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Heading for hope?

Public opinion on mental health and new interventions



**More in
Common**



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About More in Common

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public, and helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our British Seven segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public thinks and why. We've published ground-breaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering quantitative and qualitative research and are members of the British Polling Council.

About Wellcome

Wellcome is a charitable foundation supporting researchers around the world to make discoveries and build a healthier future for everyone. We support science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone by investing in research, engaging people and influencing change. We have programmes of work in discovery research; to find solutions for the challenges of mental health, climate and health and infectious disease; to enhance science in Africa and Asia; and to explore the cultural dimensions of health and science through Wellcome Collection, our museum and library.

You can find out more information about Wellcome [here](#).

About this research

This research was conducted in late 2025 - early 2026. This involved a nationally-representative poll of 4,000 GB adults, alongside 7 semi-structured focus groups representing each of the Seven Segments.

Full methodological information can be found at the end of the report.

Foreword

The way we talk about mental health in Britain has undergone a profound transformation over the last few decades. Stigma and silence have shifted to a more open and compassionate public conversation. Today, people are more willing to speak about their experiences, to listen to others, and to recognise mental health as a fundamental part of overall being well and not held back from living. This shift represents real progress. Yet there is a growing sense that the story itself has stalled. Awareness has increased, but it has not consistently translated into tangible improvements in how people experience prevention, treatment and living with a mental health condition.

Wellcome commissioned this report to better understand that gap. Wellcome is committed to improving health for everyone. We recognise that scientific advances alone are not enough and progress in mental health depends not only on what we discover, but on how those discoveries are understood, communicated and supported. We need to know how people across Britain perceive mental health today, what gives them hope, what fuels their scepticism, and what would motivate them to support change. This research was designed to provide that insight, and to equip those working across the mental health ecosystem with a tool to engage the public more effectively.

More in Common's Seven Segments model offers a nuanced and practical framework for understanding public attitudes. No single mental health intervention works for everyone, and we cannot treat the public as a single audience; there are meaningful differences in how people think and feel. There is also a shared foundation across Britain: a broad agreement that mental health matters, that early support is important, and that more should be done. But the Segments show us that people vary significantly in how urgent they perceive the issue to be, how much they trust institutions, and how optimistic they feel about the future. This matters for communication. It allows us to move beyond generalised messaging towards approaches that resonate with different audiences, meeting them where they are.

There is a strong national consensus that mental health is as important as physical health, and a widespread willingness to talk about it. Support for early intervention is consistent across every segment, as is the view that government should do more. These are powerful foundations for change.

Yet the research also highlights two critical challenges. First, optimism about progress is uneven and, in some cases, fragile. While many people believe that treatments and scientific understanding are improving, fewer have confidence that services can deliver these advances in practice. This gap between innovation and access undermines belief in a better future. Second, while concern about mental health is widespread, it does not consistently translate into political salience. Many people feel it is time for action, but do not see evidence that it is being prioritised.

We are not starting from scratch. There is a strong base of public support, empathy and shared understanding. But to move forward, we must communicate in ways that are more grounded, more credible and more tailored to different audiences. This report challenges us to tell a more complete story: one that connects progress in science with confidence in delivery, that amplifies trusted voices, and that builds hope without losing sight of reality.

If we act on these lessons, we have an opportunity to shift the narrative from one that is stalled to one that drives change. The task ahead is not simply to sustain the conversation on mental health, but to translate it into meaningful progress for people across Britain.

Miranda Wolpert, Director of Mental Health, Wellcome

Acknowledgements

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We would also like to thank all those who completed the surveys and spoke to More in Common across the focus groups we held as part of this project. It is a privilege to be able to hear Britons share their perspectives on mental health.

The Seven Segments

This polling uses More in Common's new segmentation of the British public. Based on extended research into Britons' core beliefs, their values and behaviours, this segmentation allows us to look upstream not just at what different groups think, but why they think it. Going beyond a simple left-right spectrum, it reflects deeper differences in how people relate to authority, change, community and the future, which help explain why traditional party loyalties have weakened and political volatility has increased. Segmentation is a particularly powerful way of detecting and understanding differences and commonality in people's values and in their broader orientation towards society and the big issues facing the country.

The analysis produces seven segments within the British population:

Progressive Activists - 12 per cent of the population

A highly engaged and globally-minded group driven by concerns about social justice. Politically active but feeling increasingly alienated from mainstream party politics, they prioritise issues such as climate change and international affairs. Occasionally outliers on social issues, they maintain a strongly held and sometimes uncompromising approach to their beliefs.

Incrementalist Left - 21 per cent of the population

A civic-minded, community-oriented group holding views which are generally left-of-centre but with an aversion to the extreme; they prefer gradual reform over revolutionary change. They trust experts and institutions yet are largely tuned out of day-to-day politics and can be conflict-averse, stepping away from issues they see as particularly fraught or complex.

Established Liberals - 9 per cent of the population

A prosperous, confident segment who believe the system broadly works as it is and who trust experts to deliver continued progress. They have a strong belief in individual agency which can make them less empathetic to those who are struggling. Institutionally trusting, they maintain faith in democratic processes and have a strong information-centric way of engaging with issues.

Sceptical Scrollers - 10 per cent of the population

A digitally-native group whose unhappiness with the social contract means they have lost faith in traditional institutions and seek alternative sources of truth online. Often shaped by their experience of the Covid pandemic, they prefer individual

influencers over mainstream media and are increasingly drawn to conspiratorial thinking.

Rooted Patriots - 20 per cent of the population

A patriotic but politically untethered group which feels abandoned and overlooked by political elites and yearns for leaders with common sense, but does not want to overthrow the system as a whole. They are particularly concerned about community decline and the pressures of migration. Interventionist on economics but conservative on social issues, they have shaped much of Britain's politics over the past decade.

Traditional Conservatives - 8 per cent of the population

Respectful of authority and tradition, Traditional Conservatives believe in individual responsibility and established norms that have served them well. Nostalgic for the past but optimistic about the future, they are deeply sceptical of many forces of change such as immigration or the path to net-zero.

Dissenting Disruptors - 20 per cent of the population

Frustrated with their circumstances and with an appetite for radical solutions, this group craves dramatic change and strong leadership. Highly distrustful of institutions, opposed to multiculturalism and feeling disconnected from society, Dissenting Disruptors are drawn to political movements that promise to overhaul the status quo.

Executive Summary

Mental health is a shared concern in Britain, but the story is stuck.

There is a strong consensus that mental health matters. Nearly three quarters of Britons (73 per cent) say it is as important as physical health, and a clear majority feel comfortable talking about it – including 77 per cent who would feel comfortable if a friend opened up to them. Unlike many other social issues, it has largely avoided becoming a culture war dividing line.

The British public supports the principle of early intervention. Four in five Britons (81 per cent) say that reaching people early in their mental health journey should be prioritised over focusing resources only on the most severe cases. This majority holds across all seven segments and in every constituency in Britain.

Most Britons want action. Three quarters of Britons (75 per cent) say the government should do more to improve provision, a view shared across More in Common's Seven Segments.

Yet while there is a foundational consensus around mental health, the story remains stuck in two crucial ways:

- **Hope in short-term improvements is unstable and disparate:** levels of optimism about mental health solutions vary significantly between different groups. A sense that services are struggling – and distrust toward institutions to fix them – mean that few Britons are able to imagine a better future for people with mental health issues.
- **Public concern does not translate into political salience:** many Britons now believe that it is time to turn talk into action, but feel that policy on mental health has stagnated. And while it is a widespread concern, mental health rarely shapes Britons' choices at the ballot box.

What this means for communicators: The foundations are strong; communicators are not starting from scratch. The challenge is a) to tell a more positive story that rings true with Britons' firsthand experience of mental health provision in Britain and b) to convert concern into political salience.

The public is not polarised on mental health, but it is not uniform either.

Britons approach mental health from some shared starting points, but these give way to real divergence in attitudes.

Analysing mental health attitudes through the lens of More in Common's Seven Segments reveals that different audiences vary widely by how urgent mental health feels as an issue facing the country, the trust they place in different voices and institutions, and their disparate levels of optimism for the future of mental health support.

- **Progressive Activists** and **Incrementalist Left** combine high urgency with high optimism.
- **Rooted Patriots** are equally concerned (81 per cent want more government action) but far more pessimistic about whether the system can deliver and distrustful of many institutions.
- **Established Liberals** are exceptionally trusting and optimistic about the future of mental health, but lower in urgency, often believing services are already improving and that science will continue to drive progress.
- **Sceptical Scrollers** and **Dissenting Disruptors** combine low institutional trust with high rates of personal mental health experience, two in five Dissenting Disruptors report lived experience of a mental health issue. They are extremely pessimistic about the future of mental health services and struggle to see a brighter future.
- **Traditional Conservatives** have the lowest salience of any group, and are far less likely to see mental health as an urgent issue; though "snowflake" narratives remain a minority view even here.

What this means for communicators: different frames and approaches appeal to different segments depending on their varying levels of urgency, trust and optimism. Section 5 – the Messaging Playbook – offers practical guidance on communicating with different segments on mental health.

Optimism is possible, but only when progress feels credible, and the right voices tell the story.

Britons are optimistic about discoveries in theory, but many are pessimistic about services. Britons tend to think treatments are getting better, but in many cases they

lack a belief that state systems are capable of delivering these new interventions. Communicating the effectiveness of new interventions may help, but without confidence in access, this is unlikely to translate into greater optimism or support for investment.

Trust is fragmented - but two voices cut through. Trust in institutional voices to communicate about mental health is highly disparate, and the segments who are most pessimistic about services (Dissenting Disruptors and Sceptical Scrollers) are also the least likely to trust the government, media, and other institutions. But across every segment, Britons tend to trust people with experience of mental health issues and the NHS.

Portrayals of mental health in art and entertainment can be highly impactful, but they rely on authenticity and credibility. Current media portrayals are seen as too negative, focused on crisis rather than recovery, and Britons want to see more hopeful stories. What resonates - illustrated by storylines like Ben Mitchell's in *EastEnders* - is non-linear recovery: showing difficulty seeking help, relapses and slow progress. Miraculous recovery arcs are actively distrusted.

What this means for communicators: optimism won't grow unless messages consider access and delivery, not just innovation; making ethical use of lived experience expertise can help to bolster campaigns – as can using the NHS as an institutional voice; mental health storylines that aim to propagate hope must showcase non-linear recovery.

Introduction

For organisations working in mental health – from charities and communicators, cultural organisations to policymakers – engaging the public effectively requires a nuanced understanding of the differences, and commonalities, across the segments.

Commissioned by Wellcome, More in Common carried out this research with the aim of understanding public attitudes on mental health and identifying how future communications and public engagement can reach audiences where they are, improving understanding of mental health and building optimism around new solutions.

This report is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of the state of mental health in the UK today. Rather, it focuses particularly on Britons' understanding of emerging approaches to mental health, and their level of optimism about future progress.

Taking an upstream perspective, the project is broad by design and explores a range of interconnected factors shaping public attitudes, including:

- **General attitudes and experiences of mental health across More in Common's Seven Segments**, including how the segments understand and talk about mental health in their own words.
- **Perceptions of existing mental health services**, what people feel is missing, and how optimistic they are about future solutions
- The **role of culture and media** in shaping attitudes, including which segments are most 'moveable' and which channels are most influential.
- Patterns of **trust and distrust across the segments**, including trust in different institutions, solutions and voices within the mental health space.

Part 1 – Moving beyond awareness: mental health in Britain today

Key takeaways

Across political divides, Britons feel comfortable talking about mental health and think it's important. Most support the principle of parity of esteem.

But mental health is not a political priority, and people's experiences of services and waiting times tempers any optimism about mental health improvements.

Mental health: a shared concern, but a stuck story

Of all the issues that divide Britons today, concern about mental health is not one of them. Across the political spectrum, for Britons of all ages, there is now a strong

Across every segment, majorities of Britons say they would feel comfortable talking to a friend about their mental health

How comfortable, if at all, would you feel if a friend shared how their mental illness affects their life?

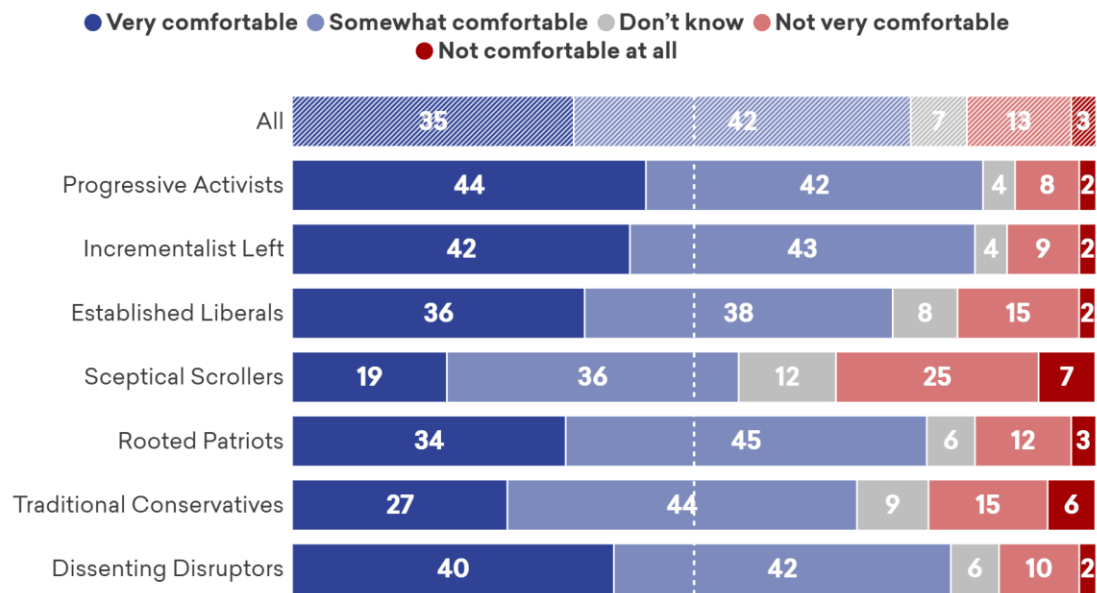


Figure 1

consensus that mental health is important. Indeed, almost three quarters (73 per cent) say it is as important as physical health – although a majority (55 per cent) say it is treated with less importance.

This strong level of support for the notion of parity of esteem holds true across age ranges, ethnic groups, voter groups and six of the seven segments of the British public. What's more, Britons are relatively comfortable talking about mental health. Not only do almost four in five Britons (77 per cent) feel comfortable if a friend shares how their mental illness affects their life but a clear majority feels this way across each of the Seven Segments. This level of comfort has remained strong since 2023, where previous research found that 79 per cent felt comfortable.

In focus group conversations, Britons across the political spectrum approach the issue from shared starting points: experiences of mental health (either firsthand or experience from loved ones) and compassion. Many share the view that mental health is an important issue facing the country but vary in how they understand it. When mental health is discussed in general terms, a few participants reach for “snowflake” narratives.

However, when the conversation shifts to specific conditions (e.g. depression, bipolar disorder), or when participants share their own experiences, Britons across the Seven Segments speak with empathy and understanding.

“It gets brought up a lot in my friendship group, whenever we go out for a drink or we meet up for whatever reason. We always like to check if everyone's all right, if anything's on anyone's mind, because one of the boys has been affected, a friend of a friend took his own life. So it's important that as a friendship group now, we look out for each other.”

Sam, office admin, Dissenting Disruptor

“The best thing about mental health right now is that we're talking about it – we're openly discussing.”

Gurdeep, Glasgow, Sceptical Scroller

Britons are almost three times as likely to say that people talking about mental health have genuine concerns for their health and welfare than the idea they are using it as an excuse (by 63 to 22 per cent). This is a marginal uptick since research conducted in 2023 identified that 60 per cent said people were motivated by genuine concerns. Whereas support for some social justice issues has become

more polarised by culture-wars narratives in the intervening years, there has remained a solid and robust base of belief in people's experiences of mental health.

But concern has not translated into political priority

While Britons broadly agree that mental health matters, this does not translate into political priority. Only 9 per cent name it as one of the top three issues facing the country — far below the cost of living crisis (65 per cent), and similar to education and childcare (6 per cent). Concern for mental health rarely shapes voting behaviour or spending preferences: Britons are more likely to support greater government investment in physical health research than mental health research. This gap in support varies dramatically across the seven segments, but only Progressive Activists are as likely to prioritise equal investment in physical and mental health research.

There is also a clear age divide: under-35s are more than four times as likely to name mental health as a top issue as those over 65. For many Britons, mental health is deeply personal — but not yet a political cause.

*"I think (mental health) is a consequence of other problems. I think it's hard to separate them. I think they're connected."
Levi, tradesman, Progressive Activist*

*"My personal experience with a close family member would suggest that the NHS are rather overwhelmed with mental health problems."
Jackie, hairdresser, Incrementalist Left*

*"I think my last job was in July (...) And I think from July up until now, I've thought about my mental health every single day, purely for the reason of it's a domino effect of you not having one thing and then another thing falls into place and another thing and another thing. (...) So for me with the current situation, I've thought about it every day, but prior to this, it wasn't something that I was thinking about every single day"
Zafiyah, student, Sceptical Scroller*

Yet while support for spending on mental health research is not as strong as with physical health, two-thirds of Britons do want to see greater investment. And while it might not shape decisions at the ballot box directly, Britons' perceptions of public services and the NHS are central to their political outlook: more than a third

of Britons say supporting the NHS is one of the three most important issues facing the country – second only to the cost of living crisis and tied with migration. Mental health services therefore feed into wider, more politically salient issues – such as supporting the NHS.

Support for investment in research on **physical health** and **mental health**

To what extent would you support or oppose the government investing more to research better treatments for *physical health conditions, such as cancer* / *mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression*?

(Net support for more investment)

● Physical health ● Mental health

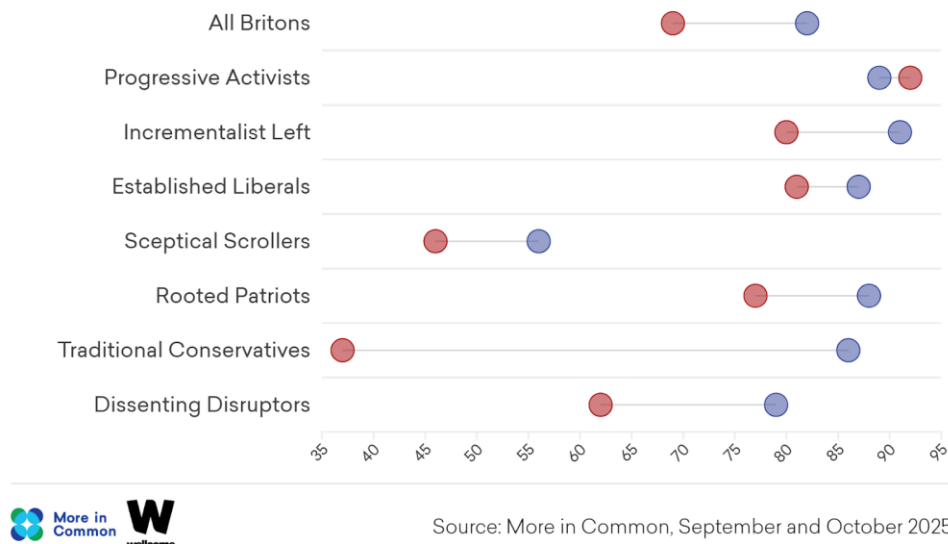


Figure 2

And hope is undermined by distrust in delivery

Britons' personal experiences of mental health support are vital to understanding their attitudes to future improvements. Three in four (75 per cent) believe that the government should do more to improve mental health services in Britain today.

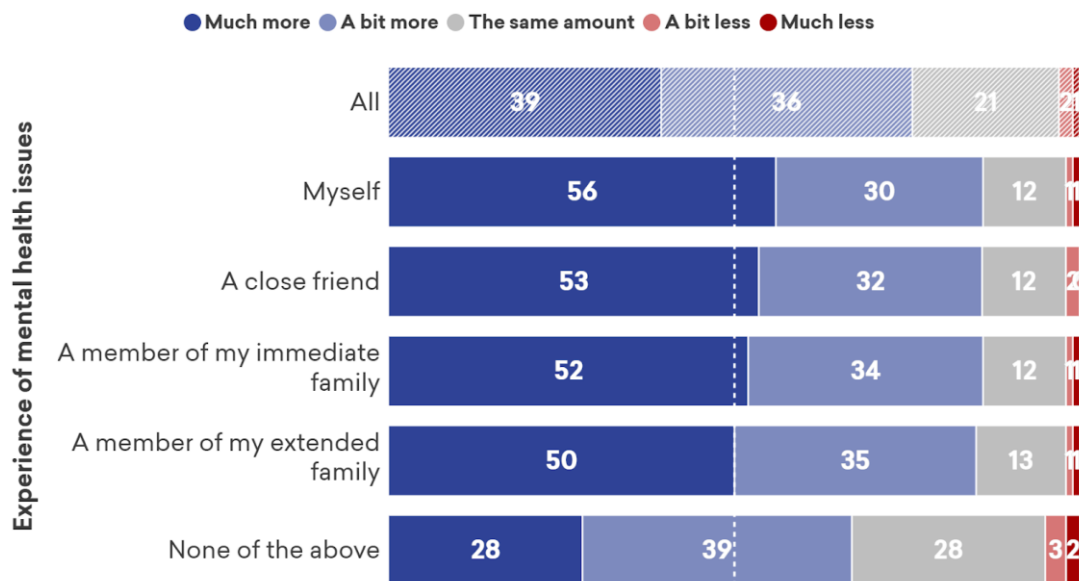
While the level of support varies across the segments, it is strikingly non-polarised. Left-leaning segments are most likely to hold this view – in particular Progressive Activists (86 per cent) and Incrementalist Left (87 per cent) – but a majority of each segment (including 52 per cent of Traditional Conservatives) also feel more improvement is needed.

Those who have experienced a mental health issue are even more likely to feel this way, with 85 per cent saying the government should do more to improve mental

health services. In contrast, those without first-hand experience feel this need for service improvement a lot less keenly. Britons who haven't experienced a mental health issue themselves, nor have any close friends or family who have, are significantly less likely - at just 67 per cent.

Three in four Britons think the government should be doing more to improve mental health support

Do you think the government should be doing more or less to improve mental health support and services in Britain today?



More in Common and Wellcome Trust • October 2025

Figure 3

In focus groups, Britons made clear their negative perceptions of the current state of mental health provision.

“From what I’ve heard on the news, it’s getting worse. The waiting lists for seeing specialist doctors seems to be getting longer. So although we are talking about it more, I do feel that things like the NHS, it hasn’t got the capacity to help everybody. So that is the only problem.”
Gail, retired, Rooted Patriot

Almost two thirds of Britons (63 per cent) think the Government is handling mental health issues quite or very badly. Compared to other issues, this rating is roughly in the middle of the pack: 71 per cent say the Government is handling jobs and unemployment badly, 53 per cent say it is handling education and childcare badly.

Nonetheless, this overarching negativity colours Britons' views on the potential for effective treatment and support for mental health conditions.

Concerns about service provision shape Britons' hopes for the future significantly. While in theory Britons are twice as likely to think that the coming years will deliver scientific advancements that will improve the lives of those with mental health issues than not (by 65 to 35 per cent), there is a gloomy pessimism underlying the current state of play. For many Britons, the state of public services has fundamentally undermined their sense of optimism about the future of mental health discoveries and innovation. A common refrain in focus groups is that even if we discovered cures for mental health conditions, patients would not be able to access them because they'd be stuck on waiting lists.

When it comes to young people, only two-in-five Britons (42 per cent) believe that we will need new scientific breakthroughs and methods in order to tackle rising mental health problems; 58 per cent believe that we already have the skills and technologies we need. For this latter, larger group, it seems that the issue is not a lack of scientific progress but instead a worry that the government may not be capable of providing the new interventions that are being developed.

"I think the approach is effective. It's just whether the patient can access them. I think that's where the delay happens is the accessing of these services. So I think, yeah, definitely medication is a way forward as long as it's consistent, you need to be able to follow up."

Kira, Progressive Activist

For some Britons, daily cost-of-living pressures undergird their sense of pessimism about the future advances. Britons who say they are more comfortable financially are much more likely to be optimistic about the potential for new scientific discoveries, whereas those struggling to make ends meet have little confidence in the potential for new discoveries.

Financially secure Britons are far more optimistic about the potential of science to help people with mental health issues

To what extent do you think science has the potential to help people, through new discoveries on treating mental health issues specifically?

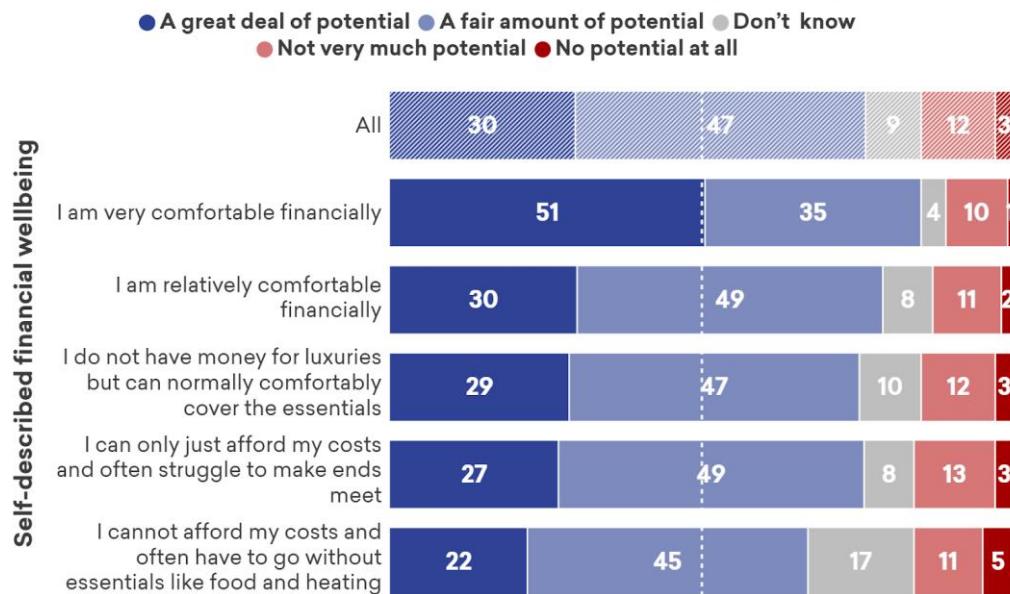


Figure 4

Britons' support for the importance of mental health is tempered, then, by a sense that current services and support are not satisfactory. Improving mental health support is stuck between these two poles: a shared concern in theory, but a gloomy cynicism in practice.

Personal experiences shape attitudes

Perhaps more than most issues, Britons' understanding of mental health is shaped by their own first-hand experiences, and experiences of their friends and loved ones. Half of Britons say they personally, a close friend, or a member of their family have experienced a mental health issue.

As we will see, these experiences shape perspectives. Whether someone has experience of a mental health issue has a statistically significant relationship to a range of different attitudes. In particular, the issue is far more salient among those with experience, and they are more likely to have negative perceptions of the support available: those who have personally experienced a mental health issue

are twice as likely to say that mental health is one of the biggest issues facing the country (18 per cent to 9 per cent), and ten points more likely to think the government needs to do more to improve support (85 per cent to 75 per cent).

The clearest demographic indicator of mental health experience is age: 37 per cent of Gen Z Britons say they have personally experienced a mental health issue, dropping to 16 per cent of Baby Boomers (60 - 75) and just 6 per cent of those over the age of 75.

Women are 6 points more likely to report experiencing mental health issues than men (31 per cent to 26 per cent). Interestingly, this gap widens among younger Britons: Gen Z women are by far the most likely group to report mental health issues, yet self-reported prevalence among Gen Z men is no higher than among Millennial or Gen X men.

Women are more likely than men to say they've experienced a mental health issue - a gap that widens among young people

Have you, or someone you know, experienced a mental health issue? Select all that apply:
(Proportion who have personally experienced a mental health issue)

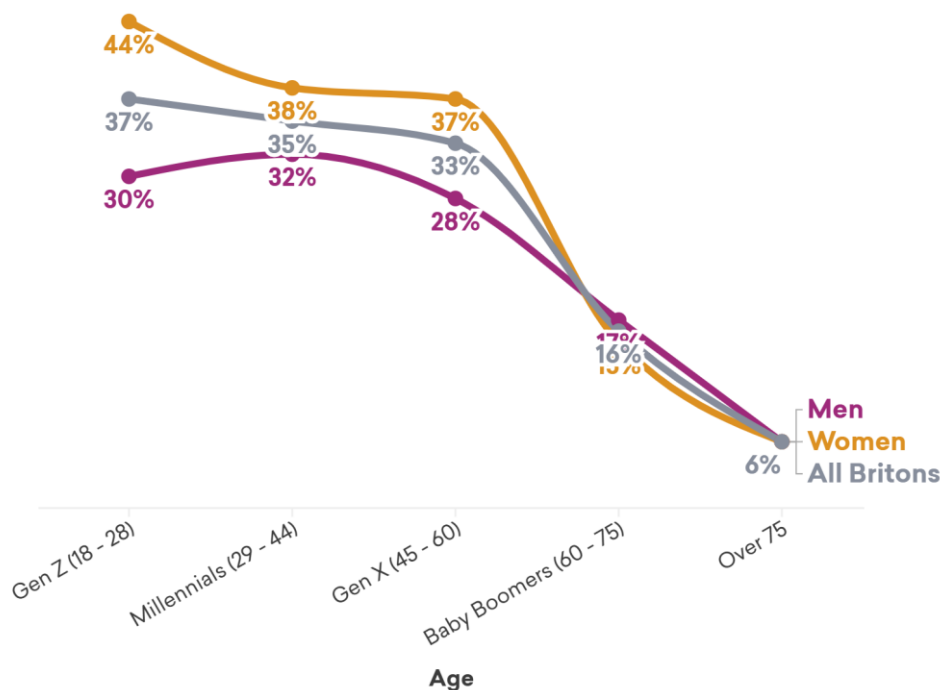


Figure 5

Experience of mental health issues vary widely by segment - and thus have varying degrees of significance for how each segment talks about mental health issues. Progressive Activists and Dissenting Disruptors are tied for the highest proportion of personal experience (around 2 in 5 for each segment), followed by Sceptical Scrollers (28 per cent). Meanwhile Traditional Conservatives are the least likely to have personally experienced a mental health issue (12 per cent, compared to 28 per cent of the general public), and are tied with Established Liberals as the least likely to have close friends or family members who have experienced a mental health issue.

While Rooted Patriots are slightly less likely than average to report personal mental ill health, they are among the most likely to say that a member of their immediate family has experienced it - something that reflects their frame of reference in focus groups, where anecdotes of relatives' struggles often feature heavily.

Progressive Activists and Dissenting Disruptors are the most likely to report experiencing a mental health issue

Have you, or someone you know experienced a mental health issue? Select all that apply:

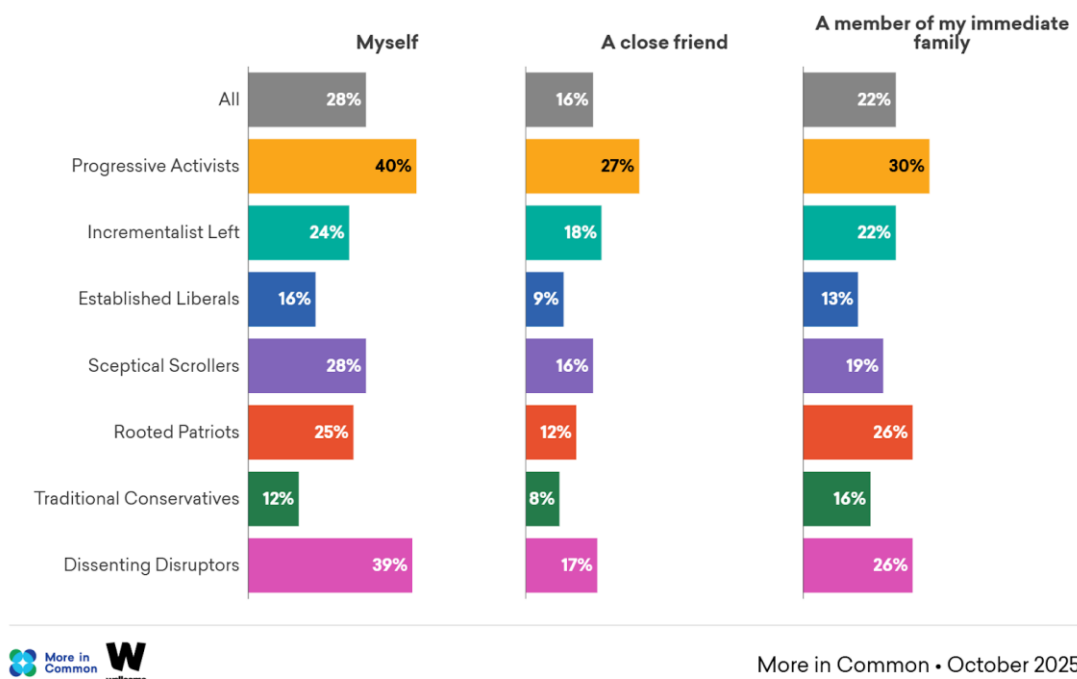


Figure 6

It is worth noting that respondents were asked this question with a “prefer not to say” option (although fewer than one in ten of each segment selected this). These figures do not provide a definitive measure of mental ill health prevalence across the segments - it also measures how likely they are to identify these issues, and to

feel comfortable answering the question in that sense. Nevertheless, it provides a useful insight into which groups are more likely to draw from their own experiences when they think and talk about mental health.

It is also a testament to the non-polarised nature of mental health in Britain that the most socially progressive, left-leaning segment (Progressive Activists) and one of the most socially conservative, populist-right segments (Dissenting Disruptors) share a significant level of comfort sharing their experiences of mental health issues.

Part 2 – Cautious hope: the future of mental health support

Key takeaways

There are three key sources of optimism that make the public more hopeful about the future of mental health support: **greater awareness and destigmatisation, positive media representations of mental health journeys and scientific advances in mental health interventions.**

Trust in new interventions has not been earned yet: Most Britons are open-minded about digital therapies, AI chatbots and wearables, but don't yet feel they have enough information to judge whether they work. Sceptical Scrollers are notably more open to these approaches than most; Traditional Conservatives are the most cautious.

The most trusted voices are those with experience of mental health issues; government and media are among the least. Britons have high trust in the NHS, charities and universities - but trust people with firsthand experience of mental health above all else. Scepticism toward official and institutional sources poses a direct challenge for communicating new interventions.

Qualified enthusiasm for new discoveries and approaches

Despite concerns about the state of services and access to support, Britons are slightly more likely to think the quality and range of mental health treatments in the UK has been getting better in the last few years than getting worse. The public is more likely to think the quality of mental health treatments has improved than worsened in the last few years, by 31 to 22 per cent. Younger Britons (under-35s) are more likely to think treatments have improved than average.

Polling and focus group conversations reveal **three interrelated sources of optimism** that make people hopeful about the future of mental health support:

- Greater awareness and destigmatisation
- Positive media representations of mental health journeys
- Scientific advances in mental health interventions.

For many, destigmatisation and awareness are key sources of optimism: in focus groups, Britons across the seven segments celebrate how it is becoming easier to talk about mental health, and the greater range of resources that are available for those who need help. In particular, people often point to community and charity initiatives that aim to provide support for people who are struggling; this includes low-trust segments who are broadly pessimistic about the state of government mental health services.

“We’re in an era right now where mental health awareness has improved in recent years, which is great. The resources like pre-published resources like blogs, you can read articles, you can read videos, you can watch published resources or more readily available and there’s more info out there if you think you’re going into depression because of x and y reason, you can start looking into okay, what are the symptoms, what are the causes, what are ways to manage it, what are ways to try recovering from it? But yeah, the unfortunate part here is that I feel like for companies at least large organisation, it’s become like a checklist.”
Abdul, IT sales manager, Established Liberal

“I think it’s probably in the mainstream, I think sport is one of the big ones that drives it, mental health. I know there’s Andy’s Man Club, they’re quite big in Doncaster. I was set up by a couple of boys who, I think their friend Andy committed suicide, that’s my understanding of it. And they wanted to use the fact of talk and go to football and have days at the races and just to converse. And then I know there’s a Mental Health FC, which meet on a Saturday in Doncaster where people come play football, have a chat, get things off your chest, speak to like-minded people. And so yeah, I think they’re doing all they can and it’s not easy, but they’re certainly putting it into the mindframe of people, especially sport”
Mark, lecturer, Rooted Patriot

Media plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward mental health. In focus groups, it’s clear that portrayals of mental health struggles and recovery in entertainment can be highly impactful. For many, these portrayals are crucial because they contribute to the destigmatisation and greater awareness of mental health issues, but they also serve an important role in highlighting that recovery is possible. Showing characters seeking and receiving help – including through new interventions – can help to build a sense of hope for the future.

The final key source of optimism is scientific advances, and the potential of innovation to lead to real improvements in interventions. Two thirds of Britons (65

per cent) think that in the coming years, scientific and technological advances are going to make the lives of people with mental health issues better. Similarly, more than three-quarters of Britons (77 per cent) think science has a great or fair amount of potential to help people with mental health issues through new discoveries. However, as we will see, this source of optimism risks being undermined if people feel that services are inaccessible, and that people will not benefit from new innovations.

“I remember them covering it on Coronation Street (...) And then for some reason within that story, because I always think about this, he got better. He went to the doctors, whatever they give him, he was better. From then he's a normal character just being a normal person. And I'd often think of that. I think, well, Coronation Street, they usually research this stuff. They have to do a lot of research into what they're putting out. And whatever problem he has, he went to the doctors and then that character in it, he had a normal life after that.”
Ann, Runcorn, Rooted Patriot

Uncertainty towards new interventions

Britons are much more familiar with well-established approaches to mental health than newer interventions. While three quarters of Britons have heard and know a lot or a bit about talking to a therapist in person or taking medication (73 and 75 per cent respectively), there is much less awareness of newer interventions. For instance, only a quarter (25 per cent) have heard and know a bit about interacting with chatbots and AI-based support.

These newer approaches do not currently inspire much confidence compared to more traditional, well-known interventions. An overwhelming majority of Britons think talking to a therapist is effective (80 per cent) but only one in five (21 per cent) say the same for interacting with chatbots and AI-based support. While this is to some degree expected - it is unlikely a little-known intervention will be widely perceived to be effective - even those who have heard of them and know a bit about them are less likely to think they are effective. For instance, even among those who know a bit about virtual chatbots, only just over half (56 per cent) think they are effective compared to almost nine in ten (86 per cent) who think in-person therapy is effective.

However, some of this may reflect Britons' prior beliefs and attitudes to new technology. Across the seven segments, there was wide variation in awareness of

and support for new mental health interventions. True to their high engagement with mental health issues, Progressive Activists and the Incrementalist Left show the highest level of awareness of most interventions, and the greatest belief in their efficacy. Conversely, Sceptical Scrollers have far lower belief in the efficacy of traditional methods, including talking therapy, medication and support groups. However, this gap disappears when looking at new interventions such as digital or spiritual solutions. Traditional Conservatives are in line with the median of public opinion on most traditional interventions, but are particularly sceptical of digital treatments.

Familiar treatments inspire confidence; the public are less convinced by digital interventions

How effective or ineffective do you think the following approaches to mental health are for people?

Net efficacy (proportion who think each intervention is effective, minus those who believe it is ineffective)

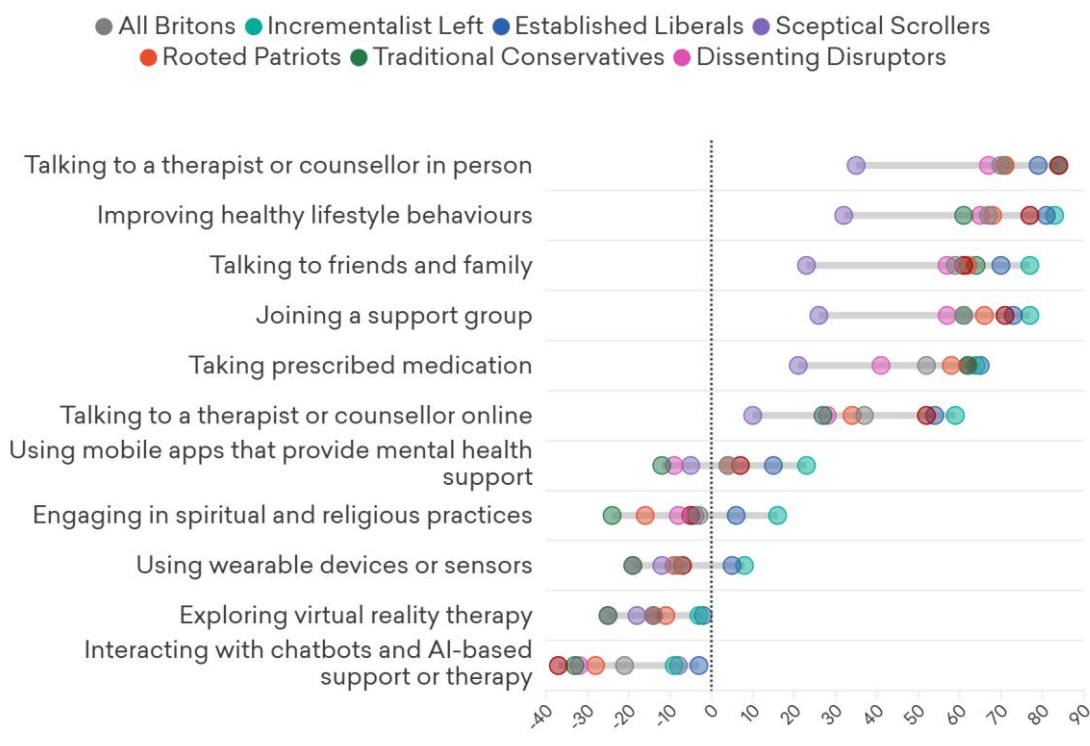


Figure 7

More generally, though, a substantial proportion of Britons (36 per cent) say they don't know whether chatbots and AI are effective. More than two in five Britons

have not heard anything about virtual reality therapy, wearables devices and sensors and chatbots and AI-based support as interventions for mental health. There is a clear association with age: the older you are, the less likely you are to know anything about these, with a majority of over-55s saying they have not heard anything about these three interventions. For advocates of newer interventions, then, there are significant parts of the public who could be receptive to new approaches, but don't yet feel they have enough information to pass judgement.

Narratives of progress - who to believe?

Britons' perceptions of mental health treatments - and new interventions or approaches - can be shaped significantly by how they receive information about them. Rooted Patriots are, for example, twice as likely than Sceptical Scrollers to get their information from TV, with 78 per cent selecting it as one of their top information sources compared to 38 per cent. Whereas half of Progressive Activists get key information from social media, only one in seven (14 per cent) of Traditional Conservatives do.

The rise of distinct information eco-systems for different segments of the public means that, when it comes to information about mental health, Britons trust and distrust a wide variety of sources. Nonetheless, there are some key commonalities. Britons have high degrees of trust in key institutions like the NHS, charities and universities - but most of all in people who have experienced mental health difficulties themselves. In focus groups, it's clear that people think of "experience" in a range of contexts: celebrities sharing their mental health stories, friends and families opening up, sometimes even campaigns or videos that include fictional stories that feel true to life. Part 5 of this report deals directly with how experience can be embedded in campaigns.

On the issue of mental health, Britons trust people with lived experience, the NHS, charities and universities

To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to provide accurate information about mental health to the public?

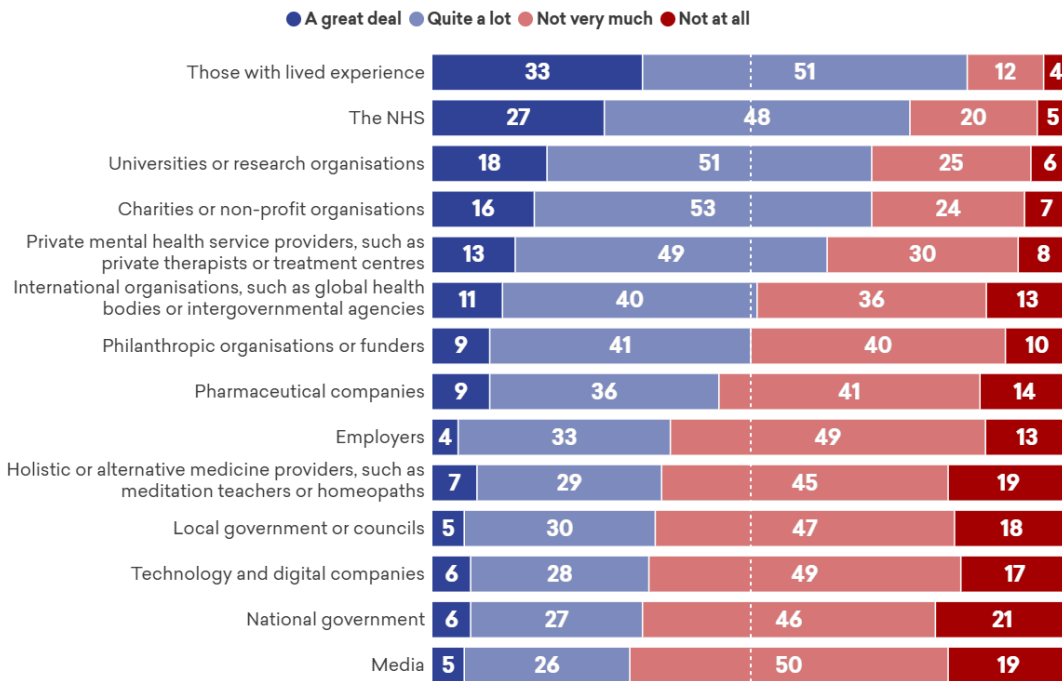


Figure 8

On the other hand, there is a lack of trust in key actors to provide accurate information on mental health. In particular, Britons are almost twice as likely to distrust than trust the media, technology companies and national and local government on this issue. Given their vital role in disseminating information about service provision and treatment, this poses a challenge for the uptake of new approaches to mental health.

Part 3 – Understanding what matters: how different segments of the public relate to mental health

Key takeaways

Progressive Activists and Incrementalist Left Britons are the ‘base segments’. For two segments of the British public, Progressive Activists and the Incrementalist Left, mental health is both a really important issue and one for which they have some optimism that things are getting better. **These are the base segments for mental health advocacy.**

Others form the ‘**moveable middle**’. Rooted Patriots show high salience but low optimism, Established Liberals show high optimism but slightly lower optimism. Along with Dissenting Disruptors and Sceptical Scrollers, for whom the issue is less important and a source of some pessimism, this is the ‘moveable middle’ for campaigners – in various different ways.

Traditional Conservatives are the only segment for whom the issue is not important. This is the **hardest to reach group** in terms of mental health advocacy and communications.

Salience and optimism

Pulling the breadth and diversity of the Seven Segments’ views on mental health together, it is clear that a key framework for understanding public attitudes toward mental health is across two primary dimensions: **salience** and **optimism**. These two dimensions help us understand where the British public - and the Seven Segments - converges and diverges on the issue and any proposed ways forward.

Salience - *How important is mental health to this group?*

This incorporates three measures:

- The proportion who select mental health as one of the top issues facing the country.

- The proportion who believe the government should be doing more to improve mental health services.
- Belief that we need new breakthroughs and methods to improve young people's mental health.

Optimism - *How positively is this group already feeling about mental health innovation?*

This incorporates three measures:

- The proportion who believe that scientific innovation will help those with mental health issues to lead better lives.
- Average belief in the effectiveness of the eleven interventions tested.
- Belief that the range of mental health treatments has improved in recent years.

High-salience, high-optimism groups, such as Progressive Activists and Incrementalist Left, can be considered the 'base segments' for mental health campaigners and communicators: these groups combine an overwhelming level of support for greater action on mental health with a sense of hope and trust in new interventions.

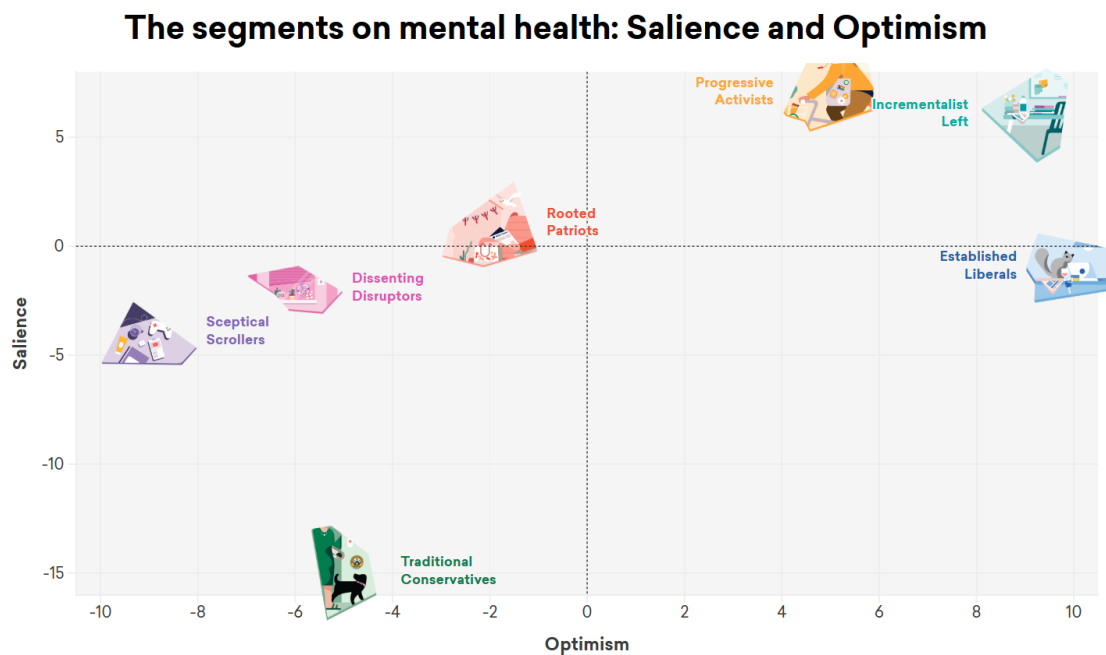


Figure 9

Established Liberals diverge slightly from these other high-optimism groups in that the issue is less salient to them than to the average Briton: they are less likely than average to believe that the government needs to do more to support mental health services. In part, this lower salience may be driven *by* their exceptionally high level of optimism: they are by far the most likely to believe that services in Britain are improving, and that the government is handling the issue of mental health well. For some Established Liberals, this may translate into a lower sense of urgency for improving services.

Rooted Patriots stand out as a high-salience, low-optimism segment. They strongly believe that more should be done to improve mental health services, but are pessimistic about the future of interventions, and distrustful of many institutions.

Sceptical Scrollers and Dissenting Disruptors are exceptionally pessimistic about mental health innovation, and distrustful of key voices. However, while these segments tend to show lower support for greater action on mental health, the issue is often important to them on a personal level: Dissenting Disruptors tie with Progressive Activists as the most likely to have personally experienced a mental health issue.

Meanwhile, Traditional Conservatives are the segment with, by far, the lowest level of salience. While few actively oppose greater investment in mental health research and services, they are by a great margin the least likely to actively feel the need for it.

The Seven Segments and Mental Health



Progressive Activists (12 per cent of the British public)

A mobilised segment who demand greater action to improve mental health services and interventions - but are often sceptical of the Government's ability or willingness to deliver.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: People with experience of mental health problems, universities, the NHS. A distinct lack of trust in big tech, pharmaceutical companies

Mental health in the media: Strong appetite to see more mental health portrayals in the media. High engagement with podcasts, digital media and issue-led content.

"I think (mental health) is a consequence of other problems. I think it's hard to separate them. I think they're connected."

Levi, tradesman, Progressive Activist

Incrementalist Left (21 per cent of the British public)

A concerned but hopeful segment who want better mental health support, but celebrate recent progress and trust innovation and institutions to improve services over time.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: high general trust, but particularly the NHS, charities and those with experience of mental health issues.

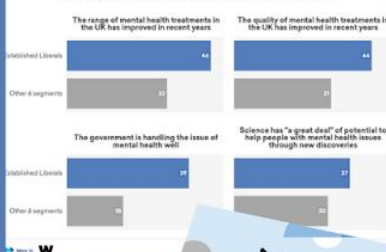
Mental health in the media: Strong appetite to see more mental health portrayals in the media. Most likely to cite music as a source of information.



"In the next few years, will there be any advances, any advancements? I'm hopeful that there will. I think because there's definitely a lot more eyes on mental health, it's definitely something that's talked about a lot more."

Paul, charity worker, Incrementalist Left

Established Liberals are more optimistic than others about mental health in Britain



Established Liberals (9 per cent of the British public)

An optimistic, institutionally trusting segment who believe mental health support is already improving, and that science will continue to drive progress.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: extremely high trust across the board - the only segment with net positive trust in pharmaceutical companies and the government.

Mental health in the media: the most likely segment to visit museums and galleries.



Sceptical Scrollers (10 per cent of the British public)

A low-trust segment who lack a foundational faith in the potential of the scientific establishment to improve the lives of people with mental health issues. While pessimistic about the future of mental health support, they show openness to new digital approaches.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: uniquely low trust in every institution. Sceptical Scrollers only have positive trust toward the NHS, universities and those with lived experience.

Mental health in the media: heavily online, and the most likely to get information through video games.



"I don't know if (AI) will have the right tools. Everyone's situation is going to be different, so it will have to have lots of situations for them to give the right responses to."

Terri, teacher, Sceptical Scroller



"From what I've heard on the news, it's getting worse. The waiting lists for seeing specialist doctors seems to be getting longer. So although we are talking about it more, I do feel that things like the NHS, it hasn't got the capacity to help everybody. So that is the only problem."
Gail, retired, Rooted Patriot

Rooted Patriots (20 per cent of the British public)

A highly concerned segment who believe mental health services are failing those in need, and are sceptical that innovation alone can fix a strained system. With eroded trust in institutions, they value human stories.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: highly trusting of the NHS, and those with experience, but show a distinct lack of trust in national or local government.

Mental health in the media: strong reliance on TV (around 78 per cent cite it as a key source); often refer to soap operas as a frame of reference for mental health information.



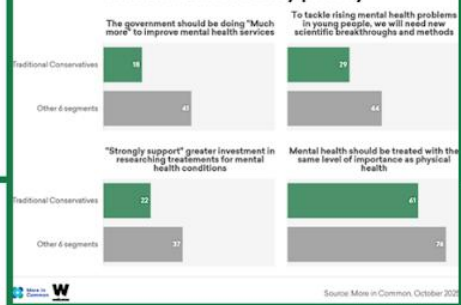
Traditional Conservatives (8 per cent of the British public)

A segment for whom mental health is not a key priority. Many feel sceptical about emerging technologies and treatments, and some doubt whether further breakthroughs are even needed in order to address mental health issues.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: trusting of the NHS and those with experience of mental health issues.

Mental health in the media: limited appetite for seeing mental health portrayed in the media. High reliance on television and radio.

Traditional Conservatives are less likely to see mental health as a key priority



"I went to seek support for my mental health, I was basically told no, that it was just hormonal, that it was just my pregnancy and don't get any help from the NHS because there's too much of a backlog."
Rachel, maternity leave, Dissenting Disruptor

Dissenting Disruptors (20 per cent of the British public)

A deeply distrustful segment who believe the future looks bleak for Britain's mental health support systems. Often informed by their own experiences, they lack faith in medical or scientific institutions and place greater trust in lived experience than in expert authority.

Who they trust to talk about mental health: extremely low trust in every institution, in particular government and pharmaceutical companies. However, strongly trusting of those with lived experience of mental health services.

Mental health in the media: strong reliance on television, but want to see that storylines are true to life and avoid trivialising or sugarcoating mental health journeys.

Britons' views on mental health are not captured adequately by simple lenses such as support or opposition, comfort or discomfort. As we have seen, there is a strong acceptance of mental health in theory, but perceptions of current service provision dampen any enthusiasm for the prospect of improvements in the near future.

How best, then, to understand the breadth and depth of Britons' views on the importance of mental health and their support for its prioritisation as a key societal issue? In particular, what do campaigners, advocates, science communicators and policy professionals need to know to be able to appeal to different parts of the public?

The Messaging Playbook from page 51 onward offers more practical insights for communicating with different segments about mental health.

To start, it is helpful to understand how each of the Seven Segments relates to mental health.

Progressive Activists

A mobilised segment who demand greater action to improve mental health services and interventions – but are often sceptical of the Government's ability or willingness to deliver.

While Progressive Activists are among the most likely to have personally experienced a mental health issue, they rarely describe it through a purely individual lens. Instead, Progressive Activists describe mental health as a structural issue facing the country, shaped by a range of social and economic forces such as social media, employment, or the cost of living.

"I think (mental health) is a consequence of other problems. I think it's hard to separate them. I think they're connected."
Levi, tradesman, Progressive Activist

As a result, this segment often speaks about mental health in institutional terms, emphasising waiting times and delays in accessing support. Progressive Activists want strong action to improve mental health services and interventions. Nearly nine in ten (86 per cent) Progressive Activists want the government to do more on mental health – 11 points higher than the national average. Of all the segments, Progressive Activists have the strongest belief in parity of esteem: 86 per cent say that mental health should be treated with the same importance as physical health; yet they are the least likely to feel that parity of esteem exists in Britain today: 72 per

cent say that mental health is treated with less importance than physical health - compared to 55 per cent of the overall British public.

In theory, Progressive Activists believe strongly in the potential of new interventions to improve the lives of people with mental health issues. They show higher-than-average awareness of a range of different treatments - from talking therapy to mobile apps - and are more likely to believe that these new treatments have potential to be effective. The exception is AI chatbots, which Progressive Activists are more sceptical of than any other segment.

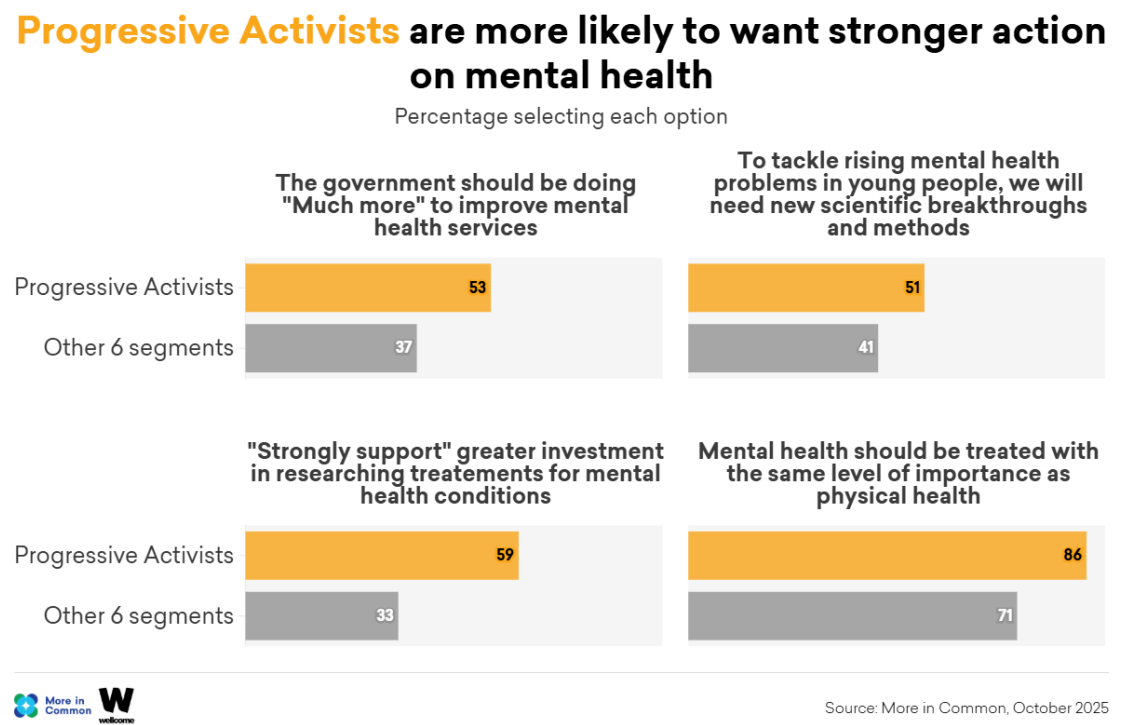


Figure 10

Progressive Activists are therefore cautiously optimistic. While they believe that new interventions have potential, they diverge from Incrementalist Left Britons and Established Liberals in their pessimism about the ability and willingness of the government to make the most of these new developments. And while Incrementalist Left and Established Liberals stand out in their view that the quality and range of treatments has improved in recent years, less than a third of Progressive Activists agree - putting them in line with the public as a whole.

For some Progressive Activists, this can cultivate a sense of futility, and a belief that investment in new interventions will not tangibly improve the lives of people with mental health issues, unless there is systemic change in how services are provided.

“I think that the NHS is so stretched as it is and the problems that we're facing with mental health.”

Kira, practice manager, Progressive Activist

Incrementalist Left

A concerned but hopeful segment who want better mental health support, but celebrate recent progress and trust innovation and institutions to improve services over time.

If mental health communicators have a “base segment”, it is the Incrementalist Left. They sit at the intersection between extremely high salience and exceptionally high optimism. They overwhelmingly feel that mental health is an important issue, and want to see the government do more to improve the support available, but unlike Progressive Activists have some faith in the government to deliver.

Like other Britons, the Incrementalist Left feel that mental health services are in a bad state in Britain. However, they remain positive and hopeful about the future of mental health support.

“My personal experience with a close family member would suggest that the NHS are rather overwhelmed with mental health problems.”

Jackie, hairdresser, Incrementalist Left

For the Incrementalist Left, it seems that this optimism is driven by a sense that mental health is finally receiving the attention that it deserves: in focus groups, many describe the sense that the issue is being taken more seriously, and that this will lead to greater investment and breakthroughs in treatments.

“I do think there are more people with mental health issues and it is being taken more seriously.”

Alex, software developer, Incrementalist Left

“In the next few years, will there be any advances, any advancements? I'm hopeful that there will, I think because there's definitely a lot more eyes on mental health, it's definitely something that's talked about a lot more.”

Paul, charity worker, Incrementalist Left

Like Progressive Activists, the vast majority (85 per cent) of Incrementalist Left Britons believe that mental health *should* be treated with the same importance as physical health; however, they diverge from Progressive Activists in that Incrementalist Left are more likely than average to believe that there is *already* parity of esteem in Britain.

Similarly, Incrementalist Left Britons are more likely than average to feel optimistic about both the range and quality of mental health treatments in Britain, and to approve of the government's handling of mental health.

Incrementalist Left Britons show high awareness of many new interventions, and are often the most likely to say that treatments could be effective, and that they would feel personally comfortable using these services. This support spans across pharmacological, non-pharmacological and digital routes of intervention: 37 per cent say that digital treatments – such as AI chatbots and mobile apps – have potential to improve the lives of those with mental health issues, higher than any other segment and 6 points higher than average.

Established Liberals

An optimistic, institutionally trusting segment who believe mental health support is already improving, and that science will continue to drive progress.

On mental health, Established Liberals occupy a space of exceptionally high optimism, but medium-to-low salience.

On some measures, Established Liberals are outliers in their high degree of trust and optimism. They show exceptionally high trust in science, institutions and new interventions. They are uniquely positive about previous improvements in mental health services and highly optimistic about the potential of science to drive future improvements.

The most significant divergence between Established Liberals and the wider public is their view of current services. This is a segment who generally tend to feel more satisfied with the status quo, and this applies to mental health services. This segment is nearly twice as likely as the general public to believe that the Government is doing a good job at handling mental health services (39 per cent to

20 per cent), and are more likely than average to think that the range and quality of services has improved.

"I think as a whole, support is improving. I think just the fact that everyone on this call is aware of mental health and the importance of it and potentially everyone knows how to help someone or have a conversation. I think just things like TV adverts or posters that you might see in a GP surgery, all that sort of thing slowly infiltrates into us as to how we can support other people with mental health issues."
 Wendy, retired, Established Liberal

This feeds into a wider sense of hope for the future: 77 per cent of Established Liberals believe that in coming years, scientific and technological advances will help people with mental health issues lead better lives, compared to only 65 per cent of the general public. For this segment, the profit motive is not a barrier to innovation: they are more likely than any other segment to believe that pharmaceutical companies (62 per cent) and tech companies (51 per cent) have the potential to improve the lives of those with mental health issues.

Established Liberals are more optimistic than others about mental health in Britain

Percentage selecting each option

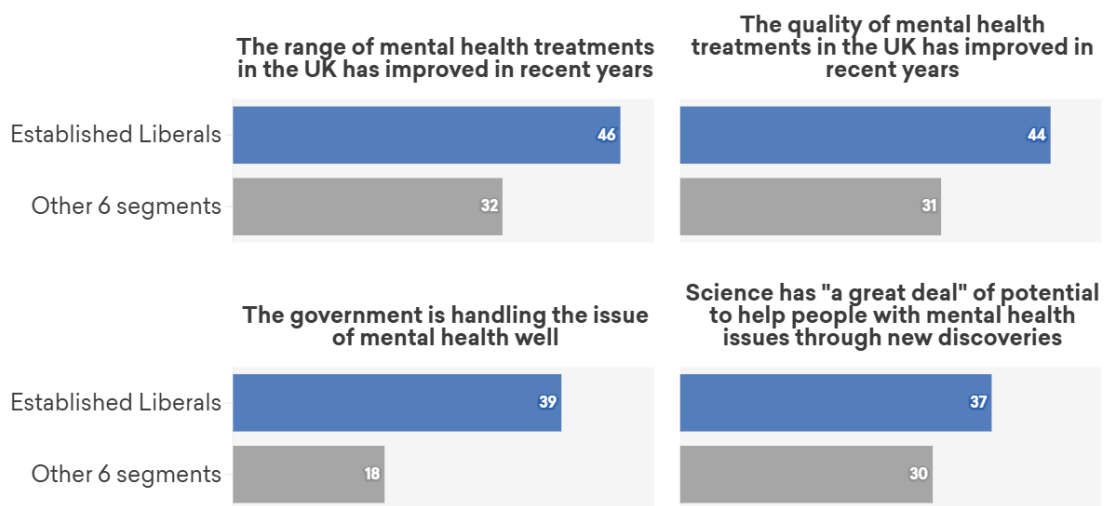


Figure 11

When it comes to new treatments, Established Liberals are in many ways techno-optimists. They show the highest openness to interventions like mobile apps,

wearable devices and virtual reality as means to support people with mental health conditions.

“Well I think it's getting better. (...) And over time I think we're finding out more and more of us have potentially had these things. So I think it's very encouraging that there's a lot of research going into it because there's a big proportion of the population which is affected”

Peter, Retired Homemaker, Established Liberal

“Think it's a work in progress, isn't it? I think it is improving, as you say, we are discovering new conditions, how to treat them, I say we, the experts, but I almost feel like it's the tip of the iceberg really. So yes, it's fantastic. We're learning more, but I still feel that there's just so much more to do.”

Sarah, Administrator, Established Liberal

Given their greater satisfaction with existing mental health support, they are perhaps less urgently convinced than Progressive Activists or Incrementalist Left Britons that more needs to be done. If there is a risk that Established Liberals may disengage from the issue of mental health, it is more likely to be driven by a sense of optimism than by hopelessness or futility.

Sceptical Scrollers

A low-trust segment who lack a foundational faith in the potential of the scientific establishment to improve the lives of people with mental health issues. While pessimistic about the future of mental health support, they show openness to new digital approaches.

This group is defined by low trust and uncertainty. Mental health is considered an important issue by many Sceptical Scrollers, yet they have the lowest confidence in science and innovation to provide solutions. Few believe that the range or quality of interventions has improved, or indeed will improve, leading many to either disengage from the issue entirely - or seek alternative methods to address mental health issues.

“I think a therapist needs to go through certain situations and maybe experience anxiety or depression themselves if they've never experienced it to understand what someone is actually going through.”

Zafiyah, student, Sceptical Scroller

Sceptical Scrollers lack the foundational trust in the scientific establishment that most other segments share, meaning they are considerably less hopeful about the

ability of breakthroughs in mental health. Only 64 per cent of Sceptical Scrollers believe science has the potential to help people through discoveries and innovations, compared to 86 per cent of the general public. And only 60 per cent think science has the ability to help people with mental health issues specifically, compared to 77 per cent of the general public.

And unlike segments such as the Incrementalist Left, who often derive hope from growing awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, Sceptical Scrollers sometimes view these cultural shifts more cynically - seeing them as “more talk, less action” in the absence of meaningful improvements in services. This scepticism may be linked to a broader sense of atomisation that defines Sceptical Scrollers: nearly three in five (58 per cent) say they often feel disconnected from society, more than any other segment except Dissenting Disruptors. As a result, they may be less likely to feel encouraged by more open conversations around mental health when these are not accompanied by tangible improvements in support.

"Me personally, I think we always get people to speak up... We almost seem to have people coming and saying nowadays, speak up, if you're a man, if you are female, but I feel like there's more talk, less action done (...) People are struggling, especially men. If I was struggling now with my mental health, I wouldn't know where to go."

Zain, car trader, Sceptical Scroller

However, for many Sceptical Scrollers, a lack of faith in traditional interventions goes hand in hand with an openness to new, innovative approaches.

Sceptical Scrollers are particularly cynical about pharmacological interventions: barely half (53 per cent) believe that taking prescribed medication is an effective approach to mental health; 33 per cent believe this is ineffective.

However, Sceptical Scrollers are notably open-minded about digital solutions and show higher awareness than other segments of using new technologies for mental health purposes. 31 per cent say that AI-based therapy could be effective, compared to only 21 per cent of the general public. On other examples of novel or unorthodox approaches (including virtual reality and spiritual practices), Sceptical Scrollers are no more sceptical than the average Briton.

“I don't know if (AI) will have the right tools. Everyone's situation is going to be different, so it will have to have lots of situations for them to give the right responses to.”

Terri, teacher, Sceptical Scroller

In focus groups, Sceptical Scrollers often criticise what they see as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to mental health support, and emphasise the importance of a tailored, bespoke approach to tackling mental health issues in a diverse population.

Sceptical Scrollers are less convinced by traditional treatments - but the gap closes when it comes to digital interventions

How effective or ineffective do you think the following approaches to mental health are for people?

Net efficacy (proportion who think each intervention is effective, minus those who believe it is ineffective)

● Sceptical Scrollers ● Other 6 segments

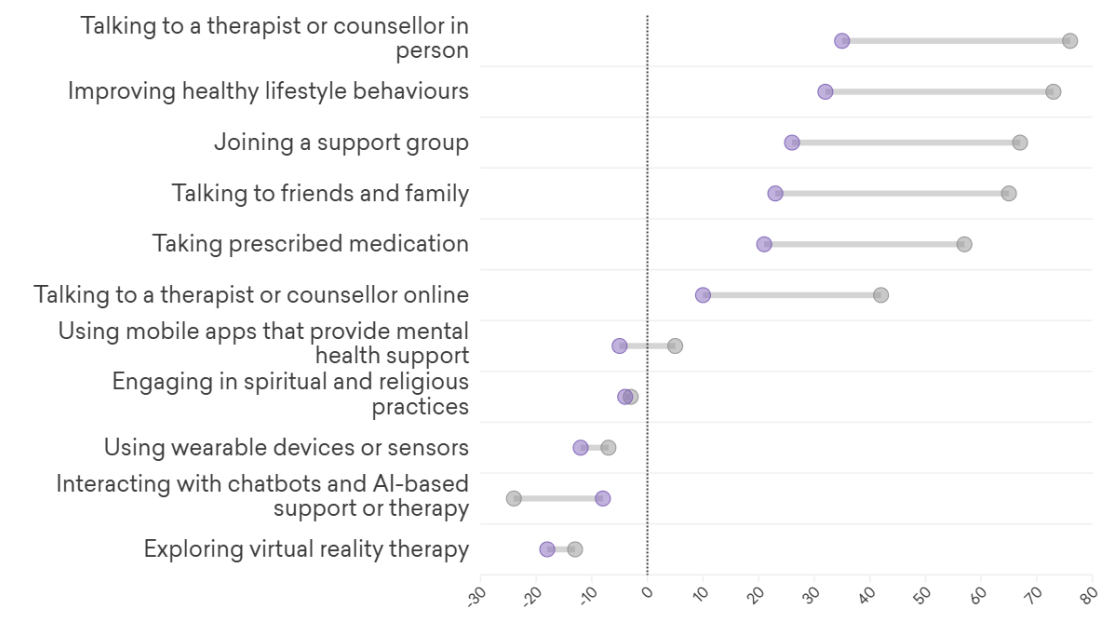


Figure 12

“There are some mental health issues where you can see there is actually like a chemical imbalance, I think those ones science has a hold of and they can give you the right pills to give you the right chemical balance... but I think with some of the others ones where its like anxiety and depression and things like that, some of them

I don't think can be scientifically diagnosed... some of those things are more away from science and more like feelings and human interaction"
Steven, Birmingham

"Depending on your cultural background or ethnicity as well, that plays a big part. So I think we need a more broader, diverse therapist approach when it comes to people like this."
Zafiyah, student, Sceptical Scroller

Rooted Patriots

A highly concerned segment who believe mental health services are failing those in need, and are sceptical that innovation alone can fix a strained system. With eroded trust in institutions, they value human stories.

For many Rooted Patriots, mental health services in Britain are in an urgently dire state - and the system needs dramatic change to help those living with mental health issues: four in five (81 per cent) say that more should be done to improve mental health services, including nearly half (44 per cent) who say that "much more" needs to be done. This puts them almost in line with Incrementalist Left and Progressive Activists in their sense of urgency.

"I think when you get to my age, you realise that most people at some point have had some kind of mental health issue (...) I just think at some point, everybody has a whibble. It's how that whibble is dealt with and whether or not it needs professional intervention or not I think varies on the person, the environment and what their support network's like. I don't think there's one size fits all. That's the problem."
Claire, maths tutor, Rooted Patriot

"I still think that a lot of people don't think it's as serious as what it is. Especially men, it's not on."
Xaria, carer, Rooted Patriot

Yet unlike these other high-salience segments, for Rooted Patriots this negative perception of services has fed into a deeper pessimism and distrust: they are considerably less likely than average to believe that the range and quality of mental health support is improving, and a third of Rooted Patriots (33 per cent) believe that scientific and technological advances will have little or no impact on the lives of people with mental health issues.

“From what I’ve heard on the news, it’s getting worse. The waiting lists for seeing specialist doctors seems to be getting longer. So although we are talking about it more, I do feel that things like the NHS, it hasn’t got the capacity to help everybody. So that is the only problem.”
Gail, retired, Rooted Patriot

While Rooted Patriots have a stronger foundation of trust than Sceptical Scrollers or Dissenting Disruptors, years of feeling that mental health services are failing to look after people seem to have eroded this confidence: only 22 per cent trust the government to provide accurate information about mental health. In some cases, Rooted Patriots question not just the competence but also the *motives* of different institutions: much like Progressive Activists, they often express discomfort about the profit motive in research.

“There’s never going to be that magic cure that’s going to get rid of everything because there’s no money to be made in these big organisations. So as long as there’s patients, there’s money, isn’t it? I think that’s a massive factor in mental health now.”
Ryan, Doncaster, Rooted Patriot

Despite being highly affirming of more traditional approaches to mental health – both pharmacological and non-pharmacological – Rooted Patriots show relatively low awareness of novel or digital mental health interventions, are more likely to feel uncomfortable accessing them, and often have doubts about their effectiveness. For example, while 80 per cent say that talking to a therapist or counsellor in-person is an effective approach to mental health, this drops to just 59 per cent when it comes to speaking to a therapist or counsellor online. They also show a clear lack of support for a range of technological and digital interventions such as AI chatbots, wearable devices and mobile apps.

However, while Rooted Patriots tend to have direct misgivings about certain technologies – namely AI chatbots – on other interventions they seem to be more undecided than actively opposed. For example, while only 34 per cent believe that mobile apps are effective for treating mental health issues, even fewer (30 per cent) say they are ineffective; the largest proportion (36 per cent) instead answer “don’t know”.

Alongside lower support for some of these new interventions, Rooted Patriots are also more likely to feel uncomfortable using them to treat their own mental health. They are tied with Dissenting Disruptors as the segment most likely to say they would feel “very uncomfortable” talking to a therapist online, and are second only

to Traditional Conservatives in their discomfort around AI chatbots, wearable devices and virtual reality.

Across most of these digital interventions, Rooted Patriots' self-reported awareness is considerably lower than average. This suggests that - unlike Traditional Conservatives - their apprehension may be driven less by outright resistance and more by uncertainty and unfamiliarity, leaving many feeling they do not have enough information to make an informed judgement.

Traditional Conservatives

A segment for whom mental health is not a key priority. Many feel sceptical about emerging technologies and treatments, and some doubt whether further breakthroughs are even needed in order to address mental health issues.

Traditional Conservatives sit at the intersection of low-salience and low-optimism. For many in this group, mental health is a peripheral concern compared to other issues facing the country. Yet even among this group, "snowflake" narratives are in the minority: only a third believe that people often use mental health as an excuse, and seven in ten say they'd feel comfortable if a friend opened up to them about mental health. Much like other segments, Traditional Conservatives tend to speak positively about changes in how we talk about mental health - even if mental health isn't front of mind for them.

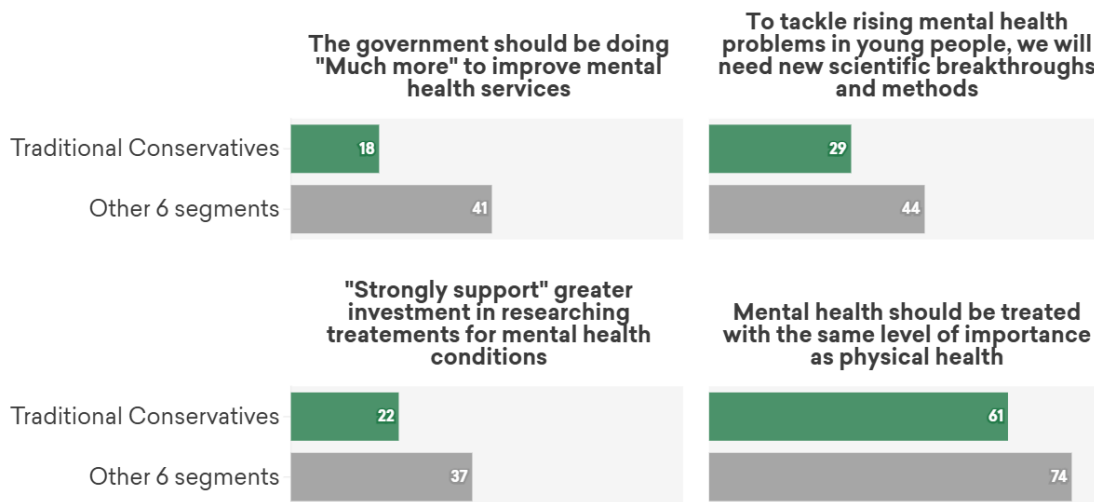
Compared to other segments, Traditional Conservatives are far less likely to believe in parity of esteem. Asked in a split-sample experiment whether they support greater investment in physical and mental health treatments, the gap between the two is wider among Traditional Conservatives than any other segment: 87 per cent support greater investment in researching physical health - making them one of the most supportive segments; yet when asked about mental health, this drops to 54 per cent, lower than any other segment.

"I would like to think we're making more progress with physical health, the likes of cancer treatments, Alzheimer's. If I was going to the doctors tomorrow and they told me I had cancer, or they told me I'm suffering anxiety, I know what I'd choose. I'd rather have anxiety than have to fight cancer or Alzheimer's or any other illness like that. So yeah, I mean, I would like to think we're making more progress in those areas. That's not to say we dismiss mental health."
Steve, sales manager, Traditional Conservative

Barely over half (52 per cent) want to see the government do more to improve mental health services in Britain, compared to three quarters of the general public.

Traditional Conservatives are less likely to see mental health as a key priority

Percentage selecting each option



Source: More in Common, October 2025

Figure 13

Despite being broadly trusting and optimistic about science, Traditional Conservatives are sceptical when it comes to mental health innovation: they are 6-points less likely than average to say that scientific advances will help people with mental health issues to lead better lives.

From focus groups, it seems that this scepticism and low salience is driven in part by a sense that mental health is a personal - rather than a societal problem - one that can often be solved through support from friends and family rather than needing new treatments or technologies. Only three in ten (29 per cent) Traditional Conservatives say that we will need new scientific breakthroughs and methods in order to address rising mental health issues - lower than any other segment.

"But I think there's a lot to be said for sitting down and talking to somebody."
 Steve, sales manager, Traditional Conservative

Traditional Conservatives are often resistant to digital interventions: only 22 per cent think that digital treatments such as AI-therapy or mobile apps have potential to help people with mental health issues - lower than any other segment. They are

also the most likely to say they would feel uncomfortable personally using AI chatbots.

Dissenting Disruptors

A deeply distrustful segment who believe the future looks bleak for Britain's mental health support systems. Often informed by their own experiences, they lack faith in medical or scientific institutions and place greater trust in lived experience than in expert authority.

Dissenting Disruptors tie with Progressive Activists as the segment most likely to have lived experience of mental health struggles: two in five say they've personally had a mental health issue. As such, they often talk from experience about what it's like to seek support for mental health issues in Britain. While they often describe with hope seeing changes in the way people talk about mental health - and the informal networks available - they are extremely pessimistic about the state of public services.

They are the most likely segment to think that both the range and availability of treatments has worsened in recent years, and three quarters believe that the government is handling mental health badly.

"It gets brought up a lot in my friendship group, whenever we go out for a drink or we meet up for whatever reason. We always like to check if everyone's all right, if anything's on anyone's mind, because one of the boys has been affected, a friend of a friend took his own life. So it's important that as a friendship group now, we look out for each other."

Sam, office admin, Dissenting Disruptor

"I went to seek support for my mental health, I was basically told no, that it was just hormonal, that it was just my pregnancy and don't get any help from the NHS because there's too much of a backlog."

Rachel, maternity leave, Dissenting Disruptor

For many, these experiences have undermined their hope that scientific innovation will lead to tangible improvements for those living with mental health issues. Two in five believe that scientific discoveries will have little or no impact. And only a minority (40 per cent) think we even *need* new breakthroughs and methods: three in five think we already have the skills and technologies we need to tackle mental health problems. This suggests that, for some Dissenting Disruptors, the problem

is not that we lack the capability to help people, but that the state is too ineffective to deliver these new treatments.

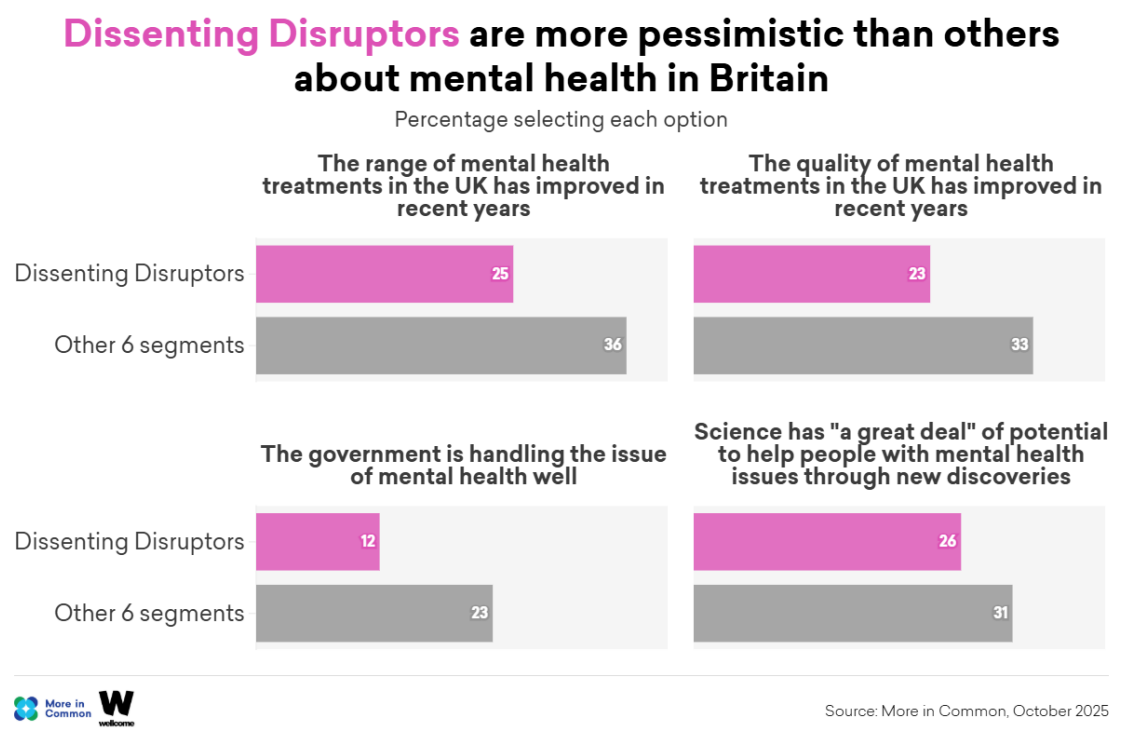


Figure 14

Dissenting Disruptors show a preference for non-pharmacological interventions: they are roughly in line with the average of public opinion when asked about the efficacy of both online and in-person talking therapy, but considerably less likely than average to think that taking prescribed medication is effective. This is likely driven by their exceptional lack of trust in pharmaceutical companies – a measure on which they are in line with Progressive Activists.

Part 4 — Telling a new story on mental health

Key takeaways

There is a **foundational consensus around early intervention** — across every constituency, every segment, most Britons believe early intervention should be a priority. Where doubt exists, it is about delivery, not principle.

Current media portrayals of mental health are widely seen as **too negative and crisis-focused**. Britons want more **hopeful stories**, but only if they feel honest and true-to-life. Non-linear recovery resonates; miraculous recovery arcs do not.

Different segments consume media very differently. Soap operas and TV news reach Rooted Patriots and Traditional Conservatives; social media and podcasts reach Progressive Activists; streaming and online channels reach Sceptical Scrollers. **Channel choice matters as much as message.**

Research into the segments' perceptions and experiences of mental health make clear that, while there are significant differences, there are some key areas of common ground. These provide a strong foundation from which to create a new narrative on mental health in the UK.

Areas of consensus for new approaches: strong support for early intervention

There is a strong foundational consensus around the value of early intervention: four in five Britons (81 per cent) believe that providing support at an early stage to prevent problems from becoming more serious should be the main focus when it comes to young people's mental health.

Across the segments, Britons understand and value early intervention. For some – particularly Established Liberal participants – this is driven by a pragmatic sense that a “prevention” is more efficient than a cure, and a better use of resources. For others, it is based on a principle that those who are struggling should be entitled to support at any stage in their mental health condition.

“I think if you see people before it gets terribly serious, it's got to be helpful. So the sooner you can get people seen, you might find that some people obviously won't

need as much as others, but the longer things are left, it just gets worse."

Wendy, Newbury, Established Liberal

"I think the early intervention is more fair to me because if they're able to tackle it early, then it'll not progress. But the people that are late intervention, they might not really benefit much from it, but with early intervention, maybe those people can go back to their normal life because it's been treated early."

Judith, Glasgow South, Sceptical Scroller

"I'm a great believer in prevention, but we just don't have it anymore, do we? We're more of a reactive country."

Maxine, Sunning, Established Liberal

Where there is scepticism toward early intervention, it seems to be driven by a sense of scarcity and urgency: some participants point out the immediate imperative of providing support to those in crisis, and the risks of suicide to those who don't access support.

Notably, few doubt the *principle* or efficiency of early intervention: for the most part, participants' doubts were driven by a perception that services are badly overstretched, and triaging is necessary to help those with the most severe and urgent needs.

"I mean it'd be really good if we could get early intervention, but I think on the other side as well, when they might actually kill themselves.."

Chris, Glasgow South, Sceptical Scroller

"If we was in a war, they would treat the people who were going to die in the next hour rather than the people that were going to die in the next month. So yeah, unfortunately terrible to say, but yeah, if money is a huge, huge issue, then obviously the later stage is one."

Robert, Clacton, Dissenting Disruptor

Analysis using an MRP (Multiple Regression and Post-Stratification) shows that this conviction is shared across Britain. Using a large sample, the model uses demographic information to project survey responses, creating a constituency-level map of attitudes.

Across every demographic in every constituency in the country, more than seven in ten believe that early intervention should be prioritised. This ranges from a low point of 73 per cent (Bradford West) to a high of 84 per cent (Monmouthshire).

Across every constituency in the country, at least 7 in 10 Britons believe that early intervention should be a priority

When it comes to young people's mental health, which do you think should be the main focus?

Providing treatment for young people already living with serious mental health conditions 73%  Providing support at an early stage, to help prevent problems from becoming more serious 84%



More in Common • Fieldwork: November 2025 - January 2026

Figure 15

Belief in the value of early intervention for young people's mental health spans across politics, generations, and education - although there are minor gaps in support among some demographic groups. Notably, young Britons themselves are significantly less likely to believe in the value of early intervention for young people's mental health. Those under the age of 25 are 10 points less likely than average to believe that early intervention should be the priority. There is a similar relationship with financial wellbeing: those who struggle to make ends meet are 10 points less likely to prioritise early intervention.

Of the Seven Segments, Sceptical Scrollers show the lowest support for early intervention: 73 per cent prioritise early intervention over a focus on serious pre-existing conditions. Nevertheless, three-quarters of each segment therefore support the principle – a strong and shared consensus of the value of early intervention for young people’s mental health.

Stories that resonate: what the seven segments think about mental health in the media

Few Britons believe that mental health is overrepresented in the media: only 17 per cent say they would like mental health problems or solutions to feature less in culture and entertainment. Meanwhile 44 per cent of Britons say the current level of media representation is about right, and 28 per cent would like to see mental health feature more heavily in culture and entertainment.

However, this is an attitude that varies widely by segment: More than a third of Progressive Activists (37 per cent) and Incrementalist Left (34 per cent) would like to see greater representation of mental health issues in the media. Meanwhile, pluralities of Established Liberals, Rooted Patriots, Sceptical Scrollers and Dissenting Disruptors are happy with the current level of media representation.

Traditional Conservatives stand out in their views: they are more likely than any other segment to feel hostile toward media representation, with 42 per cent saying they would like to see mental health problems feature less, compared to 40 per cent who think they feature the right amount, and 8 per cent who believe that they should feature more.

“I’ve seen around me some artists, like singers, they mention in their concerts or in their songs, they focus, they highlight the topic. (...) It is nice to just see these organisations just popping up sometimes in the high street or in some sort of event. The festivals, it’s great to see that they’re there. I feel like it makes it less, like there’s less of a tag and a label and a stigma, which is what creates the fear that people don’t want to admit that they are going through issues, but it actually makes them more open conversation and more engaging.”

Tarun, IT manager, Incrementalist Left

“My only concern is it’s not entertainment. You’re looking at these TV shows, movies, whatever, it’s entertainment. People go to the cinema to watch a movie to get away from their problems. They watch a TV programme to get away from their problems.”

Steve, sales manager, Traditional Conservative

While many Britons welcome the fact that mental health is now more openly portrayed and discussed across media and popular culture, there is a widespread perception that these portrayals are disproportionately negative.

Britons often feel that mental health tends to appear in news coverage primarily in the context of suicide or crisis, reinforcing associations with extreme outcomes rather than everyday experiences or recovery. Fictional portrayals were also criticised for either trivialising conditions or focusing heavily on deterioration without showing realistic pathways to support or improvement. Some feel that while awareness has increased, the tone of coverage could deepen stigma or hopelessness.

“When you see it in the news, it's always just... bad things or this person suffered from mental health and they died.”
Matthew, Pipe Fitter, Dissenting Disruptor

“Always seems to be very negative. I don't feel that there's much positivity....when you hear about it, it's normally relating to suicide.”
Lesley, Primary School Bursar, Rooted Patriot

While positive portrayals of mental health recovery may be useful in creating a more optimistic public mood around mental health, Britons also express a need for representations to be authentic.

Storylines from soap operas – such as Ben Mitchell’s storyline in EastEnders – can illustrate what kind of story resonates with Britons. For many, it is crucial that representations feel honest, realistic and relatable in order to influence how they think about mental health.

Focus group participants often described wanting to see characters seek and receive help, but being put off by “miraculous recovery” plotlines, in which mental health struggles are a standalone plot device that disappears once characters find treatment. Showing that progress can be “messy” and “slow” – with recurring challenges and setbacks – can help portrayals feel true-to-life and even more hopeful.

One example that arose positively in multiple focus groups was Ben Mitchell’s mental health journey in Eastenders.

I think it has to be not linear (...) I don't know if anybody else is an Eastenders fan, but I always remember Ben Mitchell's storyline with the depression and it was easier to relate to because it showed that he were reluctant to have help. He didn't want to get help, but then he gradually got into therapy (...) And then therapy didn't work straight away and it showed that you can have relapses. It can be a bit messy. The progress is slow. And I think if they're going to explain ... I don't know how to explain it. I think if they just say it's a perfect cure and it's very linear, I wouldn't trust it.

Ashton, Doncaster, Rooted Patriot

"I think generally in sort of dramas and things, mental health is sort of exaggerated and dramatised a little bit, but I just remembered a show that I watched called Riot Women on the BBC (...) And I think quite often in dramas it shows someone with poor mental health and the very worst extreme but this lady, her health fluctuated throughout and I think maybe that's a bit more realistic as to what actually happens to people with mental health conditions."

Annie, Wokingham, Established Liberal

"I think music generally does well, but I think that the soaps trivialise it, tarnish it and cheapen it because someone on a soap will have a mental health illness and six months later they don't really have it anymore and they don't show you actually how difficult it's to live."

Robert, Clacton, Dissenting Disruptor

The table below summarises the key cultural influences of each segment in turn.

TV and film

Rooted Patriots and **Traditional Conservatives** are the most likely to watch live TV, and the most likely to hear about scientific discoveries through TV news, but **Sceptical Scrollers** are the most likely to use streaming services like Netflix. Established Liberals are the most likely to go to the cinema to see a film.



Music

Incrementalist Left Britons are the biggest music fans, although there is less variation across the segments with majorities of every segment listening to music most or every day.

Books

Traditional Conservatives are the biggest readers, although **Progressive Activists** and **Incrementalist Left** Britons are also above average. **Sceptical Scrollers** and **Dissenting Disruptors** are less likely than average to read often.

Museums and exhibitions

Progressive Activists and **Established Liberals** are the two segments who spend the most time in museums and art galleries. **Progressive Activists** in particular are far more likely than average to learn about science through museums (32 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of the public). Perhaps a useful channel for raising salience among 'base' segments, but low reach among **Rooted Patriots** or **Dissenting Disruptors**.

Podcasts

'Base' segments are far more likely to listen to podcasts, particularly **Incrementalist Left** and **Progressive Activists**. Only 16 per cent of Britons say they're likely to learn about science from podcasts, but this rises to 29 per cent among **Progressive Activists**.

Video games

Sceptical Scrollers and **Dissenting Disruptors** are the biggest gamers, whereas very few **Rooted Patriots** or **Traditional Conservatives** play PC/console games. Smartphone games have broader appeal, with more than a fifth of every segment playing them often.



Part 5 – The Messaging Playbook

Key takeaways

The most powerful frame when talking about mental health is drawing from **those with direct experience of mental health issues**. Finding ways to ethically centre lived experience expertise in campaigns and messages can help to boost support, and overcome barriers with low-trust segments.

Linking interventions or policies to **wider practical benefits** – such as lower waiting times or alleviating pressure on services – can help to reach low-salience segments.

The two most trusted voices are the **NHS** (particularly practitioners and frontline workers) and **people with direct experience** of mental health issues.

These principles feed into a set of recommendations for campaigners, advocates, professionals in the creative and cultural sector, or anyone seeking to build a more positive and hopeful coalition in support of greater action on mental health. This section lays out the empirically-tested messages and messengers that resonate most strongly with each segment. These two elements are explored in turn below.

A toolkit for each segment

The table below summarises in brief the messages, messengers and mediums that appeal to different audiences. The short message examples illustrate how these principles can be applied in practice in a way that resonates with each of the Seven Segments.

	Effective messages	Most trusted messengers	Cultural preferences for mental health content	Example message
Progressive Activists	Wider practical benefit	Healthcare professionals or those with lived experience	TV/film, social media, books	<i>New mental health treatments can help reduce waiting times and ease pressure on overstretched NHS services, leading to greater access to support for all who need it.</i>
Incrementalist Left	Lived experience	Healthcare professionals or those with lived experience	TV/film, social media, podcasts	<i>Many people who've struggled with their mental health say that getting the right support early helped them feel more like themselves again and get back to daily life.</i>
Established Liberals	Clinical evidence	Healthcare professionals	TV/film, social media	<i>Clinical research shows that a range of mental health treatments are becoming more effective, but more work needs to be done to improve services and ensure that these benefits are felt in practice.</i>
Sceptical Scrollers	Wider practical benefit	Healthcare professionals or those with lived experience	TV/film, social media,	<i>Getting support earlier can help people avoid reaching crisis point, reducing long waits and taking pressure off stretched services. New options can give people more choice to find what actually works for them.</i>
Rooted Patriots	Lived experience	Healthcare professionals or those with lived experience	TV/film	<i>Many people are waiting months for support, and things sometimes get worse in that time - but</i>

				<i>when they finally get help, it can make a real difference. New treatments are helping people get the right care for them, and get it sooner.</i>
Traditional Conservatives	Wider practical benefit	Healthcare professionals	None	<i>Supporting people earlier with mental health can reduce pressure on the NHS and help services focus on those in the most serious need.</i>
Dissenting Disruptors	Lived experience	Those with lived experience or healthcare professionals	TV/film	<i>People with experience of mental health problems often say it was difficult to get support at first, but that the right help did make a difference.</i>

Effective messages

Using an RCT (Randomised Control Trial) split-sample experiment, More in Common tested the impact of three different frames on support for a mental health intervention, to assess whether these frames made a more significant difference than a control.

As an example, the experiment used *pharmaceutical treatment*, and measured whether three different arguments boosted support. The three arguments tested were: **lived experience**, **clinical evidence** and **wider practical benefit**.

The three arguments were as follows:

- **FRAME A: Clinical evidence:** Clinical research indicates that, for many people, medication can be an effective part of treatment for conditions such as anxiety and depression.
- **FRAME B: Lived experience:** Many people with experience of mental health problems say medication helped them manage symptoms and return to daily activities.
- **FRAME C: Wider practical benefit:** Pharmaceutical treatment can often be prescribed quickly by a clinician, which may help some people get support sooner and ease pressure on other services.

Compared with a control group, the frame that led to the largest observable impact was **lived experience** (+5 points total support), followed closely by **wider practical benefit** (+4 points total support), followed by **clinical evidence** (+1 point total support).

While lived experience is clearly an effective and unifying frame, utilising this source of expertise in campaigns can risk causing harm to contributors. See the appendix for more information on ethical use of lived experience.

However, receptiveness to the frames varied significantly across the seven segments: Progressive Activists, Sceptical Scrollers and Traditional Conservatives were most persuaded by a message based on wider practical benefit; Incrementalist Left and Dissenting Disruptors were most receptive to a message built around lived experience; Rooted Patriots saw a small positive impact in response to messages based on lived experience or practical benefit, but none

from clinical evidence. Established Liberals were the only segment for whom clinical evidence alone had a significant positive impact.

Progressive Activists respond best to messaging that emphasises the **wider practical benefit** of new interventions. Framing new treatments within the broader context of NHS capacity and access may resonate with their tendency to view mental health as a societal and structural issue shaped by social and economic forces, rather than purely an individual one. For this segment, investment in new interventions will not tangibly improve lives unless there is systemic change in how services are provided, meaning messages that connect innovation to service reform are more effective than those solely centred on lived experience or clinical evidence.

"I think that the NHS is so stretched as it is."

Kira, manager, Progressive Activist

Incrementalist Left Britons are most persuaded by messaging built around **lived experience**. While they show exceptionally high trust in a range of institutional voices, it is testimony from people with experience of a new treatment that leads to the strongest boost in support for new interventions.

Often, Incrementalist Left Britons describe wanting clarity about the limitations and nuances of treatments. Avoiding "one-size-fits-all" narratives - and highlighting the variety and combinations of treatments that work for different people - can appeal strongly to this segment.

"I think for people it's not a one size fits all, which is why I don't think there's necessarily a cure. I think every individual is an individual and I think that's part of the system doesn't allow for that. For some people, medication is the right solution, but I think a lot of people maybe go on that too quickly without actually talking to someone."

Nicola, events manager, Incrementalist Left

Established Liberals respond most strongly to messages built on **clinical evidence** or **practical benefit**, rather than lived experience. This evidence can provide reassurance to a segment defined by exceptionally high trust in science and institutions. Notably, Established Liberals are the only segment who saw a significant boost in support as a result of the clinical evidence argument - reflecting their higher-than-average value in expert authority.

"If we're talking about a medication, then you would definitely, in my opinion, you want it to be based on research. You wouldn't want it to be based on what one individual, even if you knew them quite well, is saying because well if it's not been trialled properly, we know there's a lot of misinformation out there around various things"

Ben, Recruitment, Norwich

Sceptical Scrollers are most persuaded by a message around wider **practical benefit**. Given their exceptionally low trust in institutional voices and lack of foundational faith in the scientific establishment, arguments rooted in clinical evidence are less persuasive. An argument that is therefore built around the wider positive impact on services, rather than statistics – ideally delivered by an ordinary person with experience of mental health issues rather than an institution – may be effective. Additionally, messaging that avoids a ‘one-size-fits-all’ framing and instead suggests tailored, bespoke approaches to support may also resonate.

"If I've spoke to someone and they said, "Oh, it's really well. It's really helped me, " then you're more likely to go from someone's experience, if that makes sense."

Terri, teacher, Sceptical Scroller

"Depending on your cultural background or ethnicity as well, that plays a big part. So I think we need a more broader, diverse therapist approach when it comes to people like this."

Zafiyah, student, Sceptical Scroller

Rooted Patriots respond best to messages that emphasise **lived experience** and **wider practical benefit** (although neither of these frames had a strong positive impact when compared to other segments' strongest messages in the RCT experiment). Some Rooted Patriots are sceptical of institutions and place a high value on lived experience, while also being highly concerned that mental health services are failing those in need; messages that combine personal testimony with a clear link to improving access could be particularly effective.

"I think that it's important for people who have experienced it, whether they're celebrities or Sandra down the road who happened to be on Good Morning Britain"

or whatever. I think it's important that they have firsthand experience, even if it's your child or your brother or your sister or your mother. If you've had firsthand experience, I think it is invaluable because when they're talking, you can relate to them and it's always like that know, like, trust type of thing.”
Allie, Runcorn, Rooted Patriot

Traditional Conservatives are most responsive to messages that emphasise **wider practical benefit**. As a segment for whom mental health is not a top priority, linking interventions to reduced waiting times or alleviated strain on other services can help to emphasise the wider value of action.

(Discussing AI chatbots) “I was going to say, if it's something that can be used to work alongside other treatments, then maybe it's somewhere someone can go. (...) And I suppose it's 24/7 isn't it, on your phone or whatever.”
Jackie, matron, Traditional Conservative

Dissenting Disruptors show the greatest observable boost in support when faced with a **lived experience** frame. Their anti-institutionalist instincts and exceptionally low trust in government, science and pharmaceutical companies mean they often place personal testimony above expert authority.

However, they also value experience from practitioners and voluntary organisations: using frontline voices in campaigns may be more effective than solely clinical or institutional messengers.

“I was just going to say the charities that have to deal with the people that suffer with it, obviously they're firsthand experience.”
Matthew, pipe fitter, Dissenting Disruptor

Convincing and trusted messengers

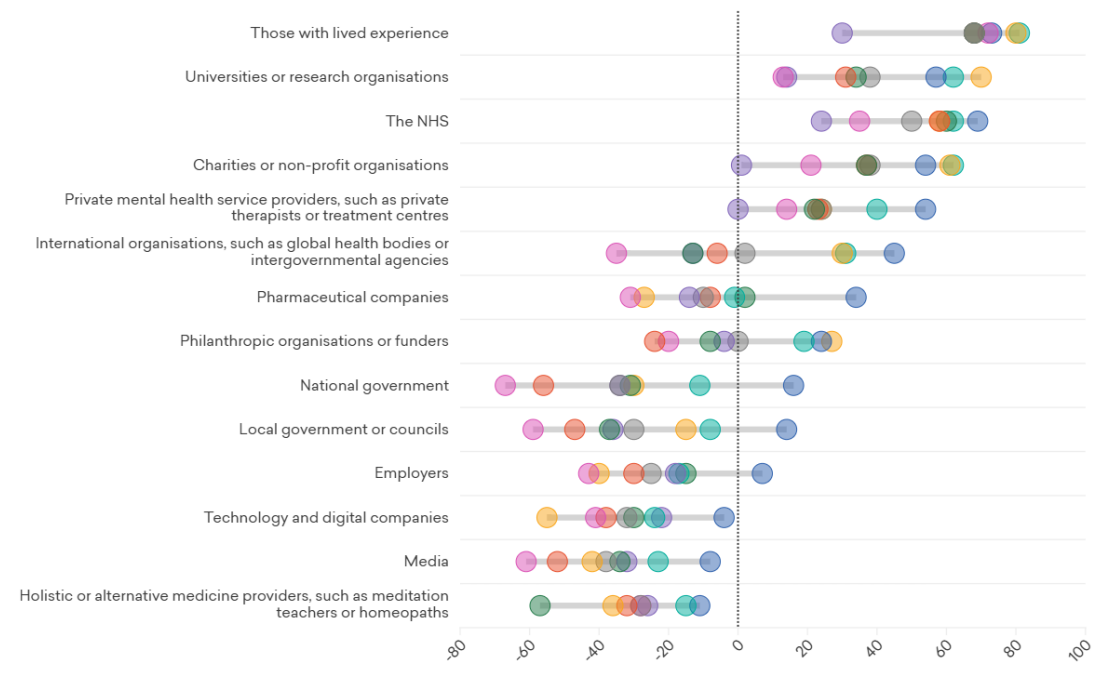
Trust in different institutions is disparate and heavily polarised, but three voices command strong trust across all segments: **people with lived experience**, the NHS and **universities or research organisations**.

Trust in different voices on mental health

To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to provide accurate information about mental health to the public?

(Net trust)

● All Britons ● Progressive Activists ● Incrementalist Left ● Established Liberals ● Sceptical Scrollers
● Rooted Patriots ● Traditional Conservatives ● Dissenting Disruptors



Source: More in Common, October 2025

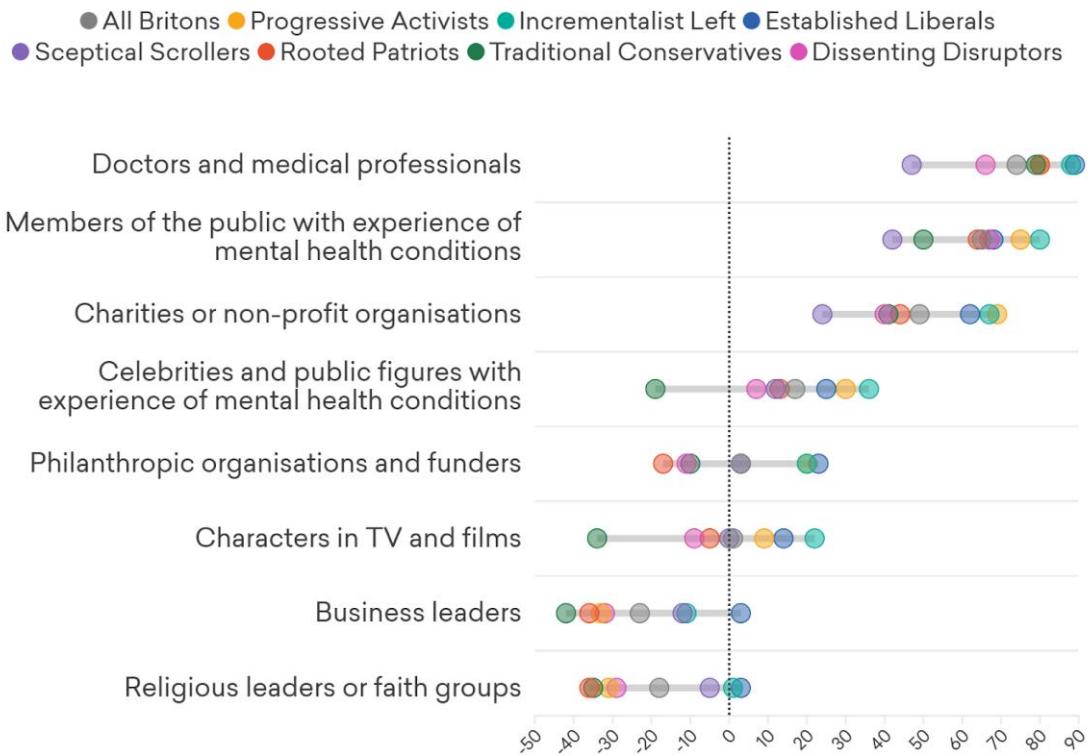
Figure 16

Charities, non-profits and private mental health providers also command a great deal of trust across the British public, but with greater variation across the segments. Across almost every institution, Sceptical Scrollers and Dissenting Disruptors are far less trusting than other segments - although this gap narrows when it comes to the NHS and people with lived experience.

A similar pattern is found when Britons are asked about how convincing mental health advice would be from different individuals. Across the public, it is striking that members of the public with lived experience can be perceived to be as authoritative as doctors and medical professionals - with huge majorities finding both convincing. In particular, these voices are most powerful when describing the efficacy of new treatments.

Many segments value advice from people with lived experience as highly as from doctors

How convincing would you find advice on mental health coming from the following people?
Net convincing (proportion who find each group convincing, minus those who find them unconvincing)



Source: More in Common, October 2025

Figure 17

While doctors and medical professionals hold high degrees of trust, those who say they have experienced a mental health issue are less likely than average to say they find doctors and medical professionals convincing (34 per cent compared to 39 per cent). This may reflect negative experiences those with mental health issues have had in accessing services or receiving treatment - a theme that came through strongly in some focus groups.

*"I went to seek support for my mental health, I was basically told no, that it was just hormonal, that it was just my pregnancy and don't get any help from the NHS because there's too much of a backlog."
Rachel, maternity leave, Dissenting Disruptor*

Talking to Progressive Activists about mental health

Asked who they trust to talk about mental health, Progressive Activists strongly trust people with lived experience, universities, and the NHS. Compared to other segments, they are far more likely to trust charities, philanthropic organisations, and inter-governmental organisations.

However, Progressive Activists show a distinct lack of trust in big tech and pharmaceutical companies, echoing a sense in focus groups that the profit motive conflicts with public interest.

When it comes to building support for new interventions, messaging that emphasises practical system-level benefits is especially effective. For example, framing pharmaceutical interventions in terms of service improvement – such as, ‘Using pharmaceutical treatment can cut waiting times for treatment by helping people to see a therapist sooner, and so taking pressure off other services’ – leads to an observable boost in support. Framing new treatments within the broader context of NHS capacity and access seems to resonate strongly with Progressive Activists’ tendency to view mental health as a societal and structural issue, rather than purely an individual one. Notably, this type of framing was more effective for this group than messaging centred on lived experience or clinical evidence.

In terms of reach, Progressive Activists are more digitally engaged than the public and are therefore more likely to encounter science-related content online or via podcasts. While only 16 per cent of Britons say they are likely to learn about science through podcasts, this rises to 29 per cent among Progressive Activists. They are also more culturally engaged than average and are disproportionately likely to learn about science through museums or exhibitions (32 per cent, compared to 20 per cent of the public).

Progressive Activists are the segment most likely to believe that mental health issues *and solutions* should feature more prominently in culture and entertainment: 41 per cent want to see this happen, compared to 28 per cent of the public. They particularly welcome greater representation in TV and film storylines.

Talking to the Incrementalist Left about mental health

Incrementalist Left Britons stand out in their exceptionally high trust in a range of voices to talk about mental health. While they prize lived experience above all else, compared to other segments, they are often also far more trusting of institutions and established sources of information – such as universities and research institutions.

“Yeah, I think (I would trust) an accredited psychologist or an institute or organisation with a background in specialising in this topic.”
Tarun, IT manager, Incrementalist Left

Incrementalist Left Britons have higher trust in a range of different voices

To what extent, if at all, do you trust each of the following to provide accurate information about mental health to the public?

(Net trust)

● Incrementalist Left ● Other 6 segments

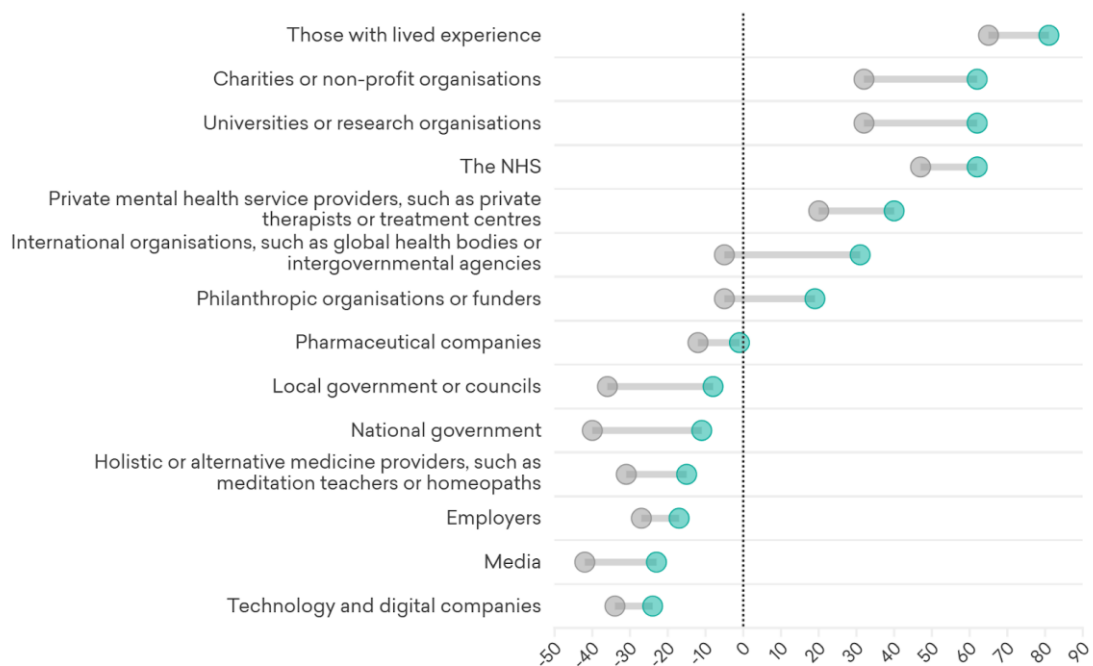


Figure 18

Yet it is **lived experience**, rather than practical benefit or clinical evidence, that leads to the strongest boost in support for new interventions. Using a message

built around those with experience of a new treatment saw a significant boost in support: 'Many people with experience of mental health problems say medication helped them manage symptoms and return to daily activities.'

Incrementalist Left Britons can be reached through live TV - which two-thirds of them (64 per cent) use as one of their main information sources - and social media, which nearly half (46 per cent) say they use to find information.

Incrementalist Left Britons tend to feel highly positively about seeing mental health in the media; for many, just seeing the issue portrayed is itself a source of optimism. The data suggests that they are the most likely to be moved in their views by seeing mental health storylines: nearly half (46 per cent) say that seeing content about mental health has made the issue feel more important to them.

"I've seen around me some artists, like singers, they mention in their concerts or in their songs, they focus, they highlight the topic. (...) It is nice to just see these organisations just popping up sometimes in the high street or in some sort of event. The festivals, it's great to see that they're there. I feel like it makes it less, like there's less of a tag and a label and a stigma, which is what creates the fear that people don't want to admit that they are going through issues, but it actually makes them more open conversation and more engaging."
Tarun, IT manager, Incrementalist Left

Talking to Established Liberals about mental health

Established Liberals are defined by their extremely high trust in institutional voices. While they share this with Incrementalist Left Britons, they diverge in their views toward the private sector: Established Liberals are the only segment with net positive trust in pharmaceutical companies and tech companies to talk about mental health. They are also uniquely trusting of the national government.

When it comes to talking to Established Liberals about mental health, the key challenge may be mobilisation, rather than persuasion. While they are often already optimistic about mental health services, they are less convinced than average about the need for greater investment or innovation.

Established Liberals respond more to a message built on **clinical evidence** or **practical benefit** than lived experience. The frame that led to the greatest boost in support for pharmaceutical treatment was, 'Clinical research indicates that, for

many people, medication can be an effective part of treatment for conditions such as anxiety and depression'; the second most effective was a message that linked pharmaceutical treatment to reduced waiting times.

Established Liberals welcome portrayals of mental health in the media, but unlike Progressive Activists or Incrementalist Left, barely a quarter (27 per cent) want to see mental health issues feature *more* in culture and entertainment. 48 per cent say it features the right amount.

One cultural avenue that may appeal to Established Liberals is live performance: they are the segment most likely to attend the theatre, and the most likely to select "Live performance e.g. play, musical, dance" as one of the cultural formats that they would most want to see portray mental health.

Talking to Sceptical Scrollers about mental health

A communication strategy that aims to reach Sceptical Scrollers will be challenging because of their diverse media consumption, and exceptionally low trust in every institutional voice. The only three messengers that command positive net trust among Sceptical Scrollers are the NHS, universities and those with lived experience.

"If I've spoke to someone and they said, "Oh, it's really well. It's really helped me, " then you're more likely to go from someone's experience, if that makes sense."

Terri, teacher, Sceptical Scroller

Given their deep institutional distrust, any opportunity to highlight personal stories and lived experience will be crucial for communicating with Sceptical Scrollers. However, even in respect to personal experience, Sceptical Scrollers can sometimes question the authenticity of the speaker. Finding ways to emphasise the authentic, natural testimony will be essential.

The message that lands best with Sceptical Scrollers is one based around **practical benefit**, emphasising the impact that innovations will have on reduced waiting times and taking strain from other services. This boosts support for new interventions far more than a focus on lived experience or clinical evidence.

Sceptical Scrollers are by far the most online segment, and the least likely to get information from television. Therefore, they may be more effectively reached by social media campaigns - particularly those from influencers who feel authentic and relatable - than by soap operas or TV dramas.

Additionally, there is limited appetite among this segment for mental health to feature more heavily in their media diet: they are as likely to say that they want mental health issues to feature less in culture and entertainment (18 per cent) as to say they want to see them feature more (19 per cent). When Sceptical Scrollers *do* approve of portrayals of mental health, they tend to point to examples where the rocky, non-linear nature of recovery is emphasised, and when the characters are human and relatable.

Talking to Rooted Patriots about mental health

Rooted Patriots are highly trusting of the NHS, but show a distinct lack of trust in national or local government. Only 22 per cent say they would trust the national government to provide accurate information about mental health - lower than any other segment except for Dissenting Disruptors. In contrast, four in five (79 per cent) trust the NHS - four points higher than the national average.

Within the NHS, Rooted Patriots may respond better to human than institutional voices - frontline workers and practitioners are among the most trusted voices for this segment: 83 per cent would find mental health advice convincing if it came from doctors and medical professionals.

Similarly, Rooted Patriots have high trust in those with experience of mental health conditions, often expressing a preference for personal stories over official advice. However - as explored earlier - not all personal stories are equally compelling: Rooted Patriots often describe wanting to hear from “everyday people” rather than celebrities or paid actors.

“I think the everyday people, I much prefer hearing it from everyday people. I remember seeing on BBC Breakfast a few years ago, it was three dads and all three of the dads had lost their daughters to suicide, and they do a lot of walk, do a lot of fundraising, do a lot of campaigns to keep an eye on your kids and look at their watching and things. And that resonated a lot with me as a dad thinking, yeah, I'd much rather hear it from everyday dads than hear it from a paid actor.”

Mark, Doncaster, Rooted Patriot

Television is essential for reaching Rooted Patriots. More than three quarters (77 per cent) of Rooted Patriots get their information from watching the news on TV, nearly three times higher than the 27 per cent who see it on social media.

Soap operas provide a strong case study for communicating with Rooted Patriots about mental health. Storylines from *Eastenders* and *Coronation Street* are consistently cited by Rooted Patriots as key sources of insight into mental health issues and treatments. Seeing “normal”, relatable characters navigate complex recovery journeys is described as hopeful, and some describe how these portrayals had sparked conversations with friends and family about mental health.

Compared to other socially conservative segments, Rooted Patriots show a greater openness to seeing mental health in culture and entertainment: only 15 per cent would like to see less, while 42 per cent are happy with the current portrayal and more than a quarter (27 per cent) would like to see mental health issues portrayed more.

Talking to Traditional Conservatives about mental health

The two voices that Traditional Conservatives trust most are the NHS and those with lived experience. They are less likely than average to trust universities, and more likely to trust pharmaceutical companies. They are exceptionally sceptical of alternative medicine practitioners.

The message that causes the largest boost in support for new interventions is **practical benefit**. Linking pharmaceutical treatment to reduced waiting times and alleviated strain on other services leads to an observable increase in support for the intervention. While Traditional Conservatives might not be mobilised around mental health, linking it to wider concerns can help to build support.

“I was going to say, if it's something that can be used to work alongside other treatments, then maybe it's somewhere someone can go. (...) And I suppose it's 24/7 isn't it, on your phone or whatever.”
Jackie, matron, Traditional Conservative

Live TV and radio are the two primary information sources that Traditional Conservatives use. Like Rooted Patriots, they often bring up storylines from soap operas when asked for examples of mental health in the media.

Yet Traditional Conservatives are far more likely to feel hostile toward mental health portrayals in the media: a third (34 per cent) want mental health problems to feature less in culture and entertainment - compared to only 6 per cent who want them to feature more. However, a focus on mental health *solutions* rather than just *problems* actually reduces net opposition among Traditional Conservatives by 9 percentage points. This suggests that where mental health is portrayed, Traditional Conservatives would like to see a focus on recovery and treatment, rather than simply the issue itself.

“Something like EastEnders... if they were to get hold of it and anxiety, for example, and show treatment, I think that could be quite powerful.”
Steve, sales manager, Traditional Conservative

Talking to Dissenting Disruptors about mental health

Dissenting Disruptors have low trust in science and often question medical voices. Their anti-institutionalist instincts mean they often place lived experience above expert authority.

They show extremely low trust in every institution, in particular government and pharmaceutical companies. However, they are strongly trusting of those with lived experience: 86 per cent say they trust members of the public with experience of mental health issues to provide accurate information, compared to 67 per cent who trust the NHS and just 16 per cent who trust the national government.

Where the NHS is used as an information source, it may be more effective to highlight the perspectives of frontline workers with direct experience, rather than relying on the NHS as an institutional voice. Dissenting Disruptors often describe wanting to hear from doctors and practitioners, rather than an anonymous organisation.

“Who's actually sourcing the information? Is it somebody that's experienced? (...) I was going to say I would either trust a doctor that has got extreme experience in that field, 30 years plus, or I'm just going to say somebody that is not so much experienced, but somebody that's been through it themselves and can give a personal experience on it. They're the people that I would trust the most.”
Rachel, maternity leave, Dissenting Disruptor

Lived experience is also the frame that has the largest observable impact on support for new treatments, beating clinical evidence and arguments about wider practical benefits.

“Definitely the stories. It's like whenever you look at a product, you're looking at reviews before you buy it.”

Lawrence, Clacton, Dissenting Disruptor

In terms of reach, Dissenting Disruptors have the highest Facebook use of all segments. Online campaigns that highlight personal stories and lived experience may be one of the most effective means of communicating with this segment; in focus groups, many cite the Norwich City F.C. mental health campaign, which centres around two friends attending a football match, one of whom is silently struggling with his mental health. Dissenting Disruptors often praise campaigns like this for their realism.

Given their unique lack of trust, Dissenting Disruptors place an even greater premium on portrayals of mental health that feel real and honest. Avoiding sugarcoating or 'trivialising' the experiences of those with mental health issues may be essential for campaigns that resonate with Dissenting Disruptors.

“I think music generally does well, but I think that the soaps trivialise it, tarnish it and cheapen it because someone on a soap will have a mental health illness and six months later they don't really have it anymore and they don't show you actually how difficult it's to live.”

Robert, Clacton, Dissenting Disruptor

Appendix: Wellcome Trust's insights on ethical use of Lived Experience

Why is it important to engage with lived experience ethically?

As seen throughout this report, using human stories and testimonies (here referred to broadly as lived experience) can be a powerful tool in campaigns and communications - but use of these insights can inadvertently cause harm. Done poorly, it risks harming the contributors it relies on, reinforcing stereotypes, or undermining perceptions of lived experience as a legitimate and valued form of expertise alongside clinical and policy knowledge.

The Wellcome Trust has identified a set of principles that can help to guide good practice on utilising lived experience for mental health communications:

- Lived experience contributors should be involved in shaping the content of a campaign or communication, not simply asked to illustrate a message that has already been decided. Share the rationale and goals of the campaign early, so contributors can input on how their perspective can best contribute. Not everyone generates ideas on the spot; keep feedback windows open long enough for people to reflect and respond meaningfully.
- As a general rule, ask contributors about their views on an intervention, a service, or a policy, not about historical personal experiences or trauma. The goal is to draw on what people know, not to expose what they have been through.
- Work with people whose experience is directly relevant to the subject matter. If the campaign concerns a specific intervention, engage someone with experience of that intervention. If it is about accessing NHS services, work with someone who contributes to a local trust in a PPI capacity. If the subject is young people's mental health, engage young people directly; parents and carers can offer valuable perspectives on the experience of caring, but should not be asked to speak on behalf of young people.
- Brief contributors carefully and honestly. People should know in advance what will be asked of them, how their contribution will be used, and where it will appear. For digital content in particular, be explicit that once material is published it may have a reach and lifespan beyond anyone's control. Be clear

from the outset about what you are and are not looking for; the aim is typically to gather views on the future of mental health care or the value of a particular intervention, not to elicit a personal mental health history.

- Be flexible about format. Not everyone will be comfortable appearing on video or in photographs. Build in options for different types of contribution from the start and be creative about how input can be gathered and represented. Flexibility here is also a means of ensuring a diversity of perspectives rather than defaulting to whoever is most comfortable in front of a camera.
- Experiences vary significantly across different communities, backgrounds, and identities. A single lived experience account cannot stand in for all lived experience. Campaigns should reflect that nuance in their messaging and actively seek out a range of perspectives rather than relying on those most readily available.

Methodology

Quantitative Research

Polling in this report was conducted by More in Common, a member of the British Polling Council.

Nationally representative polling: More in Common's polls are weighted and allocated to be representative of the adult population of Great Britain.

Fieldwork dates: 27 September – 8 October 2025

Sample size: 4,071

Qualitative research

Alongside nationally-representative polling, More in Common conducted 7 semi-structured focus groups between December 2025 and January 2026. Each of the Seven Segments were featured in the qualitative research.