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Voters' Verdict on Health: What do Green voters think about the role of government and businesses in shaping the nation's health?

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This briefing looks at the views of the Green voter coalition on the role of government and businesses in shaping and improving the nation's health, particularly focussing on preventing poor health caused by tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy diets. This includes the Greens' existing voter base and the voters the party has gained from Labour since the 2024 general election.

Ten 75-minute online focus groups were held between 1 and 10 June 2026 with different voter groups. Groups were defined by current voting intention and voting history. This briefing draws on the groups held with the Greens' key voter groups: voters who voted Green in 2024 and intend to do so again (Core Green), and voters who voted Labour in 2024 and now intend to vote Green (Labour switchers). The focus groups were supplemented with a short online survey on key issues discussed by the groups.

Summary

Green voters are the most consistently supportive of action to improve people's health of any voter group in our research, and this support is shared by core Green voters and by the Labour voters the party has gained since 2024. Where other voters approach health mainly through the NHS and prevention, core Green voters adopt a broader understanding centred on wellbeing, community and the social and commercial influences on health. They see health as a collective challenge shaped by economic circumstances, advertising, social norms and local environments rather than individual choices alone.

Green voters largely reject the language of the 'nanny state' and see helping people to live healthier lives as a core part of government's job. Support is not unconditional, however. Labour switchers in particular weigh interventions against their economic consequences, and voters across both groups want evidence, proportionality and practical implementation. But confidence in effectiveness, not ideology, is what determines support for specific policies, and protecting children is the most persuasive rationale of all.

Green voters are the most sceptical of any group about large corporations. They think food, alcohol, tobacco and vape companies put profit before health, mislead consumers with health claims and aim their marketing at young people, and only behave responsibly when compelled to. They want policy shaped by scientific evidence, health professionals and communities, not by companies with a financial interest in unhealthy products.

When asked if they are concerned about the impact of industries on children's health, 65% are concerned about the tobacco industry (national average of 63%), 63% the alcohol industry (national average of 58%) and 69% the food industry (national average 65%).

65% of Green voters want to see similar rules that limit the tobacco industry's contact with government, applied to alcohol and unhealthy food and drink companies (national average of 57%).

Views of Green voters

1. **Green voters see preventing ill health as the central challenge for the health system**

Green voters think the UK focuses too heavily on treating illness and not enough on preventing it. Voters told us they want to see health education, early intervention and healthier environments. For many, prevention was a way of improving health, reducing pressure on the NHS and lowering public spending at the same time. Unlike other voter groups, prevention was rarely framed purely as an economic necessity; it was viewed as a positive goal in its own right, and voters were clear that spending on health cannot substitute for tackling the commercial causes of poor health.

> ***"I think it gets attention but too late. There's not enough focus on prevention. I always seem to hear these things - when someone that's young has passed away - as opposed to prevention or things we can do now to change."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"If there are no new legislations coming in to deal with the predatory behaviours of companies on social media or to manage other components and aspects of industries that are causing the damage to the public health, if you're throwing money at public health to solve public health, that's just not the solution to that situation entirely."*** **– Male, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

2. **Green voters see food as the biggest threat to people's health, and blame the way it is produced and marketed**

Green voters' concerns are concentrated on the food system, particularly ultra-processed ingredients and marketing. They view unhealthy food as a pervasive, unavoidable threat, distinguishing it from smoking, which is seen as a more isolated issue. Both core Green voters and Labour switchers think commercial interests intentionally mislead consumers through labelling and health claims, and are creating a landscape in which healthy choices are systematically discouraged and healthy food costs more than processed alternatives.

> ***"These companies are making millions of pounds in profit, aren't they? So I think they should be a bit more responsible about what we're eating"*** **– Male, 30s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"Well, if a product says 'healthy' on it, you know that it's not."*** **– Male, 60s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"And sometimes it'll say like the calories, won't it? But then actually it might be low in calories, but it's loaded with a load of other stuff, isn't it?"*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"I think they get paid, don't they? So they get paid from the brands to be put on a specific place on a shelf"*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

3. **Green voters distrust large corporations to put people's health before profit**

Green voters have high levels of distrust of large corporations. They think businesses prioritise profit over health, influence consumer behaviour through advertising, act responsibly only when compelled to, and shape policymaking through lobbying and donations.

Core Green voters were concerned about the sheer scale of marketing spend and its power over behaviour, particularly marketing aimed at young people and women through TikTok and Instagram, and about vapes and alcohol products sold in ways that clearly target children. Labour switchers thought corporate influence on people's health was obvious and barely required discussion. Across both groups there was a widespread belief that commercial incentives and

health goals are fundamentally misaligned, and that as companies grow larger and swallow up smaller independents, consumers are left choosing from whatever the biggest corporations decide to put in front of them. Regulation was seen as necessary because companies cannot be relied upon to improve health voluntarily.

> ***"I don't think companies are honest unless they absolutely have to be, unless there's really strict legislation…otherwise they'll sell anything to make profit basically. And I find it quite upsetting at the moment the way that the vapes and certain alcoholic things, like these little round things are sold in all the news agents and things and clearly targeted at kids, just clearly targeted at underage people who shouldn't be buying them."*** **– Female, 40s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"It's the companies who spend the most on marketing have the biggest influence because if marketing wasn't a strong influence on our behaviour, big companies wouldn't be spending millions and millions and millions of pounds on it."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"I think a lot of that marketing as well is aimed at young people more now than ever. My daughter's 13 and the number of products that she's talking about...that are just constantly being advertised on TikTok and Instagram and everywhere, it's unbelievable."*** **– Female, 40s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"As companies are getting larger and larger, there's less and less smaller independent companies that are able to operate against some of the giants...When our selection is being dwindled away to just what the mega corporations are wanting to put in front of us, we are at the mercy of them to provide us what they want to give us."*** **– Male, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

4. Green voters want health policy shaped by evidence and expertise, not by commercial interests

Green voters want government decisions informed by scientific research, health evidence, healthcare professionals, community expertise and lived experience, and they do not want businesses with a financial interest in unhealthy products anywhere near the table. Core Green voters went furthest, arguing that companies should not be able to lobby government at all, while Labour switchers pointed to political donations and industry-funded research as routes to influence. There is concern about newer risks such as vaping, where voters felt evidence had not yet caught up with widespread use; participants drew parallels with smoking in previous decades and argued that policymakers should learn from past failures to regulate harmful products more quickly.

> ***"It wasn't until the research proved the direct link between smoking and cancer that people realised one causes the other and beforehand doctors were actively advertising and condoning smoking. And going back to current trends and fads about things like vaping, there hasn't been enough research done because vaping's such a new thing in order to work out how healthy or unhealthy vaping actually is."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"As a basic rule, don't think that any businesses should be able to influence government at all. So I don't think any company should be allowed to lobby their MPs or government at all. I think governments should be totally independent from the influence of industry."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"I'm sure if they're making donations, then there's going to be some influence. And I know in the past there's been various health things that actually when they've gone back and looked at them when all these big cases about smoking and things and various chemicals that actually the studies themselves were funded by those companies."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

5. **Green voters see a healthy population and a healthy economy as interconnected, and poverty as the biggest barrier to good health**

Labour switchers were more likely than core Green voters to balance their support for interventions against concerns about economic consequences. They think a healthy population and a healthy economy are interconnected, but worry about policies that might undermine economic activity or place additional financial burdens on consumers and businesses. Core Greens focused more on the interaction between income and healthy choices, arguing that poverty is the biggest barrier to good health and that better treatment and prevention would get people back to work sooner.

> ***"It's getting the balance, isn't it? Because if you absolutely trash the economy, then unfortunately everything else does tend to go with it. People don't have so much money, so they're not so happy. They may not make such good choices with regards to food because they can't afford it."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"You take a working class family with kids who haven't got any money or no time to do that, then this is going to be the biggest issue. And we've got four and a half million kids who are under the poverty line at the moment."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"If you're unemployed, there's a strong chance that you're probably not going to be making the healthiest choices when you go and buy things in the supermarket, for example, just because you buy what you can afford."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

6. **Green voters think health is a collective responsibility**

Green voters consistently framed health as a collective challenge. Participants saw responsibility as shared across government, businesses, communities, families and individuals. There was little support for the idea that health outcomes are simply the result of personal choices. Instead, participants repeatedly discussed how behaviour is shaped by economic circumstances, advertising, social norms, local environments and access to healthy options. The belief in collective responsibility for health was particularly pronounced among core Green voters.

> ***"It's a broader picture around what the government are doing…to look at prevention and also working with communities to look at what's accessible for different groups of people in relation to preventing and maintaining people's wellbeing and health."*** **– Female, 40s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

7. **Green voters see helping people live healthier lives as a core part of government's job, and largely reject the language of the 'nanny state'**

Green voters see helping people to live healthier lives as part of what government is for. Participants argued that government intervention improves people's lives, pointed to seatbelts and the ban on smoking in pubs as interventions now taken for granted, and rejected negative language about the 'nanny state'. Core Green voters were particularly dismissive of the term itself. Support for intervention is not unlimited: voters still want evidence, proportionality, practical implementation and respect for personal autonomy, and Labour switchers were more likely to voice these caveats. But confidence in effectiveness rather than ideology is what shapes their view of specific policies.

> ***"If [policies are] going to make them healthy, then it's for their own good, isn't it? So you go back to the nanny state thing, the government interfering with your life, but are they interfering with it or are they trying to better it?"*** **– Male, 50s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"The idea that we live in a situation where we don't want our government or the state to be helpful and to be interventionist just doesn't seem to make sense to me. So I reject the term. It just means that we want interaction as government and something that I'm quite happy to have."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"There is some wonderful government interventions, which I think we take for granted. And these things are really important. We wouldn't dream of having our kids rattling around on the backseat without being strapped in, for example. I mean, would anyone in their right minds bring back smoking in pubs?"*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

8. Children provide the strongest rationale for intervention

Across both Green voter groups, protecting children is the most persuasive argument for government action. Participants strongly supported reducing youth smoking, regulating vaping, limiting unhealthy marketing, improving school food and health education. Children were viewed as uniquely vulnerable to commercial influences. Participants repeatedly expressed concern that vaping products are designed and displayed to appeal to young people, that social media promotes unhealthy behaviour, and that advertising shapes children's habits before they can make informed decisions. This concern was particularly strong among core Green voters.

> ***"Things like smoking and vaping, I think they do need to come down hard on. Food is a bit different. I find it bonkers now that the vapes, how we can sell all these vapes are clearly targeted at kids. And that doesn't seem to be any control over it whatsoever."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"They've got all cutesy patterns and characters and things on them, haven't they? They are so obviously targeted at kids."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

How Green voters responded to public health policy ideas

We showed participants three public health policies to understand the considerations that shape their views. Green voters judged them primarily on whether they would protect children and reduce harm, and on fairness to people on lower incomes.

Smokefree Generation

The Smokefree Generation policy attracted near-unanimous support across both Green voter groups. Voters saw it as protecting children from ever becoming addicted, without affecting people who already smoke, and drew comparisons with seatbelts and the ban on smoking in pubs: measures that were controversial at the time and are now taken for granted. The only reservations were that enforcement should not criminalise young people, that vaping may now be the bigger problem, and that the government would lose tobacco tax revenue.

> ***"The main point is to stop children ever starting and getting addicted to smoking. How could anybody have an issue with that?"*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"I think it's a really good idea. I can't see any benefits to smoking. And so anything we can do to reduce people smoking is a really good thing and it feels like it's a good compromise in a way."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"As long as it's policed sensibly and people presumably will have to show ID like they do to buy alcohol. So yeah, I think it's great."*** **– Male, 60s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"I'm broadly supportive of it as long as the people who are smoking don't become the criminals."*** **– Male, 50s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

Minimum unit pricing for alcohol

Minimum unit pricing divided Green voters. Some supported the principle that unhealthy products should cost more, in the same way as the sugar levy, and liked that it would remove very cheap, very strong products from sale. Others, particularly Labour switchers in Bristol and younger core Greens in Brighton, worried that it would fall hardest on people on low incomes and add to the cost of living. Support depends on showing that the policy targets the cheapest, strongest products and leaves the price of an ordinary bottle of wine untouched.

> ***"Somebody was mentioning about the sugar tax before that now drinks with sugar are more expensive...I feel like it's quite similar to that, that if you do want to have something that is unhealthier, then you're going to have to pay a little bit more for it. I think that unhealthy things should be more expensive than healthy things."*** **– Female, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"If it meant you weren't going to drink seven bottles of wine a week, you're going to drink three, then you're going to benefit from that, aren't you?"*** **– Male, 50s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"As long as it was looked at very carefully as to how much effect it's having on pricing of other things like your bottle of scotch, because those aren't the things that are causing the problems, is it? Your person having a couple of scotches on ice.[It's those] nasty cheap white ciders that your homeless people are glugging and youngsters."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"I also do think it's a little bit exclusionary. I think there should be options for everybody's budget."*** **– Male, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"Everything you read is just like prices are going up, prices are rising, whether it be alcohol, food, electricity bills, gas bills, it just feels like everything's going up, which is pretty depressing to be honest."*** **– Male, 30s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

> ***"So I wasn't buying 1.50 cider, which is now 3.50, so that doesn't affect me. And the 10 pound bottle of wine I was buying is still 10 pounds."*** **– Female, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

Restrictions on unhealthy food advertising

Restrictions on unhealthy food advertising are supported by both groups, as voters thought a focus on television misses where children actually see advertising: YouTube, TikTok, influencers and social media. Some questioned whether restrictions could be enforced online at all. Support is strongest when the policy is framed as covering the platforms children actually use and as one part of a wider approach, alongside school food and education.

> ***"Banning it on TV, I mean, sure, I mean, I'm totally in agreeance for it. I think that's great. It just doesn't feel like it goes far enough"*** **– Male, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

> ***"So they watch YouTube to death, but at sitting down and actually watching tele, I think will have very little bearing on them."*** **– Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

***"I think it's great to not be advertising junk food in general, but I just don't understand how you can...I don't know how they can put that into place to say, right, McDonald's, you can't post on your Instagram, you can't post a picture of a burger because a kid might see it."* – Female, 30s, Brighton Pavilion, Core Green**

***"My kids, they're 11 and 15, they absolutely know all about McDonald's, Domino's. So if you stop advertising now, it's going to make no difference to them, but maybe younger ones"* – Female, 40s, Bristol Central, Labour switcher**

There are clear messaging implications for Green voters

Green voters are keen on prevention and support early intervention, so will respond well to arguments about preventing ill health, as well as messaging about enabling healthy choices and healthy lives.

Green voters are highly receptive to arguments about holding powerful companies to account for the harm they cause to people's health. Green voters are the most sceptical of all the political groups about large companies having any role in health policy. Messaging about government making companies act responsibly, and keeping them out of policymaking, is important for Green voters.

Green voters, like most other voter groups, trust and value scientific evidence, research and practical outcomes, and arguments centred on protecting children generate particularly strong support.

Messaging framed around building healthier environments, not just healthier behaviours, is likely to be effective with Green voters. Green voters are more likely than other groups to see health as shaped by systems, communities and environments rather than individual choices alone.

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