

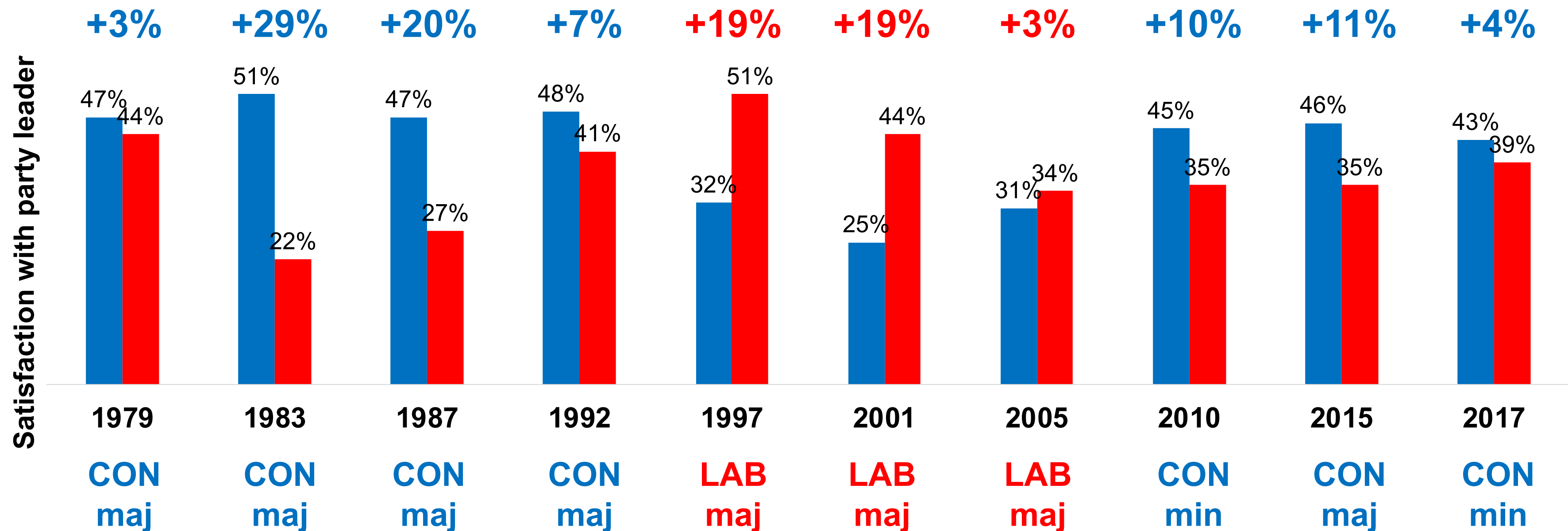
Wednesday 11th September 2019

What makes a great leader?

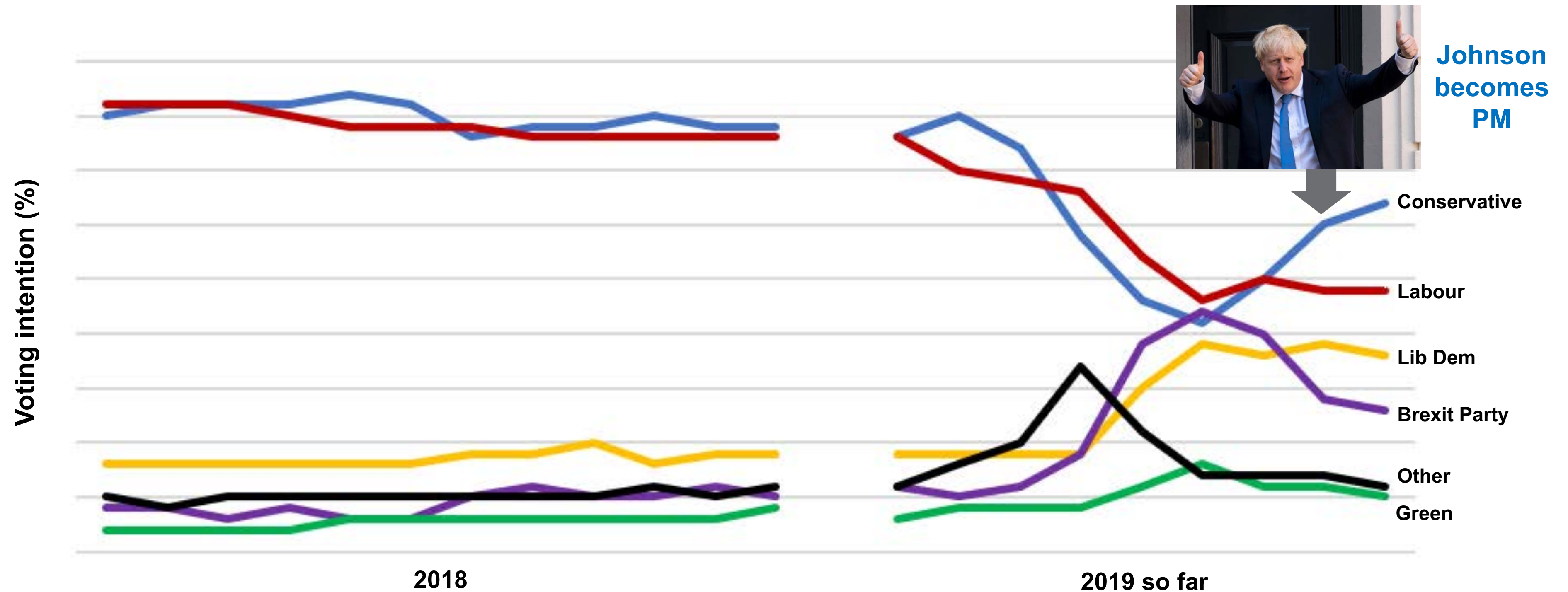
BritainThinks Leadership Study

britainthinks.com

Leadership matters. Historically, perceptions of party leaders have been one of the most reliable predictors of election outcomes



And the current volatility means that perceptions of political leaders are more important than ever



We have tracked what the public want from their political leaders since 2015, including this latest study



- **Reading, 27th August**
 - 2016 vote: Remain
 - 2017 vote: one group Conservative, one Labour
 - Voting intention: considering Labour or the Lib Dems
- **Walsall, 29th August**
 - 2016 vote: Leave
 - 2017 vote: one group Conservative, one Labour
 - Voting intention: considering Conservative or the Brexit Party

The most important findings from our latest research:

1

A great leader demonstrates integrity, decisiveness and effective communication. These are enduring qualities.

2

Our current set of political leaders score relatively poorly. No one is inspiring confidence.

3

While it's a case of the jury still being out for Johnson, views of Corbyn are settled and overwhelmingly negative. Swinson is still an unknown and Farage has been reduced to a 'one-trick pony'.

4

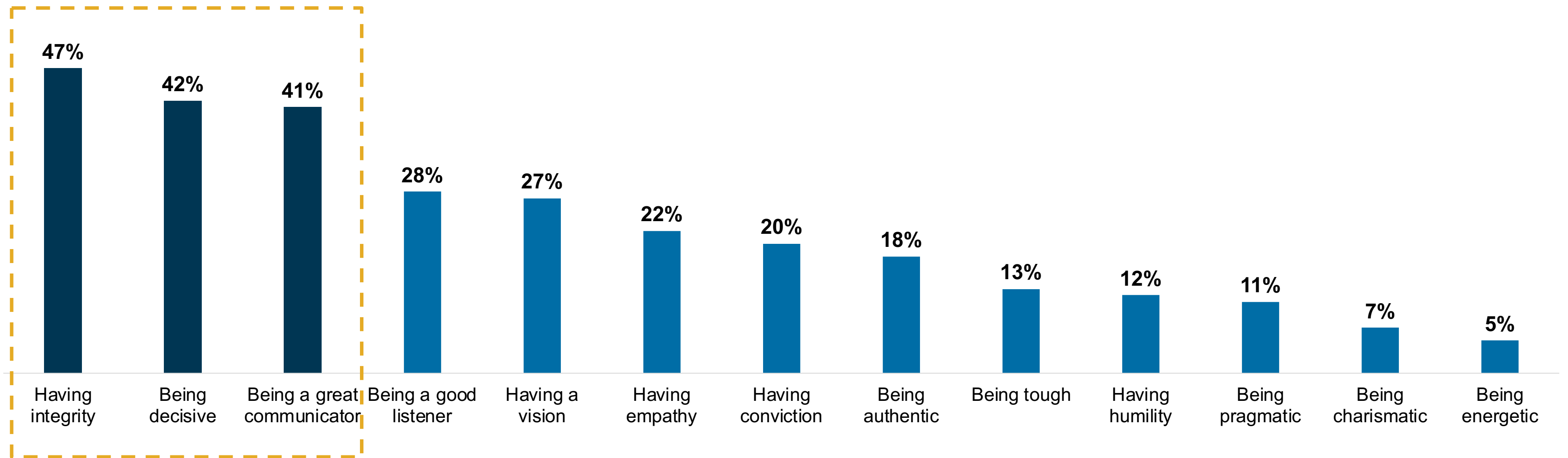
When we think about attitudes towards leaders, Leave and Remain seem to be the tribes that matter. While Leavers have found their man, Remainers are split on who to back.

5

What next? It's all to play for. Johnson has the edge. For now.

01 A great leader demonstrates integrity, decisiveness and effective communication. These are enduring qualities.

Having integrity, being decisive and being a great communicator continue to be the three most important leadership attributes



These have consistently been the most important leadership attributes since our first leadership study in 2015, with no significant shifts since 2017

Having integrity, being decisive and being a great communicator continue to be the three most important leadership attributes

Having integrity



“That’s how Obama got people behind him. He was seen as a good family man.”

(Focus group, Walsall)

Being decisive



“They have to be strong. Strong in their beliefs, they can’t be wishy washy. They’ve got to know what they want because people need to have confidence [in them].”

(Focus group, Walsall)

Being a great communicator

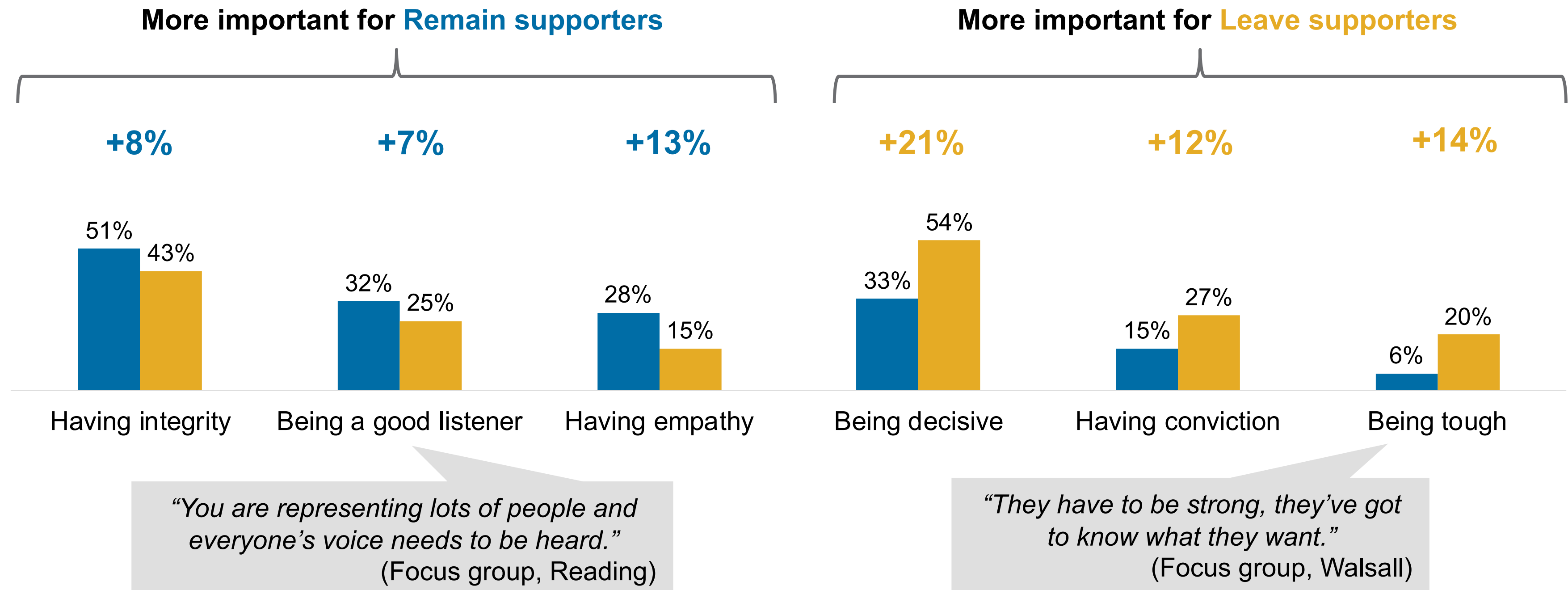


“You could have it all in your head, but without communication you’re a bad leader.”

(Focus group, Walsall)

(Leaders for whom ‘having integrity’, ‘being decisive’ or ‘being a great communicator’ were identified as one of their most applicable attributes by survey respondents)

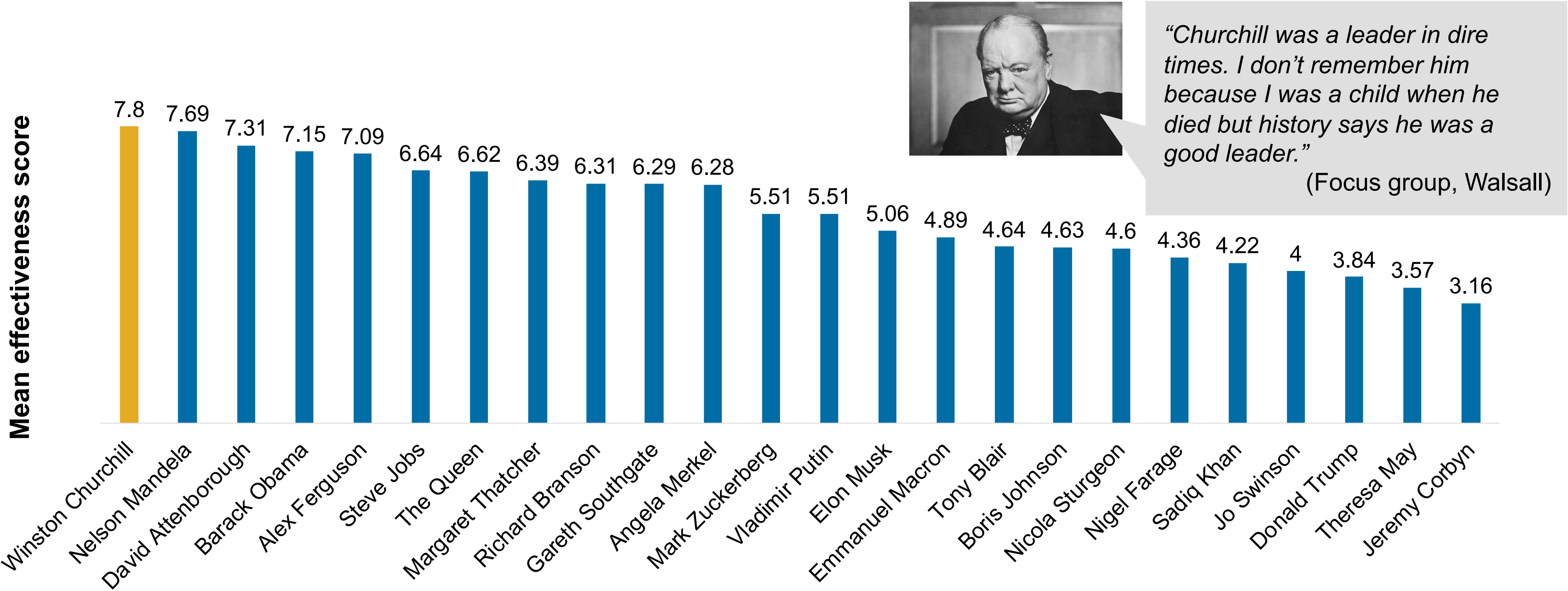
Remain supporters are more likely to value integrity, while Leave supporters place greater emphasis on decisiveness and conviction



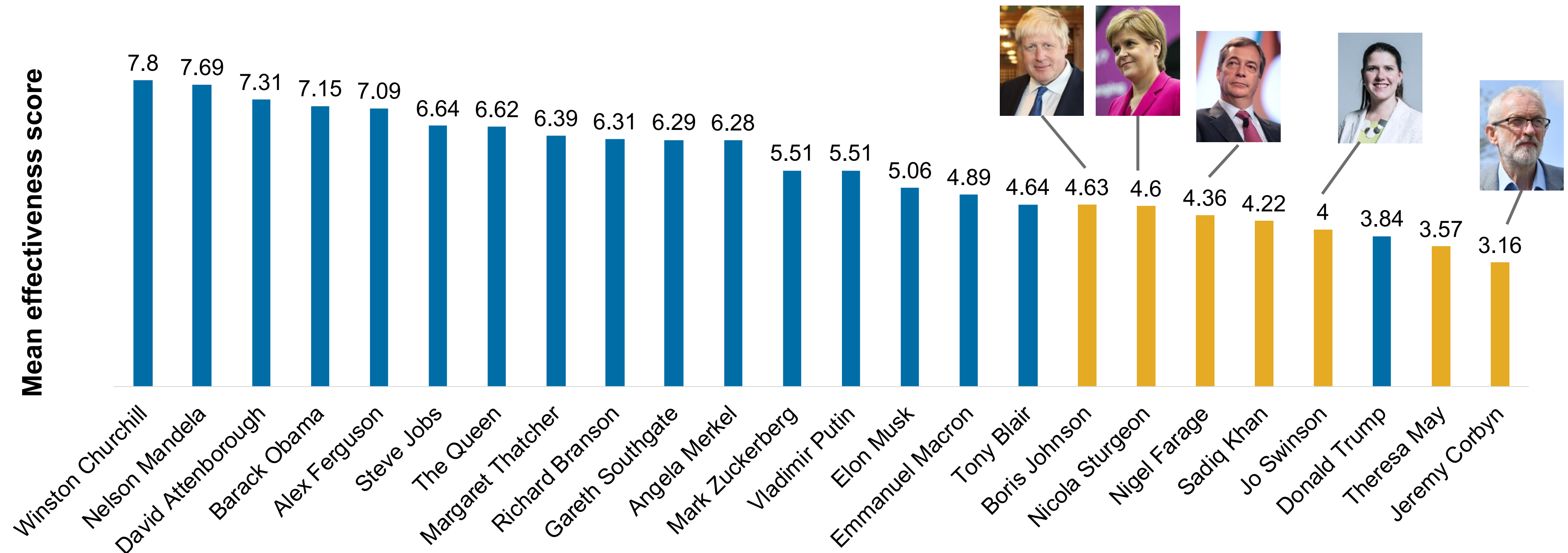
02

Our current set of political leaders score relatively poorly. No one is inspiring confidence.

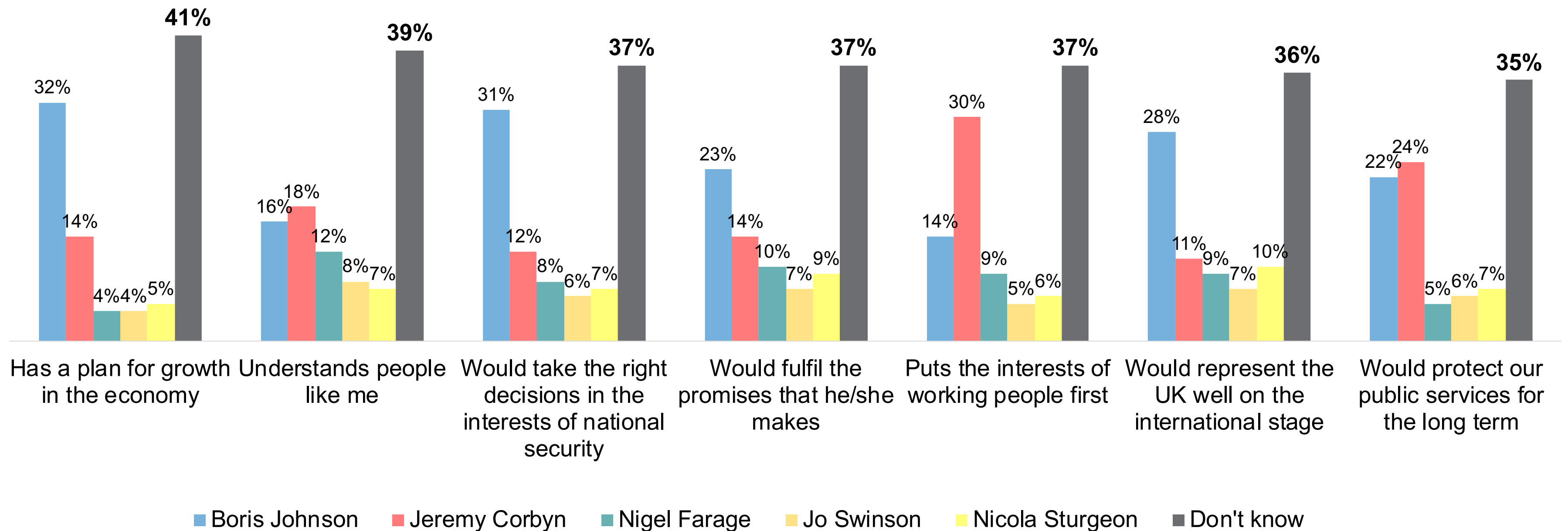
As in 2015 and 2017, Winston Churchill is rated as the most effective leader



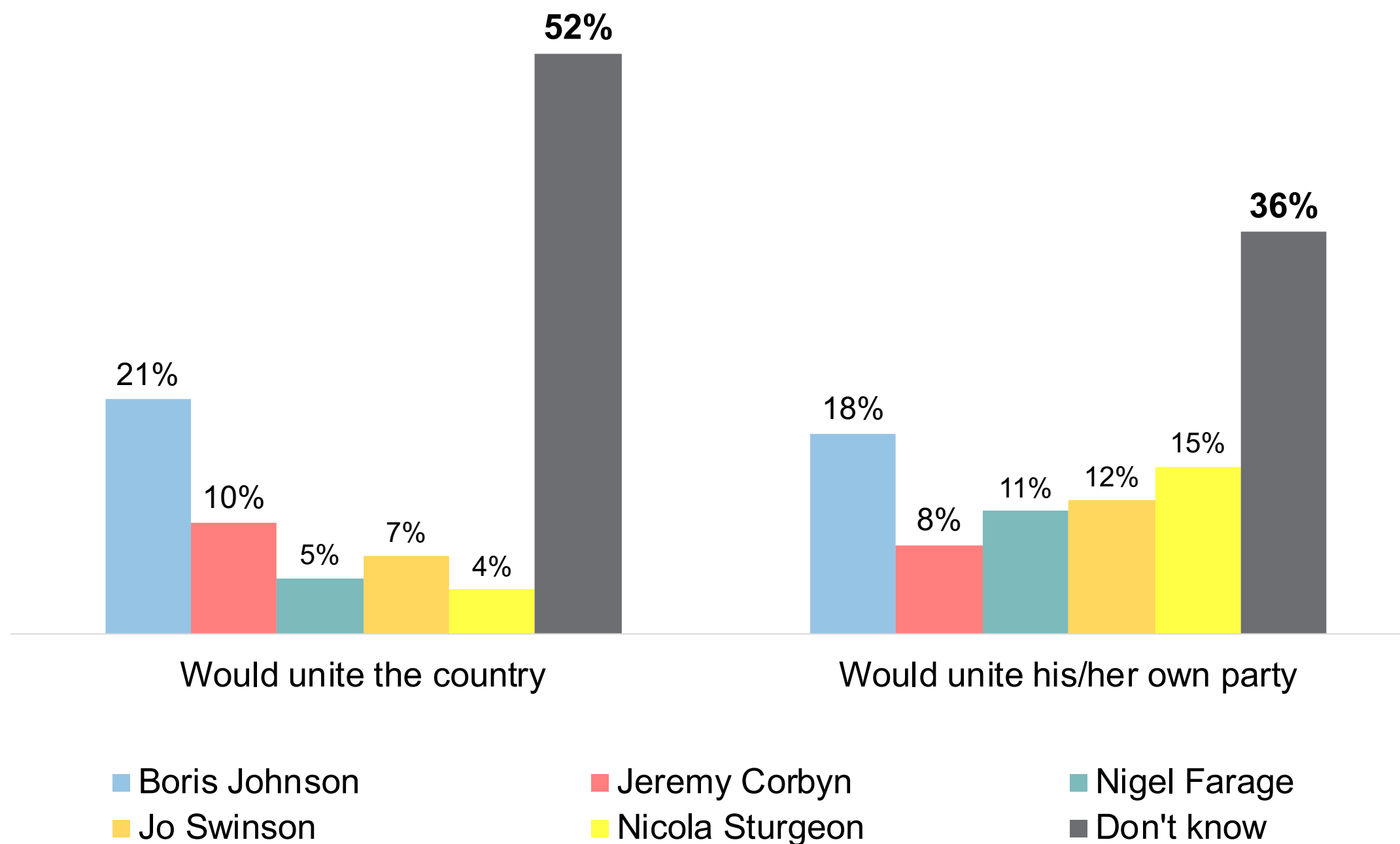
Contemporary domestic politicians are felt to be relatively ineffective leaders. Corbyn is rated as the least effective in our list



None inspire confidence – on many key measures, the public are most likely to say they don't know which leader would be best



There is little hope that current leaders will be able to heal divisions in society – or even their own parties



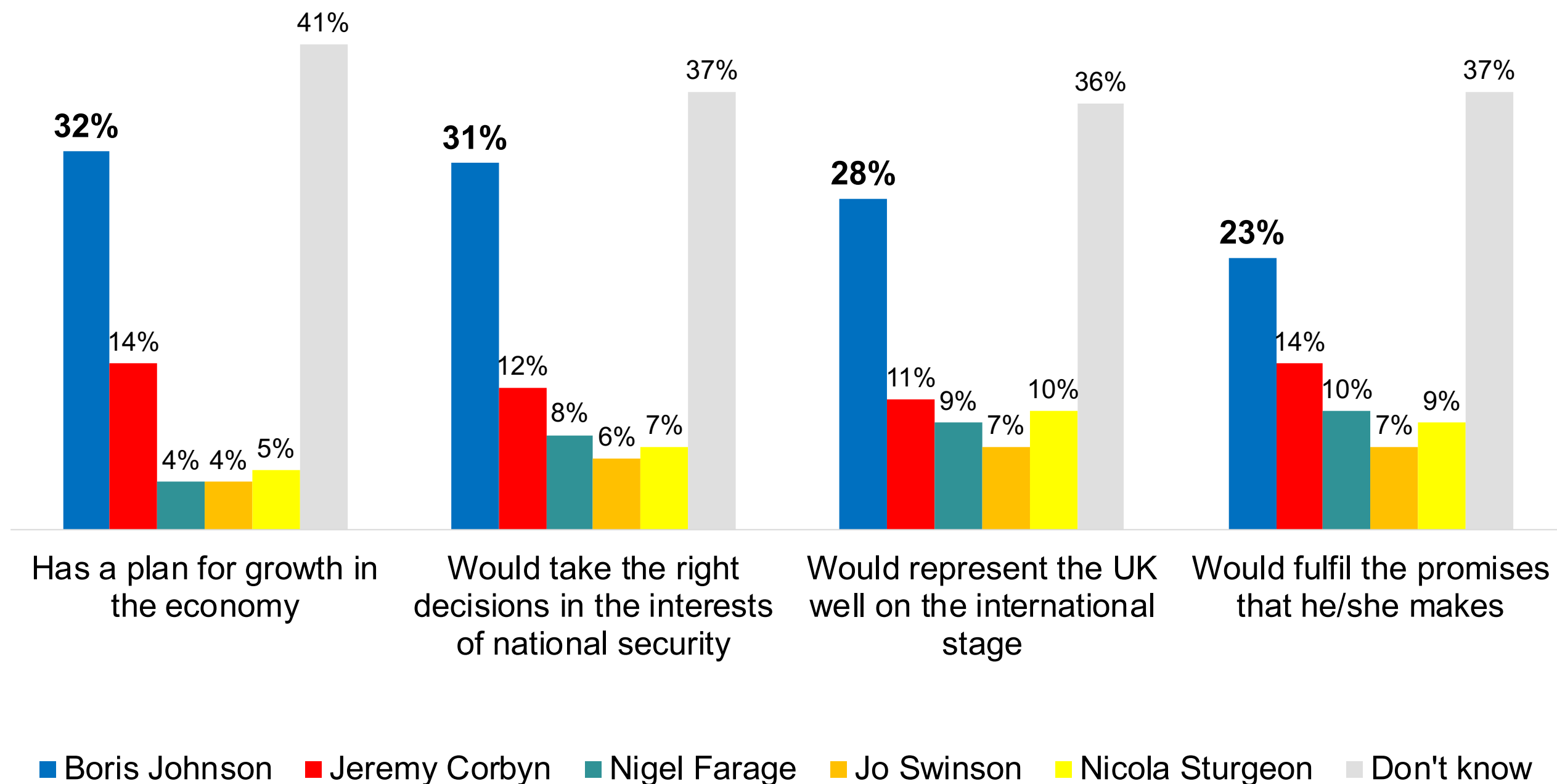
"We need a leader who can unite us and find consensus or they will fail. Brexit has hammered that home to me."
(Focus group, Reading)

"May is a good politician but she couldn't deliver as she didn't have the team around her. Same thing with Corbyn. What he's done with the party is good but he can't unite it now."
(Focus group, Walsall)

03

While it's a case of the jury still being out for Johnson, views of Corbyn are settled and overwhelmingly negative. Swinson is still an unknown and Farage has been reduced to a 'one-trick pony'.

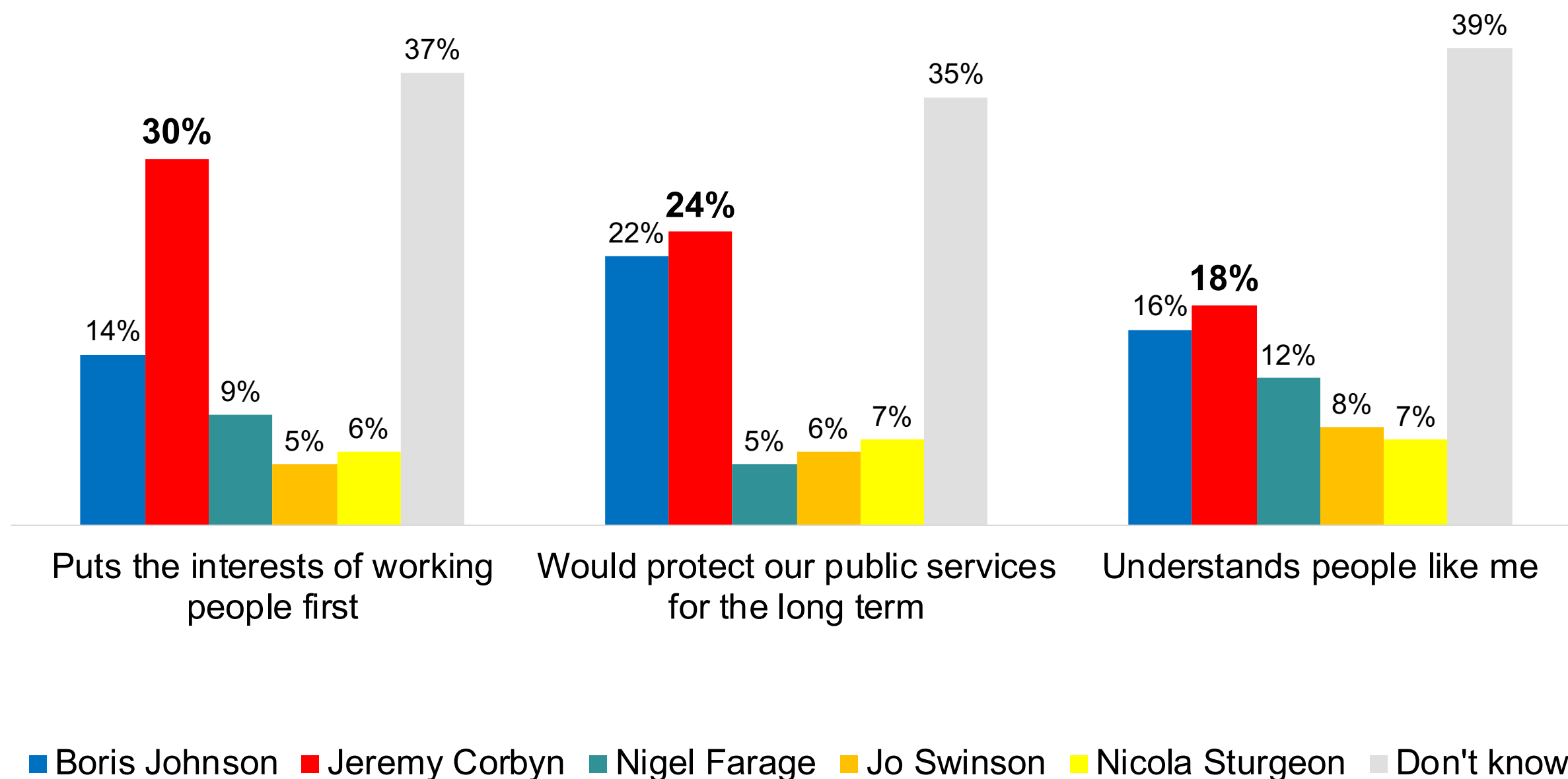
Within the context of no leader inspiring confidence, Johnson is perceived to be ahead of Corbyn on some important measures



"When Johnson went to France and Germany, they softened their stance and talked about there being room for negotiating."
(Focus group, Walsall)



Corbyn has a significant lead on Johnson on just one measure – and on other traditionally Labour attributes is in line with Johnson



"First thing he does is bang, get in, promise a lot of extra money for policing, schools."
(Focus group, Walsall)





As a leader, Boris Johnson is seen as a charismatic and energetic performer but lacking in softer leadership skills

Most applicable attributes

Being energetic

Being charismatic

Being decisive

Least applicable attributes

Having humility

Having empathy

Being a good listener



26% say none of the leadership attributes apply to Johnson

“He’s a good speaker and he can entertain people. He’s always speaking with his hands, waving his arms around. And it works.”
(Focus group, Walsall)

“He’s a bully. Though that isn’t always a bad thing for a leader. It’s a boys’ club and he fits in. Maybe he can get the best out of them.”
(Focus group, Reading)



While Leavers described him as strong and likeable, Remain voters view him as a show off who can't be trusted

If Boris Johnson was an animal...



Bear



Bull

Vs.

If Boris Johnson was an animal...



Peacock



Snake

"He's big, determined, straight into decisions, but doesn't always engage his brain I don't think. It does seem that he gets himself into a mess which for me makes him more likeable because we all do that!"
(Focus group, Walsall)

"Peacock. Whatever he does, he stands out. Everyone pays attention to him."
(Focus group, Reading)

"He's devious, I don't trust him."
(Focus group, Reading)



All feel he brings a sense of chaos with him – but there is an assumption that he has a cunning plan beneath it all

- Focus group participants described a sense that ‘there is more going on beneath the surface’
- This is driven by a sense of Johnson being intelligent, cunning, and experienced (from his time as Mayor)
- While Leavers tended to be willing to give Johnson the benefit of the doubt, Remain voters were less certain – they think he has a plan but do not trust that it will benefit anyone but him

If Boris Johnson led an orchestra...



“It suits his clumsiness and flailing around. But like a conductor, although it looks like flailing around to us, there’s actually a lot more going on under the surface.”
(Focus group, Walsall)

“He’s canny. He’s not as daft as he makes out.”
(Focus group, Reading)



As a leader, Corbyn is admired for his conviction and authenticity – but he isn't seen as pragmatic or tough enough

Most applicable attributes

Having a vision

Having conviction

Having empathy

Least applicable attributes

Being tough

Being energetic

Being pragmatic



44% say none of the leadership attributes apply to Corbyn

"He seems understanding. You can see him talking to normal people on the street. I heard stories about him walking to a coffee shop and genuinely chatting. I think he cares about people."
(Focus group, Reading)

"I don't think he's a strong enough character. He doesn't back things up or have the gumption."
(Focus group, Walsall)



Corbyn lacks the traditional image of a leader, can't pull a team together and some no longer trust he has good motives

If Jeremy Corbyn...

...wasn't a politician



Archaeologist

"He just looks like one with his glasses. He's scruffy, looks like he hasn't washed in a while."
(Focus group, Walsall)

...managed a football team



"The team wouldn't be cohesive. They'd be planning a secret takeover bid."
(Focus group, Reading)

...was an animal



Rat

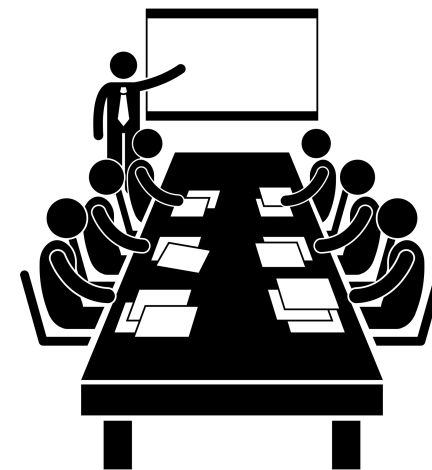
"He's a dodgy character. Dodgy past, dodgy future... Trying to disown his past, claim he's never been to the places he's been photographed in. I don't trust him."
(Focus group, Walsall)



Farage is a divisive figure. He is seen as a good communicator, but even Leavers see him as a ‘one-trick pony’

If Nigel Farage...

...ran a tech start-up



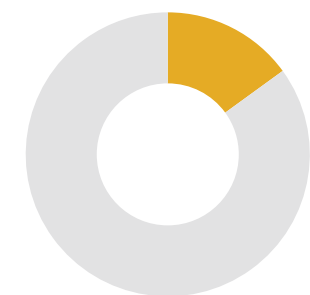
...was an animal



Pony



43% of Remain supporters say none of the attributes apply



15% of Leave supporters say none of the attributes apply

“He’d be good at motivating his team, he speaks well to the factory floor, perhaps not other directors.”

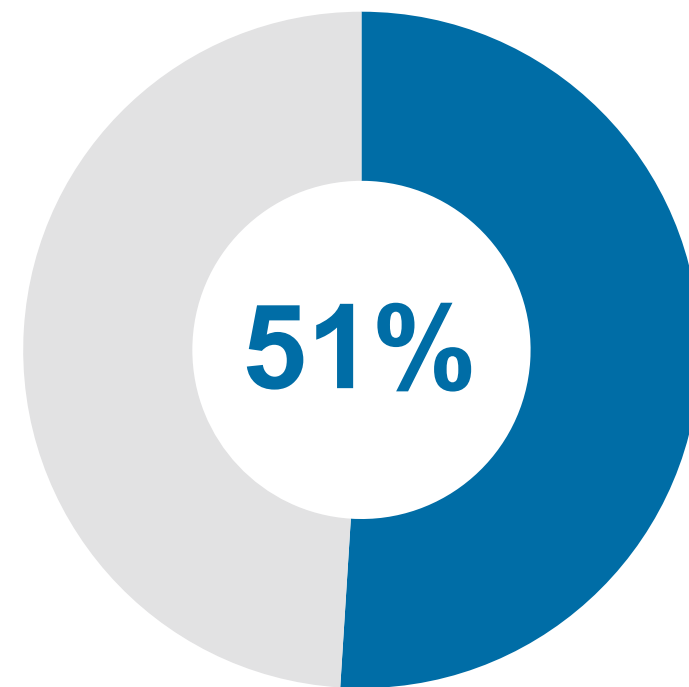
(Focus group, Walsall)

“Farage is a one-trick pony. Take him off Brexit and what’s he got?”
(Focus group, Walsall)



Swinson has yet to make an impression on the public, leading them to make assumptions based on her gender and appearance

If Jo Swinson...



say they 'don't know' which leadership attributes apply

...was an animal

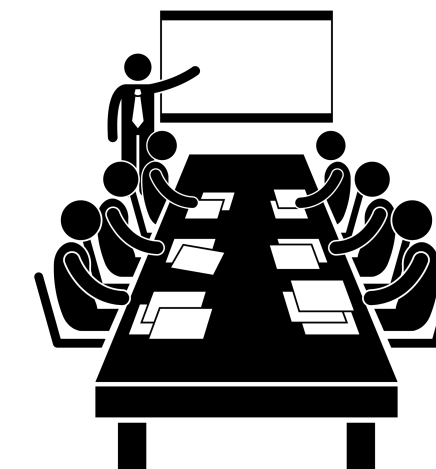


Swan

"She looks elegant and she has a nice vibe to her."

(Focus group, Reading)

...ran a tech start-up

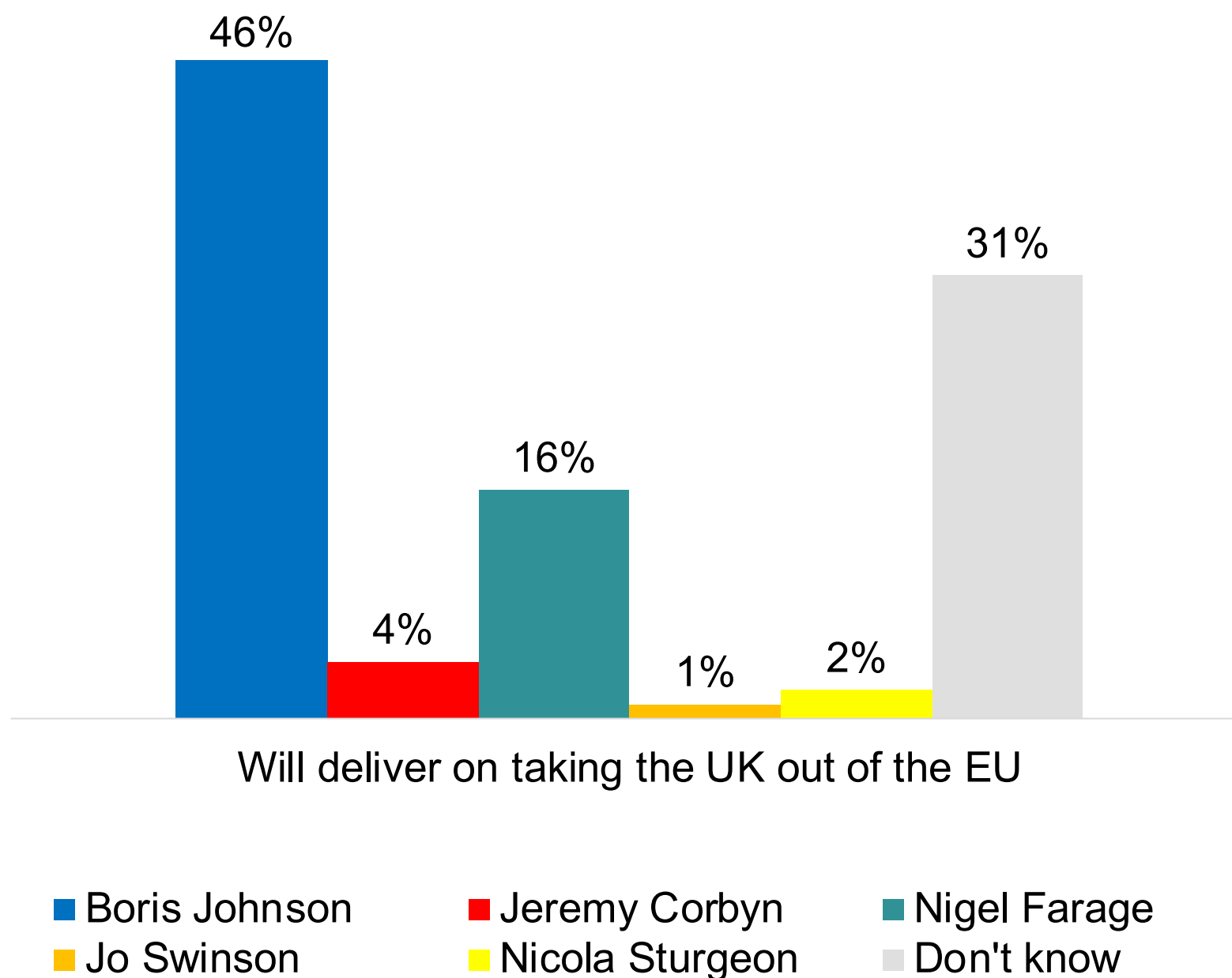


"Any business is run differently by a woman than a man. She would look for a partnership, and should get a male on board as her deputy."

(Focus group, Walsall)

04 When we think about attitudes towards leaders, Leave and Remain seem to be the tribes that matter. While Leavers have found their man, Remainers are split on who to back.

Boris Johnson is seen as the leader who is most likely to deliver on taking the UK out of the EU



"I think he is determined and in my eyes he will take us through with Brexit, one way or another."

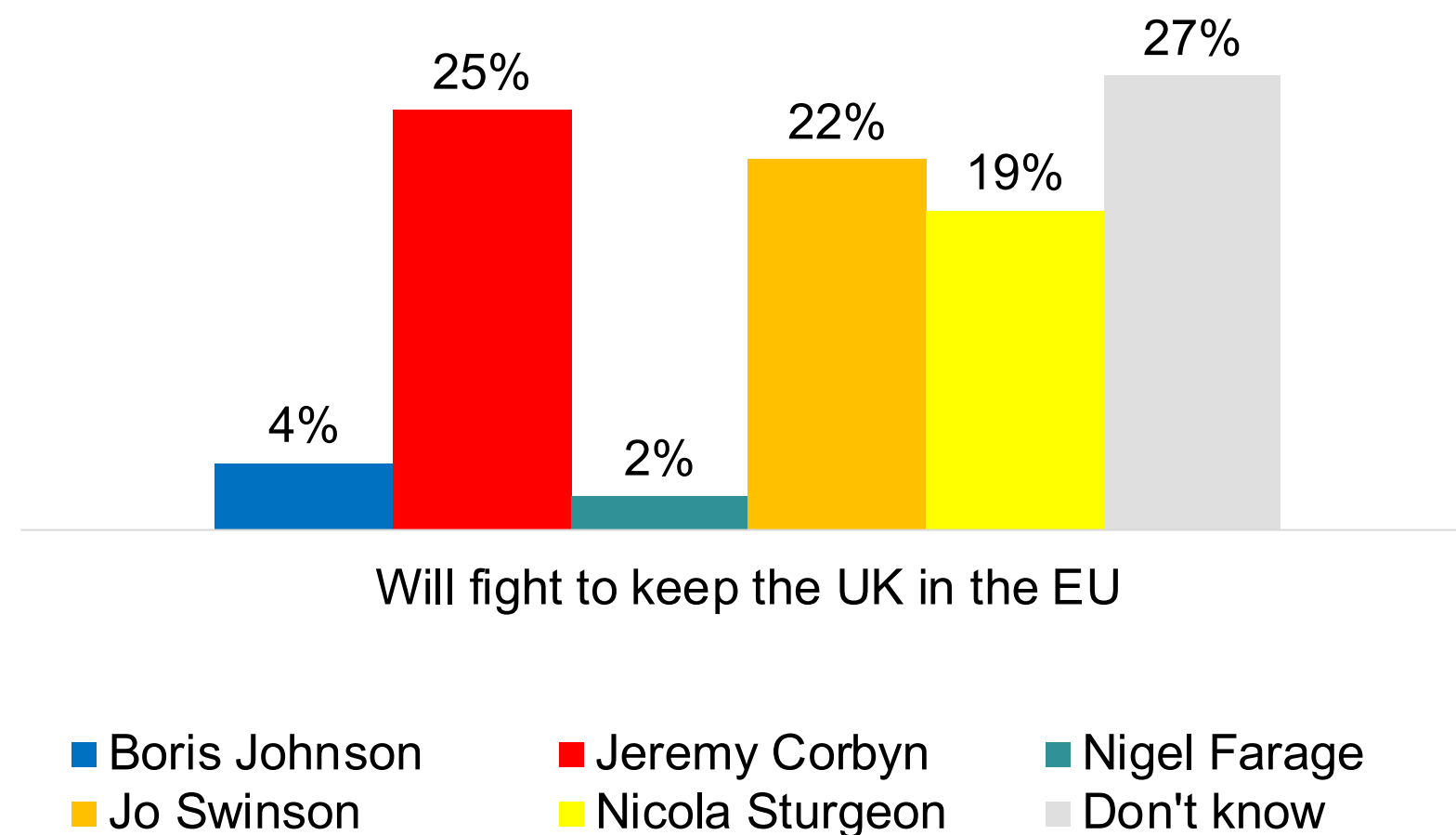
(Focus group, Walsall)

"He seems dogmatic about delivering what the country voted for. I think he's a bit of a buffoon but he will deliver."

(Focus group, Walsall)



While voters are split on which leader will fight to keep the UK in the EU



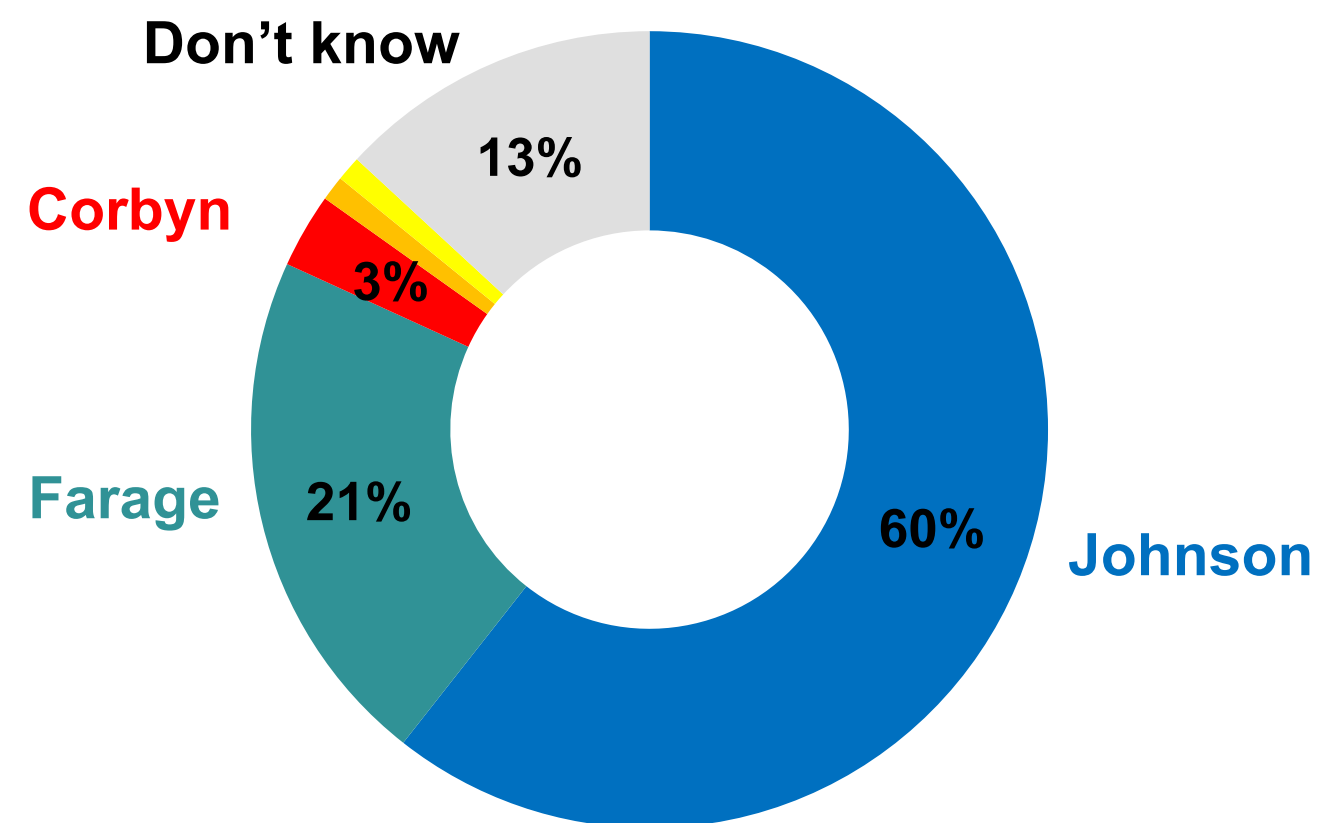
"Corbyn is sort of hedging his bets all the time."
(Focus group, Reading)

"The Lib Dems have firmly stuck their flag in the ground."
(Focus group, Reading)

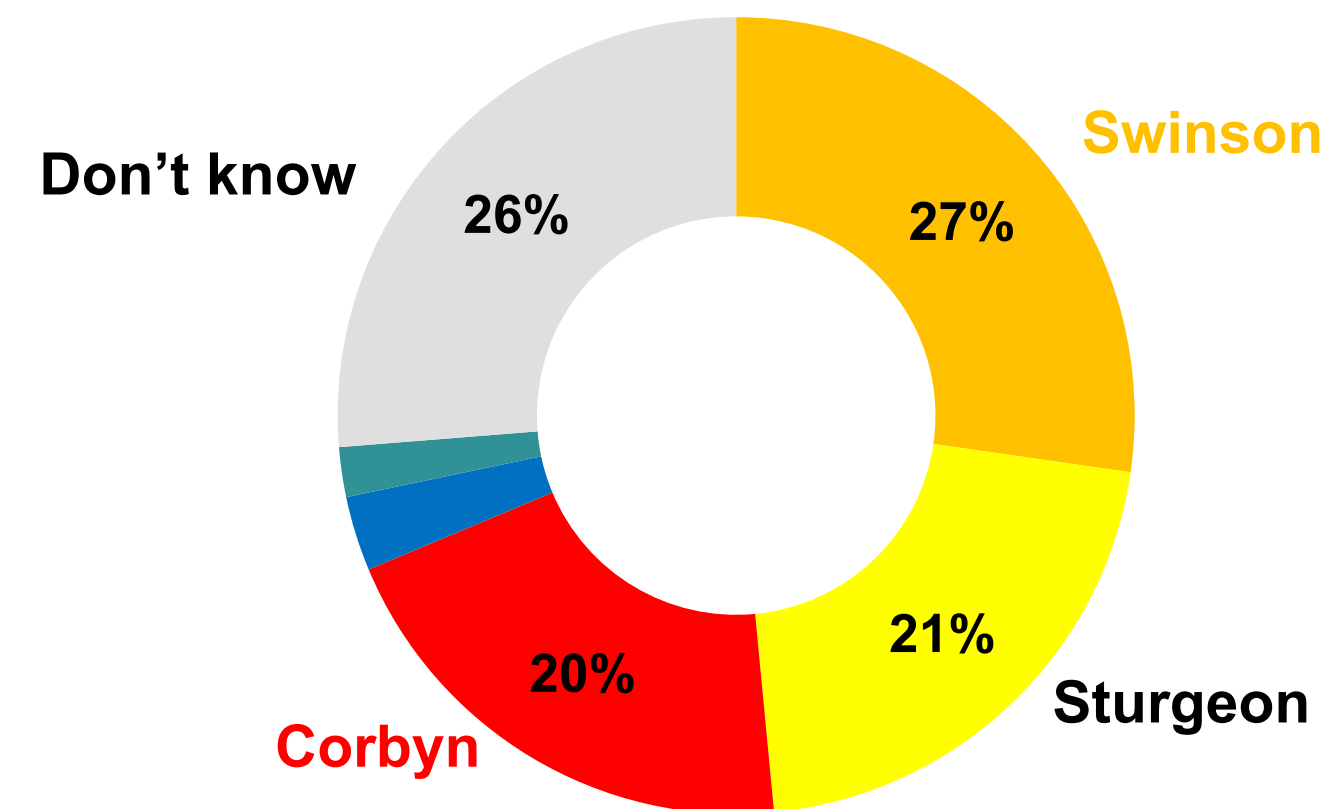


Leave supporters are more certain than the population as a whole that Johnson will deliver on Brexit. Remain supporters are just as split

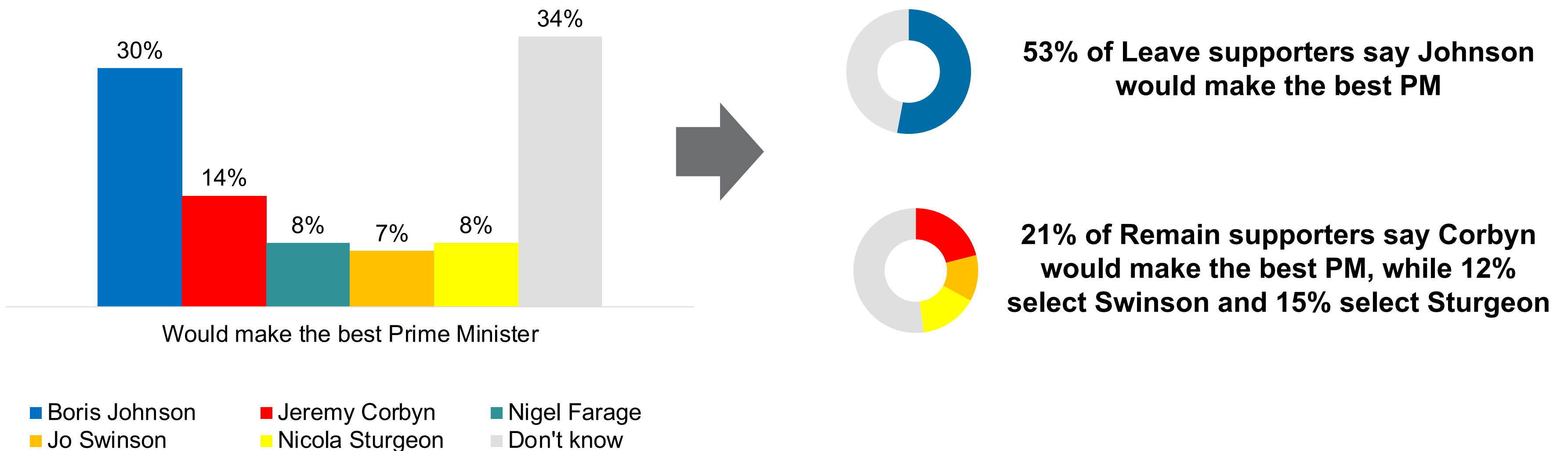
Leave supporters are more certain that Boris Johnson will deliver Brexit



Remain supporters are split on which leader will fight to keep the UK in the EU

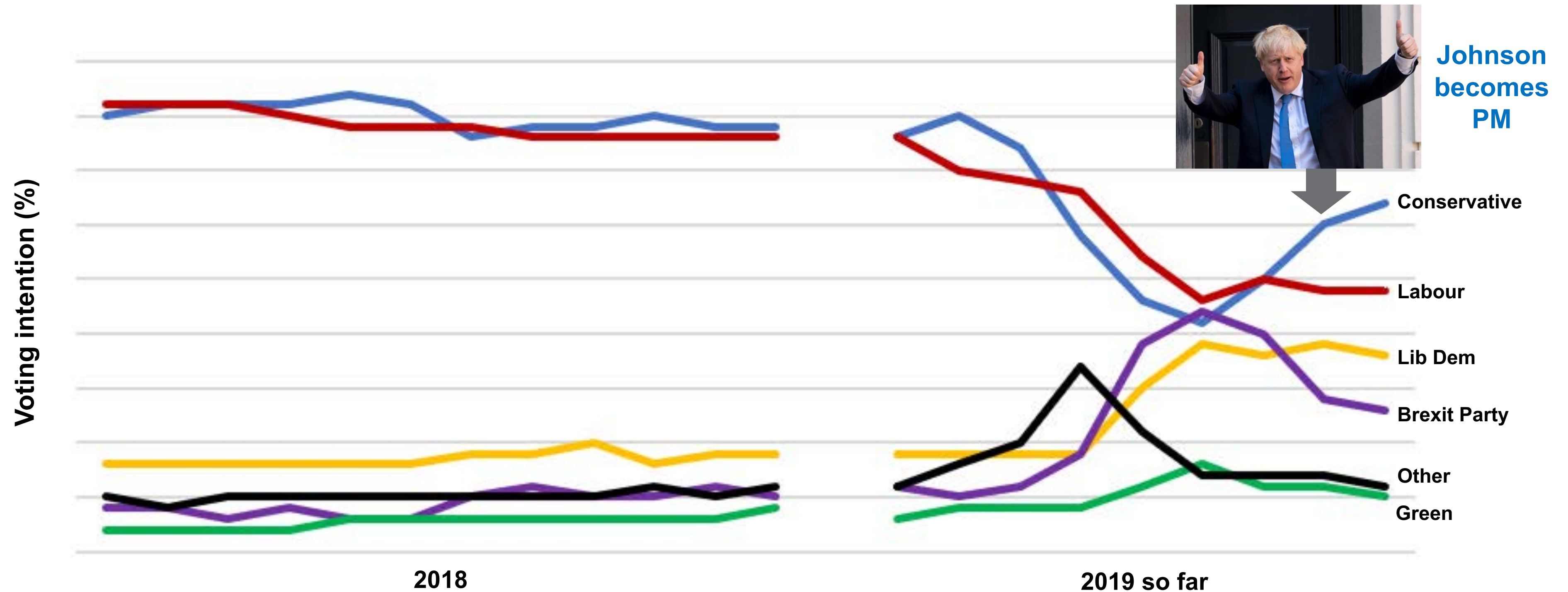


1 in 3 voters say they don't know who would make the best Prime Minister. Within this uncertainty, Johnson is the most popular and twice as likely to be selected as Corbyn



05 What next? It's all to play for. Johnson has the edge. For now.

Recap: politics has gone mad. Perceptions of political leaders are more important than ever



Things that we know as we enter a possible election:

1. Johnson's bounce is broadly holding up and he remains the most popular leader (for now)

30% of voters say Johnson would make the best PM, twice as many as select Corbyn (14%)

2. Johnson's messages are cutting through while his mis-steps are less visible (for now)

“
He'll invest well in schools and bring more money in.
”
(Focus group, Walsall)

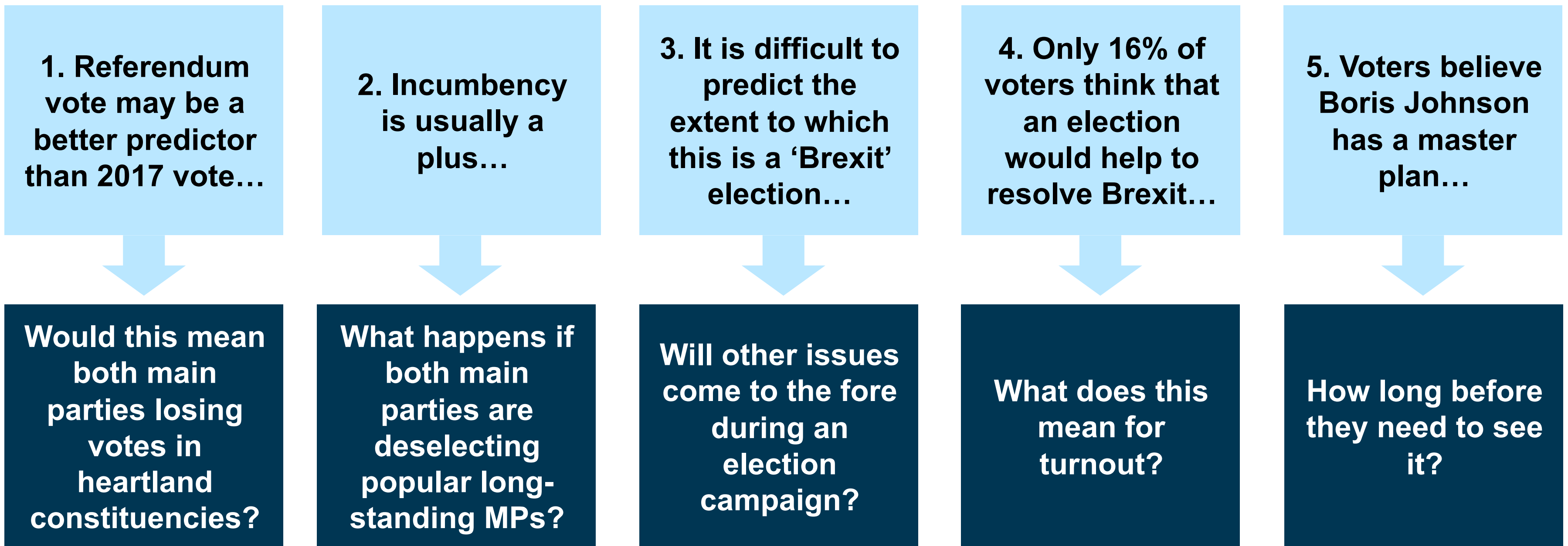
3. Johnson has had some success in neutralising the Brexit Party vote, Corbyn less so on the Remain side

60% of leave supporters say Johnson will deliver on Brexit, versus 21% who select Farage

4. The novelty factor no longer works for Corbyn – but does for Swinson and (in this role) Johnson

“
I did like Corbyn but he's got mud on his name. Swinson doesn't.
”
(Focus group, Reading)

Things we don't know that will make the outcome hard to predict – and the questions we're asking:



Thank you

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