partisanship is measured completely differently from positive partisanship, even though the same theories, SIA and ODT, are being applied to both. On the other hand, using a question on negative voting, or asking an individual who they would never vote for, also does not quite reflect the identity theories that have been applied to negative partisanship, and instead, focuses solely on capturing the potential behavioural consequences of such an identity.

To measure negative partisanship through the expressive perspective, questions would have to focus more on an emotive connection with the party. Looking at measures used to capture positive partisanship, many specifically focus on 'identifying'. First measurements of partisan identity focused on asking for a partisan in-group, and how strong that connection may be (Campbell et al., 1960). In Campbell et al.'s foundational work on 'The American Voter' (1960), partisanship was measured with two questions:

1. 'Generally speaking, do you see yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?'
2. Would you call yourself a strong (previously chosen partisan group) or not so strong (previously chosen partisan group)?'

This measure to capture partisanship has long been criticised as too simplistic and not rooted well enough in social-psychological theory (Greene, 2002; Weisberg, 1980). Specifically, Greene (2002) criticises the fact that we have been trying to measure a 'complex, multifaceted psychological concept with a rather blunt instrument'. Greene (2002) shows that using more psychologically refined measures can actually increase explanatory power to better understand political attitudes and behaviour. He also argues that this can help us better understand those who do not have a specific partisan identity and are independent or non-partisan. However, individuals may still hold attitudes towards the parties and might feel closer to one than another. Measures developed by Campbell et al. (1960) cannot account for that and therefore, should be supplemented with theoretically based measures. Greene (2002) strongly highlights that attitudes towards parties and group belonging dimensions can be separate and should therefore be measured as such.

Similar criticism can be applied to measurements of negative partisanship. In his attempt to design a measure for negative partisanship in a multi-party context, specifically in Northern Ireland, Garry (2007) designs a battery of survey items which ask respondents about each party twice. First, respondents are asked to what extent they think of themselves as supportive or opposed to each party. Then, they are asked to what extent

they feel close or distant from each party. While he clearly indicates this measure was developed to capture negative partisanship, the included questions only measure attitudes or sentiments towards the parties, rather than actual identification.

Another attempt at measuring negative partisanship is made by Mayer & Smith (2023), who use a scale developed by the Pew Research Centre (Doherty et al., 2016). Their US respondents were asked how they would rate Democrats or Republicans compared to other Americans on the following characteristics: Immoral, lazy, close-minded, less intelligent, and dishonest. However, this scale was developed to measure partisan animosity, which again, focuses on affect and sentiment, rather than identification.

Lastly, to measure negative partisanship rooted in SIA and ODT, scales need to be able to capture the multiple facets of identity as described through those theories. Some multi-item measures rooted in SIA have been developed to capture positive partisanship (Leach et al., 2008). These measures include multiple items to capture self-definition and investment in the group membership. This scale was used as a basis by Bankert (2021) to develop her negative partisanship scale, which includes items such as 'When people criticise this party, it makes me feel good' or 'When I meet someone who supports this party, I feel disconnected' (Bankert, 2021a). Her scale was developed in the US two-party context. The full scale can be found in Table 1. However, issues remain. Positive partisanship is often measured with a single item or two. This makes it easy to include in various questionnaires, as it does not take up too much space. Moreover, this scale was developed in the US context, meaning scales for a multi-party context had to be developed as well.

Based on Bankert's (2021) and other measures, Mayer & Russo (2023) developed their negative partisanship scale, specifically aimed at capturing the concept in multi-party systems. To do so, they used previously existing negative partisanship scales, conducted expert interviews, and tested the derived scale shown in Table 2.1. They acknowledge the length of the scale and specifically highlight two items on worldview and sense of self as good options for a two-item scale (highlighted in bold in Table 2.1). However, while Mayer & Russo (2023) develop their scale using a variety of methods, including expert interviews, they do not explore negative partisanship qualitatively, i.e. they continue to rely on quantitative survey results, rather than validating whether negative partisanship is actually experienced as a negative identity, and how that may differ from a positive one.

Areal (2024) further tests negative partisanship scales measuring negative partisanship as a negative identity. Using items from the PINCET data set (Bach et al., 2023), he finds

support for negative partisanship as an identity and further validates using measures that capture it as such. Moreover, he recommends including at least one item explicitly assessing self-identification as anti-[out-party], arguing that this provides an effective way of capturing the presence of negative partisanship (highlighted in bold in Table 2.1). For more nuanced measurements, more items would need to be included. Just as the scales discussed previously, Areal (2024) does not incorporate qualitative data or lived experiences into the development and validation of his negative partisanship scale. Nor does he, or the previous authors, critically reflect on the theories they apply to negative partisanship and empirically explore how the theories may need to be adjusted to actually fit the concept.

Table 2.1 Three measures of Negative Partisanship aligned with SIA and ODT. Survey items previously identified and validated by the scale authors as suitable for a shorter version are highlighted in bold.

Developed based on positive partisanship measure US-based	Developed based on existing negative partisanship measures and expert interviews Europe-based	Testing properties of existing negative partisanship measures to arrive at a shortened version German and Europe-based
Bankert (2021a)	Mayer & Russo (2023)	Areal (2024) and PINCET (Bach et al., 2023)
When I talk about this party, I say 'they' instead of 'we'	**Because of their worldview, I could never vote for this party**	When I talk about this party, I say 'them' or 'their party'
When this party does well in opinion polls, my day is ruined	**It is important to me that I am not one of those that vote for this party**	Supporters of this party are very different from me
I do not have much in common with supporters of this party	When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we'	If someone criticises this party, it makes me feel good
I get angry when people praise this party	I am glad when this party loses an election	It makes me angry when people speak positively about this party
I am relieved when this party loses an election	I have nothing in common with people voting for this party	**I would describe myself as an anti-[out-party]**
When I meet somebody who supports this party, I feel disconnected	I would never vote for this party based on their political performance in the past	It is important for me to be anti-[out-party]
When I speak about this party and its supporters, I refer to it as 'their party'		
When people criticise this party, it makes me feel good		

However, as stated by Greene (2002), it is necessary to make sure that an agreed-upon measure is theoretically sound. So far, measures of negative partisanship have been developed based on theories which originally aimed to explain positive partisanship. Their applicability to negative partisanship has not been explored in detail, as discussed in section 2.3.2. That is, there is a need to test if these theories, which centre around group identification and group belonging, are applicable to understanding group dis-

identification and a lack of group belonging. Additionally, there is no evidence on how individuals actually experience negative partisanship.

2.3.4 We Know Little About the Consequences of Negative Partisanship

As discussed by Mayer & Smith (2024), relatively little research focuses on the consequences of negative partisanship and how it might influence attitudes towards certain political issues or policies. Much of the work has rather focused on electoral actions, such as voting, or finding indications of the presence of negative partisanship (Mayer & Smith, 2024). We know that identities can shape attitudes and behaviours by providing norms and cues to follow or group prototypes to adhere to. The question remains whether negative partisanship might be able to do the same. This subsection outlines the research that has been conducted on the consequences of negative partisanship so far, and what gaps remain.

Research on the 2016 US presidential election found that negative partisanship does influence voting choice, with those expressing negative partisanship being more likely to vote for the in-group candidate (Bankert, 2021a). However, effects on voting choice were found to be lower for negative partisanship than for positive partisanship. To try and disentangle positive partisanship and negative partisanship in the US two-party context, Bankert (2022) explored negative partisanship among Independents in the 2020 US election. Results showed that negative partisanship could predict turnout, political engagement, strong emotional responses to the election outcome, and opposition to bipartisanship. While these studies indicate that negative partisanship plays a role in voting choice, they also indicate it has a somewhat smaller effect than positive partisanship. A study by Mayer & Smith (2023) highlights that both positive partisanship and negative partisanship are important when it comes to support for political issues. Specifically, their study finds that both positive partisanship and negative partisanship are related to climate policy support in Democrats and Republicans in the US. Those who hold strong negative partisanship towards the out-group party are less likely to support policies proposed by that party, while those who hold strong positive partisanship are more likely to support policies proposed by the in-group party.

On the other hand, research does find that negative partisanship can influence voting choice through ‘negative voting’, in other words, basing one’s voting choice on trying to hinder the success of a disliked party (Garzia & Ferreira da Silva, 2022). This indicates that negative partisanship might not necessarily increase likelihood to vote for an in-group party, but it does impact the motivation of voting for a party which can defeat an out-group

party. However, much of this research focuses on a two-party, rather than multi-party context. Limited research from multi-party contexts indicates that here, negative partisanship may be more prevalent than positive partisanship (Bankert, 2024). In the UK specifically, a study found that negative partisanship was related to an increase in political participation, but that it did not have significant impact on voting for the in-group party, or the party someone identified with (Bankert, 2024). Some research finds that some negative partisans do not actually hold any positive party affiliations (Areal, 2024a). These emerging findings make it desirable to understand how prevalent negative partisanship is in a multi-party context, how it interacts with positive partisanship, and how exactly individuals use negative partisanship in their decision-making (Russo & Areal, 2025).

It is important to highlight that the studies described here do not define negative partisanship the same way, and even if they do, they use inconsistent measures. To truly understand the consequences, clarification is needed on what negative partisanship is, how it develops and is expressed, how it aligns with theories, and how it can be measured. This would help clarify the implications of negative partisanship for political behaviour and support for specific policy issues, such as climate change.

In addition to the previous gaps around negative partisanship, Bankert (2024) highlights our lack of understanding of how negative partisanship works in independent voters, whether it can be held against several parties, and how it might correlate with trust in parties or the political system[5]. These are relevant to further research on negative partisanship in the wider political context, rather than exploring it in isolation.

2.3.5 Information on Negative Partisanship is Heavily Reliant on US-based Research

An additional issue in the negative partisanship literature is its heavy reliance on US-based studies and data, which likely reflects the origins of theories of partisan identity in the United States. The US two-party system creates a distinctive party structure in which in-groups and out-groups are clearly defined. In contrast, this dynamic is less straightforward in multi-party systems, where the presence of multiple parties means that not all alternatives are necessarily perceived as out-groups. Consequently, further research is needed to explore how negative partisanship operates in multi-party contexts.

2.3.6 Summary

[5] Trust is reflected in one of the major research sub-questions in Study 3. This is partly based on Bankert's (2024) comments and partly emerges in the results of study 2.

This section clearly highlights the remaining research gaps in the negative partisanship literature, namely, (1) defining negative partisanship, (2) applying theory to understand negative partisanship, (3) measuring negative partisanship, (4) understanding the consequences of negative partisanship, and (5) exploring the concept in a multi-party context. To address these issues, a deeper understanding of negative partisanship is needed. There is a need to understand how it is experienced and expressed by individuals, to create a definition and test how theories may be applied. In this thesis, experience refers to the nature of negative partisanship to understand the applicability of SIA and ODT. The research in this thesis explores whether people indeed identify negatively, or if it is potentially more of an affect-based concept, as often measured and suggested by the instrumental perspective on partisanship. This is summarised by Research Question 1:

RQ1: To what extent do current theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship?

a) How do individuals experience negative partisanship, and what underpins or contributes to its development?
b) How does negative partisanship interact with positive partisanship?
c) How does negative partisanship relate to trust in political parties?

2.4 Partisanship and Support for Climate Change Policies

The sections above focused on understandings of partisanship, how theory and its application have changed over time, and what still needs to be explored to understand negative partisanship properly. This led to the first research question and sub-questions of this thesis, which address four of the discussed research gaps around negative partisanship. This section revisits the fourth research gap around the consequences of negative partisanship. Specifically, the section highlights the literature which connects partisanship and climate policy support, and justifies why the consequences of negative partisanship need to be explored specifically in the climate context.

Positive partisanship, or the psychological belonging to a specific in-group party, is a well-researched predictor of people's support for climate policies, in the US and beyond as discussed so far (Masson & Fritsche, 2021; Mayer & Smith, 2023; Unsworth & Fielding, 2014). Similarly to the issue raised in section 2.3.5, much research that investigates the relationship between partisanship and climate attitudes has been conducted in the US.

In this US context, a previously discussed study by Mayer & Smith (2023) which explores expressive and negative partisanship in the climate context, finds that both expressive and

negative partisanship are linked to climate policy support in individuals. When both expressive and negative partisanship are low, Mayer & Smith (2023) find no differences among individuals affiliated with US Democrats and Republicans. However, when both are high, expressive partisanship can be linked to higher support for policies from the political in-group, while negative partisanship can be linked to lower support for policies associated with the political out-group. In line with this, research in the US also finds that partisan polarisation around climate policies is driven by identities, rather than ideological differences between individuals affiliating with Democrats or Republicans (Mayer, 2020). Moreover, Democrats were found to be more likely to support climate policies endorsed by their own party, which was amplified when Republicans were opposing the climate policy (Ehret et al., 2018). Conversely, Republican support for climate policies decreased when the policy was endorsed by Democrats. Similar results were also found investigating support for the Green New Deal in the US (Benegal & Green, 2024). While perceived high costs are often cited as a reason for opposing climate policies, this study finds that partisan identities were actually the reason for supporting the policies in the Green New Deal, and not the perception of costs as often claimed (Benegal & Green, 2024). This clearly indicates that the social identity aspects of party affiliation could play a more significant role in shaping the climate policy attitudes of individuals, compared to the content of the policy itself.

Research finds that partisanship can also change the way individuals process factual information (Struthers et al., 2025). Struthers et al (2025) find that in both US Democrats and Republicans, factual information is associated with more support for solar and wind energy, pylons and other energy efficient technologies. However, these effects differ among partisan groups when it comes to non-renewable energy: greater knowledge amongst Democrats is associated with opposition towards coal power plants, while in Republicans, it is associated with higher support for natural gas. Factual information alone here, has no effect. That is interesting, as it highlights how partisanship with a specific party can change the way individuals process factual information, and indicates they might compare it to what is deemed appropriate to support or not support as a member of a specific partisan group. This raises the question if differences in how the policy or the information is framed, might be able to overcome these barriers, or if the power of partisanship prevails.

Some research has been undertaken on partisanship and support for climate policy in multi-party contexts. Research from Australia finds that partisanship can reinforce the tendency to misperceive the level of support for climate policies among other partisans

(Leviston et al., 2024). Specifically, left-wing voters are more likely to overestimate partisan polarisation on climate policy support, while right-wing voters tend to underestimate it. This is interesting, as it seems left-wing voters are more likely to believe people 'on the other side' are not supportive of policies, while voters on the right are more likely to believe that left-wing voters think more similarly to them. Leviston et al. (2024) find that there generally is support for climate policies across the political spectrum, which is in line with many surveys suggesting the majority of people worry about climate change and want governments to take more action. The real barrier here seems to be partisan thinking and inter-group conflict, rather than a missing consensus on progressing climate policies. Leviston et al. (2024) recommend emphasising this community consensus when communicating climate policies.

Similar relationships between partisanship and climate policy support can be found in other Anglophone countries and across parts of Western Europe (Caldwell et al., 2025). In their study, patterns of growth in partisan polarisation could be identified across the US, other Anglophone countries and Western Europe, seemingly linking to disagreements on climate change and climate policy reform. This makes it increasingly difficult to achieve sustained political consensus for effective climate reform across many of these countries (Caldwell et al., 2025). This clearly highlights the major influence partisanship has on the progression of climate policy.

As outlined here, partisanship plays an important role in shaping support for climate change policies within party politics, although findings differ. It is a key factor influencing climate policy attitudes, but not necessarily a barrier to policy support. To better understand public support for climate policy, it is therefore essential to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between partisanship and policy preferences.

2.4.1 How to Better Understand How Partisanship Relates to Climate Policy Support

Partisanship clearly has important consequences for support for climate policy, but it also raises the question of how these effects might be mitigated. Research suggests that the framing of policies can generate varying levels of support across different groups, with both climate-focused and economic framings often proving particularly effective (Bell et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025). At the same time, research shows that partisanship can motivate individuals to align their views with their party's position on climate change, or reject policies based on their association with an opposition party (Mayer, 2020; Mayer &

Smith, 2023). This highlights that policy attitudes are not only shaped by substantive preferences but also by partisan identity, underscoring the importance of understanding how identity salience and party cues interact in shaping support for climate policies. The following section will discuss the state of the literature around message and messenger effects, outlining where areas still need to be explored further.

Little is known about what types of public action, and which specific policies individuals actually support (Fairbrother, 2022; Irwin, 2025). Research into message framing tries to explore how people with different backgrounds, climate change beliefs, and values react to climate policies, but framing mostly focuses on how climate change is framed, rather than how they frame goals and the focus of actual policies (Dasandi et al., 2022). Other research looking into policy framings directly finds that economic frames are more successful; however, their research only explored support from political actors and stakeholders, not the public (Cann, 2021).

Research in the UK finds that support for Net Zero policies can be increased by emphasising the co-benefits of the policies, specifically health benefits (Poortinga et al., 2023). However, the framing effects Poortinga et al. (2023) find are small. The researchers also find that potential lifestyle changes and financial costs lower support for policies, suggesting that economic factors and impact on personal life might play a role.

A study in the UK comparing three different framings around energy policy, namely affordability, energy independence, and climate change, finds that across all respondents, framings focused on energy affordability and climate change increased policy support (Chen et al., 2025). When looking into specific sub-groups, the researchers find that the messages framed around energy independence were only able to increase support among those in the political centre-right, and those not concerned about climate change. Surprising were the results on energy affordability, where this type of framing increased support among moderate-to-high-income respondents, but not among those falling into the low-income category (Chen et al., 2025). This research clearly shows that different types of framing can be beneficial when targeting different types of groups. However, these studies focus primarily on framing in isolation and do not consider the source of the message (or messenger), such as the party associated with the policy. With that, the research outlined here highlights gaps in our understanding of which specific climate policies people support, and how framing may interact with the partisan origin of those policies.

The studies discussed here highlight the importance of considering message framing in climate change communication, particularly in relation to the target audience. However, in combination with evidence reviewed in Section 2.4, relatively little research examines the interaction between partisanship and message framing. This gap is further underscored by the fact that positive partisanship is not the only relevant form of political identity. Negative identities, such as negative partisanship, may also play a significant role. The following section, therefore, reviews the limited body of research on the relationship between negative partisanship and climate policy support, highlighting key gaps in the literature.

2.4.2 Negative Partisanship and Climate Policy Support

To return to the issue outlined in sections 2.3.5 and 2.5, much research on negative partisanship and partisan identities and climate has been conducted in the US, where positive and negative partisanship can be distinguished more clearly, in contrast to two-party systems in which they are often intertwined.

Moreover, there is relatively limited research directly linking negative partisanship to climate attitudes, and most research conducted has been situated in the US context (Mayer & Smith, 2023). The following section outlines the current state of the literature on negative partisanship and climate policy attitudes. It highlights the need for further research in multi-party contexts to better understand this relationship and to enable a clearer conceptual distinction between negative partisanship as an identity and out-group derogation as a by-product of positive partisanship.

In their US-based study, Mayer and Smith (2023) explicitly find a link between negative partisanship and climate policy support. Those expressing negative partisanship towards Democrats were less likely to support climate policies, while those expressing negative partisanship towards Republicans were more likely to support climate policies. However, as in this context, positive partisanship and negative partisanship were explored together under the party affiliation term (as outlined in section 2.3.1 on differing definitions of negative partisanship), it is difficult to know if a negative partisan identity is associated with these findings, or rather, the out-group derogation stemming from positive partisanship.

Later work by Mayer and Smith (2024) finds that negative partisanship is more strongly associated with partisan polarisation than positive partisanship in the US. They raise the concern that partisan candidates might purposefully strengthen the association between certain parties and policies, such as climate, to influence individuals to support these

policies less. They also highlight that climate change is especially polarised, among other countries, in the UK (Carter, 2014; McCright et al., 2016; Smith & Mayer, 2019). Specifically, Smith and Mayer (2019) find that the effects of party affiliation and free market ideology on the perception of climate change's danger and importance are strongest in Anglophone countries, including the UK, compared to, e.g., other Western European countries. This highlights the importance of exploring the connection between partisan identities and climate change attitudes in such contexts.

The lack of research explicitly investigating negative partisanship as an identity in connection with climate policy support and in a multi-party context clearly highlights the need for further research to be conducted. This is especially relevant in countries such as the UK, where research suggests climate change is especially polarised.

This section clearly highlights why the potential consequences of negative partisanship need to be explored in a climate context. This thesis will not only explore what the consequences are, but will also address some potential leads to overcome negative consequences. These remaining research questions and sub-questions of this thesis are therefore:

RQ2: What are the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support?

a) Does negative partisanship play a role in climate and environmental policy support?
b) How does negative partisanship relate to voting behaviour and climate and environmental policy support in a multi-party context?
c) Can changes to the framing of the policy increase support despite negative partisanship?

2.5 From Cross-Party Consensus to Politicisation: A Brief History of British Climate Policy and Party Politics

The previous sections have highlighted the limited understanding of how negative partisanship relates to climate policy support, particularly in the UK context. Addressing this gap is the central focus of this thesis. To do so, it is important to understand the national context and link existing theoretical insights to the specific dynamics of UK politics.

This section, therefore, outlines the rationale for selecting the UK as the focus of this research. Section 3.1 provides an overview of the evolution of party approaches to climate policy, from first acknowledgements, through the landmark Climate Change Act of 2008,

to the present day, tracing a shift from party competition to increasing politicisation and climate pragmatism. Section 3.2 then reviews the current state of the literature on partisanship in the UK, with particular attention to what is known about its relationship to climate policy attitudes.

2.5.1 Early stages and First Mentions

Recognition of the importance and relevance of climate change occurred in the 1980s; Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who had eventually been convinced of the threat climate change would pose to the UK, which caused her to deliver several, impactful speeches on the topic, including to the UN (Lorenzoni et al., 2008). The succeeding Labour government, under Prime Minister Tony Blair, also provided 'green' statements, arguing that a sustainable approach would not only be good for the economy but would also further establish the UK's leadership on an international level (Lorenzoni et al., 2008). However, this did not lead to an impactful, long-term policy approach, and climate change, again, lost political priority.

2.5.2 Competitive Consensus and the Landmark Climate Change Act

A brief period of 'positive' politicisation of climate change around 2005-6 led to cross-party support for and the implementation of the landmark Climate Change Act of 2008, under the Labour government, strongly supported by David Cameron, the opposition party leader at the time. This Act was the first of its kind and created a legally binding framework to commit the UK to cutting its carbon emissions, establishing the UK in its position as a climate leader (Climate Change Committee, 2026).

Public interest in climate change in the preceding years was widespread, partly due to the large media attention elicited by the release of Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" and the publication of the Stern Review (2007) showcasing the economic costs of climate change (Carter, 2018). David Cameron decided to make climate change a central aim of his political agenda, using the media as a communication tool to inform the public of his approach. This culminated in him signing up to Friends of the Earth's 'The Big Ask' campaign, who were calling for a bill specifically focused on climate change. Many MPs across parties followed suit, which ultimately pressured the Labour government into promising legislation and thus passing the Climate Change Act of 2008. However, David Cameron too failed to secure long-term support for climate policies within his party, partly due to the backbenchers, who were heavily influenced by the fossil-fuel lobbies (Carter, 2018).

2.5.3 Unstable Climate Leadership, Public Pressure, and Brexit

The political commitment to climate action proved difficult to sustain following the 2015 general election. The Conservative Party subsequently shifted away from aspects of the 'green' agenda, with greater emphasis placed on more traditional priorities, including economic growth (Carter & Clements, 2015). After their general election win in 2015, they actively started to dismantle aspects of climate policy.

Brexit introduced a further source of uncertainty for UK climate governance. EU policies had contributed to approximately 40% of the UK's emissions reductions since 1990, while the UK's withdrawal from the EU also removed the direct application of EU legal and compliance mechanisms (Farstad et al., 2018). Brexit therefore represented an important change in the institutional context within which UK climate policy was developed and implemented.

However, during a movement of major climate protests in 2018 and 2019, the use of pro-climate arguments increased again (Nisbett et al., 2025), reflecting growing public pressure for more ambitious climate action. This resulted in several significant developments in UK climate politics, including amendments to the Climate Change Act in June 2019 under Prime Minister Theresa May (Walker et al., 2019) and Labour's Green New Deal, which launched in March 2019, and provided a more radical program to address the climate and wider socio-economic crisis in the UK (Nisbett et al., 2025). These developments reflected renewed political attention to climate change.

Under Boris Johnson's premiership, the Conservative government subsequently renewed its emphasis on climate action, including through the 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', which set out a series of measures intended to support decarbonisation and the transition to a low-carbon economy. However, this renewed emphasis occurred alongside other major political and economic challenges. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the associated energy crisis, for example, shifted political attention towards energy security and the cost of energy, creating additional pressures around the pace and direction of climate policy (Carter & Pearson, 2024).

Research on UK climate governance has highlighted the importance of cross-party collaboration in establishing durable and long-term climate policy. The Climate Change Act of 2008 provides an important example of how political consensus can contribute to the development of relatively stable climate governance arrangements (Lockwood, 2021; Rietig & Laing, 2017). However, the subsequent shifts in climate policy illustrate the challenges of sustaining such consensus when political priorities, leadership and

positions within and between parties change. Simultaneously, they clearly highlight the importance of public opinion and pressure on policy.

2.5.4 Party Politics and 'Pragmatism' – Where the Parties Stand Now

In recent years, narratives of 'pragmatism' have emerged within UK climate politics, protecting the fragile political consensus that does persist on climate change, while promoting slower, incremental change over more transformative decisions (Westlake & Willis, 2025). This reveals an interesting paradox; climate change has become increasingly mainstream as a political issue, while political support for ambitious climate action remains more contested and fragile (Westlake & Willis, 2025). This tension is also reflected in the positions adopted by political parties. The Conservative Party and associated right-wing media outlets have adopted increasingly sceptical approaches to climate change and climate policy (Carter & Clements, 2015), often adapting climate delay narratives[6], rather than outright climate denial (Hayes et al., 2025). This is further fuelled by Reform UK, who do not have a clear position on climate, but seem to generally be returning to a denialist stance on anthropogenic climate change (de Quay & Sethi, 2026). However, the Green Party has also gained support among UK residents (YouGov, 2026), and the Labour Party, which won the UK's general election in 2024, made key pledges on climate, including reaching zero-carbon power by 2030 and once again becoming a climate leader on the global stage (Dunne & Gabbatiss, 2024).

Taken together, these positions illustrate that, although climate change has become established within the UK political discourse, there remain clear differences between political parties regarding the scale, pace and approach to climate action. More importantly, party stances also change significantly over time. The sections that follow examine these positions in greater detail, providing an overview of the contemporary UK political context in which the research presented in this thesis is situated.

Today, party stances range from urgent action all the way to delay and denial. To understand the context of this thesis, it is important to examine the approaches of UK political parties to climate and environmental policy at the time. UK politics has changed drastically over the last few years, moving away from a two-party favouring system towards a diversity of parties emerging at centre stage. Previously, Conservatives and Labour were seen as central, with Liberal Democrats being part of the discussion. Now more and more

[6] The narratives acknowledge that climate change is real, but cite various reasons to justify slow responses or inaction.

attention is being paid to the Green Party and Reform UK. Each party's stance towards climate and environment over the years is discussed in this section.

2.5.4.1 The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party has traditionally emphasised economic growth and business freedom (Curtice, 2022) sometimes at the expense of substantial climate action. Despite pushing for the historic Climate Change Act of 2008, which was passed under a Labour government, their climate policies have been inconsistent. During the 2019 leadership campaign, the Conservatives largely ignored climate change, focusing instead on Brexit (Carter & Pearson, 2024). Although their 2019 manifesto included commitments to achieving Net Zero by 2050, these proposals were vague and lacked ambition.

Boris Johnson's rhetoric on climate change was proactive; however, few of his speeches resulted in the implementation of major policy initiatives (Hennig, 2024). Some of the progress that was made under Johnson on climate change was dismantled by Rishi Sunak, who, less than a year into his term as prime minister, delayed the previously established deadlines on phasing out diesel and petrol cars and gas boilers, and additionally issued new oil and gas licenses for the North Sea (Hennig, 2024). Sunak was widely criticised for using climate and environmental policies to differentiate his party from Labour (Hennig, 2024).

By 2022, internal divisions in the Conservative Party were highlighted with the 'Net Zero Scrutiny Group' raising concerns about the net-zero agenda, linking it to the cost-of-living crisis and joining forces with Nigel Farage, who historically has been sceptical of anthropogenic climate change. More about Farage will be discussed in the section on Reform UK.

2.5.4.2 The Labour Party

In contrast, the Labour Party has long advocated for taking collective action to protect the public from market failures (Curtice, 2022), framing their climate policy as a Green Industrial Revolution in the 2019 manifesto. Labour has been particularly strong on advocating for the energy transition and was the leading party behind the motion declaring a climate and environmental emergency (Carter & Pearson, 2024). However, Labour also seems unable to make up its mind, with ambitions flip-flopping. When Keir Starmer became leader of the party, he initially had big ambitions, suggesting to 'throw everything' at Net Zero in 'the race of our lifetime' towards a low carbon future' (Hennig, 2024). Yet,

this approach quickly changed into a pledge to invest £28 billion yearly after political and economic pressure (Hennig, 2024).

Two parties that have been very consistent on their pro-environmental stance are the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party.

2.5.4.3 The Liberal Democrats

At their Spring Conference in 2022, the Liberal Democrats focused on several environmental topics, such as collaborating on international environmental issues, including COP 15 and COP 27 (Liberal Democrats, 2022).

2.5.4.4 The Green Parties

The Green Party of England and Wales has always centred its platform on environmental issues (Carter, 2018), advocating for policies such as a Carbon Tax on fossil fuel imports and the Green New Deal. Although their national presence was limited to one MP, Caroline Lucas, from 2010 to 2024, they achieved greater success at the local level, gaining seats from both Labour and the Conservatives, highlighting the environment and climate as subjects attracting voters. During the 2024 General Election, they were ranked as the best party for climate and nature according to Greenpeace (Greenpeace, 2024).

The Green Party of Northern Ireland similarly centres climate and environment. They were one of the parties involved in pushing for Net Zero targets, resulting in the Climate Change Act Northern Ireland 2022 (Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland), 2022), creating a framework for Northern Ireland to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050. In their 2024 Westminster Election Manifesto, 'Save our Environment' was one of their five key priorities, in addition to focusing on renewable energy and public transport accessibility (Green Party Northern Ireland, 2024).

The Scottish Greens were supportive of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act in 2009 (Climate Change (Scotland) Act, 2009), and made it clear that they felt the amendments to it in 2019 (Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act, 2019) and especially 2024 (Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act, 2024) were not ambitious enough, abstaining from voting for either of the amendments (Brawn, 2024; Brodies, 2019). The amendments made in 2024 were specifically criticised by Patrick Harvie, the Scottish Greens co-leader, as a failure, as this legislation was brought after ministers had to abandon the previous target of 75% greenhouse emissions reduction by 2030 as it was deemed no longer credible (Brawn, 2024). The Scottish Greens' ambitious climate policy approach was also reflected in their General Election

Manifesto, which prioritised ‘Tackling the climate emergency’ through renewable energy and reshaping the economy for both people and planet (Scottish Greens, 2024).

2.5.4.5 Reform UK

Reform UK has been opposed to action on climate since their formation in 2018. While they do not hold an official position on climate change, evidence suggests that the party is returning to a climate denial position which it clearly held under Richard Tice (de Quay & Sethi, 2026). While Tice openly promoted climate change denial, Farage, the current party leader, has taken on a less loud approach (Ward & Sethi, 2024). While scrapping Net Zero remains party policy, the statement clearly denying the existence of anthropogenic climate change has been removed from the party website (de Quay & Sethi, 2026; Ward & Sethi, 2024). However, party members are still openly spreading climate denial messages via social media and in local councils (de Quay & Sethi, 2026).

Referring to the Net Zero agenda as ‘Net Stupid Zero’, Reform UK claim ‘eco-policies’ are destroying jobs and the economy, specifically in the oil and gas sector (BBC News, 2025). They also blame Net Zero for the increase in energy bills (BBC News, 2025). As of the time at which this thesis is written, there is no clarity in how their approach to ‘scrapping Net Zero’ would be implemented or result in financial savings (de Quay & Sethi, 2026).

2.5.4.6 Scottish National Party (SNP)

The Scottish National Party (SNP) was in government when the original Climate Change (Scotland) Act was passed in 2009, playing a central role in creating the commitment. The Net Zero ambitions were raised in amendments in 2019 under First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP-led government. However, a SNP minority government also introduced and passed the amendments made in 2024, which scrapped the legally binding 2030 emission reduction targets and replaced them with a 5-year carbon budget framework instead (Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act, 2024).

However, the SNP remains committed to “ending Scotland’s contribution to climate change by 2045” (CIEEM, 2026), aiming to balance climate action with people’s livelihoods. Transitioning to a green economy was one of their key policy points in the 2024 General Election (BBC News, 2024), wanting to deal with new oil and gas licences on a case-by-case basis, and calling for the UK government to heavily invest in a Just Transition Fund.

2.5.4.7 Plaid Cymru

In their 2024 General Election manifesto, Plaid Cymru clearly recognise the climate and nature emergencies as “the biggest threat to mankind on a global scale” (Plaid Cymru, 2024, p. 34), and commit to reaching Net Zero in Wales by 2035 and reversing the biodiversity decline by 2030. They, too, discuss a just transition, by investing in green jobs and ensuring Welsh workers are supported in their transition to new and different areas of work (Plaid Cymru, 2024). However, as of 2026, the party has abandoned their previous Net Zero by 2035 pledge, calling it unrealistic (Deans, 2026). They remain committed to Net Zero emissions and discuss being able to reach it before the UK government’s target of 2050, without restating a specific target or deadline (Deans, 2026).

2.5.4.8 Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin, among other parties, backed the establishment of the Climate Change Act Northern Ireland 2022, creating legally binding Net Zero targets (Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland), 2022). In their 2024 General Election Manifesto, only a single reference is made to climate change, stating that they want to meet climate change and Net Zero targets through a fair and just transition (Hanson & Hayward, 2025). As of 2026, they support the creation of a ‘Just Transition Commission’, as proposed by the Environment Minister, to ensure that no one is left behind and that those most affected by climate change and mitigation and adaptation measures are supported (Sinn Fein, 2026).

2.5.5 Summary

While the trajectory of UK climate action is difficult to summarise, one feature is particularly evident: its political direction has been fragile and inconsistent. The UK has experienced periods of considerable climate ambition, including a cross-party consensus that helped develop and pass the Climate Change Act in 2008. However, this consensus has not been sustained, as divisions within parties, changes in political leadership, and growing opposition to aspects of climate action (specifically from the far-right) have shaken climate policy. The result has been a climate policy landscape characterised by periods of ambition alongside subsequent shifts in political priorities and the pace of action.

2.5.6 Party Politics - Partisanship in the UK

The section above discusses how political views on climate have changed in the UK, discussing the different stances the parties have taken. This section focuses on the public. Specifically, it refers back to section 2.2.1 and reiterates the link between partisanship formation in the UK and social cleavages, how things have changed, and highlights the

need for new theories. Then, this section discusses the climate attitudes of the UK public and how these are connected to partisanship and wider political identities.

2.5.6.1 Political Identity in the UK

Historically, social cleavages have played a central role in shaping partisanship with the UK's two dominant political parties, Labour and Conservatives (see section 2.2.1). These parties emerged from class-based conflict between workers and employers, where the working class was predominantly aligned with Labour, whereas the middle class tended to support the Conservative Party (Richardson, 1991). The parties' roots in class conflict help explain the persistence of inter-party hostilities, which are still present today (de Jong, 2024; Huddy et al., 2018).

However, in the contemporary political landscape, the relevance of these traditional cleavages seems to be shifting. Although Labour and Conservatives remain central actors, the UK is increasingly moving away from a predominantly two-party system towards a more fragmented, multi-party system. Alongside the standing presence of the Liberal Democrats, two other parties are notable. Reform UK is performing strongly in opinion polls and has gained significant representation in the last local elections in May 2026 (Clarke et al., 2026). The Green Party has also gained momentum, with recent wins in Manchester increasing its representation to a total of five MPs in Parliament (Wheeler & Pike, 2026), and expanding their presence and control in local governments (Wheeler, 2026).

These developments suggest that traditional cleavages may no longer be sufficient to explain the current patterns of party support in the UK. Instead, they raise important questions about why voters are shifting away from Labour and the Conservatives, and what new factors may underpin contemporary partisanship. Importantly, it is becoming evident that the UK should no longer be conceptualised as a two-party system, as has often been the case in earlier research. Instead, it requires analysis as a multi-party system, taking into account the complex interplay between political identities and attitudes across a broader party landscape. In this context, the rising popularity of parties such as Reform UK and the Greens is particularly relevant, given that research has suggested that minority parties can serve as especially ideal group identities (Abrams, 1994), as discussed in section 2.2.5.2.

As the described shifts in the political landscape in the UK are relatively recent, empirical research remains limited. However, emerging evidence suggests distinctive socio-demographic patterns in party support. Specifically, Reform UK appears to resonate more

strongly with older, less-educated, working-class individuals with pronounced nationalist identities, whereas the Green Party attracts younger, more highly educated, and more middle-class individuals with more metropolitan identities (Whiteley, 2026). This indicates that traditional cleavages—such as class, age, and education—continue to structure political behaviour, but their alignment with the political spectrum has shifted. In particular, groups historically associated with specific parties now appear to support different political actors. Segments of the middle class, once aligned with the Conservatives, increasingly identify with the Greens, while some working-class voters, previously associated with Labour, have gravitated towards parties on the political right. Although divisions along similar social cleavages seem to persist, their changing political alignment suggests that existing theoretical frameworks are no longer sufficient to explain partisan identification. Notably, class no longer predicts left–right identification in the same way as in earlier periods. Moreover, it clearly highlights the interaction between political and social identities, e.g. nationalist identities and Reform UK partisanship, or metropolitan identities and Green partisanship.

A possible explanation for the shifts in party support may be political fragmentation. Fisher (2026), for example, argues that division within the political left, spread across Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Greens, may have enabled Reform UK to consolidate support on the right (Fisher, 2026). This suggests that, because there is no longer a unifying political party on the political left (i.e. Labour), voters are increasingly looking across the political spectrum to find a party to identify with.

The active debate surrounding the shift away from Labour and the Conservatives highlights the need for further theoretical and empirical investigations, specifically around political identity. Some evidence suggests that a more expressive, multidimensional approach to partisanship (see section 2.2.3) may be more appropriate than purely instrumental or 'rational actor' models in the UK context. Firstly, the interaction between social and political identities, as highlighted in data around Reform UK and Green Party supporters, points towards a multidimensional perspective. Moreover, political interest and engagement have been shown to correlate with stronger and more stable partisan identities in the UK (Arzheimer & Schoen, 2016). This is in contrast with instrumental perspectives, which suggest that seeking out political information lowers the need for holding partisanship (Arzheimer & Schoen, 2016).

Moreover, the influence of partisanship extends beyond formal political contexts into everyday social life. Evidence from the UK indicates that political affiliation influences interpersonal relationships, including online dating behaviour (Sleiman et al., 2025).

Individuals indicated considering partisanship as a key characteristic when selecting a partner, comparable to physical appearance. While both Labour and Conservative partisans preferred co-partisans, the effects were especially strong among Labour partisans (Sleiman et al., 2025). The tolerance for opposing political views played an even stronger role.

Together, these findings underscore the emotional and socio-cultural significance of partisanship in the UK, as well as the persistence of intergroup hostility both within and beyond political areas, contributing to broader patterns of polarisation.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge political identities that are not tied directly to parties. Brexit represents a salient example, with enduring divisions between 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' (Schonfeld & Winter-Levy, 2021). These issue-based identities further emphasise the need for a more nuanced understanding of political identity. However, as this thesis focuses on partisan identities, such issue-specific identities will not be examined in detail.

2.5.6.2 Climate Attitudes and Partisanship in the UK

Public concern about climate change is widespread in the UK, with approximately 75% of individuals reporting some level of worry (Moseley et al., 2025). A narrow majority of the public (51%) also continues to support Net Zero targets, with only a quarter of respondents opposing the targets (Moseley et al., 2025).

Political identity plays a significant role in shaping climate attitudes. Across Western Europe, individuals placing themselves on the political left are generally more likely to believe in and express concern about climate change than those placing themselves on the political right (Fisher et al., 2022). Beyond the traditional left–right dimension, party-specific affiliations also matter. In the UK, supporters of environmentally oriented parties were found to favour renewable energy and were less supportive of fossil fuels, gas, and nuclear energy compared to supporters of economically focused parties (Clulow et al., 2021). While these findings are correlational, they clearly demonstrate the association between partisanship and climate policy preferences.

As discussed in Section 2.4.2, research on the relationship between negative partisanship and climate attitudes remains limited. This gap is particularly evident in multi-party contexts such as the UK, as most existing studies have focused on the US two-party system. Consequently, further research is needed to better understand how both positive

and negative forms of partisanship influence climate policy support in multi-party democracies.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter clearly outlines the research gaps around negative partisanship and climate policy support. Specifically, it argues that a more thorough theoretical exploration of negative partisanship is needed to understand how the concept is experienced, and to adjust theories and develop more appropriate measures. Furthermore, little is known about the consequences of negative partisanship, specifically in the climate context.

This thesis applies a combination of SIA and ODT to negative partisanship, as discussed in section 2.2.5.3, to understand their applicability and explore negative partisanship as a negative identity. To do so, three studies are conducted as part of this thesis: the first analysing British Election Study data, the second a case study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, and the third an online survey experiment. How the three studies tie together, and how and why their respective methods were chosen, is discussed in the following chapter, Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in this thesis and the rationale for the methods used across the three empirical studies. The research adopts a pragmatic worldview and a mixed-methods approach, reflecting the aim of examining negative partisanship from both broad and in-depth perspectives. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows the thesis to examine patterns and relationships concerning negative partisanship while also exploring how individuals experience and understand it. The methodological approach therefore responds to the shortage of diversity in methods exploring negative partisanship to date, while also expanding the application of the predominantly quantitative approaches used in existing research.

Section 3.2 outlines the pragmatic worldview adopted in this research and outlines how pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Section 3.3 then describes the mixed-methods design adopted in the research of this thesis, including the use of explanatory and exploratory approaches and the rationale for the 'hourglass' structure of the research.

Section 3.4 introduces the first empirical study, which uses data from the British Election Study (BES). This section outlines the rationale for selecting the BES, describes the relevant measures and variables, and details the analytical approach used to examine negative partisanship within a large-scale quantitative dataset.

Section 3.5 introduces the second empirical study, a case study conducted in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley. This section introduces the case study context and outlines the research design, materials, sampling and data collection procedures. It also describes the survey and interview methods used to examine how negative partisanship is experienced within this context.

Section 3.6 introduces the final empirical study, a survey experiment conducted with participants in the UK recruited through Prolific. This section describes the rationale for the experimental design, the development of the experimental manipulations, participant recruitment and characteristics, and the measurement of the key variables. The study builds on findings from the preceding studies to examine the relationship between negative partisanship, political trust, and environmental and political attitudes.

Finally, Section 3.7 discusses reflexivity and the limitations of the methodological approach adopted in the thesis. The section considers the role of the researcher in the production and interpretation of the data, as well as the methodological and practical limitations associated with the research designs, samples, measures and analytical approaches used across the empirical studies. Section 3.8 concludes the chapter.

3.2 Epistemological Stance

This thesis aims to take a more methodologically diverse approach to exploring negative partisanship and its consequences than has characterised much of the existing literature. Specifically, it seeks to diversify the methodological approaches used to investigate negative partisanship, thereby exploring aspects of the phenomenon that may have been overlooked by the predominantly quantitative methodological approaches adopted in existing research.

This commitment to methodological diversification is consistent with a pragmatic worldview, which emphasises making methodological choices in relation to the research questions rather than adhering to a single methodological practice (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this thesis, methodological choices are therefore driven by the different forms of knowledge required to understand negative partisanship and its consequences. Quantitative methods provide opportunities to examine patterns and relationships across larger samples, while qualitative methods allow individuals' experiences and interpretations of negative partisanship to be explored in greater depth. Importantly, the use of different methods also creates opportunities for findings to emerge that have not been anticipated by the researcher or existing theoretical frameworks. Methodological diversification is therefore not intended solely to corroborate findings across methods, but also to identify different dimensions of the phenomenon and generate new questions and theoretical insights.

Pragmatism is also appropriate given the theoretical aims of this thesis. The research examines the applicability of the Social Identity Approach (SIA) and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) to negative partisanship, while remaining open to findings that may challenge, extend or refine existing theoretical conceptualisations. The empirical studies therefore involve both theory testing and theory development. Quantitative methods are used to examine relationships and theoretical expectations derived from existing research, while qualitative methods provide an opportunity to explore how individuals understand and experience negative partisanship and whether these experiences reveal aspects that are not captured by existing theories or measures.

However, pragmatism can also fall short on acknowledging the underlying assumptions that have guided the researcher to generate the questions in the first place, and how the same assumptions guide the interpretation of the results (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). This is particularly relevant to interdisciplinary research, where different disciplinary traditions may make different assumptions about what constitutes knowledge and how phenomena should be studied. A critical realist position provides a complementary foundation for making these assumptions explicit, while also providing a philosophical foundation that can be combined with a pragmatic approach to mixed-methods research (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Khabibullah et al., 2025).

Critical realism assumes that a reality exists independently of our perceptions of it, while recognising that knowledge of this reality is subjective, mediated by human interpretation (Shan, 2022). This distinction is particularly relevant to the aims of this thesis. Negative partisanship may have consequences for individuals' political decision-making, while the experience and meaning of negative partisanship may differ between individuals and may not be fully captured through any single method or measure. Similarly, the political and environmental contexts in which these processes occur, including evaluations of climate and environmental policies and renewable energy developments (see Section 3.5), exist independently of individuals' interpretations. However, individuals' understandings and responses to these contexts are shaped by their beliefs, experiences, identities and motivations.

A critical realist position can therefore accommodate the possibility that negative partisanship has underlying processes and consequences that exist beyond any one individual's interpretation, while recognising that these processes can only be understood through imperfect and situated forms of knowledge. This provides an important basis for methodological pluralism: different methods can provide different perspectives on the same underlying reality. Quantitative methods can identify patterns and relationships that may extend across individuals and contexts, while qualitative methods can provide insight into the meanings and experiences through which those processes are understood.

The thesis also draws on constructivist insights, particularly in understanding how individuals construct meanings about their social and political worlds. Constructivist approaches emphasise that individuals develop subjective meanings through their experiences and interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This perspective is particularly relevant to the qualitative component of the research, where participants' own accounts and interpretations of negative partisanship are central to understanding how it is experienced. However, adopting this perspective does not require the thesis to assume

that reality itself is wholly constructed or that different interpretations constitute entirely separate realities. Rather, individuals may construct different understandings of the same underlying social and political reality through their particular experiences, values and identities through which they encounter it. Constructivist insights therefore complement, rather than replace, the critical realist position.

The relationship between these philosophical perspectives reflects a wider challenge within interdisciplinary mixed-methods research. Research philosophies have originally developed in strict disciplinary and methodological silos. This can create tension when trying to research concepts which span these disciplinary boundaries. Negative partisanship in the climate policy context is an example of this, as researching it requires drawing on theory and methods from political science, political psychology and (environmental) psychology. A single methodological approach or philosophy may therefore capture some aspects of negative partisanship while leaving other unexplored. The approach taken in this thesis responds to this challenge by recognising the value of different forms of evidence while maintaining a coherent underlying philosophical position.

Thus, critical realism provides the overarching ontological and epistemological foundation for this thesis, recognising an underlying reality while acknowledging that knowledge of it is partial, fallible and mediated through human interpretation. Constructivist insights inform the understanding of how individuals interpret and give meaning to that reality, particularly through their experiences and identities. Pragmatism provides the methodological framework through which these perspectives are operationalised, allowing methods to be selected according to the research questions and the forms of knowledge required to address them. Together, these positions support the deliberate diversification of methods used to investigate negative partisanship and its consequences, and underpin the mixed methods 'hourglass' research design described in Section 3.3.

3.3 Methodological Approach

As discussed in Section 3.2, this thesis applies a mixed-methods approach, with the goal of exploring negative partisanship through multiple different ways. Mixed methods bring with them a series of benefits and limitations, which have to be acknowledged.

On one hand, combining quantitative methods such as experiments and surveys with qualitative methods such as interviews can help neutralise individual methodological biases (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, while quantitative surveys

may be able to identify trends in a wider population, they can tell us less about why these trends exist, or about the lived experiences of individuals, which interviews can help with. On the other hand, interviews and other qualitative methods are limited in terms of generalisability, only reflecting the experiences of an individual. However, quantitative methods like survey experiments build on these individual experiences and test whether they are observable in the wider population.

On the other hand, a mix of quantitative and qualitative findings can also elicit confusion through contradictory results (Oranga, 2025), e.g. in the context of this thesis topic, quantitative surveys could show high levels of climate policy support, while interviews may reveal that individuals may have more complex opinions on a policy, due to contextual or personal circumstances. Moreover, sequential designs, such as those employed in this thesis, can significantly extend research timelines due to multiple stages of data collection (Syed & Westberg, 2025). Additionally, some also highlight an epistemological conflict, arguing that quantitative methods emerge from a positivist approach and qualitative methods from a constructivist approach, which can be difficult to combine as they call for different ethical standards and aim to explore different realities (West & Schill, 2022).

While acknowledging these limitations, this thesis builds upon the strengths of mixed methods, focusing on the proper integration of quantitative and qualitative findings (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), to ensure that the results are complementary rather than contradictory, and that one can inform the other. Referencing the example provided earlier, surveys showing high levels of climate support may call of follow up interview, which could reveal reasons why individuals may support or not support such policies. Communicating such results to policymakers would then be able to not only show that people are generally supportive but also offer guidance on why they may not be, and what contextual factors may have to be considered in the implementation process.

In reflection of the integration of the mixed methods described here, the next sections discuss how the research questions and methods are integrated. Specifically, Section 3.3.1 outlines the research questions and how they build upon each other, and Section 3.3.2 outlines how and why the specific mixed methods were chosen.

3.3.1 Connecting the Research Questions

The two overarching research questions address the two central themes of this thesis: exploring the conceptualisation of negative partisanship as an identity, and examining its practical implications in the context of climate policy. The sub-questions build upon these

overarching questions by examining the theoretical dimensions of negative partisanship and its potential consequences for support for climate policy. The relationship between the overarching research questions and their respective sub-questions is illustrated in Figure 3.1. The first and second studies form the explanatory section of this research, while the second and third form the exploratory component. The next section discusses the data of each study in detail.

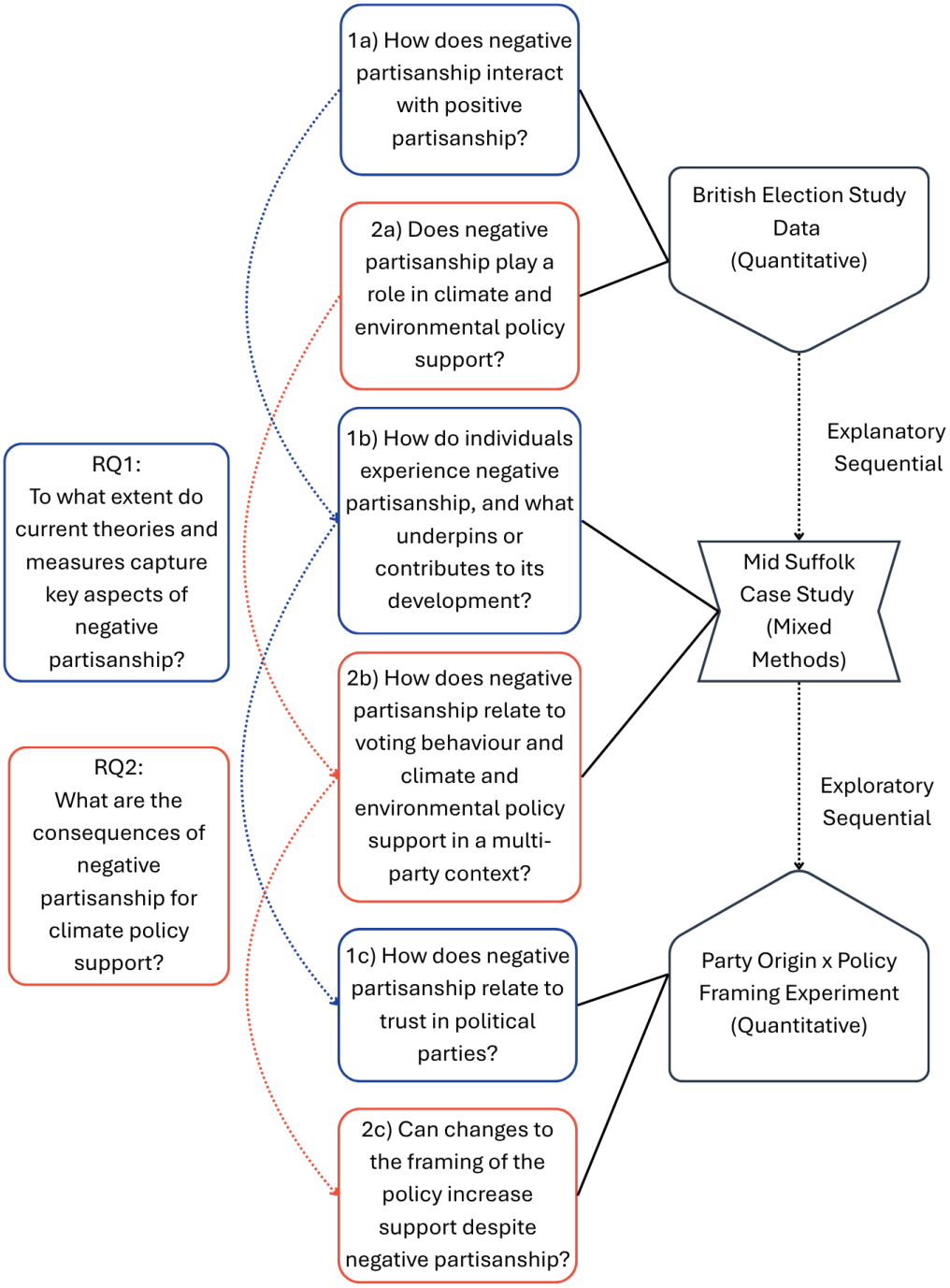

Figure 3.1 This figure explains the rationale behind the research questions and sub-questions. Each sub-question was adjusted based on the findings of the previous study. Research Question 1 and sub-questions are highlighted in blue, while Research Question 2 and sub-questions are highlighted in orange.

3.3.2 Mixed Methods – Explanatory and Exploratory Approaches

This thesis adopts an 'hourglass' mixed-methods approach, combining explanatory and exploratory sequential methods (as visualised in Figure 3.1). The rationale for this approach is grounded in both the nature of the research question and the current state of the negative partisanship literature. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods allows the thesis to identify broader patterns in negative partisanship while also examining the underlying structures, meanings, and individual experiences that may help explain these patterns.

As discussed in Chapter 2, research on negative partisanship has been predominantly quantitative, with comparatively little qualitative research examining how individuals experience and understand negative partisanship. Consequently, existing conceptualisations and theories of negative partisanship have largely been developed and evaluated without considering individuals' lived experiences. This creates a need for an explanatory approach that examines how individuals develop, experience, understand, and express negative partisanship, and identifies aspects of the concept that existing theories and measures may not capture.

Building on this qualitative exploration, an explanatory approach can help test newly identified aspects of the concept in a wider population. Additionally, this approach allows to integrate this new information into the established body of theories and measures on negative partisanship, and examines them across a UK context. Taken together, these complementary aims provide the rationale for adopting an hourglass approach, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are used sequentially to move between breadth and depth (see Figure 3.1).

The mixed methods approach also allows the thesis to examine the implications of negative partisanship at both conceptual and practical levels. At the conceptual level, the addition of qualitative research to the current body of quantitative research can contribute to understanding the nature and development of negative partisanship, including how it relates to existing conceptualisations of partisan identity and negative affect. At the practical level, qualitative research can uncover new links between negative partisanship and its consequences, which can be examined through additional quantitative methods.

Thus, the combination of methods serves complementary purposes. Quantitative methods provide breadth, allowing patterns and relationships to be identified across larger samples, while qualitative methods provide depth, allowing the experiences and meanings underlying these patterns to be explored. The hourglass approach brings these

forms of evidence together to provide a more holistic examination of negative partisanship than would not be possible through either quantitative or qualitative methods alone.

3.4 British Election Study (BES) – Wave 23

3.4.1 Design

To address part of the explanatory research aims of this thesis, Wave 23 of the British Election Study (BES), collected by YouGov between 6th May and 26th May 2022 (Fieldhouse et al., 2022) was utilised. This dataset and wave were selected because they represented the most recent available dataset at the time of analysis, which contained suitable measures of positive partisanship, a proxy measure for negative partisanship, affective evaluations, and climate and environmental policy preferences.

This study explores the following two research sub-questions:

1a) How does negative partisanship interact with positive partisanship?
2a) Does negative partisanship play a role in climate and environmental policy support?

As specific negative partisanship items or scales are still not commonly included in survey datasets, negative affect was used as a proxy measure. While acknowledging the limitations of this approach, as discussed in section 2.3.3, this was the best option available at the time. Based on this, the specific hypotheses tested were:

H1: Positive partisanship and negative affect of individuals in Great Britain will play a role in their climate and pro-environmental policy preferences. More specifically:

- H1.1: Negative affect towards more left-leaning parties (such as the Greens and Labour) and positive partisanship towards more right-leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) will have a negative association with individuals' climate and pro-environmental policy preferences.
- H1.2: Negative affect towards more right-leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) and positive partisanship towards more left-leaning parties (such as the Greens or Labour) will have a positive association with individuals' climate and pro-environmental policy preferences.

Additionally, the following questions were also explored:

- Does the relationship between negative affect and individual climate and environmental preferences differ among different partisans?
- How are individuals' policy preferences potentially associated with their affect towards specific politicians, in this case, party leaders?

No additional ethics approval was sought for working with the BES data. The research is based exclusively on secondary analysis of the dataset, which is anonymised and publicly available. No new data was collected. The study was conducted in accordance with the British Election Study's terms of use and applicable data protection requirements.

Hypotheses were registered via the Open Science Framework (OSF) and can be accessed here: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/CJNV6

This study enabled an initial assessment of whether negative partisanship can exist independently of positive partisanship and whether it is associated with climate policy preferences, thereby providing a foundation for the more in-depth analyses undertaken in this thesis, as described in sections 3.5 and 3.6.

3.4.2 Participants

Table 3.1 includes further information about the participants. The data provided in this table are unweighted and include all participants from the data set.

Table 3.1 Demographics of all BES Participants

	Percentage of 30,949		Percentage of 30,949
Gender		**University Level Education**	
Male	44%	Yes	46%
Female	56%	No	54%
Age		**Personal Income**	
18-25	8%	Low income (<£25k)	44%
26-35	8%	Middle income (£25k–49,999)	24%
36-45	14%	High income (£50k+)	7%
46-55	17%	Not disclosed	25%
56-65	21%		
66+	32%		

3.4.3 Materials

3.4.3.1 Climate and Environmental Policy Preferences

To investigate the dependent variable, climate and environmental policy preferences, data derived from two survey questions was used, measuring different forms of climate and environmental policy preferences.

The first question measured respondents' priority of environmental protection relative to that of economic growth on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 indicating full prioritisation of the economy and 10 of the environment. The exact wording of the question was 'Some believe that protecting the environment should have priority even if that reduces economic growth. Others believe that economic growth should have priority even if that hinders protecting the environment. What is your opinion?'. The scale was treated as categorical, with 'Don't know' responses treated as missing.

The second question used was an open-ended 'Most Important Issue' (MII) question, phrased as 'As far as you're concerned, what is the SINGLE MOST important issue facing the country at the present time?'. The open-ended responses to this question were categorised by the survey makers using a thematic analysis, and I used their 'environment' category, which includes responses referring to environment, climate change, global warming or similar (more information on the coding process can be found in the British Election Study Codebook). The dependent variable resulting from this question was dummy coded into 1= 'environment' related responses and 0 ='not environment' related responses. MII questions do have some shortcomings, as their face validity has long been debated in the literature (Bartle & Laycock, 2012; Jennings & Wlezien, 2011). While some conclude that it is a sufficient measure to establish what is important to the typical voter at an aggregate level (Bartle & Laycock, 2012), others argue that it is a better indicator of issue salience or gives an indication of issues that get a lot of public attention (Jennings & Wlezien, 2011). It is also important to note that the data set (BES) does not clearly differentiate between environment and climate change, as some of the responses to this question, which clearly referred to 'climate change', were grouped with environment-related responses. That also brings up the question of to what degree individuals differentiate between 'climate change' and 'environment' or if they potentially also occasionally use them interchangeably, as they are of course deeply connected.

3.4.3.2 Negative Affect – Negative Partisanship Proxy

To conceptualise negative affect, a question asking, 'How much do you like, or dislike, the following parties?' was used, on which participants could give an indication from 0 (strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like). This variable was dummy coded into 'negative affect' (1), including responses from 0 to 3, and 'no negative affect' (0), including responses from 4 to 10 and those indicating they 'don't know'.

3.4.3.3 Positive Partisanship

Positive partisanship was elicited in the following survey question: 'Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?'. Participants then chose one party from the list displayed. This variable was coded into a categorical variable with the following groups: 'Conservative', 'Labour', 'Liberal Democrat', 'Green', 'Brexit Party', 'Other', 'Non-Partisan' and 'Don't know'. The 'Non-Partisan' group will be used as the reference group in the regression analyses.

3.4.3.4 Control Variables

The following variables were used as controls: Age, Gender (the dataset offers the answer options male or female), Education (coded as university versus not university educated), Personal Income, Attention to Politics, and a scale assessing left-right values (Evans et al., 1996).

3.4.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Data from the British Election Study was analysed via the statistical software R, using two different regression analyses, adjusted to the two different types of dependent variables. Firstly, an ordinal logistic regression was performed to investigate the relationship between negative affect and respondents' answers to the economic growth versus environmental protection question, once with and once without the control variables. Secondly, a binary logistic regression was performed to investigate negative affects' relationship with respondents' answers to the MII question, once with, and once without the control variables. All analyses used a survey weight provided in the data set that weights the data to national population targets. As the weight was constructed at a regional level, it also accounts for the oversampling of Scottish and Welsh voters.

3.5 A Case Study of Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley

3.5.1 Design

The second empirical study of this thesis applies mixed methods. Section 3.4 laid out how the first study explored the existence of a relationship between negative partisanship and environmental policy preferences across different (non-)partisan groups. This study builds upon this to further understanding of why these relationships may exist, and how negative partisanship is actually experienced (i.e. is it more than just negative affect).

As discussed in Chapter 2, existing research on negative partisanship heavily relies on quantitative research. However, qualitative research allows participants to express their lived experience in more depth and on their own terms, going beyond the categories

imposed by researchers (Ratcliffe et al., 2024). To incorporate a qualitative component into this research, a case study was deemed most appropriate to focus on the context and lived experiences of negative partisanship. A case study allowed the researcher and study participants to explore an abstract concept like identity in a real-life context (geographical location).

To focus on lived experiences and to allow individuals to express their views freely, in addition to those considered by the researcher, semi-structured interviews were chosen over other methods. This involved both inductive and deductive thematic coding. Surveys were used as a recruitment method for interviews and to provide a better understanding of the context and a wider sense of people's opinions in the area.

Based on this, the second empirical study focused on the following research questions:

1b) How do individuals experience negative partisanship, and what underpins or contributes to its development?

2b) How does negative partisanship relate to voting behaviour and climate and environmental policy support in a multi-party context?

Ethics make up an integral part of research, and approval was sought where data was collected and participants were involved. Specifically, research in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley was approved by the SCI S-REC (Faculty of Science Research Ethics Subcommittee) of the University of East Anglia, with application ID ETH2425-0058, before starting the research.

3.5.1.1 Introducing the Case Study Area

Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley were chosen as the location for this research, due to the political context in the area. Located in the East of England, the area has historically been held by the Conservative Party in both national and local elections. However, during the last election in 2024, and after 14 years of a Conservative government in the UK, people grew increasingly dissatisfied with the party. A map of the area can be seen in Figure 3.3.

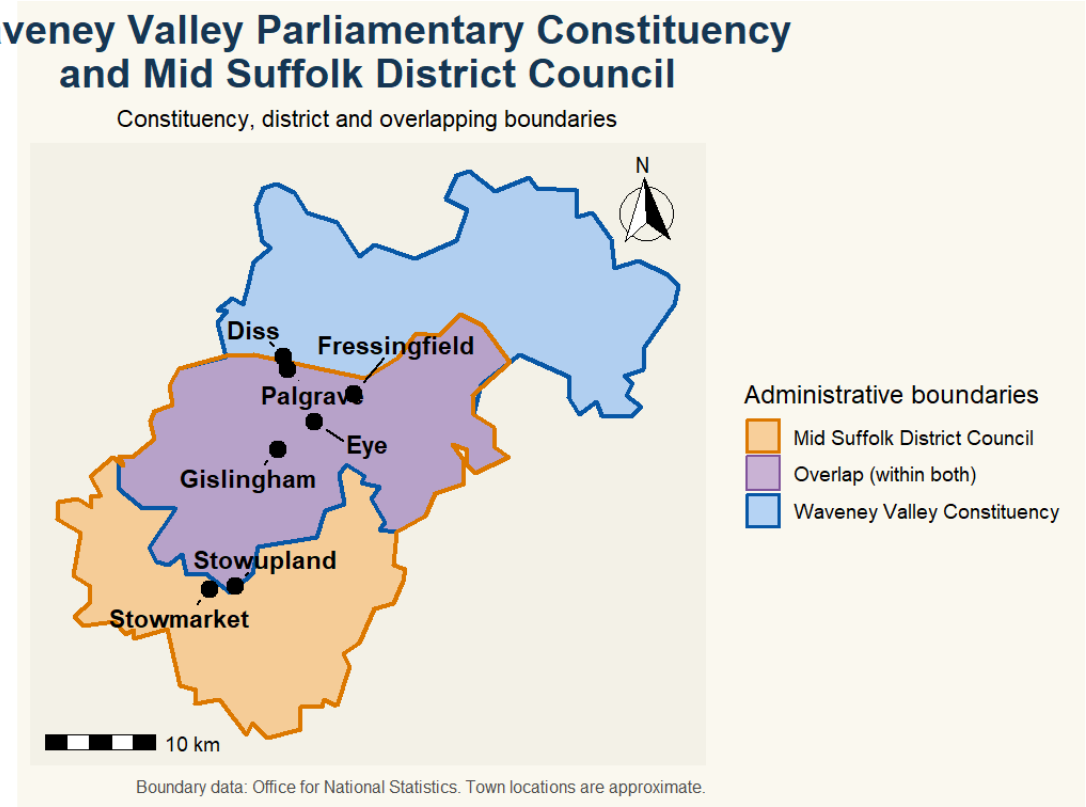

Figure 3.3 Map depicting Mid Suffolk District Council (bottom, orange) and the Waveney Valley Constituency (top, blue), including data collection locations.

Given the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system, which has traditionally favoured two-party dominance, and the areas' longstanding association with the Conservative Party, Labour was not considered likely to win. This created an opportunity for a potential third party to attract support. To the surprise of some, this space was filled by the Green Party, who are now in charge of the local Mid Suffolk District Council (as of 2023) and the new Waveney Valley Constituency (as of 2024), which spans across South Norfolk and North Suffolk. These changes in voting behaviour and rejection of a previous strong Conservative Party identity make this area particularly interesting for the exploration of NP.

It is also a particularly interesting area for climate and environmental policy attitudes. The area is largely made up of farmland, and now plays a key role in the energy transition, with multiple renewable energy projects being in development, including solar farms and pylons, to distribute energy to other parts of the country. The presence of these developments offers a great opportunity to not only discuss general attitudes towards climate and environment, but to discuss these concrete examples affecting participants, and draw the connection to the parties putting them forward, allowing to investigate a connection between negative partisanship and climate and environmental policy support.

It is important to mention that the areas where the research was conducted had their latest election (Spring 2025) postponed, due to the government's aim to centralise local politics.

3.5.2 Participants

An overview of survey and interview participants can be found in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 respectively.

Table 3.2 Descriptive statistics of survey participants. Total sample size: 119

	Percentage (n)		Percentage (n)
Gender		**Yearly Household Income**	
Male	55% (65)	Under £10,400	3% (4)
Female	39% (46)	£10,400 - £25,999	19% (23)
Non-Binary	<1% (1)	£26,000 - £41,999	16% (19)
Not disclosed	6% (7)	£42,000 - £74,999	22% (26)
Age		£75,000 or more	20% (24)
18-25	3% (4)	Not disclosed	19% (23)
26-35	6% (7)	**Education**	
36-45	6% (7)	A-Level or equivalent	12% (14)
46-55	14% (17)	GCSEs or equivalent	14% (17)
56-65	20% (24)	No academic or professional qualification	4% (5)
66 and over	44% (52)	Professional qualification	24% (28)
Not disclosed	7% (8)	Trade school	3% (4)
		University degree	26% (31)
		Postgraduate degree	10% (12)
		Not disclosed	7% (8)

Table 3.3 Descriptive statistics of interview participants. Total sample size: 10

	Frequency		Frequency
Gender		**Yearly Household Income**	
Male	8	£10,400 - £25,999	1
Female	2	£42,000 - £74,999	4
Age		£75,000 or more	5
26-35	2	**Education**	
36-45	1	A-Level or equivalent	1
56-65	1	GCSEs or equivalent	1
66 and over	6	Professional qualification	3
		University degree	3
		Postgraduate degree	2

3.5.3 Materials

Data collection began with a pilot study conducted in the village of Palgrave (see Figure 3.3) between October and November 2024. Palgrave was selected because of its accessibility via train and suitability for testing the survey instrument and recruitment procedures before starting the main study. Recruitment combined door-to-door visits, during which residents were provided with a brief explanation of the study and invited to complete either a paper survey or an online version accessed via a QR code, with flyers delivered through letterboxes when residents were unavailable. Paper surveys were picked up by the researcher on an agreed-upon date. An example of the flyer can be found in Appendix 2. The pilot resulted in 47 completed surveys and four follow-up interviews. More details on the interview questions will follow at the end of this section. As this study explored research questions and had an inductive element, no hypotheses were pre-registered.

Individuals were eligible to take part if they were of voting age and resided within Mid Suffolk and/or Waveney Valley. Recruitment was conducted using a combination of door-to-door visits and flyers distributed to households. This approach was chosen to maximise recruitment within the target geographical area while accommodating the area's predominantly rural and ageing population, for whom relying solely on online recruitment may have reduced participation and may have excluded some groups of people. Offering both paper-based and online survey options also helped minimise this exclusion. Additionally, survey responses served as the recruitment pool for the follow-up semi-structured interviews. At the end of the survey, respondents were invited to provide their contact details if they wished to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. Participants could also choose to leave their contact details separately if they wished to receive updates about the progress and findings of the research.

3.5.3.1 Pilot

The pilot was used to assess the clarity of survey questions, the feasibility of the recruitment strategy, and the effectiveness of recruiting interview participants. Based on the pilot findings, some adjustments were made to the survey questions. Specifically, the original party ranking question was replaced with individual like-dislike scales for each political party and a question asking about the individuals' least liked party. While the ranking question is commonly used in the context of negative partisanship, the ranking format did not adequately capture the views of respondents who expressed negative evaluations of all parties. Several participants who chose the paper survey option attempted to assign all parties the lowest possible ranking. Individual like-dislike scales

allowed respondents to express independent evaluations of each party and provided greater nuance in measuring partisan attitudes. A full version of the final survey can be found in Appendix 1.

The pilot also demonstrated that door-to-door recruitment had a higher response rate than flyers; however, it was also considerably more time-intensive than anticipated. Moreover, Suffolk County Council, alongside other councils, was actively advocating for the creation of 'no cold calling' zones. This meant that many areas could not be approached using the door-to-door method. Consequently, the main phase of data collection relied more heavily on flyer distribution.

3.5.3.2 Data Collection

The main phase of data collection took place between January and May 2025 across Stowupland, Eye, Gislingham, Fressingfield, Diss, and Stowmarket (see Figure 3.3). These locations were selected to provide coverage across Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley while remaining accessible for repeated fieldwork. Data collected during the Palgrave pilot were retained within the final dataset.

Across the study, 324 households were approached through door-to-door recruitment, while 1,881 flyers directing residents to the online survey were distributed. This resulted in 119 completed surveys (combining paper and online responses), corresponding to response rates of 17.28% for households approached directly and 3.35% for flyer distribution. A total of 10 semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone or Microsoft Teams between November 2024 and May 2025.

3.5.3.1 Survey Content

Participants received information sheets prior to participating, and their consent was obtained. Participants also received a debrief when opting in to the survey or after the interviews. The respective forms are attached to the survey in Appendix 1.

Data from the questionnaires was treated anonymously. Interview data was pseudonymised, i.e. participants were given a pseudonym made up of letters and a number.

The survey covered different topics around views on local and national elections, parties and climate and environment. Specifically, participants were asked about:

- how much attention they generally pay to politics,

- their satisfaction with the change in local government ('How satisfied or dissatisfied were you about the switch in leadership in your **local council** (Mid Suffolk District Council) from no majority to Green?', 5-point Likert scale from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'),
- how much they liked or disliked the major political parties (5-point Likert scale per party),
- their positive partisanship ('Which party, if any, do you identify with?'),
- what should be the UK government's highest priority (MII question),
- where they felt the current political parties adequately represented the interests of the British public (not at all, not very much, to some degree, mostly, completely),
- how concerned or unconcerned they are about the current state of the environment,
- how much they considered the environment or climate change in their voting decisions (separate questions on environment and climate)
- how much they worry about climate change,
- attitudes towards Net Zero,
- and who they have voted for in the past two election rounds.

The full survey can be found in Appendix 2. Where possible, established survey items were used to improve the validity and comparability of the measures.

A central component of the survey was the negative partisanship scale. The negative partisanship scale utilised in this study was developed by adjusting and combining measures from previously published research on negative partisanship, social identity, and environmental attitudes. The goal was to ensure the survey covered all relevant identity dimensions, based on SIA as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.5.3, to compare survey and interview responses across those dimensions and assess whether lived experiences of negative partisanship aligned with the identity dimensions.

This includes combining the different negative partisanship scales discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.3, developed and tested by (Areal, 2024; Bach et al., 2023; Bankert, 2021a; Mayer & Russo, 2023). The dimensions identified across the different survey measures, as shown in the respective articles, were Emotional significance, Worldview, Sense of Self, Group Categorisation, Self-definition, and Identity Salience. With that, they map to the key characteristics of identity following SIA and ODT, as seen in Table 3.4. To avoid creating a lengthy scale, items that were the same or similar across the scales were summarised into a single item. Items that captured a distinct dimension, a distinct aspect of a dimension such as a specific emotion, or were specifically validated in previous research (such as

the worldview, sense of self, and self-definition items) were retained. As the reference scales were developed in a US or European context (see Table 2.1), this combined scale also allowed exploration of the nature of negative partisanship in a UK context. This process concluded in the scale displayed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Negative Partisanship Scale used in case study surveys. Participants' responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from totally agree to totally disagree.

Original Source	Dimension	Survey Item
(Bankert, 2021a)	Emotional significance	When this party does well in opinion polls, my day is ruined
(Bankert, 2021a)	Emotional significance	I get angry when people praise this party
(Bankert, 2021a)	Emotional significance	I am relieved when this party loses an election
(Bankert, 2021a)	Emotional significance	When people criticize this party, it makes me feel good
(S. J. Mayer & Russo, 2023)	Worldview	Because of their worldviews, I could never vote for this party
(S. J. Mayer & Russo, 2023)	Sense of Self	It is important to me that I am not one of those that vote for this party
(Bankert, 2021a)	Group Categorisation	When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we'
(Bankert, 2021a)	Group Categorisation	I have nothing in common with people voting for this party
(Areal, 2022)	Self-definition	I would describe myself as anti-[this party]
(Areal, 2022)	Identity Salience	It is important for me to be anti-[this party]

A few additional questions were designed. These were based on previously developed racism and stereotyping scales.

The first aimed at picking up on how much blame individuals may place on the party they held negative partisanship towards, for issues in the political realm. The question was designed based on an item from the Symbolic Racism Scale (Henry & Sears, 2002) and evolved into the following question: 'How much of the political tension that exists in the United Kingdom today do you think your least liked party is responsible for creating?', with the following answer options: Not much at all, Some, Most, All of it, I don't think there is any political tension, I don't know, Prefer not to say.

A second question was designed to explore how relevant negative partisanship may be in a social context, i.e. if it may be a relevant social identity outside of a political context. This question was based on a question designed to pick up on religious prejudice (Stewart et al., 2018). The question evolved into the following in the current survey: 'People can feel differently about someone close to them marrying people from different political backgrounds. In a hypothetical situation, suppose someone close to you (such as a family member, close friend, or a child) wanted to marry a supporter of the political parties listed here. Would you approve of this choice, disapprove of it, or would it not make any difference at all?'. Respondents were presented with different parties and could respond with: Approve, Disapprove, No difference, Don't know or Prefer not to say.

This was followed up with a question on how much individuals felt their least-liked party may affect them in their life ('Thinking about your day-to-day life. Are there situations, besides voting, where the way you feel about your least liked party affects you?). Respondents could agree or disagree and then point towards specific situations where they felt affected through an open text box.

In addition to generating data, the survey also served as the recruitment mechanism for the qualitative interviews of the study. At the end of the survey, respondents were invited to provide their contact details if they wished to participate in a follow-up interview.

3.5.3.2 Interview Content

The interviews were designed to explore the survey findings in greater depth through a semi-structured format. An interview guide was developed around several broad themes, including participants' voting behaviour, experiences of negative partisanship, political identities, and perceptions of local renewable energy developments. Participants were invited to discuss how their political attitudes had developed over time, what factors influenced their voting decisions, whether they identified themselves as being opposed to a particular political party, and how climate change and environmental issues influenced their political views. Interviews also explored participants' views of the renewable energy developments within Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley and whether they distinguished between environmental and climate-related issues.

Although each interview followed the same general structure, questions were adapted where appropriate to reflect participants' survey responses and to allow further exploration of issues they had raised. This flexibility enabled interviews to investigate individual experiences in greater depth while maintaining consistency across participants. An example of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix 3.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach and lasted at least 30 minutes. This format was particularly appropriate given the explanatory and exploratory aims of this thesis, allowing the qualitative data to contextualise and expand upon the survey findings. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were invited to discuss any additional issues they felt had not been covered by either the survey or the interview. A total of 10 interviews were conducted.

3.5.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The 119 survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide an overview of opinions in the area. Open-ended survey responses were analysed using thematic analysis via NVivo 14, including both inductive and deductive coding. Deductive codes were based on the hypotheses and negative partisanship dimensions from Table 3.4.

The thematic analysis followed the 6-phase framework developed by Braun & Clarke (2006): 1) familiarising yourself with the data, 2) generating the initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing the themes, 5) defining and naming the themes, and 6) producing the report.

All ten interviews were coded by the same researcher. To test for intercoder reliability, three interviews were coded by a second researcher, using the coding scheme developed by the first researcher. The reliability scores were calculated via NVivo. An overall Kappa value of .78 was determined, with a percentage of agreement of 99.65. These scores indicate substantial agreement between coders, indicating the coding scheme was reliable. Differences in coding were discussed and reconciled, and some new codes were added to the coding framework. These included: Hope, trade-offs, and changes with the party. These can be seen in Appendix 5.

3.6 Survey Experiment

3.6.1 Design

The second half of this thesis followed an exploratory research design. Based on this, the third empirical study was a survey experiment, informed by results from the interviews of the second empirical study. Specifically, the study discussed in section 3.5 uncovered what consequences negative partisanship may have for climate and environmental policies, and how individuals experience negative partisanship, also in relation to other factors (see Chapter 5 for the results). These findings informed the design and the research sub-questions explored in this study.

A survey experiment was deemed most suitable to test if the findings from the qualitative interviews were generalisable to a wider population. To ensure the recruitment of a representative UK sample concerning geographical location, age and gender, participants were recruited via Prolific, which is an established recruitment platform for scientific research (Palan & Schitter, 2018). The survey was designed and conducted using Gorilla Experiment Builder.

The following research questions and hypotheses were explored:

1c) How does negative partisanship relate to trust in political parties?

2c) Can changes to the framing of the policy increase support despite negative partisanship (towards the party proposing the policy)?

Specifically, the choice to examine economic and climate-focused frames was informed by previous research (as discussed in Section 2.4.1), which suggests that both frames can be particularly effective across different audience groups (Bell et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025). Building on these findings, this study examines whether the effects of these different frames vary depending on levels of negative partisanship and messenger identity.

Based on this rationale, the following hypotheses were formulated to address the research question:

(1) Negative partisanship (NP) influences climate policy support. Specifically, negative partisanship towards the party associated with a climate policy will have a negative effect on climate policy support.

(2) People are more likely to support climate policies when the message is framed around economic benefits, compared to climate benefits.

(3) An Economic framing can moderate the effects of negative partisanship on climate policy support. Specifically, the economic framing will lessen the negative effect of negative partisanship on climate policy support.

Research via Prolific was approved by the SCI S-REC (Faculty of Science Research Ethics Subcommittee) of the University of East Anglia, with application ID ETH2526-0722, before starting the research.

Participants received information sheets prior to participating, and their consent was obtained. Participants also received a debrief, which was presented to them after the study. The respective forms are attached to the surveys in Appendix 4.

The data was treated anonymously.

Hypotheses were registered via the Open Science Framework (OSF), which can be found here: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/RJ2TQ

3.6.2 Participants

An initial 120 participants were recruited for the pilot study, which ran via Prolific in December 2025. The final study was conducted in February 2026, when the remaining 680 participants were recruited. Participants who met the pre-selection criteria (UK residents 18 and older, with a representative sample of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) received an invitation to the study via the platform, with the following short description: 'In this study we will ask you about your opinions on some of the UK Political Parties (across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland), some policies you will be presented with, and some more general questions around current issues (such as the economy, climate, and environment).' Interested participants could then click on the survey link, where they received more detailed information in the participant information sheet. Prolific ensured that respondents were kept fully anonymous. No personal information was accessible to the researcher. The only way to 'identify' a specific respondent was via participants' unique Prolific ID, with only Prolific being able to link the ID number to identifiable information. Participants were paid £2.25 for a 15-minute survey, which estimates an hourly rate of £9 in line with Prolific payment guidelines.

A total of 800 participants were recruited via quota sampling based on UK consensus data from Mid-2024. This number was chosen as it was the largest sample size affordable to recruit within the budget. This allowed for 200 participants to be allocated to each of the four groups. Based on survey data collected in the case study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, around 2.5% of the population may express negative partisanship towards the Green Party, and 33.6% may express negative partisanship towards Reform UK.

To recruit a representative sample, we set quotas across age, sex, and region or residence based on census data from Mid 2024 (including those 18 and above). Table 3.5 provides details of the demographics of the recruited participants.

Table 3.5 Demographics of Participants in the Survey Study conducted via Prolific.

Education	**Percentage (Frequency)**	**Ethnicity**	**Percentage (Frequency)**	**Area of Residence**	**Percentage of Sample**
A Levels or equivalent	22% (15)	White British	88% (594)	East Midlands, England	7%
GCSEs or equivalent	12% (83)	Any other white background	2% (12)	East of England	10%
No formal qualifications	1% (8)	Indian	2% (15)	London, England	12%
Nursing qualification (e.g. SEN, SRN, SCM, RGN)	<1% (5)	Black African	1% (9)	North East, England	4%
Other technical professional or higher qualification	5% (37)	White and Asian	1% (7)	North West, England	11%
Recognised apprenticeship completed	4% (26)	Black Caribbean	1% (7)	Northern Ireland	3%
Teaching qualification (not degree)	1% (7)	White and Black Caribbean	1% (6)	Scotland	8%
University or CNAA first degree (e.g. BA, B.Sc, B.Ed)	38% (255)	Any other background	5% (30)	South East, England	12%
University or NAA higher degree (e.g. M.Sc, Ph.D)	15% (102)	Don't know	<1% (1)	South West, England	9%
Prefer not to say	<1% (3)	Prefer not to say	<1% (3)	Wales	5%
				West Midlands, England	8%
				Yorkshire and the Humber, England	9%
Gender	**Percentage**	**Income per year**	**Percentage**	**Age**	
Male	49%	Under $10,400	4%	Min	18
Female	51%	£10,400 to £25,999	19%	1st Quartile	33
		£26,000 to £41,999	24%	Median	48
		£42,000 to £74,999	29%	Mean	46
		£75,000 or more	20%	3rd Quartile	59
		Don’t know	<1%	Max	83
		Prefer not to say	4%		

3.6.3 Materials

The survey contained a series of questions focused on their political attitudes and attitudes towards climate change and renewable energy. The most central ones to the analysis are discussed as follows. A full copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 4.

3.6.3.1 Party Affect and Trust

To assess affect towards the political parties, individuals were asked how much they liked or disliked each political party on a 5-point Likert Scale, reaching from strongly like to strongly dislike. To assess trust, individuals were asked how much they trusted each of the political parties on a 5-point Likert Scale from strongly trust to not trust at all.

Additionally, another question was included in the survey to assess how relevant negative affect or negative partisanship may be in a social context. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they would approve a loved one marrying different party supporters. Response options were the following: approve, disapprove, no difference, don't know.

3.6.3.1 Positive Partisanship

To capture individuals' identification with a political party, or positive partisanship, respondents were asked which party, if any, of the political parties they identified with. They were presented with a list of parties or could indicate that they identified with no political party at all.

3.6.3.2 Negative Partisanship

Participants were asked to respond to the same negative partisanship scale items as presented in Table 3.4.

3.6.3.3 Manipulation: Policy Origin x Policy Framing

After assessing respondents' attitudes and evaluations of the political parties, participants were presented with one randomly assigned party description of a fictional party (Party A or Party B), as seen in Figure 3.4. The description of Party A was loosely based on the Green Party of England and Wales, while Party B was loosely based on Reform UK.

Name: **Party A**

'As Party A, our core beliefs revolve around environmental and social justice. We aim to build a sustainable economy, which prioritises well-being, equality, and environmental health. We believe capitalism has failed and we want to bring back higher taxes for the extremely wealthy, while lowering every-day bills for the average person. We take a positive stance towards immigration and see its values. We believe creating legal routes for people to come to the UK will help regulate immigration and make it safer for everyone.'

Name: **Party B**

'As Party B, we believe in 'common sense'. We believe the other parties have broken promises for years, and only we can fix the crises the UK is facing. Our number one issue is immigration. We believe immigrants are exploiting UK citizens and that they are the reason for many hardships. Our goal is to strongly limit the number of immigrants coming in, while also reducing the number of immigrants already in the country. We want to stand up for British culture, identity, and values. We believe only we can reduce energy prices, taxes, and bring back law and order.'

Figure 3.4 Description of Party A (based on the Green Party of England and Wales) and Party B (based on Reform UK) participants read as part of the study manipulation.

The similarities to real parties were drawn deliberately to elicit existing negative partisanship towards the Green Party or Reform UK. After reading the party description, respondents were asked a few questions about their attitudes towards the party, including whether they would support the party, trust the party, never vote for this party, or be anti-Party B. For the analysis, the item 'I would describe myself as anti-[this party]' was used as the negative partisanship measure. Those who responded with somewhat or totally agree to the 'anti'[this party] item were classed as negative partisans.

Participants were then presented with one of two policy framing conditions focused on renewable energy developments. These were presented as proposed by the party they just read about. Policy framing (1) had an economic focus, while framing (2) had a standard climate focus, as seen in Figure 3.5. This policy condition made up the other independent variable in the analyses.

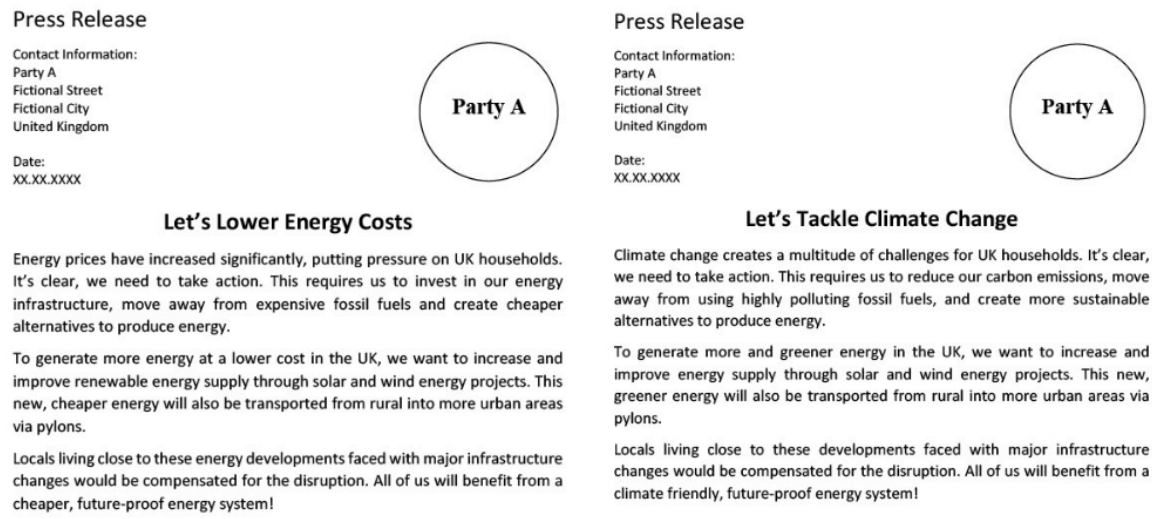

Figure 3.5 Policy framings centred either around lowering energy costs (economic) or tackling climate change (environmental), which participants read as part of the manipulation.

To avoid participants connecting the policy to existing policies and parties, the policy description was left somewhat vague to minimise the chance of connecting the policy to a different real-world party. Participants were not aware of which condition they were placed in. Block randomisation was used using the Gorilla Experiment Builder to randomly assign participants into four equally sized, predetermined conditions.

Following the experimental manipulation, respondents were presented with two manipulation-check questions designed to assess whether they had correctly understood the party and policy descriptions. The manipulation checks were refined following the pilot study, as participants indicated some difficulty distinguishing between the policy framings.

The first manipulation check assessed whether respondents had correctly identified the central position of the fictional political party. Participants were asked: Which of the short descriptions below most closely describes the party you read about earlier? They were then presented with four different descriptions: the first centred around immigration as the central issue in the UK (right option for Party B), the second focused on inequalities and social and environmental well-being (right option for Party A), the third on AI, and the fourth on reinstating military service.

The second manipulation check assessed whether respondents had correctly identified the central aim of the policy proposed by the fictional party. Participants were asked: Which of the following was the central aim of the policy proposed by the fictional party? In the pilot, participants were presented with the following four options: lower energy prices

(right option for the economic framing condition), respond to the risks of climate change (right answer for the environmental framing condition), increase the use of AI, and reduce biodiversity loss. In the final study, these answer options were adjusted to: lower energy prices through wind and solar, tackle climate change through wind and solar, increase the use of AI in government, reinstate mandatory military service at 18.

3.6.3.4 Fictional Policy Support – Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, support for the fictional policy, was captured with a 5-point Likert scale through the following question: To what degree would you support or oppose the proposed policy? Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert Scale from fully support to fully oppose.

3.6.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected via Prolific were analysed using R. An ordinal logistic regression was performed to investigate the relationship between negative partisanship, policy framing, and climate policy support. Climate change beliefs and environmental concern were included as control variables. To control for these, two previously administered questions were retrieved from participants' existing Prolific data and incorporated into the study, avoiding the need to ask participants these questions again and thereby minimising survey length. These included the questions: Do you believe in climate change? (yes, no, don't know) and generally speaking, how concerned are you about environmental issues? (5-point Likert scale, not at all concerned to very concerned).

To explore whether and how trust and negative partisanship relate, trust was added to the ordinal logistic regression model to see if negative partisanship remained significant. The results and additional analyses are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

3.7 Researcher Positionality and Reflections

This section reflects on how my academic background, previous experiences, research interests and positionality as a researcher have shaped the development and conduct of this research. In particular, the section considers how these factors may have influenced the formulation of the research questions, the theoretical perspectives adopted, the interpretation of findings, and participation in the qualitative fieldwork. While the limitations of the empirical studies are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, some limitations connected to my positionality as a researcher are raised here, as they form part of the reflexive methodological account of the fieldwork.

Because this thesis aims to apply rigorous and transparent approaches to the generation and interpretation of its findings, it is important to acknowledge that research is not conducted independently of the researcher. Researchers bring their own experiences, theoretical orientations and assumptions to the research process, which can influence the questions they ask, the concepts they consider important, the methods they select and the ways in which evidence is interpreted. Reflexivity provides an opportunity to make these influences explicit and to consider how they may have shaped the knowledge produced through this research.

My background in Environmental Psychology has strongly influenced the theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches adopted in this thesis. During my master's research, I applied SIA, and my continued interest in how social identities shape perceptions, interpretations of the world, and decision-making has informed the development of this project. My subsequent engagement with political science and political psychology literature on partisanship and identity further led me to question existing conceptualisations and measurements of negative partisanship, particularly the extent to which current measures reflect identity dimensions and whether existing conceptualisations of negative partisanship reflect individuals' lived experiences. These theoretical interests ultimately motivated the exploration of negative partisanship undertaken in this thesis, both conceptually and empirically.

The hourglass structure of the thesis was also designed to balance detailed, context-specific analysis with examination of whether findings extend beyond the immediate research contexts. While the primary focus of this thesis is negative partisanship within the UK context, my engagement with international literature on political identity and partisanship shaped my interest in examining the broader applicability of negative partisanship. Negative partisanship has been documented across North America and Europe, with related patterns observed in other political contexts (Areal, 2022, 2024a; Bankert, 2024) . However, my expectation that negative partisanship represents a broadly applicable phenomenon may itself have influenced the theoretical framing of the research and the interpretation of findings. This possibility has therefore been considered throughout the thesis through engagement with alternative explanations and critical reflection on the extent to which concepts developed in different political contexts can be applied to the UK.

My positionality may also have influenced participation in the fieldwork conducted in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley. In particular, participants' perceptions of me as a researcher affiliated with the School of Environmental Sciences may have shaped their willingness to

participate and the ways in which they engaged with the research. On several occasions, participants indicated that they assumed I held particular views on climate change because of my affiliation with the School of Environmental Sciences. Some suggested that I had a predetermined agenda, while others assumed that I was affiliated with the Green Party, which I explained was not the case. These perceptions occasionally appeared to create barriers to engaging individuals who were sceptical of climate change, opposed to climate action, or opposed to the solar and pylon developments in their area.

My identity as an immigrant may also have shaped participation. Although interactions with participants were generally positive, immigration was frequently raised by potential participants, and some explicitly expressed negative views about immigration in the UK. On some occasions, participants reassured me that they considered me to be "one of the good ones". While such comments were generally made in the context of otherwise positive interactions, they nevertheless highlighted the extent to which my name and accent marked me as an outsider within the research context. It is possible that these characteristics discouraged some individuals with particularly strong anti-immigration views from participating, although, again, the extent of any such effect cannot be established from the available data.

Moreover, these factors may not only have influenced who participated, but also how participants may have responded. Some may have assumed I wanted to hear specific things, or may have felt uncomfortable expressing certain views, specifically against immigration or against climate action. Therefore, social desirability bias needs to be considered in this context as well.

There are also broader reasons to consider whether certain individuals in the area may have been less comfortable participating, especially as the area was (formerly) Conservative. Previous research suggests that individuals with right-of-centre political views may be less likely to participate in deliberative discussions about climate change. For example, Ainscough et al. (2025) found that individuals with right-of-centre political views were less likely to participate in climate assemblies. If similar patterns of participation applied in the context of this research, participants' perceptions of my institutional affiliation may have compounded existing differences in willingness to participate. It is therefore possible that individuals who were particularly sceptical of climate change or opposed to climate action were underrepresented in the study. However, this cannot be established directly from the data and should therefore be understood as a potential source of selection bias rather than a demonstrated effect.

Taken together, these aspects of my positionality may have influenced both recruitment and the range of perspectives represented within the sample. The composition of participants may therefore have differed had the research been conducted by a researcher who was perceived differently in relation to climate change, environmental policy or immigration.

3.8 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined why a pragmatic worldview, in combination with Constructivism, was adopted in this thesis, and how the mixed methods approach, featuring elements of both explanatory and explorative elements, responds to the research objectives. The next chapters lay out the three empirical studies that were conducted; Chapter 4 discusses the results of the British Election Study analysis, Chapter 5 the case study from Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, and Chapter 6 the survey experiment using Prolific data.

Chapter 4: Beyond Positive Partisanship: Understanding the Roles of Negative Identity and Affect in Individual Climate and Environmental Policy Preferences

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines whether political identities beyond positive partisanship are associated with climate and environmental policy preferences. In particular, it investigates whether negative partisanship provides additional explanatory power for understanding individual preferences for environmental protection.

As discussed in Chapter 2, negative partisanship remains difficult to investigate empirically because of disagreement over its conceptualisation and the limited availability of appropriate measures in existing datasets. Drawing on SIA and ODT, this thesis explores negative partisanship as a form of negative political identity. Two aspects of this conceptualisation are particularly relevant to the present chapter: the potential for negative partisanship as a standalone identity, coexisting and interacting with other political identities, and its potential to provide individuals with cognitive shortcuts when evaluating political issues and actors, i.e. exploring the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support. With that, this study is exploring the elements central to an identity following SIA and ODT, which cannot be captured through the negative partisanship scales, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 (see Table 3.1 for the dimensions of identity focused on through the scales).

Despite the growing theoretical interest in negative partisanship, its empirical investigation remains challenging as the existing datasets frequently lack negative partisanship-specific measures, as raised in Chapter 2 Section 2.3.3. This results in researchers often having to rely on negative affect or dislike measures as proxies.

The present study therefore provides an initial empirical examination of how negative affect interacts with positive partisanship, and whether negative affect is associated with environmental preferences, consistent with the broader conceptualisation of the nature of negative partisanship developed in this thesis.

With that, this study serves as the empirical foundation for the subsequent studies in this thesis. Before examining the consequences of negative partisanship in more detailed electoral and experimental contexts, it is necessary to establish whether negative partisanship is actually associated with climate and environmental policy preferences beyond established predictors such as positive partisanship, and if negative partisanship

can indeed exist as a standalone identity. The study therefore provides an initial assessment of whether incorporating negative partisanship, by using negative affect as a proxy measure, can offer additional explanatory power for understanding environmental preferences.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 4.2 provides a brief overview of the methods used here. Section 4.3.1 discusses hypothesis tests in response to RQ 2a): Does negative partisanship play a role in climate and environmental policy support. Section 4.3.2 discusses RQ 1a): How does negative partisanship interact with positive partisanship. Section 4.3.3 presents additional exploratory analyses, including analyses of negative affect towards party leaders. The chapter concludes by discussing the findings in relation to the theoretical development of negative partisanship and their implications for the subsequent studies.

4.2 Methods Summary

To address the research questions, this chapter analyses Wave 23 of the British Election Study (BES) online panel, collected in May 2022. The analysis examines the association between negative affect towards political parties and two indicators of environmental preference: prioritisation of environmental protection over economic growth and identifying the environment as the most important issue facing the country (MII).

Importantly, the analyses assess whether these associations remain after accounting for positive partisanship, demographic characteristics, and individuals' left-right ideological values. To do so, an ordinal logistic regression and a binary logistic regression are conducted.

The study also considers whether these associations differ according to individuals' partisan identities, i.e. how they interact with other partisan or non-partisan identities. This allows the analysis to examine whether negative affect towards left- and right-leaning parties is associated with environmental preferences in different ways, rather than assuming that negative partisanship has uniform consequences across political groups.

Finally, exploratory analyses examine whether negative affect towards party leaders is similarly associated with environmental preferences.

4.3 Results

Wave 23 of the British Election Study included responses from 30,949 participants. The following analyses were conducted using the survey weight provided in the BES to ensure that the responses were weighted according to national population targets.

4.3.1 Research Question 2a): Does negative partisanship play a role in climate and environmental policy support?

At the time of this study in Mid-2023, finding negative partisanship-specific measures was difficult. Therefore, this study uses a feeling thermometer, or negative affect measure (like-dislike scale), as a proxy, as is common practice (see 2.3.3). Based on this, the results section focuses on 'dislike' or negative affect towards certain parties, rather than negative partisanship.

This study thus aims to explore the role of negative affect, alongside positive partisanship, in shaping British individuals' climate and environmental policy preferences. The research question guiding this study is: What role does negative affect play in individuals' environmental policy preferences, in addition to positive partisanship? The specific hypotheses are:

H1: Positive partisanship and negative affect of individuals in Great Britain will play a role in their climate and pro-environmental policy preferences. More specifically:

- H1.1: Negative affect towards more left-leaning parties (such as the Greens and Labour) and positive partisanship towards more right-leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) will have a negative association with individuals' climate and pro-environmental policy preferences.
- H1.2: Negative affect towards more right-leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) and positive partisanship towards more left-leaning parties (such as the Greens or Labour) will have a positive association with individuals' climate and pro-environmental policy preferences.

To explore the research question, an ordered logistic regression analysis was undertaken. Specifically, negative partisanship (here measured using negative affect as a proxy) was added to the model containing positive partisanship and control variables, to understand if negative partisanship can explain any additional variance relating to climate policy support (here represented by a question exploring individuals' prioritisation of environmental protection versus economic growth).

Table 4.1 includes the descriptive statistics of variables used as controls in the regression models. Additional demographics can be found in Chapter 3, Table 3.1.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Partisanship and control variables. Categorical variables are presented in Percentage (n); numeric or continuous variables are presented with Median, Mean, etc.						
No Partisanship				24% (7316)		
Conservative Partisanship				29% (9034)		
Labour				25% (7665)		
Lib Dem				7% (2217)		
Green				4% (1119)		
Brexit				1% (441)		
Other				5% (1436)		
Don't know				6% (1721)		
	Min	1st Qu	Median	Mean	3rd Qu	Max
Attention to Politics	1.00	6.00	8.00	7.52	9.00	11.00
Left-right values	0.00	1.50	2.50	2.94	4.00	10.00

Figure 4.1 highlights scores from the feeling thermometer or like-dislike scales, which were used to measure negative affect as a proxy for negative partisanship.

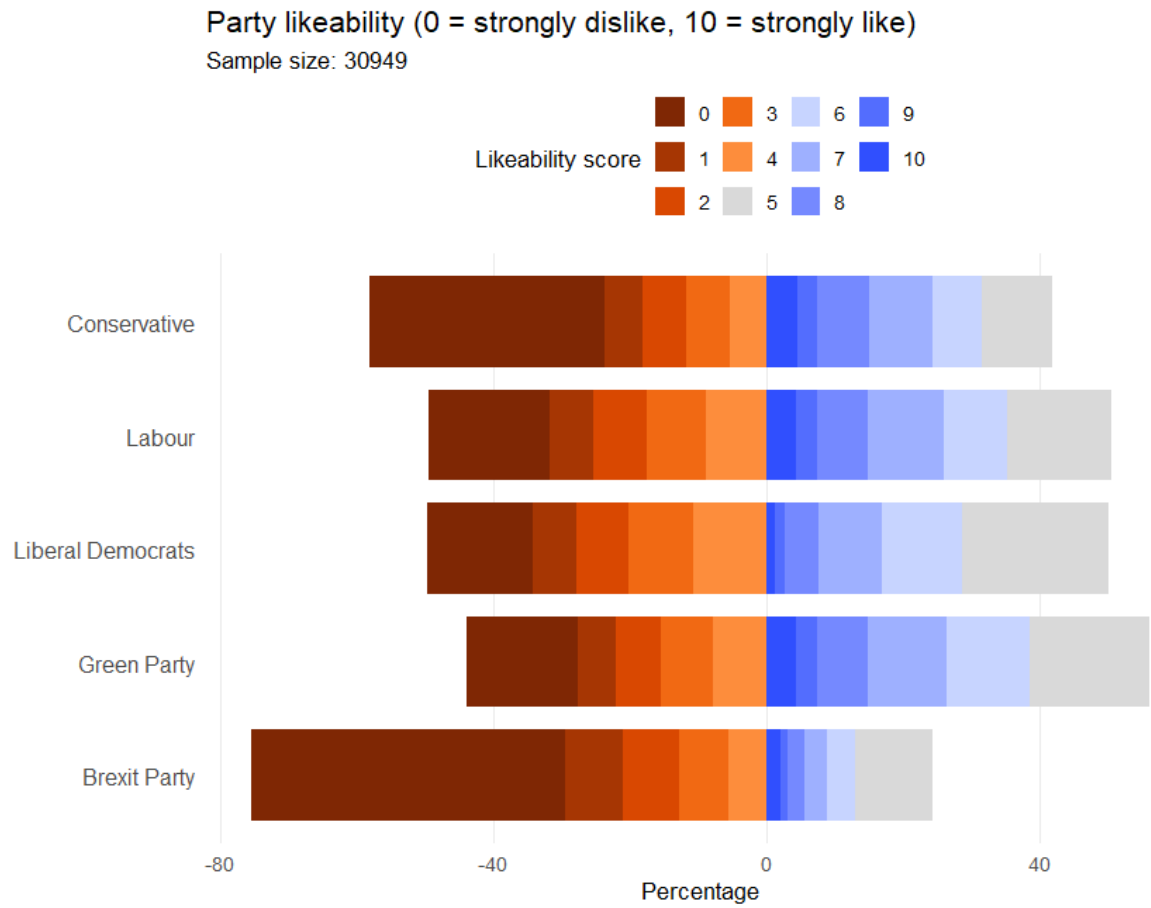

Figure 4.1 Responses to a like-dislike scale for each of the political parties. Median scores for each of the party scales: Conservatives =3, Brexit party= 1, Labour = 5, Liberal Democrats = 5, Green Party = 5.

The results of the ordinal logistic regression can be found in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2. The latter visualises the odds ratios of the model, including the control variables. A total of 4,995 cases (approximately 16% of respondents) were excluded from the regression analysis due to missing data. Missingness was primarily concentrated in three variables: environmental policy preferences (enviroGrowth), left–right values (lr_scale) and yearly household income (income_tertile), with the first two accounting for the largest numbers of missing observations. The logistic regression models were estimated using complete-case analysis, whereby observations containing missing values in any of the variables included in the model were excluded. This approach was adopted rather than statistically imputing missing values, as imputation would require estimating respondents' unobserved values based on available data and assumptions about the underlying missingness mechanism. Given that the analysis sought to examine the relationship between individuals' expressed political orientations and environmental policy preferences, the use of complete cases allowed the models to focus on respondents with recorded values for these key variables. Nevertheless, the exclusion of respondents with missing data reduces the effective sample size and may introduce selection bias if

missingness is systematically related to specific political preferences. Survey weights were applied to account for differences in the sample's representation of the British population, although these cannot necessarily eliminate bias arising from missing data.

Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs). Given the presence of categorical predictors, the adjusted GVIF, GVIF^(1/(2Df)), was examined. All adjusted GVIF values were low, ranging from 1.03 to 1.34, indicating no evidence of problematic multicollinearity among the predictors.

To assess the proportional-odds assumption, a Brant test was conducted. The omnibus test was statistically significant, $\chi^2(216) = 1493.16$, $p < .001$, suggesting a violation of the parallel-regression assumption. Several individual predictors also produced significant Brant tests. However, the test generated warnings concerning a very large number of empty combinations (255127 combinations did not occur) in the underlying contingency tables, indicating that some of the individual test results may be unreliable. This was likely due to the large number of categorical predictors in the model, which has an outcome variable with only five categories. The Brant test results were therefore treated as diagnostic rather than definitive evidence of non-proportionality. Based on this, and because the purpose of this analysis was to assess whether the negative affect measures provided additional explanatory information beyond party identification and the control variables (variables previously established as significant predictors of climate policy support), and interactions between positive partisanship and negative affect, the model was retained. Given the significant violation of the proportional-odds assumption, the results should nevertheless be interpreted with caution.

Results in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show that individuals exhibiting positive partisanship towards right-leaning parties (here represented by the Conservative and the Brexit Party) and negative affect towards left-leaning parties (here represented by Labour, Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party) are less likely to prioritise environmental protection over economic growth. On the other hand, individuals exhibiting positive partisanship towards left-leaning parties (here represented by the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party) and negative affect towards right-leaning parties (here represented by the Conservative and the Brexit Party) are more likely to prioritise the environment over economic growth. With that, the data from this analysis generally supports both H1.1 and H1.2. However, the Labour Party seems to be an outlier to this pattern. While negative affect towards the Labour Party is associated with a prioritisation of economic growth, as predicted, positive partisanship towards Labour has the same association. These differences could suggest a disconnect between what Labour partisans actually support, and what outsiders assume

they support. It could also be connected to the dimension of environmentalism, which those to whom Social Democratic Parties appeal most are less likely to score high on (Kenny & Langsæther, 2023).

Table 4.2 Results of an ordinal logistic regression of environmental protection versus economic growth on positive partisanship and negative affect towards parties and controls.

	Estimate (b)	**Std. Error**	**t value**	**p value**
Partisanship comparison group: non-partisans				
Conservative Partisanship	-0.13	0.04	-3.60	< .001
Labour Partisanship	-0.11	0.03	-3.06	.002
Liberal Democrats Partisanship	0.10	0.05	2.11	.035
Green Partisanship	1.20	0.06	18.67	< .001
Brexit Partisanship	-0.81	0.10	-8.36	< .001
Other Partisanship	-0.08	0.06	-1.33	.183
Unsure about Partisanship (Don't know)	-0.05	0.06	-0.84	.401
Dislike Conservative Party	0.28	0.03	9.27	< .001
Dislike Labour Party	-0.11	0.03	-3.61	< .001
Dislike Liberal Democrats	-0.08	0.03	-2.90	.004
Dislike Green Party	-1.34	0.03	-43.01	< .001
Dislike Brexit Party	0.43	0.02	17.64	< .001
Attention to Politics	0.05	0.01	9.61	< .001
Age comparison group: 18-25				
Age Group 26-35	-0.30	0.05	-5.93	< .001
Age Group 36-45	-0.45	0.04	-10.19	< .001
Age Group 46-55	-0.63	0.04	-14.20	< .001
Age Group 56-65	-0.63	0.04	-14.05	< .001
Age Group 66+	-0.68	0.04	-15.46	< .001
Female (compared to male)	0.10	0.02	4.27	< .001
University Education (compared to no university education)	0.24	0.02	9.71	< .001
Income comparison group: Low income <£25k				
Middle income (£25k–49,999)	-0.11	0.03	-3.63	< .001
High income (£50k+)	-0.07	0.05	-1.54	.124
Income not declared	-0.13	0.03	-4.59	< .001
Left–right scale	-0.07	0.01	-11.04	< .001

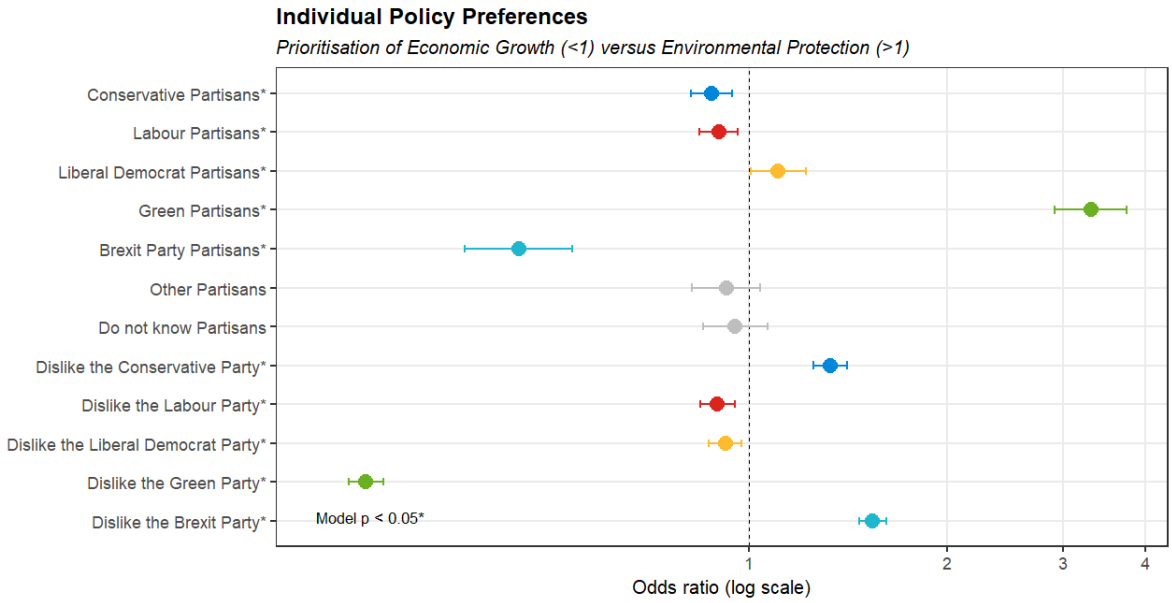

Figure 4.2 Results of an ordinal logistic regression using a 95% CI, where non-partisans are used as a reference group for partisanship. N=25,954 (model includes the same control variables as above).

Additionally, a binary logistic regression was undertaken using responses to a most important issue facing the country (MII) question, to regress climate and environmental policy prioritisation (in this analysis, comparing those who did and did not choose climate and environment as their most important issue) on positive partisanship and negative affect towards different parties, as well as controls.

Multicollinearity assessment using VIFs, or adjusted GVIF, based on the categorical predictors indicated no evidence of problematic multicollinearity, with all adjusted GVIF values being low, ranging from 1.03 to 1.29.

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis can be found in Table 4.3. Figure 4.3 visualises the corresponding odds ratios. Due to missingness, 5173 cases had to be excluded from the analysis. The trends in the results are similar to the previous ordinal regression model. However, positive partisanship towards the Liberal Democrats does not seem to have a statistically significant association with the indicated MII, neither do dislike towards Labour or the Lib Dems. Data from this analysis also somewhat supports both H1.1 and H1.2.

Table 4.3 Results of a binary logistic regression of MII on positive partisanship, negative affect towards parties and control variables.

Predictor	Estimate (b)	Std. Error	t value	p value
Partisanship comparison group: non-partisans				
(Intercept)	-2.32	0.15	-15.00	< .001

Table 4.3 Results of a binary logistic regression of MII on positive partisanship, negative affect towards parties and control variables.				
Predictor	**Estimate (b)**	**Std. Error**	**t value**	**p value**
Conservative Partisanship	-0.70	0.13	-5.55	< .001
Labour Partisanship	-0.53	0.08	-6.26	< .001
Liberal Democrat Partisanship	-0.12	0.11	-1.13	0.26
Green Partisanship	1.13	0.10	11.54	< .001
Other Partisanship	-0.49	0.15	-3.21	0.001
Brexit Partisanship	-1.20	0.59	-2.03	0.04
Unsure about Partisanship (Don't know)	-0.27	0.16	-1.67	0.10
Dislike Conservative Party	0.36	0.09	4.20	< .001
Dislike Labour Party	-0.06	0.09	-0.65	0.52
Dislike Liberal Democrats	-0.12	0.08	-1.50	0.13
Dislike Green Party	-1.27	0.12	-11.00	< .001
Dislike Brexit Party	0.50	0.07	7.66	< .001
Attention to Politics	0.01	0.01	0.64	0.52
Age comparison group: 18-25				
Age Group 26-35	-0.43	0.10	-4.23	< .001
Age Group 36-45	-0.97	0.10	-9.65	< .001
Age Group 46-55	-0.94	0.10	-9.31	< .001
Age Group 56-65	-1.04	0.11	-9.49	< .001
Age Group 66+	-0.88	0.11	-8.24	< .001
Female (compared to male)	-0.13	0.06	-2.11	0.03
University Education (compared to no university education)	0.42	0.07	6.39	< .001
Income comparison group: Low income <£25k				
Middle income (£25k–49,999)	0.07	0.07	0.93	0.35
High income (£50k+)	0.15	0.12	1.27	0.20

Table 4.3 Results of a binary logistic regression of MII on positive partisanship, negative affect towards parties and control variables.				
Predictor	**Estimate (b)**	**Std. Error**	**t value**	**p value**
Income not declared	-0.20	0.08	-2.36	0.02
Left–right scale	0.01	0.02	0.31	0.76

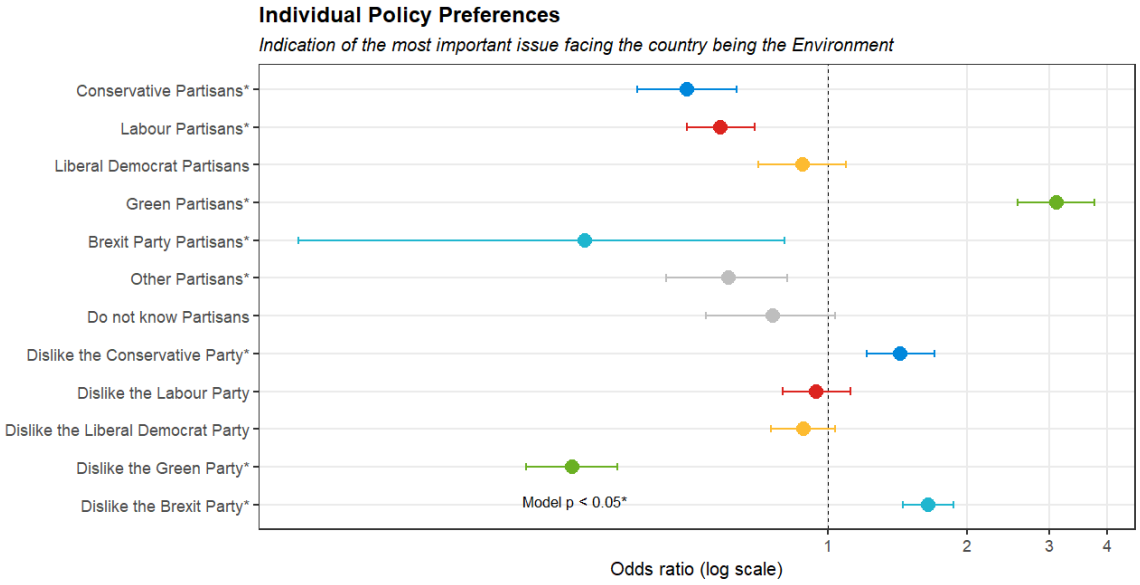

Figure 4.3 Results of a binary logistic regression using a 95% CI, where non-partisans are used as a reference group for partisanship. N=25,776.

The findings here indicate that negative affect towards the political parties may be significantly associated with climate and environmental policy preferences. Generally speaking, positive partisanship towards left-leaning parties and negative affect towards right-leaning parties were associated with greater prioritisation of environmental protection, whereas positive partisanship towards right-leaning parties and negative affect towards left-leaning parties were associated with greater prioritisation of economic growth. Importantly, these relationships remained when controlling for demographic factors and individuals' left-right values. Similar patterns were observed in reference to an MII question.

The Labour Party was somewhat of an outlier, with positive partisanship towards the party being associated with prioritisation of economic growth, similarly to those who expressed dislike towards Labour. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7, section 7.3.1.

Moreover, while results of the Brexit Party were in line with the hypothesised left-right differences, confidence intervals were large. This is likely due to the Brexit Party being a single-issue party (i.e. supporting the UK exiting the EU), meaning supporters likely have a

vast amount of different opinions on climate and environment, compared to other ideologically more aligned parties.

Overall, the findings of this section are consistent with the theoretical elements presented from SIA and ODT, which suggest that partisan identities may provide cognitive shortcuts through which individuals evaluate political issues and actors (this is discussed in detail in Chapters 7 and 8).

4.3.2 Research Question 1a): How does negative partisanship interact with positive partisanship?

As previously stated, non-partisans were used as the comparison group in all analyses. Therefore, an ordinal logistic regression was performed to explore how negative affect towards certain parties is associated with individual attitudes of non-partisans. Results are displayed in Figure 4. Negative affect towards the Conservative and Brexit Party is associated with a higher likelihood of prioritising environmental protection, while negative affect towards the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party is associated with a lower likelihood. Negative affect towards the Labour Party, while the odds ratio does lie below 1, was not found to be statistically significant.

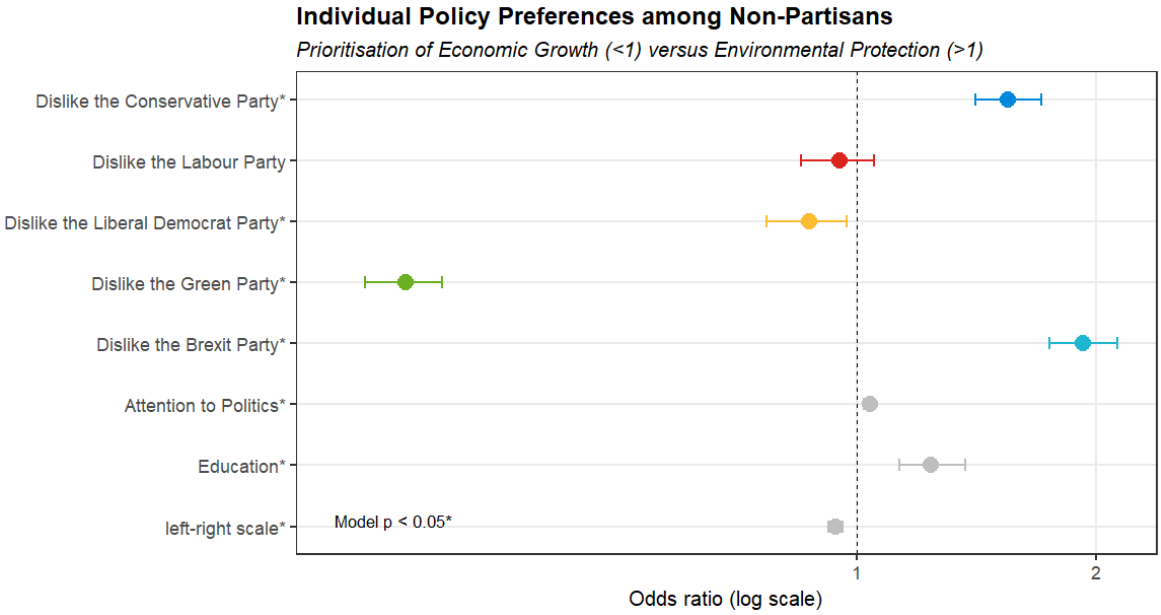

Figure 4.4 Odds Ratios of ordinal logistic regression using a 95% CI, regressing individual prioritisation of environmental protection versus economic growth on dislike towards parties, among non-partisans. N=5,757 (model includes the usual control variables, which are not displayed here).

Analyses were then performed for the other partisan groups as well. Figure 4.5 displays these results side by side. Interesting is to consider negative affect towards the Liberal Democrats here. Where negative affect towards the Liberal Democrats in Conservative

partisans is associated with prioritisation of economic growth, in Labour partisans it is associated with prioritisation of environmental protection. This implies that there are interaction effects between positive partisanship and negative affect. Among Green partisans, dislike towards other parties does not seem to be associated with policy preferences. Only dislike towards the Conservatives is significantly associated with prioritising environmental protection. This could be the case because Green Party supporters most likely have very high issue importance, meaning they might identify with the Green Party specifically because of their stance on environmental protection, making dislike towards other parties less important. Additionally, disliking the Brexit Party among Brexit partisans was significantly associated with prioritising environmental protection. As mentioned previously, the Brexit Party was a single-issue party, which focused predominantly on the UK leaving the EU. Therefore, some people who identify with this party based on this single issue may otherwise dislike the party for other reasons, and support for environmental protection versus economic growth may likely be more varied among party supporters compared to other parties that are centred around a shared ideology.

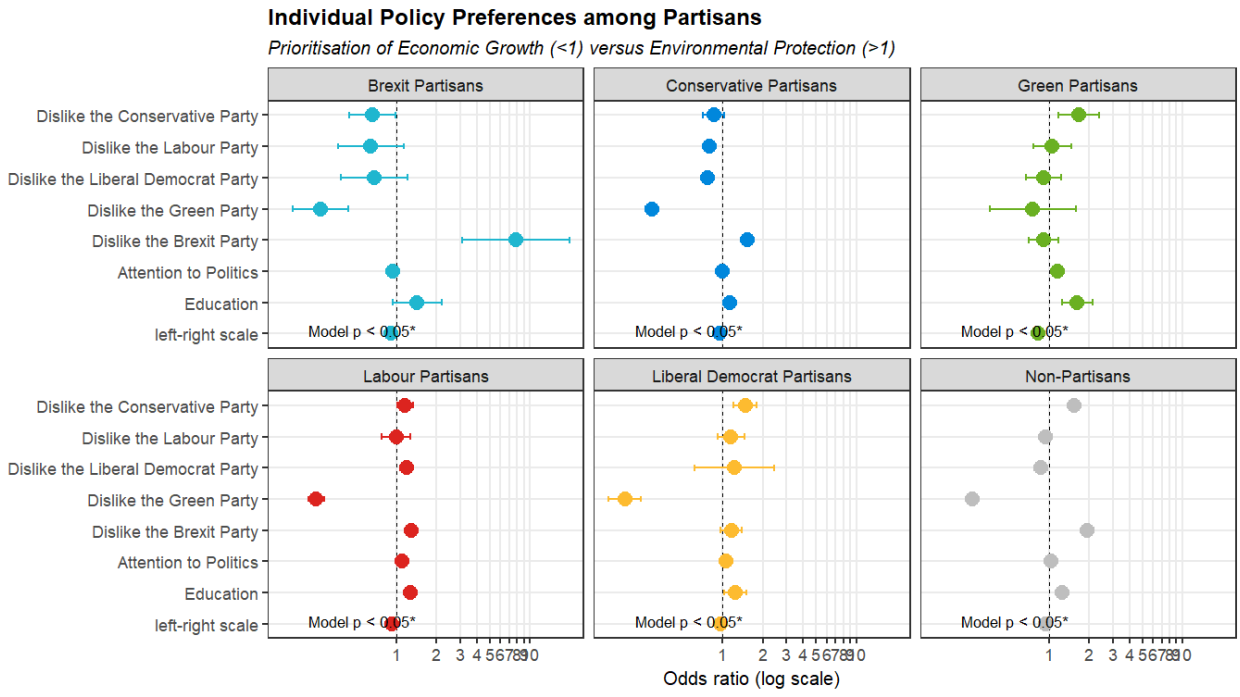

Figure 4.5 Odds Ratios of Ordinal Logistic Regression analysis regressing individual prioritisation of environmental protection versus economic growth on dislike towards parties, among different (non-)partisan groups. Sample sizes vary: Brexit Party Partisans N=395, Conservative Partisans N=7,954, Green Partisans N=993, Labour Partisans N=6,690, Liberal Democrat Partisans N=1,962, and Non-Partisans N=5,757 (model includes the usual control variables, which are not displayed here).

The findings presented in this section align with the conceptualisation of negative partisanship developed in this thesis as a form of political identity that is distinct from positive partisanship.

Specifically, the effects of negative affect seem to differ among different partisan groups, while remaining significant in non-partisans. With that, the results highlight the potential for negative partisanship as a standalone identity, which can coexist and interact with other political identities, such as positive partisanship.

4.4 Exploratory

In addition to the central research questions and hypotheses, this study also set out to explore how individuals' policy preferences are potentially associated with their affect towards leaders. This exploratory research emerged from questions around potential leadership effects, how political leaders may shape individuals' party perception, and, with that, positive and/or negative partisanship. To do so, the ordinal logistic regression models were repeated with like-dislike scores towards the main party leaders at the time.

As before, multicollinearity was assessed using VIFs. For the categorical predictors with multiple degrees of freedom, GVIFs adjusted for degrees of freedom were examined. All adjusted GVIF values were low, ranging from 1.03 to 1.27, indicating no evidence of problematic multicollinearity among the predictors. As in the model presented earlier, the proportional odds assumption was assessed using a Brant test. The omnibus test was statistically significant, suggesting that the proportional odds assumption was violated for the model overall ($\chi^2(216) = 1442.58$, $p < .001$). Several individual predictors also showed evidence of non-proportional effects. However, the Brant test, again, produced warnings concerning a large number of unobserved combinations of the dependent and independent variables, indicating that the results of the test may be unreliable. The findings from the ordinal regression model should therefore be interpreted with caution. However, as the goal was, again, to see if negative affect towards the party leaders could offer additional explanatory power beyond positive partisanship and the control variables, the model was retained.

The results of the ordinal regression model are displayed in Table 4.4. Figure 4.6 visualises the odds ratios and confidence intervals of an ordinal logistic regression, where environmental protection versus economic growth was regressed on positive partisanship and negative affect towards party leaders in Wales and England. Scotland was excluded from this analysis, as the Scottish Green Party is separate from that of England and Wales. Therefore, to keep participants stable across the different party leaders, only respondents

from Wales and England remained in the analysis. This brings the overall sample down to 27,914 from the initial 30,949 in other analyses. The results show that dislike towards party leaders has a significant association with policy preferences, where negative affect towards Boris Johnson (Conservative Party, b= 0.31, p < .001) and Richard Tice (Brexit Party, b=0.43, p <.001) is associated with a higher likelihood of preferring environmental protection, and negative affect towards Keir Starmer (Labour, b=−0.33, p < .001), Ed Davey (Liberal Democrats, b=−0.459, p < .001) and the Green Party Leaders (Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay, −0.370, p < .001) is associated with a lower likelihood. These findings are in line with those of negative affect towards the parties themselves (see Figure 4.2). This could indicate a few things: either individuals do not differentiate between party and party leader, which leads to the alignment, or they may happen to feel the same towards both.

Table 4.4 Results of an ordinal logistic regression of environmental protection versus economic growth on positive partisanship, dislike towards party leaders in Wales and England, and control variables.

Predictor	**Estimate (b)**	**Std. Error**	**t value**	**p value**
Partisanship comparison group: non-partisans				
Conservative Partisanship	-0.25	0.04	−6.74	< .001
Labour Partisanship	0.07	0.04	1.92	.055
Liberal Democrat Partisanship	0.28	0.05	5.60	< .001
Green Partisanship	1.49	0.07	22.62	< .001
Other Partisanship	0.21	0.09	2.25	.025
Brexit Partisanship	-1.10	0.10	−11.28	< .001
Unsure about partisanship (Don't know)	0.04	0.06	0.75	.455
Dislike Johnson	0.31	0.03	10.62	< .001
Dislike Starmer	-0.33	0.03	−11.33	< .001
Dislike Davey	-0.46	0.04	−12.91	< .001
Dislike Tice	0.43	0.04	11.08	< .001
Dislike Green Party Leaders	-0.37	0.05	−7.62	< .001
Attention to Politics	0.05	0.01	9.06	< .001
Age comparison group: 18-25				

Table 4.4 Results of an ordinal logistic regression of environmental protection versus economic growth on positive partisanship, dislike towards party leaders in Wales and England, and control variables.				
Predictor	**Estimate (b)**	**Std. Error**	**t value**	**p value**
Age 26–35	-0.33	0.05	−6.40	< .001
Age 36–45	-0.52	0.05	−11.25	< .001
Age 46–55	-0.68	0.05	−14.71	< .001
Age 56–65	-0.68	0.05	−14.46	< .001
Age 66+	-0.76	0.05	−16.46	< .001
Female (compared to male)	0.19	0.03	7.75	< .001
University Education (compared to no university education)	0.24	0.03	9.35	< .001
Income comparison group: Low income <£25k				
Middle income (£25k–49,999)	-0.08	0.03	−2.59	.010
High income (£50k+)	-0.03	0.05	−0.62	.535
Income not declared	-0.13	0.03	−4.15	< .001
Left–right scale	-0.10	0.01	−13.80	< .001

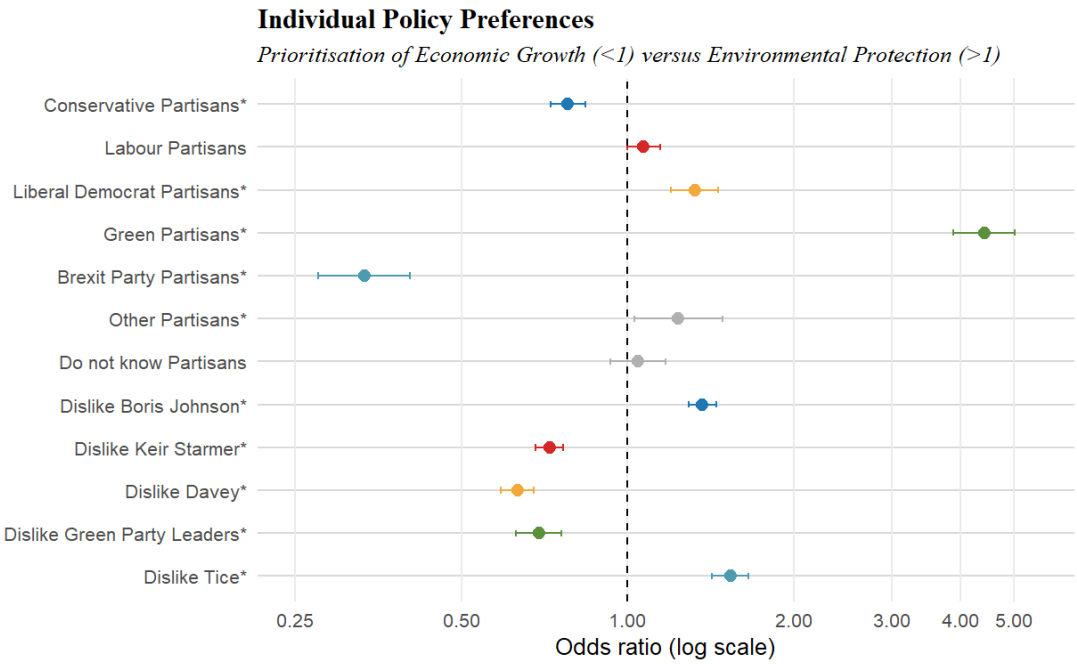

Figure 4.6 Results of an ordinal logistic regression using a 95% CI, where non-partisans are used as a reference group for partisanship. N=23,360 (the analysis included attention to politics, age, gender, education and a left-right self-placement scale as control variables, which are not displayed here).

The results presented in this section demonstrate that affect towards party leaders is also significantly related to environmental policy preferences. This raises the question if party leaders can influence negative partisanship, and to what degree evaluations of parties and leaders differ. While leader effects will not be explored explicitly in this thesis, some suggestions will be made in Chapter 8 for future research.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides an important empirical foundation for the following studies in this thesis. By establishing an association between negative affect and climate and environmental policy preferences, while controlling for positive partisanship, it demonstrates merit in further investigating negative partisanship in the context of climate policy. The subsequent chapters build on this foundation, examining the lived experience of negative partisanship and its relation to climate policy attitudes in a real-world case study (Chapter 5) and testing emerging relationships in a survey experiment (Chapter 6).

Specifically, the findings demonstrate that negative affect towards the political parties is significantly associated with climate and environmental policy preferences. The same was discovered for negative affect towards party leaders. This is consistent with theoretical elements from SIA and ODT, which suggest that partisan identities may provide cognitive shortcuts through which individuals evaluate political issues and actors (this is discussed

in detail in Chapters 7 and 8). Additionally, findings regarding interactions between negative affect and positive partisanship provide support for the conceptualisation of negative partisanship developed in this thesis as a form of political identity that is distinct from positive partisanship (i.e. the results suggest relevance in non-partisans) and is relevant to individuals' environmental policy preferences.

Chapter 5: Exploring Negative Partisanship and Climate Policy Support in Mid Suffolk

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of a case study conducted in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, which builds on the findings of Chapter 4 to explore individuals' experiences of negative partisanship and its relationship with climate and environmental policy support. The study provides a more in-depth examination of lived experiences of negative partisanship, and how it may relate to political decision-making and attitudes towards climate and environmental policy.

The study addresses research gaps identified in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, concerning the conceptualisation and measurement of negative partisanship, the applicability of theories currently used to understand the phenomenon, and its potential consequences. Specifically, it contributes to the two overarching research questions of this thesis, which examine the extent to which existing theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship, and the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support.

This study marks the transition between the explanatory and exploratory stages of the thesis (see Figure 3.1). While Chapter 4 used quantitative data to identify patterns and relationships in negative partisanship, this chapter uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to explore how negative partisanship is understood and experienced by individuals within a specific political and environmental context. The qualitative findings generated here subsequently inform the quantitative analysis presented in Chapter 6, where selected findings are examined further using an experimental design.

This chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 provides a brief overview of the methods used in the case study. Section 5.3 presents and discusses the findings, with Section 5.3.1 addressing the first research sub-question concerning how individuals experience negative partisanship and what may underpin or contribute to its development, and Section 5.3.2 addressing the second sub-question concerning the relationship between negative partisanship, voting behaviour, and climate and environmental policy support. Section 5.4 concludes the chapter and summarises its contribution to the wider thesis.

5.2 Methods Summary

This section provides a short summary of the methods used in this chapter. A more detailed description can be found in Chapter 3, section 3.5. This study has a mixed-

methods design. Surveys were conducted with residents of Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley (a map is provided in Figure 3.3, including data collection locations), which were considered of special interest due to the areas' political history (switching from Conservative to Green) and the current presence of renewable energy developments. The surveys also functioned as the recruitment method for follow-up interviews. A total of 119 survey responses and 10 interviews were conducted. The number of interviews was partly determined by the low uptake among interview volunteers. However, recent studies have suggested that 9 interviews should be the minimum number to gain thematic saturation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Wutich et al., 2024), while others also argue that in reflexive thematic analysis, no minimum sample size can be determined (Wutich et al., 2024). Given this guidance, and the combination of interview responses with survey data, the sample size was deemed appropriate.

5.3 Results

The results are presented in sections corresponding to the research questions. Each interview quote includes the corresponding pseudonymised individual identifier of the participant, to make it easier to note which responses belong to the same or to different individuals. For more information on the data collection, including participant descriptives, see Chapter 3, section 3.5.2. The full survey and interview questions can be found in Appendices 1 and 3. Table 5.2 lists the key findings from the interviews and open survey questions and their respective themes and codes, while a full coding scheme can be found in Appendix 5.

5.3.1 Individuals' Experience and Development of Negative Partisanship

The first research question focused on: How do individuals experience negative partisanship, and what underpins or contributes to its development?

This aims to contribute to the understanding of negative partisanship and theoretical perspectives (i.e. are SIA and ODT appropriate, and if so/ would adjustment be required for their application to understanding negative partisanship), and how it could be measured in light of this study's findings.

5.3.1.1 Negative Partisanship Dimensions

The study questionnaire asked participants about their negative partisanship. Figure 5.1 shows an extended version of Table 3.1, displaying responses from those who totally or somewhat agree (blue) and totally or somewhat disagree (red) with each negative partisanship survey item included in this study questionnaire. The responses reveal that

66% of respondents would describe themselves as anti-[outgroup party] and 50% agree that it is important to be anti-[outgroup party], highlighting both self-definition and identity salience. Survey items covering emotional significance (3), worldview, sense of self, and group categorisation (1) also received over 70% agreement, while disagreement with survey items is always below 20%.

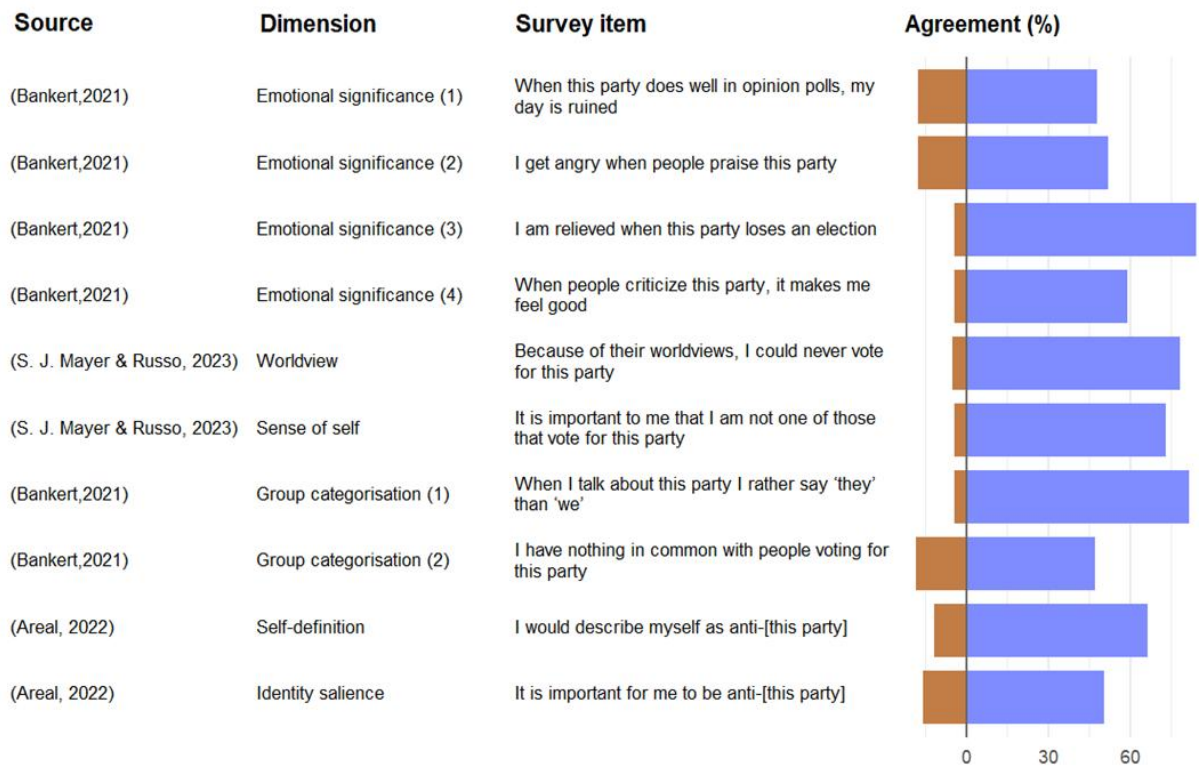

Figure 5.1 Percentage of responses (n=119) either responding with totally or somewhat agree (summarised in blue) or totally or somewhat disagree (shown in red) for each of the negative partisanship scale items. The source of the item, and the identity dimension it reflects, are shown on the left.

To explore whether respondents generally agreed with each negative partisanship scale item and, with that, the corresponding identity dimension, Wilcoxon tests were conducted. Individual survey items were summarised under the six identity dimensions (seen in Table 5.1) using mean scores. The dimensions were detailed in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3 and Table 3.4 to help identify if measures based on SIA and ODT reflect individuals' experience of negative partisanship. All dimensions' median scores were significantly higher than the neutral midpoint of three. Emotional significance was significantly higher than the midpoint ($V = 4{,}859.5$, $p < .001$), as were worldview ($V = 4{,}892$, $p < .001$), sense of self ($V = 4{,}102.5$, $p < .001$), group categorisation ($V = 4{,}473$, $p < .001$), self-definition ($V = 3{,}858.5$, $p < .001$), and identity salience ($V = 2{,}502$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that respondents expressed significantly stronger agreement than neutrality with items

capturing each of the six identity dimensions, providing evidence that negative partisanship was experienced across all of the dimensions of social identity.

Additionally, the internal consistency of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The overall scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a raw Cronbach's alpha of α = .92. Examining the reliability statistics of each scale item, the results suggest that removing individual items would not improve the overall reliability of the scale, with scores between .91 and .92.

Interview findings align with those of the survey. In relation to the self-definition dimension, as one interviewee articulates:

'I would say that I am. I'm anti-Labour, 100% anti-Labour.' (W3)

This self-description suggests individuals do experience negative partisanship as an identity rather than purely a negative affect. Individuals also seem to differentiate between negative affect and NP, and positive affect and PP, as the following statements of another interviewee highlight:

'I'll never vote Reform [UK], so you could call me an anti-Reform [UK] person, but I'm a lapsed Conservative at the end of the day.' (PO16)

'Why did I like the Green Party base? Because I voted for them, because all the rest were useless. Right? The Conservatives have been at war internally now for 14 years.' (PO16)

'So that's my view on why did I put Green down, […] because at least they've got one policy. Let's try and save the world, which the others just play lip service to.' (PO16)

This individual clearly states they still identify with the Conservatives (positive partisanship), but also expresses negative affect towards them, labelling themself as a 'lapsed' Conservative, and describing them and other parties as useless and how they have been at war internally. They also clearly express negative partisanship towards Reform UK, indicating that they would never vote for them and could be described as *'anti-Reform UK'*. On the other hand, they also express their positive affect towards the Green Party and their cause to *'save the world'*. The nuance and differentiation between affect and identity, and how their combination fed into the rationalisation of their voting, highlights the need for more nuanced measures of negative partisanship that are sensitive to such nuances. Moreover, they clearly describe that their negative affect towards the Conservatives was more influential than their positive partisanship, and that their negative partisanship towards Reform UK and positive affect towards the Green Party ultimately led

to their voting decision. This highlights that positive partisanship is not always the main voting motivation, and that change within a party can lead to parties losing core voters.

Interviewees also experienced the emotional significance of negative partisanship. They described their emotional reactance, specifically anger, towards several out-group parties:

'I wouldn't put myself as just anti-Conservative because I'm also very angry at Labour right now, and the Green Party' (SW27)

Others describe their fear and worry over what might happen if that out-group party was to win:

'I fear for what would happen in terms of what we would become. I fear for our country and, so Reform [UK] to me are very dangerous and I would never vote for them' (PO16)

These associations imply a prominent link between the experience of negative partisanship and negative emotions, rather than to positive emotions related to positive partisanship.

However, one individual also expressed a feeling of hope related to defeating the out-group:

'I felt quite hopeful this time around that knowing that there was a real chance [that the Green Party might win]' (W1)

This could imply that, although the major emotions that individuals connect to negative partisanship are negative, some positive emotions could be elicited as well.

The dimension of group categorisation also emerged through the interviews. Some interviewees seem to clearly group together people who support the party they express negative partisanship towards, viewing them in a quite negative light:

'I'll be honest, I have a genuine distaste for people that are, you know, so far right-wing they can't, they can't see or are willing to listen to other people's points of view, I find that incredibly problematic' (PO11)

This quote also highlights that individual PO11 perceives having conversations with this outgroup as difficult, highlighting potential intergroup conflict emerging in connection to negative partisanship.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that negative partisanship exhibits key dimensions of social identity identified by SIA and ODT, including emotional significance, perceptions

of differing worldviews, sense of self, group categorisation, self-definition, and identity salience. The findings therefore provide support for applying SIA and ODT to negative partisanship, while also highlighting an important distinction in the emotional dimension of the identity: negative emotional responses towards the outgroup appear to be particularly central to negative partisanship, compared to feelings of belonging, which seem to drive positive partisanship.

The interview findings further demonstrate that negative partisanship is more nuanced than existing survey measures may suggest. Individuals may hold negative partisanship towards multiple parties and may also express negative affect towards parties with which they positively identify. This suggests that negative affect towards a party should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of negative partisanship. Taken together, these findings suggest that negative affect measures may be insufficient as proxies for negative partisanship, as they only reflect a single, emotive dimension. Quantitative measures should instead reflect the identity-based dimensions. In particular, measures could be expanded to allow respondents to express negative partisanship towards multiple parties.

5.3.1.2 Negative Partisanship as a Social Identity

Results also revealed that negative partisanship may be an important identity beyond the political context, playing a role in social interactions and daily life. In the survey, respondents were asked about their approval of a loved one marrying a supporter of a certain political party (see Figure 5.2). While the results indicate that for the majority of people a loved one marrying a supporter of a specific party makes no difference, 9.24% of respondents indicated that they would disapprove of their loved one marrying a Conservative Party supporter, with the same percentage disapproving of them marrying a Labour Party supporter, 5.04% would disapprove of them marrying a Green Party supporter, and a total of 28.57% would disapprove of them marrying a Reform UK Party supporter. While exact numbers are expected to be influenced by party support and negative partisanship in this sample, these numbers indicate that for some, a political identity does play a role in a social context.

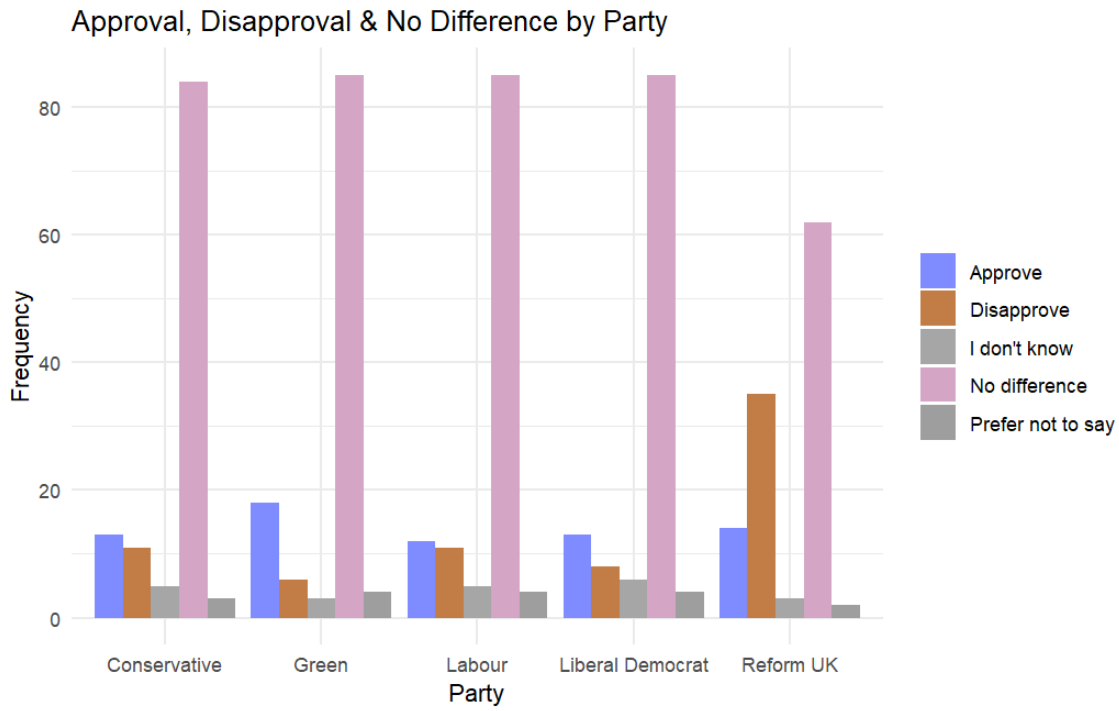

Figure 5.2 Percentage of responses (n=109) to survey question asking if, in a hypothetical situation, someone close to them [i.e. the respondent] (such as a family member, close friend, or child) wanted to marry a supporter of a specific political party, would they approve, disapprove, or would it make no difference. Percentages of those who responded with either approve, disapprove, or no difference are displayed here. Excluded are those who did not respond or responded with 'I don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'.

A question asking how much of the political tension in the UK today was caused by their least liked party revealed the following results: 8% of participants felt all of it was due to their least liked party, 31% felt most of it was, 47% felt some and 3% indicated not much at all.[7]

Additionally, respondents were also asked if there are situations in their daily life where their attitudes towards their least liked party may impact them. Out of the 119 respondents, 41% indicated no, and 41% indicated yes, clearly highlighting that a large proportion of respondents felt like their least liked political party had an impact on their lives. Open survey responses gave more insight into when individuals felt affected. Listed were reading newspapers, social situations and negative financial impact. A distinction for rural people was drawn here two with one survey respondent indicating that they felt that 'every policy is a total disaster, especially policies affecting the rural community'. Other respondents also raised that some parties felt *'totalitarian',* clearly highlighting that they felt their personal freedoms were impacted: '*Worldview of Greens is potentially*

[7] Reflecting on the exact phrasing of this question (see Chapter 3 Section 3.5.3), this question might be quite difficult for participants to answer, and especially for those that are not as politically involved.

totalitarian, plus its old-school establishment' and 'Left wing authoritarian policies at work. E.g anglophobic recruitment'. Others raised that parties like Reform UK were dividing the country: '*I think right wing politics is responsible for extremist attitudes in society at large'* and *'I would like to live in a world with care and empathy. I don't :('*.

The role of negative partisanship in a social context became even clearer during the interviews. Some interviewees discussed how their negative partisanship towards a political party influences their views of its supporters. Specifically, one respondent mentions difficulties of being confronted with differing views and even cutting ties:

'A couple of people that have that have been openly sharing their differing views, I have just unfriended them or like, you know, unfollowed them because I just think I don't want to see that content being shared by people that I'm associating with in my life.' (W1)

However, context and the salience of a particular identity seem to be important. An individual dealing with negative partisanship in their immediate family explains:

'I find that [Reform UK supporters] are often very right wing aligned and [...] embody the whole idea of cancel culture of 'Oh no, you're, I don't want to hear your opinion', 'my opinion's right'. They're not willing to have a discourse and share ideas, right. And, and I think I'm in a particularly interesting position because my dad is actually [...] a Reform UK voter like quite proudly. [...] Like most people, I, you know, I love my dad, I respect him, all that sort of stuff. But we just cannot sort of talk politics because there's that, there's that disconnect.' (PO11)

While there does seem to be an overlap between negative partisanship as a political and a social identity, viewing an outgroup member through the lens of a different identity (e.g. rather than a Reform UK supporter, viewing them as a family member) might change the way they interact with or view them.

5.3.1.3 Development of Negative Partisanship

During the interview, individuals indicated different reasons for developing negative partisanship, including a perceived focus on the wealthy:

'It's not about reforming the UK, it's about a few select people making a power grab, is how I kind of see it, and it's about keeping the rich rich.' (PO11)

Additionally, individuals raised issues around competing worldviews, feeling like their personal freedoms were threatened by the party (as previously reflected on in section 5.3.1.2) and that they felt parties had 'hidden' goals that they were not sharing publicly

(quotes can be found in Table 5.2). The idea of a hidden goal may also be reflected in the quote from PO11, who felt that the outward messaging *of 'reforming the UK'* was actually a cover for *'keeping the rich rich'*.

Something that strongly emerged across the political spectrum, however, was a criticism of the general relationship between politicians and the public. A survey question assessed to what extent participants felt the current political parties adequately represented the interests of the British public. Less than 1% indicated they felt they completely represented the public, 7% indicated mostly, 35% to some degree, 36% not very much, and 18% not at all. This highlights that more than a third of the sample does not feel the current political parties accurately reflect the public's interests.

Interview respondents generally indicated feeling a disconnect between themselves and politicians, and that politicians are no longer able to understand the public's interests or needs:

'I think if you talk about the Labour government, for example, it's yeah, it feels a bit like they're kind of locked away at Number 10 and kind of brainstorming all these ideas and haven't actually thought about how that's going to land with the people that these ideas are going to affect the most.' (W1)

Others indicated that this is especially the case for more rural populations:

'I didn't want to vote for any, I mean, the alternatives were pretty lousy. The only thing that, I think [...] still get to [rural people] is that you know, we do have to look after our country.' (PO16)

This statement is particularly interesting, as they also highlight a felt responsibility of people living in rural areas to look after and protect the countryside. Another respondent specifically drew the connection between environmental protection, in this case water pollution, and a lack of care from politicians about local issues. The respondent also highlighted that they felt there were issues in holding politicians accountable:

'In the past, if you take us locally again in terms of things like the sewage, you know the local sourcing was responsible and the thing went wrong. You know who to go to! Now, who knows? Who cares.' (SW39)

This disconnect between politicians and the public might be a potential reason for individuals to develop negative partisanship and mistrust towards politicians. Some respondents also discuss how they overcame that disconnect between politicians, specifically highlighting interpersonal contact: *'[the local candidate] was out and about.*

He was canvassing hard, you know, the values he had, you know, just struck a chord.'(SW24). Others go further and indicate how contact with politicians actually swayed their voting choice:

'And the options here. I mean, and funnily enough, I had voted green in the Council elections. Partly because he was the only candidate who came to see, came to my door to talk to me. They're good on local, they're very good on local issues too. You know, the guy who came and saw me knew the local issues here.' (PO16)

In summary, negative partisanship seems to develop out of a variety of reasons. However, what strongly emerges across the responses is a lack of trust in the parties (i.e. individuals perceive hidden agendas) and a general disconnect between politicians and the public, especially felt by rural populations.

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
Factors Influencing Voting in the Election	Change within Party		Inductive	2 (11)	8 (10)	'The Conservatives have been at war internally now for 40 years'
	Emotional Reasons for Voting	Desperation	Inductive	1(1)	0 (0)	'[My vote for Reform UK], it's a desperate last sort of you know, finger up and hope that the wind's blowing in the right way.'
		Feeling Disenfranchised		1 (1)	0 (0)	'Because I feel disenfranchised by our political parties, I really do. Once in one election, I put a line through my papers as a spoiled paper.'
		Fear		2 (8)	1 (1)	'When I think about Reform, I just, I do actually feel pretty scared about the fact that they did win some seats in, in the last election [...] and that really worries me.'
		Hope		1 (1)	3 (3)	'I felt quite hopeful this time around that knowing that there was a real chance [that the Green Party might win]'
		Nostalgia		1 (1)	0 (0)	'I think part of it is a nostalgia for what we were and could possibly be again.'

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
	Party Alignment with Personal Beliefs		Inductive	5 (7)	0 (0)	'I like what they are about, but unfortunately I don't know, the way the UK is today [...] its painful for me knowing I am voting for someone that is probably not gonna get in, but if I vote for anyone else, I'd be going against my own sort of believes.'
	Climate Change and Voting		Deductive	3 (12)	2 (2)	'So that's my view on why did I put Green down, [...] because at least they've got one policy. Let's try and save the world, which the others just play lip service to.'
	Contact with Politicians and Voting		Inductive	5 (17)	5 (5)	'I'd voted green in the Council elections, partly because he was the only candidate who came to see, came to my door to talk to me'
	Environment and Voting		Deductive	4 (18)	7 (7)	'Although I was not entirely happy with all the things which the Greens were doing, I thought the thing which I was concerned with was the environmental issues'
	NP and Voting		Deductive	7 (24)	28 (44)	'I'd probably have more in common with Greens, like I think the Greens policies are much better than the Tories, but equally I

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
						would have said I would probably vote Labour or Lib Dem if I thought they were going to win. Or Independent, as long as it wasn't Reform'
NP Expression and Development	NP because of politicians' focus on the Wealthy		Inductive	2 (2)	4 (4)	'Its not about reforming the UK, its about a few select people making a power grab, is how I kind of see it, and its about keeping the rich rich'
	NP and Emotional Reactance	Distaste	Deductive	1 (1)	(0)	'I think the reality is, again, I just, I will just ramble on about, you know, my distaste [for Reform UK].'
		Anger and NP		5 (12)	(0)	'It just drives me into a cycle of madness, why are people backing Reform, when it is the same guy who butchered everything else before it'
		Anxiety over Outgroup Party		2 (11)	1 (1)	'I fear for what would happen in terms of what we would become. I fear for our country and, so Reform [UK] to me are very dangerous and I would never vote for them'

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
	NP and Motivation		Deductive	5 (13)	0 (0)	'I feel incredibly motivated to vote out of sheer disappointment and frustration'
	NP and Outgroup Categorisation	Negative Description of Outgroup Members	Deductive	6 (21)	4 (4)	'It's people who don't, probably, really think much, beyond themselves and what was good for them.'
		Differing Values to Outgroup		6 (19)	5 (5)	'Reform UK, I recognise their role as a disruptor in the system, but obviously their core values are something that feel deeply uncomfortable.'
		Difficult Intergroup Contact		3 (5)	0 (0)	'It leaves me a bit devoid of hope at times because you just can't even have a conversation with some of these people because their ideas are so ingrained.'
		Lack of Understanding for Outgroup		6 (19)	2 (2)	'Especially I think when it is somebody that I know, who says like, you know, sharing something on Facebook and I'm just like how have, how have these views which are so against my own how, how have they kind of taken hold in this person's mindset'

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
		Outgroup as ineffective		3 (5)	5 (5)	'They're pretty ignorant about reality. Pretty simplistic about their solutions and challenges and they seem also incapable of getting things done.'
	NP and self-definition	NP as the identity	Deductive	4 (7)	1 (1)	'I think I wouldn't put myself as just anti-Conservative because I'm also very angry at Labour right now, and the Green Party, Yeah, so I think. But I think at the moment I'm more anti than I am pro the Green Party.'
		NP and Social Identity		2 (3)	0 (0)	'To be honest, a couple of people that have that have been openly sharing their differing views, I have just unfriended them or like, you know, unfollowed them because I just think I don't want to see that content being shared by people that I'm associating with in my life.'
	Outgroup Threatening Personal Freedom		Inductive	2 (4)	1 (2)	'Their policies are tantamount to agents of social control.'

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
	Worldview		Deductive	2 (5)	0 (0)	'My worldview started to change. That it was, the lesser of two or three for me very bad options. I think that's the honest truth. It was basic, it was, it was core worldview.'
Links between NP and Climate and Environment	Rejection of CC and Env policies based on Party Origin		Deductive	2 (5)	0 (0)	'There's a headline issue like. You know, like Net Zero or even naively, you know, protecting the planet or national independence. But when you get underneath those headlines, there's a massive other agenda.'
	NP Influencing CC and Env Support		Deductive	2 (2)	0 (0)	'I don't think [renewable energy] is a new industry. I think it's a complete waste of time and space. The only thing that will develop in this country is if we get energy prices down. I don't know how you're gonna do it. Unfortunately, I'm not that intelligent and that wise, I don't have to be. That's what we pay these politicians.'
	Climate and Environment		Deductive	5 (15)	0 (0)	'But I mean their views about things like the environment are just outrageous. I mean,

Table 5.2 Overview of Inductive and Deductive Codes Identified Across Interview and Open-Ended Survey Responses.

Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of individual interviews/survey responses containing this code (number of total references in data to each code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
	influencing Party Image					completely outrageous and they say what they say because people want to hear that.'

5.3.2 How does negative partisanship relate to voting behaviour and climate and environmental policy support?

The second research question aimed to explore what role negative partisanship may play in voting behaviour and climate and environmental policy support, to gain a better understanding of the consequences of negative partisanship.

5.3.2.1 Negative Partisanship and Voting

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the switch from Conservative to Green. Specifically, in the local elections in Mid Suffolk District Council, around 31% indicated they were very satisfied with the switch in leadership, while 20% indicated they were somewhat satisfied, 20% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 18% somewhat dissatisfied and 8% very dissatisfied. Referring to their local MP changing from a Conservative to a Green candidate, around 38% indicated they were very satisfied with the change, 16% were somewhat satisfied, 10% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 22% somewhat dissatisfied and 12% very dissatisfied. These results highlight that, generally speaking, people were more satisfied than dissatisfied with the changes.

Looking specifically at the national election, the survey results suggest that it was not necessarily Conservative voters switching to the Green Party that won the election in 2024, but that people who had previously voted for Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party had come together to vote Green (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Individual voting choices in the 2019 and 2024 national elections in Waveney Valley from the questionnaire responses

	General Election July 2024									
General Election December 2019	Con	Lab	Green	Lib Dem	Ref UK	Did not vote	Spoilt Paper	Prefer not to say	(blank)	2019 Total
Conservative	28	1	8	2	10	1	0	0	0	50
Labour	0	4	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
Green		2	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	9
Liberal Democrats	0	0	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	10
Independent	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Did not vote	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	1	8

Table 5.3 Individual voting choices in the 2019 and 2024 national elections in Waveney Valley from the questionnaire responses										
	General Election July 2024									
General Election December 2019	Con	Lab	Green	Lib Dem	Ref UK	Did not vote	Spoilt Paper	Prefer not to say	(blank)	2019 Total
Spoilt paper	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Prefer not to say	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	5	0	8
(blank)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	8	10
2024 Total	28	8	44	4	14	6	1	5	9	119

This suggests that negative partisanship and the potential goal of 'defeating' the Conservatives might have played a role. Interview responses offer additional insight:

'It's a calculated tactical vote that I go, well, because I voted for Labour in the past despite the fact I don't agree with Labour but because I've been informed that Labour were the only people that could beat the Tories in this area. […]. That was a chance I took just because, you know, I was so desperate for a change' (PO11)

Another respondent put this into even simpler terms, indicating why they had switched to voting for the Green Party:

'I thought they had best chance of winning it.' (P15)

One respondent discusses that it almost did not feel like they had a choice, and that they disliked all other parties so much that there was *'only just one other area to go and that was to, you know, bow down to Nigel Farage [Reform UK] and hope'* (W3).

The willingness to do whatever it takes is expressed well by one participant:

'I'd probably have more in common with Greens, like I think the Greens policies are much better than the Tories, but equally I would have said I would probably vote Labour or Lib Dem if I thought they were going to win. Or Independent, as long as it wasn't Reform' (P15)

What clearly highlights that the new Green voters are clearly not a permanent in-group is that individuals do not express a commitment to the party, as one respondent puts it:

'I'm not going to naturally vote Green in the next election.' (PO16)

A central element of identity theories is the provision of an in-group and out-group to fulfil the needs for inclusion and distinction. Interestingly, the idea reflected here of individuals coming together behind a single party to defeat an out-group party suggests there might be a potential for negative partisanship to form a temporary 'in-group'. This could be the reason individuals also express some positive emotions in connection to negative partisanship, as raised in Section 5.3.1.1, related to an individual expressing hope in connection with the new in-group party winning:

'I felt quite hopeful this time around that knowing that there was a real chance [that the Green Party might win]' (W1)

In summary, negative partisanship plays a role in voting decisions. For some, defeating a specific party they held negative partisanship towards clearly became the central motivation for their decision to vote for another party. The findings also suggest that negative partisanship may provide a temporary basis for an in-group, formed around the shared motivation to defeat an outgroup party. This provides a potential explanation for the relationship between negative partisanship and voting behaviour, whereby individuals may coordinate politically around opposition to a party even in the absence of a shared positive partisanship.

5.3.2.2 Climate and Environment and Voting

Before being able to draw a connection between negative partisanship and attitudes towards climate and environmental policies, it is important to gain a better understanding of the general attitudes towards the topics in the area.

When asked 'what should be the UK Government's highest priority?', only 3% of respondents indicated environmental protection and 6% tackling climate change. The three most common responses were (#1) improving the economy, (#2) tackling immigration, and (#3) tackling the cost-of-living crisis. However, when asked how much they consider the environment or climate change in their voting decisions, 33.05% of respondents indicated they consider the environment a lot and 48.31% consider it somewhat; 23.00% indicated they considered climate change a lot and 47.46% considered it somewhat. This is in contrast to 16.10% of respondents, who indicated they do not consider the environment at all and the 23.73% who indicated they did not consider climate change at all. These survey responses indicate that it is clearly something people think about, but it might just not be the most pressing issue they want the UK Government to address.

Additionally, over 70% of respondents were at least somewhat worried about climate change, and over 70% indicated that it was at least somewhat important for the UK government to address climate change.

Interview responses allow for more detailed responses, highlighting that individuals seem to believe climate and environment are issues, and they want the government to take action, but it is not the most pressing one:

'Yeah. So yes, [climate and environment] that's part of it. That's not the biggest thing for me, but that's definitely part of it.' (SW27)

This idea of climate and environment being *an*, rather than *the* issue, emerged as a distinct code in the interviews. Another related code that emerged was individuals' desperation for things to change. While this was also expressed more generally (see Appendix 5 for the full thematic analysis), individuals also expressed this in a climate context, specifically regarding the pylon developments in their area:

'But we have to save the world. We got to get on with it and we can't just kind of keep on delaying any of these things for the next six years' (PO16)

Moving away from climate and environment in general and towards the local context, the following emerged. When asked about the energy developments in their area specifically[8], 32% fully supported and 23% somewhat supported the developments, with only 10% indicating they fully and 10% that they somewhat oppose them. This is in contrast to the media narrative, which published headlines such as 'Battle lines drawn over 'monstrous' pylons and solar farm 'wastelands' (Rowlatt, 2025). While the opposition to the developments should of course not be ignored, the actual situation appears to be a lot more nuanced than represented.

This is also represented by the interview responses, such as:

'And anyway, so I don't think there's much we can do to make it look better. I think we've just got to bite the bullet and get on with it. And we've also got to accept [it].' (SW27)

This quote, again, reflects on the idea that people felt they just had to get on with things when it comes to climate action.

Regarding the local energy developments, a conflict between rural consequences and urban needs clearly emerged:

[8] For reference, pylons and solar farms were major topics and developments in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley at the time. See Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1.1 for more detail.

'If you want solar panels, why don't you put them on Primrose Hill in London, for example. Ideal south-facing, close to where the energy is supplied [...] Why don't you have them on Parliament? [...] The energy is required in London, you know, and I understand that. But why do you assume that you can produce your energy in Suffolk' (SW39)

This quote clearly highlights that locals perceived the energy infrastructure developments in their area as quite unfair, as they will face the costs or consequences, while those in urban areas like London will receive the benefits.

5.3.2.3 Negative Partisanship and Climate and Environment

Looking at a direct relationship between negative partisanship and climate and environmental attitudes, the following emerged. One interviewee, who at another point indicated they expressed negative partisanship against the Green Party, described their attitudes towards a green economy in the following way:

'I read an interesting article today or yesterday. I think that somebody making the case that the green economy was growing three times faster than. I don't know what the alternative word was traditional or, you know, sort of usually economy and why don't people get that? But in fact. But I don't think there's any, any real substantial depth to it.' (SW30)

At another point, they reiterate they remained '*profoundly committed to a range of environmental issues'*. Later, they clarify why they might not believe the evidence pointing out benefits of a green economy:

'The Green Party is divorced from the realities of daily life. The narrative is anti-growth [...]You know, like Net Zero or even naively, you know, protecting the planet or national independence. But when you get underneath those headlines, there's a massive other agenda. [...] there is a left-wing agenda within the Green Party that goes far too far for me.' (SW30)

Here, they clearly draw the connection between rejecting Net Zero and other climate policies, and the party they associate with these ideas, the Green Party. Even though they indicate having read articles about why the green economy is growing, and even though they care about environmental issues, they reject these policies based on the underlying, left-wing agenda they perceive from the Green Party. Their framing of '*underneath those headlines'* suggests they perceive this agenda to be somewhat hidden, raising a question of trust and perceived transparency of the Green Party.

While the above suggest that negative partisanship can impact how individuals perceive climate and environmental policies based on the parties that suggest or support them, other respondents also indicated that a party's stance on climate and environmental policy can influence how they view the party:

'Seeing the Reform UK stance on those targets, [...] it was a no brainer. Once I saw that, I was never, they were never going to get my vote. Not that they would have anyway.' (W1)

Climate and, in this specific case, environmental issues seem to also be able to shift views of a party an individual once identified with, or even was part of, as one interviewee describes:

'I find myself increasingly at odds with the perceived wisdom of my party, the Conservative Party. [...] I also had a big issue [with another] challenge facing the Suffolk, which was Sizewell C, and I felt that that the site will just have a dramatic impact upon the quality of Suffolk.' (SW39)

In summary, there seems to be a clear association between negative partisanship and attitudes towards climate and environmental policy, with some individuals rejecting a party based on their stance towards climate and environment. Moreover, the qualitative findings suggest that negative partisanship may be able to reduce support for policies such as renewable energy projects, even among individuals who hold strong climate and environmental values. This indicates that the influence of negative partisanship may extend beyond party evaluations and voting behaviour to shape attitudes towards specific policy issues.

5.4 Conclusions

The study reported in this chapter provides evidence for conceptualising negative partisanship as a distinct social identity, rather than a part of party affiliation or simply as negative affect towards political parties. The findings suggest that negative partisanship can exist independently of positive partisanship, while also interacting with individuals' positive partisan identities, making up a part of a person's broader political identity. The interview findings further demonstrate that negative partisanship is more nuanced than existing survey measures may suggest. Individuals may hold negative partisanship towards multiple parties and may also express negative affect towards parties with which they positively identify. The findings also suggest that negative partisanship may provide a temporary basis for an in-group, formed around the shared motivation to defeat an outgroup party. Interviews reveal that negative partisanship may develop for a variety of

reasons, such as politicians' focus on the wealthy, or a clear disconnect between personal and party worldviews. However, a lack of trust in politicians and a disconnect between politicians and the public, especially rural populations, clearly emerge as key reasons. The topic of trust is picked up further in Chapter 6.

Finally, the chapter identifies associations between negative partisanship and attitudes towards climate and environmental policy. In particular, the qualitative findings suggest that negative partisanship may be able to reduce support for policies such as renewable energy projects, even among individuals who hold strong climate and environmental values. This is further explored quantitatively in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Beyond Climate Concern: Party Origin, Negative Partisanship, and Message Framing in Climate Policy Support

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of a survey experiment conducted using Prolific, which examines how negative partisanship may influence support for climate and environmental policy, and whether policy framing can mitigate these effects. The study was developed in response to findings from the Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley case study presented in Chapter 5, where participants described rejecting policies based on the political party with which they associated them, even when they expressed strong environmental values. Building on this finding, the experiment examines whether support for a policy varies according to the party perceived to be associated with it, and whether the framing of the policy as a response to climate change or as an economic intervention can alter this relationship.

Using a nationally representative sample of the UK (n=800), the survey compares participants' policy support based on two different variables: Party origin (Party A or Party B) and policy framing (climate or economic). Specifically, the survey investigated whether individuals support a policy less when they express negative partisanship towards the party the policy originates from, and whether the framing of the policy can mitigate any of these effects, while controlling for climate change beliefs and environmental concern. This is novel compared to many other studies focused on framing, which mostly consider the message, rather than the messenger.

The study also extends the findings from Chapter 5 in two further respects. First, the relationship between trust and negative partisanship identified in the qualitative data is examined quantitatively. Second, the study revisits the measurement of negative partisanship by examining agreement with survey items representing the different dimensions of negative partisanship discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3 and presented in Chapter 3 Table 3.1. These items were previously examined in the Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley case study; their inclusion in the present study provides an opportunity to examine whether similar patterns are observed in a larger sample drawn from across the UK. The study therefore contributes to the research gaps identified in Chapter 2 concerning the measurement and conceptualisation of NP, its consequences for climate policy support, and its interaction with policy framing.

This study represents the conclusion of the exploratory stage of the thesis (see Figure 3.1). Following the broad quantitative analysis in Chapter 4 and the case study exploration of individuals' experiences in Chapter 5, this study uses an experimental design to examine quantitatively whether findings emerging from the case study are also observed in a wider UK sample. It therefore completes the hourglass approach of the thesis by moving from broad quantitative patterns, through case study exploration, to quantitative testing of selected findings in a broader sample.

This chapter unfolds as follows: Section 6.2 provides a brief summary of the methods and survey design. Section 6.3 presents the findings of the study, beginning with an overview of the data before examining the findings relating to research sub-question 2c, 'Can changes to the framing of the policy increase support despite negative partisanship?' in Section 6.3.2, and research sub-question 1c, 'How does negative partisanship relate to trust in political parties?' in Section 6.3.3. Section 6.4 provides the conclusion to this chapter.

6.2 Methods Summary

This section provides a short recap of the methods applied in this chapter. For a more detailed overview, see Chapter 3, Section 3.6. This study has a between-subjects, 2x2 experimental survey design. Both party origin of the policy and the policy framing are manipulated. Participants are presented with one randomly assigned party description of a fictional party (Party A or Party B). The description of Party A was loosely based on the Green Party of England and Wales, while Party B was loosely based on Reform UK. This was done to prime the existing negative partisanship that participants express towards the real parties. After reading the party description and answering a few questions about their attitudes towards the party, participants were presented with one of two policy framing conditions focused on renewable energy developments. These were presented in the form of a press release and as proposed by the party they just read about. Policy framing (1) had an economic focus (based on a large number of people indicating the economy as their most important issue in previous research), while framing (2) had a standard climate focus.

6.3 Results

This section presents the results of the study. Section 6.3.1 discusses results relating to the dependent and independent variables collected in this study. Subsequent sub-sections, specifically sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3, discuss the research questions and hypotheses in more detail.

6.3.1 Overview of Key Questions and Variables

Prior to any experimental manipulation, participants were asked to report their attitudes towards the major UK political parties. Specifically, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they liked or disliked each party on a 5-point Likert scale. The distribution of responses is presented in Figure 6.1, split across the countries. Overall, participants expressed more negative than positive affect towards the political parties. Reform UK and the Conservative Party elicited the highest levels of dislike. In total, 416 of UK participants reported strongly disliking Reform UK, while 314 of UK participants reported strongly disliking the Conservative Party. In contrast, the Green Party received the most favourable evaluations overall, with 86 of UK participants reporting that they strongly liked the party and a further 202 of UK participants indicating that they somewhat liked it.

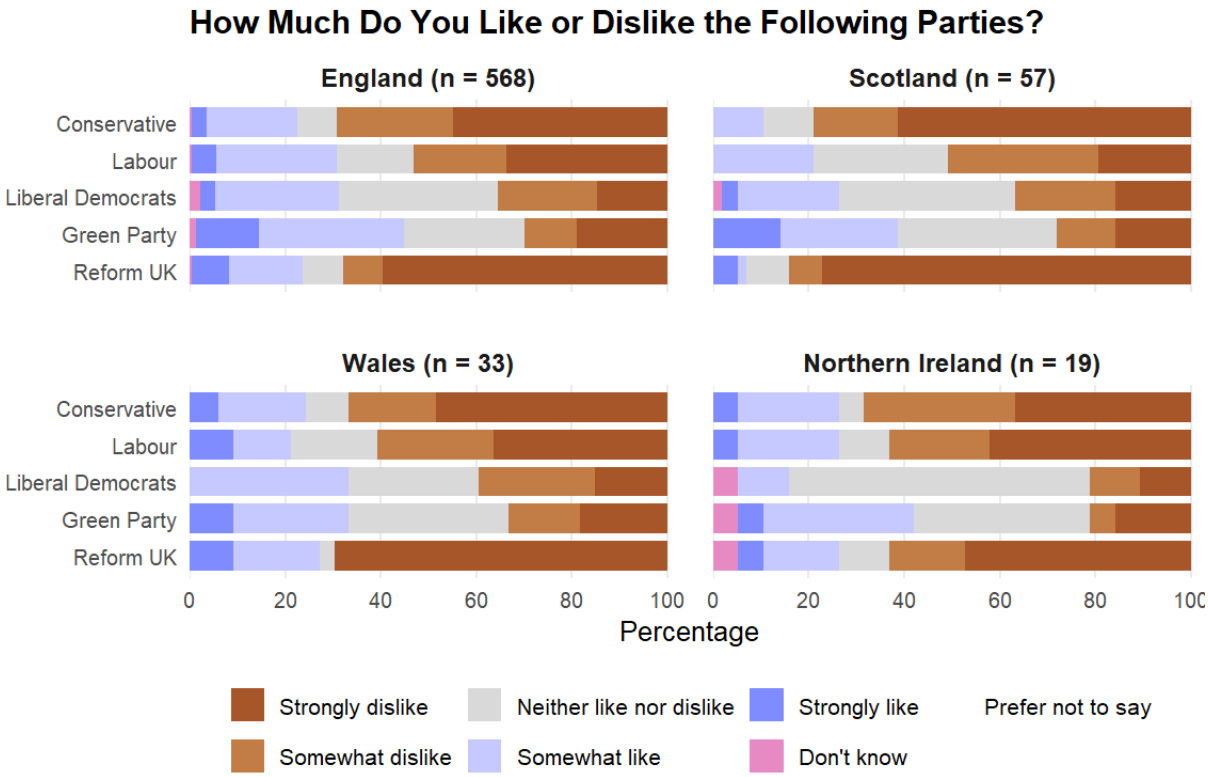

Figure 6.1 Participant responses, per country, on a 5-point Likert Scale (from strongly dislike to strongly like) to a question asking how much they like or dislike the major political parties in the UK.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which they trusted each political party. The distribution of responses is shown in Figure 6.2. Overall, participants were more likely to express a lack of trust than trust towards political parties, indicating generally low levels of political trust. The Green Party received the most favourable trust ratings, with 38% of respondents reporting that they either somewhat trusted or strongly trusted the

party. However, only approximately 6% of participants indicated that they strongly trusted the Green Party.

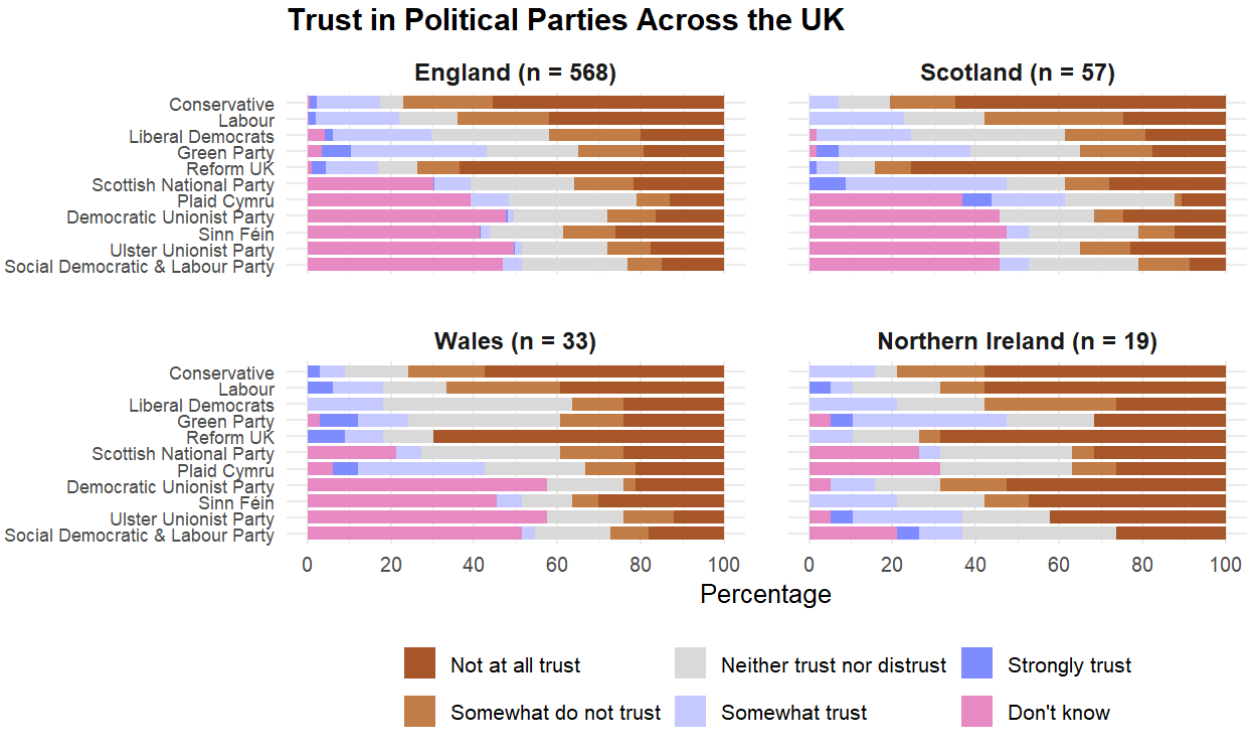

Figure 6.2 Responses indicating the extent to which participants trusted each political party, divided by country.

Figure 6.3 demonstrates respondents' party identification per country. The most common response across the UK in total was that participants did not identify with any political party (21%), followed closely by identification with the Labour Party (<21%). The Green Party was the third most frequently selected party (18%), followed by the Conservative Party (13%), Reform UK (12%), and the Liberal Democrats (8%). Comparing these findings with recent electoral outcomes is interesting. Although Reform UK has experienced considerable electoral success (YouGov, 2026), relatively few respondents in this study reported identifying with the party. This could indicate that support for Reform UK may be driven less by strong partisan identification and more by dissatisfaction with, or rejection of, other political parties. In other words, Reform UK voters may be motivated more by opposition to alternative parties than by a strong attachment to Reform UK itself. This is more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 7. Additionally, the strong positive responses towards the Green Party here are surprising in comparison to UK poll results looking at voting intentions (YouGov, 2026). While positive partisanship and voting intentions are two separate measures, the differences may indicate that the sample displays a social

desirability bias, based on respondents knowing that this study focuses on climate change, that Prolific generally includes more left-leaning respondents, or that more left-leaning respondents volunteered to participate in this study on climate.

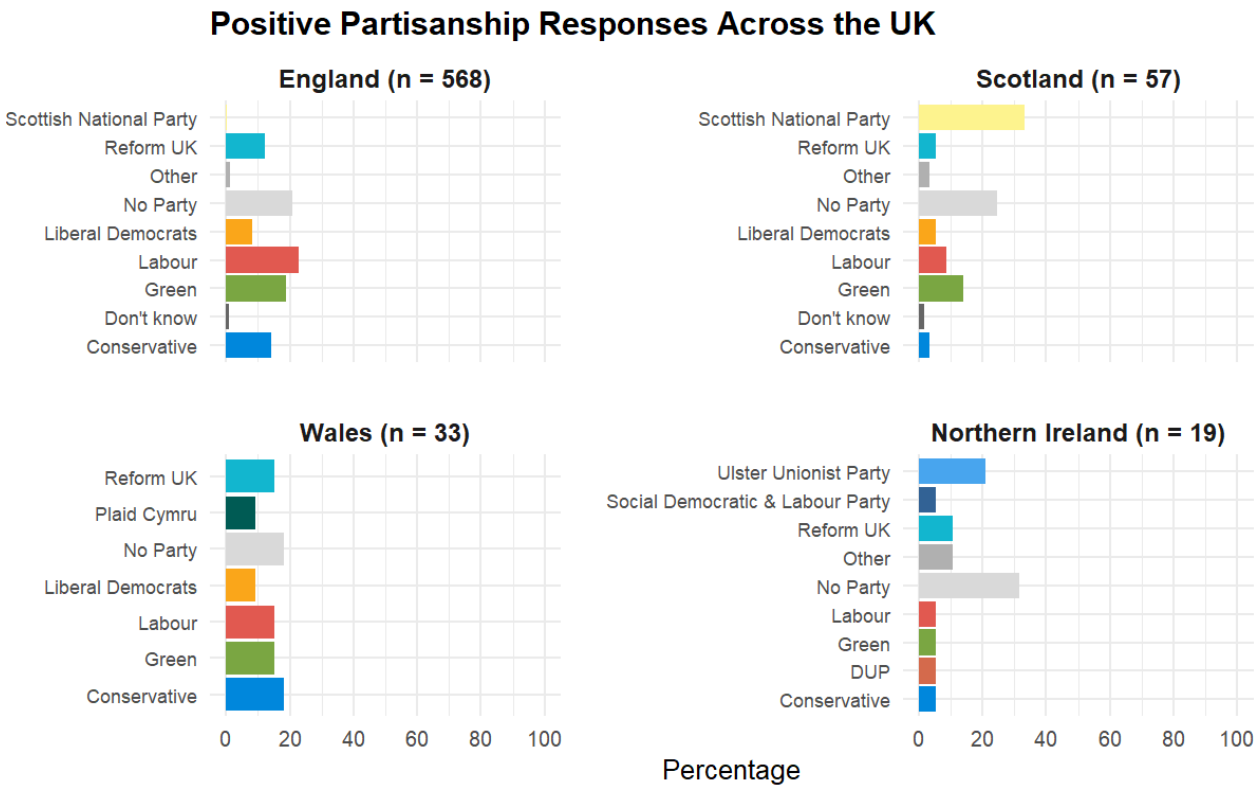

Figure 6.3 Percentage of individuals indicating they identify with the listed political party/ expressing positive partisanship or indicating they do not identify with any political party, in each country.

Figure 6.4 displays the political parties that respondents indicated as their least liked party across the countries. Overall, Reform UK was the most frequently selected least liked party, with 52.5% (n=356) of UK respondents indicating liking them least. The Labour Party, in government at the time of data collection, was the second most frequently selected option, with 24.3% (n=165) of UK respondents identifying them as their least liked party. The Conservative Party ranked third with 10.3% (n=70), Green fourth with 4.4% (n=30) and Liberal Democrats with 1% (n=7).

These findings differ somewhat from the patterns observed for the like–dislike and trust measures. While Reform UK and the Conservative Party received the most negative evaluations on those measures, Labour emerged as the second most disliked party when respondents were asked to identify a single least liked party. This could potentially be the case because they were forming the government at the time; Labour may have attracted greater political opposition, leading some respondents to view it as their least liked party

despite holding overall more negative affect towards the Conservatives. Another possible explanation is that there is a big overlap between those with negative affect towards Reform UK and the Conservatives, but, when it comes to the least liked party, that group of individuals has stronger negative evaluations of Reform UK, therefore choosing Reform UK as their least liked party over the Conservatives.

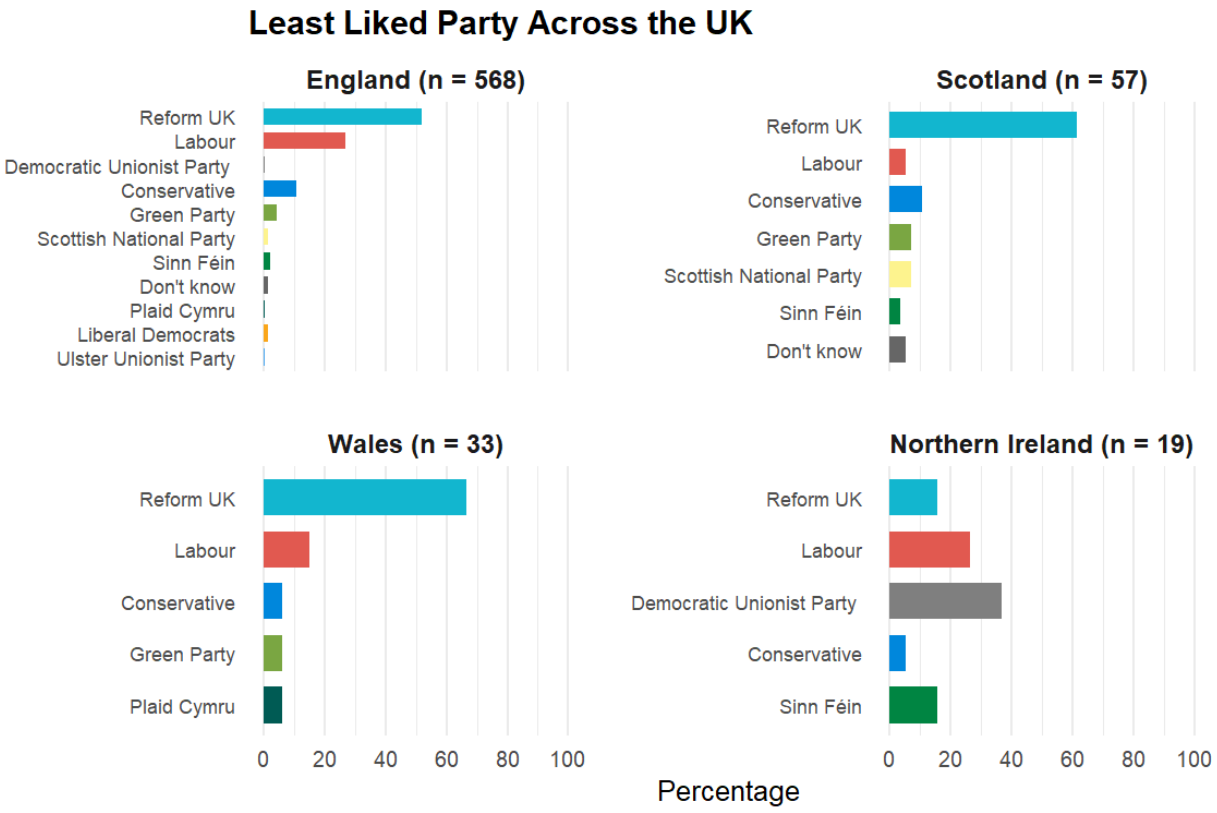

Figure 6.4 Percentage of respondents per country indicating which political party they chose as their least liked political party.

After identifying their least liked party, respondents completed the same Negative Partisanship Scale as used in Chapter 5. This scale conceptualises negative partisanship as a social identity and measures the key dimensions outlined in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1). Participants' responses can be seen in Figure 6.5. Overall, respondents were more likely to agree than disagree with most of the scale items regarding their least liked party. A somewhat notable exception was the first item, *"My day is ruined when the party does well"*, which received comparatively low levels of agreement and high levels of disagreement.

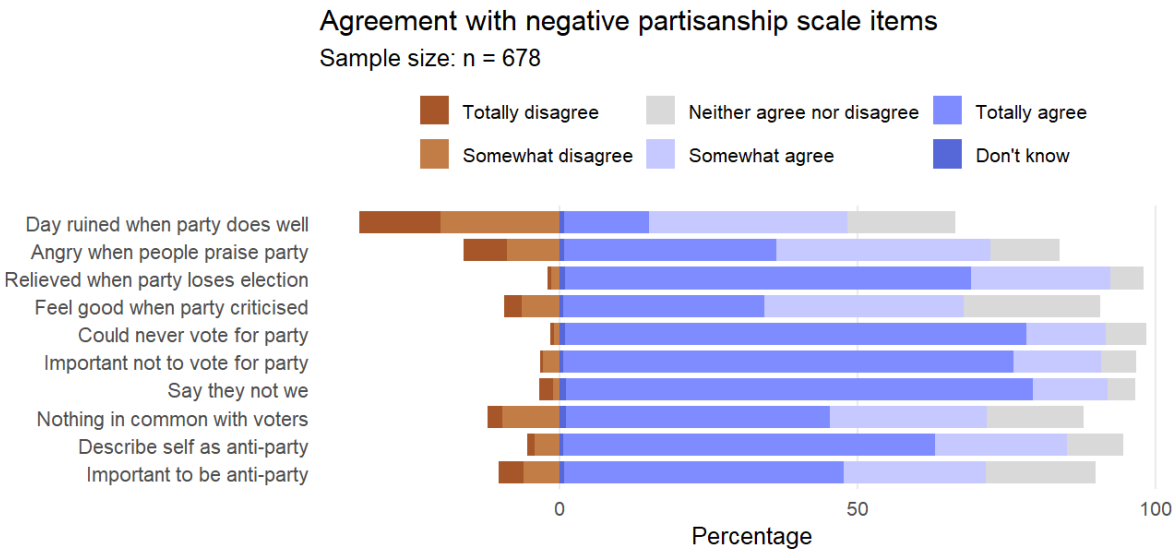

Figure 6.5 Responses to the Negative Partisanship Scale used in this study. The items represent the following identity dimensions: 'When this party does well in opinion polls, my day is ruined, 'I get angry when people praise this party', 'I am relieved when this party loses an election', 'When people criticize this party, it makes me feel good'– Emotional significance, 'Because of their worldviews, I could never vote for this party'– Worldview, 'It is important to me that I am not one of those that vote for this party'– Sense of Self, 'When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we', 'I have nothing in common with people voting for this party' – Group categorisation, 'I would describe myself as anti-[this party]' – Self-definition, 'It is important for me to be anti-[this party]' – Identity Salience.

The strongest levels of agreement were observed for statements relating to worldview, sense of self, and group categorisation, suggesting that respondents experience negative partisanship as closely connected to how they understand themselves and others. Similarly, the self-definition item received strong agreement, with more than 50% of respondents selecting *totally agree* and over 80% selecting either *somewhat agree* or *totally agree*. The identity salience item also attracted considerable agreement, with over 60% of respondents agreeing overall and almost 50% indicating they *totally agree*.

Wilcoxon tests for each survey dimension were conducted to investigate if median scores were above the neutral midpoint. This was repeated from Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1, as this data set was significantly larger and more representative of the UK population than the sub-sample from Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley. Survey items were summarised under the dimensions using mean scores. All dimensions' median scores were significantly higher than the neutral midpoint of three, with large effect sizes: emotional significance (V=186,244, p <.001, r=.71) worldview (V= 194,153, p<.001, r=.90), sense of self (V=199,024, p<.001, r=.89), group categorisation (V= 193,888, p<.001, r=.83), self-definition (V=180,299, p<.001, r=.82), and identity salience (V=136,251, p<.001, r=.67).

This indicates that respondents expressed strong agreement with the identity salience items across all dimensions.

To test whether the items also display good internal consistency and are appropriate to use as a scale, Cronbach's alphas were calculated. The overall scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a raw Cronbach's alpha of α = .89. Examining the reliability statistics of each individual item, the results suggest that removing individual items would not improve the overall reliability of the scale, with scores ranging from .87 to .88. The only item that received a score equal to that of the overall scale was 'When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we'' (α = .89), suggesting that its removal would have little effect on the scale's internal consistency.

When continuing to remove survey items to receive the shortest possible scale while retaining high internal consistency, the two items that remain with an overall raw Cronbach's alpha of α = .85 are the two items connected to self-definition ('I would describe myself as anti-[this party]') and identity salience ('It is important for me to be anti-[this party]'). These results are in line with correlation scores across the items, with the items scoring the highest average correlations with the other items (.533 and .532). A full correlation matrix can be found in Appendix 6. This indicates that, if a shortened version is needed, these two items could be appropriate to use in a UK context.

Taken together, the findings of the Wilcoxon tests and Cronbach's alpha scores provide support for conceptualising and measuring negative partisanship as a form of social identity rather than merely a negative affective orientation towards a political party. This suggests that the different dimensions that make up an identity (i.e. Emotional significance, Worldview, Sense of Self, Group Categorisation, Self-definition, Identity Salience) are clearly present and represented as part of negative partisanship. Therefore, the results align with the theoretical argument put forward in Chapter 3 that negative partisanship extends beyond simple partisan dislike and incorporates core dimensions of social identity.

Figure 6.6 presents responses to the Negative Partisanship Scale broken down by respondents' least liked party. The results indicate that the pattern of responses to the items varies depending on the party towards which negative partisanship is directed. In other words, negative partisanship does not appear to be expressed uniformly across different political outgroups.

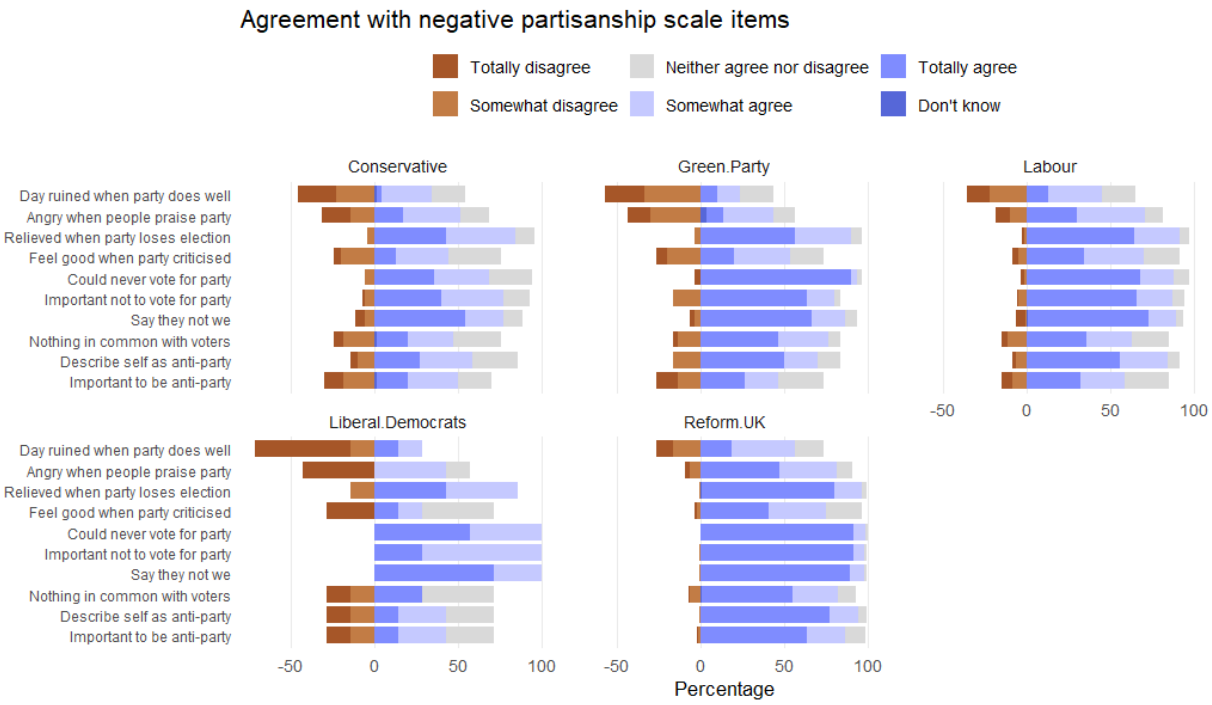

Figure 6.6 Responses to the Negative Partisanship Scale used in this study, broken down by respondents' least liked party.

Respondents whose least liked party was Reform UK generally displayed high levels of agreement across the scale items, with most responses falling into the somewhat agree or totally agree categories and relatively few respondents expressing disagreement. In contrast, responses among those indicating the Green Party as their least liked party were more varied. Although agreement remained common across most items, a larger proportion of respondents selected disagreement categories. This suggests that negative partisanship directed towards Reform UK may be both stronger and more consistently expressed across the different identity dimensions captured by the scale than negative partisanship directed towards the Green Party.

While Reform UK was identified as the least liked party by 356 respondents, Labour by 165 respondents, and the Conservatives by 70 respondents, only 30 respondents identified the Green Party, and just 7 respondents identified the Liberal Democrats as their least liked party. Consequently, the response distributions for the latter parties are based on relatively small samples and may be less reliable indicators of broader patterns of negative partisanship, although this does highlight that they generally elicit less negative affective and identity responses. Based on the small groups, no further analyses were conducted. However, the results suggest that the intensity and expression of negative

partisanship could differ according to the least liked party; for example, negative partisanship towards parties like Reform UK, or far-right political parties, could be stronger than for other parties. This exploration could be an interesting area for future research.

A question was designed to explore how relevant negative partisanship may be in a social context, i.e. if it may be a relevant social identity outside of a political context. Responses to a question on whether respondents would approve a loved one marrying different party supporters can be found in Figure 6.7. Responses differ between the different parties. Reform UK specifically receives the most negative responses, with 51% (n=343) of respondents indicating they would disapprove of their loved one marrying a Reform UK supporter, compared to 12% (n=83) approving, and only 33% indicating it would make no difference to them. The party that received the highest approval responses was the Green Party, with 31% (n=213) approving and only 9% (n= 62) disapproving, while 58% (n=390) indicated it made no difference to them. The differences in responses are interesting, as it seems that negative partisanship may play a role in a social context as well, with Reform UK specifically receiving the strongest negative responses.

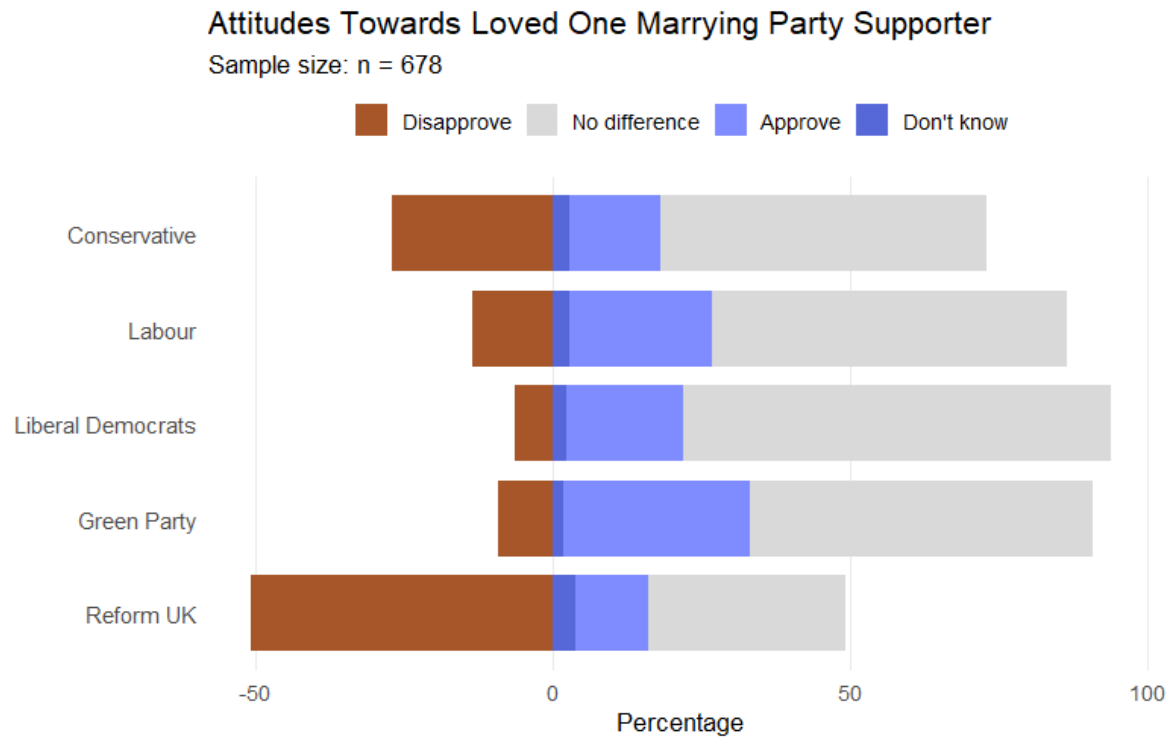

Figure 6.7 Responses to a question asking participants whether they would approve a loved one marrying different party supporters.

In summary, the results highlight that negative partisanship is a commonly expressed identity in the UK and can even play a role in a social context, with some individuals rejecting the idea of a loved one marrying certain party supporters. Negative partisanship

towards Reform UK seems specifically common, though there may be a left-leaning bias in the sample, as discussed. Nonetheless, the rejection of Reform UK could be a reflection of a general rejection of more 'extreme' parties, i.e. parties on the far-right or far left, which should be explored more directly in future research. These results clearly highlight the importance of including parties beyond Labour and the Conservatives in research on identity, which, promisingly, seems to be increasingly the case.

6.3.2 Research Question 2c) Can Changes to the Framing of the Policy Increase Support Despite Negative Partisanship?

The following analysis tests the central hypotheses of this study:

(H1) Negative partisanship influences climate policy support. Specifically, negative partisanship towards the party associated with a climate policy will have a negative effect on climate policy support.

(H2) People are more likely to support climate policies when the message is framed around economic benefits, compared to climate benefits.

(H3) An Economic framing can moderate the effects of negative partisanship on climate policy support. Specifically, the economic framing will lessen the negative effect of negative partisanship on climate policy support.

These three hypotheses were preregistered using OSF, which can be found here or using the DOI https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/RJ2TQ. These hypotheses were explored using attitudes towards fictional parties and fictional climate policies. Because of this, the full negative partisanship scale was not included for the fictional parties. Instead, a single item was included as a measure (I would describe myself as anti-[this party]'), based on previous recommendations by Areal (2024), to assess the presence of negative partisanship towards the fictional parties. Details on these can be found in Section 3.6.3.3, which provides detail on the manipulations and survey items included.

To test whether climate policy support was influenced by negative partisanship and/or policy framing, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted. This type of regression was chosen based on the nature of the ordinal response variable, which was presented to respondents as a 5-point Likert scale. Those who failed the manipulation check were excluded, leaving 678 respondents. A test of proportional odds (Brant) confirmed that parallel regression assumptions held up for the model, making this type of analysis appropriate for the data. Specifically, the omnibus test was non-significant, $\chi^2(18) = 18.75$, $p = .41$, indicating no overall evidence of a violation of the proportional-odds assumption.

The individual test for the fictional party condition was marginally significant, $\chi^2(3) = 8.13$, $p = .043$, suggesting a possible departure from proportional odds for this predictor; however, all other individual tests, including the negative partisanship × issue interaction, were non-significant (p values ≥ .29). As the omnibus Brant test was non-significant, the proportional-odds assumption was considered sufficiently satisfied to retain the ordinal logistic regression approach, despite the marginally significant result for the fictional party condition. The experimental variables were retained because assessing their effects, including potential interactions with negative partisanship, was central to the experimental research question, whereas there was insufficient evidence of a substantial violation to warrant changing the model specification.

Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs). The VIFs ranged from 1.16 (Climate Change Beliefs (yes/no)) to 2.62 (interaction term: Negative Partisanship towards fictional party (dummy coded) × Policy Framing). All values were below the commonly used threshold of 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in the model.

Negative partisanship towards the fictional party was measured using the 'I would describe myself as anti-(this party)'[9]. Likert scale responses were dummy coded into no negative partisanship (0) and negative partisanship (1). Climate change beliefs and environmental concern were included as control variables to ensure findings for negative partisanship were not actually due to differences in the other variables. Positive Partisanship was not included as a control variable, as including it in the model led to a failed Brant test ($\chi^2(39) = 65.63$, $p < .001$). Looking at the predictor-specific tests, this violation likely stems from the Reform UK category ($\chi^2(3) = 19.37$, $p < .001$). In contrast to the Brant test in Chapter 4, positive partisanship was excluded because it served primarily as a control variable rather than being central to the research question addressed in this model. Given the significant violation of the proportional-odds assumption, which appeared to be driven primarily by the Reform UK category, prioritising the appropriateness and robustness of the model specification was considered more important than retaining this additional control variable.

[9] Data to test these hypotheses was collected in the same study as the data on the full negative partisanship scale shown in Figure 6.5, which was evaluated in Section 6.3. Therefore, while Section 6.3 recommends using two survey items as a shorter scale, this could not yet be applied here. Instead, the previous recommendation from Areal (2024) was followed, using the 'I would describe myself as anti-[this party]' item to assess the presence of negative partisanship towards the fictional parties used here.

Descriptives for positive partisanship can be seen in Figure 6.3. Concern about environmental issues was captured by asking participants, 'Generally speaking, how concerned are you about environmental issues?', with response options ranging from 1 (not at all concerned) 1 to 5 (very concerned), with a median score of 4 and a mean of 3.78.

Climate change belief was measured with 'Do you believe in climate change?' yes or no responses, with 87.02% (n=590) individuals selecting yes, 6.64% (n=45) no, and 6.19% (n=42) don't know. Those who responded with 'Don't know' were treated as missing to compare those who believe or do not believe in climate change.

Evidence from the ordinal logistic regression provides support for H1, but not for H2 or H3, as shown in Table 6.1. Specifically, Negative Partisanship towards the fictional party associated with the policy is associated with less support for the climate policy (H1: b= -1.42, p<.001). The framing of the policy itself was not found to have a significant effect on policy support (H2: b= -0.22, p=.25). While the interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing was significant (: b= 0.71, p<.05), the environmental framing condition seemed to have received more support compared to the economic framing condition. Therefore, H3 was not supported.

Table 6.1 Results of an ordinal logistic regression of policy support on the predictor and control variables. n=678

	Value	Std. Error	t value	p value
Fictional Party Condition (1=Party B – right-leaning, 0=Party A – left-leaning)	0.30	0.17	1.73	0.08
Negative Partisanship towards fictional party (1=negative partisanship, 0= no negative partisanship)***	-1.42	0.24	-5.83	< .001
Policy Framing (1=environmental framing, 0=economic framing)	-0.22	0.19	-1.15	0.25
Climate Change Beliefs (1=yes, 0=no)***	1.48	0.34	4.30	< .001
Environmental Concern ***	0.66	0.09	7.57	< .001
Interaction: Negative Partisanship towards fictional party x Policy Framing*	0.71	0.32	2.25	0.02
Notes: *p-value <0.05, **p-value <0.01, ***p-value <0.001				

To make the interpretation and direction of the results easier, the odds ratios and corresponding confidence intervals of the same analysis are further visualised in Figure 6.8.

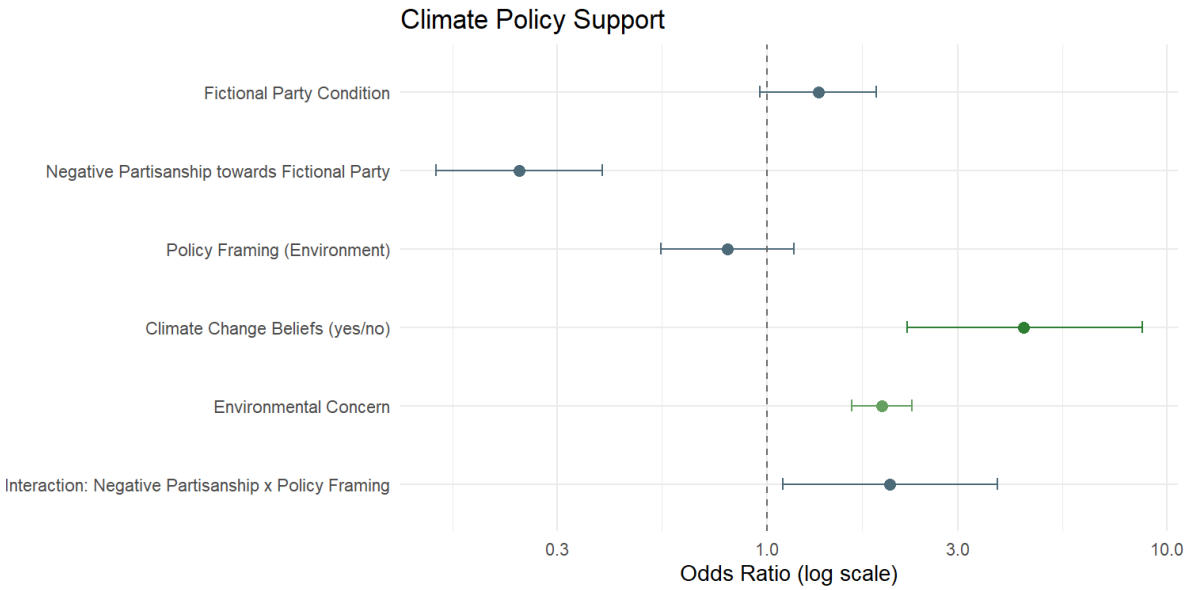

Figure 6.8 Odds ratios and confidence intervals of a regression model investigating the influence of fictional party condition, negative partisanship towards the fictional party, policy framing, climate change beliefs, environmental concern, and an interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing on climate policy support.

To further disentangle the results of the interaction effect between negative partisanship and policy framing, means of policy support were calculated for each of the different interactions between negative partisanship (yes or no), fictional party condition (Party A – left-leaning or Party B – right-leaning), and policy framing condition (economic or climate). This allowed to see the directions of each of the effects separately.

Table 6.2 presents the mean level of fictional policy support across the different combinations of negative partisanship, fictional party condition, and policy framing condition. The means indicate substantial differences between Party A and B. Specifically, among Party A (left-leaning) respondents, negative partisanship is associated with noticeably lower policy support under both economic and environmental framing, with mean support declining from 1.15 to -1.00 under the economic policy frame, and from 1.10 to -0.66 under the environmental policy frame. This is not the case among respondents exposed to Party B (right-leaning). Mean support was similar for those with and without negative partisanship under the economic frame (0.74 and 0.80), while support was higher for negative partisans under the environmental policy frame (1.05 versus 0.45). This suggests that policy support differs depending on who individuals

express negative partisanship towards (i.e. Party A or B); specifically, those with negative partisanship towards Party A (left-leaning) on average did not support the policy, while those with negative partisanship towards Party B (right-leaning) on average were supportive of the policy. Issue framing also seemed to matter (economic or environmental), with the environmental framing receiving more support among negative partisans of Party B. Moreover, among Party B respondents who did not express negative partisanship, the economic framing was associated with higher levels of policy support than the environmental framing (0.74 versus 0.45), which suggests that economic framings may be more persuasive for those who may be more positive towards Party B.

Results should be interpreted with caution, as the number of individuals per group became relatively small, e.g. only 27 respondents expressed negative partisanship towards Party A (left-leaning) and received the economic framing condition. Therefore, it is suggested to repeat this study design with a much larger sample to understand the nuance between negative partisanship towards different parties and policy framings, to be able to inform which policy message may be more persuasive for what type of sub-group.

Table 6.2 Mean scores of fictional policy support, divided by policy condition, party condition, and expressed negative partisanship towards the fictional party.

Negative partisanship	Party	Econ	Env
No	A	**1.15**	**1.10**
No	B	**0.74**	**0.45**
Yes	A	**−1.00**	**−0.66**
Yes	B	**0.80**	**1.05**

To aid the interpretation of the results from Table 6.2, the results are further visualised in Figure 6.9, showing the means with the corresponding bootstrapped confidence intervals. This figure visualises a potential shortcoming of this study: that people may perceive an incongruence in the messaging from Party B, such that it makes the condition less credible; i.e., people may not believe a party like Party B wants to increase renewable energy and tackle climate change. To test whether this is the case, future research could run a similar study, using immigration as the policy messaging theme, to see if similar patterns towards Party A may appear.

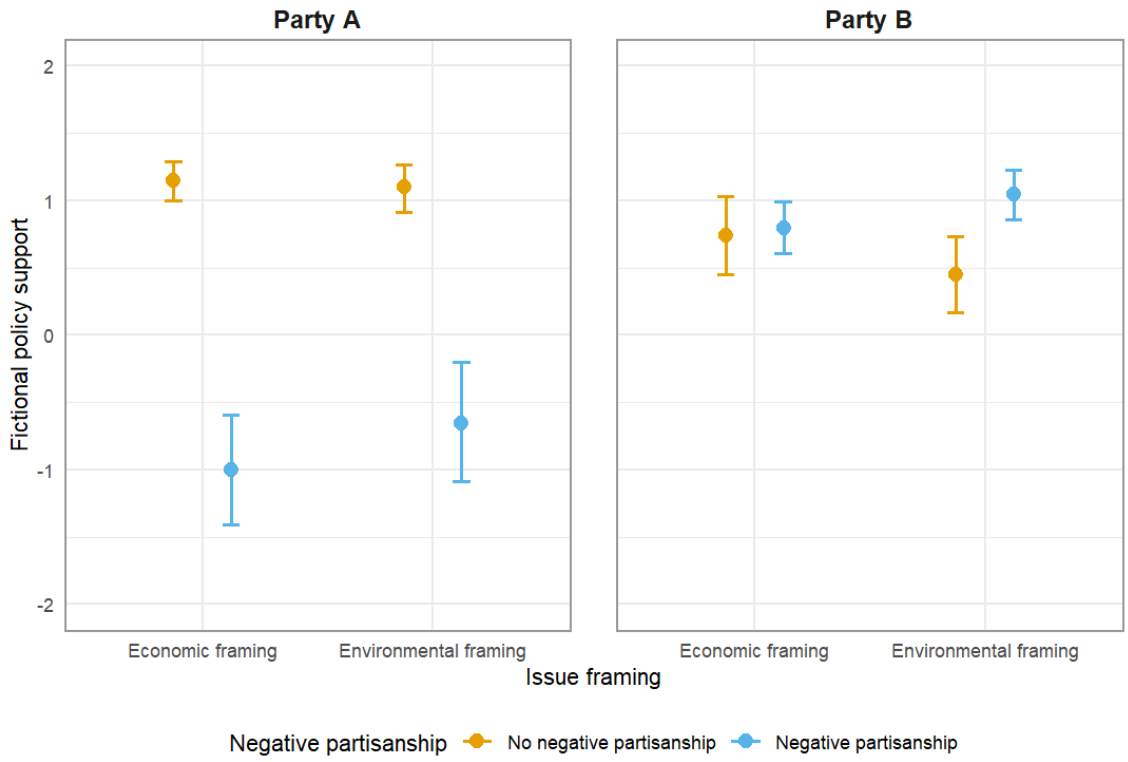

Figure 6.9 Means and bootstrapped confidence intervals demonstrating differences in fictional policy support between those exposed to Party A – left-leaning (left) and Party B – right-leaning (right), and economic or environmental policy framing. Yellow boxplots show results for those not expressing negative partisanship while blue boxplots show results for those who express negative partisanship towards the fictional party. Means are represented by the diamonds.

In summary, the results highlight that negative partisanship towards the party proposing the policy does lower policy support, and that there is a significant interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing. However, this interaction differs from what was hypothesised (see Section 6.3.2). More specifically, those expressing negative partisanship towards party A (based on the Green Party) were less supportive of the policy compared to those who expressed negative partisanship towards party B (based on Reform UK). For those expressing negative partisanship, the environmental framing received more support compared to the economic framing, across both party conditions (A and B). Interestingly, the economic framing received more support among those who did not express negative partisanship towards party B (and marginally towards Party A as well). This indicates that framing may matter depending on the audience.

6.3.3 Research Question 1c) How does Negative Partisanship Relate to Trust in Political Parties?

The second research question this analysis aimed to answer was how negative partisanship and trust in political parties relate to each other. This research question was

based on findings of Study 2 discussed in Chapter 5, which examined the relationship between trust and negative partisanship. Specifically, interview findings suggested that individuals may hold negative partisanship towards the same parties which they deeply distrust, based on underlying ideologies they perceive (see Chapter 5 section 5.3.2.2).

Revisiting Figures 6.1 and 6.2, Likert-scale ratings of trust broadly mirrored the patterns observed for the like–dislike measures. Reform UK and the Conservative Party received the highest levels of a lack of trust, followed by the Labour Party. The alignment of these results could indicate that participants' levels of trust in political parties may be aligned with their affective evaluations of those parties. To test whether trust and negative affect are evaluated the same way, Spearman's rhos were calculated per party. Table 6.3 presents the results. The Spearman's rank-order correlations indicated strong positive associations between trust and affect across all five parties. The strongest association was observed for trust and affect towards Reform UK ($\rho = .91$, $p < .001$), followed by Labour ($\rho = .86$, $p < .001$), Green Party ($\rho = .835$, $p < .001$), Conservative ($\rho = .81$, $p < .001$), and Liberal Democrats ($\rho = .73$, $p < .001$). These strong correlations highlight that there seems to be a strong connection between how much individuals like and trust the political parties. While this does not test whether trust and negative partisanship are related, the results suggest that there might be a connection between the emotional dimension of negative partisanship and trust.

Table 6.3 Spearman's rho correlations between trust and affect Likert-Scale responses per political party.

Party	**Spearman's rank correlation (rho)**	**p-value**
Conservative	.81	< .001
Labour	.86	< .001
Green Party	.84	< .001
Liberal Democrats	.73	< .001
Reform UK	.91	< .001

To investigate the relation between trust and negative partisanship in this experiment, respondents were asked about how much they would agree with the following statement about the fictional party: 'I would trust this party'. Responses ranged from (-2) totally disagree to (2) totally agree. The median response for Party A – left-leaning was (0) neither agree nor disagree, with a mean of 0.10. For Party B – right-leaning, the median response

was (-1) somewhat disagree, with a mean of -0.85. Fictional party trust was treated as continuous to examine whether the degree of trust in the party made a difference.

As correlational analyses between affect and trust already showed that evaluations of parties and trust are related[10], a paired-samples t-test was conducted to assess whether participants' scores on fictional party trust differed from their scores on negative partisanship towards the fictional party, to assess if there is a meaningful difference between the two variables. The analysis found no statistically significant difference between the two measures, $t(667) = -1.32$, $p = .187$. The mean difference was −0.15 points (95% CI [−0.36, 0.07]), indicating that fictional party trust scores were marginally lower on average, although the confidence interval included zero. Thus, evidence suggests that the two measures do not differ systematically. To test whether trust can also explain the same variance as negative partisanship in policy support, responses to the above-described question of trust in the fictional party were added to the ordinal logistic regression model outlined in section 6.3.2 above.

A test of proportional odds (Brant) confirms that parallel regression assumptions hold for the model. Specifically, the omnibus test was non-significant, $\chi^2(21) = 21.62$, p = .42, providing no evidence that the assumption was violated. The assumption was also supported at the individual-predictor level, with no individual test reaching statistical significance (all p-values≥ .09). Notably, there was no evidence of non-proportionality for the interaction term of negative partisanship × policy framing, $\chi^2(3) = 0.22$, p = .97.

Multicollinearity was assessed, with VIFs ranging from 1.15 (Climate Change Beliefs (yes/no))) to 3.48 (Negative Partisanship towards fictional party (dummy coded)). All VIFs were below 5, indicating no evidence of problematic multicollinearity.

When trust in the fictional parties was added to the ordinal logistic regression model, the previously significant effects of negative partisanship became non-significant (b= -0.50, p=.10), while trust towards the fictional party did have a significant effect (b=0.47, p<.001) (see Table 6.3). The interaction term between negative partisanship and policy framing remained significant (b=0.74, p<.05). The full model can be seen in Table 6.4, with odds ratios being plotted in Figure 6.10. This suggests that there is a substantial degree of overlap between trust and negative partisanship, indicating that the explanatory power of

[10] As affect represents one of the dimensions of negative partisanship, which is why many have opted to use negative affect as a proxy measure for negative partisanship, running another correlational analysis would not have added additional information. Therefore, a t-test was conducted, and trust was included in the regression model to further assess the relationship through different methods.

negative partisanship may, at least in part, be captured by levels of trust in a party. Because the sample was not large enough, the effects between party trust and the interaction term could not be disentangled further in a meaningful way. This suggests that this study should be repeated with a much larger sample size, to understand these relationships in more detail. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Table 6.4 Results of an ordinal logistic regression of policy support on the predictor and control variables, including trust towards the fictional party. n=678

	Value	Std. Error	t value	p value
Fictional Party Condition (1=Party B – right-leaning, 0=Party A – left-leaning)*	0.47	0.18	2.66	.01
Negative Partisanship towards fictional party (1=negative partisanship, 0= no negative partisanship)	-0.50	0.30	-1.66	.10
Policy Framing (1=environmental framing, 0=economic framing)	-0.25	0.20	-1.28	0.20
Degree of trust towards fictional party ***	0.47	0.09	5.32	$p < .001$
Climate Change Beliefs (1=yes, 0=no)***	1.51	0.35	4.34	$p < .001$
Environmental Concern ***	0.65	0.09	7.34	$p < .001$
Interaction: Negative Partisanship towards fictional party x Policy Framing*	0.74	0.32	2.34	0.02
Notes: *p-value <0.05, **p-value <0.01, ***p-value <0.001				

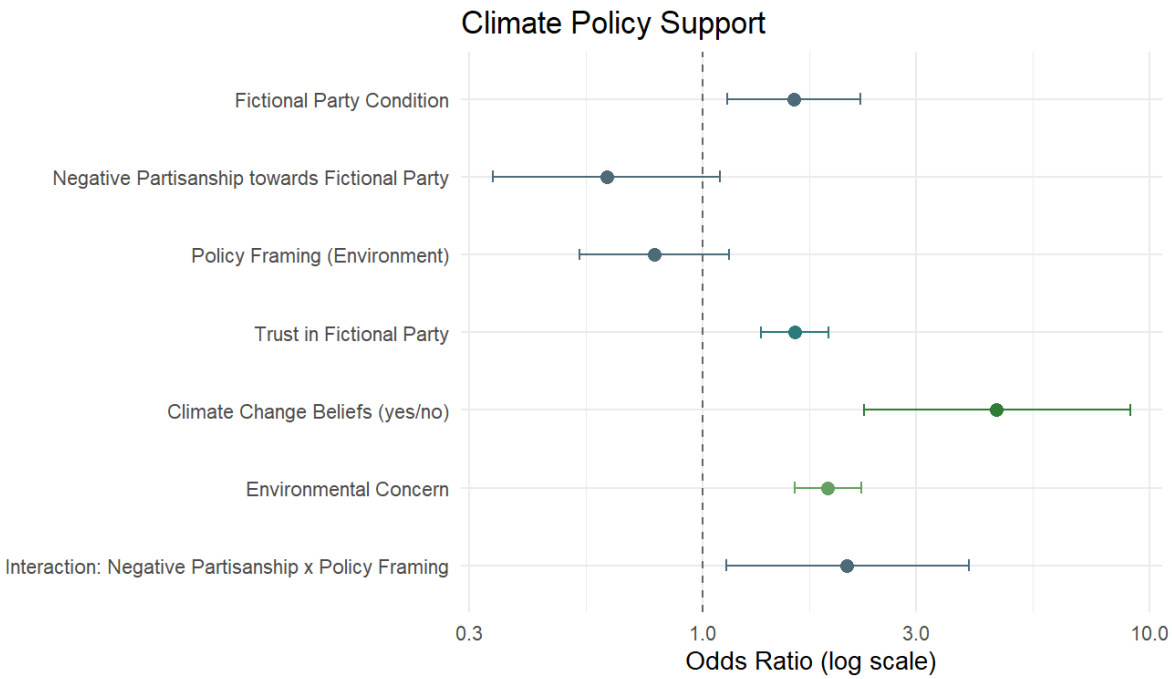

Figure 6.10 Odds ratios and corresponding confidence intervals of a regression model investigating the influence of fictional party condition, negative partisanship towards the fictional party, policy framing, trust in the fictional party, climate change beliefs, environmental concern, and an interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing on climate policy support.

This is interesting, as it indicates a significant overlap between political trust and negative partisanship, potentially indicating that negative partisanship develops out of low trust, or that negative partisanship potentially causes low trust, or both. As this analysis was conducted with fictional parties, the generalisation of the results should be done with caution.

6.4 Exploratory Analyses

During the case study in Mid Suffolk (Chapter 5), the comparison between urban and rural populations was made repeatedly. Specifically, a narrative in the media persisted which labelled rural populations as NIMBYists who were blocking renewable energy progress (Rowlatt, 2025). Based on this, the interest arose in understanding if there actually are differences in support between rural and urban populations when it comes to renewable energy in the UK.

Figure 6.12 shows those who totally and somewhat agree or totally and somewhat disagree with four different statements about renewable energy. Overall, support for renewable energy in the UK is evident. Around 30.8% (n=209) totally agree and 38.1% (n=258) somewhat agree, that renewable energy produced in the UK can lower energy prices, 40.7% (n=276) totally agree, and 36.4% (n=247) somewhat agree that renewable

energy can help us tackle climate change, only 6.8% (n=46) totally agree and 20.6% (n=140) somewhat agree that renewable energy can have negative consequences for the local environment, and 48.7% (n=330) totally and 31.4% (n=213) somewhat support an increase in renewable energy developments in the UK.

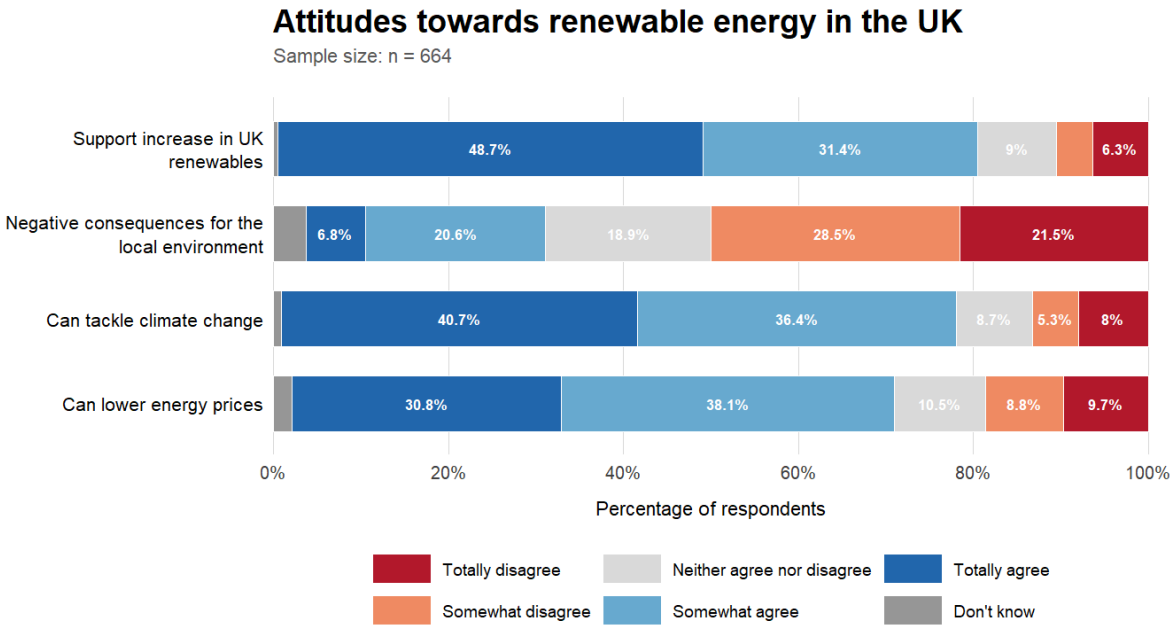

Figure 6.12 Responses to four questions assessing respondents' attitudes towards renewable energy, including whether they support an increase in UK renewables, whether they believe renewables can have negative consequences for the local environment, whether renewables can help tackle climate change, and whether renewables can lower energy prices.

To compare responses from urban and rural populations, the following question regarding the participants' area or residence was included: 'Which description fits the area you live in the best?'. Responses were summarised into two categories: Urban (including answers 'An inner city area', 'A suburban area' and 'A town') and Rural ('A village ' and 'Rural or countryside').

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted for each of the four survey items shown in Figure 6.12, comparing responses from urban and rural respondents. The tests found no statistically significant differences between rural and urban respondents across any of the four renewable-energy measures. This was the case for beliefs that renewable energy can help tackle climate change, $t(263.06) = -0.36$, $p = .718$ (rural $M = 0.94$; urban $M = 0.98$); beliefs that it can have negative consequences for the local environment, $t(258.49) = 0.31$, $p = .760$ (rural $M = -0.36$; urban $M = -0.40$); beliefs that it can lower energy prices, $t(267.16) = -0.83$, $p = .406$ (rural $M = 0.66$; urban $M = 0.75$); and support for increasing renewable

energy developments in the UK, $t(263.76) = -0.72$, $p = .473$ (rural $M = 1.07$; urban $M = 1.14$). This is in contrast to the widely spread narrative in the media, portraying rural populations as 'naysayers' halting the energy transition and national growth, a sentiment mirrored by Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister at the time (Rowlatt, 2025).

Additional descriptive analyses were conducted for the subgroup of participants who reported identifying with Reform UK (n = 80). The results can be viewed in Figure 6.13. While the overall attitudes were less positive compared to the national sample, as expected, there was a significant proportion of Reform UK Partisans who supported an increase in UK renewables (20% totally, 28.7% somewhat) and who believed renewables could lower energy prices (17.5% totally, 21.2% somewhat). This finding is notable, as it appears to contrast with Reform UK's stated opposition to Net Zero policies and its scepticism towards renewable energy (BBC News, 2025; Nevett & Farley, 2025).

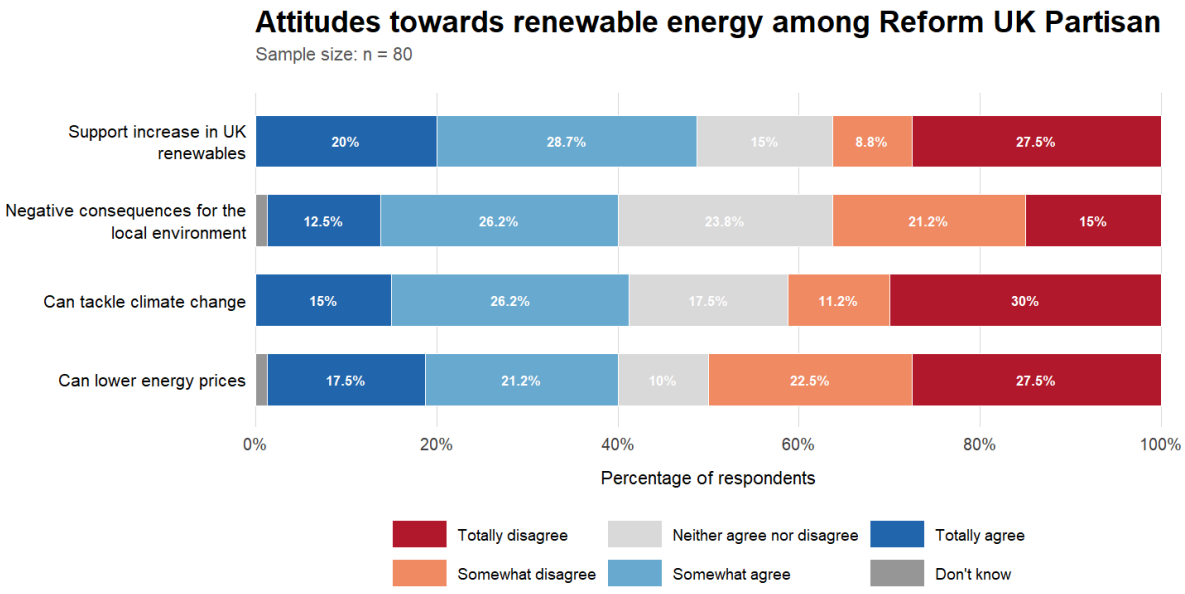

Figure 6.13 Responses to four questions assessing respondents' attitudes towards renewable energy, this time only including responses from Reform UK Partisans

To support results from Chapter 4, the ordinal logistic regression analysis was repeated using a sub-sample only containing those who identified with no party at all, i.e. who did not hold any positive partisanship[11]. The results can be seen in Table 6.5. In support of

[11] It was not possible to repeat the entire analysis from Chapter 4 with this data set, as the sample was not large enough and positive partisanship could not be added into the model without issues with the proportional odds assumption. This would have been valuable, as it would have given more

results from Chapter 4, negative partisanship does play a significant role in individuals' climate policy preferences (b = −1.82, p < .001), with those expressing negative partisanship being less likely to support the policy. Interestingly, policy framing was significant as well (b = −0.83, p = .047), with exposure to the environmental frame being associated with lower levels of policy support. The interaction term between negative partisanship and policy framing was not statistically significant (b = 0.89, p = .208).

Table 6.5 Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis among Non-Partisans (n= 145)				
Predictor	**Value**	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Fictional Party Condition	0.54	0.36	1.52	.13
Negative Partisanship towards fictional party (dummy coded)***	−1.82	0.52	−3.53	< .001
Policy Framing*	−0.83	0.42	−1.99	<.05
Climate Change Beliefs (yes/no)	0.84	0.69	1.22	.22
Environmental Concern **	0.60	0.18	3.24	<.01
Interaction: Negative Partisanship towards fictional party x Policy Framing*	0.89	0.71	1.26	.21
Notes: *p-value <0.05, **p-value <0.01, ***p-value <0.001				

In summary, the exploratory analyses indicate that there is generally no difference in support for renewable energy across rural and urban populations. This is in line with findings from Chapter 5, which found that rural populations are generally in favour of renewable energy developments, but raise important local issues with the implementation which have not yet been picked up on properly by decision-makers (see Chapter 5. Section 5.3.2.2). Additionally, a significant portion of Reform UK voters seem favourable towards renewable energy as well, raising the question of why they are supporting Reform UK, a party which campaigns on the opposite. However, this likely goes back to the conversation of climate change being *an* issue rather than *the most important* issue, which was explored in Chapter 5 Section 5.3.2.2, where individuals in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley reflected that climate change is important to them, but not the most pressing issue.

Additionally, a replication of an analysis in Chapter 4 (where negative affect was used as a proxy measure) shows that negative partisanship is a significant predictor of climate

evidence to support that negative partisanship is not indeed a sub-category of party affiliation, and how it interacts with positive partisanship, while using negative partisanship specific measure, rather than negative affect as a proxy.

policy support in non-partisans. With 21% of the sample indicating they do not identify with any party, the results highlight the importance of considering negative partisanship in public decision-making.

6.5 Conclusion

This study was designed to respond to two research questions: (1) Can changes to the framing of the policy increase support despite negative partisanship, and (2) How does negative partisanship relate to trust in political parties. With that, this study explores some of the research gaps outlined in Chapter 2, including the consequences of negative partisanship (see section 2.3.4), and how negative partisanship influences climate policy support in different groups (see section 2.4.1). It does so by exploring how framing and perception of the party (messenger) interact.

Results highlight that negative partisanship is a commonly expressed identity in the UK and can even play a role in a social context, with some individuals rejecting the idea of a loved one marrying certain party supporters. In this sample, negative partisanship was predominantly expressed towards Reform UK, potentially reflecting greater hostility towards far-right parties. However, this requires further investigation, as the sample presented here may have a left-leaning bias, indicated by strong positive responses towards the Green Party, and/or social desirability bias, given the study's climate focus.

Additionally, negative partisanship towards a party proposing a climate policy does lower policy support; specifically, those expressing negative partisanship towards a left-leaning party were less supportive of the policy compared to those who expressed negative partisanship towards a right-leaning party. The interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing was significant as well, with different negative partisan groups responding differently to an economic versus environmental frame.

This study also explored the relation between negative partisanship and trust, with results highlighting that negative identities may be related to a lack of trust in political parties and potentially the wider system.

Lastly, exploratory analyses indicate that there generally is no difference in support for renewable energy across rural and urban populations, and that a significant portion of Reform UK voters are favourable towards renewable energy.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the nature of negative partisanship and its role in climate policy support. This thesis directly addresses the research gaps outlined in Chapter 2, i.e. (1) the lack of an agreed-upon definition, (2) the application of theories developed for different contexts, (3) the absence of an agreed-upon measure, (4) limited understanding of its consequences, and (5) a heavy reliance on evidence from US-based studies. The setting of this research in the UK provides a unique context in a democracy that has been moving away from a two-party-favouring system to one that is becoming increasingly multi-party.

The research in this thesis responds to these gaps in the form of three empirical studies, each addressing specific sub-questions of the two overarching research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do current theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship?

RQ2: What are the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support?

This Chapter discusses the findings of the thesis and considers how they contribute to addressing its research questions. The chapter begins by addressing RQ1, revisiting the gaps identified in Chapter 2, and discussing the findings in relation to each sub-question. It concludes by summarising how the three sub-questions collectively contribute to answering RQ1. The same approach is then applied to RQ2.

7.2 RQ1: To What Extent do Current Theories and Measures Capture Key Aspects of Negative Partisanship?

The first central research question acknowledges the gaps around how to define negative partisanship, which theories are appropriate to apply, and how negative partisanship should be measured. The following sections outline the results of the three empirical chapters (Chapter 4, 5, and 6) and their corresponding research sub-questions. These findings are combined to answer their overarching research question.

7.2.1 How does Negative Partisanship Interact with Positive Partisanship?

Using negative affect as a proxy for negative partisanship, Chapter 4 explicitly explored how negative partisanship interacts with positive partisanship. Specifically, this study aimed to understand if positive and negative partisanship are indeed parts of party

affiliation (as theorised by Mayer & Smith, 2023), or if negative partisanship may also play a role in non-partisans (as highlighted by Bankert, 2024).

The results of Chapter 4 clearly highlight that negative partisanship, here measured through negative affect as a proxy, can exist independent of positive partisanship and can interact with it. While Mayer and Smith (2023) suggest a connection between positive and negative partisanship as subcomponents of party affiliation, the findings of this study indicate that these constructs may operate independently, especially in a multi-party context.

Specifically, results show that in non-partisans, negative affect towards the Conservative Party or Brexit Party was associated with preferences for environmental protection, while negative affect towards the Green Party was associated with prioritisation of economic growth. These results were replicated in Chapter 6 (see Table 6.5), using different control variables and a negative partisanship-specific measure, rather than negative affect as a proxy. In this analysis with non-partisans, negative partisanship towards the party associated with the climate policy presented was associated with less support for the policy, while controlling for climate change beliefs and environmental concern. Results with the non- partisan sub-group did differ slightly compared to the model which included partisans and non-partisans, which is discussed in more detail in section 7.3.3.

The significant association between negative affect and policy preferences found in the first empirical study (Chapter 4) among both partisans and non-partisans suggests that positive partisanship and negative affect can operate independently. This finding supports the notion that these are distinct constructs, particularly in multi-party systems, i.e., negative affect can exist without positive partisanship. This is in line with research conducted by Röllicke (2023) in the context of affective polarisation, where she argues that positive in-group and negative out-group evaluations can be related, but can also exist and act independently. Röllicke (2023) also finds that affective evaluations can be, but do not have to be, connected to identification, meaning positive affect does not necessarily mean positive identification, and negative affect does not necessarily mean negative identification.

Moreover, the evidence presented in both Chapters 4 and 6 not only points towards defining negative partisanship as an independent social identity, following Bankert (2021), Mayer & Russo (2023) and Areal (2022, 2024), but also helps to understand the role of negative partisanship in independent voters, as suggested by Bankert (2024). This, again, is in line with research by Röllicke (2023), who argues that negative evaluations do not

have to be 'two sides of the same coin' (Röllicke, 2023, p. 12), meaning the negative out-group evaluations do not have to stem from identifying or aiming to keep a positive image of an in-group.

Additionally, it was interesting that results differed across partisan groups in Chapter 4: negative affect towards the Liberal Democrats was associated with prioritising economic growth among Conservative partisans, whereas among Labour partisans it was associated with prioritising environmental protection. In Green partisans, negative affect towards other parties does not seem to be significantly associated with environmental policy preferences, with the exception of negative affect towards the Conservative Party (likely because Green partisans have strong views on the environment already). These results are discussed in more detail later in this Chapter in Section 7.3.1. This highlights that positive and negative partisanship may be able to interact with each other. As this was not explicitly tested in the regression models of the study as an interaction term, future research should explore this more explicitly. This could help us understand more of the nuances in individual policy preferences, which positive and negative partisanship alone cannot reflect.

However, an important limitation has to be acknowledged in relation to the research presented in Chapter 4: the use of negative affect as a proxy for negative partisanship. The purpose of this study was mainly to assess if investigating negative partisanship in a UK climate policy context was of value, and if exploring it as a standalone identity (i.e. presence in non-partisans) was feasible. This is why a pre-existing data set was chosen, rather than conducting a resource-intensive primary data collection, which would not have been able to provide the amount of data the BES was able to provide (i.e. 30.949 participants). The study in Chapter 4 was able to assess the research feasibility, but the findings from this study alone cannot tell us much about the nature of negative partisanship, nor its direct relation to climate policy support. Based on this, the following studies in Chapters 5 and 6 made sure to pick up on these shortcomings by using and testing negative partisanship-specific measures. Additionally, Chapter 6 was able to repeat some of the analyses conducted in Chapter 4, contributing to our understanding of how negative partisanship and climate policy preferences relate in non-partisans.

7.2.2 How do Individuals Experience Negative Partisanship, and What Underpins or Contributes to its Development?

The qualitative and quantitative data from the mixed-methods study presented in Chapter 5 provide evidence that individuals self-identify as negative partisans, providing further

evidence for defining negative partisanship as a distinct social identity. Moreover, the results showcase that individuals experience negative partisanship across the dimensions associated with social identities as outlined by SIA and ODT, including emotional significance, differing worldviews, sense of self, group categorisation, self-definition, and identity salience (see Chapter 3, Table 3.1 and Chapter 5, Figure 5.1). This affirms the conceptual and empirical utility of combining items from the scales developed and used by Bankert (2021), Mayer & Russo (2023) and Areal (2022, 2024), based on SIA and ODT, to elicit partisanship and its distinct categorisations.

However, the emotional dimensions seem to differ between negative partisanship elicited in this thesis and how identities are outlined by SIA and ODT. At the centre of these theories is a feeling of belonging and purpose connected with an ingroup, which negative partisanship may or may not provide (see section 7.3.2 for more detail). At the centre of negative partisanship, as emerged in the studies reported in this thesis, are negative emotional responses to the outgroup. However, an individual in study 2, reported in Chapter 5, also discussed feelings of hope when the outgroup was defeated, indicating negative partisanship may also be able to elicit some positive emotional responses.

The interviews in the second study provided nuance in how individuals experience negative partisanship and partisanship more broadly. Some individuals held both positive partisanship and negative affect towards a single party. This demonstrates that individuals distinguish between affect and partisanship, and points towards them needing to be measured independently, i.e. negative affect should not be used as a proxy measure for negative partisanship. Moreover, qualitative findings reveal that individuals might hold negative partisanship towards multiple parties. This raises the question of whether negative partisanship should always be conceptualised as a negative identity towards a single party, or if it could, in some cases, reflect a discontent with party selection more generally, or the wider political system. For example, Ridge (2022) finds that negative partisanship is linked to lower satisfaction with wider democracy. This, combined with the idea of negative voting (i.e. voting against, rather than for a party), also opens a wider discussion around political representation, where higher levels of political participation would not reflect citizens feeling parties represent their interests, but rather would be an indicator of citizens wanting to keep another party from gaining more power (Russo & Areal, 2025).

In addition to its significant role in political decision-making, negative partisanship also seems to be relevant in a social context. While previous research found that positive partisanship can act as a social identity (West & Iyengar, 2022), the studies presented in

this thesis suggest that negative partisanship may also manifest in this manner. In the second study, one respondent indicated cutting ties with friends based on opposing views, and some people indicated approving or disapproving of people close to them marrying individuals from certain political parties (see Figures 5.2 and 6.7). This is interesting in combination with findings from a study on online dating behaviour in the UK, which found that partisanship is as much a criterion for people when choosing a potential partner as conventional criteria, such as physical appearance (Sleiman et al., 2025). Specifically, the two groups included in this study (Labour and Conservative partisans) favoured dating a co-partisan; however, Labour partisans were twice as likely to do so compared to their conservative counterparts (Sleiman et al., 2025). These results suggest that positive and negative partisanship can shape dating behaviour, influencing not only individuals' own partner choices but also the extent to which they accept the relationship choices of others close to them.

Interestingly, the context in which the negative identity is expressed seems to matter as well. One respondent in the study conducted in Chapter 5 expressed negative partisanship towards Reform UK and distaste for their supporters, yet viewed their father, who belongs to that group, through a different identity lens, highlighting their care and respect for him. In other words, rather than purely perceiving the father as a Reform UK supporter, they were able to also see them through other identities, such as a close family member. This idea of context and potential identity salience could be explored further to see if it might provide an opportunity to mitigate out-group derogation created by negative partisanship. More details on this will be discussed in Chapter 8 in the context of positive intergroup contact.

The research presented in this thesis highlights the value of mixed methods for exploring negative partisanship. The interviews conducted as part of the second study enabled participants to describe their experiences of negative partisanship in their own words, providing additional context and depth to the quantitative survey findings. Moreover, in-person data collection and the option of a paper survey allowed for adjustments to be made to questions based on individuals' engagement with them, and provided a more in-depth understanding of the local context and views. However, the second study involved a relatively small number of survey and interview participants, limiting the extent to which its findings can be transferred beyond the case study context. Future research could replicate this mixed-methods design with a larger sample and across a wider range of contexts, as discussed further in Chapter 8.

7.2.3 How does Negative Partisanship Relate to Trust in Political Parties?

This research question was explored through the mixed-methods study presented in Chapter 5 and the Prolific survey study presented in Chapter 6. The mixed-methods study found that interview participants expressed a lack of trust in political parties, perceived parties towards which they expressed negative partisanship as having hidden agendas and indicated a desire to be represented by politicians who feel more approachable and relatable. This emerging relationship between political trust and negative partisanship was subsequently examined more explicitly in Chapter 6.

A connection between negative responses to political parties and diminished trust is not a new idea. Several studies link affective polarisation and the heightened focus on political identities in the public discourse with a decline in political trust (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018; Webster, 2018a). Investigating the relationship between affective polarisation and political trust, Torcal & Carty (2023) find that, specifically, out-group polarisation, or negative affect towards a political out-group, is associated with overall diminished political trust, outweighing the positive association between trust and positive affect towards the in-group. However, there is less research explicitly investigating trust and negative partisanship.

The results presented in Chapter 6 reveal a significant connection between trust and negative partisanship. Spearman's rank-order correlations reveal that negative affect and trust towards the political parties are significantly correlated with one another, indicating a strong overlap between the emotive dimension of negative partisanship and trust. A t-test comparing negative partisanship and trust towards the fictional parties showed no statistically significant difference between the two, clearly linking negative partisanship to a lack of trust in political parties. Additionally, the ordinal logistic regression models showed that negative partisanship towards a fictional party is a significant predictor of policy support, and its interaction with policy framing also plays a significant role (more about these results in section 7.3.3). When trust in the fictional party was added to the model, the previously significant effects of negative partisanship became non-significant (see Table 6.4). This finding suggests a substantial degree of overlap between trust and negative partisanship, indicating that the explanatory power of negative partisanship may, at least in part, be captured by levels of trust in a party. This is in line with the qualitative findings from Chapter 5. These results raise the question of the extent to which trust may be an antecedent or consequence of negative partisanship, and whether trust should be more directly reflected in negative partisanship scales. However, the results from Chapter

6 were conducted using fictional parties, rather than real-world parties. Therefore, a study exploring these elements with real UK political parties would contribute to this work.

Taken together, these findings from Chapters 5 and 6 indicate that trust and negative partisanship are closely related. This raises the question of whether a prolonged lack of trust in a political party may be a cause of negative partisanship, or if negative partisanship towards a political party may lead to low trust, or both. More research is needed to understand the relationship between negative partisanship and trust.

7.2.4 Answering RQ1: Negative Partisanship as an Identity

The first of the central research questions of this thesis aimed to improve understanding of how theories, concepts and measures may refine and specify key aspects of negative partisanship as an identity.

The findings discussed above lead to the following contributions to scholarly understanding:

- Negative partisanship is experienced as an identity and should be measured as such.
- Measures based on SIA and ODT are appropriate to use, aligning with how individuals experience negative partisanship across the central dimensions captured (i.e. emotional significance, differing worldviews, sense of self, group categorisation, self-definition, and identity salience) as developed by Bankert (2021), Mayer & Russo (2023) and Areal (2022, 2024), see section 7.2.2. This contrasts with work by Mayer & Smith (2023), who view negative partisanship as part of party affiliation.
- In the UK, the negative partisanship scale tested in this study could drop the 'When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we' item to shorten the scale and retain the same level of internal consistency. If a shorter scale is needed, for example to include in larger surveys, a two-item scale with two items connected to self-definition ('I would describe myself as anti-[this party]') and identity salience ('It is important for me to be anti-[this party]') could be used to retain a similar internal validity within a much shorter scale.
- However, some adjustment to SIA and ODT may have to be made to better align them with negative identities. The dimension of emotional significance may differ, with negative emotions being more central to negative partisanship than to its positive counterpart, which requires some adjustments to how SIA and ODT describe identities (i.e. need for inclusion, sense of belonging and purpose).

- Additionally, a strong relation between trust, negative affect, and negative partisanship raises the question of whether the inclusion of a trust item in the negative partisanship scale may be appropriate. Moreover, the relation could indicate that negative partisanship may develop out of low trust in political parties, or that negative partisanship potentially causes low trust, or both, potentially adding to our understanding of how and why negative partisanship may develop.
- Negative affect measures, such as like-dislike scales, alone are not an appropriate alternative to negative partisanship-specific measures. This is illustrated further by qualitative findings (Chapter 5), which show that positive partisanship and negative affect can be expressed towards the same party.
- Individuals may also express negative partisanship towards more than one party simultaneously, potentially linking negative partisanship to a dissatisfaction with the party options and the wider political system.
- Lastly, negative partisanship highlights a wider issue in the current political environment: a growing public distrust in parties, their underlying goals (or agendas), and what consequences those might have for the people themselves.

7.3 RQ2: What are the Consequences of Negative Partisanship for Climate Policy Support?

This research question specifically relates to the following research gaps on negative partisanship (as outlined in the introduction to this chapter and Chapter 2: limited understanding of its consequences, and a heavy reliance on evidence from US-based studies. The overarching question was broken down into three sub-questions. Findings that address these are discussed as follows.

7.3.1 Does negative partisanship play a role in climate and environmental policy support?

Findings from Chapter 4 reveal that negative partisanship does indeed play a role in climate and environmental policy support. In line with the hypotheses presented in Section 4.12, findings indicate that negative affect towards right-leaning parties is

[12] H1: Positive partisanship and negative affect of individuals in Great Britain will play a role in their climate and environmental policy preferences. More specifically:
o H1.1: Negative affect towards more left leaning parties (such as the Greens and Labour) and positive partisanship towards more right leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) will have a negative association with individuals' climate and environmental policy preferences.
o H1.2: Negative affect towards more right leaning parties (such as the Conservatives) and positive partisanship towards more left leaning parties (such as the Greens or Labour) will have a positive association with individuals' climate and environmental policy preferences.

associated with a higher likelihood of prioritising environmental protection over economic growth and indicating the environment as the most important issue facing the country. Conversely, negative affect towards left-leaning parties correlates with a lower likelihood of prioritising environmental protection and indicating the environment as the most important issue facing the country. These associations hold even when controlling for demographic factors, political attention, and individual left-right values. Interestingly, the Labour Party emerges as an outlier, where both positive partisanship and negative affect were associated with prioritising economic growth over environmental protection. This indicates results in line with positive partisanship with more right-leaning parties, where positive partisanship is associated with a lower likelihood of prioritising the environment. There are several possible explanations for why this might be the case. Recent work has demonstrated that individuals in Western Europe who record higher levels of environmentalism are less likely to support Social Democratic parties than those with lower levels of environmentalism (Kenny & Langsæther, 2023). Indeed, in a cross-European analysis on 2016/2017 data, Social Democrat voters were only marginally more likely to worry about climate change than Christian Democrat voters, in contrast to the notably higher levels of worry recorded by Left-Socialist and Green voters (S. D. Fisher et al., 2022). With the Labour Party falling into the category of a Social Democrat party, it might explain why individuals with positive partisanship seem to be more likely to prioritise economic growth over those targeting environmental protection. Interestingly, individuals who dislike the Labour Party are also more likely to prioritise economic growth. As seen in Figure 4.6, the only partisan group where negative affect was significantly associated with prioritisation of economic growth was among Conservative partisans. One explanation could be that Conservative partisans view Labour as an out-group and, with that, want to separate themselves from them. In combination with Labour being a party towards the political left, this could cause them to overestimate the environmental prioritisation of Labour supporters. While Labour supporters have been found to be more worried about climate change and more supportive of energy developments(Carter & Pearson, 2024), these might not necessarily translate into prioritising environmental protection over economic growth.

While the study explored negative affect rather than negative partisanship, the results can still indicate whether negative partisanship is linked to environmental policy preferences, as they clearly suggest a link between the emotive dimension of negative partisanship (i.e. negative affect).

In addition to negative affect towards the parties themselves, exploratory research also examined how affect towards the party leaders may relate to environmental protection preferences. This was done with the intention to explore whether individuals differentiate between parties and their leaders. The results reveal that negative affect towards left-leaning and right-leaning party leaders and their association with environmental protection versus economic growth preferences led to similar findings in line with the hypotheses for affect towards the parties. Specifically, negative affect towards the party leaders of the Conservatives and Brexit Party at the time (Boris Johnson and Richard Tice) was associated with a higher likelihood of preferring environmental protection, while negative affect towards the Labour, Liberal Democrats and Green Party leaders at the time (Keir Starmer, Ed Davey, and Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay) was associated with a lower likelihood.

While party leaders did not become a central research focus in this thesis, it is still relevant to discuss their potential connection to and influence on negative partisanship. As the results generally align with those of negative affect towards the parties themselves, this may suggest that individuals do not necessarily differentiate between party leaders and their parties. However, it could also indicate that affect towards the party leader may impact affect towards the party, or the other way around.

Research indicates that the impact of negative affect towards political leaders may vary by party type, with electors of catch-all parties (parties with this characteristic include members with a broad spectrum of beliefs) experiencing greater sensitivity to their leaders' influence (Costa Lobo, 2008). Important to note is also that research finds evidence for leader effects to increase simultaneously with the decline in party identification (Garzia et al., 2022). This indicates that there is a need for further research into how individual political elites influence public opinions and what role they might play in the development of negative partisanship.

7.3.2 How does Negative Partisanship Relate to Voting Behaviour and Climate and Environmental Policy Support in a Multi-Party Context?

Reviewing the results of Chapter 5, negative partisanship clearly seemed to play a role in individuals' voting choices, with many indicating their motivation to vote (for the Green Party specifically) was based on wanting to defeat rather than support a specific party. Previous research by Caruana et al. (2015) found a similar connection, although they used a negative affect measure and the question 'is there a party you would absolutely not vote for?' to capture negative partisanship, rather than negative partisanship-specific

measures or qualitative interviews as per the study presented in this paper. Based on the evidence discussed so far, negative affect and voting intention questions are not appropriate measures to capture negative partisanship (see section 7.2.4). The study discussed in Chapter 5 is therefore unique in that it directly explores the relationship between negative partisanship and voting, using a negative partisanship-specific measurement and qualitative interviews.

In addition to their voting motivation, respondents also indicated they would not automatically vote for the Green Party again, and they did not all identify as Green Partisans. This draws a clear connection between negative partisanship and voting choice, less connected to bipartisan competition and in-group favouritism. This contrasts with research by (A. P. Mayer & Smith, 2023), who define negative partisanship as a result, or sub-category, of party affiliation. However, party affiliation does not seem to be needed for negative partisanship to develop or influence voting decisions.

Individuals coming together behind one party to defeat another implies the potential for negative partisanship to provide a temporary, context-dependent in-group, formed through the goal of defeating an out-group party. This is interesting in the context of SIA and ODT, where the in-group builds a central element of a social identity and is linked to the need for inclusion and feelings of belonging and purpose. As raised in section 7.2.4, while SIA and ODT are generally applicable to negative partisanship, an issue around positive emotions and fulfilling the need for inclusion emerged. The evidence presented here suggests that negative partisanship may be able to temporarily fulfil some of these 'positive' elements. This points towards a clear direction for future research, which could explore this temporary in-group in more depth.

While the above outlines the relationship between negative partisanship and voting, the study presented in Chapter 5 also explicitly explored the connection between negative partisanship and climate and environmental policy support through mixed methods. One respondent who expressed negative partisanship towards the Green Party indicated they rejected Net Zero and other renewable energy policies, labelling them as anti-growth, even though they indicated having read evidence suggesting the opposite and citing their own environmental commitments. Based on this, there seems to be a potential connection between negative partisanship towards a party and rejecting policies they are associated with (in this specific case, despite personal values aligning with them). Section 7.3.3. discusses this in more detail.

Additionally, respondents also discussed their perception of hidden agendas of parties they expressed negative partisanship towards, indicating there might be a lack of trust that motivates them to reject the information supporting climate and environmental policies by the perceived outgroup party. This was also explored further in Chapter 6 and was discussed in section 7.2.3.

Considering the context in which the research of Chapter 5 was conducted, it is also important to discuss the unique position of rurality in climate policy. Beyond the discussion of general support for climate and environmental policies, the local energy infrastructure developments, including pylons and solar farms, were discussed as well. What became evident was that locals perceived the developments to be beneficial for urban populations, like London, but felt they were unfairly suffering the costs in rural areas. This tied into their perception of politicians not understanding the needs of rural populations. Direct energy benefits for locals were discussed as a potential way to make benefits for locals more evident. In light of other local issues being raised, such as water pollution, the question arises how benefits of renewable energy developments can be made more explicit and personalised to local needs. In the results discussed in Chapter 5, there was a clear association between the developments and noise, construction, industrialisation and 'ugliness'. Future research should explore how to connect the developments with positive change, and support local needs simultaneously with the energy developments, so locals can feel they receive benefits on top of the perceived costs.

Some respondents in the area indicated that what convinced them to vote for a specific candidate was their engagement with the community by canvassing and having direct conversations with constituents, assuaging the feeling expressed in some interviews that individuals in more rural areas felt politicians were unable to understand their needs. This, in combination with the above on rural populations not feeling understood by politicians, clearly highlights a need for more engagement with rural communities and more participation in the decision-making process (the aspect of engagement between politicians and publics is discussed further in Chapter 8, Section 8.3.5). This is in line with emerging research, clearly highlighting the importance of public engagement and consultation in rural areas, specifically when it comes to environmental and climate topics (Henderson et al., 2020)

However, not all groups participate equally. Research shows that Conservatives specifically are less likely to participate in consultation processes, such as climate assemblies, and that their resistance to rural climate action is often rooted in feelings

about what the English landscape is and means to them (Coxcoon, 2024, 2025). Findings from Chapter 5 support this, with a self-described ‘lapsed Conservative' discussing how rural populations perceive their role as protectors of the countryside. Based on this, there is a clear need to better understand and support rural populations in the energy transition.

7.3.3 Can Changes to the Framing of the Policy Increase Support Despite Negative Partisanship?

The results presented in Chapter 6 reveal that negative partisanship plays a significant role in climate policy support, even when controlling for climate change beliefs and environmental concern. This finding builds directly on the qualitative findings from Chapter 5, which suggested that a respondent rejected a policy because of its association with the Green Party, rather than because of its climate or environmental focus. Moreover, while policy framing alone was not significantly associated with policy support, its interaction with negative partisanship was significant. This suggests that the relationship between policy framing and policy support may depend, at least in part, on individuals’ negative partisan identities.

The findings highlight that negative partisanship continues to play an important role when climate change beliefs and environmental concern are taken into account. This suggests that, even when an individual believes in climate change and is concerned about the environment, holding negative partisanship towards the party proposing a climate policy may reduce their likelihood of supporting that policy. Respondents may therefore evaluate policies, at least in part, based on the party proposing them rather than solely on their content. In other words, support for or opposition to a policy may be influenced by partisan cues and pre-existing attitudes towards the party proposing the policy.

While policy origin itself (i.e. the participant being presented with a party profile of a left- or right-leaning party) did not play a significant role, further analysis of the interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing revealed important differences depending on the party towards which individuals expressed negative partisanship.

Specifically, there was a significant interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing, whether climate- or economically framed. Mean support scores (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2 and Table 6.2) indicated differences in policy support between respondents presented with Party A, based on the Green Party, and Party B, based on Reform UK. Those who expressed negative partisanship towards Party A reported noticeably lower levels of policy support under both framing conditions than those who did not express negative partisanship towards the party. In contrast, among those presented with Party B,

respondents expressing negative partisanship reported greater support under the environmental framing than those who did not express negative partisanship. Differences between the two groups were minimal under the economic framing, with both groups expressing some degree of support. Among respondents associated with Party B who did not express negative partisanship towards the party, economic framing was associated with higher levels of policy support than environmental framing. This may suggest that economic framing is more effective among individuals who are more positively disposed towards a party positioned on the right of the political spectrum.

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of considering negative partisanship, and the party towards which it is directed, when communicating climate policies. The results suggest that different audiences may respond differently to climate and economic justifications for the same policy depending on their relationship with the communicating party. For example, the patterns observed in this study suggest that those without negative attitudes towards a party resembling Party B, such as Reform UK, may respond more positively to messages emphasising economic benefits, whereas those expressing negative partisanship towards that party may be more receptive to environmental justifications. Similarly, the findings for Party A suggest that framing effects may function differently when policies are associated with a party resembling the Green Party.

The findings build on previous research suggesting that both climate-related and economic considerations can shape support for climate and energy policies. Specifically, findings by Chen et al. (2025) suggest that, generally, climate-change and energy-affordability messages increase policy support. Findings from Bell et al. (2025) suggest that communicating climate policies' economic benefits increases support for citizens who are more concerned about economic growth. This thesis suggests that, in addition, the effectiveness of such messages may not only depend on the content of the frame and the characteristics of the audience, but also on the political source of the message and individuals' attitudes towards that source. Thus, considerations of message framing may need to be situated within the broader political context in which climate policies are communicated.

Interestingly, when the model was replicated using only non-partisans, policy framing also had a significant effect, with exposure to the environmental frame being associated with lower levels of policy support. However, the interaction between negative partisanship and policy framing was no longer significant. The size of the sample did not permit further analysis across different partisan groups. Nevertheless, these findings highlight the

potential importance of accounting for nuances in individuals' political identities when examining and communicating climate policy, e.g. interactions between positive or non-partisanship and negative partisanship.

7.3.4 Answering RQ2: The Consequences of Negative Partisanship for Climate Policy Support

The second research question central to this thesis focused on the consequences of negative partisanship for climate policy support. The evidence presented throughout this thesis demonstrates that negative partisanship does directly affect climate policy support in the UK. The findings lead to the following contributions to scholarly understanding:

- Negative affect, an emotive dimension of negative partisanship, is related to environmental policy preferences, even when controlling for positive partisanship (see Chapter 4). Specifically, those expressing negative affect towards right-leaning parties are more supportive, and those expressing negative affect towards left-leaning parties are less supportive of climate policies. This relationship also existed in non-partisans.
- Negative partisanship can also influence policy outcomes more indirectly through voting choices (Chapter 5). In the elections in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley, rejection of the Conservative Party, combined with the Green Party's strong presence and canvassing, led people to rally behind the Greens, ultimately contributing to their electoral success.
- Case study results in Chapter 5 reveal a clear perception of inequalities between rural and urban areas regarding the benefits of energy developments, and nuanced identities that may contribute to the rejection of renewable energy developments in the area, including the perception of rural populations as protectors of the countryside.
- The case study also indicated that individuals may reject climate policies because they associate them with certain political parties, rather than because they lack climate or environmental values. Chapter 6 tested this further quantitatively, demonstrating that negative partisanship plays a significant role even when controlling for climate change beliefs and environmental concern.
- Policy framing was found to matter for climate policy support in interaction with negative partisanship (see Chapter 6), highlighting that parties should consider who their intended audience is, i.e. framing should be adjusted depending on whether the goal is to minimise backlash by those who express negative

partisanship towards the party, or gain more support from those who do not express negative partisanship.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that negative partisanship can have significant consequences for climate policy support, with implications that may either facilitate or hinder the success of climate policies. Rather than providing norms, cues or prototypes to follow like positive partisanship (or positive identities according to SIA and ODT), negative partisanship seems to provide cues on how not to think or act.

7.4 Summary

This chapter clearly outlines how this thesis responds to the research gaps outlined in Chapter 2. Specifically, it highlights the adjustments that have to be made to SIA and ODT to more accurately reflect negative partisanship, what measures are, and are not, appropriate to capture negative partisanship, what consequences there may be due to negative partisanship, and how negative partisanship presents in a UK context. Contributions, limitations and directions for future research are discussed in Chapter 8, including the recommended adjustments to the theories to better represent negative partisanship.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the nature of negative partisanship in more detail in a UK context, including to what extent current theories and measures capture key aspects of negative partisanship, and what consequences negative partisanship has for climate policy support. The thesis also explored the consequences of negative partisanship, understanding how individuals use it in their wider political decision-making, and specifically in the context of climate and environmental policy support.

This thesis provides novel evidence, contributing to existing scholarly literature on how negative partisanship may be defined as an identity, how current measures and corresponding theories on negative partisanship could be adjusted to reflect this, and the role of negative partisanship in support for policy (i.e. how negative partisanship may dissuade individuals from supporting climate policies). These findings, in response to the research questions posed in this thesis, were discussed in detail in Chapter 7. In addition, this thesis has demonstrated how a mixed-methods approach combining exploratory and explanatory aims can contribute to our theoretical and conceptual understanding of negative partisanship and its consequences. This chapter outlines the contributions the thesis makes to theory, methods, and policy and practice, and how they, as well as the limitations of the work, serve to identify directions for future research.

8.2 Contributions to Theory, Methods, Practice and Policy

This thesis makes contributions to the theoretical and methodological understanding of negative partisanship, as an identity, as well as to the practical and policy implications of negative partisanship. Taken together, the findings extend existing understandings of negative partisanship beyond the predominantly US-based literature and demonstrate its relevance within a multi-party, non-US context.

8.2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes to the theoretical development of negative partisanship by addressing gaps in the literature, as outlined in Chapter 2, concerning its conceptualisation, its relationship with positive partisanship and negative affect, and the political consequences associated with it. Findings across the three empirical studies included in this thesis provide evidence and support for understanding negative partisanship as a form of negative identity that is conceptually distinct from positive partisanship and from negative affect alone.

One of the main contributions of this thesis regards the relevance of SIA and ODT to understanding negative partisanship as an identity. These can be summarised as follows.

First, negative partisanship can provide a self-definition and can exist as an independent identity. The findings indicate that negative partisanship can be present among both partisans and non-partisans (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.5 and Chapter 6, Table 6.5). Findings in Chapter 5 highlight that individuals can express positive partisanship and negative affect towards the same party, directly challenging approaches that conceptualise negative partisanship primarily as an identity deriving from out-group derogation rooted in positive partisanship, or as a simple form of negative affect. This identity also seems to be relevant in a social context, influencing how individuals feel towards party supporters (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.2 and Chapter 6, Figure 6.7).

Second, findings suggest that negative partisanship can shape both electoral behaviour and political attitudes, including attitudes towards climate policy (see specifically Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.3 and Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). It does so by providing cues for what not to support, rather than what to support, requiring some adjustment to how identities have been described through SIA and ODT.

Third, although negative partisanship may be able to elicit some positive emotions (see Section 8.3.1), it is primarily driven by negative emotions. Specifically, the identity seems to be rooted in negative feelings and rejections of the out-group (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1), rather than feelings of belonging and self-worth, as associated with other social identities. Trust, or a lack thereof, seems to play a role as well (Chapter 5, Sections 5.3.1.3 & 5.3.2.3, Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3). Therefore, some adjustments may have to be made to SIA specifically.

Fourth, negative partisanship can be directed towards multiple political parties simultaneously (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1), indicating it can provide several distinct out-groups. This requires somewhat of an extension to SIA and ODT. While the theories acknowledge that multiple out-groups can exist, the theories usually define identities based on a single (salient) in-group, which guides responses towards out-groups. As in the case of negative partisanship, the out-groups are the ones guiding behaviour; it may have to be clarified that this form of identity may be rooted in the rejection of several out-groups.

Fifth, negative partisanship may create the opportunity for a temporary in-group, where individuals come together to defeat a party, as discussed in Chapter 5, rather than a permanent group individuals feel they belong to. The potential for negative partisanship to

provide an in-group has not been discussed much in the literature to date. However, evidence from this thesis suggests it may be able to. Based on this, adjustments may need to be made to the way SIA and ODT are applied to negative partisanship, by including a temporary in-group as a possibility.

Sixth, while negative partisanship does seem to fulfil the need for distinction (e.g. through the clear separation individuals draw between themselves and out-group partisans, as described in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1), it remains unclear if it is able to also fulfil the need for inclusion. Future research into the potential of a temporary in-group may be able to provide more insight.

Revisiting Figure 2.1 from Chapter 2, which visualised how SIA and ODT explain positive partisanship, Figure 8.1 highlights which elements of SIA and ODT were explored in this thesis, which of these are applicable in relation to negative partisanship and which adjustments are suggested to SIA and ODT to refine their conceptualisation of negative identities.

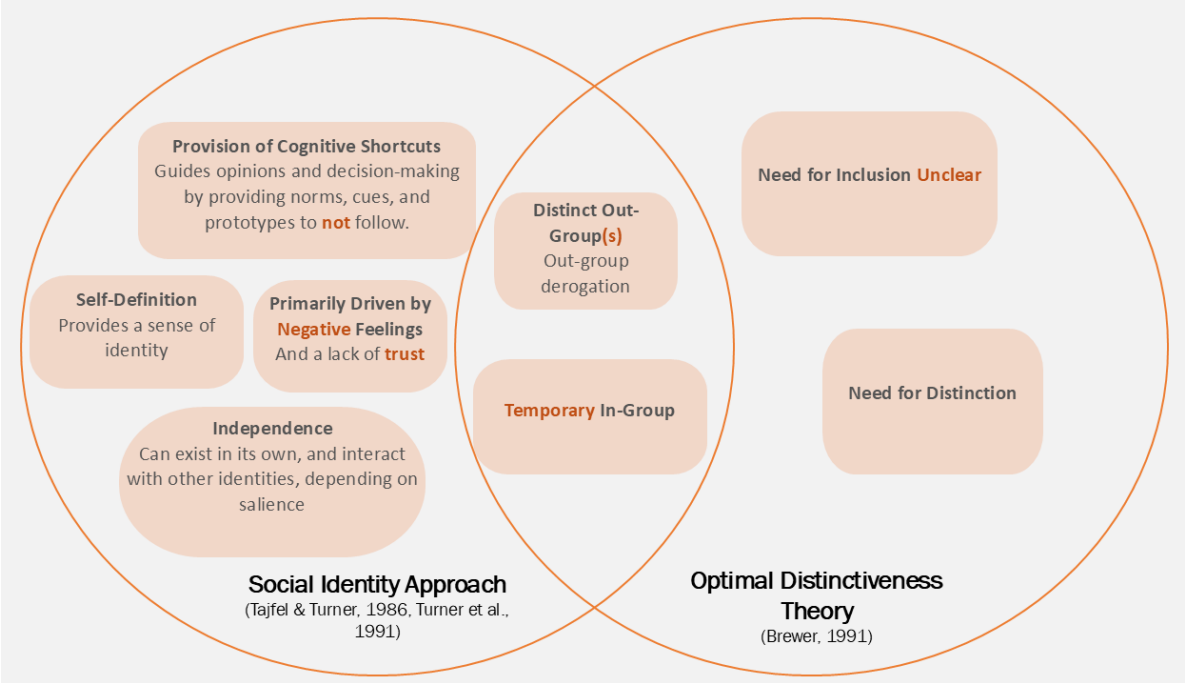

Figure 8.1 Negative Partisanship through the lens of SIA and ODT, according to findings of this thesis. This Figure revisits Figure 2.1, which illustrated how SIA and ODT can be applied to positive partisanship. The text highlighted in red in the figure shown here indicates adjustments that could be made to better apply the theories to negative partisanship, compared to positive partisanship.

The thesis therefore contributes to a more nuanced understanding of political identity by demonstrating that individuals' relationships with political parties cannot be understood solely through the parties with which they identify positively. Individuals may also define

themselves in opposition to political parties, and these negative identities can have meaningful consequences for their political attitudes and behaviour. This has broader implications for research on partisanship, as it suggests that understanding political behaviour requires consideration not only of who individuals support, but also of whom they reject and the significance that rejection holds for their political identities.

8.2.2 Methodological Contributions

The thesis also makes methodological contributions by responding to and innovating on the limitations in existing approaches to measuring and investigating negative partisanship identified in Chapter 2.

The findings support using identity-specific measures of negative partisanship (see Chapter 3 Table 3.4), either through a dedicated scale or a shorter version, specifically including the items 'I would describe myself as anti-[this party]' and 'It is important for me to be anti-[this party]' (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1). Such a shortened scale is more applicable for use in longer surveys, like the BES, as they would remain conceptually rigorous, while being less resource intensive to administer and more accessible to survey respondents. However, at the same time, the findings indicate that the two questionnaire items, or a single measure of negative partisanship (as used in Chapter 6 in relation to fictional parties), are unable to capture all of negative partisanship's potential dimensions. The methodological findings therefore point to the usefulness of distinct data collection methods and questionnaire items, depending on purpose, e.g. identifying the presence of negative partisanship and capturing its broader complexity.

A further contribution lies in the use of varied methodological approaches to investigate negative partisanship. The thesis combines explanatory and exploratory approaches through mixed methods, which allowed different aspects of the concept to be examined across different contexts. This provided insights that would not have been possible through reliance on a single method alone. In particular, expanding the understanding of negative partisanship through qualitative interviews showed that this can offer new and deeper insights, uncovering lived experiences, including negative partisanship's potential to be directed towards multiple parties, its relationship with trust, and its coexistence with positive partisanship and negative affect. These findings demonstrate the value of combining quantitative with qualitative and case-based approaches when investigating a political identity whose understanding is still in its infancy.

In addition, in-person data collection (such as the paper surveys conducted in Chapter 5) is valuable to review, calibrate and adjust collection methods and forms of elicitation, and

can provide a better understanding of how people actually experience and use negative partisanship in their decision-making. Further diversifying methods is recommended, including longitudinal studies and focus groups. Longitudinal research would clarify causality, while focus groups could explore group dynamics further.

8.2.3 Contributions to Practice and Policy

The findings also have implications for the communication and development of climate policy. In particular, the thesis demonstrates that public responses to climate policies may reflect not only individuals' climate change beliefs and environmental concern, but also individuals' relationships with the political parties associated with those policies. Negative partisanship and distrust may therefore contribute to the rejection of a climate policy even where individuals do not fundamentally reject climate action or environmental protection. With that, this thesis situates itself in the wider European literature, exploring links between trust, policy preferences, and how they receive climate communications (Devine, 2024; Kulin et al., 2024).

This has important implications for how public responses to climate policy are interpreted. A lack of support for a policy may not necessarily indicate opposition to the policy's substantive goals. Instead, opposition may partly reflect individuals' pre-existing attitudes and identities towards the party proposing or communicating the policy. The findings from Chapter 6 further suggest that the effectiveness of different policy frames may depend on these political relationships. Parties therefore need to consider not only what they communicate, but also who is communicating the policy and how different groups perceive that political actor.

This is also particularly important when interpreting public backlash against climate policies, which has recently received renewed public, political and academic attention (Sullivan-Thomsett et al., 2024; Westlake & Willis, 2023). Political actors may interpret opposition to a proposed policy as evidence that the public does not support climate action or that a particular policy will generate political backlash. However, where opposition is partly driven by negative partisanship, such a conclusion may misrepresent the underlying preferences of the public. Political actors may consequently underestimate support for climate action among groups who reject the party proposing a particular policy. Conversely, they may overestimate the extent to which opposition reflects substantive disagreement with the policy itself. Understanding this distinction may therefore be important for interpreting public opinion and for assessing the political feasibility of climate action.

The findings in this thesis also raise questions about political representation. If climate concern exists among individuals who identify with or are sympathetic towards right-leaning political parties, but these individuals perceive climate policy as associated primarily with parties on the political left, they may experience a disconnect between their environmental preferences and the political actors they associate with climate action. Negative partisanship may reinforce this disconnect by encouraging individuals to reject policies associated with parties they oppose. This raises an important question about whether environmental concerns among right-leaning citizens are adequately represented within contemporary party politics, where right-leaning parties have changed their position substantially, rejecting most climate action.

More broadly, the findings highlight the possibility that political actors may themselves contribute to the politicisation and polarisation of climate change. Positive and negative partisanship may be used strategically to mobilise support for, or opposition to, particular climate policies, as argued by Mayer & Smith (2024). Statements from political actors and commentators have similarly highlighted the role of party competition in increasing political divisions over climate change among the public (Catt, 2025).

Additionally, the framing of the policy matters too, depending on how the public feels towards the party proposing it. Therefore, parties could consider what group of people they may want to target with specific policy messaging, and how that group may feel towards them. This is in line with research on trusted messengers, which finds that climate scientists, David Attenborough and environmental charities score highly as trusted messengers across different societal groups, while politicians rank low (Climate Outreach, 2025). This means policy communicators need to work on the relationship between politicians and the public, not only on the content and format of the policy itself (Nevett & Farley, 2025).

In summary, this thesis further supports existing literature which suggests that the effectiveness of climate policy messages may not only depend on the content of the frame and the characteristics of the audience, but also on the political source of the message and individuals' attitudes towards that source. Thus, considerations of message framing may need to be situated within the broader political context in which climate policies are communicated.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

The research presented in this thesis has several limitations. This section considers how they can also point towards opportunities to further develop the conceptualisation,

measurement and consequences of negative partisanship. The following sections therefore consider each limitation alongside the future research directions that arise from it.

8.3.1 Developing the Conceptualisation and Measurement of Negative Partisanship

A key limitation concerns the measurement of negative partisanship across the studies presented in this thesis. While a more comprehensive measure of negative partisanship was explored as part of the research, negative partisanship was operationalised in two different ways in the regression models presented: using a proxy measure of negative affect in Chapter 4 and a single item from the comprehensive negative partisanship scale in Chapter 6: *'I would describe myself as anti-[this party]'.* There were several reasons for adopting these approaches. First, the analysis presented in Chapter 4 was conducted before measures specifically designed to capture negative partisanship had become more widely available, and most national datasets continue to provide limited measures of negative partisanship. Second, Chapter 6 examined negative partisanship towards a fictional party, making it not suitable to provide respondents with a full negative partisanship scale, considering respondents would likely not have developed a multi-dimensional identity after reading a short party description. Rather, a single item enquiring if they would describe themselves as anti-[fictional party] felt more appropriate. This survey item utilised in Chapter 6 had previously been validated by Areal (2024) as an appropriate measure of the presence of negative partisanship and was therefore deemed most appropriate to use in this scenario.

Nevertheless, a proxy based on negative affect, or a single-item measure, cannot capture the full complexity and potentially multidimensional nature of negative partisanship (as discussed in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.4, and Section 8.3.1.1, as follows). While it may be appropriate for identifying whether an individual expresses negative partisanship towards a particular party, it provides limited insight into the different dimensions through which negative political identities may manifest.

Future research could therefore apply and further develop multidimensional measures of negative partisanship to examine whether the relationships identified in this thesis remain when negative partisanship is measured more comprehensively, i.e. using the full negative partisanship scale or a shorter, internally consistent and conceptually rigorous scale, rather than a single item. For example, this research could build upon the internal consistency results presented in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1, and explore whether using a

two-item scale may provide the same or similar explanatory power compared to a full scale. This would be particularly valuable for large national surveys (such as the BES), where questionnaire space is limited and shorter measures may facilitate the inclusion of negative partisanship alongside existing measures of positive partisanship. Another approach could be to explore the relationship between negative partisanship and trust further, to examine if a question regarding trust towards the party could be added to the negative partisanship scale.

Additionally, the findings of this thesis also suggest that the expression of negative partisanship may vary according to the party towards which it is directed. Figure 6.6 visualises differences in responses across the dimensions of the negative partisanship scale according to respondents' least-liked party. The descriptive differences suggest that the intensity and expression of negative partisanship may differ between target parties.

For example, negative partisanship towards Reform UK, parties occupying more ideologically distinct positions, or far-right political parties, could be expressed more strongly across some dimensions compared to other parties. However, in this thesis, these differences were not examined statistically because of the small group sizes involved. Future research explicitly recruiting a varied sample of negative partisans could investigate whether different targets of negative partisanship elicit different expressions of negative partisanship.

In addition to fine-tuning the measurements of negative partisanship and understanding how expression may differ across different negative partisan groups, there is also an opportunity to further explore the application of SIA and ODT to negative partisanship. As highlighted in Figure 8.1, the results of this thesis suggest that negative partisanship may be able to provide a temporary in-group. This was based on findings from Chapter 5, finding that those expressing negative partisanship towards Reform UK came together behind the Green Party with the common goal of defeating Reform UK. Future research could explore whether there is potential for these temporary in-groups to become more permanent. For example, could the Green Party somehow elicit a more permanent positive partisanship from the temporary in-group?

Another noteworthy finding shown in Figure 8.1 regards negative feelings as the main driving factor behind negative partisanship, compared to positive feelings such as belonging and purpose, which are usually connected to developing an in-group and positive partisanship. This is based on the findings from Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.1. However, as discussed in that section, one participant also expressed a feeling of hope

regarding successfully defeating the outgroup. This diversity of emotional components of negative partisanship was not explored in further detail in this thesis because of time and other resource constraints. Future research could build on this and explore whether individuals also experience positive emotions from negative partisanship (e.g. whether defeating the party they have negative partisanship towards elicits positive emotions) or whether negative partisanship may be motivated by an aversion to negative emotions (e.g. defeating the party means less discomfort), which can elicit hope.

Lastly, the findings also raise the possibility that negative political identities may extend beyond the immediate context of party politics, as reflected in the results of a question asking participants how they would feel about a loved one marrying different party supporters (see Figures 5.2 and 6.7) and a question reported in Chapter 5, whether their least liked party may impact the participants' daily life (see Section 5.3.1.2). Other results in Chapter 5 showed that context and identity salience may be able to influence when negative partisanship may be a relevant social identity, and when other identities may be more prevalent. Future research on intergroup contact could provide an opportunity to explore how to mitigate out-group derogation created by negative partisanship. Intergroup contact is discussed further in the context of the public and politicians in Section 8.3.5.

8.3.1.2 Multiple Targets of Negative Partisanship

A further limitation concerns the number of political parties towards which negative partisanship is measured. Although Chapter 5 demonstrated that individuals may express negative partisanship towards multiple political parties, Chapter 6 focused on negative partisanship towards a single party. This decision was intentional, as it allowed the study to examine the consequences of negative partisanship towards the specific party proposing a policy, which was consistent with the scope and aims of the survey experiment. However, this approach necessarily simplifies the negative partisanship(s) individuals may hold.

In particular, measuring negative partisanship towards a single party does not capture how negative partisanship towards multiple parties may interact, nor does it allow for a distinction between multiple party-specific negative identities and a more general rejection of political parties or the wider political system. Future research could therefore examine negative partisanship towards multiple parties within the same study, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of how individuals' broader political identities shape their policy preferences.

This is particularly relevant because many large-scale surveys measure negative partisanship in relation to respondents' least-liked party. Future research using larger datasets in combination with interviews could therefore examine the circumstances under which individuals express negative partisanship towards multiple parties, including whether the number of negative partisan identities held by a person may be associated with perceptions of political representation, satisfaction with democracy, or broader dissatisfaction with the political system. Such research would also help to clarify whether multiple negative partisan identities represent an extension of negative partisanship or a qualitatively different form of political identity.

8.3.2 Negative Partisanship and Political Trust

Beyond the conceptualisation and measurement of negative partisanship, the findings of this thesis point towards a need to further investigate its relationship with political representation and political trust. A potential relationship between negative partisanship and a lack of trust emerged inductively from the interviews in Chapter 5 and was subsequently explored through the analysis presented in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3. Because trust was not initially incorporated into the research design as a potential antecedent of negative partisanship, the findings cannot establish the direction of this relationship. In other words, it remains unclear whether prolonged mistrust in a political party contributes to the development of negative partisanship, whether negative partisanship contributes to lower levels of trust, or whether the relationship is reciprocal.

Future research could investigate the relationship between negative partisanship and political trust in more depth. Qualitative research could examine how individuals themselves understand the relationship between mistrust and negative partisanship. Longitudinal research could provide an additional opportunity to establish a temporal order by examining whether changes in political trust precede changes in negative partisanship, or vice versa.

8.3.4 A Typology of Negative Partisanship

Relating to the conceptualisation of negative partisanship, its expression towards multiple targets, and its relationship with trust, this thesis's findings hint at different typologies of negative partisanship. Firstly, negative partisanship may be expressed towards one or several targets. As discussed in Chapter 4, some individuals proactively express negative partisanship and engage in tactical voting; some indicate being reluctant negative partisans because they feel like they are given no choice other than to reject the established parties. In addition, negative partisanship may be expressed in different

contexts, political and social, and at different scales, national and local. The differences in these expressions of negative partisanship could be explored further in the future, to create a typology of different forms of negative partisanship, and what consequences they may have for political behaviours and decision-making.

Moreover, this thesis has mainly focused on the relationship between negative partisanship and a lack of trust, and how negative partisanship may undermine climate policy support. While this paints a negative picture, negative partisanship is not always necessarily bad. Research from Western Europe suggests that the rejection of authoritarianism and opposition towards populist parties is linked to the defence of liberal principles of democracy (Wegscheider et al., 2023). This means that negative partisanship may not only be an element of a functioning and healthy democracy, but may also be an element that keeps that democracy alive. Future research into potential typologies of negative partisanship could explore this further, investigating which forms may be healthy and which may be toxic.

8.3.5 Negative Partisanship and Environmental Policy

Another key area of this thesis covered the relationship between negative partisanship and its consequences. The limitations emerging from this thesis, the gaps these uncover, and direction for future research are discussed as follows.

8.3.5.1 Urban–Rural Differences: Costs and Benefits

The case study presented in Chapter 5 provides an important basis for further research into the relationship between negative partisanship and environmental policy support. The Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley context provided valuable conditions for examining the relationship between negative partisanship, electoral behaviour, and climate policy, particularly given the area's political history (and recent rejection of the Conservative Party) and the strong presence of renewable energy developments.

Specifically, findings from Chapter 5 suggest that rural populations especially feel disconnected from politicians, not listened to, and often misunderstood. This also emerges in a European context, where research finds that rural areas express disappointment with politicians making decisions about the energy transition far away from the places where it is taking place, i.e. away from rural areas *(Zilles & Marg, 2023)*, are more likely to reward candidates with rural residence (McKay et al., 2025), and are more likely to perceive their area as politically neglected (Magalhães & Cancela, 2025).

The findings also raise questions about how the costs and benefits of environmental policies are perceived and distributed across geographical areas, with locals raising the concern that rural populations are facing the costs while urban populations receive the benefits. However, the contextual factors in this area may also shape the findings and limit their generalisability, i.e. the extent to which they can be transferred to other geographical and political contexts. The findings should therefore not be assumed to apply uniformly across the UK. While some of the findings were explored in Chapter 6 on a national level, future research could address this limitation through comparative case studies across areas with different political histories, levels of partisan competition, and experiences with climate and renewable energy developments.

More specifically, future research could examine how the geographical distribution of costs and benefits is perceived in other rural and urban areas, what individuals think are or could be benefits of renewable energy developments, how the costs and benefits could be more equally shared, and how rural identities (specifically those relating to Conservatives and protectors of the countryside) interact with negative partisanship in a renewable energy development context. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between trust and negative partisanship and intergroup contact in rural areas specifically, considering many raised these issues as specifically prevalent in a rural context.

8.3.5.2 Policy Framing and Communication

Chapter 6 also examined responses to climate policy proposals attributed to fictional left- and right-wing parties. The use of fictional parties was a deliberate methodological choice. Attributing a policy to a real party that had not actually proposed it could have been misleading, while presenting a renewable energy policy as proposed by Reform UK may have lacked plausibility given the party's strong rejection of Net Zero. Using fictional parties also provided greater experimental control. However, this experimental design comes at the expense of ecological validity. While the descriptions were deliberately based on the Green Party and Reform UK to elicit existing negative partisanship, respondents' reactions to the fictional parties may differ from their responses to the real political parties, whose existing reputations, policy positions, and associations may provide stronger partisan cues and stronger responses. Consequently, the extent to which the findings from Chapter 6 can be transferred to real-world political communication is somewhat limited. Future research could address this by replicating the experiment using

real parties and existing policy proposals, while trying to account for the additional confounding factors introduced by real-world party identities.

8.3.6 Intergroup Contact and Reducing Negative Partisanship

As raised in Sections 8.3.1 and 8.3.5.1, one potentially important area for future research is the role of positive intergroup contact, both horizontally between citizens with different partisan identities and vertically between citizens and politicians. This could be a promising research area to explore how to increase positive voting and lower group polarisation between publics and politicians. Indeed, research applying Contact Theory (Stecuła, 2025) finds that both direct and indirect positive intergroup contact, in the short term, can lessen the effects of political polarisation (Brooks et al., 2025; Tausch et al., 2024; White et al., 2021). In a US context, exposure to positive mediated intergroup contact via the media has been shown to decrease partisan tension, specifically if one is able to identify with a character belonging to the opposing party (Brooks et al., 2025). A study focused on the remaining polarisation between Leavers and Remainers of the UK Brexit Referendum found that an intervention focused on positive intergroup contact could increase warmth towards the outgroup, reduce unfavourable attributions made towards outgroup positions, and increase willingness to compromise (Tausch et al., 2024). However, such interventions have so far only been shown to have short-term, rather than long-term, effects.

Increasing the occasions for political contact and using authentic communication was also found to build trust in politicians (Weinberg, 2024). Some research suggests that these effects might take hold indirectly, as positive intergroup contact can increase perceived commonality among the groups (Wojcieszak & Warner, 2020). This is interesting and in line with the findings of this study, where voters indicated their vote was ultimately swayed by the local candidate knocking on their door and having a conversation with them. This active engagement of constituents who previously might not have engaged with supporters or politicians of an opposing party is of significance, given findings linking introversion to increased negative evaluations of the opposing party (Webster, 2018b). Webster (2018) argues that introverts are less likely to engage with supporters of the opposing party, reducing opportunities to form relationships, trust, and mutual understanding. Politicians seeking out constituents might therefore be a way to increase intergroup contact, even among more introverted individuals, to build such relationships. However, as the research in this thesis clearly shows, not all intergroup contact is positive.

Simply increasing intergroup contact can easily backfire, as negative interactions can strengthen polarisation (Brooks et al., 2025). Brooks et al. (2025) found that those not identifying with a fictional character belonging to the opposing party, but rather with a co-partisan character, can intensify negative affect towards the outgroup. Tausch et al. (2024) found that those with more extreme baseline opinions were also more likely to drop out of the intervention, highlighting that individuals with more extreme opinions might actively avoid positive intergroup contact. This is interesting and in line with findings from the current research: individual respondents who had a more difficult time avoiding out-group partisans, as they were part of their family, were able to perceive them as part of a different group with a different identity rather than their partisanship.

Creating opportunities for positive intergroup contact therefore seems to be important both horizontally (partisan to partisan) and vertically (partisan to politician). Moreover, focusing on what people have in common and creating intergroup contact with other group identities salient might help navigate the backfiring effects. Most research on intergroup contact has focused on binary groups (Democrats and Republicans, Remainers and Leavers). Future research could explore how this might work in a multi-group or multi-party context and the impacts of canvassing, especially in reference to the relationship between rural publics and politicians.

8.3.7 Negative Partisanship and Political Leaders

A further area of research concerns the relationship between negative partisans and political leaders. The findings of this thesis raise two related questions: how might political leaders themselves respond to negative partisanship, and to what extent do attitudes towards political leaders contribute to negative partisanship towards political parties?

If negative partisanship influences citizens' political attitudes and behaviour, political leaders may be influenced in the same way. Future research could therefore examine whether negative partisanship influences politicians' willingness to engage with opposing parties, cooperate across party lines, or support policies associated with political outgroups. This may be particularly relevant to environmental policy, where cross-party cooperation may be important for the development and implementation of longer-term policies.

The exploratory analyses in Chapter 4 also indicated that affect towards party leaders showed patterns similar to those observed for negative affect towards political parties. Future research could therefore disentangle attitudes towards political parties from attitudes towards their leaders. In particular, it could examine whether citizens perceive

parties and their leaders as interchangeable in terms of their political evaluation, or whether negative attitudes towards leaders may influence the expression of political identities and, with that, the potential formation of negative partisanship. Longitudinal research could further examine whether changes in perceptions of party leaders precede changes in negative partisanship towards the party, or whether attitudes towards leaders primarily reflect pre-existing evaluations of the party.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

Overall, this thesis advances the understanding of negative partisanship as a political identity, highlighting the need to extend established theoretical frameworks, particularly Social Identity Approach (SIA) and Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), to account for negative partisanship's distinctive expression. It also contributes to the measurement of negative partisanship in the UK context by proposing additional items, including trust, and identifying two items that could inform a shortened scale. The findings demonstrate the value of a mixed-methods approach to exploring negative partisanship and identifying directions for future research. Collectively, this work provides a foundation for further theoretical and empirical investigation of negative partisanship in a climate policy context, both within the UK and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley Surveys

University of East Anglia

Mid Suffolk & Waveney Valley –
Survey on Public Opinions and Elections

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research project about public opinions on the recent elections in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley. As you live in the area, we are interested to hear from you! We want to better understand your views on the different parties, and especially those, you do not support. We would also like to understand if climate change and the environment are topics of interest in the area, or if other issues are more important.

This Participant Information Sheet tells you more about the research project. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully. If there are any open questions, please direct them to the lead researcher on this study, Clara Kubler c.kubler@uea.ac.uk .

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

2. Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

Lead Researcher:
Clara Kubler, Leverhulme Trust Doctoral Scholar, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia (UEA)

Research Team:
Prof Irene Lorenzoni, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia (UEA)
Dr Jordan Harold, School of Psychology, University of East Anglia (UEA)
Dr John Kenny, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia (UEA)

There are no conflicts of interests.

3. What will the study involve for me?

Participation will involve answering a few survey questions in your own time. The survey includes questions regarding your evaluations of UK political parties, what issues you consider important for governments to address, and through what ways you might engage with politics, for example voting. The survey will also include some demographic questions, such as your age, gender, and income. We are asking these questions to understand how representative the individuals filling out this survey are of people in Mid Suffolk, Waveney Valley and the wider UK public. If you feel uncomfortable answering certain items, options to skip are available. Data will be collected anonymously, meaning your answers cannot be traced back to you.

4. How much of my time will it take?

Completing this survey will take around **15 minutes**. There is an option to indicate your interest in participating in a follow up interview related to the survey questions. For that purpose, contact details can be provided voluntarily at the end. These give you the opportunity to expand on your answers and share anything with the researcher, which you think the survey might have missed.

5. Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is **completely voluntary**. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia.

Once your survey answers are submitted online or handed over to the researcher, your consent can no longer be withdrawn. That is due to the data being collected anonymously.

6. Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

There are no risks or costs associated with participating in this study.

7. Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

Participation in this study will help us gain a better understanding of public interests in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley and why certain parties are supported and others are not. This will inform future directions of research and policy advice.

A briefing document summarising and communicating key findings from this study may be produced and shared with stakeholders in the region and nationally.

8. What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. The data and results of this study may be published and used in presentations, reports, publications, websites, broadcasts, peer reviewed articles, reports, notes, media summaries, etc. As your data is being collected anonymously, you will not be identifiable in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.

Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation Act 2020 and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy 2015.

Your information will be stored securely on UEA's OneDrive system, and your information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Data will be archived and stored on a secure UEA server for a period of at least 10 years after completion of the study.

9. What if I would like further information about the study?

At the end of the survey, you can opt into receiving a debriefing document with more details about the purpose of this study. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please contact the lead researcher.

10. Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by providing your email address at the end of the survey when asked about receiving future updates. This feedback will be in the form of a one-page summary of the results. You will receive this feedback once the study has concluded, which will be around summer 2025.

11. What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's Science Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem, please reach out to the lead researcher Clara Kubler, Leverhulme Trust Doctoral Scholar, School of Environmental Sciences at UEA, c.kubler@uea.ac.uk .

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Environmental Sciences, Professor Ian Renfrew (I.Renfrew@uea.ac.uk), or the Ethics Officer for the School of Environmental Sciences, Dr Helen Pallett (H.Pallett@uea.ac.uk).

12. OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
Please fill out the consent form below by reading it carefully and ticking 'YES'. Once filled in, please return it with your completed survey to the researcher.

INFORMED CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participation in this Research Study:

- I have read and understood the above information regarding this study.
- Hence, I confirm that the researchers have informed me about the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving any reason. If I decide to withdraw, I understand that I can only do so before submitting my answers by either handing the paper survey to the researcher or clicking 'submit' on the online version.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- I understand that any personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to, except where required by law.
- I understand that data and results of this study may be published and used in presentations, reports, publications, websites, broadcasts, peer reviewed articles, reports, notes, media summaries, etc.
- I understand that the submitted survey data will be kept on a secure UEA server for a period of at least 10 years after completion of the study.

With this information, please indicate if you wish to participate in this study. Select 'YES' if you want to participate, and 'NO' if you do not.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Voting Eligibility

Q2 Are you eligible to vote in both the **Mid Suffolk District Council** and the **Waveney Valley Constituency**?

(If you are unsure, you can check online via the following link https://whocanivotefor.co.uk/ . Type in your post code and click 'Find your Candidates'. On the page that pops up, go to the 'Your Area' section and click 'Find out more'.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Elections

Q3 How much attention do you generally pay to politics?

- ☐ None at all
- ☐ Not very much
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q4 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you about the switch in leadership in your **local council** (Mid Suffolk District Council) from no majority to Green?

Context: Before 2019, the Conservatives comfortably held the majority in the council. In the 2019 election, the Conservatives still won the most seats (with 16), but did not manage to keep hold of the majority, which would require at least 18 seats to be held by one party. In the last election in 2023, the Green Party won the majority with 24 seats, compared to the 6 held by the Conservatives.

- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied

- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q5 Please indicate in a few words why (optional):

_____

Q6 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you about the switch in leadership in your **local constituency** (Waveney Valley) from Conservative to Green?

Context: The 2024 election was the first for the Waveney Valley constituency, which was created following the 2023 Periodic Review of Westminster constituencies. It is made up of the parts of the previous constituencies of South Norfolk, Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Waveney, and Suffolk Coastal. All of these Constituencies were previously held by the Conservatives.

- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q7 Please indicate in a few words why (optional):

_____

Party Evaluations

Q8 How much do you like or dislike the following parties?

	Strongly dislike	Somewhat dislike	Neither like	Somewhat like	Strongly like	Don't	Prefer not

			nor dislike			kno w	to say
Conservative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Labour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liberal Democrat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reform UK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 Which party, if any, do you identify with?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ I don't identify with any party
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q10 Which of the listed parties do you **like the least**?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q11 Please now think about the party which you chose as your **least liked party in Q10.** Read the following items carefully and answer each item to the best of your ability. Some of these items may seem repetitive to you, but please evaluate them each individually.

Please tick the box in the column **on the next page** that you most agree with.

→

	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	Don't know	Prefer not to say
When this party does well in opinion polls, my day is ruined.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get angry when people praise this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am relieved when this party loses an election.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When people criticize this party, it makes me feel good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because of their worldviews, I could never vote for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important to me that I am not one of those that vote for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have nothing in common with people voting for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would describe myself as anti-[this party]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important for me to be anti-[this party]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q12 How much of the political tension that exists in the United Kingdom today do you think your **least liked party** is responsible for creating?

- ☐ Not much at all
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Most
- ☐ All of it
- ☐ I don't think there is political tension
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q13 People can feel differently about someone close to them marrying people from different political backgrounds. In a hypothetical situation, suppose someone close to you (such as a family member, close friend, or a child) wanted to marry a supporter of the political parties listed here. Would you approve of this choice, disapprove of it, or would it not make any difference at all?

	Approve	Disapprove	No difference	I don't know	Prefer not to say
Conservative Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Labour Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liberal Democrat Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reform UK Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q14 Think about your day-to-day life. Are there situations, besides voting, where the way you feel about your **least liked party** affects you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q15 If you answered with '**Yes**' in Q14 (otherwise skip to Q16):

In which situations does it affect you? (e.g. when meeting new people, dating, etc.) Please provide some examples below:

_____

Political Opinions

Q16 What do you believe should be the UK government's highest priority? (Please choose only ONE answer option from those listed below)

- ☐ Improve standards of education
- ☐ Tackle the cost-of-living crisis
- ☐ Improve the economy in general
- ☐ Protect the environment
- ☐ Tackle climate change
- ☐ Improve the NHS
- ☐ Tackle inflation
- ☐ International conflict resolution (such as resolving wars and preventing new ones)
- ☐ Tackle immigration
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other (write in your answer):

_____

_____

Q17 Would you consider yourself as ‘politically active’ (meaning, you engage with politics beyond just reading the news)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don’t know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q18 **If you answer with ‘Yes’** in Q17 (otherwise skip to Q19):
Which types of behaviours do you engage in? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Voting
- ☐ Protesting
- ☐ Signing Petitions
- ☐ Campaigning
- ☐ Seeking out conversations with friends, family, others
- ☐ Other (write in your answer):

  _____

  _____

Q19 To what extent do you think that the current political parties adequately represent the interests of the British public?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Not very much
- ☐ To some degree
- ☐ Mostly
- ☐ Completely
- ☐ I don’t know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Climate Change & the Environment

Q20 How concerned or unconcerned are you about the current state of the environment?

- ☐ Extremely unconcerned
- ☐ Somewhat unconcerned
- ☐ Neither concerned nor unconcerned
- ☐ Somewhat concerned
- ☐ Extremely concerned
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q21 To what extent do you consider environmental topics (such as air pollution or biodiversity) in your voting decisions?

- ☐ I don't consider them at all
- ☐ I somewhat consider them
- ☐ I consider them a lot
- ☐ I don't vote
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q22 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Please tick the box in the column below that you most agree with.

	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	I don't know	Prefer not to say

I would give up part of my income to prevent pollution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is no point in taking action for the environment unless others do so too.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Many claims about environmental threat are exaggerated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are more important things to do than protect the environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q23 Some believe that protecting the environment should have priority even if that reduces economic growth. Others believe that economic growth should have priority even if that hinders protecting the environment. What is your opinion? We should:

- ☐ Fully prioritise economic growth
- ☐ Somewhat prioritise economic growth
- ☐ Equally prioritise economic growth and environmental protection
- ☐ Somewhat prioritise environmental protection
- ☐ Fully prioritise environmental protection
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q24 How worried are you about climate change?

- ☐ Not worried at all
- ☐ Not very worried
- ☐ Somewhat worried
- ☐ Very worried
- ☐ Extremely worried
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q25 How important is it to you, that the UK government addresses climate change?

- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q26 How much do you consider or not consider climate change in your voting decisions?

- ☐ I don't consider it at all
- ☐ I somewhat consider it
- ☐ I consider it a lot
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q27 How much do you support the Government's aim of reaching Net Zero?

(The UK is committed to reaching net zero by 2050. This means that the greenhouse gas emissions produced would be equal to the emissions removed from the atmosphere, with the aim of limiting global warming and resultant climate change.)

- ☐ Fully oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither oppose nor support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Fully support
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q28 To what extent do you support or oppose renewable energy developments in your area?

- ☐ Fully oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither oppose nor support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Fully support
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Questions on the Last Local Election (2023)

Q29 Which party did you vote for in the last **local election** (in May 2023)?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ I did not vote
- ☐ Can't remember
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q30 Who have you voted for in the previous **local election** (in May 2019)?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ I did not vote
- ☐ Can't remember
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q31 If you changed who you voted for between 2019 and 2023, please explain why in a few words below (optional):

_____

_____

Questions on the Last General Election (July 2024)

Q32 Who did you vote for in the last **general election** (in July 2024)?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ I did not vote
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q33 Who have you voted for in the **previous general election** (in December 2019)?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA)
- ☐ I did not vote
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q34 If you changed who you voted for between 2019 and 2024, please explain why in a few words below (optional):

_____

_____

Demographics

The following questions will be used to understand how well you and the people filling out this survey represent the wider population in the area.

Q35 What gender do you identify most with?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q36 Which of the following represents the total **yearly** income of your **household** from **all** sources, **before tax**? Please include income from benefits, savings etc.

- ☐ under £10,400 per year
- ☐ £10,400 to £25,999 per year
- ☐ £26,000 to £41,999 per year
- ☐ £42,000 to £74,999 per year
- ☐ £75,000 or more per year
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q37 Among which of the following groups would you place yourself?

- ☐ Low income
- ☐ Middle income
- ☐ High income
- ☐ Don’t know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q38 What is the highest educational or work-related qualification you have? [choose ONE only]

- ☐ No formal qualifications
- ☐ GCSEs or equivalent
- ☐ A-Levels or equivalent
- ☐ Recognised apprenticeship completed
- ☐ Nursing qualification (e.g. SEN, SRN, SCM, RGN)
- ☐ Teaching qualification (not degree)
- ☐ University or CNAA first degree (e.g. BA, B.Sc, B.Ed)
- ☐ University or CNAA higher degree (e.g. M.Sc, Ph.D)
- ☐ Other technical, professional or higher qualification
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q39 Which of the following groups do you identify most as?

- ☐ White British
- ☐ Any other white background
- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ White and Black African
- ☐ White and Asian
- ☐ Any other mixed background
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Any other Asian background
- ☐ Black Caribbean
- ☐ Black African
- ☐ Any other black background
- ☐ Other :_____
- ☐ I don’t know

- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q40 Which age bracket do you fall in?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ 66 and over
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q41 How many children are present in your household?

- ☐ None
- ☐ One (1)
- ☐ Two (2)
- ☐ Three (3)
- ☐ Four (4) or more
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q42 Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

- ☐ Yes, I do belong to a particular religion
- ☐ No, I do not regard myself as belonging to any particular religion.
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q43 If you answered with '**Yes** (...)' in Q42 (If you answered 'No (...)' please skip to the next section):

Please specify which religion you belong to (optional):

_____

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

The purpose of this research is to understand public opinions better. Specifically, we want to understand what you think about the change from Conservative to Green in your area, why you don't like certain parties, and what issues are important to you. We can only do that, with your help!

We would like to invite you to partake in a follow-up interview, to discuss your responses in more detail and give you the opportunity to talk about anything we might have missed. We hope this will not only contribute to our understanding of public opinions and interests but will inform future directions of research and policy advice.

If you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview, please leave your contact details below and we will reach out with further information. Leaving your contact details only means you consent to being contacted by the research team. If you decide that you do not wish to participate further after receiving more information, we will delete your details.

Email is the research teams' preferred contacting method. If you do not have an email address, or for other reasons would prefer to be contacted via the phone, please indicate so below.

- ☐ Email address: _____
- ☐ Please contact me by phone: _____

Receiving a Debriefing and Information on the Study Results

If you would like to receive a debriefing and be informed about the results of the research, please leave your email address below.

If you indicate your interest in a debriefing, you will receive two emails with the following information:

1. An email containing a debriefing about the purpose of the study, to be received within a few weeks after participating.
2. An email containing a one-pager about the results of the study, most likely be shared with you in summer 2025.

Your email address will be kept separately from your survey responses.

Please note: Should you participate in a follow-up interview, you will receive the debriefing after the interview is completed.

☐ Email address: _____

Thank you for participating!

Don't forget to hand this survey back to one of the researchers.

University of East Anglia

Mid Suffolk & Waveney Valley – Research on Public Opinions and Elections

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEFING

Thank you for participating! This one-pager will give you more detail about the purpose behind this study, and what sort of questions we are hoping to find answers to with the help of the data.

What factors contribute to the change in the elected parties in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley?

Through your responses, we hope to gain a better understanding of what led to the Green Party being elected to head the Mid Suffolk District Council and winning the seat in the Waveney Valley Constituency. Being located in areas historically electing the Conservative Party, this change also came at a time when many indicated a disappointment in the Conservative government. We want to understand if people voted in favour of the Greens, or rather against the Conservatives.

What makes people dislike certain parties?

As mentioned, the elections took place at a time when many expressed a negative view of the Conservative Party. We wanted to better understand, where negative views towards parties generally come from and if they are more short or long-term. Meaning, are they reactions to certain events or decisions the party made, or will these negative views turn into something more stable over time? The latter is something we call 'negative partisanship'. When we talk about negative partisanship, we mean that someone wants to actively distance themselves from a party and rejects their opinions and views of the world. This comes with the wish to defeat the party, like voting for another party one might not necessarily support, but to ensure the other party does not win. We were also curious to see if this negative partisanship, or rejection of a party, can become important in other contexts besides voting. That is why we asked you questions about your engagement with politics, concerning a child marrying a specific party supporter, or in which situations you find disliking a specific party relevant.

Is there a link between people's views on climate change and environmental protection, and those parties they dislike?

We know that being a supporter of a certain party can sometimes influence what we think of topics like climate change or environmental protection. We wanted to find out if rejecting a certain party can do the same. For example, could disliking the Green Party lead to us disliking policies targeted at environmental protection, even though we might have previously supported them?

If you have any open questions you wish to discuss, please reach out to the lead researcher on this study, Clara Kubler c.kubler@uea.ac.uk . If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Ethics Officer for the School of Environmental Sciences, Dr Helen Pallett (H.Pallett@uea.ac.uk).

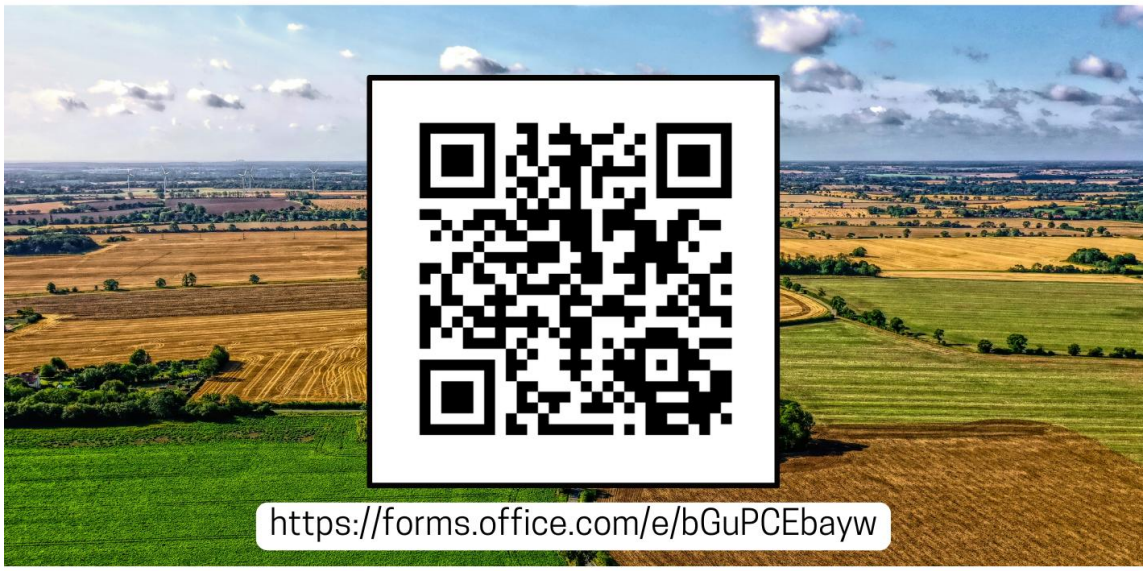
Appendix 2 Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley Flyer

University of East Anglia

Share your Opinions on the Recent Elections in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley!

Which party has your support, which doesn't?
What issues are important to you?

Scan the QR code or type in the link below and participate in the survey:



This project has been given ethical approval by the University of East Anglia's Research Ethics Committee, application number ETH2425-0058

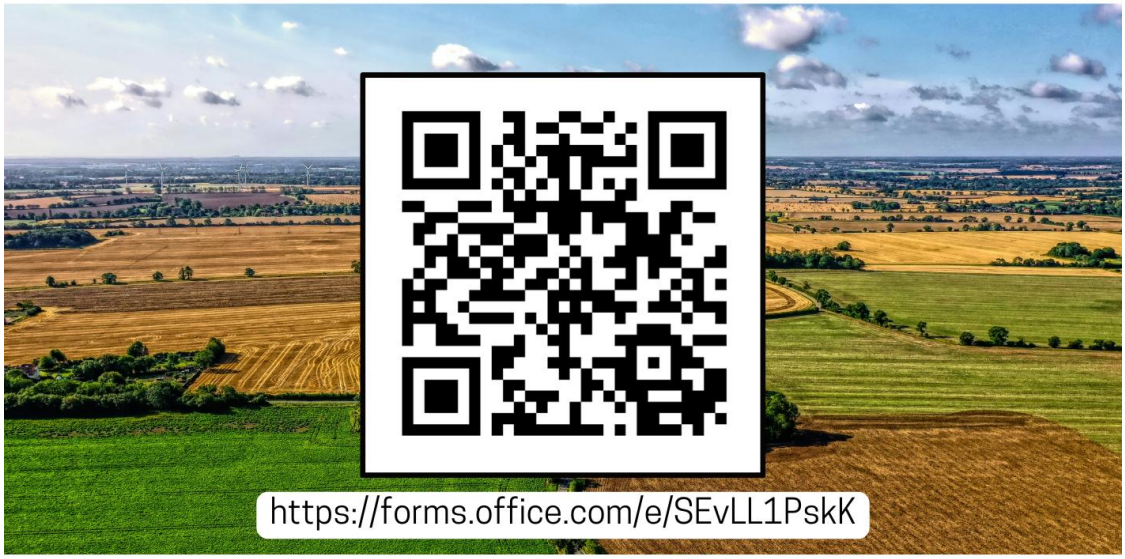
To participate, you need to be eligible to vote in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley. Your responses will contribute to doctoral research on public opinions. Participation is voluntary and data will be recorded anonymously, unless you provide contact details to be contacted further. For more information, contact the lead researcher, Clara Kubler c.kubler@uea.ac.uk

University of East Anglia

Share your Opinions on the Recent Election Results in Waveney Valley!

Which party has your support, which doesn't?
What issues are important to you?

Scan the QR code or type in the link below and participate in the survey:



This project has been given ethical approval by the University of East Anglia's Research Ethics Committee, application number ETH2425-0058

To participate, you need to be eligible to vote in Waveney Valley. Your responses will contribute to doctoral research on public opinions. Participation is voluntary and data will be recorded anonymously, unless you provide contact details to be contacted further. For more information, contact the lead researcher, Clara Kubler c.kubler@uea.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Example Interview Protocol

This is XX. I am calling about the follow up interview we discussed over email?

Are you happy to do it now?

Introduction & Checking consent

I'll just give you a quick run through some general info again, so we are on the same page, then are welcome to ask any questions and then we can get started with the interview.

So, again, I appreciate you volunteering and taking this time, so I don't want to make the introduction too long.

The interview will take around 20 to 30 minutes. Some of them are set questions that I ask every single person I am speaking with, so I will try and avoid asking those you might have answered somewhere else already, but if some things seem a little repetitive, that is why.

You will have the chance to ask questions at the end as well. If there are any questions you feel uncomfortable answering, please tell me to move on to a different topic. You can also stop the interview at any time if you wish.

Before we start, are there any questions from your side?

I will now start recording then (which will help with making the transcript) and start with the first questions.

Main Interview Questions

Lets start with one of the first questions in the survey, which was on attention to politics.

You indicated you pay quite a lot of attention to politics, what motivates you to stay informed?

[specific newspapers/curated, tv, news, etc]

Questions on Voting Choice

[Moving from sort of, why do you stay informed to some of your choices when it comes to politics. Specifically in the last elections]

Q2: Thinking about your voting decisions in the local and national elections. You indicated in your survey responses that you switched who you voted for over the

years, and that both of your recent votes went to the XX XX. Would you mind elaborating a little more about your decision-making process? [Starting with the local election, where you switched from XX to XX, and the national, from XX to XX]

Q3:So, if you had to choose, would you say you voted FOR XX, or AGAINST someone else?

Negative Partisanship

We are moving on from your voting decisions now, and I would like to talk a little bit more about your views on certain parties, and specifically the one you indicated you like the least. So let start with a more general question:

Q4: You indicated on some of the questions that your perception of the XX is quite negative and that it is the party you like least. Could you describe those views a little more in your own words?

Q4.1: Looking back, what do you think caused your negative perception of the party? / What made you view the party in that way?/ How do you think this negative view of XX, if at all, influenced who you voted for? / Did their approach to climate or environment play a role at all? /

Q5: You did indicate in the survey that you don't identify with any party. Now, considering what you now told me about the party you like least, would you say the description of e.g. a XX Voter or of someone who is Anti-XX fits you better? [Or potentially both?]

If individual indicates NP:

Q5.1: In which situations is identifying as Anti-XX something that you think about, or is relevant to you? E.g. when you vote, when you watch the news, talking to people with different political views, etc.[Is this something you only think is relevant in a political context, or a social one as well?]

Q: In the survey you also indicated that you don't feel like the current political parties very much represent the British Public. Would you mind elaborating on that?

[Also indicated you don't like any of the current parties, and even the XX you feel somewhat neutral about]

Q: If you had to choose an adjective to describe how you feel about politics at the moment, what would you pick?

Do you feel hopeful when you think about politics?

Climate and Environment

I would like to move over to some questions related to another section in the survey, where we asked some questions about the environment and climate change.

Q: You mention that you are somewhat concerned about the current state of the environment and that you consider these issues a lot when voting. Would you mind elaborating a little more on what makes you think that way?

Q: You also mention that you are somewhat worried about climate change and that you think it is extremely important that the UK government addresses it. Could you talk a little bit about that in your own words?

Q6: To what extent - if at all - do you view climate change issues and environmental issues as distinct topics, connected or as one and the same?

Q6: Has either of these topics influenced who you voted for in the past?

[You mentioned how XX has changed fundamentally and how you believe climate change to be more important]

Q09: Does the XX's approach to climate impact your opinion of them at all? If so, in what way?

Renewable Energy

I would like to get a little more specific now. Something shortly addressed in the survey, and that has come up in many conversations I had, has been the topic of renewable energy.

Q13: In the survey, you mentioned you fully support energy developments in your area. Would you mind elaborating on what makes you think that way a little further?

Q: Does the party origin of these changes influence what you think of these developments? Would you view it differently at all if it came from a different party or would it make no difference at all? Do you think political parties have an influence on these decisions, how does that influence who you vote for?

Q: How do you think other people in your area think about these changes?

Q: Do you think there is a way to make it better for the local community?

Q18: What environmental challenges, if any, do you think the government should address in your area?

-

Wrapping it up

Thank you for your time.

Q13: Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we have not covered or had the time to talk about?

[Go through the debrief sheet if there is time, or indicate it will be shared and I will be available for questions]

Appendix 4: Prolific Survey Experiment

Survey Questions

Project information You are invited to take part in a questionnaire about public opinions on UK political parties and their policies. This study aims to better understand your views on political parties, and especially those you do not support. We would also like to understand what sort of policies you might support, why, and what issues are generally important to you. In case you are interested in receiving further information on the study, you will be provided with a debriefing document with more details at the end of the survey.

This survey is part of a UEA, School of Environmental Sciences doctoral research project being undertaken Clara Kubler, c.kubler@uea.ac.uk and supervised by Prof Irene Lorenzoni, i.lorenzoni@uea.ac.uk .

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia. There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. The data and results of this study may be published and used in presentations, reports, publications, websites, broadcasts, peer reviewed articles, notes, media summaries, etc. As your data is being collected anonymously, you will not be identifiable in these publications if you decide to participate in this study. Data management will follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation Act 2020 and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy 2015. At the end of the study, the anonymised data collected will be stored and potentially made available on request or published in line with Open Research practices. We will ensure that you will not be identifiable, and any open survey responses we feel may be too personal will not be shared.

You are free to withdraw from this study at any point. However, you will only receive your compensation when you submit your responses to the whole questionnaire. Once you have submitted your responses, they cannot be withdrawn.

This study has received ethical approval from the University of East Anglia General Ethics Committee [insert here approval number]. If you have any concerns about this study then please contact the researcher, supervisor, the Ethics Officer for the School of Environmental Sciences, Dr Casper Ebbensgaard (c.ebbensgaard@uea.ac.uk) or the Head of the School of Environmental Sciences, Professor Ian Renfrew (I.Renfrew@uea.ac.uk).

The survey will take around **15 minutes** to complete.
To participate, please give your consent below.

INFORMED CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participation in this Research Study:

- I have read and understood the above information regarding this study.
- Hence, I confirm that the researchers have informed me about the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving any reason. If I decide to withdraw, I understand that I can only do so before submitting my answers to the questionnaire.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- I understand that any personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to, except where required by law.
- I understand that data and results of this study may be published and used in presentations, reports, publications, websites, broadcasts, peer reviewed articles, reports, notes, media summaries, etc.
- I understand that the submitted survey data will be kept on a secure UEA server and may be shared with others when Open Research practices require to do so.

Having read this information, please indicate if you wish to participate in this study. Select 'YES' if you want to participate, and 'NO' if you do not.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Prolific ID

Q1 Please add your unique Prolific ID in the box below.

Pre Manipulation Questions

Q2 Are you eligible to vote in UK national elections?

☐ Yes
☐ I live in the UK, but cannot vote
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Q3 How much attention do you generally pay to politics?

☐ None at all
☐ Not very much
☐ Some
☐ Quite a lot
☐ A great deal
☐ I don't know
☐ Prefer not to say

Q Which of the following Countries do you currently live in?

- ☐ England
- ☐ Wales
- ☐ Scotland
- ☐ Northern Ireland

Q8 How much do you like or dislike the following parties?

	Strongly dislike	Somewhat dislike	Neither like nor dislike	Somewhat like	Strongly like	Don't know
Conservative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Labour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liberal Democrat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reform UK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scottish National Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plaid Cymru	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sinn Féin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ulster Unionist Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Democratic & Labour Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q8 How much do you trust or distrust the following parties?

	Strongly distrust	Somewhat distrust	Neither trust nor distrust	Somewhat trust	Strongly trust	Don't know
Conservative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Labour	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liberal Democrat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reform UK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scottish National Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Plaid Cymru	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sinn Féin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ulster Unionist Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Democratic & Labour Party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 Which party, if any, do you identify with?

- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ Scottish National Party
- ☐ Plaid Cymru
- ☐ Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- ☐ Sinn Féin
- ☐ Ulster Unionist Party
- ☐ Social Democratic & Labour Party
- ☐ I don't identify with any party
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I identify with a party not listed here

Q10 Which of the listed parties do you **like the least**?

- ☐ Conservative

- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ Reform UK
- ☐ Scottish National Party
- ☐ Plaid Cymru
- ☐ Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- ☐ Sinn Féin
- ☐ Ulster Unionist Party
- ☐ Social Democratic & Labour Party
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ My least liked party is not listed here

Q11 Please now think about the party which you chose as your **least liked party in the last question.** Read the following items carefully and answer each item to the best of your ability. Some of these items may seem repetitive to you, but please valuate them each individually.

	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	Don't know
When this party does well in opinion polls, my day is ruined.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get angry when people praise this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am relieved when this party loses an election.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When people criticize this party, it makes me feel good.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because of their worldviews, I could never vote for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important to me that I am not one of those that vote for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I talk about this party I rather say 'they' than 'we'.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have nothing in common with people voting for this party.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would describe myself as anti-[this party]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important for me to be anti-[this party]	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q People can feel differently about someone close to them marrying people from different political backgrounds. In a hypothetical situation, suppose someone close to you (such as a family member, close friend, or a child) wanted to marry a supporter of the political parties listed here. Would you approve of this choice, disapprove of it, or would it not make any difference at all?

	Approve	Disapprove	No difference	I don't know	Prefer not to say
Conservative Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Labour Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liberal Democrat Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Green Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reform UK Party Supporter	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Randomisation takes place here, each participant will only see ONE party profile and ONE policy framing]

Manipulation

Q Imagine the following party was running for an election in your country.

Name: **Party A**

'As Party A, our core beliefs revolve around environmental and social justice. We aim build a sustainable economy, which prioritises well-being, equality, and environment health. We believe capitalism has failed and we want to bring back higher taxes for t extremely wealthy, while lowering every-day bills for the average person. We take a positive stance towards immigration and see its values. We believe creating legal ro for people to come to the UK will help regulate immigration and make it safer for everyone.'

Name: **Party B**

'As Party B, we believe in 'common sense'. We believe the other parties have broken promises for years, and only we can fix the crises the UK is facing. Our number one is is immigration. We believe immigrants are exploiting UK citizens and that they are the reason for many hardships. Our goal is to strongly limit the number of immigrants com in, while also reducing the number of immigrants already in the country. We want to stand up for British culture, identity, and values. We believe only we can reduce energ prices, taxes, and bring back law and order.'

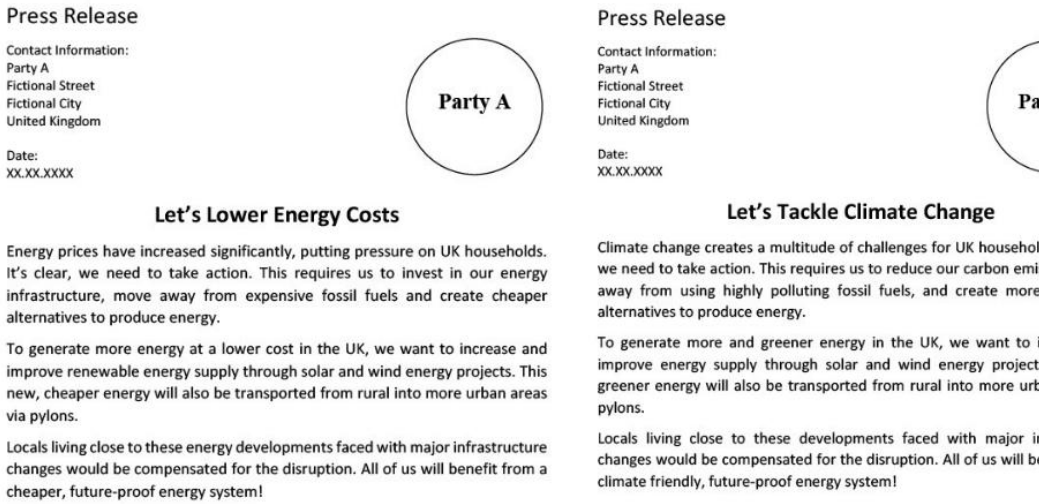
Q Please read the items below and consider them in the context of Party A. How much would you agree with the statements?

[Likert scale for each item - Totally disagree to totally agree]

- ☐ I would support this party
- ☐ I would trust this party
- ☐ I would never vote for this party
- ☐ I would be anti-Party A

Party (A or B) has issued the following press release, and has proposed a new policy:

Please read the below carefully, as you will be asked a few questions on the next pages



Press Release

Contact Information:
Party A
Fictional Street
Fictional City
United Kingdom

Date:
XX.XX.XXXX

Party A

Let's Lower Energy Costs

Energy prices have increased significantly, putting pressure on UK households. It's clear, we need to take action. This requires us to invest in our energy infrastructure, move away from expensive fossil fuels and create cheaper alternatives to produce energy.

To generate more energy at a lower cost in the UK, we want to increase and improve renewable energy supply through solar and wind energy projects. This new, cheaper energy will also be transported from rural into more urban areas via pylons.

Locals living close to these energy developments faced with major infrastructure changes would be compensated for the disruption. All of us will benefit from a cheaper, future-proof energy system!

Press Release

Contact Information:
Party A
Fictional Street
Fictional City
United Kingdom

Date:
XX.XX.XXXX

Pa

Let's Tackle Climate Change

Climate change creates a multitude of challenges for UK household we need to take action. This requires us to reduce our carbon emi away from using highly polluting fossil fuels, and create more alternatives to produce energy.

To generate more and greener energy in the UK, we want to i improve energy supply through solar and wind energy project greener energy will also be transported from rural into more urb pylons.

Locals living close to these developments faced with major i changes would be compensated for the disruption. All of us will b climate friendly, future-proof energy system!

Q To what degree would you support or oppose the proposed policy?

- ☐ Fully oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Fully support
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Q Why would you support or oppose the proposed policy? Please describe your thought process in a few words here:

Q How much would you trust the policy would fulfil the outlined goal?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Completely
- ☐ Don't know

Q Why would you trust or not trust the proposed policy? Please describe your thought process in a few words here:

Manipulation Check

Q Which of the short descriptions below most closely describes the party you read about earlier:

- ☐ The party believes the central issue in the UK is immigration, and wants to significantly reduce the numbers of immigrants
- ☐ The party believes that there are too many inequalities between wealthy and less wealthy people in the UK and wants to focus on social and environmental well-being
- ☐ The party believes in the power of AI and want to make it their central strategy to tackle issues facing the UK
- ☐ The party believes the biggest threat to the UK is potential international conflict and plant to reinstate mandatory military service for all UK citizens at the age of 18.

Q Which of the following was the central aim of the policy proposed by the fictional party:

- ☐ Lower energy prices through wind and solar
- ☐ Tackle climate change through wind and solar
- ☐ Increase the use of AI in government
- ☐ Reinstate mandatory military service at 18

Post Manipulation Questions

Q16 What do you believe should be the UK government's highest priority at the moment? (Please choose only ONE answer option from those listed below)

- ☐ Education
- ☐ Tackle the cost-of-living crisis
- ☐ The economy

- ☐ Protect the environment
- ☐ Take action on climate change
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Defense and Security
- ☐ Immigration & Asylum
- ☐ Crime
- ☐ Tax
- ☐ Pensions
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Family life & childcare
- ☐ Transport
- ☐ Welfare benefits
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

Q24 How worried are you about the following?

	Not at all worried	Not very worried	Somewhat worried	Very worried	Extremely worried	Don't know
The UK Economy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Air Pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Water Pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Biodiversity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Climate Change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q21 To what extent do you consider the following topics in your voting decisions?

	I don't consider it at all	I somewhat consider it	I consider it a lot	I don't vote	Don't know
The UK Economy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Air Pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Water Pollution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Biodiversity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Climate Change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q23 Some believe that protecting the environment should have priority even if that reduces economic growth. Others believe that economic growth should have priority even if that hinders protecting the environment:

- ☐ Fully prioritise economic growth
- ☐ Somewhat prioritise economic growth
- ☐ Equally prioritise economic growth and environmental protection
- ☐ Somewhat prioritise environmental protection
- ☐ Fully prioritise environmental protection
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q25 How important is it to you, that the UK government addresses climate change?

- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q27 How much do you support the Government's aim of reaching Net Zero?

(The UK is committed to reaching net zero by 2050. This means that the greenhouse gas emissions produced would be equal to the emissions removed from the atmosphere, with the aim of limiting global warming and resultant climate change.)

- ☐ Fully oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither oppose nor support
- ☐ Somewhat support

- ☐ Fully support
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q28 In this survey, you were presented with a policy focused in renewable energy. Please read the items below carefully, and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	Don't know
I support the increase in renewable energy developments in the UK	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe renewable energy produced in the UK can lower energy prices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe renewable energy produced in the UK can help us tackle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

climate change						
I believe renewable energy produced in the UK can pose issues for our local environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Defecting

There is a current trend in UK politics, where politicians from one party defect, or switch party allegiance, to another. We want to know your thoughts on this. Please read the following items carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each item.

	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree	Don't know
A politician defecting from one party to another lowers my trust in the politician	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A politician defecting from	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

one party to another lowers my trust in the party they have left						
A politician defecting from one party to another lowers my trust in the party they have joined	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q How do you feel about politicians from another party joining the one you support? (optional)

Q How do you feel about politicians from a party you support defecting to another? (optional)

Q: Any other thoughts on politicians defecting? (optional)

Collaboration

Party Collaboration

Q How do you feel about the party you support party collaborating with another, which you dislike? (optional)

Q How do you feel about the party you support collaborating with another, that you do like? (optional)

Q Any other thoughts on parties collaborating? (optional)

Demographics

The following demographic data will be provided by Prolific (Respondents voluntarily shared this information with the platform, to be shared with researchers):

Age, Country of Residence (within the UK), Gender, UK General Election 2024 (voting choice), Political Affiliation (left, centre, right, n.a.), Belief in Climate Change (yes, not, don't know), Support or Opposition towards Windfarms being built in their area, Political Affiliation (which party they feel affiliated to), current UK area of residence (e.g. North East of England, South West England, Wales, Scotland).

The following demographic data will be recorded via our questionnaire. Answer options will include those listed, and 'prefer not to say' options:

Does the individual consider the area they live in to be urban or rural, gender identity (to be repeated, in case it has changed), income (do they consider to have low, medium, or high

income, education (what is the highest level of education they have achieved), country of residence (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland).

End of Survey and Payment Link

Your Opinions on Political Parties and their Policies

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEFING

Thank you for participating! This document gives you more detail about the purpose of this study, and what sort of questions we are hoping to find answers to, with the help of the responses that you, as a participant to the study, have shared with us.

During the survey, we split you into groups. You either received a description of Party A or Party B. Party A's aims were focused around social and environmental justice. Party B mainly aimed at tackling immigration, as they described it as the root cause of many issues around the UK. After that, you were given one of two policy descriptions. Both focused on renewable energy developments, with one focusing on how to use these to bring down energy bills in the UK, and the other focusing on tackling climate change. The four groups are showcased below:

Group 1	Party A	Energy Costs
Group 2	Party B	Climate Change

Group 3	Party A	Climate Change
Group 4	Party B	Energy Costs

In the section below, we discuss what we hope to find out by presenting you with these different combinations of Party description and policy aims.

What we aim to answer

With the questionnaire responses received, we hope to gain a better understanding of what sort of policies members of the public prefer, and how that might relate to the parties that suggest the policies. Specifically, we want to understand:

- *Do people support a policy solely based on the content, or does it matter which party suggests it?*

By providing you with two different parties, which suggest the same two policies, we want to understand if people might reject policies, not because they necessarily disagree with the content, but because they might have strong negative views of the party, or do not trust the party.

- *Are people more likely to support a policy if it is framed around economic versus climate goals?*

The majority of people worry about the effects of climate change. However, we find that they often do not necessarily vote for a party that wants to tackle climate change. We also find that, understandably, issues around the economy and cost-of-living crisis are often raised as the important issues for people. We want to understand if focusing on policies which centralising tackling these most important issues, in this case, energy costs, can increase support for policies usually framed around the goal of tackling climate change. There is evidence that the energy transition can result in both economic growth and climate mitigation. But are these economic benefits communicated well?

- *Can we overcome the potentially effects of negative views and distrust of political parties, by changing the focus of the policies?*

If people indeed reject policies because of their views of the party suggesting them, rather than their views on the actual content of the policy, is there a way to overcome this barrier? Could we increase support if the policy clearly outlines the potential benefits to those issues, people care about most (in our example, energy costs)?

We hope that the findings from this study will inform academic research and policy making around climate change, to better serve and respect the needs of the public.

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If you have any open questions you wish to discuss, please reach out to the lead researcher on this study, Clara Kubler (c.kubler@uea.ac.uk). If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Ethics Officer for the School of Environmental Sciences, Dr Casper Ebbensgaard (c.ebbensgaard@uea.ac.uk). or the Head of the School of Environmental Sciences, Professor Ian Renfrew (I.Renfrew@uea.ac.uk).

Appendix 5: Full Qualitative Analysis Table

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
				Interview	Survey	
Factors Influencing Voting in the Election	Change within Party			2 (11)		'The Conservatives have been at war internally now for 40 years'
	Emotional Reasons for Voting	Desperation		1(1)	0 (0)	'[My vote for Reform UK], it's a desperate last sort of you know, finger up and hope that the wind's blowing in the right way.'
		Feeling Disenfranchised		1 (1)	0 (0)	'Because I feel disenfranchised by our political parties, I really do. Once in one election, I put a line through my papers as a spoiled paper.'
		Fear		2 (8)	1 (1)	'When I think about Reform, I just, I do actually feel pretty scared about the fact that

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Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						they did win some seats in, in the last election [...] and that really worries me.'
		Hope		1 (1)	2 (3)	'I felt quite hopeful this time around that knowing that there was a real chance [that the Green Party might win]'
		Nostalgia		1 (1)	0 (0)	'I think part of it is a nostalgia for what we were and could possibly be again.'
	Party Alignment with Personal Beliefs			5 (7)	0 (0)	'I like what they are about, but unfortunately I don't know, the way the UK is today [...] its painful for me knowing I am voting for someone that is probably not gonna get in, but if I vote for anyone else, I'd be going against my own sort of believes.'
	Party Size			2 (4)	0 (0)	'For the life of me I cannot understand why this particular constituency has voted for the

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						Green Party. I really, really cannot understand because if we had a lot of people with sense here, they would realise that with two MP's in Parliament they can't do anything at all. It's a token vote.'
	Climate Change and Voting			3 (12)	2 (2)	'So that's my view on why did I put Green down, [...] because at least they've got one policy. Let's try and save the world, which the others just play lip service to.'
	Contact with Politicians and Voting			5 (17)	4 (5)	'I'd voted green in the Council elections, partly because he was the only candidate who came to see, came to my door to talk to me'
	Environment and Voting			4 (18)	3 (7)	'Although I was not entirely happy with all the things which the Greens were doing, I

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						thought the thing which I was concerned with was the environmental issues'
	NP and Voting			7 (24)	4 (42)	'I'd probably have more in common with Greens, like I think the Greens policies are much better than the Tories, but equally I would have said I would probably vote Labour or Lib Dem if I thought they were going to win. Or Independent, as long as it wasn't Reform'
	Voting in Support			3 (15)	4 (5)	'I would say it's always been for the Green Party. [I] wouldn't vote Green to vote against Labour. [...] Even if I lived in an area where there was no chance that Green would get in, I would still vote Green, because I just think

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						you should vote for the policies that you believe in'
NP Expression and Development	NP because of Politicians Focus on the Wealthy			2 (2)	3 (4)	'Its not about reforming the UK, its about a few select people making a power grab, is how I kind of see it, and its about keeping the rich rich'
	NP and Emotional Reactance	Distaste		1 (1)		'I think the reality is, again, I just, I will just ramble on about, you know, my distaste [for Reform UK].'
		Anger and NP		5 (12)		'It just drives me into a cycle of madness, why are people backing Reform, when it is the same guy who butchered everything else before it'
		Anxiety over Outgroup Party		2 (11)	1 (1)	'I fear for what would happen in terms of what we would become. I fear for our country

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						and, so Reform [UK] to me are very dangerous and I would never vote for them'
	NP and Motivation			5 (13)		'I feel incredibly motivated to vote out of sheer disappointment and frustration'
	NP and Outgroup Categorisation	Negative Description of Outgroup Members		6 (21)	3 (4)	'It's people who don't, probably, really think much, beyond themselves and what was good for them.'
		Differing Values to Outgroup		6 (19)	2 (4)	'Reform UK, I recognise their role as a disruptor in the system, but obviously their core values are something that feel deeply uncomfortable.'

Table Appendix 5. Full list of codes and themes (inductive and deductive from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 5, from the study in Mid Suffolk and Waveney Valley.						
Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
		Difficult Intergroup Contact		3 (5)		'It leaves me a bit devoid of hope at times because you just can't even have a conversation with some of these people because their ideas are so ingrained.'
		Lack of Understanding for Outgroup		6 (19)	2 (2)	'Especially I think when it is somebody that I know, who says like, you know, sharing something on Facebook and I'm just like how have, how have these views which are so against my own how, how have they kind of taken hold in this person's mindset'
		Outgroup as ineffective		3 (5)	2 (5)	'They're pretty ignorant about reality. Pretty simplistic about their solutions and challenges and they seem also incapable of getting things done.'
	NP and self-definition	NP as the identity		4 (7)	1 (1)	'I think I wouldn't put myself as just anti-Conservative because I'm also very angry at

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Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
						Labour right now, and the Green Party, Yeah, so I think. But I think at the moment I'm more anti than I am pro the Green Party.'
		NP and Social Identity		2 (3)		'To be honest, a couple of people that have that have been opening, sharing their differing views, I have just unfriended them or like, you know, unfollowed them because I just think I don't want to see that content being shared by people that I'm associating with in my life.'
	Outgroup Threatening Personal Freedom			2 (4)	1 (2)	'Their policies are tantamount to agents of social control.'
	Worldview			2 (5)		'My worldview started to change. That it was, the lesser of two or three for me very bad

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						options. I think that's the honest truth. It was basic, it was, it was core worldview.'
Media	Emotional Reactions to Social Media			1 (2)		'I think it does just come up a lot on my social media and that kind of thing. So I think I'm quite exposed to it and it probably doesn't help because I probably do click on stuff when I see it just and get angry.'
	Hidden Agenda in Content			2 (4)		'I am [...] very aware that a lot of the stuff you get fed, ehm, sort of straight down your throat, I personally feel like there is always an agenda to it, the reality is usually somewhere in the middle of what people get reported or shoved down their throats.'
	Role of Journalists			1 (2)		'Journalists were finding it increasingly tough to function in the world where, you know,

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						companies were spending increasing amounts of money on public relations.'
	Selling Headlines rather than Content			3 (3)		'They're looking for cheaper headlines like grabbing news, stuff that sells papers rather than something that provokes, you know, more serious kind of debate.'
Renewable Energy Projects	Rigorous Process of Implementation			1 (4)		'Most renewable energy installations have to go through a very vigorous planning process and a lot of that process will cut them off if they are going to be in an area that's deemed unsuitable because of farmland being high quality or being too close to people's houses or whatever. So I think people will see a solar farm go up in an agricultural field and think, oh, that's terrible. They've got rid of, you know, a good piece of agricultural land. But in

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						reality, they don't know if anything was ever grown on that land.'
	Co-benefits of Renewables			1 (2)		'There's a lot of co-benefits that come with renewable energy as well. It means we're less reliant on, you know, supplies from overseas [...]. And it just means a more steady supply and a like energy security basically and hopefully that will also result in cheaper electricity for everybody as well.'
	Community Benefits of Energy Projects			5 (9)		'What's going to piss the people of Mid Suffolk off is if you've got renewables coming in from sort of like North Sea and everything else and we're just shipping sort of electricity down to, you know, people in Essex and we've got to have all these extra pylons sort of like, you know, going through.'

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	Need for Nuance			1 (2)		‘The current political climate. Is too simplistic and too one-dimensional.’
	Rural Consequences versus Urban Needs			2 (2)		‘if you want solar panels, why don't you put them on Primrose Hill in London, for example. Ideal south facing, close to where the, the energy is supplied. Why don’t you put them on Hampstead Heath?’
	Silent Majority versus Vocal Minority			2 (7)		I think the silent majority aren't fussed [about renewables], and I think everyone needs to remember that. The noisy minority is what you're facing.’
	UK as world leader on energy			2 (3)		‘Why shouldn't we be an example to the world? If there's one thing we could influence the world in, possibly it's this.’

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Centralisation of Government	Accountability taken away by nationalisation			1 (1)		'In the past, if you take us locally again in terms of things like the sewage, you know the local sourcing was responsible and the thing went wrong. You know who to go to! Now, who knows? Who cares.'
	Need for Local Government			4 (15)		'here's increasing centralization of, of control in England. [...] If you haven't got any constraints upon you, you can then carve up the country in terms of purely numbers and not worry about local sensitivity.'
	Perceived Agency			2 (2)		'You can do something about it, you can argue. You can because you have control as you like of the local authorities. You can force those people to take anything seriously.'

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Desperate for Change/Need for Political Refresh	Financial Commitment as Expression for Desire to Change			2 (7)		'There's a, I suppose a point at which I think, well, I don't mind paying the extra to, to try and save something.'
	Frustration with the Status Quo			4 (22)		'It's obviously a big problem facing the world that needs new ways of thinking, new solutions, [...] where I feel this point, it is not happening. It's about the challenge to the way things are done currently and have been done.'
	'Get on with things'			3 (21)		'But we have to save the world. We got to get on with it and we can't just kind of keep on delaying any of these things for the next.'
	Prospect of Change as Voting Reason			3 (6)		'I voted for them and [...] that was a chance I took just because, you know, so desperate to, for a change'

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Perception of Politicians	Distrust of Politicians	Distrust and NP		4 (5)		'What I believe are lies and propaganda that they promoted to, yeah, all of that turned me against them.'
		Hidden Ideology		3 (6)		'If you take the Labour Party [...]. Their next manager is carbon reduction. So it's driven by an ideology which has little, in my view, little basis in the reality of what this country is about.'
		Lack of Trust		2 (4)		'And I whilst I support Reform, I still have some negatives in the back of my mind, simply because it's very easy to say we'll do this. We'll do that when you're in opposition.'
		Politicians as Dishonest		4 (17)		'Is there such a thing as honest politicians?'
		Politicians say what Public		1 (2)		'In that, we've moved to populism with politicians saying what the voter wants to

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		Wants rather than Needs				hear rather than what the voter needs to hear.'
	Politicians are not Good at their Job	Politicians as Incapable of working Together		3 (7)		'So the Conservatives have moved away. They've moved further, right. They become less tolerant. They're incapable of coming up with a single policy amongst themselves.'
		Short-term versus Long-term Thinking in Policy		3 (16)		'The inability of politicians to be able to think long term because they spend their whole life defending themselves against attacks which come immediately after any decision that they've made. [...] There's a whole raft of things that people could do in order to improve this country, but they won't because they're too short-termist.'

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	Politicians are Disconnected from the Public	Psychological Distance to Politicians		3 (10)		'I think if you talk about the Labour government, for example, it's yeah, it feels a bit like they're kind of locked away at Number 10 and kind of brainstorming all these ideas and haven't actually thought about how that's going to land with the people that these ideas are going to affect the most.'
		Politicians Don't Care		1 (8)		'[Their] on 90 grand a year. Couldn't give monkeys about anybody else, basically. And that's their job. And I mean, when have you ever seen a politician, a decent politician actually answer a question properly?'
		Politicians Don't Listen to the Public		2 (10)		'It's just, you know, a school playground where people throwing stones at each other and nobody actually wanted to listen to what

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						the teachers, that being us, the public, are actually saying at the end of the day'
		Politicians Don't understand the Average Citizen		3 (12)		'They're both parties that I think because of their just completely innate lack of understanding of the population and what general and average sort of person living in the UK needs.'
		Politicians Don't Understand Rural Needs		2 (9)		'The Conservative candidates [...] had veered away from being supporters of the local interests and local conditions and local needs, [...] I didn't think that [the local candidate] had sufficiently understood the change in attitude which people had.'
	Individual Politicians are more Important			3 (3)		'The thing you'd like, you'd think that the party are going to do more or less what the leaders decides. And it is easier to get his, usually

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	than Party Affiliation					easier to follow his way, than it is to go against it. And I think that most parties do, they don't last long if they don't.'
	Desirable Qualities in Politician's	Approachable		1 (1)		'Could say he was a good constituency. He went everywhere and he was of course quite a nice bloke actually. And I thought, he's alright. You might talk to in the pub, having a drink with him.'
		Credible		2 (2)		'I suppose its, credibility. You think that what they're saying, at least they believe in it probably isn't too bad.'
Political Identity (other than NP)	Environmentalist			1 (1)		'I always considered myself as, like an environmentalist'
	Ideological Identity			3 (3)		'I think, ideally I'm a socialist and I always have been'

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Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
	National Identity			1 (2)		'But I also regard myself in terms of very much a patriot.'
	Party Identity			8 (9)		'Definitely a Green Party supporter. I can't ever see them being a major political force. But yeah, that's, that's life, isn't it?'
	Religious Identity			1 (3)		'don't identify with the political party because I identify with something else, namely my Christian faith, so that transcends.'
Links between NP and Climate and Environment	Rejection of CC and Env policies based on Party Origin			2 (5)		'There's a headline issue like. You know, like net zero or even naively, you know, protecting the planet or national independence. But when you get underneath those headlines, there's a massive other agenda.'

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Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
		NP Influencing CC and Env Support		2 (2)		'I don't think [renewable energy] is a new industry. I think it's a complete waste of time and space. The only thing that will develop in this country is if we get energy prices down. I don't know how you're gonna do it. Unfortunately, I'm not that intelligent and that wise, I don't have to be. That's what we pay these politicians.'
	Climate and Environment influencing Party Image			5 (15)		'But I mean their views about things like the environment are just outrageous. I mean, completely outrageous and they say what they say because people want to hear that.'
Demographic Factors and Politics	Age and Politics			5 (13)		't's just as you get older your views, I mean, the majority of people my age vote Conservative or worse, or for right wing, but

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						I've never been ever, [I haven't] got that far yet.'
	Family	Children Influencing Parents		1 (5)		'I think the other thing probably worth bearing in mind is that I've got a 38 year old daughter and a 31 year old son. [...] They are both Labour voters, but in terms of, you know, discussing things they do influence you, I mean children influence parents.'
		Difficulties in Family Dynamics Based on Opposing Views		2 (5)		'And I would say that people in my family have quite opposing political views and then you can't escape from your family so. So that brings up quite a lot of arguments and con-, you know, difficult conversations about things.'

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Attitudes towards Climate and Environment	CC and Env as AN issue rather than THE issue			2 (3)		'So yes, that, that that's part of it. That's not the biggest thing for me, but that's definitely part of it.'
	CC and Env as Depressing Topic			2 (2)		'I think I've got enough information on it. More just makes you a bit more depressed about things, don't you [think]?'
	CC and Env as Important			4 (5)		'I just don't understand how protecting the planet for future generations isn't everyone's top priority.'
	CC and Env as Motivators to Engage with Politics			2 (4)		'So thinking about what motivates me, first of all, I would say definitely the primary motivation is environmental reasons.'
	CC and Env as Not Important			1 (5)		'I can't afford to be Green. I don't agree with climate change. I'm in my late 70s now. It doesn't make any difference to me, quite

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						honestly, whatever I do isn't gonna make any difference.'
	Current CC and Env Policies do not Lead to Progress	CC and Env Policy Trade-Offs		1 (1)		'I think a lot of people in this area are concerned about, you know, losing good farmland and that kind of thing, but, I do get it and I think that is that is a problem. But ultimately, [...] most renewable energy installations have to go through a very vigorous planning process'
		CC and Env Policies as archaic		1 (3)		'They want us to move back to the you know, the 12th century and it it just isn't gonna work'
		CC and Env Policies as Ineffective		5 (13)		'You know, one of the local Green councillors here told me, you know this brilliant story. They went to inspect a new development of current housing sort of laid down in

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						Stowmarket. And they said, 'but you said that these properties will all be fitted with solar panels'. And the guy says, 'oh, yeah, no, they have got solar panels'. So the councillors then say, 'but where are they? I can't see them.' They said, 'oh, yes, they're, they're on the other roof.' And it's like, 'but that's facing north.' 'We put them on that side because, you know, you wouldn't see them'.
		CC and Env Policies as Unrealistic		4 (6)		'All of my life, and I remain profoundly committed. To a range of environmental issues, but I think the Green Party. The Green Party is divorced from the realities of daily life.'
		CC and Env Policies too		4 (10)		'And then everything is just grossly expensive. Nobody can afford to live anymore. The

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		Expensive for the Public				Greens, everything that I've read or seen about them. Everything seems to cost something and it all comes down to money.'
		CC and Env Policies as Anti-Growth		3 (5)		'You're shackling all of industry with these enormous prices.'
	Differentiation between CC and Env			5 (10)		'We have an awful lot of solar farms going up around here. We've got the pylons going. I mean, my daily walk at the moment is beautiful. I see agricultural land on both sides. In five years' time, I'll be walking down a tunnel with solar farms on either side and the pylons going over the top, and I hate the idea and I think it's destroying the environment. But we have to save the world.'

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	Net Zero			2 (4)		'Actually, there is no question about climate change. But I think that that could just briefly going back to the Net Zero thing, that isn't the answer either.'
	Relationship between Climate, Environment and Economy			3 (6)		'We have a situation whereby we give up our competitive advantage for the benefit of feeling good about the fact that we no longer producing as much carbon as we used to. I think that is a recipe for future disaster in terms of [...], it makes us poorer.'
	Exposure to CC and Env Issues			1 (1)		'That that's probably because I am so exposed to all the issues all the time that I think maybe some people don't necessarily, they may be not aware of how bad things are.'

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Theme	Parent Code	Child Code	Inductive/ Deductive	Number of Files expressing code (number of references to code)		Quote
Public Views of the Political System	General Emotions towards Politics	Feeling Stuck		1 (1)		'It just seems like we're stuck in this one, that, that just things are as they are, and/or a reaction to that you know.'
		Unable to Cope		1 (1)		'How am I supposed to cope with all of those qualms?'
		Voting as a Painful Experience		1 (1)		'The way the UK is today [...], its painful for me knowing I am voting for someone that is probably not gonna get in, but if I vote for anyone else, I'd be going against my own sort of believes.'
	Popularity Contest			3 (6)		'It's this personality driven politics, you see, I mean, not just in the UK. [...] We're less interested in the actual content and what's happening, and you know, it's more around the people doing it, which feels bad.'

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	Populism			2 (5)		'The centre for some reason isn't holding at the moment, I think the reason as I say is because it's easy for populists, easy with all the means of communication and everything the way that the world is at the moment.'
	Public Disengagement			2 (5)		'The government surveys around, you know, communities, [...] They sent the questionnaire around and they were giving away £10 of like vouchers for you to take part in a UK government survey about local communities. And that's, that's sad, isn't it, when you have to incentivise people to vote or take part in surveys. [...]Well, if you don't use it, you lose it, don't you?'
	Divided Public Opinions			2 (4)		'The scale of opinion is so drastic [...]. I don't know that a party is ever going to represent,

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						you know, how the British public feel about things.'

Appendix 6: Full Survey Item Correlation Matrix

		Emotion significance				Worldview	Sense of self	Group categorisation		Self-Definition	Identity salience
		day ruined	angrypraise	relieved loses	feel good criticised	never vote	important not vote	they not we	nothing common	anti party	important anti
Emotion sig	day ruined	1	0.64	0.411	0.572	0.276	0.349	0.204	0.353	0.384	0.461
	angrypraise	0.64	1	0.488	0.576	0.375	0.417	0.305	0.427	0.48	0.541
	relieved loses	0.411	0.488	1	0.491	0.559	0.581	0.405	0.412	0.579	0.498
	feel good criticised	0.572	0.576	0.491	1	0.39	0.425	0.358	0.383	0.497	0.549
Worldview	never vote	0.276	0.375	0.559	0.39	1	0.66	0.473	0.417	0.564	0.459
self	important not vote	0.349	0.417	0.581	0.425	0.66	1	0.505	0.464	0.611	0.6
	they not we	0.204	0.305	0.405	0.358	0.473	0.505	1	0.407	0.51	0.43

		Emotion significance				Worldview	Sense of self	Group categorisation		Self-Definition	Identity salience
		day ruined	angrypraise	relieved loses	feel good criticised	never vote	important not vote	they not we	nothing common	anti party	important anti
Group cat	nothing common	0.353	0.427	0.412	0.383	0.417	0.464	0.407	1	0.59	0.571
Definition	anti party	0.384	0.48	0.579	0.497	0.564	0.611	0.51	0.59	1	0.754
salience	important anti	0.461	0.541	0.498	0.549	0.459	0.6	0.43	0.571	0.754	1